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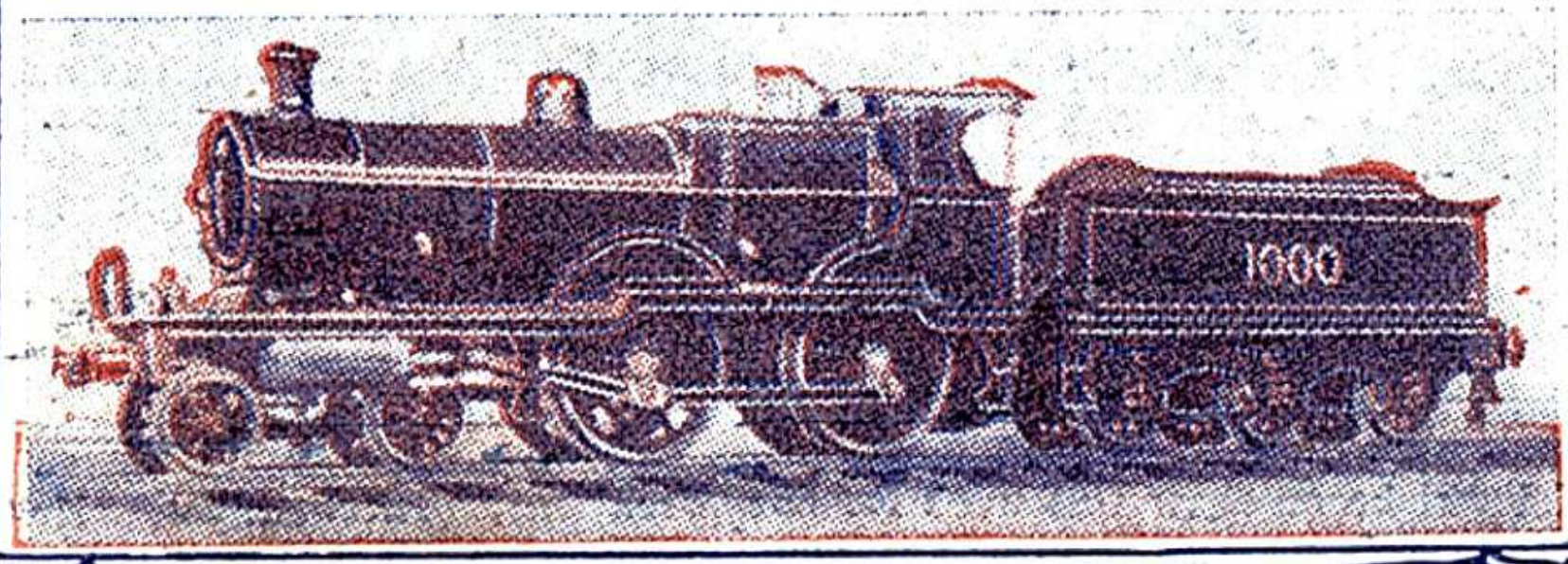

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BEGINNING THIS WEEK.

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WHEELS.—Scale Model and in cast-iron. On steel axles running in brass bearings.

BOILER.—The Boilers are of the plain cylindrical pattern, having large water capacity, and made of brass throughout. Tested to 45 lb pressure, and fitted with Flame Guard for Lamp.

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THE COMPETITION

Begins this week and ends with issue dated January 27, when a list of the seven St. Frank's stories to be voted for will appear on a coupon.

All you have to do is to place the figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7 in the blanks provided on the coupon against the titles of the stories according to how you consider they rank in order of merit, putting the figure 1 against the story you like best, the figure 2 against the story you like second best, and so on. Where you like two or more stories equally, place the same numbers against them according to their position with the other stories.

All the lists will be totalled, and from this a comparative list will be drawn up representing the general voting of all competitors. The competitor whose individual voting most nearly corresponds to the general voting will be declared the winner.

IMPORTANT!—A small coupon bearing title of story and date of issue will appear every week during the competition usually on the back of the "Answers" tag, but this week it will be found at the foot of the last page of the book. These small coupons must be cut out and enclosed with the final voting coupon.

Competitors may send in as many attempts as they like, provided each attempt is accompanied by the required number of coupons.

The model will be on show this week for one week at, Kitchensides, Newsagents, 31, Electric Avenue, Brixton, London, S.W., and Messrs. Bassett-Lowke, Ltd., 112, High Holborn, London, W.C.

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(RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER)

CHAPTER I.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

"CLEAR out!" said Kenmore curtly.

"Beggin' your pardon, Master Kenmore——"

"Get out of here!"

Simon Kenmore, of the Sixth Form at St. Frank's, was not in the sweetest of tempers. And Tubbs, the Ancient House pageboy, regarded the prefect rather uncertainly. He knew Kenmore of old, and had no special desire to receive a book in his face.

It was evening, and rain was pouring down in torrents outside. The wind howled with the force of a powerful gale, and quite a number of chimneys in the Ancient House were behaving badly.

Kenmore's was one of the culprits. Smoke and soot had been blowing into his study for hours, and he was irritable in consequence. No matter what he did, the chimney refused to behave itself.

"Why in the name of thunder don't you go?" demanded Kenmore impatiently. "I don't like the look of your face, Tubbs—it upsets me! Clear off before I get my boot to you!"

"Sorry, Master Kenmore, but there's a gent askin' to see you——"

"What?"

"A gent, sir—name of Frayne——"

"Frayne!" exclaimed Kenmore quickly. "Harold Frayne?"

"Yes, Master Kenmore."

"Then why the deuce didn't you tell me before?" shouted the prefect. "Harold Frayne! Well, I'm hanged! Bring him in here at once, you silly young idiot! Why didn't you bring him with you at first?"

"I didn't know as how the young gent might be welcome, sir," said Tubbs. "There is gents as you don't care to 'ave come to the school, sir——"

"That's enough!" interrupted the Sixth Former. "Show Mr. Frayne in!"

Tubbs vanished, and Kenmore paused in front of the mirror to tidy himself up a bit, and to smooth his hair. The prefect was not one of the most likeable fellows in the Ancient House. On the contrary, he was a bully and a cad, and a great believer in going the pace whenever he had the chance.

"Harold Frayne!" he murmured. "I wonder what on earth that young fool wants with me? If he's come to borrow money, there'll be nothing doing. He cleared me of thirty bob the last time we played poker!"

Before Kenmore could think further on the pleasant subject of poker, the door opened, and Tubbs ushered the visitor into the study. Harold Frayne was a weedy youth of about nineteen—only slightly older than Kenmore, but looking younger. He was narrow-chested, attired in the height of fashion, and his chin appeared to cease before it really started.

"What-ho, Kenny!" he exclaimed, with a wag of his cane. "How goes it? The very deuce of an evening outside. Raining like thunder, and all the rest of it. I wouldn't have come, only I'm clearing off to London by the last train."

"Glad to see you, anyhow," said Kenmore. "That's all right, Tubbs; you can buzz off. What's the idea, Hal? It must have been something pretty important to bring you from Bannington in this filthy weather."

Frayne sat down, and languidly produced a cigarette-case. He had already divested himself of a dripping mackintosh.

"Well, the fact is, it's about The Shanty," he observed. "Have a cig.? Good! That's the order! Now, what was I saying? Oh, yes, The Shanty! I don't know if you've ever been there?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Kenmore.

"My dear chap, of course not!" said Frayne. "I never told you, did I? As you know, my people live in Bannington—big pots, and rich landowners—eh? Well, you see, we've got a cute little bungalow tucked away among a lot of willows on the banks of the River Stowe. This bungalow is about a mile from Bannington on this side, and not far from the main road."

"You're pretty long-winded!" said Kenmore.

"Sorry!" went on Frayne. "As a matter of fact, it's a bore to tell the yarn at all. I loathe this sort of thing."

Frayne leaned back, puffed at his cigarette, and Kenmore watched him. The prefect's visitor was not very strong on brain power, as anybody could see with one glance at his face.

Kenmore had made friends with him some months earlier. He was the son of one of the big families who lived near Bannington, and as he had plenty of cash to throw about, Kenmore had no objection to his company. As a rule, Frayne lost heavily at cards, and so his friendship was welcome.

"About this bungalow!" went on the visitor. "It's quite a jolly little place, you know. The pater got it especially for use in the summer time—boating, and fishing and swimming, and all that kind of thing. But, of course, in the winter time, it's not much cop. The governor's paid some chap to look after the show, but we're not quite certain that he's reliable. So we'd like you to do us a favour."

"Oh!" said Kenmore.

"Not much, old chap—a mere trifle, in fact," said Frayne. "The fact is, I want you to pop round to the bungalow now and again, just to see if everything's all serene. Do you get me, Steve? Just take a look round, and keep your eye open, and that's all."

"Hang it, I'm not a caretaker!" said Kenmore gruffly. "And how can I get in?"

"I brought the key—the duplicate key, as a matter of fact," said Frayne. "The caretaker's got the other, and the pater's told him that you might be popping in at intervals. That'll keep the old ruffian up to the scratch, even if you don't go at all."

"Oh, I see!"

"But the real reason I popped along to see you was this," went on Frayne. "Since the pater wants you to do him this little favour, there's no reason why we shouldn't return the compliment. I've got an idea that you have a bit of a difficulty in having a good time of it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, cards, smoking, and things like that," said Frayne. "I've heard the masters are pretty hot on you. It's deucedly awkward to go to a hotel for a spree—and risky, too. So you told me, anyway. Well, there it is. Do you get the idea?"

"Do you mean that I can use this bungalow as I like?" asked Kenmore, with a sudden show of interest.

"Well, not absolutely," said the other. "Hardly as you like, old fellow. But there's no earthly reason why you shouldn't gather a few of your pals together and have a spree now and again. That's the wheeze. You've got the key, and there are plenty of lamps there, and oil—and coal, and everything else. If you like, you can have a little champagne supper, or something of that kind. I mean, it doesn't matter to me—not a jot. And I thought it would be a nice, private little retreat to buzz to when you're feeling a bit fed up."

Kenmore's eyes were sparkling.

"I say, that's jolly decent!" he exclaimed. "Yes, rather! A place like that will be thundering handy, I can assure you. We do hold card parties in the studies here, but they're always pretty ghastly. What with being on edge in case a master pops along,

and having to keep the door closed in case the smoke gets out, the enjoyment is a bit ruined."

"Well, at the Shanty, you would be able to do just as you liked," said Frayne. "Of course, I'll expect you to treat the place decently—no need to start any rough stuff with the furniture and effects."

"Oh, you can trust me to look after it well," said Kenmore. "Thanks awfully, Hal. It's jolly decent of you to give me the chance. I can see that we shall enjoy ourselves in the new term."

"The new term?"

"Well, the Christmas holidays will begin in a few days, so I don't suppose we shall have much chance until afterwards," said Kenmore. "Gad, it'll be something to look forward to! Good man!"

Harold Frayne beamed, and they chatted on other subjects—including horse racing, steeplechasing, cards, and similar topics. And after about half an hour Frayne took his departure.

He had handed over the key of the bungalow before going, and Kenmore sat in his study, thinking, for some little time. It was still comparatively early in the evening.

The door of the prefect's study opened, and Grayson, of the Fifth, looked in.

"Anything doing?" he inquired.

"Well, there might be," said Kenmore. "There's no telling. It all depends if Hodder is willing. He's been changing a bit lately, and I think we've got him all right."

Grayson entered the study, and closed the door.

"I heard you had a visitor," he remarked casually.

"Yes—that young ass, Frayne," said Kenmore. "You've heard me talk about him, haven't you? By gad! Why should we wait till after the holidays? Why not get up a little party for to-morrow night? It would a decent wind-up to the term."

"It would; but I don't know what you're talking about!" said Grayson.

Kenmore explained with much relish. Grayson and Shaw, of the Fifth, were two of his best pals, and kindred spirits when it came to card playing and smoking. Grayson was overjoyed.

"The fellow's a brick!" he said enthusiastically. "A bungalow—all to ourselves! Why, man alive, we can have the time of our existence there! Nobody to spy on us—nobody bothering in any way!"

"Exactly!" said Kenmore. "We can smoke as much as we want, have money lying all over the table, and we can even go to the length of champagne. How about getting up a supper party for to-morrow evening? You know—a regular supper, with cards to follow?"

Grayson's eyes sparkled.

"I've been longing for something like that all the term!" he exclaimed. "Yes, rather! We'll do it, Kenny. But we shall need a few other chaps, you know. A party of that sort isn't much good unless there are a decent few."

Kenmore looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Well, there's Shaw and Hodder—that makes four," he said. "I don't know so much about any others in the Sixth. I wouldn't trust them to keep the thing secret. They're mostly a lot of snobs and hypocrites."

"Same in the Fifth," said Grayson. "Of course, there's Fullwood and his gang——"

"Juniors!" exclaimed Kenmore contemptuously.

"What's that matter?"

"It wouldn't do; they couldn't keep the thing quiet."

"Oh, yes, they could," said the Fifth Former. "Fullwood and his crowd are pretty hot stuff, on the quiet; and, after all, they're not much younger than we are. Only about a couple of years. And for their own sakes they wouldn't breathe a word."

"Yes, of course, there's that about it," admitted Kenmore. "The young asses wouldn't dare to talk, would they? It would mean the sack for them right enough—or a frightful flogging, anyway. Besides, we shall hold other parties next term, and they'll want to join in, too."

"Just my argument," agreed Kenmore. "I say invite them."

"Good enough—I will!" agreed Kenmore. "Oh, but wait a minute. What about funds?"

The Fifth Former grimaced.

"That's just the dashed trouble," he said. "I've only got about thirty bob until the week-end—thirty bob doesn't last long at a champagne supper. Still, it's all right; I'll borrow a quid off Shaw. He's rolling in funds just now. And those kids in the Remove are pretty wealthy, too. I know for a fact that Fullwood's going about with a fiver on him. He and his pals have been having a bit of luck in betting, or something like that."

"Oh, well, that's all right," said Kenmore. "If they've got money, we'll allow them to join in. And, as you say, the more the merrier. The thing'll be a frost if we don't have seven or eight."

"I suggest we call a meeting at once, and settle it," said Grayson.

The idea was adopted.

Half an hour later Kenmore's study was well filled. The Fifth Form was represented by Grayson and Shaw of the College House and Sims of the Ancient House. The Sixth Form contributed Kenmore and Parkin. Hodder major had not been asked—as he was considered rather uncertain. For Hodder was inclined to be a decent chap, and therefore out of his element with these others.

The Remove fellows consisted of Ralph Leslie Fullwood and his two bosom chums, Gulliver and Bell. Merrill and Marriott would have been invited, but it so happened that they were nearly broke, and

therefore worthless as far as this affair was concerned.

"What's the idea?" asked Fullwood languidly.

"You'll see in a few minutes," replied Kenmore. "You Remove kids ought to be thinking yourselves confoundedly lucky to be invited at all. Now, look here! There are eight of us here, and I fancy we're all pretty well in funds. What do you say to a little champagne supper to-morrow evening, with cards and smoking to follow?"

"Good!"

"Jolly fine idea!"

"Yes, but where can we drink champagne?" asked Fullwood. "It's a rippin' idea, but I don't see how it can be wangled ——"

"Then I'll tell you," interrupted Kenmore.

As briefly as possible, he went into the facts of the case. And by the time he had finished, his listeners were absolutely enthusiastic.

"Why, it's terrific!" exclaimed Fullwood, with glittering eyes. It's a half-holiday to-morrow, and we can spend most of the afternoon in gettin' ready. I vote we have the supper at about six o'clock, so that we can have a clear two hours' game afterwards."

"It's all right; we'll arrange those details later," said Kenmore. "But I've just been glancing at the prices of things in the Stores catalogue. It'll cost us at least eight quid to do the thing properly. My idea is for us to contribute a pound each."

"Good enough!" said Grayson. "Here's my quid!"

All the other fellows handed over a similar amount.

"You can't go wrong by doing this," said Kenmore, as he folded up the notes. "I shall be able to get an hour off in the morning. Being a prefect, I can easily make some excuse for going into Bannington. I'll order the grub, and the champagne, and all the rest of it, and tell them to deliver the goods by four o'clock. And I know just the man to go to."

And, as all the details of the matter were settled, the little party broke up. They were looking forward with great anticipation to the morrow.

But they didn't know what Fate had in store!

CHAPTER II.

A VERY FOUL EVENING.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE sipped his tea contentedly.

"The fact is, Phipps, you're improving," he observed, as he set the cup down. "I mean to say, this cup of tea is the real goods. Absolutely prime and full-blooded, as it were. Bravo, Phipps! I should like to remark, without upsetting your mental sway, that you're a somewhat brainy cove!"

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps smoothly.

Archie nodded and helped himself to a piece of toast.

It was tea-time on the following evening, and instead of the weather improving, it had gradually become worse. The gale of the previous night had continued, and now it was roaring and buffetting round the old school in a most determined, vigorous manner.

And with it came torrents of rain—rain had been pouring down since daybreak, and even football had been stopped. The Remove was rather upset, because an important match had been fixed for this particular afternoon. With Little Side like a morass, play had been out of the question.

Not that this affected Archie. He had spent the afternoon in his own study—reading, dozing, and lounging in front of the fire. Archie was not the kind of fellow who exerted himself needlessly.

"Yes, Phipps, I'm dashed pleased!" went on Archie. "On a foul evening of this kind a chappie needs sundry quarts of the good old brew to shove the tissues into full working order. Gadzooks! Cast your ear towards the north-west corner, laddie! The wind howleth frightfully!"

"The evening is very rough, sir," said Phipps. "I hear that some parts of the country lanes are actually flooded."

"That's rather the limit, what?"

"Well, one could hardly expect anything else, sir," said Phipps. "The rain has been continuous for over twenty-four hours. Is there anything further you would require, sir?"

Archie looked round.

"As a matter of absolute fact, no!" he replied. "I rather fancy the young master is well supplied. However, we will see, Phipps. Life is inclined to be dashed monotonous these days. I mean to say, a chappie simply shoves in a few hours at classes, and then proceeds to hang about until the next spasm begins. Rain, Phipps, is dashed good. But, to put it neatly, a chappie hardly likes to have slabs of the heavens bunged at him in lumps!"

"I agree, sir, that the weather conditions are inclined to be deplorable," said Phipps. "Oh, by the way, sir. There is one little point I should care to mention—although, begging your pardon, sir, I have no wish to offend.

Archie adjusted his monocle.

"What ho!" he observed. "This, as it were, is a kind of preliminary. It's no good, Phipps, I know you! There's something on your chest; something that needs to burst forth. Speak, laddie! Allow the words of complaint to flow forth in an untramelled condition. The young master is listening."

"With regard to your hair, sir——"

"What—what?" interrupted Archie, rising, and gazing at himself in the mirror. "I mean to say, the thatch? What about it, Phipps? I rather thought that the old roof was looking somewhat priceless!"

"I was merely about to suggest, sir, that this is your hair-dressing day," said Phipps. "I should advise you to visit Bannington at the first opportunity. The hair is somewhat untidy at the rear."

Archie looked absolutely startled.

"But this is ghastly, Phipps!" he exclaimed in a hollow voice. "I mean, you absolutely put me off my stroke. Untidy, what? That's about the last straw, Phipps. A chappie simply can't go about looking untidy. Absolutely not! I positively shudder to think of it. In fact, I might even say that the tissues are visibly wilting under the strain."

Phipps allowed himself to smile.

"The matter is hardly as serious as that, Master Archibald," he said. "I merely mentioned the matter——"

"Enough!" interrupted Archie, holding up his hand. "Further conversash. is needless. I go to Bannington!"

"I would suggest to-morrow, sir."

"Imposs., Phipps, absolutely positively imposs.!" interrupted Archie firmly. "Great goodness, and what not! Do you seriously suggest, old tulip, that I should wander through life for another twenty-four hours with yards of hair growing like fungus at the rear? Absolutely not, Phipps! I go to Bannington!"

"But the weather, sir——"

"The weather may be poisonous; it may be absolutely ghastly in no less than five different variations, but I will brave the fury of the elements, Phipps!" exclaimed Archie. "I will set forth and stagger into the cold, clammy night. In other words, the bright spots for me, Phipps! Within five minutes I shall trickle away to catch the old local——"

"Please let me dissuade you from such a decision, sir!" exclaimed Phipps quickly. "I would not have mentioned the matter if I had thought that you would take it so much to heart. Your hair is quite tidy, and a short delay will make no real difference."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean, absolutely the reverse! Certainly not! I am going into Bannington, and I shall arrive back by the later train. Dash it all, I'm not made of jelly! I shan't ooze away. Kindly bring in mackintoshes, goloshes, and all the rest of the weather-defying materials!"

Archie's mind was made up, and Phipps knew very well that he would never be able to alter it. When Archie was really firmly fixed upon any matter, no amount of argument would prevail upon him. He intensely disliked wet weather, but he positively hated looking untidy.

"At least, sir, you will allow me to ring up the garage in Bannington, so that a car may be sent," suggested Phipps. "The expense will be rather high, but I do not think that that is a matter for concern."

Archie adjusted his monocle again.

"Well, now you come to mention it, the scheme is somewhat fruity!" he exclaimed with approval. "I might even say, Phipps, that the brain department has obviously been working overtime. Good lad! Trickle forth and see about it. Slide to the old telephone and make sundry arrangements."

"Very good, sir."

Phipps was absent for about ten minutes. When he entered Archie's study again, the genial ass of the Remove was surveying himself in the mirror with some show of concern.

"Oh, here you all are!" exclaimed Archie. "And as a matter of fact, here I all am! During your absence, Phipps, I have been surveying the old reflection. I have been thinking of this, and I have been thinking of that. Absolutely! And I have come to the conclusion that the young master looks somewhat foul!"

"I regret, sir, that the garage has no car available," said Phipps.

"Great Scott!" gasped Archie. "In other words, my only sainted aunt! But, Phipps! What, I mean to say, is the good of a bally garage if there are no cars available? I mean, what's the good of these dashed places? I am inclined to believe that Bannington is in need of a somewhat severe jolt. These business chappies require speeding up. As they would say in America, the blighters could do with sundry injections of pep, and all that kind of stuff!"

"I am afraid you are right, sir."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "So it remains for me to dash out into the cold wetness. Gadzooks! How goes the time, Phipps? I mean to say, I shan't catch that bally train unless I do a considerable amount of speed!"

"I am afraid it will be a close shave," said Phipps. "In fact, I hardly think it possible for you to catch the train now. I should, therefore, suggest putting the matter off until——"

"That's what I call rotten—not only rotten, but inclined to be putiferous!" interrupted Archie severely. "I am disappointed, Phipps. I didn't think it was in you. You stand here, talking, engaging the young master in mile after mile of chat, and you know bally well that the train is buzzing away. The trick, as it were, is dirty!"

And Archie, without waiting for Phipps to reply, shot out of the study with unbounded energy. He meant to go to Bannington now, and nothing would stop him, even if he had to walk.

He was saved from this misfortune, for he arrived at the station just in time to catch the local train, which, by great good luck, was five minutes late. And in spite of a heavy mackintosh and goloshes, Archie was very wet. He was smothered in mud, too.

For the rain was pouring down in pitiless torrents, and the roads were running like rivers of mud. On three distinct occasions, Archie had paused on the way down to the station. And on each of these occasions he nearly decided to go back.

There was only one thing which caused him to continue the journey. And this one

thing was the thought of Phipps' quiet smile. Archie could see it on the valet's face. A smile which meant much. And the junior had squared his shoulders against the wind, and walked on.

He was glad of it now that he was in the train.

"Yes, by Jove, I'll show the chappie!" Archie told himself. "He's absolutely expecting me to crawl back like the bally Prodigal Son. But when I stream into the old study again I'll have the dashed laugh over him. Streaming, by the way, is rather good. I mean to say, I shall be positively pouring!"

After all, thinking of bad weather is far worse than being out in it. One sits indoors, listening to the rain and the wind, and decides that the weather isn't fit for a dog to be out in. But once outside, tramping through the mud, things don't seem half so bad as one feared.

And now that Archie was fairly on the go he was quite happy. He rather revelled in the whole business. But it must be admitted that he was dreadfully disappointed when he arrived at the hairdresser's. For the establishment was closed. And Archie gazed at it blankly.

He had walked down briskly from the station, passing along deserted streets. The very High Street itself was practically devoid of human inhabitants, and most of the shops were closed.

"Well, this, as it were, is a few paces beyond the limit!" murmured Archie, as he gazed at the hair-dresser's. "I mean to say, it's not much after half-past six! And the foul fellow has absolutely closed the portals! I'm not the kind of chappie to grumble, but I regard this whole affair as being rather on the mouldy side."

Archie mooched up and down the High Street very disconsolately. Under such provocation he would have visited another hairdresser's, but they were closed, too. So there was nothing to be done. His only course was to get back to the station and take the next train home.

It was all very annoying, and Archie mentally decided that he would tick the hairdresser off in no uncertain terms when he went there on the morrow. People wanted their hair cut in bad weather just as much as they wanted it cut in good weather. The hair-dresser was an absolute blighter to close so early. Archie tried to think of a few cutting remarks.

And while he was engaged in this way he arrived at the station, and almost mechanically went to the booking office and asked for a ticket to Bellton—for he had neglected to get a return.

"Sorry, young man, no train to Bellton to-night!" said the booking clerk.

"Independence won't do!" said Archie absently. "I think it's dashed frightful for a chappie to close his shop——"

"Eh?"

"I mean to say, in these days, it won't do," said Archie. "Half-past six, you know! I don't mind admitting that I'm positively furious—— What? What? Oh, sorry! Did you address me, laddie?"

The booking clerk stared.

"There's no train to Bellton to-night!" he exclaimed.

Archie smiled.

"Of course, that's ridic.!" he observed. "I happen to know, fruity one, that there are at least three trains to Bellton. Dash it all, I've travelled by the six-fifty about six thousand, four hundred, and fifty-three times."

"Very likely you have, but the six-fifty isn't running to-night!" grinned the clerk. "I'm very sorry, but it's no good blaming me, or the railway company. The fault's entirely to do with the weather."

"The weather!" echoed Archie. "Gadzooks, and all that sort of thing! You're not absolutely telling me that trains can't run because of a few chunks of rain? I know well enough that these trains of yours are modelled after the style of a funeral procession, or slow-motion photography. But, at the same time, you can't fool me. Absolutely not! What, to be exact, is the scheme?"

"It's very simple," said the clerk. "There's been so much rain that a considerable amount of earth has slipped down in the Edgemore cutting. We got news of it through about a quarter of an hour back. Both the lines are blocked, and I don't suppose it'll be clear for traffic until the morning. Anyhow, all to-night's trains are cancelled."

"Absolutely?" asked Archie, aghast.

"Absolutely!"

"It appears that this is my evening out!" said Archie in a hollow voice. "I'm a good-tempered chappie, but when it comes to a poisonous business of this kind, the blood of the Glenthornes begins to ooze somewhat. No hair cut, no train! I mean, this seems to be one of those positions!"

"Sorry, young man; I can't help it."

Archie moved away from the ticket office, feeling rather dazed. But he brightened up considerably when he remembered that there were two or three garages where cars could be hired. Phipps had tried them, it is true, but there would certainly be a car available by this time.

There wasn't.

Only two garages were open, and they both informed Archie that there were no cars ready for any journey. They had either been delayed, or were not in a state of repair. So it really seemed as though Archie would be compelled to face the awful prospect of walking home. And he was not altogether enraptured with this idea. The rain was still pouring down in sheets, and the gale was whistling and howling with unabating fury.

"It seems to me, laddie, that you would have been a dashed lot better off if you had accepted the advice of Phipps!" Archie

told himself. "What I mean is, everything looks black and ghastly. Storm clouds in the offing, and all that sort of stuff. It really appears that I am scheduled to get a very considerable packet!"

Archie shivered as he paused in the High Street.

"There's no denying it, laddie!" he went on. "I mean to say, the whole thing's plain. There, as it were, it is! I'm pipped—absolutely and positively pipped! What I need now is to gather the old tissues together, and buzz forth into the dark and stormy night. There's nothing else to do, so I suppose I'd better have a stab at it. But, by Jove, the old spine will require large doses of massaging when we trickle into the old homestead!"

And, pulling his mackintosh more tightly round his throat, he set off.

Archie was in splendid condition, in spite of his general assertions to the contrary. And when it came to a brisk walk, he could move as rapidly and energetically as nearly every other fellow in the Remove. His helplessness was more of a pose than anything else

And when he really got going, he didn't mind it much. He hated crossing a muddy street, in case his boots got splashed. But when it was necessary to wade along a road which was literally inches deep in mud and water, he cheerfully splashed along, and revelled in it.

The rain tore down, and the wind hooted, but Archie walked along, whistling to himself for company. The darkness was intense, but he could just faintly see the writhing tree-tops outlined against the murky sky.

"Why, dash it all, there's nothing to make a cove mizzy!" exclaimed Archie, as he plunged along. "I thought the whole thing was going to be the absolute last word in foulness. But it's not so bad, after all. I mean to say, the wildness of the night, and all that kind of thing. Makes a chappie realise the mighty forces of nature, and the fury of the element department!"

He was already on the outskirts of the town, and now he left the last house behind him, with the open country road ahead. It was utterly dark, and there was not another soul to bear him company. Archie now thought about what he would do when he arrived back at St. Frank's.

It seemed to him that he had been walking for about half an hour—in reality it wasn't much more than a quarter—when an extra big gust of wind came swooping down over the tree tops. He heard a splintering, rending sound above the roar and violence of the gale.

"That," he remarked, "has torn it!"

For an instant he caught a glimpse of a great tree top tearing itself asunder from the main trunk. It came swirling down, but Archie lost sight of it in the gloom.

He was just thinking that he would have to go cautiously in order to avoid the fallen branches, when another sound came out of the night. It was a shout of pain, short and sharp.

Archie paused.

It seemed to him that the shout was in a boyish voice, and the silence which followed was even worse than the cry itself. For it suggested all sorts of ghastly possibilities. Somebody had been caught by that falling mass of jagged branches!

Or was it sheer imagination?

With so many noises going on all round him, Archie could not be absolutely certain. He tried to convince himself that he had

The booking clerk stared.

"There's no train to Bellton tonight!" he exclaimed.

"Of course, that's redic.!" observed Archie. "I happen to know, fruity one, that there are at least three trains to Bellton——"

made a mistake, but in his heart he knew that he was not alone on that road. So he hurried on, holding his hands out in front of him, as though to ward off any obstacle. The darkness was very thick, and the rain soaked his face, half blinding him.

He had not gone far before he plunged headlong into a mass of sharp branches. The back of his left hand was grazed, and he narrowly escaped getting some of the fallen tree in his face.

"What ho!" exclaimed Archie breathlessly. "Hallo! Hallo! Here I am, don't you know! What about it? Anybody here? Any poor chappie pinned down by the wreckage, or something like that?"

He waited, listening.

And then a voice came to him out of the darkness.

"Thank goodness!" it exclaimed. "I say, lend a hand here, will you? Confound these branches!"

"Hold steady, laddie—I'm on the spot!" said Archie. "That is to say, Archie is absolutely here! Don't worry, and don't get excited. Everything is all serene."

He groped forward, guided by a call now and again from the unknown person ahead. And after a short search, Archie found somebody held down by many of the branches.

The junior's eyes were somewhat accustomed to the gloom by now, and he could faintly make out a form, entangled amid the branches. Archie bent down towards it, all concern.

"Well, here I am!" he said cheerfully. "Here I am in all my young beauty! What about it, old onion? Just say the word, and out comes the helping fist! It seems to me that you're in a somewhat ghastly predic.!"

"It's—it's all right—I'm not hurt much," said the other. "I was walking along and this tree suddenly fell on the top of me. That's all."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "All? Well, there you are! It rather depends upon the point of view, what? If a tree suddenly came swooping down upon my beam, I should be inclined to sound the S.O.S. in repeated doses! But we'll see about the rescue work, first aid, and all that kind of rot! Heave ho! Yoicks, and all that sort of business!"

He hauled at the branches, and after a considerable amount of effort, he succeeded in dragging the soaking wet mass away. A form about his own size rose to its feet, and staggered clear of the obstacle. He swayed for a few moments, and then suddenly sank down.

"I—I think my head's hurt a bit!" he said weakly.

"Good gracious me!" gasped Archie. "The S.O.S. is useless, old chappie! I'm the only cove on the spot—and I'm about as much use as a defunct monkey! However, we'll buckle to, and see what can be done. Never say die! Absolutely not! Kindly prepare for the biz!"

He bent down and lifted the stranger up. He judged that the other was a boy of about his own age, but he had no idea as to his appearance, or status of life. He certainly spoke in an educated fashion.

Archie had no matches on him, and no electric torch. So he was obliged to make the best of the circumstances The stranger leaned heavily against him. And it required all Archie's strength to hold him up.

"I—I'm sorry to give you this trouble!" muttered the other. "I—I didn't think I was quite so bad. Perhaps one of the branches hit me on the head—it's aching terribly!"

"I'm dashed surprised that you've got a head left to ache at all!" said Archie. "I mean to say, when a chappie suddenly finds himself buried beneath the ruins of the good old British oak he gets a bit of a shock. However, it's no good worrying ourselves. The position is frightful, but there you are. I gather that the best thing to do will be to dash back into Bannington—— But hold on! What do my eyes see? What, to be exact, do the optic nerves convey to the brain section?"

Archie stared away towards the river, at right angles to the road itself.

"Do I see things, or is there a light there?" he inquired. "Kindly verify it, old dear. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that——"

"Yes, there is a light—a red light!"

"Absolutely!"

The red light which they could see was coming from the blind of some house or cottage. It gleamed warmly and invitingly through the murk of the night. And it was at no great distance, either.

Archie could have sworn that it was not there five minutes earlier—and possibly he was right. The room with the red blind might have been unilluminated until a minute or so earlier.

"I must remark, dearie, that I'm feeling frightfully braced," said Archie. "I mean to say, there it is! Beckoning to us with the glad fist of welcome! The good old haven of refuge hovers in the offing! Cling to me, fair youth, and we'll proceed to buzz somewhat!"

The other made no comment, but allowed Archie to assist him towards the hedge. There seemed to be no road or path leading towards that house with the red blind.

So Archie, who was fairly practical when it came to the point, decided to make a beeline for the light.

It was possible that floods would be encountered on the way, but there was really no sense in meeting trouble before it arrived. And something certainly had to be done.

The stranger was hurt—perhaps seriously.

Archie couldn't tell at present. He was hoping that the blow on the head was trivial—that the chap had only just been slightly stunned, and would soon recover. But until a light was reached, the truth was hidden.

They struggled on across a sodden, spongy mass of awful mud which had once been a

meadow. Their feet sank ankle deep into the mire at every step, and nobody ever knew exactly what effort it cost Archie.

His companion hung like lead in his arms, and seemed so dazed that he hardly knew or cared where he was going. But for the junior he would have sunk down four or five times—and would probably have perished of exposure.

Archie never complained—he uttered no word. But he was certainly beginning to get desperate. He ached in every limb, and in spite of the cold, perspiration oozed from every pore. He was working harder than he had ever worked before, and it was a manly, splendid exhibition of pluck and perseverance.

And having crossed the meadow, the ground rose somewhat. The red light was half hidden for a few minutes by some intervening trees. They passed round a kind of coppice.

And then, suddenly, they were at their destination.

"Thank absolutely goodness!" breathed Archie. "Well, here we are! I mean to say, here we all are, cheerful and smiling and as lively as the dickens! Succour is at hand, old lad! In fact, this is where we obtain vast slices of cheer!"

They found themselves against a little gate, which they could faintly see in the gloom—for it was painted white. They opened it, and went up a short, paved pathway.

And just as they reached the little porch, with the wind howling fiercely, Archie's charge sank down. Archie himself was nearly on the verge of it, but he held up, and rapped upon the door loudly and insistently.

CHAPTER III.

GOING THE PACE.

KENMORE looked round with keen approval.

"Topping!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "I must say that Frayne is a brick to let us have this bungalow. I'd no idea it was such a cosy place. By what he told me, I expected it to be a tumble-down shanty where we should have to rough it. But this is the real goods!"

"Rather!" said Grayson.

"As good as the bally Ritz!" grinned Fullwood.

There was every reason for the remarks uttered by the gay spirits who had gathered together at the Frayne bungalow. For the little place was luxurious in the extreme, and it was a practical certainty that Frayne senior had no knowledge that his hopeful son had given his pals permission to use it in this way.

The bungalow itself was comparatively small, being specially designed for summer use. There were tiny domestic quarters, two bedrooms, and one very large sitting room.

This was furnished in a lavish fashion, with soft carpets, rugs, and furniture of the best quality. There were lounges, rich curtains at the windows, and an enormous fireplace with an open grate.

It had been designed especially by young Frayne's pater, and he had made excellent provision for our English climate. Cold nights in the summer are by no means uncommon—and a fireplace is always handy, anyway. At the present moment a huge roaring blaze filled the open grate, casting a flickering cheer throughout the big room.

Candles were burning on all sides, giving a picturesque effect, and an abundance of light. And the table in the centre of the room was set as though for a banquet. The sportsmen of St. Frank's were in for a good time.

The table was covered with a snowy white cloth, and at intervals there were bottles of champagne. Boxes of cigarettes adorned the centre of the festive board, and there was practically everything to be desired in the eatable line.

A ham, cold chicken, rolls galore, pastry, cakes, and everything else that a hungry fellow could appreciate.

The various members of the party had eaten nothing since dinner, and so they were fairly ravenous by now. They had dispensed with tea deliberately—so that they would be able to thoroughly appreciate the champagne supper—a luxury which they had often longed to indulge in, but had never been able to "wangle." Owing to Frayne's offer, the thing was now a fact.

"Well, I must say you've done it in style, Kenny!" said Grayson, looking round with approval. "And all for eight quid, too."

"All for eight quid!" agreed Kenmore. "I looked up all the prices in the stores catalogue—they'll probably be cheaper down here—and the bill totalled up to seven pound fifteen. So we're well on the right side. Where the dickens are those Remove kids?"

"Oh, the young fatheads couldn't wait!" put in Parkin of the Sixth. "They're having a go at pontoon in one of the bedrooms!"

"Young idiots!" said Kenmore tartly.

"I'll fetch 'em!" said Sims of the Fifth.

He passed out of the cosy lounge, and entered a small bedroom where there was a red blind—it was the light shining through this which Archie and his charge had seen. So, perhaps, it was rather a good thing that Fullwood and Co. had retired to this apartment for a little preliminary gamble.

"You young duffers!" said Sims, grinning. "Everything's ready—come on!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bell. "Fully's twisted me out of fifteen bob, and I shan't have a chance to get it back!"

They crowded out, Sims making severe remarks upon the folly of gambling. And they were all ready for the meal. They felt free and easy—absolutely certain in their new safety. There were no spying eyes here—nobody who could tell of their goings on at St. Frank's.

And, a few minutes later, the eight young "blades" had settled round the festive

board, and Kenmore was busily carving the ham, while Parkin gave all his attention to the cold chicken.

"I must say that this is a rare treat!" remarked Shaw, of the Fifth. "That pal of your's Kenny, is a stunner. Just think of the good times we can have next term."

Kenmore nodded.

"That's just what I am thinking of," he said. "We'll have some topping parties, I can tell you. This is just an opening, you know—a kind of preliminary round. Next term we'll have bigger parties."

"We shall have to be careful, though," said Fullwood. "Everybody here can be trusted—we wouldn't give anything away, because it would be all up with the whole gang of us. But I'm not so sure about any other fellows."

"What about Wellborne, and his crowd, of the River House School?" asked Kenmore. "They've got a few seniors there, too. I know some chaps from the Grammar School as well. Why, we can have parties of twenty here—or even more. We'll make the place into a club!"

"Good!" said Grayson. "But what about Frayne?"

"It was his idea, so he can't grumble," chuckled Kenmore. "Anybody else for ham? Tons of it here——"

Rap—rap—rap!

Kenmore's carving-knife fell out of his fingers, and clattered on to the plate. The door of the bungalow opened straight out into the big lounge, and somebody had thumped upon it with no uncertain knuckles.

"Great Scott!" breathed Shaw. "Who's that?"

"Quick—shove that champagne away!" gasped Sims. "The cigarettes, too! It might be somebody from St. Frank's——"

"Keep your hair on!" interrupted Kenmore, recovering his composure. "There's no need to worry. There's not a soul at St. Frank's who knows anything about it. Who the dickens would come here on a fearful night like this? There's only one man who knows——"

"Oh, the caretaker!" said Grayson, with relief.

"Of course," said Kenmore easily. "And he's all right, because I've squared him. I had to do that—couldn't take any risks, you know. But I'll touch him up for interrupting us like this!"

Rap—rap—rap!

The knocks came once more and Kenmore frowned, and crossed over to the door. He pushed back the bolt, and lifted the heavy latch, and flung the door open. A great gust of wind and rain swept into the lounge, setting the candles flickering and guttering. A burst of smoke flooded out of the fireplace.

And Kenmore stood there, holding the door, and staring.

"Glenthorne!" he ejaculated, startled and amazed.

"Absolutely!" replied Archie faintly.

"This, I might remark, is a gladsome surprise, old bean! St. Frank's chappies, what? Good! Kindly do the old assisting act——"

"Who told you to come here?" snapped Kenmore savagely.

"As a matter of absolute fact, nobody," said Archie. "We saw a gleaming beacon through the hurricane, and all that rot, so we proceeded to skate towards it. Or, to be more exact, we wallowed——"

"Then you can wallow away again!" said Kenmore curtly. "You're not coming in here!"

He closed the door—but Archie, quick as a flash, pushed his foot in such a position that the door was held slightly ajar. The elegant Removite was not very surprised to receive this welcome—for at first glance he had noted the nature of the gathering.

He was very much amazed, for such an idea had never entered into his head. But in the extremity of the moment he had no time to show his real feelings. But he was certainly not going to be turned away.

"Take your infernal foot away!" rapped out Kenmore.

"Not absolutely yet!" said Archie. "I'd just like to point out old scream, that something's got to be done. Absolutely! This cove is injured, and needs large quantities of first aid."

"I can't help his troubles——"

"You can—and you've got to!" interrupted Archie indignantly. "Dash it all! Nobody but a perfectly foul ruffian would turn a dog away on a night like this! I tell you the chappie is positively winged! As for my spotting things that were not intended for young eyes, it's all up. I've observed the bubbly and the cigarette-boxes, and all the rest of it. So, you see, laddie, something has got to be put into motion, what?"

Kenmore growled out an exclamation. He knew that Archie was right. He had seen so much already, that it would really be quite pointless to turn him away. In fact, after a second's consideration, Kenmore decided that such a course would be a mistake.

For Archie would naturally be angry and upset—and he would take absolutely no precaution to keep quiet. Kenmore knew that Archie wasn't a sneak, and wasn't afraid in that direction. But, under provocation, he would probably let something out.

"All right—come in!" said the Sixth-Former curtly.

Archie bent down to help the stranger, but he was feeling very much exhausted, and couldn't manage it. But Grayson and Shaw and the others were crowding round now, and they all gave a hand to assist the drenched pair into the room. Until now, the knuts had not realised the serious nature of the affair.

They had half-believed that Archie was merely spying on them. But now, in the full light, they could see that he was haggard with exhaustion. And he swayed as he stood. The other newcomer couldn't keep steady at all, but had to be assisted to a chair, into which he sank heavily.

He was a youngster of about fifteen—well-built, rather tall, and by no means bad-looking. He was well dressed, too. And under ordinary circumstances he would have presented an excellent appearance.

But now his face was pale, and streaked with blood. He was soaked to the skin, and looked an awful wreck.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Grayson, aghast. "The kid's injured!"

"Why on earth didn't that young fool tell us so at first?" snapped Kenmore. "Look! His head's bleeding, or something! What's happened, Glenthorne? Who is the fellow, and how did you meet him?"

Archie wagged a hand.

"Afterwards, old dear!" he murmured. "At the present moment, kindly administer restoratives in abundant doses. I mean to say, the poor chappie is in a shocking condish. Brandy, and all that kind of stuff! Warm blankets, and——"

"By Jove! He's right!" exclaimed Parkin briskly. "Look here, you fellows, we'll have to postpone our little supper for half an hour. It's cold, so it won't come to any harm. In common humanity, we've got to help these youngsters. They've been through a terrible time, by the look of it."

Parkin's example was a good one. Just because the champagne party were "sporty blades" they were not necessarily heartless. Even Fullwood and Co., cads of the worst type, bustled to with a will, fetching blankets, and helping in other ways. For all the members of the party could see that Archie and his companion were in sore need of succour.

Fifteen minutes saw a remarkable change.

The clothing of the two youngsters had been torn off—every shred. And now they were sitting in two chairs, in front of the blazing fire, wrapped up to the eyes in blankets. Such treatment was well calculated to save them from any after-effects. Archie, indeed, was beginning to feel practically himself again.

And the stranger was showing signs of recovery, too.

It had been found that his chief injury was a nasty cut on the top of his head, where a jagged branch had struck him. The blow had torn the skin, and had caused a bump which dazed the unfortunate boy to a considerable extent.

But he had gulped down a large dose of brandy, and the fiery spirit had put new life into him at once. His head and face had been washed, and now a handkerchief was bound over the jagged cut. The colour was coming back into his cheeks.

"Feel better now?" asked Kenmore, at length.

"Yes, thanks awfully!" said the stranger. "I'm heaps better. It was decent of you to do all this for us."

"I should say it was!" exclaimed Gray-

son. "We couldn't very well leave you to die out in the cold. Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is Lawrence Scott," said the other.

"A stranger about here?"

"Yes."

"I found the poor chappie lying in the road," put in Archie. "You see, about half a dozen trees fell down all at once, and this cove was buried amid all the debris. We saw the welcome light shining in the wilderness, and so we proceeded to buzz towards it forthwith!"

"Well, there's not much harm done," said Kenmore. "You'll both be all right in less than an hour. Your clothes are drying quickly in front of the fire, too. Take my advice, and sit still for a bit. It'll do you good."

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Archie. "And pray allow me to express a vast amount of surprise—three bags full, in fact. I didn't think you were the kind of coves to rally round in such a priceless manner."

"We're not hooligans!" said Kenmore shortly.

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie. "In point of fact, precisely the opp., old darling. You've come to the rescue like good 'uns, and we owe you large quantities of gilt-edged gratitude."

"Then perhaps you'll show your gratitude by keeping mum about anything you happen to spot here," said Kenmore.

"Well, rather!"

"You promise not to sneak on us?" demanded Fullwood gruffly.

"It seems to me that I should be a fairly unclean kind of blighter to blow the old gaff," said Archie. "Dash it all, it's not my business. I mean to say, we biffed in upon you unannounced, and you treated us like gentlemen. Good enough! Proceed with the revels! Kindly regard us as non-existent. What happens here remains firmly locked in the old bosom!"

Kenmore nodded, looking very relieved.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "I know I can trust you, Glenthorne."

All the members of the party were pleased now. As far as they could see, no harm had been done. Archie had been speaking truthfully when he said that he would keep the whole affair secret.

He had his own private opinion about these orgies but under ordinary conditions he would never have known about this particular affair. And as the gang had taken him in and treated him well he couldn't possibly peach. His code of honour sealed his lips absolutely.

As for the other fellow, he was a stranger, and didn't count. He wasn't even questioned. Kenmore decided that as soon as the pair were sufficiently recovered, he would request them to go.

And, in the meantime, the revels proceeded.

Some of the party even offered Archie cold chicken and ham—but Archie declined. Disapproving of these goings-on as he did, it was impossible for him to accept a portion of the feast. Why, if he did that, he would be practically joining the party—and the thought was a ghastly one.

No, as soon as his clothing was dry, he would stagger forth.

Thinking it over later, he believed that he must have dozed. Anyhow, when he looked round again, he found that the atmosphere was absolutely blue with cigarette-smoke, and heavy with the fumes of champagne. Archie coughed chokingly and he was aware of a certain dizziness.

The air in the room was thick, heavy, and most unpleasant. And at the central table the party was engaged in a noisy game of cards. Money lay all over the table, and the faces of the revellers were flushed and excited.

"I mean to say, dashed fearful, what?" breathed Archie.

He bent down, and felt his clothing. It was practically dry. In the opposite chair sat the stranger, Lawrence Scott. He was sleeping now, and appeared to be in an almost normal condition.

"What-ho!" murmured Archie. "That is, this is where I proceed to start something. It seems to me that the one thing to do under the cires. is to massage the old spine, drape a few garments around me, and then have a stab at fighting the elements! I must admit that I'm feeling deucedly braced, and so forth!"

So occupied were the gamblers that they didn't even know that Archie was dressing himself. And he was practically ready before Kenmore happened to glance round. Archie was certainly feeling all right except for a dizziness—which was undoubtedly caused by the hot, fume-laden atmosphere.

"Hallo!" said Kenmore. "I didn't know you were awake!"

"The fact is, yes!" said Archie. "I mean, rather! Awake—what? Do I look anything else, old horse? I'm about to sally forth into the dark and stormy night. In other words, Archie for the turnpike!"

"What, going?" said Parkin. "Well, I suppose you might as well—you've come to no harm, and it's getting a bit late in the evening. You'll miss calling-over; but you'll easily be excused on this filthy night."

Archie swayed as he donned his big mackintosh. The fumes were making him quite giddy.

"This is what comes of drinking a whole bottle of champagne!" grinned Grayson.

"I'm surprised at you, Glenthorne!"

"Dash it all——"

"Two bottles, you mean!" put in Kenmore. "Look at his face—he's forgotten it! In a minute he'll be trying to deny that he swilled the stuff!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie indignantly. "Two bottles, don't you know! But, really, I mean to say!"

"It's no good, Archie—it's too late to deny it!" said Fullwood. "You drank the

stuff, and you can't get out of it. No wonder you're feeling rocky on your pins!"

Archie had a dim kind of feeling that they were pulling his leg. But, at the same time, a vague fear came to him that he had actually partaken of champagne. He decided that the sooner he got away the better.

And now he noticed that Scott was awake, and was looking at him steadily.

"Feeling better?" inquired Archie.

"Heaps, thanks!" said Scott. "I say, it was splendid of you to help me the way you did. I'm realising it now. Why, but for you, I might have died from exposure and exhaustion——"

"Pray don't be so ridic., old bird!" protested Archie. "There was nothing in it—absolutely not! A mere helping hand from one chappie to another chappie. Every time!"

Archie made no inquiries concerning the stranger but took his departure about five minutes later. And, to his intense delight, he found that the rain had ceased.

Ragged, uneven clouds were scudding across the sky at an extraordinary speed, and a bit of a moon was peeping in and out at intervals. The wind still roared and buffeted, but the general conditions were vastly improved.

For now it was possible to see with a fair amount of distinctness, and there was no danger of getting soaked for a second time.

But as Archie strode along he was greatly concerned. He wanted to slip in quietly, once he got back to the school. For it would be an absolute disaster if anybody saw him. His collar was a rag, his tie a pitiful object. And his elegant clothing was absolutely ruined.

He was lucky.

For as soon as he got into the Triangle—after taking the precaution to climb over the wall—he came face to face with Phipps.

And the latter, calm and unruffled, discreetly smuggled Archie indoors by a rear entrance.

And half an hour later Archie was in his study, lounging in all his usual glory, as though nothing had happened.

CHAPTER IV.

A BIT OF A SHOCK.

"WHAT-HO! What-ho! What-ho!" exclaimed Archie brightly. "In fact, a few more 'What-ho's'! Morning, and all that! Sunshine and ozone and the chirping of the merry old sparrows!"

Archie was sitting up in bed, gazing out of the window with distinct approval. The morning had broken fine and clear, with only a trace of the previous day's gale. The sky was intensely blue, and the sun shone dazzlingly. Archie smiled with delight.

"Oh, there you are, Phipps!" he said, nodding to his valet. "It seems to me,

His companion hung like lead in his arms, and seemed so dazed that he hardly knew or cared where he was going.

laddie, that the cove who controls the weather is doing his best to make up for the foul assortment of vileness he gave us yesterday. What? I mean to say, don't you agree, dear lad? Don't you join the young master in his priceless opinion?"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps gravely.

"Good!" said Archie. "In fact, bally good! Good with knobs on! Do you know, Phipps, I lounged in bed, and the old bean positively buzzed as it was thinking out a suitable remark regarding the weather."

"I am not surprised, sir," said Phipps. "The English climate is quite sufficient to exercise any mind to a very severe extent. But will you be getting up now, sir?"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "Observe!"

He flung the bedclothes aside, and gave one leap which carried him clean over the foot of the bed. He landed with a thud, and nearly sent Phipps charging headlong into the open doorway of the wardrobe.

"Really, sir!" gasped Phipps.

"That," said Archie, "is what the chappy does in the good advertisement. Haven't you seen it, Phipps? There's a whacking great picture, showing a fairly athletic sort of cove proceeding to leap out of bed as though somebody had just shown him a fiver, or something equally enticing. That's just how I feel, Phipps—bright, brisk, and positively bubbling with extra large doses of energy!"

"So I observe, sir," said Phipps. "Would you prefer the grey suit, or the brown tweed?"

"Well, I should rather say the brown tweed, what?"

"The morning is quite sunny, sir, and you look well in grey——"

"As you remark, Phipps, the sun shines brightly," said Archie. "Grey, what? I leave it to you, Phipps. You're the laddie with the brains. Bung forth the carcase coverings, and I will proceed to robe myself. This morning, Phipps, we will surprise the natives!"

It took Archie about half an hour to dress, and to complete his toilet. But Phipps had called him rather earlier than usual, and he was considerably dismayed to find that he was one of the first fellows to go downstairs. The lobby looked quite deserted when Archie descended the staircase.

He had nearly reached the bottom when he came to an abrupt halt. He stood there with his mouth open, and there was a startled look in his eyes. He groped for his monocle, jammed it into his eye, but even with the assistance of this he still saw the object which had caused him such alarm.

A boy was standing against the notice-board, reading the various school notes. And Archie gazed at him with a kind of fascination which gradually and relentlessly turned to horror.

"Great Scott!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say, that was rather priceless! Scott, don't you know! The very chappie himself! Here, on the spot—gazing up at me like a dashed bad dream!"

"Hallo!" said the other boy, smiling. "Glad to see you looking so bright this morning. I haven't thanked you properly for what you did yesterday. And I don't know your name."

The boy against the notice board was Lawrence Scott!

But what was he doing at St. Frank's? This was the question which tore through Archie's brain like a gale. How in the name of all that was impossible did this fellow get to St. Frank's at such an early hour of the morning? His very presence, in Archie's opinion, was a disaster.

"This is absolutely a bit too much!" said Archie, as he descended the last few stairs. "You mustn't be here, laddie! I mean to say, you saw me at the old party, and it's got to be kept secret. Who are you? What are you? That is to say, why? Or, in other words, what about it? I don't want to be inquisitive, but it seems to me that there's a fairly large necessity for you to trot out a few words."

"I don't quite understand," said Scott.

"What I mean is, absolutely!" said Archie. "You, as it were, are here. Why are you here? What, old bean, is the idea?"

"I've come to the school."

"Well, dash it all, I can see that!" said Archie.

"I'm a new boy."

"My only whiskered uncle!" gasped Archie faintly. "What? Say it again—perhaps I misunderstood! I trust so, laddie—I sincerely hope that my ears gathered up the wrong impresh!"

"I'm a new fellow," said Scott. "I arrived pretty late last night, and I understand that I'm to be placed in the Remove—Ancient House side. This is the Ancient House, isn't it?"

"Absolutely!" panted Archie. "Absolutely twice! I mean to say, absolutely as many times as you like! I don't mind telling you, laddie, that this is distinctly and pricelessly putrid. Don't think that I dislike you. Absolutely not! But a new chappie! The outlook is what I might call sinister!"

"But I don't understand——"

"Gadzooks and spring onions!" shouted Archie. "You don't understand? But—but you mustn't tell the lads of the village a word about the merry party last night. Not a word! If you did, the fat would not only be in the fire, but it would positively overflow! It's up to you, darling, to seal the old lips, and to give a first-class impersonation of an oyster!"

Before Archie could say anything else, a number of juniors came tearing downstairs as though they were five minutes late for a train. It was only Handforth chasing Church and McClure. A few others came behind. But, anyway, Archie found it impossible to hold any further private chat with the new fellow.

So he hastened off like a Marathon runner to his own study. As he had expected, Phipps was there, tidying up.

"Help!" gasped Archie "Phipps, I need you!"

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked Phipps imperturbably.

"Wrong!" panted Archie. "Wrong! I mean to say, there's nothing right! The lad is here, don't you know—absolutely amongst us!"

"The lad, sir?"

"Absolutely!"

"I'm afraid, sir, I don't quite follow."

"Oh, come, Phipps—come!" said Archie. "Come, come! But don't go! I always thought you were a deucedly brainy sort of merchant. I explained everything quite clearly, and yet you bleat out that you don't understand. That's just what makes a chappie feel dashed exhausted!"

And Archie sank down upon the lounge, breathing rapidly.

"The fact is, Phipps, you'll observe a glassy kind of look in my eyes!" he went on. "It's a sign that something frightfully frightful has happened. You know all about the little affair last night, what?"

"No, sir."

"What?"

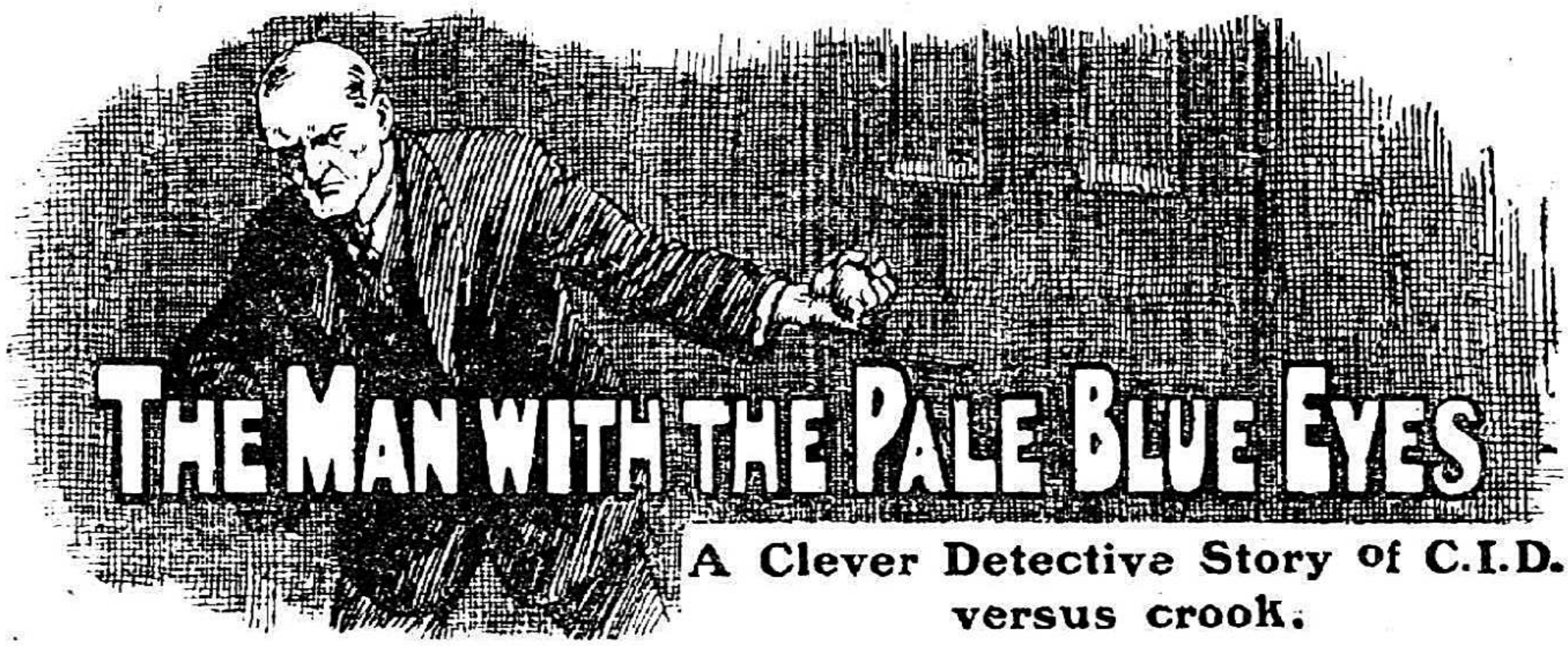
"You neglected to inform me, sir."

"By gad!" said Archie, with a start. "I mean to say, by gad! in several different tones! Of course! That is to say, of course not! I'd forgotten, Phipps; the plates of memory have done the dirty on me!"

(*Continued on page* 15.)

EVERY WEEK—TWO GRAND COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORIES

No. 2. PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." Dec. 16th 1922



A Clever Detective Story of C.I.D. versus crook.

A BLUE haze of smoke, which even the electric fans could not entirely dispel, overhung the smoking saloon of the S.S. Columbia.

With the procrastination of confirmed poker players, they had lingered at the game till well after midnight. Silvervale cut off a remark to glance at his cards. He yawned as he flung them down.

"She can call herself Eleanor de Reszke or anything else she likes on the passenger list," he declared languidly, "but she's Madeline Fulford all right. She's come on a bit in the last two years, though she always was a bit of a high stepper. Wonder if de Reszke knows anything about Crake?"

Across the table a sallow-faced man whose play had hitherto evinced no lack of nerve, threw in a full hand, aces up, in a moderate rise. No one save himself knew that he had wasted one of the best of average poker hands. His fingers, lean and tremulous, drummed mechanically on the table. For a second a pair of lustreless, frowning blue eyes rested on Silvervale's face.

"So that's the woman who was in the Crake case? It was her evidence that got the poor devil seven years, wasn't it? As I remember the newspaper reports, she was a kind of devil incarnate."

"I wouldn't go as far as that," observed Silvervale dryly, "and I'm a newspaper man myself. I didn't hear the trial, but I saw her afterwards. It never came out why she gave him away. There must have been some mighty strong motive, for he had spent thousands on her. I guess there was another woman at the bottom of it. Anyway, her reasons don't matter. She cleared an unpleasant trickster out of the way and put him where he belongs. But for her he might have been carrying on that swindling bank of his now—— I'll take three cards."

The man with the pale-blue eyes jerked his head abruptly.

"Yes, he's where he belongs," he asserted, "and she—why, she's Mrs. de Reszke and a deuced pretty woman. Hallo!"

He broke off short, staring with fascinated eyes beyond Silvervale. The journalist swerved round in his chair, to meet a livid face and furious eyes within a foot of his own.

It was Richard de Reszke himself. He had not made himself popular on shipboard—indeed, it is doubtful if he could ever have been popular in any society. A New Yorker who had made himself a millionaire in the boot trade, he was ungracious both in manner and speech. He had entered the saloon unperceived, and now his tall, usually shambling figure was unwontedly erect. His left hand—big and gnarled it was—fell with an ape-like clutch on Silvervale's shoulder.

"You scandal-mongering little ape!" he snarled, with a vicious tightening of the lips under his grey moustache. "By God, you'll admit you're a liar, or I'll shake the life out of you!"

The chair fell with a crash as he pulled the journalist forward. Men sprang to intervene between the two. Cursing and struggling de Reszke was forced back, but it took four men to do it. Suddenly his resistance relaxed.

"That's all right," he said quietly. "We'll let it go for now." A fresh access of passion shook him, and he shot out a malignant oath. "I'll make you a sorry man yet for this, Mr. Silvervale!"

The journalist had picked up the fallen chair. His face was flushed, but he answered coolly.

"I apologise," he said quietly. "I had no business to talk of your wife."

"Then in front of these gentlemen you'll admit you're a liar."

"I guess not. I am sorry I said anything, but what I did say was the truth. Mrs. de Reszke was Madeline Fulford, and she it was who gave evidence against Crake."

The little group between the men stiffened in expectation of a new outburst. But none came. The stoop had come back to de Reszke's shoulders, and he lifted one hand wearily to tug at his moustache. Then without another word he turned and shambled from the room.

There was a momentary silence, broken at last by the scratch of a match as someone lit a cigarette. The embarrassment was broken, and three or four men spoke at once.

"Look out, Silvervale," said Bowen, a young New York banker. "Lucky for you we touch Southampton to-morrow. The old man is a-gunning for you, sure. His face meant murder."

"Thanks. I'll look after my own corpse," drawled the journalist. He spoke with an ease he did not entirely feel. "I suppose the game's broken up now. I've had enough excitement for one night. I'm going to turn in."

The short remainder of the voyage, in spite of de Reszke's threat and the prophecy of Bowen, passed without incident. It was not till he was back in London that the episode was recalled to Silvervale's mind. The boat-train had reached Waterloo in the early afternoon, and at six o'clock, Silvervale, for all that his two months' vacation had yet three days to run, had been drawn into the stir and stress of Fleet Street.

The harassed news editor of the "Morning Wire" was working at speed through a basket of accumulated copy. He paused long enough to shake hands and exchange a remark or two, and then resumed his labours with redoubled ardour, for he was eager to hand over the reins to his night assistant.

He snatched irritably at a piece of tape that was handed to him by a boy, and then, adjusting his pince-nez, glanced at Silvervale.

"Here's a funny thing, Silver. Didn't you come back on the Columbia Read that."

Silvervale took the thin strip and slowly read it through:

"5-40: Mrs. Eleanor de Reszke, the wife of an American millionaire, was this afternoon found shot dead in her sitting-room at the Palatial Hotel. She had been at the hotel only an hour or two, having arrived by the Columbia from New York this morning."

Hardened journalist though he was, with a close acquaintance with many of the bizarre aspects of tragedy, Silvervale could not repress a little shudder. Here was a grim sequel for which he was in a degree responsible. He traced the sequence of events clearly in his imagination from the moment when de Reszke first heard that his wife had been the associate and betrayer of a swindler, to the ultimate gust of passion that must have led to the tragedy when it was borne upon him that the statement was the truth.

"Yes. It's—it's queer, Danvers," he said unsteadily—"deuced queer." Then with a realisation that the news editor was regarding him with curiosity: "I'm sorry, old man; you mustn't ask me to handle the story. You'd better put Blackwood on it. It should be a good yarn, but I'm rather mixed up in it. I may be called as a witness."

Few things are calculated to startle the news editor of a great morning paper, but this time Silvervale had certainly succeeded. To tell the truth, the young man was astonished at his own scruples. He made haste to escape before he could be questioned.

Out in Fleet Street he hailed a taxi and was driven straight to the Palatial Hotel. A couple of men were in the big hall, smilingly parrying the questions of half a dozen journalists. One of them shook his head as Silvervale pushed his way to the front.

"Good Lord! Here's another vulture. It's no good, Mr. Silverdale. We've just been telling your friends here that we don't know anything. The doctors have not finished their examination yet."

"But it looks like suicide, Mr. Forester," interposed one of the crowd. "You've found a pistol."

A knowing smile extended on Detective-Inspector Forrester's genial countenance.

"That won't work, boys," he remonstrated, with a reproving shake of his head. "You don't draw me."

Silvervale managed to get the detective aside.

"You must give me five minutes," he whispered hastily. "I know who killed her. I came over in the same boat."

Forrester thrust his hands deep in his trousers' pockets. His brow puckered a little, and he studied the journalist's face thoughtfully. For all his casual, unworried air, his instinct rather than anything definite in the preliminary investigations had warned him that the case was likely to prove a difficult one. A detective—the real detective—is quite willing to take short cuts in his work as any other business man.

"The deuce you do," he said. "Come, let's get out of this. Half a moment, Roker."

His assistant disengaged himself from the other newspaper men, and Forrester led the way to the lift. At the third floor they emerged. Very quietly the door of the lift closed behind them, and half-unconsciously Silvervale found himself tiptoeing along the corridor, although in any event the soft carpet would have deadened all sound. A man standing stiffly against a white door flung it open as they approached. Within, a couple of men were bending over something on a couch, and two more were busy near the window overlooking the river. No one looked up. Forrester passed straight through to another and smaller room, and fitted his burly form to a basket armchair. He waved Silvervale to another one.

"And now fire away, sonny," he said.

Concisely, in quick, succinct sentences, Silvervale told his story. As he concluded. Forrester drew a worn briar pipe from his pocket and packed it with a meditative forefinger.

"Are you writing anything about this?"

"Not a word. I know I may be wanted as a witness."

"That's true." The inspector puffed contemplatively for a moment. "Then there's this I don't mind telling you: That chap downstairs was right. There was a pistol—a five-chambered revolver—found clutched in that woman's hand. But de Reszke is missing. He never came with her to the hotel."

"Then you think it is suicide after all?"

The detective leaned forward and levelled a heavy forefinger at his questioner.

"You've earned a right to know something of this business, Mr. Silvervale. It's no suicide. The body was discovered by the maid just after five o'clock. No one heard a shot, but that's nothing—these walls are pretty well sound-proof. The dead woman was lying on a couch with the revolver in her hand—so the girl's story runs. She thought her mistress was asleep, and it was only when she touched her and the weapon fell to the floor that she discovered she was dead. She was shot through the left eye."

"I see. You mean a woman wouldn't kill herself that way. She'd poison or drown herself—some bloodless death."

"There is something in that, but it proves little by itself. But there are not many people who'd shoot themselves deliberately in the eye. It's curious, but there—— But to my mind the conclusive thing is the pistol. Any student of medical jurisprudence will tell you that usually it needs considerable force to relax the grip of a corpse from anything it is clutching at the moment of death. No, Mr. Silvervale, this is a carefully calculated murder, if ever there was one. And I think your information will help us to fix the man. Roker"—he addressed his companion—"you might get hold of the maid again. Get a full description of de Reszke, and there's bound to be a photograph somewhere. Take 'em along to the Yard and have 'em circulated. We merely want to question him, mind. Now, Mr. Silvervale, we'll see what the doctors say."

The two doctors, the police divisional surgeon and the medical man who had been first called on the discovery of the murder, had finished their examination as Forrester passed into the next room. He spoke a few words in an undertone to the surgeon, who nodded assentingly.

The two men by the window were still busy. Now Silvervale had an opportunity to see what occupied them. They were busy with scale plans of the room whereon were shown the relative positions of everything in the room, marked out even to inches. Photographs, he surmised, must already have been taken.

Forrester seemed to have forgotten Silvervale's existence. As soon as the doctors had gone, the inspector had extracted a small bottle of black powder from his pocket and sprinkled it delicately over the open pages of a book resting on a table a couple of yards from the couch. Presently he blew the stuff away. The finger-prints had developed in relief on the white margin.

"There's a blotting-pad over there on the writing-table, Mr. Silvervale," he said; "would you mind helping me for a moment?"

Forrester was cool and business-like, yet it was very gently that he lifted the dead, white hands and impressed the finger-tips on a sheet of paper on top of the pad. Silently he compared the impressions with those on the book.

"I'm only an amateur at this finger-print game," he said at last. "Grant ought to have been here. See if you make these prints agree, Mr. Silvervale."

Silvervale carried the book to the window and bent his brows over it. He found it slow work, but at last he raised his head.

"These are her thumb-prints on the outer margin," he said. "The one at the bottom of the book is not hers."

"That's how I make it. Now we can get a fair theory of how the thing was done: Mrs. de Reszke was on the couch reading. The murderer entered softly from the corridor, closing the door behind him. She looked up and placed the book beside her. He must have fired point-blank. Then to work out his idea of suicide he placed the pistol in her hand, and, picking up the book, put it on the table. Here's where we start

from—a piece of indisputable proof when we catch the murderer."

A little contempt at the apparent deliberation of the detective—at the finesse wasted on what seemed an obvious case—had come to Silvervale's mind. He hazarded a suggestion, Forrester grinned.

"I'll bet a dollar I know what you're thinking. I'm wasting my time meddling with details while the murderer's escaping. Do you know I had five men here besides these"—he nodded towards the draughtsmen—"questioning every one who might know anything about the case? Mrs. de Reszke has received no one; no one resembling her husband has been seen in the hotel. Do you know that there is not one railway station in London, not one hotel that is not even now being searched for a trace of de Reszke? We are not so slow as our critics think. If de Reszke did this murder he won't get away, you can take it from me. There's plenty of people trying to catch him—I've seen to that."

He checked himself suddenly as if he realised that he had for a while lost his wonted imperturbability.

"I thought you knew better than to run away with the delusion that all we've got to do is to arrest a man we've fixed our suspicions on. In point of fact it is often more difficult to get material evidence of a moral certainty than to start without facts at all."

He moved heavily to the door.

"I'm going on to the Yard," he said. "Care to come?"

As they turned under the big wrought-iron arch that spans the entrance to New Scotland Yard, Silverdale noted that they avoided the little back door that leads to the Criminal Investigation Department, and went up by the broad, main entrance to those rooms on one of the topmost floors devoted to the Finger-print Department.

Grant, the chief of the department, a black-moustached giant with lined forehead and shrewd, penetrating eyes, was seated at a low table pushing a magnifying-glass across a sheet of paper. Forrester had clapped him heavily on the shoulder, and he wheeled around frowningly.

"It's you, is it?" he growled. "One of these days you'll play that trick too often, my lad. Of course, you come when everyone's gone home. What do you want?"

"Don't be peevish, old man," smiled Forrester, and seated himself on the table. "You'll be sorry you weren't more kind to me when the daisies are growing over my grave."

"Fungi, you mean," retorted Grant acidly. "What's the bother?"

"This." Forrester produced the book he had found at the hotel and the scrap of paper on which he had taken the murdered woman's finger-prints. "It's the Palatial Hotel business. The prints on the paper are those of Mrs. de Reszke. They agree with those on the sides of the book. The one at the bottom of the book is that of the murderer."

"H'm!" Grant glanced at the prints and gave a corroborative nod. "You'll want photographs of these, I suppose?"

"Yes—as soon as I can get them. I suppose you'll have to have a search to make sure that the other print isn't on the records. It's unlikely, though."

"That will have to wait. I'll have the photographs taken and sent down to you as soon as they're ready. Now go away."

He dismissed them abruptly, and they could hear his deep voice thundering into the telephone receiver as they made their exit. He was ordering a wire to be sent recalling one of the staff photographers. As in any other big business firm, the ordinary staff of Scotland Yard goes off duty at six.

Downstairs in his own room, Forrester found three or four subordinates and a handful of reports and messages awaiting him. His leisurely manner dropped from him. He became brisk, official, brusque. A shorthand clerk with open notebook was waiting, and to him the chief inspector poured out the bulk of his instructions to be forwarded by telegraph or telephone. Silvervale realised how vast and complex were the resources that were being handled to solve the mystery.

Forrester dismissed the clerk at last and turned abruptly on the waiting men. There was no waste of words on either side. As the final subordinate left the room, Forrester yawned and stretched himself wearily.

"That's all right," he said. "I guess we can't do anything more for an hour or two. It may interest you, Mr. Silvervale, to know that de Reszke has booked a passage back to New York in his own name, by the boat that leaves Liverpool the day after to-morrow. He called at the White Star offices at five o'clock. It's a bluff, I guess, and pretty obvious at that. He thinks we'll concentrate attention on that scene while he slips some other way. Yes—what is it?"

Someone had torn the door open hurriedly. A young man, tall and sparse, whispered a few words into Forrester's ear. The chief inspector sat up as though galvanised. His hand searched for the telephone.

"Get him put through here. You have a taxi-cab ready, Bolt. You may have to come with me." The young man vanished, and Forrester spoke into the telephone. "Hello, that you, Gould? Yes, this is Forrester. At the Metz, you say. How many men have you? All right, I'll be along straight away. Good-bye!"

"Located him?" ventured Silvervale.

"Yes." Forrester's brow was puckered. "He's at the Metz under his own name. Hanged if I can make it out. He's either mad or he's got the nerve of the very devil. Come on!"

Bolt was awaiting them in a taxi-cab outside, which whirled them swiftly away as they took their seats. They drew up in Piccadilly, a hundred yards or so from the severe arches of the great hotel, and walked

forward till they were met by a bronzed, well-dressed man of middle age who nodded affably and fell into step with them.

"Well, Gould?" queried Forrester.

"Everything serene, sir. He's gone in to dinner. There's two of our men dining at the next table."

"That's all right, then. I'll see the manager and fix things."

A commissionaire pushed back the revolving door and the four walked in.

. . . . .

Five minutes later a waiter crossed the

to have occasion to leave the room by the same exit.

Forrester and his companions were waiting in a small room which had been placed at their disposal. As de Reszke was ushered in, the first face he caught sight of was that of Silvervale. His face lowered and he paused on the threshold.

Quickly and deftly Gould shouldered by him as though to pass out. De Reszke gave way, and the detective closed the door and leaned nonchalantly against it.

"Mr. de Reszke," said Forrester quickly,

The next Silvervale saw was a pyjama-clad man being held on the bed, with Forrester and a colleague at either wrist.

softly lighted dining-room with a card. It did not contain Forrester's name—nor indeed that of any one he knew. Nor did de Reszke seem to know it, for he frowned as the waiter presented it to him.

"I don't know any Mr. Grahame Johnston," he said. "This isn't for me."

The waiter was deferential.

"The gentleman said, 'Mr. John de Reszke,' sir. He says it's very urgent, and wants you to spare him a minute in the smoking-room."

The millionaire slowly divested himself of the serviette, and, rising, shambled after the waiter. Curiously enough, one of the diners at the adjoining table seemed simultaneously

"I am a police officer. Your wife has been murdered since her arrival in London. If you wish to make any statement as to your movements you may do so, though I must warn you that unless you can definitely convince me that you had no hand in the murder I may have to arrest you."

Blankly, uncomprehendingly, de Reszke stared in front of him as though he had not heard. His lean fingers clenched and unclenched, and his eyes had become dull. The police officers, although neither their attitudes nor their faces showed it, had braced themselves to overcome him at the first hint of resistance. But this man had no appearance of being the madman that Silvervale

had pictured. The life seemed to have gone out of him.

"You heard me?" questioned Forrester sharply.

"I heard you," said de Reszke dully. "You say Nell's dead—no, not Nell—her name's not Eleanor; it's Madeline—Madeline Fulford; that's it—she's been murdered? I heard—— Ha; ha, ha!" He broke into shrill, uncanny laughter, and then, pressing both hands to his temples, pitched forward heavily to the floor.

"A doctor, some one," ordered Forrester, and Gould vanished. Unconscious, de Reszke was lifted to a couch by the other three. Forrester shrugged his shoulders. "Looks like a bad job," he muttered.

The doctor summoned by Gould confirmed the suspicion.

"It's a paralytic stroke," he explained. "I doubt if he'll ever get over it. You gentlemen are friends of his?"

Forrester inserted a couple of fingers in his waistcoat pocket.

"Not exactly," he said. "We are police officials. There is my card."

"Ah!" The doctor's eyebrows jerked up. "Well, it's no business of mine. Of course, it's obvious that he's had a shock."

"Of course," agreed Forrester.

The inevitable search of de Reszke's room and baggage was conducted with thoroughness, but it yielded nothing that seemed of importance to the investigation. Forrester voiced his misgivings as he walked back to Scotland Yard with Silvervale.

"This business is running too smoothly. I don't like it. I feel there's a smack in the eye coming from somewhere. There's several little odds and ends to be cleared up. It would have been easier if he hadn't had that stroke."

"There's the finger-print on the book," ventured Silvervale.

"Yes. I took de Reszke's and sent Bolt with them to the Yard. Grant will have fixed all that up by the time we get there."

Grant was waiting for them when they arrived. On his table he had spread out a series of enlargements of finger-prints. He shook his head gravely at Forrester.

"It's no good, old chap," he said. "These things you sent me up by Bolt don't tally."

Forrester, suddenly arrested with his overcoat half off, felt his jaw drop. For a second he frowned upon Grant. Then he writhed himself free of the garment.

"Don't tally?" he repeated. "You're joking, Grant. They must!"

"Well, they don't!"

The chief detective-inspector brought his fist down with a bang on the table. He laid no claim to the superhuman intelligence of the story-book detectives. Therefore he was considerably annoyed at this abrupt discovery of a vital flaw in the chain of evidence that connected de Reszke with the murder. He had no personal feeling in the matter. It was merely the discontent of the business man at finding that work had been wasted. He brought his fist down with a bang on the table.

"It beats me!" he declared viciously. "It fairly beats me. Who else could have done it? Who else had a motive?"

Grant stole out of the room, and Forrester rested his elbows on the table and his chin in his cupped hands, striving to recall some avenue of investigation that he might have overlooked.

Suddenly his face lightened, and he jerked himself from his chair with a swift movement of his whole body. Ignoring the journalist, he rushed from the room. It was long before he returned. When he did he was accompanied by Grant.

"Tell me"—he addressed Silvervale—"did you ever see Crake?"

The other shook his head.

"I was out of town when he was tried. It was after the case was over that I interviewed Madeline Fulford."

Grant was frowning.

"If I hadn't seen the records, Forrester, I'd say you were mad. It's the most unheard-of thing——"

"We'll see whether I'm mad or not," said the chief inspector grimly. He placed a photograph the official size and the full-face, before Silvervale. "Did you ever see that man before?"

"No."

"Nor that?" The second photograph was a studio portrait with the name of a Strand firm at the bottom. It awoke some vague reminiscence in Silvervale. He held it closer to the light.

"Wait a minute." Grant placed a sheet of paper over the bottom of the face, hiding the moustache and chin. Recollection came to Silvervale in a flash. It was Norman, the man with the lustreless blue eyes, who had commented on Madeline Fulford in the smoking-room of the Columbia.

He explained.

"The hair's done differently," he added, "but I can recognise the upper part of the face, though he's older now than when this photograph was taken. Do you think he's mixed up in this?"

"May be," answered Forrester enigmatically. "I'll have a man motor down to the prison now"—he was speaking to Grant—"and we'll go on to the Palatial. If I'm any judge he'll still be there. His room was No. 472, almost opposite her suite. I had him questioned, of course, but I never dreamed——"

Silvervale lit a cigarette resignedly.

"It's all Greek to me," he complained. "Still, I have no right to ask questions."

"You'll understand in an hour or two," said Forrester. "It would take too long to explain now. Come on, and you'll see what you'll see."

It was back to the Palatial Hotel that he took the journalist and a couple of subordinates. There he remained closeted with the manager for five minutes. He reappeared with that functionary, a master-key dangling on his finger.

"Our bird's at home," he said. "Gone to roost, probably."

Nothing more was said till they reached the third floor. The manager led the way until they came opposite a door facing the suite which Mrs. de Reszke had occupied.

"This is No. 472," he said, in a low voice. "Shall I knock?"

Forrester made a gesture of dissent, and his hand fell coaxingly on the door. He made no sound as he pushed a key in the lock and turned it. With a sharp push the door flew open, and a quick, angry question was succeeded by confused sounds of a struggle. The next Silvervale saw was a pyjama-clad man being held on the bed with Forrester and a colleague at either wrist.

"I don't know who you are or the meaning of this outrage," he protested angrily. "Some one will have to pay for this."

"Hold on to his hand a minute, Roker," said Forrester, and one of the other detectives seized the wrist he had been grasping.

The chief inspector thrust his hand beneath the pillow and produced a small automatic pistol.

"I just grabbed him in time," he said a little breathlessly.

"I want to know——" persisted the prisoner.

Forrester turned sternly upon him.

"I am a police officer," he said. "I am arresting you as an escaped convict, one John Crake."

Something approaching a gleam of interest shot into Crake's lifeless eyes.

"So that's it, is it?" he said quietly. "I wonder how you got on to it. According to official reckoning, John Crake has still got five years to serve."

It was impossible to doubt that the man knew the real reason of his arrest, but his manner gave no hint of perturbation. He smiled sardonically and a shiver swept over his slight frame.

"I suppose you aren't going to take me to the police-station in my sleeping suit? Will these gentlemen allow me to dress?"

At an order from Forrester his clothes were searched and passed to him. He was adjusting his tie with a steady hand when he next shot out a question:

"You have something else to say?"

"That can wait," returned Forrester. "Remember that anything you say——"

"I know," interrupted Crake; "you're bound to give that warning. What's the good of all this finesse. Mr. er—Forrester—thank you? I know you want me for murder, and if you want me to say anything you'd better listen now while I'm in the mood. First of all, though, how did you get on to me?"

"There was a finger-print, and we had yours in the records when you were on trial for the other thing."

Crake's thin lips curved into a sneer.

"It was just the off-chance of your comparing the prints that did it," he said.

Forrester made a disclaiming gesture.

"The records would have been searched sooner or later in any event, and we'd have hit on you. It would have taken a day or two, though, and you'd have got a start."

"And you don't know how it is I'm not still in prison, and no one knows I've been at large for a year?"

"No, not altogether," admitted the chief detective carelessly. "There's been a change of identity and big bribery somewhere. That's for the prison people to explain." He was careful not to ask any questions.

"Well," said Crake slowly, "I can help you out on that. This is what happened: When that Jezebel there"—he jerked his thumb towards the door—"sold me at the trial, I swore I'd get quits with her, if I swung for it." He spat out the words in an even voice that made them ten times more venomous. "Mark you, in the time that I knew her she had bled me for thousands. Then when the other man turned up, she had to get rid of me—and the Old Bailey was the method she chose. I don't know if any of you gentlemen know what hate is—real, white-hot, flaming hatred that eats a man's vitals out"—he choked a little—"but never mind that. My first idea was to work an escape, for I knew my sentence would not be a light one. I had plenty of money—never mind how I kept it out of other people's clutches."

Crake then made a full confession, describing how he had escaped from prison by exchanging sentences and finger-print identities with a fellow convict for a large sum of money and how he eventually tracked the woman Madeline Fulford and carried out his vengeance.

The scratching of a pencil as a detective who had followed Crake's statement in shorthand put the finishing touches to his notes was the only sound for a few seconds after Crake had finished. The manager fished in his pocket and produced a letter which he handed to Forrester.

"I forgot to give you this," he said. "It was left in the office early this evening. It is addressed to Mrs. de Reszke."

Forrester broke the seal and read the letter, silently at first and then aloud:

"Madam,—You have no moral claim upon me since your admission yesterday that you are the infamous woman formerly known as Madeline Fulford. I then told you as plainly as possible that you need look to me no longer for support. I have now, however, thought the question over, and will allow you three thousand dollars per annum, paid quarterly, on condition, first, that you assume some other name than mine; secondly, that you make no attempt in future to molest or communicate with me either in person or by letter.

"I shall instruct my lawyer that the foregoing payment is to be made to you. I sail for New York in two days' time.

"R. DE RESZKE."

NEXT WEEK'S STORY:—
THE MAKER OF DIAMONDS!

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

THE CASE OF

THE AFGHAN RING

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE CELEBRATED DETECTIVE, CARFAX BAINES.

"MR. RUTHVEN CORRIE, of Ganges House, Essex, and Burlington Street, W., died at the latter place last night under peculiar and suspicious circumstances. According to the servant's story, Mr. Corrie was starting for his club about eight o'clock, and opened the front door just as a man was in the act of ringing the bell. A few words passed between the two, and then Mr. Corrie turned back and led his visitor to the smoking-room on the first floor. The light being dim in the hall, and the servant at the far end of it, he had but a vague glimpse of the man, and cannot give the slightest description of him. He heard nothing until nine o'clock, when the sound of the street door closing suggested to him that his master and the visitor had left the house together. Half an hour later, on going upstairs, he saw a bright light burning in the smoking-room, the door of which was partly open. He looked in, discovered his master lying on the floor, and found him to be quite dead. Apparently nothing in the room had been disturbed. A doctor was summoned at once, and he stated the cause of death to be apoplexy, probably induced by some strong emotion or shock. The deceased gentleman spent the greater part of his life in India, at first in the Civil Service, and then in the management of his extensive tea and indigo plantations, out of which he made a handsome fortune. He returned to England ten years ago, and resided mainly at his house in Burlington Street. He was a collector of curios and antique rings, and had the reputation of being eccentric. His age was fifty-eight, and a younger brother is said to be the sole heir."

The above paragraph, or the substance of it, appeared in the noon editions of a number of London papers one October day, in the year 19—— Nothing of importance—save the fact that the mysterious visitor could not be found — subsequently transpired. Apoplexy was proved to have killed Mr. Ruthven Corrie, but there was every reason to believe that the fatal stroke was due to something which occurred between himself and his unknown caller. No clue to the latter's identity was furnished by Mr. James Corrie, aged forty-five, who was presumably the sole heir. He stated at the inquest that he was married, and lived at Hampstead. He admitted that he had quarrelled with his brother five years before, that he had not seen him to speak to for three years, and that the deceased had allowed him four hundred pounds annually. On the whole this witness made a favourable impression, and it was drawn from him that the quarrel was caused by his brother, who was a woman-hater, forbidding him to marry.

The smoking-room at the house in Burlington Street was more than its name implied; it was a large and well-furnished apartment, and contained hundreds of books, several glass-covered cabinets filled with antique rings, and the late Mr. Ruthven Corrie's private desk. Here, a couple of days after the funeral, four persons came together. One was Mr. Tapford, Ruthven Corrie's solicitor, and another was a distant cousin of the deceased; his name was Arthur Lascelles, and he was a dissipated and penurious young man about town. The other two were James Corrie and Carfax Baines, who had been intimately acquainted for some years; why the detective had been asked to be present on this occasion will shortly appear.

"As no will can be found, either here or at Ganges House," the solicitor said coldly, "and as none is in my possession, the presumption is that my late client neglected to make one. I think I may congratulate you, Mr. Corrie, on coming into a fortune of considerably over a hundred thousand pounds."

"My relative must have made a will!" Arthur Lascelles cried sharply. "Did he never intimate as much to you, Mr. Tapford?"

"Not in plain words," the solicitor replied; "but he certainly spoke to me of his intention to endow several charities, and to bequeath his collection of rings to the South Kensington Museum. However, there is no will to be found."

"My brother's wishes shall be sacred to me," said James Corrie. His face was marked with grief, and he flushed as he spoke. He seemed ill at ease, and rising, he paced slowly across the room. He stopped before one of the cabinets, and his manner

changed as he looked through the glass. Then he lifted the lid and examined it for a moment.

"Here is a discovery!" he cried, bringing the rest around him. "A valuable ring is missing. Look! It's place is empty! The lock as been broken and the lid forced. And it was done within a few days—the night of my brother's death."

"Yes, about that time, I should say," assented Baines, after scrutinising the tell-tale marks. "This is interesting. I don't suppose any person could have tampered with the cabinet since. What sort of a ring is missing?"

"An Afghan ring, of curious workmanship," replied James Corrie. "It came from Cabul. Afghan! Afghan!"—he repeated the word dreamily.

"You are sure it was in the cabinet that night?" demanded the solicitor.

"Yes, it was always there—in that empty place. Nothing else is missing. Ruthven valued it highly, and would not have parted with it for any consideration. It was undoubtedly stolen by his mysterious caller."

"You seem to know a great deal about it," said the solicitor, "and you have a good memory for jewels. You have not been in this room, I believe, for three years?"

"It is quite that since I kept an appointment here with my brother."

"Three days would be more like it!" Arthur Lascelles cried sneeringly. "No, Tapford, I'm going to speak out. You yourself, James Corrie, were Ruthven's mysterious visitor. I believe you angered him, causing his death, and then you took his keys, opened the desk, and stole the will that cut you out of a——"

"Liar!" thundered the accused man.

A scene followed, and but for timely intervention the cousins would have come to blows. Lascelles would neither retract nor apologise, and finally, breathing threats until the door closed on him, he was led away by the solicitor.

"I feared something of this sort," said James Corrie, as soon as he could master his feelings and speak calmly. "The scoundrel expected to profit by my brother's death, and in his rage he will do me all the harm he can. I dread the scandal, Baines. Think of it! That I should be accused of coming here that night and stealing poor Ruthven's will while he lay dead! But you, my old friend, know how baseless this foul charge is. You will help me to refute it. On my honour, I believe my brother neglected to make a will."

"And I agree with you. Unless——"

"Well?"

"Unless the unknown one carried off with him both the ring and the will."

"He certainly took the ring. As for the will—if one existed—what motive could anybody have for stealing it? Baines, find this man for me. That is my only salvation. Prove that it was not I who visited Ruthven, otherwise Arthur Lascelles will blast my life, my good name. And Tapford, he, too, thinks me guilty."

"Let them think what they like," the detective answered heartily. "I am convinced of your innocence, my dear Corrie, and if it is in my power to clear you I will do so."

The little word "if" carried full weight with Carfax Baines, and in this case it justified its use. A month slipped by—two months. The identity of the mysterious stranger, his business with Ruthven Corrie that October night, were things as remote from discovery as ever. Vain were advertisements—vain were all other efforts to find him. James Corrie had taken possession of his brother's estate, but riches brought him no happiness. He and his wife were socially ostracised. The finger of suspicion was pointed at him, and when he tried to enter a couple of good clubs he was promptly blackballed. So much for the malicious, revengeful tongue of Arthur Lascelles. He would have gone much farther had there been any grounds for a legal action.

The winter closed in, and December came. One cold morning, when Baines picked up the paper after breakfast, his attention was arrested by the following paragraph, to which considerable prominence was given:

"Prince Azam Corrie Khan, an Afghan, is the latest distinguished arrival in London. He claims to be the legitimate son and heir of the late Mr. Ruthven Corrie, and proposes to take immediate steps to secure his rights; those who are familiar with Mr. Corrie's past will not hastily condemn the claimant."

Baines did not know if James Corrie was at Ganges House or in town, but he at once drove to Burlington Street at a venture. He found his friend there, examining a heap of documents with an anxious and haggard face.

"You have seen the paper?" Corrie cried.

"Yes."

"So have I. That is what started me at this task a second time. I thought I might have missed—— But sit down, Baines. The scandal must come out now—it can't be hushed up any longer. I will tell you the whole story."

"You had better have done so before," the detective said drily.

He lit his pipe, mixed a whisky and soda, and listened for half an hour to as strange a narrative as he had ever heard. He pondered it over a second pipe, and asked many questions.

"I believe I have the hang of the thing," he said finally. "About these papers—you are certain they were in your brother's possession?"

"Yes, in this desk. I missed them long ago, but did not think much of it at the time. It's a bad business. Here is a letter I got this morning from the scoundrel's solicitor."

Baines read it.

"A bold bluff—a daring fraud," he said. "The theft of the papers proves that. And Wardlaw is at the bottom of it. I don't

know what their evidence is, but we must upset it."

"How?"

"There is only one sure way. I will go to Peshawar."

"By Jove!" gasped Corrie. "Why, it's half-way round the world! But you are right, Baines. A thousand pounds above expenses if you win. And there is more than my fortune at stake—you will lift this black cloud of calumny and clear my name for good and all. Don't you believe that?"

"Yes; the two are certainly woven together."

. . . . . .

Many thousands of miles across the globe, far off at the top of the Punjab, stands the border city of the Indian Empire, known equally well as the gateway to the Khyber Pass. To the south of it, law and order reign in the land of the Sikhs; to the north and the west, where rugged roads lead to distant Cabul, incipient anarchy and warfare lurk in the mountain fastnesses of Afghanistan. Peshawar! It is a name to conjure with, a name suggestive of many a tale of blended romance and savagery, and Carfax Baines felt a strange thrill when he entered the old, walled town one nconday, after weeks of travel by land and sea.

This was India, and yet not India. For hours he wandered about, feasting his eyes on the fascinating and uncommon sights. Traders shrieked their wares, and the air was heavy with peculiar smells. Dark-skinned men of a dozen races jostled one another in the narrow streets, which were choked with strings of horses and camels, along which struggled caravans from beyond the Khyber. Here one met a British soldier or a Sikh policeman; then a fanatical Afghan armed to the teeth, or a group of wild-eyed Beloochi. In the bazaars was a continual clamour, a pounding and hammering in many keys as the artisans worked deftly at their benches, fashioning wood and leather, gold and silver and steel, into things curious and useful.

By the close of the day Baines had not begun to exhaust the delights of Peshawar, but he was footsore and tired, and, moreover he must needs remember that he was not a pleasure-trip. Evening found him resting in a lodging that an English merchant had procured for him—a little room over an armourer's shop in the native quarter, for it was here that his work would lie. The day's labour was finished, and a hum of voices rose from the crowds that filled the streets. As the shadows of the night deepened lights and torches began to flash. The old, grey-bearded armourer, following the example of his neighbours, lounged in his doorway and smoked a curved pipe.

Another pipe glowed redly at the lattice window overhead, where the English detective sat gazing at the passing throng, and wondering how he was to accomplish the formidable task that he had set himself. Somewhere around him were doubtless natives who knew the secret that he wanted. He must search them out with the aid of an interpreter, find the right ones, and have their evidence taken in proper form by a magistrate.

"I will begin in earnest to-morrow," he resolved. "There is no time to waste. But success is far from certain, since after all these years the witnesses may be dead or scattered. Norman Wardlaw is possibly in Peshawar, though Captain Dare said he had heard nothing of him for a long time. If I could find the scamp, I think my mission would speedily come to a satisfactory end. But he is more likely to be in London."

Half an hour slipped by, and Baines was filling his third pipe, when he heard at a distance a shrill outcry that rose distinctly above the other sounds of the night. He thrust his head from the window and listened. It was a tumult now, a roar of angry, howling voices, and it was coming his way. More curious than alarmed, though he knew that a native riot in Peshawar was something to be dreaded, he hurried down to the lower floor. The excitement was spreading to the people in the street, the greater part of whom seemed bent on seeking shelter or protecting their merchandise from possible looting. Nearer and louder rang the hoarse clamour, and the report of a couple of fire-arms blended with the din.

"Sahib, this is no place for you," said the Hindoo armourer, who spoke English fluently. "Hide thyself quickly."

"But what is the matter, Gunga Das?" Baines questioned.

"I know not, sahib. In Peshawar a riot springs from nothing."

The shutters of the shop, which were let down in daytime to form a booth, had already been drawn up. The old man hastened to secure them on the inner side, crying to the detective to follow him and close the door. But Baines hesitated, wishing to learn the cause of the disturbance, and half a minute later he saw a man turn the corner of a street a few yards to the left. A light from a window, shining on him for a second, revealed a face that had once been white, a costume half native, half European. The fugitive came on, staggering as he ran. He would have passed Baines, but suddenly catching sight of him, he turned and threw himself at his feet.

"You are an Englishman!" he gasped. "For the love of Heaven save me—protect a fellow-countryman!"

There was no time to hesitate, to think of consequences, for now the foremost of the howling band of pursuing natives had turned the corner, and in another moment they would be upon the two. The detective's plucky heart instantly responded to the appeal. He dragged the exhausted man over the threshold, slammed the door shut, and dropped the heavy bar into its place. Gunga Das had secured the window, and the rays of a brass lamp showed the anger and terror on his face when he realised what his lodger had done.

"Sahib, you have ruined me!" he cried. "May you burn for ever!" And with that,

uttering dreadful threats and imprecations, he darted through a door at the rear and made it fast on the inner side.

The mob, having seen their victim's escape, were now clamouring for admittance, choking the narrow street from house to house, and filling the air with frenzied cries. Baines glanced about the shop, with its store of arms and armour. He had a loaded pistol for his own protection, and he bade his companion choose a weapon from the wall.

"God bless you!" the man replied hoarsely, as he selected a long sword. "You are a true friend!"

of rage, they pounded on the door and the shutters, and occasionally a bullet tore through the woodwork. Then having found some heavy missile, they attacked the door, raining blow after blow against it. Baines tried the rear exit, thinking they might escape from the shop as the Hindoo had done, but that hope was elusive, so firmly had Gunga Das barred his way of retreat.

"It's no use!" he shouted to his companion. "We must face the worst. Watch sharp; here they come."

The noise was frightful. The timbers of the door cracked and bent, and suddenly it

Yells of agony arose, and a long Afghan rifle was discharged into the room.

"But what have you done?" Baines demanded curtly.

"A scoundrel of an Afghan struck me, and I knocked him down," the fugitive answered. "It was a mad act, and it set the pack at my heels."

"Ay, madman, indeed! And it is likely to cost us both our lives. But we will try to hold out till help comes, if there is any chance of that."

Further conversation was impossible, so deafening was the tumult raised by the infuriated natives. With bloodcurdling cries

burst at one side and flew open a couple of feet. Swarthy faces appeared, and Baines fired at once. Yells of agony rose, and a long Afghan rifle was discharged into the room. Through the curling smoke the detective saw his companion fall, and he realised that his turn must come quickly. He emptied his revolver, which seemed to hold the mob in check for an instant. Then when certain death confronted him, an unexpected thing happened. The triumphant clamour in the street changed to cries of alarm. A rifle volley spluttered above the

tumult, the armourer's doorway was suddenly deserted, and the now panic-stricken natives were in full retreat.

When Captain Dare forced his way into the shop, followed by half a dozen of his force of Sikhs, he found Baines bending over the man who had caused the riot. The latter was shot in the chest, and his bearded face was white with pain; but he was perfectly conscious.

"I'm done for," he said to the detective. "This will finish me. I'm glad you're safe, anyway. I lied to you, sir. I was trying to rob a native goldsmith, and he caught me at it. I needed money——"

"By heavens," interrupted Baines, staring into the man's features intently, "you are Norman Wardlaw!"

"That's who it is," assented Captain Dare.

"Yes, I am Norman Wardlaw," said the man. "You seem to know me."

"I came to Peshawar to find you," declared Baines.

"If I can do anything for you, sir——"

"You can. Repent before it is too late. I know all about Prince Azam Khan and the plot to steal Ruthven Corrie's estate. Do not die with that crime on your soul."

The man was silent for a moment.

"I'll tell the truth," he said. "You shall have a full confession."

Half an hour later his story was told, set down on paper, and signed by himself and two witnesses. Medical assistance was procured, but it was of no avail; ex-Captain Norman Wardlaw sank rapidly, and shortly after midnight he died. A few hours later, with the precious document in his possession, Baines had left Pashawar.

The curtain rises on the last scene in faraway London, where Prince Azam Khan was backed to win by the general public, so well had his case been put forward by the Press. It was a day in March when Baines, accompanied by James Corrie and a Scotland Yard detective, went to a certain West End hotel and were shown to the prince's apartments, where they found him with his solicitor and a reporter. At sight of the warrant the impostor's dusky face turned the colour of grey chalk, and when the charge was read to him and he was formally arrested, he dropped limply into a chair and had to be braced up with brandy.

"Under the circumstances," said Baines, glancing at the reporter, "and for the sake of Mr. James Corrie, I will briefly state the facts we are prepared to prove. As the public already know, through the medium of the Press, Mr. Ruthven Corrie—whom we may call eccentric from early life—twenty-five years ago married a beautiful Afghan girl of presumably royal blood, while he was in the Civil Service on the Indian frontier. A year afterwards, when he had been transferred to the North-West Provinces, a son was born; and six years later the wife, tempted astray by an English officer, Captain Norman Wardlaw, fled with him to Peshawar. She took with her the child, and the certificates of his birth and her marriage. Mr. Corrie did not pursue the fugitives. He was moved farther south, left the Service on inheriting a legacy from a relative, and invested in tea and indigo plantations, which turned out so well that he was a rich man when he came home to England ten years ago. Meanwhile, several years after his wife's flight, he received a letter from her informing him that his son was dead, and within a month or two he heard that his wife also was dead. He sent a native agent to Peshawar to investigate, and the man made a written report confirming both facts. Mr. Corrie kept the letter and the report, realising their value. As for Captain Wardlaw, the depths of degradation to which he fell need not be described. Suffice it to say that for eighteen years he has been that most pitiable of objects—an Englishman shunned by his own kind.

"And now we come to the present time—to the history of the plot. Within the past year the man Wardlaw drifted to London. He learned of Ruthven Corrie's wealth and saw an opportunity to transfer some of it to his own pocket; he had preserved the certificates that his paramour took with her when she fled. Corrie's wife and child had actually been dead for years, but that was no hindrance to Wardlaw. He went back to Peshawar, where lived a natural son of his by an Afghan woman, who had been born about the same time as Corrie's child. This young man had been well educated, but he was unscrupulous and a willing tool. He listened to Wardlaw, was schooled in the part he was to play, and when all was ripe he travelled to England and lodged somewhere in the East End. He sought out Ruthven Corrie last October, and declared himself to be that gentleman's son. What passed at the interview is not known, but a stroke of apoplexy killed Mr. Corrie. The visitor took the dead man's keys, stole from the desk the two papers that meant ruin to his claim, as well as a ring from one of the cabinets, and then slipped from the house. In the succeeding interval he wrote to Wardlaw in Peshawar, and on receiving instructions he suddenly blossomed out in the West End as the newly arrived son of Ruthven Corrie, and the heir to his wealth. Wardlaw, who had exhausted in the venture all the money he could raise, was waiting in Peshawar for funds to bring him home as the principal witness. Fortunately he was still there when I went to the Punjab in James Corrie's interests." At this point Baines related his adventure, and produced Wardlaw's confession. "You observe, gentlemen, that the case is without a flaw," he concluded.

As Carfax finished his statement, Azam Khan hastily produced a ring from his vest pocket and before anyone could stop him, he put it in his mouth. A second later he had fallen back on a couch, dead. The ring had contained a powerful Eastern poison which was released by a tiny spring. And so ended this remarkable case.

THE END.

(*Continued from page* 14.)

Archie stared straight in front of him with an expression in his eyes which was certainly somewhat glassy. Of course, he hadn't said anything to Phipps about his movements of the previous evening.

The valet had raised his eyebrows somewhat upon seeing Archie's clothing—clothing that had been obviously soaked and then dried. But Phipps was too well trained to ask any questions.

"If I can be of any assistance, sir——"

"Leave me, Phipps!" said Archie, in a hollow voice. "Leave me to my thoughts! The fact is, old lad, I've just remembered something! Absolutely! And it seems to me that I'm in the cart. In other words, the young master is just about up to his neck in a dashed foul morass!"

"I am very sorry, sir."

"You would be, Phipps, but it so happens that your sorrow doesn't alter the bally posish!" said Archie mournfully. "You see, I'm bound by honour not to breathe a dashed word. The bonds of the good old code make it imposs. for me to get busy on the explaining stuff. Of course, you don't know anything about the Scott chappie, do you?"

"The Scott chappie, sir?"

"Absolutely," said Archie. "But there you are! Suffish, Phipps—suffish! It was a mere passing thought, and so, don't you know, we'll let it pass! If I require it, I'll give it a call!"

Phipps bowed, and silently withdrew.

And Archie lay back on the lounge, and continued to stare before him.

"The great thing is to start wrestling!" he murmured. "That is, I've got to find out precisely where I am. The good old problem requires sorting out, and what not! And, dash it, the old bean seems somewhat feeble!"

However, it did not take Archie long to sort things out.

And he was by no means delighted at the result. He knew well enough that Kenmore and all the others were positively relying on him to breathe no word about the happenings of the previous evening. Considering that the gay party had helped Archie and Scott in their extremity, the least they could expect was that the unbidden guests should remain quiet—no matter what their private opinions of the affair might be.

Archie had given his word that he would remain mum. But there was no telling what the new fellow would do. That was the awkward part of it. Being absolutely fresh to everything, he might not realise that it was necessary to keep his mouth shut.

And if he talked about the affair, big trouble would follow, and Archie would be accused by Kenmore and Co. They would think that he had let the cat of the bag, and would consider his word of honour to be useless. They were not fair-minded fellows, and would paint Archie with the same brush as the new chap.

And this, after all, was the least alarming aspect of the matter.

There was quite another side to the question.

And this one caused Archie to turn pale as he thought of it. Supposing the truth came out? Supposing he was questioned? He would have to admit that he was at the party!

Certainly, he would be able to explain his reasons for going there. But Archie had quite enough sense to realise what Fullwood and Co. and the other cads would do. They would inwardly accuse him of giving them away, and then they would openly accuse him of being a member of the party.

Archie's denial would not be of much worth against so many—particularly as he would be compelled to admit that he was there.

No, from every point of view, the position was rotten. Everything depended upon Scott. If he kept quiet, no harm would come of the matter. If he didn't keep quiet, the fat would be in the fire with a vengeance.

And while Archie was in the throes of this mental storm, Lawrence Scott, the new junior, was the centre of all the attention in the Ancient House lobby. As was to be expected Handforth was well to the fore.

For some extraordinary reason, the famous leader of Study D considered that it was his duty to put every new fellow through a sort of catechism. Unless they answered all his questions freely and frankly, they were in momentary peril of having their noses punched.

Edward Oswald Handforth gave a whoop as he caught sight of the new boy.

He forgot all about Church and McClure, and the sinister thoughts he had in mind with regard to them. Their crime had not been very great. The whole trouble had arisen owing to Church's inaccurate aim.

He had playfully thrown a sponge at McClure, who had dodged out of the way just in time to allow the sponge to whizz past him and alight with beautiful precision in the very centre of Handforth's face.

The sponge, of course, was full of water, and Handforth was not very partial to cold water taken in such a way. Explanations were quite useless. Handy was not the kind of chap to listen to explanations after he had received a wet sponge in his face. So he simply gave chase with all speed, and with his fists clenched ready to do large amounts of damage.

But as soon as Handforth saw the new fellow, he had no further thoughts of sponges. He dashed up to the newcomer at full speed.

"A new kid!" he declared triumphantly.

"Impossible!" said Reginald Pitt. "It's nearly the last week of term. New kids don't come at such a time as this. Don't you believe it, Handy."

Handforth planted himself in front of Scott.

"Who the dickens do you think you are?" he demanded.

"My name is Lawrence Scott," replied the other.

"A new fellow here?"

"Yes."

"What's the idea of coming here so near the end of term?" put in De Valerie. "It's not usual."

"No, I don't think it is," replied Scott calmly. "But my people have gone abroad, and so they sent me to St. Frank's straight away. I suppose I shall spend the Christmas holidays here."

"Poor chap!" said Pitt sympathetically. "That's hard lines, if you like! Are you in the Remove?"

"So I understand."

"Shut up! Let me talk to him!" said Handforth. "Now, look here, Lawrence, I might as well put it to you plainly at the very beginning, and then we can't have any misunderstandings later on. Do you see that?"

He planted a huge fist under Scott's nose.

"Yes, I see it!" said the new boy.

"What does it look like?"

"It looks like the fist of a navvy!" said Scott simply.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole lobby broke into a roar. The new fellow's description of Handforth's fist was about as accurate as any description could be. And Scott had made the statement without any apparent attempt at humour.

Handforth gave two or three gulps.

"You—you cheeky rotter!" he roared. "Like the fist of a navvy, eh? All right, you'll feel it—— Leggo! What the dickens——"

"No punching here!" I grinned, as I held Handforth's arm.

"You mind your own business, Nipper!" snorted Edward Oswald. "Didn't you hear this cad insult me?"

"No!" I replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared round and then sniffed.

"Oh, of course, you're always ready to jeer!" he said bitterly. "You needn't worry—I won't touch the kid. But I'm jolly well going to ask him some more questions! Now then, Scott, look here! What do they call you at home?"

"Larry," said the new boy.

"Well, Larry, just you listen to this!" said Handforth. "I don't allow any fellow to tell me that my fist is like a navvy's! You've got to remember that I'm one of the chief chaps in the Remove. If it wasn't for favouritism and jealousy, I should be skipper."

"Oh!" said Scott.

"But that doesn't make any difference about you," went on Handforth. "I'm not inquisitive, but when a new chap comes, I like to know all about him. Where were you before you came here?"

"At Barrowcliffe School, Hampshire."

"Why did you leave?"

"Because I had a fight with the school captain, and knocked him out."

"What!" shouted the others.

"Do you mean to say that you were expelled?" demanded Handforth.

"No, but there was some unpleasantness, and my father decided to take me away," replied Scott. "The school captain was a cad, and I had to fight him. Of course, he was a senior. And that's what led to the trouble."

The juniors regarded Scott in surprise. They were rather astonished that he should be so frank about his reasons for leaving his previous school. It wasn't very creditable to explain that he had been expelled—or practically expelled.

"I don't know whether you're spoofing, but you don't look much like a boxer to me," said Handforth bluntly. "Do you think you could whack me?" he added.

"Yes."

"What!" roared Handforth violently.

"Yes, I do think I could whack you," said Scott calmly.

"Why, you cheeky young ass!" snorted Handforth. "I could wipe up the floor with you! I could use you as a broom!"

"It's all right, Scott. Don't take too much notice of him!" I said, pushing forward. "It's just his little way. He can't help it, you know. He's a decent chap in the main."

"Yes, so I thought," said Scott. "I rather like him."

"I'm flattered!" sneered Handforth heavily.

"Like him?" grinned Pitt. "In spite of his ugliness?"

"Yes," said Scott.

Handforth went red all over.

"If you think I'm going to stand this you've made a bloomer!" he bellowed. "This new kid just said that I'm ugly——"

"He didn't," said Pitt. "That was my remark."

"Yes, but he agreed with you!" snorted Handforth. "Look here, my lad, we'll have this out. And don't forget you've got to answer truthfully. Do you think I'm handsome or ugly?"

Larry Scott smiled.

"I don't like to offend you, but I think you're very ugly indeed!" he replied frankly. "I've never met a fellow quite so ugly before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So now you've got it, old man," chuckled Pitt.

"I haven't got a quarter of what this chap's going to get in two seconds!" roared Handforth. "Great pip! A new chap has the nerve to say that I'm ugly! What else do you think about me?" he demanded ferociously.

"By what I have seen, I should judge you to be quite good-natured in the main, but very aggressive, and with a highly-inflated

opinion of yourself," replied Scott thoughtfully.

"Well, that's more than flesh and blood can stand!" breathed Handforth huskily.

"But why?" asked De Valerie. "The chap's simply told the truth; in fact, it's the first time I've heard anybody tell the truth quite so candidly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth deliberately pushed up his sleeves.

"There's nothing I hate worse than biffing a new chap, but it's got to be done!" he said. "If he thinks I'm ugly, he might as well think a few more things as well! You chaps had better stand by to pick him up when I've finished!"

Handforth was seized by half a dozen fellows and dragged back.

"We can't have any fighting in the lobby!" I said severely. "Look here, Scott, it's all very well to be frank, but it's rather risky. You're a new kid, and I must say you've got a bit of a nerve. If I were you I should apologise to Handforth."

"Certainly not," said Scott. "What I said was true."

"There you are—listen to him!" howled Handforth, struggling wildly.

"What's the idea?" I asked, looking at the new fellow curiously. "Do you always tell the truth like that?"

"Yes, of course."

"We'll see!" I said with a grin. "I say, Montie, come here!"

Sir Montie Tregellis-West lounged forward. He was wearing a new fancy vest, and we had had a bit of an argument about it in the dormitory. Tommy Watson considered it to be rather too startling, but Montie had insisted upon wearing it.

It would be rather interesting to hear the new fellow's opinion on this waistcoat, because if he really spoke the truth he could not possibly give a favourable verdict.

"Do you see that waistcoat?" I said, pointing to it. "What do you think of it?"

"It's terrible!" replied Scott promptly.

"Begad!" gasped Sir Montie.

"Don't you like the colours?" I asked.

"They are atrocious!" said the new boy. "I've never seen such a ghastly thing before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, there's nothing like being candid, after all!" grinned Pitt.

Sir Montie froze the new boy with a glance.

"I'm frightfully sorry; I am, really," he said frigidly. "I had rather liked you at first, dear old boy, but a fellow who can insult me like that is a rotter! Whatever your opinion was, you needn't have been quite so shockin'ly blunt."

"But they asked me for my opinion!" protested Scott. "I only told the truth!"

I grinned.

"It seems to me this chap tells the truth about everything!" I chuckled. "That ought to be rather interesting, if he keeps it up. Supposing we put a test question?"

"That's a good idea!" said Pitt. "Look here, Scott, answer this. Have you ever done anything that you're ashamed of?"

"Yes," replied Scott.

"Oh! What was it?"

"I struck my mother when I was in a temper one day," said Scott quietly.

Everybody was silent in a moment. For any fellow to make such an admission was amazing. Certainly, Scott had said that he was ashamed of it, which showed that he was sorry.

But a junior like this was unheard of. He had been under no obligation to tell us such a thing as that. And yet we knew it to be the truth. Scott spoke with such quietness and conviction that there was no getting away from it.

"You struck your mother?" repeated Hubbard. "Then you're a cad!"

"I was a cad. And my father flogged me until he raised weals on my back!" said Scott. "But I deserved the thrashing. Any fellow who strikes his mother, even in a temper, is a brute."

"You're not doing yourself any good by saying this!" I put in quietly.

"I was afraid so," replied Scott. "But I was asked the question, and I had to answer. I think it only fair to tell you that the blow was only a light one, and I have never ceased to be ashamed of myself."

"Well, hang it all!" exclaimed Pitt. "You're just about the limit! There's hardly any need to be so truthful as all that, Scotty! By the way, what is your father by profession or trade?"

"He is a retired sweet manufacturer."

"How did he start?" asked Pitt with a wink at us.

"He had a stall in Deptford Broadway," said the new boy quietly.

"What!" gasped Pitt. "But—but you needn't have told us that, you ass! I never expected you to say a thing of that sort!"

"But I simply told you how my father started," said Scott. "There's nothing disgraceful about it, is there? He built his business up from that stall, and soon became a wholesale manufacturer."

"And now he's retired?"

"Yes."

"And he made all his money honestly?" asked Hubbard.

"I'm afraid not," replied Scott. "But that is business."

Somehow or other we could not feel any dislike for Larry Scott, because he spoke so truthfully, and with such delightful candour. After all, there are thousands of business men, who retire, who have splendid names. And yet, many of them did not always deal with strict honesty. But for the fellow to express his opinion about his own father in such a way was rather startling.

And Larry Scott's inclusion in the Remove seemed likely to be of particular interest. A fellow who couldn't tell a lie was a distinct novelty!

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH.

NELSON LEE put a stop to the little meeting in the lobby just when it was getting interesting.

"I wanted to speak to you, my boy," he said, addressing Scott. "Just come with me to my study, please."

"Yes, sir," said Scott.

He followed the famous Housemaster detective along the passages, leaving the crowd discussing him in animated tones. If Larry was so truthful about his own family history, it was hardly surprising that he was truthful about Handforth's face.

He followed Nelson Lee into the latter's study, and then stood at attention.

"I understand, Scott, that the Headmaser has already put you through a short examination," said Lee. "Did you please Dr. Stafford?"

"Not particularly, sir."

"Do you mean that you are rather backward?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well. you will have to buckle to and see what you can make of yourself," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "I am afraid you will not have much chance before the holidays, but when the new term begins you will soon settle down into your stride. I hope you like your new surroundings, my boy?"

"Very much, sir."

"I think you slept in a separate room," went on Lee. "To-night you will be accomdated in the dormitory. Did you sleep well?"

"Not very well, sir."

"I am sorry to hear that, my boy. What was the cause?"

"I was troubled by a flea, sir," said Scott.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Nelson Lee. "My dear lad! What on earth——"

"I think I must have picked it up in the train, sir," said the new boy. "Trains are very bad for that, sir; as, perhaps, you have discovered for yourself."

"Well, since you are so candid, perhaps I had better admit that I have," said Nelson Lee drily. "Let us hope that you will not be bothered in such a way again, Scott. I expect you will have a few troubles, as most new boys have them. But try to bear them lightly, and always do your best to get on well with your schoolfellows. I have decided that you shall share Study N with a boy named Singleton. This may be a temporary arrangement, for there will probably be room in another study when the new term begins. However, we will see how you get on. Singleton happens to be alone in Study N, whereas the other studies all have two or three occupants.

"Very well, sir," said Scott.

A minute or two later he was released, and he made his way to Study N. But before he could find it the breakfast-bell rang, and so he went off to the dining-hall with the other juniors.

Scott was one of the first juniors out after morning prayers. He still had his mind on the question of his study, and he made his way straight to the Remove passage and glanced at the letters on the doors until he arrived at the apartment which was occupied by the Hon. Douglas Singleton.

He walked in and found the little room empty But one glance round was sufficient for him. The study was luxuriously furnished, for Singleton was one of the rich juniors of the Remove; and, until now, he had enjoyed the privileged of having a study to himself.

Scott had only just managed to look round when Singleton himself came in. He regarded the new fellow amiably.

"Hallo! So you're the chap who can't tell a whopper, eh?" said Singleton. "In that case, I'd like to know why you came here?"

"Mr. Lee told me to come here."

"Oh! What for?"

"Mr. Lee said I'm going to share this study with you——"

"Oh, did he?" interrupted Singleton. "Then you can go to Mr. Lee and tell him to eat coke! And, at the same time, you'd better tell him that I'm not allowing any new fellow to share my study with me! It's like your giddy nerve to walk in here as if you owned the place."

"I'm very sorry," said Scott. "I didn't want to quarrel——"

"Don't be an ass! I'm not quarrelling," said Singleton. "But I've always had this study to myself, and it's an understood thing. There must be a mistake. Anyhow I shall be much obliged if you'll scoot!"

Scott didn't argue but walked out. And it so happened that he ran into Nelson Lee just before he arrived in the lobby. The Housemaster looked at him with a smile.

"Fixed up?" he enquired kindly.

"No, sir."

"Ah, you haven't been to Singleton yet——"

"Yes, I have, sir, but he wouldn't let me stay in Study N," replied Scott. "I didn't want to argue with him, as that would have been provoking trouble."

"Did you give Singleton my message?" asked Lee frowning.

"Yes, sir."

"And what did he say?"

"He told me to say that you can eat coke, sir!" replied Larry Scott.

Nelson Lee looked startled, as well he might. Even if Singleton had said it, it was remarkable that Scott should have repeated such a phrase. But the new fellow took it all in the same matter of fact way.

"Indeed!" said Nelson Lee grimly. "I am quite interested, Scott! So Master Singleton says that I can eat coke, does he? Did he happen to suggest any further diet for me?"

"No, sir."

"He said nothing else at all?"

"Yes, sir," said Scott. "He mentioned that I've got to tell you that he's not allowing any new boy to share his study with him."

"Oh, so Singleton is not allowing it. And he told you to tell me that?" asked Nelson Lee. "We will soon square matters up, Scott. Come with me."

Lee's face was clouded as he entered Study N, with Scott just behind.

"Good morning, sir!" said Singleton brightly.

"Good morning, my lad," said Lee. "Do I understand that you disapprove of Scott coming into your study?"

The Hon. Douglas was rather taken aback.

"I—I—— The fact is, sir, I've always had this study to myself," he said lamely. "I didn't know——"

"You had absolutely no right to send Scott away," interrupted Nelson Lee severely. "You will please understand, Singleton, that he will share this study with you by my orders. I hope you will get on well together."

Lee nodded and walked out, closing the door after him.

"Well, I didn't think you were capable of it!" exclaimed Singleton bitterly. "Fancy rushing off to Lee and sneaking——"

"I didn't sneak," protested Scott. "I simply went to him and explained that you didn't want me here. I've got to have some kind of study, I suppose, and I thought, perhaps, he would put me somewhere else. He asked me what you said and I told him."

"Oh, well, I suppose I'd better make the best of it," said Singleton gruffly. "You told him what I said, eh? Including the bit about eating coke?"

"Yes."

"What?" howled Singleton, leaping up. "You—you told him that I said he could go and eat coke?"

"Yes."

"My only Sunday topper!" gasped the Hon. Douglas. "You—you blithering idiot! I heard the chaps saying you couldn't tell a lie. But I thought it was all rot! What on earth made you do it?"

Mr. Lee asked me what you said.

"But, you ass, you needn't have told him!" snorted Singleton.

"I had to!" said Scott simply. "What else could I say?"

"What else——!" Singleton paused, breathing hard. "Oh, you priceless dummy! And did you tell Mr. Lee that I said I wasn't allowing any other fellow to share the study with me?"

"Yes."

The Hon. Douglas clutched at his head.

"But—but this is awful!" he gasped. "Hang it all, you're positively dangerous! It's fearful to have a chap like you running about the place! I don't believe in telling lies. But you carry the thing a bit too far!"

Strangely enough, Scott seemed puzzled.

The clothing of the two youngsters had been torn off—every shred! And now they were sitting in front of a blazing fire, wrapped up to the eyes in blankets.

For the fact of the matter was, he absolutely didn't know how to tell a falsehood. And we were soon to find this out in other ways. He told the truth on all occasions—on every question, big or little. There was some kink in his brain which made it a matter of sheer impossibility for him to tell a lie; or even a half or quarter lie.

"Good heavens!" muttered Singleton. "I might have been flogged! I say, what a brick, you know! Mr. Lee didn't even mention it! He must have known that I never meant him to hear such a thing. But why in the name of wonder did you tell him, you funny fathead?"

"You told me to tell him!"

"But that doesn't mean to say you ought to have done it!" roared Singleton.

He burst out of the study in sheer despair, and told all the other juniors about it. And when Larry Scott came out, he found himself seized, and borne swiftly down the passage towards the Common Room.

Once there, the door was closed, and he was surrounded.

Handforth was to the fore.

"Look here, my lad, I've been thinking things over!" said Handforth deliberately. "I won't give you a good hiding yet—I'll reserve that until later on. But I want you to know a few more facts about you. We come down this morning, and discover that you've been pushed into the Remove! Last night we didn't even know that you were coming! It's a downright shame that these things should be done! When did you arrive?"

"Rather late last night."

"And I suppose you slept in a bedroom to yourself?"

"Yes."

"Did you turn up after we went up to the dormitory?"

"No, shortly before that," said Scott. "But I was with the Headmaster."

"H'm," growled Handforth. "And why the dickens couldn't you have come earlier, instead of arriving at such an unearthly hour?"

"I was delayed," replied Scott.

"What by?"

"When I got to Bannington I found that there was no connection through to Bellton," replied Scott. "There had been a fall of earth in the cutting, or something, and all the trains were cancelled. So I had to walk."

"In all that pouring rain and wind?"

"Yes," said Scott. "It was rather a rough trip, particularly as I met with an accident. I should have been here much earlier but for that—more especially as I was delayed for some time in a bungalow."

"Delayed in a bungalow?" repeated Pitt. "Who by?"

"Eight or nine boys."

"St. Frank's boys?"

"Yes."

"We've bowled the bounder out now, anyhow," said Handforth triumphantly. "Always tells the truth, does he? It strikes me he's the biggest spoofer we've had here yet! We know jolly well there's no bungalow between here and Bannington——"

"Yes there is," I put in. "There's a place called 'The Shanty,' just about a mile from Bannington, standing near the river."

"Is that the place?" asked Handforth.

"I think it must be," replied Scott.

"Eight or nine of our fellows there," I said, puzzled. "What were they doing?"

"Eating cold chicken and ham, and drinking champagne."

"What!" yelled Handforth.

"We're learning things!" said Pitt calmly. "Eight or nine of our chaps eating chicken and ham, and drinking champagne! This is getting quite interesting! Did they do anything else, Scott?"

"They smoked and played cards," said Scott, rather uncomfortably. "But I wish you wouldn't ask me these things. I would rather not say anything about it. But if you question me, I've got to answer!"

"I think it's a jolly good thing we did question you!" said Handforth grimly. "By George! We'll see about this! Eight of our fellows drinking champagne and playing cards and smoking! If that's not the limit, what is?"

"Oh, it can't be true!" exclaimed De Valerie. "The whole thing sounds ridiculous. Were there any Remove fellows there, Scott?"

"Yes, three or four——"

"What were their names?"

"I don't know them all, but one was called Glenthorne," said Scott. "But Glenthorne didn't——" He was going to explain that Archie took no actual part in the proceedings, but he was not allowed to do so.

A perfect roar of voices went up.

"Archie!" shouted Pitt. "Oh, I can't believe it— it's too thick!"

"Is it?" sneered Marriott. "Archie's not such a saint as he makes out! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if it turned out to be true. He pretends to be such a simple bounder, and yet he's a rotten hypocrite."

"Look here, I'm not going to hear that kind of thing!" I exclaimed sharply. "Scott has only been here a few hours, but he's already got a reputation for telling the truth. In this case, I think he's mistaken. But the very best thing of all is to go and ask Archie face to face."

"Yes, that's it!"

"We'll put it to him straight from the shoulder!"

"Good!"

The fellows were eager to carry out the plan, and they at once rushed off to Archie Glenthorne's study, leaving Larry Scott in the Common Room. He had had no opportunity of explaining matters fully.

Archie was still greatly worried, but he had calmed himself down somewhat. After all, there was not much prospect of the matter being talked about. And Scott wouldn't say anything unless he was asked.

Archie had just arrived at the conclusion that he had worried himself needlessly, when the door burst open, and a crowd of fellows came in. They flooded the place like an invading army.

"I mean to say, dash it all!" gasped Archie, sitting up. "What about it? To be exact, why the frightful excitement, dear old lads?"

"We've got something to ask you, Archie!" said De Valerie grimly. "Where were you last night?"

Archie looked round in a frantic kind of way.

"Last night?" he repeated weakly. "Oh, of course! You mean last night, what? Absolutely!"

"That's no answer, you ass!"

"No, no; of course not!" said Archie hastily. "I take it, old scout, that you want an answer! I mean to say, where was I last night? Well, dash it all! That's a frightfully queer thing! Where was I?"

He scratched his head, trying to gain time.

"Yes, where were you?" demanded Handforth.

"Don't flurry me—don't flurry me!" exclaimed Archie, breathing rather hard. "The question is frightfully awk.! I mean to say, a chappie can't always remember where he was at a certain time on the spur of the good old moment! The fact is, I was here. Gadzooks! Of course! What ho! Got it, don't you know! Here—on the jolly old spot!"

"You were here—in your own study?" enquired Pitt.

"Absolutely!" said Archie triumphantly.

"The whole evening?"

"Yes, rather!" said Archie. "Er—that is, to be precisely precise, rather not! I mean, what? The whole evening? Well, now you come to put it like that, perhaps not. In fact, absolutely not! Oh, no!"

Beads of perspiration were appearing on his forehead, and he looked round like a trapped rabbit.

"Look here, Archie, you're hedging!" I said severely.

"I'm what?" said Archie. "Hedging? My dear old lad, what frightful rot! The fact is, you've flustered me—absolutely put me off my stroke! I mean to say, when a chappie is surrounded by about a thousand other chappies who all give him the frozen optic, he is somewhat inclined to wilt, as it were. The fact of the matter is, I was at Bannington——"

"Ah!" said Handforth. "At a bungalow?"

"Help!" wailed Archie. "Phipps! Phipps—I—I mean, that's dashed queer! I don't need Phipps, and yet I'm calling him! It will soon be time for lessons, old tulips——"

"There's well over half an hour before lessons!" broke in Pitt. "I must say, Archie, that your attitude is very suspicious."

"But, really——"

"Were you at this card party?" demanded Hubbard. "We've heard that the chaps were drinking champagne, and smoking and gambling—and you were there! Is it true?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie firmly. "I mean to say, I was there, but I didn't—— My only sainted aunt! Let me think, old sports! What was I saying? The whole thing is poisonously fearful! The tissues are weakening at every word, don't you know!"

"Well, we've heard enough, anyway!" exclaimed De Valerie. "Archie's behaviour is quite enough by itself, but he's just admitted that he was there. So it's no good questioning him any further."

"I shall get to the truth, anyhow!" I said quietly. "I don't believe that Archie would do anything so disgraceful."

"I breathe again!" murmured Archie. "Thanks, my dear old darling! Large quantities of gratitude for such kindly words!"

"I expect Fullwood and Co. were members of that party!" I went on. "If they were, they'll have to suffer! We're not going to have the good name of St. Frank's dragged into disrepute by a set of cads like that!"

Hubbard sniffed.

"They're all tarred with the same brush!" he said sneeringly. "We all heard him admit that he was at this party. And why was he there if it wasn't for joining in the fun? The very thing speaks for itself!"

"Of course it does!"

"Archie's a blessed hypocrite!"

"He's worse than Fullwood; because Fullwood doesn't even pretend to be goody-goody!" exclaimed Owen major. "I'm surprised, and in future, I'll take good care to give Glenthorne the cold shoulder!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was not at all unusual for the fellows to come to such hasty conclusions. To them, the whole thing seemed perfectly clear. Archie stood there guilty—self-condemned, and worthy only of scorn.

The crowd of fellows passed out of his study, and he was left to himself once more. He sank back upon the lounge, and feebly mopped his brow.

"The blow has fallen!" he murmured. "The frightful disaster has overwhelmed the horizon! I mean to say, Archie is in need of large slabs of assistance! I sha'n't jib at the flogging, but when it comes to being expelled—— Gadzooks! I can't even think of it. I'm going all goosey! The pater—the dear old dad! He'll absolutely cut me off without even the old bob!"

And Archie fairly wallowed in his misery.

In the meantime, the excited juniors had returned to the common-room. The new fellow was still there, and he looked as uncomfortable as he felt. He had an idea that he had been unconsciously causing more trouble.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "About that fellow Glenthorne. I didn't mean you to suspect——"

"It's all right, Scott. We've asked Archie about it, and he's been compelled to admit the truth," said De Valerie. "Now, you were there, you say? You were in the bungalow with Glenthorne and the others?"

"Yes," said Larry reluctantly.

"Did Archie drink champagne?"

"I didn't see him drinking at all."

"Did he smoke?"

"I don't know. I fell asleep."

"Then Archie might have done anything while you were asleep?"

"I don't think he——"

"It's no good thinking—we want facts!" interrupted Pitt. "Did you see Archie leave?"

"Yes."

"How was he—I mean, did he look quite steady?"

Larry looked more uncomfortable than ever.

"He seemed a bit shaky and giddy!" he said quietly.

"Great Scott!" gasped Hubbard. "He must have been tipsy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Larry hardly knew what to say. He knew nothing for certain about what had taken place in the bungalow while he was asleep. But he had told the absolute truth when he said that Archie was unsteady.

"It seems to me the whole affair was pretty disgraceful!" exclaimed Armstrong, with a sneer. "And I dare say this fellow had something stronger than water to drink. Did you take some champagne, Scott?"

"No."

"Did you drink anything at all?"

"Yes."

"What was it?" asked a dozen voices.

"Brandy!" replied the new junior. "But ——"

"Brandy!" roared Handforth. "You—you boozing cad! So Archie was drinking champagne, and you were drinking brandy! My only topper! You both deserve to be jolly well kicked out!"

Larry Scott vainly attempted to get a hearing, but after his admission of a moment before nobody would listen to him. It was just the same with Archie. He had wanted to speak, but nobody would heed him. And it really looked as though matters would shortly become extremely warm!

CHAPTER VI.

FOOTING THE BILL!

SIMON KENMORE was not extremely happy.

While the juniors were getting so excited about Archie, the prefect was going through a decidedly unpleasant time. He had gone to his study directly after prayers, and had found a tall, thin gentleman in possession.

This gentleman turned out to be Mr. Groves—the caterer from Bannington who had supplied the goods for the little party at the bungalow. Mr. Groves had lost no time in putting in an appearance.

Kenmore did not regard him with much approval.

"I say, Mr. Groves, this is a bit thick, you know!" he protested. "I promised to settle that bill to-day, and I think you might have waited until the evening. I was coming along with the cash."

Mr. Groves smiled.

"I was in Bellton, sir, and I thought I'd just look you up," he said, in a smooth, oily voice. "Sorry if I've annoyed you, sir. But I did it to save you the trouble."

"I'd have paid in advance if I'd known that you'd spring it on me like this," growled Kenmore. "There might be some inquiries if you're seen."

"Surely not, Master Kenmore," said the caterer. "I do other business besides the little affair we arranged. I sell cameras, footballs, football boots, and all that kind of business. Surely I can come here to arrange for the purchase of a few such articles?"

"Oh, well, we won't argue," said Kenmore. "I've got the money—let's have the bill, and we'll settle it straight away."

"Thank you, sir—thank you, Master Kenmore!"

Mr. Groves produced an envelope from his pocket, and passed it over. Kenmore was already feeling in his pocket for the notes. He had the eight intact, and about two pounds of his own money. He knew that he would be able to square the thing promptly, and his main desire was to get rid of his unwelcome visitor.

He paused as the envelope was handed over, and he extracted the bill. He had previously reckoned that the full amount would come to a few shilings under eight pounds.

He unfolded the bill, looked at it, and his eyes bulged.

"What—what's this?" he asked hoarsely.

"Your account, sir!" beamed Mr. Groves.

"But—but there's a mistake!" stuttered Kenmore. "This bill is for twenty-two pounds ten!"

"Precisely, sir!"

"You're mad!" exclaimed the prefect, "Twenty-two pounds ten! Why, I figured it all out—I looked up all the prices beforehand! You must have made a miscalculation or something! The amount ought to be about seven pound fifteen!"

Mr. Groves laughed—an unpleasant laugh.

"Really, Master Kenmore, you are quite amusing!" he said. "I cannot help how you worked it out for yourself. The bill is a detailed one, and you will see the various prices. You must remember that the champagne was a very heavy item—four bottles at three pounds amount to twelve pounds alone. Then there was the brandy at thirty-five shillings, and the cigarettes at twenty-seven shillings a hundred."

Kenmore gasped.

"Champagne—three pounds a bottle!" he exclaimed furiously. "You confounded swindler!"

"How dare you?" demanded the caterer. "You will be careful what you say——"

"Will I?" snapped Kenmore. "You're an infernal rogue—that's what you are! That champagne was muck—filthy rubbish! And the same brand is quoted in a current catalogue at fourteen and six! What's the idea of charging over four times as much?"

"Three pounds is my price, sir."

"Well, if you think you're going to get your price, you've made a mistake," retorted Kenmore hotly. "The cigarettes, too! Why, ordinary Navy Cut are only about five shillings a hundred, and those things you sent were like hay! They weren't worth using to light a fire!"

"I am sorry if you did not find the goods to your liking," said Mr. Groves. "At the same time, Mr. Kenmore, I must insist upon the payment of my account. I am distressed that there should be any unpleasantness."

Kenmore glared at him.

"The whole thing's a swindle!" he said hotly. "I won't pay it!"

"If you are unable to settle the whole bill, I am prepared to wait," said Mr. Groves, in his smooth voice. "We will say eight or ten pounds on account, eh? The rest can be left over until a more favourable opportunity—or perhaps you will be willing to pay me the balance by weekly instalments?"

Kenmore hesitated.

"No, I'm hanged if I'll agree to it!" he declared. "I can show you the prices of all these goods in a current catalogue from one of the London stores. The very same goods—the same brands!"

"I am sorry, sir, but that is no business of mine," said Mr. Groves. "You made no

mention of prices when you gave the order, or I should have told you. I must insist upon you paying the bill. You have had the goods, and you are responsible. I should greatly dislike any unpleasantness."

Kenmore looked startled.

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"I am sorry, Master Kenmore, but unless we can come to some definite arrangement, I shall have to interview your headmaster," said Mr. Groves smoothly. "That, of course, would be most lamentable!"

"You—you blackmailer!" exclaimed the prefect, clenching his fists. "I've a good mind to knock you down! You wouldn't dare to go to the Head about this affair——"

"No?" said Mr. Groves. "And why not? You had the goods, and my bill must be paid. If you won't pay it willingly, my only resource is to appeal to your headmaster."

And Kenmore was certain that the man meant it. He was filled with wild alarm. But he tried his utmost not to show it. For a moment or two he stared straight before him. Then he picked up the bill again.

"Do you mind waiting for about two minutes?" he asked abruptly.

"Not at all," said Mr. Groves.

Kenmore passed out of the study and ran as quickly as possible to the Fifth Form passage. He entered one of the studies, and was glad to find Grayson and Shaw there. They had just looked in from the College House, and were calling upon Sims.

"I say, Groves is here!" exclaimed Kenmore sharply.

"Groves?"

"The swindling robber who supplied the stuff for our little party," said Kenmore. "We reckoned it would come to about eight pounds, didn't we? Well, he's made the bill out for twenty-two!"

"What?" gasped Sims.

"Look at it for yourselves!"

The Fifth-Formers did so, and Grayson smiled.

"Well, that's about the biggest piece of nerve I've ever seen," he said coolly. "Not that it's got anything to do with us. You fixed the prices, Kenny, and you collected all the contributions. It seems to me that this is your funeral."

"Of course," said Grayson, "it's nothing to do with us."

"Nothing whatever," agreed Sims.

Kenmore argued at first, and then he became livid with fury at the way his chums were leaving him in the lurch. But all his arguments were of no avail, and in the end he had to go back to his own quarters, absolutely unsupported.

Perhaps it was lucky that I happened to come along about three minutes later. In a fit of temper, Kenmore had given me fifty lines to do the previous day—just because I happened to commit some trivial technical breach of the rules.

Kenmore was a prefect, and so I had to do the lines. I was taking them to his study now, to get the matter finished with. I was also rather curious to take a close look at Kenmore. After what I had heard, I suspected him of being one of the members of that champagne party.

By looking at him face to face, I should easily be able to tell. So, after a preliminary tap at his study door, I entered. Apparently, my knock had not been heard for, as I opened the door, Kenmore was speaking bitterly and angrily.

"It's a confounded shame, that's what it is!" he was saying. "You put your prices on like this because you know jolly well you've got me in a corner! All right, I'll pay you the eight pounds down and the rest later on."

"Thank you, sir—shall we say a pound a week?"

Kenmore was about to answer, when he looked up from the bill and saw me.

"You spying young hound!" he snarled, utterly startled. "What are you doing here? Clear out, before I kick you out!"

"Sorry—I just brought these lines!" I said. "What's the trouble here, Kenmore? Is this the man who supplied the goods for your little champagne supper?"

Kenmore's jaw dropped.

"What do you know about it?" he asked harshly.

"I know nothing for certain; but I guessed," I replied calmly. "You were saying something about paying him eight pounds down——"

"The whole bill ought to come to eight pounds; but he's nearly trebled it!" said Kenmore bitterly. "That's just because he knows he's got me on toast. But, look here, clear off, and don't dare to breathe a word about this business! If you sneak on me, I'll make your life a misery!"

I closed the door, and smiled.

"If I sneaked on you, Kenmore, you wouldn't be here to make anybody's life a misery," I replied. "If any mention of that affair came out, you'd get the sack—quick! The other members of the party might be let off with a flogging, but not you. Can I have a look at that bill?"

"No, confound you, you can't!"

"All right—sorry!" I said. "I thought perhaps I might be able to help you. Of course, you don't deserve it! It would be rather a good lesson if you were forced to pay that swindler's account! But right's right, and if I can give you a hand, I'd like to. Groves is a well-known character in Bannington—he's been locked up more than once!"

Groves rose to his feet, livid with rage.

"Do you allow this?" he demanded hotly. "Do you allow this—this junior boy to come here and insult me? You had better take care! If you go too far, I will not hesitate to visit the headmaster at once!"

Kenmore, looking more scared than I had ever seen him, allowed me to take the bill.

"Champagne three quid a bottle, eh?" I exclaimed. "Of course, I know that some champagne is even dearer than that——"

"This stuff is quoted at fourteen-and-six in a current catalogue from one of the big stores," said Kenmore. "The whole thing is a bare-faced fraud—and I can't do a thing, because he'll tell the Head!"

It took me about three minutes to verify the matter. The full amount of the bill ought to have come to about seven pounds ten.

"Have you got eight quid?" I asked.

"Yes," said Kenmore.

"Give it to me!" I said, taking command of the situation without difficulty. "Now look here, Mr. Groves," I added, as I held the notes, "take my advice, and write out a full receipt for the whole list of goods—and the amount is to come to eight pounds, and no more!"

"You young fool!" snarled Groves. "My bill is for twenty-two pounds——"

"You may be able to scare Kenmore, but you can't scare me!" I interrupted curtly. "Unless you write out a receipt within five minutes, I'll send for the police and have you arrested on a charge of extortion!"

Groves wavered, and then laughed harshly.

"If you think you can threaten me, you've made a mistake!" he snarled. "I'll put up with no more of this nonsense. I'll go straight to the headmaster—"

"What on earth's the good of attempting that bluff?" I interrupted. "You know very well that you won't go, Mr. Groves. It would certainly mean trouble for Kenmore, but you'd get into far greater trouble on your own account. Now, are you going to make that receipt out or not?"

"I am not!" shouted Groves furiously.

I walked to the door, opened it slightly, and looked out.

"I say, Tommy," I said, addressing the empty air. "Buzz down to the village, as quickly as you can, and bring the policeman up here——"

I half turned, as I heard a gasp.

"What's that, Mr. Groves?" I said smoothly.

"Don't—don't let him fetch that policeman!" stuttered the man. "It's all right—I'll accept the eight pounds!"

Mr. Groves, every ounce of his confidence and bluster gone, scrawled out a full receipt, and took the money. Two minutes later he slunk away. And Kenmore stood looking at me in a dazed kind of fashion.

"Thanks awfully, Nipper!" he muttered. "How—how did you do it?"

"I don't want any thanks from you, Kenmore," I said coldly. "And you needn't think I did it because I was sorry for you. It simply happens that I don't like to see a scoundrel of that sort practising his villainy at St. Frank's—he might be encouraged to try it again. I've got the good name of the school at heart—which is more than you have!"

And without another word I passed out and slammed the door.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE TRUTH!

ONE glance at Groves had shown me the type of man he was, and I knew well enough that the very simplest kind of bluff would cause him to abandon his swindle. It needn't be supposed that I was sorry for Kenmore.

I wasn't.

My object in butting in had been quite different. If this man had had his own way, he would have been perfectly willing to supply further goods for further champagne parties. But it was an absolute certainty that he would never deal with any St. Frank's fellows again. This sample had been enough for him.

It was solely for the good of the school that I had stopped the thing. It would have served Kenmore right if he had been compelled to pay the larger sum. However, as I had told him, right was right.

It was now nearly time for lessons, and I expected to hear the bell go at any moment.

I went back to the Common Room just to see how things were going, and I found Nelson Lee in possession, to say nothing of about three parts of the Remove. The guv'nor was looking very grim.

Obviously, he had just arrived.

"I have come here, boys, because I want to get at the truth of the question which has been generally rumoured about this morning," he exclaimed gravely. "During the last half hour I have been informed that a certain number of boys attended a disgraceful party last night."

"Oh!" said the Remove.

Fullwood went pale, and Gulliver and Bell were visibly shaky at the knees. They edged towards the door.

"Fullwood, you will remain here!" said Lee curtly. "I shall want to question you in a few moments."

"Que-que-question me, sir?" stuttered Fullwood in a faint voice.

"Yes!" said Nelson Lee. "These rumours get about very quickly, and the sooner they can be investigated the better. I have decided to lose no time over this matter."

I was secretly delighted. I knew very well that the guv'nor would not rest content until he had probed the whole thing to the bottom.

"Ah, Nipper, I am glad you have come in!" said Nelson Lee, as he caught sight of me. "What do you know about this rumoured orgy?"

"Not much, sir," I replied. "According to what I can hear, some of the fellows met together at a place a mile or two from the school. They had a card party, I think, or something of that kind."

"I rather fancy you know more than that, Nipper, but you do not feel inclined to speak," said the guv'nor. "However, we

will proceed further. It has come to my ears that both Glenthorne and Scott were connected with this revel. It is hardly conceivable, since Scott only arrived at the school last night."

"He's admitted it, sir!" said Hubbard excitedly.

"Indeed!" said Lee. "Very well, we will go into that in a few minutes. At the moment, I should like to question you, Fullwood."

"Me, sir?" gasped Fullwood, trying to look unconcerned.

"Yes!" went on the Housemaster. "I have learned, Fullwood, that you and Gulliver and Bell, arrived home very late. Indeed, you missed your supper, and Mr. Crowell accepted your explanation that you were compelled to walk home from Bannington in the storm, and that you lost your way."

"That's true enough, sir," said Fullwood. "Haven't you heard that there were no trains last night?"

"I am well aware that there was a fall of earth in the Edgemore Cutting," replied Nelson Lee. "There certainly were no trains, Fullwood. Perhaps you will tell me why you went to Bannington?"

"Certainly, sir," said Fullwood, gaining confidence. "I went to the pictures."

"Can you prove that?"

"Certainly, sir. Gulliver and Bell were with me."

"That's right, sir," said the other two nuts promptly.

"I am hardly inclined to regard the evidence of those two boys as proof," said Nelson Lee drily. "What time did you leave the pictures, Fullwood.

"About eight o'clock."

"You arrived home a few minutes before bedtime," said Nelson Lee. "Do I understand that it took you an hour and a half to walk two and a half miles?"

"We were held up by the storm, sir," said Fullwood.

"I am afraid, Fullwood, that your story is not quite convincing," said Nelson Lee. "Did you go to any other place besides the cinema?"

"Nowhere else at all, sir."

"You did not attend any card party?"

"No, sir."

"You are quite sure?"

"Positive, sir."

"I'm afraid you have a bad memory, Fullwood——"

"No, sir, my memory's first-rate!" said Fullwood calmly.

"Then, perhaps, you can tell me the name of the big picture you saw last night?" asked Nelson Lee. "Come, come—no hesitation!"

Fullwood caught his breath in and clenched his teeth.

"I—I don't seem to remember the name of the picture, sir," he said blankly. "It

"You're mad!" exclaimed the prefect. "Twenty-two pounds ten! Why, I figured it all out—I looked up all the prices beforehand. The amount ought to be about seven fifteen."

—it was about Canada, sir—one of those films of ranch life, with cowboy stuff."

"A long picture, Fullwood?"

"Yes, sir—about five reels?"

"And you saw this at the Palladium Cinema last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is very remarkable," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "It so happens that the chief picture at the Palladium yesterday was a purely English production, with the scenes laid on the sea-coast of Cornwall! There was no Canadian picture of any description in the programme."

Fullwood gulped.

"I—I must be mistaken, sir——"

"No, Fullwood, you are not mistaken. You have been deliberately lying!" interrupted Nelson Lee curtly. "What you have said has convinced me beyond any shadow of doubt that you and Gulliver and Bell attended this gambling orgy."

There was a breathless pause in the Common Room. Nelson Lee had tripped Fullwood up perfectly, and the cad of the Remove had absolutely nothing to say. He stood there, pale and tense, looking utterly beaten. Gulliver and Bell were shivering with fright.

"I have heard another rumour," went on Nelson Lee. "This is to the effect that Scott is an astonishingly truthful boy. By what I have seen of him I believe that he actually is."

He looked round and beckoned to Larry Scott.

"Come here, my boy, and answer my questions," he said gently. "I have heard that you were at this disgraceful party last night. Is that true?"

The Remove waited in intense expectancy.

The majority of the fellows expected that Larry would deny the statement.

"Yes, sir," he replied steadily.

"You were actually at this party?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think, Scott, that we will trace your movements from the moment you left Bannington," said Nelson Lee. "By doing so, I rather think we shall obtain a true account of what actually occurred. You decided to walk to the school, I believe, because there was no train to bring you to Bellton?"

"Yes, sir."

"Describe your walk."

"I didn't know the way, sir, being a stranger. But I knew I had to get to St. Frank's," said Larry. "I asked a policeman in the town, and he pointed out the road, and told me that I couldn't possibly go wrong if I kept on."

"And did you keep on?"

"Yes, sir, for about a mile," said the new boy. "I couldn't see very well because of the darkness and the rain. But then something suddenly happened. A big gust of wind broke off the top branch of a tree, and it fell down just where I was standing. I was half smothered, sir, and pinned down. I think I was a bit stunned, too, and I felt dizzy and weak."

"And then?"

"Somebody was coming along the road not far behind, sir. He came along, pulled the broken branches away, and rescued me," said Larry. "I didn't know him at the time, but he was Glenthorne."

"Archie!" exclaimed half the Remove.

"So Glenthorne very bravely came to your assistance?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Yes, sir. Although the brave part of it came later on," replied Larry, his face flushing, and his eyes gleaming. "I was practically done, sir. And I really think that if I'd been left to myself I should have died from cold and exposure. Glenthorne practically carried me in his arms, sir. I can only dimly remember what took place. But there was a kind of red light shining through the trees, and Glenthorne decided to make for it, as there would possibly be some shelter there."

"Well?"

"It was a terrible journey!" declared Larry. "I don't know how Glenthorne managed it. But by the time we reached the light he was nearly exhausted. He saved my life, sir, and I haven't had a proper opportunity of thanking him yet. He knocked at the door of the bungalow, and it was soon opened."

"You were taken in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who by?"

"There were eight schoolboys there," replied Larry. "They undressed us, put us in front of the fire between blankets, and made us comfortable. It was this treatment which saved us from catching colds or pneumonia."

"What were these boys doing?"

"They were just about to have a meal, sir."

"Did you see any champagne on the table?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did Glenthorne join in with these other boys?"

"No, sir, not to my knowledge," replied Scott. "I dozed for a little while, and so I can't say what took place then. But I am sure in my mind that Glenthorne was not a member of the party at any time. He left before I did, sir, because I think he felt rather dizzy from the effects of the smoke and the fumes."

"I think that will be quite sufficient, Scott," said Nelson Lee grimly. "I am very pleased that this matter has come thoroughly to light. I accept your story unreservedly, for it rings true in every detail."

"Thank you, sir."

"Furthermore, it has now become clear that Glenthorne's share in the evening's doings was an extremely creditable one," went on the guv'nor. "Glenthorne behaved bravely and unselfishly. And it is most unjust and unfair that he should be the object of any suspicion. I am very proud of Glenthorne."

"We—we thought——"

"I know well enough what you thought, Armstrong!" interrupted Lee, cutting the junior short. "Without any evidence whatever, a number of you boys accused Glenthorne of dishonourable conduct; whilst, actually, he was deserving only of your praise."

The only members of that ill-fated champagne-party who escaped detection were Kenmore and Parkin, of the Sixth. This was just as well for them, for, if their names had come out they would certainly have been expelled.

The others were publicly flogged as an example. And it was a pretty safe thing to guarantee that there would be no more little parties at the Frayne bungalow.

As for Archie Glenthorne, he lived once more.

He had spent an hour of utter misery, secluded in his own study, believing that his Form fellows were all against him. And Archie had racked his brain for some way out of the difficulty until his head ached.

Then the Remove had arrived to set him at ease

At first, he thought they had come to slaughter him on the spot, and was rather alarmed, until he found that their only intention was to cheer him up and to congratulate him upon his plucky behaviour.

And so the arrival of Larry Scott was marked in a somewhat striking manner. There was no doubt that he was a real terror.

For a boy who couldn't tell a lie was a very dangerous sort of individual to have running loose about the place!

THE END.

Great Northern Railway Express Locomotive

No. 1471. 4-6-2 TYPE.

WITH this issue is presented a photo plate of the latest type of express locomotive for the G.N.R. Although this type is not novel as regards wheel arrangement (the G.W.R. being the first to introduce the "Pacific" type—as far back as 1908, when "The Great Bear," was built), this locomotive may be regarded as the most modern example of British construction.

This engine has three cylinders, each being 20 in. by 26 in., two outside and one inside the frames, all driving the middle pair of coupled wheels. The outside are placed horizontally over the bogie, whilst the inside is placed over the bogie trailing axle, and is inclined at 1 in 8 to clear the leading axle.

The boiler is of very large dimensions, being no less than 6 ft. 5 in. in diameter at the firebox end, tapering down to 5 ft. 9 in. just behind the dome. The firebox is similar to the wide form on that line, and which has given such excellent results on the "Atlantics." It is made of copper, and has an over-all maximum length of 9 ft. 5½ in. externally, 6 ft. 8 in. at the bottom and middle, and a width of 7 ft. 9 in. The grate area is no less than 41.25 square feet. A "Robinson" super-heater has been fitted, giving a heating surface of 525 square feet. The total heating surface, including the super-heater, is 3,455 square feet.

The boiler pressure is 180 lb. per square inch, and two 4 in. Ross Pop safety valves are situated on the fire-box. Walchaert's valve gear is used for the outside cylinders, whilst a simple sytem of rocking levers is used for the inside.

All the rods are fluted and made of heat-treated nickel chromium steel, thus securing great lightness and strength. "Skefko" ball bearings are used for the return crank, and "Hoffman" roller bearings at the main pivots of the motion levers.

The tender runs on eight fixed wheels with outside bearings, the second and third pairs having extra side play to allow for traversing curves. The water capacity is 5,000 gallons, and accomodation is provided for eight tons of coal. A water "pick-up" apparatus is also fitted.

At present, only two of these fine engines have appeared, namely, No. 1470 "Great Northern" and No. 1471, recently named "Sir Frederick Banbury," after the chairman of the line. Ten more are undergoing construction at Doncaster, where the locomotive shops are located.

Mr. H. N. Gresley, the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the G.N.R., is the designer of these powerful engines.

Editorial Announcement.

My dear Readers:

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

Next week will appear our special Christmas Number, which includes a tip-top, long complete Christmas story of the Boys of St. Frank's, written expressly for the occasion by our ever-popular author. Entitled **"THE GHOST OF SOMERTON ABBEY!"** it describes how the Juniors spend a memorable Christmas at the Duke of Somerton's ancient ancestral home, which, as with any historical mansion worthy of a traditional past, boasts of a ghost, who generally makes his appearance at Christmas time. It is just the story to read during the festive season.

THE DETECTIVE STORY SECTION.

In our Detective Story Section next week you must not fail to read **"THE MAKER OF DIAMONDS!"** for it is a real life detective story of Scotland Yard, and as clever a battle of wits between one of our best C.I.D. men and an astute gentleman crook as you will read anywhere. The other complete story features Carfax Baines in **THE CASE OF THE RAJAH GASCOIGNE,"** and makes our coming Christmas Number a goodly feast of fiction to read over the Yuletide embers.

A COMPETITION FOR ALL.

Below you will see the first coupon for our **STORY-VOTING COMPETITION.** There will be five more of these coupons (one appearing each week), and then the final voting coupon. I hope every one of you will enter for this competition, for it requires no effort beyond reading the stories, which you will do in any case; and you may become the fortunate possessor of the very fine model locomotive shown on the cover. I may remark that the prize is not a toy, but a triumph of mechanical ingenuity—a real large engine on a small scale. The workmanship, the finish, and detail are characteristic of the excellent models turned out by the makers, **Messrs. BASSETT-LOWKE, Ltd.**

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

Coupon No. 1.—STORY-VOTING COMPETITION, The Nelson Lee Library, No. 393, Dec. 16, 1922. Story Title: THE BOY WHO COULDN'T LIE. (IMPORTANT.—This coupon must be enclosed with your attempt in the above competition.)

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