NEXT THURSDAY: "ALL FOOLS' DAY AT ST. JIM'S." Another Splendid Tale of Tom Merry & Co., by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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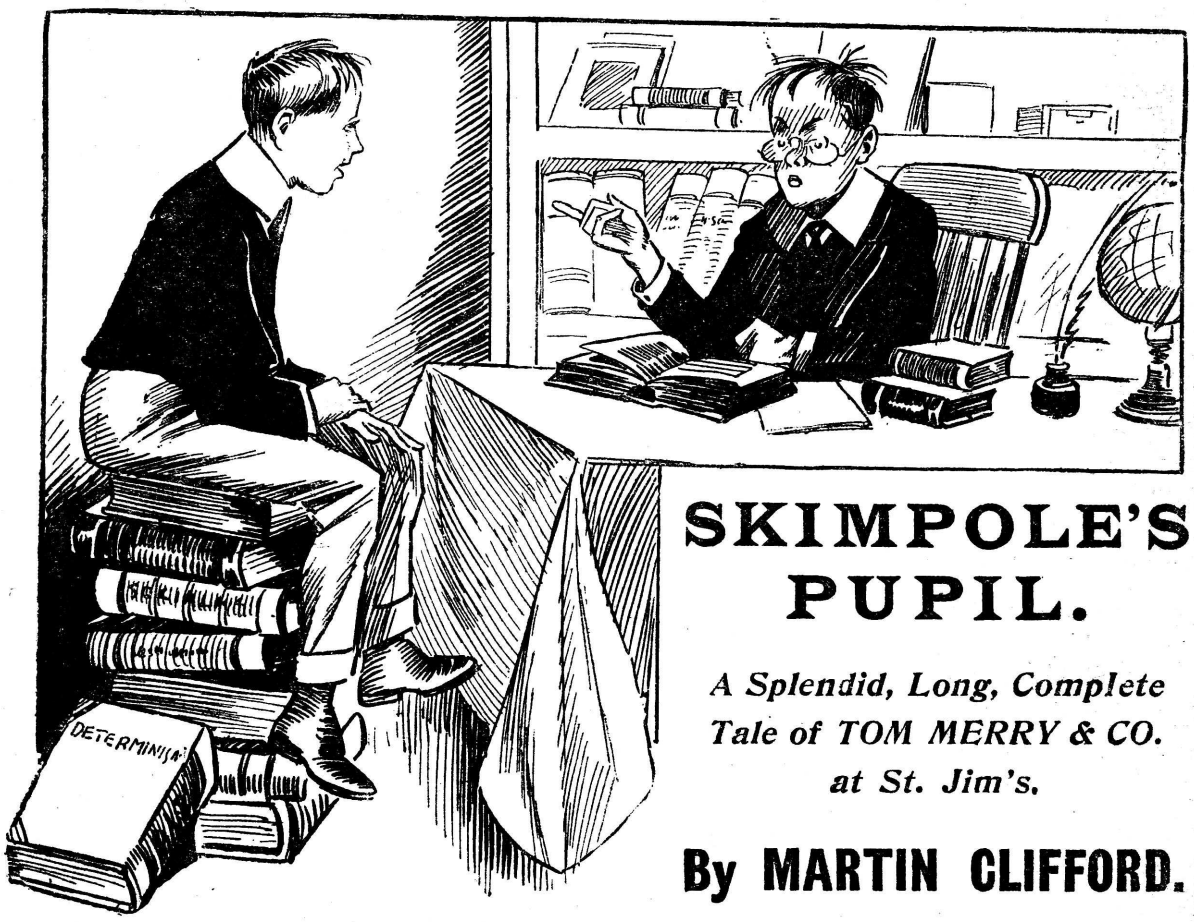
[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]



SKIMPOLE'S PUPIL.

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Cads!

JOE FRAYNE thrust his hands deep into his pockets as he walked under the trees in the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

There was a deep wrinkle in Joe's boyish brow; a gloomy shadow on his face.

Round him the old quadrangle was cheerful enough. The spring sunshine fell there in floods, and the trees were showing the spring green, bursting into new life under the kindly influence of the season. From the playing-fields came the shouts of the footballers, playing one of the last games of the season. All Joe's surroundings were cheery enough, but Joe's face was overcast.

Joe felt himself, that sunny, spring afternoon, an outcast. The Shell fellows, who were usually very kind to him—Tom Merry & Co.—were playing footer. The Shell were playing the Fourth, and the Fourth Form team included Joe's friends in that Form—Blake and D'Arcy, and the rest.

Joe had friends in his own Form—the Third. Wally, the younger brother of the great Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, had stood by him through thick and thin. But Wally was out this afternoon. He had gone off with Jameson and Gibson, and Joe had been unable to go, because he had been detained for an hour by his Form-master. And Joe had a suspicion that Jameson and Gibson did not want him, however much Wally might.

So Joe was alone.

He might have watched the footer-match, certainly, but he did not fully understand the great game, and the fellows crowding round the ropes did not want the company of the little ragamuffin whom Tom Merry had rescued from the slums of London.

Joe, with his hands deep in his pockets, walked under the trees.

Two big, sturdy seniors came striding by—Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and Darrel, of the Sixth.

Joe watched them with wistful eyes.

He would never be like those fellows, he thought. If he remained at St. Jim's long enough to get into the Sixth Form he would always be Joe Frayne, the fellow whose early life had been in Blucher's Buildings, in a London slum, and whose very parents were unknown—perhaps better unknown. The other fellows would always remember that against him.

Kildare stopped suddenly, and beckoned to the fag.

Joe approached rather timidly. In Joe's early life, policemen had been the great terror, and he had transferred his terror now from policemen to prefects. The prefects of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's would perhaps have been amused if they had known.

"Frayne!" rapped out Kildare.

"Ye-e-es, sir," said Joe.

Kildare smiled.

"Don't call me sir, you young donkey!" he exclaimed.

"No, sir."

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Well, why are you doing nothing?" said Kildare. "Can't you find anything to do?"

Joe hung his head.

Kildare raised his hand, and pointed towards the distant football-field. From the field a shout was ringing: "Goal! Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Go and watch the game," said the captain of St. Jim's. "It's the next best thing to playing. Don't slack about doing nothing."

And Kildare walked on with Darrel. Joe Frayne obediently made his way to the junior football-ground.

Tom Merry, and Manners and Lowther, Kangaroo, and Glyn, and the rest of the Shell team, were playing up well against the Fourth. In the ranks of the latter were Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, and Figgins and Kerr and Wynn of the New House, and Reilly and Hancock, and Pratt and Lumley. The game was well worth watching. The juniors played very good footer, and both sides were keen and determined to win.

Joe looked on, his face brightening up as he watched Tom Merry—his hero and idol—swooping down upon the Fourth-Form goal, where Fatty Wynn stood on guard.

Tom Merry was in fine form.

He had the ball, and the Fourth-Form defence seemed unable to stop him, and, beating Pratt and Lumley-Lumley at back, he ran in, and shot for goal. A seraphic smile glimmered on the plump face of Fatty Wynn, and he fisted the ball out, and Lumley-Lumley captured it, and cleared in a moment.

"Bravo, Wynn!"

"Well saved!"

"Well cleared, Lumley!"

"Hurray!"

The struggle surged away to mid-field, and the Fourth-Form rallied strongly, and drove the Shell back.

"How's the score?" asked Joe, addressing the fellow nearest to him. He knew by the shouting he had heard that goals had been taken before he arrived.

The fellow he addressed happened to be Mellish, the cad of the Fourth. Mellish made a great point of disdaining the lad who had been a denizen of a London slum. Mellish was a cad and an outsider to the finger-tips, and his assumption of superiority sat very ill upon him; but he never dropped it.

He gave a Joe a cutting glance.

"Don't talk to me, you young beggar!" he exclaimed.

Joe flushed crimson.

"I asked a civil question," he said.

"Oh, get away!"

Mellish turned his shoulder upon Joe, and spoke to Levison of the Fourth, and Gore of the Shell, who were with him. Levison was a fellow much like Mellish, and Gore was of the same sort, though Gore had had what Jack Blake called lapses into decency at times.

"Blessed if I can understand why the Head admits all sorts of rowdies to this school," said Mellish.

"Oh, St. Jim's is going to the dogs," said Levison.

"That's it," said Gore. "With street arabs and pickpockets admitted, I wonder what will become of the old school?"

Joe listened with burning cheeks.

He had never done anything to offend these fellows, and yet they went out of their way to cut him as deeply as they could.

He wondered why.

He did not understand that it was partly because he was protected by Tom Merry; and these cads of the Lower School disliked Tom Merry, as toads dislike the sunlight. He did not know that all the venom they could not turn upon Tom Merry they were glad to turn upon him, because Tom Merry was his friend.

Joe did not understand all that, and he did not know that fellows who could hurt another fellow willingly, were not worthy of a moment's thought.

He felt miserable and despondent.

His look was enough to show the cads of the School House that their shots had struck home, and they grinned with satisfaction, and went on with their peculiar amusement.

"I've been thinking of a round robin to the Head," Mellish remarked. "Asking him, you know, in the name of the school, to keep out slum bounders in future."

"Good egg!" said Levison.

"Jolly good idea," Gore remarked. "Tom Merry can find a new friend, I suppose, if we clear out his favourite pickpocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe set his teeth.

"I ain't a pickpocket!" he exclaimed fiercely.

Gore stared at him.

"Who's talking to you?" he exclaimed.

"You was, or you was talkin' at me, which comes to the same," said Joe.

"My hat! Did you learn that grammar in the Third Form, or in Murderer's Alley?" asked Mellish. "It was Murderer's Alley you lived in in London, wasn't it?"

"It was Blucher's Buildings," said Joe.

"Much the same, I suppose."

"Nice cheerful place, I've no doubt," Gore remarked. "Picking pockets taught in six lessons, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I ain't a pickpocket. You ain't no right to say so, and you wouldn't dare do it, neither, if Master Tom was 'ere," said Joe.

The three juniors glared at him. They knew perfectly well that his words were quite true; but the truth of his words only annoyed them the more.

"You young cad!" exclaimed Gore.

"You dirty gutter toad," said Mellish. "Give me any more of your cheek, and I'll knock you flying."

Joe clenched his fists.

"You won't!" he said.

"Who'll stop me?"

"I will, if I can," said Joe. "You're a coward, Master Mellish. You're afraid of Blake or Master Tom, and you want to bully a kid smaller than yourself."

Mellish flushed scarlet.

It was quite true, and the grins of Gore and Levison showed that they fully agreed with Joe Frayne in that, at least.

"You cheeky young whelp!" shouted Mellish. "Take that!"

He aimed an angry blow at the little ragamuffin's head.

Joe promptly dodged, and Mellish almost overbalanced as his arm swept unresisted through the air.

Then he sprang upon the fag.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Joe, as Mellish's grasp closed savagely upon him.

Mellish cuffed him right and left.

"Yow!" roared Joe. "Yah! Oh!"

He hit out in return.

Mellish caught a heavy drive on the chest, and then an upper-cut under the chin, and staggered away from the little ragamuffin. Joe stood flushed and defiant. But he had no chance. Mellish called to Levison and Gore, and the three of them seized the fag.

"Leggo!" roared Joe. "Fair play!"

But they did not let go, and they did not intend to give him fair play.

They dragged him away from the field.

"Now, then, all together," said Gore, grinning. "Kick!"

Three boots were planted at once behind Joe, and he was sent flying.

He rolled over on his hands and knees.

"Yow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore & Co. returned to the footer-ground. Joe staggered up, and moved slowly away, very dusty and sore, and very despondent.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole the Genius.

SOME of the fellows on the footer-ground had looked round as Joe was being escorted off so roughly, but no one had thought fit to interfere. It was only a fag being ragged, anyway. Joe stumbled away with a sore body and a sore spirit, and every eye was turned upon the game.

"It's no good!" muttered Joe, as he stumbled away. "I sha'n't never get on 'ere! I ain't like the others, and I

never shall be. I do wish that Master Tom 'ad let me run away when I wanted to, I do."

Biff!

Joe was standing under the trees as he uttered that reflection, rubbing his bruises.

A youth in big spectacles, with an expansive brow, ornamented by queer little tufts of hair, and a very large hat pushed on the back of his head, came along, reading a large volume which was open in his hands.

His footsteps made no noise on the grass, and he was reading too intently to see Joe, and as he came behind Joe the latter did not see him.

He walked right into Joe Frayne, and Joe staggered against the trunk of an elm-tree.

"Oh!" he exclaimed.

"Ah!" ejaculated the youth in glasses.

He staggered back, and the big volume he was reading fell with a crash to the earth.

As it lay half open, sprawling there with crumpled pages, the title of the book could be read—"Social Problems Solved," by Professor Balmycrumpet.

The owner of the book was Skimpole, of the Shell.

Joe had seen little of Skimpole. A fag of the Third, naturally, had little to do with fellows in the Shell.

But he had heard the fame of Skimpole, of the Shell.

He had heard of Skimmy's wonderful ideas—of his weird beliefs, his amazing theories.

Skimpole was a youth with a big head and a big brain, and he dipped deep into many subjects he had no chance of understanding.

He was a Socialist, and, as if that was not enough, he was a Determinist, too. He would expound Socialism by the yard, and he tried to expound Determinism, too, and explain its meaning to the boys, but that was somewhat difficult, as it had no meaning.

But Skimpole was not aware of that.

So long as a subject was wrapped up in a cloud of very big words, Skimpole was satisfied. An "ism" which wholly depended upon the dexterous use of such words as "heredity" and "environment" was dear to Skimpole.

Skimpole generally had a book with him, and it was generally a book which would give any normal fellow a headache merely to look at.

Skimpole, naturally, was absent-minded. Indeed, some of the fellows declared that his mind was wholly absent, and never would return.

It was not at all an unusual thing for Herbert Skimpole to walk down a passage reading some tremendous volume, and biff into half a dozen people one after another.

The number of volumes Skimpole had in his study was amazing. It was still more amazing that he read them, and most amazing that he lived to tell the tale.

Skimpole now leaned back against a tree and gasped at Joe, and Joe leaned against a tree and gasped at Skimpole.

"You hass!" murmured Joe.

Skimpole blinked at him through his big glasses.

"Ah! It is you, Frayne?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is!" growled Joe; "and none the better for being run into, Master Skimpole."

"I am sorry, Frayne. I did not see you. I am a trifle shortsighted, and also I was interested in the wonderful writings of Professor Balmycrumpet."

"Ho!" said Joe.

"Have you ever heard of Socialism, Joe?"

"Yes," said Joe.

"Do you know what a Socialist is?"

"Yes," said Joe.

"What is it?"

"Chap who's off his rocker," said Joe.

Skimpole coughed.

"Ahem! Not at all, Joe," he exclaimed. "It is quite true that the general public have this idea, but it is quite mistaken. I assure you, my dear boy, that Socialists are quite as keen as anybody else, and Socialist leaders know how to look after their own interests in a way that is really marvellous."

"Ho!" said Joe. That was a non-committal reply.

"I look forward to the time," said Skimpole, with a wave of the hand, "when the whole world will be lapped in the soft waves of reform, and Socialism will stride triumphant over the wreck of the present capitalistic system. Am I not a man and a brother?"

"Eh?" said Joe.

"Why should a man, because he is called a lord, ride in a softly-padded carriage while I trudge afoot?" demanded Skimpole.

He pointed a bony forefinger at Joe as he made the demand. Joe was for the moment Skimpole's audience.

"Blessed if I know!" said Joe.

"Why should I trudge afoot?" repeated Skimpole fiercely.

"Couldn't you take a keb, sir, or a 'ack?" asked Joe.

Skimpole did not heed the question.

"Shall man be always slaughtered by his fellow man?" he asked. "Shall not the time come when the great truths of Socialism shall be proclaimed from the housetops with the trumpet of doom? Shall it be for ever that the idle rich shall work hard at spending money, and the hard-working man shall be idle in the market-place? Shall the bloated millionaire roll for ever on the tesselated floors of his marble palaces, in the ill-gotten millions screwed from the toiling-classes, who have never possessed them?"

"Ho!" said Joe.

"My friends," said Skimpole, quite carried away by his enthusiasm—"my friends, this iniquitous system must cease. Let us destroy it, my friends. Let us all talk and talk and talk till we have talked away these horrors, my friends! Let us go back to the beginning of the social system, my friends, and I will prove to you the iniquity of the present system. Was man always the slave of his fellow man? No my friend. Take two men on an island——"

"What island?" asked Joe.

"Any island——"

"What two men?"

"Any two men——"

"Ho!"

"Imagine two men on an island," pursued Skimpole, who, like a true Socialist, always came back, in the long run, to an argument founded upon the supposed presence of two supposed men on a supposed island. "There are two men on an island. One works——"

"Does he?" asked Joe.

"And the other idles——"

"Ho!"

"Which one of those two men starves, do you think?"

"Chap who doesn't work," said Joe.

"Exactly," said Skimpole, very pleased. "You are quite brilliant, my young friend. You are right. But in this island, inhabited by millions, we have progressed so far that the man who works is likely to starve, and the man who idles is rich. Where is the justice of that, my friends?"

Joe scratched his head.

"It doesn't seem right, somehow," he said.

"We are going to set it right," said Skimpole. "I am making a beginning here, by striving to convert the boys of St. Jim's to the great truths of Socialism. Boy!"

"Eh?"

"You shall be my pupil."

"What!"

"I will instruct you," said Skimpole, waving the big book which he had picked up. "I—I will open my mind——"

"Oh!" said Joe, dodging back out of reach.

"I will enlighten you——"

"Oh!"

"Come with me," said Skimpole, catching Joe by the shoulder. "Come to my study, my dear boy. I will instruct you. I will enlighten you. I will make you into a Socialist."

"But——"

"Come!"

And Joe Frayne was dragged away by the enthusiastic Skimpole.

CHAPTER 3.

A Willing Pupil.

SKIMPOLE marched the little ragamuffin into his study.

Skimpole's study was shared with Gore, but Gore was at present down on the footer-ground, so Skimpole and his pupil had the room to themselves.

There were many shelves on the walls, filled with books belonging to Skimpole. Skimpole had quite a Socialistic library. There was "Das Kapital," in the original German, which Skimpole could not read, but it looked very imposing. There was a bound volume of the "Tin Whistle," and volumes of other Socialist papers, full of the most instructive articles, in which the writers clearly proved each other to be hollow and bumptious and insincere. Skimpole blinked at his imposing array of books with an eye of pride.

He pushed Joe into a chair.

Joe submitted cheerfully. He had nothing to do that afternoon, and no companionship. He was glad of Skimpole's.

Besides, Skimpole's ideas found an echo in Joe's breast.

The poor lad saw himself despised by many at St. Jim's because of his origin, and he realised very clearly the injustice of that.

It was natural that he should listen to a new theory by which it was proved that everybody was just as good as everybody else.

It was the leaven of fact in the wild theories of Skimpole that attracted Joe. He disliked snobbishness, and disliked injustice, especially when he was the victim of them, and Socialism set out to abolish both.

Whether it would do as much good as harm, whether it was practicable, whether its votaries were sincere, were questions that Joe was not old enough or wise enough to go into—or Skimpole, either, for that matter.

Skimpole sat down, and blinked at Joe in a very benevolent way.

Skimpole had longed for a pupil for a long time.

He never found one.

The fellows would sometimes listen to him, by way of a joke, but they always ended by making fun of his wonderful theories.

Skimpole, indeed, had suffered martyrdom for his opinions, as great reformers sometimes have to do.

Sixth-Form fellows who heard Skimpole proclaim that a junior had as much right to fag a prefect as a prefect had to fag a junior would cuff Skimmy, quite insensible to the splendid arguments he could bring to bear on the subject—beginning, of course, with the inevitable two men on an island.

Skimpole wagged a bony finger at Joe.

"Now, Frayne," he said, "I think you are an extraordinarily intelligent boy—you can understand me."

"Yes, sir," said Joe meekly.

"You are the only fellow at St. Jim's who has shown any appreciation of the great truths of Socialism, Joe."

"Ho!"

"I am going to make you a pupil, and fully instruct you in the tenets," said Skimpole. "I shall make you a Socialist, Joe."

"Yes, sir."

"In the first place, how can it be just for a few thousand men to possess the whole of the land in a country, and for the rest of the population to have to pay them for permission to live on it?"

Joe scratched his nose.

"Is that a riddle?" he asked.

"No, Joe; that is not a riddle. That is a tremendous question which the land-grabbers of the present day are bound to answer. Answer me!"

"I ain't a land-grabber, sir."

"You misunderstand me, Joe. I fear you are stupid."

"Ho!"

"Suppose there are two men on an island——" said Skimpole.

"Yes," said Joe resignedly.

"Would it be just for one of them to appropriate the whole island, and charge the other rent for living on it?"

"I s'pose not, sir."

"They did not make the island," said Skimpole. "They were born on it. Naturally, it belongs to one as much as to the other. My dear Joe, England is a big island, the two men have increased to forty millions, but the principle is the same."

"Yes, sir."

"Under Socialism, Joe, everything will be held in common. If a man wants a coat, he will ask for one at a Government store, and take it without payment. If he is hungry, he will be fed."

"My 'at!" said Joe. "I suppose there won't be any work done, then?"

"That is a vulgar error," said Skimpole. "All men are willing to work, if the conditions are made suitable; the number of slackers is really very small. And they are produced by bad conditions—by allowing them to consume strong drink, which saps away the moral fibre, and permitting racing, gambling, and evils of that sort, which unsettle men's minds. Under Socialism, Joe, everyone will have plenty of everything; everybody will be just as good as everybody else, if not even a little better. Do you comprehend me, Joe?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Even under the present system, we can put our principles into force," said Skimpole. "Let us live up to our principles. If a man has something you want, and does not need it himself, are you not entitled to take it?"

"Wouldn't that be thieving, sir?"

Skimpole smiled pityingly.

"My dear Joe, there will be no thieving under Socialism. It will be called by quite another name. We are going to confiscate the National Debt, for instance. But we shall not call that stealing. We shall call it confiscation."

"Oh!"

"You see, there is a great difference in names, Joe."

"Oh!" said Joe slowly. "So if I was to steal your coals, Master Skimpole, it would be stealing and wrong, but if I was to confiscate them, that would be all right."

"Exactly!"

"And I 'spose I 'ave a right to anything that the other chaps have, as I'm equal to them, and just as much entitled to anything as they are?"

"Certainly!"

"I ain't got a bicycle," said Joe; "the other fellows have."

"You are certainly entitled to the use of the bicycles, as much as their so-called owners, Joe. Under Socialism all bicycles will be nationalised—that is to say, they will become common property."

"And if I want some jam——"

"Under Socialism all jam will be nationalised."

"Werry good!" said Joe, smacking his lips. "Then I could go and ask for as much as I wanted?"

"Certainly!"

"Crikey! I wonder heverybody ain't a Socialist," said Joe.

"The world is not sufficiently enlightened," said Skimpole. "But it is coming, my friend. The dawn is coming."

Joe looked out of the window.

"It's a jolly sight past dawn," he said. "It's arternoon, sir."

"I was speaking metaphorically, Joe."

"Ho!"

"You understand now? You are a Socialist, Joe?"

"Yes, rather," said Joe enthusiastically, "I ham, Master Skimpole."

"Very good! I will continue to give you instruction every day, and ere long you will be able to read the precious volumes of Professor Balmycrumpet."

"Oh!"

"Then you will learn—— Dear me!"

The door of the study was thrown open.

Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form, appeared. He rushed into the study with an exclamation, and grasped Joe Frayne by the shoulder.

"So you're here!" he exclaimed.

"'Ere I am," said Joe.

"I've been looking for you everywhere since I came back," said Wally aggressively. "What the dickens are you doing in a Shell study? Chumming up with Skimmy?"

"Yes. You see——"

"Pray do not interrupt us, D'Arcy minor," said Skimpole, blinking at the cheery fag. "I am instructing Frayne in the principles of Socialism."

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Frayne has already adopted my views, and——"

"Then he'd better unadopt them, sharp," said Wally. "No cranks allowed in the Third. You can keep 'em in the Shell."

"Really, D'Arcy minor——"

"Come on, Joe!"

"Master Skimpole ain't finished yet," said Joe hesitatingly.

"Indeed I am not! I——"

"He never does finish," Wally explained. "Come on!"

"Really, D'Arcy minor——"

"Oh, shut up, Skimmy!"

"A sincere Socialist never shuts up, D'Arcy minor. I——"

"This way, Joe!"

"But——"

"Come on!"

"I say——"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Wally, exasperated; and he grasped Joe and dragged him out of his seat. "Come on!"

"But——"

"Out you come!"

Wally whirled his chum towards the door.

Joe struggled, but D'Arcy minor took no notice. He whisked Joe out of the study, and into the passage, and jammed him against the wall there.

"Now," he panted, "are you coming?"

Joe grinned.

"Yes," he said.

And they went down the passage together. Skimpole shook his head solemnly after them. He felt that it was hard to have his only pupil reft from him in this lawless manner. But he opened the great volume of Professor Balmycrumpet, and in the tremendous truths contained in those pages Skimpole soon forgot everything else.

CHAPTER 4.

Joe Loses a Friend.

JOE FRAYNE walked away with Wally, with a very thoughtful expression upon his rugged little face.

Joe was an intelligent lad, capable of deep thinking sometimes, though he was not, of course, old enough to deal with the problems Skimpole had put into his head.

Much of what Skimpole had said to him appeared very reasonable, and indeed unanswerable, and much of it, too, was specially applicable to his own circumstances.

Joe was a keen little fellow, and he was enthusiastic, and he had a strong love of justice and fair play.

Skimpole's ideas had taken a firm hold upon his mind.

Joe had become a Socialist, as he understood it. And the principles enunciated by Skimpole, strangely enough, agreed in many ways with those that were current in Blucher's Buildings, where Joe was brought up. They were not called Socialism there, of course; confiscation was known as "pinching," but it was much the same thing.

Wally looked curiously at his chum. He could see that some unusual ideas were working in Joe's mind, from the expression of his face.

"What's the matter with you, Joe?" he asked suddenly.

"Nothin'," said Joe.

"You've got something on your mind."

Joe stopped and faced him.

"Look 'ere!" he exclaimed.

"Well?"

"Ain't I as good as the other chaps?"

"Certainly!"

"Good as Jameson or Fane or Gibson?"

"Yes."

"Suppose there was two men on an island," said Joe.

Wally stared.

"Two men on what island?" he said. "The island in the river?"

"Any island."

"Well?"

"Wouldn't one be as good as the other?"

"That would depend upon the kind of chaps they were, I suppose," said the amazed Wally. "But what on earth are you talking about?"

"That's Socialism," said Joe.

"Oh, you're off your rocker! You don't mean to say that you've been taking any notice of Skimpole's awful rot?" demanded Wally.

"Suppose it's true?"

"Suppose rats!"

"It's a chap's duty to spread the great truths," said Joe stoutly. "Master Skimpole says so. He says he's suffered for his opinions."

"Suffered for his silly rot, you mean."

"If everybody had their rights, everybody would be as good as everybody else," said Joe. "I've got a right to use Kildare's bike if I want to."

"I shouldn't advise you to try."

"Why not?"

"Kildare'd lick you."

"That would be injustice—the oppression of the weak by the strong."

Wally chuckled.

"I don't know about that, Joe. I only know you'd get the licking."

"I should resist."

"What, resist Kildare!"

"Certainly. It's a Socialist's duty to resist tyranny."

Wally could only stare.

"I'm going to have the things I'm entitled to," said Joe. "Why shouldn't a chap have a study to himself, just because he's in the Third Form? The chaps in the Fourth have studies to themselves, and so do the Shell."

"So shall we when we pass into the Fourth."

"We mayn't ever do that. Besides, it's a question of the justice of the thing."

"You'd better see the Head about it," grinned Wally.

"So I would!"

"Oh, don't play the giddy goat, Joe! I can't understand you. You seem to have gone quite off your rocker," Wally exclaimed.

"It's Socialism."

"Well, if Socialism is another name for going off one's rocker, the less you have to do with it the better."

Joe sniffed.

"Come into the Form-room," said Wally. "I've brought in some herrings for tea, and Gully's cooking them. Ain't you hungry?"

"Well, a little," said Joe.

"The herrings will be ripping."

Joe snorted, a truly Socialistic snort.

"Why should we have herrings for tea, when Blake and those chaps in the Fourth have first-class prog?" he demanded.

"I suppose they've bought their grub," said Wally, puzzled.

"Bought it!" said the new Socialist scornfully. "How do you buy things?"

"Pay for 'em at a shop."

"What do you pay for 'em with?"

"Money, I suppose."

"Whose money?"

"Hey! Your own, of course."

"Where do you get it?"

"From your governor, if you're a kid, or an aunt, or an uncle. I've got a remittance from my elder brother," said Wally. "Old Conway, you know. He's in Parliament now, and I wrote and asked him to explain something in his maiden speech. That made him think I had read it, you see, and he sent me ten bob. I thought that was deep."

"But where does your governor get it?"

"I've never asked him," said Wally.

"It's your duty to ask him," said Joe, with all the virtue of a new convert to the great truths of Socialism. "If it's not come by honestly——"

Wally jumped.

"What!" he roared.

"If it's not come by honestly——"

"Are you speaking of my pater?"

"Yes."

Wally's eyes blazed.

"Then take that!" he roared.

His left came out like lightning, and Joe caught it on the chin, and sat down on the linoleum in the passage.

"'Ow!" gasped Joe.

Wally stood over him with blazing eyes.

"Do you want some more?"

"Yow."

"I'll give you hinting that my governor doesn't come by his money honestly!" roared Wally. "What do you mean, you worm?"

"I—I was only arguing——"

"Then you'd better find some other subject for argument," said Wally, putting his hands into his pockets, "and you can find someone else to argue with, too. I've had enough of you. If you can't speak respectfully of a chap's people, you can keep to yourself. I don't want to talk to you."

And Wally swung away angrily.

Poor Joe sat is the passage, rubbing his chin, and blinking in dismay after D'Arcy minor. He had made Wally very angry; Wally evidently did not understand that a sincere Socialist could not afford to be a respecter of persons.

"Ow!" murmured Joe.

He staggered to his feet.

He was greatly inclined to go quickly after Wally, and tell him he was sorry, and ask him to look over it.

But Wally was striding away without once looking back; and the little ragamuffin had his pride.

He would not ask Wally to make it up.

He went out into the quadrangle with a frowning brow. He was keener on Socialism than ever, and he was already thinking that Wally's action, after all, was due to the "class" training which Socialism condemns. But his new "ism" had cost him his only friend in his own Form at St. Jim's.

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CHAPTER 5.

Joe the Socialist.

TOM MERRY came off the football-field as the whistle echoed there. The match was over, and the Shell had beaten the Fourth by three goals to two.

The Shell fellows, consequently, were in high good humour, but the Fourth were cheerful enough, too. They had put up a good game, and they had had hard luck to lose, and they consoled themselves with that reflection.

"Ripping game!" said Tom Merry, as he towelled himself down.

"Splendid!" said Figgins, of the New House.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his eyeglass. "And Lumley-Lumley played up vewy well at back."

"So he did!" exclaimed Figgins heartily.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley coloured with pleasure. The

Outsider of St. Jim's was pulling very well now with Tom Merry & Co.

"And I'm as hungry as a hunter," Jack Blake remarked. "Luckily, we've got a good tea in the study."

The footballers took their way towards their Houses; Figgins & Co. going off towards the New House, calling in at the tuckshop by the way. Jack Blake tapped Tom Merry on the arm as they neared the School House.

"Coming to tea with us?" he asked. "We're well provided."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Good!" he said. "But may I bring a chap?"

"Manners and Lowther'll come, of course."

"I was going to have young Joe in my study to tea, if he's not feeding with anybody," said Tom Merry, "and——"

"Bring him, too!"

"Yaas, wathah, bwing yourg Fwayne by all means," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm sure we shall all be vewy pleased to see young Fwayne!"

"Yes, rather!" said Digby and Herries together.

"Right you are. I'll look for him now."

"Good!"

Tom Merry walked over to a group of Third-Form fags, while the other fellows went in.

"Seen young Frayne, Jameson?" Tom Merry asked.

Jameson snorted.

"No, I haven't."

"Have you, Wally?"

"Yes," said Wally shortly.

"Where is he?"

"I left him in the Form-room passage."

"What was he doing?"

"Rubbing his chin!" said Wally, and the fags chuckled. Tom Merry looked at D'Arcy minor in surprise.

"Rubbing his chin?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Because it hurt, I suppose," said Wally caustically; and the fags laughed again.

"What was the matter with his chin?" asked Tom Merry.

"Punched," said Wally briefly.

"Who punched it?"

"I did."

"You?"

Wally backed away a little.

"Yes," he said defiantly. "I suppose I can punch a fag's chin, can't I, if he cheeks me, you Shell bounder?"

Tom Merry looked very grave.

"I'm sorry you've been quarrelling with Joe, Wally," he said quietly.

"Well, I'm sorry myself," said Wally. "But I didn't quarrel with him, he quarrelled with me, and that's all there is to say about it."

"Do you mean to say that you're not going to make it up?"

"Rather not?"

"Now, look here, Wally——"

"Oh, stuff!" said Wally. "Don't you begin to preach like my major, Tom Merry. I get enough of it from Gussy."

Tom Merry walked away without replying. He was disturbed by what he had heard. Wally was certainly hot-tempered enough, and ready to quarrel at a moment's notice with friend or foe. But it was not like Wally to bear malice, and Tom Merry could not quite understand his turning against Joe in this way.

It was pretty clear that the change in Wally's treatment of the ragamuffin of the Third was very welcome to a large number of the fags.

They had never really taken Joe up, but they had learned to tolerate him, because he had such a doughty champion in Wally.

But with Wally against him, there was no doubt that the fags would be against him, too, and Joe would drop back into something like his old position in the Third Form at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry's brow was wrinkled as he looked for Joe.

He found the little ragamuffin outside the School House, leaning his elbows on a low window-sill, and watching the pigeons hopping in the quadrangle, with rather a forlorn expression on his face.

Joe started, and his face brightened, as the hero of the Shell came up.

"Hallo, Joe!"

"Yes, Master Tom. Do you want me?"

"Are you feeding with the Third, Joe?"

Joe's face clouded.

"No, Master Tom."

"Then come and have tea with me?"

The fag's eyes glistened.

"You're werry kind, Master Tom."

"Come on!"

Joe walked beside Tom Merry towards the doorway of the School House. Tom looked down at him curiously.

"I see you've been quarrelling with your best friend?" he remarked.

Joe flushed.

"Yes, Master Tom," he said.

"May I ask what it was about?"

"I'll tell you if you like."

"Well, go ahead."

"I'm a Socialist now, Master Tom——"

Tom Merry jumped.

"What!"

"Master Skimpole has been telling me about it," said Joe, with a touch of defiance in his tone, a tone he had never adopted towards Tom Merry before. "It's all true, sir."

"What's true?"

"Socialism, sir."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"But what do you want to bother your kid's head about it for, Joe?" he asked.

"Well, sir, suppose there was two men on an island——"

"Eh?"

"Why should one be considered better than the other——"

"What?"

"It ain't justice, Master Tom."

"But you're not living on an island with another chap, and there's no need for you to think about such things, Joe."

"The chaps don't think I'm as good as they are," said Joe bitterly. "They're down on me. I'm a British boy, ain't I, and ain't I got a right to live in England?"

"My dear kid——"

"It's all true, sir, and them that doesn't like Socialism is them that stands to lose when justice is done, sir."

"That's not for you to settle, Joe, or for me, either," said Tom Merry. "You can think these things out when you get older. For the present, you'd better stick to grammar and arithmetic, kid."

"It's impossible to hide the truth, sir."

"Oh, cheese it; you're as bad as Skimpole!" said Tom Merry, half amused and half angry. "You don't want to make me annoyed, Joe, do you?"

"Ho, no, sir!" said Joe. "Not at all, sir. But the truth——"

"What made you quarrel with Wally?"

"I suggested that his father didn't come honestly by his money, sir. In course he doesn't, being a big landowner, and living on the rents he squeezes out of the men that does all the work——"

"Joe——"

"Yes, Master Tom!"

"There are a lot of people thinking out the land question now, and it may be settled satisfactorily some day," said Tom Merry. "Meanwhile, there's no good in calling names. It may be wrong to do what people have always believed to be right; but it's wrong to call a man dishonest for doing what his father and grandfather did before him, and what is still considered quite legal and fair. And you're not old enough to think out these questions, Joe, my lad—and above all, you've no right to pass personal remarks upon anyone. Do you understand that?"

"Master Skimpole does, sir."

"Skimpole's an ass."

"But a sincere Socialist cannot afford to be a respecter of persons, sir."

"Oh, don't talk rot, Joe!" said Tom Merry, quite irritably. "Remember, there is no excuse whatever for anybody, under any circumstances, to neglect the ordinary laws of good breeding. If a man's principles make him act in an ill-bred manner, there is something very wrong with his principles. Now shut up and come into tea."

Joe shut up.

But there was a rebellious look upon his rugged little face. For once Joe was not at one with the fellow he had always admired and looked up to as a leader.

CHAPTER 6.

Literature for Skimpole.

"VEWY glad to see you, Joe, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook hands with young Frayne in the kindest manner in the world.

"Thank you, sir!" said Joe.

"We've got really a decent spread," said Jack Blake. "I was going to ask Fatty Wynn, too, but he's got a feed on in the New House. What have you been doing this afternoon, Joe?"

"I've been 'aving a lesson, Master Blake."

"You—you young thief!" roared Gore, grasping Joe by the collar, "That's my jam!" "B-but Master Skimpole said that under Socialism all jam would be nationalised, Master Gore!" stammered Joe. (*See page* 14.)

"Oh, dear! Detained? Make the tea, Dig."

"Right-ho!"

"Yes, I was detained," said Joe. "Mr. Selby detained me for a hower. He often does. But I wasn't speakin' of that."

"Why, what lesson have you been having, then?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"From Master Skimpole."

"Skimmy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "And what has Skimmay been teachin' you, Joe, deah boy?"

"Socialism, sir."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Skimpole has been putting his rot into Joe's head, and causing him to quarrel with Wally," said Tom Merry, looking very red and annoyed.

"Bai Jove!"

"It isn't rot, sir," said Joe. "It's a great truth, sir. The rich, bloated rotters are going to be chucked out, sir, and the down-trodden poor will be rich instead."

The chums of the School House stared at Joe.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Bai Jove! He's got it."

"Suppose there were two men on an island——" began Joe.

"But there aren't, deah boy."

"Suppose there were——"

"I wefuse to suppose anythin' of the sort. Let us stick to the facts. There are not two men on an island. There are eight chaps in a study. Let's have tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"Sit down, Joe," said Tom Merry, pushing his protege into a chair. "Don't talk about things you don't understand, Joe."

"But I does understand, sir."

"Stuff!"

"Suppose there were two men on an island——"

"Oh, ring off the island!" said Blake. "Will you try the sardines?"

"Thank you, Master Blake! But suppose——"

"Bread-and-butter?"

"Yes, please. I— —"

"Good! Pass the sardines, Dig. Ham for me. What will you have, Tom Merry? I can really recommend this ham."

"Right you are!"

And the juniors started tea.

The play had made all the junior footballers very hungry, and they ate with excellent appetites; and as they ate they talked cheerfully, the talk running wholly upon the game played by the rival Form teams.

Joe Frayne had no chance of bringing up the subject that was burning within him.

Like most new converts to any "ism," Joe was eager to talk on the subject, to any length; but the chums of the School House were equally determined that he should not. They had enough of that sort of thing from Skimpole. One Socialist was quite sufficient for one school. That was the unanimous opinion.

Joe was hungry, and he made a good tea. When the meal was over, the little fellow thought he had a chance.

"I say, Master Blake——"

"Hallo!" said Jack Blake.

"Suppose there were two men on an island——"

"There weren't," said Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't everybody as good as everybody else?" demanded Joe.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Weally, Fwayne——"

"Isn't it perfectly evident that——"

Tom Merry took Joe by the shoulder, and led him gently to the door.

"Wot's that for?" asked Joe.

"Buzz off!" said Tom Merry.

"Wot!"

"Buzz off!"

"But——"

"Scoot!"

Tom Merry closed the door on the little ragamuffin. Joe stood in dismay in the passage for some moments. Then he thrust his hands deep into his pockets and strode away.

Joe's mind was far from steady on any subject. The abrupt transition from Blucher's Buildings to St. Jim's had had the natural effect of unsteadying him. And Skimpole's teachings had fallen upon fertile soil, therefore. Most of Joe's ideas were in confusion, and the gratifying discovery that he was every whit as good as the snobs who looked down on him was too valuable to be given up lightly.

Joe had become a red-hot Socialist.

Tom Merry looked round at the fellows in Study No. 6 with a comical expression of dismay. Some of them looked grave, and some were grinning.

"Silly young ass!" said Digby.

"Young chump!" Monty Lowther remarked.

"Off his rocker!"

"Yaas, wathah! The young boundah weally appeahs to be quite off his silly wockah, you know."

"It's Skimpole's bosh that's done it," said Tom Merry crossly. "Some of the snobs have been bothering Joe, and made him ripe for all that rot. I'm getting fed up with the two men on the island, for one."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It was bad enough in Skimmy," said Manners. "But then Skimmy always was a crank, and we could stand it in him. We can't stand it from a fag."

"Wathah not."

"We shall have to cure Joe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll begin by curing Skimpole," said Tom Merry. "I was thinking that we might go and see Skimmy, and put him up to a wrinkle about talking rot to fags."

"Good egg!"

"Wippin'!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry opened the study door.

"Come on, then."

The juniors crowded out of the study, and crowded on to the Shell passage. Skimpole's door was closed, but Monty Lowther kicked it open. The door flew open with a crash, but it did not apparently disturb Skimpole.

Herbert Skimpole was sitting at his table with a pen behind his ear, and a large volume open before him, and blinking at the latter scrutinisingly through his big glasses. Skimmy was evidently lost to the world.

"The cheerful ass!" murmured Digby.

Tom Merry rapped on the table.

"Skimmy!" he roared.

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's started and looked up. He blinked at Tom Merry like an owl suddenly brought into the light.

"Ah, Merry!" he ejaculated.

"Skimmy, you ass——"

"Really, Merry——"

"You have been talking rot to young Frayne, and making him make a silly ass of himself!" Tom Merry exclaimed

Skimpole shook his head.

"Not at all, my dear Merry. I have been explaining to him the great and wonderful truths of Socialism, and I am glad to say that I have found an apt pupil. I hope that through Frayne I shall succeed in revolutionising the whole of the Third Form."

"Bai Jove!"

"It will be a beginning," said Skimpole; "a beginning to the tremendous movement which will sweep capitalism back to the nether pit, which it belongs to, and establish universal fraternity and peace on the earth. Under Socialism——"

"Oh, ring off, Skimmy!"

"Pardon me, Merry, a true Socialist never rings off. You see——"

"I see that you've been filling Joe Frayne's head with bosh!" roared Tom Merry.

"Really, Merry——"

"You've got to stop it!"

"Eh?"

"I want you to stop talking rot to Joe."

"Impossible! A sincere Socialist never stops talking rot—that is to say, never stops talking the wonderful truths of Socialism."

"Same thing!" grinned Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are under a complete misapprehension, my dear fellows," said Skimpole patiently, as he blinked at the juniors. "Socialism is not rot, although the public have a belief that it is. I should have great pleasure in explaining to you——"

"Look here, Skimmy——"

"Let me read you out a few paragraphs from the wonderful book of Professor Balmycrumpet," said Skimpole. "He explains it wonderfully well. Suppose there were two men on an island——"

"Ring off!"

"Would one of those men have a right to demand rent from the other for living on the island? Suppose——"

"I wefuse to suppose, for one. I don't believe there is any such island at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear D'Arcy, you are obtuse. This is due to heredity. A long line of lazy men, living on the fat of the land and doing no useful work, could only produce a descendant wanting in the commonest powers of the intellect, such as we behold in you——"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look here, Skimmy——"

"Pray do not interrupt me, Blake. I will explain——"

"Will you stop talking rot to Joe?" roared Tom Merry.

"Certainly not! He is my pupil—a very apt pupil," said Skimpole. "I am going to make him a really enthusiastic Socialist."

"You're not!"

"I insist that I am! In the course of time I hope to convert you fellows, too. There is a proverb that with stupidity even the gods contend in vain, but I hope——"

"My hat!"

"You won't stop it with Joe?" asked Tom Merry.

"I cannot! As a sincere Socialist——"

"Rats! Then we'll take you as a pupil, and give you a lesson!" said Tom Merry. "Bump the silly fathead!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors laid violent hands upon Skimpole, and dragged him out of his chair.

He was whirled off the floor and bumped on the carpet.

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's roared.

"Ow! Ow! Leave off! Yow! Hah!"

"It's all wight, deah boy! It's our bewedity that's makin' us do this," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Give him anothah, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yow!"

"Now shove his rotten books on him and leave him!" said Jack Blake.

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, I—I protest! Yow! If you cannot meet argument with argument, you should—Ow!—retire. Yow! Groo!"

Tom Merry dragged the books off the lower shelf.

They came down in a heap, and the juniors piled them upon Skimpole. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's struggled and gasped under a crushing weight of literature.

"Yow!" he roared. "Greo! Oh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Pile 'em on!"
"Go it!"

Books were dragged from right and left—books on Socialism, books on Determinism, books on Heredity and Environment, books on Evolution, books on Physiology and Psychology, books on every subject that could not possibly be supposed to interest a fellow of Skimpole's age. Books in dozens and scores. There were books to the right of them, books in front of them, and books on top of Skimpole.

The amateur Socialist disappeared under the heaps of heavy literature—heavy in two senses of the word. He gasped under the weight of learning. Then the juniors, laughing loudly, streamed out of the study, leaving Skimpole buried in deep lore.

"Ow!" gasped Skimpole. "Really—— Ow!"

CHAPTER 7.

Skimpole, Hass!

"BAI Jove!"
"My hat!"
"Skimpole again!"

Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had stopped before the notice-board in the School House.

There were generally a goodly number of papers on that board, and as a rule most of them failed to interest the juniors.

Notices about classes, about choir practice, and so on, failed to draw an attentive audience, and even footer notices only interested, as a rule, the fellows whom they concerned.

But there was a new notice up, in a well-known sprawling hand, that drew a crowd of fellows round to look at it.

Kildare and other magnates of the Sixth had read it, and passed on laughing, but it held more attention from the juniors.

The notice was in the hand of Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, and it ran:

"NOTICE!

"A great meeting will be held in the Shell-room this evening, at seven o'clock, to discuss various problems of great interest to all concerned. Seniors as well as juniors invited. (Signed) HERBERT SKIMPOLE, H.A.S.S."

The alphabetical adjunct to Skimpole's name caused some interest.

"My hat!" said Blake. "I knew that Skimpole was an ass, and I knew that he had great aspirations, but I never expected him to aspirate the ass."

"Bai Jove!"
"Hass!" said Digby.
"I wonder what it stands for?"
"Where's Skimmy?"
"Make him explain!"
"Hallo, Tom Merry! Have you seen Skimmy?"

The Terrible Three had just come in. It was the day after the Form match, and the morning school had been dismissed. Tom Merry came over towards the crowd of juniors.

"What is it?" he asked.
"Notice up by Skimmy, of your Form."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"What do the initials mean?"
"Hass!" said Monty Lowther, with a yell of laughter. "I suppose Skimmy's describing himself, only a little too emphatically."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Seen Skimmy?"
"Faith, and here he is!" exclaimed Reilly of the Fourth. "Skimmy! Skimpole! Skimmy! Arrah, and come here, ye spalpeen!"

Skimpole did not reply or look round. He was walking along in a brown study, with a huge volume open in his hands, reading it as he went. It was the famous volume of Professor Balmycrumpet.

"Skimmy!"
"Skimpole!"
"Come here!"
"Faith, and I'll wake him up!"

Reilly ran towards Skimpole, and stopped just in front of him, and held up his foot for Skimpole to walk upon. Skimpole walked right on, and the toe of Reilly's boot prodded him in the waistcoat.

"Ow!" gasped Skimpole.

He staggered back, and the huge, heavy volume dropped with a crash to the floor. Reilly gave a wild yell. The corner of the volume dropped upon his toe, and he leaped clear of the floor, and then stood on one foot, clasping the other with both hands.

"Ow!" he yelled. "Ye mad hatter! Yow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Really, Reilly——"
"Yarooh!"

"I felt a shock upon my waistcoat," said Skimpole, blinking round in surprise through his big spectacles. "It was very remarkable. I consider——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yow! Oh!"

"This way, Skimmy," said Tom Merry, seizing the genius of the Shell by the arm and dragging him towards the notice-board. "What does that mean?"

"My dear Merry——"
"Explain, ass!"

"It means that a meeting is to be held in the Form-room at seven o'clock, and——"

"I know that, chump! I mean, what do the initials after your name mean?"

"H.A.S.S.?" said Skimpole. "Honorary Associate Socialist Society."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove!"
"Hass!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked round in wonder.

"I do not see any cause of merriment in this," he said. "I am an honorary associate of the advanced body of thinkers known as the Socialist Society. Naturally, I use the initials after my name."

"Naturally! Ha, ha, ha!"
"So suitable!" said Monty Lowther. "Emphatic, but true!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Really, you know——"
"So you're holding a meeting," said Kangaroo. "Is it for the general public, or only for hasses like yourself?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Noble, you can all come—the more the better," said Skimpole. "I am going to make a speech, and demonstrate to you all the wonderful truths of Socialism. I shall prove to you all that you are merely parasites living in disgusting idleness upon the labour of the working classes, and I am sure you will be very pleased when you see it as I do."

"It would be most gratifying!" said Monty Lowther.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall also show you my pupil, and show you how a mere fag can become an advanced thinker by the use of some intelligence," said Skimpole.

"Ha, ha! Who's your pupil?"
"Frayne of the Third."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you ass!" said Tom Merry. "If you succeed in making Frayne as big a duffer as you are yourself I'll squash you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole blinked at them.

"I trust to be able to open your minds," he said. "Even you, D'Arcy, utterly degenerate outcome of a hopelessly decayed race as you are——"

"Bai Jove!"

"I hope to infuse a glimmering of intelligence even into your obtuse brain, my dear D'Arcy."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Yes, you may laugh, my dear fellows!" said Skimpole. "The attempt appears to you to be hopeless. I admit that it may seem so. But I do not despair. Even D'Arcy may be awakened to intelligence by long and painful effort—— Ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a patient fellow, but there was a limit to his patience, and Skimpole had reached it.

The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's stopped suddenly as D'Arcy's knuckles biffed upon his nose, and he sat down with startling abruptness.

"Ow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy pranced round the sitting Shell fellow with brandished fists, and the light of battle gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"Get up!" he roared. "Come on! You uttah wottah! I will knock some of the uttah wot out of you. Bai Jove!"

"Ow!"

"I insist upon your gettin' up immediately, so that I can knock you down, you feahful wottah."

"Yow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You uttahly wude outsidah! I——"
"My dear D'Arcy——"
"Get up! I insist! I——"

Jack Blake dragged his indignant chum away. The juniors walked off, leaving Skimpole sitting on the floor in a very dazed state. He staggered to his feet, and blinked round at a circle of grinning faces.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "Did I say anything to offend D'Arcy, Gore?"

Gore yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Gore——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrathfully, as he walked away. "If I wegarded him as bein' a weasonable human bein', I should insist upon goin' back and givin' him a feahful thwashin'. The uttah wottah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's all go to the meeting at seven," he said.

"Weally, you know——"

"We'll go and rot him and rag him," grinned Jack Blake. "Is that the idea?"

"That's it!"

"Good! I'm on."

"Yaas, wathah! Undah those circs. I shall be vewy pleased to come," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally think that an example ought to be made of Skimmay, deah boys. I wegard him as a feahful ass, and he is makin' anothah feahful ass of young Fwayne. We'll all go and wag him!"

And that was settled.

CHAPTER 8.

High!

TOM MERRY'S idea of turning up at Skimpole's meeting in force, and ragging the lecturer, caught on very well. Skimpole really had no cause of complaint, for if the juniors had not gone for that reason, they would not have gone at all. Skimpole owed it to Tom Merry's idea that he had any audience whatever.

As seven o'clock drew near, the juniors began to crowd into the Form-room.

Some of them took musical instruments to enliven the proceedings. Digby had a mouth-organ, and Herries a tin whistle. Some of them had stumps or bats to clump on the floor. A good many juniors had provided themselves with apples, bought at Mrs. Taggles's little tuckshop very cheaply because they were in an advanced state of decomposition, for the purpose of pelting the speaker when occasion offered. Several more serious-minded youths had brought eggs for the same purpose.

The probability was that Herbert Skimpole, in his efforts to convert the Lower School to Socialism, would have a high old time.

But Skimpole never thought of that.

Like most enthusiastic propagandists, he was willing to talk to any length, on any occasion, and he fancied that people would naturally be willing to listen to him.

He was not at all surprised, when he entered the Form-room, to find that it was already crowded, and that fellows were arriving every moment.

Jack Blake & Co., of the Fourth, were well to the front, with the Terrible Three, and Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, had come over for the occasion.

Fellows of nearly all Forms were represented there.

True, the high and mighty Sixth could not deign to take notice of a Shell meeting. But Lefevre and several more of the Fifth had looked in. And all the lower Forms were there in force.

Wally & Co., of the Third, of course, came. They were breathing wrath and vengeance.

A member of their Form—Joe Frayne—was to be shown at the meeting as a new convert to Skimpole's "rot," as the young rascals termed Skimpole's splendid theories.

And D'Arcy minor and his chums meant to testify their disapproval.

The band of fags forced their way well to the front, and occupied a prominent position. Fatty Wynn glanced at Wally and nudged Arthur Augustus.

"Thoughtful chap your young brother, D'Arcy," he remarked.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Wally.

"Weally, Wynn——"

"He's brought some grub with him," said Fatty Wynn. "See that bag under his arm. Now, that's what I call foresight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You never know how long a meeting is going to last," Fatty Wynn remarked sagely. "You really run a fearful risk of getting hungry, and having nothing about you to eat, if you only reflected, you know."

"Bai Jove!"

"I meant to bring some milk chocolate with me," Wynn remarked, "but—but I ate it instead. I was peckish. Do you notice that you get specially peckish at this time of the year, D'Arcy?"

"Not at all, deah boy."

"Well, I do. I suppose it's something in the air. Do you know what your minor's got in that bag?" asked the Falstaff of the New House.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Jam-tarts, perhaps," said Fatty Wynn insinuatingly.

"Poss., deah boy—quite poss."

"Or perhaps pork-pies."

"Pewwaps."

"Likely enough only sandwiches," Fatty Wynn remarked. "But sandwiches are very staying in a case of necessity, D'Arcy."

"I dare say they are, Wynn."

"Call young Wally over here, and we'll ask him," said Fatty Wynn. "Only out of curiosity, you know, of course."

"Yaas, wathah, though weally I am not cuwious on the subject. Wally, deah boy!"

"Hallo, Gus, old cock!"

"Weally, Wally, that is not a wespectful way to addwess your majah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a severe look at the scamp of the Third.

Wally chuckled.

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!"

"Weally, you young wascal——"

"What have you got in the bag?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn, you are intewwuptin' me."

"Never mind," said Wynn. "What have you got in that bag, Wally? I don't mind having some of the tarts. I get awfully peckish at this time of the year."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you young bounder?" asked Fatty Wynn indignantly, incensed at the manner of the Third Form fag. It was really an honour to the fag to be asked a civil question by a chap in the Fourth, if Wally could only have seen it in that light.

"No tarts," said Wally.

"Jam-puffs, then?"

"Puffs are off."

"Pork-pies, eh?"

"Nix."

"What on earth have you got, then?" demanded the fat Fourth-Former.

"Eggs."

"Eggs!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, in astonishment.

"Yes, eggs—les œufs, dear boy."

"My hat! Bread-and-butter with them, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Hard-boiled eggs?"

"No; not cooked at all."

"Oh! You're going to suck raw eggs, are you?" asked Fatty Wynn. "Well, I believe they're very sustaining. I'll have one and try it, anyway."

"Oh, you can't suck eggs!" said Wally.

"I've done it often enough. In fact, doctors recommend it for people who are in danger of growing thin," said the fat Fourth-Former.

Wally gave a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the dickens——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you cheeky young bounder," began the incensed New House fellow, "if you're looking specially for a thick ear——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let him have one of the eggs, Wally," said Jameson. "If he wants one, let him have one, for goodness' sake."

"Just one," urged Curly Gibson. "He won't want more than one."

Wally grinned.

"You see, we really got them for somebody else, Wynn," he remarked.

"Whom are they for, then?"

"Skimpole."

"Oh, Skimpole's got no appetite, and you don't need to keep up your strength for a speech, if you're going to be interrupted all the time," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll have just one of the eggs, if you like."

"Well, if you'd really like it——"

"Look here, D'Arcy minor, as a matter of fact, I've come over hungry," said Fatty Wynn. "Hand me over an egg to suck before the fun begins."

"Oh, all right; here you are, then," said Wally. "I don't care for raw eggs myself, but if you do, it's your bizney."

"I tell you they're very nourishing."

"Here you are, then. Crack it, and go ahead."

"Thanks, awfully!"

"Buck up!" said Jameson. "There's Frayne coming in, and now we're going to have the fun."

"All right."

Fatty Wynn hastily sucked the egg.

The next moment there was a terrific yell, and Fatty Wynn leaped to his feet, spitting and spattering all round him.

"Groo! Hoo! Ho! Groo!"

"Bai Jove!"
"Wynn! Sit down!"
"Great Scott!"
"What's the matter?"
"Wynn——"
"Yaroop!" yelled the unfortunate Fatty. "Groo! Hah! Yah! Bah! Gah!"
"Bai Jove! What a howwid smell of wotten eggs!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally. "I warned you, Wynn, you know."
"Groo! Ow! Yow! Groooooh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yah—ah—ah—ow!"
Fatty Wynn spluttered frantically. There was a yell of laughter from the crowd of fellows round him.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 9
Mixed!

FIGGINS came to the aid of Fatty Wynn and patted him on the back. Wynn wiped out his mouth with his pocket-handkerchief, and then borrowed Kerr's and used that, and then Figgins's. Then Kerr gave him aniseed-balls to suck to destroy the flavour. It was a rich and lingering flavour the egg had left in his mouth.

Then Fatty Wynn wanted to go for Wally.

The eggs the scamp of the Third had brought into the Hall were not intended—as Fatty Wynn realised too late—to revive and strengthen Skimpole during his speech.

They were intended for pelting purposes, and Wally had evidently obtained a special line, low in price but decidedly high otherwise.

The Third-Formers had retreated to a safe distance, however, and Fatty Wynn was persuaded to sit down and keep the peace.

But he cast several vengeful looks over towards the group of fags. Wally still had the bag of eggs under his arm. No one else wanted one to suck.

Skimpole was getting to business now.

He had arranged a high stool as a rostrum, and upon a little table close to it he had arranged a mass of books and papers.

Joe Frayne was with him, looking very sheepish, but with a look of determination upon his rugged little face all the same.

Joe had duly imbibed Skimpole's opinions, and he had the courage of them, and was prepared to stand up for them before the whole School House.

Tom Merry and his chums were looking over Skimpole's papers. Skimpole blinked at Monty Lowther, as he shuffled some of the sheets.

"Pray do not mix up my papers, Lowther!" he exclaimed. "You will spoil the effect of my speech, you know."

"Impossible, Skimpole!"

"Really, Lowther——"

"Nothing could spoil a speech by you, Skimmy. It is bound to be a work of art—each speech complete in itself, and every sentence a gem."

"Thank you very much, Lowther. I have endeavoured to put my speech into very long words, and, indeed, there are some sentences that contain hardly a word of less than four syllables," said Skimpole. "That is in the best style of Socialist speakers, as you doubtless know."

"Quite so!"

The Terrible Three chuckled as they looked over Skimpole's papers.

They were in fragments—Skimpole used up a great deal of paper, and he frequently ran out of foolscap, and he had written out the notes and heads of his speech upon all sorts of pieces—sheets, half-sheets, and old letters and envelopes.

These he had pinned together, so that they ran in order.

The speech dealt with various subjects; and Monty Lowther's eyes gleamed with humour as it struck him what an excellent effect might be produced by mixing up different parts of the speech.

It was easy enough to do it by unpinning some of the fragments and exchanging their places, and Skimpole was too short-sighted and too flurried to have a keen eye for what Lowther was doing.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "It's a jolly long speech, isn't it?"

Skimpole blinked at him benignly.

"Perhaps so, my dear Merry—perhaps so. But, you see, I deal with many subjects of the most intense interest to all true reformers. I begin on the subject of the inequalities of the social system, and point out that if there were two men on an island such inequalities would be unfair and impossible. Hence——"

"What next?"

"I gradually arrive at the subject of the private ownership of the national land—an awful iniquity! I point out that——"

"And what else?"

"Finally, I give a description of the toiling millions, ground down under the heel of the capitalist and the greedy landlord——"

"Is that all?"

"I can go on to any length. Of course, a true Socialist practically never finishes speaking. He may cease from physical exhaustion——"

"On the part of the audience?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Merry——"

"Speech! Speech!" howled the audience.

They were anxious for Skimpole to begin, and for the fun to begin along with him. Some of the fellows were stamping their boots on the floor, others hammering with bats or cricket-stumps.

"Speech! Speech! Speech!"

Crash! Crash! Bang!

"Speech!"

"Speak up!"

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"On the ball!"

Skimpole fumbled for his notes. Monty Lowther placed the pinned papers in his hands.

"Thank you so much, Lowther."

"Not at all!" said the humorist of the Shell blandly. "Go ahead, Skimmy! Wire in! Put her through! Pile in!"

"Speech! Speech! Spe-pec-e-e-ech!"

Skimpole mounted his rostrum, papers in hand.

He held up a hand for silence. There was a deafening roar and a thunder of stamping and banging.

"I appeal for silence, my friends——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!"

"Yah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry held up his hand, and the roar died away.

Skimpole cleared his throat with a preparatory cough.

He had no reason to cough, but he had heard the Head do it on speech days.

"Ahem!"

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"Pile in!"

"Hear, hear!"

"My dear friends, I am intensely gratified by this numerous concourse and by the eager interest you manifest in the matters I have come to treat," said Skimpole. "I trust you will enjoy this speech——"

"No doubt of that," murmured Lowther.

"I will begin without further preamble. My friends, in looking round upon the social system by which we are—are, in fact, surrounded, in looking upon the policeman's staff—the true symbol of modern government—has it never struck you——"

"Never!" said several voices.

"Eh? I——"

"The policeman's staff has never struck me," said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked in a perplexed way.

"I was not referring to the policeman's staff," he said. "Has it never struck you that the most terrible inequalities exist? Looking upon the state of society as at present constituted, are you not inclined to say—ow! Yow!"

"Not at all!" said Tom Merry.

There was a roar of laughter.

Skimpole sucked his finger.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "I ran a pin into my finger. Owing to scarcity of paper, I have been obliged to have recourse to various fragments, which I have attached to one another by means of pins. Has—which—who—ahem—ah, here is the place! Are you not inclined to say that the social system which can admit of such inequalities must be divided into acres at the disposal of men who are really rich and have done nothing whatever to improve their value?"

"My hat!"

Even Skimpole looked puzzled.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "That is not—not exactly as I wrote it. I must have pinned the wrong piece on——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience yelled.

Skimpole continued. He was getting very flurried now.

"Taking the quantity of land in the United Kingdom which is in the hands of private individuals, who not only do not cultivate it, but charge other men a high rent for doing the work of cultivating it, it seems certain that these

bloated landlords, living—as they do—in the lowest and most overcrowded slums in the East End of London, anxious from day to day even for their daily bread—ahem!"

"Mixed again!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole blinked at his papers in dismay.

They were evidently hopelessly mixed, and the audience had gone off into such uncontrollable yells of laughter, that it appeared hopeless to think of ever bringing them back to a serious mood.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "Upon the whole, I will speak as well as I can from memory. Dear friends and fellow-citizens, I will explain to you—— Yarooh!"

An apple, whizzing from somewhere in the back of the audience, caught Skimpole on the chest.

Back went Skimpole off his stool, and he sat down on the floor of the Form-room with a bump that raised a cloud of dust.

Bump!

"Yow!"

CHAPTER 10.

Eggs for Skimpole.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Skimpole sat and blinked at his audience. His audience looked at him and yelled. They could not help it. They hoped that the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's was not hurt. But they shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I felt a sudden concussion," said Skimpole. "Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Joe Frayne ran to help Skimpole up. Even Joe was grinning.

Skimpole got upon his feet and blinked dazedly. He did not mount the stool again. Perhaps a glimmering of reason warned him that he would be safer standing on the floor.

He raised his hand to command attention.

"My dear friends, I wish to present to you the first convert to Socialism that I have made at St. Jim's——"

"Yah!" roared the Third.

"Silence, please——"

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"Rats!"

"Here is Frayne, a youth——"

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"A youth of intelligence unequalled in his Form——"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Yah!" roared the Third.

"From among a Form of stupid and frivolous youths, I have picked this lad gifted with intelligence——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth and the Shell; but the Third did not laugh. They were furious.

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"Down with him!"

Whiz-z-z!

Squelch!

"Groo!" gasped Skimpole.

An egg, hurled with deadly aim by D'Arcy minor, had caught him just under the nose. It broke there, and splashed over his face.

The odour of that egg was not pleasant. It made the fellows rush away from Herbert Skimpole. Even Frayne ran back.

"Groo! Oh!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

Squelch—smash!

Skimpole staggered back under the shower of eggs!

He gasped for breath, and blinked wildly. Eggs smashed on his face and head and neck and all over his clothes.

There were eggs, and eggs, and eggs, and still eggs! They all had a decidedly aromatic flavour, and they all smashed and splashed upon Skimpole.

The amateur Socialist staggered and shambled under the deadly shower, gasping and snorting and puffing.

The Third were chiefly responsible for the fusillade. But the others were joining in with right goodwill.

Skimpole was smothered.

Eggs clung lovingly all over him, and his youthful convert came in for a fair share of attention. The Third were as much incensed with Joe Frayne as with Herbert Skimpole. They meant to mark their disapproval of both. They marked it—and incidentally they marked the two amateur Socialists of the School House.

"Crikey!" gasped Joe, as the eggs broke over him. "Ow! Crikey! My 'at! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear friends——" gasped Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray answer me with arguments. Eggs prove nothing ——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I must say—ow!—I mean I should remark—groo! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Under the circumstances of the case—groo——"

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

"Groo—oh!—oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The last of the eggs was expended. Skimpole was a sticky mass from head to foot. Joe had already escaped. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's staggered to the door.

Even Socialism seemed to Skimpole now of less importance than getting into a bath-room where there was a plentiful supply of hot water and soap.

"Stop him!" shouted Gore. "Roll him over!"

"Bump him!"

But the juniors stood aloof from Skimpole. In his eggy state he was not pleasant to the touch, and still less pleasant to the smell.

"Let him go!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Eggs-actly!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You roll him over, Gore!"

"Ahem—well, you see——"

Skimpole disappeared. He staggered along the passage carrying his odour with him. There was a sharp exclamation as Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came out of his study with Herr Schneider. Both the masters stopped aghast.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Do you notice a remarkable odour in the passage, Herr Schneider."

The German-master sniffed.

"Mein Gootness!" he said. "I tinks tat I does, ain't it. I tinks tat dere is sumting wrong mit der drains, ain't it, pefore!"

"It is extraordinary!"

"Py Chove!" said Herr Schneider. "It is more tan te smell of sour krout, my dear Herr Linton. I have neffer ——"

"Is it not somewhat like mouldering eggs——"

"Ja, ja; dat is so!"

"Dear me! Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Good heavens, Skimpole! What are you smothered with —and your clothes, boy? And the smell—it is terrific!"

"It is derrible pefore!"

"Skimpole! Boy——"

"Ach! It is awful!"

"I'm very sorry, sir, but—but some eggs—ahem!—groo ——"

"Skimpole, have you been pelted with eggs?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Why? What does it mean? Who has dared to act in this outrageous manner?" Mr. Linton thundered.

"I—I was delivering an address upon Socialism, sir——"

"Upon what?" gasped the Shell-master.

"Socialism, sir!"

"And the boys treated you in this manner, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I can only say you have received what you deserve for your folly, Skimpole," said the master of the Shell tartly. "Go and clean yourself at once, and make it a point in future not to talk about matters you do not understand!"

"If you please, sir——"

"You may go, Skimpole."

"But I should like to assure you, sir, that I understand the subject perfectly. I could explain the whole state of the case to you, sir, in less than an hour. Suppose——"

"Mein Gootness!"

"Skimpole!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir. Suppose there were two men on an island, sir——"

"Go at once and clean yourself, Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir. Suppose—— Ow!"

Skimpole left off supposing as Mr. Linton pinched his ear very hard. The master of the Shell wiped the yolk off his finger and thumb, and sniffed wrathfully. Skimpole went on his way, and was soon splashing in hot water, and lathering soap over himself.

The meeting in the Form-room broke up with great hilarity.

It was the general opinion that Herbert Skimpole would not be in a hurry again to call a meeting to hear lectures upon the subject of Socialism, and in that opinion the juniors were quite right. Even the enthusiastic Skimpole was "fed up" for the time being.

After he had got rid of the flavour of the eggs—which was not soon, Skimpole thought it over—and he came to the conclusion that he would devote his time to quiet propaganda—and to the further instruction of his promising pupil. Which was to lead to further adventures for poor Joe, who was likely to find many breakers ahead in his efforts to spread the light in the Third Form-room.

CHAPTER 11.
Gore is Not Satisfied.

GORE came into his study in the Shell passage. Skimpole was sitting by the fire, with a big book open on his knees—needless to say, it was the famous volume of Professor Balmycrumpet, that benefactor of the human species. Gore grinned at the genius of the Shell.

Then he sniffed—emphatically.

"You blessed ass!" he exclaimed. "Why haven't you scraped yourself? There's a niff of eggs in the study!"

Skimpole blinked up at him.

"I am sorry if such is the case, Gore. But I have really been washing myself for upwards of half an hour, and I have changed my clothes."

Gore sniffed again.

"I suppose you'll never quite get rid of the flavour," he remarked. "Blessed if I don't think you might keep out of the study, and air yourself a bit."

"Really, Gore——"

"You'll have to take your rotten books off the table, anyway," said Gore. "I'm going to get my tea now. I'm pretty late as it is."

"I am very busy——"

"What are you doing?" asked Gore, looking at Skimpole's books and papers, which were thickly scattered on the table.

"I am making notes of some of the more important observations of Professor Balmycrumpet, on the subject of land monopoly," explained Skimpole. "I intend to embody them in an article for the 'Weekly,' entitled——"

"Rats!"

"Nothing of the sort, Gore. The article will not deal with rodents at all, but with the question of the private ownership of land. You see——"

"No, I don't! Take that rubbish away!"

Skimpole stared.

"That is not rubbish, Gore!" he exclaimed, in amazement. "That is a most valuable collection of extracts from the wonderful works of Professor Balmycrumpet——"

"Will you clear the table?" roared Gore.

"Certainly not! I——"

"Then I will!" said the bully of the Shell.

And he suited the action to the word. With a sweep of his arm, he swept the books and papers from the table, and they descended in a whirling shower upon the carpet.

Skimpole started to his feet with an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh, really, Gore——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "You can sort them out again, you know, when you want to make some more balmy extracts. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gore, I regard you as a beast! If course, your beastliness is the result of your qualities bestowed by heredity——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Gore went to the cupboard to get out the materials for tea. He looked round the cupboard with a frowning brow, and then looked back at Skimpole.

"Where's the jam?" he demanded.

Skimpole did not reply. He was on his knees collecting up his valuable extracts from the works of Professor Balmycrumpet.

"Skimpole!" roared Gore.

Skimpole blinked up.

"Eh? Did you speak?"

"Yes, idiot! Where's the jam?"

"Jam!" said Skimpole vaguely.

"Yes. Have you seen my jam?"

"Your jam!" said Skimpole, collecting up scribbled pages and covering them over to put them in their proper order. "Jam—yes! Down-trodden millions—bloated House of Lords—sufferings of the titled idlers—no, that is not right—sufferings of the overworked unemployed—ahem!—did you speak, Gore?"

"Where's my jam, you ass?"

"Oh!" said Skimpole. "Your jam?"

"Yes, chump! Have you taken it out of the cupboard?"

"Certainly!"

"Where is it, then?"

"I am afraid, Gore, that there will be none left for you," said Skimpole, blinking at him. "I am sorry, Gore, but I fear that such is the case!"

Gore gave a yell of wrath.

"You—you burglar! Have you eaten it?"

"Oh, no! I do not care for jam!"

"Then where is it?"

"I have given it away!"

Gore stood transfixed. He fixed a glare upon Skimpole that might have made a stone image shiver.

But Herbert Skimpole did not even see it. He was busily collecting up his valuable papers and putting them in order.

"Down-trodden peers—I mean, down-trodden people—Good! Abolition of the House of Commons, as a danger to the State—ahem!—I mean, House of Lords, exactly—titled loafers, coroneted corsairs. Good! Eh? Did you speak, Gore?"

"You gave my jam away?" demanded Gore, in terrible tones.

"Not your jam, Gore," said Skimpole, resting from his labours for a minute or two to explain the matter satisfactorily to Gore. "Not your jam, Gore. Under Socialism, all jam will be nationalised."

"Eh?"

"I found a person who was desirous of jam, and I found a pot of jam," said Skimpole. "What more natural than that I should place the two in suitable juxtaposition—present the supply to the demand?"

"You—you——"

"The person in need of jam has been supplied," said Skimpole. "The jam will be devoted to a good object. What more could you possibly desire, my dear Gore?"

"I—I——"

"I am quite willing to argue the matter out with you, Gore," said Skimpole, with a benevolent smile. "I am always prepared to devote time and trouble to enlightening the ignorant, and attempting to awaken the mental faculties of the stupid and prejudiced. I will cheerfully explain to you——"

"I—I—— Whom did you give the jam to?" roared Gore.

"My pupil."

"What! Frayne?"

"Yes, Gore; my very promising pupil—young Frayne, of the Third," said Skimpole. "I will explain to you that, in reality, the jam really belonged to him as much as to you. Suppose there were two men on an island, and the chief product of the island was jam——"

"You've given my jam to young Frayne?" gasped Gore, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"Certainly. Now——"

Skimpole got no further.

Gore made a wild rush at him, and rolled the unfortunate Socialist over among his newly-scattered books and papers.

"Oh!" gasped Skimpole. "Ow! I——"

Gore slammed Professor Balmycrumpet's heavy volume down upon Skimpole, and then turned the inkpot over him. The black fluid descended upon the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's in a drenching shower.

Some of it went down Skimpole's neck, and some into his eyes, and some into his mouth. He gave a spluttering whoop.

"Ow! Gr-r-r-r-ro-ro-ro-ro-ro-o-o-oh!"

"There, you chump!" panted Gore. "Now I'll look for young Frayne, and give him the same."

"Gro-o-o-o-och!"

Gore left the study and slammed the door.

Skimpole sat up dazedly amid books and papers and ink. He looked very like a Christy minstrel, excepting that his expression certainly was not jolly.

"Oh!" groaned Skimpole. "Yow! I—I feel very unpleasant—very inky and unpleasant! I—I wonder whether I have done anything to make Gore angry. He certainly seemed very violent. Ow!"

CHAPTER 12.
Jam for Joe.

"CRIKEY! That's good!"

Joe Frayne expressed that opinion.

He was standing in the passage, with a pot of jam in one hand, and a large spoon in the other.

Joe was eating jam.

Jam had been a very rare treat in Joe's early days. It was almost an unknown luxury among the inhabitants of Blucher's Buildings. Since coming to St. Jim's, certainly, Joe had had a better time, but his sweet tooth was not yet satiated. He enjoyed revelling in jam, and to commence operations on a large pot with a large spoon was joy to Joe.

Owing to Gore's having laid in a new pot of jam for his tea, and to Skimpole's having given it away, on Socialistic principles, Joe was enjoying himself.

He could not even wait to get his prize away to a safer distance. He started on it in the passage.

"Prime!" murmured Joe. "Crikey! It's simply prime! Who wouldn't be a Sosherlist—eh? It's prime!"

Such was the scene that Gore beheld as he came raging down the passage. Gore stared at the Third-Form fag with fury in his gaze.

"So it's you!" he exclaimed.

Joe looked at him.

"Have some?" he asked.

"What!"

"Have some jam?" said Joe, hospitably. "I don't mind sharing out. That's what a Socialist has to do under Socialism, you know."

"You—you——"

"If you wouldn't mind using the same spoon——"

"You—you——" gasped Gore.

"Crikey! It's jolly good jam—prime!" said Joe.

"You—you young thief!" roared Gore. "That's my jam!"

"Wot!"

"That's my jam—my jam, you young rascal!"

Joe shook his head.

"It's mine!" he said.

"You've stolen it from my study!" said Gore, grasping the fag. "You young scoundrel! I—I'll lick you till you can't crawl! My jam!"

"B-but—but Master Skimpole said that, under Socialism——"

"You—— I——"

"Under Socialism, all jam would be nationalised," stammered Joe. "It's as much mine as it is yours; it is really, Master Gore!"

Gore gasped with rage.

"I'll jolly well show you!" he roared.

"B-b-but——Ow!—Ah!"

Gore slammed Joe against the wall, and slid him down into a sitting position on the floor, with his back to the wainscot. Holding the fag there with his left hand, Gore proceeded to spoon out the jam with his right.

It looked as if he were going to feed Joe like a baby, but that was far from Gore's intention. After seeing the little ragamuffin feeding direct from the jar, Gore did not feel inclined to eat any of the jam himself. He resolved to devote what remained of it to giving Joe a lesson—some instruction that would be likely to stick.

He spooned the jam out, and plastered it over Joe's face and hair with a liberal hand.

The fag struggled and squirmed, but he could not escape the powerful grasp of the Shell bully.

The more he struggled, the more tightly Gore held him, and all the time the burly Shell fellow was plastering him with jam.

Joe's head and face were soon a sticky mass.

"'Elp!" yelled Joe desperately. "'Elp! Ow! 'Elp!"

"There, you young beast——"

"'Elp!"

"Take that, you young thief!"

"Ow! 'Elp!"

Tom Merry's study door was thrown open. The Terrible Three were doing their prep., and they could not help hearing the disturbance in the Shell passage.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking out. "Hallo! What are you up to, Gore?"

Kangaroo and Lumley-Lumley and several other fellows came out at the same time. They ran down the passage to the spot where Gore was plastering the unfortunate fag.

Tom Merry caught the Shell fellow by the shoulder, and dragged him off Joe.

Gore did not resist.

He had pretty well cleared out the jam-pot by this time, and Joe was a shocking sight. The little ragamuffin's features had almost disappeared under thick jam.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry sharply.

"The young scoundrel stole my jam, so I've given it to him!" gasped Gore. "He's welcome to it—in that way, anyhow."

"Grooh!" grunted Joe. "Ow! Yow!"

"Joe!"

"Yes, Master Tom. Ow! Groo!"

"Is that jam Gore's?"

"It's as much mine as his, Master Tom," came the jammy response. "Master Skimpole says that, under Socialism——"

"Never mind Skimpole. Was that Gore's jam?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"And you took it?"

"Skimpole gave it to me."

"Skimpole's off his rocker!" said Tom Merry sharply. "You oughtn't to have taken it, Joe. You know that very well."

Joe Frayne looked sullen.

"Under Socialism, Master Tom——" he began.

"Don't talk rot! Go and clean yourself! You deserve to have a jolly good licking!" Tom Merry exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, Master Tom!"

"I mean it, every word. You ought to tell Gore you're sorry for taking his jam."

"I ain't sorry!" said Joe.

"What!"

"Under Socialism, all jam will be nationalised, and then I can have as much as I like. It was as much my jam as Gore's!"

"You young ass——"

"I've a right to take anything I have a fancy to," said Joe defiantly. "I've a right to everything, so long as I'm willing to share with anybody else! I——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Tom Merry turned away, and went back to his study.

"Look 'ere, Master Tom——" began Joe.

But Tom Merry did not listen.

The jammy fag went rather disconsolately on his way. The juniors he met laughed loudly at his aspect. Joe bore it all patiently. The seed sown by Herbert Skimpole had fallen upon fertile soil, and Joe was firmly bound to his new beliefs. There was likely to be more trouble in the School House before the little ragamuffin was cured of his weird faith.

CHAPTER 13.

An Old Acquaintance.

"PLEASE, sir——"

It was the day after the jam episode. Morning classes had been dismissed, and the quad. was crowded with merry, shouting fellows.

Joe Frayne had wandered down to the gates alone. The good progress he had made seemed of late to have been utterly undone. The weird beliefs he had learned from Skimpole had been his undoing. Socialism, as a theory, might be all right, but applied to everyday life it was found very unsatisfactory. And Joe's quarrel with Wally was not made up.

Joe was feeling very lonely just now, though still strong in his new beliefs. He was looking out of the gates of St. Jim's into the road, when a dusty and dirty tramp came along, and stopped to speak to him.

Joe looked at the man with compassion.

The man was dusty, dirty, unkempt. He was a man of able-bodied appearance, and certainly capable of hard work if he had chosen to do any. He did not belong to the unemployed for his appearance plainly indicated that he had never done any work unless it were in prison. He was more likely of the class called unemployable. But Joe's sympathies were easily aroused. Joe had been so bitterly poor himself in his time that he had soft feelings for all who were down in the world, whether by their own fault or not.

The door of the box-room was hurled open, and Joe Frayne was seen standing in the midst of a pile of plunder of all sorts. He turned a startled glance upon the juniors. "Here he is!" roared Blake. (See page 19.)

"Please, sir——"

"'Allo!" said Joe.

"Could you spare a copper to 'elp a pore cove on 'is way?" asked the tramp.

"I ain't got no money," said Joe.

The tramp started and looked at him. Seeing Joe, decently clad, standing at the school gates, he had taken him for one of the boys belonging to the college, noticing no difference between him and the rest.

But Joe's speech and accent betrayed him.

"My word!" murmured the tramp

Joe coloured angrily.

He saw that the man knew him not to be one of the ordinary fellows at the school; but that should not have made a Socialist, who cared nothing for class distinctions, angry. But it cut Joe quite deeply.

"I ain't any money," he said. "You'd better get on."

The man looked at him intently. He was a man of thick-set frame, with a face darkened to the hue of copper by the use of strong drink, and by exposure to all weathers. His eyes were very keen and bright.

"You belong to this 'ere school, young master?" he asked.

"Yes," said Joe shortly.

"Wot might yer name be?"

Joe flushed again.

"Mind your own business!" he exclaimed sharply. "What's that got to do with you, I'd like to know, 'ang you!"

The man grinned.

"You don't know me?" he said.

Joe started.

"Know you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I know you, Joe Frayne," said the man. "So 'ere you are, are you? Good lummy! Fancy meetin' you! Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe trembled. He did not know the man; but he knew that the man must know him. It was someone who must have seen him in the old days—the days at Blucher's Buildings.

He was recognised.

Joe remembered the scene in Blucher's Buildings, when

Tom Merry & Co. had rescued him from the ruffian, Bill Frayne—ruffian and criminal, whether his father or not.

Often the thought had passed through his mind, whether it was possible that Bill Frayne might track him down some day and claim him.

Whether the law would hand him over to such a parent, Joe did not know. He knew little of the law, and what he knew of it had taught him to be afraid of it. He had a deep-seated terror of being found again by Bill Frayne.

If the ruffian found him——

"You don't remember me," said the tramp, grinning—"me—the Weasel! I remember seeing old Bill lay into you, though—I remember. He told me arterwards that a gang of young swells 'ad come and took you away, and left him tied up. I larfed over it many a time. And now 'ere you are!"

Joe was silent.

"They brought you to this 'ere school, did they?" said the Weasel, grinning.

"Yes," muttered Joe.

"And you belong to the school?"

"Yes."

"Who's paying the piper—hey?"

"Tom Merry's uncle."

"Ho! Wot for?" asked the Weasel, in surprise.

It was clear that he could think of no explanation of the strange good fortune that had fallen to the lot of the little waif of Blucher's Buildings.

"Tom Merry is werry kind."

"And you're safe and sound 'ere—eh?" said the Weasel, grinning. "Good clothes, eh, and good grub and plenty of it, and good friends, and money in your pocket?"

"Yes," said Joe.

"And you're going to share with an old friend—eh?"

Joe turned pale.

"I ain't got any money, or I'd 'elp you," said the lad. "I can't now. If it was Saturday I could give you a shilling."

The Weasel chuckled.

"Bill Frayne'd give me more'n a shilling to 'ear you was 'ere," he remarked. "I'm coming in, my lad. You're going to give me some refreshment."

Joe looked alarmed.

"You can't come in 'ere!" he exclaimed.

"Can't I? Why not?"

"It ain't allowed."

"Well, I'm coming in, and you'll ask the servants to give me a bite and sup," said the Weasel fiercely. "It'll be the worse for you if you don't."

He slouched in at the gates.

Joe let him pass, deeply and sorely perplexed. He did not know what to do. He felt a keen sense of shame at a man like this claiming him as an old acquaintance, before the St. Jim's fellows. He feared especially the sneers of Gore and Mellish, and of Pieke and Hobbs in the Third Form.

But he could not keep the man out.

The Weasel, as his breath betrayed, had been drinking, and his recognition of Joe had filled him with an impudent confidence.

He slouched into the quad., and Joe Frayne followed him with uncertain face and hesitating footsteps. He wondered what he should do.

"Look 'ere," he exclaimed, catching at the Weasel's ragged, dirty sleeve—"look 'ere, you get out, and I'll find something for you!"

The man leered at him.

"You'll find something for me 'ere," he said.

"I can't—I——"

"You'd better!"

The man's look and tone were threatening. But Joe Frayne faced him bravely.

"I can't," he said. "Look 'ere, if they see you, you'll be chucked out, and that won't do you no good, nor me neither."

"Not you, sartinly," said the Weasel, with an evil chuckle.

"Wait in the lane, and I'll fetch you something to eat."

"Not 'arf."

"Who is this? What are you doing here?"

It was a sharp exclamation, and Kildare of the Sixth strode towards them. Joe stopped in dismay. The Weasel stopped, and looked doubtfully at the athletic captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare gazed at him sternly.

"What are you doing in here?" he demanded.

The Weasel gave him a glance of half fear and half defiance.

"I've kim in with my young friend," he said. "He's goin' to get an old pal something to eat and drink. Wot's the 'arm?"

"What's the harm?" repeated Kildare scornfully. "You've had too much to drink already, I should say. Tramps are not admitted here. Get out at once. You should have called out to Taggles when you saw this fellow come in, Frayne."

The Weasel sneered.

"Which he's an old friend of mine," he said. "He'd stand by an old pal—wouldn't you, Joe, hey? You wouldn't go back on an old chum?"

Kildare looked sharply at the tramp, and then at poor Joe's troubled and crimson face. He thought he understood; and it made him hard as steel towards the ruffian who was trading on his knowledge of Joe's earlier life.

He pointed to the gates.

"Get out!" he said briefly.

The Weasel looked at him doggedly. He was bigger than Kildare, and stouter built, and the liquor in his head made him belligerent.

"I don't go!" he said. "Not for you."

"Very well!"

Kildare wasted no further words upon the ruffian. He grasped the Weasel by the shoulders, and whirled him towards the gates. The man struggled fiercely, but he seemed like an infant in the grasp of the muscular captain of St. Jim's.

Right through the gate he went whirling, to land in a heap in the road several yards away. He scrambled to his feet with a fierce oath, and glared at the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare stood with ready hands, waiting for him to come on. For a moment it seemed that the ruffian would rush upon him. But he thought better of it, and turning away with a black brow, he slouched off, and disappeared in the direction of Rylcombe.

———

CHAPTER 14.
Not Friendly.

KILDARE turned back from the gate, and dropped his hand kindly upon the shoulder of the waif of St. Jim's.

"You needn't be afraid of that rascal, Frayne," the captain of St. Jim's said quietly.

Joe made a hopeless gesture.

"He knows me, sir."

"He used to know you, you mean, in—in the place you came from?" Kildare asked.

The St. Jim's captain knew all the story of the little outcast of Blucher's Buildings.

"Yes, Master Kildare."

"Well, he can't hurt you now, you know. He couldn't tell the fellows here much that they don't know already, as far as that goes."

"Well, that's right, too," said Joe, somewhat comforted by the reflection.

"And you needn't be afraid of his coming here again, I think; he didn't like the way he was bumped into the road, and he won't want it a second time."

"I s'pose not, Master Kildare. But——"

Joe paused.

"Well," said Kildare, kindly enough.

"He may tell my father I'm here."

The St. Jim's captain became very grave.

"Your father, Joe," he repeated.

"Bill Frayne, sir."

"Ah! But you are not sure that that man was your father?"

Joe smiled bitterly. Neither father nor mother did the little waif know for certain; and if he had been certain, they were not parents he could have been pleased with.

"No, Master Kildare. But I belonged to him."

Kildare laughed.

"You don't belong to him in law, Joe, unless he can prove that he's your father, and I don't suppose for a moment he'd go to that trouble. You're no special use to him, I suppose."

"Not that I knows of."

"Besides, I understand that he's a rotter—a criminal, in fact—and the law would never compel Dr. Holmes to hand you over to such a man.

Joe brightened up.

"I s'pose that's so, sir. But"—he faltered—"I ain't thinking only of that—but the disgrace, sir, for Master Tom, and for the school, too, if he came here."

"Don't think of that, Joe. He's not likely to come, and if he does, you've plenty of friends here to protect you."

"Thank you kindly, Master Kildare."

Kildare nodded with a kind smile, and walked away. He did not think that there was much likelihood of the Weasel turning up again, or of Bill Frayne coming to St. Jim's to claim the boy.

True, it was not exactly pleasant to have a fellow of such origin in the old school. But Kildare's heart was warm and kind, and he was glad that Tom Merry had rescued that little waif from the London slums, to give him a chance in life. And if trouble came to Joe from his old associations, Kildare, the sturdy captain of St. Jim's, would be one of the first to defend him.

Joe moved away slowly in deep and moody thought. The

sight of the Weasel, although he had not known the man till he introduced himself, had awakened all the old thoughts, the old associations. Joe felt once more the slum denizen, the beggar, and vagrant who had picked up a scanty and miserable living in the streets of the grim, great city.

His surroundings seemed strange to him. St. Jim's, with its beautiful old quadrangle, its imposing buildings, its crowds of well-dressed fellows, its wide, green playing-fields, upon which the spring sunshine glimmered, seemed strange, like the vision of a dream, to the lad from Blucher's Buildings. Was it all a dream? Would he awaken some morning to find himself in his ragged bed in the old garret?

A kindly hand dropped on his shoulder, and he started and looked up, to see the friendly, cheery face of Tom Merry.

"Penny for your thoughts, Joe."

Joe grinned. He could not help feeling cheered and inspirited by Tom Merry's pleasant, genial face and kind eyes.

"It's orlright, sir. I—I was thinking of the old place, Master Tom, and Bill Frayne. If he was to find me 'ere ——"

Tom Merry smiled.

"He daren't come here, if he knew you were here, Joe."

"'Ow's that, sir?"

"The police want him," said Tom, sinking his voice. "I have heard about it. He attempted to commit a burglary at Greyfriars School, and the police are looking for him. He has not been captured, but he dare not show himself in public. If he came here, he would be detained and arrested."

"Then he can't come, Master Tom?"

"Not a bit of it."

Yet Joe's face was troubled.

"So you can cheer up, Joe, if that's worrying you," said Tom Merry. "You're in no danger, as far as Bill Frayne is concerned."

"I s'pose not, sir; but——"

"Yes, Joe?"

"Are they likely to ketch 'im, sir?"

"I don't know. He's being looked for, but they've been looking for him some weeks, I think, and he hasn't been found yet."

Joe drew a deep breath.

"I'm glad, sir."

"Glad!"

"Yes, Master Tom. I s'pose it ain't right," said Joe heavily. "But—but he's my father, sir. I couldn't bear the thought of 'im bein' in prison, sir."

Tom Merry nodded.

"I suppose not, Joe. Whatever he is, he is your father, I suppose. You are quite right, Joe. It's not a boy's place to set up and judge his father, anyhow."

"And he's already served a long time, sir."

"I believe so."

"So long as they don't ketch 'im it's all right," said Joe. "It's werry good of you to take any trouble over a convict's son, Master Tom.

"Your father's faults are not yours, Joe."

"The other fellows don't think the same as you do, sir," said Joe, with a trace of bitterness in his tone.

"They will come round, Joe, in time, if you play the game, and stick to that," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry you've fallen out with Wally. He was your friend—your best friend—and now he's off with you, the Third will turn upon you, most of them."

Joe was silent.

"Why not go to him, and make it up?" suggested Tom Merry. "Wally's an awfully decent chap, and not the sort of fellow to swank. Tell him you're sorry you've offended him, and ask him to go on the same as before."

Joe hesitated.

"If you think I ought to, Master Tom——"

"I do."

"Then I'll do it, sir."

"That's right, Joe. Wally's in the gym. I saw him there."

"Werry well, Master Tom."

And Joe walked away to the gym. Joe, as a matter of fact, was feeling his estrangement from Wally very keenly. Wally had been his constant companion, and Joe had grown to value his society more than he had realised.

Wally was in the gym., giving some instruction to Curly Gibson. Curly Gibson, apparently, had not asked for any instruction, and he was not receiving it in a grateful spirit.

"For goodness' sake, Curly, don't hang on the bar like a sack of wheat," said D'Arcy minor.

"I'm not!" roared Curly.

"Well, a sack of potatoes, then——"

"Look here——"

"I'm looking, and I'm blessed if I ever saw such a sight!" said Wally, with a sniff. "Why don't you pull yourself together?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Here am I wasting time, showing you how to do things, and you——"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Curly——"

"Look here, D'Arcy minor——"

"I say, Master Wally——" began Joe timidly.

Wally turned round, and looked at him.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to say—say that——"

"Well?"

"Master Tom thinks——"

"Oh, Master Tom thinks, does he? Well, I'm glad to hear he's started, though it's rather late in life I must say."

"I mean——"

"Oh, don't bother! Look here, Curly, I'll come and show you how to do that."

"Rats!"

"Master Wally——"

"Oh, don't Master Wally me," said the hero of the Third. "Buzz off, and don't jaw. Can't you see I'm busy?"

And Joe, very much discouraged, "buzzed" off.

CHAPTER 15.

A Regular Raid.

"ANYBODY seen my hatbox, deah boys?"

"Eh?"

"I asked if anybody had seen my hatbox," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his monocle into his eye, the better to gaze round Study No. 6

"Yes, I have," said Digby.

"Good! Where is it?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"But you said——"

"I said I'd seen it," said Digby. "Precious difficult not to see it, I think, when you keep the blessed thing so much in evidence, you ass."

"Weally, Dig——"

"But I haven't seen it just lately, if that's what you mean. Is it lost?"

"It weally appeahs so."

"Hurray!"

"Weally, you ass!"

"Then your topper's lost in it?" asked Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hurray!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"By George!" said Herries. "Then you will only have sixteen toppers left, Gussy!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Better put up a notice in the hall about it," yawned Blake. "Lost, stolen, or strayed, a hatbox containing one silk topper. Said topper was not being worn at the time."

"You uttah ass!"

"Anybody giving information leading to the recovery of the same will be presented with a prize thick ear on applying at Study No. 6 in the School House."

"Weally, you fwabjous ass——"

"I say," said Herries, looking round. "Has anybody seen my new collar?"

"Weally, you know, my hatbox——"

"My collar——"

"I haven't," said Digby. "I didn't know you were going in for new collars. I must say you've needed 'em, though."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, forgetting his hatbox for a moment. "You are certainly wathah weckless in the way you wear out old collahs, Hewwies. I must say I am vewy pleased to hear that you are gettin' new collahs."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Oh, bosh!" said Herries. "I left it on the table here, and now it's been shoved away somehow by some silly ass. I wonder——"

"What sort of collar was it?" asked D'Arcy. "Same as you're wearin'. It might have got mixed up with mine."

"Same as I'm wearing," said Herries. "What do you mean?"

"I suppose it was a linen collar."

"Linen collar. You ass!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"What use would a linen collar be to Towser, I'd like to know?" roared Herries.

"Towsah!"

"Yes, ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Was it a new dog's collar, Herries?"

"Yes, of course it was—a new collar with Towser's name

on it," said Herries. "I left it on the table. Some silly ass——"

"Hang it all!" said Digby.

"Well, it's rotten to lose a new dog's collar, Dig, and——"

"Blow your dog's collar!" said Digby, looking puzzled. "Somebody's taken my cricket bat. I had got it out to oil it, and now it's vanished."

"Bai Jove!"

"Mine, too!" exclaimed Blake. "And the cricket-ball, too. Where's that? And hang it all, where's my Latin dictionary?"

"Some silly ass has been japing us!" exclaimed Digby angrily. "Have you been hiding the things for a joke, Gussy?"

"I wefuse to be suspected of bein' a silly ass! I——"

"Well, some silly ass has done it, and I thought it might be you. Perhaps it's a raid from those bounders up the passage."

"Yaas, wathah; but——"

"The Shell bounders, perhaps," said Blake. "Why, look at the mantelpiece. The clock's gone. My hat! And so is the barometer."

"And my hatbox——"

"Oh, blow your hatbox!"

"My dog's collar!"

"It's a raid," said Blake. "I suppose those Shell bounders have been larking. I noticed they came in before we did. Let's go and see them."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of Study No. 6 turned out into the passage wrathfully. They had come in to do their prep., and this was an unwelcome interruption. Someone had evidently raided their study during their absence. It could not have been Figgins & Co. of the New House, for only a few minutes ago Blake had been talking to those cheerful youths. Blake's natural suspicion was that it was the Terrible Three.

There were several excited juniors in the passage. Reilly of the Fourth came up to Blake with a crimson countenance, and his fists clenched.

"Faith, and is it you?" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"Have you done it?"

"Done what?"

"Ye spalpeen!"

"Ass!"

"Ye omadhaun!"

"Bai Jove, you know——"

"Have you done it, Blake?" bawled Hancock.

"Look here!" roared Blake. "What are you getting at? What's done? What's happened?"

"Yaas, wathah! You see——"

"My study's raided!" yelled Hancock. "My chairs have been taken away."

"And my table!" yelled Reilly. "The table's gone intirely."

"And my hearthrug!" shrieked Macdonald.

"And my clock!" gurgled Kerruish.

"And my bookcase!"

"And my kettle!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's a wegulah waid, deah boys! It must be the Shell bounders."

"Yes, rather."

"Faith, and it's so——"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake. "Tom Merry & Co. have been piling the things up somewhere for a lark. We'll give 'em larks!"

"Yaas wathah!"

"Faith, and I remember now I saw Tom Merry in the passage."

"It's clear enough. Come on!"

Jack Blake ran along the passage, with a crowd of excited Fourth-Formers at his heels. He reached Tom Merry's study, and dealt a sounding kick upon the door which sent it flying violently open.

There was a yell from within the study.

Manners had been standing near the door, and it had caught him on the back, and pitched him forward, and he sprawled across the table.

Blake and the rest rushed in wrathfully.

"Now then, you Shell bounders——"

"You chump!" roared Manners. "I—I——"

"Look here——"

"Have you——"

"Get out!"

"Rats!"

"I'll——"

"I'll——"

"Yah!"

"Weally——"

Biff!

A cushion grasped by Manners smote Jack Blake, and he was swept off his feet. He reeled back against his chums, grasping at them for support, and dragged down D'Arcy and Digby in his fall.

That was more than enough for the Fourth-Formers.

With a roar they rushed right at the Terrible Three, and whirled them over by the force of numbers.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther hit out valiantly, and half a dozen of the Fourth rolled on the carpet, but then the chums of the Shell were down.

Over them rolled and sprawled the victorious invaders, gasping and yelling.

"Got 'em!" roared Herries.

"Hurrah!"

"Sit on their heads!"

"Keep 'em down!"

"Gimme that inkpot——"

Blake sat on Tom Merry's chest, pinning him down by weight, and held the inkpot high in the air over his upturned face.

Tom Merry watched it with a startled, wary eye.

"Now then," said Blake wrathfully, "where's the plunder?"

"Eh?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Where's the loot?"

"The—the what?"

"If you don't own up instanter you get the ink! Where's the loot?"

"You silly ass!"

"What have you done with the swag?" roared Blake.

"You—you chump!"

Swish! Splash!

The ink descended.

CHAPTER 16.

Put Into Practice.

"GROOOOH!"

Tom Merry squirmed and gasped under the descending shower. But Blake was sitting on his chest, and Herries was holding his hands, and Digby was standing on his legs. He certainly hadn't much chance to escape.

"Now then," demanded Blake, "where's the loot again?"

"You ass!"

"Are you going to answer?"

"I—I don't understand. What loot? What are you jabbering about? Are you off your silly rocker?" gurgled Tom Merry.

"You've raided our studies——"

"Eh? I haven't!"

"What?"

"We haven't raided you, you silly ass!" roared Tom Merry.

"Well, my hat!" Blake stared at Tom Merry's inky face in great astonishment. "Why didn't you say so before, you ass?"

"Groo! You didn't give me a chance, you chump! Ow!"

"Well, I'm—ha, ha, ha!—sorry! Ha, ha!"

"You—you fathead!"

"Bai Jove, you have been wathah pwevious, Blake, deah boy, when you come to think of it!" remarked the swell of St. Jim's.

"Well, what did they want to cut up rusty for when we came into the study in a quiet and peaceable way to ask for an explanation?" demanded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, if that was quiet and peaceable——"

"You frabjous fatheads!" roared Manners. "Lemme gerrup!"

"Gerroff me chest!" gasped Lowther.

The Terrible Three were allowed to rise. They certainly looked very torn and dusty and untidy, especially Tom Merry.

They glared at the Fourth-Formers. The latter were declaring that they were sorry for the mistake. But they did not look sorry; they were laughing.

"You silly asses!" roared Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you dangerous jabberwocks!"

"Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, our studies have been waided, you know, and we natuwally came to the conclusion——"

"Rats! You never came to a conclusion," growled Monty Lowther. "You're like the little brook—you go on for ever."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, and if it wasn't you Shell bounders, who was it?"

demanded Macdonald. "My study's been raided, I know that!"

"Yaas, wathah! My hatbox——"

"My dog's collar—a new collar——"

"My Latin dictionary——"

"I tell you we haven't had the rotten rubbish!" howled Tom Merry, dabbing his inky face with a handkerchief.

"I wondah—I wondah if it's Skimmay, deah boys?" said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "You know, he believes in nationalising things, you know, and——"

"My hat!"

"We'll see! Come on!"

And the juniors crowded along the passage to Skimpole's study, excepting Tom Merry, who ran off to wash the ink from his face.

Blake kicked open Skimpole's door, and they found the genius of the Shell sitting at the table, pen in hand. He blinked at them through his large spectacles with a benevolent expression.

"My dear friends, you have come just in time!" he exclaimed. "I have just written a splendid exposition of the principles of Socialism, and I shall be very pleased to read it out. Suppose there were two men on an island——"

"Look here, Skimmy," exclaimed Jack Blake, shaking the genius of the Shell by the shoulder, "have you been raiding our studies?"

"Certainly not!"

"Do you know who has? They look as if a Socialist or a burglar or something of the sort had been there."

"Ah, I suppose young Frayne is acting up to his principles!" said Skimpole, rubbing his bony hands in great satisfaction.

There was a roar.

"Young Frayne!"

"Yes," said Skimpole, with a placid smile, "Frayne of the Third—my pupil. He was going to furnish a new room for himself. As a Socialist, he does not see why he shouldn't have a study like a Fourth Form chap, and I strongly advised him to take one."

"My hat!"

"He has therefore appropriated the small box-room, and I suggested to him taking all the things he wanted from the other studies," said Skimpole, with a beaming smile. "Under Socialism, of course, all chairs and tables——"

Skimpole was suddenly interrupted. The incensed juniors rushed upon him and seized him and bumped him on the floor and turned the table over upon him. Then they crowded out of the study, and went to look for Frayne of the Third.

"Found the things?" asked Tom Merry, as he joined the juniors in the passage, with a face freshly washed and quite good-tempered again.

"Young Frayne's got them!"

"Joe?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He's taking his blessed Socialism seriously," Blake explained. "He's taken the small box-room to use as a study, and has raided our quarters to furnish it."

"Now we're going to have him out!"

Tom Merry looked worried for a moment. But he hurried along with the juniors to the little box-room.

The door was thrown open.

There was a startled exclamation from within. Joe Frayne was standing there with a cricket-bat in his hands. The floor was piled with plunder of all sorts. All kinds and conditions of articles were there. Joe appeared to have taken everything excepting Herries' bulldog—he couldn't manage Towser.

He turned a startled glance upon the juniors.

"Here he is!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Collar him!"

And the juniors crowded wrathfully in.

CHAPTER 17.

Wally Comes Round.

JOE FRAYNE tightened his grasp upon the cane handle of the bat. He seemed inclined to defend his ill-gotten gains by force as the juniors crowded into the room. He would not have stood much chance. The fellows were in a humour to give the waif of St. Jim's a very severe handling indeed. But Tom Merry stood between.

"Joe!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Joe gave him a half-guilty and half-sulky glance.

"Yes, Master Tom!" he muttered.

"What do you mean by this?"

"Master Skimpole says——"

"Oh, wats!"

"But he says that under Socialism everything will be nationalised, sir," said Joe. "I'm only taking my share in advance, sir."

"You young ass!" said Tom Merry, half amused and half angry. "Skimpole can talk what rot he likes, but taking another chap's property is stealing."

"Oh, sir!"

"And you'd be jolly well flogged for it if your Form-master knew," said Blake.

"Oh!"

"Well, all the things are here," said Tom Merry. "We can take them away again."

"And give that young bounder a jolly good bumping, too."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, let him off!" said Tom Merry. "It's all Skimpole's doing—Joe isn't old enough to know what a silly ass Skimmy is. Let him off."

"But he may begin the same thing again," said Blake wrathfully.

Joe looked alarmed. He saw very clearly that but for the protection of Tom Merry at that moment he would have a very severe handling. It dawned upon him that, however justifiable his proceedings might be according to the weird tenets of Herbert Skimpole, they were hardly safe, at all events, to put into practice.

"Leave him to me," said Tom Merry, putting his hand through Joe's arm. "I know he deserves a licking, but he's a silly young ass, and I want you to let him off—as a favour to me."

"Certainly, deah boy! If you put it like that, there is only one thing to be done," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Oh, all right!" grunted Blake.

And Tom Merry walked Joe out, while the juniors sorted out their property. Joe was very silent and dismayed as he walked beside the hero of the Shell. He saw that, although Tom had interfered on his behalf, he was very angry.

"I'm sorry, Master Tom!" he faltered.

"That's not enough," said Tom Merry shortly. "You must promise me never to do anything of the sort again, Joe, and not listen to Skimpole's rot any more. You must not take it upon yourself, at your age, to hold unusual opinions, and act upon them against the wish of your elders. You understand?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Do you promise, Joe?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"You promise?"

"Honour bright, sir."

"Good!" said Tom Merry, and he laid his hand on Joe's shoulder. "When you're older, kid, you can think these things out. That's all now."

Joe went away with downcast face.

He felt that he had made his kind protector angry, and that he had not made a success of things as things as Skimpole's pupil. And he had lost, too, the friend who had long stood by him manfully in the Third Form.

Joe dropped disconsolately upon a seat at the end of the lower passage. He felt alone, solitary, miserable.

He sat there plunged in deep and dejected thought. There was a sudden footstep in the passage, and a soft chuckle, and he looked up to see Wally standing before him, with a grin on his face, and his hands in his pockets.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally. "You take the cake, I think! You prance off with the whole biscuit factory. I hear you've been putting Socialism into practice, and working off Form-Four bizney on the Fourth Form!"

"Oh, Master Wally——"

"Look here, aren't you fed up with that rot yet?" asked Wally. "When you are, you've only to say the word, and I'm willing to make friends, if you choose!"

Joe's little rugged face brightened up wonderfully.

"I've given it up," he faltered.

Wally chuckled.

"You've dropped the Skimmy brand of Socialism?"

"Yes."

"You've chucked up the whole Skimmy bizney?"

"Yes."

"You're not Skimpole's pupil any more?"

"No."

"Good!" said Wally, holding out a hand that was weirdly adorned with ink and jam. "Put it there, my son!"

And Joe "put it there," and that sticky handshake renewed and ratified the old friendship; and henceforth Joe Frayne was Wally's chum instead of Skimpole's pupil!

THE END.

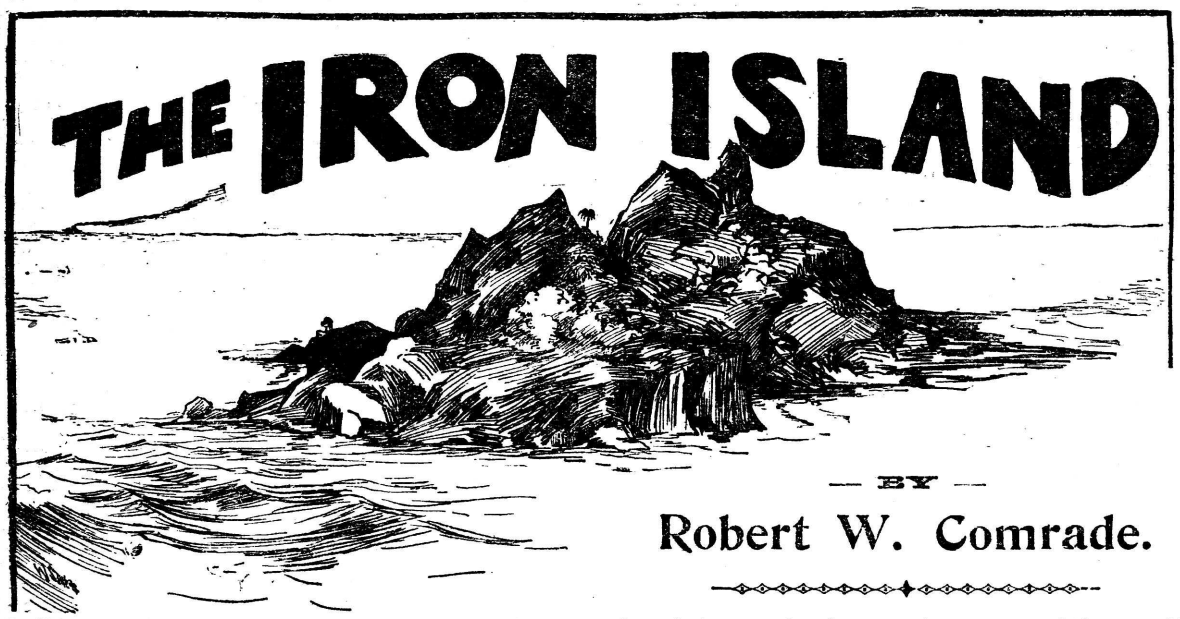
(Another splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry and Co. next Thursday, entitled "All Fools' Day at St. Jim's," by Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of the GEM Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 163.

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

A Thrilling Adventure Tale.

THE IRON ISLAND



— BY —

Robert W. Comrade.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RE-WRITTEN.

Philip Graydon is a young Englishman, who for eight years was marooned on an uncharted island in the Pacific—the Iron Island—by a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, of which he was once a member. A lucky chance brings to his aid Dolores de las Mercedes, an accomplished young lady, who has incurred the displeasure of the French Government. Graydon escapes from the Iron Island, and lands in England with Dolores. As Frank Kingston and Miss O'Brien, the two begin a secret campaign against the pernicious Brotherhood, and seven prominent members are

BROUGHT TO BOOK.

Carson Gray, a detective, is on the track of William Haverfield for murder. The man, however, manages to elude him. Kingston tells Gray that he must "lie low" for a time, as Haverfield, being a member of the Brotherhood, the society will do their best to kill him.

By a clever ruse Kingston attends a meeting of the Society, and learns that the Brotherhood intend to send a man to Gray's house to treat the telephone-wires so that when the detective answers the 'phone he would be electrocuted. Kingston puts Gray on the alert, and later on the man purporting to come from the telephone company calls. Benson, the butler, announces the man's arrival to Carson Gray, and inquires if he is to admit him.

(Now go on with the story.)

Matters Take a Strange Turn.

"Certainly!" replied Carson Gray. "Personally, I haven't noticed anything wrong with the telephone myself, but I suppose the company knows best. Tell him to get his work over as quickly as possible."

"Very good, sir."

Benson departed, and very soon the telephone mechanic was engaged upon his work. Seemingly, he was quite an ordinary workman, and no one would have guessed the dastardly object of his visit. He himself wore a slight smile as he set about his business.

"Well," murmured Carson Gray to himself in his room, as he sat smoking his pipe before the fire, "things have come to a very pretty pass. Kingston was right. The Brotherhood are certainly devoting all their attention to me this morning. There are two of the brutes in my house now, and before long—almost immediately, I expect—I shall have another to keep me company. Really, it is getting quite interesting."

He glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece, and saw that the time was just upon half-past twelve—the hour at which Mr. Joseph Reynolds was to pay his call.

Almost exactly on the minute Gray heard a taxi-cab pull up before the house, to be followed a moment later by a ring at the bell.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said Benson, entering the detective's room, bearing a card on a tray. "He says his business is of the utmost urgency."

Gray picked up the card and glanced at it.

"Tell him to step up, will you, Benson?" he said.

The butler left the room, and shortly afterwards ushered in a small, dapper little individual of about fifty. Reynolds was a jovial-looking man, with twinkling eyes, clean-shaven face, and partially bald head.

"Ah! Mr. Carson Gray, I believe?" he said, stepping forward with extended hand. "So glad you can see me. I'm sure you can assist me in my difficulty."

"I will do my best, Mr. Reynolds," replied the detective. "That is a comfortable chair there before the fire. Sit down, and take one of those cigars you see on the table. I can recommend them."

"Thanks!" cried the district superintendent. "You don't seem to be quite yourself this morning, Mr. Gray," he added, glancing at the dressing-gown in which Carson Gray was enwrapped.

"No," replied the detective. "In a certain case, a day or so ago, I was unfortunate enough to get a severe chill. The worst is now over, and by to-morrow I hope to be out again."

Mr. Reynolds smiled to himself at the words, for, as he thought, by to-morrow Carson Gray would be stiff in death.

"Good!" he exclaimed, acting his part really well. "I am glad to hear that. Now, Mr. Gray, as I know your time is valuable, I will state my business with the greatest possible expedition. It is rather an interesting case, and I think you will, without hesitating, lend me your assistance. I may mention that I am prepared to pay any fee you like to name if you complete the work satisfactorily."

"Before we come to the question of payment, Mr. Reynolds," replied Gray, huddling himself in an easy-chair before the fire, "I would prefer you to let me know your business."

Thereupon, the other told a very interesting story, constructed especially for the occasion. It was, of course, fiction, and Gray knew it, but he could not help admiring the manner in which Reynolds told his case. Every now and again he would look casually at the clock, and it was a quarter to one before he had finished.

"There, Mr. Gray," he said, knocking the ash from his cigar, "that is my trouble. As you see, it is rather difficult, and, knowing you to be the smartest detective in London, I preferred putting the affair in your hands rather than going to Scotland Yard."

"I am gratified, you may be sure," returned the detective, who was enjoying this game of make-belief quite as much as Reynolds himself. The latter was, of course, under the impression that Gray knew nothing of the Brotherhood's plans, whereas the detective was fully conversant with them, and knew exactly what would happen at one o'clock. "I

will do my best for you, Mr. Reynolds," said Gray, "although, you must understand, I cannot devote any attention to it until to-morrow."

"I quite understand that," cried Reynolds—"quite! I have no doubt whatever that, once you do start, you will not fail. But I have a favour to ask of you. I see you have a telephone in your room here. May I have the use of it for a moment?"

"Certainly!" replied Gray. "I have not the slightest objection."

He was somewhat surprised at the request, for, the time being so close to the hour, it seemed rather an unwise thing to do. Reynolds, however, knew that the death-dealing current would not be passed through the instrument until the stroke of the hour. He was making use of the telephone now for the express purpose of making Gray utterly unsuspicious. For, he reasoned, if he used the machine himself, it would show that there was nothing whatever wrong with it.

Reynolds rose to his feet, threw his cigar into the fire, and crossed over to the instrument. He picked up the receiver, and placed it to his ear, at the same time twirling the handle at the side.

"Hallo!" he cried. "Are you there, Exchange? I say, ha——"

The rest of his sentence was drowned in an ear-splitting shriek, and Carson Gray rose to his feet in horror as he saw Reynolds collapse on the floor in a writhing heap. His face was distorted to a terrible extent, and it needed no second glance to show that he was dead.

"Good heavens!" thought Gray. "What a terrible climax! Evidently something has gone wrong, for the current was not to have been switched on until one o'clock. I wonder what could have happened? The man is dead—electrocuted! I thought it rather incautious of him to use the instrument so close on the hour. It is retribution, nothing else."

Before he could think further, the door burst open and Benson rushed in, his face wearing a very scared look indeed.

"What has happened, sir?" he cried, then his eyes caught sight of the huddled-up form of what had been Joseph Reynolds. He uttered a cry of horror, and staggered back as if struck.

"He is dead!" he exclaimed in an awed voice. "How did it occur?"

"Don't stand there asking questions!" snapped Carson Gray. "Rush out for a doctor and a policeman at once. Do you hear me? At once!"

The butler recovered somewhat from his horrified stupor, and staggered out of the room, rushing pell-mell down the stairs as fast as his feet would carry him. As he reached the street he saw the figure of the telephone mechanic hurrying rapidly down the road. The latter was, at that moment, about the most scared man in London. Through a sheer mistake on his part the wrong man had been killed. The vengeance of the Brotherhood had recoiled on their own head, and, instead of Carson Gray getting the benefit of the electric current, it had done its deadly work upon one of their own members.

The mechanic, on hearing the shriek, had rushed to Carson Gray's room, knowing that the voice was that of his own colleague. One glance only was sufficient to tell him what had occurred. In a terrible fright he had grabbed up his bag from the outer room and rushed down the stairs into the street. Now that Carson Gray was alive he stood a very good chance of being arrested, so he lost no time in making himself scarce. The miscarriage had occurred through sheer and negligible carelessness on the mechanic's part.

He had, of course, no suspicion that Reynolds would use the telephone at ten minutes to one, and, at that precise moment, he had switched on the current for one second to test it. The consequences had been startling in their suddenness. In a way, the man was not to blame, for he had not been told of Reynolds's plan. Indeed, Reynolds had had the idea, and had acted on it on the impulse of the moment. By a stroke of Providence the current intended for Carson Gray had spent its power on him.

The mechanic hurried into Oxford Street and turned suddenly into one of Lyons' Cafes, concealing his agitation somewhat. He descended straight into the smoking-room, and, without hesitation, made for a certain secluded corner. Seated behind a newspaper was the Inner Councillor, Milverton, attired in rather shabby clothing, and slightly disguised.

"Well," he exclaimed sharply in a low voice, "what news do you bring, Smith?"

The man gave a glance round him furtively. The two were quite out of earshot, however, and he looked at Milverton with a scared expression in his eyes.

"Everything's gone wrong, sir," he whispered. "I don't know 'ow to tell you, I'm that upset!"

"What do you mean, man? Get it out, quick! Have our plans miscarried?"

"Miscarried ain't the word for it, sir! Mr. Reynolds is dead."

"Dead!" repeated Milverton. "Good heavens! What do you mean?"

"Everything went all right, sir, up to a certain point, then, at ten minutes to one, Mr. Reynolds used the 'phone for some reason I can't possibly make out. It so 'appened that I tested the current at the same moment, an' the next minute I 'eard a fearful shriek. I knew wot was up in a second, an' was that scared I couldn't move!"

— —

The Death of Carson Gray.

"You fool!" exclaimed Mr. Milverton in fierce accents. "It is all your doing. You received strict injunctions not to switch on the current until one o'clock, and yet you do so at ten minutes to. Confound it, not even our own men can be trusted! You will hear more of this, Smith, you can take my word for it!"

"You don't mean to kill me, sir, do you?" whispered Smith in a terrified voice. "I wasn't to know, was I? I admit I exceeded my instructions, but don't you think Mr. Reynolds was unwise to use the 'phone like he did?"

"Yes, he certainly should not have done that. It does not exonerate you from blame, however. Go, now, and report yourself to your super, and don't stir out of your house until you hear from headquarters. Considering everything, the fault is divided between you and Reynolds. He has paid a heavy toll for his incautiousness, and I will do my best to get you off lightly."

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Smith gratefully. "Thank you! I'm that upset over the 'ole affair that I don't know wot I'm doin'. To think of Mr. Reynolds gettin' killed——"

"That will do. Perhaps, after all, you had better stay here, and order yourself a cup of tea or something. I will go; although Carson Gray has escaped now, before the day is out he must be got rid of. It was a good thing an alternative was arranged for. I can now proceed to set fresh machinery in motion."

Without another word the barrister rose from his feet and passed out of the restaurant. He did not worry himself much about the death of Reynolds. The man was only a superintendent, all said and done, and one out of a thousand. At Carson Gray's rooms, however, everything was in a turmoil.

The doctor had come as quickly as possible, and had pronounced life to be extinct in Reynolds's body. The police were there, too, and before fifteen minutes had elapsed Inspector Richards of Scotland Yard drove up. Carson Gray told him nothing beyond the bare fact that Reynolds was a client of his, and had, while using the telephone, met his death. To Richards the thing was a mystery, and he was considerably puzzled.

"I am bewildered, Mr. Gray," he exclaimed at last. "How could the telephone possibly have given him such a current? The occurrence is absolutely unparalleled!"

"I admit it is puzzling," declared Gray, "but really, Richards, I must leave you to work it out yourself. I cannot be held responsible for what my telephone does, and my time is too valuable to waste on such a matter. I trust, however, that you will arrive at some solution to the mystery. It is most unfortunate that it should have come to pass in my house."

"Most unfortunate!" agreed Richards. "I shall drive straight to headquarters of the telephone company and make the necessary inquiries. The man who called this morning to attend to your machine seems to have disappeared very mysteriously. To my mind his actions appear very suspicious."

"Do as you like," said Carson Gray, "only, please, leave me to myself as early as possible. My health is not of the best at the present moment, and all this commotion is decidedly irritating."

"The police ambulance is on the way at the present moment, and Reynolds's remains will be removed the instant it arrives. I should advise you to shut yourself up immediately I am gone, for a whole swarm of reporters will presently be hovering around."

"They will not gain admittance to my house, whatever they do," declared Gray with conviction. "I have had experience with reporters before, and shall instruct my landlady to admit no one."

"It is the best plan," said the inspector. "Ah, unless I am mistaken, the ambulance has arrived."

It had, and before fifteen minutes had passed the detective was again alone in his consulting-room.

"By Jove!" he thought, "I never expected such a dramatic climax to the case as this. But what can have happened to Kingston? He said he was going to watch the house, but surely he would have put in an appearance on seeing the commotion. I cannot quite make it out. Come in!"

A tap had come at the door, and in response to Gray's invitation Benson, the butler, entered. He was still looking somewhat scared, and Gray eyed him suspiciously.

"Well," he said.

The butler closed the door before answering. Then he turned and calmly seated himself in an easy chair.

"My dear Gray," he drawled, "matters have taken a quite unexpected turn, don't you think so?"

Carson Gray gazed at "Benson" in undisguised astonishment.

"Kingston!" he exclaimed. "Great Scott, do you mean to tell me—— Well, I'm hanged!"

Carson Gray flopped himself into a chair and gazed at Kingston as if he could not believe the evidence of his own eyes. The latter smiled amusedly.

"You appear surprised," he exclaimed.

"Surprised?" echoed Gray. "Why, I had not the remotest suspicion that you were anything but the Brotherhood's emissary. You have acted magnificently. I should never have guessed the truth in a hundred years. Why have you done this, however? Why have you personated the man who was supposed to have come here?"

"I think I remarked to you, Gray, that I intended watching the house," replied Kingston languidly. "You must admit that a better way of watching it could not have been thought of."

"Yes, I admit that," agreed Gray. "Nevertheless, I am puzzled. The rapidity with which you changed is astounding in itself. You were engaged by me at about 9.30, yet, an hour or so later, you calmly call upon me in your own personality, becoming the butler again within ten minutes."

Frank Kingston laughed.

"There is nothing whatever startling in it," he said. "I will explain. The Brotherhood's man was to have called at 10 o'clock. I took a spoke out of his wheel by arriving just after 9.30. And you very kindly engaged me."

"And the other butler?" questioned Gray.

"Oh, he came at 10 o'clock as arranged, but on seeing I had secured the situation, departed immediately. Some time later, I left the house to presumably see about my belongings. In reality, I walked into Oxford Street, turned down a side street, and entered my motor-car. Fraser was at the wheel, and he immediately drove off. It took me no more than five minutes to change my clothes, and doff this disguise. I stepped out of my car at Leicester Square, and immediately hired a taxi. In this manner I was back here again within twenty minutes."

"Upon my soul," laughed Gray, "nothing could be simpler. But your disguise. You have not got an atom of paint on your face."

"I will explain the secret of that, Gray, at some future time," said Kingston. "As you know I called here, had a short talk with you, and then departed. I merely repeated my former performance, and returned in my present personality."

"And you were watching the telephone mechanic all the time?" asked Gray, looking at Kingston in real admiration. The cool manner in which this remarkable man performed his work was certainly a revelation.

"Precisely. It was decided last night that if a butler had already been engaged when their man called Smith, the mechanic, was to come in his place. I therefore advised you of his coming, and was, at the same time, on the spot in case of emergencies. I had not the least idea that Reynolds would act as he did. But really, I cannot express pity, for the scoundrel is much better dead than alive."

"But what is the next move? If the Brotherhood really mean to do for me, I suppose I may expect some further pleasant adventure before the day is out?"

"In less than an hour from now Mr. Milverton, the barrister, will pay you a visit, also presumably with work for you to do. He is to attend to the matter now that the others have failed. His method of procedure will be very simple, and you will not have much difficulty in getting rid of him. I will now explain what I want you to do, for Milverton, as well as Reynolds, must not be allowed to succeed in his object."

"I agree with you heartily," said Carson Gray, with a twinkle. "I am not getting old yet, and my premature death would be decidedly unwelcome."

Kingston smiled, and then told Gray exactly what the Brotherhood's plans were, and how to act. It was all very simple, and Gray smiled when he knew all.

"I do not think I shall have much difficulty in doing as you say," he said. "The Brotherhood's plans are decidedly ingenious, and would undoubtedly have succeeded had you not been aware of them. I cannot thank you sufficiently for saving my life on so many occasions."

"My dear chap, I should be a very callous sort of person if I did not act as I am doing. After to-day you will be perfectly safe, and there will be no necessity for you to remain within doors. It is the very fact of your doing so now that has caused the Brotherhood to adopt such extreme measures. Had you been about as is your usual custom, I could never have hoped to save your life."

"And how long do you intend to remain in your present disguise," asked Gray, "and, now I mention it, why did you adopt it at all?"

"Because I wished to conceal, even from you, that I was in your house. There was no object to be gained by telling you, therefore it was better for you to remain in ignorance. No one except yourself is aware that I am here in disguise. I shall remain until to-night, if you can put up with me until then. I admit my training as a butler is not very perfect."

Carson Gray laughed.

"Nevertheless," he said, "you acted your part to perfection. I should now be obliged if you would go below and see about my luncheon. For, in spite of being an invalid, I have a first-class appetite."

"Very good, sir," answered Kingston, in another voice; "I will attend to it immediately."

He left the room, chuckling softly to himself. The experience was a novel one for both he and Carson Gray.

For the better part of an hour the detective was left alone, then, as Kingston had told him, Mr. Milverton arrived. The second attempt on Carson Gray's life was about to be perpetrated. The barrister was shown up to the consulting-room immediately by the deferential butler.

"Mr. Milverton, sir," said Kingston, standing at the door and allowing the visitor to pass into the room. Carson Gray rose from his chair and extended his hand.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Gray," said the barrister quietly. "I trust you are not too busy at present to attend to the little matter I have called to see you about?"

"I am busy," said Gray, motioning the other to a chair, "but I think I can spare a few minutes while you state your requirements. I shall be very pleased to assist you in any way I can, but wish to point out that only cases of especial interest are welcome——"

"I am convinced, Mr. Gray, that you will be vastly interested in the story I am about to relate to you," replied Milverton, producing his cigar-case.

Carson Gray seated himself at his desk, and looked at Milverton interestedly, waiting for him to proceed. The latter held open his cigar-case and offered it to the detective.

"Have a cigar," he exclaimed. "I can thoroughly recommend them."

"Thanks, I will!"

Gray picked one of the weeds, and was about to bite the end off when Milverton interposed. He held a cigar-cutter in his fingers.

"Allow me," he said, as he took the cigar and snipped the end off.

Gray took it, and felt in his pocket for matches. As he did so, however, the cigar slipped from his fingers to the floor, rolling under his desk.

"Confound it!" he murmured, bending down to regain the cigar.

Milverton looked on meanwhile with a somewhat strained expression on his face. Gray could see out of the corner of his eye that the barrister's nerves were somewhat on edge. He knew, moreover, for what reason.

Gray affected to notice nothing unusual, however, and placed the cigar between his lips preparatory to lighting it. Milverton struck a match immediately, and held it out politely.

"Thanks!" murmured Gray, sucking at the cigar in order to get it well alight. Before he had taken half a dozen puffs, however, he suddenly, with startling abruptness, fell forward in his chair, and collapsed in a limp heap to the floor. He had not uttered a sound, and now he lay there almost uncannily motionless. The colour had fled from his cheeks, and his eyes, wide open, stared unseeingly at the ceiling.

Milverton, with an exclamation of triumph, intermixed with uneasiness, rose from his chair quickly, picked the cigar up, and threw it into the fire. He then knelt down beside Gray, having first thrown a hasty glance towards the door.

"Good!" he murmured. "The ruse has worked magnificently. The fool fell into the trap as easy as the veriest novice. I'm afraid, my dear Mr. Carson Gray, you have looked your last upon the sights of this world!"

The Professor on the Case.

Milverton rose to his feet and glanced round the room rather nervously. A crackle in the fire caused him to start, and he pulled himself together with an effort.

"This won't do," he muttered. "I shall have to put a better face on it. Carson Gray is certainly dead—the stuff has acted beautifully. Yet somehow I don't feel satisfied. Gray showed no sign of suspicion whatever. Can it be possible that we are mistaken? Surely, knowing I was a member of the Brotherhood, he would not have fallen into the trap so readily?"

Milverton glanced at the detective's form somewhat doubtfully. Then he shrugged his shoulders, for it mattered little now whether Gray had known or not. He was dead, and so it made no difference whatever. His face had gone a waxy yellow, while his eyes had become glassy and staring.

"Now for it!" murmured Milverton. "I can't possibly be suspected."

Milverton stood over Carson Gray's body and affected a very startled expression. Then he uttered a loud exclamation of horror, followed by a cry for assistance. Before anybody could have time to appear, however, Milverton changed his mind and dashed across the room. He flung open the door, and ran right into the arms of Benson, the butler—otherwise Frank Kingston.

"Come!" gasped Milverton, in horror-stricken tones. "Your master is taken ill. Come in and see for yourself!"

The two men, Kingston now looking as startled as the barrister, stumbled back into the consulting-room, and Milverton pointed with shaking finger to the ghastly object.

"See!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"Good heavens!" muttered Kingston. "What can have happened to him, sir? He looks as though—as though——"

"It occurred so suddenly that it fairly took my breath away," said the Inner Councillor. "We were sitting together when Mr. Gray, without any warning whatever, fell to the floor like a log. I am bewildered! Go for a doctor immediately!"

"Shall I fetch the police as well, sir?"

"Perhaps you had better, for it looks to me as if Mr. Gray is dead."

Kingston dashed out of the room and stumbled down the stairs in a very different manner to that which he would have done had he been his own self. He could hardly help admiring Milverton for his audacity in paying this visit in his own personality. Yet there was not much risk in it. For how could a breath of suspicion attach itself to Mr. Milverton, the eminent K.C.?

In five minutes a couple of police officers were standing over Carson Gray's body, notebooks in hand, shaking their heads doubtfully.

"It's fairly clear to my mind, sir," one of them exclaimed to Milverton. "The poor gentleman is dead, sure enough, an' he was evidently took with heart disease. Not that he looks that kind o'—— Hallo! Here's the doctor."

"Upon my soul," exclaimed the medico, in surprised accents, "this is a remarkable coincidence! Not two hours ago I was called in to pronounce death on one of Mr. Gray's clients. Now I'm here to see Mr. Gray himself in presumably the same state."

He knelt down beside the body, and made his examination.

"Life is extinct!" he exclaimed slowly. "I cannot quite make out the cause of death, but there is no hope. How did it occur? The telephone——"

"No, doctor, not the telephone this time!" exclaimed Kingston, in the deferential tones of the butler. "Mr. Milverton, here, don't seem to know himself exactly how it happened."

"No," agreed the latter. "All I can say is that I was about to state my case to Mr. Gray when he suddenly fell forward on to the floor. I immediately shouted for assistance, but when the butler came Mr. Gray was dead."

"Most remarkable!" murmured the doctor. "I am at a total loss, for I always understood that Mr. Gray was an unusually strong man. It takes my breath away to see him here dead from no apparent cause. There must be an inquest—that is very certain. But what a loss—what a terrible loss! He was the finest detective in London!"

"The finest private detective, sir," said one of the policemen, looking up from his notebook; "and it's a rare pity that he should be took like this."

"There is no doubt about the certainty of his death?" asked the barrister, his face grave and concerned.

"None whatever!" declared the doctor.

"Then it is useless my remaining further? I presume you do not wish to detain me, constable?"

"Not now, sir," replied the man spoken to. "You'll be wanted at the inquest though, seein' as you're the only man who was with Mr. Gray when he died. It's a nuisance, I know, sir——"

"Oh, I will certainly attend!" said Mr. Milverton. "For I fully realise that my presence will be necessary. I need scarcely say that my nerves are completely upset by this terrible occurrence; and, instead of continuing with my business, I shall immediately return to my house. I wish you good-day!" Milverton turned and left the room.

A moment after he had disappeared down the stairs a couple of reporters made their appearance at the door, and Kingston, who was standing there, made no effort to keep them out. On the contrary, he answered several questions they put to him, and, in fact, told them everything there was to be known.

Outside, in Great Portland Street, a crowd of people were looking up at the windows curiously and with that inane stare peculiar to crowds; for what interest there was in looking at ordinary windows with blinds drawn was difficult to understand.

Downstairs, in the house, the landlady hardly knew whether she was on her head or her heels. The telephone death so shortly before had completely unnerved her, but this, the decease of her famous tenant—and most valuable one—caused her to temporarily collapse. Everything was in a commotion for an hour or two, but then everybody had left with the exception of the doctor and Kingston.

"There will, of course, be no necessity for you to remain now," said the medical man, as they stood in Carson Gray's bed-room, looking at the still form on the bed; "so I should advise you to find another situation as soon as possible. I myself will see if anything can be done."

"Thank you, sir!" said Kingston gratefully. "I am sure I am very much obliged to you for your kindness. This is my first day here, and it's been more than tragic all the time. I thought I had a fine place, but now——"

"I quite realise your position, my man," said the doctor sympathetically; "for, of course, you are now out of work again. But, as your month's wages will be paid, I should advise you to remain in this house until after the inquest."

"Yes, sir, I think it will be best."

Kingston bent over the bed and gazed closely at the waxen figure of Carson Gray. He put forward a hand and laid it on the white forehead. It was cold, and a slight shiver passed through Kingston's hand as it lay there.

"There's no doubt about it," he whispered, "Mr. Gray's dead, sure enough."

"Yes," said the doctor gravely, "he is dead."

They left the room, and "Benson" showed the medico out.

Fifteen minutes later Kingston himself left this gloomy house and made rapidly off down Great Portland Street. In accordance with his previous arrangements, Fraser was still in the road off Oxford Street with the car. The latter was tired of waiting, although he uttered no word of complaint. Indeed, in spite of the weariness of waiting, he did not dislike the work, for it was, after all, all in the game.

"Well, sir," he asked, "where to?"

"Home, Fraser, as fast as you like," replied Kingston, stepping into the car. "I am pleased to tell you that my plans have passed off splendidly. Nothing, speaking from my point of view, has miscarried."

"And Mr. Gray, sir——" began Fraser.

"Mr. Carson Gray, Fraser, is now lying, cold and still, on his bed, covered merely by a sheet. Death was instantaneous."

Fraser looked at Kingston quickly, and the expression he saw in the latter's eyes reassured him to such an extent that he grinned quietly to himself.

Without further conversation he slipped his clutch in, and the car was very soon gliding down Regent Street. The time was just after three-thirty, and the sun was shining now with the full brilliance of a spring afternoon. Kingston, inside the car, did not appear like a man suddenly deprived of a close friend. On the contrary, he hummed excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan as he proceeded to doff his disguise and become once again Frank Kingston, the idle young man about town.

At the Cyril he lounged out of the car as though he owned the whole of the Strand, and strolled leisurely up the wide staircase. He did not enter his own suite of rooms, however, but turned to the opposite side of the corridor and tapped at Dolores' door.

Louise, the maid, answered his summons and admitted him immediately, saying that her mistress was expecting the visit.

"I promised you I would call and let you know everything as soon as possible," exclaimed Kingston, as he shook hands. "I presume you have seen the papers?"

"Oh, yes! And it is evident to me that the Brotherhood's plans miscarried in a way neither they nor you anticipated."

"You are referring, of course, to the death of Reynolds?"

"Yes. The Brotherhood's foul plot has recoiled upon one of its own members. But how is Mr. Gray? What have you done?" she added eagerly. "I am simply longing to know."

Kingston seated himself on the couch as though he had no important news to tell, or, in fact, any further work to perform. But, as a matter of fact, he had work to attend to as fast as ever he could get started on it.

He told his fair companion everything up to the point where he had disclosed himself to Carson Gray. Then he laughed softly to himself.

"The stuff worked magnificently, Dolores—better than I even hoped. Knowing the Brotherhood's plans, I prepared for them accordingly. But the phial of liquid I procured from the professor worked wonders. I placed merely a few drops of it in the end of a cigar, and Gray did the rest."

"How?" asked Dolores interestedly.

"In this way. We knew, of course, that when Milverton came he would, as a preliminary, offer the detective a cigar—a cigar prepared with some terrible Eastern poison. My cigar was lodged in a little niche at the bottom of Gray's desk, and as he cut the end off Milverton's one he dropped it as if by accident. Instead of picking it up, however, he took the other, and Milverton was none the wiser. Speaking about Milverton, it is rather surprising that he came in his own personality, for he knew the risks would be considerable. I suppose he relies upon his good name to place him above all suspicion."

"But the cigars?" asked Dolores. "You have not finished telling me about them."

"No. As I told you this morning, this drug with which my cigar was saturated—Professor Polgrave's drug, I mean—has a most peculiar effect. Merely a few drops will instantly have the effect of causing a man to apparently become lifeless, even to the extent of becoming cold and waxen. It even gave me something of a start when I placed my hand on his forehead."

"But the doctor? He would surely feel that the motion of the heart was not suspended?" exclaimed Dolores.

"The doctor, fully believing from outward appearance that Gray was dead, made but a slight examination, and, the heart-beats being very faint indeed, he was entirely deceived. Gray, of course, had taken the stuff himself when he sucked at the cigar, and Milverton is fondly under the impression that it was the Brotherhood's cigar which has caused his death. The news will be out in all the evening papers, and there will be general mourning at the loss of so distinguished a detective."

Kingston chuckled softly to himself.

"But can he be revived?" inquired Dolores anxiously.

"If I am to take the professor's word for it—and I certainly do—I have something in my pocket which will bring Gray to life again within two minutes. Really, I cannot help admiring this old eccentric, for he is, without exaggeration, the most remarkable scientist I have ever heard of or seen. Our object is achieved, however, and the attention of the Brotherhood is now no longer centred upon Carson Gray. Imagining him to be dead, they will not trouble further, which will give us a little respite in which to carry out our plans."

"And you are to let the Inner Council know that this man Haverfield has been lying to them. I admit, Mr. Kingston, that I cannot see any way in which that object can be attained, for it seems an impossible task to make a man disclose facts which he wants to keep to himself."

"I agree with you, Dolores, that the task seems an impracticable one. For all that, I think I can see my way clear. The professor has made certain hints which I mean to inquire further into. It is my intention to pay him a visit immediately, and tell him everything. He seems to be able to help me over any difficulty which crops up."

"It was remarkably fortunate that you met him, especially as it occurred in such a strange fashion. Yet I do not see——"

A tap came at the door at that moment, and Louise, Dolores' maid, appeared. She announced that Fraser was waiting outside with urgent news. Kingston rose immediately.

"I must apologise," he exclaimed, "for leaving you in this abrupt fashion, but I shall not be a moment. Fraser must have important news, or he would not come here."

Kingston crossed the passage rapidly, and found Fraser with an expectant look on his face.

"Well?" said Kingston sharply. "You have news?"

"Yes, sir. I met Crawford outside in the Strand. He was waiting in the hope of seeing me, an' he tells me that at about six o'clock to-night Mr. Haverfield is going out disguised to some place in Whitechapel. He learnt that from the doorkeeper at the Chief's, but couldn't get to know any more, where Haverfield was going, or for what reason."

"I see. I am glad you told me, Fraser, very glad, for I think I can make use of your information."

"I thought I had better tell you straight away, sir."

"You did quite right, Fraser."

Kingston returned to Dolores' apartments again, and told her that which he had just learnt.

"It is the very information I needed!" he exclaimed. "And the time of Haverfield's departure from Grosvenor Square, although a little later than I should like, will do quite well. His venturing out has altered my plans a little, and will make them less complicated, which is, of course, very fortunate."

"As soon as the Chief is aware of Haverfield's misleading account of the affair at Chelsea, and of his lying with regard to Carson Gray's knowledge of the Brotherhood, they will be sorry for having taken such severe steps with Mr. Gray?" asked Dolores.

"Exactly. And when they learn that Carson Gray is alive—they will naturally conclude that their poisoned cigar was not of sufficient strength to cause his death, and will cease to trouble him, being under the impression that he knows nothing of the organisation. So, the sooner I finish with Haverfield the better."

"It is remarkable how easily you appear to do your work, Mr. Kingston," said Dolores, gazing at his reclining form with something like admiration. "You always manage to get through a terrific lot of work, but always seem to have plenty of time on your hands."

"It is organisation, Dolores. I know exactly what I am going to do before I do it, even to the smallest detail. In the present instance I am just a little bit at fault, so mean to see Professor Polgrave without delay, for I have an idea he can get me clear of the difficulty. You may rest assured that as soon as ever the case is completed, I shall again call and let you know everything that has occurred."

A few words more, and Frank Kingston leisurely took his departure. Outside, he jumped into a passing taxi, and bade the chauffeur drive him with all speed possible to St. John's Wood.

Kingston alighted at the corner of the street in which Professor Polgrave's house was situated, and traversed the remaining hundred yards or so on foot. The professor's house was looking as dull and dingy as usual, and might well have been taken for empty.

Kingston pushed open the gate, and walked swiftly up the garden path. At the area door he pressed the electric bell-push twice in quick succession, following it up with a long ring and a final short one—the agreed-upon signal.

"I shouldn't think the old fellow is out," thought Kingston, as he waited. "Yet there is a possibility of such a thing. I wanted his advice, if possible. Ah, it's all right!"

Faintly he had heard a shuffle behind the door as the professor walked up the passage. The sound was so slight as to be practically unnoticeable, but Kingston's self-trained ears caught it immediately.

"Ah, you have come!" cried Polgrave, in a welcome tone. "I knew you would—you promised me. Come in. Let me know all about it."

"I could not get away a moment before," said Kingston, as the professor shut the door after him. "But you told me last night that any time would do."

"Quite right—quite right. I hardly expected you so soon, though. Has everything gone off all right? Have you—— But we will descend first, for it is hardly possible to talk here."

The professor's spare figure led the way down the staircase into the underground sitting-room, and so on to the laboratory. This was a blaze of light, as usual, and from the litter of test-tubes, retorts, and numerous other scientific instruments, Kingston gathered that the professor was in the midst of some complicated experiment.

"I am afraid I am interrupting you," he began.

"Nothing of the kind, my noble preserver!" cried the old man, in his surprisingly gruff tones. "The problem I am engaged upon is not a very intricate one, and, anyhow, everything must be put aside when you pay me a visit. From your expression I gather that things have gone favourably?"

"Yes," replied Kingston, "they have certainly done that. Thanks to your marvellous drug, my friend Carson Gray is now announced in all the evening papers as having left this world for ever."

The old hermit chuckled.

"I knew it could not fail!" he cried. "It was one of my simplest experiments, yet one of the most efficient. Tell me all about it, for I declare I am as eager as possible."

Thereupon Kingston related to the professor exactly how the events of the day had occurred. The old hermit sat in his chair, nodding his approval, and muttering to himself every now and again, one slender, chemical-stained hand slowly caressing his white beard.

"And that is where you have got to!" he exclaimed, when Kingston concluded. "Carson Gray lies in his rooms apparently dead, and this man Milverton has gone away under the impression that he has carried out his plan to perfection.

Ha, ha! He doesn't know what a man he is fighting against!"

"The success of this case, professor, I must admit, is mainly due to your assistance, no credit being due to myself——"

"Tut, tut, Kingston! Don't talk like that to me!" snapped the professor. "You know well enough that my drugs alone would be more useless than water. Without your brains to plan out and organise the course of action, what little assistance I am giving you would be valueless."

"As you will, professor!" laughed Kingston. "I can only say that I am deeply grateful to you for devoting so much of your time to me and my affairs. What I want now is to get Haverfield to admit to the Council that he has been telling lies—that he misrepresented the case so much that the Chief decided to kill my friend. Now, when I was here last, you were mentioning——"

"Yes—yes, I know. It is the very stuff you require, and, what I gave a hint at before, I will now fully explain. If you can think of a way of administering a certain drug, I can supply to you something which will cause this man to speak the absolute truth—it will make him say what he thinks, and absolutely prevent any misrepresentation passing his lips."

"But such a thing is impossible!" declared Kingston. "Or, perhaps, I had better not say impossible, for I never use that word myself, and from what I have seen of you I am getting to learn that there are many things in the world at first sight impracticable, which you can make possible with apparent ease."

"I have devoted the whole of my life to scientific work," declared the hermit, "and if I had no results to show for it I should be an ignoramus indeed."

He turned, and walked across to the shelves which lined the laboratory, taking down from one a small, dark-green bottle. A white label on it was covered in tiny signs, which the professor alone understood.

"This liquid," he said, "or rather, the preparation of it, occupied my time for a period of three years. To look at it now there is not much to show as a result of three years' study and research. Yet this small bottle and its contents could startle the whole civilised world, for a tiny pin-point of this liquid is sufficient to cause any ordinary man to state his own mind, and nothing whatever beyond it."

"I cannot quite understand," said Kingston.

"Since you say your time is valuable to-night, I cannot, of course, go into a long explanation; but, impossible as it at first seems, it is, in reality, not only possible, but extremely logical. Take, for instance, a man who drinks a certain amount of brandy—not too much, or not too little. He is then in a state, not of intoxication, but of what might be called light-heartedness, and while in that state he will say things which he would never dream of mentioning had he not taken the brandy."

"Quite so; I begin to see your meaning."

"Had the man drunk port or sherry, the wine would have had a different effect on him. Similarly with ordinary beer. Now my preparation, which you see in this bottle, is a concoction of dozens—I may say scores—of different liquids, condensed to such an extent that one drop of it is quite equal to a gallon of brandy. In addition, it is not necessary for this to be taken internally, but it may be administered by means of a pin, the point of which is merely coated with, or dipped into it. As you know, some of my principal discoveries are in connection with injections. As I said, to explain fully the ingredients would take me a considerable time, so I must leave that for to-night. I can only say that it acts in a somewhat similar way to alcohol, only instead of causing intoxication, it merely has the effect of making a man so talkative that he entirely forgets that which he has said previously, or the fact that he may want to keep something secret. No matter what question is asked him, he would, quite naturally, reply with perfect truthfulness, simply because he has forgotten, for the time being, that he wants to keep the answer to himself."

"I can already realise how possible such a thing can be!" exclaimed Kingston interestedly. "But, as I am keeping nothing whatever from you, I am afraid I should be a rather useless person to experiment on."

The professor laughed.

"I don't think I will trouble you by administering it," he said; "but I assure you, good friend, that the result will be precisely as I have stated. Have you any plan upon which you mean to work?"

Kingston gazed thoughtfully at the wonderful electric lights overhead.

"Yes," he replied, "I have certainly got something of an idea. It requires maturing, however, and needs to be thought over."

"Let me hear it!" cried the professor. "Let me hear it!"

"Well, the man I am dealing with at present, Mr. William Haverfield, is going to leave his present retreat for some reason I don't understand, at about six o'clock to-night, and although I am not sure of it, it is practically certain he will return an hour or two later, for he is, as you know, a fugitive from justice."

"Then," interrupted the professor eagerly, "could you not disguise yourself, and wait near the Chief's house—for that is where I understand he now is hiding—and intercept him as he returns."

"I could administer the liquid by means of a prepared ring on one of my right fingers. It would be an easy task to grasp his hand as he walked along, and shake it as though he were a friend, slightly pricking him in the process. To apologise afterwards, would, of course, be quite an easy matter."

"An excellent idea, my rescuer. A better one could hardly be found, for you can introduce the drug into his veins, and be off within the space of a minute, without giving him time in which to suspect a trick. It is no uncommon thing for one man to grasp a stranger's hand in the belief that he is an old friend; and, even if Haverfield felt the scratch, the mischief would then be done, and nothing on earth could undo it. You could certainly not fix on a better mode of procedure. Let me see, what is the time now?"

The professor pulled out his old-fashioned gold watch, and glanced at the dial. He looked up.

"It is just a quarter to five!" he exclaimed. "None too much time, and none too little. Do you think you could favour me with your presence at my tea-table? I shall be delighted to have your company."

"It is good of you to take this interest in me, professor, and I should be a boor indeed if I did not accept your invitation. Afterwards, if you will allow me, I should like to disguise myself before leaving, and go straight to Grosvenor Square."

So it was arranged.

On the Watch.

During tea hardly a word was said in connection with the respective works of these two remarkably singular men. Their main conversation consisted of every-day events, of which the professor knew next to nothing, for, being shut up most of his time, he very seldom saw a newspaper. As he said, his whole life was given to science, and not until he was dead would the world at large know of his marvellous discoveries. But, because Kingston had saved his life, he considered that the latter had a right to know everything.

And Kingston, on the other hand, realising how very useful Polgrave could be, did not hesitate to explain his whole campaign to him. As before stated, the old professor was vastly interested in Kingston's work against the Brotherhood of Iron, and announced his eagerness to lend all the assistance in his power.

"It is time you were off," said the professor, as soon as they had finished tea. "If Haverfield starts from Grosvenor Square at six o'clock and goes to Whitechapel, he could easily be back again by seven-thirty—that is allowing him at least half an hour there."

"I shall be on the watch as soon after six as possible," exclaimed Kingston, "for I mean to leave nothing to chance. It will be wearisome, no doubt, but that is all in the game. If you will assist me with my disguise I shall be able to get off within a few minutes."

"Certainly," cried Polgrave—"certainly, my dear friend. I will do it immediately, and I'll warrant that within five minutes your face is transformed out of all semblance to your own."

With that the scientist commenced operations. He was as good as his word, for in a very few minutes Frank Kingston had disappeared, and in his stead there stood a man with round shoulders and a rather pasty type of face—at first glance a City clerk. After that, having changed from his own West End-cut suit into a top hat and frock-coat, Kingston looked every inch an ordinary City man.

While he had been changing the professor had been busy on the ring which was to administer the drug into Haverfield's hand, and now proceeded to treat it with his wonderful discovery. The liquid was of a very dark brown colour, somewhat thick in consistency, and it dried on the spike he had provided almost like a paint.

"I will place it in this box," the professor exclaimed, "in case the preparation gets rubbed off, although, I may tell you, it will remain on this spike quite as tenaciously as any enamel. The instant it comes into contact with any liquid, however, it will melt on the moment. This being so, when you pierce Haverfield's hand its full strength will immediately transfer itself into his blood."

"It is incredible to suppose that that infinitesimal portion will have the effect we desire," exclaimed Kingston, "yet I have seen other wonders of yours, professor, and so must, and do, place implicit faith in you."

"You cannot go wrong," declared the old man, his face beaming with pleasure, "and although what you are now

about to do seems at first sight almost like an incident from 'The Arabian Nights,' you will realise, after due thought, that it is not nearly so far fetched as you might suppose. It is merely the result of years of study and research."

They ascended the stairs to the long passage at the top, and Kingston shook Professor Polgrave's hand heartily when they parted.

"Yes," he smiled, fully knowing the request the other was about to make, "I will return at the earliest possible moment and let you know the result this little article in my pocket has produced. Until then, au revoir!"

"Farewell, good friend," beamed the professor, "and always remember that you are a welcome visitor."

A moment later Kingston was striding down the path towards the gate, very well pleased with his interview with his strangely-found and somewhat eccentric old friend.

Kingston did not travel by taxi this time, but after walking some little distance he jumped on to a motor-omnibus, and was soon being whirled towards Grosvenor Square, for, the roads being in a dry condition, the vehicle was able to travel at an unusually smart pace. On arrival at his destination Kingston strolled up and down the pavement on the opposite side to Lord Mount-Fannell's house some little distance lower down.

Although Crawford had not described how Haverfield would be dressed, or in what disguise, Kingston had not the slightest fear of being unable to detect him. An observer would have said that he never once looked full at Lord Mount-Fannell's house, yet his eyes were constantly on the gateway, and, in fact, up and down the whole length of the road. The wait to him was not very wearisome after all, for even in work of this kind he took a certain amount of pleasure, if only because it was all contributory to the downfall of the Brotherhood. Moreover, to a man of Kingston's temperament any opportunity which afforded scope to observe the actions had peculiarities of his fellow-creatures was eagerly embraced.

He had not much fear that Crawford's information was wrong, for by now he had grown to look upon the man as an absolutely reliable assistant, in a way as valuable as Fraser himself. There was no doubt as to Crawford's integrity, for ever since Kingston's return from the Iron Island he had shown his loyalty in every possible way. So much so, in fact, that now Kingston had taken Fraser's friend into his confidence, and revealed his identity. This will explain how it was that Crawford had been awaiting Fraser outside the Cyril that afternoon.

The proof of Crawford's reliability came at about twenty minutes to eight, when Kingston espied, from the corner of his eye, the tall and bulky form of a man attired in a check Norfolk suit, wearing a cap, brown boots, and leggings—obviously a tourist. He wore a slight beard and long, waxed moustache. The resemblance to Haverfield, the fugitive murderer, was practically nil, yet Kingston mentally swept the disguise from his features, and saw him as his natural self. Professor Polgrave's calculation had been as near as possible correct.

Kingston, in one second, had transferred the ring from the little box on to the middle finger of his right hand, the spike projecting upwards from the flat of his hand.

"Now," he murmured, stepping forward, "to test the efficacy of Professor Polgrave's amazingly singular preparation!"

Haverfield Exposes the Truth with Direful Results.

"Ah, my dear Wilson, this is a pleasant surprise!"

Frank Kingston's disguised face beamed with pleasure as he hurried forward to meet Haverfield. The former had noticed that Haverfield wore no gloves, and realised that this was most fortunate, for the professor's drug would be given an opportunity of exerting its full strength.

Before Haverfield could quite recover from his momentary surprise Kingston had grasped his hand in a warm grip, and was pumping his arm up and down vigorously—so warm, in fact, was the grip, and so vigorous the shake, that Haverfield did not even feel the penetration of the tiny spike into the palm of his hand.

"I—I am afraid you have the advantage of me, sir," he said, trying to release his hand from Kingston's grip. "You are evidently mistaking me for someone you know."

"Come, come, Wilson, you cannot deceive me!" laughed Kingston, letting the other's hand go suddenly. "I knew you the instant I set eyes on you."

"But I tell you that you are a perfect stranger to me!" exclaimed Haverfield impatiently.

Kingston peered up into Haverfield's face searchingly.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "You are not Wilson, after all! My dear sir, I really must apologise! I was certain——"

"Good-night, sir!" snapped Haverfield, who was annoyed at this incident, for, being disguised, he disliked being subjected to such a scrutiny. He strode along the pavement without once looking back at his late interlocutor.

Kingston, for his part, was feeling rather satisfied, for he had introduced the drug into Haverfield's veins without the latter being the least aware of the fact. He knew there was no object in remaining now, so he jumped on to a motor-'bus which was travelling in the direction of the Strand.

Haverfield did not think much about the apparent mistake which had just occurred, but walked up the path to Lord Mount-Fannell's front door with his thoughts engaged in a different manner. In some mysterious fashion—he could not explain how—a peculiar feeling of lightness seemed to possess him, and, in spite of his former gloomy mood, he was rapidly becoming quite genial. He noticed the change even himself, but could, of course, find no reason for it.

As the flunkey opened the door to him he actually beamed, and passed inside with a quick, light step.

"Thanks!" he exclaimed. "Where's the Chief? I haven't been able to achieve my object in Whitechapel, but so far as it goes——"

"Haverfield!"

The latter turned, and saw the dapper little figure of Lord Mount-Fannell at the other end of the hall. The Chief's face wore a slightly surprised expression, for he had never before heard Haverfield so far forget himself as to commence talking private matters with a common member.

"Ah, there you are, Chief!" cried Haverfield, stepping forward. "Are there any other members in the Council Chamber, because, if so——"

"What's the matter with you?" exclaimed the Chief, grasping his arm and dragging him into the library. "You have been drinking, man!"

"Drinking!" reiterated Haverfield indignantly. "I have not touched a drop! You know perfectly well that it would have been unsafe for me to enter a public-house!"

"Well, you certainly do not seem yourself," remarked his lordship suspiciously, as he took a seat before the fire. The library was a roomy apartment, well lighted, warm, and comfortable-looking.

"Well," said the Chief suddenly, "what has been the result of your journey? Now that Carson Gray is finished with, our danger of exposure to the police has passed away."

"Danger?" asked Haverfield. "There never was any danger!"

Lord Mount-Fannell looked up.

"Really, Haverfield, I cannot quite make you out. Hasn't Carson Gray been silenced because he was in possession of all our secrets, and was preparing to give them away, and break the Brotherhood up?"

Haverfield laughed loudly, and seated himself in an easy-chair.

"Of course," he cried, "Gray was killed to-day, wasn't he? Such a step was really unnecessary, but of course he is safer in the grave."

"What in the world do you mean?" snapped the Chief, rising from his chair and facing Haverfield. "You are most decidedly not yourself to-night, Haverfield. You know positively well that you yourself told us all the facts in connection with Carson Gray. It was you who discovered that he knew all when he visited your house in Chelsea."

"He knew nothing," declared Haverfield straightforwardly, as though, in fact, he had no object in concealing the truth. "Carson Gray was only aware that I am the man who killed Philip Whyte. He never mentioned a word about the Brotherhood, or gave an inkling that he knew of its existence, and I am perfectly convinced that he never did know."

Mount-Fannell uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"But," he began, "you told us——"

"That was only a little deception on my part. I disliked Carson Gray for having tracked me down, and thought it the best way to be revenged, for I knew that you would at once set machinery in motion to secure his end, which you have done."

"Good heavens! Then we have killed Carson Gray for absolutely no reason!" cried the Chief. "If he knew nothing about the Brotherhood, he was of no danger to us whatever. This is terrible, for the sentence of death is only passed in the most vital cases, for, as you yourself know, Haverfield, bloodshed is far from being the object of the Brotherhood."

"But I have had my revenge," chuckled the other, apparently unaware of the Chief's amazement and anger. "Gray is dead now, the skunk, and——"

"What you tell me, Haverfield, is utterly incredible. You swore to us that Gray knew the secrets of the Brotherhood, knew us all by name, and we accordingly set to work to exterminate him. Yet you come now after the man is dead and calmly tell me that he was innocent of the charge brought against him."

"But I wanted my revenge——"

"Confound your revenge!" cried the Chief angrily. "Are

you joking, or do you seriously mean to tell me that you lied to us before for no reason other than personal enmity?"

"I tell you that Gray knew nothing of the Brotherhood. Why, the fact is proved by his having taken no action. Had he really known he would have lost no time in setting the police on our track. But what does it matter, anyhow?"

"What does it matter?" thundered Lord Mount-Fannell, his voice appearing almost too powerful for his slight frame. "It means that we have done a man to death who certainly did not deserve it, who did not menace us in any way whatever. Your confounded lust for revenge has caused us to perform an action which has never before occurred in the annals of the Brotherhood. You absolutely amaze me, Haverfield—amaze me because you come here and quietly reveal these facts as though I should be in perfect agreement with you. I may tell you that I am not, and that you can get out of my house as soon as ever you like. You are an Inner Councillor, but nevertheless a treacherous and vindictive dog."

Haverfield rose to his feet, an expression of surprise on his face.

"But I am only telling the truth!" he exclaimed. "What does it matter now? After all, Carson Gray is better dead; and, anyhow, he knew about my guilt, and might very possibly have tracked me here."

"Absurd!" said the Chief. "He could never have done that, for no man on earth could have traced you to this house. Indeed, the idea of your presence here would seem to the ordinary mind perfectly ridiculous."

"I admit my motive was mainly revenge."

"And look at the trouble you have put us to; look at the elaborate precautions; look at the inconvenience we have caused the Council by calling them together without notice. In addition to Carson Gray's life, the superintendent, Reynolds, has had to forfeit his into the bargain. Mr. Milverton ran a very great risk in pursuance of the same object, and it was his hand which was responsible for the detective's end. And all on account of your thirst for personal gratification! It is unprecedented, and you appear to be under the impression that I ought to be in agreement with you. I can only say that your audacity is abominable, for had you remained silent we should never have learned of your treachery."

Before Haverfield could answer, Lord Mount-Fannell walked swiftly out of the room. He was attired ready for going out, and merely paused in the hall to secure his hat and gloves. Then he flung open the door, and hurried down the steps into the street. His face was black, and his eyes shone furiously.

He hailed a taxi-cab that was passing at the moment, and was soon being driven to Mr. Milverton's house. The barrister had become, of late, his lordship's right-hand man.

"I want to talk to you privately, Milverton," he exclaimed, when the two met. "The matter is urgent, and must be attended to without delay."

"You seem to be angry over something," said Milverton, glancing curiously at the Chief's countenance. "Shall I accompany you home, or do you think it will be safe to talk here?"

"Quite safe," replied his lordship. "The room is shut off from the rest of the house, and we can talk in whispers."

The room they were in was Milverton's study, and occasionally it was used as a consulting-room for the barrister and Lord Mount-Fannell. This was only on very special occasions, however, such as at present. Without delay the Chief proceeded to tell his companion of the startling news which he had just learnt from Haverfield's lips. Milverton was equally as amazed as his lordship had been.

"But what has come over him?" he exclaimed. "Surely, after everything is over, there was not the slightest reason for him to have revealed his deception? He might have known that you would object to anything of the kind."

"I do object to it, and mean to make Haverfield pay the penalty immediately. He has caused the death of two men who, by rights, should be alive at this moment, and I see no reason why he should not follow in their footsteps."

"You mean to kill him, then?"

"Does he not deserve death? A murderer before, he is a treble murderer now, and a man such as he is quite useless to the Brotherhood, for to trust him after this would be impossible. I am perfectly sure he had had a little drink, which caused his tongue to wag a little faster to-night."

"He would never have given himself away under other circumstances," declared the K.C. "You had an idea, I think, of getting him clear of the country?"

Mount-Fannell snapped his fingers.

"That is all finished with now," he exclaimed grimly. "Haverfield shall certainly leave this country, but not in the way you meant."

"And how do you mean to do that?"

"In the very simplest way possible," replied the Chief. "We shall do nothing ourselves, but leave everything to the police."

"You intend, then, to hand him over to justice? Do you not think that he will round on us, knowing that we have given him away?"

"He will not have the opportunity," declared the Chief, "for he will never know that it is through our instrumentality that he is captured. The matter is as simple as A B C. I have already told Haverfield that, owing to his treacherous tricks, I will not have him in my house. Therefore, when I return I shall tell him to go to our secret retreat in Kensal Rise. He will take a taxi, and either I or you—it matters little which—can observe the number of the car he jumps into, step into a telephone call-office, and communicate with Scotland Yard. Haverfield, being unsuspicious, will drive straight to Kensal Rise, and before he arrives there the taxi will be stopped, and its occupant arrested. There can be no hitch that way, for Haverfield will merely think that the police have got on his track. There will be no indication whatever that we have laid information against him."

"None," agreed Milverton. "It is a splendid plan, for Haverfield deserves death. He will say nothing once he is arrested, for he will naturally expect us to make every effort to secure his escape. I am afraid, however, that our charming fellow-councillor will walk to the scaffold without a chance of regaining his liberty. Once it has got to that point, he will have no object in giving us away, and so will remain silent."

"Quite so. We could not find a better method than this. It is getting late, however, so I will go at once to Grosvenor Square, and tell Haverfield that he has to go. He will merely think that I am angry with him, and will depart without suspicion entering his mind. You will greatly oblige me by following on a few moments afterwards, and waiting in Grosvenor Square for Haverfield to appear. Five minutes later your work will be over, and the matter in the hands of the police. You yourself can never be traced."

So without delay Lord Mount-Fannell returned to his own house. He found Haverfield still in the library, engrossed in a monthly magazine, apparently as unconcerned as though nothing whatever had occurred. The real reason for this was that he had forgotten for the time being to worry over his troubles, and felt singularly light-hearted. In addition to its marvellous properties, the professor's discovery was a remarkable invigorator.

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"You are still here, Haverfield!" said the Chief snappily. "Since you have revealed to me your true character, however, I would prefer you to be out of my house."

"But you did not mean it," protested Haverfield. "It is dangerous for me to venture out too much, when every policeman is on the look-out for me."

"You will have to take your chance; and to prove that I did mean my words, I intend that you shall be out of my house within fifteen minutes. No, you need not utter protestation; you have shown me that you are not to be trusted."

"But the affair was trivial——"

"Trivial! Do you call the death of an innocent man trivial? And the death of our own member—Reynolds? You know positively well that I will not have bloodshed unless absolutely essential to the cause. This was not so."

"But where am I to go?" asked Haverfield.

"You can jump into a taxi almost outside my door, and drive straight to Kensal Rise. The superintendent there will see that you have every comfort you require. It is one of our safest retreats, and you will be just as secure from discovery there as you are here."

"But this is so sudden. I had no notion that you would take this view of the matter, Mount-Fannell. Suppose I want to speak to you—to discuss anything with you?"

"In that case, you can send a message through the usual channels, and either I will come to you, or you can come to me. Now, the hour is getting late, and I have work to attend to. You would oblige me by departing at once."

The Chief's voice was cold and hard, the voice every Inner Councillor knew to be his natural one when under stress of exceptional provocation. Haverfield, far from being a meek man, was something of a bully, and he flung the magazine down in a sudden access of temper.

"Very well," he exclaimed, "I will do as you say. You may be sorry for having treated me in this manner, however. I am a member of the Council, the same as yourself, and although I have lost my position in the world, I am still an Inner Councillor of the Brotherhood."

"That is quite apart from the matter," declared the Chief, "and threats will not serve you in the least. You know that you are perfectly helpless. But I am wasting valuable time; a taxi will take you direct to Kensal Rise, and the sooner you are off the better. Here are five pounds in cash, in case you have none in your pocket."

Mount-Fannell turned and walked across to his desk. For a moment Haverfield stood motionless, looking at him with a glowering countenance. The effect of Professor Polgrave's drug was slightly wearing off. He made as if to say something, then, changing his mind, twirled round on his heel and left the room, crashing the door to behind him.

He would have been a little uneasy had he seen the Chief's face at that moment. The anger had died from it, and in its stead there was now a smile of cunning and triumph—a smile impossible to define, for it was diabolical in its expression. An observer looking at him would have experienced a feeling of repulsion at that almost devilish smile. It was, however, an expression which the Chief allowed himself to indulge in only upon those occasions when he was quite alone.

The last he saw of Haverfield's form was the large, bulky back, the thick head, and the frizzle of wig upon the top, for Haverfield was, of course, bald. And as Mount-Fannell looked he realised that he was gazing upon Haverfield for the last time—that the Inner Councillor was on his way to his doom as surely as though he were already ascending the steps of the scaffold!

The Arrest of William Haverfield.

"Confounded impudence!"

Haverfield walked along Grosvenor Square considerably incensed at the abrupt dismissal he had just received from Lord Mount-Fannell. The effect of Professor Polgrave's drug had very nearly exhausted itself, and the effect upon Haverfield was peculiar.

Try as he would, he could not remember what he had lately been talking about, and for what reason he had had the altercation with the Chief. His memory failed him completely, so that he was not aware of the fact that he had just disclosed the truth regarding Carson Gray. All he knew was that he had to go to the Brotherhood's retreat at Kensal Rise, and that the best way to get there was by taxi.

He failed to notice, on the opposite side of the road, a rather shabbily-dressed individual, who seemed to be taking some interest in him. It was Mr. Milverton, on the look-out, as arranged.

Haverfield did not at first find a taxi, but as soon as he turned into Duke Street he saw one approaching. He noticed that the little red flag was upright, so held up his hand and hailed the chauffeur. The taxi pulled up immediately, and the Inner Councillor stepped inside. Milverton was coming along with a notebook and pencil in his hand, already making a pretence at putting something down. This was in order that when he took the number of the taxi the action would not be particularly noticeable.

"Kensal Rise," he heard Haverfield say, as he jotted down the two numbers. He smiled inwardly, and continued onwards, as though he had no interest whatever in that vicinity. Five minutes later he was boxed up in a telephone call-office ringing up Scotland Yard.

. . . . . .

Frank Kingston laid his morning newspaper on the breakfast-table with a peculiar little smile hovering round the corners of his mouth. He had just read an account of how Haverfield—the Chelsea murderer, as he was called—had been arrested in Harrow Road, near Kensal Green Cemetery. The taxi had been stopped, and Haverfield taken as quietly as possible.

There was a lot about it in the paper, and much mention was made of the exceeding smartness of the police in making the arrest. Frank Kingston, however, was not to be deceived.

"There is quite conclusive evidence," he told himself, "that the drug I administered has had the desired effect. Perhaps I had better walk across to Dolores, and hear what she has to say, for, although she is inactive at present, she takes quite as much interest in my work as I do myself."

He rose, and very soon was sitting in Dolores' boudoir. He related to her how he had seen the professor, how the latter had given him the wonderful fluid, and how neatly it had been introduced into Haverfield's veins. She was amazed at the story, for, told in plain language, it seemed too absurd to be true. Yet Kingston knew it was true, and to him the properties of Professor Polgrave's discovery had been proved to be far from theoretical only.

"I know this," he said, "because the evidence clearly shows that the effect on Haverfield was precisely as the professor stated."

"How?" Dolores inquired interestedly.

"Well, the fact of Haverfield's arrest tells me that he immediately told the Chief the absolute truth with regard to Carson Gray—that the latter knew nothing concerning the Brotherhood, I mean. The news was presumably something of a blow to Mount-Fannell, and to other members of the Council who happened to be present, for they had only just completed the murder of Gray. They think even now that he is dead. The only inference to draw is that they, in revenge for Haverfield's treachery—for it was nothing else—simply gave him up to the police. Exactly how that was done I can only guess, but I am sure I am right when I say that Mount-Fannell is responsible for Haverfield's capture. He would also be keen enough to have it effected in such a manner that Haverfield would not attribute his downfall to the agency of the Brotherhood."

"And what about poor Mr. Gray?" asked Dolores. "Now that the path is clear, I suppose you will immediately bring him back to life?"

"Not immediately, Dolores, for I want it to appear as though he is recovering from the effects of poison. This afternoon I will do all that is necessary, and by to-night the news will be in the papers that Gray is very much alive."

"And for the present?"

"Well," drawled Kingston languidly, "it is my intention, Dolores, if you will accompany me, to pay a visit to my new friend, Professor Polgrave. He will be delighted to see you, and we can talk matters over from beginning to end."

"I shall be only too pleased to come!" cried Dolores eagerly. "From what you have told me the old gentleman seems to be exceedingly interesting, and I am just longing to see round his wonderful laboratory."

"Then we will start as soon as you are ready," exclaimed Frank Kingston, rising to his feet. "The Haverfield case is completed as far as I am concerned, and we start now upon an entirely new one. My plans are already forming themselves, and I shall want you, Dolores, to lend me your assistance almost immediately."

"You know, Mr. Kingston," replied Dolores seriously, "that I am always willing and eager to help you in your great work."

"And I know," returned Kingston, "how extremely valuable your assistance is to me. Your part in the forthcoming case will be an important one, and I am sure you will carry it out as splendidly as you have done others in the past. The members of the Inner Council are falling out with terrible regularity, and a third of their number have already met their just deserts. My hardest work has yet to come, but with such a band of helpers around me as I have now gathered, I am more confident than ever that the Brotherhood of Iron will slowly but surely be totally exterminated."

(Next week a new phase will commence in the great struggle between Frank Kingston and his helpers and the mighty Brotherhood of Iron. Do not miss next Thursday's issue of the GEM Library, but order it in advance. Price One Penny.)

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