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THE FIFTH AT ST. JIM'S.

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LENGTH
TALE OF TOM
MERRY & CO.

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



NO. 39.

VOL. 2.

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THE 5th AT

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CHAPTER 1.
An Unexpected Visit.

TOM MERRY raised his head from his work, in his study in the School House at St. Jim's, and listened. The November dusk was thick on the old quad, and the gas was alight in the study. From the dusky quadrangle came the confused sound of voices, mingled with laughter and cheers. "Seems to be a row in the quad this evening," Tom Merry remarked.

Manners, who was developing films, gave a grunt of assent. Monty Lowther looked up from a German imposition.

"Seems like it," he said. "Something on, I suppose. Tomorrow's the fifth, and perhaps some of the kids are celebrating it a little in advance."

"H'm, perhaps."

And Tom Merry's pen scratched on again.

The noise in the quadrangle grew louder and nearer, and it was evident that it was approaching the School House. It sounded louder under the window of the study, and Tom Merry stepped to the window to look out. But the November mist was thick on the glass, and he could not see. He threw up the sash.

There was a shout as Tom Merry put his head out of the window and looked down into the quadrangle.

"Here you are, Merry."

It was the voice of Gore, the cad of the Shell. Tom Merry could only make out indistinct moving figures in the mist.

"What's the row?" he called out.

"Another guy."

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy! Why don't you come down?"

"Oh, rats," said Tom Merry, and he jammed down the window, and returned to the table. "It's only that ass Gore."

"They're coming along the passage," said Monty Lowther.

Footsteps sounded along the Shell passage. A crowd was evidently coming along to Tom Merry's study. Tom licked down his pen again and opened the door. He was growing puzzled. But as he looked into the lighted passage, he understood.

A crowd of fellows came along, most of them grinning, and some cheering. In the midst of them walked an elderly lady, whom Tom Merry at once recognised as his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. He had not been expecting a visit from Miss Fawcett, and he was surprised to see her, but he was not so much surprised as angry at what was taking place. The jokers of the School House were escorting Miss Fawcett to Tom Merry's study, and Miss Fawcett herself was the only person who could not see that they were "rotting."

Miss Priscilla beamed at the sight of Tom Merry, and ran forward and threw her arms about his neck.

"My dear child," she murmured, "you must be surprised to see me. As I had to undertake a journey in the neighbourhood I could not resist calling in for an hour to see you. These dear boys have kindly escorted me to your study. You must thank them for their kindness and courtesy to your old governess."

The juniors who crowded the passage behind the old lady

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY THURSDAY.

giggled joyously, but if Miss Fawcett noticed that, she only attributed it to the exuberance of youthful spirits. Tom Merry glared at the juniors, but his glare was quite ineffectual. In the presence of Miss Fawcett they knew that he could not proceed to more forcible measures. Mellish, of the Fourth, winked to Miss Fawcett and winked at his comrades.

"Not at all, Miss Fawcett," he said. "We do not need thanks or a little natural courtesy shown to Tom Merry's governess. We are all so fond of Tom Merry that we are always glad to show him any little attention like this."

"Yes, rather," said Gore. "And we take it as kind of you, Miss Fawcett, to visit the school on this most appropriate date."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We should be willing to do much more than we have done," said Mellish, "for the sake of pleasing Tom Merry."

"My dear boys, I thank you from my heart," said Miss Fawcett, "and you must thank them, too, Tommy darling. They have taken a great deal of trouble. Owing to the mist, they lost the path in the quadrangle, and we have been all round the school, and I have been quite a long time getting in." "It's awfully thick in the quad," said Mellish blandly.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Come in, dear," he said, extricating himself from the embrace of his old governess, who never could guess that demonstrative affection in public made her unfortunate ward inwardly writhing. "Come into the study."

"Yes, Tommy darling, but you must first thank these dear, kind lads."

"Not at all," said Mellish. "We are more than sufficiently repaid by witnessing this tender scene of affection. When I see Tom Merry's delight at meeting his dear old nurse, I remember the time when my grandmother kissed me on my baby brow, and—"

"Shut up, you cad," muttered Tom Merry fiercely.

"Did you speak, Merry?"

"I—"

"You have not thanked those dear, kind boys yet, Tommy sweet."

"I—I'll thank them presently," said Tom Merry. "I—shall know better how to thank them presently, dear. Come in."

He almost pulled Miss Priscilla into the study, and slammed the door. There was a loud chuckle in the passage. Tom Merry's face was crimson. It angered him for the kind, unsuspicious old soul to be made the butt of the School House jokers, and he mentally promised Gore and Mellish and their friends some forcible thanks after Miss Fawcett was gone. The old lady sat down in the only armchair, politely offered by Lowther, and untied the strings of her bonnet. She beamed upon the chums of the Shell. Manners and Lowther had faces of preternatural gravity, but Tom Merry was not unaware of the twinkles in their eyes.

"I hope I have not interrupted your work, dear boys," said Miss Fawcett.

Tom Merry had left off in the midst of a problem he had to work out. Monty Lowther had only half written a German imposition which had to be shown to Herr Schneider before bed-time. Manners was quakingly conscious of two films immersed in the developer and spoiling. But politeness came before everything.

"We're awfully glad to see you, ma'am," said Lowther.

"It's kind of you to give us a look-in like this."

"Awfully kind," said Manners.

"I could not resist the temptation to see my darling Tommy once more, if only for a few minutes," said Miss Fawcett, her eyes dwelling affectionately on the hero of the Shell. "As that boy—that kind boy Gore—remarked, it is a most appropriate date for me to come and see my darling Tommy."

Manners nearly exploded, and Lowther made a curious suppressed sound in his throat. Tom Merry's beautiful crimson complexion became redder, if possible. Gore had been alluding to the Fifth of November, but not in the sense that Miss Fawcett understood.

"Because," went on Miss Priscilla, "to-morrow is the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, and I am sure that you will wish to have some little celebration, Tommy sweet."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry.

He trembled inwardly at the thought that Miss Fawcett was about to propose being present at the celebration of the Fifth. Tom Merry was very fond indeed of his old governess. But the fact that Miss Fawcett never could realise that he was not still a baby, sometimes made things uncomfortable for him. To Miss Fawcett the hero of the Shell, the junior football captain, was still the little curly-headed youngster she had brought home from India in the days of his infancy. The passing of the years made no difference to her. He was still Tommy sweet and Tommy darling, and the humorous members of the junior Forms at St. Jim's did not allow him to forget it. He was very fond of his old governess, who was kindness itself to him—he was always glad to see her—but her visits to the school sometimes made things very awkward for him.

Miss Priscilla was kindness and simplicity personified, and she imagined everybody else to be as kind and simple as herself. Tom Merry had often chafed at the veiled inaptitude of Gore and his cronies, which Miss Fawcett never saw.

"I am so sorry," went on Miss Fawcett, "that it will be impossible for me to be here. I should like to very much. But I must go—I cannot stay here now more than twenty minutes, or I shall lose my train. But I hope you will have a very happy time, my sweet boy, letting off Roman crackers and Catherine candles and rocket wheels and other fireworks."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Oh, yes, rather," he said.

"And I am sure you will be in need of extra funds," said Miss Priscilla, beaming. "You will open this envelope when I am gone, Tommy darling. I am so glad to see you again. Do you know, you are growing."

"Am I?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yes, I declare you are growing. You will be quite a big boy. And yet it seems but yesterday when you were a tiny tot, and you were crying so over your teething. How are your darling teeth now, my sweet?"

"They're all right," groaned Tom Merry. He knew why Manners and Lowther suddenly went to look out of the window. It was so that Miss Fawcett could not see their convulsed faces. But he could not blame them.

"And your chest," resumed Miss Fawcett. "Now that this cold, misty, November weather is coming on you must take care of your chest. You must remember that you are very delicate. Did you receive the chest-protectors I sent you?"

"Yes, they came along, thanks."

"Very good. Have you any of the cough lozenges left?"

"Yes, quite a lot."

"And the Purple Pills for Tiny Tummys?"

"They're all gone."

They had all gone out of the window, as a matter of fact, but Tom Merry did not feel called upon to explain that. If he had swallowed all the medicines and pills his loving governess sent him, he would probably have been a confirmed invalid.

"Very good. Mind you write to me whenever you want anything of that sort, and you shall have it by return of post. I place my darling boy's health before every other consideration. I hope you will not run any risks with the fireworks to-morrow. I think it would be judicious for you to stand at a distance, and allow the fireworks to be lighted by some older boy. You could watch them go off, and clap your little hands."

A curious gurgle came from Manners, but Miss Fawcett did not notice it. She looked round at the chums of the Shell.

"I am sure you will look after Tommy to-morrow," she said.

"I feel that I can rely upon you. He is so bold and venturesome. When he was only five years old, he—"

"Won't you have some tea, dear?" broke in Tom Merry hurriedly.

"No, my child. Supper will be ready for me when I reach the place I am visiting. As I was saying, when he was only five years old, he—"

"But you must be hungry."

"No, I'm not at all hungry. When he was five years old, he—"

"It wouldn't take us many minutes to get a good feed, dear," said Tom Merry.

"Not at all, my sweet child, though it is like your kind little heart to think of it. But I was telling your friends about your boldness and venturesomeness when you were only five years old. There was a great dog at Huckleberry Heath, my dears—a large and fierce dog, and Tommy darling met it in the lane, and instead of running away, he walked straight past it, and shook his little fist at it, and said 'Bo!' He did, really. I have often related that circumstance. He shook his little fist and said 'Bo!' You do not remember that, Tommy darling?"

"No," groaned Tom Merry.

"He shook his little fist and said 'Bo!' I was so terrified. The great dog walked away. Tommy's boldness had cowed him. He walked straight up to the dog, you know, and shook his little fist, and—"

"And said 'Bo!'" said Manners gravely.

"Yes, and said 'Bo!' Dear me, I shall have to see about my train; the hack is waiting at the gate for me. It is very misty in the quadrangle. You may see me as far as the gate, if you wish, Tommy darling."

"Of course, dear," said Tom Merry, jumping up with alacrity.

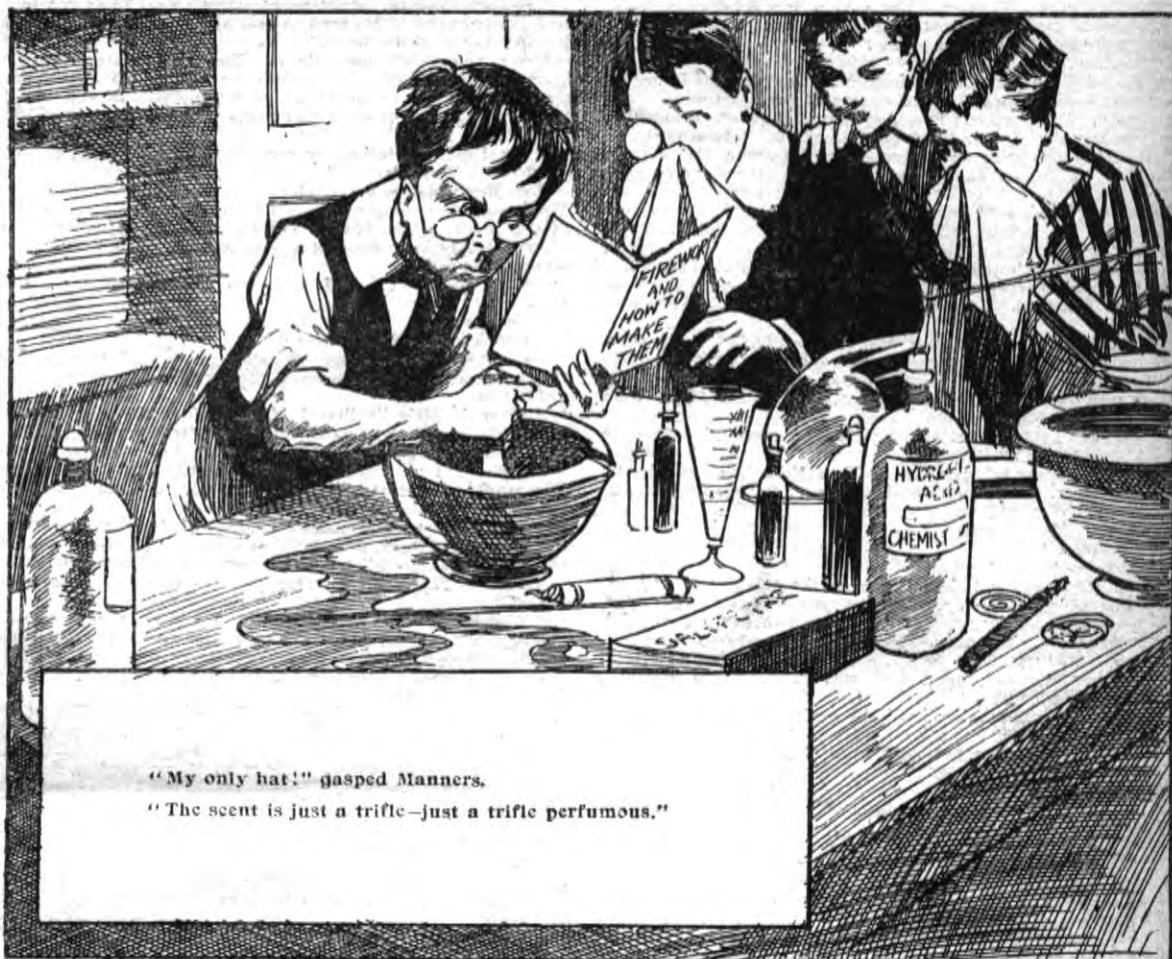
Miss Priscilla left the study leaning on Tom Merry's arm. Manners closed the door after saying good-bye, and then stared at Lowther. Lowther stared at him. They waited breathlessly till Miss Fawcett's footsteps had died away down the passage. They would not have hurt her for worlds. But then they could no longer contain themselves. They burst into a wild howl of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Manners. "He shook his little fist—"

"And said 'Bo!'" sobbed Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"



"My only hat!" gasped Manners.

"The scent is just a trifle—just a trifle perfumous."

They could not help it. They laughed and shrieked, and shrieked and laughed; and it was full five minutes before they could restrain their merriment sufficiently to go downstairs to meet Tom Merry when he came in.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole is Not Satisfied.

TOM MERRY composed his features as he escorted Miss Fawcett down to the hall. He knew that there was an ordeal to go through yet. Gore and his friends were in the hall, grinning and chuckling, and evidently on the watch for Miss Priscilla.

"Here she comes," murmured Mellish. "Look out!" The whole crowd of them turned towards Miss Fawcett with polite bows, some of them laying their hands upon their hearts. Miss Fawcett, in the innocence of her heart, bowed gracefully in return.

"I hope you are not going yet, Miss Fawcett," said Gore. "I am sorry," said unsuspicious Miss Priscilla; "but I really must."

"Couldn't you possibly manage to stay over to-morrow?" "You know how pleased the Head is when you come, Miss Fawcett," said Mellish, "and the celebration to-morrow won't be complete without you."

"It is very kind of you to say so, but I really cannot remain. Come, my darling Tommy: the hack will be waiting."

"Excuse me a moment, Miss Fawcett," said Gore; "I think Merry has run out of cod-liver oil. Could you send him some more? We are all anxious about him."

"Dear, kind lad," said Miss Fawcett. "Yes, I shall certainly send some more. Tommy sweet, it is very pleasant to me to see how much your dear schoolfellows love you."

Tom Merry looked daggers at Gore, and escorted Miss Fawcett to the hack. The juniors followed them, and all stood hat in hand as Tom Merry handed his old governess into the vehicle. She kissed him seven or eight times at the door, much to the delight of the juniors; but at last the vehicle drove off.

"Good-bye, Tommy darling!"

"Good-bye, dear!"

"Don't forget to take care of your dear little chest in this damp weather—" But the rest was lost as the hack rolled off into the November gloom.

There was a yell of laughter from Gore & Co.

"Don't forget to take care of your ickle chest, Tommy darling!" shrieked Gore.

"And to keep his ickle feet dry," said Mellish.

"And to take cod-liver oil in regular doses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Remember the chest protector."

"And the pink pills."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry stood with ominous calmness while the hack drove off, and when it disappeared he woke to sudden energy. He made a rush at his tormentors, hitting out right and left. They scattered before him in the gloom of the quadrangle, yelling and hooting, and Tom Merry, baffled, took his way back to the School House. There was a frown upon his usually sunny face.

Manners and Lowther were waiting for him at the door of the house. They were looking very grave, having laughed themselves almost into a state of exhaustion in the study. Tom Merry looked at them quickly.

"Miss Fawcett gone?" asked Manners solemnly.

"Yes."

"Kind of her to give us a look up."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"I mean it. Gore's a cad—and the rest of them are cads. I wonder you didn't shake your little flat at them—"

"And say 'Bo!'" said Lowther.

Tom Merry turned scarlet.

"Look here, dry up!" he exclaimed. "I get enough of that from the other fellows, without you starting. And if you let that idiotic yarn get out over the School House, I'll bash your heads together!"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"It's all right, Tommy. The yarn's too good to spread; we'll keep it for home consumption; but is it a fact, did you really say 'Bo'?" Hold on—pax!"

"Shut up, then!"

"Anyway, the contribution from Miss Fawcett will be useful just now," said Manners, as the chums of the Shell went up to the study. "We weren't in a very flourishing state financially, and we want to do our little bit to-morrow. Those chaps in Study No. 6 are going to celebrate, and Figgins & Co., over in the New House, are on the war-path, too. We want to keep our end up."

"Hallo, there's someone in the study!"

A youth with a big head, a bumpy forehead, and a large pair of spectacles blinked at the chums of the Shell as they came in. It was Herbert Skimpole, of the Shell, and the genius of St. Jim's.

"I came up to speak to you, Merry," he said. "As you were not here I waited. I believe Miss Fawcett has just been to see you."

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with a dangerous glint in his eyes. He had had enough chipping on that subject, and if Skimpole had come to his study to give him some more, it was about the most reckless thing the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's could possibly have done.

"Good! I thought so. Now, your old governess is extremely fond of you—ow!"

Skimpole broke off, gasping, as Tom Merry grasped him by the shoulders. He blinked at the hero of the Shell in blank amazement.

"Really, Merry—really, I—"

"Outside!"

"But, really—"

Tom Merry slung Skimpole across the study and bumped him through the doorway. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's staggered against the opposite wall, leaned there for a moment, and then slid to the floor. He sat in a huddled heap there, staring blankly at Tom Merry, with an expression of almost idiotic bewilderment upon his face. Tom Merry shook a warning finger at him.

"That's lesson number one," he said. "I've had enough, and enough's as good as a feast. Keep off the grass in future, or you'll be bumped again, and harder."

"But really, Merry—"

"Oh, travel along!"

"But really I am unconscious of having given you any cause of offence, and as there is no grass in the study, I cannot possibly have trodden on it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

"There is nothing to laugh at, Lowther. Merry has acted in an absurd and unaccountable way, and I only hope that he has not been drinking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I made the innocent remark that his old governess is very fond of him, a remark that is certainly true, as you can ask any fellow in the School House who has seen."

"Get off!" roared Tom Merry.

"But really—"

Tom Merry slammed the door, and cut short the remarks of Herbert Skimpole. Manners and Lowther were grinning, and Tom looked very heated. He took up the envelope Miss Fawcett had left on the table, and caught the clink of coin. Before he could open it, the door re-opened, and Skimpole looked in.

"Merry, I wish to speak to you on a most important matter. Your governess—Ow!"

A Latin Grammar biffed on Skimpole's chest, and he sat down in the doorway. Tom Merry started towards him with an ink bottle, and he squirmed out into the passage.

"Merry, pray do not be a beast! As a sincere Socialist, I am opposed to violence; but as a Determinist, I shall punch your head if you spill any of that ink over me. If you do not wish to lend me the money—"

"Eh?"

"I wish to borrow a small sum of you."

"Why didn't you say so at first?"

"You didn't give me an opportunity. I was remarking that as Miss Fawcett is so fond of you, she has doubtless left you a substantial tip."

Tom Merry laughed. He saw that he had been a little hasty.

"And I was thinking you might lend me a little sum for an important purpose," said Skimpole. "You are doubtless aware that to-morrow is Fireworks Day."

"Yes, I think I've heard something of it," assented Tom Merry, his good humour quite restored as he discovered that Skimpole was not chipping after all. "The fifth of November fellows next after the fourth as a rule, I believe."

"It does so always, Tom Merry, without exception, as a little reflection on the matter would, I think, be sufficient to convince you," said Skimpole reprovingly. "To-morrow being Guy Fawkes day, most of the fellows are spending money in more efficacious to make the fireworks ourselves, and as I have the necessary knowledge—"

"Good! You can make us as many fireworks as you like," said Tom Merry. "No need to talk about it. Cut along now; I've got my work to finish."

"But you don't understand. Two things are necessary, knowledge and cash. I have the knowledge, so if you have the cash, we can come to an arrangement. If you like to hand me a pound or so, I will make you any number of fireworks."

"Yes, I'm likely to hand you a pound or so—I don't think!"

"Really, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry opened his envelope. It contained two sovereigns. There was a beaming expression of satisfaction upon the faces of the chums of the Shell. The tip came in as usefully as it could possibly have done at any time. Skimpole made a step towards the table.

"Very good!" he said. "Those two sovereigns will be ample."

"Go hon!"

"I could make one of them do."

"Can't be did, Skimmey. We want this cash for the celebration to-morrow; and besides, I know you'd only blow yourself up."

"There is little likelihood of that, Tom Merry. It is true that I do not know very much about chemistry, and am not very well acquainted with combustibles; but with my unusual brain power I am certain to make a success of the matter. You would probably save about fifty per cent. on the cost of the fireworks."

"Rats! If you can make a couple of bob do, you can have it," said Tom Merry, who felt that some compensation was due to the amateur Socialist for the bumping he had received by mistake. "That's enough for you to blow up your study with."

"Thank you very much, Merry. I will endeavour to raise the rest of the required sum in other quarters," said Skimpole, taking the two shillings that Tom Merry produced from his trousers' pocket. "Do you know where D'Arcy is?"

"He's gone out."

"How unfortunate. However, I shall wait for him at the gate. Thank you very much for the loan, Merry. If you would prefer to make it the two pounds after all—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry, settling down to his interrupted problem.

"If you would like to make a contribution, Manners—"

"These films are spoiled," said Manners. "I knew they would be."

"Lowther, if you would care—"

"Nur mit Entsetzen wach' ich morgens auf," said Lowther, reading aloud as his pen travelled over the impot paper, to drown Skimpole's voice.

"Really, Lowther—"

"Ich mochte bittere Thränen weinen."

Skimpole closed the door.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy Minor in Difficulties.

SKIMPOLE went down the corridor, turned into the Fourth Form passage, and knocked at the door of Study No. 6.

Study No. 6 was the dwelling of the chums of the Fourth—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, was the Croesus of the junior Forms, and many a borrower came to share in his ample pocket-money.

There was no reply to Skimpole's knock, and he knocked again. Still dead silence.

"Dear me," murmured Skimpole, "I suppose Tom Merry was right. D'Arcy has gone out, and has not yet returned. It

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The greatest story of the year. "Answers" new serial, "GREED," starts to-day.

is curious that no one is here, however. Perhaps I had better look into the study. The gas is certainly alright."

He opened the door and looked in. Three juniors were in No. 6, unfastening a number of packets at the table.

Skimpole blinked at them, and they turned their heads to stare at Skimpole.

"Dear me," said Skimpole, "how singular that you didn't hear me knock, Blake."

"Ass! We heard you!" said Jack Blake.

"Then why didn't you call out?"

"Because we didn't want to be bothered by a howling idiot just now."

"Really, Blake—"

"Can't you see we're busy?" demanded Digby.

Skimpole blinked at the table. The packets the Fourth-Formers were unfastening contained fireworks of various shapes and sizes.

"I see you have been purchasing fireworks," he remarked. "I might have saved you a great deal of money if you had consulted me in time."

"Got a relation in the business?" asked Herries.

"Certainly not, Herries. I mean that I can make fireworks of a much better quality than those sold in shops, and at about half the price. If you fellows like to finance the scheme I shall be pleased to—"

"You'd be the only person pleased, then, I expect," grunted Blake. "We're not financing any rotten schemes just now."

"That is quite a mistake, Blake. It is not a rotten scheme, but an excellent idea for saving money," Skimpole explained patiently. "Tom Merry has advanced two shillings, but that is far from being sufficient for the purpose. I shall require a quantity of gunpowder, and gunpowder is expensive."

"So are funerals," said Blake. "You'd better leave gunpowder alone. You remember your last experiment with gunpowder on board the Condor in the vac. You wrecked the ship."

"I certainly cannot admit anything of the kind, Blake. I was conducting an experiment in the hold, and I should have proved that the mysterious powder was not gunpowder, had not that sudden and unaccountable explosion prevented me from making the experiment. However, that is neither here nor there. If you do not feel inclined to advance a small loan for the purpose of making fireworks—"

"And I certainly don't."

"Very well. Has D'Arcy returned yet?"

"No, he hasn't."

"Ah, then I will wait for him at the gate. He understands me better than any of you fellows, and he will probably advance the tin. Or, as it is very cold and misty outdoors, perhaps I had better wait for him here."

Skimpole came further into the study, and sat down calmly in the only armchair close to the fire.

"Then I shall be sure not to miss him. I will improve the shining hour, if you like, by reading you some very interesting extracts from the three hundred and thirty-third chapter of my work on Socialism, which I hope will be published before Christmas."

Jack Blake winked at his chums, and selected some crackers from one of the packets.

"Go ahead," he said. "Read it out by all means."

"Good! I am very glad indeed to welcome this unusual manifestation of intelligence on your part, Blake. It shows that your faculties are awakening to the higher conceptions. The chapter I am speaking of deals with the great question of heredity and environment. Every man being what he is, and therefore not what he is not, it is unquestionable that Determinism is quite right in maintaining that that which is, under present conditions, in existence, is the evident outcome of that which was in existence under previous conditions, and, this great truth being admitted, it is only necessary to—"

Bang! Bang!

Skimpole jumped clear of the chair. His spectacles slid down his nose, and his notes for the three hundred and thirty-third chapter of his forthcoming publication were scattered over the rug.

"Wh-wh-what was that?"

Bang! Bang!

The new bangs came from fairly under his feet. He jumped into the air, and caught his foot in the chair, and rolled on the carpet.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Wh-wh-what—ow—dear me!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Dear me! I declare you are throwing crackers at me! Really, Blake, Digby, Herries—really—oh—oh—oh!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Jumping crackers were exploding all round the amateur Socialist. He was startled almost out of his wits. He made a clutch at his spectacles, and another at his valuable notes, and bolted from the study.

The Fourth-Formers, howling with laughter, rushed to the door, and pelted his legs with crackers as he ran.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

A youth with a wide collar stained with ink, and a cheerful round face, also adorned with ink-spots, was coming up the stairs, and Skimpole ran full tilt into him.

The inky youth sat down on the stairs, and Skimpole rushed blindly past.

The sitting youth stared after him blankly.

"My only hat!" murmured D'Arcy minor. "What's the matter with Skimpole? What's all that giddy banging about?"

There was a strong smell of gunpowder in the Fourth-Form passage, as the youth picked himself up, and made his way to Study No. 6.

He looked in, and there was an instant explosion under his feet.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Wally D'Arcy jumped into the air.

"Hallo!" he roared. "What's the little game?"

"My hat! It's young Wally! All right, my son!" grinned Jack Blake. "I thought it was that ass Skimpole coming back. You can come in."

"Blessed if I care about coming into such a nifty old den," said Wally, sniffing the gunpowder as he entered. "Is my brother Gus here?"

"Your brother Gus isn't here," said Blake, "and you won't be here long, if you don't show a proper respect to your elders' young shaver."

"Oh, get off!" said the hero of the Third Form at St. Jim's. "I want to see Gus. What's the good of having a brother in the Fourth if you never make use of him. It's a bit up against me in the Third, having a Forth-Former belonging to me. We rather look down on the Fourth, you know."

Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.

The Third Form at St. Jim's had been accustomed to tremble in the presence of the Fourth and the Shell; but somehow things were changing in that respect since Wally had come to the old school. Wally certainly never showed any intention of trembling in the presence of anybody.

"It's rotten, Gus being out," said Wally. "Blessed if I can see what he wants to be out for, just when I want to speak to him. The mater particularly told him he was to look after me and now when I'm out of tin he's gone out. It's provoking."

"Bai Jove! Is that young Wally?"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, at the door.

D'Arcy came in, and removed his overcoat, and put his sill hat on the nearest chair. The elegant Fourth-Former presented a striking contrast to his somewhat untidy and inky younger brother.

"Yes, it's me," grunted Wally.

"Weally, Wally, you shouldn't say it's me," said the swell of St. Jim's, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "You must know—"

"I didn't say it's you. I said it's me."

"You said, it's me."

"I said, 'It's me.'"

"What I mean is—"

"Oh, never mind what you mean, Gus. You're too long-winded. Have you any tin?"

"I insist upon explainin' my meanin'," said Arthur Augustus with dignity. "You should not say it's me. You should say it is I."

"Got any tin?"

"That is an extremely coarse and vulgar way of askin' a question, too," said Arthur Augustus. "I am gwovin' ashamed of you, Wally."

"Rats! Got any tin?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"The mater said you were to look after me," said Wally. "The pater said I was always to go to you when in difficulties."

"Yaas, wathah, in a case of doubt, deah boy, I'll tell you what's the pwopah thing to do," assented D'Arcy.

"Well, I'm in difficulties now," said Wally. "I want some tin. I blued—"

"What? You whatted?"

"I blued all my last allowance without thinking about bonfire day, and now I'm atony."

"Wally, I cannot give my permish for you to use such slang expressions."

"That's all right. I can manage without," said Wally cheerfully. "I'm busted, and I want some tin for fireworks to-morrow. How much can you stand?"

"Undah the cires—"

"Oh, no long speeches, old chap. I have enough of those from the governor. I could do with ten bob."

"I wefuse to advance you any such sum to spend in extrava-gance," said D'Arcy. "I am bound, as your eldah bwothah, to inculcate carefulness with money. If you follow my example and nevah waste anythin', you will always have plenty o' cash."

"Rats! Now don't you begin, Gus. I can't stand speeches. How much can you stand?"

"I shall be vewy pleased to stand half-a-crown."

"Well, of all the cheek! I'd wire home to the governor for me, only he's gone abroad. Make it ten bob."

"It is weally imposa, deah boy!"

"That's all very well; but the fellows in the Third expect smething of me," said Wally. "I relied on you; and you've go right to fail me like this. Are you bounders going to celebrate the Fifth in any way?"

"A trifle," said Jack Blake—"that is, if the Third Form don't object, of course."

"Oh, you can go ahead," said Wally. "But the trouble is, that we are mostly stony, and we shall have to raise supplies somehow. Perhaps we may be able to raid the New House, and collar Figgins & Co.'s fireworks though."

Jack Blake shook a warning finger at the cheerful Third Former.

"Don't you do anything of the sort," he exclaimed. "You infants in the Third Form can keep clear of House rowa."

"Rats!" said Wally. "We'd raid your study for two pins! can tell you that the Third Form isn't going to be sat upon now I'm in it! I'm agreed about that with Jameson and Gibson. We're going to make things hum!"

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would not use those slangy expressions. I weally considah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Look here, I'll make you an offer, you chaps. If one of you likes to volunteer as a guy, will save us a lot of trouble making one, and—"

It was the last straw. Blake, Herries, and Digby rushed at the cheerful infant, and Wally dodged into the passage and ran. They came back breathless after a vain pursuit as far as the staircase.

"Bai Joze," muttered D'Arcy, "my young bwothah is a regular young wascal, you know!"

"He'll be found drowned one of these days," said Blake larkly.

CHAPTER 4. Skimpole Waits.

DEAR me, how very dark and misty it is!" murmured Skimpole, as he came to the gates of St. Jim's to wait for D'Arcy, quite unconscious of the fact that D'Arcy had already gone in. "It will be very unpleasant waiting here, but otherwise I shall probably miss D'Arcy, and it is most important for me to see him."

Skimpole had already missed D'Arcy in the foggy quad, and as he did not know it that did not worry him. He took up his stand at the gates. They were locked for the night, but he knew that D'Arcy had had a pass from Darrel, the prefect. The chums of Study No. 6 had made it impossible for him to wait there, so there was no choice but to wait at the gate if he wanted to make sure of catching Arthur Augustus. But it was, as Skimpole said, very cold and misty.

A quarter of an hour later Jack Blake came down to the porter's lodge to inquire for a parcel of fireworks he expected, and he caught sight of the amateur Socialist at the gate, blinking through the bars into the dusky Rylcombe Road.

"Hallo there!" exclaimed Blake. "Who's that?"

"It is I, Blake."

"My hat! What are you doing there—inhaling mist as a new treatment for the lungs, or trying to catch cold?"

"I am waiting for D'Arcy."

"You are whatting for which?"

"I am waiting for D'Arcy. Since your treatment of me in the study, which I cannot but characterise as rough and rude, have decided to wait at the gate. If I waited at the door of the School House D'Arcy might go in another way. He is very unreliable."

"You—you are waiting here for Gussy?"

"Yes, certainly. I suppose I am at liberty to wait here if I like?"

Jack Blake chuckled.

"Oh, certainly! Wait as long as you like, my son; but I don't suppose D'Arcy will come in to-night now."

"Nonsense, Blake! He would not be allowed to stay out all night. I shall certainly wait here till he comes in."

"Oh, do as you like, my boy. I'm the last fellow in the world to interfere with the liberty of a sincere Socialist-Determinist-howling-idiotist."

"Really, Blake—"

But Jack Blake, having obtained his parcel from Taggles, the porter, disappeared in the gloom. The sound of a chuckle floated back as he took his departure.

Skimpole shifted from one leg to the other, and back again. It was very cold. The mist was clinging to his glasses and obstructing his vision, his feet were cold, and even his overcoat did not keep off the November wind. He tramped to and fro to keep himself warm, every now and then casting anxious glances through the bars of the gate into the misty road.

A form loomed up in the mist of the quad.

"Hallo!" said the voice of Digby. "Blake asked me to come and see if you were still there, duffer."

"I am still here," said Skimpole, in shivering tones. "It is very curious, is it not, that D'Arcy should be so late?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothing to laugh at, Digby. D'Arcy may have met with some terrible accident. At this very moment a railway train may be thundering over his mangled limbs."

"Well, you're a cheerful idiot and no mistake! As a matter of fact, D'Arcy has come in," said Digby.

"Pray do not attempt to rot so wideawake a person as myself, Digby. You can hardly expect to take me in with so flimsy a tale."

"You howling ass! D'Arcy has been indoors a long time."

"I am sorry to see you departing from the truth for the sake of a very poor joke. It might appear to you to be humorous to make me come in after waiting a long time for nothing, but a joke is no excuse for telling an untruth."

"You screaming lunatic—"

"Really, Digby—"

"I tell you Gussy has come in!" yelled Digby. "Blake told me to tell you."

"I am sorry that Blake is a party to this inexcusable prevarication."

"Oh, stay where you are then!" said Digby. "I've a jolly good mind to bash your head against the gate, only it might damage the gate."

And Digby walked off.

Skimpole, very pleased with himself for having so easily seen through the device of the Fourth-Formers to get him away from his post, resumed his patient tramping to and fro. Ten minutes passed, and then Herries came down. Herries had been round to feed his bulldog, and he, good-naturedly, gave Skimpole a look-up as he returned. Skimpole turned round and blinked at him in the mist.

"Are you still waiting for D'Arcy?" grinned Herries.

"Yes," mumbled Skimpole through his chattering teeth.

"He is very late, isn't he?"

"He's indoors," said Herries.

"Really, Herries—"

"He's been in an hour."

"I am sorry to see you sharing in the prevarication practised by Digby for the sake of a very poor joke," said Skimpole.

"I assure you that a fellow like myself is not taken in so easily, Herries."

"You utter dummy!" said Herries. "I thought I'd tell you, that's all. You can stay there as long as you like."

And Herries marched off indignantly.

Skimpole blinked into the fog. Presently he tapped at the door of the porter's lodge. Taggles opened it in no good-humour.

"It's come, Master Figgins," he said—"which is the third time you've bothered me about that blessed box of fireworks! Here it is! Why, it ain't Master Figgins!"

"It is I," said Skimpole. "I want to ask you—"

"There ain't nothing for you," growled Taggles.

"I am not expecting anything, Taggles."

"Then what are you worriting me for?" demanded the porter aggressively.

"I had no intention of worrying you; I simply wanted to ask you if you knew when D'Arcy was likely to return."

"D'Arcy! He hain't gone out again."

"Eh? He went out before tea—"

"Which he came in more than a hower ago," grunted Taggles.

"He—he came in!" said Skimpole faintly.

"Hain't I told you so?"

"Then—then I must have missed him in the mist," said Skimpole. "And they were not trying to jape me after all!"

"I don't know what yer talkin' about," said Taggles; "but I jolly well know that I'm not goin' to stand 'ere listenin' to you!"

And the school porter closed his door in Skimpole's face with a slam. The amateur Socialist took his way back to the School House, shivering with cold, and wishing he had not been quite so knowing.

Skimpole looked into the common-room, and found D'Arcy there. He rubbed the mist off his glasses and approached the swell of St. Jim's.

"I have been waiting for you, D'Arcy," he said, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Yaas, Blake told me you were waitin' at the gate," said D'Arcy, with a nod. "I was thinkin' whethah I would come down and tell you I was indoors, you know, but I feel so exhausted after goin' out. Why didn't you come in when Dig told you?"

"I thought he was japing."

"Then it serves you wight for doubtin' a gentleman's word," said D'Arcy severely. "You ought to have known that a friend of mine would not depart from the twuth for the sake of japin' anybody."

"I think I have caught a cold—"

"I cannot say that I commisevate you in the least. A fellow who would doubt the word of a friend of mine—"

"I wanted to see you particularly. I have a scheme for making fireworks and saving about fifty per cent. of the cost—"

"I am afraid I cannot give you my opinion on the scheme. I cannot discuss any matter with a fellow who would doubt the word of a friend of mine."

"I really do not want your opinion, D'Arcy. That is not the point at all. With your limited intellect you would hardly be able to advance an opinion of any great value. What I want you to do is to lend me a sovereign."

"I utterly refuse to lend a sovereign to a fellow who doubts the word of a friend of mine," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"This discussion may as well close. I cannot converse on a friendly footing with a fellow who doubts the word of a friend of mine."

And Arthur Augustus effectually closed the discussion by strolling away, leaving Skimpole blinking undecidedly and still minus the necessary sovereign for carrying out his scheme.

CHAPTER 5.

A Third Form Raid.

"HOW much?"

Jameson, of the Third Form at St. Jim's, asked that question as Wally strolled into the Third Form room in the School House. Most of the Form-rooms were in the School House building, and the Third Form room was used, after school hours, by School House and New House boys alike. They preferred it to the junior common-room, where their youthful mirth was severely repressed by the Fourth Form and the Shell fellows. The Form-room was crowded with inky-fingered fags. Among that untidy and shaggy fraternity D'Arcy minor was already looked upon as a leader. Jameson, of the New House, had been cock of the Third, but Wally had knocked him, literally, off his perch, and since then D'Arcy minor had reigned. But there was no ill-feeling; he chummed up with Jameson before the black eyes had resumed their natural hue.

Wally shook his head in answer to Jameson's question.

"Nothing."

Jameson whistled expressively.

"I say, that won't do, you know! Hallo, what have you got there—fireworks?"

"My new bunny," said Wally, showing the head of a rabbit from under his jacket. "Jolly little chap, isn't he? I gave Jones a bob for him."

"Oh, blow your old bunny! What about the fireworks?"

Wally was fond of animals, and he generally had one or more about him—white mice or rabbits, or a ferret, or something hairy and smelly. He shoved the rabbit back under his jacket.

"I can't make a raise from Gussy," he added. "He offered half-a-crown."

"Better than nothing."

"Only I rowed with the chaps in No. 6, and they chased me out before he had time to hand it over. But that wouldn't be any good. My idea is that we ought to raid the Fourth or the Shell."

"Phew!" said Jameson. "That would mean trouble."

"Let it! They always sit on the Third Form, and it's war between us. I don't care a rap for their House rows. When the School House fellows row the New House, or vice versa, they expect the Third Form to back them up without question, and without wanting to have a voice in the matter."

"Well, we've always done it," said Jameson; "I always back up Figgins."

"I think it's rot. We've got to stand on our own—the Third Form for itself. United we stand, divided we fall," said Wally. "No House rows in the Form, that's my opinion, and I'm willing to fight anybody for the sake of making peace all round."

"I can see you've got something in your mind," said Curly Gibson, "out with it!"

"Well, I've noticed that Figgins of the New House has been down to the porter's lodge several times about a box of fireworks he's expecting. Figgins belongs to the Fourth, and we're up against him every time. What price raiding his fireworks?"

"Figgins would be waxy."

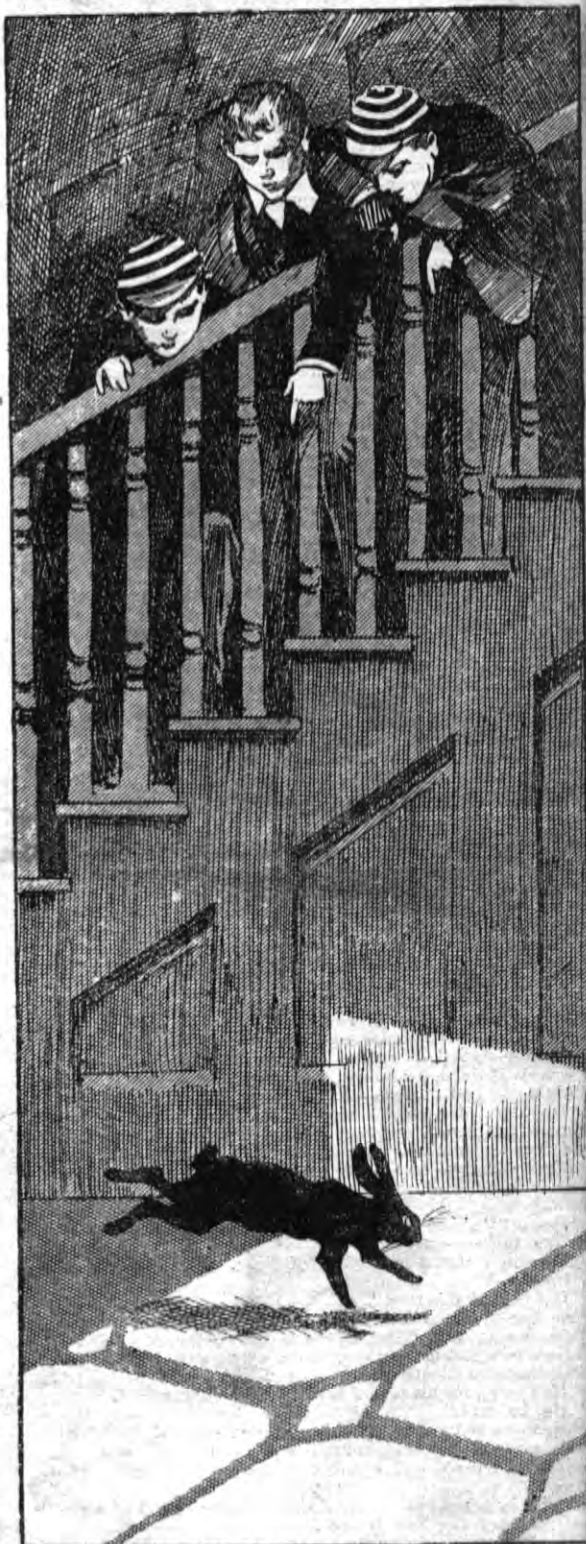
"All the better—I like to see him waxy; he's funny then."

"Ha, ha! It mayn't be funny for us, though."

"I don't mean to stick to the things, though; I'll send Figgins a postal order for them the next time my governor shells out. But the immediate question is to get hold of some fireworks for to-morrow."

"How are we to get hold of them?"

"We shall have to do it before they are taken into the New House. The carrier has been now, and most likely the box is at Taggles's lodge. Figgins may go down for it, or leave it to be sent up to the house in the morning. This is where we come in. In the first place, you, as you're a New House kid,



Tom Merry & Co. saw something dark and shadowy whisk across the patch of light.

can go to the lodge and ask Taggles if the parcel has come. If it has we'll get Taggles out of the lodge somehow, and I can slip in and collar it."

"It will be risky."

"Oh, rats! Who cares for the risk?"

And Wally, Jameson, and Curly Gibson forthwith left the Form-room, and proceeded upon the expedition. Jameson marched up to the door of Taggles's lodge, which Skimpole had left five minutes before. His knock brought Taggles to the door in anything but a good humour. He glared out into the mist. Wally and Gibson were a dozen paces away, but the mist effectually concealed them.

"Whatcher want?" was Taggles's polite query.

"Please has the box of fireworks come for Figgins?" asked Jameson.

"Yes, it 'ave," grunted Taggles. "Ere it is."

Jameson grinned as Taggles took up a box from a stool inside the room. But it was not his cue to take it then. When Figgins came for it, Taggles would tell him that the box had been given to Jameson, and if it was not forthcoming there would be trouble for Jameson. The Third-Former shook his head.

"Oh, I don't want to take it," he said. "I only wanted to know if it had come. It's all right, Taggy."

"Is it?" growled Taggles. "If you come a-knocking at my door agin I'll report yer. Young himps! I'll report yer!"

Jameson vanished, and Taggles closed his door. The junior rejoined his comrades.

"It's all right," he whispered; "the box is on the stool just inside the door, waiting for Figgins. If you could get Taggles out of his lodge for a minute, it would be the easiest thing in the world to nip in and collar it."

"Good!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "You had better go and show up in the New House now, and get an alibi ready. When Figgy finds his box has been raided he may hear about you inquiring for it, and—"

"Right-ho! I'll take an exercise into Figgins's study, and ask one of them to help me. That will be an alibi."

"Ha, ha!"

Jameson cut off towards the New House, and Wally and Curly crept towards Taggles's door again. Wally took cover close to the door, out of sight if Taggles should open it.

"Now, you go and bang at the door, Curly," he whispered.

"Make the boulder come out, and make him chase you, and then I'll nip in."

"Right-ho!" chuckled Curly.

He picked up a stone and forthwith proceeded to bang upon the door. It opened in a few seconds, and Taggles came down the steps into view in a towering rage. Curly had promptly backed away behind an empty packing-case and the porter saw nothing in the gloom.

"Which I'll report yer!" he howled.

"Holler, boys!" said Curly. "Here's another guy!"

"Young himp—"

"Ha, ha! Another guy!"

It was too much for Taggles's patience. He made a rush in the direction of the junior, and Curly promptly dodged away. The porter rushed after him, and the mist swallowed him up. It was Wally's opportunity, and he did not lose it. In a twinkling he had darted from his cover and entered the lodge, and the box of fireworks was in his hand. He dashed out again at full speed, and was behind the nearest tree by the time Taggles came back, grunting with exertion, and having of course failed to secure the elusive Curly. The porter went into his lodge and slammed the door, and Wally chuckled gleefully.

"Got it?" asked Curly eagerly as his chum joined him.

"Yes, rather—look!"

"Ripping! Let's get it out of sight. Hist, there's somebody coming."

"Get behind this tree."

The two young rascals were out of sight in a moment. A tall figure came along towards the porter's lodge, and the Third-Former recognising the long limbs of Figgins of the Fourth, Wally chuckled silently.

"He's going for his box of fireworks," he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins looked round, catching a faint echo of the chuckle.

Wally pinched his companion's arm, and Curly was silent.

Figgins walked on, and knocked at the porter's door. It did not open.

Figgins knocked again. Still there was no sound of a movement within. The New House junior looked puzzled.

"Taggy gone deaf all of a sudden, I wonder," he muttered.

"What's the matter with him? I know he's at home."

It was pretty certain that Taggles was at home, for the light was in the curtained window. Figgins knocked again, but it was evident that the porter did not intend to open his door again that night. Wally squeezed Curly Gibson's arm.

"He thinks it's another jape," he whispered. "He won't open the door. I wonder what Figgy will do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!"

Figgins waited a minute, looking very much surprised and puzzled, and then he knocked again, more loudly than before, and rang the bell in addition. This failing to elicit any response from Taggles, Figgins walked along to the window and tapped on it. The window was opened with such suddenness that the junior started back in surprise, and the next moment he gave a wild yell as a jug of water was thrown over him.

Taggles had evidently been expecting that tap at the window, and he was ready for it. Figgins staggered back, drenched with water, and the porter glared at him from the open window.

"Which I've caught yer!" he roared. "Perhaps you won't come a-knocking up a 'ard-working man at this time of night agin, you young rip!"

"You—your dangerous lunatic!" hooted Figgins. "What do you mean?"

"Is that Master Figgins?"

"Yes, you howling idiot."

"Wasn't it you knocking at my door time and again?"

"No, it wasn't, you dummy!" howled Figgins. "I've only just come along to get my box of fireworks and—"

"Then I've made a mistake," said Taggles. "Some young himp has been knocking at my door and a dodging me, and I—"

"You shrieking duffer—"

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, let's get away," murmured Wally. "I must go somewhere and laugh, or I shall burst a boiler! Let's cut."

And they cut. Five minutes later the whole Form-room was gloating over the prize, and shrieking over the joke.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins is Rather Hasty.

"AND them over!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—otherwise known as Figgins & Co.—marched into Study No. 6 in the School House. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were all there, enjoying a late supper of roasted chestnuts, and they all turned round to stare at the New House juniors. Figgins & Co. looked warlike.

"Hand them over?" repeated Figgins.

"Eh?" said Jack Blake.

"Hand them over!"

"Weally, Figgins," expostulated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that is wathah a wude mannah of askin' us for some chestnuts. I weally considah—"

"I'm not asking for any chestnuts, ass."

"I wefuse to be called an ass. I—"

"Hand them over!" roared Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, in chorus.

"Off your rockers?" asked Dig pleasantly.

"Are you going to hand them over?"

"Hand what over?" asked Jack Blake. "If you're not off your giddy ehumps, and you're not asking for some of the chestnuts, what the dickens are you driving at?"

"You know jolly well what I'm driving at," said Figgins wrathfully. "Of course, I knew it was you at once."

"You knew what—whom—which was me?"

"Oh, don't jaw! hand them over!"

"A sad case," said Blake, looking at his friends—"a very sad case indeed. Quite mad, and apt to become excited at the sight of innocent youths eating roast chestnuts."

"Are you going to hand them over?"

"Certainly," said Blake. "I believe in humouring lunatics. What do you want me to hand over? Will D'Arcy's topper do?"

"Weally, Blake, I wefuse to have my toppah handed ovah to Figgins."

"Will you hand them over?" shrieked Figgins.

"Oh, not this evening—some other evening."

"Then we'll jolly well wipe the study up with you and look for 'em ourselves!" yelled Figgins. "Sook it to them!"

And Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn rushed to the attack. But the chums of Study No. 6 were always ready for a House war, and they jumped up in a twinkling. A wild and whirling scrimmage was soon raging in the study. The table went over with a crash, and chairs and books flew in all directions. Figgins & Co. were in earnest. But there was one point upon which they had not calculated, and that was that the odds were against them.

Figgins and Blake were soon rolling on the floor, and Digby and Kerr were pommelling one another in a corner. Herries and Fatty Wynn sprawled across the overturned table, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy adjusted his eyeglass and looked round. Blake yelled to him.

"Lend me a hand with this rotter, you ass!"

"I dislike bein' addresssed as an ass, Blake."

"Lend me a hand, will you, you dummy?"

"I absolutely wefuse to be called a dummy."

"Will you lend a hand?" shrieked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, so long as you do not accompany the

request with opprobrious expressions," said the swell of the School House placidly.

He lent a hand, with the result that Figgins was soon lying on his back, with Jack Blake sitting on his chest and pinning him down.

"Now help Dig, ass."

"I refuse."

"Come on," shouted Dig, "this beast is getting the best of it."

D'Arcy seized Kerr by the collar, as he got Digby down. Kerr was swung off, and Digby scrambled on him in turn, and held him on the carpet. Then Arthur Augustus lent his kindly aid to Herries, with the result that Fatty Wynn was soon secured. Then the swell of St. Jim's fanned himself with a cambric handkerchief.

"Bai Jove, this wuffness is vewy exhaustin'," he murmured, "still, I am vewy glad I was here to turn defeat into victowry, deah boys."

"Oh, cheese it," said Blake, "get a handful of soot out of the chimney, and rub it over Figgy's chivvy."

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded his leader with a steady stare.

"What did you say, Blake?"

"Get your paw full of soot and jam it over Figgy's dial."

"Do you weally think, Blake, that I could possibly soil my hand in such a disgustin' manna?"

"Well, get some soot in the shovel, then, dummy."

"Hold on," gasped Figgins, "don't trouble about the soot, we give in."

"That's all very well, but we can't be put to the trouble of licking you for nothing."

"You haven't licked us—"

"Get that soot, Gussy—"

"Well, the odds were on your side, anyway. And you started it."

"I don't see how you make that out, Figgy. Weren't we sitting at home by the family fireside in the most peaceable way in the world, when you came in and—"

"Well, you should have handed our fireworks over."

"Your fireworks!"

"Yes; we're going to have them back, I can tell you."

"Quite off his rocker," said Blake. "It's a touching case. I wonder whether we could get up a Form subscription for a strait-waistcoat."

"Look here!" roared Figgins, "do you mean to say that you didn't get my box of fireworks from Taggles' lodge?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No."

"Honest Injun?" said Figgins, suspiciously.

"Yes, honest Injun," said Blake. "Has somebody raided your fireworks?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, make it pax," growled Kerr, "I thought all along you were too hasty about it, Figgy."

"You didn't say so till now, anyway," grunted Figgins.

"Well, it's no use arguing with you."

"Oh, rats! Let's get up, Blake—it's pax."

Figgins & Co. were allowed to rise. They looked very dusty and rumbled. So did the School House chums, for that matter. Figgins rubbed his nose ruefully. There was a thin stream of claret issuing therefrom.

"I suppose we've made a mistake," he remarked. "I was certain you had them. Somebody knocked up Taggles and got him to chase out into the quad, and then the box of fireworks was collared. At least, that's what Taggles says. He declares that the box was there when he went out, and he was back in a minute, though he didn't notice it was gone till I came for it. I was certain it was you who raided it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It must have been some of you School House rotters, of course. We'd better get along and see Tom Merry, kids. I suppose it was those Shell bounders, after all."

"You and Kerr can go," said Fatty Wynn. "I say, Blake, they are ripping chestnuts."

Jack Blake laughed.

"Have some," he said, hospitably. "There's lots, and Gussy can easily roast some more."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Certainly, I will," said Fatty Wynn, "if only to show that there's no ill-feeling. You can go and ask Tom Merry about those fireworks, Figgy, but I'd really recommend you to be a little less hasty next time."

"You and Kerr are always so blessed knowing when it's too late," grunted Figgins. "Come along, Kerr. Do you know where Merry is, Blake?"

"Well, Lowther had an imposition to do, so I daresay you'll find them in their study," said Jack Blake. "Won't you stop and have some chestnuts?"

"Thanks, no—I'm after my fireworks at present."

And Figgins and Kerr walked out, leaving Fatty Wynn disposing of the roast chestnuts at a remarkable rate of speed. Figgins kicked open Tom Merry's door, and the New House chums entered. Lowther had finished his imposition long ago, but the chums of the Shell were still in the study, chatting over the prospects of St. Jim's Juniors in an important junior

match that was to come off the following afternoon. They favoured the two intruders with a stare.

"Did they always come into a room without knocking in the slum you were brought up in, Figgins?" asked Monty Lowther, genially.

"Where are our fireworks?" demanded Figgins, without replying to the question.

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry. "What are you driving at?"

"Didn't you raid my box of fireworks from Taggles' lodge?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Then who did?" exclaimed Figgins, looking very puzzled.

"We've inquired in Study No. 6, and they don't know anything about them."

"Ha, ha! You look as if you had been inquiring in a dust bin or under a motor-car."

"Well, we had a bit of a scrap before there was time to explain. We were certain Blake had had them. I'm blessed if I know where to look now; nobody but Blake or you would have the confounded cheek to raid our fireworks."

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps it was some fellow in your own house."

"They wouldn't venture," said Figgins grimly. "I've got the kids in my house in order. There ain't two parties disputing about the leadership in the New House, as there are in this rotten old show—not much."

Tom Merry rose.

"You've come to the wrong place for your fireworks," he remarked, "but this is exactly the right spot for a thick ear, if you are looking for one."

"Oh, go and eat coke," said Figgins.

And the two New House juniors quitted the study, and relieved their feelings a little by giving the door a slam that almost shook the house. They left the School House, Fatty Wynn joining them in the passage, still eating chestnuts. As the trio went out into the mist, there was a sudden bang—bang—bang! under their very feet. Figgins and Kerr jumped, and Fatty Wynn slid on the steps and sat down with a heavy bump.

"My—my hat!" he gasped.

"Bang! bang! bang!"

"It's some duffer letting off crackers," growled Figgins.

"Hullo, there! It's that young imp, D'Arcy minor!"

"Hullo," said Wally, peering from the gloom, with a curious grin on his face, "hallo! did that cracker make you jump?"

Figgins & Co. strode away without deigning a reply. A jumping cracker followed them, and went off with six successive bangs round their feet. They disappeared towards the New House and Wally chuckled.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he murmured. "I wonder what Figgins would say if he knew whom those crackers belonged to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 7.

A Night Alarm.

"HAVE you seen my rabbit, Jameson?"

"No. You shouldn't carry beastly rabbits about under your jacket," said Jameson.

"I didn't ask you for advice, my son, I asked you if you'd seen my rabbit."

"Well, I haven't! Perhaps your dog has settled him."

"Oh, Pongo wouldn't touch one of my rabbits. He gobbled up young Parker's white mice the other day, but he wouldn't touch anything of mine."

"Herries' bulldog may have come across him, though," suggested Jameson comfortingly.

"Oh, don't be a beast. I wonder where the little brute has got to."

It was bed-time for the Third Form, and Wally was worried about his rabbit. It had escaped from its cosy berth under his jacket, and where it had gone was a mystery. The junior had to go to bed with the rabbit still missing. Bed-time for the Third was nine o'clock—rather to Wally's indignation. He didn't see why he shouldn't stay up to half-past along with the Fourth and the Shell.

The raiding of the fireworks from Taggles' lodge was still a mystery. Figgins & Co. had been inquiring right and left. Nobody seemed to know anything about it. It did not even occur to Figgins that a Third-Former might have had the "nerve" to raid the property of Fourth-Formers, and Wally did not enter his mind in connection with the raid. Tom Merry was puzzled, too, to account for it. It looked like a House raid, but a House raid without either himself or Blake being mixed up in it was improbable. Besides, all the fellows he spoke to about the matter disclaimed knowledge of the affair.

"It's a blessed mystery," said Tom Merry, when the time came to go to bed, and nothing had transpired about Figgins' fireworks. "I don't make it out at all. It's rough on Figgins, and rather rough on us. We might have had those fireworks if we'd known."

"It might have been Gore," said Monty Lowther, reflectively. "There's something going on in Gore's study—I know that."

He and Sands and Norton have been chuckling over some joke all the evening, and they won't let on what it is.

"More likely something up against us," said Tom Merry. "If they had raided the New House they would brag of it fast enough."

"Yes, that's true—it can't have been Gôre."

The Shell went to bed, and were soon wrapped in the arms of Morpheus. Tom Merry was still thinking of the missing fireworks, and the matter mingled with his dreams. It was some time later that he started and awoke.

Tom Merry's eyes opened in the darkness of the dormitory. He looked round; the dormitory was much lighter than when he had gone to bed. The mist had cleared off, and the stars were shining in a clear, dark sky. The starlight streamed into the high windows of the dormitory, falling in strange, ghostly patches on the white coverlets.

Tom Merry sat up in bed and listened.

Faintly through the night came the boom of the clock from the tower. Twelve strokes in slow succession. The quarters had already rung out before he awoke—perhaps had awakened him. But no—as he listened in the silence of the night, a faint sound in the corridor caught his ear.

It was the sound of somebody—or something—passing the door so close as to brush against it.

A thrill ran through Tom Merry.

At that hour every occupant of the School House was in bed. The thought crossed his mind that it might be a New House raid, but he dismissed it. Figgins & Co. would not be likely to raid at such an extremely late hour. Yet whom could it be? Tom Merry thought of the burglar who, but a short time before, had broken into the chapel. Was it a burglar again?

He listened with all his ears. A strange, eerie sound came through the silence; the sound of a curious staccato tread on the stairs. He hesitated no longer, but jumped out of bed, and shook Manners by the shoulder.

"Gr-r-leggo!" murmured Manners.

"Get up, old chap—there's something up!"

Manners started into wakefulness. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"What's the row?"

"There's somebody outside the dorm—looks to me like a burglar."

"My aunt!"

"I'm going to have a look, anyway. Wake up, Lowther!"

"Tain't rising-bell," murmured Lowther drowsily.

"I know it isn't—it's a burglar."

"Let him burgle."

"Oh, get up, ass!" Tom Merry jerked away the bedclothes, and Lowther grumbled and got up. He shivered as he drew on his clothes.

"Blessed if I see what you want to interfere with a chap following his trade for," he grunted. "If a burglar can't burgle at midnight, when can he burgle?"

"Oh, choose it, and come on!"

Tom Merry cautiously opened the dormitory door and the Terrible Three crept out.

"Listen!" whispered Tom.

From the direction of the stairs came that eerie sound.

Plop! plop! plop!

"What on earth is it?" muttered Lowther. "Somebody going downstairs with padded feet, and jumping from one step to another, it sounds like."

"It can't be that, anyway."

"Then what is it?"

"Blessed if I know. We're going to find out."

"Jolly uncanny!" grunted Manners. "Blessed if I know what to make of it."

"Come on!" muttered Tom Merry.

They hurried silently towards the staircase. The noise had ceased now, and there was dead silence. Through the hall window the starlight poured in in a clear, silvery stream. It lay like a bar across the hall, leaving darkness where it did not fall. The chums of the Shell leaned over the banisters on the lower landing, and stared down into the hall.

A faint sound of something moving came from the darkness below.

"There's somebody there!" murmured Manners.

"By Jove! It must be a burglar."

They watched anxiously. Somebody or something was moving about in the hall below. They waited breathlessly, hoping that he would cross the patch of light and reveal himself to their gaze.

Lowther suddenly clutched Tom Merry's arm, and pointed.

"Look!"

Something dark and shadowy had whisked across the patch of light. What it was the chums of the Shell had no time to see. A thrill ran through them. It was not a burglar, evidently—but what was it? A curiously uncanny feeling was stealing over them.

"Did you see it?"

"Just a glimpse—what was it?"

"Blessed if I know."

"There it goes again!"

The chums watched breathlessly. Across the patch of light whisked the dark form—and this time it remained in the light.

Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"My hat! It's an animal!"

"By Jove, so it is!"

"A rabbit!" exclaimed Manners. "Look at its ears!"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. The mystery was explained—though how a rabbit came to be loose in the School House was another mystery. But the next moment the laugh died away. From the dark corridor behind them came a distinct footstep. It was no rabbit this time, but undoubtedly a human being.

"Look out!" muttered Tom Merry.

The chums of the Shell whisked round. A shadowy figure loomed up in the gloom.

"Collar him!"

"Hold on," said a well-known voice, "what's the row?"

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Yes, rather! I'm looking for my rabbit."

"Your rabbit!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes. What are you kids doing out of bed?" said Wally, with refreshing coolness. "I heard the beggar plopping past the door of our dorm, and I came out to look for him. Did you take me for a giddy burglar. Ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle; get back to bed."

"I'm looking for my rabbit."

"You young rascal—"

"Did you hear my bunny?" asked Wally. "Ha, ha—I suppose you took him for a burglar! Fancy taking a bunny rabbit for a burglar! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to stop that cackling?" demanded Lowther. The chums of the Shell had turned very pink in the dark.

"Fancy taking a bunny rabbit for a—ow!"

Three pairs of hands seized the cheerful Third Former. He was whisked off his feet, carried back to the Third Form dormitory, and plumped down bodily on the nearest bed. There was a yell from Jameson, who happened to be occupying that bed.

The Terrible Three walked back to their own quarters, chuckling.

"That shuts him up!" Manners remarked. "Cheeky young bouncer! He can look for his bunny now if he likes."

And the three went back to bed.

CHAPTER 8.

The One and Only.

THE morning of the fifth dawned clear and cold. Tom Merry & Co. were down early for a little practice on the football field before breakfast. There was an important junior fixture for the afternoon. November 5th came on a Thursday—and the fifth had been a half-holiday at St. Jim's from time immemorial. Wednesday was usually one; and the half had on this occasion been held over to the next day. The junior eleven were playing away, but they meant to return in time for the bonfire celebrations in the evening. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was not with the early footballers. He had been out the previous evening, and he made that the excuse for missing early practice. He declared that he was exhausted.

"I'll come and look on, deah boys," he said. "Of course I don't need as much practice as you fellows do."

"No time to argue with the dummy," said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

They passed Wally in the quad. The hero of the Third Form grinned at them.

"Found any more bunny burglars?" he called out.

The Terrible Three marched on without replying. Wally sidled up to his elegant brother, and gave him a dig in the ribs.

"You needn't bother about that ten bob, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would not dig me in the ribs in that wuff way. I regard it as a vulgah action, and—"

"Oh, come off!" said Wally. "You needn't bother about that ten bob. I've got enough fireworks for to-night."

"Vewy good, but I don't see—"

"Got 'em cheap," explained Wally.

A light dawned on Arthur Augustus. He adjusted his eyeglass and stared at his cheerful younger brother.

"Wally, is it posz that it was you—"

D'Arcy minor nodded coolly.

"Yes, we raided old Figgins."

"Bai Jove!"

"You Fourth Form chaps aren't up to our style," said Wally patronisingly. "We raided the stuff. We're going to pay Figgins for it afterwards, though. Of course you'll keep it dark, Gus!"

"I shall not betway your confidence, of course, but weally—"



"I will try to ignite them again," said Skimpole. "This failure is probably owing to something being wrong with the atmospheric conditions. There can be nothing wrong with the fireworks. I am certain of that, as I made them myself!"

"That's all right. I say, there's something to interest you over by the New House," said Wally, with a grin.

"Is there weally? It is wathah a long walk, and I am feelin' wathah exhausted—"

"Ha, ha! You'd be sorry to miss it."

"But what is it, Wally?"

"Go and see," replied the Infant, and he scuttled off. D'Arcy major stared after him doubtfully, and then strolled over towards the New House.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus uttered that exclamation suddenly, as he came in sight of a strange figure seated in an old chair outside the New House.

He guessed at once that this was what Wally had said would interest him. It did interest him—painfully.

The figure was a life-size—or rather more than life-size guy—built up of sticks and old clothes, with a face of stuffed cloth daubed into grotesque features. A cardboard imitation of a silk hat—in very battered condition—was on its head, and a curtain ring, with a cord attached, was jammed into one eye, in evident imitation of a monocle. The grotesque figure did not bear the faintest resemblance to the swell of the School House—but its manufacturers thought otherwise, to judge by the placard on its chest.

"The One and Only Augustus, Esquire."

That was the legend the placard bore.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed at the figure in speechless indignation.

"Bai Jove!" he muttered, at last. "I suppose that is the work of Figgins & Co.—wude wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from the direction of the New House. D'Arcy turned round and saw Figgins & Co. on the steps of the house. They were in long coats over their football things, just going down to join Tom Merry & Co. at practice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Hear me smile! See the likeness, Gussy?"

"There is no likeness, you wottah."

"Oh, come, Gussy," exclaimed Kerr, in surprise, "you must be blind, you know! Look at it again; the resemblance is striking. Look at the cut of the trousers."

"You uttah wottah—"

"Then there's the placard," said Fatty Wynn. "If there were any doubt about it, the placard would settle it. The one and only—"

"Augustus, Esquire," said Figgins.

"You wotten boundahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stalked away. Figgins & Co., still chuckling, went down to the junior ground. More than one School House

Junior came over to have a look at the guy, and departed chuckling. Arthur Augustus was asked if he had seen it, and what he thought of it, till he was weary of the subject.

"Faith, and it's a remarkable likeness intirely!" said Reilly. "You must have noticed that yerself, Gussy darling!" "I have noticed nothin' of the sort."

"Sure, and ye're jist the one to be selected, too—so appropriate."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Life-size and life-like; no need to make any changes."

"If you speak to me again on that subject, Weilly, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "It's ripping, and so like the original. But it isn't quite up to the one we're making, is it, Norton?"

"Not half," said Norton.

"Hallo, are you making one, Gore?" asked Tom Merry, coming in from the football field. "So are we. That will be two for the School House."

"Bet yours won't come up to mine!" chuckled Gore. "Eh, Norton?"

"Ha, ha! Not half!"

Tom Merry looked at Gore curiously. He had thought several times before that the cad of the Shell had some wheeze on, and something up against him; but he could not guess what it was.

"Well, we shall see," he said good-naturedly, and passed on. Monty Lowther looked back suspiciously, and saw Gore and Norton and Sands laughing together.

"They've got something on," said Lowther. "Something caddish, to judge by the way they're enjoying themselves over it."

"I don't catch on to it, though. Hallo, Gussy, have you seen that likeness of yourself over by the New House?"

"Did you address me, Tom Mewwy?"

"Have you seen that likeness—Hallo, what's the row?"

The swell of the School House was pushing back his cuffs with a very warlike air. His eye gleamed from behind his monocle with the light of battle.

"I have made up my mind to bestow a feahful thwashin' upon the next person who made a remark to me on that ridiculous subject, Tom Mewwy!"

"My hat! Look at the awful danger I've run into unaware. Won't you accept an apology, Adolphus?"

"I have before remarked that my name is not Adolphus. I will accept an apology, however, on condish that you make no further reference to that obnoxious subject."

"You must answer my question first, though," said Tom Merry, with a grave shake of the head.

"What question, Tom Mewwy?"

"Have you seen the likeness?"

"I shall now refuse to accept your apology, Tom Mewwy; and undah the cires. I have no alternative but to thwash you. Pway put up your beastly fists."

"Where?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Pway don't wot. Put up your fists at once, as I am about to stwike you!"

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry; and he put up his right, and it came with a gentle tap on D'Arcy's nose. "Is that all right?"

"Ow!"

"Or do you like that better?" And Tom Merry's left tapped Arthur Augustus under the chin. "Or that?" And the third ap was on the chest.

"Bai Jove, I shall thwash you!"

"He's looking dangerous," said Lowther, in great alarm.

"There's no time to be killed before breakfast. Let's cut!"

"Good! Run for your lives!"

The Terrible Three ran. As D'Arcy stood directly in the way, they ran over him, and left him sitting on the ground, looking very dazed. Then they went indoors and changed their things, and came down to breakfast with beaming smiles upon their faces. D'Arcy was sitting at the Fourth Form table, and he did not deign to look at them. A whisper came along the Fourth Form table from Jack Blake.

"I say, Gussy, have you seen your counterpart?"

"Weally, Elake—"

"Silence at the table!" said Mr. Lathom. And the swell of St. Jim's swallowed his indignation.

CHAPTER 9.

Gore's Little Scheme.

AFTER morning lessons, the members of St. Jim's junior football eleven were thinking of nothing but the afternoon's match. They had to leave St. Jim's immediately they had bolted their dinner, to catch a train for Friarale; and they had their preparations to make before dinner. Skimpole was also making some preparations. The genius of the Shell had succeeded in raising the wind at last. Skimpole

shared a study with Gore; and Gore—usually the last person in the world to lend anybody anything—was the good Samaritan who came to the rescue. Jack Blake was coming out of the School House with his bag under his arm, when the amateur Socialist collared him by a jacket button in his objectionable way.

"Will you lend me your pudding-basin, Blake?"

Jack Blake stared at him.

"Off your dot?" he asked.

"Certainly not. I really do not see why you should deduce, by such a simple question as that, that I am at all weak in my reasoning powers," said Skimpole, looking puzzled. "I asked you if you would lend me your pudding-basin."

"And I asked you if you were off your dot."

"Your reply is utterly irrelevant. I particularly want your pudding-basin, to do some mixing in. Will you lend it to me?" "Oh, I see! Are you going to make a pudding? If it's a fig-pudding, Figgins can put you up to some points about it. He's great on fig-puddings."

"I am not going to make a fig-pudding. I am going to make fireworks."

"Where are you going to get the materials?"

"At the shop in the village. I have inquired there, and I can get all the things I require, there and at the chemist's, as well as a few things I am going to take from the school laboratory."

"Then you've raised the wind?" said Blake, with interest. "Blessed if I thought there was anybody at St. Jim's idiot enough to lend you tin."

"Gore has lent me only five shillings, but—"

"Gore!" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes; he has lent me only five shillings, but with the two Tom Merry lent me, that will be sufficient for making a small quantity of fireworks."

"Do you mean to say that Gore lent you five bob?"

"Yes, certainly. Why should he not? He is to have the money back out of the profits of my book on 'Socialism,' which I expect to be published before Christmas."

"Gore lent you five bob on the security of your book on Socialism!" murmured Blake, looking dazed.

"You speak as if there were something surprising in it—Whatever are you doing?"

Blake was taking the amateur Socialist by the throat. He jammed him up against the school wall, and held him pinned there.

"Now, then, Skimmy, no more of your bosh. What's the little game?"

"There's no little game, Blake. Gore, perhaps, thought he ought to return me some little favour for keeping his secret—that may have been a motive with him."

"What secret?" demanded Blake.

"About the guy he and Sands and Norton are making in our study, you know."

"So they're making a guy, are they?"

"Yes; and, of course, he wouldn't like me to tell Tom Merry."

"Why wouldn't he?"

"Well, Merry would be certain to be annoyed, you know."

"Blessed if I can see why he should be," said Blake. "Merry is making up a guy, too; but it's a free country—and the more the merrier."

"Yes; but Gore's guy is rather personal."

"Oh, I see; it's on the lines of Figgys's one—a caricature of Tom Merry!" grinned Blake. "I see the point."

"No, not exactly that, either; but as Gore has so kindly lent me the five shillings perhaps I ought not to say any more. Will you lend me your pudding-basin?"

"Certainly, if you can find it."

"Oh, I'll find it easily enough."

And Skimpole hurried into the School House. It was nearly time for the brake to take the juniors to the station, and they were gathering ready. Figgins & Co. came over from the New House and mounted into the vehicle. Arthur Augustus was already in it, with a pencil in his hand and a paper spread on his knee. He was deep in the composition of a poem for the forthcoming number of Tom Merry's Weekly. Blake was mounting the step when Skimpole came hurriedly out of the house.

"Blake! Hold on a minute, Blake!"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?"

"I can't find your pudding-basin."

"Sorry. I told you you could have it if you could find it."

"But where is it?"

"I don't know. I forgot to mention that Herries broke it yesterday, and that it was chucked away."

"Really, Blake—"

The brake drove off, followed by a loud cheer from the St. Jim's boys. Skimpole blinked after it.

"Really, I cannot help regarding that as rather rude of Blake," he murmured. "I must look for another pudding-basin. I think there is one in Tom Merry's study, now I come to think of it. Of course, I'm entitled to use it. I don't suppose my mixture will harm it, and I am not likely to break

it, barring accidents. Under Socialism we shall, of course, nationalise all the pudding-basins in the country."

And Skimpole started off to Tom Merry's study. Gore and Sands and Norton had watched the departure of the brake with three separate grins, and now they burst into a simultaneous chuckle.

"We'll get it finished while they're gone," grinned Gore. "They won't be back till after dark. Then we'll have it all ready for the procession."

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"I don't see that Tom Merry can say anything. You see, he can't interfere without acknowledging the likeness."

"Ha, ha!"

"What little game are you up to?" asked D'Arcy minor, looking at them.

"Mind your own business, young shaver!" said Gore loftily; "and don't have the cheek to ask questions of a chap in the Shell. We bar cheek from Third Form infants!"

"Oh, rats!" said Wally, keeping out of Gore's reach, however. Gore made a threatening gesture, but Norton pulled him by the sleeve, and the three Shell fellows entered the house. Wally looked after them curiously.

"I wonder what they're up to?" he murmured. "Some cad's game, I suppose—Gore wouldn't look so jolly pleased if it wasn't."

He went thoughtfully upstairs. Skimpole came out of Tom Merry's study with a pudding-basin and a big spoon in his hand—and, of course, nearly ran into D'Arcy minor.

"Look where you're going!" grunted Wally. "Have you been scoffing Tom Merry's crockeryware, you giddy Anarchist?"

"Certainly not, young D'Arcy. I am simply borrowing some utensils I need for the manufacture of fireworks," said Skimpole. "I have every right to do so. Under Socialism we shall nationalise basins and spoons—"

"What is Gore up to?" asked Wally abruptly. "You're in his study, so you ought to know. What's his little game?"

"He is making a guy," said Skimpole. "I am sorry I can not stop now, as I have to go to the village—"

"Hold on a minute. What sort of guy is he making?"

"A Guy Fawkes guy."

"You howling ass, I know that; but it's something up against Tom Merry."

"Not exactly; it's really more against Tom Merry's old governess."

Wally gave a low whistle.

"You don't mean to say that he's cad enough to make an imitation of Miss Fawcett for a guy?" he exclaimed.

"Gore having lent me five shillings, I am bound to tell no one," said Skimpole; "otherwise I should answer your question in the affirmative. But I must be going."

He hurried on. Wally stared after him, with a wrinkle on his young brow. Then he opened Gore's door and went in, without taking the trouble to knock. He knew that a knock would probably be followed by the turning of the key.

There was a sudden exclamation in the study as Wally entered. Three startled faces turned round towards him.

Gore gave a gasp of relief as he saw that it was only a Third-Former; but his relief soon changed to rage.

"You young mongrel!" he shouted. "What do you mean by sticking yourself in here without being asked? Get out!"

Wally did not reply. He was looking at the guy Gore and his friends were making. It was a really well-made one, in imitation of an elderly lady. It wore an ancient skirt, a still more ancient bodice, a white cotton frilled collar, and a pair of spectacles without lenses were fastened upon the face.

The face had been made out of an old football, and Gore was touching it up with paint when D'Arcy minor entered. The sudden entrance of the Third-Former had caused Gore to draw the brush across the face, and extend the lip on one side as far as the ear.

The head of the dummy was adorned with an ancient bonnet which Gore had discovered by hunting through the second-hand clothes shop in Rylcombe, and which exactly matched the early Victorian bonnet of Miss Priscilla Fawcett. The bonnet alone was sufficient to identify the figure. No one seeing it would doubt for a moment that it was meant to represent Tom Merry's old governess.

But, to make assurance doubly sure, a notice was pinned on the bodice, "I've come to see my darling Tommy."

Wally looked at the figure, and a scornful smile curved his lip. It was funny; and the Third-Former had a sense of humour. But humour which consisted in mockery of an old lady did not appeal to Wally.

"Are you going to get out?" roared Gore, laying down the paint brush.

"Oh, certainly," said Wally. "I wouldn't stay here with a set of cads if you asked me. Are you going to show that guy in the quad to-night?"

"What's that to do with you?"

"I'm going to give you my opinion of it. You're a mean cad; Norton is a mean cad; Sands is a mean cad. You're all mean cads. There!"

"You young imp!" gasped Sands. "I'll pulverise you."

"Rats! If you've got any decency you'll break up that thing. I'm jolly sure that Tom Merry will break you up, if you don't."

Gore made a spring at the Infant. Wally dodged to the door, but Norton put out a foot, and he stumbled over it. As he went down, Gore pounced on him.

"Let me go," shouted Wally, struggling.

"Yes, when I've punished you for your cheek," said Gore, chuckling. "You weren't asked to come in here, and now—"

"Give him a coat of paint—"

"That's what I'm going to do."

The door reopened, and Skimpole blinked in.

"Did I leave my cap—oh!"

A violent push on the chest sent him spinning out again, and the door slammed and was locked.

CHAPTER 10.

Wally Changes Colour.

WALLY had ceased to struggle. With a couple of sturdy Shell fellows holding him, he hadn't much chance. Norton and Sands grasped him by either arm, and he was jammed against the locked door. Gore dipped his brush in the red paint with which he had been daubing a grotesque mouth on the face of the dummy.

"If you touch me with that—" began Wally.

"There's for a start," grinned Gore, dabbing the brush in his mouth.

"Groo—gerroo—poof! You beast! I'll make you sit up for it!"

"Ha, ha! You're doing the sitting-up at present. Hold the little least tight. I'll make him as red as a Red Indian before I've done with him."

"Stop it—hold on—oooooh!"

"Every time you open your mouth I'm going to jam my brush into it," said Gore, warningly. "Keep it shut."

"I—ow! Ooooooh!"

"Ha, ha! You're making me waste a lot of paint. Will you keep your mouth shut?"

"You horrid beast—ow! Groo—gerroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Keep it shut, then!"

Wally thought he had better keep it shut. Gore proceeded to paint his face a brilliant red, from the top of his white collar to the roots of his hair. Nose and cheeks and forehead and ears all became brightly scarlet, and Wally's aspect was decidedly startling by the time Gore had finished with the red paint.

"Are you sorry you came in and bothered us?" grinned Gore.

"No, I'm not," Wally said, sturdily.

"Good! I'll give you black circles round the eyes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Sands, as Gore added the black circles.

"He looks a treat now. He'll give anyone a start who meets him."

"You beast—you—groo—gerroo!"

"Ha, ha! Keep it shut, then."

"Now, then; are you sorry you came in?"

"No, I'm not!"

"Let him have a few with the cricket-bat, Gorey."

"Good. Yank him over the table."

Wally began to struggle, but the bullies of the Shell were, of course, too strong for him. He was dragged across the table, face downwards, and Gore looked round for a cricket-bat. But cricket things had been put away for some time, and there was not one in the study.

"The shovel will do," said Norton.

"Good enough!"

Gore seized the shovel, and brought it down flat upon Wally. The Third-Former squirmed, and wriggled, and kicked. Norton gave a yell. The heel of Wally's boot had caught him under the chin.

"Give it to him harder," he howled. "The young beast."

"Let me go!"

"Are you sorry you came in?" grinned Gore, laying on with the shovel.

"No," roared Wally. "And you'll have the Third Form to reckon with for this."

"Ha, ha, ha! Don't make us tremble."

"Give him some more for his cheek."

"You bet!"

The shovel rose and fell rapidly. Every blow rang through the study, but no cry left Wally's lips. D'Arcy minor seemed to be made of iron. His face went white and hard with pain, but he would not cry out.

"That's about enough," said Gore, breathlessly. "I don't think he'll be in a hurry to come into this study again. Sling him out."

"Open the door, then."

Gore dragged the door open, and his two friends slung the

Third-Former out into the passage. Wally bumped on the hard linoleum.

"Now clear off," said Gore, threateningly. "That's only a taste of what you'll get if you show your nose here again, you cheeky young waster."

Wally staggered to his feet. He was hurt; but not so much as he was enraged. His crimson face and ears made the Shell bullies roar with laughter.

"You just wait a bit," panted Wally. "I'll show you."

"Ha, ha, ha! Get out."

Wally ran down the passage. He made a dash for the Third-Form room, in search of his cronies. Jameson was in the passage, and Wally ran towards him.

"Jameson—hallo—hallo!"

Jameson took one look at the amazing face coming towards him, and bolted. Wally had forgotten his painted features with the black circles round the eyes, in his excitement, and Jameson's flight astounded him. He ran on, and met curly Gibson face to face, turning out of another passage.

"I say, Gibson—my only Aunt Jane!"

For Gibson had bolted too.

"The silly asses!" muttered Wally, wrathfully. "What's the matter with them? Blessed if I don't think they're all dotty."

A wild shriek interrupted him. Mary the housemaid was coming along the passage, and the moment she saw Wally she threw up her hands and shrieked.

"What's the matter, Mary? I say—"

But Mary had fled, still shrieking. Wally stared after her in amazement, and then went on towards the Third-Form room. A couple of fellows were looking cautiously out, and, as Wally came in sight, they drew quickly in and slammed the door, and Wally heard the sound of a key being turned. Exasperated at being shut out of his own quarters, the junior ran on, and began to kick furiously at the door.

"Go away!" came a hollow voice through the keyhole.

"Go away!"

"Open the door, Jameson."

"Why, that's young Wally's voice!"

"Of course it is," yelled D'Arcy minor, wrathfully. "Why don't you open the door, you silly set of howling asses? Why don't you open the door?"

"Is it there?"

"Is what there?"

"That—I don't know what it is—a fearful looking thing with a crimson face and horrible-looking eyes—"

"You silly duffer; there's nothing here but me."

Jameson hesitatingly opened the door. He peeped out, and at the sight of Wally's face would have slammed it again, but D'Arcy minor's foot was in the opening.

"Go away!" yelled Jameson. "Go—oh!"

Wally shoved him out of the way and entered the room. The room was lighter than the passage, and the juniors saw Wally a little more clearly; but the sight was none the less a very startling one.

"What's all this fooling about?" demanded Wally. "Are you looking for a prize thick ear, Jameson?"

"It's—it's—it's you!" stammered Jameson.

"Of course it's me—who did you think it was?"

"I—I didn't know what to think, but—but it looked to me like one of those guys come suddenly to life, and—hold on!"

Wally had suddenly rushed at Jameson, hitting out with right and left. Jameson sat down on the Form-room floor, and the other juniors crowded back from the incensed Wally. Wally glared round like a gladiator.

"If anybody else wants to compare me with a guy, he can go ahead," he exclaimed.

"Look here, do you know what your face is like?" gasped Jameson.

Wally started, and then he passed his hand over his face. He broke into a grin, which looked ghastly under the red and black.

"My only Aunt Jane! I had forgotten that!"

"What on earth have you been painting yourself up in that style for?" demanded Jameson, staggering to his feet. "I think you would run if you saw it yourself."

"It was that beast Gore! Gore and Norton and Sands—they collared me in their study, and painted me up, and licked me with a fire shovel—"

"And you let them do it?"

"I'd like to see you tackle three Shell fellows, you ass," said Wally, indignantly. "How could I help it? But I'm going to make them sit up for it. The Shell have got to learn that the Third Form isn't to be ragged with—with—"

"With a fire-shovel?" asked curly Gibson.

"No, ass—I forget the word—with—oh, with impunity. The Shell have got to learn that the Third Form can't be ragged with impunity. It's a good opportunity now, too; some of the Shell are gone to play at Greyfriars, and nearly all the rest are having practice on the junior ground. We shall have the Shell passage to ourselves."

"What's the idea?"

"We're going to make Gore & Co. sorry for themselves. Come on!"

"Better get your face cleaned first," grinned Jameson.

"You'd give anyone fits who met you now."

"Good! I'll cut off to a bath-room and get cleaned, while you find a chopper—in case they've locked the door, you know. We'll wreck the place, and teach them that it doesn't pay to rag a Third-Former."

Five minutes later, the Third-Form were on the warpath.

CHAPTER 11.

The Fags to the Fore.

GORE locked the door of his study, and turned back to the dummy, and resumed painting the grotesque features on the old footer. The bully of the Shell was feeling very pleased with himself. Tom Merry had put down most of his bullying in his own Form, but Gore still found opportunities sometimes of ragging the Infants. And so long as he bullied somebody, Gore was not particular as to whom it was.

"That puts him in his place," he remarked. "Things are getting to a fine pass when Third-Form youngsters come and cheek you in your own study."

"Yes, rather!"

"I don't think he'll forget his hiding in a hurry. I laid it on pretty well. I've bent the beastly shovel; but it was worth it. I say, this guy will be a howling success. Everybody will know at a glance whom it's meant for, and if Tom Merry raises any objection, it will show that he's recognised the likeness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three worthies continued their work. A little later there was a knock at the door. Gore turned his head from his painting.

"Who's there?" he called out.

"I am!" called back D'Arcy minor.

"My hat!" ejaculated Gore, in amazement. "That young rat back again! Of all the cheek—this fairly takes the biscuit."

"Open this door!"

"I haven't time to lick you now!" said Gore. "I'll remember this presently, though!"

"Are you going to open this door?"

"No; you cheeky young rat!"

"Then we'll jolly well open it for ourselves!"

Crash! Gore gave a jump. It was the crash of the heavy chopper on the lock. Crash again!—and the lock burst its fastenings, and the door flew open. A crowd of Third-Form fags rushed in with Wally at their head.

The amazing nerve of the fags held the Shell trio spellbound for a moment. They had never heard of anything like this before. For the fags of the Third to invade a Shell study with hostile intent was unheard-of—undreamt of. But things were taking a new turn with D'Arcy minor as cock of the Third.

"Collar them!" roared Wally.

Wally had washed off most of the paint, but there were still plain traces of it about his ears and chin.

"You young rascals!" gasped Gore. "Get out! Do you hear? Get out!"

"Collar the cads!"

The cads were promptly collared. Gore and Norton and Sands hit out wildly, and a dozen or more of the fags went sprawling before the Shell fellows went down. But the fags were there in dozens, and the odds were irresistible. Any one of the three could have accounted for two or three fags. But a couple of dozen swarmed into the study, scrambling over the furniture, knocking things to right and left, scrambling over each other in their eagerness to get at the enemy. Wally had inspired them all with his own spirit. The room was crammed—the fags were packed in almost like sardines in a tin. Gore, Norton and Sands went down helplessly under a sprawling, scrambling mass of humanity, and were pinned down by sheer weight.

"Got 'em!" yelled Jameson.

"Hurrah for the Third!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The three Shell fellows were helpless prisoners under a heap of fags. Wally waved his hand to his excited followers to get back.

"Some of you get out. Keep watch in the passage, and if any Shell fellow tries to get in, mob him."

"Ha, ha! Right-ho!"

"Let me get up!" roared Gore.

"Yes; I'll let you get up, when you've had your lesson," said Wally. "Yank him over on the table, kids. I'll get the fire-shovel."

"Here you are! We've got him!"

"Don't you dare to touch me with that fire-shovel!" roared Gore. "I'll—I'll—ow! Oh! I'll break your necks for this! Oh! OH!"



As Taggles came down the steps into view in a towering rage, Curly Gibson backed away behind an empty packing-case.

Wally was making rapid play with the flat of the shovel, and the dust rose in little clouds from George Gore's garments.

The bully of the Shell writhed and wriggled, and wriggled and writhed, but the rain of blows descended pitilessly. Norton and Sands, each pinned down by half a dozen fags, watched with growing apprehension. They felt that their own turns were coming.

"Had enough, Gorey?" asked Wally, panting for breath.

"I'll show you—I—yes! Yes!"

"Are you sorry you were cheeky to the cock of the Third?"

"Oo!—ow!—oh!—yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes! Oh, yes! Yes!"

"Good; you can roll him off the table, kids, and shove Norton along."

Gore was rolled off the table. He bumped on the floor, and half a dozen fags sat on him. Norton took his place on the table, and the dust rose from Norton's garments as it had risen from Gore's.

"Are you sorry, Norton?"

"No!" gasped Norton. "I mean yes! Oh, won't I pay you out for this! Yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes! Oh! Yes!"

"Throw the rotter off, and bring up Sands," said Wally, who was now warming to his work. "I think this will be a jolly good lesson to the rotters. Are you still sorry, Gore?"

"Yee—e—es!" hissed Gore.

"Good! Throw that fellow Sands over here."

"It's all right!" yelled Sands, as he was dragged towards the table. "It's all right; I'm sorry; I'm awfully fearfully sorry!"

D'Arcy minor grinned.

"You're a little bit too previous," he remarked. "I haven't asked you yet; and I'm jolly well not going to ask you until you've had a dozen with the fire-shovel."

"But—but—I say—ow! Oh! Groo!"

The dozen with the fire-shovel were administered, and then Wally asked his usual question, as if Sands had said nothing on the point so far.

"Are you sorry, Sands?"

"Yes!" gasped Sands. "Oh, lor! Yes; I'm sorry!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

"Done with him, then," said Wally, flinging the fire-shovel into the grate, and smashing the teapot that was standing there. "Hallo! there's your teapot gone, Gore. Knock some of the things over, kids. We must make the lesson a telling one. If we wreck the study, Gore will remember next time to treat the Third Form with proper respect. Have the guy over. It's a rotten, cowardly insult to a good old lady, and the Third Form at St. Jim's can't allow anything of that sort. Knock it to pieces."

The fags fully agreed with Wally—at least as far as concerned

knocking the guy to pieces. They were quite ready to knock anything to pieces. The dummy was dismembered and trampled on, and then Gore's crockery was smashed on it, and his bookcase emptied out over the heap. The contents of the drawer of his table were added, and then the ashpans from the fire grate. Then Wally looked round, like Alexander the Great, for something more to do, but the fags had very nearly reached the limit.

"I think that will do," said Wally. "What do you think, Jimmy?"

"I think so, too," grinned Jameson.

"Good! We'll be getting along, then. You've put us to a lot of trouble, Gore, but we don't mind, so long as the lesson is useful to you. And I think it will be. So-long!"

The fags departed. They left the study a wreck, and the three bullies something like wrecks also. A short time before all three of them had lent a hand in wrecking Tom Merry's study, and they had regarded it as great fun. It did not seem so funny now.

"My hat!" groaned Norton. "What a muck! And fancy those Third Form kids, too! The cheek!"

"I'll wring their necks for it!" hissed Gore.

"Better catch 'em one at a time, then," grinned Sands.

"My hat! D'Arcy minor is making things hum in the Third! Your guys' ruined."

"I can mend it all right."

"Jolly long job! My hat! What a muck!"

The bullies of the Shell were furious. But none of them felt inclined at that moment to pursue the victorious Third-Formers. Wally & Co. marched off in high glee, and celebrated their victory by giving three fearful yells under the window of Gore's study.

CHAPTER 12.

The Return of the Footballers.

THE dark November evening had set in when the brake rolled up from the station with the returning footballers. There was a crowd at the gates of St. Jim's to greet them, most of the juniors being eager to know how the team had fared on the football ground at Greyfriars. The brake from Ryleomb's loomed up in the gloom, and there was a general shout of inquiry.

"How did it go?"

"Licked?" inquired Gore, in his usual amiable way.

"Did you lick them?" shouted Wally.

"No," said Tom Merry; "no, both of you."

"Eh? Was it a draw, then?"

"Yes; one to one."

"Oh, rats!" said Gore. "That's not much to brag about."

"Well, I'm not bragging," said Tom Merry mildly. "Greyfriars put up a splendid game, and their skipper took the equalising goal at the last moment. Otherwise—"

"Of course!" sneered Gore. "Otherwise—if things hadn't been as they were, and a few miracles had happened which didn't happen—you would have won."

"The result was entirely owing to Gore not being in the team," said Lowther.

"Well, I'm glad to hear you admit that, anyway."

"It's the case; it wouldn't have been a draw if Gore had been playing—it would have been a licking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Monty Lowther—"

"Oh, get aside, Gore; we want to come in!"

The brake drove on through the gateway. Wally swung himself upon the back of the leading horse, and preceded the returning footballers, waving his cap, surrounded by a cheering crowd of the Third.

"Get down, you cheeky young beggar!" called out Jack Blake.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally cheerfully. "Get on, gee-gee! Clear the way, there!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Gee-up!"

And Wally rode the horse as far as the door of the School House, where the brake came to a halt. The footballers poured out of it, and Figgins took the Third-Former round the waist and jerked him off the horse, and set him head downwards on the lowest step.

"Hold on!" yelled Wally, writhing in the grasp of the muscular Figgins. "Let go!"

Figgins let him go, and Wally sat on the step of the School House, rubbing his head.

"You long-legged ass—"

"Wally, I must weally insist upon your tweatin' Figgins with gweatath respect. He certainly is a long-legged ass, but it is wude to tell him so, and— Pway don't poke me in the wibs like that, Figgins. It takes my bweath away, and throws me into a fluttah."

"I'll throw you into a puddle for two pins," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Oh, let's get in!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'm simply

famished. It's curious how hungry a chap gets in this November weather."

"Didn't you have anything to eat at Greyfriars?" asked Jimson.

"Well, yes, there was a cold snack after the match, but what was that to me? I was hungry before we were half-way home."

"You were gorging bloaters in the interval," said Kerr.

"Bloaters! I had one bite, and that rotter had stuck the thing full of cayenne pepper, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see where the joke comes in. If we go to Greyfriars again I shall look out for that chap. But do let's get in. Lucky I thought of leaving tea ready in the study. I foresaw that I should be famished when I got back."

"Oh, come in, quick!" exclaimed Kerr. "I'm always afraid of Fatty when he gets into this state. Blessed if I should like to be in an open boat at sea with him."

"Well, you see, I get so jolly hungry in this November weather—"

Fatty Wynn's voice died away in the gloom towards the New House.

The Terrible Three went up to their study. They had had a substantial feed at Greyfriars after the match, but they were hungry again after the journey. Blake & Co. were in the same state. Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby hurried off, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained behind for a moment to speak reprovingly to his younger brother.

"Wally, you are lookin' untidiah than I have evah seen you before, and that is sayin' a gweat deal!" he exclaimed. "You have twices of paint wound your eyes and ears. Have you been paintin' your face?"

"No, I haven't," grunted Wally. "Gore has."

"Goah! What the doose should he paint your face for, deah boy?"

"I suppose he thought I should look nicer if he obliterated any resemblance to your chivvy," said Wally. "Something in that, too."

"Weally, Wally—"

"But it's all right. We ragged him, and wrecked his study, and licked him with a fire-shovel," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

"It's all right; don't you worry."

"You—you wagged Goah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"Yes, rather!"

"You wrecked a Shell study, you young wascal?"

"We made a regular hash of it."

"You young wascal! Is this what you call wespect for your eldahs? It was vewy w'ong of Goah to paint your face, but you should have acquainted me with the circs, and I would have administahed a feashful thwashin' to Goah. It was extremely cheeky of you to wreck an Uppah Form study."

"More rats!" said Wally, and he put his hands in his pockets and walked away.

Arthur Augustus went up to No. 6, still in a state of considerable astonishment. There was a pleasant hissing sound and a fragrant smell from the open door of the study, and he knew that sausages were frying there. A fire was roaring in the grate, and Jack Blake was busy with the frying-pan. A similar scene of culinary industry was proceeding in Tom Merry's study.

The juniors were in too late for the school tea in hall, but that did not matter to them, as they seldom had tea in hall. It did not take Tom Merry two minutes to light the fire, and he was quickly warming up some more solid food than the bread and butter provided in the hall. The chums of the Shell were hungry; there is nothing like football on a cold, keen day to give you an appetite. A pair of large spectacles looked into the study, and Skimpole blinked at the chums of the Shell.

"Ah, I see you have come in, Merry!"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "Now run along and see if somebody else has come in, there's a good chap. And don't come back again."

"Not at all, Lowther. I want to speak to you fellows. You will be glad to hear that I have succeeded in raising the money to get the necessary materials for manufacturing fireworks of a very superior quality—"

"Can't say I'm pleased," said Tom Merry. "You see your study's next to mine. If you blow yourself to pieces it will very likely damage things in my study."

"Really, Merry—"

"Haden't you better get on with the manufacture?" asked Manners.

"Certainly! I have already commenced, but it has occurred to me that, in the absorption of scientific pursuits, I have forgotten to go down and have my tea. I have therefore come to have tea with you."

"Thanks awfully, but we don't deserve an honour like that," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "You had better go further along the passage."

"Impossible, as the other fellows have finished tea. It is

very fortunate your being in so late, considering," said Skimpole, as he took a chair at the table. "I am very hungry, but don't hurry the cooking for me. I can wait."

Manners and Lowther looked at him grimly, but Tom Merry burst into a laugh. There was enough to go round, so the self-invited guest was allowed to remain where he was. The meal was quickly ready, and the four juniors set to work upon it, and did it full justice. Skimpole blinked amiably over his spectacles at the chums of the Shell.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said. "This steak-pie is ripping. Of course, under Socialism we shall nationalise all the steak-pies in the kingdom. But under the present rotten social system, where one man is allowed to keep a lot of steak-pies to himself, while another goes in a steak-pieless condition, it is very good of you to ask me to tea."

"Ask!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Did you speak Lowther?"

"Yes," said it was very kind of you to yield to our pressing invitation."

"Well, the fact is I am very hungry," said Skimpole. "Yes, I will have some more, please. Would you fellows like to come into my study and see the manufacture of the fireworks? I am making several varieties. The trouble is that I have not been able to get quite all the necessary ingredients described in the book, and I am having to make up the fireworks with some of them left out—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the fireworks will be all right!" said Skimpole. "I am hardly likely to fail in a simple matter like this. You know, that to a man of real genius all things are possible. Whenever I get discouraged I bear that in mind. I think the fireworks will be a great success, especially the Roman candles. There, I think I will go and get on now. You fellows can look in when you have finished."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "But what does Gore say to turning the study into a manufactory of fireworks?"

"Oh, Gore raised objections, of course! But I pointed out to him that, as I had told no one anything about the guy he was making, I was entitled to some consideration at his hands. Of course, he knew that if I mentioned the matter to you you would break up the guy in all probability."

Tom Merry stared.

"Why should I break up Gore's guy?" he asked. "I'm not likely to do anything of the kind. Is it a caricature of me?"

"Oh, no; but—"

"If it were I shouldn't care."

"I had better tell you no more or I shall be letting out Gore's secret. As a matter of fact, I do not approve of it, but Gore refused to listen to my remonstrances on the subject. In fact, he said that if I did not ring off he would pitch me out of the study, which I could not help regarding as rude. The guy has been smashed up once by a crowd of Third Form fags, but Gore has mended it again. He has put it away in the box-room till the evening, so that it cannot be seen. As I have obliged him by keeping the secret, he could hardly refuse to vacate the study and leave me in peace to manufacture my fireworks. But I must be getting along. You won't forget to look in when you've finished."

"Right-ho, we'll come!"

Skimpole left the study, and the chums of the Shell looked at one another curiously.

"Blessed if I know what Gore is up to," Tom Merry remarked. "I've noticed for some time that he had something up his sleeve. It's something caddish, of course. It's not worth while going to the box-room to see. It's taking too much notice of the cad. We shall see soon, anyway."

And the chums of the Shell, having finished a hearty meal, proceeded to Skimpole's study to have a look at the manufacture going on there.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Makes Fireworks, and Arthur Augustus Gets Excited.

"GROO—ugh—my hat!"

"G-r-r-r!"

"Poof!"

Those remarks were made by the chums of the Shell as they looked into Skimpole's study. An extremely strong and very pungent smell assailed them, and Tom Merry clapped his handkerchief to his nose.

"My only hat!" gasped Manners. "Anything wrong with the drains in the School House?"

"It's the manufacture."

"Groo—groo—ugh!"

Skimpole blinked a welcome at them. The genius of the Shell was busy, and the chums, enduring the terrible scent as well as they could, looked on at the process of manufacture. Skimpole was stirring a sticky-looking mess in a basin, which Tom Merry recognised as a pudding-basin belonging to his own study.

The table was covered with bottles, boxes, packets, fuses,

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WALLY."

and all kinds of receptacles, some of them bearing fearsome scientific names. The mess that was being mixed up in the basin emitted a scent that would have discouraged anybody less enthusiastic than Skimpole. The amateur Socialist, in his shirt-sleeves, was working away as if on piece work.

"Hard work," said Tom Merry sympathetically.

"Yes, somewhat," gasped Skimpole. "But, of course, nothing can be achieved without hard work. As Scratchford says in his book on—"

"What have you got there?"

"The fact is, Merry, that I put some of the chemicals into this basin before I came into your study, and I do not quite remember what is in and what isn't. I am going to add a little more of every ingredient I have been able to obtain. This will, I hope, make up for leaving out the ingredients I was unable to purchase in Rylcombe."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a jolly good idea, Skimmey, and worthy of a genius."

"Yes, I thought so myself. You see, genius can triumph over all difficulties, and that thought is a great consolation to me when I am in difficulty. What are you sniffing like that for, Manners?"

"Well, the scent is just a trifle—just a trifle perfumous."

"Oh, you get used to that, you know!"

"Blessed if I'm going to stay here long enough to get used to it!" gasped Manners, and he bolted from the study.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole, blinking after him, "it is curious that Manners should allow a slight scent to deprive him of the educational advantages of watching a truly scientific experiment. Do you notice a slight scent about this stuff, Merry?"

"Well, yes, just the barest trifle."

"It is not really unpleasant when you get accustomed to it."

"I suppose not."

"I dare say it would be ripping after a time," said Lowther. "But I remember I've got something to say to Manners, so I think I'll buzz off." And Monty Lowther promptly quitted the firework factory.

"Dear me! I should be glad if you would stay, Merry, and help me with the work," said Skimpole. "I want to get the fireworks finished, if possible, before the bonfire is lighted. This smell is merely a trifle; after a time it becomes positively pleasant. It all depends on getting accustomed to it."

"Yes, I dare say it does. I should be awfully pleased to stay and get accustomed to it, Skimmey, but I think I ought to go and see to building the bonfire."

And Tom Merry hurried after his chums. He gasped for breath in the passage.

"My only hat!" he muttered. "Of all the niffs! Let's get out into the quad, my sons; I'm nearly suffocated."

The Terrible Three went out into the November dusk. There were stars in the sky, and fortunately no fog. The night was dark, but clear. The quadrangle was a lively scene. At that hour the boys were usually indoors, but on the evening of the Fifth of November ordinary rules were relaxed.

Some early fireworks were already popping off, and there was a rain of coloured sparks in the sky. Opposite the School House the bonfire was being built, and as the School House juniors had expended a considerable sum on materials, it was likely to be a good one. There was a post in the middle for the "guy" to be attached to when the time came to light up. Over by the New House the juniors of the rival side were also busy. Figgins & Co. had a bonfire on their own. The New House juniors were already mustering to carry their dummy round the quad in procession.

The dummy was the libellous representation of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy which had so excited the wrath of the School House swell that morning.

As Figgins & Co., with a crowd of New House juniors, bore it round the quadrangle in solemn procession, there were yells of laughter from the School House fellows, who, of course, recognised whom it was meant for. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy put up his eyeglass and surveyed the procession in deep indignation.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "Weally, Figgins—"

"Out of the way, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to get out of the way. I wegard that dummy as a wibald insult. I have to considah my dig. I insist—"

"Stand aside there!" roared the procession.

"I uttably decline to stand aside. I wufuse—"

"Kick him out!"

"Shove him aside!"

"Get out of the way!"

"I uttably wufuse—ow!"

The swell of the School House was bumped down in the quad, and he sat there, clutching at his silk hat to save it, as the procession went by.

"Please to remember the Fifth of November," chanted Figgins & Co.

"Weally, Figgins! Weally, you wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy!"

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford.

Arthur Augustus picked himself up. He was simmering with indignation. He rushed up to Blake, who was shrieking with laughter.

"Blake, I refuse to be tweated with this uttah diawespect! I call upon you to back me up to thwash those wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Digby—Hewies—I wequire you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were laughing too much to reply. Arthur Augustus glared at them, and then rushed off to Tom Merry, who was shrieking too.

"Tom Mewwy, will you back me up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is an insult to the School House as well as to myself, deah boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mannahs—Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as beastly wottahs! It is an insult to the House, and——"

"By Jove, there's something in that!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Gussy is a funny merchant, but we can't have a School House chap caricatured by a set of New House wasters. Besides we're just going to have a procession ourselves, and we can't have two of them in the quad."

"I refuse to be alluded to as a funny merchant."

"Rally, School House!" shouted Tom Merry. "Those rotters are on our side of the quad. Rally up, there! Give 'em socks!"

The School House fellows had enjoyed the joke against D'Arcy. But they never needed twice bidding to a House row. The Terrible Three led the way, Blake & Co. were only a second behind, and a whole horde of School House juniors followed them. They burst upon the New House procession like a thunderbolt.

"Line up!" roared Figgins.

The guy went with a crash to the ground. The New House processionists put up their fists, and a wild and whirling conflict ensued. Arthur Augustus made directly for the guy. His silk hat was knocked off, his eyeglass trailing at the end of its cord, his collar torn out. But he did not care. He had eyes only for the disrespectful effigy. He dragged it out from the trampling feet, and stamped on it, and dismembered it fragment by fragment.

"Rally!" roared Figgins. "Buck up, New House!"

They rallied, and the School House were driven back for a moment. Figgins & Co. made a rush for the guy, to carry it off. They found it in little pieces, and D'Arcy stamping out the last vestige of its resemblance to a human being.

"Bai Jove, I've settled that!"

"Then we'll have the original instead!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! You wottahs!"

"Up with him!"

"Ha, ha! Hurrah! Here's a guy!"

"Welease me——"

But they did not release him. They had lost one guy, and, having found another, they were not disposed to part with him. D'Arcy was borne off with a rush on the shoulders of Figgins & Co., vainly struggling, and the New House procession crowded back to their own side of the quad.

CHAPTER 14.

An Exciting Fifth!

"MY hat!" exclaimed Jack Blake, "they've got Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, deah boys!" came a gasping voice from the dusky distance. "Wescue!"

"Another guy!" roared the New House juniors. "Bring him along!"

"Welease me, you wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Another guy!"

D'Arcy was borne in triumphant procession up and down before the New House, on the shoulders of Figgins & Co., the crowd round him waving their caps and cheering wildly.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Good old guy!"

"This is better than the other!" gasped Figgins. "It talks and moves of its own accord."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me, you wottahs! I shall thwash every wottah here! I insist upon hein' immediately weleased! Wescue, deah boys! Wescue!"

"Please to remember the—— Look out!"

The School House juniors were coming to the rescue. The predicament of Arthur Augustus made them laugh almost as much as it did the New House fellows; but the honour of the House demanded that the swell of Study No. 6 should be rescued. Tom Merry & Co. came after the rival juniors with a

rush, and the procession was broken up again, and a scene of whirling conflict took its place.

Arthur Augustus rolled on the ground as Figgins & Co. released him at last, to stem the tide of the School House rush.

"Hurrah! Sock it to them!"

"Buck up, New House!"

"Go it, School House!"

Arthur Augustus, blind with rage, rushed at the nearest junior and grasped him round the neck, got his head into chancery, and commenced pommelling away for all he was worth. In the darkness and the excitement he did not notice that it was a School House boy he had seized instead of a foe.

"Bai Jove, I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!" he panted.

"I have wesolved to thwash ewevy wottah in the New House! Take that—and that, you wascal! Take that!"

"Leggo!" roared a muffled voice, "you dangerous maniac—leggo!"

"Bai Jove, is that you, Blake, deah boy?"

"You shrieking dummy——"

"I am feahfully sowwy. I thought it was a New House wottah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, as he released his chum. "I apologise most sincerely."

"You can't apologise this bump off my nose!" yelled Blake.

"I'll wipe up the ground with you! I'll—I'll——"

An eddy of the conflict swept them apart, perhaps fortunately for D'Arcy. The New House juniors were outnumbered, and they were swept back towards their own house. A prefect, attracted by the terrific din, came out with a cane in his hand.

"Hallo! what's all this about?" he exclaimed.

Without waiting for an answer to his question, Monteith began to lay the cane about all the juniors within reach of his arm.

This persuasive method soon stopped the row. The juniors scattered, and the House combat was over—for the time, at least.

"It's all right, Monteith!" exclaimed Figgins. "Hold on—ow!"

He hopped out of the way of the cane. Monteith returned to the New House, grinning, and the juniors rubbed the places where the cane had touched, ruefully.

OUT THIS WEEK!

No. 65:

**VISCOUNT DICK'S
SCHOOLDAYS;**

or, FAGGING FOR SHARP.

By Chas. J.
MANSFORD.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND"

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OUT THIS WEEK!

No. 66:

**HARRY BRANDON,
ACTOR.**

A Romance of the Stage.
PRICE
THREEPENCE.

"Never mind," grinned Kerr; "it was a good jape. We've lost our guy, but there's the bonfire left. Let's get it going."

"Right you are,"
And the bonfire was soon roaring in the quad, casting strange, ruddy glares on the façade of the House and the leafless branches of the old elms.

The School House juniors returned to their own side, satisfied with the defeat of the enemy. The New House effigy had been broken up, and the prisoner had been rescued, so the whole affair was a score for the School House. Arthur Augustus was breathless with exertion and indignation. He looked round in the dusky quad for his topper, and found it at last, and smoothed it carefully with his sleeve.

"You might lend me that, Gussey," said Tom Merry, tapping him on the shoulder.

"Pway why, Tom Mewwy?"

"I haven't a hat for the guy I've been making—"

"Weally, Mewwy—"

"And that one would do rippingly. If you've a high collar and a fancy waistcoat to spare, I should be glad of them."

"I must refuse to discuss so wibald a suggestion. Bai Jove, you know, I am in a most bweathless state. I shall thrash all those wotahs fealfully to-morrow. I shall have to go in and change my beastly clothes, you know. I am soiled and wumped fwom head to foot."

"Yes, you look as if you could do with a wash," said Monty Lowther. "So you won't lend me that hat?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You could have it back after we've burnt the guy, you know."

To this frivolous remark the School House swell deigned no reply. He donned the dusty topper, and walked off towards the School House. As he mounted the steps there was a sudden explosion under his feet.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Bai Jove!—Oh!"

"Hullo! You're treading on my jumping crackers?" said the voice of D'Arcy minor. "You are a clumsy chap, Gus!"

"Weally, Wally, I believe you thwew that cwackah undah my feet on purpose to startle me," said Arthur Augustus, with asperity. "I am gwovin' convinced that I shall have to take to thwashin' you to teach you mannahs."

"Better take to physical culture and boxing first," grinned Wally.

And he marched on with Jameson and Curly, all three with their pockets crammed with crackers that had formerly belonged to Figgins.

D'Arcy went in to change his clothes, and Gore, Norton, and Sands went in for another purpose—to fetch the effigy of Miss Priscilla Fawcett from its hiding-place in the box-room.

A number of their cronies, who were in the secret, waited eagerly for them to bring it out, forming up ready for a procession.

Wally looked at them with a supercilious smile as he passed, and hurled a jumping cracker into their midst, and escaped before he could be collared. He ran full tilt into Tom Merry, and the hero of the Shell seized him by the ears.

"Where are you running to, young shaver? Oh!"

Jameson dropped a lighted cracker under Tom Merry's feet, and Tom released Wally as it banged. The Third-Form trio scuttled off, but Wally turned back suddenly, and called to the hero of the Shell.

"Tom Merry! I say, Tom—"

"Hullo, kid! Come and have your ears boxed."

"Rats! You'd better look after Gore."

"Eh? Why should I look after Gore?"

"He's up to a cad's trick. Better keep an eye on his dummy before he gets it carried round the quad. I'll back you up."

"Thank you," said Tom Merry politely. "If I am backed up by Third-Form infants I shall be irresistible. But what do you mean about Gore?"

"Just look when he comes out, and see."

Tom Merry looked puzzled. He had known for some time that Gore had some game on that was up against him, but what it could be he could not for the life of him guess.

"Better hang on here for a moment," said Lowther. "We'll see what it is as Gore comes out. There's no hurry for our procession."

Tom Merry nodded.

The chums of the Shell waited, joining the crowd that was fast gathering at the foot of the School House steps.

There was a sudden shout from Gore's friends, who were nearest the door, and first saw him coming.

"Here they are!"

"Holler, boys! Here's a guy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Look at her curls!"

"Notice the saucy bonnet?"

"She's come to see her darling Tommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry started forward.

Gore, Norton, and Sands came down the steps of the School

House, bearing an old wicker-chair, in which an effigy of an old lady was seated. The effigy had been skilfully repaired after the rough handling the fags had given it in the afternoon. It really looked very lifelike, although the features could not be said to bear the most distant resemblance to Miss Fawcett's. The curls and bonnet were exact, and the placard on the bodice was plain enough for all to read.

"I'VE COME TO SEE MY DARLING TOMMY!"

There was a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! She's come to see her darling Tommy!"

"Hurrah! Where's her darling Tommy?"

"Holler, boys!"

Tom Merry's face was scarlet. For the joke against himself he did not care one straw, but the mockery of his kind old governess stung him to the quick.

"Clear the way there!" shouted Gore. "Room—room for the lady."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The effigy was borne down the steps. The juniors made way, most of them yelling with laughter, some of them looking uneasily in the direction of Tom Merry. They did not know how he would take it. But they soon saw.

Tom Merry sprang into Gore's path. His fists were clenched, and his eyes were flashing.

"Put that down!" he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with anger.

"Rats!" said Gore. "I—"

He did not finish.

A right-hander caught him between the eyes, and he sat down with such suddenness that the chair and the guy went sprawling. Norton and Sands let go, and before they could decide what to do Tom Merry's right and left came out in quick succession, and they sprawled beside Gore.

CHAPTER 15.

Gore is Sorry, and Skimpole is not Quite Successful.

TOM MERRY stood over the jokers, his eyes blazing, his chest heaving. The usually good-tempered and placable captain of the Shell was in a passion such as his Form-fellows had never seen him in before.

"Get up!" he said thickly. "Get up, you cads!"

The laughter had died away now. The juniors realised that the matter was serious.

Monty Lowther tore the bonnet and curls from the guy, and hurled them in different directions. Manners tore the figure into pieces, and scattered them. Not a hand was raised to stop them.

Gore staggered to his feet. His glance was like that of a demon as he looked at Tom Merry.

Tom Merry stepped closer to him, his lips set hard.

"Put up your fists," he said.

"Look here—"

"Put up your fists!" shouted Tom Merry. "If you don't, I'll thrash you anyway. Do you hear?"

"What are you interfering for?"

"I am interfering because you are cur enough to insult an old lady who never did you any harm. You can make any joke you like against me, but you've passed the limit in insulting Miss Fawcett. I'm going to thrash you, and those two cads as well. Put up your fists."

"I—I—"

Tom Merry wasted no more time. He hit out again, and Gore staggered under the blow. There was no getting out of it now. Gore would have given a great deal to avoid that encounter; but he had no chance, and his friends, much as they had enjoyed the joke, showed no disposition whatever to rally round him now that the crisis had come.

It was better to fight than to be licked unresistingly.

Gore put up his fists. He was a big, burly fellow, much bigger and heavier than Tom Merry, though in science and in pluck much the inferior. But he was desperate now, and he fought his hardest. Tom Merry had licked him before, but he had a chance of retrieving that defeat now. After a hard football match in the afternoon, a long railway journey, and the serenade with the New House, Tom Merry was certain to be a little fatigued.

Yet he did not seem fatigued. Anger seemed to give him double strength. He pressed Gore hard, and twice the bully of the Shell dropped under his crashing blows.

Norton and Sands stood looking on sullenly. They felt that their turn was coming, and they did not like the prospect. Sands was sliding away quietly, when Monty Lowther caught him by the arm.

"No you don't," he remarked genially.

"I—I just want to—to," stammered Sands, "to speak to Gibbons."

"But you can leave it until a little later, my pippin."

(Continued on Page 21.)

GRAND FOOTBALL PUZZLE-PICTURE

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What Competitors have to do.—The Competition is very simple. We are publishing thirteen sets of Puzzle Pictures, each set consisting of six pictures. This is the Ninth Set. Keep this set until you have all the others. Each of these pictures represents the name of a well-known Association Football Player.

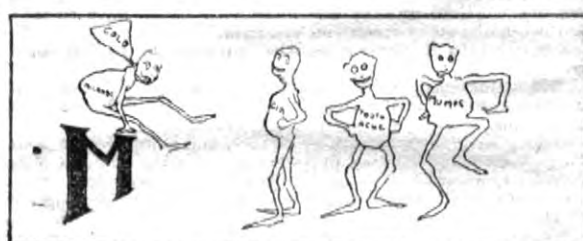
All you have to do is to write carefully under each picture the name of the Player you think it represents—it is NOT necessary to add the name of the player's club. Then place the set away until the others have appeared, when the latest day for sending in competitions will be announced. The Editor of the GEM LIBRARY will not be responsible for any loss or delay in transmission or delivery of the lists by post, nor for any accidental loss of a list after delivery. There will be attached to the final list a form to be signed by each competitor, whereby he agrees to these conditions, and no list will be considered unless this form shall have been duly signed by the competitor. No questions will be answered. Read the rules. The Editor's decision is final.

The easiest way to solve the Pictures is to get the issue of "The Boys' Realm" now on sale, price 1d. During the next thirteen weeks "The Boys' Realm" will publish a column of brief biographies of notable footballers, in which will be included all the names of the Players illustrated. Girls may compete. All competitors may get anyone to help them.

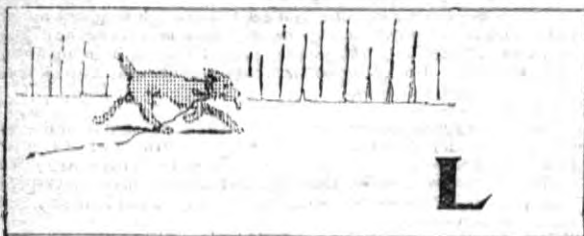
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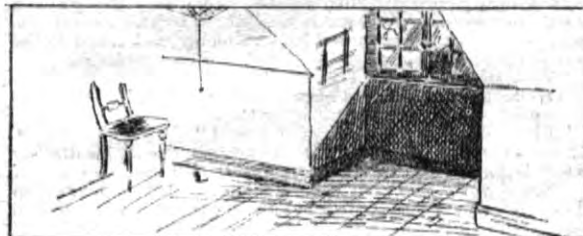
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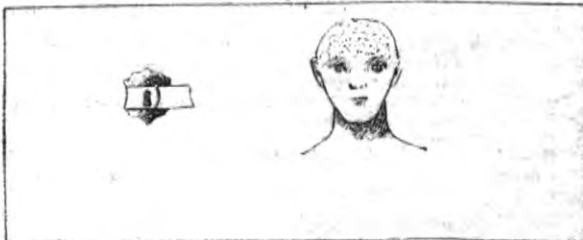
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No. 52



No. 53



No. 54

KEEP THESE PICTURES BY YOU UNTIL NOTICE IS GIVEN TO SEND IN.

"But—but—"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"I'm looking," said Lowther significantly. "You won't get away in a hurry. After the dance you have to pay the piper, you know."

Sands yielded to the inevitable. It was no use having a fight with Monty Lowther then, and another with Tom Merry afterwards.

For the third time Gore rolled on the ground under the blows of the hero of the Shell, and this time he refused to rise again.

"Get up, you skulker!"

"I—I can't!" gasped Gore. "I—I—I'm done! I give in!"

"You coward!"

"I—I tell you I'm done."

"Oh, get away, then!" cried Tom Merry scornfully. "Now, Norton, your turn."

"I—I don't want to fight with you, Tom Merry."

"I dare say you don't, but you've got no choice in the matter. Put up your fists!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Wally. "Go it, Merry, old buck!"

Norton had no chance. He was knocked right and left, and then came Sands' turn. He stayed on the ground the first time he was knocked down, and refused to move.

"Get up!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, who had come out arrayed in another suit of clothes and a well-brushed topper. "Get up, deah boy, and take your lickin'. I wegard you as a beastly coward, you-know."

"I—I can't get up!"

"I'll stick a pin in him," said Jack Blake, stooping down. "If he can't get up he won't be able to move. Why, he's up already!"

Sands had jumped up, with a face like a demon. He faced Tom Merry again, and in a minute he was on his back once more. This time he was allowed to lie.

"That's enough," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "If you don't want any more, that's enough, only keep off the grass in future, that's all."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Sands slunk away after Norton and Gore. The joke of the cads of the Shell did not seem such a successful one after all. Tom Merry had hardly received a scratch.

Monty Lowther patted him on the shoulder as he turned away, and the crowd broke up.

"It's all right, Tommy. Serve them right."

"Yes, rather," said Manners.

Tom Merry coloured.

"I—I wish I hadn't lost my temper," he said. "I—I oughtn't to have got so wild, but I couldn't help it just then."

"It's all right, my son. You did quite right. If they had been too much for you we should have taken one each."

"You bet," said Manners.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard Tom Mewry's conduct in this mattah as exemplary. He was in honah bound to twash the wottahs for insultin' a respectable and esteemed lady, and if he had not done so I should have given them a fearful thwashin' myself."

"Yes, I could see you doing it," grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I trust you do not doubt my wesome undah such cires to avenge an insult to an estimable lady?"

"No, ass; but I don't see how you could lick three fellows in the Shell, any one of whom could have eaten you."

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that, you know!"

"Here's Skimmey!" exclaimed Digby suddenly. "He's loaded up, too. I hear he's been making fireworks. Hullo, Skimmey, are they all right?"

"Certainly," said Skimpole, blinking at Digby—"I made them myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course, it's a dead cert then that they're all right."

"Oh, yes. Although I did not have the full number of ingredients, I have made up for the deficiency by adding a larger quantity than specified of the ingredients I was able to obtain, so—"

"Of course, that comes to exactly the same thing," said Blake sarcastically.

"Not exactly the same thing, Blake; but I have no doubt that the result will be equally successful."

"Oh, no doubt!"

"I have a quantity of fireworks here, and I shall be very pleased to allow anyone to help me let them off," said Skimpole.

"I hear that D'Arcy has been buying some expensive ones, specially made in London, with appropriate mottoes in golden rain. It would have been much more economical to place the money in my hands, and I could have saved fifty per cent. of the expense."

"Yaas, wathah! But would the fireworks have gone off?"

"That is a frivolous question, D'Arcy. The fireworks could hardly fail to be a success if I made them, I suppose. However, you shall see for yourself. I will place some of the Roman candles on this box, and you shall see."

The chums of Study No. 6 looked on with interest. They had very little faith in Herbert Skimpole as a manufacturer of fireworks. Some of the fireworks which the swell of St. Jim's had ordered from London were going off now, and sentences flamed against the sky which elicited loud cheers from the Saints. "Bravo, School House!" and "St. Jim's leads!" shone against the dark November sky, and the juniors yelled approval.

Skimpole carefully set up his manufactures in the necks of bottles, and felt for a box of matches. He struck one, and Wally D'Arcy, getting behind him, blew it out over his shoulder unseen by the short-sighted Socialist.

"Dear me," said Skimpole. "I think the wind is rising."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole looked surprised at the chuckle which followed such a very ordinary remark. He struck another match, and Wally gave another puff, and the match went out.

"Dear me! Will you hold my hat to shelter the match, Blake?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Really, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally, unable to keep silent any longer. Skimpole turned round and blinked indignantly at the Third-Former.

"Dear me! It was that young rascal all the time. Go away, little boy. Now I think I shall be able to light them."

Skimpole struck a third match and applied it. There was a slight fizz, but the fireworks did not "go off."

"Dear me! There seems to be something wrong."

"Ha, ha, ha! There does!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should say that there was somethin' vewy w'ong, deah boy!"

"I will try again," said Skimpole. "This failure is probably owing to something being wrong with the atmospheric conditions. There can be nothing wrong with the fireworks. I am certain of that, as I made them myself!"

"Go it, Skimmey—twy again, deah boy."

Skimpole tried again, and again, but the result was still the same. The juniors yelled with laughter, but Skimpole looked serious and worried.

"Well, why don't you light them?" demanded Blake.

"They appear to refuse to ignite, for some inexplicable reason—but I have little doubt that it is due to unresress atmospheric conditions."

"Of course, it isn't due to the way you made them?" grinned Digby.

"Oh, no, that is quite impossible!"

"Chuck them into the bonfire—perhaps they'll light then!"

"Yes, perhaps that is a good idea. It seems a pity not to explode them when I have taken so much trouble to make them. Doubtless the heat of the bonfire will overcome the influence of the atmospheric conditions."

"Perhaps! Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House bonfire was lighted now. The one over by the New House was burning down, but the School House fire, larger and more brilliant, lighted up the quadrangle. Skimpole's fireworks were hurled into the flames, and then they certainly did explode, some of them—all that he had not omitted to put the powder into. Skimpole beamed through his spectacles upon the grinning juniors.

"You see, it was undoubtedly due to the atmospheric conditions," he remarked.

"Hallo, here's the guy!" exclaimed Herries. "And—my hat!—it's Figgins's twin!"

CHAPTER 16.

The Last Procession.

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther, came out of the School House with their effigy hoisted in the air upon an ancient chair. A yell of laughter from the School House fellows greeted it. The effigy represented an extremely slender youth, and was attired in a very old pair of knicker-

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lockers which showed off the two broom-handles inserted to represent the legs. Figgins's slender calves were a standing joke at St. Jim's, and the juniors knew at once whom the figure was meant to represent. To make all sure, there was a label on the old cap on the head of the guy. The ancient Greek who wrote under his picture "This is an ox" had evidently been taken as an example by the School House artists, for the label bore the unmistakable inscription—"THIS IS FIGGINS!"

"Hurrah!" roared Blake. "Good old Figgy! It might be his twin!"

"Bai Jove, wathah!"

"Line up, kids!" shouted Tom Merry. "We've got to carry it once round the quadrangle, and under the windows of the New House."

"Hurrah!"

The juniors lined up for the procession with a will. The best fighting-men of the School House formed a guard round the Terrible Three and the effigy. The whole troop marched off, shouting and cheering, towards the New House, some of the Third Form infants dancing and waving their caps round the procession.

"Hallo, there's Figgy!" exclaimed Blake. "Look out!"

"Faith, and they've spotted the guy!" said Reilly. "Sure and there'll be an illigant row intirely. Come on, ye spalpeens." "Shoulder to shoulder!"

The School House procession, marching under the very windows of the New House, could not fail to gain the wrathful attention of the New House juniors.

In the glare of the two bonfires the effigy, raised high aloft, was distinctly seen. Many seniors, looking out of their study windows, laughed at the absurd figure. But Figgins & Co. did not laugh.

They were wroth. The voice of Figgins called the New House juniors to the attack.

"The cheek!" said Kerr. "On our own side, too!"

"Well, we marched round on their side," said Pratt.

"That's nothing to do with it! It's like their cheek to come over here. And to bring along an effigy of Figgins, too—"

"Oh, that isn't intended for me," said Figgins.

"Eh? Of course it is!"

"What rot! It's nothing like."

"Oh, the legs, you know," said Fatty Wynn. "They—What the deuce are you knocking my cap off for, Figgy?"

"Nothing," said Figgins warmly. "Don't be an ass, that's all! We're going for those cheeky youngsters because they're on our side. Line up there!"

"We're ready!"

"Follow me, and rush 'em off their feet."

The New House juniors rushed. Figgins & Co. gallantly led the way. But the School House procession was quite ready for them.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" yelled Tom Merry.

The fight was fast and furious. More juniors poured up to take part on both sides, and the din was terrific. The School House phalanx fought its way on, and marched round the quad in spite of the attack. High aloft in the glare of the bonfire the Terrible Three bore the effigy of the New House junior captain.

"Go for 'em!" panted Figgins. "They're not going to get it away again."

But they did!

In spite of the furious attack, the School House held their

own, and slowly but steadily they made their way onward, back towards the School House side.

The New House party renewed their efforts, but Tom Merry & Co. arrived at the blazing bonfire at last, and there the procession halted.

"Holler, boys!" roared Blake.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Please to remember the Fifth of November—"

"Good old Figgins! Shove him into the fire!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come on!" shrieked Figgins.

He was determined to have that guy. The New House heroes made one more desperate effort. The combatants swayed and struggled on the very verge of the blazing bonfire, at the imminent risk of rolling into it. Figgins grasped the guy at last. He knocked down Monty Lowther with his left, and seized the guy with his right. Manners dragged him off, and Kerr and Wynn dragged Manners off, and then Figgins seized the guy again, and jerked it away from the chair.

Tom Merry immediately seized it, too, and he tugged, and Figgins tugged, and that unfortunate effigy suffered the fate of the body of Valerius in Macaulay's famous lay—when Titus dragged him by the foot and Aulus by the head. But the effigy was made of flimsier material than the Roman hero, for at the third or fourth tug it came into two pieces, and Tom Merry and Figgins both sat down violently, each with a half of the dismembered guy in his grasp.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Blake. "Shove it in!"

Tom Merry staggered up, and hurled his half of the guy into the flames. Figgins, as he tried to rise, was grasped by Digby and Reilly, and his half was torn away from him, and sent crashing into the bonfire. And the School House crowd cheered wildly.

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as wathah a victowry," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "The game is up, Figgy, and you are licked, deah boy!"

Tom Merry slapped Figgins on the back.

"Make it pax, Figgy, old son: there's nothing more to row about," he said, laughing. "Your fire is out, so stay here, and let's keep it up together."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as a weally good ideah."

Figgins grinned breathlessly.

"Right you are!" he said. "I don't mind, for one. But, of course, it's rot to say that we are licked."

"Of course it is!" agreed Tom Merry. "Nobody's licked—we're both victorious, and everything in the quadrangle is lovely! Satisfied?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

And rows being over for the night, the juniors of both houses celebrated the Fifth together. Both parties had had enough of rowing for a time, at least. The crop of black eyes and swollen noses was unusually large. But trifles like those did not damp the general enjoyment.

And when the bonfire had burnt itself out, and the last cracker had cracked, and the last squib had squibbed, the juniors mutually agreed that there had never been a more ripping celebration of the Fifth at St. Jim's.

THE END.

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

David Steele, fifteen years of age, leaves his home in a North-Country village to tramp to Wrexborough. On his way, he is instrumental in preventing the murder of a man who proves to be William Scott, a Wrexborough mine-owner, who afterwards takes David into his employ.

One night, William Scott is trapped by his brother George and a miner named Markham and imprisoned in a disused mine, while he is impersonated in Wrexborough by his brother. David accidentally becomes cognisant of this, and, following Markham one day down the old mine, visits William Scott. He is just returning up the long rope-ladder, when he hears George Scott above at the pit-mouth, and Markham on the ladder below. David quickly grasps a bush overhanging the shaft, and swings himself off the ladder.

"Markham, are you there?" calls George Scott.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Trump Card!

"Ay, I'm coming," returned the miner, whose light was nearing the surface moment by moment.

David held his breath as Markham mounted. His enemy must pass within a few feet of him—should he turn his lantern in his direction discovery was inevitable.

But once again fortune favoured him. Markham's eyes were too much occupied with the trickiness of the ascent to look about him. He passed actually within touch of the lad, but went straight on, and clambered to the surface, with a groan of relief.

As soon as he had disappeared, David reached out, and, gripping the iron stanchion again, once more swung himself back into comparative safety. The sweat was streaming from every pore, and he was trembling violently from the terrible strain that had been put upon him. For a little, so intense was the giddy feeling that assailed him, that he was afraid he was going to faint.

George Scott's voice, coming clearly through the still night, helped to recall him to himself.

"Why, Markham, what's the matter?" the boy heard him say. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Doing to myself!" returned the miner gruffly. "It's what your madman of a brother has been doing to me! You're drivin' him mad now, I tell you, with keepin' him shut up there. He went for me and nigh killed me just now—knocked me fair silly for a time. It ain't safe to go near him, and I'd be obliged if you'd take over that part of the job yourself."

"But what did he say? Is he as obstinate as ever?" broke in Scott, who seemed to have very little sympathy to spare for the miner's broken head.

"Obstinate!" growled Markham. "I told you all along that this plan of yours was nothin' more nor less than a fool's idea. Have you known your brother all these years and not found out that he's a pig to drive? He'll stay in that mine till he's a hundred, rather than give you what you want—he's as stubborn as they make 'em. You'll get no money out of 'o him!"

"By Heaven, I will, though!" his companion interrupted him fiercely, "or—"

He paused, as if strangled by rage.

"Or," sneered Markham. "Yes, I fancy it will be a case of 'or.' 'Or' means, I suppose, that we shall finish by having to make a bolt for it, with the coppers at our heels!"

"No, it doesn't," returned Scott more calmly. "It means that if I don't get my money I will have my revenge—and not on my brother alone! I haven't played my trump

card yet, Markham; but I will play it, and play it now. As for yourself, don't be afraid; you shall have the five hundred pounds I promised you. I can lay hands on that easily enough."

"What is your trump card?" asked Markham curiously.

His companion laughed—a low, jarring laugh.

"I'm going," he said deliberately, "to make the name of William Scott cursed throughout the length and breadth of Wrexborough. I'm going to leave my mark on Wrexborough Town and Wrexborough Pit; and if I can't put the thousands I want into my own pocket, I'm going to take them out of my brother's!"

"What do you mean?"

"Wait, and you'll see," was the answer given, with the same unpleasant laugh. "Wait, and you'll see!"

These were the last words that David caught distinctly. Apparently the two men started off towards the town, for their voices sank and died into silence. Not until that silence had lasted some minutes did David Steele venture to creep cautiously over the edge of the old shaft. No one was in sight, and he set off as fast as he could for Wrexborough, making, however, a considerable detour, so as to avoid meeting Markham and Scott.

A Bolt from the Blue.

It was not long before David, as well as Markham, was enlightened as to the meaning of George Scott's phrase—"his trump card."

For, two days after David's adventure in the old mine, all Wrexborough town was agog with excitement and amazement—amazement which gradually deepened into the honest wrath and indignation of men whose rights are wrongfully assailed.

The owner of the Wrexborough Pit had announced to the men in his employ that, after the customary period of notice, they would be required to submit to a twenty per cent. reduction on their present rate of wages.

At first the Wrexborough men could not believe their eyes and ears. The whole thing was so impossible, so utterly unlike Mr. Scott, that they imagined it to be some extravagant joke. But that idea passed as soon as it was known that Grafton and the mine-owner had had "words"—pretty strong ones, it was rumoured—over the matter, and that Scott had finished, not only by refusing to reconsider his decision, but by ordering the manager out of his presence.

"He's no reason to give for doing it," was the verdict of the pitmen, "unless pure and simple greed's a reason. Trade's never been better; his profits have never been higher!"

And the miners looked at each other in stupefaction, and asked if Billy Scott had gone mad.

There were only two people in Wrexborough who could have enlightened the pitmen as to the nature of the thunder-bolt so unexpectedly launched at their heads, and those two were Markham and David, each of whom, for very different reasons, held his peace.

As soon as they had realised that the notice meant what it said—that, from the skilled "holer" to the youngest "trammer," everybody employed in the mine was required to yield up one-fifth of his income—the pitmen took the obvious steps that were demanded by the situation. A meeting was held, and a dozen representative miners chosen as a deputation to wait upon Scott and place the men's point of view before him.

So thoroughly friendly had been the relations which had always existed between Scott and his men, and so perfect had been their confidence in his honesty and justice, that

NEXT THURSDAY: "THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WALLY."

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the miners could not yet bring themselves to believe that their employer could persist in an act of tyranny.

"Let's see 'un and talk to 'un, and things'll be straight in no time," declared Nathan Benn, who headed the deputation. And his optimism was shared by most of his comrades.

But their hopes were destined to be bitterly dashed.

George Scott received the deputation with a mocking politeness, and, with a sneer on his lips, listened while Benn, the spokesman, stumbled through his speech—a speech that, if not eloquent, was straightforward, and, considering the provocation the men had received, exceedingly temperate.

"And is that all you have to say?" he asked sarcastically, when Nathan came to a stop. "You can give me no better reasons to induce me to change my mind?"

Benn looked at his employer in astonishment. Then, finding his tongue, he said, with a certain rough dignity:

"If you want better reasons, sir, to keep you from doing an injustice I can but mind you of the wives and children we've most on us got at home."

There was a murmur of applause. Scott waited until it died away, and then, leaning across the table at which he was seated, looked the leader of the deputation full in the eyes.

"Your wives and children, Mr. Benn," he said coolly, "are your affairs, not mine. I am a business man, and it is as a business man that I am acting when I desire to run my property at the greatest possible profit. The wage-list in the Wrexborough Mine is too high; it must come down. You say that the pit is paying. Quite so. But I wish it to pay more!"

One of the deputation—a stalwart young fellow of the name of Stevens—sprang forward, clenching his fist.

"Then you admit it! It's greed—nothing but greed—that's making ye put the screw on!"

"Call it greed if you like. I call it a legitimate desire for gain," was the supercilious reply.

"What!" returned the young man passionately. "And we're to be cut down that you may pocket a few extra thousands a year—you who have everything you want already!"

Almost unconsciously he raised his hand menacingly as he spoke.

Scott shrank back, his face livid, but the threatened breach of the peace was arrested by Benn, who seized the young man's uplifted arm and pushed him back from Scott.

"None o' that, Jim!" he said sternly. "We're here to argue, not to have a rough an' tumble. Now, Mr. Scott," he went on, "will you listen to me? You say you want to run the Wrexborough Pit at a higher profit; but what profit will it be bringin' you in when the men are hangin' idle about the streets, and the seams are empty of workers? Strikes don't bring much profit to anyone concerned in 'em, Mr. Scott—that's my experience, leastways."

The man he addressed had recovered the composure which had momentarily deserted him at Stevens' violence, and he replied calmly:

"That, Mr. Benn, is for me to consider. I may prefer to suffer a small present loss for the sake of a greater gain later on; or I may not believe that, even after all your big talk, you miners will be such fools as to quarrel with your bread-and-butter because it hasn't enough jam on it. To save further argument, I may as well tell you that you cannot frighten me with the strike bogey. In fact, I have already made up my mind that, unless you submit wholly and unconditionally to my demands, I shall lock you all out!"

The men stood looking at him in stupefied silence. Never had they thought to hear such a speech from their employer's lips.

"That is my last word," Scott continued, rising, and pointing to the door. "Understand that it is useless to make any further representation to me on the subject. My mind is made up. Unless you agree to my conditions, you will, in a few days, as your friend Mr. Benn expressed it, be hanging idle about the streets."

Remonstrance was useless. The pitmen filed out to carry back to those who had sent them the story of their ill-success, and that night, for the first time since it had been known there, the name of Scott was hooted in Wrexborough Town.

A Plan that Failed—Trapped.

Only a man who was destitute of every feeling of honour and duty could have devised such a revenge as that which George Scott now proposed to take upon his imprisoned brother.

He knew that it was the welfare of the men in his employment that lay nearer than anything else to his brother's heart, and that if William was proud of anything, it was not so much of the prosperity of the pit as of the prosperity of the men who worked in it.

What a revenge, then, for his brother's obstinacy, so he said to himself, to bring misery upon the whole town—perhaps even to stir the men up to desperate acts of violence, which might ruin the industry that brought them in their daily bread!

And the whole thing could be done so safely, too! For William would never willingly bring him to justice—at least, not while his mother lived.

Such was George Scott's plan of revenge—a plan which David Steele had little difficulty in penetrating. The cold cruelty of it made his blood boil; it was only his solemn promise that kept back the natural denunciation of such villainy that sprang to his lips.

The impostor's idea had been to keep his prisoner for the present in ignorance of what he was doing, and only when his evil scheme had been successful, to inform his brother that his workmen and himself were involved in a common ruin.

But he had not reckoned on David Steele.

The boy's first thought was to let his master know the state of affairs, and the evening following George Scott's insolent reception of the deputation of miners found him once more on the way to the disused pit.

He did not go empty-handed. All his available cash had been expended in the purchase of food more likely to tempt an invalid than the scanty fare which had hitherto fallen to Scott's portion.

He was not disappointed in the effect of his words upon the prisoner. Scott turned deathly pale when he heard of his brother's latest piece of villainy.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered. "I could have forgiven him anything but the meanness of revenging himself upon those who have never injured him, of bringing misery upon hundreds of helpless women and children."

He buried his face in his hands and remained silent for a little while, but when he looked up it was with a glance of stern determination.

"I have made up my mind, David," he said quietly. "I have no right to consider my own, or even my mother's, feelings before the welfare of the whole town of Wrexborough. At all cost this horrible plan must be defeated; yes, even if I myself have to give my own brother up to the police."

"Surely that won't be necessary, sir?" said David. "If your brother once hears that you have escaped he won't stay to be arrested. Directly you are safe out of this, you can send him a message—I will take it myself—and he will clear out in next to no time."

Scott's face brightened.

"You're right, Dave. You've got a proper head for expedients. And now let's talk the matter over. My foot is so much better that I believe in another twenty-four hours I shall be able to crawl up the ladder."

Before David left the plan of escape had been thoroughly arranged. It was very simple. On the following night, after making certain that he was not watched, David was to descend to the mine, bringing with him a file, with which to cut through Scott's fetters. Together they were to ascend to the surface, and make their way to Wrexborough under cover of darkness. Scott thus hoped to reach his own dwelling and to have the necessary interview with his brother unnoticed by any of the townspeople, or even by his own servants; and when George Scott saw that the game was up, there was little doubt but that he would clear out with all speed.

Such was the arrangement at which they arrived, and, having arrived at it, David began his return journey, chuckling to himself at the thought of the different complexion that Wrexborough politics would assume in the next twenty-four hours.

But he would hardly have whistled so exultantly as, having extinguished his lamp, he strode away from the pit's mouth over the moor, if he had known that, a few paces from him, half hidden behind a dwarf furze-bush, half shrouded in the darkness, a man was watching his every movement; a man who, when, a few minutes before he had been himself about to descend into the old shaft, had stopped short at the sight of a light shining far below him in the blackness—the gleam of David's lamp.

Micky Jones commented on David's spirits at tea next day, and Micky Jones was not the only person to remark that the lad was in a state of suppressed excitement. It was not only on Scott's account that he looked forward to the night's work; the idea of being instrumental in bringing to naught the plans of the man who had twice all but taken his life caused him to rub his hands with a not unnatural glee.

"Micky," he said cheerfully, as he emptied his second cup of tea, "do you know why I'm so jolly? It's because I'm getting a bit of my own back to-night."

"How?" inquired Micky stolidly.

"Ah, that's telling!" returned David, with a wink. "And

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now I'm going out. And don't you be frightened if I'm a bit late, Mrs. Nichols."

Ten minutes later, and he was striding against the keen east wind towards the old shaft, the file in his pocket, his lantern under his coat.

"The last time I shall make this delightful excursion," he told himself, as, having kindled his lamp, he began the descent.

He gave a cheery hail as he reached the bottom. Something to his surprise there was no answer, and as he neared the place where Scott had been confined, he noticed, with a little start of alarm, that the chink of light was no longer visible under the door.

"The lamp's gone out, I suppose!" he muttered. But involuntarily he quickened his steps. He laid his hand on the door, and it yielded to his touch. He opened it, and entered, holding his lamp above his head as he did so.

Then a cry burst from his lips. The place was empty—absolutely empty. Scott's presence there might have been nothing but a dream, so bare was it of any sign of human life.

The boy stood open-mouthed. What was the meaning of this sudden disappearance? Had Scott gone of his own free will, or had he simply changed his prison? Was he above ground, or only concealed in another of the recesses of the mine?

It was useless seeking for a clue to the mystery from the bare walls of the cell.

Bitterly disappointed, the boy turned and left it. He tried to hope against hope that Scott had succeeded in escaping without his help; but his cooler sense told him that that was practically impossible.

The alternative explanation was that his captors had removed him, either to some other place of confinement—or by death.

The boy shuddered at the idea, which he had good reason to know was not an extravagant one.

His reflections had brought him to the foot of the shaft. Mechanically he stretched out his hands for the ladder.

Then, for the second time, a shock of surprise thrilled him through.

The rope-ladder was gone. During the few minutes he had been absent from the foot of the shaft someone had hauled it up.

An Unexpected Meeting—The Madman.

For a moment David stood, stunned by the discovery. Then he began to put two and two together.

Taken in conjunction with Scott's disappearance, this latest development could only mean one thing—that George Scott had obtained knowledge of his prisoner's intended escape.

He—David—had been watched and dogged. No sooner had he reached the bottom of the ladder than it had been drawn up, his enemies thus hoping, no doubt, that they had trapped him finally and for ever.

Had they done so? That was the question that the lad asked himself. The answer to that question must depend on whether or no he could find the other exit to the old mine—the way by which he had first tracked Markham to Scott's prison.

Could he do so?

He had but a vague idea of the direction in which it lay. Still, he had a light now; and as his safety depended on finding a way of escape before that light was extinguished, there was no time to lose in commencing his search for it. The mystery of Scott's whereabouts must be left until that first and most pressing question had been solved.

He paused, only to consider his bearings. Roughly speaking, he knew that the spot at which the new and old workings touched must be somewhere on his right. To his right, therefore, he turned, and, plunging into the dark and solitary passage, began his hunt for the outlet, on whose discovery his life depended.

For some twenty minutes or so he hurried on, and then he stopped short suddenly; for a dull roar—a roar that swelled, and then died slowly away in thunderous echoes—had fallen upon his ear. He could feel the reverberation of the ground where he stood, and a shower of small stones and dust pattered down around him from the roof.

What was the meaning of the sound—an explosion? But of what kind? Could firedamp explode in an unused pit, he wondered, where no spark could possibly reach it? He did not as yet know enough about subterranean gases to guess whether or no that was likely or possible.

He advanced cautiously, feeling that he might be about to incur a new danger. Judging by the loudness of the report, the explosion could have taken place at no great distance from him. And before he had gone many paces he saw that the ground was strewn with fragments of rock, which the concussion had dislodged from the crumbling roof.

He half hesitated whether or no to turn back and try another way; but curiosity, as well as conviction that he was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the outlet determined him to push on; and he picked his way over the rough ground, until, just as he reached a sharp turn in the gallery, he stopped again, this time even more suddenly than before.

For out of the darkness, the thick darkness before him, there sounded a deep groan.

"Who's there?" he cried, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment, flashing his lamp ahead and hurrying on. "Mr. Scott, is that you?"

There was no intelligible answer; but the groan was repeated, long-drawn-out and faint.

A couple of paces more, and the light of his lamp disclosed the body of a man outstretched upon the ground, face downwards, and arms flung wide. David fell upon his knees, and turned the unconscious figure upon his back, and as he did so he involuntarily cried out, for it was not, as he had expected, Scott, but Markham, who lay there, stunned, and bleeding from a long, red gash in the forehead.

It was easy enough to see how he had come by his injury. A sharp fragment of rock, falling from the roof, had struck him just above the temple, inflicting a jagged scar that was bleeding profusely. The blow had evidently been a severe one. Markham's breath came stertorously from between his lips, and his face was of a grey and death-like pallor.

David would have been hardly human if the idea had not flashed through his mind that it would be safer to leave his enemy to struggle back to life if, and when, he could. But after a moment's hesitation he knelt down beside the injured man, wiped away the blood that was trickling from the cut down the side of his face, loosened his neckcloth, and felt for the little flask of brandy which he had slipped into his pocket earlier in the evening, intending it for Scott's use. After a good deal of trouble he succeeded in forcing some of the spirit between Markham's teeth, with the result that, after two or three deep-drawn sighs, the man's eyes opened, and looked up into David's with a puzzled stare.

"Are you better?" asked David, with as much cordiality as he could throw into the question—not very much, perhaps.

Markham did not seem to hear, or, at least, to understand, the question, though he apparently recognised the questioner.

"David Steele!" he muttered thickly. "Yes; he can't get out. I've blocked it up—the passage—I've blown up the gallery, and he doesn't know the other way; and no one will ever know."

His voice died away weakly, and his eyelids closed once more.

David laid his head down—not so gently as he might have done, for a fresh groan burst from Markham's lips—and he sprang to his feet.

The miner's semi-delirious words had given him an insight into the truth. Markham had deliberately destroyed the way of escape for which he had been searching.

There was a savage joy in thinking that, by so doing the scoundrel had overreached himself, that he had literally been "hoist with his own petard." In firing the train of explosive which was destined to shut the door of David's escape he had forgotten to make allowance for the crumbling state of the old "gateways," and he himself was the first to suffer from his own misdeed.

"You villain!" David muttered, looking down upon the senseless face. "So you were going to bottle me up here, were you; to leave me to die after you had stopped all the exits? You're a pretty pair of cold-blooded skunks, you and your pal! And if I could manage to get out of this place without your help, I'm hanged if I wouldn't like to leave you to the fate you intended for me. But, my dear friend, whatever arrangements you have made for your own safety will have to be shared with me."

What these arrangements were he could only guess as yet; but it was very obvious that Markham must have decided on some means of leaving the pit after the accomplishment of his nefarious task.

"I think," David reflected grimly, "that when he does come to he will be feeling too much out of sorts to refuse me the information I intend asking him for!"

But that information was longer in coming than David had expected. In spite of all the boy's efforts to rouse him, Markham lay in a sort of stupor, his heavy breathing being his only sign of life. Again and again David tried, by chafing his hands, by fanning him, by pouring brandy between his teeth, to bring him back to consciousness.

Hour after hour went by, and still David sat gazing on the pallid, motionless face. In spite of his anxiety, a drowsiness began to creep over him, and, strive against it as he might,

(Continued on Page 27.)



What is Greed? It is the canker-spot which, spreading, will eventually eat away a man's soul, rob him of his conscience, and cause him to be hated and despised even by the meanest of his fellow creatures. Here is a little picture which tells the whole story of Greed and its work. It shows us a father, his arms closed on the bag of gold for which he has sold his soul, turning away from wife and children to pursue the phantom shadow which lures him to his destruction.

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overpowered him at last; with his back against the rock, and his head leaning upon his knees, he fell into a heavy slumber.

When he awoke it was with a start, for peal after peal of merriment was ringing in his ears.

It was Markham who was laughing. Propping himself upon his elbow, he was rolling his head from side to side, and shaking in the contortions of his fantastic mirth. David gazed at him, open-mouthed, with horror—at his flushed face, his glazed, unseeing eyes, his scarred forehead, on which the blood was scarcely dry, his ridiculous and ungainly gestures. It did not take long to convince him that the wild yell of laughter was the laugh of a maniac—that here, far beneath the earth, in the depths of the deserted mine, Markham had gone raving mad!

There was not the least doubt about it—Markham was a madman! The blow he had received had, for the time, at least, affected his reason.

David's own brain reeled with the horror of the situation. To be shut up in a living tomb with a maniac—a maniac whose next move might be to fly at him in an excess of unreasoning fury! He dared not stir; utterly unnerved, he sat and stared at the miner, as he writhed and rolled in his hideous mirth.

At last—seemingly from sheer exhaustion produced by its violence—the paroxysm ceased, and Markham leaned back against a rock and closed his eyes.

Trembling in every limb, David rose to his feet, and advanced towards the miner. As he heard his footsteps, the latter opened his eyes once more and fixed them in a questioning gaze upon the boy's face, and the two glared into each other's eyes.

How long the two faced each other there David could never have told; but at last, with the horrible strain of keeping his eyes fixed upon the maniac's, his brain began to reel—he felt that he could stand it no longer—that in another instant his senses must give way. Better to end this hideous uncertainty at any cost—and at the thought, he moved his right hand to his pocket.

The spell which had held Markham was broken. In an instant, with a growl like that of a wild beast, he had flung himself upon the boy and borne him backwards to the ground.

David was like a reed in the grasp of his antagonist. He had often heard of the superhuman strength which madness gives, and he experienced it now. Markham had never struck him before as a particularly powerful or muscular man, but now his wrists seemed made of steel, his clenched hands like sledge-hammers.

Once or twice David essayed to struggle free from him; but the miner's grip tightened on him instantly, and he was held as in a vice.

Did the man know where he was going? he wondered, as Markham went on, never pausing, never hesitating at the various turnings.

Was he—and the boy's heart leapt in a sudden throb of hope—was he by any possibility making for that third opening? If so, there was a chance, a faint one perhaps, but still a chance, that he, David, might yet escape alive from the horrible peril in which he stood.

And that hope grew stronger when he perceived that the ground was rising—that every "gateway" into which the madman turned had an upward trend. And then suddenly he felt a rush of cold air upon his face.

A moment later bushes and twigs brushed and scratched him as Markham plunged through them. Then the miner stopped, and, looking up, David saw that it was snowing.

They were in the open air.

The Madman's Crime.

The old seam at Wrexborough had been much nearer to the surface of the earth than the more modern pit; in fact, the presence of coal in the neighbourhood had originally been discovered at what was locally termed "the Slide"—a bare cliff or scar, the result, as its name indicated, of a landslip. Actually the first attempt at working the mineral had been made by tunnelling into the Slide—a method that had soon been superseded by the sinking of a shaft nearer to the centre of the seam.

It was through this old tunnel—now overhung with snow-covered creepers, and almost choked up with earth and bushes, its very existence nearly forgotten by a later generation of pitmen—that Markham and his helpless burden once more emerged into the icy air. The Slide itself was an almost sheer cliff from eighty to a hundred feet in height, and the opening into the tunnel was about half-way up it—that is to say, some forty or fifty feet from the ground.

Twisting his head round over Markham's shoulder, David peered through the darkness at the scene below him, but in

no way could he guess at his whereabouts. The next moment Markham set off at a stumbling gait.

On he went, scrambling through the snow. Would Markham never tire? The sweat was pouring off him, but his pace never slackened. Now and again he broke out into something between a laugh and a growl, but otherwise the strange journey was performed in silence.

At the end of about a mile, the ground began to rise, and Markham had perforce to slacken his pace. As he did so, he began to mutter aloud, and here and there David could catch and understand a phrase.

"The last time," he kept on saying—"this'll be the last time. He's been after us—he's a cunning acoundrel; but I've got him this time—got him—and I'll treat him as we treated the other."

And again he burst into a loud, jeering laugh.

David's blood ran cold.

"Markham," he began, and this time his voice reached the miner's brain, and he looked down on the boy's face.

"Markham, what are you going to do?"

The miner chuckled.

"You'll see—you'll see," he repeated, in a sing-song voice. And to David's intense astonishment, the madman released his grip.

David did not hesitate for a moment; and, sighting a snow-covered thicket of bushes, dashed with all speed for cover.

At that moment the snow which had been drifting down in a steady whirl, suddenly thickened, and with a heavier gust of wind came down in a perfect cloud.

David blundered on as best he could for some thirty yards, knowing full well all the time, though, that it would be impossible for Markham to catch him while the furious storm lasted.

"Hallo," muttered Dave, "this is odd! Where on earth am I?"

He turned another way, and groped again—still with the same result. His fingers came in contact with nothing but the ever-thickening snow.

Again he stopped, this time seriously anxious.

"Which way did I come?" he asked himself, with a beating heart. His safety might depend on a correct answer to that question; for no human being could hope to live for many hours in such a snowstorm. But it was not a question easy to reply to. His wanderings, first to one side, then to the other, had made it difficult to recollect his exact bearings. The wind had been blowing in his face, he remembered, when he started to run, and he tried to guide himself by placing his back to it; but a minute or two showed him that the gusts that whirled the snow around him were continually varying, coming now from one point of the compass, now from another.

He could not be far from the town; but, for all practical purposes, he was as much isolated from it as if he had been standing hundreds of miles away.

At first he hardly realised the full extent of the danger that had so suddenly descended upon him; but, as minute after minute went by, and he staggered on in what he hoped and believed was the right direction with nothing around, above and below him but snow, his heart began to sink. He stopped and shouted at the pitch of his voice, and strained his ears for the answer that never came. Then he would hasten on—stop and shout once more—but always the reply was silence.

The snow showed no signs of abating; and so thickly did it now lie upon the ground that at every footstep David plunged into it above his ankles.

And at last it seemed as though the end had come. Stumbling blindly along, he had reached a dip in the ground in which a snowdrift had formed. Into it he plunged, first up to his knees, then to his waist. He tried to extricate himself feebly, lurched forward, and collapsed in a heap in the midst of the drift.

And there no doubt he would have lain, fallen into a slumber, and, later, have been discovered frozen to death, had it not been for an unexpected sound that pierced even to his dulled and drowsy brain.

A cry!

A cry that came ringing through the dim silence with an unearthly note—the cry of some creature in an extremity either of terror or of pain.

To David that cry, horrible as it was, brought relief with the knowledge that there must be a human being near him, veiled from him only by the drifting snow; and that knowledge gave him strength and courage to climb out of the drift, and stagger to his feet once more.

As he did so, the cry came again. Equally terrible, but not so loud, as if the man who cried were growing weaker and fainter.

Summoning up all his strength, David himself halloed as loudly as he could. But there was no answer, neither was the cry again repeated.

He pushed on blindly in the direction whence it seemed to have come, shouting "Hallo!" and "Where are you?" and brushing aside the snow as it whirled into his eyes. He must have got some twenty or thirty yards from the snowdrift when suddenly a figure shot out of the dimness—a flying figure, that literally cannoned into him.

The man, whoever he was, was coming from the direction in which David was going, and must have been running at a tremendous speed, for his impact not only knocked what breath he had left out of the boy's body, but bowled him clean over on his back into the snow. Nor did this unexpected check in his wild career seem to disconcert him; it certainly did not stop him. He reeled back from the shock, staggered a little, and then sprang onward again, actually passing over David's prostrate body, and treading him under foot as he did so.

Before David could scramble to his feet again, he had vanished absolutely, as silently and as suddenly as he had appeared. No sound had come from his lips. He seemed to have been swallowed up by the darkness and the silence of the night, and it was impossible to guess whether or no he was the same man from whose lips had proceeded that fearful cry. His face, too, had been quite invisible in the gloom; and so swiftly and mysteriously had he come and gone, that had it not been for the tangible evidence of the collision, David might have believed him to be nothing but a shadow created by his own dazed brain.

Even though revived to a certain extent, he was still too stupefied by the cold to think clearly. A vague instinct to discover he knew not what sent him stumbling onwards in the same direction as before, until he was brought to a standstill by a second collision; but this time it was a wall and not a man that barred his progress.

He stretched out his numbed fingers, and felt that the surface was of smooth stone. A ray of hope shot through his heart. Was this a house? If so, he was saved. He could not see any light from the windows, but doubtless the inhabitants of the house were long since in bed.

He raised his voice and shouted feebly, but received no reply. Then he began to feel his way along the wall in search of a door against which to knock until he could arouse the inmates.

To a certain extent the building sheltered him from the driving snow; but he staggered on until he had reached a turn in the wall without coming upon either door or window.

He rounded the corner and continued his search, feeling so weak and exhausted now that he had to lean against the wall to support himself; and more than once he thought that even on the threshold of safety he must sink down again into the pitiless snow. But when he had made a few steps from the corner of the building, his fingers came in contact with a wooden door.

He beat upon it, and it rattled crazily; but no sound in the interior of the house betokened that he had been heard. Again and again he struck and called as loudly as his failing strength would let him. There was no answer.

At last, in despair, he flung himself with all his weight against the door; and, as he did so, it yielded, creaking loudly upon its stiff and rusty hinges, and almost precipitating him into the interior of the house.

He stumbled in, too thankful for a shelter to wonder at the carelessness that left the door unlatched, and as his foot touched the threshold, it struck something that rang and jingled against the stone steps.

Mechanically he stooped down and picked the thing up, and felt that between his fingers he held the long, keen blade of a curved knife.

At any other time his mind would have quickly linked together a connection between the weapon, the cry he had heard, and the man who had met and passed him so swiftly and strangely in the storm; but now he was too numbed and dazed to think clearly. He was not even aware that he still held the knife in his hand, as he began to feel his way round the darkened room in search of its inner door.

There was no furniture in the room—nothing but a blank wall; and David realised that the building he had entered could hardly be inhabited.

Before he had more than half completed the circuit of the room, his feet rustled into a heap of dry hay—a considerable heap piled up against the wall. This discovery was a godsend to David, and he lost no time in throwing himself down upon the hay and creeping into it until he was covered up from head to foot.

Curled up among the hay, warmth gradually returned to his half-frozen limbs, and he soon fell into the sleep of absolute exhaustion.

That sleep lasted all through the night and for several hours into the morning—long after the snowstorm had died away, to be succeeded by a cold and piercing wind. Probably the lad would have slept the clock round had he not been aroused, and in an unexpected manner.

Men's voices mingled with his dreams at first—voices talking hurriedly in tones of surprise and horror. They drew nearer, it seemed to him, and he made an effort to catch their words, but could not. Then he heard an exclamation—a loud exclamation—and feet were hastening towards him, ringing on the floor; but still he could not lift his lids. But he was awake enough now to hear what the men around him were saying.

"Hiding in the hay—and asleep, too! Good heavens, why it's only a boy! There's no doubt about it, though. Why, he's got the knife in his hand—and look at his fingers!"

David opened his eyes. The bare room was filled with policemen. There were policemen at the door, policemen in a group about his improvised bed. All had their eyes turned towards him. One of them—a sergeant, by his stripes—laid a hand upon him.

Wondering whether he was still dreaming, the boy sat up, half covered in hay, and stared at the unwonted display of the majesty of the law.

His doubts on that point were soon dispelled. "Well," said the sergeant grimly, "it don't need a clear conscience to make a sound sleeper, I see."

Still half dazed with sleep, the boy looked about him wonderingly; but suddenly a shudder passed through him.

His eyes had fallen upon something which he still held clutched tightly in his right hand—something which he had slept through the whole night gripping unconsciously. It was a long, curved knife, its keen blade smeared and spotted with an ominous red rust.

The fingers with which the boy had touched the steel bore marks of it, too.

With a gesture of horror, David thrust the knife from him.

"How did that get here?" he cried.

And then there flashed through his mind the remembrance of how he had picked it up upon the threshold of the door on the previous night.

Again the sergeant smiled grimly. "That," he said significantly, "is what you'll have to explain later. Here, Williams—and he handed the knife to one of his subordinates—"take charge of that. I must warn you," he went on to David, "that whatever you say now will be used as evidence against you."

"Evidence against me?" stammered David. "What do you mean?"

"There's a man lying just outside," said Sergeant Watts gruffly, "stabbed in two places—dead. I find you with a blood-stained knife in your possession on the scene of the murder, and consider myself justified in arresting you on suspicion. Now, then, get up! I'm in a hurry."

(To be continued.)

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