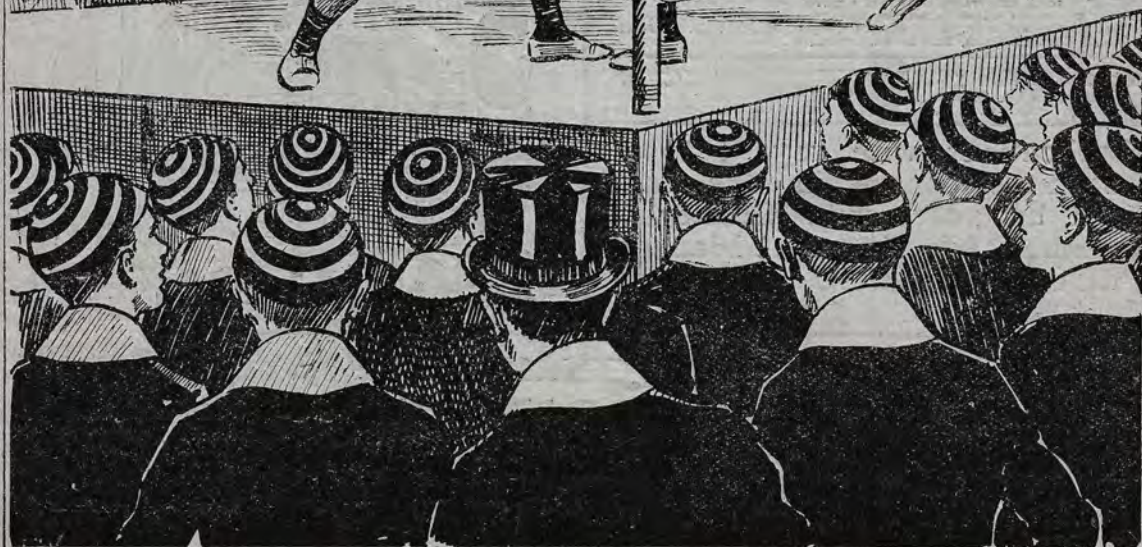
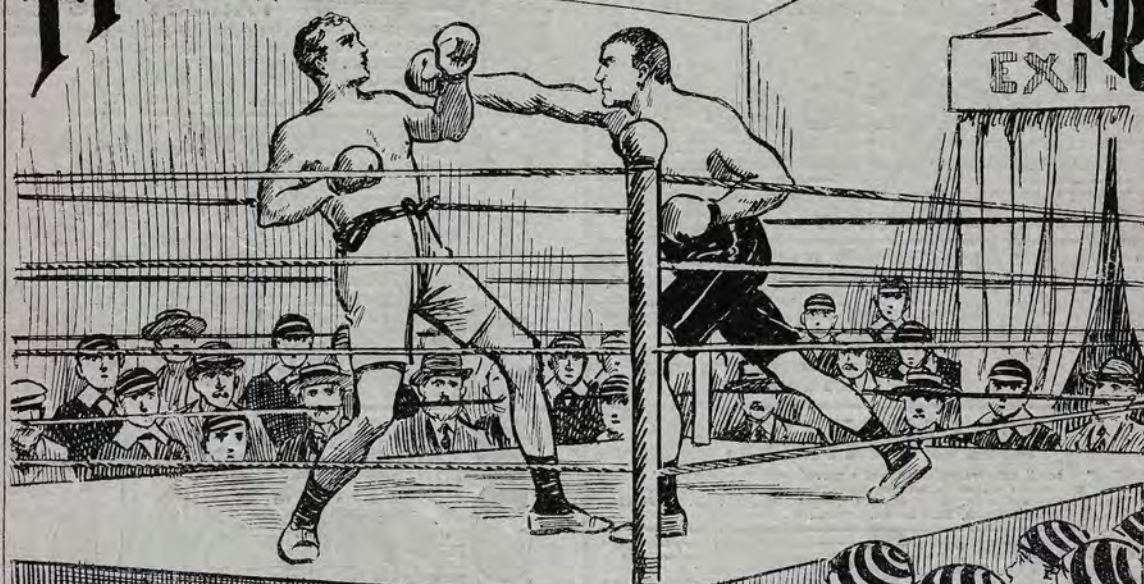


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THE FIGHTING SCHOOL-MASTER.

A
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New,
Long,
Complete
Tale of



TOM
MERRY
and Co.
at
St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

In a Hurry.

"T'S fwightfully wisky!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on."

"I wemarked that it was wisky—"

"Now, look here, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "If you're in a state of nerves—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye with deliberate care, and stared at Tom Merry of the Shell. He started staring at his feet, and worked his way up to the forehead, and then allowed his gaze to descend again in a leisurely way till it reached Tom Merry's boots. This was what Arthur Augustus D'Arcy called "lookin' a fellow up and down, bai Jove!" Tom Merry, of course, ought to have been withered up.

But he wasn't! He laughed!

"You uttah ass!" said D'Arcy. "If you mean to imply that I am afwaid, you must be off your silly wockah."

"Then come on."

"I said that it was wisky—"

"Blow the risk. Come on."

"I do not mind the wisk at all. I simply wemarked that it was fwightfully wisky, and so it is. But I am quite weady to come."

"Buck up, thea, and not so much jaw," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners. "If we wait for Gussy to finish talking, the fight will be over, and we shall have the journey for nothing, and I sha'n't get the blessed photographs. Come on—drag him along!"

"I uttably wufuse to be dwaggled along—ow!"

Jack Blake, of the Fourth, and Tom Merry, of the Shell, seized the swell of St. Jim's by the arms, and rushed him down the passage.

"Ow! ow! Leggo! You howwid boundahs! You're wumplin' my jacket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was rushed downstairs so fast that the three juniors rushed into Kildare, of the Sixth, who was standing at the foot of the staircase talking to Darrel. Kildare gave a shout.

"You young rascals—"

"Sorry!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Sowwy, deah boy—it's the fault of these uttah wottahs—"

Kildare grinned, and Blake and Tom Merry rushed D'Arcy onward. In the doorway of the School House D'Arcy caught at the cornice, and clung.

"Pway, hold on a minute!" he gasped. "You wouldn't let me finish. I was goin' to make a suggestion—"

"Rats!"

"It's fwightfully wisky goin' to see the fight—"

"Bosh!"

"And I suggest—"

"Piffle!"

With a wrench the two juniors tore Arthur Augustus away from his hold, and he was rushed down the School House steps into the quadrangle.

The old quad. of St. Jim's was bright with summer sunshine. School was over for the day, and most of the fellows were out of doors, playing cricket, or chatting and strolling under the green old elms.

A general chuckle from the fellows near at hand greeted the hurried appearance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, pinioned between the other two fellows.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kangaroo, of the Shell. "What's the trouble? Taking Gussy to be measured for a strait-jacket?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No—he's only in a hurry, and we're helping him along," Tom Merry explained.

"Yqu uttah ass—"

Next Thursday:

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

No. 177 (New Series.)

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"Come on, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I—"

"This way!"

"I was goin' to suggest goin'—"

"March!"

"Yawwoh!"

Onward went D'Arcy at top speed across the quad., willy-nilly; and a roar of laughter followed him. D'Arcy's silk hat was on the back of his head, and his eyeglass was fluttering at the end of its cord. There was dust upon his beautifully-creased trousers, and his fancy waistcoat was rumpled. It was no wonder that the swell of St. Jim's was in a state of boiling indignation.

But there was no help for it. Tom Merry and Blake held his arms in a grasp of iron, and he was rushed on at top speed towards the gates.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were standing at the gates. Figgins & Co. belonged to the New House at St. Jim's; but for once they were not on the war-path against the School House.

They roared as D'Arcy rushed helplessly up in the grasp of his chums.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wow! I—oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Where are you going?"

"Out!"

"Are you taking Gussy for a walk like that?" asked Kerr.

"Well, he's in a hurry, you see, and he doesn't know it. We're going to see the fight at Rylcombe," Tom Merry explained, "and we don't want to miss it while Gussy gives a solo performance on the jawbone of an ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"If you will come quietly now, Gussy—"

"I wefuse—"

"Then we'll jolly well give him the frog's-march," exclaimed Monty Lowther, coming up panting. "You New House bounders had better lend a hand. Collar him."

"I wefuse to be collahed—I—oh—upon the whole, I will come quietly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the swell of St. Jim's was released. He smoothed his ruffled attire with an indignant hand. He put his silk hat on straight, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and sniffed.

Manners came up, with his camera slung over his arm, and Herries, of the Fourth, and the party was complete.

"You New House chaps coming?" asked Tom Merry.

"It depends on where you are going," grinned Figgins.

"We were thinking of going to meet the new master this evening. I hear that he's coming by the seven train."

"New master," said Tom Merry.

"New master of the Fourth," said Figgins. "Nothing to do with you Shell bounders, of course; you wouldn't know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I remember. Mr. Lathom's got a few weeks away, and a substitute is coming in his place," he remarked.

"Well, it would be only civil to meet him at the station. What is his name?"

"Mr. Harrison."

"We may be in time to meet the train," Blake remarked.

"I should like to, and of course Gussy would come out strong on such an occasion"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But we can't give up the fight for it. We may be back in time—but we can't miss the Chicken and the London boxer—not much."

"No feah!"

"By Jove! that sounds interesting," said Figgins, "what is it—a boxing-match?"

"Yes, rather."

"Better come," said Tom Merry.

Figgins reflected.

"It's the boxing-match, or meeting the new master," he said, "after all, we're not bound to meet the new master. Besides, we may be in time, as you say. What do you say about it, Kerr?"

"Toss up!"

"Good wheeze."

Figgins tossed up a penny.

"Heads the new master, tails the boxing-match," he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tails, bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, looking at the coin in Figgins's broad palm.

"Then it's the boxing-match."

And the School House and New House juniors started down the road together towards Rylcombe, on the best of terms and in the best of spirits.

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CHAPTER 2.

Straight From the Shoulder.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY lagged a little behind the others. He was flicking dust from his trousers with a cambrie pocket-handkerchief, and gently smoothing out the wrinkles in his waistcoat, and finally polishing his silk hat, of which the nap had been a little disturbed during his abrupt transit from the School House to the gates of St. Jim's. The other fellows tramped on steadily. They wanted to get to Rylcombe in time.

Tom Merry and Co. all boxed, more or less, and they naturally took an interest in a boxing-match. Anything brutal or cruel would not have appealed to them in the least, and they would certainly not have appeared at a prize-fight. But a contest with gloves, under rules, was a different matter, and there was no harm in it that the juniors could see, so long as the brutal element was not allowed to enter. And there were many tips to be picked up from watching professional boxers. And Tom Merry and Co., like all boys, wished to improve their own powers in that line.

And the contest they were now going to see was a specially interesting one; for it was a local man pitted against a stranger from London. The gentleman known as the "Chicken," was a native of Rylcombe, and celebrated in the neighbourhood for boxing displays at fairs and entertainments of a like nature—famous for half a mile or more, as Monty Lowther put it. His opponent was a man from London, unknown in Rylcombe, and naturally everybody wanted to see the Rylcombe man win.

Only it was, for the juniors of St. Jim's, somewhat risky. After a discussion, they had settled that there was no harm in going, and they had decided to go.

But would the masters and prefects of St. Jim's take the same view? That was a question the juniors were very doubtful about answering.

There was no harm in the thing. That was settled! At the same time, it was a thing it was wiser to keep one's own counsel about. As Monty Lowther remarked, it was one of the occasions that called for a nice combination of the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

Hence, the juniors had said nothing outside their own circle. But to make all sure, Tom Merry intended to tell Kildare about it after the return to St. Jim's, and ask him if it was all right.

Meanwhile, the juniors tramped on in high spirits.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy maintained a scornful silence for some time, even after he had finished repairing the little damages to his attire. He was waiting to be questioned about the brilliant suggestion he had been going to make.

But the juniors had apparently forgotten all about it. They talked as they walked, about the glove contest, about Mr. Harrison the new master of the Fourth; about the cricket, about everything and anything excepting D'Arcy's offered suggestion. And at last the swell of St. Jim's came to the subject himself.

"I was goin' to suggest—" he remarked.

"About the Greyfriars match," said Tom Merry. "I think that will be all right. I know they are in good form—"

"I was goin'—"

"I hear that they've got a new captain now, and I don't know if he will shape like Wharton," said Tom Merry. "We shall see."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo, Gussy! Were you speaking?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, leave off, then. About the Greyfriars match—"

"I was goin' to make a suggestion, concernin' this glove-fight."

"Oh, dear! Go ahead, and get it over."

"That is hardly a flattewin' way to allude to my suggestions, Tom Mewwy. I have already wemarked that it is fighthfully wisky—"

"Well, put on a new record, then," said Blake aggressively.

"Weally, Blake—"

"About the Greyfriars match—" said Tom Merry.

"I was goin' to suggest that undah the circs., as the mattah is so fighthfully wisky, that it would be a good ideah to go in disguise."

"Is what?"

"Disguise, deah boy."

"My hat!"

"Better go in a cab!" said Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah—if it's not askin' too much! I think it would be a wippin' ideah to drowp into the costumier's and get a disguise, so that when we appeah in the audience we shouldn't be wecognised."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause watevah for wibald laughtah, I wathah think that with a false moustache each—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And grey beards," suggested Lowther, with the gravity of a judge.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, gwey beards would hardly go with Eton jackets, I think," D'Arcy said thoughtfully.

Lowther shrieked.

"Oh, you wottah, you were wottin', I suppose," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah!"

"We might black our faces and go as niggers," Manners suggested.

"Or Gussy might get himself up in some awfully cute disguise, and go as a human being," Monty Lowther remarked.

"You feahful ass—"

Tom Merry roared.

"Oh, come on!" he exclaimed. "Upon the whole, we'll go in our proper persons. There's no time for any Sexton Blake bizney, anyway, and I really don't think there would be much success in putting on false beards and moustaches."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard it as a wippin' suggestion—"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Here we are in Rylcombe—"

Arthur Augustus sniffed as they walked into the old High Street of Rylcombe. He regarded the idea of going to the boxing-tent in disguise as a really brilliant one. But he was only too accustomed to having his really brilliant ideas sat upon by his comrades.

"Which way now?" Herries asked.

"The tent's behind Harris's barn."

"When does it begin?"

"At half-past six."

"Then we have lots of time," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally think we might dwop into Bagshot's and get the disguises, you know."

"More rats!"

"Hallo! We're not the only Saints going to the show," said Jack Blake, as they turned into the lane leading to Harris's barn.

"Levison and Mellish," said Tom Merry.

Two St. Jim's caps had come into view in the lane. Levison and Mellish, the cads of the Fourth, were evidently making for the same destination. They glanced round and caught sight of Tom Merry & Co., and slackened pace for them to come up.

"Going to see the fight?" asked Levison.

"Yes," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Got any money on it?"

"Eh?"

"I've got a half-crown on the Chicken," said Levison coolly.

"If the stranger is beaten, I get five bob."

Tom Merry coloured.

"So you're making your dirty bets on the match, are you?" he asked.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I haven't come here for the fun of walking two miles in this blessed hot weather," he replied.

"No good talkin' to the wottah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "He will nevah undahstand what sport weally is. As a mattah of fact, now that Levison and Mellish are goin', I'm beginnin' to have doubts whethah it is a pwopah place for us."

"H'm!"

Levison sneered.

"Stay out, if you like," he said. "Go back and sing hymns in the Form-room; that's about your mark. Lot of good watching a glove-fight, if you don't have some tin on the result. What do you think, Melly?"

"What-ho!" grinned Mellish.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "If we mentioned all that to a prefect, you would get a good hauling over the coals, and you know it."

"Are you going to sneak?"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"You know I'm not, Levison, but it would serve you right if I did."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison gave another irritating shrug of the shoulders.

"Come to that, you're breaking a good many of the rules yourselves," he said. "You know jolly well you've not got permission to see the boxing-match, and you'll have to stay out till after call-over, if you see it through. You're not quite such plaster saints as you make yourselves out to be, you know."

"You uttah wottah!"

"I don't make myself out to be a saint, and I dare say I bust as many rules as the next fellow," said Tom Merry quietly. "But I don't bet, and you know it."

"How do I know it?" sneered Levison. "You say so."

"Then you mean that I may be telling lies?"

"You may, for all I know."

Biff!

Tom Merry's fist came out straight from the shoulder, and Levison, of the Fourth, sat down in the dust.

"Oh!" he roared, rubbing his nose. "Ow! Yah!"

"Bai Jove! Serve the wottah wight! Let that instwuct you not to doubt a gentleman's word, you uttah boundah!"

"Ow!"

Tom Merry pushed back his cuffs.

"If you want any more, you can get up and have it," he said.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther. "I'd just as soon see this as the fight in the tent, by Jove! Go it, Levison!"

"Ow!"

"Buck up, my son!"

Levison did not buck up. He picked himself up, and mopped his nose with his handkerchief, but did not put up his hands. Tom Merry waited for him a few moments, and then swung on.

The Shell fellow's brow was clouded and moody.

"I'm blessed if I like going in!" he exclaimed. "If it's a thing to the taste of those outsiders, the less we have to do with it the better."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"But we've come a long way to see it," said Kerr.

"I've got some sandwiches to eat, too, and we can eat them in the tent, where it's cool," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"Oh, blow the sandwiches!"

"They're best ham, and—"

"Br-r-r!"

"Perhaps we'd better go in for a bit, and we can come out early if we don't like it, and go and meet the new master," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! That's a pwetty good ideash for you, Figgay."

And the juniors walked on to the tent.

CHAPTER 3.

The Boxers!

THE tent was already pretty well filled, and the juniors did not get near the front. The contest was simply a glove-contest, with nothing in the shape of prizes depending upon it—at all events, so far as was known. It was supposed to be an exhibition of pugilistic skill pure and simple.

Tom Merry glanced round the tent.

There were all sorts and conditions of people present; and among them he saw several St. Jim's fellows, who had evidently come in spite of terror of prefects.

Levison and Mellish were there, and in the distance Tom Merry recognised Knox, the prefect, and Sefton, of the Sixth, a New House fellow.

"Two Sixth-Formers here," murmured Tom Merry. "Well, if we're busting the rules, we're busting them in good company."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"One of them a School House prefect, too," said Kerr. "Now, you wouldn't find a New House prefect here."

"Rats! Sefton's in the Sixth, anyway."

"Yes, but—"

"Bosh!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bosh, deah boy, Hallo! There comes the showman!"

A fat gentleman in evening-dress, with a diamond gleaming in his shirt-front—a stone that would have been worth about a thousand pounds if it had been real—appeared on the little stage.

He waved a fat and not over-clean hand to the audience.

"Gentlemen—"

"Ear, 'ear!" said the audience.

"Bwavo, deah boy!"

"Gentlemen, you are about to witness a display that may prove historic in the 'istory of British boxin'."

The juniors chuckled.

The glove-contest might be interesting enough to the Rylcombe farmers, and the young men from the shops in the High Street, and to the juniors of St. Jim's. But it was not likely to become historic. It did not seem likely to mark an epoch in the history of the noble art of self-defence.

"The Chicken, gentleman—the Rylcombe Chicken, 'oom; all of you know—"

"Ear, 'ear!"

"Is about to stand up for his native town against a London boxer—an amateur boxer, gentlemen, who prefers to be known under the name of Nemo."

"'Unknoun under that name, I should think," murmured Monty Lowther.

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A Grand, New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT THURSDAY!

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This gentleman, gentlemen, has achieved fame as an amateur boxer," said Mr. Blowe; "and he has the honour of appearin' before you this hevenin' in a contest with the gloves on, without fee or payment, simply for the honour of facin' the Chicken."

"Ear, ear!"

Then there was a fresh burst of cheering as the boxers came into view. The Chicken was easily recognised.

He was a short, thickset, somewhat squat fellow, with enormously-powerful shoulders, and a very long reach. His face bore some resemblance to that of a bulldog, and he had little blue eyes that twinkled under his shaggy brows. But there was a hearty and good-natured look about the boxer, homely as he was, that was very prepossessing.

The other man was taller, but evidently weighed less. He was of athletic build, medium size, and moved with a springy step that told of perfect condition.

"My hat!" Tom Merry muttered, as he glanced at the handsome, clear-cut face of the amateur. "That chap doesn't look much like a boxer!"

"Strong enough," said Manners.

"And quick enough on his feet," Blake remarked.

"Yes, but—he's jolly good-looking, isn't he?"

"Yaas, wathah! I should have taken him for an Oxford chap, from his looks, if I had seen him anywhere else," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"He's keeping his name dark, whoever he is," Monty Lowther observed. "Nemo doesn't mean anything, excepting that he's hiding his name."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It may be some chap having a lark," Figgins remarked.

"I shouldn't wonder."

The two boxers stood in the roped enclosure, in the circle of seats. The fat showman glanced over the tent with an eye of satisfaction. Almost every seat was taken by this time.

"Merry! Merry!"

Tom Merry looked round as his name was called.

Knox, the School House prefect, was standing up farther along the row, and looking at him, and waving his hand.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"Go out of this tent," said Knox.

"I've paid for admission," said Tom Merry innocently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go out at once."

"What for?"

"Because I tell you to. I'm your prefect, and I order you to get out. You've no business here."

"You've no business here yourself, if you come to that," said Tom Merry. "If it isn't a proper place for us, it isn't for you."

Knox turned crimson with anger.

"Will you go out?" he shouted.

"No!"

"Wathah not!"

"Tom Merry—"

"Sit down!" roared the audience.

Knox cast an angry glance round him. Knox was given to swank, and he did not fancy being shouted at by farmers and rough fellows of all sorts and conditions.

"I shall do as I like!" he exclaimed haughtily.

"Sit down!"

"Bah!"

"Thee will sit down," said a big farmer, laying a huge hand on Knox's hat, and crushing him down into his seat by main force. "If thee get oop again, it will be the worse for thee!"

And Knox did not get up again. He cast a furious glance in the direction of the juniors and subsided.

Monty Lowther gave an expressive sniff.

"That means a row when we get back to St. Jim's," he said resignedly.

"I don't think so. Knox can't report us without saying that he was here himself," said Blake, with a grin. "I can't fancy him marching in to Mr. Railton and saying that."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Wathah not!"

"Shut up, there!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cast a glance of astonishment round, as if hardly believing his ears. His astonishment made him "shut up," as requested. The fat showman was talking all the time, and the audience wanted to hear what he was saying.

"They're getting to bizney now," murmured Blake. "My opinion is that the Chicken is going through the mill."

D'Arcy nodded. D'Arcy had a keen eye for the good points of either a man or a horse, and he knew a great deal about boxing.

"Yaas, wathah!" he remarked. "I fancy the Chicken is booked for a high old time, deah boy. Mr. Nemo is a dark horse."

The boxers had the gloves on now, and the referee had his watch in his hand.

"Time!"

CHAPTER 4.

The Fight.

"TIME!"

"Let her flicker!" murmured Blake.

The juniors, and the whole of the audience, looked on with keen interest as the glove-fight began.

The manner of the Rylcombe Chicken was confidence itself. It was evident that he had every expectation of easily beating the gentleman boxer from London, and that he only wanted to drag out the contest a little, by not beating him too quickly. He thought the audience were entitled to have something for their money.

But the progress of the first round was quite sufficient to show the Chicken that he had miscalculated.

His heavy drives did not touch the gentleman boxer at all, and he received several taps which made him consider himself very seriously.

When the call of time came, for the end of the first round, there was a peculiar expression on the face of the Rylcombe Chicken.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy read that expression aright, and he smiled softly.

"The chap has just discovered that he has woke up the wrong passenger, deah boys," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Chicken will put up a good fight, though," said Lowther. "He's good stuff."

"Yaas, wathah! But if I were a bettin' chap, I should lay two guineas to bobs on the London man."

"Time!"

The two boxers faced one another again cautiously.

The Chicken pressed the fighting very hard in the second round, striving to get close to his adversary, to get in some of his heavy body blows. But the man from London carefully avoided any in-fighting. He kept the Chicken at arm's length, and administered a little light punishment in the way of taps on the nose and chest, which somewhat bewildered the Rylcombe man.

The display made by the Chicken so far was poor, and the audience—not all of whom by any means were sportsmen—began to groan at him.

Many of them had laid money on the unfortunate Chicken, and they saw their sovereigns in danger. Betting, the bane and blight of boxing, as of racing, and football, and every other sport, wielded its malign influence here.

"Go it, Chicken!"

"Don't give the fight away."

"He's sold out, that's what it is!"

The Chicken, as he sat on the knees of his second after the round, cast a glance of sullen anger at the murmurers, but he said nothing.

He was doing his best, and he could not do more, and it was cruelly unjust to find fault with him.

But men whose money was at stake were not inclined to be just. They wanted the Chicken to win, and a great many of them would have cheerfully winked at any foul play, so long as they could have secured their miserable bets.

"Time!"

The Chicken was looking savage and determined as he faced Nemo for the third round. He was in a sullen temper, and that was not the temper in which to win a boxing contest. The gentleman boxer simply walked round him in the third round, and drove him up and down.

The audience groaned and cheered.

"Go it, Chicken!"

"Paste 'im!"

"Pile in!"

"Don't chuck it!"

As if spurred on by the groans, the Chicken made a sudden effort. He pressed the gentleman boxer hard, and drove him back, and managed to get home with his right full on Nemo's chin.

The gentleman boxer staggered back, and as he did so, quick as lightning the Chicken's left came up, in a terrific upper-cut, and Nemo went with a crash to the floor.

There was a roar

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Chicken!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "That must have been a fearful shock! If the chap stands up atah that, he must be made of iron, deah boys!"

"I should say so."

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"Thee will sit down," said a big farmer, crushing Knox down into his seat by main force. "If thee get oop again, it will be the worse for thee!" (See page 4.)

The timekeeper was counting.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

If the gentleman boxer did not rise before ten was counted the fight belonged to the Chicken; and the Rylcombe man was waiting with eyes as watchful as a tiger's, ready for him to rise.

"Six, seven, eight—"

Biff, biff!

With a feeble and yet determined guard, Nemo fought off the Rylcombe boxer, who was attacking him hard and fast.

Right back to the ropes he went, under a terrific shower of blows, yet managing to keep his feet till time was called.

"Time!"

It came only in the nick, to save the gentleman boxer; he was almost done. He sank upon the knee of his second with a gasp that was heard by all the audience.

The Chicken grinned at the crowd.

He was on the best of terms with them now; the third round had quite restored him to favour.

They cheered him till the tent rang with it.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Bravo, Chicken!"

"Ripping!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But it won't happen a second time, deah boys. If our fwiend Nemo gets ovah those feahful whacks, he will make wings wound the Chicken yet."

"He looks pretty well done in," said Manners.

"Oh, he's all wight! He's got the wind, and the Chicken

has got bellows to mend alweady!" said the swell of St. Jim's sagely.

"I say—" began Fatty Wynn.

"What do you think, Wynn, deah boy?"

"I think—"

"You agwee with me?"

"Yes, but I think—"

"My deah chap, you can take my word for it," said Arthur Augustus. "I assuah you I know a chap's fightin' form when I look at him."

"I was thinking—"

"You follow my lead," said D'Arcy; "you can wely on me!"

"I was thinking that it was time—"

"No; the weferee hasn't called 'Time!' yet!"

"—that it was time we had some sandwiches!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm getting jolly peckish!" said Fatty Wynn. "I always get extra hungry in this June weather, somehow."

"Ass!"

"You needn't have any, but I'm going to! No good getting ill for want of grub!" said the fat Fourth-Former. "You can't enjoy a good show, either, unless you lay a firm foundation first."

"Wats!"

"Munch, munch, munch! That was the only reply of Fatty Wynn. His jaws were too busy for words just then."

"Time!"

The fourth round started. The gentleman boxer was still in a very bad state, and he confined himself strictly to defence all through the round. The Chicken pressed him

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hard, but he could make little impression upon the steady guard. Nemo's intention was to gain time, and he succeeded.

The fifth round was on the same lines, with some slight advantage to the man from London.

When the sixth round was commenced, the interest of the audience was at boiling-point. It was felt generally that a great deal depended on this round; it was the crucial point of the fight.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, who had his monocle stuck fast in his eye, and never moved his gaze from the boxers for a moment. "Bai Jove! Watch that chap!"

The "chap" was worth watching. The gentleman boxer was throwing all he knew into that round. He allowed the Chicken to get close, which the Chicken had been aiming at all the time. But it was only in order to foil him, and punish him severely. The Chicken staggered back from a heavy blow, and the stranger's left and right came upon his face with stunning force, and he had no chance to counter.

Crash!

The Chicken was down—for the first time, but not for the last.

The call of "Time!" saved him from defeat, and he moved off drunkenly to have his blazing face sponged.

The audience were silent now.

Even the most unsportsmanlike of them realised that the Chicken had been fighting his hardest, and that he was standing his punishment like a man.

The seventh round was all Nemo's. He knocked the Chicken round the ring, and the round finished with the Rylcombe man again on his back.

But the Chicken would not admit defeat. He stood up for another round, and it was the least eventful of all. But the explanation was easy.

The man from London was sparing him.

He guarded himself, but he would not hit the Chicken, except with light taps that did not hurt him.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "He's a decent chap! I'll wagah that his jaw is still achin', and will be for the west of the day, too! But he doesn't want to hurt the Chicken, you see."

"He's very decent."

Crash!

The Chicken had forced the fighting too hard, and the London man had hit out. The Rylcombe boxer was on his back again.

"All ovah, deah boys!"

D'Arcy was right; the fight was finished.

Click!

Some of the audience looked round. Manners slung his camera on his shoulder. He had taken a snap of the scene—the victorious boxer standing erect, the fallen champion at his feet. Manners looked very pleased with himself as he tramped out of the tent with the others.

CHAPTER 5.

He Cometh Not.

TOM MERRY glanced round as they came out; he did not want to meet Knox. He caught sight of the prefect and Sefton in the crowd, and drew his companions away round the tent.

"We'll keep out of Knox's sight," he remarked. "He'll have had time to cool down by the time we get to St. Jim's, and he may realise by then that the least said soonest mended."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better lie low for ten minutes or so," said Fatty Wynn. "No good standing round here, though. I know a comfy place."

"Where's that?"

"The tuckshop in the village."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it is a comfy place, ain't it?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "We can sit down there for a bit, and have some jam-tarts. Mother Murphy's jam-tarts are ripping! I'm hungry, too! I've only had eight sandwiches!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "The tuckshop will do. We'll wait there till it's time to meet Mr. Harrison's train, and if we go back to St. Jim's with the new master, I dare say we shall get in without any questions being asked."

"Good!"

And the juniors adjourned to Mother Murphy's little tuckshop in the old High Street of Rylcombe.

There Fatty Wynn immediately proceeded to indemnify himself for having had nothing to eat during the fight in the tent excepting eight sandwiches.

He began with jam-tarts and continued with cake and

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dough-nuts, and would probably not have concluded at all if he had not been forcibly interrupted at last by Figgins.

"Time we got to the station!" Figgins exclaimed.

"Wait a minute!"

"Oh, come on!"

"I think I ought to have some of the cream puffs. They're jolly good, ain't they, Mrs. Murphy?"

"Very good indeed, Master Wynn. Fresh this afternoon," said the good dame.

"You see, Figgy—"

"Well, you can have one, then."

"Lot of g-g-g-good in one!" spluttered Fatty Wynn, eating the cream puff at the same time. "Gimme six, Mrs. Murphy!"

"Yes, Master Wynn."

"You can keep them, Mrs. Murphy, and put them down to Fatty's account," said Figgins, inserting his fingers in Fatty Wynn's collar, and dragging him towards the door.

"Ow! Yow! Hold on, Figgy!"

"I'm holding on!" grinned Figgins.

"Ow! I mean leggo! I haven't paid yet!"

"Pay up, then!"

"I may as well eat the cream puffs while I'm paying!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins took out his watch.

"I'll give you five seconds," he said.

"Oh, hang it all, Figgy—"

"One second gone!"

"Well, you pay then," gasped Fatty Wynn, bolting the cream puffs. "I haven't time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins laughed, and paid, and Fatty Wynn bolted cream puffs at express speed. But quick as he was, five cream puffs did not go in five seconds. Two were left when Figgins and Kerr seized him by the shoulders and rushed him towards the door.

But Fatty Wynn took a cream puff in either hand, and marched off in triumph with them. He finished them in the street.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "I weally believe that Wynn has the digestion of an ostwich!"

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"Oh, I can eat!" he said. "I've got a healthy appetite! I'm not one of your lanky, long-legged, skinny—"

"Eh?" said Figgins.

"I mean I'm not one of your silly jays with an eye-glass—"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"No; you're more like an old Oxford ox than anything else!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Come on; we shall miss the train, and the master into the bargain!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

And the juniors hurried to the station.

They reached the railway-station, and learned to their satisfaction that the train was not in yet.

Trumble, the porter, accepted a munificent tip of a shilling, and they marched upon the platform to wait for the train.

"Jollay lucky a new mastah comin' to-day!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "We shall be able to walk into the coll. with him, and sniff at the pweffects! They can't ask any beastly questions when we come in with a mastah!"

"Rather not!"

"Here comes the train!"

"Hurray!"

Hats off at once, when we see him, and your best bow and Sunday smile," said Tom Merry. "We must show him what good and dutiful chaps we are—the kind of chaps who wouldn't go to boxing meetings, or anything of that sort!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must tweat him with pwopah wespect, of course," said D'Arcy.

"Look out now!"

The train came steaming in.

It stopped in the station, and several carriage doors opened, and passengers alighted on the platform.

The juniors looked them over carefully, and scanned them, but there was no one among the half-dozen passengers who alighted who could by any possibility be taken for a new master bound for St. Jim's.

There were three farmers from Wayland, and a lad with a basket and a pretty girl and an old lady.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "If he's in that lot, he's come in disguise, that's all."

Herries gave a snort.

"He's missed the train, that's what it is, and we've had all our trouble for nothing!" he exclaimed.

"Careless ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He may have come by an earlier train," Figgins suggested. "I didn't know this was the train for certain; but

I heard what time he was expected at St. Jim's, and I took it for granted—"

"You should nevah take anythin' for gwanted, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with an air of superior wisdom that made Piggins snort.

"Ass!" said Piggins.

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Well, he isn't here, and our little scheme is knocked on the head," said Tom Merry ruefully. "We'll ask Trumble if he's come; Trumble will know."

But Trumble, the porter, could tell them nothing when they inquired. He had not seen anybody alight at Rylcombe Station who looked like a new master for St. Jim's, and he knew for a fact that the station hack had not been engaged to drive to the school.

"Looks as if the blessed duffer isn't coming to-day!" Kerr growled.

"Weally, Kerr, that is hardly a wespectful way of speakin' of a mastah!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I suppose we'd better get back," said Monty Lowther. "No good sticking here. Bless the man; what a bother these masters are!"

"Yaas; I agree with you there!"

"Let's get off; we shall get a wiggling when we get in. But, after all, the show in the tent was worth it."

And the juniors walked back to the school.

The dusk was thickening in the old quad. when they arrived there. Taggles, the school porter, gave them a very significant look as he admitted them.

"You're booked for it, young gentlemen!" he said. "You have got to go and report yourselves to your 'Ouse-master."

"Oh, all serene!" said Tom Merry. "As a matter of fact, Taggy, we've been looking for the new master; we took a fatherly interest in him."

Taggles grinned.

"That won't wash, Master Merry."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"It won't wash."

"Look here, Taggy, if you mean that I'm spinning a yarn, you're in danger of getting your nose knocked a little redder than the gin makes it," said Tom Merry wrathfully. "We've been to the station to meet the new master."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"What are you sniggering at, you image?"

"It's werry peccoliar that you ain't met 'im, then," said Taggles. "That's hall! Ho, ho, ho!"

"He hasn't come."

"Ho, ho, ho! He's come all right!"

"What?" shouted Tom Merry. "Mr. Harrison has come?"

"Yes, he have."

"He's come?"

"He 'ave, Master Merry, and he's been 'ere some time now. You must have been looking the hother way when he came at the station. Ho, ho, ho!"

"He must have come over from Wayland, then," said Blake. "He certainly didn't come to Rylcombe Station."

Taggles grinned with evident disbelief.

The juniors, looking and feeling very much surprised, walked on. They separated to go to their own Houses—there to receive lines for missing calling-over.

CHAPTER 6.

A Startling Surprise.

"I WEGARD this as we-markable!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark.

The chums of the School House, having seen Mr. Railton and received a hundred lines each for missing calling-over, had gone to the common-room. They were all in a very puzzled frame of mind.

Taggles had told them that the master of the Fourth—the substitute who was to take Mr. Lathom's place for some weeks—had arrived.

The school porter had evidently been telling the truth. But how had Mr. Harrison, the new master of the Fourth, arrived at St. Jim's?

He could not have come by way of Rylcombe Station certainly. Coming by railway from London, he would have to change at Wayland. He might have taken a vehicle at Wayland, and finished the journey by road, but that was a most unusual proceeding. It was very curious indeed.

"It is remarkable," said Tom Merry. "I don't see it at all. The chap ought to have come to Rylcombe Station."

"And saved us a hundred lines each," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as wotten of him."

"I wonder if any of the fellows have seen him?" said Manners. "Levison, have you seen the new master yet?"

Levison shook his head.

"I've been in only ten minutes," he replied. "I've got fifty lines."

"Oh, we've all got lines!" said Tom Merry.

"I've lost my half-crown on that blessed Chicken," said Levison savagely. "Rotten fight he put up, didn't he?"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the cad of the Fourth.

"I wegard you as a wank wottah," he said. "Serve you wight for losin' your money! Bettin' is caddish."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Levison—"

Levison put his hands in his pockets and strolled away, whistling. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked after him very expressively. He was in doubt whether to go for Levison or not. But Digby of the Fourth came up at that moment.

"Seen the new master?" he asked.

"No," said Blake. "Have you?"

"Yes."

"What's he like?"

"Looks decent enough—athletic-looking chap," said Digby. "Rather a change after old Lathom. Looks all right."

"How did he get here?" asked Tom Merry.

Digby started.

"Came by train, I suppose," he replied. "How should he get here?"

"We waited for him at Rylcombe Station, and he didn't turn up."

"That's odd," said Digby. "Come to think of it, I don't know what train he would come by. He was too early for the last from Wayland."

"How long has he been here?"

"About half an hour."

"Did he come in a trap of any kind at all?"

"No; he walked in, I remember."

"Bai Jove! Then he must have walked from Wayland."

"Must be a good walker, to take that on for nothing," said Tom Merry. "What about his luggage? I suppose he had some?"

"I believe it was delivered from the railway earlier," said Digby.

"H'm! Well, I suppose he's something in the pedestrian line, and he preferred to send on his traps and walk from Wayland Junction," Tom Merry remarked. "It's rotten, of course; but he couldn't know that anybody was waiting for him in Rylcombe."

"No. It's no good feeling ratty about it."

"Certainly not, deah boys. I wequest you all to tweek the new mastah with pwopah wespect, so long as he plays the game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seen your new Form-master, you kids?" asked Harry Noble of the Shell, coming up, with a peculiar grin on his face.

"No, Kangaroo, not yet."

"I fancy he's had some sort of an accident coming," said Kangaroo. "I saw him as he went into the Head's study."

"An accident?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That might account for his not turning up at Rylcombe Station. But Trumble would have told us if there had been any accident on the line."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, he looked as if he's been in the wars," said Kangaroo. "He's got a lump on his chin, and a swelling on his nose."

"Phew! That looks like a fight."

"I suppose he hasn't been fighting with the porters or the cabman," grinned the cornstalk. "But it looks jolly like it."

"I'm getting quite keen to see him," said Monty Lowther. "I dare say he will introduce himself to you kids before bed-time."

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a kid, Lowthah."

"Oh, you'll see him!" said Clifton Dane of the Shell. "I hear that he's going to tuck the Fourth in to-night, instead of Kildare."

"I wefuse to have my goin' to bed chawactewised as tuckin' in, you ass!"

"Then I shall be around to see him," said Tom Merry.

"I guess I want to see him, too," remarked Jerrold Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "I saw him when he came in, and—"

"And what?"

"I thought I'd seen him before."

There was an eager circle round Lumley-Lumley at once. The new master, and the peculiar circumstances of his arrival, had aroused general interest.

Lumley-Lumley was wearing a very thoughtful and somewhat puzzled expression. The sight of the new Fourth Form-master had evidently surprised him.

"Where have you seen him?" asked Tom Merry.

Lumley-Lumley did not reply.

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"At another school?" asked Blake.

"Oh, no!"

"Where, then?"

"I guess I hardly like to say," said Lumley-Lumley slowly.

"You fellows know I've been in some places where—well, to put it plainly, where fellows of my age don't usually go."

There was a buzz of deep interest. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been called the Outsider of St. Jim's, and he had merited that title—he had certainly, at one time, been the rankest of rank outsiders. And he had had many experiences that seldom fell to the lot of a lad of fifteen.

Young as he was, Lumley-Lumley had seen many countries and many strange places; and the juniors of the School House knew that he could have told many a wild tale if he had chosen.

"Explain!" said a dozen voices. "Buck up! Where have you seen him?"

"Speak it out, Lumley!"

"Get it off your chest, you know."

"Was it in Paris?"

"Or at Monte Carlo?"

"Or in the Bowery of New York?"

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess not," he said.

"Then where was it?"

"Well, if I'm to tell you—"

"Of course you are!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go ahead, you ass!"

"Can't you see we're on tenterhooks?"

"Buck up!"

Lumley-Lumley's brows wrinkled a little. It was evident that he was very uncertain whether he ought to speak or not.

"Well, it was in the National Sporting Club, in London," he said.

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Nothing in that," said Tom Merry. "Everybody goes there—though a kid of your age might as well keep away."

"I went with my father when he was in London," said Lumley-Lumley.

"And you saw Mr. Harrison among the people there?"

"No; I saw him—"

The Outsider hesitated.

"You just said you saw him there," said Kangaroo.

"Yes; but not among the spectators."

"Where, then?"

"In the ring!"

"What?"

"Boxing," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley—"unless I'm mistaken I may be—in fact, I must be! I guess it's only a resemblance."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors stared at Lumley-Lumley in blank amazement. In the midst of the general silence an athletic figure appeared at the door of the common-room, and a pleasant voice addressed the juniors:

"Bed-time, my lads."

The juniors swung round and looked at the new-comer. Tom Merry uttered a cry of amazement.

It was the new master of the Fourth—and the new master of the Fourth was the man they had seen fight the Rylcombe Chicken!

CHAPTER 7.

The Master of the Fourth.

THERE was no doubt about it.

It was the same man!

The handsome, clear-cut features, the athletic figure, the steady eyes—all were the same! Even the mark on the chin was the same, and the juniors remembered the terrible upper-cut that had caused it. Mr. Harrison's chin must be still aching!

There was a pleasant smile upon Mr. Harrison's face.

It was clear that he did not recognise anybody present, and that he had no idea that any of the juniors had been present in the tent when he was slogging the Rylcombe Chicken.

In the crowded audience, they had been lost among the great throng, and naturally he had not noticed any of them.

But they had seen him clearly in the light, and they knew every line of his face, and they would have recognised him anywhere.

Tom Merry heard a deep hiss of breath from Levison. The cad of the Fourth had recognised "Nemo," too.

Tom Merry's brain was in a whirl.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S."

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The gentleman boxer of the showman's tent, and the new Fourth Form-master at St. Jim's, were one and the same.

It was amazing!

Now it could be understood why Mr. Harrison had not turned up at Rylcombe Station at the time the juniors had expected him.

He had certainly come down to Wayland early in the day, had gone to the boxing match, and after that he had walked to the school.

He had said nothing about the matter, and he did not expect anybody to be aware of it. That he had mentioned it to the Head was incredible. Dr. Holmes was not likely to allow a boxer—professional or amateur—to enter St. Jim's in the capacity of master. It was not to be supposed for a moment.

The juniors stared blankly at him. Those who had been in the boxing-tent knew him at once; to the others, he was simply the new master of the Fourth.

Mr. Harrison seemed a little surprised at the deep interest his arrival excited; but he doubtless attributed it to the fact that he was a new Form-master, and that the fellows were anxious to know what he was like.

He came into the common-room, the pleasant smile still on his handsome face.

"Some of you know me already," he said. "I am the new master of the Fourth Form. I have taken this opportunity of introducing myself. We shall meet in the Form-room to-morrow, and I hope we shall pull together very well."

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

"It's the very man!" murmured Jack Blake.

"I guess I was right, after all," muttered Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "That's the man I saw in the ring at the National Sporting Club."

"It is bedtime, now," said Mr. Harrison, pleasantly.

"The Fourth will kindly go to their dormitory."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

And the Fourth Form went up to bed.

In the dormitory, Jack Blake & Co. stared at one another as they began to undress.

"Bai Jove," Arthur Augustus said, in a low tone—"bai Jove, you know, it's the vewy man!"

"Yes, rather!" said Herries.

"It's amazin', deah boys!"

"Amazing ain't the word for it!" said Jack Blake. "It's simply staggering! But—mum's the word!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not a word to a soul," said Jack Blake. "The chap may be a boxer as well as a schoolmaster, but it's no bizney of ours. It's his own bizney, and we've no right to talk about him. We saw him by chance. Mum's the word. And I know Tom Merry will say the same."

"I quite agree with you, deah boy."

Levison strolled over to them, with a very disagreeable grin on his face. The juniors stopped talking at once.

"Well?" said Levison, in an interrogative sort of way.

"Well?" said Blake.

"What do you think now?"

"Oh, I think it's time we turned in, unless we want to go to bed in the dark."

"I mean about Harrison."

"Harrison!" said Blake, vaguely.

"Yes," said Levison, with a spiteful look. "Don't think you can pass it off that way—you can't. You know you know him."

"Naturally. He's introduced himself to us in the common-room."

"I don't mean that. You recognise him. He's the man who fought the Rylcombe Chicken in the tent."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it."

"Dear me!" said Blake, with a yawn. "Levison knows it, so there's no more to be said about the matter."

Levison snapped his teeth in his spiteful way.

"Do you mean to say that you don't recognise the man?"

he exclaimed.

"I don't mean to say anything."

"Wathah not. It's no bizney of ours, deah boy, nor of yours, either. Bettah attend to your own affairs, you know."

Levison sneered.

"That means that you do recognise him," he said, "Besides, I jolly well know you do. So does Mellish, and he's ready to back me up."

"Back you up!" repeated Blake, in astonishment.

"Yes. Suppose we thought it our duty to acquaint the Head with what we know, Mellish would bear witness."

"You're not going to do that, you cad?"

"I might consider it my duty," said Levison loftily. "It's

jolly certain that the Head knows nothing about it yet. He wouldn't have a master at St. Jim's who'd given a pugilistic exhibition in a boxing-booth, I take it."

The chums were silent. They had agreed among themselves that "mum" was the word; but they had not counted upon Levison and Mellish.

"What do you think about it?" Levison demanded.

"I think you're a worm."

"Thanks. Anything else?"

"Yes. A rotter."

"Not in bed yet!" said a deep and pleasant voice at the door. Mr. Harrison looked in.

Conversation ceased in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, and the juniors tumbled into bed. Mr. Harrison bade the boys a cheery good-night, and put out the lights, and the door closed behind him.

But the chums of the Fourth did not immediately go to sleep. Mr. Harrison, the new master of the Fourth Form, had given them a great deal of food for thought.

What they were going to do, themselves, they knew; but what Levison and Mellish might do they could not know, and they felt that there was something probably very unpleasant in store for Mr. Harrison.

And they already liked their new Form-master. If he was keeping a secret from the Head, no doubt he was to blame. But what they had seen of their new Form-master, the juniors were inclined to like him very much, and they felt concerned about him.

CHAPTER 8

Quite a Failure.

"H!"

It was Figgins, of the Fourth, who uttered that exclamation in the class-room, on the following morning, as the Form-master entered.

"O-oh!" said Figgins.

The New House juniors had not seen the new Form-master overnight. That portion of the Form that belonged to the New House had had to wait till morning for the pleasure of making the acquaintance of their new Form-master. Mr. Harrison boarded in the School House, in Mr. Lathom's old rooms.

Mr. Harrison was, therefore, a surprise to the New House members of the Fourth, when he entered the Form-room the following morning.

Of all the New House fellows, only Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had seen him before; but Figgins & Co. knew him at once.

There was no mistaking the handsome, clear-cut face, the steady eyes, the athletic figure; and the mark on the chin was a sufficient clue, in any case.

Figgins half rose to his feet in his amazement at seeing Nemo, the boxer, walk calmly into the Form-room at St. Jim's, with a master's cap and gown on.

Mr. Harrison looked at him.

Figgins stared back, in blank amazement. Kerr dragged his long-legged chum back into his seat. Kerr had recognised Mr. Harrison instantly, but he had realised in the same instant that it was best to say nothing.

"Good-morning, boys!" said Mr. Harrison pleasantly.

"Good-morning, sir!"

Figgins remained standing, staring at Mr. Harrison, till Kerr dragged him down.

"Don't be an ass, Figgy!" muttered Kerr.

"It's the man!"

"Yes. But shut up!"

"It's Nemo!"

"Yes. Dry up!"

"The boxing chap!"

"Hush!"

"But how came he here, then?" murmured Figgins, who was feeling bewildered. "It must be some jape, I suppose."

"No, it isn't! Shut up!"

Figgins subsided into silence, still very much astonished.

Those of the juniors who knew that Mr. Harrison had figured in a boxing tent as a pugilist, waited, with some keenness, to see how he would shape as a Form-master.

They found that Mr. Harrison's scholastic attainments were fully equal to his pugilistic skill.

He was quite up to his work, and a great deal sharper than old Mr. Lathom had been, and the Fourth Form realised that, under their new master they would have to "buck up."

More than once Mellish was called to account for his habitual slovenliness, and each time Mellish's eyes glittered dangerously.

It seemed to Mellish that, knowing a secret as he did about the Form-master, he ought to be allowed to do as he liked, and that it was like Mr. Harrison's cheek to haul him over the coals.

It was upon the tip of his tongue to say so more than once; but a glance at the firm, steady face of the Form-master was enough to stop him.

Mr. Harrison did not look like a man who could be lightly argued with.

Mellish was the richer by fifty lines when morning classes were dismissed, and he had a warning that he had a caning to look for unless he mended his ways. He came out of the Form-room in a state of simmering fury.

"I'm jolly well not going to stand this, Levison!" he muttered to his companion, as he stood biting his lips angrily in the Form-room passage.

Levison nodded.

"Nor I!" he said. "I was stopped three times in my blessed construing, and I was doing it all right—quite as well as I did for Lathom, anyway!"

"He's a rotter—he says there's going to be no slacking—I know jolly well that I'm not going to fag myself mugging up rotten Latin!"

"Rather not!"

"I'll jolly well tell him so, too!"

"You wouldn't have the nerve!" said Levison coolly. "But look here—come with me, and we'll jaw him together!"

Mellish gritted his teeth.

"I'm game, if you are!" he said.

"Well, I am!"

Levison had seen Mr. Harrison go into his study—Mr. Lathom's old study—and he led the way there. Several juniors watched them go. The Shell had just come out, and the Terrible Three had paused in the passage to speak to Blake and Figgins. Tom Merry watched Levison, with an uneasy expression.

"What's that cad's little game, Blake?" he asked.

Blake shook his head.

"I don't know—unless he's going to tell Harrison we know him!"

"He may get licked."

"I hope he will," said Blake very sincerely.

Levison knocked at Mr. Harrison's door, and opened it without being invited to enter. The Form-master looked round quickly.

He had taken off his cap and gown and his coat, and was in his shirt-sleeves, punching a ball, which was rigged up near the window.

Evidently the new master of the Fourth believed in keeping himself fit. A little exercise of that sort before an open window was very refreshing after the morning's confinement in the class-room.

He looked sharply at Mellish and Levison.

"Well?" he said. "What do you want?"

Mellish was dumb. He had very little nerve, and what little he had deserted him as soon as he found the steady eyes of the new master upon him. Levison was made of sterner stuff, but even he felt his courage waning as the steady glance turned on him. He felt somehow very small and mean.

"We want to speak to you, sir," said Levison.

"Very well; you may do so."

"Mellish has got fifty lines, sir—"

"Well?"

"And I've got twenty-five—"

"Yes?"

"We don't want to do them, sir."

Mr. Harrison stared at them blankly.

"I dare say that is very probable," he exclaimed. "I have never yet heard of schoolboys who did want to do their lines. I did not expect you to be enthusiastic on the subject. You may go. I shall expect the lines after tea."

"If you please, sir—"

"Well?"

"We're not going to do the lines, sir."

Mr. Harrison started.

"What?" he thundered.

"I—I mean we—we sha'n't!" stammered Levison.

Mr. Harrison looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then picked up a cane from the table. Mellish sidled towards the door.

"Stop!" said Mr. Harrison.

Mellish paused.

"Your name is Levison, I think?" said Mr. Harrison, looking at the cad of the Fourth.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Hold your hand out, Levison. I cannot imagine how you come to think that you may address a Form-master in this manner, but I think I shall very soon eradicate your insolence."

"I—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Levison put his hands behind him.

"Boy! Are you insane?" exclaimed Mr. Harrison.

"I'm not going to be caned."

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"And I won't, either!" said Mellish, with shivering defiance.

Mr. Harrison made a step forward and grasped Levison's collar with his left hand. The cad of the Fourth struggled, but he was like a baby in that athletic grip.

"Oh!" he roared. "Leggo! Look here, I know who you are—I know—Oh—oh—oh!"

Lash—lash—lash!

The cane rose and fell rapidly. Levison had refused to take it across his hand, but he took it all the same, and it hurt more. He roared and struggled in the grip of the new Form-master.

"Ow! Yow! Ow!"

Mellish stood looking on with trembling lips. He felt that his turn was coming, and he had no word to say.

What, after all, availed his knowledge of the Form-master's secret now? He might tell the Head, but there was the caning for him all the same. And Mellish's flesh was creeping in anticipation of the caning.

Half a dozen severe lashes round Levison's body reduced him to a state of shrieks. All his defiance was gone now. Mr. Harrison released him.

"Will you hold out your hand now?" he asked.

"Ye-es!" stammered Levison.

"Very well; it is sufficient for you to be obedient. I shall not cane you again," said the master of the Fourth. "Leave my study."

And Levison went without a word. Mr. Harrison turned to Mellish, who was shaking in his shoes.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" stammered Mellish, through his dry lips. "I—I'm sorry! It was all Levison's fault. He made me come here, and—and—"

Mr. Harrison laid down the cane and pointed to the door.

"You may go," he said. "Do not let this insolence be repeated, that is all."

"Th-thank you, sir!"

And Mellish followed Levison. Mr. Harrison, left alone in his study, went on punching the ball serenely.

CHAPTER 9.

The Footpads.

"LOOK out!"

"Bai Jove!"

It was growing dusk in the lanes, and the big trees in the wood cast deep shadows over the dusty road. Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were coming down the lane towards the school. It was Blake who uttered the exclamation of warning.

From the shadow of the wood that bordered Rylcombe Lane two men had suddenly appeared.

They were both powerful fellows, roughly dressed, one with a fur cap and the other with a battered bowler hat on the back of his head. That they were tramps, who might become footpads whenever opportunity coincided with necessity, was evident at a glance. And the way they stood in the lane made the two juniors naturally uneasy.

The two men had jumped out into the road, and now they stood there, watching the juniors. Blake and D'Arcy pained.

It was only too clear that the roughs were waiting for them to come up, and their intentions after that could be guessed.

"It means trouble, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The man in the fur cap grinned at the other one, and they moved a little further out into the road. The St. Jim's juniors could not pass them without being stopped if the roughs chose to stop them. Blake had heard of several robberies in the neighbourhood of late, attributed to a gang of tramps who had made the vicinity their headquarters, and he had no doubt that he had now fallen in with a couple of members of the gang.

"No good stopping here, Gussy."

"Wathah not!"

"Do you think you could tackle one of them?"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the roughs. They were powerful fellows, and even Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, would have found it far from easy to deal with one of them.

"Bai Jove, Blake, it will be a big ordah, you know," said D'Arcy. "I wathah think I sha'll get the worst of it. It's vewy fortunate that I haven't my gold tickah with me. Luckily, it's gone to be mended, and I have bowwowed Dig's watch."

"Nice for Dig!"

"Yaas, it's wathah wotten for Dig, but mattahs might be

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worse. I might have my own watch with me. I feah we are goin' to be wobbled."

"Let's get back to Wayland," said Blake. "We can dodge those villains."

"Yaas, but— Look!"

Behind the juniors, cutting them off from the village, two other rough-looking fellows had stepped out into the road.

Blake changed colour a little.

There was no doubt that the gang of footpads were out for robbery that evening, and that they had chosen the Rylcombe road as the scene of their operations.

Blake set his teeth.

"We'll try to get past, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, then!"

The two juniors dashed on towards the school.

The roughs in their path exchanged a grin, and stood in the middle of the road to stop them. With a thick wood on one side and a ditch on the other, the juniors had no chance of leaving the road.

The man in the fur cap raised his hand.

"Stop!" he said.

"Rats!"

"Wats!"

The juniors dashed on, and in a moment more the two roughs had grappled with them, and brought them to a stop.

"Hold the young fool, Ginger," said the man in the fur cap.

Ginger grinned.

"I've got 'im, Nobbler."

"Keep still, you young idiot!" growled Nobbler, grasping D'Arcy by the collar. "Can't you see you're caught?"

"You uttah wascal—"

"Quiet!"

"I wefuse to be quiet. I wegard you as an uttah wastah, and I insist upon bein' immediately weleased," exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, struggling in vain to remove that iron grasp from his collar.

Blake grunted in the grip of the man Ginger. He was done, and he knew it, and he stopped resisting.

"Chuck it, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "It's no good."

"Weally, Blake—"

"They're too many for us. Chuck it!"

"I decline to be wobbled."

The other two men had now come up. There was a sound of a whistle in the wood, and another and another ruffian came out. There were now six of them round the two juniors, and even D'Arcy realised that it was useless to struggle. He surrendered with dignity.

"Will you kindly remove your hand from my collah?" he said. "I will not wesist furthah, and I do not want you to wumple my jacket. I am afwaid, that you have soiled my collah fwithfully alweady."

Nobbler chuckled.

"I reckon I'll 'old you, though," he said. "What have you got about you?"

"Very little."

"Hand it out—money, watch, and things—quick!"

"I am vewy pleased to say that I have hardly any money," said the swell of St. Jim's. "I certainly have not more than two pounds."

Nobbler grinned. Two pounds in cash was a bigger haul than he had expected to make from a schoolboy.

"Hand it over," he said. "Clear that kid out, Ginger. We don't want to hang up here all night."

"Right-ho, Nobbler!"

D'Arcy unwillingly handed over his money. His purse being a valuable one, Nobbler took possession of that also. Then he reached for the watch and chain, but D'Arcy laid a restraining hand on his wrist.

"Pway don't take my watch," he said. "You see, it isn't weally my watch—it's Dig's. He lent it to me whio mine was gone to be regulated."

"And it over!"

"You see, it's Dig's—"

The fact that the watch was Dig's did not apparently influence Mr. Nobbler in the least. He snatched the watch and chain, and stowed them into his pocket.

"Anything else?" he demanded.

"I have nothin' else, and I wegard you as a beast—"

"Lemme go through your pockets."

Nobbler satisfied himself that there was nothing else, but he jerked D'Arcy's eyeglass away, and put it in his pocket after the watch. The swell of St. Jim's uttered an indignant exclamation.

"You uttah wottah! Give me my monacle."

"It may be worth sumfing," Nobbler remarked, with a grin. "If it doesn't sell, I'll send it back to you, per registered post—I don't think."



The captain of the Remove made a swipe at the ball and missed it. Crash! The middle stump of the wicket went crashing to the ground. "How's that?" yelled Jack Blake. The umpire grinned. "Out!" (An exciting incident in the great cricket match between Greyfriars and St. Jim's, described in the grand, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "Barred by His People," by Frank Richards, in this week's "Magnet Library." Now on sale. Price One Penny.

CHAPTER 10.

Too Doubtful!

And the ruffians chuckled in chorus.
 "Cleaned that whelp out?" asked Nobbler.
 "Yes, pretty clear."
 "What have you got?"
 "Five bob and a watch and a penknife."
 "And you'll get six months, too," said Blake cheerfully.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "I reckon we'll be moving," said Nobbler. He picked D'Arcy's silk hat off, and pitched it to the ground. "Tread on that, Weasel."
 "Bai Jove! My hat!"
 Crunch!
 "You uttah wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.
 "Haw, haw, haw!"
 "I think I've seen you before," said Blake, looking at the man called the Weasel. "You're the rotter who came down here to see Joe Frayne, and get money out of him. I hope I shall meet you again, in the daylight, by yourself."
 "Get away," said Nobbler. "Thank your lucky stars we don't strip you to the skins. Be off with yer."
 "Weally—"
 "Buzz off, I say."
 "Come on, Gussy!"
 "I insist upon tellin' this uttah scoundwel my opinion of him before I go—"
 "Ass!"
 Blake seized Arthur Augustus by the arm, and dragged him away. They left the half-dozen footpads chuckling behind them as they tramped off disconsolately in the dusk.

TAGGLES, the porter, grinned sourly at the juniors as he admitted them. Both of them were looking very flustered, and D'Arcy was hatless.

"You're to go in and report yourselves to the 'Ead," said Taggles. "Them was the horders from Mr. Railton, who is hout. Mr. Railton he says to me, says he, 'I've 'ad enough of these goings-hon of them young rips,' he says."

Blake burst into a chuckle.

"Yes, I think I can imagine Mr. Railton saying that," he remarked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Send them into the 'Ead's study, Taggles," says Mr. Railton, says he," went on the school porter. "They'll get a tanning this time," he says, "and serve them jolly well right," he says, "for hof all the young rips, them two is the worst," he says."

"Taggles, you are an untwuthful wottah," said D'Arcy severely. "I wegard you as a beast, Taggles. It is shockin' to hear you woll out untwuths in this way."

"I says to Mr. Railton, I says—"

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

And leaving Taggles snorting, the two juniors walked on to the School House. Kildare, the captain of the school, met them in the doorway.

"Missed calling-over again," he exclaimed.

"Yes; it really wasn't our fault—"

"It never is," said the St. Jim's captain drily. "Put

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you can explain that to the Head. You are to go to his study at once."

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Buzz off!"

The two juniors went rather disconsolately to the Head's study. Certainly they had a good excuse for being late, having been delayed in the lane by the footpads; but the unfortunate part of the business was, that they seldom were without a good excuse. And good excuses, as Blake dolefully remarked, were apt to pall upon the taste after a long time.

"But we weally couldn't help it this time, could we?" D'Arcy remarked, as they paused outside the Head's door.

"We never can, you know."

"Yaas, wathah; that's wathah unfortunate. But this time—"

"Well, come in, anyway."

Blake knocked.

"Come in," said the deep voice of the Head.

The juniors entered the study. Dr. Holmes glanced at them with a severe look. The good old Doctor was looking somewhat pale and frail. He had recently been away for his health, but he had a strong sense of duty, and he had returned to his work at St. Jim's at the earliest possible moment—perhaps sooner than was judicious. And he was looking somewhat worn and tired.

"You have missed calling over two evenings running," said the Head. "What does this mean, Blake and D'Arcy?"

"We're awfully sorry, sir—"

"We went down to the village to see about the new cricket nets, sir," Blake explained. "We left in good time to get home, and we were stopped in the lane."

"Ah! Another quarrel with the Grammar School boys, I suppose."

"No, sir. We've been robbed."

The Head started.

"Robbed!" he repeated.

"Yes, our money and watches, and—"

"And they twod on my toppah, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I don't mind the money so much, or Dig's watch; but they twod on my toppah out of sheer wantonness, sir, and I think they ought to be sent to p'wison for that."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head. "Tell me all about it, Blake."

Blake explained the circumstances of the robbery in the lane. The Head listened with an anxious brow.

"It is shocking," he exclaimed. "There were several robberies committed last night on the Wayland road, and a man was robbed on the moor, too, this morning. It is clear that there is a dangerous gang of footpads in the neighbourhood. Until the police have been able to deal with them, bounds will have to be very much restricted. Under the circumstances, my boys, I cannot of course blame you for being late. I shall communicate with the police at once, and I hope your property will be recovered. But I am only too thankful that you have not been injured. Could you identify the ruffians again?"

"I think so, sir. One was called the Weasel—the fellow who came here some time ago, sir. I think I should know most of the others."

"Very good. I have no doubt the inspector from Rylcombe will come and see you in the morning. I shall telephone to the station now. Good-night, my lads!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The juniors left the study.

"Bai Jove! we've got off all wight," D'Arcy remarked. "Come to think of it, there was weally nothin' to be afraid of, as we weally weren't to blame."

"Some masters don't stop to ask questions," said Blake sententiously. "The Head is a brick."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He doesn't look any too well, either," said Blake. "Look here, I'm not going to have him worried. You've got to keep on your best behaviour."

"Weally, Blake—"

"There's going to be no more rot, breaking bounds and that sort of thing," said Jack Blake severely. "While the Head is seedy, we must play the game, mind."

"I considah—"

"Oh, so you've come in!" said a very unpleasant voice. It belonged to Knox, the prefect, and he stopped as he met the juniors at the foot of the staircase.

Blake looked at him with a grin. Juniors were supposed to respect the Sixth, especially if they were prefects. But nobody had ever been able to respect Knox. It was really asking too much of anybody.

"Have we come in, Gussy?" asked Blake.

D'Arcy smiled.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy; we've come in!" he said.

"Yes, Knox, we've come in," said Blake.

The prefect gritted his teeth.

"You don't look as if you've been licked," he said.

"We haven't."

"Wathah not!"

"Then you haven't reported yourselves to the Head."

"Yes, we have, my son."

"I don't believe you," said Knox savagely. "I know you couldn't miss call-over twice running without being licked."

"Weally, Knox—"

"Come with me."

The two juniors grinned at one another, as Knox signed to them to follow him to the Head's study. The prefect was of a very suspicious nature; and as he had chosen to doubt their word, the juniors had no intention whatever of explaining matters to him. If he chose to make an ass of himself, it was not their business to stop him.

They marched on solemnly after Knox. The prefect tapped at the door of the Head's study, and was bidden to enter. He walked in, and the juniors followed him. Dr. Holmes looked at the trio in some surprise.

"Blake and D'Arcy have returned, sir," said Knox.

"Yes—I—er—yes," said the Head.

"They have missed calling-over, sir, and as they were ordered to report to you, I have brought them here, sir."

"Dear me," said the Head. "Did you not tell Knox, Blake, that you had already reported yourselves to me?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

The Head looked sharply at Knox.

"Then I fail to see why you should bring them before me a second time, Knox," he said, somewhat tartly.

The prefect turned crimson.

He realised that he had put his foot in it this time; and he gave the juniors a furious look out of the corner of his eye.

"I—I did not believe them, sir," he said.

The Head's brow grew very stern.

"And why did you not believe them, Knox?" he exclaimed sharply.

Knox bit his lip. He would have been glad to say that the juniors were known to be untruthful; but the Head knew very well that they bore excellent characters, and a falsehood like that would only recoil upon Knox.

"They had not been punished, sir," he stammered, at last.

"I had my reasons for not punishing them. Their explanation was quite satisfactory. I am sorry to see, Knox, that you allow yourself to doubt a boy's word lightly. It is the best way to make a liar of a boy. I trust you will be more careful in future."

Knox almost choked. To be lectured like this before the juniors was no more than he deserved; but it was a bitter pill to swallow.

"You may go," said the Head.

"Ye-es, sir."

They left the study. In the passage Knox fixed a furious look upon the chums of the Fourth.

"I will make you smart for this," he said, between his teeth.

Blake wagged a warning finger at him.

"I trust you will be more careful in future, Knox," he said, imitating the severe tones of the Head.

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned D'Arcy.

Knox almost exploded; but he dared not touch the juniors so near to the Head's door. He ground his teeth and tramped away down the passage, reserving his vengeance for a more opportune occasion. And Blake and D'Arcy took very great care not to come too near Knox, of the Sixth, for the rest of that evening.

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CHAPTER 11.

Better Not Inquire.

THE news of the robbery in Rylcombe Lane caused a great deal of excitement at St. Jim's.

The next morning, Blake and Arthur Augustus found themselves centres of interest, and they had to relate their thrilling experiences over and over again.

Arthur Augustus was never tired, as a matter of fact, of describing in tones of burning indignation how his topper had been squelched under the sacrilegious foot of the Weasel. It really seemed as if that would be a topic that would last the swell of St. Jim's for the term of his natural life.

What proper punishment there was for such an outrage it was difficult to say. D'Arcy himself thought that a severe application of the "cat" would suffice. Monty Lowther solemnly suggested something lingering, with boiling oil in it, a suggestion which was received by the juniors with a yell of laughter, and which caused Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to walk off with his nose very high in the air.

There had been more than one outrage of late committed by the gang of footpads who had visited the neighbourhood of Rylcombe, and the local police were very busy looking for them. The Head of St. Jim's was very active in the matter, and a notice was posted up outside the police-station in Rylcombe, offering a reward of twenty pounds for information leading to the arrest of the rufians who had robbed Blake and D'Arcy.

But during the day there was no news of any arrest having been made.

There was one amusing side to the affair, and that was the misadventure of Knox the prefect, in taking the two juniors into the Head's study. The juniors chuckled over that very much. But Knox did not chuckle. He was looking for an opportunity of coming down very heavy upon Blake and Arthur Augustus, and as the two juniors knew it very well, they were careful to give him a wide berth as long as they could.

But the prefect's opportunity came at last.

Mr. Harrison took the Fourth Form that day as usual, and the Fourth Form found themselves getting on very well with their new master.

Mr. Harrison was certainly much keener than Mr. Lathom had been, and he kept the boys much more on the alert, and there was no chance for slackers; but upon the whole he was popular in the Form, excepting with Levison and his set.

Since the complete failure of his first attempt to "buck up" against the Form-master, Levison had lain very low.

He knew something about the Form-master, and he felt that if it were reported to the Head, it would cause trouble for Mr. Harrison.

But he was not sure. It was possible that the Head had been told—it was not likely, but it was possible. And in that case, a report from Levison would only get its author into trouble.

The cad of the Fourth set to work more cautiously. He started by confiding the story of the fight in the showman's tent to several other fellows in the Form, and it was soon all over the Fourth.

Mellish corroborated Levison's statements, but both of them were known to be untruthful, and there was a great deal of scepticism on the subject.

But Levison referred Doubtful Thomases to Blake & Co. During the afternoon, Blake and Herries and Tom Merry and the other fellows who had seen the boxing contest were asked many questions.

Blake's invariable reply to inquirers was: "Find out!" It was not a polite reply, but it had the effect of stopping questioners.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was more courteous, but equally firm. He said that he had nothing to say.

Which only gave confirmation to the statements of Levison. Yet Levison was so fond of playing pranks and "pulling the leg" of anyone who trusted to his word, that the fellows for the most part did not know what to believe.

The story was being whispered about the Form-room that afternoon under Mr. Harrison's eyes, and the new master noticed that a great deal of muttering was going on. He rapped out an order for silence, and the juniors ceased to whisper; the Form-master little dreaming what the subject of the whispering had been.

When the Form was dismissed after last lesson, the Fourth gathered in groups in the passage discussing the matter.

"Faith, and I believe it's only one of Levison's rotten yarns," said Reilly. "We all know him—he'd say anything."

"This is true though," said Levison.

Reilly gave a sniff of contempt.

"Sure I've heard you say that before," he said.

"I was there, too," said Mellish.

"Sure you're a bigger whopper-merchant than Levison is, intirely."

"Blake and D'Arcy and Herries were there, and Figgins & Co., and those Shell rotters," said Levison.

"I'll ask them about it," said Reilly. "We ought to have this out. If our Form-master is a giddy prize-fighter, we ought to know, intirely."

"I don't see that it's our bizney," said Pratt, of the New House.

"Faith, we might pick up some tips in boxing from him," said Reilly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, it's a good idea intirely."

"Hallo! Here's Blake!"

Blake, D'Arcy, Herries and Digby were going out with their bats for practice at the nets. Reilly and his companions rushed up to them in the doorway.

"Hold on, Blake darling!" exclaimed Reilly. "Faith, and we want to ask ye a question."

"Go ahead," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Did you see a glove-fight in Rylcombe yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Was our Form-master one of the boxers?"

"Ask me another."

"Can't ye answer, ye spalpeen?"

"No time for jaw—I'm going out to the cricket."

"Look here!" exclaimed Hancock. "We want to know—"

"Find out, then!"

"I—I—I—"

"Weally, deah boys, you should not be so inquisitive," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, shaking a finger at the excited juniors. "Bettah not inquire, deah boys."

"Rats!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, you know—"

"You were there, Herries!" exclaimed Pratt. "You were there, I know. What have you got to say about it?"

"Mind your own bizney, that's all," said Herries.

"Why, you ass—"

"Oh, let's ask Figgins!" said Reilly. "Figgins knows."

"Good egg!"

And a crowd of eager inquirers rushed off in quest of Figgins & Co. They found them at the tuck-shop. Figgins and Kerr were marching Fatty Wynn out of Dame Taggles' little shop by main force. Fatty Wynn was wanted to bowl, and Fatty Wynn had dodged into the tuckshop to sample the jam-tarts. The fat Fourth-Former was expostulating with great indignation.

"It's an hour to tea, Figgy," he said—"a whole hour, you know, and if I'm going to bowl, it's no good going hungry. You can't play cricket, or anything else, without laying a solid foundation."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Come on!"

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Hallo, Figgins, we were looking for you!" Reilly exclaimed. "Did you chaps see the glove-fight in Rylcombe yesterday?"

"Yes, we did."

"Was Harrison there?"

"Find out."

"Faith, that's what we're thrying to do. Was Harrison there, Kerr?"

"Ask him!"

"Ask your grandmother! I don't want a licking, bedad! Was Harrison there, Wynn?"

"Oh, don't talk to me about Harrison!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I'm hungry. Look here, Figgy—"

The rest of Fatty's expostulation was lost, as Figgins and Kerr rushed off towards the cricket-ground at top speed.

"Blessed if we can get a word out of the rotters!" Reilly exclaimed. "This looks as if there was something in it."

"Let's ask Tom Merry."

"He'll be just as mum as the others, I suppose. But we may as well ask him, intirely."

Tom Merry & Co. were discovered on the cricket-field. Tom Merry was going in to bat, and Manners and Lowther were looking on from the pavilion. Reilly caught Tom Merry by the arm.

"Tommy, darling—"

"Scat!" said Tom Merry. "Leggo!"

"Did ye see Harrison boxing the Chickiee yesterday?"

"Ask him."

"Faith, and I—"

Tom Merry jerked himself away, and went on the pitch. The inquirers surrounded Manners and Lowther.

"Lowther, old man, you went to see—"

"Never," said Monty Lowther.

"Eh?"

"I never went to sea," said Monty Lowther, with perfect solemnity, "unless you're referring to the trip we had to the South Seas."

"You ass! You went to see a glove-fight in Ryl-combe—"

"Did I?"

"Yes. Did you see Harrison there?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No, it isn't!" roared Reilly. "Did you see him?"

"I'll give that one up," answered Lowther.

"You—you ass! Did you see him, or didn't you? Why can't you answer?"

"Because one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron," said Monty Lowther, with a face as solemn and serious as that of an owl.

"What!" roared the excited inquirers.

"Isn't that the right answer?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"You—you fathead!"

"I'll try again!" said the humorist of the Shell. "Because one takes his hat to go, and the other goes to take his hat."

"You chump!" roared Reilly.

"Well, ask me the riddle over again, and I'll think it out."

They turned away from Monty Lowther. As Pratt remarked, there was no getting any sense out of him.

"Look here, Manners—" began Reilly.

"Well, I'm looking."

"Levison says that you were at the glove-fight yesterday, and you took a snapshot of the boxers."

"Go hon!"

"Well, will you tell us if it was Harrison?"

"Well fielded!" shouted Manners, gazing at the cricket.

"Manners, you ass—"

"Play up, Kangy!"

"Will you let us see the negative?" bawled Reilly.

"Nix."

"Look here."

"Well bowled—oh, well bowled!"

The baffled inquirers glared at one another. There was no getting any answer out of the fellows who had been present at the glove-fight, anyway. They were determined to say nothing. Their determination probably meant that Levison's tale was true, and that the new Form-master had really appeared in the ring as a boxer. It might, however, be only a rag on their part.

"I know!" Pratt exclaimed suddenly. "You said Knox was there, Levison?"

"Yes, I saw him," said Levison.

"We'll ask him."

Some of the juniors were dubious. Knox was a prefect, and Knox was a fellow of very uncertain temper. But their curiosity had reached burning point. They crowded off to look for Knox, and they found him in the prefects'-room—an apartment in the School House sacred to the use of Sixth-Formers, who had attained prefects' rank. Knox was conning over a little book, which probably contained records of bets. He looked up very irritably as the juniors came crowding into the room.

"What do you kids want here?" he exclaimed, irritably.

"Get out at once."

"May we speak to you, Knox—"

"No; get out."

"You went to see a glove-fight yesterday—"

"What!" roared Knox.

Reilly backed away a little.

"Faith, and Levison says you went to see—ow—ow—oh!"

Knox ran at the juniors, boxing their ears right and left. Whether he imagined that they had come there to cheek him, or whether it was simply an ebullition of bad temper, cannot be said; nor did the juniors pause to inquire. They bunched out of the prefects'-room with loud yells. Knox was not asked any more questions on the subject.

CHAPTER 12.

Knocks for Knox.

TOM MERRY & Co. came off the cricket-field with glowing faces. The weather was hot, and the cricket was warm work; but they enjoyed it. Dusk was beginning to fall on the old quad, as they trooped back to the School House.

Arthur Augustus had had a remittance that afternoon, and he and Blake stopped at the school shop to take in something additional for tea in the study.

"You Shell chaps had better come to tea," said Blake. "Gussy is going to blue a half-sov. on it—I'm going to see that he does it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Get the kettle boiling, Dig, and we'll be along with the grub in two shakes of a pen-wiper."

"Right you are."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Monty Lowther.

The two juniors stepped in the tuckshop, and Blake cheerfully ordered goods right and left, and Arthur Augustus cheerfully paid for them. Then they started out with bags and parcels under their arms.

"Ware New House!" suddenly exclaimed Blake.

Three or four figures started up in the gloom of the quadrangle.

Blake and D'Arcy ran for the School House.

The New House juniors had come upon them suddenly; and if they had a chance at the provisions, it would be a long farewell to the prospect of a feed in Study No. 6.

The two School House juniors dashed on at top speed. A cake slipped from under D'Arcy's arm and dropped to the ground, but there was no time to stop for it. They ran on up the steps of the School House.

"All serene," panted Blake.

There was a yell behind.

"Follow them in!"

It was Figgins's voice.

"Buck up!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The New House juniors came dashing in. A big Sixth-Former came into the doorway, and Figgins and Co. stopped suddenly. It was Knox the prefect.

"What do you want here?"

The New House juniors did not stop to reply to the question. They melted away into the dusk of the quadrangle.

"Bai jove!" gasped D'Arcy, "that was a narrow shave!"

"Yes, rather!"

Knox stared at them.

"So you must bring your House rows right into the place," he exclaimed. "Can't you keep order even in the House?"

"Weally, Knox—"

"Follow me."

The juniors hesitated. Knox, as a prefect, had the right to order them, and it would hardly do to disobey. They followed the Sixth-Former, unwillingly enough, to his study.

Knox's eyes were gleaming as he entered his room. He was a bully to the backbone, and he had no scruples about taking advantage of his position as a prefect to wreak his dislike upon the juniors.

"Come into the study," he rapped out.

Blake and D'Arcy came in.

"What have you got there?"

"Grub!" said Blake tersely.

"Pwvisions, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Put them on the table."

"Vevy well."

The parcels and bags were placed on the table. Knox took up a cane. The juniors' eyes began to gleam. They

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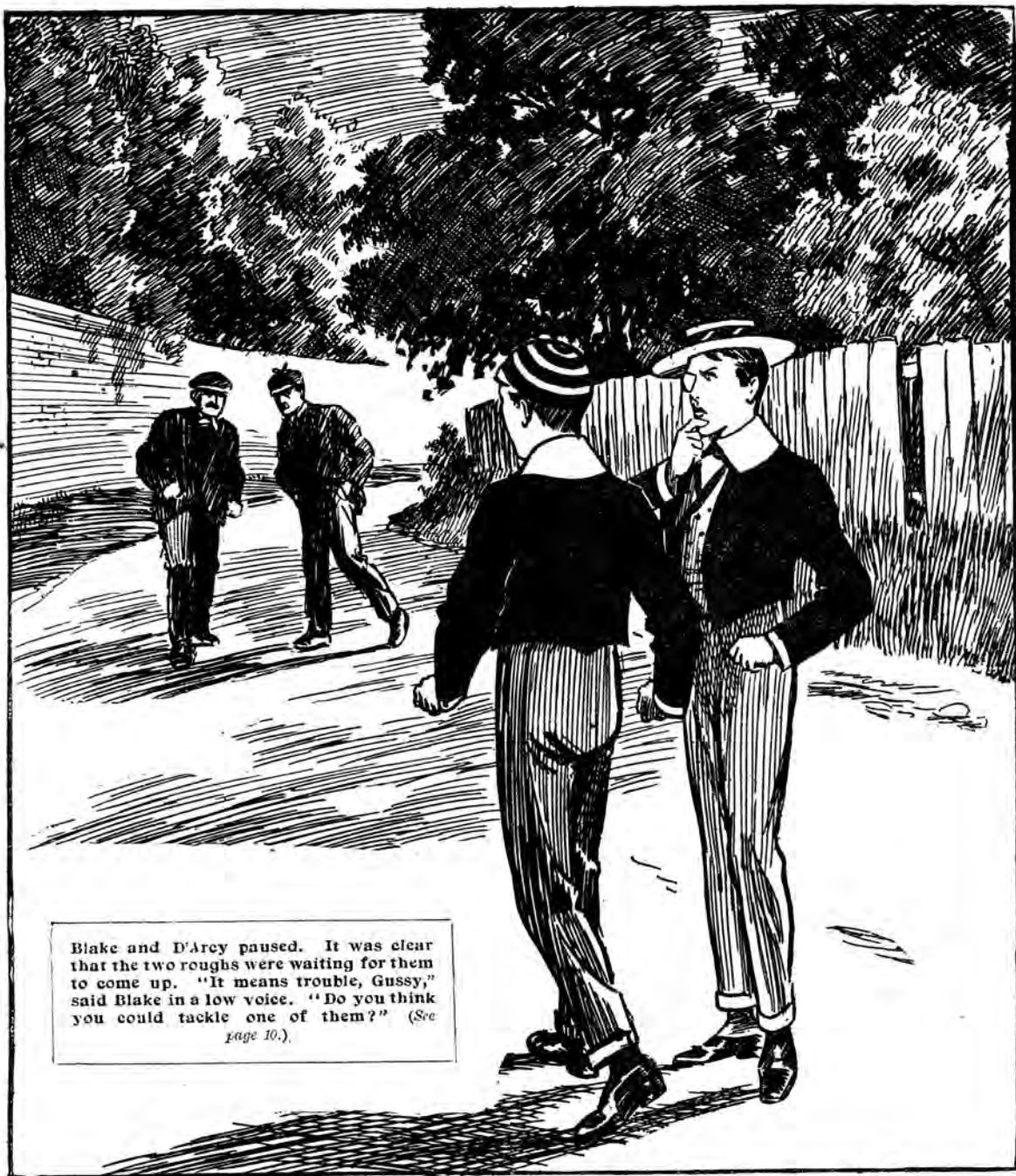
MASTER S. H. PETLEY, 112, Clovelly Road, Southampton.

COLLEGE PRACTISING SCHOOL, PETERBOROUGH.

MASTER J. H. JORDISON, 23, Percival Street, Peterborough.

MASTER J. LOW, Cemetery House, Eastfield Road, Peterborough.

MASTER L. M. LONDON, 42, Monument Street, Peterborough.



Blake and D'Arcy paused. It was clear that the two roughs were waiting for them to come up. "It means trouble, Gussy," said Blake in a low voice. "Do you think you could tackle one of them?" (See page 10.)

knew that they were to be punished, not because they had done any wrong, but because Knox had made a fool of himself in the Head's study the previous evening.

But they were in a difficult position. The prefect had a right to cane juniors for infractions of House rules.

"You must be taught to keep better order here," said Knox, with an unpleasant grin. "You have been told often enough about these rows with the New House. There's altogether too much of it. Now you are bringing the hooliganism right into the House, and it's got to be stopped."

"They didn't come in," said Blake.

"They were going to when I stopped them."

"But it wasn't weally our fault, deah boy," D'Arcy expostulated, "we were comin' in quite peacefully when the boundahs went for us."

"Do you mean that they attacked you unprovoked?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then if you make a complaint against them—"

"Bai Jove!"

"In that case, I will take you over to the New House to identify them, and leave it to Mr. Ratcliff to punish them," said Knox.

Blake's eyes flashed. Nothing would have pleased Knox better than to put the two juniors in the position of sneaking and complaining about their rivals of the New House. Their lives would hardly have been worth living at St. Jim's afterwards.

But they were not to be caught so easily.

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy repeated. "Do you think we are goin' to sneak, you uttah wottah?"

"What!" roared Knox.

"I chawactewised you as a wottah," said D'Arcy fearlessly. "I do not withdwaw the expression. Any chap who tries to induce chaps to sneak is a wottah, and I don't care if you are a pwefect or not."

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"Hold out your hand!" shouted Knox.

"Vewy well; but I wegard you as a wottah all the same." Slash!

It was a cruel blow, and it brought a gasp of pain from Arthur Augustus. The prefect gritted his teeth.

"The other hand!" he exclaimed.

"I wefuse!"

"What!"

"You are a bwute and a beast," said Arthur Augustus. "You know vewy well that if the Head saw this bowwible mark on my hand, he would dwop on you like a load of bwicks. You are a coward and a beast, and I wefuse to be caned by you."

"Same here," said Blake, clenching his fists, and breathing hard through his nose—"same here! If you touch me I'll go for you, prefect or no prefect."

Knox set his teeth, and rushed at the juniors. He was in so great a rage that he seemed hardly to know what he was doing. He lashed at them with the cane, and D'Arcy caught a lash across the cheek, and Blake on the neck. With a yell the two juniors fastened on the prefect, and bore him backwards, with a crash to the floor.

"Let me up!" yelled Knox. "I'll half-kill you! I'll—Ah!"

The door opened.

"What is this?"

It was the voice of Mr. Harrison, the new master of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 13.

Knox Makes Terms!

MR. HARRISON looked in with a stern, set brow. Blake and D'Arcy released the prefect, as if he had become suddenly red-hot, and jumped up. Knox staggered to his feet, dusty, dishevelled, furious.

Mr. Harrison looked from one to another of them.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed angrily.

Knox gasped for breath.

"It means that these—these two young whelps, have attacked me—me, a prefect, in my own study, and—"

"I saw it," said Mr. Harrison. "Have you any explanation to give, Blake and D'Arcy?"

"Weally, sir—"

"Unless you have, you will be flogged," said Mr. Harrison sternly. "Such an outrage as this, I should think, is unheard of at this school."

Blake seized D'Arcy's wrist, and held up his hand for the master to see.

"It's all wight, Blake—"

"Rats! Let him see."

There was a great red mark across D'Arcy's hand, and the skin was swollen. Mr. Harrison looked at it in surprise and alarm. He noted, too, the cut across D'Arcy's cheek, and on Blake's neck.

"What does this mean, Knox?" he exclaimed.

The prefect looked sullen.

"I have caned D'Arcy."

"Do you dare to say that you caned a junior with force enough to make such a mark?" the Form-master exclaimed.

"It was my duty—"

"You brute!" said Mr. Harrison. "And this mark upon the boy's cheek is also attributable to you, I suppose?"

Knox bit his lip.

"They attacked me—"

"Not before you lashed us with the cane, and you know it," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What are you punishing these juniors for?" asked Mr. Harrison, in very quiet and ominous tones.

"A House row," said Knox.

"I saw what just occurred, from my study window," said Mr. Harrison quietly. "If anybody was to blame, it was the other party; but it was only boyish fun in any case, and not worth taking notice of. I am afraid, Knox, that you must have a personal spite against these two boys."

"I—I—"

"Blake and D'Arcy, you may go. As for you, Knox, I shall report your utter brutality to Dr. Holmes, and I trust he will relieve you of your duties as a prefect."

Knox started.

"What! You will report me?"

"Certainly."

"You—you'd better take care, sir," sputtered Knox. "It might be safer for you to do nothing of the sort."

Mr. Harrison stared at him in blank amazement. Blake and D'Arcy exchanged looks of dismay; they knew what was in Knox's mind now. But Mr. Harrison had ordered them to leave the study, and they had to go.

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The door closed behind the two juniors. Then Mr. Harrison spoke.

"What do you mean by that remark, Knox? Are you mad?"

The prefect's lip curled in a sneer.

He was recovering his self-possession now, and the knowledge that he had a powerful weapon in his hands gave him nerve, and a courage he did not usually possess.

"No, I'm not mad," he said. "But you must be, I think, to come and fight in a prize-fight so near the school where you intend to come as a master."

The Form-master started back.

The colour wavered in his face, and a startled look came into his eyes as he fixed them upon the School House prefect.

"Knox!"

The mocking smile grew on the lips of the Sixth-Former.

"I saw you there," he said.

"You saw-me?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the boxing-tent—Mr. Nemo!"

The master of the Fourth was silent for a few moments.

Knox went on:

"I was there! I had some money on the match, and I went there to see it—and I never expected to see Mr. Nemo again; and you can imagine how surprised I was when I recognised our new master as a prize-fighter."

"Silence!"

The prefect continued, unheeding:

"I have said nothing—there were some juniors present, too, and apparently they have said nothing. But I can give you away to the Head any minute I please; and I think I can guess what Dr. Holmes would say if he knew he had admitted a boxer into the school as a Form-master."

Mr. Harrison bit his lip.

"I imagine that it is against the rules here for a prefect to visit boxing shows," he said. "Above all, to make bets on them."

Knox grinned.

"We sometimes do things we are not allowed to do," he said. "Just as in your own case, you see. There are a pair of us."

"You are a rascal," said Mr. Harrison quietly.

The prefect shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see it," he said. "But have it like that if you like."

"You have become acquainted with a matter that ought never to have come to your knowledge, and you propose to make a base use of it."

"Put it how you like. Let me alone, and I'll let you alone," said the prefect. "It's a fair bargain."

"I am bound to report your brutal conduct to the Head."

"Rats!"

"What?" shouted Mr. Harrison.

"You heard what I said. You hold your tongue, and I'll hold mine," said Knox insolently. "If you report me to the Head I'll report you, and that's an end of it."

Mr. Harrison looked at him steadily. Knox was in danger just then of being taken up in the powerful grasp of the fighting schoolmaster and used as a duster to wipe up the study. He realised it, and he made haste to place the table between him and the master of the Fourth.

"Hands off!" he said.

The Form-master smiled contemptuously.

"I shall not touch you," he said. "It would not keep your evil tongue silent, and you are not fit for a decent man to touch, I think."

"Well, is it a bargain?"

"Follow me."

"Follow you—where?"

"To the Head's study," said Mr. Harrison sternly.

The prefect changed colour.

"To the Head's study? You're bluffing—you dare not!"

"Come!"

"But I—I say—"

"Follow me, or I shall take you there with my hand on your collar," said the Fourth Form-master sternly.

He strode out of the study.

Knox followed him, with a pale and anxious face. He could hardly believe that the new master was in earnest.

"He must be bluffing!" Knox repeated again and again to himself.

But the master of the Fourth never swerved from his way; he strode right on to the Head's study, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!"

It was the deep voice of Dr. Holmes.

Knox uttered an exclamation, and caught hold of the sleeve of the master of the Fourth.

"Mr. Harrison, listen to me! I—"

The Form-master shook his hand off and opened the door. He entered the study; and Knox followed him, with pale cheeks and hanging head.

Dr. Holmes looked at them in surprise. From their expressions, he could see at a glance that something of an unusual nature had occurred.

"I have a report to make to you, sir," said Mr. Harrison quietly. "I have caught Knox in the act of treating boys in my Form with utter brutality, and I considered it my duty to report the matter to you, so that you can decide whether Knox is fit to continue to hold the post of prefect."

Knox ground his teeth.

It was all out now, and it was pretty clear that Mr. Harrison meant to face the consequences; threats had had no effect upon him, and it only remained for the prefect to take his revenge.

"I also have something to report, sir," he said. "The man who has come here as Mr. Harrison, as a Master of Arts of Oxford, and a Form-master, was appearing yesterday in a showman's tent near Rylcombe, fighting a ruffian in the ring for a money prize."

Dr. Holmes started to his feet.

"Knox, are you mad?"

The prefect pointed to the Form-master.

"Ask him, sir. He cannot deny it."

"Mr. Harrison—"

Dr. Holmes looked directly at the new master. But the man was silent; his face was pale, and no word came from his lips.

CHAPTER 14.

The Blow Falls.

DR. HOLMES gazed steadily at the master of the Fourth. Mr. Harrison looked pale and distressed. There was a triumphant gleam in Knox's vindictive eyes.

"Mr. Harrison"—the Head's voice was very quiet—"what have you to say?"

"I have something to say, sir. This boy need not remain, I suppose? He has told you all he had to tell you."

The Head made a gesture towards the door.

"You may go, Knox."

"I am willing to prove, sir—" began Knox.

"I will hear you afterwards, if necessary."

"If he denies it—"

"You may go."

"Very well, sir."

Knox quitted the study, and closed the door after him. There was trouble in store for him, that was only too probable. And his denouncement of the Fourth Form-master had not crushed Mr. Harrison as he had hoped. There was a dignity in the bearing of the master of the Fourth that did not look like that of a man who had a shady secret to keep.

Dr. Holmes watched the door close after Knox, and then his gaze returned to the Form-master. There was a troubled wrinkle on his brow.

"I have to go to Rylcombe this evening, to consult with the police about the footpads," he said. "I was about to leave my study. But if you have anything to say to me, Mr. Harrison, I will stay and hear it. As for Knox's accusation, I dismiss it. I hear nothing from the boys against their Form-masters."

"It is true, sir."

Dr. Holmes started.

"What—true?"

"True—or nearly all true. It is not true that I fought for money; but it is true that I took part in a boxing-match in Rylcombe yesterday."

"Good heavens, Mr. Harrison!"

The master's head drooped a little.

"I heard of that boxing-match," said Dr. Holmes. "A local prize-fighter met a man from London—a man of the peculiar name of Nemo—"

"I was Nemo."

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"Good heavens!" said the Head again.

"May I give you my explanation, sir?" said Mr. Harrison quietly.

"Please do."

"I can see that you are shocked and disgusted," said the Form-master. "I am not surprised at it—I hardly expect you to understand. I am Frank Harrison, Master of Arts of Oxford; but I am also Frank Harrison, beggar. I am one of the droves of young men turned out by the Universities, who, unless something is done for them, can do nothing for themselves—I am one of a crowd. Such a position as you have offered me here—that of Form-master in a public school—was my ambition. I was fitted for it in every way,

I believe, but I was unable to attain it. I hoped—and I had some friends who were willing to help me if opportunity came. Meanwhile, it was necessary to live."

Dr. Holmes nodded slowly.

"I understand," he said.

Mr. Harrison went on, in a calm and even voice:

"I taught a little—I had pupils—pupils who paid little or nothing. I instructed in various things, for little or nothing. The uncle from whom I had had expectations had died—and he died a bankrupt. I was at my last sovereign when there came an opportunity to live by my skill as an athlete. I had always been a good boxer; and I found that I could make money by it. A prize-fighter I would never have consented to be; but to give exhibitions of boxing skill and endurance, where men could see, and learn from seeing—that did not seem to me to be degrading. I know the general view is different; but that was my view."

Dr. Holmes nodded again.

"That was the way, then, that I made my daily bread for two years, added to a little teaching of languages and mathematics. Then came my opportunity. One of the governors of St. Jim's remembered me, and when you required a substitute here for the master of the Fourth Form he recommended me, and you accepted my name."

"He knew nothing of—of—"

"The boxing? No!"

"You should have told him."

"Perhaps so. But—but I hoped that this would be a beginning for me and that, having once planted my foot on the ladder, I might rise," said Mr. Harrison. "Perhaps I was wrong."

"You were."

The Form-master bowed his head.

"Be it so. I should doubtless have told you, but—but I intended to tell you, but not till after I had proved to you that I was a faithful and reliable master. If Mr. Latham did not return here, I hoped to retain my place—if he returned I hoped to obtain your interest in getting another position. But—"

"But it is impossible now."

"I fear so. You know what I have been, what I have done. It was unfortunate, but I had the engagement for the Rylcombe show booked weeks ahead, and I could not disappoint the man. But I refused to take any fee or reward—I fought merely to keep my word, as I was bound to do; and I never expected any boy belonging to this school to be present. I do not know this part of the country well, and until almost the last moment I had no idea that St. Jim's was near the village I was booked to appear in. But Knox saw me there—and that is all."

Dr. Holmes was silent.

"I suppose it is useless to say more," said the Form-master slowly. "You do not need telling that at the first opportunity of taking this post I gave up all idea of boxing. That became a thing of the past at once."

The Head had a troubled look.

"I can understand, and I feel for you," he said. "But you cannot think that a man who has boxed with bruisers in public booths is the man to take charge of a Form of boys at this school."

"I hoped so."

"It is impossible."

Mr. Harrison's troubled face turned a shade paler.

"You mean that I must go?" he asked.

"Unquestionably."

"Be it so."

Dr. Holmes rose.

"I am sorry," he said.

"Thank you! I have nothing more to say—excepting that I will leave the school to-night, and shall not return," said Mr. Harrison. "I regret very much not having told you the facts in the first place; but I did not want to miss the one chance of life. You have been very kind to me, sir, and I am sorry to go."

"I hope you will be successful elsewhere," said the Head. "It is impossible for you to remain here. Mind, I believe your character is excellent; but some of the boys, as you say, know already of what you have done, and the whole thing would be too utterly out of place. Parents who came to hear of it would complain; the governors themselves would give trouble. I am sorry, for I had thought that we should pull together very well. As for your salary, that will be paid for—"

The Fourth Form-master made a gesture.

"I shall not accept it," he said. "I will take nothing I have not earned. I am sorry only that I did not explain everything to you at first—but it is too late to think of that now. Good-bye, sir!"

Dr. Holmes held out his hand.

The Fourth Form-master shook it, and left the study.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 177.

A Grand, New, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

There was a shadow on the brow of the headmaster of St. Jim's.

The quiet dignity of the Form-master had impressed him very much, and he was sorry that Mr. Harrison was going. But it would never, never do.

Dr. Holmes left his study a few minutes later; and as he walked down to the village of Rylcombe, the shade was still on his brow. He could not help thinking of the fighting schoolmaster, and of the cruel disappointment his dismissal from St. Jim's meant for him.

But there was no help for it.

The Head strove to dismiss the matter from his mind. Mr. Harrison would be gone by the time Dr. Holmes returned to St. Jim's; his brief stay at the school would be ended. What would he do? Go back to the boxing—change the quiet study at St. Jim's for the noisy boxing-booth—the quiet cloisters for the ring and the roaring crowd?

What else could he do?

And, in spite of himself, the Head was thinking of the handsome Form-master, and of the blighting of his hopes, as he walked down to Rylcombe in the dusk of the evening.

CHAPTER 15.

Good-Bye!

"GOING!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Phew!"

"I'm beastly sorry!"

"But what is he going for?" asked Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head.

"I weally don't know, deah boy," he said. "It's wathah sudden, isn't it? But I saw him in the passage just now, and he said he was goin', and said good-bye to me."

The juniors looked surprised and dismayed. There were seven or eight of them in the group to which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just imparted the news that Mr. Harrison was leaving St. Jim's.

"It's jolly sudden," said Tom Merry. "Anybody know the reason?"

"He was in the Head's study awhile back," said Lumley-Lumley.

Jack Blake whistled softly.

"Oh, it's Knox!"

"Knox! How?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Knox has told the Head about the boxing."

"The cad!"

"The worm!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a nod.

"That's it, deah boys—Knox has given him away. I see it all now."

"It's rotten!"

"I suppose he couldn't stay, after that," Blake remarked.

"It's hard cheese, for I know he was a very decent chap."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's give him a send-off," said Tom Merry. "We can see him off at the gates, you know, and tell him we're sorry he's going. He must be feeling pretty cut up, I should think, if he's got the order of the boot on his second day here."

"True!"

"Quite wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus approvingly—"quite wight! I quite agree with Tom Mewwy's suggestion. In fact, I wegard it as wippin'."

"I'd like to give Knox a bumping, too," said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Serve the rotter jolly well right," said Levison, who had heard all that was said. "He ought to be kicked out. We don't want a blessed professional bruiser for a master in our Form."

"Oh, shut up, Levison!"

"Rats! I—Oh!"

Bump!

Levison landed heavily on the floor, and the juniors walked out of the common-room, leaving him sitting there.

Tom Merry & Co. were really very much concerned.

They had come to like the fighting schoolmaster, and they were sorry that he was leaving St. Jim's; sorrier still, because they knew instinctively that the "sack" must be a serious matter for him.

If a man of his attainments had been driven to public boxing to get a living, it must have been a god-send to him to get a position at St. Jim's; and it was cruelly hard luck to lose it again, after committing no fault; but simply because his previous career told too much against him.

Not that there was anything in his career that was worthy of real blame. It was not that. It was only that in the natural fitness of things, it would not do for him to remain at the school as a master.

The juniors tramped across the dark quadrangle to the gates, there to wait for the master of the Fourth.

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They wanted to make him feel that some of the fellows, at all events, were sorry that he was going, and would miss him.

An athletic figure loomed up in the gloom of the quad.

It was the master of the Fourth. He was carrying a gladstone-bag in his hand; the rest of his luggage was doubtless to be sent after him.

He paused as he saw the juniors clustered at the gate.

"Hallo, my lads!"

"We wanted to speak to you, sir," said Tom Merry, respectfully, taking off his cap. "We hear you are leaving St. Jim's, sir."

"That is correct."

"We are sorry, sir."

"Yaas, wathah; we want to assuah you that we are weally sowwy, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, it's beastly, sir. We were hopin' you would remain for good, sir, if Mr. Lathom wasn't able to come back."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

Mr. Harrison smiled faintly.

"Thank you very much," he said. "It is a comfort to me to know that some of my boys, at all events, have come to like me. I am very sorry to be going."

"It's weally wotten, you know, sir."

"I—I suppose it's about the boxing, sir," said Blake timidly.

Mr. Harrison started.

"The boxing! What do you know about that?"

"We saw it, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, and it was a wippin' fight," said D'Arcy.

"I knew frowm the start that you would knock the Chicken out, sir."

"Indeed! You saw it—somewhat against the rules, I think?"

"I—I'm afraid so, sir. We didn't think there was any harm in it," said Tom Merry. "We should like you to know that we never jawed about it, sir; if it's got out, it wasn't our fault."

"Wathah not!"

"Thank you," said Mr. Harrison quietly. "I did not know that you knew anything about it, my lads; but I thank you for holding your tongues, if you thought it would be of service to me. It was wrong of me in the first place not to explain it to the Head; and you may find a lesson in that—a lesson to be perfectly frank, whatever it may seem to cost you, and even when concealment may seem justifiable."

"You are vewy good, sir. Can we do anything for you?"

"I think not—except to wish me well," said Mr. Harrison, smiling.

"We all do that, sir."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Was it Knox mentioned it to the Head, sir? We know he was there."

"Yes, it was Knox—from a sense of duty, I trust."

"I don't think!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Well, good-bye, my lads!" said Mr. Harrison.

"Good-bye, sir!"

The master of the Fourth shook hands with the juniors in turn, and walked out into the dusky road, and tramped away towards Rylcombe.

The juniors watched the athletic figure till it disappeared into the dusk, and then turned back towards the School House.

"It's wotten hard lines," said D'Arcy.

"Beastly!"

"And all that cad Knox's fault!"

"Unless he did it from a sense of duty," grinned Monty Lowther. "Fancy Knox cultivating a sense of duty at his time of life! Comic, ain't it?"

"I wegard Knox as an awful cad, and I—"

"Hush!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Quiet! There's Knox!"

"Bai Jove!"

The figure of the prefect had swung past a lighted window. He was crossing towards the New House, and in a minute he had disappeared into the gloom.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed with excitement.

"He's going over to visit Sefton, I expect," he muttered.

"Look here, Knox has got Mr. Harrison sacked—"

"Yaas, the wottah!"

"Let's bump him!"

"Phew!"

The suggestion of "bumping" a prefect of the Sixth, made even the reckless juniors of the School House hesitate.

But not for more than a moment.

"I'm on," whispered Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, you kids!"

The juniors ran softly and silently through the gloom towards the New House. The moon was just beginning to peep over the edge of a big black cloud, and there was a

glimmer of light; but not sufficient for the prefect to recognise his assailants.

With a rush Tom Merry & Co. were upon him.

Knox was seized and swept off his feet in the twinkling of an eye, and brought down with a bump upon the hard, cold ground.

Bump!

Bump!

"Ow! Ow! Yow!" roared the prefect.

Not a word did the juniors speak. Only their panting breath could be heard in the gloom as they bumped the cad of the Sixth.

Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Ow!"

Then they left Knox lying and gasping, and dashed off. The dark figures seemed to melt away into the gloom as if they were part of it.

Knox, the prefect, sat up and gasped.

"Ow, ow, ow! Help! Yow! Help! Ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed a voice, as Kildare, of the Sixth, came into view. "Who's that? Knox?"

"Yow! Yes; I've been assaulted. Ow! Bumped!"

Kildare grinned.

"New House chaps, I suppose? Why can't you keep your own side of the quad?"

"Ow! I was coming over here to see Sefton. Yow! I've been bumped over! I——"

"Did you see who did it?"

"Ow! No. How could I see in the dark?" howled Knox. "Yow! But I know who did it. Groo! Those young cads——"

"Oh, rats! If you didn't see who did it, you'd better hold your tongue about it," said Kildare gruffly. "Stop that row!"

And he walked away, leaving Knox saying things which it was as well for him that Kildare did not hear.

CHAPTER 16.

One Man Against Six.

'HERE he is!"

Dr. Holmes started back.

He was walking towards the school, from the village. His business there was over, and Inspector Skeat had held out to him great hopes that the footpads who had robbed the St. Jim's boys would shortly be brought to justice. The Head was thinking of the dismissed master of the Fourth as he walked back to St. Jim's. It occurred to him that if Mr. Harrison walked to the station, he was quite likely to meet him in the lane. The Head did not desire another meeting with the "sacked" Form-master. But all thoughts of Mr. Harrison were driven out of his mind by the sudden rough shout, and the rush of feet that followed it.

Five or six dark figures came into view in the moonlit lane. Where the shadows of the overhanging branches fell it was very dark, but in the middle of the lane the moonlight made a track of silver.

Into the moonlight the dark, rough figures came, and in a moment the Head of St. Jim's realised who they were.

He mentally blamed his own carelessness in walking unprotected through the lonely lane, after what had happened only the previous night to Blake and D'Arcy. But he had been so busy thinking over other matters, that he had not considered the possibility of an attack upon himself.

He put up his cane to defend himself as the shadowy figures closed round him. He caught a glimpse of rough, shaggy, excited, and savage faces.

The looks the roughs cast upon him were evil and mocking. Nobbler was grinning with a kind of demonic glee, and the Weasel and Ginger chuckled aloud.

"It's 'im!" said Nobbler.

"The blessed 'Ead 'imself!"

"Stand back!" said Dr. Holmes.

Nobbler did not move.

"You can't frighten us with big words," he said, sneering. "We know you! You're the man who's offered twenty pound reward for us——us!"

The Head of St. Jim's eyed him steadily.

"I am," he said. "I hope you will soon be in the prison you have earned for yourselves. Now let me pass."

Nobbler chuckled.

"No bloomin' fear!" he said. "We've got you, and we're going to give you a lesson, I reckon."

"Wot!" chorused the others.

"If you want to rob me, I cannot prevent you," said Dr. Holmes. "You will be punished for this, as well as the rest of your crimes."

"It ain't robbing we want now," said Nobbler. "You've set the perlice on us, and offered a reward that makes every blooming peeler of them as watchful as a cat. You've started on us, and now we're goin' to start on you."

"'Ear, 'ear!" said the Weasel.

"We're goin' to bash you," said Nobbler, with cruel satisfaction. "We're goin' to make mince and 'am of you. Wot?"

"Wot!" said Ginger.

"We're goin' to smash you," said Nobbler. "We'll teach you to offer rewards for us. Sock it to 'im!"

And the roughs rushed at the doctor.

The Head of St. Jim's swung his cane round to defend himself, and Nobbler staggered back with a cry as he caught it across the face.

"Help, help!" shouted the doctor.

"Sock it to 'im!" yelled Nobbler.

And the Head of St. Jim's went down under the savage rush of the gang.

A moment more, and he would have been under the feet of the roughs, and the brutes would have been tramping, stamping upon him in revengeful spite.

But the doctor's cry had been heard.

There was a patter of rapid footsteps in the lane, and a man came dashing up, flinging the bag he was carrying into the road as he ran.

Two heavy fists came crashing among the ruffians, and they reeled to right and left, and the new-comer reached the fallen man.

"Dr. Holmes!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"Mr. Harrison!"

There was no time for more.

The roughs had scattered for a moment, but as they realised that they had only one foe to deal with, they closed round again, growling like savage dogs.

"At 'im!" shouted Ginger.

"Sock it to 'im!"

"Pile on 'im!"

Mr. Harrison caught up the Head in his powerful arms, and whirled him to the side of the lane. In this place a park paling made a solid wall behind him, and against that wall the gasping doctor leant exhausted. Before him stood the dismissed master of the Fourth—the fighting schoolmaster—with his hands up. He had flung off his coat in a twinkling, and his eyes gleamed behind his lifted hands as he faced Nobbler and his gang.

"Come on!" he said grimly.

The ruffians closed in on him in a half-circle.

Under the trees the shadows were dark, but they could see one another, more and more clearly as the moonlight penetrated through the branches.

The Fighting Schoolmaster watched the enemy, without a tremor in his face. He had six foes to front, and several of them were bigger men than himself.

But he never faltered for an instant.

"By gum!" said Nobbler, in a husky, savage voice. "By gum! There's only one, and 'e's standin' up to us! By gum! Smash him!"

"Limb 'im!" said Ginger.

"Knife 'im!" said another.

Nobbler chuckled horribly.

"None o' that!" he said. "Get 'im down, and get yer boots on 'im; that's wot 'e wants! By gum, we'll mark him so 'is own mother won't know him—by gum! Go for 'im! Rush 'im, I tell yer!"

"Help!" shouted Dr. Holmes.

Mr. Harrison did not move or speak. His lips were set hard over his set teeth; his eyes gleamed like diamonds. He did not lose a single movement of the enemy, and he was ready for the rush.

The roughs came on like savage dogs upon a stag.

Crash, crash! Bump! Biff!

Six to one, the roughs had not had the slightest doubt that they would be able to rush down the schoolmaster, and get him under their feet, and then work their own savage will upon him.

But they counted their chickens too early.

The Form-master's fists seemed to be here, there, and everywhere at once. They came home, left and right, upon the jaws of Nobbler and Ginger, and the two ruffians went down yelling.

The Weasel fell across them, lifted off his feet by a tremendous upper-cut, and there was a terrific grunt from Nobbler as his comrade crashed across him.

The other three closed fast on the Form-master.

But one of them reeled off with a tremendous drive on the throat, and another dropped as if he had been shot, hit fairly between the eyes.

The last man was clinging to the Form-master, hitting, tearing, scratching, and even biting; but as he was freed from the others, Mr. Harrison grasped him.

In his powerful arms the rough was helpless. He was whirled off his feet, and hurled fairly across the lane, to fall with a thud on the ground on the other side of the road. He did not rise again; he had struck his head upon the ground, and he was stunned.

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S."

A Grand, New, Long, Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The Form-master stood breathing hard, ready and alert. Dr. Holmes leaned back against the palings, panting. He was useless in this savage fight; but it looked as if the Fourth Form-master did not need assistance. The Head could only gasp, and stare at his champion in blank wonder and admiration.

This was the man who had been dismissed because he had followed the profession of a boxer. But if he had not been a splendid boxer, and in the finest form now, it would have gone hard with the Head of St. Jim's.

And Dr. Holmes realised that only too clearly.

"God bless you, Harrison!" he gasped.

The Form-master did not reply. He needed all his breath; he knew that the fight had only started. One of his foes was placed out of the fight—hors de combat—but there were five savage ruffians closing upon him again.

"Get 'im down, and use yer boots!" muttered Nobbler.

And they rushed right at the Fighting Schoolmaster.

Crash, crash!

Nobbler groaned, and fell heavily, and did not move. A heavy fist had crashed between his eyes, and Nobbler's eyes were closed now, and were not likely to open again for a quarter of an hour, at least.

The Weasel started back, and escaped a blow. Three ruffians fastened on the Fighting Schoolmaster like tigers.

Crash!

Down went one of them, groaning with the pain of a fractured jaw; down went a second, swept away by a crashing elbow on his chest.

The Weasel came on again, and the Form-master had two foes still at close quarters, hammering furiously.

His face was black with bruises now—his nose and mouth were streaming red. But he was game to the backbone.

Two foes he could deal with. He drove up their clumsy guard, and planted his blows with terrible force and precision.

The Weasel dropped like a log, half-stunned, groaning; and the other man was whirled off his feet by a fearful upper-cut.

Again, for the moment, the Fighting Schoolmaster stood unattacked.

Three of the footpads staggered to their feet—three of them were past the effort. Three foes now closed upon the powerful man again—the champion boxer who had never put up a fight like this in the ring!

The Form-master did not wait to be attacked. He leaped forward, hitting out savagely, and Ginger fell, and lay groaning, knocked completely out.

Two other men went backing away, guarding feebly, against the powerful attack of the Form-master.

He drove them across the lane, under heavy blows, till one fell and lay covering his face with his arm, and the other ran.

Mr. Harrison came back towards the Head. He was gasping with breathless fatigue, and his head was reeling from the hammering he had had.

But he was keen and alert still. If Nobbler and his gang had returned to the attack, they would have found plenty of grit left in the Fighting Schoolmaster. But they did not return to it—they had had enough.

"Come, sir," said Mr. Harrison quietly. "Let me help you to the school."

"Heaven bless you, Harrison."

"It is nothing, sir."

"It might have been death to me. At my age, and in my state of health, I should hardly have survived the brutality they intended to subject me to," said Dr. Holmes. "I shall not forget this, Mr. Harrison. Pray give me your arm to the school. I have something to say to you there."

The Head leaned heavily upon Mr. Harrison's arm as they moved towards St. Jim's. The Form-master picked up his bag. A quarter of a mile from the scene of the affray, they passed a mounted constable—one of the numerous patrols that had been sent out lately to scour the lanes in search of the footpads.

Mr. Harrison stopped him.

"You will find your men—the men you want—in the lane," he said. "There has been a fight—and all of them cannot have got away. Hurry up."

And the constable rode on fast.

The Head and his companion reached the school. As they entered the house, there was a general buzz, and a gathering of a crowd. The sight of the bruised and bleeding face of the Form-master, and the exhausted condition of the doctor, electrified St. Jim's.

"What has happened, sir?" cried Tom Merry.

"Footpads!" said Mr. Harrison briefly.

And he helped the Head into his study.

Dr. Holmes sank into a chair.

For some minutes he did not speak, and the Form-master stood silent. When the Head found his voice at last, there was a tremor of emotion in it.

"Mr. Harrison!"

"Yes, sir," said the Form-master quietly.

"I dismissed you because you had been a professional boxer; but your boxing, and your wonderful courage, saved me this night—saved my life, perhaps."

"I am only too glad!"

"Harrison! Will you stay at St. Jim's?"

The Form-master shook his head.

"What I did, sir, I did not do with any view to a reward," he said quietly. "I was going. Now you are recovered, I will go."

"If I ask you to stay?"

Mr. Harrison hesitated.

"But the facts remain as they were," he said. "I have been a boxer—a most inappropriate person to be a Form-master here, and—"

"But I ask you to keep your position here. I ask it as a favour."

And Dr. Holmes held out his hand.

Mr. Harrison grasped it. The face of the Fourth Form-master was very bright now; a weight was lifted from his mind.

"If you are sure, sir—"

"I am sure."

"Then I accept your kindness."

Five minutes later the school knew the news—and there were few in St. Jim's who did not join in the hearty cheer that was given for the Fighting Schoolmaster.

THE END.

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AN AMAZING TALE OF MODERN ADVENTURE.



By **ROBERT W. COMRADE.**

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, a manservant, and a lad named Tim.

The latest crime to be added to the Brotherhood's record is the theft of the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London. Kingston, who is determined to recover the jewels, disguises himself as the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir Henry Kenning, and in his place is kidnapped and taken to a lonely house on Putney Heath, whence he is removed to a wherry at Wroxham. There he overpowers his gaoler, and leaves the boat—taking the Crown Jewels with him—for the shore, where he meets Carson Gray, who has a motor in readiness to take them to London.

(Now go on with the story.)

Crawford Brings News.

"The next thing to do," said Kingston, "is to discover how the ransom for the jewels is to be paid, and to stop it being paid, for since we have the treasure in our hands, there will be no necessity to comply with the Brotherhood's demand."

"How will you find out about the ransom?" inquired the detective, as the motor-car swept through a sleeping village. "Crawford, useful as he is, cannot tell you such a thing as that."

"Of course not. But somebody in authority must have received a letter from the Brotherhood demanding the ransom. It is bound to be some very high official, and I shouldn't be surprised to learn it is the Premier. Of course, he would immediately hand it over to Scotland Yard, and it is there that I shall make my inquiries. In all probability the demand purports to come from Sir Henry Kenning."

"I shouldn't wonder," returned Gray. "You will go to the Yard, I suppose, learn what you can, and tell them that you have the Crown Jewels?"

"Exactly. It only remains then to capture the Honourable Percy. As he is paying a visit to the wherry to-morrow night this should prove a simple matter. By the by, how is Sir Henry getting on?"

Carson Gray smiled.

"He can scarcely contain himself," he replied. "I have managed to become acquainted with him—for, of course, since I have removed my disguise he has no idea that I was the man who escorted him from the house at Putney. Every time he sees the papers he becomes white with rage and impotence. But he knows it would spoil everything to speak, so just manages to restrain himself. Mrs. Webster, the worthy landlady, told me yesterday that she is absolutely certain he is wrong in the 'ead! Personally, I think the old gentleman is bearing the strain very well."

"It will soon be over," replied Kingston, gazing at the swiftly passing hedges. "Look here, this seems to be a lonely spot. Suppose you stop and let me enter the tonneau?"

"What for?" replied the other, without thinking.

"What for?" echoed Kingston. "My dear Gray, I have no desire to be instantly arrested as soon as the first policeman catches sight of me. You forget that I am disguised as the Lieutenant of the Tower, and should be recognised in a moment. That episode is over now, however, and I should like to become my own inane self once again!"

Carson Gray slowed up immediately.

"I'd forgotten that for the second," he said. "You'll find the electric light switch just inside the door. There's a mirror at the back, also!"

"Splendid! I shall only be a few minutes!"

The automobile proceeded on its journey, and when, some time later it came to a standstill again, the man who stepped out was Frank Kingston, the dandy. Sir Henry Kenning had entirely disappeared.

From that point the motor whizzed steadily on its journey. Gray was a first-rate driver, and took no notice of speed-limits. Being now early morning hardly a soul was stirring on the quiet country roads, and London was entered soon after three—just as the dawn was breaking. At three-thirty exactly the car drew up in front of the house in Great Portland Street, having completed its journey without the sign of a breakdown.

"We'll take the box in first!" exclaimed Gray, stifling a yawn, and brushing the dust from his coat and cap. "I sha'n't be a minute putting the car in the garage—it's only just round the corner! By Jove, there's a policeman!"

They both laughed at the words, but the constable took no more than casual interest as he saw the two men carry between them up the steps a large travelling trunk. Gray

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had brought the latter for appearance sake; the wooden box fitted into it quite nicely.

"I'll warrant that bobby would be startled if he knew what this contained," laughed Kingston, as the trunk was set down in the detective's sitting-room. "Now, you run round with the car, then we'll both have a little sleep. You can do with it, I should say!"

"An hour or two won't hurt me, anyway!"

Carson Gray disappeared, but in a very short time he was back. The house was quite silent, for everybody was sleeping. By four o'clock Kingston and Gray were in a similar condition, and neither awoke until the clocks were striking nine. Breakfast was served at half-past, and the two men, with hearty appetites, set to.

Several morning papers had been delivered, and both Kingston and Gray were highly amused at the manner in which they confidently stated their opinions with regard to the Crown Jewels. Poor Sir Henry Kenning had by this time become, in the eyes of the public, a scoundrel of the deepest dye.

"It won't take long to alter that," declared Kingston quietly. "As soon as the truth is known—or as much as the papers can get hold of—every journal will apologise for having been so ready to believe in Sir Henry's guilt. Let me see, the Coronation is to take place within the next few days. By Jove, no wonder the papers are doing well out of it. The thing is unprecedented in the whole history of the country. The people will receive another sensation by to-morrow, when they learn that the jewels are recovered, and that Sir Henry is absolutely blameless!"

"How can Sir Henry's innocence be proved?"

"Quite easily. My name of course will not appear in any way, but I shall merely be mentioned as an unknown man who has been assisting the police. Of course, the story of the Putney Heath house will have to come out, my ride to Wroxham, and, in fact, everything. In this way Sir Henry will be cleared, but nobody will be able to connect the affair with any secret society. Claydon will appear to be the sole organiser!"

"I sha'n't be mentioned, of course?"

"For your own sake, no. You remember what happened last time you ran up against the Brotherhood. This time there wouldn't be any mistake, and you would be put to death immediately. No, my dear Gray, your name had better not be mentioned in any way whatever!"

"So the police will get all the credit?" laughed Gray.

"Great Scott, and you will be referred to as an unknown man who assisted Scotland Yard! Assisted! That sounds rather funny to my mind!"

"Well, as you know, it's quite impossible for me to say more. The Brotherhood will draw its own conclusions immediately, and will thereupon set me down as the secret enemy who has been doing so much damage lately, and who they fondly believed to have been killed in the Atlantic."

They both laughed, and Gray lit a cigar.

"Shall I accompany you to the Yard?" he queried.

"Certainly; we'll start right away. These jewels here are safe enough, but both you and I will feel more satisfied when they're clear of our hands. Hallo, unless I'm very much mistaken I can see Crawford approaching!"

"That's not Crawford!" Gray declared.

"You are mistaken, Gray! He is disguised, certainly, but it is nevertheless Crawford. My eyes are sharper than yours, and that gives me a big advantage. You will see that I am right in a moment or two."

Carson Gray did, for the man walked straight up to the door and rang the bell. He was shown straight up by the maid, and entered the detective's consulting-room, which adjoined the apartment in which Kingston and Gray had breakfasted.

"Well, Crawford, what's the news?" inquired Kingston coolly, walking into the consulting-room.

"The gov'nor! By gum, sir, I'm pleased to see you! I thought you was away on the werry in Norfolk. You didn't take long to see who I was, sir!" Crawford added with a grin.

"No, but your disguise is quite good enough. I told you, Gray," as the latter entered the room, "that you were mistaken. The man was Crawford, and, unless I am mistaken, he has some news for us!"

"I have, sir, an' that's a fact!" replied the man, looking from Kingston to Carson Gray. "I received fresh orders this morning, sir, an' although it was jolly 'risky comin' round here now, I thought I'd better let you—or Mr. Gray—know straight off!"

"Good man, Crawford! Now, what's the fresh development?"

"Why this, sir! Claydon's decided not to go to Wroxham to-night, but is to take charge of the gold instead. So if you've made any arrangements for coppin' him at Wroxham it won't come off!"

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Scotland Yard Receives a Surprise:

Kingston sat down in one of the easy chairs.

"Let me understand this clearly," he said. "Where did you learn this, and why has Claydon suddenly changed his plans?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir. But as to me learnin' all about it, that's very easily explained. Mr. Milverton is going to Wroxham in Claydon's place, in a big car, and I have been ordered to go with him. Mr. Milverton saw me himself, sir, an' in the course of conversation said that Claydon was goin' to take charge of the gold this end. I don't know anything about it, sir—worst luck. I mean, I can't tell how it's goin' to be delivered, or how, or when!"

"Never mind about that, Crawford. You have done very well as it is—very well indeed! So you are going to Wroxham, eh? Well, as the Crown Jewels happen to be within five yards of you at the present moment, your mission will not be very fruitless."

Crawford's eyes opened wider with surprise.

"They're here, sir?" he exclaimed. "Love us, I might have guessed it!"

"That's all you know, I suppose?" went on Kingston.

"There's nothing more definite?"

"Nothing whatever, sir," replied the man disconsolately.

"An' I can't see what you're goin' to do, unless you take the Crown Jewels to Scotland Yard an' prevent the gold bein' sent—for I know that much, sir; that the Brotherhood's expectin' a load o' gold to be handed over to 'em."

Kingston thought for a moment.

"I think I see my way clear," he replied. "But if I do as you say, Crawford, how is Claydon to be captured? There are no definite proofs against him, remember, and he therefore cannot be convicted unless caught in the act of receiving the gold."

"But he ain't goin' to be there, sir. I forgot that!" exclaimed Crawford quickly. "When I say he ain't goin' to be there, I mean at the place where the gold's to be delivered. That would be too risky in case of a raid by the police. So he's goin' to be somewhere on the route taken by the motor-van!"

"Motor-van?"

"Yes, sir! From what I can understand the gold's to be fetched away in a big lorry, an' Claydon's to get aboard after it's started. In this way he'll be practically safe. Mind, sir, I can't say as this is all true, 'cos I've only just gathered it here an' there!"

"I shall probably have everything made clear before many hours have passed," replied Kingston. "Now you had better be off, Crawford. I admire your loyalty and courage in coming here when you know it is somewhat risky. Personally, however, I think you are just a little too nervous of discovery. In that disguise you are practically safe. There's a chance I may want to speak to you again, so be at the narrow entrance of Spring Gardens, in Trafalgar Square, at half-past-one exactly. Do you think you can do that?"

"I think so, sir! I don't have to go on duty till five o'clock to-day, an' then only for a few hours, because we start for Wroxham at nine. I'll be there, sir, unless something unexpected stops me!"

"Good! Then be off at once!"

Crawford took his departure, and Kingston and Carson Gray sat for a few moments without speaking. Finally the latter threw his cigar-end into the grate and looked across at Kingston.

"Well?" he said interestedly. "What now?"

"Why, we must pay our visit to Scotland Yard," replied Kingston. "I can't decide anything further until I know more about this gold. But it's quite certain the whole thing will have to go through, for that is the only way in which we can get hold of the Hon. Percy."

"But, my dear chap, you can't do anything to-night! There's no time to make plans, or to—"

Kingston smiled.

"No time to make plans," he repeated. "Why, we have got hours before us. But it's useless discussing the matter while we are in this hazy state. Get your hat on and we'll set out!"

During the ride in the taxi Kingston said hardly a word, but sat back in his seat, thinking hard. Of course the reader, knowing the contents of the Brotherhood's letter to the Prime Minister, will understand everything. The only difference now to the original plan was that Claydon would take charge of the motor-lorry some time after it started its journey from Wimbledon Common.

Arriving at Scotland Yard Carson Gray, who knew his way about there practically as well as he knew his own apartments, led the way straight up to the Criminal Investigation Department to the office of Sir Nigel Kane, the Chief of Scotland Yard. This was the same high official whom

Kingston had, many months before, interviewed on the first day of his acquaintanceship with Carson Gray. Gray had, in fact, introduced him to Sir Nigel, and Kingston, in strict confidence, had related the whole story of the Brotherhood of Iron, of his eight years exilement on the Iron Island, and of his crusade against the Brotherhood. Sir Nigel had thereupon offered him the assistance of the police whenever Kingston required it.

Sir Nigel Kane was in, and he welcomed the two visitors warmly.

"Pleased to see you, Mr. Gray!" he exclaimed heartily. "And, dear me, that is Mr. Frank Kingston, if I am not mistaken. I am delighted to meet you again, sir! I have heard how magnificently you have been continuing your crusade against the infamous Brotherhood of Iron, and I

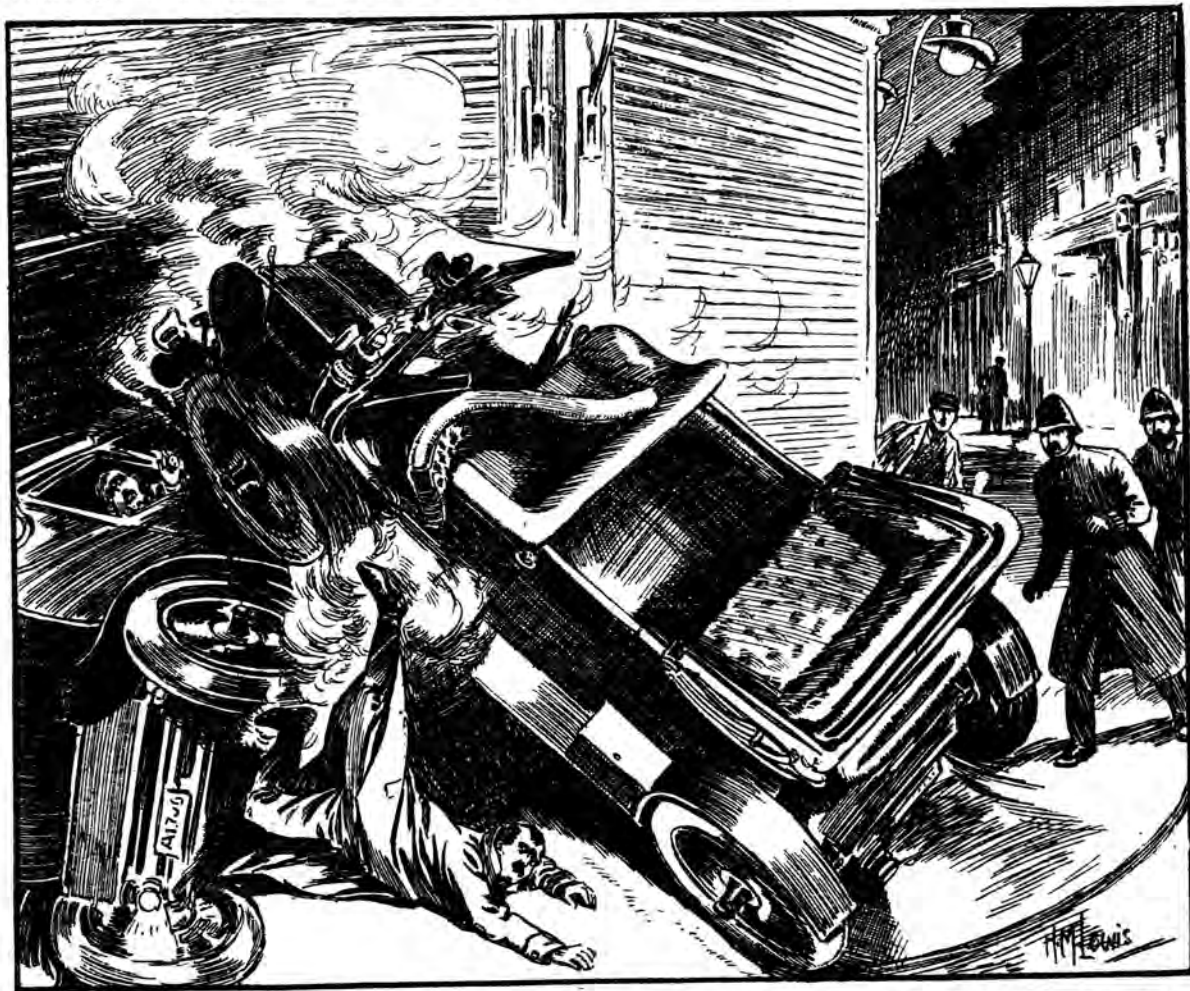
"Ah!"

Kingston murmured the exclamation under his breath, and his expression changed to one of intense satisfaction. His guess had been right. Sir Nigel looked at him in surprise, pulling nervously at his iron-grey moustache at the same time.

"You appear to be pleased, Mr. Kingston," he remarked. "Have you formed any theory with regard to the Regalia case? I am at my wits' end to know what to do, for the Crown Jewels must be in our hands in time for the Coronation. And the time is getting terribly short."

"The jewels will be in your hands, Sir Nigel, by eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

Kingston spoke this sentence in his most languid and drawling tones. Yet they seemed to send an electric



At the precise moment that the taxi-cab containing Frank Kingston and Carson Gray struck the pavement a large touring car came swiftly round the corner and dashed into the side of the taxi with a deafening crash. (See page 28.)

trust this visit does not mean that anything has gone wrong!"

He waved them to chairs, and although he spoke with great heartiness, Kingston could plainly see that he was greatly worried.

"No, Sir Nigel, I am glad to say that nothing has gone wrong. We have come to you, however, in the hopes of gaining some information which we can obtain from no other source. You are worried just at this time, I presume, over this Crown Jewels affair?"

Sir Nigel Kane nodded wearily.

"Yes!" he replied. "The matter has baffled us all round, and neither the police nor the detective force can find the whereabouts of the Crown Jewels or of that scoundrel Sir Henry Kenning. It is inexplicable, for he has disappeared utterly and completely. Yet he is in England—he must be in England—for the Prime Minister received a communication from him only yesterday—"

shock through the atmosphere. There was no mistaking the assurance in his tone. Sir Nigel sprang to his feet.

"You are joking, Mr. Kingston," he cried. "You must be joking!"

"On the contrary, Sir Nigel, I am very serious. I meant every word I said, and it is with regard to the Crown Jewels that I have paid this visit."

Sir Nigel stared incredulously, then a light of understanding dawned in his eyes.

"Good heavens," he exclaimed, "you don't mean to say— You surely don't mean to say that this is another of the—"

"Brotherhood's little transactions?" concluded Kingston blandly. "Precisely! The whole affair was organised, from start to finish, by the Brotherhood of Iron."

"But—but, Sir Henry Kenning? Surely he was not connected with this society?"

"Not in the slightest degree. It may interest you to

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S."

know, Sir Nigel, that Sir Henry Kenning is absolutely innocent. He has had nothing to do with the business in any way whatever."

"But he took the jewels himself," protested the other. "Besides, the letter the Premier received was from the Lieutenant."

"The letter was a forgery. And as to Sir Henry taking the jewels, I can tell you, with perfect confidence, that he was miles away at the time of the actual robbery—miles away, a fast prisoner. The man who was seen to leave the grounds of the Tower was an impostor, a member of the Council disguised to act the part."

Sir Nigel Kane paced up and down the room with short quick strides. He was dumbfounded, and hardly knew what to say in response to this startling piece of news. It had burst upon him like a bomb.

"But how do you know all this, Mr. Kingston? And how can you promise the return of the jewels?"

"I will tell you; but before I do so, may I learn what was contained in the letter addressed to the Premier? You have it here, I presume?"

"Yes."

The Chief of Scotland Yard quickly opened a drawer in his desk and produced the piece of quarto paper which purported to come from Sir Henry Kenning. He handed it across to Kingston, and watched him in silence as he glanced through the contents.

At last he looked up, and with a smile passed the letter over to Carson Gray.

"This makes things a deal clearer, my dear Gray, but it is just what I expected. We have now the reins completely in our hands."

"By Jove, yes," replied Gray after a moment. "This is splendid, Kingston. You can follow the affair right to the end now, and know what you are doing. Sir Nigel, you need not worry any more. I can vouch for the truth of Mr. Kingston's statements."

"I—I—Dear me, I'm becoming quite flustered," stammered Sir Nigel. "You must excuse me, gentlemen, but this sudden shock has startled me above a little. A quarter of an hour ago I was nearly giving way to despair; now you have raised my hopes to the highest pitch. Can it be possible that you know where the Regalia is?"

"It is not only possible, but it is an established fact," replied Kingston quietly. "Both Mr. Gray and myself are aware of the hiding-place of the Crown Jewels—they are, as a matter of fact, at the present moment in Mr. Gray's dining-room at Great Portland Street."

Sir Nigel Kane gasped.

"Good gracious! Can this be true? You amaze me beyond measure."

"I will tell you the whole story, Sir Nigel, and then you will understand more fully," smiled Kingston. "To begin with, the real culprit—the man who impersonated Kenning—is no less a personage than the Hon. Percy Claydon, who is also a member of the Inner Council. Perhaps you have heard of him?"

"Not particularly, Mr. Kingston; but, of course, the name is familiar enough to me. He is the son of Lord Nysdale."

"Exactly. And although apparently a popular enough man in society, he's nevertheless a scoundrel. Kenning was kidnapped the night previous to the robbery, having been sent on a fool's errand by a decoy letter."

Kingston, with no hurry, and in his quiet, even tones, related exactly what had occurred in connection with the Crown Jewels affair. By the time he had finished Sir Nigel had calmed down, and his eyes were gleaming gladly. Just at the moment of failure had come the most unexpected success, and from a quarter that he had never even looked to for help.

"That is the whole story," concluded Kingston. "I have no hesitation in telling it to you, Sir Nigel, because I know that you will treat it with the utmost confidence. For you will, of course, realise that both my name and Mr. Carson Gray's cannot possibly appear in connection with the case. Now, what were your plans? What did you intend doing about this million pounds?"

"Send it as directed, as a last resort, for the jewels must be recovered in time for the Coronation. But it was my intention to set men on the watch to find out where the lorry went, but to show no hostility until the stolen property was in our hands again."

"You would never have done it," declared Kingston quietly. "I hope you will allow me to say so, Sir Nigel, but, smart as the detective force is, they could never have kept to the track of the Brotherhood's lorry. If they had done so, you would never have received the jewels back. They have got simply hundreds of men watching and waiting."

"Well, it makes no difference now, anyhow," replied the

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Chief of Scotland Yard complacently, "for the gold will never have to be sent."

Kingston rose to his feet.

"On the contrary," he replied, "the programme will have to be carried right through to the end—with this exception. You must send the gold, but not a single spy must be put on the watch."

"But they will get away with it, and a million pounds is a vast sum of money. What is your reason for this extraordinary statement, Mr. Kingston?"

"This. That unless the programme is carried out to the letter, we shall lose our man. There is no proof against Claydon, and the only way to convict him is to catch him red-handed."

"And who will be responsible?"

"Myself and Mr. Gray. I can assure you everything will turn out right in the end."

An Adventure in the Garage.

Sir Nigel Kane rose to his feet.

"It will be a big responsibility," he exclaimed. "But there, I forgot for the moment whom I was talking to. I am sure the gold will be safe in your keeping, Mr. Kingston. It is a good thing the arrangements have all been made, for the van is now loaded and simply waiting to be dispatched to Wimbledon Common. You say there are to be no police spies on the watch?"

"Not a single one," replied Frank Kingston. "It would spoil the whole game if you put them on duty. The Brotherhood have men equally as smart as your own, Sir Nigel, and it would not take them long to find out if any detectives were on the scent. No, our policy is to lull them into a sense of false security. Mr. Gray and myself will take charge of the van, catch Claydon red-handed, and straightway bring him and the gold back to Scotland Yard."

"But, my dear sir," protested Sir Nigel, "how can you possibly take charge of the van? Do you know where it is, or where it is coming from?"

"I really haven't the slightest notion," drawled Kingston calmly. "That point, however, is a slight one. You may rest assured that when your van delivers up the gold, it will be placing it into my keeping—and not the Brotherhood's. I take full responsibility."

"Very well, Mr. Kingston, I will take your word."

"Good. It is understood then that the field is to be kept clear—that you are to comply exactly with the demands conveyed in the letter?"

"Yes; I have sufficient confidence in you, Mr. Kingston, to leave the matter entirely in your hands. My interview with you this morning has raised me from despair to the highest pitch of hopefulness. Now that I know that the Crown Jewels are safe, I feel as light-hearted as a boy. The responsibility upon my shoulders, you will understand, was very considerable, and your information has lifted the weight completely off."

"I am pleased to be of service to you, Sir Nigel," replied Kingston. "Come, Gray, the time is getting on for half-past one, so we had better take our departure. We wish you good morning, Sir Nigel."

The two men shook hands with the Chief of Scotland Yard, who now seemed extraordinarily genial in comparison to what he had been on their arrival. A few minutes later Kingston and Carson Gray were walking leisurely along Whitehall. Gray had not said much during the interview, but he had taken in every word, leaving the talking to Kingston. Now, however, he asked several questions.

"Look here," he said. "You speak very confidently about taking charge of the Brotherhood's lorry, but personally I don't see how it's to be done. You don't even know where the thing is. Besides, it will be a hired one, according to that letter."

"Bluff, my dear Gray—purely bluff. Mount-Fannell would never be such a fool as to take that kind of risk. The Brotherhood's arms are longer than you think for, and more than one seemingly respectable firm belongs, in reality, to the Brotherhood of Iron. They do not carry on these businesses expressly for the purpose of making money, but more particularly because they wish to make use of them in their criminal operations—they wish to hide themselves under this coat of false respectability."

"I see what you mean. You will get Crawford to supply you with the information, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"But suppose he does not know? He cannot tell you everything, and this might floor him for once."

"Nonsense; if he goes the right way to work it will be a simple task," replied Kingston easily. "You leave it to me, Gray, and I promise you it will be all right."

They continued their walk until they arrived in Trafalgar

Square. At the narrow entrance of Spring Gardens they found Crawford awaiting their arrival. He looked at Kingston's face somewhat eagerly, but could gain no information from his master's expression.

"It's all right, Crawford. After an interview with the police we have gleaned some very useful information. The Brotherhood's lorry is to be waiting at a certain spot on Wimbledon Common—which I have taken careful note of—at twelve o'clock to-night."

"Love us, sir; what a sauce!" exclaimed Crawford. "But where's she bound for, sir? What are they goin' to do with it?"

"As the van will never reach its destination, there is no necessity to discuss that point," replied Kingston. "I do not know it myself yet, but can very easily find it out. What I want you to do is to tell me where it is to start from."

Crawford looked uneasy.

"I can't tell you, sir," he replied. "I s'pose it's startin' from a district altogether clear of mine, so I ain't received any instructions at all. Besides, sir, there's lots o' places where it might be kept. There's several of them vans all over London, in different parts, an' she might start from any one of 'em."

"That's just what I want to find out. It should not prove a very difficult task, and I have plenty of confidence in your ability, Crawford, to be sure that you can carry it through without risk. It only needs a few veiled inquiries, and you will soon find out what you want to know. But it's imperative that I should be acquainted with the starting-point of this vehicle."

"I'll do my best, sir—"

"Well, no man can do better than that," replied Kingston, smiling. "If you do your best, Crawford, I shall be satisfied. You say you have to go on duty at five? Well, be at this same spot at half-past three or four."

"It don't leave me much time, sir," said Crawford, his eyes sparkling. "But even if I have to give myself away, I'll find out where that blessed motor is goin' to start from!"

With that Crawford turned and strode off, the expression on his face telling Kingston and Gray that he meant every word he said.

"You've got a good man there, Kingston!" declared Gray. "If he hasn't supplied you with that information before four o'clock, I shall be very considerably surprised. There was no mistaking the determined look on his face."

"No; Fraser has taught Crawford all his good manners. In short, Fraser's made a man of him, and I'm proud of the pair of them!"

"By the way, when is Fraser returning? I should think it is time the Coronet arrived with Miss O'Brien and the professor aboard."

"Yes; she will be in London to-morrow, I think. As it happens, I haven't needed either Miss O'Brien or the professor's assistance in this case, so their absence has made no difference. Suppose you come along to my club now and have some lunch? It will while away the time until half-past three."

"An excellent suggestion!" declared Carson Gray emphatically. "I am decidedly hungry, and can just do with a square meal. Thanks for the invitation!"

The two jumped into a passing taxi, and very shortly afterwards both were sitting down at Kingston's club to an appetising luncheon. They lingered over it as long as possible, and then sat talking until three-twenty.

"It's about time we were going, I think!" exclaimed Kingston, glancing at the clock. "If Crawford should be there to time, I don't want to keep him waiting. You make straight for home, and I dare say I shall be there very soon after you. You've been neglecting your business in a most disgraceful manner, and I shouldn't be surprised if you have lost several clients."

Carson Gray grinned.

"I don't care if I've lost fifty!" he said lightly. "My own cases are tame when compared to yours, Kingston, and I shall never throw away an opportunity of helping you—not for your sake, you understand, but for my own. You see, I do not disguise my selfishness in any way whatever."

They both laughed and parted, the detective making for Great Portland Street, and Kingston for Spring Gardens. He found his faithful ally waiting there, looking somewhat excited.

"I've been successful, sir," he said quickly. "The van is to start from a garage in Camberwell at eight o'clock, and run about London until midnight. This is to take suspicion away from it, sir. It is a large one, an' is supposed to belong to a furniture firm—which is the Brotherhood's, really."

"Good! Tell me exactly where this garage is."

Crawford did, and, after congratulating him, Kingston made his way straight for Carson Gray's address. At seven o'clock two rather rough-looking men descended the steps, and walked towards Oxford Street, where they jumped

aboard a motor-bus which was going in the direction of Camberwell. Arriving at their journey's end, they alighted and proceeded on foot.

"Now, according to Crawford," said Kingston, "the garage is at the end of a narrow, deserted lane. I suggest we walk boldly up and enter as though we owned it, for if we were seen stealing about, our movements might be deemed suspicious. There will only be two men to deal with, and I think you and I are capable of that, Gray."

"You needn't bring me into it at all," smiled the detective. "Our main difficulty will be in obtaining admittance, for the place is sure to be locked."

To judge by Kingston's expression, he was not worried much by this, and when at last, after making their way down a squalid thoroughfare, the prevailing odour of which appeared to be fish and beer, they turned into the dark entrance of the garage, Kingston produced a small bunch of keys, one of which opened the double doors of the shed as though it had been made to fit the lock.

"Well," he said, in a low voice, "we're in without any difficulty. I'd better lock this door again, so that when our two friends arrive they won't suspect anything."

He suited the action to the word, Gray showing him light by the aid of his powerful electric-lamp. After that they inspected the motor lorry. It was a very large one, practically new, and extremely powerful, fitted with one of the finest British engines.

The time was not far off eight, so the two intruders concealed themselves behind the bulk of the vehicle, and waited patiently for their victims to arrive, Kingston having in his hand the same sharp-pointed instrument with which he had administered the professor's drug to Old Nick. He was finding Professor Polgrave's preparations to be of the most incalculable value to him.

They had not long to wait, for scarcely five minutes had passed before a key was thrust into the lock, and one of the doors swung open. Two men entered, carrying a lighted lantern.

"Nasty windy night," said one grumblingly. "Still, it might have been worse. It's this 'ere runnin' about London that I don't care for. Once we git started on the road to Portsmouth we shall be all right. Wonder what this 'ere stuff is we 'ave to take aboard at Wimbledon?"

"Dunno, mate; it ain't our concern, anyhow! P'raps Mr. Claydon'll tell us when 'e meets us. Open that there other door; I've only to start the engine up, an' we're off. This 'ere old 'bus never wants no lookin' to!"

The speaker moved forward to the back of the vehicle, and then uttered a cry of surprise and alarm as he saw the two rough-looking men standing there. Kingston was on him in a moment.

"Look out, mate!" yelled the man. "There's a couple o' 'tects 'ere!"

He did not even have time to struggle, for the next moment the impregnated point had buried itself for a sixteenth-part of an inch in his hand. The next moment he fell to the ground. Simultaneously with this movement Carson Gray had leapt forward to prevent the other man escaping. He was just disappearing through the doorway when Carson Gray grasped him by the shoulder and swung him bodily round.

"No, you don't!" he muttered breathlessly. "Quick! Bring that stiletto! This fellow's got the strength of—Ah!"

It had all happened in a flash. The common-member, seeing that he was likely to be treated as his companion had been, resorted to a desperate measure. He still held the heavy lantern in his hand, and, with a curse, he swung it round, and brought it down with stunning force on Carson Gray's head.

The detective fell like a log—at the precise moment when Kingston was about to answer his call for help.

With another string of curses, the man flung the lantern at him, and dashed away. The heavy article struck Kingston full on the chest, where it rebounded to the floor, and jerked itself out. Kingston did not seem to notice the blow, and gave chase at a pace which was little short of amazing. It was hopeless for the fugitive, at all events, for he found himself overtaken after thirty yards.

In five seconds it was all over, and he lay in Kingston's arms unconscious. The Avenger carried him back to the garage as though he had been no weight, and laid him down against the doors. Then, producing his own electric-torch, he flashed it on to Carson Gray's form.

The detective was lying still, and blood was trickling slowly from a gash in his forehead, where it formed an ominous pool on the grimy concrete.

ANSWERS

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE STOWAWAY OF ST. JIM'S."

The Paying of the Ransom.

"Pull yourself together, my dear fellow; you'll be as right as a triquet in a few moments. It's only a cut, so you needn't worry."

"But I do worry," growled Carson Gray. "My head is singing like a whole choir, and I feel absolutely rotten!"

It was five minutes later, and the detective was now leaning against the wall, with Kingston behind him affixing a handkerchief over the cut. It was nothing much, but it would cause considerable pain for a few minutes—until the ache had disappeared. A drop of brandy from his flask made a deal of difference, and he grinned faintly.

"Just like a confounded novice!" he exclaimed. "I might have guessed the fellow's intention. But that brandy has put new life into me, Kingston, and as soon as we get out on the road I shall be better."

"Then we'd better start immediately. We can put these two fellows behind those sacks in the corner—they'll be quiet enough until to-morrow morning, and I don't suppose anybody will come during the night. By Jove, that was a handy piece of information we heard!"

"Which?"

"Didn't one of the men say something about Portsmouth? It's necessary we should know the destination so as to take the right road. Claydon is to be picked up, you know, and it would never do to make off in the opposite direction."

They lifted the two unconscious men to the spot Kingston had indicated, and then got the huge lorry ready for departure. It was all prepared, the petrol tanks being full to the top, and the lamps were all ready trimmed.

"Do you think you can drive it?" asked Kingston, when the lamps were all alight.

"Me?" inquired Gray ungrammatically, in some surprise.

"Yes; I want you to take charge after we leave Wimbledon Common with the booty. I have got to be inside, remember, ready to welcome the Hon. Percy. Don't pretend to me, Gray; you can drive as well as anybody."

"A car—yes. But when it comes to one of these lumbering things, there's a difference. However, I'll do my best."

The engine was started up, Kingston took his seat, and the heavy vehicle lumbered out into the open. In a moment the doors were securely fastened, and the big lorry made its way down the dark alleyway to the more busy street. From that moment the time passed rather slowly until eleven-thirty. Kingston drove extremely well, but with great caution, for he wanted nothing to happen to prevent his plan being carried out.

Gray by this time had completely recovered from the effects of his blow, and as he wore his cap well over his forehead the bandage was not seen. Just before Wimbledon Common was reached he changed places with Kingston, and took charge of the steering-wheel. At last they reached the spot mentioned in the letter.

"Well," said Kingston, glancing at his watch, "it's a quarter to twelve yet. We must not do anything in the least suspicious, or we shall find ourselves in trouble. I dare say several pairs of eyes are watching us from the thickets yonder. The best thing we can do is to jump down and examine the engine, as though something is wrong."

Carson Gray acted on this suggestion, and for a quarter of an hour he busied himself with nothing, Kingston helping him. Suddenly the latter turned, and listened intently. The common was completely deserted, the powerful incandescent lamps along the far side throwing their light on bare pavements. But here, where the lorry stood, all was in darkness, for this part of the common was one of the loneliest and least frequented.

"Unless I am very much mistaken, our period of waiting has come to an end," said Kingston quietly. "I'll be bound that noise is not made by an ordinary motor-car."

They both listened, and clearly across the common, in spite of the wind, could be heard the steady hum of some petrol-driven vehicle. The next moment a couple of brilliant lights came into view, and Kingston chuckled.

"Of course," he said, "the men who are with the gold don't know what their cargo is. Neither are we supposed to be aware of it. So if the men say anything about it, we must profess absolute ignorance. You understand?"

"Precisely."

In less than a minute the other motor-van had reached the spot, and had come to a standstill. There were four men aboard of her, and they looked at Kingston and Gray curiously.

"You waiting for us?" asked one.

"I reckon so," replied Kingston. "You've been told to come to this spot, ain't yer, with a cargo of 'eavy cases?"

"Yes; me an' my mates 'ave been wondering wot it all means. It's a funny job, an' no mistake, specially for the police. Of course, you know as we're all members o' the Force."

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"Yes, we know that," replied Kingston, applying a match to the bowl of his briar. "What we want to know is what's in them cases? Do you?"

"Ain't got the faintest idea. Still, we've got our orders, so we'd better unload as soon as possible. There's one thing certain, bein' a Scotland Yard matter, it's all above board."

"Rather!" put in Gray. "Go an' open the doors, Jack!" he added to Kingston. "We want to git off as soon as we can."

The work of transferring the specie commenced. The cases were small, and extremely heavy, but none of the men guessed their contents, although one or two hazarded a guess as they were struggling along under their weight that it might be lead or some other weighty substance. It never entered their heads that these untidy and dirty cases contained gold, for it was not packed in the usual manner.

Half an hour after the arrival of the other party the numerous cases were all stowed away in the Brotherhood's lorry. Kingston and Gray wasted no time, but, after saying good-night to the other men, started up the engine and made their way across the common.

"Well, that's over," said Kingston to himself, as he sat inside the van. A space was left clear just against the door, and Kingston was sitting on one of the boxes. "The gold's in our possession, and now it only remains to secure the excellent Claydon. He is bound to put in an appearance before we have gone many hundred yards."

And Kingston was right, for the lorry had not proceeded half a mile when a man suddenly came out from behind a clump of bushes and held up his hand. Carson Gray put the brakes on and brought the vehicle to a standstill.

"What's up?" he asked. "What d'you want?"

"It's me, you fool!" exclaimed Claydon. "You know, don't you? Haven't you been told?"

"What, are you Mr. Claydon?" asked the detective. "Sorry, sir, but I didn't recognise yer in them clothes. My mate's in be'ind, an' e'll open the door if yer knocks."

"Well, start off again; I can get on while she's going."

Claydon ran round to the back, and found the door already swinging open. He jumped in just as the lorry started forward, and looked up sharply as the door closed with a bang and Kingston set his back against it. He didn't mean to waste words.

"What are you standing there for?" demanded the Inner Councillor.

"To prevent you getting out," replied Kingston blandly. "The game is up, my dear Claydon, and I must ask you to make no outcry. I have several questions I wish to put to you."

Claydon staggered back.

"What do you mean?" he said hoarsely. "You confounded fool, what's all this nonsense about? By the way you speak I might imagine that I have fallen into the hands of the police."

"And that, my dear Claydon, is the exact truth!"

Frank Kingston is Merciful.

The Hon. Percy Claydon stood for a moment staring wide-eyed at the disguised form of Frank Kingston, as the latter stood with his back against the doors of the heavy, swiftly-travelling lorry.

"The police?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Good heavens, man, what are you saying? Is this some foolish joke? I will have you know that I am not to be played with—"

"It is not my intention to do so," replied Kingston seriously. "It may interest you to know that my friend who is driving this vehicle is a detective, and that he is taking a direct road for Scotland Yard. The game is up, Claydon, so why resist?"

"How did you know?" gasped Claydon, in amazement. "How do you know who I am, and that I should meet the van on Wimbledon Common? Good heavens, I had not the slightest suspicion that anything was wrong!"

"That is fairly obvious," replied Kingston drily, "otherwise you would not have put in an appearance—Now, then, stop that! It's not the slightest use struggling!"

Claydon had suddenly sprung forward in an access of impotent fury and endeavoured to throw Kingston out of the way. But such a task was utterly out of the question, for Kingston treated him as though he were a child. In a moment Claydon found himself gripped by the arms and held back against the gold-cases.

"Let me go!" he hissed.

"Not until you promise me that you'll submit quietly. Don't be an idiot, man! Can't you realise that you're beaten? It will serve no purpose to make this unnecessary resistance."

Claydon drew a breath in between his teeth sharply.

"Very well," he muttered, "I'll do as you say; but it's a mystery how you got on the scent. Who are you, hang you—what is your name?"

"My name is immaterial," replied Kingston, "but you will be interested to learn that it was I who was taken down to the wherry at Wroxham, and not Sir Henry Kenning, as you supposed. The Lieutenant of the Tower is at this moment in safe keeping. All along you have been under an erroneous impression."

"You the man whom I saw on the wherry?" cried the other. "Impossible! I know Sir Henry too well to have been mistaken."

"Be that as it may, I have told you the truth, and you can believe it or not believe it, just as you like. The fact remains that Sir Henry Kenning has never been out of London since the night he was kidnapped—when you so cleverly impersonated him at the Tower. Oh, yes, I know everything, and you cannot possibly escape the just punishment."

The Hon. Percy stood there without saying a word, the light from the lantern which hung on one of the sides of the van clearly showing the white pallor of his face. He seemed absolutely stunned, unable to utter a single word. Then, very suddenly, a sob shook his whole frame, and he almost broke down.

"Come, come!" said Kingston sternly. "It's not the slightest use your going on in this fashion. You have done wrong, and you must bear the punishment. Act like a man, and pull yourself together."

Claydon took the advice, and drew himself upright. In his eyes a peculiar gleam could be seen, but there was no sign of fear.

"What do I care for the punishment?" he cried. "It is not myself I am thinking of—not that at all. I don't care a brass button whether I go to prison or not, but— It's terrible!"

The Hon. Percy's tone made Kingston somewhat curious, for it seemed as though the man had suddenly altered his character. His voice sounded pitiful—hopelessly so.

"What are you driving at?" asked Kingston curiously. "If you don't care what becomes of yourself personally why are you worrying?"

"Can't you guess, man?" replied the Hon. Percy miserably. "You know who I am—you know that my father is Lord Nysdale, and that the family is one of the oldest in the kingdom."

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, after this—after I've been placed in the criminal dock—the name will be disgraced for ever. My family has an absolutely stainless record, and this will bring a blight upon it that can never be removed. Up to the present no one has guessed my true character—I have always been looked upon as an honourable gentleman. Good heavens, what a blow it will be for my father! He is an old man now, and the shock will kill him."

Kingston listened quietly, his face still wearing that imperturbable mask which allowed none of his thoughts to reveal themselves. He looked at Claydon's face with a certain curiosity, for he knew perfectly well that there was no pretence in Claydon's words. For once he was speaking the absolute truth.

"What a fool I've been!" continued Claydon, before Kingston could speak. "Not ten years ago I was an honest man, then I met that skunk of a Mount—I met a certain man who led me the wrong way. I'm the only man in the whole family who's done anything shady, and I suppose I deserve all the punishment I shall get, but it's hard on the others."

Kingston considered a full minute before he replied.

"Look here, Claydon," he exclaimed quietly. "I entered this van for the express purpose of arresting you and taking you to Scotland Yard. Your words, however, have caused me to alter my mind."

"What do you mean?" cried the Hon. Percy. "You're not going to let me go?"

"Certainly not—at least, not immediately. If I were to do so, however, would you promise me to leave England, and never return, or, if not that, to remain abroad for at least fifteen years?"

The prisoner's eyes opened wide, and he looked at Kingston in amazement. In a flash his thoughts reverted to the Brotherhood, and to the realisation that he would no longer be able to assist in its work. But what did that matter? The Brotherhood had never done him any good, and now it seemed as though it were going to be the cause of a vast amount of harm. Claydon was not without a conscience, and was, to a certain extent, proud of the splendid record of his family. Therefore, he hated the

thought that he would be the cause of dishonouring his father's good name.

"Yes," he replied eagerly. "I would do as you say if only it meant the prevention of disgrace. I would give up the Brother—"

He paused, remembering what he was saying, but Kingston only smiled.

"Go on," he said. "Why don't you finish your sentence? You were referring to the Brotherhood of Iron, and to the fact that you would have to resign your position as an Inner Councillor."

The Hon. Percy was freshly amazed. Who was this man—what could he be? How could he be in possession of the fact that Claydon was an Inner Councillor, or, as a matter of fact, that there was such an organisation as the Brotherhood of Iron? Then, with another start, realisation dawned upon him.

"You are—you are the secret enemy who has—"

"Precisely!" returned Kingston blandly. "There are no secrets in your heart, Claydon, that I am not aware of. I know your record ever since you joined the Brotherhood of Iron, and that your reckless love of adventure is partly the cause of your choosing to join that infamous society."

"You—you the man who has caused all these terrible mishaps? Good heavens! Now I can understand why you are here. The police could never have found anything out alone. But it makes no difference," he added recklessly. "The game's up now, and I don't mean to play the funk."

"My offer is still open," resumed Kingston, listening to the steady hum of the motor. "To save the name of your family I am willing to let you go, but understand, there are conditions, and if you fail to comply with them I can have you arrested at any moment."

"What are they? I will do my utmost to fulfil them."

"They do not amount to much. First of all you are to leave England for any country you like—which one it is matters nothing. But before you go I want a confession now, on paper, that you are a member of the Brotherhood of Iron. I shall not use this unless you give me cause to do so, but it is necessary that I should hold it. Furthermore, you are to withdraw what money you have in the bank and take it with you abroad."

"I will do everything you say—everything!"

"And you must on no account hold further counsel with either Lord Mount-Fannell or his colleagues. In fact, you must leave London to-morrow without a word, and simply disappear. I may as well warn you that if you tell anybody of this conversation it will be fatal to yourself. My action in letting you free is a great concession, and I do not intend to be played with."

"I quite understand that," exclaimed the Hon. Percy, clutching at the offer anxiously. "You have done too much against the Brotherhood for me to delude myself that it would be possible for me to outwit you. No, I shall comply with your requests to the letter, and clear right out of the country. Thank Heaven, all men are not the same as I!"

Claydon was quite unmoved, and profuse in his gratitude to Kingston. His bravado had vanished, for he realised instantly the infinite superiority of this man over himself, but the honoured name of Nysdale was to remain unsullied, and Claydon, all his finer qualities now uppermost, felt what a pitiful fool he had been to ally himself to the Brotherhood of Iron.

"Here is a pen," went on Kingston, after a moment. "A few words is all that is necessary. I can see, Claydon, that you have the makings of a good man in you, and I trust you."

"Thank you—thank you!" murmured the other, proceeding to write to the best of his ability on a sheet of note-paper. The lorry was jolting a good deal, but at last he managed to complete the confession. Kingston glanced at it, and stuffed it in his pocket.

"Now," he said abruptly, "I will allow you to open the door. This affair has not turned out as I anticipated, but I am glad, for your family's sake, that you are not going to be made the butt of the newspapers and scandal-loving public. I wish you good-bye!"

Tears were standing in Claydon's eyes as he shook the extended hand.

"Good-bye," he said tremulously, "and Heaven bless you for what you have done! As long as I live I'll never communicate with the Brotherhood again, and will try, in the new life, to be a better man!"

He opened the door, saw that the lorry was travelling fairly slowly up a hill, and dropped on to the roadway. Kingston caught a glimpse of him as he turned swiftly down a side turning—they were in a quiet district—and a peculiar smile appeared on the Avenger's immobile face.

He felt satisfied, for he knew that he had performed a good action.

At Scotland Yard—An Exciting Incident.

Frank Kingston closed the doors and seated himself on one of the boxes.

From his pocket he produced a pocket-book and pencil. On one of the leaves a list of names could be seen, and several of these—more than half, in fact, had a thick black mark through them.

"The Hon. Percy Claydon," was the next on the list, and he drew the pencil across this steadily. Then he stowed the book away again, and yawned. The rest of the ride was not proving very entertaining.

"Thirteen of them gone," he told himself complacently. "By Jove, it is proving a long job. There are twelve more to come, but from this point onwards Mount-Fannell will wake up, and very likely force my hand. Well, what the next case will be, I don't know; but if it proves to be as interesting as this has been, I shall be satisfied. I have enjoyed myself immensely this last two or three days."

Shortly afterwards the lorry drew up with a jerk, and Kingston, unfastening the door, stepped to the ground. As he had suspected, they were in Great Portland Street, and Carson Gray was at that moment coming to meet him.

"You'd better be careful!" exclaimed the detective, in a low voice. "I wouldn't trust that scoundrel out of my sight for long."

Kingston smiled.

"Scoundrel!" he repeated. "What scoundrel?"

"Do you mean to tell me that Claydon has escaped? Great Scott, Kingston, the thing's impossible! No man could escape from you."

"I won't say that, Gray, but Claydon left us a few miles back. He had my permission to do so, so you needn't look so surprised. I'll close these doors, and tell you what happened when we got in the house."

Carson Gray certainly had good reason to be astounded at the prisoner's absence, but when he had heard the full story, he understood immediately, and realised that Kingston, although he was carrying on a work which necessitated harsh treatment, could be as soft-hearted as possible when the occasion demanded.

"It was the best thing," agreed Carson Gray quietly. "Claydon was undoubtedly a scoundrel, but it would have been a pity to bring disgrace upon his family, which would probably have caused the death of the old Earl of Nysdale. You intend to go to Scotland Yard at once, I suppose?"

"Now," replied Kingston. "Help me down with this case, and we'll soon be off. You wouldn't think, to look at it, that the contents were almost of priceless value, would you?"

Between them they carried the large case containing the Crown Jewels down the staircase to the waiting lorry without. The whole house was quiet and at rest, so they made as little noise as possible.

"Your landlady will turn you out if you're not careful, Gray," smiled Kingston, as they stood in the motor-van. "These night escapades may not be to her liking. Still, I oughtn't to complain, for I'm the cause of it all."

Somehow both Kingston and Carson Gray seemed to be in better spirits now that Claydon had gone—not because of his absence, but because it was always a trying experience to see a fellow-creature suffering the indignity of being taken to prison.

When they arrived at Scotland Yard, they found everything the same as usual. The constable on duty at the door looked at the two rough-looking men curiously as they left the lorry.

Before the surprised policeman could interfere, Carson Gray and Kingston had passed him and were on the way to Sir Nigel Kane's apartment. The Chief of Scotland Yard was there, wide awake, pacing the floor anxiously.

"Ah, who is—Why, what does this mean?"

He looked at the two rough-looking intruders in some astonishment, for they had entered without waiting for him to answer their knock. Kingston stepped forward.

"We are a little earlier than you expected, perhaps?" he suggested. "Really, Sir Nigel, you should not have deprived yourself of your night's rest in this fashion!"

"Mr. Kingston!" cried the other. "And the other gentleman is Mr. Carson Gray—yes, I can see it is now you have come into the light. Have—have you been successful?" he added anxiously. "Have you got the Crown Jewels?"

"Have you ever known Kingston to fail?" laughed Gray. "You needn't worry, Sir Nigel, the whole lot is outside, waiting to be transferred to a safe place!"

"You have—By George! I have been worrying myself for nothing!" cried the Chief of Police joyfully. "I can't thank you enough for this, Mr. Kingston—it's simply marvellous! But where," he added, suddenly recollecting, "is the prisoner, the Hon. Percy Claydon?"

Kingston smiled, and Carson Gray lit a cigarette.

"Oh, I haven't brought him!" exclaimed the former.

"Haven't brought him?" repeated Sir Nigel Kane. "I am afraid I do not understand, Mr. Kingston. The reason why the van of gold was sent as demanded, was for the especial purpose of catching Claydon—the prime mover in this affair."

"Quite so. But circumstances alter cases, Sir Nigel. Everything passed off as I planned, and we nabbed the Hon. Percy quite easily."

"You nabbed him?" repeated Sir Nigel starting back. "Good gracious, man, you don't mean to say he's slipped through your fingers?"

"Not at all. I allowed him to go. Now, please don't get excited, Sir Nigel. I had a very good reason for acting in the way I did. You shall hear it. It may not be in accordance with your own principles, but in this case I think I can claim some right to do as I think just. Mr. Carson Gray heartily agrees with the step I have taken."

Sir Nigel Kane was a little dubious when he had heard everything, but, knowing how much he owed to Kingston, he could not very well complain. Nevertheless, for a moment he showed his disapproval very plainly. Then the relief of having his worry at an end drowned the other matter completely, and he was once more most effusive.

Kingston did not wait long, but merely had a few words concerning Sir Henry Kenning—proving beyond all measure that the baronet was miles away from the Tower when the actual robbery occurred. Sir Nigel promised that every newspaper in London would receive the full details, and would publish the news of Sir Henry's innocence broadcast.

"And now," said Kingston at last. "I think you and I, Gray, had better get off home. The hour is late—or, rather, early—and there is nothing further for us to do. The lorry will remain where it is, and the Brotherhood can think what it likes, but it's quite impossible to return it."

Some few minutes later they took their leave of Sir Nigel Kane, and were very soon walking briskly up Whitehall. The streets were practically deserted, not even a stray taxicab being within sight. Carson Gray pulled a wry face.

"We shall have to walk home, by the look of it," he complained.

"There are sure to be plenty a little further on. Still, I do not see why we should take one. It's a comparatively short walk to your address—Ah, here's a taxi, after all."

"Good!"

They got into the taxi, which went along at a moderate rate for some time, until it gave a sudden jerk, and seemed to gather speed very quickly. Suddenly it swerved with a jerk, and Carson Gray looked out through the glass to see what was the matter with the driver. He looked, rubbed his eyes, then looked again.

"Great Scotland Yard!" he ejaculated, starting to his feet. "The cabby's either fallen off, or—"

Kingston, who had been lying among the cushions, became alert on the instant, and glanced outside at the silent street. The vehicle was moving at practically full speed, and was heading straight for the solid shop-front of a large establishment in Oxford Circus. If it crashed into that, it would either mean death or very serious injury for them both.

"We're tricked!" cried Kingston. "Ten to one this cab was driven by a common member. Quick, Gray, lend a hand; we've got to break through and stop her, or we're done!"

Suiting the action to the word, he drove his elbow with stunning force through the glass front, Carson Gray looking on helpless. In that confined space there was not room for two to work, but he could see quite plainly that Kingston's efforts would be useless. In ten seconds the crash would come, and Gray closed his eyes in readiness.

Straight for the shop-front the taxi-cab headed, while the passers-by watched fascinatedly.

Another three seconds, and it would all be over!

One—but two seconds before the crash could come something happened which utterly ruined the dastardly scheme, and which probably saved both Kingston's and Carson Gray's lives—for the former could never have stopped the vehicle in time.

Just at the precise moment the taxi struck the pavement a large touring car came swiftly round the corner, as though to turn into Oxford Street. It was travelling fast, and the chauffeur jammed the brakes on as the taxi-cab flew straight across its path, but a short while before the roads had been watered, and the large car skidded bodily.

It all happened in a second.

The car slewed round with a whistle as the steel-studded tyres scraped over the road, and the long body, with a deafening crash, struck the side of the taxi, just as the latter was in the act of hurtling itself at the massive iron shutters of the shop.

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