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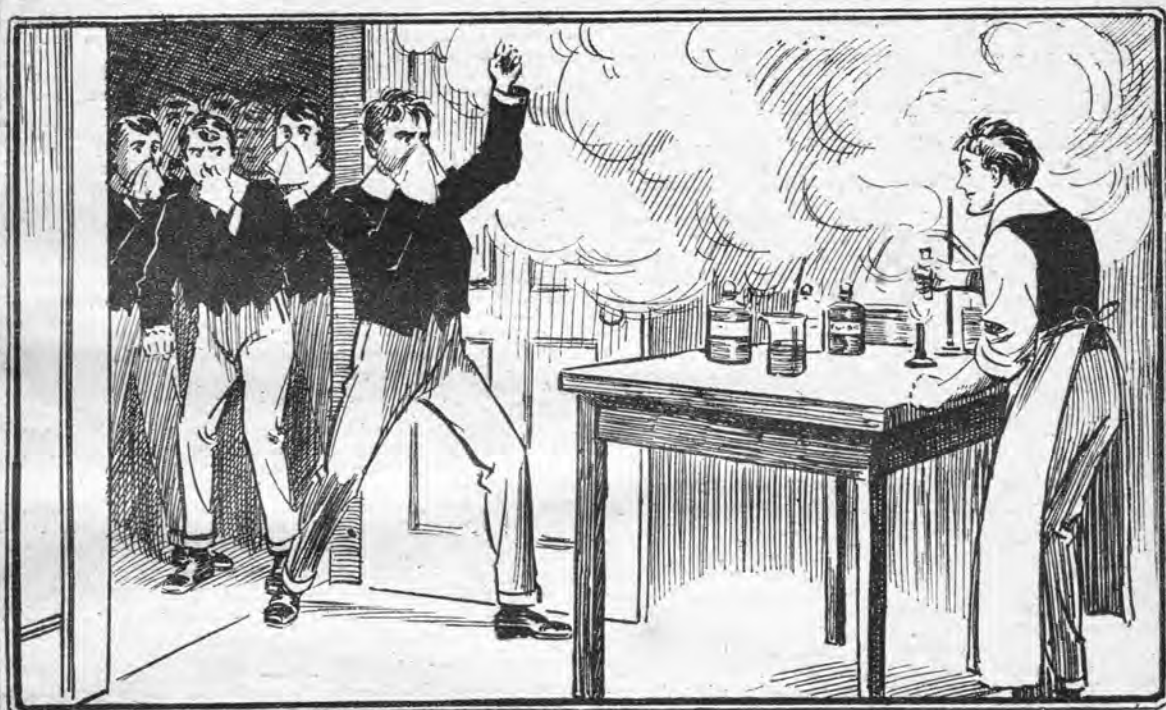


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BY WHOSE HAND?

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale Dealing with the Adventures
of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Open the window, Glyn, you ass! I tell you we can't stand this niff!" roared Kangaroo, brandishing his fist at the St. Jim's inventor. (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER 1. The Crack of Doom!

"I WON'T have it!" Kangaroo of the Shell roared out the words at the top of his powerful voice, and all the Shell passage in the School House of St. Jim's were made aware at the same moment that Kangaroo wouldn't have it.

Kangaroo—his name was Harry Noble, but everybody at St. Jim's called him Kangaroo, because he came from the land where those marsupial quadrupeds most do congregate—was looking excited.

He was standing in the doorway of his study—the end study in the Shell passage—and glaring into it. He emphasised his remarks by brandishing a large-sized fist in the air.

"I won't have it! Do you hear, Glyn, you silly ass! I won't have it!"

"Oh, don't bother, Kangy, old man!"

"I tell you I won't have it!" roared Kangaroo.

"Run away, like a good chap."

"You—you—chump!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Tom Merry,

coming along the passage, with a good many other Shell fellows, all curious to know what was "on." "Trouble in the happy family?"

He looked into the end study; then he backed out hurriedly, coughing and gasping.

"Oh—grooh—oh! My hat!"

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "What a niff! What is that chump Glyn doing this time?"

"Grooogh!" said Manners.

They held their noses and looked into the study. Bernard Glyn was working at the study table in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron on. His hands were stained with chemicals, and his face was streaked with black smears. Glyn, the amateur inventor and scientific genius, was very busy. He hardly glanced at the excited Cornstalk in the doorway. All his attention was bestowed upon his experiment, whatever it was.

Glyn was an inventor of great renown in the School House, and the perpetrator of all sorts of weird contrivances, chemical, mechanical, and—as Monty Lowther put it—lunatical.

His keenness on scientific subjects was really very creditable. The science master had commended him warmly.

Next Wednesday:

"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!" AND "THE CORINTHIAN!"

His father, who was a retired Liverpool merchant and a millionaire, provided him with plenty of money for his experiments. But it was not to be expected that his study-mates would always appreciate his scientific genius when it caused him to turn the study into a workshop and a laboratory, to use all the study crockeryware for holding sticky and smelly concoctions, and sometimes to make the room reek for days with wild and weird scents.

Most of Glyn's chemical experiments seemed to be attended with unearthly smells. But the present one took the cake. The study simply seemed to talk. Glyn himself seemed oblivious of it. But Kangaroo, who had come there to do his preparation, could not help noticing it, hence his emphatic remark that he wouldn't have it.

Clifton Dane, who shared the study with Kangaroo and the Liverpool lad, had equally strong feelings on the subject. The three juniors were great chums, but there was a limit. And Glyn had reached the limit now.

"Open the window, Glyn, you ass!" shouted Dane.

"Don't worry."

"I tell you we can't stand this niff!" yelled Kangaroo.

"Run away, then."

"We want to do our prep."

"Well, there's the Form-room; or you can go into Tom Merry's study. Don't bother. I'm just getting along rippingly."

"But what's the little game?" asked Tom Merry, still holding his nose.

"I'm making fireworks for the Fifth!" Glyn explained.

"But what's the smell about? No need to smell the whole house out just to make fireworks," said Monty Lowther.

Glyn sniffed.

"You don't understand. I'm not making common or garden fireworks. Do you know what I've done? I've hit on it by chance—a tremendous discovery. When I'm finished I shall patent it and sell it to the War Office. A new explosive!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Good idea!" said Monty Lowther. "A dodge for waking up the officials at the War Office in time of war—is that it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dynamite will be a joke to it!" said Glyn, his face flushing with enthusiasm. "Cordite won't be in it! Look at that jar!"

He pointed to a jam-jar on the table. The juniors looked at it. It was labelled "raspberry jam," and did not look very dangerous.

"Guess what that is!" said Glyn.

"That's an easy one," said Tom Merry. "Raspberry jam!"

"Ass!" said Glyn politely. "Look into it."

"Thanks! I can't without coming into the study, and I'd rather not, unless I could get my nose amputated first."

"My new explosive is in that jar," said Glyn, holding it out for inspection. "Look at it! Just look!"

"Looks like small coke," said Tom Merry.

"If I were to drop this jar on the floor, what do you think would happen?" said Glyn impressively.

"It would break," suggested Lowther.

"Ass! It would cause an explosion that would blow the whole School House into smithereens, and perhaps the New House and the gym, as well!"

"What!"

There was a hurried backing away from the door of the study. The Shell fellows did not seem so enthusiastic about the new explosive as the inventor expected. Perhaps the prospect of being blown to smithereens did not appeal to them.

"You—you dangerous lunatic!" gasped Kangaroo. "Put it down!"

"It's safe so long as I don't drop it," said Glyn.

"Put it down, you fathead!"

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "I should like to share this study with Glyn—I don't think! Suppose some-

body took that stuff for coke and put it on the fire, Glyn. What would happen?"

Glyn chuckled.

"Nobody in the house would know what happened," he replied. "It would happen too quickly. But the newspaper would record the sudden and tragic end of a famous public school."

"The Head ought to know this, and stop him!" ejaculated Manners.

"He ought to be put in a strait-waistcoat!"

"Or a lunatic asylum!"

"Put that jar down, you frabjous ass!"

Glyn laughed. He was evidently pleased by the impression he had made upon the Shell fellows. As a rule, something went wrong with his inventions, and when it came to the pinch they declined to act in the manner expected of them. But this time the inventor had the pleasure of impressing the other fellows profoundly. All eyes were fixed uneasily upon the jam-jar, which Glyn carelessly held in one hand.

"It's perfectly safe," he explained. "I'm not going to drop the jar. But think of that in war time! A couple of pounds of it would blow up a battleship—kill a thousand people as easily as anything!"

"Nice humane thing to do!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"If you don't put that jar down," said Kangaroo superfluously, "I'll come in and slaughter you!"

"I'm making up samples now to send to the War Office," said Glyn, unheeding. "Never mind this bit of a smell—I hardly notice it myself—and it will clear off in a few days."

"A few days! Have we got to have this awful niff for days?" roared Clifton Dane.

"Pooh! What's that in comparison with my tremendous discovery? The greatest explosive of the age, discovered by a schoolboy while making fireworks for the fifth of November!" said Glyn. "Think of that! It will make the country ring with the news! Now, you chaps, buzz off, and—"

"We want to do our prep."

"Oh, blow your prep. I'm not going to do any myself. Can't; I'm too busy!"

"Hallo! Look at your pot; it's boiling over!" called out Tom Merry.

A little pot on a spirit-stove on the table was sizzling away merrily while Glyn was talking, and now it boiled over. The smell in the study was multiplied a hundredfold.

Glyn uttered an exclamation and whirled round towards the table, and the jar of explosive slipped from his hand.

The juniors in the passage saw it fall, and there was a yell of alarm and a dash of hurrying footsteps.

"Run for it!"

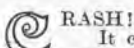
"Bolt!"

And they ran!

Like startled rabbits the juniors tore down the passage, and behind them, in the end study, there sounded the crash of the falling jar!

CHAPTER 2.

The Troubles of an Inventor!



RASH!

It came to the ears of the flying juniors like the crack of doom!

But—

No explosion followed!

According to Bernard Glyn's description of his terrific explosive, the School House should have been hurled from its ancient foundations—walls and doors and windows should have been scattered over the surrounding country—along with St. Jim's fellows in minute fragments!

But it did not happen.

The crash was simply the crash of the falling jam-jar—no louder than if it had been caused by the fall of a jar filled with innocent, harmless, and necessary raspberry jam.

The School House did not rock. Doors and windows remained in the places they had occupied since the reign of King John. The School House fellows were not blown to little bits—the only damage they sustained was by bumping over one another in their hurried flight!

They had reached the stairs, and were tearing down pell-mell when it suddenly occurred to Tom Merry that there had been no explosion—and he stopped.

"Hold on, you chaps—"

"Run for your lives!" roared Gore.

"Hold on—the explosion hasn't come off—"

"My hat! so it hasn't!" ejaculated Kangaroo.

"It's gone wrong—"

"Gone right, I should say," grinned Monty Lowther. "I wasn't specially anxious to be blown half-way to the moon."

"The—silly ass!" gasped Clifton Dane. "Of course,

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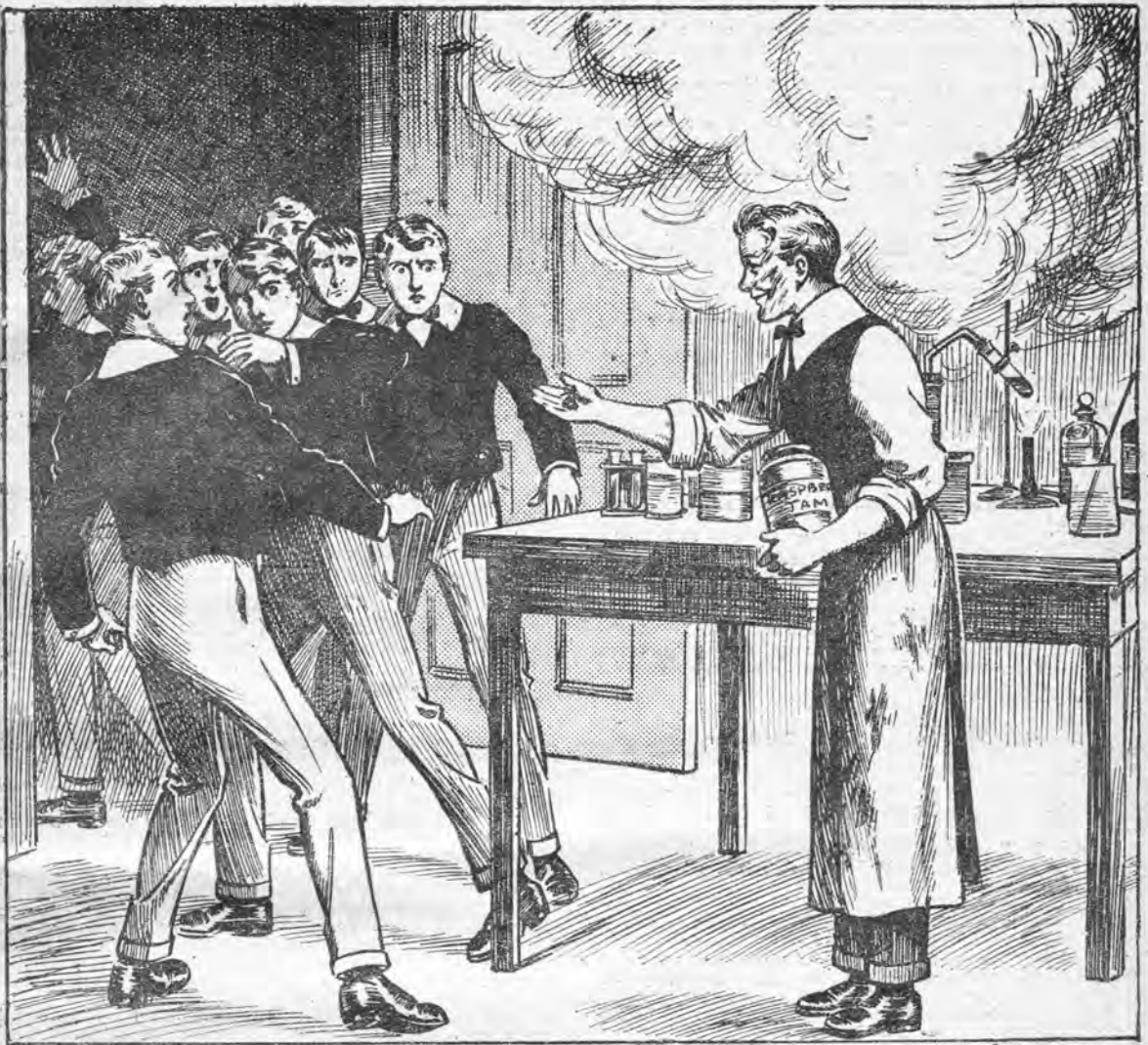
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"If I were to drop this jar on the floor," said Glyn, impressively. "It would cause an explosion that would blow the whole School House into smithereens, and perhaps the New House and gym. as well!" "What!" exclaimed the juniors, together. (See Chapter I.)

there's something wrong with his blessed invention—there always is! Jolly lucky for us! Let's go back and slaughter him before he can put it right."

"Good egg!"

And the Shell fellows, with their panic turned into wrath, crowded back along the passage to the end study.

Bernard Glyn was staring at the coke-like fragments scattered on the floor round the broken jar, with dismay in his face. He hardly looked at the wrathful juniors as they returned. All his thoughts were given to the explosion that hadn't come off, and he was evidently bitterly disappointed. On the table, the pot was boiling over unheeded.

"Well, you ass!" roared Kangaroo. "You haven't blown us up! You haven't committed murder on a large scale!"

Glyn groaned.

"Oh, it's rotten! After all the trouble I've taken! I must have got the formula wrong somehow! How utterly rotten!"

"You—your frabjous chump! Did you want to blow up the house?"

The schoolboy inventor snorted with contempt. Blowing up the School House and everybody in it evidently seemed a very small matter to him, in comparison with the failure of his invention.

"I must have worked out the specification wrong, somehow. Why, the house ought to have been blown away into dust, the shock ought to have been felt over half the county, there ought not to be left a single living soul within a radius of three hundred yards, and now—" Glyn gave a dismal groan. "Oh, it's too rotten for words!"

The juniors glared at him. But Glyn was impervious to glares. The over-boiling pot succeeded in extinguishing the spirit-stove, and now the smell of methylated spirit was added to the other pleasant scents in the study. But Glyn brightened up suddenly.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed emphatically. "I know it's all right! I simply worked out the formula wrong, somehow—probably one of you chaps was bothering me. But I'll go over it again; I'll make it right next time—"

"There isn't going to be any next time, my boy!" said Kangaroo grimly. "It must be a fearful disappointment not to have blown us to smithereens, and I can feel for you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, on the whole, I'd rather not be in smithereens myself. I'm going to stick together as long as I can. It's more comfortable that way. And there's not going to be any more explosive-inventing in this study!"

"Oh, don't bother—"

"This is where the Form puts its foot down," Tom Merry remarked. "We are fed-up with explosives! Collar the silly ass!"

"Look here— I— Oh— Leggo!"

"Pile on him!"

In spite of the terrible smell, the juniors crowded into the study. They laid violent hands upon the schoolboy inventor. Bernard Glyn roared and struggled, but his roars were not heeded, and he struggled in vain. He bumped on the floor, and the juniors sat on him—in a crowd. The

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Liverpool lad disappeared under them, and only a leg and an arm and a sulphurous voice showed that he was there.

"Groo-hoo! Lemme gerrup! Ow!"
"Sit on his head!" said Tom Merry. "Now to get rid of his rubbish. He's had one chance of blowing up the School House, and he's missed it, and he's not going to have another!"

"Grooh!"
Kangaroo opened a large portmanteau belonging to Bernard Glyn, and the juniors began packing the schoolboy inventor's belongings into it. Lowther opened the window wide, and Manners waved a sheet of paper to and fro to drive out the smell. The other fellows laboured industriously at collecting up Glyn's firework materials. All kinds of chemicals, in jars and bottles and tubes, were packed into the portmanteau.

Glyn wriggled under five or six juniors who were sitting on him, and expostulated in a suffocated voice.

"Lemme gerrup! Let those things alone! They're worth a lot of money! They may go off if you handle them! Ow!"

"They are going off!" said Kangaroo cheerfully. "They're going off to the Ryll—to be chucked in! They're not going off—here—any more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You—you burglars!" spluttered Glyn. "Do you know you're robbing me of a fortune if you muck up my invention?"

"Sorry!"
"Those things cost pounds and pounds—"

"Too bad!"

"Let them alone!"

"Rats!"

Glyn made a desperate effort to release himself, and the juniors swayed and rocked over him; but their weight was too much. The schoolboy inventor subsided again, panting for breath, and almost squashed.

"What's this sticky stuff in the brass pan?" asked Kangaroo.

"Let it alone!" spluttered Glyn. "That's my new liquid glue."

"Do you want it?"

"Of course I do, ass!"

"Then you shall have it! Get off his head a minute, Gore!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore, who was sitting on the inventor's head, grinned and got off. Kangaroo poured the glue over the schoolboy inventor, and Bernard Glyn spluttered wildly. The glue ran down his face and round his ears and into his hair.

"You're getting off cheaply, after nearly blowing us up!" said the Cornstalk severely. "Next time you make an explosive, we'll make you eat it! Is there anything else you'd like to keep as well as the glue?"

"Ow, ow! Groo!"

"What's this purple stuff in the jar?"

"Groo! That's my indelible dye! Ow!"

"Do you want to keep it?"

"Ow! Yes! It's valuable! Yow!"

"All serene! You shall have it!"

And Kangaroo brought the jar towards the gluey junior, with the evident intention of pouring it over him after the glue. Glyn gave a fearful yell.

"Ow! Gerroff! Keep him away! Don't! Ow!"

"If you're going to keep it, that's the only way!" said Kangaroo calmly. "If you'd prefer us to chuck it away, we'll do it. We want to be obliging. Now, are you going to keep it, or shall we chuck it away?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it away!" gasped Glyn.

"Right-ho! Now, here's some sticky stuff in a bottle. Do you want to keep that?"

Glyn had learned his lesson by this time. He gasped out that he didn't want to keep it. And it went into the bag with the rest.

"We'll spare his electric batteries," said Kangaroo considerably. "They're expensive, and he can't do any harm with them. All that firework stuff is going, and all the chemicals, and everything that smells"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bag was crammed full at last. Two of the juniors carried it between them out of the study. Glyn made another wild effort to escape.

"Oh, you rotters! Lemme gerrup! If you chuck those things away, I'll—I'll—"

"You'll leave the School House standing, and you won't make it smell any more!" chuckled Clifton Dane.

And the juniors remained sitting on the infuriated inventor until Tom Merry and Kangaroo returned with the empty bag.

"What have you done with my things?" howled Glyn.

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"Dropped 'em into the river," said the Cornstalk calmly. "If you want 'em again, you can practise diving after them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if you start making explosives again, we'll drop you into the river, too!" said Tom Merry. "Stick to indelible inks and liquid glue—"

"The liquid glue's sticking to him at present!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Explosives are barred. Now you can go and wash," said Kangaroo. "You need it!"

And the schoolboy inventor was allowed to rise at last. The juniors yelled with laughter at his appearance. He was dishevelled and torn and dusty, and glue was drying in layers on his face and hair and neck. Glyn shook his fists at the raiders, and they only yelled the louder.

"You—you—you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh! My collar's glued to my neck!" groaned the unhappy inventor. "Ow! It's running down my back! Br-r-r-r!"

Glyn dashed out of the study, and headed for the bathroom. And a yell of laughter followed him. The lesson had been a severe one, and Tom Merry & Co. felt that the School House was safe from being blown to bits—for the present, at least.

CHAPTER 3.

Sentenced to Death!

FIGGINS of the Fourth looked thoughtfully over his tea-cup at Kerr and Fatty Wynn, his chums and study-mates in the New House at St. Jim's.

"I suppose you chaps know what to-morrow is?" he remarked.

"Half-holiday," said Kerr.

"Fifth of November," said Figgins severely. "Please to remember the fifth of November, the gunpowder treason and plot!"

"Certainly," said Kerr affably. "I can see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot!"

Figgins grinned.

"Exactly. The Head has given permission for a bonfire; and as our kind relatives have come down handsomely in response to urgent letters, we shall be able to celebrate in the way of fireworks. Dame Taggles has laid in a big supply of them, and they are squeezing out the tarts and dough-nuts for room. But I have been thinking—"

"So have I!" said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "You've got an idea?"

"Yes," said Figgins.

"So have I!"

"That's curious!" said Figgins, with interest. "I wonder if we've both hit on the same idea at the same time. Go it!"

"About the celebration to-morrow," said the fat Fourth-Former. "Why not a bit of a celebration rather out of the common?"

"Just my idea, so far," agreed Figgins.

"After all, fireworks only make a row, and blow off a lot of money for nothing," Fatty Wynn continued.

"Eh?"

"Why not celebrate the fifth of November by a feed instead of a bonfire?" said Fatty Wynn enthusiastically.

"Instead of spending money on fireworks and things, we club together, and expend it on tuck. We could have a ripping spread—quite the biggest thing of the term. Odd that you should hit on the same idea, Figg!"

"You ass!" roared Figgins. "That isn't the idea I've hit on! You burler! I couldn't hit on that idea without being a bloated porpoise the same as you are!"

"Oh, look here, Figg!"

"My idea," said Figgins, with a glare at the fat junior, "is to have the usual bonfire and fireworks and procession, but something new in the way of a guy. You remember that chap Glyn of the Shell can make effigies just like live people. He made one of Skimpole once—the regular image of him!"

"But he's a School House chap," said Kerr. "If it's a New House celebration, we can't ask a School House rotter to make our effigy for us!"

Figgins snorted.

"I wasn't thinking of that, fathead! What I was going to say was that what a School House ass can do, we can do!"

"Oh, I see!"

"I think we ought to seize the occasion of the anniversary to-morrow to show the School House up. The New House

is cock-house at St. Jim's, and we can't make that too clear. They never will admit it on the other side, anyway!"

"Never!" grinned Kerr.

"Well, if Bernard Glyn can make mechanical effigies looking just like real people, we can do it in the New House," said Figgins. "I propose to make an effigy of Tom Merry, as captain of the School House juniors."

"Good egg!" said Kerr doubtfully. "But can we do it?"

"If a School House chap can, we can. All you have to do is to get some—some materials and things, and—and put them together, you know, and make sure that it looks exactly like the original by the time you've finished it, you know—and there you are!" said Figgins triumphantly.

"Sounds quite easy!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"Well, what do you think, Fatty?"

"I think that a fifth of November feed——"

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Figgins.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kerr suddenly. "What's the row?" There was a rush of hurried footsteps in the passage outside. The study door was flung violently open, and a dusky-complexioned junior rushed into the room. His dark Hindu face was flushed a dull crimson with excitement, and his jet-black eyes were gleaming. He waved dusky hands in the air and stammered.

Figgins gave a groan.

"The Jam again!"

"What's the row now?" murmured Fatty Wynn.

Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, waved his dusky hands, still stuttering away in the Hindustani language, apparently having forgotten that that difficult tongue was not spoken at St. Jim's. The Indian junior was labouring under wild excitement.

Figgins & Co. had taken Koumi Rao under their special protection in the New House, and he had given them plenty of trouble. Under their influence, he was learning something of British ways and British ideas; but his wild, uncontrollable temper was always ready to break out, and when he was in a rage he was, as Kerr remarked, a picture—a cinematograph, in fact! It must be confessed that some of the juniors took a sinful pleasure in tormenting the Jam of Bundelpore to make him get wild—for the amusement of seeing him roll his eyes, gnash his gleaming teeth, and wave his dusky hands.

Figgins put his hands to his ears as the stream of Hindustani rolled forth like a lava torrent from the princely lips of the Jam.

"Shut up!" he roared. "Shurrup! I don't understand a word! Dry up!"

"Bang wallop chuckalucky puff-puff!" said Kerr. "It's all right, Figg; I can talk to him in his own lingo. Bang-bang wallop—bumpetty-bump—snooker—chuckabiddy—tooraloo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Jam burst into English.

"I will kill him!"

"Oh, dear!" said Figgins. "Whom are you going to kill now? Not Kerr, for talking to you in your language?"

"Snooker-pool—tooralooal—dum-dum—chutney!" said Kerr gravely.

"It is Crooke," said the Jam, grinding his teeth—"Crooke of the Shell. He is a School House boy!"

"One of the rotters!" said Figgins. "I'm glad it's not Tom Merry this time. When you first came you were up against Tom Merry, and wanted his gore. Now you want Crooke's gore. What has Crooke done?"

The Jam rolled his big black eyes.

"He has called me a nigger!"

"Well, you call him one," said Figgins comfortingly.

"But I am not a nigger!" the nabob shrieked.

"My dear chap, a nigger is as good as anybody else. Besides, Crooke isn't a nigger either—so if you call him one, it will be just the same as his calling you one!"

"Precisely the same!" said Kerr judiciously.

"He says that I shall be carried for guy in fifth-of-November procession!" shouted the Jam of Bundelpore.

Figgins shook his head.

"Can't be did. That's only Crooke's little joke. Jammy, old man, if you get your rag out so easily, you'll never have a quiet life. Why don't you punch Crooke?"

"I have punched him, but he still talk."

"Punch him harder, and he won't talk any more."

"And there are the others—Levison and Mellish and Gore—they say I shall be carried in procession for guy!" shrieked the Jam.

And he pranced excitedly round the study, and waved his dusky fists in the air again.

Figgins & Co. could not help grinning at one another. The excitable temper of the Jam and his great idea of his dignity as a prince of India made him an easy prey for mischievous fellows. To rag the Jam, and see him prance, as Levison called it, had become quite a favourite amuse-

ment. And it was useless for the Jam to roll out a stream of deadly and scathing insults in Hindustani; the queer sounds only made the junior laugh the more.

The Jam had brought to St. Jim's many Indian ideas, that were more suited to the principality of Bundelpore than to an English school. Human life was held cheap in Bundelpore, and the Jam startled and amused the St. Jim's fellows by cheerfully threatening to kill persons who displeased him.

Indeed, he had been found to have an assortment of Oriental daggers and yataghans in his possession, all of which had been taken away and carefully locked up. The Jam, with all his excitability, was a sensible lad in the main, and he had soon discovered that he could not do at St. Jim's what he might have done at Bundelpore. But Figgins was sometimes uneasy that, in a wild fit of rage, he might break out to a dangerous extent.

"Crooke and Levison; and Mellish and Gore," said Figgins thoughtfully. "They are rotters—all of them!"

"I will kill them!"

Figgins winked at Kerr.

"Well, they wouldn't be missed very much," he remarked, in a thoughtful sort of way. "Their people can't possibly be very fond of them, can they, Kerr?"

"Peculiar taste if they are," said Kerr.

"And they're no credit to the school, are they?" said Figgins argumentatively.

"None at all," said Fatty Wynn solemnly.

"Well, taking all in all, I don't see any reason why they shouldn't be killed, if the Jam is dead set on it," said Figgins, with the air of a fellow weighing the matter judiciously and considerately. "Have you made up your mind about it, Jammy?"

The Jam stared at him, considerably taken aback. Furious as he was, he had a little inward doubt—perhaps a little compunction—about carrying out his terrific threats. And hitherto Figgins & Co. had been grimly down on homicide. This change of views on the part of the Co. caused the Jam great surprise.

"I will kill them!" he said finally.

"Good! Of course, we can't have anything to do with it," said Figgins. "We don't want to be sent to a reformatory for life. That's what they'll do with you, Jammy. Being so young, and a prince, too, they may not hang you. You'll go to a prison for youthful murderers, and stay there till you're quite an old man, living on gruel and things, and working every day at some trade or something. I dare say you'll like it quite as well as St. Jim's when you get used to it."

"It will want some getting used to," remarked Kerr; "but you can grow accustomed to anything in the long run."

"That's just it," said Figgins. "Well, come on, Jammy, and we'll go and get the killing over before locking up."

"I—I—I——"

"Have you got a knife?"

"No!"

"We can borrow Taggles's chopper. He'll lend it to us like a bird when he knows what we want it for. Come on!"

"I—I—I——" stuttered the Jam.

"No time to lose. You can do the slaughtering now, and you'll be taken away to-night, and you'll have time to pack a few things to use in prison," Figgins explained, "and if there's any other fellow you're annoyed with you can kill him, too; you won't get it any worse for five than for four, you know. There's no extra charge for quantities."

The Jam looked dubiously at Figgins & Co. He could hardly believe that the three Fourth-Formers were in earnest. But they looked quite serious and solemn. Strange to say, now that his friends were ready to help him in the work of homicide, it did not seem to appeal to Koumi Rao so much. He felt that, after all, perhaps he would not care so very much to imbrue his hands in the blood of Levison and Mellish, of the Fourth, and Gore and Crooke, of the Shell. But he could not back out now that the Co. had taken up the matter seriously, and he marched out of the study with them, to seek first for a deadly weapon, and then for the School House juniors, who had been so relentlessly sentenced to death.

CHAPTER 4.

No Casualties.

"HALLO, Figg!"

"Neither gr;?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Such were the greetings that met the Co. as they arrived at the School House. The chums of Study No. 6—Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, of the Fourth—were on the School House steps, chatting about football and fireworks and other subjects of great interest. But they gave all their

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attention to Figgins & Co. as the New House quartette hove in sight.

Figgins held up his hand in sign of peace. "Pax," he said, "this isn't a House row. We've come over here on serious business—matter of life and death."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You don't say so, Figgay, deah boy? Is somebody ill?"

"Not yet," said Figgins darkly.

"Gweat Scott! What a vevy odd wemark! Do you mean to say that somebody is goin' to be ill?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's, in astonishment.

"That's it—four of 'em. Can any of you fellows lend Koumi Rao a chopper?"

"A—a—choppah!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Yes."

"Bai Jove! What for?"

"What on earth does he want a chopper for?" demanded Blake. "And if he wants a chopper, why can't he borrow Taggles's wood chopper?"

"We've asked Taggles, but he wouldn't lend it to us," explained Kerr.

"You should have offahed him a tip, deah boy. Taggles will do anythin' for a tip," said Arthur Augustus sagely.

"Offered him a bob!" said Figgins.

"My hat, you offered the porter a tip of a bob to lend you his wood chopper, and he wouldn't do it!" exclaimed Herries.

"Yes, when he knew what Koumi Rao wanted it for."

"What on earth does he want it for?" exclaimed Blake.

"Not going to pawn it, I suppose?"

"No. He's going to kill Crooke, of the Shell!" Figgins explained.

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And Levison and Mellish and Gore," said Kerr. "That's simply business, you know. As he will go to chokey for life for killing Crooke, he thinks he may as well make a clean sweep. Have you chaps got a chopper you could lend him? He wants to get it over before locking-up."

"So sorry," said Blake politely; "we haven't a chopper. Finn, of the Shell, has a bowie-knife—quite a fearsome thing. I'll borrow it for Koumi Rao, if you like."

"Good egg!" said Figgins heartily. "We'll wait inside. Come on, Jammy. Keep an eye open in case the giddy victims scent you and try to get away."

The Jam was looking more and more dubious. Quite a crowd of fellows gathered round when it was learned what Figgins & Co. had come over to the School House for. Some of them were grinning, but some looked very grave. Figgins & Co. might have been judges on the bench, from their gravity. But a glimmering suspicion was born in the Jam's mind that he was being hoaxed.

"You make joke of me!" he exclaimed, in a fierce, suppressed voice.

Figgins looked at him in surprise.

"Joke!" he repeated, in astonishment. "What do you mean? This is no joke, you know. It's quite a serious matter to kill four juniors at any school, especially at St. Jim's, where that kind of thing is always discouraged."

"Always!" said Kerr solemnly.

"Hardly ever occurs," said Fatty Wynn, with equal solemnity.

"Wathah excitin' when it does, though," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway don't be impatient, Jammy, deah boy. Blake will be back with that knife in a few minutes; it's in Finn's studay, you know."

The Terrible Three of the Shell came out of the common-room as they spotted the crowd in the passage.

"Hallo, what's on?" asked Tom Merry.

"Blake's gone for the knife," said Figgins.

Tom Merry stared.

"Finn's knife," Figgins explained. "The Jam is going to kill Crooke, and we've come to see it done, and then we're going to see the Jam off when the police come for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a laughing matter," said Figgins severely.

"Crooke will very likely feel horribly rattled about it."

"I suppose he will naturally be rather cut up," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help grinning. They knew Finn's bowie-knife. Buck Finn was an American junior, and he

came from the Far West. He had brought a huge bowie-knife to St. Jim's with him, among other souvenirs of his boyhood on the plains of Arizona. That bowie-knife had been inspected with great admiration by the juniors, till Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, heard about it, and he had promptly deprived Finn of the dangerous instrument. But Finn was allowed to have it back on condition that the blade was removed. The case, with the knife-handle fastened in it, was an ornament on the wall of Finn's study in the Shell passage, and the blade was under lock and key in Mr. Linton's room. The idea of furnishing the Jam with a bladeless knife to commit his murders with tickled the juniors very much. And all the fellows entered cheerfully into Figgins's solemn scheme for "rotting" the homicidal Hindu.

"Bai Jove! Hesh he is!"

Jack Blake came back with the bowie-knife. All the juniors knew it by sight, and they grinned. But the Jam was a new boy, and he had not yet made acquaintance with Buck Finn's famous bowie-knife.

"Here you are!" said Blake. "Levison and Mellish are in their study. Lumley-Lumley and Rook are with them, but they won't interfere, so long as you don't spill any of the blood over their books and things. Crooke is in his study, too. I looked in as I came down. Come on!"

"I—I—" murmured the Jam.

"No time like the present," said Figgins. "I'm rather sorry for Crooke. If he'd had a longer notice he might have made his will, and perhaps he would have left me his bike. But it can't be helped. Come on!"

"What's up here?" asked Kildare, of the Sixth, bearing down on the growing crowd. "What is the little game now?"

"Nothing much," said Tom Merry. "The Jam has come over here to kill Crooke, that's all."

"What!" roared Kildare.

"It's all right," said Blake. "I've fetched him a knife, and it will be over in a few minutes. Come on, Jammy!"

They rushed the Jam upstairs before the astonished captain of St. Jim's could speak again. Tom Merry knocked at the door of Crooke's study and opened it. Crooke was alone there, and he was smoking a cigarette—one of the little ways he had. He stared at the juniors as they came crowding in, with the Jam, now decidedly reluctant, in their midst.

"Hallo, what have you brought the nigger here for?" he asked. "Going to use him for a guy in the procession tomorrow? I suggested that; it's my idea."

The Jam's eyes began to roll again.

"Dog!" he hissed, between his gleaming teeth. "Dog! In Bundelpore I would have you whipped to death by slaves!"

"My hat!" said Crooke. "Bundelpore must be a healthy place to keep out of. But what have you bounders brought the darkey here for?"

"He's going to kill you," Figgins explained.

Crooke jumped up.

"What!" he roared.

"Here you are, Jammy," said Blake. "The handle is stuck rather tight in the sheath, but you will be able to draw it. Put Crooke out of his pain at once. No need to pile on the agony, you know. As soon as you've finished, I'll mention the matter to Mr. Railton, and he can telephone for the police."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Jam took the sheath in his dusky fingers, with a curious reluctance. Having come to the point, he discovered that, after all, he did not really want to kill Crooke. "And the prospect of a cell in a lifelong prison, instead of his comfortable study at St. Jim's, did not please him. However, it was up to him to keep his princely word, and he could not back out under a crowd of curious eyes.

"Take that lunatic away," said Crooke, snatching the poker from the fender. "If he comes near me, I'll brain him."

"Pile in, Jam!"

"Under the fifth rib is the best," said Monty Lowther.

"Buck up! I can hear Kildare coming upstairs," called out Manners, from the passage. "There isn't much time."

"I'll hold him back for a moment," said Kangaroo.

"Pile in, Jam!"

The Jam grasped the sheath in his left hand, and seized the handle of the bowie-knife in his right, and tugged at it. As the handle was, in fact, riveted in its place, it did not draw forth. The Jam tugged away furiously.

"Here comes Kildare!" called out Clifton Dane.

"Pile in, Jam!"

The Jam gave a terrific tug, and dragged out the knife-handle as Kildare reached the study door. The face of the Jam was a study as he saw that there was no blade

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attached to the handle. He had had his suspicions before, but now he knew for certain that the Co. were rotting him. There was a yell of laughter from the crowd of juniors as the Jam stood gazing speechlessly at the bladeless handle.

"Pile in, Jammy!"
"Under the fifth rib!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Quite easy to handle him, anyway," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You make fun of me!" shrieked the Jam. "You laugh!"

"Well, yes," said Figgins, as if considering the matter, "I think this is where we laugh! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"
The Jam rolled his eyes and ground his white teeth, and hurled the handle and the sheath upon the floor. Then he lunged himself out of the study, right into the arms of Kildare. And Kildare closed a firm grasp upon his collar, and led him away.

CHAPTER 5.

Glyn is Too Kind.

"HA, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove! I wegard that as vewy funnay!"
Figgins wiped his eyes.

"Kildare was an extra super in this scene," he remarked. "We didn't mean the silly ass to get into a row. We must get him away from Kildare."

And Figgins & Co. followed the Jam to Kildare's study. The captain of St. Jim's had marched the Hindu there, with an iron grip on his collar. Koumi Rao had gone quietly. He was already learning that prefects could not be argued with. He had come to St. Jim's with the firm conviction that hands could not be laid upon his princely and sacred person. He had been undecieved in a very short time.

Kildare marched him into the study, and released him, and picked up a cane. The Jam eyed that cane warily.

"Do you want a hiding?" asked Kildare.
"Thank you so much," said the Jam politely. "I do not desire it."

"Then you're to stop talking that stage-play rot of yours. Do you understand? I don't believe you will kill a mouse, as a matter of fact, and you're not to talk about killing people. Do you hear?"

"He has called me a nigger!"
"If you complain of that, I will punish him."

"No, no; I do not wish to sneak!" the Jam exclaimed. He had learned that much very early from Figgins & Co.

Kildare laid down the cane.
"I won't lick you," he said. "You don't belong to my House, anyway; but Monteith wouldn't let you off so lightly if he heard you talking such rot. You're to stop it—do you understand?—or you'll get into trouble."

"I say, Kildare, old man—" Figgins looked into the study.

"You can take him away!" said Kildare.
"Thanks! He's really quite harmless, and we shall cure him of his funny little ways in time," said Figgins.

And the New House Co. seized the Jam and marched him out. They walked him back to the New House, the Jam very silent and clouded—not quite certain whether he would be offended or whether he would laugh at the joke against himself.

"You make fun of me!" he exclaimed.
Figgins chuckled.

"Well, do you want us to take you seriously, you chump, when you talk about blood and slaughter?" he demanded. "We're going to rot you till you stop it. Now, come up to the study and have some chestnuts, and don't get on the high horse."

And the Jam, who had ridden the high horse very much on his arrival at St. Jim's, but who had found that stood more and more uncomfortable as time passed on, decided to take Figgins & Co.'s little jape in good part; and, indeed, his fits of fury, violent as they were, never lasted long. He was all dusky smiles by the time they reached the study.

The study was not empty. Bernard Glyn of the Shell was sitting in the armchair. He had a pencil in his hand, and a paper on his knee, and seemed deep in some mathematical calculation—so deep that he did not notice the entrance of the owners of the study.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Figgins.
Glyn started, and looked up.

"Hallo! I came over here to see you, so I waited. I'm

going to let you chaps into a good thing," said the school-boy inventor impressively.

"Taken a sudden fancy to the New House?" asked Figgins. "Leaving your own side out in the cold?"

"The silly chumps!" said Glyn. "They've been ragging me over there; though I've made a simply marvellous invention. They've smashed up my things, and chucked a lot of them into the river, you know, and now I'm at a standstill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to laugh at. I was making some ripping fireworks for to-morrow. It would save a heap of money. They've chucked all my materials into the river, simply because there was some slight danger of the House being blown up," said Glyn indignantly.

"Go hon!"

"But I'll tell you what!" said Glyn. "I'll come over here, and work in your study, if you like, and make the fireworks here. I shall have to leave the new explosive for a bit. But I can make the fireworks here, and there's practically no danger of an explosion."

"Only practically?" said Figgins sarcastically.

"I've got a dodge for a jumping cracker of a new kind," pursued Glyn eagerly. "You light it, and it explodes twelve times in succession, and at the same time sends off showers of different coloured sparks. What do you think of that? I finished one of them, and I've got it in my pocket now. I'll show it to you."

Glyn took the jumping cracker from his pocket. The New House Co. looked at it with interest.

"I could make dozens, you know," said Glyn. "We'll go into it together, and you chaps will get the benefit. I'll just light one, and you can see what a ripping thing it is."

"Not here!" shouted Figgins, as Glyn stooped over the fire.

"I've done it now! Oh, my hat! Yow!" roared Glyn, as the cracker exploded, and he dropped it, and sucked his fingers wildly. "Ow! It went off a bit too quick! Ow!"

"Bang, bang, bang, bang!"

"Yow! Ow! Ow!"

"You ass!" roared Figgins wrathfully. "You'll set the place on fire! Put it out!"

"Ow! Can't! Ow!"

"Bang, bang, bang!"

The jumping cracker was true to its name. It jumped wildly about the study as it exploded with a succession of terrific reports. And at each explosion there was a shower of sparks, and the study was filled with them, and with the powerful smell of gunpowder. Fellows came tearing along the passage in alarm, and there were already cries of "Fire!"

Figgins jumped at the cracker, to stamp it out as it fell. Unfortunately, Kerr jumped at it at the same moment, with the same intention.

Bump!

They crashed into one another and Kerr went down, with Figgins sprawling over him. The cracker hopped away, and went on merrily cracking.

"Bang, bang, bang!"

"Ow! My nose!"

"Ow! My chin!"

"Oh, my fingers!" groaned Bernard Glyn. "It exploded too quick!"

"Bang, bang!"

The cracker was finished now, fortunately. Fatty Wynn was crushing out sparks as they settled, with a newspaper. Figgins and Kerr rubbed nose and chin, which had come into violent collision, and Glyn sucked his fingers. He had had a very painful shock from the too early explosion of the cracker.

"Collar him!" said Figgins sulphurously. "We'll teach him to bring his blessed inventions into the New House!"

"Here, hold on!" roared Glyn. "I came over here to do you a favour. I'm going to make all my fireworks here, and let you—yah!—oh!—leggo!—yaroo!"

Figgins and Kerr and Wynn did not trouble to speak. They grasped the schoolboy inventor, and rushed him headlong out of the study. Figgins had hold of him round the neck, and Kerr had one leg, and Fatty Wynn an arm. The rest of him trailed on the floor as they rushed him away.

Down the stairs they went, and through the open doorway to the steps on the quadrangle, and there they hurled him forth.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

Bernard Glyn sat up dazedly. If ever there was a misunderstood and persecuted genius, it was Glyn of the Shell. He felt it keenly. And he felt more than that—he felt as if he was clothed in bruises and bumps as in a garment.

"Clear off!" roared Figgins.

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"Ow, ow!"

And the schoolboy inventor limped away to the School House with an inward resolve that he would never try to do the New House fellows any more favours.

CHAPTER 6.

Done in the Dark!

GORE of the Shell came into the common-room in the School House with a scowl on his face.

That circumstance did not attract special notice. There was very frequently a scowl upon George Gore's face. But Gore proceeded to air his wrongs verbally.

"It's rotten!" he snorted.

"Hallo, what's the matter now?" asked Tom Merry.

"Has Kildare caught you bullying a fag and larruped you?"

"Oh, go and eat coke! It's old Ratty!" And Gore rubbed his hands painfully.

There was a general exclamation.

"Ratty!"

"Yes, blow him!"

The School House juniors were interested at once. Mr. Ratcliff was master of the New House, and master of the Fifth, and he had no right whatever to interfere with School House boys who were not in the Fifth Form. Mr. Ratcliff—Ratty for short—was of an interfering disposition, however, and he often encroached upon Mr. Railton's province. And the School House boys were quick to resent anything of the sort. Gore, the bully of the Shell, was not popular, but all the School House fellows were ready to back him up against any interference from the Housemaster "over the way."

"What's he done?" asked Crooke.

"Tell us what's happened," said Tom Merry more cordially. "If Ratty has been chipping into our affairs, he will have to sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I stwongly disappwove of Mr. Watchiff's intahfewin' mannahs and customs."

"Unfold the tale of wrong," said Kangaroo sympathetically. "Relate the harrowing circumstances, and—"

"Oh, rats!" said Gore. "It's all through Ratty sucking up to that blessed nigger. Nothing is too good for Koumi Rao, because he's a prince of sorts in his own rotten country. Ratty coddles him."

"Yaas, Watty is wathah a tuft-huntah," agreed D'Arcy. "I have remarked that several times. But what does it mattah to you, Goah! Koumi Wao is in the New House, and you needn't see Watty butterin' him."

"He's caned me."

"Caned a School House chap!" exclaimed Kangaroo indignantly. "Oh, that's too thick!"

"The cheek!"

"The frightful nerve!"

"Complain to Mr. Railton," said Crooke.

"I've a jolly good mind to," growled Gore, "only—"

He paused.

"Only what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Railton would back Ratty up this time!" snarled Gore.

Tom Merry looked at him keenly.

"I suppose that means that you have been playing some rotten trick on Koumi Rao," he exclaimed, "and Ratty caught you at it. If that's the case, he had a right to cane you, and I hope he laid it on hard."

"You weren't so friendly with the nigger when he first came," sneered Gore. "I was simply talking to him—just called him a nigger as I passed the New House, that was all—and old Ratty heard me, and called me in and caned me."

"Serve you right," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! You show a wemarkable ignowance of ethnology, Goah, in chawactewisin' a Hindo as a negwo. He is not a negwo. Besides, you ought not to use the word niggah as a term of wepwoach. It might offend a negwo if he happened to heah you, and that would be vewy bad taste."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Gore. "I'll make Ratty sit up for it. He gave me four on each hand, and jolly hard, too!"

"Well, that was wathah wuff; but, upon the whole, I must say that you deserved it, Goah, for applyin' oppwobious expwessions to Koumi Wao."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Goah—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"I don't see why Koumi Rao can't be called a nigger," said Crooke. "I've called him a nigger, and I'll call him a nigger again."

"He punched your nose for it," said Tom Merry, "and you came near being executed, if Finn's bowie-knife had only had a blade."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The murderous rotter!" said Crooke. "He's not safe. He'll break out some day and do some real damage. I'm not

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afraid of him, but I expect every day he'll stick a knife into me, or something of the sort."

"Let him alone, then."

"Oh, rats!"

"Same here," said Gore. "He ought to be put into a reformatory—that's what he wants. I wish I could get even with Ratty!"

"You deserved what you got," said Tom Merry disdainfully. "You won't get much sympathy here, I can tell you. Go and eat coke."

Gore stamped out of the common-room. His hands were smarting, and he was in a savage temper; but he did not care to pick a quarrel with Tom Merry. His chief longing was for vengeance upon Ratty. He wanted it badly, and he wanted it at once. Mr. Ratcliff was very much given to using the cane, but he certainly ought to have reported Gore to his own Housemaster, instead of caning him himself. Gore strode out into the gloomy quadrangle, with his eyes gleaming under his knitted brows.

"Whither bound?" asked Levison, who had followed him from the common-room.

Gore paused on the School House steps.

"Nowhere in particular," he growled. "I wish—"

"What?" asked Levison, eyeing him keenly.

"I wish I could get a chance at Ratty!" said Gore, between his teeth. "The way he crawls up to that nigger is sickening. And he gave me four on each hand. I couldn't have got it worse if I'd slanged Ratty himself instead of the nigger."

"Ratty takes his evening constitutional about this time," said Levison carelessly.

Gore started and looked at him.

"What about it?" asked the Shell fellow.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"He's caned me twice for ragging the nigger," he said.

"I was thinking—" He cast a cautious glance round and lowered his voice. "It's quite dark under the elms where he takes his little trot. A fellow could sling something at him and bolt, and it would be put down to the New House chaps. They all hate him in his own House, especially Figgins & Co.—he's specially down on them."

Gore drew a deep breath.

"I'm on!" he muttered. "Come with me."

"No, thanks, I'd rather not. But if you like—"

"Funk!" growled Gore.

"I've given you the idea," yawned Levison. "You can do as you like."

"You want to use me as a catspaw!" growled Gore.

"Well, please yourself."

Levison strolled into the house, whistling. He knew that Gore was in a dangerous temper, and that his unscrupulous hint had fallen upon fruitful soil. And he did not intend to remain in the gloomy quadrangle. He wanted to be able to prove an alibi in case there should be any unusual happenings there. That was very like Levison of the Fourth—to use another and more courageous and reckless fellow to pay off his scores. He had no fancy for risking punishment himself.

Gore stared savagely after the Fourth-Former for a few moments, and then strode away into the darkness with his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

He paused in the deep shadow of the elms.

The stinging of the cane, and the sarcastic lash of Mr. Ratcliff's bitter tongue, rankled with him, and he was in a mood for anything. If Mr. Ratcliff came by on his usual evening walk—Gore's eyes glittered, and he groped for a stone. As if destiny were playing into his hands, his fingers found one at once, and closed upon it. He clutched it tight as he stood there in the darkness under the trees.

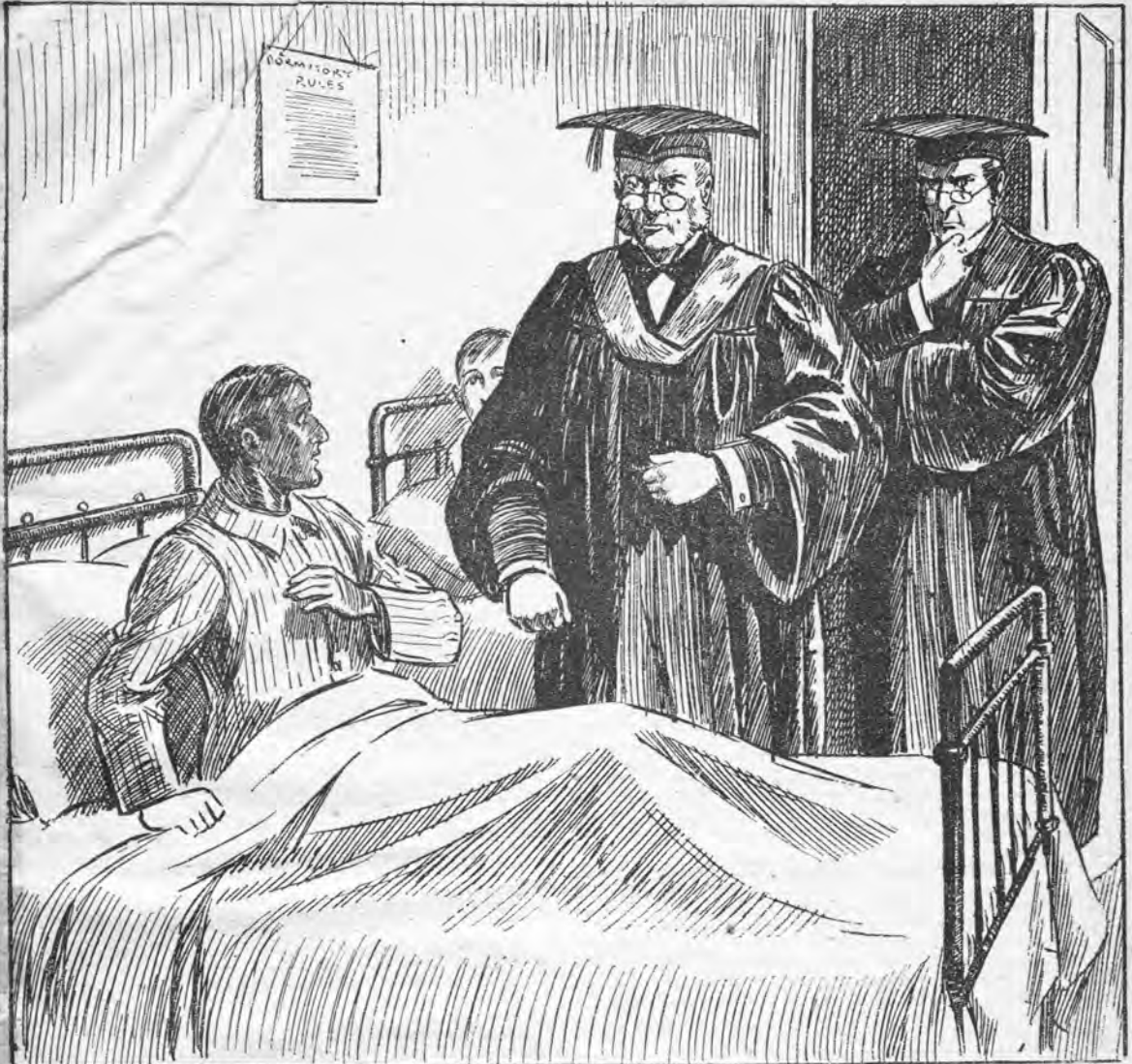
If Ratty came by—

After all, discovery was impossible. Mr. Ratcliff's tyranny in his own House made many of the fellows there very bitter against him, and in the Fifth Form he was detested. If he were hurt—not seriously, of course—but a hard knock that would make him sorry for himself—a buff on the chest with the stone—he would suspect some junior in his own House. But he would not be able to prove it. Nobody would be punished. Gore was not wicked enough to think of fixing what he did upon someone else; but he said to himself that nobody would be punished, and, therefore—

Footsteps under the dark trees interrupted his rapid thoughts. A vague shadow loomed up in the darkness, and Gore, without stopping to think, raised his hand, and flung the stone. He calculated rapidly a height of about five feet from the ground, intending to catch the Housemaster full on the chest.

Whiz!

There was a sharp cry and a fall. But Gore did not stay to see what harm he had done. He dashed off at top speed, and vanished in the darkness. He hurried round the gymnasium, and then slackened down to a walk and strolled into the building. A little pale and with a fast-beating



Dr. Holmes advanced to the bedside of the dusky prince, his face very grave and stern. "Koumi Rao, I have some serious questions to put to you!" he said, in his deep voice. (See Chapter 8.)

heart, but outwardly composed, he strolled into the gym, and joined the fellows there.

What would happen now?

He expected to hear an outcry from the quadrangle, but there was no alarm. Gore wondered. A blow, however hard, upon the chest, could not have hurt the New House master very much. He could not have been incapacitated by the blow. Then why did he not make some outcry, some disturbance? Had he gone straight to the New House in search of his assailant?

At all events, Gore was safe. He remained in the gym, till close upon bedtime, and then went back to the School House with a crowd of fellows. It was a quarter of an hour since his savage and cowardly deed under the elms in the darkness, and still there had been no alarm.

CHAPTER 7. Struck Down!

KILDARE looked into the junior common-room in the School House.

"Bed!" he said laconically.

"Wait a minute till I mate!" said Manners, who was playing chess with Tom Merry. "I've got this kid fixed; mate in one!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry promptly. "You're mate yourself in two."

"Bosh!" said Manners. "With my rook——"

"Blow your rook! With my knight——"

Kildare laughed.

"You can settle the rival claims of the rook and the knight to-morrow," he observed. "At present it's bedtime. Off with you!"

And the Shell fellows marched out of the common-room to go to their dormitory. Darrel, of the Sixth, was shepherding the Fourth off to their quarters. In the Shell dormitory Kildare glanced over the juniors. He missed one of them.

"Where's Crooke?" he asked.

"Not here," said Tom Merry, looking round. "Anybody seen Crooke?"

"He went out into the quad. some time ago," said Kangaroo. "I fancy he was going to the New House."

"What was he going to the New House for?" asked Kildare sharply.

"Trouble with the Jam. The Jam punched his nose for calling him a nigger, and the chaps have been chipping Crooke about it."

"Well, he can't be in the New House now; it's locking-up time," said Kildare. "He will get warmed for being late for bed, the young ass! Turn in, you kids! I suppose he will be in in a few minutes."

The Shell fellows turned in, but Crooke did not appear. Kildare put out the light, with a frowning brow, and left the dormitory. He left the juniors in a buzz. They could not understand what had become of Crooke.

"Where on earth has he got to?" exclaimed Gore. "He

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"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!"

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would be turned out of the New House before this, if he were there. Kildare will lick him for staying out like this."

"Did you see anything of him in the quad?" asked Lowther.

"I? No."

"You went out just before him."

"Oh, I went to the gym!" said Gore carelessly.

"It's jolly queer," said Kangaroo. "I say, that idiot, Koumi Rao, can't have done anything to him, can he? He might have found a knife with a blade to it—"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry uneasily. "What a rotten idea!"

"Well, he's a queer beggar."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gore promptly. "In fact, I think it's jolly likely. If anything has happened to Crooke we shall know jolly well who did it."

"Rot!" said Tom. "Nothing's happened to him."

"Then why doesn't he come in?"

"Blessed if I know!"

The minutes passed, but the dormitory door did not open. Not a fellow thought of sleep. Crooke's absence was utterly inexplicable, and the suggestion that the passionate Hindu might have broken out at last and done him some injury made all the fellows uneasy. Tom Merry, who had had his own experience of Koumi Rao's wild and wayward nature, was most uneasy of all.

"I wish he'd come in," Tom exclaimed. "Where on earth can he be? I'm going to see if anything's heard of him yet."

And he turned out of bed and hurried on his clothes.

"Same here!" said Kangaroo.

Three or four of the juniors dressed themselves. They were growing very anxious. They left the dormitory and stole along to the head of the stairs and looked down into the lighted hall. Mr. Railton was standing there, talking to Kildare, and both of them were looking puzzled and anxious.

"I've been to the New House, sir," Kildare was saying. "The fellows there say they haven't seen him. I spoke to Mr. Ratcliff, too."

"It is very strange," said Mr. Railton. "Where can he be? Surely nothing can have happened to a boy within the walls of the school?"

"I—I suppose not," said Kildare slowly.

Mr. Railton looked at him sharply.

"What is in your mind, Kildare? You had better tell me."

"I understand that Crooke had a quarrel with Koumi Rao, sir. One of the juniors thinks he was going over to the New House to quarrel with the Indian. Koumi Rao is a very peculiar kid. He was uttering threats against Crooke this evening, for calling him names. The juniors made a joke of it; but the Indian is very peculiar in some things, and—"

Kildare broke off.

Mr. Railton's face was very grave.

"This is serious," he said. "I can hardly believe that Koumi Rao can have done him any harm, Kildare. Did you see the Jam when you called there?"

"Yes, sir, and asked him if he had seen Crooke."

"And what did he say?"

"That he had not seen Crooke since he saw him in his study in this house, when he came over with Figgins and some other New House boys."

"Crooke must be looked for," said the Housemaster. "Ask the other prefects to join you, Kildare, and take lanterns and search the quadrangle for him."

"Certainly, sir!"

A slight sound on the stairs drew Mr. Railton's eyes in that direction, and he glanced up. Kangaroo backed away hastily out of sight, and trod on Tom Merry's toe in doing so, and there was an exclamation of anguish.

"Ow!"

"Some of the juniors are out of bed, apparently," said the School House master. "Come downstairs at once, all of you!"

Tom Merry and Lowther and Kangaroo and Clifton Dane reluctantly showed themselves. The Housemaster eyed them sternly.

"What are you doing out of the dormitory?" he demanded.

"Ahem! If you please, sir—" began Tom.

"We were anxious about Crooke, sir," said Kangaroo.

"May we help look for him, sir?"

"Yes, if you like," said Mr. Railton shortly.

"Thank you, sir!"

The four juniors soon fetched lanterns and joined the prefects, and the search for Crooke commenced.

It was pretty certain by this time that something had happened to the missing junior. Otherwise, it was inexplicable that he had not returned to his House.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Up and down and round about the old quad, the searchers went, flashing the lights to and fro and calling on Crooke by name.

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "What's that?"

The juniors stopped suddenly, shivering.

From the darkness under the old elms came a low groan.

The sound seemed almost to freeze their blood.

"We've found him, then!" muttered Tom Merry huskily.

"Good heavens! What can have happened?"

"He's hurt!" said Kangaroo, in a whisper.

They moved under the dark trees, flashing the light before them.

"There he is!"

Under the trees, on the dark turf, a form was stretched.

It was Crooke, of the Shell!

He lay upon his side, and was half-conscious, and there was a dark red stain upon his face. The juniors knew what that stain was, and they trembled with horror as they drew nearer to him. They had not liked Crooke—few fellows at St. Jim's liked him—but at the sight of the unfortunate junior stretched there, with blood upon his face, groaning, their only feelings were compassion and sympathy, and bitter indignation against the wretch whose hand had done the deed.

Tom Merry dropped on his knees beside the junior.

"Crooke, old man—"

The Shell fellow groaned.

There was a big, black bruise and a cut on his forehead over his right eye, and the blood from the cut had flowed down and stained his face and his collar. He gazed at the juniors in the lantern-light with wild eyes.

"Help!" he moaned feebly. "I—I—something hit me. I—I—oh, my head!"

"Call Kildare!" said Tom Merry.

He raised Crooke's head and supported it. Crooke groaned again.

"Something hit me. I didn't see anybody. Oh, my head! That nigger, of course; he was waiting for me, I suppose. I knew he'd do it. I told you fellows so, didn't I? The villain! Oh, my head!"

The effort of speaking exhausted Crooke. His eyes closed. He had fainted.

Kildare came up breathlessly.

"You've found him?"

"He's hurt," said Tom Merry. "He says something hit him, and he saw nobody. He's had a frightful knock on the forehead."

"And this is what did it!" said Kangaroo, picking up a large heavy stone from the grass. "There's blood on it!"

"Bring it in with you," said Kildare. "We must carry Crooke in. Lend a hand, Darrel, will you?"

Kildare and Darrel and Langton carried Crooke into the School House. Mr. Railton met them in the hall, and uttered an exclamation of horror at the sight of the white, bloodstained face.

"Get him to his bed at once!" he said. "I will telephone for the doctor, and then come up to him."

"Yes, sir."

And Crooke was taken up to bed. And in the Shell dormitory in the School House there was wild excitement.

CHAPTER 8.

Found Guilty.

FIGGINS started and awoke.

It was past ten o'clock, and all the fellows were asleep in the Fourth-Form Dormitory in the New House.

They had not expected to be disturbed until the rising-bell clanged out on the following morning.

But events were not following their usual quiet tenor at St. Jim's that night. Figgins awoke with the sound of voices in his ears and light flashing in his eyes. And most of the other fellows awoke at the same moment.

"Wake up, boys!"

It was Mr. Ratcliff's sharp, harsh voice.

Figgins sat up in bed and blinked round him in astonishment. The dormitory door was open, and Mr. Ratcliff was there. He had turned on the electric light. Mr. Railton was there, too, and Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's.

Figgins simply gaped in amazement. What could possibly have happened to bring the School House master and the Head of St. Jim's to the New House at that hour?

"Has anything happened, sir?" gasped Figgins.

"Yes," said Mr. Ratcliff. "You need not speak, Figgins. This matter does not concern you. Koumi Rao, wake up!"

The dusky junior sat up in bed.

"I am awake, sir," he said.

"Dr. Holmes wishes to question you."

"Yes, sir," said the Jam, in wonder.

Dr. Holmes advanced to the bedside of the dusky prince. His face was very grave and stern.

"Koumi Rao, I have some questions to put to you!" he said, in his deep voice, which was very sharp now, and in contrast to his usual kindly tones.

"Yes, sir," said the Jam.

"You have stated to Kildare that you did not meet Crooke of the Shell in the quadrangle after dark this evening?"

"That is true, sir."

"Where were you, Koumi Rao, after half-past eight o'clock?"

"In my study, sir, doing my preparation."

"Was anyone with you?"

"Koumi Rao has a study to himself, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff. It was evident that the New House master was disposed to take the Jam's side in the matter. "He was put into Figgins's study at first, but that was altered. Naturally, there would be no one with him, as he has a study all to himself."

"I was alone in my study, sir," said Koumi Rao. "All the fellows were doing their prep. in their studies, sir. I went to see Figgins when I had finished."

"At what time?"

"Just before bedtime, sir."

"And from half-past eight till after nine—"

"I was working in my study, sir. But I don't understand," said the Jam, puzzled. "Does Crooke say I met him in the quad? And where is the harm if I did?"

"You have quarrelled with Crooke, Koumi Rao?"

"He called me names, sir," said the Jam, a flush rising to his dark cheek, and a glitter coming into his eyes.

"You have been heard to utter threats against him, Koumi Rao—threats quite out of proportion to any offence he may have given you. In short, have you, or have you not, uttered threats against his life?"

The Head's voice was deep and stern, and it sent a thrill through the juniors as they heard it.

"Yes, sir," said Koumi Rao.

"You were wicked enough and foolish enough to utter such threats?" the Head exclaimed, as if astonished at the Jam's admission.

"He insulted me!" said the Jam, his eyes blazing. "In my country I would have had him whipped by my slaves! I would have killed him in my palace at Bundelpore! The dog! He insulted me—the Prince of Bundelpore, the lord of a thousand spears!"

"I think we need seek no further," said the Head. "You admit, then, Koumi Rao, that you committed that wicked and savage attack upon Crooke in the quadrangle?"

The Jam stared blankly.

"I, sir! Has Crooke been attacked? I did not know. I explained to Kildare that I had not seen him since I saw him in his study in the School House."

"Do you still make that assertion?"

"Certainly, sir! It is true."

"Listen to me!" said the Head sternly. "Crooke has been attacked in the quadrangle. Someone waylaid him under the elms, and struck him down with a heavy stone. He was stunned, and lay unconscious for a considerable time. His condition is serious now. Fortunately, there is no danger to his life; but he will be an invalid for a long time—incapacitated by this cruel and brutal attack. It appears that he was coming over here to seek a quarrel with you. You knew he was coming?"

"No, sir."

"You did not slip out to meet him, and waylay him under the trees, armed with a stone?"

"No, sir."

"You deny having attacked him?"

"Certainly I do, sir!" exclaimed the Jam. "I did not know that anything had happened to him at all."

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

"I am sorry I cannot believe you, Koumi Rao. There is conclusive evidence that you have uttered threats against Crooke, threatening even his life. I did not know of it. I never dreamed that such was your character, or you would assuredly never have been admitted to this school, to live among civilised boys. It is impossible to suppose that any other boy has attacked Crooke in this wanton manner. He had no enemies here; and you, and you alone, have uttered savage threats towards him!"

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another in horror.

There was no doubt in their faces, or in their minds. The half-civilised Indian had broken out, that was all. Figgins was very white.

"Oh, you fool—you fool!" he muttered.

The Jam glanced at him quickly. Figgins was the one fellow at St. Jim's for whom the Jam entertained feelings of affection. The look upon Figgins's horror-stricken face seemed to strike him like a blow. He leaped from his bed, his eyes blazing with excitement, his hands trembling.

"Figgins," he panted, "you—you do not believe this! You do not believe that I have done this?"

"Of course you have!" said Figgins. "Who else would have done it?"

"But I—I—" the Jam shrieked. "I would not have done it! I would not have attacked him in the dark, like an assassin! And, besides, I—I would not really have hurt him. In my anger I said it; but I did not mean it."

Figgins shook his head.

"I cannot believe you, Koumi Rao," said the Head coldly. "Mr. Ratcliff, will you kindly see that Koumi Rao is taken to the punishment-room, and locked in safely. Whether the police will have to be communicated with, I cannot decide yet. But, at all events, the wretched boy must be kept secure."

"I cannot believe that he is guilty, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff. Though whether he was influenced by want of evidence, or by the fact that Koumi Rao was a prince, we will not undertake to say.

"Unfortunately, the evidence is only too clear," said the Head coldly. "Please see that he is secured."

"Very well, sir. Dress yourself, Koumi Rao."

Koumi Rao dressed himself without another word. The juniors looked on in horrified silence. What had happened was terrible, and might easily have been tragic. There was not the slightest doubt in their minds of Koumi Rao's guilt. They had seen him in his rages, grinding his teeth, clenching his hands, quivering with passion. It was only too easy to believe that in such a mood he had met Crooke in the darkness of the quadrangle and struck him down.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Ratcliff left the dormitory. Mr. Ratcliff remained to conduct the Jam to the punishment-room. He had already given orders for the room to be prepared for him.

"Follow me, Koumi Rao," he said.

"Yes, sir. One moment, if you please."

Koumi Rao crossed over to Figgins's bed. He fixed an imploring glance upon the New House junior captain.

"Figgins," he muttered huskily, "you don't believe this—you don't believe I did a cowardly thing like that?"

"What's the good of denying it?" said Figgins. "I thought you were learning better. But I suppose you can't help it. You ought never to have come to St. Jim's at all."

"You doubt my word—the word of a prince?"

Figgins made an impatient gesture.

"Don't get on the high horse now!" he exclaimed. "This isn't a time for it. You've done a rotten, beastly thing, and you'll be sacked, if you're not sent to prison! I warned you often enough what would come of it if you didn't keep your beastly temper in check."

"You have said that you were my friend—my chum," said the Jam wistfully. "But now you will not take my word. Have you known me to lie?"

"Never till now!" said Figgins honestly.

"Yet you do not believe me?"

"I can't believe you. After what you've said, only this evening, how can you expect anybody to believe you?"

"But I—I—Figgins! It is true, upon my word—the word of the Prince of Bundelpore!"

"A prince's word is no better than anybody else's word, that I know of," said Figgins. "And yours isn't worth much time. I don't believe you."

"Same here!" said Kerr.

"Better own up!" urged Fatty Wynn. "You'll have to get out of the school, anyway, you know. May as well tell the truth."

The Jam glanced from one to the other of the Co., an almost wild look upon his dusky face, and then crossed to the door. He did not speak another word. Mr. Ratcliff put the light out in the dormitory and retired, and the Jam followed him. The closing of the dormitory door was the signal for the outbreak of a buzz of excited talk, and it was a late hour before the juniors slept. But, much as they discussed the matter, there was only one opinion among the New House juniors—the Jam of Bundelpore had been guilty of that cowardly attack upon Crooke of the Shell, and the Jam of Bundelpore was going to get it "in the neck."

CHAPTER 9.

A Case of Conscience.

GORE of the Shell came out of the School House in the early dawn.

The rising-bell had not sounded yet, but Gore was wakeful.

He had hardly closed his eyes all night.

While the other fellows, full of compassion for Crooke, were expressing strong opinions on the subject of the Jam of Bundelpore and his murderous temper, George Gore knew very well what the truth of the matter was. In his excitement the previous night, and in the dense darkness

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under the trees, a mistake had been made. Levison had told him that Mr. Ratcliff was coming there—he had known the Housemaster's habits, too—and in his bitter anger at his punishment the thought of Mr. Ratcliff had been fixed on his mind.

And so it was that, when he heard the footsteps under the trees, he had not thought for a moment that it might be someone else. He had hurled the stone, hastily, recklessly, at the New House master, as he had supposed. He had not stayed to see what harm he had done, or he would have discovered then that it was his own chum he had struck down.

He understood it all now. Mr. Ratcliff had probably passed before Gore arrived there at all. Crooke was going over to the New House for a row with the Jam. That was how he came to be on the New House side of the quad. It was all clear enough now. And the stone, which had been intended to hit Mr. Ratcliff on the chest, had struck the junior, who was considerably shorter in stature, upon the forehead. Gore bit his lip hard to suppress a groan as he thought of it. What a blind fool he had been, and what was to happen now?

He could not confess.

To tell that he had struck down the Shell fellow by mistake, it was necessary to confess that he had intended an assault upon the Housemaster, an offence that could only be punished by flogging and expulsion from the school.

Gore had counted upon covering up his tracks so well that he could not be discovered. And he had done so. No one dreamed of suspecting him—with perhaps one exception, of whom Gore was not thinking just then. The unanimous belief was that the Jam had known that Crooke was coming over, and had slipped down from his study in the New House, laid in wait for the Shell fellow under the trees with the heavy stone in his hand, and struck him down there. Gore had only to allow the fellows to go on thinking so, and he was safe.

Safe from punishment, safe from disgrace, but not safe from his own conscience!

If Mr. Ratcliff had suffered from that brutal attack, as he had intended, he would probably have felt some remorse afterwards, when he was calm. But it was not Mr. Ratcliff—it was his own friend; and an innocent fellow was condemned for the deed. That made all the difference.

If he held his tongue Koumi Rao would be sent away from St. Jim's in disgrace. If he spoke he would be expelled himself.

Gore did not intend to speak.

He was not a bad fellow in the main, but he had no thought of proceeding to that length of self-sacrifice to save a fellow he heartily disliked.

But even while he was resolving to keep silent, and trying to justify his resolve, his conscience was at work.

His face was white and haggard as he walked in the quadrangle in the early glimmer of dawn. The other fellows were not down yet, but some of the masters were up early. Mr. Railton, who had had a very anxious night, came out into the quadrangle for a breath of fresh air as the rising-bell began to clang. He caught sight of Gore, and nodded to him kindly.

"You are down early, Gore," he said.

"Yes, sir. I—I couldn't sleep, somehow," Gore stammered.

"I understand," said the Housemaster.

Gore looked at him with blank, frightened eyes, wondering what he meant. If he really understood!

"It is a most unhappy occurrence, and I quite understand that you feel it more than most of the boys," said Mr. Railton.

Gore hardly breathed. The Housemaster spoke as if he knew by whose hand the stone had been hurled. But if he knew, his way of speaking would surely be different! What did it mean?

"I—I—I—" stammered Gore. "I—I don't know—who did it, sir!"

"I think there is not much doubt upon that point," said Mr. Railton. "I fear there cannot be any doubt that it was Koumi Rao." Gore breathed again. "But you need not be so anxious about Crooke, my boy; he is in no danger, though his hurt is severe. I understand that you feel this more than the other boys, as Crooke was your special chum. But you need have no fear of anything serious resulting. Dr. Short assures me upon that point."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Gore.

The Housemaster walked on.

"Oh, what an ass I am!" murmured Gore. "Of course, he only meant because I was Crooke's pal. Of course! I shall have to pull myself together. I shall be giving the whole show away soon! And he knows it was Koumi Rao! Unless they guess that poor old Crooke was knocked over by mistake they must think it was Koumi Rao. They

couldn't possibly suspect me of biffing Crooke, my own pal. I'm safe enough."

He was safe, but he did not feel at ease. He disliked Koumi Rao. The lordly airs of the Prince of Bundelpore had irritated him in the first place; and he had been licked in a fair fight with him, too. And, besides, Gore was a bully, and Koumi Rao would not stand bullying. There were many causes of dislike. But personal dislike for the Jam was not sufficient to make him feel easy in his conscience at inflicting this wicked wrong upon him. He knew that if he allowed the Jam of Bundelpore to be sent away in disgrace from St. Jim's his conscience would never be quite easy again.

"But it serves the black brute right!" he muttered savagely. "If he hadn't been a savage, and talked rot about what he'd do to Crooke, they wouldn't suspect him. He's only got himself and his beastly temper to thank for it!"

That was true. And yet Gore did not feel easy.

He tramped about in the quadrangle aimlessly, with a troubled brow. He had feared at first that his evident worry and trouble would draw attention upon him, and make the fellows suspect the truth; but he could not help it. But he was relieved upon that score now. Mr. Railton's words had reassured him. His wretched looks were supposed to be caused by anxiety for Crooke, because the stricken junior was his pal. Gore could not help a miserable grin at the thought. All circumstances seemed to be conspiring to screen him and shield him, and insure his safety from everything but his own conscience.

Levison of the Fourth came out of the School House and crossed the quadrangle towards Gore. Gore gave him a curt nod. His feelings towards Levison were not pleasant. But for the insidious suggestion of Levison the previous night he would never have been guilty of the deed that racked his conscience now. He had known then that the cad of the Fourth was using him as a cat's-paw; but he had gone recklessly on, all the same. Levison had known how to play upon his hot-headed nature.

"Queer bisney, ain't it?" said Levison.

"What is?" said Gore abruptly.

"About old Crooke."

"Yes, queer enough," said Gore.

"Feeling cut up about it—eh?" said Levison.

"Naturally Crooke's your pal. I suppose you feel pretty bitter against the nigger for laying him out like that."

"Yes, of—of course!" muttered Gore.

"Of course, everybody knows it was Koumi Rao," said Levison easily. "The facts speak for themselves, though I hear that he has denied it."

"He would!" said Gore.

"Yes, he would, naturally. He doesn't want to be sacked. But he will have to go; it's as clear as daylight against him. I've just heard the whole story, and there isn't room for a shadow of doubt. Nobody else would have biffed Crooke like that."

"Nobody would want to," said Gore.

"Exactly. So unless Crooke was biffed by mistake for somebody else, it was Koumi Rao who did it."

Gore turned cold all over. Those words were enough to tell him that Levison had guessed all. Indeed, it would have been a wonder if Levison had not guessed, considering what he knew already.

"A—a mistake!" muttered Gore. "What do you mean? How could old Crooke get that stone on his napper by mistake?"

"Well, it must have been jolly dark under the elms last night," said Levison calmly. "By the way, you didn't see anything of it, I suppose?"

"I?" muttered Gore.

"Yes, you. You were in the quad."

"I was in the gym," said Gore.

"Really? Then you didn't go to look for Ratty, as you were suggesting?"

"As you were suggesting, you mean, you rotten cad!" said Gore fiercely between his teeth.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I've said I was in the gym."

"Good egg! I remember now you were in the gym.—I saw you there," said Levison. "In fact, I walked to the gym with you myself."

Gore started.

"You—you did!" he muttered.

"Yes—if you like! The less said on the subject the better. But if you want any evidence, I'm your man. I came out to say that to you, that's all. Ta-ta!"

Levison walked away, whistling. Gore stared after him, relief and anxiety struggling in his breast. Levison knew, that was evident; but Levison intended to keep the secret, and to bear false witness to prove an alibi for him, if it should be necessary. Of course, Levison stood to lose if the truth came out—if Gore were discovered, he might betray the

fact that Levison had suggested the whole affair to him in the first place. But if Levison held his tongue, he could not be discovered, even if he were suspected—Levison's evidence would clear him; he was safe! Never had a criminal been so secure from justice, Gore reflected bitterly. If only he could have enjoyed his security! Why could he not have a tough conscience like Levison's—the cad of the Fourth evidently did not feel a single pang! But he did not possess Levison's callousness; and, upon the whole, he did not want to possess it, either. It was some consolation to know, after all, that there was one fellow at least at St. Jim's who was worse than himself!

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus Helps!

FIGGINS & CO. looked very gloomy when they came into the Form-room that morning.

The Jam of Bundelpore did not come in with the other New House fellows.

He was not to attend classes that morning. His fate had not been decided yet. But it was pretty certain that he would never see the inside of the Fourth Form-room again.

"Where's the Jam?" Jack Blake asked, as the New House fellows came in.

The whole school was thinking and talking of nothing else just then but the outrage in the quadrangle the previous night.

"He's a giddy prisoner!" said Figgins gloomily. "Ratty's got a chance to use the punishment-room again. The Head stopped him after he shut Fatty Wynn up there, but the Jam is put in there now. The queer thing is that Ratty isn't down on him at all, and says he thinks he is innocent."

Blake sniffed.

"I wonder if he would think he was innocent if he was a scholarship kid like Redfern, instead of a giddy prince?" he said contemptuously.

"No fear!" said Kerr.

"I'm afraid Watty is wathah a tuft-huntah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Of course, he must know that Koumi Wao biffed Cwooke last night."

"Of course he knows it!" growled Herries. "We all know it. And the sooner that blessed cannibal is shifted out of St. Jim's the better!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins nodded gloomily.

"I know it!" he said. "But it's rough on us. We were trying to make the Jam see things as we do, and I thought we were succeeding. He's got a vile temper, but he's got his good points; he's a decent chap in the main, considering that he was brought up in a palace. I thought he was going to turn out all right."

"So did I," said Kerr. "But—he's broken out now, with a vengeance. We took it as a lark when he was threatening to kill Crooke yesterday—we rotted him about it, and laughed him out of his silly bosh. He seemed to take it in good part at the finish—he was laughing himself about the knife without a blade last evening, and he confessed that he had acted the giddy ox. And after that—"

"After that, he must have sneaked quietly out of his study, and laid for Crooke in the quad. with that stone in his fist," said Fatty Wynn. "It was a frightfully rotten thing to do, especially as he could most likely have licked Crooke in a fair fight."

"How's Crooke now?" asked Redfern.

"They've put him in the sanatorium. Dr. Short's looking after him, and he'll be away from classes for a good time. But it might have been serious."

"Lucky for the Jam it wasn't! I suppose he'll be sent away to-day?"

"To-day's the Fifth," remarked Blake. "We were going to have a jolly good celebration."

Figgins grinned ruefully.

"So were we—with a School House effigy as guy in the procession. Don't feel much inclined for it now."

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, entered the Form-room, and the juniors went to their places.

Figgins & Co., who had been very chummy with the Jam, were feeling the occurrence very much. They were sorry he was to be "sacked," but they realised that it was best for him to get out of the school. After what he had done, his life would not be worth living at St. Jim's. There would already have been some demonstration, but for the fact that the Jam was confined in the punishment-room in the New House, out of sight and reach of the St. Jim's fellows.

Figgins & Co. took the matter very much to heart, and they were in no mood for the celebrations they had planned for the famous anniversary. But that was not the case with the other fellows. The angry indignation they felt towards the Jam suggested to the School House fellows the form their celebration was to take. The suggestion came from

Levison, in the first place, and the other fellows adopted it eagerly. The idea was to carry the Jam of Bundelpore in effigy in the procession round the quadrangle, and burn him in the bonfire afterwards, as a way of expressing the opinion of the Lower School upon the subject of his conduct.

"It will show the rotter what we think of him!" said Jack Blake, as the juniors discussed the scheme in the common-room after lessons. "If we could get hold of him, we'd rag him baldheaded! We can't! But we can burn him in effigy, and that will show him, and everybody, what we think about it."

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard that as a good ideah!" Arthur Augustus remarked.

"And Glyn can make the effigy," said Tom Merry. "He can do those things well, and they're less dangerous than making new explosives."

"Where's Glyn?" said Lowther. "The sooner the quicker!"

"He's not in the study," said Kangaroo. "I found him there a while ago experimenting, and Danc and I piled on him and pitched him out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's in the woodshed," said Levison.

"Let's hunt him out!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors trooped to the woodshed in search of Bernard Glyn. They found the Liverpool lad there—at work in his shirt-sleeves. Since his wonderful invention of an explosive powerful enough, as Lowther said, to wake up the officials at the War Office, his study-mates had put their foot down upon experiments in the end study. They had threatened Glyn with instant slaughter if they so much as smelt a chemical in the study again. And the persecuted scientist had been driven to transferring the scene of his activity to the woodshed.

There he had encountered opposition in the form of Taggles, the porter; but a tip to Taggles had set that matter right. Glyn was at work now at a bench, and was surrounded by bottles, jars, tubes, and smells.

He looked up with a ferocious frown as Tom Merry & Co. swarmed in.

"Outside!" he exclaimed. "You've no business in here! Blessed if a chap can get a minute's peace! Travel!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Can't you see I'm busy? I suppose that it doesn't matter to you if the woodshed smells a bit?" said Glyn sarcastically.

"A bit!" said Kangaroo, sniffing. "It's simply talking!"

"Well, buzz off!"

"Can't!" said Tom Merry. "We've come to see you. What are you making now?"

"Fireworks at present," said Glyn, willing to explain. He was always willing to talk about his experiments and inventions, but there was generally a plentiful lack of listeners. "I've got in a fresh lot of materials, and I'm going to have some really fine display pieces. One of them will read 'Koumi Rao is a rotter!' when it goes off in the sky. I think that's a good one!"

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily.

"Then there's another—'The Head is requested to sack Koumi Rao!'"

"Good!"

"Wippin', deah boy!"

"Now you're talking!" said Kangaroo heartily. "My dear kid we'll help you make those giddy fireworks! I'll pile in—"

"No you won't!" roared Glyn. "You let my things alone, you ass! You'll muck up everything if you start! I don't want any help. It's too much trouble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better make a complimentary one about the Head, too, and we'll get him to come out and see the show," said Tom Merry.

"Yes; I'm going to. I've got several here—'The Head is a brick!' 'The New House can go and eat coke!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry. "But we want an effigy. And we want you to make it. You remember, you made an effigy of Skimpole once, and it was taken for Skimmy. It would be easier to make one of Koumi Rao. That's what we want."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Right-ho!" said Glyn. "I can do it easily enough—so like him his own pater wouldn't know the difference!"

"And you'll have it ready by dark?"

"Yes; if you'll clear out and leave me to work."

"I should be vewy pleased to help you, Glyn, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy mildly. "I'm wathah a dab at helpin' fellows, you know. I help Bwook with his work sometimes, as you are aware, and I have acted as coach to young Lynn with great success. I don't know anythin' about makin' fireworks, but I dare say I could help."

"I dare say you could muck up the whole show!" said

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Glyn. "Let that fuse alone, you frabjous ass. Don't you know better than to shove a fuse close to a lighted spirit-stove?"

"Weally, Glyn, I do not see any harm in my handlin' a fuse. What is this thing at the end of it?"

"That thing at the end of it, fathead, is a big cracker, chump, and if you set the fuse alight, idiot, you'll have an explosion that will scatter every blessed thing here all over the woodshed, ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus dropped it quite suddenly. Unfortunately, he dropped it with the end of the fuse in the flame of the spirit-stove. There was a sudden fizz.

"Fizzzzzzzzzz!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"It's alight, Glyn, deah boy."

"You ass!" roared Glyn.

"Weally, my deah fellah—"

"Stand clear! It's going off!"

The juniors crowded back. The lighted cracker, which was a large and powerful one, was fizzing close to a heap of finished fireworks. Glyn made a jump at it to put it out, but he was too late. The sparks from the fizzing fuse were falling among the other fireworks, and there was a sudden detonation, followed by more and more and more.

Bang, bang, bang! Crack, crack! Fizzzzzzzzzz!

Squibs and crackers fizzed and fuzzed and banged and cracked, jumping about as they exploded.

"Oh, crums!"

"Bai Jove!"

Glyn gave a roar of consternation. It was too late to save his fireworks now. The whole heap were going off together. The noise was deafening, and the smell of gunpowder filled the shed. The juniors, coughing and gasping, retreated to the door.

Bang, bang! Crack, crack, crack!

Glyn made a wild rush at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The explosions ceased at last, and nothing but smoke and snell remained. Glyn had D'Arcy's head in chancery, and was hammering him frantically. The swell of St. Jim's roared for help.

"Ow, ow! You awful wottah! Leggo! Help! Wescue! Yawoooh! Dwagginoff! Ow! Oh!"

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

"Bai Jove! Ow! You feahful wottah! Ow! Wescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed to the rescue, and dragged the infuriated inventor off his victim. Arthur Augustus clasped his damaged nose with both hands, and uttered a wail of anguish.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Glyn, struggling in the grasp of the grinning juniors. "I've got all my work to do over again, the frabjous ass! Lemme gerrat him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah! Pway wesease him, deah boys, and I will give him a feahful thwashin'!" yelled Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs.

"Come on, you wottah!"

"Clear out, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to cleah out. I am goin' to give Glyn a feahful thwashin'! I should have been quite willin' to apologise for settin' fish to the cwackahs, which would have set the mattah wight, but now I decline to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn tore himself loose from the juniors, and rushed at the swell of the Fourth. He seized a broom that was leaning against the wall, and charged. Arthur Augustus hopped out of the way.

"You uttah wottah! Put down that broom! I'm goin' to thwash you!" he shrieked.

Glyn did not reply, and he did not put down the broom. He attacked hotly, and the rough bristles of the broom smote Arthur Augustus upon the chest, and fairly lifted him through the doorway of the shed.

"Ow, wow! Gweat Scott!"

"Now take him away before I slaughter him!" roared Glyn.

And Tom Merry & Co., yelling with laughter, grasped the swell of St. Jim's, and rushed him away, in spite of his reiterated assertions that he was "goin' back to give Glyn a feahful thwashin'."

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CHAPTER 11.

The Burden of a Secret!

"GORE, old man, you're wanted!" Tom Merry spoke quite gently. He did not pull well with Gore, but he wanted to be as kind as possible to him now. Gore had been looking the picture of misery all day, and the School House fellows could only attribute it to one cause—his concern for his chum, who was lying in the sanatorium.

Gore and Crooke had been great friends, but the fellows generally had considered that it was more because they were birds of a feather than from any feelings of mutual regard. Certainly when Gore had been in serious trouble on one occasion Crooke had not shown any great signs of concern. Gore's looks and manner now surprised all the fellows. It was evident, so they thought, that there was more of the milk of human kindness in Gore than they had given him credit for.

How any fellow could feel a great friendship for Crooke was a puzzle, perhaps. He was not the kind of chap to inspire either respect or liking.

But if Gore was worried about his pal, his feelings were entitled to respect, and Tom Merry & Co. felt very kindly towards him in consequence.

Gore was walking moodily under the elms, in a corner of the quad, by himself, when Tom Merry found him. Tom had been looking for him for some time. Gore did not hear him coming, so deeply was he immersed in gloomy thought, and he started and changed colour when Tom spoke to him.

"Wanted!" said Gore. "What do you mean?"

"The Head—"

Gore's pale face turned paler.

"The Head wants me!" He hardly breathed the words. Had it all come out, after all? "What does the Head want with me?"

"It's all right," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "The Head only asked me to look for you. Crooke wants to see you, that's all."

"Oh," said Gore, with a deep breath, "that's all, is it?"

"That's all. I say, old chap," said Tom, as they walked together towards the school sanatorium, "I'm sorry about this. I never thought you'd be so cut up about Crooke getting hurt."

"About Crooke getting hurt!" said Gore vaguely.

"Yes. It's not so serious as all that, you know. He will have to lay up for a bit, that's all, and he'll very likely have a scar left. But it's not really serious."

"I suppose not," said Gore.

"He's awake, and he wants to see you," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you'll be able to cheer him up a bit. It must be rotten stuck there in bed, without nothing to do. I've been through it, when I was seedy."

"I'll see him," said Gore.

Tom Merry left him at the door, and he went upstairs to the room where Crooke lay in bed. Crooke was propped up on pillows, and half his face was hidden by a bandage. He blinked at Gore out of the one eye that was visible. The expression on his face was savage and morose. Crooke did not make a patient invalid. His head was aching, and his temper was bad, and he was scowling. There was a nurse in the room, but she went to the window as the Shell fellow came in.

Gore stood by the bed, awkwardly fumbling with his cap. He was not used to illness, and as a matter of fact he was not nearly so deeply concerned about Crooke as the fellows supposed. He was sorry he had struck him down by mistake, and would have given a great deal to undo that reckless deed. But that was all. His concern was much more for the innocent boy who was to be expelled from St. Jim's than for the cad of the Shell.

"Hallo, Crooke, old man! How do you feel?" he asked.

"Rotten!" growled Crooke.

"Headache, I suppose?"

"Yes. It's beastly."

"I suppose it is," said Gore. "I'm sorry."

Crooke gritted his teeth.

"Have they done anything to that confounded nigger?" he asked.

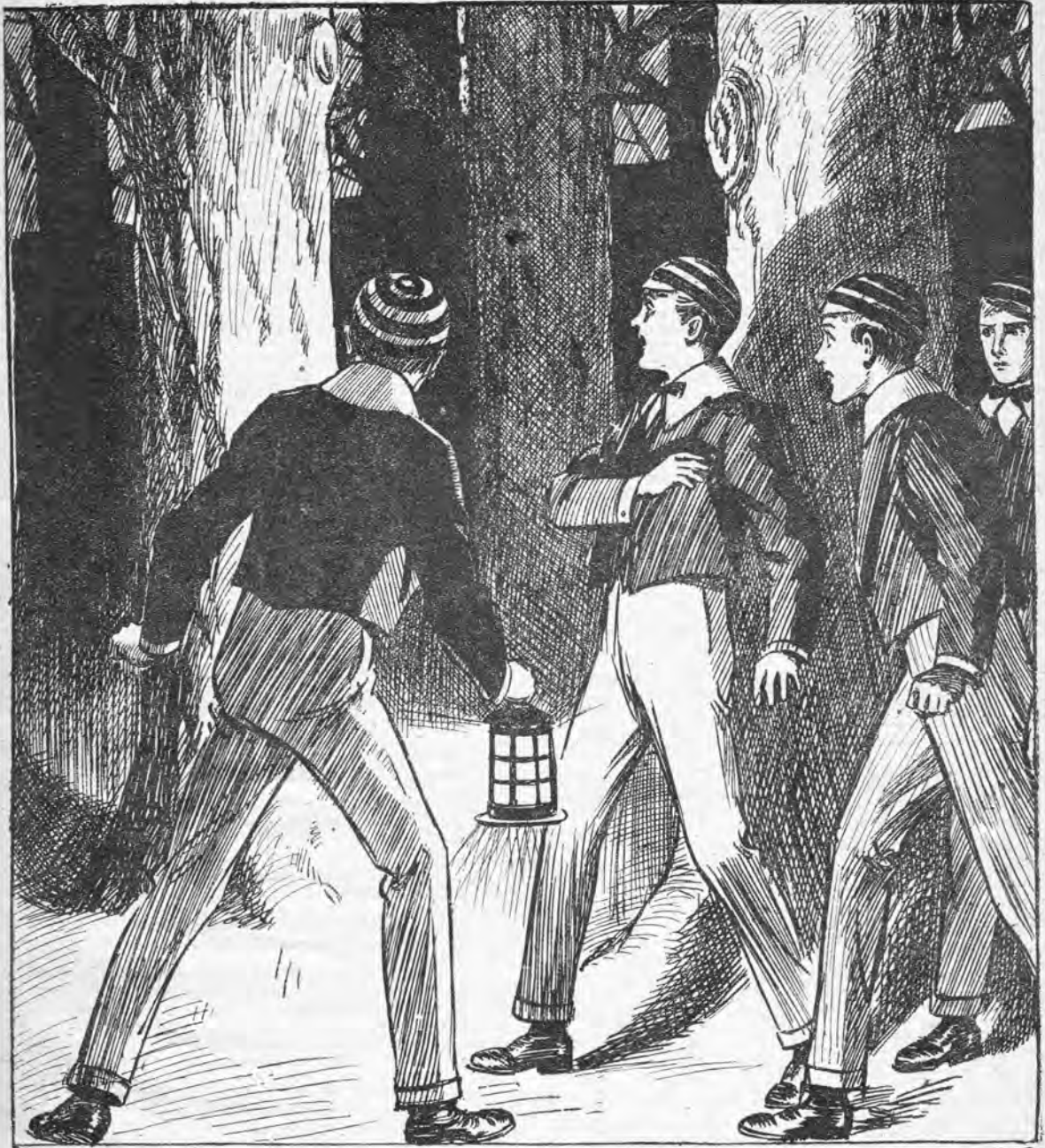
Gore winced.

"Not yet."

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WEDNESDAY:

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Up and down the old quad, the searchers went flashing the lights to and fro, and calling on Crooke by name. "Hark!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly. "What's that?" The juniors stopped as a low groan came from the darkness under the old elms! (See Chapter 7.)

"I suppose he's going to be sacked?" said Crooke.

"The fellows all say so. He's not gone yet. I hear they're communicating with his guardians at the India Office in London about him. He will be gone to-morrow, I expect. He's locked up in the punishment-room in the New House at present."

"The brute ought to be ragged," said Crooke savagely. "I shall be laid up for weeks, nothing to do but lie here and swear, or read. I suppose you couldn't smuggle in some cigarettes for me."

"Well, I could," said Gore. "But they'd smell the smoke, you know, and you'd have the nurse and the doctor down on you!"

Crooke grunted.

"Oh, it's rotten! I'll make that nigger smart for it, if he's still here when I get about again."

"I—I suppose you're certain it was the nigger?" said Gore hesitatingly.

"Of course it was the nigger. Do you think any other chap here would have been such a cowardly brute?" growled Crooke.

Gore bit his lip. He had the benefit of receiving Crooke's opinion of his action, and the opinion was not gratifying.

"Being looked after all right here?" he asked, to change the subject.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so! Dr. Short comes three times a day—to run up a bill. The nurse titivates herself every time the doctor is coming, and sits with a face like a wooden mask all the rest of the time. It's sickening. Look here, get me some cigarettes, and I'll smoke 'em when the Gorgon is out of the room, and chance their smelling the smoke. I'm fed up with this."

"I've got a packet in my pocket," said Gore. "But—" "Slip 'em under my pillow, and a box of matches," said Crooke. "I don't care if I'm spotted. They can't lick me now, anyway."

Gore did as he was asked. He remained some time with the patient, talking to him, and listening to his savage remarks concerning Koumi Rao. Crooke had not the slightest suspicion of the truth—he had been struck down in the darkness, and he took it for granted that it was by the hand of the Jam of Bundelpore. His only consolation was that Koumi Rao would be sacked from the school, and perhaps flogged as well.

When Gore left him, he went into the quad, again, in a troubled frame of mind. He had half thought of confessing the truth to Crooke—but Crooke's humour forbade that. If Crooke had known, he would certainly not have been restrained from denouncing Gore by any considerations of friendship. He was fuming and seething with anger and hatred and all uncharitableness as he lay on the bed of sickness.

Gore felt an almost overmastering desire to unburden his mind to somebody. He wanted to be comforted and backed up, to be assured that he was right in keeping his secret. But there was no one he dared to breathe a word to excepting Levison—and just then he felt a shrinking from Levison's company. The callous, unscrupulous cad of the Fourth could not have reassured him. It came into Gore's mind several times that it would be better to confess, and take the consequences of his action, than to go about with this trouble on his mind. But the consequences—they were too terrible—expulsion from the school—and a grim father to face at home. Gore had been sent away from St. Jim's once for bad conduct, and had been allowed to return after a time by the kind old Head—but he was not likely to be given another chance. He feared his father more than he feared the Head. On that occasion, he had come back to the school with good resolves, and he had stood to them for a time—but he had fallen away again. Levison's example and influence had been partly the cause of that. He turned it over in his mind—but he knew that he dared not confess.

And yet—to see a fellow he knew to be innocent condemned, sacked, disgraced—he was not hardened enough to endure that with his conscience tormenting him.

He heard continual mention of Koumi Rao's supposed action—and always with condemnation, scorn, anger. He writhed as he heard the remarks of the other fellows. But he dared not even suggest that the Jam might be innocent. For if the Jam was innocent, someone else was guilty—and in that direction he did not wish speculation to turn.

"What shall I do?" he muttered aloud, as he paced restlessly to and fro. "What the dickens shall I do? What a rotten hole to be in!"

"Sowwy, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined him under the trees. Gore scowled at him.

"What do you want?" he demanded roughly.

"Pway don't be watty, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's kindly. "I've been lookin' for you, Goah, old man. I should like to cheer you up a bit."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Goah!"

"I only want to be let alone," growled Gore.

"Won't you come down to the footah ground?" said D'Arcy. "We're gettin' up a pwactice match, and you can play; you know."

"I don't care to."

"Come oveh to Wayland with me on your bike, and we'll go to the cinematograph," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"I don't want to."

Arthur Augustus rubbed his aristocratic nose thoughtfully. In the kindness of his heart he wanted to cheer Gore up, but he seemed to have set himself a thankless task.

But he was not to be discouraged when he started out to do good works.

"I quite undahstand how you feel, deah boy," he said gently. "If Blake or Hewwies or Dig should get knocked up in that howwible way, I should feel it just the same. How is poor old Cwooke gettin' on?"

"Hang Crooke!" said Gore involuntarily.

Arthur Augustus almost staggered in astonishment. He jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Gore in blank surprise.

"I—I beg your pardon," he gasped. "What did you say, Goah?"

Gore flushed. His irritable temper had betrayed him, with a vengeance. Unless the fellows supposed that he was worried about Crooke, what reason were they to assign for his very evident trouble? For a moment he fancied that D'Arcy suspected everything—but there was no suspicion, only blank surprise, in the guileless face of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I—I didn't mean that," said Gore hurriedly. "I—I—I'm worried. Let me alone. I don't want to talk to anybody!"

"Vewy well, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, in a very stately manner, and he walked away and left the bully of the Shell by himself, to continue his restless promenade under the trees. But Gore, though he had said that he wanted to be left alone, did not look very happy when his wish was granted.

CHAPTER 12.

Koumi Rao's Resolve.

KOUMI RAO stood at the window of the punishment-room in the New House, and looked out with a glum expression upon his dusky face.

The Jam of Bundelpore was feeling far from cheerful.

He had passed the day alone.

The House-page looked after his wants; but he was a prisoner; and he understood that he was to remain a prisoner until he was taken away from St. Jim's.

He had no friend left in the whole school—unless it was Mr. Ratcliff, his Housemaster, and Mr. Ratcliff was not cordial from the best of motives—the Jam was quite keen enough to see that. He could not help suspecting that the Housemaster would have taken the same view, if the evidence against him had been ten times stronger.

Figgins—the junior for whom the Jam entertained a sincere affection—had abandoned him. Figgins believed him guilty.

Figgins could hardly believe anything else—and the Jam acknowledged it to himself, as he remembered the wild words he had uttered.

What he was supposed to have done was less than what he had threatened to do—and the juniors naturally believed that he had been Crooke's assailant.

Indeed, the Jam admitted to himself that, when he first came to St. Jim's, he had been quite capable of such an action.

Since then, however, short as the time had been, he had changed very much—principally under Figgins's influence. He had talked in the same wild way—but he had not really meant what he said. He would not have hurt Crooke, of the Shell, excepting in the way of a fair fight.

But he knew that he could not expect the other fellows to believe that. They knew what he had said; and they knew what had been done, and they naturally drew their own conclusions.

He was innocent—but he was condemned out of his own mouth.

He had had plenty of time to think the matter over that day—and he felt no bitterness against the fellows who refused to take his word.

His only feeling was utter hopelessness and misery.

He had started badly at St. Jim's—but he had got over that—and the future had looked favourable enough—until this happened.

Now he had lost everything—honour and friendship—and he was to be sent away in disgrace from the school he had grown to love.

He had seen nothing of his schoolfellows that day—heard nothing from them, excepting an occasional yell through the keyhole of the punishment-room—a shouted taunt from the juniors.

But that was sufficient to show him how he was regarded in his own House—and in the School House feeling would be more bitter still.

As he gazed out of the window into the early November dusk, his face was miserable enough. If only his own chums would have believed in him, and stood by him, he could have borne the rest—but Figgins & Co. had failed him.

Mr. Ratcliff had visited him during the day, and he had learned what was to be done—an official would arrive from the India Office to take him away, and the gates of St. Jim's would close behind him for ever.

He would not see his friends again before he went—he would have no chance to assert, once more, his innocence—not that they would believe him if he did. But he felt a keen desire to speak once more to the Co.—to tell them once more that he was wrongly condemned.

As he looked down from the window, into a recess closed in by high walls, he caught sight of a fat figure coming through the gathering dusk. He knew it at once—and his heart beat.

It was Fatty Wynn!

The fat Fourth-Former was moving in a very cautious way, as if not wishing to be observed. He came into the entry upon which the window looked down, and glanced behind him once or twice.

Was he coming to speak to the imprisoned Jam? There seemed no other reason why he should enter the secluded entry so cautiously.

The Jam watched him eagerly. The window was high

above the ground, and though it could be opened, there were bars across it that prevented him from putting his head out.

Fatty Wynn stopped, still in view of the window, and opened a parcel he carried under his arm. The Jam observed a collection of jam-tarts and a large cake. Then he understood.

The Falstaff of the New House had retired to that secluded spot for a feed. Perhaps he had raised his supplies from the School House, and was in fear of pursuit—or perhaps he did not care to enjoy his feed under the gloomy eyes of Figgins and Kerr. Under the circumstances, they might have considered it unfeeling on his part to enjoy cake and jam-tarts the same as usual—but Fatty Wynn could not see any reason why he shouldn't. In fact, as he had often said, in time of trouble it was most important to keep up liberal feeding, to enable one to bear one's troubles better.

Fatty Wynn's jaws were soon busy upon the cake and the tarts, and a fat smile of satisfaction overspread his face.

Koumi Rao grinned a little. He dropped a penknife from the window to attract Fatty Wynn's attention.

Wynn gave quite a jump as the penknife fell at his feet. He picked it up, and then looked upward. He remembered the punishment-room and Koumi Rao.

"Wynn!" the Jam called down.

"Hallo!" Fatty Wynn called back, his mouth full of tart.

"Did you come here to speak to me?"

"Ahem! No. I forgot—I mean—that is— I say, Jammy, are you hungry?" asked Fatty Wynn. "I was shut up there once, and old Ratty fed me on bread and water, and I was famished. I say, you're an awful rotter, you know, but I wouldn't like you to go hungry. I'll manage to get you something to eat—"

"It is not that. I have all I want!"

Fatty Wynn brightened up again.

"Then you're all right?"

"No. I'm not all right! I want to speak to Figgins—to tell him that I am innocent."

"Ahem!"

"I swear it!" said the Jam.

Fatty Wynn looked worried, and started thoughtfully upon another tart. It was difficult to carry on conversation at that distance, for there was danger of the voices being heard—and that would have led to interruption—and so Fatty considered it would be wiser to finish the tack before saying anything further. The Jam watched him in silence as the tarts and the cake disappeared. They did not occupy Fatty Wynn very long.

"I—I'm awfully sorry for you, you know," said Fatty, "but as you're getting plenty to eat, things ain't so bad as they might be, you know."

"You will tell Figgins what I have said?" said the Jam wistfully.

"Oh, yes; I'll tell him!"

"Listen to me! I am to be sent away from the school in disgrace—I, a prince of India!" said the Jam bitterly. "I do not want that!"

"You ought to have thought of that before—ahem—"

"I did not touch Crooke!"

"Ahem!" said Fatty again.

"I want to get out of this room—and leave the school before I am sent away. If I must go, I will not be driven forth in disgrace. I have a cord that I can let down. Will you get me a file and a rope, and send them up to me?"

"But—I say—"

"It is not much to ask. You have a file in your tool-chest, and you can easily get a rope. I will pull them up on a string."

"But what good will it do?" said Fatty Wynn uneasily. He did not like to refuse the request, but he was very uneasy.

The Jam burst out passionately.

"Do you think I wish to be driven forth like a dog—with scorn and jeers—I, a prince of India, and the lord of a thousand horsemen? When they come for me, I shall not be here—I shall be gone!"

"I—I suppose there's no harm in that," said Fatty Wynn slowly. "We've been chums, though you've turned out a rotter. I'll do it! Sure you wouldn't like me to get you something to eat?"

"No, no!"

"Well, wait a bit—I'll be back in two shakes!"

Fatty Wynn disappeared. Ten minutes later he returned, and took a file and a coil of rope from under his jacket. The Jam lowered the string, and pulled up the rope and the file tied to it. Then he began work on the centre bar of the window. It was old and rusty—and the Indian junior worked with untiring fingers. His dusky face was brighter now.

He had to go. But he would go alone—he would not go in custody of an official—amid scornful looks from his schoolfellows—perhaps jeers and taunts. There was some consolation in that.

CHAPTER 13.

Something Like a Rag.

TOM MERRY & CO. finished tea in the School House, and came out in a body to visit Bernard Glyn in the woodshed, to see how the schoolboy inventor was getting on. Glyn had not gone in to tea. He was too busy. Kangaroo had brought him refreshments to the woodshed, and Glyn had devoured them while he worked. The "guy" was approaching completion now. The bonfire was already prepared, and was all ready for lighting—and the juniors had laid in great supplies of fireworks, as well as the special pieces that Bernard Glyn was preparing. The schoolboy inventor was very busy and very dirty when the juniors came in.

"How's the guy getting on?" Tom Merry asked.

"Oh, ripping! Look at it!" said Glyn proudly.

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus, surveying the effigy through his eyeglass.

"First chop!" said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

The effigy was indeed a creditable one. It was life-size, and clad in an old suit of Etons, and Glyn had moulded the face in remarkable resemblance to that of Koumi Rao. The dark complexion, of course, made it easy to suggest the Indian. In order that there should be no mistake, Glyn had wound a turban round the head of the figure, and attached a placard to its breast, bearing the words in large letters:

"KOUMI RAO—ROTTER!"

"That's first-rate!" said Tom Merry. "No mistake about what we think of him, when we carry that round the quad!"

"No fear!"

"Hallo! What's that blessed row?" exclaimed Kangaroo, as a burst of shouting came from the dusky quadrangle.

"After him!"

"Collar him!"

"Rag him!"

"Collar the rotter!"

The shouts rang through the November dusk. Tom Merry & Co. hurried out of the woodshed. They guessed what had happened. There was only one person at St. Jim's to whom that epithet was likely to be applied so excitedly, and whom the fellows would be so anxious to collar and rag.

"The nigger's got out of the New House somehow!" exclaimed Clifton Dane.

"The ass! He ought to have known he was better off there!" said Tom Merry.

"After him!"

"Stop him!"

A panting figure dashed past the juniors, and ran in the direction of the school gates. A troop of pursuing juniors, mostly New House fellows, came tearing by in pursuit. Redfern headed off the fugitive, and Koumi Rao turned in another direction, and fled in the darkness.

Tom Merry caught Lawrence of the Fourth by the arm, and stopped him.

"What's the row—how did he get out?"

Lawrence panted.

"Thompson of the Shell spotted him," he exclaimed.

"He got down from the window of the punishment-room somehow—Thompson spotted him sneaking round the house. We're after him now. Don't stop me!"

And Lawrence joined in the pursuit again, followed by most of the School House juniors.

The fellows entered into the chase in great excitement. They had felt it very hard that they could not get at Koumi Rao to show him what they thought of him. He had been locked up in the punishment-room as much for his own protection, as to keep him from escape. Now that he had got out, the juniors were free to demonstrate to him how they regarded his action—and they meant to do it.

The November night was already dark in the quadrangle, and the chase was not easy. But scores of fellows joined in it, calling to one another, hunting and searching in every corner.

"After him!"

"Tally-ho!"

"Head him off!"

"There he goes!"

"We'll jolly well march him in the procession instead of the giddy effigy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "It will be an improvement."

"Yaas, wathah!" panted D'Arcy. "It's up to us to show him what St. Jim's thinks of his wassally conduct."

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

"Here he is!" roared the Kangaroo. The fugitive had been cornered at last. In a dark corner of the ground, near the shattered walls of the old chapel, the juniors had closed in on him. The Jam stood at bay—his chest heaving, his eyes flashing, his dusky hands clenched. Round him the juniors circled like hounds round a stag at bay.

"Got him!" chuckled Manners. "Collar the cad!" "Stand back!" panted the Jam. "Rats!" "Rotter!" "Cad!" "I am innocent! I did not touch Crooke—I was in my study—"

"Oh, don't roll out lies, you know!" urged Blake. "We don't believe any of them, you know. You're a wild beast, and you've got to be taught a lesson!"

"Yaas, wathah!" "Don't waste time jawing to him!" said Redfern. "Collar him!"

And he led the rush. The Jam hit out furiously. His blood was up, and he was a dangerous enemy to corner. Redfern roared and went down under his fist, and Monty Lowther fell across him—and Blake reeled against the chapel wall. But then the rest were upon him, and he was seized by a dozen pairs of hands. He struggled in vain.

"Here, don't hit him!" exclaimed Tom Merry, pushing Levison roughly back. "Don't be a cowardly rotter! Hands off!"

"Yaas, wathah! He's goin' to be wagged!" "Bring him along!" roared Kangaroo. "We've got the ambulance ready."

The captured Jam was rushed along helplessly towards the woodshed. The "ambulance," as the Cornstalk junior called it, was a kind of Sedan-chair, roughly knocked together, in which the juniors had intended to carry the effigy in the bonfire procession, before it was consigned to the flames. It was Koumi Rao in person, and not in effigy, that was to be carried now.

He was jammed roughly into the seat, and tied there with the cords in readiness. Then a crowd of juniors seized the handles, and the chair was swept off the ground.

"Let me go! Let me go!" shrieked the Jam, beside himself with rage. "Dogs! Slaves! I will kill you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Shut up, you ass!" "Pway don't be a ridiculous chump, Koumi Wao!" "Bring him along!" shouted Blake. "Pin that placard on his chest. We don't want the effigy yet, Glyn—we've got the real article."

"Here, I say," exclaimed Figgins of the Fourth, pushing his way through the crowd. "Draw it mild! Let the poor beast alone. He's going to be expelled, anyway."

"Buzz off, Figgy!" "Look here, I tell you—" "Chuck him out!"

Figgins was whirled away. The Jam's enraged face changed—Figgins had spoken up for him, although he did not believe in his innocence. But Figgins was powerless to stem the tide. Even fellows of his own House did not listen to him. In the midst of a shouting crowd, the chair went rocking and swaying away, with the Jam tied in it, amid yells from the excited juniors.

CHAPTER 14. Gore Takes the Plunge.

"**B**LESS my soul!" Dr. Holmes exclaimed. "What is all that dreadful noise?" "It is Guy Fawkes' night," said Mr. Railton, who was in the Head's study. "You remember the juniors have been given permission to celebrate."

"They seem to be taking full advantage of it," said the Head drily.

"That is certainly the case." From the quadrangle came the sounds of tramping feet and roaring voices, mingled with the explosions of crackers.

"Here's another guy!" "Yah!" "Rotter!" "Coward!" "Outsider!"

"Surely those are very strange expressions to be applied to an effigy," said Dr. Holmes, in surprise. "Is it possible that this is what the juniors would call a rag—that it is some person—"

He strode to the window and flung it open. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 299.

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The procession was passing within easy view. The light from the School House windows fell full upon it.

The Head gasped as he saw the Sedan-chair swaying and rocking in the midst of the excited crowd, and the Indian prince sitting in it, with grinding teeth.

"It is Koumi Rao!" he exclaimed. "But he was locked up in the New House!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in astonishment.

"He has escaped, somehow, and fallen into the hands of the juniors. I cannot really blame them for their excitement—under the circumstances—but this must be stopped."

Dr. Holmes leaned from the window, and called to the excited crowd.

"My boys, cease this noise at once!"

The shouting died away. "Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "It's the Head! What asses we were to bring him this way! I'd forgotten the Head!"

"Bring that chair here!" said Dr. Holmes, raising his hand.

The Sedan-chair was rushed up to the window, and the bound Hindu junior swayed under the doctor's eyes.

"You should not have done this, my boys," said the Head reprovingly. "That boy must be released instantly."

"He sneaked out of the New House, sir, and we caught him," said Tom Merry. "We want him to understand what we think of him for biffing Crooke with a stone."

"I quite understand, Merry. I do not blame you for condemning him, but this must cease. Release him at once. Mr. Railton, will you fetch him in?"

"Certainly, sir."

The School House master left the study. The disappointed juniors reluctantly untied the Jam. They were not half finished with him yet, as Blake regretfully remarked.

"Ah, I will kill you—I will kill you!" the Jam was hissing through his clenched teeth, as Mr. Railton arrived upon the scene.

"Listen to the cad!" said Manners. "After what he's done, too! He ought to be scragged and ducked and lynched."

"Yaas, wathah!" "I have done nothing!" screamed the Jam. "I said it, but I did not mean it, and I did not lay a hand upon Crooke. I did not know—"

"Rats!" "Pway don't tell any more woppahs, deah boy."

"Untie him!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir."

The Indian, trembling with rage, stepped down from the chair. He shook his dusky fists in the faces of the juniors; but Mr. Railton grasped him firmly by the shoulder, and marched him into the School House. A yell of derision and contempt followed him.

"Anyway, he understands now how we regard him," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was no doubt upon that point. Koumi Rao was taken into the Head's study, where Dr. Holmes fixed a stern look upon him. The Jam stood panting.

"How did you escape from the punishment-room, Koumi Rao?" demanded the Head.

"I let myself down from the window," said the Jam sullenly.

"You must have been helped."

The Jam was silent. He did not intend to betray the fact that he had received assistance from Fatty Wynn. It would have meant punishment for the fat Fourth-Former.

"Well, we need not go into that," added the Head. "But what was your object in leaving the New House. Surely you were aware that you were safer there—you cannot fail to know how the boys regard your conduct."

"I intended to go."

"Indeed! Where?"

"Anywhere!" exclaimed the Jam passionately. "I will not stay here to be expelled. Let me go! That is all I ask."

"You will go, when the gentleman responsible for you arrives to take you in charge," said the Head coldly.

"Until then you will remain in custody here."

"I will not—I will not!"

"Will you see him disposed of in a safe place, Mr. Railton?" asked the Head. "This must not occur again."

"You may rely upon me, sir."

The Jam clasped his hands.

"I am innocent—I am innocent!" he shouted. "Why will you not listen to me? I swear upon the honour of a Prince of Bundelapore that I did not leave the New House last night—I did not know what had happened to Crooke till you yourself told me, sir, in the dormitory."

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

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"I cannot believe you, Koumi Rao. No one else here could have done such a wicked thing, and you had uttered savage threats against him. The threats were fulfilled, and you cannot expect me to believe that you did not mean them. Please take him away, Mr. Railton. It is a great misfortune that he ever came to this school."

The Jam went sullenly away with the Housemaster.

"I have locked him in a study, sir," he said, when he returned. "He will be secure there. He has no means of reaching the ground."

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Thank you, Mr. Railton. He is a most dangerous and reckless boy, and I shall be very glad and relieved when he is gone."

"I—I suppose there is no possible doubt about the matter," the Housemaster said musingly. "If the proof against him were not so clear, sir, I should be disposed to believe him. He seems so frantically earnest in his assertions."

"But by whose hand was Crooke struck down—if not by his?" said the Head. "And we know the wicked threats he has uttered."

"It is true, there can be no doubt!"

And yet Mr. Railton did not feel quite easy in his mind. There was something in the wild, passionate insistence of the Indian junior that had impressed him strangely, and in spite of himself.

Tom Merry & Co. had returned to the woodshed. As the Jam had escaped from their hands, they had to be satisfied with the effigy. Bernard Glyn was giving the finishing touches to it. Tom Merry was crossing over to the piled-up bonfire, to make sure that all was in readiness for the lighting, when Gore stopped him. In the deep dusk Gore's face showed up very white and strained.

"Where's Koumi Rao?" he asked.

"They've fastened him up in the School House somewhere," said Tom. "No chance of getting at him again, I'm afraid. Never mind, he knows how St. Jim's regards him now. No chance of a mistake about that."

Gore groaned.

"If he's guilty, you mean," he muttered huskily.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Why, you know he's guilty, don't you?" he exclaimed.

"I wish I did!" said Gore wretchedly. "But for all this to fall on a chap who's perfectly innocent—"

His voice broke off.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom Merry reassuringly. "We all know what he said, you know. He was threatening to kill Crooke, and all sorts of rot like that—and there isn't any doubt that he waylaid him under the trees in the dark, and biffed that stone on his napper."

"You think so?"

"Why, of course. Don't you?" exclaimed Tom Merry, more and more astonished by George Gore's strange looks and words.

"No, I don't!"

"You don't! You think it was somebody else?" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"I know it was!" groaned Gore.

Tom Merry caught his breath.

"You know it was?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Gore huskily.

"You know it was, and you haven't said a word!" Tom Merry's voice rang out in anger. "You've let us rag him and jeer him and worry him, thinking he was guilty, and you haven't told us! What do you mean?"

"I mean that I can't stand it any longer," said Gore wildly. "I mean I'm going to the Head to be sacked. I'd rather be sacked than stand what I've been going through to-day. That's what I mean."

"Great Scott! Was it you?" shouted Tom Merry.

But Gore did not reply. He had taken the plunge now, and he was hurrying into the School House to get the rest over.

Tom Merry, looking very subdued, hurried to the woodshed. The juniors were just raising the figure of Koumi Rao, the effigy, to its place in the Sedan.

"We shan't want that now," said Tom Merry quietly.

"What?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What rot!" said Bernard Glyn. "What are you driving at?"

"I mean that Koumi Rao is innocent."

"Rats!"

"Gammon!"

"Who was it, then?"

"Gore," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Kangaroo. "Gore is Crooke's chum, and he's been going about looking like a ghost all day because he was so cut up about it."

"I fancy it wasn't about Crooke he was cut up," said Tom. "I fancy it was his conscience at work. I don't rightly understand it, but it was Gore."

"How do you know?" demanded a score of voices.

"Gore just told me."

"He's confessed?" exclaimed Blake, stupefied.

"Yes; and he's gone to the Head to tell him."

"Well, my hat!"

"Then the nigger is innocent, and we— Great Scott! We shall have to make it up to him somehow!" said Kangaroo.

And Aurthur Augustus said softly:

"Poor old Koumi Wao!"

CHAPTER 15.

Cleared!

GORE knocked at the door of the Head's study with a trembling hand.

He had made up his mind.

In the quadrangle he had watched the ragging of Koumi Rao, and he felt that he could not stand it any longer.

It was better to get it over, to take his punishment, however severe it was, than to struggle with his conscience any longer.

Dr. Holmes's voice bade him come in, and Gore entered, with a face so white that the Head and Mr. Railton started as they saw him.

"What is the matter with you, Gore?" exclaimed the Head. "Are you ill?"

"No, sir."

"Then what—"

"I—I can't stand it, sir," said Gore hoarsely and miserably. "I—I've come to confess."

"To confess what?" said Dr. Holmes quietly. "What have you done, Gore?"

"About Crooke, sir—"

The Head uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Crooke! Surely, Gore, you do not mean to say—"

"Yes, sir."

"It was you, Gore!" Mr. Railton exclaimed.

Gore nodded wretchedly.

"And you have allowed us to believe that it was Koumi Rao?"

"That's why I've come to confess, sir," groaned Gore. "I couldn't stand it—Koumi Rao being ragged—and sacked! I knew it would have to come out sooner or later. My conscience isn't tough enough. So I—"

"And why did you treat Crooke, your own friend, in this wicked and brutal manner?" the Head demanded sternly.

"I didn't mean to, sir. I hadn't the faintest idea that Crooke was there when I chucked that stone in the dark. I nearly fainted, I think, when I heard how Crooke had been found stunned under the trees."

Dr. Holmes looked at him very sharply.

"An accident, Gore? Do you mean that you were foolish and reckless enough to throw heavy stones about in the darkness?"

"I—I—I—"

"I think I understand," said Mr. Railton calmly. "You intended the missile for someone else, Gore, and Crooke received it by mistake in the darkness."

"That is how it was, sir. It hit him on the head. But I—I only meant to give a biff on the chest—that's all, sir. Only Crooke was shorter, you see, and so it caught him on the head—"

"Then it was a man you supposed you were throwing the stone at?" the Head exclaimed. "I can only conclude that it was a master."

"It was Mr. Ratcliff," muttered Gore. "He—he caned me—four awful hard cuts—because I called Koumi Rao a nigger. He had no right to cane me. He ought to have reported me to my own Housemaster. Mr. Railton wouldn't have punished me so hard for just that. Lots of the fellows call the chap a nigger. And—and I only meant to give him a biff on the chest, sir—just a hard knock that wouldn't really have hurt him. But as it turned out to be Crooke, and he's a foot shorter than Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff—he got it on the head!"

"This is a very serious matter," said the doctor, after a pause. "If the discovery had been made without your confession, Gore, I should have expelled you from the school on the spot."

Gore's face flushed with hope. The Head's words seemed to hold out a possibility of escape after all from the punishment he dreaded. The grim face of his father, the stuffy office where he would have to grind at ledgers instead of Form work, seemed a little further off now. Perhaps there was still a chance for him.

"Why did you not confess before, Gore, as your conscience

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seems to have been troubling you?" the Head asked, not unkindly.

"I—I was afraid, sir. If I'm sent home—my father—it happened before, and I ran away from home, he was so hard on me. You let me come back, and gave me another chance, and—and I didn't care to risk it again."

"Yet you have confessed after all?"

"Yes, sir. I couldn't help it. I couldn't see the fellows ragging and jeering Koumi Rao and keep my mouth shut. I thought I could at first," said Gore miserably. "But I found I couldn't."

The Head and the Housemaster exchanged glances.

"Was anyone else concerned with you in this, Gore?" the Head asked slowly.

Gore hesitated.

"N-no; I—I was alone, sir."

"No one else knew of it?"

"One fellow did, sir."

"Was this attack upon Mr. Ratcliff his idea or yours?"

"I—I don't want to put it on him, sir. I—I was so wild at the time, I was ready for anything."

"Who was the boy, Gore?"

Gore closed his lips. With all his faults—and their name was legion—Gore would not betray Levison—tempter as he had been in the beginning of the whole miserable occurrence.

"Well, Gore, I am waiting."

"I can't tell you," said Gore firmly. "I—I can't, sir. I—I came here to confess. It would be cowardly to drag another chap into it. He's stood by me, too. He wouldn't have given me away. I—I suppose you're going to sack me, sir. I—I can't help it; but I can't be a rotten sneak. Of course, you wouldn't understand, sir—only—I can't do it. But—but what am I going to say to my father when I get home?" And the unfortunate junior's voice broke, and a sob came into his throat.

Dr. Holmes's face softened.

"I think I do understand, Gore," he said. "Your fault is very, very serious. But you have, to a large extent, atoned for it by this confession, and I shall not send you away from the school."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will be punished—punished severely for your intended attack upon Mr. Ratcliff, which turned out so unfortunately for your own friend. I think this will be a lesson to you, Gore, to restrain your temper."

"I should think so, sir!" groaned Gore. "If you knew what I'd been through to-day—"

"I think I understand. You may go now, Gore. Your punishment will be decided on later," said the Head.

And Gore left the study, with a weight off his mind. He was not to be sacked after all, and as for the rest, he could stand it. Open confession is said to be good for the soul, and certainly George Gore felt that it had done him good.

"A rough and reckless boy, but not without his good points," said Mr. Railton, when the Shell fellow had gone.

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"He is certainly not all bad," he said. "And, in his wish to protect Koumi Rao from persecution, I really think that Mr. Ratcliff was a little injudicious in exceeding his authority. But I must see Koumi Rao at once. The poor lad has been deeply wronged. I tremble to think that I should have expelled him in disgrace but for the confession of Gore. We owe Gore a great debt for taking that manly and straightforward course, and I am disposed to deal with him leniently. His feelings cannot have been envious when he found that he had injured his own friend by mistake. He has certainly been punished already. But now I must go to Koumi Rao."

The Jam of Bundelpore was pacing to and fro in the locked study, when the key turned, and the door opened to admit Dr. Holmes.

Koumi Rao stopped, and stood facing the Head, his lips set, his black eyes blazing.

"Is it time?" he exclaimed. "Have they come for me?"

"No, Koumi Rao," said the Head gently. "And I am about to telegraph to the India Office that a mistake was made, and that you are not to leave this school."

The Jam started violently.

"Oh, sir, you have found out—"

"The truth is discovered, my poor lad. It was Gore who did what you were supposed to have done; he has confessed."

"Oh, sir!"

"Yet I cannot blame myself for believing you guilty," said the Head. "Your own wild words were the cause. You have only yourself to blame, Koumi Rao."

The Jam bent his head humbly.

"I know it, sir. I have told myself so many times this day. It was my own fault. I was foolish. I shall never be so foolish again."

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"I am glad to hear you say so. You are free now, Koumi Rao."

"Thank you, sir."

And the Jam of Bundelpore followed the Head from the room.

Ten minutes later, all St. Jim's was assembled in Big Hall to hear a speech from the Head. The fellows who had not heard the news from Tom Merry, supposed that it was to witness the public expulsion of Koumi Rao, and they turned up very keenly; but they met with a surprise.

In a few words the Head explained that Koumi Rao was cleared—that the real perpetrator of the outrage had confessed, and that it was in some degree by accident that Crooke had been injured.

He had called the school together to hear his statement, in order that all might know from his lips that Koumi Rao had been wrongfully suspected.

The school listened in amazement—some of them, perhaps, not very pleased at finding that they were in the wrong. But most of the fellows were glad that the truth had come out, and when the fellows were dismissed, Koumi Rao walked out in the midst of a crowd of congratulating friends.

"I'm sorry, old man!" said Figgins, half a dozen times, as he squeezed the Jam's arm. "It was your own fault, you know; but I'm sorry."

"All through you talking out of your hat, you know," said Kerr. "But I'm jolly glad it's all come right."

"Yes, rather," said Fatty Wynn. "We shall have to have a jolly big feed to celebrate this, Jammy!"

"I trust you will accept my profound apologies, Koumi Wao," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, you have been wathah wronged, but undah the cires. I cannot blame myself, you know. It was all due to your talkin' out of the back of your neck, you know, and I trust you will not play the giddy goat any more."

The Jam grinned.

"It's all right now," he said. "Don't say any more about it, and I must say that it was jolly decent of Gore to own up."

"Yaas, wathah?"

"We sha'n't want that giddy effigy, after all," Tom Merry remarked. "Glyn had better put a white face on it, and label it Gore."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the giddy fireworks," Kangaroo exclaimed. "Glyn has been making them to suit the occasion, you know. They read 'Koumi Rao is a Rotter,' and 'the Head is requested to sack Koumi Rao,' and 'The New House can go and eat coke,' and—"

"My hat, they'll have to be altered!" exclaimed Tom Merry, and he rushed away to the woodshed to see the schoolboy inventor.

CHAPTER 16.

Not Quite According to Programme.

BERNARD GLYN had finished his famous show-pieces, and they were all ready, and he did not look very pleased when the juniors burst in to explain that they would have to be altered. He shook his head.

"Look here, I've put a jolly lot of work into those things, and I can't have it all wasted!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Glyn," Arthur Augustus exclaimed warmly, "you would not wish to chawactawise Koumi Wao as a wotlah, now that we find out he is twue blue."

"Pile in and alter the blessed things," said Tom Merry.

"Look here, are you quite sure Koumi Rao is innocent?" growled Glyn, who was not at all disposed to undo his work.

"Of course we are, ass!" roared Kangaroo. "Gore has confessed!"

"Well, Gore is an awful fibber, you know," persisted Glyn. "He might have done that just to muck up my fireworks. He's always playing some rotten trick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

"Yes," grinned Tom Merry. "I think I can see Gore going to the Head, and asking for the sack, just to muck up your fireworks. My dear chap, it's quite easy. Make the blessed thing read, 'Gore is a rotter,' and 'The Head is requested to sack Gore.' And leave out the bit about the New House altogether."

"Oh, rot! Look here, Koumi Rao is a rotter," said Glyn. "Chap who threatens to kill people when he is in a temper is a first-class rotter."

"Weally, you know—"

"I do not mind," said the Jam quietly. "I know I deserve it, you fellows. Let the fireworks remain as they are."

"You see, they can't be wasted, and I've taken a lot of

trouble with them," explained Glyn. "As Koumi Rao doesn't object, we'll go ahead."

But there was a shout from Tom Merry & Co.

"Ass!"

"Rats!"

"Now, look here," said Glyn, "I'm not going to plan out and manufacture first-class show-pieces for nothing. It's unfortunate that Koumi Rao has turned out to be innocent—I mean it's unfortunate that he got himself suspected instead of the real chap. I think it was utterly inconsiderate of Gore to make his confession before the fireworks were let off. It was just like him, I must say. And—"

"You uttah ass—"

"So we'll go ahead," said Glyn. "It would be simply a rotten shame to muck up my best pieces, just because Koumi Rao didn't happen to biff Crooke on the napper with a stone. He can take the remarks as applying to something else that he did do. That will make it all fair and square."

"You frabjous ass—"

"Nuff said!" exclaimed the schoolboy inventor decidedly. "I'm not going to have my show-pieces mucked up."

It was evidently of no use to argue with the schoolboy inventor. But there were other methods as well as argument.

"Well, you won't alter them?" said Tom Merry.

"No, I won't!" said Glyn flatly.

"Then we will," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Collar that chump, you fellows, and run him out, and we'll have the things altered in a jiffy. I don't know much about making these things, but I've no doubt I can put in an alteration here and there."

"Good egg."

"Here, stop that!" roared Glyn, struggling wildly as the juniors grasped him and ran him headlong out of the woodshed. "Let my things alone! You'll get 'em mixed and mucked up, I tell you. Ow! I won't have it! Yah! Oh!"

Glyn's voice died away in the distance.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy set hurriedly to work on the display fireworks.

"Leave it to me, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I can manage it all right. I'm a vewy handy chap, you know. You put some white paint on the face of that effigy, and altah the label."

"Right-ho!"

The effigy intended originally for Koumi Rao was daubed over the face with white paint, and the name on the placard was painted out, and that of Gore substituted. By the time that was finished, D'Arcy announced that the fireworks were finished, too. And the effigy was tied in the wooden chair, and carried off in the crowd of juniors, and the fireworks were conveyed from the woodshed to the spot selected for the exhibition.

Round the quadrangle, in a noisy procession, went the lay-figure, representing Gore of the Shell now, amid hoots and yells.

Blake put the match to the bonfire, and a sheet of flame rose, dancing in lurid light over the quadrangle, and on the ancient buildings and shadowy old trees.

Bang, bang, bang, bang, whiz, fizz, whizz!

The fireworks were already going!

There was a roar as the effigy was brought up to the bonfire at last, and placed in position upon the already burning pile.

The features that had been carefully moulded by Bernard Glyn to represent the face of Koumi Rao, no longer looked like the Jam, with a daub of white paint over them; but neither could the effigy be said strongly to resemble Gore. But the placard on the breast left no doubt on the matter. It read, in large letters, "Gore is a rotter!"

Dr. Holmes had promised to come out and see the special pieces when they were lighted, and there was a buzz when the Head was seen in company with Mr. Railton.

"Now, then, Glyn!" said Tom Merry.

Glyn grunted.

"I shouldn't wonder if the blessed things don't work, now, if you have been mucking them up!" he snapped.

"Weally, Glyn, I exahcised gweat care—"

"Spoiled them, most likely."

"Wats! I twust I have sufficient bwaains to know how to handle fireworks. As a mattah of fact, I could have made them quite easily myself if I had known how to."

"Light 'em!" shouted Figgins. "We've fixed 'em up ready for you, and the Head's waiting."

"Well, I'll do my best," said Glyn. "But I don't answer for results, if Gussy has been meddling with them."

"Weally, you ass—"

"File in, Glyn!"

"Go ahead!"

Bernard Glyn piled in and went ahead. He was very proud of those excellent display pieces, and he wanted them

to be a success. The great crowd in the quadrangle looked on eagerly as the first pieces were lighted up.

Against the dark background of sky the sentence flamed forth in letters of fire:

"THE NEW HOUSE IS A ROTTER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter. It was only too evident that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in spite of his great brain powers, had done some mixing when he altered the pieces. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were seen to smile.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tom Merry. "What next?"

From where he was, attending to the lighting, Glyn could not see how the displayed pieces read. He was only too glad to see that they lighted up at all, after Arthur Augustus had handled them.

"Next!" shouted Figgins.

"There goes the next!" said Monty Lowther. "Oh, ye gods!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Put it out—quick!"

Exclamations of horror and dismay burst from all the fellows. And there was reason for them, for the next piece, as it flamed out in fiery letters, read:

"THE HEAD IS REQUESTED TO GO AND EAT COKE!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes, peering up through his glasses at the fiery glare on the dark sky. "I cannot quite make it out, Mr. Railton. What does it say?"

"Ahem!" murmured Mr. Railton.

"Put it out, Glyn, you idiot!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wotten bad taste, Glyn! The Head is bound to be offended. I considah you an ass!"

"What's the matter?" yelled Glyn, from the darkness.

"Put it out!"

Glyn came rushing up. He read the fiery sentence above, and stuttered with wrath and dismay. He turned on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy like a tornado.

"You—you—you frabjous ass! You've mixed the pieces together in your silly alterations. Oh, you awful chump!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I altahed them all right. You don't know how to make fireworks—"

But Glyn, beside himself with fury, rushed upon him, and the swell of St. Jim's roared as his head went into chancery.

Dr. Holmes had succeeded in making out the sentence now, and his face had grown very stern. Tom Merry dragged Glyn off the swell of the Fourth.

"Ass! Go and explain to the Head—quick!"

"My hat! Yes, I'd better."

Glyn dashed up to Dr. Holmes, who was about to stride away with great dignity. He burst into an explanation.

"We didn't mean that, sir. A silly idiot altered the fireworks after they were finished, sir. We had a complimentary piece about you, sir, and—and the awful chump has mixed it up with another one—that wasn't complimentary, sir. You can't think we meant it to read like that, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled again.

"Then it is a mistake, Glyn? Very well, I will take no notice of it, but you should really be more careful."

"It wasn't my fault," gasped Glyn. "It was a dangerous lunatic got at my fireworks, sir—a howling maniac, who ought to be locked up in Colney Hatch—"

"Weally, Glyn—"

The juniors seized the exasperated manufacturer of fireworks just in time, or there would have been a case of assault and battery under the very eyes of Dr. Holmes. And for what seemed an age to the fellows, they read the flaming sentence:

"THE HEAD IS REQUESTED TO GO AND EAT COKE!"

But it died out at last. And after that, Bernard Glyn firmly declined to let off any of the pieces that had been handled by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Fortunately, the Head was, as Tom Merry put it, an old sport, and took the accident quite good-temperedly.

Fatty Wynn had his way, and a tremendous feed finished the celebrations, with Koumi Rao as the guest of honour, quite restored to the friendship of the Co., and probably the happiest fellow at St. Jim's on that eventful night of the fifth of November!

THE END.

(Another Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "The Drudge's Chance." By Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!"



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

IN THE DARK.

Scene: A hayloft. Three of a country fire brigade just arrived in answer to an alarm of fire.

First Fireman (in loft, searching for the fire): "I can't see anything of it, Bill."

Captain (standing on the ladder, boiling over with importance): "What did he say, Bill?"

Bill: "Well, why the blazes doesn't he strike a light and look for it, instead of poking about in the dark?"—Sent in by Miss D. E. Roffey, Small Heath, Birmingham.

Day-Constable (relieving night man): "How's the missus?"

Night-Constable: "I don't know. 'Aven't seen 'er this seven year."

Day-Constable: "But you live together, don't you?"

Night-Constable: "Yes. But she's a charwoman, and is out all day, an' I'm out on dooty all night, so we 'aven't met since we settled down after our 'oneymoon."—Sent in by A. Sargent, Longsight, Manchester.

A PAYING GAME.

Jack: "Do you think poultry-keeping pays?"

John: "Well, it pays my boy."

Jack: "In what way?"

John: "Well, I bought the chickens for him, and I pay for their keep; I buy the eggs from him, and he eats them."—Sent in by W. Hastie, Maidstone.

It was the first time little James had been to church.

"And how did you like the service?" inquired the father, as they were going home.

"Oh, it was fine, dad! Let's go again next Sunday."

"Very well," said the father proudly. "But what part of the service did you like best?"

"Oh, when the man came round with a plate of money. I got a shilling. How much did you get, dad?"—Sent in by L. Wadsworth, Hulme, Manchester.

BAD TIMES.

Visitor (in country churchyard): "How is the world using you, my man?"

Gravedigger: "Oh, rather bad, thankee, sir. I ain't a-buried a livin' soul this six weeks. I do wish the folks 'ud die more regular!"—Sent in by Miss E. L. Short, Chichester.

THE OYSTER DEFINED.

"Now," asked Teacher, "who can tell me what an oyster is?"

Silence for a moment, while small brows were knit in strained efforts at remembrance. Then little Tommy's facial muscles relaxed, and eagerly he raised his hand.

"I know!" he triumphantly announced. "An oyster is a fish built like a nut!"—Sent in by Miss A. Wilson, Manchester.

She had sent off a telegram, and was waiting for an answer. Suddenly the peculiar halting click of the receiving-machine sounded in the office, and she said to her companion:

"That's from George. I can tell his stutler!"—Sent in by John Burns, Glasgow.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

SO SIMPLE!

Magistrate (to prisoner accused of stealing a chicken): "Are you the defendant?"

Prisoner: "No. I have a solicitor defending me. I am the man who stole the chicken!"—Sent in by J. C. Roberts, Carnarvon.

TAUGHT HIM A LESSON.

Judge: "Why did you strike the telegraph operator?"

Prisoner: "It's like this, yer honour. I gave him a message to send to me gal, and he started reading it, so I swiped him!"—Sent in by E. J. Kelly, Carnarvon.

"That was rough on Davis."

"What?"

"He stepped on a piece of orange-peel, fell, and was arrested for giving a street performance without a licence!"—Sent in by J. N. De Villiers, Cape Province.

A field officer visiting a military guard-room was astounded to find it empty, except for a shirt-sleeved old warrior puffing at a clay-pipe.

"Where's the sergeant of the guard?" he demanded.

"He's gone to get a drink."

"Where are the sentries, then?"

"In the mess-room," the man replied.

"What are you doing here, then?"

"Oh, I'm only the prisoner!" was the bland reply.—Sent in by B. Simpson, Islington.

THE REASON.

Mother (to Tommy, on returning home from school late): "Where have you been?"

Tommy: "Someone put on the board that I could squeeze girls better than any boy in the school."

Mother: "What did the teacher say?"

Tommy: "She kept me in."—Sent in by G. Emblibrary, Surbiton.

He was a postmaster, and rats in his office were playing havoc with the registered letters. So he wrote to his chief, and his chief wrote to his chief, and so on, till, six months later, he received permission to keep two cats in the office.

After a month he was compelled to send to headquarters this ominous message:

"I have the honour to inform you that the senior cat is absent without leave."

And a week later, without waiting for a reply, he wrote:

"Re absent cat. I have promoted the junior cat, and have taken into Government service a probationary cat on full rations."—Sent in by J. Wilson-Stevenson, Highbury.

UNREASONABLE.

"This letter's overweight, Mrs. O'Neal," said the village postmistress. "It's too heavy to go for a penny. You'll have to put another stamp on."

"Shure, it's joking you are!" replied the old lady. "Another stamp would make it heavier still!"—Sent in by Alec Wright, Kirkby-in-Ashfield.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

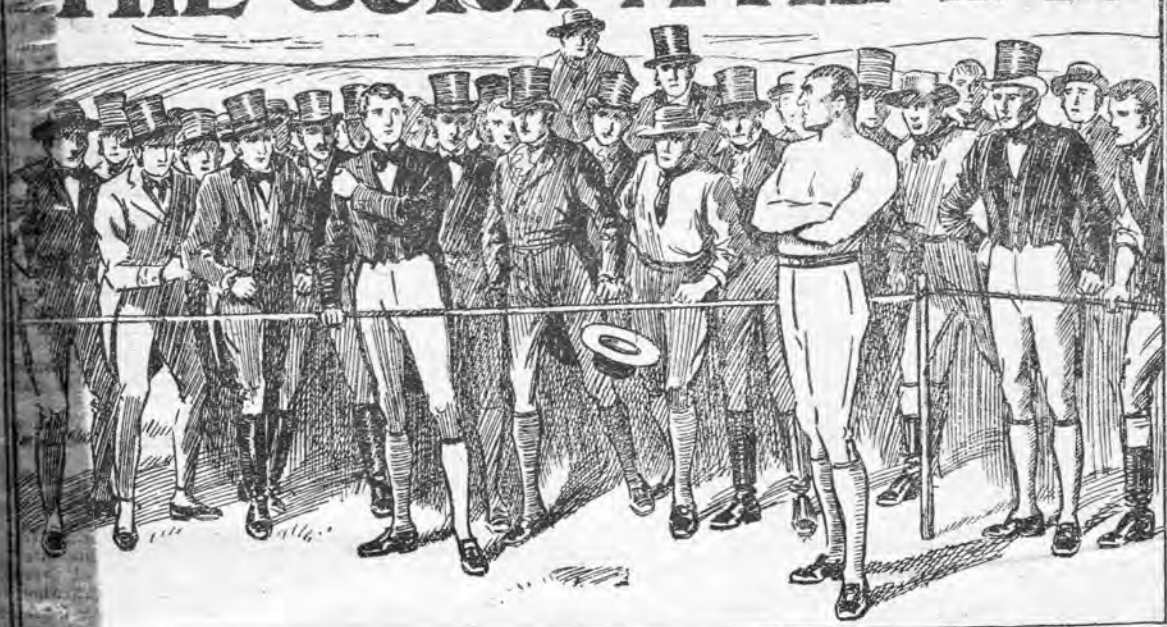
THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

THE CORINTHIAN.



A Magnificent New Story of the Old-Time Prize-Ring. By BRIAN KINGSTON.

READ THIS FIRST.

Hilary Bevan, a sturdy young Britisher of gentle birth, who has been living in the country, walks to London

TO SEE HIS FATHER,

Sir Patrick Bevan, whom he has not met for three years. Arriving at his father's house, Hil learns that the latter has been absent for three days at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes, one of the leading bucks of the time. He also learns that Sir Patrick has earned the nickname of

"PLUNGER" BEVAN,

and is heavily in debt, having dissipated his fortune.

Heading his steps to Sir Vincent Brookes' house in Grosvenor Street, Hilary

FINDS HIS FATHER AT THE GAMING-TABLES,

where he has been for three days and nights.

Sir Patrick rises from the table an utterly ruined man. Hilary's next act is to accept a challenge offered in the prize-ring at Moulsey Hurst. His opponent is a Jew pugilist, Barney Isaacs by name, while Hil, fighting under the name of Harley, beats him, and awakens the interest of a young Corinthian named D'Arcy Vavasour.

HIL DECIDES TO ADOPT THE PRIZE-RING AS A CAREER,

and at a supper which is attended by the leading patrons of "The Fancy" Vavasour matches him for a thousand guineas against any boxer of his weight that Sir Vincent Brookes may select.

Immediately after the contest, Sir Vincent tells Hil that his father is lying dangerously ill at Burnham. Without hesitation, Hil springs on a horse and makes for Burnham.

Arrived there, he finds that nothing is known of his father, and that

SIR VINCENT HAS DECEIVED HIM.

Before he can return, however, Hil is caught by a press-gang and sent to sea. After many exciting adventures he manages to return to No Man's Land in Hertfordshire, where he is due to fight Fennel, a Birmingham pugilist. Hil arrives in the nick of time, and the fight proceeds before a large gathering.

After a terrific mill of one and a quarter hour's duration, he has his opponent at his mercy, and Sir Vincent Brookes says that Fennel will not last much longer. He therefore bets his tiddy, Cokeley, mix with the crowd, and by the judicious distribution of guineas, make them ready to rush the ring and stop the fight.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Broken Ring.

As Captain Cokeley left his place, to worm his way among the press, where gathered the sullen and angry roughs from the midlands, Fennel was being picked up by his seconds for the sixth time.

Hil's straight hitting and indomitable spirit had weakened his courage. His strong rushes had ceased. He had attempted defence, to find himself beaten at a game he did not understand. Twice he had been thrown heavily. The body-hitting was telling upon him, and his seconds had hard work to get him into fit condition for going to the scratch. Game fellow as he was, he had met his master, and the fact was being hammered into him. Taunted with being beaten by a boy, he had sullenly replied that he was doing his best, and no man could do more.

Behind his corner were gathered men from his own town, followers of pugilism of the class that afterwards led to the degradation of the Ring, and its abandonment by its aristocratic supporters—roughs of the nature of the Nottingham "Lambs," who were determined that Bendigo should never have a decision given against him if they could prevent it. They howled at and cursed Fennel, charging him with losing their money.

It was among these, ripe for any ruffianism, that Captain Cokeley bored a way, finding willing listeners to his lies and vile charge that the timekeeper had unfairly benefited Ned Harley by giving him more than a half-minute's rest after the second round. Among them the suggestion to invade the ring, and, by preventing the continuance of the fight, save the payment of their bets, spread like wildfire.

Sir Vincent Brookes had judged correctly the condition of the man on whom so much—more than he could ever know—depended. Even Fennel's most sanguine supporters were slowly realising that, barring an accident, the Birmingham man had no chance of winning. In spite of his great strength and ponderous muscles, he was being licked by the white-skinned, long-armed young Londoner, who seemed to fight the better the longer he went on, whose endurance was calling forth the admiration of the keenest judges of the game.

The termination of every round—and they were getting short rounds now—saw Fennel on the ground, dropped by a

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NEXT
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"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!"

blow, or easily tripped. His seconds had ceased to exhort him, confining themselves to freshening him as much as possible. His slowness had become painful.

Yet even now were to be found reckless individuals willing to snap up the long odds which the Hebrews, good judges of a winning fight, were freely offering upon Ned Harley.

There was always the chance that a lucky blow might knock Harley out of time. Such things had happened before.

And Hil fully believed that victory was within his grasp. He was no longer exerting his full strength. Many of his hits were no more than mere pushes. Several opportunities he allowed to pass by, hoping that Fennel's seconds would withdraw their man. Fennel had proved himself a game and a fair fighter, and his opponent had no desire to administer unnecessary punishment.

But round after round Baldwin and Richmond brought their man up to the scratch, with expectant glances at Sir Vincent for a direction to throw up the sponge that never came.

"Take your man away, Sir Vincent; he is hopeless," suggested more than one of the occupants of the places nearest to the inner ring.

But Brookes either ignored the friendly advice, or shook his head. What, throw up the sponge while there was yet a chance that Cokeley would succeed in so working upon the feelings of the angry Birmingham roughs that their rioting would compel the umpires to withhold a definite decision in Ned Harley's favour? Not he!

Anxiously and covertly his little eyes awaited some signal from his tool. Behind Fennel's corner voices were rising angrily, but as yet no open attempt of interference with the fight had taken place.

"Take the brave fellow away! Take him away!" was angrily shouted from a score of different places, when Fennel stumbled from his corner for the forty-sixth round.

The battle had now lasted nearly two hours. Sir Vincent Brookes looked up, and there was a sneering, defiant scowl in his shifty eyes as they travelled from point to point.

"The mob is vastly in error if it supposes I am here to be dictated to by their unwashed selves!" he exclaimed disdainfully to a gentleman on his right.

A glance of disgust was the only rejoinder. But the clamour behind Fennel's corner was growing louder. Some of the more violent spirits were already shouting abusive epithets at Hil and the officials; there was a noticeable swaying and pressing forward of the close-packed ranks upon the keepers of the ring, all white-hatted pugilists, with the initials of the Pugilistic Club upon the gilt buttons of their long coats, and armed with long whips.

And suddenly Sir Vincent saw an arm raised in the air above the heads of the most obstreperous, with whom the ring-keepers were contending. The arm was Cokeley's.

Fennel had just fallen, sent over on his back by a light shot upon the chest. Hil walked back to his corner.

"That's the receipt, my boy," old Tom Owen said cheerfully. "You won't have to fight no more to-day!"

Fennel was lying helpless across the knees of the black man, his arms hanging limply from the shoulders, and his eyes closed. The timekeeper's glance was fixed upon his watch. In tense silence the great crowd hung up on the passing of the fatal thirty seconds. Then suddenly from the Birmingham roughs, momentarily quiet, came a hoarse, sullen roar. A hundred frenzied voices screamed vile execrations and furious threats; a surging mass of bodies heaved towards the ropes at the back of the beaten man's corner. In an instant the ring-keepers found themselves violently assailed. With difficulty they were able to keep their footing, though all but two or three hurried to the danger-spot and tried to beat back the roughs.

"Time!" announced Captain Barclay, in a voice of thunder, and thrust the watch back into his pocket. The seconds made no effort to set Fennel upon his feet. They knew such an attempt useless; the man had fainted. Then, indifferent to the fighting at the ropes, the Honourable Berkeley Craven walked across to where stood Sir Harry Smith.

"You are satisfied, sir, your man has been fairly beaten?" he asked ceremoniously.

"Perfectly, sir," was the reply of Fennel's umpire.

"Then there is no need, I think, of any appeal to the referee?"

"None, sir."

Sir Vincent Brookes' stratagem had come too late.

From the crowd not involved with the Birmingham men rose a deafening storm of cheering; hats were hurled in the air, men clapped their hands, stamped, laughed, screamed, and sang. And the rejoicings of those whose favourite had won entirely drowned the growlings and lamentations of those who had wagered upon Ned Harley's defeat.

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

"Hooray for the Corinthian! Hooray-y-y!" was heard from more than a thousand lusty throats.

Hil's bynamo had become common property somehow, and his partisans shouted it again and again, as though they heard the mere sound.

Spreading, the great crowd—except those who had been attracted to the scuffle going on where the Birmingham men congregated, and with cries of anger tried to force a way to where stood Hil—broke up into groups, arguing, congratulating, excitedly discussing such details of the battle as appealed to them most strongly.

More than one personal encounter was going on, where a supporter of the winner found himself challenged by a backer of the losing boxer, and, with clenched fist as well as power of lung, proceeded to demonstrate the accuracy of his own views. Others were making their way to where conveyances had been left, eager to leave the scene in time to avoid the collisions and breakdowns which were no unimportant features of the going to and return from an old-time ring battle.

But at the rear of Fennel's corner the disturbance was becoming serious. The roughs were eager to vent their rage upon Ned Harley in personal manner. The winner's supporters, angered by this ruffianly outburst, had no hesitation in applying physical persuasion. Fists and sticks were at work merrily.

Little by little, however, the roughs, in the minority, found themselves getting the worse of the argument, and began sullenly to withdraw.

Cokeley, the fomentor of all the trouble, had early taken care to extricate himself from the crush and turmoil, and was seeking his master.

He, his face as white as chalk, biting at his lips, and striving to control his inward agitation, remained in his place beside the ring, his eyes fixed maliciously upon Hil.

To this end had the scheming prompted by his desire for vengeance upon Sir Patrick Bevan brought him. Stimulated by a twenty years' old grudge, he had made use of every secret, ingenious, and malicious means to ruin the man whom he considered to have wronged him. Fate had been kind to him, and he had accomplished his purpose. His enemy was a beggar.

But in his very success had lain the seeds of his own ruin. From his beggared enemy was sprung one, a mere boy, who, by design or accident, had been the essential agent in bringing overwhelming disaster upon his father's enemy.

Fate, that had fought so long in the baronet's favour, had basely deserted him, and gone over, bag and baggage, to the side of his enemy. From one cunningly-concocted peril after another had this boy, Hilary Bevan, extricated himself. Unharmcd he had come through a dozen dangers.

In that moment the hatred of Sir Vincent Brookes for Hilary Bevan was even greater than he had ever felt against Hilary's father.

The boy had overmatched him, tricked and beaten him at every turn.

Truly, Sir Vincent's thoughts were bitter. At the moment of his own triumph he had unwittingly devised the means of his own downfall. He had been hoisted by his own petard. Had he not ruined Sir Patrick, his enemy's son would never have cast in his lot with the men of the Ring. The triple wager with D'Arcy Vavasour—how was it to be paid?—would never have been made.

He had blindly planned his own destruction; but the hand that had accomplished it was that of Hilary Bevan.

So fierce was his rage, so vindictive his heart, that, but for the inborn cowardice of the man's nature, he would have drawn one of the pistols lying in the pockets of his long coat, and shot Hil where he stood.

"Are you not going to look after your man, Sir Vincent? He is in a bad way, it seems!" a voice exclaimed at his elbow.

Sir Vincent spun round, his eyes gleaming with savagery. "Look after him! Not I!" he snarled. "Let the dog die if he choose!"

And he strode to the side of the common land, where his vehicle awaited him.

Meanwhile, Hil, having slipped his arms into a coat, had left his seconds, who wished to take him away, and gone across to Fennel's corner. The man was unconscious of his opponent's attempt to take and shake his hand. He had fainted, exhausted not only by the punishment he had received as by his own style of fighting.

Unheeding the clamouring and threatening mob that strove to reach him, Hil went down on one knee to assist Baldwin and Richmond in their efforts to bring Fennel round. The man had fought bravely, even though he had fought roughly. Even when he had held his opponent on the ropes he had not exceeded the limit of fairness which the rules then allowed, permitted, and Hil, though the skin had been rasped from his back, felt no grudge.

At last Fennel opened his eyes. He was propped against

and, a tot of spirit being forced into his mouth, he began to recover himself. And when Hil again offered to shake his hand he did not refuse.

"Art too good for me," he mumbled. "An' yet—yet I thout I'd ha' licked ye. Mun be of iron!"

And then Mr. Jackson drew near. Calm and self-possessed, the "commander-in-chief" had been engaged in collecting a subscription for the beaten man. A handful of gold was dropped into Fennel's pocket.

"I'll add ten guineas when I get the money," Hil told him.

Fennel was not to blame for the rascality of the man who had backed him, nor yet for the conduct of the ugly crew who called themselves the man's friends.

"Now, master, ye'll get 'im along inter a shay, an' get 'im off," Caleb Baldwin suggested.

But Fennel was unable to walk, so Hil lifted him to his shoulder, and fairly carried him to where was the conveyance in which he had been brought from St. Albans. And at this exhibition of good feeling and remaining muscular strength he was loudly cheered by the crowd, now gathering in hot haste about the ring again, it having suddenly remembered that a second battle was to be fought.

All were eager to find places again wherefrom to see the bill between the lightweights, all recollection of which had been temporarily driven from their heads by the extraordinary fight just terminated, and the riot that had arisen; but they stood aside to form a clear road for Hil and his garden.

"Noble and disinterested conduct, Ned, but is it not slightly—well, superfluous?" drawled D'Arcy Vavasour, who, without making himself conspicuous, had remained near to Hil since his crossing to Fennel's corner, and was still at his back. "I am somewhat doubtful that he would have done much for you had the positions been reversed."

"Perhaps not, sir," the lad answered warmly. "But I do not find a pattern for my behaviour among those who are opposed to me—nor do you yourself!" And he smiled. "The man fought well, and neither he nor I is the worse for what I am doing!"

"You are right, Ned." And Vavasour's cynical, drawling indifference changed. "And now, Ned, you must drive back with me. Randall and Smith will soon be in the ring; but I think both you and I have had sufficient of fighting for one day!"

Sir Vincent Brookes in Defeat.

Leaving his servant to take charge of the vehicle in which he had driven from town, D'Arcy Vavasour entered the barouche with Hil. The seconds, Owen and Ward, also chambered in, their duties not yet completed. But first they had about the driver's whip the colours of the victor, with those of Fennel underneath. Then the barouche rolled and bumped away, to the accompaniment of cheering from the crowd.

As a set-off against this evidence of the popularity that a winning athlete enjoys, from knots of Fennel's partisans, leaning from the common in angry dislocation, came hoootings and groaning, mixed with insulting words; but further demonstrations of ill-feeling were prudently held back. The roughs had seen quite enough of Ned Harley's fighting ability in the ring to risk a personal encounter with one so formidable by exasperating him beyond endurance.

Tearing down the rutty lane leading to the main road, those in the barouche were suddenly aroused by a warning shout from behind. Looking back, Hil and Vavasour saw a high, two-wheeled carriage coming behind, the horses galloping at headlong speed. So recklessly was the driver coming along, it seemed he had neither heed for the safety of his own neck nor for that of anyone in his path.

"Sir Vincent Brookes, and with the black dog sitting on his shoulders. If he could smash us, I presume he would feel some recompense for his losing to-day!"

It really seemed as though some such mad intention was in the baronet's mind. The lane was but narrow, and between the barouche and the offside hedge there seemed scarcely room for another vehicle to pass, even with a careful man handling the reins. But, thundering down on the leaders, Sir Vincent made not the slightest attempt to slacken speed. Nearer and nearer he approached, until a terrible collision seemed inevitable.

Springing from his seat, and leaning across the turned back, falling top of the barouche, old Tom Owen shouted excitedly at the foolhardy man.

"Have a care, master!" he yelled. "There ain't room for ye to pass us! Pull up, or— Blow me dickey!"—the old man's voice rose to a scream—"the man be crazy, an' 'e'll be dead!"

Shouting to his own driver to go faster, Vavasour looked across.

"If we come alive out of this, Sir Vincent shall answer to me for such conduct," he said, in his usual languid drawl, although there was a gleam in his eyes that told of anger. "I allow no man to ride me down on a public highway. I think we shall need to jump, Ned. But I am sorry for our companions!"

With the colours-decorated whip the coachman lashed the horses to their fullest endeavour; but the barouche was a heavier vehicle than the other, had four wheels, and carried a greater load. In every mad stride the head-tossing, foam-flecked pursuing horses gained ground. In a hundred yards the intervening distance would be made up, and then would come the crash.

Owen and Ward were on their feet, shouting wildly, their eyes straining. Hil rose from his seat to look round, and at that moment he felt something pushed towards his hand.

Vavasour had risen, a pistol drawn from either pocket, and was offering him one.

"It must be the horses," he said. "I would prefer to shoot the man, but that would be murder. Shoot, Ned! I'm loth to hurt a noble animal, but there are three lives beside our own at stake. The man is mad, and nothing less will stop his mad career!"

A bare twenty yards now separated the heads of the baronet's horses from the back of the barouche. With a steady hand Hil accepted the pistol, and levelled it.

"Allow me to fire first, sir; and please do not shoot yourself unless I miss it, and it is absolutely necessary," he said, without turning round.

Brookes must have seen the weapon in Hil's hand, but he still held on, his face—now easily seen—the colour of fuller's earth, and his lips a thin line. Then he suddenly shouted something, presumably to his companion, the man named Cokeley; but the words did not reach those in front. Raising his whip, he brought it down with all his strength, sending the long lash curling about the horses' ears. With a mad plunge, the animals leaped forward.

And then Hil's pistol flashed.

"Missed, by Jove!" Vavasour exclaimed; and he raised his own weapon.

"Wait!"

Hil's voice rang out sharply, and Vavasour obeyed, forefinger pressing against trigger.

And at that moment the baronet's offside horse threw up its head, lost its stride, hung for a moment, and then wrenched violently, its powerful shoulders driving heavily against the shoulder of its fellow. Brookes's whip fell again, and, with a plunge, the horses swerved sideways.

Hil's bullet had shot away the corner of the blinker covering the off animal's right eye.

Alarmed by the explosion and the shock, the horse shied upon its fellow, and the cut of the whip-thong completed the fright. Tearing and tossing, the driver unable to stop their mad career, the horses, in temporary successful defiance of their master, covered a few yards, crashed into the hedge, and, their muzzles so close to the barouche that old Joe Ward's shaking fingers might easily have touched them, brought the vehicle to a standstill, the near wheel grinding and ripping into the bushes.

So severe was the shock that Brookes and his companion were jerked from their seats, and fell into the road. The barouche rolled on.

"My faith, a neat shot, Ned!" observed Vavasour, smiling at the marksman whose skill had saved them from certain disaster, and without the sacrifice of a good horse. "Envy you your nerve, dear lad. I doubt if there be another man in England could match such a shot in such circumstances!"

"Better than killing a good horse. It was no fault of theirs," Hil answered, handing back the pistol.

The two seconds, still trembling with fright, were staring at him as though he had just made use of some black magic.

"What'd ye do, young master?" Owen gasped.

"Spared us a premature visit to the cemetery, my good fellows, I think," answered Vavasour.

"I hope he've broke that varmint's neck. I allus thought Sir Vincent Brookes was a gen'lman; now I knows different," said Owen, wiping his forehead.

But his pious wish was not satisfied. Looking backward as the barouche entered the main road, Hil saw Brookes's carriage coming along, but at a sober pace, the baronet himself with the reins again in his hands, and his companion beside him. Turning, Hil caught Vavasour's eye. The latter smiled.

"The Prince of Darkness looks after his own. Our friend will do a little further mischief, I have no doubt, before he dies," he said. "But he is hardly hit this time, I fancy—as hardly as I should have been but for you, Ned. I am vastly in your debt, lad!"

Vavasour was right. Hardly hit indeed was Sir Vincent. And while Hil and his backer went direct to the White Hart Inn at St. Albans, where Hil might obtain a warm bath, and

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have his superficial injuries attended to before returning to the metropolis, the baronet, driving Londonwards, had leisure to consider the precarious financial situation into which this latest defeat had thrust him.

He owed more than he could pay; there was no need for the aid of pen and paper to make that fact clear to him. Mile after mile rolled behind him, and still his subtle, scheming brain could devise no means whereby he might escape the penalties of the defaulting debtor. By a vigorous effort he drove Hilary Bevan and D'Arcy Vavasour from his thoughts.

"Heaven knows what he sees in him!" The jackanapes is no real fighting man!" suddenly observed Cokeley, anxious to curry favour by running down his master's enemy. "But this Ned Harley seems to have turned one fool's brain to-day!"

"Who is that?"

"That fool Brayne! Swears there never was such a boxer! Declares this Harley a second Jem Belcher! Ugh! It made me sick to listen to him!" cried Cokeley disgustedly.

"Brayne has no doubt won some money over him," was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"No, sir; the other way about!" the other cried eagerly. "I heard him say Harley will be champion of England in two years' time. Offered to bet on it!"

"Did he?"

The baronet was only half listening.

"Says he'll back Harley two to one, anything up to ten thousand pounds, against any man within a stone of him, in any part of the kingdom! These young fools with money! Bah! They ought not to be trusted with it!"

An alert expression came swiftly into Brookes's eyes. He stiffened, sitting bolt upright, staring straight in front of him, careless of his fast-moving cattle, which, controlling the reins for a moment, swerved and neatly took a wheel off a donkey-cart as they passed. But their master was magnificently indifferent to the storm of vivid remonstrances that followed him as he drove on.

Suddenly he plucked at the reins, a spot of colour in his face, and he turned sharply to Cokeley.

"Cokeley," he exclaimed, "you are a good bloodhound! D'you think you could find Sir Patrick Bevan and bring him to me in three days?"

(This thrilling sporting story will be continued in next Wednesday's issue of "THE GEM LIBRARY." Order your copy EARLY!)

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The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

N. J. Gaul, 85, Tower Street, Leederville, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England, age 19.

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L. Nieuwoudt, Barberton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-18.

Miss K. Caldwell, 202, Karangahape Road, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers.

K. Watts, 58 Richmond Road, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in the British Isles, age 14-15.

Miss F. Macdonald, 139, Lennox Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in Scotland, age 14.

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The Editor specially requests Colonial
Readers to kindly bring the Free Corre-
spondence Exchange to the notice of their
friends.

AN INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE ARTICLE TO ALL FOOTBALLERS!

GOAL GETTING!

BY
J. CANTRELLOF
TOTTENHAM
HOTSPURS

There is no need for me to point out the importance of the goal-getting part of the football business. In fact, it may be said a game of football is divided roughly into two parts—getting goals, and preventing the getting of goals. After all, there is very little else to it. Goals are the things which count. It does not matter if you have the smartest forwards of any team in your class, mere smartness will be of no avail unless it is bringing goals in its train. When you come to think of it, it is really surprising how many different ways there are in which goals are scored. Some come as the results of long shots, and others are efforts from quite a short range. There are high shots which count, and low ones which beat the goalkeeper, and there are other occasions when goals come not as the results of shots at all—they just happen, as it were.

There can be no doubt that a great many goals are gained by sheer good fortune—luck, if you like—and thus it comes about that the better team does not always win. But the best team matters very little—in the end it is real goal-getting ability which carries with it the spoils.

How, then, are goals got? That is a question which must be troubling not a few minds. I once knew a very clever footballer who lost, for the time, his ability to score goals. So his team manager put him in the half-back line, and when he was asked which part of the team he liked best, he replied:

"Oh, half-back. You are not expected to score goals there!"

He, at any rate, found this job of goal-scoring a bit too much anxiety for him. And it is a trying business, too—for, above all other things, it is coolness in front of goal which brings success. The player who gets flurried and excited with the ball at his toe, will not score many goals—it is the player who calmly takes in the situation—sees the possibilities of the position, and having taken it all in, can act upon his knowledge coolly and quickly.

There is an impression abroad, among boys, that they should shoot very hard every time. Now hard and often are two very fine words for the forward to keep at the back of his mind, but there are exceptions. Suppose you have the ball in front of goal, you have beaten the backs, and only the goalkeeper remains. You are close into goal—on such an occasion there is no necessity for a terrific shot, which may break the net. Oh, no! What should be aimed at is, making sure, and this can be done by taking deliberate aim, and placing the ball to the right or left of the goalkeeper.

The danger is here. That in putting in a terrific shot, you may miss altogether, whereas, if you take deliberate aim, you are much less likely to send the ball wide, and if the ball is out of the goalkeeper's reach, it will serve the purpose for which it is intended.

From the nature of his position, the centre-forward should get more opportunities of scoring goals than the other members of the side—provided his wing men are of the right kind. It is the duty of the outside men to swing the ball across into goal, and for the insiders—and the centre-forward—to get the ball into the net. As I am a centre-forward myself, I am speaking mostly from the centre-forward's point of view.

One important point which is often overlooked in connection with this goal-scoring, is the getting into position for having the ball passed to you. I once heard an old International say there was only one thing more important than passing well, and that was to get into a proper position for receiving a pass. He was not far wrong. The

centre-forward, then, should strive all the time to get into such a position that when the wing men give him the ball, he will have a fairly clear course to goal. Slip out of the full-back's or the half-back's way before the ball comes to you—it is much easier than dodging him when you have the ball at your toe.

One reason why more goals are not scored, is that too many young footballers—and some of the older ones, too—have only one leg. I do not mean that they have lost the other leg in a railway accident, or anything of that kind. I mean they can only kick the ball with one foot, for football purposes, they have one leg only. Many a fine player would be very much more effective if only he could kick the ball with either foot as the occasion demanded.

It is sometimes really pitiable to see the efforts of one of these players to bring the ball to the foot with which he can kick, and losing the ball in the process time after time. Young centre-forwards especially should cultivate the art of shooting with either foot.

In the same way, ability to trap the ball is of tremendous value. When the leather comes sailing over from the wings, the centre-forward can rest assured that he will not be allowed much time to bring it under control. Almost before he knows where he is, those full-backs will be on the scene, ready, willing, and able to boot the ball away from the danger-zone. Hence the necessity of getting the ball under control in the shortest possible time. And when you have the ball in shooting position, did it ever occur to you that you should deceive the goalkeeper as far as possible as to where you intend to put it—which side of the goal you are trying to get the ball into?

It must be remembered that these goalies are very clever in the art of anticipation. They are ever on the look-out for some sign from the man with the ball as to which side of the goal he intends to put it. And if the intention is detected, then when the ball goes to that side of the goal, there is the goalkeeper in the way—stopping the shots, and once more inviting you to wonder how he did it. So don't advertise the place where you intend to shoot.

Remember, too, that you don't score many goals unless you are on the spot when the ball comes in from the wings. The position of the centre-forward is as far up the field as he can be, without getting off-side, or he will be of little use to the side in the goal-scoring line. Moreover, it is indeed a part of the centre-forward's duty to hustle the full-backs all the time. Many of them can kick hard enough, and well enough, if you give them plenty of room; but hustle into them, and they will send the ball anywhere and everywhere except where they want it to go. Especially when the ground is slippery, and the ball more difficult to kick in consequence, should the centre-forward be up on the opposing backs—worrying them, hustling them, and trying as far as possible to put them off their game. This can be done quite fairly.

This hustling process can be applied to the goalkeeper, too. You may recall that England beat Scotland in the International match last season, because Hampton, England's centre-forward, hustled the goalkeeper over the line when he had the ball in his hands. No better recommendation of the value of hustle can be found.

Jimmy Cantrell

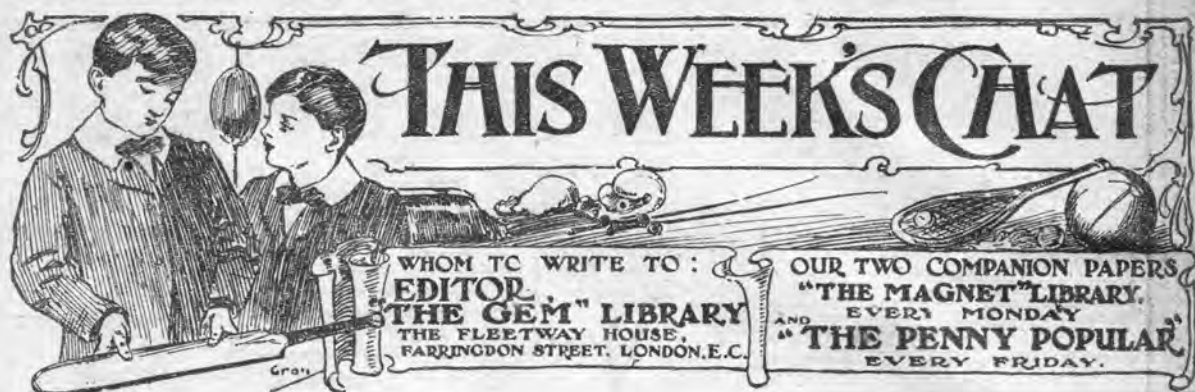
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 299.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!"

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

This splendid, long, complete school tale deals further with the troubles, trials, and ambitions of Tom Lynn, the new boot-boy at St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the aristocratic swell of the Fourth Form, backed up by Tom Merry & Co., proposes a grand scheme to Lynn, whereby his yearnings after knowledge may be satisfied to the full.

This scheme is opposed tooth and nail by the snobs of the school, headed by Levison of the Fourth, whose ill-natured persecution almost drives the poor Drudge from St. Jim's.

THE DRUDGE'S CHANCE.

however, comes in the end, and Lynn proves himself fully capable of making the most of it.

"GEM" LEAGUE NOTES.

K. Raney, of 416, Laurier Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, would be glad to hear from any fellow-Gemite who would like to join a "Gem" Correspondence Club. Applicants living in British Isles or any British colony specially invited.

The "Three Leaders' League," recently referred to on this page, continues to make splendid progress. From their latest report, I see the energetic organisers of this League—which, of course, started in connection with "The Invincible Trio" of companion papers—have recently opened a Back Numbers Lending Department and a Recreation Department, while a reading-room and sports section has also been added. In addition, I am informed that "The Langdale Sports' Club" has now become incorporated with the "Three Leaders' League," thus still further strengthening this flourishing organisation, whose head office is at 26, Princes Square, Cable Street, London, E.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

I know my "Gemite" chums will be pleased, as well as interested, to learn that the famous trio of companion papers—"The Gem" and "The Magnet" Libraries, and "The Penny Popular"—are prospering famously, and steadily growing in circulation week by week.

At the same time, I want to make an earnest appeal to my chums not to relax one whit the kind efforts they are making to popularise "The Invincible Trio" among their non-reading friends. They have already done much for me, and I am relying upon their doing still more. While on the subject of our companion papers, I am glad to be able to inform my chums that there is an

Extra Good Number

of "The Penny Pop," now on sale everywhere. The three grand complete tales are really first-class, and the very best of their kind; while the great "Poplets" Competition, for which more splendid Cash Prizes are offered, will be found to have lost none of its attraction.

The titles of the three complete stories are: "The Frontier Smugglers," a tale of Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro.

"The New Tutor," an amusing school story of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford.

"The Black King," a grand story of Jack, Sam, and Pete, by S. Clarke Hook.

The latter story is a particularly jolly and laughable one. The whole issue, in fact, is one that I should be sorry indeed for any of you to miss. Don't forget to go to your newsagent and get the issue of "The Penny Popular" now on sale.

ANIMAL CINEMA ACTORS.

No doubt you have often asked yourself, "How ever do they get wild animals to act for the cinema?" In the first place, whilst it is true that animals do act for the cinema, and, as my article will show, are properly trained for their parts just like an actor, yet wild animals rarely appear in a film: and when they do, it is obvious that they cannot be trained and yet remain wild.

Everyone likes to see animals on the screen, and so producers of films have spent thousands of pounds to buy up all the suitable animals they can get for their films. Before I go any farther with this article, let me explain to you that there are two distinct kinds of animal films—those which depict trained animals in a story, and those which show wild animals in their natural state of freedom. These latter are called travel films, and "Paul J. Rainey's African Hunt" is an example.

In this travel film, camera men accompany bands of intrepid hunters into wild regions, where they film the wild life as it is encountered—with no small amount of risk to themselves. In the case of the photo-play, or film story which contains animals, these are merely acted in the grounds of the studio. Adjoining Selig's studios is a large menagerie of forty acres, wherein are kept, in conditions as nearly like those of the forest, almost every species of animals. At the present time Mr. Selig has a huge collection, comprising 45 lions, 11 tigers, 25 leopards, 15 pumas, and almost every animal that has ever tramped a jungle. These animals are not bred in captivity, but are taken from the forests in their youth. Bands of hardy and experienced hunters are continually scouring the world's forest jungles and prairies for the purpose of keeping the menageries of cinema producers well stocked.

There is a great deal said just now about cruelty to animals in cinema productions, such as torturing them to make them appear fierce; but when you remember that Mr. Selig—who has one of the largest menageries in the world—is a member of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the stories lose force.

"If the animals were cruelly treated by their trainers, every trainer knows that his life would never be safe, for an animal never forgets an injury," said Mr. Selig recently.

Not only animals, but reptiles, with their venomous fangs removed, are kept on these farms, and clever are the parts they have to play in the films. In one film called "Fantomas" a snake glides in through a window, and entwines itself around the form of a sleeping man, seemingly crushing him in its embrace. The man, however, had a waistcoat of rubber, containing a number of tiny spikes, which grip the snake, and enable the man to throw him off.

Two or three years ago daring adventurers offered to risk their lives in animal films for large sums of money, and many thrilling scenes were obtained this way. When the authorities learned that men were deliberately offering their lives for money in this way, they stepped in and stopped it.

The camera man who accompanies an expedition in search of wild animal films has a very dangerous and heavy time of it. In tropical countries he must develop his films as he goes along, for they would perish with the heat, and this necessitates his carrying a huge outfit with him. Sometimes, two, three, or four cameras have to be taken.

Another of this grand new series of articles, specially written for "The Gem" Library, will appear next Wednesday.)

The Editor



This picture illustrates one of the many exciting incidents in

THE FRONTIER SMUGGLERS.

the magnificent, long, complete tale of Sexton Blake—Detective in

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Out across the plain a horseman was galloping furiously, and fifty yards behind him a black object was bounding, sending a deep-throated bay far and wide. It was Pedro!

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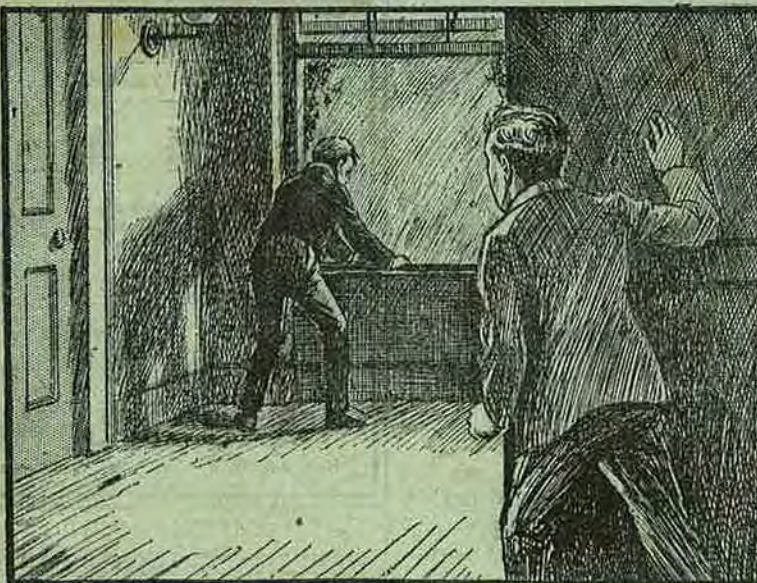
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Buy THE PENNY POPULAR to-day.



Figgins heard the sound of a window cautiously opened in the darkness. He gave a silent chuckle. "By Jove!" he muttered, "the bounder's going to the School House!"



This depicts a dramatic scene in

The New Tutor !

The grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's in

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The Blessing

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To suitably commemorate the 10th birthday number of "Woman's World," now on sale, a superb reproduction in many colours of this beautiful Academy Picture is presented FREE to every reader. The best water colour of this year's Royal Academy, this plate is the work of Mr. H. Henshall, R.W.S., and is without doubt the FINEST PRESENTATION PICTURE EVER GIVEN WITH A PENNY PAPER. Its actual size is 11 inches wide by 8 inches deep. Do not miss the 10th Birthday Number of

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