

NELSON LEE

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An amusing incident from this week's uproariously funny long complete school yarn, featuring Archie Glenthorne and his cheery chums at St. Frank's.

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OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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Valet/ By Edwy Searles Brooks.

give one look at the contents, and then proceed to lecture the young master."

"I shouldn't stand it, sir," said Tubbs spiritedly. "After all, Mr. Phipps is only your valet, and it's a bit thick that he should order you about. Surely you can buy what you like?"

contains a special assortment of ties and socks.

"I understand, sir," said Tubbs knowingly. "You want to open it first, eh?"

"Right on the nail!" replied Archie brightly. "Well, that's that. Don't forget, laddie. A silver coin of quite respectable

dimensions is yours if you nab the good old parcel and keep it discreetly dark."

"I twig, sir," grinned Tubbs, rubbing his palm.

Archie Glenthorne nodded, and strolled elegantly out into the sunny Triangle. For an autumn day, the weather was exceptionally kindly. So kindly, in fact, that Archie had decided to take a stroll. The rest of the fellows were away playing football somewhere, and Archie was feeling slightly lonely.

He was really a member of the Junior XI himself—for he wasn't half so useless as he looked—but Nipper was trying a new combination of the forward-line to-day. So Archie, attiring himself in his brightest and neatest, was taking the air.

It was one of his life's worries that Phipps, his valet, should be so prejudiced against colours. Archie himself had a passion for colour. Left to himself, he would have worn the jazziest socks and neckties, and he would have startled



"Oh, absolutely!" said the genial ass of the Remove. "But it isn't quite that, old tulip. Phipps is a dashed priceless chappie. As a general rule, we get along well together. But on the subject of ties and socks we fail to see eye to eye; and as this dashed parcel

the natives with vivid fancy waistcoats.

But Phipps, strictly speaking, knew what he was about. His restraining influence was just what Archie required. At the present moment, for example, Archie was attired with quiet elegance from head to foot; there

wasn't a single jarring note. Phipps, to put it briefly, knew his stuff.

"Oh, well, I dare say the old lad means well!" Archie told himself, as he strolled down the lane. "But I do wish the blighter would polish up his ideas on the subject of socks. I mean to say, why should a chappie be condemned to dull, sombre colours? The girls drift into public view looking like so many rainbows, and the brighter they are, the more they get away with it. Yet a chappie must stagger through existence looking like a bally autumn landscape! Frightfully unfair!"

He pondered over this problem deeply as he walked. Time after time he had attempted to convert Phipps to his own way of thinking; but he had always come off second best. There was something firm—something rock-like—about Phipps' attitude.

"Good afternoon, sir!"

Archie started, and came to a halt. The voice had come from the side of the road, and the dandified junior now saw a figure sitting on the stile which led into Bellton Wood.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "A ripping afternoon, in fact."

He was not particularly impressed. The stranger on the stile was shabby. His shoes were cracked and even gaping in places. His trousers were much bespattered with mud, as though he had walked many weary miles. His chin had not been shaved for at least two days, and although he wore a collar, his necktie was missing.

Archie was about to pass on, when he took another look. There was something indefinably different about this man. He was clearly a down-and-out, tramping the countryside; but he certainly wasn't the average type of tramp. He possessed an air of distinction—almost of dignity—and his face, although unshaven, was prepossessing. He was regarding Archie with kindly, respectful eyes.

"I take it, old warrior, that times are somewhat hard, what?" asked Archie solicitously. "I mean to say, a slight addition to the funds wouldn't come amiss?"

He felt in his pocket, and produced two half-crowns.

"Very kind of you, sir, but I'd rather not," said the stranger quietly. "I've been on the tramp, but I'm not a beggar."

"Good gad!" said Archie, nonplussed.

He was a generous-hearted fellow, and he not infrequently handed half-crowns to needy wayfarers whom he met on the roads. And never once—until now—had his money been refused. This man was a bit of a novelty.

"Well, of course, you know best, old dear!" he said cheerfully. "I wouldn't press it on you. I'm frightfully sorry if I've upset your dignity. The good old independent spirit is not absolutely dead, what?"

"And never will be, I hope, sir," said the stranger. "The open-air life is not, I must confess, all that it is cracked up to be. Yet I must admit that things might be worse.

Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me, sir, how far it is to Bristol?"

"Bristol!" ejaculated Archie, staring.

"Bristol, sir; I am walking to Bristol."

"Odds shocks and staggerers!" said Archie. "But, my good old optimist, Bristol is thousands of miles away! Absolutely on the other side of the map. We're in Sussex, and Bristol is tucked away in some frightful odd corner of Devonshire!"

"I hardly think so, sir," said the stranger, shaking his head. "Surely Bristol is mainly in Gloucestershire—with a certain portion of the city in Somersetshire? That, at least, is what I learned when I was a boy at school. I was always considered to be rather good at geography."

"Perhaps you're right, old scream. I wouldn't dream of arguing," said Archie. "The fact is, my own geography is well on the groggy side. Even so, Bristol is a fearful way off, and when you talk of legging it all the way, I quiver at the knee joints."

There was something about this man's speech which impressed Archie even more than his appearance. It was the speech of an educated, cultured man; and his quiet, respectful manner seemed to prove that he was not the usual type of wastrel.

"I fancy I shall get to Bristol in due course, young sir," said the man confidently. "A day or so, one way or the other, does not matter. Well, I must be wishing you good-afternoon. And thank you again, sir, for your offer of help—an offer which I must reluctantly decline."

He stepped down from the stile, raised his battered hat, and prepared to move on.

"Oh, but look here!" said Archie. "It seems to me, old boy, that this is a genuine case. You've fought the hard fight and lost, what?"

"No, sir," said the other firmly. "I haven't lost—yet."

"Well, let me spring a loan, if you won't take it as a gift," urged Archie. "The good old fare to Bristol, shall we say? Don't be in such a dashed hurry."

The man fell into step beside Archie, and they walked down the lane together.

"It is one of my principles in life, sir, never to borrow money," said the stranger. "As for accepting money as a gift, the thought horrifies me. I will admit that I am searching for work—but that is a different thing."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "Then what about finding you a job? Just say the word and I'll dash about a bit and see what can be done. What sort of jobs can you do?"

"I'm afraid I am singularly unaccomplished, sir," said the man, shaking his head. "In the matter of ordinary jobs—such as people would offer to me—I am useless."

"But surely, old thing, you haven't always been on the tramp?" asked Archie. "I mean, there's some sort of niche in life that you have previously filled?"

"Oh, quite so, sir," said the other. "By profession I am a gentleman's gentleman."

"Good gad!" said Archie, halting, and eyeing the man with new interest. "You don't absolutely mean to say that you're a valet?"

"Not now, sir—but I have been one."

"Well I'm dashed!" said Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye and surveying the man keenly. "I might even say that I'm dashed dashed!"

"So I appreciate, sir," said the other gravely.

Archie could now understand the fellow's deferential manner—his tone of respect—his quiet, gentlemanly bearing.

"This is most frightfully interesting," continued Archie. "I happen to have a valet of my own—and that, in a way, gives me a fellow feeling. You don't know how cut up I am to see a valet oozing about the countryside without a job. Can't something be done about it?"

"These are hard times, sir," said the man, shaking his head. "Our noblemen and gentlemen are practising economy. Valets are being dispensed with. Hence my workless condition. I have striven hard, sir, to maintain my self-respect, but I am afraid that but a remnant of it is still left with me. You must allow me to apologise, sir, for the condition of my shoes—and, indeed, for the parlous state of my wardrobe in general."

Archie waved his hand.

"Kindly drop the frightful subject," he said. "And really, old cheese, you must let me help you. Dash it, I won't take any refusal."

"If you mean money, sir—no."

"You're a frightfully difficult blighter to help!" said Archie complainingly. "What about your last job? Perhaps I can do something in that direction? Get in touch with your late master or something of that sort or order?"

"I am afraid that would be useless," said the other. "His lordship definitely gave me to understand that he is no longer in a position to maintain a valet. I tried hard to get other work before I took to the road——"

"His lordship?" repeated Archie, staring.

"Lord Willingstone, sir."

"Lord Willingstone!" yelled Archie with a jump.

"You have heard of him, sir?"

"My dear old teacup, I know the blighter!" said Archie. "Or, at least, I've met him. Well I'm dashed! So you used to be Lord Willingstone's valet? How frightfully interesting!"

"I served ten faithful years at Willingstone Manor, sir."

"That's it—Willingstone Manor, Willingstone, Bucks!" said Archie. "That's the place, what?"

"Not Bucks, sir—Berks," corrected the ex-valet.

In this instance, Archie Glenthorne was not so ignorant of geography as he pretended to be. He knew perfectly well that Willingstone Manor was in Berkshire. Archie was no fool. Although he was favourably im-

pressed by this man, it was just as well to put the fellow's story to the test.

"Oh, rather!" he said. "Berks. That's right, laddie. My frightful geography again. By the way, you haven't told me your bally name yet."

"Trott, sir—John Trott."

"And a priceless name, too," said Archie stoutly. "Tell me, Trott, how is the sunk garden looking at Willingstone Manor?"

"There is no sunk garden there, sir," replied Trott, looking puzzled.

"Well, what of the miles of glasshouses?"

"I think you must be referring to some other estate, sir," said Trott, shaking his head. "Willingstone Manor has neither a sunk garden nor an extensive area of glass."

Archie knew it, but he pretended to look astonished.

"That's rummy," he said. "I was absolutely certain—— Describe the place, laddie," he added brightly. "Then, if I am wrong, I shall soon know."

Trott described the place; and Archie, who could remember Willingstone Manor fairly well, realised that the man was indeed genuine.

He nodded briskly.

"Laddie, that's good enough," he said. "I'm going to find you a job!"

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CHAPTER 2.

Phipps Gets the Boot!

ARCHIE was thoroughly satisfied now; and, being satisfied, his one desire was to help the ex-valet.

"You'll find me a job, sir?" repeated Trott in wonder.

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "Take this, Trotty, and stagger down to the George Tavern in Bellton. All you have to do is to wait there until you hear the good news."

He pressed something into the man's hand.

"What is this, sir?" asked Trott wonderingly.

"Merely a quid-note—one of the best and crispest," replied Archie. "If you don't want to regard it as a gift, you can pay me back out of your first month's salary."

"Really, sir——"

"Good gad! You're not going to stand there and argue, are you?" demanded Archie warmly. "Trot off, Trott! This is absolutely a case where Phipps will step into the breach. My valet, don't you know. He's absolutely in the swim of things, and he'll get you a job in two shakes of a cat's tail. Now, don't forget—the George Tavern."

An eager, overjoyed light was showing in the man's eyes. With it was mixed an expression of wonder, as though he could not believe what he heard. Indeed, his next words proved what was in his mind.

"You are not joking with me, sir?" he asked huskily.

"Joking? Absolutely not!"

"Forgive me, sir, but I cannot help suspecting that you desire to make me the

victim of one of your schoolboy jests," said Trott.

"A perfectly foul thought, laddie," declared Archie indignantly. "I am going to get you a certain job, and there is no dashed joke about it. When a Glenthorne makes a promise, he absolutely keeps it."

"This is very, very generous of you, sir," said Trott earnestly. "In the circumstances, I will take this money and wait at the George Tavern. I fear, sir, that I shall never be able to discharge this debt of gratitude."

"Absolute rot!" retorted Archie. "If one chappie can't do another chappie a good turn, what, I mean to say, is the good of a chappie being on the dashed earth?"

THE elegant junior walked into the Triangle at St. Frank's so briskly and so purposely that a mob of fags stood stock-still and stared at him. They hadn't seen Archie walking like that for months.

Archie was frightfully bucked. He was never happier than when he was doing somebody a good turn, and he was quite convinced that this man, Trott, was deserving of all the help that he could give him.

"Phipps is the laddie to solve the good old problem," he assured himself. "Absolutely the one and only! There's nobody quite like Phipps for filling the breach when the necessity arises. But if he fails, I'm dashed if I don't get the pater himself to take on Trotty."

As Archie was striding into the Ancient House, Tubbs came running up to him.

"Just a minute, Master Archie!" said the page-boy urgently.

"Another time, laddie!"

"It's important, Master Archie!" urged Tubbs. "I tried hard——"

"Dash you, I can't stop now!" said Archie severely. "Trickle away, you young acid-drop! Matters of vast importance are occupying the good old thinking-box. The grey matter, in fact, is positively bubbling."

He walked on, and Tubbs was obliged to give it up. But Archie understood the page-boy's concern a minute later when he strode into Study E. For there was Phipps, at the table, with an opened parcel in front of him.

"Good gad!" said Archie blankly, and knew that the worst had happened. Archie was troubled. He hadn't wanted to be bothered with such trivialities now that that other important matter had cropped up.

"I say, Phipps!" he protested indignantly. "Confound it, dash you! I mean, who told you to open that bally parcel?"

Phipps, with a sad, pained look on his face, gazed reproachfully at his young master. Only with the greatest difficulty had he torn his gaze away from the dazzling array of highly-coloured neckties and socks which lay exposed on the table.

"I feared what this parcel would contain, sir," he said mournfully.

"Yes, you blighter, but I didn't tell you to open it!"

"It is an understood thing, Master Archie, that I open all your parcels," replied Phipps. "You gave me no special instructions regarding this particular one; and, naturally, I opened it as a matter of course."

"Oh, well, that's different," said Archie, baffled.

"With regard to these—er—articles, sir," asked Phipps, "I take it that you have purchased them for a forthcoming fancy-dress ball——"

"Don't be a dashed imbecile, Phipps!" interrupted Archie. "Fancy dress ball be blowed! I bought those socks and ties because I intend to wear them, and because the jolly old wardrobe needs replenishing. But forget them, Phipps. There is something else of even greater importance to be attended to at the moment."

Phipps had a hard, fighting light in his eyes. As a rule, he was all deference and politeness, but on occasion he would put his foot down in no uncertain manner. Unless such a check was kept upon Archie he would run riot in the matter of clothing.

"I wish, Master Archie, that I could forget these atrocious horrors," said the valet sternly. "Nothing can be of greater importance, sir. When you tell me that you intend wearing them, I can only say——"

"Put that parcel aside, Phipps, and listen to me!" interrupted Archie. "Why the dickens do you annoy the young master in this unseemly way? We'll discuss these socks and ties later."

"Very good, sir."

"In any case, I didn't mean you to see the things until I started wearing them," said Archie defiantly. "There are times, Phipps, when it is absolutely up to me to put down the good old hoof. We've had many a set-to on the subject of socks and ties, and I'm dashed if you haven't won every round. This time I'm going to deliver the knock-out."

"You mean that you seriously intend to wear these yellow socks, sir?" asked Phipps coldly. "And these purple socks with the orange stripe?"

"Absolutely! But I've already told you that we can shelve this good old question until——"

"Not now, sir," said Phipps determinedly. "Having gone so far, we must continue. These ties, sir—you cannot mean to assure me that you will ever wear them in public? Frankly, Master Archie, they are impossible!"

Archie glared. He was on his dignity now. He had even forgotten the unfortunate Trott, who was waiting at the George Tavern. This question of the socks and ties had now become a matter of first importance. And there was something in the back of Archie's mind which gave him unusual confidence. He remembered Trott again—but in a different way.

In fact, the idea came to him like an inspiration. Hitherto, in these battles, he had always lost because he knew very well that he could not afford to be without Phipps.

The chappie was indispensable. Deprived of Phipps, Archie would have been as helpless as a ship without its rudder.

But for once Archie felt that he was the master of the situation. Now that he came to think it over, it was rather a good thing that Phipps had unwrapped that parcel. The whole thing could be put to the test.

"Those neckties, Phipps, are my own choice," said Archie calmly. "For two pins, dash you, I'd put one of them on this minute."

Phipps started as if he had been stung.

"I repeat, sir, that they are impossible!" he said tensely. "You generally allow yourself to be guided by me—"

"Guided, by gad!" interrupted Archie. "It seems to me, old chunk of cheddar, that you've ruled me. Absolutely ruled me. The time has now come, laddie, when I refuse to have any more of it—and if the young master isn't making himself clear, kindly indicate same without delay."

"I am sorry, Master Archie, but you really must be guided by me," said Phipps. "I would remind you that my own reputation is at stake. If you were to appear publicly in these atrocities, I should get the blame. That is a point, sir, I would impress upon you."

"And it is a point, dash your nerve, that needn't enter into the discussion at all," retorted Archie. "I'm the chappie who pays for these socks and ties, and I'm the chappie who's going to wear them. If you don't like them, Phipps, you can lump them."

Phipps seemed to freeze up.

"Then there is no more to say, sir."

"Not another dashed word!"

"But there is at least something to be done," went on Phipps, a fighting light entering his eyes. "I regret, sir, that I must take drastic action. I can only trust that you

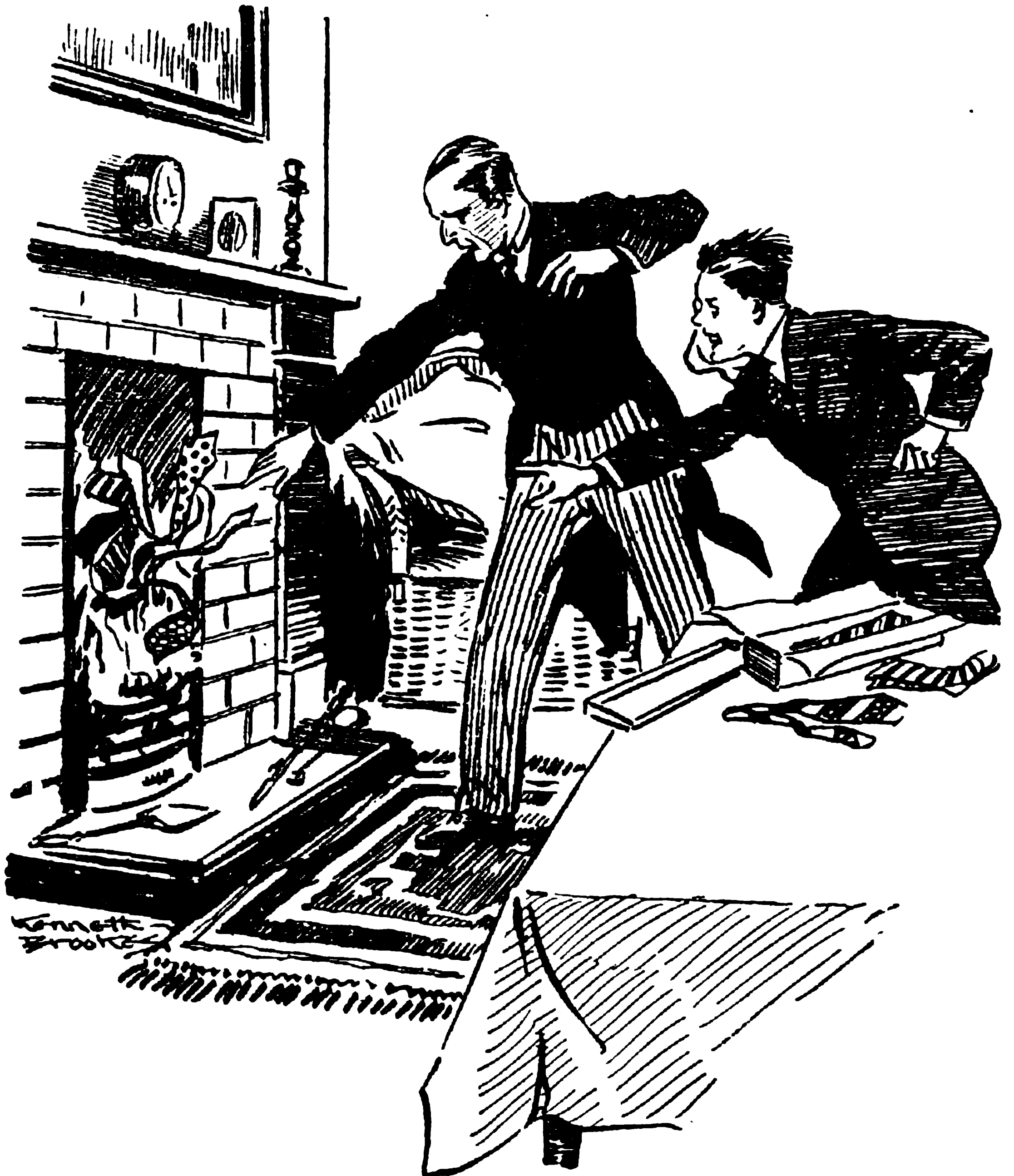
will realise, later, that I was justified."

With one grim movement, he swept up the offending socks and ties and threw them into the fire.

"Whoa!" yelled Archie. "Hi! You—you frightful fright! What the dashed dickens——"

He dashed into the fender, and rescued all the socks and ties except an odd two or three. For once he had been too quick for Phipps. He stood there, one foot in the fender, one foot on the hearthrug, his hands filled with the rainbow coloured articles.

"Phipps, blight you, that's done it!" he



Phipps seized the highly coloured ties and socks and hurled them into the fire. "You frightful fright!" yelled Archie indignantly.

said wrathfully. "Absolutely and finally, it has done it! The young master is throbbing with fury!"

"I shall be pleased, sir, to pay for the damage out of my month's salary," said Phipps.

"You won't get any month's salary!" retorted Archie fiercely. "You're sacked, Phipps! You can goad the young master to a certain point, but I'm dashed if you can goad him more than that! You absolutely

meant to destroy these priceless things, didn't you?"

"I did, sir—and if I get my hands on them again, I shall destroy them," replied Phipps. "I am grieved, Master Archie, that you should be so wilful in this matter."

"You won't get the chance, laddie," said Archie firmly. "When I said that you were sacked, I meant it with all the earnestness at the good old command. In other words, Phipps, you can buzz off! The young master has finished with you, definitely and finally. This time you've got the bird for keeps!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Fighting Spirit!

PHIPPS took his dismissal calmly; so calmly, in fact, that it was obvious to Archie that he didn't accept it seriously. In spite of Archie's plain words, he took this to be merely another of those occasions when his young master was slightly out of temper.

"Very good, sir," said the valet evenly.

He bowed and moved towards the door.

"One moment, Phipps, before you ooze into the offing," said Archie with deadly calmness. "I'd like another word with you before you wander into the wide, open spaces. Firstly, I would repeat that the young master's fighting blood is boiling like a geyser."

"So I understand, sir."

"Your scheme, I take it, is to trickle to your hidden lair, lie low for a short spasm, and then do a fado-in with the good old tea-tray," went on Archie. "And you imagine that Master Archibald will accept the cup that cheers, and that all will be forgiven and forgotten, what?"

For the first time on record Phipps was nonplussed. Archie had read his thoughts like a book. He had been counting upon the tea to restore his young master to his normal balance.

"Well, you toadstool?" demanded Archie. "Am I right?"

"I venture to suggest, sir, that a cup of tea, without delay, will go a long way towards soothing your disturbed frame of mind," said Phipps carefully. "I regret, Master Archie, that I should have been compelled to act so drastically——"

"You will regret it more yet, old swamp-root!" broke in Archie warmly. "I've allowed you to rule the roost too long, Phipps. That's just the dashed trouble. And when you think you can make a bon-fire of the young master's wearing apparel, it's time to apply the emergency brake."

"I intended no disrespect, sir——"

"Frightfully sorry, old thing, but it's too late," said Archie curtly. "I require no tea to-day, Phipps, and I never want to see your number-plate again."

Phipps began to feel vaguely uneasy.

"If you think that you can get along without a valet, sir——" he began.

"Good gad, no!" ejaculated Archie with a start. "Absolutely not, Phipps! Getting along without a valet would be as bad as a chappie getting along without his right arm. But it so happens, old door-knocker, that I have another valet in the middle distance. He merely awaits the call."

This time Phipps was staggered—although he didn't show it.

"Another valet, sir?" he repeated.

"That, I take it, has given you a somewhat nasty jab in the sirloin, what?" asked Archie triumphantly. "The young master is not such a chump as he looks, Phipps. You can jolly well clear out as soon as you like. In fact, the sooner the better. I don't want you messing about here when Trott trots in."

Phipps compressed his lips.

"I am glad, sir, that you were thoughtful enough to make these arrangements before precipitating a quarrel with me," he said bitterly.

"Here, I say! What about your precipitating my dashed socks and neckties into the fire?" protested Archie. "If there was any precipitating done, you were the bally precipitator! When I came in here, I was merely going to ask your advice about finding this poor chappie a job. But as you've cut up so rusty I'll find him one myself. In fact, Phipps, he shall have your job, dash you! I trust that I have made myself clear?"

"Very clear indeed, sir," replied Phipps evenly. "I will hasten to pack my things and go. And for your own sake, Master Archibald, I trust that Trott will serve you faithfully and well."

"I haven't the slightest doubt of it," replied Archie. "I'll admit he isn't much to look at at present. I found him wandering along the highway, down-and-out and tramping to Bristol——"

He broke off, for he did not fail to detect the amused light which showed for a moment in Phipps' eyes. Phipps even looked relieved. So this was the explanation of Archie's absence! He had merely picked up a tramp! Phipps felt, in that moment, that his job was secure. But Archie's next words startled him again.

"Oh, no, laddie!" said the elegant junior. "This chappie isn't an ordinary tramp, as you imagine. He is Lord Willingstone's late valet, and I put the blighter to the test before fixing anything up. Rather brainy, what? I would remind you, Phipps, that flies find no satisfaction when alighting upon the young master."

"If this man has been in Lord Willingstone's service, then, of course, he will be admirably suitable, sir," said Phipps quietly. "In the circumstances, I will accept my dismissal. Thank you, sir."

He bowed again, and performed one of his noiseless exits.

WALKING down to the George Tavern, Archie had plenty of food for thought. And the more he thought of Phipps, the more he glowed with triumph. For the first time he had won—he had put one over on the old lad.

"The chunk of mildew had begun to regard himself as indispensable," murmured Archie wrathfully. "He thought he could rule the young master as a sultan rules his slaves. I've been various kinds of a chump to put up with it so dashed long. I only trust that he won't dither about the premises while this new cove proceeds to take root."

He suddenly remembered that there was a question of salary. Phipps, having been sacked at a moment's notice, would probably demand a month's salary in lieu of the ordinary notice. Well, he would have it. Archie would see about that as soon as he got back. In the meantime, Phipps was probably packing.

Arriving at the George, Archie strolled into the hotel entrance, and encountered Mr. Tapley, the landlord.

"I'm glad you've come, Master Glen-thorne," said Mr. Tapley. "There's a shabby-looking man here who's been saying that you sent him. I didn't want to take him in at first—we're rather particular about our guests at the George, you know."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "But this is an exceptional case, old scream. The lad in question, I can assure you, is quite O.K. One of the best and staunchest. In point of fact, I'm engaging him as my new valet. Be good enough to lead me to him."

Trott was found in the Commercial Room. He had tidied himself up, and he was fast asleep on the lounge, an expression of peaceful contentment on his now-shaven face.

"Well, I'm dithered!" said Archie, staring. "The dear old cheese looks quite classy with all that bracken scythed from the frontispiece. I must admit that I'm frightfully bucked."

He gave Trott a shake, and the man sat up abruptly.

"All right—I'll come quietly!" he ejaculated, with a wild light in his eyes. "There's no need to use force. I—I—"

He broke off, becoming calmer as his gaze fell upon Archie. Mr. Tapley stood looking on grimly.

"What were you expecting, my friend?" he asked pointedly. "Honest men don't say things like that when a hand is place on their shoulders!"

"Oh, come!" protested Archie, shocked. "Really!"

"A dream!" murmured Trott hastily. "Yes, of course. I think I must have been dreaming. Why, it's you, Master Glen-thorne. I'm sorry I was asleep."

Mr. Tapley pulled Archie towards him.

"Better be careful, young gentleman," he murmured warningly. "I don't altogether like the look of this fellow. Your nature is too trusting. Take my tip, and watch this man closely—better still, watch your valuables closely!"

Archie shook him off.

"Kindly go and eat-coke!" he said coldly. "I know what I'm doing. And bring the bill while you're about it. I'll settle for Trotty."

"Here's the bill," said the landlord grimly. Archie took it casually, gave it a glance, and then jumped.

"Thirty-three bob!" he ejaculated, aghast. "You frightful twister!"

"Steady, young man," said the landlord. "Your new friend is a man of extravagant habits. He had the best in the house for his luncheon, and nothing would suit him but a bottle of champagne. That's the biggest item on this bill. If he hadn't assured me that you were——"

"Right-ho!" interrupted Archie hastily. "Here's your dashed money. I must remark, Trotty, that champagne for lunch is slightly on the mouldy side."

Trott looked distressed.

"I ordered it, sir, in a moment of absent-mindedness," he confessed. "My late master, Lord Willingstone, was very generous in the matter of beverages, and being accustomed to such——"

"Well, you won't get any dashed champagne in my service," interrupted Archie. "I mean to say, you've give me a shock, dash you! Champagne! Good gad! You'll expect silken sheets and a marble bath-room!"

Trott had apparently only heard one sentence.

"In your service, sir?" he repeated, in astonishment.

"Absolutely," said Archie. "I've found you a job, Trott. In a word, I'm taking you on myself. Phipps has received the bird, and he is now preparing to shove off. You're going to take his good old place."

"This is remarkably generous of you, sir," said Trott, hardly able to conceal his delight. "But I feel uncomfortable about your own valet. I had no wish to deprive a man of his position."

"It was I who deprived him, so you can allow the emotions to simmer down," said Archie. "Well, all ready? Good! Let's trickle!"

MR. ALINGTON WILKES, the House-master of the Ancient House, inspected John Trott with a keen, appraising eye.

"You tell me, Archie, that you've engaged this man as your valet?" he asked thoughtfully. "Well, it is your own affair, of course. The authorities, I understand, allow you to have a valet, so there's nothing much for me to say. I'm sorry to hear that Phipps is going——"

"Phipps asked for it, sir," said Archie coldly.

"And as for this man, I presume that you have verified his references?" went on Old Wilkey. "You mustn't be offended, Trott," he added. "We have to be very careful in a big school like this."

"Oh, quite, sir," said Trott, with deference

Another transformation had occurred. Coming down the village street, Archie had had another brain-wave. He had sent Trott into the outfitter's, and the man had emerged after twenty minutes in a new ready-made suit which fitted him to perfection.

Mr. Wilkes had met Archie and Trott in the lobby, and the Housemaster had invited them both to come to his study. This was a trifling formality which Archie himself had not even thought of.

"There's absolutely nothing to worry about, sir," said Archie anxiously. "Trott is a top-holer. I mean to say, ten years with Lord Willingstone. What better references could a chappie have than that?"

"Well, I hope you prove satisfactory, Trott. Later on, perhaps, you had better come and report to me. For the moment you must attend to the requirements of your new employer."

"Very good, sir," said Trott.

They went out, and Archie was relieved. He had been fearing that Mr. Wilkes would

make awkward inquiries as to how Archie had found the man. There had been some very thin ice to negotiate when the Housemaster had referred to references. Archie himself was quite satisfied; but he had sense enough to realise that the school authorities might require more concrete evidence.

"Well, here we are, laddie," said Archie as he walked into Study E. "This is the young master's domain. Not a bad little nest, what? Your pantry, and so forth, are to be found in the domestic quarters. I'll take you along presently and show you round."

"I am sure I shall be most comfortable here, sir," said Trott happily.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "I'm not much of a lad for causing work. All you have to do, Trott, is to make yourself generally useful, and to be at the young master's beck and call day and night, as it were."

"Quite so, sir."

"And there's another little matter," went on Archie, gripping himself hard. "In fact,



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rather an important matter. I'll even go so far as to say a vital matter."

He picked up the socks and ties which had been left in a heap on the table. This was the test. He had been thinking about it for the past half-hour, and now that the crucial moment had come, he was nervous. He thrust the jazz-coloured atrocities under Trott's gaze.

"What," he asked tensely, "do you think of these?"

CHAPTER 4.

Testing Trott!

AGONIES of doubt and suspense tortured Archie while he waited for the verdict. For, really, everything depended upon his new valet's opinion. He had sacked Phipps because Phipps objected to these socks and ties. He couldn't very well sack Trott before the fellow had even started his duties.

But Archie was rather brainy. He had sprung these horrors upon Trott without any warning. He wanted a true and unprejudiced verdict. For all Trott knew, Archie hated the things himself. His opinion, when it came, would be genuine.

The man turned the socks over in his hand, examined the ties, and he seemed to be quite lost in his task. He was certainly giving it the whole-hearted attention that Archie had hoped for in a matter of such paramount importance.

"Well?" asked the elegant junior at last. "Dash it, Trott, don't keep the young master on tenterhooks so long. You've given them the once-over—not to say the twice-over. What's the answer?"

Trott slowly and dubiously shook his head.

"I take it, sir, that these are intended for your own use?" he asked.

"Absolutely."

"Then I am afraid they are unsuitable," said Trott firmly.

Archie sat down with a thud.

"Good gad!" he bleated. "Odds shocks and blows! Dash it, you blighter, you can't absolutely mean to say——"

"They are very exquisite, sir," interrupted Trott, "but, if I may venture to say so, somewhat lacking in colour."

Archie leapt into the air like a grasshopper.

"Lacking in colour?" he yelled. "Good gad! I thought you meant——"

"On some gentlemen, sir, they would be quite suitable, but for your own particular type I would suggest something brighter," said Trott, with an engaging lightness of manner which dispelled all Archie's worries. "Something more gay, sir—more eloquent of your own buoyancy of spirit."

Archie opened and closed his mouth like a fish out of water.

"What you mean is, these things aren't bright enough?" he asked, at last.

"Exactly, sir—not nearly bright enough."

"I see what you mean!" said Archie, with untold relief. "What you mean, Trott, in

so many words, is that I really require something brighter?"

"Precisely, sir."

Archie, now fully convinced that he had heard aright, brought his hand down with such a resounding slap on Trott's shoulder that the man nearly pitched head-first into the fender. He hadn't been expecting any such mark of esteem.

"Trotty, old ray of sunshine, I'm glad!" said Archie beaming. "Kindly remove the old hoof from the fire-irons. And when I say I'm glad, I mean that I'm glad—dashed glad. You're not merely a valet, dash it, but a friend in need. As for Phipps, I don't care if the old scorpion fails even to say good-bye. I never want to see him again."

Trott rubbed his hands together with quiet satisfaction; and then, recollecting himself, dropped his arms staidly to his sides.

"Then I may take it, sir, that I am permanently engaged?" he asked softly.

"As far as I'm concerned, old colour expert, you're here for keeps," replied Archie. "What about dashing off and preparing a cup of the good old brew? In the meantime, Master Archie will indulge in forty of the best."

"I will have your tea prepared at once, sir," said Trott.

"Speaking of colours, there's something weighing pretty heavily on the old bean," went on Archie, frowning. "When I think of it, the sunshine dies out of my life. Where, Trott, can you get socks and ties gayer and brighter than these? I must confess I thought they were slightly on the noisy side."

"Leave it to me, sir," replied Trott. "If you really desire something special—something that will create a sensation—I urge you to let me go upon a purchasing expedition."

"Good gad! That's a somewhat brainy idea," said Archie, with a start. "In Bannington, you mean? Bannington is the big town two or three miles away."

"I passed through it, sir," nodded Trott. "There are some excellent shops there. With sufficient capital at my disposal, I have no doubt that I could purchase various articles of apparel which would astonish even you."

"To-morrow, laddie, you shall go!" declared Archie enthusiastically.

"There is no time like the present, sir," murmured the new valet.

"Really? Well, I suppose not, now you come to mention it," replied Archie. "But, the fact is, I didn't want to bother you so soon."

"I shall be delighted, sir," said Trott, absentmindedly scratching one of his palms.

"Then you shall go, Trott," said Archie, producing his wallet and dishing out a fiver.

"You can go absolutely on the spot. I have an idea, old scream, that you'll make history."

"Not with a fiver, sir," replied Trott firmly.

"Oh, I see! You think you'll need more?"

"Considerably more, sir—if I am to do justice to the colour schemes in my mind."

"Oh, well, here's another fiver—— What? More still?" asked Archie dubiously. "Well, perhaps you're right. Take the dashed lot!

You might as well go the whole hog while you're at it!"

He had four fivers in his wallet, and he greatly admired the smooth, efficient way in which Trott transferred these to his own pocket. There was something very slick and businesslike about this new valet. Trott's face was now wearing an expression of seraphic delight.

"I will proceed to Bannington at once, sir," he murmured dreamily. "With regard to the question of tea, I fear the meal will have to be postponed until my return."

Archie's face lengthened.

"Oh, but look here. I can't get along without my tea!" he protested. "Phipps always rolled in with the priceless tray——"

"This other matter, sir, brooks no delay," said Trott firmly.

"You think it's more important than tea?"

"Much more, sir."

"Well, perhaps you're right," agreed Archie. "After all, there's nothing more important than clobber, is there? If I can only drop into a spasm of the good old dreamless, I shan't miss the tea so much. Laddie, you can now buzz off!"

Trott lost no time in buzzing.

ARCHIE couldn't sleep.

There was too much on his mind; and besides, he badly needed his cup of tea. Vaguely, at the back of his mind, he wondered if he had done right in dismissing Phipps. Whatever Phipps' shortcomings, he never failed to materialise with the tea-tray at precisely the same minute every afternoon.

However, Phipps had gone, and he was only a memory. This new man would have brought the tea if the other matter had not been of greater importance. So Archie settled himself on the lounge again, and just before he closed his eyes he noticed the clock.

"Why, good gad, it's still an hour from tea-time," he ejaculated in astonishment.

He compared his watch with the clock, and it was the same. So much had happened during the afternoon that he had lost count of the time. Well, this wasn't so bad. And if only he could get to sleep——

He blinked, and sat up dazedly. Phipps was standing in front of him with a tea-tray, and a perfectly intoxicating odour of hot tea wafted across his face.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "Is it you, Phipps, or your dashed ghost?"

"I took the liberty, sir, of preparing——"

"But how did you get in?" asked Archie blankly. "I didn't hear you?"

"I came in as usual, sir," replied Phipps imperturbably. "It still wants an hour to



your usual tea-time, but as I was preparing a cup for myself, and as you have had a somewhat disturbed afternoon, I thought a refresher would do you good. And I shall be gone, sir, at your usual hour."

Archie looked upon him with a kindly eye.

"It is in my heart, Phipps, old lad, to forgive you," he said benevolently. "It is no exaggeration to say that you have absolutely saved my life. Odds odours and perfumes! Kindly shove us a cup of the good old reviver!"

Phipps kindly shoved it.

"There is a little matter of wages, sir," he said gently.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie, between sips. "I'll fish out the old wallet, and— Good gad! I've used all the pieces of eight, Phipps! Except for a few odd bobs and half-crowns I'm stony!"

"It really doesn't matter, sir," said Phipps. "No doubt you will be good enough to send a cheque along. For the present I shall be

practicable. "Many thanks for the tea, Phipps, but I'm still frightfully annoyed with you. Even this joyous cup doesn't absolutely wipe out the stain. It came frightfully near to it at first sip, but the old heart hardened again. My new valet is positively installed, and that, as it were, is that."

Phipps bowed.

"I trust he will serve you, sir, as well as I have attempted to serve you," he replied.

"My only regret is that I should have been compelled to leave in these unfortunate circumstances."

"Dash it, Phipps, you're making me feel most awfully rotten!" said Archie complainingly. "Can't we dispense with these sentimental scenes? I mean, in another minute I'll be engaging you again. And that's absolutely imposs!" he added firmly. "By the way, have you met Trott?"

"Not yet, sir—but I hope to when he returns."

"Who told you he'd gone anywhere?" asked Archie. "What the dickens are you, Phipps—a magician? You seem to know everything!"

"It was Tubbs who informed me of Trott's departure, sir," replied Phipps, as calm as ever. "I understand that Trott has gone shopping."

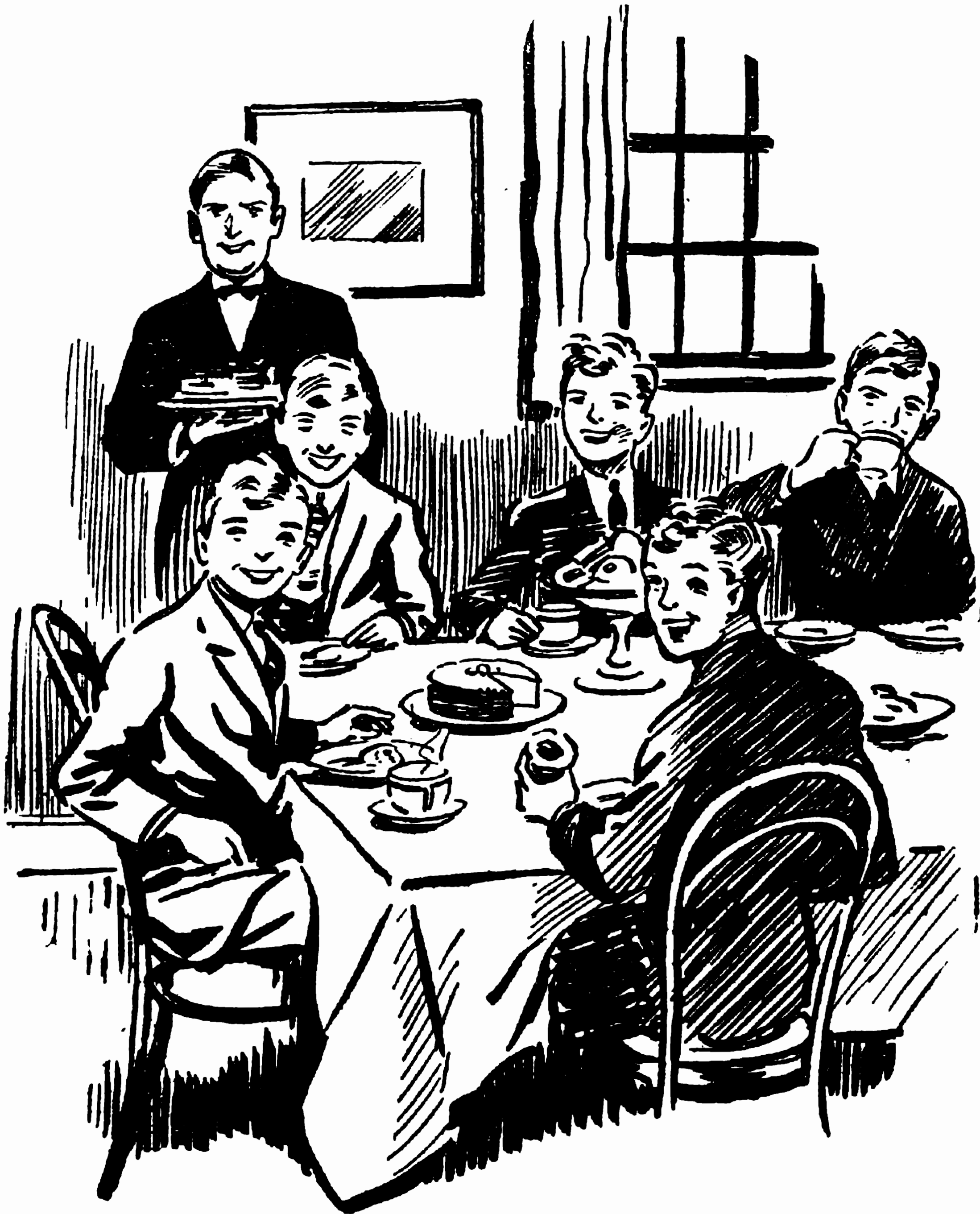
"I'm not altogether sure that Trott is going to be satisfactory, after all," he said, shaking his head. "I didn't tell the blighter to gas about his comings and goings—especially to

a page-boy! This is rather frightful, Phipps!"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps, as grave as a judge. "I don't think I shall be gone when Trott returns, and then I shall make it my task to show him round, and briefly explain his duties."

"Stout fellow! That's taken a load off my mind!"

"And as I shall not have the opportunity of seeing you again, sir, I will say good-bye," went on Phipps, as he moved towards



Archie entered his study and was horrified to find it full of noisy Third-Formers, seated round the table and enjoying a sumptuous tea—at his expense!

staying at the Grapes Hotel in Bannington. The head waiter is a personal friend of mine, and I have already been in communication with him by 'phone."

"I mean to say!" exclaimed Archie. "So you've made plans already, what?"

"Having been dismissed, sir, there was nothing else for me to do."

"Oh, well, of course, that's right enough," admitted Archie, toying with the idea of keeping two valets, and dismissing it as im-

the door. "The Grapes Hotel will always find me, sir."

"Right-ho!" said Archie uncomfortably. "So you're staggering out, what? Cheerio, Phipps! I mean to say, toodle-oo, and all that sort of thing!"

Phipps vanished, and Archie felt a distinct sensation of emptiness. It was as if something had passed out of his life. Of course, there was Trott—and Trott would take Phipps' place. But would he? Somehow, Archie felt that vague sense of uneasiness growing upon him.

CHAPTER 5.

Putting the Wind up Archie!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH, the burly leader of Study D in the Ancient House Remove, tumbled out of his Morris Minor at the bottom of the Ancient House steps. Church and McClure and Sir Montie Tregellis-West poured out through the other doorway.

"Home in jolly good time to-day!" said Handforth cheerfully.

"Well, it's not far from the River House," replied Church. "I'm glad we gave Hal Brewster and his gang a good licking. Three goals to one, eh? Not so bad, you know."

Nipper, the Remove skipper, drew up on his motor-cycle, with Tommy Watson on the pillion. Just in the rear came Travers on his motor-bike, with Jimmy Potts as passenger. A number of other juniors were labouring along, a good way off, on their push-bikes.

"Heard the latest, young gents?" asked Tubbs eagerly, from the Ancient House doorway.

"I thought there was something in the wind," said Handforth, as he gazed severely at the page-boy. "You're looking hot and excited, Tubby. You mustn't spread idle gossip—"

"But it ain't, sir!" interrupted Tubbs. "It's true. Mr. Phipps is going!"

"Going? Going where?"

"He's got the sack, sir!" breathed Tubbs melodramatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the Removites roared—for the idea of Phipps getting the sack was ludicrous. Without Phipps, Archie would be like a wheel without a hub.

"It ain't nothin' to laugh at, young gents," said Tubbs indignantly. "Mr. Phipps told me himself. He's got the sack! Master Archie's hired a new valet, too."

The juniors began to take notice.

"Archie must have been working pretty fast this afternoon," said Nipper. "You say he's sacked Phipps and hired a new valet? It wants a bit of believing, Tubbs."

"If you don't believe me, sir, you can go and ask Master Archie!" replied Tubbs, with a sniff, and he walked indoors with his nose in the air.

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Handforth.

"I dare say Tubbs has got hold of the wrong end of the stick," replied Nipper lightly. "Hallo, here's K. K. on his motor-bike—and I'm dashed if the silly ass hasn't got Deeks and Goffin on the pillion. He'd better not let old Wilkey see him riding three up, or he'll get into trouble."

"Oh, blow these Red-Hots!" said Handforth. "I'm going into Archie's study to ask him what the dickens he means by giving Phipps the push."

"I thought you said you didn't believe it?" asked McClure.

"Eh? Well, we might as well make sure," replied Handforth gruffly. "There's no telling what dotty things Archie will do when he's left alone."

He was not the only one who went to Study E. Practically the whole crowd accompanied him, and Archie was found sprawling on the lounge, wide awake, and looking unsettled.

"What's this we hear about your sacking Phipps?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Absolutely!"

"What!" went up a roar.

"Odds blasts and bellows!" protested Archie. "Is there any real need to indulge in all this dashed broadcasting?"

"But it's not true!" said Travers. "You haven't definitely fired Phipps, have you—for good?"

"We had a frightful row," explained Archie. "He objected to these socks and ties, and one thing led to another, and in the end I gave him the gate. Absolutely brought the old foot into action and gave him the boot."

Nipper picked up some of the neckties.

"You sacked him because he objected to these?" he asked. "Hang it, Archie, you've done the man an injustice! And what are you going to do without a valet, I'd like to know?"

"It's time he was without a valet," said Handforth curtly. "Not that he can spoof me. Archie has sacked Phipps before, but Phipps has always been back on the job the next day."

"Not this time, old bean—I've got a new valet," explained Archie triumphantly. "A priceless sort of cove I ran up against in the lane."

"What!"

The juniors listened with ever-increasing astonishment as Archie gave them the full details. They were more than astonished—they were startled.

"You're mad!" said Handforth, at last. "This fellow's only a tramp—a useless won't-work! And for all you know, he may be a thief, too!"

"Absolute rot!" said Archie. "Didn't I tell you that he used to be Lord Willingstone's valet? I tested him. He described the place like a native."

"The man's a tramp, and he could easily have seen Willingstone Manor," said J'arkington. "He didn't describe the inside, did he? And who was it first mentioned Lord Willingstone, and Willingstone Manor?"

"Good gad! He did! And—and— Odds catastrophies and disasters!" muttered Archie, aghast.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked Nipper gently.

"Eh? Oh, you mean what's the matter with me?" asked Archie, with a start. "Well, you see, I'm not altogether sure—now—that the blighting merchant will turn up again! I sent him to Bannington on a shopping expedition."

"Wha-a-at?"

"And—and it was his idea, too!" added Archie feebly.

"Did you give him any money to spend?"

"A mere trifle, laddie—only a mere trifle."

"How much?" insisted Nipper.

"Only—only twenty of the best."

"You don't mean twenty quid?" yelled Handforth.

"Well, you see—"

"This chap needs a nurse!" broke in Nipper. "Archie, you don't expect to see this man or the twenty pounds again, do you?"

"That was the idea at the back of my mind," admitted Archie bleakly. "But now you come to mention all these things, I'm wondering—"

"Then you'd better stop wondering right away, dear old fellow," said Travers sadly. "Trott is trotting—and he's probably congratulating himself upon having made his best haul of the year. You haven't been upstairs yet, I suppose? The fellow may have rifled some of your valuables into the bargain!"

"Odds suspicions and insinuations!"

Archie Glenthorne felt suddenly weak. He could not help recalling the significant facts. It was Trott who had suggested the shopping visit; it was Trott who had suggested that Archie should give him all the money he had. Then Archie remembered the luncheon at the George Tavern. Why, the blighter had even soaked him for a bottle of champagne! Archie was startled at his own stupidity. He ought to have known that the man was nothing but a scoundrel.

"Good gad!" moaned the elegant Removite dismally.

"Well, you've made your own bed, so you'll have to lie on it," said Handforth, shrugging his shoulders. "This swindler won't come back, and you've lost Phipps, too."

Archie sprang up wildly.

"Lost Phipps!" he babbled. "But—but —"

"He's gone by now, I expect," interrupted Travers. "When you give a man the sack, Archie, you can't expect him to hang about."

Archie was staring vacantly in front of him. Something else had come to his mind—and this time a most significant, sinister thought. He remembered how Trott had started up in the Commercial Room at the George, and how he had panted out that he would go quietly. Why, the blighter had been expecting the police even then!

"This is too frightfully frightful for anything," complained Archie, in a thin, weak

voice. "I can't help thinking, laddies, that I've been severely soaked. And yet the chappie was so dashed honest-looking. Well spoken, and all that sort of thing. It's dashed difficult to realise—"

"They're always honest-looking and well-spoken, Archie," interrupted Nipper. "It's part of their stock-in-trade. But you're only wasting time here, you know. You'd better report straight to old Wilkey, and then search your things."

Archie looked about him helplessly.

"I need Phipps," he groaned. "Kindly send out the S.O.S., laddies! Good gad! Phipps isn't far away—only at the Grapes Hotel, in Bannington. Will somebody dash to the telephone and ring him up?"

Nipper winked to the others.

"What's the matter with doing your own dashing?" he asked. "It's about time, Archie, that you learned to shift for yourself. In any case, you got yourself into this muddle, and it's up to you to get yourself out. Come on, you chaps!"

The Removites streamed out of the study. It was certainly up to Archie to get himself out of this mess.

"I say, there's something else, you know," said Handforth, with a worried look. "This rotter may have been going through our valuables, too! Hadn't we better buzz round and look over our things?"

"I left my gold watch upstairs!" said K. K. frantically.

There was a general move, and at the same time Archie reeled out of his study. He wasn't in the mood for sitting still now. With his mind thoroughly unsettled, he wanted to be up and doing.

He sprinted towards the lobby, en route for the nearest telephone. Phipps! As usual, Archie thought of Phipps in his moment of trial.

Then suddenly he halted. All the other juniors were standing in the lobby, staring into the Triangle. Archie himself stared and then gasped. A quietly-dressed, dignified figure was approaching the Ancient House, having just emerged from a taxi-cab. Behind him came the taxi-driver, the upper half of him practically obscured by a great pile of parcels.

— — —

CHAPTER 6.

Trott Proves His Worth!

ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE went hot all over.

The man was Trott, his new valet!

A violent surge of indignation throbbed through Archie's veins. He had been right all along—and these suspicious juniors had been wrong! Trott had returned; and obviously he had carried out his mission successfully. It was certainly a shock—for the juniors as well as for Archie. The very fact that Trott had returned proved that he was true blue.

"Well, you dashed bounders?" asked Archie scornfully. "What about it? Here's the good old lad with the doings!"

"Sorry, Archie!" said Nipper with genuine regret. "We seem to have misjudged this Trott fellow, and I don't mind admitting it!"

"By George, yes!" agreed Handforth heartily, clearly impressed by the dignified appearance of the new valet. "He's spent that twenty quid of yours, by the look of things, Archie!"

"And spent it well, or I'm a chunk of Dutch cheese," said Archie stoutly. "Laddies, allow me to introduce you to Trotty, my new valet. Trotty, old scream, these are the chaps. Not much to look at, but a cheery set of lads!"

Trott, having reached the Ancient House steps, bowed gravely.

"I am gratified, Mr. Archibald, to meet your friends," he said, giving the juniors a swift, comprehensive look. "Perhaps they will be friendly enough to take these parcels and carry them up to your bed-room?"

"A brainy idea," approved Archie. "Friends—I mean, laddies—dash up and collect the said parcels."

The juniors, grinning, unloaded the staggering taxi-driver. It wasn't their usual custom to act as porters, but they were rather interested in Archie's new valet, and he had made his suggestion so amiably, too, that they could hardly feel offended.

Within five minutes all the parcels were dumped upon Archie's bed, and Archie him-

self was beaming with gratification and triumph. All his doubts had gone. He had even ceased to think of Phipps. This new man was the "goods."

"Well, I must say the fellow has bought a lot for twenty quid!" remarked Handforth, as he surveyed the parcels. "Twenty quid doesn't go far where clothes are concerned, anyhow."

Trott coughed.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Archibald, that the capital you entrusted me with was inadequate," he said gently. "I discovered, after a very short while, that I was left without further funds. However, the big stores in Bannington were well acquainted with your name, and the mere mention of the fact that I am your valet was sufficient."

"I—I don't synchronise, laddie," said Archie, staring. "I'm afraid the good old needle has run off the track."

"In brief, sir, I was obliged to pledge your credit," explained Trott.

"To pledge my what?" gasped Archie. "Dash it, old horse, I don't believe in pledging things! Pawnshops are all very well——"

"I am afraid, sir, that we are still out of synchronisation," interrupted Trott.

"Then start the dashed record all over again!"

"What he means, Archie, is that your twenty quid went like a flash of lightning," said Nipper. "He's bought all the other things on tick. The bills will probably roll in at the end of the month."



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

FATHER'S RETORT.

The scapegrace son had been banished from home by his father, and he emigrated to Australia, where he obtained a job in a bank. A few weeks elapsed, and the father received a cable saying, "Made manager of bank. Feather in my cap." A month later another cable was received, which read, "Made managing director of bank. Another feather in my cap." A short while afterwards came a third message, "Am a failure. Send money for passage home."

The unforgiving father sent the following reply, "Keep feathers in cap and fly home."

(C. Howe, 159, Beaconsfield Road, Norwich, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

TEE HEE!

Difficult Customer: "I can't remember the name of the car I want. I think it starts with a 'T'."

Exasperated Salesman: "Madam, all our cars start with petrol."

(W. White, 223, Westfield Road, Southsea, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE REASON WHY.

The village court was in the throes of a great sensation. The prisoner had admitted himself guilty, yet the jury returned the verdict "Not guilty." Dumbfounded, the judge asked the foreman of the jury for an explanation.

"Because the prisoner is the biggest fibber in the village, and we never believe a single thing he says," replied the foreman.

(J. Aston, 49, High Street, Clapham, S.W. 4, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A HOT 'UN.

She was not conversant with the use of the thermometer, but she had taken her husband's temperature. Then, in alarm, she rang up the doctor.

"Doctor," she exclaimed agitatedly, "come at once. My husband's temperature is 150 degrees."

"Madame," replied the doctor, "I can do nothing. Ring for the fire brigade."

(L. Hart, 85, Sanquahar Street, Splott Cardiff, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

Archie recorded perfectly.

"A ripe scheme, of course," he admitted. "Getting things on tick is the only alternative after a chappie's cash has run out. But I trust, Trott, that you haven't involved the young master in heavy financial liability?"

"Nothing much, sir," replied Trott. "Seventy-five or eighty pounds will cover everything—over and beyond the original twenty!"

Archie reeled.

"But—but that means a hundred quid!" he gasped, his arithmetic being unusually keen this afternoon. "I say, Trott! Dash it all, I say! I don't remember giving you the authority——"

"It was your desire, sir, to dress in a manner becoming your unique personality," said the new valet calmly. "It is my desire to start right, Master Archibald. I would point out, in justification of myself, that all these goods are here on approval. There is no obligation for you actually to buy."

Archie breathed again.

"Why didn't you say so at first, you dashed chump?" he asked. "Of course, that's different! Phipps was always getting things on appro. At least, I used to send for them, and Phipps used to send them back."

"I do not think, sir, that I shall be compelled to emulate Phipps," said Trott cheerfully. "When you set your eyes upon these goods your one desire will be to keep them." He glanced disapprovingly at the crowd.

"Might I suggest, young gentlemen, that you seek diversion elsewhere?"

"Are you giving us the boot?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Not giving it, young gentlemen—merely suggesting it."

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"The old magician is right," said Archie stoutly. "Much as I appreciate all this interest, laddies, I can't help remarking that you're littering the entire landscape. And when there's a matter of examining new suits and shirts and sundries, solitude is essential. In other words, buzz off!"

THE juniors, chuckling hugely, took their departure. Trott, after all, was the real thing, and there was no need to make a frantic search for missing valuables. By the looks of things, however, the fellows had an idea that Trott would keep Archie well on the go. He was deferential, he was polite, and he seemed to be everything that a good valet should be, but if it was his habit to incur Archie in heavy debt every time he went on a shopping expedition, life was liable to become strenuous.

"I'm not altogether sure that you've done the right thing, old owl," said Archie, as he surveyed the assortment of brown-paper parcels and cardboard boxes. "I mean to say, there's such a thing as going a bit too far, what?"

Trott beamed.

COMPLETELY GREY.

Worried Father: "Every time you are naughty, my son, I get another grey hair."

Son: "Well, you must have been naughty yourself, dad. Look at grandpa!"

(V. Stephenson, 42, Cedars Road, Stratford, E.15, has been awarded a penknife.)

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

Boarder: "My shaving water wasn't very hot this morning."

Landlady: "Shaving water! That was your early morning tea!"

(A. Hall, 11, Bluecoat Road, Nottingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HE'D LEARNT HIS LESSON.

"I'd be ashamed of myself," said the lady of the house; "a big, strong man like you asking for money."

"So I am," answered the man; "but I got twelve months for taking it without asking."

(N. Crew, 52, Bloomfield Road, Blackwood, Mon., has been awarded a penknife.)

BOTH NEEDED.

Wife: "John! There's a burglar downstairs stealing the silver, and another in the pantry eating my pies."

Husband (sleepy, but with great presence of mind as he opens the window): "Police! Doctor!"



(W. Ricketts, Stable Cottage, Longworth, Lugwardine, near Hereford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

'NUFF SAID.

Golfer: "Where's the caddie I went round with yesterday, boy?"

Other Caddie: "Gone fishin' wiv the worms you dug up, sir."

(A. Long, 12, May Road, Elm Grove, Brighton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

FORCE OF HABIT.

Lieutenant: "That new recruit seems very awkward. What was he before he joined up?"

Sergeant: "A clerk, I think, sir."

Lieutenant: "What makes you think that?"

Sergeant: "Well, sir, every time I say, 'Stand at ease!' he tries to put his rifle behind his ear."

(G. Singleton, 40, Brixham Gardens, Ilford, Essex, has been awarded a penknife.)

NATURAL HISTORY.

"Can you imagine," said the teacher of the natural history lesson, "anything worse than a giraffe with a sore throat?"

"Yes, sir," a boy answered quickly. "A centipede with corns."

(J. Boon, Veneva, 32, the Nall, Bankstown, Sydney, Australia, has been awarded a penknife.)

"Quite, sir," he agreed. "But it is definitely arranged that all the articles which do not win your esteem shall be returned. Knowing your fondness for colour, I have made a very careful, thoughtful selection."

"Trot them out, Trott," said Archie eagerly.

"Here we have one of the latest suits," said Trott, deftly unfastening one of the big cardboard boxes. "You are, sir, a young gentleman of normal proportions, and I venture to predict that the fitting will be exact."

Archie was looking startled. In fact, he jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed Trott with positive apprehension.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "You don't absolutely mean to stand there, Trotty, and tell me that you've bought a ready-made suit for the young master?"

"Three, to be exact, sir."

"Three ready-made suits!" yelled Archie.

"Yes, sir."

"Odds disasters and catastrophes!" bleated Archie, shocked. "My dear, misguided old scarecrow, it's imposs. You don't understand. The young master can't wear ready-made suits. Perish the thought! It simply isn't done!"

"Kindly examine this, sir," said Trott imperturbably. "Nowadays ready-made suits are every bit as well cut as the finest Savile Row article. I can see, Mr. Archibald, that your ideas need shaking up. You have allowed yourself to vegetate. You are still drifting amongst the old-fashioned ideas."

"Good gad! You don't absolutely mean that?" asked Archie, pained.

"I do, sir!" insisted Trott. "Now, look at this!"

He withdrew from the box a smartly-cut suit made up of excellent quality worsted, with a silk alpaca lining. It was a soft, dreamy purple in colour, with white stripes.

"I say!" ejaculated Archie, fascinated.

He forgot his abhorrence of ready-made clothing. This suit gripped him, so to speak. It was just the sort of suit he had always longed for. Phipps would have given it one look and yelled with agony. Ever since he had been in Archie's service he had barred all such bright colours.

"You like it, sir?" asked Trott gently.

"Why, you giddy old conjurer!" ejaculated Archie breathlessly. "I mean to say, you've absolutely produced the one suit I wanted."

"So far, so good," murmured Trott, his tone positively gleeful. "Now we must select the shirt, the necktie, and the socks to go with this creation. The ensemble must be complete, sir."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, living in a world of joy.

Before long he had a perfect orgy of it. Colours—and more colours! Trott produced—still with the air of a conjurer—a glorious shirt of pure silk, with collar to match. It was pea-green, with the dinkiest pink spots. It was the kind of shirt that could be seen a mile off.

Then came socks and ties; all of such brilliant colours and dazzling designs that it was

a wonder Archie didn't lose his sight. But Archie looked at them rapturously. For years Phipps had repressed him; had compelled him to wear quiet, sombre colours. Now—

It was Archie's moment of triumph!

"GREAT Scott!" gasped Handforth, blinking. "What is it?"

"Looks like a rainbow that's got lost," said Church, shading his eyes with his hand. "Or perhaps it's an advert for a new kind of dye!"

They were in the Triangle, and something had just appeared on the Ancient House steps. It drifted out through the doorway, hovered on the top step, and then came sailing down. Archie Glenthorne had ventured forth in all his new glory!

"My only sainted aunt!" said K. K. Parkington faintly. "Did you ever see anything so brilliant? Where did I put my smoked glasses?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the Fifth of November next week, but I'm jiggered if we shall have anything more dazzling than this!" said Nipper. "Either Archie has gone dotty, or this new valet of his is having a lark with him."

Archie was fully conscious of his appearance. In fact, a doubt or two began to creep into his mind. Glorious as that suit had looked in the bed-room, it rather startled him now that he had come out into the open. He seemed to be walking in a halo of variegated colour.

His purple suit seemed more vivid in the full daylight, and the pea-green shirt and collar seemed to stand out and hit people. The effect was increased by the fact that his tie was a riot of jazz colouring, with a predominating red tint. Added to all this galaxy of colour came the socks. They were bright, vivid orange, and they stood out like beacons as he walked. As if this wasn't enough, Archie was wearing a fancy waistcoat of a soft lemon hue and decorated with blue squares. It was small wonder that the juniors looked, rubbed their eyes, and looked again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the idea of this joke, Archie?" asked Bob Christine of the Fourth, as he came over, half-closing his eyes. "Are you getting ready for the Fifth?"

"The old bean fails to gather the trend," said Archie.

"I mean, why have you dressed yourself like a guy?"

"I was expecting an assortment of jealous remarks, but I ignore them," said Archie serenely. "Trotty, my new valet, is a lad in a thousand. Within the space of one hour he has brought joy into my life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It seems to me that your new valet is having a game with you, Archie!" said Nipper. "Either that, or you're having a game with him."

"Absolutely not!"

"We know how you run wild if you're let loose amongst colours," continued Nipper,

grinning. "I suppose Trott gave you your head, eh? He knows which side his bread is buttered, and he didn't want to offend you on his first day."

"Pray cease drivelling," said Archie coldly. "It was Trott who selected these things, and I donned them absolutely on his advice."

"Then Trott must be colour-blind," said Handforth bluntly. "Mauve is all right by itself, and so is green, and orange and lemon are pretty good, but when you mix them all together like this they're apt to be a bit blinding."

"Colour," said Archie, "is the spice of life. Where should we be without colour? And why should human beings be compelled to walk abroad draped like so many dashed mummies? I'm setting a new fashion—and I might as well tell you that this has always been one of my ambitions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What would our magazine covers be without colours?" went on Archie enthusiastically. "What would a fair be like without gaily-coloured flags and bunting? Good gad! Colour is half the joy of life!"

"Archie isn't such a duffer, you know," said Parkington. "He's quite right, really. But he'll have to be a brave chap to carry this thing through."

"One moment," said Archie firmly. "What do I detect in the offing? Odds visions and delights, I'm dashed if it isn't Marjorie herself!"

Marjorie Temple was his special girl chum, and she had just come in with Vera Wilkes and Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley. The four girls halted suddenly, and it even seemed that they reeled.

"Look!" breathed Marjorie, in a low voice. "Look at Archie!"

"I've looked," said Vera. "My eyes feel strained."

They came nearer, and Marjorie laughed joyously.

"Why, Archie, it's just lovely!" she cried.

"What-ho!" beamed Archie. "You like the general effect, old girl?"

"I think it's too glorious for words!" replied Marjorie enthusiastically. "But where is the carnival?"

CHAPTER 7.

Shocks for Archie!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE'S face dropped a point or two.

"Carnival?" he repeated, in dismay.

"Aren't you dressed for some special occasion?" asked the girl politely. "Isn't there a fancy-dress ball somewhere?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, cheese it!" protested Archie. "Dash it, old vision, there's no need to chip the Pride of the Glenthornes! This is merely my new suit, chosen for me by Trott, my new valet."

Marjorie gave a little gulp.

"Oh, Archie!" she ejaculated. "You—you don't mean that you're going to wear these things as your ordinary, everyday attire?"

"Indoors," replied Archie, "there are brighter colours still."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mustn't do it, Archie!" protested the girl. "You'll—you'll only make yourself look silly. Why, it's not fair to the people who have to look at you! You'll get laughed at wherever you go."

Archie greatly valued Marjorie's opinion, and in anything but clothing he would have respected her words. He steeled himself, and he gazed upon her with some considerable indignation.

"Well, dash it, I must say you've got a frightful nerve, old girl!" he said. "Chipping me about colours, and look what you're wearing yourself!"

"Eh?" asked Marjorie, with a start.

Archie swept her from tip to toe with his monocle.

"I meant to say, what about it?" he asked. "A crimson hat with whacking great yellow flowers! A priceless frock of flame hue with a belt of assorted jazz colours. Silk stockings of pinkish fawn, and, dash it, green shoes! Well, I mean, rather a case of the pot calling the kettle black, what?"

Marjorie laughed.

"But I'm a girl," she said gently.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I wouldn't deny that for a moment, old dear. Of course you're a girl, and a dashed priceless girl, too. But merely because you're a girl, does that count me out? Why should the girls wear all the colours, and not the chappies?"

Marjorie laughed more than ever. Archie's description of her attire had been somewhat exaggerated, but it was true that she presented a colourful appearance. Nobody had noticed it, however, until Archie pointed it out. One naturally expects girls to wear things like that.

"Well?" went on Archie triumphantly. "I must observe, old girl, that you don't seem particularly brisk with your replies. What about it?"

"Perhaps you're right, Archie," chuckled Marjorie. "There's no real reason why the stern male sex should not wear colours as well as the frail female sex."

"Frail, what?" retorted Archie. "Nowadays, Marjorie, old fairy, you girls are doing all the things that men do. Dashed one-sided, if you ask me! It's about time some courageous chappie broke fresh ground. I might as well tell you that I am going to set a new fashion from now on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie took no notice of the yells of laughter, but strolled off. His determination was strengthened by this demonstration. He hadn't felt so bucked for terms!

HAVING strolled round the entire school, and having given everybody a treat, Archie remembered that it was tea-time. In fact, it was past tea-time. He only realised it when he found that he was walking about the school practically alone.

The fellows had drifted indoors in groups and now Archie was virtually showing himself to the thin air. A number of seniors had curtly told him to go indoors and "take off those fancy-dress togs," and he had even noticed a master or two in the offing eyeing him with deep suspicion. He had instinctively steered clear of them.

"It's a dashed hard life," sighed Archie, as he wandered towards Study E. "A chappie who becomes a pioneer is a bally martyr. However, I'm dashed if I'm going to give in."

They were brave words, but there were grave doubts at the back of his mind. He was even beginning to fear that Trott had been a trifle too daring, perhaps. It might be more sensible to do this thing by degrees. A completely purple ensemble would be better to start with, possibly. It was the variety of colours which made him look so startling.

He paused as he approached his study. Was it fancy, or did he hear an extraordinary din proceeding from that sanctum? Study

E, as a rule, was the quietest, dreamiest spot in the whole Junior passage.

"Good gad!" muttered Archie, startled.

He strode forward, flung open the door, and yelped. Study E was transformed. Tables were dotted all over the place. They were tastefully set, and about a dozen fags, with Willy Handforth well to the fore, were sitting round in every conceivable place. Trott, his eyes shining with joy, was handing round plates of bread-and-butter, sandwiches and cakes.

"Hallo, Archie!" sang out Willy. "You're a bit late!"

"Odds shocks!" gurgled Archie. "What's all this? Trott, dash you, what's the dashed idea?"

Trott surveyed his young master serenely.

"A few guests, sir," he explained.

"Guests!" yelled Archie. "But, look here, I didn't tell you to invite any guests, you frightful fright! I was expecting to trickle along to a peaceful tea, and this is what I find! Didn't I tell you, Trott, to prepare—"

"I am sorry, sir, if I have exceeded my instructions," said Trott apologetically. "It so happened that I met a number of young gentlemen who informed me that they were searching for some kind soul who would invite them to tea. Knowing, sir, that you are a kind soul, I invited them here."

Archie jammed his monocle into his eye.

"But where are they?" he asked coldly.



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"Here, sir."

"Absolutely not!" retorted Archie. "You just said you met a number of young gentlemen, but I'm dashed if I can see them."

"He means us, you ass!" said Willy.

"Good gad!" gasped Archie. "Trott, you chunk of seaweed, you didn't mistake these human sardines for young gentlemen, did you?"

"Cheese it, Archie!" said Willy. "Your new valet is a gem. Is it quite fair to jump down his throat? We happened to meet him, and as soon as we told him that we were stony and starving, he took pity on us."

"Starving?" repeated Archie.

"Just a figure of speech," said Willy, grinning. "Squat down and have some of these sandwiches. Trotty is a caution. I've never eaten sandwiches like them before."

Archie sat down limply.

"Well, carry on," he said feebly. "Trotty, old lad, kindly dish me out a bowl of the best Indian and Ceylon."

"If I have done wrong, sir, I am excessively sorry," said Trott concernedly. "But, in defence of myself, I must inform you that these young gentlemen gave me the impression that they were in the habit of sharing your tea-table nightly. I assumed that I was merely carrying on where my predecessor left off."

"In future, Trotty, you'll kindly avoid these pests as you would avoid the plague," said Archie firmly. "They've japed you, old bird. Priceless young coves in themselves, I'll admit, but hardly conducive to that peace and quiet to which the young master is accustomed."

"In future, sir, I will remember," said Trott.

He poured out a cup of tea for Archie, and then carried more sandwiches round. Some were roast beef, some ham, and some tongue, and the fags had never enjoyed such luscious sandwiches in all their young lives.

"A feed like this, Archie, is a feed to be remembered," said Chubby Heath enthusiastically. "What's puzzling me is how your giddy valet got all the stuff. And he must have worked like a Trojan to make all these sandwiches, too!"

As if in answer to Chubby's remark, a tap sounded on the door, and Mrs. Poulter, the matron, marched in, her face grim and stern.

"I thought as much!" she said, in an uncompromising tone. "Master Glenthorne, perhaps you'll be good enough to explain the meaning of all this?"

"Oh, I say, what's the matter now?" asked Archie, starting up.

"You ought to know what's the matter, young gentleman," replied Mrs. Poulter. "This—this man is your new valet, isn't he?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then I'd like to know why you told him to sneak into my larder and take a fresh joint of beef and a whole ham from my

meat-safe?" said Mrs. Poulter warmly. "You know very well, Master Glenthorne, that such things aren't allowed."

Archie's jaw dropped.

"I didn't tell Trotty to do anything like that!" he protested.

"Well, he did it," said Mrs. Poulter.

"Did you, Trotty?" asked Archie, turning his monocle upon the valet.

Trott spread his hands.

"The young gentlemen were hungry, sir," he explained. "Therefore I went to the larder and procured meat and bread for their consumption. If I have done wrong——"

"Good gad, it's next door to burglary!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, you can't do things like that, Trott! It's too blue round the edges! Kindly remember in future that all such supplies must be purchased from the School Shop."

"I shall remember, sir," said Trott cheerfully.

"In the meantime, what about my ham and my joint of beef?" asked Mrs. Poulter, with a dragon-like glare at Trott. "Things like this I won't have!"

"Well, you haven't got them now, have you?" asked Archie brightly.

"I shall want two-pounds-ten for all the food that this man took, or my housekeeping books will be all wrong," said Mrs. Poulter. "You'll either pay me, Master Glenthorne, or I shall have to go to the Housemaster."

"Right-ho!" said Archie hastily. "Frightfully sorry I can't whack out on the moment, old dear, but I'm slightly broke. However, you shall have your money to-morrow. I'll send Trott to Bannington to change a cheque."

"You'd better be careful what you do, Master Glenthorne," said the matron, with a dark look at Trott. "I don't hold with taking strange people in and trusting them too much! Especially people who come and steal things out of my larder!"

"Oh, but look here——"

"I'll give you until midday to-morrow, and I'll keep quiet until then," said Mrs. Poulter. "I'm sure I don't want to get you into any trouble, Master Glenthorne. But I've got to order a new ham and a fresh joint, and they'll have to be paid for."

She flounced out and banged the door.

"And that's that," said Archie, sinking back into his chair.

He felt weak. Trott was a good scout, but he was too much of a surprise-packet. One never quite knew what he was going to do next. Archie even began to pine for the soothing, peaceful influence of Phipps.

"Well, thanks for the tea, Archie," said Willy Handforth, as he prepared to leave. "And don't you ever get rid of your valet. He's a corker."

"Good old Trott!" chorused the other fags.

"Two-pounds-ten," said Archie mournfully.

"I mean, if that isn't thick, what is? Two-pounds-ten for having you young blighters ruin my tea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags cleared out, and Archie gazed round with a shudder. His usually elegant study was in utter disorder. Crumbs were lying everywhere; the furniture was all displaced; scratches were showing on the dazzling, polished surfaces.

"I say, Trott, what about it?" asked Archie complainingly. "Inviting those dashed fags to tea is all very well, but I'm all in favour of the peaceful life. Look at this poisonous mess!"

"I'll soon have the room tidy, sir," promised Trott.

He rang the bell, and, to Archie's astonishment, Tubbs and two other youths of his own age appeared with a carpet-sweeper, trays and dusters.

"I say!" bleated Archie. "What's—what's all this?"

"A little idea of my own, sir," explained Trott blandly. "For the fixed sum of five pounds a week, Tubbs has agreed that he and his two friends will keep this study in perfect order. You can always rely upon me, Master Archibald, to see things are done properly."

Archie opened his mouth to speak, but words failed him.

He sank back weakly into his chair. Tubbs and his henchmen started work in earnest, kicking up the dust and making a fearful din. And this was going to cost Archie a fiver a week! He fled, panic-stricken.

CHAPTER 8.

The Wisdom of Phipps.

PHIPPS carefully buttoned his overcoat, placed his hat firmly on his head, and gripped his bag. He took a final look at himself in the mirror, and there was a quiet, confident light in his eyes.

Phipps was on the point of leaving; but although he had packed his immediate needs in his bag, he had left most of his property untouched. He had not even attempted to pack it. Something told Phipps that his dismissal would not be permanent.

So far he had not seen his rival, the man who had ousted him. But he had heard rumours. Tubbs, the page-boy, had told him quite a lot: how Trott had brought back



"Who's paying for the car?" yelled Handforth as the immigrant in Master Archie's name!

from Bannington a weird and wonderful assortment of things; how Trott had raided Mrs. Poulter's larder—and so forth, and so on. There wasn't much that Phipps had missed.

He walked out of his bed-room as serene and as imperturbable as ever. He quietly descended the stairs, and quite by chance he caught sight of Trott as the latter turned a corner of the corridor. Phipps saw him over the banisters. And a surprising thing happened. Phipps, the Sphinx, lost his com-



aculate Trott prepared to enter the limousine. "Oh, I ordered replied the valet coolly.

posure. He not only jumped about a foot in the air, but he nearly fell down the rest of the stairs. His lapse, however, was only momentary. He pulled himself together with a strong effort of will, and before five seconds had passed he was as immobile as ever. He descended the rest of the stairs with stately mein.

"Er—Trott!" he said gently.

Trott, who was disappearing down the passage, turned. He came forward and gave Phipps a kindly, genial smile.

"I am afraid you have the advantage," he said politely.

"I am Phipps—Master Glen-thorne's dismissed valet," explained Phipps. "I had intended seeking you out earlier, but——"

"Really, Mr. Phipps, I am overwhelmed with regret," said Trott earnestly. "I trust you will not credit me with any unscrupulous motives. I may have usurped your position, but I can assure you that it was entirely Master Archibald's doing."

"That's all right — Mr. Trott," said Phipps in a curious voice. "I don't blame you at all. Will you be about during the next hour?"

"I shall not only be about, but I shall be up and doing," replied Trott promptly. "I have several little ideas in my mind which I desire to put into operation. My young master's comfort is my first consideration."

Phipps nodded.

"Then I will see you later," he said briefly.

He turned on his heel, and instead of going out of doors, as he had intended, he went back to his bed-room. He sat down on his bed, removed his hat and fanned himself.

"Well," said Phipps, "I'm hanged!"

In the privacy of his own bed-room he was permitted to remove his habitual Sphinx-like expression. He was looking startled; even amazed. For he had made a discovery which struck him fairly amidships, so to speak.

"And this," he murmured, "is Master Archie's new man! Well, of all the extraordinary situations!"

He laughed softly to himself. Then he rose, removed his overcoat, and neatly folded it up. He went down the corridor and found a telephone; within three minutes he was through to the Grapes Hotel,

and speaking to the head waiter.

"I'm not coming, Bert," he said smoothly.

"What, has that young feller changed his mind already?" asked the unseen Bert. "I thought you said it might be a couple of days——"

"Something else has happened," interrupted Phipps. "I can't explain now, Bert, but you'll understand later on when I tell you. Anyhow, I'm not coming."

He rang off, went back to his bed-room and reviewed the situation.

"Lord Willingstone!" he murmured dreamily.

For the discovery he had made was a staggering one. Trott, the new valet, was none other than Lord Willingstone himself! No wonder he had been able to describe Willingstone Manor so accurately to the unsuspecting Archie!

"I shall have to go carefully, of course," murmured Phipps as he set his wits to work. "He's harmless enough, but his people ought to be told. And the institution, too. I mustn't do anything too hurriedly. This is a first-class opportunity of bringing that young ass to his senses!"

In the privacy of his own quarters, Phipps was apt to refer to Archie in un-valet-like terms. Not that he felt any contempt for his young master. To the contrary. Phipps knew Archie better than anybody; he knew Archie was, at heart, sterling gold. There was really nothing that Phipps wouldn't do for his young master. But at times he had to be very firm.

From the outset he had vaguely suspected that there was something unusual in this present situation. Now he knew it. Trott—Lord Willingstone! Unfortunately, his lordship was, in the terms of the Remove, "off his rocker"; he was, in fact, a harmless lunatic who had escaped from a home in which he had been incarcerated by his despairing relatives.

Phipps was particularly well supplied with information regarding Lord Willingstone. Occasionally he would take a day in London, and there he would consort with gentry of his own fraternity, and he would hear all the gossip of the hour. And it was common talk in the servants' halls of Mayfair that young Lord Willingstone was as mad as a March hare.

He was harmless, he was genial—but he would insist that his name was Trott and that he was a valet. He had once had a valet named Trott, and that valet had been with him when he had taken a hairpin bend on the Alps too fast, and had crashed into a ravine.

The unfortunate Trott had been killed outright in the accident, Phipps remembered, and his lordship had been taken to hospital with a fractured skull and a broken leg. Upon recovery he had been sound in limb and body, but slightly deranged in mind. From that very minute he believed that he was Trott, and he had been the despair of his relatives and of various specialists. Finally he had had to be "put away."

As Phipps knew, the unfortunate young peer had not been placed in a lunatic asylum, but in an exclusive private nursing home somewhere in Surrey. In this select establishment he had been happy—with others of his kind. He had, in fact, amused himself by acting as valet to his fellow "guests," and the authorities had allowed him to do so, as it was the only way to keep him quiet.

Phipps had heard all about it from the Dowager Lady Willingstone's butler. Even now the old lady was still hoping that her

son would one day recover. Except for this one unfortunate kink he was quite normal—a charming, likeable fellow.

It was certainly a peculiar situation, not without its humorous side. No wonder "Trott" had been giving Archie so many surprises! For his lordship, in his newly-found freedom, was having the time of his life.

It was clear to Phipps that Lord Willingstone had somehow eluded his guards at the home. He had taken to the road, and he had wandered out of Surrey into Sussex—and thus Archie had found him, footsore and weary, and looking extraordinarily like a genuine down-and-out.

"And out of all the people in this world, Master Archie had to pick him up!" murmured Phipps whimsically. "The situation is delicate. If I were to explain to Master Archie he would probably refuse to believe it."

This was true enough. Archie would certainly suspect that Phipps had his own axe to grind. Phipps was a wise bird. He now knew that his own position was secure. He only needed to sit tight and keep his eye on things in general, and affairs would work out to his own advantage.

"Yes," he murmured contentedly, "there's no reason why I shouldn't make a little bit out of this. The young master needs a lesson, and there isn't the slightest fear of his lordship doing any harm."

He could understand why there had been no mention in the newspapers of Lord Willingstone's escape. The family would be at its wits' end to keep it dark. Officially, Lord Willingstone was "travelling abroad." It would never do for the newspapers to give any publicity to this unhappy story.

Phipps consulted a little notebook of his own.

"If I telephone to Sid Stevens, he'll give me Lady Willingstone's telephone number," he murmured. "Or perhaps I shall be able to find a London directory downstairs. I can telephone to the home, too. Oh, yes! There's no reason why I shouldn't make quite a nice little bit out of this!"

And Phipps, lying back on the pillow, smiled a serene smile.

CHAPTER 9.

Trott Trots Out Another Surprise!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE had fled to the Common-room upon the arrival of Tubbs & Co.; and in one of the easy-chairs he pondered over the situation.

"What's happening in your study, Archie?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Eh? Oh, you mean my study?" asked Archie, with a start. "My dear old tulip, don't ask me! I'm still dazed."

"Somebody tells me that my minor had tea with you—with a crowd of other fags," grinned Handforth. "And I hear that Trott boned some grub from Mrs. Poulter's larder."

It seems to me that this new valet of yours is going to lead you a pretty lively dance!"

"I'm not keen on dancing!" said Archie feebly.

"And what's this we hear about Tubbs?" asked Harry Gresham, strolling up. "The young fathead has been saying that you're going to pay him five quid a week for keeping his study clean. He and some of his village pals!"

"What rot!" said Handforth.

"I wish it was," moaned Archie. "But it happens to be true."

"What!" yelled the others.

"It's not my doing," complained Archie. "This blighter of a Trotty fixed it up." He sat forward with anxious eyes. "Do you know, laddies, that this cove has involved me in unthinkable expense since he arrived?"

"So we imagined," grinned Nipper.

"I mean to say, over eighty quid at the outfitter's, five quid a week to Tubbs, one dashed feed, two pounds ten—and I'm getting the wind up about what he'll do next!" wailed Archie. "Dash it, I feel I am living on the edge of a volcano which might erupt at any minute!"

Handforth grinned unsympathetically.

"I thought you said this new valet of yours was a corker?" he asked. "I thought you said he was miles better than Phipps?"

"Somehow," said Archie, "I don't think he is. Good gad! I wish I had Phipps back!"

The door suddenly burst open and in dashed Hubbard.

"I say, Archie!" he yelled. "Your new valet's going!"

"Good!" said Archie. "I mean, going? What do you mean—going? I didn't give the blighter permission——"

"All dressed up like a lord, too!" said Hubbard, without realising the exactitude of his comparison. "And there's the car out in the Triangle, waiting."

"You'd better see into it, Archie," said Handforth, grinning.

Archie staggered out, and in the lobby he beheld his new valet. Trott—otherwise Lord Willingstone—was resplendent in spotless evening dress. He beamed graciously upon Archie.

"I shall be back, sir, by eleven," he promised cheerfully.

"Good gad!" gasped Archie. "Where did you get those clothes, Trott?"

"I brought them from Bannington, sir, with the other things," explained Trott. "The outfit only cost a mere twenty pounds, and I shall be pleased, sir, if you will deduct it from my first month's salary."

"Wha-a-at?" gurgled Archie, reeling. "But look here! I mean, I say! Dash it, Trott, how much do you think I'm going to give you a month?"

"The matter has never crossed my mind, sir," replied the valet blissfully. "I am quite content to leave it entirely to you. Whatever you decide upon will be agreeable to me. I know, sir, that you will be generous."

"Odds swindles and extortions! But I'm not going to be as generous as twenty quid a month!" ejaculated Archie.

"Good gad, old owl, I'm not a millionaire!"

"Well, sir, it really doesn't matter," said Trott, beaming. "The sum can be deducted from my first year's salary. I am entirely indifferent as to that. And it doesn't matter to me whether you pay my wages in advance, or at the end of my first five years' service. Well, good-night, sir. I shall not be home late!"

GUY FAWKES' DAY AT ST. FRANK'S! Corking extra-long school yarn next Wednesday.



The "Fifth" at St. Frank's—and E. O. Handforth forbidden by his pater to buy fireworks. But does that deter Handy? No, Sir! He makes some of his own—which is ten times worse. The trouble begins, and so does the fun. Handy becomes a danger to the school! E. S. Brooks has excelled himself in this stunning yarn, chums. It starts with a bang and roars its way through to a crashing climax! Don't miss it

"HANDY'S FIREWORK FIASCO!"

Order your copy to-day.

He bowed, rammed his topper on the back of his head, and strolled out to the glittering limousine which stood waiting. Lord Willingstone might imagine himself to be a valet, but he believed in doing things in the style to which he had been accustomed.

"All right, driver," he said, with an imperious wave of his hand. "The Grapes Hotel. And don't drive too fast, because I don't like driving too fast."

Archie leapt down the steps.

"Hi! One moment, laddie!" he panted. "What about this car?"

"Only a hired car, Master Archibald," said Trott. "We valets, I am afraid, are not rich enough to own such vehicles."

"But who's paying for it?" asked Handforth, from the top step.

Trott waved an airy hand.

"I must confess that that thought had not occurred to me," he replied blandly. "I merely ordered the car, Master Archie, in your name, and——"

"In my name?" howled Archie.

"The fee is moderate," beamed Trott. "A small matter of three guineas. And the champagne supper which I have ordered at the Grapes will be quite modest—certainly not more than another three guineas. If you wish, sir, you can also deduct these charges from my first month's salary."

He stepped into the car, closed the door, and the vehicle began to purr away.

CHAPTER 10.

"The Mixture As Before"!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE clutched at the air for support; and failing to find it, he staggered dizzily.

"S.O.S.!" he bleated. "Kindly send for Phipps! This blighting blighter has got me weak! I mean to say——"

"Hallo! The car's turning back!" said Gresham.

"It strikes me there's something rummy about this new valet of yours," murmured Nipper. "He's simply playing about with you."

"Looks like a jape to me!" said Handforth bluntly.

"Not by long chalks," said Travers, shaking his head. "Even K. K. wouldn't run Archie into all this expense for the sake of a jape."

The car reached the Ancient House steps, and Lord Willingstone stepped out.

"Forgotten something, Trotty?" asked Handforth sarcastically. "Did you go without your two footmen?"

"As a matter of fact, I have changed my mind," replied Trott. "Upon due consideration I feel that it is my duty to remain with my young master. Moreover, another thought has occurred to me. I would much prefer to spend the evening with Mr. Wilkes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. Wilkes is a charming man," continued Trott. "Perhaps you boys will direct me to

his private quarters? I have no doubt that he will invite me to supper as soon as he sees me. Furthermore, I wish to consult him upon the new decorations in my young master's study."

"New decorations!" panted Archie, freshly startled.

"I have commenced them, sir, but I ran short of material," explained Trott. "No doubt Mr. Wilkes will assist me."

Archie gave one dismal wail and bolted for his study. He remembered that quiet, dignified sanctum. What had this human cyclone done now? What atrocity had he perpetrated?

He burst open the door, and rocked on his heels.

The lights were full on, and the fire was well banked up. Everything was as usual except for one drastic change. A Union Jack was utilised as a table-cloth, and two other Union Jacks were doing duty as curtains. Round the legs of the chairs and table bunting was wrapped—red, yellow, blue, and green bunting. The legs of the table looked like so many barber's poles.

"Great gad!" gurgled Archie, clutching at the doorpost. "Water! Kindly give me several gallons of water!"

"My only sainted aunt!" yelled Gresham, who had followed Archie into the room. "What the dickens has that man been doing to your study, Archie? Hi, you chaps! Come and have a look at this!"

Crowds of fellows were pouring down the passage, and Trott, as amiable and as polite as ever, was at their head. He looked into the study with pride, and beamed upon Archie.

"You like it, sir?" he asked gently.

"Like it!" howled Archie. "It's too frightful for words!"

A spasm of pain crossed Trott's face.

"But wait until I've finished, sir," he urged. "This is only the beginning."

"Help!" breathed Archie.

"Knowing your fondness for colour, sir, I utilised these flags and bunting which I found in an old cupboard," explained Trott. "Tomorrow, I shall visit Bannington and purchase some really striking colour effects."

Archie pulled himself together.

"You'll do absolutely nothing of the sort!" he said, the fighting blood of the Glenthornes coming to his assistance. "Trott, you earthquake, I hate to say it, but you're sacked! Absolutely fired!"

"Just as you say, sir," said Trott happily.

"You don't seem very dashed upset about it."

"I understand, sir, that it is your habit to sack your valets overnight and re-engage them in the morning," explained Trott calmly.

"With your permission, sir, I will now seek out Mr. Wilkes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter went up from the crowd. Nobody could understand exactly what Trott's game was, but it seemed clear to the majority of the juniors that he was pulling Archie's leg. He was so rational, so polite and

amiable, that nobody even guessed that he was an escaped lunatic.

"We'll show you the way to old Wilkey's quarters," said Travers generously. "Follow us, Trotty, and you can't go wrong."

"A very kindly action, young gentlemen," said Trott gratefully.

Unsuspectingly, he followed Travers and one or two others to the lobby. Just as unsuspectingly he followed them upstairs.

"Mr. Wilkes, you see, lives along here," explained Travers glibly, as he proceeded along the upper passage. "If you follow us——"

A discreet cough sounded.

"Really, Master Travers, you shouldn't do this," said Phipps, apparently materialising out of nowhere. "You know perfectly well——"

"Hallo! I thought you'd gone!" said Travers, startled.

"Not yet, sir," replied Phipps. "Trott, perhaps you had better come along to my own room."

"I am sorry, but I have a supper engagement with Mr. Wilkes," replied Lord Willingstone, with dignity. "He has not actually invited me, but as soon as he sees me he will repair the omission."

Phipps was alarmed. He didn't want Trott to go blundering into the Housemaster's private quarters. It wouldn't be long now before various people arrived—particularly the car from the Home, with sundry attendants. Lady Willingstone was coming down, too, to say nothing of other relatives.

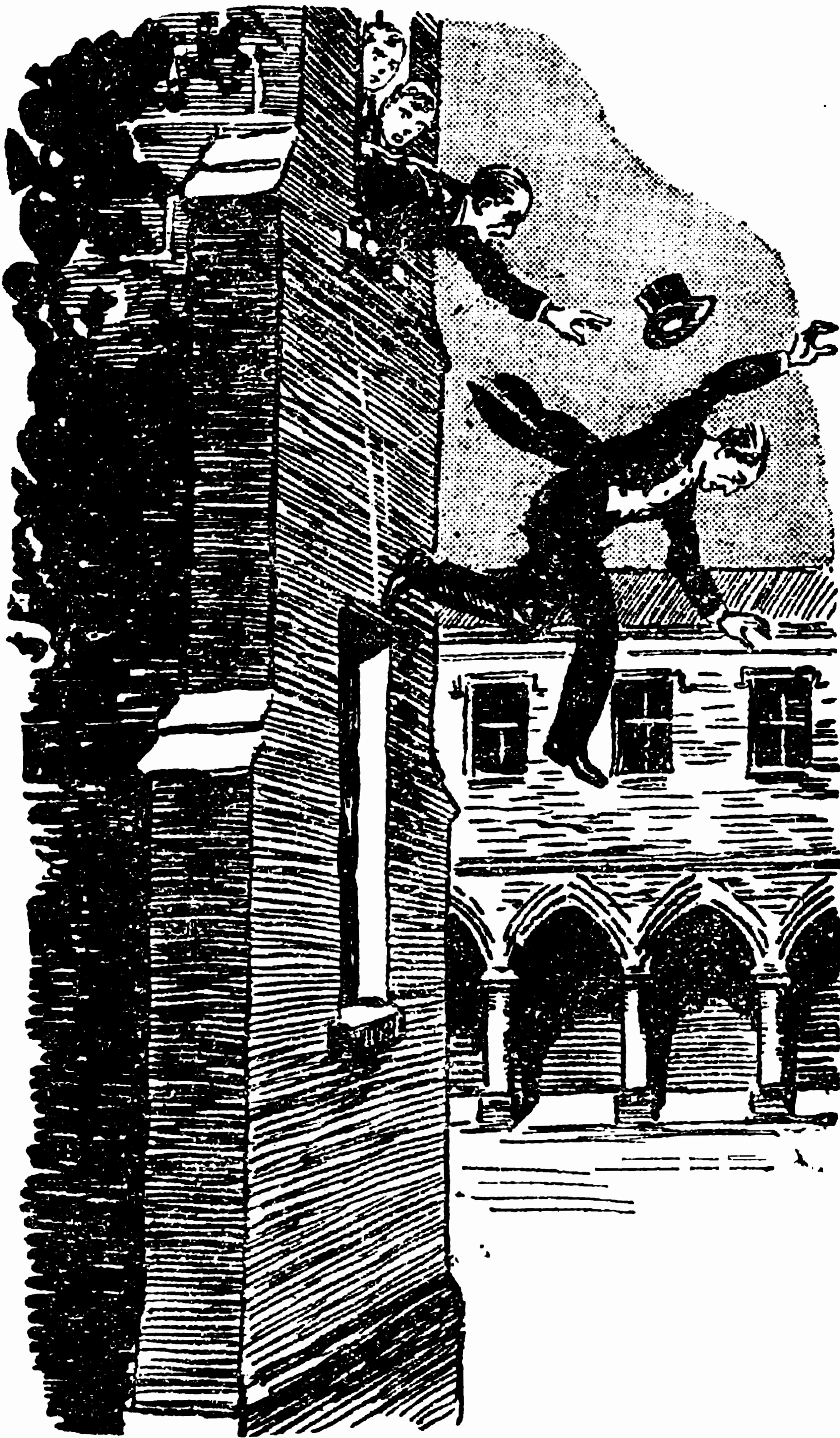
Phipps had been very discreet, as usual. He had done everything quietly and efficiently. But if he was to earn Lady Willingstone's real approval he must not allow it to leak out to any of these boys that "Trott" was really the unfortunate Lord Willingstone.

"I think you had better come with me, Trott," he said firmly.

He took a tight hold on Trott's arm. It was the first mistake Phipps had made—but he could not possibly have realised the consequences. That grip was a reminder for the lunatic. He had felt it so often!

"No!" he shouted abruptly. "You're not going to lock me up!"

He must have sensed what Phipps intended. With a violent jerk he swept Phipps' hand aside, and made a leap for the window.



Archie's new valet leapt out of the window and fell to the ground many feet below.

"Look out!" yelled Travers, in alarm. "We're not on the ground floor!"

But Lord Willingstone did not even hear; and in the excitement of the moment he had forgotten that he had come upstairs. He flung the casement windows wide, and stepped out—just as Phipps made a wild grab for him.

"Not this time!" sang out his lordship gaily.

Then he uttered a cry of alarm. Instead of leaping to solid ground, he felt himself hurtling through space. Phipps' clutch had been a second too late.

Crash!

It was an ugly sound, and after it came an absolute silence. But only for a moment.

"He's hurt himself!" shouted Travers desperately. "By Samson! I didn't mean to do anything like this! I was only going to lead the chap into the Third Form dormitory and kid him——"

"Never mind that!" interrupted Handforth. "Let's go and pick him up. Somebody fetch the doctor, too!"

Phipps, as nimble as a monkey, was slithering down the ivy. He reached the ground, ran across to the still figure, and bent over it. Lord Willingstone's face was deadly white, and trickling down his forehead there was an ugly red stream.

"Is it bad?" asked Nipper, joining Phipps.

"Don't know yet, sir," replied Phipps. "He's knocked his head, anyhow—and that's not comforting. Looks like a fractured skull to me."

"Poor chap!" said Nipper. "Here, you fellows!" he added, as a number of juniors came running up. "Lend a hand. We'll carry him to the sanny. Go easy with him!"

The unconscious man was lifted and carried gently out of the West Square into the Triangle. At the same moment a large motor vehicle glided through the gateway, its headlights gleaming. It was a private ambulance, but more like a large enclosed limousine. Two men jumped out, seeing at once that something was wrong.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated one, as he ran up. "It's his lordship!"

Dr. Somers, the principal of the Home, was frantic with anxiety. He was one of the men who had just come up.

"What has happened?" he asked hoarsely.

"I regret that this accident should have taken place, sir," said Phipps. "As I told you, I have been keeping my eye on the patient, but he suddenly took alarm and leapt through a window."

"The patient!" breathed Travers wonderingly.

"His lordship seems to be in a bad way, doctor," said the other man. "There is a nasty cut on his scalp. He will have to be attended to here. This is a bad business."

"It never ought to have happened!" said Dr. Somers angrily. "You are Phipps, I suppose?" he went on, looking at Archie's valet. "I shall hold you responsible, Phipps, for this!"

"It wasn't his fault, sir!" broke in Nipper. "Some of the fellows were larking about, and they never dreamed that Trott was wrong in the head. But I can see it now."

"Wrong in the head!" ejaculated Handforth. "By George! Of course! That explains it! But they said something about 'his lordship'——"

"Can't you boys be good enough to keep back?" asked Dr. Somers curtly. "This gentleman is Lord Willingstone. He is almost normal, but he unfortunately believes himself to be Trott, his own valet. Trott himself is dead."

"Good gad!" said Archie, aghast. "I mean to say, things are becoming somewhat clear now. It never occurred to me——"

"Look, sir!" interrupted Travers. "He's coming round!"

All eyes were turned upon the patient, Lord Willingstone was moving, and now he opened his eyes, blinked, and passed a hand over his forehead.

"Nasty crash, that," he muttered dazedly. "You all right, Trott? I didn't allow for the road being badly cambered; I tried to swing her round, but——"

"Steady—steady!" said Dr. Somers, bending over him. "We'll soon have you comfortable, my friend!"

Lord Willingstone sat up.

"Hallo! I didn't know there was another car on the road," he said. "Where's Trott? I can't seem to understand——" A bewildered look came into his eyes as he saw the crowd of schoolboys and the lighted windows of St. Frank's.

"This is infernally strange!" he said, his manner now totally different from what it had been before the mishap. "I thought I was on that hairpin bend. I remember crashing over the edge, but—— Surely I'm in England now? Can't somebody tell me what has happened?"

"I know what has happened," said Dr. Somers gently, "and you will know sooner or later, Lord Willingstone. You are Lord Willingstone, are you not?"

"My dear fellow, don't ask silly questions," said his lordship. "Of course I'm Willingstone. And there's no need to fuss over me like this. What I can't understand is where I am and how I got here."

Phipps glanced at Dr. Somers.

"Perhaps it was just as well, sir, that I relaxed my vigilance for a few moments," he murmured.

"It was, indeed!" agreed the doctor. "I shall lose a patient—but a mother will regain a son."

THERE was quite a sensation about it all.

The news spread through the school like wildfire, and everybody was talking about it. Lord Willingstone had been taken to the sanatorium, and his injury proved to be nothing serious. He was now a changed man.

"Even now, old beans, I can't understand it," confessed Archie.

"The man you picked up was an escaped lunatic," explained Nipper. "Harmless enough, but he knew how to tell the tale. And that fall gave him just the necessary shock to restore his reason. A tiny section of his brain was pressing on a bone, perhaps. Anyhow, the oracle has worked."

"Then I'm dashed glad!" said Archie stoutly.

Later on he went to his study, and it seemed quite natural that Phipps should be there with a duster. All the flags and bunting had gone, and Study E was looking its old self.

"I have taken the liberty, Master Archie, of preparing a cup of tea," said Phipps smoothly. "You do not usually indulge at

this hour, but in the circumstances I thought —”

“Oh, rather!” beamed Archie, sliding into an easy-chair. “Good egg! Rally round with the hot juice, Phipps. I must remark, old bird, that it has been a pretty hectic day.”

“It is gratifying to know, sir, that Lord Willingstone has recovered his reason,” said Phipps. “Much of the credit is due to you, for it was your kindness to him which resulted in this happy climax.”

“Do you think he’s permanently cured?”

“Both Dr. Somers and Dr. Brett tell me that there is no fear of a relapse,” replied Phipps. “A little more cream, sir? And by the way, sir——” He hesitated. “Touching upon the subject of those socks and ties——”

“Kindly drop the frightful subject!” interrupted Archie hastily. “You have my full permission, Phipps, to burn the bally lot. As for these things which that blighting

Trott ordered, you’ll arrange to have them all sent back.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Phipps gently.

“Oh, and Phipps,” said Archie, as he sipped his tea. “It’s quite understood, isn’t it, that from now onwards we continue the mixture as before?”

“Oh, quite, sir,” replied Phipps serenely.

As he glided out of the study he quietly patted the ten-pound note which Dr. Somers had slipped him as a reward for his valuable information; and there was probably more to come from the grateful Dowager Lady Willingstone. Upon the whole, Phipps decided that getting sacked wasn’t an unprofitable business!

THE END.

(Special Fifth of November yarn next week, chums: “Handy’s Firework Fiasco!” Extra-long; extra-funny; extra-good!)

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Your Two Hard-Hitting Pals in a Whirl of Excitement This Week!

VENGEANCE TRAIL !

In Manuel Garcia's
Garden!

FELIPE JOSE RODRIGUEZ sighed wearily. He let his long rifle slide softly to the ground and leaned against the high garden wall at his back, staring into the velvety darkness around him. Instinctively his nervous, yellow-stained fingers felt for the cigarette papers and the little sack of tobacco in his pocket. Then, with an impatient curse, he remembered his officer's orders, and shrugged.

Por Dios, but he was sick of this rebellion already, like many others in Zareda City. It was fine enough for his superiors, for the Great Excellency, Manuel Garcia, whose splendid mansion he was guarding; but for poor peons like himself, who had left their mountain homes at the "glorious" call of Liberty—pah! Nothing but dull hours of sentry-go, with not a light or even a cigarette to cheer one up. Nothing but waiting; cooped up here in this vile, doomed city—waiting.

And for what? thought Felipe bitterly. Manuel Garcia's cause was as good as lost already, everyone knew. He had collected a huge army with promises of rifles and ammunition in plenty. But the arms were lost; completely destroyed at Las Santos railroad two nights ago by a mysterious young Englishman who had sworn a vendetta against Garcia, and who, people said, could not be killed by human hands.

The superstitious Mexican shivered and crossed himself piously. He did not want to think about this Englishman. It was whispered furtively among the peasants that he was a devil, with great grey eyes that blazed like cold flames. He it was who had killed Juan-of-the-Scar, Garcia's lieutenant, in an open duel with guns, and afterwards, with his red Americano friend, had stolen across the border and blown up the rebel munition train with dynamite.



Another Sparkling Adventure : **FACE TO FACE!**

Felipe leaned harder against the dark wall. In good Anglo-Saxon, he was "fed-up to the teeth." He was frightened, too; for, thanks to the Englishman's exploit, the rebels in Zareda City were practically defenceless save for their own knives and a scattering of obsolete rifles. And somewhere out on the dark plains encircling the city, the Mexican army, under General Lopez, was drawing nearer every hour. Felipe's neck tingled uncomfortably, when he thought of it.

The soft patter of sandalled feet, prowling down the gloomy path towards him, brought him upright with a jerk, rifle advanced.

"Alta! Quien es?"

A hurried voice answered the challenge.

"It is Pedro, Felipe. Quiet!"

Felipe's eyes brightened as he recognised the dim figure of a fellow-sentry, who should have been on guard at the other end of the path.

"Welcome, comrade. Any news?"

The newcomer laughed shortly.

"News? No!" His voice was shaking a little with excitement. "But I have just heard a rumour, Felipe, that almost stopped my heart. Our great leader, Manuel Garcia—curse him!—and his officers are about to fly!"

Felipe recoiled as from a sudden blow. The other went on swiftly.

"Our senior capitaine was talking to the lieutenant of the patrol in the garden. They must have forgotten I was near. Felipe, Garcia is preparing to leave at once, and all officers are being warned secretly to fly to the mountains also. All is lost. And we—poor dupes—are to be left behind to be shot or hanged later by the Government troops!"

A fierce Spanish oath spat in the darkness.

"May the foul fiend take Garcia and all his works!"

Pedro smiled cruelly.

"So say I, comrade. But I wish, too, that I could lay my hands on that Englishman who is hunting Garcia. It is he we have to thank for our present peril, amigo. If we had arms, Garcia would stay and fight it out, I think, and we should win. By the saints, I would peg that English devil out on the desert——"

"Many thanks, good friend!" mocked a

soft voice in Spanish from the top of the wall. And before either of the sentries could so much as gasp in their terror, down from the skies dropped two dark, lithe forms, silent as cats and quicker than striking snakes. Something that felt like an iron bar landed on the point of Pedro's jaw, knocking him into a quiet heap; while the paralysed Felipe felt a bare muscular arm slide round his throat, hauling him into the bushes on the other side of the path. The keen point of a knife pricked him gently below his left ear, and a cold voice told him to lie still. He obeyed.

Soft, rustling sounds came from the darkness, followed presently by a whisper in English.

"I've stripped this chap, Red. Gimme that lariat!"

The lariat was passed over. Pedro, deep in slumber, was trussed and gagged. A few minutes later Felipe, also without his clothing, was laid beside him.

"Don't gag him, Pete. I want him tuh talk!"

In the darkness, Red Potter grinned gaily and knelt down until his lips were close to the Mexican's ear.

"Now listen, friend!" he whispered suggestively. "Life is sweet, is it not? Tell me whither this path leads, or——"

Felipe didn't wait for the "or." He babbled the information swiftly as the Texan's knife-point pricked him again.

"Senior, it leads to the back of his Excellency's house. Follow this wall to the end; then strike across the lawn to the right till you reach some steps leading to a terrace. You are there, then!"

"Any sentries there?"

"Only one, senior, I swear!"

"And inside the house?"

"I do not know, senior!"

"H'm. Well—tell me your pass-word for to-night. The right one, remember!"

"It is 'In the dawn,' senior!" gasped Felipe in terror.

Red grunted. With deft hands, he gagged the unfortunate Mexican and thought hard and quickly. By his coolness, skill and wonderful patience, he had brought his English chum safely into the rebel city and into Manuel Garcia's grounds. It was up to him now to get Peter into the house, even if all the sentries in the rebel army were in the way.



"We're on a sure-nough tough contract, Pete!" he murmured at last. "But we'll stick to our plan. Git dressed, quick!"

Crouched behind the bushes, Peter Graham pulled on the shirt, bell-bottomed trousers and short waistcoat belonging to the unconscious Pedro and groped around for his high sombrero and rifle. A satisfied chuckle told him that his irrepressible partner had done the same with Felipe's gear. He stepped across the prostrate Mexicans till he felt Red's shoulder.

"All ready, Red. Where to now?" he whispered.

Briefly Red repeated the information he had forced from Felipe, and gave his instructions.

"It's stiff, but we'll do it!" he grinned. "In this darkness, it'll take good eyes to discover that we ain't Mexican sentries—till it's too late. We'll mosey along till we come to them steps this guy talks about at the back of the house, lay out the sentry thar quietly, and then——"

"And then for the house itself!" finished Peter softly. His hand came down and closed on Red's arm in a tight grip. "And don't forget, Reddy; Manuel Garcia's—mine!"

Red chuckled; and then stopped abruptly.

The reckless partners on Vengeance Trail remained motionless, their eyes searching the blackness of the path. Absorbed in their plans, they had relaxed their caution for a few fatal seconds. A little squad of men, invisible as yet but close at hand, were marching briskly towards them.

The night patrol was going its rounds.

Red Is Unlucky!

PETER'S hand flew to his gun immediately. A fight against odds, he knew, would spoil whatever slim chance they had of surprising Garcia completely, but if it had to be, he meant doing his job thoroughly. Red, however, had other views.

Quick as lightning, the nimble-witted Texan grabbed his friend. Escape was impossible, for even if they made a bolt for it, the patrol would expect to find a sentry here and search for him if he was absent. Red made his decision with characteristic speed.

"Intuh the bushes, pronto!" he hissed. "I'll try a bluff!"

Without a word, Peter shrank back, tense as a hair-spring. Red, stepping farther on to the path, grounded his rifle with a smack and waited for the patrol to come up. He counted them coolly as their dark figures loomed up before him and halted. Three—an officer and two men.

A curt order snapped.

"Patrol, halt! Sentry, give the password!"

Like most Texans, Red spoke Mexican-Spanish nearly as well as his own native tongue. He answered without a tremor.

"'In the dawn,' senor!"

"Anything to report?"

"No, senor!"

The slim, dapper officer gave a slight start. He peered suspiciously through the gloom at the madcap impostor standing rigid before him.

"Your voice sounds somewhat strange, Rodriguez, my friend," he said slowly. "And—why do you call me 'senor' all at once? My rank is lieutenant, if you please!"

Taking a sharp step forward, he thrust his face closer towards the inwardly-boiling Texan. For once in his life, Red was completely floored. Even as he spurred his wits to think of the next move, the one thing he had been dreading came to pass. Diving into his tunic pocket, the lieutenant flicked out a flashlamp and switched it directly into Red's grim features. He fell back, almost dropping the torch.

"A—a spy!" he croaked.

And then the band played.

Red was the first to move. In the single precious second gained by the Mexican's recoil, he ducked away from the torchlight, pulling his gun so fast it seemed to leap to his hand. A short, savage swipe with the long barrel knocked the torch from the officer's hand; another wallop brought him to his knees. As the soldiers recovered from their alarm and leapt forward shouting, the Texan vaulted over the dazed lieutenant and flung himself upon them.

A wild, whirling and joyous ten seconds followed then, in the darkness of Manuel Garcia's garden. Side-stepping the Texan's mad rush, one of the soldiers swung up his rifle and fired, but his aim was flurried and the bullet went wide. Before he could fire again, out of the bushes came Peter in a flying tackle that crashed the man head-first to the ground, where he kicked once and faded out.

Dodging a wildly-swung rifle-butt, Red lifted the other soldier with an upper-cut, then downed him with his Colt, and wheeled just in time to see the lieutenant stagger to his feet, revolver in hand. Their shots thundered through the night together; but Red's aim was deadlier. As the officer fell, the Texan scooped up a rifle and grabbed Peter by the arm.

"Beat it!" he said tersely.

Pandemonium had broken out throughout the grounds, and the darkness was full of shouts and the sound of flying footsteps. Swiftly and silently the two raced up the garden path, melting like shadows into the bushes as a file of soldiers, bayonets fixed, pelted past them, chattering with excitement.

As usual, Peter followed Red stride for stride wherever he went, trusting implicitly to his comrade's uncanny Indian scout-craft. They left the path at the end of the wall, and went gliding across a great open lawn, crouched almost double, but ready to spring the second they were challenged.

Rejoicing in the soft turf that muffled their steps, they stole across the grass until at length Red's lynx eyes saw something that made him halt. He knelt down, crawling

forward with hands outstretched, grunting with satisfaction when they came into contact with cold, smooth stone—the steps at the back of Garcia's house, as the sentry Felipe had said. A second later they were challenged.

"Halt, there! The password, or I fire!"

It was the sentry posted on the steps—the one and only one. Peter drew his gun softly while Red replied:

"'In the dawn.' Quiet, son of a fool!"

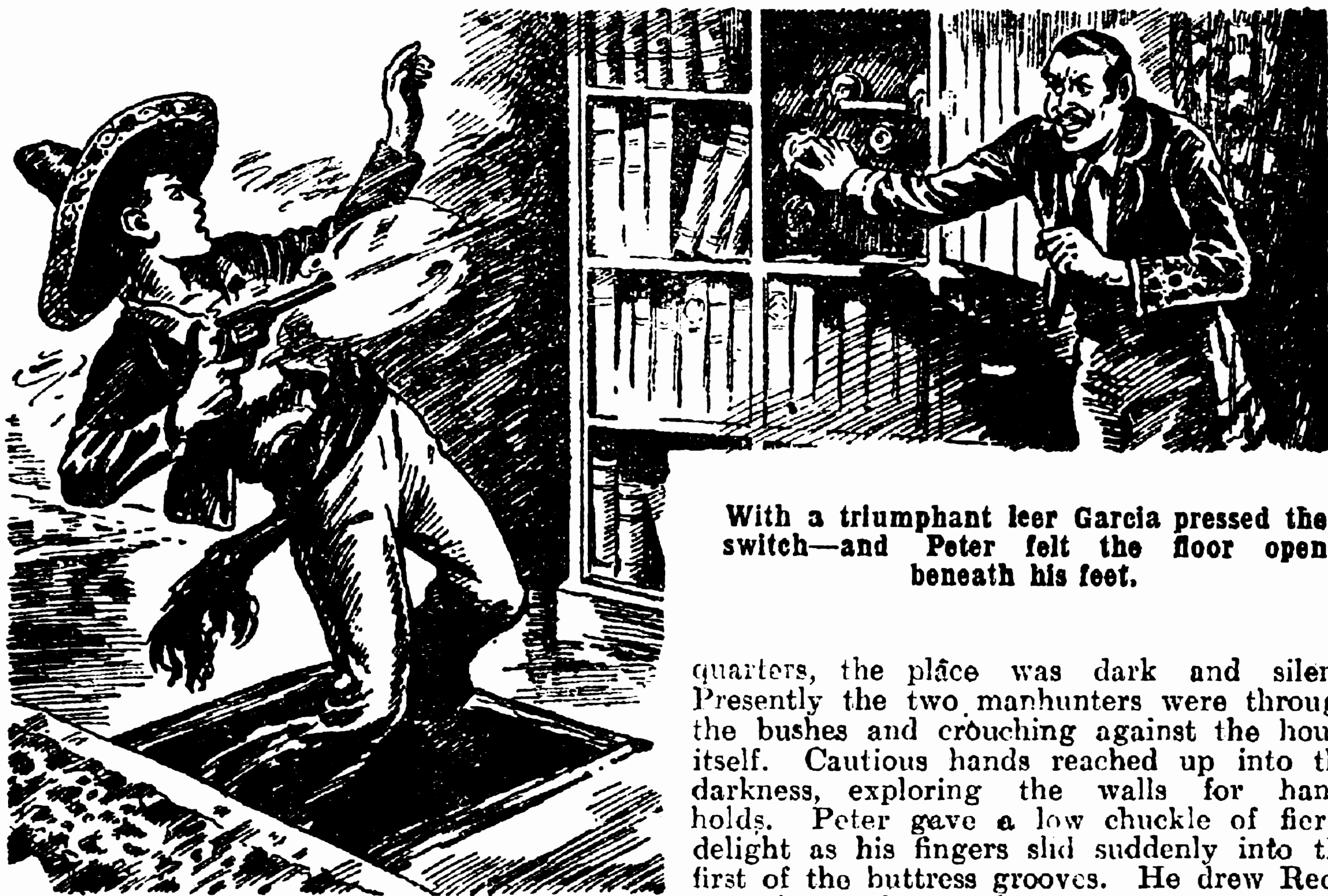
"Who are you?" whispered the sentry, prowling cautiously down the steps. He was plainly alarmed by the distant shouts.

Red looked hurriedly over his shoulder. Not only was the shouting growing louder, but lights were making their appearance at the foot of the lawn in a systematic search

Garcia—At Last!

THE residencia of his Excellency Manuel Garcia, leader of the daring revolution that had set Northern Mexico ablaze during the past ten days, was a sumptuous, typically Spanish mansion, set amid palatial grounds. It was built of cool white stone, floridly decorated with ornate scrollwork and great buttresses; the broad surfaces were carved with shallow ridges. A wide veranda above the first-story windows encircled the whole house; exotic shrubberies and tropical plants guarded its base like a living wall. Through this wall, with only a faint rustle to mark their passage, crept two dark figures.

In the front of the house windows blazed with bright lights; back here in the servants'



With a triumphant leer Garcia pressed the switch—and Peter felt the floor open beneath his feet.

of the grounds. At any moment, too, the alarm would spread to the house. Red glared at the figure of the sentry, seen dimly half-way down the steps.

"Who do you think we are?" he sneered biting. "Two spies have broken into his Excellency's grounds. We have been sent to reinforce you, lest the dogs break through this way!"

"Madre de Dios!" Casting caution to the winds, the nervous peasant made all haste to join his new comrades. The moment he came within reach, Red gathered him lovingly to his chest, and Peter smote—once.

"An' that's that!" chuckled the Texan, throwing the fallen man over the balustrade. "Now for Manuel Garcia, Pete!"

Peter did not reply. He was already racing up the steps.

quarters, the place was dark and silent. Presently the two manhunters were through the bushes and crouching against the house itself. Cautious hands reached up into the darkness, exploring the walls for hand-holds. Peter gave a low chuckle of fierce delight as his fingers slid suddenly into the first of the buttress grooves. He drew Red's attention to it eagerly.

"Gee, if these run fur enough up, we're on velvet!" whispered Red, staring up into the gloom. "Kin yuh climb 'em, Pete?"

For answer, the English boy swung himself up with agile ease, his bare toes just fitting into the slots. In a moment he was a faint blur above the ground, and Red, after a wary look round, followed. The gardens and lawns beyond the shrubbery were alive with men and torches now. Even as the Texan clawed himself aloft, a piercing yell announced that the sentry beside the steps had been found.

Up and up they went, clinging to their perilous perches like flies, cool-eyed and iron-nerved. A slip meant a fall and discovery; and discovery meant death. But neither gave a second's heed to their desperate position. All Peter knew was that at last he was getting near to the murderer of his father.

What happened after he had killed Garcia he did not care—yet. As for the cheerful Red, if he thought about it at all, he dismissed it with a shrug next moment. If he was going to be downed, at least he'd go out to the roar of his own six-shooter.

At last the veranda round the house loomed above Peter's head. With a quick movement he swayed from the buttress, caught the lower railing and drew himself over the top. The feel of solid ground again lent him added confidence, and he flung out an arm to help Red up beside him.

There was no chuckling or whispering now. They were right in the enemy's camp, retreat cut off, armed men lurking at every corner, for all they knew. Guns held low and steady, they crept along the veranda, hugging the wall close.

Stealthy minutes flew by. The sounds of the hunt grew louder. They came at length to an angle of the house. Peter put his head round the corner and saw, barely ten yards ahead, a sudden blaze of electric light from a tall French window. From the room behind the window came a sharp burst of voices and the opening and slamming of a door.

On tiptoe the daring pair darted to the window, and taking care not to get against the light, peered cautiously into the magnificently-furnished room beyond. It was partly a library, partly a study, hung with wonderful native tapestries and carpeted with Eastern rugs that were worth a fortune.

But neither Peter nor Red had eyes for the luxury and opulence of the apartment. Their stares were riveted elsewhere. At a paper-littered desk near the farther wall, a slim, exquisitely-dressed man was talking to an agitated officer who had just dashed in.

Peter's teeth came together with a snap. Although he had never seen Manuel Garcia before in his life, something told him that the man at the desk was the man he had come all the way from England, through the States and over the Border to find. Authority, resolute and brutal, showed in every line of the dark, harsh face and cold eyes. He was leaning back in his chair, listening with a little malignant sneer to the officer who, with excited shrugs and gestures, was pouring out a hasty report. His high Latin voice came clearly to the listeners outside the window, and Red interpreted swiftly:

"... Both sentries overpowered, Senor Garcia; the patrol officer wounded and his escort stunned. It seems there are two spies, and we fear they may be heading for your Excellency's house!"

At the last part of the report the contemptuous smile vanished from Garcia's face. A spasm of fear leapt furtively into his hard eyes.

"Spies!" he snarled suddenly. "More likely that accursed Englishman and his fellow-dog. Search the grounds thoroughly, Mendez—and shoot to kill. Redouble the sentries round the house; post two men in the passage outside this room!"

Fists clenched, he rose to his feet, glaring like an animal at bay.

"It is them; I know it!" he muttered to himself. Then, harshly: "Find them! Kill them! Don't let them get me, Mendez! I have just learnt from our scouts that Lopez' army are closing on Zareda faster than we expected. They may be here even now before dawn. In less than an hour we must fly, my friend!"

The officer saluted, wheeled and strode from the room. Left to himself, Manuel stared glassily before him, licking lips that had gone horribly dry.

"Dios! If only I had never set eyes on that Englishman, Graham!" he groaned after a while; and his head fell suddenly into his hands.

When he looked up again, a tall, lean youngster stood inside the window, his grey eyes fixed and shining with a great burning light. A gun rested firmly in his hard brown fist, and its ugly muzzle pointed straight at Garcia's heart.

Peter Graham had reached his enemy at last!

A Staggering Surprise!

AN eternity seemed to pass before the deathly silence in the room was broken. Slowly the Mexican's panic-numbed brain took in the full meaning of that rigid, impassive figure before him, and the message of doom that lurked in the heavy '45. All the life seemed to go out of him suddenly, and he sagged limply down across his desk, beads of moisture gleaming on his grey, sunken features. A strangled gasp, bursting from his flabby lips, showed that he knew by instinct who his visitor was. And he spoke in Peter's tongue.

"The Englishman!"

His voice was husky with terror; superstitious fear shone lividly out of his eyes. The gardens outside, surrounded by a high wall, bristled with armed guards; the teeming city beyond was full of his own peasant rebels. Yet, in spite of all these, in spite of the network thrown out against him, the Englishman was here! Manuel Garcia struggled to rise, but his legs buckled under him. He could only glare horribly in an effort to read the thoughts behind his opponent's mask-like face.

Still without a word, Peter backed to the door, holding the wretch with a stare that never wavered. With his left hand he felt behind him for the key, sighed gratefully to find it in the lock, and turned it quickly. Then he spoke; icily, harshly.

"Yes, the Englishman—come for a reckoning. I've tramped across America for you, Garcia. Freezed in the mountains, sweated across deserts and plains and hidden for two nights among bare rocks—all for this interview. Now it's you and me, you hound!"

Garcia's lips moved stiffly.

"Mercy!" he mumbled.

A curt laugh answered him.

"Sure! The mercy you gave my father—before you robbed him!"

"I—I——"

"Shut up! You've lost!" Peter's voice took on a deadlier edge. "Now, you've got one chance of a quick end, Garcia. Tell me where you killed him, and where his body lies—and I'll finish you with one shot! Otherwise——"

The trembling man raised haggard eyes.

"But I—did not—kill him!"

For a moment Peter's icy hold on himself relaxed. A knife-stab in the back could not have given him a greater shock. He stared at the man before him, unable to believe his ears; afraid to believe them, almost. His father—not dead! The sudden, fierce leap of his heart threatened to choke him.

"Where—what did you do with him, then?" he whispered as soon as he could speak.

The Mexican made a hopeless gesture. Words came from him in the dreary tone of a fear-crazed soul.

"He found a mine; I wanted it. But he had already filed his claim with the Mexican Government, and unless he signed it over to me I could not have held it. If—if I had won this revolution, it would have been different; but until I was master, the Government would protect his claim. I kept him prisoner. I tried to persuade him to sign——"

At the words, Peter crouched ominously.

"You tried to 'persuade' him?" he echoed. "You mean—you tortured him?" The terrified look in Garcia's eyes was sufficient answer.

In a single bound the youngster crossed the space that divided them, grabbed the Mexican by the throat and thrust the revolver right into his face.

"Where is he, then? Where is he?"

Unable to speak for the steel grip that was throttling him, Garcia could only writhe and point with a trembling finger—to the floor. Peter released him slowly.

"You mean—he's in this house?"

The Mexican gulped, clawing feebly at his neck. Before he could speak again, a hasty knock sounded on the door. Swift relief made him look up eagerly, but Peter's slow, mirthless smile and menacing gun checked any possible call for help.

"Tell them to go away. You're busy. See?"

With a terrible glare, Garcia pulled himself together and raised his voice.

"Who is there?" he called.

An excited cry answered him.

"It is Captain Mendez, Excellency. Urgent news has reached us!"

"Go away!"

"But—but, Excellency!" Captain Mendez was plainly taken aback. "Let me in! I have news of the most urgent!"

"Silence!" Garcia's voice rose to a snarl as Peter's gun hand moved. "Go, I tell you! I—I am busy!"

There came sounds as of a man retreating in perplexed astonishment, and once again

the two in the room eyed each other. Garcia had regained something of his nerve during the interruption, which was a reminder that he was still in his own house, among his own men; but Peter, reading his mind, hastened to put the screw on again. Jamming his gun into the Mexican's ribs, he spoke sharply.

"Now, then—where's my father?"

"I—there is a room beneath this!" explained Garcia dully. "A secret room, built under the floor. I—I am leaving Zareda within the hour, and I intended taking your father back to the mountains——"

"For more torture!" finished Peter softly. "Well, the programme's off—permanently. Now show me that room!"

Like a man in a dream Garcia hauled himself to his feet, turned and tottered towards one of the well-filled bookcases lining the outer wall. Peter's gun followed him.

"Wait!" he snapped. "Garcia, one warning! I've learnt many things since I left England, and one of them is dealing with human rattlesnakes. Make one false move, try to summon help, and you'll die—slowly!"

Cringing, the Mexican explained humbly.

"There is a secret switch behind the books that opens a trapdoor beneath my desk. That leads to the room. There is nothing else, I swear!"

Peter nodded, but kept his weapon ready.

"Right! Go ahead!"

At a touch of the man's hand a section of the bookcase swung back on well-oiled hinges, disclosing a vulcanite switchboard. His fingers went slowly inside. Then he turned. His craven attitude had dropped from him like a cloak and into his face came such a fiendish look of hate and triumph that for one priceless second Peter was thrown off his guard.

"English scum!" spat Garcia. "Go join your father!"

The floor dropped sickeningly from under Peter's feet, and with his gun roaring defiantly, down he went into blackest darkness. As he fell, dimly to his ears came the roar of some tremendous explosion that shook the house. After that came the sound of rumbling wheels and then silence, complete and terrible. He was trapped!

PETER'S first impulse, as he picked himself up painfully and groped around in the darkness, was one of blind, helpless fury that set every fibre in his big body quivering. Beaten! With victory in sight after months of desperate endeavour, he had been outwitted under the very muzzle of his own gun. Bitterly he blamed himself for that one fatal moment of indecision. Red, he knew, would have fired the instant Garcia had shown his hand.

By a great effort he recovered his coolness. He still had his gun—that was something. He struck a match, and, guided by its feeble light, began to explore his prison. Before he had taken two steps, however, something

(Continued on page 44.)

Stop Here and Meet a New Pal, Lads!



He can do anything and everything : or at least, he thinks he can. That's——

BOUNCER BILLY BAXTER

"GOSHOO!" exclaimed Billy Baxter in well-feigned astonishment. "Do you mean to say that that fellow gets paid real money just for doing a simple thing like this?"

He and his bosom pals, Fatty Hart and Ginger Jones, were inside the circus tent watching the performance. They had spent all their cash on the side-shows, electric-motors, chairplanes, and the other entertainments where they hadn't been able to dodge past the pay-box, yet they had managed to get seats in the front row of the circus. For there was a most convenient part at the rear of the large tent where the circus hands had been careless and left the canvas badly secured. It was a simple matter to crawl underneath.

It was the wonderful act of Alonzo the lion tamer that they were watching when Billy passed his remark. In the middle of the arena was the large circular cage

containing six ferocious-looking lions, who were being put through various tricks by the tall Alonzo in his elegant scarlet uniform.

But although Billy professed to find the performance pretty tame his two friends certainly found it very exciting. With popping eyes and wide open mouths they watched the fierce kings of the jungle going through their paces.

"By gosh!" said Fatty Hart in a hoarse awe-struck voice. "Say what you like, Billy, it takes a lot of nerve to go into that cage with those lions."

"They might go raging wild at any moment," said Ginger Jones, who knew everything. "They never really get 'em tamed, you know."

Billy saw that it was going to take a great deal to impress his pals on this occasion. He laughed disdainfully.

"Fat lot you know about lions, Ginger," he said airily. "Why, those lions wouldn't know how to get wild even if they wanted to. They were born tame. Besides, they've got no teeth."

His friends stared at him.

"Garn!" said Ginger disbelievingly.

"Aw, Billy," protested Fatty Hart, who wasn't quite sure whether to believe Billy or not—Billy Baxter often bounced about things that seemed impossible, and afterwards they turned out to be perfectly genuine. "How can they eat if they haven't any teeth?"

Billy snorted in exasperation.

"They can take milk and sponge-cake and soft foods, can't they, you fathead? That's the stuff that keeps 'em tame. As long as they don't get meat there's not the slightest danger from them."

Ginger and Fatty said nothing, but it was clear from the expressions on their faces that they weren't prepared to accept the statement without proof. The lions didn't look like domestic pets to them.

"Why," said Billy Baxter, deciding that it was about time he delivered a knock-out blow, "I could do the very same as Alonzo any night. And just for the fun of the thing!"

That did it. Ginger and Fatty gazed at him speechlessly. Not because they didn't believe him, but rather because they did. For Billy Baxter had never been known to make a boast that he couldn't justify by putting into real action.

While they were staring at their pal something happened in the arena. One of the doors at the end of the lion cage had been fastened carelessly, and when one of the beasts accidentally knocked against it the door flew open. In a moment the lion had sprung down the steps and was standing in the sawdust ring.

The attention of the three pals was first attracted to the incident by the screams of the people about the ringside and the hasty scurry of those around them scrambling frantically for safety. The boys turned their heads to find the lion making straight for them.

There is only one course of action advisable to anyone who finds himself unarmed and facing a lion that looks as if it hasn't eaten for many hours.

Run—and run hard! Ginger and Fatty were already doing that; they were scrambling pell-mell over the fallen benches and chairs towards the exit.

But Billy was left behind. He didn't want to stay behind, and he had decided that this wasn't the moment to prove to his chums that he could tame lions. Unfortunately, his jacket had become twisted in his chair and he couldn't move without dragging it with him.

It was a desperate moment for Billy, and he struggled furiously. The lion, advancing to the arena barrier, suddenly stood still, its eyes fixed hungrily on Billy.

All this had happened so quickly that even Alonzo the lion tamer could not act. He stood in the cage with the other lions and stared dumbfoundedly at the spectacle.

The lion uttered a low growl, and Billy Baxter felt the hairs rising on his head. He promptly decided that something would have to be done about it, and gripping the chair he started to run around the outside of the arena as fast as the encumbrance allowed.

The lion looked after Billy, an expression of surprise in its eyes, as if it felt that Billy was doing a dirty trick by running away. It started after him at a leisurely amble.

"Goshoo!" groaned Billy, as the perspiration streamed down his forehead. "It certainly looks like this lion is going to have a taste of Baxter meat to-night."

He ran faster. The lion also ran faster. Round and round they went, Billy on the outside and the lion on the inside, while the people—who had got over their first panic—watched the scene fascinated. Billy was on the point of dropping through sheer exhaustion when suddenly there was a ripping sound and the chair parted company, together with a portion of his jacket. In a moment Billy had taken advantage of his freedom and was scrambling hurriedly over the seats towards the exit.

By this time the lion tamer had emerged from the cage, and for several moments he had been watching the scene with a grin on his face. Now he uttered a sharp command and the lion, turning quickly, came joyfully towards him. Alonzo held out his hand and the lion eagerly lapped up two lumps of sugar. Then it followed the trainer contentedly back into the cage.

"Return to your seats, ladies and gentlemen," called out the ringmaster. "There is no danger. The lion is quite tame."

But Billy Baxter, Fatty Hart and Ginger Jones did not hear this. Billy ran until he had to stop for breath, and when his pals joined him some minutes later he was sitting at the side of the road waiting for them.

"Thought you weren't afraid of lions, Billy?" grinned Ginger.

"Neither am I," said Billy firmly.

"They why did you run away?" derided Ginger.

Billy grinned.

"Oh, that!" he said offhandedly. "That was a little stunt that Alonzo and I arranged this afternoon. Publicity, you know."

"Garn!" said Ginger.

Even Fatty the faithful looked rather doubtful at this statement, and Billy saw that he was in danger of losing his reputation.

"As a matter of fact," he went on with an elaborately careless air, "I shall be taking Alonzo's place at the performance to-morrow night. But only for a few minutes."

His friends were thunderstruck.

"You ain't really, are you, Billy?" asked Fatty with shining eyes.

"I'm not asking you to take my word for it," said Billy generously. "Be at the circus to-morrow night, and you'll see me in the lions' cage for yourself!"

"We shall!" cried Fatty and Ginger enthusiastically.

Billy Joins the Circus!

BILLY BAXTER spent a restless night. The awful memory of his narrow escape from the lion haunted his dreams, and the thought that he had boasted he would go into the lions' cage next evening made him sweat all over. One thing was certain. If he wanted to keep his reputation he would have to enter that cage.

His boast about the lions being quite tame had been founded on fact. He remembered reading how some tame beasts had been trained to act ferociously for moving pictures; very probably it was the same with lions used in the circus.

This thought heartened Billy considerably, and he decided that he would investigate the matter. Accordingly, instead of going to school next morning, he made his way to the circus.

He found it deserted, for it was too early for visitors and the circus hands were at breakfast. The big tent was open, but there was no one inside. Billy entered boldly. The lions' cage, he knew, were somewhere in the rear of the tent. He crossed the arena to the closed flaps by which the performers entered.

On the other side he found the cage. Most of the lions were asleep, but the beast with which he had had the exciting scene on the previous evening was wide awake and restlessly pacing the cage.

Watching it even in safety, Billy began to have his doubts about its tameness. It certainly looked wild, fierce, and man-eating. And it eyed Billy in a way which suggested that it was calculating his possibilities as a dainty morsel of food.

By way of testing it, Billy put out his hand towards the bars of the cage. The lion uttered a low growl and snapped at his hand. Billy drew back hastily.

"Hey!" yelled a voice.

Billy turned quickly to find Alonzo, the lion tamer, coming through the tent flap, followed by the ringmaster and a few circus hands.

"Come here!" said the lion tamer.

"You bet not!" muttered Billy Baxter to himself. He had visions of the lion tamer blaming him for the disturbance of the evening before, and he came to the conclusion that his safest plan was to make himself scarce.

As Billy dodged around the cage, the lion tamer and the others started quickly after him, yelling at him to come back. That was the last thing Billy Baxter intended to do, and he consequently led his pursuers a merry chase.

Unfortunately Billy knew nothing about the lay-out of the circus ground, and although he managed to elude his pursuers for some time by dodging in and out the stalls and booths and caravans, he was at last collared by the lion tamer himself.

"What's the idea?" gasped Alonzo breathlessly, gripping Billy tightly by the scruff of the neck. "Didn't you hear us calling you back?"

"Course I did," said Billy. "But I thought you were only joking. Weren't you?"

"We were not," responded Alonzo grimly.

Billy felt his knees trembling slightly.

"You can't do anything to me," he declared stoutly. "I've done nothing wrong."

For a moment or two the lion tamer and the others, who had come along by this time, stared at Billy in a puzzled manner. Then, to Billy's surprise, they burst out laughing.

"Your mistake, laddie," chuckled Alonzo—his real name, by the way, was Smith. "We aren't going to do you any harm."

"Then what do you mean by chasing me all over the place?" was Billy's natural demand.

"It's like this," said Alonzo, and he went on to explain his reasons for the chase.

It seemed that after Alonzo's act was over the previous evening, and the people had returned to their seats, the ringmaster, in order to avoid publicity that might ruin the show, had told the audience that the lion's escape had been part of the act. Unfortunately, the idea of watching an escaped lion, providing that it was tame, had gripped people's imaginations, and at the next performance the audience had demanded to see the lion chasing the boy around the arena. Unless Billy Baxter would consent to repeat the unrehearsed performance the show would be ruined.

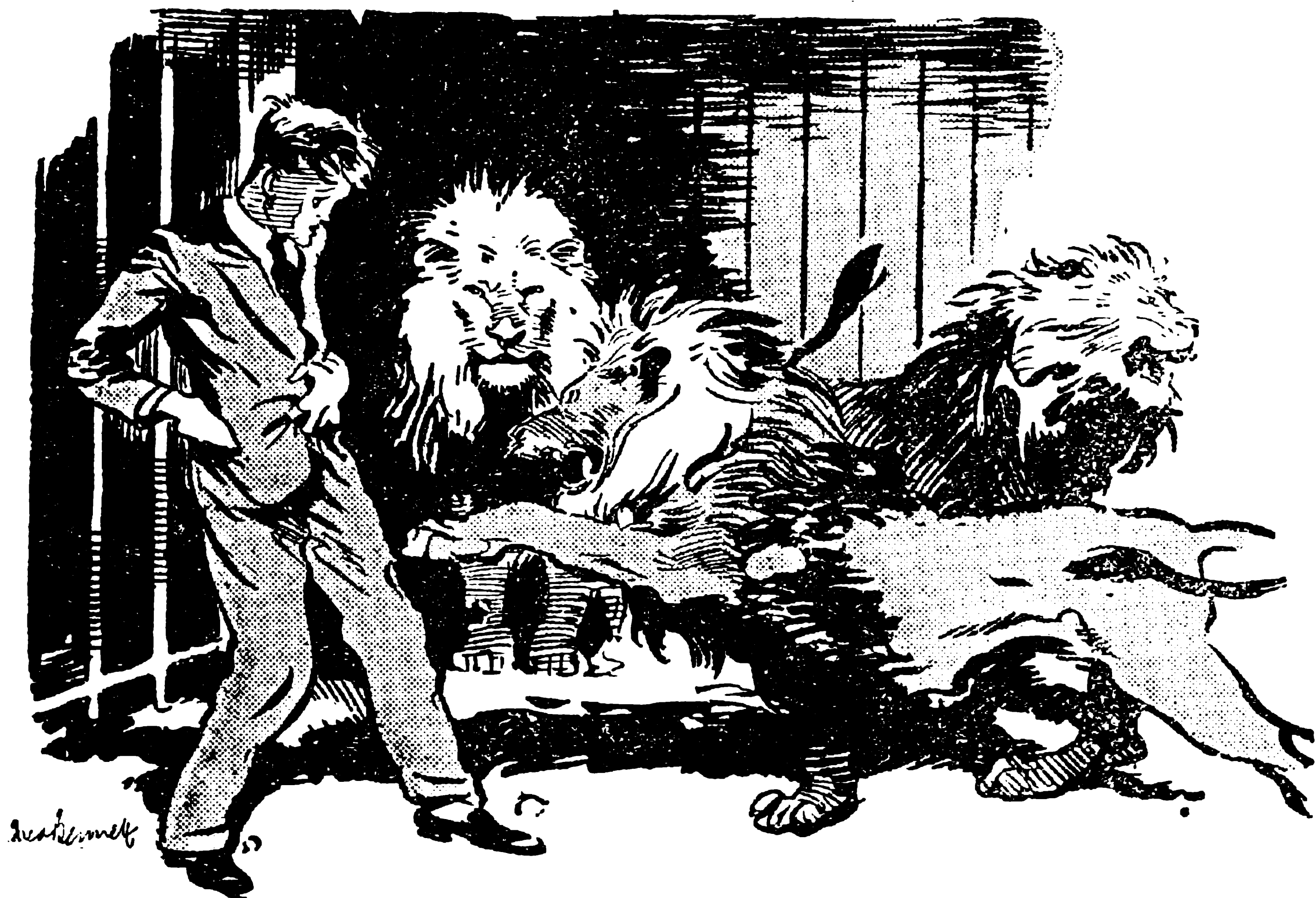
"You mean that you want me to be lion's meat?" asked Billy doubtfully.

Alonzo grinned.

"The lions are perfectly tame," he explained. "So long as you feed them with lumps of sugar you can do anything with them."

Billy thought for a moment. He recollected how the lion had made no effort to spring at him during the chase. Goshoo! It must have been chasing him for sugar. And when it had snapped at his hand that morning, it had probably expected to be fed with sugar. Billy Baxter felt a great relief come over him.

"Will you let me inside the cage for a few minutes as well?" he asked eagerly.



Frantically Billy searched in his pockets for the lumps of sugar which would soothe the lions—and found that he had forgotten to bring them !

Alonzo hesitated.

"All right," he agreed at last. "As long as you have plenty of sugar there'll be no danger."

"Fine!" said Billy, grinning widely as he thought of the astonishment of his pals when he appeared in the act. "Consider everything settled. I'll be on the job to-night."

Arm in arm with Alonzo, the lion tamer, Billy went back to the cage, where he practised feeding the beasts with sugar. In an hour he was so friendly with the lions that he was calling them by their first names.

Billy Performs!

IN the meantime, Billy's absence from the school was causing some comment among his friends. Fatty Hart and Ginger Jones were not the kind to keep Billy's boast to themselves, and the news that Billy Baxter was going to perform in the lion-tamer's act at the circus that evening had rapidly gone round the whole school, and had caused intense excitement, which naturally increased when Billy failed to put in an appearance.

"Maybe he's conveniently gone sick," sneered Sam Binns, who didn't like Billy, and for this base suggestion that Billy was quitting, the loyal Fatty and Ginger ducked Sam in the nearest horse-trough.

By careful inquiry they learned that Billy had left home that morning supposedly for school. Somehow this news heartened Billy's two pals, and they were in high feather as they passed the circus pay-box—paying this time—and took seats in the front row.

The sixpenny seats were packed in a few minutes, mostly with Billy's schoolmates, and even the dearer seats were soon filled. Excitement ran high in expectation of Billy's stunt, and when at last the lions' cage was pulled into the arena, those in the sixpenny seats could hardly remain seated.

But at first disappointment awaited them. The lion tamer went on with his act on the usual lines, but of Billy there was no sign.

"What did I tell you?" grinned Sam Binns. "He must have lost his memory."

Ginger and Fatty said nothing. Their hearts were too heavy for words. Had Billy failed them?

Then suddenly there was a commotion at the performers' entrance. The attendants dashed hastily aside, and Billy Baxter, in clothes that were ragged and torn, dashed breathlessly into the arena. He was followed by a lion!

"Come on, Billy!" yelled Fatty and Ginger excitedly. "Show us some tricks."

Billy Baxter didn't seem to hear them. He dashed around the arena with the lion in close pursuit. It was a stirring spectacle, and there was pandemonium in the circus tent.

Billy was enjoying himself immensely. The arrangement which he and Alonzo had agreed upon was that he should run several times around the arena, occasionally pretending to stumble, and finally he was to dash up the steps into the lion's cage. By that time Alonzo would have left the cage and would take the pursuing lion behind the scenes again, leaving Billy to put the rest

of the lions through a simple trick, after he had fed them with lumps of sugar.

The first part of the programme went without mishap. Billy romped around the arena, and presently sped up the steps into the cage, closing the door behind him.

This was a critical moment, and as he held the lion-tamer's whip and the lions eyed him wonderingly, Billy felt some qualms, while his pals held their breaths and stared hard, expecting the lions to pounce upon their daring pal at any moment.

One of the beasts growled, and Billy hastily put his hand into his pocket. Then he turned pale and felt in another pocket. This time he gulped hard and frantically searched his other pockets.

The results were all the same. He had forgotten the sugar!

"Go on, Billy!" yelled Fatty Hart. "Make 'em do a pyramid."

Billy heard the voice as if it was far away in the distance. The lions were all looking towards him, several of them baring their teeth as the expected sugar did not appear. One made a lunge at him with its paw, and Billy dodged back. His heart seemed to be wriggling about his Adam's apple. That afternoon the lion tamer had told him of the terrible mauling he had received when once he had forgotten the sugar!

"Aw, Billy!" shouted Sam Binns. "You're looking kind of green. Feeling seasick?"

Billy roused himself from his trance. His reputation was at stake; although he had practically carried out his boast, to show fear now would be to ruin everything.

He remembered two things. Alonzo had told him that trained lions were almost like sheep; if one was under control they were all under control, and if one went wild they

all went wild. He also remembered reading about the power of the human eyes over beasts.

Accordingly, Billy fixed his eyes steadily on those of the fiercest lion, and, showing none of the doubts and fears he actually felt, he proceeded to direct the beasts as the lion tamer had instructed him. For a moment or two, things looked desperate. Would the lions obey, or—

Then slowly and doubtfully the lion whose eyes Billy was staring into mounted the stool, its forepaws on the step above. The other lions stepped up reluctantly into their allotted places until the pyramid was complete.

"Good old Billy!" yelled Fatty Hart and Ginger Jones hoarsely, and the rest of the audience joined in the cheers.

The noise roused the lions, and uttering savage roars they sprang towards the spot where Billy had been standing. But Billy was no longer there. Seeing his opportunity to escape, he had opened and closed the cage-door and staggered down the steps.

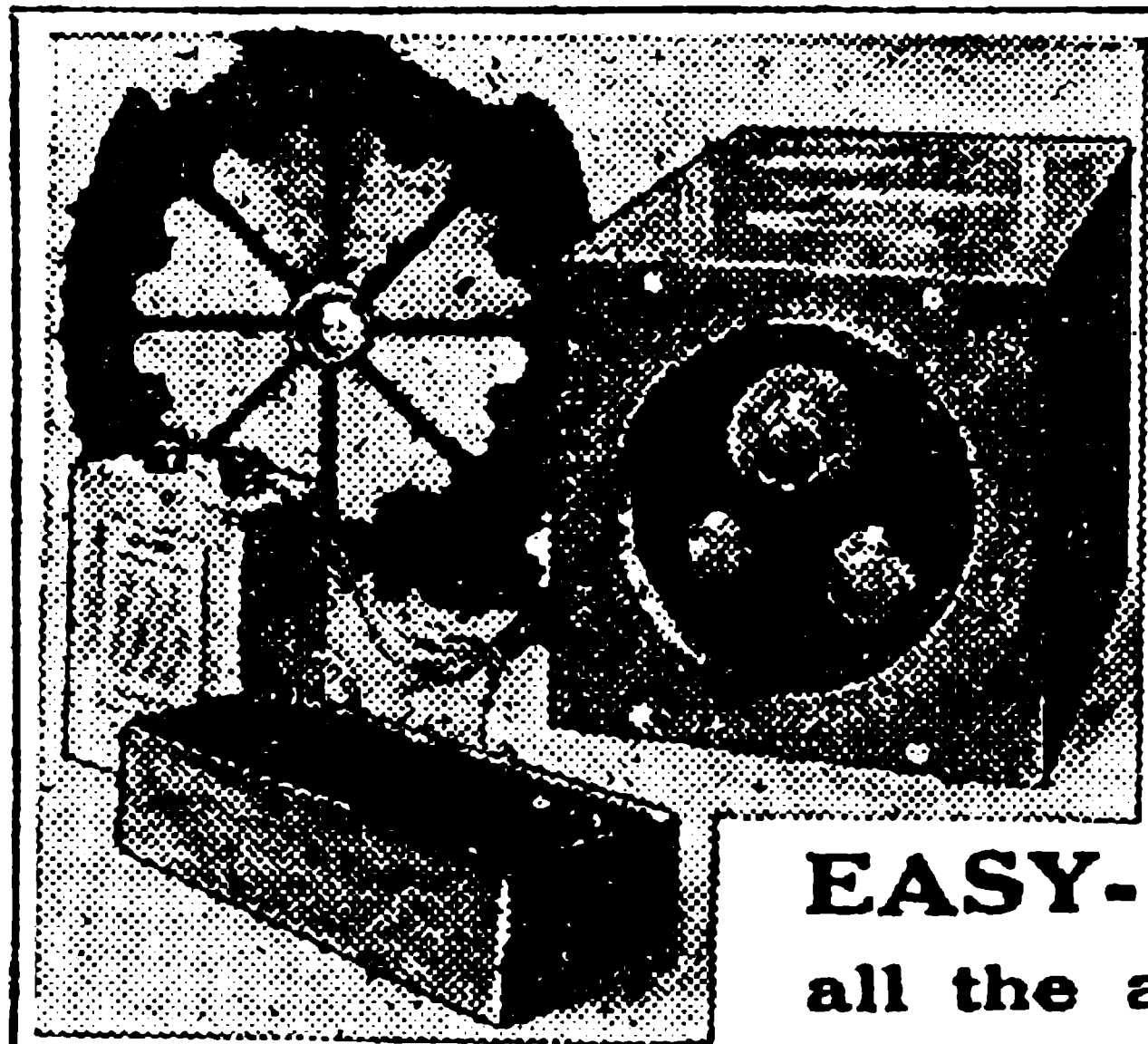
"B Y gosh, Billy!" said Ginger Jones admiringly, when they met afterwards. "You were great!"

"Better than Alonzo himself," declared Fatty Hart stoutly.

Billy Baxter yawned.

"Aw, that was nothing," he said airily. He felt in his pocket and drew forth the two half-crowns that the lion tamer had paid him for his services. "Come on, boys," he said. "Let's eat!"

(Billy bounces his way through more startling adventures in next Wednesday's breezy yarn. Alone in an aeroplane in flames, and—but wait and see!)



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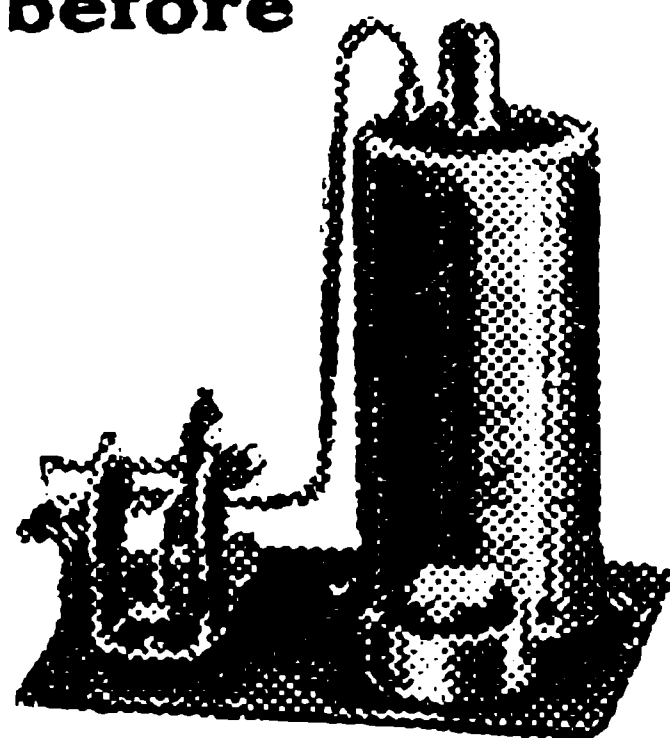
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**A Romance
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**By
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Dick Forrester, notorious highwayman—menaced by young schoolboy!

Trouble Brewing!

WITH a whoop of joy Dick leaped to his feet, his eyes hungry for battle, and, gripping the nearest villager by the neck and waistband, he hurled him against the trunk of the oak. Sam Clamp and another dashed at him with frenzied oaths, but Dick dodged the cudgel of the first, and, twining his arms round him, flung him at Clamp like a baby, knocking both head over heels. He snatched up the cudgel from the man Ralph had felled, and dashed at the others. Appalled by the strength and fury of the young outlaw, they took to their heels and fled, yelling, into the night.

"Beat! Squarely licked!" panted Ralph. "Thank goodness, Dick! I thought you were no more than food for the gibbet!"

"And so I should have been," said Dick, "but for you, old boy, and your plucky young friends here. Shake hands, lads, if you're not too proud to take the hand of an outlaw! Eh?"

"I'd rather shake hands with you than anyone in England to-night!" said Hilton; and the others echoed him, pressing round to greet Dick. "Are you really Dick Forrester, the famous highwayman, sir?"

"I am Dick Forrester," admitted Dick, laughing. "Never was I in so taut a place before, nor so well served by my friends!"

"We're proud to have helped you, sir," said Conyers. "How did you fall into the hands of those village louts?"

"Ah, that's a matter which will bear a little looking into," said Dick, his brow clouding. "There are black sheep in every flock, and it seems there are some at St. Anstell's. I trusted one of them to take a note to Ralph—he said he was my brother's chum."

"Dirkley is no friend of mine!" cried Ralph hotly. "I'll tell you how it was; he—— Hallo, who's this?"

Somebody broke through the bushes and came towards them. It was Lindsay, breathless from running. He gave a cry as he saw Dick, and ran up to him.

"Thank Heaven you're safe, sir!" he exclaimed. "They wanted me to join this dirty plot to trap you, and now I'm glad you've beaten them. I was afraid I hadn't warned your brother till too late. They're after me now, but I don't care!"

"Who?" cried the others.

"Dirkley and his lot. It was he you gave the note to, sir. He knew who you were, and he read it himself, and laid this trap. Look, there he is, hiding by that hedge yonder. He daren't come any nearer; he's watching us. He chased me here."

The rising moon showed the form of Dirkley skulking by a hedge two hundred yards away.

"A very worthy youth," said Dick composedly. "Well, his little plan has failed, so he will, of course, make his way to the doctor and lay a complaint about the wicked highwayman and his brother at the school."

"That he never shall!" cried the boys. "There he goes! After him, lads! Stop him before he reaches the school! We'll keep Ralph's secret, and he shall keep it, too!"

Away went the boys in full cry, whooping and shouting, and as Dirkley saw them coming he took to his heels and ran like the wind. Ralph and Conyers led the hunters, desperately anxious to get hold of the sneak of St. Anstell's before he could blab his tale.

"He's making for the school-house!" cried Conyers. "If he reaches it, all's lost! If we get hold of him first," he added grimly, "we'll take care he never dares to open his lips about it!"

Dirkley was a good runner, and had a long start. Ralph and Hilton were the only ones who gained on him, and even then they were only in time, as they raced into the house after him, to see him make a savage grimace at his pursuers at the head of the stairs, and then disappear into the doctor's study!

The Footpads.

"**T**HAT lets me well out of a plaguey bad fix," said Dick to himself, as he rode along the main highway after watching Ralph and the other boys disappear from view. "And I fear yonder pale-faced young tale-bearer will do more mischief yet."

He touched Black Satan with his heel, and broke into a trot.

"Those youngsters are a fine, staunch crew, but they cannot prevent a sneak from sneaking. The boy Dirkley will carry this tale to Dr. Trelawney, and Ralph will bear the blame. I am none so sure I ought not to ride to the school and bring Ralph away with me."

Dick's thoughts were gloomy as he rode up the long slope on to Black Down, the high heath, crowned with fire-trees, overlooking St. Anstell's. It was plain that trouble was coming. Dr. Trelawney was grateful to Dick for the saving of the silver, but he

would not dare keep a highwayman's brother in the school when he knew of it.

"A thousand pities!" sighed Dick. "Ralph could not be at a better school, nor safer from the accursed plots of Uncle Vane. What to do next, pink me if I know. I think I will ride back and fetch him away before the trouble comes to a head."

A sound of loud voices and the crack of sticks reached Dick just as he was wheeling round. He pricked his ears and stopped dead. The noise came from round a bend in the road. The young outlaw heard a chorus of oaths and threats and, ringing above them, a clear, loud, defiant voice.

"Some wayfarer beset by footpads," muttered Dick. "Od's life, I'll look into this!"

He urged Satan forward, and, swerving round the bend, he saw a sight that made his blood leap.

"Dr. Trelawney, by all the powers!" he exclaimed, and whipped a pistol from his holster.

Not a hundred yards down the highway was the stalwart old doctor himself, his white head bared, defending himself with a heavy hunting-crop against three evil-looking rascals with bludgeons.

Close by lay his old grey mare, prone on the grass by the roadside. The fine old man, his giant form towering above his ruffianly attackers, was laying about them with such good will that he had already felled one of them, and was holding the others at bay.

"Slip round, Jack, an' club him from the side!" shouted one. "Are we to be held all night by the old fool?"

"Come on, you scoundrels!" cried Trelawney, dealing terrific blows with the crop-handle.

Stout of arm as he was, however, the doctor could not hold out against three. A heavy blow from a bludgeon struck his shoulder, and his right arm dropped, useless. In an instant he shifted the crop to his left hand, but they were now on both sides of him, and while he was engaging one, another behind aimed a vicious blow at his head. One more moment, and his doom would have been sealed.

There was a thunder of hoofs, a flash, a ringing report, and the fellow who aimed the blow threw up his arms and fell with a

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle,

VANE FORRESTER. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

RALPH FORRESTER, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England. Travelling by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

DICK TURPIN, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and, after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. They have many stirring adventures together until Dick leaves his companion and rides north to see how his brother is faring. In the meantime, Ralph has reached Duncansby School, a dreary, desolate place on the wild moorlands. Unknown to him, Vane has arranged with the headmaster that the boy shall "not live long." Ralph is rescued by his brother, who takes him to St. Anstell's College, where he is known as Fernhall. Dirkley, the school sneak, discovers the secret. He and his cronies and a number of villagers capture Dick when he comes to visit Ralph, but the latter, with the aid of his chums, release the young highwayman.

(Now read on.)

choking cry. The other scoundrels turned savagely, but Dick and Satan were upon them in an instant. One was felled to the ground with the clubbed pistol; the third wavered a moment and then, as Dick wheeled round, rushed off into the wood.

Dick swung himself down from the saddle.

"A thousand thanks, good sir! You have saved my life, no less!" exclaimed Dr. Trelawney. And then, starting back in astonishment as he saw Dick's black mask: "Od's fish, a highwayman, as I live! Have you delivered me but to rob me in their stead? Blood, sir! You shall shoot me first!"

The pugnacious old doctor clubbed his hunting-crop again, and turned fiercely upon Dick.

"Nay, nay, sir!" cried the young outlaw, laughing. "I need no purse of yours, Dr. Trelawney, and right blithe I am to have beaten off any enemies of yours!"

He doffed his mask, and bowed civilly. The doctor gasped.

"What!" he cried. "Mr. Fernhall, who saved my silver! You have buried me deeper in obligation than I can ever hope to repay, sir. And is this mask but a jest?"

Dick shook his head.

"It is no jest, Dr. Trelawney," he replied slowly. "I have deceived you, and I own it frankly. My name is not Fernhall—that is but the title of my estate. I am Forrester the highwayman!"

"What!" cried the doctor. Then, recovering from his astonishment: "No matter, sir, you have done me greater service than any man alive. You are as courageous and as true a gentleman as ever lived! I care not if you were Turpin himself!" added the old man impetuously. "Give me your hand, sir!"

"With all my heart!" said Dick. "And yet I am sore at heart, for my young brother, who would be safe at St. Anstell's from many dangers that threaten him, will have to leave and be at the mercy of his enemies and mine."

"Leave, sir! Why?" cried the doctor heartily. "Never fear, I will keep your secret. 'Twould be a poor return for your services were I to turn him out."

"The secret, sir, is already out. Many of the boys know it. I would trust them; but there is one in whose hands it is fatal. He is a youth named Dirkley, and he has already tried to entrap me. The knaves in the village know it, too. I fear Ralph must leave."

"What you tell me is bad news," said the doctor, "yet your brother shall remain at the school if it can be at all managed. He has committed no fault, and is as fine and as high-couraged a youngster as there is in St. Anstell's. However, you will understand, of course, that the governors of the school may make it impossible if they get wind of the affair."

"You are a true friend, Dr. Trelawney," said Dick gratefully. "I own I know not what to do with Ralph if he leaves the school. You will see that my company is perilous for him. For myself, or what happens to me, I care not the toss of a straw, but I would

hang ten times over rather than see my brother share my fate. Twist it how you will, I am an outlaw, and a scourge of the roads, with the gallows-tree ready to claim me for its own. The law holds me a common robber."

"I have seen many a worse man among those who hold themselves honest men!"

"I would all men saw with your eyes," laughed Dick; "but you will see, sir, my brother could have no guardian more likely to bring trouble upon him than me."

"Ay, that is true!"

"Wherefore I wish for nothing so much as to have him remain in your care. I have a bitter enemy, besides, who constantly seeks to effect his ruin. He fears my teeth, but now he has lost track of the boy. Sir, I thank you from my heart for all you have done, and I will leave you to act as best you may. I shall be at hand if I am wanted, and if ever you need the help of straight pistols and a good sword, command me!"

The doctor took Dick's hand in a firm grip, and walked rapidly on towards the school, his brows knitted in deep thought. Dick watched his stalwart figure round the bend, and then, calling Black Satan over to him, swung himself into the saddle.

"Though all the world be against me," he said, "I have one good friend among men, and that is Dr. Trelawney. But there is perilous work ahead of us, and one that needs quick wits as well as pistol-bullets."

A Surprise for the Sneak!

"WHO'S there?"

"Me, sir—Dirkley. Can I see you, please, sir?"

The sneak of St. Anstell's, finding when he reached the headmaster's study that Dr. Trelawney was out, knew himself in a fix. He dared not go down among the boys. Once he had told his tale, however, it would be easier to protect himself. So he stole across the landing and hid in one of the bed-rooms, waiting there till he saw the doctor return.

A frown grew upon the doctor's face as he heard Dirkley's name, and he smothered a hasty ejaculation. He thought for a moment, and then bade the boy enter.

Dirkley shook in his shoes as soon as he found himself before the headmaster, for the doctor was looking very grim.

"What do you want?" he asked sternly.

"Please, sir, it's about Fernhall."

"What has Fernhall done?"

"Please, sir, nothing, sir. That is, he—his brother—I've found out—"

"What do you mean, sir?" said the doctor, in an awful voice, rising and towering over the boy—he had an especial loathing for tale-bearers, and very little esteem for Dirkley. "What is it? Have you come here to waste my time?"

"No, sir!" gasped Dirkley. He spluttered for a moment, and then burst out: "Sir, Fernhall's brother is a highwayman!"

"Have you not discovered, Dirkley," said the doctor, his voice suddenly dropping to a smooth and much more dangerous polite-

ness, "that it is unwise to try and play with me?"

"I tell you, sir," blurted out Dirkley, "that Fernhall's brother is Dick Forrester, the highwayman. There's a reward on his head. I caught him, and would have given him up to justice—I consider it my duty!" finished Dirkley, with a show of bravado, then crumpled again as the doctor looked at him angrily.

"You caught him?"

"I dropped a noose over him, and made him a prisoner. But a lot of the other fellows came up, with young Fernhall at their head, and though I fought them all single-handed and was beating them off, Fernhall let his brother loose and he escaped."

"Who led the boys whom you fought, besides Fernhall?" asked the doctor quietly.

"Conyers and Hilton, sir."

The doctor shot a keen glance at Dirkley, and rang the bell. Dirkley was triumphant. It was to summon the constables surely. He would be a hero yet.

"Send Conyers and Hilton here," said the doctor, when the bell was answered.

Dirkley looked blue. The two boys came up. Hilton was admitted first.

"Hilton," said the doctor, "I want to ask you a few questions—and I want you to answer them truthfully!"

(What's going to happen now? Will Dr. Trelawney allow Ralph to remain at St. Anstell's? Make sure you read next Wednesday's stirring instalment.)

VENGEANCE TRAIL!

(Continued from page 35.)

bumped against his shins, nearly tripping him up, and he bent down with groping hands, was on his knees, striking a match.

"Dad!"

His voice trailed away in hopeless fear. Garcia had not lied: it was John Graham who lay there, sunk in a torpor that was very near to death. Peter stared at him fearfully. It did not seem possible that this poor wreck, starved to a skeleton and filthy dirty, could be the burly, jovial father he had last seen in England. Yet it was so. In spite of the sunken cheeks, the straggly, matted beard and wasted body to which a few rags clung pitifully, Peter knew that part of his quest was over.

Very gently he bent and listened to the feebly-beating heart, then, taking off the Mexican waistcoat he wore, he folded it under the limp grey head. After that, he sat quietly in a corner and waited.

Vengeance Trail was not ended yet. Because, although Manuel Garcia had taken this trick, there was something he did not know. Out in the darkness of the veranda, cool, resourceful and vindictive as any Apache of old, crouched the other partner on the trail—Red Potter.

THE END.

(The end of the trail next week—and gee, boys! what a yarn. Packed with thrills and excitement.)

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