

FIREWORK DAY AT ST. JIM'S GOES OFF WITH A BANG!

*The*

# GEM

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GUY, GUY, GUY! STICK HIM UP ON HIGH! GEORGE GORE HAS GOOD CAUSE TO REMEMBER THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER!

# GORE'S GUILTY SECRET!



Round the quadrangle, in a noisy procession, went the guy representing Gore of the Shell! The bonfire was lighted and fireworks were soon cracking and banging, and amid hoots and yells the effigy was brought up to the burning pile.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Very Dangerous!

"I WON'T have it!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Run away, like a good chap!"

"You—you chump!"

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Tom Merry, coming along the passage with a good many other Shell fellows, all curious to know what was "on."

"Trouble in the happy family?" He looked into the end study; then he

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backed out hurriedly, coughing and gasping.

"Oh—groogh—oh! My hat!"

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

"Groogh!" said Manners.

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

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

His keenness on scientific subjects was really creditable. The science master had commended him warmly. His father, who was a retired Liverpool merchant and a millionaire, provided him with plenty of money for his experiments. But it was not to be expected that his study-mates would always appreciate his scientific genius when it caused him to turn the study into a workshop and a laboratory, to

use all the study crockeryware for holding sticky and smelly concoctions, and sometimes to make the room reek for days with wild and weird scents.

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

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

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

"Don't worry!"

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

"Run away, then!"

"We want to do our prep!"

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

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

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

"But what's the smell about? No

# ALL THE FUN AND THRILLS—AND NOT A FEW BANGS!—OF FIREWORK DAY AT ST. JIM'S!

## By MARTIN CLIFFORD

need to make the whole House smell just to make fireworks," said Monty Lowther.

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Dynamite will be a joke to it!" said Glyn, his face flushing with enthusiasm. "Look at that jar!"

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

"Guess what it is!" said Glyn.  
"That's an easy one!" said Tom Merry. "Raspberry jam!"  
"Ass!" said Glyn politely. "Look into it."

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

"My new explosive is in that jar," said Glyn, holding it out for inspection. "Look at it!"  
"Looks like small coke," said Tom Merry.

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

"It would break," suggested Lowther.  
"Ass! It would cause an explosion that would blow the whole school into smithereens, and perhaps the New House and the gym as well!"

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

"You—you dangerous lunatic!" gasped Kangaroo. "Put it down!"  
"It's safe as long as I don't drop it," said Glyn.

"Put it down, you fathead!"  
"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "I should like to share this study with Glyn—I don't think! Suppose somebody took that stuff for coke, and put it on the fire, Glyn, what would happen?"

Glyn chuckled.  
"Nobody in the House would know what happened," he replied. "It would happen too quickly. But the newspapers would report the sudden and tragic end of a famous Public school!"

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

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

"Or a lunatic asylum!"  
"Put that jar down, you frabjous ass!"

Glyn laughed. He was evidently pleased by the impression he had made upon the Shell fellows. As a rule, something went wrong with his inventions, and when it came to the pinch they declined to act in the manner expected of them. But this time the inventor had the pleasure of impressing the other

fellows profoundly. All eyes were fixed unseeingly upon the jam-jar, and Glyn carelessly held it in one hand.

"It's perfectly safe," he explained. "I'm not going to drop the jar."

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

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

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

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

"We want to do our prep."  
"Oh, blow your prep! I'm not going to do any myself, I'm too busy."

"Hallo! Look at that pot—it's boiling over!" cried out Tom Merry.

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

Glyn uttered an exclamation and whirled round towards the table, and

Who struck down Crooke, the cad of the Shell, on the eve of Guy Fawkes Day? The finger of suspicion pointed to Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore. But there was one junior who knew he was innocent! That was Gore's guilty secret!

the jar of explosive slipped from his hand.

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

"Run for it!"  
"Bolt!"  
And they ran!

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

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Troubles of an Inventor!

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

But—  
No explosion followed!

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

But it did not happen.  
The crash was simply the crash of the falling jam-jar—no louder than if it had

been caused by the fall of a jar filled with innocent, harmless, and necessary raspberry jam.

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

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

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

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

"It's gone wrong—"

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

"The—the silly ass!" gasped Clifton Dane. "Of course, there's something wrong with his blessed invention—there always is! Jolly lucky for us! Let's go back and slaughter him before he can put it right."

"Good egg!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Oh, don't bother—"  
"This is where the Form puts its foot down," Tom Merry remarked. "We are fed-up with explosives! Collar the silly ass!"

"Look here— I—oh—leggo!"  
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"Pile on him!"

In spite of the terrible smell, the juniors crowded into the study. They laid violent hands upon the schoolboy inventor. Bernard Glyn roared and struggled, but the roars were not heeded, and he struggled in vain. He bumped on the floor, and the juniors sat on him—in a crowd. The Liverpool lad disappeared under them, and only a leg and an arm and a sulphurous voice showed that he was there.

"Gro-oogh! Lemmie gerrup! Ow!" "Sit on him!" said Tom Merry. "Now to get rid of his rubbish! He's had one chance of blowing up the School House, and he's not going to have another!" "Groogh!"

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

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

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

"They're going off!" said Kangaroo cheerfully. "They're going into the Rhyl!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You—you burglars!" spluttered Glyn. "Let them alone!"

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

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

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

"Do you want it?" "Of course I do, ass!" "Then you shall have it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Kangaroo lifted the pot by the handle, and then slowly tilted it over the schoolboy inventor. The glue ran down over his face, and Bernard Glyn spluttered wildly. It flowed over his cheeks, into his mouth, round his ears, and into his hair.

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

"Ow, ow! Groogh!" "What's this purple stuff in the jar?" "Groogh! That's an indelible dye! Ow!"

"Do you want to keep it?" "Ow! Yes! It's valuable! Yow!" "All serene! You shall have it!"

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

Glyn gave a fearful yell. "Ow! Gerroff! Keep him away! Don't! Ow!"

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

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Now, are you going to keep it, or chuck it away?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Chuck it away!" said Glyn. "Right-ho! Now, here's some sticky stuff in a bottle. Do you want to keep that?"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" The bag was crammed full at last. Two of the juniors carried it between them out of the study. Glyn made a wild effort to escape.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You—you—you rotters!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "I—I—I—I'll—"

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

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

## CHAPTER 3.

### Sentenced to Death!

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

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

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

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

Figgins grinned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Eh?" "Why not celebrate the fifth of November by a feed instead of a bonfire?" said Fatty Wynn enthusiastically. "Instead of spending money on fireworks and things, we club together, and expend it on tuck. We could have a ripping spread—quite the biggest thing of the term. Odd that you should think of the same thing, Figgy!"

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

"Oh, look here, Figgy—"

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

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

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

"Oh, I see!"

"I think we ought to seize the occasion of the anniversary to-morrow to show the School House up. The New House is Cock House at St. Jim's, and we can't make that too clear. They never will admit it on the other side, anyway!"

"Never!" grinned Kerr. "Well, if Bernard Glyn can make mechanical effigies looking just like real people, we can do it in the New House," said Figgins. "I propose to make an effigy of Tom Merry, as captain of the School House juniors."

"Good egg!" said Kerr. "Well, what do you think, Fatty?"

"I think that a fifth of November feed—"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Figgins. "Hallo!" exclaimed Kerr suddenly.

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

"The Jam again!" exclaimed Figgins.

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

Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, waved his dusky hands, stuttering away,

in the Hindustani language, apparently having forgotten that that difficult tongue was not spoken at St. Jim's.

The Indian junior was labouring under wild excitement. Figgins & Co. had taken Koumi Rao under their special protection in the New House, and he had given them plenty of trouble. Under their influence, he was learning something of British ways and British ideas, but his wild, uncontrollable temper was always ready to break out at the slightest provocation.

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

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

The Jam burst into English.

"I will kill him!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Figgins. "Whom are you going to kill now?"

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

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

"He has called me a nigger," said the Jam.

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

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

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

"Precisely the same!" said Kerr judicially.

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

Figgins shook his head.

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

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

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

"And there are the others—Levison, Mellish, and Gore—they say I shall be carried as a guy!" shrieked the Jam.

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

Figgins & Co. could not help grinning at one another. The excitable temper of the Jam and his great idea of his dignity as a prince of India made him an easy prey for mischievous fellows.

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

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

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

"I will kill them!"



"If you want the glue," said Kangaroo, "you shall have it!" And the Cornstark tilted the pot over Bernard Glyn's face. The school-boy inventor spluttered wildly as glue flowed over his cheeks, into his mouth, round his ears, and into his hair. "Ow, ow! Groogh!"

Figgins winked at Kerr.

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

"Peculiar taste, if they are," said Kerr.

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

"Not at all," said Fatty Wynn solemnly.

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

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

"I will kill them!" he said finally.

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

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

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

"I—I—"

"Have you got a knife?"

"No."

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

"I—I—I—" stuttered the Jam.

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

The Jam looked dubiously at Figgins & Co. He could hardly believe that the three Fourth Formers were in earnest. But they looked quite serious and solemn.

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

CHAPTER 4.

No Casualties!

"HALLO, Figgy!"

"Nother guy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Such were the greetings that met the Co. as they arrived at the School House. The chums of Study No. 6—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth—were on the

School House steps, chatting about football, and fireworks, and other subjects of great interest. But they gave all their attention to Figgins & Co. as the New House quartet hove in sight.

Figgins held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax," he said; "this isn't a House row. We've come over here on serious business—matter of life and death."

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

"Not yet," said Figgins darkly. "Gweat Scott! Do you mean to say that somebody is going to be ill?" demanded the swell of St. Jim's, in great astonishment.

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

"Bai Jove! What for?"

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

"We've asked Taggles," explained Kerr, "but he wouldn't lend it to us when we told him what Koumi Rao wanted it for."

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

"He's going to kill Crooke of the Shell," Figgins explained.

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

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

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

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

The Jam was looking more and more

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

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

Figgins looked at him in surprise.

"Joke!" he repeated, in astonishment.

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

"Always!" said Kerr solemnly.

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

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

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

Figgins explained, with a wink.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"This isn't a laughing matter," said Figgins severely. "Crooke will very likely feel horribly ratty about it."

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not help grinning. They knew Finn's bowie-knife. Buck Finn was an American junior, and he came from the Far West. He had brought a big bowie-knife to St. Jim's with him, among other souvenirs of his boyhood on the plains of Arizona.

That bowie-knife had been inspected with great admiration by the juniors, till Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, heard about it, and he had promptly deprived Finn of the dangerous instrument. But Finn was allowed to have it back on condition that the blade was removed.

The case, with the knife-handle fastened in it, was an ornament on the

wall of Finn's study in the Shell passage, and the blade was under lock and key in Mr. Linton's room. The idea of furnishing the Jam with a bladeless knife to commit his murders with tickled the juniors very much. And all the fellows entered cheerfully into Figgins' solemn scheme for "rotting" the homicidal Hindu.

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

Jack Blake came back with the bowie-knife, and the juniors grinned. But the Jam had not yet made acquaintance with Buck Finn's famous bowie-knife.

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

"I—I—" murmured the Jam.

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

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

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

"What!" roared Kildare.

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

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

"Hallo! What have you brought the nigger here for?" he asked. "Going to use him for a guy in the procession to-morrow? I suggested that."

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

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

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

Crooke jumped up.

"What!" he roared.

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Jam took the sheath in his dusky fingers, with a curious reluctance. Having come to the point, he discovered that, after all, he did not really want to kill Crooke.

However, it was up to him to keep his princely word, and he could not back out under a crowd of curious eyes.

"Take that lunatic away," said Crooke, snatching the poker from the

**"As a Matter of Fact—**

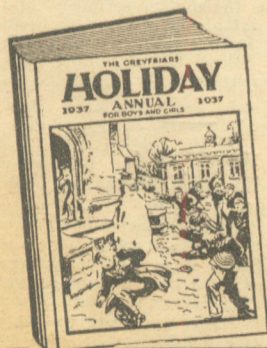
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fender. "If he comes near me, I'll brain him!"

"Pile in, Jam!"

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

"Buck up! Kildare's coming upstairs!" called out Manners from the passage.

"I'll hold him back for a moment," said Kangaroo. "Pile in, Jam!"

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

"Here comes Kildare!" called out Clifton Dane.

"Pile in, Jam!"

The Jam gave a terrific tug and dragged out the knife-handle as Kildare reached the study door. The face of the Jam was a study as he saw that there was no blade attached to the handle. He had had his suspicions before, but now he knew for certain that the Co. were rotting him. There was a yell of laughter from the crowd of juniors as the Jam stood gazing speechlessly at the bladeless handle.

"Pile in, Jammy!"

"Under the Fifth rib!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Jam rolled his eyes and ground his white teeth, and hurled the handle and the sheaf upon the floor. Then he rushed out of the study, right into the arms of Kildare. And Kildare closed a firm grasp upon his collar, and led him away.

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CHAPTER 5.

Fireworks in the New House!

"HA, ha, ha!" "Bai Jove! I wegard that as vevy funny!"

Figgins wiped his eyes.

"We didn't mean the silly ass to get into a row," he remarked. "We must get him away from Kildare."

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

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

"Do you want a hiding?" asked Kildare.

"Thank you so much," said the Jam politely. "I do not desire it."

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

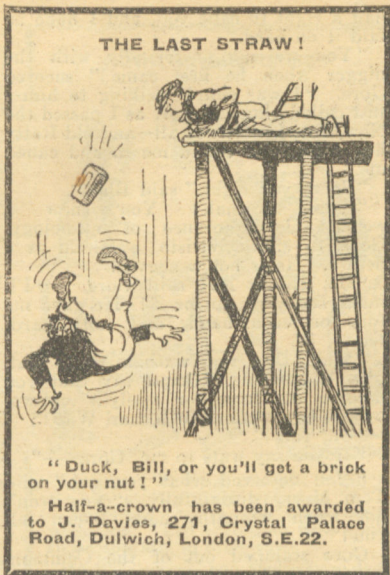
"He has called me a nigger."

"If you complain of that, I will punish him."

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

Kildare laid down the cane.

"I won't lick you," he said. "You



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

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

"You can take him away," said Kildare.

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

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

"You make fun of me!" he exclaimed.

Figgins chuckled.

"Well, do you want us to take you seriously, you chump, when you talk about blood and slaughter?" he demanded. "We're going to rot you till you stop it. Now, come up to the study and have some chestnuts."

And the Jam decided to take Figgins & Co.'s little jape in good part. His fits of fury, violent as they were, never lasted long. He was all dusky smiles by the time they reached the study.

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

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

"Hallo! I came over here to see you, so I waited. I'm going to let you chaps into a good thing," said the School House inventor impressively.

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to laugh at. I was making some ripping fireworks for to-morrow. It would save a

heap of money. They chucked all my materials into the river, simply because there was some slight danger of the house being blown up," said Glyn indignantly.

"Go hon!"

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

"Only practically?" said Figgins sarcastically.

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

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

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

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

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

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

"Yow! Ow! Ow!"

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

Bang, bang, bang!

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

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

Bump!

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

Bang, bang, bang!

"Ow! My nose!"

"Ow! My chin!"

Bang, bang!

The cracker was finished now, fortunately. Fatty Wynn was crushing out sparks with a newspaper as they settled. Figgins and Kerr rubbed nose and chin, which had come into violent collision.

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

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

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

Down the stairs they went, and through the open doorway, to the steps

on the quadrangle, and there they hurled him forth.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

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

"Clear off!" roared Figgins.

"Ow, ow!"

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

## CHAPTER 6.

### Done in the Dark!

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

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

"It's rotten!" he snorted.

"Hallo, what's the matter now?" asked Tom Merry. "Has Kildare caught you bullying a fag and larruped you?"

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

There was a general exclamation.

"Ratty?"

"Yes, blow him!"

The School House juniors were interested at once. Mr. Ratcliff was master of the New House, and master of the Fifth, and he had no right whatever to interfere with School House boys who were not in the Fifth Form. Mr. Ratcliff—Ratty for short—was of an interfering disposition, however, and he often encroached upon Mr. Railton's province.

And the School House boys were quick to resent anything of the sort. Gore, the bully of the Shell, was not popular, but all the School House fellows were ready to back him up against any interference from the Housemaster "over the way."

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

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

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

"He's caned me!"

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

"The cheek!"

"Complain to Mr. Railton," said Crooke.

"I've a jolly good mind to!" growled Gore, "only—" He paused.

"Only what?" asked Tom Merry.

"Railton would back Ratty up this time," said Gore.

Tom Merry looked at him keenly.

"I suppose that means that you have been playing some rotten trick on Koumi Rao," he said, "and Ratty caught you at it. If that's the case, he

had a right to cane you, and I hope he laid it on hard."

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

"Serve you right," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! You show a wemarkable ignorance of ethnology, Gore, in chawactewisin a Hindu as a negwo. He is not a negwo!"

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

"Well, that was wathah wuff; but, upon the whole, I must say that you deserve it, Gore, for applyin' oppwoivous expressions to Koumi Wao!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Gore—"

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

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

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

Gore paused on the School House steps.

"Nowhere in particular!" he growled.

"I wish—"

"What?" asked Levison, eyeing him keenly.

"I wish I could get a chance at Ratty!" said Gore, between his teeth. "The way he crawls up to that nigger is sickening! And he gave me four on each hand!"

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

Gore started and looked at him.

"What about it?" asked the Shell fellow.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"He's caned me twice for ragging the nigger," he said. "I was thinking—" He cast a cautious glance round and lowered his voice. "It's quite dark

under the elms where he takes his little trot. A fellow could sling something at him and bolt, and it would be put down to the New House chaps. They all hate him in his own House, especially Figgins & Co.—he's specially down on them."

Gore drew a deep breath.

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

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

"Funk!" growled Gore.

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

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

"Well, please yourself."

Levison strolled into the House, whistling. He knew that Gore was in a dangerous temper, and that his unscrupulous hint had fallen upon fruitful soil. And he did not intend to remain in the gloomy quadrangle. He

wanted to be able to prove an alibi in case there should be any unusual happenings there. That was very like Levison of the Fourth—to use another and more courageous and reckless fellow to pay off his scores. He had no fancy for risking punishment himself.

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

He paused in the deep shadow of the elms.

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

If Ratty came by—

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

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

Whiz!

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

He expected to hear an outcry from the quadrangle, but there was no alarm.

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

## CHAPTER 7.

### Struck Down!

KILDARE looked into the Junior Common-room in the School House.

"Bed!" he said laconically.

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

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

"Bosh!" said Manners. "With my rook—"

"Blow your rook! With my knight—"

Kildare laughed.

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

And the Shell fellows marched out of



the Common-room to go to their dormitory. Darrell of the Sixth was shepherding the Fourth off to their quarters. In the Shell dormitory Kildare glanced over the juniors. He missed one of them.

"Where's Crooke?" he asked.  
 "Not here," said Tom Merry, looking round. "Anybody seen Crooke?"  
 "He went out into the quad some time ago," said Kangaroo.

"He will get warmed for being late for bed, the young ass!" exclaimed Kildare. "Turn in, you kids! I suppose he will be in in a few minutes."

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

"Where on earth has he got to?" asked Gore. "Kildare will lick him for staying out like this."

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

"I? No."  
 "You went out just before him."  
 "Oh, I went to the gym!" said Gore carelessly.

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

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

"Well, he's a queer beggar!"  
 "I shouldn't wonder," said Gore promptly. "If anything has happened to Crooke we shall jolly well know who did it."

"Rot!" said Tom. "Nothing's happened to him."  
 "Then why doesn't he come in?"  
 "Blessed if I know!"

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

"I wish he'd come in," he remarked. "I'm going to see if anything's heard of him yet."

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Railton looked at him sharply.  
 "What is in your mind, Kildare? You had better tell me."

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

Kildare broke off.  
 Mr. Railton's face was very grave,



**Mother:** "What are you doing? You mustn't disturb grandpa."  
**Tommy:** "I'm not disturbing him, ma. I'm trying to tune him in on something different!"  
**Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Vickers, Ward 1, Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, Berks.**

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

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

"And what did he say?"  
 "That he had not seen Crooke since he saw him in the study in his House, when he came over with Figgins and some other New House boys."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We were anxious about Crooke, sir," said Kangaroo. "May we help to look for him, sir?"

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

"Thank you, sir!"  
 The four juniors soon fetched electric torches and joined the prefects, and the search for Crooke commenced.

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

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

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

The juniors stopped suddenly, listening.

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

"We've found him!" muttered Tom Merry huskily. "Great Scott! What can have happened?"

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

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

"There he is!"  
 Under the trees, on the dark turf, a form was stretched.

It was Crooke.  
 He lay upon his side, and was half-conscious, and there was a dark red stain upon his face. The juniors knew what that stain was. They had not liked Crooke—few fellows at St. Jim's liked him—but at the sight of the unfortunate junior stretched there, with blood upon his face, groaning, their only feelings were compassion and sympathy.

Tom Merry dropped on his knees beside the junior.

"Crooke, old man—"  
 The Shell fellow groaned.

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

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

"Call Kildare!" said Tom Merry.  
 He raised Crooke's head and supported it. Crooke groaned again.

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

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

Kildare came up breathlessly.  
 "You've found him?"

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

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

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

Kildare, Darrell, and Langton carried Crooke into the School House. Mr. Railton met them in the Hall and uttered an exclamation of horror at the sight of the white, blood-stained face.

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

"Yes, sir."  
 And Crooke was taken up to bed in the Shell dormitory.

**CHAPTER 8.  
 Found Guilty!**

**F**IGGINS started and awoke. It was past ten o'clock, and all the fellows were asleep in the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House.

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

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

"Wake up, boys!"  
 It was Mr. Ratcliff's sharp, harsh voice.

Figgins sat up in bed and blinked round him in astonishment. The dormitory door was wide open, and Mr. Ratcliff was there. He had turned on THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,499.

the electric light. Mr. Railton was there, too, and Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's. Figgins simply stared in amazement. What could possibly have happened to bring the School House master and the Head of St. Jim's to the New House at that hour?

"Has anything happened, sir?" gasped Figgins.

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

The dusky junior sat up in bed.

"I am awake, sir," he said.

"Dr. Holmes wishes to question you."

"Yes, sir," said the Jam, in wonder. Dr. Holmes advanced to the bedside of the dusky prince. His face was very grave and stern.

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

"Yes, sir," said the Jam.

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

"That is true, sir."

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

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

"Was anyone with you?"

"Koumi Rao has a study to himself, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff.

It was evident that the New House master was disposed to take the Jam's side in the matter.

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

"At what time?"

"Just before bed-time, sir."

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

"I was working in my study, sir. But I don't understand," said the Jam, puzzled.

"You have quarrelled with Crooke, Koumi Rao?"

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

"You have been heard to utter threats against him, Koumi Rao—threats quite out of proportion to any offence he may have given you. Have you uttered threats against his life?"

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

"Yes, sir," said Koumi Rao.

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

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

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

The Jam stared blankly.

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

"Do you still make that assertion?"

"Certainly, sir! It is true!"

"Listen to me!" said the Head sternly. "Crooke has been attacked in the quadrangle. Someone waylaid him

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under the elms, and struck him down with a heavy stone. He was stunned, and lay unconscious for a considerable time. His condition is serious now. Fortunately there is no danger to his life; but he will be an invalid for a long time—incapacitated by this cruel and brutal attack. Do you deny having attacked him?"

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

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

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

The Fourth Formers looked at one another in horror.

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

"Oh, you fool—you fool!" muttered Figgins.

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

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

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

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

Figgins shook his head.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Follow me, Koumi Rao," he said.

"Yes, sir; one moment, if you please."

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

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

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

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

Figgins made an impatient gesture.

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

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

"Never till now," said Figgins honestly.

"Yet you do not believe me?"

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

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

"A prince's word is no better than anybody else's word, that I know of," said Figgins.

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

The Jam glanced from one to the other of the Co., an almost wild look upon his dusky face, and then crossed to the door. He did not speak another word.

Mr. Ratcliff put the light out in the dormitory and retired, and the Jam followed him. The closing of the dormitory door was the signal for the outbreak of a buzz of excited talk, and it was a late hour before the juniors slept. But, much as they discussed the matter, there was only one opinion among the New House juniors—the Jam of Bundelpore had been guilty of that cowardly attack upon Crooke of the Shell, and the Jam of Bundelpore was going to get it "in the neck."

## CHAPTER 9.

### A Case of Conscience!

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

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

He had hardly closed his eyes all night.

While the other fellows, full of compassion for Crooke, were expressing strong opinions on the subject of the Jam of Bundelpore and his murderous temper, George Gore knew very well what the truth of the matter was. In his excitement the previous night, and in the dense darkness under the trees a mistake had been made. Levison had told him that Mr. Ratcliff was coming there—he had known the Housemaster's habits, too—and in his bitter anger at his punishment, the thought of Mr. Ratcliff had been fixed on his mind.

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

or he would have discovered then that it was Crooke he had struck down.

He understood it all now. Mr. Ratcliff had probably passed before Gore arrived there at all. Crooke was in the quad, perhaps smoking on the quiet. And the stone, which had been intended to hit Mr. Ratcliff on the chest, had struck the junior, who was considerably shorter in stature, upon the forehead. What a blind fool he had been, and what was to happen now?

He could not guess. To tell that he had struck down the Shell fellow by mistake, it was necessary to confess that he had intended an assault upon the Housemaster, an offence that could only be punished by a flogging and expulsion from the school.

Gore had counted upon covering up his tracks so well that he could not be discovered. And he had done so. No

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

Gore did not intend to speak.

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

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

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

"But you need not be so anxious about Crooke, my boy; he is in no danger, though his hurt is severe. I understand that you feel this more than the other boys, as Crooke was your special chum. But you need have no fear of anything serious resulting. Dr. Short assures me on that point."

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Gore.

The Housemaster walked on.

"Oh, what an ass I am!" murmured Gore. "Of course, he only meant because I was Crooke's pal! Of course! I shall have to pull myself together. I shall be giving the whole show away soon! And he knows it was Koumi Rao. Unless they guess that poor old Crooke was knocked over by mistake, they must think it was Koumi Rao. They couldn't possibly suspect me of biffing Crooke, my old pal. I'm safe enough!"



"We've found him!" muttered Tom Merry. "Great Scott! What can have happened?" The juniors moved forward under the dark trees, flashing the light before them, and on the ground a form was stretched. It was the missing Crooke!

one dreamed of suspecting him—with perhaps one exception, of whom Gore was not thinking just then.

The unanimous belief was that the Jam had slipped down from his study in the New House, laid in wait for the Shell fellow under the trees with the heavy stone in his hand, and struck him down there. Gore had only to allow the fellows to go on thinking so, and he was safe.

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

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

"You are down early, Gore," he said. "Yes, sir. I—I couldn't sleep, somehow," Gore stammered.

"I understand," said the Housemaster. Gore looked at him with blank, frightened eyes, wondering what he meant. If he really understood!

"It is a most unhappy occurrence, and I quite understand that you feel it more than most of the boys," said Mr. Railton. Gore breathed hard. The Housemaster spoke as if he knew by whose hand the stone had been hurled. But if he knew, his way of speaking would surely be different! What did it mean?

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

"I think there is not much doubt upon that point," said Mr. Railton. "I fear there cannot be any doubt that it was Koumi Rao."

Gore breathed again.

He was safe, but he did not feel at ease. He disliked Koumi Rao. The lordly airs of the Prince of Bundelpore had always irritated him; and he had been licked in a fair fight when the Jam first came to St. Jim's. That was sufficient cause for dislike. But personal dislike for the Jam was not sufficient to make him feel easy in his conscience at inflicting this wrong upon him. He knew that if he allowed the Jam of Bundelpore to be sent away in disgrace from St. Jim's, his conscience would never be quite easy.

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

That was true. And yet Gore did not

feel easy. He tramped about the quad aimlessly, with a troubled brow.

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

"Queer bizney, isn't it?" said Levison.

"What is?" said Gore abruptly.

"About old Crooke."

"Yes; queer enough," said Gore.

"Feelin' cut up about it—ch?" said Levison. "Naturally, Crooke's your pal. I suppose you feel pretty bitter against the nigger for laying him out like that?"

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

"He would!" said Gore.

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

"Nobody would want to," said Gore. "Exactly! So, unless Crooke was biffed by mistake for somebody else, it was Koumi Rao who did it."

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

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

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

"I?" muttered Gore.

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

"I was in the gym," said Gore.

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

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

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

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

"Quite so. I remember now you were in the gym; I saw you," said Levison.

"In fact, I walked to the gym with you myself."

Gore started.

"You—you did?" he muttered.

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

Levison walked away, whistling. Gore stared after him, mingled relief and anxiety in his breast. Levison knew, that was evident; but Levison intended to keep the secret, and to bear false witness to prove an alibi for him, if it should be necessary. Of course, Levison stood to lose if the truth came out; if Gore was discovered, he might betray the fact that Levison had suggested the whole affair to him in the first place. But if Levison held his tongue, he could not be discovered, even if he were suspected—Levison's evidence would clear him; he was safe.

If only he could have enjoyed his security! Why could he not have a tough conscience like Levison's? But he did not possess Levison's callousness; and, upon the whole, he did not want to possess it, either. It was some consolation to know, after all, that there was one fellow at least at St. Jim's who was worse than himself!

## CHAPTER 10.

### Gussy Helps!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Blake sniffed.

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

"No fear!" said Kerr.

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

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins nodded gloomily.

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

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

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

"How's Crooke now?" asked Redfern.

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

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

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

Figgins grinned ruefully.

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

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

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

Figgins & Co. were in no mood for the celebration they had planned for the famous anniversary. But that was not the case with the other fellows. The angry indignation they felt towards the

(Continued on the next page.)

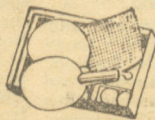
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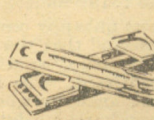
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Jam suggested to the School House fellows the form their celebration was going to take.

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

"It will show the rotter what we think of him!" said Jack Blake, as the juniors discussed the scheme in the Common-room after lessons.

"Yaas, wathah! I regard it as a good ideah!" Arthur Augustus remarked.

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's in the woodshed," said Levison. "Let's hunt him out!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors trooped to the woodshed in search of Bernard Glyn. They found the Liverpool lad there—at work in his shirtsleeves.

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

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

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

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

"Weally, Glyn—"

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

"A bit!" said Kangaroo, sniffing.

"It's simply talking!"

"Well, buzz off!"

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

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

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily.

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

"Good!"

"Wippin', deah boy!"

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

"No, you won't!" roared Glyn. "You'll let my things alone, you ass!

You'll muck up everything if you start. I don't want any help. It's too much trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

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

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

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

"I dare say you could muck up the whole show," said Glyn.

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

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

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

"Bai Jove!"

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

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "It's alight, Glyn, deah boy."

"You ass!" roared Glyn.

"Weally, my deah fellow—"

"Stand clear! It's going off!"

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

Bang, bang, bang! Crack, crack!

Fizzzzzzzz!

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

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bai Jove!"

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

Bang, bang! Crack, crack, crack!

Glyn made a wild rush at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The explosions ceased at last, and nothing but smoke and smell remained. Glyn had D'Arcy's head in chancery, and was hammering him

frantically. The swell of St. Jim's roared for help.

"Ow, ow! You awful wottah! Leggo! Help! Wescue! Yawwooh! Dwaggimoff! Ow! Oh!"

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Ow, ow, ow!"

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"Clear out, Gussy!"

"I wescue to clear out! I am goin' to give Glyn a feahful thwashin'! I should have been quite willin' to apologise for settin' fire to his cwackers, which would have set the matter right, but now I must decline to do anythin' of the sort!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

"Ow, wow! Gweat Scott!"

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

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

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Burden of a Secret!

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

Gore and Crooke had been friends, but the fellows generally had considered that it was more because they were birds of a feather than from any feelings of mutual regard. Certainly when Gore had been in serious trouble on one occasion, Crooke had not shown any great signs of concern.

Gore's looks and manner now surprised all the fellows. It was evident, so they thought, that there was more of the milk of human kindness in Gore than they had given him credit for.

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

But if Gore was worried about his pal, his feelings were entitled to respect, and

Tom Merry & Co. felt very kindly towards him in consequence.

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

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

"The Head—"

Gore's pale face turned paler. "The Head wants me!" He hardly breathed the words. Had it all come out, after all? "What does the Head want with me?"

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

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

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

"About Crooke getting hurt?" said Gore vaguely.

"Yes. It's not so serious as all that, you know. He will have to lay up for a bit, that's all. But it's not really serious."

"I suppose not," said Gore.

"He's awake, and he wants to see you," said Tom Merry. "I suppose you'll be able to cheer him up a bit. It must be rotten stuck there in bed with nothing to do. I've been through it when I was seedy."

"I'll see him," said Gore.

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

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

"Rotten!" growled Crooke.

"Headache, I suppose?"

"Yes. It's beastly."

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

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

Gore winced.

"Not yet."

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

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

"The brute ought to be ragged," said Crooke savagely. "I shall be laid up for weeks."

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

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

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

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

"Oh, yes, I suppose so! Dr. Short comes three times a day—to run up a

bill. The nurse titivates the place every time the doctor is coming, and sits with a face like a wooden mask all the rest of the time. It's sickening."

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

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

Gore felt an almost over-mastering desire to unburden his mind to somebody. He wanted to be comforted and backed up, to be assured that he was right in keeping his secret. But there was no one he dared to breathe a word to excepting Levison—and just then he felt a shrinking from Levison's company. The callous, unscrupulous cad of the Fourth could not have reassured him.

It came into Gore's mind several times that it would be better to confess, and take the consequences of his action, than to go about with this trouble on his mind. But the consequences—they were too terrible—expulsion from the school—and a grim father to face at home.

Gore had been sent away from St. Jim's once for bad conduct, and had been allowed to return after a time by the kind old Head—but he was not likely to be given another chance. He feared his father more than he feared the Head. On that occasion, he had come back to the school with good resolves, and he had kept them for a time—but he had fallen away again. Levison's example and influence had been partly the cause of that. He turned it over in his mind—but he knew that he dared not confess.

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

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

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



There was a sudden detonation in the woodshed, f Squibs, crackers, and rockets fizzed, banged and o and gasping in the fumes, staggered back.

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

"What do you want?" he demanded roughly.

"P'way do not be watty, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's kindly. "I've been lookin' for you, Gore, deah boy. I should like to cheer you up a bit."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Gore!"

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

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

"I don't care to."

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

"I don't want to."

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

But he was not to be discouraged when he started out to help another fellow.

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

"Hang Crooke!" said Gore involuntarily.

Arthur Augustus almost staggered in astonishment. He jammed his eyeglass



ore and more. Bang, bang, bang! Crack, crack!  
ing about as they exploded. The juniors, coughing  
inish of all Glyn's home-made fireworks!

into his eye, and surveyed Gore in blank surprise.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 12.

Koumi Rao's Resolve!

**K** OUMI RAO stood at the window of the punishment-room and looked out with a glum expression upon his dusky face.

The Jam of Bundelpore was feeling far from cheerful.

He had passed the day alone.

The House page looked after his wants, but he was a prisoner—and he

understood that he was to remain a prisoner until he was taken away from St. Jim's.

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

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

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

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

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

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

But he knew that he could not expect the other fellows to believe that.

They knew what he had said, and they knew what had been done, and they naturally drew their own conclusions.

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

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

His only feeling was utter hopelessness and misery.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Ratcliff had visited him during the day, and he had learned what was to be done—an official would arrive from the India Office to take him away, and St. Jim's would know him no more.

He would not see his friends again before he went; he would have no

chance to assert once more his innocence—not that they would believe him if he did. But he felt a keen desire to speak once more to the Co.—to tell them once more that he was wrongly condemned.

As he looked down from the window into a recess closed in by high walls, he caught sight of a fat figure coming through the gathering dusk. He knew it at once. It was Fatty Wynn.

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

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

The Jam watched him eagerly. The window was high above the ground, and though it could be opened, there were bars across it that prevented him from putting his head out.

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

The Falstaff of the New House had retired to that secluded spot for a feed. Perhaps he had raided his supplies from the School House, and was in fear of pursuit—or perhaps he did not care to enjoy his feed under the gloomy eyes of Figgins and Kerr.

In the circumstances, they might have considered it unfeeling on his part to enjoy cake and jam-tarts the same as usual—but Fatty Wynn could not see any reason why he shouldn't. In fact, as he had often said, in time of trouble it was most important to keep up liberal feeding, to enable one to bear one's troubles better.

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

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

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

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

"Did you come here to speak to me?"

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

"It is not that. I have all I want!" Fatty Wynn brightened up again.

"Then you're all right!"

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

"Ahem!"

"I swear it!" said the Jam.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I did not touch Croke!"

"Ahem!" said Fatty again.

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

"But—I say—"

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

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

The Jam burst out passionately.

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

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

"No, no!"

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

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

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

## CHAPTER 13.

### Something Like a Rag!

**T**OM MERRY & CO. finished tea in the School House, and came out in a body to visit Bernard Glyn in the woodshed, to see how the schoolboy inventor was getting on.

Glyn had not gone in to tea. He was too busy. Kangaroo had brought him refreshments to the woodshed, and Glyn had devoured them while he worked.

The guy was approaching completion now. The bonfire was prepared, and was all ready for lighting—and the juniors had laid in great supplies of fireworks, as well as special pieces that Bernard Glyn was preparing. The schoolboy inventor was very busy and very dirty when the juniors came in.

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

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

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

"First chop!" said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

The effigy was indeed a creditable one. It was life-size, and clad in an old suit of Etons, and Glyn had moulded the face in remarkable resemblance to that of Koumi Rao. The dark complexion, of

course, made it easy to suggest the Indian. In order that there should be no mistake, Glyn had wound a turban round the head of the figure, and attached a placard to it, bearing the words in large letters:

"**KOUMI RAO—ROTTER!**"

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

"No feah!"

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

"After him!"

"Rag him!"

"Collar the rotter!"

The shouts rang through the November dusk. Tom Merry & Co. hurried



out of the woodshed. They guessed what had happened. There was only one person at St. Jim's to whom that epithet was likely to be applied so excitedly, and whom the fellows would be so anxious to collar and rag.

"The nigger's got out of the punishment-room somehow!" exclaimed Clifton Dane.

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

"After him!"

"Stop him!"

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

Tom Merry caught Lawrence by the arm and stopped him.

"What's the row? How did he get out?"

"Thompson of the Shell spotted him!" Lawrence exclaimed. "He got down from the window of the punishment-room somehow. Thompson spotted him sneaking round the House. We're after him now."

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

The fellows entered into the chase in great excitement. They had felt it very hard that they could not get at Koumi

Rao to show him what they thought of him. He had been locked up in the punishment-room as much for his own protection as to keep him from escape. Now that he had got out, the juniors were free to demonstrate to him how they regarded his action, and they meant to do it.

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

"After him!"

"Head him off!"

"There he goes!"

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

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

"Here he is!" roared Kangaroo.

The fugitive had been cornered at last.

In a dark corner of the ground, near the shattered walls of the old chapel, the juniors had closed in on him.

The Jam stood at bay, his chest heaving, his eyes flashing, his dusky hands clenched.

Round him the juniors circled like hounds round a stag at bay.

"Got him!" chuckled Manners.

"Collar the cad!"

"Stand back!" panted the Jam.

"Rats!"

"Rotter!"

"Cad!"

"I am innocent! I did not touch Croke! I was in my study—"

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

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

And he led the rush.

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

"Bring him along!" roared Kangaroo. "We've got the ambulance ready!"

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

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

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

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you ass!"

"Pway don't be a wiculous chump, Koumi Wao!"

"Bring him along!" shouted Blake. "Pin that placard on his chest. We don't want the effigy yet, Glyn; we've got the real article."

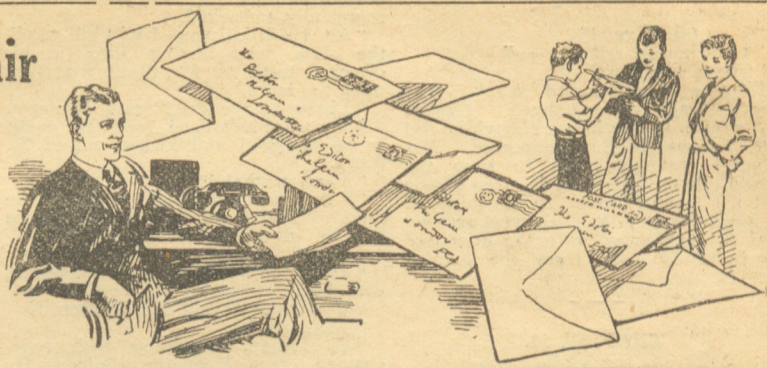
"Here, I say," exclaimed Figgins of the Fourth, pushing his way through the crowd, "draw it mild! Let the poor

(Continued on page 18.)



## The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.  
Drop him a line to-day,  
addressing your letters:  
The Editor, The GEM,  
Fleetway House, Farring-  
don Street, London, E.C.4.



**H**ALLO, Chums! A new reader of the GEM dropped me a line the other day, and, after highly praising the St. Jim's stories, he wanted to know if the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. appeared in any other publication. He is so keen on our cheery schoolboy characters, that he doesn't want to miss a single story about them.

I admire your enthusiasm, John Bates, of Guildford, and I am glad to know that, as a new reader, Tom Merry & Co. have captured your imagination to the extent of making you desire to read all the yarns in which they appear. As a matter of fact, in addition to the GEM, St. Jim's stories appear in the "Schoolboys' Own Library," and the "Holiday Annual." The latter, a five-shilling book, which is now on sale, is packed with ripping school stories of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood. By the by, this popular annual is fast selling out, so don't put it off too long before you get your copy.

The "Schoolboys' Own Library," No. 281, which is out to-morrow, contains an exciting book-length yarn of Tom Merry & Co., called "St. Jim's in Revolt!" Every GEM reader should make a point of reading this great story by Martin Clifford. Companion numbers of this issue are: No. 280, "Captain and Tyrant!"—a powerful long story of Greyfriars; and No. 282, "The Mystery of St. Frank's!"—a thrilling tale starring Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. in London. They are all on sale to-morrow, price 4d. each.

### "TOM MERRY'S TRIUMPH!"

Some time ago two Wembley readers wrote to me suggesting a story in which Gerald Cutts, the black sheep of the Fifth, schemed to annex the captaincy of the school. I replied that just such a series figured in my winter programme. Well, the first grand

yarn of that series is the one which you will read next Wednesday.

Kildare, the popular captain of St. Jim's, is called away from the school for a time, and so an election is held to appoint a new skipper. The candidates for the position are Monteith, head prefect of the New House, Knox, the bullying Sixth Former, and Cutts.

Tom Merry & Co. are very anxious to prevent the captaincy from going over to the New House, but they find themselves in an unfortunate position. They must either vote for one of the two undesirable School House seniors, or put in a candidate from the rival House. Much against their will, they decide to back Monteith.

Then, due to Cutts' treachery, there follows an eleventh hour sensation. The Head orders the New House candidate to withdraw from the election. This leaves Cutts and Knox a clear field, with the odds on the Fifth Former. What happens? You cannot fail greatly to enjoy the first exciting story of this series. Look out for it!

### "GRAND OPERA AT GREYFRIARS!"

Assuming that you read my humble chat last, you have read in this number about the efforts of Harry Wharton & Co. to produce the famous opera, "Carmen," at Greyfriars. The next sparkling chapters tell how, with the stage all set for the great show, the youthful operatic players get a series of shocks.

Thanks to the scheming of the rival Upper Fourth fellows, the "leading lady," Marjorie Hazeldene, doesn't turn up. Then the piano accompanist from Friardale fails to put in an

appearance, and, to cap the misfortunes of the Wharton Operatic Company, the vocal score of the opera vanishes. And the Remove-room is packed with masters, prefects, and juniors, all waiting for the representation of "Carmen."

Harry Wharton & Co. are fairly up against it, and it seems that only a miracle can save them from the ridicule of a disappointed audience. You'll find Frank Richards at his very best in this tip-top story. Don't forget to order your GEM early.

### RETURNED REPLY.

J. R. W., of Canterbury, wrote to me recently, and I answered his letter. My reply has now been returned to me as J. R. W. cannot be traced at the address given. If this reader will drop me a line, letting me know his full address, I will post my letter to him again.

In conclusion, I should like once again to draw the attention of readers to the fact that the "Magnet," our popular companion paper, contains every week a grand cover-to-cover yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. The one on sale now is called:

### "THE SECRET OF THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE!"

the opening yarn of an exciting new series. When you have finished reading your GEM, you probably feel that, with the long winter evenings here, you would like another school story paper to read. The "Magnet" will fully satisfy you. Try it to-day!

### TAILPIECE.

Tommy: "What does experience mean, dad?"

Father: "Experience is what you have left when everything else is gone."

## THE EDITOR.

### PEN PALS COUPON 7-11-36

## PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest with each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

John Ellison, Carxhaithe, Cheltenham Road, Gloucester; age 13-15; sports, stamps, overseas.

Miss Katherine Hooper, Lane 1220, House 56, Avenue Road, Shanghai, China; girl correspondents; stamps; swimming, photography, archery.

S. D. Briggs, 27, Stockfield Road, Streatham, London, S.W.16; stamps.

John Maddock, 186, Harrison Road, Belgrave, Leicester; overseas; age 13-16; stamps, autographs; would also like a correspondent in France.

Leonard Gregorenko, Lawri, Callide Valley, via Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia; films.

Douglas Waddy, 31, Nottingham Avenue, Keswick, South Australia; stamps.

Montague Elliott, 18, Sunny Bank Road, Wyde Green, nr. Birmingham; age 14-16; classical music; British Empire, France, Belgium.

R. Robbins, 76, Lynton Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex; age 14-16; aviation, newspapers, snaps; overseas.

Gordon W. Leaworthy, 47, Eastcott Road, Swindon, Wiltshire; age 15-18; aircraft, cycling, radio.

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P. B. Crawford, 166, Kenilworth Avenue, Hull; members for Junior Stamps Club.

James Douglas, 13, Thomas Street, Strathfield, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia; cricket, tennis, stamps.

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beast alone. He's going to be expelled, anyway."

"Buzz off, Figgy!"

"Look here, I tell you—"

"Chuck him out!"

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

## CHAPTER 14.

### Gore Takes the Plunge!

"**B**LESS my soul!" Dr. Holmes exclaimed. "What is all that unseemly noise?"

"It is Guy Fawkes Night," said Mr. Railton, who was in the Head's study. "You remember the juniors have been given permission to celebrate."

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

"That is certainly the case."

From the quadrangle came the sounds of trampling feet and roaring voices, mingled with the explosions of crackers.

"Here's another guy!"

"Yah!"

"Rotter!"

"Outsider!"

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

He strode to the window and flung it open.

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

The Head gasped as he saw the Sedan chair swaying and rocking in the midst of the excited crowd, and the Indian prince sitting in it, his face distorted with anger.

"It is Koumi Rao!" he exclaimed.

"But he was locked up in the punishment-room!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in astonishment.

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

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

"My boys, cease this noise at once!"

The shouting died away.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "It's the Head!"

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

The Sedan chair was carried up to the window, and the bound Hindu junior swayed under the Head's eyes.

"You should not have done this, my boys," said Dr. Holmes reprovingly. "This boy must be released instantly."

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

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

"Certainly, sir!"

The School House master left the study. The disappointed juniors reluctantly untied the Jam. They were

not half-finished with him yet, as Blake regretfully remarked.

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

"Listen to the cad!" said Manners. "After what he's done, too! He ought to be scragged and kicked out of St. Jim's."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I have done nothing!" screamed the Jam. "I did not lay a hand upon Crooke. I did not know—"

"Rats!"

"Pway don't tell any more whoppahs, deah boy."

"Untie him!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir."

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

"Anyway, he undahstands now how we wegard him," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

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

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

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

"You must have been helped."

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

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

"I intended to go."

"Indeed! Where?"

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

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

"I will not—I will not!"

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

"You may rely upon me, sir."

The Jam clasped his hands.

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

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

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

The Jam went sullenly away with the Housemaster.

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

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"Thank you, Mr. Railton. He's a most dangerous and reckless boy, and

I shall be very glad and relieved when he is gone."

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

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

"It is true, there can be no doubt!" And yet Mr. Railton did not feel quite easy in his mind. There was something in the wild, passionate insistence of the Indian junior that impressed him strangely, in spite of the strong evidence against him.

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

"Where's Koumi Rao?" he asked.

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

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

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Why, you know he's guilty!" he exclaimed.

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

His voice broke off.

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

"You think so?"

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

"No, I don't!"

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

"I know it was!" groaned Gore.

Tom Merry caught his breath.

"You know it was?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Gore huskily.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"What rot!" said Bernard Glyn.

"What are you driving at?"

"I mean that Koumi Rao is innocent."  
 "Rats!"  
 "Gammon!"  
 "Who was it, then?"  
 "Gore," said Tom Merry.  
 "Oh, draw it mild!" said Kangaroo.  
 "Gore is Crooke's chum, and he's been going about looking like a ghost all day, because he was so cut up about it."  
 "I fancy it wasn't about Crooke he was cut up," said Tom. "I fancy it was his conscience at work. I don't rightly understand it, but it was Gore."  
 "How do you know?" demanded a score of voices.  
 "Gore just told me."  
 "He's confessed?" asked Blake.  
 "Yes; and he's gone to the Head to tell him."  
 "Well, my hat!"  
 "Then the nigger is innocent, and we— Great Scott! We shall have to make it up to him somehow!" said Kangaroo.  
 And Arthur Augustus said softly:  
 "Poor old Koumi Wao!"

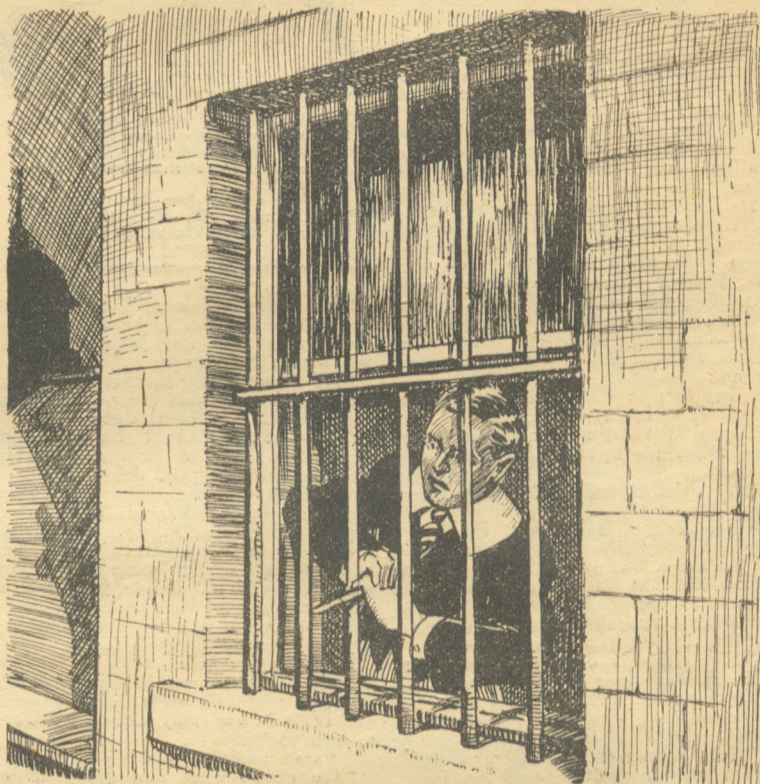
CHAPTER 15.  
 Cleared!

GORE knocked at the door of the Head's study with a trembling hand.  
 He had made up his mind.  
 In the quadrangle he had watched the ragging of Koumi Rao, and he felt that he could not stand it any longer.  
 It was better to get it over, to take his punishment, however severe it was, than to struggle with his conscience any longer.  
 Dr. Holmes' voice bade him come in, and Gore entered, with a face so white that the Head and Mr. Railton started as they saw him.  
 "What is the matter with you, Gore?" asked the Head. "Are you ill?"  
 "No, sir."  
 "Then what—"  
 "I—I can't stand it, sir," said Gore, hoarsely and miserably. "I—I've come to confess."  
 "To confess what?" said Dr. Holmes quietly. "What have you done, Gore?"  
 "About Crooke, sir—"  
 The Head uttered a sharp exclamation.  
 "Crooke! Surely, Gore, you do not mean to say—"  
 "Yes, sir."  
 "It was you, Gore!" Mr. Railton exclaimed.

Gore nodded wretchedly.  
 "And you have allowed us to believe that it is Koumi Rao."  
 "That's why I've come to confess, sir," groaned Gore. "I can't stand it—Koumi Rao being ragged—and sacked! I knew it would have to come out sooner or later. My conscience isn't tough enough. So I—"  
 "And why did you treat Crooke, your own friend, in this wicked and brutal manner?" demanded the Head sternly.  
 "I didn't mean to, sir. I hadn't the faintest idea that Crooke was there when I chucked that stone in the dark. I felt wretched when I heard how Crooke had been found stunned under the trees."  
 Dr. Holmes looked at him very sharply.  
 "An accident, Gore? Do you mean that you were foolish and reckless enough to throw heavy stones about in the darkness?"  
 "I—I—I—"  
 "I think I understand," said Mr. Railton calmly. "You intended the missile for someone else, Gore, and Crooke received it by mistake in the darkness."  
 "That is how it was, sir. It hit him

on the head. But I—I only meant to give a biff on the chest—that's all, sir. Only, Crooke was shorter, you see, and so it caught him on the head—"  
 "Then it was a man you supposed you were throwing the stone at?" said the Head. "I can only conclude that it was a master."  
 "It was Mr. Ratcliff," muttered Gore. "He—he caned me—four awful, hard cuts—because I called Koumi Rao a nigger. He had no right to cane me. He ought to have reported me to my own Housemaster. Mr. Railton wouldn't have punished me so hard for just that. Lots of fellows call the chap a nigger.

and gave me another chance, and—and I didn't care to risk it again."  
 "Yet you confessed, after all?"  
 "Yes, sir. I couldn't help it. I couldn't see the fellows ragging and jeering Koumi Rao and keep my mouth shut. I thought I could at first," said Gore miserably. "But I found I couldn't."  
 The Head and the Housemaster exchanged glances.  
 "Was anyone else concerned with you in this, Gore?" the Head asked slowly.  
 Gore hesitated.  
 "N-no; I—I was alone, sir."  
 "No one else knew of it?"



Working with untiring fingers, Koumi Rao filed away at one of the bars of the punishment-room window. His dusky face was brighter as he worked. He had to leave St. Jim's, but it would be some consolation to get away quietly and escape the scornful looks of his schoolfellows.

And—and I only meant to give him a biff on the chest, sir—just a hard knock, that wouldn't really have hurt him. But as it turned out to be Crooke, and he's a foot shorter than Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff—he got it on the head!"  
 "This is a very serious matter," said the Head, after a pause. "If the discovery had been made without your confession, Gore, I should have expelled you from the school on the spot."  
 Gore's face flushed with hope. The Head's words seemed to hold out a possibility of escape, after all, from the punishment he dreaded. The grim face of his father, the stuffy office where he would have to grind at ledgers instead of Form work, seemed a little farther off now. Perhaps there was still a chance for him.  
 "Why did you not confess before, Gore, as your conscience seems to have been troubling you?" the Head asked, not unkindly.  
 "I—I was afraid, sir. If I'm sent home—my father—it happened before, and I ran away from home—he was so hard on me. You let me come back,

"One fellow did, sir."  
 "Was this attack upon Mr. Ratcliff his idea or yours?"  
 "I—I don't want to put it on him, sir. I—I was so wild at the time, I was ready for anything."  
 "Who was the boy, Gore?"  
 Gore closed his lips. With all his faults—and their name was legion—Gore would not betray Levison—tempter as he had been in the beginning of the whole miserable occurrence.  
 "Well, Gore, I am waiting."  
 "I can't tell you!" said Gore firmly.  
 "I—I can't, sir. I—I came here to confess. It would be cowardly to drag another chap into it. He's stood by me, too. He wouldn't have given me away. I—I suppose you're going to sack me, sir. I—I can't help it; but I can't be a rotten sneak. But—but what am I going to say to my father when I get home?" And the unfortunate junior's voice broke, and a sob came into his throat.  
 Dr. Holmes' face softened.  
 "I think I understand, Gore," he

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

"Oh, sir!"

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Holmes nodded.

"He is certainly not all bad," he said. "And in his wish to protect Koumi Rao from persecution, I really think that Mr. Ratcliff was a little injudicious in exceeding his authority. But I must see Koumi Rao at once. The poor lad has been deeply wronged."

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

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

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

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

The Jam started violently.

"Oh, sir, you have found out—"

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

"Oh, sir!"

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

The Jam bent his head humbly.

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

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

"Thank you, sir."

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

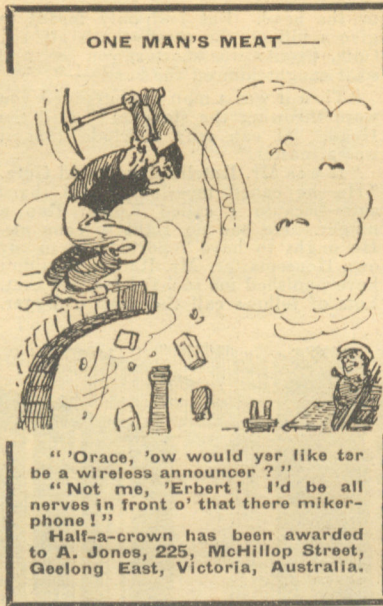
Ten minutes later all St. Jim's were assembled in Big Hall to hear a speech from the Head.

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

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

The school listened in amazement. Most of the fellows were glad that the truth had come out, and when the fellows were dismissed, Koumi Rao walked out in the midst of a crowd of congratulating friends.

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"'Orao, 'ow would yer like ter be a wireless announcer?"

"'Not me, 'Erbert! I'd be all nerves in front o' that there miker-phone!"

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

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

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

"I twust you will accept my pwo-found apologies, Koumi Wao," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, you have been wathah w'onged, but in the circs, I cannot blame myself, you know. It was all due to your talkin' out of the back of your neck, you know, and I twust you will not play the giddy goat any more."

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

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shan't want that giddy effigy, after all," Tom Merry remarked. "Glyn had better put a white face on it, and a cap instead of a turban, and label it Gore."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

"My hat, they'll all have to be altered!" exclaimed Tom Merry; and he rushed away to the woodshed to see the schoolboy inventor, who had not had time to come to Big Hall to hear the Head's announcement.

## CHAPTER 16.

### Not According to Programme!

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

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

"Weally, Glyn," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "you would not wish to chawactewise Koumi Wao as a wottah, now that we have found out he is t'wue blue."

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

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

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

"My dear chap, it's quite easy to alter the fireworks," said Tom Merry. "Make the show-pieces read 'Gore is a rotter!' and 'The Head is requested to sack Gore!' And leave out the bit about the New House altogether."

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

"Weally, you know—"

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

"You see, they can't be wasted, and I've taken a lot of trouble with them," explained Glyn. "As Koumi Rao doesn't object, we'll go ahead."

But there was a shout from Tom Merry & Co.:

"Ass!"

"Rats!"

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

"You uttah ass—"

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

"You frabjous ass!"

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

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

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

"No, I won't!" said Glyn flatly.

"Then we will," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Collar that chump, you fellows, and run him out, and we'll have the things altered in a jiffy. I don't know much about making these things, but I've no doubt that I can put in an alteration here and there."

"Good egg!"

"Here, stop that!" roared Glyn, struggling wildly as the juniors grasped him and ran him headlong out of the woodshed. "Let my things alone! You'll get 'em mixed and mucked up, I tell you! Ow! I won't have it! Yah! Oh!"

Glyn's voice died away in the distance.

Tom Merry and D'Arcy set to work hurriedly on the display fireworks.

"Leave it to me, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "I can manage it all right. I'm a vewy handy chap, you know. You put some white paint

on the face of that effigy, and altah the label."

"Right-ho!"  
The effigy intended originally for Koumi Rao was daubed over the face with white paint; the name on the placard was painted out, and that of Gore substituted, and the turban changed for a cap. By the time that was finished, D'Arcy announced that the fireworks were finished, too. And the effigy was tied in the wooden chair, and carried off by the crowd of juniors, and the fireworks were conveyed from the woodshed to the spot selected for the exhibition.

Round the quadrangle, in a noisy procession, went the lay figure representing Gore of the Shell.

Blake put a match to the bonfire, and a sheet of flame rose, dancing in lurid light over the quadrangle, and on the ancient buildings and shadowy old trees.

Bang, bang, bang, bang! Whiz! Fiz! Whiz!

The fireworks were already going. There was a roar as the effigy was brought up to the bonfire at last, and placed in position upon the already burning pile. The features that had been carefully moulded by Bernard Glyn to represent the face of Koumi Rao, no longer looked like the Jam, with a daub of white paint over them; but neither could the effigy be said strongly to resemble Gore. But the placard on the breast left no doubt on the matter. It read, in large letters: "Gore is a rotter!"

Dr. Holmes had promised to come out and see the special pieces when they were lighted, and there was a buzz when the Head was seen in company with Mr. Railton.

"Now, then, Glyn!" said Tom Merry. Glyn grunted.

"I shouldn't wonder if the blessed things won't work now, if you have been mucking them up!" he snapped.

"Weally, Glyn, I exahised great care—"

"Spoiled them, most likely."

"Wats! I twust I have sufficient bvaains to know how to handle fireworks. As a mattah of fact, I could have made them quite easily myself if I had known how to."

"Light 'em!" shouted Figgins. "We've fixed 'em up ready for you, and the Head is waiting."

"Well, I'll do my best," said Glyn. "But I don't answer for results, if Gussy has been meddling with them."

"Weally, you ass—"

"Pile in, Glyn!"

"Go ahead!"

Bernard Glyn piled in and went ahead. He was very proud of those excellent display pieces, and he wanted them to be a success. The great crowd in the quadrangle looked on eagerly as the first pieces were lighted up.

Against a red background of coloured flares the sentence flamed forth in letters of white:

"THE NEW HOUSE IS A ROTTER!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter. It was only too evident that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in spite of his great brain powers, had done some mixing when he altered the pieces. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were seen to smile.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tom Merry. "What next?"

From where he was, attending to the lighting, Glyn could not see how the displayed pieces read. He was only too glad to see that they lighted up at all,

after Arthur Augustus had handled them.

"Next!" shouted Figgins.

"There goes the next!" said Monty Lowther. "Oh, ye gods!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Put it out—quick!"

Exclamations of horror and dismay burst from all the fellows. And there was reason for them, for the next piece, as it flamed out in fiery letters, read:

"THE HEAD IS REQUESTED TO GO AND EAT COKE!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes, peering through his glasses at the fiery glare. "This is outrageous!"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Railton.

"Put it out, Glyn, you idiot!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wotten bad taste, Glyn! The Head is bound to be offended. I consider you an ass!"

"What's the matter?" yelled Glyn, from the darkness.

"Put it out!"

Glyn came rushing up. He read the fiery sentence above, and stuttered with wrath and dismay. He turned on Arthur Augustus.

"You—you—you frabjous ass! You've mixed the pieces together in your silly alterations. Oh, you awful chump!"

"I wufuse to admit anythin' of the sort. I altahed them all wight. You don't know how to make fireworks—"

But Glyn, beside himself with fury, rushed upon him, and the swell of St. Jim's roared as his head went into chancery.

Tom Merry dragged Glyn off the swell of the Fourth.

"Ass! Go and explain to the Head—quick!"

"My hat! Yes, I'd better!"

Glyn dashed up to Dr. Holmes, who was about to stride away with great dignity. He burst into an explanation.

"We didn't mean that, sir! A silly idiot altered the fireworks after they were finished, sir. We had a complimentary piece about you, sir, and—the awful chump has mixed it up with another one that—that wasn't complimentary, sir. You can't think we meant it to read like that, sir!"

Dr. Holmes smiled again.

"Then it is a mistake, Glyn! Very well, I will take no notice of it, but you should really be more careful."

"It wasn't my fault," gasped Glyn. "It was a

dangerous lunatic got at my fireworks, sir, a howling maniac who ought to be locked up in Colney Hatch—"

"Weally, Glyn—"

The juniors seized the exasperated manufacturer of fireworks just in time, or there would have been a case of assault and battery under the very eyes of Dr. Holmes. And for what seemed an age to the fellows, they read the flaming sentence:

"THE HEAD IS REQUESTED TO GO AND EAT COKE!"

But it died out at last. And, after that, Bernard Glyn firmly declined to let off any of the pieces that had been handled by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Fortunately, the Head was, as Tom Merry put it, an old sport, and took the accident quite good temperedly.

Fatty Wynn had his way, and a tremendous feed finished the celebrations, with Koumi Rao as the guest of honour, quite restored to the friendship of the Co., and probably the happiest fellow at St. Jim's on that eventful night of the Fifth of November.

(Next Wednesday: "TOM MERRY'S TRIUMPH!"—a lively long yarn of election fun and excitement at St. Jim's. Don't miss it!)

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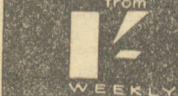
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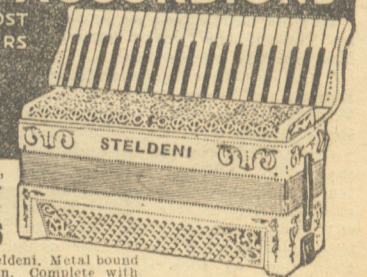
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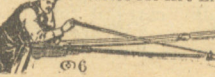
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GREYFRIARS RESOUNDS TO THE SWINGING MELODIES OF "CARMEN" WHEN THE WHARTON OPERATIC COMPANY GETS GOING!

# GRAND OPERA AT GREYFRIARS!

## Wharton's New Idea!

"THE Harry's train was in," said Bob Cherry, looking at his watch; and his words were followed by the rumble of a train down the line.

The juniors from Greyfriars, standing on the little platform of Friardale, were on the alert at once. There were four of them there—Bob Cherry, with his cap on the back of his curly head, as usual; Nugent, with his cheery, good-tempered smile; Billy Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Harry Wharton, the acknowledged leader of Study No. 1 in the Remove at Greyfriars, had been to London, and the chums of the Remove were waiting at the station to welcome him home.

"There she comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the steaming train came in sight down the line.

Harry Wharton was looking out of the carriage window, in the expectation of seeing his chums on the platform. There was a smile on the junior's handsome face, and he waved his hand in greeting as he caught sight of the Removites. The latter waved their caps and shouted.

Harry Wharton had been away only a couple of days, but his chums had missed him. His uncle had taken him for a "little run" to town, and he had had a good time, but his look showed how glad he was to see Greyfriars and his chums again.

The train slowed down, and the juniors rushed to open the door of Harry's carriage. Harry jumped out lightly, and the Removites shook hands with him with great heartiness.

"We're jolly glad to see your old chivvy again!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, shaking Harry's right hand.

"What-ho!" exclaimed Nugent emphatically, shaking his left. "Jolly glad!"

"The gladfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his quaint Hindu-English. "The hurrahfulness of the joyful meeting is great."

And as Harry had no more hands to be shaken, the dusky junior slapped him heartily on the back.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "We're glad to see you, Wharton. I say, you fellows, let a chap shake hands with the fellow!"

And Billy Bunter rushed up to a man who had just alighted from the train and grasped his hand and began to shake it effusively. Billy Bunter was extremely shortsighted, and his big spectacles seemed rather for ornament than use, as they did not assist his vision much. The man whose hand he was shaking stared at him in astonishment.

"Jolly glad to see you, Wharton!" said Bunter. "I suppose you will be standing a feed in the study to celebrate—"

Nugent caught the effusive Bunter by the shoulder and swung him away from the amazed stranger.

"That isn't Wharton, you ass!" "Isn't it?" said Billy Bunter, blinking at the man. "I beg your pardon, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,499.

## By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper the "Magnet.")

sir. Where is Wharton? Oh, here you are! We're jolly glad to see you, Wharton—and if you're going to stand a feed in honour of your return, I'll cut ahead and get the things from the tuckshop."

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him indignantly. "I only want to save time," he said. "If there's going to be a feed, I should like to have it ready for you fellows when you get to Greyfriars, that's all. I was thinking that it was very thoughtful of me. If that's all the thanks I get—"

Harry Wharton laughed. "It's a good idea, anyway," he said. "And I want to speak to you fellows, and I can't do it while Bunter's here, as he does all the talking—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"So he had better cut ahead and see to the grub. I'm getting peckish, too, as a matter of fact. My uncle

*Collaring the costumes of the Wharton Operatic Company seemed a good joke to the Upper Fourth fellows. But there was nothing funny about it when the wrathful Removites collared them!*

tipped me a pound when he saw me into the train, and so I'm in funds."

"Good! Got any uncles like that to give away?" asked Nugent.

"There you are, Bunter! Buzz off!" "I'll buzz off fast enough, Wharton! Am I to spend all this?"

"No, you young villain—only half of it!"

"I thought you might like to have a really ripping feed to celebrate your return to Greyfriars."

"If you can't get up a decent feed for ten bob, you can leave the job to me," said Wharton.

"Oh, I can manage it first-rate, only—"

"Well, go and manage it. Mind, I shall want ten shillings change."

"Right you are!"

And Billy Bunter darted off. He was not usually an active boy, but when he was making the arrangements for a study feed he could be as quick and alert as anybody.

"Come on," said Nugent, linking his arm in Harry's. "We'll stroll down to Greyfriars, and get in in good time for the feed."

"Just a moment. Where's my bag?" "I've got it," said Bob Cherry. "I'll carry it for you."

"Where's my book?"

"What book?"

"It's on the seat in the carriage. Hand it out, Inky, will you?"

"Certainly!" The Nabob of Bhanipur handed out Harry Wharton's book. The Removites glanced at it in some curiosity. The book was of quarto size and rather thick, in stiff cloth covers.

"What on earth is that?" asked Nugent, as the nabob handed it to Wharton, who put it carefully under his arm.

Harry Wharton smiled. "It's my vocal score. I'll explain later. I've got it in connection with a new idea I thought of. Come on!"

The juniors left the station. Harry Wharton was in a thoughtful mood, and his chums looked at him, and at the volume under his arm, in great curiosity.

"Well, what's the idea?" asked Bob Cherry, as they strolled down the village street towards the leafy lane that led to Greyfriars.

"You know I've been for a run up to town with my uncle," said Wharton. "We had a run round—saw the Zoo, and the waxworks, and the Tower of London, and so on, and last evening we went to the opera."

"My hat!" "You know I'm a little bit musical," said Wharton modestly. "As a matter of fact, that night at the opera was a greater treat to me than anything else I saw in town. We saw 'Carmen'—and it was ripping, too. I wish you had been there. And an idea struck me—"

"What's the idea?" "Why shouldn't we do something of the sort at Greyfriars?"

His chums stared.

"Something of what sort?" asked Nugent.

"Something in the operatic line," said Harry Wharton boldly. "We can sing, all of us—I've heard Bob Cherry hacking away at the 'Toreador' song—"

"Thank you!" said Bob Cherry.

"With a little practice you could do it," said Harry Wharton. "I was thinking of myself for the hero, Don Jose, the soldier chap, you know, who falls in love with Carmen and deserts. Billy Bunter would do for Remendado—he's a funny little beggar. We could get up a company and perform in the Common-room—"

"By Jove, that would take the shine out of the Upper Fourth Musical Society!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "They gave the 'Beggar's Opera' last term, you know, and the whole school voted it rotten. They've never dared to tackle grand opera."

"Nothing venture, nothing win."

"That's true enough. I don't see why we shouldn't learn up the parts and give a performance of 'Carmen,'" said Nugent thoughtfully. "It's a ripping opera, and everybody knows something from it. Is that the score you've got under your arm?"

"Yes," said Harry, opening the volume. "I bought it in Berners Street on purpose, when I thought of the idea. It's the vocal score."

"Why, it's in French!"

"Of course it is! The opera was written in French."

Nugent whistled.

## ANOTHER BRIGHT AND BREEZY YARN OF THE EARLY SCHOOLDAYS OF THE CHUMS OF THE REMOVE.



With Harry Wharton "thumping the ivories," as Bob Cherry expressed it, the Wharton Operatic Company went ahead with the rehearsal of "Carmen," and the room echoed to Bob Cherry's powerful voice singing the famous "Toreador" song.

"Are you thinking of performing it in French?"

"Of course. It will make the fellows polish up their French a little, and it will do them lots of good in that way."

"But what price the audience? They won't understand French—especially Lower Fourth French."

"They'll have to do the best they can," said Wharton. "Anyway, there will be the music for those who can't understand the words. Heaps of people go to Covent Garden and listen to operas they don't understand a word of. It's the music they want."

"Well, there's something in that; but where are you going to get an orchestra?" said Nugent dubiously.

Harry laughed.

"I'm not going to try to get up an orchestra. That would be rather too big an order for the Greyfriars Remove. Mr. Quelch would let us have the piano. He offered to let me use it for practice."

"And who will play?"

"My dear kid, there are lots of fellows at Greyfriars who can rattle off a piano accompaniment to a song or two," said Harry. "But I was thinking that we might have a professional, to make sure of getting the thing done properly. We could get a chap from the music shop in Friaridale to come for the whole evening for a guinea, and it's worth clubbing up for to make the thing go."

"Something in that."

"We should have to stipulate that he knew the music and rehearsed it, or something," said Bob Cherry. "You know what these cheap accompanists are, especially in the country."

"We'll see that he's up to snuff," said Harry Wharton. "But, I say, what do you think of the wheeze?"

"It won't be easy."

"I don't expect it to be easy."

"Well, it's a jolly good one. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth put

on a lot of side over their musical society, and this will take the shine out of them. It's the first time grand opera has ever been performed at Greyfriars. But about doing it in French."

"My dear chap, it was written in French by Bizet, and so there's no alternative."

"But there are translations."

"You know what translations are. All the spirit of the original is lost. I've seen two translations of 'Carmen,' and both very weak stuff. Besides, the Wharton Operatic Company—"

"The what?"

"The Wharton Operatic Company."

"Well, that's a jolly good title, anyway."

"The Wharton Operatic Company is not going to descend to the level of a travelling 'Grand - Opera - in - English' Company," said Harry, with an expressive sniff. "Grand opera in English may be a good thing, but in the original it must naturally be better. People who don't know French and Italian can listen to the music. What's the good of spoiling a good song by sticking it into English words that don't suit it? Besides, the Upper Fourth fellows can only perform in English. Grand opera in the original will knock them into a cocked hat."

"Well, there's something in that."

"I should say so. Anyway, I think you'll agree that we ought to go in for it."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"There's one thing that's jolly certain," he remarked, "and that is that there will be some fun to be got out of it, and so I vote for 'Carmen.'"

"And my votefulness is coincident with that of the esteemed Cherry," said Hurree Singh. "The idea is really rippingful."

And the chums of the Remove strode on towards Greyfriars, eagerly discussing the new idea.

### Rivals of the Remove!

"OH, so you're back?"  
It was Temple of the Upper Fourth Form at Greyfriars who spoke as the chums of the Remove came in at the ancient gate of Greyfriars. Temple was captain of the Upper Fourth, and between him and Wharton, who was captain of the Remove, there had been much rivalry, generally ending to the advantage of the Remove.

Temple stopped in front of the chums, and stared at the score under Wharton's arm. Temple was rather musical, and he knew a score when he saw one.

Dabney and Fry were with him, and they stared at Wharton's score, too. They were the leading lights of the Upper Fourth Musical Society.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes," he said cheerfully, "I'm back."

"Did you go to the Zoo while you were in London?" asked Temple, with interest.

"Oh, yes!"

"And they let you come away again?"

"Yes; your relations in the monkey-house sent their kind regards!"

Temple turned red as the Removites chuckled.

"What's that you've got under your arm, Wharton?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Oh, something you wouldn't understand!" said Harry Wharton loftily.

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"It's an operatic score."

"Well, you young ass, do you think I don't understand that a thousand times better than you do?" demanded Temple, rather excitedly. "I got up an opera here last term, you young idiot!"

"Yes, an old thing in English."

"Oh, I suppose you could do it in German or Italian?" said Temple.

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"Yes, rather, if we liked. But, as it happens, 'Carmen' was written in French, and we're going to perform it in that language," said Harry Wharton calmly.

Temple gasped. "You're going to perform 'Carmen'?"

"Certainly!"

"In French?"

"Yes, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha! You hear him, Dab?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rather rich, isn't it?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha! How much French do you Remove kids know? You couldn't ask for your dinner in a French restaurant, let alone perform a French opera!"

"I can speak Frenchfully."

"We're all pretty strong on that language," said Wharton. "Nothing like the 'ongs' and 'dongs' you fellows work off and call French!"

"But you have to sing in opera. How are you going to sing?"

"With our throats, you know."

"Ass! I mean, you can't sing. I remember hearing Cherry trying the 'Toreador' song once. It would have killed the Toreador if he had heard it!"

"Look here," began Bob Cherry wrathfully. "I've got a jolly good baritone—"

"Yes, sometimes it's a baritone, I know, and sometimes it's a bass, and at other times it's a high tenor!" sniggered Dabney. "I've heard it!"

"Well, that will add to the variety," said Harry Wharton. "Let's come by, kids! We've got to get to practice, you know!"

"And you're really going to perform an opera?"

"Of course we are!"

"My hat! We'll come to see you do it. It will be a sight for the gods and men and little fishes, and no mistake!"

"You will be welcome to come if you behave yourselves. We shall expect you to put on clean collars and wash your hands!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Come on, chaps. We can't waste any more time with these chumps!" said Harry Wharton. "But I'll tell you what, Temple. I believe you fellows have done some singing, and, with a little trouble, I might be able to knock you into shape—"

"You—you—"

"And if you rubbed up your French a bit—"

"You—you cheeky young—"

"Perhaps I could find you some small parts, if you like to join in the thing," said Harry Wharton genially. "We shall want a chorus, of course, and you fellows could do that all right, if you worked up to it. A dozen of the Upper Fourth could be used for the 'Chorus of Boys' in the first act—"

"You cheeky young idiot!" roared Temple.

"Oh, if you don't like to accept the offer, don't! We can find plenty of chaps in the Remove who'll do it better. But I thought we might do you a good turn. Come along, chaps!"

And the Removites walked on, leaving the Upper Fourth fellows almost speechless.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Temple, when he recovered his breath. "We're the musical society of the Upper Fourth—"

"And he offered us small parts!"

"Chorus of Boys' in the first act!"

"The cheeky young rotter!"

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"I'll tell you what," said Temple. "If they gave this performance and it was a success, it would take the shine out of anything we've done. But it can't be a success!"

"Of course it can't!"

"Anyway, we'll keep an eye open and see if we can get a chance to show the cheeky kids up," said Temple. "If they don't muck up the opera themselves, we may get a chance to muck it up for them!"

"That's a good idea!"

"But I say," said Fry, "very likely the chaps were only gassing to get our rag out."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Dabney.

Temple nodded.

"It's quite possible," he said. "But that chap Wharton's got cheek enough for anything!"

But when the chums of the Upper Fourth entered the School House a little later, they found that there was no doubt upon the point as to whether the Removites were in earnest or not.

A crowd was gathered round the notice-board in the hall, and Temple & Co. strolled up to see what the attraction was. A paper in Harry Wharton's hand was pinned up there among the school notices:

#### "NOTICE!

"The Wharton Operatic Company will shortly give a representation of Bizet's opera 'Carmen,' in the Remove-room at Greyfriars. Cast will be announced later. No charge will be made for admission, as the Wharton Operatic Company are working solely in the interests of Art, and not for reward. All lovers of grand opera are cordially invited to attend.

(Signed) H. WHARTON,  
"Manager."

Temple stared. Dabney whistled.

"They mean it!" said Fry.

There was a buzz of discussion before the notice-board over the startling announcement. The general opinion seemed to be that the kids in the Remove were growing a bigger nerve than ever; but, at the same time, there was little doubt that the programme announced would be carried out in some fashion or other by "H. Wharton, manager."

#### The Operatic Company Get to Business!

THERE was a cheering scent of hot tea in Study No. 1 at Greyfriars. Five juniors sat round the tea-table, looking very contented. The chums had arrived before Bunter had the tea ready, and Harry had filled up the interval by writing out the notice which had attracted so much attention downstairs. Now the tea was made, and Bob Cherry had filled the cups, and the plates were generously plished, and, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked, everything was gardenfully lovely.

Harry Wharton glanced round the cheerful tea-table with much satisfaction.

"It's good to be here again," he remarked. "I had a nice little run up to town, but I'm glad to see your old chivvies again."

"The joyfulness of the occasion is only equalled by the excellentness of the grubful tommy!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"It's a jolly good feed," said Nugent.

"So it ought to be for ten bob."

"By the way, where's my change, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

Bunter blinked through his spectacles.

"I'm sorry, Wharton—"

"Now, then, Bunter, I gave you particular instructions."

"I carried them out, Wharton, but—"

"Well, where's the change?"

"There isn't any!"

"How's that?" demanded Harry.

"Out!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You see," explained Bunter, "I have been expecting a postal order for a rather considerable amount for some days past, and owing to some delay in the post it hasn't arrived. I had promised to settle Mrs. Mimble's account at the tuckshop to-day, thinking the postal order was certain to come this morning—"

"You young Owl!"

"But it didn't, and Mrs. Mimble kept my account out of the pound-note. It was mean, wasn't it? There was only eighteenpence change, and I thought it wasn't worth while bringing that to you, so I bought young Norton's penknife. I wanted a penknife, you know, and I might never have had another opportunity."

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Nugent.

"I don't see it, Nugent. It seems to me that I am very unfortunate. Of course, it's all light about Wharton's change. I'm going to settle up when my postal order comes."

"Somewhere about the Day of Judgment, I suppose!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I ought to have known better than to trust the Owl," said Harry, half-vexed and half-amused. "Never mind."

"Of course, I'm going to settle when—"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" sang out Wharton.

The door opened and Hazeldene of the Remove came in. He coloured a little and took a backward step as he saw the feast.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I—"

"Come in," said Harry cordially.

"Come and have tea—there's plenty."

"I didn't know—"

"Of course you didn't," said Harry, rising and forcing Hazeldene into a seat at the table. "You haven't had your tea, have you?"

"No, but—"

"Then here you are. Another cup of tea, Bunt."

"Certainly, Wharton."

"Thanks very much," said Hazeldene.

"I didn't know you had a celebration on or I'd have called later. I just looked in to speak to you as soon as I knew you were back, Wharton, that's all."

"I understand. Try these sausage-rolls."

"Thanks. I will."

"And the ham-pies, Vaseline," said Billy Bunter. "I can recommend the ham-pies. There's your tea."

"I hear you've got a new wheeze on," said Hazeldene, as he stirred his tea. "What's all this about the Wharton Operatic Company?"

Harry laughed.

"It's a genuine thing, Hazeldene. We're going to give a performance of 'Carmen' in French, singing the parts, you know, in proper style. And you are just the fellow I want to see, as a matter of fact. You can sing?"

"Well, I sing in the choir on Sunday, as you know."

"Good! That's a bit different from operatic singing, but if you can sing, you can sing, anyway. We want you to take a part."



"Willingly. My French is a bit weak—"

"You will have to give it some physical culture, then. We're going to sing the whole thing in French. But what I wanted particularly to speak to you about was your sister. You told me your people were living near Greyfriars now?"

"Yes, that's so."  
 "Well, what do you say to asking Marjorie to take a part in the performance?" said Harry. "It would be quite possible for her to come over here on a half-holiday for a rehearsal, and she could get the score to learn up her part at home."

"Ripping idea!" exclaimed Bob Cherry and Nugent together. Marjorie Hazeldene was a great friend of the chums of Study No. 1.

Hazeldene nodded thoughtfully. "Marjorie would willingly do anything to help," he said. "She knows French, too, better than I do. She was very good at amateur theatricals last Christmas at home. But what part would you give her?"

Harry wrinkled his brows reflectively. "Well, Carmen's part wouldn't be nice for Marjorie," he said. "She could do Micaela—you know, Don Jose's old sweetheart, who comes to find him in the smugglers' den in the mountains. We shall have to cut down the opera fearfully to make it short enough for performance here, and we can cut down Carmen's part and leave Micaela a bigger one in proportion, so as to give Marjorie a chance."

"That's a good idea!"  
 "Good! Will you write to Marjorie, then, and ask her? As for Carmen, we shall have to think about that. I don't know who can play that character yet. I suppose we shall have a boy for it. There's young Desmond; he's got a smooth face and a high voice, and he'd be glad to try, anyway. Finished your tea, you chaps? We might as well get the parts allotted, and have the first rough rehearsal this evening."

"Good!"  
 "I say, Wharton, I haven't quite finished yet."  
 "You never have, Bunter. You can finish out in the passage, if you like. Shove the things into the cupboard now, and let's get the table back."

The study was soon cleared. Harry Wharton opened the score at the first page.

"Now, as to the parts. I was thinking of myself for Don Jose—"

"Passed!" said Nugent. "Go on!"  
 "Bob Cherry as the Toreador."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.  
 "I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, don't bother now, Bunter!"  
 "But it's important."  
 "Oh, cheese it!"

"But it's about the opera, and it's an important point."  
 "Go on, then. What is it?"

"You're allotting the part of Toreador to Bob Cherry—"

"Yes."

"I really think that I could do the part of the Toreador, Wharton. I don't know the part, and I've never seen it performed, but I really think I could do it."

"Scat! Now, as to—"

"But, really, Wharton—"

"Ass! Did you ever hear of a bull-fighter in spectacles?"

"Well, I could leave the spectacles off for the performance."  
 "Yes, and blunder all over the stage and bump into everybody. This is going

to be an operatic performance, not a bumping match!"

"But, really—"

"Cheese it, Bunter! I'm going to give you a part, but you're not going to be the Toreador, so don't bother. Now, as to Nugent, I think he will make up very well as Le Dancairo—a sort of smuggler chief."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent. "I rather fancy myself as a Spanish smuggler."

"We want a funny little beggar for the part of Le Remendado," said Harry.

"That will about suit Bunter, and we can pass the spectacles."

"Really, Wharton, I think—"

"Remendado's your part, Bunter, and you can take it or leave it."  
 "What does he do?" asked Bunter.  
 "Is it a big part?"  
 "Oh, no. But it can be funny—and

and isn't Micaela the girl who kisses chaps for their mothers?"

Harry Wharton turned red.

"Well, Micaela has to kiss Don Jose," he admitted, "but that can be cut out. Let's get on with the washing. We shall have to dress up young Desmond as Carmen, that's all. Two Remove chaps can take the parts of Frasquita and Mercedes in girls' clothes. We can get the costumes from the place in Friardale, and send them back when the performance is over. Now for the programme."

"Here's a pencil."

"Thanks!"

Harry Wharton wrote down a list of the names of the dramatis personae, and of the amateur operatic singers who were to play them.

"There you are!"  
 The list ran as follows:



The shortsighted Bunter rushed up to a man who had just alighted from the train, grasped his hand, and shook it effusively. "Jolly glad to see you, Wharton!" he exclaimed, the man staring at the Owl in astonishment. "I suppose you will be standing a feed to celebrate!"

you're funny enough to start with, so it will be a success in that way."

"Funny enough to have a smuggler with a full-moon face and a big pair of spectacles!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Bunter. "Is there any feeding in the play? If there is, you ought to arrange to have me on in those scenes. I could do that very naturally."

"I've no doubt you could, but you won't get a chance. We can settle Morales and Zuniga, and the other minor parts, afterwards," said Harry Wharton. "Now, about the girls. Micaela is a nice part for any girl, and if Hazeldene can answer for his sister she—"

"That's all right," said Hazeldene.

"I say," said Bob Cherry, grinning, "I've been looking through the score,

"CARMEN."

By Georges Bizet.

Performance by the Wharton Operatic Company.

- Don Jose - - - H. Wharton
- Escamillo, the Toreador - R. Cherry
- Le Dancairo - - - F. Nugent
- Le Remendado - - - W. Bunter
- Zuniga - - - - - P. Hazeldene
- Carmen - - - - - M. Desmond
- Micaela - - - Marjorie Hazeldene
- Frasquita and Mercedes - - Two Remove Juniors

"What do you think of that, you chaps?"

"Good!" said five voices.  
 "Goodful indeed!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But where do I come in, my esteemed and chumful friends?"

Harry Wharton looked rather puzzled. "That's the difficulty," he said. "We can't leave Inky out of it, but how are we to put him in?"

"The dusky complexion is hiddenly concealed by the greasy paint," the nabob suggested.

"Oh, it's not your beautiful colour that's the difficulty, but your still more beautiful language," said Harry. "You see, your English is remarkable—"

"And your French would probably be more remarkable," said Bob Cherry.

"I studied English under the best native master in Bengal."

"Yes, and the result does him credit; but French—"

"I do not wish to blow my own praises trumpetfully," said Hurree Singh modestly, "but I speak the Frenchful tongue as excellently as I talk in the flowing language of this esteemed and respectable country."

The juniors chuckled.

"I don't know whether that's quite up to the mark. However, we'll give you the part of Morales—and perhaps we can make it a non-speaking part," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "We can't leave Inky out, anyway. That's settled, then."

"And now for the first rehearsal!" said Bob Cherry.

### Capturing The Costumes!

THE notice on the board had attracted general attention at Greyfriars, and the Wharton Operatic Company found themselves the centre of a great deal of attention.

Temple, Dabney & Co. shrugged their shoulders at the whole business, without, however, any perceptible effect upon the operatic company.

The Removites went calmly on their way, in spite of the shrugging of the Upper Fourth shoulders.

Fellows listened in the passage outside Study No. 1 to the rehearsals, and chuckled over them. They listened when the Removites were at the piano in Mr. Quelch's room, hard at practice, and chuckled again.

Mr. Quelch was the master of the Remove, and something of a pianist, and he had given the boys permission to use his instrument when he was not in his room—a permission of which they took full advantage. Harry Wharton played the piano very well, and on these occasions he "thumped the ivories," as Bob Cherry elegantly expressed it.

The swinging melodies of Bizet's music naturally caught on among the juniors, and fellows went about the school humming them. Even Temple, Dabney & Co. caught up the music, and hummed and whistled fragments of the "Habanera," and the "Seguidilla," and the "Toreador" song, in season and out of season.

Meanwhile, Hazeldene had written to his sister, and Marjorie had replied that she would willingly do all she could to help the Wharton Operatic Company on with the good work.

The stage-managing was in the hands of Harry Wharton, and he bargained with the costumier in Friardale for the loan of the costumes, and obtained them at a reasonable price, especially considering the fact that some had to be sent for to London.

There was much excitement in Study No. 1 at Greyfriars on the day when the costumes were expected.

The local costumier had written to say that they were ready, and that they would be delivered by the carrier from

Friardale, and the chums of the Remove were in a state of great expectancy during afternoon school.

When the Remove were dismissed that afternoon, Harry Wharton met Temple, Dabney & Co. in the Hall as he came out of the Lower Fourth Form Room.

Temple beckoned to him.

"I say, Wharton, I want to speak to you."

"Fire away!" said Harry cheerfully. "You seem to be in earnest over this operatic business," the captain of the Upper Fourth remarked, in a careless sort of way.

"Only just found that out?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Don't you interrupt. I'm talking to Wharton! I was going to say, Wharton, that we members of the Upper Fourth Musical Society are always willing to encourage budding talent, and we don't mind helping you in this matter, if you like."

"Thanks!" said Wharton. "But how do you mean?"

"Well, I suppose you realise by this time that you've taken on a rather big job?"

"Oh yes; we knew that all along!"

"We're ready to help you. This idea of performing grand opera at Greyfriars is not a bad one, if it's properly handled. We are willing to take it up—"

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry.

"Don't interrupt, Cherry! I say we're willing to take it up and give you kids some coaching. We should act the principal characters, but we could give you the minor parts."

"You're too generous, Temple!"

"Well, you know there's the chorus of boys, the soldiers, the smugglers, and the crowd at the bullfight," said Temple. "There will be room for half the kids in the Remove to fill up the small parts—"

"Ha, ha, ha! What's the good of filling up the small parts while you fellows make a muck of the big parts?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Shut up, Cherry! I'm talking to Wharton! We should save the thing from being a failure in this way, and we're quite willing to do it."

"I dare say you are," said Harry Wharton. "But the difficulty is that we're not at all willing to agree to anything of the sort."

"If you're going to spoil a rather good idea out of sheer vanity—"

"We are going to risk it, anyway."

"I tell you, Wharton, the Upper Fourth Musical Society is willing to take up the matter and make a success of it!"

"The Upper Fourth Musical Society can go and eat coke!" said Harry Wharton. "No time to jaw now, either. We've got the costumes coming by the carrier, and we're going down to the gates to meet them. Come on, chaps!"

"But, I say—"

"Ta-ta!"

The chums of the Remove walked away. Temple and Dabney looked at one another in great disgust.

"Conceited asses!" growled Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"They're really going it strong, though!" said Temple. "The costumes coming down, are they? Wish we had a chance of—"

Dabney looked at him quickly.

"What are you thinking of, old chap?"

"Well, if we could get hold of the costumes, we could guy those young rotters—a sort of Guy Fawkes procession."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I suppose they'll be on the lookout," said Temple. "Hallo, what's that row?"

The chiefs of the Upper Fourth looked out into the Close. A car had driven up, and Harry Wharton was assisting a charming girl to alight.

"Oh, it's Hazeldene's sister!"

Dabney pulled his friend by the arm.

"I say, Temple, here's our chance!"

"What do you mean?"

"They're bound to stop talking to Marjorie Hazeldene a bit. Let's get down the road and look for the carrier."

"Good idea! Come on!"

The two Upper Fourth juniors darted away.

Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove were gathered round Marjorie Hazeldene. The girl, with a bright smile, shook hands with them all in turn.

"It's ripping of you to come down to help us!" Harry Wharton said, after greetings had been exchanged. "Have you been looking up your part?"

"Oh, yes!" smiled Marjorie. "I'm already acquainted with Micaela's part. But who is playing Carmen herself?"

"Young Desmond of the Remove. It's best to have a boy for that part, as I have to murder him in the last act, and I'd rather murder a boy than a girl. He's got a smooth face," said Harry, "and he'll make up very well as Carmen, I think. The only difficulty is that he's got an Irish accent, only perhaps that won't be noticed when he speaks French."

The girl laughed.

"You have been rehearsing?"

"Oh, yes! That reminds me, the costumes are coming down now. The carrier may be here with them any minute. Yours will be among them. Mr. Quelch has allowed us to hold the dress rehearsal to-day in his room, as we want the piano. You will be able to play for me, and give me a chance of singing to music. We shall have a professional accompanist on the great night, of course. I have done all the thumping so far, except when Mr. Quelch has found time to play a little for us. He's awfully good!"

"It's time now for the carrier," Bob remarked.

"Then you might run down to the gate and get the parcel when he brings it," said Harry Wharton. "You three could go together, as the package may be heavy."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I was thinking, Wharton, that you and Nugent and Hurree Singh might like to go."

Nugent grinned.

"What a curious coincidence!" he remarked. "It had just crossed my mind that you three chaps were the ones who ought to go."

"The coincidentalness is remarkable!" purred the nabob. "The sameful thought crossed me mindfully, my esteemed chums."

Marjorie laughed.

"Suppose you all go?" she suggested.

"I must go in now and speak to Mrs. Locke. I have promised to have tea with her."

The juniors looked blank.

"What about tea in the study?" said Harry Wharton.

The girl smiled and shook her head.

"Mrs. Locke asked me. Au revoir!"

And she entered the house.

"May as well go down for the costumes," said Harry Wharton, rather glumly. "I was looking for a nice tea in the study, same as we had last time. Never mind. Let's get the costumes. It will be a ripping rehearsal."

The Removites strolled down to the gates. They passed Temple and Dabney, and glanced at them rather curiously. The two Upper Fourth fellows were carrying a bulky parcel between them.

"Hallo!" said Harry. "What have you got there?"

"Oh, nothing in particular!" said Temple carelessly. "I say, if you decide to accept the offer I made you, it's still open for the present."

"Thank you for nothing!"

The Removites walked on to the gates. They looked out into the road, and Harry Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"There's the carrier's cart—and it's going away!"

"The ass has forgotten, and passed without delivering the parcel!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Perhaps he's left it with Gosling at the lodge," suggested Bob Cherry.

"The probablefulness is great."

"Yes, very likely," assented Wharton. "Let's go and ask Gossy, anyway."

Gosling, the school porter of Greyfriars, greeted the juniors sourly. He was not fond of the Remove, and he was especially not fond of the chums of Study No. 1. To their question as to whether a parcel had arrived for them he replied only with a surly shake of the head.

"Nothing?" asked Harry Wharton blankly.

"No, nuffin'!" said Gosling. "So there you har!"

"But I was expecting a parcel from the carrier."

"Can't help that, can I?" said Gosling aggressively.

"But didn't he stop?"

"Oh, yes, he stopped!"

"Didn't he leave anything here?"

"He left a parcel for me, and a parcel for the young gents who was waiting for him at the gate," said Gosling—"leastways, I s'pose it was for them, as they took it."

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Do you mean Temple and Dabney?"

"Yes," said Gosling; "they was the two. They was waiting for the carrier."

"The rotters!" Harry Wharton hurried out of the porter's lodge with his chums. "You see what has happened, you chaps?"

"Temple and Dabney have collared our costumes."

"That's it! I'll wager anything that it was our parcel that they took from the carrier. He wouldn't know them by sight, and the fact that they were waiting for him would make him think that it was all right. You remember, we saw them lugging a big parcel across the Close a few minutes ago."

"Our parcel, by Jove!"

Harry Wharton broke into a run.

"Come on! We must get it back before they have time to damage it, if that's what they mean to do. Follow your leader!"

The chums of the Remove needed no urging. They dashed away at top speed after Harry Wharton, their destination being the Upper Fourth study shared by Temple and Dabney.

opened parcel on the table in the study. There were the costumes designed for the representation of "Carmen," all neatly folded up. The chiefs of the Upper Fourth had made the capture easily enough.

"Good!" chuckled Temple. "We'll rig up each costume with stuffing and sticks and things, like a guy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can get Guy Fawkes masks to make the faces."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then we'll stick them up in the Close, labelled with the names of those asses!" grinned Temple.

"Good wheeze!"

"I say, better lock the door, in case they should suspect that we've got the things"

"Yes, that's a good idea."

Dabney turned the key in the lock. The chums of the Upper Fourth began to unpack the costumes. They were still chuckling over the intended joke on the Remove, when a knock came at the door.

"Who's there?" called out Temple guardedly.

"It's I—Wharton."

"What do you want?"

"I want to speak to you."

"Speak from that side of the door, then," said Temple, with a chuckle. "I can hear you very well, Wharton."

There was a thump on the door.

"Look here, you've got our parcel from the carrier."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've got our costumes for 'Carmen.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to give them up?"

"Not at present."

"Open this door!"

"Rats!"

"We're going to have our costumes!"

"Go and eat coke!"

There was a thump at the door again that made it shake. Then a wrench at the handle, and another heavy thump. But the lock held firm.

"They won't get in that way!" chuckled Temple. "I say, you kids out there, you may as well take a little run. We've collared the costumes, and we're not going to give them up till it suits us."

"You rotters! We'll bust the door in!" yelled the voice of Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha! I fancy you couldn't. You can go ahead and try if you like!"

There was the sound of a whispered consultation outside the study. Temple and Dabney grinned and went on unpacking. They felt that they were the masters of the situation.

There was silence for some minutes. Had the Removites given up and gone away? It looked like it, but Temple did not unlock the door. He was suspicious of the Remove.

Creak! Bang! Crack! The sudden sounds after the silence made the Upper Fourth fellows jump. Temple looked round rather anxiously at the door.

"My hat! What are they up to?"

Bang! Crack! Crack! Bang!

"Phew!" gasped Dabney. "They're driving in a chisel or something between the door and the post to prise it open."

Bang! Creak! Bang!

"I say, that's serious," muttered Temple. "I never dreamed that even Wharton would have nerve enough. They'll bust the lock in a jiffy if they keep on. My only hat, they've done it!"

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### The Remove on the Warpath!

"GOT it!" It was Temple who uttered the words, in tones of great satisfaction.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Temple chuckled as he bent over the

A wrench of the driven chisel, a terrific crack, and the lock parted. The door flew open and the chums of the Remove rushed into the study. Temple and Dabney sprang to oppose them, but they had no chance against the Famous Four. They were bowled over and hurled on the carpet in a twinkling. Temple gave a roar.

"Rescue, Upper Fourth!"

"Not much chance of that," grinned Wharton. "We've got help here, too!"

Herring, Russell and Skinner and half a dozen more of the Remove were crowding in. Temple and Dabney were seized by many hands and jammed into the hearth. On that afternoon the fire was not lighted. Bob Cherry jerked a cord from his pocket, and the two Upper Fourth fellows were quickly and efficiently tied to the bars of the grate by their wrists.

"Now get the costumes!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Here they are. Are you comfy like that, Temple? Anything more we can do?"

Temple wrenched furiously at the rope at his wrists.

"You rotters! Let us go!"

The Removites yelled with laughter.

"Not much, my pippins," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You collared our parcel, and now you've got to pay the piper. I dare say somebody will come along presently and set you loose if you yell long enough."

"You beasts—"

"Come along, you chaps," said Harry Wharton. "We've got our property and those rotters are safe enough."

"The safeness is great."

"It will be a lesson to you about interfering with the Remove," said Bob Cherry, wagging a warning finger at the prisoners. "You know the Remove has always been a bit too weighty for you chaps. You should give it up."

"You rotters—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on."

The Removites, carrying the recaptured costumes, crowded out of the study and slammed the door. Temple and Dabney drugged at the rope which fastened them to the bars of the grate, but they dragged in vain. The knots were too well made to come undone, and the rope was too strong to break.

"Well," gasped Dabney, "this is a bit of all right! What utter asses we

shall look when somebody comes along and sees us!"

"Counfound those cheeky young kids! I never foresaw that they'd have the cheek to bust in our lock with a hammer and chisel."

"It seems to me that you never foresee anything, Temple, as far as the Remove is concerned."

"Oh, don't talk rot, Dab!" said Temple crossly.

"I'm not talking rot," said Dabney warmly. "You're always getting into some row with the Remove and getting the worst of it."

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"You'll get the worst of something if you don't shut up!" growled Temple.

"Rats! Nice sort of Form leader you are."

"How could I have helped this?"

"Don't ask me. You ought to have helped it. Look here, I'm going to yell. I'm not going to remain in this fire-grate till I grow old, I can tell you."

"We shall look silly asses—"

"Speak for yourself! Hallo! I can hear somebody coming. Hallo, there! Help!"

The study door opened and Fry of

the Upper Fourth looked in. He stared at the broken lock and at the two juniors sitting in the fender.

"My—my hat!" he gasped. "Gone off your silly rookers? What have you busted your door-lock for? And what the dickens are you doing in the fire-grate?"

"Ass! Can't you see we're tied here to the beastly bars of the rotten grate?" howled Temple.

"By Jove! So you are. What have you tied yourselves up like that for?"

"Idiot! We didn't do it ourselves."

"Ha, ha! I see! This is a little jape and I'll bet anything the Remove is at the bottom of it!" exclaimed Fry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that cackling and come and cut us loose."

"Will you cut us loose?" yelled Temple.

"Certainly," said Fry, opening his penknife. "But it's funny. If you two chaps knew how funny you looked squirming there in the grate, you would laugh, too."

"Cut this rope, you cackling idiot!"

"There you are. I suppose it was the Study No. 1 lot that fixed you up. You're always rowing with Wharton's crowd, you two, and getting done in. I think you might consider the dignity of the Upper Fourth. You shouldn't let yourselves be done like this, for the sake of the Form."

"Oh, shut up!" said Temple irritably, as he rubbed his chafed wrists.

"That's all very well, Temple, but I say what I think. What do you want to do and get yourselves done in for by a gang of youngsters in the Remove?" demanded Fry indignantly.

"That's what I want to know, and what the fellows will want to know, I can tell you. I think myself—"

But what Fry thought himself will never be known, for Temple and Dabney, losing patience, let out at the same time, and two fists caught Fry, one on the nose and one on the chin, and he sat down with a bump. And Temple and Dabney walked away and left him sitting there rubbing his nose.

(The Upper Fourth fellows have had to sing small at the hands of the Wharton Operatic Company. But next week they deal a big blow at their rivals on the night of the great show. Make sure you read these sparkling chapters.)

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