

"Now," said he, when they were at the end of the garden, the boys walking by his side in silent wonder at events which were taking them out of their usual depths, "what is it you want?"

Jack looked at Jim, and Jim looked at Jack.

"You tell," said Jim to his friend, and after a moment's pause the boy's tongue became unloosed.

"It was Art's idea, sir. You see we had a cave in our garden, and I wanted to be able to call up Jim whenever I liked, without the jolly fag of going and ringing at his front door; besides, it's like a sort of telegraphing. We've learnt a few signs from the articles about signalling in the 'B.O.P.' and we've invented some," he added with a laugh, remembering how feverishly the semaphore arms had flung themselves about that afternoon.

"Humph! Yes; but you haven't put the thing very clearly. I'm afraid. What was Art's idea, and where am I wanted to come in?"

"Oh! we only wanted you to let us carry a cord over the top of your pole. The notion was to fix a sort of bell-pull from the cave up to Jim's bedroom window——"

"But surely," interrupted the old man, laughing in spite of himself, "you wouldn't want to go ringing your friend up at night time?"

"I might in the morning, though," answered Jack quickly. "He's a lazy beggar is Jim, and his father ought to be jolly glad if I get him out of bed; he can't."

"You shut up!" put in the aggrieved Jim. "I can be up as early as you any day!"

Without committing himself as a supporter of either opinion on this momentous subject Mr. Grayling gave his consent to the right of way, and, shaking hands with both lads, helped them over into the Burton's garden. They were standing alone (for long ere this the other three lads had left) before they quite realized that their companion "Art" was left behind, and they had been politely returned, as it were, to their own grounds.

"Rum go, this!" said Jim. "I bet that beggar's getting fed up with tea and cakes. I never gave it a thought about his having the same name as Grumpinug. Shouldn't wonder if the old lady turns out to be a fairy god-mother, or something."

"Perhaps he's her long-lost son," said Jack thoughtlessly.

"Likely, isn't it?" was the reply. "Why, she's old enough to be his great-grandmother twice over. I expect his pater's aunt was a sort of second cousin of Grumpinug's wife's mother! You hear of those sort of things sometimes?"

"Do you?" said Jack indifferently, though he rather wondered where. The subject, however, was quickly changed. They had arrived at the shed, and Jim's thoughts were brought back to it.

"You were a silly muff to knock the door about like this," he said in injured tone. "It'll take me all my time to make the pater see it wasn't my fault."

"It wasn't mine either, if you come to that," said Jack. "I was inside, and first thing I knew was no end of a thump, and bang comes the beastly thing smack against my head. A couple of nails and a hammer 'll shake it together again."

"We can try," said Jim doubtfully; "but you wouldn't be so chippy about it if it was *your* pater's place, I know."

As to which Jack wisely refrained from argument.

In the meanwhile Mr. Grayling had retraced his steps back to his wife and the young stranger. The waters were lapping up to the top of the wall now; a little more, and they would overflow it, stubborn and stiff though it had stood so many years.

He entered the room and stood for a moment silent. The old lady's arms were round the boy's neck, as he knelt at her chair; her grey head was bent over his golden pate.

"Many a time has your dear father knelt at my chair like this," she was saying, "and many have been the long talks he and I have had together."