

A HALLOWE'EN COMPLICATION.

BY W. A. C.

PART I.

IT was near the close of the third and final act of the Hallowe'en performance at the Grand. Up in the hot, stifling gods, a feeling of restlessness and uneasiness was gaining ground, and already the big Fourth Year men in the front rows were drawing on their coats, which they had removed earlier in the evening in order to be cooler and give their lungs freer play. From the back rows every now and then a crowd of Undergrads would move noisily out of their seats and group themselves with the throng at the back, ready, as soon as the curtain should drop, to make a rush for the street.

"Blazer" Kennedy, a big Junior, seated in the third row at the side, suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder. With mind intent on the closing scene of the opera, the touch startled him. He looked around, but in the semi-darkness, was unable to make out who it was that was holding a slip of paper toward him. The seats behind had been vacant ever since Bob Hartford had crept out with his chums some ten minutes before. Blazer grabbed the slip of paper and opened it. By holding it close to his face, he was able to make out the words scrawled in uneven characters across it. The note simply said, "Come up for supper after the show. There'll be a jolly crowd. Don't mind dress. Andy."

Blazer was charmed. Andy to him simply meant Winnifred Graham, speaking through the medium of her brother, as she so often did. Andy and Winnie and half a dozen other young people were seated down in the box opposite him. He had wondered whether she had seen him and now the note came as confirmation of that fact. He would much have preferred spending the evening in the box, but he was too well-known a character about the college halls to risk being seen in such a prominent position, so he had remained with the boys in the gods, festooned with blue and white ribbon and armed with a cane and a horn. He had met Winnifred just a year before and between the two an intimacy had rapidly developed, which had now reached perilous proportions. Blazer, as his name would indicate, was an ardent suitor and it was only Winnifred's occasional coolness which prevented him from precipitating matters. He was, as yet, entirely at her mercy.

There was a final flourish from the orchestra. The star gave her last gracious bow and, as the curtain dropped, the band struck up God Save the King and the gods were let loose. Down the narrow stairway the students poured tumultuously. Blazer was dragged along with the crowd as in the vortex of a whirlpool. Out on Adelaide street the scene was one of wild confusion. Classes and faculties, shouting their war cries, rallied their followers in the eddies of the surging mob. Across the street a row of policemen, tall, grim and silent, stood like the Old Guard at Waterloo, ready at a moment's notice for action. As the last stragglers closed into the student ranks, there was a pause of uncertainty. Next moment Osgoode Hall broke loose and dashed for Yonge street, with hoarse shouts from 100 throats. Arts, the School, Dentals and the rest, in a confused column, closed in behind and the fun had begun.

Blazer decided to remain with the crowd for a while before taking the car up to Andy's. There were rumors of strange doings that night and he was in the mood for excitement. Linked in the midst of a row of his classmates, his voice rang loudest in the slogan of the year. Out on Yonge street the road was jammed with humanity, but on and on rushed the stream of hilarious students. At every corner reinforcements of policemen joined the ranks of the accompanying cohort, ready at the slightest notice to pounce on offenders. Up above Queen street cheers broke from the advance guard and the whole column halted. Blazer, standing on tip-toe, could make out the glare of torches in the distance.

"Hold your ground, boys," yelled one of the marshals. "Give them room."

A space was rapidly cleared down the middle of the street.

The cheering was renewed as a gaily-decorated carriage hove in sight, drawn by long ropes, at which a score of Osgoode's bravest pulled. The whole mob of legalities closed in behind. In a twinkling the significance of the sight struck the Queen's Park students.

"They're going to take the actresses for a ride, boys," shouted Blazer. "Why can't we get a carriage, too?"

For a moment there was the utmost confusion. One clamored one thing and another something else. Already the rear ranks had fallen in behind the law students and were hastening rapidly southwards. Then Bob Hartford came to the rescue. He had earlier got an inkling of Osgoode's plan and, without saying much, had made his preparations. He had asked Blazer to leave the theatre early but the latter had refused and so was not in the secret. At the critical juncture, he appeared on the scene with about twenty followers drawing a vehicle, which for its sumptuous equipment far outshone its predecessor. With a triumphal shout the boys closed in around it and, cheering like mad, tore down Yonge street. Adelaide street was filled with a surging mob but the brawny bodyguard fought their way through to the door of the theatre. They were not a moment too soon. Other faculties had been on the alert and fully half a dozen carriages were drawn up awaiting the advent of the chorus girls, who now began to come out and were escorted to the carriages by gallant Undergraduates.

Blazer approached quite near to the entrance of the theatre and, standing there, watched without taking part in the proceedings. He was anxious to be off up-town but yet felt that none of Winnifred's party would leave until the fun was over. Whilst he stood curiously regarding the tumultuous scene, he became conscious all of a sudden that someone was beckoning to him. It was one of the chorus girls, a dainty enough little creature, who was standing just inside the doorway, where the shadow fell heaviest. He was at first inclined to ignore her, but an anxious tearful expression in her face stayed him and, in the confusion, he slipped through the door to her.

"I wish to goodness you'd get me out of this," she exclaimed petulantly, as he came within earshot. "It's an outrage and I won't stand it."

Blazer was somewhat taken aback, but remembering his duty as a gentleman, and picturing Winnifred in a similar plight he murmured that he would do all in his power to assist her.

"If you'll just stand right back in the corner, I'll try to keep away all inquisitive eyes. The crowd will soon clear out of this and then I'll get you a coupe."

In the general confusion the actress was not missed, and presently, as Blazer surmised, the crowd dispersed in pursuit of the procession.

"Couldn't you have made your escape earlier?" asked Blazer, as he directed her steps down the lane to King street. She looked up at him coquettishly and shook her head laughing.

"Not much. All the other doors were locked and I daren't have gone out alone."

She walked along so close to him that Blazer grew anxious and sidled off. There was something dangerously attractive about her and he was anxious to free himself of her company as soon as possible. King street was fairly clear as the pair emerged from the Arcade, and, to his relief, Blazer caught sight of a coupe within a few steps. The cabby was talking to a gentleman, who had apparently just got out, and was standing with his back to Blazer.

"Here we are," exclaimed Blazer, hurriedly seizing the girl's arm. Without noticing the cabby's exclamation of protest, he pushed her towards the open door of the carriage. Too late he perceived that the coupe had an occupant and that the occupant was Winnifred Graham. Her escort, Gerald Wayland, whom he had always feared as his most formidable rival, had noted the occurrence and took no pains to cover up the mishap.

"Good evening, Kennedy, I suppose you won't be up tonight. I'll make your excuses to Andy. Bye, bye!"

(To be concluded.)