

POPULAR TALES & PLENTY OF PICTURES!

THE POPULAR NEW STORY BOOK

THE

EMPIRE

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Vol. 1, No. 20.

JACK LYON HOLDS HIS OWN!

THE SCAPEGRACE OF THE REGIMENT.

A Thrilling NEW Story.

En Route for Dunchester.

In order to receive the princely sum of one shilling, their first day's pay as infantrymen of the line was put into their pockets, and away went Jack Lyon and Napoleon Pott first to the bar, and then to the coffee-bar. By excellent luck it turned out that their joining enabled a draft of ten men of the Fighting Fifts to be sent to the depot that evening, so that there was no weary waiting on the threshold of their new life for which Percival had been glad to see the coffee-bar. Napoleon Pott was even more delighted than Jack.

"You see, I've got people," he announced, turning nervous eyes on the barrack gate as he spoke. "It isn't the gov' nor. It thinks me such a fool, that he'll be more than glad to see the back of me."

"No," added Percival, beginning to sneer. "It's the devil who's afraid of you. It's the devil who's afraid of you, too, won't you be added quickly, as if the thought occurred him."

"Mine," answered Jack, with a snarl in his voice and a very small, black fabled little by little, in spite of all he could do. "Yes, mine would, if I could."

Percival looked at him, then closed his eyes and his mouth, and said nothing, but he was thinking of the infernal clams that he had seen.

"Oh, it's all right! How could I know?" laughed Jack, with a shrug. "It happens just that I've never had any other left, nor I don't really care two straws what becomes of me. I'm on my own, like the Miller of the Dee."

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"Now, then, you slab-sided coward, you've sat there long enough!" exclaimed Jack, rolling up his sleeves. "Get up, and take your medicine!"

Jack, because I can't, but you're bound to hear the talk no sooner or later, so you may as well try and make up your mind about me now. Do I look like a coward? Am I one to be out by every honest man, or will you take my word for it that the whole thing's a lie—a crust, dirty lie?"

For answer Percival slowly rose and stood straight up. Then, as slowly, he held out his hand:

"Old fellow," he began deliberately, "I've never seen you before to-day, but I'll swear my belly fits you none the less. And what's more, if any lily-fellah evah says you did, he'll have to reckon with this!"

And he held up a fist which beside Jack's leg-of-mutton one looked more fit for making pastry than punching heads.

But Jack gripped it and laughed over it, and swore that that settled it, and they would stand by one another, even if the Wollshires were all cannibals, from the colonel to the drummer-boy.

And two hours later, when they had washed their rows of eternal friendship over four penny steak-puddings in the tannery, and two bottles of ginger-pop, the word came that the Wollshires recruits were to get ready to march.

Out the gallant ten straggled, in

pro-as-you-please fashion, to find a strange recruiting-sergeant awaiting them, and beside him, sullen and venomous as a widow to look at, the same orderly that Jack had ducked in the bath that morning.

The man was clad in private's uniform form, for the prophecy of the sergeant in the office had been fulfilled.

As the result of his incivility, Private Green—better known as "Pasty" by his pals of the Fighting Fifts—had been sacked from his soft-bellied at St. George's Barracks, and was being sent back to disgrace to rejoin his regiment.

He was going back with the one intention of making it just as hot as he knew how for the lad who had been the cause of his downfall.

Pasty had plenty of pals, vicious and shifty as himself, to back him, if for no other reason than that Jack, their victim, had been an officer once.

"What!" they would give him an officer before they had done with him—not "arf!" chuckled Pasty, smacking his lips in anticipation.

But—whatever thought of all—his enemy had been an officer who had been kicked out of the Service in disgrace.

"Diagnose!" quoth Pasty. "I'll have to find out all about that, and then, by hooker, I'll teach him to lay his dirty hands on me!"

The fierce grin of triumph, with which he greeted the clams as they tailed on to the "awkward squad," almost made Jack cast discretion to the winds and flatten his nose flatter than Nature had made it already.

However, the word was given to march, and out they straggled through the barrack-gate, Percival Pott squaring his narrow chest manfully, and keeping stride for stride with his new chain, but the real leading along just how they pleased.

Nearly all had bundles, and one or two bags; Jack and Percival carried only the clothes they wore on their backs. They noticed how Pasty and the sergeant dropped to the rear here and there on route, where side streets and narrow alleys were plentiful.

This evidently was in case one of their motley crew tried to make a bolt for freedom. Nor, to judge by the hang-dog look on some of their faces, was the precaution unjustified.

The wester who joins the Army for the sake of the first day's shilling and a warm bed in barracks, and then coolly "does a guy," is a gentlemanly fellow who keeps a sharp eye open for down at "Cruties' Corner."

But Euston Station was reached at last, without any such excitement. Tickets were taken, and the sergeant led them to their compartment.

Jack had been comforting himself

with the thought that he would be travelling with them, and thus Pasty would be kept in his proper place. But he was disappointed.

The sergeant had spotted a civilian friend travelling by the same train, and preferred his company to theirs.

"Now, then, my lads," he said to the squad, as the guard locked them in, "I put you in charge of Private Green here till we get to Dunchester, so don't forget. Take your orders from him, and see you don't get up to any lark, 'cause I'll have my eye on you. You understand, Green?" he added, with a nod to Pasty, and then departed.

Jack could scarce stifle a groan of disgust. His clum and he would be at the mercy of this brute all the way to the pier, and as snarled as he chose.

It was evident that Pasty appreciated his opportunity just as clearly as his victims did.

First of all, he proceeded to ingratiate himself with the bigger and rougher of the recruits. He borrowed one of the men's caps from another, and, cracking questionable jokes, soon had the carriage in a roar.

Everyone thought him an amazingly fine fellow at once; that is, all except Jack and Percival, who sat quietly in their corner.

"Yes," said Pasty grandly at last, blowing a long puff of smoke into Percival's face and making him choke.

"The service 'd be all right in itself if there was no one in it but honest working coves like yourself."

He was careful to make it clear that this applied to everybody except Jack and Percival.

"No," he went on; "it's the wrong 'uns that manage to sneak in that sneers it; down-at-heel crooks wot call themselves gentlemen rangers 'I Pah!'" And he expostulated to show his contempt.

The rest of the draft eyed the two chums furively and leered. Certainly it looked as if Pasty was digging at them in their fine clothes and collar. By a wink and a grin, the private showed that they were quite right in their opinion.

"I will say that for the Fighting Fifts though," he continued. "We know how to put the scum in their places. How, yes, it ain't long I tell you before they're sorry they joined our 'I Pah, you," he said, turning suddenly on Percival. "Wot's your name when you're out of quad?"

"Don't answer him," said Jack, before his friend could reply.

"Wot!" grated the soldier, in pretended surprise, though it was plain he anticipated the result. "You dare to interfere 'twix me and a man when I gives an order!" Do you know I'm in command here!"

"Unfortunately I do," answered Jack. "Otherwise I should have allowed myself the pleasure of punching your head before this!"

Pasty exploded like a soda-water bottle.

"Because the sergeant chooses to neglect his duty," Jack rattled on impulsively. It was a tactless remark to make, and bitterly was Jack to rue it.

"Sergeant neglects his dooty!" echoed Pasty, snapping him up in a trice. "Oh, yes," he said, turning to Mister Hoosier, wot got kicked out of the Service, giving himself airs!

The other recruits gaped and

Continued on the next page.

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The Most Popular School Story.

THE RIVALS OF ST WODE'S



THIS HAS TAKEN PLACE.
A little party, consisting of a Council member, a schoolmaster, and a few others, were in the hall at St. Wode's school, when a young man, who had just returned from a holiday, was introduced to the schoolmaster by a friend of his name.

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and the deal fell to Craxcow. He stepped the cards round deftly, with the practiced manner which, as a successful gambler, he had acquired. Craxcow looked over his cards carefully, and put on a very wonky face.
"No trumps," he said.
Bray looked across at Vernon gravely.
"I play," he said.
"I double," said Vernon.
Craxcow looked at his lordship, who clinked his hand, then he selected a card. Bray looked toward him, and then he laid exposed his hand.
He laid the thirteen cards down in suits, and Dick Penwyn, whom he was a surprising proceeding, looked over the cards. He realized without asking questions that this was an excellent past of Bray's, and that the vicount had no ace, and few picture cards. Craxcow looked over, selected a card, and placed it on the table. Craxcow followed with a card of the same suit from his own hand, and Vernon collected in the trick.
It remained to him and his partner till the eighth trick had been followed in by one of them, and then it fell to Craxcow. He looked at the cards, and then the twelfth went to Vernon. The thirteenth was Craxcow's.
Vernon and Bray had taken nine tricks—three to each. Three tricks in no trumps valued thirty-six points, and as the value of his own cards, the partners scored seventy-two, and had easily gone out on the first round.
"Early bargains," said Craxcow.
"Jova 3321," said Lord Lovell.
Bray dealt for the next round.
Dick Penwyn was watching the game more intently now. He was following up the points of the game very quickly; wherein the game was the same as what, he knew it already, and his observations were not at all peculiar, when he had once seen a game played. That the dealer's partner exposed his hand, leaving the cards to be played by the dealer, and that dealer declared what would be trumps, were the chief distinctions. But Pen was not only learning now that he was watching.
The hand respecting.
Little as he knew of the game, he thought that Craxcow's play was not so good as it might have been. In any respect, as if he were not unwilling to lose that round, if Craxcow lost, of course Lord Lovell, his partner, lost. If the fellow was playing for money, and the rubber finished in the same way, Craxcow and Lovell would both have to pay up to their opponents. There was nothing to be gained, and yet remain in Craxcow's study.
Pen was not naturally a suspicious fellow. But the Fifth-Formers felt so completely an indifference to any intelligence the Council-school boy might have had, that they were far less careful than they might have been.
Bunny saw nothing. But Pen, looking on, had not failed to mark the secret understanding among the Blades.
Yet the natural inference, that Lovell was asked to play bridge in the Blades's company in order to relieve him of his money, without giving him a chance, was too black. Pen was still somewhat under the first glamour of St. Wode's. It seemed impossible, that fellows who had been at the same school, and in an ancient public school, were actually capable of cheating at cards when dealing with a simple and unsuspecting partner.
Pen did not care to think so. But he made up his mind on one point—Lovell should not be cheated if he could help it.
He snapped it out in his mind. If the Blades were acting in collusion, their programme would almost certainly be to let Lovell win one game in five. And that was a very high concession by beating him too hard.
And the second game of the rubber, sure enough, Lovell and his partner did win, though Bray had all the advantage of being dealer and making the declaration.
Pen watched the third game of the rubber very attentively.
The players were now games out of the rubber—100 points for the rubber, and the other 100 points would have to pay up; and Pen was already certain in his mind that Lovell would win one of the paying.
He was right.
Lovell had very good cards, as it chanced—the manoeuvres of all the Blades did not go so far as to give

them complete mastery of the pack. It was Lovell's deal, and he had been himself good cards, and he declared trumps.
I've saw a glance exchanged among the Blades. They did not think of Lovell's deal, and they seemed to have forgotten his existence. He was no more to them than the look-alike of the first round.
Lovell proceeded to play his hand and dummy's with considerable skill. As he was pretty strong in trumps, he had a declaration of going out on the single round. Pen glanced at the Blades in turn, and he could see the gathering anxiety in their faces.
Lovell being dealer, and playing his partner's exposed hand without assistance from his partner, it was impossible for Craxcow to influence the game in any way. But the Blades had probably not expected Lovell to play so well. At all events, they just saw Craxcow's cards, as he played, to see whether he had a hand strong enough to justify doubling no trumps, and he saw that Craxcow had no ace, and that Craxcow would win that the score against Lovell would be three-six.
The next deal was Vernon's.
He declared no trumps, which Craxcow promptly doubled. Pen watched Craxcow's cards, as he played, to see whether he had a hand strong enough to justify doubling no trumps, and he saw that Craxcow had no ace, and that Craxcow would win that the score against Lovell would be three-six.

Pen, feeling utterly miserable, left the study and closed the door behind him. As he went he said to himself, "I feel quite calmly, as if nothing had happened. My deal, I think!"
He was in the final reckoning, knowing that Bray and Vernon would win.
And they did win.
Two tricks ahead gave them 43 points, and they had won the third game and the rubber.
"Jova! Beats!" said Lovell, suppressing a yawn.
Pen's eyes gleamed.
Exactly to what extent the Blades had played foul, he did not know, but that there had been foul play was absolutely clear.
"Lemme see," said Craxcow loudly. "You and I pay up, Bunny. It's only a sov, a hundred, so it won't break us."
"Jova, no!" said Lovell smiling.
"You're paying for money!" he exclaimed.
It was the last proof he needed that the Blades had been "spooding." Of course, if they had not been playing for money, they would have had no object in cheating.
They all turned and stared at him. There was disapproval in Lovell's look. He did not want his friend to make a scene in another fellow's study. As to what he had been doing during the game, Bunny had not even thought about it.
Craxcow smiled sarcastically.
"Did you think we were playing for buttons, Penwyn?" he asked.
And that was the end of the matter. Pen flushed red.
"I did not know—that is, I was not sure!" he exclaimed. "I would not have come here to play for money. It is gambling!"

"Dear me!" said Craxcow.
"Shut up, Pen, old man!" said Lovell, turning to Pen. "It's all right. Don't play the giddy goat, you know."
But Pen did not shut up. He had been brought up to regard playing for money as what it was—gambling and wrong. Wrong, especially when it was done for a crowd, as in these Fifth-Form fellows, who were leading a younger and simpler lad into wickedness.
"I've about up, Bunny!" said Pen. "I don't know much about public schools."
"You don't?" interjected Craxcow.
"You know a lot against all the rules here for fellows to play cards for money in their studies," said Pen.
"He wasn't know, you young fool!" "It was wrong—wicked! Bunny, you can't do it! Come away, old fellow!" Pen's voice was deeply earnest. He moved towards Lord Lovell, and laid a hand upon his shoulder.
Craxcow burst into a mocking laugh.
"Are you going to be talked in like that, Lovell, by that low-level outsider? Did you bring that cheap here?" Pen's voice was deeply earnest. He moved towards Lord Lovell, and laid a hand upon his shoulder.
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Pen stepped quickly back. Lovell would not come with him, and after what he had said, he could hardly remain in Craxcow's study. It was on his feet to tell what happened, what he was sure of; but it would not have done. He had no proof—nothing but suspicion. He could say nothing. He made one last appeal.
"You won't cross, Bunny?"
"No, I won't."
Dick Penwyn said no more. He left the study, and closed the door behind him; and as he went, he heard Craxcow say quite calmly, as if nothing had happened:
"My deal, I think!"
"That's not so more."
Pen went slowly to his study. He was feeling more miserable than he had felt at any time since his first arrival at St. Wode's. In the few days he had been in the school he had had more than one trial. Blagden's snobbish drooping of him on the subject of the scholarship boy, had cut him more deeply than he cared to show. The knowledge that the St. Wode's fellows generally regarded him as a "pouter" was a constant reminder. One marked out from the rest—just the proud, high-spirited Cornish lad.
He would not show the wound, but it was there. He did not even let heart upon his face for days to pick up at. But he felt the slight that had been put upon him—felt them all keenly.

The friendship of Bunny had seemed likely to outweigh all the trials that were in store for him. Pen sincerely liked the kind, generous lad, and he had been so taken with what the other fellows would have termed "soft" only made Dick Penwyn like him the more. There was something about the soft, pouter that was a real sort of friendship, and he was only too glad to think that his strength and his courage might stand between the vicount and many a rougher, but more "set of jaw" jansour. He was ready to fight for Bunny to the last gasp, and to stand anything for his sake.
But there was a danger he could not see. Bunny from here was a peril he could not share, a pitfall from which he could not protect the generous and too-trusting Lord Lovell.
In the clutches of the Blades—the Blades as the Fifth-Formers were like the helms by in the web of the spider.
The lad was amenable to flattery. Pen did not promise him for it. He was kind, but he was otherwise, considering what his upbringing must have been—the heir to a great title and a great fortune reared in the midst of the world.

(Continued on the next page.)

A—A
New School Tale.
By
CHARLES HAMILTON.
Author of
"THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S."



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ST. WODE'S.

was that Bunny was as frank and kind and unassuming as he was. His faults were the faults of a kind and unassuming character.

The Blades were leading him into gambling. Bunny had plenty of money, and he threw himself into the amusement as he might have carelessly purchased a new bicycle that he did not need, or a pony he would not ride. He was extravagant with money, and that was odd and distinctive to a lad who had always been careful of every sixpence—who had had, indeed, almost no few sixpences to be careful with. Bunny had no idea that he was doing wrong in playing cards for money; indeed, why not?

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A Capital Complete Tale by Prosper Howard.



CHAPTER I. The Fourth-Form Bully.

TAKE that, you young sweep!" "Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!"

Carpenter, the worst bully in the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, thought that he was looking down on the trembling figure of the roughly-clad boy before him.

"You call those boots clean, do you?" cried Carpenter, after a moment's pause. "You call them clean, do you?"

"Yes, Master Carpenter," replied the boy, "but—" "I know you complained about them the other day—and rightly, too, then—but it won't be long now. I—I—I felt almost ill to work, and now your boots wasn't cleaned properly, I tried, I say, I—I—"

Thump! Carpenter gave a snort of disgust as he interrupted the frightened school boot-boy with another blow.

"Tried," cried he, "Tried to clean 'em. Did you clean 'em? You clean 'em, but you say that young rat saying he tried when he paid for the job?"

Larking grinned at Carpenter. "That's my rat," he replied. "That is a bit thick, considering the bouncer 'is' paid for the job!"

A GREAT FIGHT Being the Adventures of Gordon Gay & Co.

CHAPTER II. The Boot-boy's Challenge.

JACK and Harry Wootton and Horace Tulpole—Gordon Gay's study-mates—were seated round the study table, entertaining their three rivals of the Fourth Form to tea. They were Frank Monk, Lane, and Carboy, and although the two visitors were deadly rivals where papers were concerned, they often buried the hatchet and partook of tea in one another's studies.

The only visitor from the festive scene was the leader of Gordon Gay & Co. himself. "Gordon Gay had made some excuse to the juniors just before tea, and although his study chums had attempted to detain their leader until tea was over, they had not been successful, for Gordon Gay had slipped out of their clutches."

"I wonder," mused Frank Wootton, as tea was over, "why the dunnings class is cleared off? It's not like Gay to have tea out when we're entertaining chaps from—"

"Ah, yes, the parcel of the door interrupted the Australian junior, and Jack and Harry Wootton and Horace Tulpole—Gordon Gay's study-mates—were seated round the study table, entertaining their three rivals of the Fourth Form to tea.

"I—I haven't been feeling well just lately," he faltered. "My mother has a cold, and—"

"Well, why didn't you tell him, you young chump?" said Gordon Gay. "I know, Master Gay."

"Well, why didn't you tell him, you young chump?" said Gordon Gay. "I know, Master Gay."

CHAPTER III. The Great Fight.

THE excitement of a Grammarian was on the wane when he had fortunately Carpenter and Larking arrived on the scene, clad in running shorts and vests. They also had boxing-gloves tied to their fists, and they each gave a grin as a devotee cheer greeted them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried the juniors. "Look at the two bantam light-weights!"



Carpenter stepped back in true boxing fashion, and there was a yell from behind him. "Look out!" roared Murray major, "you've stepped on my toe!"

"The next instant a youth dashed into the room. "A fight, chaps!" he cried. "A fight in ten minutes behind the five-court!"

"What?" they cried. "Yes," cried Snipe, one of Carpenter's cronies. "That young cad Jenkins has had the cheek to send a challenge to Carpenter and Larky!"

"Why, that's not fair," cried Horace Tulpole, looking round at the juniors. "That's two to one."

"The Fifth had enough of you?" he asked. "You did not reply. He was in no humour for another row with Hagdon. He crossed over to the fireplace, where Nowcome was sitting by himself, wrestling with his Horace. Nowcome looked up at Fen. "I suppose you don't have much of a game this?" he said. "You looked at the book. "I can construe it easily enough, if that is what you mean," he said. "If I'm off course, you've passed the scholarship exam. I believe it is a stiff one, too," said Nowcome. "You nodded." "It was stiff enough to me," he said. "How the deuce did you learn enough to enter for it?" asked Nowcome, eventually. "You didn't have Latin, for instance, at the Central school, did you?"

"The boot-boy came forward and stirred the fire, his aged school-crewing gloves. "Will you please tie these on for me, Master Wootton?" he said. "I don't have a match in my hand, and everything was ready for the fight to commence. Jenkins' face was white, but he looked by no means his opponent. Price one penny—three one penny! Come on, my lad! I lead you the footstap train for his great fights! Price one penny!"

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