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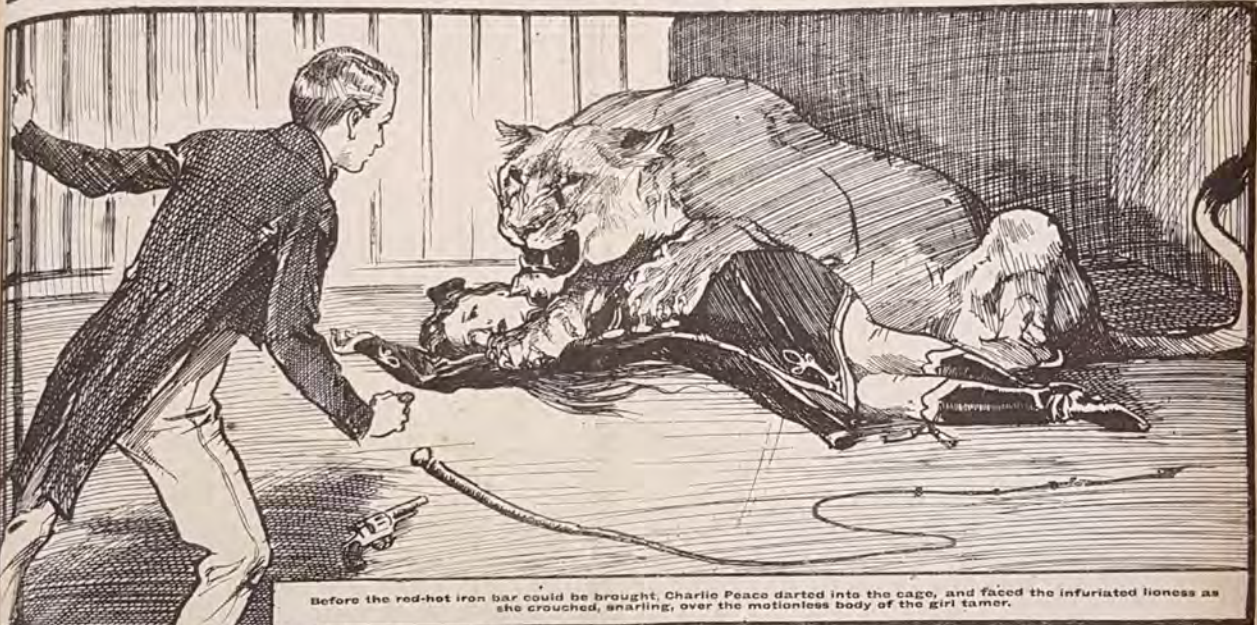
THE POPULAR NEW STORY BOOK

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THE DARK LANTERN. A SPLENDID TALE OF THE BOYHOOD OF CHARLES PEACE.



Before the red-hot iron bar could be brought, Charlie Peace darted into the cage, and faced the infuriated lioness as she crouched, snarling, over the motionless body of the girl tamer.

Readers are informed that the story is in the following Serial Story... Charlie to the Rescue. "Oh! My warty, am I?" cried Charlie Peace, with a kind of morning laugh.

quicken his pace. At nine Mrs. Burnett, the old woman who looked after the wardrobe and mended the costumes, sent Willie Wobboise, one of the stable lads, out for her supper—generally a baked sheep's head and potatoes. Charlie's mouth curled as he thought of it. If he watered as he thought of it, he would reach Jagger's a little before time, he would get the boy to buy two sheep's heads instead of one.

"Ah, to be sure! But I didn't know as you'd got a mother..." "Of course I have, but she lives a long way from here," said Charlie carelessly. "But just now I'm thinking about something else—supper. I've been walking miles and miles. I do believe I could eat a donkey's hind leg. Hello, here's Willie! There's your twopenny, my lad!"

about the thing; he was far too interested in Stella, who was putting the animals through their performance with wonderful coolness. The lioness she reserved for the last. The sleek, tawny creature seemed to-night to be in a tractable mood. She obeyed every order readily, her final feat being to spring from one side of the cage to the other, while Stella fired a pistol, and then to lie down as though she had been shot.

Milo, the "Strong Man," Mystified. OR a second the onlooker, the shouts of the men, the screams of the frightened women ceased. Breathlessly the horrified spectators watched the boy crouch opposite the lioness, bringing his head on a level with that of the savage brute. Without showing the slightest sign of fear, Charlie Peace fixed his eyes on the yellow orbs dilated with rage.

Continued on the next page.

The Scapegrace of the Regiment.

(Continued.)

tip as to which to "plump" for and which to avoid.

For even in the smartest battalion there are some companies good and some rank here and there.

Jack could imagine, for instance, that any "crush" Lieut. the Hon. Gageston (Glyn) had anything to do with would be bound to be rotten, and no place for them.

Then, again, they had no desire to fall into Sergeant Rigg's clutches permanently if they could avoid it. But, whether either of these belonged to E—the company they were told of—they had not the ghost of an idea, and they were too proud to inquire.

They found their future, sergeant seated in his "bunk."

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any actual person or event, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

The Most Popular School Story.

THE RIVALS OF ST. WODE'S.

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

THIS HAS TAKEN PLACE.

Dick Penwyn, a sturdy Cornish lad, who has been to a Council school, obtains a scholarship at St. Wode's. On his arrival there he is received with open arms by Blagden & Co., who mistake him for another new fellow—Lord Lovell. On discovering their mistake, Blagden & Co. become bitter enemies of both Penwyn and Lovell, who come together. To the disgust of his Form fellows, "Bunny" Lovell is taken up by Crawcour & Co. Pen sees plainly, in doing the easy-going young viscount no good. Bunny, however, will not listen to his friends' remonstrances, and Pen is wandering about disconsolately during one of his chum's visits to the "Blades," as Crawcour & Co. call themselves, when Newcome, of the Fourth, accosts him curiously.

"Are you glad to be at St. Wode's, Penwyn?"

"Yes, sir," replies Pen.

(Lead on from here.)

Assistance for Newcome.

"NLY in a way," said Newcome, grinning.

"Yes, I know it's a risk in life for me, and may mean something for me in the future, and for my people. But the fellows here don't seem so hearty an unaffected set as the fellows I've met at home."

Newcome chuckled. He wondered what Blagden and Co. would say if they knew that the scholarship chap carried the Fourth's fellows so favorably with the Council-school chap he was used to.

"Does that amuse you?" asked Pen.

"Yes, rather. But it's all right," said Newcome, good-humouredly. "You'll get used to us, you know. We're not all bad; there are black jokers here, but if you're decent all the time, you'll get on with most of the fellows."

"I hope I shall be decent."

"Don't be touchy, and I know Newcome quietly. 'Is not getting at you, you're not a snob, and I saw you're all right. At the same time, you can't expect all the fellows to see it all at once."

"You're only not so stuck to your guns and play the game to pull through. A chap can never be really done in, except by himself. That's my opinion!"

"I dare say you're right."

"Oh, I'm right!" said Newcome cheerfully. "You depend on your uncle! Look here, you must have been through this stuff in the scholarship exam. I know they make it jolly stiff. You can't get away if you formers here, who can't pass it, though it's only to admit you to the Fourth!"

"You're likely!"

"Well, go through this with me, there's a good fellow," said Newcome. "Your friend doesn't want you now, does he—I mean Lovell? I believe you've chummed up with him?"

"Yes," said Pen.

"He doesn't want you for a minute, I suppose?"

swallowing them. This gloomy cupboard outside the door of one of the barrack-rooms, seemed to Jack rather less comfortable than the prison-cell in which he had just spent the night.

However, it was private, and after a few years in a crowded barrack-room, most soldiers would be glad enough to sling their coats in a coal-cellar if that were allowed.

Unfortunately, Colour-sergeant Bush, of E, seemed as gloomy as his surroundings. Jack stood him up as a weak man, and since a weak Colour can only mean an indifferent company at best, he realised that once again their luck was surely out.

He read them a lecture on the bad start they had made in their new career; but so little heart did he put into it that Jack found himself actually yawning.

"Well, there's your order for your kit," concluded the colour-mountain. "You'd take those over to the quarter-master's store at two o'clock sharp, and get measured. And just so nobody pinches any of your stuff, when you've it back to your room, because they're a pretty cruel lot. It's the one just before your eyes," explained, turning again to his little table littered with pycosts and all papers. "Ask for Private Haggis and Sims, and tell 'em you show you. They'll look after you and show you the ropes."

The gloomy colour heaved a last heavy sigh, and taking this as a signal of dismissal, Jack winked at Percival and led the way out.

"That man's just wasted as a soldier. He ought to be sent to the front simply to look at him," laughed Jack, as he descended the draughty staircase and hailed "at a door" marked "25 N.C.O. and Men."

P Drives to Revolt.

"PENWYN!" Mr. Bush was shouting in his rage, his words coming out thickly.

"Penwyn! How dare you, boy!"

Pen looked at him in surprise.

Mr. Bush had heard his remark, but he did not see why it should offend the master of the school. Pen had been about to say nothing that had any harm in it—ill as Mr. Bush had treated him, he was not the fellow to carp and growl about a matter behind his back.

But Mr. Bush had evidently taken very great exception to the words which Pen regarded as perfectly harmless.

His face was quite white with passion, and his eyes were scintillating with an unpleasant greenish light.



"I am waiting for you, Penwyn," said Mr. Bush ominously. "Hold out your hand." But Pen put his hands behind him.

"Penwyn, you—you gutter-brat!" said Mr. Bush thickly. "How dare you talk about me! I say, how dare you slander me, sir?"

Pen crimsoned.

"I was not slandering you, sir," he said quietly. "I was saying that you were a dirty gutter-brat from the streets!"

"A disgrace to the Council-school where you were taught, you have come here to be a greater disgrace to St. Wode's!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Blagden. Pen bit his lip.

"You'll not find it pay to slander your masters," said Mr. Bush. "There is severe punishment provided at St. Wode's for that kind of villany. Penwyn, you cannot bring the habits of the—of the criminal classes here with impunity."

"I did not slander you. I will tell you what I was about to say."

"Boy! How dare you!"

"I was saying, sir, that if you had been a scholarship boy yourself, you would probably show more consideration for me as a scholarship boy," said Pen. "That is what I was saying when you interrupted me."

Mr. Bush glared at him.

"And how dare you assume that a master at St. Wode's has had the same disgraceful upbringing as yourself, you gutter outcast!" he thundered.

Pushing this open, they found themselves in a big, bare room, carpeted round the four walls, with long tables with forms running down the centre, and in the middle of a large hall, and an equally enormous coal-bin.

Above each bed was a shelf on which was stowed a soldier's extra uniform, belonging according to pattern, so that each shelf was as like the rest as peas in a pod.

Beneath was a row of pegs for hats and equipment, and beside the bed a rack for the rifle.

As it was close on time for the dinner hour, to sound the room was full. A few men lounged on the ends of the fold-up bed-cots, reading papers, but the greater number were grouped about one of the tables for food, to judge by the rattle of a dice-box and the invitations of a

"I have not had a disgraceful upbringing, sir," said Pen, his lip trembling. "I was brought up by my father."

At some low, ill-mannered wretch like yourself, only too eager to thrust his son into a place he was not fit for!"

"His eyes burned."

"If you speak of my father in that way again, sir, I shall complain to the Head!" he said, in low, determined tones.

"Go it!" murmured Newcome, not loud enough for Mr. Bush to hear.

Mr. Bush had simply staggered back, so stunned that he was almost astounded than enraged at the words of the scholarship boy.

"What—what?" he stammered.

Pen set his lips firmly. So long as the form-master in his mean, spiteful way, sneered at and abused him, Pen could stand it, and meant to stand it. But that his father, the head of the house, should have worked for him and made endless sacrifices for his sake—sacrifices that might never be able to repay—that John Penwyn could be spoken of insultingly by so mean a creature as Mr. Bush—that was not to be endured. Pen would not have stayed at St. Wode's to endure it. He would sooner have given up all his prospects there, and shaken the dust of the place from his feet for ever.

He faced the Form-master calmly. There was a dangerous gleam in his eyes now. The glance of everyone in the room was upon the singular scene. The fellows were almost breathless, wondering how the Form-master would take the cheek of the scholarship scholar.

Mr. Bush's fingers were clenching and unclenching with rage.

But he knew that he had gone too far.

He read determination in Pen's face, and he knew that if his words were reported to the head-master of St. Wode's in any form, the scholarship boy, he would have a very painful scene to go through with Dr. Wimperis. The Head was very strong on the subject of the masters' respect for the habits of the boys. In fact, Mr. Bush saw a possibility of his having to leave St. Wode's if the Cornish junior carried out his threat.

He choked back the furious words that leaped to his lips.

Pen did not speak. He had no desire to triumph over the Form-master in any way. It was only determined that his father should not be spoken of disrespectfully by Mr. Bush or by anybody else. He would not have stood it from the Head.

"Penwyn!" said Mr. Bush, at last. "I—I hardly know how to deal with you. You—you are such a ruffian, such an untamed hooligan!"

"If you dare to be expelled, sir," said Blagden.

"Hear, hear!" murmured Skeat. "Quite right," said Mr. Bush. "Quite right," Blagden said. "You certainly should be expelled; it is not fit that he should mix with the sons of gentlemen. I trust, however, that you do not intend to do so. I am certain you more than you can help."

"Trust us for that, sir," said Blagden.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Cads!" murmured Newcome. "Fancy sucking up to old Bushy like that!"

"I—I hardly know what to say to you, Penwyn," said Mr. Bush. "I suppose it is useless to complain of your manners—drugging and disgracing at as you are."

Pen did not reply.

Mr. Bush went on victoriously. The mean-hearted man realised that so

long as he only insulted Pen, and not Pen's father, he was in no danger of that dreaded complaint to the Head. He was in no danger of that to Pen's forbearance, he was none the less keen to take advantage of it. "I am glad to see," said Mr. Bush, "that you boys can't get any more keenly as myself the form-master have brought upon them. I am very sorry that there is no means of punishing you for your conduct. Still Pen was silent. He had his eyes burned. He had hardened himself to this, and he could stand it.

There was a new resource in your case, Penwyn—you can be caned," said Mr. Bush, wishing in his heart the cane he had in his hand. He had come to the junior row to cane any boy who was in authority over him. "Hold out your hand, Penwyn."

A hunted look came into Pen's eyes.

How long was this to last? His hands were yet aching from the last caning Mr. Bush had found an excuse for giving him.

Pen was about to submit to constant ill-usage—to be savagely, cruelly caned whenever it suited the cruel temper of the mean-spirited man who was in authority over him. Was life worth living on such terms—were the advantages his St. Wode's scholarship had brought him worth the price?

Pen was not a soft lad—he could stand punishment. But constant, undeserved punishment, that was a different matter.

"Hold out your hand for you, Penwyn," said Mr. Bush ominously.

Pen's hands were still down at his sides.

The Fourth Form were simply breathless.

Was the scholarship chap—the Council-school brawler—going to defy the master of his Form? It seemed impossible.

There was no fellow in the St. Wode's Fourth who would have dared to do it. Did the Cornish scholar intend to do it? He was more than the rest of the Form there.

"Surely not! But—"

But he was not to hold out his hand. The silence was tense—the excitement thrilling to the juniors who were looking on. For once there was something like sympathy for Pen in many of the faces round him.

Flurried, at least, the fellows knew it was to "back up" against old Bushy. They might dislike Pen, but they enjoyed seeing the dominating, unimpeded, Form-master taken down.

"Penwyn!"

"Yes, sir," said Pen quietly.

"If you mean to hold out the silence like a knife, there was no danger in it, but there was no fear. There was only steady calmness."

"Yes!" "You heard me!"

"I told you to hold out your hand."

"Obey me!"

"Why am I to be caned, sir?"

"Do you dare to question your boy?" thundered Mr. Bush, or—

Pen's hand had at once, sir, or— will thrash you, sir, where you want. Hold out your hand instantly, Penwyn."

Mr. Bush's bluster was a sign that he was near to his position, and Pen did not know that. But he did not surrender.

He put his hands behind him.

"You've no right to obey me," shouted Mr. Bush, hardly believing his eyes.

(Another splendid instance of the simplicity test work.)