

A SPECIAL EASTER ALL-STORY NUMBER!

THE

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

THE EMPIRE

THE WEEKLY STORY-PAPER.

Vol. 1.
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A Long, Complete Story
of
'PANTHER' GRAYLE,
DETECTIVE.
By
JACK LANGASTER.

(Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary; no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but our Editor wishes it to be generally understood that no adverse reflection is intended.)

CHAPTER I.

An Appeal for Help.

GORDON GRAYLE, better known as the Panther, was supposed to be busy. I, Geoffrey Martin, his friend, and sometimes his assistant, sat reading while he scribbled away after a letter. Almost simultaneously the Panther laid aside his pen and I set down my book, and we both listened. The light footfalls of a girl were ascending the stairs.

The Panther's housekeeper had been given strict instructions to admit no "body." Whether she had risked the consequences of disobedience or had been eluded we did not know.

We heard the girl pause outside the door. She did not knock at once, she smiled at each other, guessing that she was very flustered and nervous, and afraid to rap at the door. Presently the knock came—more a rattle than a knock, very low and

soft. "Come in!" said the Panther cheerily.

The door opened, and she entered. She was a girl of nineteen or twenty, slight, and of medium height. She might have been pretty, but the hour had died out of her face. She appeared crushed by some blow, white, colorless, infinitely pitiable.

"Can you spare me a few moments?" she said, in a tone half pleading, half apologetic. "I can see that you are busy, but—but I will keep you many minutes." He placed a chair for her, and the other invited her to sit down.

"My time is at your disposal," he said. "Please tell me in what way I can serve you."

"Have you heard of the great 'smould robbery' in the City?" she asked breathlessly.

The Panther nodded.

"Yes. I understand that John Wilford has been arrested in connection with the affair. I have not gone very closely into the case, but things seem to look very black against him."

"They look black enough, Heaven knows," she answered. "He has no more to do than you. I—I am content to be a witness."

"In that case I sincerely hope he is innocent. If you wish me to help perhaps you would not mind reminding my memory as to certain facts which a busy man like myself is liable to forget."

"Yes, I'll tell you all about it," she brightening up considerably now. She saw that the Panther was disinclined to lend a kindly ear. "Jack was admitted clerk to the firm of Messrs. Agbury & Lockhart." He obtained an official introduction to the firm, was entrusted implicitly. There was some talk of his being taken into

THE GREAT DIAMOND ROBBERY.



A LEAP FOR LIBERTY!

partnership at no very distant date. Such a high trust was placed in him that the keys of the safe often remained in his possession for days together.

The day before yesterday a friend of Mr. Lockhart's was extremely anxious to buy some shares, and was without ready money. He was a diamond-merchant, and offered twenty thousand pounds' worth of valuable stones as security until some money owing to him should be paid in. Mr. Lockhart trusted his friend, but the other insisted on his keeping

the diamonds. They were put into the safe and left there.

"That same evening Jack was taking me to a theatre. He remained at the office after the others had gone to change into his evening clothes. He told the caretaker, and arranged with her to let him in after he had seen me home—I live at Kensington—so that he could take the bag in which he had packed his morning clothes home with him. Well, next morning, when the safe was opened in Mr. Lockhart's presence, the diamonds were found to have disappeared. The

only other key was in the possession of Mr. Agbury, the sleeping partner.

"Jack was immediately arrested. He possessed the key to the safe; he had visited the office after midnight; the evidence against him seems conclusive. But he didn't do it, Mr. Grayle; I'm convinced he didn't do it, although I seem to be the only one who believes in his innocence."

"Not the only one, if you will excuse my saying so," the Panther observed. "You mean," she exclaimed, "that you, too—"

"I am quite convinced that, after what you have told me, that Mr. Wilford had nothing to do with the robbery. A man about to commit a theft under those circumstances would have gone about things in an entirely different way. He would have insisted upon giving up the key, having first got a duplicate made on the sly. He would have committed the robbery immediately after dark, and would certainly not have returned to the office after midnight to fetch a bag of clothes. Still, the police never seem to see things in that light."

"You must save him," she said earnestly. "If he is convicted it will kill me."

"She speaks quite calmly, but she meant it. 'I think we will adopt the good old motto of never say die,' the Panther remarked cheerfully. 'Now, my dear young lady, I want you to do your best to answer one or two questions, and then I will do my utmost to get at the truth of the whole business. Do you know the name of the diamond-merchant who left the stones in Mr. Lockhart's possession?'

"Yes, Jack was telling me about him. His name is Lazarus Lievens; his office is somewhere in Hatton Garden."

"Thanks! And now, if you could tell me about the time which Mr. Wilford would have reached the City after leaving you, it might help a little."

"About one o'clock, I should think. He reached Kensington at twelve-thirty, and left immediately in a taxi."

"And now, if you can give me the address of Messrs. Agbury & Lockhart, I think that will conclude my catechism, Miss Lievens."

"I'm sorry," she said, "I have not told you my name. It is Miss Brian."

"She went on to give the address of the office, as the Panther had requested, and then handed him her card."

"If you have good news," she said, "you will let me hear from you at once, won't you, Mr. Grayle?"

"Certainly!" the Panther answered. "I trust that it may be my good fortune not to call you waiting very long. I will certainly do my best for you and Mrs. Wilford!"

"She shook hands with us both, and then the Panther showed her out."

"Well," I said, as he came back into the room, "you've about done it now. You've got enough work to last you for weeks, and now you've undertaken another case."

"It can't be helped," he answered. "Here's a case of an innocent man in prison, and unless someone lends him a hand he'll be quadded as sure as his name's Wilford."

"You seem pretty certain of his innocence," I said.

"I am, for the reasons I explained to Miss Brian. Well, Martin, suppose we do a wee bit more time taking. Shout down to the housekeeper and tell her to call a cab, and then get your hat and coat on. We are going to do ourselves the honor of calling upon Messrs. Agbury & Lockhart."

"We did not exchange another half dozen words until we were half way down Fleet Street in a taxicab."

"What we want to discover," the Panther said to me, "is the name of the maker of the safe. When I hear of a safe being opened without any apparent violence, I'm always suspicious. On some of these safes there are screws at the back under a coating of enamel; the burglar has only

Continued on the next page.

A GRAND NEW STORY STARTS NEXT WEDNESDAY.

Conclusion of this popular School Story. THE RIVALS OF ST WODE'S



THIS HAS TAKEN PLACE.

Dick Penwyn, a Cornish lad who goes to a Council-school at St. Wode's...

By CHARLES HAMILTON. Author of "THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S."

Blagden's Family.

"WELL," said Corry, "he's getting so jolly popular, that the question seems to me to be whether he'll have anything to do with you."

"Oh, all right!" "Pen and Johnny came out of the house, the latter with a hat under his arm."

"Are you fellows going to stand by me?" "Oh, rats!" said Corry's reply.

"I'm not going to stand the cad. If he plays I don't. You fellows can take your choice."

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arm through Pen's, and leading him off towards the playing-fields. "You won't do anything of the sort."

"No," said Corry, "Blaggy will come round, and I don't see why you shouldn't play. Besides, it's no good making Hawke—he's dead determined on jinnies keeping up the practice."

"But Blagden was not in his place there. The erstwhile captain of the Fourth Form at St. Wode's had tramped away by himself, and he was alone with a strange feeling of being friendless and solitary, which he had caused Pen to feel often enough."

"He turned back towards the school at last, and paused on the bridge over the little stream to rest."

"The cricket practice was long over, and Pen was taking a quiet stroll by himself. A large tree hid Blagden from his sight, as Blagden sat on the low stone parapet of the bridge."

"He had tried other means of bringing his rival to his feet. But all means had failed."

"Blagden clenched his fists hard. Once more he would try it—he would conquer the boy he hated—the boy who had never injured him—or he would speed his last ounce of strength in the attempt."

Pen came past the big tree and stepped on the low broken—but his glance was on the ground, and he did not see Blagden.

"The bully of the Fourth Form from his seat on the low stone parapet. He stepped quickly towards Pen, and the first intimation Pen had of his presence was a blow in the face."

"Pen reeled back from the sudden shock. His eyes blazed at Blagden. 'You coward!' he exclaimed. 'Come on!' he said."

"Blagden was attacking furiously, and Pen put up his hands to defend himself. In a moment more they were fighting furiously."

"Blagden threw himself into the attack with savage energy. But he could make little impression upon the Cornish lad."

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straight at the Cornish lad—but at the right moment Pen dodged aside. Blagden's resistance, however, was not without effect."

"The heavy stone shot from his hands and whirled down into the river. Pen landed, and he fell forward on the parapet, and Blagden, unable to stop himself in time, staggered against it. His knees touched the top of the low stone wall, and he fell forward, and was shooting down into the river below."

"Blagden's rival had proclaimed him as his knees struck the low parapet. Before Pen could put out a hand to save him, the bully of the Fourth had leapt down, and was shooting down into the river below."

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Pen sprang upon the parapet and put his hands together and dived to the rescue of his old enemy, Blagden.

The Fourth Form bully would have used any weapon. A heavy stone lay on the ground near him—a large jagged mass. Blagden swung away, without stopping to think, and leaped for the stone. He caught it up in both hands, and swung back to Pen.

"The Cornish lad started back. 'You madman!' he shouted. 'What are you doing?'"

"Blagden did not reply. He rushed straight at the Cornish lad, but his hands aloft, clutching the heavy stone, his eyes blazing with fury. He watched him steadily. Blagden smashed the stone forward straight at the Cornish lad—but at the right moment Pen dodged aside."

rent now, and the waters were deeper and deeper, colder, him. Grasping Blagden tight, he struggled to reach the green steep bank, where the juniors were racing, keeping back and shouting to him.

"This way, Pen!" "Back up, old son!" shouted Bunny. "This way you're going to do!"

"What are you going to do?" yelled Newcome, grasping him. "Jove! I'm going in to help him, don't you see?"

"Can you swim?" "Well, you can't swim!" "Then stay where you are, you ass!"

"Beggars!" shouted O'Donovan. "It's all right! Hear a hand!"

"A spirit of land juttet out into the river, with weeping willows at the end of it, and Pen had made an effort to gain the bank, and prevent the current from sweeping him round. He had fastened a grasp upon a drooping willow bough, and was hanging on desperately, other land upon Blagden's collar, keeping his head above the water."

"Come on!" yelled Newcome. The juniors looked down to the willows. Pen was too exhausted by his struggle with the water to be able to drag himself ashore. But the juniors were quickly on the spot. They splashed out among the willows, and grasped him and his burden and dragged them safely to land.

"Pen padded back to the school," "Get Blagden back to the school," he said. "And you—"

"I can wait a few minutes' rest, managed to walk, while Blagden was carried to St. Wode's, and Bamford dashed off for a doctor."

Blagden had not suffered very severely—a cold—and a few days in bed set him right. When he emerged from the school sanatorium, Blagden found that Pen was the hero of the Fourth—if not of the whole school.

Even the Blades seemed inclined to treat Pen with some respect. In the Fourth there was no longer any hint of enmity towards the Council-school boy. But Blagden did not care. For it was a changed Blagden that had emerged from the sanatorium of St. Wode's.

Pen had saved his life—and Blagden knew that for the Council-school lad, he would be lying at the bottom of the deep river. And when he came out, and he met the Fourth Form just quitting their classroom, Blagden went straight up to Pen.

"He held out his hand. 'You saved my life, Penwyn,' he said. 'I want to be friends, if you do. I've treated you like a cad, and I don't care who hears me say so.' Pen grasped Blagden's hand. 'I want to be friends with everybody here,' he said. 'I'm jolly glad to hear you say that, Blagden. We can let bygones be bygones.' Blagden coloured. 'Oh, all serene!' he said. 'Filo it up!'"

"Come on!" said Bamford. "Mina's ginger-pop and doughnuts!" Bunny linked arms with Pen and Blagden, and the three of them led the way. And it was a record for the ginger-pop was drowned the last sign of enmity between the rivals at St. Wode's.

WANDERING WILLIE OUTWITS THE WILY WHITEWASHER.



1. Noticing that the old gent in the above engraving is too busy whitewashing to notice the arrival of his dinner—



2. Wandering Willie decides to attend to the matter himself, before the dinner gets cold. But the unreasonable old gent—



3. Seems to object, and gives over his whitewashing to reconstrucure. In fact, he gets so excited like—



4. That he loons on the parl of whitewash, which vanquishes him into the air, and lets the old gent down on to his dial—lump!



5. Then the nail fairly bunnets the old chaps, and after watching his antics for a bit, Willie quietly slopes off.

Special New Stories and Articles in Preparation.

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AN AMUSING COMPLETE-SCHOOL TALE.



THE FOURTH FORM'S BLACK CHAMPION

A Splendid, Complete Tale of Gordon Gay & Co., at Rylcombe Grammar School.

By PROSPER HOWARD.

CHAPTER I.

Gordon Gay's Wager. "I'd simply knock him into a cocked hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk, sitting back in his chair, and looking indignantly at his two study mates—Carley and Lane. The three juniors appeared to be having an extremely heated debate, and the remark with which this story opens was characteristic of the conversation usually heard in at the Fourth Form studies at Rylcombe Grammar School.

"Yes," continued Frank Monk, "I've got hold of his welly head, and—"

"Carley grinned at his study leader. "And would what?" he said. "I'd—well, I'd knock him into a cocked hat!"

"That they're such lefty chaps," added Lane. "It's all very well while men talk like that; but when it comes to moving their face to face it's a jolly different thing."

"Pshaw!" scoffed Frank Monk. "Well, what about Jack Johnson?" suggested Lane. "Rats!" "What about Sam Langford, then?" "Sam Langford!" laughed Frank Monk. "Why? there's plenty of our chaps in the Army and Navy who could knock him out in one round."

"You bouncer, I tell you I'll—" "Not gas nonsense!" broke in Gordon Gay's voice again, and Carley and Lane each gave a smothered giggle.

"Look here!" gasped Frank Monk, as Gordon Gay closed the study door and then seated himself on the edge of the table in the centre of the room. "I don't know what the game is, you bouncer, but you might have had the decency to knock on the door before stamping in!"

"Sorry, kids!" replied Gordon Gay. "But to tell you the truth, I heard that you had gone out, and as I wanted to borrow your French dicker, I came stumbling in. Heavily sorry, but I couldn't help hearing your absurd remark, Monk."

"Absurd!" snapped the study leader. "Do you think, then, that I couldn't knock a black kid out in a boxing match?" "Yes, me!" snapped Frank Monk. "I tell you, Gay, that black men are getting the upper hand too much, and it's up to us Grammarians to put 'em down as much as possible."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Gordon Gay heartily. "Of course," snapped Frank Monk, "nobody but a good fellow would think that a dummy like you would see the seriousness of the matter; but I maintain that the black peril is a real peril, and—"

"You're all wrong!" interrupted Gordon Gay. "Anyone would think that you had just laid out Johnson and Langford in two rounds. What an earth is the good of talking that rot when you know jolly well that some of them are better boxers than we are?"

CHAPTER 2.

A Manufactured Nigger. "THEN you're lost the lot, you howling dummy!" cried Harry Wootton. "And you know jolly well we haven't got a rot to bless ourselves with!" added Jack Woolton.

"Gordon Gay looked up. "I'm jolly sorry, kids," he said, "but I'm quite expected to be able to get Peter along. We know that he would have put up a jolly good fight against old Monkey if he could have been here!"

"But you ought to have found out when the kid was leaving Jackson's Coffee Store," remonstrated Harry Wootton. "You knew he was the only black kid in these parts, and yet you were so producing him at a moment's notice. It's all rot!"

"There was a long silence in the study, and it was not broken until Gordon Gay leapt out of his chair with a yell. "I have it," he cried—"I have it!" "Have what?"

"Why, the Massa Peter from the Coffee Store," said Gordon Gay. "I'll be Peter. I've got black tights, black paint, and—"

"But—but are you game to box?" interrupted Jack Woolton. "Game!" cried Gordon Gay. "Why, of course I'm game! I don't mind fighting old Monkey with gloves on, especially after he bragged to us what he would do to nigger kid if he came to this school!"

fixed permanently for an hour, at least. Applying this mixture had occasioned a good deal of chaff from the two brothers, but Gordon Gay had made up his mind to carry the thing through, so he ignored the banter from the lips of the Australian juniors.

"Frank Monk & Co. were surprised, therefore, when they called at Study 13 at six o'clock to find such a lively but nigger waiting patiently for them."

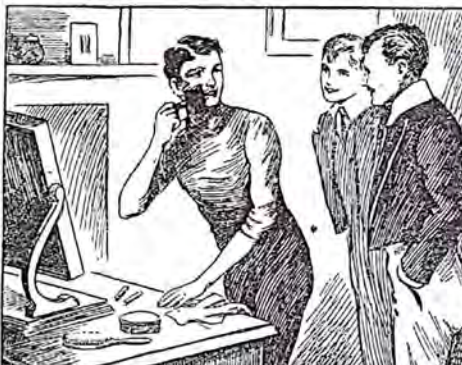
"Who's Gay?" said Carley. "He ought to bring his man along now, as this chite to go along in the gym."

"Mussa Gay come along lath, eh?" replied the negro, leaping to the floor. "Tell dis chite to go along, sah. Go in and win is my motto;—that and always merry and bright, sah."

CHAPTER 3.

The Fourth Form's Black Champion.

HARRY and Jack Woolton fell into step on either side of the black champion, and the whole party proceeded to the school gymnasium. The place was literally packed with Grammarians, and they raised a hoarse cheer as Frank Monk, dressed in boxing attire, entered the improvised ring. The cheer had no sooner died down than it was followed by a roar of laughter as the



The remarks that the two Australian juniors made as Gordon Gay made up as the black champion were anything but flattering.

disgusted Gordon Gay joined his opponent. "It's jolly!" exclaimed the nigger, looking around in pretended surprise. "What hab dis chite done to be larfed at—eh?"

"Go it, Johnson!" added another junior, and the uproar which followed him to die down before the seconds were able to tell the referee that their men were ready for the contest.

Carley, who was reputed to know more about the rules of boxing than any other Grammarian, had been selected, as a matter of course, to perform the duties of ref, and he took up his hand for silence.

"Kids," he cried, as there was a momentary lull, "this great contest is between you, Frank Monk of the Grammar School, who is on my right, and an unknown black champion, produced by Mr. Gordon Gay. The rules are as those used at the National Sporting Club, and Mr. Frank Monk is seconded by Mr. Lane and Mr. Preston, while the Unknown is seconded by the two Woottons. I would ask—"

rushed at each other, each landing effectively, flush on the face. "Oh, only!" "Dat wa' nearly done for de Monkey!" said the group of niggers. "Huh made him black silly. Dis chite 'wep de Beer w'ah him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the spectators. "Go in, Monk! Teach him to cheek!"

"The two boxes stepped back for a moment, then stepped in again. There was a sharp retort, and Frank Monk appeared to get his own back for a quick interjection of 'howay' as Gordon Gay appeared to fly full way across the ring."

"Time!" called Carley. And the ring series of seconds dashed into the ring to prepare their men for the next round. Although the fight appeared Fourth-Form had received a blow as to nearly send him down, he did not come up the worse for it; in fact, while Frank Monk looked very hot and flushed and angry, and the spectators could see by their glare in his eyes that there was trouble ahead.

"The round commenced weakly, and in response to the disappointed cries opened rapidly. However, the niggers proved quicker, and Frank Monk was eventually driven to the ropes by a sharp box of blows."

"Come on, old man!" laughed the disgusted Gordon Gay. "Come on, dis chite won't hurt you." "Just look, sm!"

"The taunt enraged Frank Monk, so much so that he dashed in wildly, and as Gay was obliged to back quickly round the ring, a huge cheer went up from the spectators. "Go on, Monk! Go on!"

"The cries encouraged Frank Monk, and while the excitement was at its height, he again landed a blow so heavily on Gay's nose. The chite which followed brought down the gym, and no other notice of the stern face of Dr. Monk, the headmaster, as he hastened into the room."

"Boys!" he cried. "Go on, Monkey! Go on, Monkey!" roared the excited spectators, as Gordon Gay rallied, and went a straight left and right on to his opponent's chin. "Boys!"

"There was no mistaking the thro, and one by one the junior turned their gaze away from the ring towards the door. "The Head!" gasped Lane. "My only fat aunt!" "Boys!" cried Doctor Monk. "What an earth does this mean! Fighting in this savage fashion! You know I don't mind friendly sparring, but this appears to be an organized pugilistic meeting."