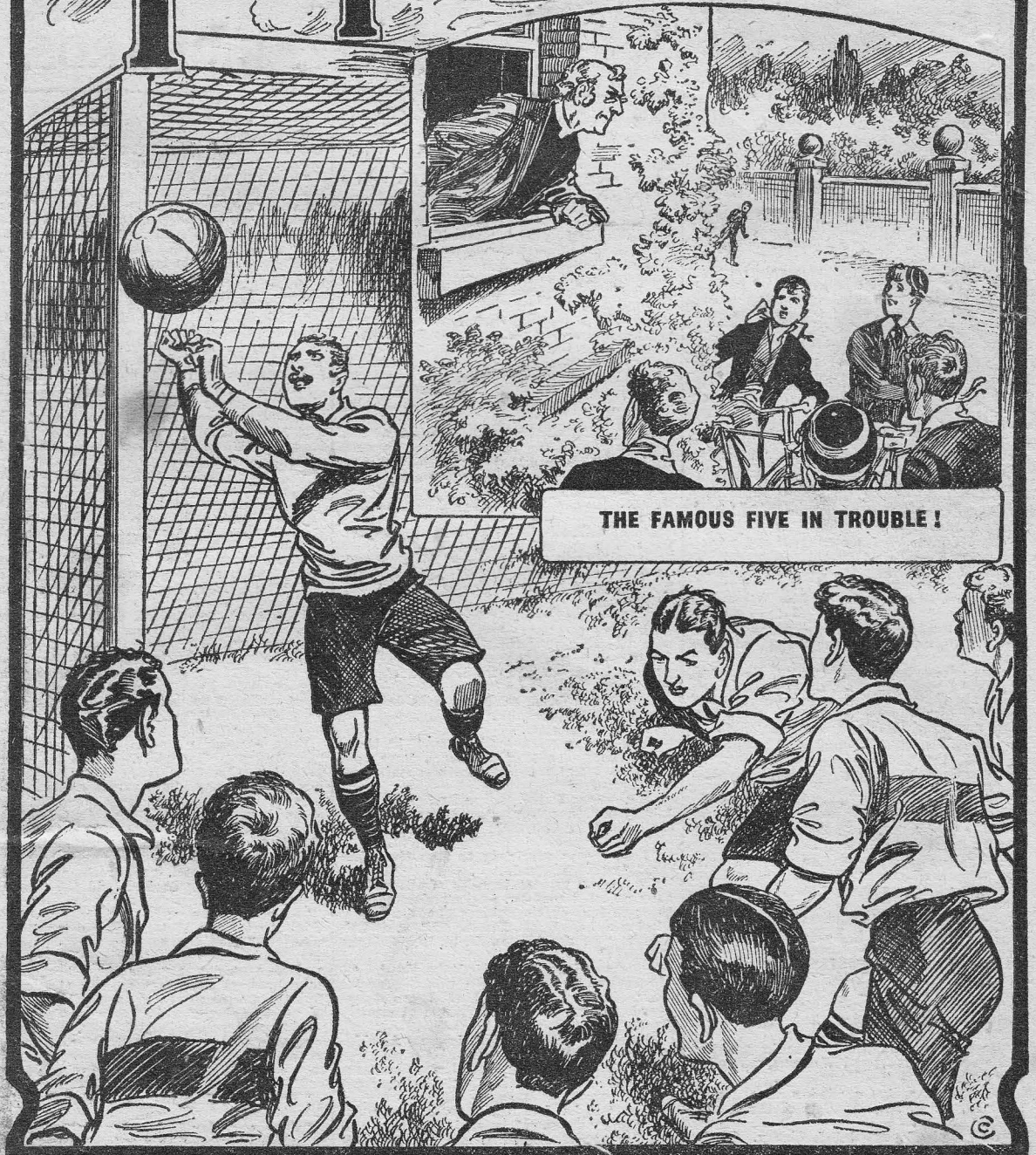


"SCORING OFF THE SNOBS!" A Grand Complete Story of **JIMMY SILVER & Co.** at Rookwood in This Issue.

The Popular

No. 92. New Series.
Week Ending October 23rd, 1920.

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THE FAMOUS FIVE IN TROUBLE!

TONY WEBSTER'S SPLENDID DEFENCE IN THE GREAT BENEFIT MATCH!

(An Exciting Episode from Our Long Complete Story, "The Fighting Five!")

OUR FIRST SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE.



The Fighting Five!

A MAGNIFICENT, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS.

By . . .
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Called Over the Coals.

"O H dear!"
"Oh crumbs!"
"I feel half dead!"
"Same here!"
These doleful exclamations were uttered by Harry Wharton & Co., of the Greyfriars Remove, as they staggered wearily along the frosty road.

The appearance of the Famous Five was usually smart and cheerful. But at this precise moment it was neither. They looked as if they had been trying conclusions with a steamroller or an earthquake. Their clothes were rumpled and dishevelled, and their faces were badly battered. Frank Nugent's nose presented a very bulbous appearance, and Harry Wharton's right eye was closed. Hurree Singh's collar and tie had broken loose from their moorings, so to speak; and Bob Cherry was scarcely recognisable.

It did not need a Sherlock Holmes or a Sexton Blake to deduce that the Famous Five had been fighting.

The juniors were nearing the gates of Greyfriars. Beside them they dragged what appeared to be shapeless masses of old iron. In reality, they were bicycles.

"Ow! I feel as badly punctured as my back tyre!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Is my nose still on straight, you fellows?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"Yes; it looks like a swollen beetroot!" said Wharton.

"Well, if it's anything like yours, I shall be an object of pity for days!" retorted Frank.

The juniors stumbled on towards the school gates. It was beginning to get dark, and they hoped that they would be able to pass through the Close without attracting attention. But their luck was out.

Quite a crowd of fellows were assembled in the Close, and they surveyed the battered and dishevelled juniors with stares of amazement.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Bolsover major. "What awful wrecks!"

"Have you fellows collided with a steam-roller?" inquired Peter Todd.

The Famous Five hurried on without replying. They were eager to hide their diminished heads, and to bathe their injuries in the bath-rooms.

"Are the Highcliffe bounders responsible for this?" asked Squiff.

No answer.

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried on through the gathering dusk. They were unable to run, partly owing to their weariness, and partly because they were handicapped by their bicycles—or what had once been bicycles.

"Once we've managed to run the gauntlet of this crowd," muttered Wharton, "we shall be all right."

Even as he spoke, a window opened near at hand. It was the window of the Head's study.

"Oh crumbs!" panted Bob Cherry. "Let's get a move on! If the Head sees us in this state, there will be ructions!"

But the Head had already seen them. It

was still light enough for Dr. Locke to discern the dishevelled figures.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove halted, with a groan.

"Ye-e-e-s, sir?" he faltered.

"How came you and your companions to be in that deplorable condition?"

"Ahem! I—we—that is to say—"

"I can deduce nothing from that incoherent mumble!" said the Head angrily. "Come into my study at once, all of you!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors restored their battered bicycles to the shed, and made their way in a doleful procession to Dr. Locke's study. They would have given anything to have been able to make themselves presentable first, but there was no time for that. The headmaster of Greyfriars was not a person who would be kept waiting.

Dr. Locke looked almost horrified as the Famous Five came in. They were in such an appalling state that it was doubtful if their own mothers would have known them.

"I am shocked—amazed!" exclaimed the Head. "Wharton, I await your explanation!"

The captain of the Remove blinked at the Head with one sound eye.

"It—it was like this, sir—" he stuttered.

"You have been fighting?" demanded the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! I need scarcely have asked such a superfluous question! With whom have you been engaging in fisticuffs?"

"With—with the townees, sir."

"I will trouble you to be more explicit, Wharton!"

"We—we've been scrapping with some of the Courtfield louts, sir."

The Head frowned.

"This is disgraceful—outrageous!" he thundered. "Times out of number I have told you that I will not tolerate these outbursts of hooliganism!"

"We weren't the aggressors, sir," said Johnny Bull doggedly. "As we came out of the cinema in Courtfield the rotters set on us."

"Then it was your duty to turn the other cheek," said the Head.

The juniors grinned in spite of themselves. They reflected that Dr. Locke had some very queer notions on the subject of quarrels.

"If we hadn't retaliated, sir," said Bob Cherry, "we should now be in the Cottage Hospital!"

"Silence, Cherry!" rumbled the Head. "I will inquire no further into this disgraceful affair. Suffice it to say that I am determined to put a stop to these unseemly brawls."

The Famous Five waited, in some trepidation, for the Head to produce his cane.

But Dr. Locke saw that the delinquents were not in a fit state to receive corporal punishment.

"You will be detained in your Form-room to-morrow afternoon," he said sternly. "And you will not leave it under any pretext whatever!"

The juniors exchanged dismayed glances, and Johnny Bull groaned audibly.

It was a half-holiday on the morrow, and the Famous Five had made special plans for the afternoon. The Head's sentence, however, had ruthlessly shattered those plans. "You will now go and cleanse yourselves," said Dr. Locke, "and I trust you will not offend in this way again!"

Looking very disconsolate, Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the study. They found Dennis Carr and Mark Linley and a host of others waiting for them in the corridor.

"Licked?" asked Dennis.

"No!" growled Wharton.

"Then wherefore those worried brows?"

"We've got to stew in the Form-room to-morrow afternoon, and we'd arranged to go to Courtfield to see the big match," said Nugent. "Blow the Head! Blow those beastly townees! Blow everybody!"

"But what's happened?" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Tell your uncles all about it!"

"We'll have a bath and a change of togs first," said Wharton.

And the crowd had to possess their souls in patience for the space of half an hour.

At the end of that period the Famous Five looked almost respectable again. But they were scowling as they came into the junior Common-room. Even Bob Cherry, whose face was usually wreathed in smiles, was frowning darkly.

"Here they come!" said Squiff. "Clean, sober, and properly dressed, as they say in the Army. Now, you fellows, tell us what happened."

"We went to the cinema, as per programme," explained Harry Wharton; "and half-way through the show a special announcement was thrown on to the screen to the effect that Courtfield United were playing West Kent Rovers to-morrow afternoon, and that the match would be for Tony Webster's benefit."

The juniors looked greatly interested.

Tony Webster had recently been appointed groundsman at Greyfriars. It was his job to keep the playing-fields in order, and the juniors had found him a very likeable sort of fellow. They did not know a great deal about him, beyond the fact that he lived in a little cottage close to the school, and that he was a goalkeeper of repute. Rumour had it that a few years before he had kept goal for Sunderland, "the team of all the talents." Latterly he had held the fort for Courtfield United.

"Of course, we were awfully bucked to think that Tony Webster was going to get a benefit," Wharton went on. "He deserves one, because he's a rattling good goalie and a ripping sportsman. We cheered when the announcement was thrown on to the screen. But there were several louts sitting in front of us—that bounder Jim Savage was one—who started hooting and hissing. Evidently they were jealous of Tony Webster. Anyway, we weren't going to stand that sort of thing, so we told the attendants to chuck them out."

"Yes; and what happened then?" asked Dennis Carr.

"They were bundled out neck and crop," said Bob Cherry. "As you fellows know, the attendants at the Courtfield cinema don't stand any nonsense."

"And then?"

"We went out ourselves shortly afterwards, and we found that the rotters had absolutely bashed our bikes to bits!"

"My hat!"

"It was their idea of revenge for being chucked out," said Nugent. "We saw them standing a short distance away, cackling as if it was a huge joke."

"So we told them, in the best English language, what we thought of them," said Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And they went for you?" queried Mark Linley.

The Famous Five nodded.

"There were seven or eight of them," said Harry Wharton. "They'd been reinforced by other louts who were hanging about outside the cinema. Of course, we hadn't an earthly, but we lined up shoulder to shoulder, and put up the best fight we knew. We were badly hammered, and it was as much as we could do to collect our chunks of scrap-iron and crawl back to Greyfriars."

The juniors who had been listening to this narrative were hotly indignant.

"The cads—the cowardly cads!" exclaimed Dennis Carr, his eyes flashing.

"Pity the police weren't handy!" said Squiff.

"The police!" echoed Bob Cherry scornfully. "A fat lot of help we could expect from that quarter! True, old Tozer waddled from the scene, but directly he saw what was happening he turned tail. You couldn't see him for dust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jim Savage was at the bottom of the whole bizney!" growled Johnny Bull. "He egged the others on to smash up our jiggers. And mine was a beauty, too—a present from my uncle. It would disgrace a scrap-heap now!"

"Rough luck!" said Mark Linley sympathetically.

"And instead of sympathising with us, the Head went for us baldheaded!" said Nugent. "Said we ought to have turned the other cheek! Did you ever hear such awful rot!"

"And we've got to stay in to-morrow afternoon," said Bob Cherry. "That's the last straw! We'd set our hearts on seeing Tony Webster's benefit match, instead of which we shall be cooped up in the Form-room, writing out 'It is naughty to indulge in fistuicuffs,' or something of that sort. It's the limit! I feel like becoming a Bolshevik!"

For the remainder of that evening the Famous Five, like Rachel of old, mourned, and would not be comforted. They were feeling sick and sore and savage. It was not their fault that they had come back to Greyfriars that afternoon looking like tramps, and they were furious with the Head for having deprived them of their half-holiday.

Somebody suggested that they should ask Dr. Locke to reconsider his decision. But they were too proud to do that. Besides, they realised the futility of so doing.

The fiat had gone forth, and the Head's decree was as inexorable as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

So the Famous Five gloomily resigned themselves to their fate.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tony Webster's Benefit!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were chatting on the School House steps next day, when the subject of their conversation came towards them.

Tony Webster was a tall, well-built man, getting on in years, but still as agile as a squirrel. He was looking unusually pale, however. Perhaps he was feeling very excited on the subject of the forthcoming match. And yet it seemed strange that a man who had played for one of the big League teams should allow a minor match—even his benefit match—to affect him in this way.

The groundsman carried a bag, which evidently contained his football garb.

"Just off to Courtfield, Tony?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Master Cherry."

"Jolly good luck to you! Hope you rake in plenty of shekels! It's a fine afternoon, and there's bound to be a big attendance."

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

"With a bit of luck, Tony, you ought to clear thirty or forty quids."

Tony smiled rather sadly.

"I shall need every penny of it, Master Wharton," he said. "Fact is, I'm in rather a tight corner."

And then, as if not wishing to dwell on

his own grievances, he hurriedly changed the subject.

"Are you young gents comin' over to see the match?"

The juniors shook their heads.

"The Head has detained us for the afternoon," said Frank Nugent. "Matter of fact, we ought to be in the Form-room now."

"We were looking forward ever so much to seeing your benefit match, too!" said Johnny Bull.

Tony Webster was sympathetic. He liked Harry Wharton & Co., and, to tell the truth, their presence on the ground would have cheered him immensely.

"Never mind about us, Tony," said Bob Cherry. "What you've got to do is to play the game of your life. West Kent Rovers are hot stuff, by all accounts, and you'll need to be in tip-top form to keep their forwards out. Au revoir, and the best of luck!"

Tony Webster thanked the juniors for their good wishes, and passed on.

Dozens of fellows were in the act of pushing their bicycles down to the gates. They were bound for Courtfield, and they were excitedly discussing the match.

The Famous Five could not bear the sight of so many fellows on pleasure bent while they had to spend the afternoon in their Form-room.

"Let's get out of this!" growled Harry Wharton.

And he led the way to the place of detention.

The juniors seated themselves at one of the desks, and the expressions of misery on their faces might have melted a heart of stone.

They had not been long in the Form-room when Mr. Quelch entered.

The master of the Remove was in golfing attire, and a bag of clubs was slung over his shoulder.

"I am sorry to see you here, my boys," he said. "But you have only yourselves to blame for what has happened."

The juniors were silent.

"Strictly speaking, a master or a prefect should remain in with you this afternoon," Mr. Quelch went on. "But that is impossible. I would stay myself, but I have an important golfing appointment. You will be left to your own devices."

The Famous Five looked hopeful.

"And I want you to promise me that you will not attempt to break detention."

The juniors exchanged glances. The thought of breaking detention had already occurred to them, and they were not in a position to make such a promise.

"I am waiting!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. Silence.

The Remove-master compressed his lips.

"Very well. Since you cannot promise what I ask, I have no alternative but to lock the door and to have the windows fastened on the outside. I am reluctant to treat you as if you were prisoners in a dungeon, but you give me no option."

So saying, Mr. Quelch withdrew.

The juniors heard the key grate in the lock, and a few moments later they heard the windows being fastened from without.

"Rats in a giddy trap!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It's awful!"

"I feel quite desperate!" said Wharton. "If there was half a chance of getting out of this place I'd jump at it!"

"Same here!"

"There's only one means of escape," said Johnny Bull, "and that's the chimney."

"Ass!" growled Nugent. "It would take us all the afternoon to get rid of the soot, and by the time we got to Courtfield the match would be over."

The juniors relapsed into silence. For the space of half an hour no word was spoken.

Then there was a sound as of the key being turned in the lock, and the next moment the door opened, and Billy Bunter looked in.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry gave a whoop of delight.

"Quelch must have left the key in the door!" he exclaimed. "Now's our chance!"

"Schoolboys never, never, never! shall be slaves!" said Hurree Singh.

With one accord the Famous Five darted to the door. Billy Bunter stood blinking at them in amazement.

"I—I say, what's going on?" he gasped.

"We are!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Thanks awfully for unlocking the door, Bunter!"

"Stop! Come back!" shrieked the fat junior. "You'll be sacked from the school—"

But the Famous Five paid no further heed to Bunter. They rushed on, and a moment later they were in the Close, and making a bee-line for the school wall.

Fortune favoured them. They clambered over the wall and dropped into the roadway beyond without being detected. And then they made their way at a rapid pace across the fields towards Courtfield.

"We shall swing for this!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"What matters, so long as we see Tony Webster's benefit match?" was Harry Wharton's retort.

"Bunter will blab—"

"Blow Bunter!"

In due course the juniors reached the football-ground.

The match between Courtfield United and West Kent Rovers had already started.

There was a record attendance, but Harry Wharton & Co., who knew their way about, contrived to get seats in the stand close to the dressing-room entrance.

"Any score yet?" inquired Frank Nugent of a spectator seated near by.

The man shook his head.

"How long have they been playing?"

"Twenty minutes. West Kent Rovers have been doing all the attacking, but they can't get past Tony Webster. The man's a wizard! I've never seen him play a better game!"

"Good!"

The juniors fixed their eyes on the field of play.

Tony Webster was indeed playing a great game.

The Rovers were attacking fiercely, and not many custodians would have been able to hold the fort successfully against such a terrific bombardment. But Tony Webster seemed impregnable. He was always in the right spot at the right time, and the Greyfriars juniors watched his display with sparkling eyes.

"He'll save the side!" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "And I hope he gets a bumper benefit."

"I see they doubled the price of admission, so he ought to do well!" said Johnny Bull.

The game was very one-sided—pathetically so. The Courtfield United forwards were never in the picture, and their defence was sorely tried. The backs made several bad blunders, and but for the brilliance of the man between the posts, the Rovers would have been half-a-dozen goals to the good before the interval.

As it was, half-time arrived with the score-sheet blank.

When the players came off for a "breather," Tony Webster caught sight of the Famous Five. He was astonished to find them at the match.

"So the Head let you off, young gents?" he exclaimed.

"No; we let ourselves off!" chuckled Nugent.

Tony Webster looked grave.

"You'll be getting into hot water!" he remonstrated.

"We wouldn't have missed your benefit-match, Tony—not for whole hemispheres!" said Bob Cherry. "And we're quite prepared to face the music afterwards."

"You're playing a spanking game, Tony!" said Johnny Bull, with enthusiasm. "You've saved scores of shots!"

"More by luck than judgment, I'm afraid," answered Tony, with a smile.

And he followed the other players into the dressing-room.

During the interval, the Courtfield Town Band provided harmony. And the Famous Five were obliged to stop their ears. The local musicians believed in making as much noise, and as little melody, as possible.

All through the second half, Tony Webster continued to hold the fort in fine style. Time and again it seemed as if he must be beaten, but he always rose to the occasion. And yet the Famous Five could not help noticing how pale he looked. He was obviously in pain; though whether that pain was physical or mental the juniors could not judge.

"Something's wrong with Tony!" declared Bob Cherry, with emphasis.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"He told us before the match that he was in a tight corner, if you remember. And he looks awfully groggy!"

"And yet this ought to be the happiest day of his life!" said Nugent. "It's his benefit, and he's bound to net a nice little sum!"

Try as they would, the juniors could not

think what was amiss with the Greyfriars' groundsman. He was in trouble of some sort, that was certain. But the nature of that trouble they could not even guess.

The marvellous thing was that Tony Webster, despite the fact that he was feeling off-colour, was putting up a magnificent display. He was evidently forcing himself to concentrate on the game; and his great display was a triumph of mind over matter.

Five minutes from the end there was still no score. And then, to the amazement and delight of the crowd, the Courtfield forwards broke away, and one of their wingers sent in a fast, low shot.

The Rovers' goalie failed to gather the ball, which lodged in the corner of the net.

"Goal!"
"Hurrah!"

With only a few minutes to go, the Rovers fought desperately for an equaliser. But they found Tony Webster safe. His skill held good to the end, and he was still unbeaten when the final whistle rang out.

And thus Courtfield United won a most extraordinary game by one goal to nil.

Everybody realised that this sensational victory was due to Tony Webster's display. And he came in for a tremendous ovation. The crowd cheered him to the echo; and, needless to state, the cheering was led by Harry Wharton & Co.

"Hurrah!"
"Well played, Tony!"
"Jolly well played, old sport!"

As he came off with the rest of the players, Tony Webster smilingly acknowledged the applause. And in the committee-room the directors of the Courtfield Club were waiting to hand over his benefit money. The sum exceeded forty pounds; for, apart from the gate-money, a special collection had been made on the ground.

And the Greyfriars juniors unanimously agreed that Tony Webster had thoroughly deserved every penny!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fight on the Highway!

"WHO says tea?" asked Bob Cherry. "Tea!" responded the other members of the Famous Five in unison.

"Let's try the Elysian Cafe," said Bob. "They do you well there!"

"They 'do' you only too well!" said Johnny Bull sadly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors made their way to the cafe which Bob Cherry had recommended. It was a very select establishment, and the patrons consumed their food to the accompaniment of an orchestra.

Harry Wharton & Co. had almost forgotten the fact that they were truants—that they had broken detention in order to see Tony Webster's benefit-match. After the feast came the reckoning; but the Famous Five were not thinking of that just then. They were bent on enjoying themselves.

Tea at the Elysian Cafe was a merry function. The buttered scones were delightful, and the cakes and pastries were so delicious that they fairly melted in the mouth.

But when the bill was presented the Greyfriars juniors groaned.

The Anti-Profitteering Committee which had been formed in Courtfield had been disbanded; and the proprietor of the Elysian Cafe evidently deemed himself quite safe in selling fancy cakes at fancy prices.

Dusk had fallen when the juniors stepped out into the street.

"We shall have to buck up!" said Johnny Bull. "There's just a chance that we shall get back to the school before Quelch; in which case, we shall escape the vials of his wrath."

"That's so!" said Harry Wharton. "Come on!"

The juniors set off at a swinging pace through Courtfield High Street, and presently they reached the hard, frosty road which led to the school.

They did not encounter a soul as they strode along, and the shadows were deepening on either side of them.

Presently, however, there was the clang of a bicycle-bell, and the juniors promptly stepped towards the bank.

The cyclist was approaching from the rear. As he whizzed past the Famous Five, they caught a glimpse of his face.

"Good-night, Tony!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Good-night, young gents!"

"Tony ought to be a happy man to-night,"

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remarked Frank Nugent. "He's got about forty quid in notes in his pocket."

"And it's a dark night and a lonely road," said Harry Wharton. "Lucky there are no footpads about nowadays."

Even as the captain of the Remove spoke, there was a crashing sound ahead of them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Tony's had a spill!"

exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton looked grim, and he quickened his pace.

"I fancied I saw three figures dart out from the hedge!" he said.

"Looks as if it's a deliberate attack on Tony Webster!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"Buck up!"

The juniors broke into a run. They suspected foul play; and when they came to the cross-roads, about twenty yards ahead of them their suspicions were confirmed.

Tony Webster had been waylaid on his homeward journey by three men. One of them was Jim Savage, the hooligan with whom Harry Wharton & Co. had already come to loggerheads. The juniors failed to recognise the other two, but doubtless they were a couple of Jim Savage's cronies.

So sudden, so unexpected had been the attack, that Tony Webster had been thrown off his balance—as well as off his bicycle. He had been totally unprepared for anything of this sort; consequently he was unable to offer much resistance. His fall had dazed him. And before he could scramble to his feet Jim Savage and his two confederates were upon him.

"Search 'im!" rapped out Savage.

"Ow can we, when you're a-sittin' on 'is chest?" growled one of the men. "We can't get at 'is breast-pocket!"

"Give over, you scoundrels!" panted Tony Webster, struggling fiercely but unavailingly.

The next moment his coat was torn open, and a hand was thrust into his breast-pocket. The hand was withdrawn a moment later, triumphantly clutching a leather case. In the case were notes to the value of forty-two pounds.

"Help!"

Tony Webster's cry echoed along the dusky road.

"It's all right, Tony!" panted Bob Cherry. "We'll jolly soon settle the hash of these beauties!"

Jim Savage turned his head with a muttered imprecation. But before he could get to his feet Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were upon him like tigers.

Meanwhile, the man who had the money promptly took to his heels. He darted towards a gap in the hedge; but before he could reach it the fleet-footed Hurree Singh had overtaken him.

The dusky junior acted promptly and decisively. He seized the fellow by the ankle, and brought him to earth with a crash.

It soon became apparent, however, that the Greyfriars juniors had no easy task.

Jim Savage was a hulking giant of a fellow, who by sheer brute strength hurled Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry from him.

The man whom Hurree Singh had tripped up was soon on his feet again. Whilst the third man was fighting furiously with Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull. Moreover, he seemed to be getting the best of it.

The Famous Five, therefore, had their hands full. And Tony Webster had been so badly shaken up that he was not in a position to help them.

Nevertheless, the juniors fought like tigers. Their blood was up. The dastardly attack upon Tony Webster had infuriated them. They hit out vigorously, and gradually the tide of battle turned in their favour.

Harry Wharton was sent sprawling by a heavy blow from Jim Savage. But immediately afterwards the ruffian was felled by a powerful drive in the chest. This was Bob Cherry's handiwork.

Jim Savage went to the ground with a crash. The back of his head cannoned against the handlebars of Tony Webster's machine, and he lay dazed and helpless.

"That's one of 'em out of action!" muttered Bob Cherry.

And then he went to the assistance of Hurree Singh, who was in danger of being overpowered by the man who had taken the money.

Shooting out his left straight from the shoulder, Bob caught the fellow to reel. And then Hurree Singh drove in a terrific uppercut which proved the finishing touch. The man fell like a log, and he made no effort to rise.

Meanwhile, Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull

had got the better of their man. He had given them a lot of trouble, but they mastered him at length, and he landed in a sprawling heap in the roadway.

It had been a stern struggle. But the Famous Five had triumphed. And there was real gratitude in Tony Webster's tone as he said:

"A thousand thanks, young gents!"
Bob Cherry restored the leather case to its rightful owner.

"Better count the notes, Tony, to see that they're all there," he said. "Meanwhile, one of us will sprint into Courtfield for the police."

"No, no!"
There was alarm and anxiety in Tony Webster's tone.

"But surely you want these rotters arrested?" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"No, Master Cherry."

"My hat! You want us to let 'em go scot-free?"

"Yes, Jim Savage is my cousin—"

"I don't see that that makes any difference."

"He ought to be punished," declared Harry Wharton.

"All the same, I'd rather you took no action, young gents!" pleaded Tony Webster.

"But the bouncer had plotted to pinch your benefit money!" protested Johnny Bull.

"I know. But please let him go!"

The Famous Five were very reluctant to do this. But they saw that Tony Webster was in earnest, so after some hesitation they allowed the three modern footpads to sink away.

Jim Savage and his cronies were only too glad to be able to take their departure. They had had enough fighting to last them a long time. And it was as much as they could do to crawl back to Courtfield.

The Famous Five assisted Tony Webster to his feet, and righted his bicycle, which fortunately was not badly damaged.

To their dismay, however, they discovered that Tony, in falling from his machine, had badly gashed his right arm just below the elbow. His coat-sleeve was torn, and the wound was visible.

"It—it's nothin', young gents!" muttered Tony.

But the juniors thought otherwise.

"You'll have to go to the doc's and get it bound up," said Nugent.

"We'll come with you," said Wharton.

"No, no! I don't want to make you late for lockin'-up. I'll go myself."

"Sure you can manage it?" asked the captain of the Remove doubtfully.

"Quite, Master Wharton!"

And the groundsman turned back towards Courtfield.

"Mind you steer clear of those louts!" warned Johnny Bull.

Tony Webster laughed.

"They're too badly knocked about to give any more trouble," he said. "Jove! It was a treat to see you young gents givin' 'em beans!"

The speaker walked away, and the juniors anxiously watched his retreating figure.

"Think he'll be all right?" muttered Nugent.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "That's a nasty gash on his arm, but the doc will soon put him to rights."

And, having satisfied themselves that Tony Webster would be all right, the Famous Five dusted down their clothes, adjusted their neckties, and tramped on towards Greyfriars, where doubtless a warm welcome awaited them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Saved at the Scaffold!

"IT'S all up, you fellows!"

It was Bob Cherry who spoke.

As the famous Five were crossing the dusky Close they caught sight of the very last person they wished to see at that moment—Mr. Quelch.

The master of the Remove was standing, like a stern sentinel, at the main entrance to the school building. He had returned from his golfing expedition, and he was aware that Harry Wharton & Co. had broken detention. Either Billy Bunter had spread the news, or the Form-master had made the discovery for himself. Anyway, he knew that the Famous Five were absent, and he was waiting for them to come in.

The juniors' first impulse was to dodge back into the shadow of the elms. But they realised that such a course would be useless. Sooner or later they would have to



"Help!" Tony Webster's cry echoed along the dusky road. "Search him, quick!" rapped out one of the footpads. The juniors, not twenty yards away, hearing the cry, were racing hard towards the scene. "It's all right, Tony!" came the voice of Bob Cherry. "We'll be with you in a moment!"

face the music. So they walked on towards the stationary figure of Mr. Quelch with fast-beating hearts.

"Wharton!" The Remove-master's voice rang out sternly. "What does this mean?" The Famous Five halted, and Harry Wharton vouchsafed no reply to Mr. Quelch's question.

"You were expressly forbidden to leave your place of detention," the Form-master went on, "and you have set the authorities at defiance. I need not enlarge upon the seriousness of your offence. You will come with me!"

And Mr. Quelch led the way to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke looked very grim as the five juniors were arraigned before him.

"Am I to understand, Quelch," he said, "that these boys have broken detention?" "That is so, sir," answered Mr. Quelch gravely.

"They have also been fighting again, in spite of the warning I gave them yesterday!" exclaimed the Head. "Such conduct is abominable—outrageous!"

"If you please, sir—" began Harry Wharton.

"Not a word, Wharton!" thundered the Head. "I presume you do not deny that you have broken detention, and that you have been indulging in fisticuffs?"

Wharton was silent.

"Very well," said Dr. Locke grimly. "I think I know how best to deal with you. Your conduct merits a public flogging! You will go to the punishment-room, and wait there until you are summoned to Big Hall." The brief interview with the Head was at an end.

The Famous Five made their way to the punishment-room, exchanging very doleful glances as they went.

Before they had been five minutes in their place of detention they heard the clanging of the school-bell.

"A general assembly!" muttered Bob Cherry.

And his chums nodded. There was a stampede in the passage without. Evidently the fellows were making their way to Big Hall.

"The Head's impatient," said Nugent, with a faint grin. "He doesn't believe in putting off till to-morrow what he can do to-day."

"We shall be hoisted on Gosling's shoulders and given a round dozen each, I expect," said Johnny Bull.

"Never mind! We've had our money's worth of excitement this afternoon," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" At this juncture Wingate of the Sixth arrived on the scene.

"This way, you young rascals!" he said sternly.

"Got any smelling-salts on you, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry, as the party proceeded in the direction of Big Hall. "I feel quite faint!"

"You'll feel fainter still in a few minutes!" was the retort.

The scene in Big Hall was a very solemn one, and even Bob Cherry was subdued.

On the raised dais stood the Head, birch-rod in hand. And Gosling the porter was standing in the offing, so to speak, awaiting the signal to hoist the culprits on to his shoulders in turn.

The Head made a preliminary speech, in which he described to the school the nature of the Famous Five's transgressions. Then having lashed the victims with his tongue, he prepared to lash them with his birch-rod.

Harry Wharton was hoisted on to Gosling's shoulders, and a hush of expentancy fell upon the assembled throng.

The birch was raised aloft. But before it could descend there was a dramatic interruption to the proceedings.

The door of Big Hall was thrown open, and in rushed a man with his arm in a sling. It was Tony Webster, the school groundsman.

"Webster!" The Head's voice was thunderous. "What is the meaning of this? How dare you intrude in this manner!"

Tony Webster had realised as soon as he emerged from the doctor's that the Famous Five would be severely dealt with on their return to the school. And he had made up his mind to save them, if possible. He had lost no time in getting back to Greyfriars, and on arrival there he found the corridors deserted, and concluded—rightly, as it happened—that a general assembly had been summoned. Whereupon, he had made hurried tracks for Big Hall.

"Pardon me, sir!" he said. "But I don't think Master Wharton an' his friends have

fully explained what happened this afternoon."

The Head raised his hand.

"I do not wish to hear—" he began.

"But you must hear, sir!" panted Tony Webster. "As you probably know, it was my benefit match this afternoon. I netted over forty pounds, an' it came just at the right time, for my wife has just been sent to hospital for a serious operation."

The Head melted at once. His sternness gave way to sympathy.

"I knew nothing of this, Webster—" he began.

"No, sir. My wife was only taken ill this afternoon. They wouldn't perform the operation until they knew that I was in a position to pay. So I turned out for Courtfield United, an' drew my money; an' I should have been robbed of every penny if these young gents hadn't chipped in!"

"Bless my soul!"

Tony Webster then described, impressively if not eloquently, the fight on the highway. When his narrative was finished a storm of cheering burst forth. Cheer upon cheer until the old rafters rang again.

Everybody realised that Harry Wharton & Co. had shown great pluck and resource. The applause was infectious. Indeed, the Head felt like cheering, too.

In the light of recent revelations the public flogging was out of the question.

The Famous Five did not escape scot-free, for the Head could not overlook the fact that they had broken detention. But he contented himself with awarding the juniors a hundred lines apiece. And there the matter ended.

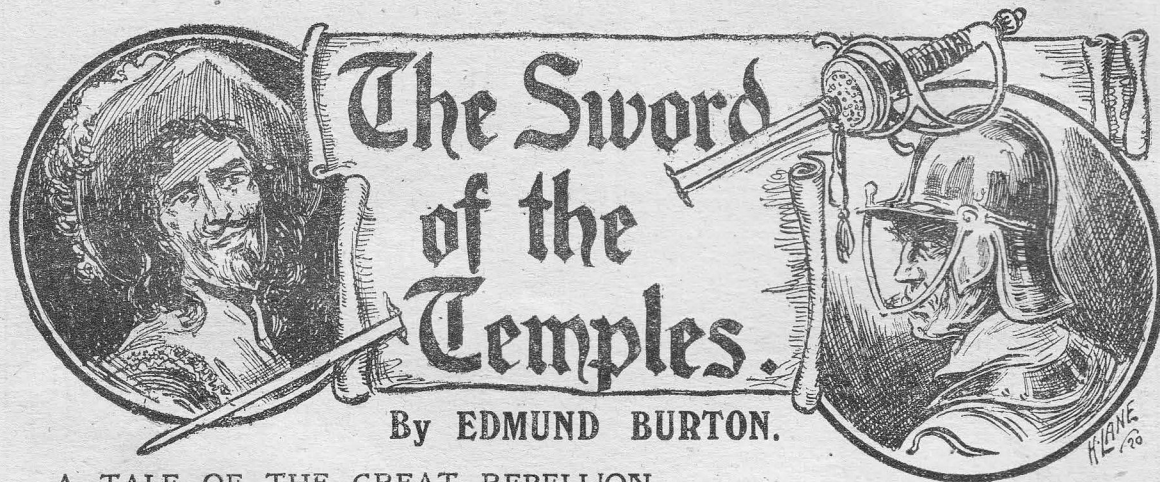
Next morning, when Harry Wharton & Co. met Tony Webster, he informed them that the operation had proved successful, and that his wife was making champion progress.

And the groundsman did not forget, nor was he ever likely to forget, how much he owed to the juniors who were fittingly styled by their schoolfellows as the Fighting Five!

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "The Worst Form at Greyfriars!" by Frank Richards, in next week's issue.)

A POWERFUL, ROMANTIC, ADVENTURE SERIAL!



A TALE OF THE GREAT REBELLION.

INTRODUCTION.

Harry Temple, master of the Chase, and possessor of a wonderful sword at the death of his father. When carried by any member of the family in battle the legend is that the sword will guard him from hurt in the fight, and make him invincible over his enemies. Walter Temple, his cousin,

who is a Roundhead officer, also has a great longing for the sword, and there are many fights between the two for the ownership of it. Will Howard, Harry's particular friend, has several accounts to square with Walter. When war is declared between the King and Parliament, Harry and his friend join the

Royalist forces. The two are in the thickest of the fighting, and many adventures befall them. One day a great tree falls on them during a march, and they are laid up to Temple Chase.

(Now read on.)

For the King Again!

HARRY had, of course, long since recovered from his hurt, and was as fit as ever. Upon him, too, the enforced idleness was telling, though he would not have admitted it for worlds, for fear of making Will feel his position even more keenly than he did.

Not a soul had come nigh the Chase all that time, and save for the damaged windows and scarred walls, 'twould have been hard to believe that, only a few short weeks before, the great mansion had been the scene of one of the fiercest fights in the history of the Great Rebellion.

Where the opposing hosts were now engaged, 'twas impossible to say. Even Travers, who daily went forth to glean what tidings he could, invariably had his journeys in vain. None had seen or heard either of Royalist or Roundhead since the retreat from the Chase, nor did they know upon which side victory had smiled when my Lord Goring sallied forth on that last occasion.

In this way, another fortnight dragged by, when Will, much to his own delight and Harry's, announced himself as feeling fit enough to buckle on his sword once again. So, Travers being this time fortunate in obtaining a couple of horses, they rode away from the mansion, neither being certain which way to turn.

"Why not make for Gloucestershire?" suggested Harry, as they halted hesitatingly at the boundary of the demesne. "'Twas towards there my Lord Goring was about to move, when we were summoned to join him."

"As you will, lad," replied Howard. "It seems as good one way as another, yet we may be riding right into the wolf's lair, for aught we know to the contrary."

By now the last traces of snow had completely disappeared, and the scent of spring was in the air. Everywhere the trees were shooting forth their green buds in the bright sunshine, and the birds were carolling blithely with the very joy of it all.

Sunset saw the two riders cross the Gloucestershire border, without so far having seen or heard any sign of either friend or foe; but finally, as dusk closed down, they encountered a small party of horsemen whilst cantering through a deep defile, the banks of which were almost as steep as a wall. The others were coming towards them at an easy pace, and Will pulled his steed up sharply.

"We cannot ride up yonder, Master Harry, nor yet can we go back in time," he said. "If those be our fellows, well and good; if not—" He shrugged his shoulders significantly.

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'Twas too dark by now to clearly distinguish the newcomers until they arrived within some yards of the pair, then Harry uttered a joyful exclamation.

"Roundheads never wore plumed hats, Will!" he said. "Dost not see them against the sky?"

"Ay, lad! Just as you spoke. Ho, there, friends! Are ye of my Lord Goring's company?"

"Goring?" echoed the foremost, pulling his horse back on its haunches in surprise. "Nay, we are with the Earl of Lindsey. Who is it speaks?"

"Two for the King! Heaven preserve him in safety!" replied Will fervently. "Hast heard aught of my Lord—"

"Nay, not lately! Save that he will require a new force, methinks!" was the grim response.

"Zounds! What mean you?"

"Why, that he was put to flight weeks back, not twenty miles from here!"

"Defeated? By Cromwell?"

"None other! The clever knave surprised him with an immense following, and 'twill be many months ere we hear of Lord Goring again, I'll vow!"

"And Noll?"

"Would that we guessed where he is! Like a will-o'-the-wisp, he dances before us, and when we think we have him safely cooped, he springs up elsewhere!"

To the present-day reader, these things may seem somewhat strange, when he calls to mind our modern, rapid methods of sending and receiving information; but in those times, not being blessed with such advantages as the telegraph, the telephone, the wireless, opposing armies had to rely solely upon their scouts or chance news for tidings of each other's whereabouts. Thus, a huge force might be lying only a score of miles away, and the enemy never know aught of its presence, except one of their scouting-parties came back with the information.

And Noll Cromwell was indeed a human will-o'-the-wisp, just as the Royalist trooper had said; for his marvellous rapidity of movement was at once the wonder and despair of many of the King's commanders. Since his defeat of the new force under Prince Rupert, and then of the second Royalist body, he had sprung a staggering surprise on the third—although reinforced by my Lord Goring—after which he had disappeared apparently into thin air.

"As ye are King's men," said the trooper presently, "ye cannot do better than throw in your lot with us. We were returning to camp when we met ye."

Nothing loth, they both wheeled their horses round, and cantered behind the others, who were riding two abreast on

account of the extreme narrowness of the track. Suddenly, there was a rustle in the foliage, followed by a sliding sound, and something rolled down to the side of the pathway, almost beneath their steeds' hoofs. The leader of the troop pulled up sharply, and sprang from the saddle.

"Grammercy!" he gasped, stooping and peering closely at what was lying there.

"'Tis a rebel scout, and hurt, I fear! Sirrah, your sword! You are our prisoner!" The weapon was handed over without a word, but the man made no effort to rise. He lay there where he had fallen, groaning with pain.

"Quick!" said the trooper, in a low voice. "Whence come you? Answer now, on your life!"

"From a valley some twenty miles to southward."

"Is Noll Cromwell encamped there?"

The man uttered a shrill cackle of laughter, which sounded oddly enough considering the inevitable plight he was in.

"Noll Cromwell? Ho, ho! Colonel Cromwell still there! Nay, he is not, and 'twould take more than a party of blind moles like ye to find him!"

"A glib tongue will avail you little, Sir Rebel!" exclaimed the trooper angrily.

"Who is there, then?"

"Someone who would like to meet ye, and the rest of Lindsey's owlish brood! They will trounce ye right soundly, too, I warrant!"

"You seem most anxious that we should engage them, sirrah! 'Tis a thin trap—Noll Cromwell's rabble are yonder!"

"Somewhere, but not the Colonel! He and the rest have bigger fish to fry, and have gone— Ah, you would give much to know that, but, on my soul, my lips shall never tell ye—"

The man paused as a strange sound arose not very far away—somewhere on the other side of the hill—sounds of shouting voices and clashing steel. Again the rebel scout burst into a shrill cackle.

"Aha, they have come even sooner than I thought! I told ye some of us were encamped yonder—but not now! Hark you, Sir King's pawn! They are here!"

The troopers uttered a chorus of amazed gasps, and, leaving the man where he had fallen, galloped furiously along the track.

Earl Lindsey's forces had been the victims of a stunning surprise.

The Night Attack.

TWAS small wonder the injured scout had been so mighty ready with his tongue, for his refusal to speak would have made but little difference to the plans of his friends. Indeed,

those self-same plans were already cut and dried, and the big Parliamentary force was almost within striking distance of Earl Lindsey's unsuspecting followers, when he, with some others, had ridden ahead to make sure that all was really as promising as it seemed. True, some of the Royalist scouts had been encountered, but these had been cleverly captured by the advancing enemy, so that no word of their coming had reached those who were encamped there, all unconscious of the staggering surprise which was about to burst upon them.

When Harry, Will, and the others galloped up, the fight had already well started; and soon they were in the thick of it, slashing and hacking like men possessed. The body under Lindsey was a large one, but the other, though by no means the greater part of Cromwell's army, was easily as strong, and 'twas a fierce tussle which raged there in the darkness of that spring night.

As for Harry and Will, their luck seemed to have changed for the better—permanently this time. The mysterious rapier darted back and forth like lightning, doing immense execution amongst the closely-packed ranks of their opponents; yet Harry himself never received so much as a scratch, though surrounded by foemen on all sides. Howard, too, save for a slight stiffness in his right arm, felt little discomfort as his long blade thrust and parried, cutting down one rebel and then engaging another.

And so the fight went on, neither side for a time either giving or gaining ground; for, despite the stunning rapidity of the attack, Lindsey's men were behaving wonderfully well, taking everything into consideration—so much so, indeed, that the enemy commander at length began to feel a strange anxiety undermining his confidence of a few minutes back.

Half an hour later, his fear of disaster had developed into a certainty. His followers were giving ground—gradually at first, then more quickly. Presently, a masterly movement on the part of Lindsey drove a triangular wedge into the lines of the opposing host, whilst his cavalry, now congregated at full strength, rounded each flank and engaged the main mounted forces just behind.

The battle had now been practically divided into two distinctive actions—one mostly between infantry; the other between cavalry—and so placed were the Royalists that either mounted or foot could support the other, if necessary, whilst the Roundheads had not this unquestionable advantage now.

As he took in what had occurred, the Parliamentary commander realised that the outlook had become more than serious for him, and cursed the bright moonlight which had allowed his adversary to carry out his clever tactics. Several times during the action he had desperately striven to bring his men together, but on each occasion he was forestalled by the watchful Lindsey, who had grasped the immense advantage his position had given him, and resolved to hold it intact at all costs. Deeper and deeper drove the wedge of infantry, whilst farther and farther away from them the Roundhead cavalry were forced, until their commander gave up all hope of a rally.

The enemy broke and retreated in the best order they could, harassed and worried by their pursuers.

The chase had continued for some miles, when Earl Lindsey, who was riding in the van of one of the following cavalry parties, noticed a horse draw alongside his own, whilst its rider leaned forward anxiously. He was the leader of the scouts whom Harry and Will had encountered just before the fight.

"My lord, will you continue much farther?" asked the man gravely.

Lindsey turned in some surprise.

"Much farther!" he echoed angrily.

"Why, into the next county, if needs be!"

"Nay; 'tis unwise, my lord, if I may say so. 'Tis probably a trap! Cromwell himself cannot be so very far away now. List, I pray you!"

As he gave a brief outline of what the injured scout had said, Lindsey seemed somewhat doubtful and disappointed. They galloped on silently for some little time, the trooper watching his chief's face anxiously in the moonlight. Presently, the latter issued a command to an officer riding on his right-hand side.

"We must cease this pursuit!" he said, with an effort. "This man has had no time to make his report till now, and the news he brings is most serious! Cromwell left with his main body before the attack

was carried out, but where he lies now, nor how strong he is, we know not. Indeed, he may be waiting for us just ahead, and we've had too much experience of his trickery already to treat it lightly! Give the order to fall back!"

Great was the surprise when the command went round, but there was nothing for it save to obey unquestioningly. Earl Lindsey was a clever soldier, and they well knew he would not take such a course without good reason.

So, whilst the fleeing Roundheads disappeared in the distance, not yet guessing what had occurred, their pursuers turned back and recaptured their previous position, which was a particularly good one.

The Ambush at the Ford.

BUT the two comrades' stay with Earl Lindsey was not destined to be a very lengthy one, and, indeed, it was as abruptly cut short in a rather unexpected manner.

Both had been attached for the time being to the same troop of scouts as they had previously encountered, and were almost hourly engaged on some reconnoitring movement or other, which frequently carried them several miles from their base. For

leader laughed at Will somewhat amusedly, and shook his head.

"One would almost think we were so many birds, friend, to hear you talk!" he said. "There is the hill, sure enough, but we cannot bring it across to us!"

"Nay; but we can easily go to it!"

"Od's fish, man, who could swim in that, with sharp rocks every few yards of the way, and still escape with his life?" gasped the scout.

But Howard pointed a little farther down stream.

"I did not say swim, most wise one, for wherefore should we do so, when we can walk?"

The other looked in the direction indicated, and also observed what the big fellow had already seen—a sandy ridge scarcely covered by the flood. It formed a natural ford, stretching the whole way from bank to bank, and would easily admit the passage of two horses abreast.

With Howard and the other scout leading the way, the whole troop entered the water, almost reaching mid-stream in safety, when a stunning surprise burst upon them.

From the farther bank came a ragged volley, the smoke hanging in swirling wreathes over rocks and scrub. Will's companion reeled from the saddle with a



From the further bank came a ragged volley. Will's companion reeled from his saddle, with a gasping cry, whilst Howard's own horse went down, leaving the rider struggling in the racing torrent.

Lindsey, vaguely disturbed by the possibility of Cromwell being somewhere close at hand, was leaving nothing to chance. He had learnt much from that night attack, although it had turned out successful so far as he was concerned.

It was on one of these expeditions that the scout-leader suddenly drew rein, peering ahead through the thickly-wooded country, and presently motioned Will Howard to join him.

"You have good eyes, friend!" he said. "Dost see aught yonder? Nay, just a little more to the right!"

Will stared in turn, and then nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Ay, I saw something just now, but 'twas too far off to make very much of. That hill over there should give us a better view."

They had halted almost at the bank of a wide, swift-running river, bounded on their side by a thick expanse of scrub, and on the other by a high, grassy mound. The

gaspings cry, whilst Howard's own horse went down beneath him, leaving its rider struggling madly to disentangle his feet from the stirrups.

He kicked himself free and looked round, standing almost up to his hips in the river. There had been eight altogether in their party—now but three remained, including himself. Of Harry Temple there was no sign whatsoever.

A second volley rang out, and the two other troopers swayed and fell into the torrent. Will's own salvation being due to his being so much lower down, and consequently out of the direct line of fire. He gave one glance at the opposite bank, and then scrambled back along the ridge, hopeless and smitten to the heart with sorrow.

Half-way he got in safety, the leaden balls flicking the water all round him, but so far himself untouched. Then, a wild flounder, a vain effort to regain his footing,

and he had plunged into the deep water below the ford, being carried along like a cork on the bosom of the flood.

But 'twas doubtful now if Howard really cared overmuch what happened to him. Master Harry was gone, and, though Will knew he had loved him like a brother, 'twas only at this moment he fully realised how deep and unswerving that affection had been. Indeed, 'twas as though Will himself had lost everything that made life worth battling for.

On ever on the torrent bore him, grazing jagged rocks, but miraculously never actually striking any of them. Onward, until something just ahead became faintly discernible to his half-blinded vision, and caused him to put forth his utmost remaining strength, with a choking gasp of delighted astonishment.

"Master Harry! Kind Heaven, 'tis he, and none other!"

A few yards in front of him, and almost directly in his course, a horse and rider were battling desperately with the tide which threatened each moment to dash them against one of the numerous cruel teeth that showed above the boiling surface. And the words burst hoarsely from Will's lips as he realised their true identity. Then he uttered a chuckle of joy as he found himself to be swiftly overtaking them; for Howard's body was, of course, much lighter than the combined weight of the others, and therefore travelled more quickly. In a very few minutes he had grasped the stirrup, and was looking up thankfully into young Temple's own amazed countenance.

"Will! Nay, it cannot be!"

"Oh, but 'tis, lad! Make no mistake on it!" replied the big fellow, winding his other hand amongst the trappings to secure a firmer grip. "And as pleased to see you as you are to see him. Careful! Careful! Zounds! That was a narrow graze!"

They swept past a huge rock, with but a couple of inches to spare, and tore along for some minutes unchecked. Then Will suddenly uttered a cry of hope.

"Leave the saddle, lad! Leave it quickly! See ahead!"

A great tree-trunk, evidently having been uprooted from one of the banks, was being carried sluggishly along, with one half of its thickness showing above water—a far better support for both of them than the horse, could they but climb astride it.

Harry reluctantly slipped from the saddle, his steed uttering a whinny of disappointment as it saw its master swept swiftly onwards. But 'twas a case of needs must, and the horse's safety could not be considered now when their own was being so dangerously threatened. Will gripped one of the thick boughs and hauled himself atop of the main trunk, drawing Harry up behind him.

"Marry! A strange craft, lad, in all conscience—and a stranger voyage, for we know not aught of our destination, nor—Hark you! What is that odd sound in front?"

A deep booming roar had become quite audible as they rounded the next bend, and a minute later Will pointed ahead with a hurried gasp towards the foam-flecked flood as it seemed to disappear into a dense cloud of steamy spray, which rose upwards for several feet above the stream.

"By Heaven, 'tis the end, I fear!" he cried hoarsely. "Hold tightly, Master Harry, and thrust out your right foot, as I do, broadside to the current! 'Tis but a slim chance, and—Nay, patience, lad, patience! I fancy we are turning, if ever so slightly!"

Close to the brink of the fall the water was not quite so deep, and the submerged boughs of the tree were even now brushing the gravelly bottom. Slowly the stem of their odd craft turned towards the bank—but would they ever reach it in safety?

Now almost broadside to the current, the trunk was being buffeted about unmercifully, whilst its occupants anxiously glanced alternately from the riverside to that steamy cloud which seemed to be rushing towards them all too swiftly.

Then, with a curious grinding, the tree grounded on a submerged rock and remained stationary within ten yards of the precipitous brink.

Will dashed away the cold perspiration which had gathered in beads on his brow, and looked round at Harry. But the boy was calm, though rather white and drawn of face.

"'Tis a brief respite, anyhow, lad," said Howard, "but we know not how long our anchorage will hold, nor how to reach the bank. See! We are many feet from that."

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Harry nodded, fully realising that their predicament was still a sore one; but, presently he clutched Will's sleeve, and pointed to a great bough which stretched out at right-angles to the main trunk.

"Look, old friend!" he exclaimed. "See how yonder branch reaches almost to the calmer water over there! 'Tis a frail bridge enough, but worth testing!"

Howard's eyes lit up with renewed hope, and presently, on hands and knees, they had begun their perilous journey, dropping into the water below, when the branch became too thin to carry them, and holding on by gripping it tightly above their heads.

The suction of the current at first almost tore their fingers from the bough, but in a short time it became less powerful, and presently Will announced that his feet had touched bottom. Next moment, however, he uttered a warning shout.

"Let go, lad! Let go, on your life! The tree is moving!"

Harry relinquished his grip instantly, and struck out for the bank. The water here was quite calm, forming as it did a small natural bay on the edge of the current. They staggered out, dripping, and somewhat unmoved by their perilous adventure, sinking down on the grass with a gasp of relief.

The trunk had by this time slid from the rock, and next instant it disappeared over the brink of the fall.

"We were only just in time, lad!" said Will, as he saw it go. "Another minute and we should have been unable to reach the eddy! And now, Master Harry, we have yet another enemy to fight—the danger of a chill from our wet clothes."

Young Temple smiled, and then shivered violently.

"Ay, you are right, but that foe is quickly disposed of!" he replied, commencing to undress, an action which was immediately followed by his big companion.

They wrung the water from their garments, hanging them on the bushes to dry in the warm spring sunshine, and in something over an hour after were continuing their journey, fairly comfortable, but ravenously hungry.

"Marry, lad," said Will. "'Tis a mighty strange mix-up altogether! We joined the King's cavalry, but, methinks, we might as well belong to the infantry, with all the walking we seem to encounter from time to time! Where are we now? Have you any idea?"

"Nay; no more than you have, old friend. But, 'tis better than being underneath a waterfall, I'll vow!"

"True, but I'll be underneath the sod very shortly, an' I get not something to eat! Ah! There is a dwelling yonder, which looks promising!"

A buxom, good-humoured-looking woman answered their summons, and cautiously inquired who they were. Upon being told what had occurred, a look of compassion overspread her face, presently giving place to a smile of welcome.

"An' ye be King's men? Then ye shall have the best that Mother Mortimer can prepare for ye! My only son is fighting under Prince Rupert—"

Will uttered an amazed gasp, and shot a quick look at Harry.

"Body o' me!" he exclaimed. "Is the world growing smaller than ever? Why, dame, your son is an old comrade of ours, and a right good soldier—"

"Is he still safe and sound, know ye?" she inquired anxiously, but Will shook his head.

"Nay; that we cannot say," he replied. "For 'tis many weeks since we last set eyes upon him; but I can assure you that he had sustained little or no hurt up to then."

Dame Mortimer sighed deeply, and led the way to the cosy little kitchen, where the hungry travellers were soon ravenously discussing a savoury meal, which was washed down by an ample draught of home-brewed ale.

"And now, lad, let's hasten! For every strong arm is daily needed!"

The Parting of the Ways.

A LITTLE over five miles from where they rested the comrades came upon a tiny hamlet, where a small body of Royalist Horse were quartered.

Both were cordially welcomed when their identity became known, and after a stay of some twenty-four hours, the whole troop moved to join up with Prince Rupert, who was again collecting his scattered forces.

Amongst the main body, Harry and Will were overjoyed to recognise several well-remembered faces, one of which belonged to Sylvester, who returned their greetings warmly.

"Zounds!" he said, looking them up and down, when he had heard their adventures. "Ye seem to have had a busy time of it! We have done little ourselves, since my Lord Goring was so badly cut up."

"Ay, we heard of that!" replied Will. "So Noll appears to be still as much a problem as ever? And the others who were with us—Mortimer, and the rest of our troop?"

"I know naught of them! 'Twas just such another affair as our first meeting with Cromwell. At least, I should have said I know naught of any save Mortimer—"

"Ay?" Will queried eagerly, but Sylvester shook his head.

"Gone!" he replied. "He fell just before my lord gave the order to retire. Mortimer and I were fighting saddle to saddle, but could do naught against those who opposed us. He was cut down by a great bull of an Ironside, whilst I barely escaped with my life!"

"You saw this?"

"Ay; as plainly as I see you now! Have I not said we were side by side at the time? I did my utmost to assist him, but 'twas in vain. I was too hard pressed myself!"

And, during all those long weeks, what had become of that utter rascal, Walter Temple?

Riding furiously from the Chase, his bruised back reminding him painfully of his futile visit, he had travelled blindly through the darkness of that memorable night, trusting to his horse, rather than to himself, for guidance. Which way to turn he knew not—was an Ishmael, in every sense of the word. Enemies behind him at the Chase, enemies under Lord Goring, from whose clutches he had just escaped—ay, enemies even amongst his friends, for he dared not attempt to return to Cromwell, on account of what had already taken place, even had he known the Colonel's present position.

So he rode on till well past sunrise, yet never attempting to draw rein, though his horse was showing unmistakable signs of fatigue. But presently it stopped dead, obstinately refusing to go a step farther, and Walter slid from the saddle.

Hungry and weary from lack of sleep, he sank down in the snow-covered undergrowth and dozed off, his steed following suit. He was still oblivious to all about him when a small party of Parliamentary cavalry almost trampled upon him, and he awoke with a violent start.

"You sleep soundly for a good soldier, sirrah!" said one, smiling at his agitation. "And you are unarmed! How comes that?"

"'Tis easily told," replied Walter, swiftly collecting his scattered senses. "I have just escaped from Lord Goring's camp, and was obliged to leave my sword behind me. I regret to say. Are ye of Colonel Cromwell's forces?"

"Nay, we belong to no one just at present, but are travelling north to join the Earl of Manchester."

'Twas with great difficulty that Walter concealed his satisfaction at learning that Cromwell himself was not their objective. He coaxed his now rested horse to its feet, and placed his foot in the stirrup.

"Some food first, for I am half-starved," he said, "and then I will join ye, if I may."

Some spare rations were handed to him, and he ate ravenously for a while; then the band moved forward again, away from the scenes of the recent terrific fighting, to fresh fields and pastures new.

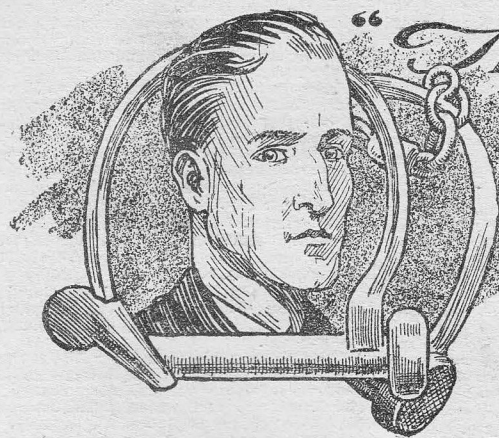
Northward, ever northward, they travelled, until finally they linked up with the Earl of Manchester's forces. Several skirmishes took place, but they were of small moment, and mostly resulted indecisively. But, though Walter fought as valiantly as the rest throughout the whole time, but one object hovered before his mental gaze—a shining rapier with a glittering, bejewelled hilt, which seemed to draw him like a magnet.

Yet each day he was getting farther and farther from the young Cavalier at whose lip the strange sword was swinging in safety. Nor could Walter, so far, see any opportunity of retracing his steps in search of the cousin for whom his smouldering hatred increased with each passing hour.

And, indeed, though the rascal did not know it then, many a long year was destined to drag by ere he and Harry were again to come to grips.

(Do not miss the next long instalment of our Grand Romantic Adventure Serial next week.)

THRILLING DETECTIVE TALES YOU WILL ENJOY READING!



The EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!

A Grand New Story, dealing with the Adventures of FERRERS LOCKE, the Famous Detective.

By MAURICE EVERARD.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, is called in to help Scotland Yard to disentangle the mysterious murder of Paul Morale Rodriguez. The detective travels down to the World-Wide Club, where he spends considerable time in investigating. He meets Harter and Sartoris, both friends of the dead man's. He discovers many clues, all of which lead him to think that another member of the club, Mr. Delgray, is the person who had organised and executed the murder.

(Now read on.)

The Upper Room—(Continued).

By the time Locke strode into Ribaud's office he was quite composed again.

"Just a few more questions, and I sha'n't trouble you any more," he announced, with a smile. "Firstly, does Mr. Delgray wear spectacles?"

"I've never seen him in them," the other replied.

"Do his eyes look weak?"

"On the contrary, I should say they are very strong."

"For what reason?"

"Because he reads a great deal—sometimes from morning till night—and I've often wondered that his sight didn't give out."

"Even such small print as this?" the detective asked, and placed in the manager's hand a leaf from a South American mining journal printed in the smallest and most execrable type imaginable.

Ribaud nodded.

"Oh, yes. He receives that by mail every fortnight, and reads it through from cover to cover. I've often seen him spend the whole day over it. I should describe Mr. Delgray as a prodigious reader, when the fit takes him."

"How did he read—with a magnifying-glass, or without one?"

"I've never seen him with a magnifying-glass."

A strange gleam flashed into Locke's cold eyes, and his free hand closed mechanically on a length of twisted metal in his pocket.

Still, he made no further reference to this subject just then.

His next question was equally as curious.

"Did Mr. Delgray ever ask you to supply him with tin-tacks?"

"Good gracious, no! I don't suppose we possess such a thing in the whole place."

Next Locke produced a photograph.

"Is that a portrait of Mr. Delgray?"

"Yes, and an excellent likeness."

Locke smiled.

"I believe there is a fancy-shop in Milehurst kept by people of the name of Firkin. Is that so?"

"Yes," Ribaud replied. "You'll find their place in High Street, opposite the Corn Exchange. But, Mr. Locke, what a strange and disconnected lot of questions!"

"Each linking one with the other, I shouldn't be surprised," was the enigmatical response. "Now, about the redecoration of the club premises, which you will remember telling me took place—at least, Inspector Mauvell told me, and I presume he was right—late in July."

"That's right. We had the workmen in for ten days. What can I tell you about it?"

"I want the name of the man who repainted the front of the house—the woodwork, I mean—especially the window-frames and cross-pieces."

The manager propped his head in his hand.

"I believe a chap named Hersom did the outside painting. Anyway, Mr. Newcombe, of Newcombe & Jarvis, the builders and decorators, would tell you. Their offices are in High Street, too, only a few doors down from the toy and fancy-shop."

Ferrers Locke, on a new line of investigation, walked leisurely down to Milehurst.

Light in Dark!

FERRERS LOCKE'S first visit was to the only optician the town boasted. He produced and laid on the counter a broken aluminium frame, which once had been circular, and to which a small ebony handle was attached.

"About three weeks ago, Mr. Kibbold, a friend of mine bought a reading-glass here," he said, smiling blandly. "Unfortunately, it got broken. I want another like it. I believe the price was twelve-and-sixpence."

The spectacle-maker picked up the twisted framework.

"Quite so. I recall the glass. A gentleman from the club-house bought it. I have another exactly like it. Will you take it with you, or shall I send it?"

"Thanks, I'll take it," Locke returned. "You needn't trouble about receipting a bill. I have my friend's old bill, and that will serve to remind me of the price, should he or I want another. Good-afternoon!"

Across the way was the toyshop. He asked to see the proprietress.

"You sell a good many boxes of these tacks, I suppose?" he said.

The woman took the box, almost full, and turned it over.

"Scores and scores in a week."

"Then I couldn't expect you to tell me to whom you sold this particular one," Locke laughed, "unless, perhaps, you could recognise him from a photograph. Have either you or any of your assistants ever served a gentleman like him?"

"No, I have never served him," she nodded emphatically. "Perhaps one of my assistants has." She walked across the shop. Coming back, she said: "Yes, Miss Parsons remembers the gentleman quite well. He made a remark at the time about the smallness of his purchase, but she can't recall just when it was."

"No matter," said Locke, thanking her. "That is all I wanted to know."

From the toyshop he passed on to the builders. The man Hersom happened to be in the yard, looking out materials.

Locke produced a cigar-case. Hersom's mouth opened automatically.

"You were the man who did the exterior decoration at the World-Wide Club a little while ago," the detective suggested.

Hersom beamed, and puffed at his weed.

"That's me, sir. No complaints, I hope. All sound workmanship; ohly best paint used. Not peeling already, sir, I hope, though the hot weather is trying to fresh paint."

"Not in the least. Standing sun and rain excellently," Locke said. "What I wanted to ask you was if you remember driving two tin-

tacks—brand-new tin-tacks—into a cross-slat of the window-frame to one of the gentlemen's sitting-rooms."

The painter shook his head.

"Not me, sir. Never did such a thing all the time I was there. No reason to. My job was to slap the paint on, and I did it—well, you know, quite all right, and all that."

Locke was equally satisfied. He found Hay still sitting in his chair, mopping his forehead.

"Pistol go off?" he asked, with a callous smile.

The young man heaved a deep sigh.

"Devil a bit!" he remarked laconically.

Locke drew on his gloves.

"Never mind," he said, with a light laugh. "It will to-morrow, when the position of the sun corresponds with the position it occupied at 3.27 just over a fortnight ago."

"What do you mean?" gasped Hay, leaping to his feet.

For answer the detective emptied his pockets on the dead man's desk.

"Here are the clues," he said, bending over them with almost reverent seriousness. "First, a length of brown thread. One end was shut down on the sill of Mr. Delgray's front room, with the closed window keeping it in position.

"The other end carried a hand magnifying glass, brought to rest and supported by the two tin-tacks which, if you will step down to the balcony below, you will find still fixed in the top cross-piece of the high window-pane. The afternoon sun, focused through this powerful glass, was strong enough to explode the powder in the pan of the weapon on the wall. There you've got the whole secret."

Even Hay, used to the unexpected, was surprised.

"But how do you know Mr. Delgray did it?" he asked.

Locke's voice fell to a whisper.

"Because, my young friend, Delgray bought a hand magnifying-glass especially for the purpose. He had no need of one otherwise, his eyes being particularly good. While the excitement in this room was at its height he nipped upstairs, cautiously opened his window, drew up the glass by means of the thread, broke up the framework, threw the lens away, but, unfortunately for him, left the optician's receipt and the piece of thread behind.

"I knew from the start, directly I had established to my own satisfaction the fact that Rodriguez's end was caused by the wall-pistol, that heat alone, and heat from outside, was the only way for firing the weapon. I thought the sun streaming through the window would be sufficient. When I found it wasn't I had to retrace my steps, go back again over old ground.

"In Delgray's room I discovered a number of small things which appeared unaccountable: part of a broken magnifying-glass, which I soon ascertained he had no use for; a box of tin-tacks, strange things for a man who has everything done for him by club servants to buy; and two quite new tin-tacks fixed in the woodwork of the very window-pane through which I had watched the sun shining on the pistol."

"And you've no doubt in your mind that Delgray caused Rodriguez's death?"

"None at all."

"What was the motive?"

"Rodriguez was responsible for bringing one Arthur Delgray to a violent end. I gathered sufficient from the papers in the poor chap's room to learn that the death of Henry Delgray's brother lay at Rodriguez's door, and that Henry had followed the scoundrel from South America to England for the purpose of exacting payment."

"You think Rodriguez knew?"

"Without a doubt. He must have recognised Henry Delgray by the likeness between the two brothers, and have feared all along that the day of reckoning was coming. That explains why he fixed the bolt to his sitting-room door—to prevent a surprise attack."

"And Henry Delgray—what about him?"

Locke took out his watch.

"I want to get the seven-twenty-two to town for a few words with Maxwell—just to put him on his guard. To-morrow we shall have proved my theory for certain. Poor Delgray! I feel sorry for him, because I share his views—that Paul Rodriguez's end was a blessing to his fellows."

Here Locke's part in the case ended. Twenty-four hours later the Yard took it in hand. But they never caught Henry Delgray.

The Strange Affair in Leinster Gardens!

THE hands of the old lantern-clock pointed to eight. Ferrers Locke gathered together the papers on his desk, and leant back in his chair with a sigh of content. From where he sat he could see into the adjoining room, where Hay, his secretary, sat busily writing at his desk.

The outside telephone whirred, and Hay vanished through the curtained doorway.

Locke could hear his voice, but what he was saying came only in an indistinct murmur, which ceased abruptly as he put down the receiver and hurried back into the room.

"Someone wants to speak to you, sir," Hay said. "Yes, a man; but he's so excited I can hardly make head or tail of what he wants."

Locke heaved himself from the chair, and crossed the room with quick, decisive steps.

"Well?" he asked, picking up the instrument. "Yes, Mr. Locke is speaking. What do you want?"

A rough, uncultured voice tremored at the far end of the wire.

"Something's happened, sir! Can you come now? No, I can't tell you what it is. But I must see you at once!"

A frown deepened the lines on Locke's brow.

"Where are you?" he asked tersely.

"Leinster Gardens, Hyde Park. It's urgent, sir—very urgent! I'm his butler. My name's Spriggs—Albert Spriggs. Do come quickly!"

"What number?"

The detective jotted it down on the pad beside the instrument.

"I daren't lose another moment—"

There was fear, vibrant fear, in the shaking tones, and Locke felt a curious thrill of excitement keying him up to this sudden, strange silence broken by a terrified scream. It hung for a moment on the wires, died down to a choking sob; then all was still.

Locke called again, but no reply came back. The receiver snapped on to the rest, and, with quick, nervously impatient strides, he was back in the room where Hay awaited him.

Locke drew something that shone in the glow from the pink-shaded lamp, and slipped it into the pocket at his hip. Hay's eyes narrowed in surprise.

Locke was through the door and half-way down the stairs before Hay recovered from his surprise.

A drizzling rain was falling, and a chilling cold mist, blown in from the river, had settled over London like a wet blanket.

Locke shivered, turned up the collar of his coat, and stepped, a little impatiently, into the taxi-cab which drew up at his call, and inwardly anathematised Mr. Albert Spriggs for a summons which might lead anywhere. There was more than one puzzling point about the telephone message. How had a man like Spriggs—an ordinary "gentleman's gentleman"—got to know of him? And what was the nature of his wants that he could not stay a moment to detail them over the 'phone, and why the sudden mysterious silence, and why the horrid cry that still lingered in Locke's memory and made him glad of the companionship of the thing of lead and steel that reposed in his hip-pocket?

The sense of impending action dissipated his natural disappointment. At Leinster Corner he jumped out, and, turning his back on the

mist-wreathed park, hurried along the deserted street.

The season was in full-swing, but restaurant and theatreland had long since claimed their own, and long gaps of dark, unlighted houses, sinister-looking in the murky gloom, frowned at him as he scanned their doorways.

At last he came to the number Spriggs had given, a big, cream-coloured place of five storeys, whose heavily-curtained windows stared like unseeing eyes into the foggy night.

Locke cleared the steps at a bound, and came to a halt in the dense shadow of the portico, his hand on the electric bell. He bent his head and listened, but above the dull, far-away roar of life citywards, no whirring sound was to be heard. Something suspiciously like an oath left him. He pressed the button again, but all was silent as the grave.

"A hoax, most likely," he decided, and turned away. But in turning his coat-sleeve brushed against the gleaming handle of the door, and it gave softly inwardly.

This, trifling in itself, invested everything with a different aspect. As he stood for an instant motionless in the spacious gloom of the hall a curious, indefinable feeling that something wrong, that somewhere in that dark, untenanted mansion he would stumble across the key to the butler's strange words and a stranger cry, prompted him to quick action, and, sending a loud call through the



Gasping for breath, Locke reached the telephone-box. "Scotland Yard!" he panted down the 'phone. Then, "Yes—come at once to Leinster Gardens—quick as you can!"

house, he shut the door with a bang, and fumbled for his electric torch. The oppressive stillness was getting on his nerves, and, though the echo of his voice still trembled faintly in the air, he felt a deeper sense of loneliness than he had ever before known.

And to add to this he had come without his electric torch. Always quick of action, Locke groped his way blindly forward, his right arm outstretched, with the fingers moving swiftly over the surface of the wall for the ever-present switch. He found it; the knock clicked noisily, but no responding gleam answered the touch.

And then in a moment the silent house in Leinster Gardens assumed the proportions of a place of horrors, for his ungloved hand came to rest on soft, yielding human flesh; and at the touch, at which his whole body thrilled with excitement, the form slipped away.

There was a swift tread of footsteps behind him. He swung round; but something heavy swished through the air, fell about his head and shoulders, and, while the cry that rose to his lips was strangled in his throat, a pad which strong hands pressed over his

mouth gave out a subtly sweet perfume that quickly robbed him of consciousness.

For a minute or two he struggled fiercely with the tall stranger. But the grip upon him grew more relentless, and soon he slipped to the floor, helpless.

Hours seemed to have passed before Ferrers Locke fought his way back to a knowledge of understandable things. But even then his head ached and throbbled so terribly that he could only lie there panting for breath and inwardly upbraiding himself for having fallen so hopelessly into the trap which had been prepared for him.

At last, however, life began to return to his numbed limbs, and, staggering to his feet, he searched through his disordered clothes, and found a box of matches.

The little slip of pine sizzled and flared in his shaking hand. He held it high above his head, and looked around him in startled stupefaction.

The flickering gleam made a little circle of light in a huge and exquisitely-furnished apartment, whose windows were curtained and shuttered, and whose thickly-carpeted floor bore witness to a dreadful tragedy.

Against the blackness of a big astrakhan rug before the fireless grate a white face, horribly distorted with staring eyes, looked up at him—a face so repulsive in its terror that even Locke shrank back, appalled.

"Murdered!" he cried, and, bending low, put his ear close to the man's lips. They touched his face, ice-cold in death.

A solitary candle in a carved mahogany stick stood upon an open escritoire. Locke lit it, and made a searching examination of the room. Everything was in disorder—chairs overturned, cushions flung here and there, and the door-hangings half torn from the rings of the portiere.

"Poor wretch! He made a desperate fight for life," the detective decided, and, kneeling again by the dead man's side, he started on a closer examination.

The body was that of a stout, finely-built man of about sixty. His clothes were of good quality and well cut, and the collar and shirt-front, disarranged and crumpled in the death-struggle, were of pure linen. About the throat marks of discolouration, where maniacal strength had crushed out the very breath of life, were already deepening, and the white, flabby fingers showed evidence of the brutal force with which a couple of rings had been ruthlessly torn away.

Across the lifeless breast the fragment of a gold chain trailed, broken in the hurry with which the murderous assailant tried to get the watch. A wallet, with one cover torn, lay under the grate, and in the corner of the steel fender a purse containing sixpence and a few copper coins.

"Robbery, undoubtedly," Locke decided, and, discovering a key still in the lock of the door, he dashed into the street and made for the nearest telephone-box.

Gasping for breath, and his collar hanging out, he reached his destination.

"Scotland Yard!" he panted down the 'phone. Then: "Is that the Yard? Come at once! There has been a murder at Leinster Gardens!"

Within a quarter of an hour half a dozen detectives and plain-clothes officers were on the spot.

Locke's old rival, Detective-inspector Barkleigh Fox, was among the first to put in an appearance.

"Something rather startling and fresh in the annals of crime, isn't it, for a detective to be in the house while the murder is taking place?" he interjected as the Assistant Chief of Police took notes of Locke's story.

A curious gleam shot into Locke's dark eyes.

"My opinion is he was dead before I arrived," Locke answered. "You see, the drug they used on me must have been a fairly light one for me to come round in half an hour."

Fox brushed back his sleek, dark hair.

"Whom do you suspect? The man Spriggs, I suppose?"

"I shouldn't like to say anything definite as yet."

"But he was here. You've satisfied yourself on that point?"

"Yes. The girl at the exchange has verified the message. It came through to me about two minutes past eight. I left at once, and arrived here at twenty-four minutes to nine."

"You can swear to the time?"

"Certainly. I looked at my watch as I passed the lighted portico of the house opposite."

"Then the person who attacked you in the hall—was it a man or a woman?"

"A man—probably two; but about that I can't be quite sure, because the cloth was wound so quickly over my head and the drug worked with such swiftness that I can only remember striking a few feeble blows before I collapsed."

"Then it's possible there was only one person present besides you and the murdered man?"

"I think two. The flesh I touched as my hand was groping for the switch was a woman's. I could swear to that!"

A curious smile flitted over Barkleigh Fox's saturnine face.

"Of course, on that subject you are a competent judge," he said.

Locke shot him an angry but carefully restrained glance.

"Only a fool wouldn't know the difference!" Locke retorted.

Fox shook his head.

"I'm not so sure. You could easily be mistaken. The man might only recently have shaved. If he was young his face would be just as soft as a woman's."

"Possibly. But the feel and quality of the skin are never the same. I hold to my opinion that there were at least two in this business."

"Personally, I don't think so," Fox replied, with that superior air of self-assurance which always made Ferrers Locke's blood boil. "Suspicion points to Spriggs absolutely. You are satisfied he was here only a few minutes before the murder was committed. Now he has vanished. Heaven knows where! If he didn't commit the crime, who did? And why isn't he here to clear himself?"

"Now you're asking me something which I can't explain."

"At present? Then you mean later on—"

"That if you can't, I shall fight this case to a satisfactory termination. One never knows, Mr. Fox, but it might—I say it might—be said by evilly-disposed persons that I had had a hand in the affair."

"You're only putting thoughts into my mind, Locke."

"On the contrary, I'm merely telling you what you'd like to be able to say. However, we won't bandy words. The case is in your hands—I see the chief means to turn it over to you—and, as your opinion and mine doesn't coincide, we shall work along different lines, and only come together at the end."

"Then you are not going to presuppose Spriggs guilty?"

"Not until I can prove him so."

"Which rests entirely on your ability to find him."

"Admitted. But one day he'll turn up."

"What makes you think so?"

"His telephoning to me."

"A blind. Had he needed assistance he would have rung up the Yard."

"Not necessarily. Some people have an aversion to the Yard. Either they don't want undue publicity, or they don't want to run the risk of seeing their cause bungled. I think for the present we can leave it there."

Fox went scarlet with passion.

"If I were Sir Kenneth Moseley I should forbid you having anything to do with the matter!" he ground out.

Locke made a note of something which apparently Fox had not seen.

"He can't. I'm free to gang my own gait, which sometimes is very fortunate for you and your colleagues."

"One thing before you go, the Scotland Yard man called out as Locke moved away. "From his voice, how old should you judge Spriggs to be?"

"Quite young—twenty-eight or thirty."

Fox smiled.

"I thought so. Now mark my words. When you get to the bottom of this affair you'll find there wasn't a woman in the case at all. To me the whole thing is clear as a pikestaff. Spriggs did the murder, and robbery was the motive. This poor fellow, apparently, was a man of means. He came here with the man Spriggs, who, so far as I can make out, appears to have been his valet, and, giving way to a sudden fit of covetousness, he slew his master for the sake of his jewellery and the money on him. The gold watch, broken in the struggle, he left behind—probably lost his nerve when he heard you at the front door. Your coming in so quickly upset his plans. He downed you, and made off."

Locke gave a quiet laugh.

"You've built up a splendid case against Albert Spriggs. I mean to start in and prove whether or not you are right."

"Of course I'm right! I've never come across a clearer case."

With that the two detectives parted.

It was annoying to Locke that unexpected turns in the great pearl robbery should have taken him off to Paris, and have detained him there for the best part of a fortnight, when all the while he was on tenterhooks to get to the bottom of the Leinster Gardens mystery.

Of course, he had to make a flying return visit to attend the inquest, the only tangible result of which was the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of Albert Spriggs on the suspicion of having caused his master's death. For the rest, however, he left the matter entirely in the hands of John Hay until the successful termination of the pearl robbery case left him free to return to his flat, and to gather up the threads of what promised to be a most fascinating but baffling mystery. Hay had all the available facts at his fingertips.

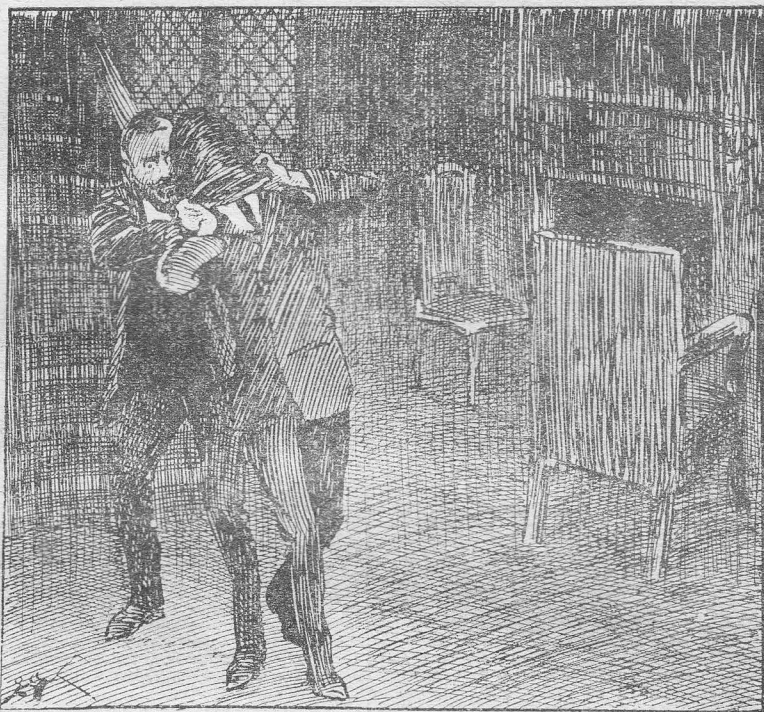
"I interviewed the owner of the house, as you directed me to do," he explained, "and

then he was constantly in and out of the house, which apparently he was getting ready for his master."

"Then Mr. Shields hadn't been staying in the place?"

"No. I went up to Dewsbury, and found that he leads a bachelor life and has a suite of rooms at the Witley Hotel, with the man Spriggs to look after him. By closely questioning the servants I picked up several things. For the last six months Mr. Shields had been in very poor health. The doctors said incessant work and the lonely life he led were seriously undermining his health, so they advised him to take a holiday—a long holiday in London. The upshot was that he sent his man to town, told him to take a comfortable house in a quiet neighbourhood, and promised to follow as soon as Spriggs sent word everything was ready. He left Yorkshire before noon, and went straight to his death."

Locke's brow was puckered in lines of deep thought.



There was a swift tread of footsteps behind the detective, and something heavy swished through the air and fell about his head and shoulders. A sweet perfume tried to rob him of his consciousness, and he fought savagely with his tall assailant.

he says that he never saw the murdered man in his life. Six weeks ago Spriggs called at his office, and, explaining that his master had sent him on ahead to make all arrangements, he paid a large deposit, and took the house furnished for three months."

Locke nodded.

"Have they succeeded in establishing his identity?"

"Several people came forward, but not until the inquest. They explained that the published description of the dead man hadn't awakened their suspicions until the further details came out at the inquest, when three persons voluntarily presented themselves, and identified the body as that of Mr. Marcus Shields, wealthy manufacturer, of Dewsbury."

Locke nodded and said:

"So far so good. Do you know who these people are who came and identified the body of Marcus Shields at the inquest?"

Hay shook his head.

"I went down to the Yard, hoping someone would give me the information; but Barkleigh Fox is in charge of the case, and he refuses to let any of his subordinates say anything."

"H'm! That's a nuisance. It rather looks as though Fox has been able to steal a march on me during my absence in Paris. And about Spriggs?"

"The police know nothing. He hasn't been seen since the night of the crime. Before

"Altogether a most perplexing case. I wish I knew the names of the three persons who identified the dead man. I wonder why they didn't come forward before."

"Probably because, failing to find the missing Spriggs, the authorities kept the whole case as quiet as possible," the young man suggested.

"Well, there may be something in that. Did you learn how long Spriggs had been with his master?"

"Yes. Between eleven and twelve years. He went to him when quite a lad as page, and afterwards became a sort of general factotum."

"How did the hotel people speak of Shields' treatment of his butler?"

"The older man regarded him almost in the light of a son."

"What kind of a man was Shields? You must remember I saw him only when he was dead."

"A self-made man—he had risen from the people—but generous and kind-hearted. And Spriggs, they say, although a bit of a rough diamond, is a very good sort, and was devoted to his master. It is most perplexing, and I confess that at present I do not see daylight anywhere."

(A further instalment of our Detective Serial will appear in next week's number of THE POPULAR.)

SCORING OFF THE SNOBS!

A GRAND LONG COMPLETE STORY
OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. AND
TOM RAWSON AT ROOKWOOD.



By . . .
OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Impertinent to Uncle James!

"**H**A, ha ha!" Adolphus Smythe, the ornament of the Shell Form at Rookwood, burst into that hearty laugh quite suddenly.

Apparently—so far as Jimmy Silver could see, at all events—there was no cause for the merriment of the great Adolphus.

Smythe of the Shell was sunning himself on the steps outside the School House, and he had appeared to be buried in thought.

Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth, was leaning on the stone balustrade, chatting with Rawson, the scholarship junior.

Rawson was telling him things about making a rabbit-hutch—a subject which Rawson had at his finger-tips, as Rawson, senior, was a carpenter, and Rawson had worked with him before he won the scholarship which had brought him to Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver glanced round as Adolphus Smythe burst into that sudden cackination. There was a glint in Jimmy's eye.

Smythe of the Shell was the fellow who was most "down" on Rawson, though Townsend of the Fourth was a good second. To the Nuts of Rookwood the presence of Tom Rawson seemed a shocking thing.

"Wherefore that cackle, Adolphus?" asked Jimmy Silver very quietly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some awfully good joke—what?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Adolphus made an effort to control his merriment.

"Yaas," he said, "the joke of the term! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what is it?"

"You'll be seein' that later," said Adolphus. "I'm not tellin' you that at present. Don't let me interrupt your chat about rabbit-hutches. Rawson knows all about those things. I dare say he's made 'em."

"I've made a good many," said Rawson.

"I thought so!" said Smythe, with a curl of his lip. "It's rather a pity, Rawson, that you didn't stick to your pater's workshop instead of coming to Rookwood!"

Smythe stepped elegantly down the steps towards the quad, but he came to a sudden halt as Jimmy Silver's knuckles were jammed into the back of his neck.

With a firm grip on his collar, Jimmy twisted the dandy of the Shell round, gasping.

"Grooh!" gurgled Adolphus. "Let go, you cad!"

"You haven't told us the joke yet," said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Grooooh! Leggo! I'm not tellin' you now!"

"Not keeping secrets from your Uncle James, surely!" said Jimmy Silver pleasantly.

"That won't do, Adolphus!"

"You rotter! Leggo!" yelled Smythe, struggling furiously to release his neck. "It's nothin' to do with you!"

"Your mistake—it is!" said Jimmy Silver. "You mustn't burst into a cackle like an old hen, Adolphus, when Rawson is telling me how to make a rabbit-hutch. It's disrespectful to my pal, Rawson!"

Rawson grinned.

"Oh, I don't mind," he said. "Let the idiot cackle!"

"But I mind," said Jimmy Silver. "As his Uncle James I am bound to keep Adolphus in order. Adolphus, I am going to rub your adolphine nose on the steps!"

"Gurrooogh!"

Smythe of the Shell made a desperate effort to tear himself loose, but he could not do it. His somewhat prominent nose was forced down to the stone steps and rubbed there—hard.

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"Cave!" murmured Rawson. "Here comes Bootles!"

Jimmy Silver let go the wriggling, gurgling Adolphus.

"Now wait a minute while I kick you," he said.

Adolphus did not wait a minute. He shook his fist at Jimmy Silver, and sprinted into the quadrangle.

The next minute Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, looked out of the doorway, with a severe frown, at the cheerful Jimmy.

"Silver!" he rumbled.

"Yes, sir?"

"I do not approve of this horse-play, Silver, especially in such a public spot. You appear to have been handling Smythe in a very—ah—rough manner. Silver, you will follow me to my study!"

"If you please, sir—"

"What—what! If you have an excuse to offer, Silver—"

"Smythe was impertinent to his Uncle James, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly. "I felt that I ought to take notice of it, sir!" Rawson nearly exploded, but he managed to turn his laugh into a cough at the right moment. Mr. Bootles looked puzzled.

"Indeed! If Smythe is guilty of impertinence to an avuncular relative, it is certainly most reprehensible," said Mr. Bootles. "But it hardly rests with you, Silver, to administer correction. However, as your motive appears to have been good, I will say no more about the matter."

And Mr. Bootles passed on majestically.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Adolphus Has a Great Idea!

TOWNSEND and Topham greeted Smythe with lurking grins as he joined them under the beeches in the quadrangle.

They had beheld the little scene on the School House steps.

Adolphus was very much ruffled. His collar was rumpled, and his necktie was disarranged—great worries to a Nut like Adolphus. He jammed an eyeglass into his eye, gleaming with wrath.

"I've been lookin' for you, Towny," he said. "I've thought of a weeze—a rippin' good weeze! This time we'll take that cad Rawson fairly down!"

Townsend looked doubtful. As Towny and Topham shared Rawson's study, and had to "stand" the scholarship junior at close quarters, they were more "up against" Tom Rawson than any other of the noble society of Nuts. But in their contests with the scholarship junior they had so decidedly the worst of it that they were beginning to think it was "not good enough."

"Well, what's the idea?" asked Townsend cautiously. "The fact is, Smythey, I'm afraid it's N-G. The fellows are all taking to Rawson, especially since it came out about his frother Dick."

Smythe sniffed.

"A private in the Army!" he said.

"Well, he was taken prisoner by the Russians," said Topham. "The fellows seem to think it's a big distinction for Rawson."

"What rot!" said Adolphus.

"Well, I know that," said Topham, hesitating a little. "Dick Rawson was in the Middlesex Regiment, and saw a lot of hard fighting. After all—"

"I suppose you're not standing up for that cad Rawson, Toppo?"

"Well, no. All the same—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Adolphus. "Look here, I've got a weeze. It came into my head while I was listenin' to that cad talkin' to Jimmy Silver. He was tellin' Silver about his father teachin' him to make rabbit-hutches."

"Nice for a Rookwood chap's father!" said Townsend, with a sneer. "They might have the fellow put on the Modern side, at least!"

"I suppose nobody's seen his pater?" said Smythe.

Townsend laughed.

"No jolly fear! You can bet Rawson will keep his people jolly dark! Some awfully boozey ruffian, most likely!"

"Most likely!" agreed Adolphus. "An' that's where my weeze comes in!"

"What the dickens—"

"Your uncle is comin' to see you on Wednesday, Towny."

"Yes," said Townsend.

"Major Townsend of the Middlesex Regiment?"

"That's right."

"Good! Now, suppose Rawson's pater came here the same afternoon?"

"He won't."

"Suppose he did?" grinned Adolphus. "Suppose the boozey old ruffian came here and met your uncle face to face? Major Townsend is one of the governors of the school, isn't he?"

"Yes; but—"

"What would he think of Rawson—and especially Rawson's pater?" chuckled Smythe. "If they're here on the same afternoon we can easily manage for them to meet. The major would be simply knocked over at the sight of the old ruffian—what! He would be shocked to find there was a Rookwood fellow with a pater like that. Wouldn't he jaw the Head about it? Why, it might lead to Rawson gettin' the boot out of the school!"

"By gad!" said Townsend.

"Anyway, it would be a fearful show-up for Rawson, havin' his pater here for all the fellows to see!" grinned Adolphus.

"But he won't come. Rawson's too jolly cute to bring any of his people to Rookwood."

"That's where my idea comes in. Suppose old Rawson gets a telegram from the young hopeful, tellin' him to come at once, because Rawson's ill—"

"But he ain't ill—"

"Fathead! Old Rawson could get the telegram all the same!"

"Phew! You mean—"

"Any fellow could drop into the post-office and drop a wire."

"It means trouble if it came out!" said Topham uneasily.

"How can it come out? We needn't send it from Coombe, where we're known. One of us can bike over to Lantham and send it from there. Rawson's people can't know how far Lantham is from Rookwood, so they couldn't snipe a rat."

"Know Rawson's home address, though?" said Townsend. "Not much good askin' for it?"

"You can find that out, as you're in his study. He's bound to have it written down somewhere—in his books, perhaps."

"Well, I'll try. I'll get you the address, and you can send the telegram immediately after lessons on Wednesday."

"Perhaps you'd better take it to Lantham."

"I'll leave it to you, Smythey."

Smythe grunted. He had pointed out carefully that there was no risk involved in sending the telegram, but somehow he would have preferred to let Townsend send it. But Townsend was quite firm on that point.

"Oh, all right!" said Adolphus at last, ungraciously. "I'll send the blessed thing! You get me the address."

"Right-ho!"

And so it was agreed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Treacherous Trick!

JIMMY SILVER was a little puzzled. Jimmy generally had his eyes wide open, and even if he had not been very observant, he would have noted that there was something unusual "on"

among the Nuts of the Classical side at Rookwood.

He remembered that mysterious cacinination over an unknown good joke, which had led him to rub Adolphus' lordly nose on the steps. Since that incident there had been an extraordinary amount of nodding, whispering, shrugging, and grinning among the "Giddy Goats."

Smythe and Howard and Tracy and Selwyn of the Shell, Townsend and Topham and Peele of the Fourth evidently had the secret among them.

And the next day several more members of the noble society seemed to have been let into the secret, judging by their nods and winks and chuckles.

There was something "on"—that was certain.

But whatever was on the Nuts kept their own counsel about it. But from the way they glanced at Rawson it was pretty clear that Rawson was the object of their pleasantry, whatever it was.

Rawson himself did not note it. The manners and troubles of the Rookwood Nuts did not trouble his serenity. And he had other matters to occupy his mind. He had taken up footer very keenly, and at the same time he was "swotting" hard.

Between footer and swotting Rawson had no time to waste on Smythe, Townsend & Co. And he had still another matter of concern—his brother Dick—Private Rawson, of the Middlesex Regiment, who was now a prisoner in Russia.

Most of Tom's meagre allowance went in the shape of parcels to feed the hapless prisoner in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

It was the plight of brother Dick, as much as anything else, which had brought the Classical Fourth round in favour of Rawson.

The Fistical Four had been his good pals from the start. Now there were very few fellows left to follow the lead of Cecil Townsend, and persecution of the scholarship junior was a thing of the past.

On Wednesday morning it was easy for Jimmy Silver to see that the Nuts were in a high feather.

Townsend & Co. were smiling with great elation as they came into the Form-room for first lesson.

There was a good deal of whispering among them in the Form-room, and Mr. Bootles came down on them heavily more than once.

But even the shower of "lines" did not abate the satisfaction of the Nuts. They were looking forward with keen enjoyment to the happenings of the afternoon.

When morning lessons were over Townsend & Co. joined Smythe of the Shell in the quadrangle.

"Better cut off before dinner, Smythey," Townsend remarked. "The sooner that wire goes the better."

"Can't get back from Lantham in time for tiffin," said Smythe. "I'll see if I can get excused. The wire must go."

"Got the address safe?"

"Yaas, that's all right!"

Ten minutes later Smythe of the Shell was sauntering down to Coombe to take the train for Lantham.

He was excused attending at dinner, having invented a relative in Lantham with whom he was to lunch.

He arrived at Lantham and hurried to the post-office.

There, he meditated a little at the telegraph desk. His conscience was not troubling him in the least, but he wanted to word the telegram in the best manner to avoid suspicion.

He settled it at last to his satisfaction. It ran:

"Your son badly injured in football match. Come at once to Rookwood."

There was little doubt that the telegram would bring Mr. Rawson to Rookwood School as fast as he could get there, and there was little in the message that could betray the elegant hand of Adolphus.

Suspicion could scarcely point its finger at him; and if it did, a denial of any knowledge of the telegram would not cost him much.

Smythe of the Shell had a very easy-going and accommodating conscience.

He addressed the telegram and despatched it, writing the message in a disguised hand, and filling in a false name and address on the back of the form.

Then he strolled out of the post-office, and took the train back to Coombe in a satisfied mood.

His friends met him at Coombe, and Adol-

phus lunched at the tuckshop, and the Nuts sauntered back to Rookwood in great spirits.

The arrival of Mr. Rawson and his meeting with Major Townsend seemed a certainty now, and Smythe & Co. rejoiced at the prospects.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Classicals v. Moderns!

JIMMY SILVER clapped Rawson on the shoulder after dinner. Rawson was hesitating in the passage when the captain of the Fourth bore down on him.

"Footer!" said Jimmy.

"Well, I was going to put in some slogging at Latin this afternoon. I want to get on, you know."

"Rats!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We

not taking a passenger in this team, thanks!"

"My uncle's coming this afternoon," growled Townsend. "I'd like him to see me in the team."

"Well, if that's the case, I'm sorry I can't play you, if it would please him. But it can't be done; you're not good at footer," said Jimmy.

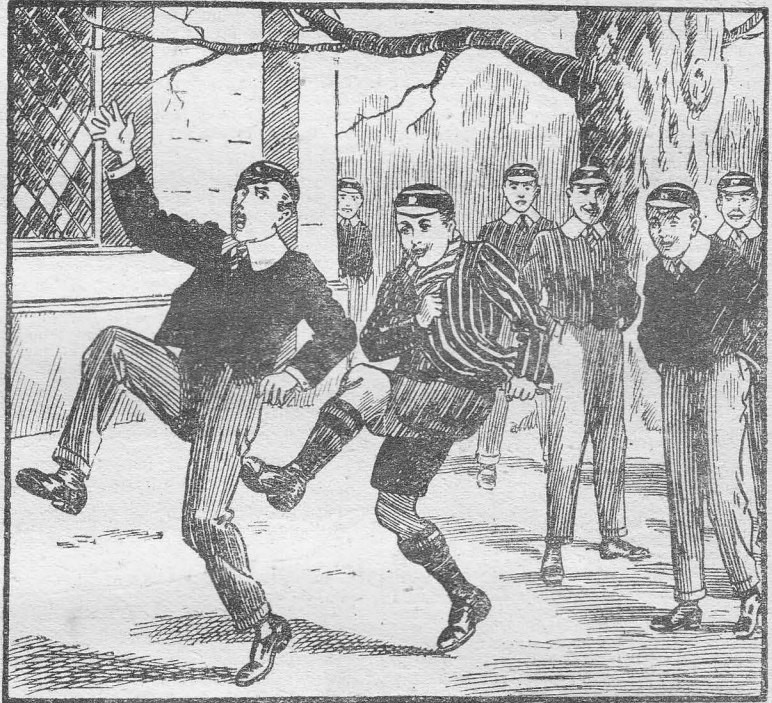
"Who are you playing at right back, then?"

"Tom Rawson."

"You're puttin' that outsider into the Classical eleven!" said Townsend. "It's simply sickenin' leavin' out a decent chap to put in that howlin' rotter!"

"You've got it wrong," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "I'm leaving out a howling rotter to put in a decent chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Jimmy Silver's football-boots came into play upon the person of the unfortunate Townsend. "Off the field!" snapped Jimmy. Townsend fled, yelling.

want you to play at back, and you're coming!"

Rawson laughed and nodded.

"Well, I'd rather play, of course, than swot."

"Done! Come on!"

Rawson joined the crowd of Classicals making for the football-ground.

Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern side, were already there.

Moderns and Classicals were very keen about that last match to wind up the season. Each was determined to leave the other side with a thorough kicking to remember.

"Here we are," said Jimmy Silver cheerily; "and we've brought our shooting-boots, Daddy! Are you ready to be scalped?"

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"We're ready to mop you Classical duffers off the face of the earth," he replied. "I see you're not playing Smythe or Townsend."

"Hardy. We want to win."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Townsend of the Fourth had just come in with Smythe & Co. He came down to the footer-field and hurried up to Jimmy Silver.

"Glad I'm in time!" he remarked.

"Yes; you're in time to see the kick-off," said Jimmy.

"I mean in time to play."

"Don't be funny now, Towny. Keep your little jokes till tea-time," said Rabv.

Townsend scowled.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver, I specially want to play this afternoon."

"If you specially wanted to play, my infant, you should have specially given up smoking and slacking, and specially done some practice," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm

"Don't talk to him, Towny, dear boy," said Adolphus Smythe. "Treat 'em with contempt."

"My uncle will have somethin' to say about that cad when he comes!" growled Townsend.

Jimmy Silver was turning away, but he paused and turned back as the exasperated dandy made that remark.

"What has your uncle to do with Rawson?" he asked quietly.

"He's a governor of Rookwood," said Townsend between his teeth, "and he's major in the Middlesex Regiment. And we'll see what he's got to say about the brother of one of his privates bein' at Rookwood."

"I don't see what he can have to say about it," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Unless he's as rotten a snob as his nephew, he can't have anything to say. Get off this field!"

"Wh-a-at!"

"Get off! You make me ill!"

"I'll get off when I like!" yelled Townsend.

"You won't! You'll get off when I like!" snapped Jimmy Silver, and he brought his football-boots into the argument.

Townsend fled, yelling. There was no arguing with football-boots. Jimmy Silver followed him, dribbling him as far as the quadrangle, amid yells of laughter. The dandy of the Fourth was feeling decidedly sore and dusty when he escaped at last, and Jimmy returned, smiling, to the football-ground.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Daddy!"

"Oh, don't munch!" said Tommy Dodd

heartily. "If you wait a minute or two for me, I'll do the same to Adolphus!"

Adolphus retired hurriedly from the football-ground without waiting for "the same" from Tommy Dodd.

The two junior captains tossed, and Tommy Dodd won. Jimmy Silver & Co. were given the wind to kick off against, and the match started.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Rawson Arrives.

JIMMY SILVER had been given some food for thought by Townsend's remarks on the subject of his uncle, the major.

He thought he understood now the meaning of the whispers and nods and winks among the Nuts for the last day or two. If Townsend's uncle was the same kind of character as Townsend, it was possible that he might make things uncomfortable for Townsend's enemy, being a governor of Rookwood, to whom the Head was bound to listen with some respect.

It was probably a new trouble for Rawson, who bore his troubles already with such a calm courage and equanimity. If a new and more dangerous "set" were against Rawson, however, he had friends to stand by him—Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite ready to rally round him.

But Jimmy had not time to think about the matter just then. All his attention was wanted in the football match.

Jimmy was determined on a victory. His team was in great form—Lovell and Raby and Newcome, Oswald, Conroy, Errol, and Rawson, and the rest. Not a single member of the "Giddy Goats" was in the team. Jimmy could not afford to take chances in the last match of the season.

Smythe of the Shell, and the rest of the Nuts sometimes watched the matches, from which they were excluded on the grounds of slackness and unfitness. But on this occasion they did not grace Little Side with their presence.

The Nuts of Rookwood were lounging round the gates, eagerly watching for the arrival of Mr. Rawson.

While the junior footballers closed in strife Smythe & Co. were indulging in great anticipations.

They formed many conjectures as to what Mr. Rawson would look like.

Townsend opined he would be in cord trousers, tied at the knees.

Topham considered it certain that he would be smoking a black clay pipe, turned downwards in equally black teeth. Smythe was inclined to surmise that he would put on his Sunday clothes to visit Rookwood—that is to say, if the wretched individual had any Sunday clothes.

"Loud cheeks, dear boy, and a billycock hat," said Smythe. "It will be a sight worth seeing, and somethin' quite new for Rookwood."

"Ye gods! Suppose the Head sees him!" said Peele of the Fourth.

"We must try to work that somehow," said Smythe. "Besides, he's bound to call on the Head, as he's here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, he'll drop his aitches," remarked Howard, "and speak with an awful twang most likely. That will delight the Head!"

The Nuts chuckled joyously.

Rawson, all unconscious of the trick which was to bring his father post-haste to Rookwood that afternoon, played up in the Classical ranks, thoroughly enjoyed himself. Rawson was a keen footballer, and his sturdy build and weight made him very useful at back. The Moderns found him very difficult indeed to pass, and the Classics found him a tower of strength on the defence.

The first goal came to the Classics after half an hour's struggle that was "gruelling" to both sides. Jimmy Silver put the ball in amid loud cheers from the Classical juniors round the field.

Tommy Dodd & Co. pressed hard until the whistle went, and just on the stroke of time the ball reposed in the Classical net, and the score was equal.

"Jolly good game!" remarked Jimmy Silver, as he sucked a lemon at half-time. "The Modern bounders are playing up!"

"What ho!"

"And Rawson's a giddy prize-packet," said Jimmy Silver. "The Nuts aren't honouring us with their presence. Where are the Nuts?"

"They're all at the gates," said Oswald, nodding his head in that direction. "They seem to be expecting somebody."

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"Towny's uncle, I suppose," said Jimmy, his brow clouding for a moment.

He wondered whether Major Townsend's coming would mean trouble for Rawson, as Towny evidently anticipated with confidence.

Jobson, of the Fifth, who was referee, blew the whistle, and the Classics and Moderns piled into the game again.

The second half was a hard struggle. The Modern attack was hot; but the Classics defended well, and the goalkeeper had little to do. The Classical forwards got going at last, and the Modern citadel was assailed, but Towle kept the ball rolling. The second half wore on, and the match began to look like another draw.

It was not far from the finish when the station cab from Coombe came rumbling up the road to Rookwood.

Smythe & Co. spotted it at once, and exchanged joyous grins.

"Here comes Rawson senior!" chuckled Smythe. "Your uncle isn't due yet, Towny."

"No, not till five, I think. And he'll come in a car. You can bet this is the Rawson bird!" said Townsend.

"We'll walk him all over Rookwood," said Tracy, "and show him to all the fellows. We'll take him to see the footer, so-as to get him in the crowd. I hope he's in cord trousers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hack stopped at the gates. The juniors drew back a little to give it room. A middle-aged gentleman descended at the porter's lodge, and the Nuts stared at him curiously, certainly not politely.

Was this Rawson senior?

He was a somewhat stout, respectable man, with a kind and intelligent face, dressed quietly and simply, with a bowler hat and heavy, thick boots. His face was troubled, doubtless as the result of Smythe's heartless telegram. He glanced at the juniors, and knocked at the porter's door.

Old Mack opened it.

Mack looked rather curiously at his visitor. "This is Rookwood School?" asked Mr. Rawson.

"Yes," said Mack, undecided whether to say "sir" to the plainly-dressed man, and deciding finally not to.

"I am Mr. Rawson. My son is here."

"Oh!" said Mack.

"I have received a telegram to say he has been injured in a football match. Will you tell me where to find him, please?"

Mack started.

"Master Rawson of the Fourth, do you mean?" he asked.

"Yes. I am his father."

"Then there's some mistake," said Mack. "Master Rawson's all right. I see him only half an hour ago, going on to the football-field, sir!"

Mr. Rawson gave a start.

"Then he is not injured!" he exclaimed.

"Not unless he's injured in that there game going on now," said Mack, with a gesture towards the distant football-field.

"That is very strange!" said Mr. Rawson. "This telegram was sent me from Lantham. That is near here, I suppose?"

"Ten mile," said Mack.

"It must have been sent more than two hours ago, yet you say—"

"Must be a mistake," said Mack. "If you want to see the Head, you go across to that there door and ring."

And Mack, feeling he had spent quite enough time on a person who did not wear a silk hat, retired into his lodge.

Mr. Rawson stood looking very puzzled and troubled. Smythe of the Shell exchanged a wink with his comrades, and advanced, raising his topper very politely to the worried gentleman.

"Excuse me, sir, perhaps I can help you?" he said urbanely.

"Thank you kindly, young gentleman!" said Mr. Rawson, looking at him. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find my son Tom?"

"Rawson of the Fourth, I think?"

"That's right!"

"A very great friend of ours," said Smythe. "He's playin' footer now. Perhaps you will allow me to show you the way, sir?"

"Thank you!"

With another wink at his chums, Smythe led the way to Little Side. The whole army of Nuts followed up in the rear, chuckling and grinning.

But they were a little disappointed.

Mr. Rawson was by no means the "out-and-out" they had fondly anticipated. His clothes were cheap, and were not fashionably cut, but they were quiet and respectable, and not likely to attract the mocking looks

the Nuts had expected. His manner was quiet and grave. He looked what he was—a solid, respectable, self-respecting workman dressed in his best, worthy of the respect of any but the foolish and unthinking Nuts.

The party arrived at the football-field, where the Classical-Modern match was at its climax.

"Ha! There's Tom!" exclaimed Mr. Rawson, in great relief.

The sight of his son, in blue-and-white, in the ranks of the Classical footballers was reassuring.

Tom Rawson did not observe his father in the crowd.

The Moderns were attacking, and the Classical back had plenty to do, and Rawson was very busy.

"Yes, that's Tom," said Townsend. "That's the dear boy! You must be very proud of Tom at home, sir?"

"Yes, we are," said Mr. Rawson simply.

"Are there any more like him at home?" asked Peele, closing one eye at his chums.

Mr. Rawson shook his head.

"No. His brother's a prisoner in Russia," he answered.

"Ah! Captain Rawson, I think?" murmured Smythe.

Mr. Rawson smiled.

"No; my elder son is not an officer, young gentleman."

"No?" said Smythe, elevating his eyebrows.

Mr. Rawson paused and coloured.

He wondered, in his simple mind, whether it would be harmful to his son to reveal the fact in this high-class school that Tom's brother was a private soldier.

But the thought immediately followed that he would be wronging them by such a supposition.

"No; Dick is a private," he said. "He is in the Middlesex Regiment, and he would have been made a corporal if the Russians hadn't taken him."

"What a distinction!" said Smythe.

"Yes; we were proud to hear it when his officer wrote to us and told us," said Mr. Rawson. "He saved his officer's life at Loos against the Germans."

"Did he, by gad?" yawned Smythe. "I suppose his officer was grateful, and gave him something for his trouble—what?"

Mr. Rawson looked hard at Smythe.

To his simple mind it was almost impossible to suspect this elegant, well-dressed, gentlemanly young fellow of speaking caddishly.

He concluded that Smythe meant no harm. Before Smythe could proceed, there was a roar from the crowd round the football-field.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rallying Round Rawson.

BR AVO, Rawson!

Mr. Rawson watched the game again, his eyes glistening. It was a deep pleasure to hear his son cheered by that Rookwood crowd.

The Modern attack had, for the moment, broken up the Classical defence, and the right-back who had the ball was beset. But Rawson was not to be beaten. Three Moderns were right upon him, when he cleared with a powerful kick to midfield, going over under a charge the next moment. Jimmy Silver & Co. were on the ball in a twinkling, rushing it away towards the Modern goal.

Jobson of the Fifth was looking up at the clock-tower.

The Moderns fell back to defend. But Jimmy Silver's attack was not to be beaten. Right home to goal they went, sweeping, with short passing of the ball, and Lovell sent it in with a shot that beat Towle to the wide. Then the Classical crowd roared.

"Goal!"

The whistle went after Towle had tossed the leather out. The match was over, and the Classics had won.

"Jolly close thing!" growled Tommy Dodd, as they came off the field. "We should have had you that time but for that bouncer Rawson!"

Jimmy Silver clapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he said. "We've won, thanks to you!"

Rawson nodded and smiled, and then, as he caught sight of a busy figure in the crowd he uttered a startled exclamation.

"Father!"

"Hallo! Your father here!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes."

Rawson ran through the crowd to greet his father.

"Fancy seeing you here, dad!" he exclaimed in surprise and delight.

"Jolly glad to see you, sir!" said Jimmy Silver, as he came up with his cap and muffler on.

Then Jimmy's brow darkened ominously. Townsend, standing behind Mr. Rawson, had been busy. A number of fragments of paper, tied together like the tail of a kite, had been pinned to Mr. Rawson's coat-tails, and whisked about as he moved—the good-natured gentleman quite unconscious of it. The Nuts were giggling, and most of the fellows could not help grinning.

"Did you come down to see the match, father?" asked Rawson, having presented Jimmy to his father.

"No, Tom; I came down because of this telegram," said Mr. Rawson. "I was told you were injured."

"My hat!"

Rawson looked at the telegram, as his father held it to him, in amazement. Jimmy Silver looked at it and understood. The whispering and chuckling of the Nuts were explained now.

"Blest if I know who could have sent that," said Rawson. "I've not been injured, dad. I don't look like it, do I? Some silly ass must have done this for a rotten joke."

"I don't see where the joke comes in," said Mr. Rawson simply. "I've been feeling very anxious until I got here. I'm glad I didn't tell your mother anything about it. I meant to see you first, Tom, and see how bad it was. A very cruel joke, it seems to me!"

"Unfeelin', I call it!" said Smythe of the Shell.

"Horrid!" said Townsend. "But it's a great pleasure to see you here, sir. It's an honour for Rookwood!"

"But I wish you'd brought your saw and jack-plane with you, sir," said Smythe, in a tone of urbane politeness.

Rawson flushed, and his eyes glinted, while his father looked puzzled.

"I couldn't bring it with me, young gentleman," said Mr. Rawson. "But if you're interested in carpentry, I can tell you a good deal about it."

"I'm more interested in that than in anything else, except chimney-sweepin'," said Smythe seriously. "Perhaps you could tell me somethin' about chimney-sweepin'!"

The Nuts giggled, and Smythe howled as Lovell took him by the ear with a firm grip and walked him away.

"Let me go, you fool!" muttered Smythe furiously.

"You're coming for a little walk with me," said Lovell.

"I'm not!"

"Your mistake; you are!"

And Smythe did. He had no choice about it.

"Come into the house, father!" said Rawson, with burning cheeks.

He understood clearly enough from the false telegram and the looks of the Nuts that his father had been tricked into coming to Rookwood for the special purpose of being "guyed" by Smythe & Co.

So far as he was concerned, their design did not affect him; but he shrank from letting his father see that he was being deliberately made an object of ridicule.

Mr. Rawson was looking very grave; perhaps he was beginning to see.

He nodded, and walked with his son towards the School House. The kite's tail attached from his coat-tails dangled and whisked behind him, and there was a shout of laughter.

Fortunately, Rawson spotted the adornment, and jerked it off. But his cheeks were burning as he went into the School House with his father, and he mentally promised Smythe & Co. a warm time later.

The Fistical Four looked at one another grimly.

"What a rotten trick!" said Raby, in a low voice. "One of those cads sent the old chap a wire, of course."

"And they've got him here to rot him, and make Rawson feel an ass," said Lovell.

"Come on, you chaps!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth ran to the School House. Mr. Rawson had entered with his son, and Mr. Bootles had met him in the Hall. Rawson presented his father, and Mr. Bootles shook hands with him.

"Now, come up and see my study, father," said Rawson. "You don't want to hurry away now you've come. You're going to have tea in the study."

Jimmy Silver joined them breathlessly.

"I say, Rawson, old fellow—"

"Hallo!" said Rawson.

"We've got a spread in the end study," said Jimmy. "Will your pater come to tea with us?"

Rawson gave the captain of the Fourth a grateful look. He understood. In his own study Mr. Rawson would have been exposed to the pleasantries of Townsend and Topham. True, Rawson could have sung out the two Nuts without the slightest difficulty; but he did not want his father to see that he was on such terms with his study-mates. Of all the troubles the scholarship junior had met at Rookwood, not a word had reached his humble home.

"Thanks!" said Rawson. "You'll have tea with my friends, father?"

"Thank you kindly, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Rawson.

"This way," said Tom.

And he piloted the distinguished guest to the end study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Adolphus Has No Luck.

SMYTHE & Co. were in a state of utter disgust.

Smythe had been highly pleased with his scheme.

The only doubtful point had been whether his telegram would bring Rawson senior to Rookwood.

It had brought him; and that point being settled with all the rest ought to have gone swimmingly.

But it hadn't.

Smythe & Co. had looked forward joyously to showing off a rank outside to hundreds of mocking eyes—to see Rawson crimson with rage and shame—to triumphing over the scholarship junior by that trick of hitting below the belt.

But all had gone awry.

Rawson's friends had rallied round Rawson. Every fellow who knew or suspected the treacherous trick played by the Nuts followed Jimmy Silver's lead in making much of Rawson's family.

Mr. Rawson was placed in an armchair in the end study, and settled down there very comfortably. Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome vied with one another in showing him polite attentions.

Oswald and Flynn came in to join the party and to help get the tea. Then came Tommy Dodd & Co. from the Modern side.

"Bit crowded here, what!" grinned Tommy Dodd, as he looked in.

"Room for Rawson's friends," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, we're all Rawson's friends," said Tommy Cook, "especially at tea-time, with such a ripping cake as that on the table. How do you do, Mr. Rawson?"

"Top of the afternoon to yez, sir!" said Tommy Doyle. "Sure, we're glad to see yez at Rookwood!"

Smythe of the Shell looked in at the door. His scheme of "rotting" the simple gentleman was evidently "off" while Mr. Rawson was in the charge of Jimmy Silver & Co. But Smythe, feeling that the chums would not care to proceed to rough measures under the eyes of the visitor, made a last attempt.

"I suppose we are all welcome, dear boys," he remarked. "I've been lookin' forward to a chat with Rawson's pater, y'know. He's goin' to tell me all about carpentry."

Rawson stepped to the door.

"I'll tell you about it, Smythe," he said. "Come along to my study a minute."

"Look here—"

"This way," said Rawson, taking Smythe's wrist in a grip like a vice.

Jimmy Silver shoved the door shut, and thus cut off Mr. Rawson's view. Rawson jerked Smythe along the passage.

The dandy of the Shell was alarmed now. He did not like the look on Rawson's face.

"Let go my wrists, you low cad!" he muttered.

Without replying, Rawson drew him into his study and closed the door. Then he put up his fists. Smythe backed round the table in alarm.

"I—I—say—" he stammered.

Rawson's lip curled.

"You thought I couldn't hammer you because my father's here!" he said contemptuously. "That was a mistake. I'm going to hammer you. Put up your paws!"

"I—I'm not going to fight you!" stammered Adolphus, with a longing glance at the door. But the sturdy Rawson was between him and the door.

"I'm going to thrash you," said Rawson coolly. "You, or one of your pals, sent my

father a spoof telegram, and made him anxious, and wasted his time."

"I suppose he had to leave his work to come here, what!" Adolphus could not resist a sneer.

"Exactly—and it's a loss to him!"

"Oh, I'll give him five shillings, if you like!" jeered Adolphus.

Rawson's eyes glinted.

"You'll put up your hands," he said.

"I won't!" snarled Smythe.

"Then you'll take a licking without!"

"Look here—Yarooooooh! Help! Oh! Yah!" yelled Adolphus, as Rawson commenced operations right and left.

The next few minutes was like a dream to Adolphus. He put up his hands as there was no help for it; but his hands, though delicately manicured and quite pretty to look at, were not of much use in a "scrap." He was knocked right and left, and finally collapsed into a corner, his nose streaming red, his left eye closed and his other eye blinking dismally.

He looked, and he felt, a wreck.

"Had enough?" snapped Rawson.

Adolphus groaned.

"Yow-ow! Yaas! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"You can clear off, then. Come near my father again as long as he's here and I'll knock you flying at sight!"

Rawson returned to the end study. His father glanced at him as he entered a little curiously. But Rawson smiled in his cheery way, and went on helping to get tea.

Adolphus crawled away down the passage, feeling that life was not worth living.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. A Surprise for Towny.

MAJOR TOWNSEND descended from his car. He was a tall, thin, angular gentleman in khaki, with grim, bronzed face, that looked as if it were wrought in hard metal.

The hard face still showed traces of the rigours of the long campaign in Flanders. On one weather-beaten cheek was a white scar, where a German bullet had ploughed its way.

Townsend of the Fourth greeted his military uncle rather nervously.

As a matter of fact Towny was more than a little afraid of the grim old major.

The major's manner, however, was quite cordial as he shook hands with his elegant nephew. He was shown into the Head's study, leaving Townsend and his friends in the Hall.

"Looks a savage old sport, by gad!" murmured Howard of the Shell. "I shouldn't like to have him on my track."

"He's as hard as nails," said Townsend. "Just the man to be down on a sneaking upstart cad like Rawson!"

"Blest if I'm not sorry for Rawson's brother, if he was in your uncle's regiment!" grinned Topham. "His men must love that face—I don't think!"

"Just the jolmie for us!" grinned Peele. "Get him to come up to the study for a jaw. Towny, and we'll all pitch it to him about that cad Rawson."

"That's the idea!" agreed Tracy. "We'll all be there, and you can trot him in, and we'll back up whatever you say!"

"Good egg!" said Townsend.

They proceeded to Townsend's study, to wait for the major there. In about ten minutes he appeared.

The Nuts rose to their feet as the major entered with his nephew. The major's grim old face relaxing now.

"So these are your quarters, Cecil?" he said, glancing round the study.

"Yes, uncle. These chaps are my friends."

Townsend presented the juniors to his uncle. "Topham shares the study with me and another fellow; but I hardly like to mention him to you!"

"Hey! Why not?" said the major.

"Well, I think you would hardly think it right for me to associate with such a character," said Townsend diffidently. "He's not the kind of chap you would approve of; in fact, he's rather a low hound."

Major Townsend frowned.

"I don't understand this, Cecil. Do you mean to say that Dr. Chisholm has admitted to this school a boy you can justly describe as a low hound?"

Townsend coughed. He felt he was in rather delicate ground.

"Well, sir, you see, he wedged in here on a scholarship," explained Townsend. "I believe he's got some legal right to shove himself into Rookwood; and, of course, the masters

don't see what a beast he is. We can't exactly tell them. That would be sneakin'." "Quite right, Cecil. But if this boy is really objectionable who is he?" asked Major Townsend abruptly.

The Nuts exchanged surreptitious glances; they felt they were getting on. The grim frown on Major Townsend's brow looked promising.

"Well, he—he's an awful ruffian!" said Townsend. "He's got a brother who was a private soldier in your regiment, uncle, and yet I'm expected to associate with him."

The major did not look horrified, as Townsend expected. Instead of that he frowned grimly at his nephew.

"What do you mean, sir," he exclaimed, "by stating that it is against this boy to have a brother in my regiment? Is there anything to be ashamed of in a boy who has the courage to fight for his King and country?"

"I—I didn't mean it exactly like that!" stammered Townsend. "I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

Peele & Co. exchanged glances, and stepped quietly from the study, and departed. They had had enough of the major. It was only too clear that Major Townsend was not going to answer their charitable purpose, after all. It was one more disappointment for Smythe & Co.

The Nuts cleared off precipitately, leaving the unfortunate Townsend to face the terrible old soldier alone.

Glady enough would the dandy of the Fourth have followed them. But the major was fixing him with an eye like a gimlet.

"I have asked you what you mean, Cecil?" rumbled the major.

"I—I mean, he is really a rank outsider!" stammered Townsend. "He's got the cheek to bring his father here. He's here now, in the end study—a carpenter, you know. And—and, of course, we're disgusted!"

"At what?"

"At—at everything connected with such people!" said Townsend. "We—we think it rotten to have Rawson here at all!"

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Major Townsend started.

"Rawson!" he repeated.

"Yes. His name's Rawson."

"By gad!" said the major. "Rawson! You say he had a brother in the Middlesex Regiment?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Is that brother Private Richard Rawson who has been captured by the Russians?"

"Yes."

"By gad! Where is he?"

"I'll take you to see him uncle, if you like," said Townsend, a little more hopefully. "You'll see his father, too—an awful old codger!"

"Silence! Take me to them!"

Townsend, much puzzled, and wondering what was to come of it, led the way down the passage. He pointed to the open door of the end study.

"They're in there, uncle."

"Follow me, Cecil."

"Ye-e-es."

Major Townsend strode into the study, the juniors outside respectfully making way for him. The merry party in the end study rose to their feet at the sight of the bronzed old major. They know, of course, that this must be Townsend's uncle.

Jimmy Silver's brow grew grim. Tonly had evidently been at work, and the major had come to see Rawson.

"Is Master Rawson here?" asked the major, in his deep voice.

"I am here, sir," said Rawson quietly.

"You are Richard Rawson's brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give me your hand, my lad!"

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Jimmy Silver, in utter astonishment, as the major shook hands with the surprised Rawson.

"Is this gentleman your father, Rawson?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Rawson.

"You know my name, Mr. Rawson," said the major. "I wrote to you when your son was captured by the Russians."

"Major Townsend!" said Mr. Rawson.

The major held out his hand.

THE POPULAR.—No. 92.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Rawson! As I told you in my letter, your son saved my life at Loos. He was one of the best soldiers in my regiment, sir! A splendid young fellow, of whom his father and his brother may well be proud!"

"Hurrah!" chirruped Jimmy Silver involuntarily.

Townsend's face was a study.

"Come here, Cecil," said the major, after shaking hands with Mr. Rawson.

Townsend came in reluctantly.

"It appears that you are not on good terms with Master Rawson. I should be glad to see you shake hands and make friends."

"I am quite willing, sir," said Rawson simply.

And he held out his hand to his old enemy. Townsend took it with a hand that was like a cold fish. Under the grim eye of his uncle he did not dare to refuse.

"That is better," said the major. "Pray excuse me for intruding in this way, gentlemen, but I was anxious to make Mr. Rawson's acquaintance."

"Don't mench, sir!" said Jimmy Silver. "Would you honour us, sir, by joining us? It would be a great honour to have a chap who's been to the Front—I mean— Excuse me calling you a chap! I mean—"

The major smiled.

"I should be very pleased!" he said. "I should like a chat with Mr. Rawson, and I should like to make Master Tom's acquaintance."

"Here's a chair, sir!"

"Please sit down, sir!"

"Here you are, Tonly, you sit here."

Townsend dropped into the chair. But he did not enjoy that feed in the end study, though the "truck" was plentiful, and of the very best. But the major unbent, and it was evident that he was in a high good humour. The feed in the end study was an even greater success than Jimmy Silver had ever expected.

When Mr. Rawson left Rookwood at last, Major Townsend gave him a lift to the station in his car. Tom Rawson was left looking very happy. And when they were gone Jimmy Silver grinned at his chums.

"Looks to me as if the Giddy Goats' luck is out," he remarked. "I rather fancy Tonly's uncle has frustrated Tonly's knavish tricks—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

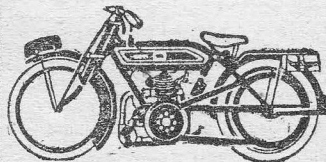
Smythe & Co. were furious. But their teeth were drawn, so to speak.

It was evident that they were helpless to cause the scholarship junior further trouble now that Townsend's uncle, from whom they had hoped so much, had followed Jimmy Silver & Co.'s lead in making much of Rawson.

Smythe's ill-natured scheme had only ended by Rawson and Jimmy Silver & Co. distinctly "Scoring Off-the Snobs."

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week, entitled: "PEELE'S IMPERSONATION!". By Owen Conquest. ORDER EARLY!)



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FOR NEXT FRIDAY:

Now that the summer season has finished I have been hard at work preparing a new lot of stories for the winter numbers, and I think I may claim to have got out a programme which will meet with the hearty approval of all my chums.

For next Friday I have an extra-fine number. Mr. Frank Richards has come up to the scratch in fine style, and has given us a really ripping, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the popular chums of Greyfriars. This yarn will contain many humorous episodes, and plenty of excitement. Some of you will doubtless guess, from the title, the identity of the Form with the bad name, and others will perhaps be surprised when I tell them that it happens to be the Remove Form!

The whole trouble starts when Dennis Carr lights one of those fireworks known as jumping-crackers in the Form-room. After that things begin to hum! I shall not disclose more than to say that the title of this grand story will be

"THE WORST FORM AT GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

The next item will be a further instalment of our powerful romantic adventure serial; the scene of which is laid during the period of the Great Rebellion, when the gay Cavaliers flung themselves unavailingly against the iron wall of Cromwell's sturdy Roundheads. This next instalment will disclose many surprising things, and I advise my chums not to miss reading on any account

"THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!"

By Edmund Burton.

The next instalment of our detective serial is particularly thrilling. The famous detective, with his plans well thought out, makes his last astounding move in the Rodriguez Murder Case. Do not miss

"THE EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"

By Maurice Everard.

Next, Owen Conquest will give us another splendid story of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood School, which will go to make the number an especially attractive one. The title of the story will be

"PEELE'S IMPERSONATION!"

By Owen Conquest.

Last, though not least, will be the continuation of the famous Eddie Polo's life story. I am glad to say this serial enjoys great popularity, and has been voted as being one of the best of its kind so far written. Don't miss

"FIGHTING FOR FAME!"

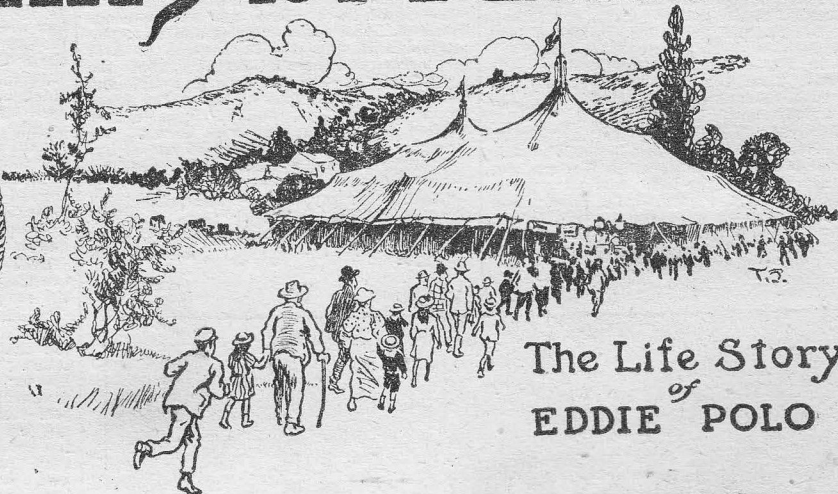
"THE MAGNET."

The "Magnet," true to its name, always attracts, but just now its drawing powers are stronger than ever. I hope all my chums have duly taken note of the Grand Free Illustrated Cinema Booklet which is given away with this week's number. The "Magnet" Film Supplement is a splendid publication in every respect, and as all the world goes to the pictures, so will all the world delight in this beautiful souvenir of the Cinema Stars.

Your Editor

THE GREATEST HUMAN LIFE STORY FOR MANY YEARS.

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The Life Story
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EDDIE POLO

A Thrilling Story of the Famous Film Star's Early Struggles and Triumphs.

THE THREADS OF THE STORY.

Eddie Polo as an unknown boy acrobat joins Busto's World-Famed Menagerie and Circus in Western America. He quickly makes his mark, and becomes great friends with Ginger the clown, and Esta, Mr. Busto's charming daughter. By his skill in the ring he incurs the jealousy of Del Rogeriguo, the Spanish trapeze artiste, who makes several attempts to get rid of him by so-called "accidents." At the same time he makes it hot for himself to stay, and leaves, breathing revenge on his late rival. A performance in the great marquee is drawing to a close when suddenly twelve bandits draw out revolvers and hold up the audience. Eddie, at the top of the tent, sees his opportunity, and, at the risk of his own life, saves the situation. He is injured, and is taken into Mr. Busto's own caravan, where Esta takes charge of him. Rogeriguo is hiding in the caravan when Esta is left alone. He surprises the girl and binds her up with ropes, and is on the point of leaving the van with her and Mr. Busto's cash-box, when he finds himself staring into a revolver-barrel held by Eddie Polo, whom he had thought unconscious at the time.

(Now read on.)

Tarred and Feathered!

GARCIA DEL ROGERIGUO emitted a startled oath as he felt the hard muzzle of the Colt sticking into his middle. He half-raised his arms automatically, and looked over his shoulder. Eddie Polo, still in the acrobat's dress he wore in the circus, lay half back on one elbow, and now, instead of the vacant and uncomprehending stare, there was a laughing light in his eyes. But as Del Rogeriguo looked the laughing light gave way to a fierce glare, and the half-caste knew that the last of his tricks was played.

"Step back smart, greaser," commanded Eddie, "and lay the lady down on the floor. Cast off all that truck you've bound round her, and take that filthy handkerchief from her mouth. Quick, now, or I'll move you."

The dago turned round and stepped forward, the steel muzzle biting into his flesh through his clothing. And the Colt continued to cover him till Esta reclined at full length on the littered floor of the van. As he rose Eddie swung his legs over the edge of the bunk.

"Sit down!" he commanded shortly. "Over there, on the safe you've apparently battered," he added, waving the gun in the required direction. "I've been wanting a chat with you a long time. Wait, though."

He pressed the trigger of the automatic, and the gun roared as the bullet ripped through the woodwork of the caravan, missing the dago's head by a full foot.

"That's just to tell a few of our friends that I should like to see them," explained

the lad coolly. "They'll be here in a minute or two, I guess. It has just struck me—Don't try to bolt, greaser, or I shall have to plug you out of hand. As I was saying, it's just struck me that Busto and Bud Truefit and one or two of the others are all pining for a heart-to-heart yarn with you, and they might as well come in on this conference."

As he spoke the last words the sound of hurrying feet came on the outside ladder. The door was burst open, and Mr. Busto, with Ginger the clown on his heels, and Bud Truefit, gun drawn, close astern, bounded into the caravan. The showman's jaw dropped as he looked at Eddie, then at the covered greaser, and lastly at the prone figure of his daughter.

"My busy day—or, rather, night, boss," smiled Eddie. "Will you oblige me by picking up Miss Esta and making her comfortable? Thanks—Don't rush, greaser! I'm simply aching for a decent excuse to shoot you out of hand, you know."

The half-caste grinned with rage and fright, for now, looking right across the van at him, were the cold, level eyes of Bud Truefit, the man he had intended to rob of his sweetheart. Eddie shifted his own glance for a fleeting second, and then put out a hand to touch that of the cowboy.

"Presently, Bud," said the lad soothingly. "He's got to do a bit of explaining first. I want to know, right here and now—stand back a bit, boss, so that I can keep this foresight bearing on his heart—I want to know how he dropped that knife from the roof to-night."

"I didn't drop eet!" screamed Del Rogeriguo. "Eet vas Lopez."

"Lopez, eh?" questioned Eddie Polo. "I didn't know he had any grudge against me. It was at your instigation, though, dago, I'll bet. What hold have you on him?"

"E robbed a bank an' killed a man, an' zere's a warrant out for 'is arrest," explained the white-livered scoundrel. "E ees afraid that I veel tell them zat want 'im an' docs as I bid 'im."

"I thought so," was the next comment. "Now, how did you come to be in this van?"

"I vas already in ther ven, an' I 'car ze men come an' bring you in," replied Del Rogeriguo. "An' I 'ide under ze bunk."

"And effectually shook me back to consciousness when you wriggled out, eh?" said Eddie astonishingly. "Oh, don't worry. I was half-awake when you and Esta had the dust-up, but didn't fully wake to matters till you had the gun. Then I realised that it would be foolish of me to try and butt in till you were off your guard; so, when you stood over me with the pillow, trying to screw up courage enough to smother me, I looked into your eyes, and pretended not to know you. Garcia del Rogeriguo, if ever you have another life of crime—for I expect

there's those who will want to hang you for inciting the bandits to hold up the show this evening—remember always to keep hold of the gun, and not to leave it lying about on the floor where a supposedly sick man can get a hand to it. Busto, if you'll just run your hands over the prisoner's pockets you'll find a lot of your good money stowed away. Bud, I see Miss Esta is coming round; you might attend to her, there's a good chap. My head's swimming, but if that dago tries to bolt I'll perforate him one-time in spite of it—even if I'm hanged for ridding the earth of such a yellow-faced scoundrel. That all right, boss? Good! Shove that twisted sheet round the greaser's arms and body, and cart him outside. Ginger, old man, give me an arm to lean on, and we'll proceed to try the great and only Garcia del Rogeriguo before a jury of his fellow-men."

The wondering crowd outside the caravan—for the whole excited camp had been aroused by Eddie's revolver shot—were somewhat surprised when the caravan door disgorged—first, Eddie Polo, leaning on the clown's arm, then Busto holding the yellow-faced and thoroughly affrighted Spaniard, and finally Esta and Bud. They gave a little cheer at the evidence of their favourite's recovery from the shock of his fall, for there were many who had feared he could never survive it. They had, however, failed to take into account Eddie Polo's elasticity and iron constitution, which, backed by his usually clean method of life, had enabled him to shake off the worst of the after-effects in so little time.

They boomed as they recognised Del Rogeriguo, and, but for Busto's commanding "Back, all of you!" would have rushed the dago and strung him, there and then, aloft on a tent-pole. But they gathered their fists, muttering deeply, and shaking their fists, and the half-caste knew that he might expect little mercy at the hands of these rough men and women.

"To the big marquee, lads!" ordered Busto. "Some of you post off and tell the sheriff to hike along one-time, but keep your faces shut about what he's wanted for. We don't want any angry citizens butting in for a lynching bee at this time of night. We'll try the greaser fair and square, and if he's got anything to say worth listening to, maybe give him a chance for his life."

"String him up!" "Tar and feather him, and ride him out of town on a rail!" "Burn his fingers off!" These and a few other kind and gentle suggestions were bawled out at the top of hoarse, passion-filled voices.

"Boys," said Bud Truefit, "what ther boss says goes. The big tent it is. Hike, then, all of yew!"

They hiked, but they took Del Rogeriguo with them. Eddie whispered a word into the ear of a bystander, and he disappeared. But he reappeared again soon, with Lopez

in his grasp, for the lad was determined to clean the circus of all evil at one stroke. The procession made its way into the centre of the ring, from which the bodies of the killed bandits had already been cleared, and while some of the circus hands hurried about placing the flaring naphtha about to illuminate the scene, the remainder settled down in an orderly circle—Del Rogeriugo and Lopez, his confederate, guarded by Bud Truefit's outfit, in the centre. Esta, her father, Bud, Ginger, and Eddie Polo hauled a long stool forward and seated themselves, the boss in the centre as president of the tribunal. Then the messengers came back, and with them the sheriff and a posse of half a dozen men.

"Howdy, sheriff!" said Busto. "You're just in time to help with the trial, in fair and square fashion, according to Western law, of the pris'ner at the bar. And after we've tried him before a jury of his fellows and sentenced him, we want you to take charge of him till the sentence can be either carried out or verified by a more properly constituted court. Air you agreeable?"

circus I've already talked about. Well, what you got to say? And remember, before you say it, that nobody'll believe a word you do say!"

"Fire ahead, greaser, and remember we'll check all your statements," supplemented Eddie Polo.

The dago stared about him at the circle of determined faces. He glanced at the ready revolvers of the cowboys, and at the bonds which encircled his own arms and legs. He attempted to appeal with his eyes to Esta for mercy and her intervention; but the girl, sore and bruised, looked away, and refused to meet his glance. His tongue licked round his dry lips, and his eyes almost boggled out of his head with terror. He struggled for words for a plea of mercy, but his tongue refused to utter them. And at last he shook his head.

"Nuthin' ter say, dago?" interpolated the sheriff. "Waal, it kinder saves time an' breath yew pleadin' guilty like thet. An', 'avin' tried yew, this court sentences yew ter—"

Eddie had risen also, supporting himself on Ginger's shoulder, though, except for a weak stiffness, he felt no ill results from his fall.

"I say, boss, you're chairman of this court, I take it?" asked Eddie, a smile in his eyes.

"I am, boy," was the curt response, "and I'm voting for—"

"Hold on, boss!" interrupted Eddie again. "As chairman you haven't got any vote except when the others tie on the question, and then you only have the casting vote. At present the voting stands three to two, so the non-die-ers have the verdict!"

Again the circus hands laughed at Eddie's quick wit, and Garcia del Rogeriugo drew a deep breath as he realised that he had still a slim chance of saving his precious life. Almost he could have thanked Eddie. Then the thought that Eddie was at the bottom of all his troubles returned, and he bent upon the lad a glance of such malignancy that the onlookers wondered if the dago was about to refuse to accept his life at the boy's hands, for that was what it amounted to.

Even Busto grinned as, outgeneralled, he sat down again, and Eddie looked round on the gathered crowd.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, addressing all hands, "you'll agree that it's my life that the dago has tried to take a few times. You know our Western law says 'A life for a life.' Well, in return for trying to out me, I'm going to suggest that we give the dago a fresh chance. And, believe me, the knowledge that he owes his life to the lad he's tried so often to kill will punish that greaser more than any rope or bullet. It'll worry him all his days, and, maybe, even teach him to lead an honest life and keep right away from Busto's Great and Original Travelling Circus for ever. Not that I'm suggesting he shall go away unpunished! He's tried twice to rob the boss, and to-night he's tried to kidnap Miss Esta; and I saw him with my own eyes start the fire that burnt down the old tent a few days ago. And he must suffer for those crimes. Now, then, shall we turn him over to the law and let him spend a few years in jail, or will some of you sacrifice your pillows, so that we can tar and feather him before we run him out of camp in the old style?"

Again that ruffle of laughter, and again Del Rogeriugo's eyes gleaming inalienable hatred towards the quick-witted, quick-muscled lad. Then he looked no more, for the crowd surged in towards him with a rush, and before he knew it he was in the grip of many rough hands.

They carted him to a clear space in front of the big tent, and the marquee hands brought the flares, so that there should be light for the fun and the punishment. Then women ran to their own tents and reappeared with feather pillows, slit at the ends, while others arrived with a big barrel of Stockholm tar, used in and about the circus for many things, such as preserving ropes and tarpaulins, and dressing horses' cracked hoofs.

They stuck the tar-barrel on end in the centre of the crowd, while the women passed the pillows to those nearest the front. Then, from out the small knot of men who had been busy about him, the figure of Garcia del Rogeriugo, stripped of his clothing, was swiftly passed to the centre, and the fun began.

Once, twice, thrice, he was plunged head over heels in the black, strongly-smelling mixture, till the tar dripped from him, and the only white things about his whole body were his eyes. And then, as he twisted and twirled, the men suddenly released him, and those with the pillows full of feathers rushed forward and did their part, so that presently the blackness of the tar was concealed by the whiteness of the feathers.

"Let him run! Off belts, and drive him along!"

The cry went up from a dozen throats, and the crowd split into two sections, leaving a long lane through which the luckless half-caste must pass before he could end his punishment. And at the cry everybody who wore a belt unslung it, and, with the unbuckled end, drove hard at the racing figure as it passed before them. The crowd waited till the pain and rage-maddened Del Rogeriugo reached the end of the lane before breaking and pursuing, and then, for the third time in his life, the tarred and feathered and soundly belaboured Spaniard passed over the brow of the little hill, and scooted for his life into the alkali waste of the Nevada desert, the circus crowd, laughing and shouting, and calling all manner of insults, in full chase.



A swiftly-riding horseman turned the corner of the lane, and dashed down upon the small group standing in the naphtha flares' glare. "Strike yew're tents, quick!" he yelled hoarsely. "The Redskins 'ave broken out of their reservation!"

"I'm agreeable to stand by and see yew string ther blighter sky 'igh pronto, if yew're figgerin' on that sort of end ter this court bec," said the sheriff. "Mebbe, if nobody has anythin' ter raise agin sich a practice, I'll take er seat on ther bench of examinin' magisterates meself, jest ter kinda represent law an' order."

Busto nodded, and the sheriff joined the others on the seat, while his posse stood in the background.

"Prisoner at the bar," commenced Mr. Busto, in what he considered fit and proper form, "you are here charged to answer for your life in that you did, first, try to imperil the life of Eddie Polo by dropping a knife from the circus roof on him while he was performing the greatest stunt that has ever been done in any circus throughout the whole of—"

"Stick to the charge, boss," interrupted Eddie. "This isn't any advertising lecture!"

"Second," went on the boss, taking no notice of the guffaw Eddie's sally had raised, "with burning down the tent belonging to the aforesaid circus; third, with stealing, on two occasions, cash from the caravan of me, the owner of the circus before-mentioned; and fourth, with trying to kidnap the person of the daughter of me, the owner of the

"Here, hold on, sheriff," interposed Eddie again. "The court hasn't sentenced him to anything as yet! Why, we haven't even discussed what we'll do with him! I, for one, am voting against him being killed, though he has tried to kill me a few times!"

"And I vote the same way as Eddie," put in Esta. "And Bud, here, will vote with me. Won't you, Bud?"

And what could Truefit do in the face of that plea, when the best thing he would have liked would be to take the greaser and fill his hide so full of lead that he'd sink like a stone if cast into water?

"Thar's three agin it, anyway," said the sheriff. "What about you, Mr. Clown?"

"I—I'd like to choke him with my bare hands!" burst out Ginger Wiggles. "He'd no longer be a danger-spot then, and he's been more than a nuisance in the past."

"An' my vote's fer hangin' 'im, pronto, to ther nearest pole," said the sheriff.

Everybody looked at Busto, for his alone was the vote yet to be taken. Would he side with Eddie and his daughter, or vote for death, making the voters even? There was little doubt in the greaser's mind, or in those of the audience, as the showman cast a look of hatred upon the trembling greaser. Busto rose to his feet, while Eddie and Bud Truefit watched him. But before he could speak,

The Night Alarm!

EDDIE, Esta, Bud Truefit, and Busto stood in the circus square, watching the flitting of the strangely-attired half-caste, laughing as though they would strain their ribs. Only Ginger the clown looked aggrieved.

"A lot of folks will sleep without pillows to-night," laughed Eddie Polo, and the others joined in again.

"And it'll take the greaser a long time to pluck himself," supplemented Esta.

"It'd have been better—and safer for everybody—to have strung him up!" asserted the doleful Ginger. "There's only one sort of good greaser, and that's a dead one, especially of the Del Rogerio brand."

The others would have entered into laughing argument with the clown, but at that moment a bell somewhere in the town began to clang lustily and loudly. The sheriff and his posse swiftly detached themselves from the circus crowd, and hurried back, while the others, wondering what this new noise meant, reluctantly gave up their chase of the miserable Spaniard, and returned in one's and two's, talking about the recent scene.

"What's the matter?" asked Eddie, of the sheriff, as he rushed up and made for where his horse was tethered.

"Dunno," replied the official. "That bell only rings fer fire an' flood. But 'ere comes somebody burnin' ther trail—mebbe 'e'll 'ave noose fer us all!"

A swiftly-riding horseman turned the corner of the lane, and dashed at breakneck speed down upon the group standing in the naptha flares' glare.

"Strike yew're tents quick, an' get inter ther village," he yelled hoarsely, "er yew'll 'ave no scalps left! Ther Redskins 'ave broken out of ther reservation and got 'old er some firewater, an' they're a-tumblin' down on ther lill' ole village like a lot er yellin' fiends! Sheriff, yew're wanted bad back thar. Ther boys sent me ter collect yew."

It needed none of the sheriff's hastily-shouted instructions to stir the circus folks into activity, and in the twinkling of an eye they set about striking the huge canvas marquee to the ground. The vanmen ran to where the horses were picketed, and hastily thrust them into the shafts of the various transports, and backed them down to where others struggled with great heaps of struggling canvas. Bud Truefit and his band of cowboys mounted their ponies, and, loading all their guns and repeating-rifles, rode out to the top of the little hill over which the Spaniard had gone to form an outpost which would be strong enough to beat back an attack till the circus was ready to move.

Busto went from group to group, ordering, spurring on, and wondering why all his days and most of his nights of late had been so filled with adventures.

And at last all was packed, and the cowboys recalled. Eddie and Esta, each mounted, and each armed with rifle and revolver—for the girl was used to fending for herself, and could use both weapons—rode in the front, with Red Cloud, the Indian, at the girl's side. The Indian's face was dark and lowering, and it was plain that it would go hard with any enemy who fell into his hands. He had so long associated with white men that his old love of slaughter and

carnage for its own sake had long since died, and he looked now upon the circus people as his blood brothers.

The cavalcade reached the village before the first of the attacking Indians came in sight, and the whole outfit was swiftly commanded by the defenders to form part of the barricade erected across the ends of the streets nearest the desert. All but the horses, that is; these were retained for riding purposes, and, under the auspices of Bud Truefit and the sheriff, both of whom had already had experience of Indian fighting, a formidable force of cavalry, armed with rifles and revolvers, was swiftly organised.

And then it was that Eddie Polo conceived the idea which turned what threatened to be a tragedy into the merest farce, but which lost nothing of its effect through being spontaneous and dramatic.

"Boys," he yelled suddenly, throwing up his hand into the air as he reined in his horse, to attract attention, "I've got the father and mother of an idea! I'm for the saloon, and it is from the saloon we shall be able to work out a stunt that'll put every Indian in the State into our power, and enable us to overcome this raid without the shedding of any blood. We don't want to kill the Indians, and we don't want them to kill us, but we must read them a sharp lesson. Those of you who are for killing, ride out into the desert and do it; those who are for Eddie Polo and his bloodless stunt, follow me! On, my braves, on to the saloon!"

(A further instalment of this powerful life-story in next week's number. Order your copy to-day!)

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