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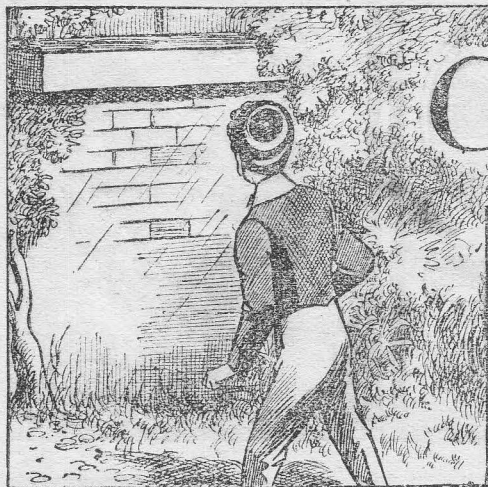
# The $1\frac{1}{2}$ Popular

20 PAGES.



**BOARDING THE FRENCHMAN!** (A Stirring Scene from Our Grand Serial, "Outlaws of the Sea!")

## ANOTHER GRAND GREYFRIARS SCHOOL TALE!



# Champion of the Third!

A Splendid Long Complete  
Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.,  
AND THE  
Fags of the Third Form.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Tubb is Dared!

WINGATE minor of the Third had made history.

There could be no doubt about it. In the first stage of the Third Form boxing tournament young Jack Wingate had defeated Paget. In the second stage, after a fierce and strenuous fight, he had beaten Bolsover minor. And thus he had qualified to meet George Tubb in the final.

It was amazing—it was extraordinary! For Wingate minor, although fairly useful with his fists, had never been regarded as one of the best boxers in the Third.

Lots of the fags rubbed their eyes, and asked themselves if they were dreaming. Not for one moment had they ever supposed that Jack Wingate would get into the final, and that fellows like Bolsover minor and Paget and O'Rourke would be among the "also-rans."

But the unexpected had happened, and Wingate minor was to meet Tubb in the ring to decide the boxing championship of the Third.

Jack Wingate's big brother, who was the captain of the school, was immensely pleased to hear of his minor's success. And he invited Jack to tea in his study on the strength of it.

"You've done splendidly, kid!" he said. "Though, mark you, I don't think you'll stand the slightest chance of licking Tubb. He's a regular little box of tricks, and he can do almost anything in the ring."

"I know; but I mean to give him a jolly good run for his money!" was Wingate minor's rejoinder.

"That's the spirit!" said the captain of Greyfriars approvingly. "By the way, I shouldn't scoff so many of those jam-tarts if I were you. They're hardly the sort of thing to train on."

"All serene, George!" said Jack Wingate cheerfully. "I'll moderate my transports. Pass the bovril!"

"Silly young ass!" said George Wingate, laughing. "Now, look here. The chances of your licking Tubb are about a thousand to one against. But if you pull it off I'll buy you that pair of roller-skates you've been hankering after for weeks."

"Oh, good!"

"And I'll persuade the pater to give you an extra-special Christmas present."

"Better still!"

Jack Wingate's eyes were sparkling. He knew that he would have all his work cut out to beat Tubb, who was very hefty for his age, and who was possessed of a powerful punch. But this knowledge only increased Wingate minor's determination to force a victory.

When tea was over he adjourned to the fags' common-room, where a number of Third-Formers were engaged in frying herrings.

Jack Wingate sat down and watched them, and he listened with an amused smile to their comments on the subject of the forthcoming fight.

"Tubb'll win hands down," said Paget.

"Faith, an' he'd lick Wingate minor blind-

folded, and with one arm tied behind his back!" said O'Rourke.

"E'll make shavings of 'im!" chimed in Bolsover minor. "There ain't a shadder of doubt about that."

Presently Jack Wingate spoke.

"I'd like to remind you fellows of the words of a celebrated old woman," he said.

"Well?" queried Paget.

"Wait and see."

Paget gave a snort.

"You haven't the ghost of a chance against Tubb," he said, "and you know it!"

"At a quarter-past ten to-morrow morning," said Jack Wingate, "you might have cause to change your opinion."

The fags' final was due to be fought at ten o'clock next morning. And Jack Wingate was evidently under the impression that by a quarter-past he would have dusted the gym floor with his opponent.

At that moment Tubb himself came into the Common-room.

"I say, young Wingate," he said loftily. "I want to speak to you."

"Go ahead!"

"You've got to meet me in the boxing final, haven't you?"

"Of course!"

"Well, you needn't."

"Eh?"

"I'm going to give you a chance to stand down," said Tubb magnanimously. "I don't want to batter your chivvy so that your own mater wouldn't know you. After all, you're not a bad sort of kid. So if you'll just cry off, there'll be no contest, and the gold medal will go to me."

Wingate minor started blankly at the speaker.

"You ought to know which side your bread's buttered," Tubb went on. "If you come up against me in the ring, you'll be pulverised. And you don't want that to happen, I suppose?"

"I'm willing to risk it," was the reply.

"What! Does that mean that you refuse to back out?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Jack Wingate. Tubb snorted.

"You're a frabjous ass!" he said.

"Thanks!"

"And a born idiot—"

"Same to you!"

"I shall flatten you, you chump! By the time I've finished with you, your chivvy will be like a smashed bread-and-butter pudding!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Tubb's friends.

"I'll take my chance of that," said Wingate minor. "And I shouldn't crow too much, Tubb, if I were you. The boot might be on the other foot, you know!"

"Why, you duffer, you'd never be able to lick me—not in a thousand giddy years!" shouted Tubb.

"I mean to do my best."

"Look here, I've offered you a ripping chance to back out—"

"Poor sort of worm I should be if I took it!"

"Then you're going through with it?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, you can look out for squalls!"

"I expect all the squealing will be done by you!" said Jack Wingate.

"You—you cheeky ass!" roared Tubb.

And he would probably have assaulted Wingate minor there and then had not Paget and Bolsover minor seized him and swung him back.

"Leave it till the mornin', Tubby," said Bolsover. "Then you can put 'im through the mill!"

"I'll knock some of the confounded cheek out of him!" said Tubb grimly.

The conversation then drifted into other channels.

Tubb superintended the frying of the herrings, and a savoury odour pervaded the fags' Common-room.

Jack Wingate did not join in the repast which followed. He had eaten an excellent tea in his major's study.

When bed-time came, and the fags went up to their dormitory, the fight was again discussed. And everybody—with the exception of Jack Wingate—agreed that Tubb would have a walk-over.

After lights out the conversation took a peculiar turn.

The night was very dark, and no gleam of light penetrated into the dormitory.

Outside, the wind whistled through the branches of the elms, and occasionally a burst of rain spattered against the window-panes.

Ghost stories, real and imaginary, were soon being told. And Paget mentioned a lonely house on the cliffs which was reputed to be haunted.

"Nobody lives there," he said, "and yet a ghostly figure has often been seen at one of the windows by the Pegg fishermen."

"The fishermen ought to take more water with it!" growled Tubb.

"You mean to say you don't believe in this ghostly figure?"

"Not a scrap!"

"It appears at the window right enough," said Jack Wingate. "I've often heard the old fishermen jawing about it. The house is haunted; there's no doubt about that."

"Rats! I don't believe in haunted houses," said Tubb. "I wouldn't be afraid of going into any so-called haunted houses."

Jack Wingate laughed quietly.

"It's easy enough to be brave when you're tucked up safely in bed," he remarked.

Instantly Tubb sat up.

"What do you mean, you cheeky rotter?" he exclaimed.

"What I say. You mightn't be afraid to enter this particular haunted house in the day-time; but you'd be afraid to do it at night."

"I'm not afraid of anything!" said Tubb boastfully.

"Well, I dare you to visit the haunted house to-night!"

A breathless silence followed Jack Wingate's challenge. Everybody hung on Tubb's answer.

At least a moment elapsed before the answer came. It consisted of two words:

"I'll go!"

"Bravo!" said Paget.

"I'll go right now!" said Tubb. And he slipped out of bed and started putting on his things.

"Faith, an' I'll come wid ye!" said O'Rourke.

"No, no!" said Jack Wingate. "That wouldn't be fair. The arrangement is that Tubb goes by himself, and that he brings something back to show that he's actually been inside the haunted house."

"What d'you want me to bring back?" asked Tubb.

Jack Wingate reflected for a moment. "Last time I went to the place myself," he said, "I clambered up on to the windowsill of the drawing-room and looked through. There was hardly any furniture in the room, but on the mantelpiece I saw an ornament. It was a small black elephant, carved out of ebony, I believe. You can fetch that, and it can be replaced to-morrow."

"Right you are!" said Tubb. "If you bring back the elephant, it'll be sure proof that you entered the haunted house."

Tubb had finished dressing by this time. He had not put on his boots, however. These he intended to carry in his hand until he reached the box-room window.

"So-long, you fellows!" he said. "I'll be back in about an hour."

"If you're lucky!" said Paget. "It's a jolly long way to the house."

"Besides, the ghost might collar you," said Bolsover minor.

Tubb gave a scornful laugh. Then, fired with the determination to prove to his Form-fellows that he was not a funk, he stole silently from the dormitory.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### An Adventure by Night!

ONCE outside in the dark and wind-swept Close, George Tubb became less brave, and his spirits less buoyant.

Still, he did not falter. He had made up his mind to visit the lonely house on the cliffs, and he had no intention of returning empty-handed. He would clamber through the drawing-room window, secure the carved elephant, and take it back to Greyfriars.

He battled his way across the Close, with the wind whistling round his ears, and a moment later he was clambering over the school wall.

He wished that O'Rourke had been allowed to accompany him. It was very lonely and uncanny out here in the darkness.

But what would it be like in the vicinity of the haunted house?

Tubb shivered a little. But he could not—he dared not—go back. Wingate minor would rag him unmercifully if he did, and he would never hear the end of it.

He stepped out briskly along the dark road, almost afraid to glance to the right or left, or behind him.

His quickest way to his destination was through the woods. Tubb didn't relish the prospect of plunging into the woods just then. But he did not hesitate. He found the path by instinct, and promptly struck off along it.

Tall trees stood sentinel on either side of him as he walked. There were strange moanings and whisperings in the branches, too, and Tubb shivered again. He was feeling far from happy.

"I was a fool to come out on this stunt!" he muttered. "I oughtn't to have let young Wingate taunt me into doing it. Still, I must go through with it now."

He was very relieved when at last he emerged from the woods.

Only a short walk lay before him now, and then he would be at his destination—the place which everybody, barring himself, seemed to regard as haunted.

And even Tubb began to have his doubts when he presently came in sight of the house, which stood in lonely isolation on the cliff-top.

Far below huge breakers were dashing and crashing upon the rocky shore. Whilst out at sea twinkled the lights of some passing vessel.

Tubb had reached his goal. But the most difficult part of his undertaking was yet to be faced.

He had to clamber through the window of the drawing-room and obtain possession of the ebony elephant.

There was something sinister and forbidding in the appearance of the lonely building which was silhouetted against the sky.

No lights gleamed from any of the win-

dows. There was no sign that the place was tenanted.

In setting out on his strange mission Tubb had omitted to provide himself with two very necessary things—a raincoat and an electric-torch.

His omission cost him dear, for he was already drenched by the rain. And an electric-torch would have been invaluable to him in locating the ornament which he had to take back to Greyfriars.

Tubb hesitated for some time on the outskirts of the house before making his way to the drawing-room window.

Although he would not have admitted as much, he was sorely afraid. He would have given a great deal to have been back in his warm bed in the Third Form dormitory.

At last, after a long period of irresolution, he went round to the window through which he would have to clamber.

As he went, he fancied he heard the sound of voices close at hand, and he spun round fearfully.

There was not a soul to be seen.

"It was only my fancy, I suppose!" he muttered. "I'm a bundle of nerves to-night! Wish I'd never taken this job on!"

He turned and gazed up at the windowsill, which was several feet above his head.

"Only a blessed acrobat could get up there!" he murmured. "Still, I'll have a shot!"

Tubb stepped back a few paces, then he made a short run, followed by a spring. His arms were upraised, and his fingers clutched the edge of the sill.

He was in the act of drawing himself up when there was a sudden rush of feet behind him.

Tubb was so startled that he nearly lost his hold.

"Collar him!" he heard a voice say. And then his ankles were seized, and he was dragged down from the sill. After which, a grip of iron descended upon his shoulder.

Turning quickly, Tubb saw that his captor was a tall, powerfully-built man, and that another man of equally powerful build was beside him.

"Leggo!" gasped the fag.

But the pressure of the grip increased until it became positively painful.

"You young spy!" hissed the man in whose grasp Tubb was wriggling. "What do you want here?"

"Ow! I came here to—to—" faltered the fag.

"To pry upon us, and to try and discover the secret of this house!"

"Nothing of the sort! I—"

"He's a Greyfriars kid," said the other man, peering closely at Tubb. "We'd better shut him up in a safe place, or he'll be makin' things unpleasant for us."

Tubb was startled by these words. And, hopeless though his chances of escape appeared to be, he resolved to make a strenuous bid for freedom.

With an almost superhuman effort he wrenched himself free. Then, clenching his fists, he hit out fiercely.

Although small of stature, Tubb could get plenty of power behind his punches. He struck one of the men just below the chest, fairly doubling him up.

But there was the other man to be reckoned with. He bore down upon Tubb, and, although the fag continued to hit out, his blows glanced off the man like water off a duck's back.

And then, to his consternation, Tubb found himself swung clean off his feet.

His assailant lifted him above his head as if he had been a light dumb-bell. Then he brutally hurled the fag to the ground.

Crash!

The unfortunate Tubb felt as if an earthquake was happening.

His senses swam; the darkness of the night became intensified. There was a roaring in his ears, and he realised that consciousness was slipping away from him. He rolled over on the rain-soaked turf, and lay motionless—completely at the mercy of his dastardly assailants.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### A Night of Terror!

WHEN Tubb of the Third came to himself he was alone.

There was still a roaring in his ears, but he discovered, after a time, that it was the roar of the sea. He could hear the breakers crashing upon the rocks.

All around him was darkness—impenetrable darkness.

Where was he?

With a great effort the fag staggered to his feet. He stretched out his hands, and presently they encountered what appeared to be the wall of a cave.

"This must be one of the old smugglers' caves at Pegg," he thought.

He imagined that it would be a simple matter to find a way out. But he was wrong. It was so dark that he could discern no outlet.

A feeling of faintness came over him.

"I'd better wait a bit before I try to get out," he muttered.

And he sank down on to the floor of the cave and recalled the events which had led up to his capture.

Where were the two men who had attacked him? Had they brought him here and abandoned him? It seemed only too probable.

And then a sudden thought struck him—a thought which, try as he would, he could not banish from his mind.

He saw the hand of Wingate minor in this.

Jack Wingate had been very keen for him to visit the haunted house.

Why?

Was it not possible that this was a put-up job—that Wingate minor had bribed a couple of roughs to lie in wait for him and take him prisoner?

Tubb was almost distracted at the time, or such a thought would never have occurred to him.

But the more he considered the matter, the more convinced he became that he had hit upon the correct explanation.

This was how Tubb looked at it. Wingate minor knew that he had no chance of winning the boxing final, so he had plotted to get Tubb out of the way. He had suggested the visit to the lonely house, and he had arranged for a couple of hoodlums to overpower Tubb, and take him away to some safe place.

"Fool that I was to walk into the trap!" muttered the fag. "I might have known there was something behind all this. No wonder Wingate wasn't keen for O'Rourke to come with me. It was me that he wanted to get out of the way, and he's succeeded, too, by Jove! If I don't get back to Greyfriars in time for the fight I shall lose it by default. The verdict will go to that awful little cad Wingate!"

Tubb was so furious that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

In his sober senses, he would not have dreamed of connecting Jack Wingate with such a vile plot. But a hammer seemed to be beating in his brain, and his imagination was inflamed.

Had he remembered clearly the conversation of the two men who had kidnapped him, he would have recollected that they had a secret of some sort, and that they had captured him lest he should find out and betray their secret—not because they were the hired agents of Wingate minor.

Calm reflection would have convinced Tubb that Jack Wingate had nothing to do with the matter. But he felt anything but calm now. His head seemed to be on fire, and he clenched his fists savagely as he thought of what he would do to Wingate minor.

After a while his strength came back to him; though he was still very wrathful and excited.

He rose to his feet, and groped his way round the cave until he found an exit.

It was a very small outlet, and the fag was obliged to go through it on all-fours.

He found himself in a narrow tunnel, and as he crawled along in the darkness he could still hear the roar of the sea.

"It won't take me long to get out of this," he thought.

But a series of terrible disappointments awaited him.

Instead of leading to the shore, as he had anticipated, the tunnel merely connected with another cave, similar to that in which the fag had found himself on regaining consciousness.

After a good deal of groping, Tubb managed to locate another tunnel, and, after following this for several yards, he found that there were still more tunnels, branching off in different directions.

Tubb halted in dismay.

It was easier to solve an intricate chess problem than to find a way out of that maze of tunnels.

"I must try each one in turn," he reflected. And he did, only to find that each tunnel ended in a cul-de-sac.

There seemed to be no way out, and Tubb was almost in despair.

He felt that he would go mad if he remained here much longer in the darkness. Apart from the roar of the waves, he seemed to hear shrill wailings, and he was scared out of his wits. Moreover, he was cold, wet, and hungry.

There seemed to be nothing for it but to wait until dawn in the hope that the darkness of his surroundings would lift.

But how could he possibly remain in this place all night?

Tubb shuddered.

A great fear got hold of him, and he continued his despairing quest for a way out.

Nearly two hours had elapsed before success crowned his efforts.

He seemed to have explored every tunnel there was, but at last he discovered one which was longer than the others. And at the far end of it was a subdued light.

The fog uttered a sobbing cry of relief. He had found an outlet at last!

Five minutes later he stood on the fringe of the angry sea.

All around him the elements were raging, and the salt spray beat into his face.

But Tubb cared nothing for these things. He was free!

After resting awhile on one of the rocks which the tide had not yet reached, Tubb started on his journey back to Greyfriars.

His heart was still full of bitterness towards Wingate minor. But he resolved to say nothing of his suspicions—or, rather, convictions. He would deal with Jack Wingate in his own way and in his own time. When they came face to face in the boxing-ring he would fight as he had never fought before. He would cram every ounce of effort into the tussle, and he would give Wingate minor the rocking of his life.

With stumbling, faltering steps, Tubb toiled up the cliff-path, and at length he reached the narrow, winding lane which led to Greyfriars.

The terrors of the night were over now, and Tubb was more like his old self again.

But the bitter feeling he entertained towards Wingate minor did not diminish. It grew stronger.

As he clambered over the school wall the clock in the old tower began to boom out the hour.

One—two—three—four—five!  
"Five o'clock in the morning!" gasped Tubb. "My hat! I must have been in that cave for hours and hours!"

He crossed the Close, clambered through the box-room window, and made his way without mishap to the Third Form dormitory.

He expected to find his Form-fellows asleep, and the majority of them were. But Jack Wingate, Paget, Bolsover minor, and O'Rourke were sitting up in bed as he entered.

"That you, Tubby?" whispered Paget.

"Yes."  
"Where the merry dickens have you been?"

"Faith, an' what's happened to ye?" asked O'Rourke.

Tubb groped his way towards his bed, and removed his rain-soaked garments.

"I went to the haunted house," he said quietly.

"You admit that it's haunted, then?" said Jack Wingate.

"I admit nothing of the sort."  
"Have you got the elephant?"

"No."  
Jack Wingate chuckled.

"I thought your courage would ooze out at your finger-tips when it came to clambering through the drawing-room window!" he said.

Tubb said nothing in reply to this taunt. But he had to exercise a tremendous amount of self-restraint. He could cheerfully have throttled Wingate minor at that moment. But he deemed it wiser to bide his time.

All sorts of questions were fired at Tubb as he undressed and got into bed. But he answered none of them. He declined to say what he had been doing during the long night hours.

There was one thing which puzzled him.

He had expected Wingate minor to show signs of dismay when he returned; whereas Jack Wingate seemed relieved, more than anything.

This was extraordinary, thought Tubb. For the fellow must surely be annoyed to find that his plot had failed.

But Tubb was not good at riddles, and, anyway, he was too tired to solve this one. Within two minutes of his head touching the pillow he was fast asleep, after one of the grimmest adventures he had ever known.

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#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### The Fight.

CLANG! Clang!  
It seemed to George Tubb that he had only been sleeping five minutes when the rising-bell clanged out its harsh summons.

He sat up in bed with a yawn. All around him were signs of activity.

Most of the fags were already up and doing. Bolsover minor and O'Rourke were biffing each other with pillows, and Paget was brandishing a pair of Indian clubs. He had lately been impressed by an article in the "Greyfriars Herald" on the value of keeping fit.

Paget desisted from his exertions when he saw that Tubb was awake. And he immediately started to bombard his chum with questions. But all that he could get out of Tubb was a gruff "Dry up!"

Tubb glanced in the direction of Wingate minor. He expected to see him showing signs of fear and uneasiness in view of the forthcoming fight.

But Jack Wingate looked cheerful and confident.

"If he's acting a part," muttered Tubb, "then he's one of the best actors I've ever struck!"

"Feeling fit for the giddy fray, Tubby?" asked Jack Wingate pleasantly.

"I've never felt fitter in my life," answered Tubb grimly.

"Good! That's exactly how I feel."

"You don't seriously think you've got a chance of bagging that gold medal, Wingate?" said Paget.

"I think I've a ripping chance."

"Faith, an' it's simply burstin' with confidence that he is!" said O'Rourke, pausing in the act of wielding his pillow. "After all, he might run Tubby pretty close for the honours."

"Not if I know it!" muttered Tubb under his breath.

After he had washed and towelled himself vigorously, Tubb felt as active and alert as if he had had his full quota of sleep. And he looked forward with grim earnestness to his encounter with Wingate minor.

The fight was fixed for ten o'clock. And half an hour before that time the gym was packed.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, were present in full muster. The fags were there to a man; and even the high-and-mighty men of the Sixth had condescended to put in an appearance.

George Wingate gave his minor some very good advice before the fight started; and Wingate minor resolved to profit by it.

Jack Harper, the famous sports trainer, was the referee, and a cheer greeted his appearance in the gym.

During the interval of waiting there was a buzz of animated chatter. And presently the hands of the clock pointed to ten.

"Now we'll get to business," said Jack Harper; and a hush fell upon the spectators.

"Seconds out of the ring!"

Tubb and Wingate minor stood face to face. The latter was smiling serenely; the

former was white as a sheet, and his eyes glazed as if with passion.

It was seldom that George Tubb gave way to feelings of hatred. Hatred was not in his line, but he hated Wingate minor at that moment with a bitter hatred, and he resolved to trash him unmercifully.

"Time!"

Jack Wingate held out his gloved hand for Tubb to take. He was surprised to find that it was ignored, and while he was wondering as to the why and wherefore of this Tubb struck him a telling blow between the eyes.

"Bravo!"

"Well hit, sir!"

"Keep it up, Tubby!" yelled Paget.

Tubb followed up fiercely. His whole attitude and expression seemed to say "I'm out for scalps!"

Jack Wingate was dazed by that early onslaught, but he was a long way from throwing up the sponge. He had pluck in plenty, and he met his opponent's repeated rushes unflinchingly.

Tubb attacked with the vigour of a prize-fighter. Science and caution he threw to the winds. His one aim seemed to be to find the shortest way to his opponent's body.

Very few fellows could have stood up to that terrific onslaught for long; but Wingate minor did. He offered a stout resistance, and once, when Tubb was fighting wildly, he broke through his guard and delivered a series of sharp jabs to the ribs; and Tubb looked pretty sick when Jack Harper called "Time!"

"Go easy, kid!" muttered Harry Wharton, who was acting as Tubb's second. "You're using up all your energy."

"No, I'm not," was the panting reply. "My energy will last exactly as long as the scrap lasts!"

Tubb spoke so vehemently that Harry Wharton stared at him in astonishment.

"You don't owe young Wingate a grudge, do you?" he asked.

No reply.

"This is a boxing match, not a prize-fight," Wharton reminded the fag.

But Tubb, even if he heard, did not heed. For in the second round he fought as fiercely as ever.

Jack Wingate felt that he was battling with a whirlwind. He had never known Tubb behave so ferociously before.

But he didn't allow Tubb's hurricane tactics to terrify him. He kept cool, and by clever footwork he managed to dodge the majority of the blows which Tubb rained upon him.

It was a regular hammer-and-tongs fight. The rest of the boxing finals had been quiet and dignified by comparison.

"But, then, what can you expect from a pair of fags?" remarked Bob Cherry.

If Tubb had had his own way, Wingate minor would have had to be carried off on a stretcher at the end of the second round.

Fortunately for Jack Wingate, Tubb didn't have matters all his own way. He fought so recklessly that his opponent was given numerous openings, of which he took full advantage.

At the end of that round Tubb's face was a picture, and Wingate minor was in little better case. One of his eyes was nearly closed, and a bruise was forming on his temple. For Tubb's hits had been of the straight from the shoulder variety, with plenty of power and punch behind them.

During the interval the captain of Greyfriars whispered a few words in his minor's ear.

"I don't know whether young Tubby's got anything up against you," he said, "but he seems to want to half-kill you. Well, don't play him at his own game. Keep cool, and carry on just as you have been doing, and you're a certain winner!"

It would have been well for Jack Wingate had he followed this advice.

But when the third round started Tubb dealt him such a terrific blow on the jaw, and gave him such a vindictive glare as he did so, that Jack Wingate's blood boiled. He lost all his coolness and self-possession, and began to fight wildly, as Tubb had been doing all along.

The fight waxed so fierce at this juncture that Jack Harper began seriously to consider the advisability of stopping it.

Wingate minor "saw red," and so did Tubb, and they hammered each other unmercifully.

Tubb, in particular, seemed to have taken leave of his senses. He fought like one demented. He was convinced, as he fought, that Wingate minor had been responsible for luring him into a trap overnight, and the memory of those lonely hours of imprison-



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As Tubb was in the act of drawing himself up to the window his ankles were seized, and he was dragged down off the sill. "Collar him!" he heard a gruff voice say. "He's a dangerous spy—come to pry out our secret!" (See Chapter 2.)

ment in the cave goaded him into a state of ungovernable fury.

The spectators were looking quite scared. They couldn't understand it. They had come into the gym expecting to witness a rather tame scuffle between a pair of fags. Instead of which the affair had all the grimness and fierceness of a duel.

"Tubb seems to have gone clean off his dot!" muttered Frank Nugent.

Bob Cherry, to whom the remark was addressed, nodded.

"It can't last much longer, that's one thing," he said.

And it didn't.

Summoning all his energy, Tubb dashed his fist full into the face of his opponent, and Wingate minor fell like a log.

No cheering greeted the knock-out blow.

Jack Wingate lay so white and still that everybody was filled with alarm, and when a few moments later he opened his eyes and sat up a murmur of relief ran round the crowded gym.

As for George Tubb, he had grown suddenly calm again.

The wild fit of passion had passed, and as he stood over his recent opponent, and looked down at Jack Wingate's battered but honest face, a wave of remorse surged over him.

"Supposing he had made a mistake? Supposing Jack Wingate had nothing whatever to do with the affair of the night before?"

"I don't believe he did it!" muttered Tubb. "I'm sure he didn't! He wouldn't play a dirty, low-down trick of that sort! I was wrong—yes, I was wrong!"

He dropped on one knee beside Wingate minor. Jack smiled at him, and the smile brought a lump to Tubb's throat. He would have borne it better if Wingate minor had glared at him, and called him a hot-headed brute.

"I—I say, Tubb," muttered the defeated fag, "why did you fight like—like that? It— it seemed as if you hated me like poison."

"I did," confessed Tubb.

"But why?"

"I'll tell you later," said Tubb huskily.

And he assisted Jack Wingate to rise, and then led him away from the scene of the encounter.

A crowd of fags were in the act of following, but Tubb waved them back.

"Buzz off, you fellows!" he said. "We want to be alone."

It was in one of the bath-rooms, after they had sponged their battle-stained faces, that Tubb made his explanation.

"Do you know what happened to me last night?" he asked.

"No; but I've wondered."

"Well, I'll tell you. I went to the haunted house, as per programme, and as I was clambering up on to the window-sill of the drawing-room I was pounced upon by a couple of booglgans. I put up a fight, of course, but it wasn't much use. One of the rotters lifted me above his head, and threw me; and then I suppose I became unconscious, for I didn't remember anything more until I found myself in one of the caves at Pegg."

Jack Wingate listened to Tubb's recital in amazement.

"Oh, I know it all sounds like a fairy-tale," said Tubb, "but it's true enough. I crawled out of the cave, and found myself in a whole giddy network of tunnels. For hours and hours I tried to get out, but I couldn't."

"My hat!"

"Of course, I felt awfully mad at the time. My imagination played me tricks, and I jumped to an idiotic conclusion. I thought it was you who wangled my capture."

"I?"

"Yes. I thought you were funky of meeting me in the boxing final, and that you had plotted to get me out of the way. It was a beastly, horrible thing to think, I know, and it wasn't until just now, after I'd knocked you out, that I came to my right senses. Then I knew I was wrong. I knew that you wouldn't play a cowardly, low-down trick of that sort. You knew nothing at all about it, of course?"

"Nothing!" said Jack Wingate.

And Tubb knew that he was speaking the truth.

"It was jolly mean of me to think as I did," he said. "I suppose you'll never be able to forgive me?"

"There's something wrong with your supposer, then!" said Jack Wingate cheerfully. "Dash it all, there's nothing to forgive. Any fellow whose nerves were upset might have thought the same as you. By the way, who were those two men?"

"Haven't the foggiest notion."

"We'll go along to the haunted house this afternoon, and see if we can see anything of them."

"Good idea!" said Tubb.

The investigation, however, proved futile, and nothing further was seen or heard of the two cowardly scoundrels who had attacked Tubb in the vicinity of the haunted house. The strange affair remained an unsolved mystery.

In due course Sir Timothy Topham's wife presented gold medals to the best boxer in each Form.

Wingate of the Sixth, Coker of the Fifth, Hobson of the Shell, Temple of the Fourth, Bob Cherry of the Remove, Tubb of the Third, and Dicky Nugent of the Second—these were the lucky victors. And the fellow who led the cheering when George Tubb walked up to the raised platform to receive his due was Jack Wingate.

Jack himself did not go empty away. His major realised that he had put up a very plucky show, and he bought him the pair of roller-skates upon which Jack had set his heart. He also wrote home to his people, recommending that his younger brother should receive something extra special in the way of Christmas presents.

Thus ended the great boxing tournament at Greyfriars. But it would be a long time before the fellows forgot those thrilling tussles—and especially that fierce fight which won for George Tubb the championship of the Third!

THE END.

There will be an extra-special long, complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled:

**"CHRISTMAS AT BUNTER COURT,"**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Be sure you do not miss this splendid Yale-Tide yarn next week.

A GRAND ADVENTURE STORY BY A FAVOURITE AUTHOR!

# OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS



A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND  
ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.

By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.

## INTRODUCTION.

BOB GREVILLE, and his cousin, JEFF HAWKINS, are returning to school when they are met by BLACK MICHAEL, a serving man of Bob's father, SIR JOHN GREVILLE. Mike gives them news of the baronet's ruin, and of his orders to take them back to Talland Hall, the home of the Greilles.

During the journey to Exeter the three rescue ALDERMAN CONYERS and his

charming daughter from the clutches of a notorious highwayman. To show his gratitude, Conyers invites them to his home. There, after a good meal, he tells them that he is a director of a certain big shipping company, and that he will replace the lost fortunes of the Greilles on condition that they bring about the capture of Avéry, a daring buccaneer, who had made the seas very bad for the merchants of the day.

They journey to Bristol and sign on as

"hands" on the ship Duke on which they encounter Avery in the guise of the first mate.

During the night, Avery, with a dozen chosen men, seize the captain of the Duke and the ship. The hands, unable to resist, are made to obey the pirate, and the ship alters her course and sails for Arabia. The next evening they come up to a French ship, and make ready for action.

(Now go on with the story.)

## A French Ship is Attacked!

AND yet the boys might have known, had they paused to reflect, that no attack could be ventured for some time yet. True, both below and on the main deck the long-barrelled guns had been run out, with powder and ball heaped beside them, and the pick of Avery's men—fierce-looking fellows, stripped bare to the waist—waited with the icy wind blowing upon their naked flesh for the signal to fire the pieces. There was, however, a good deal to be done, and none knew better than Avery himself, before the Duke would be in readiness to try her mettle against an adversary.

With a cunning few would have given him credit for, he had chosen both the hour and the darkness to produce such a state of armed preparedness as might well be turned against an enemy, but was less capable of being directed against himself.

To this end the newly-appointed first mate—a rough, brutish fellow named Mason—was sent round to split up the ship's hands in detached groups of eight or ten men, who were posted to different stations, and there given separate instructions.

By great good luck, Bob, Jeff, and Black Mike, who by this time had re-possessed himself of his terrible weapon, were sent, with six others, into the bows, and there told to await instructions.

The spaciousness of their post gave the shrewd sailorman just the opportunity for which he was looking.

"Now, see you here," he said in a cautious whisper, drawing the lads apart, "the first chance, which our good friend the alderman predicted would come, has arrived. John Smith has shown himself in his true colours, and we now know him for Avery, the buccaneer. What we have to do, my hearties, is to get that bit of information back to the Old Country."

"Back to Merchant Conyers," said Dick, surprised. "Yet how is it to be done?"

"There is a way, and the chance to do it can be found," the sailor replied. "I take it you, Master Jeff, can cipher in the dark?"

The boy laughed.

"We did little else at our school in Wellington, seeing our night studies were done by the light of a single taper for the whole room. But ink, Mike, and paper—"

The sailor laughed.

"D've think I came unprepared? We talked

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such matters, the good alderman and me, and in my pack below I have an inkhorn filled with writing-powder, some paper, and blotting-sand. It is easy enow to slip down and bring them here. With so much business afoot, you should be able to scrawl the missive in the cipher the merchant told us of."

"Indeed, nothing easier; but I still don't see how the same will travel back to England. If we commit it to the waves in a bottle the wrong persons may pick it up, or it may never be found at all. And as for a pigeon—"

"Did I not say the captain's purpose is to lie in wait for a Frenchman? That means we shall both attack and board her, and thus come to handgrip with 'em. In the general confusion it should be possible to make terms with one—perhaps to spare his life on condition that the letter is later sent across to England. So get you busy, Master Jeff, as soon as I fetch the materials, and tell our good Master Conyers that we are even now aboard Pirate Avery's ship, and bound for Madagascar."

There was, fortunately, ample time, for the armourer, who was going round, taking with him each section to his store, there to arm them with such few weapons as Avery, in the guise of John Smith, had been able to smuggle into the hold, had not yet come nearer than amidstips.

So Black Michael made off in the darkness, and in a little while he was back again with powder and water in the horn, a quill pen, paper, and sand-box. With Bob's aid Jeff translated the message into the secret marks, and, sealing the missive with a wafer, addressed it to the merchant's house in Exeter, and returned it to Mike.

"I fail to see why our captain is running such a risk as this near to home waters," Bob said, when they had settled down once more.

Mike, with his broad banter upon his hunched-up knees, was ready with the answer.

"Doubless for several reasons. To put the men—those of them not used to buccaneering—in good humour, to show 'em the game's not so risky as they think, and, more'n that, to collect more arms than the Duke already carries."

There was, however, more behind the venture than this, but the facts were not disclosed until later. About-midnight Mike and the two boys were summoned below to the armourer's store, where a flintlock and a

blade were handed to each of them. Then, to their great amaze, they were given the following instructions:

"A little after dawn it is expected we shall fall in with a French vessel lying at anchor. She awaits a consort to proceed up-Channel. On board her is much merchandise, silk, and cloth goods, and spirituous liquor. These our good captain needs for the well-being of his crew. They will be taken at the sword-point, but in the taking as little hurt as possible is to be done to life and limb."

It was evident from this that Avery had planned his expedition with rare forethought, and that he knew the whereabouts of the Frenchman before the Duke hoisted anchor and sailed across St. George's Channel.

A little before daybreak the Duke assumed a lively appearance. The wind had freshened during the night, and had taken her somewhat off her course, so that, at a signal from the look-out, she was obliged to haul off north-west and west-nor-west to avoid a sand called the Frenchman's Bank, the wind then being south-south-east. So they kept away before the breeze, with mainyard braced and tacks on board, but making altogether, as Black Michael remarked, very bad steering.

The lifting of the grey mist preceding the dawn showed the object of their search less than half a mile away. Avery had already hoisted the black flag, and, as its sable folds streamed from the mainmast, the little Frenchman ran her own colours to the mizen-peak, and opened with four chase-guns. This was the signal for the Duke to draw closer in by starboarding her helm, and to fire a broadside. The smaller vessel immediately weighed anchor, and, with her sails belling slowly out, she, too, returned a broadside.

As yet little damage had been done, although the air was filled with deafening sound and dense volumes of smoke, for the Frenchman had drawn so far ahead on the weather-bow that now only two of the pirate's cannon could point at her. The wind, however, changed soon after, and allowed of a heavier broadside being poured in, which had the effect of carrying the other's main-topmast away.

A throaty cheer rose from Avery's men, who, crowding to the side, with their blades between their teeth and flintlocks ready, were ordered to be ready to board the enemy.

Avery knew his men well. Coming amongst them in his gentleman's clothes, he exhorted

them to acquit themselves with credit, remembering always that the French were their enemies, and that, as good Englishmen, they must needs do all in their power to despoil their foes. At the same time, he reminded them that, unless absolutely necessary, no blood was to be shed, but rather the enemy was to be reduced by threats and terror.

The two vessels had now drawn so near together that the Duke was able to manoeuvre her spritsail yard under the other's bowsprit for boarding.

Through the haze of smoke, Bob and Jeff could make out the forms and faces of the gallant Frenchmen, sadly outnumbered, yet resolved to put up a brave fight in defence of their ship. Of the two, it was plain to see the Frenchman was the better handled; for, even as Avery gave the signal to his fellows to board, the other, though her main-topmast gone and much of her rigging torn, managed to slide half a gunshot clear, continuing to discharge her cannon without intermission. In these several broadsides the pirate lost seven of his men.

A great clamour now arose, and it was evident that once the opponents came to grips there would be a merciless effort at mutual destruction. But a shot below the parrel bringing the rest of the mainmast down caused the French ship to strike her colours and to call for quarter.

"Quarter there shall be!" shouted Avery from the poop; but such a cry went up that advantage was again taken of the wind to advance again, and the position for boarding being now secure, the command was given, and the men went over the side like a pack of wolves.

Both Bob and Jeff were well to the front, seized with the natural desire, if not to kill, at least to give such a good show of sword-play as should count for something against their natural foes.

A tall Frenchman, wiry and supple of limb, engaged Bob as he slid to the deck, and both drawing apart for several minutes there was a fine fight between them—thrust and counter-thrust, parry and repose, and thrust again, until with a quick get-in Bob came under his opponent's guard, and ran him through the fleshy part of the forearm.

With a cry the Frenchman went down, and a hulking sailor from the Duke, seeing him at a disadvantage, leapt forward, and would have discharged his flintlock full at his head had not the boy, with an upward sweep of his blade, knocked the weapon from his hand.

"The prisoner is mine!" he cried. The Frenchman forced a pallid smile, and tendered the hilt of his sword, which Bob took, and drew him out of the press. The fight had now become a confused medley which might have ended disastrously for the attacked, seeing they were outnumbered by more than two to one, had not Avery, the first-mate, and the boatswain counselled such clemency that many prisoners yielded with but little harm befalling them.

As their weapons were surrendered there was a general rush to search the cabins and to tear the hatches off the hold, which diversion gave Bob and Jeff an opportunity to come together again and to put their plan into execution.

Said Bob to the Frenchman, who stood with folded arms calmly awaiting the end which he felt certain was so close to him:

"You are a brave man who deserves to live," he said in the best French he could muster.

"Even so," replied the other, "but I have no wish to accept a favour at a pirate's hands."

"As for that," laughed the boy, "we are but engaged in lawful privateering which has always existed between our two countries. Your life is spared, however, to some purpose. I perceive you are a gentleman of more than ordinary culture."

"Indeed," replied the other, with a bow, "it is my good privilege to be the second in command of this vessel. I perceive my commander has suffered grievous hurt; therefore, as the one in authority, I demand to be taken before your captain to arrange honourable terms for my men."

"It shall be done," said Black Michael, to whom Jeff translated. "And I think good terms will be given. But my friend here would first request a favour of you."

The purport of this remark having been made known to the captive, Jeff went boldly forward with his proposition, which was nothing less than that the Frenchman should seize an early opportunity of getting the letter sent across the Channel to the address in Exeter.

Being by instinct a gentleman, and anxious

to stand well with his captors, the Frenchman consented, and the letter was handed over. Then a promise of silence having been extracted from him, Black Michael took him in hand, and conducted him into the presence of Avery.

They found the pirate in the captain's cabin, whither the first-mate, the armourer, and the boatswain had also withdrawn to make tally of such requisition as they required. The vessel had now been reduced to a state of inaction, the prisoners put under guard, the decks cleared of all traces of the short but somewhat sanguinary encounter, and everything made ready for despoiling the prize.

"This gentleman is now first in command, seeing that his captain has been put out of action," said Mike, boldly advancing to the table before which Avery stood with a glass of strong liquor in his hand.

"Indeed so!" cried Avery, raising the goblet. "Then I drink to him as a worthy foe, and congratulate him on the courage of his

but stricken French ship was but a mere speck on the horizon.

So, in this strange fashion, came to an end Bob Jeff and Black Mike's first adventure under the black flag.

#### Further Exploits of the Duke!

IT now became clear what Avery's design was in falling upon a vessel so near to home waters—a perilous venture when one considers the number of the King's men-of-war continually plying between the Indies and the West Coast of Africa. The plot to seize the Duke had permitted of the pirate in his capacity of bogus first-mate only in smuggling a very limited quantity of his own arms on board, to say nothing of the extra supplies required for the long voyage round the Cape to Madagascar. Therefore a ship had to be taken as soon as might be possible to supply such manifest deficiencies.



"The prisoner is mine!" cried Bob. The Frenchman forced a smile and tendered the hilt of his sword, which Bob took. Then he stooped and helped the wounded sailor to his feet. (See this page.)

men, for I perceive that my own band of rascals has suffered more than they."

"It is the fortune of war, seeing we were outnumbered but not outmatched," said the other grimly. "What would you have with us?"

"We require you," replied the buccaner, "to surrender all arms, powder and shot, and extra clothing, to assist in transferring stores and merchandise, and in exchange you are guaranteed an honourable freedom."

The terms seemed almost too generous to be true, but for reasons best known to himself Avery had no hesitation in granting them. Orders were given for the Frenchman's arm to be bandaged, which service Jeff Hawkins rendered, after which he partook of a glass of his own cognac tendered by the mate, and preparations went forward for the transfer of the prize.

For three hours until noon was passed the work went on. The last bale of cloth and cask of brandy was hoisted to the deck of the Duke, ironic farewells were exchanged, the two ships were cast free from the grappling hooks, and, her big sails filling to the wind, the Duke drew slowly away, and before the afternoon was spent the gallant

There was another reason, too, and one which showed Bob and Jeff the clever nature of the rogue against whom they were pitted. A good many of the polyglot crew taken on board at Bristol had little knowledge of, and perhaps less taste for, buccaneering. It was therefore necessary, to begin with, to show them the operations in as favourable a light as possible, the scant danger, and the high prizes to be gained. And having thus far achieved his purpose, the pirate went even further.

As soon as the several unfortunates who had lost their lives from the enemy's second broadside had been sewn into weighted sail-cloth and with mock solemnity lowered over the side, the decks were swabbed clean, the slight damage repaired, and all hands piped to the poop, where the captain himself thus addressed them:

"You have received your baptism of fire against a foe whom it is your bounden duty as loyal Englishmen to fall upon and despoil on every possible occasion. In this, your first operation, you have acquitted yourselves as befits those engaged in our noble calling."

Which little pat on the back, of course, THE POPULAR.—No. 100.

put the men in a good humour with themselves, and evoked cheers.

"It is now my privilege," Avery went on, "to make to each and every one such a reward as befits his courage. It would be unjust to single out one more praiseworthy than another. To every man, therefore, whether he be ordinary hand or officer, I make a free gift of twenty yards of cloth, ten yards of silken material, one pound of tea, and an allowance of rum for the duration of the voyage. More than this, to each man's pay will be added two ounces of gold dust, to be paid on arrival in port; and for every subsequent adventure two ounces of gold dust and a hundred and fiftieth share in whatever prize remaineth over after such division has been made."

He then proceeded to recount the many advantages of the work upon which they were engaged; how in one encounter Captain Bartholomew Roberts, the previous year, with two ships, the Ranger and the Royal Fortune, did take eleven sail in Whydah Road, off the coast of Guinea; and that, as a result of this operation, the yield of gold and merchandise to each man was more than seven thousand pounds.

To ignorant sailors, used to spending their lives under the most appallingly hard conditions, with only a few shillings to draw at the end of a long voyage, such wealth was unheard of, and set the seal of fact upon the amazing stories then circulating in England regarding the rich hauls of the buccaners.

"There will be little need for those who serve me well to soil their hands with labour when my voyage is done. I can guarantee to all a life of ease and luxury for those who desire it, in foreign climes, where the climate is good, and all that man can desire can be had for the taking."

The crew were then dismissed to receive their rewards and to be given possession of their new arms, which they were exhorted always to hold in readiness for any contingency.

Neither Mike nor the two boys had any cause to be dissatisfied with the voyage so far. It had yielded much valuable information and no little experience, with comparative small risk to themselves.

With the addition of the provisions and

stores taken from the Frenchman, the quality of the food was wonderfully improved, and on every second day wine was served out to be drunk instead of the rough, staid beer.

It is of very great interest at this point to note, from the documents which have come down to us by reason of being in the possession of the Greville family, the articles drawn up by Avery, the pirate, regarding the conduct of those who served under him in the Duke and other vessels. On the evening following the attack on the French ship all the men were summoned to the steerage. A large bowl of punch, especially made for the occasion, was placed upon the table, together with pipes and tobacco, and everyone having answer to his name, Avery himself, seated in the armchair taken from Captain Gibson's cabin, read out the regulations. These were, under cover of the wretchedly poor light, taken down in cipher by Jeff Hawkins, and subsequently, after manifold adventures, found their way into the Greville archives in Talland Hall.

In brief, they were as follows:

1.—Every man has a vote in affairs of moment, and has equal title to the fresh provisions and strong liquors at any time seized, unless a scarcity make it necessary for the good of all to vote for retrenchment.

2.—Every man to be called fairly, in turn, on board of prizes, because they were on the occasions allowed a special change of clothes. But if they defrauded the company to the value of a dollar, in plate, jewels, or money, marooning was their punishment; the offenders to be put on shore on some desolate or uninhabited cape or island with a gun, a few shot, a bottle of water, and a bottle of powder.

If the robbery was only between one another, the ears and nose of him that was guilty to be slit.

3.—No person to game at cards or dice for money.

4.—The lights and candles to be put out at eight o'clock at night. If after that hour any of the crew still remained behind for drinking, they were to do it on the open deck.

5.—To keep their pieces, pistols, and cutlass clean and fit for service, such weapons to

be slung in time of services with different coloured ribbons over their shoulders.

6.—To desert the ship or their quarters in time of battle was punishable with death or marooning.

7.—No striking one another on board, but every man's quarrels to be ended on shore, at sword and pistol, the disputants to face each other so many paces distant, at the discretion of the quartermaster, and at the word of command to turn and round twice and fire immediately, otherwise the piece is knocked out of their hand. If both miss, they come to their cutlasses, and then he is declared victor who draws the first blood.

8.—No man to talk of breaking up their way of living till each had shared £1,000. If any man should lose a limb or become a cripple in their service he was to have 800 dollars out of the public stock; for lesser hurt, proportionately.

9.—The captain and quartermaster to receive two shares of a prize; the master, boatswain, and gunner one share and a half, and other officers one share and a quarter.

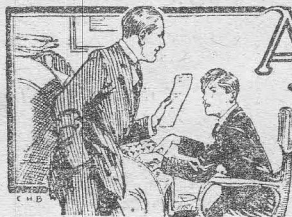
10.—The musicians to have rest on the Sabbath Day, but the other six days and nights none, without special favour.

From which it will be seen that, however more or less enviable was one's position as a pirate or buccanier, being a musician certainly did not promise to be the most pleasant avocation in life.

There was nothing in the constitution to which either Bob, Jeff, or Mike found it in the least difficult to subscribe, and the oath having been taken all round, a further ration of rum was ordered, after which Avery announced that the vessel's course might be temporarily stayed by a visit to the West African Coast, where a matter of some moment needed attention. Which meant, in other words, an attack on some fortified town for the purpose of obtaining further plunder, which venture was to end in a manner far different from that the pirate chief had intended.

(Another splendid instalment of this grand serial next Friday. Order your copy of the POPULAR now.)

OUR WEEKLY FEATURE!



A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASSED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. ADDRESS: EDITOR, THE "POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

FOR NEXT WEEK!

Before I commence writing about next week's programme, I want you to know that the Grand Christmas Number of the "Magnet Library" will be on sale next Monday. This splendid number will contain an extra long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with a Christmas adventure which befalls them, an article entitled "Christmas Fun," which will be found very useful in aiding you to obtain the utmost enjoyment out of the forthcoming festive holidays, another article telling you what sportsmen do at Christmas-time, and a splendid set of pictures featuring the inimitable Billy Bunter.

There is no alteration in the price of this magnificent issue, and three-halfpence will buy it. I advise you, however, to ask your newsagent to save you a copy, because there is always a great rush for the Christmas Numbers of our famous Companion Papers.

Speaking of Christmas Numbers, the next issue of the POPULAR will be a Christmas Number. For this issue I have obtained some very fine stories. The first will be entitled:

"CHRISTMAS AT BUNTER COURT!"  
By Frank Richards.

All my chums know that Billy has often boasted of Bunter Court, but Harry Wharton & Co. have always taken it for granted that Bunter Court existed only in THE POPULAR.—No. 100.

the fertile imagination of the fat junior of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. However, when they are asked to spend their Christmas holidays at Bunter Court their disbelief turns to amazement. The end of the story reveals something which will greatly interest every one of you.

Our second long complete story will be entitled:

"ROUGH ON JIMMY SILVER!"  
By Owen Conquest.

Christmas without a story of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s adventures would indeed be a blank. Mr. Conquest has, therefore, come forward with one of his very best yarns, and without writing any more about the story itself, I am content to leave it to you in the knowledge that it will be very much enjoyed by all my chums.

Further instalments of our splendid serials will also be found in our next issue, and as you know the titles so very well there is really no need for me to print them here. I want the space at my disposal to Chat with you.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

Somehow or other, Christmas is always the time when one gives—and secretly expects!—presents. But the means to obtain the presents you want to buy for your friends,

brothers, and sisters, are not always at one's command. It is therefore a case of buying as much as you can with the funds at your disposal. It is with that idea in my head that I am writing you about one present you can give at a very small cost, but a little trouble. And who minds trouble if it is to help others at Christmas-time? Nobody, of course!

I dare say many of my chums have younger brothers and sisters, or perhaps younger cousins, to whom they will wish to give some small token of their affection. Those small tokens, however, cost a small fortune!

There is one thing you can buy them—at least, you can buy for yourself—and then, after exercising a little trouble, make them a very fine present. That is in next week's issue of "Chuckles."

You're quite wrong if you're thinking that I consider that likely to amuse the youngster as long as would the toy you have in mind!

"Chuckles" can be read, even by the smallest boy or girl, in a week.

But in the Christmas Number of "Chuckles" is a model pantomime. That is where you come in. You make up the model as instructed in the directions printed in the same issue, cut out the book of words and the figures of the performers, and then you have a present for the youngsters which money cannot buy.

You notice I have not written anything at all about the other contents of "Chuckles." I don't want to, for the simple reason that you'll have plenty of time to study them after you have made up the model.

If you want to test me, and see if I am right when I say that your young brother would rather have a toy pantomime than a box of chocolates, just secure next week's issue of the paper, coloured back and front, and headed "Chuckles."

Your Editor



# A COOL CUSTOMER!

A GRAND AND AMUSING SCHOOL STORY OF BILLY BUNTER'S VISIT TO ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### A Kind Invitation Accepted!

**J**IMMY SILVER whistled. It was a prolonged whistle, expressive of surprise.

The captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood had a letter in his hand. His chums—Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—were watching him read it. They had very interested expressions.

"Well," said Lovell, "how much?" Evidently Lovell was under the impression that there was a remittance in the letter.

Jimmy Silver did not reply to the question. He whistled again, more expressively than before.

"How much, fathead?" demanded Raby.

"Eh? Nothing!"

"Nothing in the letter?" exclaimed Newcome.

"Oh, no!"

"Well, you ass," said Lovell warmly, "you're keeping us away from the footer while you read a letter with nothing in it! Chuck it away, and come along!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy.

"Bow-wow! Let's get down to the footer. Ain't we playing the Modern bounders next Saturday, and haven't we got to be in form?"

"Never mind the Modern bounders now, and never mind the footer! This is a rather queer letter," said Jimmy Silver. "Do you chaps remember when the Greyfriars cricket team came over in the summer—"

"Well, it's hardly long enough ago for us to forget it," said Lovell. "What the merry dickens about the Greyfriars cricket team?"

"Do you remember a chap named Bunter?"

"Bunter? Can't say I do."

"I do," said Raby. "Fat chap in gig-lamps. For some weird reason he was in the team—at least, I remember he said so. But they left him out of the match."

"I've seen him at Greyfriars, too, when we've been there," said Newcome; "a fat bouncer."

"Did any of you chaps chum up with him?"

"My hat! No!"

"Did I?" said Jimmy thoughtfully.

"You! I suppose you did," said Lovell.

"But surely you ought to know whether you did or not."

"Well, to the best of my belief, I didn't," said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head. "But, to the best of Bunter's belief, I did. I must have, as he says so. This letter is from him. He's written on account of our close friendship!"

"Great Scott!"

"He can't bear the idea of clearing off for the Christmas holidays without seeing us first."

"Can't he, by Jove!"

"So he's coming to visit us."

"Oh!"

"This afternoon," said Jimmy Silver. "He's accepted our kind invitation to drop in at Rookwood. Did you give him a kind invitation, Lovell?"

"I jolly well didn't!"

"Did you, Raby?"

"No fear!"

"You, Newcome?"

"Rats! No!"

"Well, I know I didn't," said Jimmy, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "Somebody else must have done so, and Bunter's put it down to us by mistake. Looks as if we're going to have a visitor, instead of any footer this afternoon."

"Oh, draw it mild!" grunted Lovell. "Look here, I don't think much of that bouncer Bunter. Read out the letter, and see if we can dodge him!"

Jimmy Silver grinned, and read out the letter. It ran, in large and sprawling handwriting:

"Dear Jimmy.—Before breaking up for the Christmas holidays I should like to see you

and my other old pals at Rookwood once more. Eksuse my not having written before. I hadn't forgotten our friendship, but Toddy is very keen with stamps. I shooodn't like to clear off for Christmas without seeing you chaps once more. So I am accepting your kind invitation to drop in at Rookwood, and I'm coming down on Wednesday afternoon early. If you like to mete the train at Coombe—two-thirty—I shall be pleased to see you there. If not convenient, send me a telegram.—Always yours,

"W. G. BUNTER."

"Why, it's two now!" exclaimed Lovell. "The fat bouncer must have been in the train long before this letter was delivered. How are you to send him a telegram?"

Jimmy rubbed his nose again.

"Certainly, it's a bit too late," he said.

"It's a plant!" growled Lovell. "He doesn't mean to be put off. Look here, I'm not going to spend the afternoon crawling round with a porpoise!"

"Rookwood hospitality, old chap. The Greyfriars chaps did us very well when we were over there."

"Bunter didn't."

"Well, no; but he's a Greyfriars chap."

"Oh, rot! I wouldn't object if it were Wharton or Cherry or Field—any of those fellows. But—"

"It's up to us," said Jimmy Silver resignedly. "Noblesse oblige, you know. After all, we can spare an afternoon for the sacred duties of hospitality."

"Oh, blow!"

Jimmy Silver looked at his big watch.

"Just time to trot down to the station and meet the two-thirty," he said. "Come on! Keep smiling!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver's word was law to the end study. The Fistical Four took their caps and sallied forth. There was no time to lose if they were to meet Bunter's train, and they hurried down to the gates.

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were chatting in the gateway. Apparently they were in a humour for a rag, for, with one voice, they asked the Fistical Four whether they had found their features in a museum.

But the chums of the Classical side did not reply to that humorous question. There was no time even to bump the three Tommies in the road. They hurried out, and "trotted" down to Coombe.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Honoured Guest!

**A**FAT face, adorned with a large pair of spectacles, looked out of the train as it stopped in the little country station.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were on the platform, and they spotted that fat face at once.

"Here he is!" grunted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver politely opened the door of the carriage. William George Bunter of the Remove Form at Greyfriars rolled out.

He greeted the Rookwood juniors with a beaming smile.

"Jolly glad to see you," he remarked, shaking hands effusively with Jimmy Silver. "Pleasure to see you fellows again! You got my letter all right?"

"Yes; that's why we're here."

"Jolly long way here!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "Not that I mind, to see old pals again!"

The Fistical Four grinned politely. If the Greyfriars junior claimed them as old pals, they did not feel that it would be civil to dispute the claim. But not one of them had the slightest recollection of palling with Billy Bunter. Perhaps W. G. Bunter had a better memory, or a more active imagination.

"How are all the chaps?" asked Jimmy, as they piloted Bunter out of the station.

"Oh, they're fumbling at footer this afternoon!" said Bunter. "I declined to join them. I'm left out of the eleven, you know. Wharton is rather an ass!"

"He must be to leave you out of the footer eleven!" grinned Raby.

"You're right, old fellow! There's a lot of jealousy in footer, too. A skipper doesn't like to be outclassed by one of the team, you know! By the way, I'm rather peckish after that journey. I remember there's a shop here." Billy Bunter blinked up and down the High Street of Coombe. "I dare say you fellows could do with a snack—what? Come with me; it's my treat!"

It was not an hour since the Rookwood juniors had dined, but they politely piloted Billy Bunter to Mrs. Wicks' little shop.

"I hadn't anything in the train, excepting some sandwiches, and a pork-pie and some doughnuts," said Bunter. "I'm pretty nearly famished! Pile in, you chaps; it's my treat!"

"Not at all," said Jimmy Silver. "It's our treat, Bunter. Pile in!"

"Well, if you insist!" said Bunter.

The Fistical Four contented themselves with ginger-pop; and they watched Billy Bunter pile in. They watched him in growing wonder.

Billy Bunter started on pork-pies. He proceeded to cold ham and tongue. He went on to cake and pie. Doughnuts came next, and then biscuits and preserves. His round, fat face assumed a very shiny look, and his breathing grew slower. But he went on without a break.

"That's better," said Bunter at last, eyeing the jam-tarts regretfully. It was evident that he hadn't room for even one more. "I feel comfy now. I'd rather you let me settle this bill, you chaps—"

"Oh, no; not at all!" gasped Jimmy. "Give it to me, Mrs. Wicks!"

Mrs. Wicks passed it across the counter. It came to fourteen shillings and ninepence. Billy Bunter strolled to the door, and stood blinking into the village street.

The Fistical Four, glad that his back was turned, held a hurried consultation.

Jimmy Silver's supply of cash was limited to five shillings. Lovell added half-a-crown to it, and Raby sixpence. Fortunately, Newcome, after a hurried search of his pockets, was able to make up the remainder. The bill was settled, and the four juniors joined Bunter.

"Come on, Bunter!" said Jimmy.

Bunter yawned.

"Going to walk?" he asked.

"Well, we generally walk."

"Can't get a taxi here, I suppose?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"They've never heard of taxis in Coombe, my dear chap," he replied. "All we could get would be the station-cab—made before the flood."

"Well, that's better than nothing," said Bunter. "I've had a long journey, you know. I'm tired. Let's take the cab."

"Ahem!"

"I'll pay, of course," said Bunter. "You've stood me a ripping feed; now I'll stand you a drive. Come on!"

The Fistical Four would have preferred walking to taking the slow, dusty old station-cab. But it was a case of noblesse oblige, and consideration for a guest came first. They walked down to the station again, and Bunter rolled into the cab, and the Rookwood juniors followed him.

The ancient driver whipped up the ancient horse, and they started for Rookwood. Billy Bunter leaned back in a corner of the cab, and closed his eyes.

"Hallo! Going to sleep?" said Lovell.

Bunter blinked.

"I'm rather fagged," he said. "If you



not desert their leader at that trying moment. They nobly resolved to stand Bunter as long as Jimmy did.

Billy Bunter blinked after Lovell, and grinned. He seemed to be thinking some minutes; then he grinned again.

"I'll show you fellows a trick," he said. "It simply makes 'em roar at Greyfriars!"

"Go ahead!" said Jimmy.

"Open this door, Jimmy, you silly idiot!" Jimmy Silver jumped.

It was Lovell's voice from the passage. Jimmy stepped to the door and threw it open.

Nobody was there. Jimmy glanced out into the passage with a puzzled look. He had distinctly heard Lovell's voice through the keyhole.

"Well, of all the silly asses!" he exclaimed. "What an idiotic trick for Lovell to play!"

Jimmy closed the door and came back to the table, and sat upon it. Barely had he seated himself, when Lovell's voice was heard again from the passage:

"Jimmy Silver!"

"Hallo!" called out Jimmy.

"Open the door!"

"Open it yourself, fat-head!"

"I'll give you a thick ear, Jimmy, if you don't open the door!"

"You silly ass—"

"I'll wallop you, you idiot!"

"Will you, by Jove?" exclaimed Jimmy warmly, and he jumped off the table and rushed to the door and threw it open. "Now, you burbling ass— My hat!"

The passage was empty.

Jimmy Silver looked out in blank amazement. It seemed impossible that Lovell could have had time to dodge out of sight so quickly. But he was not there. Why Lovell should be playing such kiddish tricks, like a fag in the Second Form, was a mystery.

Jimmy slammed the door.

"Must be off his rocker!" said Raby.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Hallo, in there!" It was Lovell's voice again from the keyhole. "You silly asses, why don't you open the door? You silly duffers!"

"I'm fed up with this!" exclaimed Jimmy wrathfully. "If that's Lovell's idea of a joke, he wants bumping badly. Let's go and bump him!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

The three juniors rushed out of the study, leaving Billy Bunter doubled up with merriment in the armchair.

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome rushed down the passage. Lovell was on the landing, chatting with Oswald of the Fourth.

Without a word his three chums seized him.

"Hallo!" roared Lovell. "What the—"

Bump!

"Yaroooh! Wharrer marrer? Leggo! Yow-ow!"

Bump, bump!

"Now do you feel funny, you fathead?" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Funny!" spluttered Lovell. "Why, I'll squash you! You howling asses, what's the matter with you?"

"Next time you want to yell through a keyhole, select some other keyhole," said Jimmy Silver.

"Eh? Who's been yelling through a keyhole?" roared Lovell.

"You have, you ass!"

"You silly chump, I haven't! I've been talking to Oswald for the last ten minutes," spluttered Lovell.

"Rats!"

"But it's a fact," said Oswald, in wonder.

"He has, you know."

"I tell you he's been yelling like a knatic into the study."

"And I tell you he hasn't."

"Of course I haven't!" roared Lovell, scrambling up breathlessly. "You silly chumps, do you think I play tricks like a fag?"

"But—but it was your voice!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, taken quite aback.

"Do you think we don't know your voice?" hooted Raby.

"I tell you I didn't!"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you can't take my word, Jimmy Silver—"

"I know your voice, fathead!"

"Then you can take that—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Oswald, dragging Lovell back. "Don't begin to scrap, you duffers! There's some mistake."

"He, he, he!"

The juniors stared round as they heard

Instead of showing appreciation of Bunter's exquisite humour, Lovell made a rush at him, quite forgetting that he was a guest, and got his head into chancery.

Then the roars that rose from Bunter were like unto the roars of a bull; and the Rookwood juniors roared, too, with laughter. To Bunter it no longer seemed funny.

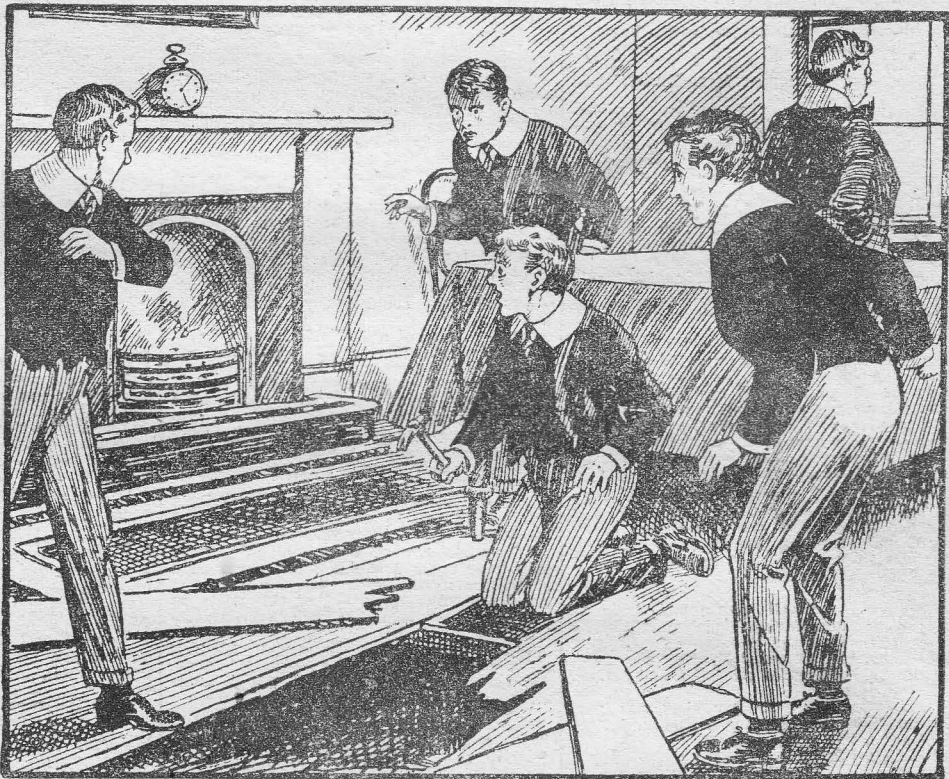
**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**  
**Bunter the Ventriloquist!**

**Y**AROOOH! Help! Yowp! Yowp! Groooh! Draggimoff!"

Thus William George Bunter at the top of his voice.

Jimmy Silver was the first to remember that Billy Bunter was there in the sacred character of a guest. He rushed at Lovell and grasped him.

"Chuck it, Lovell!"



Dommy Dodd peered into the opening. "Are you there?" he gasped. "Here I am!" And to the amazement of the juniors the voice came from the chimney. (See Chap. 6.)

that fat chuckle. Billy Bunter had rolled out of the end study, and he was chuckling as if for a wager. Evidently he was in possession of an extra good joke.

"He, he, he! It's all right! It wasn't Lovell!"

"Who was it, then?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Me."

"You!"

"What-ho! That was the trick I was going to show you," grinned Bunter. "Funny, wasn't it? I'm a ventriloquist."

"A—a—a what?"

"A ventriloquist, and a jolly good one," said Bunter. "I can imitate anybody's voice, you know—specially a queer grunting voice like Lovell's."

"What—?" ejaculated Lovell.

"Or a squeak like Newcome's."

"Why, you fat idiot—" began Newcome.

"Oh, really, Newcome! Funny, wasn't it?" chuckled Bunter. "It was me all the time, you know. I knew you'd go for Lovell if I kept on chopping you with his funny voice— Here, keep off, you know! Only a joke! Yah! Keep him off!"

Bunter had stated that it was very funny. Perhaps it was. But Lovell had been bumped hard, and it was excusable if he did not find it funny at all.

Punch, punch, punch!

"Yaroooh! Help! Beast! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Bunter's a guest, you fathead! Is this how you treat visitors?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Raby and Newcome added their grasp, and Oswald seized Bunter, and the two were dragged apart. Lovell panted.

"Lemme get at him!"

"Yaroooh! Oh dear! Beast! Look here, if this is how you treat a—grooh!—guest—"

"Lovell, you ass—"

"Never mind, Bunter!"

"But I do mind!" roared Bunter. "I'm hurt! That silly idiot has broken my nose, and dislocated my jaw, and blacked both my eyes! I'm going to lick him! Hold my jacket, somebody!"

"Hold the fiery porpoise, not his jacket," said Raby.

"Let him come on!" roared Lovell. "I'll teach him to play tricks and start three burbling idiots scragging me!"

"Shush!"

Billy Bunter was not really much hurt. Lovell, excited as he was, had punched carefully to avoid his big glasses. It was Bunter's fat nose and chin that had suffered chiefly.

He caressed them with a pair of fat hands, and glared.  
"If this is Rookwood hospitality—" he snorted.

"Apologise, Lovell!"  
"Rats!"  
"We'll bump you again if you don't. Think of the good name of the end study, you fathead!" said Jimmy Silver severely.  
"Well," said Lovell, calming down, "I'm sorry I—I didn't give you a few more, Bunter."  
"You fathead, that's not an apology!"  
"It's all you'll get out of me."  
"Your apology is accepted," said Bunter loftily. "I don't want to lick you, as I came here as a visitor."  
"Lick me! Why, you fat toad—"  
"Shut up, Lovell!"

"I must say that Rookwood manners wouldn't do for Greyfriars," said Bunter. "We don't treat Rookwood fellows like this."  
"Rookwood fellows know how to behave themselves!" snorted Lovell. "Still, I'll say I'm sorry. There!"  
"All serene!" said Bunter magnanimously. "I forgive you."  
"Grunt!"  
"Come and bathe your face, Bunter," said Jimmy.

"That's all right. I don't believe in too much washing. It's not good for the health," said Bunter. "I must say you fellows haven't much of a sense of humour. I set 'em in a roar at Greyfriars with my ventriloquism. Wharton comes to me sometimes and begs me to give 'em a show in his study. Fellows in the Sixth ask me to give 'em an entertainment on special occasions. Even the Head often—"  
"And you're really a ventriloquist?" said Jimmy Silver, with some interest.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "It's a gift, you know."  
"I'm sure of that," agreed Jimmy. Jimmy's idea was that it must be a gift, as Bunter wouldn't have had the brains to learn it. But he did not explain that.  
"I'll show you what I can do, if you like," said Bunter. "I can make my voice seem to come from anywhere, you know."  
"Let's hear you do it," grunted Lovell.

"Bow-wow-ow-wow! Grrr!"  
Lovell jumped almost clear of the floor, as the barking and growling of a savage dog sounded at his very heels. He spun round in alarm. Then he almost staggered. No dog was to be seen in the passage.  
"Why—what—where—"  
"Gr-r-r-r-r!"  
"My hat!" Lovell spun round again as the savage growl came behind him. "Where's that dog? What the thunder—"  
"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Rookwood juniors. Lovell gasped.  
"Do you mean to say that was you, Bunter?" he exclaimed incredulously.  
"He, he, he! Yes, rather!"  
"Well, my hat!"  
"Didn't it make you jump?" chortled Bunter. "Scared you out of your wits—what!"  
"I wasn't scared—only a bit startled—"  
"He, he, he!"  
"Look here, you fat bounder—"  
"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's jolly clever, Bunter—I mean, it's a wonderful gift. Can you do that whenever you like?"  
"Certainly!"  
"You must have a jolly queer throttle," said Lovell. "Something wrong with it, I should say."  
"Why, you ass—"  
"Will you ring off, Lovell? Where's your Rookwood manners? Bunter, old chap, come with us and see the Moderns. Let's see you pull Tommy Dodd's leg."  
"Good egg!" chorused the Co.

"I don't mind," said Bunter. "But what about tea?"  
"Tea!"  
"Yes; I'm getting a bit peckish!"  
"Oh, dear!"  
"We—we shall have to have tea in Hall!" said Raby. "I'm afraid it won't run to it in the study."  
Bunter grunted.

"I could have had tea in Hall at Greyfriars," he said discontentedly.  
"Well, you see—"  
"Bring your pal to tea in my study," said Dick Oswald, coming to the rescue. "We're having rather a spread, and we'll kill an extra-special fattened calf."  
"Better make it a fattened bullock for Bunter!" murmured Lovell.  
"Thanks awfully, Oswald!" said Jimmy THE POPULAR.—No. 100.

Silver gratefully. "Now let's go and see the Modern worms, and spring Bunter on them."  
"I'm game," said Bunter. "Any old thing!"  
The fat junior strutted, feeling invested with new importance, as the Classical juniors marched him away.

Even Lovell was grinning now. In all their alarms and frays with the Modern juniors they had never had a chance like this. It was their first opportunity of "springing" a ventriloquist on Tommy Dodd & Co. The prospect of pulling the Moderns' leg almost consoled the Fistical Four for Bunter's visit.  
The Fistical Four and Oswald and Bunter sauntered out into the quadrangle together, looking for the Moderns. Tommy Dodd & Co. were not to be seen, so the Classics crossed over to Mr. Manders' House. Mr. Manders, the senior Modern-master, was in the doorway, and he frowned a little at the sight of Jimmy Silver & Co. Mr. Manders generally frowned at the sight of those cheery youths. There had been old troubles between them.

"Silver!" rapped out Mr. Manders.  
"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy meekly.  
"What are you doing on this side?" Mr. Manders evidently scented a "rag."  
"Taking Bunter to see Dodd, sir. Bunter's come over from Greyfriars this afternoon."  
"Oh! If there is any disturbance, Silver, while you are here your conduct will be reported directly to the Head."  
"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy demurely.

Mr. Manders frowned again, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went on. They arrived at Tommy Dodd's study, and thumped on the door. Jimmy threw the door open.  
The three Tommies were there. They were gathered round the table, upon which lay the sum of eightpence-halfpenny in coppers. The Modern chums were debating how eightpence-halfpenny could best be expended for tea.

"Hallo, Classical cads!" said Tommy Dodd, looking round. "My hat! Where did you pick up that prize-porker?"  
"Just looked in to see you, Tommy Dodd," said Jimmy cheerfully. "Why, what have you been doing with your face?"  
"My face!" said Tommy, passing his hand over his countenance. "What—"  
"There's something sticking on it—looks like a squashed gooseberry—"  
"What! I didn't know—" Tommy Dodd spun round to the glass. "Why, you silly ass, there's nothing on my face."  
"My mistake," said Jimmy blandly. "It's only your nose. I didn't recognise it as a nose for a moment."  
"If you want to go out of this study on your neck—" began Tommy Dodd wrathfully.

Tommy Dodd paused. From under his feet, as it seemed, there came suddenly a low, deep groan, so blood-curdling that it made all the juniors jump.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**The Tommies to the Rescue!**

**W**HAT the thunder!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.  
"Tare an' ounds!" exclaimed Doyle. "Phwat was that?"  
"It—it sounded like a groan!" gasped Cook. Groan!  
The dreadful sound came again. Tommy Dodd stepped quickly aside. It was fairly under his feet.

"What on earth—"  
"Let me out!" came a faint voice. "Oh, let me out! I'm suffocating! I'm dying! For mercy's sake let me out!"  
"It's somebody under the floor!" shrieked Tommy Dodd.  
Groan!  
"Great Scott!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That can't be—it can't!"  
He looked at Bunter. Billy Bunter was staring out of the window into the quadrangle, and seemed unconscious of what was happening in the study.

"Let me out!" The voice was faint and exhausted. "I'm dying!"  
"Who—who are you?" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Help!"  
"Where are you?"  
"Under the floor!"  
"How the thunder did you get there?" howled Tommy Dodd.  
The juniors gazed at one another in consternation. Tommy Dodd seized the study carpet and dragged it aside. The planks of the floor were revealed. They were strong, wide planks, firmly nailed down to the joists. Certainly nobody got under the study floor from the study itself.  
"Let me out!" moaned the voice. "I'm

suffocating! I can't find the way out! I've been here for hours! I'm dying!"  
"My hat!" said Tommy Dodd. "Somebody's got under the floor somewhere, and crawled along here, I suppose. Who are you?" he shouted.

"I'm the gasfitter!" moaned the voice. "I got under the floor to see to the pipes, and I've lost my way. Help, I'm suffocating!"  
"Well, of all the duffers!" gasped Tommy Dodd.  
Groan!  
"We'll help you!" shouted Tommy. "Buck up! We'll soon have you out of that!"  
Tommy Dodd made a bound for his tool-chest. In a moment more he was kneeling with a hammer and chisel in his hand. He hammered and chiselled away desperately at a joint in the plank.  
"Shove in the poker, Cooley, when I get it loose!" he panted.  
"Right-ho!" Cook stood ready with the poker. "Buck up!"  
Groan!

The groan was fainter now, and full of anguish. Jimmy Silver & Co. stood dumb-founded. Bunter was still looking out of the window. If this was the work of the Greyfriars' ventriloquist, it was certainly very remarkable. They wondered.  
Bang, bang! Crash! Thump! Bang!  
Tommy Dodd worked away like steam. The planks were well set; but Tommy was working like a Trojan. Bang, bang! Grind! Crash!  
"It's coming!" gasped Doyle.  
"My hat! You're doing some damage!" said Lovell.  
"Blow the damage—I suppose we've got to save the chap's life!" panted Tommy Dodd. "Buck up, my man—we're helping you!"  
A low moan responded, fainter and weaker. Tommy Dodd had succeeded in loosening the end of the plank. Tommy Cook shoved in the poker, and wrenched. With a creak the plank came slowly up.

Moan!  
The sound was directly below the opening. The three Tommies grasped the rising plank, and dragged it away with a wrench. A dark and somewhat smelly orifice lay before them—darkness below, and dust and spiders' webs. Tommy Dodd, on his knees, peered into the opening.

"Hallo! Are you there, gasfitter?" shouted Cook.  
"Here I am!" said the voice.  
To the amazement of the Modern juniors, the voice came from the chimney. There was a fire in the study grate; but the voice came unmistakably from the chimney.  
"In—in the chimney!" gasped Tommy Dodd.  
"Here I am! Help! I'm scorching!"  
"How did you get into the chimney?" gasped Cook. "There can't be an opening in—"  
"Help! I'm scorching!" shrieked the voice. "Better put the fire out!" suggested Oswald.

"Help! Oh, help!"  
Tommy Dodd caught up a jug of water and dashed it on the fire. There was a terrific sizzling and spluttering. The three Modern juniors raked out the fire in tremendous haste. Blacks and ash rose in clouds, and Silver & Co. retreated to the door. But the three Tommies faced it heroically. They were dusty, they were black, but they were anxious to save the life of the unfortunate gasfitter.

"Now you can come down!" shouted Tommy Dodd up the chimney.  
"Help me! I'm wedged in!"  
"Good heavens!"  
Tommy Dodd paused, but only for a moment. Then he threw off his jacket.  
The chimney was wide, affording ample room for Tommy Dodd. Careless of soot, he squeezed over the grate and put his head up the chimney. He withdrew it again as black as ink, gasping:  
"He ain't there!"  
"What?" yelled Cook and Doyle.  
"There's nobody there!"  
"Oh, rats! He must be!"  
Cook took the electric lamp and put his head up the chimney. He came out again as black as Tommy Dodd and as puzzled.  
"Nobody there!" he gasped.  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Classical juniors, unable to contain their merriment any longer.  
Tommy Dodd glared at them—a very black look indeed! He was as black as a Christy Minstrel.  
"You silly asses, what are you cackling at?"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Come on, Bunter, chappy!" The Classical

juniors retreated from the study. Jimmy Silver paused to speak one more word in the doorway. "We thought we'd entertain you a bit, you Modern duffers, with our tame ventriloquist. Ta-ta!"

"Ventriloquist!" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Jimmy Silver slammed the door and sped after his chums.

Tommy Dodd & Co. looked at one another, dumb for a moment. Tommy Dodd found his voice.

"Ventriloquist!" he stammered. "That—that fat pig is a ventriloquist! It's a jape! Look at the floor! Look at the grate! L-L-look at me!"

"Ather them!" roared Doyle.

Tommy Dodd bounded to the door. He was not in a fit state to appear in public, certainly, but he forgot that in his fervid desire to get to close quarters with the humorous Classics. Cook and Doyle followed him fast. They rushed out on the landing.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were speeding down stairs.

"After them!" yelled Cook.  
"Hold on!" The voice of Mr. Manders was heard below, and the three Moderns stopped. They did not wish Mr. Manders to see them in their present state. "Cut it!"

Tommy Dodd & Co., breathing vengeance and soot, whipped back into the study. Vengeance had to be postponed. But vengeance was already upon the track of the Classical jaspers, in the shape of Mr. Manders.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**  
**Kill that Wasp!**

"STOP!"  
The hilarious Classics had quite forgotten Mr. Manders. They were thinking only of keeping at a safe distance from the sooty Moderns.

But Mr. Manders was there! His long, thin form interposed as the juniors were racing for the door, and he raised his hand commandingly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. halted in dismay.

"Stop!" repeated Mr. Manders. "How dare you race about the House in this disorderly manner? I presume that you have been quarrelling with my boys—as usual I have already warned you, Silver!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Jimmy Silver. "We—we never quarrel, sir."

"Then why were you rushing down stairs like a crowd of wild animals?" demanded Mr. Manders.

"Ahem!"  
"I will not have this horseplay in my

house!" snapped Mr. Manders. "I shall proceed to ascertain what you— My goodness!"

Mr. Manders broke off suddenly with that exclamation, and started back, as a deep, droning buzz came at his left ear.

**Buzzzzzz!**  
"Bless my soul! A wasp, at this season of the year!" he exclaimed.

**Buzzzzzz!**

It was at his right ear now, and Mr. Manders bucked and jumped like a restive horse. Mr. Manders had a holy terror of wasps. He had been stung once. Certainly it was a remarkable time of the year for wasps to be buzzing about. But there was the buzz—which was unmistakable.

**Buzzzzzz!**  
It was round Mr. Manders' startled head now, as if the wasp were seeking a favourable spot to alight.

"Dear me!" Mr. Manders waved both hands wildly in the air. "Silver—Lovell—do you see that insect? Pray drive it away! Dear me, I shall be stung!"

**Buzzzzzz!**  
"It's on your neck, sir," said Billy Bunter cheerfully.

"Grooh!"

Mr. Manders smote himself on the neck with such force that he uttered a yelp of pain.

Jimmy Silver & Co. tried hard not to chuckle. They guessed that the Greyfriars ventriloquist was at work again.

"Is it gone?" gasped Mr. Manders. "Thank goodness! Silver, I was about to say— Bless my soul, there it is again!"

**Buzzzzzz!**  
It was close to Mr. Manders' right ear, and he jumped to the left. Then the buzz came into his left ear, and he jibbed to the right. Then it was round the back of his head, and then under his chin. It seemed to the startled and flurried master that a whole swarm of wasps were buzzing round him.

**Buzzzzzz!**  
"Silver—Oswald—Baby—pray see if you can—oh dear!—kill that wasp! Oh, upon my word, I shall be stung! This is most unnerveing! Kill it, please! Strike it with your caps!"

**Buzzzzzz!**  
"Do you hear me, boys? How dare you laugh! I command you to kill that wasp at once!" shouted Mr. Manders.

"Certainly, sir!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. rushed to the rescue, twisting their caps in their hands. They could not see any wasp, but they could see Mr. Manders, and they were quite willing to hit!

"Whack! Whack! Whack! Thump!

"Be careful!" shrieked Mr. Manders, as the twisted caps smote him on all sides. "Do not strike me! Lovell, keep your cap out of my eye, you stupid boy! Silver, the wasp is not on my nose! Do not touch my nose, you utterly stupid dolt! I think it is on my shoulder. Yaroooh! You have almost dislocated my shoulder. Oswald, you unspeakable booby. Oh dear! Cease—cease at once!"

**Buzzzzzz!**  
The buzz pursued him down the passage, right to his study door. But it died away when he was in the study, and Mr. Manders threw himself into a chair and gasped for breath. The wasp was gone at last.

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched, grinning, out into the quad, and they almost hugged Bunter. The Owl of Greyfriars had atoned for all his sins!

As soon as they were at a safe distance from Mr. Manders' house their pent-up feelings found expression in a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kill that wasp!" chuckled Oswald. "Oh, my hat! Didn't I give him a whop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will have a prize nose after this!"

"And a thick ear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Rookwood juniors repaired with their guest to Oswald's study.

**THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**  
**At Last!**

DICK OSWALD was standing a "spread" on a lavish scale. His study-mats, Jones minor and Hooker, were present, as well as the Fistical Four—and Bunter. Oswald had laid in ample supplies—so he supposed. But he did not know Bunter yet. Billy Bunter took his place at the table, with his little round eyes gleaming behind his glasses. The "snacks" he had had during the afternoon did not seem to have impaired his appetite in the slightest degree.

Hooker had fried a dozen rashers to begin with. Bunter cheerfully helped himself to six of them. There were a dozen eggs on the table. Four were transferred at once to Bunter's plate.

"Won't you have some more?" gasped Hooker.

"No room on my plate," explained Bunter. "Wait till I've finished these. An egg only takes me a minute."

"Oh!"

The first course was partaken of sparingly by the Rookwood juniors. Bunter cheerfully demolished more than half of it. Sausages came next. There were six, *beautifully* fried.

"I must say that's ripping!" said Bunter, as Jones minor put the dish on the table. "I'm rather fond of sosses. But ain't you fellows going to have any?"

The juniors blinked as Bunter turned the six sausages out upon his own plate. Certainly they had intended to have some. But they did not seem to have much chance.

"Nunno!" stammered Oswald. "We don't really care—ahem!"

"Not at all!" mumbled Lovell.

"That's your mistake," said Bunter, with a shake of the head. "Sosses are good. Got any more? No! Well, all right, I can fill up with something else!"

"Fill up!" murmured Jones minor. "Ye gods!"

A cake came next—a whacking cake. Billy Bunter's eyes glistened at the sight of it. This time the other fellows were in luck; they got a slice each. By the time they had finished their slices Bunter had finished the rest of the cake. Dick Oswald, with a peculiar expression upon his face, turned a whole pineapple out of a tin upon a plate. Bunter cheerfully drew the plate towards him. The Rookwood juniors gazed at him as it mesmerised as he started on the pineapple.

"I'm fond of pineapple!" said Bunter.

"You must be!" gasped Jimmy Silver. The pineapple disappeared. Nothing but biscuits remained. Billy Bunter glanced round the table, and started on the biscuits.

"I can always fill up with these things," he remarked. "You don't have much in the way of solids here, I see. But don't mind me. I dare say I can get some sandwiches in the train."

"S-s-sandwiches!" gasped Oswald.

Bunter looked at his watch.

"Yes; but perhaps we'd better drop in at the tuckshop first. We've got time. It's bad for the health to begin a long journey hungry."

"Hungry! Oh crumbs!"

Jimmy Silver slipped out of the study. For ten minutes he was busy wildly borrowing money up and down the Fourth Form. Then Billy Bunter was helped on with his coat, and they started. They dropped in at the school shop, and when they reached the village they dropped in at Mrs. Wicks'. When they reached the station, Jimmy Silver had just enough money left to take Bunter's ticket.

Billy Bunter beamed at them from the carriage window as the Fistical Four said good-bye to him.

"Thanks awfully!" he said. "I've had quite a good time—quite. 'Tain't your fault if I'm going off a bit peckish. Hard up—what! Thanks all the same. Good-bye! I'll come and see you again early next term. I won't forget. It's a promise!"

The train rolled out of the station.

On the platform the Fistical Four looked at one another. Lovell sparrered in the air, as if smiting at an imaginary foe.

"Coming to see us again early next term!" said Lovell. "Well, if he does he won't go home alive, that's all!"

"If he does—" said Jimmy Silver; but he could not finish. Words could not express all those things he would go to William George Bunter if he visited Rookwood again.

Of course, there was some consolation in the fact that Billy Bunter had assisted them to play a great jape against the Modern Co. There was not the slightest doubt that Tommy Dodd & Co. would have to think of something really brilliant in the way of japes to get their own back on Jimmy Silver & Co.

In the meantime, they had a pleasant job of putting their study to rights. There was no doubt that Billy Bunter was a Cool Customer, and his visit to Rookwood would long be remembered.

**THE END.**

(Another grand story of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next week's POPULAR.)



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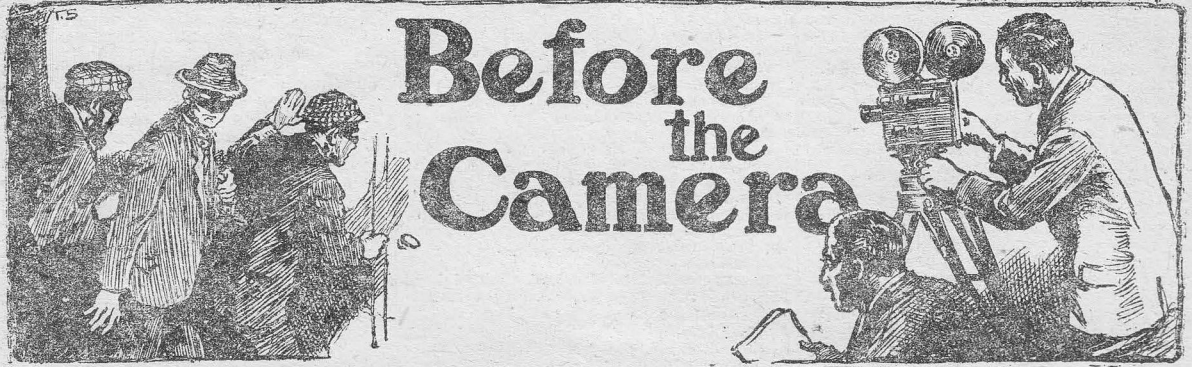
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AN AMAZING HUMAN STORY THAT WILL HOLD YOUR INTEREST!



A STIRRING STORY OF THE FAMOUS FILM STAR'S EARLY TRIUMPHS AND STRUGGLES.

## INTRODUCTION.

Eddie Polo, ex-acrobat of the Busto Circus, commences his great career in the Eclair Film Company, under the management of Mr. Morrison. Here he meets an English actor, Dick Fordyce, with whom he becomes close friends, and a charming young star, Miss Stella Cleaver, sister of one of the girls he had previously rescued from the great fire in St. Louis. Later Eddie unfortunately makes a bad enemy of Tim Bobbin, of the same company.

During the working of a certain film Bobbin attempts to kill the young actor, but Eddie saves himself from a terrible death by his quick action.

The film story develops in which Eddie takes a prominent part. An unlooked for accident happens to Stella and Eddie, and the two find themselves floating down the river. After a struggle, Eddie reaches the shore, only to blunder into a quicksand, in which they stick fast.

(Now read on.)

## From the Jaws of Death!

THREE miles away up the river-bank half a dozen horsemen pounded along at high speed, their keen eyes sweeping the water and the adjacent land carefully that not a stray cat or dog or startled rabbit escaped their scrutiny. They encountered the tug and the barges, and, in response to their frantic signals and a little revolver play indulged in by Dick Fordyce, the captain of this nonchalant array of craft appeared.

"Have you seen anything of a man and woman floating down the stream?" cried Morrison.

The bargee "expectorated thoughtfully, scratched his head, and then shook it.

"Nary a one," he said. "At least, not this side of Cananda Town."

"The man's stupid, or drunk, or half-asleep!" snapped Morrison. "Come on, we can't waste more time now! Boot and saddle, boys, and remember I'm paying for the horseflesh you founder. On you go!"

He led the way at a terrific bat, and thus, in course of time, they came to the little cove where Eddie and Stella had scrambled ashore. Carefully they rode round the edge of the quicksand, without knowing that it was quicksand, and then, quite suddenly, Morrison caught sight of a white hand sticking out of the beach. And on the hand was a ring he promptly recognised as belonging to Stella Cleaver.

With a hoarse cry the cinema producer fell upon his knees and commenced to scramble at the sand, throwing it behind him in heaps. Dick Fordyce joined him on the instant, and then one of the other men, who had previously had experience of the treacherous nature of quicksands, unslung from his saddle-bow the rope he had brought against an emergency, and, flinging this to the two men, took the other end to an adjacent rock, and thus prevented their being swallowed up as Eddie and Stella had been. It seemed eternities to the toiling men before they got the sand clear of Eddie's face—before they managed to haul him and the girl out of that death-trap. And even then they feared that they had arrived too late. Stella, mercifully, had never recovered from the sudden shock of the explosion which had

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been the original cause of their troubles, and lay still and inert. Eddie's face was as white as wax, and there was hardly any perceptible sign of life about him.

"Ride for a doctor, quick, Herring!" cried Morrison to one of his followers. "Bring the first you can find! Here, Fordyce, grab Eddie's arms and play the artificial respiration game on him, while you, Wilkins, and myself do the same for Stella. Muddiman, ride like the wind to the nearest chemist's and get some brandy out of him. Halse, you'd better help Fordyce."

The party were now well clear of the quicksand, and Eddie and Stella were laid down side by side on the green field the lad had tried so gallantly to reach while there was still life in him, and though the men lost no time in starting artificial respiration, though Herring found his doctor and Muddiman managed to extract—not without violence—a modicum of brandy from a half-awake druggist, it was with sad hearts that they toiled. And, work as they would, they could bring colour into neither Stella's nor Eddie's faces.

"Keep at it, lads!" said the kindly surgeon, when he at last arrived. "It's the only thing possible. I've seen people dug out of that sand after being immersed for hours, and then brought back to life. You're doing as much as I could, and yet I'll wait here till they show signs of life, and then use what skill I have to bring them back over the bridge. It might be worth while to get an automobile here to take them away when they come round, if they do."

He remained, directing the work, and though they tried to force brandy between the victims' lips, the effort was useless. There were tears in the eyes of all the men as they worked—tears for the loss of the light-hearted girl and the steel-hearted lad who had so quickly endeared himself.

"Greater love hath no man than this—" said Fordyce, half-brokenly, when a sudden exclamation from Morrison cut into the quotation.

"Here, doc—quick!" yelled the producer. "I think the girl's coming round!"

As the surgeon bent over Stella, she suddenly gave a gasp, made a quick intake of breath, and then, in the agony of returning life, writhed convulsively. Her eyes opened, and there was a terror in them that nearly drove the onlookers insane. And then she gave a shuddering moan of pain.

"That's right," said the doctor. "She'll do now. Try her with the brandy again—force it between her teeth. That's just a normal faint—and I don't wonder at her fainting, for bringing back life is more than painful. Now she's all right we ought to have the boy fixed up in no time. Keep pegging away—while there's a sign there's hope."

Eddie Polo afterwards said that never in the whole of an adventurous and fairly well spent career did he experience such agony as in that first rush of blood from the heart, when the exertions of his friends started that organ once more pumping. And, like Stella, after the first protesting cry, he also fainted, so that presently the remainder were able to hoist him and Stella, accompanied by the doctor and Morrison, into a big car dragged out of an adjacent garage, which flew like the wind, regardless of all speed laws, back to St. Louis. Dick Fordyce's heart singing a psalm of praise and joy that these two friends of his had been pulled back across

the great divide. And a couple of hours later both were tucked into their respective beds, with their nearest and dearest in close attendance upon them, and the other members of the studio crowd calling in twos and threes to congratulate them on their marvellous escape from death in the quicksand.

"Look here, Eddie Polo!" said Terence, the camera-man, with mock indignation. "You've let slip the opportunity of a lifetime. Think what a wonderful stunt it'd have been for us to have been able to film you and Stella in that quicksand. Why, man, it'd have made you and the lady both famous throughout the whole world. What a chance you've made us miss. Next time you'd better tell us in advance, and we'll have a camera all ready on location to take your dying struggles, to show folks just how you looked and felt when the sand crept up round your neck, your chin, your mouth and—"

"It tasted jolly funny, anyway," said Eddie. "Say, Terence, if you're so keen on a picture of that kind, how will it be if Stella and I stage the scene for you some day—eh?"

"Do it, and I'll be your friend for life!" said Terence.

Eddie raised himself on his elbow. "You bloodthirsty old villain!" he smiled. "Get out! I refuse to be smothered to make a reel for your beastly old camera! Dick, old man, throw Terence out of the door, and if he struggles accidentally drop him down the stairs while somebody else snaps him with his camera! That'll teach him! Cheerio, Terence, my lad!"

In such wise the days of his own and Stella's convalescence passed, though in the intervals of calling to cheer the invalids, the studio crowd went on with their work. And it so happened that one afternoon, feeling still a little shaky on his legs, Eddie Polo strolled into the place and announced his intention of carrying on where he had left off. They laughed at him, and told him to rest up awhile; anyhow, said Morrison, with his tongue in his cheek, there wasn't any shooting going on in which Eddie or Stella appeared. So, when the girl turned up the next morning she and the acrobat were compelled to take seats well out of range of the camera, and wait till they had regained their old strength and vigour before again taking up their parts. And thus a month passed—a very pleasant month—wherein sunshine and laughter and the affection of old friends helped the pair over a trying time.

## Treachery!

WELL, Eddie, my lad, you've eaten the bread of idleness and drawn salary for doing nothing quite long enough," said Morrison one morning. "How do you feel about trying to break your neck in some of your stunts again?"

"Feel!" retorted Eddie. "What's the stunt this time—murder, or sudden death, or fire, or lightning, or what?"

"Neither," said Morrison. "This time you simply let Fordyce, the villain, get the better of you for once. You and Stella are travelling across the prairie on horseback, and he and the studio crowd, made up as Indians, attack you—he, of course, having supplied them with firewater and a lot of

promises about money—and capture you. Then they carry Stella off—the Indians, I mean—and leave you in Fordyce's hands, bound hand and foot. There's a single railway track running across the ground where the fight takes place, and a train coming along in the distance. The sight of this train's smoke"—Morrison was now reading from the typewritten scenario in his hand—"gives the villain the idea that if he lashes you to the rails the engine will rid him of a dangerous rival, and at the same time, by encompassing your death by accident—for he'd remove the ropes after the train had passed over you—he inherits the fortune. Pretty good for Fordyce—what!"

"Rather!" grinned Eddie. "Well, I'm ready. Lead on. I'll willingly suffer death at any time to get the real thrill. But, say, boss, that engine? I suppose you'll fix everything all you can do? I've just had a long spell of rest and a long spell of bed, and if I put in any more time there recovering from injuries my landlady will be charging me extra for wearing out the sheets and blankets."

There was a general laugh at this sally, and Morrison joined in. Then he pointed at a dummy figure in the corner of the studio.

"That's what we're going to run over, if anything is smashed," he said. "We shall stop the camera and the train just in the nick of time, of course, shift you, lash the dummy to the rails, and then drive on—that is, of course, if we can't see where you're to be rescued, though the scenario says you're to die, and your twin brother fall in love with the girl and continue to thwart the villain. But rest your mind easy on the score of accidents; there won't be any, for I've fixed up with the railway folks not to damage their property, and, besides, the driver of the train will be Tim Bobbin there, and you know how careful he is."

Eddie's jaw dropped at the mention of his enemy's name. It was certainly incredible that Morrison should not be aware of the little liking Eddie had for Bobbin, or the one-time acrobat for the lad who had displaced him in the studio. And now Eddie's life was to lie in the other's hands. Yet, somehow, Eddie could not object to the arrangement. To show the white feather at this juncture, just as he was beginning to make good in the film world, would be disastrous in its effect on his future career as a star. But he stared frankly into Tim Bobbin's eyes.

"There's no call for you to get excited, Polo," said Bobbin, with a great assumption of heartiness. "T'won't be the first time I've handled the throttle and brake aboard a locomotive, and I know just where to stop and when. So your precious skin'll be quite safe in my hands. Say, don't you think it's time you and me forgot all about the animosity there's been between us, and became just friends? We've got to work together, and if you don't trust me and I don't trust you—well, we sha'n't be able to turn out the real stuff. I'm ready to be pals when you are, and there's my hand on it."

Eddie Polo's heart gave a great leap of joy. He had long suspected that Bobbin had been responsible for the "accident" to the bucket in his first great scene, but as he and Fordyce had not been able to prove this, and as events had marched too fast for them to have time to gather evidence, they had said nothing. But now, it appeared, Bobbin was ready to forget the cause of his enmity in working for the general good. With a great swift impulse Eddie's hand shot out and gripped that of the other man.

"Pals," said the lad—"sure we'll be pals, and I'm sorry if I've suspected you wrongly, or done you any harm in deed or thought. And now let's have a chat about this stunt; it's my neck that's going to be under the train wheels if there's any mishap."

Morrison grinned. He had long noticed the strained relations which existed between these two, and had already formed a shrewd opinion of the reason therefor. When the two young men shook hands, therefore, he smiled gladly, for had they continued to be at daggers drawn either one or the other must have gone.

And next day, after a discussion of the new film from all points of view, the whole of the studio crowd mounted a train and were hurled into the prairie across which the drink-mad Indians had once come to wreck Busto's travelling circus, and across which Eddie had once hunted an acrobat by the name of Garcia del Rogeriogo. But that was ancient history, and hardly evoked a

smile in Eddie's memory as the train crawled past villages where the circus had performed, and at last drew up at a one-eyed place whose signboard proclaimed it to be Alkali Springs.

A water-tank, half a dozen frame-houses, a ranch in the distance, and a liquor store combined with an hotel, seemed to be the whole constitution of Alkali Springs, and the advent of the cinema crowd exactly doubled the population of the place. And every ordinary inhabitant immediately announced his or her intention of taking a holiday from work till such time as the actresses, actors, and cameras withdrew from the scene—a proceeding which made Morrison smile, for he could easily obtain here a cheap "crowd" of the right local type and colouring. Therefore he prompted the lot, and had the freedom of Alkali Springs unanimously conferred upon him in the saloon that same evening, Eddie Polo, Dick Fordyce, and even Tim Bobbin sharing the general idolisation.

And next morning they commenced work in earnest. And work meant, for Eddie and

life there and then. "They lose their heads and cavort about irresponsibly, with the result that somebody gets hurt, and the producer has to pay considerable damages. Here, you cuckoo, come off it; you're not supposed to eat the girl! Fall back a bit, and let Mr. Fordyce through; he's the star, not you! That's better! Fordyce, plug that joint in the car—the fellow who's doing his best to knife Polo! Tell him it's only play, and that he's not a real scalp-hunting savage!"

Poor Mr. Morrison had his hands full. The natives, mingling with the trained actors from the studio, seemed to have forgotten in the excitement of the fight that it was anything but a mimic combat, and though they gave the producer and the stars several anxious moments as the film eventually turned out, the picture was all the more thrilling and realistic for it. But Eddie Polo, as he struggled and fought in his saddle to save Stella from her supposed captors, received more than one crack with spear-shaft and tomahawk-handle, and had the blades of the knives been other than tin he must have lost



The two men scraped round the heads of Stella and Eddie with frantic haste, and at last they were able to get a hold on the sinking couple. But it seemed that they were too late, and that the quicksands had done their deadly work! (See page 14.)

Stella, riding out into the prairie a considerable distance. Save for a couple of grooms, the hero and heroine of the picture went alone, since all the others were required for their various parts, Fordyce haranguing the crowd made up as Indians—since real Indians might have overdone the attacking part of the play—and Bobbin making his way to where a tank-engine was attached to a train of passenger cars, lent by the obliging railway company to the Eclair Film-Producing Company for a consideration.

From their place on the skyline Eddie and Stella and the others watched the preparations, and presently Miles, the second cameraman, came riding towards them in an automobile. That was the signal for them to start work, and as he fixed his recording machine on the ground they posed for a close up, showing them to be gazing over the prairie, and then rode onwards at an easy canter, obviously unsuspecting of danger. Their horses' hoofs kicked up the sand as they progressed, and side by side with them ran the camera man's motor-car.

The whoop which came from the supposed Indians as the pair rode carefully into the skillfully-prepared ambush was far more life-like than the real thing, and the struggle that followed was far more bitter than it need be.

"That's the worst of using local talent," said Morrison, as he grabbed at one man, who, with tomahawk uplifted, looked as though he was about to end Eddie Polo's

a considerable quantity of blood and perhaps a little flesh in the strenuousness of it all.

But presently he was hauled from his horse, and, with Fordyce, cursing the natives and at the same time making the gestures of issuing orders, bound hand and foot. Then he and Stella were placed side by side, and with their faces expressing contempt and rage at the villain, the pair were submitted to a section of "gloating" which Fordyce carried out very well, though he nearly made his victims laugh as he audibly apologised for the roughness with which his followers had handled them.

"A most gentlemanly brigand, upon my word!" said Eddie, with a vigour that made his face appear as though he were telling the other to do his worst, and he hanged to him. "Knock a man on the head, cut his throat, and beg his pardon at the same time! Dick, keep an eye on that Bobbin merchant. I don't quite trust him for his sudden professions of friendship."

"Right-ho!" said Fordyce, taking the last turn around Eddie's arms with a stout cord. "I had a chat with him last night, and told him if there were any monkey tricks or accidents he'd have to answer to me and to the law for his actions, and he seemed to understand that I meant my words. So I don't think you need worry."

(Another splendid instalment of this grand serial next Friday.)

A STIRRING DETECTIVE STORY WITH SOME THRILLING INCIDENTS!



# A MARKED MAN.

A Grand New Story,  
dealing with the Adventures of Ferrers Locke, the  
World-Famous Detective.

## THREADS OF THE STORY.

Adrian Vaughan, after having served five years, leaves Dartmoor Prison, bent on regaining his old position in the world, but he finds that all of his old acquaintances had joined the great army against him, including a very old chum, Harry Leigh, and he vows to get his revenge on those who were once his friends.

He falls in with an old acquaintance of the prison, by name of Demottsen, and secures a suite of splendidly furnished rooms, where they intend to plan a great scheme. Later Vaughan appears before the public as a singer and musician, and makes a great name for himself.

Later, Demottsen informs his partner that he has discovered that Leishman is really Mr. Leigh, the criminal's moneylender, a man who leads a double life.

They employ the services of John Firth, who is the double of the ex-convict, and it is arranged that the latter helps Firth to discover the whereabouts of Judas Leishman, a man who had wronged him in the past.

(Now read on.)

## The Contract!

**J**UDAS LEISHMAN? He has wronged you, then?"

Adrian Vaughan's perfectly masked face betrayed no sign of the shock of surprise the other's words had caused him. He had been far more astonished when Demottsen told him that Judas Leishman was none other than Harry's father, Justin Leigh.

"Heaven alone knows how much!" Firth replied passionately. "But one day he will answer. Forgive me, Mr. Rutherford. Perhaps I'd let myself brood too much upon my wrongs."

"I don't know."

Vaughan grew thoughtful. He could, if he chose, bring John Firth and his enemy face to face without further delay. But would that be wise? Not altogether! He had conceived a notion whereby it would be in his best interests to retain this man, his double, in his power. Why spare him because of something that had happened to Firth in the long ago—something that didn't concern him in the very least?

He rested his arm on the mantelpiece, and spoke in quiet, subdued tones.

"Suppose, Mr. Firth, I could do more than pay you the amount I have mentioned; if, for instance, I would undertake, at the end of two years, not only to hand you two thousand pounds, but to bring you and Judas Leishman face to face?"

Firth leaped forward and seized the other's arm.

"You know him, then?" he said, his voice rising almost to a shriek.

"That is my affair, Mr. Firth. I'm putting before you a business proposition. It is for you to decide whether you will accept or not; not for you to ask questions."

"Mr. Rutherford, I'm sorry!"

The other's coldness made a deadly fear grip his heart lest, after all, his chance of finding Judas Leishman might go for ever.

"I'll state my terms first," Vaughan went on. "If they appeal to you tell me, and I'll

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go on to say what I should expect of you in return. Take another cigar. Now, for my purpose I must know something of your past."

"I have nothing to hide!"

John Firth's fine head was lifted proudly.

"Are you a married man?"

"My wife died nineteen years ago."

"You have no other—what the world calls circumstances?"

"None whatever!"

"Any relations?"

"They don't know me."

"Would John Firth be missed if he died?"

"Not by a soul!"

"Then he can quite easily disappear for two years?"

Firth inclined his dark head.

"You play well, Mr. Firth?"

"I can play anything, and almost every instrument."

"Suppose you sit down and run over Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata'?" Vaughan listened enraptured until the last liquid note died softly away.

"Exquisite! My 'cello—take it and render Chopin's 'Nocturne.' I will accompany you." Vaughan stepped to the piano, a magnificent Bechstein Grand, and the great room became filled with sweetest, gentlest cadence. Who would have dreamt that behind that grand face of Vaughan, as the spirit of the music lifted him out of himself, was the brain of a fiend?

"Ah, you play divinely, Mr. Firth! With a little practice you could catch every expression of mine, especially when I am in lighter vein."

"I feel quite certain of it."

"Then to business once more. The money is yours at the end of the stipulated time. You will be free to leave me and go your own way again."

"But Judas Leishman—you said—"

"I said nothing. Don't worry about him. The day your two years' service expires I shall take you to him."

Firth's white hands fingered the strings of the 'cello nervously.

"Good heavens, the time!" he muttered, and for a minute buried his head on his arm. When he looked up, his face was strong with a firm resolution. "What do you ask of me in return for all this?"

"Firstly, that our compact, if you agree, shall be known to no one, under heaven save you and me."

"I swear!"

"Secondly, that you forget that such a man as John Firth ever existed, and become Paul Rutherford instead."

"That is easy to promise!"

"You will never betray your real identity."

"My word is my bond."

"Whatever I ask you will perform. Your work will be simple. One day you might have to appear at the Albert Hall; another at a public dinner; another at a grand reception; the next, perhaps, at a bazaar or a fashionable wedding, but always you would be Rutherford, the musician."

"I understand."

"The next, you must promise never to read a newspaper for two years, except such as I myself give you."

"Whatever happens in the world around

doesn't concern me. I have told you I have only one interest in life."

"Good! Then you will agree never to write a letter or to receive one—I mean, as John Firth?"

"I make no objection to that condition. A street musician doesn't do much letter-writing."

"You will place yourself unreservedly in my hands, obeying my slightest wish, doing my will always?"

"Certainly!"

"You will swear to do all these things, provided I keep my side of the bargain?"

Firth raised his right hand, and at thought of the vengeance one day to be visited on Judas Leishman his face became distorted with passion and hatred, terrible to behold.

"I swear to do all these things, on my life!"

"Then the compact is made," Vaughan said. Firth gave a laugh, and set down to the piano again.

"As you suggested, Mr. Rutherford, you've bought me body and soul. May I play? The music gives me power to think."

"But not to draw back!"

"There is no drawing back where a life vengeance is concerned," he answered, glancing at Vaughan over his shoulder. "This little piece—I shall play it over again two years from now—the day when my reckoning against Leishman is complete."

He filled the huge apartment with fierce, triumphant sound.

Vaughan helped himself to a fresh whisky-and-soda.

"Strange," he mused, "there isn't so much difference between that poor wretch's outlook on the world and mine. We both live for the same thing—I on a grand scale, he on a small one. Thank you!" as, with a crash like the heavy roll of thunder, the music ceased. "Now, if you've somewhat recovered, we may as well discuss your duties. Stand there for a moment under the light."

He scanned the other's face attentively.

"You want a bit of looking after, man. A week's rest, a few touches here and there with pencil and liner, some of the clothes I wear, and then I'd challenge anyone alive, save myself, to tell the difference between us!"

Firth took a pull at his glass, and relit his cigar.

"What do you wish me to do first?"

"Nothing for ten days at least. Meanwhile, I shall thoroughly coach you in your part as to how much—or, rather, how little—you are to say about yourself, and so forth. Eleven! It's growing late. You will be shown to your room. Anything you require, please ring for."

He touched a bell, and Demottsen appeared.

To him Vaughan briefly explained the situation. At a nod from him John Firth moved away.

"Good-night!" he said, turning in the doorway.

Vaughan looked up, and for the first time Firth saw the triumph in his face.

"Good-night, my friend!" came back the low reply. "We shall meet again to-morrow."

Slowly Firth followed Demottsen up the



grand staircase, and with every step echoed the cry in his soul.

"Too late, too late to draw back now! Too late!" And with the fatal words on his lips he at last fell asleep, just as the dawn was breaking over London.

**The Golden Cup!**

**F**ERRERS, I am so glad you're back! Dad has been almost unbearable the last week or two, and I've been altogether at my wits' end to know what to do with him!"

Harry did not wait for the detective to reach the house. In a flash he was down the steps leading from the veranda and across the lawn to grip his hand.

Locke ran a critical eye over his friend. "My boy, your nerves are getting frayed. Tell me about your father. How does he seem upset?"

"It is difficult to explain, Ferrers. When you and the doctor brought him here after

weight of care. There were deep furrows about the bearded face, and a fretful droop about the thin, barely visible lips. The searching eyes had lost none of their keenness, but as the man rose to greet him, Locke caught a momentary gleam of fear lighting their dark depths.

"Well, any news?" the millionaire asked, in sharp, jerky tones, while his frail hand indicated the chair beside him.

"Hardly yet, Mr. Leigh. I reached Liverpool only last night. The London police have heard nothing of Vaughan; he appears to have vanished utterly."

"And the supposed detective who took charge of him—have the police found him?"

There was obvious anxiety in the older man's tones.

Locke shook his head, and a sigh of relief came from Justin Leigh.

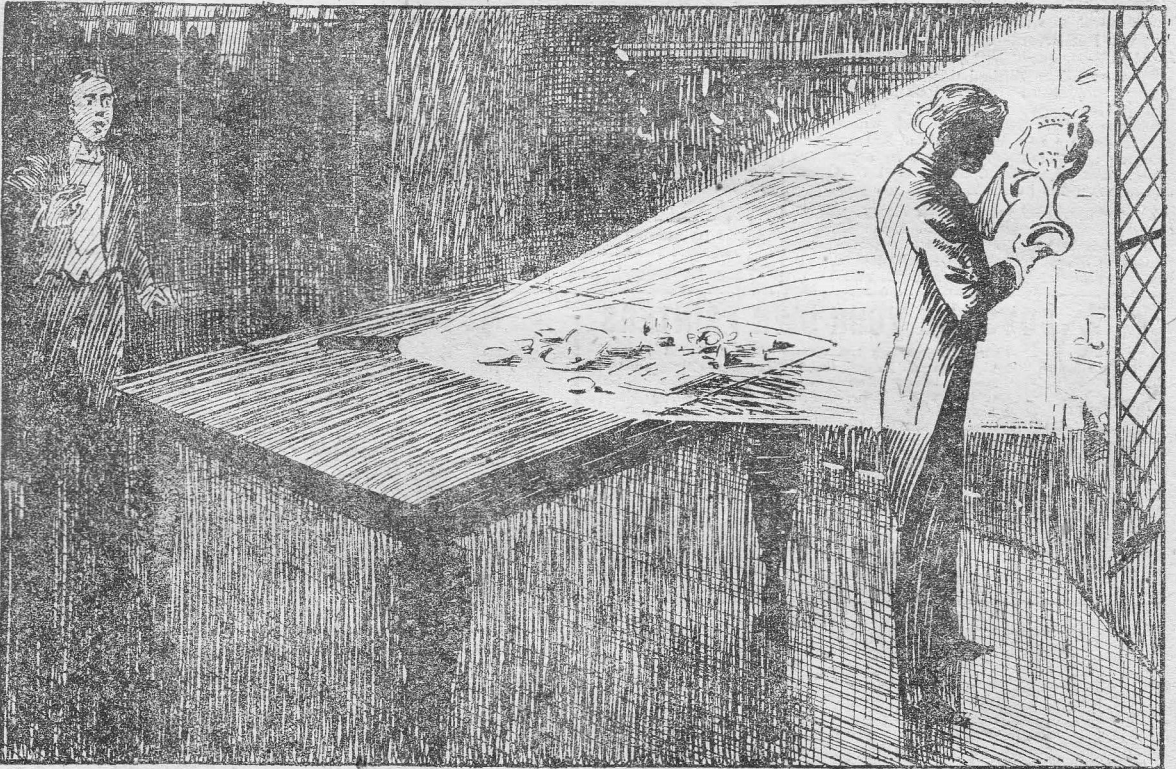
"Nothing. Both got clear away. It was a clever ruse. Vaughan must have had a confederate who got at all our plans as fast as

Ferrers went out, strangely puzzled. There was something about Justin Leigh which was a mystery—some dread fear eating away the happiness from his life.

As a thinking man he could not fail to read into the strange happenings in the house at Clapham some connection between the bogus detective, Barton Dawe, and the old man's heart attack.

"Whoever Vaughan's confederate was, he knew Mr. Leigh, and Mr. Leigh, on recognising him, was so struck with amazement that for the time being his heart failed him, and he became pretty near to a sudden end. Well, whatever it may be, I won't worry Harry about it, except to tell him that his father is determined to have his own way, and no power on earth will shake him from his resolve. Something is undoubtedly worrying him and causing him considerable mental excitement, and the sooner he gets done with it the better."

A few reassuring words from him eased



Harry turned the handle of the door and entered the room. At once he gave a gasp of surprise, for he saw that the room was occupied, that a man was in the act of removing a beautiful golden cup from the sideboard. "Mr. Rutherford!" gasped Harry. (See page 18.)

his heart attack in the house at Clapham he was too weak and ill to give much trouble. But a day or two after you sailed from America he started to worry me to let him go up to London, and ever since he has given me no peace night or day. Of course, in himself he's quite strong and well now. But the doctor said he was to take no long journey alone, and because I won't hear of his going to town unless I accompany him he simply makes life unbearable. Perhaps you could reason with him."

"Where is he?"  
"In the library, reading. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must clear off and get ready for to-night. Of course, I shall see you there?"

"Where?"  
"At Kingsweare. You've been asked, haven't you?"  
Locke nodded.

"Oh, yes, I've been invited, but, much as I'd like to be present, I certainly can't spare the time to appear at dinner. You see, I've got to deliver my report on this New York affair. Of course, if I can get in before the dancing is over I will."

Justin Leigh had aged much since the few weeks of Ferrers' absence abroad. The detective watched him from the doorway. The big, strong frame seemed bowed beneath a

we matured them. I suppose you've received none of your notes back?"

"No. Search as we might, the numbers couldn't be found. I'm afraid I must say good-bye to that twenty thousand pounds!"

"Now, Ferrers, I want you to reason with Harry. Of course, I've always left myself in his hands, but, all the same, there are times when a man wants to be alone. A certain business matter of a very trying nature demands my attention in London. Naturally, he insists on going with me, and, for private reasons, that won't do. You might put the idea out of his head that there's any danger in my travelling alone."

Locke glanced sideways at Justin Leigh. Truly, the change in him was remarkable. He had grown nervous and fidgety, and there was a scared look in the erstwhile placid and benevolent countenance. He leaned forward, hanging on the detective's answer with curious eagerness.

"Naturally, Harry would be anxious, Mr. Leigh. Is it essential you should go quite alone?"

"I have said so!" The old man stiffened, seeing no support was to be gained from Locke. "Still, perhaps you will be so good as to forget I mentioned the subject to you. That will do, Ferrers! I have to get ready to go to Kingsweare to-night. Good-bye!"

Harry's mind. He said good-bye, and, jumping into his car, was driven to London.

Now that Ferrers was gone, the same inexpressible sense of impending disaster returned to Harry. He, too, was conscious of the great change. Of late—in fact, ever since the hour when Ferrers and a London specialist brought him home after his breakdown in London—there was a difference in his attitude towards him. He seemed to regard him as someone to be guarded, watched, and hardly let out of his sight. This made his sudden determination to go alone to London all the more mysterious, and he found himself wondering, for the hundredth time, why Justin Leigh had so often of late questioned him about a short, stout man with peculiar eyes, and whether he had seen such a one loitering near the house or grounds.

For the first time a barrier seemed to have sprung up between father and son.

All this was in Harry Leigh's mind as he dressed for the dinner and dance at Kingsweare.

The sight of Kingsweare Hall, a mass of silver-grey stone pierced by a hundred points of dazzling light, banished his troubles. The big car drew into the Jacobean forecourt, and the great doors swung wide.

He went in. A spacious walnut panelled

hat, hung with tapestry and pictures and suits of gleaming armour, opened on to the grand staircase, at the head of which the Marquis and Marquise of Ranguvy stood to receive their guests. A hundred softly-screened lights wavered across the portraits and glowed now on a glittering corset of steel, and now on a rich red coat. Men in lace collars and bucket boots, in Oudenarde wigs and shining breastplates, grand-dames in low-cut velvet gowns powdered with pearls, looked down upon the curious couple as Harry and his father ascended the stairs.

From somewhere in a distant part of the grand old house languorous music floated, and the trees without seemed to whisper back the soft notes through the open windows.

Harry left his father in a little circle of men, whom he knew would talk finance till dinner was over.

Raymond Marconnon, standing in a recess by the doorway, watched him. The marquis came in, talking gaily to a tall, handsome man, whose wealth of dark, curling hair and dead white face marked him as the musician whose name was in everybody's mouth.

"Paul Rutherford—the great Paul Rutherford!"

Eyes and lips flashed his identity along. Harry, too, found himself looking over and beyond the group of friends to where the musician stood. Not until dinner was nearly over did their eyes meet. Paul Rutherford's handsome features were masked by a gracious smile. Then he looked away, as though unconscious of his presence.

Marconnon, who sat next to Harry, was so entranced that he gave him little time to reflect again on the curious, subconscious feeling of disquiet that had assailed him when his eyes had, for that brief minute, met those

of the artistic-looking musician at the far end of the long table. At last the long repast was over. Harry rose, and prepared to join the long procession on its way to the ball-room.

On the way he suddenly discovered that he had lost his cigarette-case, so, stepping aside, he waited until the huge dining-room was practically empty, and then slipped in to recover his lost property.

The great shadowed hall was empty, and the front door open to the cool of the night. The magnitude of the house was a little disconcerting, and Harry felt a chill presentment seize him as he crossed the vestibule after a vain search for the missing article. Perhaps, after all, he had dropped it in the little ante-room.

No sound came from within the small apartment. He turned the handle and went quietly in. The darkness was cut by a brilliant path of white light which came from an electric hand-torch lying on the table. In the glaring radiance a thousand points of fire leapt up, for here were cases of gem-studded sword-hilts, and rare miniatures and numerous plaques of ivory and silver and gold. Mechanically frozen into stillness, his wide, staring eyes yet followed the beam of the electric torch to the recess beyond the fireplace.

Against the light background a familiar figure stood out. His back was towards him, the tall form bent, the handsome, striking face only partially visible as its owner leant far forward and replaced on a velvet-lined shelf a golden cup of marvellous beauty. For an instant he stared at it critically, took it up again and held it, clear and sparkling, against the strong light.

Then he turned, and looked beyond the

glare into the shadows to where Harry Leigh stood accusingly facing him.

"Mr. Rutherford, what are you doing?" the young fellow cried, and shrank back appalled at the hatred in the other's eyes as he shot him a single furtive glance. Now his shoulders were working, his lithe body crouched and quivered for the leap that would bear him back and dash him into insensibility. Harry saw red murder in the gaze, and, flinging a shrill cry into the night, flung wide the door and sped, panting, across the hall, each moment expecting the glittering weapon which had sprung into view in Rutherford's steady hand to flash out a leaden messenger of destruction.

At the open door of the drawing-room the marquis and marquise confronted him.

"My dear Harry, what ever is the matter?" the marchioness asked, started by the young man's unwonted pallor and the excitement on his face.

"I don't wish unnecessarily to alarm you, but, Mr. Rutherford—I saw him in the curio-room; I went there in mistake for the ante-room. He had a large gold cup in his hand—"

Already the marquis, swift and supple, was darting across the hall.

The marquis smiled reassuringly.

"My dear fellow, something has unnerved you. As for Mr. Rutherford, assuredly you are mistaken. Look there!"

A little group, chattering and laughing, emerged on its way to the ball-room. Harry's glance swept above their heads and came to rest on Rutherford's big form at the piano, from which he was drawing the most delightful music and singing one of his inimitable songs.

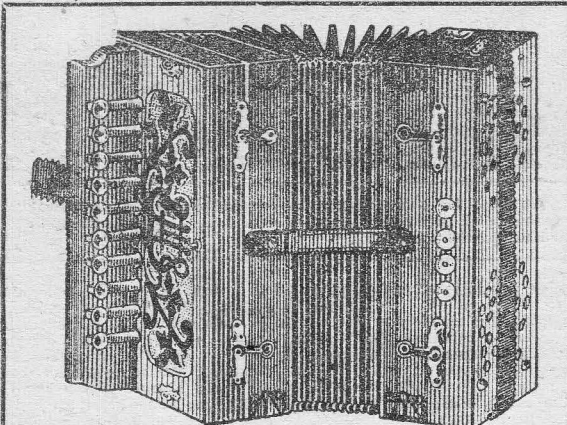
(There will be another long instalment of "A Marked Man!" in next week's issue.)



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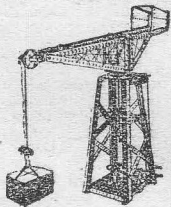
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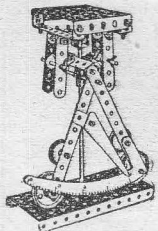
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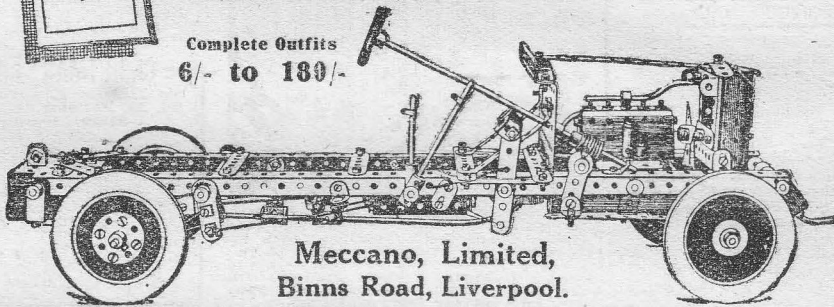
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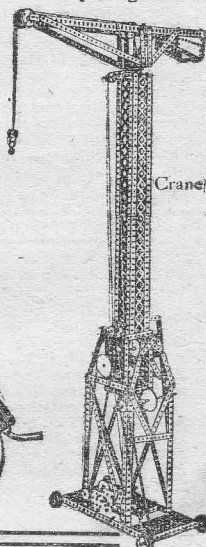
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Sir.—I should like one of your 1,000,000 Christmas Gift Packages, containing instructions and materials for developing the growth and beauty of my hair. I enclose 4d. stamps for postage and packing to my address.

POPULAR, 18/12/20.

#### NOTE TO READER.

Write your FULL name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it, and post as directed above. (Mark envelope "Gift Dept.")

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If so, let the Girvan System help you to increase your height. Mr. Briggs reports an increase of 5 inches; Driver B. F. 5 inches; Mr. Ratcliff 4 inches; Miss Davies 3 1/2 inches; Mr. London 3 inches; Mr. Ketter 4 inches; Miss Leedell 4 inches. This System requires only ten minutes morning and evening, and greatly improves the health, physique, and carriage. No appliances or drugs. Send 5 penny stamps for further particulars and £1.00 Guarantee to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.



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