

Hoy

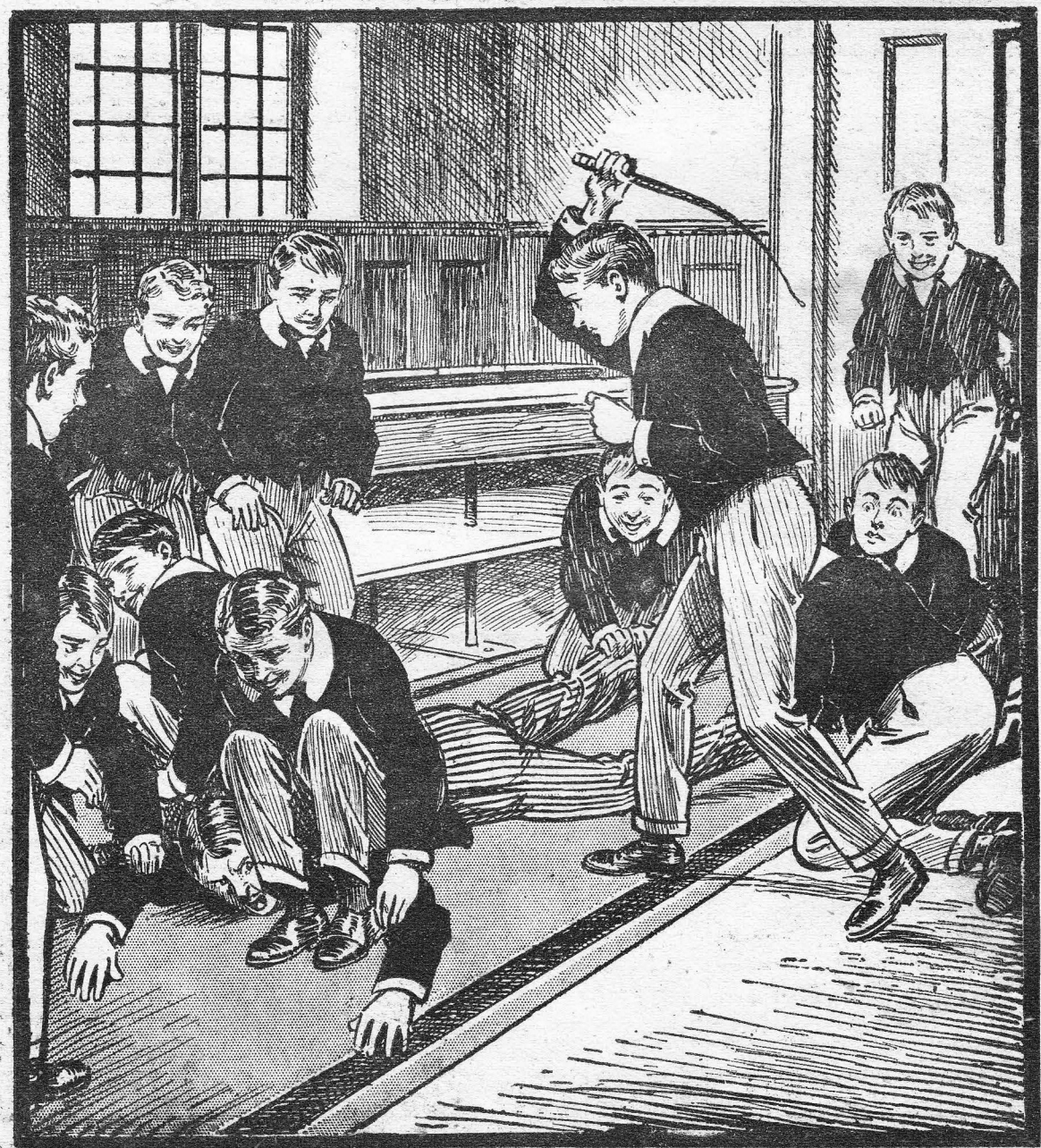
GRAND NEWS FOR ALL READERS ON PAGE 18.

No. 166.
New Series.
Week Ending—
Jan. 29th.
1921.

The Popular Tale

20 Pages.

—:— TWO —:—
COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES.



FLOGGED BY THE FAGS! A BITTER AND PAINFUL EXPERIENCE FOR MORNINGTON OF THE FOURTH.
(A Lively Incident in the Long Complete School Tale inside)

BARRED BY THE FORM.

A Splendid Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of JIMMY SILVER & Co. and MORNINGTON at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Second Form are Wrathful!

"G O it, Jones!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked round with a grin. Jimmy was interested and entertained.
 Under the leafless beeches in the quadrangle of Rookwood there was a meeting. It was a meeting of the Second Form. A dozen diminutive fags were there, all in a state of great excitement, and Jones of the Second was mounted upon a bench to address the meeting.

There were three brothers who bore the famous name of Jones at Rookwood. Jones major was a prefect in the Sixth Form; Jones minor was in the Fourth; Jones minimus was in the Second, and the great chief and leader of that important Form. Jones minimus was evidently on the war-path now.

Something had happened to disturb the serenity of the Second Form at Rookwood, and there was an indignation meeting in progress.

Jimmy Silver looked on with interest. But the fags did not heed the Fourth-Former; they did not even see him. All eyes were fixed upon Arthur Montgomery Jones, as he stood upon the old oaken bench under the beech, and raised a commanding if somewhat grubby hand.

"Gentlemen!" said Jones minimus.
 "Hear, hear!"
 "The Second Form are going to put their foot down!"
 "Bravo!"
 "We're not going to stand it!"
 "Never!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome came out of the tuckshop, and joined Jimmy Silver.
 "Come on, Jimmy!" remarked Lovell.
 "What are you hanging about here for?"
 "There's something on," explained Jimmy.
 "Look at the fags!"
 "Oh, blow the fags!"

"They're always ragging about something," yawned Raby. "I suppose Carthew of the Sixth has been bullying some of them! Let's go and get the ball out, and punt it round before dinner!"

"No; listen! I fancy it's something about young 'Erbert. He's taking his place in the Second Form to-day, Mornington says."

"I don't envy him," said Lovell. "The fags will make it warm for him!"
 "Sounds like it!" grinned Newcome. "Listen to them!"

Jones minimus was going great guns.
 "We're not going to stand it! I call it a rotten shame! Who is the rotter, anyway? Some young tramp that Mornington of the Fourth picked up on the road! Very likely a pickpocket! And they're going to shove him into our Form! It's time for us to put our foot down!"
 "Hear, hear!"

"He calls himself 'Erbert!'" resumed Jones minimus. "I dare say his name's Herbert. He's got no other name that anybody knows of!"

"Boooh!"
 "He's going to be called Murphy, because he was brought up, it seems, by some chap named Murphy. And that's the kind of awful outsider they're going to shove into the Second Form at Rookwood!"

"Shame!"
 "Chap who eats with his knife, and picks his teeth with a fork!" roared Jones minimus. "I put it to the meeting, is that the kind of chap to be put into a Form at Rookwood—especially curs?"
 "No fear!"
 "We're not going to stand it!" said Tracy minor.

Tracy of the Second had a brother in the Shell, who was a great nut and dandy, and Tracy, whose great ambition it was to follow in his major's footsteps, was very nutty for a Second-Form fag. All Tracy minor's aristocratic nerves were jarred by the mere idea of the little waif coming into his Form.

"Never!" roared the fags.
 "Let's go to the Head!" proposed Fisher of the Second, greatly daring.

"And get licked, fathead!"
 "Well, something's got to be done," said Tracy minor. "I'm not goin' to stand it, for one! He makes me shudder, don't you know!"

"You leave it to me," said Jones minimus. "I've got an idea!"
 "Go it, Jonesey!"

"It's a matter for our Form-master to deal with," pursued Jones. "It's up to Mr. Wiggins to see that that awful outsider isn't planted on us! I propose putting it quite plainly to Mr. Wiggins, and asking him to speak to the Head about it!"

"Good!"
 "We'll pitch it straight to Wiggins! I shan't stand any nonsense from him!" said Jones minimus.

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned at one another. Jones minimus was very daring—in the absence of Mr. Wiggins; but the fags roared approval.

"We'll all go to Wiggins, and put it to him plain!" pursued Jones. "We'll tell him straight that we're not going to stand it, and he can put that in his pipe and smoke it!"
 "Bravo!"

"Look out! Cave!" muttered Tracy minor, as the portly form of Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Second, came in sight under the beeches.

But the Second-Form orator had his back to Mr. Wiggins, and he rattled on in stentorian tones:

"I shall say to Wiggins, quite plain: 'Look here, Wiggins—'"
 "Jones!"

The awful voice of Mr. Wiggins cut Jones minimus quite short. The orator spun round on the bench, and blinked at the Form-master. Mr. Wiggins' face was like a thunder-cloud. He had heard that disrespectful reference to himself. Anybody within fifty yards might have heard it.
 The orator's jaw dropped.

Now that the Second Form master was present was Jones' opportunity for putting it plain to him, as he had declared he would.

But somehow the frowning face of the portly Form-master seemed to have a paralyzing effect upon Jones minimus.

He blinked at Mr. Wiggins as he might have blinked at the terrible head of Medusa, if it had suddenly appeared before him.

Deep silence fell upon the indignation meeting. Tracy minor sidled away and disappeared.

But the unfortunate orator could not disappear.

"Jones!" repeated Mr. Wiggins, in thunderous tones.

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Jones.
 "You were referring to me!"
 "Oh!"

"You were referring to your Form-master disrespectfully, Jones?"
 "—I—"

"How dare you hold such a noisy and tumultuous meeting in the quadrangle? Every boy present will take fifty lines!"
 "Oh!"

"You, Jones, will follow me to my study! I shall cane you!"
 "Ow!"

"Disperse at once!" said Mr. Wiggins.
 "Follow me, Jones!"

Mr. Wiggins stalked away majestically towards the School House. The unhappy Jones followed in his wake, looking like anything but a bold rebel, and the meeting broke up.

"Looks like a frost!" grinned Lovell, whilst his comrades chuckled. "Poor old Jones hasn't put it straight to Wiggins, after all! He hasn't said, 'Look here, Wiggins—'"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four of the Fourth proceeded to punt a footer about to get an appetite for dinner, what time Jones minimus of the Second Form was squeezing his hands, twisting himself into weird shapes, groaning, and mumbling, and uttering fierce threats concerning 'Erbert of the Second, to whom he rather unreasonably attributed the licking he had just received.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

'Erbert of the Second!

"H ALLO, 'Erbert!"
 Jimmy Silver looked for the waif of Rookwood after dinner, and found him in the quadrangle.

'Erbert was looking very bright and cheery. Jimmy regarded him rather curiously. He felt very friendly towards the little waif. 'Erbert, with all his shortcomings, had a heart of gold, and Jimmy Silver recognised that fact.

Jimmy Silver had his faults, but anything like snobbishness was not one of them. The fact that 'Erbert was an unknown waif, who did not even know his own name, did not matter in the slightest degree to Jimmy Silver, though it appeared to get on the aristocratic nerves of Tracy minor and his friends.

It was Mornington of the Fourth who had found poor 'Erbert banished by the roadside—who had brought him home in his big motor-car and cared for him.

Mornington, the slacker, waster, dandy, and worse, evidently had his good points, and Jimmy Silver & Co. thought all the better of him for his kind action.

Morny's friends, the Nuts, were down on him for it—as down as they could venture to be, for they did not want to quarrel with the wealthy Mornington.

How on earth Morny had persuaded the Head to allow the little vagrant to be entered at Rookwood as a new boy was a mystery the Nuts could not solve. Snythe and Tracy and Howard, Townsend and Topham and Peels discussed the mystery without finding a solution.

It did not occur to them that the Head was a kind-hearted gentleman, who realised that it was his duty to assist Mornington in

helping the little waif. Morny's action was decidedly unusual—it was astounding, in fact—but it had given Dr. Chisholm a much better opinion of him.

Morny's guardian, who was always indulgent to his ward, had acceded to his request to arrange for the payment of 'Erbert's fees, and Morny had fitted him out to take his place at Rookwood regardless of expense. Morny had more money than he knew what to do with, and it made him purse-proud and arrogant; but certainly on this occasion he was spending his superabundant cash to good purpose.

Little 'Erbert was dressed better than any other fag in the Second Form—he had a larger allowance than most—and certainly he looked a very creditable member of the Form.

During the weeks he had been sheltered at Rookwood he had been kept under keen observation, and the Head had decided that he was an excellent little fellow, who fully deserved the chance Mornington wanted to give him.

And, although his education had certainly been neglected, he had picked up knowledge at a great rate, and was fitted by this time to enter a fag Form. Mr. Wiggins, at the request of the Head, was to give him special care. He had had 'Erbert under special tuition for some time, and was satisfied with his progress.

'Erbert looked quite at ease in his elegant Etons, and he grinned up cheerfully at Jimmy Silver as the captain of the Fourth addressed him.

"Allo!" he responded.
"So you're going into the Second Form to-day?" said Jimmy Silver.

'Erbert nodded.
"Yes, sir. I begin this arfternoon."

"Don't say 'sir' to another fellow, kid," said Jimmy kindly. "My name's Silver."

"Yes, Silver," grinned 'Erbert.
"Have you met any of the Second yet?"

'Erbert's cheery face clouded a little.
"Yes, I seen some of 'em," he said. "They don't seem to like me being a Rookwood bloke, some'ow. Master Tracy told me I made him sick."

"Tracy minor's a little beast!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Don't mind what the fags say, 'Erbert, and don't get your back up if you're chipped a bit at first. They'll let you alone in time. Stick it out, you know!"

"Wot!" said 'Erbert.
"And remember you've got friends at Rookwood, if not in the Second," said Jimmy. "But you'll make friends there in time."

"I 'ope so," said 'Erbert, rather doubtfully. "But they're down on me, some'ow; but I'm goin' to stick it out. Master Mornington's told me to."

Jimmy nodded, and sauntered on. It was a puzzle to him that the cad of the Fourth had taken 'Erbert up in this way. As for 'Erbert, he regarded Mornington as a god-like youth, whose slightest behest was to be obeyed without question.

"That kid's got a hard row to hoe at this school," Jimmy Silver remarked to his chums. "But I think he'll pull through; he's got lots of pluck. And the end study is going to keep a fatherly eye on him—what!"

"Any old thing!" yawned Lovell. "I suppose that means that you're going to get us mixed up in no end of fag rows?—What a life!"

To which Jimmy replied politely:
"Rats!"

A little later, when the bell rang, 'Erbert joined the stream of fellows heading for the School House. Mornington stopped him in the passage. The dandy of the Fourth gave him an approving look.

"By gad, you pay for dressin', kid!" he remarked. "You'll do!"

"Might take me for a reg'lar Rookwood bloke, mightn't yer?" said 'Erbert, with some pride.

Mornington grinned.
"Rookwood chap," he said—"not 'bloke'! We're not bokes here, you know."

"I keep on forgettin'," said 'Erbert apologetically. "I tries to remember everything you says to me, Master Mornington."

"There's the rotten cad!" remarked Tracy minor. And there was a jeering chortle from a crowd of the Second.

'Erbert coloured, and Mornington looked round with gleaming eyes.

"You confounded young cads!" exclaimed Mornington. "Look here, if you give Murphy any of your rot, you'll have to deal with me! Understand that!"

There was a howl from the fags at once. The bare idea of a Fourth-Former inter-

fering with the affairs of the Second was enough to put up every Second Form back on the spot. The arrogant Morny was not exactly the person to make matters pleasant for his protegee in his new surroundings.

"You mind your own business, you Fourth-Form cad!" shouted Jones minimus.

"Kick him out!" roared Fisher.
Mornington clenched his fists, but the fags were not afraid of his fists. They closed round him. Fortunately, Mr. Wiggins came along the passage just then.

"Come! What is this?" snapped the Form-master. "Go into the Form-room at once!"

The fags marched in, 'Erbert following them. Mornington made his way to the Fourth Form room, still looking angry. He might have expected something of the sort from the Rookwood fags; but any disputing of his lofty will and pleasure was enough to make Mornington angry.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Form Ragging!

'Erbert took the place indicated to him by Mr. Wiggins in the Second Form room. Tracy minor was on the same form, and he ostentatiously squeezed as far away as he could from the newcomer, as if in fear of contamination.

The little waif's face flushed as he noted it.

'Erbert was sensitive—a good deal more sensitive than Tracy minor, as a matter of fact.

He realised that he was not booked for a pleasant time in the Second Form. But for the fact that Mornington wished it, 'Erbert would not have chosen to enter Rookwood as a new boy. But Mornington's will was law, and 'Erbert was prepared to "stick it out," whether the fags liked it or not.

'Erbert was so new and strange to the Rookwood fags that it was not surprising that there was some prejudice.

He was, in fact, somewhat in the position of a strange dog in a kennel, and the mere strangeness was a sufficient cause for enmity and contempt.

Some of the Second ostentatiously ignored him; some watched him in the malicious expectation of seeing him make egregious "bloomers" in the Form work.

But that expectation, at least, was disappointed.

Certainly 'Erbert's choice of diction was entertaining, and the way he dropped his aspirates made even the solemn Mr. Wiggins smile sometimes.

But 'Erbert was quick and intelligent, and he had made the best use of a few weeks of careful tuition.

To the surprise—and, in fact, the mortification—of the fags, he made few mistakes, and was commended more than once by Mr. Wiggins.

Tracy minor whispered to Snooks that the grubby little beast was a "swot"—which was another count in the indictment against 'Erbert. In fact, it was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again. If 'Erbert had shown ignorance he would have been despised for it; if he showed knowledge and aptitude he was a "swot."

'Erbert was safe, however, for his Form-master's good graces, whatever the rest of the Second thought of him.

Even his dropped "h's" and peculiar diction did not worry Mr. Wiggins so much as Tracy minor's slackness and Jones minimus' slowness.

'Erbert got through the Form-work much more creditably than he had expected, and he was feeling quite cheerful again when the time came to dismiss.

After pronouncing the word "Dismiss!" Mr. Wiggins left the Form-room immediately, leaving the Form to their own devices.

Jones & Co.'s devices were already planned. 'Erbert was heading for the door, when Jones minimus stepped to it and slammed it, and put his back to it.

'Erbert stopped.
"I want to go hout," he said mildly.

"Oh, you want to go hout, do you?" said Jones minimus, with heavy sarcasm. "You don't want to stay hin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Second.
'Erbert crimsoned.

"I don't see that you've got any call to 'owl at a bloke," he remarked.

"Hark at him!" said Snooks.
"What language!" said Tracy minor, with a shudder.

"What a rotten outsider!" said Fisher.
"What a beastly worm!"

"And that!" said Jones minimus, pointing

the finger of scorn at the waif of Rookwood. "That's in the Second!"

"Shame!"
"What are workhouses for?" demanded Tracy minor indignantly.

"'Ow would you like to go to the workus?" asked 'Erbert.

Tracy minor made a gesture of disdain.
"Master Mornington brought me 'ere," said 'Erbert. "I ain't done nobody no 'arm. I don't see wot you've got your rag out for."

"Horrid little beast!"
"Look here," said Jones minimus, "we've got something to say to you, Murphy, if your name's Murphy. We don't want you in our Form."

"You got to lump it, then," said 'Erbert sturdily. "I'm 'ere."

"You've got to clear out. You're a disgrace to Rookwood, and you know it. You're not our sort," said Snooks.

"No, I ain't," assented 'Erbert. "I wouldn't be down on a cove wot 'adn't done nothing."

"Oh, what language!" shuddered Tracy minor.

"And look 'ere, I want to get hout!"
"You're not going hout just yet," grinned Jones minimus. "You're a-goin' to stay 'ere till we've done with yer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We want you to clear out of our Form," said Jones. "I dare say you can't help being a grubby little beast!"

"I ain't so grubby as wot you are, and chance it!" said 'Erbert.

Some of the fags chuckled at this retort, which certainly was well-founded.

Jones minimus glared round.
"If you're going to chortle at this rotter's cheek—" he began furiously.

"Your 'ands could do with a wash, anyway," went on 'Erbert.

"Shut up, you cheeky little beast!" roared the incensed Jones. "Don't talk to me!"

"Well, you're a-talking to me, ain't you?"
"I put it to you," said Jones. "We want you to leave us alone. You're a disgrace to the Form, and the other fellows will chip us no end about having a workhouse rotter in the Second. Tell the Head you don't want to stay, and he'll let you go, and be glad of it. That's what we want."

"You ain't going to get it, then!"
"You won't?"

"No bloomin' fear!"
"Then we'll jolly well make the Second Form too hot to hold you!" declared Jones minimus. "Collar him, and we'll give him a Form ragging to start with!"

"Bravo!"
"Collar the cad!"

'Erbert put up his hands defensively.
"You leave me alone!" he exclaimed, in alarm. "Mind, I shall 'it out if you touch me!"

"Collar him!"
The crowd of fags rushed upon 'Erbert from all sides.

The new junior kept his word. He hit out, and Tracy minor retired from the scene holding his nose, and spluttering, and Snooks was stretched on the Form-room floor. But 'Erbert had no time for more.

Many hands closed upon him, on all sides, and he was pinioned.

He still struggled in the grasp of the fags, but his resistance was unavailing.

"Now give him the frog's march!" shouted Jones minimus.

"Hurrah!"
"Elp!" yelled 'Erbert.

"Bring him along!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new fag went round the Form-room in the frog's-march. Round and round he went, bumping on the floor. His collar and his tie were torn out in the struggle, his new jacket split up the back, and most of the buttons flew off his waistcoat.

The fags halted at last, with the breathless and dishevelled 'Erbert still wriggling in their grasp.

"Now are you going to clear out!" roared Jones.

"No, I ain't!" gasped 'Erbert.

"Blessed obstinate little beast!" ejaculated Tracy minor, rubbing his nose. "Give him some more."

'Erbert sprang to his feet, and made a wild rush for the door. He felt that he could not stand any more ragging just then.

"Stop him!" roared Jones.
Three or four hands clutched at 'Erbert, but he tore on, and dragged the door open.

THE POPULAR.—No. 108.

With the whole crowd whooping at his heels, he ran.

He headed for the Fourth Form passage, whether he knew the fags would not venture to follow. And Jones & Co., catching sight of a prefect in the passage, crowded back into the Form-room.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Morny Takes a Hand!

"MY hat! What's the matter?" Jimmy Silver stared at the dusty, dishevelled figure that came tearing into the Fourth Form passage.

"Erbert reeled against the wall, panting. 'They're arter me.'"

Jimmy glanced down the stairs. "There's nobody after you, kid," he said kindly. "What on earth's happened to you?"

Mornington came along the passage from Townsend's study, and he stopped at the sight of 'Erbert, frowning darkly.

"What's happened to you?" he exclaimed. "I—I been in a row," gasped 'Erbert. "It wasn't my fault, Master Mornington, it wasn't really. They set on me."

Jimmy Silver whistled. "The Second?" he asked.

"Yes," panted 'Erbert. "Better, come to the dorm and get yourself tidy," said Jimmy.

"They set on you, did they?" said Mornington, his eyes gleaming.

"Yes, arter Mr. Wiggins 'ad gone out. They don't like me in the Second Form, some'ow," said 'Erbert dolorously.

"They'll get used to you in time," said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "Keep smiling, you know!"

"I ain't complaining, sir," said 'Erbert bravely. "I come 'ere to get away from 'em, that's all. I—I don't mind."

"I'm goin' to see to this," said Mornington. "I'll make the young rascals sorry for it!"

Jimmy Silver gave him a quick look. "You're going to chip in, Mornington?" he asked.

"Yes, by gad!" "It's rather rotten of them," remarked Jimmy, "but it won't do 'Erbert much good for an upper Form fellow to take his part in fag rows. It will put their backs up, and make them more down on him, don't you think?"

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it, Jimmy Silver," said Mornington coolly.

He walked away, leaving Jimmy with his lips set. He was very near at that moment to taking the dandy of the Fourth by the neck, and "mopping" up his passage with him. But he refrained.

Jimmy's advice was good; interference from Mornington was about the worst thing that could happen for 'Erbert. The bare idea of being dictated to by a Fourth-Former would make the fags join together as one man, and fellows who were not "down" on 'Erbert already would join in against him, if only to show that the Second did not mean to be dictated to.

But considerations of that sort were lost upon Mornington.

His lofty will and pleasure had been disregarded and disputed, and he was going to make the weight of his anger felt by the delinquents; that was his idea.

He strode into Townsend's study with a frowning brow. Towny and Topham, Gower and Peele, were there.

"Got the smokes?" asked Townsend.

"Hang the smokes. There's somethin' else on," said Mornington savagely. "I want you fellows to back me up!"

"Anythin' you like, dear boy," said Topham.

"Row with Jimmy Silver?" asked Gower uneasily. "Look here, Morny, it's no good gettin' into a rag with those rotters."

"It isn't that. I want you to come to the Second Form-room with me."

"The Second Form? What on earth for?"

"I'm goin' to make the little beasts sit up! They've been raggin' the new kid, an' I'm not goin' to allow it."

The Nuts of the Fourth stared at Mornington. As a matter of fact, they were in full agreement with the Second-Formers on the subject of 'Erbert. But if they had sympathised with the little waif to any extent, they would not have been likely to go on the warpath with a fag Form.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Topham. "You aes, Morny!"

"Catch me raggin' with fags!" said Towns-

end disdainfully. "Ask Jimmy Silver, if you like; it's more in his line."

"Leave me out," grinned Peele. Mornington frowned.

"Then you won't back me up, you funks?" he exclaimed.

"No fear!" "Let the little cad take his chance!" said Townsend. "I wouldn't stand him in the Fourth, I know that. You'd no right to plant the little beast on Rookwood, Morny, an' you know it!"

"Blest if I know what the Head was about to let you!" said Peele. "I've thought of writin' to my people about it."

Mornington turned his back on the Nuts, and strode out of the study. He left Townsend & Co. grinning.

"So the little bouncer's got the chopper," chuckled Townsend. "Serve him right! I hope the fags will make him sick of Rookwood. I asked Tracy of the Shell to speak to his minor about it, an' get him to rag the little beast. No good tellin' Morny that."

And the Nuts chuckled in chorus. Mornington strode down the passage with a lowering brow. He did not feel inclined to ask the end study for help in the matter, as Townsend had suggested. But though he was left alone to carry out his project, he did not falter. Along with obstinacy and wilfulness, Mornington had unbounded pluck.

He stepped into his study, and took a dog-whip, and descended the stairs. Smythe of the Shell met him in the hall.

"Comin' up to the study, Morny?" he asked.

"No!" snapped Mornington. And he strode on.

Adolphus Smythe elevated his eyebrows, and looked at Howard and Tracy, his pals.

"Lovely manners, what?" he yawned. "Do you know, I'm gettin' rather fed-up with Morny!"

Mornington, quite reckless as to whether the great Adolphus was fed-up with him or not, strode on to the Second Form room.

There was a sound of laughter and loud voices in that apartment, as the dandy of the Fourth threw open the door.

Jones minimus & Co. were chortling over the way they had handled the rank outsider. They flattered themselves that, with a little more of it to follow, 'Erbert would get tired of Rookwood, and take his departure—a consummation devoutly to be wished, in the eyes of Jones & Co.

"Hallo, Fourth-Form cad!" sang out Fisher, as Mornington came in.

All eyes were fixed on Mornington. The savage gleam in his eyes and the dog-whip in his hand warned the fags of his warlike intentions at once. Though they were in a quite different Form, they had had some experience of Mornington's insolence; but this, as Jones remarked afterwards, was the limit.

"What do you think you're going to do with that?" asked Jones minimus, pointing to the dog-whip, his eyes blazing.

"I'm going to thrash you, you young cad!" said Mornington, between his teeth. "You've been raggin' my young friend, Murphy!"

"We'll rag him again, too!"

"I want to know which of you did it."

"All of us," said Fisher; "and we'll rag you, too, if we have any of your cheek, you Fourth Form cad!"

"I suppose you were the ringleader, Jones?"

"Right on the wicket," said Jones coolly.

"Then take that!"

Mornington rushed at Jones minimus, and grasped him by the collar. The dog-whip sang and lashed round Jones with terrific vim.

"Yaroo!" howled Jones. "Yow-ow! Rescue, you chaps! Pile on him!"

The Second-Formers did not need bidding; they were already swarming round Mornington.

"Stand back!" roared Mornington furiously, and he lashed out fiercely on all sides with the dog-whip.

"Collar him!"

"Down him!"

"Scrag him!"

Mornington was dragged down by a dozen pairs of hands, and the angry fags fairly swarmed over him. The whip was snatched away, and Mornington struggled in vain under his swarm of assailants. He had woke up a hornets' nest, with a vengeance.

"Turn him over!" roared Jones minimus. "I'll give him some of his own medicine!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Mornington.

"Hold him!"

Mornington, in spite of his struggles, was

pinned down, with his aristocratic nose grinding on the Form-room floor. Three or four fags sat on his head and shoulders; three or four more tramped on his legs. That left him in a very favourable position for a flogging, and Jones swung up the whip.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Friend in Need!

SWISH! "Gurrrrrr!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Jones was in deadly earnest. He had received four or five cuts, and he intended to repay them with interest.

He laid on the lashes with all his force. Mornington struggled furiously under the fags, yelling with pain. His yells came out muffled and choked from under the swarming fags.

"Gurr! Oh! Ah! Groogh! Ow!"

"Go it, Jones!"

"Lay it on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Mornington had been flogged by the Head in his time. But a flogging by the Head was hardly so severe as this. Jones minimus seemed to be under the impression that he was beating a carpet, and that Mornington of the Fourth was the carpet.

He laid on the lashes with all the force of his arm, till his arm ached, and he was breathless.

Mornington wriggled spasmodically as he took the punishment. His yells rang through the Form-room.

The door had been left open, and the noise travelled a good distance. Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the room, as Jones paused to take breath.

"What's this thumping row about?" roared Bulkeley.

"Yaroo! Grooh! Help!"

Jones minimus looked round defiantly.

"It's nothing to do with you, Bulkeley."

"What!"

"We're ragging a Fourth Form cad, that's all."

The captain of Rookwood strode into the room. He took Jones minimus by the ear, and there was a wail of anguish from Arthur Montgomery Jones.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo, Bulkeley!"

"Give me that whip!"

Jones minimus handed it over, and rubbed his ear ruefully.

"Let that fellow get up at once!" said Bulkeley, frowning.

The fags obeyed. Bulkeley, the head of the Sixth, was not to be argued with. Mornington staggered to his feet, breathless, crimson, and gasping.

"So it's you, Mornington," said Bulkeley grimly. "What were you doing here?"

Mornington panted.

"He brought that whip here!" howled Snooks. "He was going for Jones with that whip, Bulkeley!"

"Is that correct, Mornington?"

"Yes, it is!" panted Mornington. "I came here to thrash the young scoundrel!"

"Then you seem to have got what you asked for," said Bulkeley drily. "You can't take the law into your own hands like that."

"I shall do as I like!"

"Will you?" said Bulkeley. "Well, you'd better like to take two hundred lines for your cheek. I shall expect them after tea."

"Look here—"

Mornington was interrupted. 'Erbert came dashing into the Form-room. He had heard the disturbance from afar, and learned what was toward, and had come valiantly to the aid of his patron.

"You rotten bloomin' monkeys!" yelled 'Erbert. "If you're a-touchin' Master Mornington—"

"Come here, Murphy!"

"Oh, I didn't see you, Master Bulkeley!" stammered 'Erbert.

"Come here!" said Bulkeley, frowning. And the waif of Rookwood approached.

"How came you in that state?"

"I—I—I—"

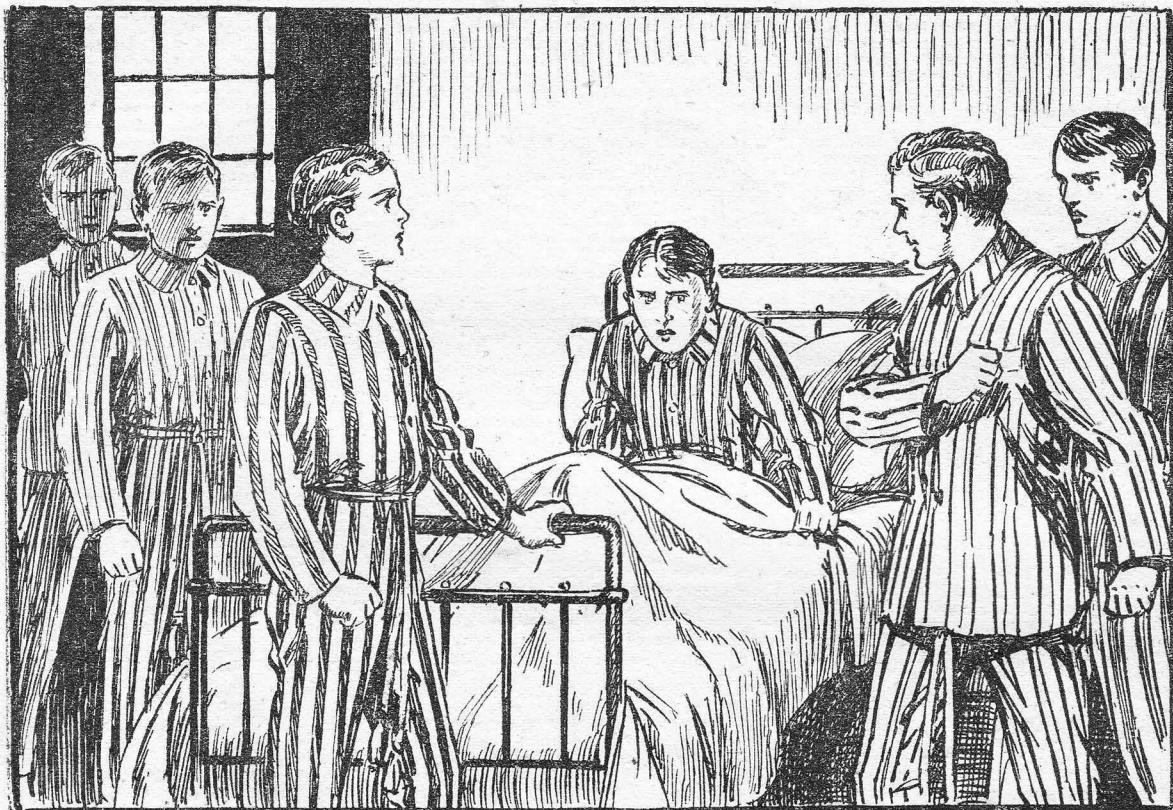
"I suppose there has been ragging here—is that it?" demanded Bulkeley, with an angry glance at the fags.

There was a grim silence. 'Erbert did not speak. He had been hardly used, but he was not inclined to complain to a prefect.

"Jones, answer me at once!"

Jones minimus looked sullen. "We ragged the young rotter!" he said.

"And why?"



"Let that rotter alone," said Jones, sitting up in bed. "We said we'd give him fair play, and he's going to have it. You've licked me, you cad, fair and square. Let him alone, you fellows! He's going to be sent to Coventry."
(See chapter 7.)

"We don't want that sort in our Form!"
"You cheeky little rascal!" said Bulkeley.
"The Head's decided that. Are you going to set yourself up against the Head?"
"We don't want low ruffians here!" said Tracy minor.

"Is that why you came here with this whip, Mornington?"

"Yes!" growled Mornington.
"Well, you shouldn't have done anything of the kind! You can get out of this room, and don't come here again!" said Bulkeley. "I'll take this matter in hand myself. This kid has been ragged, it seems, by all of you here."

"Yes, he has!" growled Fisher.
"What has he done?"
"He's a rotten outsider!"
"He's a low hound!" said Tracy minor.
"Disgusting!"

Bulkeley's lips set.
"Now, listen to me!" he said. "The Head's put Murphy in this Form, and he's got to be treated decently. I shall report this matter to Mr. Wiggins, and you can be sure that he will cane you all round!"
"Oh!"

"And after this I shall keep a very special eye on you!" continued the captain of Rookwood. "Let me hear the merest whisper of a ragging, and you'll be sorry for it! Mind, I mean what I say!"

And Bulkeley strode out of the Form-room, taking the whip with him. Mornington had already gone.

Erbert was left alone with the fags.
They eyed him almost wolfishly, but not a hand was raised to touch him. Bulkeley's authority was not to be lightly disregarded. After that warning from the head-prefect of Rookwood, even the truculent Jones was not inclined to begin another ragging.

Erbert left the Form-room, and went up with a heavy heart to the dormitory to put himself to rights. Ten minutes later Jones & Co. were called into their Form-master's study, where Bulkeley had made his report. Mr. Wiggins gave them a severe lecture and a caning all round, which did not improve the feelings of the Second Form, towards Erbert.

The wail of Rookwood came down from the

dormitory, and, after some hesitation, looked in at Mornington's study. He was greatly concerned for his benefactor. He found the dandy of the Fourth alone, arranging his tie before a glass. Mornington looked round impatiently.

"I 'ope you wasn't 'urt, sir?" faltered 'Erbert.

"Of course I was hurt!" said Mornington irritably. "I'll make those little rascals sit up for it, though, somehow! What do you want?"

"N-n-nothing" stammered 'Erbert.

"Then cut along!"
'Erbert withdrew from the study, his lips trembling a little. Mornington was in a savage temper, and in no mood to be bothered by his unfortunate protegee. 'Erbert stopped in the window-recess at the end of the passage, his heart heavy, and dangerously near "blubbing."

"I wish I 'adn't come 'ere!" he muttered desolately. "I ain't their sort, and I sha'n't never 'ave any friends, exceptin' Master Mornington! I—I wish he 'ad let me alone where I was, I do!"

"Hallo, kid!" came a cheery voice. Jimmy Silver came upstairs with a parcel under his arm—good things for tea in the end study.

"Feeling fit again—what!"
"Ye-e-es!" stammered 'Erbert.

"Had your tea?"
"Nuano!"

"Fags generally have tea in Hall," remarked Jimmy. "If you're not keen on tea in Hall, young 'un, come along with me."

'Erbert was not keen on tea in Hall, where he would have to sit at the table with Jones minimus & Co.

His face brightened up.
"Come on, kid!" said Jimmy kindly.

And he marched the new fag off to the end study.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared a little as Jimmy came in with 'Erbert of the Second, and then they grinned. But the end study was famous for its hospitality, and Jimmy Silver's chums exerted themselves to keep up its reputation. And, under their combined efforts, 'Erbert forgot his troubles, and began to feel that life at Rookwood was worth living after all.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The Outcast!

ERBERT joined the Second Form again for evening preparation in the Form-room, which was taken under the eye of Mr. Wiggins. He received many truculent glares from Jones minimus and his friends.

It was possible that if 'Erbert had been left alone to "shake down" in the Form, the fags would have ceased to bother him in a short time, though he would always have had petty persecution to expect from snobbish fellows like Tracy minor.

But Mornington's intervention had a result which the arrogant dandy of the Fourth might have expected if he had been a little less headstrong and high-handed.

Mornington had come to their Form-room with a dog-whip to chastise the fags who had offended his lofty will, and the bare idea of that made the Second Form furious. 'Erbert was booked for continual trouble now, if only to "show" Mornington, as Jones & Co. expressed it.

During prep an ink-ball landed in 'Erbert's neck, and he found his inkpot full of gum, and the leaves of his school-books gummed together. Bulkeley's warning had stopped ragging, but there were other ways of "getting at" the obnoxious newcomer.

Mr. Wiggins left the Form-room when preparation was over, and 'Erbert rather anticipated a renewal of hostilities. But the thought of Bulkeley coming in with a cane prevented that.

Jones minimus threw open the door.
"Get out, you cad!" he said briefly. "We don't want you here!"

"I'll stay as long as I like!" said 'Erbert defiantly.

But he left the Form-room.
The fags were gathering round the fire to cook one of the weird and fearsome suppers in which the Second Form indulged, and 'Erbert would gladly have joined them. But there was no place for him there—nothing but contemptuous and hostile glances. He did not want to stay where he was not wanted.

He wandered out of the Form-room into the wide old passages.

He was staring out of the window into the shadowy quadrangle, when he felt a touch on the shoulder. He looked round cheerlessly, and found two juniors of the Fourth smiling at him. They were Van Ryan and Pons, the two Colonial chums.

"I've been looking for you," said Van Ryn cheerily.

"Lookin' for me?" muttered 'Erbert, wondering that anybody at Rookwood should take the trouble to look for him.

"Yes; come on!"

"It's a baked chestnut party in the study," explained Pons.

'Erbert grinned, and followed the two Colonials up to Study No. 3. The Fistical Four were there, and Rawson and Fisher and Jones minimus of the Second. Fisher and Jones were looking very pleased with themselves. They were not often asked into a Fourth-Form study.

But at sight of 'Erbert their pleased looks vanished.

They exchanged a quick glance, and rose to their feet.

"Here we are," said Van Ryn cheerily. "Trot out the chestnuts!"

"Hallo, not going, young Jones!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes; I'm going," said Jones minimus sarcastically. "So's Fisher. Come on, Fishy!"

"But you haven't had any chestnuts!" said Rawson.

"Thanks; I don't want any!"

And Jones minimus and Fisher left the study with their noses high in the air. They understood now why the good-natured South African had asked them there; and they intended Van Ryn to see very plainly that they weren't taking any.

'Erbert's face was crimson. He understood, too.

"Sit down, kid," said Jimmy Silver, pulling 'Erbert into a chair.

And, in spite of the lofty departure of Fisher and Jones minimus, 'Erbert spent a very pleasant half-hour before bedtime.

Jimmy Silver gave him a word of advice, when he had to go to the dormitory at nine o'clock.

"If there's any trouble, kid, pick out the biggest chap, and fight him," he said. "The fags will give you fair play. And hit your hardest!"

'Erbert grinned and nodded, and went up to the Second-Form dormitory.

Black looks from the Second greeted him. Jones minimus had detailed to his comrades how a cheeky, meddling Fourth-Former had asked him to a chestnut supper, to make him civil to the rotten outsider. Jones had magnificently declined to be corrupted by baked chestnuts. And the fact that 'Erbert was making friends outside his own Form was against him in the eyes of the fags.

Neville of the Sixth saw lights out for the Second, and he gave the fags a word of warning.

"Any ragging here, and I shall come back with a cane," he said. And he departed.

'Erbert lay quietly in bed, wondering whether there would be trouble now that he was at the mercy of the incensed fags.

Jones minimus sat up in bed. Jones & Co. had been laying their plans for the night.

"You awake, you measly worm?" asked Jones politely.

'Erbert did not reply.

"Don't you hear me, Murphy?" howled Jones.

"I 'ear you," said 'Erbert.

"Then why don't you answer?"

"I thought p'raps you was speakin' to Master Tracy, from what you said," retorted 'Erbert.

There was a chuckle from some of the beds, and a snort of indignation from Master Tracy's.

"Well, get up, you worm!" said Jones. "Bulkeley's down on us for ragging you. Just like you to sneak behind a prefect!"

"I never asked him to interfere."

"Oh, dry up! We're not going to rag you! But I'm going to take you on, and give you a thumping good licking," said Jones darkly.

"That's what you want, and that's what you're going to get. See?"

"I see," said 'Erbert, not appearing much alarmed. As a matter of fact, 'Erbert had roughed it during his short career to such an extent that he had learned to take care of himself remarkably well, and his private opinion of the Second-Formers was that they were a "soft" lot, and that he could make rings round any of them.

"Better wait a bit to give Neville time to get clear," said Snooks.

"Oh, that's all right; there's a meeting of the footer committee in Bulkeley's study, and Neville won't come back unless there's a row!"

The fags turned out of bed, and candle-ends were lighted.

'Erbert stepped out with the rest. There was no help for it; and he was not particularly averse to a "scrap," as a matter of fact.

"Time!" said Tracy minor.

And in the glimmer of the candle-ends, with a circle of excited faces round them, the combatants met, and the fight began.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Jones Minimus Meets His Match!

JONES MINIMUS started work with a terrific rush.

The Second-Formers looked on, grinning.

Jones was the great fighting-man of the Form. He had even achieved the distinction of licking Wegg of the Third; and there was not a fellow in the Second who could have stood against him for two rounds.

Greatly to his surprise, 'Erbert stood up like a rock to his onslaught.

Still more to his surprise, his terrific drives were knocked aside apparently with the greatest ease, and a set of knuckles that seemed as hard as iron were planted on his nose.

Jones minimus went over backwards as if he had been struck by a bullet.

Crash!

"Ow! Oh!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Tracy minor.

Jones was down! The great fighting-man of the Form was gasping, on his back, on the floor of the dormitory.

The Second Form could scarcely believe their eyes.

Fisher ran to pick his principal up. A slow grin crept over 'Erbert's face. He had hardly been touched, so far.

Jones was raised to his feet. He dabbed at his nose, and his fingers came away crimson.

The fags regarded 'Erbert a little more respectfully, and some of them edged away from him. It dawned upon them that Jones minimus had awakened the wrong passenger, so to speak, and they were quite contented that it was Arthur Montgomery Jones, and not themselves, who had to face the outsider's hard knuckles.

But Jones minimus was game. He had plenty of pluck, and after a minute or two of gasping, he came on again.

This time the combatants closed in a deadly clinch, and 'Erbert's head went into chancery.

But 'Erbert's head came out of chancery, and Jones' own head took that unenviable position, and 'Erbert's hard knuckles pounded away at him with great vim.

"Break away!" shouted Tracy minor.

'Erbert released his adversary, with a bitter smile. There had been no call to "break away" when his head was in chancery.

Jones staggered back, and Fisher supported him, looking very dubious. The rank outsider's licking seemed a good distance off, at this rate.

'Erbert stood waiting. The rest this time lasted four or five minutes, but Jones minimus toed the line again at last.

"Got it, Jonesey!" said Snooks encouragingly.

Jones minimus "went" it to the best of his ability. Several of his drives got home, and 'Erbert's nose assumed a bulbous appearance, and one of his eyes persisted in winking uncomfortably. But all the time he was dealing out terrific punishment to Jones, and that hero at last went down on his back with a thump that made the floor shake.

He did not rise, even when Fisher gave him a helping hand.

"Ow-ow-ow!" was Jones' reply to Fisher's inquiry as to how he felt.

"I say, you're going on?" asked Fisher anxiously.

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"You're not goin' to let that cad lick you?" hooted Tracy minor.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The fight was evidently over. It was as much as the unhappy Jones could do to limp back to his bed and collapse in it. His friends gave the victor very curious looks.

"Rag the cad!" said Tracy minor. "If we can't lick him, we can rag him!"

"Shut up!" came an unexpected voice from Jones' bed. "Let him alone!"

"Perhaps you like bein' licked!" sneered Tracy.

"I'll lick you to-morrow!" groaned Jones minimus. "Ow! My eye! Oh, my nose! Oh crumbs!"

"If you're done, I'll be gettin' back to bed," said 'Erbert sarcastically. "If there's any other young gent what's spoilin' for a fight, I ain't tired yet."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Fisher. "Just like your sort to crows!"

'Erbert crimsoned.

"I never meant to crows!" he exclaimed.

"Tain't that. And—and I'm sorry if I've hurt Master Jones, too! He was tryin' to 'urt me."

"Oh, shut up!"

Jones minimus sat up in bed, blinking painfully at the fags through his twitching eyelids.

"Let that rotter alone," he said. "We said we'd give him pair play, and he's going to have it. You've licked me, you cad, fair and square. I own it. Let him alone, you fellows. He's going to be sent to Coventry. If we can't get him out of the Form, we needn't speak to the cad. He's going to be sent to Coventry by the whole Form for good, and any chap who speaks to him will get it in the neck!"

"Nobody wants to speak to him, I fancy," sneered Tracy minor.

"I don't see wot you want to be down on a bloke like this 'ere for," said 'Erbert.

"Wot 'arm 'ave I done?"

There was no answer to that remark. Tracy blew out the candle-ends, and the fag returned to bed. 'Erbert turned in, in silence.

When the rising-bell clangled out in the morning, and the Second Form turned out, Jones' face was, as Fisher said, a picture.

'Erbert glanced at him somewhat contritely.

"I'm sorry you're 'urt so much, Master Jones," he said.

Jones minimus gave him a cold stare, and did not answer.

'Erbert set his lips, and did not speak again. He left the dormitory in silence.

That morning the sentence of Coventry was in full force. The Second Form appeared to be utterly oblivious of the existence of the new junior. And the outcast of the Form was soon feeling that he would have preferred even the raggings Bulkeley had saved him from.

"Well, how are you getting on to-day?" asked Jimmy Silver, meeting 'Erbert in the quadrangle after lessons.

"Oh, orlright!" said 'Erbert bravely. He did not intend to worry his kind friend in the Fourth with his troubles.

"Good! Keep smiling!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

And 'Erbert tried to act upon that good advice; though it was not easy to "keep smiling" while he was Barred by the Form!

THE END.

(Particulars of next week's story will be found in Editor's Chat.)

Who is This?



£250

IN CASH PRIZES

Offered in Simple Competition.

Could you recognise your favourite cinema stars if they suddenly took to wearing goggles? If so, enter this fascinating new competition, and try for one of the big cash awards. Full particulars appear in TO-DAYS issue of

BOYS' CINEMA

WEEKLY

The Cinema Adventure Paper

THE POPULAR.—No. 106.

A SERIAL WITH A THRILL IN EVERY LINE!



A MARKED MAN.

—:- A Grand 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 as Paul Rutherford.

Later, Demottsen informs his partner that he has discovered that Leishman is really Mr. Leigh, the criminals' moneylender.

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.

Vaughan pays Leigh a visit, and threatens to reveal to the world his secret if Leigh does not hand over to his care, Harry, no longer the son of Leigh, but of John Firth. Leigh has to agree, and Harry is taken to Vaughan's house in Flatney, and kept a prisoner there. Vaughan had previously outwitted the leader of a gang of Continental thieves, Von Diehling, in a big scoop, and not wanting to keep at loggerheads with this powerful organisation, he agrees to steal for them a certain valuable picture. After five weeks of waiting he manages to annex the masterpiece from the gallery.

(Now read on.)

Vaughan Explains.

IT was exactly six weeks later, between nine and ten of a night, in late August, that Vaughan's car stopped before the front entrance of the Red House at Flatney, and Vaughan himself got out carrying a small parcel, which with infinite care he took to the library. Then having safely locked it in a big safe let into the wall, he cabled the cryptic message to Von Diehling—simply the words, "Come—successful."

By tea-time the following afternoon the count and a companion arrived. A manservant ushered them into the library, where Vaughan awaited them. He shook hands cordially with the count, but shot a suspicious glance at his companion—a little stout man, with keen eyes and a sharply-hooked nose.

"Your friend, count?" he asked, in an aside.

"Ah! I was forgetting. Allow me to introduce you. Pietro Almarli, an Italian picture expert. You have the painting, I believe?"

"I said so in my cable. You have the money!"

Count Otto nodded, and tapped his breast-pocket.

"Then come this way."

Vaughan unlocked a door, and led the little procession to an ante-room, dimly lit with flickering candles. He paused, and pointed to an exquisite canvas over the fireplace.

"There, my friend, is Van Dyck's masterpiece—the Paola Adorno."

Von Diehling and the Italian stood back gasping with amazement. For long minutes their gaze was riveted on the beautiful work.

"May I examine the painting?" Almarli asked at length.

"Certainly! I will get it down."

With the count's aid the picture was unhung, and laid flat upon the table. Then more lights were brought, and for an hour Almarli persisted in a most searching examination.

"I am satisfied," he said, wiping his brow and nodding to Von Diehling. "There can be no question. This is the genuine picture from the Norwich Gallery. The secret mark I myself put upon it nearly a year ago is still there."

Von Diehling bent over the life-like face of the beautiful woman.

"You have done well, Herr Vaughan," he said, shooting Almarli a sidelong glance, "but I doubt if we shall be able to pay you as much as we agreed. You see, we reckon that twenty thousand pounds—"

Vaughan rang a bell, and elbowed his way to the table, from which he pushed aside the two crooks. The door opened silently, and Dr. Demottsen appeared.

"Charles, help me up with this picture, and tell Gavin to show these gentlemen the door," he said.

The count fell back, his cheeks quivering.

"I didn't mean you to take my words like that!" he gasped. "You didn't understand, nor give me a chance to finish what I was going to say."

Vaughan stepped on to a chair, and with Demottsen's help hung the priceless masterpiece in position.

When he got down his handsome face was wreathed with smiles.

"Compose yourself, count. I assure you no harm has been done. I have accorded you a private view of the Marchesa—that is all."

Von Diehling was stupefied into silence by the magnitude of his blunder. It was only too clear what Vaughan would do now—sell the picture direct to the South American millionaire, and pocket an easily-gained fortune.

"A thousand pardons! I spoke hurriedly. I am ashamed of myself!" he muttered penitently. "See, here is the money—thirty thousand, as arranged. Let us do the deal now before trouble comes!"

Vaughan stood back, and, lighting a cigar, surveyed the painting leisurely.

"The Marchesa's beauty fascinates me," he remarked. "I have half a mind to keep her there for my own satisfaction. But forty thousand pounds is a big amount even for a lover of the beautiful like myself to lock up in a single canvas."

"Forty thousand, Herr; you make a

mistake. We agreed on thirty thousand!" Von Diehling interrupted.

Vaughan gave a tired yawn.

"So we did. But I've changed my mind since a few moments ago, when you tried to beat me down by ten thousand pounds. I've put that amount additional to my value of the picture, which will now cost you forty instead of thirty thousand pounds. Forty thousand pounds, my dear count, or the canvas remains where it is until I dispose of it myself!"

Von Diehling glanced across at Pietro Almarli, who grudgingly nodded approval.

"We have no alternative but to agree," he said gloomily.

Vaughan laughed satirically.

"It is your own fault entirely, count. Even now you can please yourself."

"We will pay the amount."

"And I will accept it—on one condition only," Vaughan replied.

"And that is?"

"That you give me your word of honour not to attempt the theft of another single masterpiece from any gallery or private house in Great Britain."

For a minute the count was silent.

"We promise," he said curiously. "But I think you should also give us the satisfaction of knowing how you succeeded in getting the picture so easily, while all our efforts failed."

Vaughan looked up from his task of counting the notes.

"You mean, you want me to tell you how the theft was carried out without a breath of suspicion being aroused or a single soul apart from ourselves being the wiser?"

"That is so."

"Very well. I've no objection to telling you how the Marchesa was stolen."

The count and the Italian expert hung on the other's words.

"Only one way of stealing the Marchesa was possible—if the picture's value to its possessor was to remain," said Vaughan.

"Supposing now, by some clever means, I had got the picture off the wall and out of the Norwich Gallery, and six hours later the theft was discovered. What would have happened? I should have found it difficult to get a hundred pounds for the canvas, for the simple reason that no one wants the risk of buying a knowingly stolen masterpiece. Instead, you have the Paola Adorno: your rich and unscrupulous South American client can hug it to his breast as the one and only original, and no one in this country save our four selves will be any the wiser regarding the Norwich Collection's loss."

The count leaned across the table and scrutinised the picture admiringly.

"I see. You have left another Paola—a copy—in its place?"

"That is so. The first step was to get a copy painted so perfectly that none save an expert could tell the difference while the picture remained on the wall. Fortunately, I knew the very man—a Yorkshire painter, a cripple, but an artist to the finger-tips. My friend, when you want inimitable copies of old masters made, I will recommend you to Mr. George Bayrerton Hills, of Hebble Bridge, Doncaster. My friend here"—inclin-

ing his head towards Demottsen—"commissioned the painting, and saw it finished. I, too, as a casual observer, often walked into the Norwich Gallery to see Mr. Hills at work."

"He gained permission from the curator, I presume, to make the copy?" Almarth suggested politely.

"Hills is known to the officials of almost every gallery in England. At last the work was finished, and paid for, and the copy passed into my possession. A few days later I gained admittance to Norwich House through a secret entrance which took several weeks to make. I had arranged beforehand to have a copy lying inside waiting for me to exchange for the original. There was very little danger attached to the enterprise, bar, of course, the night watchman, who, by the way, was a young soldier, and not a person to come up against. Before very long the

good-day. Count, my car will take you to the station—and I trust we shall have the pleasure of meeting again soon!"

On the Watch!

FERRERS LOCKE acted with commendable promptitude on finding the stolen bowl in Justin Leigh's garden.

The discovery opened up a perfect maze of possibilities, and started a score of different lines of thought in his mind. From the hotel, where he had a set of rooms, he telephoned direct to Baker, telling him to come direct to Northampton by car.

A few minutes after three o'clock the never-tired man, as fresh and alert as though he had been sleeping for a week, came briskly in.

Locke sat over a bright wood fire, for the hour before the dawn even in summer-time is usually cold, and for several minutes went

cadaverous man replied casually. "We have set ourselves to solve all the problems which started on the night of Marconnon's murder. Till that is done, we cannot rest."

The famous detective gave a grim smile. "You are a relentless sleuth, my boy. Still, what you say is right. We must find out who buried the bowl."

"Have you no clue?"

"Two somewhat slender ones; they point in the same direction."

"Ah!"

"Harry Leigh, from his bed-room window, saw the bowl being buried—on the night Poltniron was shot, which, you will also recollect, was the night when the escaping fugitive in the motor-boat tried to put an end to me."

The man who shot Poltniron and attempted your life made straight for Northampton with his booty, and hid it in Mr. Leigh's grounds."

"That is my case?"

"And his identity—"

"The secret is locked in Poltniron's turned brain, until we can probe it ourselves."

Baker's face expressed a dreamy sadness.

"What a pity that one word was never spoken. The poor fellow had it on the tip of his tongue when the chord of memory snapped."

"We must rely on our own skill," was Locke's brisk reply. "There is a certain way to uncover the identity of this mysterious person."

"Of course, sooner or later he will attempt to unearth the treasure."

"We must expedite the moment. I want you, after breakfast, to restore the marquis' property to him. Then go to the offices of the 'Leicester Times,' get hold of a reporter, and dictate a paragraph to him to the effect that the almost priceless goblet stolen from Marquis Ranguvy's house on the night of the ball has been returned by a man who does not wish his name to become known. Also say the bowl has been examined by an expert, who declares it to be undoubtedly the priceless original. I want that notice to appear, if possible, in to-day's issue."

"And you?"

"For the present I shall remain in Northampton. If I want you, I will ring you up at Baker Street."

When breakfast was over, Locke slipped into a morning suit and walked to the house in Kilworth Grove. To his surprise he was informed that Mr. Leigh had already left the house.

"Then would you mind telling young Mr. Leigh I should like to see him?" he said.

There was a curious frigidity in the servant's answer.

"I'm sorry, sir, but Master Harry is out, too. He left, with his father, very early this morning."

Locke arched his brows curiously.

"Have they gone away by train, then?"

"No, by car. The master and Master Harry left in the big Daimler soon after eight o'clock."

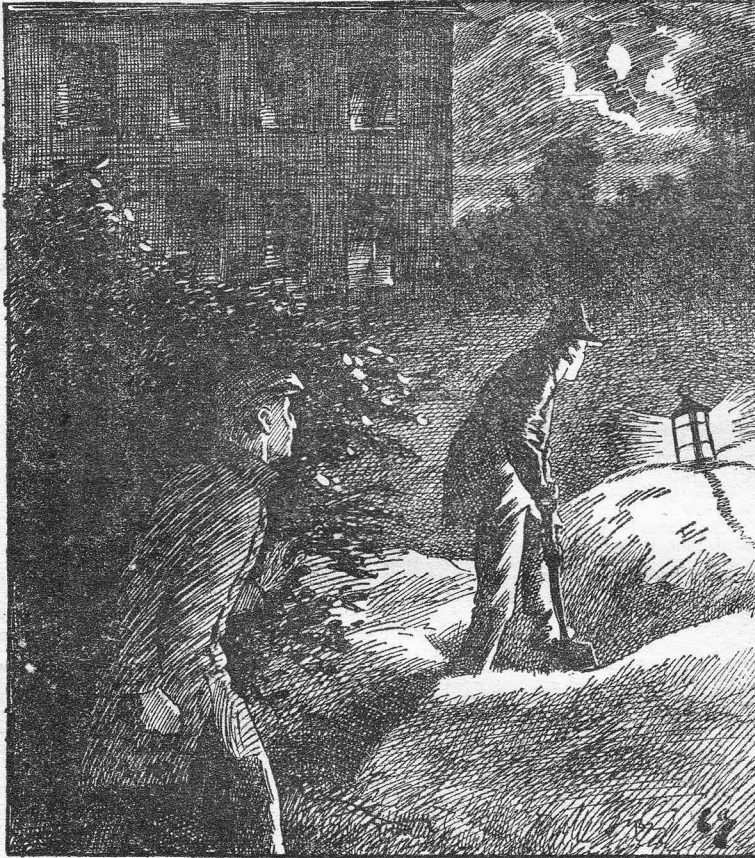
"And you haven't any idea where they have gone?"

The detective turned away, obviously troubled. Less than twelve hours had passed since his interview with Harry. He had complained bitterly of his father's treatment, and of being kept so close a prisoner, but nothing of any projected journey. Locke spent the morning in making careful inquiries, but could learn nothing more than that the car had taken the main road towards London. At this juncture the scent failed, and threw Locke back on to his device of keeping ceaseless vigil on the spot which had hidden Ranguvy's goblet.

For close upon thirty hours he kept watch, certain that as soon as the flaring newspaper announcement concerning the amazing recovery of the bowl came to the knowledge of the villain who had bought it from Louis Poltniron, he would rush to the hiding-place to vouch for the truth or otherwise of the story.

A blustering, windy day gave place after dusk to leaden skies, which poured out a perfect deluge of rain. Thoroughly wet and chilled to the bone, Locke, however, stuck to his post. As midnight drew near there was a rustle among the bushes, the halting of a dark shadowy form among the trees; then the sound of a spade biting into the soft earth. At the end of three minutes a muttered curse, in an unrecognisable tongue, reached the ears of the watcher. More digging, a wild scuffling about as it became apparent the treasure had gone, then the mysterious visitant shuffled rapidly off in the

(Continued on page 13.)



A dark form emerged from the bushes, and the waiting detective saw a man with a spade commence to dig a deep and wide hole in the lawn. At the end of three minutes the man muttered something inaudible, and Ferrers Locke knew that the loss of the treasure had been discovered.

(See this page.)

job was completed. The Van Dyck was my property, and there was nobody to stop me leaving the place."

Von Diehling drew back, dumb with surprise.

"But however did you get it out of the place unseen? It was never rolled up?" he asked.

"That would have spoilt it. No, my friend. I fixed it to a stretcher in a canvas bag. Outside, at the back of Norwich House, a car awaited me. It was all done without any bother and any inquisitive police dogs hanging about. One word, count, to you, and I have done. The picture has cost you ten thousand pounds more than it need have done. That is because you tried to go back on your bargain. Now, remember this, and tell it to your confederates across the Channel—that when Adrian Vaughan pledges his word to anything, then his word is his bond, and he never departs a fraction of an inch outside it! Gentlemen, as you cannot stay to refresh yourselves, I have to wish you a very

THE POPULAR.—No. 108.

on-smoking silently. When at last he spoke, it was in the slow, deliberate manner which always signified an important utterance.

"We are nearing the hub of an 'amazing mystery,'" he said, as though speaking to himself. "A mystery which enfolds some of the most extraordinary events of recent years. In that parcel, Baker, you will find the Marquis of Ranguvy's missing gold cup."

The other's gloomy hound's-eyes gleamed momentarily, but relapsed again into their customary slumbrous expression.

"When and where did you find it?" he asked.

"Buried in the earth—in Mr. Leigh's garden."

"Mr. Leigh! It is impossible he can have anything to do with its theft! You don't argue he stole it?"

"Certainly not, but we have to remember he was at Kingsweare on the night of the theft. That is only one link in the long chain you and I have to forge, and I am afraid the forging will affect some innocent lives."

"Which is no concern of ours," the

OUR SECOND SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE!



Mark Linley's Temptation!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s and Mark Linley's Early Days at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Waiting!

"GOT the news yet?"
"No."
"How are you feeling?"
Mark Linley smiled in rather a strained way.

"Anxious," he said.
And he resumed his tramping up and down the passage. He could not keep still. Up and down, up and down the flagged passage he went, his hands thrust deep into his trousers' pockets, and his brow corrugated in a deep frown.

Mark Linley was usually one of the quietest and most composed members of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. He had had more troubles than usually fall to the lot of a lad of his age; but he bore them all quietly, without complaint; and the heavier the burden, the more stoutly he squared his shoulders to it.

But for once he seemed shaken out of his reserve.

He was waiting in the passage outside the Head's study—waiting to be called in to see the Head. Fellows who passed glanced curiously at him, and some of them grinned. They knew the cause of his anxiety, though most of them were surprised to see him show it in this way.

Tramp, tramp!
Mark Linley seemed to have to keep in movement. Every time he turned his eye went towards the Head's study door.

Would the call never come?
Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Remove, came down the passage, and they paused to speak to Mark.

"Heard yet?"
The Lancashire lad shook his head.

"Not yet."
"Time the wire was in," said Harry Wharton, looking at his watch.

"Yes, I should think so."
"Cheer-ho!" said Bob Cherry, patting Mark on the shoulder. "There's not the slightest doubt about it, you know."

Mark smiled faintly.

"I wish I could think so," he said.

Bob stared at him in surprise. Bob Cherry's admiration for the attainments of his chum was unbounded. Mark Linley was a fellow who took Greek as an extra, of his own free will, and a fellow who could do that could do anything in the scholastic line; that was Bob's fixed opinion.

"My dear chap," said Bob, "you're an ass! There isn't the slightest doubt about it. Why, there were only four entered for the Founder's Prize."

"Well, that's three against me," said Mark. "And there would have been another, only Wharton stood out on purpose to give me a chance."

Wharton laughed.

"That's all right," he said. "I was going in for the prize, just to please my uncle if I could carry it off. But I wouldn't go in for it against a chap who needed the tin—you don't mind my saying so."

"Not at all. It's no secret that I need the tin," said Mark. "A chap who comes here on a scholarship, after working in a factory for a living, is not likely to be overburdened with money, I suppose. Although I have no fees to pay here, and the scholarship money helps me out, it's not easy for my people to keep me at a school like Greyfriars."

"I suppose so," said Bob. "But you'll make it all up to them some day, when you become a judge or a bishop, or something."

Mark laughed, forgetting his anxiety for the moment, as Bob intended that he should.

"I don't think that's ever likely to come to pass," he said. "But I hope I shall have some chance of showing father and mother how grateful I feel for what they've done for me. There are few fellows have so much to be thankful for as I have. And—and my poor old dad—"

He broke off.

"How is he now?" asked Harry.

Mark gulped something down.

"He's all right," he said. "Getting on as well as could be expected after his accident. Thanks for asking! Oh, I wish that wire would come!"

He turned away towards the door of the Head's study again.

But it remained shut.

"You'll see Trotter bring in the wire when it comes," said Harry.

Mark nodded.

"Yes, so I shall."
"It's bound to be all right. There isn't a chap in the four who had any chance against you, especially on the Greek paper. That's what kept a crowd out, you know; and that's where you get your chance."

"Yes, I thought so; but—but—"

"Which competitors are you afraid of?" asked Bob. "There's Bulstrode—but he doesn't count. As a matter of fact, Bulstrode only entered for the prize to occupy his mind by sticking at work, because of what happened to his brother. He told me he was only doing it to keep from thinking about poor Herbert. He hasn't any expectation of getting the prize—he said so—and he said, too, that he wouldn't like to take it away from you."

"No. I don't think I need fear Bulstrode."

"Then there's Skinner—but he hasn't an earthly."

Mark smiled.

"No; I expect Skinner to come in last."

"The other one is Vernon-Smith—the Bouncer! You don't think the Bouncer is likely to beat you, do you?" Harry Wharton exclaimed, in surprise.

"That's the one I fear."

"The Bouncer!"

"Yes."

"My hat!"

Wharton and Bob both stared at Mark in great surprise. Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, was the last fellow they would have thought of fearing in an exam.

The Bouncer was the blackguard of the Lower School; he had nearly every bad habit a boy could have—he smoked, he gambled in secret, he broke bounds at night to visit a public-house in the village. He turned up his nose at games, and he neglected his studies. His entering for the Founder's Prize at all was a surprise to the Remove fellows, and most of them had laughed.

To imagine him as having a chance against the keen, studious, industrious Lancashire lad seemed absurd.

Yet he was the one Mark Linley feared.

"But it's all holy rot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Why, the Bouncer would be as likely as not to send in his paper smelling of tobacco; and he'd get the order of the boot for that alone."

"He'll be too careful for that."
"But he's the biggest slacker at Greyfriars."

"Yes—by nature—but when he chooses he can work hard. And he only entered for the exam at all because I had entered, and he wanted to beat me. He doesn't need the fifty pounds; he could have twice as much by asking his father for it. As for the honour of winning, he doesn't care two straws for that. He wants to beat me, out of sheer spite; though, goodness knows, I've never done him any harm!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

Vernon-Smith's motive for entering for the Founder's Prize was well-known enough in the Remove. He did not want the money, and he cared nothing for the glory; he wanted to "take a rise" out of the "factory bouncer."

But few expected that he would succeed.

"I know that's his little game, and a rotten caddish game it is, Marky," said Wharton. "But he has no chance."

"He has a jolly good chance."

"But at Greek, too," said Bob Cherry.

"Remember one of the papers is Greek, and I've heard it's a jolly hard one, too."

Mark Linley smiled miserably.

"You don't know the Bouncer," he said.

"He can do anything he likes. Do you remember how he always sneered at footer and cricket, and never would play. But when he had a purpose to serve he bucked up, and played both games as well as any fellow in the Form. He practically won a cricket match for us—after everybody had been saying that he couldn't play for toffee. It was the same with the German prize. Nobody knew the Bouncer was strong on German—but his German paper was miles ahead of the others, and he took the prize quite easily."

"Yes, and gave it to a kid in the Second Form afterwards," said Harry Wharton wrathfully. "That was like his caddish swank. He just entered to show that he could beat Hoskins of the Shell, who expected to get it."

"Yes, and he's entered now to show that he can beat me."

"But he won't do it, old chap. He can't." Mark did not reply.

Wharton and Bob Cherry stood silent, too. Their confidence was shaken. They remembered that Vernon-Smith was indeed a "dark horse." Blackguard and rascal as the Bouncer undoubtedly was, there seemed to be no doubt that he was cleverer than most of the fellows in the Remove—and that he could do almost anything successfully when he had once set his mind to it.

At the thought of Vernon-Smith winning the Founder's Prize, both the juniors felt savagely exasperated. That prize had been founded for the benefit of needy scholars, long years ago; and for a rich fellow to enter for it was bad form, in the first place.

When Wharton had heard that Linley had entered, he had at once withdrawn his name. Common decency should have impelled Vernon-Smith to do the same. But the Bouncer was the last fellow in the world to do that.

Fifty pounds was a matter of no moment to the son of Samuel Smith, the millionaire.

The Bouncer often had bank-notes for as much as that in his pocket. But it was untold wealth to Mark Linley, the factory lad.

THE POPULAR.—No. 166.

who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship, and whose people had to pinch and contrive to keep him there. And lately Mark's father had been injured in an accident in the factory, and money was more than ever sorely needed in the poor home. The Bounder knew it all—but to the Bounder it seemed only like a chance of paying off old scores against the lad from Lancashire. Many a rub had they had—many a time had the mean, false, reckless blackguard of the Remove shrunk from the clear, scornful eyes of the scholarship boy. And Mark Linley was to pay for it all now; that was the Bounder's object. Mark thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked restlessly up and down the passage.

Would the news never come? He thought of the little home in far-off Lancashire—of the anxious mother, of his little sister—of his father stretched upon a sick-bed, his strong right arm barred from the work which had supported the home. He must have the money!

In the midst of gloomy trouble that exam. for the Founder's Prize had seemed like a beacon of light to the Lancashire lad. He had worked for that exam. as he had never worked before. It was wholly a paper exam., and the Lancashire lad had worked on his papers till his eyes were dim, and his head was aching, and his whole body was throbbing. He had sent his papers in at the finish feeling that he had put into them all that he had in him, and that if he failed it was because he simply hadn't it in him to win.

Then came the dreadful pause of more than a week, while the adjudication took place.

The news was to come to-day—a wire was to announce the name of the fortunate winner. Fuller information, as to who had taken the second prize, and so forth, and the number of marks, would follow by letter.

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation. "Here's Trotter!" Linley started, and turned round quickly, his face pale.

Trotter, the page, came along the passage with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand. He grinned a little at the sight of Mark Linley. He knew what the Lancashire lad was waiting for.

"Is that for the Head?" said Mark quickly. "Yes, Master Linley."

"Thank you!" Trotter knocked at the door of the Head's study, and went in. Mark Linley clenched his hands hard, and waited.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Bitter Blow!

MARK'S face was pale, and there were little beads of perspiration on his forehead. He waited, his face tense, and his hands hard clenched. In a few minutes now he would know the result.

Either he had won the Founder's Prize, and was the richer by fifty pounds—or else he had failed—and—and what?

He did not dare to think. If he had failed, if the money was gone, it meant that the little home in Lancashire would be sold up—that his sick father would have to go to a workhouse infirmary, and his mother to a factory.

That, and more, if he had lost! If he had won, the money would tide over the difficulties at home, and leave a little sum in hand for future emergencies. But if he had failed—

He groaned at the thought. "I say, buck up, old chap!" said Bob Cherry, in alarm. "I've never seen you like this before. Don't take it to heart like that."

"You don't understand," said Mark. "I know it must mean a lot to you, but—hang it all, cheer up! My hat!" said Bob. "You don't look like the same chap who was standing up to the niggers like a little man, when we went down to the African coast to look for my pater."

Mark smiled a little. "It's easier to stand up with a rifle and face cannibals than to face a thing like this," he said.

"Blest if I can see it. Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Trotter came out of the Head's study. The three juniors made a simultaneous movement towards him.

"Does the Head want to see Linley?" asked Harry Wharton quickly.

"He didn't say so, sir," said Trotter.

THE POPULAR.—No. 106.

Mark's heart sank. "He hasn't given you a message for me?" he asked.

"No, sir!"

"Oh!"

"Has he read the telegram?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes; he read it at once."

"Then why doesn't he want to see Linley?" growled Bob. "Blest if I catch on! He ought to want to see the winner at once, to put him out of his anxiety."

Mark was silent, his heart throbbing. But Harry Wharton asked the question that was in the Lancashire lad's mind.

"Has Dr. Locke given you a message for anyone, Trotter?"

"Yes, Master Wharton."

"For whom?"

"Master Vernon-Smith."

Mark muttered something. Bob clenched his hands.

"Vernon-Smith!" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, sir."

"You—you're sure," said Harry. "No mistake? You know what a young ass you are, Trotter. You're sure he said Vernon-Smith?"

Trotter grinned.

"Yes, sir, quite sure."

And he went down the passage to find the Bounder, and give him the message from the Head. The three juniors looked at one another.

"There must be some mistake," said Bob Cherry, not very hopefully, however.

Mark shook his head.

"There's no mistake," he said quietly. "This is what I feared; but I suppose I shall have to stand it. If it wasn't for—"

He was going to say, if it wasn't for the people at home; but he stopped himself. He never would speak of his home poverty to anyone; he shrank from sympathy on that subject, and the Lancashire lad, poor as he was, had as much pride as a prince.

"Better speak to the Head and make sure," said Harry.

"Yes, I suppose I might do that."

Mark Linley tapped at the door of the study.

"Come in!"

It was the deep voice of the Head.

The Lancashire lad opened the study door and went in, leaving Wharton and Bob Cherry waiting anxiously enough in the passage.

Mark Linley's heart was throbbing almost to suffocation as he entered the Head's study.

In spite of the fact that he had not been sent for—in spite of the fact that Vernon-Smith had been called—he nourished a hope that his name might have come out first. He had feared the competition of the Bounder; but—but all the time he had felt almost as if the prize were rightfully his—as if he must have it.

Dr. Locke looked at him over his desk and nodded.

"Ah, it is you, Linley! I suppose you are anxious to know the result of the examination for the Founder's Prize?"

"Yes, sir," said Mark, in a suffocating voice.

"I do not know the details yet," said the Head. "Those I shall know to-morrow. So far, I know simply the name of the winner, and I regret very much that the name is not yours, Linley."

Mark Linley staggered back.

He had feared it—expected it; but it came like a crushing blow, all the same! His face was white as death.

"I had fully anticipated, from the list of competitors, that you would carry off the prize, Linley," said the Head kindly. "It is a great surprise to me to find the name of Vernon-Smith as the winner. I am agreeably surprised to find that that lad knows how to work in this way—it is a great surprise."

The Head's voice seemed to Mark to be droning on from a great distance. The room was swimming round the Lancashire lad.

He had lost!

Vernon-Smith had won. But that did not matter. It did not matter who had won. He had lost!

He had told his people that he was practically certain of winning. That was before he had known that the Bounder had entered. What was he to tell them now?

Lost!

"I have not the slightest doubt that your name will come second, Linley," said the Head—"not the slightest doubt. The second prize is a valuable set of books—a most valuable set of books, which any studious boy might be proud to possess. A really thoughtful and studious lad, perhaps, would prefer

the second prize to be the first—for the books will undoubtedly remain, to be friends through life, long after the money is spent. I shall be very pleased, Linley, if it proves that the second prize is yours. Ah! Come in!"

There was a tap at the door. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, entered. Mark Linley turned dully to the door.

"Ah! Vernon-Smith! I congratulate you—"

the Bounder's eyes met Mark's for the moment, gleaming like steel with triumph. But Mark was too hard hit to feel even resentment for the ungenerous triumph of the Bounder. He crossed blindly to the door and passed out into the corridor, hardly seeing where he was going, and Bob Cherry passed an arm through his, and led him away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. In the Depths!

LETTER for Linley!

Mark Linley heard the words as he came in from the Close some time later.

The Lancashire lad was looking a little pale, but he was quite composed now. He had wrestled the matter out with himself, as it were, and had come to a more composed frame of mind. Whatever he felt, it was useless to show it—there was no object in wearing his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at.

He knew, too, that there were many fellows at Greyfriars who would be glad to see the signs of discomfiture in his face—who would rejoice to know that the "factory cad" had had a fall.

And Mark did not intend to gratify them.

Outwardly, the Lancashire lad was quite calm, as usual, only a little unaccustomed pallor in his cheeks showing that he felt the blow that had fallen upon him. Inwardly, he was suffering.

The post had come in, and many of the fellows had letters. There was a letter for Linley in the rack, and some of the juniors were standing round looking at it, some of them grinning.

The letter was addressed in a strong, uneducated hand—the hand of Mark Linley's father. Snoop especially was very much amused.

"I like that fist," he said. "You can see that the hand that wrote that was used to handling a pick or something."

"Yes, rather," said Stott.

"And why not, you cad?" exclaimed John Bull. "Is there anything disgraceful in handling a pick, you ass? Isn't a pick a more useful instrument than a pen, any day?"

Snoop sneered.

"I dare say it is," he said. "All the same I—"

"All the same, you're a low cad, and if you say any more I'll jam your head against the wall," said John Bull wrathfully.

And Frank Nugent sang out:

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here—"

he began Snoop savagely. He got no further; John Bull kept his word. He seized Snoop by the collar, ran him to the wall, and solemnly jammed his head there.

Snoop roared with anguish. He was a child in the hands of the sturdy junior. He was taller than Bull, but he never kept himself fit, and he had not the courage of a canary.

"Ow, ow! Leggo! Yow! Yah!"

Mr. Quelch came along the passage.

The master of the Remove looked sternly at John Bull.

"What is this disturbance?" he exclaimed.

"What are you doing, Bull?"

"Knocking Snoop's head against the wall, sir," said John Bull calmly.

There was a chuckle from some of the juniors. Coolness was John Bull's great gift. Mr. Quelch frowned. John Bull's coolness did not please him so much as it tickled the Removites.

"Take a hundred lines, Bull, and release Snoop at once."

"Yes, sir."

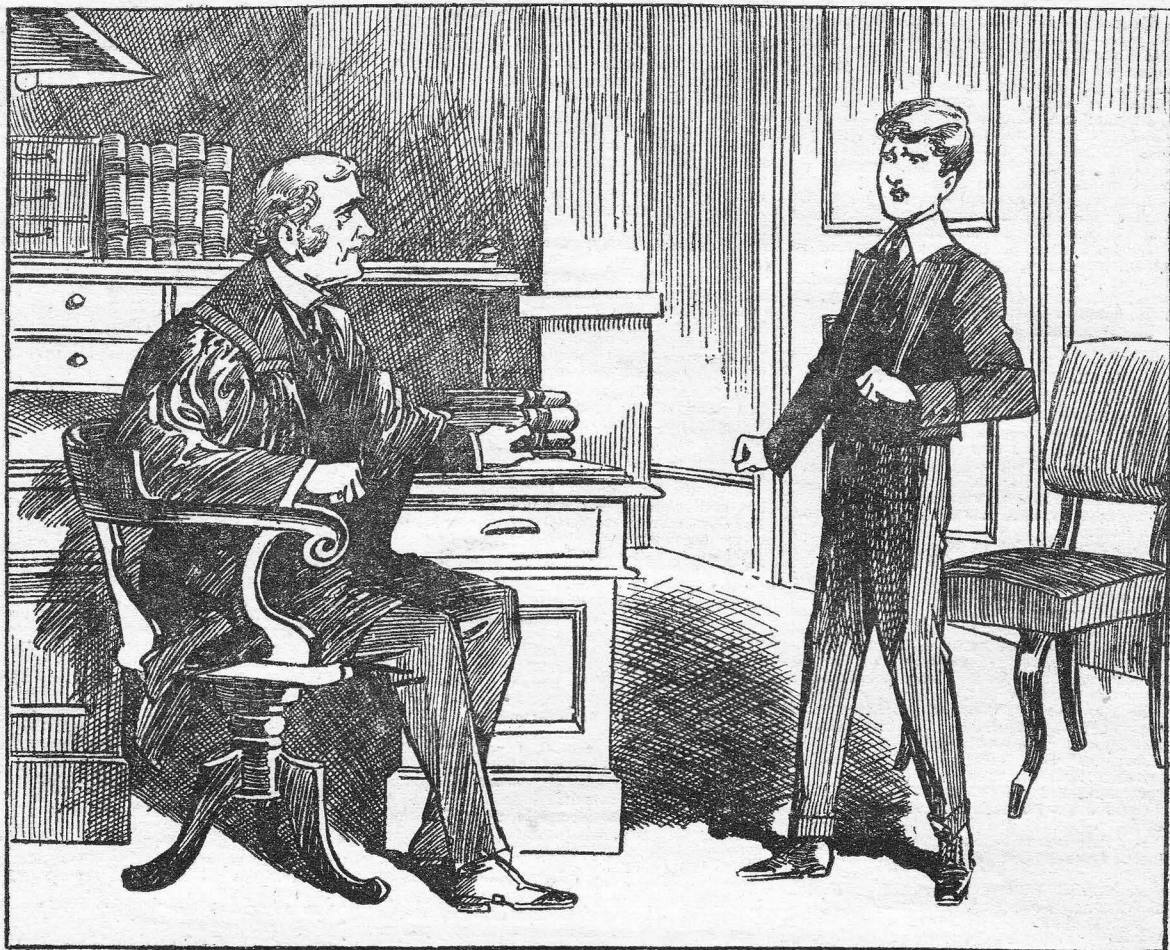
And Mr. Quelch walked away.

Snoop rubbed his head, and gave John Bull a malevolent look.

"You—you rotter!" he muttered.

Bull shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You can call me any fancy name you like," he said. "I don't mind. But if you begin any more of your caddish remarks about Linley's pater, I'll jam your head against the wall again, if I get a thousand lines for it."



"So far," said the Head, "I simply know the name of the winner, and I regret very much that the name is not yours, Linley." Mark Linley staggered back. His face went as white as a sheet. (See chapter 2.)

And Snoop, thinking that discretion was the better part of valour, said no more.

"Blest if I know why you can't keep your oar out of it, Bull," said Skinner. "Look here—"

John Bull turned on him in a flash. "Do you want your napper jammed on the wall?" he demanded.

"Oh, no!"

"Then shut up!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Marky!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's a letter for you, Marky."

"Thank you!" said Mark quietly, taking the letter.

His heart throbbed as he looked at the address on it. It was in his father's hand, and Mark could guess the contents of that letter.

Many sneering looks were cast upon him. Most of the fellows there had people who were at least well off, and they did not know poverty—the state in which the mass of the nation is plunged. To them poverty seemed mean, rotten, contemptible, disgraceful. It was a natural view for a thoughtless fellow to take.

"It's a letter asking for money," Skinner murmured to Stott. "I'll be bound his people are after that Founder's Fifty!"

"What-ho!" said Stott.

"I shouldn't wonder," Hazeldene remarked.

"I suppose they're rightfully hard up, you know, and they naturally want a look in when the kid bags fifty quid."

"He hasn't bagged it this time," said Ogilvy. "I'm sorry, too. I wish he had."

"It's hard on the cad himself," said Skinner, with an air of great fairness. "I think he's a rotten outsider, and he oughtn't to be allowed here. But as he's here, if he wins any prizes, he ought to have them."

"Oh, they're all of a sort!" said Stott.

"Lot of awful rotters, of course."

Mark Linley, careless of what the cads of

the Remove might be saying, went on up the passage with his letter. Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Busy?" he asked.

Mark stopped.

"No."

"I want to pay my subscription," said Tom Brown, diving his hand into his pocket. "I'm sorry it's so late; but you know the money had to come from Taranaki, over in Maoriland. I was hard up till the remittance came."

"It's all right," said Mark.

"Will you take it now?"

"Certainly, if you like."

"Here you are, then."

Mark took the money without counting it, and slipped it into his pocket. Tom Brown looked at him in great surprise. Mark Linley was secretary and treasurer of the Remove Football Club, and, as a rule, he was extremely careful and methodical in his accounts. The fellows had been glad to get him as treasurer for that reason, because he didn't mind how much trouble he took, and because he could always be relied upon to have the accounts exactly in order.

But certainly order and method seemed to have departed from him now.

"I—I say," said Tom Brown, as Mark turned to go upstairs, "we made it a rule for the treasurer to give a receipt for the payments, you know."

"Oh, I forgot!"

"I don't mind, of course," said Tom hastily; "but—but it's more in order, in case of any forgetfulness on either side."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mark; "I forgot! I'm sorry! I will give you the receipt."

He pencilled the receipt.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" asked Tom, looking at him curiously.

"No, only—well, I've lost the Founder's,

and I feel a little upset about it, that's all," said Mark in his frank way.

"Oh, sorry I bothered you now!"

"It's all right."

"I'm sorry about the prize, too," said Tom Brown sincerely. "I was certain you would pull it off, you know, and certainly I jolly well hoped you would. Do you know who's got it?"

"Vernon-Smith!"

"My hat!"

Mark Linley went upstairs. He went into his own study—the study he shared with Bob Cherry at the end of the Remove passage. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese, made a third in the study. But neither Bob nor Wun Lung was there now, and Mark was glad to see that he had the room to himself. He wanted to be alone.

He sat down to read his letter.

It was from his father, and it was the kind, strong, hopeful letter that the lad knew he would receive from the brave and sturdy Lancashire man.

"Dear Marky,—We are all glad to hear you feel so hopeful about getting the prize. I know what you mean to do with the munny—I know, my lad! But we sha'n't let you part with all of it. You shall help us over this bad time; but half the munny shall be put in the bank for you, and in your name, for you will need it when you get into a higher Form at your big school. Don't say any more about being a worrit to us. It's nothing of the kind. You don't know how proud and pleased your owd folk are to see you getting on so fine."

Mark lowered the letter.

The tears were blinding his eyes.

His father said nothing of it, but Mark knew—knew only too well—the bitter need there was for that money in the far-off home.

He knew that his father had not had work for weeks, that illness had sapped away the little savings of the thrifty family, that there were bills to be paid, rent in arrears, a hard and grasping landlord to be faced. He knew it only too well!

He had not been away from home long enough to forget the troubles of home, in the class he belonged to—that brave and hard-fighting class, which does so much of the work of the world and wins so little reward.

How was he to write and tell his father that he had been over-confident—that he had lost the prize—that there was no money?

He knew that he had not a word of reproach to expect. It was not that, but the blow it would be to his people. And, besides, what were they to do? Without money, the little home would be broken up.

Mark groaned aloud.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Many Friends!

VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was in high feather. He had won the Founder's Prize—one of the biggest things going at Greyfriars for the junior Form. He had beaten Mark Linley, who had been generally considered to have a "dead cert" in that direction.

And the Bounder of Greyfriars was very, very pleased with himself.

Not that he cared twopence for the money. He could have had as much by asking his father for it if he had wanted it. Samuel Smith, the millionaire, did not stint his hopeful son—indeed, many of Vernon-Smith's vies might have been directly traced to the circumstance that he had more pocket-money than was good for him.

Neither was the honour of winning of much account to the Bounder; for scholastic distinctions he cared not a straw.

But he had triumphed. He had a peculiar kind of vanity—he liked to show that he could do things easily that other fellows did with difficulty, or could not do at all.

For that reason he had thrown himself into football once and came out ahead as a splendid player; for the same reason he had distinguished himself at cricket, and then dropped the game entirely.

Nobody had believed that at the exam for the "Founder's Fifty," as the juniors called it, he would have a chance against Mark Linley.

He had proved that he had a chance—a winning chance—and he had avenged himself upon the Lancashire lad—two very gratifying circumstances to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Not that Mark, either, had done anything to provoke his dislike, apart from being quiet and decent and clean-living—a contrast to the Bounder. But those were the reasons why the Bounder could never endure him.

Fellows like Wharton and Bob Cherry, Nugent and John Bull took to the boy who had been a factory lad, and stood his firm friends through thick and thin. They did not take to the Bounder; and his reckless extravagance, his piles of money, did not make them do so. The best set in the Remove did not care a straw for his money, or for the millions of Samuel Vernon-Smith.

And at that the Bounder chafed.

He had hit Mark Linley hard, and through Mark he had hit the other fellows hard, and therefore he rejoiced.

And there were plenty of fellows to congratulate him. Few, if any, liked him. But a good many liked his money and the free way he spent it. And fellows like Snoop and Skinner liked his reckless, blackguardly ways, too, and were glad to be taken on little excursions with him to haunts forbidden by the rules of the college—rules at which the Bounder snapped his fingers.

It was a marvel to many how it was that Vernon-Smith escaped being expelled, and many surmised some mysterious influence which his pater exercised over either the Head or the Board of Governors.

Fifty pounds was a large sum for a junior to possess, and the Bounder's ways were too well known for him to be supposed to have any intention of saving any of it.

He was certain to expend it, or most of it, in some jollification—some celebration which would not bear the light in all probability; and there were many fellows who were only too eager to be asked to it.

Fellows dropped into Vernon-Smith's study by chance, as it were, during the afternoon.

THE POPULAR.—No. 106.

The Bounder was not playing football, he was not on the river, he was not in the gym. He was occupying the crisp winter's afternoon by sitting in his study, smoking cigarettes and poring over a betting-book. It was a marvel how the Bounder kept himself fit, considering the life he led, yet he never seemed to be seedy.

After a night out of bounds with Vernon-Smith, Skinner or Snoop would look like ghosts on the following morning; but the Bounder himself seemed to be made of iron.

When a fellow dropped in, and began to talk about the weather or the football or the Founder's Fifty, Vernon-Smith grinned quietly.

He knew what they wanted, and he asked those whom he had already selected in his own mind to join his party, and the others he did not ask, in spite of the most genial blandishments.

The Bounder was one who was not asked. The fat junior rolled into Vernon-Smith's study with his most ingratiating smile turned on, and blinked at Vernon-Smith through his big spectacles in a way that was meant to be very engaging.

The Bounder raised his pencil to point to the door.

Billy Bunter blinked round at the door, not understanding for the moment what the Bounder intended to convey, or, perhaps, not caring to understand.

"Outside!" said the Bounder.

"Eh?"

"Get out!"

"I came to speak to you on a rather important matter. I want to congratulate you about winning the prize first. I'm so jolly glad that factory cad never got it," said Bunter. "He's an insulting beast! Of course, I knew that he hadn't an earthly all along when I knew that you had entered!"

"Liar!" said the Bounder calmly.

"Eh?"

"You know very well that you thought I hadn't an earthly against Linley," said the Bounder. "So did all the other fellows. I had some doubts myself."

"Yes; that—that's exactly what I meant to say!" stammered Bunter. "I—I meant that you hadn't an earthly, you know—"

"Oh, get out!"

"I'm sincerely glad you won! I've been thinking that, as you are simply rolling in money at the present moment, you might care to make me a small advance upon a postal-order I'm expecting—"

"Travel! I haven't the money, you young ass! If I had, it would make no difference!"

"No; but you can borrow on it," said Bunter. "You see, you can borrow on your expectations. Lots of chaps do, who have relations who are going to die and leave them money, you know."

"Are you going?"

"With you—for the celebration?" said Bunter, purposely misunderstanding. "Certainly! I shall be very pleased indeed to accept your kind invitation—"

"You'll be pleased to accept a thick ear, you fat duffer, if you don't get outside this study!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smythy—"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet, and the Owl of the Remove skipped hurriedly to the door. He stood with the handle of the door in his grasp, ready to bolt if the Bounder made a step towards him.

"Now, look here, Smythy," he said. "I want you to be businesslike! If you hand me a pound, I'll give you twenty-five bob for it when my postal-order comes to-morrow!"

"Cut!"

"Anyway, I know you're going to stand a feed out of that prize, and I'll come," said Bunter. "You will need a good cook, and I'm a good cook!"

"There won't be any cooking, fathead!"

"Well, I don't mind if it's a cold collation," said Bunter. "I can enjoy a cold chicken as much as anybody."

"I dare say you can," said the Bounder, with a grin. "But you won't have any cold chickens at my expense—"

"Oh, really, Smythy—"

"Buzz off!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, picking up a ruler.

Bunter dodged outside the door. Then he put his head cautiously into sight again.

"Look here, Smythy—"

Crash!

The ruler crashed to the door, and Bunter gave a yell and jumped away. The next moment he put his head in again.

"You rotter!" he yelled. "You blessed parvenu, I wouldn't come to your mouldy old feed if you asked me, now! Yah! Beast!"

And Bunter fled down the passage—so suddenly that he fled right into a junior who was coming to the study, and there was a terrific collision.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"You silly ass!" roared Hazeldene, catching Bunter by the collar. "You chump—"

"Ow! Oh, really—"

"You—you—"

Bunter twisted himself away and ran. Hazeldene kicked wildly after him, missed, and lost his balance, and sat down on the linoleum.

Vernon-Smith stood in the study doorway, laughing.

Hazeldene limped up.

"Hallo! I was just coming to see you!" he said.

"Come in!" said the Bounder cordially.

Hazeldene entered the study.

"Sit down!" said the Bounder. "What is it? Have you seen Marjorie lately?"

Hazeldene coloured uneasily. He wished that the Bounder would not speak of his sister, but it could not be helped.

"Yes," he said, "I've been over to Cliff House this afternoon."

"Good! You might have mentioned that you were going, and I would have come with you," said Vernon-Smith.

Hazeldene's colour deepened. It was for precisely that reason that he had not mentioned the matter to Vernon-Smith.

"Well, I'll think of it another time," he said. "I really looked in just now to congratulate you about the prize."

"Oh, thanks!" said the Bounder carelessly. "I'm sorry about Linley; but I'm glad you've got it! I suppose you're going to have a bit of a celebration?"

"Yes; I've asked some fellows. Look here, I'd like you to come—"

"Good!"

"And bring your sister. I'm thinking of having a nice little party, quite suitable for a girl to come to," the Bounder added. "She could bring Miss Clara with her, of course!"

Hazel shook his head.

"It's no good; she won't come!"

"How do you know?"

"You know she doesn't get on with you, Smythy. It's no good talking about it; she doesn't like you. I don't like telling you so, but there it is."

"You might ask her."

"It wouldn't be any good."

"Just as you like," said the Bounder, with a bitter gleam in his eyes, in spite of his careless tones. "It's of no importance. If there are no ladies present, however, the party will be a bit—well, a bit more lively! I couldn't think of asking such a nice, well-conducted chap as you are! Will you excuse me now? I'm busy!"

He turned to his book again, and began jotting in figures with his pencil. Hazeldene rose and stood irresolute. He wanted very much to make one of Vernon-Smith's little party, but he knew the hard nature of the Bounder.

"I say, Smythy—" he said weakly.

The Bounder did not even look round. Hazeldene hesitated another minute or so, and then quitted the study.

Then the Bounder looked up, with a savage snap of the teeth.

"She won't come!" he muttered. "And yet she'd come like anything if—if it were that beggar—that factory cad Linley who asked her! Hang him—hang him! But I think I've settled him this time, anyway!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Cross-roads of Life!

MARK LINLEY, if he could have heard that remark of the Bounder's, would probably have agreed with him fully—that Vernon-Smith had "settled him" this time.

He had to reply to his father's letter, and he had to tell his father that he had lost instead of won the Founder's Fifty.

How was he to tell the old man so—to tell him that the last hope of saving his home was gone?

He drew pen and paper towards him, and began to write.

"Dear Dad—"

There he stopped.

He sat at the table, biting the handle of the pen, staring at the paper before him, till the two words he had written danced before his weary eyes.

He could not go on.

He rose, and walked about the room, thrusting his hands into his pockets, or fold-

ing them behind him, unable to still his restless movements.

"Dad could stand it, sick as he is," murmured Mark; "but mother, and Mabel—Oh!"

He sat down again. His pen ran on over the paper.

"Dear Dad—"

He drove on the pen, forcing himself to write. After all, the letter had to be written; it was a task that had to be done.

"Dear Dad,—I'm sorry to have to tell you that I've been disappointed about the prize. I haven't won it. I shall not get the fifty pounds; and the second prize, even if I get it, is a set of books—"

He broke off, threw down the pen, and tore the letter into pieces.

"I can't do it—I can't do it!"

He took out his books; he opened Xenophon and his Greek Grammar. As a rule, when he was worried or bothered, he could find relief in work. When the fellows had ragged him in the Remove, when matters had gone wrong in any way, he always had his work to retire to, and he could bury himself in it and forget his troubles.

But now the Greek characters danced before his eyes.

He could not fix his attention upon them; he could make no meaning of the simplest sentence.

He pushed the books away with a groan.

"I can't work! Oh, what shall I do?"

He felt that he must have some occupation or he would become distracted. He shrank from going out into the sunshine. He knew that his face was haggard, and he did not want the fellows to see it. And the crispness of the winter afternoon, the bare trees, the blue, smiling sky seemed to mock him.

The money that Tom Brown had paid him clinked in his pocket as he moved. He remembered it, and took it out and laid it upon the table. He had some work to do as treasurer of the football club, and he drew his book from the drawer of the table, and unlocked the box he kept the funds in.

Tom Brown's subscription clinked into the box.

Mark stared at the money.

The clink of the coins seemed to exercise a strange fascination over him. He looked at them dazedly.

Notes and silver—silver and notes!

There were many subscribers to the Remove football club, and they had mostly paid up by this time, and little of the money had been, so far, expended.

In the keeping of Mark Linley it was as safe as in a bank—or safer. So, at all events, everybody in the Remove thought. Even Mark's bitterest enemies would not have hinted that his honesty was not beyond question.

Mark gazed at the money.

A few pounds—that was all! But a few pounds was all that was required to keep the wolf from the door at home—all that was needed to save his people. He had hoped to win fifty, but fifty was not required. Ten pounds would have been sufficient; ten pounds would have answered the purpose.

And now, here—

Mark Linley gazed at the money, gleaming and glimmering under his eyes.

His hand stole into the box; he played with coins, clinking them against one another, and then pouring them out on the table.

Money, money, money!

The money he needed!

His for the taking—his if he chose to take it. He would have to leave Greyfriars; but he had to leave Greyfriars anyway, to work. Why should he not save those who looked to him for help?

Thief!

Some strange voice from the distance seemed to whisper the word, and Mark started and clenched his teeth.

Thief!

Yes, that was what he would be if he yielded to this temptation. A thief!

But to save his people—so save those he loved—would it not be justifiable? Surely no lad had ever been exposed to such a temptation before?

Would it not be justifiable?

After all, the fellows would not miss the money much. New goalposts for the footer ground, new flags—Pah! What did all that matter when it was a question of life

or death, perhaps, to a sick man, of shelter and food, or of homeless wandering and famine, to a woman and a little girl?

Mark's hand closed on the coins.

Surely—

A footstep sounded in the passage—the footstep of someone passing along the Remove studies.

Mark Linley started—started like a thief—and cast a guilty look towards the door.

If the door opened—

The footstep passed on.

The boy breathed again.

But his heart was still throbbing—throbbing as if it would burst. His dazed eyes turned upon the glimmering coins.

Thief!

The horrible word seemed to ring from somewhere, as if it had been spoken. Thief!

But why not a thief, then, if it was to save his father and his mother and his little sister from want? Who should blame him? The dreadful sophistry that is never wanting when temptation comes was sapping away his resistance. Yet all the time he knew that if he stole, if he took what did not belong to him, he would become a moral outcast—he would become a boy who was not fit to breathe in the same atmosphere as a decent lad.

He knew it!

All the time he knew it, yet the temptation tugged at his heart, and his hand still lay upon the glimmering coins.

Mark Linley was at the cross-roads—the cross-roads of life. Upon his decision rested all that mattered to him—upon it depended whether he should go through life with his head erect, fearing to look no man in the face, or whether he should slink through it with drooping head and shamed look—a thief, fit for no honest man to touch.

With a sudden, almost violent, gesture of disgust, Mark Linley turned down the lid of the box, locked it, and walked out of the study.

Mark Linley had overcome the temptation to steal that which not his. And, later on, he was to be glad that he had not given way.

THE END.

A MARKED MAN!

(Continued from page 8.)

direction of the house, with the ever-watchful Locke at his heels.

Only one momentary glimpse did the detective catch of him as he passed through a beam of light that still streamed out into the darkness from one of the downstairs windows. Despite the disguise of the flowing, iron-grey beard, the shaggy eyebrows hanging over the deep-set, piercing eyes, Locke had his man placed.

"It is Justin Leigh himself!" was the agonising thought that beat into his brain. "Harry is the son of a potential murderer and a thief!"

Only for a moment did he allow the knowledge to affect him; the next, he was back at the spot where the digging operations had been so savagely abandoned. For an hour or more, in fact, until the night was far advanced, he dare not trust himself to make any close investigations, but before the dawn he had taken from the soft, down-trodden earth two sets of impression of Justin Leigh's footprints.

"These will prove him either innocent or guilty of the graver crime," he said, wrapping up the glue stearins with great care.

Even to Ferrers Locke, accustomed as he was to surprising discoveries, it seemed unbelievable that Justin Leigh, the great philanthropist, the ready giver to charity, the man whose name was blessed in a thousand Midland homes, should have such a dark and terrible secret in his life. He fought hard to fight down the almost certain suspicion and his mistrust of the man when he called that day again at the house.

At first Leigh refused to see him, but the detective remained constant; he would see Mr. Leigh if he waited a week.

The old man, wild-eyed and pallid-faced, greeted him with marked hostility.

"Well, Ferrers, what's in the back of your

mind that you won't take 'No' for an answer, when I tell you I don't want to be bothered?" he asked, feeling his way suspiciously.

Locke laid his hat, gloves, and stick deliberately on the table, and faced the other coolly.

"Mr. Leigh, as one who has long been admitted on terms of closest friendship to your house, I don't wish to appear rude, but on behalf of one, in whom, as you know, I have the greatest interest, I venture to ask you why you have kept Harry locked up in this house—a prisoner against his will?"

Leigh's eagle eyes twinkled fiercely.

"What right have you to question me?"

NOW ON SALE! GET THEM AT ONCE.

SCHOOL, SPORT, & ADVENTURE TALES, BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

No. 538.—CORNIISH GRIT.

Splendid Tale of Mining Adventure.
By HERBERT MAXWELL.

No. 539.—THE PREFECTS OF BOWKER'S HOUSE.

Superb Yarn of Jack Jackson and his Chums at Wycliff.
By JACK NORTH.

No. 540.—FOOTER ON FOREIGN FIELDS.

Grand Story of a Footer Tour on the Continent.
By ALAN DENE.

No. 541.—MICK OF THE MOVIES.

Stirring Story of the Cinema.
By STANTON HOPE.

THE BOYS' FRIEND 4d. LIBRARY.

"The right of being Harry's friend."
"My treatment of him is no concern of yours. I will trouble you, Mr. Locke, to mind your own business!"

His thin hand moved out to ring the bell, but with a quiet gesture the detective detained him.

"You are aware that I know how you have kept him shut away of late."

"You have dared to enter my house secretly."

"I have to dare anything, Mr. Leigh; it is the nature of my profession."

"Get out! Leave this room at once!"

"Certainly!" Locke picked up his hat.

"Do I understand you refuse me permission to see Harry?"

"He is not here. If he were, I should not allow you to see him."

"May I ask where he can be found?"

"Somewhere away from your meddlesomeness. I don't know that I ever approved very greatly of you even as his friend. I disapprove of you most emphatically now, and shall be obliged if you will never enter my house again!"

The detective bowed with mock politeness.

"Thank you, Mr. Leigh. Your wishes shall be respected. But as you refuse to enlighten me—"

The old man drew a chair towards his rosewood desk, and sat down as though almost unconscious of the other's presence.

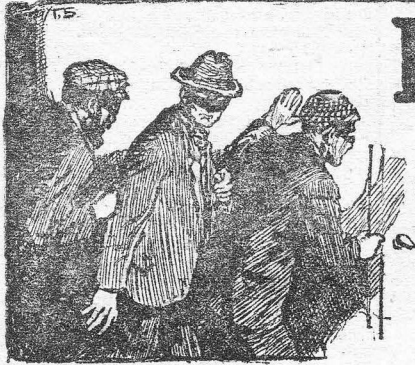
"Concerning Harry's whereabouts," Locke went on coolly. "I think it only fair to warn you that among other things I shall make it my business—my very earnest business—to assure myself he is in perfect safety, and is not the object in any adverse action on the part of interested parties. I wish you a very good morning!"

The door closed behind him, leaving Justin Leigh trembling like a leaf.

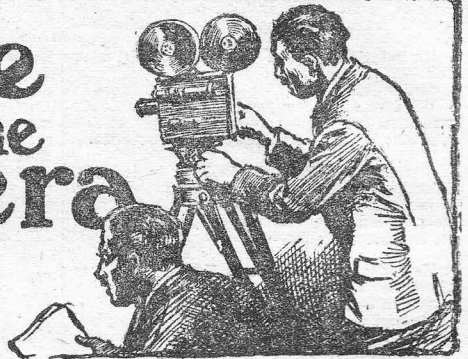
"Curse that fellow! I wonder if, after all, he really is dangerous?" he mumbled weakly. "At any rate, if he sets himself to fight me he has Adrian Vaughan to reckon with, too, and Vaughan, in my opinion, is by far the cleverer man of the two."

(Exciting incidents in next week's instalment.)
THE POPULAR.—No. 166.

CONCLUSION OF A GRAND LIFE STORY!



Before the Camera



A STIRRING STORY OF THE FAMOUS FILM STAB'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 managership 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.

Eddie Polo has news that the Eclair Company have lost much of their money on several unsuccessful films, and he suggests to Morrison that they should turn out a circus story. Mr. Morrison agrees, and they travel down to Busto's circus to film the scenes. One day Eddie has a surprise when two men arrive at the circus as acrobats, who turn out to be Bobbin and an old enemy of Eddie's, Del Rogeriguo. There is a competition between the three acrobats. During the performance Polo falls from the top of the tent, and catches both the other men by the waist as he passes.

(Now read on.)

The New Film!

EDDIE POLO caught the lowest trapeze with his legs, crooked his knees over the bar in the space of a thought, and hooked his ankles together to hold the better, leaving the two other acrobats hanging by their waistbands, each at the end of one of his powerful arms.

And after that both Bobbin and Del Rogeriguo refused to compete further, and the plaudits of the crowd when Busto announced that Eddie Polo was the winner of the hundred dollars showed that he had chosen rightly. And while the audience, satisfied that they had received more than their money's worth, filed out of the theatre, Terence, the camera fiend, and Miles, his assistant, chuckling with glee at hundreds of feet of super-excellent film, eagerly sought a dark room. Eddie Polo, Mr. Morrison, and Mr. Busto, together with Bobbin and Del Rogeriguo, made their way to Busto's caravan to talk things over.

Eddie took the floor.

"As you've guessed, Mr. Busto," he said, "one of these chaps is Del Rogeriguo. The other, Mr. Morrison, is Bobbin. No, don't get shirty, and pull guns on 'em. I've made certain promises that I'd like to keep. You, Busto, are shy of an acrobat—a good trapeze man. I know you wouldn't take Del Rogeriguo on again at any price, but what's the matter with Bobbin, the other man? You've seen that he can do ordinary work, and has brains enough to think out an occasional thrill now and then. Well, what about it? Mr. Morrison will give you all the references you're likely to require, and, seeing that the only fault I have to find with the man is his silly jealousy of me, I can't make out that he'd not be doing you a good turn by taking on the job, and you'd be doing him a good one by offering it. Wait, though; I'm not making myself responsible for his future good behaviour, but during such times as we stay with the show to do

THE POPULAR.—No. 106.

the filming part of the business, I'll undertake to visit his sins upon his hide if he commits any."

"Well, Eddie," said Busto slowly, "you ain't the sorter chap to recommend anybody what can't do their work, and as I've seen to-night, this chap ain't bad. Anyway, he's better than the greaser there, not mentioning the fact that, if he was loose in the place, Bud Truefit'd be likely to shoot him full of holes, and afterwards hand him to the razor-backs to lynch. Well, if he's willing—I am. What sorter wages was you thinking about, Mr. Bobbin?"

"Hold on a minute! There's the greaser to deal with," interpolated Eddie. "Suppose we add him to the cast of the film as the masked rival acrobat in the circus, and we do it at the regular afternoon performances—or we can run special shootings now that Busto is fixed up for a star turn? In this case, I will be responsible for the man's behaviour, though Busto will do all the referencing, because if the greaser tries to play anything on me that isn't strictly inside the game, I'll turn him over to Ginger Wiggles the clown, and Del Rogeriguo knows what that means."

"Well, Polo," said Morrison, "you're author and producer and star turn in this new film, 'Under the Big Top,' and as such you have a voice in selecting the cast. This chap has already appeared in the opening part of it—Terence tells me he's got a whale of a take—and I don't see why, properly handled and fed occasionally, he shouldn't serve. Engage him if you like, but I'll shoot him out of hand if I catch him planning mischief. That's all!"

And thus it came about that Eddie Polo made his final link secure, and it was not because he had a swelled head that he considered he had a claim on both the greaser and Bobbin, having found them both permanent jobs.

Though the life was strange to Stella, who was cast for the part of a daughter of Busto who was in love with the star acrobat—Eddie Polo—and beloved of the masked acrobat—Del Rogeriguo—and to most of the others—Eddie himself it was as the breath of life. And as he spent most of his days rehearsing the company in their various parts, and in carefully preventing them from learning Del Rogeriguo's real identity, he had little time to spare. He made the greaser try all the tricks he had previously tried, only this time the greaser had to perform his actions under the all-seeing eye of the camera, and Terence himself freely confessed that the stunts were more than a little thrilling at times.

Things went well for a time—on the surface, at any rate. Eddie and his company occupied the big top almost the whole of the forenoon and every afternoon when there wasn't a matinee. They accompanied the circus on its travels, and here several scenes were shot, as in the story of Eddie's life which has already been told in these pages. They visited the gulch where Del Rogeriguo and Lopez had fought Eddie and Red Cloud for Esta, and Esta herself found great joy in playing the minor feminine lead. They even tarred and feathered a dummy greaser, who ran for his life; they even—this was after Morrison had got a big brand-new big tent from New York for replacement purposes—set fire to the old tent while Eddie was aloft on the trapeze to illustrate his

method of letting the people out through the slit away canvas wall, and altogether the film promised to be a most excellent thing.

A Hard Blow!

AND so it came about that Morrison decided to film the first escape of Del Rogeriguo and his pursuit by Eddie, where the supposed sheriff rounded up the greaser, and then held up the whole camp. The country was ideal for the work, and the weather was just right. Both Miles and Terence were detailed to accompany the expedition, and, according to programme, so were things worked out.

Del Rogeriguo stole his horse and set fire to the big top. Eddie chased him, and was thrown. The mock sheriff—Dick Fordyce—cantered up and secured the greaser, and brought him back with a pair of guns which, for the sake of safety, were empty. And while Miles shot away with his camera at the Spaniard and the Englishman, Terence was constantly in attendance on Eddie. The scene had just reached the point where Del Rogeriguo is turned over to Eddie, and both cameras were clicking busily, when an interruption came.

"You will oblige me, gentlemen," said a suave, oily voice just behind them, "by hoisting your hands right up into the air. I'm sorry to discommode you, but I happen to have the drop on the lot of you, and my comrades yonder will shoot at the first sign of movement from any of you. That's right. Thank you!"

The camera handles ceased clicking as if by a miracle; Del Rogeriguo, Dick Fordyce, and Eddie Polo, all seated in their respective saddles, held their hands above their heads as required. Facing them was a man with his nose and mouth and chin covered by an orange-coloured bandanna, and a hefty automatic in each hand.

"Yes, gents all," said this latter, "I thought I'd surprise you. If you look carefully at a dozen rifle muzzles; they are those of my men, and for your information, I may say that I had the greatest difficulty in persuading them not to shoot you down first and take your surplus wealth from you afterwards. You will observe that I do not get between the rifles and yourselves, and that I have the prior means of argument; also, I happen to know that the guns with which you were covering that man with the black mask just now, Mr. Fordyce, were unloaded."

"You know my name?" gasped Dick.

"And many other things about you," was the cool reply. "I know you all, and it may be that you all know me. But, gents all, I haven't a lot of time to waste being sociable just now, and, while my friends cover you, I'll just step aside and allow you to drop your watches, rings, money, dollar bills, greenbacks, gold certificates, and other signs of unearned increment into a neat and convenient heap on the sand, after which you will fall back ten paces and allow me to collect the boodle. Thank you!"

There was no help for it; there wasn't a loaded gun among the whole party. Del Rogeriguo led the way, cursing in Mexican Spanish as he took out his earrings, and cast them to the ground. Terence had other ideas.

"Say, bo!" he exclaimed, after depositing his pocket-book and gold watch at the bandit's feet. "This would make a fine scene for the fillums. You've got my filthy boodle. Is there any objection to me shooting the rest of these chaps giving up their wealth, so's we can work it into a picture? The camera ain't a machine-gun, and don't throw out sudden death! Well, going to be a sport, and let me take the scene?"

"It matters nothing to me," said the other. "You have paid your toll; get on with your job. You may include me in your picture if you so desire. I am Bad Big Bill, late of Arizona, if you should require an introduction, and as I have my features carefully covered, there should be no chance of the police recognising me when your picture is shown. It will be more than a little amusing for you to see yourselves being robbed of your valuables, and I hope I may one day see the picture myself."

The little heap grew bigger and bigger, and Eddie Polo noticed that one of the automatics was constantly pointing in his own direction, as though the robber could understand what was going on in his mind. For Eddie was considering the possibility of suddenly spurring his horse forward on to the man, and chancing the bullets from the rifles, but he could see that the first movement of his foot would bring a bullet—and so, being wise, he refrained, which was what was expected of him.

The man gathered up his valuables, still with that gun trained on Eddie, and stuffing them into various pockets, stepped back towards the cover of the rocks and disappeared. The rifles still covered the party, and they stood stock-still for a further ten minutes, though the strain of holding their hands aloft was awful.

"I'm for chancing it," said Eddie. "Come along!"

He drove the spurs into his horse, and the animal bounded forward, Eddie crouching low. To his surprise, and the surprise of those who followed him, there came no crackling of rifles, no shot of any kind; and as they topped the rise they understood. The things which had appeared like rifle muzzles from a short distance were pieces of ordinary stick stuck into crevices—they had been covered by dummy guns. And though they searched for an hour before they returned to camp, they found not a single trace of the daring and genial joint who had held them up.

They took the thing in good form, and laughed most heartily as they entered camp, intending to retail the story at supper that night, though the drinks were on them. But they did not carry out this intention, because they were met by a most agitated Morrison.

"Heavens, lad!" he said. "Have you seen the film?"

"What film?" asked Terence. "Faith, we've seen a robber—"

"Then you've seen the film also," said the director despairingly. "The robber and the film have gone off together. All our work is wasted. Somebody's stolen, Terence, every foot of film you've exposed in 'Under the Big Top'—every stunt that you've risked your neck for, Eddie!"

The news fell like a thunderbolt, and it effectually quashed the mirth of the five at having been fooled by the man who had relieved them of their valuables.

"Who's done it?" asked Miles, when he recovered his breath. "Lord, to think that I've raced and chased all over three States to get the stuff that's on that fillum, and now it's been lifted! Boss, we've just been held up by a rustler, with a dummy rifle, like babes out of school, and he's taken our spare cash and personal jewellery. But this is the earnings of us all. Who's taken it?"

"I don't know," said Morrison. "I was in the big tent discussing a—er—a cup of tea with Busto, and when I went back to our caravan, I found the safe had been busted open, and the developed film stolen! The thief wasn't after money, or else he was in too big a hurry to notice it, because he left a pile of gold certificates behind him. One of the razorbacks says he saw a queer-looking cuss—a stranger—loafing about in this direction, but the only thing he remembers is that the fellow wore a vivid orange neckerchief, and—"

"Orange neckerchief!" shouted Eddie. "Got it! The man who rustled you is the same man who rustled us! Busto, where's Red Cloud?"

"I am here," said the Indian himself, with much dignity. "Does the white brother desire to use me?"

"I do," said Eddie. "I want you to come with me into the sage and try and pick up

the track of a joint who's been rustling us, and who's stolen our films."

So Terence, Morrison, Eddie, Fordyce, and two others, mounted on Busto's best horses, and armed at all points with various kinds and sizes of pocket artillery; Red Cloud, on his native mustang, nosed for a time around the caravan from which the precious film had been stolen, and then, like an energetic bloodhound, stuck spurs into the pony's side and darted off on a trail, which, to him, was as plain as day, up through the alkali and sage brush into the plains. And, behind him, with guns loaded and holsters unbuttoned, rode Eddie Polo and his comrades, now no longer laughing, but with stern, set features.

With Red Cloud following the trail in the lead, the little party rode onwards at high speed, and presently on to where the actors had been held up by the man with orange bandage around his face. The sticks were still projecting from the rock crevices as evidence of the truth of their story, but now they raised no laugh—things were too serious

along and irrigated the whole of that otherwise dry region.

"Why, a man would be able to hide in that blessed canyon for months," said Morrison. "While we were searching the forest on one side, he could be on the other, dodging us all the time. We're looking for a needle in a haystack."

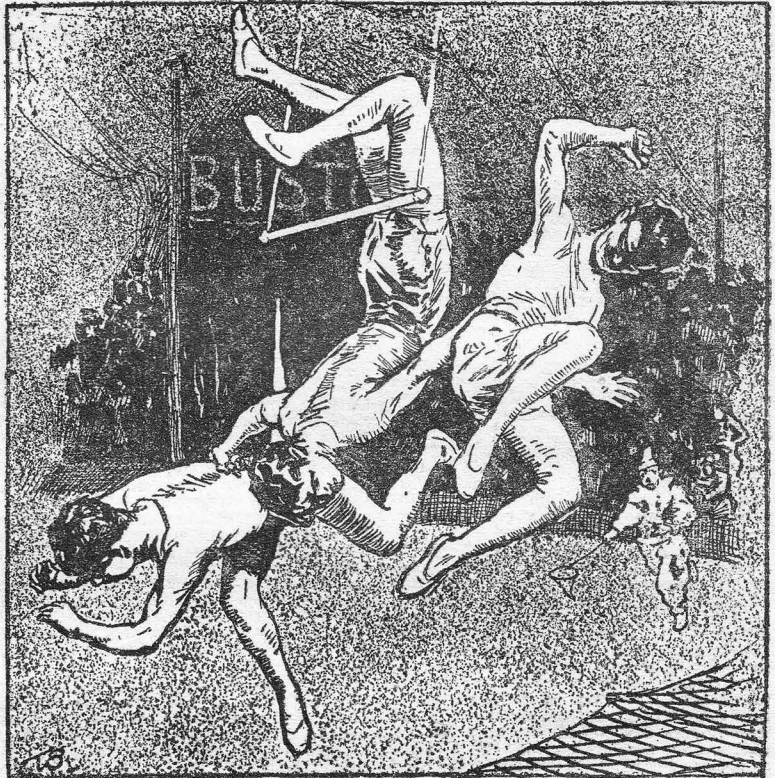
Eddie choked back an "I told you so," and nodded grimly.

Red Cloud suddenly checked on the very edge of the arroyo, and looked around him.

"Hum!" he exclaimed, a moment later. "Cloud no like that. Man, him come here—look'm, there's him track. Then him stop—no more track nowhere. There, too, am track of box him carry—look!"

With his finger Red Cloud traced in the ground the outline of a box, which Morrison recognised as that which contained the film. Only the Indian's keen and trained eyes could discern the impress of the box on the alkali, it was so faint.

"No good him go furder this night," said Red Cloud. "Too dark to follow him track."



Eddie Polo caught the lowest trapeze with his legs, and crooked his knees over the bar. The two other acrobats were left hanging by their waists, each at the end of one of his powerful arms. (See page 14.)

for that." Red Cloud took the outcrop at a jump, and the others followed. But on the other side he suddenly checked, and, dismounting, examined the ground carefully.

"One man—two man, him have been here," announced the Indian. "One man him stay long time; sleep here last night. Other man, him go away—go towards circus. Mebbe he 'long Busto—mebbe 'son. Him tread like cat—like 'crobat. Odder man, him man step out there on alkali, den joomp here, and run under scrub and sage into the gorge down there. No pony, no mustang; him have no horse, can't be far ahead. Slow—we go slow. Red Cloud walk and point out track."

"I wish we could stay the setting of the sun," said Eddie presently, as they picked their way down the sides of a rocky ravine, where at times even their untrained eyes could discern traces of the man's passage. Here, a slither in the dry, sandy alkali; there, the scrape of a shot boot, obviously fresh, on the moss-grown side of a jutting outcrop of rock. The ravine was the one, by the way, where Eddie and Red Cloud had originally fought Del Rogeriquo and Lopez, and at the bottom of which the latter was buried long since, in the stream that prattled

'Sides, no track of him to follow. Sleep now. Cloud will be ready to move, sun or moon him come up."

In their inexperience, Miles, Terence, Fordyce, and Morrison, were for pressing on, but Eddie at last, convinced them that the Indian was right and that they would serve their purposes best by making camp where they were. Accordingly, the horses were hobbled and a fire lit, and they prepared to make themselves comfortable for at least a couple of hours. In view of the fact that shortly after midnight the moon would rise and give them light enough to search the surrounding neighbourhood by—the man could not be far away, because his tracks were still quite fresh—they set their watches, Eddie taking the first, and, presently, as the lad peered this way and that, the others rolled themselves into blankets and sought sleep as best they could.

Nothing happened while Eddie was on watch; not a sound broke the stillness save Terence's snores and the champing of harness as the horses moved from place to place. At ten he roused Morrison, and himself curled up. It seemed that he had dropped

off to sleep but a few seconds when he was suddenly roused by the sudden shrill neighing of horses and the thunder of hoofs, and half a dozen dark forms swept past him in the darkness. It was the horses, stampeded, going like the wind in the direction of the open country, and neighing with fright the whole time.

The camp was awake on the instant. "I dozed off for one minute," admitted Morrison. "Everything was as quiet as the grave. Then I heard the gees yelling, and they rushed past me. Silly creatures—they must have been scared by their own shadows."

"Horses don't stampede for nothing, Morrison," said Eddie gravely. "It strikes me that the party we're looking for is much nearer than we imagine. I propose we scatter and search for him, working in a circle so that we come back to this place by dawn at the latest."

It was a good proposition, and was accepted by the gathering on the suggestion. And, leaving the horses to their fate—though there was a good deal of discussion as to what had scared them—the half-dozen, revolvers in hand, spread themselves out and advanced separately, each hoping to come to grips with the robber in order to recompense himself for the discomfort that worthy had made them suffer.

Eddie Polo found himself flitting from rock to rock in the depths of the canyon, a mere black patch on the darkness. He had made a wide detour in order that he might use eyes and ears, and every sense was tensely on the alert as he crept along. He was certain that the quarry was in the vicinity—some intuition told him this, though he had no legitimate grounds to go upon. Had he seen a figure anywhere he would have fired first and asked questions afterwards; but, save a jack-rabbit or two, nothing moved in his vicinity save himself.

Onwards he crept, going slowly, and taking advantage of every patch of cover. Occasionally he halted and peered around him, listening carefully. Nothing happened. Onwards he went again, and Red Cloud himself made no more noise in the tracking than came from Eddie Polo to betray his whereabouts to any watching eye.

And yet there were eyes that saw him—eyes that glistened with fear and rage as they squinted along the sights of a rifle-barrel, and waited for the black patch that was Eddie's body to detach itself from the surrounding blackness of a covering rock. And in due course Eddie moved.

The silence of the night was pierced by a single crack, and a bullet whizzed hummily through the air. And as he saw the flash of fire Eddie Polo pitched forward on his face and lay quite still. But only for a second, till he heard the thud of the lead against the rock he had just vacated. And as he lay he thought swiftly.

"That can't be one of our chaps," he said to himself. "In the first place, there shouldn't be any of them so close; in the second, only Red Cloud is armed with a rifle, and his eyes are far too good to make a bloomer like that. I wonder if the man who fired at me is going to come and make sure of his hit? I'll lie still a minute and listen."

There wasn't any further sound in the darkness, and so, trusting to luck to keep him away from snakes, if such should infest that region, Eddie began to worm himself forward on his hands and knees towards the point where he had seen the flash of the rifle.

He reached the spot where the rifle had been fired without mishap—he knew he had reached it because he put his hand on the empty cartridge-case, still warm from the breech, as he crawled. Gently he drew himself up behind a rock and peered around, but there wasn't anything in sight. Then, as suddenly as before, the rifle cracked again, this time ahead of him, and, abandoning all caution, Eddie raised his revolver and sent three shots in the other's direction, changing his position swiftly so that any reply to his fire, using his flashes as a target, should not find billets in his body.

He needn't have troubled; the other didn't fire again. Eddie, with a grin, tucked his head down, and, with a revolver in each hand, took a chance. He raced across the scrub and the alkali at full speed towards where he had seen the flash, and expecting all the time to be fired upon. Still there was no answering crackle of a rifle.

"Can I have killed the bouncer?" the lad asked himself. "If so, the chase is over. I hope it isn't one of our folks, though, or there'll be—"

He never finished that sentence, for he found himself suddenly falling through space, clutching with outstretched hands at nothingness. He had raced onwards, oblivious of the fact that, covered by a slight camouflage of creepers and lianes, the gaping mouth of a disused silver mine waited to receive him—a fact of which the man who had fired twice at him had been well aware when he tried to lure this persistent pursuer into the trap. And Eddie Polo had fallen into it.

He closed his eyes in anticipation of the crash that was to batter his life out when his fingers touched something like a rope, and closed on it.

It was a rope left behind by the silver miners when they abandoned their claim. For a moment it held, then, rotten through, its last few strands parted, and Eddie Polo completed the journey to the bottom of the shaft, deep down in the bowels of the earth. But though the rope had not held, it had arrested the lad's flight, and broken the force of his fall considerably, so that when he at last fell on top of his revolvers he escaped with nothing more than a few bruises and a severe shaking.

And as he lay there, attempting to recover his wits, he heard an awful laugh above him. Then a revolver spoke, and a bullet flattened itself alongside his head.

"Making sure of me—sprinkling the place with bullets from the top of the shaft," said Eddie. "Well, my lad, my luck's held so far; I'm trusting to it to keep your bullets away."

And it did keep them at bay—or, at any rate, sufficiently far from Eddie as to leave him unharmed. And Eddie didn't make the mistake of replying to the fire. He wanted whoever had fired the shots to think him dead. Most likely, the lad reasoned, the rustler was using this old, disused mine as a temporary hiding-place, and would soon be coming down it himself. Surely the rest of the party must have heard those shots, and would converge on the place from which they came. Daylight must show them the mouth of the mine, and they would investigate.

He picked himself up as best he could, and his hand came into contact with one of his revolvers. He opened the cylinders and made sure that it was filled with live cartridges; he tried the mechanism, and found that it worked. The other—the one which had fired when it dropped—was mere scrap-iron, the barrel twisted dangerously. This he threw aside, and then, crawling on hands and knees, made for where the entrance to one of the mine workings showed a darker patch in the darkness.

And here he sat until, two hours later, the moon came up and shone down the old pit-shaft. It showed him three tunnels leading away from the main shaft into the workings, each littered with driftings from the woods above.

"Well," said the lad, "I suppose there are four ways out of this place—one up the shaft, the other three by any of those tunnels. That means there are four ways in, and I hardly dare to hope that my friend the rustler will come by the same one as I used. I'll have to take a chance on it. I have some matches somewhere, and one of these bits of dry timber should make a decent torch if I can get it going."

He picked out the stump of a likely branch, and was just about to strike a match to ignite some brushwood so that his torch could be well and truly set aflame, when the glimmer of a light down one of the passages caught his eye.

"Aha," said Eddie, "the rustler approaches! Just in the nick of time, too, because in another minute I should have betrayed my position. Mr. Rustler, there's going to be trouble for you mighty soon. Mustn't lose my temper and shoot you, though, or we may never find the films, if it happens that you've had the common-sense to hide them in such a rabbit-waren as this mine would appear to be. Hallo, what're you stopping for?"

The dancing light, which obviously came from a torch, had suddenly ceased to advance. Instead, it flamed steady in the still air of the mine, and, if it served no other purpose, it showed that the air in the workings was clear and breathable.

"Well, if you won't come to me," said Eddie, under his breath, "I must go to you!"

He took off his riding-boots without a sound, and on tiptoe stole down the corridor. His mode of progress was necessarily slow, since he must essentially surprise the man holding the torch; whoever he might be. To

give warning of his own approach was to invite the other to make a target of him, and he'd had enough of that for one night.

As he crawled onwards he wondered if the others had yet discovered the mine workings—any of the entrances—and were wondering if it were worth while exploring them. And then, as he wondered, he turned the corner of the gallery next to that where the torch flared steadily.

He crouched in the shadow, and noiselessly cocked his revolver. Then he listened intently, but heard no sound save the crackle—very faint—of the flaming wood.

"Hands up!" he yelled suddenly, as he dashed at full speed round the corner. He pulled up short, the torch, stuck in a crevice of rock, flaring above his head. There wasn't a soul—not a living thing of any kind—in that rock chamber with him! Only from the roof came the steady drip, drip of water into the workings.

Then he shuddered, as a weird peal of mocking laughter rose into the air, the echoes catching and throwing it back on all sides. Eddie couldn't possibly see what direction it came from; he was utterly at sea!

And then suddenly there was the sound as of an earthquake, and, like a solid wall, the roof of the tunnel just ahead of him fell inwards. The vibrations of air caused by the laughter had displaced the earth, left undisturbed for years, even as a revolver-shot would have done—and Eddie Polo had escaped death by suffocation only by inches!

He gasped, and fell back from the solid face of rock and earth, and snatched the torch from where it stood, intending to run the risk of bullets fired by the fiend who had laughed. And thus he came face to face with death for the third time that night.

For, rushing like a mighty torrent upon him, came a great sheet of water, black as the depths of the pit itself, mighty and irresistible in volume, as though the river which ran through the canyon outside had suddenly been diverted in its course. Eddie Polo was trapped in the workings of the old silver-mine; and above him his comrades searched for a thief—maybe for the thief who once more, at that very moment of horror, assaulted Eddie's ears with another shriek of mocking laughter, just as the racing water swirled around the lad's feet!

For a moment Eddie fell back, aghast. The swirl of the rushing water round his ankles and the echoes of that mocking laugh combined to throw him off his mental and physical balance for the time being. Then, as the force of the water threatened to engulf him, and actually hurled him back against the solid wall that had fallen in the mine-working, he struck out with might and main, and found that he could still feel the ground under his feet.

He was dripping wet, and sobbing with horror, but he was not in the least frightened. The suddenness of the whole thing had awed him; to think that so slight an episode could bring such terrific consequences in its train made him shudder. He slipped his revolver into his holster, thankful that his cartridges were waterproof, and struggled for a foothold, holding aloft the torch in his free hand.

Then, very suddenly, there appeared a face above the waters—the face of one who stood and held a torch in a small gallery that ran off the main tunnel to the right. It looked white and small in the distance, but, with eyes sharpened by danger, Eddie Polo recognised it. It was the face of the man who had originally been the spokesman for Del Rogeriguo and Tim Bobbin—the man to whom Eddie Polo had, a few short weeks before, given the hundred-dollar note.

"What in the world is that joint doing here in this gallery?" Eddie asked himself. "I understood he'd beaten it to Raven's Roost some time ago."

The next moment the peering man had seen Eddie, and waved his torch in a semi-jocular fashion.

"Not finished yet?" he cried, the chambers of the roof echoing his words clearly. "It takes a deal of persuasion to choke some folks off, don't it? But I'm thinking that you're about at the end of your tether, my lad—you've chased one man a bit too far! No, don't try swimming in this direction, or I shall have to shoot! Listen, and I'll tell you what's going to happen to you. I've just placed a charge of gelignite at the foot of the shaft, and that'll explode in about ten minutes. I've got another one in this tunnel, and that'll go off about the same time, bringing down the roof and blocking all the exits from this place! You've got the water coming down out of the other passage! Yes, I opened up an old place in the wall that I

discovered would let the river through, and the canyon's dry at this minute—so that you can't get out that way; and the fall of the roof just behind you—which has saved me a few more pounds of blasting stuff that I found in here—cuts you off in that direction! Pretty cheerful, ain't it? But I dare say you expected something of the kind when you found out that Del Rogerigo was working with me!"

Eddie's shout of surprise cut him short. "You didn't know, eh? Well, then, there's another shock for you!" went on the man. "Perhaps you don't know as the greaser and me and Tim Bobbin has been trailing you all over the States; that it was us that set Red Crowther's gang to finish you off? You see, you happen to possess an unhappy knack of rubbing some folks the wrong way. But that needn't trouble you in the future, 'cos when you're through with the heap of trouble you've got to face here and now—well, you won't be much use either as a film actor or an acrobat! That's all—except that folks will always remember you when the films you've made with Morrison's money are being shown! I've got 'em safely stowed where they can be found, and presently they'll be over the border in Mexico, where the United States law don't hold. What! Can't stay on your feet any longer? Well, you ain't got a long time to swim about! I'll be going now. Good-bye!"

And, with another callous, mocking laugh, the man turned on his heel and disappeared through the mouth of the little shaft. "Ten minutes," said Eddie—"and he means it!"

He wasted no time in wondering what he should do now that the rifle no longer menaced him. He stuck the torch into a crevice of the rock as the water swirled around his neck, felt for his gun, and, thankful that he had left his riding-boots at the top of the mine-shaft, plunged into the black tide. With swift, strong strokes, he dragged himself to the place where the other had taunted him, and drew himself up into the tunnel. Far ahead, like the glimmer of a firefly, he could discern the glow of the other's torch. He pressed his elbows to his side, and ran like a madman towards it, stumbling over pieces of silver-quartz and rock that were strewn along the narrow adit.

Onwards he went, and it seemed that he was gaining upon the light. Then, as he turned a corner, he came across a spark that glowed red in the darkness.

"The explosive!" he gasped. "Heaven grant I'm not too late!"

He took his courage in both hands, and dashed up to the rock face where a foot of fuse showed in the glow of its own burning. His hands were upon it to rip it out of its seating when a thought crossed his brain.

"No; if I do that the man will know I'm after him!" he muttered. "If I leave it, and race away, I'll be safe when the explosion comes, and he'll think he's finished me. Hallo! There goes the mine-shaft! If that doesn't fetch the other, nothing will!"

"It won't fetch them!" said a voice suddenly, out of the darkness. "They've gone away long ago, thinking that you'd chased off, too. Put your hands over your head. You and me stay here till that fuse goes off, and if you even look as though you'd like to touch it, I'll blow the top of your head off! No, you can't see me, but I can see you, and the first move you make is your last!"

The voice died as Eddie, his hands up, strained his eyes this way and that. He could see nothing. Then, for one long minute he stood erect, wondering in what direction his enemy lay. Then, with a swift duck, he jumped forward, expecting a shot. Again there was silence. The other man had worked a successful bluff, and had sped away on silent feet.

Eddie raced after him, padding along in the darkness in his wet clothes. His revolver was now in his hand, and he was determined to fire at the first sound of a voice, and chance being hit. And when he had got a hundred yards down the shaft, he was suddenly hurled from his feet and almost crushed to death by rocks falling from the roof as the blasting explosive touched off and blocked the tunnel entrance. And, even as he lay there, came again that mocking laugh, this time from a long way off, and very faint.

"So that's that!" said Eddie, as he picked himself up. "I might have known that

greaser couldn't run straight. Well, now I'm supposed to be killed, I may be able to come to grips with my friend the enemy, unless I get lost in the workings of this mine."

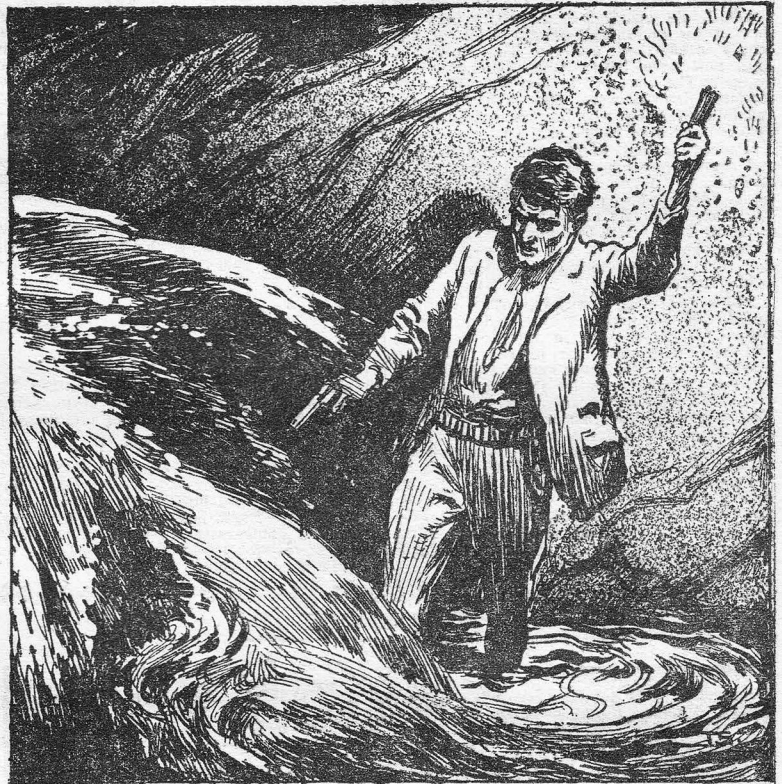
He stumbled on, sore and bruised, heading ever forward. There was now no light, no sign of any kind to guide him in his quest for the other man; for all he could see he might have been the only dweller in the very depths of inferno. Only his iron will urged his weary muscles and aching bones to action; only the determination to die rather than let the other get away with the film spurred him onwards.

He wondered where Dick and Terence and the others were; whether Red Cloud had tracked him to the mouth of the mine-shaft, and whether any of them had also fallen victims to the unscrupulous murderer who hid in these depths. He wondered what it would feel like to be out in the open air, with the clean sunshine pouring on him again. He felt as though he had been in the mine a thousand years.

Many times he stumbled and fell, for there

sound covering any chance noise that his stockinged feet made, Eddie was able to gain a position immediately in the man's rear without trouble.

"I never did like these clever coons," the man was saying. "They're always so spry they cut themselves. Now, if that man Polo hadn't interfered with me and the boys when we were running that show I'd have said and done nothing to annoy him. But he butts in, offers them two jobs just when they were starting to be a paying proposition to me, and chokes me off with a hundred dollars—less than I would get out of them acrobats in a week. Shoes me off over the border, too. I'm glad I got a surprise over on him to-day. Lucky I found that old tunnel leading into this place, though, and the way out; lucky, also, that he fell into my trap and tumbled down the mine-shaft, though, if he hadn't been a protegee of some guardian angel or other, he'd have broken his neck! Garcia said he had as many lives as a cat, and I'm hanged if he wasn't right. Anyway, he's expended



The rushing torrent came down on him with all its mighty strength. Eddie was trapped in the old silver mine! At any moment he expected to feel himself being sucked away and rushed along the underground river. (See page 16.)

were fissures in the flooring; but each time as he picked himself up his resolve to find the man who was responsible for his plight surged up afresh to urge him onwards. He guided himself with his hand on the tunnel wall, and then, very suddenly, he found himself in the centre of a clear space—a kind of hall. He could see the roof and the floor, the walls, and, in the far corner, a man.

Eddie dropped to his face and lay perfectly still, as the man kicked a small fire into vigour, and in the flames that surged up, Eddie saw this man—the man of the other tunnel—take from a projecting piece of rock a neckerchief that showed its colour in the leaping firelight—a neckerchief that proclaimed itself an orange bandanna. And, having disposed this around his neck, the man seated himself before the fire, rubbed his hands, and chuckled deeply. Then he cocked his head and listened, chuckled again, and opened the lid of a box which Eddie recognised as containing the film.

"Delivered into my hands," said Eddie to himself.

He wriggled forward, and the care with which he cocked his pistol prevented even the faintest click sounding in that silence. The man began to talk to himself, and this

two of 'em in my presence to-night. Done now, though. If he hadn't driven me so hard and turned me desperate, I'd have done him nor any of the others no harm. If he'd caught me and carried me back to that circus camp they wouldn't have tarred and feathered me, like they did the greaser. They'd have—"

"Hanged you, my son, and they'll hang you yet!" chipped in Eddie, shoving the muzzle of a wet but most efficient revolver into the man's ear. "You've given me a long chase and a hard one, and provided me with dangers enough to last even me a few months. But I'm afraid your run is ended, though I should hate to spill your brains! Here, take that!"

Eddie regretted all his life that he had plugged a man who didn't expect it, but, as the man had said, he was desperate, and Polo couldn't afford to take any chances. So he just drove his fist to the other's jaw on a purely scientific spot, and the astounded man lost consciousness for quite a time. And when he came round he found Eddie Polo seated on the box containing the films, and himself with his hands neatly and securely tied behind his back.

"Here, I never intended you no harm—" he began, with a whimper.

"That's a yarn you can tell to the judge and jury," said Eddie. "You've been a long time coming round, and I've only waited because I love you so much that I can't bear to be parted from you! But now you're able to sit up and take notice, and to walk. Seeing that I've left your feet free, we'll just plod on into the open air. No, don't worry about anything. I'll carry the film-boxes and your gun, and this little package that contains the valuables you relieved me and my friends of yesterday afternoon. I suppose it was yesterday, though it seems a month ago. And I'll carry this gun, too, cocked, as you'll notice. So lead on, Mister Conspirator, and presently we'll have you just where we want you! That's right—mush!"

The man mushed, and though he attempted several times to talk to Eddie—to plead for mercy—the lad's gun was a most effective gag. And, presently, after traversing for upwards of three hours several winding and exceedingly dark paths—in the pursuing of which Eddie guarded against treachery by shoving his gun-muzzle in the back of the other's neck—they won to the open air. And, not more than three hundred yards away, in the very act of mounting their recaptured horses, were the five comrades and fellow-workers who had come with Eddie Polo in search of the films.

"Cooee!" yelled Eddie, and at the sight and sound they cantered over. "Got him!" said Eddie. "Films, money, and all, and he's tried to murder me by suffocation, by drowning, and by blowing me up with gelignite since I last saw you!"

"You haven't been away long, Eddie," said Dick. "Seems to me you've been pretty busy. Here, stop him!"

Dick's cry came too late. The captive, seeing that his captor's eyes and gun were turned for the moment in another direction, and desperate with fear of the fate that awaited him at the other end of the journey, made a sudden break for freedom. Eddie's gun spoke, and he aimed at the man's feet. The bullet kicked up a small cloud of alkali. The captive stood for a second on the very brink of the ravine, and halted long enough to cast one look of terrible malevolence at the group, now running towards him. Then, with a repetition of the maniacal laugh he had treated Eddie to in the mine, he leapt—and when the remainder reached the brink of the ravine he lay, a shapeless, huddled mass, at the bottom.

Fame at Last!

THEY found Busto's Travelling Circus in a state of ferment when they arrived back—especially Ginger Wiggles and Stella Cleaver. And the tales which both these people had to tell were pretty similar. Ginger had to report a struggle with Del Rogeriguo, and that worthy's last reported theft in the shape of a horse, upon which he had been seen beating it for the Mexican border as fast as he could pelt. Stella Cleaver had to report that she had seen Bobbin and Del Rogeriguo in close conclave about ten minutes before the Mexican attacked the clown, and that Bobbin had immediately proceeded to the horse lines, annexed the best steed he could find, and proceeded to burn the trail towards the land of few and hasty laws in the south.

"We're well rid of the pair of them," said Morrison.

"Except that I've no acrobat in my show," said Busto.

"I should say so," said Morrison. "Look here, Busto, you've been awfully good to us, and all that, and we're jolly grateful. But we've finished our work, and nearly lost our best men, and I hope you'll not think badly of us if we pull our freight on the first train leaving this one-eyed show to-morrow morning. You've got a standing invitation—you and the whole of the show—to visit me and the Eclair studios whenever you like, and we'll make you as welcome as you've made us. I can't say more. But we'll go to-morrow. Life in your locality is too strenuous for me. I rather think I must be getting old."

"Right-ho!" said Busto. "There's just one thing I'd like Eddie to do for me, though, and that is engage a reliable trapeze man for me in the first town you come to. I'll wait here for him."

"I will," said Eddie. "And he'll not only be a good man, but a straight guy as well. That I'll promise you."

One morning, as the crowd gathered for their daily confabulation at the Eclair Studios, there came a messenger who groaned under a bulky parcel.

"Mr. E. Polo here?" he asked. Eddie was, and he signed for the parcel. Then, wondering, he slit the string. The parcel was nothing but newspapers.

"Somebody's got postage money to burn," remarked Eddie, with a grin—"sending me a package of wastepaper like this! I can get all the old newspapers I want in St. Louis."

"Is that a picture-paper there, Eddie?" asked Stella. "If so, you might hand it up. I like to see New York news occasionally."

He handed the paper to the girl, and she languidly opened it. Then her eyes fell on a blue pencilled section of the print, and she yelled with delight.

"Girls! Boys!" she cried. "Look at this! Eddie Polo getting headlines in the New York Herald!"

They gathered round to look. Sure enough, "ACROBATIC STAR ON NEW FILMS!" read one paper. Another was ripped from the pile. "POLO, THE COMING FILM HERO!" read a second.

They were all like that. The package of wastepaper upon which somebody had "wasted postage" was a collection of American eastern journals, each of them boosting Eddie Polo and his magnificent feats in the great film being shown by Morrison—"Under the Big Top."

Eddie crammed his fingers into his ears, and retrieved every paper from his fellow-artists.

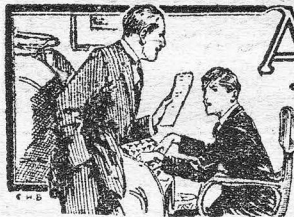
"Girls and boys," he declared, "I'm going to be greedy for the first time in my life! I'm going to carry all these papers to my diggings and read them myself, and afterwards—well, you can have them. But after that I'm afraid you'll have to club together to buy me a rubber hat—I shall be suffering so badly from swelled head."

But Eddie Polo never got swelled head, though every criticism and review of the new films appearing in those papers laid praise on him with a trowel. He just realised that he had fought his way to the topmost pinnacle of the ladder through hard work and constant application to it, and that he had done only his best—he could do neither less, being what he was, nor more—before the camera.

And of his history since that time what need is there to write? He had made good—he had arrived. And though those who were stars in the cinema world when he did at last burst forth upon an astonished world as the most daring exponent of a daring profession have long since faded into insignificance, to-day Eddie Polo's name and face are familiar and beloved of hundreds of thousands in many roles, and will become more so. But even to-day he is fair to confess, he doesn't work an atom harder or better than when he worked "Under the Big Top" or "Before the Camera."

THE END.

WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR ABOUT IT!



A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

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

For Next Friday:

"THE GREAT MISTAKE!" By Frank Richards.

This, the first of our splendid complete school stories, deals with the further adventures of the chums of Greyfriars, and more particularly Mark Linley. We have seen that Mark Linley, by failing to win the Founder's Prize of fifty pounds, is placed in an awkward position. He has to leave Greyfriars—that is what he thinks.

But it is proved that a great mistake has been made, and Mark Linley does not even have to think of leaving the school where he has spent many happy days.

Our second long complete school story concerns Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, and is entitled:

"WINNING HIS WAY!" By Owen Cook.

'Erbert, the waif of Rookwood, finds himself very much up against the juniors of the Second Form, but 'Erbert does not lack pluck. He has "licked" Jones, the captain THE POPULAR.—No. 100.

of his Form, and the juniors cannot help but feel something like respect for the unfortunate lad. By dint of hard work and sheer pluck, young 'Erbert succeeds in

"Winning His Way!"

to the hearts of his Form-mates. This is a grand story, boys and girls!

THE GREAT NEWS!

My chums all over the world will be interested to know that our next number is going to be the most remarkable issue of the year. Never before has the "Popular" had a four-page supplement; but next week there is going to be a magnificent four-page supplement in the "Popular."

It is entitled,

"BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY"

But the famous fat junior of Greyfriars does not have everything to say in the matter of producing what is undoubtedly the funniest "Weekly" ever published. He is assisted by Fatty Wynn and Baggy Trimble, of St. Jim's; Tubby Muffin, of Rookwood;

and Sammy Bunter, his minor in the Third Form at Greyfriars. They are known as

"Billy Bunter and his Four Fat Subs"

by all the schoolboys at the three schools, and great interest has been taken in this first number of the "Popular." There is going to be a great rush for this number, so please will you order your copy, as I want all my regular readers to have a copy.

Then there will also be particulars of a

Grand Competition for Money Prizes!

There will be no entrance fee for this competition, and your effort has only to be sent in on a postcard. So that won't cost you very much! And it is NOT a Storyette Competition.

So that altogether we may be proud of our bumper number—two grand complete stories, a four-page supplement packed full with fun and fiction, a detective serial, and a fine competition. Never before has so much been put before readers of the "Popular."

Once again I must urge all regular readers of the "Popular" to make sure of their copy of the "Popular" next Friday by ordering it in advance. Many times have I given this advice, but never before was it so vitally important. Readers of the "Magnet Library" have already sampled the wonderful "Billy Bunter's Weekly," and they are sure to rush the newsagents first thing on Friday morning. And where will YOUR copy be? And what chance will you have of winning a money prize?

Your Editor

WRIGLEY'S

Three Flavours

CHEERIO! my bonnie boys, I've trailed a real good thing for you all.

IT'S WRIGLEY'S, a most marvellous kind of sweet. One little Bar of it **LASTS FOR HOURS**, and we get 6 Bars in a Packet for only 3d. There are Three Flavours to choose from, too. You pay your 3d. and you take your choice.

And **WRIGLEY'S** is fine for fitness. It keeps your mouth moist and your muscles strong and supple and free from fatigue on the longest march. And look at my teeth. See how white and strong mine are now.

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

PER 3d PKT.
1/2 d per bar.

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT
THE PERFECT GUM
Mint Leaf Flavour

WRIGLEY'S DOUBLEMINT
CHEWING GUM
Peppermint Flavour

WRIGLEY'S JUICY FRUIT
CHEWING GUM
The Flavour of Crushed Ripe Fruit

The Flavour Lasts sealed tight kept right.

WRIGLEY'S, LTD., 235, Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E. 1

HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS from £1.—Real Value. Films Galore. A Boon for Winter Evenings. Lists Free.—Desk E. DEAN CINEMA CO., 94, DRAYTON AVENUE, WEST HALENG, LONDON.



15 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Packed FREE. Carriage PAID. Direct from Works. **LOWEST CASH PRICES. EASY PAYMENT TERMS.** Immediate delivery. Big Bargains in Shop Soiled and Second-hand Cycles. Tyres and Accessories at popular Prices. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Refunded. Old Cycles Exchanged. Write for Monster Size Free List and Special Offer of Sample Bicycle.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY, Incorpd.
Dept. B 607, BIRMINGHAM.

HEIGHT INCREASED IN 30 DAYS 5/- Complete Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Full particulars and Testimonials 1d. stamp.—Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. S.), 24, Southwark St., S.E. 1.



STRENGTHEN YOUR NERVES. Nervousness deprives you of employment, pleasures, and many advantages in life. If you wish to prosper and enjoy life, strengthen your Nerves, and regain confidence in yourself by using the Mento-Nerve Strengthening Treatment. Used by Vice-Admiral to Seaman, Colonel to Private, D.S.O.'s, M.C.'s, M.M.'s, and D.C.M.'s. Merely send 2 penny stamps for particulars.—GODFREY ELLIOTT SMITH, Ltd., 527, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London, E.C.4.

MAGIC TRICKS, Illusions, etc.—Parcels 2/6, 5/6, and 10/6. Sample trick, 1/—T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N. 1.

MODEL STEAM ENGINES.—Locomotives, Railways, Electric Motors & Dynamos, Batteries, Accumulators, Model parts, fittings, etc., etc. Interesting illustrated catalogue, 6d. (P.O.'s only).—MODEL CO., 38 (A.P.), Queen's Road, Aston, Birmingham.

FILMS CHEAP. Stamped envelope for lists. Machines, etc. 50-ft. Sample Film, 1/3.—**TYSON & MARSHALL**, 89, Castle Boulevard, NOTTINGHAM.

BECOME BIG NOW. The plums of business and social life go to the man who has height, and inches, and improve your health, figure, and carriage, by the Girvan Scientific Treatment. 9 years' unblemished record. £100 guarantee of genuineness. Particulars for postcard.—ENQUIRY DEPT., A.M.P., 17, STROUD GREEN ROAD, LONDON, N. 4.

FUN FOR SIXPENCE!—Ventriloquist's Instrument, InvisMe. Beasts, etc. Price 6d. each; 4 for 1/-. (Ventriloquism Treatise included).—Ideal Co., Clevedon.

FREE BOOK FOR ENGINEERS

ENGINEERING. EARN MORE MONEY. KNOW YOUR TRADE.

Complete Correspondence Courses in:

ENGINEERING	MOTOR-CAR ENGINEERING
DRAUGHTSMANSHIP	MACHINISTS
ELECTRICITY	AERO ENGINES

Write and say which subject you wish to study, and we will send you a FREE Book pointing out your chances and explaining our system: State age and send 2d. stamps for postage.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF G.T. BRITAIN, LTD.
41, Thanet House, 231 & 232, Strand, London, W.C.2.

FREE FUN! The Latest Scrambling Funny Surprise Novelty, causing roars of laughter, FREE to all sending 1/- for 70 Cute Conjuring Tricks, 12 Jolly Joke Tricks, 6 Catchy Coin Tricks, 5 Cunning Card Tricks, 5 Mystifying Magic Tricks, 6 Jokers' Comical Cards, Sensational Ventriloquism Secret, and 1,001 Stupendous Attractions. Thousands delighted! Great Fun! Postal Address: G. HUGHES, 15, Wood St., Edgaston, Birmingham. (Big box Demon Mouths Grover, 1/2 post free.)

"CURLY HAIR!" "Mine curled at once," writes Major. Thousands of testimonials, proof sent. Summers' "Curliit" curls straightest hair. 1/5, 2/6 (stamps accepted).—SUMMERS (Dept. P.), Upper Russell St., Brighton.

25 COMIC SONGS, 8 Funny Recitations, 30 Parlour Games, Tricks, etc., etc., lot 1/- carr. pd.—HILL CO., 8, Triangle, Clevedon, Som.

PHOTO POSTCARDS OF YOURSELF, 1/3 doz., 12 by 10 ENLARGEMENTS, 8d. ALSO CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL. CATALOGUE AND SAMPLES FREE.—HACKETTS, JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

NEXT WEEK!

An easy competition for money prizes, and a grand four-page supplement edited by Billy Bunter and His Four Fat Subs., complete school stories in

THE POPULAR

Order Next Week's Copy at Once. Price 1 1/2d.

GET THIS 4-in-1 GIFT FOR YOUR HAIR.

See How It Will Banish all Hair Troubles, Promote Abundant Growth and Beautify Your Hair.

MAKE up your mind TO-DAY to get the Free 4-in-1 Gift Package here offered you. Don't wait to "think it over" or you may miss for ever a golden opportunity for maintaining or developing hair beauty.

The gift of a Free "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfit that is now offered you will help you to escape from every form of hair trouble quickly, or, if no such trouble exists, will enable you to add immensely to the beauty and luxuriance of your hair.

DON'T BE CONTENT WITH IMPOVERISHED HAIR.

Thousands who were formerly worried about the poor condition of their hair have been amazed and delighted at the wonder-working powers of "Harlene Hair-Drill." You will be the same if you write to-day and accept by return a Free "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfit. You are only asked to send the sum of 4d. in stamps to cover cost of postage and packing, and this Free 4-in-1 Gift will be despatched to your address in any part of the United Kingdom promptly. It will include:—

1. A Free Trial Bottle of "Harlene-for-the-Hair," now universally recognised as the greatest of all hair tonics, and as used by Royalty, the nobility, the aristocracy, social leaders, public people, and millions of men and women in every grade of society.
2. A Free Trial Cremex Shampoo Powder, which cleanses the scalp and hair and soon frees it from all scurf and dust.
3. A Free Trial Bottle of "Uzon," another preparation that has won world-favour and world-praise from all sorts and conditions of people for giving the final touch of radiant beauty to the Hair.
4. Last, but not least, the "Harlene Hair-Drill" Manual, containing full instructions for carrying out Hair-Drill in the most successful and resultful way.

FREE.



There is not the least difficulty in obtaining one of these Free 4-in-1 Gifts of Beauty, for all you have to do is to send your name and address, with 4d. in stamps and the following coupon, and a Free Four-fold Seven Days' Trial "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfit will at once be despatched to you.

WRITE TO-DAY FOR FREE OUTFIT.

This wonderful "Harlene Hair-Drill" only takes up about two minutes of your time—an addition to the time spent on your toilet daily that is repaid a thousandfold because it relieves you from all hair troubles, makes your hair grow thicker and stronger, strengthens the roots of your hair, imparts a charming naturally healthy "waviness" to women's hair, gives it a radiantly beautiful look which makes all the difference, and keeps on improving it in quality and quantity until it reaches its highest possible standard of health, strength and beauty.

After a Free Trial you will be able to obtain further supplies of "Harlene" at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 9d. per bottle; "Uzon" Brilliantine, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle; "Cremex" Shampoo Powders, 1s. 6d. per box of seven shampoos (single packets, 3d. each), from all Chemists and Stores, or will be sent direct on receipt of 6d. extra for postage by Edwards' Harlene, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, and 26, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.C.1.

FREE "HAIR-DRILL" COUPON.

Cut out and post to EDWARDS' HARLENE, LTD., 20, 22, 24 and 26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.1.

Dear Sirs,—Please send me your Free "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit as described. I enclose 4d. in stamps for postage and packing to my address. Popular, 29/1/21.

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 "Sample Dept.")

NICKEL SILVER WATCHES

DELIVERED ON FIRST PAYMENT OF



2/- ONLY. YOU HAVE WATCH WHILST PAYING FOR IT.

Gent's full-size Railway timekeeping Keyless Lever Watch; Stout Nickel Silver or Oxidized Damp and Dust Proof Cases, plain dial, perfectly balanced superior Lever Movement, splendid timekeeper. Price for either pocket or wrist, 15/- each. Luminous dial (see time in dark), 2/- extra. Ladies' Chain or Wrist, 2/- extra.

We will send either of these watches on receipt of P.O. for 2/-. After receiving watch you send us a further 2/-. and promise to pay the remaining 11/- by weekly or monthly instalments. For cash with order enclose 14/- only. Five years' warranty given with every watch.

To avoid disappointment, send 2/- and 6d. extra postage at once. No unpleasant inquiries. All orders executed in rotation.

The LEVER WATCH Co. (M Dept.),
42a, Stockwell Green, London, S.W.9.

"CURLY HAIR!"—Wonderful results by using Ross' "WAVEIT." Waves and curls straightest hair. Hundreds of testimonials. 1/3 and 2/5 (stamps accepted).—ROSS (Dept. P.), 173, New North Road, London, N.1.

CUT THIS OUT

"The Popular." PEN COUPON. Value 2d.

Send this coupon with P.O. for only 5/- direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet St., London, E.C.4. In return you will receive (post free) a splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6. If you save 12 further coupons, each will count as 2d. off the price; so you may send 13 coupons and only 3/-. Say whether you want a fine, medium, or broad nib. This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to the POPULAR readers. (Foreign postage extra.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Self Filling, or Safety Models, 2/- extra.

SHARP'S SUPER-KREEM TOFFEE

For "REEL" Pleasure

From hand to hand goes the orange tin with the parrot and knut on it, and nimble fingers deftly unwrap the paper surrounding the creamiest, purest, and most wholesome sweetmeat ever made—SHARP'S SUPER-KREEM TOFFEE. Truly, it seems a rival attraction to the pictures, and while tastes differ with regard to films, everyone looks forward to Super-Kreem with "REEL" pleasure.

Sold loose by weight or in 4lb. decorated tins—also in ½, ¼ and 1lb. tins.

E. SHARP & SONS, LTD., MAIDSTONE.

