

READ THE **EDDIE POLO'S FIGHT FOR FAME** IN THIS STORY OF **EDDIE POLO'S FIGHT FOR FAME** IN THIS ISSUE.

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HARRY DASHED UN CEREMONIOUSLY INTO THE KING'S TENT. "PUT IT DOWN, SIRE! IN HEAVEN'S NAME, DO NOT TASTE IT!" HE CRIED.

(See Our Grand New Serial, "THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!")

THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE SERIAL!



INTRODUCTION.

The story opens with the death of Sir John Temple, the old master of the Chase. Harry, his son, now becomes the new master. Walter Temple, his cousin, pays him a visit on the same night, and hears of a wonderful sword belonging to the Temples—a sword with a strange influence. It is supposed that when carried by any member of the family in battle it will guard him from hurt in the

fight, and seemingly make him invincible over his enemy. Walter has a great longing for the sword, and next morning vanishes suddenly, bearing it with him. A little later war is declared between the King and Parliament, and Harry Temple, with his friend Will Howard, join the Royalists' forces. Harry's troop are returning from an encounter with the Parliamentary troops

when young Temple sees Walter, with the stolen sword. He gives chase at once, and rides his cousin down on the outskirts of a wood. A fight ensues in a woodman's hut wherein Harry is unluckily wounded. Walter escapes, and joins his regiment with Cromwell, and a little later Will Howard discovers his friend lying unconscious on the floor of the hut. (Now read on.)

How Waller's Reinforcements Were Stopped.

CONSIDERING the very determined nature of that encounter with those stragglers from Essex's host, Captain Lovelace's losses had been comparatively slight—three killed, some half a dozen wounded, and two missing—and, after a brief rest, he rejoined Rupert's main force, which had moved some miles northward again to secure a better position in the event of a sudden reopening of hostilities on the part of the enemy.

"Two missing, you say, Mortimer?" said Lovelace, when he had received his second in command's report. "Who are they?"

"Young Temple, captain, and the big man Howard."

"Ah! 'Tis a pity—a great pity! Keen fellows both of them, and sturdy."

Lovelace turned away, shaking his head, whilst Mortimer passed on to attend to some minor duties. Suddenly he was attracted by the sound of excited voices, and, looking up, beheld some half a dozen of the troop gazing intently across country.

Striding forward, Mortimer joined them, and stared in the same direction. About a mile away, two riders were approaching the camp—one swaying dizzily in his saddle, and supported by the other. Both horses, too, seemed quite exhausted—one limping painfully.

Mortimer shaded his eyes, and gave vent to a muttered exclamation.

"'Faith, we have not suffered even so much as we feared, for, unless my eyes have grown dim before their time, those twain seem mighty familiar! Ho, there! Some of ye go to meet them! That lad is sorely hurt, I warrant!"

A rough hurdle was procured, and in a short time Harry Temple was lifted gently from the saddle and placed upon it whilst Will Howard, drawing his hand across his dry lips, mutely indicated that a deep draught of ale was all the "medicine" he would require for the time being.

An army in the field in those days had none of the many excellent ambulance arrangements of the present, yet, crude though the surgery was, it proved amply efficient in Harry's case. His wound was cleaned thoroughly, and rebound, and the verdict given was quite in accordance with Will Howard's previous one—"serious, but not dangerous."

Close upon five weeks passed without any further hostilities taking place between Rupert and the enemy. Indeed, so dull a

time did it seem that, as Will put it, with somewhat grim humour, "their blades were growing dull for want of a coat of colour!"

But by this time the Civil War had obtained a grip on Merrie England which would not be easily loosened. The fire which had been started when Charles raised his standard at Nottingham was now a raging conflagration—all-devouring and unquenchable. In almost every corner of the land Royalist and Roundhead were tearing at each other's throats like so many wild beasts, reinforcements flocking to each banner by thousands; and if Prince Rupert's followers were idle for a while, 'twas not likely they would long remain so.

Nor did they, for a couple of days later word came that a large body of Parliamentary soldiery were on their way to take possession of a strongly-fortified castle some twenty-five miles distant, which they intended to hold, pending the advance of a much heavier force, when the twain would unite and hasten onwards to the assistance of Sir William Waller, who was just then being rather hard pressed by my Lord Goring.

Such was the position of this particular stronghold that commanded all roads by which the reinforcements could possibly travel, so that if a large body could but obtain possession of it, they could successfully prevent any farther progress on the part of the enemy in that quarter.

'Twas this knowledge, therefore, which sent the Parliamentary detachment hastening hot-foot in that direction, so that they might arrive there first, thereby obviating any hitch in their colleagues' advance, and 'twas that selfsame knowledge, also, which made Prince Rupert equally determined to obtain possession of the castle, for the very opposite purpose.

Unfortunately, however, they were just too late, for scarce an hour before the first of the Royalist scouts came within sight of the pile the Roundheads had arrived, and had taken up their quarters. A strong body they were, too—tough, 'prentices mostly from London Town, whose population was now almost entirely in favour of the Parliamentary cause.

There was nothing for it save to make a determined attack at once. Indeed, every moment was precious, for the second party would probably be already on the way, and the twain combined would in all likelihood outnumber Prince Rupert's men. Added to this, unless the stronghold were taken soon, there would be scarcely any chance of the enemy's march to Waller's aid. 'Twas, in

short, a case of first conquer one force, and then wait to beat back the other.

Acting on this policy, Rupert lost no time. So skilful were his picked scouts, that not one of them had been seen by the Roundhead outposts, so that the attack was a surprise one in every sense of the word. Delivered from three sides at once, they rushed towards the castle, breaking through the first line of the Parliamentary defences as a knife goes through paper. At the walls themselves, however, a determined resistance was put up—so much so that the King's ranks began to show ugly gaps, and a brief retirement was deemed advisable.

Whilst all this was taking place, another contingent of the Royalist forces, speedily travelling by a circuitous route, reached the far side of the castle, which, by a piece of strangely poor generalship, was left practically undefended, most of the garrison being drawn to repel the attack on the other three.

With this body was Captain Lovelace's troops, amongst whom were, of course, Harry Temple—now quite recovered from his injury—and Will Howard. They surged forward with that brilliant dash which has made Prince Rupert's cavalry deservedly famous in history. Forced down the great rear-gate, and burst into the courtyard, almost before the defenders had time to realise the danger from that new quarter.

Too late the Roundhead commander saw his grave error, for at that moment the attack was renewed in front and on the two flanks, so that he found himself threatened with defeat from all four sides at one and the same time.

Yet, well knowing how much depended on his occupation of the position, he put up a stubborn resistance. Both parties suffered heavily in the action, though for some time neither side gained nor lost any appreciable advantage.

But, whereas the Royalists were stimulated by the success of their strategy so far, the Roundheads were fighting that worst of all enemies, demoralisation; and the latter presently began to show unmistakable signs of weakening. Then a sudden determined rush by the invaders broke the last strands of their discipline, and sent them flying in all directions—some up the great staircase; others through the windows—everywhere, anywhere, so long as they could escape those lions of the King, who seemed bent upon devouring all before them.

'Twas after those who had sought refuge in the upper rooms and on the flat roof that Lovelace's troopers went, dashing like men

possessed up the staircase, and cutting through the half-hearted defence of those who had halted in a futile attempt to stem the tide.

Up, up they tore, until they had hemmed in the remnants, which included the commander, on the battlements, where, after a short resistance, the superior numbers of the attackers told the Parliamentarians that 'twas useless holding out any longer.

"Your sword, sirrah?" said Lovelace, to the Roundhead commander. "Further resistance will avail you naught. The day is ours!"

The weapon was handed over without a word; then, with bowed head, the Parliamentary commander, followed by his crest-fallen supporters, passed through the company of elated Royalists, and so on down the stairs, where they were placed under a strong guard by those below.

At that moment a clatter of hoofs in the flagged courtyard attracted Lovelace's attention, and, looking over the battlements, he saw one of the Royalist scouts dismount close to where Rupert was standing conferring with some of his officers. A hurried conversation took place between the Prince and the newcomer, some swift commands were issued, and Lovelace drew back with an exultant smile on his lips.

"Odd's life!" he laughed. "There's little rest for the weary nowadays!—They're nigh upon us, Mortimer, those rascalions—and a right royal welcome we'll give them, I vow!"

Quickly the castle was made ready to repel the coming attack, which was likely to be of a most determined nature. Various firearms, discarded by the defeated garrison, were scattered about in profusion, whilst on the battlements themselves a quartet of light artillery pieces were found, together with plenty of ammunition. These were particularly welcome to Rupert's followers, who, being mainly cavalry, possessed little or nothing of this kind of armament. Indeed, but for the clever manner in which their own attack had been carried out 'tis very doubtful if they would ever have succeeded in taking the place at all, for a mounted soldier is of little use as a besieger, as a rule.

They had not long to wait. Over a distant hill swung a strong force on foot, marching in rather more disciplined order than any they had yet seen; then followed some cavalry, well mounted—enough on heavy horses. Straight on they came, the sunlight glittering on the accoutrements—straight towards the fortress, which, as they fondly imagined, their friends were holding against their arrival.

But what a stunning surprise it held for them! The artillery pieces, crashing out at almost point-blank range, sent their leaden messengers hurtling amongst them, tearing ugly gaps in the packed ranks, and strewing the white roadway with many who would never move again, whilst the remainder were thrown into a state of amazed confusion.

In the meantime, Prince Rupert had withdrawn the pick of his cavalry to the shelter of a thick wood on the enemy's flank, and, whilst the pandemonium was at its height, loosed them on the demoralised mob, who were little prepared to withstand this new attack. Despite the commands and entreaties of their leaders, but a half-hearted attempt at resistance was put up, and presently the Roundhead host was scattering in all directions, hotly pursued by the triumphant Royalists.

And, elsewhere, Sir William Waller was still waging his losing battle against my Lord Gorings—waiting vainly for the reinforcements which would never come!

A Mysterious Conversation!

PRINCE RUPERT, fearing the danger of a sudden rally on the part of the scattered Roundheads, whom he did not deem it wise to pursue too far—for the majority had taken a direction in which he strongly suspected they might eventually meet with substantial assistance—decided to hold the captured fortress for but a short time, and then return to his previous position. Indeed, now that his daring action had been crowned with success, and the reinforcements intended for Sir William Waller stopped on their march, the place would be of but little use to him. True, it commanded all the available roads, but having once been so completely surprised, 'twas not likely that a further enemy force would attempt to pass that way, unless in such overwhelming numbers as he could not hope

to withstand. Nay, any who came would probably travel across country by a longer and more difficult route, rather than face another trouncing such as had just been given them.

Thus, some little time later the castle was deserted by all save the rats and owls, and the Royalists were rapidly marching through the surrounding woods towards the spot whence they had set out. Arriving there just after dusk, a well-earned rest was welcomed by all and sundry, Harry and Will dropping to sleep almost immediately they lay down.

But whereas Howard snored on, inert as the dead, his young companion, contrary to his expectations, enjoyed but a fitful doze, waking an hour or so later.

He lay there, turning and twisting alternately from one side to the other, until, presently the sound of subdued voices fell on his ears and caused him to remain still.

More as a change from tossing about than anything else, the lad began to listen, hoping that the soft murmuring of the voices might lull him to sleep; but presently he gave a

Harry gave it up in despair, gently nudging Will Howard.

Will gave an articulate grunt, which was effectually choked by his companion, and sat up. Then, with a hastily-whispered warning, Harry led the way quietly towards a patch of deep shadow lying some distance off.

"What is't, lad?" asked Will, as soon as they were out of earshot.

"That I know not just at present," replied Harry, "but I feel mightily alarmed."

He repeated what he had overheard, and Howard rubbed his stubby chin in perplexity.

"Ay, 'tis a fact that his Majesty is expected. We got word of his coming, an' you remember, just after we returned. He can be no more than six or seven miles off now."

"Probably; but what is the meaning of—"

Will gave his shoulders a hopeless shrug.

"In these times, lad, 'tis hard to tell the meaning of anything, so we can but watch carefully. Who are the fellows in the tent?"



Down the wide lane formed by the walls of white canvas, a number of mounted men trotted. The foremost couple were Prince Rupert and the King. They passed quite close to where Harry and Will were standing stiffly, and acknowledged their salutes gravely.

start, and raised himself quietly on his elbows, straining his ears to their utmost.

"You are sure?"

"Sure! Why, hast not heard his Highness say it?"

"Ay; but—"

"Buts, my friend, are the fool's obstacles! Charles times his movements well, and will come by sunrise; then—"

"Then, good Thomas, our pockets will weigh more heavily, and our hearts lighter—"

"Hist! Dolt, dost not know that walls—and tents—have ears? Get you to sleep!"

Harry stifled a gasp, and remained listening intently for some minutes longer; but no further words sounded through the canvas. What could be the import of the strange conversation? That it had reference to the King was certain, but what had they meant by that strange reference to their pockets? 'Twas true that his Majesty was expected to join forces with his nephew, Prince Rupert, and was probably even now on his way down from the North, where he had successfully defeated a large Parliamentary body, though with considerable loss to himself. But what—

"That I cannot say, but we could find out easily enough, I should think."

Will nodded, pointing to the eastern sky, which was even now beginning to show a faint greyness.

"'Twill soon be daylight," he said, "so our best plan is to take up such a position as will allow us to see who leaves yonder place. We dare not enter, of course."

But though they waited patiently, their eyes fixed untringly on the closed flap until the first shafts of the rising sun shot upwards from the horizon, not a soul left the tent to reward their vigil.

"Marry, this is strange!" muttered Will doubtfully. "They were talking of the King, you say, yet even when he must be almost upon us, they still make no stir— Ah!"

A bugle-call sounded faintly from some distant part of the camp, and then came a great noise of bustle and cheering. The two sprang to their feet, and were hurrying away in the direction whence it proceeded when Will suddenly halted and stepped aside towards the mysterious tent.

"'Tis perhaps wise to take the bull by the horns, after all, lad, for we may not have another opportunity of knowing who—"

He stopped short and pulled the flap open, but next instant a disappointed look crept into his face, for the interior was quite empty. Evidently the occupants had made good their departure beneath the canvas at the rear whilst they watched in front.

By this time the commotion had become even more pronounced, and presently, down a wide lane formed by the walls of white canvas, a number of mounted men trotted, the foremost couple being Prince Rupert and the King. They passed quite close to where Harry and Will were standing stiffly at attention, acknowledging their salutes, and finally disappearing in the direction of His Highness's quarters.

"Now, lad, the subject of that strange talk has arrived, and we are yet groping like a pair of moles in a thick fog," said Howard. "We cannot accuse the speakers, since we know not who they are, and we certainly cannot denounce the whole force. 'Thomas' is but a vague description. Why, we have dozens of that name here."

Harry looked rather anxious.

"Ay, 'tis a pretty mess!" he replied. "I almost wish now that I— Nay, 'tis small use wishing, though. Ah, I believe I have it!"

"Well, lad?"

"There is but one plan that I can think of," the boy continued. "We must attach ourselves to His Majesty's personal bodyguard at once, so that we can have him under our observation ceaselessly."

"A difficult problem, Master Harry. You may take it he will likely have little need of extra supporters."

"Nay, Will, your eyes require brightening! Didst not notice how depleted his guard was? Ay, and some were wounded, too! He'll require fresh men, I warrant you!"

But Howard still looked very doubtful.

"You may be right, lad, but 'tis a poor chance—almost as poor as we shall have of being selected should it actually turn out as you say."

But, nevertheless, in spite of the big fellow's misgivings, Harry's prophecy proved to be a correct one; and chance also favoured them both when it came to making the choice from Rupert's forces, from which 'twas decided to pick the fresh guard, on account of the many casualties in the King's, for Will's great figure and Harry's own wiry appearance most favourably impressed the officer entrusted with the task, and he nodded approvingly.

"Ay! Both fine fellows, truly!" he said. "Step forward, the two of ye, beside these others here."

He passed on down the line, picking several more likely-looking men, and finally announced his required number complete.

Almost immediately afterwards they were paraded afresh before His Majesty, who also looked them over with an approving eye, complimenting the officer on his taste and shrewdness.

"A goodly lot!" Charles said, smiling. "Marry, Fortescue, I warrant I could even pay the Parliament itself a friendly call and return unharmed, with these fellows at my back!"

Captain Fortescue smiled in return, but then looked somewhat grave.

"Nay, sire!" he replied. "'Twere not well to risk overmuch just now. The people are scarcely in a mood to be trifled with, and but a slight touch either way may tip the scales to our disadvantage."

The King burst into a roar of laughter, and then extended his gold snuff-box towards the other.

"Zounds, friend," he chuckled, "I did but jest! What a sober-sides you are, Fortescue, yet I'll vow you mean well!"

He turned and re-entered his tent, whilst the new bodyguard was dispersed for the time being.

In the Nick of Time!

FOR the next day or so nothing further transpired which served to throw any light on the mysterious conversation Harry Temple had overheard, nor had the identity of the unseen speakers yet been discovered.

Doubtful as to whether they should take **THE POPULAR**.—No. 86.

anyone else into their confidence upon the matter or not, he and Will finally decided to keep their own counsel, being now in a position to watch everything that took place, and having the King under observation almost every moment of his stay at the camp.

At first the arrangement had been that both Rupert's force and his uncle's should combine and march eastwards to attack several large Parliamentary bodies which were reported to be at full strength there, waiting for an opportunity to sweep the Royalists completely out of that district; but unexpected news of a somewhat similar state of affairs coming from the west made it necessary to alter the plans, and the King's forces were now about to travel that way alone, whilst His Highness's would adhere to the original arrangement, each leader hoping to fall in with substantial assistance on his journey to replace the loss of their mutual support.

Thus it came to the last few hours of Charles's sojourn with his nephew, and up to now nothing had occurred to cause overmuch alarm in the hearts of the only two who guessed that anything untoward was in the air.

But this selfsame change in tactics had apparently served to quicken the movements of the hitherto unknown enemy also; and Harry himself was fortunate in at last learning something more substantial to go upon than before.

Shortly after Charles had returned from a hurried inspection of the lines on the last day of his stay, young Temple and Howard had obtained a brief respite from duty, and were resting quite close to one of the larger tents where some of the cookery arrangements were being conducted. From this point they also had an uninterrupted view of the King's quarters, and presently one of His Majesty's personal servants made his way across the intervening space, disappearing into the other tent.

"Now, beshrew me, but yonder fellow reminds me that I, too, am empty!" quoth Will, rising to his feet. "You remember, lad, that our duties caused us to miss our breakfasts this morning, so let's see what can be had within."

They entered the big tent, where a busy scene met their gaze, whilst a savoury odour served to make their appetites all the more keen. Close to the right of the entrance a light repast was being prepared for the King ere he took his departure, and, even as they watched, the servant carried it out.

Next moment Will had turned away in search of something for themselves, and Harry was about to follow, when a few words spoken by one of the cooks caused him to start slightly, for the voice was the voice of one of those whom he had chanced to overhear but a short time back.

Apparently the man had either not noticed the boy's close proximity, or else did not imagine the latter could possibly grasp the meaning of what he said, for his speech was but moderately low as he turned to one of his assistants.

"Now, Thomas, 'tis done!"

The words were but ordinary ones in everyday use, and to anyone else, provided he had not overheard that previous conversation, they would have appeared innocent enough, and might have referred to the task which had just been completed; but to Harry Temple, strung up to his highest pitch in his anxiety to fathom the real import of what he had already learnt, they seemed to bear a strange significance, coupled with the fact that when the other answered, his tones were curiously like those of the second mysterious voice.

But Harry never betrayed his inward feeling for an instant. Leaving Will Howard to continue his way towards the far end of the tent, where several other cooks were busy serving some troopers, he strolled casually outside, and then sprang like a hare towards where the King was about to begin his meal.

Indeed, Charles was even then in the act of raising the spoon to his lips when a lithe figure rushed unceremoniously past the solitary man-at-arms standing at the entrance, and ere that worthy had half realised what was happening, burst in like manner through the group of officers just within, and came to a breathless halt in front of the small table.

"Stay, sire! Put it down! In Heaven's name, put it down!"

Charles dropped the spoon with a clatter, splashing its contents over his attire, and rose to his feet in angry surprise.

"Put it down, sirrah!" he echoed. "What mean you? Why, I was just about to do so—down my throat," he added, with a laugh, quickly recovering his composure.

"Nay, sire! Heaven grant you did not!" exclaimed Harry, and then described what had occurred.

Charles's face grew graver as he listened, his brows meeting in a dark frown.

"Ah me!" he said presently, sighing deeply. "It seems those with the Parliament are not my only enemies. Gentlemen, this must be inquired into at once! You, lad, go with them, and point out those two fellows whom you suspect."

Both cooks looked the picture of consternation when a quartet of officers entered and curtly commanded them to follow, whilst the rest of the company, including Will Howard, stared in surprise, and finally flocked out behind them.

Arriving at the King's tent, none but those directly concerned were admitted, the remainder halting in a body outside. Then, after a searching glance at the two suspects, Charles nodded towards his untouched plate.

"'Tis not often, I'll vow, ye are honoured by a Royal invitation," he said grimly. "There is a most appetising repast, sirs. Taste it, I pray you!"

But from the demeanour of the twain 'twas easy to see that they would willingly forgo such a great distinction, for their jaws dropped and their cheeks turned as white as the canvas about them.

"Nay, sire," mumbled one, licking his dry lips. "We have dined but an hour back, and do not feel hungry. Your Majesty is too considerate!"

"Ah, 'tis a pity," was the cutting reply, "for I had hoped for the pleasure of your company. Nay, the disappointment is more than I can bear. Ye must take some!"

He held out the plate, the rest of the group looking on breathlessly. But the wretched fellows backed away, their legs trembling as though they could no longer support their bodies, until brought to an abrupt halt by the tent-wall behind them.

Then the King's attitude suddenly changed from grim banter to blazing anger. He cast the plate from him and fixed each with a steely stare.

"Ye are convicted out of your own mouths!" he snapped harshly. "Your refusal to eat proves beyond a doubt what was but a suspicion up to now. Have ye anything to say?"

They dropped to their knees, trembling so much that they could scarce frame a reply. Then—

"Mercy, sire!" cried Thomas. "Have mercy upon us! We were sorely tempted—"

Charles's lips curled contemptuously.

"Mercy, forsooth!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "Didst show me any when ye sent that stuff here? Wouldst have shed any tears over me had I eaten it? Nay, ye need say no more. I have no use for those who succumb to temptation. Take them away, Fortescue! The very sight of the knaves upsets me!"

Still frantically entreating, they were dragged from the tent, and the King turned to Harry, who still remained, undecided whether his further presence was required or not.

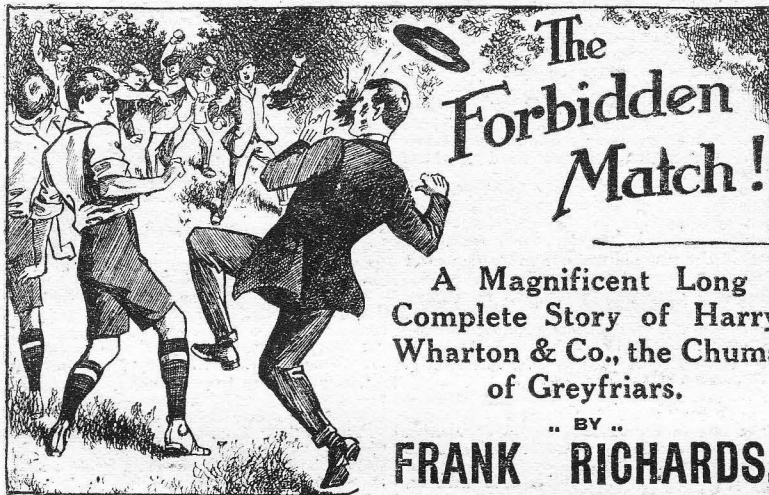
"I thank you, lad," said Charles gratefully. "'Twas a clever piece of work. And rest assured I shall remember it to your credit when we have more time to consider such things—Hark!"

A crashing volley sounded from somewhere outside, and Harry gave an involuntary shudder. The King's head had sunk upon his chest, and his eyes were closed, whilst his lips moved silently.

"'Tis unfortunate, but necessary for the benefit of others," he presently muttered. "I bid you farewell now, lad. But we shall meet again, an' Fate is kind, when I shall keep my promise."

Harry bent low and kissed the white hand held towards him. Then he backed slowly from the tent.

(There will be another grand instalment of this romantic adventure serial in next week's issue of THE POPULAR. Tell all your friends about this splendid new serial.)



The Forbidden Match!
A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Cheeky Challenge!

GOAL!" "Hurrah!" "Well played, Carr!" There were scenes of great animation on Little Side at Greyfriars.

The reign of King Cricket was over. Bob Cherry remarked that there had been a jolly sight more "rain" than cricket—and he was right. Many matches had had to be abandoned on account of the weeping skies which generally prevailed during an English summer.

Football had started at Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, were in their element. Cricket was a game which could be played only in fine weather. But so far as football was concerned, it could rain, hail, snow, and sleet—either separately or all together—for all the juniors cared.

As it happened, it was a fine afternoon in September. A trial match was taking place on Little Side, to give Harry Wharton an opportunity of selecting the Remove eleven.

Wharton captained one team, and Dennis Carr the other, and the play was fast, keen, and interesting.

At half-time Wharton's team had led by two goals to nil. But in the second half Dennis Carr revolutionised the game by netting twice, and bringing the scores level.

Dennis was in great form, and it was certain that he, at any rate, would secure a place in the Remove eleven.

With ten minutes to go, both sides strove hard for the winning goal.

Harry Wharton missed by inches, and at the other end Dennis Carr came within an ace of completing the "hat-trick."

But nothing further was scored, and the game ended in a draw.

"Race you to the tuckshop, you fellows!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Right you are!" said Nugent.

And the Famous Five sprinted away, with the rest of the players at their heels.

The runners had not proceeded very far before they met with an obstruction, in the person of Billy Bunter.

The fat junior stood with arms and legs apart, as if determined that no one should pass him. In a way the scene was reminiscent of Horatius keeping the bridge of old.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Stand aside, porpoise!"

"Stop!" exclaimed Billy Bunter dramatically.

In his right hand the fat junior was flourishing a newspaper.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What have you got there?"

"Looks like the local rag," said Harry Wharton. "Got anything exciting to show us, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors halted, and Billy Bunter handed the paper to Wharton, at the same time indicating a paragraph in the advertisement column.

The captain of the Remove perused the paragraph, and his chums glanced over his shoulder.

It was a football challenge that Billy Bunter had pointed out. And it was worded as follows:

"COURTFIELD CRUSADERS (very strong) desire a match with junior schoolboy team, for the purpose of licking them into a cocked hat. The Courtfield ground will be available on Saturday next. Any replies to this challenge should be addressed to the secretary and captain.—S. H. JARVIS, High Street, Courtfield."

"My hat!"

"What awful cheek!"

"I've never heard of such nerve!" said Bob Cherry. "Fancy calling themselves 'very strong'! I suppose they think they're peppermints?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fancy I know this fellow Jarvis!" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "He's the butcher's boy!"

"And he thinks he can turn the Courtfield ground into a slaughter-house, with a junior schoolboy team as his victims!" said Frank Nugent.

"He'll be unlucky!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose his initials, 'S. H.', stand for 'Swelled Head'?" said Dennis Carr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton," said Billy Bunter, "I think this challenge ought to be taken up, you know!"

"Go hon!"

"But it won't be any use taking a dud team over to Courtfield. You'll have to take eleven good men and true. I offer you my services—"

"Declined with thanks!" said Wharton promptly.

"Oh really, Wharton! You'll want a really good centre-forward—"

"Are you suggesting that I'm rotten?" demanded the captain of the Remove. "Because, if so, you'll get a thick ear!"

"What are you going to do about this challenge, Harry?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Accept it, of course!"

"You'll write to Jarvis?"

"No; I'll get through to him on the 'phone before Highlife or some other school takes up the challenge."

"Good wheeze!"

Harry Wharton obtained permission from Wingate of the Sixth to use the telephone in the prefects' room, and he lost no time in ringing up the presumptuous Jarvis.

The other members of the Famous Five accompanied Wharton to the prefects' room.

"I want Courtfield—double-two six!" said the captain of the Remove, speaking into the transmitter.

A moment later a gruff voice sounded across the wires.

"Hallo! Who's there?"

"This is Greyfriars—" began Wharton.

"Oh, yes! We sent the steak up to the school this morning!"

"Eh?"

"Hope the boy delivered it all right!"

"Blow the steak!" growled Wharton.

"What!"

"Bother the steak! This isn't a business call. I want to speak to Mr. Jarvis junior about footer!"

"Oh! Who is it speaking?"

"Wharton, of Greyfriars."

"Very good, Master Wharton. I'll get my son to come to the telephone."

Shortly afterwards the coarse and insolent voice of Mr. S. H. Jarvis hailed Harry Wharton.

"What d'you want, kid?"

"I've rung up about your challenge in the local paper," said Wharton. "On behalf of the Remove eleven at Greyfriars, I wish to accept it."

There was a chuckle from Jarvis.

"I 'ope you realise what you're lettin' yourselves in for!" he said. "We shall simply make rings round you!"

"That remains to be seen," said Wharton quietly. "Will it be all right for our eleven to come over to Courtfield on Saturday afternoon?"

"Cert'nly! An' if you take my advice you'll bring an ambulance with you!"

"Eh! Why?"

"Well, we ain't rough players, by no manner of means, but we're likely to inflict a few accidental injuries on you undersized brats!"

"You—you cheeky rotter—"

"I give you fair warnin'," said Jarvis. "If you come over to play us, you must expect a few 'ard knocks!"

"We don't mind hard knocks, so long as the game's played fairly!" said Wharton.

"What about the time of the kick-off? Will two-thirty suit you?"

"Down to the ground!"

"We'll call that settled, then."

"You'll get a terrible whoppin', mark you!" said Jarvis.

"We shall see. We're not so hefty as your fellows, by long chalks, but I dare say we shall be able to hold our own. Good-bye!"

"Bon swore!" said Jarvis. "Scuse my bad French."

And he rang off.

"Fixed everything up, Harry?" inquired Frank Nugent, as Harry Wharton replaced the receiver on its hook.

"Yes. We play Courtfield Crusaders on their ground on Saturday. Kick-off two-thirty. That fellow Jarvis seems an awful nooligan. He says we'd better bring an ambulance."

"Does he, by Jove?" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, we won't do that; but I'll tell you what we will do. We'll take a whole crowd of supporters over with us, in case there's any foul play."

"That's the idea!"

"And if we don't make the Crusaders feel sorry that they issued that challenge, I'll eat my Sunday topper!" declared Johnny Bull.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Wharton. "I'm going to draw up the team."

And the Famous Five—alias the Remove Selection Committee—adjourned to No. 1 Study in the Remove passage, in order to compile the list of players who would endeavour to "put it across" the cheeky Courtfield Crusaders.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Ready for the Fray!

THAT evening the following announcement appeared on the school notice-board:

"NOTICE!

The challenge made recently in the Press by the Courtfield Crusaders has been accepted by the Greyfriars Remove, who will be represented by the following eleven:

Goal, Bulstrode; backs, Bull and Brown; half-backs, Cherry, P. Todd, and Linley; forwards, Vernon-Smith, Nugent, Wharton, Carr, and Hurree Singh.

(Signed) H. WHARTON,
Captain."

That announcement gave complete satisfaction to exactly eleven fellows—the eleven who had been chosen.

Among the rest of the Removites there was something discontent.

Harry Wharton & Co. found it quite impossible to do any prep that evening. They were constantly being interrupted.

Billy Bunter was the first arrival. He rolled into the study without knocking, and blinked at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles.

"I say, Wharton," he began, "I want a place—"

"This isn't a fried-fish shop!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want a place in the Remove Eleven," continued Bunter, unheeding. "I've already

offered you my services, and you declined them. But, of course, you were only rotting. You can't afford to overlook the claims of a brilliant forward like me! Am I going to play at outside-left, Wharton?"

"No; you're going to be left outside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, it's no laughing matter—"

"It would be, if you played for the Remove!" chuckled Frank Nugent. "A performing porpoise wouldn't be in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter glared at the hilarious juniors. "Evidently you fellows have never seen me playing on the wing," he said. "I've got the speed of a hare. I can travel—"

"You can!" agreed Johnny Bull. "And you're going to start travelling now! Lend me a boot, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter darted towards the door. But he was too late to escape the attentions of his schoolfellows. Five boots clumped together on the rear of his person, and he disappeared through the doorway. The manner of his going out was considerably quicker than the manner of his coming in.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As soon as he was able to sort himself out, Billy Bunter rolled disconsolately away. It had taken him a long time to realise that Harry Wharton & Co. had no use for his services; but he realised it at last.

The Famous Five attempted to start their prep, but scarcely had they opened their books when Fisher T. Fish came in.

"I sorter guess and calculate that you've made a mistake, Wharton!" said the Yankee junior. "I don't see my name down to play against Courtfield."

"We're keeping you in reserve till we play a blind school, Fishy!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"See hyer!" said Fish. "I guess you'll be wanting a strong team on this occasion."

"That's so," said Wharton. "And we've therefore got no use for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I reckon I'm just the galoot you're looking for," went on Fisher T. Fish, undaunted. "I'm an eighteen-carat forward, and I can travel—some!"

"Then you can jolly well travel out of the window!" said Bob Cherry.

"Bunter's already travelled through the doorway, and he can go out of the window by way of variety!" said Nugent.

Fisher T. Fish backed away in alarm. But before he could dodge out into the passage he was seized by the Famous Five, and dragged to the window.

"We will now speedfully despatch the parting guest!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on, you jays—" panted Fish.

The juniors obeyed. They held on grimly, and forced their victim on to the window-sill.

The window was wide open, for the Famous Five were by way of being fresh-air fiends.

Fisher T. Fish was bundled through, and he descended none too gently on to the flagstones in the Close.

Fortunately, it was not a very big drop; but it was quite big enough for Fish. His yells of anguish would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

"Now p'r'aps we shall get some peace," said Merry Wharton.

But such was not the case.

Squiff and Monty Newland and Tom Redwing were the next arrivals at Study No. 1.

"I say, Wharton," said Squiff, "some silly ass has been playing a practical joke!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, there's a list of players on the notice-board supposed to be signed by you. The list has been faked, of course!"

"Rats!" said the captain of the Remove. "It's perfectly genuine!"

"But it can't be, because my name's not down!"

"Nor mine!" said Monty Newland.

"Nor mine!" added Tom Redwing.

"That list was drawn up and signed by me," said Wharton. "I'm sorry I had to leave you fellows out, because you're all good players. But when there's such a giddy array of talent to choose from somebody's bound to be disappointed. I tell you what, though. You can be first reserve, Squiff."

"Thanks!" said Squiff drily.

"And you can be second reserve, Newland!"

Monty Newland gave an emphatic snort.

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"And I can be third reserve, I suppose?" said Tom Redwing.

"Yes."

"Your generosity, old chap," said Squiff, "is far in excess of your personal beauty—which isn't apparent to the naked eye!"

"You—you—"

"We appreciate very much the honour which you have conferred upon us, but it isn't quite good enough. We don't see the fun of being first, second, and third reserves, respectively!"

"No, jolly fear!" said Monty Newland.

"Look here, you fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "The Eleven's been chosen, and the editor's—I mean the skipper's—decision is final!"

"And now you can buzz off, unless you want us to show you the way out!" said Nugent.

Realising that they would get no change out of the Remove Selection Committee, Squiff and his companions stamped out of the study. And Harry Wharton consoled them as they went by promising them places in the eleven at no distant date.

The Famous Five made yet another attempt to tackle their prep. But there was a tramping of feet in the passage, and a deputation of juniors, headed by Bolsover major, came into the study.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet with an exclamation of impatience.

"This is the absolute limit!" he ejaculated.

"You'll have to put a notice up outside the door, Harry," said Nugent. "Something after this style:

"The chaps who come in here to grouse, And don't know where to stop, Are warned to keep their distance, or They'll go out neck and crop!"

There was a growl from Bolsover major.

"I'd like to see you try it on!" he said.

"You'd have all your work cut out!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Faith, an' there's a dozen of us here, intirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"And if it comes to a scrap, you fellows will find yourselves in Queer Street!" said Morgan.

Harry Wharton glared at the deputation.

"What do you silly asses want?" he demanded.

"We've come to solemnly warn you not to take a team over to Courtfield on Saturday!" said Bolsover major.

"Eh? Why not?"

"Because you won't be up to the weight of the Crusaders: They're nothing more or less than a set of hooligans. Instead of playing the ball, they play the man. They've made up their minds to lay you out, and if you value your skins you'll stay at Greyfriars."

"We're not funks!" said Wharton contemptuously.

"No. But you don't want to risk your lives and limbs against a set of bruisers. Take my advice, Wharton, and cancel the fixture!"

"And what's going to happen then?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Why, I shall take a team over to Courtfield myself," said Bolsover. "A big, hearty team, that will play the Crusaders at their own game. In fact, it'll be more like a dog-fight than a footer-match!"

"Ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "We wouldn't dream of cancelling the fixture, and making way for your rag-time team. We're not afraid of getting hurt. And if there's any foul play, there will be a bodyguard of Remove fellows on the touch-line, ready to back us up!"

Bolsover scowled.

"Do I understand—" he began.

"Of course not!" said Bob Cherry. "How can you, when you don't possess an understanding?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do I understand that you're going to ignore my warning?" hooted Bolsover.

"Absolutely!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, if you get killed, don't come round to me afterwards and say that I didn't warn you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover turned on his heel.

"There's nothing doing, you fellows," he said. "These chumps are determined to go ahead, and if they get slaughtered it will be their own funeral!"

And the members of the deputation retired. After which Harry Wharton took the precaution of locking the door of Study No. 1. And there were no further interruptions that evening.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Stormy Scene!

SATURDAY dawned bright and clear. The morning seemed never-ending, but at last the time was ripe for the Remove eleven to set out for Courtfield. They changed into football garb before they went, for the dressing-room facilities on the Courtfield ground were anything but up to date.

Quite a crowd of Removites walked over with the team. There must have been at least a couple of score of them—practically the entire Form.

Many of the fellows carried mouth-organs and toy rattles and tin-whistles, by means of which they hoped to spur their team on to victory.

When Harry Wharton & Co. reached the Courtfield ground they felt devoutly thankful that they had a bodyguard with them. For the touch-line was thronged with hefty-looking hooligans, who evidently meant mischief.

"They seem to have advertised the match pretty well, judging by the number of spectators," remarked Dennis Carr.

"Nice-looking mob, aren't they?" said Bob Cherry. "If I'm anything of a prophet, there'll be some thick ears and swollen noses in evidence before the game's over."

"Where are the Crusaders?" asked Nugent.

"In the dressing-room, I expect," said Harry Wharton. "Let's go and see."

The Remove eleven adjourned to the dressing-room, and there, sure enough, they located their opponents.

Jarvis, the skipper, was there, and he made a mocking bow.

"You've turned up, then?" he said.

Wharton nodded.

"Well, I didn't think you would, somehow."

"You thought we'd show the white feather?" said Vernon-Smith.

"Yes."

"We're not afraid of you," grunted Johnny Bull, "although you're big enough to eat us, almost."

The Courtfield Crusaders were indeed a hefty lot. They were, without exception, taller and broader than the Removites. But the latter were fast and nippy, and they anticipated no great difficulty in holding their own against Jarvis & Co.

"It was like your cheek to put that challenge in the local rag," said Wharton to Jarvis.

The Courtfield skipper grinned.

"I was hopin' that you Greyfriars kids would swallow the bait," he said. "You're goin' through the mill this afternoon!"

"Rats!"

"I'll give you one more chance to back out," said Jarvis. "You can see what you're up against."

"Back out?" echoed Bob Cherry. "Never!"

"No jolly fear!"

Jarvis winked at his companions. Then he said:

"Are you kids ready?"

"Quite!" said Wharton. "Where's the referee?"

"Ere he is!" said Jarvis, with a chuckle.

A slim-looking young man, who was dressed in black, with a clerical collar, came into the dressing-room. He was Mr. Blenkinsop, one of the curates at Courtfield.

Mr. Blenkinsop beamed at the footballers.

"Are we all heah?" he inquired, in a drawing voice.

"Yaas, I think so, begad!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have offahed to come ovah and referee this match, and I trust there will be no disordah," said Mr. Blenkinsop. "It is my desiah to control a clean, gentle game, unmarred by any roughness or brutality."

"Afraid you'll be unlucky, old sport!" muttered Jarvis.

"Shall we adjourn to the playing-field, on which the—haw!—battles of England are won?" said Mr. Blenkinsop.

"Wouldn't be a bad idea," said Dennis Carr. "Lead the way, sir!"

The mild-looking curate stepped on to the ground, and he blew a shrill blast on his whistle.

There was a mighty roar from the touch-line as the rival teams lined up.

"Play up, Greyfriars!"

"Go it, the Crusaders!"

"On the ball!"

From the kick-off Harry Wharton & Co. knew that they must expect a rough game.

The Courtfield Crusaders seemed to make it their special mission not to score goals,

but to bowl their opponents over as often and as roughly as possible.

Had there been a firm referee, with a strong control of the game, the unfair tactics of the Crusaders would promptly have been stopped.

Mr. Blenkinsop, however, was anything but firm.

Shortly after the start Harry Wharton was racing for goal, when Jarvis, who had been lying in wait for him, brought him down very badly.

It was a glaring foul, for which Jarvis deserved to be ordered off the field.

As it was, Mr. Blenkinsop contented himself with administering a mild rebuke. Turning to the Courtfield skipper, he said:

"Pray be a little more gentle, Mr. Jarvis. Your methods are—er—a trifle rough!"

Harry Wharton picked himself up. He was frowning darkly.

"You cad!" he said to Jarvis. "Why can't you play fairly?"

Jarvis shrugged his shoulders.

"I told you what to expect," he said.

"If there's much more of that sort of thing, you rotter," said Bob Cherry hotly, "you'll get it in the neck!"

The referee awarded a free-kick to the Greyfriars Remove. The kick was taken by Peter Todd, whose shot for goal struck the crossbar.

It was a very near thing, and the Courtfield supporters looked far from pleased.

Jarvis & Co. continued to play a very rough game, and there were numerous casualties amongst the Remove eleven.

Mark Linley was limping, having been kicked in the ankle, and Vernon-Smith's jersey was torn and tattered. He had been bowled over in the mud by an unfair charge, and one of the opposing backs had rolled over on top of him.

Frank Nugent was in the wars, too. And so were Johnny Bull and Tom Brown.

The Greyfriars section of the crowd became very wrathful, and there was a chorus of indignant exclamations.

"Play the game, Courtfield!"

"Don't be a set of cads!"

"Why don't you do your duty, ref?"

Mr. Blenkinsop was looking very worried. His experience of refereeing was decidedly limited. He was not even aware of the fact that he was empowered to send a player off the field for employing unfair tactics. He had volunteered, out of sheer kindness of heart, to referee the match, but he would have been wiser to have kept off the game, so to speak. He was woefully lax in the duties of a referee, and whenever he addressed any mild rebuke to Jarvis & Co. those young hooligans simply laughed at him.

"This is awful!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"I've never played against such a cowardly team in my life!" declared Harry Wharton.

"Still, we accepted the challenge, and we must go through with it."

"Yes, rather!"

"You're pretty badly crooked, aren't you, Marky?" said Frank Nugent, addressing the Lancashire lad.

Mark nodded.

"I'm nothing more than a passenger," he said. "But I mean to carry on."

"That's the spirit!"

Harry Wharton & Co. played up pluckily. They had received many hard knocks, and it seemed as if many more were in store for them. But they did not falter. It was their fixed intention to defeat the Crusaders. And but for foul play on the part of their opponents they would certainly have been a couple of goals ahead by this time.

Jarvis and his cronies tried hard to break through the Remove's defence, but it was impenetrable.

Johnny Bull and Tom Brown, at back, were playing the game of their lives. They were bowled over without ceremony again and again, but they were always up and doing immediately afterwards.

Butstrode, in goal, had plenty of work to do, and he did it well. He was for ever fisting out shots, and his brilliant saves earned him the applause of the Greyfriars spectators.

Towards half-time the Remove forwards broke away.

Dennis Carr had the ball, and he put in a sensational run. Jarvis lumbered up to meet him, and there was an evil smile playing about his features. He hurled himself savagely at Dennis, who promptly rolled over in the mud. But even while he was on the ground he contrived to touch the ball to Harry Wharton, who banged it into the net.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The Greyfriars supporters danced with glee. But the Courtfield roughs were furious. And their fury showed itself in their expressions. The fact that their team was a goal down went very much against the grain, and, unnoticed by the Greyfriars fellows, they started collecting lumps of mud and other missiles.

No sooner had the ball been set in motion again than a deluge of missiles rained upon the field of play.

Mud and turves, and even stones, were hurled at the Greyfriars players. And one of the lumps of mud struck Mr. Blenkinsop, the referee, full in the face.

The curate staggered back with a startled gasp.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is most distressing! Unless this bombardment ceases, I shall have no recourse but to stop the game! Desist—I entreat you to desist!"

But Mr. Blenkinsop might as well have addressed a brick wall, for all the notice that was taken of his appeal.

The air was thick with flying missiles, and it was impossible, of course, for the game to proceed.

The Greyfriars players grouped themselves

It was extremely fortunate that the Remove had turned out in full force, or Harry Wharton & Co. would soon have been overpowered. As it was, they more than held their own against the cowardly Courtfielders, who were compelled to retreat before their fierce onrush.

The best bout of all was that which took place between Bob Cherry and Jarvis.

Remembering that Jarvis was the ring-leader and offender-in-chief, Bob did not spare him. He was no match for the Courtfield skipper so far as height and weight were concerned, but in every other respect he was the better man of the two.

Jarvis was by no means a good fighting-man. His methods were crude. Every blow he aimed at Bob Cherry—and he launched a good many—was successfully evaded. And presently it was Bob's turn to attack.

A powerful straight left, followed by a smashing uppercut with the right, and Jarvis went down and rolled over in the mud at the feet of the Mayor of Courtfield. That angry gentleman seized Bob Cherry by the shoulder.

"How dare you!" he roared. "How dare you fight and brawl in this manner?"

Bob Cherry shook himself free.



Dennis Carr had the ball now. Jarvis lumbered up to meet him, and savagely hurled himself at the junior. It was a clear foul, and they both rolled heavily in the mud. But even as he fell Carr managed to pass the ball to Harry Wharton who came dashing down on his right wing.

together, thus affording an easy target for the marksmen.

"This is the absolute giddy limit!" said Bob Cherry.

"I suggested there would be trouble," said Peter Todd, "but I didn't think those hooligans would go as far as this!"

"It's no use playing on," said Harry Wharton. "We must tackle these cowardly cads!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Greyfriars supporters were already at grips with the missile-throwers, and fierce fights were in progress all over the ground.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined in, and the scene was one of indescribable commotion and confusion.

Mr. Blenkinsop, who by this time was plastered from head to foot with mud, deemed it advisable to beat a retreat. And he made an undignified exit from the scene of strife.

The uproar was terrific.

No quarter was asked or given, and the conflict was at its height when a portly and pompous individual arrived on the scene. It was the Mayor of Courtfield, who was also the chairman of the local football club.

The mayor's countenance was red and wrathful. He waved his arms to and fro like a windmill in a hurricane.

"Stop!" he roared. "Stop this hooliganism at once! I command you!"

But nobody took any notice of the mayor.

The fight waxed fast and furious.

"Have you been watching the match, sir?" he inquired of the mayor.

"No. But—"

"Well, if you had you would have seen that the fault wasn't on our side. We played cleanly and fairly. But this rotter"—Bob Cherry indicated the squirming Jarvis—"egged his men on to play a rough game. And when we scored a goal the Courtfield crowd started pelting us with mud and things. Do you call that playing the game?"

The mayor scarcely seemed to hear Bob Cherry's remarks.

"Your conduct is outrageous!" he barked. "You are public schoolboys, yet you are behaving like untamed hooligans! Never have I witnessed such an appalling scene of disorder as this! I have a good mind to report this outrage to your headmaster!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em, sir!" muttered Jarvis, lumbering to his feet. "It was these Greyfriars kids who started playin' rough, an', of course, we paid 'em back in their own coin. You can 'ardly blame us, in the cirs."

The mayor nodded.

"I do not see that you are in any way to blame, Jarvis," he said. "I confess I did not witness the beginning of the trouble, but I have no hesitation in accepting your assurance that these young rascals from Greyfriars were at the bottom of it."

"That's not true!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, his eyes flashing.

Then he turned, fiercely upon Jarvis. "If you say another word, you cad, I'll knock you down again. And you won't get up so quickly next time!"

Jarvis very wisely kept his mouth shut after that.

Meanwhile the battle royal had degenerated into a few desultory scraps. And presently these ceased also.

Both the Greyfriars fellows and the Courtfielders had had their fill of fighting.

It had been a fierce and strenuous conflict, and many black eyes and swollen noses would be revealed by the morning.

Harry Wharton mustered his scattered forces, and the Greyfriars juniors—some of them limping, and all of them looking decidedly the worse for wear—started back for the school.

The Mayor of Courtfield witnessed their departure with a frown. He genuinely believed that the Greyfriars fellows had been responsible for the riot, and he was debating what steps to take in the matter.

"Oh dear!" panted Frank Nugent, dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief. "Strikes me Jarvis was right when he said we should need to bring an ambulance over with us! I feel half-dead!"

"Same here!" groaned Johnny Bull.

"Ditto!" murmured Peter Todd. "My nose seems to have got round to my left ear!"

"We've started the footer season in style, and no mistake!" said Dennis Carr. "Those Courtfield bounders would have been licked if their supporters hadn't interrupted the game."

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll lick them yet!" said Wharton savagely. "We'll get them to Greyfriars somehow, and put it across them on our own ground."

"Hear, hear!"

And, fired with the resolve to defeat the cowardly Crusaders, the Removites limped on towards their destination.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wibley Finds a Way!

NEXT day Harry Wharton & Co. were still as anxious as ever to replay the match which had been so rudely interrupted. They wanted to get Jarvis & Co. to Greyfriars, and inflict a crushing defeat upon them.

After morning lessons Harry Wharton got through to Jarvis on the telephone.

"I want to speak to you about yesterday's affair," said the captain of the Remove as politely as he could. "It was your fault that the game was spoilt—"

"It was yours!" said Jarvis.

"I won't argue with you. The match couldn't be played to a finish, anyway. And we're still keen on licking you. But we're not prepared to send our eleven over to Courtfield again. We can put up with a good deal, but we draw the line at sticks and stones and things. If the match is to be replayed, we shall expect you to bring your team to Greyfriars."

"Right you are!" said Jarvis.

"You'll do that?"

"Certainly!"

"Will next Wednesday afternoon suit you?"

Jarvis answered in the affirmative.

"That's settled, then," said Wharton. "But I warn you not to bring any of your precious supporters over with you! If they try to get on to the ground there'll be short shirt for them!"

"Oh, all right!" growled Jarvis.

And the conversation ended.

"Fixed everything up, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry, as Jarvis turned away from the telephone.

The captain of the Remove nodded. "We replay the match with the Crusaders on Wednesday," he said.

"Good!"

"And we'll have a decent referee this time—a fellow who can keep a firm grip on the game," said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

It was certain that Jarvis & Co. would get very little scope for rough play if they came to Greyfriars. If any serious fouls were committed, the offenders would promptly be sent off the field.

Harry Wharton & Co. were eagerly looking forward to the encounter. But that afternoon, when they had occasion to cycle

through Courtfield, they received a rude shock.

Dennis Carr had left his handkerchief in the dressing-room on the previous day, and the juniors went along to recover it. Their attention was arrested by a notice which appeared on the fixture-board:

"COURTFIELD CRUSADERS' FOOTBALL CLUB.

No further fixtures with the rough and unsportsmanlike Greyfriars Eleven will be permitted.

(Signed) TOBIAS TOMLYN,
Mayor of Courtfield, and
Chairman of the above-named Club."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged indignant glances.

"Well, if this isn't the absolute giddy limit!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"The rough and unsportsmanlike Greyfriars Eleven!" quoted Frank Nugent. "If that isn't libel I should like to know what is!"

"The mayor's got hold of the wrong end of the stick altogether," said Harry Wharton. "The Courtfield fellows were the offenders, not us!"

"Tear the beastly notice down!" growled Dennis Carr.

And as nobody made a movement to do so, Dennis tore it down himself, and ripped it into fragments.

"We simply must replay that fixture," said Wharton.

"But the mayor won't let the Crusaders come over to Greyfriars," said Bob Cherry. "So what can we do?"

"We can see the mayor, and try to convince him that we weren't to blame for yesterday's rag."

"Come along, then! Anybody know where the mayor lives?"

"Courtfield Grange," said Nugent. "It's only a few minutes from here."

The mayor was surprised when the deputation of Greyfriars juniors turned up at his private residence. But he did not budge from the attitude he had taken up.

"Under no circumstances," he said, frowning at the Removites, "shall I permit the Courtfield Crusaders to play a further fixture with you."

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the school fuming. They were more than ever anxious to meet Jarvis & Co. on the Greyfriars ground. But now that the match had been forbidden by the express commands of the Mayor of Courtfield, they didn't see how they were going to achieve their object.

Wibley of the Remove met the juniors as they came into the Close, pushing their bicycles.

"You fellows look pretty down in the mouth," he remarked. "What's wrong?"

Harry Wharton explained the situation in detail, and Wibley chuckled.

"Dashed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said the captain of the Remove irritably.

"We shan't be able to play the match, and we're simply dying to lick the Crusaders. We've called on the mayor, but the pig-headed old fool won't agree to the match being played. And unless we can persuade him to cancel his order we're done!"

"Cheer up!" said Wibley. "I fancy I can work the oracle for you."

"You!"

"Certainly! You leave it to your Uncle Wib."

The juniors stared blankly at Wibley.

"How on earth are you going to get the mayor to climb down?" exclaimed Dennis Carr.

"I'll tell you later on, as soon as my plans are cut and dried," said Wibley.

And he strolled away.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged hopeful glances. They had great faith in Wibley.

Many a time and oft he had relieved an awkward situation.

Exactly how Wibley was going to influence the Mayor of Courtfield to reverse his decision was not quite clear.

The mayor had said that the match with Courtfield Crusaders was not to be played. Wibley of the Remove vowed that it would be played. And which of the two would be right, it must be left to another narrative to tell.

THE END.

(Another magnificent long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "The Wiles of William Wibley!" will appear in next Friday's number.)

TALES TO TELL!

WORTH ENGAGING.

Into the office of a business man rushed a bright-faced youth. For three minutes he waited, and then began to show signs of impatience.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "I'm in a hurry."

"Well, what do you want?" said the business man.

"A job, sir."

"But why the hurry?"

"Got to hurry," replied the lad. "Left school yesterday, and I haven't struck anything suitable yet. The only place where I can stay long is where they can pay me for it."

"How much do you want?"

"Ten shillings a week for a start."

"And when can you come?"

"Don't need to come; I'm here. Could have been at work five minutes ago if only you had said so!"

ALARM-ING!

She (after singing): "Do you think I could do anything with my voice?"

Manager: "Well, it might come in useful in case of fire!"

There's Still Time—

If by any chance you have not secured your copy of the Grand Bumper and Free Gift Number of

"The GEM" LIBRARY,

with which is given the splendid

FREE FOOTBALL ANNUAL,

Don't delay a moment longer!

The price is only 1½d.—your newsagent has it on sale now!

—Get IT To-day!

RIGHT, BUT WRONG!

"A train leaves London, travelling at thirty miles an hour," began the master impressively. "Half an hour later another train leaves the same station, travelling at fifty miles an hour. Where will the second train run into the first?"

The class thought and thought, and, judging by their faces, the problem in mental arithmetic was beyond all—save one, young Tommy Smart.

He jumped to his feet, waving his arms wildly.

"Yes, Tommy?" said the master encouragingly.

"At the back end of the rear carriage!" said Tommy.

WHO NOSE?

Jones: "Constable, my neighbour has threatened to pull my nose. What shall I do about it?"

P.-c.: "Soap it, and p'raps it will slip through his fingers!"

A WEEK FOR THE WEAK!

"I'm off to spend seven days in the country to get up my strength."

"Indeed! I thought seven days in the country would make one week!"



"The EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"

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

By MAURICE EVERARD.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Charles Fox Quenaby, a well-known philanthropist, visits the flat of Ferrers Locke, to ask his assistance in a very baffling mystery surrounding his household. A precious document had been stolen from the safe, together with three hundred pounds. The document in question, being an astounding confession of Quenaby's, which, in the hands of a blackmailer, would be very dangerous for the writer. His wife had also suffered at the hands of the burglars. She had been locked, bound and gagged, in the massive safe-room, and found next morning on the point of suffocation. Locke decides to take up the case, and travels to Brampton Hall to investigate. He has reason to believe that Mrs. Quenaby has more to do with the robbery than she makes out, having come to this conclusion through one or two deductions and small clues. He also meets Norton, the private secretary, at the Hall, whom he questions. Norton is not careful, and he betrays a sign, which afterwards leads to him confessing to the detective that he had, on one occasion let slip the key-words to the combination lock. But he had not thought of any wrongdoing.

(Now read on.)

The Circle Contracts.

LOCKE was struck by his sincerity. But for all that, he could not forget that his apparently chance remark had wrung an incriminating confession from the young man.

His strong hand reached out and came to rest on Norton's shoulder.

"Don't take it too badly," he said not unkindly. "I'm not suggesting for a moment you were a participator in the affair. I merely say that your telling her made the theft possible. Be honest with me, and I promise to do all I can for you. How and why did you come to let her share such a confidential secret?"

Norton groaned. "I must have been mad. She taunted me with thinking more of my work than of her, of not telling her things which she thought, as my affianced wife, she had a right to know."

Locke smiled. At last the woman's identity was out.

"In her jealousy she goaded me to desperation," Norton went on. "'I think more of you, Florence, than all else in the world,' I told her. 'There's nothing I would keep from you, no secret I wouldn't share with you. I'll prove it once and for all. I'll tell you the greatest secret I hold in connection with my work—the key-words to the vault up at the Hall.' 'Well, what are they?' she asked, with all a woman's curiosity. A second later I had told her, and from that moment until you first questioned me, believe me, Mr. Locke, I thought no more of the matter, nor, I am sure, has she."

"But someone else has," Locke returned promptly. "I am satisfied, perfectly satisfied, that, apart from your fiancée's overwhelming curiosity and unjustified jealousy of the confidential position you hold as a millionaire's right-hand man, she is as directly guilty of any part in this affair as you are. All the same, I can't hide from myself or from you the fact that I believe your unguarded utterance—I ought to say breach of confidence—has been made use of by someone."

"I am sorry. It was done in a moment of thoughtlessness."

"I am sure it was."

"I never wanted anyone to know."

"I suspected something of the sort when I first questioned you. At that stage, however, the matter wasn't vitally important. Now it is."

"Why?"

"Because I am positive the person who got that information through you and Miss Florence Weston conjointly had, to say the least of it, a hand in the robbing of the vault."

Norton began to pace the room.

"Impossible—impossible!" he exclaimed excitedly. "I have questioned Florence on the subject. She swears by all she holds sacred she hasn't breathed a word about it to anybody. I would trust her word against the world."

"Then someone must have overheard what passed between you."

"Ah, I wonder if they did?" he exclaimed, catching at a last straw.

"What were the circumstances under which the conversation took place?" Locke asked. "I want you to be very clear before your answer."

"I am—absolutely. It was on the evening of the 7th. We were dining—Florence and I—at a favourite small restaurant in Soho—the Hotel Bayard. The family—that is, Mr. and Mrs. Quenaby—were staying at the town house in Prince's Gate. Florence, too, was in London, with her mother. On the next day we were leaving London for the Hall."

"Can you recapture the scene in the restaurant?"

"Perfectly. I remember every little incident, because of the quarrel, I suppose. The orchestra played the barcarole from 'Tales of Hoffman,' 'Chopin's Nocturne,' and several of our favourites by request."

"Good! Now, do you remember if anyone sat near you?"

"Not at our table. But there was a young man, a dark, saw-toothed young man, clean-shaven, and with a mop of very black hair. He sat at the next table to ours."

"What makes you recollect him so particularly?"

"Because during the three months I was in town I had often seen him there. Florence and I dined at the Bayard generally twice a week, sometimes oftener. He was nearly always there."

"Do you know this man?"

"I have never spoken to him, except, perhaps, to say good-evening. I thought he was a musician or something like that, who frequented the place because of the excellent orchestra."

"Did he ever speak to you?"

"Well, no, not exactly. But more than once he went out of his way to make friendly overtures."

"To you or to your fiancée?"

"Oh, to me!"

Locke brightened.

"At last, Mr. Norton, at last I have a ray of real light to guide me. The saw-toothed man undoubtedly had some motive in trying to get to know you. That motive was rendered unnecessary by his overhearing from your own lips the key-words to the combination lock."

"This is dreadful."

"Never mind. I can cover your unpremeditated part in the affair if only you will help."

"What can I do?"

"Get a week's holiday from your employer and go to London. Stay, I'll get it for you. Make a practice every night of dining at the Bayard, and if your saw-toothed friend is an habitue we shall see him there."

"He is. I've noticed him so often of late."

"Then it's quite on the cards we may stumble across him again. I know the Bayard well. He has found it a good place where he can dine well, listen to the best music, and smoke the choicest cigars, all for a most moderate outlay."

"I'll do anything to help you, Mr. Locke."

"Thanks! I don't think we shall be long now. This theory of a third and outside party fits in with several things which long have puzzled me. When your chief gives you leave of absence, go straight to London. Whenever you are in the Bayard, depend upon it, I sha'n't be very far off."

"And if I see this man?"

"Merely nod, but avoid speaking to him.

See that he leaves before you. But as he rises to go, crook the second finger of your left hand over the first, and, keeping it crooked, raise your wingglass to your lips. The rest you can leave to me."

Two at the Game.

LOCKE was in no hurry to leave for London. He had plenty of time between now and the five o'clock "special."

He wanted to go over the original ground again—this time with a new theory in his mind, a theory that involved the supposition of an outside person in the case, and that person a man of infinite resource and cunning.

He passed through the dining-room and re-entered the library.

The little clot of dried mud, almost hidden in the thick pile of the carpet, had been brushed away, despite his injunctions to Mr. Quenaby to keep the outer door locked, and to forbid anything being touched.

It was obvious now that someone in the house was anxious to hamper his further investigations, and that someone—Mrs. Quenaby!

He was thinking of this as he made a second and even more minute inspection of the door opening to the flight of stone steps leading to the vault below.

What had at first necessarily been a perfunctory examination of generalities now called for the most scrupulous attention to minute details. He felt that everything depended upon a logical and sequential linking together of, so far, scattered and unrelated clues.

Over every square inch of the newly-painted, highly-polished green surface the powerful magnifying-glass travelled in ever-narrowing whirls, to come to rest at last on a long, deep scratch, freshly made, running from the lower right-hand corner of the door to the very edge of the framework.

This set Locke thinking deeply. Only a few days before the master of the place had confirmed his remark about the rooms having been newly and recently decorated, as he was able to judge for himself, most carefully and lavishly.

"It is hardly likely one of the painters would have made and left a scratch like that," he decided. "I wonder if other doors have received similar rough treatment."

Search, however, failed to reveal any like mutilations.

"We have to remember that on the night of the 11th this was the first inner-locked door encountered by the thief," he went on cogitating. "Let us see what happens. Assuming him to be the man from Bayard's, he knows the combination key-words, but it is hardly likely he is aware of where the key to this door is kept. Only one person in the house at the time knew—Mrs. Quenaby, and she was downstairs.

"He could have got the key from her only by force or of her free will. At present we can't say which, but, as she says she remembers nothing, we will imagine by her consent. Now what occurs? He fits the key into the lock—so. There is a little struggle. The woman is trying to prevent him. She grabs his right arm—the arm holding the key—tries to pull it away, and with such force that the fresh paint-work becomes deeply lacerated. The man is not to be denied, however; he means to open that vault.

"There is a struggle, in which the woman either faints or is rendered unconscious. He rushes down the stairs, opens the vault, finds the money, accidentally discovers Quenaby's confession, realises its monetary worth, disdains the banknotes for fear of leading to discovery, locks the senseless woman in the vault to prevent her raising a dangerous alarm, and makes off. That is my present elucidation of the mystery, and when it comes to be finally and completely solved I doubt if I shall be very far wrong."

The swish of a silken underskirt came faintly from the outer passage, and Locke's head came round just in time to see Mrs. Quenaby on the point of moving away.

"So she has been spying on me. That is something I will not stand!"

He straightened up, and crossed to the door.

"Mrs. Quenaby!"

There was something compelling, challenging, in his voice.

The woman followed him into the room, meeting his steely gaze with a most unfriendly look.

"Well, Mr. Locke, is my husband still encouraging you to waste more of your valuable time?" she asked, trying hard to conceal the disquiet in her voice. "I think Charles is making himself positively ridiculous over a paltry matter of three hundred pounds! Why, he will spend quite as much in fees, and perhaps never see a penny back!"

"He may spend a great deal more," the detective answered sweetly.

"I wish he'd drop it!"

"He will, when the mystery is finally solved."

"That will never be!" she said, with an air of finality meant to dishearten Locke.

"My dear Mrs. Quenaby," said Locke, propping his chin in his unturned palm, regarding her through half-closed lids. "This affair would cease to puzzle all of us, would save a great deal of time, bother, worry, and expense, if only you would be a little more candid with me."

"I?"

"You, Mrs. Quenaby."

"Mr. Locke, I refuse to allow you to make such base insinuations! I will see Charles, and have you sent about your business!"

"For your own sake, please do no such foolish thing. If only you knew it, I am your best friend!"

Her eyes darkened with wrath.

"Then I prefer to be without your friendship!"

She walked disdainfully towards the door, and the proud lift of her head indicated that, so far as she was concerned, the interview was ended.

"Just a moment!" Locke heaved his big frame from the couch, and interposed it in the angry woman's path. "I want you to reflect—to change your mind. You want this case settled. You can the most easily bring it to an end."

"I have no desire to do your work!"

Locke's eyes flashed.

"Is that a challenge, Mrs. Quenaby? Do you defy me to do my worst?"

Her steady gaze began to falter.

"I don't want to talk any more about the subject. I have told you all I know."

"Not at all, Mrs. Quenaby. You haven't told me the name of the man whom you discovered or who entered with you into this room on the night of the 11th."

A quick pallor crept up beneath her tawny

skin, and he caught the sudden contraction of her eyes.

"It is untrue. There was no man with me." Locke's manner became pleading.

"For your sake—to save you pain and sorrow afterwards—I respectfully suggest there was. I suggest you met him here, where we now stand; that you were aware of his intention to rob the vault, your husband being away; that you remonstrated with him, even to the extent of trying to tear his hand holding the key, which he had induced you to produce, away from the lock of yonder door; that, finally, in desperation, he turned on you and rendered you senseless, and, having rifled the vault, put you inside, and made his escape."

Not once did the woman's splendid courage desert her.

"I deny every word of your fantastic story," she said.

Locke sighed, and shrugged his shoulders in despair.

"You still keep to that?" he suggested.

"I do, most emphatically!"

He moved away from the door.

"Then I regret you force me to unravel the tangled skein down to the last thread."

She bowed mockingly as she went out.

"I hope you will be a little more successful than your present theories indicate!"

He caught the five o'clock special. From



Locke bent eagerly forward as the stranger rose at length and vanished through the big swing door.

seven to twelve that night he sat unobtrusively in the gay dining-saloon of the Hotel Bayard. Frank Norton was there, but no one remotely resembling the sallow-faced, musical-looking genius put in an appearance. But Locke was not to be shaken in his purpose. He argued that if the man who had overheard Norton and his sweetheart's conversation were an habitue of the place, sooner or later he would be bound to patronise it again.

It was not until the sixth night that his and the secretary's patience were rewarded. The wanted stranger had come at last.

Locke's eyes lit the very moment he had a chance of closely studying the face. There was something curiously familiar yet horribly repellent about it—a young, handsome face marred by dissipation and senseless recklessness, with something of Mrs. Quenaby's beauty about it.

The suspect was obviously bent on doing himself well.

Locke made no move to follow him as he rose at length and vanished through the wide swing-doors. Instead, he cornered Clement Dothieu, the proprietor, and in the privacy of that gentleman's office showed his card.

"Dothieu, I want the glasses from table No. 29," he said persuasively.

Dothien grinned.

"Mon Dieu! You have a catch—eh, Monsieur Locke?"

"I think so. You know the customer's name?"

"No. But his address—oh, yes! He come here often, and the man at the door, he often hear him speak to the taxi-driver his address. But his name—oh, no!"

"Never mind about the address. I have someone who will look after that right now. You swear you don't know his name?"

"On my mother's grave!"

"Right! Then go and collect his wine and liqueur glasses for me, and pick them up by the stems. Also tell the gentleman at table 14 to wait for me."

When the glasses were brought Locke himself packed them, and, leaving a sovereign to seal Dothieu's lips, he passed out, signalling to Norton on the way.

The pair struck into the Charing Cross Road.

"Mr. Norton, your holiday is over," Locke said, lighting a cigar.

"You saw the man?"

"Sure!"

"Good! What is your next move?"

"I can't say, except that you can tell Mr. Quenaby privately I shall be back at the Hall before the week is out. By the by, I suppose you can't tell me Mrs. Quenaby's name by her first husband?"

"I can't."

"Never mind. I shall get it in due course. Don't mention to anyone that I asked you. Good-night!"

He saw Norton turn in the direction of his hotel. Then he hailed a taxi and drove to his rooms in Baker Street. Till the darkness paled and the first flush of cold grey dawn shot up in the eastern sky Ferrers Locke sat before a huge book turning countless sheets of thumb-prints. At last a cry of exultation broke from him. He made several comparisons between two in the book and those on the wine and liqueur glasses, and finally turned up the index number.

This is what he read:

"Alec Hill Parsons, aged 23. Notorious forger and bank thief. Sentenced at Notting-ham for forgery to eighteen months' imprisonment, July, 19—, two years' at Norwich Assizes, 19—, for embezzlement, etc."

Then followed a record of several minor convictions and a full description of the man.

Locke's hand flew to the telephone after a quick glance at the clock.

"I want Scotland Yard, please!"

In a moment a tired voice answered him.

"Who is that, and what do you want?"

"I'm Ferrers Locke. Put me through to Inspector Keane's office. Hallo, Keane! That you? X2374 North speaking."

The rest of the conversation was conducted on both sides in fluent French.

"Say, Keane, do you know of a chap called Parsons—Alec Hill Parsons?"

Keane whistled.

"Know him? I should think I do! I want him. We all want him. There's a good ten years—perhaps more—coming his way when he can be found to receive it."

Locke's grim face relaxed.

"That's something like. I know where he is—at least, I shall be able to tell you when my assistant returns with his report. I'll ring you up later."

"What do you want done?"

"Nothing officially yet, except a couple of your best men put on to keep track of him. Don't let him slip out of your hands."

"Why not let us arrest him straight off?"

"Because I mean to have first run at him. He's holding something which I want pretty badly. The law mightn't give me possession of it, so I've got to hook it in on my own. When I'm through with him I'll arrange for you to sail in. That's all!"

He banged down the receiver, turned out the light, and, throwing himself on a couch, slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

"X.Y.Z."

THE detective's secretary came into the room to find the blinds still drawn and the atmosphere heavy with overnight tobacco-smoke.

Ferrers Locke lay where he had flung himself down, fast asleep on the settee. Hay watched him thoughtfully.

"This case is proving a strain on him," the younger man reflected. "He has worked on it day and night for nearly a month now. I shall be glad when it's all over."

Locke sat up, awakened by the slight sound, and stretched himself.

"My! How I've slept! What's the time?"

"Close on ten."

"Then for goodness' sake draw up the blinds and let in the daylight! My word, you look fagged out!"

"I'm not." A laugh broke from Hay.

"I've had a most exciting time following that man."

"He doesn't suspect you've been keeping an eye on him?"

"Oh, dear, no! Only he didn't go straight home after leaving the Bayard. He turned into a night club, and was there till five o'clock. I had a fearful job to shadow him home after that, because it was getting light. However, I managed it. He lives at Cassandra House, Woodford Lane."

"A lodger there?"

"No; he's just taken the place on a lease, and installed a lady who, I suppose, is his wife. Anyway, she welcomed him on his belated return—not very kindly."

"Parsons is a wrong 'un, and we've got to lay him by the heels."

"You feel sure he had a hand in the Brampton Hall robbery?"

"Certain of it. Mrs. Quenaby gave herself away."

"By saying too much?"

"By not saying enough. Had she confided in me early on, I might have been able to clear up this business without anyone being much the wiser. As it is, Mr. Quenaby has got to be faced with the unpleasant truth that all along his wife has been keeping something from him."

"You mean, this man committed the robbery with her connivance?"

"Not exactly. She knows he committed the robbery, but she wasn't a willing party to it. Her silence is due to another cause altogether. What that cause is I have yet to ascertain."

"Meantime, I suppose you will have this man Parsons arrested?"

"I daren't. Scotland Yard wants him, but I've arranged with Keane, who henceforward will keep him under observation, not to move just yet awhile. I claim that as my reward for discovering him."

"But why not let them take him while they have the chance?"

"Because the thing we most want to prevent might happen. The paper, Charles Quenaby's statement, which must never be revealed until after his and his wife's death, would fall into the hands of the police, and its contents might become public property."

"Then what do you propose to do?"

"Make sure of my ground before taking any decisive steps. You see, our case against Parsons is as yet merely circumstantial. Until I have positive, irrefutable proof that he is the guilty man I am only making a wrong and dangerous move by taking any step against him."

"And how will you get that irrefutable proof?"

"From Mrs. Quenaby herself."

"I thought she had refused to tell you anything more?"

"I'm not going to ask her to tell me anything. If my theory is correct I shall be able to do all the telling."

John Hay laughed. "Ah, I forgot to say Peters told me that Mr. Quenaby is coming up to his London office to-day."

"Good! I must be off. I sha'n't be away long. I want you to stay here; and when you get either a wire or a telephone message from me, go to see Keane at the Yard, and tell him to set his men straight on to Cassandra House. Meantime, I promised to give him Parsons' address. Phone it through."

With that he slipped upstairs to the bathroom, and came down a new man.

A few minutes after eleven he and the millionaire were closeted together in the latter's private office.

Quenaby looked abnormally grave.

"I've just received this," he said, in lifeless, heavy tones, passing a letter into the detective's hands.

It bore no address, and was to the following effect;

"To Charles Fox Quenaby, Esq.

"Sir,—I happen to hold a certain document, the contents of which I imagine you would be most unwilling to have made known. I am quite agreeable to forget that this remarkable confession has ever been seen by me, and to give you a binding undertaking to that effect, on your paying me the sum of two thousand pounds. It is needless at the moment to say more. If you are willing to enter into bona-fide negotiations with me, publish an intimation to that effect, addressed to 'X. Y. Z.' in the Personal Column of the 'Post' next Tuesday.—Yours faithfully,
"X. Y. Z."

"You see, the trouble has started," the millionaire said, looking at Locke in a dazed, hopeless sort of way.

The detective laughed.

"The trouble will soon be ended. You can forget all about that letter, but you might as well put the announcement for which he asks in the 'Post.' Now, Mr. Quenaby, I want to ask you a few questions dealing with quite a different matter. You remember telling me that your wife was a widow when you first met her?"

"That is so."

"What was her name then—I mean, her first husband's name?"

"Parsons."

"Ah! And can you tell me anything about

questions to me? You aren't going to make out—"

"Anything, except that if the need should arise, I want you to treat your wife with that leniency and forgiveness which you would hope should be extended to you if ever the secret in your own past should become known to her."

"I don't understand," the millionaire replied. "You are never going to tell her?"

"Certainly not! But in case you should find she, too, has a secret in her past, I should expect, as the reward for my endeavours, that you would find it in your heart to forgive and forget."

"Anything—anything; rather than she should know. You have hopes, then, of getting the document safely back?"

"I never had any doubts. If you particularly want to aid me in the last and most difficult stage of the case, manage for tomorrow to keep away from the Hall. I want to see your wife alone. For the present, good-bye!"

By four o'clock the following afternoon Locke was back again at the Hall.

The millionaire's wife greeted him rather superciliously.

"I'm pleased to see you're looking more hopeful, Mr. Locke," she said, leading the way into the drawing-room, where the butler was just leaving after bringing in the tea.



The swish of a silk skirt caused the detective to look round. He was just in time to see Mrs. Quenaby on the point of moving away. "So she has been spying on me. That is something I will not stand!" he muttered.

their married life—where they were married, where they lived, and so on?"

"They were married, I know, at Bury St. Edmunds. I believe they lived there for quite a number of years."

"And what sort of a man was this Parsons?"

"A ne'er-do-well, I imagine. A clever enough chap, but he went all wrong, and finished by drinking himself to death. My wife never says much about him."

"They had no children, I suppose?"

"None at all, or you can take it from me I would never have married her. I don't believe in spending my money on other people's children."

"Is that a strong view of yours?"

"A very strong view."

"Which your wife was cognisant of?"

"Oh, quite! She has often remonstrated with me about it; says it is most selfish and unjust of me to talk like that. Why, Mr. Locke," his manner becoming suddenly suspicious, "why are you putting all these

Locke sat down.

"I am, Mrs. Quenaby; in fact, my case is almost finished."

"Quite differently from what you expected, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, absolutely in line with my theories as outlined to you."

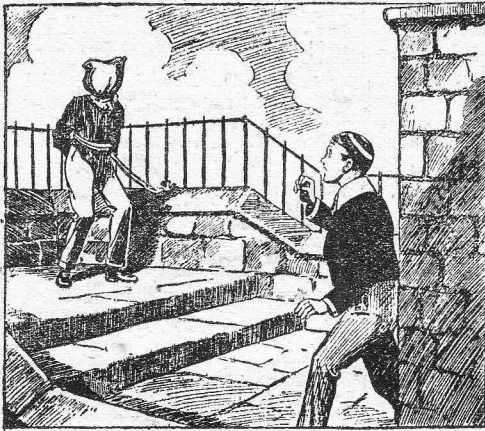
The woman rose suddenly.

"Mr. Locke—"

"Mrs. Quenaby, for once we shall be perfectly frank with each other. I have discovered everything that happened in this house between the hours of eleven and twelve on that night when your husband found you in the vault."

She knew by the ring in his voice and his unflinching, steady gaze that the game was up, and she hid her shamed face behind her jewelled hands.

(There will be another magnificent instalment of this grand detective serial next week. Look out for it!)



THE MISSING CRICKETER FOUND.

... THE ...

ELEVENTH MAN!

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE
SCHOOL TALE OF JIMMY SILVER &
CO. OF ROOKWOOD.

— By —

OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Left Out.

DISGUSTIN'!" Thus Adolphus Smythe. Smythe of the Shell spoke with emphasis. He was annoyed—in fact he was exasperated. And his dear chums, Tracy and Howard, nodded a sympathetic assent. They were just as annoyed and exasperated as Adolphus was.

The Nuts of Rookwood were lounging on the cricket-ground, watching the Junior Eleven at practice. Tommy Dodd was at the wicket, and Jimmy Silver was bowling, but Tommy Dodd was keeping up his wicket in a way that elicited loud cheers from the on-lookers—especially those of the Modern side. And the Classical spectators were just as enthusiastic for the bowler, who was a Classical.

It was the last practice of the Junior Eleven before the next School match, and the junior team was in great form.

And most of the spectators were delighted with the form the cricketers were displaying. Only Smythe & Co. were disgusted.

That select circle of nutty young gentlemen known as the "Giddy Goats," agreed that it was "disgustin'." The fuss the fellows made of Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver put their nutty backs up.

The great Adolphus couldn't forget that he had been junior cricket captain once upon a time. That the cricket club had kicked him out for fat-headed incapacity did not worry Adolphus—he was quite satisfied with himself and his cricket. But it made him very sore to be left out of the game, and to be reduced to a mere looker-on, while the Fourth Form fags had cricket entirely in their own hands, and ran it as they saw fit. True, they won matches, whereas Adolphus had almost invariably lost them. But that was a mere detail.

"Disgustin'!" repeated Smythe bitterly. "The fuss the fellows make of those young bouncers is simply sickenin'."

"Sickenin'!" agreed Howard. "Exasperatin'!" said Tracy. "Look at the eleven," continued Smythe. "Not one of us in it. Only one Shell fellow in the whole team, and he not in our set—a mere outsider. Chap who doesn't even know how to tie his necktie!"

"Rotten!" "The fact is," said Smythe, "somethin's got to be done. Not that I care for cricket, as cricket. I'm not goin' to work at any game as those fags do—not if I know it. But a fellow can't be left out—especially fellows of our standin' in the school!"

"Bravo, Tommy Dodd!" Smythe was interrupted by an enthusiastic shout, as the Modern batsman drove the ball over the boundary—a ripping "sixer."

"Well hit!" "Bravo!" "Listen to 'em!" said Smythe. "They never used to yell like that when I was battin'!"

Lovell of the Fourth fielded the ball, and tossed it back to Jimmy Silver. That cheer-

ful youth looked a little grim as he prepared to deliver his next ball. Jimmy Silver was the champion junior bowler of Rookwood, and he was determined to get that wicket.

He sent the ball down this time with a weird break on it that beat even Tommy Dodd, such as he was. There was a yell from the Classics as the balls flew off.

"Well bowled!" "Good old Jimmy!"

"Fellows would think that nobody else ever bowled a Modern cad before," said Smythe, with a sarcastic sneer. "I call all this rot sickenin'!"

The fall of Tommy's wicket ended the practice. The cricketers came off the field. Some of the small fry went on with practice, but Tommy Dodd & Co. and the Fistical Four adjourned for tea. Jimmy Silver gave Smythe of the Shell a cheery nod and a grin as he passed him.

"What do you think of our form, Smythe?" he asked affably. "Cricket's looking up a bit since your time—what!"

"I think you're a set of cheeky young duffers!" he replied, "and I think Bagshot will beat you hollow to-morrow!"

"Same as in your time!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"They'll lick you, and serve you right!" said Smythe. "There's still time for you to put a decent man or two in the team, Silver. I'm willin' to overlook what's past, and play—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "What are you cacklin' at, you cheeky fags?"

The cheery juniors did not explain what they were cackling at. They left Smythe to guess, and strolled away towards the School House.

"You Classical bouncers come to tea with us," said Tommy Dodd. "Cook's people have sent him a hamper."

"Hear, hear!" said the Fistical Four, with one voice.

"Poor old Smythe!" chuckled Tommy Cook. "Still yearning after his departed glory. If he would only learn to play cricket—"

"Too busy playing the giddy Nut!" said Lovell. "Why, if Jimmy Silver put a duffer like that in the team, we'd scrag him!"

"Enough Classical asses in the team already!" remarked Tommy Doyle.

"Eh, what's that, you Modern fathead?" "Shut up!" said Tommy Dodd. "Here's Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, stopped to speak to the youthful cricketers. The big Sixth-Former gave them a kindly smile.

"I've been looking at you," he said. "You're getting on famously. You seem to have got a very good team together, Silver. I hope you'll have good luck at Bagshot to-morrow!"

And the great man passed on, leaving the juniors much elated by those words of commendation. Praise from old Bulkeley was praise indeed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Appeal to Cæsar.

LEAVE the talking to me!" said Adolphus Smythe. "Come along!" That was just like Adolphus. Adolphus never had the slightest doubt that matters of any sort would be much better left in his hands.

"Where?" asked several of the Nuts dubiously.

"To the Modern side."

"What for?" "To see Jimmy Silver. We'll catch the young cads at tea in Dodd's study. We'll put it to 'em straight," said Smythe. "Either Jimmy Silver promises to give us six places in the team, or—"

"Or what?" "Or we'll give him a thunderin' good hidin'," said Smythe. "That will be some comfort, anyway."

"Well, there's somethin' in that," agreed Tracy. "We can give 'em a hidin', and clear off before a crowd of the cads come buzzin' round!"

"That's the idea, dear boy." Smythe & Co. marched into the quad looking very determined. They crossed the quad, and headed for Tommy Dodd's study, on the war-path.

Tommy Dodd's study was very festive just then.

There were seven juniors in the study, Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome being Tommy's guests at tea.

The three Tommies were doing the honours, and Classics and Moderns were on the best of terms with one another.

Tommy Cook's hamper from home had been well supplied, and the table was fairly laden with excellent things. The seven juniors had brought in first-class appetites from the cricket-ground, and they were doing full justice to the spread.

They talked cricket over tea, cricket being just then the subject uppermost in their thoughts. They were looking forward to the match at Bagshot on the morrow, and to the licking they fully intended to administer to Pankley & Co., of Bagshot.

That pleasant conversation was interrupted suddenly.

The study door was kicked open. Adolphus Smythe prided himself upon manners of the mould of Vere de Vere; but he had none of those nice manners to waste upon cheeky fags who excluded him from the cricket team. He kicked the door open and marched in, with a dozen nutty youths at his heels, all looking very grim and determined.

"Hallo!" said Tommy Dodd coolly. "Didn't they teach you to knock at a door in the slum you were brought up in, Smythe?"

Adolphus took no heed of that pertinent question. He jammed an eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed Jimmy Silver with crushing disdain.

"I've come here for a word with you," said Adolphus.

"Take your face away, Smythe," urged Jimmy Silver. "We're having tea, you know. It's not a time to introduce your face into a study—now, is it?"

"Don't rot, Silver! I'm talking to you as cricket captain, and I don't want any cheek from fags. I've got to tell you plainly that you're not leavin' me out of the team to-morrow."

"Go hon!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Nor my friends!" added Smythe. "Pass the tarts," said Tommy Dodd. "Do you hear me?" roared Smythe. "Oh, yes! These tarts are good," said Jimmy Silver—"distinctly good. You should encourage your people to send you hampers, Cook."

"We want six places in the team, and we're jolly well goin' to have them!" shouted Adolphus, beginning to lose his temper.

"And the cake is a regular corker!" said Jimmy. "Your sister is a brick to make cakes like that, Cook!"

"Are you givin' us those places, Silver?" "And then the jam!" pursued Jimmy Silver enthusiastically, and apparently having forgotten the existence of Smythe & Co. "I always liked home-made jam, but I must say this is a regular treat!"

"Do you hear me?" shrieked Smythe. "Help yourselves, you Classical chaps," said Tommy Dodd. "I can recommend the tarts, the cake, and the jam. How did you like the sardines?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young rotter, I'm talkin' to Silver!" howled Smythe.

"Hallo! Are you still there Smythe?" asked Tommy Dodd, looking round. "I don't remember asking you to tea!"

"I've not come to tea, you young idiot!" "Still, as you've come you can have a tart. You can all have a tart each," said Tommy Dodd generously. "You don't mind, Cook?"

"Not at all," said Tommy Cook. "Let 'em have a tart each, and welcome. Only don't let 'em make the place sticky."

"You—you—you—" stuttered Smythe. "Take 'em out into the passage and eat 'em," said Tommy Dodd. "You ain't very clean in the Shell. Don't touch the door with sticky fingers, will you?"

Adolphus looked as if he were on the verge of apoplexy.

"Oh, wade in and mop them up!" said Tracy impatiently. "It'll be a lesson to the cheeky little beasts, anyway."

"Rag the study!" shouted Howard. Smythe raised his hand.

"Pile in!" he commanded. The Nuts of Rookwood piled in, with a rush.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were all on their feet now, and they were ready. Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were ready, too. They were quite prepared to back up their kind hosts and entertainers against any number of Nuts.

"Smash 'em!" panted Tracy. "Muck up the study! Pile in!"

"Give 'em socks!" yelled Jimmy Silver. There was a terrific combat in the study.

Smythe & Co. were two to one; but it was quality, and not quantity, that counted in that combat. The three Tommies were great fighting-men, and the Pistical Four were renowned for their prowess.

Crash! Crash! Bump! Crash! Bang! Yell! Furniture was knocked right and left, and so were the combatants—chiefly the invaders. The study carpet was strewn with tarts, chairs, and Giddy Goats.

In three minutes the combat was decided. Four or five of the attacking party were in ignominious flight down the passage, and the rest were on the carpet, gasping for breath and roaring with anguish.

"Give 'em the tarts!" panted Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver was already giving Adolphus tarts. These tasty comestibles that had been squashed underfoot in the tussle were in no condition for eating, but they came in very useful for plastering the noble countenance of Adolphus. Smythe of the Shell wriggled and gasped under the horrid infliction, but he could not save himself.

"Yow! Leave off!" moaned Tracy, as Lovell rubbed jam into his hair. "Do leave off! I give in! Grooch!"

"Stoppit!" mumbled Howard. "Ow! Keep that treacle away, you beast! Ow—ow! Yah!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dusty and dishevelled, and sticky all over, the unhappy Nuts were pitched out one after another. The noise had brought a crowd of Modern Juniors along the passage, and they greeted each Giddy Goat as he appeared with bowls of laughter.

Smythe & Co. crawled away, feeling as if

life were not worth living. That excellent scheme of giving Jimmy Silver a "thunderin' hidin'" had worked out very badly for the unfortunate Adolphus. His luck was out.

"Well, the study looks rather pucked up," remarked Tommy Dodd, when the last of the invaders had disappeared, "but I think Smythe will think twice before he pays us another visit—what!"

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, having restored the study to something like order, went on cheerfully with their tea, untroubled by any further visits from the aspirants to cricket honours.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Smythe's Masterstroke.

THE next morning Adolphus Smythe might have been observed to wear a thoughtful expression.

That thoughtful expression was not caused by any unusual devotion to his lessons, for the master of the Shell called Adolphus to order several times, and, indeed, stated his fixed opinion that Adolphus was the densest fellow in the class.

Adolphus that morning was thinking of quite other things. There was a wrinkle of reflection on his classic brow when the Shell came out of their Form-room. His chums sympathised with him. Smythe was the richer by a hundred lines for his performances that morning.

"Hard cheese!" said Tracy. "The beast was rather rattier than usual," remarked Howard.

"Oh, never mind him," said Smythe tolerantly. "A Form-master's always a beast. That's what he's paid for, I've been thinkin'."

"Anythin' on this afternoon?" asked Howard. "What about a little bridge party in the study?"

"I'm thinkin' of the cricket." His chums looked alarmed.

"Look here, I've had enough of raggin' Silver," said Howard, feeling his nose tenderly. "I don't like scrappin' with fags."

"Same here," said Tracy. "It's rather beneath our dignity, you know."

"I'm not thinkin' of raggin' the fags." Smythe rubbed his left eye, where there was a distinct "mouse." Certainly, he had had quite enough of ragging.

"Well, what's the little game?"

"We're goin' to show Silver that he can't come the cheeky cad over us," said Smythe. "He's left us out of the cricket—the whole gang of us."

"Yes; but—"

"I've an idea. Suppose ommy Dodd's left out, too?"

"Eh? How can he be left out?" said Howard, puzzled.

"Might be shoved out."

"Oh!"

"If we miss the match, why shouldn't he?" argued Adolphus. "It will be a lesson to him, and one in the eye for the whole cheeky gang. Besides, they depend on Dodd. He's their best bat. Without him they'll get licked at Bagshot. That will serve 'em right."

"Serve 'em jolly well right!" agreed Howard. "But I don't quite see how we can make Dodd miss it."

"That's what I've been thinkin' out," said Smythe condescendingly, "and I know how to do it. Suppose we watch for him, and collar him when the other cads ain't lookin' on, and bung him into the clock-tower?"

"My hat!"

"We'll run him up to the top of the tower and keep him there till the rest have gone to Bagshot."

"But he'd make a row."

"Not if we put his head in a bag."

"By gad!"

"They'd rag us afterwards," said Tracy doubtfully.

"I've thought of that, too. Those kids in the study are always raggin' Moderns, and they chip us for not takin' a hand in their fag scrappin'. Well, we're Classicals, and Tommy Dodd's Modern. We'll explain that it was a Classical rag on a Modern bouncer—see? Nothing really to do with cricket. We'll explain that we forgot all about the Bagshot match."

Tracy and Howard looked at their leader quite admiringly. Evidently Smythe's mental exercises had been gone through to some purpose.

"I suppose that would go down," remarked Tracy slowly.

"Of course it would," said Smythe, "with

most of the fellows, anyway. As for Dodd, he will be simply wild at missin' the match—a punishment for his cheek, you know. And if the Bagshot bouncers beat them, all the better. They won't have such a whackin' record of wins to compare with our record then."

"By gad, you think of everythin'," said Tracy. "Let's pass the word round, and stalk the Modern cad before dinner."

And Smythe proceeded to call the Nuts to the war-path. He found them very indifferent at first; they weren't inclined for any more raids.

But when Adolphus explained that Tommy Dodd was to be tackled "on his lonely own," they brightened up, and were ready to back up their great leader.

Luck favoured Adolphus for once. The enterprising Nuts looked for Tommy Dodd without delay, and they found him in the Fourth Form room.

The rest of the Fourth were out, but Tommy Dodd had stayed behind to do fifty lines—owing to a misdirected sense of humour having led him to spill ink down the neck of Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth, in class.

Tommy Dodd looked up as Adolphus peered in and spotted him.

"Hallo!" said Adolphus. "Detained?"

"Yes," growled Tommy Dodd. "Don't make it worse by putting your face in, Smythe. Take it away and bury it!"

Smythe frowned, and withdrew his face. He whispered to his friends in the passage, and they strolled into the quad.

Tommy Dodd finished his lines just as the dinner-bell began to ring, and bolted out of the Form-room, and out across to the Modern side.

At the clang of the dinner-bell, Classicals and Moderns had gone in, and as Tommy Dodd seudded across to his own side, there was only half a dozen fellows in the quad, and they were Smythe & Co.

"Here he comes!" murmured Tracy. "What a giddy stroke of luck, dear boys! Nail him!"

"Yaas, by gad! Here, stop, you Modern cad!"

Tommy Dodd had to stop, as the Nuts of the Shell surrounded him.

"Here, no larks!" said Tommy. "Haven't you heard the bell, you fatheads? Why don't you go in to feed with the other animals?"

"No hurry!" yawned Smythe. "We're goin' for a little walk first—with you, dear boy!"

"Let me pass, fathead!"

"Nail him!" said Adolphus.

"Why, what's the game? Leggo!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "I shall hit out, you fat-heads!"

Biif!

"Yoop!" yelled Tracy, like an echo, as Tommy Dodd's left was planted in his eye.

And Tracy plumped down on Adolphus' long legs.

But the rest of the enterprising band were piling on Tommy Dodd, and four pairs of hands dragged him down before he could hit out again.

Adolphus staggered to his feet.

"Bring him along!" he gasped. "Never mind if you hurt him! Yank him along!"

"Leggo!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Put your fist over his mouth. Come on!"

Tommy Dodd struggled wildly in the grasp of the Nuts. But six to one was a little too heavy odds for him. He was dragged off the ground, his arms and legs firmly held, and rushed away rapidly towards the clock-tower.

The Modern junior, astonished and enraged, resisted manfully all the way.

But he was rushed into the tower by the panting Shell fellows.

"Up the stairs!" gasped Adolphus. "Leggo—yaroo! Oh, my hat!"

Up the stairs went the struggling band, with Tommy Dodd wriggling in their midst. Never had a kidnapped person given his kidnappers so much trouble. Tommy Dodd was not handled gently, but he resisted all the time. It was only with terrific efforts that the Nuts got the struggling, wriggling, kicking Modern up the narrow spiral stair, and to the top of the tower.

There, on the little railed-in roof above the clock, they plumped him down, and sat on him.

A rope was produced, and knotted round his ankles and wrists. Then he lay panting and helpless on the roof of the clock-tower, and glaring homicidally at the Nuts.

"You fatheaded chumps!" he gasped. "What's the game? Do you want me to miss my dinner, you frabjous burlbers?"

"More than that!" grinned Tracy.
 "Shush!" murmured Smythe. "Yes, this is a little game to make you miss your dinner, Duddy. You Modern chaps are such gluttons, you know, we think it will do you good."

"Look here, if you don't let me loose, I'll yell for help!" shouted the exasperated Modern.

"You're welcome to yell all you can, my tulip," grinned Adolphus. "Where's that bag?"

"Here you are!"
 "His handkerchief first!" said Howard.

"Why—what—grooh—booh—yoooh—ugg!" Tommy Dodd said no more than that. He couldn't say any more, for his handkerchief was jammed into his mouth, and Smythe proceeded to fasten it there by winding string round his head and knotting it. Tommy Dodd glared at him in speechless wrath. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, a bag was pulled down over the unfortunate Tommy's head.

"M-m-m-m-m!" came from within the bag. Smythe of the Shell took another length of cord, and tied it under the arms, and tied the other end to an iron stanchion. Tommy

"He didn't come in," said Cook. "We've been looking for him since, and we can't find him. Where the dickens has he got to, I wonder?"

"My hat! The brake will be here soon," said Lovell. "Just like a Modern ass, to lose himself now!"

"Oh, don't jaw, but help us look for him!" growled Cook.

It did not seem much use looking for Tommy Dodd. They looked in the Form-room, remembering that he had lines to do. But the Form-room was empty. They looked in the gym, in Big and Little Quads, everywhere, in fact. But Tommy Dodd was not to be seen.

A shout from some of the cricketers announced the arrival of the brake.
 Tommy Dodd had not turned up.

Smythe & Co. came out, and seemed surprised to observe the troubled state of the worried cricketers.

"Not off yet?" asked Smythe affably. "We're comin' over to see the match, you know. I understood it was timed to begin at two-thirty."

"Two-thirty now," said Howard.

Smythe & Co. smiled at one another, and strolled out after the brake. They were interested to see what kind of a game the junior team would play at Bagshot without their best batsman.

On top of the clock-tower an unhappy junior, wriggling in cords that he could not loosen, heard the rumble of the departing brake. He could not speak, but the thoughts he thought about Adolphus Smythe were simply lurid.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Bagshot Match.

PANKLEY of Bagshot greeted the Rookwood cricketers when the brake arrived. The Bagshot team had long been ready, and waiting. They were inclined to be sarcastic when the Rookwooders arrived nearly an hour late.

"You've come!" ejaculated Pankley. "We were beginning to think that you'd overstept yourselves or something."

"Sorry!" said Jimmy Silver. "One of our men happened to be away, and we waited for him. Lots of time for a single-innings match, anyway."

"Oh, we don't mind!" said Pankley politely.

Jimmy Silver frowned a little. He had had a faint hope that Tommy Dodd might be at Bagshot. He was disappointed, and irritated, too.

He knew that Pankley's eleven were at the top of their form and that the match would be a tough one, anyway. The absence of their best bat might make all the difference to the Rookwooders's chances.

But Tommy Dodd was not there, and the match had to proceed without him. Jimmy Silver won the toss. The pitch was in perfect condition, and the Rookwooders naturally expected to bat first. But Jimmy Silver decided to send the Bagshot fellows in.

"What the dickens are you up to?" demanded Lovell, in surprise. "Why ain't we going to bat, fathead?"

"Sure, and we ought to bat first!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle warmly. "This is what comes of having a Classical skipper."

Jimmy Silver grinned.
 "Bagshot's going to bat," he said. "I've got my reasons. I suppose you fellows don't know why Tommy Dodd's cleared off like that."

"Of course we don't!"
 "Neither do I. But I know he'll get to the match, if he can," said Jimmy, "and if he comes along, we're going to play him."

"Oh!"
 "I can put a substitute into the field—I've mentioned it to Pankley. If Tommy Dodd comes along in time for last man in, he's going in—see? Come on! The bounders are waiting for us."

And Jimmy Silver led his merry men on to the field.

Jimmy's idea of leaving a place open for Tommy Dodd till the last possible moment was regarded as a stroke of genius by the Moderns.

They admitted that Jimmy Silver, though a Classical, was a fellow with an uncommon amount of common-sense. The Classics were not quite so enthusiastic. They felt that they could win without any Moderns in the team at all, and were rather disposed to "slang" their leader for not replacing Dodd by a Classical while he had the chance.

But Jimmy Silver went on his way regardless of praise or blame—thinking only of the game and the best way of winning it—and thereby proving that he was, in fact, a first-rate cricket captain.

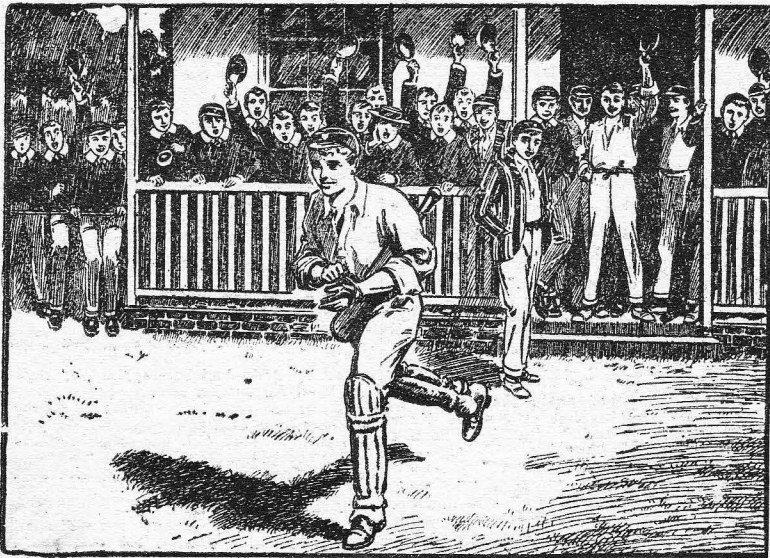
Pankley and Poole opened the innings for Bagshot. That they were in fine form was soon proved. Even Jimmy Silver's bowling was not able to touch them for some time.

And the runs piled up.
 Pankley fell to Silver's bowling at last, and soon afterwards Poole was clean bowled by Raby. But the score was then at fifty.

It was a handsome start for Bagshot, and they kept it up. The Rookwooders were given an unusual amount of leather-hunting, and few catches. Wickets went down slowly, while the numbers went up on the board at a great rate.

At half-past five the last Bagshot wicket went down, and Pankley & Co. simply chirruped with glee over a score of 115. The faces of the Rookwooders were correspondingly glum.

"We shan't equal that without our best bat!" growled Tommy Cook, when they adjourned for refreshments before the visitors' innings. "Where can that fathead Dodd be all this time?"



Two minutes later Tommy Dodd came running out from the dressing room. A big cheer greeted him from the pavilion. "Good old Tommy!" He was last man in, and he fully realised how much the match depended upon his play, and what his chums expected from him. (See Chapter 6.)

Dodd was about as secure as a prisoner could be. Unless somebody happened to ascend to the top of the clock-tower—which was extremely unlikely—Tommy Dodd was a prisoner till Smythe & Co. chose to release him.

Leaving the Modern junior wriggling with wrath, the Nuts cheerfully descended the stairs, and strolled away to the School House for dinner. They were late for dinner, and received sharp remarks from their Form-master—which they bore meekly. It needed more than a few sharp remarks to dash the great satisfaction they felt at their complete success.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Missing.

JIMMY SILVER & Co. came out with their cricket-bags, in great spirits. The Fictical Four had smiling faces that afternoon.

"Time the brake was here," said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook came hurrying across the quad. Their faces were disturbed and anxious.

"Hallo! Anything the matter?" asked Silver.

"Have you seen Dodd?"
 "Dodd! No!"

"Faith, and phwat's become of him in'to'ry?" exclaimed Doyle. "He's missed dinner, and ould Manders was waxy."

"Missed dinner!" said Jimmy Silver, in astonishment. "That's a queer way to get ready for a cricket match. He will want all his beef this afternoon."

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"We're waiting for Tommy Dodd," explained Jimmy Silver.

"Not ready by this time!" exclaimed Smythe. "What's he doin'?"

"Blest if I know—he seems to have vanished."

"By gad!"
 "We shall have to go without him," said Lovell. "We've kept the Bagshot bounders waiting already. They'll think we're never coming."

"Can't he go without Dodd," said Cook.

"Look here, we shan't have time for the match if we wait any longer!" exclaimed Raby. "If Tommy Dodd chooses to clear off like this, it's his own look-out. If he wanted to play, I suppose he'd be here."

"Gone for a stroll and forgotten the match, perhaps," suggested Smythe. "I'll play for you if you like—you'll want a man."

"We want a man, but we don't want a silly idiot," said Cook rudely. "Young Lacy had better come on."

"Better have a Classical chap," suggested Lovell—"Hooker, f'rinstance—"

"None of your Classical cheek! Lacy—"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Who's captain of this team?"
 "Why, you silly ass—"

"You come in the brake, Hooker," said Captain Jimmy Silver coolly.

Cook almost exploded; but he had to yield the point. Jimmy Silver was captain.

The two Tommies gave a last despairing look round, hoping to spot Tommy Dodd at the last moment. But there was no sign of him, and they piled into the brake. They could only hope that, for some unexplained reason, he had gone over to Bagshot first, and that they would find him there.

"Oh where, and oh where can he be?" murmured Adolphus Smythe. Adolphus & Co. were looking on at the game with smiling faces.

It was distinctly amusing to Adolphus to see the fortune of war going against Rookwood in this manner. He considered that it would be a lesson to them.

"The silly Modern ass ought to be seragged," said Lovell. "We want every run we can get. We'd better elect a new captain—a Modern for this time."

And for once the Moderns had nothing to say. Tommy Dodd's absence was utterly inexplicable, and they could not say a word in defence of a player who had left his team in the lurch in this unaccountable manner.

"He may turn up yet," said Jimmy Silver. "There's a chance he may. Anyway, his place is open for him if he does."

But tea finished, and Tommy Dodd had not turned up. Pankley & Co. went into the field, and Rookwood opened the innings with Lovell and Cook.

But, good as the Bagshot bounders had proved themselves to be at the wickets, they soon proved that they were equally good in the field and on the bowling-crease.

Pankley's bowling was very nearly as good as Jimmy Silver's own. There were loud cheers from Bagshot as the home skipper performed the hat-trick, Lovell and Raby and Newcome going down in succession to his bowling.

Long and longer grew the faces of the Rookwooders.

More than ever was Tommy Dodd needed now, with his mighty arm. But there was no sign of Tommy Dodd.

"Three down for 7!" chuckled Smythe of the Shell. "What a score! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too funny for words, by gad!" yawned Tracy.

"And they found fault with our cricket!" said Howard, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

But fortune smiled on Rookwood once more, with Cook and Doyle as partners. The board registered 40 when their partnership was dissolved. Modern fellows who had come over to see the match cheered them loudly, and the Classical gave them a yell of appreciation.

It looked as if Rookwood were booked for one of the severest lickings they had ever had, even in the days of Adolphus Smythe. Every run was welcomed now by the anxious Rookwood spectators.

Jimmy Silver had not gone in to bat yet. His forte was bowling, and he knew that he was only an average bat. He sent in man after man, but, as a rule, their luck was cruel.

Eight wickets were down for 52! Then, as Flynn came out, Jimmy Silver had to go in with Webb, a Modern, as his partner. When another wicket fell it would be last man in, and if Tommy Dodd had not turned up by that time Hooker would have to go to the wickets. And the Rookwooders, who knew just how long Hooker was likely to last against bowling like Pankley's, groaned in spirit at the thought. Where was Tommy Dodd?

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Eleventh Man.

"THAT'S jolly odd!" remarked Bulkeley.

The captain of Rookwood was strolling in the quad with his chum Neville. The two great men of the Sixth had been at the nets, and now they were sauntering back to the School House to tea, chatting cricket.

There were few juniors about Rookwood. Most of them had gone over to Bagshot to watch the game there. A peculiar object had caught Bulkeley's eye, and he paused in the quad to regard it.

"Jolly odd!" agreed Neville, following the captain's glance.

Certainly it was odd. Bulkeley was looking up at the clock-tower. Over the railing up at the top of the tower appeared an object, which looked like a bag. It was moving about, just as if somebody had his head inside it and was moving it to and fro. The parapet hid the person below the bag—if, indeed, a person was there—but the bag showed above the railings.

"Extraordinary!" said Bulkeley, in great astonishment. "Is that some fag's idea of a lark, I wonder?"

Neville looked greatly puzzled. "Blest if I can make it out!" he said. Bulkeley called to a fag in the quad.

"Here, Thompson, cut up the tower, and see who's playing the giddy ox there on the roof," he said.

"I say, it's a jolly long way to the top of that blessed clock-tower, Bulkeley!" objected Thompson of the Third.

Bulkeley made a gesture, and Thompson scudded off without raising further objections.

He tramped up the spiral stair to the top of the tower, determined to punch the head of whoever was "playing the giddy ox" there when he found him.

But when he reached the top of the tower, the fag gave a yell of astonishment.

"Oh, scissors!"

It was an extraordinary object that met his gaze—a junior tied up with cords and secured to a stanchion by another cord, and with a bag tied over his head. The Third-Former almost fell down as he caught sight of that strange object.

"Tommy Dodd!" he gasped.

He could not see the junior's face, but he could guess that this was the missing cricketer. It could hardly be anybody else.

A faint mumble came from inside the bag. Tommy Dodd heard the fag's footsteps, and he was trying—in vain—to speak. With almost incredible exertions Tommy Dodd had managed to get on his feet, bound as he was, after many attempts that had failed. He knew that when he was on his feet close to the parapet his head would show over the rails, and he nourished a faint hope that it might be noticed from the quad, and that somebody might come. Somebody had come at last!

Thompson of the Third jerked the bag off his head and disclosed a red and furious face.

"Gagged, by gum!" ejaculated the astounded Thompson.

He kindly removed the handkerchief from Tommy Dodd's mouth. Then the Modern junior found his voice—hoarse and husky.

"Thanks! Grooh! Did you see me?"

"Bulkeley did. I say, Doddy, what's the name of this game?" grinned the fag.

"Cut me loose!"

Thompson opened his pocket-knife, and cut through the cords. Then Tommy Dodd sat down to gasp. He was cramped. He had been there for hours, and though he had not been tied tightly, he felt the effects of it pretty keenly. It was full five minutes before he was able to move. Thompson watched him, grinning.

"Ow!" said Tommy Dodd, at last. "I suppose they've gone?"

"The eleven? I should say so!"

"Where's Smythe?"

"He's gone, too."

"What's the time?"

"Nearly six."

Tommy Dodd groaned.

"Oh, the rotters!"

Then he rushed down the stairs, without a word of explanation to the amazed Thompson. He saw Bulkeley in the quad, but did not stop to speak to him; he left it to Thompson to explain to the captain of Rookwood. He bolted into the tuckshop first—he was ravenously hungry. Sergeant Kettle—staring at his crimson face and dusty clothes—served him with ginger-pop and sandwiches.

Tommy Dodd drank the ginger-pop, and, taking the sandwiches in his hand—with a good bite in his mouth—scudded for the bike-shed.

He rushed his machine out of the gates, and mounted in the road, and started for Bagshot School.

He rode on at a speed which certainly exceeded the legal limit, his pedals going round like lightning, and a cloud of dust in his wake marking his track along the white road.

Bagshot at last!

Tommy Dodd turned his bike in at the gate, and rode in. Red and perspiring and breathless, he jumped off his machine, and letting the bike go spinning whither it would, he raced for the cricket-ground.

A loud shout was ringing over the field as he dashed up.

"Well bowled, Pankley!"

Webb's wicket was down!

"Last man in!" chuckled Smythe of the Shell. "There's your chance, Hooker! There won't be any Tommy Dodd to-day! Why—my hat!—by gad!"

Smythe's eyes almost started from his head at the sight of a junior in dusty Etons racing up to the pavilion.

"Tommy Dodd!" he gasped.

"Dodd, by thunder!" muttered Howard.

There was a wild yell from Tommy Doyle as he spotted his study-leader.

"Arrah! It's Tommy Dodd! Hand over that bat, Hooker; here's Tommy Dodd! Sure, he's turned up at last!"

Jimmy Silver's face lighted up. Shouts on all sides from the Rookwood fellows greeted Tommy Dodd as he came panting up. Nine wickets were down for fifty-five, and if Hooker had come in to face Pankley's bowling, Rookwood would certainly have been all down for about sixty. But Tommy Dodd was there.

"Last man in!"

"Buck up, Tommy Dodd!"

Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook seized their chum, and rushed him into the dressing-room, and bundled him into his flannels.

The Rookwood batsmen did not, as a rule, keep the field waiting; but the field had to wait some minutes for last man.

That could not be helped. Tommy Dodd pumped in breath while he changed; but when, in the course of five minutes or so, he joined Jimmy Silver at the wickets, he looked very much his old self.

The Rookwood crowd watched him anxiously.

But Tommy Dodd dealt cautiously and respectfully with that bowling till the end of the over. He waited to get into his stride before he started punishing the bowling.

Then Poole bowled to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy played the bowling steadily and coolly, and it was a maiden over. That gave Tommy Dodd a much-needed rest.

Then the field crossed, and the Modern junior had the bowling again. All Rookwood eyes were bent anxiously upon him. Tommy Dodd let himself go now. Again Pankley had the ball, but he could not touch the wicket. Loud cheers from Moderns and Classical alike greeted a hit for 4. It was followed by a 3, and Jimmy Silver had the bowling. But Jimmy Silver stole a single, and gave it back to Tommy Dodd, and the Rookwooders grinned with satisfaction.

It was creeping up. Still the batsman were safe at the wickets.

"Hundred!" yelled Lovell, as the figures changed again. "My only hat! We shall pull it off after all!"

"Fifteen to tie, be jabers!" chuckled Doyle. "Go it, Tommy!"

"Oh, well hit! Well run!"

Three to the good, and Jimmy Silver batting again. A blank and a single, and then Tommy Dodd's mighty bat was swiping the leather once more—a four and a two, and another two and a single! One hundred and thirteen! Two wanted to tie, and three to win!

Pankley sent down every ball he knew to Jimmy Silver now. With the most exasperating calmness Jimmy Silver stopped them dead. A maiden over again; nothing could tempt him to hit out. And the Rookwooders cheered that maiden over as loudly as they might have cheered the hat-trick or a sixer.

Tommy Dodd again, with Poole bowling. Poole did his best, and Rookwood breathed deep with anxiety as Tommy Dodd stepped out to the ball. Smack! And away flew the leather, and the batsmen were running, and running again and again! Crash came the ball, a couple of seconds too late, and the umpire shook his head.

"Rockwood wins!"

"Hoorah!"

There was a rush of ecstatic Rookwooders on the field, and Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver were carried off shoulder-high, amid deafening cheers. It was a win for Rookwood after all, and Rookwood rejoiced with a tremendous rejoicing.

Tommy Dodd told his story in the brake as the victorious cricketers rolled homeward, and the Rookwood cricketers were very anxious to see Adolphus Smythe & Co.

They saw them as soon as they arrived at Rookwood. It was a painful meeting for Smythe & Co. It was in vain that Adolphus explained that that jape on Tommy Dodd was simply a Classical joke on a Modern bounder, and that he, the great Adolphus, had completely forgotten the cricket-match at the time.

When the cricketers left Adolphus & Co. they went satisfied, and they left the unhappy Nuts in a parlous state.

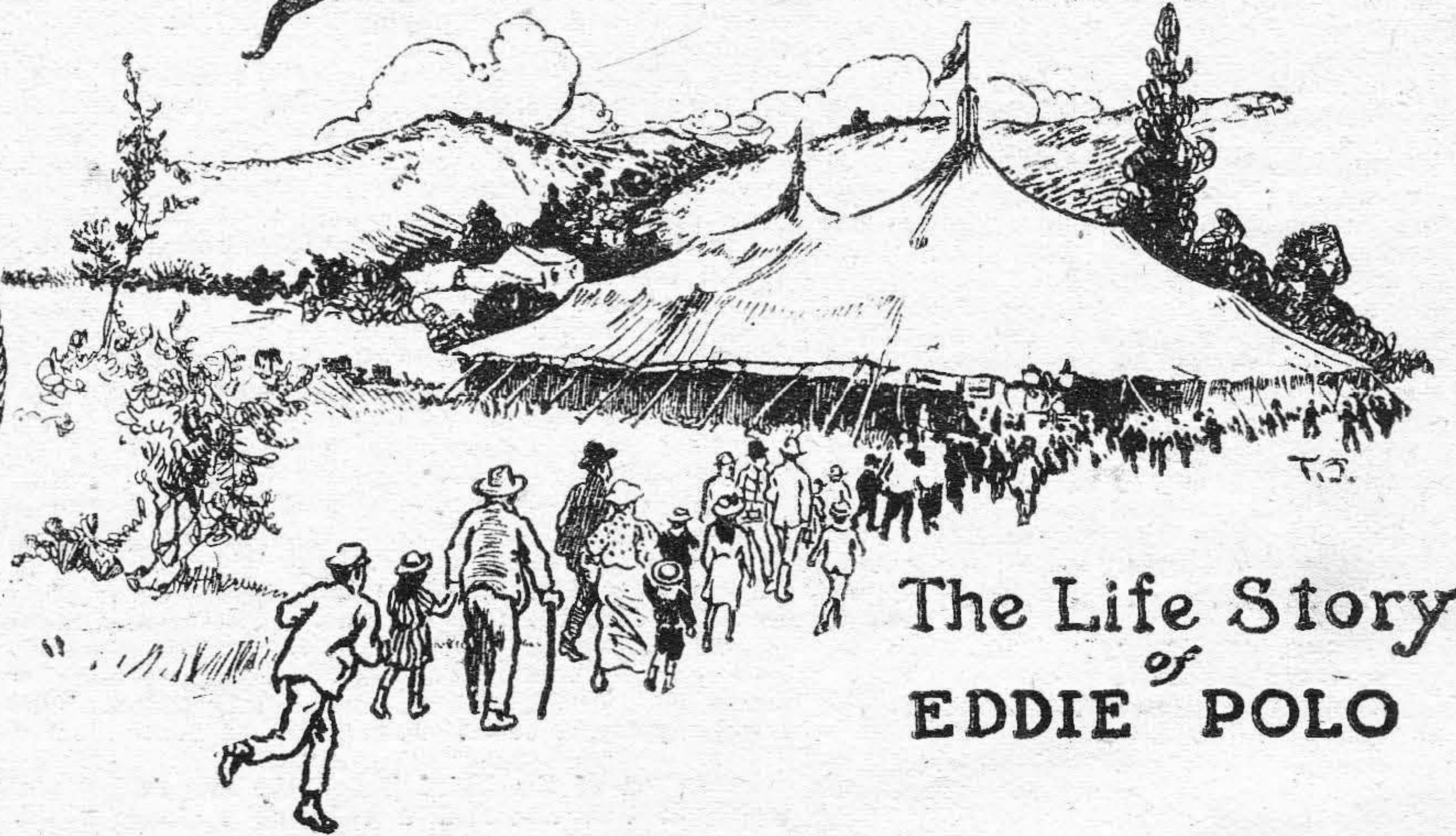
It was likely to be a long, long time before Adolphus & Co. chipped in again in junior cricket.

THE END.

(Another grand story of the chums of Rookwood School next Friday, entitled: "A Bad Egg!" by Owen Conquest. Don't miss it!)

START READING THE LIFE STORY OF FAMOUS EDDIE POLO TO-DAY!

Fighting for Fame!



The Life Story
of
EDDIE POLO

A Thrilling Story of the Famous Film Star's Early Struggles and Triumphs.

THE THREADS OF THIS STORY.

Eddie Polo, an unknown and apparently poor boy, obtains a position in Mr. Busto's World-Famous Menagerie and Circus, after being given the opportunity of proving himself a wonderful young acrobat, in the place of Del Rogeriguo, where he meets "Ginger," the circus clown, who warns him against the Spaniard's spiteful heart. An attempt is made by Del Rogeriguo to end Eddie's life, but the young acrobat manages to retain his presence of mind, and so save himself from a certain death. The next day he is out riding with Esta, the charming daughter of Mr. Busto, when his mount takes fright as he is passing over a narrow bridge, and, crashing into the rails, topples over into the ravine. Esta returns posthaste to the circus to tell her father of the accident and get help.

(Now read on.)

A Wonderful Escape!

EDDIE was a firm favourite with the company, owing, not only to his remarkable skill as an athlete, but also to his kind, sunny nature, and his willingness to help all others.

"What has happened, Esta?" queried Mr. Busto hoarsely. "Quick, girl!"

With the horrified look still upon her face, as the scene enacted itself before her closed eyes once more, Esta told her father of the incident which had led to Eddie Polo's fall into the ravine.

Del Rogeriguo smiled again as he heard the story of events. Fate and the Mad Chestnut had removed from his path for ever the only obstacle to his success.

Although it seemed a hopeless task to undertake, Mr. Busto decided at once that the strongest men of the company should proceed to the ravine with ropes.

It was still possible that Polo was alive, and that something could be done to save him.

The owner of the circus clung to that tiny shred of hope.

Apart from that, however, they must bring the body of the young acrobat to the surface, if the worst had happened.

Volunteers were soon forthcoming. Ginger, although getting on in years, headed the party. The men carried long ropes, and proceeded to the scene of the tragedy as fast as possible.

Esta, in spite of her father's remonstrances, insisted upon accompanying them. They soon arrived at the broken bridge.

Ginger carefully walked on to it, and fearfully peered over the edge. What he expected to see he hardly knew.

For a few moments he regarded the bottom

of the ravine, an expression of utter amazement spreading over his kindly features.

Suddenly he uttered a loud shout of pleasure, and frantically waved his hand.

Mr. Busto and the remainder of the party gazed at him in surprise. They had been busy knotting two lengths of rope together, preparatory to making the descent into the ravine for Eddie Polo's remains.

At Ginger's extraordinary behaviour they ceased their labours.

"What's wrong, Ginger?" roared Mr. Busto.

"What the devil—"

The owner of the circus stopped short. A cheerful—though somewhat shaky—voice came from the depths of the ravine.

"Hallo, Ginger!"

For the moment the party were deprived of their powers of speech. Then they realised that the miraculous had happened, and that Eddie Polo was still alive, and, what was more, to judge by the tone of his voice, not badly hurt.

A loud cheer went up from the assembled men, and, regardless of the danger of falling, they crowded to the edge of the ravine and looked down.

An amazing sight met their eyes. Instead of the mangled, broken corpse they had expected to find, they saw Eddie Polo sitting comfortably on the ground, leaning against the side of a boulder, his face turned towards the top of the ravine.

Even at that distance it was possible to see that a ghost of a smile still hovered round the corners of the young man's mouth.

"Cheer-ho, Eddie!" roared Mr. Busto, overcome with his delight. "We'll have you out of this in two ticks!"

In less time than it takes to tell, the prepared rope was dangling over the edge of the ravine, and Ginger started to descend.

"Don't trouble, Ginger," came Eddie's voice. "I can climb that all right."

"He's not even hurt!" gasped Mr. Busto, as he saw the acrobat rise and cross to the rope.

A few minutes later Eddie's cheerful face appeared.

His black eyes twinkled faster than ever.

Eager hands helped him over the brink, and once more he stood safely amongst a group of the circus company.

Del Rogeriguo's Final Attempt!

AS Eddie Polo explained to the astonished members of the circus company, the only difficult thing to do under circumstances such as those he had just passed through, was to keep rigid control over the thinking-box and nerves.

To the majority of these men, who were all used to taking great risks, this was the hardest of all things to do, and Eddie Polo became even a greater hero than before, if that was possible.

Beyond a severe shaking and a few bruises he had sustained no injury in his fall, and expressed his intentions of performing at the circus during the evening performance as usual.

Mr. Busto, however, would not hear of it, and told Eddie he must take a complete rest. So, much against his wishes, Eddie did not make any public appearance that night.

Del Rogeriguo, therefore, at the evening performance again became chief acrobat. The Spaniard's feelings can be imagined better than described.

To be turned out of the position he had held so long by this young newcomer was bad enough, but to be put to act as this interloper's deputy—the substitute for a man he hated and feared—added yet another spur to the man's desire to get even with Eddie Polo.

From the time news was received of the accident until Eddie was discovered unhurt, Del Rogeriguo's hopes of the future had soared high.

Then they were dashed to the ground, and his anger and disappointment knew no bounds.

He swore he would get rid of this popular newcomer, and, but for the fact that he lacked the necessary courage, would have gone straight to Eddie Polo and made the effort.

However, he still had vivid memories of the last attempt he had made under those circumstances, and had no wish to sample the strength of the young acrobat's blows again.

Del Rogeriguo spent his afternoon endeavouring to find some means whereby he could get even with the man who had so successfully displaced him.

The evening performance passed off without any untoward incident happening.

Eddie, acting upon his master's instructions, did not do any trapeze work, but merely contented himself by standing at the exit to the ring, talking to the various artistes as they finished their turns.

Del Rogeriguo was at present on the trapeze ropes, and was giving a really creditable performance.

To give the man his due, he was a wonderful acrobat, and Eddie was the first to realise that the Spaniard would make a good partner for some really thrilling stunts.

As Del Rogeriguo finished his show and made towards the exit, Eddie tapped him on the shoulder.

"Will you talk to me for a few moments?" he asked.

The smile of pleasure vanished from the Spaniard's face. He was quite pleased with his performance and the applause he received.

"What do you want to say?" he demanded surlily.

"I want to suggest that we work together more, as I feel convinced that between us

we could get some very fine things over. What do you say? I can fix it up with Mr. Busto.

The Spaniard's inclination was to refuse, and no doubt he would have done this rather violently. But a thought flashed through his brain, and he turned to Eddie and smiled his consent, his white teeth gleaming.

"Zat ees a very good idea," he said. "Ve shall be able fo thrill zee people vel, I am sure."

"Good!" replied Eddie Polo heartily. "Then we'll rehearse a few double acts to-morrow morning."

With that the two parted, Del Rogeriguo to return to his dressing-tent, and Eddie to cross to where the genial Mr. Busto was standing.

The owner's face was beaming with delight. He had had a good day. His large tent was packed to overflowing, and he decided at once that he would prolong his stay in this district a day or so.

He greeted Eddie cheerfully, and in his usual boisterous manner. He was becoming more and more attached to the young acrobat each day.

Eddie explained his idea to the boss.

At first Mr. Busto was inclined to disagree. He had had a good deal of experience with men of Del Rogeriguo's stamp, and knew that the Spaniard would keep his desire for vengeance alive for a long time.

"I don't think it is quite a wise thing to do, Eddie," he remarked. "I know that Del Rogeriguo has never forgiven you for taking his place, and may make use of this opportunity to work you some harm."

After some little time, however, Eddie persuaded the old man that his fears were groundless; and it was arranged that they should try their double act the next morning.

The Spaniard, in his tent, came to the conclusion that to combine with Polo would probably offer him more chances of disposing of his rival without undue danger to himself, and was therefore glad that he had taken the offer. He would have to leave the exact method until he had heard what the double scheme was to be.

The next morning, after the early meal, Eddie approached the half-caste with his idea.

He had decided to combine his prowess at horse-riding with trapeze work, and for that purpose would need the assistance of Del Rogeriguo.

The Spaniard was to be on the trapeze ropes the whole time, and after he had given a few of the usual exhibitions Eddie was to ride into the ring standing on the back of a horse. Del Rogeriguo then had to come down to the lowest rung of the trapeze ladder, hang from it by his legs with his hands outstretched downwards ready to catch Eddie, who, when the horse was in a suitable position, would spring upwards, and so be hoisted on to the trapeze ropes.

For a short time they would continue the ordinary acrobatic acts, and eventually Eddie would leave in a similar manner to his arrival. That is, he would slide down a single rope and fall upon the back of the galloping horse, and be carried out of the ring.

At the rehearsal that morning the trick was completed without incident. The one dangerous part of it was when Eddie had to fall upon the horse's back and depart. At that moment he would be working too low to the ground to be really safe, and if he missed the horse by the slightest he would stand a very good chance of being severely crippled.

The Spaniard noticed that this was the one point where he might be able to work his revenge on Eddie.

It was obvious to him that if, when Polo was hanging upside-down from the rope, he could move it ever so slightly to one side, Eddie would miss the horse and fall on to the low wooden railing fixed round the ring.

He was certain that he could do it without attracting attention to himself, as the arrangement was that he should continue his performance while Eddie was doing his.

By sitting on one of the bars, and swinging far enough, he saw that he could reach the rope and drag it to one side. That would mean his rival would fall head-first for nearly twenty feet on to the edge of the wooden ring round the circus.

Mr. Busto was immensely pleased with the effort, though he was not at all certain that Del Rogeriguo would not attempt some dirty trick.

Eddie and Del Rogeriguo were also quite

contented with the morning performance, though not for the same reason.

It was decided to perform it that evening.

Again the large circus tent was filled to overflowing. It had been announced by handbills that the chief acrobat, who had been indisposed as a result of an accident the previous day, was now fit to work, and would celebrate it by doing an exceptionally daring trick, combining trapeze work and horse-riding.

The Spaniard, Del Rogeriguo, was not mentioned on the handbills. When he noticed this he gritted his teeth with rage, and he clenched his fists.

"Vait till to-night, Mistaire Polo!" he snarled to himself, as he noticed the young acrobat proceeding to his tent to dress for the performance.

When the time for the trapeze act came round Del Rogeriguo, dressed in the regulation tights and singlets of acrobats, and, with a gorgeous red sash round his waist, made his entrance, and quickly swarmed up to the topmost rung of the trapeze ladder.

He was loudly applauded as he performed each trick, and in his delight almost forgot his desire for vengeance.

It was time for Eddie Polo to make his

The horse was now within a few yards of the spot, and Del Rogeriguo swung forward and transferred his weight on to the second rope.

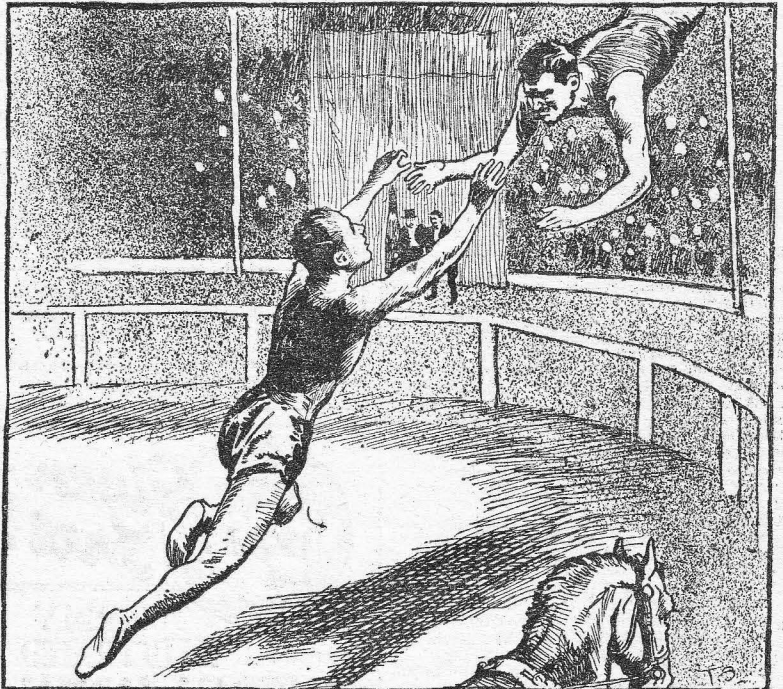
At that moment Eddie Polo released his hold, but the movement caused by the Spaniard above, who had now resumed his previous position unnoticed by the crowd, was sufficient to pull him out of direction.

He fell to one side of the horse, and, missing his hold on the saddle, tumbled head-first on to the wooden fence.

There was no time, no distance, in which Eddie could attempt to tumble safely and easily as before.

He must trust entirely to luck, and keep his head. The silence in the great circus tent could be almost felt, and as Eddie shot through the frail wooden railings he felt a stinging pain in his shoulder that made him think his bones were broken.

He tucked in his head as he neared the ground, and to his surprise and delight he rolled over, head over heels, at the moment of impact. And with a quick jerk he turned the first "neck roll" into a second and third, and then, suddenly, stood on his feet, bowing



With a wonderful spring Eddie shot up from the back of the galloping horse. The jump was splendidly timed, and his hands closed over those of Del Rogeriguo in a firm grip.

entrance, and the Spaniard came down to the lowest rung of the specially-placed ladder to take up his position.

Riding gracefully once round the ring, Eddie Polo then stood upon the saddle and prepared to make his jump. Twice he galloped round the ring while standing, warning the Spaniard at the second that he would jump the third time round.

With a wonderful spring Eddie shot up from the back of the galloping horse.

The jump was splendidly judged, and his hands closed over those of Del Rogeriguo in a firm grip. The next moment he was swarming up the ladder, followed closely by the half-caste.

The two worked together perfectly, and thrilled their audience as it had never been thrilled before.

Eddie, glancing down, noticed that the horse had started to gallop round again ready to receive him.

Timing his arrival so that he reached the bottom of the rope just after the horse had galloped past, Eddie waited for the animal to approach again.

Del Rogeriguo, above, was swinging to and fro within reach of the rope, ready to follow out his vile plan.

to the audience, as though the accident had been an effect designed for their especial thrill and entertainment.

But, for all that, there was more than a little relief in the applause the audience showered upon the intrepid lad, and his shoulder still occasioned him spasms of pain.

Above him, Del Rogeriguo ground his teeth and cursed Eddie's presence of mind and good fortune. This was beyond doubt uncanny; some good angel certainly watched over Polo, and sought to thwart the Spaniard's plans always at the critical moment.

"Zey cannot attach ze blame for ze accident upon me," he told himself savagely. "Zey haf no evidence zat I am to blame; no one haf even seen me. Ze next time—ah, ze next time, Mistaire Eddie Polo, ze result of ze 'accident' will be different. I will show you zat ees not good to be ze enemy of Garcia Del Rogeriguo."

Ginger, the clown, as soon as Eddie finished bowing, approached the lad with a quizzical air that seemed all part of a great game. With his two hands he rocked Eddie's hand from side to side, and then turned to the audience.

"The medical men who so graciously volunteered their services without being asked

receive the best thanks of the management," he announced; "but they will not require to waste paper and ink sending in their bills. Thank you, gentlemen, both of you!"

The audience laughed at this delicious satire, for the town's two leading medicos had jumped up in their seats as the lad fell, but had as hastily resealed themselves when he stood up, apparently unhurt. As they clapped at the clown's quip Ginger turned to Eddie.

"Another 'accident,' my lad?" he queried. "It strikes me these accidents are done a purpose, and I don't think any insurance company would give you a big policy for a small penny-a-week payment. That Spaniard's close on your heels, and he'll get you one of these days if you don't look out."

"Just what I was thinking myself, Ginger," said Eddie, with a rueful grin. "I know jolly well that I misjudged no distances; ninety-nine times out of a hundred I should have landed on the horse's back, and nobody but Del Rogeriguo could have prevented me. I shall have to see him, and tell him off about this. It's really beyond a joke."

"I told Busto that no good could come of letting the dago work with you," went on Ginger, "and if you hadn't put in your spoke he'd have stopped it. I can tell you the boss takes a lot of notice of what I say."

"Sometimes!" murmured Eddie, with a quick smile.

"What do you mean — sometimes?" demanded Ginger.

"I heard you telling him something the other day, and he laughed in your face," was the cool answer. "Don't you remember? You were asking him for a rise in salary, and saying that you'd have to find another billet if he refused, and he just told you to go ahead and get it. That didn't look as if he always took notice of your words."

Ginger scratched his head.

"Laddie," he retorted, wagging a whimsical finger at the acrobat, "man and boy I've been with Busto since he was so high." "So high" being a matter of three inches or less. "And every week-end when the ghost walks we've had that little scene. Why, the boss would think I was offended with him if I didn't ask for a rise when he hands me my dollars—he's got so used to it. But I haven't got time to stand here arguing with you all day! If I don't crack a few more jokes the audience will get up and leave. It's really me they come to see, you know. You and your trick falls and thrilling accidents are mere snaps of the finger when I'm about."

He winked, and, turning, threw a few somersaults, receiving a crack from the ring-master's whip and a murmur of laughter as his reward. As Ginger himself would say, a clown's lot is far from a happy one.

Eddie Polo, not waiting to see the end of the performance now that his own "turn" was finished, made his way to the dressing-tent, and took off his tights and singlet.

"The dago is getting above a joke," he mused. "I'll have to warn him that I'm not standing for any more of this nonsense, else I shall get nery, and then Busto will be looking out for somebody to take on my job, and I can't say that I'm fond of job-hunting in these hard times."

He buckled his belt and stepped across to the tent set apart for Rogeriguo, who still retained a tent to himself, as if he were still star acrobat of Busto's Great Menagerie and Travelling Circus. Eddie thrust back the flap, but beyond a pair of tights and another of trunks, thrown across a biscuit-box, there was no sign of the half-caste.

"He's evidently sown no grass-seed and waited for the crops to grow," mused Eddie, with a smile. "Maybe he expected a visit from me and has boosted off to hide till I've forgotten the little matter. I suppose he's in the grog shanty, striking down fire-water

or Dutch courage, or whatever fancy handle he's got for the stuff; he'd be bound to take a shot of that dope. Well, the little heart-to-heart talk will keep. Neither he nor I, as far as I'm aware, have got marching orders from the show as yet."

He turned to face Ginger, who, while Esta was performing on her "Arab steed" from Kentucky, had taken the opportunity to slip out for a breather.

"Hallo, Eddie!" he said. "Not dead yet, and I've rifled the baby's money-box to buy you a wreath! What're you doing—paying a call?"

"Just that," answered the lad, with a significant nod. "But Senor Del Rogeriguo's footman-valet, who's taken my card, says that his master is not at home, and doesn't know when he's expected back. Seems like I shall have to do the evening show alone."

"That won't be any hardship," replied the clown. "But look here, boy, you leave that dago to me," he added grimly.

Eddie's eyes twinkled as he shook his head. "Awfully good of you to offer to stand my racket, Ginger," he replied; "but, honest, I don't think the yellow hound's worth worrying about. After all, his accidents haven't cut much ice up to now, and he's got a job for life trying to kill me that way."

Ginger wagged a finger again, but did not reply. Despite the boy's light-hearted way of looking at things, the clown had quite made up his mind that there should be a vacancy for a second acrobat in Busto's Travelling Circus that evening, and if Rogeriguo didn't go in peace—well, he should go in pieces. So, as Eddie walked away, the clown strolled into the dago's tent, and perched himself on the tight-decorated packing-case. But he had presently to abandon his vigil, for the afternoon performance drew to a close, and the tea-bell rang without Rogeriguo's dark face appearing at the tent-flap.

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A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

GREAT ATTRACTIONS FOR NEXT FRIDAY!

In the next issue of the "Popular" there will be further chapters of our splendid serial, entitled,

"THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!"
By Edmund Burton.

This story of the Cavaliers and Roundheads has become immensely popular with my chums, and I have had many letters telling me how very carefully they follow up these thrilling incidents, which form one of the finest old-time yarns that Mr. Burton has ever penned.

Another magnificent long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., The Famous Chums of Greyfriars, under the title of

"THE WILES OF WILLIAM WIBLEY!"
By Frank Richards,

will be next on the list of the good things. It is a sequel to this week's fine yarn, and deals of an amazing plan adopted by Wibley of the Fourth to get Harry Wharton and certain other members of the Junior Football Eleven out of that unenviable position in which they had found themselves. There are plenty of humorous and extraordinary incidents in the story, of a kind which are too good to be missed.

Also, another enthralling instalment of

"THE EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"
By Maurice Everard,

dealing with the adventures of the famous criminal investigator as he progresses deeper and deeper into the mystery surrounding the strange murder of Sir Johnstone.

I also call the attention of my friends to a splendid complete school tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood,

"A BAD EGG!"
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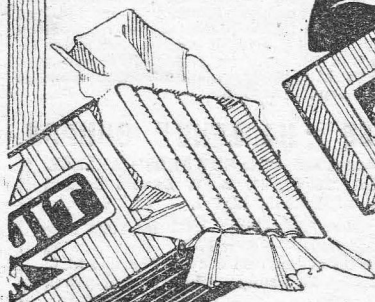
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