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AS THE HEAVY OAK SETTLE CRASHED INTO THE ADVANCING GUARDS, WILL HOWARD SPRANG THROUGH THE OPEN PANEL AFTER HIS COMPANION!

(An Exciting Moment in Our Grand Serial "THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!")

OUR POWERFUL ROMANTIC ADVENTURE SERIAL!



A TALE OF THE GREAT REBELLION

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 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.

In an encounter with a big troop of Roundheads Harry and Will are captured, and taken before Cromwell. Walter Temple, seeing them there, thinks it a great opportunity to get rid of them, so that he can become master of the Chase. He denounces

them as spies, and his accusation carries weight when he brings forth damning evidence. An alarm interrupts the trial, and Harry and his friend manage to escape during the confusion. They journey to the Chase, and decide to stay there until they are able to join their regiment again. Walter, cut off from his troop in the same neighbourhood, comes across the two in the great hall.

(Now read on.)

Walter Plays Another Card!

BY early morning the snow had ceased to fall, and as Harry looked out across the white park the first golden shafts of the rising sun forced their way upwards through the clouds which still hovered loweringly on the horizon.

Will was already fully dressed, and helping old Travers to prepare breakfast in the great kitchen across the passage. 'Twas extraordinary, the vitality of this big fellow, whose silvery hair lent such a suggestion of age to his appearance; for Will never seemed to grow fatigued, no matter how long or how hard he worked. But a clean, open-air life since early childhood had habitually been his, so that perhaps 'twas not strange after all.

Presently he appeared with a heavily-laden tray, which gave forth an appetising odour, and set it on the table with one of his good-humoured smiles.

"Now, Master Harry, here is yet another enemy to devour. Fall to, I prithee, lest it grows cold and unappetising!"

And fall to the boy did, in all conscience, with such zest as rivalled Will's own, and made the big fellow rub his hands in genuine appreciation.

"Od's life, lad!" he chuckled. "I myself was once reputed the biggest eater at Temple Chase, but I fear me I must look to my laurels, for you are threatening them truly!"

Harry laughed as he pushed his plate away, and lolled back in his chair with a sigh of contentment. But he was not allowed to rest long, for Will was already buckling on his sword and drawing his gloves over his hands.

"Nay, master, we must not tarry," he advised. "There should be scant illness for King's men in these days. Travers has gone to seek a pair of horses, which he thinks he can get some short distance off—though they will be but a sorry couple, I warrant."

"E'en two plough-horses would be better than four 'calves,'" returned Harry, with a smile. "And then, old friend?"

"I scarcely know; but we must leave here at once."

"You fear—"

"A surprise visit from Noll Cromwell. Your cousin will— By my soul, we are too late!"

A couple of grim muzzles were covering them through the open window, whilst the faces of a pair of Roundhead troopers were grinning at them along the barrels.

"Yield, gentlemen! The place is surrounded, so resistance will be quite useless!"

There was little use flying in the face of circumstance, and they threw up their hands. An Ironside officer climbed across the sill and disarmed them, and then the triumphant face of Walter Temple also appeared in the aperture, his teeth showing in an evil smile.

"Ah, cousin, so I score once again! I warrant 'twill be a rope this time, without any fear of interruption!"

Both were silent, each returning his gaze defiantly, though they well realised that he held the whip-hand with a vengeance. A sudden stir, and a clatter of accoutrements, announced the arrival of further soldiery, and, entering the servants' hall, Walter hurried towards the great door. Presently a rattle of chains and bolts betrayed his purpose, and heavy-feet clanked on the stone flags outside.

"This way, colonel! We have the birds safely coped!"

In the doorway loomed a familiar figure, stout of build and plain of visage—Oliver Cromwell himself!

When Sir Jacob Astley delivered his sudden attack on the Ironside forces there was, of course, but little time to do aught but to make a hurried stand to repel him.

But with that masterly swiftness which has marked Cromwell for all time as one of the greatest commanders who ever took the field, he quickly placed his men in such a position that they formed a rough "U," well into the hollow of which the Royalist forces advanced ere they realised their error. 'Twas a blunder that was to cost them dear, for, sweeping in from both flanks, whilst their comrades engaged the enemy in front, the Parliamentary soldiery succeeded in cutting the opposing host in two.

With any other leader it might well have ended in a complete rout for the Ironsides, for added to the surprising swiftness of their advance, the forces under Astley comprised some of the best of the Crown soldiery; but Cromwell's clever manoeuvre tipped the scales in his favour, and from that moment Sir Jacob Astley realised he was fighting a losing battle.

Nevertheless, this most trusted of the King's commanders rendered a right good account of himself, I warrant you. Losses were heavy on both sides, but at length Cromwell's strategy commenced to tell—the Royalists gave way, and were scattered like chaff before the wind.

Earlier in the fight Walter Temple, together with some five or six officers, had acci-

dentally been cut off from the main body, and found themselves opposed to almost thrice their number of the enemy. A stubborn resistance was put up, but 'twas useless; three went down to rise no more, whilst the remainder, including Walter, wheeled round and spurred away for dear life, hotly pursued by some of their opponents. During the gallop they by some means got separated, until presently Walter found himself riding alone, whither he knew not—indeed, he only realised that behind him, blotted out every now and then by the whirling flakes which had commenced to fall soon after the battle had started half a score of foemen were following swiftly on his track, like hounds hot on the scent.

Thus, he dashed blindly onwards, recognising no landmarks, nor seeking them for that matter, until the familiar front of Temple Chase loomed dimly through the smother.

What transpired then we already know. Half an hour later Walter had barely escaped with a whole skin, and was riding back in his tracks—just as anxious now to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Chase as he had been to slip his Royalist pursuers before. In the latter intention he had evidently succeeded, for none had followed him so far as the mansion—probably having turned to right or left ere they reached it.

Yet, even as he rode, Walter could not feel quite certain what to do. He did not know that the Chase stables were empty, and consequently expected Will Howard and Harry to follow at once; yet neither could he be sure, promising though the situation had looked, that Cromwell had ultimately succeeded in routing the enemy.

He drew rein and halted in doubt; then 'twas Fate herself who gave him his decision. Through the whirling flakes a silent host was advancing towards him, their feet making no noise on the snowy ground. Indeed, owing to the darkness, they were upon him almost before he was aware of their presence, and he backed his horse, with a half-stifled exclamation. Then, dimly recognising the form of the leading figure against the white background, his consternation turned to sudden relief. 'Twas the Parliamentary army, driven to seek proper shelter from the severe weather which appeared to have set in for good.

"The two prisoners—the spies, as you said!" exclaimed Cromwell. "Where have they found refuge, and how do you know?"

"At a large house—some seven miles distant, I make it, colonel." Walter was clever enough not to mention the name of the place, for Harry had previously admitted his standing in the way of something which his cousin coveted, and for obvious reasons Walter did not wish his chief to guess that the charge of spying had been brought against the prisoners from a purely personal motive.

"Twas said of the Ironsides' leader that he knew a good deal about every man under his command; he, therefore, knew Walter's surname to be Temple, which might rouse his suspicions were he also made acquainted with the name of the mansion. Crafty enough though the evidence of the glove was, 'twere not wise to run risks with such a sharp individual as Noll Cromwell.

"H'm! Seven miles, and bad going in this weather! Is there good cover near the place? Even the biggest horse cannot hold us all."

"Ay!" returned Walter. "I passed through a large wood on my way. It seems to spread all round the building."

"You appear to have noticed a good deal, considering the gloom," remarked Cromwell, with some sarcasm and ill-concealed doubt in his tones. "How you got so far from your duty at all is a matter which must be dealt with later, but not just now."

Walter flushed in the darkness, as he realised how near he had been to giving himself away.

"I—I was cut off and pursued, colonel," he explained, "and, being unable to rejoin ye, was forced to keep ahead. 'Twas but dusk when I reached the spot, so the woods were just visible."

"How did you know the spies were quartered there?"

"I saw them through a lighted window."

"They did not suspect your presence?"

"Nay, colonel, I'll vow they did not! I was cunning in my movements, and returned to seek you."

Whether Cromwell fully believed the tale or not is a matter for conjecture. In any case, he relapsed into silence, and did not refer to the matter again until his forces entered the forest and took up their quarters in the shelter of the trees.

They remained there throughout the night, Cromwell deeming his quarry safe enough till morning; then, later, as a shaft of sunlight touched the twisted chimneys of the Chase, a score of sharp eyes watched the shutters of one of the lower windows swing back, and a face appear in the opening.

Walter pointed triumphantly in that direction.

"You see, colonel, that my words were truly spoken. You recognise him?"

Cromwell nodded briefly, and issued a swift command to an officer standing beside him.

A Way Out!

COLONEL CROMWELL looked at the comrades steadfastly for a few minutes, satisfaction and doubt playing equal parts in his expression. These two had borne themselves well and bravely, which alone appealed with a strange force to his soldierly temperament; and, though the paper found in the glove needed a good deal of explaining, if these fellows were indeed spies, they had acted in an odd manner, truly, for knives of their fraternity. They had made no attempt to disguise themselves as his own followers; they had not tried to smuggle themselves into his lines, but had been taken in fair fight as prisoners. Yet, in spite of the fact that they had not been in his clutches more than a couple of hours at most, they seemingly had succeeded in going perilously near ascertaining his strength and position—a fact which he would have considered impossible, as they had been but one quarter-hour unwatched, and the camp was so well spread. If they actually had accomplished it, then, marry, they were spies who would be invaluable to any army.

"So we meet again, gentlemen," Cromwell said presently. "Ye have goodly quarters here, and, seemingly, no lack of provisions."

He crossed to the table and sat down, resting his chin in the hollow of his hand. Then he raised his head with a jerk.

"That paper, boy, which was found in your glove. Did you write it? I shall take your word for it, for I tell you, the man who can lie to Noll Cromwell is not yet born."

"I never even saw it till you discovered it, colonel."

"And your friend?"

"Nay, he knows naught of it, either. 'Tis some crafty plot, and I vow I could expose it to you will you but allow me to speak fully."

Cromwell's eyes narrowed, and he nodded his head, mutely giving his permission to proceed.

"This place is my property," continued Harry quietly. "Were I dead, it would fall into the hands of the knave who has spoken falsely against us—my cousin. Ah, you begin to understand, colonel?"

Cromwell's hand was beating a rapid tattoo on the table—a habit he seemed to have when surprised out of his customary calmness—and a look of comprehension had come into his eyes.

"Strange—strange, but true, I'll swear!" he muttered. "Two kinsmen, fighting against each other privately as well as openly. 'Tis a curious world, my masters. So you suspect, boy, that the paper was hidden in the glove by your cousin?"

figures to paper is much too dangerous to be at large! I warrant there are many who would pay well for that piece of information, were it but offered to them."

Diligently though they searched, however, no trace was found of the missing man. Wherever Walter had disappeared to was a mystery, for his horse was still where he had left it, and neither had any one of the other steeds been taken, yet it seemed impossible that he could have eluded his trackers on foot; for every square yard of ground for half a mile round had been thoroughly examined.

In twos and threes they returned empty-handed, some beginning to ransack the house itself, but close on an hour went by without any further result, and the search was finally abandoned.

In the meantime, Harry and Will had been conducted to a small apartment on the first floor, where they were placed under a strong guard, who took up their position in the corridor outside.

Howard had remained stolidly silent during the whole of the proceedings; not



A couple of grim muzzles were covering them through the open window. "Yield, gentlemen! The place is surrounded, so resistance will be quite useless!" said one of the Roundhead troopers.

"Nay, I do not suspect—I know it, as well as though I had seen him do it."

"And, I'faith, I believe you!" exclaimed the Ironsides' leader. "What you say bears a strange resemblance to my own thoughts on the matter."

"Then, we are free—"

"Free! Oh, oh! Oh, oh, oh! Nay—nay, my impetuous stripling, you travel too fast for a young foal! A good soldier does not let his captives go just because they seem truthful. The charge of spying is withdrawn, but you forget ye must still consider yourselves prisoners of war. Rest assured ye will be well taken care of until we can send ye elsewhere. And now, Master Spy-hunter—"

Cromwell suddenly paused, and stared towards the spot where Walter Temple had been standing a few minutes before; but the space was now empty. Too intent upon watching what was transpiring in front of them, none of the inmates of the servants'-hall had noticed the rascal slip back again through the window and hurry swiftly away, his face as black as night.

"After the knave!" ordered Cromwell. "A man so foolish as to commit important

a word had he uttered since Cromwell had entered the servants'-hall, and even now he sat with a line of deep furrows wrinkling his brows.

"Cheer up, old, sobersides!" laughed the boy. "We've slipped partly out of the net much better than we had expected. This cannot last for ever."

"Nay, but while I rest I rust, Master Harry, and at my age it does not do well to rust, for our joints get stiff."

He again became silent, appearing to ponder deeply. Then, suddenly gazing with renewed interest round the apartment, he sat bolt upright.

"Master Harry," he breathed, glancing cautiously towards the door, "unless Fate is indeed altogether against us, I fancy I see a way out of this pickle."

Lost!

WHEN Walter Temple slipped away from the servants'-hall unobserved he thanked his good fortune for an incident which had occurred some years before—simple enough it had seemed at the time, but now to him it sud-

denly swelled into quite an important happening.

With the woods full of Parliamentary soldiery, and the mansion by this time probably being searched from roof to cellar, there was small chance indeed of his getting away in safety. But if he stayed—what then? 'Twas quite apparent that his cousin's outspoken statement had carried considerable weight with Cromwell—he, Walter, could see that ere Harry had well begun his recital—and that the Ironsides' leader seemed to be wavering. Were he finally to accept Harry's word with reference to the fateful paper, then 'twould go hard with whoever had written those figures. To give Walter his due, he had never had any intention of using them for any but purely personal motives. But what view might not Cromwell take of it?

Oh, Walter Temple was cunning, I warrant you—cunning as any fox! He saw the rocks ahead, and endeavoured to steer clear of them. Running before the storm was safer than trying to weather it, so he guided his barque into calmer waters.

Darting unseen round the corner of the stables, he made his way furtively across a stretch of flat ground towards where an old sundial stood isolated some ten yards ahead. Reaching this point he glanced round warily; then, stooping, he brushed away the snow from the base of the stone pedestal.

Several summers before, whilst on one of his brief visits to the Chase, Walter had rested one day on the grass, with his back against that selfsame sundial. Suddenly he had become aware that the whole object had bodily turned, as though on a pivot, revealing a narrow flight of steps leading downwards into the earth. Dumbfounded at first, he had finally descended, exploring the passage from end to end. 'Twas close upon half a mile long, branching here and there on each side—a regular maze, probably dating from the Norman Era. Ultimately he had emerged into the sunlight beyond the park, and then retraced his steps with difficulty, owing to the puzzling nature of the place. A further careful search had shown him the hidden spring in the pedestal, on which his elbow or some other part of his body must have chanced to press when he lay back.

But he had said nothing of all this. Another lad, excited by his strange discovery, would have delighted in showing what he had found. But not so with Walter. Naturally reticent and untalkative, he had kept the whole thing to himself, never breathing it to a soul. And glad he was now that he had done so.

A slight click, a faint rumbling noise, and the sundial swung sideways. Next instant it had revolved back on its pivot, only the disturbed snow telling that anyone had ever been there.

The passage was not quite pitch dark. Several cunningly-contrived slits, cut at intervals in the vaulted roof, allowed a kind of dim half-light to filter through. Walter arrived at the first junction, hesitated uncertainly, and then kept straight ahead. Here the way forked to right and left, and again he halted.

"A blight upon it! Are my wits forsaking me?" he muttered. "I cannot remember which path I took last time!"

He drew out a coin and tossed it upwards. Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he turned to the left.

The passage here was flooded at parts, compelling him to pick his way carefully. But presently the ground began to rise slightly, and progress became easier. All at once, however, the chinks in the roof ceased, nothing but pitchy blackness lying ahead, and Walter swore loudly.

"I am wrong!" 'Twas not this path I travelled before, for I remember the light lasting all the way. I fear me, friend, you have made something of an oaf of yourself!"

Again passing the flooded spots he regained the fork, and took the other track. Here the branches were more numerous, and gave no clue to the right direction. Blindly he chose one, and then, returning, tried another. But in a very short time he realised that the Fates were indeed acting against him; nor could he be sure now of finding his way back to the sundial, even had he wished, for, having taken so many conflicting twists, he was quite as ignorant of the locality of the entrance as the exit.

Then, realising that he was in almost as sorry a plight as if he had stayed to brazen matters out, he sat down on a small shelf formed in the rock wall, to try and plan some way out of his difficulty.

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But tired Nature demanded satisfaction. Hungry and dog-weary after his fruitless bid for freedom, Walter Temple was soon oblivious to all around him, whilst his heavy breathing and the ceaseless drip-drip of the moisture from the damp stonework were the only sounds which disturbed the silence of that uncanny place.

The Catastrophe!

HARRY started at Will in open-mouthed surprise. Had the big fellow's senses, weakened by the strain of the past few hours, suddenly deserted him? Confined in a small chamber, thirty feet from the ground, with an armed guard, wide awake as watchdogs, at the door. And yet Howard thought he saw a way out of the difficulty! But Will was smiling confidently, and certainly looked sane enough, as he took in his companion's amazed expression.

"What mean you, old friend?"

"This! I— Hist, lad! 'Twill do presently!"

The door opened and one of the troopers entered, bearing some fuel, which he heaped on the stone hearth. Then he left, without giving so much as a glance at his captives. Will's face was grave as he noiselessly rose to his feet.

"Hasten, lad—and quietly! They are going to make themselves comfortable in here, and, if so, our chance will be lost. This way!"

He tiptoed across the room, ran his hands rapidly over the dark panelling, and finally pressed in a certain way upon one particular spot. As an oblong portion of woodwork slid noiselessly back, a shout of angry surprise came from the door.

"You first, Master Harry!" gasped Will. "Quickly—quickly, for the love of Heaven! I'll stay these knaves for a while!"

He seized an oak settle in his powerful arms, and topped it towards the advancing guard. It crashed down heavily upon them, felling three to the floor; but as Howard followed his companion through the gap the fourth sprang forward, making a wild lunge with his blade.

"Too late! The panel slid to, the keen point biting deeply into the wood, and Will laughed grimly.

"Not this time, my merry rebels! Pay our best respects to Noll Cromwell, an' ye find him in a good humour—which I much doubt—and tell him we should have tarried but for the King's business. Now, lad, carefully! The stairs are mighty steep!"

Dumbfounded by the swiftness of events, Harry made no reply. Will Howard was feeling his way down a dark flight of narrow steps, built apparently in the thickness of the wall. The boy followed silently, treading cautiously over the rough spots when warned to do so, until finally Will's voice floated up through the blackness.

"Come, lad! 'Tis safe enough now, though I know not which way to turn from this onward."

"You are not familiar with the place, then?"

"Only as far as the stair foot here," laughed the big fellow. "I found the panel years ago, but never went farther than this. I like not these ways of darkness, Master Harry!"

"But those fellows will surely follow us when they discover the spring?"

Howard laughed again.

"Ay, when they do, lad; but 'twill take some finding, I vow! And even if they do succeed, an ordinary pressure will not work it. But for pure chance I should never have known of the panel myself. Come, master!"

They felt their way along by the wall, testing each patch of ground before trusting foot to it, and presently the floor commenced to slope downwards. A few yards ahead a kind of dim twilight filtered through, coming they knew not whence, but it served to show them that the place was undoubtedly artificially constructed, for the roof and walls were mainly slabs of stone, smooth-cut and close-fitting.

"An odd place, in all conscience!" muttered Will. "But 'tis strange that in all my years here I ever knew aught of it save for the staircase. However, Will Howard was never of an inquiring mind, so— Take care, lad! 'Tis flooded just ahead, and may be deep!"

Pressing close to the wall, they passed the water in safety, and continued for some yards until a forked branch made them halt undecidedly.

"How say you, Master Harry? Which way?"

Temple gave a laugh, which echoed loudly through the confined space, as he replied:

"'Tis scarcely a matter of choice, friend! What say you to this one here?"

Will nodded, and they passed on, patches of slimy water and mounds of fallen masonry compelling them to progress more slowly than ever. Suddenly the big fellow held up his hand, and remained in a listening attitude.

"Hark you, lad! Dost hear that?"

Harry strained his ears to their utmost. A strange noise, other than the drip of the moisture, sounded from some short distance ahead.

"What is it, Will? 'Tis like—"

"Like someone breathing, Master Harry! I fear me we have had our trouble for nothing."

"Nay, 'tis too heavy for anyone, otherwise than asleep. Listen again!"

Deep and regular came the sounds through the gloom. No tracker would have dared to reveal himself so stupidly, knowing that in such a confined space he would have to breathe as quietly as possible in order to escape detection.

"Some wanderer who has chanced upon another opening, I warrant, and has made his abode here," ventured Will, in a whisper. "And, marry, that speaks right well for us, lad! There must be an exit close by."

They rounded a bend in the track, and then halted dead in their amazement. There, scarce ten yards away, and just visible in the gloom, a Roundhead trooper was sitting with his back against the wall and his head sunk deep upon his chest.

"I was right, lad!" breathed Howard. "We are in a sorry pickle, for we know not how many more there may be—"

Harry gripped his arm like a vice. Though as yet he could not see the man's face, something about the build and the attitude of the figure struck him as mightily familiar.

"Will—Will!" he whispered hoarsely. "Dost not see who it is? My cousin!"

For the life of him, Howard could not restrain the exclamation of astonishment which burst from his lips as he realised the truth of the words. The sleeper awoke with a start, gazed for a second or two on the two dim figures in the half-light, and rushed away down the passage, with a scream of terror.

"After him, lad—after him!" cried Will, breaking into a run. "He'll lead us out, I warrant, e'en if we don't succeed in—"

A rumbling noise, followed by a loud crash, sounded from somewhere in front, and they pulled up in consternation. A huge mound of rock, earth, and masonry filled the passage from floor to roof—an unpassable barrier, which Howard kicked at grimly with his foot.

"I warrant your cousin will give you no more trouble, lad, though I fear 'twill take lusty digging to get at your sword."

But 'twas not of the sword that Harry was thinking just then. Despicable rascal though his cousin had shown himself to be, the boy could not restrain a shudder as he gazed at the huge mass of debris. However bad, surely a Temple was worthy of a better grave?

Walter Meets with Ill-fortune!

BUT, contrary to their expectations, Walter had not been killed, or even seriously injured, by that falling mass, though 'twas a closer call than he cared to experience again.

Suddenly wakened out of his sleep, and terror-stricken at the two forms standing so close to him in the gloom, he had not stayed long enough to ascertain who they really were, but had dashed along the passage, urged to further efforts by the sound of their footsteps swiftly following in his wake.

'Twas the vibration of those selfsame footsteps which had brought down the roof, just as Walter passed over the fatal spot. He heard it crash down behind him, felt a rebounding stone strike him in the back, and pitched forward on hands and knees, unnerved, but safe.

Glancing round, he saw the huge pile blocking the way, and effectually cutting him off from his pursuers. Then, thankful at his timely deliverance, but realising that he was as hopelessly lost as ever, he staggered blindly onwards, relief and dismay battling with each other within him.

Yet, by a strange working of Fate, his very blindness was to prove his salvation. Round a bend in the passage gleamed a brighter light than any he had yet seen in that depressing place, and next moment he was

(Continued on page 11.)

OUR FIRST GRAND SCHOOL STORY.



For
Old Times'
Sake!

A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of
HARRY WHARTON &
Co. at Greyfriars.

- By -
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Down on His Luck.

DENNIS CARR pedalled swiftly along Friardale lanes in the gathering autumn dusk.

He was returning from the local cinema. His chums in the Greyfriars Remove were keenly interested in a chess tournament which was taking place that evening in the junior Common-room. And Dennis, who took about as much interest in chess as the Head took in hopsotch, had sallied forth on his own, to while away a pleasant hour at the cinema.

Dennis was in high spirits. He had every reason to be, for all was well with him at Greyfriars. In Form-room and playing-field he was making his mark, and there was no question about his popularity. If he had cared to challenge Harry Wharton's position as captain of the Remove, he could have gained the coveted post for himself.

But Dennis Carr was not thinking of the captaincy just then. He was concentrating his energies on reaching Greyfriars before Gosling, the crusty old porter, locked the gates.

Suddenly, as the junior rounded a bend in the lane, he espied a pedestrian walking ahead of him.

It would have been more correct to say that the pedestrian was staggering.

"There's something wrong with that merchant!" muttered Dennis. "Either he's been drinking or he's ill!"

"Ting-a-ling-ling!"

Dennis rang his bell violently, and the man stepped to one side, turning his head as he did so. And then an exclamation of surprise—of joyous surprise—burst from his lips.

"Dennis!"

Instantly the Greyfriars junior dismounted from his machine. He had not recognised the voice, but he recognised the tattered figure in front of him. It was the figure of a young man whose lined and careworn face made him look much older than his years.

"Why," ejaculated Dennis Carr, in amazement, "it's Terry!"

Several months before, when Dennis had been compelled to leave Greyfriars owing to the death of his father, he had gone to London, and had obtained clerical employment in the offices of Sir Howard Prescott, and Terry—the young man who now confronted him in Friardale lane—had been one of his fellow-clerks.

Dennis remembered Terry as an exceptionally decent fellow and a fine sportsman.

What was he doing here, in shabby and tattered clothing, and in an exhausted and apparently famished state?

"This is a surprise, and no mistake!" said Terry. "I didn't dream I should meet you, Dennis, though I might have remembered that you were at Greyfriars."

"It's an even bigger surprise for me, Terry!" said Dennis, shaking hands with his old chum. "Tell me—what's wrong?"

"Everything!" answered Terry wearily.

"I thought you were still in London—in Sir Howard Prescott's office," said Dennis.

"Sir Howard is dead!"

"My hat!"

"And his business has gone to rack and

ruin. Everybody on the staff had to look out for another job. I can't say what happened to the others, but if their experience has been anything like mine, I pity them from my heart," said Terry. "I've tramped London from the West End to the slums. I've advertised, and I've interviewed dozens of employers, but the luck's been dead against me!"

"You've not been able to find a job?"

"No."

"Not of any description?"

Terry shook his head.

"I've tried hard enough, Heaven knows!" he said. "But it's a hopeless business! There are precious few openings for male clerks nowadays. I've hunted here, there, and everywhere for work, and it's the same old story every time: 'Sorry, but we have no vacancy!'"

"Poor old chap!" murmured Dennis, with real feeling. "It must be awful!"

"It's a nightmare!"

"And what are you doing here?"

"Following my only occupation—that of looking for one!" answered Terry bitterly. Dennis gave a low whistle.

"I knew things were pretty bad in the way of unemployment," he said, "but I thought that a fellow of your ability wouldn't have to look far for a job."

Terry laughed mirthlessly.

"My experience has been," he said, "that ability counts for nothing these days. I'm a skilled shorthand-typist, I know office routine from A to Z, but nobody wants me. And I've met fellows on the road—well-educated fellows, mark you—who are in the same boat as me. They've got brains and ability, but they're not wanted."

"Then how do you reckon that most jobs are obtained?"

"By wangling and favouritism."

"I say, that's pretty steep!"

"It's true enough," said Terry.

"Strikes me your experiences have made you bitter," said Dennis.

"They have!"

There was a pause.

"If you've tramped all the way from London," said Dennis, at length, "you must be awfully tired."

"I'm fagged right out!"

"And you're hungry, too, I expect?"

"Famished!"

"In that case," said Dennis briskly, "you must come with me. I can fix you up with a jolly good feed, if nothing else."

These words—the kindest that had been spoken to Terry since he had set out on his long and weary pilgrimage—moved him strongly, and when he spoke his voice was husky.

"You're a good sort, Dennis," he said, "but I—I can't accept your hospitality."

"Why can't you?"

"It would mean coming to Greyfriars, and I wouldn't dream of disgracing you!"

"My dear old duffer, how could you possibly disgrace me?"

"By appearing at the school like this."

And Terry surveyed his shabby and tattered clothing.

"Rats!" said Dennis. "Do you think I'm

going to leave you stranded just because you don't happen to be togged up like a Bond Street 'knut'? Not a bit of it! You're coming with me!"

"Look here—"

"If you don't I shall have to use force, and I'm afraid you're no match for me in your present state."

So Terry gave in, and he and his companion set off in the direction of the school, Dennis pushing his bicycle.

As they entered the school gateway Gosling came shuffling out of his lodge, jingling a bunch of keys in his hand. He stopped short on catching sight of Dennis Carr and his companion.

"Wot's the meanin' of this, Master Carr?" he demanded. "Which you knows as well as I do that tramps ain't allowed in 'ere!"

Terry flushed, and Dennis Carr turned fiercely upon Gosling.

"Mind your own business!" he snapped.

Gosling frowned.

"Wot I says is this 'ere——" he began.

But Dennis didn't wait to hear what Gosling had to say. He escorted his companion across the dusky Close. Then, having placed his bicycle in the shed, he took Terry along to his study—No. 12, in the Remove passage.

There were several juniors in the passage, and they glanced curiously at Dennis Carr and at the pale-faced, shabby-looking young man who accompanied him. But, unlike Gosling, the porter, they asked no questions.

"Here we are!" said Dennis, throwing open the door of Study No. 12.

A couple of juniors were seated at the study table, doing their prep. They were Lord Mauleverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian. They looked up in amazement as Dennis ushered his friend into the apartment.

"What the merry dickens——" began Lord Mauleverer.

"This is Terry, an old pal of mine, who worked with me in London," explained Dennis. "He happens to be down on his luck."

No further explanation was necessary.

Lord Mauleverer promptly rose to his feet, and extended his hand to Terry.

"Pleased to meet you, begad!" he said.

"Same 'ere!" said Jimmy Vivian, also shaking hands.

Dennis Carr beckoned Terry to the armchair. Then he turned to his study-mates.

"What have you got in the way of grub, you fellows?"

"The cupboard is stacked with good things, dear boy," said Lord Mauleverer. "Fresh supplies were laid in this afternoon."

"Good! Terry's famished. I don't think it's any exaggeration to say that he's jolly nearly starving."

Lord Mauleverer and Jimmy Vivian looked sympathetic. But they did not content themselves with merely looking sympathetic. They proceeded to demonstrate their sympathy in a practical manner.

The Latin primers and the exercise-books were promptly swept off the table, which was then adorned with a snowy-white cloth. After which the three juniors bustled about to provide a good square meal for the famished Terry.

"Pile in, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer at length.

Terry needed no second bidding. He attacked the good things with avidity, and he explained to the juniors that this was the first really substantial meal he had eaten for three days.

"You must have had a perfectly ghastly time, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "An' the worst of it is, your troubles don't appear to be over. I suppose you've got to keep joggin' along the highway, with your luck all upside-down, as the song says, until you get a job."

Terry nodded.

"I was in despair just now," he confessed. "But rest and food have bucked me up no end, and I feel quite hopeful again. After all, there must be a few jobs of some sort going begging in this part of the world."

"I don't see why you shouldn't get a job here, at Greyfriars," said Dennis Carr.

"On the teaching staff, d'you mean? That would be impossible, I'm afraid. You see, I haven't taken a degree."

"I wasn't thinking of your becoming a master, exactly. But there are other jobs to be had."

"Such as?"

Dennis was silent. Now that he came to think it out, he didn't see what sort of a job Terry could obtain at Greyfriars. He could probably serve in a menial capacity, as boots or under-gardener, but Dennis did

not wish to insult his friend by suggesting this to him.

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat face, adorned by a pair of spectacles, was insinuated into the study. And Billy Bunter regarded Dennis Carr's shabby guest with interest and curiosity.

"Buzz off, porpoise!" growled Sir Jimmy Vivian.

"Travel!" said Lord Mauleverer curtly. But Billy Bunter lingered on the threshold.

"I say, Carr, who's this down-at-heel merchant?" he inquired.

Dennis looked daggers at the Owl of the Remove. The look seemed to say:

"If you're not out of this study in two ticks, I'll pitch you out on your neck!"

But Billy Bunter was too short-sighted to observe the storm-signals on Dennis Carr's brow. He prattled on gaily.

"Is he a bookie, Carr, or a billiard-marker, or a burglar, or what?"

"Mr. Terry is my friend," said Dennis ominously.

"My hat! Fancy making friends with a low-down rotter like that! And fancy bringing him to Greyfriars and entertaining him! If Quelch or the Head was to come in now, there'd be the very dickens to pay! If you take my advice, Carr, you'll send this beastly vagabond about his business!"

But it was Billy Bunter who was sent about his business.

Dennis Carr made a motion to his two study-mates, and the trio advanced grimly towards the fat figure in the doorway.

Billy Bunter turned to flee. And he was assisted in his flight by three well-shod boots, which clumped together simultaneously on the rear of his person.

"Yarooooooo!"

The Owl of the Remove travelled through the doorway at express speed, and rolled over in the passage.

Three separate and distinct glares were bestowed upon him from the doorway of Study No. 12.

"Clear off, you horrible fat worm!" growled Dennis Carr. "You're not fit to tie Terry's bootlaces!"

"Ow! He hasn't got any to tie!" retorted Bunter. "He's a tramp, that's what he is—a beastly down-at-heel tramp!"

And, with that Partisan shot, the fat junior scrambled to his feet and streaked along the passage as fast as his fat legs would carry him. And it was extremely fortunate for Bunter that Dennis Carr & Co. did not start in pursuit.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Good News for Terry!

BILLY BUNTER burst into the junior Common-room like a cyclone.

Harry Wharton & Co. had just concluded their chess tournament, which had been won by Hurree Singh. They looked up in surprise as the Owl of the Remove rushed in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's up, porpoise?"

Billy Bunter paused, pumping in breath.

"I—I say, you fellows!" he panted at length. "You ought to see what's going on in Carr's study!"

"Eh?"

"He's entertaining one of his shady pals—a bouncer called Terry, whom Carr used to be thick with when he lived in the slums of London!"

"Why, you fat rotter," said Nugent wrathfully, "Carr's never lived in the slums!"

"Oh, yes, he has!" said Bunter. "And he made some choice pals there, too. This chap Terry's an out-and-out wrong 'un! I believe he's come here to burgle the school!"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter's theory quite failed to impress Harry Wharton & Co. But others in the Remove—fellows who disliked Dennis Carr—said that there might be something in it.

"I'm going along to see, anyway," said Bolsover major. "Carr's got no right to harbour a criminal in the school. And if this fellow Terry answers to Bunter's description of him, we'll chuck him off the premises!"

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

The cads of the Remove promptly made their way to Dennis Carr's study. And Harry Wharton & Co., thinking their presence might be desirable, went along, too.

Terry was in the act of finishing his repast when the study was taken by storm, so to speak.

The door was thrown open, and Bolsover

and Skinner and Stott, and several others, swarmed into the study. Harry Wharton & Co. remained in the doorway. They were holding a watching brief, as it were, on behalf of Dennis Carr's friend.

Dennis rose to his feet as the invaders surged in.

"What do you fellows want?" he demanded.

"We came along to see your queer pal," said Bolsover, with a sneer. "Bunter said he was a wrong 'un, and he certainly looks it."

"Typical criminal!" murmured Skinner.

"You cads!" cried Dennis, his eyes flashing.

"Look here, Carr," blustered Bolsover, "if you want to entertain your old shady pals, you must do it outside the school! We don't want this place turned into a sort of thieves' kitchen!"

Terry flushed crimson with indignation and embarrassment.

As for Dennis Carr, he seemed suddenly to go mad. He rushed at Bolsover major, hitting out right and left. And Skinner and Stott and the others promptly hopped back out of the danger-zone.

"Take that, you cad—and that!" panted Dennis.

The first was a blow in the chest, which sent Bolsover reeling backwards. The second was a powerful upper-cut, which lifted the bully of the Remove clean off his feet.

"Yarooooooo!"

With a roar of anguish, Bolsover alighted at the feet of Harry Wharton & Co., who stood without. And the Famous Five, instead of assisting him to rise, promptly wiped their boots on his person.

"Serves you jolly well right, you rotter!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Where is he?" demanded Dennis Carr, elbowing his way into the passage. "I'm going to give him some more!"

"I fancy he's had enough, Dennis," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"He inferred that my pal was a thief!" exclaimed the indignant Dennis. "Why, he's not fit to breathe the same air as Terry!"

"Who is Terry, by the way?" asked Harry Wharton.

"A fellow who worked with me in London, when I had a job in Sir Howard Prescott's office. Surely you remember him? He came down to Greyfriars once with a footer team."

"By Jove, yes!" said Nugent. "But—but what's happened? And why is he here?"

In a few brief sentences Dennis Carr explained the situation. He told how Terry having lost his job through no fault of his own, had been tramping the country in search of employment.

"I met him when I was coming back from the cinema," said Dennis, "and he was so utterly done up that I brought him along to the study for a feed."

"Quite right, too!" said Johnny Bull. "He must have been nearly at the end of his tether."

"He was," said Dennis. "Come in and chat to him, you fellows, and we'll lock the door on the rabble!"

The Famous Five stepped into the study and shook hands cordially with Terry. The fact that his clothing was in tatters, and that he was in an unshaven condition, seemed to escape their notice. They knew him for what he was—a gentleman—and it was not their way to despise a fellow because he had the misfortune to be down and out.

"This is rotten bad luck!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Hope you'll be able to get a job soon, Terry."

"Hear, hear!"

Terry smiled.

"Thanks!" he said. "I shall keep pegging away. Before I had the good fortune to meet Dennis, I felt absolutely in despair. I'd half made up my mind not to make another effort—just to let things rip, and starve. But now that I've had a square meal and a rest, I feel a new man. And I shall set out again with fresh heart."

"You're going on the tramp again to-night?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes."

"But you're not fit!"

"I can't stay here," said Terry.

"But you ought to see the Head," said Nugent. "He'd fix you up with a bed for the night, anyway."

"I can't sponge on the headmaster. I've got no claim whatever on his generosity. Matter of fact, I ought not to be here at all. But Dennis insisted on bringing me in."

"Of course!" said Dennis. "And before you go, Terry, we'll have a whip-round on your account. We shall be able to raise enough cash between us to keep you in grub for a few days, at any rate."

Terry's face was working strangely. The tears welled to his eyes.

"This—this is immensely decent of you, Dennis," he said, in a low tone; "but I can't accept charity!"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "You can look upon it as a loan, if you like, and pay us back when you've bagged a private secretary's job at five hundred a year!"

"No such luck!" said Terry, with a faint smile.

At that moment there was a sharp rapping on the door of the study. And a voice—the familiar voice of Mr. Quelch—exclaimed:

"Carr! Open this door at once!"

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Dennis.

And he crossed to the door and unlocked it.

The master of the Remove advanced into the study. He was looking very stern.

"It has come to my knowledge, Carr," he said, "that you are entertaining a suspicious character—"

"There's nothing suspicious about Terry, sir!" answered Dennis, warmly. "He's one of the very best, and as straight as an arrow!"

Terry had risen respectfully to his feet on Mr. Quelch's entry. The Remove-master threw him a questioning glance.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

Before Terry could reply Dennis Carr was explaining the position to Mr. Quelch.

"I met Terry on the road, sir. I used to work with him in Sir Howard Prescott's office, but owing to the death of Sir Howard he lost his job, and is tramping the country in search of another. He was absolutely famished and worn out when I saw him, and I did the only thing possible by bringing him here and standing him a feed."

Mr. Quelch nodded. He no longer looked stern, but sympathetic.

"Now that I have heard your explanation, Carr," he said, "I am satisfied. But I understood from Bunter that Terry was a person of—doubtful repute. I can see now that I was misinformed."

Then, turning to Terry, Mr. Quelch added:

"I am extremely sorry to learn of your misfortune, and I only wish I could render you some assistance, but I fear that is impossible. Carr has done the right thing in bringing you here and entertaining you. But I am afraid you will not be able to stop long."

"I've no intention of stopping, sir," answered Terry. "I was about to set out again on my quest for employment."

"Have you nowhere to sleep?"

"No, sir."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch aghast. "I hardly like the thought of sending you away under such conditions. You had better come with me and interview Dr. Locke. Doubtless he will be able to make some arrangement whereby you may spend the night at the school. He may be able to assist you in the matter of obtaining employment. Come!"

And Mr. Quelch escorted Terry from the study.

When they had gone the juniors exchanged hopeful glances.

"The Head may be able to do something," dear boys," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, rather!"

"A night's shelter will be something, even if the Head can't find Terry a job," said Harry Wharton.

"He's a jolly decent sort, and I hate to see a fellow of his stamp down on his luck!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors continued to discuss the affair, and it was not until bedtime that they saw Terry again.

They were on their way to the Remove dormitory, when a well-dressed, well-groomed young man met them in the passage.

"Terry!" gasped Dennis Carr. "What the thump—"

"Rather a transformation—what!" said Terry cheerfully. "I've had a bath and a shave, and Mr. Lascelles has lent me a suit of togs."

"Ripping!" said Dennis. "But—"

"Moreover," continued Terry, "I've got a job."

"You have?" exclaimed Dennis eagerly.

"Yes. The Head was awfully decent to me, and he said he could do with a secretary."

"Hurrah!"

"I don't believe he's really in need of a secretary at all," said Terry. "He simply

created the job in order to do me a good turn."

"The Head's a brick!" said Bob Cherry warmly.

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm awfully pleased about it!" said Dennis Carr.

And he showed his pleasure by throwing his arm round Terry's waist, and waltzing him up and down the passage.

Whilst they were thus engaged, Skinner & Co. came along.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Skinner, stopping short. "Talk about a giddy transformation! I hardly recognised Carr's stumpy pal!"

"What's he doing here?" growled Bolsover major. "I thought Quelch had kicked him off the premises ages ago!"

Bob Cherry turned to the cads of the Remove.

"I should advise you to be jolly careful," he said. "Mr. Terry counts as a member of the staff now. He's been engaged as the Head's private secretary. And if you start checking him, you'll get it in the neck!"

Skinner & Co. were almost overcome. "You—you mean to say the Head's given him a job?" gasped Stott.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Then, he must be potty!" snarled Skinner. "I've suspected for a long time that he had bats in his belly."

"Fancy giving employment to a blessed gaol-bird!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

Dennis Carr suddenly ceased waltzing, and he spun round upon the bully of the Remove.

"Eh? What did you say?" he demanded.

But Bolsover did not linger to repeat his observation. He promptly bolted up the stairs, and Skinner and Stott followed. The trio had no desire whatever to remain within biting distance of Dennis Carr!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Stormy Scene!

LIONEL TERRY rose next morning like a giant refreshed.

It seemed too good to be true that his wanderings were over, that the long and weary quest for employment was ended.

Dr. Locke had been kindness itself to him, and he resolved to show his appreciation of the Head's kindness by working hard and untiringly.

But when Terry, having breakfasted in his own room, went along to the Head's study, he found that that celebrated apartment resembled a Government office. There was nothing whatever to do.

Terry sat down, and perused the latest copy of the "Chimes," pending the Head's arrival.

The morning was well advanced when Dr. Locke rustled in.

"Ah! Good-morning, Terry!" he said genially.

Terry rose to his feet, and returned the salutation.

"I'm quite ready for work, sir!" he hinted. The Head smiled.

"I fear there is very little to be done, Terry," he said. "My postbag this morning has been unusually light."

"Then, what am I to do, sir?"

The Head reflected a moment.

"Do you think you are capable of conducting one of the lower Forms?" he asked at length.

"I think so, sir."

"Then I shall be obliged if you will take the Third. Mr. Twigg, who usually conducts that Form, is indisposed."

"Very good, sir!" said Terry.

And he betook himself to the Third Form room.

It was Terry's first experience as a teacher. But he had had a good education, and what was more important still, he understood boys, and was able to handle them. The young rascals of the Third were restless and inattentive at first, and several of them attempted to play practical jokes on their temporary master. But they soon found out it didn't pay. And by the end of an hour Terry had the class under perfect control. And he won the admiration and respect of his grubby little pupils—a feat which Mr. Twigg had never been able to achieve.

The morning passed pleasantly enough for Terry, who enjoyed the novelty of the situation.

After dinner he again called on the Head, and he was again informed that there was no work for him.

"As it is a half-holiday, Terry," said Dr.

Locke, "you had better obtain some recreation."

"Thank you, sir!" said Terry.

"Seems to me," he added, under his breath, "that I'm booked for a permanent holiday in this show!"

As he emerged into the Close he encountered Dennis Carr.

"How goes it, Terry?" asked Dennis cheerfully.

"First-rate!"

"I hear you've been drumming wisdom into the noodles of the fags."

Terry smiled.

"I've done my best in that direction," he said. "By the way, Dennis, I've never thanked you—not adequately, at any rate—for all that you did for me yesterday."

"Rats!" said Dennis. "There's nothing to go into heroics about. I merely stood you a feed. The Head did the rest. And if I'd refused to help you I should have been a downright cad. Dash it all, I had to do something—for old time's sake, you know!"

"If it hadn't been for you," said Terry, "I should still be tramping the roads."

vous. By the way, where can I get some footer fogs?"

"The club will lend you some. Wingate always keeps a stock of extra jerseys and things."

"Splendid!"

Dennis Carr lost no time in acquainting Harry Wharton & Co. with the fact that Terry was playing for Greyfriars. And when, half an hour later, the two teams lined up, there was an enthusiastic roar from the touchline.

"Play up, Friars!"

"Good old Terry!"

The new member of the Greyfriars team was all at sea at first. But as the game proceeded he got back into his old form, and proved himself to be one of the speediest and cleverest forwards ever seen on the school ground.

Wayland Wanderers played pluckily, and at half-time the score-sheet was blank, although the Friars had done the bulk of the attacking.

In the second half, however, Terry ran riot. He scored a couple of goals in swift succes-



Terry was going at too great a pace to pull up in time, and he cannoned fairly and squarely into the pompous form of Sir Hilton Popper. Crash! Both parties collapsed heavily to the ground. (See page 8)

"If it hadn't been for the Head," corrected Dennis.

"But don't you see that if you hadn't brought me into the school I should never have got my present job?"

"Well, you've got your job, and nothing else matters," said Dennis. "What are you going to do this afternoon?"

Before Terry could reply, Wingate of the Sixth bore down upon him.

The captain of Greyfriars had heard all about Terry and his recent appointment, and he looked upon the Head's secretary as a likely recruit for the First Eleven.

"Would you care to turn out for the First this afternoon?" he asked.

Terry's eyes sparkled.

"I'd simply love to!" he said.

"Good!"

"Is it a home fixture?"

"Yes—with Wayland Wanderers. Kick off two-thirty."

"I'll turn out with pleasure," said Terry.

"But how did you know I was a footballer?"

"I remember your display when you came down to Greyfriars with a London club. You were the real goods!"

"Afraid I'm sadly out of training," said Terry. "I've had other and more unpleasant things than footer to think about. But I'll do my best."

Wingate nodded, and strolled away.

"Bravo, Terry!" said Dennis Carr. "Awfully glad you're playing. We'll all turn out in force to see the match."

"Don't," said Terry. "You'll make me ner-

sion, and then he made an opening for Wingate to net a third.

It was a great display, and Harry Wharton & Co. cheered Terry to the echo.

"He's great!" said Bob Cherry. "Hope he does the hat-trick!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors' hopes were realised.

Shortly before the end Terry added another goal, the Friars winning comfortably by four to nil.

Terry received quite an ovation. He would have been carried shoulder-high from the field had he not been agile enough to dodge the crowd of cheering juniors which surrounded him.

Vaulting the gate at the entrance to the ground, Terry sprinted away in the direction of the school building.

Turning his head as he ran, he saw that the Famous Five and Dennis Carr were in hot pursuit. They were resolved that he should not give them the slip. And in their eagerness to congratulate him, they ran at top speed.

Terry quickened his own pace, and dashed into the building. Muddy and breathless, he headed in the direction of the nearest bathroom.

So intent was he upon reaching his goal that he failed to notice an obstruction in his path, in the form of a portly and pompous-looking gentleman.

The latter uttered a shout of warning.

"Look where you're going, confound you!"

But it was too late.

Terry was going at too great a speed to pull up in time. And he cannoned fairly and squarely into the pompous-looking individual.

Crash!

It was a terrific collision, and both of the colliding parties were injured.

Judging by the snorts of wrath and anguish which emanated from the portly person, he had had the worst of the argument.

"You clumsy fool—snort! Why don't you look where you're going?—snort! 'Pon my soul, I've a thundering good mind to lay my walking-stick about your shoulders!"

And then the speaker gave a third snort, more emphatic than the rest.

Terry caressed his elbow, which had come into violent contact with the wall of the passage.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It was quite an accident."

"Bless your sorrow, sir! It does not compensate me for the serious injuries I have sustained!"

Terry grunted.

"You're letting off steam pretty well, for a person who's seriously injured!" he remarked.

"You—you— How dare you address me in that manner, you young jackanapes! Are you aware of my identity? Do you realise who I am?"

"No," said Terry indifferently.

"I am Sir Hilton Popper!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Marching Orders!

TERRY did not turn a hair.

The fact that he had bumped into a baronet, and, incidentally a governor of Greyfriars, did not frighten him in the least.

"I am Sir Hilton Popper!" repeated that gentleman, in tones of outraged dignity. "I demand an apology from you for your offensive conduct!"

"I've already apologised for barging into you," said Terry. "I've nothing else to apologise for."

"You have treated me with gross disrespect!" barked Sir Hilton.

"If you had accepted my apology in the first place, as any gentleman would have done," said Terry, with emphasis on the word "gentleman," "I should not have dreamed of addressing you in a disrespectful way."

The baronet rapped on the floor with his walking-stick.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"My name's Terry."

"You are a visitor here?"

"No. I'm the Head's secretary."

"What! What!" exclaimed Sir Hilton Popper, in amazement. "You must be lying!"

Terry flushed.

"I'm not in the habit of telling lies!" he said indignantly. "I repeat, I'm the Head's secretary. Dr. Locke engaged me in that capacity last night."

"I don't believe you!"

Terry clenched his hands. And he came within an ace of dashing his fist into the baronet's mottled face. But with a great effort he controlled himself, and said:

"Dr. Locke will confirm what I've told you."

"I will go and see him at once, by George!" said Sir Hilton. "And I will trouble you to accompany me."

"Very well," said Terry.

And he set off in the wake of the fuming baronet.

The Famous Five and Dennis Carr had halted in the rear. They had not cared about showering their congratulations upon Terry while Sir Hilton Popper was present. And they looked on in surprise as Terry walked away with the baronet.

"What's going on, I wonder?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Old Popper looks awfully waxy!" said Nugent. "I believe there's going to be a first-class row!"

"What about?" said Johnny Bull.

"Goodness knows! But you can tell by Popper's stride that he means trouble."

The Head was resting in the armchair in his study when Sir Hilton entered without a preliminary knock.

Behind the baronet came Terry, muddied from his exploits on the football-field.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Locke, starting to his feet. "I trust nothing is amiss, Sir Hilton?"

The baronet strode towards the Head in such an aggressive manner that Dr. Locke stepped back in alarm.

"This—this person," spluttered Sir Hilton, indicating Terry, "has told me a cock-and-bull story to the effect that he has been engaged as your secretary!"

"It is not a cock-and-bull story, Sir Hilton!"

"What!"

"It is perfectly correct. I have engaged Terry as my secretary."

Sir Hilton's face was working convulsively.

"But this—this is unheard-of!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that Terry has been engaged without the sanction of the governors?"

"Ahem! I did not think it necessary——" began the Head.

"There is no need whatever for you to employ a secretary, Dr. Locke!" said Sir Hilton.

"I venture to say that my correspondence is three times larger than yours, yet I have no secretary."

The Head made no reply. He realised that what the baronet said was perfectly true.

"You should not have taken such a step, sir," continued Sir Hilton, "without consulting the Board of Governors. I strongly resent your action, sir! This young man must be given marching orders!"

Terry's face fell.

After all his trials and tribulations—after all the hardships and vicissitudes which he had endured, he had succeeded in obtaining a job—only to lose it within a few hours!

Fate, in the person of Sir Hilton Popper, had administered a crushing blow to Terry's hopes.

But the Head did not intend to yield to Sir Hilton without a struggle.

"I understood that I was at perfect liberty to engage a secretary, if I so desired," said Dr. Locke.

"Then you understood wrongly, sir. All appointments at this school have to be sanctioned by the governors. Terry must go!"

And the baronet glared vindictively at the young man who was standing in the doorway.

"I appeal to you, Sir Hilton," said the Head, "not to be too hard on this young fellow. If he is deprived of his present position, he will be utterly destitute!"

"Bah!" snorted Sir Hilton. "Enough of that sentimental nonsense, sir! We cannot afford to convert this school into a haven of refuge for the unemployed! A secretary in your case is a totally unnecessary luxury, and you must dispense with Terry's services at once!"

The Head frowned. He didn't like being dictated to even by a governor of the school.

"Pardon me, Sir Hilton," he said, "but Terry shall remain here until the governors have unanimously agreed to his dismissal."

"Very well, sir," said the baronet, turning on his heel. "There will be a governors' meeting on Wednesday, when I shall propose that Terry be instantly dismissed from your service."

"Needless to state, I shall do everything in my power to retain him," said the Head.

"You cannot fight single-handed against

the Board of Governors, sir!" snarled Sir Hilton.

And he stamped out of the study.

When he had gone, the Head sank limply into a chair.

"I very much fear, Terry," he said, "that your days here are numbered. I shall do my best to retain your services, of course. But you must prepare for the worst."

Terry nodded without speaking.

An hour before "everything in the garden had been lovely," to quote a favourite phrase of Bob Cherry's.

And now—thanks to that unspeakable tyrant, Sir Hilton Popper—dismissal and despair threatened the fellow whom Dennis Carr had befriended for Old Time's sake!

THE END.

(Another grand, long story of Greyfriars, featuring Dennis Carr and his cham Terry, will appear next week, entitled "Saved at the Finish!" by Frank Richards. Order now.)

GOOD STORIES!

HOW IT IS DONE!

Jones was very much surprised to see a lot of quite nice-looking clocks displayed in a shop-window, priced at one guinea each.

He went inside and asked to see one.

"I don't know how you do them at the price," he remarked. "It must cost a guinea to make one of these."

"It does," replied the jeweller.

Then where does your profit come in?" asked Jones in amazement.

"In repairing them," the jeweller informed him blandly.

MIKE KNEW!

Mike: "Faith, Pat, how do you tell those two twins apart?"

Pat: "Sure, 'tis aisy enough, Mike! I stick me fingers in Dennis' mouth, and if he bites Oi know it's Patrick!"

CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE.

Tommy arrived home an hour late one day with a nice new golf-ball in his pocket, and, delighted with his find, proceeded to show it to each member of the family in turn. Father looked at the ball rather suspiciously.

"Are you sure it was really lost, Tommy?" he asked severely.

"Oh, quite!" replied the young hopeful, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "I saw the golfer and his caddie looking for it!"

STRICTLY TRUE!

It was a washing-day. But Mary was a thoroughly reliable girl, and could be trusted. So Mrs. Jones reasoned with herself that she should visit Mrs. Walker, and leave Mary to do the washing. As soon as she had gone, however, Mary let her pet policeman in at the back door. She placed before him pie and beef, with plenty of drink to wash it down. Suddenly Mrs. Jones came back, having forgotten to take her gloves.

"How are you getting on with the washing, Mary?" she called from the top of the stairs.

"Oh, all right, mum, thank you!" replied Mary. "I'm just filling the copper!"

EXPERIENCE ENOUGH.

"Your mistress tells me, John, that you are desirous of applying for the vacancy as an attendant at the lunatic asylum. But what experience have you had?"

"Well, sir, I have been here for five years!"

HIS MISTAKE!

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," quoth Uncle Cuthbert to his nephew.

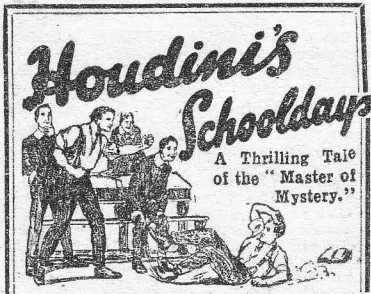
"I thought it was 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast,'" said the nephew. "And that was why they always put a brass band round a bulldog's neck!"

STUMPED HIM!

A school inspector had been questioning the class, and afterwards he told the pupils they could ask him any question they liked, and he could answer it.

The class looked dubious, but at last one little boy got up.

"Please, sir, if you were standing up to your chin in mud, and I threw a brick at you, would you duck?"



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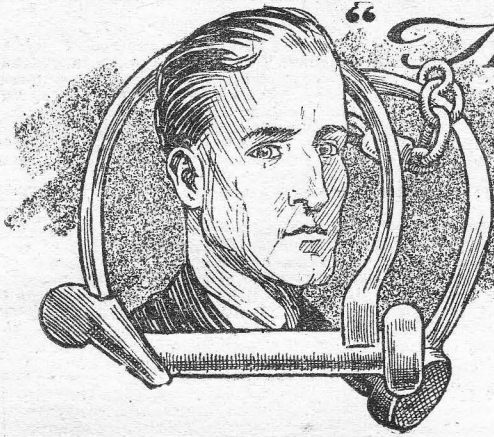
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By MAURICE EVERARD.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ambrose Rixson, a young scapagoat and spendthrift, visits the house of his uncle, Sir Johnstone Sherlicker, to try and procure some money to pay off his debts. Rixson is shocked to find his uncle dead. On the desk is his will, and on reading it through Rixson discovers that all the money and property is left to a cousin, Rupert Morrison, leaving him a pauper. He is maddened by this change in the will, and, with the help of the family butler, plans to alter the death to a murder, and lay the blame on Morrison.

A little later Scotland Yard receive the news of the murder, and a detective, accompanied by Ferrers Locke, starts out for Prince's Gate.

(Now read on.)

The Man in Black!

BY this time Brinnon had joined them. In Piccadilly they hailed a taxi, and drove to the scene of the crime. The three men entered the library, where a strange sight met them.

On the faded carpet, over against the safe, an elderly man lay on his side with a dark hole showing against the whiteness of his shirt-front. Around the edge a scarlet stain had gathered, and red, moist beads dripped slowly to the floor.

Gartrell went down on his knees.

"Dead—quite dead, I see!" he said shortly. "Has a doctor been summoned?"

"Yes, sir; Dr. Manito—Sir Johnstone's own medical man," said the valet.

Gartrell looked up and beyond him to where a white-faced young man sat limply in a straight-backed chair. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and one arm—the right—had the sleeve rolled up. About the soft, almost feminine arm a bandage was wrapped, and through the wrapping a crimson stain was spreading visibly.

The young man looked too ill to speak. He leaned back, his head on the edge of the chair-back, his lips quivering, and every now and then the valet held a glass of water to his lips and sprinkled a few drops on his closed eyelids.

Locke was swift to see what had happened. "Here, get some of this between his lips," he said, thrusting a brandy-flask into the servant's hands. "Ah, that's better! D'you feel very bad?"

Ambrose Rixson sat up, and blinked dazedly in the light.

"I don't quite know how I do feel!" he muttered brokenly. "What's happened to him? Is he dead?"

"Yes," responded Gartrell, looking up. "When did this happen?"

"At half-past nine!" the valet replied. "A frown settled on the Scotland Yard man's face."

"And still a doctor hasn't come. Brinnon, ring up for the divisional surgeon. We ought to have a medical man's testimony at once!"

The young man in the chair shivered, despite the running fires which a second pull from Locke's brandy-flask brought to his veins.

"Have you caught him?" he muttered, staggering weakly to his feet.

Gartrell rose.

"We've caught no one. We are absolutely in the dark as to what has happened. Perhaps you can tell us. Sit down, and take things easy a bit."

Rixson sighed.

"This arm!" he moaned, and bent himself double over the wounded limb. "Why the deuce doesn't Manito come? Is there nothing that can be done for my uncle?"

"Nothing—absolutely nothing! The bullet took him clean between the heart, and came out just under the left shoulder-blade. Ah, you're feeling better now!" as two vivid spots of colour appeared in Rixson's cheeks. "I'd like you to tell me as shortly and as clearly as you can—"

Ambrose averted his gaze from the dead man on the floor.

"There's not much to tell. I just looked in on my uncle after an hour or two with my friends. I walked straight in, as I usually do, and made for this room, where my uncle always sits reading after dinner. To my surprise, I heard the sound of voices in altercation, then a shot and a scream, followed by a dull thud. I rushed in in time to see a tall young fellow with his back to me holding a smoking revolver in his hand. Of course, I dashed at him, closed with him, when I saw what had happened to my uncle; but in the struggle the revolver went off, and I got the second bullet through my arm. I don't remember much more till I came round, to find Wardle—he's the valet, you know—bending over me and forcing water down my throat."

Gartrell wrote rapidly.

"I understand. You are the dead man's nephew?"

"His eldest nephew. My name is Rixson—Ambrose Garth Rixson."

"About what time would this be?"

"As near as I can say, a few minutes before half-past nine."

"And this man—"

"I did not see his face."

"Although you closed with him?"

"That is so. You see, my first thought was to get the pistol out of his hand. He was holding it downwards, so in the struggle my face was turned to the ground. Of course, the whole affair only lasted a few seconds, from the time I heard the first shot and my uncle's scream to the time when I myself was wounded."

"And Wardle, the valet, when did he arrive on the scene?"

"He must have been pretty quick, seeing he had three flights of stairs to come up. At the time he was in one of the cellars."

"Doing what?"

The officer swung round on the listening man.

"I was drawing a jug of beer, sir, for my supper. It's a long way down, sir. I fancy I heard the first shot, but I can't be certain. However, I heard Mr. Rixson shout; that's how I knew something was wrong. I dropped the jug and raced upstairs."

"Straight into the library—this room. I suppose it's the library?"

"This is the library, sir; but I didn't come straight in, because I saw a man just rushing along the hall. Unfortunately, he reached the door several yards ahead of me, and

slammed it in my face. Look, that's what he done to my fingers!"

And he showed a couple of finger-nails fast purpling under a bruise.

Gartrell snapped his book to.

"Talk to this gentleman," he said, indicating Sergeant Brinnon. "Tell him as clearly and as accurately as you can how much you saw of this man, how he was dressed, and so forth. Ah, here is Dr. Manito, I believe!" A sound of footsteps in the hall, and presently a tall, dignified man walked briskly in. "I'm afraid bad work has been afoot, doctor. Sir Johnstone has been the victim of a dastardly attack!"

Manito inclined his head towards the waiting Wardle.

"Give me a hand!" he said curtly. And between them the dead man was lifted to the leather-covered couch.

Gartrell bent close, and watched the deft hands at work testing for some signs of life.

"There is no hope," the doctor said. "He must have died instantaneously. You can see just where the bullet struck him." And with that he opened the shirt-front, pulled wide the vest, and exhibited the marks of death.

Ten minutes after he left, holding himself at the service of the police authorities.

Gartrell turned to Brinnon.

"Well, what have you got?" he asked crisply.

"Alfred Wardle's story."

"Keep it by you, merely as a matter of form," Gartrell said sharply, but at the same time shooting his colleague a warning glance which no one save Ferrers Locke noticed. "Now, Mr. Wardle, your evidence is very valuable. You must pull yourself together, and think and speak as coherently as possible. Time is slipping by; every minute now means an hour's start for the murderer! Do your best to describe him."

The valet's timid glance wandered from the detective's face to the stiff form upon the couch.

"I couldn't say more, sir, than that he was tall and dark. You see, he went out of the front door like a streak of light."

"How was he dressed?"

"Black trousers and a black overcoat, with a white wrap round his throat."

"Should you say he was a common man—I mean, by his clothes?"

Wardle coughed behind his hand.

"Rather not. I know something about clothes; it's my business. The overcoat was a good cut, drawn in at the waist, and rather full round the bottom. Yes, it had a collar—a velvet collar, dark like the material."

"And the hat—what sort of a hat?"

"A crush hat, same as gentlemen wear for the theatre. I particularly noticed the hat because it was squashed flat, and he must have left in on a chair in the hall when he came in, for, as he rushed to the door, he picked it up, and tucked it under his arm."

Gartrell whistled. Already the case was looking interesting.

"This room, now—was it in disorder when you entered? I mean, was anything disturbed as though to suggest robbery might be the motive?"

"No. Everything was in perfect order, except for a couple of chairs overturned. The master lay on his side just as you found

him. I knew better than to move him when I found him dead. And Mr. Ambrose—well, he was sitting on that couch, dazed like, with the blood dripping from a wound in his arm."

"H'm! It's a pity you didn't see the other man's face. How old should you say he was—young or middle-aged?"

"Oh, quite young!"

"What makes you think so?"

"Because his hair was very dark and shiny. There was no grey in it. I could see quite well as he passed under the vestibule lamp. You remember he had his hat under his arm?"

"The detective's eyes seemed everywhere at once. Ferrers Locke still supported the limp form of Rixson, and every now and then held the brandy-flask to his lips."

Suddenly Gartrell broke the silence.

"I see the assassin has left a very valuable clue in our hands."

"What's that, sir?" Wardle asked.

The other leaned across the desk, and picked up a heavy calibre revolver, the breach of which he opened. Five brass shells tumbled into his hand. Two were empty cases.

Ambrose Rixson inclined his head.

couldn't have been Rupert," he repeated slowly. "All the same, Wardle may be right. For all I know, the weapon may have belonged to him, though I've never seen it before."

Gartrell began to show signs of eagerness.

"We are entitled to know all you can tell us," he said. "Who is this Rupert M.?"

"If what Wardle says is correct, the initials must refer to my cousin, Rupert Morrison."

"I see. Where does Mr. Morrison live?"

Rixson's head came up with a jerk.

"Am I bound to answer? I mean, am I bound to say things which might cause embarrassment to an innocent man?"

The detective looked grave.

"You're not bound to say anything at all, sir. As a matter of fact, I have no authority for questioning you, only the circumstances are so exceptional and call for such speedy action on our part if anything is to be done towards apprehending the criminal. I take it you have no objection to answering any questions that may assist us in bringing the murderer to book?"

Rixson looked relieved.

"I agree. There is that aspect to be con-

business—I believe of a private nature. I informed him that Sir Johnstone was not at home, and was not expected back before eleven."

"Was that the truth?"

"Quite. I thought the master had gone out to dinner. To my surprise, he returned at a quarter to eight. He dined alone in the small room—the room we use for breakfast. After dinner he came in here to write or read. I never saw him but once, when I brought him a glass of barley-water, which I usually do about half-past eight."

The detective took in everything.

"What did Mr. Morrison say when you told him your master was out?"

"He looked surprised; said he had a very urgent reason for calling, and that he would call again during the evening. So far as I know he never came, unless—oh, Mr. Ambrose!" And, turning his face towards the dead man's eldest nephew, he showed eyes that were moist with tears.

Gartrell was quick to anticipate him.

"You needn't say it. You will have plenty of opportunity to tell your story in open court," he explained. "You can leave us, Mr. Wardle. I wish to speak privately to Mr. Rixson. Brimmon, phone through to the Yard a description of the man as near as Wardle has given it—tall and dark, and describe the clothes. Now, Mr. Rixson, I am speaking just to gratify my own curiosity, and with a view to throwing some real light on this extraordinary case. As one of the deceased's nephews you may have been more or less in his confidence. Can you suggest there might be any reason for Mr. Morrison being interested in your uncle's death?"

Rixson looked indignant.

"I'm perfectly sure there wasn't. My uncle was an extremely wealthy man, who had always been most generous to both of us. We are his only relatives. Of course, both have expectations under his will, but the allowance he made us rendered it unnecessary for either ever to have to look to that possibility. Of course, as the elder, naturally the greater bulk of the property will come to me, unless, of course, since making the last will, of which I am cognizant, he left his fortune to charity."

The pocket-book vanished from the Scotland Yard man's hand.

"This is a very sad business, I'm afraid," he said gravely. "A defenceless man has been done to death without a chance to raise a hand to save himself."

Rixson appeared most dejected.

"I've lost my best friend. Uncle was always very good to me, and to my cousin, too, as a matter of fact. We shall both miss him."

"Of course. And the circumstances—such publicity is not pleasant. But you will be required to come forward and give your testimony."

The young man rose, leaning on Locke's arm.

"I dare say I shall be forced into the limelight a good deal," he replied, forcing a sickly smile. "As the eldest nephew everything is bound to fall on my shoulders."

"Do you live here, Mr. Rixson?" Gartrell asked.

"No," was the reply; "this is my town address"—producing a card from his vest-pocket—"though, as a matter of fact, the place was always a home to Rupert and me whenever we cared to make use of it. For the present I shall stay. I must ask Wardle to ring my man up to fetch my things round."

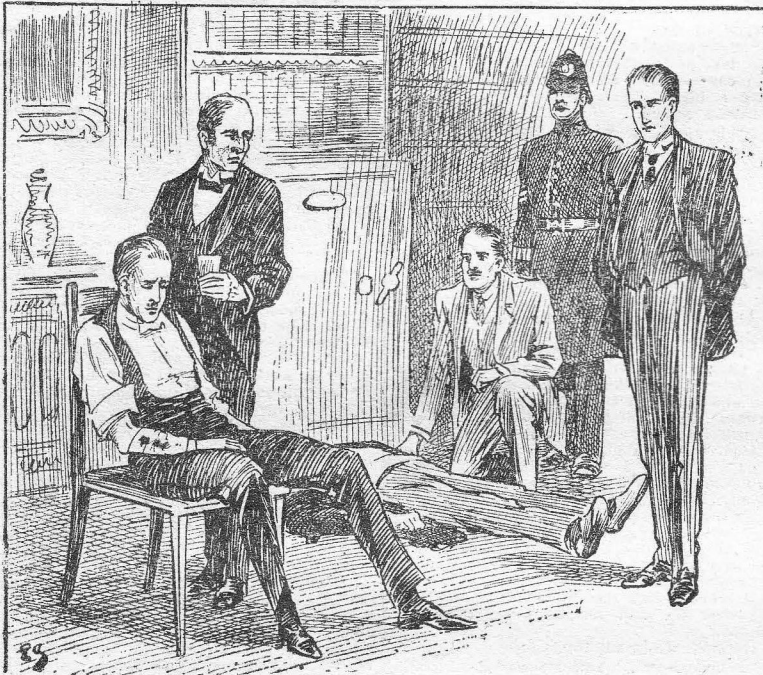
Gartrell agreed, and started on a careful examination of the room. By the bullet marks in the panelling and in the wainscoting he was able to judge pretty accurately the position in which Sir Johnstone was standing when the fatal shot was fired, and the spot where the assassin and Ambrose Rixson struggled, as a result of which the latter received the wound in his right arm.

Beyond this there was nothing to help him. By half-past ten he and Ferrers Locke left the house, leaving Brimmon in charge.

For some time neither spoke. Each seemed very busy with his own particular line of thought; so much so that when the first street standard was reached Charley Gartrell stopped under it and, producing his notebook, carefully read through every word Sergeant Brimmon had written.

On principle Ferrers Locke never asked a colleague's opinion until he saw the other was ready to volunteer it. In this case Gartrell himself opened the ball.

"A very nasty case of unpremeditated murder," he said, slipping the book from view and falling into stride once more.



Gartrell glanced across the room at the white-faced young man who sat limply in a straight-backed chair. He had been wounded in the fight, and the detective noticed the crimson-stained bandage about his right arm. (See page 9.)

"Yes, that's the weapon!" he muttered weakly. "I believe if I hadn't knocked it from his hand the brute would have shot at me again."

Gartrell was busy examining the weapon. "R. M.," he said, reading the engraved initials aloud. "Mr. Rixson, have you any idea who 'R. M.' might be?"

Ambrose shook his head wearily.

"Not in the least. 'R. M.'! The letters aren't familiar at all."

Suddenly a cry broke from Wardle. He dashed forward, and almost tore the pistol from the officer's hand. He gripped it tight, turning it over several times. Then his scared, wide-open glance travelled backwards and forwards between Gartrell and Ambrose Rixson.

"Well, man, what is it?" snapped the younger man irritably.

Wardle held out the weapon.

"The pistol, Master Ambrose—it's one of a pair belonging to Master Rupert."

With a quick stride Gartrell had seized the revolver.

"Who's Master Rupert?" he asked sharply, and waited for several seconds before either of the questioned men replied.

A light, half-hysterical laugh burst from the man on the chair, and his eyes went to the floor.

"Of course, the idea's ridiculous! It

sidered. I'm afraid, though, I've told you as much as I know. Certainly I should be very loth to say that Rupert was the assassin."

"Of course—of course!" Gartrell agreed. "All the same, in face of this discovery we must take every clue into consideration. Mr. Wardle, you were apparently the only servant in the house at the time of the tragedy. Can you say if your master had any callers?"

Wardle looked genuinely concerned.

"He had one, sir; but perhaps it is hardly fair—"

Gartrell's customary patience began to evaporate.

"Time is running against us. For the moment sink your personal feelings. Who was this visitor?"

"Mr. Morrison, sir."

The answer fell upon the silence of the room with startling distinctness.

The Woven Web!

MR. RUPERT MORRISON called tonight to see Sir Johnstone Sherlock?"

Gartrell was making notes again in his usual rapid way.

"That's right, sir," the valet answered. "He came just about seven o'clock. He said he wanted to see his uncle on very urgent

"Why unpremeditated?" Locke asked.
 "Because, my dear fellow, I really don't think that young Morrison meant to kill his uncle. To terrorise or frighten him, perhaps, yes; but deliberately to shoot him in cold blood, no, that wasn't his intention in the first place."

"You really think so?"
 "I do. And I'll tell you why. If the young fool had thought the matter well out beforehand, he'd never have gone to the house the first time and openly have asked to see his uncle. According to the valet's story, he was at the door at seven o'clock, and was met with the news that Sir Johnstone was out, and wouldn't be back before eleven. My belief is he had some very special reason for wanting to see his relative at once, that he waited about watching the front entrance, and that as soon as he thought the old man would be well through his dinner and safely alone in the library he slipped in for the purpose of getting through what he evidently anticipated would be a very stormy interview."

Locke appeared interested in the other's method of building up a case.

"What is there to account for the stormy interview theory?" he asked curiously.

"The presence of the revolver, my boy. He knew there would be a row—just what about for the moment we can't say—and he meant to put the fear of God into the old man by the simple expedient of producing a weapon. Apparently his conduct goaded Sir Johnstone beyond all endurance. He must have said or done something which made Morrison blind with rage, for without a moment's hesitation the young fool shot him dead. However, we shall soon see light in the several dark places, though I must confess that as a whole this is a pretty plain case."

"What's your next move?" Locke questioned.

Gartrell warmed enthusiastically.
 "To get face to face with Morrison. Like as not we shall find him coolly smoking a cigarette in his chambers. Of course, he'll have no idea he's suspected."

"But Wardle?"
 "Wardle, my friend, told a very clear, straightforward story. He saw the man—at least, had a back view of him; but that's far from saying the murderer saw him, or suspected he was so close on his heels."

Locke nodded.
 "Certainly, he was very unwilling to say anything likely to harm Morrison. I'm beginning to wonder what sort of a chap Morrison is."

The other laughed.
 "About the last chap in the world you would connect with murder. Probably a young blood about town—bit of a wild blade. Probably had been drinking. You know the type—too much money to spend, and too little work to do."

"Anyway, it's a terrible business!" Locke admitted. "I dislike murders of this sort intensely. They show no evidence, as you say, that the assassin meant to kill. What was done was probably done in a moment of blind, unreasoning passion, and two lives must pay the penalty. Merely to weave a web round a thoughtless fool for the purpose of carrying out the law of a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, gives no satisfaction."

An amused smile wreathed Gartrell's expansive face.

"That's because you're a sentimentalist, Locke, a luxury we fellows can't afford to indulge in. Our living depends on carrying out the law to its utmost rigour. If Morrison killed Sir Johnstone Sherlicker, it isn't for me to go into the ethics of the business, or to consider the finer shades of the state of Morrison's normal mind, but to nab him with as little delay and as little show as possible. Care to come along?"

"Of course! I was in this case at the start. I shall see it through to the end. You've no doubt that Morrison is guilty?"

"Very little, unless he can bring forward a substantial alibi. However, we shall see. Ah, this is the number!"

He referred to the address Rixson had given him. His ring was answered by a polite manservant.

"I am sorry, sir; Mr. Morrison is not at home. Would you care to leave your name?" he asked.

"If you don't mind I'll come inside and wait for him," was the detective's reply, and with that the man inclined his head and ushered them into a cosy morning-room.

From long training both men took in their surroundings at a glance—the tidiness, the

atmosphere of comfort, the vases of bright flowers, the soft, well-arranged cushions. And yet neither Wardle nor Rixson had said a word about Morrison being a married man. Certainly the evidences of a woman's hand were everywhere, and in a silver frame on top of a bookcase was the portrait of a young girl.

Something about the face haunted Locke. The eyes, the mouth, and the winning smile seemed vaguely familiar.

Charles Gartrell broke his train of thoughts. "What time do you expect your master in?" he asked, turning to the man just as he was passing out of the door.

"I couldn't say, sir, except that he'll be back some time to-night before very late."

If Gartrell failed to notice it, the significance of this reply was not lost upon Ferrers Locke. It gave him the first real index clue to Rupert Morrison's character.

"I see. Would you mind telling me what time he went out? I am a detective; here is my card," Gartrell added, as the servant



Suddenly a cry broke from Wardle. He dashed forward and almostore the pistol from the officer's hands. "R. M.!" he gasped, "Master Rupert's initials!"

stiffened visibly under the other's questioning.

The man took up the slip of pasteboard, held it to the light, and his puckered eyes travelled to Gartrell's watching face.

"My master left here soon after six to keep a dinner appointment," he said. "More than that I am unable to tell you."

Gartrell sat down.
 "Very well, we will wait," he said, and the door closed.

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"A good man, that, eh?"

"A very discreet servant," Gartrell admitted. "I admire the way he shut me up. Well, what are you interested in?" For Locke had risen from his chair, and was peering intently into the photographed face.

"I thought I knew her," he said, half turning and pointing to the picture. "Carminc Dawn, the musical comedy star. Evidently a great friend of Morrison's. See, there's another picture on the flap of his desk. Gartrell, she's a lovely woman."

Charley laughed.

Locke smiled, and resumed his seat.

"Morrison has traversed your probable line of eventualities," he remarked.

The other made a gesture of impatience.

"Afraid he has. I thought for sure he'd have returned here to remove any traces of the crime that might be on him, or to try to fix up something of an alibi, or at least to look the picture of injured innocence when anyone appeared to tell him what had hap-

pened. It's getting late, too—twenty-past eleven. I wonder if the office have done anything, following Brinnon's instructions?"

Locke yawned.
 "You can easily find out. Bound to be a telephone in his rooms. Ask the manservant if you can get through."

Gartrell lumbered into the hall. He was gone a good five minutes, during which time Ferrers Locke made a closer inspection of the room with a view to getting a nearer estimate of the character of the man he had never seen.

His task was just finished when the door opened with a slam, and Gartrell appeared, visibly excited.

"Come on!" he cried, jamming his bowler tightly on his head. "Our man is already in custody. He was arrested at two minutes past eleven, just as he was about to enter his uncle's house."

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

THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES.
 (Continued from page 4.)

conscious of a rush of fresh, cold air in his face. Straight before him was the blessed daylight—a more welcome sight to him than even food just then.

Ay, he recognised the passage well enough, now that he was in it, and knew exactly where he would emerge; but he must needs relax nothing of his vigilance. Probably by this time the search had been given up, but, on the other hand, there was always the chance that it might not.

Cautiously emerging from the passage-mouth, Walter gazed across the snow-covered landscape. It must have been many hours since he had entered the maze, for the sun was just dying into the west, and the chill air of the evening struck him to the marrow. Not a living soul was in sight as he hastened towards a belt of trees, beneath whose shadow he felt rather more secure than against the dangerously white background of the snow.

Food first—and what then? Return he could not, for Noll Cromwell had a most unpleasant way with deserters, to say nothing of what had already taken place. But food—food! That was what troubled Walter most for the time being. He tightened his sword-belt, smiling a trifle grimly as his eyes fell on the jewelled hilt at his hip, and trudged onwards.

"Ay, you may guard your wearer against death or hurt in the fight, friend," he muttered, "but you seem not overmuch use to prevent his dying of starvation!"

Presently he stopped, staring through the leafless branches. An elderly man, with a bundle of wood slung across his shoulders, was slowly approaching, halting every now and then to pick up a dead stick, and add it to his burden. Walter slipped behind a tree, and waited for him to draw level.

The wood-gatherer came on with aggravating slowness, mumbling to himself unintelligibly. Then, unable to stand the strain any longer, the watcher suddenly advanced towards him.

"Food, old man—food, I say! Hast any about you?"

The bundle of wood fell noiselessly on the snow, as its owner started back, rubbing his eyes at the strange vision of a Roundhead trooper who had suddenly appeared as though from nowhere.

"Food, sot! Don't stand staring at me like a stuck pig! I'm starving!"

"Starving! Oh, ho! One of Noll Cromwell's men starving! Why, I thought they were the best-fed soldiers in the land!"

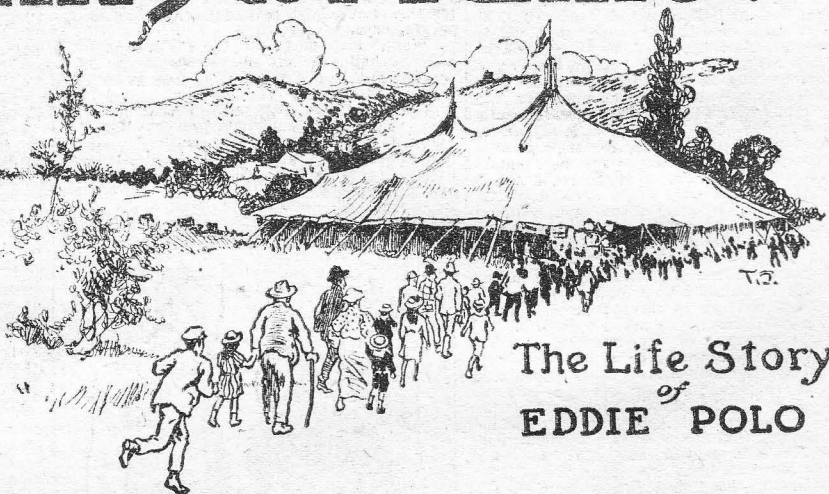
"A blight upon you and your thoughts!" snarled Walter, driven to desperation. "Look you here, friend, I'm in no mood for trifling!"

"Nay, I see that!" leered the other, by no means abashed. "But 'twould take a good many young firebrands such as you to frighten Woodman Peter. Howbeit, come along. You may share what I have, such as it is. I know what an empty paunch is too well myself to refuse to fill another's!"

(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. Order early.)

A HUMAN STORY THAT WILL HOLD YOUR INTEREST!

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 THE STORY.

Eddie Polo, as an unknown boy acrobat, joins Busto's World-Famous Menagerie and Circus in Western America. He quickly makes his mark, and becomes great friends with Ginger, the clown, and Esta, Mr. Busto's charming daughter. By his skill in the ring, however, he incurs the jealousy of Del Rogeriguo, the Spanish trapeze artist, who makes several attempts to get rid of him by means of so-called "accidents."

Finally, in a fit of madness, the Spaniard sets fire to the great tent during the evening performance, and decamps on horseback with Mr. Busto's cash.

Eddie saves the situation by his cool bravery, and pursues Rogeriguo, finally securing him. They are returning to the circus, when they are stopped by a sheriff.

(Now read on.)

Tricked!

EDDIE breathed a hugh sigh of relief as the newcomer thrust back the flap of his waistcoat, and showed the Western sheriff's badge. He dropped his empty gun to the ground, and advanced with outstretched hand.

"I was never more glad to get into the hands of the police!" said the lad heartily. "The shooting you heard came from my gun, and the gun was aimed at this joint here. He boned that horse from a circus we both belong to"—the stranger was still eyeing Eddie's acrobat's garb wonderingly—"and I just chased him!"

"Thet so?" said the sheriff, transferring his gaze to the dago. "Well, I don't see why we shouldn't hev a little hangin'-bee on our own, jest yew an' me—eh? Horse-stealin's a deuce of a crime round these 'ere parts, I'm a-telling of yew!"

"He's got more than that to answer for," returned Eddie. "And I think it'd be best to let the circus hands punish him themselves. You see, he's set the big tent alight, and there'll be no work for them till we can get another one from New York."

"Gee, dago, I'd just sure hate to be in your hide, yaller as it is!" said the sheriff. "Boy, you seems to be the brains of this 'ere court; suppose you and me mounts the pris'nar on this grey mare, and totes him along to where there's them 'at's real anxious to lamb him agin? And, arter they're through, I'll see if I can't find a nice tree to decopate with his carkiss!"

"I've promised him a slow death by roasting over a fire!" retorted Eddie, with a wink. "Hanging's too good for him!"

The sheriff agreed, and between them they hoisted the dago to Grey Wind's back, and lashed his ankles beneath her belly, so that he should not fall off, and cheat justice by

breaking his neck. Then they set out for the circus camp, leading the grey by the bridle.

By the time they reached the little hill overlooking the camp, the sheriff was in possession of all the details of that night's happenings, as Eddie knew them. And as they halted on the rise to look down on the camp in the brilliant moonlight—the moon having come up just as the river of fire was set loose—a lump came into Eddie's heart. The great circus tent was now a heap of smoking, blackened ruins, around which men still worked, and upon which the local fire brigade was still casting water.

He said nothing, though in his heart he felt he could have taken Garcia del Rogeriguo and choked him to death, but led the way down the hill to the camp. Busto, his face blackened and his clothes scorched, and Ginger, in the soiled clown's dress, saw the trio first, and rushed towards them.

"Thank Heaven you're all right, Polo!" said the showman, seizing Eddie's hand, and wringing it hard. "But for you there'd have been hundreds of lives lost, 'cause the tent blazed like tinder, and collapsed two minutes after the last man and the last animal had been got outside. And if you hadn't torn that exit they'd have all been trapped. I thought, when I couldn't find you, that you'd been trampled underfoot, but we couldn't discover your body anywhere."

"I've been busy," said Eddie simply. "I happened to spot the dago here setting fire to the naphtha that he rolled down the hill, so I borrowed Red Lightning, and went in chase. I thought you'd maybe like to tell the yaller coon what you really think of him."

He pushed Del Rogeriguo into the glare of the nearby naphtha-lamps as he spoke, and the sheriff, with a grin, released the grey's bridle. With a hoarse cry Busto sprang at the dago, and tried to pull him from the horse.

"I ain't figgerin' to let yew kill thet dago, boss," put in the sheriff, as he slashed through the bonds that held the Spaniard's ankles, and let Del Rogeriguo fall to the ground. "I'm a-thinkin' the boys'll like to see him steppin' lively on the end of a rope when yew're through with him. I'm sheriff here, if yew wants interdoocin'!"

Busto would have made some suitable reply, but he was interrupted.

"Yah! Yah!" The circus' cowboys, mounted on their ponies, had suddenly appeared on the scene, revolvers in hand. "Shoot 'im up! Shoot up thet yaller dog thet burnt thet show! String 'im up be thet toenails, and let us practise on 'im!"

"That's too good fer the likes of the greaser!" shrieked one of the women. "Tie him to a stake, and let's stick pins in him till he's armour-plated."

"Rope 'im, and drag him round the old ring, over the burnin' embers!" suggested

Ginger Wiggles, the clown. "Let him feel what it's like to be slowly tortured to death!"

"Let me crush him till his bones give way," shouted Rex, the Strong Man, "and then give him to the dogs to eat!"

"I will pierce him wiv knives!" chuckled Red Cloud, the Cree Indian knife-thrower, flashing a blade. "The yaller man, he is no goot to red or white!"

"Ef they're goin' ter do all that ter yew, dago, afore they roasts yew over a slow 'fyer," put in the sheriff, "I reckon as my job in this 'ere play's a me-yer sinnykure! Go on, ladies an' gents, he's yew're meat! 'Ere, wait till I put my star in my pocket, and, darn me, if I don't assist in this 'ere jamboree!"

The dago, hauled to his feet, and held by Eddie's strong and relentless hand, looked this way and that like a trapped rabbit. His skin was a sickly yellow, and he sobbered with sheer fear at the mouth. His knees trembled, and had not Eddie held him up must have collapsed on the ground again. He would have given ten—twenty years of his life to have been a hundred miles away, tramping through the alkali desert on foot with empty pockets and ponches, rather than face this infuriated mob who desired to end his life in so many different ways—and all painful.

"Hold on a minute before you start in on him, though!" interposed the boss, looking round on the ring of faces surrounding the dago. "The big tent's burnt down, and, unless some of you have got a couple of thousand pounds to lend me, the show's going bust. For, while we were all at the performance last evening, the tin box that I kept the takings in was stolen from my caravan. Now"—he held up his hand again as the howl of execration rose once more—"I think the dago here knows where that money's gone, so I'll give him a chance of telling where it is afore you start on him proper. Well, dago, where's the coin—eh?"

Del Rogeriguo's eyes snapped back to light. In the boss' words he saw a chance of bargaining for his life.

"Ze biskett-box—eh?" he snarled. "Aha, eet ees safe vere you veel nevaire find 'em in a 'ousand year!" And as he said this Garcia fervently hoped that neither Eddie nor the sheriff had noticed the bulging saddle-bags strapped across Grey Wind. "But I veel tell you vere ze moneys are eef you will spare me my life!"

"Torture the blighter, and make him tell!" went up the yell. "Put fire to the soles of his feet! He'll spit soon enough then!"

"I weel not tell!" roared the greaser. "You shall keel me first! Let me go, and I veel say vere ze moneys are—zat on my honour!"

"Guess you ain't got a lot of that, dago!" said Busto. "But I suppose it's my only hope. Here, Eddie, hold that crowd back—

Mr. Sheriff, you might help the lad as well!—and I'll promise the greaser his miserable life in return for the coin. It's our only hope, if the circus isn't to go busted!"

The sheriff nodded, and, drawing a pair of huge Colts from his holsters, mounted to the top of an upturned packing-case.

"Say, yew joints!" he said. "I ain't figgerin' to draw no beads on nobody, but Jake Miller—the'ts me, folks—is reputed ter be the fastest shooter in these 'ere parts, and he allus sure shoots ter kill! I've a dozen lives in these 'ere little yows, and I'd hate ter have ter use 'em on yew folks, but yew're boss says nixes on the greaser-killin' game, and I'm 'ere ter see what he says goes! Get me?—Then listen while ther greaser expounds ther great secret of ther missin' treasure, and yew'll sure let 'im make a get-away from this camp afore yer starts a-shootin' 'im up. We ain't over-fond of gun-play in these 'ere parts, moreover, so yew'll have to think out a way of killin' ther ain't accompanied by so much row, or else I shall hev to put on my star again, an' talk sheriff pow-wow ter yew! Now, git busy, Mister Boss, and worm the dread news out of the yaller hound while I gives these tough guys of yourn the once-over, with two fingers on the triggers!"

As the sheriff spoke Del Rogeriguo cast an eye round the circle till it lit on one Lopez, the Redskin's assissant in the great knife-throwing display. Then the eye shut once, opened slowly, and shut twice in quick succession, and nobody noticed Lopez as he stole silently from the back of the crowd and disappeared.

"Well, dago, and where've you hidden the money?" It was Mr. Busto's voice breaking in on the Spaniard's crafty thoughts, and bringing him back to business with a jerk.

"Loose my arms," was the cool reply, "an' I veel tak' you to ze place vero eet ees 'idden. Eet ees not far away, but I must haf my arm loose to get it."

Busto made a sign to a couple of his men, and they stepped up and unwound the lariat from the half-caste's body. Rogeriguo stretched himself to recover his circulation, and then, with an eye on Busto's drawn gun, stepped to where Grey Wind, still saddled, was cropping the grass. With a swift gesture the greaser thrust his hand into the saddle-bag and drew out the black-painted box, which he handed to the boss. Still keeping him covered with the gun, Busto drew out the key of the padlock, and gave a great sigh of relief at the sight of the yellow-backs and currency lying in the tin undisturbed.

"Right!" he snapped swiftly. "The money's here, and it's a darned good job for you, dago, that it is. If there'd been one silver dollar missing, I'd have carved you up to get it back."

The sheriff stepped down from his packing-case, and guns in hand, made his way to where Busto and the dago stood. With one gun he waved back the crowd, and the other's muzzle he jammed into Del Rogeriguo's stomach.

"Now, this is where I stack the deck," he said. "Yew folks sure promised the dago his life, and at least yew'll give him a run fer his money—a fair run, and no gun-play. Jest to make sure ther yew mean it, yew'll all throw yew're guns inter that packin'-case which made a dandy pulpit fer me jest now. That's it! Now yew've proved yew're bony-fideys proper. I'll jest say a few words to the dago hisself. Yew, yaller man, hit the pike and burn the trail as if the 'ounds of 'ell were arter yew. I ain't aimin' to frame yew, but I'm jest seein' as ther fixin's is right. These 'ere chaps is a-goin' ter let yer reach the top of thet hill afore they starts ter try and beat yer tew safety, so if yew can run, yew've got a chance ter prove it. If they catches yew, I reckon yew'll die medium suddint, and I ain't aimin' ter stop 'em any. Now, greaser, you drift, and drift right smart."

The dago shot the sheriff a look of gratitude, and then, his lip curling in scorn of the circus crowd, stunk off. The sheriff, guns in hand, watched him till he reached the foot of the hill, and then, with a swift word, mounted his own horse.

"Say, boss," he drawled, still holding his guns, and with one eye on the circus crowd and the other on the disappearing dago, "I'm figgerin' as I've done yew a mighty good turn, eh? 'Twould have been kinda awkward fer yew're crowd if there'd bin any killin' 'ereabouts, 'cause I'm toled the real sheriff is mighty hot stuff, an' 'e gets beat up under ther collar kinda suddint when there's permiskus shootin' goin' on 'ereabouts.

I know, 'cause I 'ad an argyment with ther old man about it last night, an' 'ad ter shoot 'im up afore 'e'd see reason. That's 'ow I got ther star 'ere."

He looked round with a grin, and it wasn't altogether accident that the muzzles of his heavy automatic swept the crowd. There would have been guns flashed at him already for this, but all the weapons reposed in the packing-case.

"Waal," he went on, in a languid drawl, "I ain't no bad man and no picksher-book desperado, but I am figgerin' as 'ow ther's a reeward ter come ter me for the good work I've done fer yew, boss, and yew, folks, this very evenin'. An' I'm aimin' ter collect that reeward right 'ere an' now. Boss, I think yew'd best hand up that black biscuit-box, with all its yallerback and silver-dollar fixin's prompt, or yew're goin' ter kingdom come medium suddint."

Again those blue-black muzzles swept the crowd, and those who, at the mounted man's

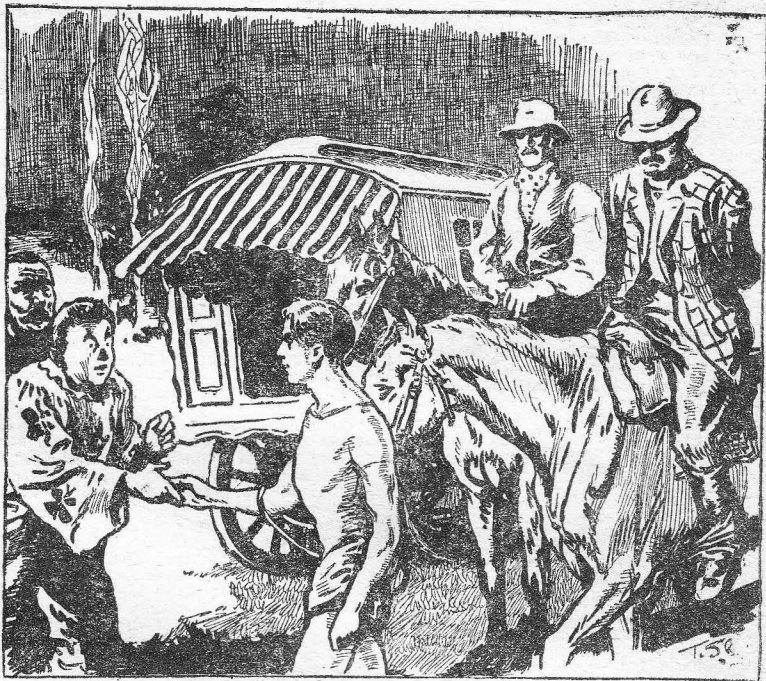
to do something, or else the show'll fall to pieces, and I'd just hate to be prised away from all you chaps just as we're getting really acquainted."

"Tain't your fault at all, Polo," replied the cowboy. "Tis just tarnation cussedness and hard lines. But the luck's bound to change some day soon."

Busto, with Esta by his side, came riding up from the fruitless quest over the alkali desert.

"That's the limit!" gasped the showman. "To think we should be stuck up in our own camp—on our own doorstep, so to speak—by a snivelling son of a gun who hides behind a sheriff's star. Next time I'll shoot at him, and trust nobody."

"I was just saying that if I hadn't brought that chap to camp this wouldn't have happened," put in Eddie. "I can only say I'm sorry about it, but then it was as much a surprise to me when he flashed his artillery on us as it was to you."



Busto and Ginger, their faces blackened and their clothes scorched, came forward to meet him. "Thank Heavens you're all right, Eddie."

words, had taken a step forward, now fell back again. Mr. Busto gasped, and, clutching the box, tried to make a dash for safety, but a bullet shot into the ground at his feet halted him, so that he had no option but to hand over the cashbox—and all his hopes—to the sham sheriff. The mounted man took the box, jammed it between his knee and his saddle, and wheeled his horse. Then, with a few scattering shots to keep the crowd at bay, he spurred up the hill in the same direction as Del Rogeriguo had taken.

The circus crowd gasped, said a few profane things, and made a dive for the packing-case in which they had cast their guns. But by the time they had sorted out their hardware and saddled their mounts and reached the top of that fateful hill, the sham sheriff was nowhere in sight. Nor, in all that waste and tangle of sand, alkali, and sage-brush, could the circus hands see the prime cause of all their trouble—the half-caste Spaniard, Garcia Del Rogeriguo.

The Great Wager.

EDDIE POLO, now mounted on the rested Grey Wind, and with Bud Truett on Red Lightning by his side, reined in his horse and stared under his shading hand all around the horizon. But, save for a tiny speck of cloud well to the northward, there wasn't a thing in sight. "Bad luck for us, Bud," said Eddie. "And it seems as if it's all my fault. If I hadn't taken that chap and his star on trust we shouldn't have been robbed so easily, if at all. Well, I suppose it's no use crying over split milk, but we shall all certainly have

"But if he wanted to rob us, why didn't he keep Grey Wind when he caught the horse in the plains?" put in the quick-witted Esta. "The money was in the saddle-bags then, though neither he nor you, Eddie, knew it, and he could have simply hobbled the horse and kept her till the coast was clear, and then made off with the lot."

"I rather fancy he was in a hurry to change his location, Miss Esta," said Eddie, with a smile. "Especially if he'd really been shooting up sheriffs, and, seeing me and the chestnut standing there as if we were looking for the grey, he took a chance on things. I fancy he wanted that money to make a quick get-away—somehow, he didn't seem like a regular hold-up merchant to me, and I've an idea we shall see him again, and get all our money back. But, in the meantime, we've got to get a new tent and give more shows, or how're we going to live till the coin comes back?"

They all laughed at Eddie's philosophy, and, turning their horses, rode back to the camp, and immediately went into committee upon ways and means, the whole of the circus staff being called to attend.

Meanwhile, not more than two hundred yards away from the spot where Eddie and the others had conferred, two half-caste Mexican-Spaniards had their swarthy heads together, hatching out devilment. They were Garcia del Rogeriguo and Lopez, assissant in Busto's circus, property master, and general attendant upon Red Cloud, the Cree trick knife-thrower.

(Continued on page 18.)

OUR SECOND LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

TRICKING HIGGS!

A SPLENDID LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO.,
THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Stumped!

CRASH!
The door of Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood flew open violently. Jimmy Silver, who was coming down the passage, stopped just in time, as a flying figure hurtled forth and bumped on the floor.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.
It was Peele of the Fourth who had been violently ejected from the study. He sprawled on the floor at Jimmy Silver's feet, gasping.

"Hallo! What's the little game?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yow-ow!"
"Is that a new kind of gymnastics?"
"Groooh!"

Peele sat up, groaning. He seemed hurt. Jimmy glanced into the study. There were two fellows in the room. One was Gower, Peele's chum, and the other was Alfired Higgs. It was evidently Higgs who had hurled the unfortunate Peele into the passage. The big, burly Fourth-Former was brandishing a formidable set of knuckles under Gower's nose.

"See that?" he demanded.
Gower backed away.

"Ye-es."
"Do you want to go after Peele?"
"Nunno!"

"Then do as you're told!"
Jimmy Silver's eyes glistened.

"What's the little game, Higgs?" he asked quietly.

"The cheeky rotters haven't got my tea," said Higgs. "I told 'em specially to have tea ready at six. I'm boss in this study."

"Yow! You rotter!" mumbled Gower. "Do you think we're going to fag for you? Yow!"

Higgs chuckled.

"I rather think you are," he said. "You're not coming back into this study unless you do. I'm going to turn you out, and have Muffin here instead. Muffin knows how to obey orders."

"Don't you think that's rather high-handed?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"You mind your own business!" said Higgs. Peele and Gower glared at Higgs. They were two to one, but the Nuts of the Fourth were not fighting men, and Higgs was a formidable antagonist. He was as old and as big as most of the fellows in the Shell at Rookwood.

"Look here, we're coming in!" said Gower. "Come in, then," said Higgs. "But you'll go out again on your necks. But come in by all means."

"Do you think you're going to keep us out of our study?" howled Peele.

Higgs nodded.

"Yes, I rather think I am," he replied coolly. "I'm ready to chuck you out again. I can't say fairer than that."

Peele gave Jimmy Silver a bitter look. "That's the kind of Form captain you are!" he sneered. "You ought to keep the rotter in order!"

"I'm going to," said Jimmy. "Cut along to the end study, and tell Lovell and Raby and Newcome to come here."

Peele ran up the passage.

"You're going to chuck this, Higgs," said Jimmy.

"You'd better make me!" sneered Higgs.

"Yes, that's my idea. You're going to be kept in order. You can't fag fellows as if you were in the Sixth."

"I shall jolly well do as I like!"
Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders. As captain of the Fourth, it was up to him to keep Higgs within limits. He was prepared to do his duty.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome came hurrying along the passage.

"What's the trouble?" asked Lovell. "Higgs is! He's pitched these chaps out—wants to fag them," said Jimmy. "He's asking for another lesson, and we're going to give him one."

"Hear, hear!" said Raby. "Collar him!"

The Fistical Four rushed into the study together. Peele and Gower looked on—grinning now.

"One at a time—two at a time, if you like!" shouted Higgs. "Fair play!"

"This isn't a fight, this is a ragging!" said Jimmy Silver. "You think you can lick any chap in the Fourth. But you're going to be kept in order all the same, see? Down with the rotten Bolsly!"

Higgs hit out furiously as the Fistical Four closed on him.

But four pairs of hands grasped him, and, powerful as he was, the bully of the Fourth went down on the study carpet with a crash.

"Leggo!" he roared. "I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! I'll—I'll— Yooop!"

"Sit on him!" said Jimmy. "Groooh!"

"Come here, Peele!"
Peele came into the study, grinning.

"Have you got a dog-whip or anything?"
"Here's a cricket-stump."
"That will do. Give him two dozen while we pin him."

"What-ho!" said Peele.
Higgs struggled desperately, but was rolled face downwards on the bearthrug. Then Peele lashed with the cricket-stump.

Higgs' roars rang along the passage, and brought a crowd of juniors to the scene. There was a shout of laughter from the Fourth-Formers as they stared into the study.

"Go it!" chuckled Oswald. "Give him beans, Peele!"

Lash, lash, lash!
"Yaroooh! Leggo! Stoppit! Oh crumbs!" roared Higgs.

Lash, lash, lash!
"Sure, he's been askin' for it!" grinned Flynn. "Give him some more!"

"Twelve!" counted Jimmy Silver. "That's enough. Have you had enough, Higgs?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"
"Are you going to keep the peace, and let these chaps stay in their own study in peace?"

"I'll smash them!" roared Higgs. "Another dozen!" said Jimmy Silver calmly. Peele lashed away as if for a wager.

Higgs yelled and writhed, and wriggled wildly.

"Stop! Have you had enough, Higgs, or would you like another dozen?"
Higgs groaned.

"Ow-wow-wow! Leave off! I give in! Ow!"

"You'll keep the peace, and make it pac with Peele and Gower?"
"I—I— Oh! Yes! Ow!"

"Good!"
The bully of the Fourth was released. He staggered to his feet, his face crimson with fury. But he had had enough; twenty-four with a cricket-stump sufficed even Higgs of the Fourth. It was a good deal more severe than a flogging from the Head.

"There's plenty more to come if you don't mind your p's and q's!" said Jimmy Silver warningly, and he left the study with his chums. Peele and Gower followed hastily.

They did not want to be left alone with Higgs just then!

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Looking for Peele!

HIGGS of the Fourth was still feeling the effects of his licking when the Classical Fourth went to their dormitory that night. His brow was black and sullen, and he was evidently in a bad temper. Peele and Gower had done their preparation in No. 4 that evening without molestation. The effect of Higgs' lesson was still lasting. But Higgs gave them a dark look in the dormitory.

"You can cackle, you funk," he said to Peele, who was grinning as the bully limped in. "You won't cackle to-morrow!"

"Hallo! Do you want some more cricket-stump?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Higgs grunted, and went to bed without replying.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, and the Classical Fourth turned out, Higgs was feeling better, though he was still in a bad temper.

After dinner that day Jimmy Silver & Co. were thinking of football. There was a practice match between Classical and Modern juniors. Higgs came down to watch the beginning of the game. The Fistical Four were rather surprised to see him there.

The two skippers marshalled their men and went into the field.

Then Higgs strolled away from the footer ground.

As a matter of fact, he had come down to Little Side to see the Fistical Four fairly started before he carried out the plans he had formed for the afternoon. He strode into the School House, and made his way to the study of Adolphus Smythe of the Shell. Without troubling to knock, he pitched the door open and walked in.

There was a haze of cigarette smoke in the study. Smythe & Co. were amusing themselves in their usual manner. They looked up uneasily at the sight of Higgs.

"Can't you knock at the door, by gad?" demanded Adolphus.

"Oh, shut up!" said Higgs. "Where's Peele?"

"He isn't here!"
Townsend and Topham of the Fourth were in the study with Smythe, Howard, and Tracy. But Peele, who was usually one of the party of Nuts on a half-holiday, was absent for once.

Higgs looked round with a scowl. "I'm looking for Peele," he said. "He licked me yesterday with a cricket-stump. What are you grinning at?"

"Was I grinning?" said Adolphus politely. "Yes, you were, you monkey! I'd mop up the lot of you as soon as look at you!" growled Higgs.

"What beautiful manners!" murmured Adolphus. "Would you mind shutting the door after you, Wiggs? I think your name is Wiggs, isn't it?"

And the Nuts chuckled.

"Where's Peele?"
"Keepin' out of your way, I fancy!" smiled Adolphus.

"Do you know where he is? I'm going to lick him!"

"Yass!"
"Well, where is he?"
"Find out!"

Higgs looked at the Nuts with a truculent eye. There were five of them, and they felt safe in numbers. But they were not made of the same stuff as Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Find out—eh?" said Higgs. "Well, I'm going to find out. You're going to tell me."

He grasped Adolphus by his collar, and yanked him out of the chair.

Smythe gasped.

"Groooh! Rescue, dear boys!"
The Nuts piled on Higgs at once. They intended to hurl him forth from the study. But the bully of the Fourth was not to be

"WHO'S WHO IN FILMLAND?"

(See next week's MAGNET Library.)

dealt with by Smythe of the Shell and his nutty friends. He hurled Adolphus to the floor, and put up his hands. The rush of the Nuts was met with tremendous drives. Tracy rolled on the rug, and Howard under the table. Townsend and Topham were seized, and their heads came together with a resounding crack.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! I give in!" yelled Townsend.

"Same here!" gasped Topham. "Oh, leggo!"

Higgs grinned as he pitched them to the floor.

"Anyone want any more?" he demanded, in his most bullying manner.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"By gad!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Now where's Peele?" asked Higgs, advancing on Adolphus, who was sitting on the carpet and gasping.

"Keep off, you beast!" gasped Smythe. "I don't want any row with you! Hands off!"

"Where's Peele?"

"He's gone down to the boathouse," said Adolphus feebly. "He's goin' up the river this afternoon with Gower."

Higgs strode out of the study without another word. Adolphus rose, gasping, to his feet.

"Ow! The cheeky cad!" mumbled Adolphus. "Layin' hands on a Shell cub, bai Jove! Jever hear of such cheek?"

"Horrid rotter!" groaned Townsend. "He ought to be kicked out of the school! Ow!"

"Awful hooligan!" mumbled Howard.

And the Giddy Goats of Rookwood, feeble little game of nap that Higgs had interving very rumpled and wrathful, resumed the rupted, Adolphus taking the precaution to lock the door first.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Once Too Often!

"BUCK up!" said Peele.

There was a crowd of fellows on the raft, and a good many boats on the river. Bright sunshine streamed down on the shining river and the grassy banks. Peele and Gower were launching a boat from the landing-raft when the burly form of Higgs was seen striding down to the bank.

Peele had a strong suspicion that Higgs would be looking for him that afternoon while Jimmy Silver & Co. were otherwise engaged, and he wisely arranged to give the bully of the Fourth a wide berth.

"Shove her out, Gower!" he exclaimed. "Here comes the beast!"

The boat plumped into the water, and Gower jumped in, followed by Peele. Higgs broke into a run, and came down to the edge of the raft, panting.

"Come ashore, you young rotters!" he shouted.

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Peele, pushing off with an oar against the raft.

Higgs made a spring.

As the boat floated off he landed in the middle of it with a crash that made the little skiff rock and jump.

He rolled over in the boat, but he was up in a moment.

"Now, then!" he said grimly.

Gower backed into the bow, and Peele into the stern, in great dismay. They were at the mercy of the bully now.

Higgs grinned as he went along the boat towards Peele, whose face was almost white.

"You licked me with a cricket-stump yesterday," he remarked pleasantly.

"I—I'm sorry!" stammered Peele. "It—it was Jimmy Silver's fault, you know!"

"I'm going to make you sorrier!" grinned Higgs.

"Help!" howled Peele. "Gower, old man, get that boat-hook! Now, then—"

"Boat-hook—eh!" said Higgs. "I'll give you boat-hook!"

His heavy fist smote Peele.

The Fourth-Former staggered back. His knees caught the gunwale, and with a sharp cry he toppled backwards.

Splash!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Higgs.

Peele disappeared under the water.

"Clumsy ass!" said Higgs, and he knelt in the boat to help the Fourth-Former in as soon as he came up.

But Peele did not come up.

Higgs waited in vain for his head to appear.

"Good heavens!" stuttered Gower. "You—you silly fool! He's gone down!"

Higgs' face was white now.

A full minute had elapsed, and there was no sign of Peele. The bully of the Fourth knelt, almost frozen with horror.

"Help!" yelled Gower. "Help!"

There was a rush of the fellows on the raft.

"What's the row?" called Jobson of the Fifth.

"Peele's drowned!"

"He—he can't be drowned!" stammered Higgs. "He—he—can't!"

"Peele's drowned!" shrieked Gower.

"Higgs knocked him into the water, and he hasn't come up!"

"Good heavens!"

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, who had just come on to the raft, stayed only to kick off his boots and throw off his cap. Then he plunged in.

A thick crowd was gathering now, and there was a buzz of excited voices.

Bulkeley had disappeared under the water, and a hundred eyes watched for him anxiously.

Bulkeley came up, gasping, and held on to the boat.

But he came alone.

"You can't find him?" called out Jobson.

"No!"

"He—he went in just here," stammered Higgs. "I—I just touched him, and he dropped in just here. He must have gone down like a stone!"

Bulkeley filled his lungs, and sank out of

Bulkeley held up his hand for silence.

"You'll come with me to the Head, Higgs," he said. "Keep your eyes open, you fellows, in case it—he comes up. Follow me, Higgs!"

Higgs dragged himself from the boat to the raft. Black looks from the Rookwood juniors followed him.

Peele was not popular in the Form. He was what Jimmy Silver called a smoky beast, and he was one of the most reckless young rascals in Adolphus Smythe's set. But all his faults were forgotten now—now that it seemed clear that his body was hidden beneath the deep waters.

Higgs tramped wearily after the captain of Rookwood. Dripping as he was, Bulkeley made his way directly to the Head's study.

Dr. Chisholm stared at the captain of Rookwood came in, dripping with water, followed by the wretched Higgs.

"What has happened, Bulkeley?" exclaimed the Head, rising to his feet.

"An accident, sir, in the river!" faltered Bulkeley.

"Bulkeley, you do not mean a fatality?"

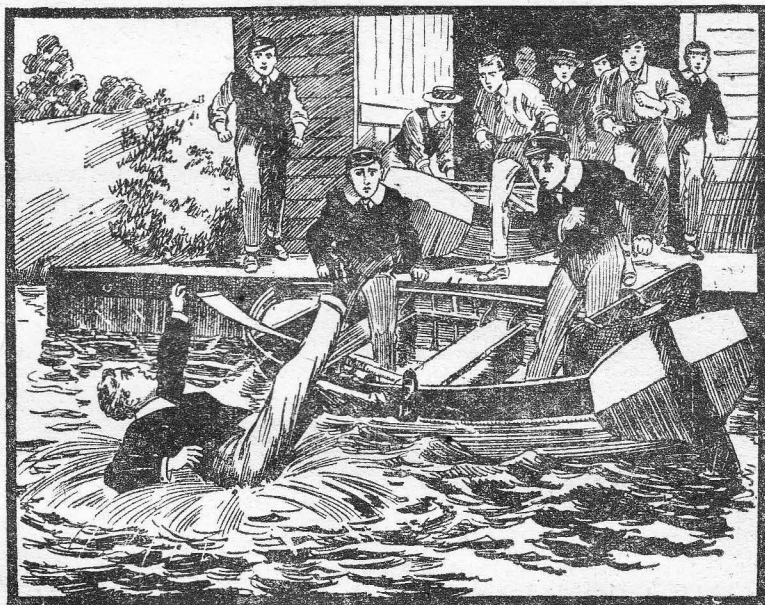
"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Good heavens! Who is it?"

"Peele of the Fourth, sir. I have brought Higgs to you. Higgs knocked him out of a boat, and he did not come up again. We've searched for him, but—but—"

The doctor's face was white.

"You—you are sure, Bulkeley?"



Higgs' heavy hand smote Peele. The Fourth Former staggered backwards. His knee caught the gunwale, and with a sharp cry he toppled back into the water. "Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Higgs.

view again. Three or four swimmers had gathered near the spot, and they joined in the search.

But it was in vain.

For ten minutes it was kept up, but there was no trace of Peele. Bulkeley clambered on to the raft at last, dripping.

A hush fell on the Rookwood crowd.

If Peele was under the water there was no doubt that he was dead, and a thrill of horror went through the crowd.

Higgs sat on the boat, almost frozen with horror and fear.

He had not intended harm to come to his victim. He had not struck very hard. He had often hit Peele harder than that. But this unlucky blow had made him a murderer! And what was going to happen now?

The wretched junior was trembling in every limb.

Bulkeley's hand fell on his shoulder, and Higgs looked up with a ghastly face. The Rookwood captain's face was hard and grim.

"You did this, I understand, Higgs?"

"I—I didn't! I—"

"He did!" shrieked Gower. "He jumped into the boat to bully Peele, and knocked him into the river! Lots of fellows saw him!"

"I did!" howled Tubby Muffin.

"And I!" shouted Rawson of the Fourth

"There seems to be no doubt, sir. We searched for ten minutes. I suppose the body must have been caught in an under-current. It will be found farther down the river."

"Good heavens! And this boy—"

"Yes, sir. He knocked him in! I suppose the police will want to see him!"

Higgs shuddered at the word. Dr. Chisholm bent his eyes upon the wretched, trembling bully of the Fourth.

"What have you to say, Higgs?"

"I—I didn't mean it, sir!" groaned Higgs.

"I just gave him a touch!"

"You were attacking that unfortunate boy, Higgs?"

"I—I was going to lick him, sir. I—I—"

"That is enough, Higgs. You will go to your study, and stay there until you are sent for! I will telephone to the police at once, Bulkeley! You had better go and change your clothes!"

Higgs dragged himself from the study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Jimmy Silver is Suspicious!

"BRAVO, Jimmy Silver!"

The leather had gone whizzing into the net. It was a goal for the Classics.

But as Tommy Dodd punted the ball again THE POPULAR.—No. 88.

to the centre, Jobson of the Fifth came dashing up.

"Better chuck that!" called out Jobson.

Jimmy Silver glanced up.

"Hallo! What are you burling about?"

"There's a kid been drowned!"

"What?"

"A chap from your Form—young Peele."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Jimmy Silver glanced at Tommy Dodd, and the Modern skipper nodded. After that news the juniors did not feel inclined to finish the match.

The footballers came off the field with anything in their minds but football now. Gower had followed Jobson to Little Side. He was white and excited. The crowd surrounded him, eager for news.

There was a deep growl among the juniors as Gower explained how the fatality had occurred.

"That beast Higgs!" said Lovell, between his teeth. "He's done it now!"

"The awful rotter!" said Jimmy Silver.

"He—he couldn't have meant it," said Oswald. "Just his beastly bullying as usual. Poor old Peele!"

"But is it certain?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Peele was a jolly good swimmer."

"He didn't even come up once," said Gower. "I dare say the knock hurt him. He never showed up once after he went in. Bulkeley went in for him, and couldn't find him. They're still looking for him."

There was a rush down to the river at once.

But there was no news.

Nothing had been seen of the unfortunate junior. There were several boats out looking for him. Neville of the Sixth had picked up his cap in the water. That was all.

"Let's go and find Higgs," said Flynn. "Let's tell the thafe of the world what we think of him, anyway!"

"He must be feeling pretty bad without that," said Jimmy Silver soberly.

"It means the sack for him, and perhaps prison, too," said Oswald, "and serve him jolly well right! That's why he came and watched us begin the match, so's he could go for Peele without being interfered with!"

"The awful beast!"

"Let's go and see him!" shouted Jones minor. "We'll rag him baldheaded!"

The juniors streamed away towards the School House to look for Higgs. Jimmy Silver did not follow. He signed to his chums to stay.

"Look here, the beast ought to be told what we think about him!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Why don't you come, Jimmy?"

Jimmy shook his head. His brow was wrinkled in thought.

"I'm thinking," he said quietly. "I hardly know what to think of this, and that's a fact. It's jolly queer that Peele should be drowned like that when he was a good swimmer."

"Well, he's drowned, isn't he?" said Raby, with a stare. "Whether it's queer or not, he's drowned, poor chap!"

"I don't know!"

"You don't know!" exclaimed Newcome.

"Look here," said Jimmy, "if Peele's drowned, I'm as sorry for him as anybody. But Peele's an awfully deep chap. You know, he was as cunning as a monkey!"

"Never mind that now!" muttered Lovell. Jimmy coloured.

"I'd be the last to say a word like that if he's drowned," he said. "But Peele was as cunning as a monkey, and he was a good swimmer. They haven't found the body. Lots of fellows have pitched in off the raft, and never been drowned yet. I'm jolly well not satisfied."

Lovell whistled.

"Dash it all, Jimmy! You don't think it's a trick?"

"I shouldn't be surprised. It would be just like one of Peele's tricks if it were. I know it sounds rotten to say so, when the chap may be at the bottom of the river all the time. But that's the fact. He's a good swimmer, and he seems to have gone down like a stone. It's jolly queer!"

"Higgs had hit him. He might have been too hurt to swim."

"He might, of course; but it's not likely."

"But—but what—"

"Let's go and look again," said Jimmy quietly. "Higgs has used him pretty roughly, and he's a bullying beast! Higgs will have a pretty bad time to-day. But if Peele has played a trick to scare Higgs, and get him punished—"

"It would be a rotten trick to alarm us for nothing!" said Newcome.

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"Well, Peele was always playing rotten tricks. Anyway, I think it's jolly odd for a good swimmer to be drowned without a struggle. Peele was good at swimming under water, too. You've seen him in the swimming-bath."

"That's so!"

The Fistical Four went down to the boat-house. The boats were out on the river, some a good distance down the stream, searching. On both banks there were Rookwood fellows scattered, looking for traces of the lost junior.

Jimmy Silver knelt on the edge of the plank raft, his chums watching him curiously. The raft was supported on thin wooden posts, and it was eighteen inches above the water at its present level. Jimmy bent his head down and looked under it at the gurgling water beneath.

"Easy enough for a chap to come up underneath the raft," said Jimmy quietly, as he rose to his feet. He could have stayed there quite safely. He had only to swim a dozen feet under water to get out of sight when he came up."

"It's possible, but—"

"But he's not there now," said Raby.

"Not there now, certainly. Come this way!"

Close by one end of the raft grew a thick clump of willows. Jimmy lead the way, and the Fistical Four plunged into the willows.

"Suppose Peele was playing that game?" said Jimmy. "Every chap was looking towards the river, of course, as soon as the alarm was given. Nobody'd dream of looking round to see whether Peele was crawling out of the water at the end of the raft into the willows. He could have done it as easy as falling off a form. But it's the only way he could have disappeared, and if he did we shall find traces of him in the willows here."

"And here they jolly well are!" exclaimed Lovell.

"My hat!"

The ground was dry and hard; there had been no rain for a week. But on the dry earth among the willows wet tracks showed clearly, and the twigs were splashed with water. Someone dripping wet had passed through the willows lately.

The chums of the Fourth exchanged startled glances.

"One of the chaps who went in for him might have come out this way," muttered Lovell.

"Not likely."

"Then—then—"

"Let's follow the track."

It was easy for the Fistical Four, experienced Boy Scouts as they were, to follow the wet track from the willows.

It quitted the willows, crossed the river-side path, and disappeared into the trees. There it was more difficult to follow.

But the Classical chums had little doubt that they were on the track of the missing junior now, and they pressed on determinedly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Higgs Goes Through It!

THE door of Study No. 4 crashed open. Higgs of the Fourth was in the study.

The wretched junior was crouched in the armchair, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, in an attitude of utter despair and misery.

He looked up as the Classical juniors crowded in with a face white as death.

He did not speak. He did not need to ask the Fourth what they had come for.

"Here the beast is!" said Jones minor.

"Here's the rotter!"

"Have the spalpeen out!"

"Collar him!"

Higgs staggered to his feet. Plunged in misery and remorse, he had not given a thought to what his Form-fellows would be thinking.

The contempt, the scorn, the horror, and dislike in every face stung him, and a wave of crimson came over his chalky face.

"I—I say—" he stammered.

"Have him out!" growled Jones minor.

"We're not going to have a murderous beast like that in our quarters!"

"No fear!"

"Frog-march him into the quad, bedad!"

The Classics surrounded Higgs, and grasped him on all sides.

With a rush the juniors bore him out of the study, and he went bumping along the passage to the stairs.

Down the stairs he went, with bump on bump.

Mr. Bootles came out of his study as the crowd poured into the lower passage, and he called out sharply:

"Let Higgs go at once! Do you hear? Let him go!"

But for once the Form-master's voice was unheeded by his Form.

Higgs went out into the quad in a rush in the midst of the excited juniors.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "Boys do you hear me? What! What! I command you— Bless my soul!"

Right across the quad went the crowd, unheeding Mr. Bootles' agitated voice. Higgs was struggling now, but his struggles were unavailing.

Mr. Bootles dashed away to the Head's study. The Fourth Form-master felt quite unable to deal with the riot.

Higgs, struggling and shrieking, was being frog-marched round the quadrangle, when the Head appeared at the big doorway.

"Boys!" thundered Dr. Chisholm.

There was a pause. Higgs took advantage of it to tear himself loose, and he went tearing across the quad towards the House.

"After him!" roared Flynn.

The juniors rushed in hot pursuit.

But fear lent wings to the wretched bully of the Fourth, and he reached the House-steps, and fled behind the doctor. There he stood, panting.

Right up to the steps the pursuers rushed, but there they halted. Dr. Chisholm's hand was raised commandingly.

"Cease this riot at once!" he exclaimed. "How dare you!"

"Pize, sorr, we want to get hold of the thafe," said Flynn. "We don't want the murtherous baste at Rookwood, sir!"

"Silence! Higgs will leave Rookwood to-day," said the Head. "He could hardly remain at the school after what he has done. He will leave here in charge of the police."

"Oh, good!" said Townsend.

"You will not molest him again. Higgs, go to my study, and remain there!"

The Head followed Higgs, and the crowd broke up with a growl of disappointment. They had by no means finished with Alfred Higgs yet. But into the Head's study even the boldest did not dream of pursuing him.

Dr. Chisholm followed the panting, dishevelled junior into the study.

"You remain here, Higgs," he said. "After what you have done it is hardly safe for you to be anywhere else. You cannot be surprised at it."

"Oh, sir!" moaned Higgs. "I—I never meant—"

"I quite understand that. It appears, from inquiries I have made, that you have been much addicted to bullying. Higgs, taking advantage of your age and size," went on the Head. "It was mean and cowardly, and it has led you to this. But I will say no more. I trust that your conscience will represent your conduct to you in its true light!"

Higgs did not reply. The Head motioned him to a chair, and the bully of the Fourth fell, rather than sat, in it. Dr. Chisholm sat at his table, and resumed his pen, taking no further notice of the wretched junior.

Higgs waited, in fearful apprehension, for the heavy steps of the police in the passage. He knew they were coming. He wondered whether he would be taken away and lodged in a cell. The mere thought of it turned him almost sick. His heart almost ceased to beat as there was a heavy foot-step in the passage, and a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said the Head.

It was Inspector Skipp, of Coombe, who entered the study, with a grave face. Higgs half-rose to his feet, and sank back again, his face white as a sheet. The inspector gave him a curious glance as he turned to the Head.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Dead Alive!

"HERE we are again!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were following the track through the woods, their eyes on the ground, watching for a "sign."

Twice the trail had been lost, but search among the thickets revealed it again—traces of wet boots and dripping water that could not be mistaken.

Jimmy Silver had found it once more, and the chums of the Fourth pushed on again. They had little doubt as to what they would find at the end of the trail.

Someone in wet clothes and dripping boots had passed this way a little time before,

and it was pretty certain who that "some-one" was.

Jimmy paused suddenly, and held up his hand.

"Seen him?" whispered Lovell.
"I can hear him—or somebody."
The juniors peered through the thicket into the green glade beyond.

Where the sun fell through the green glade in the trees they saw a suit of Etons laid out to dry, and lying in the grass, in the warm sun, was a junior in his shirt, and they recognised Peele of the Fourth.

"Come on," said Jimmy. "He can't dodge us without his clobber!"
"Ha, ha! No!"

The chums of the Fourth ran into the glade.

There was a startled cry from Peele as he leaped to his feet.

"Well?" said Jimmy grimly.

Peele gasped.

"I—I— What—what are you chaps doing here?"

"What are you doing here, you spoofing cad?" exclaimed Lovell wrathfully.

Peele shrugged his shoulders. He recovered his coolness at once.

"Drying my clobber," he said coolly. "It's rather chilly now in the end of September, and I don't want to catch cold."

"You rotten spoof!" exclaimed Raby.

"Well, we've found you," said Jimmy Silver. "Now you can get your clothes on, dry or not, and come back to Rookwood!"

Peele started.

"Have you been looking for me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; and we've found you."

"But—but this is a quarter of a mile from the river. How the thunder did you know—"

"You can't fool scouts, you ass!" said Newcome. "You left a wet trail behind you."

"Oh!" said Peele. "But—but is it all out? Do the other fellows know I wasn't drowned?"

"Not yet."

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver, with a whistle. "If the Head knew you'd spoofed him on purpose, Peele, you would get something worse than Higgs. Do you know you're reported drowned, and the police are sent for?"

"Good!" said Peele.

"What did you play such a rotten trick for?" demanded Raby.

Peele's eyes glistened.

"I suppose you know what that rotter did?" he said, between his teeth. "He knocked me into the river. I got caught in the current, and came up under the raft. If the river hadn't been low I might have been drowned. If it had been a floating raft I might have been under it. As it was there was room to breathe. Then I thought of a dodge for paying out that cad."

"So you sneaked away through the willows while the fellows were all looking towards the river?" said Jimmy Silver.

"I see you know all about it!" sneered Peele. "I didn't expect you to be nosing after me. I thought you were at footer."

"We chuckled that when we heard the news," growled Jimmy Silver, "and then we thought it over—"

"Well, you've found me," said Peele. "Now you can clear off!"

"You're coming back to Rookwood with us. Don't you understand that everybody's feeling rotten about it?"

"Let 'em!"

"The Head's sent for the police."

"That's just what I want!"

"My hat! But the bobbies will have something to say when they know you've been fooling and wasting their time," said Jimmy Silver.

"They won't know. I'm not going back to Rookwood till to-night. They can take Higgs away and put him in a cell. That's his proper place, the ruffianly beast!"

"And what do you think the Head will say to you when you turn up?" exclaimed Lovell.

Peele grinned.

"I've got a yarn ready," he said coolly.

"I got out of the river a mile further down, crawled ashore, and lay exhausted for hours. Savvy?"

"You're not going to spin the Head a yarn like that!"

"Why not?"

"Well I suppose he would believe it," said Jimmy Silver, after some thought. "He wouldn't suspect that you'd played such a trick on purpose. But, as a matter of fact, my pippin, you're not going to do anything of the sort. You're going back to Rookwood

with us. We don't want a scandal in the papers about the school to please you!"

"I suppose you're going to sneak?" sneered Peele.

Jimmy shook his head.

"No. You know that. You ought to be shown up for playing such a rotten trick, but we're not going to give you away. But you're not going to keep all Rookwood in a state of anxiety till to-night for the sake of playing a rotten game. We're going to take you back with us."

"I won't come!"

"Won't you?" said Jimmy Silver. "Wait till I've cut a switch in the thicket, and I'll see if I can persuade you."

"Look here—"

"Nuff said. You're coming!"

Peele gritted his teeth. The Fistical Four meant business, and resistance on his part was not of much use.

His plans had been cunningly laid—to remain away from the school till night, and then to return with a plausible story to account for his absence. By that time he hoped that Higgs of the Fourth would be locked up in the police-station, and after that he was not likely to be allowed to return to Rookwood. That the affair would get into the newspapers and cause endless unpleasant discussions did not matter to Peele. He had not given that aspect of the case a thought. But it mattered very considerably to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Slowly the defeated schemer resumed his clothes, already half-dried. The Fistical Four watched him grimly.

"You're spoiling a first-class jape!" growled Peele. "Think of that bullying brute being locked up—"

"And think of the disgrace to Rookwood!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, hang that!"

"Are you ready?" growled Lovell.

"Look here, I can't come back with you. If it comes out that you found me here it will prove it's only a yarn about my being carried down the river!"

"Well, don't tell any lies, then," suggested Raby.

Peele panted.

"You thumping idiot! Can I tell the Head it's a trick—that I've alarmed the whole school for revenge on Higgs?"

"Ha, ha! I shouldn't advise you to tell him that!" chuckled Raby. "I know what would happen next—the birch and the boot!"

"You fellows go on first, and I'll follow."

"No fear!" said Jimmy Silver promptly.

"You're rather too downy, Peele. We can't trust you. You'd dodge, and stay away. You know we can't go to the Head and give you away!"

"Let me alone, hang you!"

"We're going to see you as far as the gates of Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"After that you can please yourself. But you're not keeping up this game a minute longer. Come on! Take his other arm, Lovell!"

"You bet!"

And Peele, scowling savagely, was led away in the midst of the Classical chums, his little game fairly nipped in the bud.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the School!

"By gad!"

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell almost fell flat.

The great Adolphus was sauntering in the quadrangle with his friends discussing the untimely fate of Peele of the Fourth.

Adolphus had given up hope of ever seeing again a pound that Peele owed him, as he stated somewhat sadly.

And all of a sudden his eyeglass dropped from his eye, and his eyes almost bulged from his head, as the subject of discussion walked in at the gates.

"Peele!" yelled Howard.

"Alive!" gasped Adolphus.

"Great Scott!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed Peele in. Now that he was fairly within the gates of Rookwood, however, they were done with him.

They left it to him to make any explanation he pleased, so long as he apprised the Head at once that he was alive and well.

Peele grinned sourly at his startled friends.

"I—I thought you were drowned!" stuttered Townsend.

"How the thunder did you get out of the river?" demanded Adolphus. "I say, the inspector's just come from Coombe; he's with the Head!"

"Carried away down the river, crawled out, and just got back," said Peele coolly.

"By gad!"

"Carried away down the river under water—what!" grinned Townsend. "That may do for the Head, Peele! You spoofin' rotter!"

"Rotten game to alarm us all for nothin'!" said Smythe.

Peele sneered.

"I suppose you're awfully cut up—what!" he said.

"Yaas. I was thinkin' I should never get the quid you owe me, dear boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peele grinned and walked on to the House. There were exclamations of astonishment on all sides as he was spotted.

Fellows rushed to look at him, and speak to him, and clap him on the back. Never had there been such a sensation in the old school.

Mr. Bootles spotted him from his study window, and rushed out to meet him as he came into the House.

"Peele!" he exclaimed. "Can I believe my eyes? Thank goodness you are safe, my dear boy! Come with me to the Head at once!"

"I hope you haven't been alarmed, sir?" said Peele demurely.

"I have been terribly alarmed, Peele. Come with me at once!"

The agitated Form-master led the junior away to the Head's study. They left a crowd in a buzz behind them.

"Aloive, after all!" said Flynn. "And sure, we've ragged Higgs for nothing! I suppose Higgs won't be sacked now."

"What rotten luck!" said Jones minor. "Pr'aps the Head will sack him all the same, though," he added hopefully.

"But how did he get out of the river?" exclaimed Oswald. "Do you know anything about it, Jimmy Silver?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Least said, soonest mended," he remarked. "Peele is a deep beast!"

"But wasn't he drowned intoirly?" ejaculated Flynn.

"Ha, ha! He doesn't look like it!"

"Then he was atfter spoofing us!" growled Flynn. "It's a dirty trick, and just like Peele! I take back all the nice things I've been saying about him since he's been drowned—I mane since he wasn't drowned!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver clapped Tommy Dodd on the shoulder.

"Time to finish the match," he remarked. "Shall we go on?"

"Yes, rather," said Tommy Dodd. "It's jolly queer about Peele! Did you fellows find him?"

But Jimmy Silver did not appear to hear that remark.

The Classics and Moderns proceeded to Little Side, and the interrupted footer match was soon in full swing again. The shadow of tragedy which had hung so darkly over the old school for an hour had lifted.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Flogging for Two!

HIGGS of the Fourth had heard the excited buzz from the quadrangle without being aware of what it portended.

The wretched junior was standing in the Head's study, listening dully to the talk between Dr. Chisholm and the inspector.

His fate was being decided—whether he would be taken into custody, and lodged in a cell at Coombe police-station, or allowed to remain under surveillance at Rookwood at present.

A tap at the door interrupted the Head.

"Come in!" he said, rather sharply.

Mr. Bootles entered the study.

"Pray excuse my interrupting you!" said Mr. Bootles. "I have news—startling news!"

"The body has been found?" asked Inspector Skipp.

"Peele is found," said Mr. Bootles. "He was not drowned!"

Dr. Chisholm started to his feet.

"He is alive!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; he has returned safe and sound. Come in, Peele!"

Peele entered the study.

Higgs stared at him, open-eyed, his jaw dropping.

From where he had stood he had seen Peele in the passage as Mr. Bootles opened the door, and he staggered at the sight of him. For a moment he almost fancied it was the ghost of his victim that had returned to haunt him.

"Alive!" he muttered. "Alive!"

He sank helplessly into a chair.

His eyes were glued on Peele, as if he could scarcely believe their evidence. The load of guilt and terror was lifted from his heart.

"Thank Heaven, Peele, that you have returned!" said the Head. "But an explanation is required. I was given to understand that you sank in the river and was not seen again?"

"Yes, sir," said Peele. "I—I was partly stunned by the blow Higgs gave me!"

"I hardly touched him, sir!" said Higgs. Higgs was almost himself again now. The Head made a gesture.

"Silence, Higgs! Tell me precisely what occurred, Peele!"

There was a significant tone in the Head's voice, which sent a shiver through the scheming Fourth-Former. Dr. Chisholm's keen eyes were reading his face. He answered as calmly as he could.

"I—I was carried away by the current, sir. I—I think I must have lost my senses. I was carried a long way down the river; but I got hold of some rushes at last, and pulled myself out. Then—I lay exhausted for some time, and—and at last I was able to walk home."

"That is a very extraordinary story, Peele!"

Dr. Chisholm turned to Mr. Bootles.

"Mr. Bootles, will you kindly call Bulkeley?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The Fourth Form master quitted the study, and returned with the Rookwood captain. Bulkeley had already heard of Peele's return, and he gave the Fourth-Former a very curious look as he came in.

"Bulkeley, I think you mentioned to me that you entered the river in search of Peele almost immediately after he sank?"

"Yes, sir," said Bulkeley.

"Would it have been possible for Peele to have been carried away by the current without being seen?"

"Impossible, sir! Fifty fellows were watching the river."

"I was under water, you know—" stammered Peele.

"You were carried away under water down the river to such a distance that you could not have been seen from the raft?"

"I—I suppose so, sir!"

"Impossible!" said Bulkeley. "Impossible, without being drowned!"

"That is my opinion," said the Head ominously. "As Peele evidently did not sink as was supposed, Bulkeley, how would you account for his getting out of the river without being seen by anyone?"

Bulkeley reflected.

"He must have come up under the raft—the landing-stage, sir," he replied. "He could easily have held on there and called for help."

"Apparently he held on there, and did not call for help?"

"It certainly looks like it, sir."

"Did you look under the landing-stage?"

"Yes; after I'd been in for him. He was gone by that time." Bulkeley's brow darkened. "He must have been playing a trick. It was impossible for him to float down the river far, without being seen, when he landed without being drowned if he was under water. It was a trick."

"So I imagined," said the Head, in a rumbling voice.

Peele was deadly pale.

The game was up now, with a vengeance.

"Well, Peele?" said the Head, turning to the junior, whose knees were knocking together. "What have you to say?"

"I—I—" The lies died on Peele's lips.

"I—I got under the raft, sir, and—and then into the willows, sir. I—I—"

"You deliberately threw the whole school into a state of alarm for a miserable trick?" thundered the Head.

"It—it was Higgs' fault, sir. He knocked in!" mumbled Peele. "I—I wanted to pay him out—"

"I think I understand."

Dr. Chisholm turned to the inspector, who was listening grimly.

"I trust you will excuse me, Inspector Skipp, for having given you the trouble of coming here for nothing. As you can see, it was the result of a wretched trick played by this boy, and you may be assured that his punishment will be exemplary. I apologise for having troubled you."

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Skipp politely, and he took his leave.

"Bulkeley, will you be kind enough to send the sergeant here?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Bulkeley left the study. Then the Head's grim frown turned upon Peele and Higgs. The two unhappy delinquents stood with knocking knees.

"Peele, you have been guilty of a most un-

feeling deception. You have caused anxiety and alarm for no reason, but to gratify your revengeful feelings."

Peele mumbled.

"Higgs, you are the original cause of the trouble. You acted brutally towards your Form-fellow, and probably placed him in danger of his life."

"I—I—"

"I shall flog both of you!" continued the Head. "You, Higgs, for brutality, and you, Peele, for deceit and impertinence. I shall endeavour to make your punishment severe, to be a lasting lesson to you."

Sergeant Kettle entered the study, and the Head took up the birch.

Higgs was the first to suffer.

Outside in the passage a group of interested juniors listened to the sound of the birch, and the gasps and howls of the bully of the Fourth.

The doctor had said that he would endeavour to make the punishment severe, and he certainly succeeded.

The Head's arm was aching a little when he had finished.

"Now you may go," he said. "Higgs, I shall observe you in future, and I warn you to take care!"

"Wow-wow!" mumbled Higgs.

The two juniors quitted the study. They blinked at one another in the passage, but they had not even enough energy left to call one another names. It was a lesson either of them was not likely to forget for a long time to come.

That evening there was peace in No. 4 Study.

Over their preparation, Higgs, and Peele groaned in chorus, both of them realising dismally that the way of the transgressor was hard.

THE END.

FIGHTING FOR FAME

(Continued from page 13.)

"The boy Polo must be killed or so severely maimed that he cannot go on with acrobatic work!" hissed the former, his eyes ablaze.

"He has insulted me and outraged my dignity; and you, Lopez, must help me."

"I am only too willing to help you, senior," was Lopez' reply, "if you will tell me what to do. And it must be done secretly, for it will go very hard with me if Busto or any of the others catch me playing tricks upon the trapeze artist."

"It will go harder with you if I drop a line to the police at San Jose, telling them that Manuel Lopez, wanted for bank robbery and murder in Mexico, is travelling in the United States with Busto's Circus!" snarled del Rogeriugo, well knowing that he held the whip-hand over his fellow greaser by reasons of his knowledge. "And unless you do as I require, Lopez, they will receive that information very quickly!"

The smaller man shuddered, and put a hand to his throat as though he could already feel the rope around his neck. His eyes glittered evilly, but his hand shook. Del Rogeriugo knew too much. He was dangerous.

"Well, senior, I will do what you require, and so the message will be sent. Is it not so?" demanded Lopez.

And the other grinned.

"That is right," he said. "Now, this is the first thing you will do. Once, I remember, Manuel Lopez had some skill at throwing the knives through the air. To-night, or to-morrow night, the show will make some attempt to give a performance. Eddie Polo will rig up a trapeze somehow, or, maybe, do a few tricks on the horizontal bars; and as he is about to step into the arena you, from behind some adjacent wagon, will call back to your aid the knack of knife-throwing which has already been useful to you, and when they pick up Eddie Polo he will have a knife right through his back and piercing his dirty heart!"

They spoke in the polyglot Mexican-Spanish, which was their native tongue, and they minced no words. Lopez attempted to argue, but del Rogeriugo's hold over him was far too powerful to admit of anything but obedience, and presently Lopez had agreed to carry out his orders. He was just about to leave his master when the sound of an approaching cavalcade fell upon their ears,

and, peering cautiously through the sage brush, the two half-breds made out a procession of caravans and wagons such as Busto used in his own business.

"Aha!" laughed Rogeriugo. "This is the best thing that can happen. A rival show is just arriving, and Busto will find his business completely spoiled. He will be a ruined man when he leaves this town, and he will never arrive at his next location with the troupes intact. This new man will complete Garcia del Rogeriugo's work, and ruin Busto. Maybe in the confusion, Lopez, there will be a chance to seize the fair Esta and run off with her as soon as her champion, Eddie Polo, is out of the way. Keep your eyes open. I want the girl!"

They parted, and Lopez slipped back to the camp just as the council of ways and means broke up without having arrived at a workable conclusion. The half-breed had not been missed, and he made his connections again without attracting any attention.

Busto and his little band of satellites stood watching the new cavalcade as it made its way down the hill. Like Rogeriugo, the showman thought at first that this was some rival circus come to take advantage of his misfortune. His face fell, but presently it broke out into a smile as he saw, painted on a board, the legend:

"PROFESSOR BASHAM'S GREAT BOXING AND WRESTLING SHOW. FINE, FAIR FISTICUFFS AND STRAIGHT, STRONG STRUGGLES."

"Only a counter-attraction. There's room for us both," said Busto, as, with Eddie and a few others by his side, he walked forth to give greeting to his fellow-showman.

"Maybe this chap's got a tent to spare that he'll let us have."

The other was pleased to meet everybody, and he ran his eye over Eddie Polo, who was still in his stained acrobat's rig with a raincoat over his shoulders, with approval. He waved his whip at the blackened ruins of the marquee, and heard the full tale of the fire and of the robbery. He was, of course, a little amused, but he was genuinely sympathetic, and replied that if he'd had a spare tent he would immediately have lent it to Busto for a few days, wherein the circus could have got back perhaps enough money to purchase another.

But sympathy cannot build out of the air a canvas theatre big enough to house a thousand souls, and so the boxer's words were as chaff in the wind. He chatted with Busto while Eddie and the others strolled over to watch the working hands erect the great marquee, and soon got into conversation with the men.

Then, struck with an idea, Polo walked away to his own tent to think things over, and presently emerged with a new light in his eyes.

He was absent with Bud Truefit all the afternoon, and got back to the camp just as the boxing outfit was opening up for the evening.

"Walk up, gents!" cried the showman. "Come and see the old-time bare-knuckle encounter between Kid Summers and Knock-out White! Also the great wrestling match between the Powerful Pole and Strengthy 'Stralian. Likewise there's five hundred dollars a-going to the chap that can stand up for half a dozen three-minute rounds with Bill the Basher, the heavy-weight champion of Cuba, Santiago, and the Phillipeens. Now, then, where's the local talent that wants to earn five hundred of the best?"

"Here," said Eddie, stepping forward.

"Here it is, boss! I'll take your man on, and, what's more, I'll bet you that I knock him out inside three rounds if you'll make the stake high enough!"

"You'll what?" screamed the showman.

"Say, kid, is your name Johnson or Tommy Burns? Here, I'll bet you what you like you can't do it! Make your own terms!"

"Right!" said Eddie, stepping up, with Bud Truefit at his back, while he winked at the rest of the show's cowboys, who were crowding up to pay their fifty cents for admission in the usual way. "I'll take your bet! I've got a thousand dollars here in this bag, and that with the five hundred you're going to pay me makes fifteen hundred. Now, I'm going to bet that against your big marquee, and if I knock out your Bill the Basher in three rounds, Boss Busto, of the travelling circus over there, has the full use of your big marquee here for the next fortnight. Make my own terms, you said. There they are! Is it a go?"

(Another instalment of this splendid Life Story of Eddie Polo will appear in next week's issue of the POPULAR.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 88.

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

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

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the amazing story of famous Eddie Polo's

struggles and triumphs in early manhood with the Busto Menagerie and Circus.

I think you will agree that for daring and breathless incidents and splendid reading it is unsurpassed. It is written to suit the tastes of all my chums, with a narrative which holds them spellbound in its grip.

I have to thank those of my chums who have given me such valuable support by introducing the old paper to non-readers, and secured them as "regulars."

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