

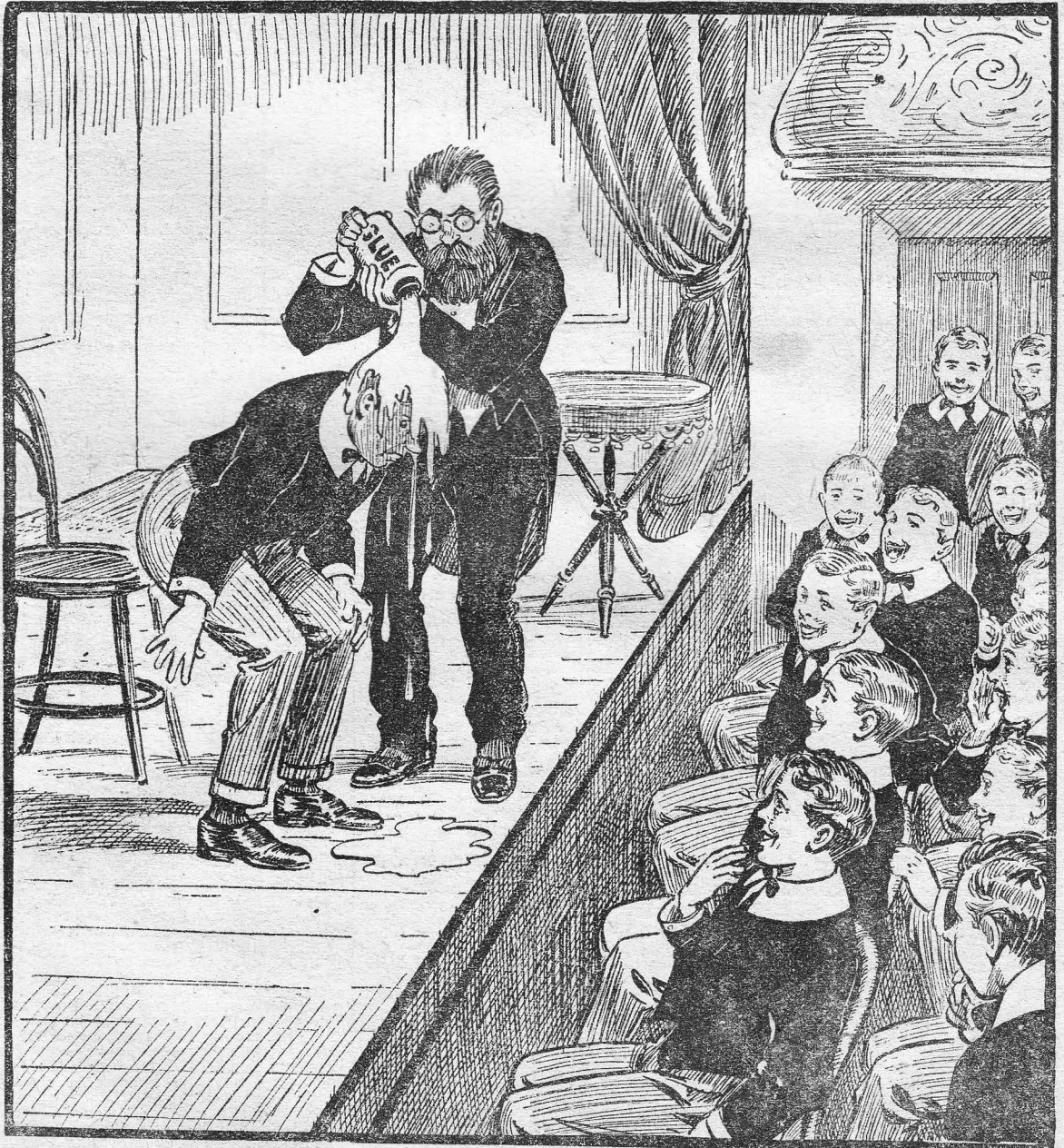
Don't Miss Your Copy of "The Holiday Annual."

No. 102.
New Series.
Week Ending
Jan. 1st,
1921.

The Popular

20 Pages.

TWO LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL
TALES EACH WEEK.



THE QUESTION IS—WILL IT COME OFF?

(An Exciting Conjuring Trick—with a doubtful ending!)

Jimmy

By OWEN
CONQUEST.

(Author of the Grand Stories of
Rookwood, which appear in the
"BOYS' FRIEND" every week.)

Silver's

Revenge!

A MAGNIFICENT
COMPLETE STORY
OF THE CHUMS
OF ROOKWOOD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Uncle James at a Discount!

DICK OSWALD looked in at the door of the end study in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood School. There was a buzz of excited voices in that famous apartment.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the Fistical Four of the Fourth, were holding a discussion, and their voices could be heard half-way down the passage.

"Something's got to be done!" Lovell was saying, emphasising his remark with a bang of his fist on the study table, which made the table jump.

"We're being chipped to death by all the school—Classicals and Moderns alike," exclaimed Raby.

"They're calling us the Fatheaded Four, and we jolly well deserve it, after the way we've let the Bagshot bounders walk over us!" said Newcome hotly.

To which Jimmy Silver responded,

"Keep smiling!"

"Keep smiling, be blowed!" roared Lovell. "I tell you, we've got to get our own back on the Bagshot bounders. Haven't they japed us, and dished us, and spoofed us, and isn't all Rookwood cackling about it?"

"Cackling no end!" said Raby dolorously. "Our giddy prestige is gone! They call this study a home for idiots now!"

"Well, that ain't far wrong, so far as three of us are concerned!" said Jimmy Silver tartly.

"Why, you ass—"

"Why, you fathead—"

"Why, you burbling duffer—"

"You leave it to your Uncle Jimmy!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly.

"Yes; we've heard all about that!" snorted Lovell. "And didn't you land us beautifully last time—right into the hands of the Philistines! Everybody's still cackling about it."

"And when I proposed a new wheeze, you shoved my head in the coal-locker!" said Jimmy Silver indignantly.

"Yes; that's what you want for your wheezes!" said Lovell. "That's about what they're worth! This study had better go out of business altogether, I think, and give Bagshot best."

Dick Oswald grinned. His cheery face, looking in at the study doorway, had not even been noticed by the excited four.

"Busy, you fellows?" he demanded.

"Hallo, Oswald! Come in!" said Jimmy Silver, looking round. "We're holding a pow-wow. Bagshot have got to die the giddy death! Tell these duffers to leave off burbling and trust their Uncle James."

"Oh, blow Bagshot!" said Oswald. "Give Bagshot a rest! Besides, they always give you the kybosh, you know—"

"Why, you cheeky ass—" roared Lovell. "Something else on," explained Oswald.

"I've looked in to see if you fellows would like to come along with me. Lots of the chaps are going. Ever heard of the Great Springer?"

"The which?"

"Chap who does the long jump?" asked Lovell, a little interested.

Lovell was rather good at the long jump himself.

"Ha, ha! No! Professor Springer, the conjurer. Does conjuring tricks, you know—fishes leaves out of your hat, and whales out of your watch-cases—more or less. He's called the Great Springer on the posters. Some chaps have seen him in Latham, and they say he's good. He's giving a matinee show at Coombe this afternoon, and, as it's

too wet for footer, I'm going. Come along—my treat!"

"Not a bad idea," said Raby. "I remember seeing it in the local rag now. Better than staying in, listening to Jimmy Silver's rot!"

"Much better!" agreed Newcome. "We'll come!"

"Trot along, then!" said Oswald. "Begins at three!"

"Right-ho!"

The pow-wow in the end study was indefinitely postponed. Outside the old quadrangle of Rookwood the leafless beeches were simply weeping with rain. Footer was out of the question that afternoon. The Fistical Four had been improving the shining hour by holding a council of war. But they agreed that a conjuring entertainment was a little better than "jawing" in the study. The iniquitous bounders of Bagshot were granted a respite.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Pankley Scores!

"NICE weather for ducks!" growled Lovell.

The rain was coming down in a steady drizzle. The football ground was swimming with it. The beeches in the old quad creaked and wept.

Quite a little army of Rookwood fellows marched out when the Fistical Four started for Coombe. Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were there, and Adolphus Smythe and his nutty friends of the Shell. In overcoats and macintoshes, and with an army of umbrellas, the juniors started.

The lane was wet and muddy, and the Rookwooders squelched through the mud and made remarks about the weather, and arrived at last in the little village of Coombe. In spite of the weather, a goodly audience was turning up at the village room for the conjuring entertainment. Entertainments of any kind were rare in the quiet village, and as the charges were decidedly reasonable, the good folk of Coombe were extending a hearty support to the Great Springer.

The village room, where "Pleasant Saturday Afternoons" could be spent under the kindly auspices of the vicar, was not a palatial building. It was an edifice of corrugated iron, and, architecturally considered, it was a blot upon the landscape. But it was dry and warm, and its shelter was very welcome to Jimmy Silver & Co.

Oswald, who was in funds, took five tickets for his party at sixpence each. There were reserved seats at a shilling each, and Smythe of the Shell, of course, bagged some of them for his party. Adolphus Smythe never did anything like a common mortal.

Long wooden benches accommodated the audience, and a temporary stage, at one end of the long room, was concealed—or partly concealed—by curtains which Lovell described as cock-eyed.

Jimmy Silver & Co. secured front seats, and Jimmy surveyed the audience. A howl from a group of fellows at a little distance came to his ears:

"Hallo, Rookwood duffers!"

"Bagshot bounders!" growled Jimmy.

Pankley and Poole and several other juniors from Bagshot School were there. They grinned amiably at the Rookwood fellows. Their late encounters with Rookwood had ended entirely in their favour, and Pankley & Co. were feeling very pleased with themselves.

The curtains which Lovell had described as cock-eyed were drawn aside—looking consider-

ably more cock-eyed after that operation. A little gentleman in black, with a black box, was disclosed to view.

Professor Springer was worth a second glance. He was a very small man physically, but he had a very important manner. His evening-clothes made him look still slighter. He had a thick head of hair, evidently a wig, and he wore an enormous beard. The beard would probably have been grey if left to itself, but as a matter of fact it was jet-black, with a bluish tinge when it caught the light. The Great Springer had undoubtedly dyed it. He had a large, bushy moustache of the same hue, and big, bushy, black eyebrows. Never had the juniors seen so hairy a gentleman. He wore also a pair of large, gold-rimmed pince-nez, which justified their name by pinching his nose cruelly, and causing the end of it to glow with a fiery red.

"That chap's worth the tanner just to look at him," said Lovell, somewhat restored to good-humour by the sight of the professor.

But, queer-looking as the Great Springer undoubtedly was, he was a good entertainer in his own line. He proceeded to open his black bag, and astonish the simple folk of Coombe with his mysterious tricks. Though fortune had apparently not smiled upon the Great Springer—to judge by the evident age of his evening-clothes, and by the fact that he was giving entertainments in the little village at all—he was certainly a clever conjurer.

Jimmy Silver & Co. watched him with great interest. When the professor requested assistance from the audience, Pankley of Bagshot went on the stage. Pankley was always ready for the limelight. He looked a little uneasy when the professor reduced his watch to powder, and was greatly relieved when the watch was handed back to him uninjured, amid cheers from the audience.

Then the professor asked for a silk topper, and Adolphus Smythe obliged. Adolphus's face was a study when the Great Springer lighted a fire in the hat; but the hat was returned undamaged.

"Jolly clever, by gad!" Adolphus confessed.

Jimmy Silver was looking thoughtful. The professor was decidedly entertaining, and an idea had come into Jimmy's active brain. During a pause in the proceedings he whispered to his chums:

"I've got a dodge."

"At it again!" said Lovell.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Jimmy.

"Look here, we've been thinking of raising a fund at Rookwood for the local hospital—giving a show and charging for admission, you know. It's a bit difficult to make up a show that the fellows would pay to see."

"More than a bit difficult," said Raby.

"Well, I've got a wheeze. What about getting Springer to come and entertain?"

"My hat!"

"Everybody would come and see him, and we could have the Form-room for the show," argued Jimmy. "We could charge three-pence a head—tanner each for the Sixth. This chap would do it cheap. He don't look like a millionaire. Suppose he came for a guinea? Well, we might take three or four pounds if we rushed all the fellows into taking tickets—see? That would be a good whack for our fund."

"Well, that's not bad," agreed Lovell. "Pankley's doing the same thing at Bagshot. As soon as he heard we were raising money for the hospital he bagged the idea. He says we bagged it from him, the bounder!"

"Well, lots of people are doing it," said Jimmy. "It's up to everybody to shell out for a good cause like that. With this nobby wheeze we ought to raise more money than Pankley will get at Bagshot."

"Good egg!" said Raby. "We'll beat him in that, at least."

"I'll get round and speak to the professor after the show," said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy smiled to himself, very pleased with his idea, as the show proceeded.

He glanced towards the Bagshot crowd. Pankley and Poole had disappeared. The rest of the Bagshot fellows were watching the entertainment. The Great Pankley had apparently left early.

The last trick having been performed, and the last round of applause delivered, Professor Springer retired from the stage with many bows, and the audience rose.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've got to get round and speak to him as he comes out. He'll leave by the side door."

The Fistical Four and Oswald shoved their way through the crowd. They were soon out of the hall, and they made their way round the building.

As they reached the side door it opened, and Professor Springer appeared, muffled up in a greatcoat.

He did not come out alone. Two juniors followed him out, and Jimmy Silver started as he recognised Pankley and Poole of Bagshot. What were the Bagshot bounders doing there?

"Hallo!" said Pankley, with a cheery smile. "Enjoying the rain, dear boys?"

"Don't bother!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Springer, will you stop a minute? We want to speak to you."

"Certainly!" said the professor, stepping back into the porch.

"You Bagshot bounders can clear off!" said Jimmy Silver.

Pankley leaned against the porch. Poole followed his example.

"Don't mind us, dear kid!" said Pankley. "We're seeing the professor home."

Jimmy frowned. He did not want to reveal his ripping scheme in the presence of the Bagshot juniors. But Pankley and Poole evidently intended to stay, and the Great Springer was waiting.

"Never mind them," said Lovell. "Fire away, Jimmy!"

"The fact is, sir," said Jimmy Silver, "we've been awfully struck with your show—awfully! It's simply ripping! We want you to come and give us an entertainment at our school."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankley and Poole. "Shut up, you worms!" growled Lovell. Professor Springer smiled.

"I shall be very pleased, young gentlemen!" he said, rubbing his hands. "My charge for two hours' entertainment, in the evening, will be one guinea."

"Good enough!" said Jimmy Silver. "Could you come to Rookwood to-morrow evening?"

"I am sorry—no. I have already promised these young gentlemen—"

"What!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankley and Poole. "They—they've bagged you already?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yes; I am engaged to appear at Bagshot School to-morrow evening," said the professor.

"Oh, my hat!"

Pankley and Poole were almost doubled up with merriment. The Rookwood juniors looked daggers at them. The same scheme had evidently occurred to Pankley's active brain, and he had been first in the field. That was why he had cleared off before the entertainment ended, evidently.

"Dished again!" grunted Lovell.

"Same old tale!" sniffed Raby. "But trust your Uncle Jimmy! Oh, trust your Uncle James!"

"Oh dear!" said Jimmy Silver.

"The next evening I should be quite at your service," suggested the professor. Mr. Springer did not want to lose an engagement if he could help it.

"What about to-night?" asked Jimmy. "We might manage it in the time. If you could come to-night—"

"I am engaged for this evening, as I have already told Master Pankley—"

"Dished!" said Lovell again. "Hang the evening after next! We don't want Pankley's mouldy old ideas when he's done with them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankley.

"Oh, cheese it, you Bagshot worm!"

"I—I say, we'll let you know about Friday evening, professor," said Jimmy Silver, much

discouraged. "Good-night! Come on, you chaps!"

The Rookwood party turned disconsolately away, followed by merry chuckles from Pankley and Poole, who walked off triumphantly with the professor. Jimmy Silver did not speak a word on the way home to Rookwood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Simply Stunning!

"WHAT the merry dickens—" Lovell uttered that exclamation as he came into the end study that evening.

Jimmy Silver was there. Jimmy was bending over an open box—the box in which the juniors kept the properties for their amateur theatricals. He was sorting out clothes, and wigs, and beards, and moustaches, and grinning the while. Raby and Newcome followed Lovell in. It was time for prep. They all stared at Jimmy Silver.

"Amateur theatricals now!" grunted Lovell. "Chuck it, for goodness' sake! We may as well give up the idea of that fund. We don't want old Springer when Pankley's done with him. We're not going to have Bagshot leavings."

"Fathead!" said Jimmy Silver politely. "We're going to dish Pankley—at least, I am. You can stay at home and grouse!"

"Another blessed wheeze?" said Raby.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver impressively. "The wheeze of the season! I've been doing a big think, and I've got it."

"Well, now you've got it, go and bury it!" said Lovell. "We're fed up on your wheezes in this study!"

Jimmy Silver snorted. "I'm jolly nearly fed up on your grouching," he replied. "Why can't you keep smiling, as I tell you? We're above Pankley's weight, really—"

"Looks like it when you let him bag your professor under your nose!" said Newcome.

"All serene; I'll go over to the Modern side and get Tommy Dodd & Co. to take a hand," said Jimmy. "I dare say they'll manage it better than you duffers!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! If you've really got a wheeze, we'll hear it."

"That's better! Now, look here, Pankley's got the professor for to-morrow evening at Bagshot, to give a show for his hospital fund. We could have him the next evening if we liked—"

"We don't like. All Bagshot would be sniggering at us. They say now that we can't think of anything for ourselves!"

"Quite right. We don't like," agreed Jimmy Silver calmly. "So my idea is to have him the same evening."

"Eh?"

"At the same time precisely."

"What!"

"We'll get the notice out, and make the tickets, and so forth, for our show in the Form-room at seven to-morrow," said Jimmy coolly. "I'll put up a big announcement that Professor Springer is coming."

"But he isn't coming!" shouted Lovell.

"He jolly well is! But Bagshot are going to have their Professor Springer, too. See?"

"No, I don't see, you ass! How can old Springer be in two places at once?"

"He can't, of course. His double's going to Bagshot."

"His—his double?" stuttered Lovell.

"Little me!" said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"You saw the professor? Didn't he look as if he were specially built to be caricatured? Any chap his size, with a false scalp and a yard of whiskers, could make up exactly like him."

"M-m-make up! Oh, my hat!"

"We've done a lot of amateur theatricals, and made up harder characters than Mr. Springer. I could do it with my eyes shut. He's no taller than I am, and he's thick with whiskers and barnacles. It's as easy as falling off a form. I'm going to do it."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "What a wheeze! If it could only be brought off! But it can't!"

"It can—and it's jolly well going to be," said Jimmy Silver. "This is where Bagshot gets it fairly in the neck. Pankley & Co. are going to be done in the eye all along the line!"

"But—but the professor will go there, as he's arranged—"

"He won't! Springer is putting up at the Black Bull. Well, to-morrow evening a car will call for him, to take him to the school."

"A—a car!"

"Well, a taxicab!" said Jimmy Silver. "There will be two or three fellows—Tommy

Dodd & Co. can do that; he's never seen them. They'll say they've called to take him to the school—he's bound to think they mean Bagshot—and he won't find out they mean Rookwood till he's here."

"Great pip! Kidnapping!" gasped Raby. "When he gets here he'll find it's too late for the Bagshot show even if he went there; it's a good step from here to Bagshot, We don't want him to lose money over it, of course."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Meanwhile," pursued Jimmy Silver victoriously—"meanwhile, as they say in the novels, I shall be gone to Bagshot got up as Springer!"

"They'll bowl you out!"

"If they bowl me out, I'll let them eat me!" said Jimmy disdainfully. "I could play the part on my head. We've got all the props here—black beard and moustache, bald scalp, gold-rimmed glasses, seedy evening-clothes—the whole boiling, in fact. I'm going to be Professor Springer—for one night only! They'll want him there to play tricks—well, I shall play tricks, I give you my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you think it's a good wheeze, do you?" said Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Stunning—ha, ha, ha!—if it comes off!"

"Oh, it will come off! Leave it to your Uncle James!" said Jimmy loftily. "So you're going to back me up, you doubting Thomases?"

"Yes, rather," said Lovell heartily. "It's the wheeze of the season—the outside edge, by gum! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's have a jaw with Tommy Dodd & Co. and some of the other fellows," said Jimmy Silver. "We've got to raise some tin; every chap will shell-out what he can afford. It's worth a bit to dish Pankley & Co. in this style. Come on!"

In great spirits, the Fistical Four proceeded to the Modern side, where they found Tommy Dodd & Co. in their study. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle listened with wide-open eyes as Jimmy Silver expounded that stunning "wheeze." The three Tommies gasped at first, and then they yelled with laughter.

"Ripping!" said Tommy Dodd. "First-class, by gum! There's only one point you've got wrong—"

"What's that?"

"You'd better let me play Professor Springer. You see, we do acting so much better on the Modern side—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Now, look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Encore—bow-wow!" said Jimmy cheerfully. "That's my little bit. Besides, we want you to bag the professor in the taxicab. It won't be easy, but you three are just the fellows to pull it off."

"Oh, all right!" said Tommy Dodd. "Rely on us."

"Now we'll settle the details—"

"What about prep?" asked Tommy Cook.

"Blow prep!"

Preparation was accordingly "blowed," and the rivals of Rookwood, uniting heartily against the common foe, discussed the great scheme in every detail.

The "blowing" of prep led to some trouble with Mr. Bootles in the Fourth Form-room the following morning. But, as Jimmy Silver remarked, it was in the day's work, and they bore it philosophically.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Great Preparations.

"GRAND ENTERTAINMENT!"

In aid of the Local Hospital Fund.

TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT!

6.30 in the Form-room.

A Grand Entertainment, by Professor Springer, the Great Conjuror and Mystery Merchant.

The Great Springer's Unique Performance will be given positively on this occasion only.

Admission 3d. 6d. to the Sixth.

Roll up! Remember this is a record entertainment.

Roll up with your threepenny-bits!

(Signed) JIMMY SILVER.

THE POPULAR.—No. 102.

That notice, in letters of great size, daubed with a brush, appeared upon the notice-board at Rookwood in the morning. When morning lessons were over, and the fellows came out of the Form-rooms, crowds gathered to read the stirring announcement.

There was a general buzz of approval. Jimmy Silver & Co. had written out tickets on fragments of impot-paper, and they sold like hot cakes. A few reserved seats at half-a-crown each were sold to masters and prefects. Nearly every fellow in the Sixth took a sixpenny seat. As for the threepenny tickets, they were wanted in sheets.

"My hat! There'll be a crowd!" said Lovell, after dinner. "The tickets are nearly all gone already."

A dozen fellows who could be relied upon had been taken into the plot—Flynn, and Hooker, and Oswald, and Jones minor, Towle and Lacy, and several more. They had entered into the scheme heartily, and subscribed cheerfully to the expense.

There was a taxi-cab to be paid for, and an extra guinea for the professor. His fee of one guinea was to be paid out of the takings, but the extra guinea fell on the plotters of the plot. But they all agreed that it was worth it, and, whacked out among nearly twenty fellows, it did not come very heavily.

During afternoon lessons there was a considerable amount of grinning and whispering in the Fourth, which led to a liberal distribution of lines; but Jimmy Silver & Co. did not mind.

What were lines to them at that moment, when they were about to "dish" Bagshot and make Pankley & Co. sing small, and hide their diminished heads—at all events, if all went well?

The early winter darkness had set in when afternoon lessons ended. The conjuring entertainment having been fixed for after tea, Jimmy Silver & Co. had plenty of time to act.

The peculiar rig Jimmy Silver was to wear in his character as the Great Springer's double had been packed carefully in a bag, after being tried on in the end study amid general satisfaction and approval.

The bag was carried out into the woodshed, where Jimmy was to make up for the impersonation when the time came.

The three Tommies, meanwhile, had started on their mission. Lovell, doubtful about the ability of mere Moderns, impressed upon them to be awfully careful with the professor—to which Tommy Dodd replied with a request that Lovell would depart and masticate coke. So they started full of confidence, leaving Lovell shaking his head.

"It's all right, fathead!" said Jimmy Silver. "Tommy Dodd's just the chap to do it! Now let's go and see about the show!"

There was a good deal for the juniors to do in the Form-room, in preparing it for the entertainment. Many hands lent their aid, however, and made light of the work.

The stage was rigged up, with a curtain that would move if carefully persuaded, and forms and chairs arranged to fill the apartment from end to end. Oswald and Flynn and Jones minor were appointed ushers to show the audience to their places, and Tracy and Howard of the Shell consented to act as door-keepers, to see that only fellows with tickets came in.

"There is a postcard for you, Silver," said Oswald, as Jimmy came out of the Form-room, a little dusty, but very cheerful.

Jimmy took it from the rack.

"From Bagshot?" he said. "My hat!"

"Some blessed cheek!" said Lovell. "Read it out!"

"Dear Silver," read out Jimmy,—"As you know, we're giving a conjuring show this evening at seven. Glad to see any of you that care to come over. Must charge you three 'd' for admission, as it's for the fund. Come over and swell the takings, like good little boys. We won't lick you."

"CECIL PANKLEY."

Lovell breathed hard through his nose.

"Won't lick us!" he gasped. "My hat! I've a jolly good mind to go over, just to lick him!"

"Lickings are off," said Jimmy Silver. "We've got a game on worth a dozen of that. Look here, you fellows, come. Bootles will give you a pass, if you show him this postcard. Somebody ought to be there with me!"

"Good egg! But what about the show here?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 102.

"Oswald can manage it, with Tommy Dodd to help. I can give you a lift in my taxi nearly as far as Bagshot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, kindly bestowed a pass on the Fistical Four, when they showed him that kind invitation. He observed that he was glad to see them supporting Pankley in this way, so unlike the usual rowdy dealings of the Rookwood juniors with the Bagshot fellows.

The chuns thanked him meekly, and withdrew with the pass.

Armed with that valuable paper, they proceeded to the wood-shed. Time was getting close now. In that wood-shed, by the aid of a lamp and a glass, Jimmy Silver donned the hirsute adornments he was to wear as Professor Springer's double. Lovell and Raby and Newcome lent him their assistance.

Jimmy Silver simply disappeared; the new Professor Springer grew, as it were, under their skilful hands.

Jimmy was very nearly as tall as the professor. In seedy evening-clothes, with an expansive shirt-front, with a huge black beard and moustache, thickened and blackened eyebrows and large, gold-rimmed glasses, Jimmy became the twin brother of the great Springer.

Lovell chuckled gleefully as he added skilful touches of grease-paint to Jimmy's countenance where it was not hidden by hair.

"Blest if it ain't the great giddy Springer himself!" said Raby, in great admiration.

"It's simply ripping!" grinned Newcome. "Pankley won't spot Jimmy under all that in a month of Sundays!"

"Mind you speak in the professor's squeak, Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What-ho!" squeaked Jimmy. "Young gentlemen, I am here entirely at your service—h'm!"

The juniors chuckled gleefully. The imitative Jimmy had the professor's voice to the last tone.

There was the hoot of a taxi-cab in the dusky quad.

"Here comes the real article!" grinned Lovell; and he rushed from the wood-shed.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Two of Them!

GOOD-EVENING, professor!" Professor Springer, in the reading-room at the Black Bull, laid down his paper, and turned his gold-rimmed glasses upon the three Tommies. He smiled benignly.

"Good-evening, young gentlemen! You are from the school, I suppose?"

"Just so," said Tommy Dodd. "We've come to fetch you, professor!"

"It is hardly time yet," said Mr. Springer, glancing at the clock. "I arranged with Master Pankley to reach the school at a quarter to seven. It is barely six."

"We've fixed it for six-thirty, after all," explained Tommy Dodd. "I hope you can come, sir. We've got a taxi-cab all the way from Moordale, and it's ticking off twopences!"

"Dear me! You have gone to a very great expense, then!" said Mr. Springer, in surprise.

"We don't have the Great Springer at our school every day," said Tommy Doyle.

The Great Springer smiled. He was not impervious to flattery. Neither was he insensible to the advantage of travelling to the school in somebody else's taxi, instead of hiring the station hack for himself. Money was an object with the worthy professor.

"Very well; I will get ready at once," he said. "I shall not keep you waiting long."

In ten minutes the professor came down. He was in evening-clothes under his great-coat, and carried his black bag in his hand. The taxi was waiting outside, the driver contentedly watching the twopences ticking off.

Professor Springer entered the taxi, followed by the three Modern juniors of Rookwood. Not for an instant did it enter the professor's mind that these three cheery young gentlemen did not belong to Bagshot.

The taxi buzzed away. The driver had received his instructions already. Through the dusky winter evening the taxi buzzed along the muddy lanes for Rookwood.

It did not take long to reach the school. Tommy Dodd jumped down and rang the bell, and old Mack came out of his lodge and opened the gates.

The taxi halted outside the School House, and Lovell came speeding round from the

direction of the wood-shed. He looked into the cab, and gave a jump as he saw the professor.

The latter was so exactly like the "double" Lovell had just quitted that it gave him, as he said afterwards, quite a "turn."

"Good-evening, professor!" said Lovell cordially. "Come with me! We've arranged our study as a dressing-room for you!"

"Thank you very much! Is Mr. Pankley here?"

"Not at the present moment. This way!"

Professor Springer, bag in hand, followed Lovell into the house. The three Tommies exchanged joyous glances.

"Bagged!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Fairly nailed!" grinned Cook. "And if he cuts up rusty and goes, he jolly well won't go in a taxi, that's a cert!"

Tommy Dodd spoke in a low voice to the driver, who nodded and drove the taxi down to the gates. The three Tommies went into the house. Lovell met them on the stairs.

"I've put him in the end study," he said in a whisper. "Go and talk to him. Keep him quiet till the taxi goes, at least!"

"What-ho!" The three Tommies hurried on to the end study, with the excellent object of keeping the professor from "smelling a rat" until the taxi was gone. Lovell ran to the wood-shed.

He gave a chuckle at the sight of the bearded gentleman within.

"Blest if you ain't as like as two peas!" he ejaculated. "Oh, it's a corker! The professor's come. Tommy Dodd's in the end study with him. They'll manage him. You ready, Jimmy? Put your coat on, and keep your face out of sight. It's jolly dark in the quad, though—safe as houses."

Jimmy picked up the bag, and the Fistical Four hurried out of the wood-shed. Taking great care to keep out of the lights from the house, they hurried round the quadrangle to the gates.

No one was there but Mack, the porter, who was looking out into the road. Lovell reached the taxi first and opened the door, and Jimmy ran up and dodged in. Raby and Newcome followed him quickly, screening him from Mack's direction. Then Lovell spoke to the driver, and jumped in.

The taxi dodged away.

"Let's hope the professor will listen to reason!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I'm pretty certain of that. He's lost his Bagshot job, anyway. But Bagshot won't lose its conjurer. One conjurer is as good as another—what!"

"Better!" grinned Lovell.

"Hurrah for us!" chortled Raby.

The taxi rushed on through the winter evening. It was close on seven when Bagshot School appeared in sight. A score of yards from the gates, Jimmy Silver signed to the driver to halt. Lovell and Raby and Newcome stepped out into the road. It would not have done for them to arrive at Bagshot with the professor; they did not want to afford Pankley & Co. the slightest grounds for suspicion. The driver was looking a little surprised. He had driven Professor Springer to Rookwood; now he had driven him, as he believed, to Bagshot, and it was certainly a little odd.

"Drive on to the school, please!" squeaked Jimmy, in the voice of the professor, which he imitated very closely. "Good-evening, little boys! I am glad I have been able to give you a lift—hem!"

"Good-night, professor!" said Lovell & Co.

The taxi drove on, and the three juniors disappeared in the darkness. At the gates of Bagshot the driver descended and rang the bell. The gate was opened. Inside, there were half a dozen juniors waiting, Pankley at their head.

"That must be the professor," said Pankley. "He's late, and he's got a taxi."

Professor Springer II. glanced at the taximeter. It indicated nineteen shillings. He handed the driver a sovereign hastily, and said "Good-night!" to him. He did not want the Bagshot juniors to see the amount he had paid.

The taxi whirred away down the dark road and vanished.

Professor Springer II. stepped towards the gates.

"Here you are, sir!" said Pankley. "You're rather late."

"I trust I am not very late, Master Pankley," squeaked the new professor. "I think the driver did not take the direct road—in fact, I am sure he did not."

"Well, never mind, as you're here," said Pankley. "This way, sir!"

Jimmy Silver grinned under his big black

heard as he followed Pankley into the house. True, the juniors had only seen him in the gloom so far; he had a harder test before him when he came into the light. But he was quite confident.

Seven was striking as Pankley led the professor into the house. In the lighted hall a score of pairs of eyes were turned on the disguised Rookwood junior.

Jimmy drew a deep breath for a moment. But there was not a shadow of suspicion in any face.

"I say, the audience are nearly all in the lecture-room," said Poole. "Will it take you long to get ready, professor?"

"I need only remove my coat," said the professor. "Now, I am ready."

"Oh, good!"

The little black-bearded gentleman followed Pankley and Poole into the lecture-room, blinking round him through his big glasses. The room was crowded—Pankley had evidently got a good audience. Nearly all Bagshot School was there. A cheer or two greeted the professor as he made his way to the platform.

entertainment instead of two, if both fees are paid?"

"N-n-no!" ejaculated the professor in astonishment; "but—but I don't quite understand—"

"You—you see, we—we've brought you here to give us the show," explained Tommy Dodd.

"This place isn't—ahem!—Bagshot."

"What!"

"It's Rookwood."

"Bless my soul!"

"You see, we're Rookwood chaps, and we're up against those Bagshot bouncers," said Tommy Dodd. "We've got a fund here for the local hospital, and those worms have bagged the idea for their rotten show. They wanted to bag you, too. See?"

"But Master Pankley—" he said. "He will be expecting me—"

"That's all right. We've arranged about that. Some of our fellows have gone over

He smiled at last.

"You are sure Master Pankley will not be waiting for me?" he asked.

"Quite sure," said Tommy Dodd. "Four of our fellows have gone over there, and I answer for it that Pankley's not expecting you."

"Very well," said the professor, smiling.

"You have played a trick on me. But really, I have little choice in the matter."

"I knew you'd play up, sir," said Tommy Dodd heartily. "I knew you wouldn't leave us in the lurch, with the whole school waiting to see your splendid performance."

"Well, well, I consent."

"Hurrah!"

The delight of the juniors was very flattering to the professor, and he laughed heartily. Oswald cut off to announce that the professor was coming. The three Tommies escorted

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Soft Sawder!

"**D**EAR me, it is turned half-past six!" exclaimed Professor Springer L., in the end study at Rookwood.

The three Tommies and Oswald were in the study with him. They had been talking nicely to the professor. They asked him about the performance he had given before the crowned heads of Europe, and drew him out skilfully. Professor Springer was a great talker on the interesting subject of himself. The juniors hung upon his words, so to speak, as if they were pearls of wisdom. Mr. Springer chatted on, forgetting time and space. It was a chime from the tower that reminded him of business.

"Half-past six!" repeated Tommy Dodd. "Oh, that's all right! The audience won't mind waiting a few minutes."

But the professor rose. "I am quite ready," he remarked. "Where is Master Pankley? I expected to see him here."

The Rookwood juniors exchanged glances. The hour had come. They could hardly hope to keep the professor in ignorance of the fact that he was at Rookwood and not at Bagshot, when he came to give the entertainment. He was bound to make that discovery, and they considered it best to let him make it in the study, where they could deal with him.

"It—it's all right, sir," murmured Tommy odd. "As a matter of fact, we've announced to the audience that it's left till a quarter to seven."

"I have some little preparations to make—"

"The—the fact is— said Tommy Dodd.

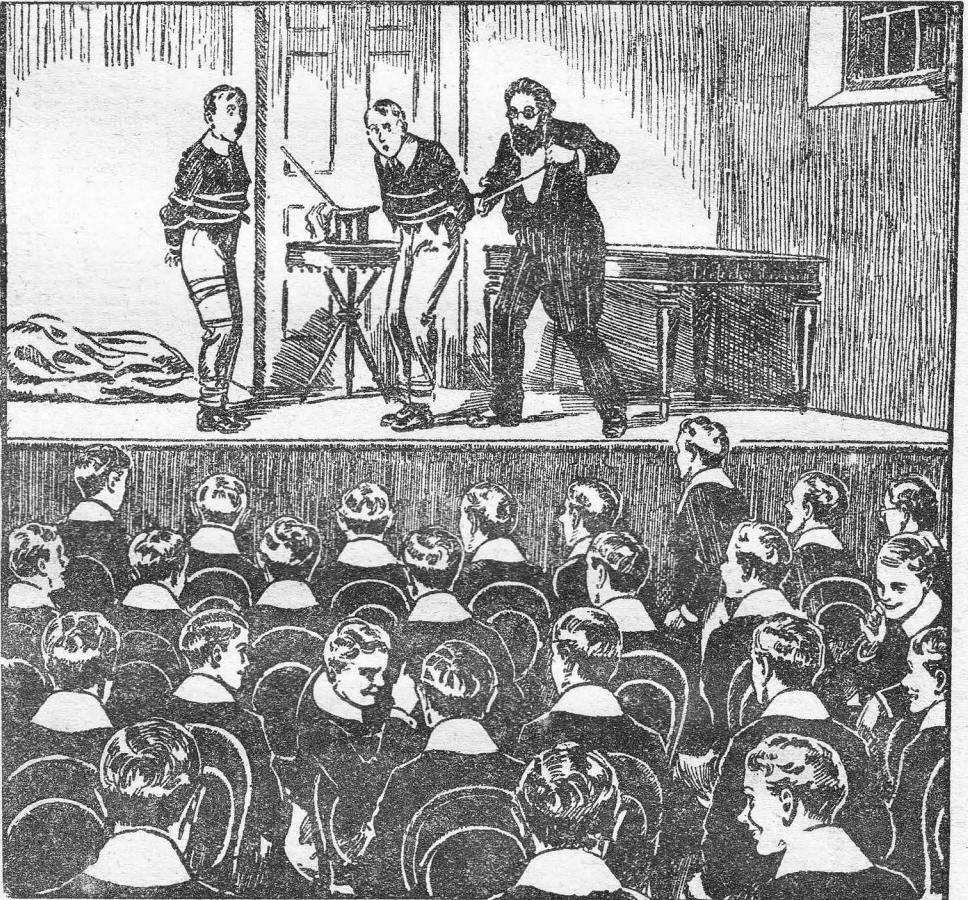
"Yes?"

"Lemme see! Perhaps we'd better settle in advance about your fee, sir, as—as it may be forgotten."

"Just as you like, young gentleman," said the professor. "I should not be likely to forget it, however."

Tommy Dodd laid two currency notes and two shillings on the table. The professor looked at them curiously.

"That's two fees," explained Tommy Dodd. "One for the Rookwood entertainment, and the other for the Bagshot entertainment. I suppose you don't mind giving only one



The "Professor" proceeded to fasten the rope round Pankley when he had finished with Poole. "Kindly watch me closely!" said the conjurer. "There's no deception whatever!" (See page 6.)

there, and they'll see that Pankley doesn't expect you."

"But—but I must really go to Bagshot. I think I had better go at once in the taxi. You are very flattering, young gentlemen, but my engagement—"

"The taxi's gone," said Tommy Dodd cheerfully. "It's been gone a long time. You'd have to walk."

"Oh!"

"Three miles by muddy lanes," said Cook. "I should think you'd lose your way in the dark, sir. Hardly a finger-post the whole way."

"And too dark to see 'em," said Oswald.

"Dear me!"

"And it would take an hour to get the hack from Coombe," said Tommy Dodd, "and it's getting on for seven already. You see, it's too late for the show at Bagshot, anyway, this evening."

The professor was silent for a few moments, and the juniors watched him anxiously.

him in state to the Form-room. To add to the professor's satisfaction, he was informed that the village hack would call to take him back to his hotel without expense to himself. Seldom, or never, had the Great Springer been made such a fuss of.

He was smiling genially as the three Tommies escorted him into the crowded Form-room.

"Here he comes!" shouted Flynn. "Sure, it's the Great Springer himself, begorra! Three cheers for Springer!"

The Rookwood juniors cheered heartily. Professor Springer, quite cheery and elated, went on the platform, and the entertainment commenced.

Tommy Dodd & Co. led the applause at every point, and the entertainment proceeded amid great satisfaction on all sides. Indeed, all things considered—especially the two guineas—the Great Springer was rather pleased than otherwise that he had arrived at Rookwood instead of Bagshot.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. The Vanishing Trick!

PANKLEY & CO. smiled serenely as they led Professor Springer's double into the lecture-room at Bagshot.

The Bagshot bounders felt that they had ample reason to be pleased with themselves. Their satisfaction would have been considerably dashed, however, if they could have guessed the identity that was hidden under the big glasses and bushy whiskers and beard of the professor.

The curtain was drawn back, and the whiskery gentleman appeared on the platform. At the same moment three more members arrived to swell the audience. They were Lovell and Raby and Newcome from Rookwood. They gravely paid their three-pences at the door, and took their seats.

"Some of the bounders have come over," grinned Pankley. "Only three; but every three-penny-bit tells when you're raising a fund. Hallo, Lovell, why didn't you bring Jimmy Silver?"

"Your face worries him, old chap," said Lovell politely.

"Rookwood fathead!"

"Bagshot ass!"

After that exchange of compliments the juniors settled down to watch the performance. The whiskery gentleman on the stage had made his bow to the numerous and distinguished audience.

"Gentlemen," said the professor, in his squeaky voice, "some of you have seen the entertainment as given at the village room. I am about to introduce some variations in the show. The first performance will be that of the Indian Rope Trick. I require the assistance of two members of the audience. Perhaps Masters Pankley and Poole will kindly oblige?"

Up jumped Pankley and Poole at once. With all eyes upon them, they made their way to the stage. From his bag the professor produced a long cord and several folds of thick canvas.

"Here we are, sir!" said Pankley cheerily. "Thank you, young gentlemen! You have no objection to being blindfolded?"

"Oh, no!" said Poole.

"Gentlemen," said the professor, addressing the audience, "you will watch me bind these young gentlemen hand and foot, and roll them up in this canvas. They will disappear entirely from sight. Kindly watch me closely. I desire that there shall be no deception—no deception whatever!"

"I'm jolly well going to watch!" murmured Putter to Higgs. "I don't see how he's going to make 'em disappear!"

"Oh, it's a trick!" said Higgs. "I've heard of that trick before, but I don't know how it's done. Watch him!"

All the Bagshot audience watched the conjurer closely.

He proceeded to fasten the rope round Pankley and Poole. He bound their arms and their legs, till they could not move a limb, and it was noted that he tied the knots with genuine tightness. There was no deception whatever on that point.

Pankley and Poole were a little puzzled, but they submitted cheerfully. Having reduced them to a state of utter helplessness, the conjurer laid them on their backs on the stage. Then he extracted their handkerchiefs from their pockets, and rammed them into their mouths.

Pankley spluttered.

"I—I say, hold on! Is that necessary?"

"Absolutely necessary—the trick could not proceed without it. Silence is absolutely required."

"Oh, all right!"

The handkerchiefs were jammed in, effectually gagging Pankley and Poole. They were reduced effectively to silence. To make sure, as it were, the professor tied twine over their heads with a liberal hand, to make it utterly impossible for them to eject the handkerchiefs. Then he solemnly rolled them up in the canvas, and tied more cord round the bundles, till they resembled rolls of goods.

Then he turned them on their sides, so that they could look into each other's faces. Then he knelt close, and whispered. And what he whispered made their eyes open wide.

"Panky, my son, you're spoofed!"

The cautious whisper of the professor reached only the ears of the two juniors rolled up in the canvas on the stage. Not a sound of it was heard by the audience.

Pankley wriggled spasmodically.

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For in that whisper he recognised a voice, no longer disguised.

He could not speak, he could only glare.

"You bagged the giddy professor," went on Jimmy Silver, in the same sweet whisper. "Well, we've bagged him over your fat heads, my infants. At the present moment he's giving our show at Rookwood."

"Grooogh!"

"I've come here in a new set of whiskers, to make you sit up, dear boys. There's going to be a ripping entertainment—very! By Professor Jimmy Silver, you know."

"Gur-rr!"

"Now, lie quiet, and enjoy yourselves, dear boys!"

"Gur-rr!"

Jimmy Silver covered the flap of the canvas over the heads of Pankley and Poole, and rose, smiling, to his feet.

"Gentlemen," said the professor to the audience, "that is the first trick. Those rolls of canvas will remain as they are until I perform the vanishing trick. I guarantee that the vanishing trick will astonish you. Meanwhile, let us proceed to the next. I require further assistance. Perhaps Master Putter will oblige?"

Master Putter came on the stage.

The professor took a bottle of glue from his bag, and held it up to view.

"Gentlemen, this is glue! Master Putter, you may examine it. There is no deception. You have probably never seen glue coated upon a human head, and then removed by the wave of a wand. Your head, please, Master Putter!"

"I—I say—" stammered Putter. "I—I don't want—"

"Come, come; it is merely a trick! You will understand it afterwards. Your head, please!" squeaked the professor.

Putter advanced his head in a very gingerly manner. The professor solemnly poured the glue over it, and Putter gurgled. The audience watched, spellbound. If the professor could remove that glue by a wave of the wand, he was certainly a most remarkable conjurer. Putter's head fairly steamed with glue.

"Now, sit down, young sir!" said the professor. "A quarter of an hour must elapse when—"

"It will harden in that time!" shrieked Putter. "Look here—"

"Are you performing this trick, or am I?" snapped the professor.

"Grooh!"

"Please sit down!"

Putter sat down, grunting very discontentedly. The glue was running down into his collar, and he felt most uncomfortable.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell & Co. suddenly.

The professor looked sternly at the three Rookwood fellows.

"Young gentlemen, you are interrupting the performance—"

"Shut up, you Rookwood bounders!" called out Higgs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"These three young gentlemen will kindly step outside!" said the professor snappishly. "I shall not proceed otherwise!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome jumped up. They understood. With cheery grins on their faces, they walked out of the lecture-room, and waited for Jimmy Silver in the passage. There they gurgled with glee.

"Oh, what a jape!" murmured Lovell.

"What a stunning jape! Poor old Putter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," the professor was going on, "the next trick must be performed in darkness. I must request that all the lights are turned out. Keep your eyes on the stage, and kindly do not move!"

The lights were turned out for the next trick.

Darkness reigned.

Jimmy Silver slipped from the stage in the darkness, and felt his way along the wall to the door. In a couple of minutes he had joined Raby and Lovell and Newcome in the passage. The opening of the door let a shaft of light into the darkened hall, but it was closed again at once.

"Here we are again!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "How long do you think they will sit in darkness, like the giddy heathen? Time enough for us to visit the studies—what!"

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The four Rookwood juniors ran up the stairs. For the next ten minutes they were very busy. Then they hurried down again.

The passages were deserted—all Bagshot was in the lecture-hall, waiting.

The Fistical Four slipped out into the dark quadrangle. A couple of minutes more, and they were scaling the wall, and dropping into the road. They secured the Coombe Station fly, and proceeded to Rookwood.

In the cab Jimmy Silver removed his disguise, chuckling the while. He was wondering what was happening at Bagshot.

Meanwhile, the Bagshot audience waited patiently in the darkened lecture-hall.

Ten minutes elapsed—fifteen. The audience showed signs of impatience. They were growing fed-up.

"I've jolly well had enough of this!" growled Higgs. "The professor's gone out—I saw him! Why don't he come back?"

"Professor! Professor!" shouted the audience. "Get a move on!"

But there was no sign from the professor. Several more minutes passed, amid impatient exclamations and stamping of feet from the audience. By that time all of them were fed-up. Some of the seniors left their seats, and turned on the lights. Several fellows left the hall in search of the professor. Higgs of the Fourth came rushing back in a few minutes, wildly excited.

"I say, you chaps, he's gone—can't be found anywhere!"

"What!"

"And those Rookwood bounders have gone; and they've wrecked half the Fourth Form studies!" raved Higgs.

"Grooogh!" came from Putter. "Oh, my hair! Oh, I'm sticky! Oh, dear! I'll slaughter that professor! Grooogh!"

"Gurrrr!" came from the rolls of canvas.

Fellows spread all over Bagshot in search of the professor. It was soon evident that he had vanished. The vanishing trick had been performed. There was no doubt about that, but in a very unexpected way.

Higgs ran on the stage, and unrolled Pankley and Poole. Their faces were furious. Higgs dragged the gags from their mouths.

"I say, Pankley, the professor's bolted!"

"Fathead!" roared Pankley. "It wasn't the professor at all; it was Jimmy Silver!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"It was Jimmy Silver, got-up!" shrieked Pankley. "He whispered it to us when he'd got us safe! Oh, you fatheads, if you've let him get away! Get me loose—cut these cords! Quick—quick!"

"Great Scott! But—but— Oh, what— Ah—"

"Get me loose, you idiot!" yelled Pankley. Pankley and Poole were cut loose by the dumbfounded Higgs. They bounded from the stage. The lecture-hall was in an uproar. Some of the seniors were laughing. But Pankley & Co. were furious. Far and wide they searched for Jimmy Silver. But the cheerful Jimmy was far beyond their reach.

The performance was over at Rookwood when the Fistical Four arrived in the cab from Coombe. Professor Springer—the genuine article—took the cab home. The performance had gone splendidly, Tommy Dodd gleefully assured the newly-arrived juniors. And there was a chorus of inquiry as to what had happened at Bagshot.

And when the Fistical Four explained there was a roar of merriment. The description of Pankley and Poole rolled up in the canvas, of Putter with the glue in his hair, of the audience waiting patiently in the dark while the Fistical Four ragged the junior studies—made the Rookwood fellows shriek.

"I rather think," remarked Jimmy Silver, "that Bagshot have been done in the eye this time. I rather think that Rookwood has scored—what! I rather think that Rookwood is top-dog, and Bagshot simply nowhere. And now, you bounders, perhaps next time you'll put your money on your Uncle James!"

And the Co. vowed solemnly—as solemnly as they could at that moment—that never, never again would they doubt the wisdom of their Uncle James.

THE END.

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SOME ASTOUNDING ADVENTURES OF A FAMOUS FILM STAR!



Before the Camera



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

INTRODUCTION.

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

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

The actors of the Eclair Film Company are in a saloon one evening after a very exciting day, when two ranchmen start a quarrel. Just as one of them draws his revolver to shoot the other, Eddie jumps in and knocks it out of his hand.

A Wonderful Display.

IN a second all was tension. Every cowboy there drew his gun and awaited eventualities; the cinema artistes measured the distance to the nearest door or window, and Dick Fordyce, his hand in a sling, looked upwards appraisingly at the single oil lamp with which the saloon was lit, his intention being to douse the glim at the first sign of trouble.

"Come, come!" said Eddie. "You two chaps are really too good pals to quarrel. You're both to blame, and, after all, it was only fun. You, Black, put treacle in Red's jack-boots, and in retaliation he slitched up your trousers. So you're quits. There's no call for gun play, so why do it. If you kill Red, Black, the sheriff's posse will only grab you and send you to the chair. Shake hands on it, boys, and live in peace and harmony."

Stella added her pleading to that of the acrobat, and a couple of the other women artistes added their pleas to her own, and in the end Black Benson allowed himself to be calmed down, and Red Rufus was persuaded to overlook the fact that his comrade had pulled a gun on him with intent to cause him bodily harm.

"Yew're sure plumb right, miss," said Red, when Stella pointed out that it was much better to be friends than enemies. "An' me an' Black's allus been matey since he first come to ther rancho. So I'm willin' ter let bygones be 'as-bins, if Black's ther same; but my conditions is that Black sings us a song to show there's no ill-feelin'."

Stella snatched at the straw of hope, for the air was still electrical.

"Yes, please, Black!" she said. "Do sing for us! I'll play your accompaniment."

Black removed his hard eyes from those of his companion and team-mate, Red, and gazed softly into Stella's face.

"If you ses so, missie, it sure goes," said the gigantic cowboy. "But I 'as my conditions, too, and them is that ef I sings, Red thar gives us one of his step-dances. If Red agrees, thar's a go atween us, and no ill-feelin' at all, an' thar's me 'and on it!"

Stella precipitated matters by immediately moving over to the piano and striking a few chords, after which Black burst into a mellow

baritone, and declaimed a song as old as the hills—one of the old ballads that will never die. Scarcely had the applause died down than Red stepped on to the little improvised stage, and executed a clog-dance that would have done credit to any music-hall stage, and when he drew to a close Stella herself lifted up her rounded contralto, and made every man in that assembly her slave for life by the haunting pathos and sweetness of her song.

"Say, that's good! What about a concert—a proper one?" said Eddie, when she had rendered the inevitable encore. "Everybody to sing or do some stunt of some kind for the amusement of the others, and nobody excepted. What say, lads and lassies, is it a go?"

It was a go. The barman shut up his liquor-selling, and brought a couple more oil-lamps, and the fear of a shindy was forgotten quite in the entertainment that followed.

It was Fordyce who showed these case-hardened gamblers just how many weird and wonderful tricks were possible with a pack of cards, so that men swore that they would never gamble with him, since his slight-of-hand alone would ensure his winning. It was Terence who brought—not a camera, this time, but a banjo, and with this as accompaniment he played and sang strange, heart-stirring songs, of the quality which has since come to be called "ragtime," but which was then old to the negroes on the cotton plantations of the Southern United States. And feet itched to dance to the syncopations, and voices rose and fell in some of the oldest and best-loved choruses in the world, so that Terence had to play till his fingers were sore and his wrists so stiff that he declared he would never be able to turn the camera-handle the next day.

And so it went on—some sang, and some of the cowboys helped—some recited, some danced. And then Eddie Polo, having slipped into his circus garb, which always accompanied him on his travels with the Eclair Company, did hand-balances and back-lifts and neck-rolls and various acrobatic tricks that delighted to the nth degree these strong and rugged men of the plains, and delighted no less his fellow-artists, who had never had the privilege of seeing the lad perform in the circus before he had joined the producing concern.

They rose at him, for the men already loved him, since his quick wit had smoothed over an episode that had threatened to end in tragedy. They demanded more, so he told them the story of his chase of the train, and his feelings at the end of that run. He mentioned to them the strange, bearded horseman who had suddenly appeared from out of the tree belt, fired two shots, and then ridden like a madman over the skyline. He asked them if they could help him in bringing that man to justice; and they there and then swore that they would rope in the miscreant if it took them a month of Sundays.

And by this time Eddie's muscles had received their needed rest, and he started again on a new stunt, just to show them what could be done. He sprang upwards, and caught the edge of one of the rafters, and showed them feats of skill and strength and balancing. He drew himself up with one hand, with two haps; he hung by his fingernails, his teeth, his knees—almost his eyelids. He twisted and turned and writhed, and threw somersaults in the air, each more

thrilling than the last, and, apparently, all the time at the risk of his neck. Then he started what he called the grand tour of the room.

This consisted of nothing more or less than swinging from one rafter to the next, using each as a standing trapeze, and circling a somersault or two between letting go of one and catching hold of the other. He dived and twisted as well as he had ever done for the cord in Busto's great tent, and when he reached the far end of the room his costume was dusty and bedraggled, and his face and hands covered with the grime which years of neglect had allowed to accumulate on the rafters.

The house rose at him—Eddie afterwards swore that he could feel the rafter on which he stood shiver with the volume of noise—and they demanded that he should do it again. They had scarcely breathed during his daring passage above their heads, and when he at last bowed, and started back again, they again held their breath.

Once he missed—with one hand only—his grasp, and the startled intake of breath in the audience was a hiss. And when at last he stood on the platform and bowed his arms and legs were aching, and his ears almost split with the roar of cheering that went up.

"That's a real man yew're got thar, guv'nor!" said one of the cowmen to Morrison. "Say, let 'im come and put in a few weeks with us on the ranch, and we'll show 'im 'ow ter cast a lariat and shoot with a real gun!"

Morrison smiled.

"I don't think he needs to do that," said the producer. "He's sure the dandiest man and the swiftest on the draw that ever wore cold iron in his hip-pocket or in a holster, and if you had the six spot of any suit of cards nailed up at the end of the room where he could see it he'd sure knock five pips out of it, with each hand! Ask him, and he'll maybe show you how to shoot."

The cowman unthatched a formidable Colt's revolver, and handed it up to Eddie, who took it with a look of wonder. Then, without a word, the cowman marched to the other end of the room, and over the swing-door he nailed the six of diamonds.

"Say, Eddie Polo," said the cowman, clambering on a chair, "I ain't callin' no bluff o' yourn, and seekin' trouble at all, but this yere boss o' yourn 'e ses as how yew're about the dandiest chap as ever squinted atween the sights of a gun. That little bit of iron o' mine as I've 'anded ter yew is sure some dead straight shooter, and I'd be 'bliged if yew would give me a real 'shibition of yewre shootin' powers, or yewre boss yere will 'ave ter eat his words. Shoot, boy—attaboyee!"

Eddie grinned, and wrinkled his nose in amusement. He had, it was true, gained some reputation for swift and accurate shooting in his early days, and he had not neglected to keep himself in practice during his time with Busto's travelling circus. But he didn't feel very fit just then, and, besides, his recent passage across the rafters of the saloon had not tended to make his nerve any the better or his hand more steady. The light was not good, either, and the spots on

that six of diamonds seemed so tiny and small in the distance.

"Well, I'm not in practice," he began. "I haven't held a gun for weeks, so you must bear with me if I make a failure of the test. If Mr. Morrison there has been swagging about my prowess, he's been leg-pulling, I'm afraid. You see, he's never seen me shooting. I may say, ladies and gentlemen, that I once won a spoon in a shooting-match—a wooden spoon for the lowest score. Nevertheless, things being what they are and the night still being young, I'll now proceed to show you how the bullet got into the elephant, with illustrations—crack!"

He had fired as he spoke, and as every head slowed round on its neck to gaze at the target at the other end of the room, the top-left-hand pip of the six of diamonds lost its shape.

"That's a fluke," commented Eddie. "Really, I don't know how it happened. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind appreciation of a happy accident! I hope to do worse next time!"

Again the pistol cracked, and another red spot was wiped out. Then came two cracks

or three of the cowman. "That's shore our sheriff yew're 'oldin' up!"

"The drinks are not on me, nor is the onus of explanation," said Eddie. "This may be your sheriff, and as much entitled to see into and investigate any gun-play that's going on. But while I'm at the right end of the gun, I'm just going to ask your sheriff to explain one thing, or, rather, two. The first is, why did he shoot at two of my film-producing company this morning? And the second is, why did he ride away like a madman after he'd done so?"

The New Sheriff!

THERE was a swift hiss of intaken breath as the company indicated their surprise. Though most of them had heard of the shooting, few of them had thought that the bearded shooter was the sheriff. But, as the bearded one continued to look straight into Eddie Polo's eyes, he gave a short laugh, and waved a hand airily.

"Drop that!" said Eddie. "This isn't any laughing matter, as you'll find if your ex-

shot would skeer stiff that engineer. When I sees him a-fallin' from the footplate, I thought it was bluff. So I tried the second round at the chap what was a-fightin' with the victim—that was yew, I s'pose—and he dropped, too. I would have ridden across to yew crowd and made the usual interdict-shuns if I'd a-bin allowed, but when I fired the second time, that blamed broncho put her ears back and showed the whites of her eyes, and afore I could jerk back the lever to reload, she was off across the sage with me a-cingin' to her neck for dear life. And blame me if she didn't just tote me miles out into the prairie, whar there ain't nothin' only alkali and sage brush, and then calmly chuck-me off her back, and bestow a friendly kick on me afore trottin' back to rejoin the sharp that sold her to me. And I've had to walk back here, or I'd have told you all this afore now."

A great shout of laughter went up at the sheriff's explanation, and after a few of the leading citizens of Alkali Springs had vouched for the bearded man, Eddie permitted him to lower his arms, and stow away the heavy Colts he had held aloft so long. Then the acrobat held out his hand.

"I sure forgive you this time, sheriff," he said, "if Bobbin and Fordyce, who received the real hurt, don't mind. But your impulsive action nearly caused me to be made a mess of by the train-wheels, and I'm not figuring to die in such a messy fashion just as life's getting interesting."

It was some ten minutes later, having regarded the lad with steady eyes for quite a time, that the sheriff made a proposal to Eddie Polo that almost cut his film career short there and then.

"Say, boy," said the elder man, "being sheriff of this 'ere district ain't all kid's play, yew understand, an' I'm gettin' a bit too old an' stiff in the joints ter carry out me jewties prop'ly, or else yew'd never 'ave got thet drop on me as yew did jest a while back. I wants an assistant, I dew, and I'm offerin' yew thet post here and now, right prompto. There's plenty of excitement, good grub, a decent screw, and the backing of the Yewunited States Government that goes with the job, and I'd love ter 'ave a smart young chap like yew as me deputy. A chap what was as smart on thet drew as yew, and as handy on thet target, wouldn't he like my last deputy, as was shot all to bits by a gang o' bad men down at the Crimson Halter, thet other saloon of thist district. We give 'im a real slap-up funeral, we did, but thet didn't round up thet gang, and it ain't pleasin' me none ter know as they're runnin' round thet country wild, waiting fer a smart man ter rope 'em in, and sayin' as I'm gettin' a dodderin' ole grandpa as ought ter be tucked snugly away in thet graveyard. Well, me lad, there's an offer fer yew! Are yew on?"

"The lad is not on, Mr. Sheriff," butted in Mr. Morrison, from behind the bearded man. "I dare say he would make an ideal deputy for you, but I have him destined for something greater than that. Under you, his name might strike terror into a little district round Alkali Springs, but under my direction his name will be known and loved all over the world—in time. Of course, if he likes to break his contract with me and join you, I cannot say anything, though I should, of course, have a remedy at law, but I don't think he will do that."

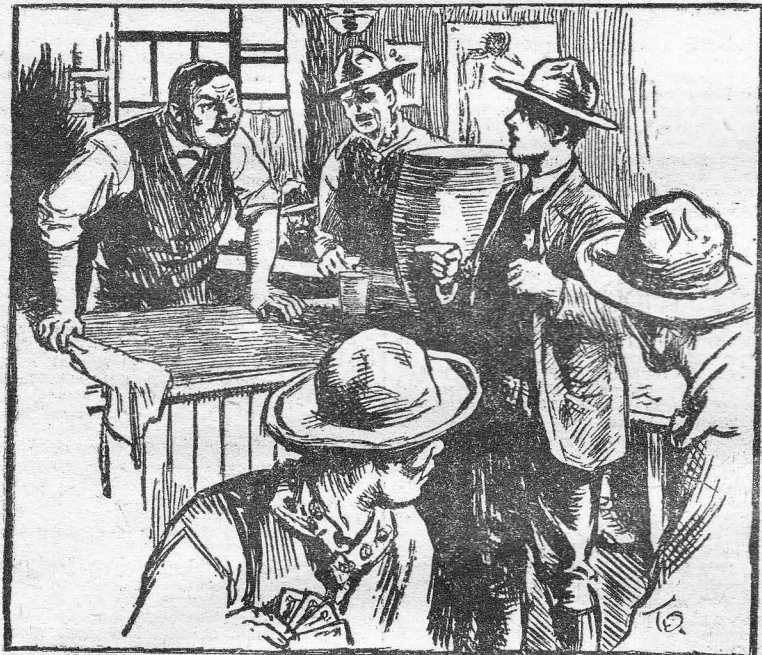
Morrison turned to Eddie. "What have you got to say about it, Polo?" he asked.

"Not much," Eddie said. "I dare say there are things in a deputy-sheriff's life that might appeal to me, such as the risk, and the riding, and the shooting, but in my present capacity I get my fair share of them, besides other advantages. So I'm afraid, much as I appreciate the sheriff's offer, I must decline it with thanks!"

"Here, not so fast, yunker!" put in the sheriff. "If yew won't take on thet job permanent, what about taking it on temp'ry? This 'ere gang at the Crimson Halter wants cleanin' up bad, and I can't do it outer me own stack o' tricks. So, if yew won't help me fer keeps, what about helpin' me a little while, so's we can get all square?"

"I'd love to," said Eddie, looking at Morrison. "Well, we've only a couple more scenes to shoot," said the director, "and I think we've all earned a holiday. You can go ahead, Polo, on condition that you don't get shot up, and maybe the situations you get into will make material for another play for us."

(Continued on page 18.)



Eddie turned back his coat and showed his badge. "I'm the deputy-sheriff of this district, and what I says goes! If you let that young Hymans gamble in this saloon any more I'll shoot the whole lot of you in gaol!"

(See page 18.)

in succession, and the four pips at the corner of the card showed as round holes.

And as the fourth shot rang out the door opened, and a face, covered with a long, black beard, appeared in the aperture. And below the face was a pair of hands, each holding a long-barrelled Colt, pointing in the direction of the gathering.

"Sorry to intrude, gents, all—" commenced the stranger.

He got no further.

"Say, put those hands of yours right sky-high above your head, stranger!" said Eddie, snapping off a fifth round, which hit the door just above the other's head, and caused him to hurriedly elevate his hands, guns and all, into the air.

And as he did so a great burst of laughter went up.

"Say, young feller," said the stranger, with a twinkle in his eye, "you've shore got the drop on me! But I'm the sheriff of this 'ere town, an' as I've bin away all day, and 'earin' gun-shots inside this saloon, I've jest looked in to see if there's anythin' appenin' that's agin the law. If there ain't, waal, let me put me 'ands down an see the show; if there is, waal, I don't see as I can butt in much with my shooters pointin' to 'eaven, can I?"

"The drinks are on you, Polo," said two

planation isn't satisfactory. Well, what about it?"

The bearded one composed his face, and then, singling out a man in the audience, called him to his side.

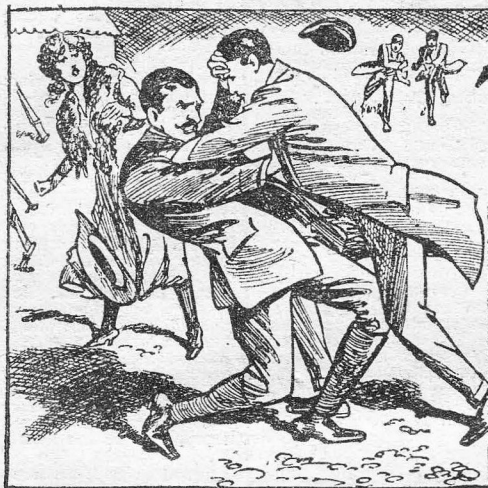
"Mike, yew young scoundrel," said the sheriff, "this is yew'r fault, me lad, and it's yew'r bones I'm a-goin' ter take it outer after I'm through with the show. Them cartridges what you put in my rifle wasn't what I told you to put in, and, as a result, I've got to be tried fer a-shootin' up two men. An' if I gets sent to the chair, it's my ghost as'll haunt yew all the rest of yewr born-days."

The sheriff turned to Eddie Polo, whose gun-muzzle had never wavered an inch.

"I tole thet boy," he said, nodding at the individual he had called Mike, "to load my Winchester with three rounds o' blank cartridge at the top, as I was a-goin' out to break in a new broncho I'd bought. Jest as I was a-gettin' reel busy exercisin' that broncho and wonderin' how I was a-goin' ter make her stand still whiles I did some shootin' from her back, ther train comes steamin' along. Then I sees a couple of chaps what I took to be toughs a-strugglin' with another young chap, and, thinks I to meself, 'This is where yew takes a hand in the game, Bill.' So I ropes round the cayuse, and lets fly at the engine, thinking that the noise of the

The Head's Secret

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars, GEORGE WINGATE of the Sixth, and Dr. LOCKE.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Nugent Knows!

MADMOISELLE ROSINA looked, as the circus posters stated it, a child equestrienne, but her age was probably sixteen. She rode wonderfully well, standing up on the horse's back with the light agility of a fairy.

A circus had come to Friardale, and Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Tom Brown, the chums of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, had taken the first opportunity to visit the show.

They had asked Wingate, the captain of the school, for passes, but for some reason he had seemed unwilling to grant them. But Harry Wharton and his chums managed to get the passes at last—but only for three.

And Wingate was the only other Greyfriars fellow they could see.

"By Jove! What a ripping rider!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Splendid!" The girl seemed to have no eyes for the audience.

She made the circuit of the ring, and then the clown and Signor Benson held up paper hoops for her to jump through.

She passed through the "balloons" with ease and grace, alighting surely on the back of the galloping horse.

"Well, she's a ripper!" said Nugent. "A mere kid, too!"

"First-rate!" "That ugly chap can't be her father," said Wharton, looking puzzled. "But the bills say Monsieur Felix and his daughter, Mademoiselle Rosina."

"A grape from a thorn!" grinned Tom Brown.

"By Jove—yes!" The chums watched the circus girl with great interest. There was one thing they observed—which was observed by a good many more in the audience. The girl seemed to shrink involuntarily when she came near the French rider. He might be her father, but there was no love lost between them.

Harry Wharton looked round at Wingate as the performance ended—why, he could hardly have told. The captain of Greyfriars did not meet his glance. He was rising from his seat, and he left the spot without looking in the direction of the chums.

"Something up with Wingate," said Frank. "He hasn't been himself all day, or yesterday, either, for that matter. Linley told me he was kicking wild at footer practice yesterday."

"Wingate was?"

"Yes."

"Then he must be ill. I wonder—"

Wharton did not finish. He wondered whether the unusual manner of the Greyfriars captain was in any way connected with Monsieur Felix. What had meant the hard, fierce glance that Wingate had bestowed upon the French rider?

The audience cheered the performers loudly as they retired; but the greater part of the applause was for mademoiselle.

That, Harry believed, was not wholly pleasant to Monsieur Felix for he saw the rider give the girl a very dark look, as she paused to bow her acknowledgment to the cheering.

"Come!" he exclaimed, roughly seizing her rein.

And they moved out of the arena. "Rotter!" said Harry Wharton.

"What-ho!" said Frank. "I don't like that chap's looks. Hallo, here's the giddy juggler!"

And the juniors were soon interested in the new turn.

A little later Monsieur Felix reappeared, but without mademoiselle.

He was in a new turn this time, doing acrobatic feats on the trapeze, feats which he performed passably well; and which were, at all events, good enough to satisfy an un-exacting country audience.

He was the last turn.

When it was over the audience filed out, and the Greyfriars juniors managed to meet the Courtfield fellows in the crowd.

When the juniors of the rival schools met there were frequently rows, but on this occasion all, as the poet says, was calm and bright.

"Hallo!" said Trumper, with a grin. "Ripping rider that mademoiselle, isn't she?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Fanthy meeting you," said Solly Lazarus.

"I thay, that young lady is thimply thtunning, you know. Do you chaps know her?"

Wharton looked at him in astonishment. "Know her!" he exclaimed. "How should we know her? Never heard of her before this evening, Lazarus."

Solly chuckled.

"Thumbody at Greyfriars knows her," he replied.

"Oh! Who's that?"

"You don't know?"

"Not a bit."

"Your thkipper," said Lazarus.

"Wingate!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yeth, rather!"

Wharton looked greatly puzzled.

"Blest if I know how, then!" he said. "I suppose you're pulling my leg, Lazarus. Of course, it's no bizney of mine if he does know her; but I don't see how he could."

Solly grinned.

"I've them them," he explained.

"Seen them?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yeth, rather!"

"Where, Solly?"

"Walking on the thands," said Solly.

"Yetherday they were walking by the thee, and talking. Yeth, rather!"

"Walking by the sea and talking!" said Wharton, in amazement.

"Yeth; quite like old friendth, you know."

"Blest if I can make it out!" Nugent burst into a sudden yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His chums stared at him.

"What's the matter, Frank?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass—"

"Oh, he's off his thilly rocker!" said Lazarus. "Come on, you boulderth; we shall be late home if we don't thpeed up!"

"Good-night, you Greyfriars chumps!"

"Good-night, you Courtfield duffers!"

And with those polite valedictions, they parted. Frank Nugent was still laughing. Harry Wharton and Tom Brown stared at him.

"What on earth's biting you?" Tom demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two juniors seized Frank by the shoulders, and ran him out of the tent, and jammed him against a caravan. They pinned him there by main force.

"Now explain, you silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton wrathfully. "What are you cackling about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"Oh, bump him!"

Bump!

Frank was bumped against the waggon. One bump was enough.

"It's about Wingate! He knows mademoiselle—ha, ha, ha! That's why he has been mucking up footer lately—that's why he's been bad-tempered to nice, civil, obliging juniors in the Remove—ha, ha, ha!"

"Why?" howled Wharton and Brown together.

"Because he spoons."

"What!"

"Hey!"

"Spoons!" roared Frank. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Wharton. "As if Wingate would be such an ass!"

"But he is—ha, ha, ha! Didn't you see the killing looks he was giving old Felix—I expect Felix has been doing the heavy father bizney, and warning him off!"

"You ass!"

"Wingate's turned seventeen," said Frank, grinning. "He's old enough to make an ass of himself; lots of chaps do at seventeen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it's the giddy springtime, you know. In the spring the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of—"

"Rot!"

"Exactly! The poet said 'love'—but it means the same."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Look here, you ass, Wingate's got far too much sense to be spoons on anybody, at his age," he said; "and that girl looked awfully nice—not at all a spoony sort. What you want is a jolly good bumping, Frank Nugent."

"You see if I'm not right," grinned Frank. "You mark my words, as they say in the newspaper serials."

"But, look here—"

"That's why Wingate didn't want us to come to the circus. He thought we should spot it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton started a little. There certainly did seem to be something in that view of the case. But he shook his head.

"I don't believe it, Frank."

"Rats! I do."

"You're an ass!"

"Thanks! Same to you, and many of them."

"I tell you—"

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

The juniors had stayed behind the crowd, and the ground was pretty well clear. Most of the naphtha lamps were out. Excepting near the supper-tent, where the circus company had gathered to refresh themselves with bread and cheese and beer after their labours.

Suddenly, from the direction of a caravan

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a short distance away, there came a sharp exclamation—in a voice they knew.

"You hound!"
The juniors simply jumped.
It was Wingate's voice—Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton Takes a Hand!

HARRY WHARTON and his chums stood in doubt as they heard the voice of Wingate through the gloom. It was followed by the sounds of a struggle, and that decided them. They hurried to the spot.

Wingate and Lasalle were reeling to and fro in a savage struggle.

Mademoiselle stood by, her hands clasped, her face white with fear. She feared for Wingate, and perhaps for the Frenchman. Wingate, with his blood up as it was, was likely to do the man some injury.

The sound of the struggle had brought others to the spot as well as the chums of the Greyfriars. Fat and oily Signor Benson came rolling out of the supper-tent, and the clown came up with a naphtha lamp in his hand to show light. Two or three more of the circus hands came up, but without any apparent intention of interfering. They regarded the matter as a fight that was interesting to watch, that was all.

"Oh, stop them!" panted Rosina.
"To and fro, to and fro went the reeling combatants.

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried the girl.
Wharton looked dubiously at his comrades.

"Shall we interfere?" he murmured.
"Tom Brown shook his head decidedly.

"No. Let Wingate give him a hiding."
"But he's her father."

"Can't be helped. We can't interfere, anyway. Wingate would give us a jolly good licking if we meddled."

"What ho!" said Frank Nugent.
Wharton was silent. But the time came for interference. Wingate stumbled over a rope in the grass, and went reeling backwards. The Frenchman was quick to take advantage of the stumble.

He threw his whole weight upon the Greyfriars captain, and Wingate went heavily to the earth, with the circus rider on top of him.

Wingate's grasp relaxed as he fell. Lasalle was kneeling over him now, his eyes blazing with fury, and his clenched fists beat into the schoolboy's face.

"You coward!" shouted Harry Wharton.
He sprang forward and grasped the Frenchman by the shoulders, and dragged him backwards off Wingate.

"You won't hit a chap when he's down, you dirty coward!" he exclaimed.

The Frenchman snarled, and turned upon him.

Wingate was upon his feet in a moment. The cowardly blows had somewhat dazed him, but he was quite fit to go on.

"This way, you hound!" he exclaimed.
"Let that lad alone!"

Signor Benson pushed between them.

"Old on!" he said. "There's enough of this! We shall 'ave the perlice about us afore we know where we are."

Benson had seen that Lasalle did not wish to go on. The man's drunken fury was spent, and he was secretly afraid of the handsome, sturdy captain of Greyfriars. He was glad enough now to keep behind the portly figure of the circus proprietor.

Wingate dropped his hands at once.

"I would like to wipe up the ground with the brute," he said, "but I'm willing to chuck it. I didn't come here for a row."

He looked at Rosina.

"Oh, go, go!" murmured the girl.
Wingate hesitated.

"Look here, Mr. Benson, if that is your name," he exclaimed, "I interfered to stop that hound from ill-using Mademoiselle Rosina. It's your duty to see that he doesn't do it; and I warn you that if he does there will be trouble. If I can't protect her, the law can, and I will see what informing the police will do."

The signor's fat, red face became a trifle less red.

Signor Benson had ample reasons for not wishing to come into too close a contact with the law. The law to Signor Benson was a troublesome thing it was always very advisable to avoid. It was a thing that interfered most exasperatingly to prevent a boy from working fourteen hours a day, or a child from being exposed to the dangers of a risky mid-air act. The less Signor Benson saw of the law the better he liked it.

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"It's all right, young gentleman," said Signor Benson quite eagerly. "He's been at the drink; that's what it is. I'll look arter him. He won't play them games no more, I assure you, or he'll get the boot from this circus!"

Wingate nodded shortly, and, raising his cap to Rosina, he turned away.

The juniors followed him in.

Benson turned angrily to Felix Lasalle when they had gone. His fat face was very angry.

"You drunken fool!" he exclaimed. "That young fellow might have brought dozens of his schoolfellows to see the show, and you must quarrel with him."

Lasalle muttered an oath.

"He attacked me!" he snarled.

"Yes, because you were being a brute again. And haven't I told you you're not to touch mademoiselle?" shouted the signor.

"I'll do as I like!"

"You won't!" You won't lay a finger on her again!" said the signor. "Mademoiselle is more use in the show than you are, if you want to know the truth; and if I have too much of your cheek, I'll fire you, my man, and keep her here."

And the signor strode away, puffing and blowing with anger.

Lasalle gave the girl a deadly look; but he did not speak to her again, nor did he approach her. Rosina went quietly into her van. Meanwhile, the Greyfriars fellows had reached the lane, and were tramping towards the school. Wingate was very silent and moody, and the juniors did not care to speak.

Greyfriars was looping up before them in the gloom, when Wingate spoke at last.

"Thank you for interfering as you did, Wharton," he said abruptly.

"That's all right, Wingate."

"Look here, I don't want you kids to jaw about this in the school," said Wingate, pausing, and looking at them directly. "The fellows will make a lot of jaw about it if you do. You know, I suppose, now that I'm acquainted with Mademoiselle Rosina?"

"Yes."

"I met her a long time ago," said Wingate. "It was in the summer vac last year. I happened to go to the circus—it was down in Devonshire then—and afterwards I interfered on an occasion something like the one to-night. The Frenchman is a brute, and—

But you understand. I knocked him down. That was how I came to know mademoiselle. I'm explaining this so that you won't be curious about it. We are just good friends. But if the fellows got hold of it they would say it was a case of spoons, or some rot of that sort. And I don't care to have mademoiselle's name talked about in that way. You understand?"

"Yes, Wingate."

"Then keep your mouths shut about what happened after the performance."

"We'll do it," said Tom Brown.

"Honour bright!" added Harry.

"Thank you!"

And they entered the school. The juniors had over-stayed their time, but returning in company with the captain made that all right. Gosling, the porter, gave them a grim look as he opened the gate. They were very late, and he could not report them—which was a great disappointment for Gosling.

Wingate left them at the door of the School House, and the juniors joined their Form, who were going up to bed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Accused!

IT was two days later that the bomb fell.

Harry Wharton & Co. had noticed that Wingate had been out of the school a good deal during the last two days, and, what was more, they had noticed that Loder and Carne, the two bullying prefects of the Sixth, had followed him.

Harry Wharton had warned Wingate of the fact, but the captain had laughed the matter aside. But the day after the warning had been uttered Wharton saw Loder and Carne come in from the village, and Wingate came in a little later, with a moody brow. He passed Harry Wharton as he came into the School House, and nodded to him. He paused to speak after a moment.

"I think you were right, Wharton," he remarked, with a bitter smile. "Loder followed me this evening. But I don't see how he can make mischief."

Wharton looked anxious.

"Would it hurt you if he reported it to the Head?" he asked, in a low voice.

"He would not do that!" he exclaimed.

"I don't know. I saw him come in with Carne," said Harry. "He went almost directly to the Head's study. I thought I'd mention that, in case—"

"Master Wingate?"

It was Trotter, the page. The Greyfriars captain turned towards him.

"What is it, Trotter?"

"Ead want to see you in his study, Master Wingate, immediate," said Trotter. "I was to tell you immediate you come in, sir."

"Very well," said Wingate quietly; and Trotter departed.

The Greyfriars captain gave Wharton a glance.

"Thank you, lad," he said. "I suppose you were right; you seem to see more into Loder than I do. But I don't see how he can hurt me, even if he has sneaked about me. But thank you, lad!"

He strode away towards the Head's study. Nugent and Tom Brown joined Wharton, who was looking clouded and anxious.

"Wingate's in deep waters just now," Tom Brown remarked. "I wonder whether those rotters will be able to do him any harm? It was awfully reckless of him to get mixed up with the circus people as he has done."

Wharton nodded.

"But Wingate's as good as gold, and true blue!" he exclaimed. "I wish we could help him. I wonder if we could?"

And the three juniors put their heads together, to discuss the matter and think it over.

How could they help Wingate, the idol of all the juniors at Greyfriars? That he was in trouble, growing worse, was no secret to them. But what could they do?

Wingate strode to the Head's study without a pause. If Loder had made any accusation against him, the Greyfriars captain did not mean to be slow in meeting it. He tapped at the Head's door, and Dr. Locke bade him enter.

Wingate entered, and closed the door behind him. Then, with a firm and steady glance, he met the troubled gaze of the Head.

"You wished me to come, sir, I understand," he said.

"Yes, Wingate."

"Well, sir, I am here."

The Head looked long and hard at Wingate. There was a sad shadow on his kind old face.

It seemed impossible that the accusation brought against this brave-looking, frank, open-hearted lad could be true. Yet even now in Wingate's face, as the Head looked at it, were plainly to be seen signs of the mental struggle he had gone through—signs that his life was not following its usual calm and peaceful course.

"Wingate, I have to speak to you upon a serious matter—a most serious matter," said the Head slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"I will send for Loder."

The Head touched the bell, and Trotter was despatched to fetch the prefect.

A bitter smile curled Wingate's lips.

It was Loder, then. Harry Wharton had been right in his warning.

"So Loder has brought an accusation against me, sir?" he asked.

"He has informed me of something, Wingate."

"Very well! I have no doubt I can answer it."

"I hope so, Wingate—I sincerely hope so," said the Head earnestly. "I have always had faith in you, and it would be a terrible shock to discover that I had misplaced my trust."

Wingate met his eyes firmly.

"That will never be the case, sir."

Loder entered.

He avoided Wingate's glance, keeping his eyes towards the Head. He was accompanied by Carne—partly to bear witness for him, partly to support him by backing him up through what was likely to be something of an ordeal. It was not easy to face Wingate's scornful eyes, and lie.

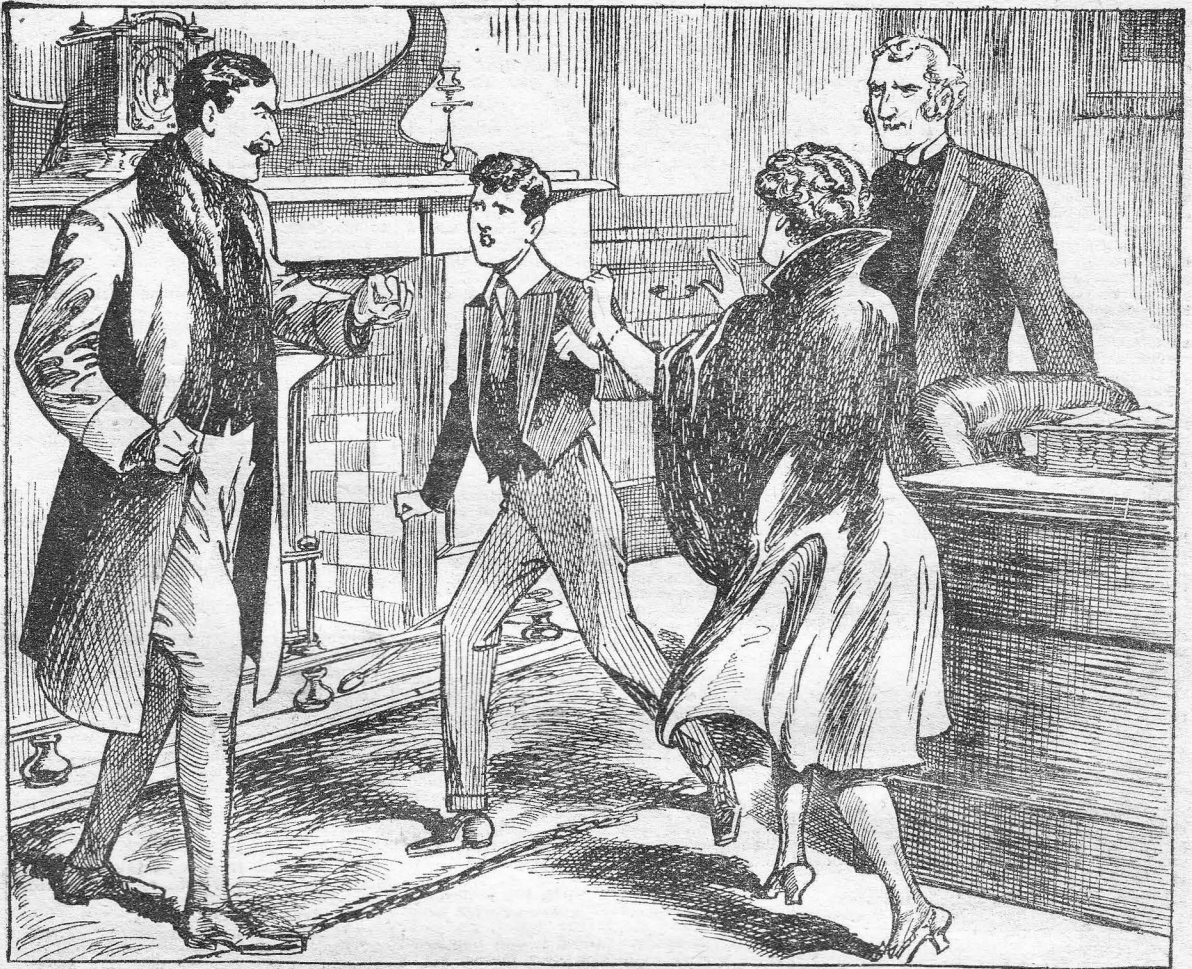
"Loder, Wingate is here. I wish you to repeat what you have told me, and we will hear whether Wingate has any explanation to give."

"Very well, sir. I hope," said Loder, "that Wingate understands that I have spoken only from my sense of duty as a prefect, and not in the least from any personal feeling towards himself."

"That is quite understood," said the Head. "I am sure Wingate gives you credit for the best motives."

Wingate's lip curved.

"I give Loder credit for his true motives."



"I go—but I take Mademoiselle!" Lasalle exclaimed. He stepped forward with clenched fists. But Harry Wharton jumped between the Frenchman and the Head. "You will tackle me first, you cur!" he cried. (See chapter 5.)

at all events!" he exclaimed. "But let him come to the point."

The Head raised his hand. "I will question you, Loder. You learned that Wingate was worried by some trouble that he kept secret from the other boys."

"Yes, sir." "You found that an attachment he had formed with a woman in a circus was the subject for jests among the juniors?"

"Precisely." "You looked into the matter with the view of clearing Wingate in the eyes of his school-fellows?"

"Quite so, sir." "My motive also, sir," said Carne.

"Yes! And both of you saw Wingate at the circus, on friendly terms with people of disreputable appearance. You saw that he had really formed a friendship with an adventuress, much older than himself, and that he was engaged in a quarrel with drunken ruffians of her account."

"Yes, sir." Wingate's face blazed with rage. He made a step towards Loder and Carne, his fists clenched.

"You liars!" he shouted. The doctor rose to his feet. "Wingate!"

"They are lying, sir! Mademoiselle Rosina is not older than I am—she is younger. She is a lady, sir—a really splendid girl. And—"

"Nonsense, Wingate!" "And these lying cads know it, sir!" "Wingate!"

"You ought not to have believed them, sir, you ought not to have listened to them in such a story!" shouted Wingate, quite beside himself now and reckless of what he said.

The Head turned pale. In all his career he had never been spoken

to like that before, and it was no wonder that even his kind temper failed.

Loder and Carne exchanged a look. Wingate was playing their game as if he wished it to succeed as much as they did.

"Wingate, how dare you!" gasped the Head.

"I mean it, sir—I tell you—"

"Enough!" "I tell you, sir—"

Dr. Locke waved his hand. "Silence, Wingate! You must, indeed,

have changed, when you dare to treat your headmaster in this manner—else I have always been deceived in you. Wingate, I am disgusted! Your violence leaves me only one conclusion to draw—that you are guilty; that you have really fallen into low associations, and—"

"It is not true, sir! I—"

"Silence! Wingate, if it were any lad I had respected less, I should expel him immediately from Greyfriars. With you, I hardly know what course to take. But, in the first place, you must promise me never, under any circumstances, to see this woman again—never to speak to this adventuress."

"She is not an adventuress."

"Will you give me the promise required, Wingate?"

"I cannot, sir!"

"What!" "It is impossible, sir!"

"You refuse?" said the Head, in a terrible voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Go to your room at once, Wingate! Go to your room, and pack your box to-night. You shall not remain in this school another day! You are expelled from Greyfriars!"

Wingate gave the Head one look, and then strode from the study. He was too angry to feel, for the moment, the full force of the blow that had fallen upon him.

"Leave me now," said the Head briefly to the two seniors.

"Yes, sir."

Loder and Carne quitted the study. In the passage they almost gasped. Their triumph, their complete scoring, had almost taken their breath away. They had been far from expecting so complete and so swift a victory.

"My hat!" said Loder. "He's done!"

Carne chuckled. "Quite done!"

"Expelled!" said Loder. "I hardly hoped for that. Carne, old man, you or I must get in as captain in the next election."

"What-ho!"

"Let's go to Ionides' study, and toss up which shall be candidate."

"Done!"

The two rascals went their way rejoicing. Wingate had gone to his study. As the anger and excitement faded away in his breath, the full significance of the Head's words came more clearly home to him. Expelled from the school!

Expelled from Greyfriars!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Head's Daughter!

DR. LOCKE started out of a deep reverie as a knock came at his door. The good old doctor's face was deeply clouded. There were troubles enough heavy upon his heart at that moment, and the affair of Wingate had troubled him more. Wingate had always been his favourite—his ideal schoolboy. The Head had never had a son, but he had felt a great deal of a father's affection for Wingate. Now all was shattered; the character of the Greyfriars captain was

blackened, and he was to go forth from the old school in deep disgrace.

It was a heavy blow to the Head. "Come in!" said the doctor, glad, perhaps, of an interruption to his gloomy thoughts.

He imagined that it was one of the masters or prefects who wished to speak to him on some matter of business. But as the door opened he started to his feet in surprise; for it was a girl who stood there—a girl of sixteen or seventeen, in a cloak with a lace shawl over her head, and her oval face flushed, and her dark brown eyes full of fear, and at the same time of resolve.

It was Rosina, pale and trembling. Younger, slighter than ever the girl looked, in her deep nervousness of the stern old gentleman, the Head of Greyfriars.

Wharton was by her side. He pressed her hand encouragingly.

"What—what!" the Head exclaimed, in amazement.

Wharton led the girl into the study. "If you please, sir—"

The Head frowned.

"Wharton, Gosling has reported to me that you have broken bounds—that you actually climbed over the gate while he was watching you!"

"It is true, sir."

"Then what—"

"I want to fetch this lady, sir."

"I don't understand you, Wharton. Who is this lady? Sit down, my child," said the Head, handing Rosina to a seat with his old-fashioned courtesy. "I cannot quite understand this!"

"Oh, sir," gasped the girl, "I—I—"

"This lady has come to clear Wingate, sir," said Wharton steadily, as poor Rosina's voice failed her.

The Head looked astounded.

"To clear Wingate?"

"Yes sir. I know what he is accused of, and I thought of fetching her," said Harry.

"I don't mind being licked for breaking bounds, sir. This is Mademoiselle Rosina."

"What!"

"Mademoiselle Rosina, of the circus, sir."

The Head stared.

"There must be some mistake," he exclaimed. "The—the person Wingate was acquainted with at the circus was a woman much older than himself—nothing at all like this child."

"Loder told you so, sir?"

"Assuredly!"

"He was not speaking the truth, sir."

"Wharton!"

"Well, at all events he was mistaken, sir," said Wharton. "This is Mademoiselle Rosina; this is Wingate's chum."

"Dear me! This is—this is extraordinary!"

"It's just as I say, sir."

"Did—did Wingate wish this young lady to come here—"

"He doesn't know anything about it, sir," said Wharton, with a grin. "But I thought of bringing her here, sir, so that you could see it was all lies!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Rosina, her eyes wet with tears, "if you knew how kind Wingate

has been to me, and what a difference his friendship made to me, I am sure you would not be hard upon him! And what harm did it do him to know me?"

"My dear child," said the Head kindly, "I have been misled. If you are really Mademoiselle Rosina—"

"Indeed I am!"

"Then there has been a great mistake. I think I am sufficiently a judge of character," said the Head, "to be able to tell at a glance that you are a good and noble young lady. I have not the slightest doubt upon that point. Loder made some absurd mistake, and led me to believe that Wingate's friend was a very different sort of person. Yet all is not clear. You are an English girl, and the girl in question is a Mademoiselle Rosina—the daughter, I understand, of a French circus rider."

"I am Felix Lasalle's daughter, sir," said Rosina simply. "I have been told many times that I look like an English girl, and not at all French; but indeed I am Mademoiselle Rosina."

The Head started back. "Felix Lasalle's daughter!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Who was your mother?"

"I never knew her, sir."

"Oh, heavens!" murmured the Head, pressing his hand to his head. "Can it be possible? Is this a miracle which is happening to me?"

He stared at Rosina so intently and earnestly that the girl was frightened.

Wharton was amazed.

"This is Mademoiselle Rosina, sir!" he exclaimed. "There is no doubt about it. I saw her in the performance. Besides, Felix Lasalle is following us, and he will soon be here to prove it. He was furious at Rosina coming here."

"His daughter?"

"Yes, sir," said Rosina, in wonder.

The Head came closer to her.

"My child," he exclaimed, "I know I must astonish you, but listen! Has any doubt ever crossed your mind that you are really the daughter of this Frenchman? Has he ever said anything leading you to suppose that you might not truly be his daughter?"

"Yes, sir—often."

"Ah!"

"Many times, sir, when he has been drinking, he has said that I am not his child; that he found me in the gutter, sir," said Rosina faintly. "Oh, if it were only true! It is wicked to dislike one's father, but I cannot like him—he is hateful and cruel! If it were only true! I would rather be any beggar's child!"

"Child," said the Head, "you cannot be his daughter. You are English, and he is French."

"I hope it is true that he is not my father, sir!" Rosina clasped her hands. "If it were only possible to know!"

The Head gazed at her fixedly.

"Your name is Rosina?" he asked.

"My circus name, sir. My own name is Rose."

"Roset. Oh, it must be true! Even the name is the same! Oh, my child, listen to me!" said the Head, in a trembling voice. He seemed to have forgotten Wharton's presence. The junior was dumb with amazement. "Listen to me, child! Many years ago, when you must have been a tiny child, that man Lasalle knew me. He had committed a crime, and I gave evidence that sent him to prison. After he was released he revenged himself by taking away my child—my little Rosie!"

The girl listened, pale, with set lips.

"He disappeared," said the Head. "I never saw him again until this week. I met him near here. I did not know he was with a circus; I did not know he had a young girl with him whom he called his daughter. No trace was ever found of him. I had no actual proof that he had taken my child, but I was sure of it—my wife was sure of it! I was not Head of Greyfriars then. It happened far from here. When I met him lately he said that the child was dead. I felt that he lied—he was always false to the core! Child, you are the age she would be. Your name is the same. And you cannot be the daughter of Felix Lasalle. He is French, and you are English."

Rosina trembled.

"Heaven has been kind to me," said the Head solemnly. "Through this strange affair I have found my child!"

"Oh!" murmured Rosina.

"My dear little Rosie!"

There was a wild tramping of feet in the

passage, the voice of Trotter, the page, raised in alarm.

"I tell yer—"

"Which is the room?"

It was the voice of Felix Lasalle!

The next moment the door of the Head's study was flung open and the Frenchman appeared, red with rage. He had his grip upon the collar of the unfortunate Trotter. It was evident that he had forced his way into the house and had compelled Trotter to guide him to the Head's study.

He flung the page reeling back as he caught sight of Rosina. The terrified Trotter took to his heels.

Lasalle strode into the study.

"So you are here!" he cried. "Come, do you hear me? Come!"

The Head stepped between Rosina and the furious Frenchman.

"You will not take away my child a second time, Felix Lasalle," he said steadily.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Exit Felix Lasalle.

FELIX LASALLE staggered back.

This was what he had feared, this was what had scared him—that, with Rosina at Greyfriars, some recognition might come about.

And it had come!

But the circus-rider was not beaten yet.

The man's voice was loud, threatening.

The girl trembled. It seemed to her that she must obey this man, as she had always obeyed him.

But Harry Wharton caught her hand, and held it fast. The stately figure of the Head of Greyfriars stood before her in protection.

"No, no!" cried Rosina. "I will not come! You are not my father! I will not come!"

"Obey me!"

"Never again!" cried Rosina, with rising courage. "You have always been cruel, you have always hated me. I know that I am not your daughter! Go without me! I shall never see you again!"

The Frenchman muttered a curse. His eyes burned with rage as he turned them upon the Head of Greyfriars.

"If I go alone," he said, "I return with the police! There is a law in this country to save a child from being taken away from its parents. She will be restored to me by law, Dr. Locke!"

The Head smiled scornfully.

"You may make the attempt," he replied.

"Fool!" shouted Lasalle. "Can you prove, then, that she is your daughter, that you defy your own laws?"

"Perhaps not. But we have a saying in this country—that possession is nine points of the law," said the Head coldly. "She is here—she remains here. If you claim her, it is for you to prove that she is your daughter."

"What?" he exclaimed.

"You are a Frenchman. Prove how it is that an English girl is your daughter—prove it to the satisfaction of the law, and you may claim her."

"Her mother was English—she is like her mother," muttered Lasalle.

"Very good! In that case, produce the marriage certificate of her mother and her own birth certificate," said the Head. "If she is your child you can obtain both—easily or not."

Wharton grinned. He had not thought of that, and he had hardly expected Dr. Locke to be so keen.

Lasalle's eyes glittered.

"I go, but I take my child!" he exclaimed. "Old man, stand between us at your peril!"

And with clenched fists the Frenchman strode forward.

Dr. Locke did not move.

Old man as he was, and no match physically for the powerful ruffian, he did not stir an inch.

Harry Wharton sprang between them.

"You will tackle me first, you cur!" he exclaimed.

"Boy," said the Frenchman hoarsely, "stand aside!"

"Rats!"

The Frenchman sprang upon him.


Wharton closed with the ruffian. Dr. Locke rang the bell, and then came to Wharton's aid.

But his aid was not needed.

A stalwart form came in at the doorway—it was George Wingate's. The captain of Greyfriars had heard the news that was buzzing all through the school—that Mademoiselle Rosina, of the circus, had come.

The moment he heard it, Wingate had guessed her object in coming—to clear him in

(Continued on page 13.)



Billy Bunter

writes **FOUR PAGES OF FUN** For this week's "MAGNET"

in which he gives his own ideas on how a paper should be run. Billy Bunter's Weekly is a screamingly funny feature no one should miss. See TO-DAY'S issue of

The Magnet

The Famous School Story Paper.

A STORY OF MANY MYSTERIES AND THRILLING INCIDENTS!



A MARKED MAN.

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

THREADS OF THE STORY.

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

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

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

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

Firth pays a visit to the Marquis of Rangvy to entertain the guests as a musician, using the name of Rutherford, whilst the real man burgles the house of the most valuable possession, the Golden Cup.

When the alarm is given, the guests search the grounds, and the body of Raymond Marconnon is found, evidence points to the fact that Vaughan is the murderer. Ferrers Locke and Baker secure a taxi, and drive to a place where they hope to find a confederate of the ex-convict, a little man, who had been seen with the Golden Cup. Ferrers Locke declares that Vaughan is the thief.

(Now read on.)

The Hidden Hand!

EVEN Baker, used as he was to surprises, drew in his breath.

"The little man," explained Locke, "was to be the go-between, the man deputed to buy the goblet. Note, he paid for it in cash; an honest person would have submitted a cheque and left an address. The next move, Vaughan now knows where the original goblet is; he further learns of the projected dinner and ball at the marquis' home. Among others, a man much in the public eye, Paul Rutherford is to be there. To lessen the risk of detection, Vaughan makes himself up to look like Rutherford. Whilst the festivities are at their height, he enters the curio-room and is discovered in the act of stealing the cup by his old friend, Harry Leigh! But the exchange is already made. The thief takes to flight through the open window. Marconnon, who has heard Harry's cry, rushes to the spot. The window is open; he sees a man speeding across the lawn, and follows in hot pursuit. The two men come to grips; Vaughan is desperate and armed. To save himself, and at the same time to be revenged on his enemy, he shoots Marconnon, and makes good his escape."

"But how did he get away? Certainly not by car, sir, and all the stations were watched."

"That is a puzzler. Adrian Vaughan is no ordinary criminal, but a man who is willing voluntarily to pit his brain against the best of us. What happens next must be purely

guesswork. He has the golden bowl, but red murder clings to it. The papers have already said that the one who stole it also shot Marconnon. The thing must be disposed of. How? The easiest and safest plan is to sell it for its metal worth to a 'fence' or receiver. It is therefore entrusted to the little man with the blue eyes; he takes it to Poltniron's. That, Baker, is the outline of my case against Vaughan. How it will work out we shall very soon see."

The garish lights and the darkling shadows of Commercial Road lay before them. The detective and his assistant sprang out, and, after a few instructions to the driver, walked rapidly eastwards as far as Stepney Station, where they plunged into a labyrinth of evil-smelling courts and passages until they came to Marron Street.

On the right, beyond the gloomy houses, the silent waterway wound sombrely to the sea. Midnight was striking from the grim grey church tower as they paused before a tall, storied house that once, in the long ago, had seen better days. Now the lower part served as a shop of kinds, and on the door a crudely-daubed inscription in Chinese showed that it provided board and lodging for Oriental sailormen.

"You stay in this passage. If I want you I shall whistle twice."

The detective drew his hat over his eyes and lounged into the shop. Outside, but a few streets off, the pulsing life of the West beat and throbbled; here was a transition, a passing in a moment, to the underworld of the East.

On the floor, in the centre of a square of tawny-coloured matting, sat a young Chinese woman, dressed in a silk petticoat of azure blue; a loose-fitting yellow bodice adorned the upper part of her small person, but left her olive arms and shoulders bare.

She did not look up as Locke entered, nor did the mask-like face betray the slightest sign of surprise.

"Evening, Tu San!"

"Evenin', white man police dog!" Tu San replied.

"Tu San looking very pretty to-night." Locke leant across the counter, and puffed at his pipe.

"What you want, police dog?" the girl asked, still without looking up.

"To give you something, if you are a good girl."

He spun a half-crown in the air. The thin hand caught it, and the money disappeared in the folds of the bodice.

"Velly well, go on."

"Tell your father I want to come through. Louis Poltniron is upstairs. I want a word with him. But, Tu San"--as the girl began to sip silently away--"keep your finger on your father's lips."

Almost before Locke realised that the girl was gone a big man with an impassive face stood before him. Tu San came to his side, and the clutter and clack of many syllables passed between them.

"You wanted see Mista Louis, Mista Locke?" the Chinaman asked, and extended a huge hand.

Money passed, and at a friendly nod from Ah Ling, the detective passed through the hangings and up the stairs.

"A good investment for me the day I saved Ah Ling's daughter from a knife-thrust!" he muttered, toiling upwards through the sickly atmosphere.

On either side was a long line of closed doors, behind which men and women were passing glided hours in the land of opium dreams.

A trapdoor in the roof opened to a little gangway that ran through a maze of chimney-pots. Under the dark roof of night London, mysterious, phantasmal, lay part awake and part sleeping. Here, among these haunts where West meets East, and East conquers West, were secrets never revealed, except to men such as Ferrers Locke.

Once again a flap was raised, and Locke, with unerring instinct, descended a short iron ladder. He found himself in the corridor of a spacious unfit house. Around him lay almost unparalleled magnificence. High walls, draped with valuable tapestries and exquisite paintings, and rooms stocked with objects of great worth.

Locke shone his electric torch on the great "receiver's" collection, and a smile played about his lips.

"Poltniron's a clever dog," he mused. "The police know he's got all these things, but they can't identify them as stolen property, and so he remains in undisturbed possession. I wonder where the old rascal is?"

He opened door after door with a skeleton key, till at last he stood blinking momentarily in the glare of an overhead chandelier. On the far side of the apartment, furnished as a comfortable living-room, an old man was hunched over a desk. A long, iron-grey beard almost hid the gaudy waistcoat beneath the faded frock-coat. A pair of deep-set eyes, almost hidden beneath bushy, overhanging eyebrows, shot a surprised glance at the unexpected visitor.

"Vell, Locke, vot do you want?" he asked in a thin, rasping tone, as the detective deliberately locked the door behind him.

"A little chat with you, that is all, Mr. Poltniron."

The detective came into the middle of the room and threw his hat upon the table.

"But, ma tear boy, there is nothin' doin'."

"I didn't say there was. You needn't look so gully. I don't want you, Poltniron."

"That was good. Move along."

Locke sat down, and his clear eyes were fastened on the other's face.

"Last Monday you had a visitor—a little stout, dumpy man, who brought in the goods in a parcel."

"How you know that?"

"I know everything, or I shouldn't be here."

"Vat did he bring?"

"The golden bowl, of course. Where is it, old friend?"

"I know nothin' of any gold bowl, see." "Don't lie, Poltniron! You do!" Locke's big lower jaw snapped angrily. "If I liked I could put you away by merely raising my hand, but I don't want to. Now, about the gold bowl. The little man brought it to you and asked you to buy it and melt it down."

"He told you that?" the "fence" almost screamed.

"Never mind. I want the cup, that's all. Murder has been done over it, and unless you want to find yourself in the dock, give it up and tell me all you know."

"Heavens, I can't, ma poy! It vas worth 'tousands!'"

Locke's pulses leapt. He had learnt two things—that the goblet had been brought to Poltniron and that Poltniron hadn't got it now.

He leant forward, and, taking a pistol from his pocket, balanced it menacingly on his knee, the while he slipped a whistle between his lips.

"Now, look here, Mr. Poltniron; unless you make a clean breast of everything I shall keep you covered until the police arrive. Quick, tell me! What was the real name of the man who sold you the cup, the name of the man who sent him to carry out the deal, and where is the cup now?"

A look of terrible dread spread over the face of the Hungarian Jew.

"I dare not tell you all dis," he said, in a quavering voice.

"But you must—you must! Which is it to be, prison or a confession?"

The old man threw a frightened glance around the room; then, as if his mind was made up, he leaned suddenly towards the detective.

"Give me your word of honours not to mix me in dis affair, an' I tell you!" he whispered.

Locke slipped the pistol in his pocket and nodded acquiescence.

"De man vot brought me de goblet vas Demottsen; he vot stole it yas—de teufel—der man I sold it to vas—"

The name died on his lips, and the silence of the room seemed to explode in a puff of noise that fell like a thunderclap on Locke's ears. Then, before the detective's startled eyes, Louis Poltniron slipped forward from the chair and fell heavily on his face.

The Daring Leap!

BEFORE the noise of the explosion had died into an awesome stillness, the detective was on his knees beside the stricken man. Louis Poltniron lay on his face, and the first swift glance failed to reveal the sudden cause of his collapse. Everywhere the atmosphere was clear and still; no vestige of smoke trailing through the warm air towards the glittering chandelier showed sign that a pistol had been murderously discharged not a score of feet away.

Slowly Ferrers Locke turned him over. A glancing red furrow, clear as a knife-cut, extended from Poltniron's right cheekbone to the lobe of his ear. Below it a welter of blood ran into the flowing beard.

"A nasty, painful wound, but not in the least dangerous," Locke decided, as he propped the "fence" into a chair. "You've missed death by half an inch. Ah, you'll soon come round!" For now Poltniron was grunting and labouring heavily in his throat.

A moment later Locke was on the roof-ladder, sending a shrill call through the night. Then he went back and began a rapid search for cold water, a basin, and towel. By the time the injured man evinced the first inclination to return to consciousness Baker had arrived.

He halted in the doorway, a pistol poised menacingly. Only when he saw the show was over did he slip it from view.

"You've had it all to yourself, I see," he remarked drily, taking on the work of resuscitation. "Drew it on you, I suppose?"

Locke was busy making a swift examination of the room.

"No. Someone drew it on him. That's what puzzles me. How the deuce was it done? He and I were alone; the windows and the doors were locked. He was on the point of telling me to whom he had parted with the marquis' goblet when someone tried to seal his lips with a pistol shot."

At the far side of the big, heavily-furnished room he turned and compared the chalk lines he had made on the carpet, indicating the position in which the Jew had fallen, with the angle of the fesh wound on his face. This brought him to a locked door, leading probably into an adjoining room.

"I see now," he laughed drily, "someone listened to all that passed between us. As soon as Poltniron came to the crucial point in his 'give away' the hidden man fired on him with a smokeless, non-odoriferous cartridge, and locked the door between us before the noise

of the explosion was over; which looks, Baker, as though very much more than the name of an ordinary 'receiver' hung on the old fellow's confession."

The gloomy eyes of the "never tired" man lit up with the light of an ill-suppressed excitement.

"The trail gets hot," he murmured. But the words fell on deaf ears, for already Locke was in the inner room. A curious, musky smell hung over everything. Locke switched on an electric hand lamp, and stared round curiously.

He was in what at first sight looked like a long disused lumber-room. Against the mildewed panelled walls were stacked bundles of gaudy-coloured silks, rolls of Oriental carpets and rugs, and dully glittering heaps of Sheffield plate and silverware.

The floor was carpetless, but silent to walk upon, for the dust lay thick upon it. The white arc of light flashed from point to point, and came to rest on something that drew a low whistle from Ferrers Locke. Softly he called to Adam Baker, and bidding him close the door behind him, pointed to the deep imprint of stockinged feet among the grime.

"Ever seen a foot like that before?" he asked.

"Yes. In muddy earth, beside the dead body of a man," Baker answered, his eyes narrowing.

"Where?"

"In the grounds of Kingsweare Hall."

"I think so, too. See Poltniron is all right. And while I'm gone melt those two candles"—pointing to a pile of lumber—"and take a stearin' of the footmarks. If I don't come back, keep the police out of this, and tell Poltniron he's quite safe in my hands so long as he doesn't play me false."

Before Baker could realize it Locke was gone, travelling through a third and fourth room until he came to an open window. Cautiously he crept towards it and peered out. The great river, dark and oily, swirled below, and its lapping drowned another sound. Barely two minutes could have passed since the firing of the shot and the flight of the would-be assassin. Obviously, as yet he wasn't far off.

Cautiously the detective drew himself up and peered down. Something dark lay rocking against the walls twenty feet below. Now, by leaning far out his keen eyes made out everything—the shapely lines of a motor-boat, and the figure of a man bending over the machinery amidships.

For once in his life Locke felt nonplussed. Even if he held his man covered, what possible chance was there of arresting him? The issue was decided for him, for the man in the boat looked up and caught the grim outline of Locke's revolver arm. In a flesh his weapon spoke twice. Two sharp stabs of blood-red flame cut through the blackness, and Locke felt the ripping up of his right coat-sleeve. Then the night was shattered by a series of loud explosions as the engine started, and the little craft began turning her nose towards mid-stream.

Locke sprang on to the window-ledge and poised himself. Then, with a spring, he dived far out, cut through the air like an arrow, and vanished beneath the swirling flood. When he came to the surface the motor-boat was not ten yards away, but every moment gaining speed. With long, powerful strokes the detective flashed through the water. Twenty, thirty, forty yards. He was alongside the frail craft, gripping at the gunwale, and making desperate efforts to climb on board.

At sight of him the man left the tiller and snatched up a boathook. Twice he aimed savage blows at the dauntless detective. No human power was proof against such pain. Without a sound Locke dropped back into the river, and the little craft sped on into the night.

The horrible sense of suffocation brought the detective back to the struggling state. The pain-numbing inertia slipped away. With splendid self-possession he turned on his back and let the tide carry him for a minute or two. Soon he felt strength stirring in his chilled blood, and, striking out again, headed once more for the north shore. At last his feet touched the muddy bottom. He struggled to land and, mounting a flight of steps, found himself near the east end of Marron Street.

"Poltniron is now my only hope," he decided. "What was the unuttered word? Whose was the unspoken name? The man who shot at the 'fence,' the man who made good his escape in the motor-boat, the man

who stole the bowl, and the man who killed Raymond Marconnon—are they one and the same?"

With this thought still in his mind he hastened along the deserted street. Behind him the dark roof of night was lightening to a steely grey, telling of the soon coming dawn.

Ah Ling, inscrutable, greeted him with Oriental courtesy.

"You welly wet, Mista Locke. What your dog man doin' with a doctor fellow?"

"I don't know, Ah Ling. There's been trouble in the house at the back. Mr. Poltniron has been shot. Do you know the name of the man who visits him—a big man, old, sixty at least—old as you, with a stoop, and walks heavily?"

The Chinaman folded his hands in his wide silk sleeves, and his yellow face lit up with a smile.

"Me knows nothing abee along!"

"Not if I paid you to refresh your memory?"

"No go, Mista Locke. Me likee likkle babe, perfectly illocent. Really, suah!"

Locke knew he was speaking the truth, and at a sign from Ah Ling stepped softly over the many-coloured mat on which 'Fu San lay curled up, sleeping as peacefully as a child. Back again in Poltniron's room, a strange scene was unfolded to him.

Poltniron, white as death, his deep-set eyes glittering curiously, was propped up in a wide armchair against a fire of sticks which Baker had kindled in the grate. A little, shabbily-dressed, frock-coated man busied himself mixing something in a glass. He turned as Locke entered, and eyed him suspiciously.

"I am Ferrers Locke, the detective," the newcomer said, taking off his coat and wringing the water out. "I believe you are a doctor?"

"Quite so. Dr. Abramovitch. This gentleman summoned me"—nodding to Baker. "I find the patient in a bad way. The wound has proved a great shock to the nervous system. Listen!"

He held up his hand. Poltniron's grey head was buried on his chest; the long, skinny hands twitched nervously. From between the chattering blue lips a strange medley of sounds issued—Russian, Polish, German, and English.

A great fear gripped at Locke's heart. Was he, after all, to be baffled by some chance circumstance?

"What's the trouble, doctor? Anything serious?"

"I fear so," Abramovitch replied, forcing the draught down the Jew's throat. "The man has lost his memory."

"Permanently?" queried Locke.

"I can't say. Physically, he's little worse for the—er—accident, except for a copious loss of blood; but mentally—I'm afraid he's all wrong."

Locke looked down on the bowed figure.

"Is it safe for me to ask one question? So much depends on it," he said anxiously.

"Quite—quite. He may not be quite so bad as I think."

Abramovitch stepped aside, and thoughtfully stroked his glossy brown beard.

Locke looked straight into the Jew's wild eyes.

"Mr. Poltniron, you were telling me about the golden goblet," he said in clear, deliberate tones. "You remember the name of the man who brought it here?"

"It vos Demottsen," came back the low reply.

"And the man who stole it?"

"De teufel!"

A silence.

"And to whom did you sell it?"

Poltniron's stinking hand went to his bandaged forehead.

"To— I cannot remember. I do forget so." A long pause. "Demottsen—de teufel—"

"And who do you mean by 'de teufel'?"

"Ach! Now I do not know."

"Never mind. The man you sold the bowl to—it was he who shot you. Cannot you recall his name?"

"Yes; it vos— Ah, it is gone again! No, I do not think of it any more."

The glittering eyes dropped, the grey head was lowered, and the thin, nervous hands toyed again with the tassels of the rug which Baker had wrapped round him.

The doctor and the detective exchanged a slow glance. Then the former spoke.

"It is of no use, Mr. Locke. I'm afraid you must go further afield to find out what you want to know. We mustn't worry him, or his reason will go altogether."

With a sigh Locke motioned Baker, and turned away. Not until he was back in his flat in Baker Street did he speak again. "Get some sleep, Baker," he said, as he thoughtfully filled his pipe. "To-morrow—or, rather, later to-day, you and I must get busy on the second string."
"And that is?"
"To find 'de teufel,' whoever he may be, and discover just what his part in all this maze of mystery is."

The New Life!

SOCIETY is returning to town, Motty. That should mean good business for us, eh?"

Adrian Vaughan leaned over the green-painted balcony rail, and watched the flow of fashionable life below him. The wide thoroughfare that lay between his own beautiful suite of rooms and Hyde Park swarmed with ant-like activity; broughams and phaetons, silent, privately-owned cars, and screeching taxis rolled on in never-ending streams.

Demottsen took a cigarette from the proffered gold case, and puffed at it placidly. "You mean still to continue to work this double business? Isn't it a trifle dangerous after the Kingswear Hall affair?"

"Dangerous! Every venture in unorthodox and unconventional paths is dangerous. That's why I lead the life I do. Danger is the salt of life to me." Vaughan's smile revealed his perfect, white teeth. "As for the happening at Kingswear"—waving an elegantly-ringed right hand—"it wasn't my fault that Ferrers Locke chose to saddle me with the murder of Raymond Marconnon. Is the second post in?"

"I have it here." Demottsen glanced at a bundle of envelopes in his hand. "The calls on your services still seem as numerous as ever. You mean to keep your part as Paul Rutherford going?"

"Why not? It supports you and me and John Firth in luxury. Anything special?"

"Yes; M'Arthur and Stringeley want to know when you will be ready to complete the purchase of the Red House at Flatney."

A frown settled on Vaughan's handsome face.

"That's awkward. I agreed to pay £27,000 for the place, and Locke's interference over the marquis' bowl has kept back my programme a bit. I want the old Red House badly, Motty. When I've filled it with art treasures, pictures, and statuary, armour and porcelain, and things which are a joy to the man with an artistic soul, I shall feel I have achieved something to repay myself for the wrongs the forces of so-called law and order have done me."

"You can't mean—"

Demottsen swallowed a mouthful of smoke before he could recover from his surprise.

"That home I intend to provide myself with—at the expense of the public. My dear boy, you don't imagine I formulated these schemes over the breakfast-table; they've been maturing, with events, ever since eleven o'clock one morning outside Dartmoor, when my only pal let me down badly. To get back to business, M'Arthur and Stringeley want £16,000 by Friday of this week, and the truth is I can't spare the money. Well, go on."

The doctor flopped down in a veranda chair and fanned himself in the morning sunshine.

"An invitation. Young Count von Diehling sends you a ticket for the great Society function at the Edward Hall to-morrow night. Everybody, from Royalty downwards, will be there."

"Certainly. I shall go. Tell him so. By Jove, Demottsen, that gives me an idea! The count has bothered me to meet him ever since I played and sang to some guests of his at Enwell Castle; he must pay for the privilege. In short, he may as well be made to meet my obligations to M'Arthur and Stringeley. A German coal king's son won't miss £16,000."

"You can't ask him for money," Demottsen said.

"I've given up asking for things. I take what I want!" laughed Vaughan. "At the present moment I want £16,000 more than I've got. Someone must supply it; in this case, the count. Thank him, and say Mr. Rutherford will arrive at the Edward Hall at eleven o'clock."

The doctor scribbled a few notes on a memorandum-pad. When he looked up his usually good-natured face wore lines of concern.

"Have you forgotten you promised to be present at the Corporation's banquet to the Mayor of Burndale? You can't get from Lancashire to London in two hours."

"I shouldn't be far out if I set myself to do it," Vaughan responded, laughing cheerily. "Anyway, send John Firth along. I'll talk to him in the library."

The two men met in the luxurious, sun-bathed apartment which had witnessed their ever-memorable compact—they were more alike than ever. Even in the strong light it was impossible to find a difference between

I, who contemplate it, shrink from the thought of."

"You would like to know that the day of your reckoning with Leishman is much nearer than you have ever dared hope?"

"Yes!" cried Firth, springing to his feet. A gesture from Vaughan, a steely glitter in the cold eyes, sent him cowering back.

"You are a fiend to raise my hopes like that!"

Firth's breath came and went in rapid stabs.

"I told you that weeks ago. Why repeat



Ferrers Locke sprang on to the window-ledge and poised himself. Then, with a spring, he dived far out and cut through the air like an arrow. At that moment, trembling from stern to bow, the little motor-boat turned her nose towards mid-stream. (See page 4.)

them. Vaughan threw his double a cheery "Good-morning!"

"You're looking well, man. Good living and nothing unpleasant to do agrees with you," he said, smiling magnetically.

John Firth held up the fingers of his well-manufactured right hand.

"I count the days that keep me from Judas Leishman," he answered, with slow deliberation. "Each one, as it passes, makes me a happier man, because I draw one nearer to the reckoning."

"And what will the reckoning be?"

"Either the longings of fifteen long, weary years will be satisfied for ever, or Judas Leishman will meet with an end which even

commonplaces? If there were not 'fiends' your job would end. Come now, seriously, I am bringing your meeting with your enemy every day nearer; but wouldn't it be as well if you confided in me the cause of the bitterness between you?"

"No. My secret is mine, and I mean to keep it to myself. If Judas Leishman dies as a result of his wrong to me, no one but I will know the secret. It will end with us both. And now, your wishes, sir?"

He bowed in deference, and stood awaiting Vaughan's commands. They were few, but to the point.

(Another fine instalment of this serial next week.)

AN AMAZING SERIAL OF STRANGE ADVENTURES ON THE HIGH SEAS!

OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS



A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND
ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.

By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.

INTRODUCTION.

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

During the journey to Exeter the three rescue ALDERMAN CONYERS and his charming daughter from the clutches of a notorious highwayman. To show his grati-

tude, Conyers invites them to his home. There, after a good meal, he tells them that he is a director of a certain big shipping company, and that he will replace the lost fortunes of the Grevilles on condition that they bring about the capture of Avery, a daring buccaneer, who had made the seas a very bad and dangerous highway for the merchants of the day.

They journey to Bristol and sign on as "hands" on the ship Duke, on which they

encounter the buccaneer Avery in the guise of the first mate.

During the night, Avery, with a dozen chosen men, seize the captain of the Duke and the ship. The hands, unable to resist, are made to obey the pirate, and the ship alters her course for the West African coast to a town which Avery hopes to capture. They arrive, and land a party of men. But the Spaniards hear of their coming, and the pirates have to retreat, Mike at their head.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Call of Truce!

MIKE, who possessed a wonderful knack of keeping his bearings, was put temporarily in charge, and, still running fast, though several cried out that their lungs were bursting and their limbs too tired to go at such a pace, they covered six or seven miles of ground, until, with alarming suddenness, the light began to fade and night to fall. To add to their difficulties, with the fading of the short tropic twilight, rain began to fall in a torrential downpour which was the more uncomfortable to bear, seeing that a goodly number, in anticipation of the fighting, wore nothing more than a shirt and a pair of breeches. The rough ground made havoc with their bare feet, which were bleeding and swollen; but Mike would not allow a halt to be called, saying that their safety depended entirely on the progress they made during the dark.

Through the whole of that night, soaked to the skin and chilled by the cool wind which blew in from the sea, they pressed on, keeping their course by the light of the stars.

Next morning, about break of day, the rain ceased, and they were halted for half an hour, during which every man was instructed to dry his arms. Unfortunately, much of the powder had become damp, and the sun, which they had looked to for salvation, did not break through, heavy banks of clouds driving in from the west, and finally soaking them again with a continuous downpour, which lasted four hours.

What with partial nakedness, hunger, and thirst, and the useless condition of their weapons, they were now in very desperate straits.

But towards midday a horse was found in a field—very old and very decrepit. This they killed and roasted, devouring it without salt or bread, as Jeff truly remarked to his cousin, "more like wolves than men!"

Once more a council of war was held, and, as before, Black Mike came quickly to the fore.

"Our poor fellows are nigh used up," he told Avery. "To strike farther into the uplands is to court death from thirst and starvation. To turn and fight, equally impossible, seeing we have not a pound of dry powder betwixt us. There is but one thing to do."

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"And that?" asked Avery, his handsome face set hard with a frown.

Mike hesitated only a moment, thinking of Bob and Jeff, and the duty he owed his master in England.

"To call a truce with our foes, but in such a manner that it shall appear as though we have the upper hand," he declared boldly. "Let us send to the Spanish Governor this message, that if within a few hours he delivers not himself and all his men into our hands, we will most certainly put them all to the sword without granting quarter to any."

"And you think he will be deceived by such a subterfuge?" asked Avery, in amazement.

"Indeed, I do!" said Mike, breaking into a laugh. "One Englishman can bluff a hundred Spaniards any day! Just try the scheme, and see what will happen!"

The Buccaneers' Choice!

"T WAS ever the way with our forebears to break the Spaniards' courage by a show of force we did not possess," Black Michael continued. "In good Queen Bess' days did not such valiants as Howard and Drake scatter the great Armada by a fine show of pluck? Even now we will take the curls from yon Dons' moustachios by pretending we have overwhelming numbers. See, there is a mist coming in from the West. For aught he knows there may be a dozen ships like the Duke there beyond the roadstead, and as for how many parties of us have landed he cannot tell. Therefore, sire, let us send this ultimatum."

For a full minute the pirate stroked his chin thoughtfully. Then he threw back his massive head and burst into a loud guffaw.

"Indeed, it would be a pretty trick to play. And, either way, we have little choice betwixt this and death. So let it be, my stout Cornishman. But who shall be our ambassadors?"

"I for one!" cried Jeff, stepping briskly forward.

"And I for another!" said Bob, falling in beside his cousin.

Avery eyed them narrowly.

"Two striplings! Yes, indeed, perhaps such weaklings can best be spared."

Black Mike's dark eyes glowed with pride. He caught the anxious looks on the faces of the boys, and knew they were both on the tip-toe of expectation for Avery's consent.

"Not striplings in courage, master!" he said, sauntering forward and swinging his long blade. "And, indeed, Don Almanzoa will wonder greatly that such lads dare to beard him!"

"It may be so," the pirate admitted. "But two more must go as well, for surely hostages will be demanded."

"Then send me and stout John Chater," said Mike, indicating a fair-haired man from Devon, whose courage had been tested on more than one occasion.

Now, Chater had no desire to see his life come to an untimely end, for at home in Bere a wife and two children awaited his return. But to mention the name of the Spaniard to him was like unto waving a red rag before a mad bull, seeing that some years before a younger brother having been captured at sea by Castilians had been returned to England, after five terrible years of imprisonment, with his ears cropped and his nose slit.

"None better, master!" he said, tightening his belt and laying his hands on the butts of his pistols.

"Very well, then," said Avery, signing to one of his officers. "Give me inkhorn, paper, and sandbox, and I will write the terms. You, Black Mike, with Chater and the boys, had best strike for the river until you find a canoe which shall take you down to St. Principe. And good luck go with you!"

About two hours after noon, sufficient powder having been dried over a fire, the four adventurers set off, none knowing better than Mike the terrible risks they ran. It was, however, an exploit after his own heart, and such as he knew old Sir John would dearly love to have the lads embark on. They forged ahead through a sea of white down, coming at length in sight of the great river flowing silently beneath the overhanging trees towards the sea. The mist had thickened considerably, due to the torrents of rain falling after such intense heat. The air was now chokingly hot, and swarms of insects droned about them incessantly. The matted growths which hung over the bank shut out the light, and the tangled foliage kept out the air, so that in a very little while the perspiration made their clothes as wet as though they had been wading breast high in water.

Their spirits were high, and Chater, who led the way, sang lustily. This gave the three an opportunity to talk.

Said Jeff, who was more than a little puzzled by the step Black Mike had taken:

"What is going to happen if the Spanish Governor is frightened into surrendering the town and fortress?"

The Cornishman smiled.

"We are on the laps of the gods, as your uncle would say. It looks very much as though we should be putting a dangerous weapon into Avery's hand. But maybe some chance will come to us to get good out of the situation whichever way it turns. Let us wait and see."

With that they had perforce to rest content, and half an hour later, coming upon a canoe moored near a deserted thatched hut, probably belonging to some native chief who had been summoned by Don Almanzoa to aid in defending the town, they cut through the liana which held it to the bank, and Chater, taking the broad-bladed paddles, they shot down the river.

After some miles the mist began to lighten, and for a time the sun's powerful rays pierced

He hailed them in French, which tongue both the boys spoke quite fluently, and the following conversation took place, Jeff acting as spokesman for his companions.

"We are here as emissaries of Avery, the great buccaneer whose vessels lie out yonder, he said, waving his hand towards the sea, to which the mists still clung, "and whose armed forces are spread over the hinterland. We desire safe conduct to his Excellency the Governor."

Jeff knew quite well that their lives hung on a thread. But they were playing for high stakes, and as this was their first venture he was determined they should acquit themselves creditably.

The Frenchman, who was probably a pirate turned dishonest trader, rapped out a sharp command to his men, who instantly laid their weapons on the grass, and at a sign the four adventurers stepped ashore.

"My name is Lolonois," said the Frenchman. "You find me without arms, so that whatever happens I am a non-combatant."

"You will summon one of your companions to demand audience for him with his Excellency the Governor, Don Almanzoa," he said. "And make haste, or your blood will be upon your own head."

At this the big iron gate was cautiously opened, and the message sent through. They had to wait but a very little while, for soon there was a loud fanfare of trumpets, and as the big gates swung wide they saw that the entrance to the fortress was lined with armed men. Between a lane of glittering cuirasses and raised pistols the four went boldly forward towards a second door, which was opened only after they had explained their business.

"You will tell his Excellency," said Jeff firmly, "that unless he opens immediately to us and discusses terms within a quarter of an hour, the fortresses of St. Principe and St. Christophe will be attacked on every side by Avery's men, the town assaulted and razed to the ground, and that no quarter will be given."



Between a lane of glittering cuirasses the four went boldly forward towards the second door. "You will tell his Excellency," said Jeff to the guard, "that if he doesn't surrender the fortresses at once Avery's men will attack the town!" (See this page.)

through, and the river stretched before them like a gigantic ribbon of molten steel. Their bodies began to throb with the heat, and, with their arms dropping listlessly to their sides, they sank back, while the perspiration ran in rivulets, from their foreheads down their crimsoned faces.

Towards dusk a sound floated across the greasy waste of water, and a number of scantily clothed natives were seen running along the river bank. Mike stepped up to the pole which carried the matting sail, and tied to it a strip of white cloth, the token of truce. Then, standing in the bows, a cocked and loaded pistol in each hand, he waited for the first sight of the Spaniards.

Soon the rosy sunlight began to lick at patches of velvety shadow beneath white walls, and they knew that they were within sight of the Spanish town. A lumber-spattered river front, alive by day with crowds of natives and sallow-skinned traders, was deserted and devoid of sound save for the low swishing of the river murmuring its way to the sea. The air was heavy with a faint, musty odour brought down from the jungle, and a drowsiness settled on the boys until a tall, dark man, followed by a score of natives, heavily armed, appeared through a door set in the wall of a compound, and, moving briskly towards the river bank, waved a white cloth in token of the desire to parley.

"That will be quite all right," answered Jeff. "Our business is only with armed Spaniards who would resist our attack on this town. You will conduct us in safety."

The Frenchman set himself at the head of his men, and the little party moved off, taking a path which ran under the compound wall, and bringing them to a narrow street of straggling, white-walled houses whose projecting balconies effectually shut out the sun. A march of ten minutes took them into a fair-sized square where cannon had been mounted and armed traders stood about in knots of five and ten.

Altogether there must have been several hundreds of whites, so that Jeff and Bob were amazed at Mike's daring in coming to the Governor with such a message.

By devious ways they were piloted through the town to a narrow bridge joining one of the smaller islands to the mainland.

"The fortress of St. Christophe," said Lolonois, with a wave of his hand. "Here we shall be challenged."

True enough, as they toiled up the steep, rocky path a sentry carrying a musket presented arms, and challenged them in a loud voice. To their surprise, he spoke English quite well.

Jeff advanced immediately, covered by Mike with his pistols at the ready.

Bob stared wide-eyed at his cousin's exhibition of daring, which had the desired effect, for the second gate was flung wide after massive bolts had been drawn, and they found themselves in a circular courtyard surrounded by a low wall, through the embrasures of which long, black-nosed cannon pointed in every direction.

A lieutenant in the uniform of the Spanish musketeers appeared, and, after making an elaborate bow, repeated that the Governor would be pleased to talk to one of Avery's messengers provided the rest considered themselves as hostages for the time being.

Jeff and Mike exchanged glances. "You'd better go," whispered Mike. "Maybe the Spaniard doesn't talk our lingo, in which case French would serve. And, young master, you can rely on my protecting your cousin's life."

So Jeff, carrying the paper Avery had given him, followed in the wake of the lieutenant, and was ushered into a second and smaller courtyard, where, under an awning, Don Almanzoa reclined in a swinging hammock slung between two poles. No one would have thought the town to be in peril, for on the rich Persian mat beneath the Spaniard's feet were his square-toed shoes, a mandoline, a basket of fruit, and on a carved ebony side-table a decanter of wine

and a glass. In his right hand he held a long-stemmed pipe, from which every now and then he took a long whiff, blowing streams of blue tobacco-smoke into the heavy air.

"I am informed that you come with an insolent message from your master," he drawled in perfect English. "I will oblige you to hand the paper to me."

Jeff's blood began to boil. No self-respecting English lad could allow himself to be addressed by a mouldy Spaniard.

"Indeed, Don, we are here as victors, not suppliants," he said, drawing himself up to his full height, and facing the Governor unflinchingly. "We serve under the flag of the most dreaded buccaneer who has ever sailed the seas, and for any insolence you will have to answer to Captain John Avery."

Avery! In the four corners of the world the name was passed from lip to lip, and produced dread wherever it was spoken. Since the days of the terrible and redoubtable Morgan, no outlaw of the sea had earned such an appalling reputation as Avery. Jeff saw at once by the swift pallor which began to creep up under the Spaniard's sailow skin that here was a name to be conjured with, and, keeping up the spirit in which Black Mike had first mooted the proposition, he went on:

"You are caught, Don Almanzoa, in a trap from which there is no escape. The forest swarms with Avery's men; guns of heavy calibre are trained on the forts and on the towns, and as soon as the fog lifts they will be fired should you not come to terms. The boats are ready to take the water crammed with desperate, armed men. Unless St. Principe is to be a shambles, and every house and building to go up in fire and smoke, you will be well advised to surrender."

The pipe dropped from Don Almanzoa's hand and broke in pieces on the carpet. He had heard from ships that had come from the Spanish Main of the dreadful doings of these English pirates, who feared neither God nor man, and would attack any town no matter how big the odds against them.

(Look out for the grand long instalment of this thrilling pirate story in next week's issue.)

"THE HEAD'S SECRET!"

(Continued from page 12.)

the doctor's eyes. He had hurried to the Head's study, in time to see the circus-rider make his desperate attempt to recapture Rosina.

It was indeed a desperate attempt on Lasalle's part, with so many within hearing to rush to the doctor's aid. But it was the man's last card, and he played it recklessly. As he struggled with Wharton, Wingate dashed in, and his grasp was laid upon the shoulders of the circus rider.

One powerful wrench, and the man was torn away from Harry Wharton, and with a swing of Wingate's strong arms, he was tossed through the open doorway into the passage.

"Thank you, Wingate!" said the Head quietly.

Wingate panted.

"Rosina! I am sorry, as he is your father

"He is not Rosina's father!" said the Head. "Wingate, this dear child came here to speak up for you, and it has led to an amazing discovery. Rosina is not that man's daughter—she is my child!"

"Dr. Locke!"

"It is true, Wingate! You knew, I believe, that little Molly has a sister, though she never saw her—a sister who was stolen before she was Mollie's age. This is the child—I am convinced of it. That wretch is the thief who stole her from me!"

Lasalle staggered to his feet. Wingate's face was ablaze with exultation. He clasped Rosina's hand.

"Rosina! Rosie dear! I'm so glad—so jolly glad! Then you won't go back with that man again?"

"Never—never!"

"Oh, it's splendid!"

"He is not my father! I shall never see him again!"

The Frenchman was looking in at the door, his face black with rage. But he dared not throw himself upon Wingate.

The Greyfriars captain looked at him with gleaming eyes, then glanced at the Head.

"Shall I throw the rascal out, sir!" he said.

"Yes, Wingate. Call some of the prefects, and see him off the school grounds!" said Dr. Locke.

"And I'll jolly well call some of the Remove, too!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Help, Remove!" roared Wharton.

"Prefects!" called out Wingate. There was a rush of feet and a roar of voices. Lasalle, struggling desperately in the midst of a crowd, was rushed out into the

When the Head's daughter—"Miss Rosie," as the fellows called her—first appeared in public with Mrs. Locke, there was great curiosity to see her. All Greyfriars agreed that Miss Rosie was a charming girl—and, as a matter of fact, they envied Wingate his friend.

For the change in Rosie's life had made no difference to her friendship with the captain of Greyfriars.

"It's ripping!" Harry Wharton remarked, to an approving circle of Removites. "It's jolly ripping, you know!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "on an occasion like this, the best thing we could possibly do would be to stand a feed to celebrate the event."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But for once Bunter's suggestion was not frowned upon. The Remove felt that such an occasion required celebrating, and they celebrated it, with a feed that made a record in the history of the Remove. And in harmless lemonade and ginger-pop, the health was drunk again and again of Mademoiselle Rosina—now Miss Rosie—Wingate's child.

THE END.

(There will be another splendid long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "A Coward's Blow!" by Frank Richards.)

"BEFORE THE CAMERA!"

(Continued from page 8.)

'Waste not, want not' is my motto, and I can't waste too much of your energy, or too many of your tricks."

Eddie grinned, and held out his hand to the sheriff.

"After to-morrow evening, Mr. Sheriff," he said, "I'll be at your disposal for a few days. If I should get killed by one of your bad men, bury me deep where the coyotes can't disturb me, and give my belongings to Dick Fordyce and Miss Cleaver. That's settled. Now let's talk about sharks, or something more exciting."

At Alkali Springs.

It was two days later that Eddie Polo and the sheriff walked through the straggling main street of Alkali Springs towards the branch of the First National Bank, a stone building on the corner, and one of the really few picturesque edifices in the township. The elder man was explaining its history to Eddie when the bank manager, one Starmer, suddenly appeared on the doorstep, and, with a nod to the sheriff, crossed the street to hail the pair.

"Morning, gents!" said the man of money. "You, sheriff, are just the man I was coming to see."

"As plain Jim Bludsoe, or as sheriff of this 'ere pesky town?" demanded the man of law.

"As sheriff, as it happens," said Starmer, with a meaning look in Eddie's direction.

"Then say on, Starmer," said Bludsoe. "This 'ere's my deputy, an' knows all about ther laws of ther Yewntid States as applickerable to Alkali Springs. What's wrong—somebody been a-liftin' yewr gold reserve?"

"Not exactly," said the banker, "but very close. As a matter of fact, I've lost several old banknotes lately—not for big amounts in themselves, but totalling up together into a fairly considerable sum."

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"H'm" interpolated Bludsoe. "Who do you suspect?"

"Hymans, the clerk," was the answer. "Mind, I have no proof against the lad, and even if I had, I don't know that I'd gool him, because, between you gentlemen and me, I've a soft spot in my make-up for his mother still, though she did turn me down to marry Jim's father. I should have to be driven fairly hard to railroad her son, I'm afraid. And I can't say much to him, in my peculiar circumstances, so I thought you might just give him a warning on the side, like, that'd frighten the lad into honesty."

"What does he want money for?" put in Polo. "Don't you pay him decent wages?"

"Twice as much as any other bank-clerk outside New York City," was Starmer's retort. "But that's not enough. He's lately got into the hands of Red Crowther, at the Crimson Halter, and I understand he sits in on the poker game night after night. You know, sheriff, what sort of a honest man Red Crowther is with the pasteboards, so you may guess the lad never rises a winner. So, to make up, I believe he forrows an odd greenback now and then from the money he handles inside the bank, thinking that I've got so much it won't hurt me."

"Red Crowther!" said Eddie. "That's the head of the gang we're so anxious to meet, isn't it, sheriff? Well, look here, I'll take this case over right now, and I'll work the lad and the cardsharp out of it in the one act."

He nodded to the sheriff, and made his way into the saloon.

"Say, barkeep," said Polo, "You know that child Hymans?"

"I do," said the man behind the counter. "But what's that to yew?"

"No matter of life and death," said Eddie, "as it may be to some people. But you're not to allow him to gamble in this saloon any more."

"What?" yelled the barman. "Here, who in thunder air yew ter come a-handin' out orders in this 'ere saloon? An' what the—"

"You can cut that rough stuff, barkeeper," said Eddie, with a flash of the eyes that made the other look at the dirty sawdust on his floor. "I'm the deputy-sheriff of this district—see for yourself." Here the lad turned back the lapel of his coat and showed the silver star which was his badge of office. "And what I say to you goes. Get me? If

I find you disobeying my orders, or that young lad Hymans playing poker, or any other gambling game in this saloon I'll shoot the whole crowd up, beginning with you! That's all I've got to say to you just now! Good-morning!"

He twirled his revolver around his finger by the trigger-guard most ostentatiously as he spoke, and the barman, who had heard of the lad's target practice at the other saloon some evenings previously, stifled the temptation to reach swiftly for the gun that lay handy beneath the counter. His face was evil as he watched Eddie stroll nonchalantly out of the room, though he knew that, in his heart of hearts, he would obey Polo's orders and forbid Hymans to gamble under that roof again.

The next stage in the game was played in the evening, when the sheriff himself started in to watch the lad Hymans as he left the bank premises at the close of his day's work. Steadily, keeping himself unobserved, the sheriff dogged the lad's footsteps to his home, waited outside for the space of time necessary for the despatch of the evening meal, and cursed heartily, though below his breath, as he heard Widow Hymans' ineffectual appeal to her son to stay at home, away from the saloon, this night. Then the sheriff followed the slouching lad along the road to the saloon, and slipped into the place, taking cover behind a pillar, from where he could observe all that went on, himself unnoticed.

He saw young Hymans exchange greetings and significant nods with Red Crowther and a couple of others belonging to the gang of rustlers, and the four gravitated to an unoccupied table, where, in the twinkling of an eye, a pack of cards and four little piles of money were produced.

The barkeeper, who had also been watching Hymans, frowned, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders and a glance round the room to make sure that Eddie Polo wasn't present, slipped across the floor to the gamblers.

"Here, Hymans," he said, "put up yewr money. I ain't no objection to these other gents a-playin' in this saloon, but it ain't no kindergarten for children. Yew've played yewr last card for money under my roof, so don't stake anythin' more."

(Another instalment of this great life story in next Friday's issue.)

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

Address all letters to:
The Editor, The "POPULAR,"
The Fleetway House, Farringdon
Street, London, E.C. 4.

FOR NEXT FRIDAY:

We have again a splendid programme for next week's issue of the POPULAR. The first grand long complete story is of the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., and is entitled:

"A COWARD'S BLOW!" By Frank Richards.

In this story we find George Bulstrode and Alonzo playing prominent parts. Bulstrode

leads the gentle Alonzo to carry out a practical joke, which lands Alonzo in trouble. Quite innocently Todd gives the game away, and Bulstrode finds that the joke is turned against himself. Then he seeks out Alonzo, and deals him a blow which Bulstrode regrets far more bitterly than does Alonzo himself. The story of

"A COWARD'S BLOW!"

is one which all my chums will thoroughly enjoy.

Our second long complete school story is entitled:

"THE SURPRISE FOOTBALLER!" By Owen Conquest.

Needless to say, this story deals with the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver, readers will remember, has not been having the best of luck in his efforts to "jape" the Bagshot juniors. True, this week's story tells us that Jimmy has scored for once, but there are big arrears to wipe off. In the story of

"THE SURPRISE FOOTBALLER!" "Uncle James" comes very much to the fore!

Our Serials.

Of course, there will be further long instalments of our grand serials, and the one which deals with

"OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!"

is of a particularly exciting nature. Ferrers Locke proceeds to relentlessly pursue the course of justice, whilst the further adventures of Eddie Polo will interest you all.

The "Magnet Library."

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Your Editor



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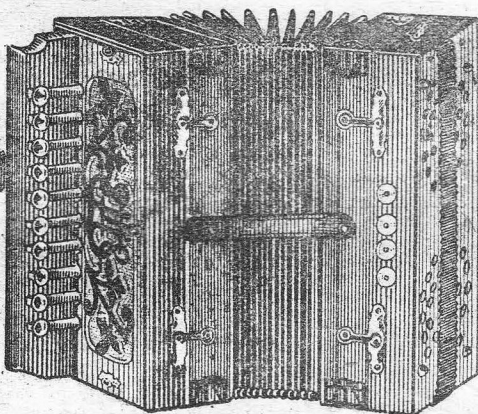
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