

# A SPECIAL EASTER ALL-STORY NUMBER!

THE

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

# THE EMPIRE

THE WEEKLY STORY-PAPER.

Vol. I.  
No. 25.

A Long, Complete Story  
of  
**'PANTHER' GRAYLE,  
DETECTIVE.**  
By  
**JACK LANCASTER.**

(Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary; no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but our Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.)

## CHAPTER I.

### An Appeal for Help.

**G**ORDON GRAYLE, better known as the Panther, was supposed to be busy. I, Geoffrey Martin, his friend, and sometimes his assistant, sat reading while he scribbled letters after letters.

Almost simultaneously the Panther laid aside his pen and I set down my book, and we both listened. The light footsteps of a girl were ascending the stairs.

The Panther's housekeeper had been given strict instructions to admit no one. Whether she had rigidly insisted on consequences of disobedience or had been eluded we did not know.

We heard the girl pause outside the door. She did not knock at once. She smiled at each other, guessing that she was very flustered and nervous, and afraid to rap at the door. Presently the knock came—more a mumble than a knock, very low and timid.

"Come in!" said the Panther cheerily.

The door opened, and she entered. She was a girl of nineteen, or twenty, light, and of medium height. She might have been pretty, but the door had died out of her face. She appeared crushed by some blow, white, colourless, infinitely pitiable.

"Can you spare me a few moments?" she said, in a tone half pleading, half apologetic. "I can see that you are busy, but—but I will keep you many minutes." "I can see you placed a chair for her, and the other invited her to sit down."

"My time is at your disposal," he said. "Please tell me in what way I can serve you."

"Have you heard of the great diamond robbery in the City?" she asked breathlessly.

The Panther nodded.

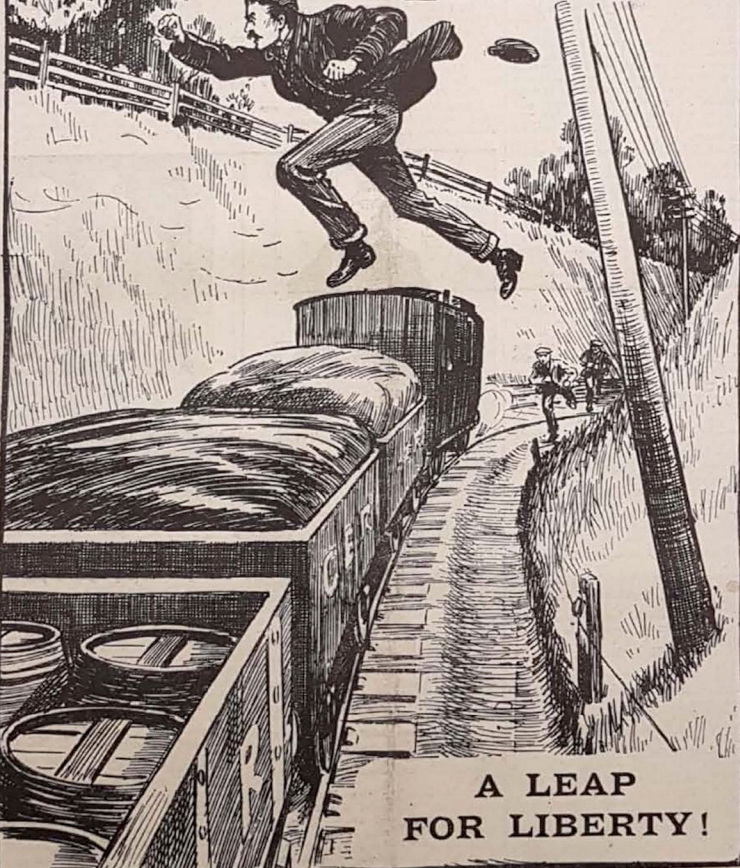
"Yes, I understand that John Wilford has been arrested in connection with the affair. I have not gone very closely into the case, but things tend to look very black against him."

"They look black enough, Heaven knows," she answered. "He no more did it than you. I—I am content to let it go."

In that case I sincerely hope he is innocent. If you wish me to help perhaps you would not mind retaining my memory as to certain points which a busy man like myself is liable to forget."

"Yes, I'll tell you all about it," she began, brightening up considerably now she saw that the Panther was disposed to lend a kindly ear. "Jack was identical clerk to the firm of Agbury & Lockhart. He obtained an accidental introduction to the firm, was entrusted implicitly. There was some talk of his being taken into

# THE GREAT DIAMOND ROBBERY.



## A LEAP FOR LIBERTY!

partnership at no very distant date. Such a high trust was placed in him that the keys of the safe often remained in his possession for days together.

The day before yesterday a friend of Mr. Lockhart's was extremely anxious to buy some shares, and was without ready money. He was a diamond-merchant, and offered twenty thousand pounds' worth of valuable stones as security until some money owing to him should be paid in. Mr. Lockhart trusted his friend, but the other insisted on his keeping

the diamonds. They were put into the safe and left there.

"That same evening Jack was taking me to a theatre. He remained at the office after the others had gone to change into his evening clothes. He told the caretaker, and arranged with her to let him in after he had seen me home—I live at Kensington—so that he could take the bag in which he had packed his morning clothes home with him. Well, next morning, when the safe was opened in Mr. Lockhart's presence, the diamonds were found to have disappeared. The

only other key was in the possession of Mr. Agbury, the sleeping partner.

"Jack was immediately arrested. He possessed the key to the safe; he had visited the office after midnight; the evidence against him seems conclusive. But he didn't do it, Mr. Grayle; I'm convinced he didn't do it, although I seem to be the only one who believes in his innocence."

"Not the only one, if you will excuse my saying so," the Panther observed.

"You mean," she exclaimed, "that you, too—"

"I am quite convinced that, after what you have told me, that Mr. Wilford had nothing to do with the robbery. A man about to commit a theft under those circumstances would have gone about things in an entirely different way. He would have insisted upon giving up the key, having first got a duplicate made on the sly. He would have committed the robbery immediately after office hours, and would certainly not have returned to the office after midnight to fetch a bag of clothes. Still, the police never seem to see things in that light."

"You must save him," she said earnestly. "If he is convicted it will kill me."

She spoke quite calmly, but she meant it.

"I think we will adopt the good old motto of never say die," the Panther remarked cheerfully. "Now, my dear young lady, I want you to do your best to answer one or two questions, and then I will do my utmost to get at the truth of the whole business. Do you know the name of the diamond-merchant who left the stones in Mr. Lockhart's possession?"

"Yes, Jack was telling me about him. His name is Lazarus Lievens; his office is somewhere in Hatton Garden."

"Thanks! And now, if you could tell me about the time which Mr. Wilford would have reached the City after leaving you, it might help a little."

"About one o'clock, I should think. He reached Kensington at twelve-thirty, and left immediately in a taxi."

"And now, if you can give me the address of Messrs. Agbury & Lockhart, I think that will conclude my catechism, Miss—"

"I'm sorry," she said, "I have not told you my name. It is Miss Brian."

She went on to give the address of the office, as the Panther had requested, and then handed him her card.

"If you have good news," she said, "you will let me hear from you at once, won't you, Mr. Grayle?"

"Certainly!" the Panther answered. "I trust that it may be my good fortune not to keep you waiting very long. I will certainly do my best for you and Mr. Wilford!"

She shook hands with us both, and then the Panther showed her out.

"Well," I said, as he came back into the room, "you've about done it now. You've got enough work to last you for weeks, and now you've undertaken another case."

"It can't be helped," he answered. "Here's a case of an innocent man in prison, and unless someone lends him a hand he'll be quodded as sure as his name's Wilford."

"You seem pretty certain of his innocence," I said.

"I am, for the reasons I explained to Miss Brian. Well, Martin, suppose we don't waste any more time talking. Shout down to the housekeeper and tell her to call a cab, and then get your hat and coat on. We are going to do ourselves the honour of calling upon Messrs. Agbury & Lockhart."

We did not exchange another half dozen words until we were half-way down Fleet Street in a taxicab.

"What we want to discover," the Panther said to me, "is the name of the maker of the safe. When I hear of a safe being opened without any apparent violence, I'm always suspicious. One of these safes has three screws at the back under a coating of enamel; the burglar has only

Continued on the next page.

A GRAND NEW STORY STARTS NEXT WEDNESDAY.

Conclusion of this popular School Story.

THE RIVALS OF ST WODE'S



THIS HAS TAKEN PLACE. By CHARLES HAMILTON.

THE RIVALS OF St. KIT'S."

Dick Penwyn, a game Cornish lad who has been to a Council school, etc. Blagden was attacking furiously, and Pen put up his hands to defend himself.

would spend his last ounce of strength in the attempt. Pen came past the big tree and stepped on the low bridge-but his glance was on the ground, and he did not see Blagden.



Pen sprang upon the parapet and put his hands together and dived to the rescue of his old enemy, Blagden.

The Fourth Form Bully would have used any weapon. A heavy stone lay on the ground near him, a large jagged mass.

straight at the Cornish lad—but at the right moment Pen dodged aside. Blagden meeting resistance, staggered blindly forward.

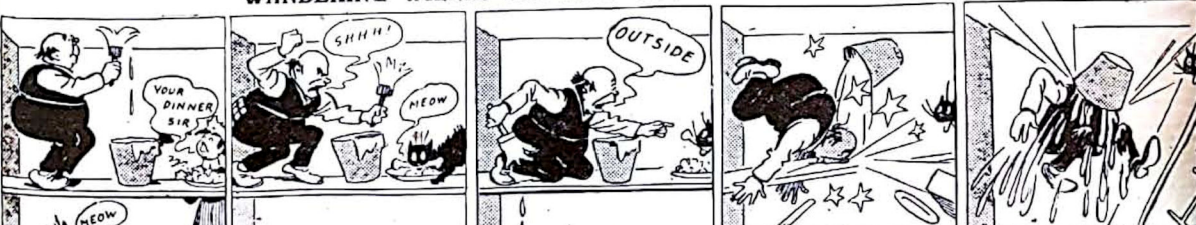
Dick Penwyn, Hero. PEN rushed to the parapet of the bridge. Kneeling upon it, with steady head and eyes, he gazed downward.

The juniors ran to the bridge. Looking over their white faces, they saw Blagden struggling feebly in the grip of the current, and Pen nearing him with rapid and powerful strokes.

Pen recoiled, releasing him. The water closed over Blagden's head, and his breath came up in bubbles. Pen recoiled for him again, and brought him up.

Pen was being raced on by the current. A spit of land jutted out into the river, with weeping willows at the end of it, and Pen had made an effort to gain that and prevent the current from sweeping him round.

WANDERING WILLIE OUTWITS THE WILY WHITEWASHER.



1. Noticing that the old gent in the above engraving is too busy whitewashing to notice the arrival of his dinner— 2. Wandering Willie decides to attend to the matter himself, before the dinner gets cold. But the un-fort, he gets so excited like— 3. Seems to object, and gives over his whitewashing to remonstrance. In fact, he gets so excited like— 4. That he leans on the rail of the window, which whizzing flies into the air, and lets the old gent down to his dial—bump! 5. Then the pail fairly bonnets the old chump, and after watching his antics for a bit, Willie quietly slopes off.

Special New Stories and Articles in Preparation.

Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following complete Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.

AN AMUSING COMPLETE-SCHOOL TALE.



THE FOURTH FORM'S BLACK CHAMPION

A Splendid, Complete Tale of Gordon Gay & Co., at Rylcombe Grammar School. By PROSPER HOWARD.

CHAPTER 1.

Gordon Gay's Water. "I'd simply knock him into a cocked hat!" exclaimed Frank Monk, sitting back in his chair, and looking defiantly at his two study-mates—Carboy and Lane. The three juniors appeared to be having an extremely heated debate, and the remark which this story opens was characteristic of the conversation usually heard in any of the Fourth Form studies at Rylcombe Grammar School.

"You bouncer, I tell you I'll—" "Not gas nonsense!" broke in Gordon Gay's voice again, and Carboy and Lane each gave a smothered giggle. "Look here!" gasped Frank Monk, as Gordon Gay closed the study door and then seated himself on the edge of the table in the centre of the room. "I don't know what the game is, you bouncer, but you might have had the decency to knock on the door before stamping in!" "Sorry, kids!" replied Gordon Gay. "But to tell you the truth, I heard that you had gone out, and as I wanted to borrow your French dicker, I came stumbling in. Heavily sorry, but I couldn't help hearing your absurd remark, Monkney."

CHAPTER 2.

A Manufactured Nigger. "THEN you've lost the bet, you howling dummy!" cried Harry Wootton. "And you know jolly well we haven't got a son to bless ourselves with!" added Jack Wootton. Gordon Gay looked up. "I'm jolly sorry, kids," he said, "but I quite expected to be able to get Peter along. We know that he would have put up a jolly good fight against old Monkney if he could have been here."



The remarks that the two Australian juniors made as Gordon Gay made up as the black champion were anything but flattering.

fixed permanently for an hour, at least. Applying this mixture had occasioned a good deal of chaff from the two brothers; but Gordon Gay had made up his mind to carry the thing through, so he ignored the banter from the lips of the Australian juniors. Frank Monk & Co. were surprised, therefore, when they called at Study 13 at six o'clock to find such a finely-built nigger waiting patiently for them. "Where's Gay?" said Carboy. "He ought to bring his man along now, as there's a big crowd waiting in the gym."

CHAPTER 3.

The Fourth Form's Black Champion. HARRY and Jack Wootton fell into step on either side of the black junior, and the whole party proceeded to the school gymnasium. The place was literally packed with Grammarians, and they raised their cheer as Frank Monk, dressed in boxing attire, entered the improvised ring. The cheer had no sooner died down than it was followed by a roar of laughter as the

rushed at each other, each landing effectively, flush on the face. "Oh, jolly! Dat was the nasty one for de Monkney!" said the nigger sily. "De chile wuz made him look sily. Dis chile wuz de boor with him!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the spectators. "Go on, Monk! Teach him to cheek!" The two boxes stopped back for an instant, then stopped in again. There was a sharp rattle, and Frank Monk appeared to get his own back, for Gordon Gay appeared to fly half way across the ring.

"Time!" called Carboy. And as the ring to prepare their men for the next round. Although the disgraced Fourth-Former had received a good blow as he nearly sent him down, he did not come up smiling for it; in fact, he flushed and angry, and the spectators could see by the glare in his eyes that there was trouble ahead of him. The round commenced weakly, and in response to the disappointed cries opened rapidly. However, Carboy proved quicker, and Frank Monk eventually driven to the ropes by a sharp series of blows. "Come on old boy!" laughed the disgraced Gordon Gay. "Come on, dis chile won't hurt you." "Dis chile won't hurt," muttered Lane. The taunt enraged Frank Monk to such an extent that he dashed in wildly, and as Gay was obliged to back quickly, he raised a huge back cheer went up from the spectators. "Go on, Monk! Go on!" The cries encouraged Frank Monk, and while the excitement was at its height, he again landed his left heavily on Gay's nose. The cheer which followed brought down the gym, and nobody noticed the stern face of Dr. Monk, the headmaster, as he hastened into the room. "Boys!" he cried. "Go on, Monkney! Go on, Monkney!" roared the excited spectators, as Gordon Gay rallied, and sent a straight left and right on to his opponent's chin. "Boys!" There was no mistaking the tone, and one by one the juniors turned their gaze away from the ring towards the door.

"What about Sam Langford, then?" "Sam Langford!" laughed Frank Monk. "Why—why, there's plenty of our chaps in the Army and Navy who could knock him out in one round!" "Not!" snapped Lane. "Why haven't they come forward?" Frank Monk hesitated, and then went crimson. "Haven't they got something else to think about?" he said at last. "Haven't they got their drills and all that kind of thing? Why, I bet there's plenty of chaps who would come forward to knock these beastly conceited black boxes out of the boxing world if only they'd got time. And I tell you plainly that if any black kid dare come to Rylcombe Grammar School, I'd knock him into a cocked hat before he could say lightning! My hat, if only I had the chance I'd—" "Not gas nonsense!" interrupted a voice suddenly, and the three Fourth-Form juniors turned their heads with a jerk towards the door of their comfortable study. Frank Monk sprang to his feet as he caught sight of the owner of the voice which had interrupted his eloquent flow of conversation. "Now, then, Gordon Gay, you bouncer," he cried, "out you go!" The newcomer grinned pleasantly. He was Gordon Gay, the leader of Study 13, and a deadly rival of Frank Monk & Co. The two factions were in a continuous state of warfare, although everything was done in apparently good nature—the warfare consisting in fact, only of japes. However, a visit to a study was always greeted with suspicion, and for a full minute Gordon Gay stood grinning by the open door as Frank Monk, whose face had gone deep crimson. "I said out you go!" repeated Frank Monk with a jerk. "If you aren't outside by the time I count ten, I'll—" "Not gas nonsense!" interrupted Gordon Gay, with a laugh.

"Of course," snapped Frank Monk, "nobody as well made as I could think that a dummy like you would see the seriousness of the matter; but I maintain that the black peril is a real peril—and—Oh, drizzle up, fathead!" interrupted Gordon Gay. "Anyone would think that you had just laid out Jones and Langford in two rounds. What on earth is the good of talking that rot when you know jolly well that some of them are better boxers than—" "Rats!" "Well, aren't they? What about Jacks—" "Shut up mentioning that Johnny's name for goodness sake!" interrupted Monk. "I tell you that a black boy any weight of any chap in this school wouldn't stand an earthly chance against Rylcombe. I'd take him on at once, and would show him how white chaps can box if they want to." Gordon Gay's forehead puckered up into a frown. "You say you could knock out a black your own weight?" he said at last. "Well, I say you wouldn't and couldn't. Do you 'ber me a study feed you could, if I produced a nigger?" Frank Monk grinned and puffed out his chest. "Produce the nig," he said, "then we'll talk him. But let me tell you that blackies don't grow like cabbages in the neighbourhood of Rylcombe." "But I could find a chap not a quarter of a mile away from Rylcombe who could send you through the ropes."

Wootton. "You knew he was the only black kid in these parts, and yet you wagged on producing him at a moment's notice. It's all rot!" There was a long silence in the study, and it was not broken until Gordon Gay leapt out of his chair with a yell. "I have it," he cried—"I have it!" "Have what?" "Why, I'll be Massa Peter from the Coffee Stores," said Gordon Gay. "I'll be Peter. I've got black tights, black paint, and—" "But—but are you game to box?" interrupted Jack Wootton. "Game!" cried Gordon Gay. "Why, of course I'm game! I don't mind fighting old Monkney with gloves on, especially after he bragged so of what he would do to a nigger kid if he came to this school!" Gordon Gay's remark seemed to pacify the three juniors somewhat, and there was peace in Study No. 13 while the leader of the faction explained how he had gone into the town to invite a nigger-boy, who was employed at the local coffee-stores, to come up to the school to fight Monk. Gordon Gay told his chums how he had been disappointed to find the nigger gone, and then the juniors fell to discussing how the evening's arrangements were to be made. That every little detail was well discussed was proved by the fact that when Frank Monk & Co. called at Study 13 at six o'clock that evening, they were surprised to find a nervous-looking negro boy sitting on the table, and the two Woottons and Horace Garpole standing at one end of the room in an admiring group. Such a perfectly satisfactory state of affairs had been maintained a deal of hard work. There was the patent make-up paint to be made, and this took some time, as it had to be a preparation which

disgusted Gordon Gay joined his opponent. "I, jolly!" exclaimed the nigger, looking around in pretended surprise. "What hab dis chile done to be hired at—eh?" "Go it, Johnson!" added another junior, and the uproar which followed had to die down before the seconds were able to tell the referee that their men were ready for the contest. Carboy, who was reputed to know more about the rules of boxing than any other Grammarian, had been selected, as a matter of course, to perform the duties of ref, and he held up his hand for silence. "Kids," he cried, as there was a momentary lull, "dis great contest is between Mr. Frank Monk of the Grammar School, who is on my right, and an unknown black champion, produced by Mr. Gordon Gay. The rules are as those used at the National Sporting Club, and Mr. Frank Monk is seconded by Mr. Lane and Mr. Preston, while the Unknown is seconded by the two Woottons. I would ask—" "Bow-wow!" cried one of the spectators. "Get on with the washing!" "I hear, hear!" "Carboy grinned, and then glanced at his watch. "Time!" he cried. Frank Monk skipped lightly from his corner, and the next moment found himself face to face with the disgraced Gordon Gay. "Come on, you grinning bouncer!" muttered Monk; and he made a feint at the black's head. He rocked without Gay's quickness, however, for with a jerk, and he uttered a squeal of surprise. The next second the two juniors

disgusted Gordon Gay joined his opponent. "I, jolly!" exclaimed the nigger, looking around in pretended surprise. "What hab dis chile done to be hired at—eh?" "Go it, Johnson!" added another junior, and the uproar which followed had to die down before the seconds were able to tell the referee that their men were ready for the contest. Carboy, who was reputed to know more about the rules of boxing than any other Grammarian, had been selected, as a matter of course, to perform the duties of ref, and he held up his hand for silence. "Kids," he cried, as there was a momentary lull, "dis great contest is between Mr. Frank Monk of the Grammar School, who is on my right, and an unknown black champion, produced by Mr. Gordon Gay. The rules are as those used at the National Sporting Club, and Mr. Frank Monk is seconded by Mr. Lane and Mr. Preston, while the Unknown is seconded by the two Woottons. I would ask—" "Bow-wow!" cried one of the spectators. "Get on with the washing!" "I hear, hear!" "Carboy grinned, and then glanced at his watch. "Time!" he cried. Frank Monk skipped lightly from his corner, and the next moment found himself face to face with the disgraced Gordon Gay. "Come on, you grinning bouncer!" muttered Monk; and he made a feint at the black's head. He rocked without Gay's quickness, however, for with a jerk, and he uttered a squeal of surprise. The next second the two juniors