

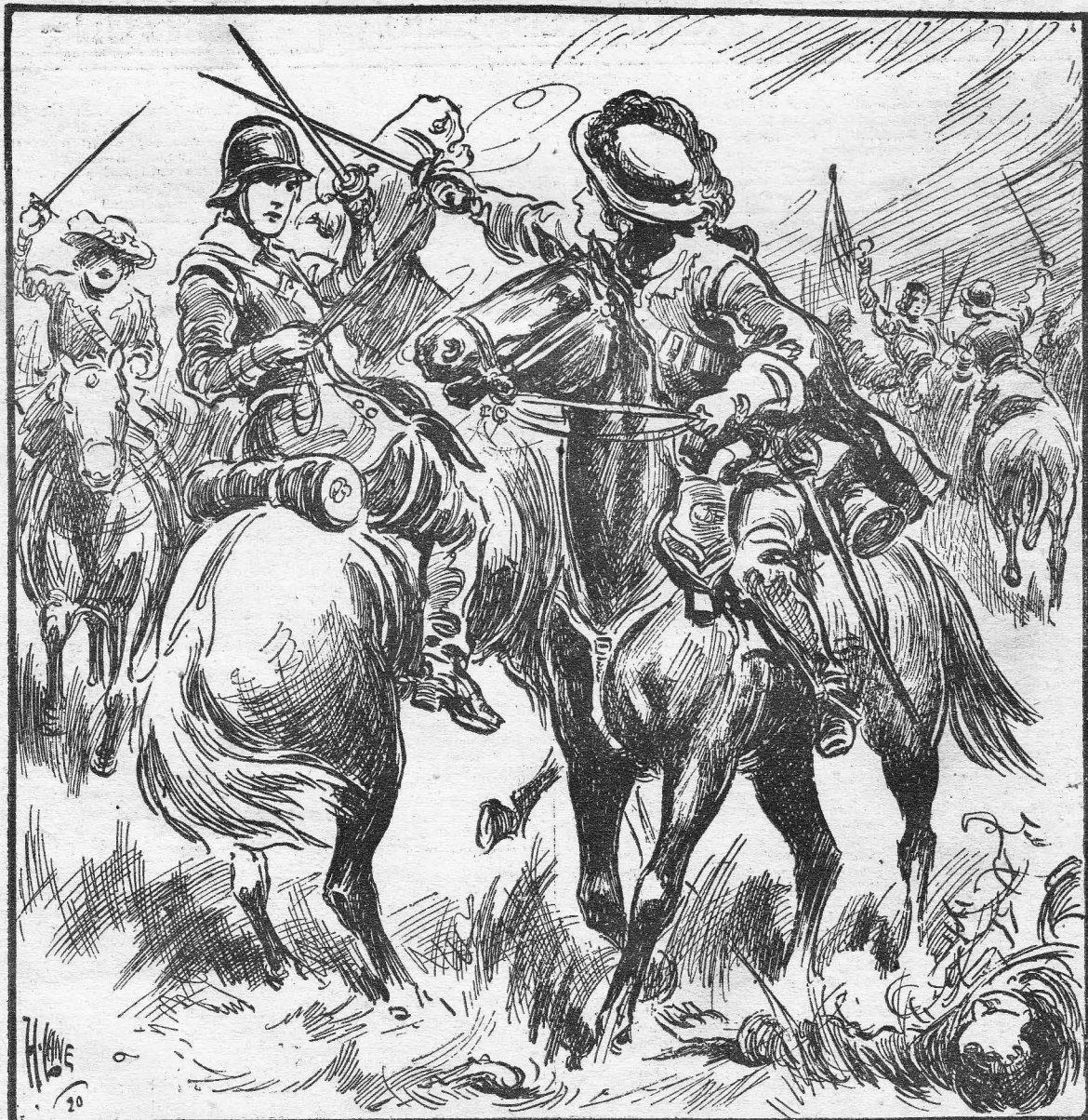
PACKED WITH GRAND SCHOOL & ADVENTURE STORIES!

No. 85.  
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# The $1\frac{1}{2}$ d Popular

20 PAGES.



ROUND AND ROUND CIRCLED THE TWO COUSINS, THEIR SHINING BLADES GLITTERING LIKE TWO STREAKS OF SILVER AS THE SUNLIGHT CAUGHT THEM.

(A Thrilling Incident from Our New Serial, "THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!")

## THE FIRST CHAPTERS OF A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE SERIAL!



## A TALE OF THE GREAT REBELLION

## INTRODUCTION.

The story opens with the death of Sir John Temple, the old master of the Chase. Harry, his son, now becomes the new master. Walter Temple, his cousin, pays him a visit on the same night, and hears of a wonderful sword belonging to the Temples—A sword with a strange influence. It is supposed that

when carried by any member of the family in battle, it will guard him from hurt in the fight, and seemingly make him invincible over his enemy. Walter has a great longing for the sword, and next morning vanishes suddenly, bearing it with him. A little later war is declared between the King and Parlia-

ment, and Harry Temple, with his friend Will Howard, join the Royalist forces. They are walking out one day, when a wounded horseman dashes up, and, reeling in his saddle, holds out a crumpled packet. "For Prince Rupert!" he gasps.

(Now read on.)

## The Skirmish in the Rain!

"HIS Highness! Hasten, for the love of—"

The trooper staggered, and fell in a huddled heap ere either could reach him, the paper falling almost at the feet of Will, who picked it up, uttered a startled gasp, and hurried swiftly away.

Harry drew his scart over the dead rider's face, and followed quickly, his heart beating wildly as he instinctively realised that something important was in the air.

And it was something important, I warrant you, as the sudden activity which prevailed in the camp a few minutes later could have told. A party of Rupert's scouts, operating on the borders of Warwickshire, had been surprised by a much stronger force of Parliamentary soldiery. A desperate hand-to-hand conflict had ensued—was probably even then raging—and help was urgently needed. The message concluded with the information that a large body, under the Earl of Essex, had also been reported somewhere in the neighbourhood.

Less than fifteen minutes later an array of silent tents, with an odd figure moving here and there, was all that remained to mark the place where Rupert's Horse had rested. Practically the whole force was speeding south-west, their accoutrements glittering in the red light of the sunset.

The exact position of the surprise attack had not been made quite clear, but 'twas presumed to have taken place somewhere between Atherstone and Nuneaton; therefore, 'twas towards the border-line midway between these two places that the main force of Rupert's Horse rode, the others spreading out in skirmishing order. For, if 'twas true that Essex had a really formidable Parliamentary Army anywhere close at hand, there was no telling to what extent his scouts might have been reinforced since the ill-fated messenger brought the disquieting news to Leicester.

'Twas pitch-dark when the border was crossed, so they could only trust to their ears to guide them towards the scene of the encounter. But nothing broke the stillness, save the soft swish of their horses' hoofs in the long grass and a muttered word of command every now and then.

Presently Harry, Will, and some of the others topped a rise, which in daylight commanded a good view of the surrounding country, and drew rein, listening intently. Suddenly young Temple's quick ears caught a faint—very faint—sound over towards the left, and he clutched Howard's sleeve tightly.

"Hark! You heard it? Ay, there 'tis again!"

The watery moon shone for a moment from behind the clouds, revealing a rough, wide track leading towards the valley beneath. Suddenly a fierce tumult—a clashing, shouting uproar—broke out beyond a coppice a short distance off, and an answering cheer of encouragement burst from Prince Rupert's men as they raced to the help of their hard-pressed comrades.

The moon had now hidden herself again, and, what was worse, great drops of rain commenced to fall, soon becoming a drenching downpour. 'Twas blackness, blackness everywhere, and, but for the sounds of the struggle which still continued, they might well have missed their goal, and ridden in any direction without being one whit the wiser.

Presently even that guide was taken from them. The noise ceased as though by magic, friend and foe evidently having realised the futility of trying to distinguish each other in that velvety darkness. Then came a sudden pounding of hoofs from somewhere just ahead, quickly dying away into the distance.

"A thousand curses!" exclaimed Captain Lovelace, who was in charge of Harry's particular company. "The birds have flown ere we could clip their wings! However, 'tis something to have made them do even that! Ho, there, Roger!"

But no reply came back through the gloom, and they pushed cautiously ahead, shouting at intervals. Presently something which sounded like a muffled groan fell on their ears from scarce a dozen yards away.

"Be wary!" cautioned Lovelace. "Mayhap 'tis but a 'cute trap. Who is there? Is it Roger Grayle?"

"Ay, or what's left of him!" came the grim response. "A light here quickly, in mercy's name!"

The hissing downpour made it a difficult matter to ignite one of the short torches which formed part of each man's equipment, but the overhanging trees at this particular spot afforded some shelter, and presently a flickering gleam shone down on a scene which drew a gasp from the newcomers, tough though they were.

For, scattered round the small clearing was ample evidence of the fierce conflict they had just interrupted. A dozen silent forms lay in various suggestive attitudes within a few feet of each other, and farther away, just within range of the torch-rays, as many more were visible; whilst sundry weapons—some broken and useless, some intact—littered the greensward.

Propped up against the base of a great oak, whither he had evidently crawled with his last remaining strength, a wiry-looking

trooper was vainly endeavouring to stanch the flow of blood from a gaping wound in his chest.

"Ye are just too late!" said Roger, the scout, biting his lips in his agony. "But a quarter of an hour sooner, and ye would have turned the tide in our favour. We held them well for several hours, but there's a limit!"

Captain Lovelace clenched his fists, and muttered something uncomplimentary with reference to the weather, as he looked compassionately at the man against the tree-trunk.

"I am sorry, friend Roger! To-night even Nature herself seems to have thrown in her lot with his Majesty's enemies! Hast definite news of Essex and—"

"Ay!" The scout's voice was very faint as he replied. "He and his jackals were close to Chipping Norton yesterday, but where they lie now I know not—possibly somewhere nearer here. Those—those knaves whom your coming put to flight, travelled south—"

Grayle broke off suddenly, as his head fell forward. Lovelace bent swiftly towards him, but immediately drew back, standing stiffly at attention. Another life had been given for the King.

Then southwards through the streaming torrent they rode, until the eastern sky began to pale, when a halt was called to take bearings. They were well into Warwickshire now—just on the outskirts of Coventry Town, in fact—where, by previous arrangement, the remainder of Prince Rupert's followers had also arrived.

A brief council of war was held; then, after a hasty meal, they continued their journey to intercept his Grace of Essex on his northward march.

## Edge Hill I

T WAS just on the Oxfordshire border that Rupert's advancing scouts came upon them—down there amongst the thickly wooded hollows at the base of the Edge Hills. They were busy, too, in all conscience, for the returning party had carried the news of the interrupted fight; yet they were hardly prepared for hostilities quite so soon, not knowing the remarkable swiftness with which the King's cavalry had crossed practically a whole county, so that the attack, when it came, was something in the nature of a surprise.

But right well 'twas withstood, I warrant. Essex had chosen his position carefully, if hurriedly, and was surrounded by rough and broken ground which greatly impeded the King's horsemen, and for a long time prevented any satisfactory manoeuvre being

carried out. Finally, however, a breach was forced in the left flank of the enemy, and the attack delivered there in considerable strength, pressing home the advantage.

The crash as the two forces met was something appalling. Harry Temple felt himself carried along like a straw on the bosom of a river, quite unable for a while to do anything towards bettering his position. Then he suddenly became conscious of a sturdy fellow on a big grey mare, who made a lusty thrust at him with his sword.

Harry parried in the nick of time, striking the Roundhead trooper's blade aside with such force as numbed its bearer's arm from wrist to shoulder. With a savage oath, the fellow swiftly changed the hilt to his left hand, lunged again, but stopped midway as though turned to stone.

And Harry? Why, he, too, was sitting there like a statue, completely unconscious of the tumult raging round him, and only realising that the last time he had seen that jewelled rapier it was hanging up over the hearth in his father's room at Temple Chase.

"Walter!" he gasped, finding his voice at length. "So it was you—"

By a supreme effort of will his cousin pulled himself together and renewed the attack with surprising vigour, considering his recent stupefaction. In, out, and round circled those shining blades, glittering like two streaks of silver whenever the sunlight caught them. Harry knew, from those first few passes already exchanged, that he was easily Walter's master at swordplay, yet, try as he would, 'twas all he could do to keep that keen point at a distance.

A confident look gradually crept over Walter Temple's face as he realised that he was having the best of the encounter so far, and the fierceness of his attack increased still more, if that were possible. According to the legend, the weapon he wielded made its user invincible in the field, and, whether by coincidence or not, the rapier was certainly living up to its reputation.

"Temple Chase—another master."

The words, though spoken several months ago, seemed to ring in Walter's ears with extraordinary freshness, sounding even above the clash of arms, and the cries and groans of the combatants. What if that other master were destined to be—

He saw that his young cousin's arm was weakening—those parrying strokes were surely growing much feebler than before—and his heart thumped with a wild exultation. Then, as Harry's horse stumbled slightly and the boy swayed forward, Walter seized his opportunity. Back went the jewelled rapier, its point aimed straight for its victim's now unprotected side; but even as it started on its final journey, something crashed into Walter's own horse from behind, the sudden jolt nearly throwing him headlong from the saddle.

"Body o' me!" exclaimed the voice of Big Will Howard. "'Twas a mighty close call, lad! Another instant, and the knave would have spitted you like a— Kind Heaven!"

Will uttered a startled gasp as he, too, recognised the identity of the man before him. Ever quick-witted, however, he collected his scattered senses, and, giving his steed a sharp prod with his spur, swerved still closer. Bent on securing the sword of the Temples at all costs, the big fellow threw caution to the winds, and thrust out his great hands. But Walter guessed his intention, and, having delivered one wild and futile lunge at Howard's broad chest, spurred away after his comrades, who were now giving ground rapidly before Prince Rupert's better cavalry.

Will shook his fist, glanced round to make sure that Harry was still unhurt, and together they took up the chase. The boy's mouth was set in a grim, hard line as he realised that it now meant war to the knife between his cousin and himself. Their relations had ever been somewhat strained, to say the least of it, but those past few minutes had completely swept away all remaining traces of mock friendship, when Harry had realised how well-founded his worst suspicions had been. The thief was now unmasked without the possibility of a mistake, and if the mysterious weapon really did make its possessor invincible—well, that invincibility would undergo many hard tests ere he—Harry—would finally relinquish his claim to it. Nor did he forget those curious words which Sir John had uttered on that eventful night shortly before he died: "I want you to guard this sword as you would your life, for 'tis my belief that only through

its agency will the treasure be found—if ever!" Strange words, truly, but what their import was could not just then be fathomed. Perhaps in time—

"Od's life, Master Harry, but that uncanny blade seems to be performing its work all too well. See yonder!"

Following the direction of Will's outstretched arm, Harry saw that a strong body of Parliamentary cavalry had suddenly come between them and their quarry. Walter, indeed, being completely lost to view in the background, and forgotten, too, next instant.

His Grace of Essex was an excellent commander. Permitting his men to give ground before the better-mounted Royalists, he had all the time been keeping this strong force in reserve in order to release it when a favourable opportunity presented itself.

And it almost turned the tide, too. Indeed, were it not for the better-trained soldiery of the Crown, who still held the advantage of discipline, if not of numbers, it might easily have become a complete rout for Prince Rupert.

As it was, the battle raged for several hours in a ding-dong fashion, neither side

that great physician, ministers to our weary frames, and we thankfully acknowledge her thoughtfulness by submitting ourselves to her treatment.

And so it was with Harry Temple. When night closed down on that day of blood and strife, and his troop had bivouacked in a little hollow about half a mile to westward, he commenced to understand that a seasoned warrior is never produced in a few short weeks. Each separate bone in his body aching, his eyelids feeling as though lead-weighted, he threw himself down on the turf, and knew nothing more until a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a deep voice sounded in his ear.

"Up, lad! More work ahead for King's men!"

Harry rubbed his eyes and scrambled to his feet. Big Will was standing there, holding both their steeds by the bridles, whilst the rest of the troop were for the main part in the saddle.

Then a low-spoken order, and they had started, whither Harry could not tell until Big Will Howard enlightened him.

"Stragglers!" he said briefly. "Essex has gone back South, but we are not strong



Propped up against the base of a great oak was Roger the Trooper, with a gaping wound in his chest. "Ye are just too late!" he said. "But a quarter of an hour sooner, and ye would have turned the tide in our favour—" He broke off suddenly as his head fell forward. (See page 2.)

gaining any appreciable advantage. 'Twas a fight of exhaustion, a struggle between two mighty forces—trained prowess on the one side, numerical strength on the other. Finally Nature herself cast the deciding vote; both parties relinquished hostilities from sheer fatigue, and withdrew from each other as though by common consent. The first real engagement of the Great Rebellion had ended with honours even.

Harry saw his cousin again but once or twice during that hot tussle, yet each time found it impossible to reach him. Walter, though he seemed to have chosen the thickest part of the fighting, appeared to be quite unhurt, and was doing deadly work with the mysterious rapier which by right should even now be wielded by Harry himself.

**Pursuers and Pursued!**

**H**UMAN endurance is an extraordinary thing, inasmuch as we seldom realise its limit until we cease activity of our own free will, as it seems to us. Then heavy eyes and tired limbs tell us that the boundary has been overstepped. Nature,

enough to follow his main force. A blight upon it! Marry, though, some of his jackals have got separated, and are taking the opposite direction! See yonder, lad!"

The boy stared keenly ahead.

"I see naught, Will."

"Nay! Patience, lad, patience! I saw the knaves, nigh on a score of them, top yonder rise whilst you still slept. Wait till we pass the next dip."

They cantered on, only the soft swish of the vegetation giving sound to their presence. Then, as the first shafts of the rising sun shone upwards like a great golden fan, they saw their quarry scarce a mile ahead, spurring for dear life towards the shelter of a thick pine wood just across the valley.

Harry loosened his weapon in its scabbard, drove his spurs deep into his horse's flanks, and tore along beside Will, the faces of both alight, and their eyes flashing with the magio joy of battle.

"They're lightly mounted, like ourselves," the boy said, "and about the same—"

Harry suddenly paused, causing Howard to

swing sideways in his saddle and stare curiously at him. The lad's face had gone strangely white and puzzled-looking.

"What is't, master? You seem ill. On my life you do!"

A rather forced laugh broke from young Temple's lips, and then the colour slowly crept back into his cheeks as he replied:

"'Twas nothing, old friend, a—a passing faintness, mayhap."

Will's eyes narrowed, and his brows drew together in a puzzled frown. Then he said anxiously:

"Wert wounded, lad? I did not notice. There was so little time to see overmuch, save the—"

"Nay, nay, I sustained no hurt beyond a bruised wrist. But—but on my soul—"

"Master Harry," exclaimed Will sternly, "what is it? 'Tis no trifle, for trifles ne'er turned a Temple's face as white as yours was a moment back. What ails you, lad?"

The boy laughed again as he answered:

"Indeed, 'twill be your turn to smile, old friend, when I tell you. I have just seen myself wounded by the family sword!"

Howard started, looked grave for an instant, and then allowed a rather forced look of amusement to creep into his own face.

"That holds little surprise for me, lad," he said, "as the rapier has been ever in your mind since Sir John told you its history. How did it seem, master?"

"I hardly know. 'Twas like a picture—a vision—which formed suddenly before my eyes, vanishing almost as soon as it had taken shape. I seemed to see myself lying on a boarded floor, whilst over me someone—I could not see whom—was standing with the jewelled rapier in his grasp."

"Your cousin, I warrant."

"Probably; but, as I say, I could not tell for a certainty. Only—"

"Hasten, my lads, or they'll foil us yet."

Captain Lovelace, who was riding ahead, half turned in his saddle, effectually putting a stop to any further conversation; and in any case there was no time for it, for the flying Royalists, though they had gained a good deal on the enemy, would have to spur their steeds to still greater efforts if they hoped to cut off the Parliamentary troopers before the latter had a chance to scatter through the wood.

But fortune this time favoured the Crown. Right on the outskirts they came up with the foe and engaged them in as hot an encounter as either side could have wished for.

Harry Temple, always skilful with the blade, found plenty of work to do amongst the half-panic-stricken enemy—panic-stricken and disappointed, too, for they had counted themselves safe, and had not suspected any pursuit until the King's troopers crept up within a mile of them and dashed their hopes to zero.

Close upon a score had started on that futile gallop for safety; less than half a dozen remained intact at the end of twenty minutes, and those who could still ride were fleeing for dear life in different directions, hotly pursued by every Royalist who was sound enough to follow.

With the exception of a couple of slight flesh wounds, Harry and Will had weathered the storm in splendid style, and both were in the van of one of the pursuing parties when the final round-up was begun.

Singling out one of the flying foemen who had turned south, the twain tore after him like hounds suddenly freed from the leash, but he seemed to be exceptionally well mounted, for the distance between hunters and hunted did not decrease perceptibly for some time.

At length, however, the horse in front seemed to flag, and its rider turned swiftly in the saddle, taking an anxious glance backwards. Will Howard uttered a gasp of excitement.

"Sec, see, Master Harry! Look who it is—your cousin!"

Such was indeed the case, but so bedraggled was Walter Temple's appearance, and so intent on the chase were his trackers, that they had not realised the true identity of their quarry, until he turned round, and gave them that brief glimpse of his scared visage.

"Faster, faster, lad!" cried Will. "Marry, there are none of his friends to hide him now, and his strange rapier will avail him but little against our two trusty blades, I warrant!"

So, evidently, thought Walter also; for, though he saw at once that but two pursuers threatened him, he did not seem inclined to try his wonderful weapon's powers too far. Bending low on his weary steed's

neck, he urged it to fresh efforts, an action which was lustily followed by the others.

Then, suddenly, when success seemed almost in their grasp, Howard's horse, catching its hoof in a furrow, went down with a crash. Will went flying from the saddle, landing heavily, but scrambled up again next instant, apparently little hurt.

"Body o' me! Keep on, lad!" he shouted, for Harry had anxiously drawn rein. "Keep on, and may Heaven be kind to you! I'll follow hotfoot, can the beast but carry me!"

Walter Temple had by now gained a lead which would surely take some catching up; but Harry spurred ahead like one possessed, and at length had the satisfaction of knowing that he still had the legs of the fugitive, even if ever so slightly.

Od's life! What a chase it was! Up hill, down dale, over brooks, through coppices and meadows—on, ever on, until Walter's horse's head hung drooping towards the earth, and its flanks heaved like a bellows.

He chanced another look behind, and cursed beneath his breath. Only one pursuer was threatening him now—the cousin against whose blade the mysterious rapier had already proved its superiority on Edgell Field. Had Walter but known of Will's retirement from the chase, he would, doubtless, have made a stand earlier, instead of riding his steed almost to its death.

A ramshackle wooden building stood just ahead—a large woodman's hut, evidently unoccupied—and Walter swiftly decided to take advantage of the shelter it afforded. He was leaving nothing to chance, and, inside the building, with a solid wall to back him up, he would feel somewhat surer of the mysterious sword's power again asserting itself. He sprang from the saddle, and pushed open the door, just as Harry, perceiving his cousin's intention, also dismounted less than fifty yards away.

A strange foreboding possessed the boy as he ran forward with his naked blade gripped tightly in his hand. 'Twas not like a Temple to experience fear in the face of the enemy. But was it really fear? Nay, 'twas rather a sense of something to come—something which could not be avoided, but certainly not a feeling of fright—which worried him so vaguely. 'Twas just as though the issue of the coming encounter lay in other hands than his—that he was merely to be a mechanical figure, worked, as it were, by invisible wires.

Then, with a thrust of his shoulder, he sent the ramshackle door flying inwards, and the two weapons crossed with a clash, a shower of sparks momentarily brightening the gloomy interior of the hut.

#### The Duel in the Hut!

**T**WAS with a feeling of intense satisfaction that Walter Temple felt his cousin's steel once more cross his own. Previous experience had done much to lend him encouragement and an added faith in the strange legend of the sword; but scarce a dozen passes had been made ere he felt that faith wavering somewhat, as he realised that, so far as the art of fence was concerned, he had still a good deal to learn before he could place himself on a level footing with his opponent.

Clash, clash! The two ribbons of steel met and locked, remaining motionless for a short space, as though fixed there for good; then they slid apart, to meet again in a shower of twinkling sparks.

Harry's sword was rather a heavy one, but with more room for wrist-play he did not tire so quickly as on that former occasion. He feinted, drew an ineffectual attempt to parry from his cousin, and lunged swiftly. But Walter, more by chance than skill—or guided, mayhap, by the mysterious influence of his strange weapon—stepped sideways in the nick of time, just escaping the keen point, which grazed his shoulder and bit deeply into the woodwork behind the spot where he had been standing a moment before.

Harry had thrown a good deal of power into that thrust; not, indeed, that he desired to do his kinsman any grievous hurt from purely personal motives—though, Heaven knew, Walter had acted scurvily enough to create an undying feud between them—but Harry, as a loyal soldier, only remembered that the man before him belonged to the enemy, and that it was his duty to either kill him or else take him prisoner.

As Walter saw the effect of his cousin's stroke, hope again rose high in his breast. Stopping swiftly, whilst his adversary sought to draw his blade clear, he lunged outwards

and upwards, feeling the point of his weapon sink into something soft and yielding.

A sudden gasp of pain broke from Harry's lips, as, relinquishing his grip on his sword-hilt, he sank to the floor. Walter gave one glance at the prostrate figure, saw the red stain dying the left breast of the doublet, and rushed from the hut. Then a muffled sound of pounding hoofs announced his departure.

Inwardly reviling the ill-fortune which had compelled him to relinquish his part of the pursuit when it seemed so like proving successful, Will Howard saw the cousins disappear round a thick clump of brushwood just ahead; then, pulling his fallen mount to its feet, he made a swift examination of its injuries; but a strained fetlock was all that rewarded his search. Slight though the damage was, however, it completely put an end to all thoughts of again taking up the chase, so he climbed into the saddle, and set out at a slow walk in the same direction.

"Od's life!" he muttered, patting the horse's glossy neck. "But you let me down badly that time, lad! And I like it not, for methinks my right arm might have been of service to—What, knave? Limping again! Beshrew me, but 'tis a pretty pass you've come to, friend William!"

He slid from the saddle and pushed ahead on foot, leading his injured horse by the bridle. All sounds of hoofs had long since died away, nor was there a sign of either horseman when Howard topped a small rise further on. Halting, he shaded his eyes with his hand, but no living thing rewarded his gaze. The rolling country stretched for miles on all sides, mainly flat grass land, interspersed here and there with clumps of thick bush and small coppices. Close upon a mile away a tiny wooden building showed up, but Howard scarce noticed it, letting his eyes rather rest upon a swift-moving mounted figure which had suddenly appeared from behind a tall gorse-clump, to vanish next instant behind another.

At that distance Will could not distinguish who it was, but an involuntary shout escaped his lips, quite forgetting that his voice was not likely to be heard.

"Holla, holla! Master Harry!"

But only the hollows of the countryside caught the sound and threw it back to him again in a series of mocking echoes. The horseman did not reappear, so Howard continued his way at the best pace he could, calling out at intervals in the vain hope of some response.

In this way he at length reached the wooden hut, and was about to pass it when something on the ground caught his eye. 'Twas Walter Temple's worn-out horse, still lying where it had dropped from sheer weariness, its flanks heaving in great gasps. Will's eyes lighted up with a flash of excitement.

"Oh, ho!" he chuckled. "So the thieving knave has been rounded up at last, has he? Od's fish! Legend or no legend, I knew I could wager Master Harry's blade against any in England—"

He suddenly paused and stared about him. Why was only one horse lying there? Where was its rider? And why was Master Harry hastening onwards when he had seen him from the mound yonder, instead of retracing his course?

A slight creaking noise behind him caused Howard to swing round. The flimsy door of the hut was swinging on its rusty hinges, swayed to and fro by the light breeze, and something lying on the floor within was dimly visible from where Will was standing. He strode forward, pushing the door open wider, and allowing a shaft of golden sunlight to stream into the dark interior. Then the big fellow started back with a gasp of horror.

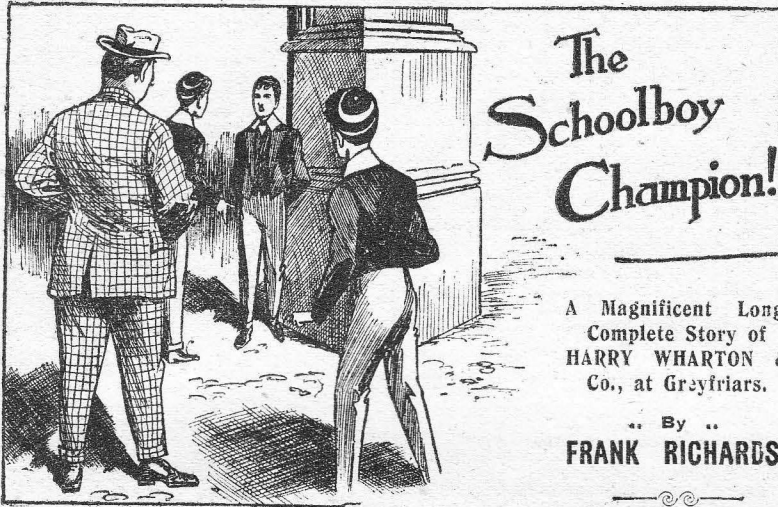
"A thousand curses! 'Tis Master Harry, as I live! What foul fiend's work is this?"

Stupefied at the sudden turn events had taken, he stooped down, gazing into the ashen face, and touching the blood-soaked cloth of the doublet. Then, opening the garment swiftly, he felt anxiously for any sign of life. "The saints be praised!" he murmured joyfully the next instant. "He's sorely hurt, though not dead! But 'twas a cruel thrust!"

Harry was indeed in dire straits, Walter's blade having pierced his left side, narrowly missing a vital spot. But, though he had lost a great quantity of blood, 'twas mainly owing to the back of his head striking the floor in his fall that he had been rendered unconscious, as Will soon discovered.

"A close call, 'faith!" muttered the latter, as he commenced roughly bandaging the wound. "But the Temples were ever as

(Continued on page 8.)



# The Schoolboy Champion!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Dennis Carr's Task!

**"M**ORNING, young shavers!" There were five "young shavers" standing in the old gateway of Greyfriars—the Famous Five of the Remove. They were discussing the Public Schools Boxing Championships, which were due to take place at Aldershot that afternoon, when the gruff voice greeted them.

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the speaker. He was a burly man in a loud check suit, and his face resembled a hatchet. His eyes were of the shifty variety, and his nose gave a decided tilt to starboard. Altogether the man's appearance was far from prepossessing.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt, and the other members of the Famous Five grunted in chorus. They didn't like the look of the fellow who had gruffly hailed them as "young shavers."

"What do you want here?" demanded Harry Wharton at length.

"I've called to see Master 'Azeldene."

"My hat!"

"You're not a relative of Hazel's, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry.

The man grinned.

"No," he replied. "I'm one of 'is creditors."

"Oh!"

"You mean to say that Hazel owes you money?" said Frank Nugent, with a frown.

"That's it!"

"And you've come here to dun him for it?" said Harry Wharton.

"I've given Master 'Azeldene plenty of time to settle—months an' months, in fact," said the burly man in the loud check suit. "An' now, bein' 'ard up meself, I can't afford to wait any longer. So I've come to collect the dubs."

"Who are you?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"My name's Jerry Martin. You've 'eard of me, p'raps?"

Bob nodded grimly. He had certainly heard of Jerry Martin, and so had his chums. They knew him for what he was—a scoundrel and an outsider—a man who lived by his wits—a cardsharp who was always on the look-out for fresh pigeons to pluck.

The Famous Five were alarmed, not for themselves, of course, since they had had no transactions with Jerry Martin, but for Peter Hazeldene. The latter was a weak-willed, easily-led fellow, who had more than once come near to expulsion. And he would come nearer to it if one of the masters or prefects saw Jerry Martin and discovered the object of his visit to Greyfriars.

"Look here," said Wharton, "you can't see Hazeldene."

"Why can't I?"

"Do you want to ruin the kid?"

"I want my money."

"How much does he owe you?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Fifteen quid."

"My only aunt!"

The juniors looked very grave. They had supposed that Hazeldene was in debt to the extent of a pound or two. But fifteen pounds! It was appalling!

"I—I don't believe it!" exclaimed Frank Nugent at length.

"It's a fact," said Jerry Martin. "I've got Master 'Azeldene's IOU for the amount."

And the rascal produced a grubby-looking document from his pocket.

"If Master 'Azeldene don't settle up," he said, "I shall take this scrap of paper to the 'eadmaster."

"But you—you'll get him sacked from the school!" protested Harry Wharton.

Jerry Martin shrugged his shoulders.

"It'll be 'is own fault," he said. "E ought to be honourable an' pay 'is debts."

The juniors exchanged glances.

"We can't let this blackguard come in!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"No jolly fear!"

Jerry Martin gave a gesture of impatience. "Stand aside, young shavers!" he said.

At that moment a junior came strolling down to the school gates. It was Hazeldene of the Remove.

Hazel's face went as white as chalk when he caught sight of Jerry Martin. He was about to turn on his heel, but Harry Wharton called to him.

"Come along, Hazel!"

With a hunted look in his eyes, and with hands tightly clenched, Hazeldene came on.

"This fellow declares that you owe him money," said Bob Cherry.

"That's true enough," muttered Hazeldene.

"An' I've come to get satisfaction," said Jerry Martin grimly.

"I can't speak to you here. Let's go out into the road."

"Oh, all right," grunted the cardsharp.

When they had proceeded a few yards Hazeldene turned fiercely upon his companion.

"You rotter! There was no need for you to come up to the school. If the Head or one of the masters had seen me with you it would have been all up."

"I want my money!" growled Martin.

"The time-limit isn't up yet," replied Hazeldene. "You gave me till six o'clock this evening to settle up."

"An' will you be able to do it?"

"I don't know for certain, but I hope so."

"So do I—for your sake," said Jerry Martin, with a sneer. "At six o'clock this evenin' I shall be in the smokin'-room at the Cross Keys. If you bring me the money, all well an' good. If you don't, I shall come straight up to the school an' interview your 'eadmaster!"

Hazeldene gave a shudder. He knew only too well what the result of such an interview would be. He would be expelled from Greyfriars in disgrace. He would be called upon to pay a heavy penalty for the misdeeds of the previous term.

"You understand that?" said Jerry Martin.

"Yes. Clear off now, for goodness' sake!"

To Hazeldene's intense relief the man obeyed.

"Six o'clock this evenin', mind!" he called back over his shoulder.

Having got rid of his unsavoury companion, Hazeldene walked back to the school gates.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced reproachfully at the white-faced junior.

"Hazel, you ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Why did you want to get mixed up with a

merchant like that? I thought you'd chucked your shady games long ago."

"So I had," muttered Hazeldene.

"But you're in debt through gambling!" protested Wharton.

"I know. But that debt was incurred last term."

"Oh!"

"Jerry Martin let it rip for months, and I thought he was going to let it slide altogether. But now he's started dunning me for the money. And I've got to raise it by six o'clock this evening, or it means the sack."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked very grave. They could sympathise with Hazel in his extremity. It was rough luck, they reflected, that the indiscretions of the previous term should have to be paid for now.

"The fellow says you owe him fifteen quid," said Nugent.

Hazel nodded.

"That's a lot of money," said Johnny Bull.

"If it was a matter of a quid or two we might be able to have a whip round and help you out of your scrape. But funds are low at present, and I doubt if I could muster fifteen bob."

"The outlook seems pretty hopeless," said Bob Cherry. "You'll never be able to raise fifteen quid by six o'clock, Hazel."

"In that case I shall have to face the music," said Hazeldene.

And, nodding to the Famous Five, he strolled away.

In the Remove passage he encountered Dennis Carr. Dennis was clad in shorts and a sweater and white canvas shoes, and he looked a living picture of health and strength. He started a little when he caught sight of Hazeldene's white face.

"Anything wrong?" he inquired.

"Jerry Martin's just been here to see me," said Hazel.

"My hat!"

"I was able to speak to him without being spotted, and he's gone now, thank goodness!"

"What did he say?"

"He made his usual threat. Said that if the fifteen quid wasn't handed to him by six o'clock he'd come up and see the Head."

"Set your mind at rest," said Dennis, "he'll never do that. I've promised to help you out of this mess, and I mean to keep my promise."

Some days before the unhappy Hazeldene had confided his troubles to Dennis Carr, and Dennis had undertaken to see him through. He was going to Courtfield after dinner to encounter, and, if possible, defeat, a youthful boxing marvel known as Ned the Nipper.

If Dennis won he would receive the sum of twenty-five pounds, and would thus be enabled to see Hazeldene clear of his trouble.

Dennis was making a big sacrifice in going over to Courtfield to fight Ned the Nipper. He had been selected to go to Aldershot that afternoon to represent Greyfriars in the light-weights, and for Hazel's sake he had backed out of this engagement.

The other two Greyfriars candidates—Bob Cherry and Dick Russell—would also be unable to go to Aldershot.

Bob Cherry had sprained his wrist, and Dick Russell had been summoned home owing to the illness of his mother.

Consequently, Greyfriars would not be represented at all—except by Wingate of the Sixth, who was taking part in the heavy-weight contests.

By declining to go to Aldershot, Dennis Carr had made himself very unpopular. His schoolfellows imagined that he was going to Courtfield with the sole object of winning twenty-five pounds for himself—that he was putting his own selfish interests before those of the school. They did not know that it was for Hazeldene's sake that Dennis had undertaken to tackle Ned the Nipper.

"I say, Carr," said Hazeldene, "do you honestly think you've got a chance against that boxing marvel?"

Dennis nodded cheerfully.

"I don't suppose it will be a walk-over for me," he said. "I shall need to go all out. But I've never felt in better trim in my life. And if you're not out of Jerry Martin's clutches in an hour or two, it won't be through lack of effort on my part, I can assure you!"

"You're a real brick, Carr!" said Hazeldene gratefully. "You've made yourself jolly unpopular by refusing to go to Aldershot, and I'm not sure that I ought to allow you to do it—"

"Rats!" said Dennis.

"You're making a big sacrifice—"

"Don't start going into heroics, for good—"

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ness' sake! Keep a stiff upper lip, Hazel, and let's hope you'll soon be clear of this wretched business. You can rely on me to put up the fight of my life, anyway."

And Dennis passed on, whilst Hazeldene, with his mind in an agony of suspense, sought the solitude of his own study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Plot That Failed!

"CARR!" Wingate of the Sixth bore down upon Dennis in the Close, after dinner.

The captain of Greyfriars carried a bag in his hand. He was just off to Aldershot to take part in the heavy-weight contests. And he frowned as Dennis Carr turned to him.

"What's this rot about you're not going to Aldershot, kid?" he demanded.

"It isn't rot, Wingate."

"You've been chosen to represent Greyfriars in the light-weights, and you ought to regard that as a big honour."

"I do," said Dennis. "And I'd come to Aldershot gladly, only—"

"Only what?"

"I've another engagement."

Wingate's frown deepened.

"I hear that you're going over to Courtfield to box against Ned the Nipper," he said.

"Is that so?"

Dennis nodded.

"I understand there's a reward of twenty-five pounds for anybody who can lick this boy marvel," said Wingate. "Is that why you're going?"

"Yes."

"This is a money-making stunt on your part, then?"

"Not exactly."

"But it must be," said Wingate. "And I consider that you're a beastly little cad, to study yourself at the expense of the school!"

Dennis flushed crimson. And he writhed under the lash of Wingate's tongue. He could not explain that it was for another's sake that he was going to Courtfield. He could not divulge the fact that Hazeldene of the Remove was in debt to the extent of fifteen pounds, and that he—Dennis—intended to see him clear of that debt.

"You've quite made up your mind not to come to Aldershot?" said Wingate.

"Quite!"

Skinner and Stott and Bolsover major were hovering near, and they unanimously cried "Shame!"

"I've a thundering good mind to make you come, whether you want to or not!" said Wingate. "But you seem to have no sportsmanlike instincts at all, so perhaps it's as well that you should stay behind."

And Wingate went on his way.

Dennis Carr turned back into the building, and the derisive jeers of Skinner and Stott and Bolsover major followed him.

"The awful outsider!" said Skinner. "He doesn't care a rap for the traditions of the school, or anything of that sort. He'd go to Aldershot in double-quick time if there was any money to be made. But there isn't. So he chooses to go to Courtfield, where he'll have a chance of picking up twenty-five quid!"

"Shame!"

"Mean wasters like Carr," said Bolsover major, "ought to be pulverised!"

"Yes, rather!"

"He'll never lick Ned the Nipper," said Stott. "That's one consolation."

Skinner shook his head.

"I'm not so sure," he said. "As I say, Carr's an awful outsider. He's put himself right outside the pale. But he's a top-hole boxer, and there's no getting away from that."

"Something ought to be done," said Bolsover major thoughtfully, "to prevent Carr from going to Courtfield."

Skinner clapped the bully of the Remove on the back.

"Bravo!" he exclaimed. "That's the idea! The question is, how can we stop the cad from going?"

"We can waylay him on the road, of course!"

"Ripping!"

"And then we could tie him to a tree, or something like that, and keep him a prisoner for the afternoon."

"Bolsover, old man," said Skinner admiringly, "you grow brainier and brainier every day! What could be better than the excel—"

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lent wheeze you've just suggested? All we require is a length of rope. Then we'll lie in ambush, behind a hedge, and spring out on Carr when he comes along, and capture him."

"He'll fight like a tiger," said Stott uneasily.

"Rats! He won't stand an earthly chance, with the odds at three to one," said Bolsover.

Having laid their plans, the three young rascals went round to the woodshed. Here they found a length of rope suitable for the purpose.

"We'd better be getting a move on," said Skinner. "Carr's due at Courtfield in half an hour."

The plotters promptly quitted the school premises, and strolled along the lane in the direction of Courtfield. They halted at length, when they discovered a suitable ambush, and, concealing themselves behind the hedge, they waited.

"Afraid Carr's dream of winning twenty-five quid will never be realised!" chuckled Skinner.

"No jolly fear!"

"Serve the bounder right."

"Keep your ears open, you fellows!" said Bolsover. "We want to be ready to pounce on him when he comes along."

And Skinner & Co. listened intently for the sound of approaching footsteps.

Meanwhile, Dennis Carr, blissfully unconscious of the little plot which had been hatched for his benefit, strolled out of the school gateway, and set off in the direction of Courtfield.

A big task lay ahead of him, but his courage did not falter. He had been told that Ned the Nipper boasted an unbeaten record in the boxing-ring, but he didn't allow that fact to upset him. He told himself grimly that the Nipper's unbeaten record would be spoilt that afternoon.

Dennis was fit, and keen, and in the pink of condition. He stepped out briskly, for he hadn't a great deal of time to spare.

And presently, when he was within a hundred yards of the spot where Skinner and Stott and Bolsover major lay concealed, Dennis was overtaken by a two-seater car. Somewhat to his surprise, the vehicle slowed up. And then the junior recognised the driver of the car as Jack Harper, the proprietor of a big training centre at Courtfield.

"Hallo, Mr. Harper!" ejaculated Dennis.

"Whither bound?"

"To Courtfield, to see you make shavings of Ned the Nipper!" was the reply. "Hop in!"

Dennis willingly complied. He was on very friendly terms with Jack Harper, who had been the first to bring Ned the Nipper's challenge to his notice.

The car bounded forward, and sped swiftly along the dusty road. And Skinner, who caught a glimpse of the occupants through a gap in the hedge, uttered an exclamation of wrath and chagrin.

"Oh crumbs! That's fairly done it!"

"Anything wrong?" asked Bolsover major.

"I should jolly well say so! Did you hear that car go past?"

"Yes, but—"

"Carr was on board!"

"Carr!" shouted Bolsover.

"Yes!"

"My only aunt! Then we're done?"

"Absolutely!"

The only member of the trio who was at all relieved was Stott. That weedy youth had not relished the prospect of coming to blows with Dennis Carr, who had an unpleasant way of hitting straight from the shoulder.

Skinner and Bolsover, however, were furious. Their little scheme to prevent Carr from carrying out his engagement at Courtfield had failed utterly. And it was with scowling faces that the rascals of the Remove, having been balked of their prey, retraced their steps to Greyfriars.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Short and Sweet!

"COMING over to Courtfield, Bob?"

It was Harry Wharton who asked the question, and standing behind Wharton, in the doorway of Bob Cherry's study, were Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh.

Bob was reclining in the armchair. His wrist was bandaged, and the usual sunny smile was missing from his countenance. He had hoped to do great things at Aldershot; and on the eve of the boxing tournament he had had the misfortune to sprain his wrist.

Bob was feeling far from cheerful, and he made no pretence of feeling otherwise.

"Blow Courtfield!" he growled.

"You might as well come along, Bob," said Nugent. "No sense in sitting here moping all the afternoon."

"Besides, the scrap between Carr and Ned the Nipper will be jolly interesting," said Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"It'll be too one-sided to be interesting," he said. "Carr will be licked to a frazzle!"

"What if he is?" said Harry Wharton. "That's not the only item on the programme. There will be at least half a dozen bouts, and some of them will be well worth seeing."

"I'm staying here!" grunted Bob Cherry.

The four juniors in the doorway exchanged glances, and then Hurree Singh murmured: "I proposably suggest that unless our worthy chum comes of his own accordfulness, we take him forcefully!"

"Good idea!" said Nugent. "You hear that, Bob?"

Bob Cherry rose reluctantly to his feet.

"I suppose I'd better come along," he said. "You've got no choice in the matter," said Harry Wharton. "If you won't come of your own free will, we'll carry you!"

"Time's getting on," said Johnny Bull, consulting his watch. "We'd better bike over. Think you can manage it, Bob, with a gammy wrist?"

"Of course!"

A few moments later the Famous Five were speeding along the dusty lane. On their way they passed Hazeldene of the Remove.

Pale-faced, and with his hands plunged deeply into his pockets, Hazel was pacing to and fro like a restless spirit. It was not difficult to see that he was in a state of suspense and agitation.

"Poor old Hazel!" said Nugent, when the cyclists had swept past. "I feel awfully sorry for him."

"Same here," said Bob Cherry. "But sorrow's no use in Hazel's case, unless it's backed up by fifteen quid in hard cash!"

"We can't do anything for the fellow," said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to leave him to the tender mercies of Jerry Martin."

"Afraid so," said Johnny Bull. "If he was only a quid or two in debt, we might be able to do something. But fifteen quid! Why, it's a small fortune!"

"I shall be sorry to see Hazel sacked, for his sister's sake," said Harry Wharton. "But I'm afraid there's no escape for him this time. Jerry Martin will see the Head, and then the chopper will come down."

The Famous Five were very concerned for Hazeldene, but they felt that they were quite helpless in the matter.

When they reached the Public Hall at Courtfield, Hazel and his troubles had vanished from their thoughts.

A boxing bout was in progress as they entered the hall. A tall giant was knocking a short and stocky individual round and round the ring.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he sat down. "This is exciting!"

But the excitement didn't last long.

The tall man floored his opponent with a powerful right swing to the jaw, and the contest was over.

The platform was then cleared, and after a brief interval a sturdy, well-developed youngster appeared. He had the gloves on, and he seemed to be fairly oozing with confidence.

"Gentlemen," thundered the master of the ceremonies, "I have much pleasure in introducing you to the boy boxing marvel, Ned the Nipper."

"Hurrah!"

There was quite a stir in the crowded hall, and the Famous Five found themselves quivering with excitement.

"As you are probably aware, gentlemen," continued the master of the ceremonies, "Ned's manager has issued a challenge on his behalf. An award of £25 will be given to any light-weight who can defeat Ned the Nipper, either on points or by administering a knock-out, in a twelve-rounds contest."

There was a pause.

"That challenge, gentlemen, has been accepted by Dennis Carr, of Greyfriars School."

"Bravo!"

At that moment Dennis himself appeared on the platform. He was not at all disconcerted by the sea of faces in front of him.

"Looks as cool as a cucumber, by Jove!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"The fellow always did have plenty of nerve!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"And he ought to be at Aldershot now, winning honour and glory for Greyfriars," said Frank Nugent.

"Strikes me he'd rather win twenty-five quid in hard cash than any amount of honour and glory!" said Harry Wharton.

"Who's his second?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The fellow's face seems familiar, somehow."

"That's Jack Harper, the physical culture merchant," said Bob Cherry. "Goodness knows how he came to get in touch with Carr."

"He's been a great boxer in his time," said Harry Wharton, "and I expect he'll put Carr up to all the wrinkles."

"When are they going to commencefully begin?" asked Hurree Singh. "I am on tender hooks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Seconds out of the ring!"

"There was a hush of breathless expectancy after this command had been given.  
"Time!"

Dennis Carr advanced to meet his opponent.

The Greyfriars junior had mapped out his plan of campaign beforehand. He intended to force the fighting at the outset—to sweep Ned the Nipper off his feet, as it were. These sort of tactics sometimes came off, and at other times they didn't. Dennis fervently hoped that they would prove successful on this occasion.

There was a swift handshake, and the next instant the fight was in progress.

The spectators settled themselves in their seats, as if expecting a long and gruelling encounter.

To their intense disgust and disappointment, however, the bout lasted exactly one minute.

Right from the kick-off, so to speak, Dennis Carr had his opponent in difficulties.

Ned the Nipper was a skilful boxer, but on this occasion he was given no scope whatever to exercise his skill. The affair was more like a whirlwind than a boxing contest.

Not for one instant did Dennis Carr relax his efforts. He attacked hotly and fiercely, throwing Ned the Nipper completely off his balance, and presently he shot out his left with terrific force, and his opponent went to the boards with a crash.

Nobody had expected to see a knock-out in the first round—least of all in the first minute of the first round. And nobody—with the possible exception of Jack Harper—had anticipated that the person knocked out would be Ned the Nipper!

It was a tense moment.  
Dennis Carr stood aside, waiting for his opponent to rise, and the referee was counting. He had, as a matter of fact, already got up to six.

And Ned the Nipper, the much-vaunted boy boxing marvel, lay motionless, with all the fight knocked out of him.

"Eight—nine—ten! Carr wins!"  
"Hurrah!"

Loud cheers rang through the packed hall.

The Famous Five did not join the demonstration. In the first place, they were too thunderstruck to do anything but sit and stare, and secondly, they could not honestly feel glad that Dennis Carr had won the day.

As for Dennis himself, his brain was in a whirl. He was not surprised at his own success, but he was surprised that the success had come so early. He had anticipated a long and bitter tussle, instead of which, the whole affair had lasted only a minute.

It almost seemed as if Ned the Nipper had deliberately allowed himself to be knocked out. But that, of course, was not the case.

"Good work, kid—splendid work!" said a voice at Dennis Carr's elbow.

And Jack Harper shook the victorious boxer warmly by the hand.

"Not hurt, I hope?" he asked.

"Not a scratch!" said Dennis.

"Then we'll be getting off the mark at once!"

Dennis stared at the speaker in astonishment.

"Why, what do you mean, Mr. Harper?"

"I'm going to run you over to Aldershot in my car."

"What!" shouted Dennis.

"We shall arrive there within the hour, and there may yet be time for you to compete in the light-weight championship. But there's not a moment to lose. Come on!"

Like a fellow in a dream, Dennis Carr followed Jack Harper behind the scenes. Here, he was presented with five crisp and

rustling fivers by Ned the Nipper's manager, who, although very disappointed at the result of the fight, was a real sportsman.

"A smart piece of work, kid!" he said.

"Very smart indeed, by gad!"

And, before Dennis could say anything in reply, he was hustled into his coat and led out into the street by Jack Harper.

It seemed altogether too good to be true that he was going to Aldershot—that there was yet a sporting chance that he would be able to participate in the light-weight contests, and his heart warmed with gratitude to Jack Harper, who had proved himself such a good Samaritan.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**Saved from Disgrace!**

**I** SUPPOSE we ought to congratulate Carr?" said Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Dashed if I'm going to congratulate the bouncer!" he exclaimed. "He's beaten Ned the Nipper all serene, and he's won the twenty-five quid. But I don't see that we're called upon to slap him on the back and tell him what a fine fellow he is. Instead

Dennis Carr was being whirled along in Jack Harper's two-seater.

Before they had proceeded a mile along the country road Dennis espied a solitary figure in Etons pacing up and down. He touched Jack Harper on the arm.

"Would you mind slowing up, Mr. Harper? I want a word with this fellow."

Hazeldene of the Remove had passed through a period of terrible suspense. He had not been able to nerve himself to go to the public hall at Courtfield. He could not banish from his mind the fear that Dennis Carr would be beaten.

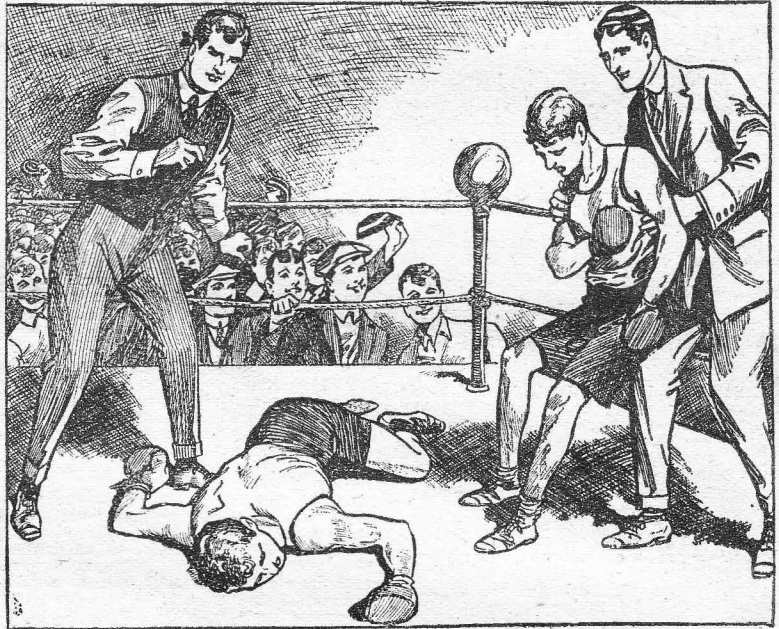
Hazel presumed that the fight was still in progress, and he had the surprise of his life when the car slowed up beside him, and Dennis leaned over and hailed him.

"Here you are, Hazel!"

Three five-pound notes were thrust into the junior's hand. And before Hazel could stammer out his thanks to the fellow who had befriended him in his dark hour, the car bounded forward, and vanished rapidly from his view.

The tears welled into Hazeldene's eyes, and he drew a quick, sobbing breath of relief.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered fervently. His troubles were over now.



"Dennis Carr Wins!" A storm of cheering followed the announcement, and Wingate leapt into the ring, and caught the victor, who fell, half fainting, into the captain's arms. "Bravo kid! You were great! (See page 8.)

of fighting for the sake of making money, he ought to be at Aldershot fighting for the school!"

"That's true enough" said Bob Cherry.

"All the same I should like to see Carr just to ask him how the dickens he did it!"

"It was simply wonderful. There's no getting away from that," said Johnny Bull.

"Let us loatefully discover Carr, and ask him how it was performedly done," said Hurree Singh.

Accordingly, the Famous Five went in search of Dennis. They went first of all behind the scenes, expecting to find him there. But they were disappointed. There was no sign of their schoolfellow.

"Surely he hasn't gone already?" said Frank Nugent, in perplexity.

"Looks like it," said Wharton.

"He must have been in a tearing hurry!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I can't quite make it out."

"Let's see if he's outside," said Johnny Bull.

And the juniors passed out into the street. They looked this way and that way, but Dennis Carr was nowhere to be seen.

"He seems to have vanished off the face of the earth," said Harry Wharton. "Still, there's no need to organise a giddy man-hunt. We shall see him later on at Greyfriars."

Whilst this conversation was taking place

Long before the specified time—six o'clock—Jerry Martin would have his money. And Hazel would be out of the scoundrel's clutches for good.

Dennis Carr was smiling happily as the car raced onwards. He experienced that glow of satisfaction which always follows a noble and generous action. He was almost as pleased as Hazeldene himself that the wayward junior was out of the wood at last.

Aldershot was reached within the hour, and Jack Harper piloted Dennis to the dressing-room of the gymnasium. They were delighted to find that the lightweight contests had not yet taken place.

Wingate of the Sixth was in the dressing-room. One of the attendants was giving him a brisk rub-down.

The captain of Greyfriars stared at Dennis Carr in amazement.

"So you've come, after all?" he ejaculated. Dennis nodded.

"Mr. Harper was decent enough to bring me along in his car," he said.

"Jove, that's jolly quick work! I suppose you cancelled your engagement with Ned the Nipper?"

"No. I met him all right—"

"And lucked him," added Jack Harper.

"My hat!"

"How did you get on in the heavy-weights, Wingate?" inquired Dennis.

"I survived a couple of rounds, and was then knocked out by a fellow from Tonbridge," said Wingate. "I'm afraid there won't be any honours for Greyfriars to-day, unless you manage to bag the lightweight championship. You'll have all your work cut out, kid."

The car-ride had refreshed and invigorated Dennis. He felt ready for anything. And after he had cooled his heels in the dressing-room for half an hour or more, he was called upon to take part in the first heat.

Dennis found himself matched with a sturdy Etoman, against whom he could make very little headway. But he stuck gamely to his task, and was finally awarded the verdict on points.

In the second heat Dennis was pitted against a fellow who was suffering acutely from nerves. And the Greyfriars junior was able to secure an easy victory. He knocked out his man in the second round.

"You're doing splendidly, kid!" said Jack Harper, during the interval. "Stick it out! It's any odds on your reaching the final."

In the third heat Dennis, to his delight, drew a bye. This not only gave him a good long rest, but enabled him to reach the semi-final.

Dennis would not soon forget that semi-final. It was a gruelling, desperate affair. Nearly all the way through the Greyfriars fellow was outpointed. But in the last round of all he rallied fiercely, and succeeded in knocking out his formidable opponent.

"Good man!" said Jack Harper approvingly. "You've reached the final."

But Dennis Carr was very much the worse for wear by this time, and even the optimistic Jack Harper had his doubts as to whether the Greyfriars junior would win the championship.

It seemed to Dennis that he had only been resting a few moments when his name was again called.

With the consciousness that the supreme moment had arrived, Dennis returned to the platform, and the referee announced the names of the finalists.

"Dennis Carr, of Greyfriars School—"

"Good old Greyfriars!"

"And Herbert Kennedy, of St. Clive's College."

"Hurrah!"

Dennis Carr had heard all about Kennedy of St. Clive's. He was a man who had literally walked into the final, winning all his bouts with consummate ease. He was slim and agile and wiry, and Dennis knew that he would have to surpass himself in order to win. Kennedy was by far the toughest proposition he had yet had to face.

"Seconds out of the ring!" rapped out the referee.

And then, after a moment's pause:

"Time!"

Kennedy came forward, and shook hands smilingly with his opponent. And then it seemed to Dennis Carr that an earthquake was in progress. Blows rained upon his face and chest, and upon his ribs, and he was driven round and round the ring—a novel experience for the fellow who had so easily disposed of Ned the Nipper!

In the first round it was all Kennedy. And Dennis Carr took heavy punishment. But he was game, and he resolutely refused to take the knock-out. His thoughts were confused, his breath came and went in great gasps, and he was wondering whether he was on his head or his heels when the welcome call of "Time!" brought relief.

"You're fairly up against it, kid," said Jack Harper, as he sponged Dennis Carr's heated face. "But keep on keeping on! Kennedy has set much too hot a pace, and he's beginning to tire already. He'll collapse like a pricked bladder presently."

Dennis had his doubts about that. But he said nothing. He would need all his breath for the second round.

"Time!"

In response to the referee's terse command, the two boxers faced each other once more. Kennedy continued his hurricane tactics, but he was not quite so successful on this occasion.

Dennis Carr's tricky footwork saved him again and again from receiving a severe drubbing. And when the second round was over, Kennedy was palpably tired. He seemed to stagger into his corner.

Jack Harper's face was beaming now. "The fellow's run himself to a standstill!" he declared. "Go for him baldheaded in the next round, Dennis!"

"If I can!" was the muttered reply.

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"The fact is, I'm far from being as fresh as a daisy myself!"

"You've got more in you than Kennedy has. And if you go the right way to work you'll settle his hash in the next round."

After a brief interval, Dennis Carr faced his man for the third time. And, dropping his defensive tactics, the Greyfriars junior rushed in, hitting out right and left.

Kennedy did the same, and the fun—it was fun to the audience, but not to the boxers!—waxed fast and furious.

"Talk about fireworks!" muttered Wingate of the Sixth, who was looking on. "Something's going to happen in this round!"

And something did happen.

Dennis Carr's head was swimming, and the faces of the audience seemed blurred and indistinct. The Greyfriars junior knew that he was nearing the end of his tether, and he summoned all his remaining strength for a last desperate attack.

Crash!

Dennis Carr's left smote Kennedy on the point of the jaw, and the St. Clive's fellow went down. He scrambled to his feet again on the instant; but before he could pull himself together Dennis was at him, and again Kennedy went to the boards. This time he lay motionless, unable to rise.

The referee was counting, amid a buzz of excitement from the audience.

"Five—six—seven—"

"There was no movement from the fallen boxer."

"Eight—nine—"

"Buck up, Ken!" shouted a number of St. Clive's fellows, who were seated in the front row.

"Ten!" said the referee. "Dennis Carr wins!"

A storm of cheering followed the announcement. And Wingate of the Sixth leapt on to the platform to congratulate the victor, who fell, half-fainting, into the captain's arms.

"Bravo, Kid!" said Wingate huskily. "You were great!"

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Harper.

And Dennis himself felt, as he was escorted to the dressing-room, that he had deserved well of his country.

Greyfriars first heard the news through Billy Bunter.

The fat junior had "borrowed" an evening paper from Leder's study, and he rolled into the Common-room that evening, fairly bursting with excitement.

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

Bunter's excitement was too great for words. He spread the newspaper out on the table, and a crowd of juniors gathered round.

They could see nothing of outstanding interest until their gaze fell upon a paragraph in the "Stop Press" column—a paragraph which was headed:

"PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS.

HONOURS FOR WELLINGTON, ST. PAUL'S, AND GREYFRIARS."

"Honours for Greyfriars!" echoed Harry Wharton, his eyes sparkling. "That means that old Wingate has won the heavy-weights!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Wingate!"

"It means nothing of the sort!" interposed Mark Linley, his voice quivering with excitement. "It means that Dennis Carr has won the light-weights!"

"What!"

"Chuck it, Linley!"

"If you don't believe me," said Mark, "read the paragraph for yourselves!"

The juniors did so, and they fairly gasped. In a few concise sentences the report told how Dennis Carr, of Greyfriars, had defeated Herbert Kennedy, of St. Clive's, in the third round of a most exciting contest.

"It—it must be a mistake!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Carr couldn't possibly have got to Aldershot in time!"

And then Hazeldene uttered a sharp exclamation, and all eyes were turned towards him.

"I know!" said Hazel. "He went to Aldershot in Jack Harper's car! I met him on the road, but I didn't know, at the time, where he was going. It's clear enough now."

"Talk about strenuous lives!" said Vernon-Smith. "I reckon Carr's had enough boxing in one afternoon to last him for whole terms!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Now that he's been loyal to the school, and bagged the light-weight championship," said Harry Wharton, "I can forgive Carr for fighting for money."

"He didn't fight for money!" said Hazeldene. "Not for himself, anyway. He fought Ned the Nipper to get me out of a scrape."

"Great Scott!"

There was a chorus of inquiry at once. And Hazeldene, determined to set Dennis Carr right in the eyes of his schoolfellows, told them exactly what had happened.

Harry Wharton & Co. were thunderstruck. And they could have kicked themselves when they recalled their harsh criticism of Dennis Carr's conduct. Once again they had misunderstood Dennis' motives. Once again they had failed to give him credit for being the unselfish sportsman he was.

But they soon made amends. And when Dennis Carr returned to Greyfriars that evening he met with a tremendous reception. And, as was only fitting, a bumper repast was held in honour of the fellow who had fought and won—the fellow who had risked his own reputation for the sake of another.

Greyfriars in general, and Hazeldene of the Remove, in particular, had every reason to feel grateful towards Dennis Carr, the School-boy Champion!

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "THE FORBIDDEN MATCH" Order your copy in advance.)

## THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES.

(Continued from page 4.)

tough as young oxen, and I wager this one is no exception. Ah, lad! So the varlet has scored once again, has he?"

Harry opened his eyes and stared dully into the face bending over him.

"Who is that—Walter? Nay, 'tis you, Will. What has happened, old friend? My head throbs strangely."

Howard forced a smile to his lips.

"'Tis small wonder, lad, with a lump as large as a pigeon's egg on it. Nay, do not stir awhile. That is not the only injury."

Harry winced as his side gave him a reminding twinge, and then lay still whilst Will completed his bandaging.

"There, lad, 'twill do, I warrant. The bleeding has ceased somewhat. But you must let me carry you, or else 'twill begin afresh. Come, master!"

Lifting the boy as though he were but a feather's weight, Howard passed into the open and placed his burden in the saddle of his own lame horse. Then, dragging Walter's partially rested steed to its feet, he mounted it, leading the other by the bridle.

"A day of deeds, Master Harry, and no mistake!" he exclaimed, as they rode slowly away from the hut. "I understand naught of what has happened, nor must you tire yourself in the telling. 'Twill do later, after you have had that hurt properly attended to."

Nor did Harry seem inclined to talk, either. Indeed, scarce a word did he utter until more than a mile had been covered, and then his remark was a strange one truly—one, in fact, which bore upon a subject that had been running in Will's own thoughts for some minutes past, ever since he had had time to review the situation.

"You remember what I told you, Will, just before we started on the chase—that strange warning I seemed to have?"

"Ay, lad, that I do!"

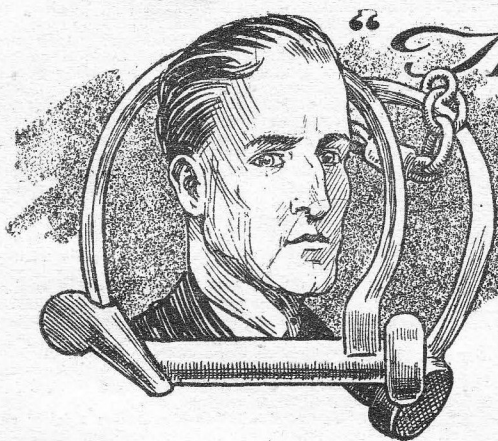
"Then mark you, old friend, the place where you found me was the same as I had seen in the vision. I can have no doubt on it!"

"Howard started, and looked a trifle scared. 'Od's life!" he said. "'Tis a strange world, Master Harry, a stranger one than any of us wot of, and things happen in it which none can explain. Yet 'twere not well to dwell upon them."

Then both relapsed into silence as they moved ahead, neither knowing where they were nor how long it would be before they again fell in with Prince Rupert's Horse.

(There will be another grand instalment of this romantic adventure serial in next week's issue of THE POPULAR. Order early.)





# The EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"

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

By MAURICE EVERARD.

## THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Charles Fox Quenaby, a well-known philanthropist, visits the flat of Ferrers Locke, to ask his assistance in a very bluffing mystery surrounding his household. A precious document had been stolen from the safe, together with three hundred pounds. The document in question, being an astounding confession of Quenaby's, which, in the hands of a blackmailer, would be very dangerous for the writer. His wife had also suffered at the hands of the burglars. She had been locked, bound and gagged, in the massive safe-room, and found next morning on the point of suffocation. Locke decides to take up the case, and travels to Brampton Hall to investigate, with his secretary, John Hay. "This problem is going to tax us to the uttermost," he had said on the journey down.

(Now read on.)

### Mystery!

**L**OCKE had no cause to abandon this opinion when he came to open his investigations at the Hall. Mrs. Quenaby he found charming and delightful, a much-travelled and accomplished woman.

She threw no fresh light on the mysterious occurrence of the night of the fateful 11th. "I can tell you nothing more, Mr. Locke, than you already know," she said in her exquisitely modulated voice. "I distinctly recollect crossing the hall to re-enter the dining-room. The hall clock then showed three minutes to eleven. I have no consciousness of anything—either of being carried to, locked in, or taken out of the vault—until I came to my senses at three the next morning, to find Charles and my maid bending over me."

Locke was watching her face narrowly. It agreed with the portrait in every particular save one—the wistful expression about the delicately curved lips was more pronounced.

"H'm! Most strange! It is out of the question, I suppose, for you, Mrs. Quenaby, to have become temporarily either cataleptic or somnambulist and to have opened the door of the vault and locked yourself in?"

A rush of colour came into her cheeks. "Ah! I wonder if I could possibly have done that?" she said, with some show of eagerness. "You might have done. But, if so, how are we to account for the missing money? Nearly three hundred pounds were taken from the safe."

"Yes, of course," she repeated slowly. "Of course, that puts the theory out of court." Locke was making mental notes.

"I don't quite see, if only such a small amount were taken, why Charles takes the matter so seriously," she broke in, after a little pause.

"On principle he must," Locke returned evasively. "You see, Mrs. Quenaby, he has had constructed, at a cost of several thousand pounds, a most elaborate vault to house money and papers incidental to a man of his position. I understand the place is, to all intents and purposes, burglar-proof, that save for you and he and his private secretary not a living soul

knows the key-word to the combination lock. Whoever opened and robbed the vault and subjected you to what might have proved a lingering death must be discovered and brought to justice."

"I suppose so," she assented a trifle wearily. "I hope you will be successful. I have told you all I can. Will you excuse me now?"

She put her slim white hand to her forehead, and as Locke opened the door for her she passed majestically out.

His keen gaze followed her narrowly. "I wonder! I wonder!" he muttered, as she mounted the stairs. "I must hear what Quenaby has to say."

He found the master of Brampton Hall calming his nerves at the billiard-table.

"Well, Locke, have you seen the wife?" he asked, replacing his cue in the rack.

"I have, Mr. Quenaby."

"And are you satisfied she knows nothing more than she has already said?"

"You mustn't ask me to express an opinion yet on anybody or anything."

"And the servants, Mr. Locke?"

"I have closely questioned and cross-examined them all. Their individual accounts of what they did on the evening do not give rise to a hair's-breadth of suspicion."

"I am glad to hear you say so, because they are old and trusted employees."

"We may dismiss all thoughts of them as practically negligible. Now about the combination word or words."

"Only my wife, Mr. Norton, and myself know them."

"I have not yet seen Mr. Norton."

"He is absent on business. I had a letter from him by this morning's post saying he would be back in the morning. Of course, I regard him as absolutely above suspicion."

"Has he been with you long?"

"Five years."

"Is he young or old?"

"Comparatively young—about eight-and-twenty, I suppose."

"A married man?"

"No, single, but engaged."

"Do you know his fiancée?"

"Quite well; in fact, she happens to be a distant connection of mine."

"What is your general attitude towards Mr. Norton?"

"On account of his fiancée's relationship and of the excellent service he has always rendered me, more like brothers. I would trust Norton with anything."

"H'm! May I inquire what his salary is?"

"Certainly! Six hundred a year."

"A handsome salary for a young man."

"I agree, but he earns it."

"He has never spoken to you of money troubles?"

"Never; in fact, I know he hasn't any. Only last year he invested a couple of thousand pounds at my suggestion, and sold out last month, also at my suggestion, after nearly trebling his money."

"H'm!" Another note went down on Locke's mental memorandum book. He took a proffered cigar and lit it thoughtfully. "I'd like to see the vault by the way of approach which your wife must have made on the night of the robbery. And, Mr. Quenaby, you may take it from me that, so far, she knows nothing whatever either about the theft or the contents of that document."

"Thank God! Come this way."

They reached the great panelled hall, lit by night by a cluster of lamps in the beamed ceiling.

"This is the last spot Mrs. Quenaby remembers standing on," the millionaire said, pausing before the dining-room door. "She must then have passed through this room to the library, and thence by a flight of stone steps down to the vault."

As he unlocked the sumptuously-furnished rooms Locke followed him, his keen glance everywhere.

"I see your house has recently been done up," he remarked.

"The annual spring-clean—new paint-work, fresh ceilings, and so forth. Now, Mr. Locke, this is the door leading to the vault. It is always kept locked, and the whereabouts of the key known only to Frank Norton, my wife, and myself."

A big magnifying-glass came to view in the detective's hand, and, bending down, he made a swift examination of the carpet and the door.

"I take it no one has been allowed in here since the occurrence?" he suggested, without looking up.

"No one. I locked up this part of the house immediately after finding my wife."

"Good!"

He recalled Mrs. Quenaby's story that she had remained indoors all through the evening of the 11th.

The glass made a dancing circle of light over the glistening panels and framework, but all hope that tell-tale thumb-print or finger-mark might be there was doomed to disappointment.

"Quenaby, I suppose, can prove an alibi; Frank Norton may be able to prove an alibi; the wife, we know, was here. Suspicion so far all on Mrs. Quenaby— Ah!"

The exclamation was drawn from him by the sight of the gleaming green and gold-lined door opening to the vault.

"You can see it was no ordinary burglar's job. A cracksmen would have tried blow-pipe and oxygen flame, and have taken the bank-notes, too," Quenaby remarked. "Well, Mr. Locke, any clue?"

Locke's keen eyes were travelling over every inch of the highly-polished surface.

"Absolutely none worth betting on. The safe was opened, your wife placed inside, and not a finger-mark has been left behind." He slipped the glass in his pocket, and shot a searching look at his host. "What are the key-words, Mr. Quenaby?"

"Irretrievable embarrassment."

"Not words an uneducated person could spell correctly, even if he knew them."

He played with the disc, and he watched the dancing tumbler fall in one by one. As the last letter settled in its place he swung the heavy lever, and the words snapped back. But it took all his strength to open wide the great steel door. He followed the millionaire into the steel chamber, and the floor rang solidly beneath their feet.

"Now, Mr. Quenaby, where was this precious document kept?" he asked.

"Right at the bottom of that jappaned tin box," was the reply.

Locke flashed on his electric pocket-lamp and subjected the box and its contents to a minute examination.

"The thief has been clever—very clever indeed. Not one in a thousand would have closed this job without leaving some faint trace of a hand-mark behind."

He got up and sounded all the walls and the roof. Like the floor, they were intact. In a dark corner something caught his eye—a crumpled square of dirty rag. His hand

closed over it, and it found its way covertly into his waistcoat-pocket.

Then, with a scarcely audible laugh, he straightened up.

"Thank you! I needn't trouble you to remain in this atmosphere any longer. You can congratulate yourself that your wife got out alive."

Quenaby fumed.

"A dastardly outrage! Most dastardly! If only I could get my hands on the scoundrel I'd make him pay pretty dearly!"

Locke smiled.

"You shall—when we find him."

"You think you will?"

The millionaire's voice was tense with eagerness.

"I am certain of it. A matter of time, Mr. Quenaby; merely a matter of time—and care."

"Then you have a clue?"

"I have discovered several things faintly resembling clues. But please don't ask me any more. I prefer to work the problem out in my own way."

They had come back into the dining-room, and Locke's eyes were searching for something. He moved carelessly towards the side-board, and his knee jerked open the carved oak door which stood ajar. One glance was enough.

"If I should be late for dinner to-night, please don't wait," he said. "You have given me a key to the hall-door, and I shall find my bedroom easily enough. And, Mr. Quenaby, I shall want to see your secretary in the morning."

With that he picked up his hat, slipped on a light dust-coat, and went out.

#### Under Suspicion!

**A** LONG, low, high-powered car, at the driving-wheel of which Ferrers Locke himself sat, stood by the kerb where the road dips from Great Tower Street to St. Dunstan's Hill.

Peters, Locke's confidential man, appeared through the arc-lit night haze of the London street.

"It's quite right, sir. Mr. Quenaby was at his office till late that night. I've seen the caretaker and one of the cleaners, who saw him leave in a taxi a little after eleven o'clock."

Locke opened the throttle of the car and drove rapidly westward.

"Then we can dismiss Mr. Quenaby from the case altogether," he said reflectively. "Only two probabilities remain—the wife and Frank Norton. If both these fail, we must look farther afield. Peters, are you tired?"

"No, sir."

"I'm glad. I shall want you to remain up all night, perhaps for many nights."

"Yes, sir."

"Don't look so pleased about it. You can sleep as much as you like during the day."

"What do you want me to do, sir?"

"Keep an ever-open eye on the exterior of Brampton Hall. See that no one enters it by stealth. The ordinary occupants you can leave to me. Now, which is the best way to Brampton?"

"Hendon, Watford, Tring, Leighton Buzzard, Fenny, and Bracknell."

"Right!"

The car swung into the Edgware Road, and for the rest of that long journey Locke only twice broke the silence.

"An amazing case, Peters; one of the most amazing cases I have ever struck," he said.

"I want to think the wife innocent, because she's beautiful, and I believe at heart a good woman; I want to think the secretary innocent, because by all accounts he's a decent young fellow, standing on the threshold of a fine career. Yet what can I do? A thousand to ten one of 'em goes down before I'm through."

Peters took the wheel to give his master a rest.

"You can drop me at Bringley, and put the car up at the King Charles. Then follow the main road till you come to the great stone gates," Locke remarked a little later. "Half-way down the drive turn off to the left, and keep constant watch on the house till I relieve you. For the next few days and nights I want to make sure no one from outside holds any secret communication with either Mr. or Mrs. Quenaby."

Locke did not retire much before one. In the silence of his own room he took test-tubes and a Bunsen lamp from his bag, and made a careful examination of the square of rug picked up in the vault.

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"The only evidence of the thief's carelessness," he designated it.

The analysis revealed absolutely nothing from the chemist's point of view.

"All of which helps to form the first link in the chain," he said, with a grim smile. "The rag was not used either to gag Mrs. Quenaby or to drug her into insensibility." With which satisfying reflection he surrendered himself to a few hours' sleep.

A little before ten found him enjoying the clean morning air and fine views of dignified English parkland. He found Peters, looking a little sleepy-eyed, near the west lodge.

"Any luck?" he inquired laconically.

"Nothing."

"Very well. Go and get some sleep."

As the clock in the turret over the stables struck the hour a fresh-faced, alert-looking young man, clean-cut of limb and buoyant of health, caught his eye.

"The secretary, for a cert. Morning, Mr. Norton!"

Frank Norton, though taken by surprise, showed no embarrassment.

"Good-morning! Going to be a nice day, I believe!"

"Beau-tiful—beau-tiful! Mr. Norton, can you spare me a minute?"

The young man glanced at his watch.

"I'm afraid not. You see—"

"Mr. Quenaby won't want you at ten o'clock this morning. I have his consent to take up a little of your time—that is, with your permission."

"Of course, I shall be only too happy if Mr. Quenaby understands. What can I do?"

"Mr. Norton, I am a private detective. My name is Ferrers Locke. Please realise that if you don't wish it you are under no compulsion to answer any of my questions; in fact, you can at once forbid my interrogating you."

The secretary fell in at the detective's side.

"I've no wish to do that, Mr. Locke. I suppose you want to talk about the strange affair that has happened up at the Hall?"

"That is so."

"I'm sorry I can give you no information."

"You don't resent my making a few inquiries?"

"Not at all. I shall be as glad as Mr. Quenaby when the mystery is cleared up. One can't but help feeling that a cloud of suspicion hangs over the place. You see, unfortunately for me, I happen to be one of the only three persons who are aware of the lock combination, and of where the key leading to the vault was kept."

Locke swung round full face on.

"Mr. Norton, have you ever, accidentally or otherwise, given anybody an opportunity of learning from you the key-words to the lock?"

Norton felt gimlet eyes boring into his very soul.

"I have not," he said; but Locke noticed an uncontrollable twitching of the delicate nerve in his upper lip.

"Thank you! You have never mentioned the words to Mrs. Quenaby?"

"Never. I am aware now that she knows. I was unaware of this till after the robbery."

Locke was at his side again, but watching the handsome face with hawk-like intentness.

"You will realise, Mr. Norton, that any inquiries I may make are solely for the purpose of arriving at the truth, and to save trouble falling on innocent people?"

"Of course!" A sudden whiteness crept into his cheeks, and he swung round. "Good heavens, man, you're not suggesting they suspect me!"

Locke looked very serious.

"I will be perfectly frank, Mr. Norton. Mr. Quenaby has called me in to solve this case—at any cost. I have made certain deductions, involving the honour of three persons. One I have already eliminated. Two remain. When I can honestly put those two out of my mind, my investigations will extend to wider and fresh grounds. At the moment, Mr. Norton, I have to think about you. Do you mind giving an account of all you did on the night of the eleventh?"

Norton brightened, as though a near danger had passed him by.

"Not at all," he said. "I left the Hall at six, went to my lodgings at Brampton Rectory, had dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Everard, changed into dress-clothes, hired a car from Mr. Saller's, drove to my fiancée's house at Erpingley, and took her and her mother to the Royal Theatre in Leicester. We returned home soon after one. I sat and

smoked with Parson Eyerard till nearly two, and then went to bed."

Locke knew the ease with which every statement could be contradicted or affirmed.

"A perfect alibi, Mr. Norton. For the time being please forget I have spoken to you on the subject. I hope I shan't have to mention it again. Have a cigarette?"

They turned back, smoking and chatting as they approached the house, apparently the best of friends. Norton left the detective thoughtfully pacing the terrace.

"Last night the weather-vane pointed to the secretary; this morning it has swung again at Mrs. Quenaby. If Peters makes no haul, I can do nothing till Hay hands in his report."

For this he had to wait almost a week, as Peters' vigils had proved fruitless so far. It did not surprise him that no attempt at blackmail had as yet been made by the person holding the compromising document. His own presence at the Hall might have become known to the thief, who would feel all along that time was on his side.

On the Monday evening, after a fairly carefree week, Peters informed him that John Hay wanted to see him the following morning. His assistant's summons took Locke to a prettily creeped cottage on the outskirts of the village.

"I told Peters to tell you not to come, sir, unless you thought it quite safe," Hay said.

"It is perfectly safe. We can meet as openly and as frequently as we wish for the present. Later on, perhaps, there may be need for more secrecy on my part. Well, what have you learned?"

"A good deal."

"Oh!"

"Mrs. Quenaby leads a double life!"

"You don't surprise me. I fear she holds the key to the entire situation."

"You have made discoveries, too?"

"Quite a lot. Tell me yours."

"She gambles, plays cards for high stakes, bets on horses, owes bills right and left."

"What sort of bills?"

"Costumiers—big bills for Paris gowns and chic finery."

"H'm! She means to make the most of her husband's money, however much she cares for him. I don't like the look of things at all. On top of what you tell me, and what I have already found out, I'm afraid the good lady is going under. I told you Mr. Quenaby feared most of all the machinations of a blackmailer. So far we've no conclusive evidence that any outside person has had a hand in the case. Mr. Norton has almost cleared himself in my eyes—not absolutely, but nearly. Quenaby himself I have ruled out for good and all. The facts against Mrs. Quenaby look blacker every hour."

"I'm sorry for the husband. He'll be terribly upset."

Locke rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"But what puzzles me," he said, "is why, if the wife robbed her husband, she took the document, and so far hasn't even troubled to look at it. From what you say, she is in need of money unknown to her husband. Three hundred pounds in gold is a handy sum for a hard-pressed woman. We have her motive there. But why hasn't she read the paper?"

"You don't think she knows its contents?"

"I'm sure she doesn't. For one thing, I believe she would be heartbroken; and if it is so dreadful as the man himself has admitted to me, she would leave him altogether, and never look on his face again, or she would try to make use of her newly-acquired knowledge by compromising with her husband on the condition that he helped her out of her financial difficulties. I must see Quenaby at once."

He left Hay and returned to Brampton, feeling that matters were rapidly approaching a climax. Charles Quenaby was restlessly pacing the shrub-lined walks of the Italian garden when Locke appeared.

"Afternoon, Mr. Locke! I hope you've something to report," he said a little wearily.

"Nothing definite as yet, Mr. Quenaby; but events are shaping rapidly. I hope to put an end to your anxiety soon. For the present I want to ask a few questions about your wife."

"My wife! You're not suspecting her, surely?"

"I should like to see her cleared. Mr. Quenaby, are you aware that your wife is a very extravagant woman?"

"In what way?"

"Well, the night I came you told me you allowed her six thousand a year."

"So I do."

"Do you know that that sum is insufficient for her needs?"

The millionaire stopped and looked the detective straight in the face.

"I do. She herself told me so only four days ago. She came to me with her little confession and a big bundle of unpaid bills. I have met them all—on condition she never exceeds her allowance again."

Locke evinced nothing of the surprise which he felt at these words.

"Pray forget I ever mentioned the subject," he said quite easily. "You have kindly removed a little difficulty I saw in my path. By the bye, is Mr. Norton about?"

"Up at the house, in the room next to my study. Make what use of him you like, only clear up this mystery."

A smile flitted across Locke's inscrutable face.

"I promised you I would find the thief and recover your papers. That promise shall be

doors on the night of the eleventh. All of which brings me to what I have against the secretary."

He glanced up and caught sight of Norton's bent head as the man worked busily at his desk in the millionaire's outer office. Locke watched him narrowly.

"There are three points to be adduced in your favour, Mr. Norton," he muttered reflectively. "The first, that you possess sufficient means to make a matter of three hundred pounds no very great temptation; the second, that you would hardly be likely to throw up a safe six hundred a year for the speculative gain which a dangerous course of blackmail might bring you; and your alibi, which so far I have been unable to traverse. Against these I have to set the damning fact of that nervous twitching of your upper lip when I asked you if you had ever told anyone the secret of the combination lock."

It must be confessed this was indeed a slender enough cluc. But others, stronger

of warmth. But the other coolly motioned him to be reseated.

"Pray don't distress yourself. I merely want you to be calm and absolutely without reserve. In that way you will be serving your own interests better, perhaps, than I can serve them for you."

"Please be plain. I dislike quibbling."

"Even as I deprecate half-truths. Mr. Norton, when, early on, I gave you an opportunity to be quite frank with me, you chose to tell me only part of the truth, thereby tremendously hampering and complicating my investigations. Why were you not open with me? Why didn't you tell me that, through your instrumentality, someone else, other than your employer and Mrs. Quenaby, knew the key-words to the combination lock?"

Norton went white to the lips.

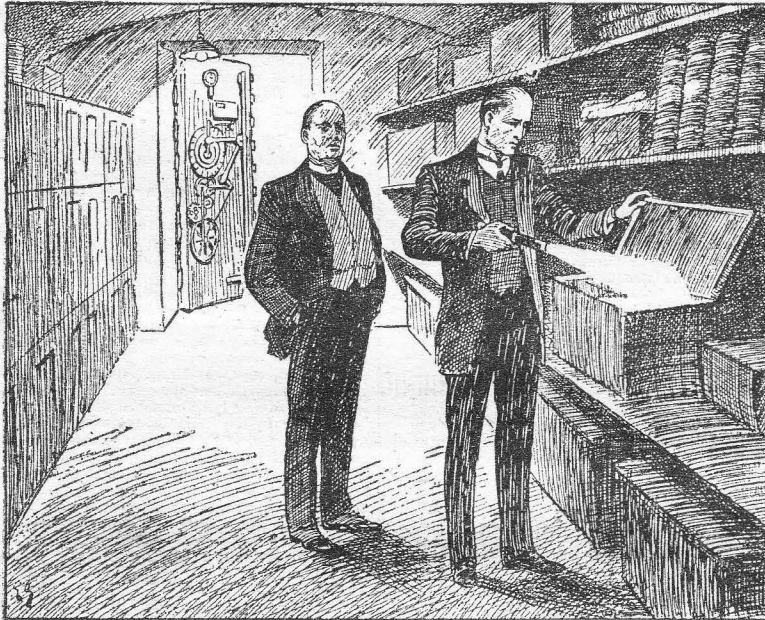
"Has she told you?" he asked breathlessly.

"No, she hasn't told me," said Locke, with a triumphant smile. "I found out myself."

It was a shot in the dark, but it went home. The secretary sank limply into the chair and hid his face in his hands.

"Mr. Locke, this means disgrace and ruin for me," he muttered miserably. "I never dreamt things would turn out like this. That thoughtless slip loses me my honour, my berth, and my right place in the world! Yet I am innocent of wrongdoing."

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



Locke flashed on his electric lamp, and subjected the japanned tin box to a minute examination. "The thief has been very clever—very clever indeed. Not one in a thousand would have been able to do it!" he said to his companion. (See page 9.)

kept. I want to make quite sure that in the keeping of it no innocent person suffers."

He strolled on, his thoughts running into fresh channels.

"Once again the case against the wife breaks down. There are several things to be said in her favour. What are they? Instead of taking money secretly to pay her debts, she went to her husband and confided her trouble. Very probable, then, she didn't steal the three hundred pounds. And certainly she didn't take the document, or womanly curiosity would have led her long ago to examine it. When I first saw her she looked more troubled than in her photograph. That may have been due to her financial difficulties. We will allow it was."

He was rapidly approaching the house now. "Point number four. No ordinary woman would be strong enough to open the door of that vault. It is a man's work, a strong man's work—perhaps such a man as Mr. Norton. Then there is the rag clue, the square of dirty rag—dirty before it was used to wipe all finger-marks and hand-marks from the leading doors, the vault door, and the japanned tin box. A woman, unless she were a professional crook, would hardly be likely to think of such an expedient; and if she did, the chances are she would have torn a piece of clean material from a disused garment, or have taken a clean piece out of the household rag-bag. Certainly she wouldn't have taken the precaution to rub the marks off with spirit taken from the tantalus on the dining-room sideboard. There is still one more thing in Mrs. Quenaby's favour—the mud-dust found in the pile of the carpet near the library door. I can find no evidence that she went out of

and more promising, had broken down, and Locke could afford now to regard nothing, however seemingly unhelpful, as negligible.

His manner more than usually grave, he turned into the house to confront the secretary with an examination on which the whole success or failure of the baffling case depended.

Norton's handsome face clouded at sight of him.

"No nearer, I see," he remarked, struck by Locke's seriousness. "I suppose you'll soon be giving the affair up as a bad job?"

Locke sat down in the cushioned window-seat and crooked one long leg over the other.

"On the contrary, Mr. Norton, I'm growing keener and more interested every hour. Unlike most mysteries, this one depends for its solution on the tiniest happenings. So far as my present investigations go to show, I haven't accomplished criminals to deal with. My inquiries are amongst ordinary people who refuse to give me their fullest confidence."

The colour mounted in Norton's face, right up to the roots of his crisp brown hair.

"What do you mean?" he answered slowly. "Are you suggesting—"

"I don't suggest; I merely state a fact."

"Which does not apply to me, since I am entirely innocent of any part in the whole wretched business."

The secretary's cultured voice became sarcastically indignant.

"Which applies to you, Mr. Norton, more than anybody else."

Norton pushed back his chair and rose slowly.

"Mr. Locke—" he began, with some show

## TALES TO TELL!

### A "SMART" LAD.

Master: "Did you deliver my message to Mr. Smith?"

Boy: "No, sir. He was out, and the office was locked up."

Master: "Why didn't you wait for him, as I instructed you?"

Boy: "There was a notice on the door which said 'Return at Once,' so I came back as quick as I could."

### INFAMOUS!

Teacher: "Now, Tommy, can you tell me one of the most famous charges in history?"

Tommy: "Yessir!"

Teacher: "Well, Tommy, what was it?"

Tommy: "The first time the barber charged me fourpence for getting my hair cut."

### EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

"The evening wore on," continued the man who was telling the story.

"Excuse me," interrupted the would-be wit, "but can you tell us what the evening wore on that occasion?"

"I don't know that it is important," replied the story-teller, quite unperturbed. "If you must know, however, I believe it was the close of a summer's day."

### A STRIKING RETORT.

First Actor: "They say that there is as much strength in three eggs as in a pound of meat."

Second Actor: "Yes; that's the way eggs have always struck me!"

### HOT AIR.

Horticultural Gentleman: "You say here, in this article of yours, that you have cultivated hothouse lilac bushes that have attained the height of over fifty feet."

Expert: "Yes. Why?"

Horticultural Gentleman (musingly): "Only I wish I could 'lilac' that!"

### TOO MANY!

Everything in the dear old village seemed the same to Jones, who had returned after an absence of four years. The old church, the village pump, the ducks on the green, the old hen smoking their pipes while the wives gossiped—it was so restful after the rush and bustle of the city. Suddenly he missed something.

"Where's Hodge's windmill?" he asked a native, in surprise. "I can only see one mill, and there used to be two."

The native gazed thoughtfully round, as if to verify the statement, then he said slowly: "There baint enough wind for two of them, so they pulled one down!"

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of JIMMY SILVER & Co., at Rookwood School.

# UNINVITED GUESTS!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Adolphus on His Mettle.

"Go it, Smythey!"  
It was quite a chorus in Smythe's study.  
The Nuts of Rookwood were gathered there. The door was locked—an indispensable preliminary—and cigarettes had been lighted. Chief of the elegant band, monarch of all he surveyed, Adolphus Smythe lounged gracefully in the armchair, one leg crossed over another, with the trouser-leg carefully pulled up and several inches of purple sock displayed to the public gaze.  
Adolphus was smiling.  
He gazed serenely through the blue haze of his cigarette.

The great brain of Adolphus had been at work. His nutty pals were gathered to hear the result. Adolphus had a wheeze. He had announced that he had a toppin', rippin' wheeze. And as Adolphus was popularly supposed never to have an idea in his head, his friends were naturally interested.  
Adolphus had declared—and his nutty friends fully concurred—that Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth wanted putting in their places. It was time—high time—that the Fistical Four were taken down a peg or two and made to realise who was who and what was what.

Who were Jimmy Silver & Co., anyway? Fellows who never troubled about the set of their neckties, who wore their watches in their pockets instead of upon their wrists, never scented their handkerchiefs, who were not even sufficiently civilised to part their hair in the middle. Yet those fellows ran things with a high hand in the Fourth Form. They described Adolphus & Co. as slackers and asses, and did not hesitate to knock their hats off in the quadrangle when the spirit moved them to do so.

What they really wanted was a tremendous lickin'. But there was no member of the nutty band who was equal to the task of lickin' any one of the Fistical Four. The beasts played cricket as if they were paid for it, they walked and biked distances which would have made Adolphus & Co. quite ill, they kept themselves disgustingly fit and as hard as nails, and they could have knocked Adolphus & Co. into the middle of next week, or the whole length of the calendar, without turning a hair.

Wherefore, the great Adolphus had set his brain to work, and he had compiled, so to speak, a tremendous wheeze for putting the obnoxious beasts in their places. Jimmy Silver & Co. had pulled Adolphus' leg often enough. Now Adolphus was going to turn the tables. Hence the meeting in Smythe's study, and the admiring chorus of the Nuts:  
"Go it, Smythey!"

Smythe of the Shell removed his cigarette from his lips, and held it between two elegant fingers, which were much more accustomed to holding a cigarette than to holding a bat.  
"I told you I'd got an idea for drownin' those cheeky cads," he drawled. "It's rather a nobby idea. Of course, I don't as a rule think of enterin' into such rot as fag japin', an' all that. But it's time those cheeky bouncers learned that they ain't the only pebbles on the beach. Who came here the other day to see the Head—a rum old sailor-man?"

"Rear-Admiral Topcastle," said Howard.  
"Yaas."  
"Queer old beggar!" remarked Tracy. "He seemed rather taken with that cad Silver. Blest if I know why! Rum old johnnie!"  
"Yaas." Adolphus Smythe paused to pull at his cigarette, and blew out a little cloud of smoke. "He's a fery old codger. He laid his stick round a kid who cheeked him."  
"Cheeky old rotter!" said Townsend.  
"But what the dickens has he got to do with japin' Jimmy Silver?" queried Topham.  
THE POPULAR.—No. 85.

"That's what I'm comin' to. He lives in a bungalow on the coast, a lonely hole of a place named after his old ship—Spitfire Bungalow. My pater knows him, you know. Now, that rotter Silver made his acquaintance when he was here last week. Silver wouldn't be very much surprised to get an invitation from the admiral to go an' spend a week-end at his bungalow."

The Nuts stared at Adolphus. They could not guess in the least what he was driving at.

"Blest if I see—" began Howard.  
"That's the idea!" said Adolphus calmly. "Jimmy Silver is goin' to receive an invitation from the admiral. He'll get leave from the Head to go an' spend a week-end at the bungalow. He'll go—with his friends. It will be mentioned in the invitation that the old beggar may be called away suddenly to the Admiralty, and in that case Jimmy and his friends are to make themselves at home, just as if he was there, and to have a good time."

The Nuts looked quite blank. Adolphus was grinning over his cigarette. But his chums could see nothing to grin at.



## NEXT WEDNESDAY'S

# "Gem" Library

WILL BE A—



"That will be rippin' for Silver," said Tracy. "But as for japin' him—"

"You don't see the point!"  
"Blest if I do!"  
"You see, as a matter of absolute fact, the invitation won't come from the admiral at all, but from me."

"You!"  
"Yaas."  
"But—but—but—"  
"Admiral Topcastle won't know anythin' about it. I shall get to know from my father when the admiral's in town. When he's in town the bungalow's shut up. His man goes with him. Jimmy & Co. will arrive and find the place locked up. They'll have to get in somehow. They'll make themselves at home, accordin' to instructions. Admiral Topcastle comes home, an' finds a gang of juniors makin' free with his bungalow—what! He's a fery old beggar. What do you think he will do?"

"Wallop them, I should imagine," grinned Tracy.  
"Report 'em to the Head," remarked Townsend.

"Break his stick over their giddy shoulders!" nodded Topham.  
Smythe nodded.

"I don't know exactly what he'll do," he said, "but I rather think it will be somethin' Hunnish."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"But how the thunder are you goin' to work it?" demanded Topham. "You can't write a letter in the admiral's name. That's a bit too jolly serious."

"I couldn't if I wanted to. I don't know his fist, and I don't know that I've got any gift for forgin'," said Smythe calmly. "Haven't you ever heard of the telephone?"

"Eh? The telephone!"  
"Yaas. Jimmy Silver is called up on Bootle's telephone. Gets an invitation by word of mouth. I suppose I can put on a gruff voice like a bear or a Hun—good enough to go down on the 'phone, anyway. Jimmy Silver will think the admiral is telephonin' from the bungalow. He won't know that it's me telephonin' from Coombe Post Office."

"Oh crumbs!"  
The Nuts simply gasped. How had the brain of Adolphus Smythe schemed out a tremendous scheme like this? It was miraculous!

"Rippin'!" said Howard.  
"But suppose the Head don't give 'em leave?" asked Tracy.

"He will. There'll be a telephone-call for the Head, too."

"Great pip! You'll have the nerve—"  
"Why not? Even if the Head smelt a rat, he couldn't know who telephoned. There's no risk."

"That's right enough. But—"  
"You see, it turned out that Jimmy Silver's grandfather was in the admiral's ship, ages ago, when they were fightin' somebody—Russians, or Turks, or somethin'. That's why the old boy took rather to Silver. The Head won't be surprised at his askin' for a holiday for him. He mayn't like it, but he won't care to refuse. His younger brother's a naval officer, and I've a pretty cute idea that the admiral used his influence for him. He's bound to say yes. But when it comes out afterwards that the admiral never asked him at all, he'll suspect that somebody pulled his leg on the 'phone. Whom will he suspect? The chaps who get the holiday, of course. But that's Jimmy Silver's bizney, not mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Well, what do you think of the wheeze?" grinned Adolphus. "Isn't it a corker?"

"Bravo!"  
"Toppin'!"  
"Rippin'!"  
"Top-hole, old chap!"

It was a chorus of admiration. Never had the great Adolphus been so great in the eyes of his loyal followers. And in Smythe's study there wasn't the slightest doubt that Jimmy Silver would be spoofed, diddled, dished, and done, and that, when the irascible old admiral found him making free with his bungalow, Jimmy's experience at the admiral's fery hands would be simply terrific. And the Nuts of Rookwood chortled joyously at the prospect.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. Great News!

"LOVELL!"  
Mr. Bootles looked out of his study. It was a couple of days after the meeting of the Nuts in Smythe's study.

"Yes, sir!"  
"Kindly tell Silver to come here at once."  
"Yes, sir."

Arthur Edward Lovell hurried away in search of Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy was in the end study, grinding out lines for Monsieur Monceau, when Lovell found him.

"You're wanted, Jimmy!"  
"Jimmy granted."  
"Can't come. I've got fifty lines of the Henriade to do for Mossoo. Go and chop chips!"

"It's Bootles," said Lovell. "He wants you in his study at once."

Jimmy Silver groaned dismally.  
"What's the row now?"  
"Blest if I know! Better cut along."  
"You get on with my lines, then," said Jimmy, rising from the table. "If I'm going to get scalped by Bootles, you can do the lines for Mossoo. That's fair!"

Lovell grinned, and dropped into Jimmy's chair.

"Right-ho! Cut along!" Jimmy Silver made his way to Mr. Bootles' study, wondering which of his sins was to be answered for now. Not that Jimmy had any very serious sins on his youthful conscience. But he had knocked Smythe's hat off—almost under Mr. Bootles' window—that afternoon; he had ducked Tommy Dodd's head in the fountain in Little Quad; he had "biffed" Mornington's head against the passage wall. All for reasons good enough to Jimmy Silver, but which might not appear good enough in the eyes of his Form-master.

But, to Jimmy's relief, Mr. Bootles was not frowning when he entered the study, neither was the Form-master's cane in evidence.

"Ah, Silver!" said Mr. Bootles. "I sent for you. You may go to the telephone."

"The telephone, sir!" ejaculated Jimmy. "Yes, Admiral Topcastle has requested to be allowed to speak to you on the telephone," explained Mr. Bootles. "I have, of course, acceded to his request. He is now waiting for you to speak."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Jimmy, in great relief.

Jimmy had no objection to a talk on the telephone with Admiral Topcastle while Lovell was doing his lines in the end study.

He crossed to Mr. Bootles' telephone, and took up the receiver, which was off the hooks.

Mr. Bootles left the study. "Hallo!" said Jimmy into the transmitter. He could not help wondering what the admiral wanted with him.

He had never seen Admiral Topcastle before the previous week, when the old gentleman had visited the Head at Rookwood. But Jimmy's grandfather had been the admiral's shipmate, ever so long ago, and for that reason the old seadog had been rather kind to Jimmy. Jimmy had certainly not expected to hear from him again, however. He had almost forgotten Admiral Topcastle.

"Hallo!" came back on the telephone, in gruff tones. "Are you there?"

"Yes, I'm Jimmy Silver."

"I'm Admiral Topcastle. How do you do, you young rogue—hey?"

"Oh, ripping, sir!" said Jimmy. "I hope you are well, sir!"

"Hey? I'm always well. I haven't forgotten you, Jimmy."

"You're very kind, sir."

"Now, how would you like a holiday, youngster—a bit of holiday with your grandfather's old shipmate—hey?"

Jimmy jumped.

"First-rate, sir!"

"How'd you like to come down to my bungalow at Beachcliffe for a week-end—hey?"

"First-rate!"

"Of course, there isn't much doing for a youngster like you—not much excitement. But there's plenty of bathing and swimming, and cliffs to climb, and all that—hey? You like the idea?"

Jimmy's eyes danced.

"Yes, rather, sir! You're very kind!"

"Of course, you'd bring some friends with you. You've got three special messmates, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. Lovell and Raby and Newcome. Could I bring them?"

"Ay, ay!"

"But—the Head? What about permission?"

"That's all right. I've asked the Head."

"Oh, sir, you are a brick!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Not at all, my boy—not at all! Ain't you my old shipmate's grandson—hey? Now, come down for the week-end. I've spoken to Dr. Chisholm, and he's going to grant you leave of absence. He's going to grant you on Saturday."

"Good!"

"You'll find me rough and ready, but you'll get a sailor's welcome, my hearty!"

"It will be splendid, sir! We shall enjoy it immensely!"

"Ay, ay! Then you're coming on Saturday?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Take the train for Beachcliffe, change at Lantham, and come along soon after your lessons on Saturday. This bungalow I'm telephoning from is a mile from the station, right on the sea. You'll find it easily enough."

"Oh, we'll find it all right, sir!"

"Then good-bye! Oh, hold on! It's possible I might be called away. I may have to go up to London to the Admiralty. In case I should be called away, make yourselves at home in the bungalow. You're to look on the place as Liberty Hall, and it

you don't make yourselves at home I shall be offended."

"Rely on us, sir!"

"In that case you'll have to amuse yourselves. Take the boat out if you like, only don't get yourselves drowned. You won't mind if I should happen to be called off—Admiralty business, you know?"

"Not at all, sir!"

"But it's not likely. You'll find me there all right. Well, good-bye, Jimmy, and I shall expect you and your friends on Saturday afternoon."

"Thank you very much, sir! Hurrah!"

Jimmy put the receiver back on the hooks. His face was very cheery. A week-end by the sea just "jumped" with Jimmy Silver's inclinations. And the possible absence of the admiral did not really detract from the prospect. The free run of the bungalow and a boat to sail in the Channel appealed very much to Jimmy Silver.

He left the study, and Mr. Bootles beckoned to him in the passage.

"You are to go to the Head's study, Silver."

"Yes, sir."

Jimmy Silver repaired to Dr. Chisholm's study in great spirits.

The Head gave him a kindly nod.

"I have received a telephone message from Admiral Topcastle, Silver. He wishes me to grant leave of absence to you and three of your friends, to spend a week-end at his bungalow. I see no reason for refusing. You may leave Rookwood after lessons on Saturday. I shall expect you to return by the earliest train in the morning on Monday, so that Monday's lessons may be as little interfered with as possible. That is all. I hope you will have a pleasant week-end," added the Head graciously.

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy gratefully.

And Jimmy fairly ran back to the end study to communicate the great news to the Co.

**Grand Bumper and Free Gift Number.**

**WONDERFUL ATTRACTIONS.**

**For full particulars—SEE PAGE 20.**

**THE THIRD CHAPTER. Four in Luck!**

"D ONE the lot!" said Lovell, as Jimmy Silver came smiling into the end study.

Jimmy had forgotten his lines. Raby and Newcome were getting tea on one end of the table, while Lovell ground out the Henriade at the other. The three juniors stared in surprise at Jimmy's buoyant countenance.

"What did Bootles want?" asked Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"What the dickens—"

Jimmy executed a war-dance.

"Good news, my infants! Topping news, my children! Gloat with me! We've got a giddy holiday!"

"Oh, good!"

"A week-end by the sea, my sons!"

"By Jove!"

"But who—how—what—"

Jimmy Silver explained, and the Co. brightened wonderfully.

"Hurrah!" roared the Fistical Four, in chorus.

"Good old Nibs!" said Lovell heartily. "It would have been better to have it in the middle of the week—we should have missed lessons then. But a week-end is ripping, all the same!"

"Topping! Hurrah!"

"Well, the Head mightn't have given us leave if it had meant cutting lessons," remarked Raby. "Anyway, we shall dodge 'em on Monday morning."

"Hurrah!"

"We want a change," remarked Newcome. "The admiral is an old brick. It's because your great-grandfather, I suppose—"

"My grandfather, fathead!"

"Yes, I mean your grandfather—because he was with the admiral in the Trojan War—or the Thirty Years' War. Was it the Thirty Years' War—"

"The Crimean War, ass!"

"Yes, that's it—the Crimean War. These Crimean veterans are the real thing!" said Newcome enthusiastically. Admiral Topcastle is a regular corker!"

"I wish we could take some more of the chaps," said Jimmy. "I'd like Flynn, and old Rawson, and Tommy Dodd, and Cook—"

"And half Rookwood!" grinned Lovell.

"Yes," said Jimmy, laughing. "But I couldn't very well put it to the admiral. But he specially asked me to take you three chaps."

"Good for him!"

"He mentioned that he mightn't be there, if he gets a sudden call from the Admiralty. But that won't hurt us."

"No fear! We can look after ourselves."

"I don't suppose he'll be called away. But if he is, he's specially asked us to make ourselves at home."

"He can rely on us for that!" chuckled Lovell. "That's our sort. By Jove, this is a stroke of luck! We shall be sailing on the giddy Channel while the other chaps are going for Sunday walks!"

"Hurrah!"

The Fistical Four had their tea in great spirits. After tea, they left the study, and marched down the Fourth-Form passage in a very cheery mood. As the exuberant four came out into the quadrangle, they met Smythe of the Shell, who was lounging there with Tracy and Howard.

Smythe stuck his eyeglass into his eye, and glanced at them curiously.

"Hallo! You look joyous!" remarked Smythe amiably.

"We're in luck!"

"Geegee got home?" asked Tracy.

Jimmy sniffed.

"Not your kind of luck," he replied. "We've got a holiday—a week-end at the seaside. We're going on Saturday!"

"Congratulations, dear boy!" said Smythe cordially. "Where may you happen to be going—Brighton or Blackpool?"

"Neither," said Jimmy, laughing. "We're going to see Admiral Topcastle at his bungalow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four stared at Smythe & Co. They could not see any reason why that announcement should cause the three Nuts to burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well," said Jimmy, a little nettled, "where does the cackle come in, Smythe? I don't quite see the joke myself."

"Excuse me," gasped Adolphus, "but—but he's rather a rum old beggar, isn't he?"

"He's one of the best!" said Jimmy warmly.

"Oh, keep your wool on! So he is," said Smythe amiably. "He used to defend us from somebody a couple of centuries ago, and it is very good of him. I hope you'll have a good time, Silver—I do really!"

"Same here!" said Tracy heartily. "Best wishes, Silver, old chap!"

"Congrats, I'm sure!" said Howard.

"Thanks!" said Jimmy, mollified. "I wish I could take some more fellows, but it's limited to us four."

"Well, think of us hangin' about Rookwood, and goin' dismal Sunday walks, while you're disportin' yourselves by the merry sea!" said Smythe. "I hope you'll have a rippin' time!"

Smythe & Co. sauntered into the house, to indulge their merriment in the privacy of their own study.

"Smythe's a silly ass, but he ain't a bad sort, after all!" remarked Raby. "He seems quite pleased at our getting this holiday!"

"I don't quite see what they were cackling at, though," said Lovell.

"Oh, never mind, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're going, and Smythe can cackle as much as he likes! I hope it'll be a fine week-end, that's the important point."

The Fistical Four received many congratulations on their good luck, and only a few fellows, like Leggett and Muffin, made envious remarks, and hinted at favouritism. But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not care twopenny for Leggett and Muffin and their opinion. They rejoiced in the prospect of a week-end by the sea, and looked forward to it with great keenness.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

## Extraordinary!

SATURDAY dawned fine and clear—a splendid summer's day. Jimmy Silver & Co. were relieved of their doubts, induced by the uncertainty of the British climate. They were going to have glorious weather for their week-end.

After morning lessons on Saturday they made their preparations for departure. Four bags were packed—not very large ones; they did not want much for a week-end. Rawson and Flynn and Oswald helped them pack, and saw them off to the station.

Smythe & Co. were lounging in the gateway when they started, and they turned sweet smiles upon the week-enders.

"Startin'—what?" said Adolphus.

"Yes; just off!"

"Good luck, an' a merry time, dear boys!" And the week-enders started.

They said good-bye to Rawson and Oswald and Flynn at Coombe, and the train bore them away. They changed at Lantham, and found seats in the express for the longer run to Beachcliffe.

It was about five on a glorious summer's afternoon when they stepped out of the train at Beachcliffe.

It was easy enough to obtain directions to Spitfire Bungalow.

It lay about a mile from the town, right on the sea-front, they were told, and they started walking in great spirits, carrying their bags.

The road lay along the coast; and at some distance from the town a lane turned off towards the sea, which they followed.

"There's the bungalow!" exclaimed Jimmy, at last.

"Good egg!"

The building came in sight, outlined against the setting sun.

It was a rambling, one-storey building, with a garage attached. It was surrounded by extensive gardens, and there was an orchard. It was a very pleasant view to the four juniors tramping down the dusty lane. Past the bungalow, the line of the cliffs showed up against the deep blue of the sea.

"Jolly lonely place!" remarked Lovell.

"Looks as if nobody's at home, by George!" said Raby. "There isn't any smoke from the chimney, anyway."

"The shutters are up!"

"By Jove, so they are!"

Jimmy Silver felt a little puzzled.

As the juniors drew nearer to the bungalow, its air of silence and desertion struck them more forcibly.

Every window was covered with wooden shutters, evidently fastened on the inside. And when they reached the garden gate it was found to be locked.

The Fistical Four paused at the gate, and looked at one another.

"I—I suppose somebody's there!" said Lovell dubiously.

"Well, the admiral said he might be called away."

"But he'd leave a servant or something, as he's expecting us."

"I understand that he keeps only one man, an old sailorman who does everything for him," said Jimmy. "You see, this isn't his real home; he has a place in London, too, and doesn't spend all his time here. I've heard Smythe say he has only an old sailorman at the place. He might have taken him away with him!"

"Jolly odd way to treat visitors," grunted Newcome.

"Well, he's rather a rough-and-ready old chap. But there may be somebody at home all the time. We'll soon see."

"The gate's locked, and there's no bell here."

"Jump over it!"

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors clambered over the gate, with their bags, and advanced up the path to the house. There was a bell-pull at the door, and Jimmy Silver took hold of it and rang a loud peal.

They could hear the bell pealing inside the building as they stood under the porch at the door.

They waited.

But the door did not open, and there was no sound of a movement from within. The chums of Rookwood looked at one another queerly.

"Ring again, Jimmy!"

Clang, clang! Jingle, jingle!

The bell rang and pealed thunderously in the silent house.

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The juniors waited, with growing impatience; but there was no response. After five minutes it was clear enough that the bungalow was untenanted.

"Well, this is a queer bizny," said Lovell. "I suppose the admiral's been called away, as he said; but he might have left somebody here to meet us, I must say!"

"He jolly well might," growled Raby.

"The man may have gone up to the town for something," suggested Jimmy Silver hopefully. "Of course, he would lock up the place while he was gone. Let's have a look round. Might be a back door open!"

Leaving their bags in the porch, the juniors went round the bungalow. There was a kitchen door at the back, but it was fast, and all the windows were shuttered and secured.

They returned to the porch in a dismayed mood. This was not exactly the holiday they had been anticipating. They were hungry, too, and they were tired.

"Well, this is a go!" growled Lovell. "About the best thing we can do is to get back to Rookwood!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Can't be did!" he replied.

"Why not?"

"Because there isn't a train back to-night."

"Oh crumbs!"

"We're landed here," said Jimmy. "We've got to make the best we can of it. The admiral told me to make myself at home, and I suppose we can't be expected to sleep in the open air. We've got to get in somehow!"

"Well, that's clear enough," said Raby.

"But how?"

"We shall have to burst the door in."

"My hat!"

"There's nothing else for it. The admiral seems to have forgotten that he's asked us here, or he wouldn't go away like this and leave us stranded. He's a pretty old johnnie, you know—may be a bit queer. But I suppose we can't go without grub, and sleep on the ground?"

"No jolly fear!" said Lovell emphatically. "It's possible that the man was left here, and that he's gone into the town for something. Suppose we give him an hour, and if he isn't back then—burst in the back door with a rock!"

"I suppose that's the best we can do."

In a grim humour the juniors sauntered about the gardens, waiting. They were hungry, and the keen air from the sea made them hungrier. Jimmy and Lovell fetched up a heavy chunk of rock from the shore to be in readiness.

The hour elapsed, and no one had arrived. Not a living being had appeared on the horizon from any direction, as a matter of fact.

"Time!" called out Lovell.

"Good!" said Jimmy.

Tempers were growing a little sharp now, between the influence of hunger and disappointment. The juniors were not wholly sorry to be forced to "biff" in the back door. The admiral would have only himself to thank for the damage.

Jimmy Silver swung the heavy chunk of rock, and bugged it on the lock of the door.

Crash!

The door shook and groaned, but did not yield.

Crash—crash—crash!

Jimmy Silver worked in deadly earnest. The door split at last, and a final crash drove it inwards, one half hanging to the hinges, the other half to the lock and bolts. The rock rolled on the ground.

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

He pushed the fragments of the door aside and entered.

The interior was very dusky. The setting sun had almost disappeared by this time, and darkness was falling.

The juniors found themselves in a kitchen, from which a passage led. They followed the passage. Several rooms opened from it, and they found two bed-rooms, a dining-room, and a smoking-room. The atmosphere was stuffy, showing that the place had been shut up a considerable time.

"We've got to get some air in first," remarked Jimmy. "Then we'll see about grub. I suppose there's some grub!"

"Great pip! Suppose there isn't!" ejaculated Raby, in dismay.

That dreadful possibility had not occurred to the juniors before.

"Well, we'll soon see!"

The shutters were unfastened, and the fresh air poured in.

Several lamps were found and lighted. Then the juniors proceeded to the kitchen with a lamp to look for provender.

"Larder's locked, and the key's gone!" snorted Lovell.

"Well, if it's locked, I suppose there'd something in it," said Jimmy Silver philosophically.

"My hat! I'm hungry!"

"But it open!"

"Nothing else to be done!" said Jimmy. He looked about the kitchen, and found a chopper.

Crash—crash!

Under Jimmy's doughty blows, the larder lock soon yielded. Jimmy dragged the door open.

"Any grub?" asked Raby anxiously.

"Lots!"

"Hooray!"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

## Making Themselves at Home!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were surprised and considerably exasperated by the strange state of affairs at the bungalow.

It was simply extraordinary that Admiral Topcastle, after inviting them there for the week-end, should have departed, and left the place locked up untenanted. But he had told them to make themselves at home—at least, they believed that he had. And they meant to do so. There was no getting back to Rookwood that night, neither were they inclined to have had their long journey for nothing.

Jimmy considered that the admiral couldn't object to a little damage, under the peculiar circumstances. But that had to be risked, anyway. The juniors were hungry, and they had to have supper.

Fortunately, there were plenty of supplies. The juniors found a ham and a whole cheese, plenty of things in tins, and several loaves, somewhat stale; but that, as Jimmy cheerfully explained, was all the better for the digestion.

Provisions were conveyed into the dining-room in liberal quantities. Jimmy Silver started the kitchen fire, and coffee was made. Then the week-enders sat down to a well-earned meal.

Darkness had long fallen, and the bungalow was wrapped in gloom. The shutters were closed to keep in the light.

As they looked out they seemed to be enveloped in darkness and loneliness, as if the bungalow had been in the heart of a desert. The dark fields were silent, only the murmur of the sea coming to the ears of the Rookwooders.

"Jolly lonely old place!" said Lovell. "Nice place to burgle, I should think, if there were any valuables here!"

"Well, we're burgling it!" grinned Jimmy. "It's thumping odd that the admiral should be treating us like this! He must have clean forgotten that he asked us here!"

"Queer old johnnie! Still, we're making ourselves at home, as he said. He may turn up to-night!"

"We might telephone to somebody, and ask about him," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "I know his address in London. We could get a trunk call from here!"

"Is there a telephone?"

"There must be. He telephoned to Rookwood from here when he asked me down."

"Blest if I can see anything of it, then!"

"We'll soon find it," said Jimmy. "I think it's a good idea to get through to his London address, and ask him what the little game is!"

Supper being finished, the juniors looked for the telephone. They searched every room in the house for it.

But it was not to be discovered.

After a thorough search, it was evident that the telephone was not installed in the bungalow at all.

Jimmy Silver was more perplexed than ever. "He must have telephoned from the town," suggested Raby.

"I suppose he must; but he told me distinctly that he was telephoning from the bungalow," said Jimmy. "Jolly queer! However, as there isn't a telephone we can't ring him up, that's certain."

"I say, what are we going to do if he doesn't turn up to-morrow?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"Make ourselves at home, as he told us," he replied. "We shan't have a bad time here. There's plenty of grub, luckily. I dare say he'll drop in to-morrow in the car. The garage is locked up, but the car's away, I suppose. It's a jolly queer bizny. Still,

as a matter of fact, we can get on quite as well without the admiral as with him!"

"No doubt about that," agreed Lovell. At bedtime there was no sign of the admiral returning, and the juniors went to bed. There were two beds in the bungalow, apparently belonging to the admiral and his manservant. No preparations in that line, evidently, had been made for the visitors.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not mind. They could sleep two to a bed, and they did. The broken back door was jammed shut, and a bench put against it to secure it, and then the juniors turned in.

In spite of the strangeness of their surroundings, the Rookwood juniors slept soundly enough.

Jimmy was the first to wake in the morning.

The summer sun was stealing in through the closed shutters when Jimmy sat up in bed. He looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock.

"My hat! Turn out, you slackers!" he called out.

He threw open the door. Bright sunshine streamed upon him. In the distance the sea was blue as sapphire, smiling under the sunny sky.

"Oh, ripping!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Who's for a bathe?"

"Well, that looks all right," said Lovell, joining him at the door in his pyjamas. "It's going to be a gorgeous day. No sign of the giddy admiral."

"Oh, blow the admiral! Let's get down to the sea before brekker!"

"No need to dress," said Raby. "We can put our coats on to go down. We've got the place all to ourselves, too!"

"Better take some towels," said Jimmy. "This is ripping! We shall be able to tell his ribs that we had a good time when he comes home—if he does come home."

"My hat!" said Lovell. "Suppose he doesn't turn up before we have to go? He will be surprised to find the place busted open."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's his look-out," said Jimmy. "He shouldn't ask four nice boys here and forget all about it. Come on!"

The Fistical Four were soon in the sea. All four were good swimmers, and they thoroughly enjoyed disporting in the sunny waves.

The beach was solitary; not a soul came in sight. Out at sea some fishing-craft appeared, and at a great distance the smoke of a steamer could be seen.

They came out of the water with very keen appetites for breakfast.

In the bungalow they towelled themselves down and dressed in great spirits. They were accustomed to the queerness of the situation by this time, and, in fact, felt rather obliged to the old admiral for taking himself off in that exceedingly odd way. Roughing it and looking after themselves appealed to them strongly.

Jimmy Silver constituted himself cook, and he soon had a savoury breakfast ready. The larder was well stocked. The Rookwood juniors enjoyed their breakfast, and after it Jimmy commanded a general washing-up and clearing away.

Duty done, the juniors left the bungalow and proceeded to the little cove under the cliff, where the admiral's boat was moored. The boat was secured by a padlock, but the juniors had already learned not to stand on ceremony with a padlock. Jimmy Silver found a crowbar, and soon dealt with the padlock.

The mast and sails were found in a shed, which was also locked up, and again the crowbar came in useful.

The juniors were undoubtedly making themselves at home. But there was, as Jimmy remarked, nothing else to be done. They couldn't spend the week-end doing nothing—that wasn't to be thought of for a moment.

The boat was run out, and the mast stepped, and the sails hoisted. Jimmy Silver knew how to handle a boat.

With great glee the juniors ran out to sea before the breeze. Sunny waves curled round the boat as it glided away from land.

"This is ripping!" declared Lovell. "I suppose the admiral won't mind us taking his boat out, Jimmy?"

"He specially mentioned the boat," said Jimmy. "He told me to have it out, even if he wasn't here. He said we weren't to get ourselves drowned."

"Then you'd better let me be skipper."

"Bow-wow!"

It was not till inward warnings of dinner-time that the juniors turned the boat for the shore again. Land had sunk low behind the sea, but the big cliff was a landmark. The

amateur sailors discovered that it was not so easy to return as to run out to sea, however. It was fortunate for them that Jimmy Silver had had some experience in handling a boat, or they might have spent the rest of the day and the night in the Channel, and found themselves on the French coast the next morning. It was fortunate, too, that the weather remained calm.

"We've rather overdone it," remarked Jimmy Silver, as they tacked for the shore. "I'm afraid it will take an hour or two to get back."

It took three hours, as a matter of fact, and the juniors were in a famished state when they ran the boat into the cove at last. Lovell and Raby and Newcome debated whether to bump their skipper, but they were too hungry to waste time on him, and they jumped ashore and ran for the bungalow. And, well stocked as the admiral's larder was, the juniors made a raid upon it, which left, as Jimmy carefully calculated, just about enough for supper and breakfast the next morning.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**A Narrow Escape!**

"RIPPIN', isn't it?" yawned Lovell.

After that very late dinner the Rookwood chums lay on the sands, looking at the sea, in a cheery and contented mood. The sun was sloping down

not have returned to Rookwood in swimming costumes.

Jimmy scrambled out of the water. The man on shore was a rough-looking customer. He had not seen the swimmers, and Jimmy could see that he was calmly extracting the watches from the waistcoats left on the sand. Jimmy dashed towards him.

"Hands off, you rotter!"

The man jumped up and spun round.

"You thieving scoundrel!"

The man doubled up his fists. He was a powerful fellow, with a bulldog face, and evidently a tough customer. His nose had been broken in some pugilistic encounter, which did not add to his personal beauty.

"Let those clothes alone!" rapped out Jimmy, "and hand over what you've stolen, you rascal!"

The gentleman with the broken nose did not reply. He scowled and backed away, with the evident intention of clearing off with his plunder. Jimmy dashed after him, his fists clenched.

"Ands off, you young shaver!" growled the ruffian, turning on him. "I'd knock you silly as soon as look at yer!"

"You'll hand back our stuff, or I'll give you an eye to match your nose!" said Jimmy wrathfully.

"Keep off, I tell yer! Ow—ow!"

Jimmy was upon him.

The ruffian hit out savagely, apparently



"You thieving scoundrel!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Let those clothes alone, and hand over what you've stolen from our pockets!" The man with the broken nose scowled and doubled up his fists. "'Ands off, young shaver, or—!" he threatened. (See chapter 6.)

in the west. Odd as was their experience as the admiral's guests, Jimmy Silver & Co. had enjoyed their day immensely.

Jimmy sat up in the soft sand.

"Better have another swim before the sun goes," he said.

"Too lazy!" yawned Lovell. "Let's rest."

"Rats! We haven't come here to slack. Get a move on!"

"Oh, all right, you efficient beast."

The juniors stripped under the cliff, and plunged into the water. They were well out from the shore when Jimmy, looking landward, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo!"

"The giddy old admiral?" asked Lovell.

"Some rotter after our clobber!"

"My hat!"

The juniors started towards the shore. They made out the figure of a man bending over the heap of clothes they had left near the cliff.

"Come on!" exclaimed Jimmy.

He started swimming for the shore with powerful strokes.

The stranger was evidently examining the clothes, picking them up and turning them over. The bare idea of having their clothes stolen was dismaying. Certainly they could

under the impression that he was quite capable of dealing with four schoolboys. But his impression was a mistaken one; Jimmy Silver knocked aside his drive and struck out, and the broken-nosed gentleman went down on the sand with a bump and a yell.

Jimmy's knee was planted on his chest the next moment.

"Now, you rotter—"

"Yow-ow! Gerroff!"

"Take hold of his ears, Lovell!"

"You bet!"

"Now bang his head till he gives in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bang, bang, bang!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared the victim. "Old on! I'll 'and 'em over! Yow! Ow! Woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better go through his pockets," said Raby.

"Yes. Search the cad!"

Jimmy Silver and Newcome and Lovell held the ruffian down, while Raby went through his pockets, turning out the stolen goods.

"The beast ought to be locked up!" said Lovell.

"Too much fag to march him a mile," said Jimmy Silver. "Give him a jolly goodumping!"

"What-ho!"  
The ruffian struggled fiercely, but he had no chance in the grasp of the Fistical Four of Rookwood. He was swung off the ground and bumped down—hard.

Bump, bump, bump!  
"Yow! Ow, ow! I'll spifficate yer! Ow, ow, ow, yow!" roared the ruffian. "Lemme go! Yaroop! Oh crumbs!"

"Now cut off!" said Jimmy Silver. "If you're not gone in two seconds we'll duck you in the sea!"

The two seconds were enough for the gentleman with the broken nose. He disappeared along the lane at record speed.

"Jolly narrow escape of losing our clobber!" said Jimmy, panting. "This spot isn't quite so lonely as we supposed."

"Never mind! A miss is as good as a mile. Let's get in to supper."

The juniors dressed and returned to the bungalow. Shadows were lengthening on the shore now.

Supper was a merry meal, and sufficient provisions were left for next morning's breakfast—just sufficient.

"We'll see that the back door's a bit safer to-night," Jimmy Silver remarked. "That sneaking rotter might come prowling round again!"

And Jimmy's suggestion was acted upon. The damaged door was blocked up with a bench and a table and a heavy box.

Then, feeling quite secure, the juniors turned in for the second night of their week-end as the guests of the absent admiral.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. An Adventure in the Night!

**J**IMMY SILVER started and awoke. It was very dark in the bed-room with the shutters closed, though outside the moonlight streamed down on land and sea.

Jimmy was a sound sleeper as a rule, and as he lay awake in the darkness he wondered what had awakened him. Lovell was sleeping soundly by his side.

Jimmy sat up in bed and listened. Creak!

He started, and his heart thumped. It was a sound from the back of the house—from the kitchen, where the broken door was barricaded. He knew now what had awakened him.

Creak! Cre-e-ak!  
Jimmy Silver stepped softly from the bed. Groping his way silently with his bare feet, the junior stole down the passage to the kitchen.

Through the shattered door several streaks of moonlight penetrated into the room from without. From the silence came a murmur of voices.

"It's givin', Ikey!"  
Jimmy Silver's face set grimly. He recognised the voice of the man with the broken nose.

"It's jammed some'ow. Lurcher!" said another voice. "It's jammed up with furniture or something! Blast if I ketch on to it! There ain't nobody in the 'ouse—I know that!"

Jimmy Silver grinned.  
"It beas me!" said the broken-nosed man's voice. "They can't ave left the place like this 'ere! And they ain't come back—I knows that! Old Topcastle is away till Monday morning. I found that out at Beach-cliffe!"

"We should 'ave secd the car if they'd come back. And we know the place is locked up hempty when the admiral's away. It's all serene, Lurcher!"

"The busted door won't open, though!"  
"I'll try the winder! It won't take me long to get through them shutters with this 'ere!"

"This 'ere" was evidently the house-breaker's implement. There was a shuffling of feet at the door, and then a creaking at the window.

Jimmy Silver had heard enough. He stole back softly to the bed-room, and awakened Lovell with a shake.

"Quiet!" he whispered.  
"Mum-my hat! Wharrer marrer? Who—what—"

"Shut up, old chap! Burglars!"  
"Oh crumbs!"

Lovell sat up in bed, blinking at Jimmy in the darkness.

"Get your clobber on while I wake the others! They're not inside yet—we they won't be for a bit!"

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"Oh, jiminy!" murmured Lovell.  
Jimmy crept into the other bed-room. Raby and Newcome were quickly awakened, and they gasped at Jimmy's news.

"Not a word!" whispered Jimmy. "We can't keep the beasts out—there are two of them—but we can make them sorry they got in! Quiet!"

"Oh, my hat! What a go!" murmured Raby.

The juniors dressed themselves quickly in the darkness. From the direction of the kitchen came a sound of creaking continuously.

"We've got to get something to tackle the rotters with!" whispered Lovell.

"Poker and tongs!" said Jimmy. "But mum's the word!"

Jimmy found a poker, Lovell the tongs, Raby a heavy ruler, and Newcome a hammer. Thus equipped, the Fistical Four of Rookwood felt equal to dealing with Lurcher and Ikey.

They crept softly down the passage to the kitchen.

The shutters had swung open, and Ikey was at work on the glass itself. His frame showed up clearly against the moonlight.

The window opened.

"Go for him as soon as he gets in!" whispered Jimmy. "Down him, anyhow!"

The juniors breathed hard.

"All serene, Lurcher!" said Ikey, putting his head in at the window and peering round him.

The juniors were invisible in the darkness.

"In you go, Ikey!" came Lurcher's voice. "I'll give you a 'and! There'll be enough to pay us for our trouble!"

Ikey clambered in at the window.

He dropped lightly into the kitchen, and the next moment he uttered a howl as a shower of blows fell upon him, and he rolled on the floor.

Jimmy Silver leaped on the fallen ruffian.

"Keep still, you hound, or I'll brain you!"

"Elp!" shrieked the housebreaker.

"Look out for the other!" yelled Jimmy Silver, struggling with Ikey.

Lurcher was bundling in at the window. He was already half-way in when Ikey went down. The moonlight streamed in at the open window, and he could see his feet now.

"Them kids again!" yelled Lurcher. "Pitch into 'em, Ikey! There ain't no one near to 'elp! We'll out 'em!"

Jimmy Silver struck downwards with the poker, and Ikey's struggles suddenly ceased. He gave a groan and lay still.

There was a terrific clatter as Lurcher's cudgel crashed on the juniors' weapons. Jimmy Silver sprang up. Raby and Lovell and Newcome had receded a little from the broken-nosed man's savage onslaught.

Jimmy was behind him as he sprang up from the stunned Ikey.

The next moment the poker crashed on the back of Lurcher's head, and he staggered forward.

Before he could recover himself the juniors fastened on him like cats, and he was dragged down.

He struggled desperately, but once he was down the juniors were too much for him, and Ikey could render no assistance.

Jimmy's knee was planted on the ruffian, and the poker whirled over his head.

"Keep still, or I'll brain you!"

Lurcher cowered under the threatening poker.

"'Old on! I gives in!" he panted.

"You'd better!" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Get a rope from somewhere, Newcome; you others keep hold of this beast and the other beast. Smash 'em if they lift a finger!"

"What-ho!"

Newcome lighted a lamp. It did not take long to find a rope. Ikey, blinking dazedly and quite subdued, was bound hand and foot.

Then came Lurcher's turn. Under the threatening poker, the ruffian did not venture to resist. He ground his teeth and muttered curses while the rope was knotted round his limbs.

Jimmy Silver removed his knee from the ruffian's chest when he was secure, and rose, panting.

"Rookwood wins!" he gasped.

"Hurrah!"

### THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

All's Well That Ends Well!

**Z**IP! Zip!

"Hallo, there's a car!"

The Fistical Four were at breakfast in the bungalow. They ran to the window.

"It's the admiral!" exclaimed Jimmy.

A wooden-legged man, with a ruddy face fringed with white whiskers, was stumping up the path to the house. He paused in astonishment as he found the front door wide open.

"Why—what—thunder!" ejaculated the admiral, as Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared on the threshold. "What the dickens are you doing here?"

"Looking after your house, and capturing burglars for you," said Jimmy Silver coolly, while his chums chuckled.

"Burglars!" gasped the admiral.

"Yes, two of them, safe and sound—all serene, you know!" grinned Jimmy.

The astounded admiral stomped into the house. His eyes almost started from his purple face at the sight of the two house-breakers bound to the kitchen-table.

Lurcher and Ikey turned savage looks upon him.

"Pirates aboard, blow my timbers!" ejaculated Ben, in amazement.

"Well done, my lads!" exclaimed Admiral Topcastle. "But how the thunder did you come here?"

The juniors stared, as well they might.

"Why, you asked us to come!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"I—I asked you!"

"Yes, when, you telephoned to Rookwood on Thursday."

"I—I telephoned to Rookwood on Thursday!" gasped Admiral Topcastle. "You young swab, are you joking with me, hey?"

"Blest if he hasn't forgotten!" exclaimed Raby.

"Forgotten!" roared the admiral. "I haven't forgotten! I did not telephone to Rookwood on Thursday, or any other day."

"You didn't?" yelled Jimmy.

"Certainly not!"

"But—but somebody telephoned to me—in your name—and asked me to come down with my friends for a week-end," stammered Jimmy, in bewilderment. "You—he—whoever it was—telephoned to the Head, too, and got us leave to come."

"By gad!"

"And it's jolly lucky we came!" said Lovell warmly. "The place would have been burgled if we hadn't been here."

"By gad!" said the admiral. "Well, I didn't invite you here, and I never telephoned; but you're welcome! I'm glad to see my old shipmate's son any time. As for these rascals, these piratical swabs, you can run them to the police-station in the car, Ben!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Better run us up in the car at the same time," said Jimmy. "We've got to get back to Rookwood this morning."

The admiral shook his head.

"You're not going back this morning. I'll telegraph to the Head. You'll stay with me a few days, now I'm here. Not a word—I don't allow argument! Ben, shift those landsharks into the car, and make sail!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The juniors grinned. They were by no means averse to an extension of the week-end—the responsibility resting on the admiral.

"So we weren't invited, after all!" chuckled Lovell. "You are an ass, Jimmy—a howling, asinine ass, I must say!"

"Well, it wasn't my fault! Somebody invited us, if it wasn't the admiral. Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy suddenly. "That's what Smythe was chuckling about!"

It was four days later when the Fistical Four returned to Rookwood. And Jimmy Silver sought out Adolphus Smythe of the Shell at once.

"We've had a ripping time, Smythey," he said. "It turns out that it was some japing jackass who invited us, and not the admiral at all; but the admiral's a brick, and he's got ripping good taste—he likes us no end. We've had a topping time, and we're awfully obliged to the silly idiot who telephoned! And if you happen to know that howling idiot, Adolphus, will you mention to him that we're awfully obliged, and that we're grateful to him for giving us the time of our lives!"

And Jimmy Silver walked away before Adolphus could reply, leaving the great Adolphus with an expression on his face that simply could not be described in words.

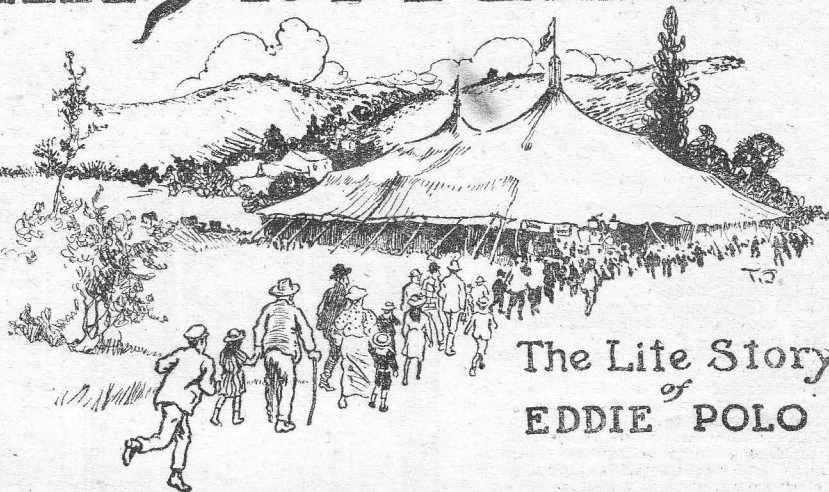
THE END.

(Another grand story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week, entitled: "The Eleventh Man!")



START READING THE LIFE STORY OF FAMOUS EDDIE POLO TO-DAY!

# Fighting for Fame!



## The Life Story of EDDIE POLO

*A Thrilling Story of the Famous Film Star's Early Struggles and Triumphs.*

### THE THREADS OF THIS STORY.

Eddie Polo, an unknown and apparently poor boy, obtains a position in Mr. Busto's World-Famous Menagerie and Circus, after being given the opportunity of proving himself a wonderful young acrobat, in the place of Del Rogeriguo. He meets "Ginger," the circus clown, who warns him against the Spaniard's spiteful heart. Eddie is performing some daring stunts high above the audience. He falls into a catch-net, some thirty feet up, the strings break, and, unable to stop himself, falls through to the ground.

*(Now read on.)*

### The Wager!

As in a flash, when his body touched the safety-net, Eddie Polo knew that something unforeseen had happened.

He was conscious of the startled intoneness of the audience, who but a few moments before had been thrilled by his dare-devil performance.

He felt, rather than heard, the horror-stricken sound which came from the audience as the net gave way before the impetus of his falling body.

But during the fraction of time taken by his rush through the air, to what appeared to the crowds as certain death, Eddie, fortunately for himself, managed to retain his presence of mind, and so turn a dangerous episode into a masterful stunt.

All his life Eddie Polo had been accustomed to falling without hurt.

This occasion was to be no exception to the rule.

As soon as he knew himself to be within the correct distance from the springy turf of the ring, Eddie straightened his body, and alighted softly upon his toes.

To the audience it appeared that his feet could hardly have touched the ground before, turning like a flash, he threw himself backwards and landed upon his broad shoulders.

He was back upon his feet immediately, and bowing to the crowds in the tent before the astonished people could realise that the intrepid young acrobat had saved himself.

Mr. Busto still remained rooted to the ground, with staring eyes and mouth agape, evidently expecting to see a mangled body on the turf.

Ginger, the clown, was the first to recover himself. He walked towards Eddie, stopped in front of him, and, with mock seriousness, carefully ran his hands all over the smiling young man's body.

He winked. Ginger realised it would be a bad thing for the circus to allow the public to depart thinking that the proprietor cared so little about the welfare of his artistes as to permit the use of unsound equipment.

"Hallo-oah!" he roared. "The prize offered by the management, ladies and gentlemen, is still available."

Ginger glanced round, and caught sight of the face of Del Rogeriguo.

It was distorted with passion, and the clown snapped his jaws together hard.

Up to this moment he had really thought the whole affair had been an accident.

His one glance at the half-caste's face, however, had convinced him that this was a deliberate attempt on Eddie Polo's life.

Del Rogeriguo noticed the stern look which flashed across the clown's powdered face, and quietly sneaked away.

Ginger, however, made no sign; he continued to address the audience.

By this time they were all fully convinced that the final fall had been part of the last trick, and applauded Eddie so much that the young man was kept continually bowing his thanks.

There was no doubt that his first appearance with Busto's World-Famous Menagerie and Circus had been a tremendous success.

Mr. Busto, having recovered from his first shock, was smiling broadly. All the years he had been touring with his circus he had managed to steer clear of accidents.

As Eddie passed the owner on his way to his dressing-tent Mr. Busto clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well done, laddie!" he said.

Eddie Polo flushed with pleasure at this praise.

He had made good, was the thought which was uppermost in his mind; and although he knew that the jealous Del Rogeriguo had purposely prepared the safety-net for his discomfiture, Eddie felt that he could forgive even this dastardly action.

By a stroke of good fortune, he had been able to turn this incident, which was intended to dispose of him effectively, to his own advantage.

At the exit of the ring he passed Esta. The queen of equestriennes bestowed a sweet smile upon the young acrobat, and murmured her congratulations upon his success and his lucky escape.

Strangely enough, not one of the company suspected foul play, with the exception of Ginger.

The last of the audience had left the tent, and the naphtha lamps were being dismantled for the night.

Ginger, with a towel in his hand, put his head inside Eddie's tent.

"May I come in?" he asked.

"Sure."

Ginger entered, and stood watching Polo. Eddie was standing calm and collected.

"You take things very coolly," Ginger remarked.

Eddie laughed.

"Accidents are bound to happen, you know."

"Accidents!" repeated Ginger wrathfully.

"You know very well, that it was not an accident, and that it was only your own

presence of mind which saved you. The dirty little dago! I'll see that he goes."

Eddie glanced hard at the clown, the twinkle in his black eyes dancing more rapidly than usual.

"I think we might consider this an accident, Ginger. Perhaps he will not be such a fool again. Anyway, let's say nothing."

Ginger was amazed, but saw that the lad was determined to take no steps against the man who had so foully tried to kill him.

"All right," he replied. "I'll see that his wings are clipped a bit, anyway."

And Ginger left the tent.

The following morning Eddie was up and about with the first signs of daylight.

The camp was already astir, for Mr. Busto, with that strict sense of duty which his long connection with circus habits had taught him, had one hard-and-fast rule which nothing was allowed to disturb.

With him his animals came first and foremost.

He personally saw that no groom partook of food before attending to his charges.

Eddie, as he returned from his dip in the stream near by, saw the men at their work, and stopped to speak to them. Mr. Busto was there, keeping a watchful eye on all.

"Morning, Eddie!" he said cheerfully. "Know anything about horses?"

Eddie Polo laughed. "I have been riding them since I was so high." And he held his hand down to indicate the size.

"Good! Perhaps you would care to take one out for exercise occasionally. There are a number of riding ponies which, of course, we never use in the ring."

"There's nothing I'd like better," replied Eddie.

And his eyes sparkled in anticipation of an early canter across the fields.

"Well, when you feel like it, just ask Jacko there to saddle one up for you. If you take my tip you'll have nothing to do with that chestnut. She's more than a little vicious. In fact, the grooms have all their work before them when they start on her."

And the genial owner turned once more to supervise the work on the horse lines.

Eddie walked towards the animal which the owner had pointed out.

She was undoubtedly a beautiful beast, and her appearance, as Eddie came nearer to her, certainly backed up the reputation she held.

There was a wicked glint in her eyes as she turned her head to look at the intruder. A warning shout came from Jacko, the head groom.

"Shouldn't go too near her, Mr. Polo," he remarked, walking over. "She don't take too kindly to strangers. I don't know why the old man keeps her. She's no use, nobody

ever rides her, and she's more trouble to groom than she's worth."

"I'll take her out after breakfast," remarked Eddie quietly.

Jacko looked up in surprise. Then he roared with laughter.

However, Eddie was not to be deterred by the man's amusement.

When the head groom saw this he became more serious.

"If you'll take the advice of one who really knows, young fellow, you'll quit that idea. I have only seen two fellows try to ride her, and they both went to hospital."

Eddie Polo shrugged his shoulders.

"Nevertheless, I am going to try." Jacko gave it up. After all, if the man did want to end his life so suddenly—that was how Jacko looked at it—well, it was no affair of his.

When the company was assembled that morning for breakfast—Mr. Busto insisted on everyone having meals together in one large marquee—Jacko spread the word round that Eddie Polo had decided to ride the "Mad Chestnut," as the mare was called.

Most of the members remembered the two previous attempts, and the disastrous consequences which had followed.

Each tried to dissuade the venturesome youth against his mad scheme.

Del Rogeriguo was the only exception. During breakfast he had made himself as pleasant as possible to Eddie, and the young acrobat, thinking no more of the incident of the previous evening, treated the Spaniard with the same cordiality as he showed to all the other people.

Del Rogeriguo smiled to himself as he heard the decision Eddie had come to.

Perhaps after all it would not be necessary for him to scheme further to remove Polo from his path so that he could resume his old position in the circus.

Instead of joining in the chorus against the escapade he carefully made remarks which he calculated would make it impossible for Eddie to withdraw from his promise.

The words had the desired effect, and before long resulted in the Spaniard offering to wager a large sum of money against the success of the affair.

Eddie was annoyed with himself for being drawn into this arrangement. He was determined to ride the animal, and he would keep to his resolve without mixing himself up with any financial deals with the Spaniard.

"You can keep your money, Del Rogeriguo," he said. "I shall make the attempt under any circumstances."

The half-caste smiled.

"As you wish," he replied. So long as Polo was hurt in the attempt he would rather have it this way. He had only wished to make certain that his rival would not back out.

Having done that he was quite content to leave matters in the hands of Fate and the Mad Chestnut.

**The Mad Chestnut.**

AS soon as the meal was over a concerted move was made towards the horse lines.

Although nobody agreed with the foolish decision, they could not resist the attraction of seeing Polo try to ride the chestnut.

He had been amply warned against the dangers, and the company now could only admire his pluck and determination.

However, no groom could be found willing to undertake the task of getting a saddle on to the animal's back.

The mare was as quiet as a mouse so long as she was without a saddle. Eddie himself eventually made the attempt, but it was useless to try to get near her.

As soon as she saw him approach with the equipment she lashed out furiously with her hind legs.

The onlookers scattered wildly, and the unfortunate groom at her head was lifted off his feet.

Eddie at last gave it up, and, walking carefully to her head, relieved the groom of his unenviable job.

That worthy was only too pleased to get away. His arms had been almost pulled from their sockets.

The Mad Chestnut became still again, and it was only the nervous twitchings of her ears and muscles which betrayed any sign of excitement.

Eddie calmed her somewhat, and walked her away from the crowd.

He halted her for a few moments.

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Then, without the slightest warning, and to the utter astonishment of all the onlookers, Eddie Polo vaulted lightly and surely on to the animal's back.

For the moment the mare remained perfectly still. She seemed—as surprised as every member of the circus company.

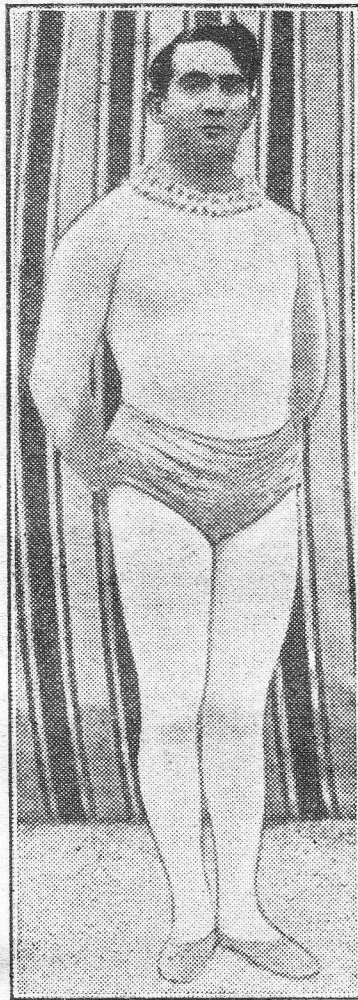
But only for a moment.

With a shrill neigh she commenced her tricks.

She plunged sideways and then backwards, kicking out furiously, and scattering the company of onlookers broadcast.

Eddie, with only his knees to support him, and grasping a halter in place of the reins, was in a precarious position.

His black eyes glared with excitement.



**EDDIE POLO,** known to all the world as "The Circus King." He is the most daring film actor living, and in the above photograph we see him in his famous and picturesque acrobat costume.

and his jaw became set firmly and determinedly.

He had managed to mount, and felt that it would have to be a wonderful animal to shift him now.

The Mad Chestnut, however, was not giving up the battle too soon. With another wild plunge she endeavoured to throw Eddie. It failed.

The circus company was excited beyond description.

Mr. Busto jumped about like a small boy, shouting out words of encouragement. Never before had he seen such an exhibition of horsemanship.

With a sudden decision, which would have unseated any other rider, the Mad Chestnut made her next move.

Her ears almost flat upon her head, and with her vicious-looking teeth gleaming, the mad-tempered animal tore past the excited group of spectators across the fields.

Eddie now felt more certain of victory. Provided she ran a straight course, he knew there would be no difficulty in retaining his seat, and the mare would soon tire herself on her mad dash across the heavy country.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" muttered Mr. Busto, as he gazed after the figure rapidly disappearing in the cloud of dust.

For nearly ten minutes the group waited, talking excitedly over the extraordinary exhibition they had just witnessed.

Then, as Mr. Busto showed signs of getting anxious, a figure could be seen riding a horse at a gentle trot towards the circus.

It was Eddie Polo on the Mad Chestnut. It was obvious to all that he had conquered the beast for good, and a rousing cheer went up as he rode into the centre of the circus company.

Eddie smiled, pulled the animal up in the centre of the group, and jumped lightly to the ground.

The animal showed many signs of the hard struggle it had had. It was covered with foam, which testified that Eddie, wonderful horseman that he was, had had no easy task during that brief ten minutes.

Now, however, the Mad Chestnut appeared in a more reasonable frame of mind.

Eddie turned to one of the grooms.

"Just rub her down," he said, "and I will take her out again for a quiet walk, to cool her down thoroughly."

Within a few moments the animal was ready, and Eddie soon had the saddle on. Even now the animal was a little restive.

Eddie glanced round, and saw Del Rogeriguo looking on surlily.

"Lucky I didn't take your wager, Del Rogeriguo!" Eddie shouted across to the Spaniard.

Del Rogeriguo cursed under his breath. He couldn't understand it. Any other fellow would have been killed, and here was the man he wanted to see out of the way smiling in his self-confident manner. He must have had the luck of the very devil!

Del Rogeriguo did not answer.

At that moment, Esta, Mr. Busto's daughter, appeared in neat riding-kit. Her pony was ready for her. Each morning, wet or fine, she went for a short canter across the open fields. Usually a groom accompanied her.

To-day, however, Mr. Busto had something to say on the question. He turned to Eddie.

"If you are going out again, Eddie," he remarked, silyly winking, "perhaps I needn't send a groom with Esta!"

Eddie smiled.

"I shall only be too pleased!"

The queen of equestriennes was already waiting. She looked on curiously as Eddie tried to mount the Mad Chestnut. She had heard of the animal's bad reputation, but had not seen the young acrobat conquer the animal's vile disposition.

The mare was still inclined to be fricky, but Eddie now had complete control of her. He seemed to be able to foresee the animal's every trick, and so counteract it at once.

He vaulted lightly into the saddle, and the two made off across the open country.

Mr. Busto looked after them till they were out of view over a small ridge some distance ahead. They made a goodly sight, the pair of them. Esta could ride with the best. Her style was perfect, and she rode with that ease and grace which made her a beautiful picture to behold.

Eddie, of course, was beyond criticism.

The circus-owner was very pleased with himself. He had become remarkably fond of the intrepid young acrobat, and could wish for nothing better than that he should become on the very best of terms with his daughter.

Ginger noticed the owner's interest in the pair. The clown, also, had become very fond of Eddie.

Esta and Eddie cantered smartly along for some distance.

The girl expressed her surprise at the ease with which the young man handled his animal, and Eddie proceeded to tell her of the brief ten-minute battle he had had just before.

They pulled their horses into a slow trot.

"Which way shall we go?" asked Eddie.

"Ahead of us there is rather a deep ravine. But on the other side there is a splendid stretch for a full gallop. Shall we go there?"

"Why, yes!" replied Esta.

Eddie branched off to the left, and the pair

made for the spot where a wooden bridge had been erected for the convenience of horsemen, to save the extra-long journey which would otherwise have been necessary.

The bridge itself was solidly built, with the exception of the handrails. It was very narrow, however, and, try as he would, Eddie could not make his animal cross.

Esta became exceedingly nervous. There was an eighty-foot drop to the bottom of the ravine, and she did not wish to see the young rider and horse go over the edge.

"Hadh't you better lead her across, Mr. Polo?" she suggested timidly.

The now well-known look of determination came over Eddie's face.

"I think I shall make her go," he replied.

Again and again he faced the animal at the bridge, at first with no success.

Each time he managed to get her a little closer, and eventually forced her fore-feet on to the wooden planks.

But again the Mad Chestnut broke away. The animal became more fractious every moment; but Eddie was just beginning to enjoy the situation. He had decided that animal should cross the bridge, and go she should.

Esta, waiting nervously behind, wished to scream as the horse and its rider got closer and closer to the edge of the ravine. She knew, however, that to do so might startle the already nervous animal, and cause the catastrophe she wished to see avoided.

At last Eddie managed to get the animal on to the narrow bridge.

Overcome by the treatment she had received earlier in the morning, and now really frightened, the Mad Chestnut plunged wildly about the narrow confines of the bridge.

Eddie was feeling none too safe on the back of this animal as it jumped backwards and forwards. The bridge had not been constructed to stand this extra strain, and, from the creaking and groaning sounds it made, might break at any moment.

Esta was standing horrified. She could not move, but stood gazing helplessly at the fight on the bridge.

The Mad Chestnut at last decided matters. With a violent plunge she crashed into the frail handrail.

It snapped like a matchstick, and, the animal, unable to arrest its back movement, tumbled off the side of the bridge, bearing the intrepid young rider with him.

#### A Marvellous Escape!

**T**HERE was an eighty-foot drop to the bottom of the ravine, where numerous heavy, jagged rocks were strewn.

Although Eddie had never visited the place before, he had caught a fleeting glimpse of the depths during his brief fight with the maddened animal on the bridge.

During those few moments things had happened with lightning rapidity.

The animal, finding that it could not overcome the indomitable spirit of its rider, and becoming more frightened every time it plunged on the narrow bridge, in the perverseness of its nature, had thrown itself into the ravine.

For a fraction of a second the rider gave himself up for lost. During the first few yards of the fall it seemed as if nothing could save him from being smashed to atoms on the boulders beneath.

Eddie, as the horse crashed through the frail handrail, obtained but a fleeting glimpse of his companion Esta.

She was standing rigid with horror. Her face was as white as death.

Somehow, this vision had an extraordinary effect on Eddie Polo.

His brain worked quickly, and once more his nerves became as steady as iron.

There was only one possible way he might save himself. It was only one chance in a hundred, but he took it.

At such moments as this quick thinking is essential. Eddie had been in similar positions of danger often before, and never had his brain or nerve failed him. He would trust it again this time. He had fallen from great heights many times previously, and, by his own skill and judgment, had saved himself from serious injury.

Quite recently, on the first night of the circus, he had been the intended victim of a foul plot to destroy him, but had, to his enemies' discomfiture, come through it without a scratch.

True, in that case the floor had not been made of rough, slippery boulders, but had been flat and springy turf, thereby increasing his chance.

This time—

But he would not think of that. His only chance of safety was to stick to the horse as long as possible, and so avoid taking the full force of the blow himself.

The wind rushed past his ears as his body, apparently glued to the animal's back, gained speed in its downward dash.

The Mad Chestnut gave a terrified squeal, and Eddie knew instinctively that the moment had arrived for him to act.

They were now within a few feet of the ground.

Quickly freeing his feet from the stirrups, Eddie threw himself well clear of the falling horse. A second after the animal's body hit a huge boulder with a sickening thud.

Eddie was no lightweight, and, although he had lessened the speed of his own fall by holding on to the horse practically the whole way down, the crash with which he hit the ground was sufficient to knock him breathless.

Fortunately, he had missed a large rock by a few inches, and his body struck a softer piece of ground.

A gasp of fear broke from her parched lips, and she trembled.

"Dead!" she muttered.

She realised she could be of no assistance there, and, rushing back to where her pony was waiting, patiently eating the luxuriant grass, she leapt into her saddle, and, fiercely, beating the horse into a furious gallop, rushed back towards the circus.

She was hardly conscious of her actions; but her pony knew her well, and was well aware that something urgent was required of him. He raced back to the circus at a speed he had never equalled before.

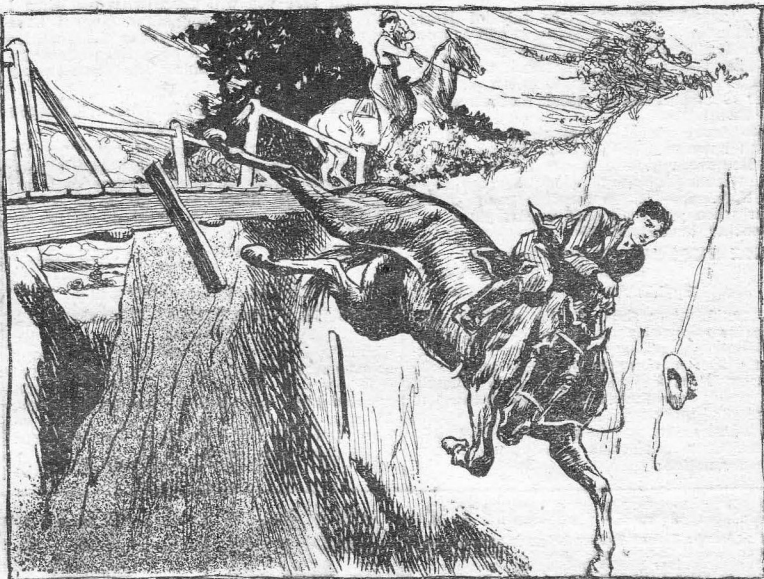
A group of men, including her father, the proprietor of the circus, were still standing by the horse lines gossiping.

As the sound of the madly galloping horse reached their ears, they glanced up, thinking probably that it was Polo giving a further exhibition of his remarkable skill.

They hurried forward in surprise and consternation as they saw there was only one rider—and that Esta.

A wave of anxiety passed over the face of Mr. Busto, as it dawned upon him that the long-avoided accident had overtaken him at last.

With one accord the men rushed forward to



With a violent plunge, the Mad Chestnut crashed into the frail handrail. It snapped like a match-stick, and animal and rider tumbled over the side of the bridge, and plunged downwards.

Even so, the force of the fall and the sudden release from the nervous tension he had passed through during those few seconds deprived him of consciousness, and he lay there inert.

When the horse and its rider disappeared into the ravine, Esta gave a horrified shriek.

She stood stock-still, her face ghastly white, and her eyes wide with horror at the sight she had witnessed.

It seemed an eternity to her, although in reality less than two seconds elapsed before she heard the last frightened neigh of the Mad Chestnut.

She was conscious of no human voice, and even during that moment of great mental stress she marvelled over the wonderful self-control of the man who was no perhaps falling to his doom.

The animal's frightened shriek was followed immediately by another even more terrifying sound—the thud of a heavy body striking the ground.

It was this sound, magnified by the echo from the ravine, which gave her power to move.

She hastened towards the broken bridge, and peered over the side. There, far beneath her, she saw two bodies lying helpless on the ground.

assist the exhausted girl from her equally tired mount.

The pony stood, and endeavoured to regain its breath. He was covered with foam, while from his nostrils there trickled a thin stream of blood.

Esta leaned against the animal, her pale face twitching nervously, and her eyes closed.

"Mr Polo!" she gasped. "Dead!"

The full meaning of the words did not convey itself to the group of listeners immediately, and they still remained looking on in that startled manner.

Del Rogeriguo, the half-caste, who had been standing at the rear of the party, with a scowl upon his face at the popularity of his rival, was the first to gather the full purport of the exhausted girl's message.

But he made no forward movement. Instead, he rubbed his hands softly together, and a smile flitted across his villainous face.

"At last!" he muttered to himself.

It was, indeed, fortunate for the Spaniard that no other members of the company noticed his content.

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



# A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. Address: EDITOR, THE "POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

## FOR NEXT FRIDAY.

In the issue of the POPULAR for next Friday there will be another thrilling instalment of our great Rebellion serial, entitled:

### "THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES!"

By Edmund Burton.

This tale has made a wonderful hit, as the evidence of the postbag shows, and the appreciation from my chums is never lacking. No doubt you are patiently waiting to read what has happened to that strange and wonderful sword, round which this story is being penned. I can assure you that there has never been written such an enthralling instalment as that which is appearing next week.

### "THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!"

By Frank Richards.

Our grand, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars will appear under the above title, and the theme of it will be the extraordinary and unenviable position in which Harry Wharton and the other members of the junior football eleven find themselves.

The great football season opens with a match between the Courtfield Crusaders and the Remove, but it is never finished, owing to an amazing interruption shortly before half-time. The reason for this you will discover when you read next week's yarn.

Another instalment of

### "THE EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"

By Maurice Everard.

a magnificent serial of the world-famous detective's amazing adventures and progress in the strange robbery of an important document. For a story of mystery and thrill Maurice Everard has given us a truly splendid one, which becomes even more so as the plot is unfolded week by week.

In addition to this is a splendid complete tale dealing with the famous Rookwood chums, entitled:

## "THE ELEVENTH MAN!"

By Owen Conquest,

and is one of the best cricket yarns we have had from this talented author's pen. The "Giddy Nuts" of Rookwood figure rather prominently. Smythe & Co. contrive a scheme to get into the team, and they are very disappointed when their little plot falls through and they find themselves still left out, after all the trouble they had taken.

Last of all, I call the attention of my chums to the next instalment of the great life story of the world's most wonderful and daring film star,

### EDDIE POLO,

who has gained for himself the name of the "Circus King."

I am sure you will agree with me when I say this is a really topping number I have prepared, and the only thing remains for you to do is to order a copy from the news-agent well in advance, to avoid any disappointment.

### YOUR EDITOR'S SPECIAL MESSAGE TO HIS CHUMS.

I have a glorious piece of news for my readers this week—news which all my friends will receive with as much pleasure as I feel in being able to give it. Next Wednesday's "Gem" Library—our celebrated companion paper—will be a

### GREAT BUMPER AND FREE-GIFT NUMBER.

### One of the principal features will be a GRAND PICTORIAL FOOTBALL ANNUAL.

which is being given away with each copy as an extra special supplement. This annual will contain dozens of splendid photos, articles by famous football champions, fixtures, rules of the game, valuable information, and hosts of other features, gathered in its thirty-two pages.

In addition to this surprise, there will be

## TWO NEW SERIALS.

The first is a sporting story of a kind which will receive a cordial reception from the hands of my readers, and the second, a very charmingly-written tale of a young boy's adventures in the South Sea Islands. Thirdly, our talented author, Martin Clifford, will be called upon to relate the most exciting adventures of Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's, we have ever read.

This, then, is the bill of fare which will be in the next issue of the "Gem," and I ask my chums to pause a moment and consider whether such a magnificent range of really wholesome, first-class reading matter is, or ever can be, offered to them by any other paper in the world. After many weeks of reflection, I have satisfied myself that it is impossible to offer my chums anything better than this feast of superb reading matter and the grand gift I have outlined above, so that it is with perfect confidence that I ask their

### ENTHUSIASTIC AND WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT

for my ripping surprise, which I am giving to many thousands of "Gem," "Magnet," and POPULAR readers.

## EXPECTATIONS.

We all have them, and, as a rule, they are great. If you could open the door of any fellow's mind you would discover that behind all the ordinary business thoughts which he was carrying round with him, was some sort of an idea that big and splendid things were about to happen. If they do not happen there is disappointment, naturally, and these grand events seldom occur. If they occurred they would cease to be grand. It is just the dream which makes them look attractive, isn't it? But everybody is the same, more or less—thinking of some glittering happening which will bring in a vast fortune, delivered, carriage paid and nicely packed, at the door, with the messenger running off to avoid largesse the moment he has handed in the parcel. We all know this kind of anticipation. It is the fancy ware of the world, and it is just as well such wonders do not come along.

Your Editor

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