

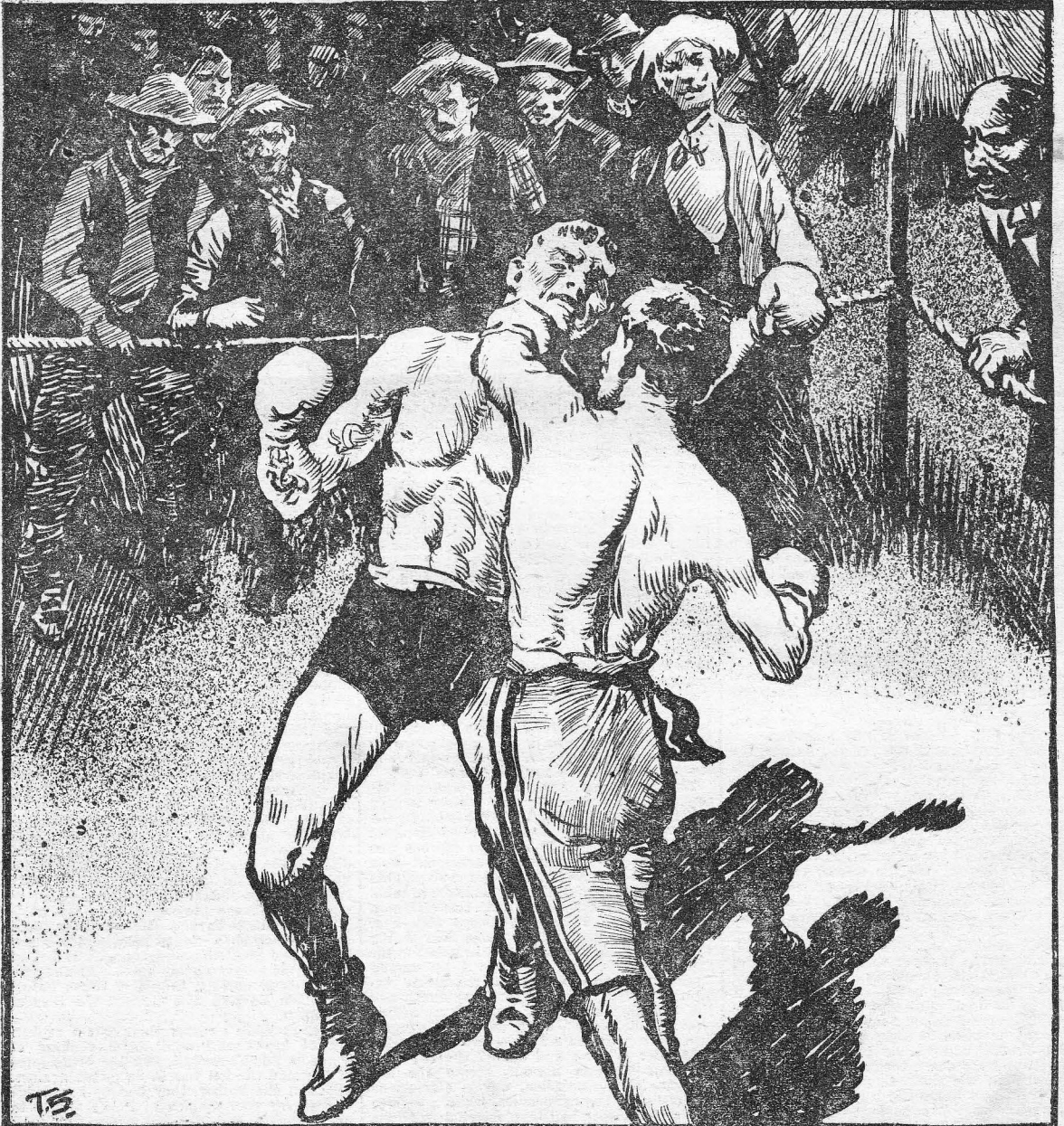
**THE LIFE-STORY OF FAMOUS EDDIE POLO** IN THIS ISSUE!

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# The $1\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>d</sup> Popular

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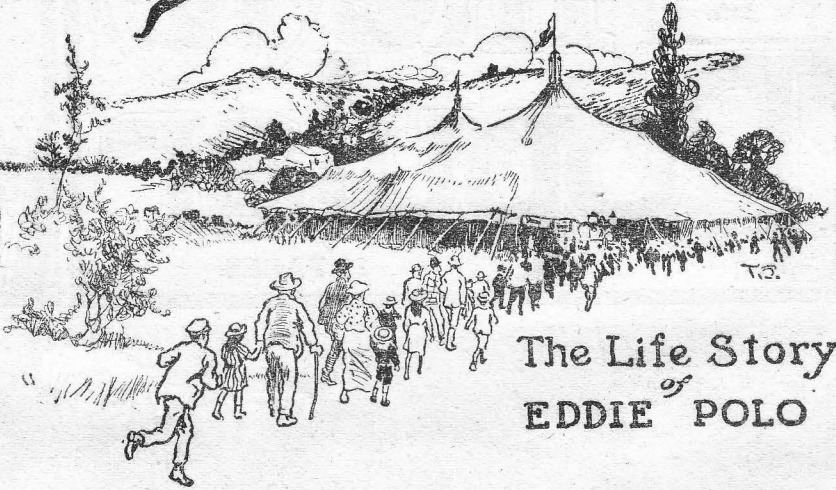


**EDDIE POLO'S GREAT FIGHT! THE KNOCK-OUT BLOW!**

(See the Thrilling Life-Story of EDDIE POLO Inside.)

YOU MUST NOT MISS READING THIS SPLENDID LIFE STORY!

# Fighting for Fame!



The Life Story  
of  
**EDDIE POLO**

*A Thrilling Story of the Famous Film Star's Early Struggles and Triumphs.*

## THE THREADS OF THE STORY.

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

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

Eddie saves the situation by his cool bravery, and pursues Rogeriugo, finally securing him. They are stopped by a sheriff, who returns with them to the circus. But he turns out to be a sham sheriff, and, instead of helping them, he makes off with the money and lets the Spaniard free. A travelling boxing show visits the town, and Eddie challenges one of the boxers to a contest. It is agreed that if Eddie wins the fight, the boxer's great marquee shall be at the disposal of Mr. Busto.

(Now read on.)

## The Great Boxing Contest.

**P**ROFESSOR BASHAM'S jaw dropped as he stared at the lad. Then his tongue crept out and moistened his lips, and, throwing back his head, he burst into a fit of roaring laughter.

"What! You knock out Bill the Basher, the terror of the east side?" he scoffed. "Bill'll put salt on yer tail, and eat yer in one mouthful. Is it a go, yer ask? Young feller, hand me that thousand dollars right now, give me the address of yer next-o'-kin, so's I can tell 'em how yer met yer death, and then proceed to yer execution at once. If so be as yer knocks Bill the Basher clean out, fair and square, in six rounds—six, mind you—not three, the tent's yours for keeps, and you can use it as an awning if yer've a mind that way."

Eddie grinned, and Bud Truefit, at his nod, passed over to Basham the bag of coin and notes which the circus staff had subscribed among themselves, not knowing for what it was to be used. But had they known they would have subscribed double, for Eddie was a great favourite among them. But only Bud Truefit and his cowboys were in the secret, and the dozen tough lads had already passed into the show as paying spectators, and were now lining the ropes of the boxing ring. The showman gave the lad a receipt for his coin, and immediately began to blazon forth the news of the coming struggle.

"Prices is doubled, gents and ladies!" he roared. "One dollar a head it is now to see the hope of Texasville doin' his best to knock out Bill the Basher, champion of Cuba, Santiago, and the Philippiens, in six rounds, for a stake of a thousand dollars to a showman's tent. Walk up—walk up! The gore will be flyin' in bucketfuls soon!"

He grinned across the front of the big booth to Bill the Basher, a hefty son of Anak, who stood, with arms folded, on view to everybody. Basham chinked the coin in the bag and winked at the heavy-weight, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Get inside, Bill," he said, "and take a look at the coon. He ain't a decent mouthful for yer, and I reel hates to ask yer to wipe 'im up pronto!"

"No need ter get windy, boss," said Bill. "One round's all that I'll want ter put the kid where he oughter be. I'll just play with him fer a bit, and send him ter sleep whenever I fancies, but well within ther six-round limit. Yer leave 'im ter me. Say, what do I get outer ther purse?"

"A hundred—you're on a hundred to nuthin', Bill," grinned Basham. "It's easy money, and if yer find 'im troublesome, well, that's more ways of puttin' a chap to sleep than administerin' chloroform—eh?"

He winked again, and the bruiser nodded. Then he disappeared inside the tent-flap, and walked to the ring. He nodded genially to Eddie, his keen eyes taking in the lad's physique.

"He'll give me a run, I expect," said Bill to himself. "But he'll also gimme two or three stone in weight an' about six inches in reach. It's all over, bar the countin' out!"

The tent was now being crammed to capacity, for everybody was willing to pay a dollar to see the great contest between the Unknown and the champion, as Basham claimed him to be. Most of the citizens who had paid for admission remembered how resourceful the lad had been two nights before, when his daring and quickness of mind and limb had saved many of them from a death by fire. They sympathised with him, and were prepared to encourage him in the very unequal battle he had taken on for the sake of the circus, and this they showed when, after the old-time bare-knuckle exhibition had tapped its dreary way along, and the wrestling show had come to a tedious close, Eddie, stripped to the buff, stepped into the roped square at one corner, attended by Ginger Wiggles and one of the cowboys. Professor Basham himself, seeing the importance of the occasion, was in attendance as master of the ceremonies, while a referee and a timekeeper had been selected from the audience by Polo himself.

"This 'ere, gents all," announced the pro-

fessor, "is a six-round contest atween Bill the Basher, heavy-weight champion of a few places, and the Unknown. If the Unknown stays six rounds against Bill the Basher, he receives five hundred dollars; if he knocks Bill the Basher out in the same time he wins his bet, which is one thousand dollars, already in the hands of the management, against the free use of this marquee what's covering you all, for a fortnight. Them's the terms the Unknown 'as made 'isself, and they're square. That's all, gents, and I hopes yer'll keep quiet and give yer Unknown challenger a fair chance."

"E'll get that, sirc," interposed Bud Truefit, as he drew a pair of heavy revolvers out of his holsters, "cos it's my lamps as 'ull be on yaw're man all ther time, and if I catches 'im so much as thinkin' 'e's a-goin' ter play a cross game with ther Unknown, wall, it'll be ther last time 'e'll try it on. Fair play an' square play, ses I, an' these 'ere suns o' mine ses it as well, an' so does the irons o' these fourteen men o' mine that's stickin' to ther ropes and keepin' ther eyes skinned fer foul play. Fight fair an' square, an' we'll say nuthin' if yew're man wins, but if 'e tries any 'anky-panky, then it's 'im fer the Great Divide medium suddint. I'm through, but I'm watchin'." Mr. Referee, yer can git on with ther show."

A murmur of approval went up from the audience, and Bill the Basher, seated in his corner, hastily made a mental revision of his pre-arranged tactics. Still, there were one or two tricks he kept up his sleeve in case of emergencies, though he felt certain that he would never have need to use them. He could surely paste this daring opponent, who, by contrast with himself, looked so small and insignificant.

There was more than a suggestion of brutality about the older man. His great chest, revealed by the stripping off of the dingy white sweater, was deep and solid, his knotted muscled arms were covered with tattooing from shoulder to wrist, and his low-crowned skull and projecting lower jaw made him look almost savage. He was fully seven inches taller than Eddie Polo, and his legs looked like gnarled brown columns as he sat resting his elbows on his knees. Behind him stood his seconds, a couple of other boxers for whom Basham also claimed the title of champion.

Over in Eddie's corner there was a puckering of brows and a doubtful shaking of heads as Eddie's seconds saw the brute force of the man the lad was to be pitted against. Like Bill the Basher, they had no knowledge and a very poor opinion of Polo's ability to use his hands, and, like Bill, again, they were shortly to revise that opinion drastically.

"Time!" called the man with the watch,



and the two leapt to their feet, their seconds slipping outside the ropes and taking with them the camp stools upon which their principals had been seated. As they met in the middle of the ring and touched gloves in the conventional handshake, the boxer grinned savagely, and Eddie noted that he had several teeth missing where previous contests had resulted in hard blows to the mouth. But Eddie hadn't much time for noticing facial peculiarities. Almost as their hands fell apart the boxer led a straight left to Eddie's jaw, which, had it reached home well and truly, would have ended the scrap there and then.

And Eddie took it on his face with a magnificent movement that made the audience gasp in wonder. The left just grazed Eddie's face as he ducked to one side, and the next minute he and the surprised Bill were warily circling around each other, watching and sparring for an opening.

The difference between them was now more apparent. Eddie was finely built, deep-chested, lean-flanked, and perfectly proportioned—perhaps a shade "fine drawn" as compared with the bulkiness of his antagonist. But he was such a beautiful lad—the product of good blood and a clean life, such as is to be met with every day in England and the United States. His graceful activity as he moved in the sawdust of the ring, with the naphtha flares overhead, were characteristic of the amateur, while the professional contented himself with almost imperceptible movements of his feet as he watched, with great caution and never-flickering eyes, for the coming attack.

And then, with the suddenness of a flash, Eddie leapt in, delivered a beautiful straight left to the side of the other's head, and danced swiftly back out of harm's way. The blow was beautifully timed and measured, and Bill the Basher shook his head as the bells commenced to ring under the force behind Eddie's blow. Then they went to it, for the heavy-weight followed up the lad hard, and they exchanged cross and counter, jolt and jab, guard and parry like lightning. And only those who watched closely could see that every blow of Bill's was robbed of the greater portion of its force by the fine defence the lad was putting up, while, time and time again, Eddie drove a pile-driving right to the region of the big man's heart.

Then Bill started rushing, and twice he drove Eddie to the ropes, and it seemed all over. But Eddie stopped the rushes with swift flush hits to the mouth, and ever his terrific right crashed into the other's heart, till at the end of the first round, when "Time" was called, the boxer retired, flushed and breathing hard, to his corner.

The second round commenced with a foul, and nearly ended in a most sudden manner. Bill the Basher stepped in with his arms and fists going like pistons to distract the attention of the referee. And as his left foot came forward he drove it hard against Eddie's ankle, catching the lad with the sharp edge of the sole. Eddie let out an involuntary "Ow!" and almost at the same moment Bud's gun spoke, and a bullet buried itself in the ground at Bill the Basher's feet.

"Next time I'll shoot to 'it, and ye'll walk on one leg for a while," said the cowboy. "There ain't no kickin' allowed in this 'ere fist contest, and don't yew fertit it. If yew can't beat the kid fair, don't try ter kick 'im ter death. Git on with it, and 'member I'm a watchin' yew ther 'ole time!"

Bill, with a glower, worked back to his corner and then came advancing again, a whirling bulk of might and ferocity. His head was lowered and his chin thrust forward, and his eyes glared hate as he rushed down upon his opponent. But his sudden change of tactics didn't worry Eddie. Tap, tap, tap! Right, left, under and over and round the guard of the out-fought champion the white arms sped, and every blow took toll. Bill's left eye swelled up and began to close, and his nose was broken, so that the blood ran down his half-opened mouth, his ear had also started to swell, and he closed on Eddie again at the rush, driving the lad to the ropes.

Despite himself, Eddie had to fall into a clinch, wherein the bigger man tried to get home a deadly kidney punch, but Eddie avoided it, and, in passing out, drove his fists hard and swift, good solid half-arm jolts, crashing against the other's heart. Then followed a left to the mask, and Bill the Basher took the mat heavily. He remained down till the count reached nine, Eddie standing over him with ready fists, and then, with a

quick sideways jerk of the head, leapt back out of danger.

Eddie Polo, his face grinning and his heart singing, for he knew he had the other man beaten, followed him up, and drove a swift right to the point again, following it with another from the left, to the jaw as the man reeled once more. The Basher hung across the ropes for the space of an eye-flick, and then dropped heavily to the ground, and it was only the call of "Time" that saved him from being counted out then and there.

"Time!" Eddie went to his corner feeling a trifle dazed and shaken, but immensely jubilant. "Gee, but yew're givin' him some socks, kid!" said a nearby cowboy. "Shouldn't like ter stand up ter yew when yer reely meant business. Git 'im this time, if yer can—it's wicked ter see ther way ther so-called champion fights!"

"Say, yer nearly 'ad 'uff?" asked Bill the Basher, as they again faced each other. "Chuck yer towel in—I'll not grumble!"

Eddie's reply was a flush hit to the mouth, which effectually silenced the professional. Then Bill led a left which fell on Eddie like a pile-driver, and followed it with a right



Esta rode round the ring on her head on the galloping horse, with her fluffy skirts spread out stiffly around her.

swing that should have taken Eddie off his feet and over the ropes. But Polo dodged the swing, and then, very quickly, hooked his left to the head again, smashed his right to Bill's ribs, then his left to the point again, all as swift as lightning. The professional's breath left his lips in a swift hiss, and Eddie crashed home above the heart again. Then a fist dropped on the Basher's nose, and he retreated, covered up, having driven home a punch that Eddie thought had cracked a rib. But the lad was out to finish things this round, and drove his fist square into the man's mouth again as the fists went up to cover. Then Eddie backed away encouragingly from an offered clinch. He feinted high as though to the ear again, and Bill's guard went up; then Eddie's fist seemed about to start for the solar plexus once more, and the fists came down. That was what the lad had been working for. With a swift leap he drove his left hard into the other's jaw, then the right followed to the other side, and then the left again. And Bill the Basher, without a single interest in the world, fell forward on to his hands and knees, tried to rise, and rolled over while the slow-droning timekeeper counted out the seconds.

"Ten!" he said, after what appeared an eternity to Eddie Polo. "The lad wins!"

Basham nipped out a curse, and, with the money in his hand, turned to rush out of the marquee. But as he reached the top of the steps leading out of the tent he found himself looking down the muzzle of a gun in the hands of one of Truefit's outfit.

"Guess yew're got a date in ther ring thar," said this man. "Yew better burn ther trail to it. Beat it, quick, yer dago, afore I drive yew thar. Thar ain't no passin' outer this tent till ther lad's got his winnin's, fair and square!"

Baffled, grinding his teeth, Professor Basham, with Eddie's stake-bag in his hand, walked back to the ring. One glance he cast at Bill the Basher, lying back unconscious in his corner, another he cast balefully at Eddie Polo, and a third he cast fearfully at the guns in the hands of Truefit's cowboys, stationed all round the ring. The audience were on their feet, cheering for what was obviously a popular victory.

"Ther kid's won, an' now fair!" yelled Truefit, at the top of his voice. "Air yew citizens a-goin' ter see thet 'e gets what 'e fought fer?"

"We are!" they yelled. "Basham, give the kid the money—and the tent!"

And Basham had no option but to do so, for the temper of the crowd would admit of no bickering and bargaining. And thus it came about that Busto's Travelling Circus posters replaced those of the boxers, while, in the dressing-tent, Esta, the Excellent Equestrienne herself, through her tears of joy, dressed the bruises on Eddie Polo's white skin with arnica, and rubbed his stiffening muscles with liniment.

**A Double Programme!**

HERE was a record crowd waiting for admission to the new circus-tent that evening, despite the fact that the charge of admission was raised to a dollar. Everybody who had not been in the boxing-booth in the afternoon—and it was a huge marquee, nearly as big as that Busto had had burnt down—had been told of the daring acrobat's fight for the tent, and were anxious to see the hero for themselves. Therefore, when Busto, like the true showman, sent posters round the town announcing that Eddie Polo, the fistic wonder, would perform a new and most daring feat on the flying trapeze that night, they trooped in their hundreds to the foot of the little hill, and patiently waited for the canvas doors to open. And, what was better, they were going to get two shows for the price of one, for Busto had arranged with Basham that during the circus performance his boxers should put up a show, and thus he had obviated a great deal of bad blood on the part of the bruisers, for, without a tent, their occupation was also gone.

All the performers had been hard at work, transforming the interior of the tent into a regular circus, which should hold as many people as possible. Also, so that nobody who wished to see the performance should be prevented from so doing, it was arranged that Busto should give two shows. The citizens themselves had gone to a great deal of trouble to help fit up the marquee, even bringing planks torn from their own cattle corrals to help build the tiers of seats.

And, at the last minute, Busto came out with the news that Eddie Polo himself had invented a new and exceedingly thrilling stunt for the special performance, and that all the other artistes were to give of their very best.

Somehow a rumour—entirely untrue—that the performances were to be in the nature of an "Eddie Polo Benefit" had been circulated around the town, and, coming to the ears of Garcia del Rogeriguo as he drank in the bar of the crazy little saloon, made that worthy foam at the mouth. He sent for Lopez, but that chocolate-skinned gentleman was required at his work, and could not get away. Del Rogeriguo fumed more than ever, and drank more spirit. Then suddenly he slapped his knee, to the surprise of the "bad men" gathered in the saloon.

"Aha!" he grinned. "Ze great idea. Ze brain of Garcia del Rogeriguo, ze world-famed acrobat, steel works. Ze show shall be even more t'rillin' than Busto expect's."

He refused to tell anyone the idea, and the others turned away, thinking that drink had driven the dago insane. But could they have seen him encamped with a dozen of the worst men in the locality on the alkali plains, talking earnestly and fiercely, half an hour later, they would have realised that the scorpion hadn't yet finished trying to sting.

The crowd evidently agreed with all he said, and as each looked to it that his guns were loaded, and swore, with uplifted hand, that they would help him carry out his dastardly project, they looked like fitting satellites for the venomous half-caste. And presently, just before the first show opened, they made their way to the great marquee, Garcia del Rogeriguo skulking in the rear. He got hold of Lopez and gave that fellow-hound some clear and concise instructions, and then hid himself beneath one of the circus-waggons, waiting. That was all he could do—he knew that if he presented his face for admission to the tent in the ordinary way the circus-hands would most likely string him up over the entrance as a warning to other evildoers. And he was still very fond of his neck, was Del Rogeriguo. But the dozen bad men who had been in conclave with him laboured under no such disadvantage, and they were among the first to pay their dollars and enter, distributing themselves around the various parts of the tent, and all seating themselves in the back tier of the seats.

Wiggles was in great form that night, and kept the vast rows of miners and cowboys and herds amused during the preliminaries to the more thrilling performances. He showed them how to ride the trick donkey, and allowed Neddy to chase him, with mouth open to savage and bite, around the ring, himself displaying much comical mock terror. And he fell over his feet and earned cracks of Busto's ringmaster's whip, and sauced the proprietor, and told the audience canstic but funny home truths till the men voted the clown alone worth the money.

They rose at Esta, the Excellent Equestrienne, and by sheer force of admiration compelled the girl to do tricks which she had never before attempted. She leapt from the back of one steed to that of another while the horses were careering madly in opposite directions; she even performed what the posters had promised so long for her, and rode once round the ring standing on her head, her fluffly skirts spread out stiffly around her. And she chaffed Ginger in the most lively fashion as he eventually chased her out of the ring with the whip, which he borrowed from the ringmaster.

Red Cloud, the Indian, asked for a volunteer from the audience, and when he received one, an exceedingly stout baker who called himself a Swiss, he proceeded to stick the fat man against a board and throw knives at him till his whole shivering form was outlined in glimmering steel. And then Red Cloud departed and left the camouflaged Swiss baker trembling, while Bud Truefit and his band of cowboys rode round him

and the board at high speed, and sent him into the uttermost terror by driving the knives into the board up to the hilt with bullets from their revolvers, while they whooped and yelled in a fashion that would have delighted an Indian tribe. And when they hurled their lariats in swift succession and lassoed the man and the knife-decorated board, and rode round him in a queer sort of Maypole dance, the supposedly Swiss baker was the only soul in the show who wasn't thoroughly happy.

And then Professor Basham and his bruisers gave an exhibition, sparring and boxing and wrestling, so that the loss of their tent made the audience miss nothing of the great combined performance. And when they had finished, and the ring was cleared away, Eddie Polo, in brand-new acrobatic gear, bounded out of the entrance, rolled head over heels three times along the tan, and stood in the centre of the ring, bowing to the plaudits of the multitude. It was a proud moment for the lad, whose cleverly made-up face showed none of the traces of the afternoon's combat.

He performed all his tricks, while the audience sat spellbound and watched him risk his neck half a dozen times a minute. He dived from the roof, he flew through the air, and he even gave an exhibition of the remarkable stunt he had first tried when the old tent had taken fire. And then, descending to the earth again, he disappeared while Busto announced his imminent re-appearance as the "human bullet."

Circus hands now brought into the arena a strange contraption of wooden boards and springs, which looked for all the world like a bed without bedding. Eddie, entering again, lay down on this, curled up into a small ball, and Esta, the Equestrienne, at a given signal, pulled back a lever.

Then the lid of the bed-like box flew up, and Eddie Polo, projected like a stone from a catapult—which was what the arrangement really was—flew through the air, twisting and turning in his flight. He caught the lower trapeze, swung through space for a minute, then let go and hurtled through the air towards the next highest trapeze. From here he worked his way towards the very apex of the great tent, and here stood smiling and bowing as the astounded audience rose on their feet and applauded him. Then he made his way back to the ground once more, bowed again, and begged to be let off an encore.

That ended the two-hour show, said Busto, but the feat would be repeated at the next performance. Those who desired to see it again could retain their seats, and the collector would come round for their dollars. And among the hundreds who elected to

remain were the dozen men of Rogeriguo's gang, who had clapped and cheered Eddie and the others to the echo as much as anybody else in the place.

The second performance, which started after the performers had had a brief rest, was every bit as thrilling as the first, and even a little bit more so. Esta had more confidence in her new tricks, Ginger had several new quips and jays to play, and the donkey actually appeared to bite his master's shoulder hard, but really only nuzzled the clown affectionately. The Swiss baker refused to be the Indian's victim this time, but watched Red Cloud imperil the life of another of his fellow-citizens with great gusto, and cheered like a madman at the antics of the highly-trained cowboys. The boxing and wrestling exhibitions over, and a few more jokes perpetrated by Ginger, Eddie Polo appeared for his turn. Mechanically he dived and stunted, his mind on the great catapult trick, with innovations he had introduced since he performed it two hours ago. He would lie flat this time, and be shot clean into the air, stiff as a ramrod, to the first trapeze.

He took his place on the board, and nodded to Esta. The girl, with her heart in her mouth, since the trick was just as dangerous as it looked, pulled down the lever with a faint click.

"Ready?" she asked.

"Stand by," replied Eddie. "Let—go!"

The lever went over with another click, and as Eddie Polo's extended body left the board a great cry of horror burst from the audience, for from the roof immediately over the spring-like arrangement there fell a long, shining knife.

It struck the board just where Eddie's heart should have been, and hung quivering in the wood. And as it dropped Rogeriguo's hand rose from their seats as if at a signal, and, with one roar, jumped on to the forms, and yelled:

"Hands up, everybody!"

The shouted cry: "Hands up, everybody!" came to Eddie's ears as he flew through the air towards the first trapeze, and the shock of the shout, combined with the startling appearance of the down-dropping knife, almost made him miss his grip of the slender swinging bar.

He pulled himself into safety with a great effort, and, as he swung through space again on his frail perch, looked upwards swiftly, endeavouring to see from whose hand the deadly missile had been sped. Above him, showing the stars in the sky as in a fretwork with a purple background, was a long, triangular rent in the canvas, and, beside the flapping fabric, a dark, malignant face that, even at that distance, and seen by the glare of the swinging naphtha lamps, was twisted and distorted by a grimace of baffled, sinister rage.

"The dago!" gasped Eddie shortly. "He's not gone, then!"

He wasted no further time in thought, but, as the trapeze swung backwards, jerked his body in that manner whereby he imparted momentum to his aerial perch, and, letting his feet next swing against the corner of the canvas structure, he flashed again above the arena towards the next highest trapeze. And once more he swung, and this time gained the tiny platform erected on the central pole for his special benefit, and from which he performed his thrilling high dive. But now, instead of letting go the trapeze upon which he had swung thither, he turned, and measuring the distance to the rent in the roof with an unerring eye, swung off again. Once, twice, thrice, he made the swift journey through the air, the breeze rushing about his ears as he went. He paid not the slightest attention to the crowd below for the moment, and they, gazing into the muzzles of a dozen automatics, had no interest in life beyond keeping their own hands fully raised above their heads. It looked for all the world as if a myriad of people were pointing at the intrepid youth now emulating the birds in the higher recesses of the marquee.

And at last Eddie let go the trapeze, and swung to the rent in the canvas. As his fingers gripped and the weight of his body swung on the fabric, it carried away with a ripping noise, and Eddie fell ten feet before the edge of the roping brought him up by stopping the tearing of the canvas.

(Another instalment of this splendid Life Story of Eddie Polo will appear in next week's issue of the POPULAR.)

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**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**  
Notice to Quit!

"**H**E, HE, HE!" That unmusical chuckle floated in at the doorway of Study No. 1, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars School.

The study was occupied by the Famous Five and Dennis Carr. They were apparently waiting for somebody, for tea was on the table, and they had not yet started operations on the good things.

"He, he he!" "Slaughter that laughing hyena, somebody!" growled Johnny Bull.

The laughing hyena proved to be Billy Bunter of the Remove. The fat junior rolled into the study, and continued his unmelodious cackle.

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

Billy Bunter turned to Dennis Carr. "Your pal Terry hasn't had a very long innings at Greyfriars," he said.

"What do you mean?" demanded Dennis. "He's been sacked!"

"Eh?" "Sacked!" repeated Bunter, with emphasis. "Fired out—finished! His Majesty—meaning the Head, of course—has no further use for his services. He, he, he!"

The Famous Five glared at the Owl of the Remove, and Dennis Carr looked alarmed.

Lionel Terry was an old chum of Dennis', and he had just been engaged as the Head's secretary. The news that he had been sacked within a few hours of obtaining his appointment filled Dennis with consternation. But there was always the possibility that the news was false, since it emanated from such an unreliable source as Billy Bunter.

"The fat worm's telling whoppers, as usual!" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter. "It's a fact that Terry's been sacked. I happened to be passing the Head's study just now, and I heard Sir Hilton Popper letting off steam. He gave the Head a beautiful ticking off! Said he'd no right to engage a secretary without the permission of the governors, and that Terry must go. He, he, he!"

"Blest if I can see where the joke comes in!" said Harry Wharton. "Would you mind explaining, Bunter?"

"I'm awfully bucked to know that Terry's fired!" said the fat junior. "We don't want his sort at Greyfriars. This is a place of sons of gentlemen—"

"And others!" said Bob Cherry, glaring at the Owl of the Remove. "And we don't want any of Carr's low-down pals bringing the school into disgrace!"

Billy Bunter was on very dangerous ground, but he did not seem to realise the fact. And he was too short-sighted to notice the storm-signals on Dennis Carr's brow.

"If that boulder Terry had remained," he went on, "he'd have rified the Head's safe, I expect. As I explained to Quelch, he's a suspicious character—"

The speaker got no further. His comments were interrupted by what appeared to be an earthquake.

Dennis Carr had made a sudden rush at the fat junior, and the Famous Five had rushed simultaneously, with the result that

six boots clumped upon the rear of Billy Bunter's person.

The Owl of the Remove went whizzing through the doorway like a pip from an orange. And his yell of anguish as he alighted on the linoleum in the passage would have awakened the celebrated Seven Sleepers. "Yaroooooh!"

"Follow up, kids!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. And Billy Bunter was promptly dribbled along the passage.

"Help! Fire! Murder!" he yelled as he was towed—or, rather, iced—along by six well-shod feet.

Breathless from their exertions, the juniors went back to Study No. 1, where they were joined immediately afterwards by a tall, good-looking young man who was attired in football garb. It was Terry, the Head's secretary—the fellow whom Dennis Carr had befriended for old times' sake.

"At last!" said Dennis Carr, jerking back a chair for the newcomer. "We've been waiting tea for you, old man."

"I was detained in the Head's study," said Terry.

His tone was the reverse of cheerful.

"I say, Terry, what's all this rot about your being sacked?" said Harry Wharton.

"It isn't rot, unfortunately. It's true!" Dennis Carr was at his chum's side in a moment.

"You—you mean to say you're sacked!" he exclaimed.

"I'm under notice, which amounts to the same thing."

"Oh crumbs!"

"It isn't the Head's fault," said Terry, "and it isn't my own. When I was returning from the footer match, running at top speed to avoid the fellows who wanted to congratulate me, I bumped into Sir Hilton Popper."

"We saw the collision," said Johnny Bull. "And, judging by the row he kicked up, we thought old Popper had at least had a couple of ribs broken!"

"Was he waxy?" asked Dennis Carr.

Terry nodded.

"He demanded to know who I was, and what I was doing here. And when he heard that I was the Head's secretary he had a blue fit. He went raving to the Head, and told him that he hadn't any right to engage a secretary without consulting the governors. And he gave me marching orders."

"Rough luck!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Popper's a tyrant of the first water!" said Harry Wharton. "He's never happy unless he's making things unpleasant for somebody."

"He deserves to be flayed alivefully, and boiled in oilfulness!" said Hurree Singh.

"Yes, rather!"

Dennis Carr turned a troubled face to Terry.

"When have you got to go?" he asked.

"Not at once, surely?"

"There's to be a governors' meeting on Wednesday," said Terry, "and Popper's going to propose that I be sacked forthwith and instanter."

"Oh!"

"You mean to say that the Head's going to take it lying down?" said Nugent.

"No. He'll make a fight for the retention of my services, but it's a foregone conclusion that I shall be sacked. The Head told me to prepare for the worst."

"It's a rotten shame!" said Dennis Carr, his eyes flashing.

"Beastly! But there's no help for it."

"What shall you do if the worst happens, Terry?" asked Harry Wharton.

# SAVED AT THE FINISH!

A Splendid Complete Story of **HARRY WHARTON & Co.,** and **LIONEL TERRY,** at Greyfriars School.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

"I shall have to tramp the country in search of employment, like I did before."

Terry shuddered a little at the recollection of his previous experiences.

Owing to the death of his employer in London he had been thrown on his own resources, and compelled to hunt for a fresh job. And his experiences had been terrible in the extreme. He had known hunger and hardship in their severest form, and he had been nearly at the end of his tether when Dennis Carr had chanced to meet him on the outskirts of Greyfriars.

And now—now that he had at last obtained employment, through the kind agency of Mr. Locke, he was to lose it! Sir Hilton Popper, the crusty old baronet, had stepped in and blighted his career.

It was cruelly bad luck, and Terry was utterly cast down. Not many fellows could have faced such a crushing misfortune with a smile on their lips. And Terry was still weak from his recent hardships.

Dennis Carr laid his hand on his chum's shoulder.

"Buck up, old man!" he said. "Lots of things may happen between now and Wednesday. And you might not have to go, after all!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"It's a long lane that has no silver lining," as your English proverb says," remarked Hurree Singh.

Terry smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid there's no hope," he said. "I can't see daylight anywhere. Popper's given me notice to quit, and I'm not going to appeal to him to reconsider his decision."

"But we will!" said Bob Cherry suddenly. "We'll go in a deputation to Popper, and talk to him like Dutch uncles!"

"Good wheeze!" said Johnny Bull.

"Look here, you fellows," said Terry seriously, "I don't want you to go getting into trouble on my account."

"Rats!"

"The sooner we make old Popper see reason the better!" said Nugent. "We'll go along and see him after tea."

"Keep your pecker up, Terry," said Harry Wharton. "The worst hasn't happened yet. And, what's more, it's not going to happen if we can possibly prevent it."

And, having fortified this resolve, the Famous Five and Dennis Carr got on with their tea.

Terry would eat nothing at first. But when Bob Cherry threatened him with forcible feeding he joined in. And throughout the meal he was cheered by the reflection that he had six staunch chums to stand by him in his trouble.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**

Not a Success!

"**R**EADY?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"Ready, aye ready!" responded Bob Cherry.

"Come on, then!"

And the Famous Five and Dennis Carr set off on their mission.

"It's immensely good of you fellows to go to all this trouble," said Terry. "But I'm afraid it will be useless."

"We'll do our best, anyway," said Dennis Carr.

The juniors tramped on in silence till they reached Sir Hilton Popper's estate.

It was with some trepidation that they entered the grounds, but having come thus far they were determined not to retreat.

"How shall we approach the old buffer?"

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inquired Bob Cherry. "Shall we rave at him, or be awfully polite?"

"Be polite of course!" said Harry Wharton. "And if that doesn't work I'm afraid we shall have to be rude!"

"Here we are!" said Nugent.

And the juniors mounted the steps leading to the front entrance.

Dennis Carr gave the bell a violent tug, and, after a brief delay, a sleek and oily manservant appeared in answer to the summons.

"Is Sir Hilton at home?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"Yessir."

"We want to see him. Think he'll give us an interview?"

"I'll ask him."

"You can polceax him, if you like!" said Bob Cherry. "We've no objection."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The manservant retired. He reappeared almost immediately.

"Sir Hilton says as 'ow I'm to send you about yer business," he said.

"Right you are!" said Nugent. "Our business is with Sir Hilton. And we're going in to see him."

The manservant stood with arms and legs akimbo, obstructing the doorway.

"Which you ain't comin' in 'ere!" he said firmly.

"Stand aside!" snapped Dennis Carr.

"Sir Hilton 'as hissed orders that I'm to send you packin'." An' wot I says is this 'ere—"

The juniors didn't wait to hear what the manservant had to say.

Bob Cherry issued the command, "Charge!" and the next moment the sleek and oily servant was lying on his back in the hall, with the invaders marching over him. He scrambled to his feet at length, breathing threatenings and slaughter; but by that time Harry Wharton & Co. had reached the drawing-room.

After a preliminary knock, the captain of the Remove entered, followed by his chums.

Sir Hilton Popper was reclining in his favourite armchair, smoking his favourite brand of cigar.

The baronet rose to his feet with the suddenness of a Jack-in-the-box as the Greyfriars juniors entered. He hurried his unfinished cigar into the fireplace, and turned a red and furious face upon the invaders.

"Young rascals!" he stormed. "How dare you encroach upon the privacy of my drawing-room! How dare you, I say!"

"How dare we!" murmured Bob Cherry.

But nobody laughed. The situation was too dramatic for that.

"I gave James instructions to send you about your business, you impudent young cubs!" raved the baronet.

"Our business is with you, sir," said Dennis Carr, who found it exceedingly difficult to be polite, in accordance with the programme.

"Huh! What d'you want with me—hey?"

"We want you to reverse your decision about Terry, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Terry!"

"The Head's secretary, sir."

Sir Hilton Popper's frown resembled that of Jove old old. The mention of the Head's secretary was like a red rag to a bull.

"Pon my soul!" ejaculated the baronet. "I can scarcely believe my cars! How dare you approach me on such a subject? Your impudence is without a parallel, by George!"

"We've no intention of being impudent, sir," said Dennis Carr. "We merely wish to point out to you that Terry's a rattling good fellow—"

"Huh!"

"And if he's fired out of Greyfriars it'll mean that he's got to start hunting for work all over again."

"Serve him right!" snarled Sir Hilton.

"But he hasn't done anything wrong, sir!" protested Nugent.

"And it's a bit thick that he should be sacked from his job for nothing!" said Johnny Bull, in his blunt way.

"What—what!"

"It's a shame—a crying shame!" said Johnny, quite overlooking the necessity for being polite.

Sir Hilton's red face grew redder still. He gave the impression that he was about to have an apoplectic fit.

"You shall rue this impertinence!" he snarled. "You shall rue it, I say! I am amazed—astounded—at your presumption in criticising the actions of a governor of the school! I have said that Terry shall go, and my word is law. Do you imagine for one moment that I should allow myself to be influenced by a pack of cheeky young cubs? Go! Leave my premises at once!"

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The juniors did not budge. And Dennis Carr stepped forward from the rest, his eyes blazing.

"I agree with Johnny Bull that it's a crying shame!" he exclaimed. "You've no right to sack Terry! The Head engaged him—not you. Why can't you leave him alone?"

"Hear, hear!" came in a chorus from the others.

Sir Hilton Popper made no reply to this outburst. Perhaps he was too furious and flabbergasted to speak. After an ominous pause he rang the bell at his elbow, and the sleek and oily manservant appeared.

"James!" thundered the baronet. "I ordered you to send these young rascals packing! Why didn't you obey my orders?"

"Which they didn't give me a chance, sir," said the servant. "They bowled me over in the 'all, and—"

"Eject them at once!" roared Sir Hilton.

"Sir!"

"Clear them off the premises, you—you gaping, moonstruck idiot!"

James hesitated.

"It's a tall order, sir," he said. "Which they're a verry 'ot 'andful, an' six to one ain't wot you might call fair odds."

Sir Hilton glanced out of the window, and caught sight of two of his gamekeepers crossing the drive.

"Henry! George!" he bellowed. "Come here at once! I want you to eject a number of young rascals from my premises!"

Henry and George grinned, and they hastened to comply with the baronet's order. They were tall, powerfully-built men, who delighted in throwing their weight about. Two minutes later they stepped into the drawing-room.

Sir Hilton waved his hand towards the Greyfriars juniors.

"Out with them!" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in an aggressive mood by this time. They were quite prepared to go, for they saw the futility of further argument. At the same time, they meant to go of their own accord—not to be hustled off the premises by Sir Hilton's servants.

And as the gamekeepers advanced towards them, they lined up shoulder to shoulder.

"Pile in!" muttered Bob Cherry.

A fierce fight followed.

Frank Nugent was lifted clean off his feet by one of the keepers, and sent whirling through the doorway. But he promptly returned, to find that particular keeper measuring his length on the carpet. Dennis Carr had floored him with a straight left between the eyes.

The other keeper was being gradually overpowered by Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. And the oily manservant, who saw how events were shaping, promptly slunk away. He had already had one encounter with the sturdy Removites, and he believed in the old adage that enough is as good as a feast.

"Out with them!" repeated Sir Hilton. "Get up, Henry, and do your duty! Don't lie grovelling there!"

But Henry, who had no intention of risking another blow between the eyes, remained motionless on the floor.

Sir Hilton did not join in the affray himself, though had a hunting-crop been handy he would probably have done so. As it was, he contented himself with directing operations. And when he saw that the Greyfriars juniors were rapidly gaining the upper hand, his fury knew no bounds.

"Henry!" he fumed. "Get up, man!"

But Henry refused to budge.

"Take a week's notice!" barked Sir Hilton.

"That's the fifth week's notice I've 'ad in a fortnight!" growled Henry sullenly. "Wot I says is this 'ere—if you wants these young raskils chucked out, you can do the chuckin' out yerself!"

At that moment the other keeper—George—landed in a sprawling heap at the baronet's feet.

The combat was over, and Harry Wharton & Co., flushed with their victory, walked calmly away, without another word to the tyrant who had refused to listen to their appeal on Terry's behalf.

Their mission had proved a failure. But they at least had the consolation of knowing that the forcible ejection planned by Sir Hilton Popper had not come off.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Midnight Adventure!

#### TING-A-LING-LING!

The telephone-bell clanged loudly in Dr. Locke's study at Greyfriars.

With an exclamation of annoyance, the Head crossed over to the hated instrument, and put the receiver to his ear. He

was astonished and somewhat disconcerted to hear a fierce snort over the wires.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Dr. Locke.

"Who—who are you, please?"

"There was a sort of explosion from the other end, followed by an angry bellow.

"I am Sir Hilton Popper, sir!"

"Oh, yes! I trust there is nothing wrong, Sir Hilton?"

"Nothing wrong!" said the baronet. "Oh, no, there is nothing wrong! Six of your junior boys have had the audacity to walk into my drawing-room without permission, and they have violently assaulted two of my keepers, and turned the place into a bear-garden. But there is nothing wrong, sir—nothing at all! Perish the thought, sir!"

The Head winced under the baronet's crushing sarcasm.

"Has there indeed been an outrage at your private residence, Sir Hilton?" he inquired.

"There has, sir, and a pretty appalling outrage, too, 'pon my soul!"

"But I—I quite fail to understand."

"Then I will enlighten you, sir, as to the facts of the case. The six young rascals in question came to me as a deputation to make an appeal on behalf of your secretary, Terry. After I had instructed my manservant to eject them, they had the temerity to walk into my drawing-room as if they owned the place! They treated me with unpardonable impertinence, and I was compelled to order two of my keepers to turn them out. A fierce fight ensued, sir—a battle royal, mark you, in my own drawing-room—and my keepers were knocked down before my very eyes!"

"Dear me!" murmured the Head.

"I am a lenient and tolerant man, Dr. Locke, as you may have noticed."

The Head had noticed nothing of the sort.

"But there is a limit to my endurance. I can stand a good deal, sir, but my patience has been sorely tried by the events of this afternoon, and I am angry!"

Judging by his tone, Sir Hilton Popper was very angry indeed.

"I am sorry—" began Dr. Locke.

"Your sorrow, sir, does not compensate me for the mischief which has been done! I must insist upon those six boys being severely flogged!"

"If, as you say, they have been impertinent to a governor of the school, and assaulted two of his keepers, I shall certainly flog them!" said the Head.

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" barked the baronet.

"Not at all," said Dr. Locke hastily. "but I thought that in your present state of anger you might be prone to exaggerate."

"There is no question of exaggeration, sir. What I have said is true in substance and in fact. Those six boys—"

"Can you give me their names?" interposed the Head.

"Wharton—the ringleader, of course—Cherry, Nugent, Bull, the Nabob of Thingummyjig, and Carr."

"Very well. I will see that the boys in question are severely punished!" promised the Head.

Sir Hilton gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Now, with regard to Terry," he said, "he may remain at the school until Wednesday, but not a day longer. Doubtless the governors will unanimously decide on Wednesday that you do not need a secretary, and in that event you must get rid of Terry without a moment's delay!"

The Head gave a sigh.

"If you will allow me to say so, Sir Hilton, I think you are acting very harshly in this matter. Terry is an excellent young man, and I should like to give him a position on the staff here—"

"Bah!" snorted Sir Hilton. "The Governors of Greyfriars cannot afford to be philanthropists, and to give employment to every young loafer who comes along with a tale of woe. Terry must go, sir! My decree is inexorable, and it will be confirmed on Wednesday by the rest of the governors. Of course, if you care to retain the services of Terry, and pay him his salary out of your own pocket, you are at perfect liberty to do so!" added the baronet, who knew very well that Dr. Locke could not afford to do that.

After further conversation, the Head hung up the receiver. And as he did so he caught sight of Harry Wharton & Co. returning through the dusky Close.

Dr. Locke promptly threw open his window and called to the juniors.

"I wish to see all of you in my study immediately!" he said sternly.



"Now for the fireworks!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"What's happened, do you think?" said Nugent.

"Popper's reported us, of course. He must have got through to the Head on the phone."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Better go and face the music!" said Harry Wharton.

"Pity we haven't time to pad ourselves out with exercise-books!" said Johnny Bull.

"That dodge is no good," said Bob Cherry.

"Every time I go to the trouble of barricading my bags, the Head administers handers!"

"And now that you've omitted to do it, it'll be a case of 'Touch your toes!'" said Nugent. "You see?"

The juniors proceeded at once to the Head's study, where they ranged themselves in a row before Dr. Locke.

"Sir Hilton Popper informs me," said the Head, "that you boys entered his drawing-room without permission and caused an unparalleled disturbance."

"Ahem!"

"Is that correct?" demanded the Head.

"Well, it's putting it rather strongly, sir," said Dennis Carr. "We went as a deputation to Sir Hilton Popper, to ask him to reconsider his decision about Terry. There was certainly a disturbance, sir, but it wouldn't have happened if Sir Hilton hadn't ordered his keepers to chuck us out. Of course, we weren't going to stand that, so—"

"So you fought a pitched battle in Sir Hilton Popper's drawing-room?" said the Head grimly.

"There was no alternative, sir."

The Head picked up a cane.

"You have behaved abominably," he said, "and you will hold out your hands in turn! Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove came forward and took his punishment.

Dr. Locke was getting on in years, but his hand had lost none of its cunning, so to speak. He administered three stinging cuts on each of Wharton's palms, and Harry needed all his fortitude to endure the ordeal without flinching.

Frank Nugent came next. He was followed in turn by Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Dennis Carr. Although Dennis was the last of the delinquents to be dealt with, he fared just as badly as his chums.

"There!" panted the Head, when he had finished. "I trust that will be a lesson to you, and that there will be no more deputation of this kind. The fact that Terry is in danger of losing his employment does not justify your calling upon a governor of this school and making yourselves objectionable!"

"We want Terry to stop, sir," said Dennis Carr.

"And so do I. But no good purpose can be served by going as a deputation to Sir Hilton Popper. On the contrary, you have only made things worse for Terry."

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors had not viewed the matter in that light before, but they realised that the Head was right. They had put the baronet into such a bad humour that nothing was likely to make him relent now. Terry would have to go.

As they emerged from the Head's study, squeezing their hands, the juniors encountered Terry himself. He stopped short, and regarded them curiously.

"Licked?" he inquired.

"Rather a superfluous question, don't you think?" said Dennis Carr. "We shouldn't be squeezing our hands just for fun!"

"What's all the trouble about?"

"We went to see Popper," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes?"

"And this is the result. Popper got waxy, and reported us to the Head, and then the chopper came down."

"Rough luck!" said Terry. "But I urged you not to go getting into trouble on my account."

"Rats!"

"You got no satisfaction whatever from your visit to Popper, I suppose?"

"No," grunted Dennis Carr. "Popper's the beastliest tyrant that ever breathed! He refused to listen us!"

"Thanks very much for taking up the cudgels on my behalf," said Terry. "You fellows have been immensely decent to me during the short time that I've been here, and I shall be awfully sorry to leave you."

"We shall be equally sorry if you go," said Harry Wharton. "But you haven't gone yet, and there's still a chance that you won't have to go at all."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "Keep your pecker up, and hope for the best!"

But Terry found it impossible to hope for the best when he feared the worst. He had no hope left—or precious little, at any rate. On Wednesday came the governors' meeting, after which—on Thursday morning, probably—he would have to go.

It was an appalling prospect—to begin all over again the weary quest for employment, to have to endure hunger and hardship and privation. It would have taken the heart out of stronger fellows than Lionel Terry.

Darkness descended like a pall over the old school—black darkness, which was in harmony with Terry's thoughts. He spent the remainder of the evening in the company of Larry Lascelles, the mathematics master, and Larry, who knew what it was to be down and out, gave his companion plenty of encouragement and sympathy.

But when the time came for turning in Terry found it impossible to sleep. For an hour or more he lay staring into the shadows, absorbed in gloomy reflection. And at last he could stand it no longer. He rose and dressed himself, and decided to go for a stroll.

Terry quitted the school premises by way of the Head's garden—an exit which he had permission to use.

He had no fixed destination in his mind—

"It'll be the best haul we've made for weeks, Charlie," said one of the men.

"I agree with you, Ted. Old Popper's got some wunnerful silver plate an' stuff in 'is dinin'-room—wunnerful!"

Scarcely daring to breathe, Terry remained where he was, listening intently.

"Of course," continued the man called Ted, "we shall 'ave to be werry careful not to rouse the barry-net. I've 'eard that he keeps a loaded wepping of some sort under 'is pillar. An' he won't scruple to use it, neither."

"That's true," said Charlie. "But we sha'n't rouse 'im, bless 'is 'eart!"

And there was a chuckle, which sounded almost uncanny in the darkness of the night.

Further conversation followed, and Terry overheard every word of it.

His first thought had been that the two persons on the other side of the partition were practical jokers, and that they were planning an imaginary burglary for Terry's benefit. But he soon realised that there was no joke about it. The two rascals were in earnest. They intended to raid Sir Hilton Popper's private residence, and to make off with his plate and such other valuables as they could lay their hands on.

For some moments Terry was in a state of indecision.

What ought he to do?



Sir Hilton Popper, who had been awakened by the sounds of the struggle, appeared at the front door in a dressing-gown and slippers. The baronet uttered an exclamation of amazement. "What the thump—" (See page 8.)

he intended to wander at will—and Fate ordained that he should take the road leading to the little fishing village of Pegg.

The night was dark as pitch, the moon being hidden behind a bank of clouds. And presently heavy rain began to descend. Terry scarcely seemed to notice it at first, but by the time he reached the cliff-top at Pegg he realised that he was in danger of being drenched to the skin, and he decided to take refuge from the downpour.

Close to where he stood was a public shelter—a small structure, divided in two by a partition, with a seat on either side.

Terry dropped on to one of the seats, and waited for the rain to abate. And while he waited he suddenly became aware of the fact that he was not alone in the shelter.

On the other side of the partition were two men. Terry could not see them, but their conversation came clearly to his ears.

Terry sat bolt upright, his heart beating fast.

Faintly from the distance sounded the midnight chimes.

What were these two men doing here at such an hour?

Obviously they did not know that anybody else was seated in the shelter, or they would have been more guarded in their conversation. As it was, Terry heard every word distinctly.

He was sorely tempted to take no action in the matter—to let the burglars go ahead with their nefarious designs.

After all, Sir Hilton Popper had robbed him of his employment. Therefore, why should he not stand by and allow Sir Hilton to be robbed of his most valuable possessions?

It was a strong temptation. But Terry fought it down.

"It's up to me to prevent this stunt coming off," he reflected. "I've no love for old Popper, but it wouldn't be playing the game to let these scoundrels burgle his place."

The deluge had abated now, and the two men had risen to their feet, and were about to take their departure.

Terry's brain worked swiftly. He was wondering what course to pursue. And he eventually decided that the best plan would be to tackle the burglars on the spot.

Just as the two men were in the act of moving away, they were hailed from the rear. They turned swiftly, and found themselves confronted by Terry.

A savage imprecation burst from the lips of Charlie.

"This young whippersnapper's been listenin', mate!" he muttered.

"Down 'im!" exclaimed Ted.

Terry had hoped that the burglars would

be undersized men, incapable of putting up a fight. But ~~the~~ hopes were not realised.

Both Charlie and Ted were powerfully-built rascals, and either of the two would have proved a host in himself.

But Terry did not waver. He clenched his fists, and as the two men bore down upon him he hit out straight from the shoulder.

The blow landed home on Charlie's ribs, and fairly doubled him up.

"Take that, you rotter!" panted Terry.

But his success was short-lived.

The other man—Ted—seized him round the middle and forced him backwards.

Terry struggled fiercely, but he was helpless as a child in the man's powerful grasp. He was hurled to the ground with terrific violence, and as he fell his head struck a large stone. His senses swam; there was a roaring in his ears, and then all was blackness and oblivion.

Terry's assailant laughed harshly.

"He's gone down for the count," he remarked. "He won't worry us again to-night. Come on, Charlie!"

And the two scoundrels set off in the direction of Sir Hilton Popper's house, leaving Terry lying prostrate on the cliff-top, with his pale face upturned to the midnight sky.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Sir Hilton Turns Up Trumps!

**T**ERRY struggled into a sitting posture, and pressed his hand to his throbbing temples.

It took him some time to realise where he was and what had happened. But at length recollection came to him, and he tottered to his feet.

How long he had lain on the cliff-top he did not know. His luminous watch indicated that it was a quarter after midnight. But the watch seemed to have stopped. Hours might have elapsed since his skirmish with the two burglars.

On the other hand, there might still be time to frustrate the burglary. And with this object in view Terry set off in the direction of Sir Hilton Popper's residence.

He was feeling sick and dizzy. His head was throbbing painfully, and his gait was unsteady. But he was determined not to throw up the sponge.

Bareheaded and drenched to the skin, he stumbled on through the night. And as he went his circulation was restored, and his strength came back to him in a measure.

But he was not capable of grappling with the burglars, and he knew it. However, he might be in time to raise the alarm. And he quickened his pace.

He was within a hundred yards of the baronet's estate when a bull's-eye lantern flashed out through the darkness, and a gruff voice exclaimed:

"Alt!"

Terry saw that the owner of the lantern was P.-C. Tozer, of Friardale.

"Who are you, an' wot are you doin' 'ere

at this time o' night?" demanded the constable.

"Burglar-chasing," said Terry briefly. "There's a chance of promotion for you to-night, if you look slippy!"

"Eh?"

"An attempt is being made—p'raps it's been made already—to burgle Sir Hilton Popper's house!"

"My heve!"

"What time is it?"

"'Aft-past twelve."

"Good! Then the scoundrels won't have got clear with the loot yet. Come on!"

Tozer hesitated.

"Look 'ere," he said. "If you're tellin' a cock-an'-bull yarn—"

"I'm stating facts," said Terry sharply. "Got any handcuffs with you?"

"Yes."

"Buck up, then! We haven't a minute to lose!"

The slow-witted Tozer realised at last that Terry was in earnest, and without asking any more questions he accompanied his companion to Sir Hilton's residence.

"Softly, man!" muttered Terry, as they crossed the gravelled drive. "Don't make so much row with those beetle-crushers of yours!"

Presently there was the sound of a window being opened.

Terry and the constable stopped short. Peering intently through the gloom, they saw a man clamber out of the dining-room window and drop lightly on to the ground.

A sack, evidently containing plunder, was then lowered from the window, and another man clambered through.

Terry gripped the constable by the arm.

"This way!" he muttered. "Quick!"

And they tiptoed in the direction of the burglars.

But Tozer had not yet mastered the art of walking noiselessly, even on tiptoe. The burglars heard his approach, and they swung round sharply.

What followed occupied a matter of seconds only.

Terry sprang upon one of the men from behind, and Tozer, displaying unusual alacrity, promptly handcuffed the scoundrel.

The other man took to his heels; but before he had proceeded a dozen yards he stumbled and fell. And before he could regain his feet Terry was upon him.

"Here you are!" he sang out. "Quickly! The fellow's a tough handfui!"

Tozer came hurrying to the spot.

There was a short, sharp struggle, and then—

Click!

Burglar No. 2 was safely handcuffed.

"Got 'em both!" said Tozer triumphantly.

And he conjured up dazzling visions of promotion.

Shortly afterwards Sir Hilton Popper, who had been awakened by the sounds of scuffling, appeared at the front door in dressing-gown and slippers. In his hand he held an electric torch, which he flashed on the scene.

The baronet uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"What the thump—"

Mr. Tozer drew himself up proudly. He was swelling visibly—so much so that he appeared likely to share the fate of the frog in the fable.

"A good night's work, Sir 'ilton!" he said. "I bagged 'em both!"

"Eh?"

"They was caught in the hact—the werry hact—of burglin' your 'ouse!" said Tozer impressively.

"By George!"

"But they're 'andcuffed, an' they won't give no more trouble. I'll take 'em along to the station right away."

Sir Hilton nodded his approval.

"But—but what are you doing here, by gad?" he asked, turning to Terry.

"I merely came along to lend a hand, sir."

"It was 'im wot nailed us!" said one of the burglars. "He did all the trackin' down, an' if it 'adn't bin for 'im we should 'ave got away with a good 'aul."

"Ear, ear!" said the other. "Old Fatty"—the speaker nodded his head in the direction of Tozer—"would never 'ave collared us on 'is own."

"Look 'ere, my man—" began Tozer.

"Bah!" said the burglar derisively. "Call yerself a policeman! You're a yewman barrel, that's wot you are!"

Tozer did not look best pleased now that all the glamour had been taken from his achievement.

"Come along o' me!" he growled.

And the burglars, who seemed quite resigned to their capture, obeyed.

Sir Hilton and Terry watched them depart, and then the baronet saw his companion stagger, and he promptly shot out his arm to support him.

"You're done up, my boy!" he said; and there was nothing of the tyrant in his tone as he spoke. "Better stay here for the remainder of the night, and I'll give you something that'll pull you together."

The baronet escorted Terry into the house, and mixed him a stiff brandy-and-soda, after which he insisted upon hearing a detailed account of the attempted burglary. Then he made Terry comfortable for the night—or, rather, what was left of it.

Terry was quite himself again next morning, and he returned to Greyfriars at an early hour. He did not see Sir Hilton Popper again until Wednesday evening. The baronet espied him in the Close, and beckoned to him.

"I want a word with you, young man!" he said.

Terry looked up eagerly.

Was it possible that, in view of the service he had rendered to Sir Hilton, he was going to be allowed to remain at Greyfriars?

"The governors' meeting took place this afternoon—" said the baronet.

"Yes, sir?"

"And it was unanimously decided that Dr. Locke could dispense with a secretary. You must therefore give up your post."

Terry's face fell.

So the worst had happened! He was to go; he was to be turned out upon the world! He must renew his quest for a job in a country where jobs were few and far between, and very difficult to obtain. And despair engulfed Lionel Terry in a black wave.

Sir Hilton went on speaking, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I'm sorry that you've got to forfeit your position," he said. "However, arrangements have been made for you to stay on at Greyfriars—"

Terry's heart jumped.

"To stay on at Greyfriars," repeated Sir Hilton, "in the capacity of football coach."

"Oh!"

It was an exclamation of joy and gratitude and relief.

Sir Hilton Popper, the peppery and fiery baronet, had turned up trumps after all.

Terry was not to go.

And, needless to state, there was great rejoicing in the Remove when the good news became known. And Harry Wharton & Co. and Dennis Carr were among the first to congratulate their chum Terry, who, after a grim and almost unbearable period of suspense, had been saved at the finish.

THE END.

(Another grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., next week, entitled: "The Slackers' Eleven!" Avoid disappointment by ordering now.)

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INTRODUCTION.

The story opens with the death of Sir John Temple, the old master of the Chase. Harry, his son, now becomes the new master. Walter Temple, his cousin, pays him a visit on the same night, and hears of a wonderful sword belonging to the Temples—a sword with a strange influence. It is supposed that when carried by any member of the family in battle it will guard him from hurt in the fight, and make him invincible over his enemy. Walter has a great longing for the sword, and next morning vanishes suddenly, bearing it with him. A little later war is declared between the King and Parliament,

and Harry Temple, with his friend Will Howard, join the Royalists' forces. In an encounter with a big troop of Round-heads Harry and Will are captured, and taken before Cromwell. Walter Temple, seeing them there, thinks it a great opportunity to get rid of them, so that he can become master of the Chase. He denounces them as spies, and his accusation carries weight when he brings forth damning evidence. An alarm interrupts the trial, and Harry and his friend manage to escape during the confusion. They journey to the Chase, and decide to stay there until they are able

to join their regiment again. Walter, cut off from his troop in the same neighbourhood, comes across the two in the great hall. He falls in with Cromwell, and returns with him to the Chase, and Harry is recaptured. Cromwell hears Harry's story, and believes it, and Walter flies from the house and conceals himself in a secret underground passage. Will, who also knows of this secret, follows him with Harry. After a tiring search Walter finds a way out. He meets a woodman, who offers him food and bed for the night.

(Now read on.)

Walter Meets With Ill-Fortune.

SHUFFLING along, and mumbling to himself at intervals, the wood-gatherer led Walter by a winding track through the trees until a tumble-down hut was reached. Pushing open the rotting door, old Peter threw down his bundle of faggots, and began rummaging in a cupboard in the corner. Presently some black bread, a small portion of cheese, and a mug of sour ale were placed before the ravenous man, who fell to upon them like a starving beast.

Then, with the edge taken off his appetite, Walter Temple lay back in the rickety chair, staring about him in some disgust at the wretched poverty of his surroundings. Old Peter was sitting before the hearth, replenishing the dying fire with some of the wood he had brought in, the blaze soon beginning to roar and crackle up the chimney. Truly a strange creature, reflected Walter, thoughtfully regarding his benefactor's stooping shoulders. How on earth he still managed to eke out even this miserable existence in such times of strife and bitterness was something to be marvelled at, red war raging on every side, yet here was this aged specimen of humanity daily gathering his wood as unconcernedly as though nothing untoward was happening.

Somewhat warmed by the food and the fire, Walter presently felt a drowsy feeling again stealing over him. His head began to nod, and a few minutes later he was sprawled across the creaking table, his face pillowed in his arms. Old Peter made some mumbling remark, but, getting no reply, glanced round.

The red firelight gleamed on the jewelled hilt of the rapier at his guest's hip, making each stone sparkle like a cluster of stars. The wood-gatherer turned away, but, as though attracted by some invisible force, looked again.

Presently he rose quietly to his feet, and, stretching out his wrinkled hand, touched the hilt lightly with his finger-tips. The feel of the gems seemed to thrill him with a strange sense of desire, as he muttered to himself:

"You were ever an honest man, Peter, but can anyone remain so when such temptation as this is thrust upon him? Now, I'll vow this pretty thing would fetch—how much? A pound? Nay, more—much more; a fortune, most like! 'Twould——" He ceased sud-

denly, bending down and murmuring something in the sleeper's ear; but he might as well have spoken to the dead for all the impression his words made. Walter slept on, quite unconscious of the fact that his priceless treasure was slipping from his possession.

The old fellow carefully drew the blade from its scabbard, inch by inch, pausing every now and then to make sure that his victim showed no sign of waking. Then, at length drawing the point clear, he stole out into the dusk, pulling the door softly to behind him.

And, still ignorant of what had occurred—still oblivious of his danger of discovery at any moment—Walter Temple lay motionless across the table, sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Drawn Blank!

BY a great effort Harry withdrew his gaze from the mass of rubbish which seemed to hold him fascinated, and turned to where Will was standing. The big fellow was looking down a branch passage, sniffing the air like a hound.

"Pray come hither, lad! I may be wrong, but—dost smell anything?"

Harry walked over, his nostrils dilating. A faint scent of fresher air was unmistakable. "Ay, Will! 'Tis somewhat colder here, surely!"

They walked a short way down the passage, the draught gradually growing more pronounced as they slowly advanced. Indeed, could they have but seen a plan of that underground maze, they would have understood how matters stood at once, for the tunnel where the roof had fallen formed one side of a rough triangle, the bend round which Walter had caught his first glimpse of daylight being the beginning of the other. The branch the comrades were now exploring acted as the base, which, as they presently discovered after a couple of false turns that almost set them astray again, brought them into another passage within a few yards of the exit.

The last glow of the sunset was still lingering in the west when they cautiously emerged into the open, and 'twas only then that Will Howard was able to see how tired and hungry Harry appeared to be. Since that interrupted meal in the early morning,

neither food nor drink had passed their lips, and even Will himself, strong though he was, sorely felt the need of it.

"You can't go much farther, lad, on an empty stomach. I warrant; so that must be our first consideration. Ay, e'en if all Noll Cromwell's wolves were hot upon our track at this moment!"

Unknowingly following Walter's lead, they entered the wood, looking keenly to right and left for some sign of habitation; but, for a time, their search was unrewarded. Dusk was falling fast when Will suddenly uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"See, Master Harry!" he said, pointing through the trees. "Smoke! And where there's smoke there's sure to be fire! Oh, ho! You did not think Will Howard was so shrewd, did you?"

Chuckling hugely at his own witticism—simply with the intention of keeping his companion's spirits from flagging—the big fellow covered the ground with rapid strides. Presently a rickety, tumble-down building loomed up dimly ahead, its weather-beaten door closed, and no light showing through the dirty little window alongside it.

"'Tis not mightily inviting, lad," said Will, "but 'tis better than nothing. And seemingly the place is in constant use. Look there!"

A well-beaten track led from the door, whilst several clearer footprints, turned in opposite directions in the deeper snow at each side, spoke dumbly of someone having arrived quite recently and gone away again.

All at once Will gave a gasp, and clutched the boy's wrist tightly.

"Hist, lad! Speak not above a whisper, but look closely at these prints here. Dost make anything of them?"

"Nay, naught save that they are larger than the others——"

"But see! They are only pointing the one way. Whoever made them is still inside——"

"Well, is not that all in our favour?"

"It may not be. Look again, lad! The man who made these marks wore spurs!"

Howard was certainly right in his deductions. Dimly visible in the fading light, the faint impression of a spur-rowel showed at the heel of each print. Silently they looked at one another, undecided whether to enter or move quietly away. But hunger is a cruel driver, and each felt at that moment that

he would have faced half Cromwell's forces single-handed for a crust of black bread and a drink of water.

Will cautiously crept up to the little window, and peered through the dirty panes. A dying fire was smouldering on the hearth, sending a wisp of smoke up the chimney; but the light it gave seemed only to accentuate the surrounding darkness, and not for some little time could he distinguish the dim figure seated at the table.

"Ay, Master Harry, he's there, sure enough, but he's sound asleep. Gently now, lad!"

Howard pushed open the door, inch by inch, stopping breathlessly when it emitted a faint creak. Presently they tiptoed across the threshold, halting on the far side.

The deep, regular breathing of the sleeper floated across the hut, showing that he was far from being suspicious of their presence, and Howard bent his head, whispering in Harry's ear:

"Draw softly, lad, and stand in front of him whilst I shed a little more light on the subject. We know not who he is, but 'tis not wise to take foolish risks these days!"

Harry took up his position as the big fellow kicked the smouldering faggots into a flickering blaze. Roused by the noise, the man at the table gave a start, sat up, and stared stupidly at the glittering point held within a few inches of his chest.

"Aha! Master Walter is it? Marry, but we can scarce move at all without meeting you now. Not that we would not prefer other company!"

At Will's words Harry involuntarily lowered his weapon, an opportunity which his cousin was not slow to take advantage of. Swiftly clapping his hand to his hip, he felt blindly for his sword-hilt, a look of stupefaction creeping over his face as he realised that naught save an empty scabbard was swinging by his side.

Will, too, suddenly became silent as he saw what was taking place. Then he laughed derisively.

"Ho, ho, my cockalorum—an oat's ruse, truly! That last bout must have shown you how useless 'tis to trust foolish legends over-much, and shaken your faith in your blade. Where have you hidden it, fearing our chance coming?"

But, good actor though Walter may have been, he could never have risen to such heights of realism as his bearing displayed just then. Open-mouthed and the picture of consternation, he stared from one to the other dumbly. When he spoke his voice was cracked and hoarse.

"I swear I know as little of it as ye do! 'Twas at my side when I fell asleep. On my word of honour—"

"Your honour!" Harry cut in contemptuously. "'Twould be best not to mention anything which lacks existence, cousin!"

Walter flushed crimson, but still stared at them defiantly, a strange calmness creeping into his voice, despite the feeling of despair his loss had caused him.

"No matter what falsehoods I may have uttered hitherto, what I say now is the truth, believe it or not as ye will. I fell in with an old wood-gatherer, who brought me here and fed me. Ye see the crumbs and the mug upon the table. The rapier was safe enough when I fell asleep, and—Surely ye can guess as easily as I what has happened?"

They nodded curtly, a grim smile playing about Will's lips.

"When a thief robs another thief things must be coming to a pretty pass!" he remarked. "I knew, Master Harry, that one never returned here. But what now, lad? Yesternight you toasted your next meeting, but I fear me the conditions are scarcely as we expected them to be. If Master Walter would like to test my blade, then—"

But Harry silenced him with a gesture.

"Nay, old fire-eater! 'Twould serve no useful end. Go, cousin! We are now both in the same quandary. May the best man win!"

He pulled the door open wider, admitting a shaft of light from the newly-risen moon, and Walter passed out without answering so much as a word. Whether he turned they neither saw nor cared, for something instinctively told them that they had not finished with him yet by any means. Harry knish his cousin for a tenacious fighter once he had set his heart on achieving anything, and guessed that he would leave no stone unturned to regain possession of that which had just been taken from him.

THE POPULAR.—No. 89.

The race had restarted with neither competitor handicapped. Which would win the prize?

### The Sword Changes Hands Again!

**I**N the meanwhile, how had it fared with Prince Rupert's Horse? Scattered and broken before the greater weight of the Ironside forces, they had separated into straggling bodies, each retreating in the best order they could manage under the circumstances.

With the fall of Captain Lovelace, Mortimer had taken command of the remnants of that particular troop, and tried to whip them into some semblance of discipline, for the hitherto invincible cavalry felt the sting of their first real reverse most painfully.

"Now, my lads," Mortimer implored time after time, "'tis a bitter pill to swallow, as I well know, but 'tis the fortune of war. Small hope for the King's cause if ye act like a flock of frightened sheep!"

At length his words bore fruit, for the troopers shook off their dejection, and the battle light slowly crept back into their eyes. I warrant you had all Charles' forces possessed one half of the spirit and stamina of these dashing riders history would have written itself differently.

"Brave lads! Good lads!" chuckled Mortimer gleefully regarding them. "That's the way to look at it! The darkest cloud has ever a silver lining, e'en though it be slow in the turning. Now, what should our plans be, since those rats have dropped behind? How say you, Sylvester?"

"I see naught, sir, until we can rejoin his Highness," was the reply. "We are but a little over a dozen here now, so can do little against the enemy's numbers, however keen the desire."

"H'm!" Mortimer frowned reflectively. "You are quite right, friend! We are like a small island in a sea of foes which lap round us on all sides. Until we find the Prince, and reform with the others who have escaped, 'twere useless to attempt much. However, we, fortunately, have some idea of where we should make for."

"To Sir Jacob Astley, sir?"

"Ay! We were to join forces with him at once had we succeeded in relieving that hard-pressed body. So those who got through will likely hold to the same plan as though all had gone well. 'Tis Sir Jacob, then, my lads, and quickly!"

Mortimer did not, of course, know how Cromwell had dealt that heavy blow at Astley's force almost immediately on the heels of his defeat of Rupert's, or he would have altered his plans somewhat. But none were aware of what had taken place in the meantime, so they rode ahead, with high hopes of a speedy reunion.

The country here was thickly wooded, affording fairly good cover, although the branches were leafless, and presently they came upon a little glade, through which a clear stream bubbled musically. Mortimer called a halt, and, protected by their heavy riding-cloaks, they stretched themselves on the ground.

The snowstorm which had started during the encounter between Astley and Cromwell as yet gave no sign of its coming, for the sky seemed promising enough, though there was a chill nip in the air, which told that severe weather was not very far off.

"A strange world, my masters!" muttered Mortimer, half to himself, as he took in the attractive scene about him. "Here peace and quietness, whilst scarce a league and a half away rages as fierce a fight—as a soldier's heart could wish for. Heigh-ho! 'Tis curious, my lads, how weary a man feels when he lies down to rest! For me, I could sleep the clock round without much trouble."

'Twas likewise with the others, and Nature would not be denied. So well hidden were they, too, that 'twould take a clever scout indeed to locate them, and Mortimer, noting this, did not deem it necessary to mount a guard. Had he done so, probably they might not have slept so long as they eventually did, for the grey light of another day was faintly discernible when they finally awoke.

"Marry, 'twas a foolish suggestion of mine," exclaimed Mortimer, rubbing his eyes, "but I knew not we were such children! 'Faith, hard riding and a stubborn foe are the best sleeping-draughts I wot of! I shall recommend them to—"

He broke off, with a gasp. Whilst they slept the little glade had been covered with a fleecy mantle of white, and he looked round

at his companions, whose bodies were buried in the snow, only their heads sticking up, with odd effect.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed. "I fear me some of us will have the ague through oversleeping themselves in a cold bed!"

Stiff from lying so long in the same position, he shook the snow from him and rose to his feet. The others did likewise, untethering the horses, and taking some emergency rations from the saddle-bags.

"'Twill be boot-and-saddle now, my men! We've lost much valuable time, and—Hist! Down—down for your lives!"

Mortimer dropped flat in the snow as he uttered the warning. Through the trees his quick eyes had suddenly espied two mounted figures against the white background. But next moment he had sprung erect again, and was hurrying towards them. They were not Ironsides, but a couple of King's troopers, who halted doubtfully as they caught sight of him.

"'Faith, 'tis an early meeting, friends!" began Mortimer, when one of the others gave a warning gesture and sprang from the saddle.

"Be still, an ye value your skins!" he said quickly. "We are of Sir Jacob Astley's force, and—"

Mortimer gave a triumphant chuckle, cutting him short.

"Then, marry, ye are right welcome! We were just going to join ye. But wherefore the need of caution if Sir Jacob is hereabouts?"

The trooper looked puzzled for a moment, exchanging a quick glance with his companion.

"He is not hereabouts," he finally replied, "but Noll Cromwell is! Ye cannot have heard?"

"Heard? Nay, we heard naught since the bump of our heads against an iron wall yesterday!"

"I know not what you mean."

"Nay? Then, in short, Noll's men proved too big a problem for Prince Rupert's."

"As they proved for Sir Jacob's also!"

Mortimer staggered back.

"Body o' me! You surely do not mean—"

"Ay, 'tis too true! We were utterly out-generalled during a surprise attack on the rebel yester e'en, and were scattered like chaff. I and Jasper here managed to get through, though how many more escaped, and whither they went I know not. Noll Cromwell may be an enemy, but, marry, he's a mighty soldier!"

"Too mighty, I fear me!" muttered Mortimer, chagrined at his hopes being so rudely dashed to the ground. "Were ye pursued?"

"Ay, for a good while, when we hid in a coppice. Cromwell has taken up his quarters at a large house a few miles away. We heard him pass with his men in the darkness as we lay concealed; but his rats are still scouring the countryside for stragglers, and we must be wary."

"And Sir Jacob?"

"I know naught of him, alas! nor, as I have said, of any of the others. 'Twas every man for himself. Fortunately, the snow covered up our tracks, and threw the jackals off the scent, or likely we should not be here now!"

"Then 'twill not be safe to move till dark?" said Mortimer disappointedly.

"Safe?" was the quick response. "'Twould be little short of madness! Ye have a snug retreat here, and we'll join ye if we may? But move? Never, so long as there's light in the sky!"

As long as Mortimer lived, he never forgot that day of inaction. To men like Rupert's troopers, it seemed an eternity, each minute dragging by with leaden footsteps. But a satisfied sigh left their lips as the last rays of the sun vanished into the west, yet 'twas some hours later ere they deemed it safe to sally forth.

In the meantime the situation had been discussed at length, and plans carefully made. Guided by Astley's two troopers, they would give Cromwell's headquarters a wide berth, and continue their way as before. Sooner or later they would be sure to come across some of the Royalist forces, which should be mainly congregated in that direction, even though they would probably lie a good many miles off.

"But, unluckily," said Jasper, glancing towards the heavens, "there'll be a moon, so we had best keep beneath the trees as much as possible. Those Ironside rascals have eyes like so many cats!"

Moving warily, they left the glade, passing Temple Chase after a while undetected, and covered some distance in safety ere the



lightening sky showed how correct Jasper's prophecy had been.

The moon rose, flooding the country with silver, and making long, grotesque shadows amongst the trees about them. The snow-covered landscape, too, seemed to add to its brilliance, telling them that they would have stood small chance of escape should any scouting-party of the enemy once catch sight of them.

But no suspicious signs disturbed them. Cromwell's men seemed to have given up pursuit of both Rupert's and Astley's stragglers—as, indeed, they had, for they were now snugly ensconced at the Chase, which comfortable mansion Noll found much to his liking, and was loth to leave it.

Suddenly, however, Mortimer uttered a warning "Hist!" and pointed through the trees.

"Who comes there?" he whispered. "See, yonder—to the left!"

The others followed the direction of his pointing finger. A bent figure was silhouetted against the snow, a bundle of something slung across its shoulder. The man was coming straight towards them with a swift, hobbling gait, halting every now and then to give a nervous glance behind him, and bend his head to one side as though listening.

Then he continued his way until he almost blundered into them, and dropped his bundle, with a gasp of consternation.

"Ho, friend!" Mortimer gripped him by the nape of the neck, and peered into his face.

"'Tis late for an old man to be wandering about like a lost sheep, especially at such times as these!"

The newcomer threw up his hands with a terrified gesture, and croaked shrilly:

"Ah, gentlemen, ye surely would not harm old Peter, the wood-gatherer, who never hurt a fly in his life, and who takes no sides!"

"We did not want your personal history, greybeard," said Mortimer shortly, "but rather to know whom you have seen on your way hither, and how long ago?"

"Nay, on my life, sir, I have met no one, though I hear there has been fighting not far off!"

Mortimer looked closely at him in the moonlight, and guessed he was speaking the truth. He pointed to the bundle of wood lying on the ground.

"Very well. Get hence, then, with your—Odd's life! What is this?"

He stooped hastily, and turned the bundle over. A stray shaft of moonlight had touched something that gave back a scintillating glitter, and Mortimer inserted his hand amongst the long faggots. Next instant he had drawn out a beautifully-jewelled rapier, which had been cunningly concealed in the interior of the bundle.

"Oh, ho! You take no sides, old man, yet we find you well able to defend yourself! How comes this thing here?"

Peter recovered his composure with an effort.

"'Twas given me many hours ago, Sir Captain, by a—a Roundhead trooper, who had been cut off from his friends, and was starving. He it was who told me of the fighting, and offered me the sword in exchange for some food."

The wood-gatherer was lying, and right well Mortimer knew it.

"'Twas an expensive meal, truly!" said the latter sarcastically. "But if you came by this so honestly, why conceal it as though 'twas stolen property—eh, old man?"

"I—I—'Twas such a pretty thing that I feared it might be taken from me, and I wished to sell it later. It should be worth a few crowns, and I need money these troublous times."

"A pretty thing! Ay, too pretty for aught but a King's trooper to wear at his hip!" Mortimer thrust the bare blade through his own sword-belt, and looked down at it admiringly. "You say you wish to sell it, greybeard?"

The wood-gatherer stepped forward eagerly. "Ay, but 'tis worth a great deal, soldier. Could you pay me its value?"

"A few crowns, you said just now!" interposed Mortimer shrewdly. "But I never haggle over prices. Here, thou aged rogue!"

He took a jingling purse from his pocket, and poured a handful of coins into Peter's outstretched palm, and the wood-gatherer went on his way rejoicing.

He knew he had not obtained one fraction of the rapier's real value, but 'twas a dangerous possession, and he feared he would not long be able to hold it. All the soldiers were not so honest as Mortimer, of Prince Rupert's horse.

Then the troopers continued their way, passing at length almost within a stone's-throw of the hut where that selfsame sword was just then the subject of much discussion, but they knew it not.

**On the Road Again!**

**W**HEN Walter Temple passed out into the night, Harry gazed at Will with a strange smile playing about his lips, for the big fellow's face was the picture of surprise and disappointment.

"'Tis faith, master!" Howard muttered. "'Tis too soft-hearted you are growing! That saipe deserved spitting, if ever one did! However, there is bread and some liquor in that cupboard yonder—foul fare enough, I warrant, but an empty stomach is a hard master! Fall to, lad!"

The food was coarse, but satisfying, and presently they rose from the table feeling somewhat better than when they had entered.

"And now, Master Harry, let's push onward! Every second we remain here may

his foot, pushing back a smouldering stick which had tumbled down rather closer to the pile of leaves than was safe.

"Things have moved swiftly, lad," he remarked, "and we're no nearer to— Oh, ho! So that's how the land lies, is it? And small wonder, either!"

Harry was swaying where he sat, threatening each moment to topple forward into the fire. Howard caught him by the shoulders and laid him gently down amongst the litter, stretching his own great body alongside. Soon, despite the wild sobbing of the wind and the rattling of the crazy door, both were sleeping like the dead.

By the following morning the snowstorm had abated somewhat, though the flakes were still falling thickly. Will shook Harry into wakefulness, and nodded towards the open.

"'Tis best to move, lad!" he advised. "Take the remainder of the food, and let's hasten, for 'twill soon cease snowing altogether, and then the wolves may get on the prowl!"

They left the hut, turning their backs on the Chase, and made off quietly through the



"Odd's life! What is this?" Mortimer stooped hastily, and turned the bundle over. The next instant he had drawn out a beautifully-jewelled rapier, which had been cunningly hidden in the faggots. (See this page)

be a second too long! Noll Cromwell is no fool, and—"

He paused, and glanced quickly round, as the rotting door shook violently, whilst through the broken panes of the little window a few powdery flakes of snow whirled. Will gazed out, striving to pierce the pitchy darkness, for the moon had vanished, as though suddenly extinguished, and scarce a foot could he see through that white smother which had begun afresh.

"Heaven help anyone caught in that," he exclaimed, "for 'tis worse than what we've been through already, lad! And may Beelzebub look after your precious cousin, for he'll need all his protection, I warrant!" he added, under his breath, as he began pulling a basket containing some dried leaves from the corner of the hut, and turned it out on the floor in front of the hearth.

"So we stay here, old friend?" said Harry, nodding towards the heap.

"Ay, lad, unless we wish to be beyond staying anywhere, save beneath the snow!"

The dancing flames lit up their faces, throwing every nook and cranny of the ramshackle place into bold relief. Will thrust out

trees. Their progress was necessarily slow owing to the depth of the snowfall, but, nevertheless, they kept ahead tenaciously for some hours, until the air cleared and the sun burst once more through the clouds.

"A rest will do us no hurt, Master Harry," said Will, flinging himself down on a clear patch of ground at the base of a giant oak.

Shortly after noon saw them again plodding on their way—two black objects against the pure snow—until a small hamlet appeared just ahead, its picturesque, white-roofed habitations scintillating in the cold rays of the wintry sun.

"We must avoid yonder spot," said Howard, nodding and swerving in his tracks. "'Twere not safe—"

"Too late, Will! We are seen!"

Harry pointed towards where some half a dozen mounted men were galloping towards them, spread out fanwise in order to lessen their chance of escape.

"Noll's— No, by my life, King's men!"

(Another grand instalment of this splendid serial in next Friday's POPULAR.)

# JIMMY SILVER'S

A Grand Complete Story of the Chums of Rookwood School.

## PANTOMIME!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Rather Mysterious!

"The sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might;  
He did his very best to make  
The billows smooth and bright;  
And this was odd, because it was  
The middle of the night!"

"MY only hat!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

Tommy was surprised. He was coming down the junior passage on the Classical side at Rookwood. He was coming to the end study to speak to Jimmy Silver, the junior skipper, on the all-important subject of football.

He was going to point out to Jimmy Silver that, excellent as the Rookwood junior side undoubtedly was, it could be further improved by the inclusion of one more Modern chap in its ranks, Tommy being of the Modern side himself.

As he approached the end study he heard Jimmy Silver's well-known voice reciting those extraordinary lines.

No wonder Tommy Dodd ejaculated "My hat!" Jimmy Silver's voice in the study went on:

"The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Were walking close at hand;  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of sand.  
'If this could be swept away,'  
They said, 'it would be grand!'"

"What the merry thunder!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

He kicked the study door open. Jimmy Silver & Co. were all at home. Jimmy Silver had a book in his hand, from which he was reading. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were listening to him. The Fistical Four of the Fourth all looked round as Tommy Dodd appeared in the doorway.

Jimmy Silver waved the book at him. "Run away and play, Duddy! Busy!"

"What the dickens are you at?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "What's that rot you're spouting?"

"Rot!" repeated Jimmy Silver indignantly. "Haven't you ever read 'Alice in Wonderland'? Where were you brought up? Listen to this!"

"If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year,  
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,  
That they would get it clear?  
'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,  
And shed a bitter tear.  
'Oh, Oysters, come and walk with us!'  
The Walrus did beseech;  
'A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny beach——'"

"Cheese it!" roared Tommy Dodd. "What are you spouting that piffle for?"

"Listen to the unsophisticated Modern!" said Jimmy Silver, in more sorrow than anger. "He calls it piffle!"

"I don't seem to see much sense in it myself," ventured Lovell.

"Bow-wow!"

"But it will be all right for the pant——"

"Dry up!" rapped out Jimmy Silver.

"Sorry! I forgot that Modern bouncer was listening. Do run away and play, Duddy!"

"The pant!" repeated Tommy Dodd.

"What do you mean by a pant?"

"Guess again!"

"I don't understand what a pant is!" growled Tommy Dodd, puzzled, and glaring at the four grinning Classics. "If you mean pants——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then what on earth do you mean?" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Nothing that a Modern bouncer would understand," said Jimmy Silver soothingly.

"Run away and play marbles!"

"I believe you're off your silly rocker!" snapped Tommy Dodd.

"Go hon!"

"If you're getting out some wheeze against our side, I warn you that you'll get it where the chicken gets the chopper!" said Tommy Dodd darkly.

"My dear man, we'd forgotten there was such a blot on the landscape at all as the Modern side," said Jimmy Silver affably. "Run away and let us forget such painful things!"

"Fathead!"

"Good-bye-ee!"

"Silly asses!"

"Farewell, sweetheart!"

"You burbling chumps!"

"Adieu, dearest!"

Slam!

Tommy Dodd departed, closing the door with a bang that rang through the whole length of the passage. Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled in chorus.

"That Dodd bird was puzzled!" grinned Jimmy. "He won't guess in a month of Sundays. Though you jolly well nearly gave it all away, Newcome, you duffer, if I hadn't stopped you before you could get the word out!"

"Oh, he didn't spot it!" said Newcome. "If he did, he would chip in and try and muck up the show. We've got to keep it dark till we spring the great announcement upon them, and invite them to see us in all our glory!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "And then the giddy Moderns will want to grind their tusks, you bet! Now, about the parties. Who's going to be the Walrus?"

And the Fistical Four entered into a deep and earnest discussion.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER. Simply Awful!

"GRACIOUS goodness!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, uttered that ejaculation in a faint voice.

He staggered back. It was deep dusk, but the light was not yet on in the passages.

It was October now, and the autumn evening was well advanced.

Mr. Bootles had come up the stairs, and he stepped along the Fourth Form passage in his brisk, jerky way. Naturally, there was no thought of danger in the Form-master's mind. What danger could threaten in a junior passage at Rookwood?

Mr. Bootles was going to call at Oswald's study for certain lines which Oswald seemed to have forgotten.

But he forgot all about Oswald and the forgotten lines as he stepped into the dusky passage.

His face went white, and his scanty locks bristled on his head under his mortar-board.

"G-g-gracious g-g-goodness!" he stammered. Before his eyes, almost under his feet, looming out of the dusk in the passage, was a fearful object.

A gigantic animal—whether it was a hippopotamus or a rhinoceros the agitated gentleman could not discover—was creeping along the floor towards him. So far as Mr. Bootles could see, it was a huge animal with a thick, brownish hide, a gigantic head with whiskers like a cat, and two gleaming, glittering, awful eyes of green.

It made a crackling and swishing sound as it moved ponderously along. It stopped suddenly as Mr. Bootles as it came face to face with the Form-master.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Bootles.

He made a wild bound for the stairs. The huge animal was swishing about clumsily, and to the startled mind of the Form-master it seemed that the terrible beast was pursuing him.

Mr. Bootles was not an athlete, but he cleared the stairs at a speed that would have done credit to the nimblest fag at Rookwood. He did them three steps at a time, like lightning, and he landed at the bottom gasping, where he lost his footing and rolled over on the mat.

He sat up breathlessly, and yelled: "Help!"

A study door was flung open, and Monsieur Monceau, the French master, rushed out.

"Vat is zat?"

"Help!" moaned Mr. Bootles. Monsieur Monceau rushed to him and picked him up. Mr. Bootles leaned helplessly on the French gentleman.

"Vat is it zat happen?" he asked anxiously. "You fall down zose stairs viz yourself, isn't it?"

"Danger! Fly!"

"Mon Dieu! Vat?"

"Fly!" shrieked Mr. Bootles.

"But I cannot fly, dear monsieur!" gasped the French master. "I am not vat you call airman!"

"Run!"

"But vat——"

"It is pursuing me—the awful creature—a wild beast that has escaped from some menagerie!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "It is in the junior passage!"

"Ciel!"

"I fear that some of the juniors may have been devoured! Those eyes—those fearful eyes!"

"Mais, mon cher, monsieur, it eez impossible. Zere can be no vile beast!" stammered Monsieur Monceau. "How shall he come viz himself?"

"I have seen it! Look up the stairs! It is coming!"

Monsieur Monceau, astounded, gazed up the stairs. There was no sign of any wild beast.

"I assure you zat you are mistaken, monsieur. You deceive yourself viz your eyes in ze dark. I vill go and see."

"Come back!" shrieked Mr. Bootles, as the French master mounted the stairs. "You may be torn to pieces!"

But Mossoo sped up the stairs intrepidly. Mr. Bootles clung to the banisters and panted. Was it possible that his eyes had deceived him? He listened in anguish for a sound from above.

There was a sudden pattering of feet on the stairs, and Mossoo came tearing down, his eyes wild, and his mouth wide open.

"Courez!" he shrieked. "Run viz you!"

"You have seen it?"

"Oui, oui, oui—c'est, terrible! Courez!"

"Help!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Bulkeley, arriving on the spot.

Fellows were gathering round on all sides in utter astonishment.

"Zat terrible beast!"

"There is a wild animal loose in the school!" panted Mr. Bootles. "Keep away from the stairs. Prepare to flee should it come down. You may be torn to pieces—devoured! Oh, dear me!"

"A wild animal!" said Bulkeley.

"Yes; a dreadful monster, with dreadful green, glittering eyes——"

"Then we'd better tackle it, sir! It may do some harm to the juniors up there," said Bulkeley.

"Bulkeley, the danger——"

"If there's a wild animal in the junior passage, sir, I can't stay here," said Bulkeley. "I'm captain of the school."

"You—you are right, Bulkeley. Stay a moment—arm yourself—wait till I get a poker! I shall come—I shall certainly come!"

"I vill get mon epee!" panted Monsieur Monceau, and he dashed into his study.

He reappeared with his epee, the army sword which Mossoo retained as a souvenir of his old military days.



"Follow me!" he said, brandishing his sword.

"Look out!" shrieked Smythe of the Shell. There was a general scampering to get out of the way of Mossoo's trusty blade.

There might or might not have been danger from the supposedly wild beast in the Fourth Form passage, but there was decidedly danger from Mossoo's deadly weapon.

"Pray take care, Monsieur Monceau!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Wait till I get a poker!"

There was wild excitement by this time. Several prefects of the Sixth seized pokers and cricket-bats to arm themselves for the fray. Astounding as was the news that a wild beast was loose at Rookwood, it seemed impossible to doubt it when both Mr. Bootles and Monsieur Monceau had seen it.

Certainly a lion or a tiger might have escaped from some menagerie, though how it got upstairs at Rookwood School without being seen was a great mystery.

"Follow me!" shouted Mossoo. He led the way, sword in hand, Mossoo

was as brave as a lion, and he faced the unknown danger as his countrymen had faced the savage Huns in beautiful France.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came next with a cricket-bat, and then Neville with a stump, and then Mr. Bootles with a big poker. After them came several more seniors with whatever weapons they could lay their hands on.

And from the hall below a crowd of startled fellows watched them breathlessly, ready to run for their lives if the wild beast overcame that formidable array.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Not Dangerous.**

"VOILA!" Monsieur Monceau shrieked.

In the dusty passage, dimly lighted by the big window at the end, the whole party caught sight of the huge, strange animal.

Fortunately, it was not advancing upon them.

It was wriggling and writhing along the passage with a swishing, crackling sound, as of crackling cardboard.

The green glimmer of its eyes could be seen in the dark, though its head was turned away. It was almost at the other end of the passage by this time, and seemed to be making for the end study.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Bulkeley. He had had his doubts, but he had to believe in the monster now. "What—what is it?"

"It's a rhinoceros!" exclaimed Neville. "More like a walrus!"

"Walruses are not dangerous, I believe, unless attacked," said Mr. Bootles. "Pray be careful!"

"Suivez-moi!" shouted Monsieur Monceau valiantly, and he rushed along the passage. "I will run him zrough! Ah-h-h-h!"

"After him!"

Study doors were opening on both sides of the passage, but Bulkeley shouted to the juniors to keep to their rooms. The whole party followed the Frenchman fast.

Just as if the monster had heard and understood the French master's words, it was wriggling wildly along the passage to escape.

Apparently it was more frightened than ferocious.

With a loud swishing and crackling, it whisked into the end study, and the door of that celebrated apartment slammed.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "That dreadful animal has sufficient intelligence to close that door!"

"Extraordinary!"

"After him!"

The hunters rushed on. Monsieur Monceau reached the end study first, and grasped the door-handle.

The door was flung wide open.

The light was on in the study.

"Voila!" yelled Monsieur Monceau. "Follow me! Slay ze brute!"

The whole party prepared to charge.

There was the fearsome beast, under their eyes, plainly revealed by the light in the study.

It was evidently a walrus, and it was floundering wildly. The eyes gleaming and glittering with a greenish light.

It floundered round the table wildly.

"Follow me, mes garçons! Fear nozzing!" shouted Mossoo. "With one zrust of my blade—"

"Yow-ow! Yaroooh! Keep it off!"

Monsieur stopped dead, the trusty sword nearly dropped from his hand. He stood rooted to the floor.

"It—it speaks viz itself!" he stuttered.

"Yes, sir. I'm the Walrus!"

"The—what?"

"The Walrus, sir. Lovell's the Carpenter!"

"Is the boy mad?"

"It's our pantomime, sir!" gasped the Walrus.

"This is my rig for the panto, sir. I'm the Walrus. We're doing 'Alice in Wonderland,' as a panto!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulkeley.

"Bulkeley, there is no cause for merriment!" Mr. Bootles was wrathful. He turned hot all over as he remembered his sudden flight from what had proved to be a junior in a cardboard-and-cloth walrus outfit.

"Silver, how dare you be guilty of this—this absurdity! You might have—ahem!—you might, have frightened someone in—the dark!"

"I—I never thought of that, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver. "I didn't know you were coming up, sir! Of course, though, I knew that you couldn't be frightened, sir!"

"Ahem! Quite so, Silver! I was alluding to the boys," said Mr. Bootles hastily. "I was very much startled, however."



There was a sudden pattering of feet on the stairs. "Courrez!" shrieked Monsieur Monceau, clinging to Mr. Bootles for cover. "Run wiz you!" (See page 12.)

It was amazing certainly, but undoubtedly the Walrus was speaking.

From the deep mouth came a terrified yell. "Keep him off! Keep that rotten sword away! Oh, my hat!"

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles.

"It is zat I dream!" gasped Monsieur Monceau. "For it is impossible zat a walrus he shall speak!"

Bulkeley gave a roar. He recognised the voice of the Walrus.

"Jimmy Silver, you young rascal!"

"Silver!" stuttered Mr. Bootles.

"Silver!" roared Mossoo.

"Oh crumbs!" came from the Walrus. "Oh, dear! Keep that blessed sword away! I don't want to be stuck! Oh dear!"

"Ciel! How lucky it shall be zat I did not give you zat zrust!"

"Silver!" shouted Mr. Bootles, crimson with wrath. "What is the meaning of this masquerade, sir?"

"Oh dear!"

"Take that absurd rubbish off at once!"

"I—I—I c-can't!" gasped the Walrus. "It's got fixed somehow. That fethead Lovell has fixed it with safety-pins, I believe!"

"How dare you, Silver, play such a trick?"

"It wasn't a trick, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver plaintively. "I was only practising."

"Practising!"

"I am sorry, sir!" said the Walrus meekly. "I was jolly frightened myself, when Mossoo got after me with his sword."

Monsieur Monceau beat a hasty retreat, trying to conceal the sword under his coat-tails. Under the circumstances, the sword was superfluous. Mossoo was glad when he got the trusty blade out of sight in his study.

"Silver, if—you venture to play such a trick again, you will be punished severely. I forbid you to put on that ridiculous outfit at all in the future, under any circumstances whatever. You will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations in my presence, Silver. Boys, you need not crowd round—kindly calm yourselves; there is no occasion whatever for excitement. As you see, it is a simple foolish trick."

This was rather cool of Mr. Bootles, who had certainly been the most wildly-excited person present. The Form-master rustled away, and the prefects followed him, grinning. But a crowd of juniors crowded round the study door, watching with great amusement Jimmy Silver's efforts to get out of the walrus' skin.

"Where's Lovell?" yelled the Walrus. "Come and undo me, you fethead!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome hurried in. They had gone to the tuckshop to sample a new assortment of confectionary, and had

returned to find the passage in an uproar. They were chuckling spasmodically.

"Oh, Jimmy, you ass!"

"Jimmy, you duffer!"

"You've done it now!"

"You chortling asses!" roared the indignant Walrus. "It's all your fault. You've stuck me in this, and I can't get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme out!" roared Jimmy Silver. "I'm nearly suffocated in this. I'll dot you in the eye, Lovell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. struggled manfully with the walrus' outfit. It was really a clever contrivance, and had cost the Fistical Four no end of time and trouble. It was made of cardboard and canvas, strongly sewn, and was very thick and heavy. The huge headmask was a very good imitation of a walrus. The eyes were formed of two little green electric torches, sewn in their places. Jimmy Silver's own head was invisible, not filling half the space inside the walrus' head.

Jimmy's outer casing was released at last, and the big head was pushed back, and Jimmy Silver's crimson face appeared from the walrus' neck. He glared at the hilarious crowd of Fourth-Formers.

"You cackling duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You— I'm nearly suffocated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Drag this blessed rig off, you howling asses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver struggled free at last. Lovell and Raby and Newcome rubbed their eyes.

"Oh, Jimmy!" gasped Lovell. "You've done it now. The panto's knocked on the head—you heard what Bootles said. We shall have to leave out the Walrus!"

"All your fault, fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling—there's nothing to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite a long while before the cackling ceased in the end study. For, in spite of Jimmy Silver's assertion that there was nothing to cackle at, the chums persisted in thinking that there was—and they cackled.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Tommy Dodd Thinks It Over!

**B**OWLED out! Tommy Dodd came into his study on the Modern side in an extraordinary manner. He seemed to be performing a mixture of an Irish jig and a Highland fling. Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, his study-mates, stared at him in amazement.

Tommy Dodd jiggled joyfully round the study table, evidently in a state of great hilarity.

"Phwat the thunder—" exclaimed Doyle.

"What's biting you?" demanded Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd, still jiggling. "Bowled out! Shown up! Unmasked! Done to the wide! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle jumped up, grasped their hilarious leader, by the shoulders, and jammed his head emphatically against the wall.

Then Tommy Dodd roared—not with laughter.

"Yow! Chuck it, you fatheads!"

"Then tell us what's the matter intoirly, you ass!"

Tommy Dodd calmed down and rubbed his head.

"It's those Classical duffers!" he said. "It's their secret, you know. It's all out. You remember I told you they were plotting something in their study. Newcome was saying something beginning with 'pant,' when Jimmy Silver cut him short. I knew it was a wheeze. Well, it's out!"

"And what is it?" demanded Cook.

"They're getting up a pantomime!"

"Be jabbers!"

"Alice in Wonderland, as a panto!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "And Jimmy Silver is the Walrus. And he's nearly scared old Bootles to death in his walrus' outfit, and he's got five hundred lines, and the panto's knocked on the head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They thought it was a wild beast escaped from a menagerie—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Mossoo's got after it with his old sword, and jolly nearly pinned Jimmy to the floor."

The three Tommies shrieked.

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"Oh, my hat!" said Tommy Cook. "So that was the dodge after all! And now it's U P! Blast if I should have thought of a pantomime!"

"Like their cheek!" said Tommy Dodd. "They haven't even asked us to show 'em how to do it! Getting it up on their Classical own, you know. I suppose they were going to invite us to the show when it was ready? Of course, they knew we'd put a spoke in their wheel if we knew, so they kept it dark. And now it's all out!"

"Faith, it's not a bad idea if they could pull it off!" said Tommy Doyle. "Just like those Classical bounders! If we'd known—"

"If we'd known we'd have bagged the idea and done it better," said Tommy Dodd. "Rather a pity, too! We could have played their heads off at a panto, as well as at cricket and footer!"

"Perhaps they'll bring it off, all the same," said Cook.

"Bootles has dropped on it. The Walrus will have to be cut, anyway. Bootles is fed up with walruses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a knock at the door, and Tony, the boot-boy, grinned into the study. He had a note in his grubby hand.

"Master Dodd!" he said, and he handed over the note and vanished.

Tommy Dodd, somewhat surprised, opened the note. Then he gave a shout.

"My hat! Classical cheek, if you like!"

The note was from Jimmy Silver.

It ran:

"The Classical Pantomime Company have the pleasure of requesting the presence of Masters Dodd, Cook, and Doyle at their great performance to-morrow night, in the Fourth Form-room, at seven precisely.

"The great new pantomime, 'Alice in Wonderland,' will be presented by the Classical Pantomime Company in their well-known inimitable style.

"No charge for admission, so Moderns can afford to come. They will only be expected to put on clean collars, as it is a special occasion."

The three Tommies read that missive, and looked at one another.

"Cheek!" said Tommy Cook.

"They're going it, all the same, though Bootles is down on the Walrus," said Tommy Dodd. "I suppose they think they'll get round Bootles somehow. He's a good-natured little ass! They didn't mean to tell us until to-morrow, but they know we've heard of that rumpus on the Classical side, so they've taken the bull by the horns. Awful cheek!"

"It's up to us!" said Cook.

"To go, do you mean?"

"Oh, rats! To muck it up!" said Cook emphatically. "It's as good as a challenge to us, if they'd let us know in time we'd have pantomimed their heads off! If they wanted it to be a success, they should have come and begged our help."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, it's up to us now to see that it isn't a success, as they didn't ask us to help—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's take a crowd of Moderns and rag the blessed pantomime!"

Tommy Dodd wrinkled his brows.

"Bet you they'll be ready for that," he said. "Jimmy Silver will have a crowd of Classics ready for a row."

"Look here, we're not going to let 'em pull it off!" said Tommy Cook indignantly. "What's the Modern side coming to, I'd like to know! Are they going to be allowed to run a successful pantomime?"

"Never!"

"Then what can we do but rag them bald-headed?"

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"This wants thinking out," he said. "I'm going to ask some questions on the Classical side about the panto, and have a big think."

"Better rag 'em!"

"Bow-wow!"

Tommy Dodd strolled over to the Classical side. Now that the secret was out it was useless to keep the pantomime dark, and the Classics were quite willing to talk about it.

Putty Grace was to play Alice, and Conroy and Flynn and Tubby Muffin, who all had parts, had lots of information.

They were quite willing to explain to Tommy Dodd how the Modern side was to be outshone, outclassed, and completely put in the shade on the morrow evening.

Tommy Dodd listened with an air of humility, apparently confessing to the pain-

ful fact that this time the Moderns were simply nowhere.

But when he came back into the study he was grinning.

"Well?" said Cook and Doyle together.

"They've got it all cut and dried. Jimmy Silver's written the 'book,' and the bounders have been mugging up their parts for a week or more. They've kept it awfully dark from us. Jimmy Silver plays the Walrus, and, of course, he's written himself a good part. The Walrus comes on in nearly every scene."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Cook. "And what are we going to do?"

"Sure, we are going to be done!" said Doyle.

Tommy Dodd snorted.

"You leave it to me," he said. "I'm going to think!"

Tommy Dodd did think.

It was evidently up to the Modern heroes to dish the Classical pantomime somehow. But how? That was the question. Cook's suggestion of ragging the performance was not exactly feasible, in Tommy Dodd's judgment, for it was certain that Jimmy Silver would not neglect to guard against an obvious move like that. It was likely enough that he would persuade some good-natured perfect to be present, in which case raggings would be distinctly "off."

But Tommy's big think did not seem to materialise. At bed-time he had to confess that he hadn't got it yet.

But some time after lights out there was a sudden chirrup from Tommy Dodd's bed in the Modern dormitory. He sat up.

"You fellows awake?"

"Groooh! Mornin'!" mumbled Cook.

"Wake up, fathead!" said Tommy Dodd excitedly. "I've got it!"

"Eh? Wharrer got?" mumbled Cook.

"The wheeze!"

"Oh! Goo'-night!"

"Why, you silly, sleepy cuckoo, don't you want to hear it?"

"Groooh! Mornin'!" mumbled Cook.

"Look here—"

Grunt!

"I say, Tommy—"

Sn-o-o-or-rrrrr!

Tommy Dodd then gave a grunt himself, and decided to leave it till the morning.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Gratitude!

**I**T'S got to be did!" said Jimmy Silver positively.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked dubious.

"We've got it all mapped out," said Jimmy warmly. "I've been practising the Walrus no end, and you've got on rippingly at the Carpenter. Raby is a first-class Gryphon, and Newcome is a toppin' Dormouse. Putty Grace makes a lovely Alice, with his chivvy chalked. Flynn was first-rate as the Mad Hatter and Conroy as the March Hare, and Tubby Muffin does fine as the Mock Turtle. Do you think we're going to chuck it after all that trouble?"

"But Bootles—"

"Besides, haven't we sent the Modern worms an invitation to see the pantomime in the Fourth Form-room this evening?"

"I told you it was a bit too previous."

"Oh, rats! Bootles or no Bootles, it's coming off, all the same. Now that the Moderns know, they'd chivvy us to death if we chucked it!"

"Well, we shall have to cut the Walrus."

"Impossible! I'm the Walrus!"

"You could come in in the chorus as an oyster!" suggested Raby.

Jimmy Silver gave his chum a freezing look for that unfortunate suggestion.

The general manager of the Classical Pantomime Company was not likely to come in in the chorus.

"The Walrus is the great figure in the panto as we've written it," he said. "It would be like leaving the Prince of Denmark out of 'Hamlet' if we left out the Walrus. He does all the best bits."

"Yes; you've given yourself a jolly good part!" said Newcome.

"Of course, as the best actor—"

"Bow-wow! Rats!"

"If we chuck the Walrus, we may as well chuck the whole panto," said Jimmy Silver. "But we're not going to. We've got to get round Bootles."

"But we can't. He was scared to death last evening, and he won't get over it until next term. All the fags are cackling about the way he was scared."

"He's a good little ass, though! He won't ask me for those five hundred lines, you see."

"He won't forget how he was scared,"



said Lovell. "It's N G. He's forbidden the Walrus, and there you are! He knows we know he was terrified, and he can't get over it."

"Bosh! Leave it to your Uncle James. We're going to put it nicely to Bootles," said Jimmy Silver. "We've all got to go to his study together."

"And ask him? It's N G!"

"No; thank him!"

"Thank him for what?" demanded the Co. in one voice.

"For his bravery in coming to our rescue last night, when he thought we were in danger."

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Soft sawder, by gum! It might work."

"He's a nice little man, and we're going to put it nicely to him," said Jimmy Silver. "Besides, it was brave of him to come rushing along with a poker, wasn't it, when he thought there was a wild griffin or unicorn or something in the passage?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Then come and let's show some proper gratitude. And don't grin, you duffers! One grin may ruin the whole hisney. Look grateful!"

"How the dickens does a chap look grateful?"

"Well, put on a soft, dying-duck look!"

Exactly how to look like dying ducks was a puzzle to Lovell and Raby and Newcome. But they resolved to do their best, and they followed the captain of the Fourth to Mr. Bootles's study.

Jimmy Silver tapped discreetly at the door.

It was a critical moment. The success of the pantomime depended on the way Mr. Bootles' fur, so to speak, was stroked.

"Come in!"

Mr. Bootles' expression was not promising as the juniors meekly entered his study. Mr. Bootles was good-tempered and kind-hearted. But he more than suspected that he had shown fright on the previous evening—he was not sure, but he suspected it. He feared that the juniors were grinning behind his back. And that was enough to make the kindest Form-master grim.

"What? What? You have brought me your lines, Silver?"

"Ahem! No, sir!"

"What is it you want, then?" said Mr. Bootles, still very stiffly.

It was another matter I came to speak about."

"My time is valuable, Silver."

"Certainly, sir. But—but we felt that under the circumstances, sir, we couldn't do less than come here and thank you, sir."

"For what, Silver?" asked the Form-master, puzzled.

"For what you did last night, sir."

Mr. Bootles coloured.

"The less you refer to that absurd matter, Silver, the better."

"I can't help it, sir," said Jimmy Silver respectfully but firmer. "You believed that a wild animal was loose in the Fourth Form passage."

"Silver!"

"And without stopping to think about your own safety, sir, you rushed to help us, believing we were in danger—"

"Ah!" Mr. Bootles' frowning brow relaxed.

"For all you knew, sir, it might have been a lion or a tiger," said Jimmy Silver, in an awe-stricken voice. "And you came up with only a poker. Of course, sir, we know that as we're in your Form, we can always depend on you to guard us if there is any danger. But we felt, sir, that we ought to come and thank you. I can't help thinking, sir, that some masters would have left us to chance it."

"Ahem!"

"You see, sir, if it had really been a dangerous wild beast, that poker wouldn't have been much good. You might have been torn to pieces. But you didn't stop to think of that."

Mr. Bootles smiled.

"It is quite true, Silver, that I did not pause to reflect upon the inadequacy of my weapon," he said genially. "And it is certainly true that I believed that a dangerous beast was there, escaped from some menagerie. But you may always be sure, my boys, that if danger should threaten, your Form-master would not be found wanting."

"And we want to thank you for it, sir," said Jimmy Silver.

"Thank you so much, sir!" said Lovell and Raby and Newcome, in a sort of chorus of gratitude.

Mr. Bootles beamed.

"Well, well, I am glad that you show this

appreciation, my boys," he said. "The affair was—ahem!—absurd; and I was greatly concerned about your safety. I may remark, Silver, that your make-up was a very clever one—very clever indeed!"

"Yes, sir; we'd taken a lot of trouble with it," said Jimmy Silver regretfully. "It will rather muck up our poor old pantomime to have to leave the Walrus out, but after giving you all that trouble, we can't expect you to overlook it."

"That would be asking too much," said Raby, with owl-like gravity.

"Not at all—not at all!" said Mr. Bootles kindly. "I have no desire to be hard on you, Silver, or to spoil your—ahem!—little entertainment. You acted very thoughtlessly; but I am sure no harm was intended. I withdraw my prohibition."

"Oh, sir!"

"Proceed with your entertainment as originally arranged, Silver!" said Mr. Bootles magnanimously.

"Oh, sir, you're a brick!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, with genuine gratitude this time. Then he flushed scarlet. "I—I mean, excuse me, sir, I—I meant to say you are awfully kind, sir!"

Mr. Bootles smiled. A spontaneous expression of regard from his pupils was by no means displeasing to the kind gentleman, even if couched in unacademic language.

"I understand you, Silver. Quite so—quite so. You may go!"

"Thank you so much, sir!" chorused the Fistical Four, and they withdrew from the study in great delight, leaving Mr. Bootles much comforted in his mind.

Jimmy Silver frowned a little, however, as they went down the passage.

"He is a brick," he said. "It occurs to me it was rather rotten to butter him up when he's such a ripping good sort. But—but we do feel grateful, though, don't we? And after all, it was plucky of him to come along with that poker—though I'm jolly glad he didn't get a lick at the Walrus with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we'll jolly well work hard for the rest of the term, and please him," said Jimmy Silver. "We won't rag those Modern worms so much, but we'll stick at work and make Bootles proud that he's got us in his Form—what!"

"Ahem! H'm! We might!"

"And we'll mug up a bit on the half-holidays, and do our prep properly, and give him a surprise at the way we've got on."

"Ahem! Most certainly!"

And those good resolutions having eased the consciences of the young rascals, they proceeded contentedly to the preparations for the pantomime—in which the Walrus was to figure as planned. Whether those excellent resolutions would be carried out, however, was another point.

Schoolboy memories are short.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Modern Improvement!

**A**FTER lessons that day the Fistical Four were busy. Preparations for Rookwood pantomime were in full swing.

Almost to a man the Classical juniors lent their aid.

Even such fellows as Tubby Muffin and Topham were in the cast of the pantomime, which was a numerous one. Jimmy Silver's skilful hand had made a delightful hash of those two wonderful fairy books, "Alice in Wonderland," and "Through the Looking-glass." Naturally, Jimmy had given the Walrus a splendid part, but there was plenty to be done by the Gryphon, the Mock Turtle, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, the Dormouse, the White Knight, Humpty-Dumpty, and the rest of the remarkable characters.

The Moderns looked on and sniffed. They were convinced that a pantomime in which no Modern had a hand was doomed to blank failure.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. went on their way smiling.

The three Tommies smiled, too.

Doubtless they had their own secret reasons for smiling.

Seven was the hour fixed for the performance, and long before that hour the stage had been rigged up at the end of the Form-room, and the curtains arranged, and the many actors were getting into their striking costumes.

Dressing-rooms, naturally, were lacking, and the schoolboy pantomimers dressed in their own studies. They had to come downstairs in their costumes to get to the Form-room by

the door at the upper end behind the curtain. But there was no danger now of anyone being scared by suddenly meeting a gryphon, a walrus, or a mock turtle, or any other fearsome beast in the passages or on the stairs. Indeed, when Mr. Bootles came upon a gryphon in an argument with a bearded oyster, he only smiled benignly, and passed on.

Jimmy Silver's outfit as the Walrus was most gigantic and elaborate, and it was the most difficult to assume. In the end study he was far from finished, when Lovell and Raby and Newcome were ready. Jobson of the Fifth, a poor, but good-natured senior, who had kindly consented to act as prompter and call-boy, and several other things came along to call them.

"Just gone seven," he said. "They're beginning to stamp on the floor of the Form-room. Ain't you kids ready? You begin, you know."

"Ready in two ticks," said Jimmy Silver. "Some of the Moderns are pecking the curtain already," said Jobson, and he walked away whistling.

"You fellows get on," said Jimmy Silver. "You open the scene, you know, with Alice. I suppose Grace is ready. I don't come on for a quarter of an hour."

Putty Grace in a skirt, a blouse, and a golden wig, with a pink-and-white face, grinned into the study.

"Ready?" he said.

"Get on and start," said Jimmy Silver.

"I'll be in time."

"Right-ho!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed Grace down the passage. There was plenty of time for Jimmy Silver, and he did not hurry. The Walrus was to be a work of art.

The three Tommies were chatting at the head of the stairs as Lovell & Co. came along.

"Going to start?" said Tommy Dodd affably.

"Yes; you'd better look sharp if you want seats," said Lovell.

"Yes, we may as well be getting along," said Tommy Dodd, slipping off the banisters.

The Classics went downstairs. The three Moderns remained on the landing, grinning at one another.

"Silver's not due yet for a quarter of an hour, according to the programme," remarked Cook.

"They've started," said Tommy Doyle, as the strains of a fiddle came from the direction of the Form-room. Gibbey of the Shell, who was a violinist, supplied the orchestra.

"Time we called on our friend Jimmy," murmured Tommy Dodd.

The three Moderns strolled down the passage towards the end study.

The door was open, and they looked in.

Jimmy Silver was standing before a glass on the walrus' hind legs.

Only his face in the glass could be seen of him, and over that he was fitting the huge cardboard and canvas head of the walrus.

The three Tommies chuckled softly.

Tommy Dodd left his chums and went a few yards along the passage to the box-room at the end, reached inside, and drew out a coil of rope and a sack, evidently put there in readiness. Then the three entered the end study.

Jimmy Silver looked round from the glass.

"Hallo! Why aren't you in the audience?" he asked.

"We've come to lend you a hand, dear boy!"

"Thanks! I don't want any help!"

"Your mistake, you do! Shut the door, Cook!"

The door closed.

"Here, no larks!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a rush the three Moderns were upon the captain of the Fourth.

In the cumbersome outfit of the Walrus Jimmy had simply no chance in the struggle.

He bumped down on the floor with a loud creaking and crackling of the walrus' skin.

"Ow! Oh! Help— Yoooo!"

Tommy Dodd's hand was over Jimmy's mouth in a twinkling.

He was bundled out of the walrus' girth, and, struggling in the grasp of the raiders, he was pinned down, while the sack was passed over his head.

From within the sack there came wild gurgles.

Round the sack the cord was passed and tightly tied, pinning Jimmy Silver's arms down to his sides.

Then Cook and Doyle lifted him—Tommy Dodd opened the door—and the unfortunate Classical was rushed down the passage into the box-room.

The box-room door closed.

Jimmy Silver was disposed of. The raid had been a complete success. For once Jimmy Silver, wide-awake as he was, had been taken entirely by surprise.

Tommy Dodd remained alone in the cnd study. He closed the door hastily, and with equal haste donned the walrus' outfit.

It was roomy enough inside for a much bigger fellow than Tommy Dodd. In a few minutes he was inside it, and had fastened the various buckle, straps, and safety-pins by which the costume was secured.

Then he grinned into the glass, and adjusted the headpiece.

It came right down over his face, completely covering it. Small holes in the thick mask allowed for sight and breathing. Tommy Dodd turned on the two electric torches fixed in the mask, and the green light glittered and gleamed.

From inside the walrus' head came a joyous chuckle.

The Walrus was ready for the Rookwood pantomime, only the occupant was a Modern instead of a Classical. That was all the difference; but it was a very considerable difference.

Tommy Dodd, chuckling, added a few finishing touches, and then the door of the study opened, and Jobson's lean form appeared.

"Just on your cue, Silver," said Jobson.

"I'm ready!"

It was a muffled voice that came from under the walrus' head, and it might have been Jimmy Silver's or Tommy Dodd's, or anybody else's, so far as the sound went.

"Then you'd better come along," said Jobson.

"Right-ho!"

The Walrus, on his hind legs, followed Jobson from the study. He glanced at the door of the box-room. It was closed. Not a sound came from the room. Cook and Doyle were keeping their prisoner very quiet.

The Walrus grinned under his mask, and floundered away down the passage after Jobson.

In the box-room a furious junior was writhing in a sack, mumbling in muffled tones all sorts of bloodcurdling threats.

The two Moderns who were sitting on him only grinned and chuckled.

"Sure, it's all serene, bedad, Silver, me bhoy!" said Tommy Doyle. "The Walrus won't be missed; Tommy Dodd's going to see to that!"

"He'll make it rather more exciting, you know!" chortled Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver wriggled spasmodically. But he could only wriggle. For once Jimmy Silver's luck was out!

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Very Wild Walrus!

**B**RAVO!"

"Good old Jimmy!"

There was a buzz of applause in the Form-room, transformed for the nonce into a theatre.

The Walrus had arrived.

All the fellows knew that Jimmy Silver was to play the Walrus, hence their greeting. It was impossible to see anything of the schoolboy actor excepting the walrus' costume.

Not a fellow dreamed that a change had been made. And Tommy Dodd did not intend to enlighten them.

Alce and the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle and the Mad Hatter were holding the stage when the Walrus floundered in. In the wings were a crowd of Oysters ready to play their part.

The heavy, clumsy movements of the Walrus were decidedly comic, and there was a ripple of laughter as he came lumbering on.

But the laughter was louder when he bumped into the Gryphon, and sent him staggering back, to sit down with a bump on the stage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Carpenter—Lovell—followed the Walrus on, having been waiting for him in the wings. The Walrus whisked round and bumped into Lovell, and the Carpenter went sprawling.

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"G-g-great Scott!" ejaculated the Carpenter. "You silly ass, Jimmy, that ain't in the programme!"

Crash! Bump!

The Walrus seemed to be running amuck. He charged across the stage at the Mock Turtle, and, though it was Tubby Muffin, floored him by sheer weight. He wheeled round at the Mad Hatter and floored him, and he whisked after the March Hare, who dodged wildly.

"You silly ass!"

"Play the game, Silver!"

"No skylarking, now, you ass! You're mucking up the panto!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience, greatly tickled by hearing those remarks proceeding from mock turtles, gryphons, mad hatters, and oysters.

"Go it!" shrieked Towle of the Modern side. "Play up! Give 'em beans, Walrus!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"He's potty!" yelled Lovell.

"He's off his silly rocker!"

"Stop him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience yelled. The sight of the cumbersome Walrus charging about the stage and knocking all the actors flying fairly brought the house down.

Some of the fellows thought it was a knock-about turn designedly introduced into the panto; others thought that Silver was larking, or that he had suddenly gone off his "rocker."

But whatever was the reason of the Walrus' strange and unaccountable actions, it was certain that the effect was uproarious. The scene was greatly enjoyed, except by the actors.

They did not enjoy it.

They dodged round the stage wildly to escape the furious charges of the huge Walrus.

Lovell and Tubby Muffin and Flynn and several others collared him desperately to drag him off the stage.

But the Walrus was too bulky to be easily handled.

And he was hitting out with his flappers, too; and his flappers were big and heavy, and came lashing round like flails.

Bump, bump, bump!

Yell—roar—whoop!

"Go it!" shrieked the audience. "Pile in, old Walrus! Go it! Give 'em jip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's mad!" shrieked Lovell, sitting up dazedly and rubbing his nose. "He's as mad as a hatter!"

"Stop him!"

"Rescue!"

"All hands on deck!" roared Towle from the front seats. "Collar the Walrus! Ha, ha, ha! This takes the cake!"

It did!

The Walrus remained in possession of the stage. Gryphon and Mad Hatter and Mock Turtle & Co. crowded into the wings in dismay.

The Walrus lay down in the centre of the stage, and seemed to go to sleep.

"Call this panto!" chuckled Lacy. "More like Bedlam! Classical duffers!"

"Wake up the Walrus, you Classical duffers! Get on with the washing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the merry thunder does it mean?" gasped Lovell breathlessly in the wings. "What is Jimmy Silver playing the giddy goat like that for?"

"Yow-ow!" mumbled Raby, nursing his nose, where a heavy flapper had smitten him. "He's mad! Stark, staring, blinking potty!"

"Grooooh! My eye!"

"Yow! My napper!"

"He must be raving potty!" howled Flynn. "But, sure, the silly spalpeen isn't going to muck up the pantomime! Collar him and drag him off!"

"The audience won't stand this!" said Newcome desperately. "They'll be going out. Bulkeley's gone already! Jimmy's mucking up the whole show with his foolery!"

"He's forgotten his lines, and he's doing knockabout rot to fill up, I suppose!" groaned Lovell. "Was there ever such a born idiot!"

"Yank him off, then!"

"Jimmy," said Lovell, in a stage whisper from the wings, "Jimmy, old man, don't be such an ass! You're spoiling the show!"

"You're mucking it all up, Jimmy!"

"Come off, old chap!"

There was a deep snore from the Walrus. Apparently he had gone to sleep on the stage.

An army advanced on the Walrus from both wings, led by the Gryphon on one side, and the Mad Hatter on the other.

The audience looked on in great delight.

There was a yell of warning to the Walrus.

"Look out, Jimmy!"

"Look out in goal, Walrus!"

But the Walrus was looking out. As the exasperated pantomimers closed on him and collared him, he leaped up on his hind legs, and his flappers flurshed out with terrific vim.

"Help!"

"Oh, my napper!"

"Stoppin! Yooooooop!"

The struggle was terrific. Costumes came almost in rags as the Walrus struggled and scrambled, with the whole of the pantomime company clinging to him.

"Give the beast beans!" panted Flynn. "The panto's mucked up! And we'll muck up Jimmy Silver, too, the spalpeen!"

Bump, bump!

"Yarooop! Rescue, Moderns!" yelled the Walrus.

Lovell almost fell down.

"Tommy Dodd!" he stuttered.

"Tommy Dodd!" shrieked the audience.

"Where's Jimmy Silver?" yelled Lovell.

"Oh crumbs! Bump the Modern beast!"

Like one man, the Modern part of the audience rose and rushed to the stage. They knew the voice of their leader, and they understood.

Even the Classics in the audience shrieked with laughter as they realised the jape that had been played upon the Classical Pantomime Company.

The rush of the Moderns saved the Walrus from dire vengeance. The rest of the pantomimers, with their costumes in tatters, were struggling to get at him. There were some wild and whirling minutes on the stage, while two or three seniors in the seats shouted in vain for order.

Then the Modern crowd retreated from the stage, carrying the rescued Walrus in their midst.

With yells of laughter they retreated from the Form-room. In the passage they were joined by Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle. Tommy Dodd's head emerged from the Walrus' head, and he grinned at the infuriated Classics, and kissed his hand to them from the Form-room door.

"Thanks for the ripping evening!" he shouted. "You chaps can play in pantomime—I don't think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Moderns retreated across the quadrangle to their own side, carrying off the Walrus triumphantly in their midst.

The Rookwood pantomime had come to a sudden end.

Even Jimmy Silver, when he was found in the box-room and rescued from the sack, wasn't inclined to make an attempt to get on with it.

The audience had gone, and were laughing themselves husky in the passage and in the studies. The costumes were in a state that required endless repair before they could be presented to the public eye again. And Mr. Bootles, frowning, had locked up the Form-room. Evidently pantomimes were off!

"Dished!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "Dished by those rotten Moderns! Oh, my hat! I'll scalp Tommy Dodd for this!"

"Let 'em wait!" said Lovell. "We'll rag 'em to pieces!"

Vengeance certainly had to be postponed for a little while, but the Fistical Four were not likely to forget the sad "muck-up" which had befallen Jimmy Silver's pantomime.

THE END.

Another Grand Story of  
Jimmy Silver and Co.  
at Rookwood, entitled:

**"JIMMY'S  
GREAT IDEA!"**

By OWEN CONQUEST

in next Friday's issue  
of the "POPULAR."

**DON'T MISS IT!**



THRILLING TALE OF A FAMOUS DETECTIVE.



# 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.

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

A little later Scotland Yard receives the news of the murder, and a detective, accompanied by Ferrers Locke, visits the house in Prince's Gate to investigate. They find that Rixson has received a wound in the arm, and he tells them that it was in a fight with Morrison that he got it. Rixson's story of the murder is accepted by the police, and Rupert is arrested the next day.

(Now read on.)

## Deepening Shadows!

ON the following Thursday morning, however, having obtained authority, and with the prisoner's consent, Locke came face to face with Morrison in his cell.

The young man rose, and greeted him cordially.

"I don't know why you should take all this trouble to come to see me," he said, indicating the only chair. "Markham has told me all about you—that you are interested in my case quite apart from the police."

Locke sat down, and shot the young man a sympathetic glance.

"That is so, Mr. Morrison. I was present with Inspector Gartrell when the affair was first communicated to the police, and ever since, because of something known only to myself, I have interested myself quietly in the business. Miss Dawn and I lunched together, at my suggestion. She has helped me considerably to throw light on a theory I hold, namely, that you are an innocent man."

"My firm belief is you know nothing whatever about it. The police believe you guilty, and have built, or, rather, are building, up an overwhelmingly strong case against you. Their case I hope to destroy, as I have done on a good many cases before. But before I can move another step I want you to give me your version of what happened on the night of the 16th, and just how you stood with regard to your uncle."

Morrison perched himself on the edge of his bunk-bed, and propped his chin in his upturned palms.

"With regard to my uncle, Mr. Locke, I must confess we weren't on the best of terms. We had a dreadful row. I knew that I was his eventual heir, and he said that he objected very strongly to the Sherlicker family fortune being dissipated by an extravagant, amoral comedy actress, as he had no doubt it would be did she become my wife."

"I see. When was this?"

"The quarrel? Oh, the night before his death. That was Tuesday. I had only just become engaged to Miss Dawn. I called that evening—the evening of the 15th—at the house in Prince's Gate to inform uncle of the step I had taken. We had a bitter

quarrel, during which both said hasty things.

"All through Wednesday I felt very regretful. My temper had had time to cool down. I realised how frightfully unjust I had been to my uncle. I determined the following evening to call on him to ask his forgiveness, meaning at the same time to make quite plain that I still meant to stick to my engagement, and that it was for him to decide whether or not he would make a new will. You see, under the existing will everything comes to me. My cousin, Ambrose Rixson, is entirely cut out."

"He and uncle were not on the best of terms, either. Like the foolish young man he is, he has run through a lot of cash; so much so that two years ago Sir Johnstone informed him that he had definitely decided to cut him out unless he reformed. I suppose he regarded it as an idle threat, for he still went on in the same old way."

Locke remembered the remark to Gartrell, Rixson's pretended belief that a large share of the dead man's fortune would come to him. Why was that statement made?

Suddenly he raised his glance to the other's troubled face.

"Now that your uncle is dead, what would happen should this case go against you?"

"In that case, Mr. Locke, everything would go to Ambrose."

"Ah! I begin to understand. Now, on the night of the murder—tell me just what you did."

The events were too horribly fresh in Rupert Morrison's mind to need much thought.

"I left my chambers about six, and dined with a friend, a man I used to be very chummy with at Balliol. We had dined at the Cri. A very hurried meal it was, as he had an appointment at a quarter to seven. I left him on the Circus, took a taxi, and drove to my uncle's house, arriving there, as nearly as I can guess, about seven. He was out, so I called again."

"That would be at eleven o'clock, the time when you were arrested?"

The other shook his head.

"No; at half-past nine." Locke almost jumped from his chair.

"You called at half-past nine? Whom did you see?" he asked, for once betraying signs of great surprise.

"Not my uncle, I saw Wardle. He told me Sir Johnstone had not yet returned—that he supposed he'd be back some time about eleven. I said I would go away, and come back later."

"Did you enter the house—I mean, on the occasion of the 9.30 visit?"

"I swear I didn't!"

"H'm! That is very strange!" Again Locke thought that Wardle's story was traversed—in a very important essential, too.

"What did you do between this time and your next and last visit?"

"I went for a walk in the Park. I wanted to think out just the right thing to say. The position was a very delicate one for me."

"Quite! And you swear you were not in possession of a revolver that night?"

"I hadn't seen the pistol for years. It is one of a pair that belonged to my father. He gave them to me years ago, when I was living with my uncle in Prince's Gate. When I took a flat of my own I brought the case away with me with some loose cartridges. Four days ago, when the police searched my

flat, they found the case and the fellow pistol, and took possession of them."

"I know. Now, I understand your uncle was in rather a poor state of health?"

"He had a frightfully weak heart. So far as I am aware, that is all that was the matter with him. Physically he was strong."

"Who told you about the weak heart?"

"He himself; and Dr. Manito had often mentioned it—suggested the possibility of Sir Johnstone dying at any time."

"Thank you, Mr. Morrison. That's all I want to know." Locke extended a hand and gripped the other's warmly. "Keep up your spirits. I hope before many days are through to see you a free man."

## Locke Builds up an Astounding Case!

SAVE for an aged caretaker, who had been left in charge, the house in Prince's Gate was shut up, when Ferrers Locke sought admission.

His professional card, backed by a substantial tip, gained him admission. With both Wardle and Ambrose Rixson present at the last sad rites, the detective felt himself tolerably free from interruption for several hours to come.

From the library, which yielded nothing fresh, he passed through every room in the great house. That eagle glance of his took in everything, but discovered nothing of importance until he came to a big, airy apartment with an immense glass fanlight, used at one time as a studio.

A mass of charred wood, burned paper, and half-consumed ashes in the grate provided the first sensation in this remarkable case, for peeping out among the black debris was something that glistened brightly in the sunlight streaming through the glass overhead.

Locke stooped down, picked it deftly out, and there it lay, smoke-darkened in parts, but still reflecting little shafts of brightness—an empty cartridge-case.

"Same size and number as those fired from the pistol," he told himself triumphantly. "But the chambers of the weapon were full—five shells, two discharged, three undischarged. Of the former, one found its billet in Sir Johnstone's chest, the other in Ambrose Rixson's arm. And yet both he and Wardle swore they had never seen the weapon before. Strange if this cartridge-case could have remained in that grate all these years!"

He groped about the fringes of unburned paper, and found an edging of a daily newspaper with a date ten days earlier. He could almost have shouted with triumph. The fire had been lit and the sixth shell thrown among it some time during the last ten days.

At that moment he went downstairs, and, starting again with the library, examined every wall of every room. At the end of half an hour he was back in the studio, where a strip of woodwork in the north end gave up its secret. At a height of about six inches he discovered a small round hole in the wainscoting, in a position almost exactly similar to the hole in the wainscoting of the library.

He drew back, noting the position carefully. From the centre of the studio he found himself almost in a straight line with a lay figure from which one of the limbs was missing.

"Left arm gone. Now, where's that left

arm?" was his next question, not to be answered until the loft had been thoroughly raveled over, when he found it hidden away behind the water-tank under the slates.

Excitedly he carried it to the light. A hole showed clear through the forearm, the back of which was splintered. Fixing the wrenched-out limb in position and extending the arm with the hand pointed to the floor, he discovered that the bullet-hole through the wood of the limb corresponded, at a little distance away, with the hole in the wainscoting.

Here was a fresh and a very startling problem.

"Why should that arm have been deliberately shot at? Of course, Rixson had a bullet wound in his arm—the forearm, too."

He sat down on a big packing-case and framed again in his clear mind the picture presented to him when Gartrell, Brinnon, and he had first entered the library.

"Sir Johnstone lying dead on the floor," he murmured, closing his eyes. "Ambrose Rixson, pale and weak from loss of blood, sitting in a chair in his shirt-sleeves. Gartrell paid no attention to that. His theory was

"I'm a fool, a slow-witted, doddering fool, that's what I am," he muttered fiercely, bending to his task again. "The very fact which should have been patent when first I discovered the bullet-marked arm of the lay figure has only just dawned on me. Rixson was shot through the right forearm, the coat and the figure through the left. Obvious conclusion—at the time Rixson met with his wound he was minus his coat. The bullet-wound in the sleeve was purposely made afterwards, for the purpose of throwing dust in everyone's eyes, for the purpose of supporting the story that he was wounded when attempting either to defend his uncle or to grapple with the supposed assailant. Now, as Morrison swears he never entered the house at 9.30—the approximate time of the tragedy—and as I have every faith in Morrison's word against the word of two self-convicted liars, one can only presume that the only persons present in the library at that time were Sir Johnstone, Ambrose Rixson, and perhaps Wardle. And Rixson was in his shirt-sleeves when he met with his injury."

"The wound in Rixson's arm cannot have

### Gartrel Changes His Plans!

THEY cut across the Green Park, and Locke stepped out before a palatial block of flats.

The maid who admitted him took his card.

He was kept waiting less than a minute. The maid showed him into an exquisitely furnished boudoir, whose sun-warmed atmosphere was fragrant with the perfume of flowers.

A tall girl, stately and dignified, turned to acknowledge his bow. He saw in a glance that the beauty of her face was shadowed by sombre fires of sadness lurking in her usually laughing eyes, and that deep lines of care had gathered about her lips.

"I know you better as Miss Carmine Dawn," said Locke, taking the chair which she indicated. "I want you to forget all about official detectives. I'm afraid, though, they haven't been quite so kind to your fiancé. I saw Mr. Morrison in prison this morning, and after a chat with him I left him with the injunction to keep smiling, and to look forward to the time when, as a free man, the world would welcome him with open arms."

Margaret Preston leapt to her feet, her eyes radiant, and her cheeks warming with pleasure in the way he had often seen them when, as Carmine Dawn, she nightly bewitched London's thousands.

"You can't possibly be sincere over that," she said, still watching his smiling face.

"I was never more sincere in my life," Locke said. "To gratify professional curiosity I took a hand in this case. My investigations and discoveries have convinced me of one thing, that Mr. Morrison is an innocent man."

Margaret put her hand in his as he rose to go.

"We shall never forget," she whispered, looking at him with shining eyes. "Everything has been so dark these last few days. The horror of it has bitten deeply into my life. I began to feel I should never be able to smile again. But you have come with this glad, good news. No, we shall never forget, never."

Locke passed down the stairs with her words of thanks ringing in his ears. His skill in piecing together the minutest fragments of a great mystery had not deserted him then. He thanked his lucky stars the same good fortune was his to-day.

The waiting taxi-man took him swiftly to Branch Street. As he entered the station all the impetuous haste had dropped away. He passed up the stairs calmly enough, entered Charley Gartrell's office-room, and greeted his official rival with a friendly nod.

"Well, Charles, and what news to-day?" he asked nonchalantly, as he pulled off his gloves and laid them carefully on the desk.

Gartrell beamed as only Gartrell knew how.

"Oh, the best, my boy, the very best. My men have done their work splendidly. And what with the labours of the prosecuting counsel, I tell you, between us we shall weave such a web of evidence about that young man as won't leave him the slightest pin-hole of escape."

"I see. You are absolutely convinced of his guilt?"

"Absolutely. Lucky Fate put the case and the proofs into our hands. We never for a moment had any other possible point of view to consider."

Ferrers Locke leaned back and smiled at the ceiling.

"That's a pity, because neither you nor Brinnon had the nous to consider one."

"What d'you mean? Some more new-fangled, far-funged hypotheses, conclusions, and corollaries which you private detectives are for ever expounding to the police?"

A grin—a triumphant grin—crossed Locke's face.

"Well, something not far remote from that," he answered slowly, sticking a long cigar in the corner of his mouth and lighting it. "Supposing I pointed out to you something which both you and your assistant overlooked from the very start—that Sir Johnstone Sherlicker was never murdered at all."

Gartrell's lower jaw fell.

"Then how did the man die?" he asked blankly.

"From heart failure, valvular derangement. He was dead when the bullet was fired into him. That wound in Sir Johnstone's chest



Carrying the short dinner-jacket upstairs to the studio, he fitted it on the lay figure, and discovered that the bullet mark on the jacket exactly corresponded with the hole in the left arm of the figure.

that the coat had been removed to facilitate the bandaging of the wound. Quite so. But where's the coat? Oh, yes, I must have the coat."

With that he went down the stairs three at a time to the apartment used by Rixson whenever he stayed in the house. In a long lower chest he found what he was after—the short dinner-jacket. In the left sleeve a jagged hole showed through both sides. Carrying his find upstairs, he fitted it on the lay figure, and discovered that the bullet marks exactly corresponded.

"Now we're coming to it," he muttered as his lips compressed tightly. "Someone, either Rixson or Wardle, fitted this coat on to this lay figure and fired at it with a pistol, either the weapon marked 'R. M.' or a pistol of a similar calibre. Now, why was that done?"

Again that long, tense period of sitting down, of head buried in his hands, of close thought, building up one point from another, and—always the most helpful thing—a reforming in the brain of every detail left by first impressions.

At length Locke rose, this time looking none too well pleased.

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been self-inflicted. I believe Wardle was present, the baronet being then dead. Suppose Wardle fired the wounding shot at Rixson's suggestion, what does that suggest? It suggests that Rixson was willing to suffer the pain of the laceration merely to divert suspicion from himself. He got Wardle to do the shooting, to fire the second shot at his bare arm, and then a moment later both realised the mistake they had made—that if Rixson's story of rushing in to assist his uncle held good he wouldn't have made his appearance in his shirt-sleeves. Consequently corresponding bullet-marks had to be made in the coat, and one of them suggested fitting the garment on the lay figure. But the fools in their excitement fired at the wrong arm. Rixson's wound is on the right, not on the left."

Very carefully Ferrers Locke wrapped up his two precious exhibits, and, binding the caretaker to silence, left the house.

In the warm sunlight he hailed a taxi. Once inside his hand reached out for the tube.

"Endsleigh Gardens, and as fast as you like!" he shouted.



had hardly bled at all. He had been dead some little time, perhaps several minutes, before the shot was fired. By that time the blood had ceased to circulate, and only the local fluid in the immediate neighbourhood flowed out. Had he been shot when he was alive, the carpet, to say nothing of his shirt-front and clothes, would have been soaked."

Gartrell sniffed.  
"Good heavens, I never thought of that!" he said slowly. "Then who do you think fired the weapon?"

"Either Wardle, the valet, or Rixson. The whole affair was a put-up job, a plant to fix the guilt of having caused death on an innocent man."

"For what purpose, pray?"  
"The purpose of getting Rupert Morrison hanged. Do you know what would have happened had Morrison gone to the scaffold? Rixson didn't tell us; in fact, he deliberately led us all away on a false scent. If Morrison dies, every penny of Sir Johnstone Shericker's money goes to him."

"He said something about share and share alike."

"I know; a view which Wardle didn't take the trouble to contradict, although all the time he knew quite different."

"Why do you say that?"  
"Because at the very moment when those two were standing before us telling lies for all they were worth, in the safe, not three yards away, was a copy of the baronet's last will and testament, witnessed, as to one party, by James Wardle, leaving everything to Rupert Morrison, and not a penny to the other nephew."

"H'm! This looks bad. Well, go on! I'm still far from convinced we're in error."

Locke laughed mirthlessly.  
"Sorry to give you so unpleasant an awakening. At first everything told in Wardle and Rixson's favour. All they said apparently conveyed the impression that, though they themselves suspected Morrison, they were anxious to shield him. For one thing, Wardle never mentioned that Morrison had quarrelled violently with his uncle the previous night, although I have it from Morrison's own lips that the valet unexpectedly broke in just when the row was at its height."

"How do you explain the pistol?"  
"It was in the house all the time—it had been there, in fact, with a number of loose cartridges, for several years. I have been able to follow exactly young Rixson's movements on the night of the crime. After dining rather well at Frascati's he went on to a friend's flat, where he joined for a short time in a game of cards. From there he was summoned by a message on the telephone. A man named Donnermore, a bookmaker, rang him up, and demanded payment of a very large sum of money under pain of exposure."

"Where did you get all this?"

"Donnermore himself told me. I located the sender of the message through the 'phone exchange. Donnermore had said quite openly that unless Rixson paid at once he'd lay everything before his uncle. Rixson feared losing his allowance, so determined on the bold course of seeing Sir Johnstone, and, under some plausible pretext, borrowing sufficient from him to stave Donnermore off."  
"Well?"



"Margaret Preston leapt to her feet, her eyes radiant, and her cheeks warming with pleasure. "You can't possibly be sincere over that!" she said.

"He went to the house in Prince's Gate, and there found Sir Johnstone dead."

"By heavens, no!"  
"It's true—the only possible explanation. Every other possibility has a flaw somewhere; that one hasn't. I arrived at it by the simple but unflinching process of elimination, supported by medical evidence so far as my own knowledge goes."

"And then, Locke?"  
"Then either Wardle told him he was disinherited, or he made the discovery himself

by undoing the safe with his uncle's keys. Anyway, he got to know, and between him and the valet the thought took shape that, if only they could arrange the old man's death in such a way that it would look as though young Morrison had caused it, he would be tried and convicted, and all the money go to Ambrose Rixson."

"What a fiendish notion!"  
"Nothing less. The difficulty was how to accomplish it. Wardle knew of the presence of the pistol in the house. More, he knew that Morrison had quarrelled with his uncle over the lady he is engaged to; he knew that the young fellow would turn up again at half-past nine. It must then have been somewhere about twenty past. If they could use the intervening moments to arrange a plan of campaign, and fix the guilt on Morrison, all would yet be well."

"So they shot at the corpse!" Gartrell exclaimed.

"They went farther than that, Charles. To give the semblance of reality to their story, and to free Rixson from any possibility of suspicion, they even went so far as to produce the wound in Rixson's arm. So, after shooting Sir Johnstone, Rixson got Wardle to fire at his arm. To do this without the risk of damaging the bone, he hit upon the notion of removing his coat."

"Of course! I remember. He was in his shirt-sleeves."

Locke laughed.  
"But there they had made a mistake. If suspicion should be aroused, attention would be drawn to the dinner-jacket he was wearing. It was essential it should show a corresponding laceration to the arm wound. They stumbled to this almost in a panic, and, in endeavouring to get the correct position, they overreached themselves; for, after fitting the jacket on a lay figure in the studio, and carefully measuring the exact distances and the position for the shot, they fired at the wrong arm."

Gartrell was very agitated by the time Locke had finished.

"What do you suggest should be done? The trial is getting pretty close. I suppose you'll lay all these facts before the counsel employed for the defence?"

Locke slowly drew on his gloves.  
"I don't think so. I'd much rather you brought them to the notice of the police authorities. Say they are your own, if you like—say anything, do anything, so long as you can get Rupert Morrison free. But I'd ask just one thing." He turned smilingly to the doorway. "Make matters just as hot as you can for Wardle and Rixson. I'm not usually vindictive, but the best place for them is the inside of a prison-cell! So long! I'll look round later in the week, and sort out the rest of that jewellery."

(Another grand instalment of this detective serial will appear in next week's issue of the POPULAR.)

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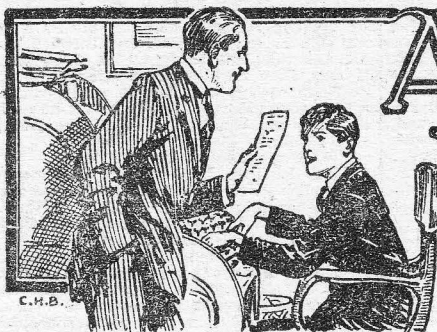
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our magnificent tale of the Civil War, will

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And last, though not least, another complete story dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver and his chums at Rookwood School, entitled:

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By Owen Conquest.

### LIKES AND DISLIKES.

Seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth is all very well in its way. Popularity is different. The latter is hardly to be sought for. The active hunter will be baffled. Popularity just happens, or it does not happen. I am reminded of this by a complaint from a chum who feels he is not liked; he experiences the nobody-loves-him sort of sensation. This is like the drum—nothing in it. A fellow may be ignored simply because of some trivial detail which he has overlooked. There may be a notion that he is too fat, or too thin, or that he speaks too slowly, like Gussy. Come to think of it, the individual who takes ten minutes to say something that might be tucked up in as many seconds is apt to be a bit trying. And the world is usually in such a hurry that it refuses to go deep. It just judges by externals. But if my correspondent goes on trying to play the game, his "try" will get a cheer, and the onlookers will be grateful to him.

### EIGHT YEARS.

Tributes to the "Pop." pour in on me from all quarters of the globe. Here is Miss Joan, of Mortheth, N.S.W., who writes thus:

"Dear Old Pal, Editor,—Please tell other readers through the Chat that I have never missed a week of the good old health-giving "Penny Popular" since 1913, only when you had to stop getting her out owing to the war." This is the sort of comment that brings the smile of benevolence to the face of the office cat, and sends the staff home to its tea light of heart, and feeling all its well. So all is well with the "Popular."

### COMPLIMENTS.

A letter to hand from a staunch supporter in Melbourne contains the remark that the "P.P." has improved wonderfully these last few months. The writer has plenty to say about our serials and Chat and other features of the paper, and he is prepared to stand up for Billy Bunter through thick and thin. It was just the sort of letter I like, with the real ring about it. Some letters are like that—some are not. You will have noticed this interesting fact. A letter may be as cold and unattractive as the fishy sort of handshake one meets with when the shaker seems to have his thoughts far, far away. Most likely that is the case. On the other hand, there are letters and handshakes which just set the world right. The more of them the better.

Your Editor

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