

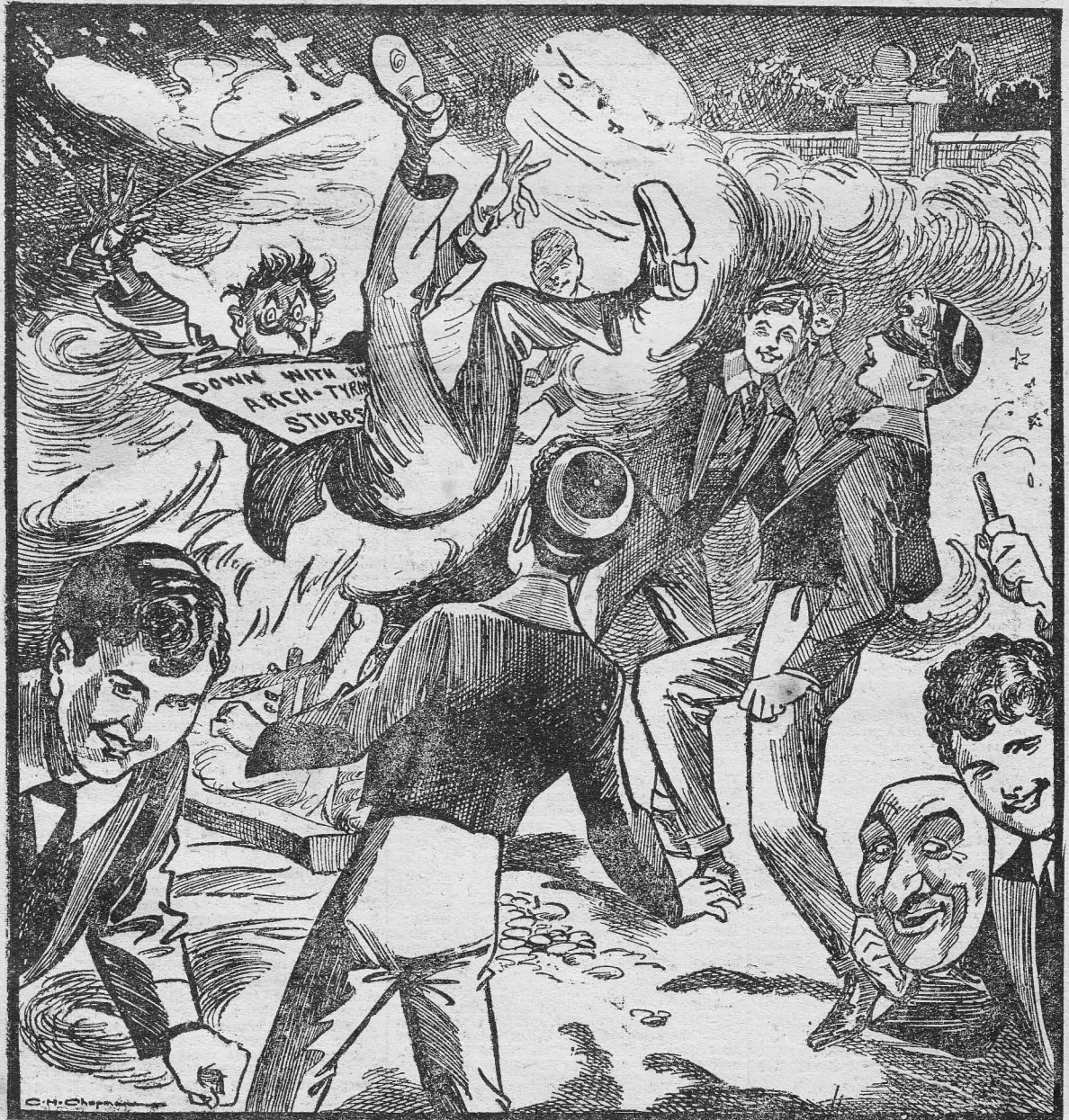
GRAND SCHOOL, DETECTIVE, AND ADVENTURE TALES IN THIS ISSUE!

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# The $1\frac{1}{2}$ Popular

20 PAGES.



**BURNING THE GUY!** THE GREYFRIARS JUNIORS CELEBRATE THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

*(One of the many episodes from our grand long complete school story in this issue!)*

A Further Instalment of Our Powerful Story of Cavaliers and Roundheads.



By EDMUND BURTON.

A TALE OF THE CIVIL WAR!

#### INTRODUCTION.

HARRY TEMPLE, master of the Chase, and possessor of a wonderful sword at the death of his father. When carried by any member of the family in battle the legend is that the sword will guard him from hurt in the fight, and make him invincible over his enemies. Walter Temple, his cousin, who is a Roundhead officer, also has a great longing for the sword, but there are many fights between the two for the ownership of

it. Will Howard, Harry's particular friend, has several accounts to square with Walter. When war is declared between the King and Parliament, Harry and his friend join the Royalist forces. The two are in the thickest of the fighting, and many adventures befall them. At last, after a crushing defeat, Charles surrenders himself to Cromwell. His trial takes place at Westminster Hall, where both the comrades are present, and after the

fourth day his punishment is decided. Harry and Will return to the Chase and turn their minds to work of a more private nature. Through a clever ruse Walter, still intent on securing the sword, gets into the Chase and administers a dose to Harry and his companion, and he is then able to take the sword without being stopped.

(Now read on.)

#### The Last of Walter Temple!

STILL chuckling, Walter passed from the room and downstairs, the loud bang of the shutting door awakening the echoes of the great mansion.

But the motionless trio on the floor heard nothing of it. They still slept on, as they would do for some little time to come.

Will stirred uneasily, and opened his eyes, looking dazedly about him. Travers was still breathing heavily across the table, but Harry was beginning just then to show faint signs of returning consciousness.

Presently he, too, awoke, and gazed queerly at Howard's stupefied face; then his hand crept down to his hip, and he laughed amusedly!

It seemed a strange thing to do at such a time, particularly as the jewelled hilt was no longer in its place; and it seemed stranger still when Will also uttered a delighted chuckle.

"Od's life!" he exclaimed. "Master Walter was ever a knave, but now he is a fool!"

Harry nodded, still smiling, and looked towards a collection of weapons which adorned the wall at the far end of the apartment. The central position was vacant, only a couple of nails marking the spot where something else had rested.

"I told you, lad, that they were almost similar!" said Will, holding his sides, which absolutely refused to cease their shaking. "With the two together you might easily see the difference, but never apart, I'll vow!"

What had taken place scarcely needs any explanation, save to say that Howard's quick eye had noticed the close resemblance the mysterious rapier bore to one which was hanging there amongst the others, and had persuaded Harry to substitute it in case of accident. How well the ruse had succeeded was apparent enough. Walter had had all his trouble for a weapon which was worth no more to him than its market value. Yet in his hurry he had not noticed the simple trick which had completely deceived him.

"But, nevertheless, he shall not escape!" said Harry determinedly. "Too long has the safety of the rapier been threatened, and it must cease at once and for all time! We shall follow my cousin, Will!"

"And then, lad?"

"Then I shall challenge him to a final bout, both being on an equal footing. The sword I shall leave here, using yours."

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"But if he wins—"

"He will not win! You well know I am more than his match in fence under ordinary circumstances, and I never felt in better practice than I do now. Have we not had our friendly bouts almost daily, you and I, to keep us both from losing our cunning—eh, old friend?"

"That is so, lad."

"And when I have fought him to a standstill, I shall force him to sign a declaration agreeing to leave the country as soon as his service expires—or without that permission, supposing 'twill not be granted—and promising not again to make an attempt on the rapier."

"And if he breaks that promise?"

"Then have I not his signed confession, which I shall pass on to the proper quarter? I warrant you, there are many unfortunate knaves languishing in prison now who have not one-half of Walter's misdeeds to answer for!"

Will nodded, his misgivings shaken by the young fellow's confidence; and presently they set out, following the track of human footprints in the snow until they were suddenly replaced by those of a horse.

"Od's life!" exclaimed Howard. "He must have seemed a strange contrast to those who chanced to see him! A vagrant in rags, riding like a gentleman, forsooth!"

Will could not, of course, know that Walter had only changed his clothes on the outskirts of the woods. Truly, he would indeed have been a simpleton had he hoped to pass unnoticed for long, otherwise.

'Twas a long and tiresome pursuit, that chase after the other horse, and 'twas to end in a way which neither of the comrades had ever foreseen. Walter, highly jubilant with the success of his venture, reached his waiting steed and vaulted into the saddle. The snow had ceased falling as he rode swiftly away, putting some miles between himself and the Chase ere he made a brief halt.

Here, undoing a bundle which was fastened to the high pommel, and which contained his own clothes, he effected a rapid transformation, shivering in the bitter wind. Then he buckled the swordbelt round his waist, cast the rags—and also the untidy wig which he had worn over his own close-cropped hair—into a thick clump of bushes, and continued his way immediately afterwards.

Up to now he had been quite in ignorance of the simple trick which had been played upon him, but as he glanced down at the

glittering hilt once more something in its shape suddenly attracted his attention. Whether he was looking at it from a different angle than heretofore, or whether his eyes were deceiving him, he could not say, but the thing seemed totally unlike the hilt he had fondled and examined a hundred times since he had stolen it from its resting-place in his uncle's bed-room years before.

He slowed his horse to a walk, and half drew the blade from its scabbard. Then he swayed dizzily in his saddle as a vicious oath hissed through his clenched teeth. 'Twas the first time he had seen the steel itself since leaving the Chase on this particular occasion, and the revelation was a stunning one, for the blade was certainly not that of the rapier he had risked so much to obtain.

"A blight upon you and your trickery, cousin!" he said thickly. "And a blight upon me, also, for my coxswainness!"

As he spoke his horse planted its forefeet in a hollow made level by the drifting snow. It sank well above its fetlocks and came down in a heap, rolling over upon its rider, who had no time to disentangle his feet from the stirrups.

Walter felt the crushing weight of the animal as it pinned him down, and writhed in his agony; but his struggles were of no avail. Both the horse's legs were badly injured, and, suffering intense pain itself, it twisted to and fro, despite the frantic, gasping commands and entreaties of its luckless master to quieten it.

And 'twas there they found him about half an hour later, half unconscious from his suffering, his face white and drawn as the snow around him.

Walter fainted dead away as their combined efforts dragged the horse to one side, and knew nothing until he opened his eyes in one of the bed-rooms at Temple Chase. Will was standing beside him, shaking his head gravely, and holding a cup of warm wine to his lips.

The injured man took a couple of sips, and, glancing round, smiled bitterly. The space above the wide hearth was occupied by a solitary, familiar object—a jewel-hilted rapier, which scintillated in the firelight. Two candle sconces stood on the big table in the centre, their flickering rays almost overpowered by the blaze from the crackling logs.

'Twas as though some scene of long ago were being re-enacted, and how well Walter remembered it now! Harry was standing just where he had stood that night of Sir John

Temple's death; and, as though to complete the strange string of coincidences, here he was in his uncle's own bed, suffering from the effects of a similar mishap as had previously befallen Sir John!

Walter made a feeble effort to raise himself, but fell back, with a groan of agony, and Will placed his strong arm beneath his shoulders, lifting him higher.

"There, now, Master Walter," he said, in a softer tone than one would have expected from him under the circumstances. "Lie quiet for a little, until Travers returns. He has gone to seek a—"

"Nay, 'twill be of no avail! My star has fallen, and is flickering out." Walter's eyes closed for a moment, and then opened again, fixed with a burning gaze on Harry. "Cousin, that last move was yours—not mine!"

The young fellow took the hot, moist hand in his own and pressed it tightly, speaking no word; but the other seemed somewhat comforted, for he gave a grateful glance upward, and then his eyelids drooped again.

"Cousin," he muttered presently, "I have played a fool's game, and I have lost, as I deserved to. We may cheat our fellow men, but not our destiny. I see the sword yonder, hanging in the same place as it hung—how many years back? How long is it since I came here to embitter my uncle's last moments?"

"I—I scarcely know. A good while, I should say, coz."

"Ay, a long time—a very long time! And—and then I saw, and was tempted. 'Twas truly a poor night's work for me."

"Hush, Walter, hush! 'Tis all over and done with now."

"Ay, 'tis all over—or soon will be, coz!" The injured man gave another smile, even more bitter than before. "I shall shortly have little power to trouble you, or anyone. But—but—"

Harry bent lower as the other's voice grew feebler and his breathing much more laboured.

"Well, cousin?"

"Can you forgive? I know 'tis not my right to ask, but—"

"Walter, I do forgive you—freely!"

The dying man mumbled some words which neither could catch distinctly, but from the peaceful look which crept over his face, they guessed he was satisfied. He did not speak again, and some short time later the feeble life-spark flickered out.

Walter Temple had indeed "left the country."

### The Secret of the Sword!

HARRY walked with slow step and uncovered head behind Will Howard and Travers, who were bearing his cousin's body towards the little family vault within the Chase demesne. 'Twas a strange funeral this for a soldier who, to give him his due, had fought well enough for the cause in which he had drawn his sword; but our lives are odd things surely. We use them whilst they last, and 'tis doubtful if many of us really care what becomes of our bodies after death has claimed them.

'Twas snowing heavily again, as they halted at the low door of the vault, which Harry unlocked with a small key he carried. Walter was borne in, and laid on the slab just opposite that of his uncle. There were many coffins there, containing the dust of the Temples for generations back—silent relics of one of the greatest families which had ever dwelt in Merrie England.

Close beside Sir John's coffin another lay, almost touching it—the coffin of one who, in life, had graced the mansion with her stately presence, and whom Harry only remembered as though in a dream. There they rested, side by side, as years before they had stood together at the altar-rails—their two lives merged into one—"in death not divided."

The ceremony was simple in the extreme. There was no lengthy burial service, for the unsettled state of the country made it difficult to conduct matters properly; no volley over the grave of a soldier, nor roll of muffled drums, nor solemn music. Harry and the others merely stood there for a few minutes, their lips murmuring a short prayer for the soul of him who in life had done so much to anger them. But death makes great changes in all of us. Walter was now just as any of those others sleeping quietly there, his misdeeds and treachery forgotten and forgiven.

The trio turned to leave, Harry pausing reverently for a moment beside the two

coffins lying together, and then followed the others.

Back in the great dining-room of the Chase, he produced the mysterious rapier and placed it silently on the table. Will Howard and Travers looking at him curiously as they waited for him to speak.

"There!" said the young fellow presently. "You see it—the bringer of good fortune to one Temple and ill-luck to another! By my soul, I almost wish I had never seen the thing, though I should have reason to be grateful to it!"

He picked it up by the scabbard, rapping the hilt on the table, as though to emphasise his words, and then dropped the weapon, with a gasp of amazement. For a sudden click had sounded through the apartment, and the hilt sprang open in two halves, allowing a couple of tightly-rolled papers in fall on the table.

Will uttered an exclamation, and snatched at one, whilst Harry took the other, scanning its contents with some difficulty, for the writing was faded and brown-coloured, and the paper stained with age.

At that moment Howard gave a chuckle

not such as these who are for ever about me— watching—watching—watching—

"WILLIAM TEMPLE!"

"William Temple!" echoed Travers, as the young man finished. "Why, that must be Sir William, Master Harry—your grandfather!"

"Of a surety!" put in Will Howard. "There is no possible doubt of it, and the manner of the writing bears out the popular belief of the time. He was supposed to have concealed the Temple treasure in a fit of madness, ye recollect?"

Harry nodded.

"Ay, I have oft heard the tale. He hid the treasure, and, presumably, then also hid the sword containing his secret."

"But you mentioned something about a riddle, lad," said Will—"a riddle which he set for unravelling?"

"I did. Here it is, though it seems mighty puzzling, and will take some thinking out, I'll vow:

"Where the sunshine marks the hour of three,



Will lifted the shattered box, and deposited it on the edge of the pit. "Zounds! 'Tis not often I wade in money, friends!" he chuckled, as he stooped down for the second treasure chest. (See page 4).

of delight, and pushed his portion across the table.

"Read it, lad—read it, and thank your good fortune for the possession of the sword!"

Harry peered at the closely-written lines, repeating each sentence aloud, word for word, as he deciphered it. 'Twas a strange and interesting epistle truly, and for that reason I give it here in its entirety:

"They watch me—those who covet my riches. I see them when I wake; they are here and there—beside me—before me—behind me—but it shall avail them nothing. I have hidden the wealth—hidden it so well that none may find it save the reader of this, who, too, will have a difficult task to unravel the riddle I set him here. I am concealing this with another strange paper which I found in the sword-hilt. It opened by chance one day whilst I polished it, and I knew I had discovered a safe resting-place for my secret— Ah, they are coming now, so I must hasten! May the wealth fall again into the hands of a worthy Temple—

To be enriched, your place must be;  
At two or four, 'tis wasted time—  
Three, and three only, points to lime.  
A hundred paces off, and then  
Twice twenty paces north again,  
To where the Whited Sentinel,  
O'er treasure rich is watching well."

Underneath was a small arrow pointing downwards.

Harry ceased reading, and looked questioningly at Will and Travers, but both were staring fixedly before them, a line of deep furrows wrinkling each man's brow. Presently, Howard passed his fingers through his silvery locks, with a despairing gesture.

"'Twill take some considering truly, lad," he said, "for it seems but a meaningless tangle at present."

"Yet tangles were made to be unravelled, Will. But list to what is written on the other paper. 'Tis at least as strange, and much older, I can see, by the formation of the letters."

Walking over to the window, he commenced:

"To my benefactor, greeting.—When ye boar was almost upon me, dydst thou spur thine horse between us. For that I thank thee, and shall do more. Henceforth, thy blade shall never fayl thee, guarding thee in ye fyght, and making thee a vctor over thine oppressors, as it shall do also for those who come after thee. But beware of loss, for with y sword also goeth prosperyt to ye fynder!"

The epistle was unsigned and undated, so that there was no possible clue either to its author or to the time of writing. It could easily be gathered, however, that its first possessor had received it in reward for having saved someone who was gifted with strange powers from death or injury; but who had rendered the timely assistance could not, of course, ever be ascertained. The Temple's ownership of the sword dated only from the year 1488, when Sir Henry had picked it up after Richmond's victory on Bosworth Field, where, it must be concluded, it probably was dropped by one of the "benefactor's" descendants, who was possibly flying with Crookback Richard's scattered army. 'Twas not likely he had been killed, for the sword was supposed to be endowed with curious properties, which would save him from hurt. Nay, he must have lost it, and, as, the legend said, his prosperity had been transferred to the finder.

There was silence in the great apartment for a full five minutes, whilst each of its occupants dwelt upon the strange contents of the second paper. How had it come to be inside the hilt? Had its first owner caused the secret hiding-place to be fashioned, so that he might feel all the more satisfied about the safety of the paper, or had it always been there since its manufacture?

"'Tis a pretty pickle, friends," said Will, breaking the silence at length, "and, after all, it concerns us not overmuch. Sir William's paper is far more important just at present, so I suggest we make a start upon it at once. What say you, lad?"

Harry nodded, and with the quaint verse smoothed out before them, they clustered round the table.

### The Unraveling of the Tangle!

FOR close upon half an hour they pondered over the rhyme, without seeing so much as a glimmer of light. Suddenly Will Howard gave his knee a lusty smack.

"Zounds! Can this be it, lad?" he cried excitedly. "'Where the sunshine marks the hour of three.' Now, surely, that might refer to the sundial—"

"'Tis a good guess, but which one is meant?" asked Harry, smiling. "We have three here, you know."

Will's face fell.

"Ay, lad, that's the question! A dial would fit the description right well, but, as you say, which of the three is the correct one?"

"To ascertain that we must try each one in turn. Indeed, until we get to the dial it seems impossible to know what Sir William means by 'only three pointing to lime.' 'Tis now just two of the clock, and there's more than a promise of a bright afternoon. A meal, then, friend Travers, and we'll inspect the nearest dial afterwards!"

Their visit proved fairly successful to a certain extent, for it seemed to reveal the meaning of the word "pointing." As the minutes passed, the shadow of the style, or gnomon, crept round the plate, turning gradually to a slightly different angle. At three, Harry took his stand beside the instrument, and measured a hundred paces in the direction the shadow indicated.

"Ay, lad," said Will, as he halted. "'Tis one hundred paces surely, but I see naught of any lime, and there should be some near by, supposing this is the right place, and that a dial is referred to."

Harry looked puzzled.

"Those words were written many years ago, and it may not be here now," he replied. "So let me try the forty paces northward which my grandfather mentions, and see if we can locate the mysterious 'White Sentinel.'"

But though the distance was measured with

\*The upright portion of a sundial, by the shadow of which the time of day is indicated. THE POPULAR.—NO. 64.

extreme care, nothing answering the description could be found; indeed, the place was but flat, snow-covered grassland, without a tree or bush for yards around.

Having made a minute, but futile, search, they retraced their steps, somewhat crest-fallen. 'Twas now well past three, so there was nothing else for it but to put off further investigations till the following day, hoping for some sunshine, however weak.

"Since this is clearly not the dial indicated, we must wait till to-morrow," said Harry. "Assuming that we are really on the right track, grandfather seems fairly sure of three being the only suitable hour; therefore, nothing more can be done now."

The next afternoon, fortunately, was also moderately bright, and, making their way towards the second sundial, they watched the shadow as it crept slowly round. Then, having measured a hundred paces as before, Harry was brought to a halt at the foot of a graceful tree.

"Seemingly, ill-fortune dogs us again, Will," he said, looking back. "There is no lime here, either."

But Howard was smiling good-humouredly, and then dug Travers playfully in the ribs, much to that worthy's disgust.

"No lime, forsooth!" chuckled the big fellow. "Oho, ho! Ho, ho, friend Travers! You also take a good look, and see if there is no lime!"

Harry was staring aghast, amazed at the other's demeanour.

"Will, Will, have your senses suddenly left you?" he cried. "What mean you by that?"

Howard recovered his gravity with an effort.

"Naught, lad, save that your knowledge of woodcraft needs some polishing up!" he replied. "Were it summer, and the leaves out, you would probably recognise it instantly. But look at the trunk, note its colour and formation, and then tell me, an' you dare, that 'tis not a lime-tree!"

Harry clapped him vigorously on the shoulder.

"Marry, Will!" he said gleefully. "Your old eyes are sharper than mine, and your brain has double my understanding! Now for the forty paces, and the 'White Sentinel!'"

He turned northward, and strode away, eagerly followed by the others. They had now entered the fringe of the wood, where the snow had not fallen quite so thickly, but the undergrowth here was tangled and deep, making it difficult to take an accurate measurement. Yet, rough though Harry's pacing was, 'twas quite sufficient for their purpose, for the "White Sentinel" could not be mistaken for a moment—a giant oak, which had been blasted by lightning, its white, sapless wood rendering it easily distinguishable from its neighbours.

Two boughs of this great tree were outstretched like a pair of arms, as though guarding something—a fact which had probably suggested the term "sentinel" to Sir William Temple, whilst the great, gnarled roots spread in all directions are being swallowed up by the undergrowth.

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At this moment Will Howard, who had advanced and was inspecting the trunk closely, uttered a wild whoop.

"Master Harry, come hither! What see you there, or are my eyes tricking me? Here, just a little way!"

Harry bent down, and scrutinised the place indicated, catching his breath sharply as he did so.

"Nay, Will, your vision is not at fault! 'Tis the same marked as was on the paper!"

The faint traces of an arrow, roughly carved in the wood, were just discernable, and the point was downwards turned.

"Then that settles it! You remain here, lad, whilst Travers and I fetch spades, and I warrant you Sir William's treasure won't remain long in the earth—that is, assuming it is still there!"

"Have you any reason to suspect otherwise?"

"Nay; but one never knows what may have happened in the passing of years. However, 'tis time enough to salute the trouble when we meet it!"

Will hurried away, followed at a slower pace by the aged Travers; and Harry squatted down on one of the great, gnarled roots, to await their return with what patience he could muster.

It had been a wonderful affair, truly, taking it all round, since the sword was first stolen by his cousin. What a time packed with incident all those years had been, and what great changes had taken place in Merrie England!

The various scenes seemed to form again before Harry's gaze, as he sat inactive, presently beginning to feel the nip of the keen air gripping his bones.

He rose, and paced restlessly up and down, commencing to count each passing minute. What a long time they were! And why that strange, vague sense of foreboding, which persisted in creeping over him?

Once he started, almost sure that he heard a faint sound amongst the trees; but though he listened intently for a few minutes, there was no repetition of it.

"A falling branch, or a fox, mayhap!" he muttered, staring towards the twisted chimneys of the Chase. "Ah, here they come at last!"

Howard and Travers were advancing across the snow-covered ground, the big fellow bearing a couple of spades and a pick across his broad shoulder, whilst the old retainer carried a coil of stout rope.

"Marry, Master Harry, 'twas a grievous task to find anything at all yonder!" exclaimed Will, casting his burden down. "Even Travers, here, who knows every nook and cranny of the place, had to search the whole house for these."

The surface snow was cleared away, and the pick sank deep, Harry and Travers removing the clay as Will loosened it.

'Twas a difficult task, digging there amongst those tough roots, which had spread considerably, though the upper part of the oak was lifeless. But at length the point of the pick struck something solid.

"You heard that, lad?" he said enthusiastically. "No root this time, I warrant!"

The hole was now some three feet deep, and presently a portion of rusty metal was disclosed to view. Howard worked the pick in under its edge, and levered in order to loosen it; but the substance shivered beneath the pressure, sending a cascade of golden coin flowing over his feet.

"Zounds! 'Tis not often I wade in money, friends!" he chuckled. "The rope now, Travers—Nay, you need not trouble! 'Tis but a small chest, and here's another beneath it."

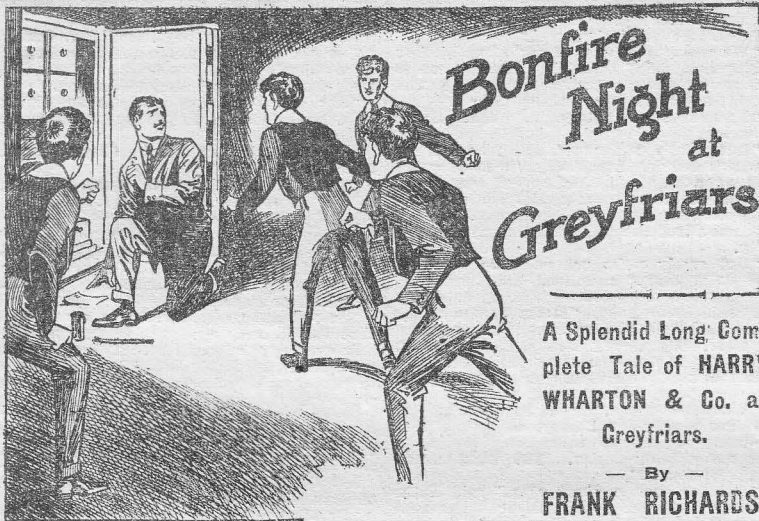
He lifted the shattered box up, and deposited it on the edge of the pit; then stooped for the second. A third followed, and so on, until five chests, all about the same size, shape, and weight, stood in a row. Then Will probed for a time with the pick, but nothing further rewarded his search.

"Ah, well, 'tis not right to be too covetous!" he laughed. "I warrant there's more than a king's ransom here, as it is! Marry now, Travers, are we both addeppates? How do we expect to carry all these back, without a barrow of some kind? Methinks I can manage one on each shoulder, Master Harry could bear another, but you—Body o' me! What in Heaven's name is this?"

They swung quickly round, and remained staring through the trees, amazed and stupefied.

(Another grand instalment of this serial next Friday.)

SPECIAL GUY FAWKES NIGHT STORY.



A Splendid Long Complete Tale of HARRY WHARTON & Co. at Greyfriars.

— By — FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Mr. Stubbs is Unlucky!

"IT'S up to us," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully, "to do the decent thing!"

And five voices chorused their assent. They were the voices of the other members of the Famous Five, and of Dennis Carr.

"Poor old Quelch will be confined to his bed-room for a week—perhaps longer," Wharton went on. "That's what comes of rushing into a blazing study to rescue his precious 'History of Greyfriars.' It wasn't our fault exactly that Quelch got burnt—"

"But it was our fault that the study caught fire," said Nugent.

"Exactly! And when we saw Quelch, and apologised to him, he behaved like a brick." "The brickfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

"Therefore," continued Wharton, "it's up to us, as I say, to do the decent thing. Quelch won't be able to leave his bed for a week, and we want to make the time pass as pleasantly as possible for him. So I vote we bike down to the village, and buy him a whole heap of books at the newsagent's, and send them to Quelch anonymously."

"There's just one drawback," said Dennis Carr.

"Well?"

"We don't happen to know what sort of books Quelch likes. It's no use getting him pirate stories, or love novels, or detective yarns, unless we're sure that he's got a leaning towards that sort of stuff. And it's no use getting him the Waverley Novels, or the works of Dickens, if he's already read the whole jolly lot about ten times over."

"In fact, it's no use getting him books of any sort," said Johnny Bull.

"Eh?"

"You see, he can get all the literature he wants from the school library."

"My hat! I hadn't thought of that!" said Wharton.

For some moments silence reigned in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage, where the conference was taking place.

Then Bob Cherry suddenly exclaimed:

"I know! We won't get books at all—we'll get smokes!"

"Smokes?"

"Yes. Quelch likes a good cigar."

"He's fond of a pipe, too," said Nugent.

"And I've often seen him puffing away at a Turkish cigarette," said Johnny Bull.

"Then supposing we club together and buy him some tobacco and cigars and cigarettes?" said Harry Wharton.

"That's the idea!"

"And we'll send the parcel up to his room by one of the maids, so that he won't know who it's come from."

"Ripping!"

Having formed this resolve, the juniors at once started to put it into execution. In the gathering winter dusk, they wheeled their bicycles out of the shed, and were soon speeding away towards the village.

They dismounted outside the tobacconist's and took the little shop by storm.

It did not occur to the juniors that their

motives might be misunderstood by anyone who chanced to see them enter or leave the shop. They were fired with the object of doing their Form-master a good turn, and they did not stop to reflect how curious their conduct would seem to anyone who did not know their intentions.

The man behind the counter rubbed his hands briskly. Trade had been indifferent that day, and the sight of six customers was very gratifying. The fact that those customers appeared to be below sixteen years of age did not trouble the enterprising shop-keeper.

"What can I do for you, young gentlemen?" he asked.

"You can trot out a half-pound tin of your best 'bacey, and a box of your choicest cigars—ditto cigarettes," said Bob Cherry.

"Very good, sir!"

Whilst the tobacconist was attending to the juniors' requirements, a man was peering through the doorway. He was a thin, hatchet-faced man, and the fact that he was well-dressed did not make him look any the less repulsive. He said no word, but a crafty smile played about his features.

The Greyfriars fellows were too engrossed in making their purchases to notice the looker-on. But when the "smokes" had been made up into a parcel, and the juniors turned to leave the shop, they found their exit barred by the individual who had been spying on them.

"Ha, I have caught you red-handed, you young rascals!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped short and stared.

The man who addressed them was a complete stranger to them.

"Cheek!" growled Johnny Bull. "Stand aside!"

"Boy! How dare you address me in that manner?"

"Who—who are you?" faltered Johnny.

"I am Mr. Stubbs, and I am coming to Greyfriars in the capacity of temporary Form-master of the Remove!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I see by your caps that you are Greyfriars boys. I have caught you in the very act of making illicit purchases, and it is my intention to take you before the head-master."

"But, sir—" began Wharton.

"Not a word!"

"We—we weren't getting these smokes for ourselves. We were getting them for—"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Stubbs. "You will come with me!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. They were nettled at being treated in such a high-handed manner, and for two pins they would have rolled Mr. Stubbs, Form-master or no Form-master, into the gutter. But they restrained themselves, and accompanied Mr. Quelch's deputy back to the school.

"You had better hand me that parcel," said Mr. Stubbs, turning to Bob Cherry.

"Otherwise you would probably throw it over the hedge while I was not looking."

The speaker little realised, as he took the parcel from Bob Cherry, that he himself was in danger of being thrown over the hedge.

For some moments the party tramped on in silence.

"You are members of the Remove Form, I take it?" said Mr. Stubbs, at length.

Nobody denied the fact, so Mr. Stubbs continued:

"Ah, I thought so! I understand that the Remove is the most unruly Form at Greyfriars. It is my intention to alter all that. Although my stay at the school will be restricted to one week, I fancy I shall succeed in effecting a transformation!"

The juniors smiled grimly.

In the past heaps of people had tried their hand at reforming the Remove, but none of them had met with much success. And where many had failed, it was unlikely that Mr. Stubbs would succeed.

In the course of further conversation, Mr. Stubbs got to know the names of the juniors, and he instructed Harry Wharton to lead the way to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke was at home. He started to his feet in surprise as his visitors trooped in.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. Then, turning to Mr. Stubbs, he added: "Who are you, sir? I have not the pleasure—"

"My name is Stubbs, sir. I responded to your advertisement in the 'Scholar,' and you instructed me to come to Greyfriars for a week as a substitute for Mr. Quelch."

"Yes, yes! But these boys—"

"I discovered them in the act of making purchases at the tobacconist's in the village, sir. If you will examine this parcel, you will find that it contains tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes, which these young rascals had purchased for their own consumption."

The Head's brow grew very stern. He untied the string round the parcel, and unfolded the brown paper. A box of cigars, a box of cigarettes, and a tin of tobacco were revealed.

"Wharton!" The Head's voice resembled the detonation of a bomb. "What does this mean?"

"Ahem! We bought these things for Mr. Quelch, sir. We intended to send them to him anonymously."

"I trust you will not be deceived by such a lame explanation, sir," sneered Mr. Stubbs.

The Head frowned.

"Pardon me, Mr. Stubbs, but Wharton would not lie to me. I consider that your thoughtfulness is very commendable, my boys. But why did you not explain to Mr. Stubbs—?"

"He didn't give us half a chance, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"He marched us straight up to the school before we could get a word in edgeways, sir," said Johnny Bull.

Mr. Stubbs bit his lips. In his eagerness to get the juniors into trouble, he had overlooked the fact that the "smokes" might be intended for somebody else.

The Head waved his hand towards the door.

"You may go, my boys," he said. "I will send Trotter to Mr. Quelch with this parcel. I do not think it advisable for these things to remain in your possession, or other people may fall into the same error as Mr. Stubbs."

Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the Head's study, scarcely able to repress their griefs. And the Head turned to Mr. Stubbs.

"Might I see your credentials?" he inquired.

"I did not deem it necessary to bring references, sir. But I will at once obtain them—"

"No, no. It does not matter. As you will only be here a week, I can dispense with references. And now, Mr. Stubbs, I will give you an insight to your duties."

For nearly half an hour Mr. Stubbs remained in consultation with the Head; and then he made his way to Mr. Quelch's study. And as he went he resolved to make things warm for the Remove Form in general, and for Harry Wharton & Co. in particular.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Peter Todd Makes a Discovery!

MR. STUBBS was not on view that evening. His arrival caused much excitement and speculation in the

Remove; but it was not until next morning that the juniors had the pleasure—the very doubtful pleasure—of meeting the temporary Form-master face to face.

The fact that Mr. Stubbs was a tyrant of the worst order was very soon made manifest.

Mr. Quelch was a hard taskmaster, and he was sometimes voted a beast. But, as Bob Cherry remarked, he was a just beast; whereas the new man was just a beast!

Lines and lickings were the order of the day, and even the best scholars in the Form—fellows like Mark Linley and Dick Penfold—

came under the ban of Mr. Stubbs' displeasure.

By the time morning lessons were over there was scarcely a fellow in the Remove who had not received either an impot or a licking.

As the juniors streamed out into the frosty quadrangle they gave vent to their feelings.

"What a giddy tyrant!" exclaimed Dennis Carr.

"And we are to write under the rotter's rule for a whole week!" said Bob Cherry.

"Personally, I don't think I shall survive!"

"I say, you fellows!" chimed in Billy Bunter, "I think something ought to be done, you know! I've a good mind to write to my pater, and get him to come down and give Stubbs a jolly good horsewhipping!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

"I'm beginning to wish we'd never set those fireworks alight in Quelch's study the other day," said Frank Nugent. "Then this wouldn't have happened."

"I vote the whole Form goes on strike!"

This brilliant suggestion emanated from Bolsover major, who proudly described himself as a Direct Actionist. But the suggestion met with poor support. A strike of Removites was not likely to do much good.

On the contrary, the ringleaders would have been well in the running for "the sack."

"Blow Stubbs, and all his works!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Who says footer?"

"Footer!" responded a dozen voices.

Peter Todd walked away towards the building.

"Whither bound, Toddy?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Aren't you going to play?"

"No," replied Peter, over his shoulder.

"I've got something more important than footer to think about."

And he passed on, with a very thoughtful expression on his shrewd features.

Straight to his study he went, and he remained there, turning over the pages of an album of newspaper-cuttings, until the bell rang for dinner.

During the meal Peter Todd seemed to be labouring under great excitement. And when dinner was over he beckoned to the Famous Five and Dennis Carr, who were about to take a stroll in the Close.

"I've got something to show you fellows!" he said mysteriously. "This way!"

"What the thump—" began Johnny Bull.

"Follow your leader, and don't ask questions!"

Greatly wondering, the juniors followed Peter to Study No. 7. Arrived there, Peter closed and locked the door. Then, whilst his schoolfellows watched him in amazement, he went to his desk, and produced the album of newspaper-cuttings.

"What's the little game, Toddy?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"I've made a discovery—"

"What?"

"Concerning this bounder Stubbs."

"My hat!"

"As you fellows know," said Peter, "one of my hobbies is to collect newspaper-cuttings describing unusual events at public schools."

"Yes, we know that," said Dennis Carr.

"But what are you driving at?"

"Listen!" said Peter. "Two years ago there was a big sensation at St. Clive's. I dare say you heard all about it at the time. The science master there—a fellow called Barker—purloined some War Bonds belonging to the headmaster."

"Yes, I remember, that well!" said Harry Wharton. "But what on earth—"

"Barker was arrested, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment," continued Peter Todd.

"And here—" the speaker pointed to one of the cuttings in his album—"is a full report of the affair, together with a photograph of Barker."

"But what's all this got to do with Stubbs?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Peter Todd's reply was sudden and dramatic.

"Look at this photograph!"

The juniors gathered round to examine the photograph, and Johnny Bull gave a shout:

"Stubbs!"

"Stubbs to the life!" gasped Nugent.

"It's the speaking image of him!" declared Bob Cherry.

"Quite so," said Peter Todd. "The Head's harbouring a thief at Greyfriars—a man who's been in quod. He's come under an assumed name, and you can bet your boots he's up to no good!"

There was a buzz of excitement amongst Harry Wharton & Co.

"You'd better take that cutting to the

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Head, Toddy," said Dennis Carr at length, "and have that rotter shown up."

"Yes, rather!"

But Peter Todd demurred.

"We want to be sure of our ground before taking that step," he said. "After all, we've got no proof that Stubbs is the man who carried out the burglary at St. Clive's."

"There's the photograph," said Harry Wharton.

"But that's not proof. Stubbs may be Barker's double. And if we were to denounce him as a thief, and he turned out to be nothing of the sort, we should find ourselves in Queer Street!"

"That's true enough," said Nugent thoughtfully.

"But surely we're not going to sit tight and do nothing!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"We must keep our optics open, that's all," said Peter Todd. "If Stubbs is a wrong 'un, he's bound to give himself away sooner or later. My theory is that he's come to Greyfriars in order to carry out a burglary. But that's only conjecture on my part. And we want proof before taking action."

"What beats me," said Harry Wharton, "is how Stubbs—or Barker, as he probably is—managed to get taken on here as a temporary Form-master. The Head would want references."

"Not for such a short stay," said Peter Todd. "He'd satisfy himself that the man knew something about schoolmastering, and he wouldn't trouble any further."

Harry Wharton & Co. determined to keep Mr. Stubbs under close observation—to note his goings out and his comings in, and to thwart, if possible, any attempt at a burglary. Much as they disliked playing the part of spies, they realised that Mr. Stubbs, being a suspect, must be shadowed, or he might get away with a rich haul.

Wherever the new Form-master went that day, he was followed as diligently as Mary's little lamb followed its mistress.

The juniors took turns at keeping watch on Mr. Stubbs' movements. Had they remained together, it would have excited suspicion.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had a very weary vigil, and a very chilly one, too. For they were stationed in the doorway opposite Mr. Stubbs' study, and the wind blew in cold gusts along the passage.

The juniors waited with growing impatience for Mr. Stubbs to emerge from his study. But he failed to do so. And at length midnight boomed out from the old clock-tower.

"No go!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Afraid not," rejoined his companion.

The door of Mr. Stubbs' study was slightly ajar. Bob Cherry tiptoed towards it, and cautiously opened it another two inches, so that he was able to peer into the apartment. He saw the Form-master reclining in the armchair, fast asleep, with his slippers feet resting on the fender. No man looked less like a dangerous criminal than Mr. Stubbs did at that moment.

"Strikes me we're on the wrong track, Harry!" muttered Bob, as he withdrew.

"Stubbs is sound asleep, and the sooner we follow his example the better. It's perishing cold, and I don't feel like hanging about any longer!"

"Nor I!" grunted Wharton.

And the two chums, very dissatisfied with their uneventful vigil, went silently back to the Remove dormitory.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Against Orders!

**N**EXT morning, after breakfast, the Famous Five and Dennis Carr received a message to the effect that Mr. Quelch desired to see them at once.

It was the day of the Guy Fawkes celebrations, and all Greyfriars, with the exception of the Remove Form, was simmering with excitement. For a tremendous bonfire was to be lighted in the Close that evening, and a magnificent firework display was to be held.

The Removites, however, had been debarred by the Head from taking part in the revels. The Form was in disgrace, owing to the juniors' conduct of a few days previously, when Mr. Quelch's study had been set on fire.

Consequently, an atmosphere of gloom hung over the Greyfriars Remove. And Harry Wharton & Co. were looking none too cheerful as they made their way to Mr. Quelch's bed-room.

They found Mr. Quelch sitting up in bed.

On a small table by the bedside reposed the cigarettes, cigars, and tobacco which the juniors had bought for the invalid.

"I understand, my boys," said Mr. Quelch, "that you are responsible for these gifts?"

"We didn't intend you to know where they came from, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"No; but Dr. Locke gave me an inkling. I am much indebted to you for your kindness and thoughtfulness."

"Oh, rats, sir!" said Bob Cherry uncomfortably.

"The pleasuredfulness is ours, honoured sahib!" murmured Hurree Singh.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I hoped to communicate some good news to you this morning, my boys," he said.

"But I fear I must disappoint you."

The juniors waited, wonderingly, for the Form-master to continue.

"As you are aware, Dr. Locke gave orders that the Remove were not to take part in this evening's celebrations. I sent him a note, asking him if he would be good enough to withdraw those orders; and he has just replied to my request."

Harry Wharton & Co. waited expectantly.

Was it possible that they were to be allowed to take part in the Guy Fawkes revels, after all?

Mr. Quelch's next words threw a damper on this hope.

"Dr. Locke has consented to cancel the punishment, except so far as the ringleaders are concerned. And he adjudges you six boys to have been the ringleaders."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You will therefore be detained in the Remove-room this evening, from seven o'clock onwards, and a prefect will be placed in charge of you. I do not wish to appear harsh, but these are Dr. Locke's orders."

The juniors exchanged dismal glances. They considered it hardly fair that they should be singled out for special punishment, whilst their schoolfellows were let off.

However, they realised that Mr. Quelch had done his best for them; and they thanked him for his efforts on their behalf.

"What rotten luck!" growled Harry Wharton, as they went downstairs.

"Beastly!" agreed Dennis Carr.

"We've got to sit stewing in the Form-room, while the rest of the fellows are enjoying themselves!" said Bob Cherry. "It's not good enough!"

"We shall have to grintfully bear it, I suppose," said Hurree Singh.

"I don't see why we should," said Johnny Bull, in tones of defiance. "I vote we cut loose from the Form-room, and take a hand in the celebrations."

"But how can we possibly do that, fat-head?" demanded Harry Wharton, with a touch of impatience.

"Lend me your ears," was the reply, "and I'll tell you."

And then Johnny Bull outlined his scheme. It was a daring scheme, and full of risk. But, as Johnny pointed out, it would be quite impossible to carry the thing through without running a certain amount of risk.

Johnny Bull's chums expressed themselves in favour of his plans, and then the juniors went in to morning lessons.

Mr. Stubbs proved himself as big a tyrant as ever that day. He goaded the Remove almost to the verge of rebellion.

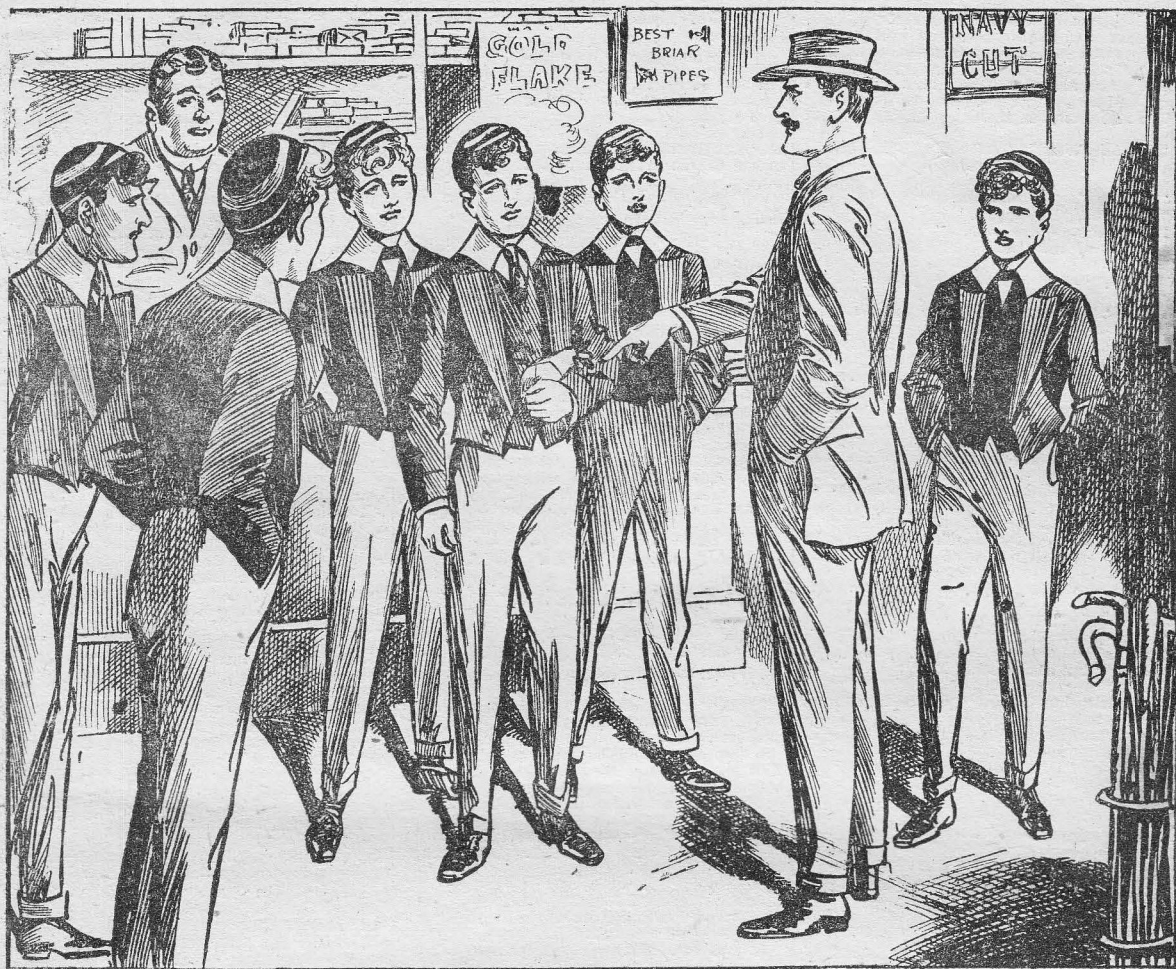
Judging by the cruel smile which incessantly played about his lips, the temporary Form-master took a positive delight in making things unpleasant for his pupils. On several occasions he was downright brutal in the administration of punishment. But the juniors had no redress. It was against their code of honour to complain to the Head.

The day dragged slowly. But dusk fell at length, and there were scenes of great animation in the frosty Close.

A huge bonfire had been prepared, and at seven o'clock a procession of torch-bearers began. There was also a dazzling display of fireworks, whilst numerous effigies, representing various unpopular persons, were conveyed to the bonfire.

In the Remove Form-room sat the Famous Five and Dennis Carr, looking very meek and demure. Indeed, so meek and demure did they look that it was rather surprising that Loder of the Sixth, who had been placed in charge of them, did not suspect that there was something in the wind.

Loder was scowling savagely as he sat at the Form-master's desk. He was furious at having his evening spoilt like this. He had intended to slip down to one of the shady haunts in the village whilst the cele-



The juniors were about to leave the tobacconist's when they found their exit barred by a stranger, with a thin hatchet-face. "Ha! I have caught you red-handed, you young rascals!" Harry Wharton & Co. stepped back, and stared at him in blank amazement. (See page 5.)

brations were in progress. But that was impossible now.

"If you kids give me any more trouble," he snarled, "I shall come down heavy!"

The defaulters sat silent.

"You deserve to be sacked from the school for setting Quelchy's study alight!" Loder went on. "The Head's too soft and lenient. He believes too much in the quality of mercy. If the punishment of you young hooligans had been in my hands, you'd have got short shrift!"

Still the juniors said nothing, though one or two of them flushed angrily on being addressed as young hooligans.

The minutes passed, and from the Close came sounds of shouting and laughter. In the Remove Form-room, however, no word was spoken.

Loder produced a sporting paper, and spread it out on the desk in front of him. He had been reading it intently for about five minutes, when suddenly Harry Wharton bounded to his feet.

"Collar him!" he rapped out.

Before Loder could realise what was happening, the six juniors were upon him. He struggled and shouted, but in vain. He was pinioned to the stool on which he sat, and Johnny Bull produced a length of cord, and tied the prefect's legs to the legs of the stool, after which Loder's arms were fastened behind his back.

This startling manœuvre occupied only a couple of moments.

Loder of the Sixth was bound and helpless, and his eyes glittered with fury.

"You—you young demons!" he spluttered. "You'll be fired out of Greyfriars for this!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Come along, kids!" said Harry Wharton, turning to the door. "The celebrations are well under way by now."

Bob Cherry waved his hand to the infuriated prefect.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he sang out cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In desperation, Loder shouted at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help!"

But the din in the Close was so terrific that nobody heard Loder. The bonfire was blazing, and scores of fireworks were exploding every minute.

Before going into the Close, Harry Wharton & Co. produced crapa, masks from their pockets, and proceeded to don them. This was part of Johnny Bull's scheme. By wearing the masks, the juniors would avoid detection. And the fact that they were masked would not excite suspicion, for dozens of fellows wore masks on Guy Fawkes night.

"Hurrah!" chortled Bob Cherry. "We shall be able to take part in the fun, after all!"

"Where's Mauly?" asked Nugent, looking round as they entered the Close. "He's the merchant with the fireworks!"

Lord Mauleverer was discovered some distance from the blazing bonfire. He was bending over a huge packing-case, which was crammed with fireworks of all sorts and shapes and sizes.

"Want any help, Mauly?" inquired Dennis Carr.

The schoolboy earl nearly fell down.

"Bead! What are you fellows doin' here? You're supposed to be under detention! How have you worked the oracle?"

"We collared Loder, and strung him up," explained Nugent. "I expect we shall smart for it afterwards. It's regarded as a capital offence to lay hands on a prefect. Still, we must face the music."

"But wherefore those masks?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"We don't want the Head or any of the masters to spot us," said Wharton.

"But Loder will tell them that you've broken detention—"

"Yes, but not yet," said Bob Cherry. "He won't be able to report us until we release him. And, meanwhile—well, 'One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name,' as the poet says."

Lord Mauleverer chuckled.

"Pile in, dear boys!" he said, pointing to the case of fireworks.

Harry Wharton & Co. needed no second bidding. They helped themselves to the fireworks, which were soon spurting and exploding on every side.

"By the way," said Nugent suddenly, "there's an effigy of Loder in the study. Let's go and get it."

"Good!"

The juniors dashed into the building, returning shortly afterwards with a weird and wonderful figure, from whose mouth a clay pipe depended. Pinned to the front of the dummy was a placard, bearing the inscription:

**"GERALD LODER—BULLY, BEAST, AND BRAGGART!"**

The effigy attracted quite a lot of attention as it was carried through the throng of revellers.

"Heave-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when the juniors drew near to the bonfire.

And the dummy figure was hurled on to the blazing faggots. Great tongues of flame enveloped it, and Loder of the Sixth—or, rather, his counterpart—was soon reduced to a heap of charred embers.

And then a new sensation arose. Skinner and Bolsover major and several others came marching towards the bonfire, bearing between them a grotesque figure. There was a diabolical frown on the dummy's face, and a cane had been tied to its hand.

The inscription on the effigy was as follows:

**"DOWN WITH THE ARCH-TYRANT  
STUBBS!"**

"Hurrah!"

"Heave-ho, you fellows!"

"Feed him to the flames!"

In spite of their jubilation, Skinner & Co. glanced round nervously, as if expecting the temporary Form-master to pounce upon them.

But Mr. Stubbs was nowhere to be seen.

The flames were soon sizzling and crackling around the effigy, and the crowd cheered uproariously. Had Mr. Stubbs been present, he could have had no better proof of his popularity.

The Head was in the Close, but he was too far away to see what was happening. He was advancing towards the window of the Remove Form room, in order to see that the detained juniors were still there.

It was impossible, owing to the height of the window, for the Head to see right into the room. But he was able to catch a glimpse of the back of Loder's head, and he concluded that all was well.

He was about to turn away, when he distinctly heard a cry from within the apartment.

"Help, help!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head. "That is Loder's voice! Are you there, Loder? What is happening?"

"Help!"

Dr. Locke hurried into the building, and he lost no time in getting to the Remove Form room. He halted on the threshold in astonishment and anger.

For Loder of the Sixth was bound to the stool on which he sat. And Harry Wharton & Co. had vanished!

"What does this mean, Loder?" demanded the Head, though he knew only too well what it meant.

"The prefect spluttered with rage.

"Those young scoundrels set upon me, sir, and caught me unawares, and tied me up! And they've gone out to take part in the celebrations!"

The Head looked grim.

"I've been strung up like a trussed chicken for nearly an hour, sir!" hooted Loder. "I'm cramped in every limb! Would you mind cutting these cords, sir? There's a knife in my left-hand coat-pocket."

Dr. Locke promptly extricated the prefect from his unfortunate predicament.

"Those juniors have set my express orders at defiance!" he exclaimed. "They shall be punished severely for this outrage!"

And the Head, with Loder in his wake, hurried back to the Close, on the track of the Famous Five and Dennis Carr.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### A Thrilling Capture.

**H**ARRY WHARTON & Co. were watching the effigy of Mr. Stubbs being devoured by the hungry flames, when a breathless and excited junior dashed up to them. It was Peter Todd.

Peter recognised the juniors in spite of the masks.

"This way, you fellows—quick!" he panted.

"What the merry dickens—" began Bob Cherry in amazement.

"Follow me!" There was an imperative ring in Peter's voice. "I'll explain as soon as we get out of earshot of this crowd."

Greatly wondering, the juniors hurried away at Peter Todd's heels.

"I've been shadowing Stubbs," explained Peter, as soon as they were well away from the crowd of revellers.

"And you've discovered something?" exclaimed Dennis Carr eagerly.

"Yes! At this very moment Stubbs is in the Head's study!"

"My hat!"

"I tracked him there," continued Peter, in a low tone. "He's got a bag of tools with him, and an electric torch, so you can guess what his game is. The corridors seemed deserted, and he didn't dream he was being followed. He's going to burgle the Head's safe, and he couldn't have chosen a more convenient time. If I hadn't spotted him, he'd have got away with a rich haul."

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"By Jove, yes!" said Harry Wharton.

"Come on!"

With their pulses throbbing with excitement, the juniors made hurried tracks for the Head's study.

From beneath the door a ray of light glimmered.

The light of the marauder's electric torch was not visible to the crowd in the Close, owing to the fact that the blinds were drawn.

For an instant the juniors halted in the corridor and listened. But they could hear nothing.

If the Head's study was being raided, the raider was remarkably silent in his movements.

Harry Wharton's hand gripped the door-handle.

"Now!" he muttered.

The door was thrown open, and with one accord the juniors dashed into the study.

Once inside the apartment, they caught a brief glimpse of a man kneeling in front of the open safe. Then the man's electric torch was put out, and the study was plunged into darkness.

"Quick! Don't let him get away!" It was Dennis Carr's voice, tense with excitement.

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"Where's the electric-light switch?" muttered Bob Cherry, groping blindly in the darkness.

Whilst Bob fumbled for the switch, Johnny Bull planted himself with his back to the door. It was well that he did so, for the next instant a form collided heavily with his own.

"Got him!" exclaimed Johnny, his arms encircling the burglar's waist. "Lend me a hand, you fellows!"

Click!

Bob Cherry had found the switch at last, and in the dazzling glare of the electric light the cracksmen stood revealed.

It was Mr. Stubbs, the temporary Form-master!

The man tried to appear calm, though not with much success. He was caught like a rat in a trap—trapped down by seven of his own pupils. And he realised the futility of trying to escape. Having caught their prey, Harry Wharton & Co. were grimly determined not to let him slip through their fingers.

"The game's up, John Barker!" said Peter Todd.

The man started violently.

"My name is Stubbs—" he began.

"Your new name, perhaps—but I prefer to call you by the old one," answered Peter calmly. "Two years ago you burgled the Head's safe at St. Clive's, and were collared, and history seems to be repeating itself."

"Release me!" panted Mr. Barker, alias Stubbs. "Let me go! I will make it worth your while—"

Harry Wharton's lips curled contemptuously.

"Bribery and corruption won't wash, so far as we are concerned," he said. "You're our prisoner, and—"

Crash!

With a sudden, tiger-like spring, the burglar tore himself from Johnny Bull's grasp, and dashed his fist into Harry Wharton's face. The captain of the Remove went to the floor like a log.

Following this, Mr. Barker caught Frank Nugent round the middle and sent him spinning against the opposite wall.

But no further success attended the burglar's bid for freedom. Bob Cherry and Dennis Carr and Peter Todd hurled themselves upon him, and he was overpowered and borne to the floor. The back of his head cannoned against the fender, and he lay stunned and helpless.

At this juncture the door of the study was thrown open, and the Head appeared on the scene.

For a moment Dr. Locke stood speechless on the threshold. An extraordinary scene met his gaze.

Mr. Barker lay where he had fallen, and two masked juniors—Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent—were slowly picking them-

selves up. There were five other juniors in the study, and all save Peter Todd were masked.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the bewildered Head. "Todd, what—what is the meaning of this?"

In a few hurried sentences, Peter Todd explained the situation. And to say that the Head was astonished was to put it mildly. He could scarcely believe that the temporary Form-master had rifled his safe, until Peter Todd went through the man's pockets and brought to light a sheaf of banknotes and a number of important documents.

And then the Head realised that he had been very unwise in not insisting upon references from the man who had been given a temporary position on the school staff.

"But who—who are these other boys?" exclaimed Dr. Locke at length.

Harry Wharton & Co. removed their masks, and the Head frowned. He was about to speak harshly to the juniors on the subject of breaking detention, and then he stopped short, realising that but for these same juniors he would have sustained serious losses, and the burglar would have got away.

"I must communicate with the police at once!" he said, stepping to the telephone.

Within half an hour a police-inspector and a constable arrived from Courtfield.

Mr. Barker gave them no trouble. He was still dazed, and he made no resistance as the handcuffs were clicked upon his wrists. As he was led away, however, he glared savagely at the juniors who had brought about his undoing.

But Harry Wharton & Co. ignored that vindictive glare. They were only too glad to see the back of the temporary—the very temporary—Form-master, under whose brief rule they had been made to squirm.

The burglar's capture and arrest soon became common knowledge, and the excitement of Bonfire Night was increased tenfold.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not get off scot-free. Grateful though he was to them for the service they had rendered, the Head could not overlook the fact that they had laid hands on a prefect, and broken detention. But he dealt very leniently with them, merely giving them two hundred lines apiece.

Loder of the Sixth was furious when he learned that the juniors had got off so lightly. But Loder's fury went unheeded.

The Guy Fawkes' celebrations were kept up until a late hour that night, and Harry Wharton & Co. retired to their dormitory in high spirits.

"The Fifth hasn't been a wash-out, after all!" said Bob Cherry. "We've had a glorious time!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And Stubbs—I mean Barker—has been bowled out—"

"Thanks to your Uncle Peter!" said Peter Todd modestly.

"And everything in the garden is lovely!" concluded Bob Cherry.

"Remember, remember, the Fifth of

November,

Gunpowder, treason, and plot!

When six I won't mention escaped from

detention,

And Barker the thief caught it hot!"

chanted Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "I suspected that boulder Stubbs all along!"

And there was a fresh peal of laughter.

"Well, we did something more than suspect him—we collared 'im!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm not a vindictive sort of fellow, but I hope he's sent to Dartmoor for umpteen years!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull's hope was not realised. It transpired that John Barker, alias Stubbs, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. And the report of the Court proceedings was duly cut out by Peter Todd and pasted in his album for future reference.

As for Mr. Quelch, he made a speedy recovery, and within a day or two he was back again in the Remove Form-room.

Matters pursued the even tenor of their way. But not for many moons, so to speak, would Harry Wharton & Co. be likely to forget their adventures on that memorable Bonfire Night at Greyfriars.

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "The Boxing Boom at Greyfriars!" in next Friday's issue.)



# ★ LEGGETT'S LOOT! ★

A Splendid Long Complete School Tale, dealing with the Adventures  
of JIMMY SILVER & Co., at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Uncle James is Puzzled.

"IT'S jolly odd!" said Jimmy Silver. Jimmy made that remark at the tea-table in the end study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked at him inquiringly.

"Very odd indeed!" added Jimmy. "What's the trouble now?" yawned Lovell. "If you don't want the last egg, pass it this way!"

"I've been thinking—" "Well, I admit that's rather odd!" assented Lovell. "What made you do it?" Raby and Newcome grinned, and Jimmy Silver frowned.

"Don't be a funny ass, Lovell, old chap! I've been thinking. There's something odd—something jolly queer. Haven't you noticed it?"

"Blest if I have!" said Lovell. "If you mean the way Leggett plays footer, that's queer. Bulkeley made him come down to practice this afternoon, and he was looking like a demon in a pantomime!"

"Blow Leggett!" "Certainly! Blow all the Modern bounders at Rookwood!" assented Lovell. "Blow 'em all, from Leggett to Tommy Dodd! If you haven't got any designs on that egg—" "Look here—"

Lovell reached over, and fielded the egg. "Go ahead!" he said. "We're listening! What's odd and what's queer besides your going in for thinking, Jimmy?"

"There's something going on that I can't quite catch on to—something fishy!" said Jimmy Silver, knitting his brow. "I've noticed it for some time. Haven't you noticed that a lot of fellows have taken to clearing off in the evening somewhere? They can't go out of gates after locking-up. Where do they go?"

"Blest if I know, or care twopence!" said Lovell. "Why shouldn't they clear off if they want to?"

"There's another thing. Lots of the chaps have been uncommonly hard up lately. Money seems to have run out on all sides." "Yes, I've noticed that," said Raby. "Three or four chaps have been trying to borrow of me to-day. They hadn't any luck, though."

"That's so," said Newcome. "Higgs and Muffin and Towny and Topham all tackled me to-day for loans. Towny and Topham generally have plenty of tin. But they're stony now, and trying to raise the wind."

"Same with Gower and Peele and a lot of others," said Jimmy. "All the merry nuts of the Fourth are stony, and a lot of other fellows, too. Tubby Muffin was looking the picture of misery last night, and he only groaned when I asked him what was the matter."

"Not our bizney," suggested Lovell. Jimmy shook his head.

"Perhaps it is our bizney," he replied. "This study is head of the Fourth—"

"Hear, hear!" "And if there's some fishy rot going on, it's up to us to look into it."

"But—" A tap at the door interrupted Lovell. Flynn was one of the juniors who had fallen into the mysterious habit of disappearing from sight at a time when the juniors were supposed to be doing their prep in their studies in the evening.

Flynn of the Fourth generally looked merry and careless, one of the cheeriest juniors in the Classical Fourth.

But he was not looking cheery now. His honest, frank face was clouded, and there was a curiously furtive expression in his

eyes that the chums of the Fourth had never noticed about Flynn before.

"The Irish junior coloured under their gaze. 'Hallo, Paddy!' said Jimmy cheerily. 'Sure I've looked in to ask ye something,' said Flynn. 'Can any of ye lend me half-a-crown?'"

"Half-a-crown, more likely," said Jimmy Silver. "Half-quids have gone out of fashion in this study."

"Sure, half-a-crown is better than nothing!" said Flynn. "Much obliged to ye, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy handed over the half-crown, and Flynn departed. The Fistical Four looked at one another oddly. Little borrowings of that kind were usual enough among the juniors, but Flynn's manner was not at all usual.

Flynn had scarcely left the study when Tubby Muffin came in. The fattest junior at Rookwood did not look so rosy as usual. His podgy face was pale and worried.

"Well?" said Jimmy grimly. "Could you lend me a few pounds?" asked Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" The modest request made the end study roar.

"Not a few hundred?" asked Raby. "Or a few thousand?" grinned Raby. "Or a few million?" chuckled Lovell.

"A few bob would do," said Tubby, with a look of distress. "I'll let you have it back to-morrow. I shall have plenty of dibs to-morrow."

"What do you want a few pounds for, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver quietly. "You don't want to spend a few pounds in tuck, I suppose—even you?"

"Oh, no! It's something else."

"What else?" Tubby Muffin crimsoned, but he did not reply.

"Get it off your chest!" said Jimmy. "There aren't any quids in this study, but we can manage a few bob, if it's important. But our last bobs are not going to the tuckshop, my fat tulip!"

"It isn't the tuckshop!" stammered Tubby.

"Then what is it?" "I—I can't tell you, Jimmy Silver! Leggett specially told me not to let you know anything about it! I—I—I mean—"

Leggett did? ejaculated Jimmy. "Nunno!" stammered Tubby. "Nothing of the sort! It's nothing to do with Leggett, of course!"

"Don't tell whoppers, Tubby! Do you owe Leggett money?"

"Oh, no!" "That rotter Leggett lends money among the kids at a penny a bob interest!" said Lovell. "Awful outsider!"

"He hasn't lent me any money," said Tubby. "I've asked him, and he won't."

"Then what do you want it for?" "I—I'm not going to tell you!"

"Something you can't tell us—what?" "Well, you fellows won't understand," said the fat Classical. "You're not sporting chaps!"

"Sporting chaps!" repeated Jimmy. "Yes. You're not the sort to have a flutter!" said Tubby loftily. "You haven't any go in you, Leggett says!"

"Oh, he does, does he?" "N-no! I—I mean, Leggett never said anything of the sort!" said Tubby, in alarm. "Look here, you're not going to pump me! Can you lend me some tin?"

"Not for a little flutter, you duffer!" "Then you can go and eat coke!" said Tubby independently; and he snuffed, and rolled out of the study.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath. "What do you think of that?" he exclaimed.

"There's something going on that's awfully fishy, and that cad Leggett is mixed up with it. Moreover, it's something that wants looking into, and Uncle James is going to look into it! Come on!"

And the Fistical Four left the study in an unusually thoughtful mood. It was only too clear that something of a mysterious nature was going on in the Fourth Form at Rookwood—something from which they were being carefully excluded. And the captain of the Fourth was quite convinced that it was high time for "Uncle James" to look into it.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Plot Thickens.

HOOKER and Jones minor were chatting in the quad as the Fistical Four came by. The chums of the Fourth caught a remark from Jones: "I've got an idea for to-night, though. What about backing red all the time, and then—"

Jones minor caught sight of Jimmy Silver & Co., and ceased speaking.

"Go on!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Don't leave us out of the little secret, Jonesy." Jones minor turned red.

"Oh, rot!" he said uneasily. "What the thunder do you mean by backing red?"

"Oh, n-n-nothing!" "Is it a game?" asked Lovell, mystified.

"Come on, Hooker!" said Jones. "We shan't get our prep done in time if we stay here jawing!"

The two juniors walked away quickly. The Fistical Four were left blinking in astonishment.

"Backing red!" said Newcome. "Is he potty? If he isn't, what the merry deuce did he mean?"

Jimmy Silver shook his head. "Blest if I know! It beats me hollow!"

"Lots of the fellows are in the secret," said Lovell. "They're leaving us out on purpose. They can't treat the end study like that, by Jove!"

"They've got a reason," said Jimmy Silver drily. "It's a secret they can't tell us—a jolly shady one, that's clear enough!"

"Because we're such good little boys!" chuckled Raby.

"Fathead! Because we should be down on it!"

"But it isn't our bizney." "Who's captain of the Fourth?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Who's Uncle James—kind Uncle James—to all Rookwood? I tell you this is jolly fishy, and it's got to be inquired into! There's some rotten game going on, and all the Nuts are in it—that isn't surprising. But Flynn is a first-rate chap, and he's in it, and he won't let on what it is. And Jones and Hooker, too—what are they keeping secrets for?"

"It doesn't seem much good asking them." "The plot thickens!" grinned Raby.

"I've been thinking, too," announced Lovell. "Well, what is it?"

"I've been thinking that if we don't get on with our prep we shall have trouble with Bootles in the morning."

"Ha, ha!" "Oh, rats!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

"Well, you see, prep's got to be done. Bootles has been waxy lately owing to some of the chaps shirking prep. We don't want lines or detention, fathead; we've got the

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footer to think of! Do you want Greyfriars to beat us?"

Jimmy Silver grunted, but he acknowledged that prep had to be done. Prep, accordingly, was done in the end study.

That night Jimmy Silver went to bed in a decidedly thoughtful mood. It was not agreeable to the captain of the Fourth to be left out in this way of something in which, at least, half the Form were concerned. But that was not all. Whatever was going on was of a "shady" nature; there was no need to be secretive otherwise. Uncle James felt that it was his business. But at present Uncle James was quite in the dark.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Getting Serious!

"WOW-OV-OV! Leggo!"

Jimmy Silver stopped.

The voice was the voice of Tubby Muffin, and it was raised in anguish. Jimmy Silver heard it as he was passing the old stone archway that led into Little Quad. And then he heard the angry voice of Higgs, the bully of the Fourth.

"Shut up, you little beast!"

"Yow-yow! I'll tell Jimmy Silver!"

"Look here—"

Jimmy strode through the archway, and came on the scene.

"Rescue!" yelled Tubby, as he caught sight of the captain of the Fourth.

The fat junior was wriggling in Higgs' grasp.

"Let Tubby alone, Higgs!" said Jimmy curtly.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Higgs angrily.

"I won't shell out!" howled Tubby Muffin. "He wants my half-quad, and I'm not going to let him have it!"

Jimmy Silver's brow darkened.

"Higgs, you rotter—"

Higgs released the fat Classical, his rugged face growing red.

Tubby Muffin promptly dodged behind Jimmy Silver.

"Keep him off, Jimmy! He's not going to have my half-quad! I got the postal-order only this morning, too!"

"Look here," said Higgs savagely, "you needn't meddle here, Jimmy Silver! I'm going to borrow a half-sovereign of this little beast, that's all! I suppose you don't think I want to steal the money, do you?"

"Well, borrowing it against his will isn't much different from stealing," said Jimmy. "And you're jolly well not going to do it!"

"Who's going to stop me?" roared Higgs.

"Uncle James!" said Jimmy Silver coolly.

Higgs clenched his big fists. The burly bully of the Fourth had tried conclusions with Jimmy Silver before, in vain. But he was not averse from trying conclusions again.

Tubby Muffin cut off through the archway, and Higgs made a rush in pursuit. Jimmy Silver promptly joined in, and collared Higgs by the back of the neck. The bully of the Fourth turned on him, and in a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs. Tubby, quite content to leave Higgs to be dealt with by his champion, scudded away across the quadrangle and vanished.

"Boys!"

Mr. Bootles came across Little Quad from the library.

"Silver—Higgs—"

The combatants, flushed and excited, separated at the Form-master's voice. Mr. Bootles gave them a severe look.

"Take a hundred lines each, Higgs and Silver, and let there be no more of this!" rapped out Mr. Bootles.

"Ye-es, sir."

Mr. Bootles passed on, and Jimmy Silver and Higgs went different ways, looking grim. Jimmy looked for Tubby Muffin. He looked in the tuckshop first, fully expecting to find Tubby there, as he was in funds. Most of Tubby's funds went over Sergeant Kettle's counter for refreshments, liquid and solid. But the fat Classical was not there, and the sergeant had not seen him.

"Seen Tubby?" asked Jimmy, meeting his clums in the doorway of the schoolhouse.

"Yes; he's gone in," said Lovell. "Anything the matter?"

Jimmy explained about the scene in Little Quad. Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked serious.

"My hat, it's coming to something!" said Lovell, with a whistle. "Higgs is a beastly bully; but bullying a chap into lending him money is rather the limit."

"It's serious," said Jimmy. "And Tubby's

in funds, and hasn't been guzzling. That's jolly odd. What is he keeping his money for, eh?"

"Because—"

"Because of what goes on in the evening, when they sneak out after prep," said Jimmy. "Wherever it is the fellows go, they lose money there, that's plain."

"But—but—I can't understand—"

"I can't either; but I'm going to. Let's go and see Tubby."

The Fistical Four went up to Tubby's study. They found the door locked, and Jimmy rapped sharply with his knuckles.

"Go away!" came the fat Classical's voice from within. "You're not going to have my half-quad, Higgs!"

"It isn't Higgs," said Jimmy. "It's us."

"Oh! Sorry! I'm busy."

"Open the door!"

"Can't! I'm working!"

"Don't tell whoppers, you fat Prussian," exclaimed Jimmy Silver angrily. "Look here, Tubby, what did Higgs want your money for?"

"Because he's a beast."

"Why haven't you blued it in tuck as usual?"

No reply.

"What is it you are going to do with your money to-night, Tubby?"

Silence.

"Will you tell me what's on, you fat idiot?"

Still no reply. Tubby Muffin was evidently not to be drawn. Jimmy Silver bestowed an angry kick on the door, and the chums retired.

"Whither bound?" asked Raby, as Jimmy went downstairs.

"I'm going to see Leggett. He's got a hand in this, and I'm going to know what it is," said Jimmy savagely. "It's as plain as the nose on your face that it's gambling of some sort."

"Phew!"

"And Leggett is making a profit out of it," said Jimmy. "And every silly ass of the lot would be flogged, sacked perhaps, if it came out. And it must come out sooner or later. Come on."

The Fistical Four met the three Tommies on the Modern side. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle lined up in the doorway of Mr. Manders' house. But Jimmy held up his hand in sign of pax.

"No rags now," he said gruffly. "We've come over to see Leggett, and you may as well come with us. It's jolly serious."

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"Leggett's a worm," he said. "But we don't allow you to rag, Moderns, you Classical ass!"

"It isn't a ragging, fathead! We only want to talk to the cad, and you can come. I tell you it's serious."

"Oh, all right," said Tommy Dodd.

"He's in his study," remarked Tommy Cook.

"I heard him lock the door."

"We'll jolly soon make him open it."

The seven juniors proceeded to Leggett's study, and they found the door locked. Tommy Dodd knocked.

"Let us in, Leggett."

"I'm busy! What do you want?" came the thin, acid tones of the cad of the Fourth.

"Let us in, or we'll burst the lock," said Jimmy in concentrated tones. "I give you one minute!"

"You fool! You'll have Manders up!"

"Let him come. Then you can explain to him your precious little game," said Jimmy Silver. "Manders will be interested."

The juniors heard a startled exclamation in the study. The minute was enough for Leggett. He opened the door. Jimmy glanced round the study as he entered. Whatever "work" Leggett had been engaged upon he had put it out of sight.

"Counting up your gains—what?" said Jimmy Silver.

Leggett stared.

"I—I was looking over some papers," he stammered.

"Let's see your pocket-book."

"My—my pocket-book?"

"Yes."

"I'm not going to!" said Leggett sullenly. "Mind your own business!"

"Look here, what do you want to see Leggett's pocket-book for, Silver?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"I'll explain. There's something going on in the school; you know that as well as I do. You're not in the secret, and I'm not. Lots of the fellows clear off somewhere in

the evening, where they lose money. One silly ass has been babbling about backing red, another silly ass mentioned that he'd had good luck, another admitted he'd promised Leggett to say nothing about what was going on. I was puzzled at first, but I can see it now. There's some kind of gambling going on, and Leggett is at the bottom of it. He's got some dodge for winning the other fellows money, and I want to see his pocket-book for proof."

"What rot!" said Tommy Dodd incredulously.

"Look at his face!" said Lovell caustically. Leggett's face had turned almost yellow. Tommy Dodd gave him a startled look, and his brows knitted.

"Is it true, Leggett?" he demanded.

Leggett recovered himself a little.

"No, it isn't! It's a Classical yarn, of course!"

"Well, show us your pocket-book," said Tommy Dodd decidedly. "If you've got a lot of money, as Jimmy Silver says, we shall know what to think. Out with it, or we'll collar you and make you! Sharp's the word!"

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### The Rookwood Reformers Mean Business.

THE juniors gathered round Leggett with grim looks. There was no doubt that the cad of the Fourth had to obey.

He shrugged his narrow shoulders.

"I don't mind showing you my pocket-book, Tommy Dodd. I'm not going to be ordered about by Classical cads!"

"Well, that's all right," said Tommy.

"It doesn't matter so long as you show it."

"And huck up!" said Jimmy Silver.

Leggett thrust his hand into his jacket and took out his pocket-book. He opened it for the juniors to see.

It contained several letters and a currency note for ten shillings and some stamps. Nothing more.

Tommy Dodd looked relieved.

"I thought it was all rot," he remarked. "You're off-side, Jimmy Silver. Better go home and think again."

Jimmy shook his head.

"I thought the cad had the money about him" he said. "I suppose he was putting it away somewhere. That's why he had the door locked."

"You can search the study if you like!" sneered Leggett.

"That means that you've shoved your loot into a safe place where we couldn't find it," retorted Jimmy Silver.

"You can think so if you like."

"Oh, draw it mild, Jimmy Silver, ye gossooner!" growled Tommy Doyle. "You're barkin' up the wrong trees. Moderns don't play that kind of game. The giddy sports are all on the Classical side."

"I'm going to ask Leggett some questions. What did Jones minor mean by talking about backing red, Leggett?"

"How should I know? Better ask Jones minor."

"Why do a crowd of fellows get off somewhere out of sight every evening?"

"Ask them."

"Why did Tubby Muffin promise you to tell me nothing about it?"

"Probably he was dreaming."

"How is it that the fellows are all hard up after their mysterious excursion in the evening?"

"Why not ask them?"

"It's no good asking them. It seems that you've made them all promise not to say anything about what's going on. You know that we should be down on it."

"Have they made you Head of Rookwood?" inquired Leggett sarcastically. "I don't see that it's your business."

"It is my business, as captain of the Fourth and Uncle James of Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "My belief is that you've got up some kind of gambling, and that you're welshing all the fellows."

Leggett gave a shrug. He was quite master of himself now, and it was clear that he did not mean to make any revelations—if he had any to make.

"That sounds awfully thick," said Tommy Dodd. "And I don't see that you've got any proof, Jimmy Silver."

"Not so far," said Jimmy quietly. "I'm going to have some, though."

"Can't you mind your own business?" asked Leggett.

"I don't believe it," said Tommy Dodd.

"You've been dreaming, Jimmy. Leggett is

a bit of a waster, but he's not such a rotter as that."

"Well, I believe it!"  
"It's about time for you to clear out!" said Leggett insolently.

Jimmy clenched his hand, but he unclenched it again. It was not much use beginning a scuffle of Classics and Moderns. The matter was too serious to be settled by the punching of noses.

Jimmy left the study without another word, and his chums followed him. Leggett's scoffing laugh was heard as they went down the passage. The three Tommies lingered.

"Look here, Leggett, I suppose there's nothing in what Silver says?" asked Tommy Dodd, scanning Leggett's narrow, foxy face.

"Nothing at all!"  
"Because if you did anything of the kind, and we spotted it, we'd simply smash you!" said Tommy Dodd grimly.

"I tell you there's nothing in it!"  
"Well, you're a bit of a Prussian, but I suppose I must take your word," said Tommy.

And the Modern chums left the study. Leggett scowled when they were gone. He had succeeded in bluffing the inquirers, but he was by no means easy in his mind. The curious game he was playing was attended by many risks.

Jimmy Silver's face was glum at tea in the end study. He was more than ever convinced that Leggett of the Fourth was playing an underhand game by which he succeeded in relieving his Form-fellows of their spare cash. And sooner or later, Jimmy thought, there must be a discovery, and then the disgrace would be terrible. For if the truth was as Jimmy suspected, there would be floggings, and perhaps expulsions, all round. And foolish and reckless fellows who had been tempted by the cunning Leggett would suffer as much as the young rascal himself—perhaps more.

"I don't see that there's anything to be done," said Lovell, breaking the silence.  
"I suppose we can't start watching the fellows about?"

"No jolly fear!" said Raby.  
Jimmy shook his head.

"We can't do that," he said. "But we've got to put a stop to this. It must come out sooner or later. A pretty disgrace for the school then!"

"But—but you're not sure, you know," said Newcome doubtfully.

"I'm sure enough. There's nothing else to account for what we know. It's gambling, and Leggett has got the fellows into it. Towny & Co. would jump at anything of the sort, of course. But he's got other fellows into it—thoughtless asses!—Flynn and Jones and Hooker and Tubby Muffin, for instance. I dare say they look on it as a sort of lark. It won't seem much like a lark if they're hauled up before the Head for it."

"There would be an awful row," said Lovell uneasily.

"We've got to put a stop to it!" said Jimmy angrily. "This study resolves itself into a Committee of Reform."

"Oh crumbs!"

"We could find out where the fellows go, and spot the whole game, only—only we can't play the rotten spy!" said Jimmy, colouring.

"Mustn't do evil that good may come of it," said Raby sagely.

"But that doesn't apply to Leggett. My firm belief is that Leggett's getting the fellows to gamble, and winning their money—most likely welsing them, too. Why, it's breaking the law, and the blessed police would be watching Leggett if they knew.

If what I suspect is true, Leggett is liable to be arrested and charged at a police-court."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Of course, it wouldn't come to that. He knows that. But as Leggett is breaking the law, it's justifiable to shadow him and stop him. You fellows can please yourselves, but I'm going to keep an eye on Leggett this evening."

"We'll help you," said Lovell.  
"He's a downy bird," said Raby dubiously. "If he's really up to something of that kind he will be on his guard."

"We shall spot him sooner or later. It will be dark, and we can hang round the Modern side and look for Leggett. Whoever spots him is to shadow him and see where he goes and what he does. Then, if it's as I think, we can deal with him."

And the Co. nodded assent.  
After tea the Fistical Four hurried through

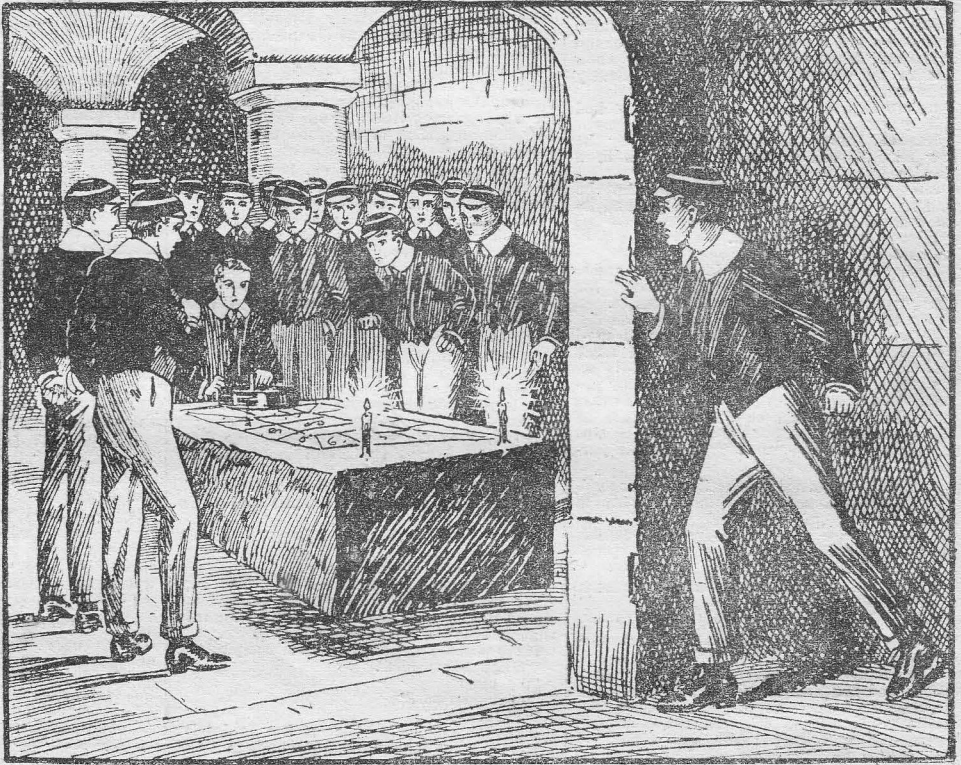
Leggett was simply sauntering about to throw any possible watcher off the track. The Modern junior sauntered round the old clock-tower, and then, apparently satisfied that he was not watched, he started for the abbey ruins.

The ruins of the ancient abbey, though within the grounds of Rookwood, were at some distance from the school. Leggett vanished into the ruins, and Jimmy lost him.

Jimmy followed on cautiously.  
He had no doubt that Leggett had reached his destination now. If he was playing some nefarious game, the abbey ruins were exactly the spot he would choose. The old abbey was seldom visited by day, and never by night.

Under the dark sky the old ruins were silent and shadowed. Leggett had vanished, and there was no sound, no movement, amid the old masses of tumbled masonry.

Jimmy, without making a sound, moved to and fro, looking for a trace of the vanished



Jimmy Silver halted at the fifth vault and looked in. But he was not prepared for what he saw. He could only rub his eyes and look again (See this page).

their preparation. And when darkness had fallen upon Rookwood they slipped out quietly into the quadrangle.

The Rookwood Reformers were on the track!

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**

**Jimmy Silver's Discovery.**

**L**EGGETT of the Fourth came out of Mr. Manders' House, and strolled into the dusk of the quadrangle.

He glanced to and fro as he passed under the old beeches.

From there he sauntered away into Little Quad.

And Jimmy Silver, who had spotted him at once, followed softly in the darkness.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were on the watch at different points, but they had not seen the cad of the Fourth.

Leggett strolled round Little Quad idly, with his hands in his pockets, keeping his eyes well about him. The cad of the Modern Fourth was on his guard, and, after his interview with Jimmy Silver, he suspected that he might be watched. But he did not discern Jimmy. The captain of the Fourth was a practised scout, and it was not difficult for him to shadow Leggett without giving himself away.

From Little Quad Leggett sauntered into the quadrangle again, still with Jimmy Silver on his track. It was plain to Jimmy that

Leggett. The sound of footfalls fell upon his ears, and he stopped, peering about him. There was a murmur of whispering voices.

"The beast wanted my ten bob—he lost all his tin last night, you know." It was Tubby Muffin's voice. "He won't be here to-night."

"Not much good coming without any tin." Jimmy recognised Jones minor's voice. "I sold my pocket-knife to Leggett. He gave me five bob—it's worth ten, the rotter!"

The two Fourth-Formers passed on towards the steps of the vaults under the old abbey. They disappeared into the opening.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"So it's there!" he muttered.

Quietly and cautiously, Jimmy Silver descended the stone stairs. At the bottom was a strong oak door, generally shut. It was open now, and Jimmy groped his way through.

He stood at the first vault, and looked about him.

Ahead, some distance down the series of dusky vaults, was a glimmer of light. Keeping close to the wall, Jimmy Silver tiptoed along.

The light grew stronger.  
It came from three or four candles burning in the sixth vault.

Jimmy Silver halted in the fifth vault, and, keeping close to the old stone arch, he looked in.

The scene that met his eyes made him rub them and look again.

That Leggett had started some gambling game, into which he had inveigled fellows better than himself, Jimmy already suspected. But he was hardly prepared for what now met his eyes.

The candles were burning upon a great slab of stone in the vault.

At the side of the slab, which served as a table, Leggett was seated on a camp-stool. The candle-light gleamed and flickered upon his sallow, greedy face.

The vault was crowded with juniors, mostly Classics.

There were at least fifteen fellows there, all gathered round the slab. They were standing. Leggett's camp-stool was the only seat in the place.

Jimmy recognised Smythe and Howard and Tracy and Selwyn of the Shell. Townsend and Topham and Gower and Pele were there with them. All the Nuts of Rookwood had gathered for the "little flutter."

But there were others, too. Tubby Muffin and Jones minor and Hooker and Towle and Flynn and Evans—fellows whom Jimmy knew not to be vicious, but who had evidently been unable to resist the temptation.

Before Leggett on the slab was what looked like a box at the first glance.

But as Jimmy looked more carefully he saw that it was a wooden wheel set in a wooden bowl.

Jimmy had never seen one before, but he had read descriptions of such things, and he knew what it was.

It was a roulette-wheel.

Roulette!

Jimmy had read of that fascinating game, which is played in Continental casinos for the purpose of swindling foolish tourists.

His teeth came together hard.

It was a roulette-wheel, such as is used at Monte Carlo, though not on the same scale. Leggett had probably picked it up second-hand for a pound or so. Jimmy remembered now having heard someone remark that there was such an article for sale at the second-hand shop at Rookham. It was merely a toy, but it answered the same purpose as the real article.

Evidently Leggett had seen it at the second-hand shop, and it had put into his cunning brain the idea of fleecing his schoolfellows, as richer victims are fleeced by older rascals on a larger scale on the Riviera.

The mystery was a mystery no longer.

Jimmy Silver watched in almost stunned silence.

On the stone slab a shabby green cloth was spread, marked in yellow with numbers and spaces.

The numbers corresponded with those marked on the margin of the roulette-wheel. On the wheel each number had a small compartment below it. The game was played by a marble rolling round the wheel. It fell, sooner or later, into a numbered compartment and that number was the winning number.

The young rascals in the vault had evidently learned the game probably under Leggett's instructions.

They were "making their game"—placing coins on the numbers they fancied or backing black or red, the numbers on the wheel being coloured black and red alternately.

Leggett, evidently acting as croupier, began turning the wheel.

"Make your game," he said.

The wheel turned in one direction, the ball was thrown round in the other.

Wheel and ball revolved in opposite directions till both slowed down and the little ball clicked into one of the numbered holes.

All eyes were turned anxiously on the wheel as it sped.

The ball stopped at last.

"Six, black," said Leggett.

There was a grunt from Jones minor. He had carried out his intention of backing red with disastrous results.

But Smythe of the Shell gave a chirrup of triumph.

"By gad, I'm on six!"

Smythe was the only winner. Leggett was not provided with a croupier's rake. He gathered in the stakes with greedy hands.

Smythe of the Shell had a sixpence on six. Leggett had to pay him thirty-five sixpences, according to the rules of the game.

But as he had raked in thirty shillings at least, he could well afford to do so.

All the same, Jimmy observed a discontented frown on Leggett's greedy face.

Like the real professional gambler, he dis-

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liked paying out. Gathering in was what he liked.

However, he paid out to Smythe, and the great Adolphus grinned gleefully over his fistful of small silver.

"By gad, you have all the luck!" said Howard enviously. "I'm goin' on six this time. Six repeated before."

"I'm puttin' half-a-crown on six," said Tracy loftily.

"A bob for me," said Townsend.

"Go it," said Leggett. "Make your game!"

Jimmy was silent. He was curious to see how that spin would result. Smythe's having won on the number six encouraged the others to follow his example. The number was fairly plastered with coins, from sixpence up to half-a-crown. Leggett's game was on a much humbler scale than that at Monte Carlo, where the minimum stake is five francs. But if "six" turned up this time, the cad of the Fourth would have to pay out something like twenty pounds.

Jimmy doubted whether Leggett had as much as twenty pounds at his disposal for the precious game.

He watched Leggett's face in the candle-light. It is proverbial that the looker-on sees most of the game, and certainly Jimmy could see what was not visible to the eager punters. The cunning gleam in Leggett's eyes did not escape him.

If the number six came up, Leggett would be cleared out of his money, and the rascally proceedings would come to an end.

As it was perfectly certain that Leggett did not intend anything of the sort to happen, it was easy for Jimmy to guess that he had practised assiduously with the roulette-wheel and learned the trick of it.

Jimmy would have been willing to stake his best football that number six would not turn up that time.

In other words, it was clear enough that Leggett was not only gambling, but he was cheating as well, after the fashion of the Continental croupiers, whose manners and customs he was imitating.

Eager, greedy glances were fixed on Leggett as he turned the wheel and spun the ball.

The spirit of gaming was in every heart, and the boyish faces were hard and eager and greedy.

"Ten, black!" announced Leggett, as the wheel stopped.

Jimmy Silver smiled grimly.

On the wheel the numbers were not consecutive. Ten was the eighth number from six. Leggett had run no risk of tumbling into that heavily-backed number by chance.

There was a general groan from the punters.

"What rotten luck!"

"By gad!"

"That does me!"

"Oh, rotten!"

Leggett raked in the stakes sedately. There had not been a single winner, and the stakes were very considerable.

"Make your game!" said Leggett once more. But Jimmy Silver was not listening.

He was treading away through the vaults with glinting eyes. He had discovered all he needed to know, and it was time for the Rookwood Reformers to appear on the scene.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Running the Gauntlet.

"WHERE on earth have you been, Jimmy?"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome met Jimmy Silver as he came into the School House.

"I've been bowling out that scoundrel, Leggett," said Jimmy. "No time for jaw. We've got to get to work. Call the fellows together in the Common-room. All the decent chaps you can find indoors. I'm going over to call Tommy Dodd!"

"But what—" began Lovell.

"Buck up, I tell you!"

"Oh, all right!"

Jimmy Silver cut away to the Modern side. The Co. proceeded to call the meeting in the junior Common-room.

With great surprise, the Fourth-Formers gathered to the meeting. Van Ryn and Oswald and Rawson and several more were there with the Co. when Jimmy Silver came in with the three Tommies and several more Moderns. There were nearly twenty juniors in the meeting, and there was a general howl for Jimmy Silver to explain.

Jimmy Silver closed the door, and proceeded to explain.

He was listened to with blank astonishment. "Roulette!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "You're dreaming!"

"I've seen it with my own eyes," said Jimmy quietly.

"But—but—but—" stammered Lovell. "Why, Leggett would be sacked like a shot if it came out! He could be arrested!"

"That's why he has taken jolly good care to keep it dark!" said Jimmy. "It's clear that every fellow who's been let into the game has given a promise to say nothing about it. And the howling cad has got decent fellows into it, too, as well as the rotters. Silly asses! This is where the Rookwood Reformers chip in!"

"By George, yes!" said Tommy Dodd. "Why, every silly ass of them would be flogged if it came out! And Leggett, at least, would be expelled!"

"Some of the others, too!" remarked Rawson.

"Perhaps the lot," said Oswald. "Nice for their people. And a nosy prefect might have got on to it."

"They're at it now," said Jimmy Silver. "We're going to join them, and help in the little game. Come on! But mind nobody spots you! We don't want prefects on in this scene. Come separately to the ruins, and meet at the vault steps."

"Right-ho!"

There was need for caution. The Rookwood Reformers meant to make a clean sweep of Leggett and his precious game; but they naturally did not want to betray the foolish juniors to severe punishment. Nobody would have been sorry to see the rascally Leggett expelled from the school; but they did not want to have a hand in it.

But there was punishment to be meted out all the same. Jimmy Silver would see to that.

The party met in the old ruins, and Jimmy Silver led the way down the stone stairs into the vaults.

Quietly they trod through the vaults towards the glimmering candle-light ahead.

They reached the arch of the sixth vault, and looked in.

All the eyes of the punters round the roulette-table were fixed on the game, and not one thought of looking round; though some were facing the newcomers, not an eye was raised to them.

Leggett was turning the wheel once more.

"Make your game!" he was saying.

Coins were being placed on the numbers and on red and black. Some of the players stood idly apart, evidently out of money, but looking on with undiminished eagerness.

"Make your game!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

He strode into the vault.

Leggett sprang to his feet, his face turning white. The punters round the slab stared at the new arrivals.

"Hallo! You goin' to have a hand in the game, Jimmy Silver?" yawned Adolphus Smythe.

Jimmy nodded grimly.

"Yes; I'm going to take a hand," he said. "Line up there, you fellows, and see that nobody gets away!"

"What-ho!"

"Look here, you're not goin' to interfere, Jimmy Silver!" blustered Townsend. "Go on with the game, Leggett!"

"Get away from that wheel, Leggett!" rapped out Jimmy Silver.

Leggett hesitated.

Tommy Dodd took him by the hair.

Then Leggett left the wheel, with a yell of anguish.

"Keep him there!" said Jimmy. "We've not done with Leggett yet!"

"I've got him!" grinned Tommy. "He won't get away in a hurry!"

"Yo-ow-ow! Leggo!"

"Look here, you cads, clear off!" shouted Smythe. "I'm winnin', and I'm not goin' to be meddled with!"

"Would you rather we fetched Bulkeley?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"You—you rotter!"

"If I'd wanted to sneak, I'd have brought Bulkeley with me," said Jimmy quietly. "But I advise you not to make a row, or somebody may hear!"

"Sure, it's a baste ye are, Jimmy!" mumbled Flynn. "Faith, I've lost nearly all me money, and I was going to win it back!"

"It would take you all your time, you fat-head! Haven't you sense enough to see that Leggett was cheating you?"

"Howly Moses!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Sure, I am ashamed of myself!" confessed Flynn ingenuously. "I know it's a dirty blagardly game, but, sure, it does draw ye on, you know, and—"

"And it's the first and last time it's going to be played at Rookwood!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Here, yank that fool back!"

Topham was sidling away to escape. Lovell took him by the collar and spun him back, and Topsy sprawled on the stone flags with a yell.

"Listen to me!" said Jimmy Silver. "We are the Rookwood Reformers, and we mean business. Leggett is a scoundrel, and you fellows are all fools! We're going to give Leggett a lesson he won't forget! You rotters are going to run the gauntlet, and then you can go!"

"Look here—"

"Line up!"

A dozen of the Rookwood Reformers lined up for the gauntlet, the rest keeping guard in the archway to stop a rush to escape.

"You first, Smythe!" said Jimmy.

"By gad! I won't!"

Jimmy Silver clenched his fists, and advanced upon the dandy of the Shell. And Adolphus, though he had said he wouldn't, decided hurriedly that he would.

He made a rush between the lines of waiting juniors, and blows came down on him on all sides.

Adolphus was yelling with anguish when he escaped into the next vault. He did not linger there. He fled.

"Now, Howard—"

"I—I say—"

Jimmy Silver's boot helped Howard to make up his mind, and he ran the gauntlet. The other Nuts followed his example, one by one, and they were pretty severely punished by the time they escaped.

"Go a bit easy with the rest," said Jimmy Silver. "They're silly fools, and I suppose they can't help it!"

"Sure I—"

"Buck up!" said Jimmy.

There was no help for it. Flynn and the rest ran the gauntlet in turn, but they were let down lightly. When the last of them had gone, the Rookwood Reformers gathered round Leggett with grim looks.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.  
The Way of the Transgressor.**

**L**EGGETT was wriggling in the grasp of Tommy Dodd.

He was not to escape so lightly as the others.

His sallow face was almost yellow with apprehension.

"Look here!" he mumbled. "Hands off, you rotters! I—I—I'll complain to Bootles if you—"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Yes, you'll be glad to tell Bootles about this—I don't think!" he remarked. "Take up all that money from the table, Leggett!"

Leggett, in wonder, obeyed the command. Jimmy Silver stripped the green cloth from the slab, gashed it with his pocket-knife, and tore it into fragments.

Leggett watched him with burning eyes. Then Jimmy took the roulette-wheel, and dashed it against the stone slab with a force that smashed it to pieces.

"You rotter!" shrieked Leggett. "I gave a pound for that!"

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He stamped on the fragments of the roulette-wheel till they were reduced to atoms.

"Now bring the cad along!" he said.

"We're going to rag him, surely?" exclaimed Oswald.

"Bump him, bedad!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle indignantly.

"Later," said Jimmy cheerfully. "He's got to disgorge the plunder first—what he's got about him, and what he's got hidden in his study."

"Oh, good!"

"I—I won't!" gasped Leggett, in furious dismay.

"We'll see whether you won't! Bring him along!"

Jimmy Silver took one of Leggett's arms and Tommy Dodd the other. The cad of the Fourth was walked off between the two juniors.

Lovell blew out the candles, and the Rookwood Reformers followed.

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The party broke up in the quadrangle. The Fistical Four and the three Tommies accompanied Leggett to the Modern side.

The wretched trickster did not venture to resist.

Leggett's study was reached, and the shivering young rascal was marched in in the midst of the seven.

Tommy Cook closed the door and turned the key.

"Shell out!" said Jimmy Silver concisely. Leggett, grinding his teeth, turned out his pockets on the table. He turned out four pounds.

"My hat! The worm has been making money, and no mistake," said Lovell, with a whistle.

"It's mine!" hissed Leggett. "Now turn out what you've got hidden in the study!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Bump him till he shells out!"

"Let me alone!" snarled Leggett. "I—I—I'll get the money."

With a groan the unhappy swindler turned back a corner of the study carpet, and removed a loose board. He took out a cardboard box.

"There it is, hang you!"

Jimmy opened the box and examined the contents. Currency-notes and silver lay inside.

"Total, nearly twenty quids," commented Jimmy Silver.

"Some of that's mine!" howled Leggett. "I—I had five pounds of my own."

Jimmy shook his head.

"I dare say some of it was yours," he assented. "You must have started with some of your own, I suppose. But I don't know how much, and I'm not going to take your word. All this cash is going to be confiscated."

"Why, you—you rotter—"

"If you lose any of your own, as well as what you've stolen, you can consider it a fine for swindling," explained Jimmy, and the juniors chuckled.

Leggett's face was a study.

"You—you've got all my money; you're leaving me stony!" he panted.

"Why not? You've made lots of other fellows stony," said Jimmy coolly. "Don't fancy we're going to keep this—we're not quite down to your level. Tommy Dodd is going to take it down and put it in the mission collecting-box in the Hall. Go it, Tommy!"

"What a ripping idea!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "It will do some good that way. Leggett, old chap, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you've done some good for once."

Leggett ground his teeth. Apparently he failed to derive any satisfaction from that circumstance.

Tommy Dodd gathered up the money and left the study. Leggett sank into a chair, white and collapsing.

Lovell and Raby went with Tommy Dodd. The three returned in a few minutes.

"All serene!" said Lovell. "It's in the collecting-box—every blessed bob! They'll be pleased when they open that box for the mission."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up, Leggett!"

"What do you want, hang you?" groaned Leggett, eyeing Jimmy Silver apprehensively. Jimmy had taken a cricket-stump from the cupboard.

"You haven't been flogged yet."

"Flogged!" yelled Leggett.

"Certainly. If the Head found you out he would flog you and sack you. We can't sack you, unfortunately; but we can flog you, and we're going to!"

The shivering rascal was thrown face down on the table. Then Jimmy Silver commenced operations with the stump.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Leggett snarled and gasped and uttered suppressed howls; but, painful as the infliction was, he dared not yell aloud. Jimmy's arm was a little tired when he had finished, but he did not leave off till twenty terrific whacks had been administered.

Leggett rolled off the table, quivering and groaning. Jimmy tossed the stump into a corner.

"That job's jobbed!" he remarked. "Leggett, if ever you want to start again, go ahead, and keep your weather-eye open for the Rookwood Reformers."

The juniors crowded out of the study. Their prompt and drastic action had put an end to the scandal of Leggett's Loot!

(Another story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week.)

**A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.**

Address all letters to:  
The Editor, The "POPULAR,"  
The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

**FOR NEXT WEEK:**

A fine array of features is on the programme for next Friday, and the issue of the POPULAR booked to appear on that day is of an altogether attractive nature.

The first of the features is a magnificent long complete story of the Chums of Greyfriars, entitled,

**"THE BOXING BOOM AT GREYFRIARS!"**  
By Frank Richards.

This powerful boxing tale is thrilling to the last line, and no one can read it without being gripped by its intense interest.

The school gets the boxing fever badly. Friendly bouts are the order of the day. The individual responsible for this extraordinary state of affairs is Sir Timothy Topham, one of the directors of the school, who arranges for a tournament to be held at Greyfriars, and offers a gold medal to the best boxer in each Form, and the excitement can well be imagined.

Be sure that you do not miss this grand yarn.

The second of the stories is a further and last instalment of the great romantic adventure serial,

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The mystery surrounding the strange rapier belonging to Harry Temple culminates in a most unlooked-for fashion. The concluding chapters will provide both thrilling and interesting reading, and should not be missed on any account.

Also, another instalment of  
**"THE EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"**

wherein the great criminal investigator brings the strange case of the dead Mr. Shields to an astonishing close, and the Scotland Yard officials have to admit that but for the help of Locke there would have been another grave miscarriage of justice.

A splendid long complete school story of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood, entitled,

**"THE TWO GUYS!"**  
By Owen Conquest,

will be next on the list of good things for next week, and will delight the loyal friends of that select circle of chums known as the Fistical Five. In this story Owen Conquest has a great chance to write a splendid story, and he makes the most of it!

The last item on the programme will be the further amazing adventures which befell Eddie Polo when

**"FIGHTING FOR FAME!"**

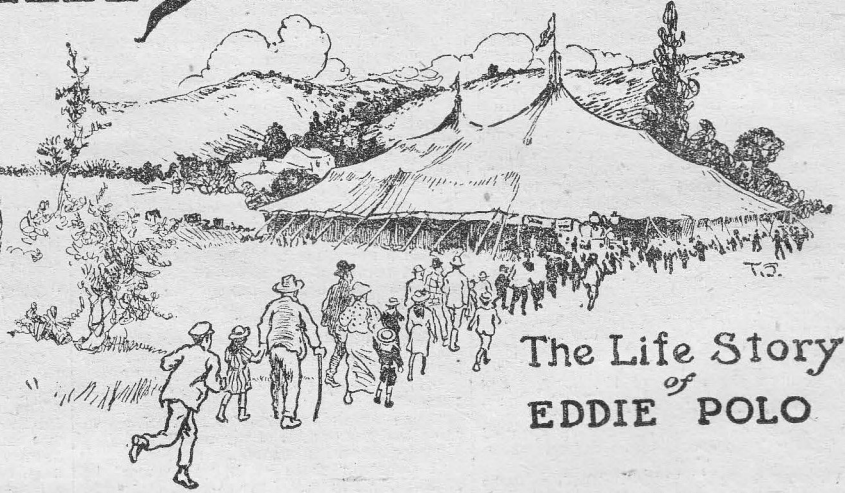
In this instalment Edie is very much to the fore, and his exploits of skill and daring will leave the reader with a longing for the next issue of the POPULAR, to follow up this wonderful life story.

Don't forget! To avoid disappointment, order your next week's copy of the POPULAR well in advance!

Your Editor

THE HUMAN STORY THAT WILL HOLD YOUR INTEREST!

# Fighting for Fame!



## The Life Story of EDDIE POLO

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

### THE THREADS OF THE STORY.

EDDIE POLO as an unknown boy acrobat joins Busto's World-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 he incurs the jealousy of Del Rogerigu, the Spanish trapeze artiste, who makes several attempts to get rid of him by so-called "accidents." At the same time he makes it hot for himself to stay, and leaves, breathing revenge on his late rival. A performance in the great marquee is drawing to a close when suddenly twelve bandits draw out revolvers and hold up the audience. Eddie, at the top of the tent, sees his opportunity, and, at the risk of his own life, saves the situation. He is injured, and is taken into Mr. Busto's own caravan, where Esta takes charge of him. But they discover later that his hurts are not so serious as was supposed, and within a few days is almost himself again. They discover the organiser of the raid to be the ex-acrobat Rogerigu, and as a punishment they tar-and-feather him, and run him out of town. The circus leaves Scooter's Drift, and makes tracks for the next place. Eddie, on going to Esta's van to speak to her, discovers her missing, and on searching the van finds a tarry feather sticking to the doorpost. He shows his find to Mr. Busto.

(Now read on.)

### A Perilous Undertaking!

BUSTO gazed at the tar-stained feather with his mouth open with astonishment. Then he half rose, hitched the reins over a near-by hook, and clicked to the horses to halt.

"The greaser!" he snorted.  
"Del Rogerigu, for a certainty!" asserted Eddie. "He's collared Esta, and bunked off with her in some mysterious fashion."

He waited for no more, but leapt into the saddle of Grey Wind, pacing by the side of the van. Swiftly he whirled the horse about, and as he passed down the line called on the cavalcade to halt.

"Pass the word for Bud Truefit!" he called. "Miss Esta's missing!"

The drivers of the various vans and lorries pulled their horses to a halt and gazed after the racing mare. Bud Truefit, surrounded by his band of cowboys, came racing out on their mettlesome mustangs, and Eddie pulled Grey Wind to her haunches. He held out the tar-smear'd feather to Bud sadly.

"Miss Esta's missing," he said slowly; "and that was sticking to the door of her van. I've ridden down the whole line and given everybody the news, and she isn't in any other van. There's only one explanation—Del Rogerigu's stolen her from under

our very noses, but, by everything that's holy, he's going to suffer for it—and suffer mightily. Here, boss!" he added, as Busto came running up. "You'd better pull into the bush here and pitch camp. You can't open up at Sulphur Springs till we find Esta; and find her we will, if we've got to scour the whole of the United States for her!"

"By gosh, we will!" cried the score of cowboys. "And we're off right now."

Eddie led the scattered rush that took the mob clear of the camp on to the bluff by the roadside. Here they reined in, and scanned the vast rolling alkali plains as far as the eye could reach, but nowhere could they discern the dust-cloud which would betray the passage of a swiftly-moving pair of horses. Eddie, on a sudden afterthought, sent one of the cowboys back to discover if any of the circus mounts were missing, and spent a fuming ten minutes till the man returned with the news that the circus horses were all correct or accounted for.

"Then they must be on foot," snarled Eddie. "All the better for us to run them down; but don't sacrifice careful search of the ground you pass over to speed, lads. Here, Brown, tell Busto to have a fire started—a big fire—on this bluff, so that we can use it as a guiding post to return to by day or night. You others scatter at half-mile intervals, and search every inch of ground between here and the Canadian border. And if you find the dago, deal with him as you will, but bring back Miss Esta safe and sound. Scatter!"

Bud Truefit reined in alongside the lad, and Red Cloud, the Indian knife-thrower, mounted on a swift, country-bred horse, came spurting up to the pair.

"Eddie Polo," said Bud, "if I set eyes on that greaser, I'll not give 'im time ter rattle off a prayer, but send 'im ter 'is master, ther devil, pronto! Fer the good Lord's sake, Eddie, find Miss Esta an' bring 'er back, or it's a crazy loon I'll be ther rest of me days. Why didn't we set guard over 'er when she was safe? We oughter be kicked fer not thinkin' of it!"

"It's no use crying over spilt milk, Bud," said Eddie. "I'll search for her till I drop, and there's my hand on it. I may say as the old man was thinking of you and her getting married at Sulphur Springs, and his heart's nearly breaking now. Del Rogerigu needn't expect mercy from me if I come across him, but unless one of the others finds her first, I'll bring Esta back for you. I'm taking Red Cloud, who's great guns at tracking, and between us we'll be in the greaser's vicinity before nightfall. Good-bye, Bud, and good luck—and don't worry, for I'll be best man at your wedding myself in a few days' time!"

The cowboy gulped, and, with a parting pressure of the hand, put Red Lightning at the gallop. Eddie turned to Red Cloud.

"We'll find the greaser's tracks, Red Cloud," he said kindly, "and we'll follow them to the end. And if one of us drops out the other will go on till we run him to earth; and, by the Great White Father, one of us—or both—will extract from him his soul and full reparation for any harm he has done to Miss Esta! That so, Red Cloud?"

"Wow—even so!" was the Indian's reply. "See, here—he went, on foot, and carrying a weight. And behind him are the tracks of another who wears moccasins, and leads one—two—no, three horses. Unshod horses they are, like those of the Blackfoot Indians—mustangs. Mount, my white brother; together we will follow the trail of this man until it ends—who knows where?"

The Indian shut himself to silence and mounted, but Eddie, all impatience, was already in the saddle before him. They started off at an easy lope, Red Cloud reading the trail as though it were written in large print. Eddie snapped open the mechanism of the brace of Colt's automatic pistols he had provided himself with, and felt to make sure that his spare clips of cartridges were ready against need for sudden and swift action. And all the while his eyes roamed to right and left, searching for signs of the fugitives.

Like the spokes of a wheel the search-parties spread themselves to right and left, scouring the whole of that vast plain. But though they searched right into the evening, they found nothing—nothing at all save the hoof-marks of three horses forming the trail upon which Red Cloud and Eddie Polo were riding like hounds following a hot scent.

Eddie shuddered at the thought of the circus proprietor's daughter in the grip of the half-caste Spanish-American. She was nothing more than a friend or a sister to the lad, but he would have willingly laid down his life to save her from the fate that most certainly awaited her. He knew Del Rogerigu's type—the dark, somewhat handsome faces with suave smiles and vengeful, crafty hearts—and knew that behind that smile the half-breed hid hatred of himself, of Busto, and of everybody who had in any way thwarted him. Del Rogerigu's anger was not the swift anger of the white pioneer, who early learned that to be quick on the draw and not over-scrupulous about hitting first were essentials to the maintenance of his life, but the type of vindictive hatred that broods and feeds upon itself until it turns its nurser into a semi-madman.

Eddie had been in Mexico, and he knew the lined faces of the still-young women there—lined with suffering and torture at the hands of their own men. He set his teeth as he determined that, come what might, Esta should never share the same

fate if he could help it. He flicked Grey Wind with the short whip he carried, and the willing mare stretched herself out at racing speed, Red Cloud's mustang gallantly toiling in her rear. And then, very suddenly, just as the afternoon light was beginning to wane, the Indian tracker called a halt at the head of a bluff looking down into a wooded valley.

"Trail run two ways here," said the Indian. "Two horse go that way to right; one horse go round to left this way. Mebbe Esta break away and run."

"Hardly," said Eddie, "or the other two would have been after her post-haste. No; I expect that's Lopez gone to the left, while the greaser has taken Esta this way. Look here, Red Cloud, you carry on and follow that single trail; I'll go on this way. I surmise that the greaser and Esta are somewhere down in that little wood there, and presently, when it gets dark, we'll be able to see their fire. Got a gun, Red?"

The Indian nodded, and showed the butt of a hefty four-five.

"Don't be afraid to use it if necessary," warned Eddie. "Now I'm off. If you don't find anybody, try to meet me here a few hours after dawn, and if I don't turn up, ride back to camp and tell Busto what we've done. Cheerio, Red Cloud, and good luck!"

The Indian repeated the farewell, and the two parted company. Eddie rode straight down the bluff, the trail showing where the hoofs of the pursued horses had slipped in two or three places. At the bottom was a small ford, and here, in the soft ground, the lad found the impression of a Mexican boot and of a high-heeled shoe, such as he had seen on Esta's feet many times previously.

"Their horses were getting tired, and they've had to walk a bit," said Eddie. "They can't have camped much farther on than this."

He remounted Grey Wind, and, with automatic drawn and ready to fire, pushed slowly into the forest, the ground gradually rising. Here and there bent grasses and the wrenched-off branches of bushes showed where the others had passed, and once or twice, before the darkness fell, Eddie found shreds of cloth streaming from briars, plain indications that Esta or some other woman had passed that way.

Presently they reached rougher ground, and Grey Wind, not being buoyed up by any mental stimulus, showed signs of becoming distressed. Eddie, seeing that the way would be easier on foot—for it was obvious that the Spaniard was making for the foothills—stripped the saddle and saddle-cloth from the mare, and hobbled her with the straps hanging at the peak of the saddle. Then he patted her on the flank and turned her loose to nibble the lush grass, knowing full well she would not stray more than feeding distance in a month.

She whinnied very softly, as though bidding him farewell, as Eddie turned and plunged into the wood, climbing ever upwards now. After an hour's hard tracking he found himself standing on the edge of a ravine, across which a rope bridge had been slung, and as he watched he suddenly became aware of a point of dull radiance a little below him on the other side of the ravine.

And as he made out the light of this fire, a rift below cracked, and a bullet zipped past his head, and as he jumped back swiftly under cover and drew his own gun there floated up to him the leering laughter of the Mexican half-breed.

"So ze second enemy come into ze net!" cried the unseen Del Rogeriguo. "Senor Polo, if ze life you 'at ees sweet to you, you veel turn roum' an' ride away like ze mad zing, 'cos zis place ees ver' dangerous of ze interloper who 'at no invittershun. See?"

He fired again, a scattering fusillade of bullets from the repeating Winchester he carried, and Eddie, in turn, fired back a full clip from his automatic at the place where the splashes of light came from. And then, very suddenly, there came from another place on the opposite bank of the ravine the spattering of another rifle as Lopez opened fire upon the lad.

"Two of 'em, eh?" said Eddie, as he crouched low and drew a ball on this new battery. "The more the merrier, that's all. But they've got the bridge enflamed right enough, and if I'm going to get across to the other side I've got to run the gauntlet. Neither of 'em has a great deal of love for me, and they'll not hesitate to finish me off with their knives if I should chance to be wounded; and if that happens, then

Heaven help Esta! I've got to think for two folks now."

Suddenly there floated up to him the sound of Esta's high-pitched voice.

"Eddie, keep off the bridge! It's been cut through—!" And then a gurgle as the half-caste thrust his hand across the girl's face to silence her.

"Thanks, Esta," said Polo, smiling to himself—"not only for the information about the bridge, but for telling me you're alive. I sha'n't be long locating you after I get across. Eddie, my lad, this is where you think swiftly, and act more swiftly still."

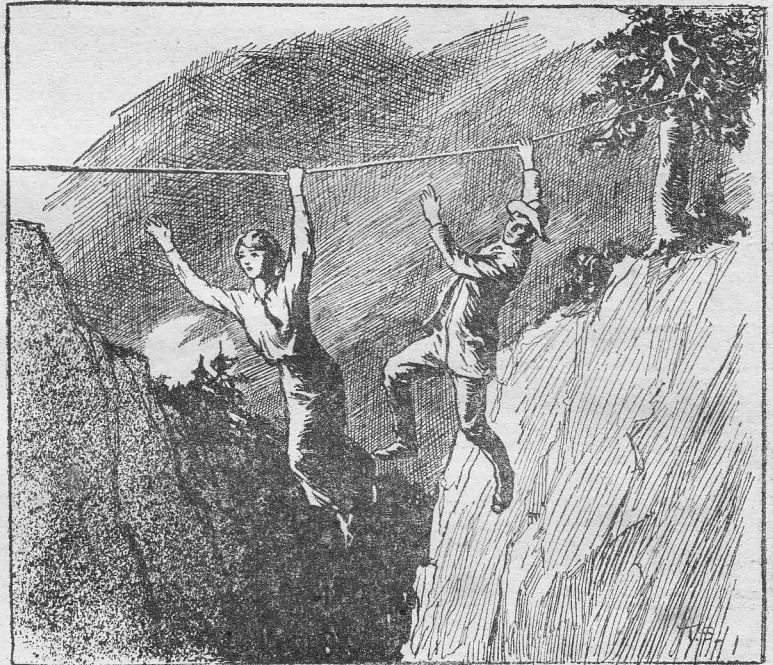
He sat, crouched in the lee of the rock, staring at the dimly-discerned outlines of the bridge for a second. Then a great idea came to him, and he shook with silent laughter. But it involved deserting the place he at present occupied, and that was what he didn't want to do. Supposing the greaser and his pal took Esta off to some other place while he was gone? He must track them again. And yet, if he was going to put the plan into effect, he must go back to his horse, among whose gear he had left his long, plaited raw-hide lariat.

"Crumbs!" he sighed. "Why didn't I keep

Hurry, now; I'll keep the others busy while you're gone."

He crawled out from the boulder as the Indian noiselessly disappeared into the tangle of the forest, and, keeping himself under cover, started firing shots at intervals and from various places into the trees at the opposite side of the ravine, trusting to luck to keep the flying bullets away from Esta. And every time he fired there came in return a fusillade of Winchester bullets from the two Mexicans, both of whom aimed at the point opposite the swaying rope-bridge where they thought Eddie to be hidden. And it was the red flashes of their rifles in the darkness that gave Eddie the target for his next shooting, and once, though he never hoped for such luck, he heard Lopez suddenly emit a howl of pain and Garcia del Rogeriguo snarl with baffled anger.

"I'm keeping you away from the girl, anyhow, greaser," muttered Eddie to himself; "and when Red Cloud comes back, we'll start things in real earnest. Hallo, Cloud! You'll frighten me one of these days; turning up without ringing the front door bell. Got the rope? That's good. Now, just keep these others busy for a few minutes, and then we'll start operations. See? Fire into



Hand-over-hand, Eddie and Esta began their perilous journey across the ravine. The taut lariat swung dangerously at each jerk, and the trees on which the rope was tied threatened to give way at the roots every minute.

(See page 16).

Red Cloud with me? I could have left him on guard then while I returned."

At that moment he stood up, and Lopez, lurking in the shadow across the ravine, fired three rounds. Eddie gave a squeal and a shriek of pain, and fell forward on his face. But he was not wounded, and as he lay, looking towards the rope-bridge, he gripped an automatic in each hand. He heard Lopez shout to Del Rogeriguo, and waited for one or the other to come across the damaged bridge to make sure their tracker was cleaned up. But neither of the greasers was noted for courage, and the knowledge that they had all but sawn through the ropes of the bridge prevented them from taking the risk of recrossing it.

Then, as he lay there, Eddie was suddenly startled by a voice in his ear.

"Red Cloud!" said a voice he knew. "Still! I found your horse and gear, and have followed your tracks, for the trail I pursued ended a little way above here, where I could see the Mexican Lopez standing guard among the trees with a rifle. I have been to see if I could meet you, and here you are!"

"You've come just at the right minute, Red Cloud," said Eddie. "Get back to the place where my horse is tethered as fast as you can, and bring my lariat to me here.

the brown this way, and that draws 'em both. They shoot at the bridge, trying to get me if I cross it. Keep low, and fire at the red flashes a minute or so after they shoot, and fire from the direction of the bridge every five minutes. I don't want 'em shooting at me for the next quarter of an hour or so, or I shall get a nasty tumble. This ravine's all of a thousand feet deep, and rocks aren't too soft to drop on."

Red Cloud grunted, and, drawing his own weapon and taking one of Eddie's automatics, he commenced to blaze away at the other side exactly as Eddie had previously done. And the greasers, not knowing that this was a new man shooting, redoubled their efforts to get the shooter, and dimly wondered why he wasted ammunition—his own and theirs—in this fashion. Also—and they snarled when they thought of it—he was shooting very close to the bullseye every time, and they couldn't afford not to reply.

But as Red Cloud got to work, Eddie Polo started his own operations. First of all, with the lariat coiled on his arm, he clambered to the top of a tall larch-tree that grew at the lip of the ravine. Here, perched over space, with his leg around a slender branch, he made fast the loop of the

lariat, and secured the other end around his waist. Then, taking a turn round the limb of the tree, he swarmed down to the ground again, and, feeling for foothold and fingerhold in the dark, commenced to scramble down the face of the rocks that constituted the ravine.

It was careful going, and exceedingly rough. Eddie was thankful that the moon had not yet risen, for its light must have shown him, an easy target, to those from whom he wished to hide. Foot by foot he clambered down, his feet feeling for rock edges, his hands gripping tufts of grass. And then, as he groped his way, a small bush carried away in his hands, and, with a crash that sounded more than loud in his ears, and a rattle of stones, he fell headlong. And as he fell he heard Red Cloud, who had heard the thudding of the stones on the rocks far below, open fire as fast and as noisily as possible; but the others, wondering what this sudden noise meant, did not reply.

"What was that?" called Del Rogeriguo to Lopez. "I heard stones rattling. Look out that the boy does not outwit you in that direction."

Red Cloud fired a clip at the sound of the voice, and Del Rogeriguo hastily sought cover.

"It is nothing, senor," replied Lopez, and Eddie recognised that the lesser scoundrel was standing opposite the point where, slung by the waist to the lariat, he was hanging between heaven and earth. "Some animal. Even Eddie Polo cannot be in two places at once—shooting from the top of the ravine and climbing down it as well. Besides, the ravine is deep, and he must travel far to reach its bottom and then reclamber up the other side."

He laughed, and again Red Cloud found a target. As Eddie hung there at the end of the lariat, for all the world like a fish at the end of a line—the larch, bending over the gulch, being the rod—he watched the red flashes of the greaser's bullets, and noticed that Lopez was working in a kind of patrol from tree-trunk to tree-trunk towards the bridge, going farther and farther away every second.

And when, at last, he was far enough away, Eddie started the second part of his

stunt. Gently swinging, he managed to reach the wall of the ravine, and from here pushed himself off with his feet to gain momentum. Out he sped, and then back he rushed like a pendulum, but every time he came back he had to prevent himself from smashing to pieces against the rock face. And then he made his final effort. He swung off and whizzed right to the other side of the ravine, and grabbed like a madman at the branches of a bush that grew about thirty feet from the sill of the cliff.

For a moment he wondered if his arms were going to be wrenched out of their sockets as he tried to swing back, if his wrists would carry away, or the bush be drawn out by the roots with the strain. But, to his intense relief, everything held, and, carefully listening to make sure he had not betrayed himself, the lad drew himself farther into the bush. He sat athwart its stem for a minute to recover himself, and then, with the lariat end still made fast around his waist, clambered to the top of the ravine on the greaser's side. He was at last in their camp, and it should not take long to find Esta.

It didn't. She was lying, wholly unguarded, but with her hands and feet lashed, and a dirty red handkerchief gagging her, before the fire. Her face was lined and worn and dust-stained, but there was a cheery optimism in her eyes, and she broke, as well as she was able, into a welcoming smile when Eddie dashed into the circle of the firelight. He wasted no time in greetings, but flung her to his shoulder and carried her into the wood, where, laying her down, he cast off her bonds, and told her in a few swift words what he intended to do.

It was a terrible ordeal to ask the girl to face; almost it might be better to leave her in the greaser's hands than to risk dashing her to pieces against the bottom of the thousand-foot ravine. But Esta accepted the risk with a cheerful smile, and there were almost tears in her eyes as she told Eddie so.

"Right-ho! Follow close at my heels!" said Eddie. "We haven't much time to waste if we're going to get across before the moon comes up. This way."

They stole through the underbrush, and once had to take cover and hold their breath as the form of the rifle-armed Lopez strolled into sight ten yards away. Eddie could have shot the man down with the greatest of ease, but that would have meant betraying his own position to Del Rogeriguo, for it so happened that Lopez presented himself as a target at a moment when neither the Indian nor the greaser were firing at each other.

They crawled forward again as the dago passed, and presently won to the foot of another larch-tree, sister to that to which Eddie had made fast the loop end of the lariat. And now they both clambered up the trunk of this second larch, Eddie carrying with him the end of the lariat that had already once saved him from being dashed to death.

He made it fast high up, exactly as it was made fast across the ravine, and tested the knot to make perfectly sure of its holding.

It was tight and strong.

"Come, Esta," he said softly. "It's our only way of getting out of this place. Are you ready?"

"Yes, quite ready," said the girl. "And, Eddie, if anything happens, you'll understand that I'm more than grateful to you for risking so much for my sake. Good-bye, big brother, and good luck!"

They nodded to each other, and then set out on the perilous passage. Hand-over-hand, swinging along with the taut lariat stretched between two bending, swishing trees, keeping them from the bottom of the ravine and the cruel rocks a thousand feet below, they started the journey. And as they reached half-way there arose, as if it had been waiting behind the distant hills for the dramatic moment, the full round moon; and in its light Lopez and Garcia del Rogeriguo and Red Cloud the Indian saw, silhouetted against the lightening sky, the figures of Eddie Polo and Esta, the Excellent Equestrienne, clinging to a threadlike bridge half-way between heaven and earth.

(Another instalment of this grand serial next week.)

## SHORT STORIES.

### FOGGED!

The recent fogs have given rise to some amusing occurrences. For instance, it is being whispered in a certain City office that one morning while the fog was at its height the principal of a firm was incensed to receive from one of his clerks, who lived some distance out of the town, the following telegram:

"Sorry cannot come to office to-day. Have not got home yesterday.—JUMPKINS."

### A LOST OPPORTUNITY!

A fairly large-sized crowd had gathered outside the New Gallery in Regent Street, London, and were evidently expecting some notability to arrive, when Jimmy Brown, the Messenger Boys' pride, strolled up and joined them.

"What's the show?" he asked of a bystander.

"This isn't a show, my lad," was the cold reply; "this is the Whistler's Exhibition."

"Ho, is it! Well, wotcher waitin' for?"

"The King."

"What, 'is Gracious!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Well, I'm blowed! I shouldn't 'ave thought 'e cared 'bout whistlin' at 'is time of life! Wish 'e'd 'ave come to me, I'd 'ave given him a few lessons meself!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 94.

### CASTING ITS LOT!

They were driving from the railway-station to the little village in which the blissful honeymoon was to be passed, and though she had not as yet brushed the confetti out of her hair, the bride was in an agony of nervousness in case they should be taken for anything but a couple well seasoned in the joys and sorrows of matrimony. Presently the carriage drew up with a jerk.

"What's the matter?" queried the bride-groom of the coachman.

"Horse thrown a shoe, sir," said the driver. The beautiful bride clutched her husband's arm, and, with what sounded suspiciously like a sob, she cried:

"Oh, dear George, is it possible that the very horses know we are just married?"

### NO PAY, NO WORK!

The East End sign-writer danced up and down outside the new emporium opened by Mr. Nicholas Petroff Scarovoltzakupotoboshskie, the retired Russian admiral, and boiled with rage.

"The mean, cross-eyed, price-cutting villain!" he yelled. "If he don't settle with me I'll—I'll smash every blinkin'—"

"Shure, what's the trouble, matey?" queried a passing Irishman.

"Trouble!" cried the enraged one. "It's that scarecrow inside there! Here have I stood upon that ladder a-painting up his name for nearly a week. I've caught three chills and a touch of influenza, and now the wire-whiskered scamp says he won't pay!"

"Begorra!" said Pat. "Does the thafe expect ye to do the work for nothin'?"

"It looks like it!" snarled the other.

"Well, then, don't ye do it, sonny!" cried Pat. "Just ye let me 'ould the ladder while ye take my penknife and scrape 'is name off again!"

### BUT SHE BROKE IT GENTLY!

White as driven snow, and trembling like an agitated blanc-mange, Cecilia, the new housemaid, burst into the room.

"Brandy!" she moaned. "For the sake of all you hold dear, give me a little brandy!"

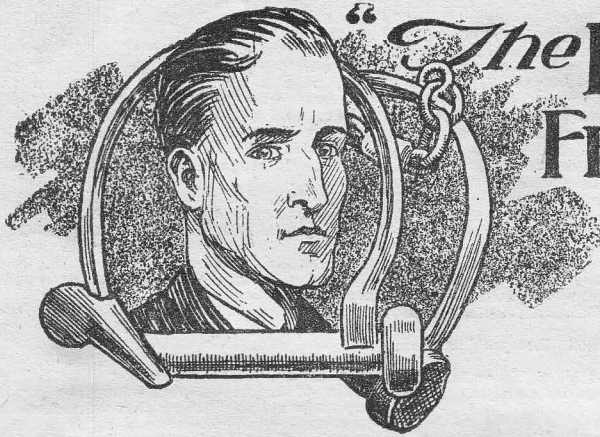
With a tender heart full of misgivings and gloomy forebodings, her mistress hastened to succour the collapsed girl with the required spirit.

"What ever has happened?" she asked.

"Oh, mum, thank you; that's much better. I don't care so much now. 'I've just broke the old Sevres vase that was in the morning-room!"



**STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE!**



# "The EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!"

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

**SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS**

FERRERS LOCKE is called up on the 'phone by Albert Spriggs, a valet, to Mr. Shields, a wealthy manufacturer, who requires the famous detective's assistance. Locke promptly journeys to the house of Shields in Leinster Gardens. He finds the house empty, and suspecting a tragedy he breaks in. Whilst searching for the electric switch he is attacked and drugged by some unknown persons. He regains consciousness, and discovers the dead body of the manufacturer lying near him. The police arrive on the scene a little later, and from their investigations they believe Spriggs to be the culprit. But Locke has reasons to think otherwise, and he informs the Scotland Yard officials that he will try to prove that they are in the wrong. With his secretary, John Hay, he commences his investigations. Detective Fox, of Scotland Yard, informs Ferrers Locke that he has laid a trap for Spriggs, who had but a few minutes before left Locke's rooms with a message for Hay. Ferrers Locke, intensely angry, has to listen to Fox's taunts regarding his non-success.

*(Now go on with the story.)*

**What the House near Ipswich Held!**

FERRERS LOCKE had gone very white, not from chagrin, but from anger. "I'll tell you what it is, Fox," he said very coldly, "you've missed your proper spot in the sun. The right place for you is the Secret Service Bureau at the Wilhelmstrasse in Potsdam. You and Jagow would make the best of friends. Sorry I have to run away. Peters will show you the right way to the door!"

It turned out exactly as the detective had said. Spriggs had almost reached the corner of the road when suddenly a couple of plain-clothed detectives stepped in front of him.

"I have a warrant for your arrest," said one of them, laying a hand on the old butler's shoulders.

Spriggs, with a sudden twist, freed himself from the grip, turned, and was on the point of dashing away when a pair of arms caught him round the waist, his arms were drawn back, and in an instant the handcuffs were snapped home.

Ferrers Locke lost no time in seeking, through his solicitor, an interview with the arrested man. He found Spriggs very down and disconsolate.

"Now, cheer up. Everything will come right in the end," Locke counselled in his customary cheery way.

"What you say is true. London is ringing with the news of the capture of Mr. Shields' murderer, but for once London has been misled by a pack of over-zealous fools."

Spriggs sat down with his head in his hands. "They wouldn't hear a word I had to say," he answered miserably; and at that Locke laughed.

"A piece of officialdom for which I am most profoundly thankful," he said, lowering his voice. "I don't want them to listen to anything, and, what is more, I don't want you to say anything. That's why I am here

—to counsel you to keep what you know to yourself."

"You mean about the mark behind the dead man's ear?"

"Exactly! You maintain your master had no such mark. I hold the mark I have described was on the body. The Home Secretary could solve the puzzle by signing the order for an exhumation. But that takes time, and Inspector Fox, in his pig-headedness, would probably oppose such a course. If you leave everything in my hands, I guarantee to see you out of this difficulty before you know where you are."

From the prison Locke made straight for his flat, where he knew he could find John Hay. Hay was busy typing out an abstract of the case to date.

"I think you might leave that for a while," Locke said. "There'll be so much more to add later on, and the gaps to be filled in. Now I want you to find and keep a line on Mrs. Grateley. This is her address."

Hay bade him good-bye, and for the next hour Locke was busy looking out a suitable disguise. At length he found what he wanted; and, donning it, set out for Great Tower Street. A little after six from his coign of vantage he saw Mr. Tilburn emerge, and, giving a quick glance both up and down the narrow street, hasten off.

He followed, and was at Tilburn's elbow when that astute lawyer stood at the booking-office and asked for a first return to Forest Gate. Here indeed was fresh ground for Locke, who followed his quarry on to the platform.

At the barrier the lawyer acknowledged the ticket-collector's salute—a trifling episode which did not escape Locke's watchful eye—and jumped into the train. Right to the door of the house in Osborne Road Locke had Tilburn under surveillance, and, thoroughly well satisfied with his evening's work, he returned to Liverpool Street.

At the entrance to No. 16 platform he discovered the ticket-collector who had passed passengers through to the 6.37. A skillfully-placed half-crown won freedom of speech from the man.

"You remember the gentleman in the grey top-hat who nodded to you as he passed through to the train?" he suggested.

The other stroked his chin.

"Yes, I remember him, sir. I've known him for years."

"Does he always travel by the 6.37?"

"Well, lately he does. But when he lived at Flatsea Mill he used generally to make a run on the 5.40. You see, Flatsea's a tidy step along the line."

"I don't know it. Where does it lie?"

"This side of Ipswich—a dreary hole of a place. But I suppose the old toff must have seen something in it, or he'd never have fixed up there."

Locke supplemented the tip.

"You needn't mention that I've spoken to you. The old gentleman and I have a little outstanding account," he said, with a smile.

"Now I know where he lives I shall go down and collect it."

All the same, Locke did not bother his head any more about Tilburn that night. Instead he crossed over to the main-line platform, discovered the last train to Flatsea Mill had gone, so caught the express to Ipswich. He hired a taxi as far as Flatsea Station and

dismissed it. Then he made a bee-line for the stationmaster's house.

Yes, the stationmaster remembered Mr. Tilburn quite well. The lawyer had lived at the Moat House for three years, and had only given it up a month ago. That was enough for Locke. In high, good spirits he set off in the darkness, and before long was threading his way along winding, narrow paths overgrown with moss and weeds. The little bag he carried provided all that was necessary to gain entry to the deserted house.

What would he find? A slight shiver tremored through this iron-nerved man, used to meeting and dealing with crime in all its aspects. But there was something so depressing, so suggestive of evil, about this lonely house, with its deep screen of wind-blown trees and its curtain of clinging mist that blurred all the windows and crept in icily under the cracks and crevices of the doors.

It would seem that Locke had come prepared for his gruesome task, for, locking the wooden shutters over the solitary window and covering every inch of space with damp sacking, he started with cold chisel and hammer to take up the bricks in the floor. The canvas-wrapped tools made little noise, and soon he had cleared a space some three feet by two, blocked in by a thin layer of cement. It took the best part of an hour to work through this, but at the end of that time a trapdoor showed in the floor beneath, and prising it up, Locke lay flat and peered into the opening.

"A dead man's tomb or an empty vault— which?" he asked himself, and the next moment the flashing beam answered him. The cellar under the floor was empty. With a coil of rope lashed to the iron bars of the grate, he went down hand-under-hand. "Spriggs' prison, the place where Tilburn & Co. kept him till the poor wretch made his escape," he reflected. "That escape of Spriggs was the last straw. He merely boarded in the wretched hole, and decamped."

Locke felt there was nothing more to be done at Flatsea. At every turn he was meeting with corroboration of the butler's strange story. In no single respect had he found Albert Spriggs wanting, and, on the other hand, the cloud of suspicion was deepening swiftly and certainly over the heads of Tilburn and his friends.

Twelve o'clock was striking from an adjacent church when Locke turned into the vestibule of his flat. To his surprise, a light still burned in his room. He passed in, to find his secretary comfortably ensconced in a spacious armchair.

"You look very tired, sir," Hay said, pushing his chair to the blaze, and bringing his warmed slippers from the fender. "Peters wasn't feeling well, so I sent him to bed, and told him I would wait till you returned."

Locke smiled.

"You shouldn't have stayed. You've been on ever since nine, and, really, I shall want you quite early in the morning."

Hay sat down again.

"I meant to wait. You sent me after Mrs. Grateley. I didn't want to see the case slip through your hands at the eleventh hour."

"Like that, is it?"

Locke looked up over a curtain of blue smoke.

"I think so. She's been out all day, buying clothes."

"Oh! What sort of clothes?"

"Not the kind you need for this country at this time of the year. Muslin frocks, silk evening-gowns, shady hats, steamer-trunks, and all the rest of the paraphernalia incidental to a long journey."

Locke's eyes narrowed to pin-points.

"I see. They are getting frightened. I don't think you are far wrong. Strudwick has been buying stones and visiting exchanges. He's after circular and foreign notes. I believe those three have made a big haul, and are preparing to make a bolt for it. The difficulty, of course, is to find their destination before it is too late to stop them. Now, how could I get to know?"

For a long time he was silent. The cigar in his long, white fingers burned lower and lower, until at last, with a sudden, self-satisfied sigh, he flung it into the grate.

"I am able now to reconstruct the happenings of the house in Leinster Gardens," he said, putting the tips of his fingers to gether and looking into space. "Spriggs was right when he told me that the three days

things of this world, and to indulge them she was not prepared to wait very long for dead men's shoes. Mind you, Hay, for the moment I am merely building up a hypothetical case."

"Always a dangerous thing to do, unless the corollary is untraversable!" Hay flung back.

But Locke was not to be put off.

"I have supplied the most possible motive. The widow wants her share of the fortune. Strudwick would like to have a hand in it. Tilburn knows that, if Mr. Shields dies, at least half the estate goes to Mrs. Grateley. Suppose we assume they decided to see the manufacturer safely in his grave. When that is accomplished, when the dead man's own are satisfied that poor Shields has passed beyond this mortal vale of tears, as soon as may be the estate will be realised, and no living soul be any the wiser—till they are all safely beyond the reach of the law, in some place where extradition cannot touch them."

The secretary turned the problem over thoughtfully.

"Your theory seems all right, so far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough to satisfy

Flora Grateley let the silk-lined coat slip from her shoulders to the back of the chair, and her smooth skin gleamed like purest ivory in the golden sheen of the shaded lights.

"Pierre should be here to see how we take our last farewell to the Imperial!" she said, with a light laugh, nodding to the manager, who just then crossed the big saloon, and vanished through a curtained doorway at the end. "Where is Smith? Smith should be here to take our things!"

Strudwick laughed, and put his hat under the chair.

"My dear, you are getting peevish. You are making the worst possible mistake in allowing things to get on your nerves."

The woman rested her shapely elbows on the gleaming white of the cloth, and, although she smiled with her eyes, deep down in her heart was a sigh.

"Sometimes, Ralph, I ask myself, 'Is the game worth the candle?' Don't scoff and give that laugh which is meant to tell me I'm turning into a sentimental fool. It isn't that at all, but the ceaseless anxiety, the strain of never knowing what is going to happen next, the feeling that one false slip may spoil all before we are ready to cope with it, makes the whole business a nightmare!"

Strudwick toyed with the stem of an empty glass.

"Where's that waiter? Why, in the name of fortune, doesn't he show up?" He glanced round irritably, but composed his temper at sight of the evident anxiety in his sister's face. "Really, there's nothing to worry about! I suppose you are thinking of Spriggs?"

Flora Grateley raised her head, and met his glance with a straight look.

"I am, and I'm not—if you know what that means."

"What does it mean?"

"Not that I've any sentimental feelings for him, because from the way things are turning out he'll be very well paid for all he goes through. Now what puzzles me is how the authorities will receive his story. It's a funny tale to tell, and although Walter is so very cocksure, I'm not so certain but that he won't be able to substantiate sufficient of it to make things too hot for us at a very critical time."

The doctor half rose from his chair.

"Here comes Walter! Let's hear what he has to say!"

The woman extended her hand as Tilburn, looking less professional but more smart, in his well-cut evening-clothes, pushed his way through the gaily-chattering crowd of late-comers, and leant over the table.

"Well, Mrs. Grateley, you look more than charming to-night! The drive with your brother has given you a most exquisite colour!"

"The colour of nervousness!" she said, with a forced laugh. "You will hear all about it in a minute. I've just been telling Ralph I don't quite see how things are going to turn out now that that fool of a Scotland Yard man has arrested the butler!"

The man of law nodded.

"There's something in what she says, Ralph. Spriggs was a useful scapegoat so long as no one could lay hands on him. But the police have changed that all now. However, as this is our last night at the Imperial, I'm not disposed to spoil it by—"

He bent down and picked up the menu-card. "Where's our man? He seems to have deserted us. Silly chap! I meant to see Smith well through, for his many excellent services!"

Strudwick by this time was looking decidedly bored. For close on twenty minutes he and his companion had sat there, and, although Pierre had crossed and re-crossed their line of vision a score of times, he seemed in no hurry to have them attended to.

At last Tilburn—never the most patient of men—could stand the waiting no longer. He saw lines of anxious care deepening on Flora Grateley's brow, and knowing that a worrying woman is a dangerous drag, he decided that the sooner she forgot some of her cares in sparkling wine the better. With quick steps he caught Pierre half-way towards the balcony.

Pierre's face, as he listened to the complaint, was more than a picture of regret—it was a study in sympathy.

"I am sorry. I did forget. And Smith—zo good Smith—he failed me at the last minute, with a telegraph. Poor Smith, he is too ill! And what could I do?"—shrugging his shoulders expressively. "All my tables are full. I have sent out Monsieur Bertolin. He has just sent me a good waiter, but he



It took best part of an hour to dig out several bricks round the trapdoor, but at last Locke managed to get at the edges and prise it up. Then, laying flat, he peered into the opening. "A dead man's tomb or an empty vault—which?" he said to himself. (See page 17).

disappearance of his master alarmed him. He was in a state of great excitement when he rang me up. That excitement changed to surprise, followed by terror, as two men, probably Dr. Strudwick and the lawyer Tilburn, sprang upon him to drug him into insensibility."

"But why do you say Mr. Tilburn and Dr. Strudwick? How should they benefit by Mr. Shields' death? Mr. Tilburn was Mr. Shields' legal adviser. Mr. Shields was a rich man, engaged in a large and profitable business. Isn't it possible Tilburn would be losing a well-paying client by Mr. Shields' death?"

"Quite possible. But there are such people in this world, Hay, as the want-to-get-rich-quick brigade. Tilburn, I believe, is one of them."

"I'm afraid I don't follow."

"Perhaps not, because you only see detached portions of the affair. I am now able to look at it as a whole. Now, neither of these men had anything to gain directly through Shields' death. Indirectly they had—through the woman. Tilburn was the manufacturer's legal adviser; it was he who drew up the will leaving half the fortune to Mrs. Grateley. But Mrs. Grateley's brother is Dr. Strudwick, and Strudwick, I discovered, is an extravagant, impecunious individual, financially embarrassed. Mrs. Grateley, too, has her weakness for the good

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me. You haven't explained where Mr. Shields was during the time that elapsed between his leaving Dewsbury and his being found dead, nor have you explained why the man Spriggs was spirited away."

"For the present the first question must remain unanswered."

Hay's brows rose in astonishment.

"For the present? Then you think it possible, now that Shield's is dead, the story of what happened over those three days will ever be made known?"

Locke smiled.

"Oh, more than possible! One day—perhaps very soon—we shall know for certain."

"But the butler—if they wanted his share of the money, why didn't they kill him?"

Locke picked up Hay's hat, and held it out to him.

"Because they are such a tender-hearted trio that they wouldn't kill anybody. The matter is a very serious one—so serious that I want to go to bed and forget all about it. But I've a letter to think out. What it is all about you shall know in the morning."

#### The Secret of the House by the River!

STRUDWICK piloted his sister through the gay throng of diners towards the table set for them in a little, secluded corner, where the banked-up masses of blooms and the cool green of the ferns and palms gave a restful touch to a scene vibrant with animation.

very deaf. He wait ver well, but you must write down on ze paper."

Tilburn frowned with vexation.

"Never mind, send him along, Pierre—any-one so that we get our dinner! My friends have been waiting—"

But by this time the manager had vanished, and the deputy, any thing but bright, if willing, took his place with folded hands behind Strudwick's chair.

The doctor launched out, only to be cut short by the lawyer.

"It's no good, old chap! He's as deaf as a post. Here, see how you get along with this!"

He passed up a written list of their requirements, and the new waiter vanished.

Tilburn settled himself, and glanced across at the woman with a pleased smile.

"Well, I've had a very good day," he said. "I got the Orient people to cancel those berths after a ten per cent. reduction. It has been worth that to throw anyone who

wanted to know our probable movements off the scent."

Strudwick frowned.

"But have you fixed up the real thing?" He moved his arms. The waiter removed a vase of flowers, and set down the soup.

"Of course! I've booked one single and one double by the Asturias."

Strudwick gave a low whistle of surprise.

"The Asturias! But she doesn't sail till Friday, and that fool comes up for his first hearing on Thursday! There's no knowing what he may say!"

Mrs. Grateley nodded approvingly.

"That is just what I've maintained all along. Things have gone so well, we couldn't have done better than stick to the Ormonde. She leaves to-morrow."

"Well, I think Friday will do very well," the doctor remarked, starting his meal.

Tilburn turned towards him.

"My dear chap, it will have to. There are dozens of boats going out to-morrow, but not to the places we want. Mrs. Grateley doesn't

quite understand there are other things to be thought of than mere haste. I seem to remember—a note of sarcasm crept into his thin voice—"that certain individuals who have left England for England's good, under the impression that distance means safety, have found the landing-stage at Sydney or Melbourne just about as uncomfortable as Dover to night-birds flying over to the Continent."

As the chiming clock in the hall struck the hour Tilburn pushed back his chair and put down his cigarette.

"Don't think I'm in a hurry to leave you, but there are certain things I must do before the morning. We shall meet at Southampton at eleven-thirty on Friday. Good-by!"

He gave Strudwick a flabby grip, held the widow's hand a trifle longer than the occasion demanded, and hurried away.

(Look out for another instalment of this powerful detective serial in next Friday's issue.)

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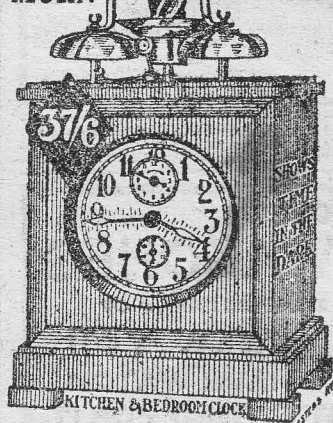
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