

READ "THE BOXING BOOM AT GREYFRIARS!"

SPLENDID SCHOOL STORY INSIDE.

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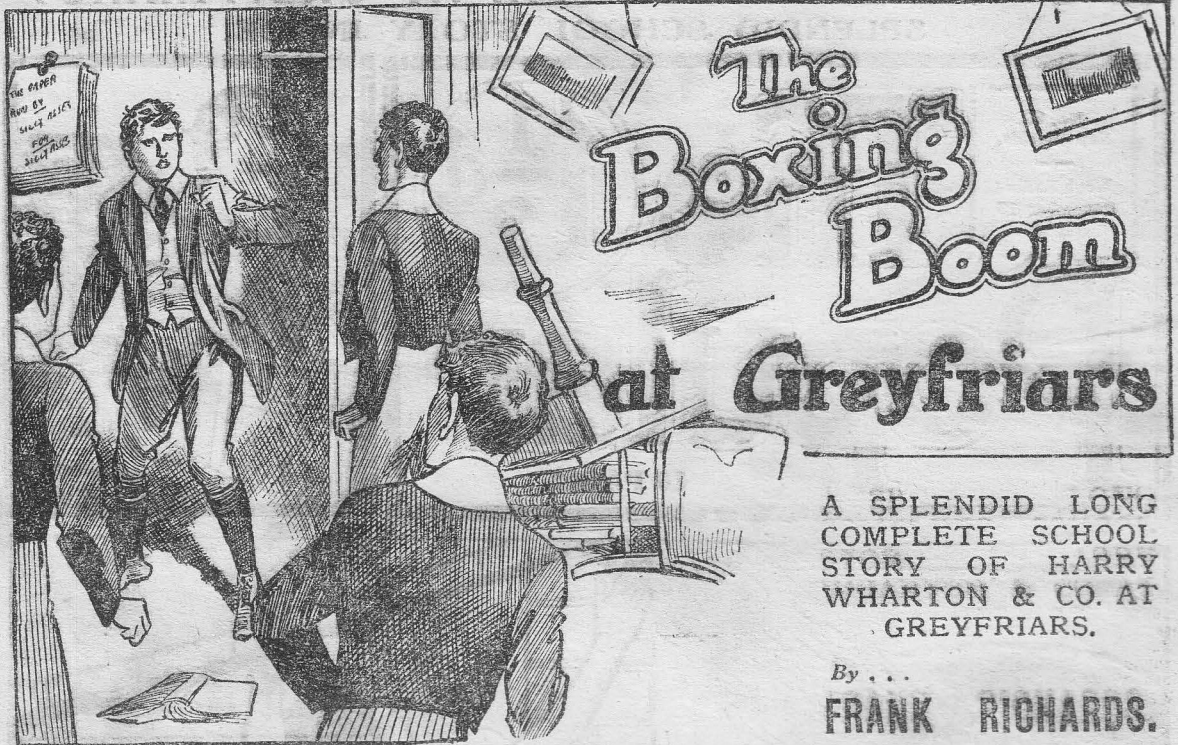
The 1½d Popular

20 PAGES.



PLUCK versus FIRE! Eddie Polo, setting his teeth, commenced his dangerous journey across the telephone cable!

(A Dramatic Episode from our grand serial "Fighting for Fame!")



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Enemy in the Camp!

"GREAT jumping crackers!" There was astonishment, wrath, and indignation in Bob Cherry's tone.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and immediately after dinner the Famous Five, and Dennis Carr, of the Remove, had adjourned to Study No. 1 to discuss ways and means of spending the afternoon.

The six juniors halted in amazement on the threshold of the study. And there was reason for their amazement, for the apartment presented an extraordinary appearance.

To begin with, the table was upside-down, with its legs upturned towards the ceiling. The chairs also were upside-down, while the sofa had been reared up on its haunches, so to speak.

In other respects, too, the furniture in Study No. 1 had been tampered with. The bookcase was open, and the volumes it had contained were strewn about the floor. Harry Wharton's Latin Primer was in the fireplace, and Frank Nugent's Virgil was reposing in the coal-scuttle.

Nor was this all.

Hanging on a hook at the side of the bookcase was a file of back numbers of the "Greyfriars Herald." And a sheet of paper had been affixed to the file. On the paper was an inscription which referred to Harry Wharton's journal:

"THE PAPER RUN BY SILLY ASSES FOR SILLY ASSES!"

As if this were not enough, there was a jummy figure perched on the window-sill—a hideous, grotesque figure, which, judging by the little heap on the floor, had been shedding sawdust from its crudely-fashioned legs.

The dummy seemed to be grinning mockingly at the Greyfriars juniors. And on its chest was a placard, bearing the words:

"HARRY WHARTON—THE GUY OF GREYFRIARS!"

"Great jumping crackers!" ejaculated Bob Cherry again.

Harry Wharton looked grim.

"This is a raid!" he said.

"Any ass can see that!" said Frank Nugent scowlishly. "The question is, who planned it—who carried it out?"

"The Fifth, I expect, or the Upper Fourth."

"Impossible!"

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"Why?"

"Because this has been done while we were at dinner. And Coker & Co. were in Hall, as usual—so were Temple & Co."

"Then who is responsible for this?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Give it up!"

The juniors exchanged baffled glances.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, the owners of the study, were wrathful. And their wrath was shared by their chums.

Somebody who was "up against" the Remove had carried out this raid during dinner. But who? That, as Hamlet said, was the question. And it was a question which the juniors found difficult to answer.

"It'll take us hours and hours to put this study in apple-pie order again!" said Frank Nugent. "My hat! I'd give anything to be able to have five minutes with the merchant who did this!"

"Same here!" said Dennis Carr.

"Might be one of our own fellows," suggested Bob Cherry. "Skinner, for instance. He's always playing practical jokes."

"Skinner would never have the nerve to wreck our study," said Harry Wharton. "And, besides, he was in the dining-hall. A fellow can't be in two places at once."

"Better start trying to put things shipshape again," said Nugent.

"We'll see if we can find the merry raider first!"

"But where are we to look?" asked Johnny Bull hopelessly. "We can't go all round the school asking every fellow we meet if he had a hand in this bizney."

"Besides, it isn't likely that the fellow who did it would say, 'Please, teacher, it was me!' said Dennis Carr. "He'd keep mum about it."

"The mumfulness would be terrific," agreed Hurree Singh.

And then he stepped across to the cupboard, in order to ascertain whether the unknown raider had tampered with the supplies.

No sooner had Hurree Singh thrown back the cupboard door, than a breathless and dishevelled figure rushed out.

There was a shout from the assembled juniors. "Trumper!"

It was the youthful leader of Courtfield County Council School who had carried out that amazing jape. He had come over to Greyfriars whilst the fellows were at dinner, and, the corridors being deserted, he had had a clear field. But it had taken him some time to complete his designs, and before he could leave the study he had heard the

sound of approaching footsteps. He had therefore taken refuge in the cupboard.

And now, realising that the game was up, Dick Trumper made a dash for the door—and freedom!

Astonished though they were, however, Harry Wharton & Co. had sufficient presence of mind to intercept the japer.

Before Trumper could reach the door, he was seized by many hands and borne to the floor.

"Got him!" panted Bob Cherry.

The Courtfielder struggled furiously, but to no purpose. He measured his length on the carpet, and Johnny Bull sat on his chest, while the others pinioned his arms and legs.

"Jolly lucky you thought of going to the cupboard, Inky," said Harry Wharton. "If you hadn't, this bouncer would have got away!"

"Leggo!" panted Trumper. "Gerroff me chest!"

"Not just yet, my infant!" said Johnny Bull, with a grin. "So it was you who played this jape?"

"Yes!"

"Well, we knew you had plenty of nerve, but we didn't dream you'd go to such lengths as this!" said Dennis Carr.

Trumper said nothing. With Johnny Bull's hefty form on his chest, speech was difficult.

"What do you mean by it?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by saying that the 'Greyfriars Herald' is 'the paper run by silly asses for silly asses'?"

Despite the discomfort of his position, and the fact that he had fallen into the hands of the Philistines, Trumper chuckled.

"And what do you mean by referring to me as the Guy of Greyfriars?" persisted Wharton.

"Well, you are, you know!" Trumper managed to blurt out.

"You—you cheeky rotter—"

"Don't argue with him, Harry!" said Frank Nugent. "Now that we've got the merry japer, what are we going to do with him?"

There was no lack of suggestions.

"Pulverise him!"

"Serag him!"

"Play him alivefully!"

After some deliberation, Harry Wharton pronounced sentence.

"We'll make him put this study in order again. Then we'll treat him to a dose of ink and feathers. After which, we'll send him back to his native haunts in a sack!"

"Ripping!"

Everybody thought this a splendid idea— with the exception of Dick Trumper.

The Courtfield junior didn't mind putting the study to rights—though that in itself was a hefty proposition. But the prospect of going back to the Council School in a sack, and with a face like a nigger-minstrel's, was galling in the extreme.

“No—not that—not that!” he protested. “Well, you've fairly asked for it!” said Bob Cherry. “What would you do to us if the boot was on the other foot—if you caught us in the act of raiding the Council School?”

“I should ask you to stay to tea,” said Trumper.

“Ha, ha, ha!”
“Let him get up!” said Wharton. Trumper was allowed to scramble to his feet.

“Now you can carry on!” said the captain of the Remove. “We'll give you twenty minutes to put everything in order!”

“You'll give me a hand, I suppose?”
“There's something wrong with your supposer, then!”

Dick Trumper took off his coat, and rolled up his sleeves, and started on his uncongenial task.

The Famous Five and Dennis Carr stood with their hands in their pockets, and looked on. They had the practical joker completely in their power, and they were grinning.

With a tremendous heave, Trumper managed to restore the table to its usual position. After which he wrestled with the sofa. And nobody put forth a hand to help him.

Having righted the sofa, Trumper grovelled on the floor, and collected the numerous volumes that were scattered about the study.

Before the twenty minutes had expired No. 1 Study presented quite a neat and tidy appearance.

“Half a jiffy!” said Bob Cherry, pointing to the stuffed dummy on the window-sill. “What are we going to do with that?”

“We'll alter the inscription to ‘Dick Trumper—the Guy of Courtfield!’ Then, when we've put Trumper in the sack, we'll attach the dummy to him by a string, and it'll follow him wherever he goes—like Mary's little lamb!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”
“Look here—” began Trumper, in alarm. “First of all, let's trot out the ink and feathers!” said Dennis Carr.

“Good egg!”
Dick Trumper was in a very tight corner, and he was beginning to regret having played that jape on Harry Wharton & Co. If it meant that he was going to be inked and feathered, and sent back to Courtfield in a sack, with a dummy figure trailing behind him, he felt that he would never survive the experience. He would be the laughing-stock of all Greyfriars, and of everybody he chanced to meet on the road. And when he got back to his own school, he would be soundly bumped for having failed to achieve his object.

Bob Cherry was already scouring round for the ink and feathers. And Dick Trumper's brain worked swiftly. Presently he spoke.

“I've got a suggestion to make, you fellows,” he said.

“Get it off your chest,” said Wharton. “It's not likely to help you, though.”

“I'll meet the best fighting-man among you—”

“Eh?”
“In a twelve-round contest with the gloves—”

“What!”
“On the following conditions: That if I win, I'm allowed to go back to my own school unmolested; and if I lose, you can carry out your original programme, and put me through the mill.”

The Greyfriars juniors stared breathlessly at Trumper.

“Is that a go?” asked the leader of the Courtfielders.

Harry Wharton & Co. hesitated. They were good sportsmen, and it was to their sporting instincts that Trumper had appealed.

“What do you say to that, you fellows?” asked Wharton. “Shall we accept Trumper's offer, or turn it down?”

“Accept it!” said Bob Cherry promptly. “Yes, rather!” said Dennis Carr.

And Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh nodded their heads in assent.

“Now, let's repeat the arrangement, so that there shall be no possibility of a mistake,” said the captain of the Remove, turning to Trumper. “You're to engage in a twelve-round boxing contest with one of us, and if you win we take no further action against you. If you're licked, we go ahead with our original scheme.”

“That's it!” said Trumper eagerly. “Select your man, and let's get to business.”

Of the six Greyfriars juniors present, Bob Cherry was unquestionably the best fighting-man. But Harry Wharton hesitated to pit Bob against Trumper. It would hardly be fair to the Courtfield fellow, for it was morally certain that he would never be able to stand up to Bob Cherry for twelve rounds.

Dick Trumper seemed to read Harry Wharton's thoughts, for he said:

“I'm not afraid to tackle Bob Cherry. Select him by all means.”

“It wouldn't be fair,” answered Wharton. “Why not?”

“Bob would wipe up the ground with you.”
“P'raps—p'raps not!”

“We want to give you a sporting chance, at least,” said the captain of the Remove. “I think you and Carr will be pretty evenly matched. What do you say, Dennis?”

“I'm game!” said Dennis readily. He was a splendid boxer, and the novelty of Dick Trumper's suggestion had appealed to him immensely.

Hitherto, Trumper had not been brought into contact with Dennis Carr. And he smiled as he took the measure of his man, and noted how slim, almost frail-looking, Dennis appeared. And then he remembered that this slim-looking junior had carried off the light-weight championship at Aldershot, and he knew that the forthcoming fight would be no walk-over for him.

“Where's this scrap to take place?” asked Johnny Bull.

“Behind the chapel,” said Wharton. “It's quiet there, and we shan't be spotted by any of the beaks.”

“Come along, then!”
Dick Trumper donned his coat, though he would shortly be required to take it off again, and the party of juniors, looking as excited as they felt, made their way to the quiet retreat behind the chapel. They encountered Bolsover minor en route, and despatched him to the gym for two pairs of boxing-gloves.

Nobody doubted that it would be a keen, and probably a thrilling contest. And there was much at stake, so far as Dick Trumper was concerned. If he won, he would be allowed to go his way in peace. But if, on the other hand, he lost, he would go his way in pieces, as Bob Cherry humorously expressed it.

“May the best man win!” said Frank Nugent heartily. And he felt convinced, as he uttered the words, that the best man was Dennis Carr.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Fortune of War!

SHAKESPEARE has said that each man in his time plays many parts.

This was true of Billy Bunter of the Remove. Bunter was a ventriloquist, and a gormandiser, and a fibber, and an eavesdropper. And he had just been busy in the last-named capacity. He had overheard the whole of the conversation between Harry Wharton & Co. and Dick Trumper, and he had detached his ear from the keyhole of No. 1 Study and dodged into the adjacent doorway, just in time to evade the juniors as they came out.

“My hat!” murmured the fat junior. “Trumper and Carr are going to box twelve rounds behind the chapel! Pity Wharton didn't select me to tackle Trumper. I'm a better man than Carr any day of the week! Still, I s'pose he didn't want to give Trumper too tough an opponent.”

When Harry Wharton & Co. had retreated along the passage, Billy Bunter emerged from his temporary hiding-place, and scuttled away towards the football-field, where the majority of the Removites were at practice.

“I say, you fellows!” he panted breathlessly.

Peter Todd paused in the act of taking a lying kick at the ball.

“What's up, porpoise?” he growled.
“A fight!” said Bunter dramatically.

“Eh?”
“Trumper and Dennis Carr are going to hammer each other behind the chapel!”

“My hat!”
“What's it all about?” asked Squiff.

“Trumper came over and raided No. 1 Study, and they collared him. They were going to ink and feather him, and shove him in a sack, but they've decided to let him off if he succeeds in licking Carr in a twelve-round contest!”

A buzz of excitement followed Billy Bunter's words.

Football was forgotten, and the players sped away to the scene of the encounter. As they went, they were joined by other juniors, to whom they breathlessly explained what was afoot.

Consequently, instead of a mere handful of onlookers, an enormous crowd turned up to witness the contest.

It was surprising how so many fellows managed to congregate in the same spot in such a short space of time. They seemed to spring up suddenly from nowhere.

“Hallo! Quite a lot of spectators have turned up to see you licked, Carr!” remarked Dick Trumper.

“To see you licked, you mean!” said Dennis.

“Rats!”
“I'm your second, Dennis,” said Bob Cherry. “I ought to be master of ceremonies really, but I'll stand aside for Wharton.”

“Very kind of you, Bob!” said the captain of the Remove, laughing.

“Anybody care to second me?” asked Dick Trumper. “Don't af speak at once!”
Johnny Bull came forward.

“I'll act as chief patcher-up on your behalf,” he said.

“Ha, ha, ha!”
“It's Carr who'll need all the patching-up, I'm thinking,” was Trumper's rejoinder.

“Bow-wow!”

A human ring had been formed, and in the middle of this ring the two combatants, having removed their coats and donned the gloves, stood face to face.

A stranger, taking stock of the two boxers, would have put all his money on Dick Trumper. For the Courtfielder was taller than Dennis Carr, and better developed.

But the stranger's money would not have been safe, for—as those who knew Dennis were aware—he was one of the pluckiest fellows who ever stepped inside a ring. Moreover, he never knew when he was beaten.

“Before we begin,” said Dick Trumper, “let's understand each other. I take it this is not going to be a kid-glove affair. We're going to put our beef into it, what!”

“That's the idea!” said Dennis. “There's no ill-feeling between us. At the same time, each of us will go all out.”

Trumper nodded.

“Ready, you two?” asked Harry Wharton.

“Yes.”
“Right! Seconds out of the ring!”

“We're already out, fathead!” said Bob Cherry.

“Time!”
Dennis Carr and Dick Trumper shook hands, and the next instant they were at it hammer-and-tongs.

There were no cheers from the lookers-on. This did not mean that they were not excited. The fact was that they were too excited even to cheer.

There was nothing half-hearted about the opening exchanges.

Dick Trumper had resolved to bring the fight to a speedy issue, and, Dennis Carr having made a similar resolve, there was plenty of hard hitting.

The first really telling blow was struck by Trumper. It was a half-arm jolt to the jaw, and it made Dennis Carr stagger.

But the Greyfriars fellow was soon master of himself again, and he returned the blow with interest, much to the delight of the crowd.

“Go it, Dennis!”
“Follow up, man!”

“Let him have it hot!”

A remarkable feature of the first round was that there was little or no defensive work on either side.

Both Carr and Trumper seemed to scorn defensive tactics. Each attacked fiercely, though it was obvious that such a terrific pace could not be maintained for long.

Honours were easy at the end of the first round.

“Good man!” said Bob Cherry approvingly, as he sponged Dennis Carr's face. “Thank you can lick him?”

“I think so, but it's no cert. The fellow's as strong as a horse, and he puts no end of beef into his blows.”

Dennis said no more. He knew that he would need all his breath.

The spectators expected the pace to slacken in the second round. Instead of which the round was even more fiercely contested than the first.

And gradually Dick Trumper began to assert his supremacy. Dennis Carr landed

quite as many blows as he did, but there was not the same "punch" behind them.

Harry Wharton & Co. began to look anxious.

"Afraid our man's booked for a licking!" muttered Frank Nugent. "You ought to have let Bob take Trumper on, Harry."

Before Wharton could reply, Dennis Carr landed in a sprawling heap at his feet.

A well-timed blow between the eyes had done the mischief. Everybody thought it would prove a knock-out blow, for Dennis Carr lay perfectly still for several seconds.

And then, with a suddenness which astonished the audience, Dennis bounded to his feet. What was more, he managed to keep Trumper at bay until the end of the round.

"He's not beaten yet," said Mark Linley. "Good old Dennis!"

The seconds got busy with their sponges, and the fight was resumed. To Dennis Carr it seemed that the interval had only lasted a couple of seconds.

In the next round both boxers became more cautious.

Dick Trumper had abandoned his hope of forcing an early victory; and so, for that matter, had Dennis Carr. And their object now seemed to be to avoid being smitten, rather than to smite. There was a good deal of feinting and side-stepping, and here Dennis Carr was seen to great advantage. His footwork was so smart, so clever, that Dick Trumper appeared almost clumsy by comparison.

"They're going to make it a long-drawn-out affair," remarked Vernon-Smith. "Shouldn't be surprised if they went the whole of the twelve rounds."

"What happens if it's a draw?" asked Peter Todd.

"We'll let Trumper off," said Wharton. "If he stands up to Carr for twelve rounds, he won't feel like being inked and feathered and sent home in a sack."

"My hat, no!"

The fight proceeded on even lines for the next three rounds.

The exchanges had been interesting, though not exactly thrilling. But towards the end of Round 7 Dennis Carr seemed suddenly to spring into new life. Perhaps the long spell of defensive work had exhausted his patience. Anyway, he rushed in, shouting out right and left in swift succession.

"Hurrah!"

"Stick it, Dennis!"

"That is the stuff to impartfully give 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick Trumper retreated a couple of paces. Then he staggered. Then he got in the way of another smashing left-hander, and the next instant he was on his back, with his opponent standing over him.

The Courtfielder was utterly dazed, and only the call of "Time!" saved him from certain defeat.

The Greyfriars fellows were dancing with delight now.

"Trumper won't last another round!" said Peter Todd.

And that was the general opinion.

But the Courtfielder revived during the interval, thanks to the ministrations of Johnny Bull, and in the next round he was fighting as keenly as ever.

All the same, Dennis Carr was top-dog. There was no gaining that fact. He knew that it only needed a really powerful blow to send Trumper down for the last time, and he was sparing for an opening, with a view to delivering that blow when there was a dramatic interruption to the fight.

"Stop!" It was the voice of Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars. "Cease this unseemly brawl instantly! I command you!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, in dismay. "The Head!"

And Dennis Carr and Dick Trumper promptly dropped their hands to their sides. If the truth were known, the Courtfielder was not altogether sorry for the interruption.

The spectators had been far too deeply engrossed in the fight to notice the Head's approach, and when they heard his voice they looked confused and sheepish.

Dr. Locke was not alone. A dapper little gentleman, immaculately dressed, and wearing a twirling moustache, accompanied him. This individual, although small, made the most of his height. He carried himself erect, and he had the appearance of a retired colonel. His lips were sternly set, but there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"What's it all about—hey?" he inquired.

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"It's—it's just a friendly scrap, sir," stammered Harry Wharton.

Despite the fact that they were under the Head's eye, several of the juniors chuckled. The fact that Dick Trumper's nose was nearly twice its normal size, and that Dennis Carr's right eye was half-closed, suggested that the scrap was anything but friendly.

The dapper little gentleman chuckled, too. "Carry on with the good work, begad!" he said.

Dr. Locke looked horrified.

"Really, Sir Timothy," he began, "you surely cannot countenance such a disgraceful exhibition of fisticuffs!"

"Boxin' is a manly art, sir—a noble art!" was the reply. "As a member of the National Sportin' Club, I fully appreciate that fact."

"But—but an affray of this kind is brutalising and debasing!"

"Fiddlesticks, sir! Boxin' is the healthiest an' cleanest sport extant. If I had my own way, sir, I should expunge Latin an' Greek an' all dead languages from the school curriculum, an' the time that had hitherto been devoted to them would be taken up by boxin' lessons!"

"Wise old buffer, that!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

Sir Timothy beckoned to Dick Trumper and Dennis Carr.

"Carry on!" he repeated.

Dr. Locke was about to make a further protest, but the words he was on the point of uttering died away on his lips.

Sir Timothy Topham happened to be a governor of the School, and the Head felt that it would be diplomatic to let him have his own way. Besides, it would be very undignified to continue to argue with Sir Timothy in the presence of so many juniors.

Dennis Carr glanced towards the Head, and as that gentleman made no sign of protest, he turned to Dick Trumper.

"Going on?" he muttered.

Trumper nodded. He knew that he was courting defeat by going on, but he was too honourable a fellow to back out because of that.

So the fight was resumed, and Sir Timothy looked on with sparkling eyes.

As for the Head, he looked decidedly uncomfortable. He was regretting that his stroll with Sir Timothy had led him to this spot.

"Who are you backing, sir?" asked Skinner, who possessed more "check" than the average fellow.

Dr. Locke flushed crimson.

"Silence, Skinner!" he rumbled.

"The fair-haired youngster has my vote," said Sir Timothy. "Jove, but he's a fine little fighter! Look at that! Right in the solar plexus, begad!"

"Really, Sir Timothy—" murmured the Head feebly.

"He's gone down for the count, too!" continued the sporting governor, referring to Dick Trumper. "His number's up! His bolt's shot! All the stuffing's knocked out of him, by Jove!"

The juniors were cheering wildly. Harry Wharton could scarcely hear himself count. When he got to seven, Dick Trumper made a desperate effort to rise. But that final blow of Dennis Carr's had proved altogether too much for him, and he sank back again, beaten in fair fight by one of the finest sportsmen in the Greyfriars Remove.

"A fittin' climax to a stirrin' encounter!" exclaimed Sir Timothy. "Pity we didn't arrive on the scene earlier!"

The Head said nothing. He was reflecting that it was a pity they had arrived on the scene at all.

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull assisted Dick Trumper to rise.

The Courtfielder junior was feeling very shaky, but he mustered a grin.

"The best man wins," he said chivalrously. "And now I suppose I must face the ink and leathers?"

"No jolly fear!" said Harry Wharton.

"But the arrangement was—"

"Blow the arrangement! You fought like a giddy Trojan, and we'll forget all about the study-raiding incident."

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, that's awfully decent of you fellows!" said Trumper, and his voice was strangely husky.

"Rats!"

Dennis Carr came towards his recent opponent with outstretched hand.

"It was a great scrap!" he said. "I had all the luck that was going."

"You beat me fairly and squarely," was the reply. "If we had the fight over again, I guarantee the result would be just the same. And now I must be getting back to Courtfield. We've got a footer match on this afternoon—though, to tell the truth, I don't feel much like footer. Au revoir, you fellows!"

And, having donned his coat, Dick Trumper stroled away.

Meanwhile, Sir Timothy Topham stepped up to Dennis Carr.

"Bravo!" he exclaimed, clapping the junior on the back. "Who taught you how to use your fists?"

"I'm self-taught, sir," said Dennis, with a smile. "But I wasn't much good with the gloves until I met Jack Harper. It was he who gave me the necessary polish, and taught me a trick or two."

"Jack Harper! Do you mean the ex-boxing champion who runs a trainin'-school near Courtfield?"

"That's the fellow, sir."

"Well, you couldn't have had a better instructor, by Jove! What Harper doesn't know about the noble art isn't worth knowin'. By the way, what's your name?"

"Dennis Carr, sir."

"Begad! Are you the youngster who won the Light-Weight Championship at Aldershot?"

Dennis nodded.

"That was a great performance!" said Sir Timothy. "I remember readin' a full account of it in the 'Athlete.' You're fond of boxin', I take it?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Ah' your schoolfellows?"

"We're crazy keen on it, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"Good! Good! That's the spirit!"

And Sir Timothy nodded genially to the juniors, and walked away. He seemed to be debating something in his mind, and a few minutes later he was seen to be in deep and earnest conversation with the Head.

"Regular old sport, isn't he?" said Peter Todd.

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull. "Wish there were a few more of his stamp buzzing around!"

"Now that the strife is o'er, and the battle won, I think we'll adjourn to the footer-field," said Bob Cherry.

Shortly afterwards a practice-match was in progress on Little Side; while Sir Timothy Topham and Dr. Locke were engaged in an earnest discussion in the latter's study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

• Great News for Greyfriars!

BIFF! Thud! Biff! Thud!

Those vigorous sounds proceeded from the school gymnasium.

Harry Wharton & Co. were passing the gym on their way back from football, and they halted outside the door in profound astonishment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Somebody seems to be going strong."

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

"Sounds like a scrap," remarked Frank Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Let's investigate," he said.

And he threw open the door of the gym.

The juniors swarmed into the large and lofty apartment. They expected to find a battle royal in progress. But they were disappointed.

The sole occupant of the gym was Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

The fat junior's coat was off, and his sleeves were rolled up, and he was in the act of committing assault and battery upon the punching-ball. Hence the continual biffing and thudding.

Billy Bunter was quite oblivious to the sudden entry of his schoolfellows. He continued to pound and pommel the punching-ball, and the perspiration coursed down his fat and flabby cheeks.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood rooted to the floor. They were amazed—utterly bewildered—by the sight which greeted their gaze.

As a rule, Billy Bunter fought shy of physical exertion. He was plump and stodgy, and even his best friend—if he had one—would not have accused him of being an athlete. Yet here he was, in the gym, inflicting blow after blow upon the punching-ball, which swung to and fro like a pendulum.

"M-m-my hat!" stammered Bob Cherry.

"What are you hammering that ball for, you fat duffer?" demanded Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter did not seem to hear, and the juniors looked on in amazed silence.

"Biff! Thud! Bang!" Billy piled in with all the strength of his podgy person, his fat fists clenched so tight that his nails fairly dug into the palms of his fat hands.

Several times he misjudged the fight of the flying leather, and it rebounded and caught him unawares, sending him crashing back, to meet with a hard bump upon the unsympathetic floor.

He was not long in forgetting his pains, but was up again almost immediately, his fists working like clockwork upon the fast-moving punching-ball.

He stopped for a moment or two to wipe the perspiration that was fast flowing down his cheeks, which now resembled the colour of beetroots.

Then, still unconscious of the presence of his schoolfellows, he made another ferocious attack upon the ball.

It was a new thing for William George Bunter, but he obviously meant business.

There was a snigger from the onlooking juniors.

The captain of the Remove gave a snort. He strode towards the fat junior, and shook him violently.

"Yow-ow-ow! Gerra-way, Bolsover, you beast!"

"I'm not Bolsover, you idiot! Look here! What's the little game?"

"I'm in training," said Bunter.

"Great pip!"

"In training for what?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"The gold medal, you know!"

"The gug-gug-gold medal?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"What gold medal, you fat chump?" demanded Wharton.

"Oh, of course, you fellows don't know what's in the wind! You haven't my knack of picking up first-hand information!"

"We haven't your knack of listening at key-holes, you mean!" said Nugent scornfully.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I couldn't help hearing what Sir Timothy said. When he suggested his scheme to the Head, he bellowed so loudly that he could have been heard all over Greyfriars!"

"And what was the scheme that he suggestfully propounded?" asked Hurree Singh, his curiosity getting the better of him.

"He's going to organise a tremendous boxing tournament at Greyfriars—"

"What!"

"And there's to be a gold medal presented to the best fighting-man in each Form—"

"My hat!"

"Is this the truth, or are you pulling our legs?" growled Wharton.

"It's the sober truth—"

"We don't care whether it's the sober truth or the intoxicated truth so long as it is the truth!" said Bob Cherry. "Did Sir Timothy really suggest that to the Head?"

"Really and truly!" said Bunter solemnly.

"And what did the Head say?"

"He said 'Rats!' at first—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But after a time Sir Timothy talked him round—he's a jolly persuasive sort of merchant, you know—and the Head gave in. The tournament's coming off in a fortnight's time.

Harry Wharton & Co. were profoundly impressed. If there was really to be a big boxing boom at Greyfriars it would be immensely exciting.

A gold medal for the best boxer in each Form! What a striving for honours there would be—especially in the Remove! The excitement would be at fever-heat, and some of the contests—particularly the finals—would become historic.

At the thought of Billy Bunter taking part

in the tournament, the juniors roared with laughter.

"Hold me up, somebody!" implored Bob Cherry. "This is too rich! Bunter—a giddy fighting-man! Bunter—the Joe Beckett of Greyfriars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it was the barrel-weight championship that he was going in for, or the special contest for prize porkers, he'd win hands down!" chuckled Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

The juniors left Billy Bunter to his own devices, and strolled out of the gym. And the news of the forthcoming boxing tournament was soon being eagerly discussed up and down the Remove passage.

No official announcement was made that day, however, and the juniors began to wonder if, after all, it was a leg-pulling stunt on Bunter's part.

"Fat lot Quelch knows about boxing!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Or Prout, either!" muttered Johnny Bull. "He doesn't know the difference between an upper-cut and a round of beef!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

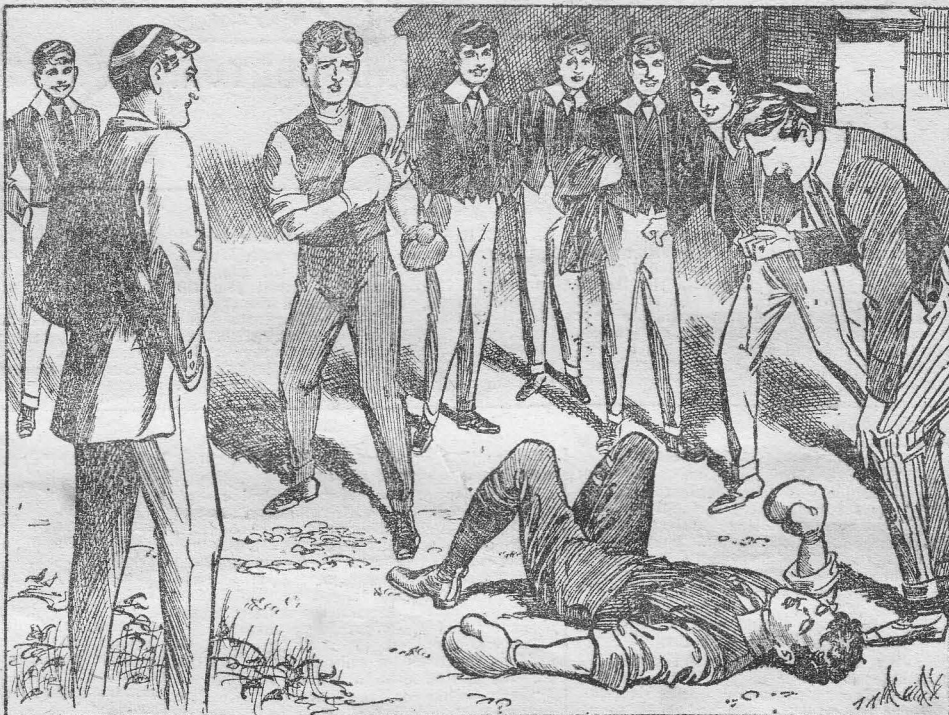
The Head made a few more remarks of minor importance. And then Coker of the Fifth raised a shout.

"Three cheers for Sir Timothy Topham!"

The cheers were given with right good will, and the sporting Governor smiled.

"I trust the tournament will prove a great success, begad!" he said, as soon as he could make himself heard. "Boxin' is a healthy sport—a manly sport—an' I shall take a personal interest in the various contests. Moreover, I will ask Lady Topham to come down to Greyfriars an' present the medals."

"Hurrah!"



Dick Trumper retreated a couple of paces. Then he staggered, and got in the way of another smashing left-hander. The next instant he was on his back with his opponent standing over him. The timekeeper, his watch in hand, commenced to count. (See page 4.)

Next morning, however, the Head came into the dining-hall at breakfast-time. He was accompanied by Sir Timothy Topham.

The masters and prefects, having enforced silence all over the hall, the Head spoke.

"My boys!" he began. "This gentleman is Sir Timothy Topham, a newly-elected governor of this school. He is also a member of the National Sporting Club, and an authority on athletics. Sir Timothy is particularly keen on boxing, and it is his earnest desire that a boxing tournament on a very large scale shall be held at Greyfriars."

The Head was interrupted at this juncture by loud cheers. He waited until the din had subsided, and then resumed.

"Sir Timothy has been generous enough to offer a gold medal to the best boxer in each Form—"

"Hurrah!"

"And the captains of the respective Forms will collect the names of all boys who wish to participate in the contests. The lists must be handed in to me within one week from this date."

"Good!"

"Put me down, Wharton!"

"And me!"

"Faith, an' if ye leave me out I'll scalp ye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head raised his hand for silence.

"The preliminary heats will be fought out in ten days' time," he announced. "And Mr. Prout, Mr. Quelch, and Mr. Lascelles will organise and control the arrangements."

The big hall rang with cheering. And when the Head and Sir Timothy retired they left the school in a buzz.

"This is the best news we've had for whole terms!" said Denis Carr.

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover major. "I'll keep my gold medal in a special plush case, and wear it—the medal, not the case—on special occasions!"

"There's just one trifling obstacle in the way of your doing that," said Peter Todd.

"Well?"

"You've got to win the medal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I shall win it all right!" said Bolsover confidently. "There are some fairly useful boxers in the Remove, but, bless you, I shall put 'em in my pocket!"

"Rats!"

"You've got me to reckon with, Bolsover!" said Billy Bunter.

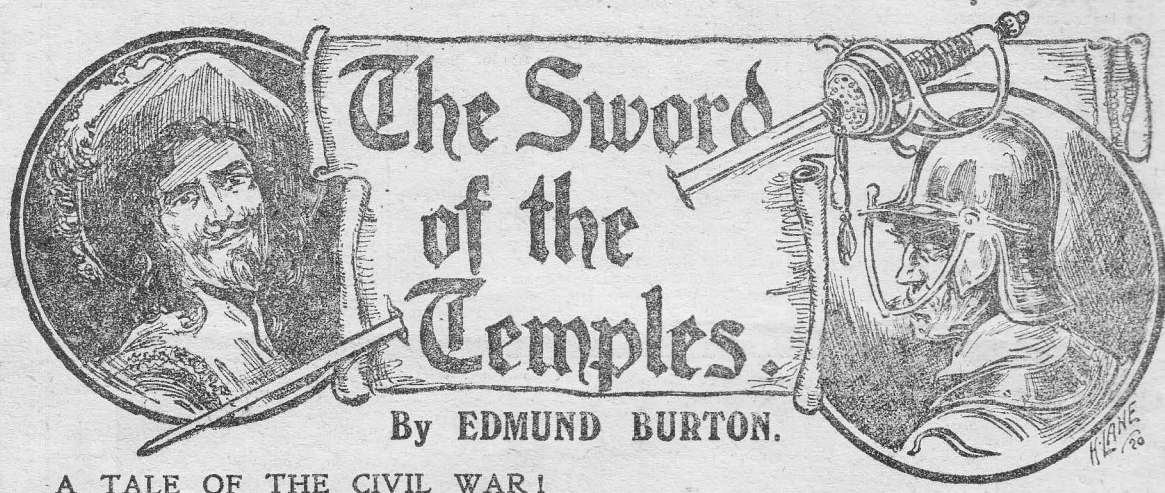
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were in great spirits, and so, for that matter, were the seniors and the fags.

Certain it was that many thrilling contests would take place, and many breathless and exciting incidents would occur during the great Boxing Boom at Greyfriars!

THE END.

(Next week's grand long story of the chum of Greyfriars will be entitled: "Training for the Tournament." Avoid disappointment by ordering EARLY!)



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. In an attempt to secure the sword, Walter is thrown from his horse and killed. They find concealed in the sword a parchment containing the whereabouts of the lost treasure, which they unearth. Suddenly comes the sound of approaching horses.

(Now read on.)

An Unforeseen Obstacle!

ABOUT the same time as Walter Temple was being borne towards his last resting-place, a small body of mounted soldiery arrived at a spot some short distance off. They formed one of the many parties which Cromwell was dispatching in different directions throughout the country, to gather recruits for the new army which he was forming to throw against the Scots, should such a course be deemed necessary in the near future.

Finding their camping-ground somewhat unsuitable after one night's stay, this particular body decided to seek better quarters, and sent one of their number ahead to ascertain if such could be obtained. But nothing promising presented itself, until the upper windows and twisted chimneys of Temple Chase at last showed above the trees.

"Now, there is a most likely spot," muttered the man.

He advanced through the wood, his horse's hoofs making no sound on the soft snow, until the murmur of voices fell on his ear, causing him to draw rein hastily.

Through the trees he saw three figures, engaged in earnest conversation; one—a big man—was pointing out something in the trunk of a whitened oak, and gesticulating excitedly.

But two departed, leaving the third sitting moodily on one of the great roots. Half hesitating whether he should speak now, or wait to see if the others came back, the Roundhead finally decided to return to the rest of his party and conduct them thither. Seven or eight would likely be of more use than one, when it came to persuading these two to throw in their lot with Noll Cromwell.

So resolved, the trooper turned his horse, and rode rapidly away, the animal stepping on a dead stick and cracking it as it passed—which was probably the faint sound Harry had heard whilst awaiting his comrades' return.

Finding the rest of the little party in agreement with him, no time was lost in setting out for the spot where the horseman had come upon the trio; but what a different sight now met their gaze as they silently advanced. Instead of three innocent-looking individuals conversing together, now they were clustered round a shallow pit in the earth, each face aglow with an excited

light, as they examined the five small chests placed in a row upon the brink.

The leader of the troop checked a surprised exclamation with difficulty, as he silently motioned his colleagues to halt. Up to now, the other party was too intent on the work in progress to notice anything else; but as the newcomers rode forward again, Will suddenly looked up, and catching sight of them, uttered the startled words which concluded the preceding chapter.

The trio remained staring as though transfixed at the troop of soldiery which had apparently sprung upon them from nowhere.

"Pray, what is the meaning of this, gentlemen?" asked the officer in command, advancing towards them, and indicating the unearthed treasure with a sweep of his hand. Then his eyes devoured the smashed chest with interest, feasting themselves on the golden contents, and the little heap of coin beside it.

Harry and Will exchanged glances, scarce knowing how to reply. It had all been so sudden, and so totally unexpected, that for the time being surprise had struck them dumb. But, presently, the young fellow decided to make a clean breast of the matter—that would be the wisest and safest way out of the difficulty.

The officer listened attentively until the end of the story, and then shook his head doubtfully.

"Nay, I do not question the truth of your words, sirrah," he said, "but, even allowing for that, you must know that at present all treasure, unless in actual possession of its owners, is forfeit to the State."

"But this is in our actual possession," objected Harry.

"True! 'Tis in your possession, but that does not prove your ownership of it. The tale you have just told me may be an honest one, yet 'tis a most strange story, as you will doubtless admit, and therein lies my difficulty. I fear I must hold this, pending further inquiries!"

He nodded again towards the boxes, and then let his eyes travel over the crestfallen faces of Travers and Howard, treating the latter to a particularly close scrutiny.

"Now, you, and our young friend, here, look keffy fellows both, and we are in dire need of every able-bodied man we can discover," he said. "Will ye join us?"

Will shook his head.

"Not so, Sir Roundhead! For me, my fight-

ing days are almost over. I have served well and faithfully in a good cause, and 'twas not my fault that it was lost. And, an' I mistake not, Master Harry here, is much of the same mind in the matter."

"So!" The officer turned to young Temple. "And you—Master Harry?" You, at least, have plenty of fighting-force still remaining to you."

But Harry shook his head decisively. "Nay, that is scarcely the point," he replied quietly. "'Tis rather, for what cause is that force to be used? I have loyally served the King—Heaven rest him!—and 'tis not likely that I shall now turn and serve his enemies!"

The trooper bit his lip, somewhat taken aback by the frankness of the reply. Then he shrugged his broad shoulders resignedly.

"So be it, then!" he said. "So far, Colonel Cromwell has only deemed it necessary to ask for what he requires—later he may decide to command! Meanwhile, as I assume your house is yours, we shall give ourselves the pleasure of lodging with you until we receive our orders as to the disposal of this."

He indicated the treasure, and then motioned his men to close in. The chests were lifted up, and the whole party moved towards the Chase—Will and Harry silent. Travers muttering dire threats against the whole troop in general.

By this time dusk was falling fast, and a move was made towards the great dining-room, where the Roundhead officer eyed the scanty remains of the mid-day meal greedily.

"Ye seem to have fared right well, sirrahs, which is more than we did," he said. "But 'tis soon remedied, an' your hospitality will extend itself to such unwelcome guests."

Harry's eyes flashed for a moment at the cool impudence of the request, but, catching a sudden, swift signal from Will, he remained silent.

"Most assuredly!" replied Howard quickly. "Ye are but doing your duty, sirs, and we bear ye no ill-will on that score. Come, Travers! You and I will prepare them such a meal as will tighten their sword-belts to bursting point!"

Vaguely upset by the sudden change from sullen silence to amiability, the Roundhead shot a curious look at Howard, but read nothing in that expressionless face. He nodded curtly.

"I thank you!" he said. "We have not fed over well for days past, and feel the need

of something solid. But we are most careful in our choice of fare, so one of us will go with ye to make the selection!”

The officer smiled grimly, and Will inwardly cursed him for his cuteness; but there was nothing for it, and the trio departed to the lower regions of the mansion, leaving Harry—somewhat perplexed, but nevertheless trustful—with the others.

Will Howard's Trickery.

ONCE downstairs, the behaviour of the solitary trooper who had accompanied Travers and Howard instantly revealed the fact that he was quite well aware of his leader's real object in dispatching him, other than merely making a selection of the viands; for he showed not the slightest inclination to carry out his apparent instructions—just standing idly by as they loaded a couple of trays. Yet, although he made no attempt to assist them, not for one single second did his eyes waver in their watchful gaze, noting each action, however small, on the part of the others, at which Will felt mightily upset as the minutes passed slowly by.

“Zounds!” he muttered to himself, taking another side-long glance at the intruder out of the corner of his eye. “Yonder fellow will prove our undoing yet, an' I act not quickly!”

Then, carelessly humming a tune, he moved towards the table whereon the trays rested, now almost ready for delivery upstairs, and became most busy, as though settling each separate article more securely so that it should not tumble off in transit.

Whilst thus occupied, he edged inch by inch, warily and imperceptibly, towards the far end of the table where the trooper was still standing watching his movements like a cat, all unsuspecting of what was to come.

Pausing midway to attend to the second tray, Will progressed another foot or so, diligently brushing the crumbs from the board to the floor. He was now almost within striking distance of the man, and ere that worthy rightly knew what was happening, he suddenly felt his waist encircled in a grip of steel, whilst a horny hand descended heavily on his mouth, cutting short the startled cry which rose to his lips.

“A rope, Travers—a rope! Quickly, thou aged snail!”

The trooper was a brawny fellow enough, somewhat of Will's own height and build, and he wrigled like a great eel in Howard's grip. Indeed, 'tis doubtful if the latter could have held him for long, for the hold had not been quite so good a one as he could have wished. One of the captive's hands gradually worked free, and felt blindly for his sword-hilt, but Will perceiving his intention, as quickly forestalled him. He snatched the blade from its scabbard, and sent it clattering on the flagstones behind him.

“Ah, friend, you were scarce smart enough. Nay, stay still or I shall be obliged to rap you most heavily on the pate, which would be somewhat unpleasant! A murmur upon you for a lame beetle, Travers! The rope, man, the rope!”

The old retainer shuffled forward, bearing a stout coil which he looped round the prisoner's ankles.

“That's right!” gasped Will. “Wind it round his legs now, for he kicks like any mule. Good! Now, his hips, and, here, give me the free end!”

Loosing his grip for a second, Howard deftly ran a slip-knot over the Roundhead's wrists, drawing them downwards; then he secured the remainder of the rope round the man's elbows, trussing him securely.

“Now, that cloth yonder, friend Travers! I thank you!”

He rolled the rag into a ball, thrusting it swiftly into the trooper's mouth, which had just then opened to send forth a warning shout; but all that issued from it was a spluttering gasp. Will secured the gag in its place with another piece of material which he snatched up, and then lowered his victim to the floor.

“Now, Sir Cocksparrow, you may chirrup through that, an' you can manage it—but 'twill be a miracle! Nay, look not so pleased, I pray you, for I have seen too much amusement already!”

Travers was chuckling wheezily as he watched the proceedings, but then he turned to Will, with a grave expression on his face.

“'Twas right well done, friend, but 'twill serve us little!” he said. “They'll miss him when we go up again.”

“Nay, Master Wisacre, they will not, for he'll be there!”

“How?”

“Old man, your wits are wool-gathering again, I fear! Dost take me for such a simpleton? See here!”

He crossed over to a cupboard, and took down a small bottle filled with some dark liquid, which he shook thoroughly and held up to the light.

“I know not rightly how much the dose is,” he muttered, “but dire ills require equally dire remedies! Perhaps this will do.”

He poured a small portion of the fluid into a cup, and then, taking up the vanquished trooper's sword, knelt down beside him.

“Now look you here, sirrah!” he said quietly, resting the keen point against the discomfited man's ribs. “You must swallow this, or else your blade will drink something of another colour, I promise you! Take off the gag, Travers! An' he cries out, I vow 'twill be for the last time!”

The man looked up into Will's face as the cup touched his lips, but, seeing the dangerous gleam in the big fellow's eyes, decided 'twould be nothing short of madness to resist. He took a few mouthfuls, and in a minute or so his head fell forward on his chest.

Howard turned up the eyelids and looked closely at the pupils beneath, a sigh of satisfaction issuing from him.

“'Tis all right!” he said. “A strong dose,

the great kitchen was deserted by all save the motionless figure on the floor, who was quite oblivious to what had just taken place.

Now, although all this has occupied some time in the telling, it had really occurred in the space of but a few minutes; so that it did not seem very long to the company above ere the dining-room door was again opened, and two figures entered bearing a goodly array of various provisions and several flagons of wine which they set on the table.

Harry looked curiously at them, vaguely wondering at the absence of Will Howard, but his unspoken question was put forward next instant by the Roundhead officer.

“Only two!” the latter exclaimed. “Where is the other one, Robin—the big fellow?”

“'Twas Travers, however, who replied to the query.

“He's still below, Sir Captain, watching a pigeon-pasty lest it burns. He should be here within a quarter of an hour.”

The officer nodded curily, and then looked curiously at the trooper who had accompanied Travers, as the others drew chairs over, preparatory to attacking the inviting array of eatables on the table.

“Why do you not remove your hat, Robin? 'Tis a strange way for a guest to sit down to meals!”

But “Robin” gave a sniff, and blew his nose loudly, as he replied:



The Roundheads sat up stupidly, and stared at the clouds of smoke around them. By this time the panelling was burning fiercely, and the costly tapestry had almost disappeared in a sheet of flame. (See page 8).

truly, but not too strong. Now, old friend, help me to undo these knots.”

“But surely—?”

“John Travers!” said Will sternly. “Pray do as I say, and lose no time over it, or we'll have the whole swarm down buzzing about our ears!”

The cords were cast off, and Will removed the unconscious man's coat. The rest of his apparel quickly followed suit, and then a thick rug was thrown over him.

Next, Howard's own clothes were hastily removed, and he redressed himself in the others, Travers watching open-mouthed throughout the whole performance. Presently, Will gave his long silvery locks a toss and uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

“It can't be helped!” he sighed. “They'll have to go! Now, off with them quickly, Barber Travers—as near to the scalp as you can go without cutting me!”

In a few minutes a close-cropped Roundhead, whose scent remaining hair was silvery-white, was busy at the trays, lingering at them for a short spell. A little while later,

“Nay; presently, sir—presently. I have a touch of a chill, and those passages were mighty draughty! I shall keep it on for a few minutes, till I get warmer, an' I may!”

The other made no demur, but bent his eyes on the plate before him. Yet, had those sitting nearest been even a little more attentive to their companion, they might have heard him breathe an almost inaudible sigh of relief.

“Zounds, gentlemen, but your hospitality stirs my breast!” mumbled the officer presently, his mouth full. “An' it lies in my power, I shall do my utmost to save some of that wealth for ye in payment of this!”

He took a deep draught of wine, and turned to his plate again, eating for some minutes in silence. Then he delivered a kick at the trooper sitting next him, for that worthy's head was nodding most foolishly, whilst his eyes were half-closed.

“Odds fish, Stephen! I thought you could stomach more liquor than most of us, yet even now you seem almost as drunk as Bacchus! Sit up, man!”

The other recovered himself with an effort, reaching for his wine-cup, but paused halfway, staring stupidly towards the end of the table, where three more of the company had suddenly sprawled forward. The officer, who was himself just then taking another deep draught, also saw them at that moment, and rose unobscuredly to his feet.

"By my soul," he gasped thickly, "what knave's trickery is this? Wake up, there! Dost think this is the proper way to behave as—"

He took a couple of steps forward, swayed wildly, and sank to the floor. The remainder of the troop, including "Robin," were heavy-eyed and stupid, vainly striving to grasp what had occurred. Then, one by one, their heads, too, fell forward, and they slept.

Whilst all this was taking place, Harry and Travers had withdrawn to the far end of the apartment, and were gazing upon the strange scene, the latter chuckling delightedly, the former in wondering surprise.

The light in that great apartment was not over strong, and, up to now, Harry had not grasped the true identity of the big "Roundhead." But as a well-known chuckle sounded across the intervening space, his eyes lit up with a gleam of admiration.

"'Twas well done, lad, was it not?" exclaimed Will, joining them, and removing his hat at last. "Though, when yonder rascal asked me to uncover, I almost feared for a moment that 'twould prove a failure!"

The young fellow nodded comprehendingly, and then let his eyes wander towards where the five treasure-chests were ranged in a row by the wall. Will chuckled afresh as he followed his gaze.

"There they are, lad—there they are, safe and sound! And there lie the thieves who would have despoiled us of them!"

Harry looked puzzled, and the big fellow continued:

"You swallowed that tale about the treasure being forfeit to the State? Ay, I saw that! But, though it may be true that such a rule exists, I have my doubts upon it. And now?"

Will smiled indulgently.

"And now, Master Harry, our next move must be to put both ourselves and the gold beyond reach of this carrion's claws! They and the gentleman below are safe for the next half-hour, though no longer, I fear; so we'll set to work at once!"

"But—"

"Nay, lad, no 'buts'! Leave it to me, and I warrant I'll yet draw the three of us out of this hornets' nest without a sting!"

An Unexpected Deliverance!

WILL'S eyes were twinkling merrily as he raised the first chest in his arms, swinging it upon his shoulder as though it were but quite a featherweight.

"You remember, lad, a certain trick we once played on Noll's men, some years back, when he himself was here?"

Harry nodded, as the swift recollection of a sliding panel and a flight of dark, narrow stairs came back to him clearly.

"The passage?" he said quickly. And Howard inclined his head in return.

"Ay, that and none other! It served us before, and I warrant 'twill serve us equally well now! Nay, never mind the smashed box, Travers. Fill your pockets with the gold, and leave the iron for these dogs to fight over! Now, let's hasten, for 'twill mean two journeys, I fear!"

The small chamber with the sliding panel was on the next floor immediately above, and Will, hurrying on ahead, already had the narrow entrance open when the others arrived.

"That's it! Hand them in to me! How many? I've one and ye've another, and a couple of big pocketfuls. Gently, now!"

He climbed through the opening, and deposited each small chest, as it was passed to him, at the head of the stairs. Then, rapidly transferring the contents of his pockets to Will's own, Travers returned with Harry for the remainder.

As they carefully picked their way across the recumbent form of the Roundhead officer for the second time that worthy stirred slightly, and uttered a smothered grunt; but immediately afterwards he was snoring as deeply as ever.

"We are none too soon, Travers!" whispered Harry, as they ascended the stairs. "That fellow did not drink so much as the others, and may awake at any moment!"

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The four boxes now being safely delivered, they climbed through the gap, and closed the panel. Will had taken the precaution of bringing up a couple of candles from the dining-room, so that this time their journey would not be quite so difficult as that last memorable one, so long ago now.

They carried the chests to the foot of the narrow stairs, and bore them by stages for some distance along the passage, until the first branch was reached, when they halted in doubt.

"Now, which way did we take last time, lad?" asked Will; and Harry burst out laughing, the sound echoing oddly in that confined space.

"Ay, which way—that's the question? You do not seem to recollect how many years have passed by since, and my memory is no better than yours."

"Then we must only chance it, and trust to our good fortune to guide us. Let's try this one!"

They proceeded again for some distance, until stopped by the water which lay several inches deep on the floor; but presently Howard continued his way, splashing through it loudly.

"Best put that behind us," he said, "and we shall then hear anyone who chances to come along, for see, it fills the place right across from wall to wall."

On the opposite side of the tiny lake they deposited their burdens, and held a brief council of war. It would scarcely be possible, even did they succeed in reaching the outlet, to escape notice for long, laden as they were by the four boxes and Will's overflowing pockets. Yet, how long would it be ere Cromwell's men gave up the search which must surely ensue, and leave the Chase? Then there was the question of food, but Will, who never seemed to overlook any eventuality, quickly settled this.

Unbuttoning his long borrowed riding-coat, he detached a couple of well-packed bags from his waist-belt, and laid them down at his feet.

"Prepared for a siege, you see, lad!" he chuckled. "With care, we've a full four days' provisions here, and we require them."

Harry clapped him enthusiastically on the shoulder.

"Marry, old friend, your brain seems to grow 'cuter with age!" he exclaimed. "But there's one thing you have overlooked. 'Twill be cold down here, an' we have to stay long."

"True!" was the swift response. "But I'd rather brave the risk of a chill than the certainty of suffocation. We can light no fire here, lad!"

Realising the sound sense of this, the young fellow relapsed into silence. Travers had already propped himself up on a dry patch of floor and was snoring soundly; seeing which, Will nodded towards him, and counselled Harry to do likewise.

"I'll keep first watch," he said; but the other would have none of it.

"Nay, you must be tired out, old friend!" Harry replied firmly. "Do you follow Travers' example, and I'll wake you if I hear anything suspicious."

Will did not argue the point, guessing that his companion's mind was made up, and soon his great body was stretched alongside the old retainer's, each rivaling the other in the volume of his snoring.

Thus an hour passed slowly by, naught save the sleepers' deep breathing and the drip-drip of the water as it fell from the moist roof breaking the silence. Harry shivered a little from time to time, and then rose to pace restlessly up and down. Truly, he reflected, this inaction and strain of listening was worse than any fighting he had ever been through. Yet they should be safe enough, for the panel had already baffled others, and would likely do so now; but still—

Presently, unable to stand the strain any longer, he turned and stared questioningly down where the blackness was impenetrable, owing, of course, to its being night-time, and no light entering through the narrow slits which served to dispel the gloom by day.

Finally, coming to the conclusion that there was no immediate danger of a surprise, he relit one of the candles, and took a few steps forward until he came to another junction. Then, choosing the right-hand track, and leaving an easily-discernible mark behind him at the fork, in the shape of his embroidered handkerchief, he strode ahead till pulled up sharply by a short flight of stone steps leading upwards.

"Zounds!" he muttered. "I do not remember these, anyhow, and 'tis not likely I should have forgotten so important an

object, had I ever seen it before. Now, what is this?"

Just above his head a rusty iron bar stuck out from the wall, being joined by a pivot to another, which continued upwards at an angle. He gripped it carelessly, giving it a sharp jerk upwards and downwards, and then gasped in amazement.

For the roof-space just at the head of the steps suddenly moved aside, revealing a gap through which the night sky was visible. Nay, more! The sky was bathed in a ruddy, flickering glow.

He sprang upwards, all thought of caution driven from him by this new surprise, and halted open-mouthed. Close beside him was a sundial—the same, by the way, that covered the entrance by which Walter had made his escape from Cromwell on that memorable occasion—and, just beyond, one wing of Temple Chase was blazing like tinder, whilst a hoarse shouting sounded from somewhere amongst the trees.

Harry turned and dashed back along the passage, rousing Will and Travers unceremoniously in his excitement. They stood up, equally amazed at the strange tidings, and followed him rapidly to the exit.

"By my soul!" exclaimed Howard hoarsely, as he looked. "I know not what has happened, lad, or how, but I vow 'twill take some extinguishing!"

Harry shook his head gloomily.

"Ay, that it will! So much for the good fortune the rapier carries with it! I had firmly believed in it, but now—" He broke off, and looked bitterly at his companions. "The finest room of all is burning, and—"

"Nay, lad!" Howard rebuked him, somewhat sternly. "For me, I should say the good fortune is increasing. We have the treasure, which will go far to repair the damage done, and the wind blows this way, so that the rest of the place may yet be saved. But, hark you! Best of all, the fire has driven out the rats far better than anything else could have done. You hear them squealing?"

'Twas quite true. The sounds of the departing Roundheads were even now growing fainter and fainter in the distance, presently ceasing altogether. Moreover, as they looked, Will's prophecy with reference to the fire seemed like proving a true one. The flames were still roaring and crackling fiercely, yet without making any headway towards the main building. The dining-room would probably be totally destroyed—likely the apartments above and beneath it, also—but so long as the other rooms and the Great Gallery, which contained most of the mansion's priceless treasures, were intact, the loss was equally balanced by the great service the conflagration had rendered the fugitives in driving Cromwell's followers to save their own hides from singeing.

Into their Own!

W HEN the Roundhead officer stirred uneasily and half awoke as Harry and Travers were stepping across him, he was vaguely conscious of something happening; but the drugged wine had not yet ceased to have its effect, and he snored off afresh.

The great hearth fire died down gradually, the half-burnt fagots subsiding as their support crumbled to ashes beneath them. Then, with a hissing crackle, one dropped from the pile and lay blazing on the sheepskin rug in front. But none noticed what had occurred until the irritating smoke roused them to consciousness, and they sat up stupidly by ones and twos. By this time the panelling beside the fireplace was burning fiercely, the costly tapestry which had draped the mantel had long since disappeared in a sheet of flame, and the big table itself was being threatened by the fiery tongues which licked its legs from the blazing floor. The clothes, too, of those who had been lying nearest the hearth were smouldering in several places when their owners succeeded in realising their dangerous position.

The apartment was one mass of ruddy-coloured smoke, through which the blaze roared and crackled vindictively, when the whole troop sprang to their feet; but it looked far more serious than it really was—so serious, indeed, that panic seized them, and they made for the door in a body, almost filling the space between the posts in their frantic efforts to reach the landing.

Once outside, the quick eyes of the leader fell upon several gold pieces lying at intervals—some on the landing itself, and others on

(Concluded on page 16.)

THE TWO GUYS!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd Makes a Discovery!

"NOW, what's the little game?" Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood School knitted his brows thoughtfully as he asked that question.

He addressed his chums, Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook.

They shook their heads.

"There's something on," continued Tommy Dodd.

"Thruo for you!" assented Doyle.

"But what is it?"

"Give it up," said Cook.

The three Tommies of Rookwood were puzzled.

"The Classical worms are up to something," said Tommy Dodd; "and, of course, it's something up against us."

"Of course!"

"And we're going to look into it," said Tommy determinedly.

"Hear, hear!"

Tommy Dodd looked rather sourly across the quad towards the tuckshop. Outside Sergeant Kettle's little shop Jimmy Silver & Co. could be seen, talking and laughing.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome—the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth—were evidently enjoying a joke of some sort. Oswald and Flynn and Rawson were with them, also chortling. And Tommy Dodd had asked them a few minutes before what the joke was, and Jimmy had replied that it was Tommy's face, a reply that was misleading as well as personal.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came towards the House, and the three Tommies eyed them as they did so.

Jimmy nodded to the three Modern juniors affably, and passed on.

Outside the tuckshop the Modern juniors came face to face with Tubby Muffin of the Classical Fourth.

Tubby, as usual, was stony, and he was only able to feast his eyes on the good things, which was small satisfaction to the fattest and hungriest junior at Rookwood. He hung about the tuckshop like an exceedingly plump and podgy Peri at the gates of Paradise.

"Hallo!" said Tubby despondently. "I suppose you couldn't lend me a bob, Dodd?"

"Right! I couldn't!" said Tommy. "But come in and have a tart, Tubby."

Tubby Muffin brightened up at once.

"What ho!"

He followed Tommy Dodd into the shop, and was quickly busy on that tart.

"I hear you Classical chaps have got great things on for to-morrow, Tubby," Tommy Dodd remarked casually.

Tubby nodded.

"Big celebration—what?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tubby, with his mouth full. "Jimmy Silver & Co. are making a guy." "Making a guy? But Guy Fawkes Day is over."

"I know," said Tubby. "But there you are! I suppose Jimmy Silver can make guys whenever he likes?"

"Oh, yes!" said Tommy Dodd. "But who's this guy like?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tubby. "They won't let me come into the wood-shed."

"The wood-shed!" repeated Tommy Dodd, with a significant glance at his chums.

"Yes. They're making it there, you know. Jimmy Silver's got the key from old Mack, and he keeps it locked up."

"Oh, he does, does he?"

"They're not going to let you Modern bounders into it, you know," said Tubby.

"It's going to knock sky-high anything you fellows can think of. Jimmy says so."

"Perhaps Jimmy is wrong for once!" growled Cook.

"Did you say another tart, Dodd?" Tommy did not appear to hear that question.

"Don't you know what the guy's like, Tubby? An awfully sharp fellow like you!" said Tommy Dodd, in honeyed tones.

Tubby blinked at him cunningly.

"That's telling!" he remarked.

"Well, tell us, then!"

"It's a secret," said Tubby mysteriously.

"Look here, you've heard them talking it over, at least," urged Tommy. "You hear everything."

"There isn't much goes on on the Classical side without me knowing," said Tubby Muffin, with pride.

"Well, what about that guy? Is it an imitation of a Modern master?"

Tubby grinned, but did not reply.

"Go ahead, Tubby!"

"It's a secret, you know. Did you say another tart?"

Tommy Dodd breathed hard. It was evident that he would not get any information out of the fat Classical without paying for it.

"Look here, Tubby," he said, sinking his voice, "I want to know whether they're guying our Mr. Manders."

"I say, I'm jolly hungry, Dodd!"

"I'll stand you two more tarts if you tell me."

"Done!" said Tubby at once.

"Well, go ahead!" said Tommy eagerly.

"Is it Manders they're guying?"

"You've got it!"

"They're making up a guy imitating our master?" exclaimed Cook wrathfully.

"Exactly!"

"The cheeky rotters!"

"My hat! We'll jolly well put a spoke in their wheel!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd angrily. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Hold on!" bawled Tubby Muffin indignantly.

Tommy Dodd turned back.

"Eh? What's the matter?"

"You've forgotten the tarts—"

"Oh, you fat Classical worm!" growled Tommy Dodd. He slammed down the coppers on the counter. "There you are!"

The three Tommies quitted the tuckshop, and hurried back to Mr. Manders' House, to hold a council of war with the other Moderns. The discovery of Jimmy Silver's intentions made them very wrathful. True, Mr. Manders was almost as unpopular on his own side as on the Classical side at Rookwood. He was not a pleasant gentleman.

But he was a Modern master, and the guying of a Modern master was a piece of intolerable cheek—from the Modern point of view.

It was up to Tommy Dodd & Co. to chip in with emphatics.

Tubby Muffin looked after the Moderns with a grin as they went, and devoted himself to the tarts.

"I wonder," he murmured, with his mouth full—"I wonder whether Jimmy Silver's guy is anything of the sort? I dare say they'll find out to-morrow, anyway."

From which reflection of Tubby's it might be guessed that the information the fat youth had given was hardly worth the tarts it had cost.

Do a good turn by lending this copy, when finished with, to a friend. He will be obliged to you.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Moderns on the Warpath!

"CHEEK!" "Awful nerve!" "We'll jolly well stop 'em!"

It was an indignation meeting in Tommy Dodd's study, on the Modern side. The study was crowded; nearly all the Modern Fourth had crammed themselves into it for the meeting.

There was wrath and indignation on all sides when Tommy Dodd related the discovery he had made by means of Tubby Muffin.

Nobody in the Modern Fourth liked Mr. Manders, the science-master. All of them had made close acquaintance with his cane on occasions too numerous to be mentioned. But he was a Modern master. He represented their side at Rookwood, and for the Classics to guy Mr. Manders was an insult to every Modern in the school.

"Of course, we don't care tuppence about Manders personally," said Towle. "But he's the head of our House."

"It's one in the eye for all of us," said Lacy.

"We'll stop the cads!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Now, what's going to be done?" asked Towle. "We've got to get hold of that guy and smash it up, of course."

"That's the idea. I screwed out of Tubby Muffin that they've got the wood-shed to make it in. Jimmy Silver's got the key from the porter. Tipped him, I suppose. He keeps it locked."

"Like his cheek!" growled Lacy.

"Yes; but we can't bust in the door," remarked Towle. "There would be a row about that."

"We can't," said Tommy Dodd. "But we can be there when the Classics are there, and rush them."

"Hear, hear!"

"They're pretty certain to be at work on it this evening," said Tommy, his eyes glistening. "There won't be much time to-morrow, as the bonfire has to come off immediately after lessons. Well, one of us can scout for them, and when they start for the wood-shed we start, too."

"Good egg!"

"You may as well cut off and begin scouting now, Cook. I expect they've had their tea by this time."

"Right you are!"

Tommy Cook left the study at once. "Where are you going, Leggett?" demanded Tommy Dodd, as the cad of the Fourth was following Cook.

"I'm going to get on with my prep," said Leggett sulkily.

"Stay here!" said Tommy Dodd autocratically. "We're all in this. Every chap will be wanted in the scrap."

"Look here—"

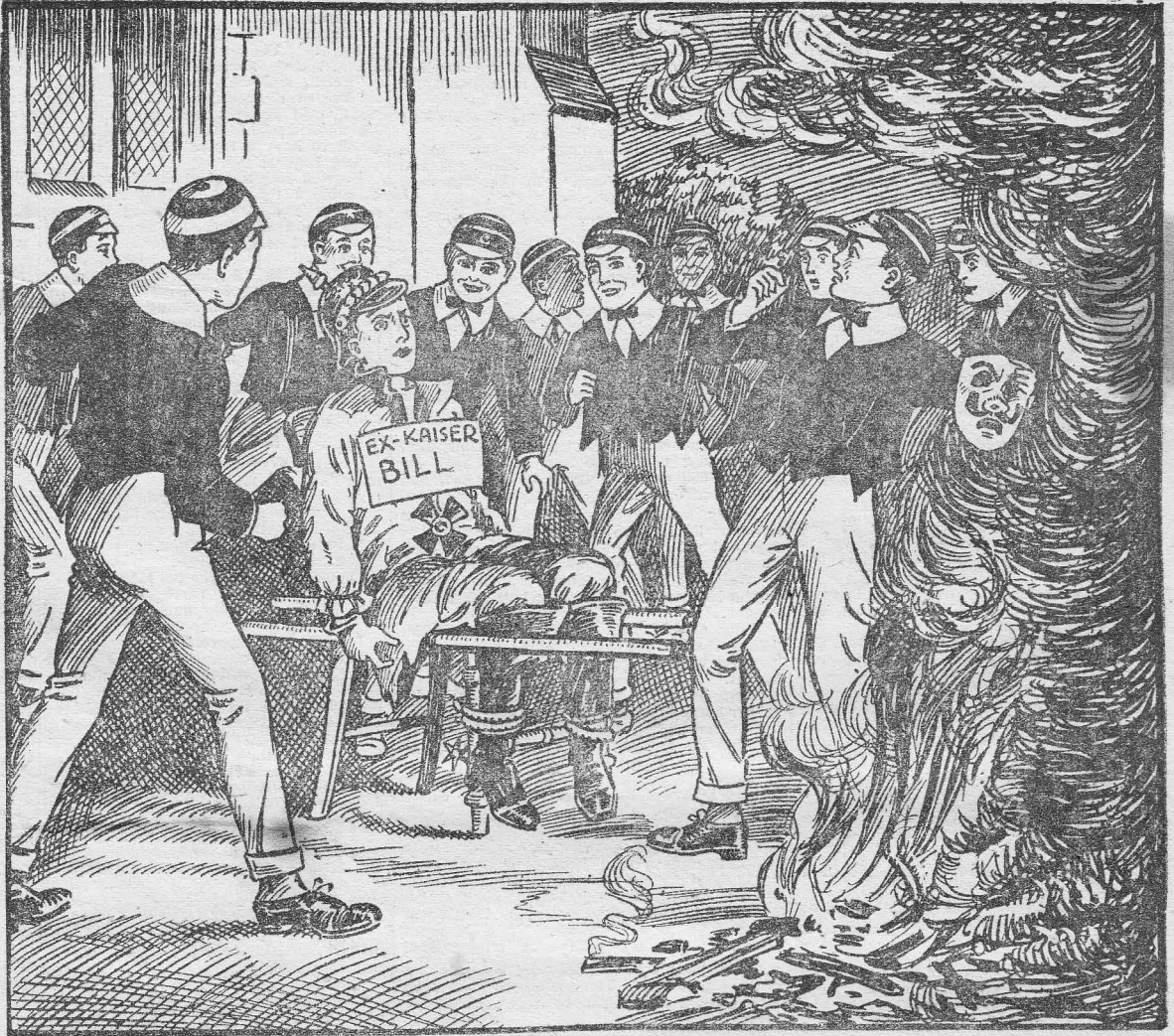
"Shut up!"

"I'm going—"

"Take him by the ear, Tommy!" said Dodd; and Tommy Doyle took Leggett by the ear, grinning, and led him back into the study.

Leggett scowled and gave in. Leggett was not keen for a "scrap" with the Classics. But he had no choice in the matter. It was a case of all hands to the mill, as Tommy Dodd remarked.

"There may be a crowd of the rotters," said Tommy. "We're all going to be there; we may all be wanted. We've got to get hold of their guy and smash it up to smithereens, as a warning to them, and give them a jolly good ragging into the bargain."



"It's alive!" yelled Higgs. "Look at his eyes!" Loveli dragged the mask from the effigy's face and the crimson features of Jimmy Silver were revealed. "Ha, ha, ha,!" yelled the Moderns. "Another guy!" (See page 13.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Not Mr. Manders!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. looked on curiously.

They were not surprised at Leggett telling tales. But they did not see how he was going to make out that they were the aggressors in the conflict. The Moderns had attacked the wood-shed in force, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had defended themselves—that was all. Indeed, the Classics had a quite unaccustomed sense of perfect innocence in the matter.

Leggett, with one uneasy eye on Tommy Dodd, and the other on Mr. Manders, plumped stammering into his explanation.

"We—we came here, sir—"
"I can see that you came here!" snapped Mr. Manders. "What did you come here for?"

"Because—because—"
"Well?" rapped out the Modern master.
"Because they were making a guy, sir," said Leggett desperately.
"Sneak!" hissed all the Moderns, in a kind of chorus.

"A—a what? A guy?" ejaculated Mr. Manders. "You mean that Silver and his companions were manufacturing an effigy?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Leggett.

"Such a proceeding is absurd enough," said Mr. Manders, who perhaps had never been a boy himself. He did not look as if he had. "But there is no reason why the Classical juniors should not manufacture an effigy, Leggett, if they choose to waste their time in such absurd occupations."

"Nice polite gentleman—I don't think!" murmured Loveli.

"But it was an insult to our side, sir, so we came to stop them," said Leggett, feeling quite sure that Mr. Manders would approve as soon as he knew the facts. "We couldn't allow them to make an effigy of a Modern!"

"Oh, I understand! Silver was making this ridiculous effigy in imitation of someone belonging to the Modern side of the school?" exclaimed Mr. Manders, seeing light at last.

"That's it, sir."
"Cad! Sneak!" hissed Tommy Dodd.

"Take two hundred lines, Dodd!"
"Oh, yes, sir!"

"I think I understand," said Mr. Manders. "You had cause of complaint. But you should have come to me instead of tearing the law into your own hands. I am far from approving of such a misdirected kind of humour. I should certainly have spoken to Mr. Bootles on the subject."

The Moderns glared at Leggett as if they would have eaten him. Tommy Dodd was especially cannibalistic in his looks. Sneaking by a Modern "let down" the whole party in the eyes of the Classics.

But Leggett was not thinking of the honour of his side. He was thinking of the exceeding unpleasantness of a caning.

"So, Silver," said Mr. Manders, "you were manufacturing an effigy?"

"Making a guy was not imposing enough for Mr. Manders."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy calmly.

"In absurd imitation of a Modern boy's appearance?"

"No, sir."

"What! You deny Leggett's statement?"
"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Leggett—"
"Not a Modern boy, sir," said Leggett hastily. "I didn't mean that. I said somebody on the Modern side. Not a boy."

Mr. Manders' expression grew quite terrific.

"Do you mean to say, Leggett, that these disrespectful boys were caricaturing a master with their ridiculous effigy?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Leggett.

"And which master?" thundered Mr. Manders.

"You, sir!"
Mr. Manders fairly jumped.

"Me!" he ejaculated.
The look on Mr. Manders' face almost made Leggett sorry he had spoken. The Moderns all looked scared. The Classics only exchanged glances of wonder. Jimmy Silver was apparently not in the least alarmed.

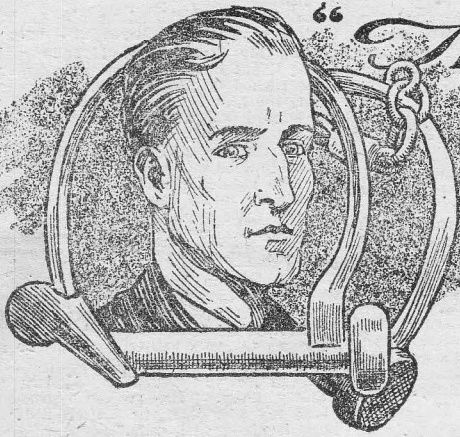
"Me!" repeated Mr. Manders dazedly. "Impossible! Even Silver's impudence would not go to that length! I cannot credit it! Impossible!"

"It's so, sir!" gasped Leggett. "So—so we came to stop them, sir."

"Bless my soul! In that case, Leggett, I pardon you and your companions. You did quite right to attempt to put a stop to such an insult to your master. Silver, I hardly know what to say to you. You have dared to—"
Mr. Manders stuttered.

The awfulness of the circumstances appeared to deprive him of the power of speech.

THRILLING TALES OF A FAMOUS DETECTIVE!



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. Spriggs is arrested by the police. Locke suspects several people as being the organisers of the murder, and, to trap the ringleader, he sends Tilburn a decoy letter.

(Now go on with the story.)

Trapped!

BY nine-thirty Tilburn was at his rooms in Forest Gate. A solitary letter lay on the hall-mat. He picked it up and stared curiously at the illegibly scrawled superscription. The handwriting was unknown to him. He drew out a much-soiled sheet of paper, and the words that danced before his eyes—badly made letters in capitals—drove the last vestige of colour from his cheeks:

"You're not paying me half enough. Unless I get one hundred pounds by to-morrow I shall sell my secret to a higher bidder."

For several minutes he stood in the middle of the dimly-lit hall dumbfounded with perplexity and anger. That this should have happened at the last hour—or, rather, not at the last hour, but at a moment, when there was still a chance, if the writer carried out his threat, to spoil all their plans!

He glanced at his watch. There was no help for it, so, with much anathematising of the man who had played him false, he left the house, and hurried to the station.

There he learned that the last train to the place he wanted to reach was gone. He hired a taxi, and drove off. It was past eleven when Tilburn ordered the driver to stop, and promised him an extra half-sovereign for waiting.

"And jolly well worth it, too, old sport!" replied the taxi-man, staring round on as dreary a scene of utter desolation as could be found in the length and breadth of the land. On either side of the winding road marsh-land stretched, a waste of sea-sodder land, from which ruined windmills and broken-in roofs of deserted farmsteads pointed to a murky sky.

And through the cold, damp haze drifting in continually from the grey North Sea, gulls wheeled and skirled, waking the silence with low, plaintive notes that made the blood creep in one's veins.

Low down in the south a late-rising moon was trying to pierce the blanket of mist, and

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its dull light made the wide river flowing on to the sea gleam like dull lead.

The long, black shadows cast across his path caused him to shudder and quicken his steps, and he cursed Sawyer, who was responsible for this midnight escapade. He thrust his hand into his pocket again, and it closed over a bulky object, and he thrilled at the grip of it. He was glad he had remembered to bring it with him.

The place was in darkness as Tilburn moved into the shadows of the porch, and the heavy iron knocker sent thunderous blows re-echoing through the rumbling rooms and passages before a light appeared in one of the upstairs windows and a rough visage, heavy with sleep, showed in the dancing glow.

"Who the deuce is it, and what the tar-nation do you want at this hour?"

The lawyer stepped back into the path.

"It's me, Sawyer. Hurry down! Don't keep me waiting out in this filthy air. We'll have a little word together, you and I"—this last in an undertone as the figure at the window vanished and Tilburn was forced to kick his heels again in the porch. But at length the stout oak door creaked wide, and Jabez Sawyer showed in the opening, a lamp smoking in his hand. His manner was aggressive. He passed into the nearest room, banged down the lamp on the table, and, closing the door, glared at Tilburn savagely.

"Now look you here, I don't reckon I'm paid for this sort of thing!" he growled. "What kind of a job d'you reckon this is, fetchin' a chap out at this time of night? I tell you, lawyer, there ain't no gilt on it." Tilburn shot him a penetrating glance.

"Now what's your little game, Sawyer?" he asked, fumbling in his pocket and crushing the letter in his palm. "We are paying you for a certain job. I suppose you know the penalty attached to blackmail?"

Sawyer leapt to his feet, and an angry roar emphasised the resounding bang with which his huge fist came down on the table.

"Are you trying to get strings across me, lawyer?" he snarled, leaning towards the other and leering savagely into his scared face. "Cos, if so, I'd just as soon put out your light here and now as stand bunkum of that sort."

Tilburn met the storm of fury with admirable calm.

"You've asked for more money. I want to know why."

Sawyer sat down, breathing fast.

"Me—asked—for—more—oo? What's the caper? You're putting it on me. I ain't gone outside my side of the business by a penny. Here, I say—"

He snatched the crumpled slip of paper from the other's hand, and stared at it in bewildered surprise.

"This didn't come from me. You've been had, mate."

"Not come from you!"

Tilburn sprang up and looked fearfully round, as though even then he expected invisible hands to dart out of the shadows and hold him till full justice was done.

Sawyer crossed his roughly-clad legs and sat back, his hands deep in his pockets.

"I don't like the look of things. Someone's got to know about our little arrangement: they are trying to make trouble between you and me. Straight, now—I ain't joking—that

letter never came from here. When did you get it?"

"By to-night's post." Tilburn's voice was low and quivering now. With the stakes for which he had played almost won, an unknown had come into the game.

"Better forget it, and make some new arrangement," suggested Sawyer. "I don't know as I'm too keen on the job now."

"Only two days more—say three at the most—then you can put your hands on more money than you've ever seen in your life. Mind, I mean it. And at the end of a month a like sum to come. My Heaven—"

He swung round as the door opened noiselessly, and the dull lamp glare showed strong, alert faces watching him intently. And against the darkness the blue of their uniforms and the glint of their buttons began to take shape and form, and Tilburn knew the game was up at last.

Ferrers Locke was first in the room.

"Arrest that man!" he cried, pointing to the shrinking lawyer.

The bracelets clicked on Tilburn's wrists. There was a short, sharp struggle, and Locke had the satisfaction of seeing him being borne bodily down the path to the gate.

With a quiet laugh he turned to the frightened farmer.

"Mr. Sawyer, I'll trouble you to take me to the room where Mr. Shields is being kept a prisoner," he said; and at the threatening note in his voice the farmer's jaw dropped, and he collapsed all of a heap into the nearest chair.

"This means prison for me," he mumbled, and the sweat of great fear hued his heavy face to the pallor of death.

"Shouldn't be at all surprised," Locke replied laconically. "Now, then, get up and pull yourself together. I want to get Mr. Shields out of this hole as soon as possible."

Shaking like a leaf, the farmer lurched to his feet, picked up the lamp, and stumbled from the room. Up a flight of winding stairs, through a maze of ruinous wind-swept rooms to a dismal attic under the eaves, dead to the light of God's day, the haunt of rats and creeping things, they groped their way, to find Marcus Shields sleeping the sleep of weary exhaustion on a littered pallet of straw.

Locke held the lamp over the sleeping man. The once well-rounded face was pinched and shrunken; deep hollows pitted the cheeks, and black shadows lurked beneath the closed eyes.

"You are right, farmer; you should get penal servitude for this. If you don't, it won't be my fault. Pick him up, and carry him downstairs."

The arrests in the farm were carried out in a manner which did credit to Locke's swiftly-laid plans. He saw both Tilburn and the farmer in safe custody, had the manufacturer taken in a taxi to a London nursing-home, and then, late though it was, drove straight to Scotland Yard.

Barkleigh Fox, he knew, came on duty somewhere about three. A quarter of an hour slipped by before the rival detectives stood face to face.

Fox glared at his unofficial colleague in his customary supercilious way.

"What brings you out in the middle of the night?" he asked, swinging round in his revolving desk-chair and crossing his thin legs in an attitude of affected boredom.

Locke coolly rammed a charge of tobacco into his pipe.

"Oh, felt a bit restless, that's all. Thought I'd like to run round and see how the Leinster Gardens case is progressing."

Fox stroked his chin.
"Thought you had lost all interest in that affair. However, it's going on pretty well. I'm sorry you didn't like my snatching Spriggs out of your hands. But really, Locke, he's a wrong 'un—a downright wrong 'un. I'd give him twelve feet of rope and a drop of five feet six."

"Never—never!" Locke laughed. "I'll bet you a thousand pounds to a bad shilling Spriggs will never swing."

Fox leant forward, his face keenly alert.

"You mean that?"

"Surely."

"What makes you cocksure?"

"I never allow myself to be cocksure. I only back on certainties," replied Locke, with a grin. "You see, old man, if you mean to hang Albert Spriggs you must do it on the strength of Marcus Shields' dead body."

"Well, there's no difficulty over that."

"No?"

"And the motive is as plain as a pikestaff."

"Oh!"

"You see, he must have got to know that his master meant to leave him a fortune, and, being avaricious, he killed him."

Locke found it hard to restrain a smile.

"Doesn't it strike you that yours is a very weak case? I mean, what man in his sane senses, situated as Spriggs was, would have murdered his master and best friend? Suspicion would have been dead against him all the time. Had he stayed, he would have been arrested; had he taken to flight, his capture must have been only a matter of time. Your theory is built on a rotten foundation."

Fox yawned.

"All the same, we've got our claws pretty well into him, and he'll have a deuce of a job to get free."

"You really think so?"

"Of course!" Locke's coolness was nettling Fox. "What's in the wind? What's behind your coming here at this unearthly hour? You can't mean—"

Locke broke into a peal of laughter.

"I want just to read you a little moral lesson, that's all—to point out the fatuity of counting your chickens before they are hatched. You have bungled—bungled badly—over the Leinster Gardens business, and for the credit of the Yard, for the credit of our profession, I want to put you right before you stand a laughing-stock to the whole world!"

Fox leapt to his feet.

"Look here, Locke, I won't stand this from you or anyone. You made me a bet. I've accepted it. Before a month is out I shall call round for the money."

"Then don't forget to bring a bad shilling with you, because, as sure as the day is breaking, a new day of freedom is about to break for the unhappy man who now lies under such a dark cloud of suspicion. I am serious, Fox. Spriggs is going to be released, and unless you do something to get out of the pit you have made for yourself, your reputation is gone for ever."

Barkleigh Fox looked the most sick man in Europe just then. The note of obvious sincerity that had crept into his rival's voice scared him.

"What's wrong?" he stammered hoarsely.

"This—that you have opened up a mare's nest. For one, Spriggs is an innocent man; for another, there never was a murder at all; for another, within ten minutes from now, if I chose to do so, I could take you into the presence of the living Marcus Shields."

Fox was a study in blank astonishment.

"No murder? Then whose was the body found in the room with you?"

Locke refilled his pipe, and leant back comfortably in the saddlebag chair.

"I will reconstruct the crime from the moment of its inception. Marcus Shields, a wealthy manufacturer, leads a lonely life. His only real friend in the world is Albert Spriggs, who, boy and man, had served him faithfully for nearly eleven years. At length Shields falls into a low state; he becomes morbid, and begins to feel that death is not far from calling him. He makes a will with the assistance of his lawyer, Mr. Walter Tilburn, of St. Dunstan's Hill, Great Tower Street. Now, in that will he divides his fortune equally between a distant and rather unscrupulous relation, Mrs. Grateley, and the faithful Spriggs."

Fox began to move uncomfortably in his chair.

"Now, the lawyer knows Mrs. Grateley; in fact, her rather alluring type of beauty has fascinated him. More, he knows the lady's brother, a certain Dr. Strudwick, whom we might well describe as the most unscrupulous of the three. Mrs. Grateley is in financial difficulties; Strudwick is more than hard up—he is broke, bent, and, I take it, Tilburn is pretty well in the cart. So the three of them lay their precious heads together and concoct a very neat little plan."

"I'd give something to know how you discovered all this—if it's true," murmured Fox.

Locke traced fancy patterns on the knee of his trousers with the stem of his pipe.

"Simply by using the right end of reason—"

by noting down every fact that came to my

knows—but they accomplished it on the day of his leaving Dewsbury, and smuggled him off to a lonely house on the Essex marshes, where they paid a rascal named Sawyer to keep him a prisoner until such time as they were in possession of the money and had a chance to get safely away."

"You mean to say they did all this?"

"And more. But, of course, the great danger was Spriggs. As soon as Spriggs' master failed to turn up, Spriggs started in to make inquiries. Spriggs was hampering the scoundrels' plans. They wanted to get a dead body into the house in Leinster Gardens, and to get rid of Spriggs in such a way as would appear that Spriggs had murdered Mr. Shields and had bolted."

"A possibility you maintain does not apply."

"Absolutely. From beginning to end



Tilburn swung round as the door opened, and he saw in an instant that he had been trapped, and that there was no hope of escape. "Arrest that man!" cried Locke, pointing to the shrinking form of the lawyer. (See page 14.)

knowledge, tracing its origin and purpose and its probable results."

A dejection of spirit fell upon the Scotland Yard man.

"I'm afraid you look like coming out top in this case after all."

"Never mind. Think of Spriggs and the narrow escape he has had. As you say, he might have gone to the gallows. Still, to return to our muttons. Strudwick learns through his sister that the doctors who have examined Shields say there is nothing radically wrong with him, that all he needs is cessation from work, a change of surroundings. They know he has decided to come to London for several months, that Spriggs has been sent ahead to rent a furnished house. They know, too, the day on which he proposes to start. Their plan, though simple, is hedged about by dangers, so they resolve to take no risks, to stick at nothing short of murder to accomplish the manufacturer's death in the eyes of the world."

"But I thought you said Shields wasn't dead?" Fox interposed.

"Nor is he. Nor did Tilburn, Strudwick & Co. mean him to die. Their idea was to make it appear as if he was dead in order that Mrs. Grateley, at any rate, might succeed to her part of the fortune, and possibly the whole lot. So soon as Shields left Dewsbury they laid a trap to kidnap him, to spirit him out of the world. Just when and where they did so is immaterial—Strudwick

Spriggs was an innocent man. They knew he could not be bought, so went to the house to kidnap him. He was at the telephone speaking to me—asking me to call round. I take it, to inform me of his master's strange disappearance. At that moment the ruffians entered. They knocked the poor fellow senseless, and hurried him off in a closed car to a temporary hiding-place."

"But how came they to attack you, when you did not arrive till some time later?"

"There was need for haste on their part. Something like an alarm had been partially raised by Spriggs. They wanted to get the dead body, supposed to be that of Marcus Shields, into the house without delay. They returned with it just a few minutes before I arrived on the scene, and moved the hands of the watch on the body to enable them to prove an alibi. By an oversight one of them had omitted to close the front door. They heard me ring, and were struck momentarily inactive with fear. They crept down into the hall, all three of them, just when I was well inside. The place was in darkness. They thought I might pass up the stairs, and so give them a chance to slip quietly into the street before I could raise the alarm. Certainly they had the advantage of time, because the electric wires to the lights had been cut."

"Instead, they discovered and downed you."

"In groping blindly I touched the woman's

face. In a rush they fell upon me, chloroformed me into insensibility, and left me there with the body."

"Which wasn't Shields at all?"

"No. A body which the doctor had procured ostensibly for anatomical purposes. But with Spriggs out of the way, and Mrs. Grateley and the dead man's lawyer both prepared to come forward at the proper time and identify it, they felt tolerably safe."

"My hat, what a maze!"

"A maze not difficult to penetrate once I got a lead on to the case. The break in Spriggs' message to me, his surprised cry, the presence of a woman in the house, the belated coming forward of Strudwick and the lawyer, all roused my suspicions. I set a watch on Tilburn, dismissing from my mind altogether the theory that Spriggs was guilty."

"Why?"

"Because had he been guilty he would never have attempted to enlist my services, nor would he have disappeared. He would have committed the murder in such a way as to leave himself outside the pale of possible suspicion. He knew he had been left well in his master's will.

Lots of people knew it, including some of the people at the Witley Hotel. Consequently I put Spriggs down as an innocent man. The next task was to look for another interested party. I found one in Mrs. Grateley. And Mrs. Grateley was very friendly with the lawyer, and Strudwick was friendly with both. And I reckoned there were three implicated in the attack on me. Consequently I lacked Tilburn."

"And found him—how?"

"Foolishly evasive. At this stage the butler escaped from his capture, and wisely came to me. I tested his story by going to a lonely house which the lawyer had recently vacated. There, I told myself, I should find corroboration of the butler's story."

"Which you did?"

"Yes. I discovered the cellar in which he had been imprisoned."

"And did you at this stage suspect Mr. Shields had not been murdered?"

"Not until a chance remark by Spriggs, who informed me that his master never had a certain mark behind the left ear. Then I knew. The rest was simplicity. I kept watch on the three by taking the manager of the Imperial into my confidence and by posing as a deaf waiter. In this way I learnt of their plan to clear the country. Mrs. Grateley by this time being in possession of a considerable portion of her legacy."

"But why didn't you inform the police?"

"Because something more had to be done—the recovery of the kidnapped man. Regarding as I did Tilburn as the prime mover, I decided it was he who had put Shields away. As Tilburn was living alone in rooms in Osborne Road, Forest Gate, I knew Shields wasn't hidden there. The possibility was that he had handed him over to the care of a fourth person whom he was paying for the job, so I concocted a bogus letter, knowing full well that Tilburn would immediately rush to the place where the manufacturer was kept, if only to test the bona fides of the letter. This he did, and the Essex police arrested him a couple of hours ago."

"And what have you done about the others?" Fox asked.

Locke wrote down an address.

"You will find them there. If you like, you can have the satisfaction of arresting them."

THE END.

(Another Splendid Complete Tale of Ferrers Locke in next Friday's issue.)
THE POPULAR.—No. 95.

THE SWORD OF THE TEMPLES.

(Continued from page 8.)

the lower steps of the second flight—which had fallen from Travers' pockets during his first ascent.

"Ah!" he cried. "The rats have taken refuge above, and the treasure is with them also. Have we time, think ye, to root them out?"

He glanced back into the dining-room, and received his answer in a rather startling manner. A long tongue of yellow flame licked round the panelling, and almost touched his face, causing him to draw back with a gasp.

"Nay, the place burns like a haystack, so we must hasten! Let them be. I warrant molten gold will be of little use to a trio of charred corpses!"



Accompanied by the farmer, Locke mounted the stairs to the attic. There, in the corner, lying on a bed of straw, he found Marcus Shields sleeping the sleep of weary exhaustion. (See page 14.)

They clattered down the stairs, undoing the great door, and made off hurriedly towards where their horses were tethered. Then, with the blazing wing reddening the leafless branches and bare trunks behind them, they quickly put a goodly distance between themselves and the danger of a thorough grilling, as they thought.

Meanwhile, the trio at the sundial had heard the enemy retire, and were considering the best way to hasten the extinguishing of the fire, which was already showing unmistakable signs of dying down.

"Zounds!" said Will, at last. "Methinks we shall save the main part of the wing if we hasten. Pails, now, Travers—as large as you can find—and then you make for the stream yonder, whilst you, Master Harry, carry each pail to me as he fills it."

This programme was accordingly carried out, Travers taking his stand on the brink of a small stream which skirted the woods, and which was too swift-running to succumb to the frost, and young Temple hurrying with a pair of overflowing pails to where Howard was waiting outside the great door. The big fellow then would ascend the stairs, dash the water upon the crackling flames in the dining-room, and return to bring a further supply, which was always ready for him when he came back. In this way, working the four pails on a kind of chain system, a quarter of an hour went by, and then they knew that the fire was being slowly conquered.

Twenty minutes or so later nothing save a heap of smouldering, hissing ashes marked the place where the great hearth had stood,

whilst three of the four walls were charred and blackened beyond recognition, as also was the ceiling. Sir Henry Temple's portrait gazed down oddly from its smoke-soiled frame; yet none of the pictures had suffered more than a slight scorching, hanging as they did on the opposite wall to where the conflagration had started.

They set to work removing the debris as soon as it was cool enough to handle, and very shortly the apartment presented a rather more tidy appearance, though the fire had left a mark upon it which would take a good deal of obliterating. Three of the chairs would never be used as such again, whilst many new floor-boards and several feet of fresh panelling would be required ere the place could once more be occupied in comfort.

Will peered out through the scorched and glassless casement, marking how the flames had eaten away the ivy from the walls all round, and cracked the few remaining panes in the windows.

He glanced towards the woods, gravely stroking his stubble chin, and Harry caught his expression.

"You think they will return?"

"Return? Nay, lad! They say a burnt child dreads the fire, and I'll vow they were more than slightly singed as they lay asleep! Indeed, 'twould not surprise me if they were high on a dozen miles away by now!"

They procured lanterns and made their way towards the entrance at the sundial, which still stood open as they had left it. In a very short time the four boxes were resting on the ground, with Will and Harry pushing the stone back into position; then the treasure was carried to the cellars of the mansions, and concealed carefully amongst the wine-bins.

Having accomplished this task in safety, they were returning past the door of the great kitchen when Will suddenly halted, half stifling an exclamation.

"Body o' me, Travers! I had forgotten our friend whom we put so peacefully to sleep—the real Cock 'Robin'!"

He entered the kitchen and glanced round half amusedly. The place was quite empty, only a few cords lying on the floor bearing witness to what had taken place there so recently. Where he was now could not, of course, be told, and, in any event, 'twas not a problem that worried him overmuch.

AFTER THE STORM.

AND now, my readers, I draw towards the conclusion of my tale, for even a long story cannot continue indefinitely. If you have followed the adventures of my chief characters with as much pleasure as I found in the writing of them, then I shall consider myself well repaid for my task. I have tried to record them as faithfully as possible, without approaching too close to the border-line of improbability; but if at times they may have seemed over-exciting, you must always remember that I was dealing with one of the most exciting periods in the history of Merrie England, and I beg that you will pardon me on these grounds.

Close upon four years had passed since the events described in the preceding chapter. Travers, grown old and tottering in the service of the Temples, had just been laid to rest with the dust of his masters—a fitting end, I'll vow, for one who had proved himself so faithful throughout that time of stress and strife.

Harry had changed but little, save perhaps that he had settled down somewhat, and looked quite contented with the good fortune the sword had brought him; whilst Will, at length beginning to show signs of the creeping age that attacks all of us eventually, still moved about the great mansion—a popular lord and master over the new staff of servants which now lent the place an appearance of life and bustle.

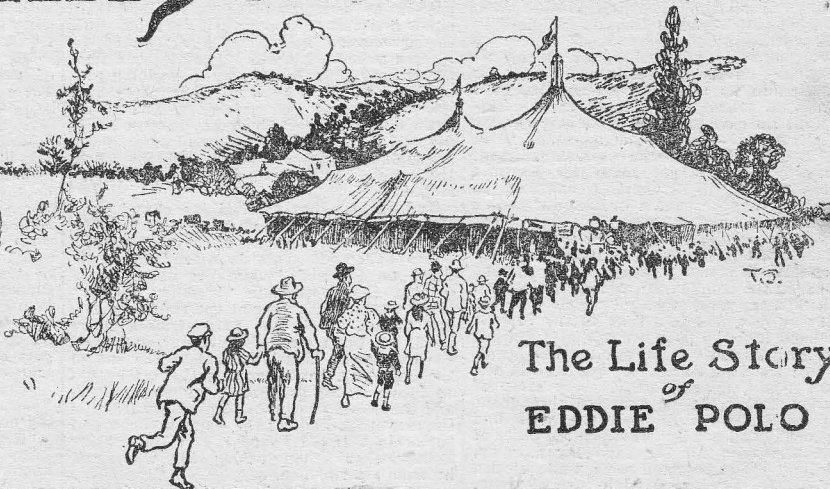
Then in the evenings, when candles were lit and curtains drawn, these two—servant and employer outwardly, but the closest of comrades inwardly—would sit before the blazing hearth in Sir John's bedchamber (which was usually chosen on account of its being the first scene of their many exploits), and go over the old ground, reighting old battles, and seeing again the strange scenes of long ago, whilst ever and anon their eyes would linger on a glittering rapier which rested in solitary state above the fireplace—the Sword of the Temples.

THE END.

(Look out for the Grand New Serial next week.)

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 Rogeriguo, 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 Rogeriguo, 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. He and the Indian track the Spaniard to a ravine, and effect an astounding rescue.

(Now read on.)

The Rescue!

DEL ROGERIGUO gave a little cry of hatred and baffled rage, and, stepping out to the edge of the ravine, raised his rifle and peered along the sights at the two figures swaying aloft on the stretched lariat. Another second and he would have fired, but as Eddie and Esta swung madly across the rope for safety, it was difficult for him to get his sights on. And then Red Cloud acted.

His automatic crackled, and, looking down for a fleeting second, Eddie Polo saw the greaser crumple up with a faint cry, drop his rifle down the ravine, and then, with a twitching spasm of pain, follow the weapon towards the rocks at the bottom of the thousand-foot drop. Esta gave a little gasp as she saw the greaser's carcass hurtling down, turning over and over itself in its flight, but Eddie consoled her by telling her he was dead already.

"Red Cloud was too swift on the draw for him," said the lad; "and, unless we hurry, he'll get Lopez as well."

They did hurry, but Red Cloud didn't get the other half-caste. As soon as that worthy had realised that Eddie Polo had baffled him yet again, and that the boy wasn't the only attacker on the opposite side of the ravine, as the greaser had thought, he wasted no more time, but turned to run to where

his horse was tethered. But as he glanced back at the sound of Del Rogeriguo's rifle shot, he saw that worthy stumble and fall, and the terror of a like fate lent strength to his legs and wings to his feet, and he hurled himself through the forest and the undergrowth like a madman.

He passed the smouldering remains of the camp-fire where Esta had lain, and he kicked the embers aside with a curse and as vindictively as he would have kicked Eddie Polo had that youth been lying there, bound and gagged and in the greaser's power. Then he grabbed up his blanket and sped onwards, caring for nothing but the safety of his own neck and hide.

Meanwhile, Eddie and Esta completed their perilous passage across the ravine, though by the time the girl arrived in the safety of the upper larch branches she felt that her arms were almost pulled out of their sockets. But Eddie lowered her to the ground carefully, and presently, after she had lain down a little while, the blood began to circulate more normally, and she announced herself ready to go back to the camp with Eddie and the Indian.

They talked but little as they followed the trail back to where Grey Wind and the little mustang were tied, for they required all their eyes to save themselves from disaster on the rough ground. But presently, when they were mounted and riding through the moonlight towards where, like a star in the distance, the light of Busto's signal fire could be seen, Esta turned again to Eddie, and endeavoured to thank him once more.

"Don't speak about that, Miss Esta," said Eddie shortly. "There's no need for it, but there would have been a need for blame if I'd not done what I could to get you out of the greasers' grip. 'Sides, Bud's my pal and your man, and when I serve you I serve him. And I haven't forgotten as it was you who pleaded with your father to offer me employment with the Show when I was starving for want of a job, and this is my way of paying back a little bit of what I owe you all. So we'll say no more about it shall we? I forget, though—you haven't told me how you came to be in the greasers' hands in the first place."

"I don't rightly know myself," said Esta. "I was working with everybody else last night, striking the tents and getting ready for the road, and just as I passed one of the waggons I heard somebody moaning as if in awful pain. I stepped aside to see what was wrong, when suddenly a cloak was thrown over my head, and I was gagged and bound in less than no time by the two greasers. They carried me away between them very slowly, which makes me think they were dodging people who might have spotted them, and then—presently they won to where they'd tethered horses. They made me mount and ride with them, and Garcia del

Rogeriguo kept telling me how fine I'd look in his hacienda in New Mexico, and what a fine wife I'd make him; and once or twice when I answered him back he slapped me across the face—said it was beginning my training."

Eddie's face went white with anger. "The rotter!" he ejaculated. "And to think that we once let him get a ray with his life! There's one other thing, Esta. The next time I come face to face with Lopez there won't be any time for 'Howdy!' or anything like that; I shall just draw and shoot him down like the dog he is. Hallo, here's some of the boys! Red Cloud's lost no time in spreading the glad tidings."

Evidently the Indian, whom Eddie had sent on ahead while Grey Wind plodded onwards with her double burden, had told everybody, for it seemed as if the whole circus camp, men, women, children, and dogs—even a few chickens—had turned out to greet the recovered daughter of the boss. And they cheered Eddie, and the women kissed Esta, and old Busto cried.

A Circus Wedding!

BUSTO'S Great and Original Travelling Circus reached Sulphur Springs in good time that same afternoon, but when the men started to strip the waggons ready to erect the camp the boss held up his hand.

"Work first, folks say, and play afterwards!" he cried. "But we'll reverse the maxim. We'll play first—and play all night to-night, and to-morrow we'll open with a grand procession. Say, what's the matter with just pushing on a few more miles to St. Louis, and getting Bud Truefit and my daughter married there, and then coming back here and playing hokey-pokey in a real first-class manner for the benefit of the citizens of this one-eyed hole? Eddie Polo, aren't you best-man of this wedding outfit?"

"I haven't been detailed for the job as yet," replied Eddie; "but I dare say I can manage it, if I'm asked. Say, boss, leave it all to me; we'll have a regular circus wedding. Have I got a free hand?"

"Yes," said Busto, and "Yes!" yelled the crowd.

"Right!" said Eddie. "Bud and Esta, I'm sorry to rob you of a day of your married life, but it's got to be done. There ain't a-going to be no hole-and-corner affair at a poky church or a registrar's office about this wedding. It's the first I've ever been to, and it's going to be done in style. You, Esta, just go and put the last few stitches into your wedding finery, and if there's anything you'd like ordered in St. Louis—well, there'll be a messenger riding in to get a few things shortly, and he'll do your errands. Say, Bud, there's a whole lot of things for a bachelor

to do the last day of his single life—making his will, burning love-letters, and all that sort of thing. Don't you think you'd better get busy?"

Bud and Esta laughed and turned away. No sooner were they out of earshot than Eddie turned to the remainder of the circus bands.

"Get out all the paint and brushes from the store van," ordered the lad, "and set to work to refurbish up every van and vehicle we have. Bandmaster, you'd better fix up all the gilding on the band car, and have your chaps polish up their instruments like new. Stablemen, groom and tend all the horses—we want their coats to shine like a new collar on a sweep's face to-morrow—and when you've done that get the harness polished. Everything's to be got ready for a grand procession through St. Louis to-morrow. It isn't every day we have a wedding in Busto's Travelling Circus!"

The men scattered about their various jobs, and Eddie, spurring Grey Wind, buzzed off in another direction to see to other details. He called the bandmaster aside and discussed with him a programme of music for the following day, and told that worthy to take the band into the plain when they'd finished refurbishing themselves and practise like fiends. He had the hands erect the big tent in the near-by field, hanging on it every scrap of hunting that could be collected throughout Sulphur Springs. He had the vans and wagons drawn out by hand into the order of their procession for the following morning, and long tables, covered with white cloths, arranged in the clean sawdust-covered arena. And, finally, he rode into St. Louis and interviewed several officials, and when night came crawled into his bed and slept the sleep of the utterly exhausted.

The citizens of St. Louis had hardly commenced work the next day when there suddenly burst upon their ears the sound of a blaring brass band. There was no mistaking it—this was none of those milk-and-water temperance bands that sometimes paraded the city, but something out to celebrate a joyous occasion.

They deserted desk and typewriter and tape machine. Even the lift-boys in the great buildings, and the counter-girls in the big shops deserted their posts and crowded in doorways and windows to see the strange procession. It came, blaring and bragging with hefty thumps of the drum. First, on a magnificent white horse, dressed in his white dress-suit and top hat, rode Busto himself, alone and unsupported; then followed the eight horses of the gaudy band wagon, all black and all stepping daintily together, while, perched atop the red-and-gold vehicle, were the thirty bandmen, each playing his instrument as though his soul were in the job.

Followed immediately afterwards Red Cloud and a score of other Indians employed about the circus, each in tribal blanket, war-paint, and feathers, and, despite their grave faces and dignified bearing, enjoying the pageantry and the attention they were attracting to the full. And, lumbering along, followed the tribes, the two big elephants and the four camels belonging to the circus, each animal drawing a small, gaily-coloured trotting buggy, in which was perched a small boy or girl dressed as a Roman charioteer.

Then came three or four of the newly-painted, flag-decked caravans, with Ginger Wiggles, the clown, in new ring costume, tumbling and throwing catherine-wheels and cracking his long whip and his quips in the face of all and sundry, ambling along on Neddy, the donkey, who every now and then would cause roars of laughter by suddenly stopping and solemnly throwing up his hind legs, causing Ginger to fall over his head to the ground.

And then, in the very centre of the happy, decorated, noisy procession, the very people in whose honour it was being held. Escorted by Bud Truefit's outfit of cowboys, each in a clean red shirt, his best Stetson hat and snowy chaps, with glistening belts and bandoliers filled with new and shining brass cartridges and their trusty guns, and supported by Eddie Polo, in full acrobat's costume, riding Grey Wind, came Bud Truefit and Esta Busto, each in their ring attire, ambling along delicately in the centre of the mob, Esta blushing shyly at the ovation she received from the people, while Bud occasionally scratched his chin and wished it was all over.

Then came the rest of the circus wagons, each in their best Sunday coat of paint, and the other animals, with each horse backed

by some quaint character. And yet there was one thing that made the circus procession different from every other St. Louis had ever seen. Though the band blared and the people paraded, there wasn't the slightest trace of advertisement about it, and the people wondered why. They were accustomed to men with huge megaphones and flaring posters, to handbills being thrust into their hands and thrown about their ears, but with this procession nobody even attempted to make a noise even about its name. And then the rumour grew that it was a wedding procession, and, as if by magic, newspaper men got out pencils and notebooks, and wrote down descriptions of the show, camera fiends snapped it from every corner and angle, while a couple of cinema cameras shot the whole thing from the base of a great statesman's statue.

And at last they reached the church, and the procession formed up in a square, while Esta, Bud, and all the cowboys, with Mr. Busto and Eddie Polo in attendance, wandered up the aisle, while the band played outside the appropriate "Wedding March." Eddie produced the ring at the right moment, and thrust it into the panic-stricken Bud's hand, Mr. Busto gave his daughter away, and the old parson kissed the girl at the end of the ceremony, little knowing that as he did so fifteen hands dropped to as many pistols and the escort of cowboys looked towards the thunderstruck Bud for the signal to draw and perforate this old bouncer who kissed their Esta without even asking her brand-new husband's permission.

But Eddie scowled at them, and they realised that if he said nothing everything was all right. But they weren't going to be surpassed by a grey-whiskered old parson—not they. They lined up in a queue and kissed Esta themselves, while Busto raged, Bud looked like one stunned, and Eddie Polo grinned.

Outside, and back to the procession. But now Esta and Bud led the whole show, and Esta hung her head and blushed as the band thundered out the great and rousing "Wedding March." And the sympathetic St. Louisans showed their appreciation of this novel wedding by showering rice and confetti upon the bride and groom and best man and father, and even upon the Roman gladiators, till the elephants looked as if they had been attacked with white and coloured measles where the confetti discs stuck to their hides.

Clang, clang, clang! Like a mad peal of bells the rattle and roar of a fire-engine sounded in the rear of the procession, and, trained for every emergency, the drivers of all wagons and the riders of all steeds drove their charges close in to the side of the street, leaving a clear road for the ramping, roaring fire-engines to pass through. And the fire-engines took advantage of the road in proper fashion, their bells clanging and their turbine pumps already working. Some of the circus horses were affected strangely, as if they were excited by the swift dash of the red-painted motor engines and escapes flashing past them. Esta's old pack horse stood and regarded the engines and escapes as things of no account, while Red Lightning, on which Bud Truefit was mounted, tried to stand on his hind legs and paw the air with nervousness—a thing he seldom showed. And then, as if tainted with the contagion, Grey Wind put her ears back and whinnied, and, despite all Eddie Polo's efforts to rein her in, bolted like a mad thing in the direction taken by the fire-fighting wagons.

Eddie swung back as hard as he dared, fearful of breaking the reins, and as he went he began to talk soothingly to Grey Wind, for the horse knew and loved his voice, and, besides, was already beginning to repent having bolted so incontinently. And very gradually Eddie gentled her and soothed her, till at last, just as she reached the street wherein the fire-engines and escapes were at work, she allowed herself to be fully pacified.

Eddie looked up at the sight of the burning building. It was a skyscraper, some twenty stories high, and smoke was issuing in dense clouds from all its windows. One whole floor, halfway up, was well alight, and, while everybody had managed to escape from the rooms below the fire without any trouble, the half-dozen escapes placed around the upper part were crowded with women and girls who had been trapped and kept prisoners until the arrival of the fire-fighters.

Eddie leapt from Grey Wind's back, and turned to a bystander.

"Pretty hot corner—eh?" he commented.

"Pretty deadly one, too—or will be presently," said the other. "The top two floors of that building are used by the telephone company as an exchange, and there are at least seventy girls penned up in there. And the escapes are far too short to reach them. I always was against allowing them to build twenty-storey buildings in a city with fifteen-storey fire-escapes. Now, maybe, there'll be those who'll listen to me when I talk in their council."

But Eddie hadn't time to discuss the ethics of providing long escapes for long buildings. There were girls in danger—human beings trapped in the conflagration. Surely there must be some chance of rescuing them, of getting them to the escapes. He called a lad standing near, and handed Grey Wind's bridle to him. Then, with a few words to the mare, he shouldered his way through the press, a queer figure in the singlet and tights of his acrobatic profession.

He won to the nearest fire-engine, and asked to be shown the chief. And just as he reached this worthy's side there was a sudden shout from the crowd, a crash, and then silence. Eddie, looking up swiftly, saw a huge coping-stone fetch away as the flames licked round it, and, falling on the upper part of the city's longest fire-escape, it had snapped the ladder in halves thirty feet down.

"Can I help in any way, chief?" asked Eddie. "I hear there are girls trapped in the top stories."

"That's too true," was the curt answer. "And unless you can show us how to prolong that ladder another fifty feet, I'm afraid you can't do much."

But Eddie was looking aloft—looking to where the thick cable which carries a large number of trunk circuit wires into every telephone exchange flung its black length from the summit of the burning building to an insulator on top of another tall building some hundred yards away. And then, with swift force, came back the remembrance of his and Esta's crossing of the slung lariat the night when Del Rogeriugo and Lopez were defending the ravine.

"Substitute that wire for the rope," he said to himself, "and it's easy. But the girls in there aren't all Esta's—most of 'em would be too terrified to try the trick, and half of those who did try would let go and drop to the street. Wait a minute, though. Say, chief, have you got a nice stout rope, big enough to reach the top of the building from the ladder?"

"Half a dozen of 'em. Why?" was the answer.

"Let me have a couple, will you, please?" said Eddie. "I think I've discovered the way to lengthen those ladders of yours, or, at least, to bring the girls within reach of them. Hand over the ropes, and tell your men to watch out for me and take the girls as they pass out. I'm going over to the telephone exchange, via the trunk circuit lines."

"You're mad, man—absolutely mad!" was the chief's astonished answer. "Why, the whole building may collapse any minute and kill outright everybody that's in it—you're going to certain death if you attempt to enter it!"

"I'm going to certain shame all the rest of my life if I don't do what I can to save those women," returned Eddie. "Chief, I'm a trained acrobat, and I can get where the ordinary man cannot possibly go; I can do things that in the ordinary way are impossible. I propose now to cross the bridge formed by the thick cable aloft, there, carrying with me a couple of your ropes, down which, after I have managed to enter the building, I shall send the girls one at a time. Your men, on the top of the fire-escapes, should be waiting to take those girls, and, if there's a danger of that place falling in, as you say, then the more time we waste talking here, the less good we'll be able to do. Chief, am I to have those ropes?"

"You can, my lad, and Heaven go with you!" snapped the chief, thrusting out his hand. Eddie shook it, rushed to the nearest fire-engine, and, with the coil of rope over his shoulder, darted through the crowd and into the building, from whose untouched roof he was going to start operations.

He found the lift deserted, and the boy who should have been in attendance standing with open mouth looking at the fire. Eddie dragged him away, and while the lift spat him up fifteen stories, he busied himself wrapping around his body the two ropes, so that he could have his hands and legs free for the perilous crossing.

"There ain't no stairs leading to the roof," said the lift-boy, in answer to Eddie Polo's question. "Yew'll have to crawl out of the

window and go along the ledge up the rain-pipe.”

Eddie threw up the window and gazed out upon the crowd below. They looked like so many ants, and the great fire-engines belching forth tons of water appeared to be no bigger than matchboxes. Then he looked above his head, and saw the thick wire cable running from the corner of the building fifty feet away.

Gingerly he thrust himself out over space, feeling with his foot for the narrow ledge running round the block. It was just a foot wide, and there wasn't any room for fancy walking as he stepped out. He refused to allow himself to think what would be the result if he were to drop to the pavement below; all he thought about was that thick wire, inch by inch, flat against the wall, moving sideways, with his eyes fixed all the while on the white faces of the girls at the upper window of the burning block. Eddie edged his way along. Presently he won to a rampipe, and the watching crowds felt a sudden clutch at their hearts as his foot, in

He caught it for the third leap, and swung for a minute, jerking as though to test its weight and its fastenings. He was none too sure of these, and his nose wrinkled dubiously. But he had no time to pick and choose, and, indeed, the cable presented the only opportunity of bridging the gulf between himself and these burning rooms.

So he had to risk it, and, with a smile on his face, and an unuttered prayer in his heart, he swung once, twice, thrice, and then, hand-over-hand, started off on his perilous journey, while the flames roared and crackled as though in protest at this daring attempt to deprive them of their prey.

Beating the Flames!

THERE was breathless silence in that crowded thoroughfare as Eddie Polo swung out upon the first stage of his perilous journey. Not a sound could be heard save the throbbing of the restless steam-pumps and the hissing of the water

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

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

PROGRAMME FOR NEXT WEEK:

GRAND NEW SERIAL.

I have been very fortunate in securing a rattling new adventure serial which will make its appearance in next Friday's issue of the “Popular.” This story will be entitled:

“THE OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!”

By Maurice Everard,

the scenes of which are written round the period of the pirates and buccaneers' reign of terror over the seas. There have been many buccaneer stories, but this latest tale of Maurice Everard's will be the best that has been published. There will be plenty of thrilling episodes and exciting escapes, and there is not the slightest doubt that this serial will make a great sensation on the day of its appearance.

Included in the grand selection of stories for next week will be a splendid long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars School, which is a grand sequel of this week's yarn, and will be entitled:

“TRAINING FOR THE TOURNAMENT!”

By Frank Richards.

The boxing fever spreads throughout the old school, and in the gym, the corridors, and the Close, fellows spar with each other, and the thudding of the boxing-gloves becomes quite a familiar sound everywhere. The Head, with much enthusiasm, employs the services of the great Jack Harper, the owner of the big training centre in Courtfield, and things begin to fairly hum with excitement. Look out for this grand school tale in next week's issue.

Another new tale of

“THE EXPLOITS OF FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE!”

will be next on the list of good things, and will come up to my readers' expectations. Excitement and thrill is not lacking, and I am sure that it will be voted one of the best yarns of the amazing criminal investigator we've had as yet. Be sure you do not miss reading it.

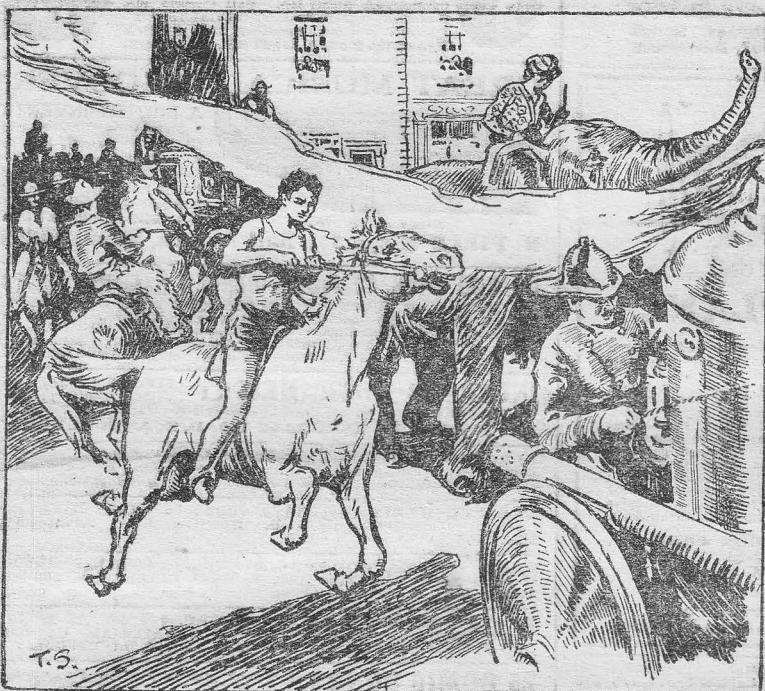
And another and final instalment of the grand life story of famous Eddie Polo in

“FIGHTING FOR FAME!”

This serial has been very popular with my chums, so I am seriously thinking of having a sequel to this tale, which would deal not with Eddie Polo's life as an acrobat, but during the time of his first appearance before the camera. But, of course, that has to be considered a little longer, but I hope to have arrived at some decision by next Friday. I might add that there are other surprises in store, so I advise my loyal friends to keep a strict look-out for further announcements regarding the introduction of new features.

RAILWAYS.

There are plenty of railway companies in this country who own no rolling stock at all—not a carriage, not a locomotive, not as much as a trolley for a porter to trundle into folks' backs when they are least expecting trouble. In the old days there was a rush of railway enterprises, and companies were formed to make what are called leased lines. The few big companies hire the metals of these minor associations, and the public imagines it is all one corporation. In one case, the railway company which serves a good slice of England could not get into its own terminus if it were not for the permission of another corporation, which made the last bit of line into town.



As the red-painted fire-engine dashed by, Eddie Polo's horse tried to stand on its hind legs and paw the air. Then despite all the boy could do, it bolted in the direction of the fire.

turning, slipped, and he hung for a dizzy minute over space. And then they cheered with relief as they saw him, like a tiny white ant, grip the rainpipe and mount roofwards.

The ropes around his waist hampered him a lot, but they were necessary evils, and as they couldn't be cured they must be endured. They nearly pulled him back as he reached the coping and made a great effort to scramble over it. He hung by his hands for a full minute from the edge of the fifteen storey building, while below the macadam pavement yearned to feel the thud of his soft body on its own hard surface. And there wasn't a soul breathed as, with a sudden jerk, Eddie Polo pulled himself to the edge of the coping-stone, and, with a swift heave, rolled himself, ropes and all, on to the flat roof of the building.

He scrambled to his feet, and waved an encouraging hand to the telephone-girls, who, from the smashed-out windows of their fiery prison, were watching him. They knew he was coming to their rescue, and they smiled back in response to his encouragement.

And now Eddie Polo had two handicaps to face—the additional weight of fifty fathoms of rope, and the upward slant of the wire cable. But he was out to conquer handicaps that day, and, after rubbing his hands on the roof to get rid of any perspiration and grease, he crouched low on his haunches and sprang upwards into the air, reaching for the circuit.

as it fell on the walls of the burning building. Strong men felt a grip at their hearts that prevented even coherent thoughts, women sobbed softly, and prayed that the intrepid youth might succeed in his dangerous task. The white-faced telephone-girls, crowded at the upper windows of the blazing block, clasped their hands together in anxious agony, and all the while, yard by yard, Eddie Polo swung, hand over hand, up that steep incline of the wires.

The dead weight of the ropes bound around his body pulled heavily, and severely taxed his strength. The wire circuit sagged with his weight, and made the feat all the more difficult of accomplishment.

Once, twice, his hands slipped down the greasy wire, and a great sigh of suspense swept over the watching crowd. And then, at long last, he neared his goal. He could feel the waves of heat rising and engulfing him, and he gasped for breath. Only his iron will and determination prevented his being choked, and, once, letting go with one hand while he hung over a three-hundred-foot drop with the other, he clutched at the neck of his singlet, and tore it free, so that he could breathe more freely. It seemed as if his heart had been transposed into a great trip-hammer, that mercilessly beat inside his body, as though his lungs were bursting.

(Another fine instalment of this grand serial next Friday.)

THE FAILURE.

There was a reference in the papers the other day to the need of accepting failure. Of course, to know how to lose is half the game, but there should not be any sitting down under a sense of defeat. Seniors are over fond of quoting the saying that in the bright lexicon of youth there is no such word as "fail." The word is there, right enough, but it is the meaning given to it that matters. Failure is the stepping-stone to triumph. If you did not fail now and again, as likely as not you would stagnate. Unbroken success spoils a character. It promotes over-confidence, too much self-esteem,

and lowers the standard of a man's work. The sense that there might be failure brings excellence of endeavour, and makes a chap wire in for all he is worth.

COOKSURENESS.

It is a hateful quality to meet. There are individuals who get on in life a bit, and then think they are exceptionally endowed. They turn unpleasant to their fellows, and show ingratitude towards those who have helped them on the way. There is nothing much meaner, more ignoble, and detestable than this trait. You know yourself how much

pleasanter it is to meet a man who has not had much luck than the overbearing party who gasses without end about his marvellous exploits. And they are not so very wonderful, all said and done!

Your Editor

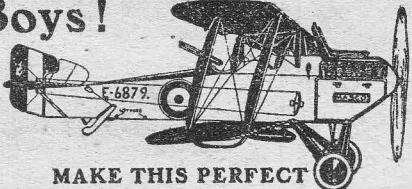


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Advertisement for watches and jewelry. Includes images of a pocket watch, a wristwatch, and a watch case. Text: "GET CAT. NOW FREE New 'Big Bargains' Catalogue Post Free. Watches, Alarm & Striking Clocks, Jewellery, Gramophones, Mouth Organs, Novelties, Toys, Xmas Cards, Etc., Etc. Gent's Strong Watch, Oxidised 9/6, Nickel 11/. Half Clippers 10/. Gold Shell Rings 1/3. Send Hole in Card for Size. All Post Free. Satisfaction or Money Back. Pain's Presents House, Dept 3B, Hastings."

Advertisement for a musical discovery. Includes an image of a pocket instrument. Text: "GREAT MUSICAL DISCOVERY. A BRITISH INVENTION. A pocket instrument that plays in all Keys as perfectly as a Violin, without the laborious study of scales. The only British Made Pocket Instrument on the Market. Post Free—with full instructions—1/9. Better Quality 2/9, from: R. FIELD (Dept. 33), Hall Avenue, HUDDERSFIELD."

Advertisement for a self-confidence treatment. Text: "DO YOU LACK SELF-CONFIDENCE? Do you suffer from nervous indigestion, constipation, lack of energy, or will power? You can acquire strong nerves, which will give you absolute self-confidence, if you use the Mento-Nerve Strengthening Treatment. Used by Vice-Admiral to Seaman, Colonel to Private, D.S.O.'s, M.C.'s, M.M.'s, and D.C.M.'s. Merely send 3 penny stamps for particulars.—GODFREY ELLIOTT-SMITH, Ltd., 527, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London, E.C. 4."

Advertisement for height increasing. Text: "INCREASE YOUR HEIGHT SEVERAL INCHES 7/6 Ross System never fails. Price 7/6, complete. Particulars 2d. stamp. R. ROSS, 18, LANGDALE ROAD, SCARBOROUGH."

Advertisement for electric light. Text: "ELECTRIC LIGHT.—Battery, Bracket, Lamp, Lampholder, Switch, Wire, Reflector, 4/9 (Postage 6d.). Catalogue Model Engines, Railways, Dynamos, etc., 4d.—MODEL CO., 38, Queen's Road, Aston, Birmingham."

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Advertisement for comic songs. Text: "25 COMIC SONGS, 8 Funny Recitations, 30 Parlour Games, 10 Parodies, 80 Conjuring Tricks, 15 Magic Tricks, etc., etc., lot 1/- carr. pd.—HILL CO., 8, Triangle, Clevedon, Som."

Advertisement for ghost photography. Text: "GHOSTS! YOUR OWN appear and disappear at will. A SCIENTIFIC WONDER. Causes great fun. 1/3, post free.—MILLEY CO., 3, Winchelsea Road, Tottenham, N. 17."

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Advertisement for the Givran System. Text: "ARE YOU SHORT? If so, let the Givran System help you to increase your height. Mr. Briggs reports an increase of 5 inches; Driver E. P. 3 inches; Mr. Ratcliffe 4 inches; Miss Davies 5 1/2 inches; Mr. Lindon 3 inches; Mr. Kelley 4 inches; Miss Leodell 4 inches. This System requires only ten minutes morning and evening, and greatly improves the health, physique, and carriage. No appliances or drugs. Send 3 penny stamps for further particulars and £100 Guarantee to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N. 4."

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