

"OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!" GRAND NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL!
By MAURICE EVERARD.

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HELD-UP! Galloper Dick, the Highwayman, with his pistol cocked ready, helped the merchant's daughter from the coach!
(A Thrilling Episode from our Grand New Adventure Serial in this issue.)

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL!



A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.

By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Which Records the Start of a Great Adventure!

AT the top of the tor, swept by the bitterest wind which had blown this forty year, and full a foot deep with crisp, hard snow, the two boys drew up so suddenly that the bone skates they carried rattled on their backs.

"By faith, an' if you traveller be not our Black Michael, then write me down for a numbskull!" said the elder of the two, shielding his eyes from the pelt of the flakes. "D'ye see him, Bob, breasting the rise, and ploughing his way through the great drifts as only our Cornish giant knows how."

Bob Greville turned up the collar of his square-skirted coat, and shivered as he raised his voice above the hollow whine of the wind.

"Indeed, Jeff, our home is a good forty leagues away, and if Sir John had wished to send Black Mike to us, surely the stage or one of the horses from the stable, would have brought him.

Jeff turned to his cousin with a serious face.

"See, now, it is Michael, with his black curls streaming behind him, so that I see the glint of the gold rings in his ears. It is he, sure enough, with his old red sea-coat all stained, and the petticoat breeches, such as all good sailormen love to affect; and, what is more, Bob, I see that terrible sword of his hanging at his side. Indeed, it is Black Michael, come all the way from Talland, and, domine or no domine, I shall hail and speak with him."

At the suggestion the colour faded a little in young Bob Greville's cheeks, for the short winter afternoon was drawing in, and very soon now the "Return" bell would summon them back to evening school.

"I trow not it can be Mike," he said, as they scrambled and slid down the rugged slope of the tor together. "For what would bring him so far afield in such weather?"

Jeff Hawkins laughed, and, blowing on his numbed fingers, ran on towards the distant turpicks.

"Mebbe, cousin, the call of the sea has come on him agen, an' he's left your father's house to seek ship from Bristol port. But Mike it is, in funnel-topped boots and knitted bonnet, and such pistols in his belt as would almost proclaim him a bold buccaneer. Indeed—as they saw the big man pause beneath a clump of trees to regain his breath against the buffelings of the wintry gale—"but the storm has used him hardly. Why should he not have ridden by the diligence?"

"I fear me, if the stage could journey thus far against these drifts," young Greville said, running so fast that the snow powdered his breeches and brown cloth coat to the colour of his white, woollen stockings. "Perhaps he brings ill news."

At the suggestion Jeff Hawkins sent out a
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shout which brought the loose-limbed giant staring about him, one gnarled fist coming to rest on the handle of the great swinging blade at his side.

"So, oh, and who might be hailing me?" he yelled, in a voice rasped with the salt and tang of the sea.

"It is I—Jeff! Don't you know me?" said Hawkins, rubbing the flakes out of his eyes. "Cousin Bob and I sighted you as you toiled up the hill, and though the bell must have gone these five minutes since, it is as good to see you agen—"

"By the rood, Master Jeffrey, and you, too, young master"—doling his red cap with its tasselled end as he stood once more in the presence of Sir John Greville's son. "But as lief would I be hung for a cut-purse as face Dartmoor agen. Still, the good sailorman sails whither he be sent, and your father's orders are to take you both back home with me."

The two boys stared hard at their father's serving man, and then exchanged surprised glances.

"Is my father ill?" burst from Bob.

"The powers be praised, no!" replied Black Michael, unfastening the buttons of his petticoat breeches, and drawing out a folded paper sealed in wax with a signet-ring. "But, by my master's command, I must needs deliver this."

The young lad's fingers shook as he broke the seal and read the missive.

Talland Hall, Cornwall,
November 7th, 1713.

"My dear Son, and my Nephew,—I have charged our faithful servant Michael Pentech to deliver into your hands this my letter. Full a year has gone since last we met, and in that time it has been God's will to bring certain misfortunes upon me. Of these it is neither my desire nor intention to enlighten you, for a man must needs bear his burdens alone, and not place them on younger shoulders; but you should know this, that owing to certain reverses which have befallen me, my fortunes are much impaired, so that no longer can I keep you at school."

"Saints, but our schooling days are over!" cried Bob, for a moment forgetting the seriousness of the position. "You hear, Jeff, no more cyphering or figuring, or iambic pentameters for either of us. We must needs at my father's command return home."

"Yes, that is it," Black Michael interjected, settling himself in the lee of a high bank, with a long-stemmed clay pipe between his teeth, from which he blew volumes of fragrant tobacco-smoke into the gusty air. "The poor master is in a sad way over the moneys, so that all the horses have gone, and even the grand family coach has been taken from the stables. He would have given me gold to bring me by the stage from Plymouth this side of Exeter town; but 'tis as easy for

a man in the prime of life to foot it on the King's highway."

Bob looked up with tears in his honest blue eyes.

"You're a stout friend, Mike, and my father must be proud to have such a faithful servant."

"Indeed, a servant is proud to have such a master," said the big Cornishman, with a nod that set the gold rings in his ears shaking. "And there's naught to fear with such a trusty friend as this beside me." And, drawing the great hanger from its leathern holding he made such furious thrusts and lunges as set the air whistling about their ears.

"A stout aid to carve your way to fame and fortune," laughed Jeff, as the sailor resumed his seat in the snow piled high against the bank. "Well, read on, Bob, or is the cyphering too hard for you?"

"Zounds, but the cold has brought the water to my eyes!" muttered Bob untruthfully. "For my father says he is too poor longer to maintain us at college, and we must need come home to start work on one of the farms. It is hard for one so old as he, Jeff—"

"Nay, but we're both strong and willing, and though he is but my uncle, I love him even as you, cousin Bob, and together we will return with Michael to labour for him in his old age."

"To which end," said the sailor, rising with each hand pressed down on the butts of the pistols in his belt, we will tramp the King's highway together from here to Plymouth town and beyond, before which, however, I am charged to deliver an epistle to Dr. Peters, your worthy master."

"Come, then," said Jeff, linking his arm through Mike's, an example followed by Bob on the other side, "we will go together to the School House with our sorry story. But it's an ill-wind that blows no one good, Michael—his handsome face flushed with excitement—"and I, for one, am now almost a young man grown, and our town of Wellington here is but a small place, so that I shall be glad to put all scholarship away and face the world to try my fortune."

"Ay, an' the world's a grand place," muttered Michael, giving a flick to his long, curved hanger so that the tip of the blade struck against his square-toed shoe. "Like as not, seeing I must soon look to the sea again for a livelihood, and find either a King's ship or a privateersman, your uncle would consent to your making company with me."

Jeff Hawkins shook his fair head.

"That indeed would be after my own heart, Michael!" he said. "But if Bob stays at home, then I must keep with him; for, you see"—with a twist to his lips—"we long since vowed, the first day of our schooling, that come what might we would stick through life together."

"Then that settles it," replied Black

Michael sadly. "I must take you home and set forth on the road to high adventure alone. So we come to the school. Indeed, it is a fine place, with its old walls and turrets and towers and big belfry, but give me the sea, the rolling main, a deck-plank under me, and gold to be won on the Spanish Main. But there, there; 'tis but a foolish man's idle dream, and I would have to think no more on't. We will find your learned pedagogue and give up our charge, for to-morrow we set our faces to the South again, and only the good Lord can tell what business may befall!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Which Deals with a Gentleman of the "High Toby."

LONG after the excitement occasioned by the appearance of such a desperate-looking fellow as Black Michael at the school had died down—for many there were among Bob and Jeff's school-fellows who declared that the swarthy sailor-man with the black curls, gold earrings, and terrible sword, must be one of the pirates themselves who shortly before had broken prison in London town and thus escaped the sea-rover's fate at Execution Dock—the two boys lay wakeful in their hard beds, staring into the gloomy shadows of the high-raftered room, and watching the moon climb above the distant Mendips to trace fairy patterns upon the frosted window-panes.

There was, behind the coming of Black Michael, a tragedy which touched both their young lives; for, thoughtless and care-free though most boys be, each had a great love for fine old Sir John Greville, and the news of his misfortunes made a deep impression on their fine upstanding natures. For oftentimes when together they had planned their own future, they had talked of joining up with the armies in the Low Countries to win fame for the honoured names they bore. And nothing, they knew, would have pleased Sir John more than to see them set forth as officers in the King's service to carry on the family's high traditions in foreign parts. But now it was all over; they must needs foot the hundred and twenty-odd miles to Talland Hall, and, no longer gentlemen except in word and deed, labour at common tasks for him to whom they owed everything. Not that either Bob or Jeff had foolish notions about birth and position—a fault only too common in those days—but they felt how deeply Sir John's honest pride and fond hopes would be broken at the knowledge of a soldier's life being closed to them.

Something of the disappointment was forgotten, however, by the run in send-off which was given them, for at daybreak, after a hurried meal, they found all the school drawn up in the great snow-covered quadrangle, and their worthy master in his long stiff robe and white surplice waiting to wish them God-speed before sending them on their way.

Scores of little fellows in breeches and woollen stockings and short-skirted coats of brown, green, or blue cloth held their three-cornered hats under their arms, as their piping voices raised the strains of the founder's hymn; then, to a rousing three cheers and one for the King, our young adventurers and their stout guide in his petticoat breeches and red-knitted jersey, passed with heads held high, though lips quivered a little, and their eyes were suspiciously dim, beneath the great gate-house, and set their faces towards the lone highway.

It was a long and arduous, not to say perilous, journey upon which they were embarked, for being the main road from London to the big towns of the West Country, the roads were infested with footpads and highwaymen. But the sight of Black Michael swinging sturdily along, his immense height and girth dwarfing every passer-by, was more than enough to set all fears at rest; for did not Toothpick, the terrible curved hanger, sway at his side, and in his belt were the two pistols which local tradition credited with having caused the death of many men.

"Have no fears, boys!" the genial sailor said, when the open country stretched white as a sheet under a mantle of driven snow about them. "I fear no more a tom rig or a rump scuttler than I do a cly faker or a bung snatcher. And, seeing with me two such trusty-looking young blades as you, I warrant no gent'ry of the High Toby crack would venture to molest our persons!"

At which both Bob and Jeff laughed, and promptly dismissed from their thoughts the stories which had been rife in Wellington town about the doings of one Lance Bedgood, a heartless ruffian who had callously killed in cold blood two unarmed travellers journeying to Taunton.

"It's the silly cūp's books what do all the mischief!" Michael said, when they were come to a very lonely portion of the road. "If silly folk would cease to read such rubbish the High Toby would soon have the bottom knocked out of it!"

And then, knowing what a great strain such a long journey as lay before them must put on two young and inexperienced travellers, Black Michael proceeded to while away the hours with real and imaginary stories of his own breathless doings on the high seas. So in right good spirits as the short day drew to a close, with the promise of a fine night and a clear moon, they came to Clyst, and halted for a meal and a warm by the fire in the only inn which the straggling village could boast.

The moon was rising when they faced once more the long stretch of lonely road bordered on either side by snow-mantled wastes of

but Mike's free hand closed on his stern collar and he was jerked roughly back.

"Whist now! We can do no good by a forward attack. It is a coach which has been brought to a stand, for I hear the crunch of the wheels in the snow. There is time and to spare. Follow me!" With which he stepped from the turnpike into the thick snow which lay upon the heath and struck off at a quick run towards the trees.

Here, where the moonlight did not penetrate, it was a simple matter to thread a path unseen through the spinney, and to watch unobserved the course of the hold-up.

Both Jeff and Bob's pulses quickened, and the blood ran faster in their veins, as, crouching at Black Michael's side under the lee of a prickly bush, they made out a handsome private stage drawn by a pair of magnificent horses. By the roadside crouched the lackeys in a posture of terror, rendered help-



The younger lad's fingers shook as he broke the seal and read the missive. It was a letter from his father. "Saints, this means that our school days are over!" he cried. "Yes, that's it!" said Black Michael, seating himself on the bank. (See page 2.)

heath here and there broken by dark clumps of forbidding-looking pines.

"We should make Exeter by midnight, where the Bull Tavern will be open to receive us," Black Michael explained. "And to-morrow's journey should carry us to Plymouth. I trow you will both be glad to see Sir John again!"

"It will be a sad home-coming," replied Jeff. "for uncle had entertained high hopes of our future, and it irks me to feel we can do no more for him than to labour on the land."

Black Michael laughed, and passed his hand over his bushy black hair.

"Who knows but what he may aye consent to let you come on shipboard with me? I purpose before the month is out to find a ship in Bristol to take me to furrin parts, where mebbe I may find good fortune to bring back to my master in his last years."

"You're a good, stout friend, Mike," Bob said, as they neared a bend in the lonely road. "I wish it were possible—"

And then his voice was stilled in his throat, and his lips went a little dry as upon the still night air was borne to them the noise of a distant cry, "Stand and deliver!"

"Sdeath!" growled Mike, drawing up. "There's trouble on foot ahead of it! D'ye hear that? A woman's shriek and the shrill neighing of horses. We must see to it!"

"Forward!" cried Jeff, drawing his cloak about him and gripping his stout ash stick;

less by a short, stocky man, who covered them with a long-barrelled pistol.

But stranger still was the sight of a masked highwayman adopting in an unusual manner the methods of his calling.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Which Galloper Dick, the Highwayman, Makes a Bad Bargain!

BENEATH an ordinary civilian attire, probably purchased long before in one of the slop shops of Monmouth Street, Soho, a tall, fine-looking figure showed, under a horseman's cloak, a voluminous sleeveless garment, with a high storm-collar pulled up to protect his precious neck from the rigour of the night.

Mounted on a fine bay mare, only a few moments before the boys and Black Michael arrived, he had lowered one of the flaps of his three-cornered hat, inside which was a piece of crepe broad enough to rest on the tip of his nose, with a couple of slits cut in it to give clear range of vision to his eyes.

From one of his holsters he had drawn a heavy flint-lock pistol, the butt of which the watchers saw in the moonlight was bound in brass.

"Sire," said he, tapping on the glass with

the muzzle of his weapon, "I would ask you to let down the window and converse with me, or I shall be forced to make an entrance and bring you to your feet in the snow."

At this the window was opened, and a faint cry of distress came from within.

"I perceive the lady with you, sir, is both young and beautiful, for which, having a reputation to maintain, seeing I am known among the brethren of the High Toby as Galloper Dick, I would assure you gentle treatment on obeying my commands," the fellow said, with a laugh.

Jeff made a movement to rise, but with a warning grip Mike restrained him.

"So, Galloper Dick, the footpad, is the rogue to whom I owe my plight!" came in scornful tones from the interior of the coach. "Plague on you, for a vicious rogue who has caught me unprepared!"

"Fortune of war, my goodly merchant!" laughed Galloper Dick, helping out a portly figure in a square-skirted coat, with large square cuffs turned back, showing much lace ruffle at the end of the fine lawn sleeves. "By the rood, but indeed you look a goodly capture!"

Well might the highwayman be pleased, for as the old gentleman stepped down under the threat of the pointed muzzle, it was plain to recognise him as a person, of quality. Gold buttons ornamented his coat, his neck-cloth was of Mechlin lace, the long-flapped waistcoat reaching down to mid-thigh and almost covering his breeches, was of rich material, and his stockings of silk were gartered below the knees with silver buckles.

"It irks me to traffic with such a rogue," he said, in well-bred tones. "But when the devil drives, needs must, and though I am but an old man I would fall upon you hard but for fear of the ill that might befall my daughter were I worsted in the contest."

"Have no fear for that," grinned Dick. "I have but to give you one tap with the butt of my pistol and Heaven receives your soul! To-night, however, I am in merry mood, and I perceive the pretty young lady holds in her trembling fingers a flageolet with which doubtless she has whiled the long hours of the journey away. I would observe from the slimmness of her hand she plays most excellently, and I doubt not that she dances as well. Will you please let me have the honour to dance a caranto with her upon the heath?"

At this the old man shook with rage, but one glance at his daughter's white face showed him the need of caution and submission.

"I regret, sir," he said, bowing. "I am not in a position to deny your request. My daughter shall dance with you."

Dick laughed, and, still retaining his cocked pistol, leapt lightly from his horse, and, opening the door wider, leant forward to help the young lady from the coach.

It was at this moment that, with a shout that set the highwayman's horse curvetting and prancing with fright, Black Mike leapt to his feet, and with a ferocious yell to both the boys, crashed through the thicket and broke on to the road.

In his right hand he swung his terrible hanger. One sweep of the huge blade held flat-wise sent the fellow covering the lackeys howling into the ditch. Before Galloper Dick could turn Jeff was upon him, smiting right and left with his stick to such good purpose that the highwayman dropped a shattered wrist to his side. He still had the use of his other hand, and with this he was quick enough to catch at his flying horse, and snatching the second pistol from the holster to deal Jeff such a blow with it as knocked him senseless in the road.

"Hold! Drop your weapon, or I'll riddle you as full of holes as a colander!" cried Mike.

Dick turned round fiercely. "I shoot the merchant if you advance a step!" he yelled.

"I don't think so!" broke from Bob, who, creeping round the back of the coach, had approached the highwayman unobserved.

"There's one for the insult to the lady!" And raising his weapon, he brought it down with terrific force on Dick's shoulder.

So severe was the blow that Dick dropped his weapon, and, seeing himself outnumbered, he waited no longer to engage either Black Michael or the boy, but, running as fast as his high boots would allow, he managed to catch up with his mare, to vault lightly into

the saddle, and, with a flourish of his hat, to disappear round the bend in the road.

A quick shot from Black Mike's pistol hastened his flight, the moon sliding behind a low cloud in the north giving the second injured ruffian the opportunity to rise dizzily to his feet and to slip away in the darkness.

Mike removed his woollen cap, and with the point of his hanger sticking into the ground, and his hand on the hilt, he made the best bow he could muster.

"I am honoured to be able to render the small service," he said to the merchant, fast recovering his composure under copious applications of snuff from a jewelled box. "I feared me the rascal would take your honour's money before we could interfere."

"Indeed no!" the merchant said, extending the snuff-box. "By great good or ill fortune I was carrying no less than eight hundred golden guineas, a goodly portion of which I would ask your acceptance for the service you have done my daughter."

"Indeed, and I shall be pleased to accept," said Mike, "seeing I have with me two penniless young squires on whom ill fortune has turned her frown."

"Indeed, you will do nothing of the sort!" said Jeff, rising shakily. "Believe me, sir, we are very poor, but we will take no reward for what is, after all, a privilege."

"But, Master Jeff, think of Sir John, and the ill condition in which he finds himself," persisted the sailor. "It is not for us to refuse such generosity."

"We are indeed poor—so poor that we must needs leave school and work with our hands for one to whom we owe everything," said Jeff. "All the same, I decline to take a guinea of this gentleman's money."

"Then in that case," said the merchant, ordering his servants back to their seats on the box, "seeing that I am in a position to render you all some return for your courage, I would ask you to do me the honour to come to my mansion in Exeter, and there let me put a proposition before you—a proposition which will ensure you more than a few hundred guineas, perhaps, indeed, a very great fortune!"

At the Alderman's House!

NEITHER Jeff, Bob, nor Black Michael felt constrained to question the merchant as to the direction from which their good fortune was to come; for the sudden reversal of their prospects, coupled with the excitement through which they had just passed, left them all a bit dazed, so that they tumbled into the roomy coach all breathless, and silent until their benefactor spoke again.

"But half an hour's drive will bring us to Exeter town," he said, tapping his gift snuff-box before passing it over to Mike. "There, as good and loyal citizens of his gracious Majesty, we must needs, put the riding officers upon the track of our highwayman, though, Od's wounds, when I think of his daring in offering to dance with my daughter—"

Both Jeff and Bob came to their senses with something of a shock, and each blushed scarlet and attempted a clumsy bow as the young lady held out a friendly hand.

"Indeed, young gentlemen, I am most sensible of your courage, and of yours, too"—smiling at Black Michael. "But for your timely arrival, I fear my father and I would have returned home stripped of all the valuables we were carrying. It is indeed good to find such stalwarts on the King's highway."

She smiled in a manner that showed her small, but even, white teeth, and glanced from one to another with eyes full of gratitude and merriment.

"I almost lost my fear of the gallant who would have robbed us," she went on. "Until I saw this gentleman—"

"Black Mike's my name, lady, and you must know me as serving-man to old Sir John Greville, of Talland Hall, in Cornwall."

"Ha!" said the merchant, restoring the pouch of guineas to the flap-pocket of his broadcaded waistcoat. "A fine name, truly. And you, I take it, are his sons?"

"I'm his son, and Jeff Hawkins is my cousin," said Bob, by no means abashed seeing that the young lady—indeed, she was little more than his own age—continued to regard him with roguish eyes. "We have passed three years in college in Wellington, and but yesterday our good Michael came all the way from beyond Plymouth to tell us of misfortunes which have befallen my father, so that both Jeff and I are forced to leave school and to go out into the world to find our own livings."

"As to which there will be but small difficulty!" laughed the merchant, setting one richly jewelled hand on Bob's knee. "You are a couple of fine, sturdy lads, full of the pluck and brawn of old England, and I trow the world will hear a great deal more of you yet. As to your father's ill-fortune, I know naught of it; but it touches me mightily, since once upon a time I myself was a poor man, who by the grace of God and some industry have become rich. And seeing you have done all this for my daughter and myself, I would but wait for a more fitting opportunity to unfold a scheme whereby I may repay you. 'S'wounds, but the hour grows late, and this is only Latimer's Hill, with the twinkling lights of the city far below."

It was mightily cold inside the coach for all the rich upholstery, but they were all so close-pressed together—Bob, to his secret joy, being next to the young lady—that they forgot their discomforts, and soon the great lumbering vehicle was rolling over the bridge, and taking the sharp, cobbled rise past the cathedral to the high ground upon which the merchant's house stood.

It was neither so large nor so imposing a residence as Talland Hall, being a modern structure of red brick, built in the previous reign, with pretty dormer windows, and a rounded porch giving on to a stout mahogany door. A great blaze of lights streamed from the windows, and footmen in powdered wigs and knee-breeches came out to meet their master, while linkboys added the lackeys with the coach, which rumbled down the drive and disappeared—a pretty picture, indeed, lined out as it was with snow.

"Now come you in, and welcome to my home!" said the merchant, taking both boys by the arm. "And as for you, sir"—calling to Black Michael, who was stalking off with his gleaming hanger tucked under his arm— "I'll have none of it! Come you here with these blades, and sit at my table with me, for he who is brave enough to emperil his life for another is good enough to sit at any table in the realm."

Whereupon Michael pulled his woollen bonnet from his immense head of jet-black curly hair, and stood nervously pulling it through his fingers like a guilty schoolboy caught in an act of wrongdoing.

"Faith, sir, but I am only a rough, common man, and a sailor withal. And these are my young masters, so that it is not right for the likes of me—"

"Indeed, and I will hear nothing of it!" cried the merchant genially. "A glass of strong drink, my good Michael, to warm your blood! And, Patience—calling to a serving-woman in a black stuff dress who stood in the hall—"you will show these young gentlemen to the guest-chamber, and put out some of Master Frank's dry clothes for them!"

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



Commencing this week KINEMA COMIC will give away 3 free plates—one each week—in the following order:

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Training for the Tournament

A Magnificent Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Skinner's Little Jape!

GREYFRIARS had it badly. There could be no doubt about that.

From end to end of the famous Kentish school the boxing fever had spread.

In the gym, in the corridors, in the Close, fellows sparred up to each other, and the thudding of the boxing-gloves was a familiar sound at the old school. The craze, the boom, the fever—call it what you will—had spread to such an extent that even the high-and-mighty men of the Sixth, their dignity forgotten, playfully punched each other's noses, and hammered at punching-balls in their studies.

So universal was the craze that it was rumoured that Gosling, the porter, had challenged Joseph Mimble, the gardener, to a six-round contest, for a purse of five shillings.

The Remove, of course, had the boxing fever as badly as anybody, and friendly bouts were the order of the day.

The individual who was responsible for this extraordinary state of affairs was Sir Timothy Topham.

Sir Timothy was a governor of the school, and a member of the National Sporting Club. He was a great boxing enthusiast, and he had arranged for a big tournament to take place at Greyfriars.

A gold medal was to be presented to the best boxer in each Form, and the excitement, therefore, was intense, particularly in the Remove Form, which was rich in fighting-men.

On this particular afternoon—a half-holiday—the gymnasium was packed, and the thudding of the gloves resounded through the large and lofty apartment.

Harry Wharton was trying conclusions with Dennis Carr; Bob Cherry was matched with Dick Russell; Peter Todd and Mark Linley were "going it" hammer-and-tongs; and at least a dozen friendly contests were in progress.

Even Lord Mauleverer, the slacker and dandy of the Remove, was bestirring himself for once. He had the boxing fever as badly as anybody. And Billy Bunter was in the gym, too. He was "scrapping" with Fisher T. Fish.

One of the few fellows who had not yet fallen a victim to the fever was Skinner of the Remove.

Skinner was no fighting-man, and at that moment he was wandering aimlessly along the corridors. Time was hanging heavily on his hands. And he longed for a diversion of some sort.

As he passed the door of Mr. Quelch's study it opened, and the Remove-master looked out into the passage.

"Ah, Skinner!" he said, observing the cad of the Remove. "Might I trouble you to take this note to Mr. Prout?"

"With pleasure, sir," said Skinner. And he took the sealed envelope which Mr. Quelch handed to him and strolled away.

But it was not to Mr. Prout's study that he went. It was to his own. For Skinner was an inquisitive and an unscrupulous fellow, and he badly wanted to know what Mr. Quelch had written to Mr. Prout.

"It's something to do with the boxing,

I expect," he murmured. "Both Quelch and Prout have got a hand in the arrangements. Anyway, I'll soon see what it's all about."

A cheerful fire burned in the grate in Skinner's study. And the kettle was on the hob.

Skinner waited until it was boiling; then, after taking the precaution of locking the door, he carefully steamed open the envelope which Mr. Quelch had given him.

There was a half-sheet of notepaper within. It contained the following message:

"My dear Prout,—If you will meet me in the gymnasium at five o'clock I shall have pleasure in thrashing out various subjects with you.

"Yours sincerely,
"HORACE H. QUELCH."

Skinner perused this brief note intently—not once, but several times. He was fully aware what it referred to.

Mr. Quelch wished to hold a discussion with the master of the Fifth on the subject of the forthcoming boxing tournament.

Presently Skinner emitted a low chuckle. Then he took an ink-eraser from his pocket and carefully scored out four words which constituted a line of the letter.

When the four words had been erased the result was as follows:

"My dear Prout,—If you will meet me in the gymnasium at five o'clock I shall have pleasure in thrashing you.

"Yours sincerely,
"HORACE H. QUELCH."

Skinner surveyed his handiwork with considerable satisfaction.

"I guess that'll do the trick!" he chortled. "It'll be no end of a lark to see Prout squaring up to Quelch. Ha, ha, ha!"

For some moments the cad of the Remove was overcome with merriment.

When he had recovered from his hilarity he replaced the half-sheet of notepaper in the envelope, the flap of which he carefully gummed down. Then he went along to Mr. Prout's study.

The master of the Fifth was busily engaged in polishing the barrel of his celebrated Winchester repeater.

"What is it, Skinner?" he asked testily. "If you please, sir," said Skinner demurely. "Mr. Quelch asked me to hand you this note."

Mr. Prout took the missive, and ripped open the envelope with a paper-knife.

Skinner lingered on the threshold. He wanted to see the expression on Mr. Prout's face when he read the note.

But he was unlucky. "You need not wait, Skinner," said Mr. Prout.

"But there might be an answer, sir." "Go!" thundered the master of the Fifth. And Skinner went.

Left to himself, Mr. Prout perused the note which the junior had delivered. His eyes seemed to bulge out of their sockets as he did so.

For a moment he was completely overcome. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "I can scarcely believe the evidence of my eyes! Quelch has actually challenged me to a fistful encounter! Moreover, he states his intention

of thrashing me! This—this is extraordinary!"

Mr. Prout gave another glance at the challenge.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it. It was Mr. Quelch's handwriting that stared him in the face.

The master of the Fifth rubbed his eyes, and wondered if he was dreaming.

"It seems incredible—unheard-of—that Quelch should desire a bout with the gloves!" he murmured. "I can only conclude that he has been infected by the wild enthusiasm which is now prevailing. He has fallen a victim to the boxing fever. He has been swept off his feet, so to speak, and he has temporarily forgotten his dignity. The question is, ought I to accept this somewhat impertinent challenge?"

Mr. Prout's first impulse was to indignantly refuse to meet his colleague in the gym. But he reflected that if he took this course he would be dubbed a coward.

Besides, Mr. Quelch had boastfully stated that he would have pleasure in thrashing his fellow-master. And that nettled Mr. Prout exceedingly.

Despite the fact that he was no longer a young man, the master of the Fifth regarded himself as a formidable antagonist to anybody who crossed his path. Had he not during the war been a special constable? And had not the local pawnbrokers stood in awe of him?

True, he would be no match for a young and sturdy fighting-man. But then Mr. Quelch was neither young nor sturdy.

"It is very presumptuous of him to say that he will thrash me," muttered Mr. Prout. "He has no justification whatever for making such a bold assertion. I will keep this appointment in the gymnasium at five o'clock. Yes, I will meet him and defeat him!"

Having formed this resolve, Mr. Prout went along to Mr. Quelch's study, in order to tell him that he had accepted the challenge.

It so happened, however, that Mr. Quelch was out.

"Dear me! How annoying!" murmured Mr. Prout. "Never mind, I will meet Quelch in the gymnasium at five o'clock, and I fancy he will regret having sent me such an impertinent challenge. Scenes of violence are repellent to me. But the fault is not mine in this instance. It is Quelch who has arranged this bout. Very well; Quelch shall pay the penalty!"

And Mr. Prout strode back to his own study with the air of a prospective conqueror.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Scene in the Gym!

FIVE boomed out from the old clock-tower at Greyfriars.

Ere the last note had died away Mr. Prout stepped into the gym. He was attired in grey flannel trousers and a very tight-fitting sweater. And the light of battle gleamed in his eye.

The gym was crowded with Removites, who were resting from their exertions.

The Famous Five were perched on the box-horse. And the others were sprawling in recumbent attitudes on the mat.

The sudden entry of Mr. Prout surprised THE POPULAR.—No. 96.

everybody, save Harold Skinner, who chuckled softly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What's the Prout bird want, I wonder?"

"He looks quite fierce!" muttered Harry Wharton.

The master of the Fifth glared at the assembled juniors.

"Is my opponent here?" he demanded.

The Removites were too amazed to reply.

Mr. Prout gave a snort of impatience.

"Has Mr. Quelch put in an appearance yet?" he inquired.

"Numro, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"Ha! Can it be possible that he is showing the white feather—that he has realised the absurdity of trying conclusions with a skilled fighting man?"

The juniors fairly gasped.

Bob Cherry tapped his forehead significantly.

"Mad!" he murmured.

"Stark, staring mad!" agreed Frank Nugent, in an undertone.

"He has the battfulness in his esteemed belly, as our American friends would say!" whispered Hurree Singh.

Mr. Prout frowned.

"Wharton!" he rapped out. "I will trouble you to hand me a pair of gloves!"

"Gug-gug-gloves, sir!" stammered the captain of the Remove.

"Yes—at once!"

"W—w—what sort of gloves do you mean, sir?"

"Boxing-gloves, of course!"

"M—my hat!"

The juniors could no longer doubt that Mr. Prout was afflicted with some form of madness.

What could a staid and dignified Form-master want with a pair of boxing-gloves? Surely he did not require them for his own use?

Like a fellow in a dream, Harry Wharton handed over a pair of gloves.

"You had better put them on for me," said Mr. Prout.

Wharton hesitated.

"Do as I tell you!" rumbled the master of the Fifth.

He extended a flabby hand, upon which Wharton deftly fastened one of the gloves.

Then the other glove was adjusted, and Mr. Prout started pawing the air with his fists, as if to get his eye in.

He struck out several times at an imaginary opponent, and Harry Wharton promptly hopped out of the danger-zone.

Some of the onlookers looked rather scared. They began to think that Mr. Prout was not only a lunatic, but a dangerous one.

The others, unable to repress their merriment, were chuckling.

Mr. Prout was still pounding away at an imaginary opponent, when the door of the gym opened and Mr. Quelch came in.

The Remove-master stared at his colleague in blank amazement.

"Really, Prout!" he exclaimed. "I am surprised to find you in this undignified pose!"

Mr. Prout dropped his gloved hands to his sides.

"I am quite ready, Quelch," he said grimly.

"What?"

"I am quite ready for the thrashing which you have undertaken to administer!"

Mr. Quelch nearly fell down.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"I shall not allow you to withdraw your audacious challenge, sir! You have undertaken to thrash me, and I shall hold you to that undertaking. Not that I think you will succeed for a single instant. In fact, to use a somewhat vulgar colloquialism, I imagine the boot will be on the other foot. Wharton, hand Mr. Quelch a pair of gloves!"

The captain of the Remove was too flabbergasted to obey.

As for Mr. Quelch, he was thunderstruck. He caught his colleague by the arm.

"Are you sure, Prout, that you—you feel quite well?" he asked, in concern.

"Quite! Well enough, at any rate, to hold my own with you in fistic combat!"

"Prout!"

"I would prefer that the contest should be of a private nature," continued Mr. Prout.

"It is not seemly that we should fight in the presence of these boys. I will ask them to leave the gymnasium, and then we will settle our little affair."

Mr. Quelch snorted. He was beginning to get very angry.

"I have not the slightest intention of indulging in a bout of fisticuffs with you, Prout!" he exclaimed. "I should not dream of such a thing! You must be mad to suggest it!"

"But it was you who suggested it——"

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"I?"

"Certainly! You arranged to meet me here at five o'clock, and you stated that you would have pleasure in thrashing me."

"Nonsense!"

"Ha! It is as I thought!" said Mr. Prout angrily. "Now that the crucial moment has come you are showing the white feather! You are regretting your rash challenge! But I have not come here for nothing, Quelch. Having lured me to this place, you must stand up to me in fistic encounter. If you refuse to don the gloves, you will be branding yourself as a coward, sir—a manufacturer of idle threats—a man who goes back on his word!"

"Hold me up, somebody!" implored Bob Cherry. "Prout will be the death of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If there's going to be a scrap, my money's on Quelch!" muttered Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, rather!"

"Three to one on Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch tightened his grip on his colleague's arm.

"Come away, Prout," he said. "You are not yourself. Doubtless you have been in the sun."

"Release me, Quelch!"

"Come away!" repeated the Remove-master. "Can you not see that you are making yourself ridiculous in the eyes of these boys?"

"Unhand me!" hissed Mr. Prout. "Or——"

Mr. Quelch maintained his grip. Whereupon Mr. Prout brought his unhampered arm into action. It swung round, and the boxing-glove thudded against Mr. Quelch's ribs.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This—this is madness!" panted Mr. Quelch. "You cannot realise what you are doing! I have long suspected, Prout, that you have been suffering from some form of mental derangement, and my suspicions are now confirmed!"

"You—you cannot deny that you challenged me to a bout with the gloves!" spluttered Mr. Prout.

"I do deny it, most emphatically!"

"You sent a message only this afternoon——"

"Certainly!"

"You desired me to meet you here at five o'clock——"

"Yes, yes!"

"For the purpose of thrashing me!"

"Not at all. I cannot conceive how you misconstrued my message in such a way. I sent for you so that we might discuss certain matter relative to the forthcoming boxing tournament."

"What!"

It dawned at last upon Mr. Prout that there must be some mistake. He wrenched himself away from his colleague's grasp and requested one of the juniors to remove the boxing-gloves.

This done, he despatched the junior to his study.

"You will find a communication on my desk, in Mr. Quelch's handwriting," he said. "Bring it here immediately."

At this juncture, Skinner of the Remove, looking rather ill at ease, tried to slink out at the door.

"Come back, Skinner!" ordered Mr. Quelch grimly. "I have an idea that you will be wanted!"

Reluctantly, the cad of the Remove obeyed.

After a brief interval, the junior who had been sent for the letter returned.

Mr. Prout took the missive, and showed it to Mr. Quelch.

"Here are your own words!" he said. "If you will meet me in the gymnasium at five o'clock, I shall have pleasure in thrashing you."

Mr. Quelch gave a gasp.

"This letter has been tampered with!" he exclaimed. "A line has been erased!"

"Bless my soul!"

"The original wording of it was, 'I shall have pleasure in thrashing out various subjects with you.'"

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch fixed his gimlet eyes on Skinner, who was fervently wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"This is your doing, Skinner!"

The cad of the Remove made no reply.

"You were entrusted to take this letter to Mr. Prout," continued the Remove-master. "And you opened it, and erased four words, thereby giving the letter a totally different meaning from that which it was intended to convey. Have you anything to say?"

Skinner remained silent.

"You have been guilty of a base and despicable action, Skinner, which very nearly resulted in an interchange of blows between Mr. Prout and myself. I regret that this

should have happened, Prout, and I will deal with this young rascal as he deserves. You will follow me to my study, Skinner!"

"Oh crumbs!—It—it was only a joke, sir——"

"Jokes of this description, Skinner, are not to be tolerated for an instant. Follow me!"

Five minutes later sounds of steady swishing proceeded from Mr. Quelch's study. And the victim's voice was raised in shrill lamentations.

Skinner of the Remove was being made to realise that the way of the transgressor—and the practical joker—is hard!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Coming of Jack Harper!

AFTER the amusing scene in the gym, a very merry party sat down to tea in Study No. 1.

The Famous Five were there, as a matter of course. And Dennis Carr, Mark Linley, and Vernon-Smith had been invited to the spread.

The good things were eagerly discussed, and so was the forthcoming boxing tournament, which had thrown Greyfriars into such a flutter of excitement.

"Wonder who I shall find myself drawn against in the first heat?" mused Dennis Carr.

"Billy Bunter, most likely!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In that case, I sha'n't have an earthly chance of bagging that gold medal!" said Dennis, laughing. "Bunter's a bit above my weight."

"In avoirdupois, certainly!" chuckled Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't profess to be a prophet," said Johnny Bull, "but I've a pretty good idea who's going to bag the medals. Wingate, of the Sixth; Blundell, of the Fifth; Temple, of the Upper Fourth; Bobson, of the Shell; Tubb, of the Third; and Dicky Nugent, of the Second."

"What about the Remove?" asked Wharton.

"Modesty forbids me mentioning the name of the winner," said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you chump, you haven't an earthly!" said Nugent. "Your only hope would be if I were to drop out of the competition."

And there was a fresh burst of laughter.

"Joking apart," said Harry Wharton, "there's no question that the winner of the Remove gold medal—barring accidents—will be Bob Cherry."

"Hear, hear!" said Mark Linley. "As a fighting-man, Bob's head-and-shoulders above everybody else in the Form."

But Bob Cherry shook his head.

"I shall go all out, of course," he said. "But there are at least three fellows who'll give me a good run for my money. There's you, Harry, to say nothing of Dennis Carr and Dick Russell."

"You're a better man than me, any day!" said Wharton.

"I'm not so sure of that. You've come on by leaps and bounds lately. You gave Dennis Carr a rare grueling this afternoon."

"That's so," said Dennis ruefully. "I feel as if I've been wrestling with a lawn-mower. My nose is like a squashed raspberry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wish we had somebody who could train us," said Nugent, at length. "There isn't a boxing instructor at Greyfriars. If there was, he'd put us up to a few wrinkles."

"Pity we can't get somebody," said Vernon-Smith.

Suddenly Dennis Carr jumped to his feet.

"I know!" he exclaimed. "What about Jack Harper?"

"Eh?"

"There isn't a better boxing instructor breathing! Jack Harper knows the game from A to Z. He coached me for my contest with Ned the Nipper a few weeks ago, and I should never have won if it hadn't been for him. He's just the man we want!"

Jack Harper was a man who loved sport for sport's sake. He was very enthusiastic, and he did everything possible to inspire enthusiasm in others.

For some years Harper had been games master at a public school, and an unexpected windfall from a wealthy uncle had enabled him to give up his post, and establish a big training centre near Courtfield.

At this training-centre Jack Harper coached young fellows in all sorts of sport. He had turned out some first-class cricketers, and some excellent footballers. He had persevered



Suddenly the class-room door opened, and the Head appeared on the threshold. Instead of seeing the Remove sitting meekly at their desks, the juniors were all on their feet, cheering wildly the six pairs of boxers. "Boys! Boys! What does this mean?" rambled the Head. (See page 8.)

with raw talent, and transformed novices into champions.

All this had taken time, of course. But Jack Harper was keenly interested in his work, and his pupils could not have had a finer instructor.

As a boxing trainer Harper excelled. And if he came to Greyfriars there was no doubt that he would be able to bring the fighting-men of the Remove to a high state of perfection.

"But we could never get Jack Harper to come here!" said Harry Wharton, at length.

"Why not?" said Dennis Carr. "It would only be for a week or so, and he's got a right-hand man whom he could leave in charge of his gymnasium."

"Are you pally enough with Harper to ask him to come over?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather! He'd have to fix things up with the Head, of course, and get his consent; but that ought not to be difficult. I'll go and ring up Jack Harper right away."

"Ripping!"

Dennis Carr went to the door. He opened it, and stepped back in amazement. For he stood face to face with Jack Harper himself.

"Hallo, Dennis!" said the young trainer cheerfully. "Surprised to see me, what?"

"Yes, rather! You could knock me down with a feather. I was just going to ring you up on the 'phone. Come in!"

The juniors rose to greet Jack Harper as he entered the study. Most of them knew him by sight; all of them knew him by reputation.

"We've just been jawing about you, Mr. Harper," said Harry Wharton. "There's going to be a big boxing tournament at Greyfriars—Sir Timothy Topham arranged it—and a gold medal's going to be presented to the best boxer in each Form."

"And we were wondering if you could come over and coach us, Mr. Harper," chimed in Bob Cherry.

Jack Harper smiled, and dropped into the

chair which Hurree Singh jerked back for him.

"I shall be only too pleased to coach you," he said. "In fact, I've come here for that express purpose."

"Oh, good!"

"Dr. Locke told me of this tournament, and it was arranged that I should come here for a week. My second in command—a fellow called Derrick—will run the training-centre in my absence."

Harry Wharton & Co. were delighted. They liked Jack Harper immensely, and they knew that he would spare no effort to make them fit for the fray.

"Of course, I'm not coaching the Remove exclusively," he said. "The other Forms will have to have a look-in occasionally. But I'll give you as much time as I possibly can. By the way," added Jack Harper, glancing round the crowded study, "are all you fellows taking part in the tournament?"

There was a general nodding of heads.

"Then I should like to point out to you that doughnuts and jam-tarts are hardly the right sort of things to train on."

"Ahem!"

"If you take my advice, you'll give up cakes and pastries for a bit."

"All serene!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll make this the last feed of its kind until the boxing tournament's over."

"And then we'll have the biggest bust-up that funds can buy!" said Johnny Bull. "It'll be my treat. As the winner of the Remove gold medal, I shall feel that it's up to me to provide the tuck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never countfully reckon your chickens before their hatchfulness!" said Hurree Singh. "I have designs on the esteemed gold medal myself."

"Well, whatever happens, may the best man win," said Jack Harper, with a smile.

The meal progressed merrily. But Jack Harper ate sparingly. He had work to do that evening. And an hour later, in the

crowded gymnasium, he gave an exhibition bout with Wingate of the Sixth.

It was a magnificent display, and good boxer though he was, Jack Harper had all his work cut out to hold his own against the sturdy captain of Greyfriars. But he succeeded in demonstrating many useful points to the audience. He showed them how to hit, and how to time the blows; he showed them how to attack effectively, and how to defend. And the amazing dexterity with which he ducked and dodged, and feinted made the spectators gasp.

In the course of the bout Wingate took some hard knocks. And there were times when he was made to look a clumsy novice. But he took it all in good part, like the sportsman he was, and the spectators cheered heartily when the display came to an end.

"Now that we've got Jack Harper at Greyfriars," remarked Bob Cherry, as the Removeites dispersed in order to do their prep, "things are going to hum!"

And Bob spoke truly!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Lesson in Science.

JACK HARPER did not let the grass grow under his feet. He was up and doing early the following morning, and when Harry Wharton & Co. went into the gym they found him knocking spots off the punching-ball. He bade the juniors a cheery good-morning, and undertook to put them through their paces before breakfast.

"Have you fellows got skipping-ropes?" he asked.

"Dare say we could rake some out," said Wharton. "But you're not going to make us skip, are you? Skipping's a girl's game!"

"And a boxer's, too!" replied Jack Harper. "It's one of the finest training exercises going. Makes you nimble on your pins, you know. Trot out the skipping-ropes, and then line up in the Close. And get as many more recruits as you can."

Ten minutes later the Close presented a very animated appearance.

Fellows of all forms turned out to take part in the skipping exercises. And it was amusing to see Coker of the Fifth getting his legs entangled in the rope, and constantly coming a cropper.

The great Horace had high hopes of winning the gold medal which was to be awarded to the best boxer in the Fifth. And, despite his awkwardness and clumsiness, he had to be admitted that Coker stood a good chance, for he was a doughty fighting man.

The skipping exercises gave the fellows keen appetites for breakfast. They noticed that Jack Harper sat at the masters' table, chatting cheerfully with Larry Lascelles, who was the only master present. The others were breakfasting in their rooms.

When the meal was over Trotter, the page, came to Jack Harper with a message that the Head wished to see him. Accordingly, he went along to Dr. Locke's study, where he found the Head and Mr. Quelch together.

"Ah, good-morning, Harper!" said the Head. "I wish to ask you a favour. Mr. Quelch has been called away at short notice to attend a conference of public school-masters in London. And rather than place a prefect in charge of the Remove in his absence, I should prefer that you deputised for him. Are you willing to do so?"

"Perfectly, sir!" said Jack Harper. "But I don't profess to be a pillar of learning. I had a decent education, but I've forgotten all my Latin and Greek."

"That does not matter. You may select your own subjects, and instruct the boys according to your own inclination."

"Very well, sir."

"I shall be back this evening, Harper," said Mr. Quelch, "so it is only a question of taking my place for one day."

Jack Harper nodded, and quitted the study. The Removites were agreeably surprised on going into the Form-room for morning lessons to find Jack Harper installed at the Form-master's desk. They anticipated a good time—and they were not disappointed.

In a few words, Jack Harper explained that he was deputising for Mr. Quelch for that day. Then he inquired what the subject of first lesson usually was.

"Latin, sir!" said Bolsover major.

"Ahem! I expect you are rather tired of Latin, my boys!" said Jack Harper.

"Yes, rather, sir!" said Skinner. "We're fed up to the neck with it!"

"Then what do you suggest as an alternative?"

"Greek, sir!" said Dick Penfold.

"Ahem! I don't think we'll dabble in dumb languages this morning," said Jack Harper hastily. "Supposing we start off with English History?"

The juniors grinned, but made no demur. So Jack Harper, looking very red and confused, got on with the washing, so to speak. He saw Billy Bunter seated in the front row, and he recollected that the fat junior had once been a temporary pupil at Courtfield gymnasium.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir!"

"Where was the Battle of Hastings fought?"

"Waterloo, sir!" answered Bunter promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The answer was no less absurd than the question, and the class roared.

"Silence!" thundered Jack Harper, bringing his clenched fist down on the desk with an impact which caused the inkwell to leap out of its cavity. "Your ignorance is astounding, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Do you seriously mean to tell me that you don't know where the Battle of Hastings took place?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"At Hastings, of course!"

"You are wrong, sir!" interposed Mark Linley quietly. "It was at Pevensey."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh was against Jack Harper, and that gentleman realised that English History was finding him out of his depth.

"That will do!" he said. "The first lesson is over."

The juniors gasped.

First lesson usually lasted an hour. On this occasion it had lasted less than two minutes!

"What is usually the subject of the second lesson, my boys?" asked Jack Harper.

"Science, sir!"

"Very well, Wharton! Kindly fetch half a dozen pairs of boxing-gloves from the gymnasium!"

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The captain of the Remove did not budge from his place. He wondered if he had heard aright.

"Hurry up!" said Jack Harper.

"You—you wish me to fetch half a dozen pairs of boxing-gloves, sir?" said Wharton incredulously.

"Certainly! I intend to conduct a lesson in science—the science of boxing!" added Jack Harper, with a twinkle in his eye.

"My hat!"

The class sat spellbound. Jack Harper's intentions fairly took their breath away.

As soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his amazement, Harry Wharton went and fetched the boxing-gloves. There was quite a sensation when they were brought into the Form-room.

"That's the idea!" said Jack Harper cheerfully. "Now, I'm going to pair you off. First of all, though, the desks had better be moved in such a way as to leave an open space in the centre of the room."

"Heave-ho, my hearties!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "All hands on deck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The desks were duly shifted, and when a clearance had been effected Jack Harper called upon six juniors to don the gloves.

Bob Cherry was matched with Harry Wharton; Johnny Bull with Bolsover major; and Dennis Carr with Mark Linley.

"Now," said Jack Harper, with a grin, "the science lesson will commence! Stand back, everybody, and give the boxers a clear field. Time!"

The next moment a lively scene was in progress.

The six juniors who had donned the gloves seemed to be doing their level best to wipe each other off the face of the earth. And the thudding of body-blows resounded through the Form-room.

"That's the style!" said Jack Harper approvingly. "I'm glad to find everybody so enthusiastic about the science lesson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Use your left, Wharton! Drive it out straight from the shoulder! That's the way! Look to your guard, Linley! Don't scowl at your opponent like that, Bolsover. You won't terrorise him!"

Jack Harper stood at the Form-master's desk and directed operations.

The boxers were "going it" hammer and tongs, and the rest of the fellows were on their feet showering words of encouragement upon their favourites.

Never had the Remove Form room presented such an animated appearance.

Science lesson was usually a silent and solemn affair. But this particular science lesson resembled an earthquake. It could be heard practically all over Greyfriars.

At the end of three minutes Jack Harper called "Time!"

Then he selected six more boxers, and there were roars of laughter as Billy Bunter faced Alonzo Todd, and Fisher T. Fish did battle with Wun Lung, the Chinese.

"Carry on, my boys!" said Jack Harper. "Put some punch into it, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove was in deadly earnest. His arms were revolving like a windmill in a hurricane. Fortunately for his opponent, the guileless Alonzo, he was short-sighted, and his wild blows encountered nothing but air.

Presently, however, Billy Bunter's left smote Alonzo on the nose. And the victim, with a fiendish yell, backed away towards the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Bunter!"

"We didn't know you were a Joe Beckett!"

Alonzo Todd turned to Jack Harper with a look of wild appeal.

"I—I feel it incumbent upon me to inform you, sir," he panted, "that I regard boxing as a degrading, debasing, and demoralising pastime!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I must urge you to call upon Bunter to desist!" continued Alonzo. "He has already struck me with great violence on the nasal organ, and see—he is coming towards me again! His expression is Bolshevistic, and I

feel sure he intends to do me an injury! Oh dear!"

"Stand up to him, man!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Every time he biffs you, biff him back!"

"That's it!" said Jack Harper. "There's plenty of him to hit, so you needn't be afraid of missing the mark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo rallied, but only for a moment. He was beaten back by Billy Bunter, who evidently believed in blind swipes, for his eyes were closed, and he was smiting savagely.

The Removites looked on in great excitement.

"Go it, Bunter!"

"Give him beans!"

The fat junior continued to attack with fierce frenzy. He drove his opponent towards the door; and then, in his eagerness to administer the "knock-out," he overreached himself, and his full weight—fourteen stone, twelve and a half pounds—descended upon the weedy Alonzo.

The result was appalling.

Alonzo Todd was bowled over like a ninepin, and he landed on his back in the doorway, at the feet of the Head who had just arrived on the scene!

For quite a moment Dr. Locke was incapable of speech or action. He stood as if petrified, and surveyed the interior of the Remove Form in horrified amazement.

Instead of sitting meekly at their desks, the Removites were on their feet, cheering wildly. Fisher T. Fish and Wun Lung, blissfully unaware of the Head's presence, were pounding away at each other with their gloves. Alonzo Todd was grovelling at the Head's feet, and Billy Bunter was standing over him, with a conquering-hero expression on his face. And at the Form-master's desk stood Jack Harper—as calm amid the confusion as the boy who stood on the burning deck.

Gradually, however, the juniors became aware of the Head's presence, and a hush fell upon the assembly.

"Mr. Harper!" The Head found his voice at last. "I am shocked—horrified! What is the meaning of this unparalleled commotion?"

"Ahem! The science lesson is in progress, sir."

"The—the science lesson!"

Jack Harper nodded, and the Head frowned.

"There is a vast difference between a science lesson and a mere fistic brawl!" he exclaimed. "What authority have you to permit boxing in the Form-room?"

"Your own, sir."

"What!"

"You told me I could select my own subjects, sir, and instruct the boys according to my own inclination. So I'm giving them a lesson in science—modern science. And the boys appear to be enjoying it!"

The Head scarcely knew whether to be angry or amused. Had he thought that Jack Harper was being impertinent, he would have been very angry. But there was no trace of impertinence in the young trainer's manner.

Finally, the Head's sternness melted, and he smiled.

"It is true that I told you to follow your own inclination," he said. "But I did not intend for one moment that you should hold boxing-lessons in the Form-room. This absurdity must cease instantly. The boxing-gloves will be returned to the gymnasium, and the desks will be put back in their proper places. Meanwhile, I will arrange for one of the prefects to relieve you of your duties here, Mr. Harper."

"Very good, sir."

And thus Jack Harper's career as a deputy Form-master came to an untimely end. He was not altogether sorry, but the Removites were. They had thoroughly enjoyed morning lessons up to that point.

During the days that followed Jack Harper devoted himself strenuously to his duties as a boxing-trainer. And at length everything was in readiness for the great boxing tournament to take place, and Greyfriars was fairly seething with excitement.

There was endless speculation as to who would prove the winners of the various contests. And the "favourite," so far as the Remove Form was concerned, was Bob Cherry.

But whether the favourite would win, or whether he would be ousted by one of the other fighting-men of the Greyfriars Remove, remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "RIVALS OF THE RING!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy EARLY!)

SAVED FROM DISGRACE!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver and His Merry Chums at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST, (Author of the Grand School Yarns appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Adolphus is Disgusted!

"MORNINGTON minor, by gad!" Smythe of the Shell chortled as he made the remark. His bosom pals, Howard and Tracy, chortled, too.

The Nuts of Rookwood had just come out of the School House when their eyes fell upon the little fellow who was called "Mornington minor" in the school.

Not that he was any relation to Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth. His name was 'Erbert, and, so far as he knew, he had no other name.

He did not belong to Rookwood; but he was there. Mornington, the slacker and dandy, and the great chief of the "Giddy Goats" of Rookwood, had brought him into the school in the first place.

Morny's pals simply did not know what to make of it.

Morny had found him hungry and footsore by the wayside, and had picked him up and brought him home in his car, to the intense indignation of his nutty pals, whose excursion had been spoiled by Morny's unexpected philanthropy.

As Townsend had remarked, with almost sulphurous wrath, what the dickens did the grubby little beast matter to Morny or anybody else? Weren't there plenty of workhouses for his sort? What were workhouses for?

As for Mornington, of all fellows, to set up as a kind-hearted philanthropist! A fellow might have expected that sort of thing from Jimmy Silver or his pals. They were that kind. But Morny!

The disgust of the Nuts knew no bounds. But, in spite of their exasperation—perhaps because of it—Mornington had insisted upon giving up the excursion, and bringing the ragged little vagrant into the school. To the further astonishment and annoyance of the Nuts, the Head had allowed him to remain there. Really, the Nuts had expected better than that of Dr. Chisholm. It was, as Towny said, "Shockin'!"

But there he was. What was going to be done with him nobody knew; but there he was, for the present, at least.

He was wandering about the quadrangle, looking with awed eyes at the old grey buildings, when Smythe & Co. spotted him.

The three Shell fellows bore down upon him at once.

Adolphus Smythe extracted an eyeglass from his waistcoat, and fixed it in his eye, to survey the little ragamuffin.

'Erbert did not look such a ragamuffin now as he had looked when Morny brought him in.

A cast-off suit of Wegg of the Third, plenty of soap and water, and a hair-cut had made a marvellous difference to him.

"Hallo, young shaver!" said Smythe.

'Erbert looked at him.

"Aho!" he replied.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"'Allo!" repeated 'Erbert cheerfully.

"Have you dropped anything?" asked Smythe, with exquisite humour.

'Erbert glanced round him.

"No, I don't think I 'ave," he answered.

"I thought you might have dropped an aspirate somewhere," explained Smythe.

"Not that I knows on," said 'Erbert, looking perplexed. "I ain't dropped nothin'."

"My hat!" murmured Tracy. "He don't know what an aspirate is. Ha, ha!"

"Well, what is it?" asked 'Erbert, rather resentfully, as he realised that the three well-dressed fellows were making fun of him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Smythe & Co.

"I don't see nothin' to laugh at!" said 'Erbert.

"What a pronunciation!" murmured Howard. "Rippin', by gad!"

"What's the little beast hangin' about Rookwood for?" said Smythe. "He can't be allowed to stay here, surely!"

"What are you doing here?" asked Howard.

"Lookin' round," said 'Erbert.

"You're staying at Rookwood?"

"Master Mornington says so."

"Like his cheek!" said Smythe. "Blest if I understand Morny! What is he playin' this fatheaded game for, you fellows?"

"Don't ask me!" remarked Howard. "It beats me. Just to get our rag out, I suppose!"

"Morny's an annoyin' beast!" agreed Smythe. "He'd play any rotten trick just to get a fellow's back up. But pickin' up a beggar on the high-road—that's rather thick!"

"I ain't a beggar!" said 'Erbert angrily.

"And don't you say nothin' agin Master Mornington, either! 'E's a good sort!"

"Don't cheek me, you little ragamuffin!" said Smythe, frowning. "Why hasn't the Head sent the little beast to the workhouse? That's what I want to know!"

"Proper place for him, by gad!"

"Jolly queer of the Head!" said Adolphus.

"Must be potty. Mornington's only doin' it to annoy his pals, but I suppose the Head isn't doin' it for that. He'll be sorry for it when the little waster bolts with all he can lay his grubby paws on!"

"I ain't a thief!" said 'Erbert hotly.

"Of course you are!" said Smythe calmly.

"All your sort are. Better look after your watches, you fellows!"

"You're a liar!" said 'Erbert.

"What?" gasped Adolphus.

'Erbert had evidently not been trained in the select circles of Vere de Vere. The Nuts of the Shell gazed at him in angry disgust and horror.

"Well, so you are!" said 'Erbert. "You ain't no call to call a feller a thief! Wot 'ave I done?"

"You horrid, disgustin' little rotter!" gasped Smythe. "My word! Somebody ought to reconstrate with the Head about this! Fancy allowin' that disgustin' little hooligan to hang round the school! Hanged if I don't write to my pater about it, if it goes on! Jolly good mind to send Morny to Coventry, too. He's no right to play a trick like this on us!"

"If the little rotter's goin' to hang about the school, cheekin' the fellows, somethin' ought to be done!" remarked Howard.

"Somethin's goin' to be done!" said Smythe emphatically. "The little beast is jolly well goin' to be bumped for his confounded cheek. Nail him!"

"Ere, 'old on!" exclaimed 'Erbert, in alarm, as the Shell fellows closed round him.

"'Ands off!"

"Bump the cad!"

"Oh, my eye! Leggo, can't yer?" roared 'Erbert, as he was seized in three pairs of hands and whirled off his feet.

Bump!

'Erbert sat down in the quadrangle with a concussion that made him yell.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Give him another!" panted Smythe.

"Look out!" muttered Tracy, as there was a rush of feet.

Smythe & Co. released 'Erbert suddenly and spun round—a little too late. The Fistical Four of the Fourth—Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome—had spotted the scene from afar. They came up with a run, and their charge completely bowled over the Nuts of the Shell.

Smythe and Howard and Tracy were strewn on the ground round the gasping 'Erbert,

and Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on them and grinned.

"Get up and have some more!" said Jimmy Silver.

To which the lofty Adolphus replied only:

"Ow, ow, ow!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Mornington's Protege!

JIMMY SILVER took 'Erbert by the collar and lifted him to his feet.

'Erbert gasped for breath, and blinked at him.

"Oh, my eye!" he ejaculated. "I'm 'urt!"

"Never mind!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

"Keep smiling, you know. Smythe, dear boy, what are you ragging Morny's pal for?"

"Yow! Wow!" said Smythe.

"Mind your own bizney, you interferin' rotter!" shouted Tracy. "What's it got to do with you, anyway?"

"Lots!" said Jimmy Silver. "Fair play's a jewel, you know. Isn't the kid a guest at Rookwood? Where's your hospitality?"

"Oh, go an' eat coke!"

"What were you bumping him for?" demanded Lovell.

"Find out!"

"One good turn deserves another," remarked Jimmy Silver. "He that bumpeth likewise shall he be bumped! Collar 'em!"

"Hands off, you rotters!"

"Leggo!"

"My eye!" murmured 'Erbert, looking on in astonishment.

The Fistical Four laid hands on the sprawling Nuts.

Smythe & Co. resisted, but they resisted in vain.

They were bumped on the ground, and rolled over, yelling with wrath, till they escaped from the hands of the Fistical Four, and fled, considerably dishevelled.

"Come back and have some more!" roared Raby.

But the Nuts of the Shell did not come back. Apparently they had had enough.

Jimmy Silver turned to 'Erbert with a grin.

"That's all right," he remarked. "I hope they haven't hurt you much."

"Not much, sir," said 'Erbert manfully.

"What did they go for you for, kid?" asked Newcome.

"In with the glass eye says as I was a thief," said 'Erbert. "So I told 'im 'e was a liar!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, he shouldn't have said such a rotten thing," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "So you're staying at Rookwood, kid?"

"Master Mornington says so," said 'Erbert.

"'E says somethin' is going to be done for me. Werry kind young gent. 'E's a gentleman, 'e is!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

Mornington's kindness to the little vagrant had astonished Jimmy, as it had everyone else.

Doubtless there was some good in the reckless, unscrupulous blackguard of the Fourth. But Jimmy had certainly never expected it to come out in this form.

Probably Mornington's motive was partly to exasperate his nutty pals. Morny had a sardonic vein of humour in him. He was the chief of the Nuts, and a more reckless and hardened young rascal than any of them; but he hardly concealed his scorn for them, while he associated with them.

But Jimmy Silver, though he was on the worst of terms personally with Mornington, was willing to give him credit for the real kindness he had shown to 'Erbert.

Certainly very few fellows would have had

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the nerve to bring the little ragamuffin into the school as Morny had done. Whatever the dandy of the Fourth lacked, he certainly did not lack nerve.

"Here's Morny," said Newcome, as the elegant Fourth-Former came up, with a frown upon his brow.

Mornington gave the Fistical Four a glance of dislike.

He noted the dust on 'Erbert's clothes, and frowned.

"Have you fellows been ragging him?" he exclaimed hotly.

Jimmy Silver's lip curled.

"You know we haven't," he said curtly.

"Don't be a silly ass, Mornington."

"They ain't done nothing, sir," said 'Erbert eagerly. "It was that chap with the glass eye!"

"That what?" ejaculated Mornington.

"A cove with a glass in his eye, sir!"

"Oh, you'd better come with me!" said Mornington.

"Yessir."

Mornington walked away with his protege without another look or word to the Fistical Four.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Friends Fall Out!

"DISGUSTIN'!"

"Rotten!"

Peele and Gower of the Fourth put great expressiveness into these ejaculations.

They were looking into Study No. 4.

Mornington, their study-mate, was there. But the dandy of the Fourth was not alone.

'Erbert was there, too.

It was tea-time, and Peele and Gower had come into tea. Tea was always a piteous spread in No. 4. Mornington generally "stood it." The richest fellow in Rookwood did not need to count his money, and he did not care whether his pals sponged on him or not, so long as he had everything of the best.

Townsend and Topham were behind the two in the passage. As they were going to be guests in the study, they made no remark. But their looks showed that they were as disgusted as Peele and Gower.

'Erbert was seated at the table with Mornington.

There were school books on the table, and the two were busy.

Mornington was not a favourite of his Form-master by any means. He was careless and neglectful of his lessons, and did not do his Form credit. But he was undeniably clever, and what he did learn he seemed to learn without an effort. There were few fellows in the Fourth he could not have beaten at class work, if he had chosen to take the trouble.

The fellow who never chose to take trouble with his own work, who neglected his prep in a way that sometimes brought Mr. Bootles' most thunderous wrath down upon him, was taking trouble now—with 'Erbert.

He was teaching the little ragamuffin.

Peele & Co. could scarcely believe their eyes. There was the fastidious Mornington, the dandy and aristocrat, seated at the same table with the vagrant, who was, as they noted, breathing quite audibly through his mouth. Poor 'Erbert had a good many things yet to learn.

There was no doubt that little unpleasantnesses of that sort got on Morny's fastidious nerves. But he did not show a sign of it.

To his own friends and equals Mornington was always offhand, and frequently insolent. To the little ragamuffin his politeness was scrupulous. That was one of Morny's whims that his pals did not understand.

Mornington looked up as he heard his study-mates at the door.

"Hallo!" he said. "Is it tea-time?"

"Yes, it is," growled Peele.

"What's the young rotter doing in our study?" demanded Gower angrily.

"I asked him here."

"Well, if you want to know my opinion, Morny, it's like your cheek!"

"Thanks!" said Mornington imperturbably.

"I don't want to know your opinion, Gower."

"What are you doin'?" asked Townsend.

"Lessons."

"Oh, gad!"

"The little beggar is pretty keen," said Mornington calmly, just as if his chums were interested in a friendly way in 'Erbert's pro-

gress. "He's had some schoolin', and he remembers all he's learned; that's a good thing, isn't it?"

"You silly ass!"

"He'll have to go to school somewhere, you know, an' I thought of puttin' him through his paces for a bit to get him ready. Good idea—what?"

"Fathead!"

"Don't you think it's a good idea, Peele?"

"You silly ass!" shouted Peele. "What are you foolin' us for? Kick the scrubby-little beast out, and let's have tea."

'Erbert rose quickly, and sidled to the door.

"Stop!" said Mornington.

'Erbert stopped.

Mornington's eyes were glittering.

"There's one thing that's got to be understood," he said. "You chaps are expected to be civil to that kid. I've taken him under my protection."

"Catch me being civil to a beggarly tramp!" sneered Peele.

"I'm fed up with this funny game of yours, Morny," said Gower angrily. "Let the brat be sent to the workhouse, an' have done with him."

"Why should he go to the workhouse?" said Mornington calmly. "I don't see why he should, any more than you, Gower!"

"Me!" yelled Gower.

"Certainly. He's got more brains than you!"

"You cheeky rotter!"

"He's a beggar!" growled Topham.

"You mean he hasn't any money, except what's given to him? Well, we're all in the same boat. We haven't, either," said Mornington. "So we all ought to go to the workhouse, at that rate!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Cut it short," said Mornington; "I've taken that kid under my wing. I'm going to have him sent somewhere to be educated. I've written to my guardian about it already; an' he approves. He's goin' to stay here till it's all fixed, an' I'm going to look after him a bit. And you're goin' to be civil to him in this study or get out of the study."

"Get out of our own study!" gasped Peele.

"Yaas."

"Why, you cheeky cad—"

"Oh, cheese it! If you want to quarrel with me, go ahead. If you don't, keep a civil tongue in your head!"

"I don't want to quarrel with you, hang you!" growled Peele. "But you've no right to plant that ragamuffin on us, an' you know it!"

"Well, turn him out now, an' let's have tea," said Townsend pacifically.

"He's goin' to stay to tea."

"What!"

"Gettin' deaf?" asked Mornington pleasantly. "He's goin' to stay to tea!"

"I'll give you a look in another time, in that case," said Townsend dryly. And he walked away, followed by Topham.

"Please yourself, an' be hanged to you!"

Peele and Gower looked furiously at Mornington.

"Do you think we're goin' to sit down to tea with that scrubby cad?" hissed Peele.

"Yaas; if you want tea in this study."

"Well, we won't!" roared Gower.

"Go an' eat coke, then!"

"That little rotter's goin' out," said Peele, between his teeth. "I'm not standin' it, an' I tell you so plainly, Morny!"

"I—I say, sir," stammered 'Erbert, "lemme go, sir! I—"

"Stay where you are!" rapped out Mornington.

"Yessir," mumbled 'Erbert.

Peele's eyes blazed. All the blood in Peele's snobbish veins was boiling. He did not want to quarrel with the dandy of the Fourth; but there was a limit!

"He's goin' out!" he said savagely.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I tell you I'm fed-up. You've been doin' this all the time to get our rag out, an' you know it. Now I'm done with it. He's goin' out, an' if he comes into this study again I'll wring his neck!" shouted Peele.

He made a spring at the shrinking 'Erbert.

Before he could reach him, however, Mornington was between them.

"No, you don't!" said Mornington coolly.

"It's you that's goin' out, Peele, till you can learn better manners. Ah, would you?"

The next moment they were fighting furiously.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Looking After 'Erbert.

"HALLO! Trouble in the family?"

Jimmy Silver paused on his way up the passage, with a bundle from the tuckshop under his arm.

He stared into No. 4 blankly.

Mornington and Peele were fighting savagely, and Peele was being driven towards the doorway. He was no match for Mornington.

Gower stood looking on, evidently undecided in mind.

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly.

Crash!

Peele came through the doorway at last, sent fairly spinning by a right-hander that landed on his nose.

He crashed down in the passage with a gasp.

"Well hit!" commented Jimmy Silver.

Mornington, panting, turned to Gower.

"Well, what have you got to say?" he demanded.

"Nothin'," said Gower hastily, dodging to the door. "I'm not goin' to stay here with that young cad, though."

Peele sat up.

His nose was streaming red, and he looked dazed and dizzy. He gave Mornington a glare of bitter rage.

"Do you want any more?" sneered Mornington.

"Hang you!" muttered Peele. "I'll make you suffer for this, Mornington, you cad!"

Mornington laughed scornfully.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders and passed on. He could see what the row was about now, and he was more surprised than ever at the line Morny took.

It had been quite certain that the Nuts would "cut up rusty" about 'Erbert, and Mornington did not seem to care if he quarrelled with all his friends on account of the little vagrant. Opposition always roused the obstinacy of Mornington's nature, and the objections of the Nuts only made him the more determined to have his way.

Gower helped Peele to his feet, and they went down the passage to Townsend's study. There they were sure of sympathy.

'Erbert was looking distressed and troubled, as Mornington fanned his heated face with a handkerchief and dusted his clothes after the fight.

"I—I say, sir—" mumbled 'Erbert.

"Hallo!"

"I don't like it, sir, you rowing with your friends over me, sir."

"Rot!" said Mornington. "Don't you worry, kid."

"But, sir—"

"Rats! They'll make it up whenever I ask them," said Mornington, with a curling lip.

"If they don't, I don't care twopence. Now we're going to have tea."

"Me 'ave tea 'ere!" said 'Erbert.

"Yes. Come and help me do the shopping. I'll let you carry the parcels," said Mornington, laughing.

"Wotto!" said 'Erbert at once.

Mornington, having removed the signs of the combat, left the study with his protege. They passed Smythe & Co. in the lower hall, and the Nuts of the Shell sniggered at the sight of them.

Mornington halted.

"Just a word with you, Smythey, old scout!" he said.

"A dozen if you like, dear boy!"

"You were ragging the kid this afternoon. I don't want you to do that any more."

Smythe yawned.

"Things that you don't like, might happen sometimes," he suggested. "You'd better mind your p's and q's, Morny. We're getting rather fed-up with this rot!"

"If there's any more of it, you're goin' to reckon with me," said Mornington calmly.

"If you don't want your nose rubbed on the ground, Smythey, you'll keep your paws off 'Erbert. That's a tip."

"By gad!" ejaculated Smythe.

Mornington walked on with 'Erbert, who was grinning, leaving Smythe of the Shell pink with wrath.

"Cheeky cad!" said Tracy.

"By gad, I'm getting fed-up with him!" said Smythe. "I sha'n't stand much more of his cheek, I can tell you! As for that scrubby cad he's taken under his wing, I'll hand him a thick ear whenever I see him, by gad!"

The wrath and disgust of the Nuts was growing. Mornington's cool and contemptuous disregard of their opinion and themselves was a bitter pill for them to swallow. They had made much of Morny, they had backed him up, and had been his admiring followers, and

it was a little too "thick" for him to turn on them in this way, as they regarded it.

It did not occur to Smythe and his friends that their only real cause of complaint against Morny was that he declined to share their miserable snobbishness. Perhaps it was because Morny was so wealthy and highly-connected that he could afford not to be snobbish; but certain it was that in that respect he did not resemble the other Nuts of Rookwood.

Mornington's study was empty when he came back with 'Erbert and supplies for tea. Peele and Gower were keeping away, having their tea in Towny's study. Even there they were not quite happy, for Rawson, the scholarship junior, shared Towny's study, and Rawson got on their noble nerves almost as much as 'Erbert. Still, Rawson did not drop his h's and eat with his knife; that was one comfort.

"Can you cook?" asked Mornington.

"Wotto!" said 'Erbert.

"Let's see how you do it, then."

"You watch me!" said 'Erbert confidently.

Mornington was not averse to watching him. He sat in the easy-chair and smoked a cigarette while 'Erbert prepared tea.

Tea was an ample meal in Mornington's study. Morny affected not to care for the plain school fare; but he "did himself" remarkably well in his study. He spent more on a single meal than Jimmy Silver & Co. in a week for their study brews. That was Morny's way.

'Erbert was evidently delighted to be of use to his noble patron.

He proved himself a good cook, too.

The eggs, the rashers, and the sausages were done to a turn, the toast was beautifully browned, the coffee was delicious.

Morny's cooking was generally done by his study-mates, the rich junior finding most of the money, and Peele and Gower being quite content with that arrangement.

But 'Erbert's cooking was a good deal better than Peele's or Gower's, and Morny found his meal quite to his liking.

"By gad, you're an acquisition, kid!" remarked Mornington. "Why aren't you having your tea? Ain't you hungry?"

"Ye-es, but—"

"But what?"

"I—I—am I to sit down with you, sir?"

"Of course, you young ass!"

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

"Pile in, you duffer!"

So 'Erbert piled in. Mornington grinned as he watched him.

"Would you mind usin' your fork to shove grub into your mouth, 'Erbert?" he asked.

"Not at all," said 'Erbert obligingly. "The knife comes 'andier."

"We have a prejudice here in favour of usin' a fork."

"A—a—what?"

"Ha, ha! I mean, use your fork, kid. It's better."

"I'll do anything you tell me, sir," said 'Erbert submissively. "It's werry kind of you to tell me things, sir."

"Good! You don't mind?"

"I'm very grateful, sir."

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind breathin' through your nose?"

"Eh? My nose?" said 'Erbert.

"Yaas. It's considered rather bad form to breathe through the mouth, you know," explained Mornington.

"My eye!" said 'Erbert. This was appar-

ently news to him, but he tried at once to carry out Mornington's instructions.

"That's better," said Morny approvingly.

"Sure you don't mind my givin' you a tip, 'Erbert?"

"I'm werry glad, sir."

"That's right. Never be too proud to learn, you know."

'Erbert chuckled at the idea of being proud.

The strangely assorted pair were on excellent terms when they had finished tea. Mornington shifted into the armchair and opened his cigarette-case.

"Do you smoke, 'Erbert?" he asked.

'Erbert hesitated.

"I never 'ave, sir," he said slowly. "Old Bill Murphy told me it was bad for kids."

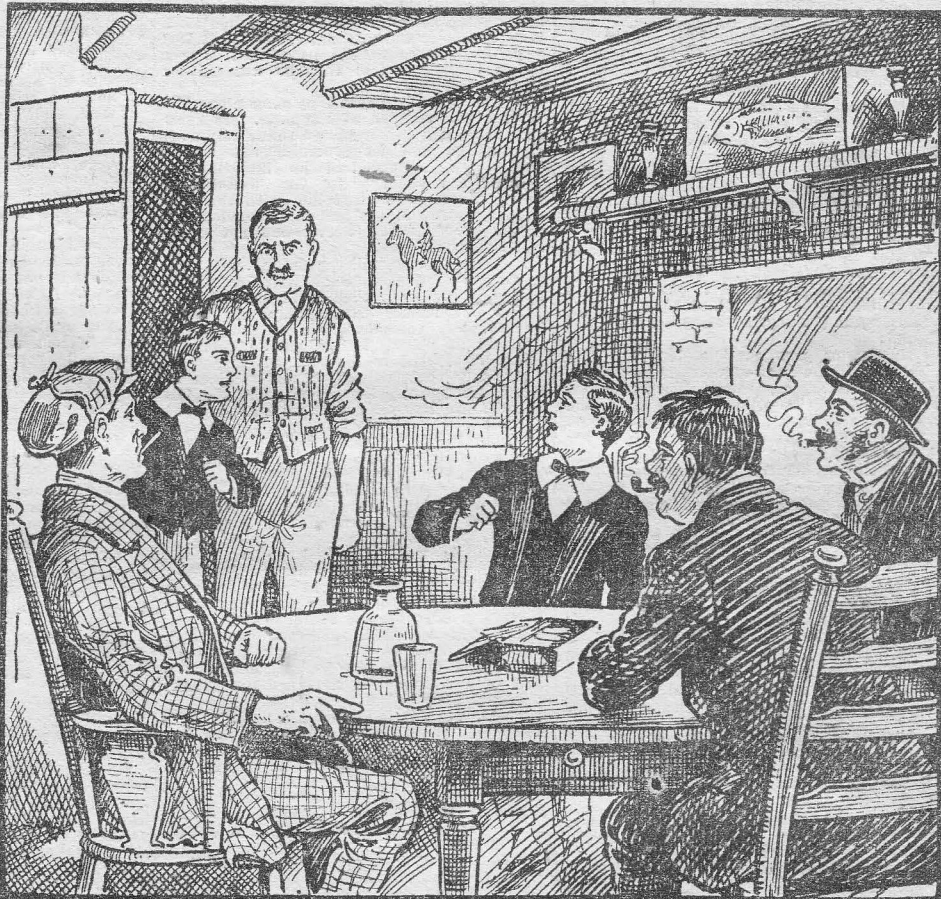
had taken a liking to the good-natured, good-tempered captain of the Fourth; and he wondered how it was that a splendid fellow like Mornington did not get on with him.

"You can use this study just as you like," went on Mornington. "If any of my friends interfere with you, take the poker to them."

'Erbert chuckled.

"You can stay here now and read," said Mornington, rising. "Plenty of books here, without botherin' Jimmy Silver for any. Keep the fire in; it will be cold when I come back."

Mornington lounged out of the study. But for his last remark 'Erbert would have scuttled off to the housekeeper's room as soon as he had gone. He had no desire to come in contact with Peele and Gower,



The door of the parlour opened and the landlord of the "Bird-in-hand" came in with 'Erbert in tow. "They're after you, sir!" gasped 'Erbert to the startled Mornington. (See page 13.)

"Old Bill Murphy was a sensible man," said Mornington. "It is bad."

"But—but you do it, sir," hesitated 'Erbert.

"Oh, yaas!"

"But why do you do it if it's bad, sir?"

"Because I'm a silly ass."

"Oh!" said 'Erbert.

Mornington laughed, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I was goin' to offer you a fag, 'Erbert; but, on second thoughts, I won't. Better not. Better keep clear of that kind of habit. And don't mention that you've seen me smoking; it would mean trouble for me."

"Not a word, sir," said 'Erbert loyally.

Mornington finished his cigarette, and looked at his watch.

"I shall have to be off pretty soon," he remarked. "What are you doin' of an evenin', 'Erbert?"

"The 'ousekeeper lets me sit in 'er room, sir, an' read. I've got a book Master Silver lent me."

Mornington frowned.

"If you want any more books, come to me for them, 'Erbert. You can let Jimmy Silver alone. I don't like him."

"Settling, sir!" said 'Erbert; but he looked a little downcast for a moment. He

though Morny had authorised him to "take the poker" to them. But Morny had told him to keep the fire in against his return; and any wish expressed by Morny was a command to 'Erbert.

The little fellow settled down to remain in the study, chancing an unpleasant interview later with the angry Nuts. He built up a good fire, and sat reading till the light failed. Then, not venturing to light the gas on his own responsibility, he sat blinking and staring at the red embers, and thinking dreamily over the change that had come over his life; a change due to Mornington of the Fourth.

And 'Erbert's feelings towards the black sheep of Rookwood were of passionate gratitude and affection; feelings that it was strange enough Mornington should inspire in anybody.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Morny On His Own!

"COMIN'?" Mornington looked into Townsend's study.

Townsend and Topham, Peele and Gower were there, chatting in low tones. THE POPULAR.—No. 96.

Rawson was at work at the table. Rawson didn't find it easy to work with the slackers talking all the time, but he made no complaint. Not that complaint would have been of much use. The snobs of the Fourth found a charitable pleasure in making the scholar-junior uncomfortable.

The Nuts stared blankly at Mornington, as he asked the question in the doorway, with as much coolness as if he had been on the best of terms with them still.

"Comin'!" repeated Townsend.

Mornington nodded.

"Yaas. Have you forgotten our appointment for this evening? Better get out before gates are locked. I've got a pass from Carthew of the Sixth; it's all right."

"All right, is it?" said Peele, between his teeth. "You think we're comin' with you, you cad, after what you've done?" Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Suit yourself," he said. "I'm goin'!"

"Go an' eat coke!"

"You comin', Towny?"

"No!" snapped Townsend.

"All serene; I'll ask Smythe."

"Smythe won't come, either," said Townsend, with a sneer. "We're done with you, Morny, you rotter!"

"How rotten for me!" yawned Mornington.

"Until you chuck up foolin' over that tramp brat," said Topham, "an' apologise for your rotten behaviour, too!"

"Catch me apologisin' to anybody!" said Mornington disdainfully. "Well, I'm goin' to have a good time, an' if you choose to miss it, that's your funeral. Ta-ta!"

Mornington lounged away down the passage.

His manner was careless, but his eyes glittered. He had not expected this set-back. In his usual arrogant way, Mornington expected to treat his friends as he liked, and find them still at his beck and call.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were chatting in the passage when Mornington came down. They were discussing a forthcoming football-match with considerable animation.

Mornington passed them, and then stopped and turned back.

"By the way, Silver—" he began.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I'm goin' out—"

"Close on locking up," said Jimmy Silver, in surprise.

Mornington smiled in a lofty way.

"I've got a pass out, of course," he said.

"Carthew, bet you a tanner!" grinned Lovell. "How nice to have friends in the Sixth! You've made a new pal among the seniors since your old pal Beaumont was sacked, Morny!"

"Well, you haven't any friends in the Sixth, anyway!" sneered Mornington.

"I don't want any of that sort, either. Are you going to bring in smokes for Carthew?" said Lovell scornfully.

"Find out!" retorted Mornington. "I was goin' to speak to you, Jimmy Silver, if Lovell will shut up for a minute."

"Bow-wow!" said Lovell.

"Go ahead!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"No charge!"

"I'm goin' out, as I said. You've been pretty decent to that scrubby little bounder I picked up. I've left him in my study. While I'm gone, some of those cads—"

"Eh! What cads?"

"My bosom pals," said Mornington, with a grin. "They're rather up against poor old 'Erbert; he gets on their aristocratic nerves. I shouldn't wonder if they rag the poor little beast while I'm gone, and—and if they do, I was wonderin' if you'd care to chip in an' stop it."

"Rely on me!" said Jimmy Silver heartily. "Let me hear a whisper of it, and I'll come down on your bosom pals so heavy you won't know their faces when you see 'em again."

"Thanks!" said Mornington, and he went out of the House.

"Queer beggar," said Raby. "I know jolly well where he's going—that den in Coombe where Joey Hook and his friends are. Beastly backguard, and yet he's worrying himself about that little ragamuffin. Dashed queer!"

"He's a queer beast," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But we'll do as he asks, all the same. There won't be any ragging while we're around."

"Right-ho!" Jimmy Silver's chums agreed heartily to that.

"It's about time we got on with our prep," remarked Jimmy. "Morny isn't going to do any, I suppose. Blessed if I know what he's

at school at all for! He could slack and smoke without taking the trouble to come to Rookwood to do it. I wonder how long it will be before he's bowled out and sacked?"

And the Fistical Four went up to the end study, and began their work.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

'Erbert to the Rescue!

'ERBERT started, and sat bolt upright in the armchair.

He had placed fresh coals on the fire, and the blaze had died away. The study was in darkness.

'Erbert had been feeling very cosy and comfortable as he sat there with his feet on the fender, thinking. It was warm by the fire, and the chair was extremely soft and comfortable—and poor 'Erbert had been very unused to warmth and comfort. It was a great pleasure to the little waif merely to sit there and feel that he was neither cold nor hungry.

But he started as footsteps came along the passage and stopped at the door. He knew that Peele and Gower shared that study with Mornington, and his protector was absent now. And 'Erbert had no intention of taking the poker to the well-dressed young fellows who awed him with their insolence, though Morny had recommended him to do so. 'Erbert's nerve was not quite equal to that.

His heart beat rather painfully. He had a very shrewd idea what to expect from Peele and Gower if they found him there.

The door-handle turned, and he heard Peele's voice without.

"Dark as pitch! Got a match, Gower?"

'Erbert started to his feet.

His only thought was to find a place of concealment before the gas was lighted. His vagrant life had sharpened his wits, and he did not lose a second.

While Peele was still speaking, 'Erbert dropped silently on his hands and knees, and crawled under the table.

There was a rich, handsome cover on the table, one which descended almost to the floor—one of Mornington's expensive luxuries.

The little waif, hunched up under the table, was quite concealed from sight.

He grinned a little as he heard the two juniors stumbling in. They were not likely to suspect his presence there.

A match scratched, and the gas flared. The study door closed. 'Erbert heard the movements of the two juniors, and saw a pair of elegant boots stretched out within a foot of him, as Peele sat down.

"Well, what is it, Peele, old man?" asked Gower. "What is it you want to jaw about?"

Peele rubbed his swollen nose, and his eyes glittered.

"We couldn't talk before that cad Rawson," he said. "It's got to be kept jolly dark, Gower. Better not tell even Towny or Topsy?"

"What the dickens are you drivin' at?"

"About that hound Morny!"

Peele hissed out the words with an intensity of hatred that made 'Erbert start, as he crouched under the study table.

"Oh, hang Morny!" said Gower.

"The rotter!" said Peele. "We've been pals the whole term, and I've stood all his confounded cheek, an' he's turned on us like this! Look at my nose!"

"It does look a beauty!" chuckled Gower. "He'd have done the same to you if you'd had the pluck to stand up to him as I did!" said Peele savagely.

"Oh, I didn't want a row!" said Gower. "I don't like his cheek any more than you do, but—"

"He's going to be sorry for it, the cad!" snarled Peele. "I'm fed up with him. He thinks he can do anythin' he likes because of his rotten money. I'm fed up with his airs an' graces—fed right up to the chin! I'm goin' to make him jolly sorry for givin' me this nose."

"You can't do anythin'" said Gower, with a shake of the head. "You can't fight him. He's too much for you. And as for sendin' him to Coventry, that won't last. The fellows will all come round."

"He's gone to the Bird-in-Hand," said Peele.

"I know that."

"Suppose he was found there?"

"He won't be," grinned Gower. "He's too jolly careful for that. Trust Morny to look after himself. He's got a pass-out from Carthew, too."

"Well, he's goin' to be found there."

Gower started.

"How? What are you drivin' at?"

"Suppose Bootles got a telephone-call from somebody in the village who saw Morny goin' into the place—"

"Nobody will see him. He will sneak in from the towin'-path. He's too cute."

"But we know he's there."

"Yes; but—" Gower paused as he understood at last. "Oh, I say! That's too thick, Peele! You can't give Morny away to Bootles like that!"

"Not after he's given me this nose?" said Peele bitterly.

"Dash it all, you know!" said Gower, in startled tones. "Morny would be sacked—or flogged, at least!"

"That's what I want!"

"Well, it would serve him right!" said Gower. "I'm sick of the swankin' cad lordin' it in this study! A chap can't call his soul his own with Morny about. But—but—"

"We can do without him," said Peele. "I tell you, I'm not goin' to stand any more of his insolence. I'm fed-up with him!"

"So am I, if you come to that. But—"

"Well, that's what I couldn't say before Rawson," grinned Peele. "How does it strike you?"

"It—it couldn't come out?" said Gower, hesitating.

"Of course it couldn't!"

"But—but what about the telephone? How—"

"I've thought that out. There's a telephone in Manders' study, on the Modern side. Manders is out till eleven—I got that from Leggett. He's gone to one of his blessed meetings in Coombe. We can use his 'phone. Bootles won't know he's rung up from Rookwood if he's told that he's rung up from Coombe."

"My hat!" said Gower. "That's jolly deep, Peele!"

"You can keep watch while I use the 'phone," said Peele. "I'll speak as if I'm in Coombe, and have just seen a Rookwood chap goin' into the Bird-in-Hand, and feel it my duty to acquaint his schoolmaster with the circumstance. Any meddlin' old duffer in of gates, an' he will remember his old reputation, too; and he's bound to go an' look for him, or send a prefect, at least. They'll find Morny in the place, smokin' and card-pullin'—drinkin' very likely—and the game will be up for Morny at Rookwood."

"Serve the cheeky cad right!" said Gower. "Turnin' a fellow out of his own study, by gad! We'll have our own study again, at all events!"

"You're game?"

"Yes, rather! Come on!"

The two Nuts left the study, turning out the light.

Under the table, 'Erbert had not made a sound. But he was trembling in every limb. A good deal of the talk he had not understood. He did not know why it should be so serious for a Rookwood fellow to be found at a public-house in Coombe. But he did understand that it would be serious—that Morny's incensed pals were planning what meant his ruin.

'Erbert's brain was in a whirl.

He could not stop the two plotting young rascals. It was impossible to prevent the information reaching the Form-master.

What was he to do?

'Erbert crept out from under the table, his face white and set. His benefactor was in danger—deadly danger! How was he to help him?

He stood in agonised indecision.

Then the thought of Jimmy Silver came into his mind. Mornington had told him to have nothing to do with Jimmy Silver. But it was no time to think of that. With a white, scared face, the little waif scuttled out of the room, and ran along to the end study.

He burst into Jimmy Silver's quarters breathlessly.

The Fistical Four were working there, and they all stared at 'Erbert as he burst in.

"Hallo!" said Newcome. "Hasn't Morny taught you to knock at the door, young 'un?"

"I'm sorry, sir!" gasped 'Erbert. "But—but—"

"Anything the matter, kid?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Have those cads been going for you? If they have, tell Uncle James about it!"

"No, no!" panted 'Erbert. "I—I want ask you something, Master Silver."

"Go ahead!"

"Do you know a place called the Bird-in-Hand, sir?"

Jimmy gave a jump.

"My hat! Yes; it's a low pub in Coombe," he said. "What the dickens do you want to know about it?"

"S'pose a Rookwood chap was nabbed there, wot woud'appen to him, sir?"

"That depends," said Jimmy, with a smile. "He might be flogged, or kicked out of the school—one, or both."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned 'Erbert. The Fistical Four exchanged glances. They guessed pretty shrewdly where Mornington had gone, and it seemed that the little waif knew, too.

"Ow do you get there, sir?" asked 'Erbert.

"You're not going there, kid?"

"For 'Evin's sake, Master Silver, tell me 'ow to get there!" panted 'Erbert. "I got to warn 'im! They're tellin' his master where he is. I—I know you ain't friends with 'im, Master Silver, but you won't let that appen—'im turned out of the school—'im wot 'ave done what he 'ave for me?" 'Erbert's voice broke, and he sobbed.

"Master Silver, 'ow can I get there?"

"It's the first building as you go down to Coombe, just outside the village," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "There's a big tree outside, with a signboard on it. But—"

But 'Erbert was gone. The Fistical Four looked grimly at one another.

"It strikes me," said Lovell, after a pause, "that Mornington did a rather good thing for himself when he brought that kid home, as it turns out."

And Jimmy Silver nodded. 'Erbert scuttled down the stairs, his heart thumping as he went. He passed Mr. Bootles' door, and heard the buzz of the telephone-bell. He paused, his heart beating almost to suffocation. Peele and Gower were evidently already at work with the telephone in Mr. Manders' study.

"Yes, yes?" He heard Mr. Bootles' voice from the room. "Hallo! Yes, I am here! Who is speaking?"

A pause. "Bless my soul! Are you sure? A Rookwood boy—the Bird-in-Hand—Mornington! Bless my soul! Yes, certainly I shall look into it—at once! I thank you for informing me! I can scarcely believe it is true! What—what! Yes, most undoubtedly I shall take immediate steps!"

'Erbert hurried on. There was no time to be lost. Mr. Bootles' door opened, and the Form-master came out in a great hurry. Carthew, the prefect, came downstairs, and Mr. Bootles called to him:

"Carthew! Carthew!"

"Yes, sir?"

The Sixth-Former looked over the banisters at Mr. Bootles' disturbed face in wonder.

"Kindly ascertain at once, Carthew, whether Mornington of the Fourth is out of gates."

"I think he is, sir. He had a pass-out to fetch some football things from Coombe."

"Bless my soul! Then it is true!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Kindly help me on with my coat, Carthew, will you?"

'Erbert heard no more. He scuttled away across the dark quadrangle, clambered desperately over the school wall—with sad damage to the cast-off Etons of Wegg of the Third—and dropped into the road. Bare-headed and panting, the waif of Rookwood dashed away down the lane, and was far out of sight before Mr. Bootles, with his ponderous step, emerged from the side gate and started for Coombe.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Narrow Escape!

"YOUR deal, Master Mornington." Mornington removed the cigarette from his lips.

There was a haze of smoke in the parlour of the Bird-in-Hand. Round the table sat Mornington, of Rookwood, Joey Hook, the bookmaker, and a couple of men of Mr. Hook's stamp. There were glasses and ash-trays on the table, and the Rookwood junior's flushed face showed that he had been drinking as well as gambling.

A door opened, and the fat-faced landlord of the Bird-in-Hand stepped in. There was a grim look on his beery face. A diminutive figure followed him into the room.

Mornington started to his feet.

"'Erbert! You young ass! You!"

'Erbert reeled into the room, his breath coming and going in great sobs. He could not find his voice for a moment.

"The kid's come to speak to you, Master Mornington," said Mr. Flack. "I wouldn't let him in, only he says—"

'Erbert strove to speak. "They're after you, sir!" he got out, in great gasps.

"Eh?"

"They've told Mr. Bootles, and he's coming, sir."

The cards dropped from Mornington's hand. "My Form-master!"

"Yes, sir! He's started already! He's coming up the road now to look for you here!" panted 'Erbert. "I've run all the way to tell you, sir!"

"My hey!" said Joey Hook. "You'd better travel, Master Mornington! Rely on us not to give you away if the old gent comes 'ere askin' questions."

"Safe as 'ouses," said Mr. Flack. Mornington nodded.

He was cool again at once. The peril was near, and he knew what it meant—knew better than 'Erbert did. But his nerve had only been shaken for a moment. Disgrace and humiliation, and the sack from Rookwood—that was what was hanging over his head—if Mr. Bootles found him there.

"By gad!" he drawled. "This is rather excitin', kid! You're sure of what you say, 'Erbert?"

"I heard them talkin', sir, and then I 'eard Mr. Bootles speakin' over the telephone, sir. And he started arter me."

"Time I cleared, then," said Mornington calmly. "I'll get out the back way, Flack. Let the old donkey in when he comes, and be civil—very civil. Make 'im understand that he's made a mistake, and that you're glad to welcome any investigation."

Mr. Flack chuckled.

"Depend on me, sir," he said. Mornington picked up a bag containing the shopping he had done as an excuse for his visit to Coombe that evening. Joey Hook opened a door into a passage, and he hurried out, putting on his cap as he went.

"Come along, 'Erbert!"

'Erbert followed him. They hurried down the passage. Mornington knew the way well. A door at the end gave access to the garden. Taking 'Erbert by the arm, Mornington led him across the dark garden into a narrow lane. From the lane they reached the towing-path, and in silence they hurried along it for some distance, and then struck across a field to reach the Rookwood road.

Mornington did not utter a word till they were in the road and Rookwood was in sight in the distance. Then he halted.

"How did you know, kid?" he asked quietly.

'Erbert explained breathlessly.

"Peele and Gower!" muttered Mornington, and to 'Erbert's surprise, he chuckled.

"What a trick! The cads! I didn't know they had their backs up to that extent. What a surprise for them when I drop in—what!" He chuckled again. " 'Erbert, my boy, you've saved my neck, an' no mistake! I sha'n't forget it! Cut back to Rookwood now. We mustn't be seen together. And keep mum."

"Mum as a oyster, sir!" said 'Erbert. "He vanished into the darkness."

Mornington strolled easily towards the school, bag in hand. He rang the bell, and old Mack let him in, blinking at him. Mornington gave the porter a nod, and sauntered off to the School House.

Carthew of the Sixth met him as he came in.

"Have you seen Bootles?" he asked, with a curious look at the junior.

"'Erbert?" repeated Mornington. "No. Is he out?"

Carthew grinned.

"Where have you been?"

"Hopper's—for my footer things."

"You're a lucky little scoundrel!" said the Sixth-Former.

And he turned away laughing.

Mornington smiled, and went up to his study. He found 'Erbert there. Mornington did not lose a moment. Books were brought out at once, and he signed to 'Erbert to join him at the table.

It was half an hour later when Mr. Bootles, a little breathless from his rapid walk, looked into the study.

"'Er! You are here, Mornington?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" said Mornington, rising respectfully.

Mack told me you had come in. Where have you been, Mornington?"

"Hopper's, sir, in Coombe. Carthew kindly gave me a pass to fetch my new footer things."

"Ah! Ahem! You have not—ahem!—been to any place out of bounds?"

"I think not, sir."

Mr. Bootles gazed at him hard. Mornington's face was quite impassive.

"I have been misinformed," said Mr. Bootles. "It was a wicked, unfeeling practical joke, I presume. I shall not take notice of anonymous information on another occasion. A most unfeeling practical joke—most unfeeling! Dear me! What is this boy doing here, Mornington?"

"I'm giving him some lessons, sir, to help him on a bit," said Mornington meekly. "His education has been a bit neglected, sir."

Mr. Bootles beamed with approval.

"My dear Mornington, that is very kind and thoughtful of you! I approve—I quite approve! I am sorry, Mornington, that, owing to some wickedly false anonymous slander, I have done you an injustice! I am glad, Mornington, to see you are so very beneficently occupied!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Bootles puffed away. Mornington turned to 'Erbert, with a smile. The door opened, and Peele looked in with a startled face.

"You—you're back!" he stammered.

"Yes, thanks!"

Peele blinked at him as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Thanks for telephoning!" said Mornington satirically. "It was quite a clever dodge—quite up to my form!"

Peele started back.

"Tut-tut-telephoning!" he stammered.

"Yes. It gave Bootles rather a walk; but I dare say a little exercise will do him good. Now, you can take a walk yourself! Shut the door after you!"

Peele almost staggered away from the study, lost in astonishment. How his revengeful scheme had gone wrong he could not guess; but evidently it had gone wrong. Mornington's luck had held good.

"'Erbert," said Mornington quietly, as the door closed after the astounded Peele, "do you know what you've done for me? You've saved my neck, an' no mistake. If you think you owe me anythin', you've more than made it up."

"No, I ain't, sir," said 'Erbert.

"And"—Mornington drew a deep breath—"I was thinkin' of gettin' my guardian to send you to a school somewhere; but after this, 'Erbert, that isn't good enough. How would you like to stay here?"

"I'd like to stay anywhere with you, sir," said 'Erbert.

"I could work it with the Head—my guardian could, anyway—and I could get you a coach," said Mornington. "Hanged if I don't! 'Erbert of the Second Form! Ha, ha! That will be somethin' for Peele and Gower and Smythe to chew over!"

"Wot!" ejaculated 'Erbert.

"You're goin' to stay here," said Mornington determinedly. "You're goin' to be a Rookwood chap, 'Erbert."

"A—a—a Rookwood chap!" stammered 'Erbert. "Like you!"

"Like me," smiled Mornington.

"Oh, my 'at! Oh, crumbs!" said 'Erbert. That was all he could say. But the pleasure that glowed in his face was more eloquent than words. He had no doubt of Mornington's power to do as he said, wonderful as it was. To Mornington, as it seemed to 'Erbert—to that super-youth all things were possible.

Mornington's door was open when Jimmy Silver & Co. came down the passage a little later. Jimmy looked at Mornington curiously.

"So you wriggled out of it?" he said. "I heard that—"

"Yaas; I wriggled out of it," said Mornington calmly. "Never mind what you heard. Would you like to be introduced to the new chap?"

"New chap!" said Jimmy, in surprise. "I didn't know there was one."

'Erbert chuckled.

"You don't mean—" exclaimed Jimmy, in amazement.

"Yes, I do. 'Erbert of the Second!" said Mornington. "He'll do Rookwood credit, don't you think?"

"Well, my 'at!" said Jimmy Silver. "I hope you'll be able to work it, by gum! And if the kid wants anybody to see him through, there's four of us ready to lend a hand. Good man!"

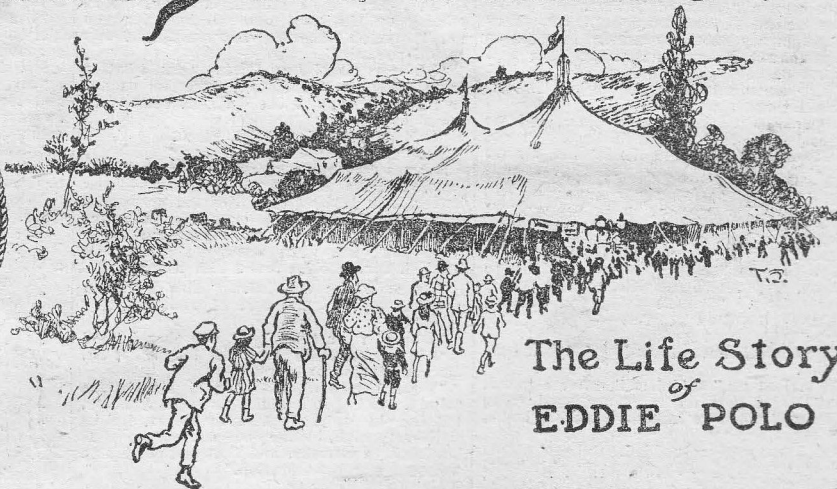
And Jimmy Silver went on his way, feeling much more kindly to the black sheep of Rookwood than he had ever felt before.

THE END.

(Another story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next Friday, entitled: "PANKLEY'S LATEST!" Order your copy now.)

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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 Rogeriugo, 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 organizer of the raid to be the ex-acrobat Rogeriugo, 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 St. Louis. A serious outbreak of fire occurs in the town. Eddie makes an attempt to rescue the trapped telephono-girls by crossing the street on a cable.

(Now read on.)

A Daring Rescue!

FOOT by foot he worked his way along, and, at long last, amidst a cheer that contained as much thankfulness at his reaching safety as praise for his daring, Eddie Polo at length swung himself over to the roof of the blazing block, and, letting go, dropped lightly to the tiles.

Swiftly he selected an adjacent chimney-stack, and, making fast the end of his first rope to this, swung it over the sill opposite one of the smashed windows of the telephone exchange. After the strenuousness of the last ten minutes, to clamber down this rope and into the room was but child's play. And as soon as he felt the solid boarding under his feet Eddie set to work.

"Save your talk till afterwards, girls!" he shouted. "Come on, some of you; pass yourselves this way! That's right, miss! Now cling to the rope, wind your leg round it like this, and ease yourself down towards the firemen standing at the top of the ladder there! Look, girls, it's easy enough! All you've got to do is hang on, and let the rope slip slowly through your hands, and the fireman will do the rest! Here, get busy! We can't stay here all day, you know!"

As the reassured girls—some of them were not more than fifteen years of age—started

on their escape by the first rope, Eddie rapidly twined the other one around one of the great switchboards, and, paying over the end towards a second fire-escape, began to marshal his ladies towards it. He cheered the hesitant, and waved aside those who would—out of the very gratitude of their hearts—have fallen upon his neck and kissed him.

His cheery words made them smile, and already the terror of the fire seemed a negligible thing. So much for the presence of a real man amongst them. The telephono-girls, shrewd and business-like, were swift to see that unless his stupendous effort was to be wasted, it was up to them to lose no time. Indeed, in their swiftness, Eddie found it necessary to check some of their ardour, or they would have swarmed down the ropes too swiftly, with the result that the fireman at the top of the ladder could not have handed them down to his waiting colleagues quickly enough, and the result would have been a hitch in the proceedings. One or two girls did lose their nerve, and these Eddie set aside to be dealt with later on. It was no use risking a dozen lives to save one.

The crowd below cheered, and yelled encouragement to everybody who appeared and the girls, for the most part, following Eddie Polo's instructions, swarmed down the ropes steadily enough. Once, however, a girl stuck half-way, and the fireman had to rage at her before she would consent to finish the journey.

The crowd took charge of the girls as they arrived at the foot of the long ladders, and gathered them together in a crowd. Some of them, finding themselves safe, promptly fainted, but others of sterner mould stood and added their voices to the cheers of the people. Eddie pointed them out to the more timorous, at the same time working everybody at top speed, for the flames were now coming through the floor of the room next to that where the remnant stood.

"Only a dozen left, girls!" cried Eddie. "We've got this old fire where we want him! Now, don't get going into hysterics, or we shall have to leave you behind. That's right, missie, jump lively!"

There were only three girls remaining when, with a loud crash, the wall behind them collapsed inwards, crashing through the flames and the burnt-out floors beneath with a sound like thunder. Eddie frowned, and assisted the last pair out on to the window-sills, just as the flames commenced to lick around their feet, for the inside of the place was now a blazing furnace. And one of the girls only got to safety just in time, for as she reached the fireman's arms the rope down which she had clambered burst into flames at its upper end, and, like a flaming torch, went snaking downwards towards the watching crowd.

Fresh Peril!

"HEAVENS!" exclaimed the last girl—the supervisor of the exchange. "What shall we do now? Look, the other rope's caught fire! Oh, why didn't I go before, instead of hanging back? Only my false pride made me stay till the last, because I was the supervisor!"

"No use crying about it, missie!" replied Eddie, shouting to make himself heard above the roar of the fire. "There's hope yet—always is while there's life! Catch hold of this rope, and help me to haul it in; we've got to use it still. Here— Good heavens, the girl's fainted!"

He bent out of the window just in time to catch the second rope as that, too, started to fall towards the crowd, and when he got the end into the room, he hauled it up and rested it on the window-sill.

Then, with a second crash, the heavy telephone exchange switchboard fell through the fire-rotten floor, leaving only a couple of feet of space between Eddie Polo and the devouring flames.

"Crumbs!" he gasped. "This is where you've got to move slick, my lad!" he said to himself. "Just as well the girl's fainted, after all—she might be a nuisance if she started to kick now!"

Swiftly he bent to the girl, and, with dexterous twists bound the half-charred rope around her senseless body. Having arranged it to his satisfaction, and confident that she could not slip through its coils, he raised her to her feet, and propped her against the remaining wall. Then very quickly he turned his back upon her, and, standing as closely as possible, passed the remainder of the rope around his own body, securely binding the girl to him. He made fast the final knot, and with a terrific effort scrambled to the window-sill just as the remainder of the floor carried away, leaving only a footing of fire to rest upon. And now, as though angry at being robbed of their destined prey, the flames swirled around Eddie and the girl, even swishing through the window at which he appeared, poised, to the watching, breathless crowd below.

He cast one glance behind, and then another to where, five feet above him, the circuit of the cable swung still in space. He crouched back, measuring the leap with his eyes, and then, when everybody expected him to leap outwards and be dashed swiftly to death on the pavement below, he turned, and, grasping the edge of the coping, prised himself and his deadweight handicap upwards to the roof.

He could not feel that the stone was burning hot to the touch—everything in that locality, even the air he so painfully breathed seemed charged with fire. He reeled and swayed a little with the strain as he balanced himself on the roof for a moment, and then, reaching up, for the second time commenced

to essay the passage across that main-line circuit cable. Now the way was downwards, and Eddie clung till he got his legs round the rope, trying to work his way along, monkey-fashion, very swiftly. For a backward glance had shown him that the flames were already licking around the further and upper end of the cable, and that it was only a matter of moments before that, too, carried away. Eddie shuddered as he realised that the swing of the cable, with his own dead weight upon it, must crash the pair of them against the opposite wall, when they would be dashed to pieces. As he felt the wire jerk as the first fastening gave way, he took a terrible resolve.

"A desperate case," he muttered, "needs a desperate remedy."

He measured the space to the nearest fire-escape ladder with his eye, and letting go with his legs, swung for a moment backward and forward. Those in the street below sent up a combined shriek, for the intrepid lad had swung himself clear of the wire, into the air, and, with the still senseless telephone-girl bound to his back, was dropping in a swift incline through space.

Crash! By some strange means—Eddie himself could never afterwards tell how it happened, but it was wholly due to the semi-conscious part of him which had been trained to take hold and hang tight in all emergencies—Eddie Polo's hands had come into sharp contact with the top rung of the fire-escape which had earlier on been broken off, and for a breathless minute he hung there by his finger-tips, wondering dimly if he had pulled both arms out of their sockets with the swiftness and impact of the fall. Then, as a great roaring cheer came up to him, he thrust out his feet and got a grip on a lower rung. He was at last nearly safe, anyhow.

Slowly, steadily, he swung round to get right side upon the fire-escape, while the firemen below—they had deserted the top of the escape when the rope was hauled up, and Eddie had gripped the cable—swung off on its bottom to prevent its capsizing. Inch by inch, with teeth set and the perspiration rolling down his body in streams, with eyes starting from his head, and every muscle in his body aching with the strain, Eddie prised himself round, and once safe, half automatically began to descend, step by step, to the ground.

Eddie Polo's Great Chance!

"BACK, there!" cried the fire chief, as the people surged forward; but the people refused to obey. They had made a popular hero of the brave lad who had saved seventy-odd girls from a most awful death, and the fire chief's orders were mere words to them. They surged round Eddie, as, half-fainting, he stood on solid ground once more; they clapped him on the back, and cheered themselves hoarse while the firemen cut the ropes that still bound the telephone-girl, now mercifully recovering her senses, to Eddie's back, and when he was at last free, they pressed round him to shake him by the hand.

And, foremost among them were Esta and Bud Truefit, for the circus procession had been warned of what Eddie Polo was attempting, and had been diverted in this particular direction. But Eddie wasn't able to see much; his brain was still reeling, for the feat, and the effort, had both been terrific, and he was still more than a little shaky on his legs.

He was an awful picture. The neck of his singlet was wrenched open and torn almost to the waist where he had fought for air—it was blackened by smoke and scorched in several places. His face was grimy and soot-covered, while his eyebrows and his hair were both singed badly. And when Eddie came to shake hands with the madly enthusiastic crowd he found that he had sustained severe burns on both palms, and that his fingers were all cracked and bleeding.

And then, quite suddenly, there rose a shout—somebody had asked the circus people for the lad's name, and "Hurrah for Eddie Polo!" rang through the street. The burning building was forgotten almost completely; the people alone desired to crowd round and tell the young lad just what they thought of him.

The rescued telephone-girls, after talking together for a minute, made a sudden rush. They swept everybody aside, even Esta and Bud, and the others of the show, and, crowding round their hero, they flung their arms around his neck and kissed him till he blushed

again and again under the covering grime, and was at last forced to beg for mercy.

"Rah for Polo! Good old Eddie Polo!" they cried. "Eddie, you're a darling, and we're all your sweethearts!"

"Let me alone a bit till I get my bearings, girls!" he called, pushing the more impetuous of them back, "and I'll become a Mormon, take the first express for Salt Lake City, and marry you all. But, in the meantime, if you're really grateful, take me somewhere where I can get a drink. I'm as dry as an alkali plain!"

There were drinks enough in the crowd. Men produced flasks from inner pockets, and held them out, but Eddie would have none of them.

"Me for the water-waggon," he said. "Here, chief, just play the hose on me and let me get wet all over at once—I feel as if I was one dry bone!"

jolly to feed in a circus-tent. Sav. Mrs. Bride, can't you invite us along with you as guests?"

Esta fell in with the notion immediately, and said so. The girls ripped out a veil, and, having made sure that Eddie had filled himself with ice-cream and water, and stood in need of no surgical attention further than having his hands bandaged, they trooped off in a body to where Busto's Travelling Circus was halted. And as they went the blazing building subsided upon itself with a last crash, and left the firemen nothing but a smouldering heap of ruins to play their hoses upon.

Eddie, to whom, said the circus hands, the seventy-odd girls belonged, packed them all into the gaudy band wagon among the musicians, and, mounting Grey Wind, rode alongside Bud and Esta at the head of the procession. Casting back an eye, he noticed



There was a shriek from the crowd below, as Eddie, letting go of the cable, swung out into space with the senseless girl bound to his back. (See this page.)

The chief grinned, and, seizing a handful of water from a spouting hose, swung a few drops on the lightly-clad hero. Eddie shrunk back at the cold impact.

"Enough!" he said shortly. "That's got too much ice in it for me. Girls, let's go and find a bucket of water that I can take a long swig of."

The telephone-exchange girls, cheering and shouting and hanging on to Eddie Polo's arm, and followed by the whole of the circus crowd, including Mr. Busto, who had not been able to get to Eddie at all, clove their way through the crowd towards the nearest soda-fountain. As they went men nodded shortly to Eddie, too full of appreciation for words, while the women said "God bless you, lad!" with glistening eyes. And at every step some of the grateful girls insisted on kissing Eddie, until he cried for mercy.

Arrived at the soda-fountain, they pressed on him ices sufficient to last him a thousand years, and enough soft drinks to float the entire United States Navy. But Eddie was firm for water, and water he got.

"Say, Busto," he said, "this looks like a tidy restaurant. Suppose we give up the idea of the wedding breakfast in the tent, and have it here?"

"Wedding breakfast in the tent!" cried the telephone girls. "Indeed, you'll do no such thing! It will be just too romantic and

a frock-coated, tall-hatted man in conversation with Mr. Busto, but gave him no further thought, though, had he but realised it, this man was to play more than a small part in his subsequent career.

The tall-hatted man, whom we will call Morrison, was given, however, a seat on the front of Mr. Busto's caravan, and the showman seated himself beside him, sending the ordinary driver to ride home the horse Busto had ridden outwards. Then, all settled, the whole cavalcade started off back to Sulphur Springs, and the bandmaster had to be thrice threatened with sudden death at the bandaged hands of Eddie Polo before he would knock off playing "See the Conquering Hero Come" in Eddie's honour, not the honour of Esta and Bud, for whom the procession had originally been organised.

The girls and the circus hands thronged the great circus-tent and made the rigging of an extra table imperative. Thus the wedding feast was split into two parts, for the girls insisted that Eddie Polo should take the head of their table, and the rescued supervisor the foot. Truth to tell, all the girls envied her, for had she not been with Eddie when he had done his stupendous dive through the air?

With laughter and jest and airy badinage the feast went on, Ginger, the clown, having

saved and manufactured a lot of quips for this special occasion. Esta was all a blushing bride should be, though Bud Truefit wondered sometimes if the allusions to his new bondage made by various speakers really meant anything more than appeared on the surface. Busto was all smiles and expansiveness, and talked to the frock-coated stranger who sat beside him all through the meal, till Eddie at last began to wonder why they looked so frequently at him.

"The bride—God bless her!" It was Rex, the Strong Man, who was on his feet, proposing her health, and the willing guests jumped up to their feet and drank the toast, while Esta blushed.

"The bridegroom!" called Ginger Wiggles, and glasses were drained in honour of the embarrassed Bud.

"Speech, Bud!" called Eddie mischievously. Bud Truefit shot the lad an amused glance, and rose to his feet.

"Leddies an' gents all," he said slowly, "our Eddie thar wants er speech. Waal, I ain't a chap er many words, but I will say this—thet if it hadn't bin fer our Eddie thar takin' a lot er risks and chasin' a certain blamed dago as shall be nameless off this 'ere lot, me an' my little gal would 'ave still bin runnin' in single 'arress. I'm thar happiest man in forty States ter-day, and it's Eddie Polo as I've got ter thank fer it. So I gives yew all a toast, ter be drunk standin', an' no 'el-taps. 'Ere's ter Eddie Polo, the chap with the quick wit, strong arm, and lion's heart!"

"Eddie Polo—the one and only Eddie!" Never had the old circus tent roof resounded to such a shout as went up. Everybody scrambled to their feet—nay, they mounted to their seats, and, with one foot on the table, raised their glasses high, and toasted their favourite, who sat silent and blushing at the head of his own table. Then, at a sign from Bud, the bandmaster waved his baton, and the whole crowd, to the accompaniment of the brasses and the big drum, crashed forth "For he's a jolly good fellow!" till tears started to Eddie's eyes.

"Speech, Eddie!" came the yell from half a dozen corners at once.

Eddie got up, but before he could speak Busto's bull voice made itself heard above the din.

"Hold hard, there!" he said. "I've got a word to say before Eddie has his chiwag! Leddies and gen'l'men, who was it saved the folks from being burned in the circus-tent when it was set alight? Who was it saved me from being robbed of money and daughter? Who was it fought a fist battle to get a new tent for us when we were on the verge of going broke? Who was it rescued Esta from the clutches of a pair of greasers? And who was it risked his neck this afternoon for a parcel of women he'd never seen before in his life?"

He paused for breath, and the answering shout of "Eddie Polo!" nearly split the canvas roof.

"Who is it deserves everything that's coming to him in the way of success—that wants to get on, and that loves his old friends? Eddie Polo!" went on Busto. "Well, Eddie, me lad, and leddies an gen'l'men, I've got news for you all, Eddie's little exploit in St. Louis

to-day has put his foot on the ladder of fame. He's leaving the showman business, and he's going to become one of the people who perform thrilling stunts and do daring deeds for the cinema films."

Busto paused at the roar of cheering that went up again from the gathered crowd. This was indeed good news, and Eddie Polo could hardly believe his ears. Life in the circus was all very well, but there he only played to audiences of a thousand or so; on the cinema film, which was just then beginning to have something of a vogue throughout the whole of the civilised world, he could play to millions of people in a hundred or so different places at the same time, and perhaps it lay on the knees of the gods that he would become famous in this new branch of the performer's art.

"This genelman here," went on Busto, when the cheering died down a little, and indicating the stranger at his side, "is the manager of a big cinema producing company—one of the biggest in the United States—and he's got an offer to put before our Eddie that the boy will be wise to accept. It's a good offer—a better thing for Eddie than the circus life could ever hope to offer him—and though it means starting all over again in a new line of life, the boy will be silly if he refuses it. The new work will be strange and at times hard, but so was the circus life when Eddie joined us. But I'm sure, as I said, it's only the bottom rung of the ladder of fame, and I'm sure Eddie, if he takes it, will never forget the friends he made in his circus life in making friends in the new cinema life. Three cheers for our Eddie and his new job!"

"Hooray!" cried Ginger Wiggles. "Leddies and gen'l'men, help me lift the roof off this old ramshackle canvas bunny-hutch. Here's to Eddie Polo, the world's finest trapeze artiste, and the world's coming greatest cinema film star!"

Eddie blushed, and there were tears of joy in his eyes as the stranger edged across the sawdust-strewn ring and engaged the lad in talk. His friends' cheers rang in his ears, and he could hardly make out what Mr. Morrison was saying to him. Busto joined the little group, followed by Esta, and these two true friends urged on Eddie his acceptance of the offered contract. Mr. Morrison held out a piece of paper and a fountain-pen. Eddie seized the latter and wrote his signature on the former, just as the assembled people burst out cheering again.

And then Eddie got up on his feet and made a simple little speech, thanking all his friends for their kindness to him who had came among them a stranger. He would never forget them, he said—indeed, he loved them all too much for that. Then he broke down, and had to stand while Busto, Esta the Equestrienne, Bud Truefit the Cowboy and all his outfit, Ginger Wiggles the Clown, Red Cloud the Kree Knife-thrower, and everybody else of the circus camp shook him by the hand.

And some of them even shook the hand of Mr. Morrison for giving their idol the great chance of his life—the chance of earning for himself the fame for which, throughout his own life, he had been fighting.

THE END.

BOTTLED BUZZES.

It Is Rumoured—

That Hoskins' talent as violinist is hardly up to the scratch of Minnie, the Greyfriars mouser.

That the last year's report at St. Jim's showed breakages as follows: 207 plates, 51 tumblers, 98 eggcups, and 7 teacups.

That William George Bunter knew something about the 52 cupboard locks that had also been smashed.

That to uphold the high standard of St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suggests that the wearing of evening-dress suits should be compulsory.

That the suggested title for the forthcoming pantomime at St. Jim's is "Knocking Knox's Knocker!"

That chess has taken the place of draughts. The absence of bad colds has been duly noticed.

That when the juniors argued with their respective Housemasters about the shortage of coal, they were informed to "keep cool!" No doubt they did.

That the result of the last mile sprint between Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry as published in the "Greyfriars Weekly," read thus: "Wharton beaten by a pip!"

That "Wibley's Wheeze" has necessitated his admittance to the sanatorium.

That the term hippopotamus would be more appropriate for William George Bunter than porpoise, as the former animal is not only short-sighted, but can smell food a mile off.

That Mrs. Mimble has engaged the services of an iron-welding operative, recently employed on munitions. Undoubtedly useful for the making of picquets!

That Gerald Knox only smokes one cigarette per diem. Yes, but how many times?

That Reginald Talbot had arranged to meet the school nurse, Marie Rivers, outside the sanatorium, and that she was a quarter of an hour late. He says it's an act of cruelty!

That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is a squandermaniac, because he throws away good fancy waistcoats and socks that any other junior would be glad to wear.

That Banks, the bookie, drank a bottle of Schnapps, and now comes under the muzzling order.

That Aubrey Racke will not be left out of any dare-devil escapades of Crooke's. Well, let him stew in his own juice!

That George Francis Kerr, who is a Scotchman, having been anticipated in a jape, was heard to remark: "I've bin scotched!"

That William George Bunter expects his next specs on "spec"

That the blow Tom Merry dealt Dirk Power would have done credit to Joe Beckett.

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**A GRAND COMPLETE
STORY OF FERRERS
LOCKE, THE FAMOUS
DETECTIVE.**

Left Out in the Cold!

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous detective, was not in a good humour when he awoke one morning in late November. He had recently succeeded in clearing up the remarkable case concerning the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Shields, and had made up his mind to have a holiday before undertaking any further commissions.

But the enjoyment of a holiday is generally dependent upon fine weather, and that was not forthcoming. For several days now there had been thick fogs over London, and, thinking it might be quite local, Ferrers Locke had telephoned to Norfolk in the hope of learning that there the weather was brighter. But he had been disappointed.

But if Ferrers Locke was not in a good humour, it was obvious that his assistant was feeling far from morose. He had been reading a newspaper, and frequently chuckled at what he had read. Ferrers Locke paid no heed, however, until the chuckles ceased, and his assistant broke into a peal of loud laughter.

"It's something to be possessed of a sense of humour on a morning like this," Ferrers Locke said, staring out through his work-room window at the pall-like fog which hung over Baker Street. "What's the joke?"

His assistant threw back his long head and laughed again till his sides shook.

"There are some Chief Commissioners of Police, sir, whom it seems a shame to score off, but Sir Kenneth Moseley isn't one of them. I can just imagine how he went off the deep end on finding that not only he, but Colonel Guy Bovington, the Deputy-Commissioner, Chief-Inspectors Holmwood and Lacey, and his own particular pet rat Hackett, had all been impersonated, and a full fifty thousand pounds' worth of stuff cleared out under the very noses of the authorities."

Locke poked the fire into a cheery blaze, then leisurely filled his pipe.

"What was the scheme?" he asked indolently.

The assistant had some difficulty in emerging from his mirth.

"The whole affair strikes me as being the funniest crooks' comedy ever staged in London. The 'Daily Mail' gives the whole story. On Monday last at eleven in the morning there drove up to the front door of Sir Charles Lethaby's mansion in Park Lane a big closed car containing five men, whom their own mothers would respectively have recognised as Moseley, Bovington, Holmwood, Lacey, and Hackett. Moseley, immaculately dressed, and with his customary swagger, walks up to the house, of which only the caretaker—an old fellow named

Binns—had been left in charge, and produces a stamped and signed warrant made out under his own seal and signature at the Yard for the arrest of Sir Charles on a charge of illicitly receiving church plate from the ravished districts of Armenia, knowing the same to have been dishonestly come by, etc., etc. Apparently they are surprised when they are told that Sir Charles is away; the bogus Chief Commissioner then produces an official order, and, locking up Binns in one of the basement rooms, proceeds to search the house. Cabinets are opened, the vault is unlocked, the safe door drilled and blown in, valuable gold and silver ornaments are collected together, and when the two covered vans drive up, the crowd outside are treated to the rare spectacle of seeing Hackett in police-constable's uniform assisting his high-nightiness Sir Kenneth Moseley to strip a town house of its choicest treasures."

"Great Scott! What an idea!" laughed the detective.

"Never heard of a stunt to beat it," the assistant smiled back. "Of course, it was all a plant. The supposed Scotland Yard officials were a gang of clever criminals equally cleverly made up, and by the time Binns had so far recovered from his stupefaction to raise the alarm, they were clear away with stuff worth at least fifty thousand of the best. So when Sir Charles returns to England—"

Ferrers Locke became suddenly business-like, crossing the room with quick, alert strides, and taking from a locked cabinet his most valuable possession—his famous green book, containing his own record of every unusual crime committed.

"I can place this thing to a 't,'" he said, pausing over one page. "My impression is the notion was conceived and carried out by Kid Glove Mason and his gang. His record is full of them—crimes committed with a dash of humour."

"Half a moment, though," interjected the assistant, looking over his chief's shoulder. "The coup looks like Kid Glove Mason's, but if you look at your own footnote towards the end, you distinctly state 'Mason's gang numbers six, and so works, never more nor less.' Now, what do you make of that?"

Ferrers Locke looked puzzled.

"It certainly is curious, I admit," he replied thoughtfully. "When a fellow like Mason has accustomed himself to working with five assistants every time, it's a thousand to one against his dropping down to four, and yet, according to the account, there were only five principals. I wonder—"

"It wouldn't be difficult to line up Mason, Weldmann's staying at the Carlton. Shall I—"

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," Ferrers Locke agreed. "I should like to help the Yard. Get on to Weldmann, and through him to Kid Glove, Tie-pin Taylor, and the rest of the bunch, then report to me."

Ferrers Locke saw little of his assistant for the next five days. Towards the end of the week, however, he returned, tired out but triumphant.

"I've made several useful discoveries, all pointing in the right direction," he announced. "In fact, I've proved without a shadow of a doubt that it was Kid Glove's gang who ransacked the Park Lane mansion. I'll go farther, and say I've both seen and handled some of the stuff. Goldstein, of Mare Street, has a nice little bunch, only we couldn't make him speak if we faced him with a battalion of policemen."

"Never mind; there's plenty of time. Where is Mason?"

"Staying at the Randolph in Oxford, and doing himself like a king. Flash Weldmann is taking a fortnight off at Harrogate for the waters, Tie-pin Taylor has engaged an expensive suite at the Ritz, Harlow Johnson is rusticated in the country, Blount, the crackman, has gone off in style to Monte Carlo—"

"And Foggerty—number six?"

"Foggerty, the hunchback, seems to have been left out in the cold altogether. I'm sure Mason and his boys worked this scoop, and deliberately left Foggerty out because of his deformity. You see, there wasn't a job for him. Scotland Yard doesn't possess any deformed officials, so Foggerty was not let into the job, likewise isn't receiving any of the gains."

"Ho, ho!" chuckled Ferrers Locke. "Now we are getting warm."

"Yes, I felt almost sorry for Foggerty," the assistant continued. "He's living in a couple of rooms in Wandsworth Common while his pals are living like kings. How do you reckon it, sir?"

"Dead easy!" said Locke, with a smile. "For once Kid Glove Mason has made a big mistake. For the first time in his career he has gone outside his rule to work as five instead of six. Perhaps he did it to throw the police off the scent, but in cutting Foggerty out he has signed his own arrest warrant. Give me that address in Wandsworth, if you please!"

Foggerty's Chance!

FOR three long and wearisome days Ferrers Locke kept Foggerty, the hunchback, and his humble lodgings under observation. And during that time he made discoveries, even as Baker had done. Foggerty had been badly treated

THE POPULAR.—No. 96.

by his companions. Left out in the cold because through no fault of his own, he had not taken part in the Park Lane robbery. Consequently, he was a very sore and disgruntled man.

When Saturday came, Foggerty himself went out early in the morning, and returned half an hour later with a handcart. On this he piled his few personal belongings, and dragged them all the way to Githa Road, a squalid thoroughfare in Clapham Junction. He deposited his effects at No. 17—obviously new and cheaper lodgings. On the Saturday night Foggerty broke his journey to the nearest house of refreshment to post a letter. With the aid of a length of twine, a flat stone, and a little bird-lime, the detective abstracted the letter from the pillar-box. It was addressed to a gentleman staying at the Randolph Hotel, Oxford, and among other

letter back into the pillar-box, and took a well-earned rest. The next day, however, he was back in Githa Street, seeking lodgings at No. 16, which lodgings he secured.

The following morning he was astir early—so early that he met the postman at the corner of the street.

"Fine morning!" he said cheerily.

"It is," replied the man.

"Anything for me?"—falling in at the genial postman's side.

"What name?"

"Sill Williams," said Locke unblushingly. "I'm a newcomer. You'll find me at No. 16. Here we are. These are my quarters. All right, Mrs. Higgs!" as the door behind him opened, and the landlady called to him that breakfast was ready, waitin', and on the table. "Sha'n't be a minute!"

The man was going through his little bundle.

Locke did not let Foggerty far out of sight after that. He followed him everywhere. And when, on the third day, Foggerty dropped another letter, cursing Mason and his friends up hill and down dale, into the pillar-box, the detective cautiously lifted it out and put it in his pocket for future reference. And when Saturday came round once more, and the postman left at No. 17 the letter which should have gone to No. 16, Locke pocketed the weekly remittance with as little compunction as he would have thrashed a bully stealing coppers from a blind girl.

Meantime, the iron of rage and discontent was eating bitterly into Foggerty's soul. Three weeks had passed, and as yet he had received no answer to his letters to Mason. And funds were running perilously low—so low that when Locke offered to stand him a drink in the private bar of the Two Swans, Foggerty thought so well of his new friend as to suggest he might lend him a couple of bob.

To which Locke, always inclined to be generous, responded nobly.

"My dear old chap, ten if you like!" he said, thrusting a note into the other's palm. "And no need to worry about repayment. There's plenty more coming along. Drink up, and have another! I tell you I'm on the high-road to making a cosy little fortune, and as easy as kissing your hand to a nurse-maid!"

"Oh!" said Foggerty. "You're one of the lucky boys!"

"But I'm not alone; in fact, I'm looking for a real deserving case, such as yours might be, for instance, to help me scoop the pool."

"Scoop the pool!" repeated Foggerty, professional instinct reasserting itself. "You're on the easy-money game, then?"

"Bet your life!" the detective grinned. "I suppose you wouldn't be over particular how you earned a hundred or two?"

"It all depends!" was the cautious reply.

"Well, it's like this," Locke went on. "I'm looking for a lad who's not tied up with another bunch, who's free to work on his own, who hasn't got pals to consider."

"What!" Foggerty snarled, baring his teeth. "Me consider pals! I had some once. They're mine no longer, and I'd see 'em swing as high as Haman without lifting so much as a finger to cut the rope!"

"Then you'll do," the detective said, producing a printed handbill. You see this! Five hundred pounds reward for the first man giving such information as will lead to the arrest of the perpetrators of the Park Lane robbery."

"You know who did it, then?" Foggerty gasped.

"I do," said Ferrers Locke. "Kid Glove Mason and his lot. There were six in it—Mason, Weldman, Tie-pin Taylor, Marlow, Johnson, and a fellow called Foggerty." And, now I come to look at you a bit closer, blimey if I don't think you and Foggerty are one and the same!"

The hunchback started back.

"I tell you, I wasn't among 'em!" he hissed. "If you want to know, the other five did it, and I—I was left out!"

Ferrers Locke dropped his mask.

"Foggerty," he said, in a changed voice, "would you like to earn money—this five hundred pounds—and a chance to go straight?"

Foggerty rose unsteadily, and passed his hand over his eyes.

"Go straight?" he mumbled. "D'you think I could? D'you think it's worth while?"

"Yes," answered Ferrers Locke, "I do. You've found the other way—the crooked path—doesn't pay. Here's a chance for you. The reward that shall put Mason and his boys where they ought to be—under lock and key—and for you a straight run to a new land, money in your pocket to keep you on the right lines! Is it worth your thinking about? Because, if so, we'll go into the matter together."

They did. And to-day Foggerty, under another name and in another way, is doing quite well for himself. Sometimes Sir Charles Lethaby has a letter from Canada, signed by the man who was left out when the bogus Scotland Yard officials stripped his London home.

THE END.



"Anything for me?" asked Ferrers Locke. "Sill Williams, the name!"
 "Yes!" said the postman. "But the letter is addressed to No. 17—this is No. 16!" (See this page.)

useful items of information, contained the following expression of candid opinion:

"You and Tie-pin and Harlow—in fact, all the bunch—are a crowd of dirty dogs, so crooked that you meet yourselves coming round the corner of the street. While you wallow in golden slime, I'm pigging it in a couple of back rooms. Because you didn't part up as you promised, I've had to leave my Wandsworth quarters, and the above will have to do until you and the boys see the wisdom of doing something. So, Kid, here's the griffin, straight from the shoulder. I want five pounds a week now on till the next scoop comes off, with me standing equal with the rest, which five must be mailed me each Friday to reach me Saturday morning first post. Unless the stuff arrives regular, I go straight to the right quarters, and put the breeze on the whole crowd. Address all your letters to Sill Williams, 17, Githa Street.

"Yours in anticipation,

"FOGGERTY."

With a smile, Ferrers Locke dropped the

"Sill Williams. Yes, here we are, but addressed to No. 17."

"That's a mistake!" laughed the detective.

"I was going to No. 17, but they're full up, so I settled in with Mrs. Higgs here. And the number's 16, ain't it, mother?"

"Sure!" said Mrs. Higgs, smiling good-naturedly. "And here's your morning refresher, postman!"—handing out a cup of tea.

The postman passed over the letter, and said "Cheerio!" over the top of the cup.

"Same to you!" responded Locke, passing over half-a-crown. "And, see here, if any other of my correspondents make the same mistake, and address my letters to No. 17, you just drop 'em in here, 'cos this is where I live."

"Trust me!" said the delivery-man; and passed down the street, whistling as he went.

Ferrers Locke opened the envelope over a plate of bacon and egg. The contents were from Kid Glove Mason—a letter of apology, full of sincere promises, backed by a five-pound note.

"A MARKED MAN!"

A Grand New Serial, dealing with the further adventures of FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE, starts next Friday in "The Popular." Order a copy to-day.

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The surprises which I mentioned in last week's Chat will be in the shape of

TWO GREAT NEW SERIALS,

which will appear in next week's issue of the POPULAR.

The first will be a splendid story of FERRERS LOCKE, the famous detective, of whose wonderful exploits we have already read in the previous serial. As this proved to be so popular with my friends, I asked the author to write me another, dealing with this great criminal investigator. There will be plenty of thrilling and dramatic episodes in the opening chapters, and you must on no account miss them. The title of the story is

"A MARKED MAN!"

The second serial will be a grand sequel to "Fighting for Fame!" but, instead of dealing with EDDIE POLO'S adventures with the Great Busto Circus, it will be a narrative of his first experiences in the cinema world.

His circus days at a close, he sets himself the task of learning the secrets of filmland. He enters into his new life with a light heart and a great determination to win through, and the way in which he commences his work will give the reader a clear idea of the splendid stuff he is made of. Don't forget to make a point of reading the opening chapters next week. The title of the story is

"BEFORE THE CAMERA!"

There will be a magnificent long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars, under the title of

"RIVALS OF THE RING!"

By Frank Richards,

and will deal with the commencement of the great boxing tournament at Greyfriars. The famous fighting men of the Remove come into the limelight to battle for the honours, and Billy Bunter, by a strange series of flukes, manages to reach the semi-final, where he is matched with the great Bob Cherry. Harry Wharton, Dennis Carr, Mark Linley, and

many others show surprising quality as boxing men. Do not miss reading

"RIVALS OF THE RING!"

And a second instalment of the great romantic, adventure serial, entitled:

"OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!"

By Maurice Everard.

I have had many letters from my chums telling me how pleased they were with Maurice Everard's last story, and how keen they are to have another from his pen. I, too, am glad that he has proved so popular. I am always ready to read my friends' opinions of the splendid stories I put before them.

In next week's instalment the alderman, whom Bob and Jeff had rescued from the highwayman, to show his gratitude towards these daring young boys, puts before them a suggestion which, so strange is it, that it takes their breath away for the moment. He tells them of treasure untold waiting to be unearthed, and whether they decide to start on this enterprise you will discover next week.

Last, but not least, will be another splendid long complete story of the merry chums of Rookwood School. The title of this story will be

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Your Editor

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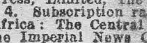
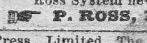
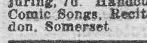
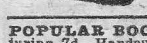
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