

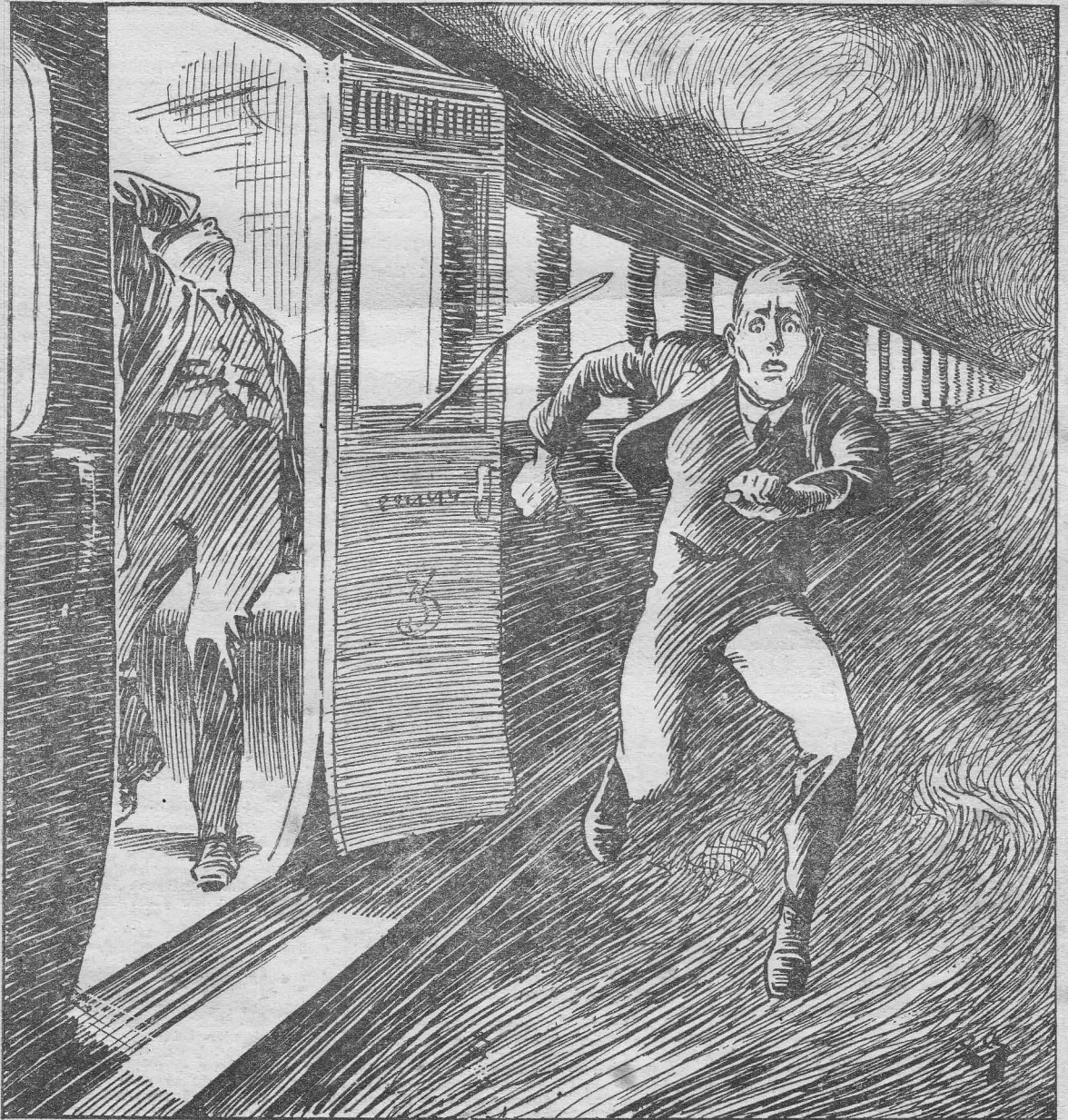
TWO GRAND NEW SERIALS "A MARKED MAN!" "BEFORE THE CAMERA!" JUST STARTING!

No. 97.  
New Series.

Week Ending  
November 27,  
1920.

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

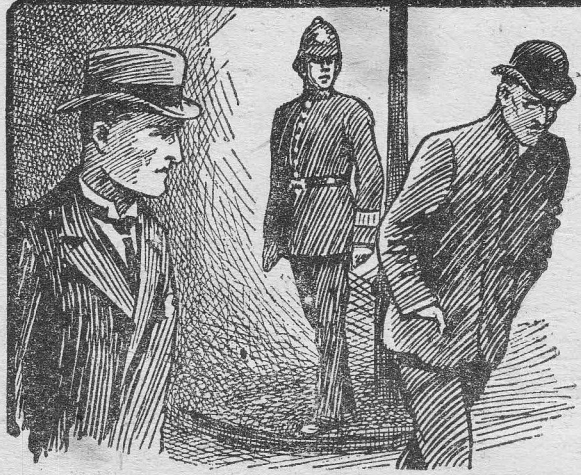
20 PAGES.



**A DARING LEAP FOR FREEDOM!** WHAT HAPPENED IN THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS!

(A Dramatic Episode from the Grand New Ferrer's Locke Serial, "A MARKED MAN!" Inside.)

POWERFUL NEW DETECTIVE SERIAL JUST STARTING!



# A MARKED MAN.

A GRAND NEW STORY, DEALING WITH THE ADVENTURES OF FERRERS LOCKE, THE WORLD-FAMOUS DETECTIVE.

Free!

“ONE, two, three . . . nine, ten, eleven.” As the clock in the church tower on the far side of the church struck the hours, Convict LA709 sprang up from the side of his bed and counted them aloud.

“Eleven! Thank Heaven! Five years of grinding torture of body and soul are done!”

Even as he stretched his big form to its full height a key rattled in the lock, and the door of his cell swung wide.

“Eleven o'clock, 709! I suppose you're glad?”

Warder Mills came briskly in and nodded in the direction of the open door.

Adrian Vaughan followed him along the stone-flagged passage-way, across the courtyard towards the front gate.

Turning into the small apartment, the warder pointed to a suit of civilian clothes, which Vaughan picked up and examined critically.

“I hope they're a good fit?”

Vaughan made no reply. It wasn't much to start a man, who had been a gentleman once, out into the world with—coat, trousers, and waistcoat of the cheapest, shoddiest imitation tweed, with a staring pattern printed loudly upon it. All the same, he donned it silently. Five years of forced self-effacement had stamped out the right to express an opinion.

“One more job, and you'll be through!”

Vaughan winced, as, feeling strangely uncomfortable in the new clothes, he followed the warder to an adjacent room, where a camera waited him. Two pictures of him were taken—one full-face, the other in profile. The governor and the deputy-governor of Dartmoor came bustling in and shook him by the hand.

“Well, good-bye, Vaughan! We wish you well. Go straight, and try to regain your place in the world!”

They were the first words spoken with sympathetic sincerity that the convict had heard since the great gates of Dartmoor had clanged shut on him, five weary years before.

“I shall do that!” he said, and the thin face, handsome still, despite the marks of mental suffering which it bore, flushed with nervous excitement. “An innocent man need have no fear!”

The remark was scarcely true so far as he was concerned, but he lifted his head with almost unconscious pride.

“I'm afraid all men come in and leave this place innocent!” the deputy-governor laughed. “However, that's neither here nor there. Warder Mills will see you to the station. You'll feel a bit strange when you are alone.”

Vaughan put on the ill-fitting, hard felt hat.

“I sha'n't be alone, sir. A pal has promised to meet me.”

The clerk handed him a sovereign. “The rest of your good-conduct money—three pounds ten—will be paid you when you report yourself to the police at Northampton.”

Adrian Vaughan thanked him, and walked out into the warm air of the sunlit morning. It was hard to realise he would soon be out

of range of ever-watchful eyes. The iron wicket before the last barrier swung back, then the great green gates opened. He passed under the frowning archway of stone into the street a free man. Even the sentry, pacing ceaselessly, a loaded and bayoneted rifle at his side, took no notice of him.

Warder Mills looked up and down the road, away to the left, where the main drab street of Princetown made an ugly foreground to the dim, mist-clad moors beyond, and to the right, up the long hill that winds towards Tavistock.

“I'm afraid your friend has disappointed you,” he said quietly.

Vaughan's thin lips straightened into a decisive line.

“He'll come all right. He's not the sort who'd fail me.”

He stood a few yards off, glad to be alone with his thoughts. Of course Harry would come! He had always promised to take up the old threads of their wonderful friendship again. “The day you are free, old man, I shall be outside the prison to greet you” had occurred in his letters again and again.

Vaughan stepped forward and rejoined Mills.

“My last letter, telling Mr. Leigh the date and time of my release—it was posted all right?” he asked.

“I put it in the bag myself,” Mills replied. “I hope your friend won't be long. I've only so much time allowed to see you to the station. How is he coming?”

“By train, I suppose. Don't worry. He won't fail me!”

Half an hour dragged by. Mills looked at his watch.

“I can only give you till twelve. If he doesn't come then—”

Vaughan turned away to hide the bitter chagrin in his face. Five years of endless trust were broken by a horrible suspicion. Supposing Harry Leigh did not mean to come? Now he fancied he could recollect a slight coolness in more than one of his letters to him during the last eighteen months.

When noon came his friend had not appeared.

“Can't I wait a bit longer?” he asked, as Mills prepared to move off.

“Inside if you like. I've got to see you safely at Harrabridge. What'll you do?”

“Wait inside,” the ex-convict answered, obviously disappointed.

“All right! Sentry-go” will let us know if he comes.”

Once more the heavy gates clanged to behind Vaughan, echoing the gloom that had settled on his soul. For three dragging hours he paced the narrow courtyard. Mills thought fit to tell him no train could possibly bring anyone to Princetown now.

At that the dark inaction fell away from the man.

“Take me to the station,” he said, and, following Mills, stepped into a closed cab, waiting by the warders' cottages.

At Harrabridge the warder took a special convict's ticket for his charge, and saw him into the train. Vaughan flushed at this unnecessary degradation. Surely a free man should be treated as a free man, and not be branded still with prison marks of shame?

He had yet to experience the lasting stigma which attaches to the ticket-of-leave man.

The train flashed along unfolding beauties, that turned earth into a heaven of loveliness, after the dreary monotony of rain-swept and fog-wreathed Dartmoor. Sun-kissed fields of waving corn, pasture-clad slopes, and sleeping hamlets made a procession that took him back to a world long dead. But every happy moment was marred by the thought of the friend who had failed him. Of what use was life if those who had promised to stand by him, to help him to his feet again, turned their backs on him as soon as he was free of prison? And least of all had he expected Harry, his companion since boyhood's years, to fail him. Now, had he forgotten? Was he no longer in remembrance? Of course, he was misjudging. At Northampton he would find him—just the same staunch pal, ready to forget the past and to help him regain his lost place among men. For, rich young man that he was, Harry's influence and friendship must count for much.

A collector on the train broke in on his reverie.

Vaughan flushed as he handed up his convict's ticket—his badge of servitude still.

The man stared at him suspiciously.

“Here, you come out o' this!” he growled. “Decent folk don't want the likes o' you travelling with 'em!”

The half-dozen people in the carriage stared at the man in the corner, who, accustomed as he was to obeying a command, left the carriage, and allowed himself to be locked into a compartment by himself. But as the glass door clicked shut a change came over Vaughan.

“God keep me from taking my revenge on the world if that is to be my lot!” he cried, starting up and pacing the narrow confines feverishly. “Though I was guilty I've paid the penalty. Yet a dolt like that can still hound me down before my fellow-men.”

The handsome face was livid with passion; a look no one had seen there through his term of imprisonment flashed into his steel-grey eyes.

It was nearly midnight when the train put him down at Northampton. Too late to report himself to the police at that hour, he went in search of a cheap hotel. More than once, as he stopped dubiously, an alert-eyed policeman, recognising the prison brand of his shoddy clothes, eyed him suspiciously and moved him on. At length he found a lodging, and for a few short hours forgot his troubles in sleep.

At breakfast next morning he was so confused by the unusual privilege of selecting his own viands that he contented himself with a cup of tea and two slices of bread-and-butter. Then he put on his hat and walked briskly towards Kilworth Grove. On either side palatial houses, fronted with lawns and wide drives, were embowered among well-kept trees. Somewhat nervously, with more than a deprecatory glance at his trashy suit, Vaughan rang the bell. A liveried manservant answered him.

“Is Mr. Leigh junior in?” the ex-convict asked respectfully.

His deference lowered him a little more



than the ill-fitting clothes in the flunkey's eyes.

"Mr. Leigh is not in. He is away motor-ing with some friends. I do not know when he will return. Would you care to leave a message?"

Vaughan hesitated, and the door began to close. He made as if to turn away, when, a little way down the road, a big touring-car stopped, and a voice which he had never forgotten through all the years came to him on the soft wind of the morning.

"You sha'n't come another yard, Ferrers! I know you are dying to get on to this new case of yours, and it isn't right for us to keep you. Besides, you absolutely forbid, don't you, dad?" he went on, taking his father's arm. "Good-bye, Ferrers; we shall see you at dinner to-night."

Vaughan's keen gaze was fixed on the gap in the trees, through which he commanded a full view of the scene. Harry Leigh was shaking hands with the young man in the car.

The ticket-of-leave man caught at the flunkey's arm.

"Who's the fellow in the motor?" he ques-tioned.

Tonsom stepped into the portico.

"What! Him at the wheel? Thought every-body hereabouts knew him. That's Ferrers Locke, the famous detective."

Vaughan shrank back, taking a mental photograph of Locke. He saw a good-look-ing, boyish, sunburnt face, lit with the bluest eyes imaginable, a big, firm mouth, and a chin nicely shaped, but determined and strong-looking, even when he smiled.

"A Scotland Yard man, I suppose?" he ventured carelessly.

"No—a private detective; works all on his own, he does. Him and Master Harry are great pals. But, here, what am I talking to you for? The old gentleman will be look-ing this way in a minute. Ah, they're going in by the other entrance! If you've got any message, I'll take it."

Vaughan watched Harry, chatting with his father, traverse the far sweep of the drive. Happy and care-free he seemed, with no thought of him or his suffering on his face.

"Give young Mr. Leigh my name—Mr. Adrian Vaughan."

He waited in the doorway. So Harry and Ferrers Locke were friends! He hated the name and the man already. Minutes passed before the manservant led him through the wide hall to the drawing-room.

"Mr. Adrian Vaughan, sir!"

The door closed, and the ticket-of-leave man stood blinking in the strong light that streamed through the open window. The younger man turned.

"I'm glad you've come, Vaughan," he said. "I hope you'll forgive me for not keeping my promise. You understand, don't you, it was a sheer physical impossibility?"

"I'm ever so sorry," he went on, "because I realise how much it meant to you, but the car broke down and left me stranded at Taunton. So I got Locke to motor me back, knowing you would come straight on here."

"Then you did mean to be at Dartmoor?" Leigh looked him straight in the face, and his own eyes were unutterably sad.

"I should have come, if only because I had always promised I would. But there is something else, Adrian, something which I feel can serve no good purpose by being ignored. I hate to think that anything I say may hurt you, but facts—even brutal facts—have to be faced. For years you and I were the biggest pals—all through our Cam-bridge life and later, when business claimed you. I stood by you when you were tried and sentenced to imprisonment, because, in my ignorance, I thought you were innocent."

Vaughan laughed bitterly.

"I see. So you have joined the vast army who think me guilty?"

Young Leigh flushed to the roots of his fair hair.

"I don't think, Adrian—I know. When you swore to me, before your conviction, that you were never guilty of the dishonesty which landed you in for a term of penal servitude, I was unwise enough to believe you, and on the strength of that I have kept up a friendly correspondence with you. Of course, I am very sorry for many things. You had such wonderful abilities. You might have been a great man. Instead, you choose to go wrong, and in going wrong you nearly dragged down some of your friends with you. I was one of those friends. I escaped by a miracle, and, having escaped, I do not intend to run any risks a second time."

Vaughan flushed angrily.

"You mean—you wish to have no more to do with me?"

"I mean," replied Harry quietly, "that it is impossible we should ever be what we were to each other. You will agree, in the schools, in sport, in debate, even in business we were everything to each other. Then, to serve your own ends, you ceased to go straight. Personally, I am willing to forgive the wrong you did me. But this can make no difference to the future. It is impossible we can ever be pals again."

"I see. You're thinking of your precious position. Because you're a rich man's son—"

Harry stayed the other's bitterness with a gesture of remonstrance.

"Money has never made the slightest differ-ence to me. You ask for the reason. It is one quite apart from myself; it concerns others. While you have been in prison I have become engaged to a very nice girl.

He leaned forward, his pallid face working with devilish passion.

"For Heaven's sake, stop!" Leigh said, shrinking back.

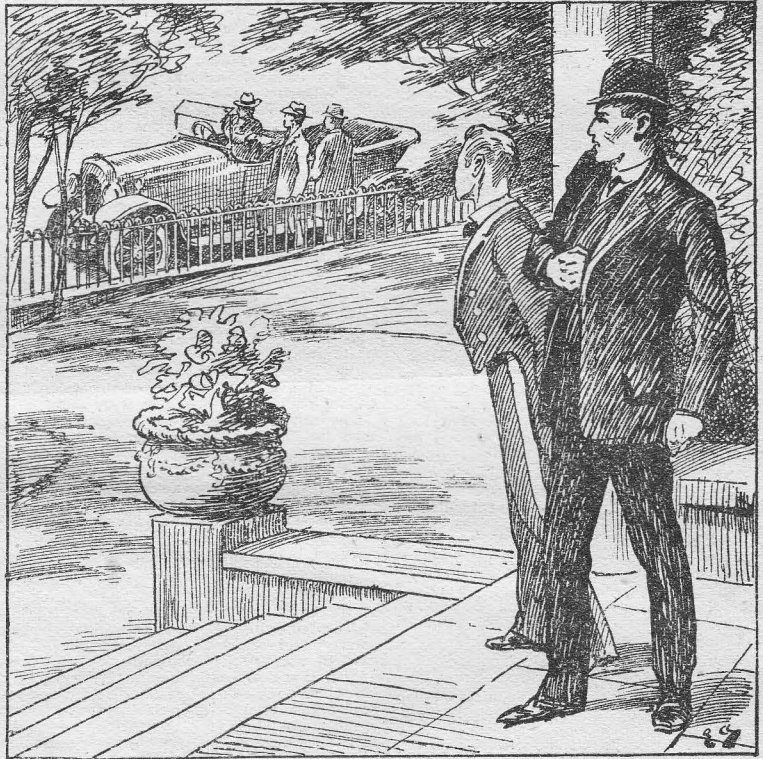
"Not until the last hour of my life has come!" he answered, with a mocking laugh. "There are things a man never forgives or forgets, and one of them is to take his revenge on those who have turned their backs on him. So, for the present, good-bye!"

**Up Against It!**

V AUGHAN left the house in Kilworth Grove conscious that watchful, pitiless eyes and -dogging footsteps were following him.

More than once he looked back and saw a police officer behind him. Then, of course, he remembered; before twenty-four hours were up he was bound to retrace himself.

The brisk, alert, but cool manner with



**Suddenly a car drove up and a young fellow dismounted. Vaughan shrunk back, and caught the flunkey's arm. "Who's that fellow at the wheel?" he questioned. "That's Ferrers Locke, the famous detective!" was the reply. (See this page.)**

She must be considered. Then there is my father, an old and honoured man. I have, too, acquaintances of my own—Ferrers Locke—"

"A sleuth-hound—a police dog!" A change came over Vaughan's manner. "I see clearly what has happened. Because I am a ticket-of-leave man, a convict on licence, I am no longer good enough to be your friend."

As Harry Leigh looked into his face he saw the awful change his decision had wrought. All humanity was gone; instead, Vaughan's features might have been sculptured from granite—the flesh was lifeless, the eyes glittering and deadly.

When Vaughan spoke at last his voice was passionless.

"I am not the sort of man to whine," he said. "I went to penal servitude for a crime of which I now admit I was guilty. Six years ago I possessed a quarter of a million of money, and, among other things, your friendship. All are gone. I have paid the penalty which the law thought wise to mete out to me; I am now paying the penalty of reliance on you. Only the world lies before me—and the world will turn against me. Is there nothing left? Yes, there is something, and that—that—"

which he presented himself at the police-station, submitted to be compared with the photographs taken in Dartmoor, and received the balance of his good conduct money, gave no clue to the lashing storm of fury and hate in his heart. His rage and chagrin only deepened when more than one well-to-do old-time acquaintance, recognising in the cheaply-clad man the Adrian Vaughan of prosperous days, looked away, pretending not to notice him. He began to count over his wrongs. Harry Leigh, the millionaire's son, had failed him, the world was against him, the law had punished him with undue severity. Was there any solace or retribution for such wrongs? The great brain behind the massive, dome-like forehead had already answered the question to its own satisfaction.

At the General Post Office he paid ten shillings for a slip of paper bearing these words: "Mr. Adrian Mervyn Vaughan, of the Aberley Hotel, in the borough of Northampton, in the county of Northamptonshire, is hereby authorised to carry and use a gun from the date hereof until and including the 20th of June next following."

He ate a frugal lunch under the eye of THE POPULAR.—No. 97.

the same watchful detective, of whom he did not lose sight until nightfall. Then at the nearest gunsmith's he bought a second-hand Browning automatic pistol and a box of cartridges, and found himself a ticket-of-leave man with fourteen shillings between him and destitution.

An afternoon train took him to a little village a few miles the London side of Leicester.

Dusk had fallen when he knocked at the door of a well-appointed house standing in its own grounds.

"Is Mr. Marconnon in?" he asked.

"Mr. Marconnon is just finishing dinner," the maid replied.

"Will you tell Mr. Marconnon that a gentleman wishes to see him on urgent business, please?"

Raymond Marconnon, well groomed and well fed, with a choice Martin's cigar between his full, sensual lips, was just entering the library.

"Who is the fellow? What does he want?" he asked irritably. "Oh, well, show him in!"

He turned with his back to the fireplace, and the cigar fell to the carpet as the door opened and Adrian Vaughan stood before him.

In a flash, however, Marconnon recovered his composure.

"Well, my good man, and what can I do for you?" he asked carelessly.

"Just write me a cheque for £3,000—that's all, Raymond Marconnon."

"Who the deuce are you? I don't know you."

"Oh, yes, you do. You have cause to remember Adrian Vaughan, the man who saved you from insolvency five and a half years ago by a loan of £3,000. I've come to collect the money."

"The deuce you have, eh? Well, as it happens, I don't know you, and I don't remember the name of Vaughan, let alone a fellow like you."

The ticket-of-leave man walked into the middle of the room, his blue eyes flashing dangerously.

"Don't lie, Marconnon! You were one of the first of my friends to drop me when there was no possibility of escape. For that reason I now call you to reckoning. You will repay me what you owe me to-night."

The prosperous man smiled cynically. "Even allowing you are Vaughan, what proof do you possess that I owe you this money?"

"None whatever. When I had a quarter of a million of money to play with and a host of so-called friends round me, I didn't trouble much over sums of a thousand or two. Now Fortune's wheel has changed. I am about to start on a reckoning with all my former friends."

The thin lips snapped and set in a hard line. Otherwise the pallid face was mask-like.

"It's no use your trying to blackmail me!" thundered Marconnon, picking up the telephone.

"What do you propose to do?"

"Have you arrested for trying to extort money by threats. You have seen fit to come here and demand money from me," he said in a loud voice. "The only course open to me is to have you arrested and handed over to the police."

The mouthpiece was at his lips.

"Drop that instrument, or I'll blow a hole through you!" shouted Vaughan, whipping out the pistol from his coat, and raising its barrel on a line with Marconnon's head. "I am not going back to penal servitude a second time!"

"You are, though! Hold him, Locke! Ah, thank you, officer!"

There was a rush of feet from the doorway, and three strong arms wound round the ticket-of-leave man, while a fourth wrenched the pistol from his grasp. With a start Vaughan swung round and found himself in the grip of the inspector, who had followed him ceaselessly, and the man on whom he had already planned to take vengeance for robbing him of his friend—Ferreers Locke himself.

"It's lucky for you, Mr. Marconnon, I've had this chap under observation all day long! He's a convict on licence, only released from Dartmoor yesterday. This isn't the first big house he has been to. Mr. Locke, whom I met by chance, and who was good enough to motor me from the station, informs me that he has been to the house of a friend of his in Northampton. Vaughan, put out your hands! I shall arrest you on a charge

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of attempting to extort money, and threatening to murder by shooting!"

For a wild moment Adrian Vaughan made a desperate struggle to win free, but, strong and powerful though he was, he was no match for the six strong arms that now pinioned him. In a trice steel handcuffs snapped on to his wrists, and for the second time in his life he found himself in the grip of the law.

With remarkable self-possession, however, he faced his captors.

"Listen, you Marconnon, and you, Ferreers Locke! You, inspector, are acting, I suppose, under a mistaken sense of duty; but you, Marconnon, will one day answer to me for this. Once my friend, you deny me. More, you are a thief, who has stolen from me three thousand pounds. Still worse in my eyes, you are a liar and a coward, for all of which I shall call you to account. Remember what I say, for I sha'n't go back on a single word!"

Then his eyes travelled stonily to Ferreers Locke's face.

"You, Locke, have made yourself unconsciously my enemy. Unwittingly, perhaps, yet none the less certainly, you have stolen from me the best friend I ever had. There can never be anything but the deepest hatred between us. Before I went to prison for another man's crime Harry Leigh and I were like brothers. Now—"

"Nonsense! Harry was too young then to be wise in the choice of his friends," Locke interjected. "Bah, man, you must be mad to try and take revenge on a one-time acquaintance simply because he finds it impossible to be friendly with you any more! Believe me, I'm more than sorry for you," the young detective continued gravely. "I only wish you hadn't got yourself into this fresh difficulty"—pointing to the glistening wristlets of steel.

Vaughan's face crimsoned with rage.

"You'll need all your sympathy for yourself later on," he growled out savagely. "My reckoning with you will only be a little while delayed!"

Locke turned away. "Good-bye, Foster! I must be going!" he called, nodding to the inspector.

The great crime investigator smiled inscrutably, and went down the stairs.

"If a man like that were only free to give vent to his passions, what colossal damage to the world he could do!" he reflected. And, curiously enough, the same thought was in the mind of Adrian Vaughan, too!

The southward-bound train flashed noisily through the night. Adrian Vaughan sat helpless in a third-class compartment with the inspector of the Northampton Police. A long chain of dragging years stretched before him. There could be no question that in the grim eyes of the law he was guilty of a criminal act in threatening Raymond Marconnon, and for that he would almost certainly be sent back to penal servitude.

The train thundered on, to the accompaniment of beating projects in his brain. A pair of handcuffs, a keen-eyed man, and a Browning pistol stood between him and his swift-formed project of revenge.

He bent down to tie the lace of his boot, which his left foot had rubbed undone. In a flash the officer's lynx eyes were on him.

"You sit still, Vaughan! I'll see to that. Raise your leg!"

As Vaughan put his foot upon the cushioned seat, the other leaned forward. The bent head was the signal for action, for, quick as lightning, the ex-convict sprang up, and, holding the chain taut, brought it down with stunning force on Foster's skull. With a gasping cry, Foster staggered, and lay inert, with his pale face buried in the cushions.

Those fleeting seconds were sufficient for the desperate man. He took the unloaded Browning and the box of cartridges from Foster's pocket, and transferred them to his own. Then, raising his locked hands above his head, and steeling himself against the terrible shock of pain, he crashed them downwards against the heavy handle of the door. The links gave, and his arms fell apart. From Foster's clothes he drew the key of the handcuffs. A mocking laugh broke from him as the wristlets clattered to the floor.

"We change clothes, you and I," he muttered, glancing towards the inspector. "Then you go under the seat while I walk out at Northampton Station free. Ah, would you?" For even as he bent over the police officer, who was fast regaining consciousness, the latter drove his fist with a quick upward

thrust into Vaughan's face. The ex-convict reeled, giving Foster just time to pull the communication-cord.

Vaughan saw freedom slipping away. Already there appeared to be a slight diminution in the speed of the train. A few seconds more, and recapture would be certain. He flung wide the door, and leapt on to the swaying footboard. Beneath him the ground raced by at forty, fifty miles an hour, and the dark night lay on every side.

As he crouched for the leap the policeman was upon him, tearing at his hands and clothes, and engaging him in a life or death struggle. Foster cried aloud, sending shrill shouts for help into the darkness. Would the train never stop, assistance never come?

This way and that the two reeled and swayed, first one and then the other gaining mastery. Desperation, however, urged Vaughan on. Death itself was preferable to a further sentence. He gathered every ounce of strength to fight the inspector off. He tore his right arm free, while with the other he clung tenaciously to the handrail. Then twice he struck out madly at Foster, catching him each time on the point of the law.

A shriek of pain broke from the battered man. He let go his hold, and fell backwards into the compartment.

A loud cry of triumph burst from Vaughan. He leant far out, and gave a mighty leap. The lighted windows raced past him. The rushing air whistled around shrilly in his ears. He was falling—falling to destruction.

### Vaughan Meets a "Friend."

ONDON at last—London, the safe-place in all the world to hide from justice, provided one has the means for efficient disguises and swift transport! After jumping from the train Vaughan had landed safely in a bush, and, extricating himself, he set out to walk to London.

He now stood in one of the bays of Waterloo Bridge, and watched the dark, oily river swirling far below. A taxi whirred alongside, and came to a jarring standstill. A little spectacled man, fat and fussy, jumped from the taxi, and, pushing him rudely aside, entered into a wordy warfare with the driver. Vaughan hurried after him, and touched the sleeve of the other's astrachan coat.

"C642, will you do an old friend a good turn?" he asked in a whisper.

The kindly eyes behind the spectacles blinked in surprise.

"Dear me! LX709, as I'm a living man! What are you doing in London?"

"Dodging the police," replied Vaughan laconically; "only I've got no money to help me. Look here, doctor, lend me a fiver! You shall have it back in a week."

The little man smiled. "A fiver's no use to you, my boy. Walk on a bit. When did you come out?"

"Less than a week ago."

"You've been filling in your time pretty well, according to the papers, demanding money under threats to kill, attacking and injuring a police-officer, escaping arrest, and jumping from an express train."

"And stealing a cap and overcoat from a lonely house to complete the tale!" laughed Vaughan. "Now, it looks as though I've come to the end of my tether, after I've planned such big things, too. With no money I'm bound to fall into the hands of the detectives!"

"Which means seven more years, at least!"

"I suppose so!"

The doctor's face expanded into a fresh grin.

"Are you still as scrupulous as you used to be in Dartmoor? You remember, Vaughan, that day when you and I were working in the tailors' shop, and you had the chance of lifting a warder's bunch of keys, and you wouldn't do it? Ah! Ha! You were the good boy of the family in those days, but now—"

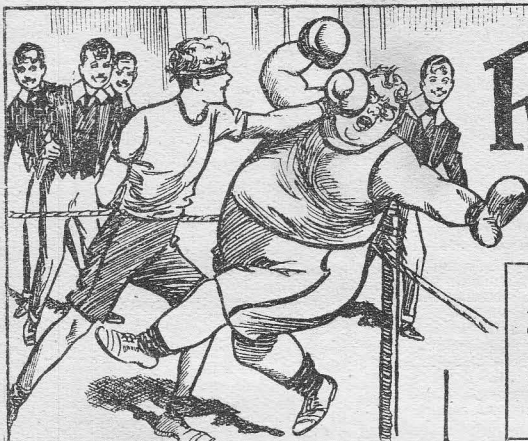
He shrugged his fat shoulders, and raised his palms as though everything hung on the answer to his question.

"My dear Demottsen, I looked at life differently then. I had a stake in an unblemished future, a reason for wishing to hold up my head again in Society. But all that's done with now."

"H'm! We most of us go like that. It's one of the peculiar defects of the penal system. It doesn't cure crime; it encourages it. Then I take it you are open to do anything?"

(Another instalment of this fine detective serial next week.)





# RIVALS of the RING

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE  
TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Dreamer of Dreams!

**S**CRATCH, scratch, scratch!  
Billy Bunter's fountain-pen—or, rather, one that he had "borrowed" from his study-mate, Peter Todd—travelled rapidly over a sheet of note-paper—also borrowed.

A borrowed envelope, a borrowed stamp, and a borrowed blotting-pad lay close at hand.

Billy Bunter sat alone in Study No. 7, scribbling away as if for a wager.

The majority of Bunter's schoolfellows were in the gym at that moment, preparing for the big boxing tournament which was shortly to take place. And Jack Harper, the young trainer whom the Head had engaged for a week, was putting them through their paces.

The Owl of the Remove, however, fought shy of strenuous training. In his colossal conceit he imagined that he would be able to win, without exerting himself unduly, the gold medal which Sir Timothy Topham was going to present to the best fighting-man in the Greyfriars Remove.

And so, whilst Harry Wharton & Co. were busy with the gloves, Billy Bunter was busy compiling a letter to his father.

Although he wrote rapidly, Bunter's handwriting and spelling left much to be desired. When he had finished it looked as if a spider had dipped its legs in black ink, and then performed evolutions over the sheet of notepaper.

The fat junior surveyed his handwriting rather doubtfully.

"Dashed if I can make head or tail of my own writing!" he murmured. "Still, the pater will be able to puzzle it out. He's awfully cute!"

The completed letter ran as follows:

"Greyfriars Skool,  
"Friardale.

"My dear Pater,—

"Grate newze! sir timmerthy topham has maid arrangements for a big boxing toryment to take place at Greyfriars, and he's going to give a gold meddle to the best boxer in each Form.

"Of corse, I shall kompete in the toryment, for, as you no, I am a grate fitting-man, and I have know doubt that I shall be able to nock spofts of the feloes who find themselves pited against me.

"Their is only one drorback to this skeme of sir timmerthy topham's. I don't regard a gold meddle as an addykett reward. Do you? I think they ought to present a dish of doonuts, or something of that sort, to the suckessfool boxers. What's the use of a beestly gold meddle? You can't eat it! You can only ware it on yore watch-chane!

"Howevver, I have maid up my mind to go in for the kompetishun, and I shall be glad to no if you will be prepared to make me some speshul award if I prove myself to be the best boxer in the Remove. That would put fresh hart into me, and make me fite like a jack jonson or a joe beckett.

"I have nothing else to tell you this time, eksept that I am suffering, as usual, from lack of nurishment. Dinner in hall to-day was a wash-out. I was not aloud a seventh helping of roobarb-pudding.

"Hopping you're not in such an underfed state as it leaves me at present, I remane, yore affeckshunate son.  
BILLY."

That was quite a lengthy effusion—for Bunter. But the fat junior felt very strongly on the subject of the forthcoming boxing tournament. He could not see the fun of working his way through to the final, and emerging triumphant as the Remove's best boxer, only to receive a paltry gold medal for his pains. Billy Bunter wanted something more substantial than a gold medal, and he hoped that his father would rise to the occasion and shower all sorts of good things upon him if he proved himself the first and foremost fighting-man in the Remove.

"I think this letter will do the trick!" murmured the fat junior as he sealed the envelope. "The pater's bound to realise that he'll get quite a lot of reflected glory out of my victory, and he'll come down hand-somely!"

As Billy Bunter made his way to the pillar-box in the Close he met quite a crowd of fellows returning from the gym.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" boomed the cheery voice of Bob Cherry. "Whither bound, porpoise?"

Billy Bunter halted. "I'm just going to post a letter to my pater," he said. "I've told him that I intend to win the Remove gold medal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior was interrupted by a roar of laughter. He blinked indignantly through his big spectacles at the hilarious throng.

"Oh, really, you fellows! There's nothing to cackle at. You know jolly well that I'm the best fighting-man in the Remove!"

"Barring thirty-nine others!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Considering that there were exactly forty fellows in the Remove, Nugent's remark was decidedly humorous.

Billy Bunter gave a snort. "You can laugh," he said wrathfully, "but you wait till you see my form!"

"We can see it now," said Johnny Bull. "In fact, it blots out everything else from view!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've told my pater that I'm going to win the gold medal, and a Bunter always keeps his word!" said the Owl of the Remove, with dignity.

"Why, you ass, it's absurd for you to think of going in for the tournament at all!" said Harry Wharton. "You'll be knocked out in the first heat, unless you happen to be drawn against Alonzo Todd or Fishy. And even then I wouldn't give a fig for your chances!"

"Wait and see!" said Bunter sagely.

"We will!" said Squiff. "We'll wait and see you flattened out like a squashed table-jelly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The continued laughter was too much for Billy Bunter. He shook his fist furiously at the hilarious Removites, and passed on. And the juniors dispersed to their studies to discuss the one topic of conversation at Greyfriars—the boxing tournament.

The Removites swarmed round the notice-board like bees.

"The draw!"

"It's out at last!"

"Wonder who I'm drawn against?"

There was a great craning of necks, and the Famous Five, being somewhat taller than the majority of their schoolfellows, and having wormed their way into a good position, were able to get a glimpse of the announcement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Wingate's drawn against Loder!"

"And Gwynne against Faulkner!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Blow the Sixth!" growled Harry Wharton. "It's the Remove we want to see! Here we are!"

There was a chorus of excited exclamations. "Make way, there!"

"Stop shoving, for goodness' sake!"

"How can a fellow see?"

"Read the list out, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove mounted on the willing shoulders of Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, and proclaimed the result of the draw to the eager crowd.

Thirty-two members of the Remove Form had entered the tournament, and the draw was as follows:

"Tom Brown versus William Wibley.  
Percy Bolsover versus Micky Desmond.  
Robert Smith versus Herbert Trevor.  
George Bulstrode versus Peter Todd.  
Richard Russell versus Piet Delarey.  
Tom Redwing versus Richard Rake.  
Mark Lintley versus Richard Penfold.  
S. Q. I. Field versus Jimmy Vivian.  
Frank Nugent versus Richard Hillary.  
Harry Wharton versus Johnny Bull."

The captain of the Remove paused at this juncture, and made a remark to Johnny Bull to the effect that the latter's number was up.

But the crowd waxed impatient.

"Go on, Wharton!"

"Get on with the washing!"

And the captain of the Remove proceeded:

"Oliver Kipps versus Anthony Treluce.  
Dennis Carr versus H. Vernon-Smith.  
Tom Dutton versus Hurree Singh.  
Robert Cherry versus Monty Newland.  
Donald Ogilvy versus David Morgan.  
Fisher T. Fish versus William George Bunter."

"That's the lot!" added Wharton breathlessly.

And a perfect babel of voices arose.

"Bunter versus Fishy!" chortled Bob Cherry. "That'll be the bast bout of the lot! I wouldn't miss it for a whole term's pocket-money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fact that Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish had been drawn together gave a sort of comic relief to the proceedings.

There was just a chance, after all, that Bunter would be able to survive the first stage of the competition, for Fisher T. Fish was no great shakes as a fighting-man.

Everybody agreed, however, that the most thrilling and interesting contests would be those between Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull, and Dennis Carr and Vernon-Smith.

The Bob Cherry versus Monty Newland scrap was looked upon as a "dead cert" for the former. Consequently, it did not arouse a great deal of interest.

"There will be some jolly fine tussles, and no mistake!" said Dennis Carr. "I shall have all my work cut out to lick Smithy."

"You will!" said Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "I'm feeling in great form just now." "I've got the easiest job of the lot," said Bolsover major confidently. "I shall dust the floor with Micky Desmond inside a couple of minutes!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered the Irish junior indignantly. "Faith, an' I'll knock ye into the middle of next week, intoirly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
At that moment Jack Harper, the athletic young boxing-trainer, came on the scene.

"Well, what do you fellows think of the draw?" he inquired.

"It looks jolly interesting, sir," said Piet Delarey. "Wish I'd been drawn against Billy Bunter, though, instead of Dick Russell. Dick's got a four-point-seven punch. I shall be in an ambulance case by the time he's finished with me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"When do these scraps come off, Mr. Harper?" asked Frank Nugent.

"We hope to get through half of them to-morrow afternoon, and the remainder the next day."

"Good!"  
"I guess you'd better arrange to send Bunter's remains home in a matchbox!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I sorter calculate he's not going to get any mercy from me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
When Billy Bunter heard that he had been drawn against the Yankee junior his delight knew no bounds. He anticipated no difficulty in strewing the hungry churchyard with Fishy's bones, so to speak.

And when, on the afternoon of the following day, Billy Bunter received a letter from his father, he was even more delighted. He insisted upon showing the communication to Harry Wharton & Co., and they chuckled hugely when they read it.

The letter ran thus:

"My dear William,—I was delighted to receive your ill-spelt but interesting effusion. It is extremely generous of Sir Timothy Topham to promote a boxing tournament at Greyfriars, and to award gold medals to the leading boxer in each Form. I had no idea, until I got your letter, that you were useful with your fists. However, I know you would not make such a statement unless it had ample foundation. Your weight should prove a valuable asset to you in the boxing-ring, especially if you are pitted against a slim opponent.

"Nothing would delight me more, dear William, than to see you outclass your schoolfellows, and become the recognised boxing champion of the Remove. And in order to give a spur to your ambition, I may mention that if you are successful in winning this honour your pocket-money for the current term shall be trebled, and I will also present you with a football, a gramophone, or a tuck-hammer, according to choice. You must clearly understand, however, that I shall make no award of any sort unless you prove yourself to be the undisputed champion of the Remove.

"I note that you are alleged to be suffering from lack of nourishment. But in the same breath, as it were, you tell me that you had four helpings of rhubarb-pudding at one sitting; so there cannot be much the matter with you. Besides, it will be advisable for you to curb your unhealthy appetite, if you wish to acquit yourself well in the ring.

"I enclose a postal-order for five shillings, and remain

"Your affectionate  
"FATHER."

"P.S.—Somehow I have mislaid the postal-order. It shall be enclosed with my next communication."

"There you are, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter. "What do you think of that? Makes you feel jealous, doesn't it?"

"Rats!"  
"Wouldn't you like to be in my shoes? My pocket-money's going to be trebled—"

"What does that mean?" asked Bob Cherry. "Three-halfpence a week instead of the usual halfpenny?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Oh, really, Cherry! It means that I shall be simply rolling in quids! And I shall get a ripping tuck-hammer into the bargain!"

"There's just one thing you've overlooked," said Johnny Bull.

"What's that?"  
"You've got to win the boxing championship of the Remove first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
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"Oh, that's easily done!" said Billy Bunter confidently. "In my present fighting mood, I'm capable of licking all comers. Hi, where are you fellows going? Don't you know that it's jolly rude to walk away when you're being spoken to?"

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried on without replying.

A bell was clanging through the corridors of Greyfriars. It was to summon all the fighting-men to the gym.

The great boxing tournament was about to commence.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. How Billy Bunter Reached the Semi-Final!

SELDOM had the historic gymnasium witnessed such thrilling contests as those which took place that afternoon.

Fellows of all Forms participated in those contests. And the judges and officials—Mr. Prout, Mr. Quelch, Mr. Lascells, and Jack Harper—had their hands full.

All through the afternoon, except for a brief tea interval, the thudding of boxing-gloves continued.

The Sixth Form bouts came first, and, to the general delight, Wingate knocked out Loder in three rounds.

Gwynne defeated Faulkner in a gruelling tussle, and the remaining contests all had their share of thrills.

Then the Fifth-Formers came into the picture, followed by the Shell and the Upper Fourth. And it was not until after tea that the Removites were called into action.

There were sixteen contests down for decision, so far as the Remove was concerned. And Jack Harper had not thought it possible to get through the whole lot that day.

Some of the fights, however, were of such brief duration that it was found possible to complete the whole programme.

There were several surprises. Fellows who had hitherto not been famed as fighting-men had come on by leaps and bounds under Jack Harper's able tuition, and they rendered a good account of themselves.

Thus, Micky Desmond defeated the burly Bolsover; while Tom Dutton, who was not thought to have the ghost of a chance against Hurree Singh, defeated the Indian junior on points after a great fight.

Johnny Bull put up a great show against Harry Wharton. Indeed, at one time he appeared to be carrying everything before him. But the captain of the Remove stuck gamely to his guns, and in the seventh round he settled his opponent's hash with a straight drive to the jaw.

Dennis Carr gained the verdict over Vernon-Smith far more easily than anybody had anticipated. He forced the fighting at the outset, and his opponent was soon driven into a corner.

The one-time Bounder was very game, and he fought with the coolness and resource for which he was noted. But he was no match for the dashing Dennis, who floored him in the fourth round amid great excitement.

The best bout of the afternoon was, curiously enough, that between Bob Cherry and Monty Newland.

Nobody had expected the Jewish junior to put up such a great fight. But he stood up to Bob Cherry like a Trojan. He took heaps of punishment, but try as he would, Bob could not succeed in knocking him out. They went the whole of the allotted number of rounds, and Bob Cherry was awarded the verdict on points. And never was a loser so warmly cheered than the plucky Monty Newland!

Whilst these contests had been taking place, Billy Bunter had been waiting in a fever of impatience for his turn to come. And at last his name was called by Mr. Lascells.

"Bunter! Fish!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Let's stand back out of the danger-zone, you fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "Methinks there will be little pieces of Bunter flying around in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish was pale with excitement. Billy Bunter mistook his pallor as a sign of fear.

"I say, Fishy," he said magnanimously, "if you like to cry off, you've only got to say so. Simply retire from the tournament, and then the fight will be awarded to me."

"Why, you—you—" stammered Fish, in amazement and wrath.

"You'll save your skin, anyway, by backing out while you've got the chance," said Bunter.

"You—you silly mugwump!" hooted Fish.

"You slabsided jay! If there's any backing out to be done, I guess you'd better do it, because I mean to smash you to a pulp!"

"Come, Fish and Bunter!" said Jack Harper. "Let's get to business. We can't wait your pleasure!"

"I'm quite ready!" growled Bunter.

"Same here," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess somebody had better go for a stretcher, Bunter'll be needing it, I'm thinking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" rapped out the referee.

It was Billy Bunter's intention to finish the fight in about five seconds.

Unfortunately for Bunter, his opponent had formed a similar intention!

The result was that Bunter rushed at Fish like a whirlwind, and Fish rushed at Bunter like a tornado.

"Where the merry dickens are they?" asked Nugent. "I can't see 'em for dust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll sort themselves out in a jiffy!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

They did! And when they came apart it was observed that Fisher T. Fish was clapping his somewhat prominent nasal organ, while Billy Bunter was caressing his jaw. And they were groaning in a doleful duct.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three to one on Fishy!" exclaimed Skinner, in the language of the Turf.

"No takers!" laughed Vernon-Smith.

"Bunter's putting up a jolly good show!"

"Looks as if it's Fishy who'll need the stretcher!" said Peter Todd.

"Yes, rather!"

Billy Bunter was fighting wildly and without method. Much of his energy was wasted on the desert air, so to speak; and on one occasion his gloved fist smote the side of the box-horse with a terrific impact, and he uttered a shrill whoop of anguish.

But although Bunter was fighting wildly, his opponent was not fighting at all. That blow on the nose had brought the water to his eyes, and had temporarily dazed him. He scarcely knew where he was, or what was happening.

"Go it, Bunter!"

"You've got him whacked!"

"A straight one will do the trick!"

Billy Bunter was getting plenty of support from the onlookers. Most of it was of a sarcastic nature, but the fat junior took it seriously. The light of battle gleamed in his eyes. And he continued to hit out—invariably missing the target—until the call of "Time!"

During the interval Fisher T. Fish lay panting in a chair in his corner.

"Gee! I guess I'm done!" he groaned dismally. "I don't want to face that fat clam any more. He—he's gone mad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stick it out, Fishy!" urged Squiff. "Think of the honour of Study No. 14, you know!"

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm not going to have it said that any study-mate of mine was licked by a fat idiot like Bunter. Go for him baldheaded in the second round, Fishy!"

"Oh dear! I guess—"

Fisher T. Fish had no time to complete his guesswork. The referee rapped out a sharp command, and he tottered into the ring once more.

Billy Bunter stood waiting for him, with the grin of a prospective conqueror.

"Polish him off, Bunt!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Give him one of your classic uppercuts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter shot out his left, and then his right. And then, as if to make certain of hitting something, he shot out both together.

It so happened that Fisher T. Fish stood right in the line of fire. His opponent's fists smote him in the ribs, and he went to the boards with a yell that awakened the echoes.

"Yarooooooh!"

The referee started to count. And Billy Bunter folded his arms in the manner of Napoleon, and threw himself into an alone-I-did-it attitude.

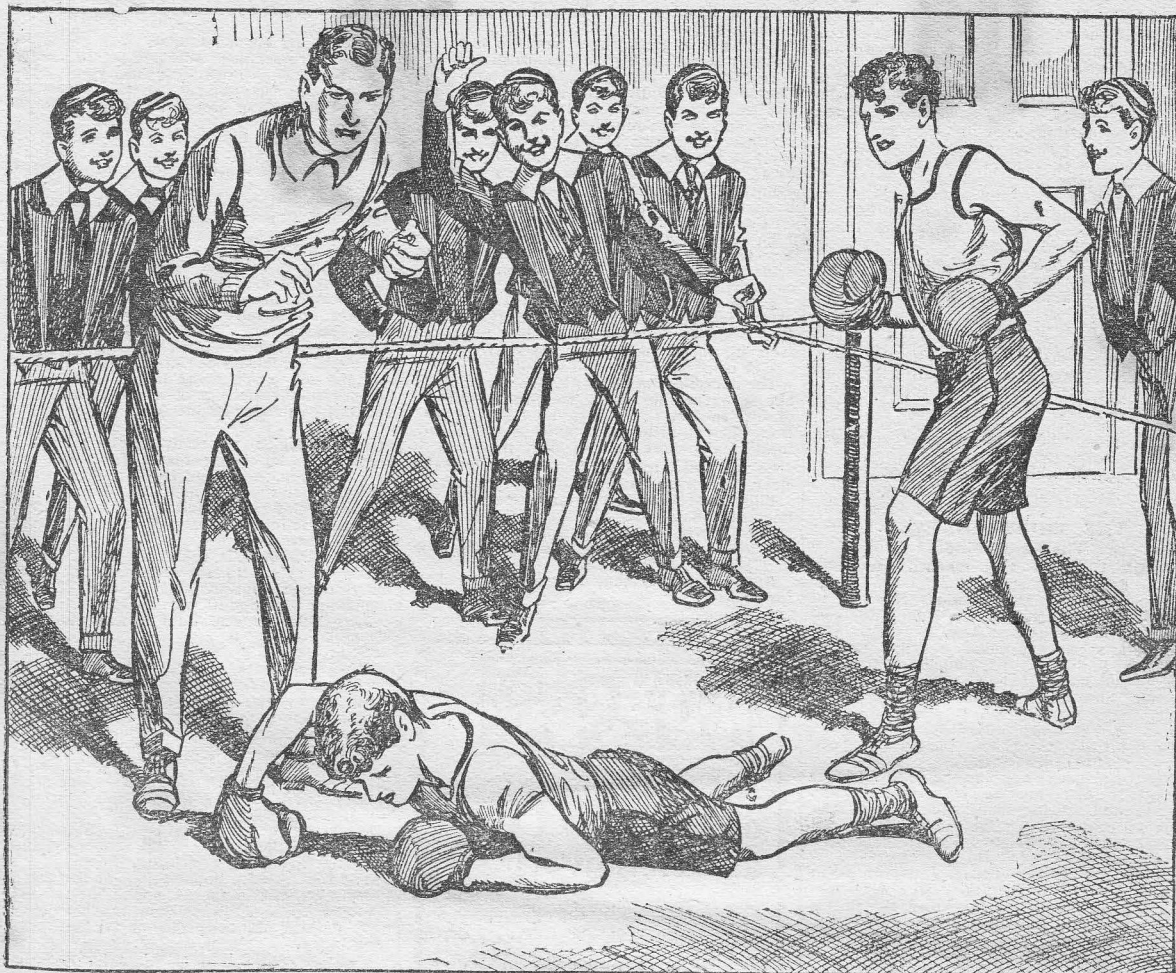
Fisher T. Fish made no effort to rise. Not for whole hemispheres would he have faced Bunter again. He remained motionless, and when the referee got to "Ten" a storm of cheering arose.

"Bunter wins!"

"Good old Bunter!"

"That's one step towards bagging the gold medal!"





Dennis Carr swerved to one side, but he was a fraction of a second too late. His opponent's glove came crashing against his temple, he flopped to the boards, and, before he realised it, the timekeeper commenced to count. "One—two—three—" (See page 8.)

"There's nothing to shout about, you fellows," said the victor. "Wait till I administer the knock-out to Bob Cherry. Then you can let yourselves go!"

The bout between Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish was the last on the programme, and the crowd dispersed, excitedly discussing the events of the afternoon, and wondering who Billy Bunter would be drawn against in the second stage of the competition.

It was not until the next morning that they knew. And then it transpired that Bunter would have to meet Oliver Kipps, who was better known as a conjurer than as a boxer.

Still, Kipps was no mean opponent, and it was agreed on all sides that he would make short work of the Owl of the Remove.

Kipps had had an easy passage into the second round. He had originally been drawn against Treluce, whom he had beaten all ends up. And where Treluce had failed, it was hardly likely that Billy Bunter would succeed.

But the fat junior seemed confident of victory—in fact, he was simply bristling with confidence when he met his opponent face to face in the ring that afternoon.

"The fat duffer really thinks he's got a chance!" said Harry Wharton. "Just look at him giving himself airs!"

"Kipps will settle his hash in next to no time!" said Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

At the call of "Time!" Billy Bunter rushed to the attack. But he found Kipps a far more formidable opponent than Fisher T. Fish had proved on the previous day.

Kipps easily evaded the fat junior's clumsy blows, and his own attack was not idle. He got his opponent's head in chancery, and scored blow after blow upon it.

How Billy Bunter survived the first round he never knew. When the interval came he was gasping like a fish out of water.

"Your number's up, Bunty!" said Peter Todd. "I don't want to dishearten you in any way, but Kipps will simply pulverise you in the next round!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Although he was breathless and battered, however, Billy Bunter did not appear to have abandoned hope.

Kipps opened the second round with a spirited attack. But before he could do much additional damage to his plump opponent a sneering voice addressed him from the audience. Kipps could not be certain, but he thought the voice sounded like Bolsover major's.

"Call yourself a boxer, Kipps! Why, you'd never lick Bunter in a thousand years!"

Kipps desisted from his attack, and spun round angrily.

"Dry up, Bolsover!" he growled.

"Rats! You've got no more idea of boxing than a tame hedgehog! You're no match for Billy Bunter, and you know it! Why, he's simply making rings round you!"

"Look here—" began Kipps, in wrath.

"Yah! Go and chop chips! You're the biggest freak that ever stepped into a boxing-ring!"

Kipps could stand it no longer. Forgetful of his surroundings, and of the task he had in hand, he darted out of the ring and made a rush at Bolsover major.

The bully of the Remove, finding himself suddenly attacked, retaliated hotly. And the gym was in an uproar.

"Separate them!" commanded Mr. Quelch. Jack Harper rushed forward, and dragged Kipps and Bolsover apart.

"This is disgraceful, Kipps!" said the Re-

move-master angrily. "It is true that you were provoked, but you had no right to cause a scene of this nature!"

And then Kipps suddenly remembered that he was supposed to be fighting Billy Bunter. He was about to return to the ring, but Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"You are disqualified, Kipps!" he said sternly. "The judges are agreed that, having left the ring in that manner, you have forfeited your right to continue the contest. The verdict will therefore be awarded to Bunter."

A storm of protest arose, but Mr. Quelch did not heed it.

The names of the next two boxers were called, and Billy Bunter rolled out of the ring—a very undeserving victor!

It was not until afterwards that Harry Wharton & Co. realised what had happened. And then it dawned upon them that Billy Bunter had been employing his powers as a ventriloquist. He had imitated Bolsover major's voice, and had goaded his opponent into leaving the ring.

Directly the true facts of the case became known Billy Bunter was seized and soundly bumped.

"We'll explain the situation to Quelch, Kipps," said Wharton, "and then he'll allow the fight to be held over again."

But Kipps was too good-natured a fellow to consent to that. He knew that if the authorities came to hear of the matter Billy Bunter would get into serious trouble. Besides, he was not likely to go very far in the competition, and it was therefore no great hardship for him to be out of the running.

"I've given the fat worm a jolly good bumping," he said. "Let it rest at that."

Thus it came about that Billy Bunter

entered the third stage of the competition. And when the next "draw" was made public, it was found that the fat junior was bracketed with Tom Brown.

As ill-luck would have it, however, Tom Brown was denied the satisfaction of thrashing Billy Bunter. On the very eve of the contest he developed an influenza cold, and was promptly put to bed in the sunny.

This meant that Billy Bunter automatically passed into the semi-final!

Had anybody suggested a few days before that the fat and flabby Owl of the Remove would ever reach the semi-final he would have been dubbed insane.

But the unexpected had happened. Billy Bunter was still in the competition, and in the semi-final he was drawn against Bob Cherry!

"I'll jolly soon put paid to Cherry's account!" said the fat junior loftily. "And then I shall be in the final, either against Wharton or Carr. And I shall win hands down! Put your money on your Uncle Billy, you fellows, and you'll be quite safe! He, he, he!"

The juniors whom Billy Bunter addressed made no reply.

They were speechless!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Semi-Finals!

**B**OB CHERRY had reached the semi-final by sheer pluck.

After defeating Monty Newland in the first round of the competition, he had been drawn against Tom Redwing. And the sailor's son had taken a great deal of beating. But Bob had triumphed in the end, and he had hoped that the next round would provide him with a less formidable opponent.

But he was disappointed.

In the third stage, Bob Cherry had been drawn against Dick Russell.

Now, Russell was a boxer of exceptional merit. He had many successes to his name, and he had set his heart upon winning the Remove gold medal. He was half a stone lighter than Bob Cherry, but he made Bob go all out.

It was a ding-dong tussle, and even when it was over the spectators could not be certain who had won the day, until the judges announced that Bob Cherry had gained the verdict on points.

Dick Russell took his narrow defeat in a sportsmanlike spirit, and he was the first to shake Bob Cherry by the hand and warmly congratulate him.

Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr had not experienced nearly so much difficulty in reaching the semi-final.

The captain of the Remove had beaten, in turn, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Squiff.

Dennis Carr had had harder nuts to crack. After defeating Vernon-Smith, he had been matched against Peter Todd and Mark Linley. These two were doughty fighters, but Dennis had disposed of each of them in turn. And now he was drawn against Harry Wharton in the semi-final, while Bob Cherry found himself faced with the anything but herculean task of beating William George Bunter.

There was an interval of several days before the semi-finals took place. They were fixed for Saturday afternoon, and the gym was packed.

It did not require a skilled prophet to predict that Bob Cherry would have a walk-over. But he was a bold man who ventured to forecast the result of the Wharton-Carr contest. With both Wharton and Carr at the top of their form, it was a bout in which anything might happen.

Mr. Larry Lascelles was master of the ceremonies, and a hush fell upon the crowded gym as he announced:

"The Remove semi-finals will now take place."

Then, raising his voice, he added:

"Robert Cherry! William Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, plumed for the fray, rolled into the ring. And somebody struck up "The Conquering Hero" on a tin-whistle.

For a moment there was no sign of Bob Cherry. And Mr. Lascelles frowned.

"Where is Cherry?" he demanded. Nobody seemed to know.

"He's finking it, sir, I expect!" said Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He doesn't like the idea of facing me, sir," continued the fat junior. "You'd better award the fight to me, and go ahead with the other semi-final."

"Silence, Bunter!"

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For a moment Mr. Lascelles was non-plussed.

And then a great shout arose—a shout of mingled astonishment and amusement.

The door of the gym opened and Bob Cherry came in. He was led by Johnny Bull. His right arm was tied securely behind his back, and he was blindfolded!

"Cherry!" gasped Mr. Lascelles. "What—what is the meaning of this nonsense?"

"If you've no objection, sir," said Bob calmly, "I'm going to fight Bunter with one hand, and blindfolded!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd yelled with laughter, and even Mr. Lascelles was unable to retain his dignity. He threw back his head, and laughed as heartily as anybody.

As for Billy Bunter, his face was a study.

"Do you really mean this, Cherry?" asked Mr. Lascelles, as soon as he had recovered from his merriment.

"Of course, sir!"

The mathematics master hesitated. He was not sure that he ought to permit such an absurd contest. And then he reflected that Bob Cherry, although heavily handicapped, would make short work of Billy Bunter.

"Very well," said Mr. Lascelles. "Stand clear of the ring, there! Time!"

Billy Bunter was grinning cheerfully. He imagined that it would be the easiest thing in the world to defeat Bob Cherry when the latter had his right arm out of action and his eyes blindfolded.

But there was a staggering surprise in store for Bunter.

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But there was a staggering surprise in store for Bunter.

Very well, said Mr. Lascelles. Stand clear of the ring, there! Time!

Billy Bunter was grinning cheerfully. He imagined that it would be the easiest thing in the world to defeat Bob Cherry when the latter had his right arm out of action and his eyes blindfolded.

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these old rivals appeared as they stood face to face.

Dennis Carr seemed slimmer than his opponent; otherwise, there was nothing to choose between them. Both had plenty of supporters, and the audience settled down to witness a thrilling and stubbornly-contested battle.

They were not disappointed.

Immediately after the handshake, Dennis Carr led off with a straight drive to his opponent's jaw.

Harry Wharton side-stepped in the nick of time, and Dennis overreached himself, and dropped on to all-fours. But he was on his feet again like a lightning-flash, and he led Wharton a rare dance. Right and left, left and right, his fists shot out, and but for the soundness of his defence, the captain of the Remove would have been flogged more than once. As it was, he managed to ward off most of the blows, and at the conclusion of the round he landed one himself—a smashing straight left, which smote Dennis Carr in the chest with the velocity of a cannon-ball and knocked him clean off his feet.

"Time!"

In the opinion of many, that call saved Dennis from an early defeat. It enabled him to get a "breather," and to recover from the smashing blow which had flogged him.

Mark Linley was Dennis Carr's second, and the Lancashire lad set a perfect gale blowing with his towel.

Dennis lay back in the chair and dreamily closed his eyes. He was thoroughly enjoying his refresher. But as soon as the referee's command was rapped out he leapt up like a Jack-in-the-box and went forward to meet his opponent.

"Now, Dennis!"

"Give him socks, old man!"

"Pulverise him!"

But in response to these cries came a full-throated shout from Harry Wharton's chums.

"Come along, Harry!"

"You've got him whacked!"

Dennis Carr, however, fought very warily in the second round. He employed defensive tactics, and Wharton could not break through his guard.

For three rounds this state of affairs continued, with Dennis defending stubbornly, and Wharton attacking fruitlessly.

And then, with a suddenness that staggered everybody, Dennis Carr changed his tactics. He seemed to throw caution to the winds, and, dashing in, he peppered his opponent with blows.

Wharton was driven round and round the ring. He was dazed and in a whirl. He felt as if he was in the grip of a cyclone.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

The captain of the Remove leaned heavily against the ropes, pumping in breath. To all appearances he was "whacked."

But appearances are sometimes deceptive. And they were so in this case. Just as everybody expected to see Harry Wharton go down for the count he pulled himself together, and, summoning all his remaining strength, he rushed at his opponent.

Dennis Carr swerved to one side, but he was the fraction of a second too late. His opponent's gloved fist came crashing against his temple; and then everything grew misty and indistinct, and Dennis remembered nothing more until he heard the referee announce in dispassionate tones:

"Wharton wins!"

It then dawned upon Dennis Carr that he had been knocked out. Mark Linley assisted him to his feet, and he tottered across the ring to Harry Wharton.

"Well played!" he said. "It was a great scrap, Wharton. Will you shake?"


For answer, the captain of the Remove took Dennis Carr's hand in a tight grip. And cheer upon cheer echoed through the large and lofty gymnasium.

The Remove semi-finals were over. And those two staunch chums, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, had qualified to meet each other in the final.

Who would win?

That question was on everybody's lips, but not until the following week, when the various fans were due to be fought, would Greystriars know the solution.

THE END.



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After groping about a good deal, Bob Cherry managed to locate his opponent. And then he shot out his left with tremendous force.

Crash!

"Yoooooop!"

The plump form of William George Bunter struck the boards with what a novelist would describe as a sickening thud.

The referee began to count, and the on-lookers were almost in hysterics.

The fight between Billy Bunter and Bob Cherry had consisted of one blow, and that blow proved a knock-out.

Bunter made no effort to rise. All the stuffing had been knocked out of him. Even when he remembered his father's letter, promising him all sorts of things if he won the Remove gold medal, he was powerless to get up and face Bob Cherry again.

Bob was duly acclaimed the victor, and, calling in a loud voice for his crutches, he hobbled out of the ring.

As for William George Bunter, he was obliged to crawl away and hide his diminished head. His great expectations of proving himself the best fighting-man in the Remove had not materialised. And the treble amount of pocket-money and the tuck-hammer would never come his way.

Meanwhile, the crowd in the gym was agog with excitement. For the other two semi-finals, Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr, had been summoned into the ring.

Very fit and confident and well-matched

these old rivals appeared as they stood face to face.

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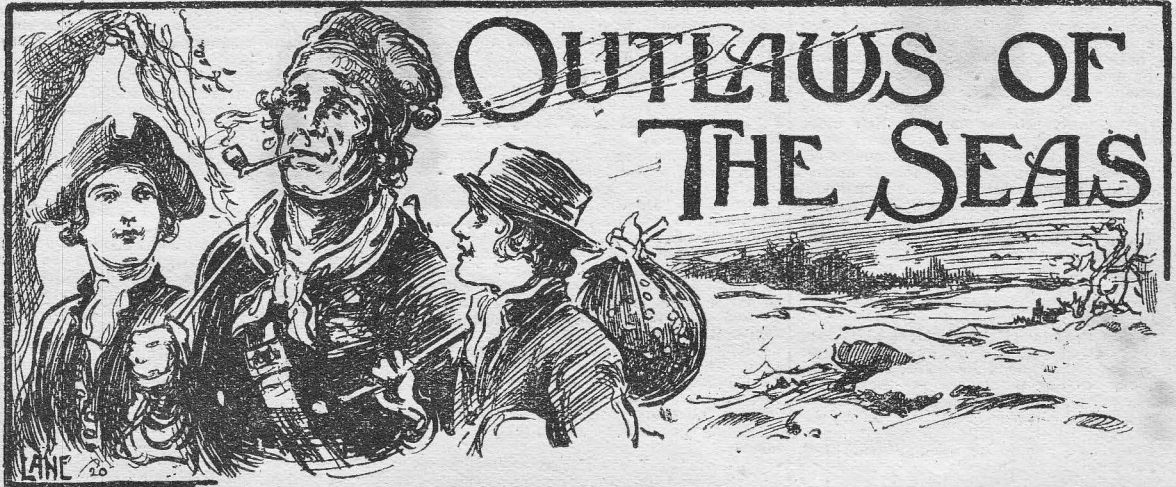
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THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND NEW SERIAL!



**A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.**  
**By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.**

**INTRODUCTION.**

BOB GREVILLE and his cousin, JEFF HAWKINS, are returning to school when they are met by BLACK MICHAEL, a serving man of Bob's father, SIR JOHN GREVILLE. Mike gives them news of the baronet's ruin, and of his orders to take them back to Tallend Hall, the home of the

Grevilles. The two boys take their last look at the grand old college that had been their home for several years, and then make tracks to Exeter town, where they intend to pick up the coach.  
 During the journey they rescue an alderman of Exeter from the clutches of

GALLOPER DICK, a notorious highwayman. To show his gratitude, the alderman asks them to accompany him and his charming young daughter to their mansion, where they are invited to dine with him.

(Now read on.)

**An Amazing Story Is Told!**

**W**HILE Black Michael, with his rough sea-boots and crude attire, to which the snowflakes still clung, passed into the great dining-room to warm his outer man by the blaze of crackling logs, and his inner man with a glass of mulled sack, Jeff and Bob followed the serving woman up the winding staircase and along a passage with white-panelled walls to a large bed-chamber, where a fire burnt in a basket-grate and a big four-poster bed gave an air of welcome repose.

Silk stockings, velvet breeches, and short skirt-coats were set out for them, and when the woman had retired, after pouring warm water into the basins, their tongues began to wag quite freely.

Said Jeff, who was glad that for that night at any rate their journeying was done:

"We are in truth in luck, Cousin Bob. Me-thinks our host is a rich merchant who perhaps will apprentice us to one of his shops where we may earn a living good enough to support your father."

At which Bob, whose mind was more filled with a pair of laughing blue eyes and a pretty rosebud mouth, smiled and shook his fair curly head.

"He will tell us of something better than that, Jeff. He spoke of a fortune, and no fortune was ever made jumping over a counter."

"I will argue that," retorted Jeff stoutly, "for our host himself is one who has risen by dint of sheer hard work so that now he is a rich man, and no doubt an honoured alderman of this borough. Had we fallen in with the gentry so-called, our good Mike would have been left to fare in the servants'-hall. Bah! I've no use for it, Bob! These honest, hard-working successful men who make their money in trade by honest toil are the finest gentfolk in the world. Give me one of them in preference to all your coats of arms!"

"Mebbe, mebbe; but it is as hard to understand," said Bob, brought up in the school of pride of race. "I often fret that I was a Greville born. Better far for folk in our station to forget we were once of high degree, and to remember we must now work for a living."

"Indeed!" laughed Jeff. "You talk to-night like a penny chap-book with the lids off. I warrant Miss Isobel's charms have set you thinking."

"And I but fifteen years at my last birthday," said Bob. "Of course, you are very foolish; but one day, Jeff, if good fortune does come, and this merchant gives us a

chance to acquire money, I vow by the honour I have for my father, Sir John, I will ride into Exeter town and claim the young lady for my own."

"How Black Michael would laugh could he but hear you!" teased Jeff, taking, however, particular care in the tying of his lace cravat. "I wonder now what it is the good man has to propose?"

But though they wondered, the merchant said nothing until nearly two hours were past, during which pleasant time they all sat down at a long table together in high-backed chairs of figured walnut, and ate off silver dishes, while handsome men and beautiful women, pictured in oils by the most famous painters of the day, looked down upon them. And at the end of the table, facing the merchant, was Black Michael, whose face, well washed and scoured, shone like polished mahogany in the flickering glow from the silver candlesticks; and though he put his knife in his mouth and lifted the white powder from the trencher salts with his fingers, neither the host nor the young hostess appeared to notice these delinquencies, but devoted all their efforts to making him feel at home.

And when the meal was done a special brew of tea, accounted a cure for all ills, and especially a prevention against colds, was made for the boys in a silver teapot, while Mike again and again hid his shining face behind a two-handled loving-cup which the merchant seemed always ready to pass to him.

And when the meal was done a silent-footed serving-man brought in a tray holding long-stemmed pipes and a jar containing dried leaf from Virginia, and when portions of this had been stuffed into the slender bowls and lit, the two men repaired to a small panelled room in which was much comfortable furniture.

To this apartment in a little while, Bob and Jeff, after bidding Miss Isobel good-night, were summoned to hear the merchant's wonderful proposition.

"You must know me, young gentlemen, for one, Ralph Conyers a merchant, late of the Cheapside, in London, and now an alderman of this city," he explained, when they had drawn their chairs to the fire. "More than this, I am a director of the British East India Company, which, as you may have heard, is a trading company with factories and warehouses in many parts of the East."

Both the boys had learned something of the ramifications of this progressive concern during their time at school, and many times their imaginations had been fired by the

heroic deeds of the Company's servants in strange lands beyond the seas.

"Now, as I understand it," Alderman Conyers went on, "your position is this. Certain circumstances, of which Black Michael here tells me you are not acquainted, have occurred to imperil the stability of Sir John Greville's fortunes. I would therefore ask your consideration, with Sir John's later permission, of a project which, if carried out, may help re-establish those fortunes and put the noble family of Greville, to say nothing of that of Hawkins—equally honoured in our history—on its feet again."

Being of a romantic temperament, both Bob and Jeff thrilled.

"We should welcome any chance of aiding Sir John," Jeff made bold to say.

The alderman nodded.

"Indeed, two lads with such courage would return no other answer. Therefore, let me first acquaint you with a matter of great but secret import. You will know from what your late dominy has taught you, that since the Peace of Ryswick, when there was an alliance of Spain, England, and the Low Countries against France, that the French in Martinico carried on a smuggling trade with the Spaniards on the continent of Peru. To put which down certain merchants of Bristol did fit out ships with guns to repress these practices and make prize of all yessels engaging in such work."

"We have heard something about it," Jeff admitted. "And I rather gather, sir, that our friend here"—indicating Black Michael—"is himself thinking of joining some such ship to—"

"Me—me! I never said nowt of the sort!" roared Mike, flushing guiltily. "It's privateering or buccaneering, that's what it is, and I swear no man can say Black Mike has ever served under the Jolly Roger!"

"Well, let it pass!" said the merchant, laughing heartily. "Perhaps, when I have finished you may not be so far from serving under the Jolly Roger after all, for, in brief, my suggestion is that all three of you should go to sea with a pirate, and thus make the fortune you are so much in need of!"

**Testing the Pluck of Bob and Jeff!**

"I NEVER heard the like on't!" said Jeff boldly. "To sail in a pirate ship! I wonder what my good uncle would say—"

The merchant raised a warning hand, and looked serious.

"Mark me well; this matter can be decided  
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only with the consent of Sir John himself! But to-night, as we rode homeward, and I was thinking over your rare courage in coming to my rescue, the thought came to me that here might be two stout English lads, to say nothing of a brave seafaring man, who might not only help me, but be of great assistance to this country. So I decided to let you into this great secret, which, come what may, you must promise on your life's blood never to divulge.

"We promise!" said the three in one voice. "Very well, then." The merchant settled himself in his long chair again. "Then know, first of all, that you would be called upon to face many and grave dangers."

"The more the merrier for such adventure-loving lads as they be!" interjected Black Mike. "And, for sure, good Sir John in his old age, though he loves them greatly, will soon tire of being plagued with their madcap escapades at home."

"'Tis in the blood!" laughed the alderman, his eyes twinkling. "More and more I see no better choice could be made. What say you, lads, to sail, not on a pirate vessel, but with a pirate, and as bad and bold a one as ever sailed under the black flag, be my informants to be trusted?"

"I'm sure I should be willing," said Jeff, glancing at his cousin.

And Bob, flushed with excitement, said: "Faith, good sir, I would rub shoulders with Teach himself to win a prize worth having!"

"A prize worth having!" repeated the merchant. "Let me tell you this, young sirs. Acquit yourselves creditably of this commission, and I can warrant your pockets will never ache for golden guineas, for I myself will put some thousands to your credit in the bank. And as for Sir John—well, perhaps that had better be a matter of private concern 'twixt him and me."

Thousands of guineas! Jeff's eyes shone, and Bob clasped his knees in such an ecstasy of delight that he almost rolled off the chair, while, as for Black Mike, his big, dark eyes started so in his head that the wonder is they, too, did not drop out and fall on the carpet.

"Yes, thousands of guineas," the alderman went on. "I could promise no less for the nature of the trust I should confide in you. Mark you, at every turn there would be danger, life and death, and great adventure. You may be witness of such things as at first will fill you with terror; but with such stout hearts as you possess, I warrant all in the end will come well. So, as I have your promise of secrecy, and your willingness to embark on the undertaking with Sir John Greville's consent, I must needs acquaint you with my plans."

To the boys it all seemed so terribly unreal, this tumbling into the lap of a great adventure, that as yet their wits were a trifle scattered, and they could ill believe their own eyes. Yet, late though the hour, and fatigued though they were, they had no need to pinch themselves to keep awake, for the merchant's

very first words brought them bolt upright in their chairs, thrilled with excitement.

"You will go to sea with Avery!"

Jeff could not help paling a little, for of late all England had rung with the exploits of this amazing man.

"What! With Avery, the buccaneer?" he gasped.

"With Avery, the most noted and blood-thirsty pirate since Kidd swung in chains at Execution Dock."

"But he is a fugitive, with a price on his head, and no man can tell where to find him," said Black Michael, with his fingers in his hair. "Do they not say, honoured sir, he has devil's wings for flying away at the approach of the King's men?"

"Indeed, the devil and he are confederates together," admitted Mr. Conyers. "So much so that all efforts made to capture him have so far failed. And on the high seas, year in and year out, he continues to take such rich toll of prize that the King's ships are no longer accounted of high esteem on the seas. Therefore, to the man who lays Avery by the heels great honour and even greater fortune must come."

"Which means, you want us to try and take him prisoner?" was Mike's sage comment.

"Not exactly," was the unexpected answer, "because for one thing no man knows for certain who or where Avery is. He is as elusive as was Robin Hood of olden time, and as Swift Nick is to-day. Many have been taken, both in port and on the high seas, and identified as Avery, and not a few have tasted the hempen cord in his name; but the real Avery, the prince of buccaneers, has not yet been caught, and very few folk in the world outside his own accomplices can say where he is to be found."

"In which case it is hardly likely, sir, we can unearth him," ventured Jeff practically.

"Everything depends on the verity of my information. Now take heed." The alderman lowered his voice, glancing nervously about the panelled room, as though fearful lest the black shadows beyond the flickering candle-light should harbour enemies. "As an influential director of the Great East India Company, someone has thought it worth while to put into my possession certain details which I am convinced refer to Avery, and Avery alone. They concern a plot of such daring and stupendous magnitude that I, for one, am convinced that none but Avery would dream of carrying it out—nothing less than the theft of the Mogul's treasure!"

"The crown jewels of the Great Mogul of India!" gasped Bob.

"Indeed so, young sir," the alderman replied. "Reputed to the value of twenty million sterling. According to my information, a certain man, now living openly in Plymouth town, is John Avery. Were we quite sure, it would, of course, be possible, though perhaps hardly wise, to arrest him. At the moment he styles himself a first mate, and has signed on in that capacity with a

ship named the Duke, under the command of a Captain Gibson. At the present moment the ship, of thirty guns and a hundred and twenty hands, is lying at Bristol, well furnished with provision and ammunition for an expedition to New Spain."

"I hardly see what the Americans have to do with the Great Mogul of India," said Jeff.

"We shall come to it in good season," said the alderman, who secretly admired Jeff's quick brain. "The Duke is under orders to sail for the Groine at Corunna, there to take aboard a number of Spanish gentlemen desirous of going to New Spain. On learning this the man we think is Avery made application to join the ship as first mate, and was signed on. He then got busy, and drew around him a number of other men, who are now numbered amongst the hundred and twenty hands—stout fellows, with little conscience, but good with musket-balls and sword play. Then comes the news to me from a private source that the first mate, who calls himself William Smith, is none other than Avery, the notorious pirate, and that every man with him, fifteen all told, are conscienceless buccaneers out of Tortuga who have found refuge in our West Country."

"A dangerous cargo to carry with Spanish gentlemen!" laughed Bob.

"Indeed so, but more dangerous still when you know the rest of the story. I give it you for what it is worth to test out, and stand or fall by. Avery's plan is supposed to be to wait till the Duke is at sea, to seize her, change her course, and sail for Arabia, whither he expects to encounter the Great Mogul in his stage vessel, journeying from India by sea to the nearest port to Mecca, where he intends to pay homage to the tomb of Mahomet."

"Now I begin to see daylight," said Jeff. "If this fellow is indeed the great Avery, he means to stop the Mogul's ship, and possess himself of the treasure on board."

"No less," said Mr. Conyers. "You will realise, though, that at the start we are beset with grave difficulties. We have this information—that is, I and my co-directors of the India Company, and several members of his Majesty's Government—but we have no means to ascertain the truth of it. Nor would any service be performed by arresting this John Smith on suspicion, because he may not be Avery, after all. Besides which, he must be taken red-handed in his notorious practices, or the case against him fails. There is another and more vital reason, too. To capture Avery a-buccaneering on the high seas with all his men would mean a great triumph for the English Government, and re-establish the esteem in which his Majesty's men-of-war used to be held in foreign waters. So it has been decided to let this expedition sail, but to follow it secretly by one of the King's armed ships."

"Which you would wish us to join?" said Jeff.

"No!" was the crisp answer. "My suggestion is that you and Robert Greville, with Black Michael go to Bristol and sign on with the Duke. She is still a good thirty men short of her full complement. We should thus have friends in the enemy's camp in a position to discover all Avery's plans."

"Indeed, it is a wonderful idea!"

"You would be capable, in the event of piracy on the high seas, to give valuable and unbiased evidence. Furthermore, should the buccaneers succeed in taking the Mogul's treasure, which even a King's ship could hardly prevent, you could find out its hiding-place, because for certain Avery would then run for the East Indies, and land with his hoard on one of the many islands off the Spanish main. By dint of keeping your eyes open and your wits about you, much information could be obtained, and a great service done to your King and country."

"Of course we'll go!" cried Bob and Jeff together.

"One moment, please! The final word must rest with Sir John. And I would have all three of you count the cost. In the event of your mission being discovered, you realise what would happen?"

"Death! We'd be made to walk the plank and be eaten by sharks!" broke in Black Mike's deep voice.

"Even so," was the other's answer, "Death of a horrible kind would certainly befall you. But, though the dangers would be many, the prize would be great."

"I think not so much as that as of the service to England!" said Jeff, with a proud lift of his head.

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"And I, too!" agreed Bob.  
 "Write me down the same!" growled Mike, fingering the handle of his immense blade. "I ask nothing better, your honour, than for the chance to let Toothpick drink a gallon of the pirate's blood! Master Jeff, and you, too, Master Bob, we must go! See here!"—raising and swinging the immense blade with a vicious swish through the air. "With this and a trusty pistol or two we can face all the pirates afloat! Come, now! No need to waste the hours under the good alderman's roof! Once again for the King's highway to home, and with the morrow—"

"Indeed, I forbid!" said the merchant, rising. "The young gentlemen shall sleep on't, and be they in the same mind with the morning, they, all three of you, shall see Sir John for his consent, and that gained you will return to Exeter town for further orders. And then on to Bristol to join Avery and his gang!"

"What do you say, Jeff? Shall we go?" asked Bob.

"Of course!" cried Jeff Hawkins. "Your father, I know full well, will give his permission, and, when we hold that, the seas lie before us!"

"To win fame and fortune," said the alderman, clasping their hands, "such as two English boys, backed by a stout Cornishman, have never before won! So to bed, my young friends, and to-morrow the great decision will be made!"

**The Man With a Scar Makes a Choice.**

OF course, Sir John Greville made no bones about the matter. Was there ever a Greville yet who would strive to keep kith or kin from serving king and country? So he gave his consent more than willingly, and one fine winter's morning, about a week after their adventure on the Exeter road, Bob and Jeff, with Black Michael at their head, having taken farewell of the squire, rose out of Talland on mounts which kindly-dispositioned neighbours had lent them, and set their faces towards Bristol.

Their ultimate destination, as may be imagined, was a profound secret, for even in those days news had a knack of travelling fast and far, and the last thing Merchant Conyers desired was for the story to leak abroad that three stout and trusty blades were about to travel in his service beyond the seas.

Accordingly, they drew rein at Exeter, where one of the alderman's servants awaited them, and in the darkness piloted them to his master's house. Black Michael delivered the letter which Sir John had entrusted to him, confirming the conditions under which the three were to embark upon the adventure; and this having been read, Mr. Conyers ushered them, as before, into his private room, where the final details of the expedition were discussed.

"I need say no more about the many perils you will be called upon to face, and the manifold opportunities you will have of serving this land, if, as I, in common with others suppose, that this John Smith, chief mate of the Duke, is Avery the noted pirate," he said.

Then, turning to Mike, he addressed him: "To you, Black Michael, shrewd of brain and strong of limb, I look to exercise always a protecting influence over these boys. They are setting forth on an adventurous path strewn not only with many difficulties, but also with many temptations. In such company as you propose to sail with, it is possible there will be much licence; you will teach them always to close their eyes to it. Life on board a buccaneering vessel is made up of wild extravagances; blood and treasure flow as swiftly and as easily as water. Be on your watch against both!"

At which, Black Mike drew his terrible hanger from his belt, and, holding its point aloft, kissed the handle, and in the name of the Trinity signified his willingness to die rather than allow dishonour to sully their actions.

"And you," Conyers went on, turning to the cousins, "have likewise heavy responsibilities for your years. Sought after with evil intent you often may be by those who would take your lives. I counsel you, in the hour of peril, to be strong and fear nothing. Your cause is the cause of right, and sooner or later is bound to triumph. That you have courage, both have already given proof. Such courage will oft be put to the test. Stand brave and strong and true, and England will be proud of you!"

So likewise Bob and Jeff made sacred oath to carry out the mission entrusted to them, and never to deviate one hair's-breadth from their purpose.

And now, the solemn part of the business being over, the alderman dwelt on the advantages of their going.

"You set forth as young and inexperienced boys; you will return as wise and experienced men of the world. Day by day fresh facts, continually coming to light, convince me more and more that this mysterious John Smith is the pirate Avery, and that in sailing in the Duke he has formed some sinister design which, if successfully carried out, will imperil our friendly relations with Eastern powers, especially with India. It is not probable you will be able to thwart his purpose; but certainly, if he takes toll of treasure at sea, you will be in a position to acquaint yourselves of what becomes of it. More than this, as I explained at our last meeting, you will discover the secret hiding-places of the buccaneers in the East Indies and on the Spanish main. There are hidden

kins, I have had these prepared. On the inside of each is an inscription in Latin, and even so, then in the nature of a cypher. But it tells what is needful to be known. You will wear these rings, and guard them as you would your life, for verily at times upon them your lives may depend!"

So one by one they took the rings, and, having examined them, put them on.

"There is little left to be said," the merchant concluded. "To-night you will remain here as honoured guests under my roof. In your honour a special repast has been prepared, at which several other gentlemen of the British India Company have been invited. My daughter will also be present. Of your mission no word will be said. In the morning you will doff your present attire, and clothes of a very different kind will be provided."

On hearing which, Black Mike shook his curly head until his big ear-rings rattled against his cheek-bones.

"Begging your honour's pardon, but I'd as soon part with my life as say good-bye to



The alderman's next words caused Bob and Jeff to sit up with amazement, and thrill with excitement. "You will go to sea with Avery, the most noted and bloodthirsty pirate since Kidd swung at Execution Dock!" "Avery!" gasped the two boys simultaneously. (See page 10.)

more than the ransom of many kings. Should you discover such hiding-places, you are to make careful plans, secrete these plans upon your persons, and deliver them up to me on your return to England."

"There's one thing which perhaps you haven't thought of," said Jeff, quick to realise the practical side of the business. "We are going to ship as ordinary hands upon a vessel which may or may not hoist the black flag. Supposing it does, and all aboard are captured at sea by one of the King's ships. How do Mike and Bob and I stand then?"

The merchant smiled. "It is a good question. By the recent laws governing the trials of pirates, such trials must take place in certain appointed places in his Majesty's Dominions. To the governors of all Colonies and Dependencies letters will be sent out in secret proclaiming your mission."

"But how shall we be recognised?" persisted Jeff. "Naturally, neither of us wants to swing in a hempen cord."

Conyers had unlocked a drawer. From it he drew three rings.

"During your absence, young Master Haw-

Toothpick!" he said. "Part me from my blade only when I'm dead man's bones!"

"I had no such intention," the alderman laughed. "By all means carry such a length of trusty steel with you, my good fellow. And for your further arms you will carry these—a new pistol with two revolving chambers. They will provide an uncommon advantage over your enemies."

They examined the weapons curiously, having never seen the like before. Outwardly they differed little from the ordinary pocket flintlock such as were carried by travellers of that day, but their import consisted in the fact that they each had two triggers which could be pulled practically simultaneously, thus discharging both barrels in very rapid succession.

"A very great advantage," continued the merchant, "seeing that while an adversary has to stop to prime his weapon, you have a charge still in store. And here be powder and shot made up in thin silk."

(Another instalment of this magnificent adventure serial next week. Avoid disappointment by ordering your copy EARLY.)

AN AMUSING STORY OF THE RIVALRY BETWEEN ROOKWOOD AND BAGSHOT SCHOOLS!

# PANKLEY'S LATEST!

A Grand Long Complete Story, telling how Pons, the Boy from Canada, came to Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### In the Hands of the Philistines!

**J**IMMY SILVER, by gum!" Three cheery-looking youths, lounging by the stile in Coombe Lane, uttered that ejaculation together. From the direction of Rookwood School a cyclist was pedalling up the lane towards the village at a leisurely pace. It was Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And Pankley, Putter, and Poole, of the Fourth Form at Bagshot School, grinned as they recognised him. "This is where we come in!" remarked Pankley. "We do—we does!" assented Poole. "How kind of Jimmy to come and provide us with a little entertainment on a half-holiday!" chuckled Putter. "How kind of him to come alone! He's generally got Lovell and Raby and Newcome with him. Of course we can lick the four of them—" "Of course!"

"Still, it's very kind of him to come along alone. We ought to show him how we appreciate his kindness."

"And we're going to!" chortled Cecil Pankley. "Come on!"

Jimmy Silver of Rookwood was pedalling along cheerfully, unconscious of danger. He did not see the three heroes of Bagshot until they came out from under the trees by the stile. And then it was too late.

"Halt!" sang out Pankley.

"Bagshot bounders!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Stand and deliver!"

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver drove hard at his pedals, and rushed on. Rookwood fellows never met their old rivals of Bagshot without a ragging, and, though Pankley & Co. did not admit it, the advantage generally lay with the Fistical Four, of whom Jimmy Silver was leader.

But this time Jimmy had landed himself fairly in the hands of the Philistines. Not that he had any hard usage to expect, for the "Bagshot Bounders" were fair foes, and quite good-tempered. But certainly there was a ragging in store for him unless he could get clear.

The bike gathered speed, but it was too late. Jimmy intended to charge the enemy, and trust to luck; but before he could get fairly going, Pankley & Co. closed on him.

Poole seized the handle-bars, and Pankley and Putter seized Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver let go the handles to hit out, and the bike curled up, and four fellows went sprawling to the ground with it.

There was a wild howl from Poole. A flying pedal had caught him on the shin, and he jumped up on one leg, hopping in anguish. Jimmy Silver struggled on the earth with the other two.

Jimmy was a mighty man with his hands, but he was not quite equal to the odds. In a few minutes he was safe on his back, with Cecil Pankley sitting on his chest, and Putter standing on his legs. Then Jimmy gave it up.

"Looks like a win for us—what!" grinned Pankley.

"Yow! Don't squash me, you ass!" gasped Jimmy.

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Poole.

"What are you making that thumping row for, Poole?"

"Yow-ow! My shin!"

"Oh, never mind your shin!"

"Yow! I'm hurt!"

"Never mind!"

"But I do mind!" yelled Poole. "I've got a bruise as big as an egg! Yow-ow-ow!"

"All in the day's work," said Pankley cheerfully. Pankley seemed able to bear Poole's injury with great fortitude—much more than Poole showed. "Now, we've got this Rook-

wood rotter, and we're going to make an example of him. There's a law been passed at Bagshot, Jimmy Silver, that Rookwood rotters are not allowed in the village on half-holidays."

"You cheeky ass!" gasped Jimmy.

"Shush!" said Pankley chidingly. "When a chap calls me a cheeky ass, I always pull his nose—like that—"

"Guggggg!"

"Or like that—"

"Mummmmm!"

"Queer language they talk at Rookwood," said Pankley. "What may that happen to mean, Jimmy Silver?"

"Ow!" gasped Jimmy. "Lemme get up, and I'll wallop the lot of you!"

"Not good enough," said Pankley, with a shake of the head. "We came out to wallop, not to be walloped."

"Look here, you ass—Groogh! Leab by dose alone! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," gasped Jimmy, "I'm willing to make it pax!"

"I dare say you are!" grinned Pankley. "The under dog generally is. Pax is off, my son."

"I've got to get to Coombe by three—"

"I'm sorry to say that your arrangements will be upset a little. I've an idea that you won't get to Coombe at all."

"Look here," said Jimmy. "Bootles has sent me to meet a new kid at the station. I've had to leave the footer to do it. So chuck this rot, and let me get on."

"So that's why the merry Co. are not with you!" grinned Pankley. "Lucky for them! We should have made an example of the lot."

"You silly ass! I wish they were here! We'd mop you up badheaded! Yow-ow! Leggo by dose!" spluttered the captain of the Rookwood Fourth.

"So you're going to meet a new kid?" said Pankley thoughtfully.

Jimmy gasped for breath, and glared up at the Bagshot junior.

"Yes. Let me go!"

"What sort of a new kid?" asked Pankley, appearing to be thinking the matter over.

"A chap from Canada."

"Oh! A merry Colonial?" asked Pankley, with interest.

"Yes. Gerroff!"

"What's his name?"

"Pons—Charles Pons."

"Pong!" ejaculated Pankley. "Is that a name?"

"Not Pong, fathead—Pons! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Mustn't call me names, dear boy! I feel bound to pull your dear little nose every time—"

"Oh, you rotter! Yow-ow!"

"A French kid—what?" asked Pankley, grimacing down at the infuriated Rookwood junior.

"No, ass! Yow-ow! A Canadian—a French-Canadian, I suppose, from his name. Look here," said Jimmy, "the kid expects to be met. He's a stranger in the place—only lately come over from Canada, and he was put in the train in London by somebody, and was to be met here. Make it pax, and let me get on."

Pankley shook his head.

"Couldn't think of it," he replied. "But the dear kid sha'n't fail to be met. You know what nice chaps we are—always doing kind deeds. We'll go and meet the new kid for you."

"Oh, you rotter! Yooocop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I call that ungrateful," said Pankley. "Here we're willing to spend a half-holiday looking after a new kid for Rookwood, and you only call us names. You can't be surprised if I pull your nose!"

"Groogh!"

"I say, we're not going to waste time meet-

ing a fatheaded Rookwood kid at the station, Pankley," objected Putter.

"Yes, we are," said Pankley. "I dare say we can get enough fun out of a new moon-faced Rookwood kid to pay us for our trouble."

"Oh, I see! We're going to jape him?"

"Has that just dawned on your mighty brain, old scout?" asked Pankley pleasantly.

"Oh, rats!"

"I'm sorry to say we can't take you along, Jimmy Silver. Nice boys like us can't be seen with a dusty fellow like you. You're awfully untidy. You must go back to Rookwood like a good boy."

"I jolly well won't!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"I think you will—dear boy. Pick up that bike, Poole."

"Yow-ow!"

"Look here, Poole, you've done enough rowing over your blessed shin. Get a move on, and pick up that bike!"

Poole snorted, and obeyed. The bike was set up. Then Jimmy Silver was jerked to his feet, Pankley and Putter keeping tight hold of his arms.

"You've got a whipcord, Poole?"

"Yes," grunted Poole.

"Well, leave off rubbing your silly shin, and tie Jimmy Silver's wrists to the handles while we hold him."

"Look here—" yelled Jimmy.

"Shush!"

The Rookwood junior began to resist violently. But the odds were too great. His hands were dragged to the centre of the handlebars, and the grinning Poole tied them there with the whipcord.

Jimmy looked at the Bagshot fellows with a look that a Hun might have envied.

"Now go home!" said Pankley. "Good-bye, Bluebell!"

"I can't go home like this!" yelled Jimmy, in dismay.

"I think you can, if you try. For instance, I'm going to do goal-kicks till you start—like that!"

"Yaroooh!"

"There! I said you could do it," remarked Pankley.

It was awkward enough for Jimmy to wheel his bike along with his hands tied on the handlebars. But with Pankley's foot to help him from behind, he found that he could do it.

Jimmy Silver, with feelings too deep for mere words, started for Rookwood, the Bagshot fellows standing in the lane and roaring with laughter as he went.

"I fancy there'll be a smile at Rookwood when Jimmy Silver gets in," remarked Pankley. "I rather think the great Jimmy will be down off his perch for a bit. Now come along, and let us meet the dear, new boy—it's close on three!"

And the Bagshot fellows, in great spirits, sauntered away to the village, to meet Charles Pons from Canada. And Jimmy Silver wobbled away down the lane with his bike, with unhappy anticipations of the merriment that would greet him when he arrived at Rookwood.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Pankley's Latest!

**T**HAT'S the merry youth!"

Pankley & Co. were on the platform in the little country station of Coombe, when the train came in from Latcham.

Cecil Pankley, of Bagshot, prided himself upon being a humorist. The Rookwood fellows had had many samples of his humour—which they had appreciated more or less.

But "Pankley's latest" was what the great Pankley regarded as a "corker." The unsuspecting new boy arriving for Rookwood was to be the unsuspecting victim, and Pankley



had elaborated a really great scheme for his benefit.

The train stopped, and among the passengers who alighted was a slim, dark-haired, dark-eyed lad, whom the Bagshot fellows had no difficulty in guessing was the new boy for Rookwood.

The newcomer alighted from the train with a bag in his hand and a rug over his arm, and stood looking up and down the platform, evidently in the expectation of being met there.

Pankley made a sign to his comrades, and they approached, raising their caps with great politeness as they did so. Pankley & Co. could be very polite when they liked.

The new boy looked at them, and raised his hat in acknowledgment of their salute, and gave them a bow. The graceful and polite bow greatly tickled Pankley's fancy. It was evident that the new junior had French blood in his veins.

"Master Pong, I believe?" asked Pankley courteously.

"My name is Pons," said the new junior, with a slight trace of French accent.

"New chap for Rookwood School?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. We've come to meet you," said Pankley gracefully. "Mr. Bootles wished you to be met here and taken to Rookwood."

"Yes, I understand so," said Pons. "Thank you very much for coming."

"Not at all. If there's one thing we delight in, it's being nice and kind to new boys. That's our special line."

"Our special line," said Poole solemnly.

"You are very kind," said Pons, looking a little puzzled.

"Not a bit of it. We're going to take you to the school," said Pankley. "First, we'll give directions about your box. I suppose you brought a box from Canada?"

"I have a box, certainly," said Pons.

"We'll let the station people take it to Rookwood. Here, porter! Leave it to me, young'un. I'm an old hand, you know."

Pons was quite willing to leave it to the kind youth who was taking so much trouble for him.

"Better give him your bag and rug as well," said Pankley. "You won't want those till you get to Rookwood."

"Very well."

Bag and rug were handed to the porter, to be sent on to Rookwood along with the box. Then the three juniors led the unsuspecting newcomer from the station.

Pons' handsome, dark face was very cheery. It was plain that he appreciated the kind attentions that were paid him. Naturally, it did not occur to his mind for one moment that the three juniors did not belong to Rookwood at all. Pankley had not said that they did. But from his remarks Pons naturally inferred that they did.

"You don't mind walking?" asked Pankley, as they came out of the station.

"No; I am a good walker."

"Good! This way, then."

"What a pretty old village!" remarked Pons, as he walked down the quaint, ancient High Street of Coombe with the Bagshot juniors.

"Yes, it's pretty old," said Poole.

Pons smiled.

"There are some sights to be seen here," remarked Pankley. "The railway-station, for instance. That dates from the reign of King John."

"Does it?" ejaculated Pons, in astonishment.

"Quite so."

"But—but there weren't any railways in the time of King John."

"Not in Canada," said Pankley. "Here it is quite different. Here's the Red Cow. It's a pub now, but it was once a monastic establishment, dissolved by Henry the Eighth. You've heard of Henry the Eighth—the old scout who had six wives, and never smiled again?"

"Ye-es," said Pons dubiously.

"This is the bridge—built in the reign of King Cole. You've heard of Old King Cole? He was famous for being a merry old soul."

"I—I didn't know he was a real king."

"This old fountain marks the spot where Oliver Cromwell died when a boy—"

"But—but Oliver Cromwell lived to be a man, didn't he?" asked the astonished Pons.

"I thought he died in London, middle-aged."

"Possibly," assented Pankley. "But he was a queer old codger. This is where he died when a boy."

never heard of Bagshot or the Bagshot Bounders.

"Here we are!" said Pankley at last.

They had arrived at the gates of Bagshot School.

Pons glanced up at the building as they entered the gateway, and there was a shade of disappointment in his face.

"That Rookwood?" he asked.

"Don't you like the place?"

"I understood it was a very old place," said Pons. "My uncle was a Rookwood chap, and he told me about it. I—I thought it was a very ancient building, with grey walls, and—and ivy, and all that. Not a new brick horror like that."

Pankley & Co. looked at the Canadian as if they would eat him. They were very proud of Bagshot, which was new—comparatively speaking—from end to end, with the very latest improvements in the way of architecture.

It contrasted very favourably, in their opinion, with a mouldy old place like Rookwood, which had been standing for centuries



Jimmy Silver came panting up to the gates, his hands tied to the handlebars of his bike and perspiration streaming down his face. "Oh, crumbs, it's Jimmy!" gasped Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. (See page 14.)

"Oh!" Pankley imparted a considerable amount of historical information to Pons as they walked down the High Street to the lane. The Canadian junior regarded him very curiously. He was very quiet in his manner, but he was not exactly the "moony-faced" new kid the Bagshot Bounders had expected. The juniors arrived at the cross-roads, and took the turning to Bagshot.

Pons paused, and made a gesture towards the signpost, which indicated the way to Rookwood.

"Isn't that the way?" he asked.

"Short cut," said Pankley urbanely.

"Oh, I see!"

Pons walked on cheerily with Pankley & Co. He could not help suspecting that the humorous Pankley was "pulling his leg" with regard to his historical information about the village of Coombe. But he had no suspicion that he was heading for Bagshot School, and not Rookwood at all. He had

—parts of it for twelve or thirteen centuries. Pons' candid opinion—which would have been endorsed by any Rookwood fellow—was not flattering to Pankley & Co.

"You young ass!" growled Poole.

"You fathead!" said Putter.

Pons coloured.

"I—I am sorry," he faltered. "I—I did not mean— Please, excuse me. I—I suppose you like the place."

"There isn't another place like it in England, or in Scotland, or Wales, or Ireland, either!" exclaimed Pankley warmly.

"Why, look at it!" exclaimed Putter indignantly. "Compare it with a mouldy, worm-eaten, dingy old den like— Ahem—hum—ah!" Putter checked himself just in time.

"I—I mean— Let's get on and don't talk rot!"

And Charles Pons, of Canada, considerably abashed, followed the Bagshot fellows into the quadrangle of Bagshot.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

## Taking the Stranger In!

"HALLO, Panky!"

"What's that?"

"New kid!"

A number of juniors gathered round Pankley & Co. as the cheery trio arrived at the big, red-brick building with their companion. Pons was not looking so cheery now, though he tried to.

His uncle in Canada had told him a great deal about Rookwood School—its ancient walls, its tottering old clock-tower, its beeches that had defied the storms of ages, its stained-glass windows that were almost unique, its dusky old panelled library, where ancient Latin records of the place were to be found; its abbey ruins, shattered by the cannon of Cromwell's troops when the place was held for King Charles; its Royal Room, where Richard Cœur de Lion had once slept, with the very same bed still preserved.

Pons had thought a great deal about it all. And he found this brand-new place in its stead—evidently the old school had been rebuilt, and its present occupants were satisfied with the change. Pons couldn't feel satisfied.

The best news Pons could have received at that moment would have been that he wasn't at Rookwood at all. But he did not suspect that yet.

He was regarded curiously by the juniors who gathered round.

"Yes, a new kid," said Pankley airily. "His name is Pong—"

"Ye gods! What a name!"

"It is not exactly Pong," said the Canadian, with a smile. "Pons."

Yes, Pong," assented Pankley. "He has come all the way from Brazil—"

"Canada," said Pons.

"Isn't Canada in Brazil?" asked Pankley innocently.

Pons stared.

"Of course not! Why—"

"Make a note of that, you fellows," said Pankley, with owl-like solemnity. "Canada is not in Brazil. That's worth knowing. It may come in useful in an exam. That's the advantage of meeting a chap who comes from the place. He can tell you just where it is, and where it isn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to chuckle at, you asses! It's very kind of the new chap to tell us. Of course, if we'd thought a minute we should have known that Canada was in Honduras."

"But it isn't!" exclaimed Pons. "Canada's a hundred times bigger than Honduras."

"You're pulling our leg," said Pankley, with a shake of the head.

"No, really!" said the perplexed Pons. "Honduras is in Central America, and Canada is in North America."

"Not really?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Make a note of that," said Pankley to the grinning juniors. "That may come in useful in an exam, too. And what is North America in, Pong?"

"Eh?"

"Is it in New York?" asked Pankley.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Oh, if you're making fun of me—" said Pons.

"My dear chap, we wouldn't think of it on your first day at Rookwood, too," said Pankley.

"Rookwood!" shrieked a dozen voices.

"I don't see anything to yell at. We went to the station specially to meet this new chap and bring him here," said Pankley. "He didn't know the way to Rookwood, so we guided him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bagshot fellows fairly yelled. Pons looked round him with a puzzled expression, not understanding the cause of the merriment. The idea of a Rookwood fellow coming to Bagshot without the least idea that he was in the wrong school tickled the juniors greatly. Certainly, Pankley's "latest" was a little jape quite out of the common.

"Come in," said Pankley. "We're going to show you over—ahem!—Rookwood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pons went in with the cheery Co., leaving a crowd yelling outside.

"I don't quite see what they're laughing about," said Pons.

"Must be some sort of a joke on," said Pankley gravely. "Never mind them. I suppose you'd like a bit of a wash after your journey. Like to go to your room?"

Pons' eyes opened.

"Do I have a room to myself here?" he asked.

"My uncle told me that junior boys

slept in a dormitory and shared a study—two or three to a study."

"Things have changed a bit since your uncle's time. So long as you're at this school you'll have a room to yourself."

"Oh, good!"

"And here it is," said Pankley.

He led Pons down the Sixth Form corridor and opened a door. The room he showed the unsuspecting Canadian into was that of O'Malley of the Sixth Form at Bagshot. O'Malley was on the football-field at present, as Pankley was well aware. What the senior would think—and do—when he came in to change and found a junior installed in his study was a very interesting and entertaining problem to Pankley & Co.

"This is a ripping room!" said Pons, looking about him. "Do all juniors have rooms like this?"

"Like it?" asked Pankley affably.

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"Well, make yourself at home here," said Pankley. "If you're hungry, you'll find grub in the cupboard here—everything ready for tea."

"I say, that's topping!"

"Yes; we look after new kids here at—at Rookwood, I can tell you. Don't spare the grub—you're to eat all you can. We'll leave you to it for a bit. By the way, if a big fellow comes in here and starts any nonsense, don't put up with it. A rather big chap with an Irish accent. He's not a bad sort, but he's liable to come down heavy on new kids—like his cheek, you know, but these seniors will be cheeky. I shouldn't stand it."

"I won't!" said Pons warmly.

The Canadian's eyes flashed at the idea.

"That's right," said Pankley approvingly. "If the bouncer comes showing in here, give it to him straight. It would be just like him to wedge in here and treat the room as his own!"

"My hat!"

"Biff a cushion at him if he does."

"You bet."

"We'll see you later," said Pankley. "Come down when you've had your tea, and we'll take you round the place."

"Thanks very much!"

"Not at all," said Pankley airily.

Pankley & Co. quitted the study, a most suffocating. Not till they had reached the end of the passage, however, did they give expression to their feelings. Then they yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Poole. "Oh, dear! Did you ever hear of anything like it?"

"Ha, ha! Hardly ever!"

"And Rookwood chaps think they can keep their end up against us!" sighed Pankley. "Did you ever hear of a Bagshot chap being taken to Rookwood by mistake, an' thinking he was in Bagshot all the time?"

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"I—I wonder how he'll get on with O'Malley?" gasped Poole. "He'll be in from footer soon, and when he finds that kid there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"O'Malley's rather an excitable chap," grinned Pankley. "I think there'll be fireworks. We'd better be ready to rescue the merry Canadian out of his clutches. We don't want him hurt."

"Oh, no! Ha, ha!"

The story of the unsuspecting Rookwood junior making himself at home in the Bagshot Sixth-Former's study made the juniors howl when Pankley told it in the quad. Half the Lower School was looking forward to O'Malley's return to his quarters after football practice.

Pons never having heard of O'Malley, and not having the faintest idea that he was in the wrong school, was cheerfully making himself at home.

After removing the stains of travel, he sat down to tea feeling hungry after his journey. He found everything he could want in the study cupboard—indeed, as O'Malley was standing tea that day to some friends, the supplies were on a very liberal scale.

Pons rather wished that his new acquaintances had stayed to tea. But he sat down in a very contented mood.

True, the school had disappointed him a little at the first view. But he felt that he could be quite happy there.

Pankley & Co. were jolly fellows, and very obliging; and all the fellows seemed jolly, too. Even now he could hear roars of laughter from the quadrangle.

Upon the whole, the junior from Canada was very well satisfied, and he made a hearty tea in great spirits. And he had just finished, when the study door was thrown open, and a big, red-faced, freckled senior came busting

in, with a coat and muffler thrown on over his football garb.

Pons rose to his feet.

The big senior evidently did not expect to find anybody in the study.

He blinked at Pons.

His gaze travelled over the tea-table—over the used crocks, the fragment of cake, the broken eggshells, the remains of a ham—and then rested upon the new junior again. And the expression upon his face could only be described as terrific.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

## Rookwood to the Rescue!

"O H, crumbs!"

"Great pip!"

"Jimmy Silver!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, of the Classical Fourth, stared at the strange figure that came limping up the road, pushing a bike.

Football practice being over, Lovell & Co. had strolled down to the gates of Rookwood to look for their chum.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, had called Jimmy Silver away from the practice to send him down to Coombe to meet the new boy. Jimmy had gone cheerfully enough, on hearing that the expected junior was a new arrival from a distant Colony. He had not returned so cheerfully.

Lovell & Co. could scarcely believe their eyes.

They had expected to see Jimmy wheeling his bike, and the new junior walking by his side. There was no sign of the new junior, however. Jimmy certainly was wheeling his bike, but in a very extraordinary manner.

Jimmy came up to the gates, panting, with a crimson face. It was a cold day, but the perspiration was pouring down Jimmy's brow. Wheeling the bike had been hard work, with his hands tied to the bars. The machine had shown an obstinate disposition to curl up at almost every step, and Jimmy's legs had received a good many clumps from the pedals.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared at him. It was clear that their great leader had been in the wars, and his chums ought to have been sympathetic. They were sympathetic, really; but the comical side of the affair seemed to strike them irresistibly, and they roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy glared.

"Ha, ha!" shrieked Lovell. "Oh, Jimmy!"

"Hallo! What's the joke?" asked Oswald of the Fourth, coming down to the gates.

"Why, what—Hallo! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me loose, you cackling duffers!"

"How—how on earth did you get like that?"

"Tare an' ouns!" yelled Flynn of the Fourth, arriving on the scene. "Phwat's the game intirely, Jimmy darling?"

"It's Jimmy Silver!" yelled Townsend, catching sight of the captain of the Fourth from the quad. "Ha, ha! Look!"

"By gad! What a merry guy!" chuckled Mornington.

"Oh, my hat!" shouted Tommy Dodd, the Modern. "Jimmy—Jimmy! Why do you do these funny things, Jimmy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver groaned inwardly. He had had a faint hope of getting loose before his plight became known to all Rookwood. That hope was ill-founded. A crowd was gathering in the old gateway to stare at him and yell.

"Will you let me loose, you chumps!" said Jimmy Silver, in concentrated tones.

"Oh, my-hat! W-w-wait a minute till I get my knife open!" gurgled Lovell.

"Buck up, fathead!"

"But phwat did you tie yourself up like that for, Jimmy?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"You silly Modern chump!" roared Jimmy.

"Do you think I tied myself up? How could I tie myself up?"

"Then who did?" asked Tommy Cook. The three Tommies of the Modern side seemed to be enjoying the peculiar plight of the Classical leader.

"The Bagshot rotters!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you let them?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"You fathead, how could I help it when they were three to one?"

"Of course you couldn't help it," grinned Tommy Dodd. "You Classical chaps can't keep your end up against Bagshot. You ought to give them a wide berth, and leave it to the Moderns."



"Hear, hear!" chuckled Cook and Doyle. "Buck up with that knife, Lovell, you ass!" "I'm bucking up—"

"Yoocp!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Eh! What's the matter?"

"You're skinning me, you howling ass!"

"Well, you told me to buck up."

"You—you—you— Yah! Oh!"

"Better keep your hands still, and not talk," suggested Lovell calmly.

Jimmy Silver gave his chum an expressive look, and kept his hands still. Lovell sawed at the whipcord that fastened them to the handle-bars.

"But where's the new kid?" asked Newcome. "You went to the station to meet a new kid, Jimmy—a Canadian chap or something."

"Lost him?" grinned Tommy Dodd. "How could I go, when I was tied up like this and chivvied off?" howled Jimmy Silver. "Then you haven't been?" exclaimed Van Ryn.

"Of course I haven't, fathead!"

"Then there's nobody to meet the new kid. That's rotten!" Van Ryn was rather interested in the new boy, as he was a Colonial himself.

"I couldn't help it, could I, duffer? Besides, there is somebody to meet him. Pankley and Poole and Putter have gone to meet him, and they're going to jape the poor beast!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"And you've let them!" said Tommy Dodd. "Just like you Classical asses!"

"I'll punch your silly head when I get my hands loose, Tommy Dodd!"

"There you are," said Lovell. Jimmy rubbed his chafed wrists. Lovell had given him a scratch or two, in addition to the chafing of the cord.

Jimmy was looking very exasperated. It was bad enough to have been handled so ignominiously by the enemy, without being yelled at by half Rookwood when he got home. He resolved to punch Tommy Dodd's nose as some compensation for his injuries. Dick Van Ryn interposed as he was starting towards the Modern junior.

"Hold on!" said Van Ryn. "If those Bagshot chaps have got hold of the new chap we ought to chip in."

"Sure you're done cackling?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They won't hurt him," said Lovell. "But they can't be allowed to jape a Rookwood chap. Let's go to the rescue, Jimmy."

"All right, if you've done gurgling."

"Good idea!" said Tommy Dodd. "We'll come along and show you Classics how to handle them."

Jimmy Silver snorted, but he did not demur. The three Tommies were great fighting-men, and would be very useful if there was a "scrap" with a crowd of the Bagshot fellows.

Jimmy strode along the way he had come, leaving Tubby Muffin to wheel in his bicycle. His chums followed him, with a crowd of the Fourth, both Classical and Modern. Some of the fellows were interested to learn what had happened to the new junior, and all were ready for a "scrap" with the rival school.

There were a good many chuckles en route. The Rookwooders seemed to find something entertaining in Jimmy Silver's frowning face.

Somewhat to their surprise, nothing was seen of the new junior on the way to the station. They arrived in Coombe. As it was past four o'clock, and the train had come in at three, the new fellow must have arrived an hour ago, and they wondered what had become of him.

"Where the dickens is he?" exclaimed Lovell. "The Bagshot bounders can't have eaten him, I suppose?"

"They're japing him somewhere," grunted Jimmy Silver. "Pankley had some scheme in his head; I could see that. Let's go to the station. They may have left him there."

But at the station the new junior was not to be found, and there was no sign of the Bagshot trio.

Jimmy Silver questioned the porter. He began to think that perhaps Pons had not come by the appointed train after all.

But he was soon enlightened upon that point.

"Master Pong!" said the old porter. "Yes, sir; he's left his box and bag and ring to be taken up to Rookwood, sir. That's the name."

"Where did he go?"

"He went away with the three young gents, sir. I heard one of them say they'd take him to the school."

"To—to the school!" ejaculated Jimmy. "Yessir."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath. He understood now. Pankley & Co. were taking Pons to the school; but certainly they hadn't taken him to Rookwood. Jimmy came out of the station with a worried face.

"Well, where's the merry Canadian?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"He's gone off with Pankley & Co., and, from what I can make out, they've taken him to Bagshot!"

"To—to Bagshot!"

"Yes; it's a jape, of course. That was what Pankley was chortling over."

"But—but what on earth are they going to do with him at Bagshot?" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"It's a jape, fathead! Goodness knows what they are going to do—make a fool of him somehow, I suppose. The blessed rotters—"

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Raby.

"I know what I'm going to do. Bootles sent me to bring the kid in, and I'm going after him."

"To Bagshot!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, you Modern ass! If you don't want to come, you can crawl home."

"But—but we can't raid Bagshot for him!"

exclaimed Lovell.

"I'm going there, and you can come if you like!" snorted Jimmy Silver, and he started. And the Rookwood fellows, who were not likely to let their leader enter the lions' den alone, followed him.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Pons in Hot Water!

CHARLES PONS stared at the big Sixth-Former in the study, and the big Sixth-Former stared at Charles Pons. Pons was quite on his guard.

He guessed that this was the fellow Pankley had alluded to, who was "down" on new boys. As for O'Malley, of the Bagshot Sixth, he couldn't guess who Pons was. He had never seen him before, and supposed that he was a new junior in the school. Finding him making himself at home in his study in that free-and-easy way, took O'Malley's breath away. For a full minute he could only blink at the junior across the table.

He found his voice at last.

"Howly Moses!" he gasped.

Pons was sure now. This was the Irish accent Pankley had mentioned. Pons was very much on the alert.

"What are ye doing here?" roared O'Malley.

"I've been having tea," said Pons, surprised by the question.

"Having tay here?"

"Certainly!"

"Without so much as saying by your lave!" ejaculated O'Malley.

"Why not?"

"Oh, howly Moses! I suppose it's a new boy ye are?"

"Yes."

"Then ye've got to learn manners to begin with," said O'Malley. "Faith, I never heard anything like it in all me natural!"

It was not surprising that O'Malley was excited, under the circumstances. The good things he had laid in for a feast among his friends had suffered considerably. Pons had brought a good appetite with him from Canada. But the astounding cheek of a junior asking himself to tea in a Sixth Form prefect's study was what excited O'Malley more than anything else. A new boy with so astounding a nerve wanted teaching his place immediately and drastically, in the Bagshot senior's opinion.

He started round the table after Pons.

The junior dodged round at the same time, keeping the table between him and the enraged Sixth-Former.

"Hands off, you know!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not going to stand any bullying!"

"I'll give ye bullying!" roared O'Malley.

"Mind, I shall bif something at you if you don't keep off!" shouted Pons, dodging round again as O'Malley rushed upon him.

The Sixth-Former did not heed. He came on like a bull, only anxious to get his hands upon the junior.

In single combat it was not much use for the slim junior to think of tackling the burly senior. But the Canadian did not mean to take a licking, especially for nothing, as it seemed to him. So far as he could see, there was no excuse whatever for O'Malley's irruption into the study and his violent behaviour.

He seized the butter from the table as he dodged, and hurled it.

There was a squelch as it landed full upon

O'Malley's red and furious face, and the prefect staggered.

"Groooh! Oh! Ah!"

An egg followed, and it squashed on O'Malley's nose.

"Howly smoke! Groooh! Why, ye limb of Satan! Groooh!"

"Keep off, then!" panted Pons.

"I'll slaughter ye intirely!" yelled O'Malley, gouging egg out of his eyes, and butter from his nose. "I'll pulverise ye! Oh crumbs!"

He raced round the table again. Pons dodged towards the door, but O'Malley cut him off. The study window was open, and the junior made a dash for it, and leaped through, lowering his head to escape the lash.

O'Malley's hands swept through the air an inch behind him as he leaped.

Crash!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Yah!"

"Oh! Yah!"

It is an old saying that one should look before one leaps. But Pons had had no time to look. He had leaped without looking. And Pankley, Putter, and Poole, who were gathered under the study window to enjoy the scene, had the benefit of it.

The flying junior landed fairly upon them.

Pankley went spinning as Pons' knee caught him fairly on the nose. Peele reeled back from a boot that landed under his chin, and Putter sprawled on the ground, with Pons sprawling over him. Falling on Putter had broken Pons' fall, and from the sounds that proceeded from Putter it might have been supposed that he was broken, too.

Pons rolled dazedly off the junior.

At the study window O'Malley was almost raving.

Pons staggered up. Putter remained on his back, gasping, with all the wind driven out of him. Pankley and Poole yelled with anguish.

"Oh!" gasped Pons.

"Come back!" roared O'Malley. "I'll make shavings of ye! I'll pulverise ye to powder, bedad! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed the egg, buttery, and indignant prefect. He put his hands on the sill and vaulted out, quite forgetful of his dignity as a prefect of the Sixth.

"Cut off, Pong!" gasped Pankley.

Pankley was rather dismayed. He had "planted" Pons in O'Malley's study as a joke, but the prefect's look showed that it would be no joke if he reached the new junior—not for Pons, at all events.

But Pons did not need bidding.

He flew.

But O'Malley was thirsting for vengeance, and he bore down fast on the fleeing junior. There were yells of encouragement from the juniors in the quadrangle as they watched the race, roaring with laughter.

"Go it, O'Malley!"

"Put it on, Pong!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pons was heading for the football-ground, where there was room to dodge. He looked back over his shoulder. O'Malley was almost within reach, his hand outstretched, and his look Hunnish.

The junior ran on, and suddenly halted, and threw himself on the ground.

The big senior came pounding on, and before he knew that Pons had stopped, he had stumbled over him.

His knees caught Pons, and he fairly flew over him, landing upon his hands on the other side of the junior.

"Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the quad. "Well done, Pong!"

Pons leaped up again like a flash, and fled. O'Malley slowly sat up, breathless and dazed. After that sudden concussion with the earth he was not feeling fit to continue the chase. Pons vanished round the gym.

"Howly smoke!" gasped O'Malley. "When I get hold of that young scaramouch, sure I'll pull him to pieces! Ow, ow, ow!"

And the prefect limped away towards the house. Pons, peering round a corner of the gym, was very glad to see him go.

"My hat!" hurred Pons. "This is a jolly queer school, where they treat a new kid like that! Bless if I thought Rookwood was anything like this! Hallo! Leggo!"

A hand had dropped on Pons' shoulder, and he spun round. It was Raleigh of the Sixth, the captain of Bagshot, who had collared him. Pons clenched his fists—a proceeding that made Raleigh stare.

"Who the dickens are you?" asked Raleigh.

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"I'm a new boy."  
"I suppose so, as I've never seen you before. I didn't know there was a new kid coming to-day."

"Well, I've come," said Pons independently. "Leggo my collar!"

"I've just seen your little game. I don't know where you've come from—"

"Canada," said Pons cheerfully.  
"Oh, Canada! Well, perhaps they forgot to tell you before you left Canada that you mustn't trip up prefects at Bagshot," grinned Raleigh. "As they forgot, I'm going to impress it on your mind—see?"

"Bagshot!" repeated Pons blankly.  
"Yes. Come with me."  
"What for?"

"I'm going to lick you, of course!"  
"You're jolly well not!" said Pons hotly.

"I didn't come to Rookwood to be licked by every silly ass I came across!"  
"Rookwood!" repeated Raleigh.

"Yes, fathead!"  
"I suppose you're a funny merchant?" said Raleigh. "I think it's about time you had some of the fun taken out of you. I think perhaps a licking will help. Come along to my study!"

Pons had no intention of going to the captain of Bagshot's study. Why he should be picked on in this way was a mystery to him, but he did not mean to take it lying down. As Raleigh marched him off towards the house by the collar, Pons suddenly hooked his leg in Raleigh's, and with a sudden jerk—totally unexpected on the senior's part—brought him to the ground with a bump.

"My hat!" ejaculated Raleigh.  
He sat up blankly.

Pons had vanished round the gym.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Startling Discovery!

LOOK here, Pankley—if that's your name—what the dickens does it mean?"

Raleigh, after looking for the elusive new boy for about ten minutes unsuccessfully, had gone in. Then Pons joined the crowd of juniors in the quadrangle in a worried and excited frame of mind.

"What does it mean?" he repeated.  
"What's the game? Is everybody off his dot at Rookwood?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Yes, I believe so," grinned Pankley. "In fact, Rookwood's famous for it."

Pons stared at him, unable to guess why Pankley's reply was followed by a howl of laughter.

"Blest if I catch on to it!" he said. "First, a bullying bounder comes and chases me out of my room—"

"Your room! Ha, ha!"  
Then another silly ass collared me, and is going to lick me! What does it mean? I suppose this isn't the way new boys are always treated here, is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
The Bagshot juniors yelled. Only Pankley & Co. were not so hilarious as before. They had suffered severe damages when Pons landed on them from O'Malley's study window, and they had not quite recovered. Pankley's nose, especially, looked like an over-ripe strawberry.

"As for that big chap who collared me," continued Pons, "he seems fairly potty. He looked astonished when I mentioned the name of the school—as if he doesn't know the name of his own school—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"And he was speaking about Bagshot. What's Bagshot? Is it a school?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Pons stared round at the yelling juniors. A suspicion was beginning to work in his mind at last.

"I—I say," he stammered, "this—this—this is Rookwood, isn't it?"

The juniors shrieked.  
"You brought me here, you grinning ass!" shouted Pons, beginning to understand at last.

"Isn't this Rookwood?"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Pankley. "No, you Rookwood fathead, it isn't Rookwood! It's Bagshot! Nobody here would be found dead in Rookwood if he could help it. We've been japing you, you silly ass!"

"Oh!"  
"And now we're going to send you home where you belong, with a face painted like

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a Red Indian, and a fool's cap on your head," said Pankley.

Pons jumped back.  
"Hands off!"  
"Collar him!"

The Bagshot juniors closed round Pons. Pankley's latest was to wind up with a striking climax, in which the Rookwood new boy was to play the leading part—at least, that was Pankley's idea. It was not Pons' idea, however. The prospect of arriving at his new school painted like a Red Indian, and with a fool's cap on his head, and a crowd of yelling Bagshot fellows at his heels, was not exactly attractive. The Canadian junior was quick to act.

He dodged the closing crowd, and made a rush for the gates.  
"Stop him!"  
"Collar him!"

The Bagshot juniors fairly swarmed after Pons. Fellows in the quadrangle headed him off from the gates, and Pons swerved and dashed along the inner side of the wall. He seemed as fleet as a deer.

"He can't get out, and he's not going out till he's decorated!" chortled Pankley. "Run him down, my infants!"

On all sides the fellows were closing in on Pons, and there seemed no way of escape. The school wall bordering the road was high, and he had no time to climb it, if it could have been climbed.

But Pons was not at the end of his resources.

He dashed straight at the wall, as if he were going to run into it, with the Bagshot fellows close behind.

As he came close to the wall, he made a tremendous jump and caught the top with his hands.

"Great Scott!" gasped Pankley.  
It was a jump such as few of the juniors there could have made. Pankley rushed forward to catch at Pons' legs. A boot caught him on the nose, and he gave a muffled roar.

The next moment Pons had whirled himself to the top of the wall, and had one leg over it.

He grinned down at the Bagshot crowd breathlessly.

"Good-bye!" he gasped.  
And he swung himself over the wall to the road, and dropped. There was a terrific yell as he did so. He had dropped on somebody!

"Come on!" roared Pankley. "He mustn't get away!"

Pankley led a rush to the gates, and the Bagshot fellows swarmed out into the road.

As the Rookwood party came up the road they heard the loud shouting from the other side of the school wall. They did not need telling that something unusual was proceeding in the Bagshot quad.

"I suppose they've got that ass there!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Come on; he's a Rookwood chap, anyway, and we're going to— Yoooop!"

Jimmy Silver did not mean to wind up with that remark, but he did, as a flying figure came over the school wall, and dropped fairly on him.

Jimmy went on his back in the road, and Pons, in a state of great astonishment, sat on him and gasped for breath.

"Mon Dieu!" stuttered Pons.  
"Ow! Yow!"

"What—who—"  
"Draggimoff!" shrieked Jimmy.

Lovell & Co., yelling with laughter, seized Pons and dragged him off the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver sat up dazedly.  
"Oh crumbs! Where did the silly idiot come from? Who is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Shut up cackling, you dummies! I'm nearly squashed!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Who is that silly idiot?"  
"Hallo, here come the Bagshot bounders!" shouted Oswald, as Pankley & Co. came streaming out of the gates.

"Let me go!" gasped Pons, struggling in the grasp of Lovell and Raby and Newcome. "They are after me!"

"Eh? Who are you?"  
"I belong to Rookwood School, but those fellows—"

"My hat! This is the merchant we're looking for!" exclaimed Lovell. "Are you Pong?"

"I am Pons—"  
"Here they come!" shouted Rawson. "Line up!"

"Here he is!" shouted Pankley. "Rookwood rotters, by Jove! Mop 'em up!"

Jimmy Silver leaped to his feet.  
"Give 'em socks!" he shouted.

A dozen Bagshot fellows had streamed out into the road, expecting to find Pons there,

and not in the least expecting to find fifteen or sixteen Rookwood fellows. But they found them!

Rookwood made a rush, not at all sorry to get to close quarters with their old rivals.

"Go for 'em!" roared Lovell.  
"Down with Bagshot!"  
"Hurrah!"

There was a terrific tussle in the road. But the Rookwood fellows had the odds on their side, and Bagshot were driven back.

Pons stood staring breathlessly at the exciting scene for a moment or two. Then he realised that it was his own future school-fellows who were engaged with the enemy, and he rushed in to help.

He chose Pankley for his special victim, and he closed with the Bagshot leader, and they rolled on the ground together.

"Give 'em socks!" howled Tommy Dodd "Hurrah for us!"

Back went Bagshot with a rush to the school gates, leaving Pankley in the hands of the enemy.

"Now we'd better clear before the whole tribe comes out," grinned Lovell. "Hallo! Pong's got a prisoner!"

"Wow-wow!" came from the prisoner.  
"Gerrof my neck, blow you!"

"My hat! It's Pankley!"  
"Bring him along!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Prisoner of war!"

Pankley, grasped by a dozen hands, was rushed off down the road by the retreating Rookwooders. And when the Bagshot fellows rallied, with reinforcements, and came out to the rescue, Jimmy Silver & Co. were well on the way to Rookwood. There was instant pursuit, and half-way to the village the Bagshot Bounders came upon their great leader.

Pankley was sitting by the roadside. His hands were tied by the sleeves of his jacket, jerked off for the purpose, his cap was stuffed down his back, and his bootlaces were tied together, securing his feet. His face was a deep black, from a coating of thick mud, and a sheet of notepaper pinned on his waistcoat bore the inscription, in Jimmy Silver's hand:

"ROOKWOOD WINS! RATS!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Poole.  
Pankley gave his rescuers a muddy glare. "Gerrafellow loose!" he mumbled. "Don't stand there cackling! Can't you gerrafellow loose, you cackling dummies?"

And the grinning Bagshot fellows got Pankley loose, after some trouble. Jimmy Silver & Co. had vanished, and there was nothing for them to do but to take Pankley home. The great Pankley was in quite a subdued mood as he went. "Pankley's Latest!" had not worked out such a howling success as Pankley had anticipated.

"So this is Rookwood?" said Pons, as he came in the ancient gateway with the crowd of Rookwood fellows.

"Yes, fathead!" said Jimmy Silver.  
"What the merry thunder did you go to Bagshot for?"

Pons explained.  
Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him blankly as he did so.

When he had finished, Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"Well, of all the duffers—" he said.  
"I—I couldn't help it!" stammered Pons.

"I—I thought they were Rookwood chaps. They didn't exactly say so, but—but I thought—"

"Rats! You can't think!" snorted Lovell.  
"I—I say, you know—" stammered poor Pons.

"Oh, rats!"  
"Come along with me!" said Van Ryn, slipping his arm through the new junior's.

"You couldn't help it, old chap. Come on! You're going to share my study, if you like."

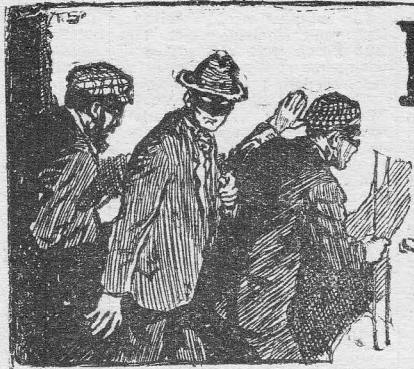
And Pons, with a grateful heart, went with the South African junior, leaving the Rookwood fellows grinning and sniffing. It was rather hard on Pons; but Jimmy Silver & Co. did not like the idea of Rookwood being "done" by their old rivals. But in Van Ryn's study Pons found comfort.

THE END.

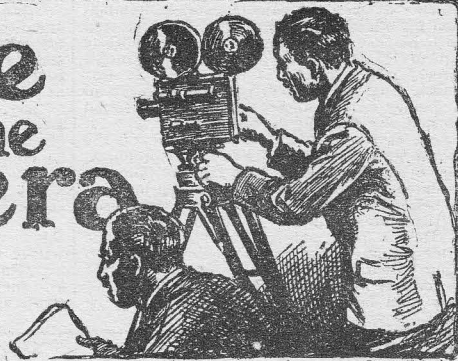
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AMAZING LIFE STORY OF FAMOUS EDDIE POLO STARTING TO-DAY!



# Before the Camera



A STIRRING STORY OF THE FAMOUS FILM STAR'S EARLY TRIUMPHS AND STRUGGLES!

**Eddie's Great Chance!**

IT was with very mixed feelings that Eddie Polo made his way up a certain very busy street in St. Louis to an address which necessitated frequent confirmation from a card in his hand. A short hour ago he had said "Au revoir!" to all his friends of the circus staff once more, had looked around the tent and the old ring, had smoothed Red Lightning and Grey Wind, and given them their final pieces of sugar; and then, with a smiling face, and a heart a little apprehensive, he had turned his back on the old life and stepped forward bravely to confront the new—the life of the cinema studio and the location, of glaring lights and unreal colours and scenes of the silent drama that was frequently so realistic it went indeed close to death and danger.

There were many who cast curious glances at the lad as he strode along the pavement, for his picture had been in all the morning papers, and St. Louis looked up to him as one who reckoned little of his own life, so long as those weaker than himself came to no harm. As he passed a drug store a policeman took him by the arm and looked approvingly into the lad's eyes.

"Say, bo!" exclaimed the man of law. "Ain't you the guy that did the trapeze act yesterday into the telephone building?"

"Perhaps," replied Eddie, with a faint smile. "Why?"

"Oh, just nothing," answered the other, with a knowing grin. "Only I just wanted to say that if you'd hand me advance news next time you're thinking of pulling off a stunt like that I'll be right there to see things for meself, instead of having the dope handed out at second-hand by those that was there, so to speak."

Eddie grinned again. "One of these days you'll perhaps be able to sit in a cinema theatre and see me do things every bit as risky," he rejoined. "I've had an offer to play on the films, and I'm just going to take over my new job."

The policeman stared, and then burst into a great roar of laughter, so that those who passed by began to have fears for the sanity of at least one of their guardians.

"Say, that's too rich!" laughed the man in blue. "One of these days, say you. Listen, bo, and I'll explain to you a secret. I've already seen you on the movies."

Eddie staggered back in amazement. Was this policeman a little mad after all? How could he have seen Eddie Polo on the screen when he had only been offered a chance to perform for the cinema some twelve short hours before? But the policeman was laughing and beating the wall with his night stick, and the more Eddie stared the more he laughed.

"D'you mean to say as you ain't wise to it yet?" he demanded at last. "You don't know as you've already made your debou to the dark theatre audiences? Then you've got some thrills coming to you. Gee, but I'd like to be in your shoes. It ain't every guy as gets the opportunity to see himself swinging, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, without halliards or downhaul.

The news movie folk got you yesterday and showed the films last night. Saw 'em meself, straight! Starting this morning, are ye? Well, bo, good luck to you, and may all your stunts be such great draws as the one you did yesterday to an all-admiring audience. S'long, kid! I'll keep a look-out for your face at the movies."

Eddie was glad to escape from the policeman, for by this time the usual small crowd had gathered round the pair, and these, as the lad moved away, gave a small cheer that caused Eddie to blush and press forward at full speed for the security of the studio whose address he was already furnished with.

The Eclair Film Company were expecting him, and when he tentatively pushed open the door and stepped inside the place Morrison rushed up to him with outstretched hand. The room was in indescribable confusion, and for a moment his surroundings swam around Eddie's eyes, while Morrison worked his arm up and down like a pump-handle.

"Here, girls and boys!" he cried. "Here's the new recruit. Eddie Polo, they call him, and he's a real star turn at chucking himself around the ropes and the trapezes. Just the sort of lad we've been looking for to play the messenger-boy part in the new film. Eddie, meet the crowd! Shake hands, and get acquainted with 'em all!"

About sixteen young men and young women, some in queer, and it seemed to Eddie, outlandish dress, shook hands with the new recruit, murmuring their welcome. At last all had greeted him save two young men a little taller than himself, who, attired in long and greasy raincoats, sat in the far corner of the room.

They looked Eddie up and down sneeringly as he approached, taking in the slim, straight lines of the lad with appraising eyes. They glanced at his outstretched hand, and shrugged their shoulders.

"Nixes on that!" said the taller of the pair. "I don't strike mitts with the guy that comes to jump my job!"

"Nor me, either!" rejoined the other. "I'm Tim Bobbin's pal in fair weather and foul. I am, and what he says goes with me, and my pow-wow cuts much ice with him. We've no room for a tumbler like you in our outfit."

"Jump your job!" echoed Eddie blankly. "I didn't know, really. I understood that there was a vacancy for me, and that I shouldn't be throwing anybody else out of work, or I'd not have accepted Mr. Morrison's offer. If my coming means that one or both of you gets the sack, then I'll chuck the whole thing here and now. I'll tell Mr. Morrison so without delay."

Tim Bobbin's lips curled in a sneer. "Don't get shooting off the top of your bonthead yet, kid!" he said, with a snarl. "And don't mention my name to the chief, or you and me'll have words—see? There ain't been nobody got the sack yet through your coming, but there will be shortly, and if it's me, well, then, look out for yourself, that's all. Cause I'm one of those people who hit first and talk afterwards! Get me?" "Look here, Bobbin, or whatever your

name might be," said Eddie suddenly, taking a step forward. "You can cut out all that with me. Your talk of hitting first doesn't make me tremble one little bit; indeed, if you think it'd ease your mind to hit me now, I dare say we can find some open space and a couple of folks to see fair play, without any further talk about it. That's my final word on the matter. I'm standing no threats from you or anybody else. Get that, and there'll be peace. I've come into this company to do certain work to the best of my ability when I'm ordered to do it, and I'm not letting you or anybody else interfere with that work. If you get the sack, it's no concern of mine, and I expect you'll have deserved it. Anyway, I came to you in a friendly fashion, and held out my hand. You've refused to shake that hand, so look out that I don't have cause to make it shake you. Or, if you fancy your chance, let's find that open space I mentioned, and we'll settle the matter once for all. In any case, so long as you don't interfere with me, I'll keep clear of you, and that's my final word on it!"

He turned on his heel and strode towards where the chief was directing the filming of a scene, leaving Bobbin and Curtis, his friend and fellow-worker, purple with wrath and indignation. That such a slip of a youth as Eddie Polo should have the nerve and presence of mind to put them so suddenly and severely into their places took away their breath. Bobbin would have started to his feet and followed Eddie but for his companion's restraining arm.

"Let it go, Tim!" said the latter. "There's many brand-new days not touched in the year as yet, and that joint'll keep. See, the chief's calling to you—it's your scene."

"You'll stop alongside me for a while, Polo," said Morrison. "There's a few things I want you to pick up before I start you in a part. This picture is nearly completed, and we start on a new one to-morrow—you'll get your first part in that, and don't grumble if it's only a small part at first. You'll not be playing in crowds long, if I'm any judge."

And for the rest of that hour Eddie Polo was content to stay by the producer's side and watch points. It struck him as rather funny that the story which was being filmed seemed to jump about from point to point very rapidly, without any connected sequence at all, and without any direction other than that Mr. Morrison gleaned from a tattered typewritten script in his hand. For instance, there were three or four scenes which were supposed to be enacted in the corridor of an hotel, and though they came at four different points of the actual story, they were all produced in quick succession.

The scene being set—and it was nothing more like the corridor of the hotel than lath and plaster and scene-painting could make it—the second heroine of the film entered in evening-dress, wearing a most gorgeous opera-cloak. A man in a top-hat and evening-trock accosted her, and for a moment the two talked and gesticulated in front of the camera. Then that part of the play was finished, and in the next the same hotel corridor was used for the entrance of a whist-

# 18 "The St. Jim's Hunger Striker!" An amazing school tale you must not miss—

telegraph-boy with an envelope in his hand. Then, for the third scene, it was darkened by a cunning arrangement of lights which still gave the camera enough illumination for effective photography, and three men with black crepe masks on their faces stole out of it, apparently disappearing into the street, while for the fourth scene it was shown filled with detectives and waiters and a gaping crowd, among whom Eddie found himself, by the chief's orders.

Several times Eddie made up one of the crowd, and earned a smile from the producer, for, in his anxiety to miss nothing, the lad assumed the real expression of a curious on-looker, a thing which the others—more used to the work—could only attain by their art.

"He's a born actor, that kid," said the camera man to the producer when Mr. Morrison called a rest. "Takes everything just as natural as if he'd been born to it. If he only does his personal bits like that it'll be

been saved from the fire the previous night by somebody who was going to come to the Eclair Company to act.

"Shot!" said Terence, the camera fiend; and Stella's face lost its soulful look as the set was taken down and another lot of scenery showed up in its place by the property men. The girl came forward and smiled at Morrison.

"Say, young fellow," said the producer to Eddie. "Here's a lady you haven't met yet. Miss Stella, meet Eddie Polo, who's going to do some acrobatic stunts for our future films. I rather think he can tell you a lot about that fire your sister was in, if you can get him to talk."

The impulsive girl crossed swiftly to where Eddie stood with outstretched hand, and, seizing it, shook it warmly. Then she tilted his chin with her free hand, looked carefully into his face, and then, before the astonished company, to Eddie's deep and lasting em-

use the sunny hours this afternoon for taking it. That's the part you were going to give Eddie, wasn't it?"

"It wasn't," said Morrison, with a side-long look towards where Tim Bobbin and Bud Curtis were still seated in conversation with some of the company. "As a matter of fact, I'd half promised it to—"

"To Eddie Polo, of course," interrupted Stella, with a winning smile. "I'm sure I should register emotion much better and not feel half so frightened if he was going to do the rescuing part of the business, and I'm equally sure I should feel so nervous that the pictures would not be worth anything if anybody else did it with me."

"In other words, unless I give you your way you'll bust the whole thing, eh?" asked Morrison. "Well, Stella, as you generally get your own way in this studio, I suppose I shall have to climb down this time."

Stella wrinkled her nose and laughed, and Morrison turned to Eddie, standing just out of earshot.

"You'd better go to the wardrobe man and get a messenger-boy's outfit, Polo," he ordered. "I want you to do some work this afternoon. You're starting earlier than I expected."

Eddie nodded, and followed Dick Fordyce through a doorway towards where the company kept its huge stock of costumes of every shape and size and period, even complete with hats and wigs and swords where these might be required.

"Shouldn't trust that fellow Bobbin too far, if I might say so," said Fordyce kindly. "He doesn't seem to love you, Polo; and when Miss Stella—er—embraced you his face was a study in evil passions. He's been our star acrobat up to date, you know; so maybe he's afraid you're going to jump his job, and it has peeved him considerably. Keep an eye on him, not part of the time, but all the time, for I have a feeling in my bones that he'll play Merry Andrew with you if he gets only the shadow of the ghost of a chance. Here's the wardrobe man. Hey, Harry! Messenger outfit, pronto, for this gentleman!"

Meanwhile, in the studio, Morrison and Stella were engaged in deep conversation regarding the action of the scenes to be filmed that afternoon. And close to the producer's elbow stood Tim Bobbin and Bud waxing eloquent, telling Stella just what she would have to do in the scene, when Bobbin cut in.

"Say, chief," he said, "why not leave it to me and Miss Stella? She can lurch with me, and we'll go and give the location the once over afterwards, and fix our plans to suit the needs and facilities of the place."

"Sorry, Bobbin, but that won't do at all," said the chief. "As a matter of fact, you aren't doing the acrobatic stunts in the new film at all. I've got a small ordinary part for you in it. I believe you're a real English butler, or valet, or maybe a footman."

"You've what!" cried the astounded acrobat. "You've let me out of the big stunt scene, after half promising it to me! And you've given me a funkey's part to make up for it? Say, chief, do you think I'm a child in arms to stand such punk?"

"It doesn't matter tuppence to me what you are," said Morrison angrily. "All I know is that while I pay your salary every week I'll give the orders, and you'll obey them. And if you don't like it—well, I can find a score of eminently useful butlers and waiters and footmen to take on your job at half the salary before two o'clock this afternoon. Well?"

"Of course you're boss, chief," Bobbin acknowledged, "and what you says goes. But I had reckoned on that part to do me a bit of good, and to show you I was worth more than knockabout parts in slapstick comedies. It'll be a come-down to show my calves as a footman, but for your sake and Miss Stella's I'll do it."

"And keep your tongue between your teeth while you're doing it, or I'll fire you on the spot!" was the producer's parting shot as Curtis and his crestfallen friend turned away.

It was just at that critical moment that Eddie Polo reappeared in the garb of a somewhat stalwart messenger-boy, pillbox hat perched on one side of his head, and wallet slung over his shoulder. He was grinning at his own grotesque appearance when Bobbin shoved his face into Eddie's own.

"Say, you, what're you doing in that get-up?" asked Bobbin. "Who told you off for the part, anyway?"

"If it has got anything to do with you I'll enter into a full and adequate explana-



Swiftly Eddie Polo balanced himself on the sill and divested himself of his coat. Then he measured the distance to the bucket, and crouched back on his haunches to spring. (See page 19.)

a real find for us, and a real pleasure to shoot him with the old camera, I guess."

He might have said more, but at that moment the door of the studio was pushed open, and a young lady, dressed far more sumptuously than Eddie had ever seen a woman dressed before, rushed into the room. She flung her gloves and coat into one corner, her hat into another, and after dusting her face with yellow powder, sat on a rustic bench in front of a background representing trees with such a soulful look on her face that Eddie wondered what had so swiftly saddened her.

"Shoot, Terence!" she cried to the camera man. "I'll go right on where I left off yesterday."

Her lips were the only part of her that moved as the handle of the camera began to turn once more. Then she rose to her feet, held out her arms to an imaginary lover, and pressed them to her bosom. Then the same man who had worn the top-hat and evening-dress in the hotel corridor scene appeared and kissed her hand, and as far as the camera could see, they then proceeded to pour sweet nothings into each other's ears. As a matter of fact, they were discussing the news in that morning's papers, and Stella Cleaver, for such was the name of the star, was telling her leading man—Dick Fordyce—about how her sister Mary, the telephone operator, who had

barrasted him and confusion, she bent and kissed him.

"That's some little reward for saving my sister," she said. "Mary will deliver the rest when she sees you next time."

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed Eddie, and his smile robbed the ejaculation of any seeming rudeness. "There's been too much said about that little business already, and I'm beginning to feel just a bit tired of it. Say, Miss Stella, this is a new job to me, and I'm not aiming to profit anything in it by what I've done in the past. For all you know, or I know, or Mr. Morrison there knows, I may be the worst dud that ever stepped in front of a camera—and I'm sure I'll be frightened to death the first time I have to do anything alone. Well, what I want to say is, let things like praise—and kisses—though from you they're very nice—go till you see what I'm like at the new work, and then, if I make good you can wear out my jacket patting me on the back if you like!"

"Well said, Eddie," said Stella. "That's straight, and what I like. Well, you'll soon have a chance of doing some work. Chief," she added, turning to Morrison. "I saw Mr. Leroy as I came along the street, and he asked me to tell you that he'd be taking that big crane of his down from the Flatiron Building roof to-morrow morning, so if you want to use it for that big acrobatic scene in the new drama you'd better get busy and



tion," returned Eddie. "But as I only recognise one boss in this show, I don't see that I'm called on to answer your question. Get me? Then get out of my way!"

He pushed Tim Bobbin back into his friend's arms, and stepped across to Morrison, who turned and scrutinised his rig-out most minutely. He unfastened a couple of buttons of the coat, and loosened the wallet strap a little. Then he stuck the pill-box at an even more jaunty angle, and finally pronounced Eddie a messenger-boy to the life.

Then he went through Polo's new part most carefully, telling Eddie exactly what was going to happen, and showing him as much as possible how the rescue was to be effected. And in the end he carted Stella and Eddie Polo and Dick Fordyce off to lunch, and completed Bobbin's mortification by dispatching that worthy to inform the camera man to be on location by two o'clock sharp, ready to shoot the new scenes.

It was while the two bullies were speeding down the street, having delivered their message, that a dastardly idea was born and took shape in Bud Curtis' brain. It was so astounding that it made its creator draw breath sharply and stagger against a wall.

"Say, Tim," drawled the youth, "that Polo coon's going to be a nuisance to you and me if we don't shunt him. And if he's got to be shunted we might as well shunt him first as last. This afternoon's the best opportunity we'll ever have. He's new to the game, and there'll be no chance of him getting practice on location before he has to do the dive for shooting or maybe the boss will give him one rehearsal. You know what it is with these things. The risk is so great that if the picture isn't taken right at the first exposure the director cuts it out and substitutes some other feat. And if things go wrong this afternoon, and this Polo child gets badly hurt, or even knocked out, as he will if he muffs the business, that'll give you a real chance to star in the play, and get him the merry good-bye from the studio before he's properly learned where it's situated!"

"Yes, I agree. But nothing will go wrong," said Bobbin bitterly. "It's just my luck. You'll see, this Polo feller will carry it all off as if rescuing distressed damsels from sudden and certain death at the hands of a villain in a swinging mortar-bucket two hundred feet in the air was an everyday affair to him. He'll get all the praise from the camera man and the producer, and you and me will shortly be seeking our bread from door to door, or words to that effect. But I'll give him a sound drubbing if that comes off, all the same!"

"Here, listen a minute!" said Curtis, halting and pulling his companion into a deserted doorway after looking around to see that nobody eavesdropped. "What about making things happen? What about making sure that Eddie Polo won't catch that bucket as it swings in mid-air? You can do it as easy as pie!"

Very carefully and very slowly the two men went over what they remembered of the plot of the scene wherein the crane on the top of the tall Flatiron Building was to be used. It should be explained that in this scene Stella, as the heroine, was being hunted by a villain who in a previous scene had stunned her lover. She had raced to the top of this building in the lift and the madman, at her heels, had forced her out on to the arm of the crane overhanging the street and into the big bucket which swung on its chain. Then he had cast loose the brakes and let the chain slip out, himself clambering into the bucket and struggling with the girl as it descended. The bucket had stopped just below the windows of an hotel, from which the messenger-boy was to dive to rescue the girl from the villain's clutches. The messenger-boy was really the hero of the film.

And it was to frustrate this dive that the two bullies were now plotting, little heeding that its frustration would mean that the lad trying it would crash down to the hard concrete pavement below, and very likely be killed in so doing. And presently they had their details all worked out to the last letter, just as, well ahead of camera-man and players, they arrived at the location of the crane and the Flatiron Building.

They introduced themselves to the foreman of the building operations as members of the cinema company, and he, having seen them with Mr. Morrison, accepted them at their own valuation.

It is strange how Fate at times seems to play into the hands of those who plot

against the safety of their fellow-men. It did, so apparently on this occasion, for just as Curtis and Bobbin introduced themselves to the man in charge of the works, there came out of the skyscraper door a greasy and smoke-grimed individual, holding one arm with a most frightful expression of pain on his face.

"Say, boss," he said, "I'm quitting this job for a while. That blamed engine's done for my arm; it feels as though it was smashed in at least a dozen places. You'll have to get somebody else to run it for this cinema show this afternoon."

Curtis, as the chief plotter, hid an evil grin as he turned to the chief workman.

"You needn't trouble about hunting for a new hand, Mr. McKenny," he remarked. "Me and my friend here were detailed to aid the engineer in the stunt, and as we've both got a fair knowledge of running the machine, we'll manage without the regular driver for the time the film's being taken. We both know what's wanted, and you can trust us."

The foreman looked relieved, and, after putting a few questions to the pair, gave his permission for them to take over the operation of the crane. It was with a grin of ghoulish glee that they whizzed roofwards in the lift, and clambered out above half the St. Louis roofs just as the rest of the film party were stepping out of their motor on the ground below.

"There you are, Polo, my lad," said Morrison, pointing to the swinging bucket overhead. "That's the little place you've got to do your stunting in. Fordyce, you know your part. When we start shooting you chase the girl Stella here through the hotel corridor and into the bucket. Put some ginger into the struggle. Remember you hate Stella for the time being, and when Polo makes the dive out of the upper story window to her rescue make it look as if you really meant him to be dashed to the ground below. This stunt should make the film a great success, and we've neither time nor film to spare for any messing up of the show. Ready? Then get busy. Terence's camera is simply aching to start shooting."

Eddie, from his station at an upper window of the hotel, watched the thrilling scene below for ten full minutes before he was called upon to do his part. He was desperately anxious that his stunt should be a success, and, after all, there wasn't any reason that he could see why he should miff it. It was simply a high dive, the same as he had performed from the roof of the circus to a swinging trapeze a hundred times, only in this case the narrow edge of the iron bucket took the place of the suspended wooden bar, and there was no net spread below to allow him a second chance if he made the slightest error of judgment in the dive.

It was with a queer thrill that he watched the supposed struggle taking place high up on the roof of the tall skyscraper. Terence and his camera being perched aloft like a monster spider on the very coping of the building so that close-ups of the scrimmage could be obtained, and Polo was suddenly aware that he had already started his part—he being supposed to be a smart messenger-boy, who, like most of the gaping crowd below, had merely chanced to be in the locality when the fun started.

And then, like a flash of lightning, the bucket overhead commenced to descend, swaying and swinging as the couple within it fought and writhed in their seemingly fierce combat. Eddie, remembering what he had to do, allowed his face to register horror as the bucket passed his perch at the window. Then, in answer to a shout from Morrison, the bucket stopped its descent, and Eddie clambered out on to the window-sill. Swiftly, as he balanced on one leg, he divested himself of his coat, the crowd below, thinking this was a real rescue, sending up a cheer. Then he measured the distance to the bucket, and crouched back on his haunches to spring.

A twinkling of an eye, and, like an arrow, his lithe form was hurtling straight through the air—direct for the edge of the swinging bucket. There wasn't anything on earth to prevent his reaching it, he told himself—indeed, he could almost feel the cold iron already in his hands. And then, just as he reached within six inches of the bucket, the men aloft at the crane removed the brakes, and, like a stone, it fell downwards, followed by Eddie's body as he missed his grip and clutched at mere air and nothingness.

(Make a point of reading next week's long instalment of this thrilling yarn.)

## A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

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which introduces a new character, Charles Pons, a junior from Canada, and deals with his appearance at the school and of the series of unlooked-for incidents that follow.

Your Editor

# BOTTLED BUZZES.

## It is Rumoured—

That Hoskins, of piano fame, is thinking seriously of letting his hair grow long. It is necessary to have plenty of locks to match his "keys."

That William George Bunter, when fishing for information in the Remove Form, caught Bob Cherry's fist full on his prominent nose, and wriggled like an eel.

That Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's birthday is April 2nd—late as usual!

That when Monty Lowther stepped into the roadway to pick up a cast horseshoe for luck he was knocked down by a passing cart! (Try carrying a piece of coal in your pocket, Monty; it's luckier.—Ed.)

That Herries' bulldog, Towser, accompanied Minnie, the Greyfriars mouser, in its latest song: "If I had a thousand lives, I'd live them all for you!"

That a recent remark passed in Hall about the tea now provided was to the effect it was none to well—in fact, too weak to stir!

That George Gerald Crooke was straight enough before he came to St. Jim's. He's striving hard to make both ends meet now!

That Peter Todd said Harry Wharton was a "knut." He takes after his father, the colonel!

That William Cutibert Gunn cannot shoot for toffee!

That George Gore's contribution for "Tom Merry's Weekly," a thrilling story, entitled "At the Point of the Bayonet!" has been rejected. Too much "Gore"!

That Arthur Augustus said: "Mr. Cappah is as mad as a hattah!"

That Mr. Maurice Bootles, M.A., slipped up in the corridor the other day. Was "Peete" the cause of it?

That William George Bunter appealed to Mr. Quelch for a position in the Remove Football Eleven. "Why, you don't even understand the game!" said Mr. Quelch. "What is a goal?" "Two uprights and a cross-bar!" promptly replied the porpoise.

That Miss Penelope Primrose's birthday is April 19th, Primrose Day. Some coincidence!

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