

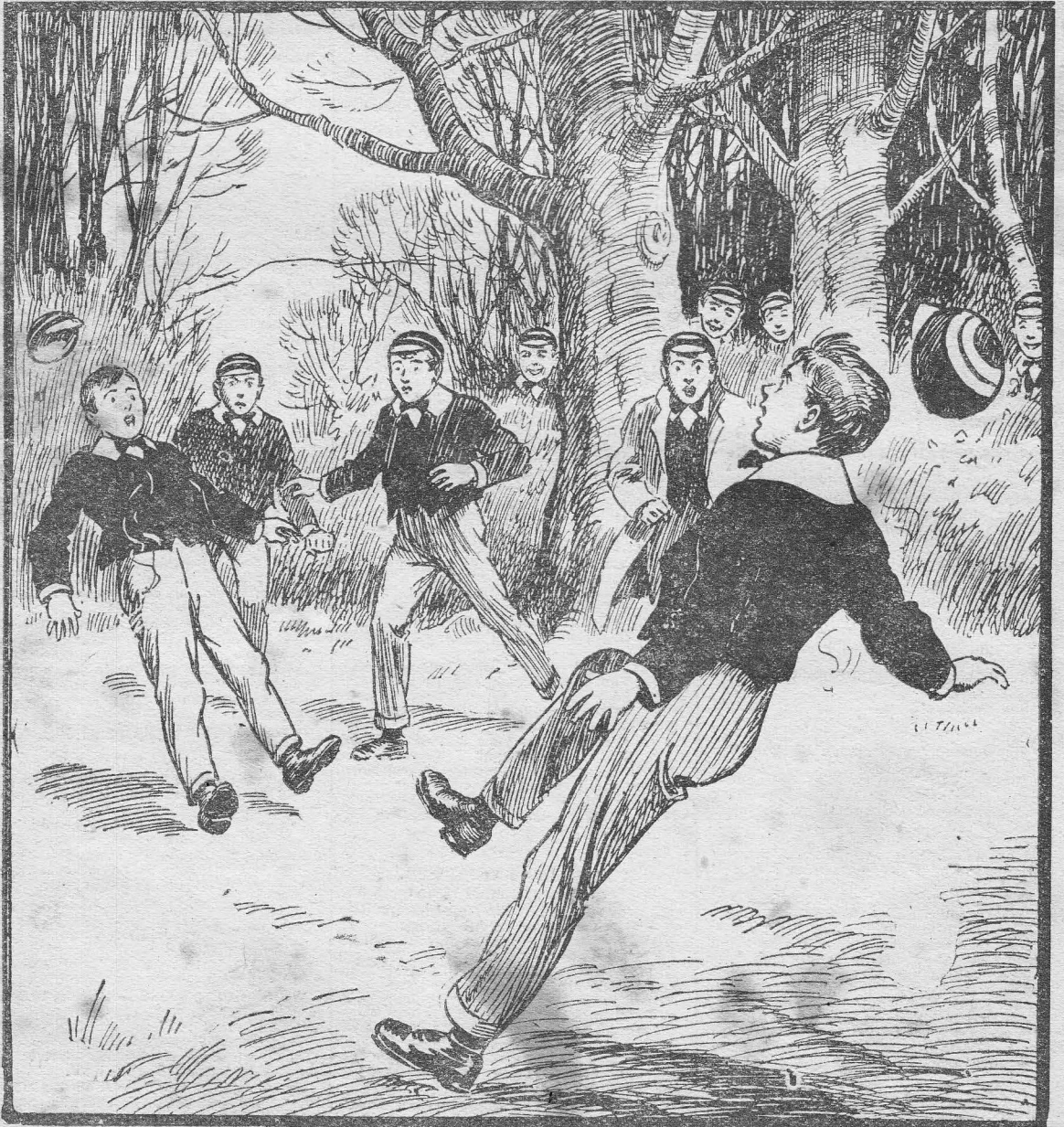
**"BEFORE THE CAMERA!" THE GREATEST LIFE STORY THAT HAS EVER BEEN WRITTEN!**

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

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**AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR!** The Schoolboy Duel which has such amusing results!

## OUR GRAND SCHOOL YARN!

## AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR!

A Splendid Rookwood School Story, showing how the Boy from Canada got his own back on Pankley & Co. of Bagshot.

By OWEN CONQUEST (Author of the Famous Rookwood Yarns appearing in the "Boys' Friend")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Trouble in the Study!

HIGGS snorted. Alfred Higgs of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood had an expressive snort.

Higgs was evidently "ratty." Higgs, as the biggest fellow in the Fourth, and a good deal of a bully, was accustomed to see fellows sit up and take notice, so to speak, when he was ratty.

But on the present occasion his angry snort passed unnoticed.

There were three fellows in Study No. 3 with Higgs. One was Dick Van Ryn, the South African junior, who had earned Higgs' unwilling admiration by licking him. Another was Charles Pons, the new boy, who hailed from the great Dominion of Canada. The third was Cecil Adolphus Reginald Muffin, generally called Tubby Muffin, on account of his circumference.

Tubby Muffin was too busy to notice Higgs. Van Ryn had laid in unusual supplies for tea, to entertain the new junior hospitably; and Tubby was making hay while the sun shone. Van Ryn was making himself pleasant and agreeable to the new fellow, and did not even look at Higgs. And the new fellow, quite a stranger to Rookwood, did not know anything about Higgs, and was quite unaware that any special importance was to be attached to his angry snort.

Higgs glowered at the three. "Look here, I'm not going to have that chap in this study!" he roared. "I tell you I'm not standing it!"

"Take Jimmy Silver's advice, and keep smiling," suggested Van Ryn. "It can't be helped, you know. I've asked Mr. Bootles to put Pons in this study, and he's agreed—and there you are."

"You had the cheek to ask Bootles without asking me first?" spluttered Higgs.

"What was the good of asking you? You always cut up rusty."

Higgs jumped up. "Well, I won't have it!" he roared. "We don't want the born idiot here. Look at him, the spoony ass!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Pons, speaking for the first time.

"You shut up!"

"But—"

"Dry up! I'm talking!"

"You generally are," remarked Van Ryn, with a sigh.

"Look at the burbling idiot!" continued Higgs indignantly. "Calls himself a Rookwood chap! Look at him! Why, the whole school is cackling at him. He let himself be taken in by the Bagshot Bouncers!"

"I couldn't help that!" pleaded Pons. Higgs gave a louder snort than ever.

"Just think of it! He let Pankley lead him off to Bagshot, and made out that Bagshot—that blessed casual ward—was Rookwood. Fooled him like a baby! Did you ever hear of such an ass? Bagshot will be laughing to death over it. He oughtn't to come to Rookwood at all. He ought to go to a lunatic asylum. We don't want the fathead in this study. No fear!"

Pons' handsome, dark face was crimson. He realised that it was likely to be a long time before he heard the end of his unfortunate adventure on his first day at the school.

Certainly he had been fooled most completely by the practical jokers of Bagshot, the old rivals of the Rookwood juniors.

But there were plenty of excuses for poor Pons. A stranger from a distant Colony

could hardly be expected to know anything about the rivalry between Rookwood and Bagshot, or to be on his guard against such an extraordinary practical joke.

Everybody was down on Pons for being taken in so easily, feeling that it reflected on Rookwood generally.

Only Van Ryn, in the kindness of his heart, stood by him, feeling that it was up to him as a fellow-Colonial.

The opinion of the Classical Fourth was that Pons was a hopeless duffer, and, with schoolboy plainness of speech, they did not hesitate to tell him so.

Higgs' indignation was simply overwhelming at the idea of the duffer being "planted" in his study. And his lordly permission had not even been asked.

"Now, I don't want to quarrel with you, Van Ryn," said Higgs. "You're a good sort, though you're cheeky. But I'm not having that chump in this study."

Pons rose to his feet.

"I don't want to come where I'm not welcome," he said. "I'll cut!"

"And the sooner the quicker," growled Higgs.

"Sit down!" said Van Ryn.

"But—but—"

"You see, you've got to have a study," explained Van Ryn. "You'll get chipped wherever you go until the fellows forget about it. You'd better stay here. Besides, Bootles has fixed it now. As for Higgs, never mind him. He's always a bit of a Hun, and you'll be able to stand him when you get used to him. Sit down!"

Pons considered for a moment, and then he sat down again. "If my Form-master has put me here, I've a right to stay," he said.

"Exactly."

"Then I'm staying!"

"That's right!"

Higgs' face was almost purple.

"And what about me?" he roared.

"Oh, I'll try to stand you," said Pons calmly. "I wish you'd improve your manners a bit. But I dare say I shall get used to them."

Higgs stared at the new junior speechlessly. Van Ryn grinned, and Tubby Muffin gave a fat chuckle.

"My hat!" Higgs found his voice at last. "It's no good talking to you. Will you go out of this study on your feet or on your neck? That's the question."

"Well, I shan't go on my feet!" said Pons.

"Then you'll go out on your neck!"

And Alfred Higgs came round the table with a rush and laid violent hands on the new junior.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

## Higgs Meets His Match!

JIMMY SILVER, the captain of the Fourth, stopped in the passage.

"Hallo, that sounds like war!" he remarked.

There was a sound of a terrific struggle in No. 3. Certainly it sounded like war.

"Oh, come on!" said Lovell. "It's only that new duffer in trouble again."

"Tea's ready, you know," said Raby.

But Jimmy Silver did not come on. "The new kid's a howling idiot!" he remarked. "But if Higgs is bullying him it's time for Uncle James to chip in."

"Oh, don't begin Uncle Jamesing now!" urged Newcome. "I tell you tea's ready!"

The Fistical Four were coming in to tea after football practice, and they were hungry.

And there was a feed ready in Oswald's study. The Co. were anxious to get there.

So was Jimmy Silver, for that matter. But Jimmy Silver had a very strong sense of duty as captain of the Fourth and Uncle James to Rookwood generally.

Crash, bump! came from the study. "Dash it all, we ought to look in!" said Jimmy.

"But tea—"

"Never mind tea for a minute—"

"Look here, the new kid is a howling ass and born to find trouble!" growled Lovell. "Look how the Bagshot Bouncers took him in yesterday!"

"Well, if he's a silly ass, it's up to wise-aces like us to look after him a bit," suggested Jimmy.

"Oh, rats!"

"You fellows coming?" shouted Oswald from his study doorway.

"Just a minute, Oswald."

Jimmy Silver thumped at the door of No. 3, and opened it.

His comrades growled, but they stopped, too. After all, it would only take a few minutes to bump the bully of the Fourth and reduce him to reason.

But the scene that met their eyes in the study amazed them.

Van Ryn and Tubby Muffin were looking on at it, grinning.

Alfred Higgs had grasped Charles Pons, of Canada, with the intention of hurling him neck and crop from the study. That was Higgs' simple and drastic method of settling the question.

As Higgs was a head taller than the younger lad, and a very powerful fellow in every way, he did not anticipate any difficulty in carrying out his programme.

But difficulties had arisen.

Pons had returned *à la* grasp, and Higgs, to his amazement, found himself held. The slim arms that were wound round him seemed to be made of steel.

Pons' dark, handsome face was quite calm—in fact, smiling. Higgs' was red with rage.

The two juniors were stamping and trampling about the study in a terrific struggle. Chairs had been knocked right and left, and some of the tea-things were on the floor.

But the steel-like grip round Higgs' burly body did not relax.

Van Ryn had intended to interfere, but there was no need for his interference.

The Canadian was quite capable of taking care of himself.

Jimmy Silver burst into a hearty laugh. Lovell and Raby and Newcome could not help grinning. If Charles Pons was a duffer, he was a very capable duffer in some ways.

"My hat!" ejaculated Lovell. "That kid's got some muscle! I couldn't hold Higgy like that!"

"Leggo!" roared Higgs.

Pons grinned.

"Well, I didn't begin," he remarked. "Are you going to keep the peace if I let go?"

"You're going out of this study, or I do!" howled Higgs.

"Then you'll go!"

"Out you go!" gasped Higgs.

And he made a tremendous effort to whirl the new junior round to the door.

For a moment he thought he was succeeding. They swung to the doorway, and the Fistical Four crowded back to give them room. But in the doorway it was Higgs who was swung outward, and the Canadian sud-

denly let go. Higgs went spinning into the passage, his arms flying wildly.

Crash!  
"Yooop!" roared Lovell, as Higgs' right hand caught him across the nose.  
"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Higgs.  
He sat down in the passage, with a resounding bump.

Lovell rubbed his nose furiously.  
"You silly ass! Oh, you dummy!"  
"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Van Ryn.  
"He is a corker, and no mistake! How the dickens did you do it, Pong?"  
Higgs scrambled up breathlessly.

"I'll smash him! I'll slaughter him! I'll scalp him! I'll—"

He rushed into the study again.  
"Poor old Pong!" murmured Raby.  
But Pons was not in need of sympathy.

He was not quite big enough to tackle Higgs at fisticuffs, but with wonderful quickness he closed in with him, and, once in his grasp, Higgs had no chance to use his fists. Pons had received one heavy drive which made his head sing, but that was all. How Pons did it, the juniors could hardly see. It was evident that he was a wrestler of uncommon skill. Higgs' muscular arms were pinned down to his sides, and the two juniors struggled chest to chest, Pons' grinning face looking coolly into Higgs' flaming and furious one.

The bully of the Fourth was struggling frantically.

But it seemed to be a circle of iron that was enclosing him, and he could not break it. His breath came in quick, sudden jerks.

"Ow! You—you're breaking my arms!" he gasped at last.  
Pons nodded.

"If I put the screw on they'd break, right enough," he said calmly, "and your ribs along with them! I think I'd better do it!"  
"Ow!"

"Have you had enough?"  
"Groooh!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotter!" groaned Higgs.  
"Stand up to a chap and use your fists! I can't do this wriggling business!"

"Well, I can't do the fist business against a fellow your size!" grinned Pons. "You are a rotten bully to tackle me when you're a head taller!"

"You cheeky rotter! Yow-ow!"  
"Make it pax, Higgy!" grinned Van Ryn.  
"Yoop!"

"Better make it pax!" grinned Jimmy Silver.  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I won't!" gasped Higgs. "I'll smash him! I'll pulverise him! I'll— Yow-ow-ow! I say— Yarcooh!"

"Make it pax, you ass!" gasped Van Ryn, almost weeping with merriment.  
"Yow-ow-ow!"

Higgs made one more effort, and then he crumpled up in the Canadian's iron grasp.  
"Yow-ow! Leggo, you—you boa-constrictor! I give in!"

Pons let go at once, and Higgs staggered against the wall. He was utterly out of breath, and quite "done."

"Oh, dear!" he gasped. "You—you rotter! Ow! Look here, you're not going to stay in this study, all the same!"

Pons shrugged his shoulders.  
"Oh, cheese it, Higgy!" said Van Ryn.  
"For goodness' sake, let's have some peace! It's like living with a Hun with you in the study!"

"If that rotter stays here, I shall change out!" roared Higgs.

"Well, we'll try to survive it if you do!" Higgs shook a weak fist at Pons, and staggered out of the study. He had had enough—for the present, at least. Van Ryn gave a shrug. He was almost the only fellow in the Classical Fourth who could get on with Higgs, and he had found him very trying. If Higgs chose to change out of the study, it was probable that there would be dry eyes there over his departure.

The Fistical Four went on to Oswald's study, grinning. There had been no need for Uncle James' intervention, after all.

"There's more in that new kid than meets the eye," said Jimmy Silver sagely.  
"Awful duffer, though!" said Lovell.

"Well, after all, he was a stranger here, and Panky is a deep beast!" said Jimmy Silver. "Anybody might have been taken in as Pong was—"

"Bow-wow!"  
"He's a silly fathead!" remarked Raby.  
"But he can wrestle, no mistake about that! I'll get him to give me some tips."

The Fistical Four joined Oswald in his study, considerably interested by the form the Canadian junior had shown. The Canadian junior went on with his tea in Study No. 3, showing small signs of the exertion he had been through. Tubby Muffin gave him a benevolent blink across the table.

"If Higgs changes out, it will be ripping!" he remarked. "I'd much rather have you, Pong!"

"Thanks!" said Pons, laughing.  
"Of course, you're an awful ass, the way you were taken in by the Bagshot Bounders!"  
"I suppose I shall never hear the end of that!" growled Pons.

"You never will, till the chaps get something else to think about!" grinned Van Ryn. "You must try to dish Pankley somehow, and make the score even, and then you'll hear the end of it!"

"Good idea!" said Pons. "I'll think over that."

Tubby Muffin chuckled.  
"You'd better let Pankley alone," he remarked, "a duffer like you, you know. He, he, he!"

But Pons was looking very thoughtful. Van Ryn's suggestion had taken root in his mind. That was one way, at least, of setting himself right with the Rookwood Fourth, if he could contrive it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Pankley Surpasses Himself!

"GO it, Panky!"  
Cried Pankley, the great chief of the Fourth Form at Bagshot School, beamed upon Putter and Poole, his study-mates.

The great Pankley had been thinking. And his admiring chums, who knew the glimmer in Panky's eye when they saw it, guessed that a "wheeze" was working in Panky's mighty brain. So when he gave utterance to a soft chuckle Putter and Poole knew that the moment had arrived, and they chorussed:

"Go it!"  
"I've got it!" said Pankley.  
"Good man!"

"The wheeze of the season!" said Pankley impressively.  
"Go it!"

"We've been giving Rookwood rather a rest of late," said Pankley. "They're really not up to our form. Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd can't quite keep up their end against Bagshot."

"No fear!"  
"We've done them brown, many a time and oft," pursued Pankley, perhaps forgetting that he, also, had been "down brown" occasionally by Jimmy Silver & Co. "They're played out, really. Still, a chap must have some fun. You know that new kid who's gone to Rookwood—Pong or Bong, or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"You know the way we spoofed him, bringing him here from the station, and stuffing him that that was Rookwood?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Putter and Poole.  
"Well, a silly idiot like that oughtn't to be wasted," said Pankley. "There's no end of fun in a crass ass like that. And he's a Rookwood chap, anyway. Every time we pull his silly leg it will make Jimmy Silver sit up. In fact, that born idiot is their heel of Achilles—"

"Their which?" asked Poole.  
"Don't you know that Achilles was only vulnerable on one spot—his giddy heel?" demanded Pankley severely. "Well, that utter idiot, Pong, is their Achilles' heel. See? We can fool him as much as we like. I've got a wheeze. He's a French chap—"

"French-Canadian," said Putter.  
"Well, French-Canadian, then. He's half French, and he's got a French name. Stands to reason that he's a good deal like a Frenchy."

"I suppose he is," said Putter, looking puzzled. "But what's that got to do with the wheeze?"

"That's where it comes in. Being a Frenchy, that's where we catch him. You've heard about French duels?"

"Duels!" ejaculated Poole.  
"Yes. You know, they skewer one another when they have a row, instead of punching noses. Of course, they don't hurt one another with their skewering; it's only a sort of comedy. Well, Pong, being a Frenchy, more or less, will have that sort of row in his blood, and he will be touchy, about his honour and glory and things—Frenchies are, you know—"

"But what the dickens—"

"So we're going to send him a challenge."

"A—a—a challenge?"  
Pankley nodded.  
"Yes, a challenge to a merry duel."

Putter and Poole stared at their leader. He had succeeded in taking their breath away.

"A—a—a duel!" babbled Poole at last.  
"A regular, deadly, blood-and-thunder, honour-must-be-satisfied duel," said Pankley. "Being a born idiot, he will think we are in earnest."

"Oh!"  
"And being a touchy Frenchy, he will take it quite seriously. You see, we point out that honour demands satisfaction, and all that—"

"Oh, my hat!"  
"And there's a deadly meeting on the heath," said Pankley, grinning. "We get a couple of the cadets' rifles, with blank cartridges—"

"Great pip!"  
"And there's a blaze-away, and you, Putter, fall down fatally wounded."

"Oh, do I?" said Putter.  
"Certainly!" And we make the poor old Frenchy fairly skip," grinned Pankley. "After that we'll let him know it's a jape."

"But—but you don't think he's idiot enough to fall into a trick like that?" exclaimed Poole.

"Rookwood chaps are all idiots, and he's the champion idiot," said Pankley serenely. "He was idiot enough to come here thinking this was Rookwood, and let us pull his leg. I think he's idiot enough for anything. And if he does take it on—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"If he does, it will be a screaming joke against Rookwood. We'll let them know all about it, you bet."

"But—but he couldn't be such an ass," said Poole.

"Well, when we take over the challenge we shall see whether he's such an ass or not," said Pankley. "If he accepts the challenge, that will prove what kind of an ass he is, and then we go ahead with the jape. If he doesn't, we can let it drop, and no harm done."

"Well, that's so. He can't be such an idiot, though."

"We'll see," said Pankley. "You can come over to Rookwood with me with the challenge, Poole. Putter's the injured party who sends it. When Pong was here he trod on Putter's foot, or something, and honour has to be satisfied. Putter is thirsting for gore!"

"Oh crumbs!"  
"He sends his seconds with the challenge, in the French style," Pankley rubbed his hands. "Master Touchy Frenchy is afraid of being thought a funk, and he accepts the challenge, and then we make a regular guy of him. Just imagine the fun if the silly idiot does take it seriously. We'll have a crowd of Bagshot chaps there to yell when the duel comes off."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Putter and Poole.  
Pankley jumped up briskly.

"No time like the present," he said. "Of course, we shall have to keep it dark from Jimmy Silver; he wouldn't let us jape the duffer. You come and get your bike, Poole."

In a few minutes Pankley and Poole were cycling away to Rookwood to carry out Panky's extraordinary scheme.

It was an amazing scheme, worthy of the mighty brain of the great Pankley. But even Panky had some doubts as to whether Pong would be duffer enough to be taken in to that extent. He hoped he would, but he had some doubts. It all depended upon how crass a duffer the new Rookwood fellow was. And Pankley had fooled him so easily once, that he had hopes of fooling him again to a still greater extent.

The two Bagshot juniors arrived at Rookwood, and leaving their machines at the porter's lodge, crossed the quadrangle. There was a shout from Jimmy Silver in the distance.

"Hallo, Bagshot Bounders!"  
The Fistical Four bore down upon the enemy as they came up to the School House. Pankley jerked out his handkerchief, and waved it in the air.

"Flag of truce!" he exclaimed.  
Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"White flag is a flag of truce," Jimmy replied.

"Well, this is a white flag."  
"You must be colour-blind, Panky. That's a black flag, so I suppose you've come here as a pirate, and we always bump pirates."

Pankley glared. His handkerchief, perhaps, was not quite so clean as it might have been, but it was not so bad as all that.

"No larks," said Poole. "We've come on a visit. Returning Pong's visit, you know. I suppose you're aware that he visited us the other day?"

The Fistical Four grinned. "We can't help him being a silly ass," said Lovell. "After all, he went to the right place for a born idiot."

"Oh, rats!" Pankley and Poole hurried into the House, the Fistical Four deciding to respect the flag of truce.

"Is Pong anywhere about?" asked Pankley, addressing the first junior he met inside, who happened to be Tubby Muffin.

"Yes; he's my study-mate." "Show us where to find him. Only a friendly visit," said Pankley reassuringly.

"Oh, all right!" Tubby Muffin led the Bagshot juniors to Study No. 3, and left them there. Pankley tapped at the door.

"Come in!" called out Pons' voice. Pankley opened the door. Pons was alone in the study, getting through some lines he had received from Mr. Bootles. Pankley was glad to find him alone.

The Canadian stared at the Bagshot juniors. "You!" he ejaculated.

"Good-afternoon, dear boy!" said Pankley, coming into the study, followed by Poole. "We've come over for a little talk—rather an important matter. Shut the door, Poole."

Pons rose to his feet, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Only a friendly talk, I tell you," said Pankley. "There's a dozen Rookwood chaps within call. We haven't come here to rag. Sit down."

"Oh, all right! What the deuce is it, then?" Pankley's manner assumed a portentous gravity.

"You were at Bagshot the other day," he said. "You trod on Putter's foot. Putter is my chum, and I'm acting for him in this matter. I'm his second."

"His second?" exclaimed Pons. "Exactly!"

"Does Putter want me to fight him? I don't mind."

"You accept the challenge?" "Certainly!"

"Then choose your weapons!" said Pankley.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Challenge Accepted!

PONS stared blankly at the Bagshot junior. He had supposed that Pankley brought over a challenge to a fistical encounter with Putter, and the Bagshot junior's remark made him jump. "Weapons!" he ejaculated.

Pankley nodded gravely. "This isn't an ordinary matter," he explained. "Putter has been insulted. You trod on his foot, and called him a silly ass. An insult like that can only be wiped out in blood!"

"Oh, my hat!" A peculiar glimmer came into the Canadian's eyes.

Pankley was quite satisfied that he was a born idiot, owing to his experiences at Bagshot; and certainly only a born idiot could have taken the ridiculous challenge seriously.

But it was barely possible that the great Pankley had made a little mistake, and that Pons was not quite such a duffer as he supposed.

But certainly Pons' next words bore out Pankley's opinion of him.

"A duel?" he asked. "Exactly!"

"As the challenged party I have a right to choose the weapons," said Pons.

Poole gasped, and Pankley had hard work to suppress a chuckle. He had judged the French-Canadian correctly, he considered. Unless he was a born idiot, how could he have answered like that? The scheme was going to work!

"Quite so!" said Pankley as gravely as he could. "We've come over as Putter's seconds to arrange the meeting. As a French chap, you understand how these things are done, and that honour can only be satisfied by skewering!"

"Mais oui!" said Pons. "Vous avez raison, mon cher!"

"Eh?" "I mean, you are right. Honour must be satisfied. There is French blood in my veins. I understand perfectly. I accept the challenge!"

"Oh, good!" gasped Poole. "I will meet Monsieur Putter where and when he likes!" exclaimed Pons, gesticulating

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in an excited manner. "Only one of us shall leave the field of battle alive!"

Poole stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth. It was the only way to keep back a yell of laughter.

"Good!" said Pankley. "Will Coombe Heath suit you—under the trees by the old quarry? That is a lonely place."

"Oui, oui! The dead body can be thrown into the quarry, and nothing need be known," suggested Pons.

"Exactly!" gasped Pankley, almost overcome. "Ex-ex-exactly! The quarry will come in very handy for disposing of the body."

"Splendid idea!" stuttered Poole. "Then, as the seconds, we settle the details now," said Pankley. "Coombe Heath, by the old quarry, four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. That suit you?"

"Oui, oui." "And the weapons?"

"Anything you like. I have none, unfortunately."

"You haven't any duelling rapiers?" asked Pankley gravely.

"Non." "Nor any pistols?"

"I regret it, none." "Well, any kind of firearms will do for blowing a chap's roof off. I can get a couple of the cadets' rifles."

"Tres bien!" "And some cartridges. That suit you?"

"Parfaitement." "And you'll keep it dark, of course? Duelling isn't allowed in England. We've got a lot to learn yet from our Allies," said Pankley. "The police would interfere—ahem!—if they knew."

"Secret as the grave, of course!" "Don't tell any of your friends here. It might spread, you know!"

"I understand." Pankley felt relieved. If Pons had confided the matter to any of the Rookwood fellows, Pankley was not afraid they would inform the police—not at all. He was afraid they would enlighten Pons, for certainly no Rookwood fellow would have thought that the proposed duel was anything but "spoof."

But Pons seemed to have no suspicion. He nodded gravely.

"But what about a second for me?" he asked. "I must have a second."

"A Bagshot chap would act for you," said Pankley. "Poole, here."

"I'd be honoured," said Poole. "You are very good!"

"Not at all. An honour and a pleasure!" gurgled Poole.

"Then I accept your offer. You shall be my second."

Poole rose to his feet and bowed. Pons rose also, and bowed in return. It was, as Pankley told his friends later, as good as a scene on the cinema. The only trouble was that the Bagshot jokers found it difficult to preserve their gravity.

"Then all's arranged," said Pankley. "It's understood that you don't tell any of the chaps here that there's going to be a duel to the death?"

"Certainly not!" said Pons, with a momentary glimmer in his eyes.

Pankley and Poole took their leave. They seemed to be suffering from suppressed internal convulsions as they hurried back to the porter's lodge for their bikes. But it was not till they were riding home to Bagshot that they gave vent to their feelings. Then they yelled.

"Did you ever hear of such a howling ass?" roared Pankley.

"Ha, ha! Never!" "A duel to the merry death!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And poor old Putter is to be chucked into the quarry when slain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Poole. The two japers rode home in great spirits. Putter met them at the gates of Bagshot School.

"Well, did he spot the jape?" was Putter's question.

"No fear!" "He's accepted the challenge?" yelled Putter.

"Yes." "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Four o'clock on Wednesday, on Coombe Heath—cadets' rifles, and a duel to the giddy death!" gurgled Poole.

Putter shrieked. "And you're to be chucked into the old quarry, Putter, when slain."

Putter wept. The merry trio proceeded to relate the story in the Junior Common-room, and the Bagshot fellows gasped when they heard it.

And there were few in the Fourth Form of Bagshot who did not resolve to be on the scene on Wednesday afternoon and see the duel a la mort. Poole intended to take his camera. He thought that a snapshot of the duel would make an agreeable picture, which could be sent to Jimmy Silver & Co. afterwards.

Meanwhile, Pons went cheerfully on with his lines till Van Ryn came into Study No. 3. The South African junior regarded him rather curiously.

"What did the Bagshot Bounders want?" he asked.

Pons looked up with a grin. "I have something to tell you, mon ami," he remarked. "I have an idea—I think it is a good idea."

Pons proceeded to explain his idea. Van Ryn listened with astonishment at first, staring blankly at the Canadian junior.

But as Pons proceeded the South African's face relaxed into a grin, and the grin became a laugh, and the laugh a yell. He roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Van Ryn lay back in the study armchair and yelled.

"Hallo! What's the merry joke?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking into the study. "Somebody been fooling your born duffer again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It is a secret," said Pons gravely—"a terrible secret—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Van Ryn. "Oh, blow your secrets!" said Jimmy.

"What are you cackling at, you duffers?" Van Ryn, chuckling, explained; and then Jimmy Silver yelled too. And if Pankley & Co. could have heard they would probably not have been quite so pleased with themselves.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Duel!

"GREAT pip! There he is!" It was Wednesday afternoon.

Pankley, Putter, and Poole crossed the heath from the direction of Bagshot School in the clear, frosty afternoon.

Excellently as their little scheme had worked, the Bagshot trio had had a lingering doubt. They wondered whether Pons would really be ass enough to keep the appointment at the old quarry.

But as they came through the trees from the road across the moor they saw the Canadian junior.

Pons was first in the field. He stood by the old quarry, with his arms folded, his face dark and stern, in a Napoleonic attitude.

He was alone, and waiting for the enemy. "By gad!" murmured Putter. "The howling ass has come right enough!"

"Oh, I knew he would!" said Pankley airily.

"Of all the screaming duffers—" murmured Poole.

"Mind you don't laugh," admonished Pankley. "If you cackle, that will give it all away."

"Ha, ha!" "Shurrup! He can see us from here. You know what you've got to do, Putter. You fall down fatally injured—"

"Oh, my hat!" "Oh, my hat!"

"We chuck you into the quarry—" "Oh, do you?" said Putter.

"Yes, ass—only slide you into the bushes, you know. Then we tell Pons to fly."

"Poor old Pong!" "And he flies!" grinned Pankley. "Later on we'll drop in at Rookwood, and let him see Putter alive and well, to relieve his mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Shush!"

The three juniors assumed looks of great gravity as they came under the trees. They saluted Pons with becoming solemnity.

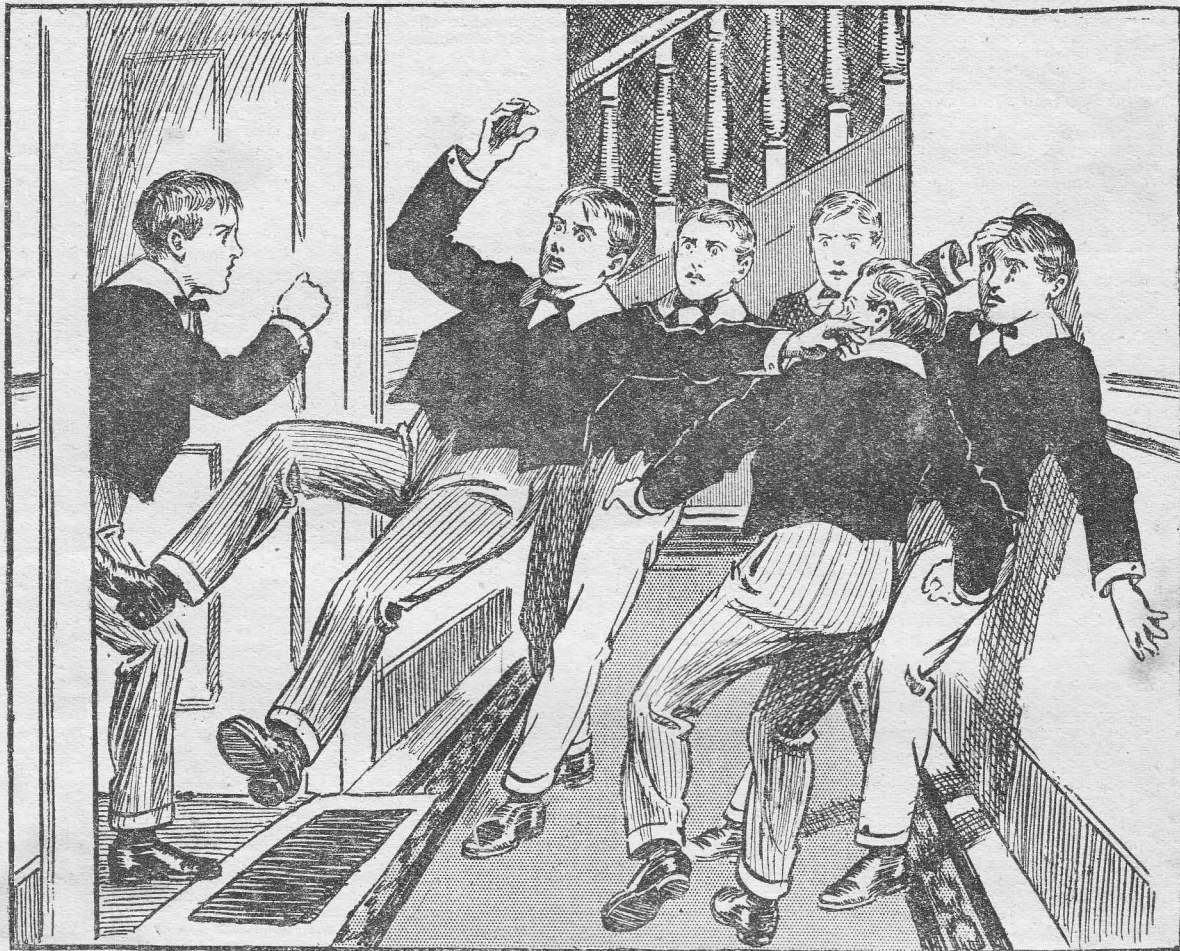
Pons gave a graceful bow. "I have waited, messieurs," he remarked. "Just four," said Pankley, consulting his watch.

"Tres bien!" Here and there on the heath heads appeared in view. A good number of Bagshot juniors were looking on from a distance, not to miss the fun. Pons did not appear to observe them.

Pankley unfastened a long bundle he carried, wrapped in canvas. A pair of the rifles used by the school cadet corps were disclosed to view.

Pons glanced at them. "Good!" he ejaculated.

"How many paces?" asked Poole.



Pons let go suddenly and Higgs went spinning into the passage, his arms flying wildly. Crash! "Yooop!" roared Lovell, as Higgs' right hand caught him across the nose. "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

(See Chapter 2.)

"Say ten," said Putter. "I want to make sure of him."

"Does that suit you, Pons?"

"Parfaitement."

"Ten paces, then," said Pankley. "Take your stand while we load the rifles."

The distance was measured off carefully. Pons stood waiting in a Napoleonic attitude. He was quite calm.

"I—I say, Panky," whispered Putter, "you—you're sure that you've got blank cartridges?"

Pankley gave him a withering look.

"Do you think I should make a mistake, you fathead?" he asked.

"Nummo; but—"

"If you're getting nervous, you ass—"

"I'm not; only mistakes do happen—"

"Look at them yourself, fathead!"

"Oh, all right!" said Putter.

"Take your place, ass, or Pong will begin to smell a rat."

Putter went to his place, facing Pons at a distance of ten paces.

The two seconds proceeded to load the rifles.

This operation was performed with due seriousness. Then the deadly weapons were handed to the two principals.

Pons gripped his rifle with a businesslike air.

"When I drop the handkerchief you fire," said Pankley.

"Oui, oui!"

"Are you ready?"

"Quite ready!"

"Go ahead!" said Putter.

"Level your popguns, and wait for the word!"

"What-ho!"

The rifles came to the shoulders. Deadly aim was taken.

"My hat!" murmured Poole. "Pong must be an awful beast as well as a silly fool! He really thinks he's going to wing poor old Putter!"

Pankley nodded.

"This lesson will do him good, then!" he remarked. "He'll feel a bit different after winging him. Don't cackle, you ass! Now—"

"Hold on a minute; I've got to get my camera ready!"

"Buck up, then!"

"The Rookwood chaps will enjoy this photograph," murmured Poole, as he opened the view-finder. "They'll gloat over it—I don't think!"

"Now, then!" said Pankley, raising his hand with the handkerchief in it. "Eyes front! Ready?"

The duellists blinked along the levelled rifles.

All was ready.

The handkerchief fluttered from Cecil Pankley's hand.

Bang, bang!

The two reports sounded almost as one. Putter, as per programme, uttered a piercing yell, and fell backwards.

To the astonishment of the seconds, Pons gave a shriek at the same moment, spun wildly round, and fell on his side.

They stared at him.

A deep, anguished groan came from the fallen Canadian.

"Oh, mon Dieu! Je suis mort! Helas!"

Then he lay still.

Pankley rushed madly towards him, his face white as a sheet. A crimson stream was flowing over Pons' white collar, dyeing the grass upon which he lay. The Bagshot juniors gazed at him in speechless horror.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Not According to the Programme!

PANKLEY and Poole stood transfixed, gazing down at the fallen junior. Putter leaped to his feet. It had been arranged for Putter to go through the ceremony of appearing fatally injured. But it was evidently no time for jokes now. Putter came running up with a scared face.

"What—what's happened?" he panted.

Pankley's teeth chattered.

"Look at him!"

"He—he's hit!" stuttered Putter.

The Canadian groaned again. His hand was clutching at his collar, and his fingers came away dyed crimson.

Putter's knees knocked together. How had it happened? He turned a wild look upon Pankley.

"Panky, you silly idiot, I—I asked you specially if they were blank cartridges!"

"They—they were!" groaned Pankley. "I got them out of the right box, I'll swear!"

"Then they must have got mixed!" gasped Poole.

"But—but I looked at them!"

"Oh, you fool!"

"You silly fool!" groaned Putter. "I knew there'd be some bungle! You've given me a loaded cartridge, and—and now—"

Groan!

The three juniors were almost overcome with horror.

Pons blinked up at them.

"It is nothing!" he gasped. "I—I am— Oh! But you are not to blame. It was a fair duel!"

Pankley groaned.

"I forgive you, Monsieur Putter!" moaned Pons. "If I die, you shall throw me into the quarry, and say nothing!"

"Pong, old man," gasped Pankley hoarsely, "it—it was only a joke! We—we thought they were blank cartridges!"

Pons smiled faintly.

Then his features became convulsed, and he writhed in the grass and groaned.

"Ah, je suis mort! Je vais mourir!" he groaned.

There was a crash in the trees and bushes by the quarry, and Dick Van Ryn of Rookwood came panting up.

"What's happened?" he exclaimed. "I heard shots here! Why, what—what's happened to Pong?"

"It—it was an accident!" said Pankley huskily. "We—we were fooling him!"

"Look at the blood!"

"The—-the cartridge wasn't a blank somehow!"

"Oh, you champion idiot!" exclaimed Van Ryn. "Don't you know better than to play jokes with firearms?"

"I could have sworn—"

"Lend me a hand with him. I've got a trap on the road," said Van Ryn hastily. "He may not be fatally injured. Let's get him to the surgeon's at once!"

Pankley took the Canadian's legs, and Van Ryn his shoulders, and they carried him towards the road.

Pankley could not help thinking it lucky that Van Ryn had happened to be driving by in a trap at that terrible moment. Without that, the wounded junior could hardly have been got to the surgeon's.

The trap was waiting by the roadside. Jimmy Silver was sitting in it, holding the reins.

He stared at them as they came up, carrying the groaning Pons.

"What on earth—"

"An accident!" panted Pankley.

"Good heavens!"

"No time to talk now!" interjected Van Ryn. "He's got to be got away! Help me in with him, Pankley!"

Pons was laid in the trap.

Groan!

"You fellows had better say nothing about this till you hear what the surgeon's got to say," said Van Ryn, as he followed the wounded youth into the trap. "Get off, Silver! Drive as fast as you can!"

"Don't jolt him too much!" gasped Pankley. "I—I say, let me tie up his wound first! Look at the—-the blood!"

"I'll look after him while we're going. Buck up, Jimmy!"

The trap started.

Pankley gazed after it stonily, as it disappeared down the road, across the heath, in the direction of Coombe.

Putter and Poole came slowly up and joined him.

The trap had disappeared, driving at a rate that was certainly not good for a fellow who had a bullet in his body.

Pons lay in the bottom of the trap, with Van Ryn at his side. Jimmy Silver drove on to the village, but he did not stop there. He passed the gates of Mr. Scoggins, the surgeon, without thinking of halting, and drove on towards Rookwood. In the lane he slackened speed, and looked round with a grin.

"All serene now," he remarked. "Not dead yet, Pong?"

Pons sat up.

He did not look as if he were perishing now.

He was chortling.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Poor old Pankley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just imagine Panky's face when he calls on the surgeon!" gurgled Van Ryn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"I have spoiled my collar," said Pons regretfully, "and it is very uncomfortable to have red ink flowing down my shirt-front. But it was worth inking a shirt and a collar."

"Ha, ha! I should say so!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "You're not such a duffer as you look, Pong!"

"Thank you!"

"I saw Putter fall down!" grinned Van Ryn. "He jumped up quick enough when Pong went down, though!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Rookwood juniors drove on in great spirits.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Quite a Surprise!

PANKLEY & Co. looked at one another after the trap had gone.

"What an awful ending to a rotten joke!" groaned Poole. "I—I say, he he can't be fatally injured, can he?"

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"No, no!" gasped Pankley. "Only—only a wound, you know! Goodness knows how the wrong cartridge got into the box. Somebody ought to be prosecuted!"

"We shall be prosecuted when this gets out!"

"Oh, don't!"

"Let's get on to the surgeon's, for goodness' sake, and hear the worst!" mumbled Putter.

But as the dismayed trio started a crowd of Bagshot fellows arrived on the spot. The distant spectators had observed that matters had not gone quite according to programme, and they wanted to know what was the matter. They looked very blue when they learned what the matter was.

"Well, you've done it now, Panky!"

"You awful ass!"

"Putter will be hung!"

"You'll all go to prison, too!"

"Of all the silly idiots—"

"It was a rotten joke, anyway!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Pankley, not much comforted by these remarks. "Some of you get those confounded rifles away, and hold your jaws! It mayn't turn out to be serious."

Pankley and Putter and Poole started for the village, with very uneavable feelings. Truth to tell, they were more anxious about poor Pons than about the consequences to themselves. But the consequences were certain to be very serious.

They started at a walk, but they broke into a run, and arrived in Coombe in a breathless state.

Pankley rang a loud peal at the door of the village surgeon's.

Mr. Scoggins, the surgeon, stepped out into the hall, frowning. Mr. Scoggins was at tea, and he was not pleased by the disturbance at his door.

"What is it? What is the matter?" he exclaimed. "An accident?"

"How is he, sir?"

"What! How is who?"

"Pong, sir."

"What do you mean—Pong?"

"The—the chap who was brought here wounded, I mean. How is he?"

Mr. Scoggins stared at Pankley, as well he might.

"What do you mean? Is this a joke?" he rapped. "Nobody has been brought here!"

Pankley staggered.

"Isn't he here? A Rookwood chap. Didn't Jimmy Silver bring him here in a trap?"

"Certainly not!"

Pankley looked at his comrades in bewilderment. What did it mean?

"You—you—you're sure, sir?" stuttered Putter.

"I suppose I should know whether anyone has been brought here or not!" snapped Mr. Scoggins. "If this is one of your practical jokes, you young rascals—"

"Nunno. But—but—"

"Close the door, Mary!"

Mr. Scoggins went back to his tea, and the door was closed in the faces of the Bagshot trio.

Pankley looked helpless.

"They—they didn't bring him here," he gasped. "What have they done with him? They—they wouldn't take him to Rookwood like that!"

"They must have."

Pankley pressed his hand to his brow. He simply couldn't understand it.

"Let's get on," he muttered at last. "I suppose they must have taken him to the school, the silly fools! Buck up!"

A visit to Rookwood, under the circumstances, was not pleasant; but the Bagshot juniors were too terribly anxious to think about that. They ran on up the lane towards the school, tired and dusty and breathless.

They were panting and perspiring when they arrived at the gates. Lovell of the Fourth was waiting there.

"Oh, you've come!" he exclaimed.

"Is Pong here?" gasped Pankley.

"Yes."

"Where—where is he?"

"They've taken him to his study."

"Not—not to the sanatorium?" ejaculated Poole.

"No; it's being kept dark at present," said Lovell. "Only a few of us know. If you want to see him, I'll take you in."

"He—he—he's not—" The word almost froze on Pankley's tongue. "He—he's not—not—-not dead?"

"Not yet."

"Is—is—is he going to die?" groaned Putter.

"Yes."

"Ow!"

The miserable trio followed Lovell to the

School House. They fairly ran up the stairs to the Fourth-Form passage. But Pankley opened the door of Study No. 3 very softly.

Pankley & Co. tiptoed in.

"Where is he—" began Pankley.

He broke off suddenly.

There were half a dozen juniors in the study having tea. And at the table, with a very cheery face, engaged in the act of eating sardines, was Charles Pons, of Canada!

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Good Old Pankley!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. jumped up, grinning as the astounded Bagshot juniors stared into the study.

Pankley & Co. could scarcely believe their eyes.

"Pong!" gasped Putter.

"So pleased to see you, Monsieur Putter!" said Pons. "Do you want any more satisfaction?"

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

Pankley almost staggered. It was dawning upon him now that his leg—the great Pankley's leg—had been pulled. If there had been a born idiot in the transaction it was not Pong who had been the born idiot!

"You—you—you're not hurt?"

"Thank you, no. A blank cartridge does not hurt," said Pons, in a tone of surprise. "I was a little uncomfortable from the red ink, but that was all."

"Red ink!" shrieked Putter.

They understood fully now. Pankley turned a ferocious look upon Lovell, who had followed him, grinning, into the study.

"You—you rotter! You said he was going to die!" he howled.

"So he is," said Lovell. "Pons isn't immortal any more than the rest of us. He's bound to go the way of all flesh, isn't he? Not for another seventy years, I hope; but it's bound to come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" mumbled Pankley.

"You took me for a howling duffer," put in Pons; "I took you for howling duffers, too. Who was right?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" murmured Pankley.

"I knew you were going to spoof with blank cartridges, as I couldn't believe you were idiot enough to be thinking of anything else," went on Pons cheerfully. "But cartridges sometimes get mixed, and I thought that if I fell down dying you would suppose they'd got mixed—as you did. You were going to spoof me into believing that I had winged Putter, and you couldn't do it, you ass! But I spoofed you into believing that Putter had winged me, because you're a born idiot!"

The expression on Pankley's face was excruciating. The Rookwood juniors laughed till they wept.

"I fancy Rookwood scores this time," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Will you stay to tea, Panky, old scout? You're so entertaining!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co. did not stay to tea. With crimson faces they sneaked out of the study, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. yelling. They did not speak till they were in the road. Then Putter and Poole spoke—with emphasis.

"Pankley, you ass!"

"Pankley, you idiot!"

"I—I'm jolly glad it's no worse, anyway," mumbled Pankley.

"And that's the chap you were going to spoof, taking you in all the time!" hooted Poole.

And the unfortunate Pankley had nothing to say. He could not deny that his tremendous jape had been turned on his own head, and that he had been taken in all along the line. It was time for the great Pankley to hide his diminished head.

In Study No. 3 at Rookwood there was much merriment. Never had the rivals of Rookwood been so completely "dished" before; and the cream of the joke, as Jimmy Silver remarked, was that Pankley had laid the whole scheme himself, and had taken no end of trouble to bring about his own undoing. Jimmy Silver & Co.'s opinion of the new junior was quite changed now, since the Bagshot Bounders had met more than their match in "Pong" of the Fourth.

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled; "Too Clever by Half!" by Owen Conquest, will appear next week.)

# OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS



A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.

By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.

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 Talland Hall, the home of the Grevilles.

During the journey to Exeter, the three rescue ALDERMAN CONYERS and his charming daughter from the clutches of a

## INTRODUCTION.

notorious highwayman. To show his gratitude, Conyers invites them to his home. There, after a good meal, he tells them that he is a director of a certain big shipping company, and that he will replace the lost fortunes of the Grevilles on condition that they bring about the capture of Avery, a daring buccaneer, who had made the seas very bad for the merchants of the day. Through a certain source, information had reached him to the effect that Avery, under

the name of William Smith, had joined the Duke, a ship resting in Bristol Harbour. It is his intention of seizing the ship and changing her course and sailing for Arabia, whither he expects to encounter the Great Mogul, with an immense treasure. They agree to fall in with the alderman's plans, and having secured permission from Sir John Greville, Conyers, on the eve of their departure, presents each with a ring and a small pistol. *(Now go on with the story.)*

## Off to Sea!

"AND on the morrow?" asked Jeff, hiding his pistol away. "Before the dawn you will set out on foot for Bristol. Your horses will be returned by one of my servants to Talland. On reaching the port, you will make your way to the docks where the Duke lies. There John Smith is still waiting, unable as yet to procure his full complement. You will know him for a big full-blooded man, of black beard and bushy eyebrows—a fine, upstanding fellow—and from cheek-bone to chin on the left side of his face is what looks like a livid scar."

"But if Avery has such a scar, then surely, sir, it is easy to recognise him!" said Bob quickly.

The merchant laughed.

"Did I not say 'what looks like a scar,' Master Bob? Believe me, if Avery he be, he is a past-master at the art of mummery, and would as lief don the guise of a priest as a sailorman to serve his ends. Therefore, relying on my information, look out for the man with the red scar."

After this, little was left to be discussed, so they went in to meet such a goodly company as neither of the three had ever set eyes upon before. Some of them high in the King's service who, knowing the dangerous mission upon which the three were bent, drank success and good fortune to them again and again until they felt that already they were heroes. Still, they kept their heads very well, and after a sound night's rest they were up two hours before day-break, and having bidden farewell of their good friends, they drew their patched and mended cloaks about them—for the alderman had thought wise to clothe them as itinerant beggars—and set off down the long hill which is the main road out of Exeter town.

"Faith, what an adventure!" said Jeff, as they kept quick stride with Black Mike, whose long hanger every now and then rattled on the cobble-stones. "To think but a fortnight since we were figuring and ciphering at school, and now we are bound for lands beyond the seas."

"The only life for young gentlemen!" growled Mike. "And for why should any young blade choose to be an apothecary or a chirurgeon where there is blood to be let at the dagger's point? Ho, ho, my lads! Fortune has smiled upon you in the merry jest this time!"

"So much so that I wouldn't exchange with any lad in England!" vowed Jeff.

"Nor I!" cried Bob stoutly. "And as for Avery—the first time he falls foul of me, I warrant he'll have good cause to regret it!"

"Not so, young master!" warned Mike sagaciously. "Remember orders—to keep a watchful eye and a still tongue. Our work for the present is not to do, but to discover things. We are venturing in the dark. What betfalls is, beyond us to prevent. We are sworn to be servants of the King rather than servants to ourselves. Therefore, do nothing rash to spoil the purpose of our journeying."

"Do you think we shall fall in with many adventures?" the younger boy insisted.

"More than is to your palate, most likely," replied the sailor. "Take them as they come, and, as our reverend pastor at Talland would say, 'Read, mark, and inwardly digest,' which I take to mean keep your binnacle lamp well oiled and lighted to show the right way."

Towards noon of the second day Bob, Jeff, and Mike halted on the high road overlooking the broadening river, with the tall church-tower and the tapering masts of the ships in the harbour making dark lines against the blue of the water.

"Now, see here," said Mike. "We hide the rings which the good merchant gave us, and never produce them except our lives be at stake. Now shoulder your packs, follow me down to the quay, and leave the rest to me."

It was full noon of the winter's day when, leisurely following in the wake of the tall sailor, and versed in the parts they were to play, Bob and Jeff strolled on to the quay-side, and, setting down their packs, sat on the flagged stones, with their backs to the low wall.

Between them and the water's edge was a motley throng of townspeople, both young and old, among whom moved seafaring men of every nationality under the sun—smiling yellow faces from far-off China, black men from the Indies, thick-lipped niggers from the Ivory Coast, rubbing shoulders with lean, brown fellows from the Gayman Islands.

In the harbour a number of bluff-bowed ships were being unloaded, some with tea from Ceylon, others with spices from the Javas; while, as the crowd broke at the cries of "Make way, my masters!" down the long lane thus formed came shiny mulattoes carry-

ing big baulks of mahogany and sandal-wood from Honduras.

It was indeed a scene calculated to fire the imagination of the most sluggish, and, seeing so much that was new and fascinating, and hearing such a babel of strange tongues, both Bob and Jeff were eager to be up and doing and away in search of the supposed Avery's vessel. Mike, however, had all the native caution of the Cornishman, and for a good hour or more he did nothing but stroll with his hands in his breeches-pockets, smoking his pipe as he lounged from one group to another.

At last, about three o'clock, he came and sat between the boys, giving vent to a self-satisfied grunt.

"Cock your peepers beyant the press to the high-masted ship opposite yon chandler's shop," he whispered. "See the brass cannon on her deck, and more peeping out of her sides. That's the Duke—Cap'n Gibson's ship; and John Smith is even now busy recruiting for her. So gather your traps together and follow me. We'll hear what the likes of him have to say."

The press had thinned somewhat to little knots of curious lookers-on, and the three had but little difficulty in threading a path to the opposite side of the pool, where the Duke, a stockily-built vessel of some two hundred tons, sagged at her moorings.

On reaching the far side of the quay, however, they found the crowd thick again, for here was a big man, broad of chest and long of limb, and almost of the stature of Black Michael, haranguing them in strident tones.

"Now, see you here, my lads," he said, waving his arms as he moved about. "This is the good ship Duke, and she sails on Thursday tide under right good patronage. A generous master who knows every trick of the sea, a fair voyage to the Groine, and much good living to be had there. Gentlemen of Spain to carry thence to the East Indies, and all the world knows the depths of their pockets! So there it is, my hearties—a fine life and a free, money in the pouch and all found, little to do when once the vessel is out of port, long stays ashore, with a dash of adventure thrown in. So who's for the Duke? Who's for the Duke, I say?"

His dark eye swept the throng of yokels, town loungers, and fishermen, and sought for some of the women to give their men-folk a lead. None, however, seemed to be forth-

coming. But John Smith—they knew him instantly by the scar—was not to be denied.

"Listen, my masters. The run is but for four months. To each and every one signing on I present a bag of golden guineas—ten in all—and Dutch guineas, too! Now, who'll join?"

"Let's see good coin of the realm, and we'll talk to 'ee," said Mike, shouldering his way forward.

Smith's not ill-looking face expanded in a smile.

"New, my sons of Somerset and Devon, what think ye of that? A foreigner from down South. Shall he beat the lot of ye? How so, my good Cornishman—you would sign on for coin of the realm?" And he jingled his brown fingers in his pocket.

"I see no reason why not," laughed Mike.

oftentimes be merry, with a bag of guineas—yes, English guineas, if you like, thrown in. So who'll sign on for the Duke? Shall I choose you three among the last ten?"

"If you like," said Jeff.

A cheer broke from the crowd.

"I'm willing!" shouted Bob, striding forward.

A buxom lass of Bristol patted his back and would have kissed his scarlet cheek had not Smith thrust her back.

"And you!" he cried to Mike. "You with your long rib-tieker—will you come, too?"

"On my life!" cried Mike, as the mob cheered. "You can sign all three for the voyage!"

So in this way they took service on the Duke, and started out on the great adventure.

slanting deck—for with every twist in the river, the Duke heeled over—steadied them, and without further ado they joined in the task of coiling ropes and stowing tackle until towards dusk the clanging of a bell sent them below with the rest.

Here, in the dark living quarters, only faintly illuminated by an evil-smelling lamp, they had the first real glimpse of their companions. A rough lot truly—cut-purses, swift-nicks, cly-fakers, the dregs of a seaport town mingled with rough but honest sailormen, whose living lay on the broad waters.

The boys sickened a little as they listened to the strange jargon which fell from such uncouth lips, but a warning glance from Black Mike, who occupied one end of the bare board, and cut huge slices from a mountain of salt junk, while another went round filling big mugs with beer, caused them to hide their feelings and to fall to with a will on the rough fare placed before them.

There was work to be done until late that night, and fortunately for the boys, Mike was not chosen for the watch, so that they were able to meet before turning in, and exchange a few confidences.

Said the sailorman, stumping a quiet corner of the deck with his pipe in his mouth:

"Methinks our good friend of Exeter town has led us on a wild-goose chase. I can see nothing hereabouts to call for suspicion. This John Smith—be it honest or faked scar which he boasts on his chin—appears a sound enough fellow, well liked and respected by his men, and but an hour since I heard Captain Gibson—as proper a gentleman as ever took a thirty-gun ship to sea—speak wondrous well of him."

"Hist!" whispered Bob, laying his hand on the sailor's arm. "Is that not he?"

They crouched down in the shelter of the bulwarks while Black Michael, setting his back against the railing, continued to smoke placidly.

Down the short broad companion-way of five steps a big man was coming, so tall and broad against the blue of the night sky that they knew him instantly for John Smith. His thick, square-toed shoes rang heavily on the deck, and as he walked, he sang a snatch of a sailor's song. A moment later he disappeared in the direction of the men's quarters.

"The men all seem to have a care for him, and to like him, too," Mike continued, when he was sure the mate was out of earshot. "This afternoon I took myself to his quarters while he was busy making a tally of the merchandise in the hold for the captain, and I found naught out of the way. One would think if he meant to brew trouble aboard this vessel, his chest would be stacked with cutlasses and pistols."

"You mean to say you opened his sea-chest?" gasped Bob, in surprise.

"I did that!" said Mike, "and, believe me, I found naught but two sets of best Sunday clothes, some underwear, and a Bible. Now, who would like to say a man means to run up the Jolly Roger when he leaves port with that attire?"

"Not I, for one," vowed Jeff, feeling a keen sense of disappointment. "Once or twice lately I've felt our good fortune was too good to be true, and now, it would seem, we are signed on to work the ship for the voyage with nothing more exciting than to see a hanging in Port Royal."

"Believe me, if ever this vessel makes Port Royal, we'll see more than a hanging there, for a wickeder spot on earth don't exist. I warrant you, there's shooting and firing all day and all night long there, and crews burning their own ships in harbour, to say nothing of Indians being carried off by the boatload, and such goings-on as aren't fit for a Christian soul to see."

"Then we can well leave Port Royal alone," said Bob. "And as the hour grows late, we'll turn in and try the comfort of our new quarters."

They had thought living at Wellington more than a trifle hard, with a straw palliase in a four-poster bed, but now for the first time in their lives they were to learn what real hardship meant. As well to be shut up in a wooden box as to lie all night on straw in a narrow bunk with neither light nor air to breathe; but the situation had to be faced, and faced it was stoically, though the ship heaved and wallowed in heavy seas, and pitched so wildly that more than once Bob and Jeff, unused to such ways, thought she must sink to the bottom.

Glad indeed, they were, long before the break of day, to clamber on deck and to cool their fevered bodies in the cold air, and to

(Continued on page 18.)



"Who will come and join the gallant ship Duke?" asked Avery. Bob and Jeff stepped forward at once. "We will, and our friend here, Mike, will come with us, too!" shouted Bob. A cheer broke from the crowd standing near. (See this page.)

"'Tis a good life for them strong in wind and limb."

"And, faith, you look as though you're strong in both!" cried the mate, running his eye over Mike's immense girth. "Six foot seven if an inch, and broad withal. And, spit me, if they be not two fine upstanding lads behind ye!"

"Indeed they are, but naught but English gold would tempt 'em. None of your Dutch guineas or Spanish moidores good enough for they. What say you, lads? Would guineas of the realm tempt ye to cruise in yon fine ship?"

"I shouldn't mind," replied Bob, in as rough a voice as he could muster, "though it's little enough I understand about the working of a vessel."

"What matter, lad?" cried Smith, slapping him on the shoulder. "Everyone must needs go to sea for the first time some day. Let this be yours. And what say you, my young cock-a-hoop?"—turning to Jeff.

Jeff jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "He's my master. If he says yea, I'm willin' enough—that is, if the life's not too rough."

Smith laughed outright. "I hide nothin' from ye, lads, for that big, black-bearded fellow is as trim a sailorman, as ever trod a plank, and, to tell you the life's different from what it is, would be to say the sea isn't salt. But there it is, chock-full of adventure, enow to eat and drink, and

A Cry in the Night!

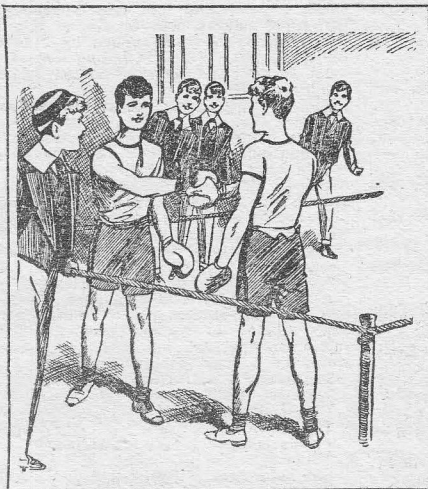
WELL might the three have thought that the venture upon which they had embarked promised nothing more exciting than a rough passage to the North of Spain, for all that happened amiss on the first two days of the voyage.

It was on the Thursday, after Bob and Jeff had settled into their quarters, which consisted of nothing better than a combined space some fifteen feet square, with a hatch-like opening, that the Duke set her sails and ploughed steadily down the river towards the distant sea. Neither Bob nor Jeff was in a mood to grumble at the scantiness of the accommodation which the mate had provided. It consisted of a couple of straw-lined bunks, with just enough room to crawl into; for the rest, the place was filled with merchandise to be put ashore at Port Royal after the Spanish gentlemen had been taken on board from Corunna.

But, all the same, as they two boys stumbled on deck and, momentarily escaping the mate's eagle eye, stood side by side watching the receding shores on both banks of the Severn, some measure of home sickness seized them, and more than once, each felt he would give all the golden guineas ever won on the sea to be back in the cheerless school-room at Wellington again.

The sight of Black Michael, however, bare of chest and arm, with his bushy beard blowing in the wind, as he worked at hauling bales of cloth, or trundling heavy casks across the





# BATTLING FOR THE HONOURS!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete School  
Story of HARRY WHARTON & Co.; the  
Chums of Greyfriars:

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Practical Joker!

**L**ISTEN, you fellows!"  
The Famous Five of the Remove pricked up their ears. They were standing in the dusky Close at Greyfriars, and they had been eagerly discussing the great boxing contest which was to take place on the morrow.

For days the school had been plunged into profound excitement by the boxing tournament, which was now nearly over, so far as the Remove was concerned.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry had fought their way through to the final; and it would be a case of Greek meeting Greek when they faced each other in the ring to strive for the gold medal which Sir Timothy Topham, a sporting governor, was presenting to the best boxer in the Form.

Bob Cherry was slightly the favourite for the honours. But there wasn't a great deal in it. When Harry Wharton boxed at the very top of his form, he took a lot of beating. And Bob was likely to find the captain of the Remove a very stiff proposition.

In the midst of the discussion that was taking place in the dusky Close Frank Nugent repeated his exclamation.

"Listen!"  
"Somebody's fairy footsteps approaching," murmured Bob Cherry. "Gosling's, most likely."

There were sounds of hobnailed boots crunching into the gravel.

The owner of the boots carried a lantern, which lighted up the ground on either side as it swung to and fro.

"The postman!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

The footsteps drew nearer. They were now accompanied by the sound of laboured breathing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything for me, Blogg?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yes, Master Cherry. Which there's a registered letter—"

"Ripping! My titled relations must have turned up trumps with a postal-order!" said Bob, in imitation of Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ancient postman handed over the letter, and by the light of the lantern Bob Cherry signed the receipt.

"It's the pater's fist," he said.

"There's bound to be a remittance inside, or he wouldn't have registered the letter," said Harry Wharton.

Johnny Bull linked his arm affectionately in one of Bob Cherry's.

"I've been your pal ever since I can remember, Bob," he said, in husky tones of emotion. "And I always make a point of standing by a pal at a time like this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry led the way into the lighted hall, where a crowd of Removites were assembled. Then he ripped open the envelope, and drew out the letter. As he did so a scrap of paper fluttered to the floor.

Hurree Singh plucked upon it at once.

"I expect it's a quidful Fisher," he said.

But it proved to be something better than that. It was a five-pound note, and Bob

Cherry's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as Hurree Singh handed it over.

"The pater's a brick!" exclaimed Bob. "Whenever he sends me a remittance, he always makes a good one. No sixpenny-postal-order touch about this! A fiver, by Jove!"

And Bob Cherry waved the banknote above his head in his exuberance.

"I say, Bob," said Billy Bunter, whose hungry gaze was focused upon the fiver, "the tuck-shop isn't closed yet."

"Eh?"  
"Don't be a mean beast, you know! Don't be afraid of spending money! It's up to you to lash out—"

Biff!  
Billy Bunter sat down violently on the hall floor. A well-aimed blow in the chest had doubled him up.

"Yaroooop!" he roared. "What did you do that for, Cherry, you beast?"

Bob looked surprised.  
"You said it was up to me to lash out, so I simply obeyed instructions!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Billy Bunter adjusted his spectacles on his snub nose, and lifted his hands towards Skinner, who stood near.

"Help me up, Skinny!" he said.  
"No fear!" said the cad of the Remove.

"I'm not a champion weight-lifter. Better send for a steam crane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Beast!" snorted Bunter.  
And he heaved himself to his feet by the simple expedient of clutching Skinner round the ankle.

Skinner went sprawling, and he threw his arms round Bolsover major's neck, in order to save himself. The result was that both fell heavily, and rolled over on the floor, with their arms and legs interlocked.

"Ow!"  
"Yow!"

"Geroff me chest, you clumsy ass!"  
"Why didn't you save me, you chump?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Amid the confusion, Bob Cherry de-claimed his father's letter aloud. It was a brief but kindly message, and it ran as follows:

"My dear Bob,—I am delighted to hear of your success in the boxing tournament. The news that you had reached the final, however, was not altogether unexpected, for I know how useful you are with your fists.

"I enclose a five-pound note—No. 035228—which I desire to be expended in providing a celebration in honour of the winner.

"Your affectionate  
"FATHER."

"Good!" murmured Bob. "That means that I'm to provide a celebration in honour of myself!"

"In honour of me, you mean!" laughed Harry Wharton.

"Rats! You've about as much chance of licking me as Billy Bunter has of becoming captain of the Remove!"

"Look here—"

"Pax, my infants!" said Johnny Bull soothingly. "You'll be coming to blows if you go on at this rate, and we don't want to see a full-dress rehearsal of the boxing final!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "I've got an idea! Why not hold the celebrations first, and boxing final afterwards?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Needless to state, this brilliant suggestion was not acted upon.

Bob Cherry put the banknote back in the envelope.

"I'll put it in my desk for to-night," he said, "and we'll pop over to Courtfield in the morning and purchase the tuck."

"Ripping!"  
Skinner and Bolsover major had managed to sort themselves out by this time; and the former gazed after Bob Cherry's retreating figure with a curious expression on his face.

He appeared to be deep in thought. And whenever Skinner took the trouble to think deeply, it generally meant that he was planning a practical joke on somebody.

The cad of the Remove allowed an interval of five minutes to elapse, and then he made his way to Bob Cherry's study—No. 13 in the Remove passage.

The door was ajar, and the study was in darkness.

For a moment Skinner paused. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way, and there was no man.

"Now's my chance!" he muttered.  
And he slipped into the study.

Although the apartment was in comparative darkness, a subdued glow from the fire enabled Skinner to grope his way to Bob Cherry's desk. He did not wish to turn the light on, for it would probably have been seen from the Close.

The desk happened to be locked, but Skinner was in no way disconcerted. He crossed over to the mantelpiece, and groped behind the clock. His fingers closed over a bunch of keys, and a moment later he had unlocked and opened Bob Cherry's desk.

The marauder paused, straining his ears to listen. All was still and silent.

Satisfied that he was in no danger, Skinner put his plans into execution.

From his behaviour it might have been supposed he had come to Study No. 13 like a thief in the night, with the object of purloining Bob Cherry's banknote.

But Skinner, although an unpleasant fellow in many ways, was not a thief. He had no intention of taking the fiver. He merely removed it from the envelope, and tucked it away in the bottom of the desk, beneath a heap of books and papers.

This done, he took from his pocket a Bank of Engraving note—which was, of course, worthless—and slipped it into the envelope from which the genuine fiver had been taken.

He then relocked the desk and quitted the study, chuckling softly to himself as he did so.

"Cherry will never know that I swopped his fiver for a Bank of Engraving note!" he muttered. "He's a careless ass, and he won't examine the note closely. He'll take it over to Courtfield to-morrow to buy the grub, and he'll get into an awful row for

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trying to pass a worthless note. Only wish I could be there to see the fun!"

And that was Skinner's idea of a good joke. He was one of those fellows who could never discriminate between a harmless practical joke and a piece of rank caddishness.

As he emerged from Bob Cherry's study he failed to hear a scuffling of feet along the corridor, and he failed to observe—owing to the darkness—the rapidly-retreating form of Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove had been watching and listening, and he knew all about Skinner's little jape.

What was more, Billy Bunter intended to turn his knowledge to good account.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Dramatic Moment!

**B**UCK UP, Bob!"

"We haven't too much time."

"Go and get your merry fiver and join us in the Close," said Johnny Bull. "Then we'll all go over to Courtfield together and get the grub."

Breakfast was over, and the Famous Five had emerged into the Close.

Bob Cherry promptly sped off to his study in quest of the fiver. He hurriedly unlocked his desk and took out his father's letter.

Little did Bob dream that anybody had been to his desk overnight. Everything seemed to be as he had left it.

He took out the note and thrust it into his breast-pocket without examining it. Then he crumpled the letter and the envelope into a ball, which he threw on the fire. A moment later he had rejoined his chums.

"Got the fiver?" asked Nugent.

"Of course! You didn't expect me to come without it, did you, you ass?"

"I thought it might have taken unto itself wings," said Nugent.

"No fear! I was careful to lock it up in my desk."

"Well, come along!" said Wharton briskly. "We've wasted quite enough time as it is. And we shall have a hefty hamper to cart back from Courtfield."

As the Famous Five strolled down to the school-gates Mark Linley and Dennis Carr bore down upon them.

"Whither bound?" asked Dennis.

"Courtfield," said Johnny Bull. "We're going to lay in supplies to celebrate Bob Cherry's victory in the boxing final."

"My victory!" corrected Wharton.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"I don't want to depress you in any way," he said. "But you'll never lick Bob in a thousand giddy years!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheerful, encouraging sort of cove, aren't you?" growled Wharton. "Going to be an undertaker when you grow up?"

"No, I shan't wait till then. I shall bury you this afternoon, after Bob's left little pieces of you trown about the gym!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come along to Courtfield, too," said Mark Linley. "Your fellows may want some help with the hamper, and we don't mind turning ourselves into beasts of burden!"

Reinforced by Mark and Dennis, the Famous Five proceeded to Courtfield.

"We'll get the grub at Chunkley's, I think," said Bob Cherry.

Chunkley's was a spacious, well-appointed store in the High Street. It was possible to obtain almost anything at Chunkley's, from a box of tin soldiers down to a Ford car.

The provision department was a familiar resort of the Greyfriars juniors, and the manager nodded genially to them.

"Nice weather for the time of year, young gens!" he observed.

"Blow the weather!" growled Bob Cherry. "Look here, we want a hamper of tuck."

"Yessir! Very good, sir! What sort of—or—tuck, sir?"

"Oh, a couple of chickens, to begin with. And a dozen veal-and-ham pies, and some sardines, and a couple of tins of pineapple, and some assorted pastries—"

"Steady on, Bob," said Nugent, "or you won't have any change to come out of your fiver!"

The manager of the provision department bustled about to execute Bob Cherry's shipping order. And in due course the hamper was made up.

"What's the damage?" inquired Bob.

The manager jotted down the items, and added up the amounts.

"Four pounds nineteen and elevenpence-halfpenny, sir," he said at length.

"Good! That's just on the right side. You can keep the change!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob fumbled in his breast-pocket for the note, which he handed over. The manager glanced at it casually; then he said:

"Kindly write your name and address on the back, sir."

"That's soon done," said Bob.

And he produced his fountain-pen and wrote the necessary particulars.

The hamper of tuck was then conveyed to Greyfriars, the juniors taking turns at carrying it. It was arranged that the celebration should take place in No. 1 Study, and in that famous apartment the hamper was safely stored.

There were no lessons at Greyfriars that morning.

Sir Timothy Topham, the sporting governor, who was presenting a gold medal to the best boxer in each Form, had induced the Head to grant the whole school a holiday.

Both Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, however, desired to put in some practice with the gloves, and with this object in view they went along to the gym.

Dennis Carr acted as Wharton's sparring-partner, and Mark Linley as Bob Cherry's.

It had been thought at first that Bob Cherry would have little difficulty in disposing of his chum in the final.

But Harry Wharton shaped so well in his bout with Dennis Carr that Bob Cherry's backers began to grow apprehensive.

"It's going to be no walk-over for Bob," observed Peter Todd. "Wharton's in great form."

"He's hardly ever licked Bob Cherry in the past," said Squiff.

"But that's no reason why he shouldn't lick him now."

At eleven o'clock the gym was invaded by a large crowd. For there was another boxing final down for decision. Wingate and Gwynne were to decide the championship of the Sixth Form.

This proved to be a very stubborn fight indeed. Although Wingate eventually won, it took him eight rounds to dispose of his opponent.

Wingate's victory was extremely popular with the crowd, who cheered him to the echo.

The Wharton-Cherry contest was to take place after dinner; and the remainder of the finals—those in which the Fifth, the Shell, the Upper Fourth, and the fags were concerned—were to be fought at a subsequent date.

Needless to state, there was tremendous excitement in the Remove as the hour of the fight approached.

Some wag—evidently Dick Penfold—had had a number of programmes printed; and these were distributed to all the fellows as they streamed into the gym after dinner.

The wording of the programme was as follows:

"THE SELECT SOCIETY OF SLOGGERS

begs to announce

that

A MAGNIFICENT, FIRST-RATE, GILT-EDGED, EIGHTEEN-CARAT BOXING CONTEST

(in 99 reels, 50 jerks, and umpteen spasms),

Will take place in the gym this afternoon

between

BATTLEING BOB

(of Greyfriars)

and

HOOLOGAN HARRY

(of Colney Hatch).

ROLL UP! ROLL UP! ROLL UP!

There will be no charge for admission, but a collection will be made on behalf of the Cottage Hospital, to which the loser of the contest will be tenderly conveyed on a stretcher!

'Roll up! Roll up! and do not tarry; See Battling Bob beat Hooligan Harry!'

That quaint programme caused considerable amusement. Probably the only person who failed to see the humorous side of it was the captain of the Remove. He strongly objected being referred to as "Hooligan Harry," even in fun. He also resented the insinuation that he hailed from Colney Hatch.

Although the fight was not due to commence until two o'clock, the gym was packed half an hour before that time.

The Head was there, and the majority of the masters. And Jack Harper, the gymnastic expert, who had been coaching the Greyfriars fellows, was to act as referee.

Bob Cherry was surrounded by a host of his supporters, who were telling him exactly what to do. And Harry Wharton was in a similar predicament.

The advice given was of a most conflicting nature.

Some fellows urged Bob Cherry to force the fighting from the outset; others maintained that he should gradually wear his opponent down. Some suggested that he should floor his opponent in the first round; others, that he should let the contest go the whole way, and win on points.

Harry Wharton, too, was receiving mixed advice. But he paid no heed to any of it. He had his plans all cut and dried.

At last the word of command was given, and the two chums stepped into the ring. They squared up to each other with smiling faces, though each knew that the contest would be a grim and gruelling one.

There was a roar from the crowd.

"Pile in, Bob!"

"Go it, Harry!"

The seconds had already left the ring, and Jack Harper glanced at his watch.

"Time!" he rapped out.

But before the contest could proceed there was a dramatic interruption.

The door of the gym, was thrown open, and in marched P.-c. Tozer, who was simply swelling with pomposity and importance.

"Stop!" he exclaimed.

Instantly all eyes were turned towards the portly constable.

"Tozer!"

"What do you want here?"

"Clear out, before we chuck you out!"

Headless alike of threats and questionings, Mr. Tozer advanced towards Bob Cherry.

His flabby hand descended upon the junior's shoulder.

"Robert Cherry," he said dramatically, "I arrest you in the name o' the lor!"

## THE THIRD CHAPTER. Postponed!

**B**OB CHERRY spun round in anger and amazement.

"Is this a joke?" he demanded.

"I arrest yer!" repeated P.-c. Tozer.

"What for?"

"You know werry well what for, you young warmint!"

At this juncture the Head intervened.

"Tozer!" he thundered. "What is the meaning of this intrusion? What has this boy done that you should subject him to this indignity?"

"Which he's attempted to pass a worthless banknote, sir—"

"What?"

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowded gym.

As for Dr. Locke, he looked utterly incredulous.

"Nonsense, Tozer!" he exclaimed sternly. "It ain't nonsense, sir—it's a fact! I 'ave the note 'ere, sir. As you will see, it's a Bank of Engravin' note, an', consequently, of no value. Master Cherry tried to pass it off on Chunkley's, sir."

"Rot!" growled Bob.

"This mornin', as ever was, he 'anded this 'ere note to the manager of the provision department, sir," continued Mr. Tozer.

The Head turned to Bob Cherry.

"Did you visit Chunkley's Stores this morning, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you purchase anything there?"

"Yes, a tuck-hamper, sir."

"And how did you pay for it?"

"With a genuine fiver, sir, which I received from my pater last night."

"That's so, sir!" exclaimed the other members of the Famous Five in chorus.

P.-c. Tozer gave a snort.

"Look at this 'ere note, sir. You can see for yerself as 'ow it ain't genuine. An' it's got Master Cherry's name an' address wrote on the back."

The Head carefully examined the face side of the note; then he inspected the back, on which was written:

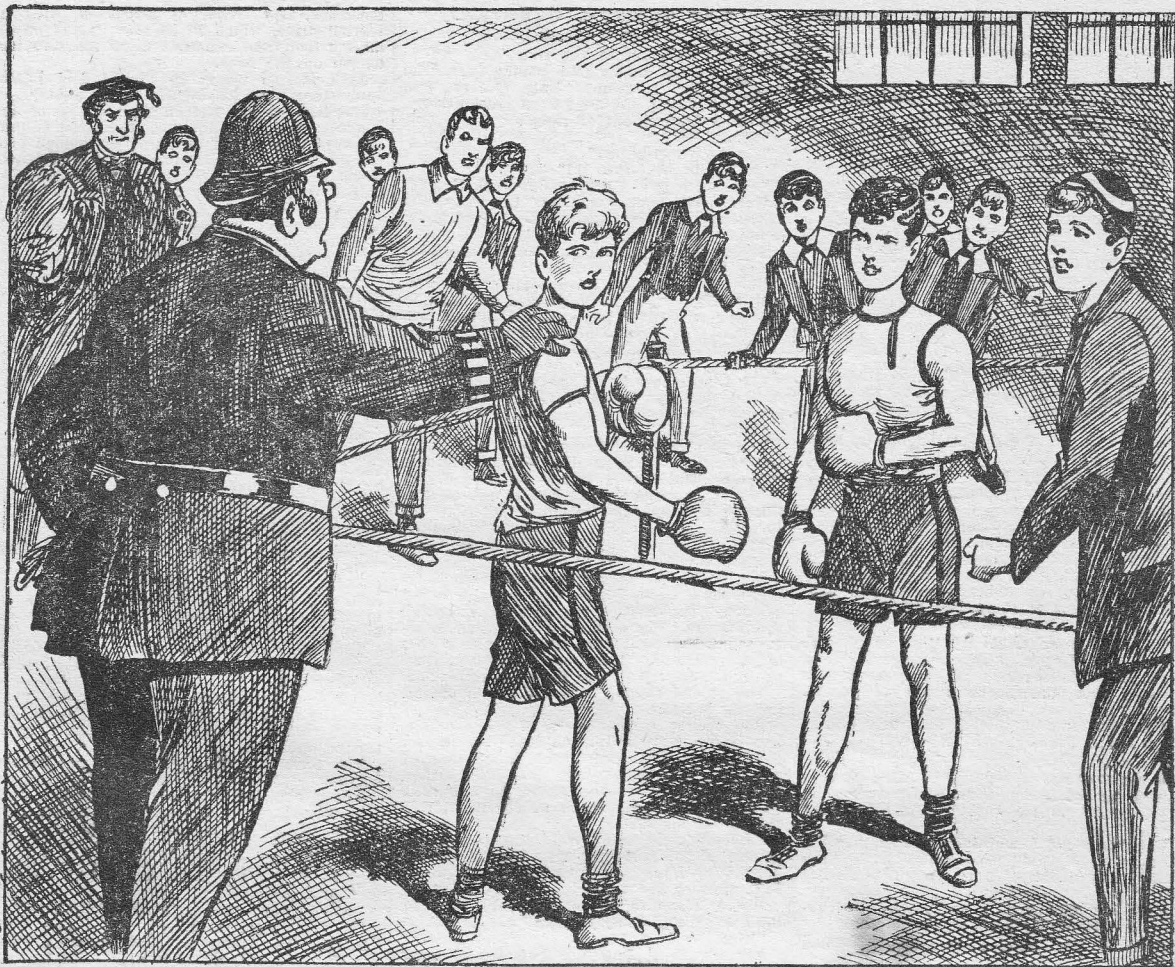
"ROBERT CHERRY,  
Greyfriars School,  
Friarale, Kent."

Dr. Locke's brow grew stern.

"Is this your handwriting, Cherry?" he demanded.

"Y-e-s, sir!" faltered Bob. "But—but, surely that's a genuine note?"

"It is not genuine!"



P.c. Tozer advanced towards Bob Cherry, and his flabby hand descended upon the juniors shoulder. "Robert Cherry," he said dramatically, "I arrest yer in the name o' the lor for passing a worthless banknote——!"  
(See Chapter 2.)

"Oh crumbs!"  
 "You say that your father sent you a five-pound note, Cherry?"  
 "Yes, sir."  
 "Have you the letter which accompanied the note?"  
 "No, sir; I destroyed it."  
 "Ah!"  
 "But there was a letter, sir!" chimed in Harry Wharton. "We all saw it."  
 "Hear, hear!" murmured Frank Nugent.  
 "Scuse me, sir," said Mr. Tozer, "but this young raskil must come with me."  
 "Where do you propose to take him?" asked the Head.  
 "To Chunkley's Stores, sir, so as the manager of the provision department can identify 'im as the young rip wot passed off a worthless scrap of paper!"  
 Dr. Locke hesitated.  
 "Very well, Tozer," he said at length. "It is only right that this case should be gone into thoroughly."  
 "But the fight, sir!" protested Jack Harper, who had been glaring at the portly constable as if he would eat him.  
 "The fight must be postponed until this affair has been satisfactorily cleared up," said the Head.  
 Bob Cherry scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels.  
 Like a fellow in a dream, he removed the boxing-gloves, put on his jacket, and quitted the gymnasium with P.c. Tozer, who was fairly oozing with officiousness and importance.  
 The majority of the fellows could scarcely realise what had happened. But they knew that Bob Cherry wasn't the sort of fellow who would deliberately pass a worthless note; and they hoped that it was all a mistake, and that Bob would be able to clear himself.  
 Skinner was chuckling quietly to himself. But even Skinner realised that his little jape

had gone too far. However, he dared not confess that he had hidden the genuine fiver and placed a worthless note in Bob Cherry's desk.  
 As for Bob, he was in a very wrathful mood as he tramped along by Mr. Tozer's side. For two pins he would have dashed his fist into the constable's flabby face, so furious was he about the whole business. But he held himself in check, and made no reply to Tozer's taunts.  
 "Which you'll cop out for this 'ere," said the portly constable. "Passin' worthless notes with intent to defraud. That's a werry serious offence, let me tell yer!"  
 In due course they reached Chunkley's Stores, and Tozer marched his captive into the provision department.  
 The manager came forward. He darted a reproachful glance at Bob Cherry.  
 "Is this the young rip, Mr. Sims?" inquired Tozer.  
 Mr. Sims nodded.  
 "I am surprised at you, Master Cherry, for attempting to deceive me in such a base manner," he said. "Fortunately, I examined the note closely after you had left the premises this morning, and I found it was not genuine."  
 "But—but I didn't know!" exclaimed Bob wildly. "I hadn't the foggiest notion that it was a Bank of Engraving note! It arrived for me by post last night, and I concluded it was quite O.K."  
 Mr. Sims said nothing.  
 "You can communicate with my pater," Bob went on, "and he'll bear out what I say."  
 The manager shrugged his shoulders.  
 "You have attempted to defraud my firm," he said coldly, "and you must take the consequences."  
 P.c. Tozer nodded grimly.  
 "Come along!" he commanded.

"Where to?" asked Bob dazedly.  
 "To the station, of course! You're going to interview the inspector, an' see wot he's got to say about it."  
 "Look here——"  
 "An' I fancy the upshot of it will be that you'll be sent away to a reformatory. Least-ways, you'll be taken away from Greyfriars."  
 "Fool!" snorted Bob. "I tell you I didn't know the note was worthless! It was sent to me by my pater, and——"  
 "Come along!" repeated Tozer.  
 And he hustled his prisoner out of Chunkley's Stores.  
 But there was a limit to Bob Cherry's endurance. He knew that he had done no wrong, and he hotly resented being treated like a criminal.  
 As soon as they emerged on to the pavement, therefore, he wrenched himself away from the constable's grasp and took to his heels.  
 For a moment Tozer was too flabbergasted to follow.  
 Bob Cherry was at least fifty yards away before the constable bestirred himself. Then he bellowed at the top of his lungs:  
 "Stop! Stop, in the name of the lor!"  
 But Bob Cherry raced on.  
 Tozer waddled after him a few steps, and then he paused, realising the futility of pursuit.  
 "The young warmint!" he muttered. "He'll suffer for this 'ere!"  
 Bob Cherry went away like the wind.  
 When he had reached the outskirts of Courtfield, a car bore down upon him from the opposite direction. It was a smart two-seater, and Bob recognised it as Jack Harper's.  
 The young sports trainer was driving. He slowed up when he sighted Bob Cherry.  
 "Hop in!" he exclaimed.

Bob halted, pumping in breath. He darted a questioning glance at Jack Harper. "It's all serene," said that worthy. "You're cleared!"

Bob stepped into the car. "Where are you going to take me, Mr. Harper?" he asked. "To Chunkley's."

The car bounded forward, and two minutes later it halted in the High Street, outside the stores.

P.-c. Tozer stood without, and he gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Many thanks, Mr. 'Arper, for bringin' that young rip back," he said. "He slipped through my fingers."

"Idiot!" growled Jack Harper.

"Wot!"

"Imbecile! You've put your foot in it—as usual!"

"Cherry is innocent."

So saying, Jack Harper alighted from the car, and beckoned to Bob Cherry to follow him into Chunkley's. Tozer, spluttering with wrath, accompanied them.

The bald head of Mr. Sims bobbed up from behind the counter.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Harper," he said. "You have come about this wretched boy?"

Jack Harper frowned. "I have come about Cherry. His statement that his father sent him a five-pound note is perfectly correct. It appears, however, that some practical joker stowed the note away in the bottom of Cherry's desk, and substituted a Bank of Engraving note."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"The discovery was made just now," continued Jack Harper. "Two of Cherry's chums ransacked his desk, and discovered the genuine note underneath a pile of papers. Here it is."

The note was produced, and Bob Cherry examined it eagerly.

"That's the one, sir!" he said. "I recollect the number. I thought it was this note that I handed to Mr. Sims this morning. It didn't occur to me that a trick had been played."

"Of course not," said Jack Harper, "and it is scandalous that you should have been taxed with attempting to pass a worthless note."

Both Mr. Sims and P.-c. Tozer looked decidedly uncomfortable.

Jack Harper handed the note to Bob Cherry.

"Fill in your name and address," he said.

Bob obeyed.

"Here you are, Mr. Sims," said Jack Harper. "I trust you are now satisfied?"

"Quite, Mr. Harper—quite!"

Then, turning to Bob Cherry, the manager added:

"I am sorry I spoke to you as I did, Master Cherry; but I was not to know that you had been the victim of a practical joke. The young rascal who placed that Bank of Engraving note in your desk deserves to be severely punished."

"And he shall be, as soon as I have discovered his identity!" said Jack Harper grimly.

Now that everything had been explained, and Bob Cherry had been vindicated, P.-c. Tozer melted away. He realised that he had made a big mistake, for he could no longer doubt that Bob Cherry was innocent, and that he had not acted with intent to defraud.

After further conversation with Mr. Sims, Jack Harper started up his car, and a moment later he and Bob were speeding back to Greyfriars.

"Does the Head know that the genuine five has been found, sir?" inquired Bob.

"Yes."

"And the boxing final—"

"It will take place as soon as we get back."

"Good!"

And when, a few moments later, Bob Cherry stepped into the crowded gymnasium a storm of cheering burst forth.

"I much regret that this should have happened, Cherry," said the Head, "and it is a great relief to know that your honour has been completely vindicated. If I discover the identity of the boy who played such a dangerous practical joke"—Skinner of the Remove shivered uneasily—"things will go hard with him! The boxing contest will now take place."

"Hurrah!"

And once again Bob Cherry made ready for his great bout with Harry Wharton.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Champion of the Remove!

"SECONDS out of the ring!"

Mark Linley and Dennis Carr, who were seconding Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton respectively, promptly jumped out of range.

"Time!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Put your beef into it!"

"Silence, please!" rapped out Jack Harper. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry shook hands, and the next instant they were going it hammer and tongs.

The pace was terrific, and both boxers took heavy punishment.

Bob Cherry sent in a fierce jab to the jaw, and Harry Wharton, dancing from side to side like an excited goalkeeper about to face a penalty-kick, suddenly launched out his left, and struck his opponent just below the eye.

"If that's how bosom pals behave," murmured Johnny Bull, "save me from my friends!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The first round saw some very wild fighting. Both combatants appeared to overlook the advantages of a sound defence. Harry Wharton's mission in life was to get at Bob Cherry, and Bob Cherry's one ambition was to send Harry Wharton down for the count.

There was very hard hitting, but defensive work was at a discount.

The Head was looking rather alarmed. He wondered if he had been wise to yield to Sir Timothy Topham's suggestion of a boxing tournament. The startled old gentleman regarded the present bout more in the nature of a prize-fight than anything else. Certainly the finer points of boxing were lacking.

The second round, however, saw a change for the better.

Bob Cherry continued to attack strongly, but Harry Wharton put in some very clever footwork, and he evaded more blows than he received. His attack was not idle, either, for at the end of the round he got in a smashing uppercut, which nearly lifted Bob Cherry off his feet.

"Splendid, old man!" said Dennis Carr, as he set a gale blowing with his towel. "A little more force behind that last blow would have finished the scrap."

Harry Wharton made no reply. He lay back in his chair, enjoying his "breather."

"Time!"

For the third time the two chums faced each other, and the spectators sat hushed and expectant.

Harry Wharton continued to hold his own, much to the surprise of the fellows who had expected to see him knocked out at an early stage of the fight.

The captain of the Remove was in great form. His attack was thrustful and relentless, whereas Bob Cherry's had lost a good deal of its sting.

The fact of the matter was, the excitement of the past hour had not done Bob any good. He was not nearly so cool and collected as usual, and he was wasting a good deal of energy when he would have been wiser to hold himself in reserve.

"Looks as if Bob will be licked."

It was Frank Nugent who spoke. And Johnny Bull, who had anticipated a walk-over for Bob Cherry, was forced to agree with his chum.

In the fourth and fifth rounds it was all Wharton, and Bob Cherry only kept going by sheer pluck. He was sturdy, and he could stand plenty of punishment. But his powers of endurance had seldom been so severely taxed as now.

When "Time!" was called at the end of the fifth round, the Head rose to his feet, and crossed over to where Jack Harper was standing.

"Do you think this—er—exhibition had better continue, Harper?" he said.

"By all means, sir."

"But—but look at Cherry's face!"

Jack Harper did so, and he could scarcely repress a grin. For Bob's countenance was certainly not a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. It was badly battered, and Harry Wharton's was in little better condition.

"There's bound to be a certain amount of damage done in an affair of this sort, sir," said Jack Harper. "But it's not serious enough to warrant a stoppage. Besides, I fancy the fight will finish in the next round."

The Head, looking rather doubtful, returned to his seat. And the fight went on. Jack Harper's prediction proved correct. The sixth round was likewise the last.

It was a remarkable round. The fighting was even fiercer than it had been at the

outset. Harry Wharton sailed in with a terrific drive, which lifted Bob Cherry clean off his feet, and caused him to measure his length on the floor.

Jack Harper began to count. And Bob's supporters were looking decidedly anxious.

But Bob was not beaten yet. Visions of Sir Timothy Topham's gold medal floated before his eyes. He was determined to become the recognised boxing champion of the Remove. Dash it all, he reflected, had he not defeated Wharton scores of times in the past? Then why should he fail to do so now?

He staggered to his feet. And there was a cheer of admiration from the spectators, for the blow which had sent Bob Cherry to the floor had not been a light one. It would have clean knocked out the majority of fellows.

Bob's head was swimming, and his legs felt weak and unsupporting. He saw his opponent as through a mist. But as he fought on some of his former strength seemed to come back to him. While to his joy he saw—and felt—that Wharton's attack was weakening.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it. Harry Wharton had put all his strength into the blow which had downed his opponent.

"Now's your chance, Bob!"

It was Mark Linley's voice. To Bob Cherry it sounded far away, but it served as a powerful incentive.

Jack Harper was on the point of calling "Time!" when Bob Cherry staggered his opponent with a swift jolt to the jaw. Then, following up, he dealt Wharton a tremendous uppercut, and the captain of the Remove went down with a crash.

Then such a storm of cheering burst forth as had rarely been heard in the historic gym at Greyfriars.

For the spectators knew only too well that the fight was over and won. Very few boxers indeed would have survived that terrific uppercut.

The voice of Jack Harper, who was counting, was drowned amid the din.

Harry Wharton was duly counted out, and then he struggled into a sitting posture. He looked utterly dazed, and he felt as if an earthquake had hit him. But he was able to pant out his congratulations to the victor, and to extend his hand, which Bob Cherry took in a tight grip.

"Bravo, Bob! The gold medal's yours!"

"I wish there could be two," said Bob Cherry, "for if ever a fellow deserved one, it's you. I hardly dared to hope I should lick you after you put me on my back just now."

"Well, you've done it!" said Wharton, as his chum assisted him to rise. "And, judging by the row everybody's making, it's a jolly popular victory!"

And then, before Bob Cherry could make an answering comment, he was swept off his feet by the rush of Removites, and carried shoulder-high from the gym.

Of course, a tremendous celebration took place afterwards. And the contents of the tuck-hamper which had been purchased at Chunkley's were speedily disposed of.

A most singular fact in connection with the feast was that Billy Bunter failed to turn up and demand his share.

This curious circumstance led Mark Linley and Dennis Carr to go along to Study No. 7. And there they found Billy Bunter making rapid inroads into a huge rabbit-pie.

When asked whose study he had been raiding, the fat junior indignantly replied that he had purchased the pie at the tuck-shop.

Investigations were made, and it transpired that Billy Bunter had been spending money freely at Mrs. Mumble's establishment.

On being taxed as to how he had come into possession of the money, Bunter was driven to confess that he had been extorting hush-money from Skinner.

Then the whole facts of the case leaked out—that it was Skinner who had placed the Bank of Engraving note in Bob Cherry's desk, and that Bunter knew all about it, and had turned his knowledge to good account.

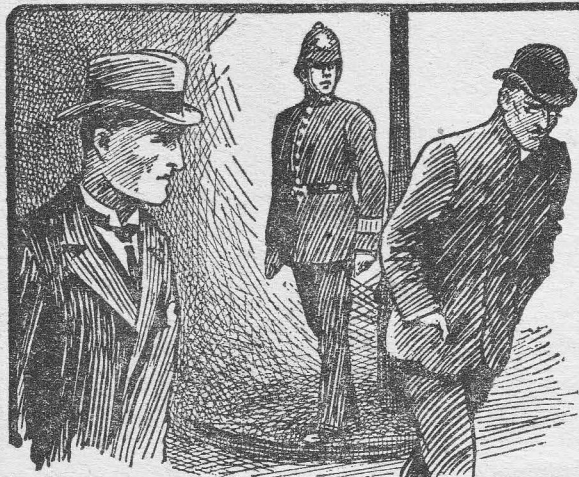
Skinner was not reported to the Head—though he deserved to have been. He was dealt with by the Form, and the Remove did not err on the side of mercy.

Both Skinner and Bunter were made to run the gauntlet. And the two precious rascals were not likely to look back with joy upon the occasion of the Remove boxing final.

THE END.

(Another fine story of the chums of Greyfriars next Friday, entitled: "HIS WORD-OF-HONOUR!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy now.)

POWERFUL NEW DETECTIVE SERIAL JUST STARTING!



# A MARKED MAN.

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

## THREADS OF THE STORY.

Adrian Vaughan, after having served five years, leaves Bleakmoor prison, bent on regaining his old position in the world, but he finds that all of his old acquaintances had joined the great army against him, including a very old chum, Harry Leigh, and he vows to get his revenge on those who were once his friends. He visits a prosperous City man, one Raymond Marconnon, who had, six years ago, borrowed money from him.

But Marconnon refuses to acknowledge such a debt. Vaughan threatens him with a revolver just as the door opens and Ferrers Locke and another detective rush in. Again in the hands of the police, Vaughan is taken back to prison, but in the train he manages to overpower the detective and jump from the express, fortunately escaping injury in the fall. With all speed, he makes tracks for London, where he meets an old convict acquaintance, Demottsen, who asks him what he is going to do.

(Now read on.)

## Vaughan's Revenge!

"**A**NYTHING, with a few pounds to carry me over the present," answered Vaughan. "Only give me my freedom for a week or so, and not all the police in Britain will get me!"

"You've got confidence, anyway."

"More, Demottsen. I've got brains and the will to do just what I please."

"Then you're just the man I want! Yes, I'm doing well"—as he noticed Vaughan eyeing him from head to foot—"but I want a man like you."

"H'm! The Vaughan you knew was a different man from the Vaughan of to-night. I've planned my life now; I hadn't then—revenge, colossal revenge on all who have made me what I am; revenge on the man who has turned from me because I am down; revenge on Ferrers Locke, who tried to get me re-arrested; revenge on Raymond Marconnon, who, to escape a just debt, would have put me back into prison; revenge on the system which, innocent or guilty, would brand me again with the mark of shame!"

"Hush, man! You look and talk like a devil!"

"Devil or man, what's it matter to me? I've my own life to live, and I mean to live it as I please! What is your proposition, Demottsen?"

"That you come with me. I've got a little cottage in the country which my sister is keeping for me. There I'm living quietly as a retired medical man. In my odd hours I keep a few crucibles going—the difficulty is to fill them with other people's silver and gold—a host of moulds, and a battery or two. But the game is dangerous and trying. It's hard work for a man of my age to have to come up to London and hawk my stuff amongst the 'fences'."

Vaughan's eyes lit up hungrily.

"As you say, you and I can do better than that. Where's your place?"

"Mena Cottage Brackley. That's a little village a few miles out of Northampton, on the main road to London. The house faces the road, so you can't miss it. Here, come along! Your best plan will be to come to the

rooms I've got in London, and let me fix you up a bit. It's no use your wandering about London inefficiently disguised, especially as a certain knowing customer, according to tonight's papers, has undertaken to find you within a week."

"And that is—"

"Ferrers Locke, the detective."

A curse exploded on Adrian Vaughan's lips.

"There's not room on this earth for both of us," he breathed passionately. "Either Locke or I have got to retire pretty early in the game."

His hand closed on the butt of a pistol, and murderous hate flamed up in his heart. Locke, he firmly believed, had been responsible for bringing about his arrest at Marconnon's house near Leicester.

When the two ex-convicts parted that night the arrangement was that Vaughan, now perfectly disguised, was to go to Brackley, and there await the coiner's homecoming.

Accordingly, the following day Vaughan left London. At Brackley, however, surprise awaited him in the form of a couple of uniformed policemen standing near the barrier of the wayside station. Pure coincidence, perhaps, but Vaughan wasn't inclined to take chances, and remained in the train until he reached Northampton.

The day was still young, and he decided to walk the few miles to Dr. Demottsen's house. At the end of Abingdon Street his pulses leapt to life, for a great car purred slowly by, and in it sat the man for whom he had conceived such a deadly hate—Ferrers Locke. The eyes of detective and ex-convict met in a momentary glance, but neither betrayed the slightest sign of recognition.

Vaughan made no effort to move on. The chauffeur and the car held him engrossed. He followed both to the garage at the rear, and seemed immersed in interest over the mechanic's operations, while Ferrers Locke moved away.

"Going on a long journey?" he asked, leaning against the gate and proffering a cigarette.

The driver paused, and passed his hand across his mouth.

"I'm not. The governor is, though. Going up to London to-night."

"What by? Road?"

"That's it. He often does it. Nothing to a chap like him. Lor', she can shift, too, this 'ere car!"

"What is she?"

"Six-cylinder, fifty-horse Delarge."

"H'm! How soon can that get to London?"

"Two hours, dead sure. He'll leave sharp at eight, and be at his flat in Baker Street soon after ten."

Vaughan blew smoke-rings, and his brain worked rapidly. He could only think of three things. It was Locke who had influenced Harry Leigh against him; it was Locke who had made the arrest at Marconnon's house possible; it was Locke whom he had sworn to be revenged upon, even as Locke had sworn to track him down. And now Locke's life lay in the hollow of his hand.

"Good running, that! Which way does your master take?"

"The quickest way, of course, to dodge the limits, through Brackley and Roade to

Fenny and Leighton and on through Watford."

"I see. She's a curious-looking car!"

"One in a thousand. You'd know her anywhere, sir."

"I should," responded Vaughan, as he moved casually away.

Only one motive obsessed him—the lust to kill, to see Ferrers Locke lying dead at his feet. Darkness found a tall hedge screening him by the side of the road along which the detective's car must come.

"I shall make sure of him in such a way that no one will ever suspect foul play," he muttered.

Eight o'clock striking from somewhere! Five minutes past! A great full moon hung like a lamp in the sapphire sky. Vaughan could see a long way up and down the road. Minutes ticked by—three, five, eight. Eight minutes past eight. Then in a blaze of blinding light from the two front head-lamps, and the one perched high over the radiator, Ferrers Locke's giant motor swept into view.

The silent night was shattered by the roar of the engine and the deep panting of the exhaust.

Vaughan, his handsome face devilish, and his blue eyes cold as steel, peered out. A moment more and the monster flashed by.

The bushes by the roadside parted, and the waiting man rose swiftly to his feet. The deadly automatic pistol in his steady right hand was raised with deliberate and murderous intent. Twice, thrice he fired. The whip-like reports were followed by a terrific bang as the near-side back tyre burst. The flying monster swayed, zig-zagged across the road at lightning speed, then, amidst a chaotic rending of woodwork and a shower of splinting glass, turned completely over, a total wreck.

A dark, motionless mass against the silvered streak of road showed where the driver lay.

The deathlike stillness had settled down again as Vaughan crept stealthily into the roadway and stood over Ferrers Locke.

"Dead—stone dead!" he muttered fiercely. "At least one part of my revenge is complete!"

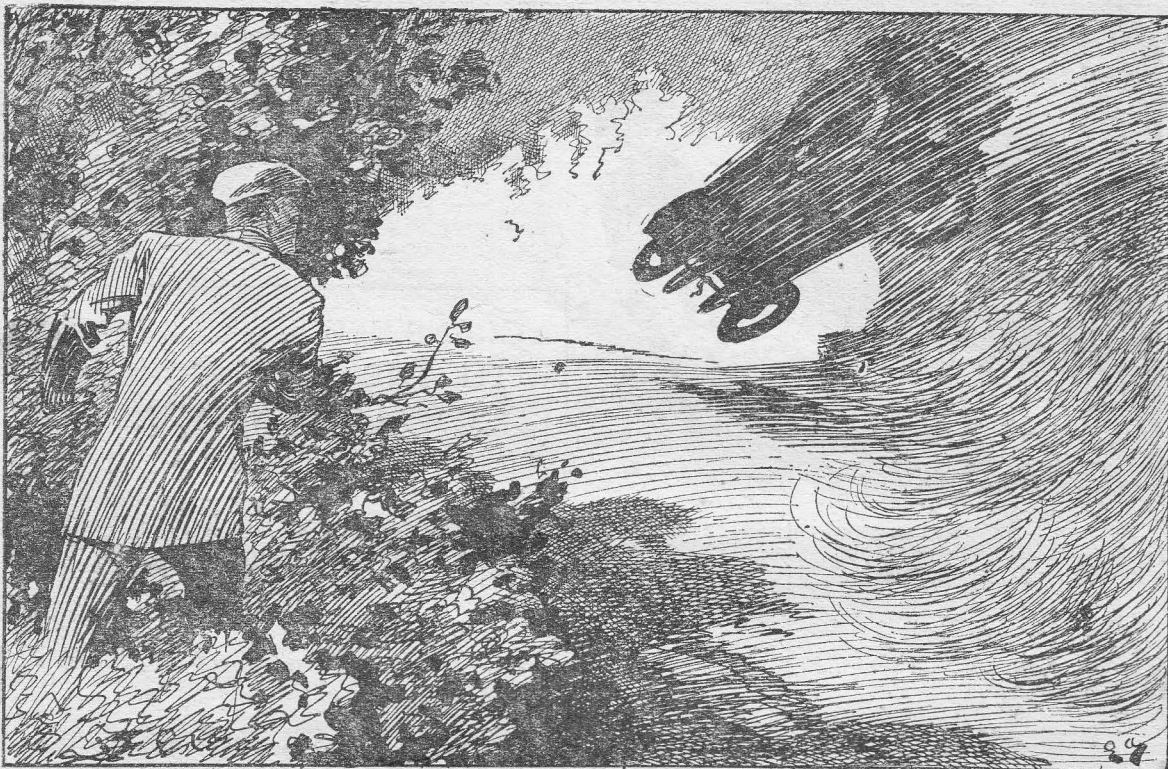
Locke lay just where he had been thrown by the tremendous impact of the car with the road. Vaughan bent down and peered critically into the relaxed face. No sign or sound of breathing! With difficulty the ticket-of-leave man reached out and let his fingers touch the detective's brow. It was clammy and cold as death.

"Locke is dead. I've kept my promise," he laughed.

Somewhere along the silvered ribbon of road, vanishing to a streak in the misty vapour of night, Dr. Demottsen's cottage lay; there he would plot and plan his final act of revenge.

He had toiled and waited through years of convict life, only to find the matchless prize of friendship denied him by the man who had avowed himself his enemy.

The long arm of the law, too, was reaching out again, innocent of wrong-doing though he was, to drag him back into its grip. Everything that made life good was lost to him; only his revenge on Ferrers Locke made balance. In this frame of mind he came to Demottsen's cottage.



The flying monster swayed, zig-zagged across the road at lightning speed, then, amidst a chaotic rending of woodwork and a shower of splintering glass, turned completely over. Vaughan watched it with a grim smile.  
(See page 13.)

#### Important Discoveries.

**F**ERRERS LOCKE, however, was not dead. Almost a miracle had saved him. On being thrown out of the car his head had come in contact with the burst tyre of a wheel detached by the accident. While the impact with the thick rubber was sufficiently severe to rob him of consciousness, he suffered little beyond a slight attack of concussion. A belated farmer, driving to Northampton, found him by the road-side, and, lifting him into his trap, drove him to the Three Swans Hotel, and summoned a doctor. For three days the detective was kept a prisoner under medical orders; the fourth found him back at work in London.

Ferrers Locke's study in the large suite of rooms in Baker Street in nowise differed from that of an ordinary cultured man.

A door in the south wall opened into an apartment less conventional. Here long benches and shelves filled with bottles, carbons, test tubes, mathematical and scientific instruments, gave the impression of a mechanic's workshop and a chemist's laboratory rolled into one.

Hidden from view in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and by a deep shadow of an easy-chair, Locke was wrestling with a problem to which at first there seemed no possibility of finding a satisfactory answer. It was the first time since his escape from death that an opportunity had come to carefully study the disaster of that never-to-be-forgotten night.

The sound of footsteps, and of heavy packages being deposited on the floor of the next room drew him from the depths of the chair.

"That you, George?" he called.

"His chauffeur appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, sir; I've brought the lot along."

Locke went into the workshop. Four blistered wheel-rims, with charred and broken spokes, lay on the bench. The detective glanced at them critically.

"Now, George, I want to get at the bottom of that burst tyre," he remarked. "From the way the car leapt it must have been a back one that went. Tell me just what their condition was when I left Northampton."

"They was two new Palmer Cords, sir; I put 'em on only that morning."

THE POPULAR.—No. 98

"H'm! And of all tyres Palmers' are the least likely to burst?"

"Yes, sir. The cords give 'em a wonderful power of resistance. Even right down to the canvas I've never known 'em to burst."

"Exactly."

For a minute he was silent, his mind running on the curious fact that Vaughan, after making his dramatic escape from the Leicester train, and going, as it was supposed, to London as the best place in which to hide from the police, should have reappeared in the neighbourhood of Northampton.

"You are quite sure nobody had a chance to monkey with either of the tyres—cut almost through the walls with a knife, or anything?"

"Absolutely certain, sir. The car wasn't out of my sight from the time the tyres was put on till you got in to drive to London."

"I suppose you didn't see anyone trying to interfere with the car?"

George leaned back against the bench and scratched his head thoughtfully.

"Now you come to mention it, there was a fellow who had a gas with me. A tall, bearded chap, who asked me several things about the car—what make it was, the horsepower, and so on."

"Ah! Describe his face!"

The description conveyed nothing to the detective.

"Did you tell him anything else?"

"Yes, that you were going that night to London—and he asked which road you would take."

A curious light kindled in the detective's eyes.

"The scent grows warm at last. Give me those rims."

One by one the detective subjected them to careful scrutiny. There was nothing to show cause why a sound tyre should have burst on either of them. With a frown Locke put them down, and was about to turn away, when a circular scar, scarce the size of a sixpence, lying in the shadows of the beaded edge, caught his quick glance. In a moment a powerful magnifying-glass was in his hand. Beneath the lens he saw something that astonished him—the myriad pits in the iron held faintly shining specks of some different metal.

A Bunson flame came into play; the sprink-

ling of lighter stuff bubbled in the heat. A minute's analysis proved the presence of infinitesimally small particles of lead.

"Lodge that rim against the far wall, George, its edge towards me," he cried, and vanished into his sapatum, to return a second later with a revolver in his hand. The weapon cracked, and spouted flame and smoke; where the bullet struck the thick iron a circular scar showed faintly. The previous process was repeated, and the results provided startling similarity.

"A bullet fired at one of the back tyres overturned the car," he said. "George, get the new motor out; I want you to take me straight to Brackley."

By four o'clock Ferrers Locke was on the scene of the accident. Allowing for the velocity and force expended by the bullet's tearing its way through the stout tyre and tube, he conjectured that the weapon was discharged forty-five to fifty yards away from the spot where the car made its first sideways leap. This took him within a couple of yards of the place in which Vaughan had lain in ambush.

The broken and disturbed bushes in the hedge immediately caught his eye. Now it was comparatively easy to reconstruct the crime. The man who had questioned George in the garage had lain in wait for him there; and from his vantage point discharged a pistol at the flying car.

For more than an hour Locke and the mechanic searched exhaustively in the deep grass and among the countless little pits by the roadside. At last a cry of satisfaction broke from Locke. Beneath a tuft of earth a burst cylinder of metal peeped out at him. He picked it up and held it to the light—an empty cartridge-case!

"George, we've solved the mystery!" he said, with a hard laugh, and his boyish face settled into fiercely-determined lines. "The man whom you saw in the Great Central Garage was Adrian Vaughan; the man who laid in wait for me and planned my death was Adrian Vaughan." Then to himself he added: "In Marconnon's house he threw down the gage of battle, and I did not regard him seriously enough to take it up. Now I see he was in deadly earnest. Rounds one and two to Adrian Vaughan. I think round three will fall to me."

After which decision he drove rapidly to

Northampton in the hope of gaining from Harry Leigh some clue to Vaughan's whereabouts.

To his surprise Harry's father received him in the library.

"I'm sorry, Ferrers, to disappoint you, but Harry is in London," he said. "I don't expect him back until to-morrow."

Locke looked surprised.

"I suppose that fellow Vaughan hasn't turned up again?"

The old man nodded.

"I'm sorry to say he has. He was here only yesterday."

The detective started.

"Good gracious! What for?"

"He wanted money."

"Of course you didn't give him any?"

"I have promised to."

"You've promised to give him money?"

Locke asked, amazed.

The old man shook his head sadly.

"I had to choose between parting with my wealth or losing my son. Vaughan swore that unless I paid him he would make away with my boy. After your terrible experience last week I decided it would be better to buy him off than to risk his revenge."

"I am afraid you have acted very foolishly, Mr. Leigh," Ferrers Locke said.

Justin Leigh looked troubled.

"I am an old man, Ferrers, and my will is not so strong as it used to be. Perhaps if you had been here, to support me I should not have agreed to Vaughan's terms. As it is, in consideration of his agreeing never to harm my son, I have promised to give him a cash consideration of twenty thousand pounds."

Locke's pulses beat with triumph. If only he could lay Vaughan by the heels, the villain must of a certainty go back to prison for life.

"We'll have him yet, Mr. Leigh!" he cried, and related his own discovery. "Can't we make this compact you have made to pay him this money a trap from which he cannot possibly escape?"

The millionaire went to an escreteiro.

"I have undertaken to pay him the sum of twenty thousand pounds in cash on his signing a paper binding himself never to interfere with Harry. That document, Mr. Jeff, my lawyer, is now preparing. It will be ready by six o'clock to-morrow. I am to meet Mr. Jeff and Vaughan at a house near Nightingale Lane, Clapham, where the transaction will be properly completed."

"Right!" answered Locke. "Then I think the hour to strike will have come at last."

**Trapped!**

**I**N the dining-room of a moderately comfortable if sombrely furnished house, standing in its own grounds, not many minutes' walk from Wandsworth Common, Adrian Vaughan paced restlessly up and down, waiting for the keeping of the appointment which meant so much to him.

He watched the clock hands draw steadily towards the hour. Sharp on the stroke of eight a closed cab drove down the silent drive, and, peering from behind the curtains, Vaughan's steely eyes watched the two men get out.

"Old Pettifogger Jeff! Why, I haven't seen him since my trial at the Northampton Assizes!" he laughed, as the lawyer picked up a black bag and followed Justin Leigh up the steps. A minute later the three men stood face to face.

Mr. Jeff took the initiative.

"I think we are agreed, Mr. Vaughan, on the object of our meeting here to-night," he began, fumbling nervously amongst his papers. "To prevent misunderstanding, let me recapitulate the circumstances so far as they affect all the parties concerned."

Vaughan took up the paper and scanned it rapidly.

"It's quite in order, Mr. Jeff. The money first, if you please."

The millionaire drew a bundle of banknotes from his pocket and laid them on the table. Vaughan reached forward and took them up.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said, pocketing them with a laugh. "I need not trouble you to remain any longer. The signing of the document can await my pleasure. This money is mine until either of you can succeed in getting it from me. I wish you both good-night."

As he spoke he moved briskly to the door, and his right hand flew to the weapon concealed beneath his coat a fraction of a second too late, however, for the lawyer's arm rose

swiftly on a level with Vaughan's head, and in his steady fingers a black-mouthed pistol muzzle rocked threateningly.

"Hands up, Vaughan!" he cried. "You've met the wrong man to play traitor with this time!"

As Vaughan staggered back with a curse on his lips, the beard and side-whiskers came away from Mr. Jeff's countenance and revealed the resolute, determined face of Ferrers Locke.

"Tricked!" the ex-convict cried, ashen to the lips.

"I'm afraid so, Vaughan!" laughed Locke, and, putting a small whistle to his lips, he emitted a short, shrill blast.

Vaughan spun round. The door flew wide, and a stout, dark man stepped briskly across the threshold.

Locke was master of the situation now.

"Detective Barton Dawe, arrest that man. I charge him with being Vaughan, ex-convict LX799, wanted for failure to report himself; also for the attack on the police-inspector in the Leicester to London train; and, further, for attempting to murder me on June 28th last!"

Vaughan cast a swift glance round. On every side he was trapped.

Even in the face of this unexpected and inevitable peril Adrian Vaughan's marvellous self-possession did not desert him. His arrest, unavoidable in the compelling submission produced by a loaded revolver in the hand of an equally desperate man, must be accepted as a matter of course; resistance meant finality; submission merely a postponement of his great plans.

"Another notch to the score that stands between us!" he laughed; but there was a baleful glitter in the steely gaze which he directed on Ferrers Locke. "One day there'll be such a reckoning!"

"Dawe, make sure of that man!"

Locke merely inclined his head towards Vaughan, who stared at the revolver and wondered what chance there was of a lightning grab at his own weapon, lying so enticingly near.

For a minute there was silence, save for the sharp click of the locks as a double set of handcuffs manacled the ticket-of-leave man into futility.

"No risks this time, Mr. Vaughan; you don't play the same game on me that you put across Detective Foster!" the Scotland Yard man sententiously remarked. "You're to be congratulated, Locke, on having laid your trap well!"

Locke was busy putting the papers back into the black bag.

"It's for you to hold the quarry now that I've brought him down," he said. "Why, Mr. Leigh, what is wrong?" As a strange gurgling rattle came from the millionaire; and before Locke could reach him his hands, so thin and trembling, were fumbling at his throat, tearing at his collar as though it were choking him. A glance, swift but penetrating, that was all, had passed between Barton Dawe and Justin Leigh, only a glance that had in it the power to strike the millionaire with crushing, devitalising force. He reeled back from the table, battling for air. Without a sound, his one white, transparent hand was pressed to his heart, and he slithered unconscious to the floor. Barton Dawe looked grim, but concerned.

"A bad heart attack, that, Locke. We must get a doctor at once. That's right, don't lose a moment. For Heaven's sake, keep the spark alive!"—for already the young detective was freeing Leigh's throat and pouring a few drops of brandy between the cold, blue lips. "I'll see to this chap. Four of my men are waiting in a closed cab below."

"But a medical man—a heart attack is a pretty nasty thing!"

The thought of Justin Leigh's dying filled Locke with deep concern.

"I'll send one at once. Now, Vaughan, give Mr. Dawe the slightest trouble and it will be the worse for you!"

Almost unconsciously, at the word of command, Vaughan felt himself obeying, just as he had done these five years past in Dartmoor. As yet he was hardly master enough of his freedom to try conclusions against odds so overwhelmingly great.

"I'll come, but don't forget, Ferrers Locke"—turning in the doorway and flashing a look of insensate hate upon the detective, still bending over the corpse-like form of Justin Leigh—"ten, fifteen, twenty years hence I shall call you to reckoning!"

(There will be another grand long instalment of our detective serial in next week's issue of the POPULAR.)

## A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

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

**FOR NEXT WEEK!**

Next Friday I shall place before my chums a splendid programme of school and adventure stories. Included in the list will be a grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., under the title of

**"HIS WORD OF HONOUR!"**

By Frank Richards,

featuring Coker of the Fifth. The great Horace being well known as a fighting man, there is a great sensation when it becomes known that he left the Famous Five in the lurch during a dust-up with the village louts, who outnumbered the Greyfriars juniors more than three times.

In due course the final bout for the gold medal for the championship of the Fifth is fought, and, much to the astonishment of everybody, Coker, dubbed a fank because of his strange conduct in the village, puts up such a great fight against Blundell that it sets everyone thinking. At last the truth is revealed. You will enjoy reading

**"HIS WORD OF HONOUR!"**

To follow, there will be yet another instalment of our great buccaneer serial, entitled

**"OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!"**

By Maurice Everard,

in which Avery shows himself in his true colours. Bob and Jeff are astounded at the swift development and success of his plans. However, they come up to the scratch in a splendid manner, and prepare themselves for further movements on the part of this amazing pirate. You must not miss

**"OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!"**

The two other serials,

**"BEFORE THE CAMERA!"**

and

**"A MARKED MAN!"**

detective and Eddie Polo's life story respectively, will be as thrilling and interesting as usual. I have had many appreciative letters from my readers, and when these are shown to the authors, it will encourage them to aim for a even higher standard in the later instalments.

And another splendid long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled,

**"TOO CLEVER BY HALF!"**

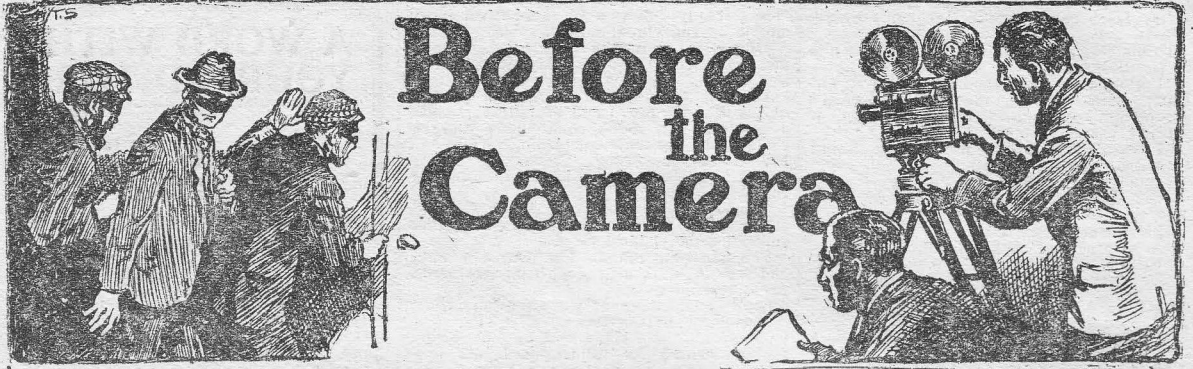
By Owen Conquest,

which is sure to receive a cordial reception at the hands of my chums.

**A TIP!**

I have not enough space to say much about the grand issue of the "Gem" Library which will appear next Wednesday, but I thought I would give you this tip. There is being presented with it a magnificent photograph of "The Smiling Prince"—the photograph with which a famous daily newspaper took the country by storm. It is yours for three-halfpence—and you've a splendid school story-paper in addition.

Your Editor



# Before the Camera

A STIRRING STORY OF THE FAMOUS FILM STAR'S EARLY TRIUMPHS AND STRUGGLES!

## INTRODUCTION.

Eddie Polo, ex-acrobat of the Busto Circus, commences his great career in the Eclair Film Company, under the managership of Mr. Morrison. Here he meets an English actor, Dick Fordyce, with whom he becomes close friends, and a charming young star, Miss Stella Cleaver, sister of one of the girls he had previously rescued from the great fire in St. Louis. Later Eddie unfortunately makes a bad enemy of Tim Bobbin, of the same company.

Eddie is taking a small part in a film, and, in his new role, he has to rescue Stella from the clutches of Fordyce by jumping from a window sixteen stories from the ground into a bucket on a crane. He takes the jump, and, as he reaches the bucket, Bobbin, who is acting as the engineer aloft, removes the brake, and it drops downwards, followed by Eddie as he misses his grip and clutches at empty air.

(Now read on.)

## A Wonderful Recovery!

AYELL went up from the throats of the watchers below, and the couple in the bucket even forgot their supposed struggle while they looked swiftly up at the flying lad. Eddie, with a sudden twist of his body, and an equally sudden kick of his heels, had turned a most magnificent somersault in the air—a somersault that had had the effect of altering the direction of his flight. And as he fell again there flashed into his vision the long black line on the wire rope that held the bucket aloft, and in a trice his hands had shot out and gripped this straw of salvation.

The rope was greasy, and slipped through his hands at the first grip, and that was why, when Curtis and Bobbin, seeing that their plan had failed, slammed the brakes on and rushed for safety, heedless of how the actors were to get out of the bucket. The sudden jerk of the wire didn't again dislodge him, and so, wrapping his legs around the wire, he slid gently to the bucket, and grinned for a second at the startled pair already within it.

"Get on with the struggle, if you can!" yelled Morrison, through a megaphone. "We've filmed all that great dive, and we can finish right now. Fight Fordyce, Eddie, and shove him into the bottom of the car, and then overboard, as per instructions."

Fordyce and Stella, seeing that Eddie was not really hurt, fell to struggling again, the Englishman the while talking instructions to Eddie with a grimace that made him look as though he was calling down unutterable threats on Stella's head. Eddie, almost forgetting that this was only play, fell on him tooth and nail, and the pair had a short but savage fight in the still-swaying, swinging bucket, a hundred feet from the ground. Indeed, Eddie came at last to think the fight was real, and when Fordyce, the accomplished actor, slid to the bottom of the bucket, he bent to pick him up and throw him over the side.

Stella, horror in her eyes, and her hands to her face, was watching most carefully. She knew from past experience how liable a new actor is to be carried away by the excitement of the moment, and make irreparable mistakes. Therefore, when Eddie's hands closed on such portions of Fordyce's dress-up as were available, she bent swiftly, and

pointed to a dummy made of rags and dressed to resemble a man, lying on the bucket bottom.

"Chuck that over—not Fordyce, Eddie!" she said quickly. "He's got some more to play in his film yet, you know!"

Eddie thanked her with a look, and came back to earth. Nevertheless, it was with great gusto that he hurled the dummy over the side, and, after it had crashed sickeningly but harmlessly to the earth beneath, the lad turned and clasped Stella in his arms to soothe her, as per the plot.

"All over, thank Heaven!" said Morrison. "Terence, we'll shoot no more. Fordyce, signal to the engineer to draw you all up in the bucket, and come down to the studio as soon as you can. That dive of Polo's is the greatest thing I ever saw; it's put a punch into this part of the film I never reckoned on getting. Lord, why, it made my old and tough heart missfire for a minute or two, it was so absolutely real and dangerous!"

Eddie nodded his grinning acknowledgments of the praise. He didn't feel a single scrap the worse for his great and risky dive. It was just the sort of thing to which he was accustomed, though if he hadn't possessed swift wits as well as great acrobatic ability and enormous bodily strength, he'd by this time have been as shapeless a mass as that dummy. Fordyce, patting the lad on the shoulder, looked skywards to hail the engineer, whom he had expected to see looking over the edge of the building, and called, but no engineer was there.

"Two of your chaps took the place of my driver," explained the foreman. "They should still be up there."

"Apparently they aren't," said Morrison. "Besides, I haven't cast anybody for the part of engineer in this film. I understood your man was going to work the engine, and I was looking forward to telling him, without frills, just what I thought of his letting the bucket go as Eddie Polo made his dive. If that lad had been hurt or killed, I'd have had him hauled before the justices promptly, and maybe he'd have gone to the electric-chair for his carelessness. He's nearly cost me my two stars and a most promising juvenile lead this day. Where is he?"

"In hospital! Aren't I telling you?" cried the foreman. "Two guys that said they belonged to your crowd came and worked the engine, and it was them that took the brakes off when the bucket swung between wind and water. So if there's any hanging, Mr. Morrison, it's them as will swing. I expect they're so skeered they daren't try to hoist the bucket. Here, Malone, jump to the crane engine and haul that bucket up, promptly, and tell the two guys you'll find in its vicinity I'd like a word with 'em!"

"Me, too," said Morrison, and stood discussing the matter in all its bearings as Malone, at the engine, hauled up the bucket and its human contents to safety once more. It took five minutes to bring them all down in the lift, Malone accompanying them.

"There ain't no guys up there, boss," he reported. "Not so much life even as you'll see in a deserted cemetery. Strikes me them two joints was hobos what wanted to pull some graft over the film-folks, and not film-folks at all, as they set themselves out to be. Anyway, they've beat it good and hearty, and they ain't left no farewell notes or speeches for you!"

Morrison scratched his chin, and looked at

Eddie Polo. Then his gaze travelled to Stella, and then to Fordyce.

"Say, Stella," said the boss, "you haven't been jilting anybody lately, have you?"

"Not that I know of, chief," came the girl's answer. "Why?"

"Thought it might be some disappointed lovers of yours that were trying to pull the 'hated rival' stunt off on you. Say, Fordyce, you got any enemies that'll benefit under wills or insurance policies by your sudden death?"

"Can't call any to mind, chief," said the English star. "And even if I had, I'm thinking they'd be scared stiff at murder in broad daylight and in such a clumsy fashion."

Morrison's eyes travelled back to Polo, and then swept the clustering crowd slowly and piercingly.

"Then it's somebody with a chip on his shoulder against you, my lad!" he ejaculated at last. "That bucket didn't just jump away from your hands for nothing, I know. Buckets don't do that sort of thing. At least, the well-regulated ones we use in this company don't!"

Fordyce butted in, an eager look on his face.

"I have it, chief!" he cried. "It's—"

Mr. Morrison put a hand over the Englishman's mouth.

"If you have it, keep it to yourself," he said swiftly. "No names, no pack-drill. I rather think you're right, too, but thinking isn't proof, and till you and we can prove things, it'll serve no good purpose telling—well, telling certain folks—that we know what they're up to. You and me, and you as well, Polo, will just have to keep our eyes skinned, because any future 'accidents' might not always turn out so well as this one, and then there'll be trouble for somebody."

Eddie smiled at the word "accidents." He had heard it so often and used it so frequently himself in describing the things he had since traced to Garcia, del Rogeriguo that it had quite a familiar ring.

"I'm used to accidents of that sort, chief," he said quietly. "Maybe that's why I'm able to form new plans so quickly when stunts as they're mapped out go wrong. That's saved my neck a few times, and I'm hoping, if there's any need, it'll save me again. But don't let's talk about this little matter. Will you want me again to-day, because if not I've got a little appointment to keep with a couple of men I met this morning, and after I've got rid of this make-up I'd like to trot along."

His face was grim as he spoke, and Fordyce's own eyes lit up with a happy light.

"And I'd like to come with you, Eddie," he said softly. "I don't think you'll find me in the way, and I may be useful."

"If you two chaps are going looking for anybody's blood," interposed Morrison, "I'll work you till you're so tired you'll be glad to sleep where you drop on the studio floor. I'll not have my company running into trouble. Away with you, and return your props to the baggage-master—Polo, here's your Western Union coat—and then clear off. But mind, if you turn up with black eyes at the studio to-morrow I'll fire the pair of you on the spot. Stella, my dear, come along with your father. Bad men like them ain't no fit company for a young girl like you."

"There's only one car, daddy," she replied, falling into the chief's playful mood,



"So we'll all go together. You can protect me if they get really ferocious, then. 'Sides, they've got a date with me and my sister to dinner this evening, though they haven't heard about it yet."

Morrison chuckled as he recognised the woman's wit underneath this hastily-arranged invitation. He was almost certain that he could put his hand on the "two film guys" who had engineered the accident to the bucket, and he was nearly sure that Fordyce and Eddie Polo shared his suspicions. If they did—and as the reader knows they were well founded—and met Curtis and Bobbin that afternoon while their blood was still hot, there might have been severe fighting on four fronts. But if the grudge kept till the morning it might be disposed of in a few words of explanation. Besides, he wasn't at all sure that Curtis and Bobbin were responsible for the mishap, and you can't accuse men of attempted murder on the off-chance of being right in your surmises. So when Stella solved the difficulty by putting a dinner invitation in such form that neither of her companions could refuse it, he was unfeignedly glad, and almost ruined the wholly happily-thought-of plan by saying so.

But on his way back to the studio Eddie suddenly remembered that, in the excitement of leaving Busto's Travelling Circus last night, and of working in the studio and on location day, he had not as yet fixed any place of abode.

"I'm sorry, Miss Stella," he said, "and I'd like to meet your sister to-night, but I'm afraid, unless I'm to sleep on the cold, hard pavement to-night, I'll have to put in a little time house-hunting. I'm not fixed for rooms yet, you know."

"That's good news to me, at any rate," suddenly put in Fordyce. "Look here, Polo! I've rather taken to you, and I don't think you quite regard me with fierce hatred, either. There's a spare room in the same block as my lodgings—young chap got fired out yesterday for being a couple of years behind with his rent—and I can get old Biddy Tudor to fix you at once. So your quest's ended at once if you'll take the rooms."

He nodded frantically at Eddie, and the lad, taking the cue, said he'd be glad to see the place, anyway. So the motor stopped on its way to the studio, and the four inspected the apartments together. Mr. Morrison backing Fordyce's guarantee that the rent should be paid regularly.

"Promptly, in advance, if you like, ma'am," added Morrison.

"I'll take 'em!" said Eddie, and the other three cheered softly. That was one big problem off Eddie's mind. Had they but known it, there was a bigger one worrying him.

#### Eddie Polo's Mistake!

**I**T was after they had divested themselves of make-up and costume that Fordyce and Eddie discussed this problem.

"Say, Fordyce," said the lad, opening the ball, "it's awfully good of you to put me on to such good rooms. If you'll only tell me where I can buy or hire a decent dinner-suit for to-night without losing time I'll be twice over in your debt."

"I thought that was coming," said Fordyce, with a grin. "Behold me, ladies and gents, the universal provider! Anything from a suite of rooms in an apartment house to a dress-suit fit to take a lady to dinner in. Eddie, my lad, don't suspect me of ulterior motives, but I've been itching, ever since Stella issued her impromptu invitation, to ask if you possessed dress fixings. You see, at one time in my life—and not such a long time ago, either—I used to have nothing more to do or think about than just looking pretty, and I accumulated a whole lot of things that I'll never be able to wear out during the rest of my existence. And among 'em are, at least, half a dozen dinner-suits, and as you and me might have been run out of the same mould as far as build goes generally—though I've got more of a chest than you, being older and lazier—it strikes me that, at least, one outfit of those said glad-rags should fit you like the shell fits an oyster. And if it should happen so I'll ask you to do me a favour and take the suit off my hands. 'Pon my word, I'm often hard put to it to find room for my overcoat in my wardrobe, and the removal of a surplus dinner-suit will be a merciful act on your part."

"Carrie Nation then closed the meeting with a prayer!" laughed Eddie. "Really, Dick, that's the longest speech I've ever heard you make. Sounds like real British

House of Lords palaver, too. If you've really got more fakements than you want, and one of the suits will fit me, I'll buy it like a shot from you—of course I will! That'll leave me time for a little search I want to make for Curtis and Bobbin, because I'm convinced they can tell us lots we'd like to know about this afternoon's business, if we could only gain their confidence."

"And I'm with you, Eddie!" said Fordyce, holding out his hand. "Say, just come along to my room, will you, and let me play second-hand clothes' dealer for you. As for the matter of payment—well, if you must squander your money, give it to some poor devil who hasn't got a square meal. I can't take cash from you for doing me a kind action. Here are the joyful garments, without which one may not eat in St. Louis or other centres of civilisation, especially when accompanied by ladies."

"A conviction that's since grown to include the theory that he and his pal are responsible for the little accident to the bucket this afternoon—eh?" interposed Fordyce. "Well, I share it myself, and they're a pair of in-sensatory puppies, anyway."

He led the way into the Dive, and, calling for coffee, the two seated themselves at a near-by table and looked round the place. Though several men were seated in the place, there was no sign of their quarry. They stayed a little while to give colour to the supposition that they had merely dropped in for a refresher, and then emerged, clean into the arms of Mickey Nolan, the policeman who had recognised Eddie that same morning.

"Hallo—hallo!" said the guardian of the law, in mock surprise. "You again, my young bantam cock! Say, you're one of the guys belonging to the Eclair Film Company?"

"That's the name of my employers,



As Eddie and Fordyce emerged from the cafe they walked clean into the arms of a policeman. "Hallo!" said the guardian of the law, "You again, my young bantam! Do one of you guys belong to the Eclair Film Company?" (See this page.)

Eddie got into the dress-suit at once, and it might have been made specially for him. There were certainly no faults about the fit of the things. As for the cut—well, they'd originally cost incredible sums in Saville Row, London, W., and that says everything for them. And the rest of the gear was in as good order and as stylish, so that when Eddie was at last attired in every particle of the black uniform, he looked what he was—a hard, clean-living, and straight-backed young man.

He discarded the garments, and laid them aside ready for the evening, and then, in ordinary tweeds, and accompanied by Fordyce, set off down town to the haunts where he expected to find Bobbin and Curtis.

"They should be in the Broadway Dive," said Fordyce. "Ruffians of their class haunt the place, which only just manages to keep itself from being closed by the police. There's some talk of its being a dope joint, and in any case, one can obtain rye and other juices there at all hours of the day and night, while there's more than a little gambling goes on in the place. Bobbin and Curtis both use it quite a lot. By the way, they're both pretty keen athletes in your own line. Did you know?"

"Bobbin told me in a roundabout fashion this morning that I didn't need to think I was going to take his place as an acrobat," returned Eddie. "Indeed, we almost came to blows over the matter, and I broke off the conversation with the conviction that Bobbin wouldn't send any wreaths to my funeral if I died unexpectedly."

sergeant," said Eddie. "Didn't I tell you this morning?"

"You did not, son, or I'd have filed and indexed the information for future reference," was the reply. "But what's a couple of guys like you doing in the Broadway Dive, I'd like to know? Go on, tell me it's none of my business, and I'll agree with you, but if you was pals of mine I'd whisper softly in your ears that the Broadway Dive ain't always going to be as good as it is now, and that one of these days I'll be wearing out several pencils taking names down them stairs. Get me? Well, it's a wise dog as knows which is the sunny side of the street, and a kick's as good as a nudge to a wooden horse."

"Thanks, we aren't regular customers, yet," said Eddie, with a grin of thanks for the other's roundabout tip to keep clear of the Dive. "We just popped in hoping to meet a couple of men we've got an urgent date with. But what's that got to do with your question as to whether we belonged to the Eclair?"

"Nuthin'—jest nuthin'!" replied the policeman. "Only there was a feller name of Morrison round here not so long ago, peeling yal-berbacks off his wad and handin' 'em round with a whispered word as any policeman as kept his eyes firmly glued on you two for the remainder of the time you happened to spend in this locality would maybe see and hear things to his advantage. What's the lay? You two coons going to do a bit of swell crib-cracking, or the gold brick trick, or what? Let me in on it, and I'll keep the rest of the police off while you get away with a good

haul if you'll promise to go fifty-fifty with the hoodle!"

Eddie looked at Fordyce in disgust. It was plain what had happened, Mr. Morrison knew full well that Polo and Fordyce would make a search for Curtis and Bobbin that afternoon, and, not being able to keep them apart from those they suspected of being their enemies, he had bribed the Irish policeman to keep his eye on his stars. They might as well give up the search now, for Nolan would stick to them like glue in the hope of getting a case and earning the dollar bills the cinema producer had pressed into his willing palm.

"It's all off, Dick," said Eddie. "We might as well go back to the digs and play cat's cradle till it's time to call for the ladies. What a fatherly old cuss Morrison is! Say, sergeant, would you like to walk down the street holding our hands to see that we didn't play with any dirty little boys on the sidewalk?"

"If there wasn't danger of a sarcastic crowd collecting and sayin' things they didn't mean," replied Nolan, "I'd do it promptly. But just you two shoo off my beat; burn the pavement to where there ain't such a great likelihood of your getting into trouble, and I'll wave ye farewell from here. Say, now, do you stop looking for trouble while I'm on duty in this locality, or have I to attach myself to you as official shadow and protector? For say it quick, 'cos I'm a busy man."

For answer Fordyce hauled a shining silver dollar out of his pocket, pressed it into Nolan's hand, and, with a sad nod of the head, the pair strode off up-town. They reached home in nice time to rig themselves for the party, and when at last the shine on their shoes and the set of their ties suited their ideas of dressiness, they hailed a taxi and set off for the Cleaver residence. Stella and Mary were waiting for them in the porch, looking like a couple of flowers in their white frocks. Mary, of course, needed no introduction to Eddie, since she had been a fellow-guest at the wedding party in the circus tent last night, and the two girls

exclaimed in delight at the smart and natty appearance of their escort.

"Yes," said Eddie, "Dick here rigged me out like this. There's one thing peevs me, though. I can't hold the bally monocle in my eye, like him. It doesn't stick, somehow." "Never mind; you'll see better without it," said the girls, and the laughing quartette descended to the waiting car, and were whisked swiftly off through the city to the chosen restaurant. The programme for the evening was a dinner, and then either a movie or a stage show, and Stella, as hostess, had had a table reserved.

The place was empty when they entered, and Eddie Polo, to whom night restaurant life was wholly new—had he confessed it, this was his first appearance in his life in evening-clothes, though he wore them like a second skin, and without any self-consciousness at all—looked round the place in wonderment. The glint of crockery and silver, of plate glass and cut flowers, filled him with a kind of simple joy, and he hardly dared speak as he sat down by Stella's side, Dick Fordyce having been allotted to Mary.

But as the dinner went on Eddie lost all his nervousness, and played up as though he lived most of his life among the white lights of fashionable eating-houses. He had never permitted his speech to become tinged with much of the meaningless slang which passes for language in many American centres, and as a result it was little wonder that others who presently entered and took tables close at hand mistook him for an Englishman, like his aristocratic-looking companion.

But presently, and quite suddenly, Eddie Polo's attention became distracted. Twice Stella found him paying no attention to her remarks and conversation, and at last, wondering, she allowed her eyes to follow his. And then she understood why his jaw had become suddenly so set, why his fist, lying on the table, had clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed white under the skin. For, at a table isolated from the others, and in plain full view of the room, a man was glaring at a woman who sat facing him.

His clenched fist was shaken under her nose, and she cowered in her chair, her frightened eyes on those of the seeming madman before her. And then, as Eddie and Stella watched, and as Dick and Mary turned round to see things for themselves, the man at the further table reached up his hand with a wineglass, and cast its contents clean into the woman's face, so that the ruby liquid spread like a great stain of blood over the front of her white frock.

Involuntarily the woman gave a little cry—a cry which brought Eddie Polo to his feet—"Excuse me, Miss Stella," he said softly.

He waited for no reply, but with half a dozen swift bounds leapt across the room. His hand shot out as the other man rose to his feet, and his fist again threatened the frightened woman. And then Eddie's hand fell on his shoulder and whisked him back, and Eddie's voice, as cold and crisp as the blade of a rapier, fell on the miscreant's ear.

"You hound!" exclaimed the lad. "You've insulted that woman!"

"Mind your own business!" snarled the other, while the woman herself rose to her feet with appealing hands outstretched to the lad who had come to defend her.

"Oh, don't!" she pleaded. "It is my business, you scoundrel!" echoed Eddie, shaking the man and taking no notice of the woman. "Down on your knees and apologise, you beast, or I'll hammer you to the job!"

And just as the man began to look really frightened, there came an interruption which turned the tragedy into comedy, for, with a roar like a bull, a familiar white-shirted, black-coated figure detached itself from the mass of diners who had risen to their feet, and bore down upon Eddie and his opponent.

"Polo—Polo!" it yelled, and the voice was that of Mr. Morrison. "Drop that man at once, and come out of it! What on earth do you mean, I'd like to know, playing in the cinema film production of a rival company while I've got your name on my salary list!"

(Make a point of reading next week's long instalment of this thrilling yarn.)

## "OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!"

(Continued from page 8.)

refresh themselves in a wooden tub of clean sea-water.

It was very dark and very lonely out there under the stars, with the masts making a creaking, and every timber in the stout hull straining to each surge of the black waters. Somewhere in the blackness below, Michael, injured to such hardships, was sleeping quite peacefully, dreaming of to-morrow and whatever it might bring.

"I dare say we shall be glad to run away by the time she makes the Groine," said Bob, in a hollow voice. "I say nothing to fighting, but to die of suffocation down there is more than I, for one, can stand."

"Steady," said Jeff, laying a hand on his cousin's arm. "We were told by Mr. Conyers we should have many trials. They are only just at the beginning. Shall we turn away from them so soon?"

The rebuke brought a flush of crimson shame to the younger boy's face; he thought of Isobel Conyers and whether such faint-heartedness would ever win so rare a prize.

"I shall acquaint our Michael with my fault," he said, with a break in his voice. "It ill requites the alderman's goodness to complain when so little is amiss."

"Save your breath for bigger troubles," Jeff went on cheerily. "And thrust your hot head in the bucket. I warrant your brain will clear soon enough. Now, let's walk up and down and get an edge on our tongues for the rough fate which begins the day. We—"

"Jeff, what was that?"

Bob dropped the cloth with which he was scouring his face, and clutched at his cousin's arm.

"Nothing but the howl of the wind in the rigging. We are getting further out to sea now, and the breeze is freshening so—"

"No, I fancied I heard someone call. Listen."

And then, as they stood thus, their ears astrain, there rang out such a cry of mortal terror as blanched their faces and chilled the blood in their veins.

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"Someone is being murdered," said Jeff, in a hoarse whisper. "Come, we must see to it."

But even as he seized Bob's arm and started to run, a flash of flame stabbed the darkness ahead, and a ball whistled past his shoulder.

"The alderman was right!" cried Bob. "We're in for mutiny on the high seas!"

### John Smith Proves himself a Clever Man!

JEFF'S first impulse was to send out a warning cry. It was checked by what, for the moment, he thought was a terrific blow on the head. He reeled back into Bob's arms, and, clapping his hand to his temple, drew it away warm with blood.

"That was a pretty heavy one!" he growled, fumbling for his pistol; but the quick action was stayed when he realised that the tall, dark shape looming before him in the gloom was motionless, and that in the darkness he had run his lowered head into the mainmast.

"You're all right, Jeff?" Bob inquired in an anxious whisper. "Or did the ball strike you?"

"No; I struck myself, fool that I am!" grumbled the elder boy. "This won't do—to go on blundering about in this light, at the mercy of everything and everybody. Bob, it seems very still."

They stood together, a little anxious, and more than a little puzzled, for neither the cry nor the shot had been repeated, and save for the screech of the wind among the rigging and the yawing of the ship's timbers as the Duke heaved to the swell, all was quiet as the grave.

"We must have been mistaken," vowed Jeff, still rubbing his head, which ached most abominably.

Bob, however, still remained in an attitude of listening, by this time his flintlock primed and ready at the cock.

"'Twas no mistake, Bob. Someone loosed off a ball, and precious near it came to ending your life. Besides, I'm certain, just as you knocked your head, I heard a dull splash. What's to be done?"

"I—I feel a bit at sea without Mike," admitted Jeff, trying hard to collect his scattered senses. "I suppose the pistol wasn't fired as a signal to some other ship near by?"

They moved to the thick deckrail, and, craning their necks, peered into the gloom.

Below them the waters of the Channel swirled dark and oily under the bluff sides, and with the sluggish rolling of the vessel the spray was dashed into their eyes.

"Most mysterious altogether. Yet I fancy I see something out there—something black against the waves. Can you make out anything, Bob?"

Bob rubbed the moisture from his face and stared out upon the tumbling waste. Where the waves broke were whitish patches, and against one of these momentarily loomed a darker shadow which seemed to draw farther and farther away until the gloom swallowed it altogether.

"Looks for all the world like a row-boat drifting at the mercy of the wind," he replied. "I think we ought to rouse Mike up."

This was a far more difficult task than appeared on the face of it, for as yet they knew very little of the geography of the vessel, their time having been fully occupied while she was being warped out of harbour on the flood. However, they moved gingerly forward, and succeeded at last in discovering themselves on the poop-deck, where a motionless figure stood by the wheel.

They crept down the short flight of steps and made for the main hatchway which led past the hold to the seamen's quarters. A ship's lantern which gave only the faintest light hung at the entrance to the main sleeping quarters. Standing back in the shadows the two boys could just make out a jumble of rudely-dressed fellows sprawled like logs on the bare boards.

"No chance of making out Mike among that lot," Jeff decided, tugging at his cousin's arm, so together they retired to the shelter of the high-reared stern to hold a further consultation.

"Everything seems quiet enough now," Jeff remarked, crouching under the bulwarks with Bob beside him. In an hour the day will come. We must wait till then for a chance of talking to Mike."

"One thing's quite plain," said Bob. "Whatever happens, we've got to be careful, or we shall give ourselves away. Something mysterious happened during the night, and we came up only with the end of it. To show undue curiosity now might make unnecessary fuss. As the alderman told us, we must lie low, and watch events."

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