

ASK YOUR . . . "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

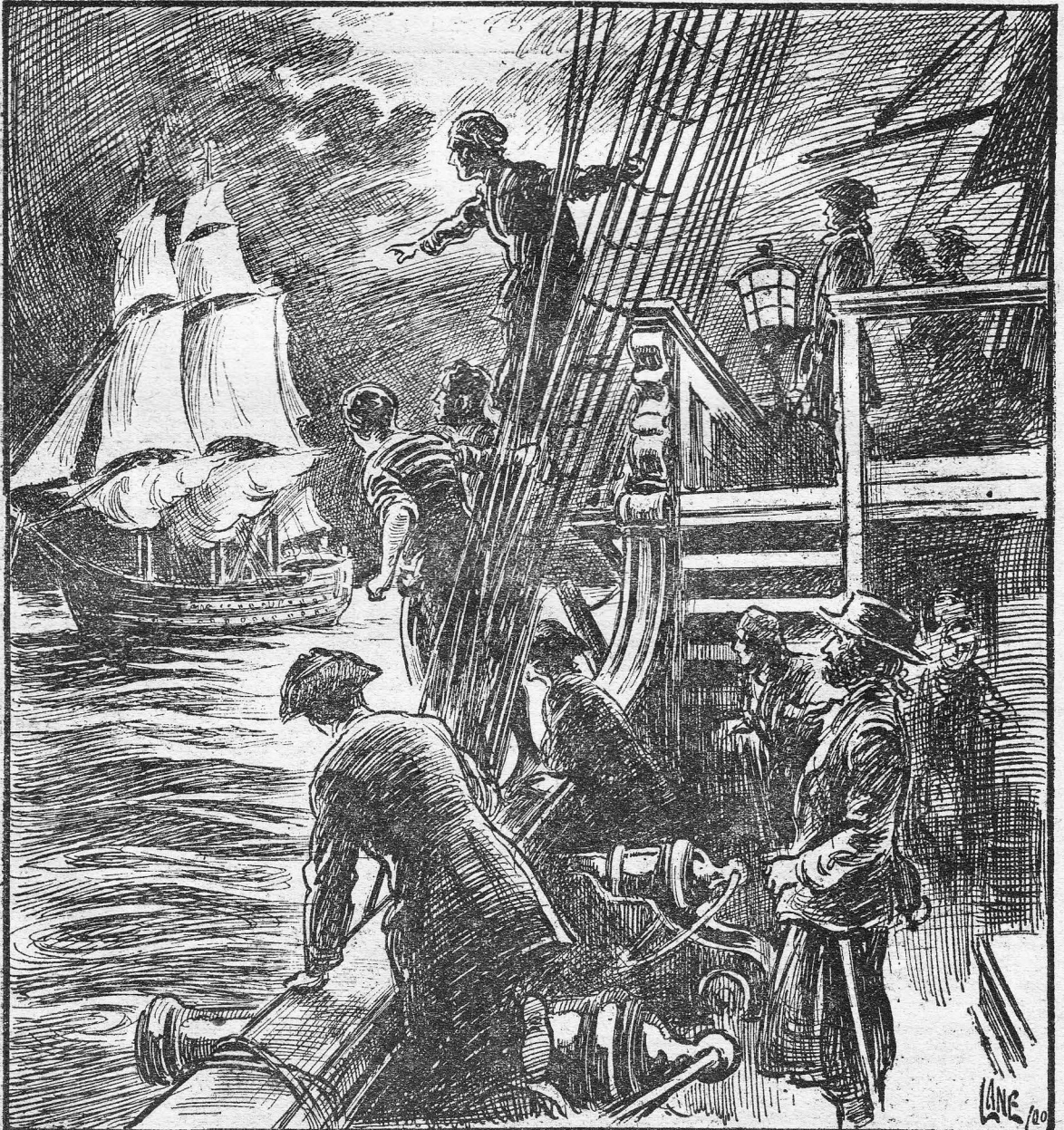
GRAMMED FULL OF  
SPLENDID STORIES, ARTICLES  
AND COLOURED PICTURES.

No. 103.  
New Series.  
Week Ending—  
Jan. 8th,  
1921.

# The Popular

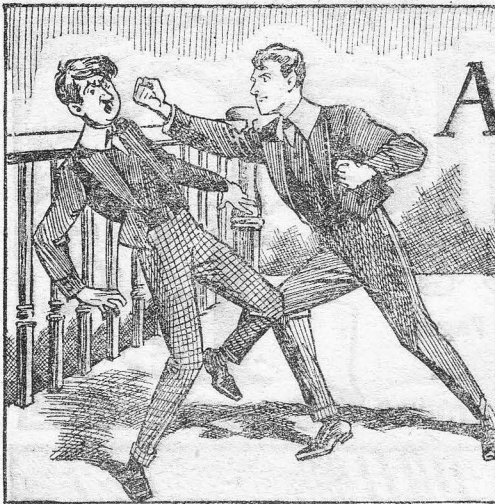
20 Pages.

-- TWO --  
COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES.



**FRIEND OR FOE?—A STRANGE SHIP IS SIGHTED!**

(A Tense Moment in Our Grand Serial, "OUTLAWS OF THE SEAS!")



# A Coward's Blow!

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

... BY ...

FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Taken In!

"YOU don't say!" Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, uttered that exclamation in tones of great surprise. He was standing in the corridor, and with him were Bulstrode, the bully, and Snoop and Ogilvy.

"But I do, Skinner!" said Bulstrode. "What! You mean to say that—" "Yes. I mean to say that the fellow who took Miss Rosie away from her home is coming here as the new French-master!" persisted Bulstrode.

"Rats!" said Ogilvy. "Shut up, ass!" snapped Bulstrode. "Can't you see Todd coming this way?"

The Scotch junior grinned. Until Bulstrode had spoken he had failed to notice the advent of Alonzo Todd. Snoop emphasised the fact that a jape was on by winking vigorously.

"Yes," went on Bulstrode loudly. "And I think it's a jolly shame!"

Alonzo Todd apparently woke from the brown study he was in. He looked anxiously to where the chums were standing. Bulstrode was apparently in distress; so Alonzo felt himself behoven to assist, if possible. But he did not approach at once.

"Rather! I should think so, Bulstrode!" said Skinner. "What ever can the Head be thinking of? Going barmy?"

"Dear me!" thought Alonzo. "What would my dear Uncle Benjamin think if he knew poor Dr. Locke was in such a fearful plight?"

But the Duffer of Greyfriars still kept at a distance.

Bulstrode, however, meant that he should not escape. Louder and louder waxed the confab.

Ogilvy was rather conscience-smitten. He thought Alonzo might be let off for once. But the others were obdurate.

"He's fair game," Snoop said. "What does a fellow want wandering about the Close like that for? Go on, Bulstrode. Tell us some more about the new master."

Alonzo Todd pricked up his ears. Despite all his Uncle Benjamin's efforts, Alonzo had certainly developed the bump of inquisitiveness.

"He's a villain!" cried Bulstrode. "Take my word for it. The fellow will end up a murderer, or something quite as bad!"

"Shame!" echoed the juniors.

Alonzo edged a little nearer. He was deeply alarmed by Bulstrode's wild utterances.

"The Head ought to be ashamed of himself, bringing such a chap to Greyfriars!" went on Bulstrode. "What do you think, Todd?"

Alonzo started as if he had been shot. Until that moment he had not dreamed that anyone had been aware of his presence.

"Think, Bulstrode?" he asked, in genuine alarm.

"Yes," said the Bully of the Remove. "What do you think of the Head bringing that fellow who abducted Miss Rosie here as the new French-master—"

"My dear Bulstrode—"

Skinner, Snoop, and chorus groaned.

"But I was not aware that M. Charpentier was leaving," said Alonzo very anxiously.

"Neither are we supposed to be, Todd," went on Bulstrode importantly. "It's a secret."

"Oh dear! I'm so sorry, my dear Bulstrode. My Uncle Benjamin told me never to have any secrets. But surely you cannot be serious?"

"Rather!"

"My dear Bulstrode, something must be done!" gasped Alonzo.

"Something must be done."

"How callous, my dear Ogilvy, to jest at such a time! Pray, what do you suggest, my dear Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode flung up his hands as if he were utterly prostrated by the magnitude of the task. The others looked at Alonzo as if he were the cause of it all. Alonzo looked from one to the other as if entreating their utmost indulgence.

"May I suggest that I write to my Uncle Benjamin for advice?" he said meekly.

A vigorous shaking of heads intimated a decided negative.

"There's no time, you see, Todd," said Skinner.

"Justice must fall swiftly," said Snoop, with awful gravity. "He's coming to-day."

"To-day!" cried Alonzo, in wild alarm. "Oh dear!"

"And there's not one of us at liberty to watch the villain," said Bulstrode.

"Not one, Bulstrode?" asked Alonzo anxiously. "What ever is the Head thinking of?"

"I suppose he's unaware that he's engaging the same man."

"Surely we could form ourselves into a courageous band and frustrate the villain, my dear Bulstrode?"

"I've got to mend my football boots," said Ogilvy quickly.

"And I'm swotting up like anything for the exam," explained Snoop.

"You understand my case, don't you, Todd?" said Skinner. "I'd come with your little band of heroes like anything, but I've promised to help Bul with his Latin—"

"Oh, certainly, Skinner! You could not think of breaking your promise, could you?"

Skinner winced. Alonzo had a way of unconsciously driving things home.

"And I'm simply crammed up with engagements, Todd," concluded Bulstrode.

"Dear me! How very unfortunate!" reflected Alonzo. "I'm afraid my little band of heroes will be reduced to me alone. Skinner, don't you think I had better go to the Head first—"

Alonzo stopped precipitately. Bulstrode & Co. had thrown up their hands in attitudes of horror. Alonzo Todd retreated, thinking they were going to hit him.

"That's just what we want to avoid," said Bulstrode. "The Head would merely think we had got hold of some cock-and-bull story."

Alonzo was very much impressed, but he hadn't the least idea what to do.

"If someone would only meet him—"

begun Skinner thoughtfully.

"My dear Skinner!" gasped Alonzo.

"Oh, I only meant meeting him and putting him off the scent!" said Skinner, looking very sympathetically at Alonzo Todd. "Of course, it would take a brave chap. But it ought to be done. It could be done. But it's asking too much of anyone, isn't it, Todd?"

Alonzo shuddered as if a mild earthquake were agitating his spare frame. All eyes were on him. He looked as if he would have been glad to sink through the Close. Then the recollection of what his Uncle Benjamin had said to him came to his aid.

"I should be the last one to shirk a duty, my dear schoolfellow," he said. "But is there no other way of circumventing this awful man?"

"He'll be on his way here from the station now," said Bulstrode, looking at his watch. "I wish I were at liberty! I'd soon put him off the mark. This is simply dreadful!"

"Oh, my dear Bulstrode, pray don't be put out like that! If it is to fall on me to save my fellows, I cheerfully accept the situation. My Uncle Benjamin told me cowardice was the worst of all vices. I will meet and defeat this villain!"

And the juniors simply stared at the heroic light in Alonzo Todd's eyes. They realised that on this occasion Todd's Uncle Benjamin was really helping them in a wonderful manner. They clapped Alonzo on the back effusively, praising his valour.

"Good old Todd!" said Skinner. "He's a plucked one, anyway! Three cheers for Uncle Benjamin! Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Thank you, my dear fellows!" said Alonzo, beaming on them. "The credit is indeed due to my dear respected uncle. I will act at once. He told me to do so always."

And to further cheers Alonzo Todd strode off to the gates like a giant refreshed with wine. If he had not been gratified with the praises of his Uncle Benjamin, he would perhaps have noticed that the cheers gradually changed to hilarious laughter as he got farther away. But the soul of Ajax had entered into Alonzo Todd.

Then the problem of getting past Gosling presented itself. But Alonzo was in luck. The porter was asleep. The Duffer of Greyfriars felt that he was in luck. The chance was too good to be lost. In another moment he was in the road. Putting on some speed, he got well away.

There was no one in sight. Alonzo began to think he was perhaps the victim of another joke. Then his heart throbbed wildly. There, not a quarter of a mile down the road, was a man hastily approaching the school. He carried a satchel.

Alonzo's wits were scattered for the moment—that is to say, they were in a more than usually disordered state. But fool's luck is proverbial. Just as he was about to little behind the hedge, with a view to pouncing on the man when he came abreast, he recollected that very likely the man would get the better of it. No; why should he not notice this man somewhere, and get him safely under lock and key?

Alonzo glowed with triumph as the idea occurred to him. Yes, he would do it. But where? That was a poser for Alonzo. But he was in luck again. The box-room close to the Remove dormitory would do,

And Alonzo Todd strode forward to meet his "enemy." They met sooner than Alonzo would have preferred, despite his resolutions. "Ah, monsieur! Good-day eet ees!" said the stranger, putting down his suit-case, and making the most elaborate of bows. "You are from ze Greyfriars, ees eet not?"

Alonzo was fearfully perturbed, but he managed to return the salute.

"And what ees your name? Ze name of monsieur who ees so kind as to meet me, I would?"

"Oh dear!" thought poor Alonzo. "He knows I came to meet him."

Alonzo's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"Why, my boy, ees eet zat you are afraid of me? Ha, ha, ha! I only come veez myself to relief Monsieur Charpentier. Ha, ha, ha! Come, tell me ze name of you!"

"Alonzo Todd," that individual managed to say in a faint whisper.

"Ah, ze funny boy! Monsieur Charpentier told me of you many times. Bon jour, monsieur! I am delight zat you show me ze way!"

"What a fearful crammer!" thought Alonzo.

But the mention of showing him the way brought Alonzo to his senses.

"I shall be very pleased to show you the way, sir," said he, realising to its full extent the awful meaning that underlay his words. "Good eet ees! And you know all about ze college—eh?"

"Yes," said Alonzo, in as near a return to his usual self as could be expected. "Please to follow me, sir."

They had been drawing nearer and nearer to the school all this time. They reached the gates. Alonzo's heart rejoiced as he saw that Gosling still slept like a top.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the new master. "He is having ze good time veez heemself!"

Alonzo's heart sank. The "villain" would surely wake Gosling, then all would be lost.

But they got through safely. Alonzo hastened on towards the stairs that led to the Remove dormitory. The journey seemed endless.

"Ma foi!" cried the Frenchman, catching sight of the beds through the open door of the dormitory. "I am put veez ze boys eet ees! What ees zees?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not in there. This is your room, if you please," said Alonzo politely.

"Zat?" almost screamed the Frenchman.

The door that Alonzo held open revealed a little dark room. It was lighted by one narrow window, and was littered with boxes and rubbish.

"Yes, sir. It is only temporary. I hope you will be better suited for the evening."

"Temporary!" exclaimed the new master excitedly. "Eet ees only feet for ze pig!"

And he walked into the little room and kicked over one or two boxes to show his contempt.

Alonzo's pulse beat wildly. Here was his chance indeed! In an instant he had banged the door to. Horror! There was no key in the lock! All his trouble had been for nothing. But what was that under his hand? A staple! The door was made to fasten on the outside. Quick as thought Alonzo clapped the loop over the staple. The "villainous abductor" of Miss Rosie was a prisoner.

There was no sound from within for a moment. Then the room echoed with hearty laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ze good shoke eet ees! Eet serves me right, for asking you what funny zeengs you do to-day! Ha, ha, ha! Ze good shoke! But open ze door, Monsieur Todd! Ha, ze good shoke!"

"No, it is not a joke, you bad man!" said Alonzo unctuously.

"Eh? What eet ees?" cried the astonished prisoner. "Not ze shoke? Open ze door at once!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind," replied Alonzo Todd, in a much braver voice than he had possessed for the last twenty minutes. "You can't deceive me. I know who you are. I've heard all about you. You are the villain who took Miss Rosie away, and you've only come here to murder us!"

"Ah, ze boy is mad! Monsieur Charpentier vas right! I am lost!"

"And so you deserve to be! You naughty, wicked man—"

Alonzo got no farther.

"Help! Help! I am ze prisonair of ze madman!" shouted the Frenchman. "Help! Help!"

"You can shout as much as you like. It will not avail you, you monster!" said Alonzo.

And as the new master commenced to batter boxes and other things at the door, he fled down the passage for his life.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER, A Cruel Blow!

**B**ULSTRODE doubled up in the passage with merriment. The practical jokers had watched Alonzo escort the Frenchman into the house from a safe distance. It seemed almost too good to be true, but Todd had done it. The idea of Todd's marching the new French-master into a box-room and locking him in seemed inexpressibly comic to Bulstrode & Co. They roared and roared.

"My hat!" murmured Skinner. "There will be a row about this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it was really Bulstrode's idea," said Snoop, who was getting a little scared.

"I—I only meant Todd to meet the chap and talk to him. But to lock a master up in a room is jolly serious—worse than locking Loder up—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode, beginning to feel a little uneasy himself. "Shut up! Todd won't give us away, anyhow."

"Of course not," said Ogilvy. "He's a champion ass, but he's not a sneak."

"But he'll blurt it all out before he knows he's been japed, if there's a row," said Snoop. "Remember, it was your idea, Bulstrode—Ow!"

Smack!

The back of Bulstrode's hand caught Snoop across the mouth, and effectually stopped him. The cad of the Remove staggered back.

"You jolly well shut up!" said Bulstrode. "If there's a row I jolly well know you'll sneak out of it, anyway!"

"Well, I suppose we shall own up if Todd gets into a row with the powers that be," said Ogilvy uneasily.

"Oh, rats!"

Bulstrode tramped away with his hands in his pockets. Skinner followed him. Skinner was feeling uneasy, too. He could not help realising that the jape had gone a little too far this time.

"We'd better see Todd," he said. "If he gives us away it will be a licking for us, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"If he gives Quelch a chance at me I shall get it hot," he said. "But if he does I'll—I'll smash him!"

"That won't undo the licking."

"Rats!"

Bulstrode was evidently not in a humour to be argued with. The two practical jokers—neither now feeling very pleased with the joke—hurried along the Remove passage. They paused as they caught sight of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master was looking very angry.

"What is that terrible noise?" he exclaimed, catching sight of Bulstrode, and addressing him before he could escape.

"I—I don't know, sir."

"It seems to proceed from the box-room," said the Remove-master. "Has someone been locked up in a room for some silly joke?"

"I—I haven't done it, sir!"

The Remove-master strode towards the box-room stairs. Todd was just dashing down, and he almost dashed into Mr. Quelch.

"Todd! Stop!"

"Yes, sir," gasped Todd.

"What is that noise up there?"

"That's the villain, sir!" panted Todd. "I've fastened him in, sir."

"What!"

"He can't escape, sir! I've fastened him in, and now all you have to do is to telephone for the police and have him arrested, sir."

Bulstrode and Skinner scuttled away. Mr. Quelch was staring at Alonzo Todd as if he had suddenly been petrified.

"Arrested!" gasped the Form-master, at last.

"Yes, sir."

"You have fastened someone up in the box-room, Todd?"

"Yes, sir. Quite safe, sir!"

"Who is it?"

"The French villain, sir; the circus man who kidnapped Miss Rosie, sir."

"Todd! Are you mad? I saw you crossing the Close with that gentleman. He is the new French-master who is taking Monsieur Charpentier's place this week."

"Oh, no, sir! He is in disguise."

"D-d-disguise!"

"Yes, sir. He is really Lasalle, the desperate villain who kidnapped the Head's

daughter, sir, and I've fastened him up, so that—"

"Are you out of your senses, boy?" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This French gentleman is a man I am well acquainted with."

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Quelch dashed up the box-room stairs. He tore open the door, and a wild, gesticulating figure rushed towards him.

"Ha! It ees zat I am release!" gasped the Frenchman. "I have been ze victim of ze practical shoke, monsieur."

"I am aware of that, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "I assure you that the joker shall receive the most condign punishment, Monsieur Leblanc. Pray accept my most profound apologies!"

The Frenchman waved his hands.

"Not at all, my dear Monsieur Quelch—not at all! It is enough. I am satisfied!"

"I am very sorry—"

"Not at all, monsieur."

"Pray follow me."

"Certainement. Viz pleasure."

Mr. Quelch conducted the Frenchman downstairs. Todd watched him with eyes of great alarm.

"Pray be careful, sir!" he exclaimed. "I was warned that—"

"Hold your tongue, Todd! Go and wait for me in my study!"

"Yes, sir," said Todd meekly.

He obeyed. It was some minutes before Mr. Quelch came into the study. When he came in he fixed a stern glance upon the Duffer of Greyfriars.

"Todd," he said, "what put the idea into your head that this gentleman was the kidnapper of Miss Rosie?"

"I—I was warned, sir."

"Ah! Who warned you?"

"Bulstrode, sir. Is it possible that he made a mistake?" asked Todd in perplexity. "If you are satisfied of this gentleman's bonafides, sir—"

"Go and tell Bulstrode to come here."

"If you please, sir—"

"Go at once!"

Todd departed. He found Bulstrode in the lower passage, and tapped him on the shoulder. Bulstrode turned on him with a scowl.

"What do you want?" he snapped out.

"Mr. Quelch wants to see you, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"So you've given me away to him, have you?" he exclaimed.

"Not at all, my dear Bulstrode. I mentioned you as the source of my information respecting that desperate villain, and I presume that Mr. Quelch wishes to question you as to how you made the discovery."

"You fool!"

"My dear Bulstrode!"

"If I get a licking," said Bulstrode, in a low, savage voice, "I'll smash you! Do you understand that?"

Todd looked dismayed.

"D-d-but—" he stammered.

Bulstrode stamped away. He was in a state of smouldering fury. Todd remained standing near the doorway in a state of great perplexity. Finally, he followed Bulstrode, and waited for him outside the door of Mr. Quelch's study. It was dawning upon Alonzo now that he had been japed by Bulstrode & Co., and although he did not approve of their untruthfulness, he was far from wishing to betray them to the Form-master. He was most anxious to assure Bulstrode that he had not meant to give him away.

Bulstrode entered the Form-master's study with a sullen face. Mr. Quelch fixed his stern glance upon him.

"Bulstrode, you appear to have told Todd a most absurd story respecting Monsieur Charpentier's substitute, who has just arrived at Greyfriars," the Form-master exclaimed.

Bulstrode met his eyes steadily.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Why did you do it?"

"For a joke on Todd, sir."

"There have been too many jokes on Todd, Bulstrode. This shall be the last," said Mr. Quelch. "You have led him to treat a master of this school in the most outrageous and disrespectful manner. I am going to cane you, Bulstrode, as a warning to yourself and others. Hold out your hand!"

Bulstrode set his teeth and obeyed.

When Mr. Quelch was in earnest, he had a way of laying on the cane which the juniors had learned to their cost. He gave Bulstrode four cuts on each hand, and each cut was a "terror." Bulstrode did not utter a single cry. He was as hard as nails; and he would

have taken twice the punishment without a word. But his ruddy face went white, and his lips were set till they seemed to become a thin, spiteful line.

"You may go," said Mr. Quelch. Still without a word, Bulstrode went. There was black rage in his heart, black rage in his face. He was dangerous to meet at that moment—most dangerous of all to Alonzo Todd! And Todd was waiting to meet him!

"My dear Bulstrode—" began Alonzo anxiously.

Bulstrode did not speak. But his heavy hand came up, his fist, clenched, and, as hard as iron, struck Todd full in the face. It was a terrible blow, and Todd reeled back from it helplessly, knocked flying by the fearful force of the impact.

Crash! The junior crashed back against the banisters and fell to the floor. He lay where he has fallen, without a movement.

"There," said Bulstrode thickly, "take that! And—"

He paused. Todd had not moved. There seemed to be something strange, something unnatural in the way the lad lay, heaped together at the foot of the banisters.

"Get up, you fool!" said Bulstrode harshly. "What are you lying there for?" Todd did not move or speak.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Remorse!

**B**ULSTRODE stood looking at Todd—at his crushed victim, lying there wordless, motionless, at his feet.

What was the matter with Todd? Why did he not get up?

"Todd!" said the Remove bully thickly. "Todd! Get up, you fool!"

No movement—no word! Was the boy breathing? He did not look like it, as he lay there, still, inert.

"Todd, Todd, old fellow, get up, there's a good chap! I—I didn't mean to hurt you!" And Bulstrode's voice had sunk to a low, husky whisper now.

But Todd did not move. There was a step in the passage. Harry Wharton came up and looked at Bulstrode, and then at Todd, and started violently.

"What's the matter with Todd?"

"I—I don't know!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Todd! Good heavens! What have you been doing to him, you bound?" shouted Wharton.

"I—I hit him. I didn't mean—"

"You bully!"

"I—I—"

Wharton bent over Todd. He lifted the junior's head. Todd's eyes were closed, and there was a trickle of blood from under his hair.

His face was as white as wax. Bulstrode gazed at him in horror. All his rage, all his fury, had vanished now. He was sick with remorse for what he had done.

"Is he—is he hurt?" he muttered.

Wharton looked up.

"You villain!" he said.

"I—I didn't mean to hit him so hard."

"He is stunned."

"But I—I— Ah!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "He struck his head against the banisters as he fell! I never thought of that! It wasn't my fault!"

Wharton did not reply.

"Bob! Frank!" he called out.

Mr. Quelch's door opened. The Remove-master had heard, and he came out into the passage. He looked at Todd, and a change came over his face.

"Who did that?" he asked, in a terrible voice.

"I—I didn't mean—"

"Go to your study, Bulstrode, and wait there till I send for you!" said the Remove-master.

"I—I—"

"Go!"

And Bulstrode went.

"Help me to lift him in here," said Mr. Quelch to Wharton. "The unfortunate lad! Good heavens, he is quite unconscious! Run to the Head's study, Wharton, and ask him to telephone for a doctor. Tell him that Todd has had an accident."

"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton raced off.

By this time, news of the accident had spread, and a crowd was gathering outside Mr. Quelch's study.

The Remove-master acted promptly, and did what he could. He sent for water, and bathed Todd's injuries. There was a big

THE POPULAR.—No. 163.

black bruise on the forehead, just above the nose, where Bulstrode's fist had struck him. But the greater injury was on the back of the head, where he had crashed against the banisters in falling.

But in spite of Mr. Quelch's efforts Todd did not regain consciousness. The Duffer of Greyfriars was not a strong lad. At the best of times he was frail. He lay insensible, dead to his surroundings.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, helped Mr. Quelch to carry him from the sofa to the school infirmary, where he was put to bed, to await the arrival of the medical man. All had been done that could be done, but he did not come to.

By the time Alonzo was in the infirmary bed, all Greyfriars knew what had happened. A hush had fallen upon the school.

Fellows went about on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers, although Todd was too far away from the school buildings to hear them if they had shouted.

Todd had many peculiar ways. But he was a decent fellow, and had never had an ill thought about anybody, had never done anybody an ill turn.

And his many good qualities were all that the juniors cared to think of now.

Not a voice was found to speak in favour of Bulstrode.

The cruelty of what he had done was condemned on all sides, and would have been so condemned even if the terrible result had not followed.

"The brute!"

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The blackguard!"

They were the expressions the Removeites used when they spoke of the Remove bully, and no voice said a word for him.

What was there to say for him?

He had been punished for his own action, and in his rage had struck Todd in a brutal way—without intending to cause the accident that followed, certainly; but what he had done was bad enough.

There was a proposal from some fellows to fetch him out of his study and rag him; but Wharton and a good many more vetoed it at once.

"Let him alone," said Harry. "If Todd turns out to be badly hurt, Bulstrode will be expelled—and that's enough. If he's seriously injured, Bulstrode may go to prison, for all I know."

"The proper place for him," said Nugent.

"Very likely; but it will be enough, without our ragging him. I don't suppose the poor chap is feeling any too comfy at the present moment."

"Well, that's likely enough," said Ogilvy.

"The likelihood is terrific."

Wharton was right.

Bulstrode sat alone in his study—alone, brooding and miserable—as miserable as it was possible for a human being to be.

He was alone, and likely to remain so. Tom Brown and Hazeldene, who shared the study, did not come there—they did not want to see or speak to Bulstrode. He was alone—condemned, avoided by all, and if he had left the study he knew with what looks of disgust and horror he would have been greeted.

He sat there, while the slow minutes dragged by.

What had happened?

What was the matter with Todd?

Was he going to be seriously ill? Was he going to— Bulstrode dared not form the word, even in his mind.

Surely it could not be—surely that terrible thing, the most terrible of all, could not happen? Fate could not be so cruel!

He groaned aloud.

If he could but have recalled that blow—if he could have undone the hasty action of an angry moment! But the action once done is irremediable—the blow could not be recalled, and he who had struck it had the consequences to face. What consequences?

He hardly dared to think.

While Todd lay senseless in the school infirmary, Bulstrode sat in his darkening study, alone, avoided as one plague-stricken, with dull remorse gnawing at his heart.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### In Danger!

**T**ODD, the Duffer of Greyfriars, lay in a room with darkened windows.

The doctor—kind, fussy little Dr. Short, of Friardale—was at his bedside, with Mr. Quelch and the Head.

They had watched the poor lad long and anxiously.

But there was no recognition in Todd's face. There was no light in his eyes, which were now open, but blank in their gaze.

Todd did not know them.

He was half-conscious—that was all! His brain seemed to be dazed and numbed by the shock he had received.

Dr. Short had spoken in whispers to the Head of concussion of the brain; but he hoped for the best.

Uncle Benjamin had been wired to, and he had wired back that he was coming down to Greyfriars instantly, and that a famous London specialist was coming with him.

There was nothing to do but to await their arrival.

Meanwhile, Todd was to be kept quietly resting.

So the word went forth to the anxious, expectant school.

The evening was drawing on darkly, with a wailing of wind in the old elms, and round the roofs of the ancient buildings, Todd was in danger.

That was the news that thrilled through the school, and made every face quiet and grave.

In danger!

Their schoolfellow, whose simple nature and kind heart had endeared him to all, whose simplicity had made him the victim of so many practical jokes, for which he had never borne malice, was in danger.

The shadow of doom hung over his room; there were hushed voices and silent footfalls round his bed.

In danger!

The boys could hardly realise it. Only a few hours before, and Todd had been as bright and cheerful as the rest—talking of the next visit his Uncle Benjamin was to pay to the school.

And now—

Poor fellow, his uncle's next visit was coming only too soon, and under terrible circumstances!

"Poor old Todd!"

That was the general expression on the lips of all the Greyfriars fellows. Even Loder, of the Sixth, was sorry, and thought with a twinge of conscience of the many times he had ragged the kind, simple lad.

And Bulstrode?

He was still in his room, waiting in fear and trembling for the verdict!

He knew that the medical man was with Todd; he expected to know the worst very soon now.

But no one came to Bulstrode's study. He was avoided, as if the room had been a plague-stricken den, and himself the uncleanest of lepers.

At last the bully of the Remove could endure the suspense no longer. He felt that he would go mad if the dreadful solitude continued.

He rose from the seat into which he had flung himself, and went slowly out of the study with faltering steps.

He must have news of Todd—he must know the worst. Remorse and fear, like twin vultures, seemed to be tearing at his very heart.

Ogilvy was in the passage, talking in low tones to Mark Linley. Bulstrode walked towards them feverishly. They would know!

Linley and Ogilvy gave him one look, and then turned and walked swiftly away.

"Linley!" said Bulstrode hoarsely, hurrying after the Lancashire lad and grasping his arm. "Linley! Tell me—"

Mark's eyes blazed.

"Don't touch me!" he exclaimed.

"But—"

"Take your hand off my arm!"

"I— Oh! I—"

Mark shook him off, and strode away. Bulstrode stood panting for breath. He understood how it was—the Lancashire lad was not alone in his horror. No one would speak to him now!

He went unsteadily down the stairs—unsteadily, as if he had been intoxicated. A group of juniors stood talking in the hall, but they walked away at the sight of Bulstrode.

"Wharton!" he called out huskily.

Wharton did not return.

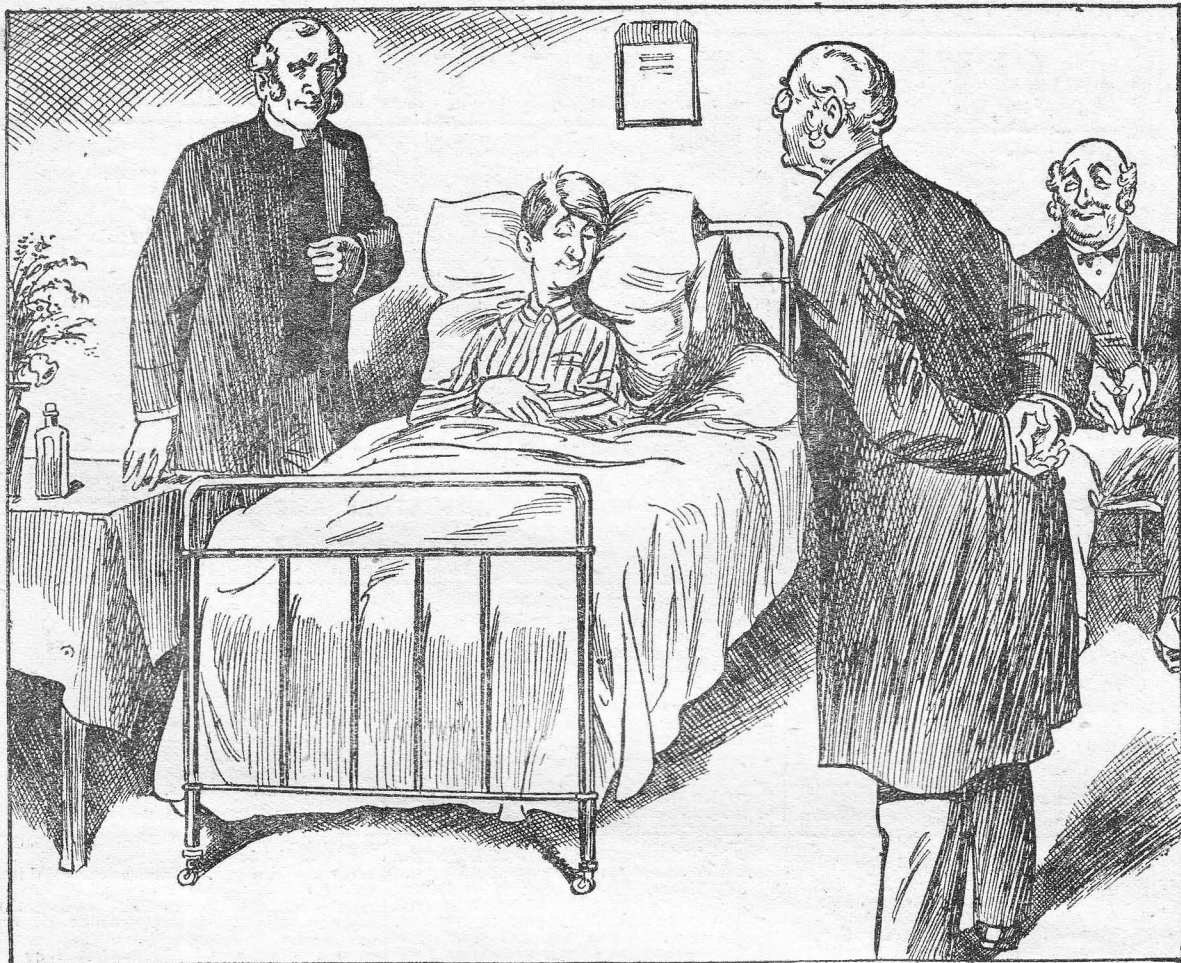
"Wharton! For Heaven's sake tell me a word—tell me how Todd is!" Bulstrode cried, in a voice of agony.

Harry turned round.

There was a tone in Bulstrode's voice that went to his heart, in spite of the horror and scorn he felt towards the bully of the Remove.

"Don't come near me!" he said. "What do you want?"

"How is Todd?"



"I wish you wouldn't punish Bulstrode on my account," whispered Todd. "I am sure he never meant to hurt me so. Could you forgive him, sir?" "It would be dangerous to excite him now. Accede to his wishes if you possibly can," said the doctor to the Head. (See chapter 5.)

"The same."  
 "Hasn't he spoken yet?"  
 "No."  
 "Hasn't the doctor seen him?"  
 "Yes."  
 "What does he say?"  
 "He fears concussion of the brain."  
 Bulstrode groaned.  
 "It's not certain yet," said Wharton.  
 "There's a specialist coming down from London, with Mr. Todd, by the eight o'clock train. I dare say he will be able to tell us something more definite."  
 The bully of the Remove clasped his hands together.  
 "Oh, how can I wait!" he groaned. "I never thought—I never dreamed of this! I—I never meant anything of the kind!"  
 "I suppose you never meant murder," said Wharton coldly, "but you've come jolly near to doing it, all the same."  
 Bulstrode shuddered.  
 "Murder! Wharton!"  
 "Manslaughter, then," said Wharton mercilessly. "What do you expect when you hit at a weak, frail chap like Todd with all your force—a strong, powerful chap like you? What did you expect?"  
 "I—I didn't think. I was in a rage."  
 "You were a rotten ruffian and a cur!" said Wharton. "But it's no good slanging you. I don't want to say anything. You forced me to speak to you."  
 "I—I—"  
 "Oh, let me alone! Get away! I can't bear the sight of you; you make me sick!" Wharton swung away.  
 Bulstrode put his hand upon the banisters to steady himself. He was sick with himself—sick with horror and self-loathing.  
 Why had he done it?  
 Oh, if this only turned out well for him, how careful he would be in the future!

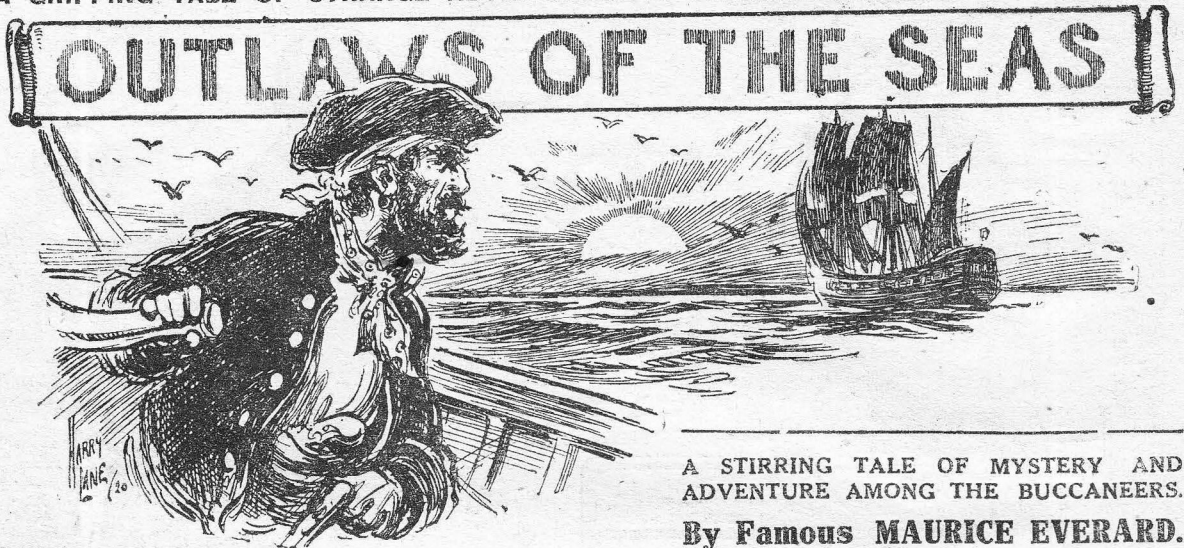
But—but if it turned out badly; if the worst came—  
 His very senses swam with horror at the thought. He groaned aloud in his misery.  
 Bulstrode sank down on the stairs, in a mood of utter dejection. Several fellows passed and saw him there; but no one spoke to him, and all passed as distantly from him as possible.  
 The Remove bully did not start from his lethargy till there was a sound of arrivals, and Uncle Benjamin came in with a white-haired gentleman in a frock-coat and silk hat—the specialist he had brought down from London with him.  
 There was a great change in Uncle Benjamin.  
 The fat, jolly little gentleman, who had furnished so much fun for the juniors of Greyfriars, was pale and worn and anxious. It was evident that his affection for his nephew was very great, and that the danger Alonzo lay in had shaken him terribly. The sight of the kind old face lined with deep, gnawing care, sent a fresh thrill of remorse to Bulstrode's heart. There seemed to be no end to the misery he had caused to himself and to others.  
 Uncle Benjamin glanced at Bulstrode, and his face became very soft. He did not know that it was Bulstrode who was responsible for poor Alonzo's calamity. He fancied that the misery in Bulstrode's face was caused by anxiety for his schoolfellow. There were many anxious faces about him, but none so miserable as Bulstrode's.  
 Uncle Benjamin dropped his hand upon Bulstrode's shoulder.  
 "Bear up, my boy!" he said. "We must hope for the best."  
 "It was I that did it," said Bulstrode dully.  
 Uncle Benjamin started back.  
 "What! You?"  
 "I struck him."

"Bless my soul!"  
 "I—I didn't mean it. He knocked his head on the banisters, but—"  
 The old gentleman regarded Bulstrode in silence for some moments.  
 "Heaven forgive you!" he said at last. Then he followed Mr. Quelch.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. After Darkness, Light!

**G**REYFRIARS waited in tense anxiety for the specialist's verdict. It did not come soon. The time passed on leaden wings. The juniors wandered about the passages, or sat miserably in their studies, or gathered in groups in the Form-rooms. Under the strain of the anxiety they could settle down to nothing, and all had been excused from evening preparation. What was to be the news from the sick-room?  
 Mr. Quelch came forth at last, and a score of pairs of eyes were fastened upon him at once, to read the truth in his face.  
 The Remove-master was looking relieved.  
 "He's better, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.  
 Mr. Quelch nodded.  
 "Yes; better."  
 "Thank goodness!"  
 "It turns out to be less serious than Dr. Short feared at first," said Mr. Quelch. "There is every hope that, with quiet and rest, Todd will recover; but if he takes a turn for the worse, it is feared that an operation may be necessary. That is all that can be said at present. I need not caution you all to be very quiet."  
 "We shall be careful, sir."  
 The evening of anxiety was followed by a night of unrest for most of the Greyfriars fellows.  
 Bulstrode went to bed with the rest of the  
 (Concluded on page 17.)  
 THE POPULAR.—No. 103.

A GRIPPING TALE OF STRANGE ADVENTURES IN FOREIGN LANDS!



A STIRRING TALE OF MYSTERY AND ADVENTURE AMONG THE BUCCANEERS.

By Famous MAURICE EVERARD.

## INTRODUCTION.

BOB GREVILLE, and his cousin, JEFF HAWKINS, are returning to school when they are met by BLACK MICHAEL, a serving man of Bob's father, SIR JOHN GREVILLE. Mike gives them news of the baronet's ruin, and of his orders to take them back to 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 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 a very bad and dangerous highway for the merchants of the day.

They journey to Bristol and sign on as "hands" on the ship Duke, on which they encounter the buccaneer Avery in the guise of the first mate.

During the night, Avery, with a dozen chosen men, seize the captain of the Duke and the ship. The hands, unable to resist, are made to obey the pirate, and the ship alters her course for the West African coast to a town which Avery hopes to capture. They arrive, and land a party of men. The three comrades are dispatched to inform the President of their arrival and intentions. They gain admittance to the palace and Almanzoa, the Governor.

(Now go on with the story.)

## The Spaniard's Amazing Strategy!

"HOW did you get here?" the Spanish President asked, with a break in his voice.

Jeff was quick to take advantage of the momentary show of weakness.

"To prove the truth of my words, Excellency, Captain Avery had already landed large numbers of his men. A few were attacked this noon, but succeeded in freeing themselves after inflicting heavy losses on your followers."

"Indeed, eighteen have fallen!" snarled the Don. "It is only right your own lives should pay the penalty."

Jeff took a quick step forward, and waved the paper in the Spaniard's face.

"Listen, Don Almanzoa!" he said, his face flushed and his eyes very bright. "I give you just five minutes to choose. Unless you come to terms, the time allotted will be over, and St. Principe will be attacked on all sides. For the sake of your people—"

The Spaniard rose into an upright posture.

"For my own sake—" he began; then the expression on his cunning face changed to one of relief. "Listen, ambassador of Avery; I have a plan to propound, by which victory will be assured to you with honour and little danger to myself. Come, take a glass of wine with me, and I will tell you the answer to take back to your captain!"

A number of Almanzoa's officers were summoned, and long, whispered conversations took place, during the course of which many furtive but scared glances were directed upon the stalwart young Englishman, who strolled leisurely about under the embrasured walls, from which a fair view of the town and forts, faintly looming through the mist, could be obtained.

At last the Governor dismissed his men, and sinking back in his hammock with a sigh of relief, motioned Jeff to come nearer.

"The matter has been discussed in full assembly, and we are resolved to deliver up the islands, the town, and the forts, not being provided with sufficient forces to defend them against such overwhelming odds," he said.

Jeff Hawkins could scarce believe his ears. How Black Mike would yell with laughter when he knew. The use of Avery's terrible

name had frightened a whole Spanish garrison into submission.

"But, withal," the Governor went on, "for the better saving of my own and my officers' credit, I desire Captain Avery to use a certain stratagem of war, so that our reputations shall suffer neither at home nor abroad."

Jeff could not help winking to himself. He began to see how the land lay—that the Governor's object in delivering up the town was to save his own precious skin.

"I propose, therefore," his Excellency continued, "that Captain Avery shall come with his troops by night to the bridge that joins this island fortress to the mainland, and there attack it—that at the same time his vessels shall draw it under St. Principe, and, landing troops there, shall intercept me and my staff on the way to the fort, and thus make us honourable prisoners of war. On both sides I propose there shall be continual firing, but without bullets—or, at least, into the air, so that neither side may be hurt. Now take these conditions to your master, with my compliments."

Jeff passed out as though he were reading on air. The look of terrified uncertainty on Don Almanzoa's sallow face, which seemed to have shrunken visibly during the interview, showed how desperately anxious and sincere he was to come to terms at any price.

Jeff rejoined Black Mike and Bob, hardly able to control his laughter. At the entrance they found food and drink set for them, which, however, Mike cautiously insisted the Governor's men should partake of first in case the viands had been poisoned. This having been done, Chater and the two boys fell to with a will, while the stout Cornishman, who seemed indifferent to anything so long as he brought his mission to a successful issue, engaged himself in converse with one of the guards.

At last, just as twilight was dropping in, they set off on the return, and an hour later came safely to the camp, where Avery and his followers were pitched.

There was a deal of pleased excitement when Jeff made known the result of his interview with Don Almanzoa, for the terms to which the Spanish Governor had agreed promised much gain to the buccaneers. Accordingly Avery, with commendable promptitude, at once set about his preparations.

Dividing his now slender forces, he sent

one half across the river to occupy the heights on the south side of the town, promising during the night to send up further supplies of weapons and dry powder; and the other half he directed to follow the line of the river westward, and to halt in the forest within a couple of miles of St. Principe.

Then he, together with the chief gunner, the bo'sun, and Mike, and the two boys, returned to the ship, and worked out a detailed plan of action.

In all he had now one hundred and fifty men under his immediate command, and these he proposed to send ashore in three parties of five-and-forty each, leaving only fifteen men to guard the Duke, for the risk of attack in that quarter by the Spaniards was scarcely to be reckoned with.

Both Jeff and Bob were rather puzzled by Mike's attitude while all these matters were going forward. He appeared far more interested in learning the disposition and the duties of the fifteen hands to be left on shipboard than in Avery's plan of pretended attack, and more than once the boys saw him, under cover of darkness, cautiously moving from one part of the vessel to another, though of his intentions he gave no sign.

At length, towards midnight, the pirates' scheme of operations was practically completed. A number of men were provided with short scaling-ladders to storm the walls in case at the last moment Don Almanzoa resorted to treachery. In addition, bags of powder and shot were served round, every cutlass and blade was examined and tested by the chief armourer, and twelve of the fifteen being set to man the guns, the hundred and thirty-five under Avery himself put off in four of the ship's boats, all prepared for the attack.

On landing, ten of these were sent under Chater and the bo'sun to carry fresh supplies of ammunition to the two parties left on the north and south banks of the river, with instructions that at the first noise of gunfire they were to close in on the town, discharging their pieces as they came on, and making as much noise as possible. Every musket and pistol was to be loaded with ball, but no life to be taken unless express orders were issued by Avery himself.

Towards two o'clock, with scarce a light showing in the town, the false battle commenced, with incessant firing from the forts

out to sea, but, so far as the Spaniards were concerned, without bullets. The buccaners then closed in, and, assaulting Fort Christophe, under cover of a furious hand-fire, took it without any casualties, among the prisoners being the Governor himself and all his staff.

In the streets, however, desultory fighting of a different character was taking place, as a number of the inhabitants, not being aware of Dan Almanzo's design, had turned out, armed with guns, and these they discharged at the pirates as they ran through.

Indiscriminate slaughter might have resulted from this had not a runner brought news to Avery, who thereupon sent a message to the Governor, enjoining him to keep all his men together in the principal fort, while the main body of the buccaners proceeded in force through the town to subdue it with as little damage as possible.

The excitement was now intense, for here and there stragglers had got into several of the richer houses, and, after plundering them, set them on fire. In the light of the flames and with the narrow ways choked with debris and smoke, Bob and Jeff kept close to Mike's side, while the rest of the pirates dashed out, shouting threats and curses, and shooting down all who stopped in their path.

"Come on!" whispered Mike, dragging Jeff and Bob by the arm down a side street. "This is not what Master Avery agreed at all. Our friend, his Excellency the Governor, for all his cowardice, has kept his part of the bargain, and here are our fellows killing right and left. See, many of them are broaching casks of strong liquor, and soon will be out of hand altogether."

So they followed the Cornishman up a steep incline, not guessing whether he was leading them, until he drew up before a gate in a wall, upon which he hammered lustily with the butt-end of his musket.

It was opened by a Spanish soldier, who looked scared to death by the noise and tumult raging in the town below, and, instead of discharging his weapon, as he had been instructed, into the air, let fly full at Mike.

Bob, however, realised the danger in the nick of time, and at the very moment when the piece went to the Spaniard's shoulder he levelled his pistol and pulled the trigger. The bullet struck the lock of the gun at the moment of the discharge, thus deflecting the barrel, and causing the ball to scream over Mike's shoulder.

With one blow of his immense fist the Cornishman knocked the Spaniard insensible, and, leaping over his prostrate form, entered the courtyard.

"The entrance to the magazine, where all the shot and powder is stored. And here, too, are many guns and the biggest cannon on the island!" cried Mike, picking up the hand-lantern which the soldier had dropped. "Ah, would you? Then take that!" as a bearded fellow leapt at him out of the darkness, and strove to engage him with a long, slender-bladed rapier. "It is well you should make the acquaintance of my little toothpick!" And, with a slashing blow he beat down the other's guard, and sent him to his knees with a broken forearm.

Meantime, both Bob and Jeff had been engaged in a terrific struggle with three other soldiers, one of whom had to be shot before the danger could be averted, for by this time it was plain to the lads that Black Mike had some well-thought-out plan on foot in bringing them to the magazine.

As they passed into the armoury, where many hundreds of guns were stacked, and bags of powder and ball heaped against the wall, Mike stopped to wipe the perspiration from his face.

"Now, see here, both of you, Captain Avery has spoilt his plan," he said, drawing them to a window high up in the magazine wall, from which they commanded a wide view of the town, the roadstead, and the sea beyond, now lit brilliantly as day as fresh fires were started in various parts of the town. "Our master has let too many of his fellows get out of hand, and it is our duty to see that justice is done. The Don kept to the terms of his promise, and these pirate villains have broken theirs. Therefore, it is for you and me to make ourselves masters of the situation."

"But, Mike," gasped Bob, "it is out of the question for three of us to set ourselves against a hundred and fifty stalwart fellows."

"Indeed, we are not alone," grinned Black Michael. "In a little while John Chater, with several others, have promised to come to this place; and then if the trouble spreads we shall turn the big guns on the pirates in the town. Meantime, to make ourselves secure,

no one must recognise us. Here are a number of black cloths with eyelet-holes. I made them on shipboard this evening. Come on now, you first, Master Jeff. We are to be the three masked men of St. Principe, and to give Captain John Avery such a surprise as he will remember for many a long day!"

**How a Spaniard Kept His Word and Profited Thereby!**

"A VERY overlooked the magazine, which is also the land fort," Black Michael said, leading the way through a small iron-studded door set in a wall of enormous thickness. "I found out all about it while you, Jeff, were parleying with the Governor this afternoon."

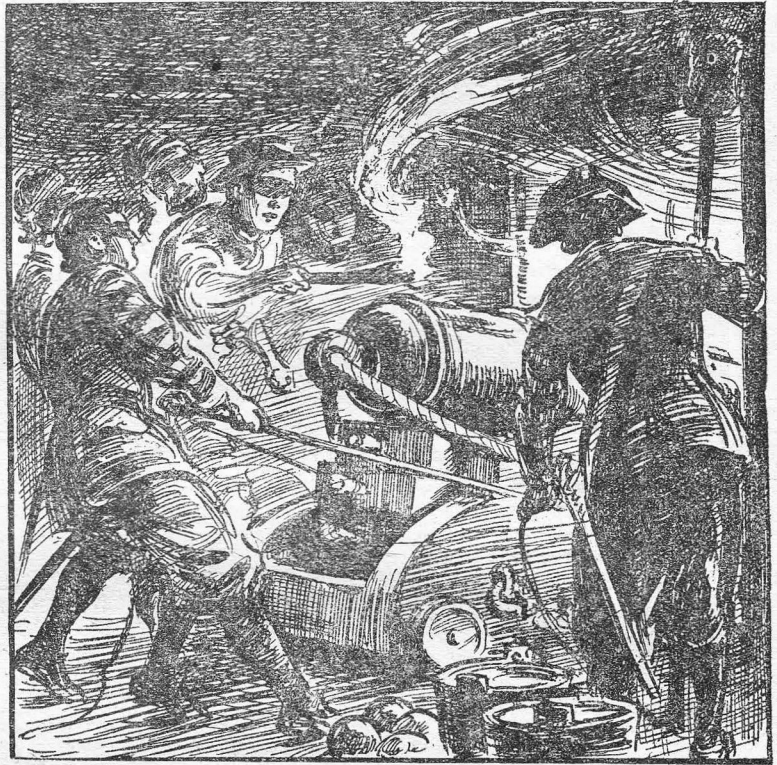
"Yes, indeed," added Bob, who at Mike's instructions lit a torch lodged in a bracket on the wall. "While you were away, Jeff, he made a friend of a renegade out of Bristol town, and this fellow told him that the key to the situation lay in this powder store." As the spluttering wood flare filled the place

personal belongings—even their clothes," muttered Jeff, wiping the moisture from his face. "Is there any way of stopping them, Mike?"

"As soon as Chater and his two friends, who are gummers, arrive," said the Cornishman. "See, even now our fellows are advancing towards St. Principe, which has raised the white flag of surrender. This butchery must be stopped at any price, and we will get them when they turn into the road up the hill."

It was possible to follow the course of events pretty clearly, for, heedless of the shots fired from some of the houses, and of the missiles rained down on them from the terrified but desperate inhabitants, the buccaners surged on, carrying their lighted flares, destroying everything in their path.

Two smaller parties, breaking from the main body, followed the line of the river, and, pushing off in small boats, made for two of the vessels lying in the roads. Here a sharp but brief encounter took place, which ended apparently in the pirates' favour, for



At a word from the chief gunner the torch was applied to the touch-hole, and a deafening explosion filled the vault. Bob and Jeff jumped clear as the long gun flashed back with the recoil. (See page 8.)

with light, the boys saw they were in an immense stone apartment with a domed roof, and about them, radiating from a common centre, were eight long cannon whose ugly muzzles rested against iron partitions.

"Cover the flare a moment, and we will slide back one of the covers," warned Mike. "You will then see that these guns command the town."

As the casement slipped back on well-oiled rollers, the opening made a light patch against the darkness, and, peering down, they made out the faint outline of the low foreshore, still shrouded in mist, the dark forms of the Spanish vessels still at anchor in the roadstead, and closer in the white walls and red roofs of the town, from which, here and there dense columns of smoke billowed to the sky as house after house was fired by the buccaners.

A medley of shrieks, cries, and curses rose from the narrow streets as the pirates, now thoroughly carried away by excitement and the lust for plunder, charged through the main thoroughfares, breaking down doors and windows, firing the lower stories and driving the wretched inhabitants at the cutlass point towards the foreshore.

"Later they will plunder them of their

in a very little while the shots from the ships' decks ceased, and before the night's work was through both vessels hoisted anchor and stood out to sea.

"Help bring in powder and ball," said Mike, closing the iron casement and lighting another torch. "When Chater and the rest begin to work these guns they will keep us busy for supplies."

Barely were the words out of his mouth when there came a loud knocking on the outer door, and, having opened it, three of the Duke's crew came quickly in.

Black Mike stood waiting, with spare garments taken from the Spanish soldiery and the strips of black cloth in his hand.

"Put the jackets over your own, in case of being seen," he counselled. "And then, my good fellows, get a hand on to the big pieces, for devil's work is afoot below there."

Now, both Bob and Jeff understood the nature of the work upon which the resourceful Cornishman had been engaged on his brief return to the Duke. He had searched the ship for material wherewith to make masks, and had used his powers of persuasion to win several valuable helpers to his side.

It is not to be wondered at that, among the buccaners, there were some fired more with the spirit of adventure than with the lust for killing and destruction, and of these, after cautiously sounding them, Mike had made a careful choice.

Bidding the boys open a number of the sliding doors, Mike and Chater took stock of the situation while the others loaded the guns.

"It is clear the brutes mean to raze the main fort to the ground, and to put to death every Spaniard left in it," said Mike, in a tense whisper. "Our duty is to spoil the design. Now, how do you see it, Chater? The two guns away to the left command the thoroughfare where the big warehouse is blazing. The next two can be trained on the principal square, where they must cross on their way up the hill, and the three biggest will sweep the ground under the fort.

"Justice, my young friend, demands stern measures," said Mike to Bob. "For once the Spaniard has proved honourable. It behoves us, therefore, as Englishmen, to mete such punishment as shall not be forgotten."

The torches were again extinguished, all except one, which was kept burning to provide sufficient light to attend to the priming, the touch strings, and the fuses.

Two of the weapons having been run forward, the gunners, looking very desperate with their masked faces, crouched behind them and trained them according to Chater's instructions. At a word from him, just when the pirates were surging through the main street, shooting wildly and venomously in all directions, the flame was applied to the powder at the touch-hole, and a deafening explosion filled the vault.

Bob and Jeff jumped clear as the long cannon flashed back with the recoil, and, leaving Chater and one of the seamen to reload, the shutters were closed, two more opened, and the cannon behind them directed on the square.

Looking out, Mike was able to gather something of the havoc the first shot had played in the crowded ranks of the pirates. The ball fell full among them and ploughed its way into the centre of the room. Loud cries and shouts filled the air, which, however, were drowned by the discharge of the second piece at the head of the column.

"At least half a dozen gone that time!"

yelled Mike. "Run the short one out, boys, and sweep the square."

They were too busy now to watch the effect of the shots, for the buccaners, not knowing by whom they were attacked, save that the ball had taken them from behind, dashed on, streaming in twos and threes from the houses burning furiously in their wake.

The guns from the magazine were discharged at very short intervals, for as soon as one shot was loosed the cannon next it was ready. Bob and Jeff worked like demons in an inferno of smoke and stifling fumes, the slight breeze from the west driving the vapours back into the gun-chamber.

They laboured, they felt sure, in the cause of justice, and began to reap the result of their endeavours when, three more shots having been fired at the party swarming up the hill, the ranks broke and the pirates uttered loud cries, streaming down the hill in confusion.

A few, however, more daring than the rest, had marked the direction from which the firing came, and the chief armourer, calling for volunteers, a full score rallied round him and raced across the square in the direction of the magazine. In the red glare rising from a score of burning villages, those behind the guns could make out their erstwhile companions coming towards them, blades gripped in teeth, and pistols in hand.

"Time for us to get out!" shouted Mike, closing the iron doors. "Keep the black cloths on until clear of the town. I will lead you back to the boats. Follow me!"

The torches were extinguished which Mike had left in the outer room, the stout iron door slammed shut, and, lowering themselves by a short rope-ladder which the Cornishman had left in readiness, they struck by a narrow path into a quieter quarter of the town.

News had spread that the pirates were on the run, and a number of Spanish soldiers and townsfolk tried to bar the path of the running men. The masks on their faces, and the fact that most of them wore Spanish jackets, however, confused them, and the seven passed through with no harm being done.

Near one of the wharves Mike ordered the masks to be thrown aside; the jackets, too, were discarded, and, turning to the right, they sprinted along the foreshore, where already little groups of the buccaners were collected.

It was quite clear to Mike that his strategy had succeeded. In all directions the pirates were on the run, Avery himself appearing a few minutes later surrounded by a bedraggled-looking mob, many of whom showed distressful signs of battle.

Mike, Chater, and the boys mingled with the throng now making for the boats. These put off crammed to the gunwales, and at Avery's command, three were dispatched to board the Duke, and three to man each of the captured ships.

It wanted but an hour to daybreak when the three ships, with the Duke leading, put out to sea. In all, Avery had lost twenty-two killed, while thirty-seven had suffered more or less seriously. Very little plunder had been taken, thanks to the action of Michael and the boys, and not until many months later did the pirate chief discover to whom he owed the failure of his treacherous attack on the inhabitants and defenders of St. Principe.

**The Duke Falls in with a Strange Ship.**

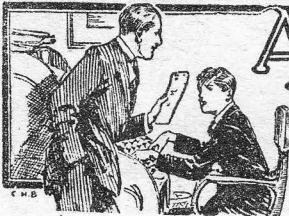
FOR three weeks after leaving the West Coast of Africa the three ships kept together, steering a southerly course through fine weather. The nearer they got to the Line the more intense did the heat become, and no one enjoyed more than Bob and Jeff, after the hardships of an English winter, the long hours of blazing sunshine, and the sweet, cool night, when the vast ocean was fanned by a delicious breeze.

About twelve o'clock, when all lights had been extinguished, and everything was very still, save for the occasional calling of the watch, all hands were aroused by a cry from the look-out man perched high in the bows. A late rising moon had come up, and bathed the sea with pathways of silver light. In one of these glistening lanes, following the pointing hand of the look-out, they saw a bluff-bowed schooner riding as though at anchor some three miles away.

Very ghostly and mysterious she looked with her dark hull standing black against the sky-line, and her tapering masts pointing like silver sticks to the blue dome of heaven faintly luminous with stars. No flag floated from her stern or mainmast, but a solitary light was visible, which winked curiously through the night, as though sending out signals.

(To be continued.)

**OUR WEEKLY FEATURE!**



**A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR**

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. ADDRESS: EDITOR THE "POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

**FOR NEXT FRIDAY:**

Our next week's programme will again include two grand long complete stories. The first will be entitled:

**"BULSTRODE MINOR!"**  
By Frank Richards.

This story deals with the early days at Greyfriars, when George Bulstrode was captain of the Remove. His minor comes to Greyfriars, and the captain is very greatly put out. For Bulstrode had even then been altering his ways, and his minor, a reckless youngster, causes him grave concern. It is left to Dicky Nugent to deal with

**"BULSTRODE MINOR!"**

The second long complete story is of the chums of Rookwood, Jimmy Silver & Co., and is entitled:

**"MR. MANDER'S GUESTS!"**  
By Owen Conquest.

No issue of the POPULAR would be complete without a story of the adventures of "Uncle James" and his chums, and this story is one which you will undoubtedly like. THE POPULAR.—No. 103.

Jimmy Silver ranks high in the affections of my chums, and if they look to him to interest them for some part of every week, Jimmy is right on the scene.

There will be further long instalments of our grand serials. Eddie Polo is now well used to being

**"BEFORE THE CAMERA!"**

but it is not only his work that Eddie has to think about. Several unscrupulous enemies see that Eddie is kept busy looking after himself.

Our other serials are too well known to need mention here, so I will save space by just saying that all three instalments are really fine.

**The "Greyfriars Herald."**

In this week's issue of the "Magnet Library" there is a fine four-page supplement. This is the "Greyfriars Herald," the Remove Form magazine. Harry Wharton & Co. edit this supplement, and my chums will find therein very much to interest and amuse them.

Billy Bunter managed to get his "Weekly" into the "Magnet" for one week only—Harry Wharton & Co. saw to that! But I've an idea that "Billy Bunter's

Weekly" will appear again before very long. Harry Wharton & Co. have been caught napping once—they're not likely to shut their eyes when they see Billy looking unusually thoughtful.

By the way, I should very like my chums, who have been fortunate enough to obtain a copy of the "Magnet Library" containing "Billy Bunter's Weekly" to write to me and let me know if they like it. A postcard will do, addressed to me as above.

**HOBBIES.**

A reader wrote to me and asked me to say what kind of hobby he should take up. Of course, that is a very awkward question for me to answer, because I do not know in which way my chum's inclinations lie. For instance, if my chum was more interested in birds' eggs than stamps, it would hardly be worth while my telling him to take up stamp-collecting for a hobby, would it?

As a matter of fact, I had the problem solved for me by another reader. He signs himself "G. L. K.," and he writes from Liverpool. He tells me that he finds that making up the models given in "Chuckles" every week is a fine hobby. Naturally, the word "hobby" made me sit up and take extra notice!

Then he went on to say that although he is rather too old to get much fun out of the models himself, he finds that the making up—or building—takes him quite a long time, and passes the long cold evenings away in fine style. Then he gives them, complete, to young friends of his. He has no brothers or sisters.

Then to all my chums who want something to do—I say, follow the example set by "G. L. K."

*Your Editor*



OUR SECOND SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE!

# The Surprise Footballer!

An Amusing Complete Story of Pons, the Colonial Junior, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### "To Let!"

**T**O let!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" It was a roar of laughter in the old quadrangle at Rookwood.

Pons, the new junior in the Classical Fourth, looked round in surprise.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth—Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome—were on the steps, and they burst into a yell as Pons came out.

Mornington and Townsend and Topham, the Nuts of Rookwood, were lounging in the quad, and they echoed the yell as they looked at the new junior.

And then it spread, and from all sides came shouts of laughter.

Pons looked bewildered, and his face flushed crimson.

"What is it?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is the joke?" demanded Pons.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy.

"To let!" shrieked Lovell. "Well, I always knew it was empty!"

And there was a fresh yell.

Pons stood on the steps, blinking about him. He was quite unconscious of the fact that some practical joker had, by means of a fish-hook, attached a small card to the back of his coat. Upon the card was inscribed in bold letters:

### "TO LET!"

The unfortunate new boy could not see the card, having no eyes in the back of his head; but everybody else could see it, and they yelled.

There was an impression in the Fourth Form at Rookwood that Pons, the new boy, was a duffer. It was quite an unjust impression; he was anything but that. But on his first day at the school he had been mercilessly taken in and befooled by Pankley, of Bagshot, the old rival of Jimmy Silver & Co.

And though he had since then more than got even with Pankley, of Bagshot, the first impression still remained. Early impressions are hard to erase. Poor Pons was set down as a duffer; hence the little joke of which he was now the victim.

Pons' head was certainly not empty; but the card hooked on the back of his coat implied that it was, and that the vacant space was "To Let."

"Look here, what are you cackling at?" Pons demanded warmly.

"All serene!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"There's nothing in it!"

And that remark, which had a double meaning, was greeted with another howl of merriment.

Pons put his hand up to his face, under the impression that something or other was there—an ink-spot on his nose, or something of the kind. The juniors watched him in great glee.

"By gad! That's got him down about right!" said Mornington. "To let! What offers for the vacant space?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To let!" repeated Pons. "I don't understand—"

"Of course you don't; you need brains to understand with!" grinned Mornington.

"Look here, what is the matter, Jimmy Silver?"

"Nothing's the matter, dear boy!"

"Then what are you chortling at?"

"We're chortling at the duffer of Rookwood!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Van Ryn of the Fourth came across the quadrangle from the tuckshop, and Pons called to him. The two Colonial juniors were chums.

"Van Ryn, can you see anything for these silly asses to cackle at about me?"

The South African junior stared at him. He could not see the back of Pons, as the junior faced him.

"No, I can't," he replied.

"Then what is the cackle about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fistical Four.

Pons swung round angrily towards them, and then Van Ryn saw the card, and burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was Pons' unconsciousness of the ridiculous label upon his back that tickled the Rookwood juniors most. He spun round towards Van Ryn again.

"You, too!" he exclaimed. "You silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Van Ryn.

"Look here—"

"Et tu, Brute!" chuckled Lovell. "Thou, too, Brutus! Ha, ha!"

"Here comes Bootles!" murmured Raby.

"Oh, my hat! Take it off, Pong!"

"Eh? Take what off?" exclaimed the separated Pons.

"Ha, ha!"

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, was coming over from Mr. Manders' house. He glanced round in mild surprise at the hilarious juniors. Then he caught sight of the card hooked upon Pons' back, and started.

His lips quivered for a moment, but he contrived to frown.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "This is—*is* ridiculous! Pons—come here, Pons! You should not play such an absurd trick, Pons!"

"Trick!" gasped Pons.

"Yes, my boy. It is surely a very peculiar sense of humour which causes you to hold yourself up to ridicule in this way!"

"I—I—" gasped Pons.

"Take it off at once!"

"Take it off!" repeated Pons, in bewilderment. "B-b-b-but what am I to take off, sir? My cap?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Is it possible, Pons, that you are not aware that there is a ridiculous card upon your back?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pons' hand made a dive for the back of his coat, and he dragged off the card. His face was a study as he looked at it, and read "To Let."

The expression upon his face made the juniors shriek.

"To—to—to let!" gasped Pons.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! You were not aware, Pons—"

"Nunno, sir!"

"A—a very ridiculous joke!" said Mr. Bootles, trying not to smile. "You should not play such jokes upon a new boy!"

And Mr. Bootles went into the School House, and did not laugh till he was out of hearing of the juniors.

Pons stood with the card in his fingers, his face crimson.

"I—I suppose that's a joke?" he ejaculated at last.

"No; it's a fact!" grinned Flynn of the Fourth. "Sure, the space is to let, isn't it intirely?"

"You silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Van Ryn, laughing, put his arm through

Pons', and drew him into the House. They left the Classical juniors yelling.

"Poor old Pons!" said Lovell, wiping his eyes. "I suppose he can't help being a duffer, but he's funny!"

In Study No. 3 Dick Van Ryn was grinning, and Pons was frowning, with knitted brows.

"You mustn't mind, Pong, old chap!" said Van Ryn. "Only a joke!"

"I do not mind a joke!" growled Pons. "But why have all the fatheads made up their minds that I am a duffer?"

"Well, the way Pankley dished you, you know—"

"But since that I have dished Pankley."

"True, O king! But you gave them that idea at the start, and they haven't got over it. Never mind. Keep smiling, as Jimmy Silver says!"

"Blow Jimmy Silver!" growled Pons.

And it was some time before the cloud cleared from the usually good-humoured face of the Canadian junior.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Pons to the Rescue!

**B**AGSHOT bouncers!" growled Jimmy Silver.

It was the following day, and Jimmy Silver was returning to the school after a visit to Coombe, and at a turning in the lane he met Pankley and Poole and Putter of Bagshot face to face.

As the rival juniors never met without a ragging, Jimmy Silver was evidently in for it. Pankley & Co. bore down on him at once, grinning.

"What a happy meeting!" exclaimed Pankley.

Jimmy put up his hands.

"Buzz off, you silly asses!"

"Ain't you glad to see us?" asked Pankley in a pained voice, while his comrades chortled.

"Could anybody be glad to see a face like yours?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

At which Poole and Putter ceased to smile.

"Rats!" grunted Pankley. "How's your new idiot getting on, the silly ass we took to Bagshot the other day and fooled?"

"Never was such an idiot as that Rookwood chap!" said Putter.

"Then he was in his right place at Bagshot!" growled Jimmy Silver. "You did quite right to take him to a home for idiots!"

"We're cheery to-day!" smiled Pankley. "Never mind. Come for a little walk, Jimmy, my son! We're just going home! Come along!"

"Hands off, you chumps!"

But the three Bagshot fellows did not "Hands off." They closed round Jimmy Silver, who hit out vigorously. But, great fighting-man as Jimmy was, there were rather too many for him. His arms were pinioned, and he wriggled in vain in the grasp of the trio.

"Now, come along!" grinned Pankley.

"We're going to take you to Bagshot, and show the chaps what we've found wild on the road! Kim on!"

"Leggo!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha! Come on! You walk behind, Poole, and help him with your boot!"

"What-ho!" chortled Poole.

"I'm not going to Bagshot, you howling chumps!" yelled Jimmy Silver, resisting desperately. "Yaroo! Keep your boot away, you rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you coming, dear boy?"

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Jimmy.

He had to go. Pankley and Putter held his

arms securely, and Poole, behind, was helping him on with a heavy boot. Jimmy walked down the road in the midst of the Bagshot trio, with a red and furious face. He knew what he had to expect if his captors marched him into Bagshot School, but there was no help for it.

"There was the buzz of a bicycle on the road, and a junior came pedalling along at a leisurely pace from the village.

It was Pons of the Fourth.

He glanced at the group of juniors in astonishment.

"Look out, Rookwood cad!" muttered Pankley.

"Rescue!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

He did not expect much help from the duffer of the Fourth, but it was a chance. He remembered that Pons had given a good account of himself against Higgs, the bully of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Pons jammed on his brake at once, and jumped down, leaving the bike to go spinning into the hedge.

He rushed upon the scene at once.

"Clear off, ass!" said Pankley warningly. "Do you want to be taken to Bagshot again? Oh, my hat!"

Pons did not reply. He rushed to the attack, hitting out. Pankley and Poole had to let go Jimmy Silver to defend themselves. Poole grasped the Canadian, but he was hurled aside, and went staggering into the hedge. Pons grasped Pankley the next moment, and they rolled on the ground.

Jimmy Silver was freed then, and he piled in without a moment's pause. Putter was driven back under a shower of drives through a gap in the hedge, and into a clayey field. Then Jimmy turned upon Poole, and in a few minutes Poole had enough.

Meanwhile, Pons and Cecil Pankley were rolling on the ground in a terrific combat.

They seemed about evenly matched, and both of them were getting terrific punishment.

Jimmy Silver rushed to the rescue of his rescuer, and dragged Pankley off by his legs. Pankley roared.

Pons staggered up. His nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes were closed. Pankley clawed at the ground as Jimmy, with a powerful grasp on his ankles, dragged him towards the ditch.

"Leggo!" he roared. "You're not going to— Ow! Oh! Ooooch!"

Pankley went headfirst into a foot of rainy mud.

"Goorrooooooch!"

Poole and Putter were returning breathlessly to the attack, and Jimmy Silver and Pons met them half-way. Pankley was struggling wildly in the muddy ditch, and was quite out of the combat.

"Come and help a chap!" shrieked Pankley. "Grooh! Yow! Oh! Lend a hand!"

"Pax!" ejaculated Poole.

And he ran to help his leader. Putter followed behind him, and Jimmy Silver burst into a chuckle.

"A win for us!" he exclaimed. "Come on, Pons! Let's clear!"

Three or four Bagshot juniors were speeding towards the scene across the field. It was high time for the Rookwooders to clear.

Pons picked up his bike.

"Jump on behind!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho!"

"Stop them!" roared Pankley. "Groogh! Stoppen!"

But Pons was in the saddle, and Jimmy Silver was standing on the foot-rests, his hands on Pons' shoulders. The double-loaded bicycle whizzed away down the road, and the Bagshot Bounders rushed after it in vain.

"We've done them!" grinned Silver, as Rookwood came in sight.

The bike slowed down, and Jimmy jumped off. Pons alighted, and wheeled the bicycle on, rubbing his nose with his free hand.

"You've had it bad," said Jimmy sympathetically. "It was awfully plucky of you to tackle the bounders like that, Pons. Better buck up and get a beefsteak for your eye!"

"Lucky for you there was a duffer coming along," remarked Pons.

Jimmy coloured a little.

"Well, you didn't look much like a duffer when you tackled them," he said. "You've done me a good turn, Pong, old chap. They were going to yank me off to Bagshot, and I should have had a high old time. Look here, Pong, you are a bit of a duffer, you know, but you've done me a jolly good turn, and it was plucky of you, and—and if I

THE POPULAR.—No. 103.

can ever do you one, you've only got to ask me."

Pons looked at him with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes.

"Honest Injun!" said Jimmy Silver solemnly.

"I may remind you of that some time."

"Do!" said Jimmy.

And he wheeled in Pons' bike, while the Canadian went to the housekeeper in search of a steak for his eye, which needed it badly.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### What Pons Knew!

MORNINGTON of the Fourth looked in at the end study that evening. Jimmy Silver & Co. had finished their preparation, and Jimmy was conning over a list of names on a slip of paper. The dandy of the Fourth glanced at it.

"That the list for the Bagshot match?" he asked.

Jimmy nodded.

"Got my name down?"

"No."

Mornington looked unpleasant.

"I suppose that means that you're going to keep me out of the footer all the season, as you did out of the cricket?" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"You can put it that way if you like," he said. "It means that you're not going to have a chance to play dirty tricks in the footer as you did in the cricket. That's how I put it."

"Well, I warn you that I'm not standin' it, Jimmy Silver!"

"Oh, go away and smoke," said Lovell.

"That's more in your line than footer."

"Isn't there a game of banker going?" grinned Raby.

"Or nap?" asked Newcome. "You'd rather play nap than footer, any day, Morny."

Mornington did not heed. His eyes were fixed upon Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy Silver. "If that means that you've got another dirty trick up your sleeve, Mornington, you'd better look out yourself. You jolly nearly got sacked over the last one."

Mornington gritted his teeth, and strode away from the study.

"The chap's a good player, if he wasn't such a howling cad," Lovell remarked thoughtfully. "He would be useful against Bagshot, Jimmy, if—if—"

"If he didn't get into one of his precious tempers and kick the ball through our own goal to spite us," retorted Jimmy.

"Well—yes, he's rotter enough for that," agreed Lovell. "Hallo, here's the duffer!"

Pons came into the study.

"Still to let?" asked Newcome.

"Oh, don't be funny," said Pons. "I'm getting fed up with that. I say, Silver. I hear you're making up the eleven for the Bagshot match!"

"Right on the wicket," said Jimmy.

"How would you like to put me down?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Well, where does the cackle come in? I can play footer."

"Well, I haven't seen you play," said Jimmy, smiling. "But I hardly think you'd be up to form for the junior team, old son, even if you weren't— Ahem!"

"A duffer?" said Pons.

"Well—yes."

"Then you don't feel inclined to play me for Rookwood on Saturday?"

"Hardly!" grinned Jimmy.

"We're not playing a lunatic asylum!" explained Lovell. "When we do, you shall have a front place!"

"Certainly!" said Jimmy. "That's a go!"

Pons looked from one to another of the grinning faces.

"But you haven't seen me play yet," he remarked.

"No, we haven't had that pleasure," said Jimmy. "Let's see you at the practice tomorrow, Pong."

"Well, if he can play footer as well as he can play the giddy ox, he must be a corker!" remarked Newcome.

"Do you know how to kick a ball?" asked Lovell.

Pons nodded.

"With the foot," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at? Is not that right?"

"Yes," gasped Jimmy Silver, "that's right

—right as rain. But—but you'll have to know a little more about the game than that before you play for Rookwood. My word, you are a duffer, old scout!"

"A chap can't help being a duffer if he's born one," said Pons. "I should like to play football all the same."

"So you shall, my infant," said Jimmy kindly. "I'll put you through your paces on Little Side to-morrow, if you like. You've got the build of a good forward, if you knew anything about the game. I'll give you some coaching."

"Thank you! But surely the game of football is not played in a vehicle!" said Pons, looking puzzled.

"A-a-a what?"

"A vehicle. You spoke of a coach—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is football anything like coaching?" asked Pons, looking bewildered. "Coaching is done with a coach and horses—"

The Fistical Four shrieked.

"Oh, my hat! You're too funny to live!" gasped Jimmy Silver, wiping away his tears.

"You are, really! Coaching at footer means teaching you and giving you tips."

"Oh, I see."

"He sees!" sobbed Lovell. "He sees! Oh, my hat! Sure you see, Pong?"

"Yes, now that it is explained," said Pons simply. "From the game being called football, I supposed that it was played on foot, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it isn't played on horseback," gasped Raby, "nor yet on skates."

"I was sure of it," said Pons. "I do not see why I should not play football, as I know the game quite well—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, to-morrow we'll see what you can do," said Jimmy Silver, almost weeping with mirth. "You are a corker, Pong, and no mistake. I never knew there was such a funny merchant outside 'Chuckles.' Tell us some more about footer."

"I know the rules. The game is played with goal-posts, and when the ball hits a goal-post that is a try," said Pons, with an air of great knowledge.

This piece of information was too much for the Fistical Four. They went into hysterics on the spot, and Pons, after a surprise stare at them, walked out of the study.

"Oh, hold me, somebody!" groaned Newcome, faint with laughter. "Oh dear! Did you ever—"

"Well, hardly ever!" gasped Lovell.

"It's played with goal-posts," wept Jimmy Silver, "and when the ball hits a goal-post— Ha, ha!"

"Then it's a try!" shrieked Lovell. "It's a giddy try! Oh dear!"

"What on earth's the row about?" asked Oswald, looking into the study.

"Lend us your ears!" choked Lovell.

"Listen, my infant! The new kid has been telling us how to play footer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's played with— Ha, ha, ha!"

Oswald stared.

"What are you driving at?" he asked.

"With goal-posts!" shrieked Lovell hysterically.

"What?"

"And when the ball hits a goal-post—"

Lovell could get no farther. He lay back in his chair and yelled.

"When it whitches?" asked Oswald.

"Then it's a try!" yelled Raby.

"A-a-a try!" yelled Oswald. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell staggered to his feet.

"I must go and tell the chaps about this," he gurgled. "It's too good to keep. It's worth a guinea a box!"

Lovell almost tottered into the Common-room.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," he gasped, "listen! The new chap has told us what he knows about footer—"

"Eat lot he knows!" snorted Townsend.

"He does— he do! It's played with gig-gig-gig—"

"With what?"

"Gig-gig-goal-posts!" stammered Lovell. "And when the ball—ha, ha, ha!—hits a g-gig-goal-post it's a—ha, ha, ha—a try!"

When the Classical Fourth went up to their dormitory that night, grinning looks were turned upon Charley Pons from all sides. And there was a beseeching chorus:

"Tell us something more about footer, Pong!"

But Pons only grunted and went to bed.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.  
Something Like Footer!**

**J**IMMY SILVER & Co. went down to Little Side after morning lessons the next day, and Pons of the Fourth went with them. And all the Classical Fourth and most of the Moderns followed. Pons' wonderful knowledge of the great game of football had spread, and all the Lower School had yelled over it. After that they were very keen to see how Pong would get on at the game itself.

The fellow who believed that football was a game played with goal-posts, and that a try was scored when a ball hit a goal-post, was certain to be worth watching with a footer. Smiling faces Pons, who was smiling good-humouredly himself. He seemed to be pleased at finding himself an object of general interest.

The Fourth Form had already decided that he was a first-class duffer, and had somewhat unreasonably declined to take any notice of evidence to the contrary. Perhaps they were a little pleased in finding that they were in the right to this extent. A fellow who hadn't played footer might be excused for knowing nothing about the game, but certainly only a born duffer could have had such weird ideas about it as Pons had.

"But why are you smiling?" asked Pons. "The goal-posts are here—it is just as I said."

"Quite right," said Jimmy Silver, chuckling. "They're here. But we don't generally try to hit a goal-post with the ball—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And we don't score tries at all. That's in the other game."

"In cricket?" asked Pons innocently.

There was a shriek. "Cricket! Oh crumbs!"

"The other footer game, I mean," gasped Jimmy Silver. "Rugger, you know—they score tries in Rugger, not in Soccer. This is Soccer."

"Goals, fathead!" "You mean goal-posts?" asked Pons.

"Hold me, somebody!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "He's too much for me. No, dear boy, we don't score goal-posts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When the ball goes between the posts and stops in the net, that's a goal," said Jimmy, gasping with laughter. "See now?"

"Yes; that is very easy. Is there anything else to learn?"

"Ha, ha! Just a little. But that will do to begin with. Let's see you put this ball in goal—with your feet, you know, not with your chin or your left ear."

"That is quite easy."

"Well, let's see you do it," said Jimmy. "Get into goal, Flynn."

The grinning Flynn went into goal, and Jimmy pitched the ball into the field. All eyes were upon Pong as he made a run for it.

He kicked it towards the goal with clumsy kicks, and required about a dozen of them to cover ten yards or so. Close up to the goal-mouth he kicked the ball in, and Flynn flung it out.

Then there was a yell. Pons had rushed into goal at the astonished goalkeeper and collared him.

"Hurroo!" roared Flynn. "What the howly Moses— Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Pons was banging Flynn's head against the nearest goal-post. There was a shriek of laughter round the field. Jimmy Silver dashed on, and caught hold of Pons' collar, and dragged him back.

"What are you up to?" he yelled.

Pons turned an excited face on him.

"He stopped my goal!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"I should have taken the goal, but he knocked it out with his hand—"

Jimmy Silver almost choked.

"Arrah, it's potty he is!" gasped Flynn.

"Kape him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has spoiled my goal!" shouted Pons.

"Oh, my hat! That's a goalkeeper's

"You'd better watch us a bit first," grinned Lovell. "You'll get the hang of the game that way."

"Yes, that is a good idea," assented Pons. The Canadian joined the fellows round the ropes, while the practice went on. He watched them very seriously and solemnly, as if trying to pick up as much of the game as he could.

He sauntered away at last, however, and Van Ryn joined him as he went to the School House. The South African junior was eyeing his new chum in a very peculiar way.

"What's the little game, Pong?" he asked suddenly.

Pons looked at him.

"Football," he replied. "It is played with



Pons banged the excited goalkeeper's head against the post. "What do you mean by stopping my goal?" he demanded fiercely. (See this page.)

bizney!" stuttered Jimmy Silver. "That's what he's there for!"

"Nonsense!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You are pulling my leg!" exclaimed Pons indignantly. "What is the use of my kicking the ball into goal if Flynn pushes it out again?"

Jimmy almost collapsed.

"Pong, old man, don't do it," he said feebly. "You've given me a pain in all my ribs. I've got an ache under my waistcoat. Don't say anything more about footer. Give me a chance to recover first."

"But is it fair to put out the ball when I kick it in?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"If it is in the rules, I don't mind," said Pons. "I am sorry, Flynn!"

Flynn rubbed his head.

"It's a pretty gossoon ye are!" he said. "Sure, ye ought to be sent to a home for howlin' idiots intoirely! I've a good mind to mop up the ground wid ye! Kick him off the field, somebody!"

"But, I am going to practise," said Pons.

a ball and the foot, and so it is called football. That is very interesting, is it not?"

Van Ryn chuckled.

"That will do for Jimmy Silver," he remarked. "It won't do for me, Pong, my son. What have you been staggering humanity for in this way?"

"Because I am a duffer," said Pons calmly. "Being a duffer, I cannot be supposed to know anything about football."

And he strolled into the House, leaving Dick Van Ryn looking perplexed.

Pons' adventures on the football-field furnished good food for gaiety to the Rookwood juniors. After dinner Tommy Dodd & Co. came over from the Modern side, and begged Pons to give them a sample.

The obliging Pons gave them a sample, and it made the Modern juniors weep with laughter.

"Do you think I shall soon be fit to play in the Junior Eleven?" asked Pons, when he came off, cheerily.

"Certainly!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "But I'd go for the Senior Eleven, if I were you. Form like yours would be wasted among

juniors. Go to Bulkeley, and ask him for a place in the First Eleven."

"And see what he says!" grinned Tommy Cook.

But whether Charley Pons was a duffer or not, he was not quite duffer enough to take that advice; and he did not ask the captain of Rookwood for a place in the First Eleven.

### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

#### Held to His Word!

**J**IMMY SILVER!"

"Hallo, kid!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

It was the day following Pons wonderful exhibition on the football-ground. Jimmy Silver was in the window-seat at the end of the passage, with his footer list on his knee.

The Bagshot Bounders were coming over for the match on Saturday, and Jimmy, as a dutiful football skipper, was much exercised in his mind. He meant to put into the field the very best team Rookwood could produce from the lower Forms.

Such mighty players as Jimmy himself, Lovell and Raby, Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle were sure of places.

Jimmy had decided upon Flynn, Oswald, and Towle, in addition, and Rawson. Eleventh man was not yet decided upon, the claims of Newcome and Selwyn of the Shell being about equally balanced.

Jimmy would have been glad to play his own chum, but considerations of that kind could not be allowed to count in footer. He was turning it over in his mind when Pons joined him.

"You have not finished making up the team?" asked Pons.

"Just about finished," said Jimmy, smiling. "Got any advice to give me?"

"Yes."

"Go it! It's bound to be valuable."

"Put me in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is my advice," said Pons seriously.

"That's the second time you've worked that joke on me!" remonstrated Jimmy Silver. "It's funny, but think of a new one next time!"

"But I mean it," said Pons. "I wish very much to play for Rookwood on Saturday. I want to help to beat Pankley & Co. when they come here, you know."

"Oh, don't be so comic!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Ask me again another time."

"But I claim a place in the team!"

"You—you which?"

"I claim it!"

"Well, there's no harm in your claiming it," said Jimmy, staring at him. "You won't get it!"

"And you will give it me!"

"Catch me!"

"But your promise?"

"My what?"

"Your promise," said Pons calmly. "Honest Injun, you know!"

Jimmy started.

"What the dickens do you mean? I never in—"

"You told me that I had done you a good turn the afternoon the Bagshot fellows collared you—"

"So you did. But—"

"And that if ever you could do me one, I had only to ask you."

"Ye-es, but—"

"Well, I ask you!" said Pons calmly. Jimmy could only stare at him.

"You said, it was honest Injun," pursued Pons. "I suppose your Injun is honest, Jimmy Silver? You will not break your word?"

Jimmy Silver looked hard at the new junior, Jimmy's expression at that moment was very peculiar, not to say extraordinary.

It was true that he had said it, and he had meant it sincerely when he said it. He meant it still. But, of course, he had not foreseen any demand of this sort.

"You remember?" asked Pons pleasantly.

"I remember," said Jimmy shortly.

"You meant what you said?"

"You know I did."

"Yes," said Pons, with a nod. "I know you did! You are a fellow of your word, Jimmy Silver. You will keep your promise."

"I—I said I'd do you a good turn if you asked me," stammered Jimmy. "I didn't say anything about footer."

"That is the good turn I ask—to put me into the Rookwood Junior Eleven for the Bagshot match."

"Look here—"

"Honest Injun!" grinned Pons.

"I—I never meant—"

"You meant to keep your word?"

THE POPULAR—No. 103.

"Yes, of course. But—"

"Then keep it!"

"You've no right to ask anything of the kind, and you know it!" said Jimmy Silver angrily. "You can't play footer!"

"I think I can."

"You silly ass, all Rookwood has been yelling at the way you play!"

"Perhaps I shall improve by Saturday."

"Oh, you fathead! A footballer can't be made in a couple of days! Why, the fellows would be ready to scalp me if I put you in!"

"I am sorry for that."

"So you see it can't be done?"

"Not at all. It can be done, and I expect you to do it, as you are not a fellow to break your word."

Jimmy set his teeth.

"It's mean of you to keep me to a promise like that, when I wasn't thinking of any thing of this kind!" he said savagely.

"Next time, perhaps, you will think before you promise?" suggested Pons, with a smile.

"But this time you have committed yourself, mon ami. Am I going to play in the Rookwood Eleven on Saturday?"

"No!" said Jimmy Silver desperately.

"You can't! You know you can't! If you weren't a born idiot you wouldn't even think of it!"

"You refuse me what I ask?"

"Yes, confound you!"

Pons shrugged his shoulders.

"I should not have believed it of you if anyone had told me," he said. "I thought you were honourable."

Jimmy Silver sprang to his feet, his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing. Pons eyed him coolly.

"I am willing to fight you, if you wish," he said. "Perhaps you can lick me. But if you lick me it will make no difference. If you do not keep your word you are not honourable."

Jimmy's hands dropped to his sides. He knew it was the truth.

He had made the promise unguardedly, never expecting to be held to it in this way. Pons' demand was preposterous—how preposterous, apparently, the duffer of the Fourth could not realise. But that was the "good turn" he chose to ask for. And unless the captain of the Fourth chose to break his word, his demand had to be granted.

What was to be done?

Jimmy Silver was a slave of his word. It was not fair to hold him to an unguarded pledge in this way. It was taking a mean advantage. But there it was! He could not retract the pledged word.

"Honest Injun, you know!" smiled Pons.

"You rotter!" burst out Jimmy Silver furiously.

"I do not see it. You offered to do me any good turn I asked. I asked you to make me a forward in the Rookwood Eleven on Saturday. That is all."

"All!" said Jimmy bitterly. "You ask me to play a hopeless idiot in one of our hardest matches. Do you call that decent?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I—I can't do it!"

"That is enough!" Pons' lip curled. "You break your word!"

He turned away.

Jimmy Silver stood rooted to the floor for a moment, his breath coming quick, his eyes flashing. But as the new junior went down the passage Jimmy called after him:

"Stop!"

Pons looked back.

"I'll play you if you ask it," said Jimmy. "I think you're a howling cad to ask me, and I despise you. If you choose to hold me to my silly word on those terms, you can do it!"

"Perhaps you will change your opinion of me later," smiled Pons. "At all events, I do hold you to your word!"

"Then your name goes down!" snapped Jimmy. "And now get out of my sight before I jam your head on the floor!"

Pons walked away whistling, leaving the captain of the Fourth in a very unenviable mood.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### The Eleventh Man!

**P**ONG!"

"Rot!"

"It's a joke!"

"That silly ass!"

Incredulous exclamations came from the juniors gathered round the notice-board, where Jimmy Silver had put up the footer list for the Bagshot match.

For the eleventh name on the list—no longer in doubt—was that of Charles Pons, of the Classical Fourth.

The Rookwood juniors could scarcely believe their eyes.

Pons! The fellow who knew as much about footer as he knew about conchology. Pons, the duffer! Pons, the fathead! Pons in the Junjor Eleven for the Bagshot match. Excepting St. Jim's and Greyfriars, Bagshot was the toughest team Jimmy Silver & Co. ever had to meet.

No wonder the fellows started.

"Somebody's shoved that name in for a joke," said Lovell.

"It's Jimmy Silver's fist!"

"Faith, he's off his silly rocket!" said Flynn. "It was to be either Newcome or Selwyn—but Pong!"

"By gad," said Mornington, "that's rippin'! Silver's leavin' me out, and puttin' in that howlin' idiot! Do you fellows call that fair play?"

"I call it a rotten shame!" roared Higgs. "I'm ready to play if there's a man wanted!"

"Same here!" growled Jones minor. "If Silver plays that idiot, I'll resign from the club!"

"Here he is!" exclaimed Townsend. "Let's ask him! It can't be genuine!"

Jimmy Silver looked worried and troubled as the excited juniors surrounded him.

"You're really playing that idiot? asked Newcome.

"Yes."

"Playing that ass against Bagshot?" exclaimed Oswald. "Jimmy, old scout, have you gone off your rocker?"

"What do you want to play him for?" shrieked Higgs. "Why, Tubby Muffin would be a better man!"

"I don't want to play him," grunted Jimmy Silver.

"I've got no choice!"

## LATEST POPULAR BOOKS

EACH A 65.000 WORD NOVEL COMPLETE IN ITS SELF.

On Sale Friday, January 7th.

### DETECTIVE TALES.

#### SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY.

Sexton Blake figures prominently in all the following stories:

**No. 156. THE ROUMANIAN ENVOY.** A thrilling story of romance, intrigue, and detective work, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Zenith the Albino.

**No. 157. A BREACH OF TRUST.** A fascinating tale of a sad Christmas and a happy New Year, moving amidst the lights and shadows of the great City of London. Featuring Sexton Blake and Tinker in a most mysterious case.

**No. 158. THE CASE OF THE UN-DISCHARGED BANKRUPT.** A romantic story of detective work and thrilling adventure, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, John Lawless, and Sam, his black servant.

**No. 159. THE CASE OF THE MILL-OWNER'S SON.** Being a tale of one of Sexton Blake's most fascinating and baffling cases. By the author of "The Vengeance of Three," "By the Terms of the Will," etc., etc.

### SCHOOL, SPORT, & ADVENTURE TALES.

#### BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

**No. 538. CORNISH GRIT.**

Splendid Tale of Mining Adventure.

BY HERBERT MAXWELL.

**No. 539. THE PREFETS OF**

**BOWKER'S HOUSE.**

Superb Yarn of Jack Jackson and his Chums at Wycliffe.

BY JACK NORTH.

**No. 540. FOOTER ON FOREIGN FIELDS.**

Grand Story of a Footer Tour on the Continent.

BY ALAN DENE.

**No. 541. MICK OF THE MOVIES.**

Stirring Story of the Cinema.

BY STANTON HOPE.

PRICE 4d. ACH.

**DON'T HESITATE NOW!**

EVERY NEWSAGENT Sells THEM.

PRICE 4d. EACH.

"Then why—"  
 "I've got no choice!"  
 "What rot! said Mornington. "You're puttin' that imbecile in rather than me?"  
 "Well, I'd rather put him in than you, duffer as he is!" said Jimmy Silver. "He's straight, anyway!"  
 "That's one for you, Morny!" grinned Van Ryn. And Mornington scowled.  
 "But what are you doing it for, Jimmy?" asked Lovell. "I suppose you've got a reason?"  
 "I've got the reason that I can't help it. I'll explain, if you like."  
 "You'd better!" roared Higgs.  
 "Go it, Jimmy!"  
 "Pong chipped in the other day and helped me," said Jimmy. "I told you about it. The Bagshot Bounders collared me, and were going to yank me off to Bagshot and give me a high old time there. Pong handed them, and I got away. I told him, like a silly ass, that I'd do him a good turn if he ever asked me, and—and he asked me to play him on Saturday. That's all."  
 "Well, my hat!"  
 "The cheeky ass!"  
 "I've got to keep my word," said Jimmy. "But he's a rotter to ask such a thing!" exclaimed Oswald indignantly.  
 "I've told him that."  
 "Do you think you've got a right to muck up a footer match for the school because you were ass enough to make a silly promise?" demanded Mornington.  
 Jimmy shook his head.  
 "I don't! You can shut up, Mornington. I'm not talking to you, anyway. But you other fellows have a right to complain—"  
 "I should think we have!" howled Higgs.  
 "I—"  
 "Give me a chance to speak. You've a right to complain, and to ask me to resign the captaincy," said Jimmy. "If the club asks me to do that, I'm ready to do it. Tommy Dodd will captain you, if you choose."  
 "We don't want a Modern worm to captain us!" growled Raby.  
 "We want you, Jimmy!"  
 "Jimmy's the man!"  
 "Well, there it is," said Jimmy Silver. "I've got to keep my word to Pong. If you fellows don't like it, you can turn me out. I sha'n't grumble."  
 "Let's take him at his word," said Mornington at once. "Hands up for turning Jimmy Silver out!"  
 Townsend and Topham put up their hands, and Peele and Gower followed suit, and then Higgs. But no other hand went up, excepting Mornington's own.  
 The dandy of the Fourth looked round with angry disappointment. In spite of Jimmy's really exasperating conduct, he had a strong hold upon his followers, and they stood by him.  
 "Well, what's the verdict?" asked Jimmy quietly.  
 "You're going to captain us, of course," said Lovell, "and—and if it's a promise, as you say, you've got to play Pong. But I'll jolly well talk to him!"  
 "Sure, we'll rag him baldheaded!" howled Flynn.  
 "We'll persuade him to chuck it," said Oswald.  
 "I've tried that," said Jimmy dully.  
 "He's as obstinate as a mule. The silly ass thinks he can play footer."  
 "Oh, the silly duffer!"  
 "So you see how it stands," said Jimmy. "If I'm captain, he's got to play. I'm ready to take the order of the boot if the club chooses."  
 But it was evident that the club members did not choose, exasperated as they were. Pong's name remained written in the footer list. He was booked to play for Rookwood.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**  
**Something Like a Surprise!**

**W**HEN Saturday came round Jimmy Silver ventured upon a last remonstrance with Pons. The juniors came out after dinner, Pons with them, in smiling good-humour.  
 "Pong, old chap," said Jimmy, "I know you don't mean to be a rotter, and you don't mean any harm. But you're doing a lot. Will you stand out of the team to-day?"  
 "But I am going to play a great game for Rookwood," said Pons innocently.  
 Jimmy tried to be patient.  
 "You can't play," he said. "Do be a good chap, and stand out!"  
 "I have played very much in Canada—"  
 "Pong, you can't help being a duffer. Will you stand out?"  
 "No."

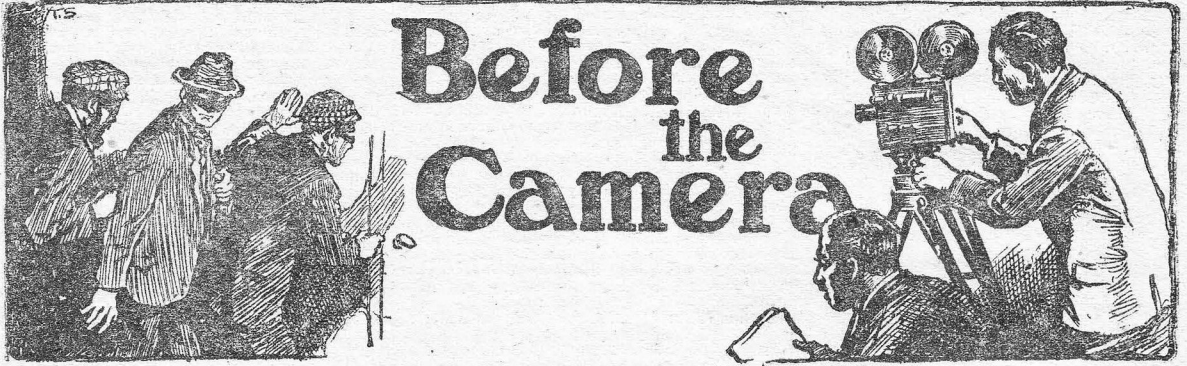
And Jimmy Silver snorted, and gave it up.  
 When the junior eleven went down to the ground Pong went with them, in all the glory of the Rookwood colours. He did not seem to mind the black looks of the rest of the team. All the Fourth, and nearly all the rest of the Lower School, thronged round the field to watch.  
 Pong as a footballer would certainly be worth watching. A licking for Rookwood was inevitable. The two teams were about equally matched otherwise, but with such a passenger as Pong, Jimmy Silver & Co. could hardly hope to keep their end up against Bagshot. Jimmy was paying dear for his rash promise.  
 "What will you bet on the game?" Mornington remarked to his chums. "I think it will be three or four to nil for Bagshot—at least. I can't say I'm sorry. It serves Jimmy Silver right for leavin' a good man out!"  
 "Hear, hear!" said the Nuts cordially.  
 But the other fellows were not sharing Mornington & Co.'s views. They expected to see Rookwood beaten, but they did not like the prospect.  
 When Pankley & Co. arrived from Bagshot they looked oddly enough at Pong, finding that cheery youth on the field with the team.  
 "Rags" between the rivals were suspended on the occasions of the matches, and the Bagshot Bounders were received very cheerily.  
 "Is that chap in your team, Silver?" asked Pankley.  
 "Yes. Inside-right," said Jimmy curtly.  
 "Ye gods!" said Pankley.  
 Jobson of the Fifth, the referee, came on the field. The kick-off fell to Jimmy Silver. The Rookwood front line was composed of Oswald, Lovell, Tommy Dodd, Pons, and Cook. Jimmy himself played centre-half. Pons lined up with the team in a business-like way. He asked Tommy Dodd politely whether he should kick off, to which Tommy replied with equal politeness—"Idiot!"  
 The ball rolled, and the game began, watched by a bigger crowd than usually assembled to see a junior match. Pong was the centre of interest. Every fellow felt that Pong was worth watching, and they were right.  
 "On the ball!"  
 "Play up, Rookwood!"  
 But it was Bagshot that began the attack hotly. Pankley & Co. got through almost from the whistle, and bore down upon Flynn in goal. The Bagshot Bounders were evidently in great form.  
 Rookwood meant to do their level best, hoping against hope; but perhaps the knowledge that they had a hopeless duffer in their ranks had its effect upon them.  
 Certainly Pankley & Co. seemed to be sweeping all before them at first. But the defence was sound. Flynn, in goal, fisted out the ball twice, and then the backs succeeded in clearing. Cook trapped the ball, and sped it away, but Cook was charged over, and the inside-right was the only man who had a chance left at it. And inside-right was Pong!  
 What happened next made the Rookwooders rub their eyes.  
 Inside-right was on the ball in the twinkling of an eye. He eluded the Bagshot forwards, he drove through the halves, and he wound round the backs before they knew what was happening. Jimmy's front line was almost nowhere—there was nobody to take a pass, but there was only the Bagshot goalie to beat, and Pons was upon him before he realised the danger.  
 Whiz!  
 "My hat!" ejaculated the goalie.  
 Rookwood gasped.  
 "Goal!"  
 Like fellows in a dream, they repeated:  
 "Goal!"  
 "Goal!" said Mornington, rubbing his eyes.  
 "Pong! Goal! Goal! Pong! Is this a giddy dream?"  
 "Goal!" gasped Jimmy Silver.  
 "Goal!" stuttered Lovell.  
 Pons stood smiling at the astonished goalkeeper.  
 The Bagshot goalie tossed out the ball.  
 "Are we asleep, and dreaming this?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.  
 "I think we must be," said Lovell dazedly. "That howling idiot's taken a goal—all on his own, too!"  
 "Line up!"  
 Jimmy Silver was astounded. He looked at Pons, and Pons nodded and smiled. Was it an amazing and extraordinary fluke? If it wasn't, what was it? Van Ryn, among the spectators, was grinning hugely. Perhaps he had been prepared for that little surprise.  
 Bagshot did not grip at Pong any longer. Rookwood might regard him as a duffer, if they chose, but Pankley & Co. knew when

they had a dangerous opponent to deal with, and they gave Pong the compliment of their very marked attention after that goal.  
 The game went on, hard and fast. There came no more goals "on his own" to Pong; a chance like that was not likely to be repeated. But he was "there" all the time, and his passing was, as Jimmy said afterwards, a dream.  
 Pong was always just where he was wanted, and just where the enemy didn't want him. And when Tommy Dodd very nearly scored just before the interval, it was from a pass from Pong. But the goal did not materialise, and Jobson blew the whistle, with the score unaltered—one up for Rookwood.  
 Jimmy Silver was glad the interval had come. He wanted to speak to Pong. He rushed up to the Canadian junior, grasped him by the shoulder, and shook him.  
 "You spoofing bounder!" he roared.  
 Pons grinned.  
 "What did you tell us you couldn't play footer for?" yelled Lovell.  
 "But I did not. I told you I could play," said Pons innocently. "It was you fellows who said that I couldn't."  
 "But—but—but you—"  
 "You were spoofing us, you image!"  
 Pons nodded coolly.  
 "Exactly! As you had made up your minds that I was a duffer, I thought I would play up. It was amusing!"  
 "You—you cheeky ass!"  
 "If I could not have played I should not have claimed a place in the team," said Pons cheerfully. "But I did it, because I was in good form. Perhaps another time you will not think a fellow a duffer so quickly, when it is you who are the duffers all the time!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Van Ryn. "Who's the duffer, Jimmy Silver?"  
 "So you knew, you Dutch bounder?" exclaimed Jimmy.  
 "Oh, yes, I knew Pons was pulling your leg!" grinned the South African junior. "I knew he could play. And if ever a lot of duffers deserved to have their leg pulled, you did."  
 Jimmy burst into a laugh.  
 "It's a fair catch!" he said. "It serves us right! And I'm jolly glad you were spoofing, Pong, you bounder—it's turned out all right for us. This looks like a win for Rookwood!"  
 "Time!" said Lovell.  
 The footballers lined up for the second half. Rookwood were in great spirits now. They were one goal up, and their new recruit was a player equal to the best in the team; they realised that now. Round the ground there were loud cheers for Pong, even Mornington & Co. joining in. The Rookwood fellows had come to watch Pong, and truly, they found him worth watching, though not in the way they had supposed.  
 The second half was a prolonged tussle, with plenty of good play on both sides. It was within a quarter of an hour of time when Pankley at last succeeded in putting the ball in. But from that moment the Rookwood attack was hot and strong, and the Bagshot team had hard work to defend. And when, right at the finish, the Rookwood forwards came on to goal, Pons was well to the fore, and it was a centre from Pons that was turned into a goal by Tommy Dodd—a shot right into the net that elicited a roar from the delighted spectators.  
 "Goal!"  
 "Good old Tommy!"  
 "Bravo, Pong!"  
 The whistle went.  
 "Well, my only hat!" said Pankley, as they came off the field. "I took that chap for a duffer; and, by gum, it was his game from start to finish!"  
 "Your goal, Pong, you spoofing bounder!" said Tommy Dodd, clapping the Canadian on the shoulder. "Where did you pick up footer, you spoofer?"  
 "I have played in Canada," grinned Pons. "In Canada I learned to distinguish a goal from a goal-post!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Good old Pong!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "You've given me a high old time this week. But I forgive you! Shoulder-high, you fellows!"  
 "Hurray!"  
 And Pong of the Fourth came off the football-field in triumph, on the shoulders of his comrades.

THE END.

(You must not miss the long complete school tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week, entitled: "Mr. Mander's Guests!" by Owen Conquest.)

THE EVER-THRILLING LIFE STORY OF FAMOUS EDDIE POLO!



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 management 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.

During the working of a certain film Bobbin attempts to kill the young actor, but Eddie saves himself from a terrible death by his quick action.

Eddie becomes deputy-sheriff, and tells a bookkeeper that a lad named Hymans is not to gamble. Hymans is amazed when he is told.

(Now go on with the story.)

## A Gambler Frustrated!

**W**HAT in the world are you talking about?" demanded Hymans. "Why can't I gamble in your saloon?"

"Cos yew guardian angel says not," was the barkeeper's answer.

"My guardian angel!" echoed the lad, puzzled. "And who might he be, I'd like to know?"

"Waal, it ain't no difficult matter ter tell yew," said the man. "He blew in 'ere this afternoon, an' tole me, first, as 'e was the deputy-sheriff, and, second, as yew weren't ter be permitted ter gamble in this place. An' 'is name's Polo—Eddie Polo—the youngster as did them tricks with a gun up at the Golden Hope the other night, and who's lately been roped in by Old Man Bludsoe as deputy."

"Hang Eddie Polo!" snapped the lad.

"Just my words, though 'e 'ad 'is 'and on ther butt of 'is gun at ther time, and I didn't let 'im 'ear me think 'em," replied the barkeeper.

Red Crowther sprang to his feet.

"'Ere," he said, "Hymans plays poker 'ere ter-night, or I'll know the reason why! This conarded sheriff 'is gettin' too uppish fer my likin', an' if 'e or his new deputy comes a totin' their noses inter my affairs, they'll get a lead pill ter cure 'em! Hymans, stack ther deck an' deal! We plays, Polo or no Polo!"

"You do not!" cut in a crisp voice from immediately behind Red Crowther.

The big gangster flinched at the feel of the hard muzzle of a revolver pressing against his spine, but involuntarily his hand dropped to the butt of his own gun.

"I shouldn't," went on the voice. "Because by the time you get that weapon clear of your holster your backbone will be in several small and far from pretty pieces. The best place for your hands—and the safest for both yourself and me—is right above your head. That's right! Sheriff, just keep an eye on these other gentlemen while I talk to Mr. Crowther and Mr. Hymans."

Eddie Polo, for the newcomer was none other, never moved the muzzle of the gun in his left hand from Crowther's spine till

THE POPULAR—No. 103.

he had placed the muzzle of that in his right hand immediately above the gambler's heart. It was just as well, he knew, to take no chances with men of this type.

"Make yourself comfortable, Crowther," said the lad. "I've got much to say to you. And when I've finished with him, Hymans, I'll waive the formality of introduction and tell you things in private for the good of your soul and the benefit of your health."

He winked at the sheriff and at the crowd which had gathered.

"Look here, Crowther," said Eddie. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I'm surprised at a great big gambler like you trying to take money from school children. Why don't you play poker with men for a change? Surely you aren't afraid of losing a few chips now and then, or are you one of those rotten sports who want to win all the time?"

The gambler stared open-mouthed at Polo. "Ere!" he snarled. "Wot's ther game? Air yew figgerin' ter roast me, or what? I ain't no piker as plays w' school-kids—I wants reel meat under my axe when it drops, believe me!"

"I'd like to be able to believe you!" retorted Eddie. "But the evidence is all the other way. You see, Hymans isn't worth a lot—all he's got is his wages from the bank, and he's got to keep a mother out of that, so he can't have much left for worth-while play, can he?"

Though Eddie Polo's tone was quite conversational, he never shifted, by so much as half an inch, that menacing pistol-muzzle, nor did he allow Red Crowther to pull down his hands. His eyes were hard, belying the soft tones of his voice, and their menace frightened Red far more than the hard ring of the gun-muzzle sticking into his flesh through his shirt. But suddenly Eddie withdrew the pistol from its pressure.

"Put your hands down, Red," he said. "But keep them off your guns if you'd be comfortable. All right, sheriff, you just tote Hymans outside—no, I'll do it myself. Say, Red, if you want a real man's sized game of poker just hold this seat for me, I'll be back one-time, as soon as I've set this youngster on the way home."

In point of years there wasn't much to pick between Eddie Polo and James Hymans, but as they walked out of the saloon, Eddie's hand on his shoulder pushing the other along willy-nilly, the difference in their physique was most marked. The hard life of the circus and the exercise on the trapeze, combined with the arduous work of the cinema stage, had braced the former till his back was as straight and flat as a board, and his shoulders suggested huge power. That his arms were strong and tenacious Hymans proved in the first minute, when, as he tried to twist and writhe out of their grip, Eddie's hands tightened till the fingers bit into Hymans' shoulders, and forced from him a weak cry of pain as he desisted.

"Well, youngster, this is where you say farewell to the saloon for ever," remarked Eddie, when they stood on the road. "The air of this place isn't good for the lungs of growing boys, especially when these boys have mothers at home worrying about their worthless ways. And don't think that I don't mean it—I'm going to put the fear of the law into these people inside, and if ever I catch you in this place again—well, the Lord have mercy on your hide, for I'll

have none. Now, toddle off home, and don't hang about any longer!"

Hymans walked forward two steps, and then turned and glared at Eddie.

"Just because you're big and strong," he snarled, "you think you can make me do just as you want me to do. But you're wrong; you may keep me away from the saloon, but you can't stop me gambling in other places. I'll gamble in my own bedroom if I want to!"

Eddie shrugged his shoulders.

"That's your own funeral, of course," he admitted. "But, if I may advise, I'd say 'Do all your gambling with your own money, and don't have sticky fingers at your job, or you may find yourself passing up the railroad to Sing-Sing or some other summer resort, where there are neither pastebards nor saloons! No, don't press me for explanations—I've an appointment in the saloon with your friend Red Crowther, and I hate to keep a gentleman waiting. Good-night! Don't forget the little hint I've dropped!"

He turned on his heel and strode into the saloon, halting at the door to smile at the still glaring Hymans. The latter turned and shambled off down the road, utterly humiliated, and burning to be avenged on this officious young man who interfered with his mode of spending his leisure hours.

Eddie found an expectant crowd gathered around the table, where sat Red Crowther and a couple of his intimate cronies, a brand-new, unopened pack of cards on the board, waiting for him to tear off the wrapper. The lad, with a confident grin, took his seat, and, drawing his gun, twirled the cylinders to make sure it was fully loaded. Then he laid it on the table beside him.

"Get out the boards, Red," he said. "And the roof's off the limit, remember. Another thing you might bear in mind is that I don't intend to ask questions about anything, but when I suspicion dirty work I'm going to let this little chap talk for me!"

He touched his Colt as he spoke. Crowther gave the lad a glance, shifted his gaze to where Sheriff Bludsoe stood where he could watch the whole crowd—including Crowther's fellow-rustlers mixed with it—and then dropped his eyes to the gun. The next second his own pistol had followed Eddie's to the table, and he had ripped the wrapper from the cards.

They cut for deal, and Eddie got a handful of wastepaper, which he promptly discarded, making Crowther richer by ten dollars. But the next hand the ten dollars plus twenty more crossed the table again.

There was hardly a sound save the deep breathing of the watchers and the shuffle of a boot as somebody shifted his position during the ten minutes that followed—ten minutes during which Red Crowther played absolutely fair and straight poker for the first time for a very long while—ten minutes during which the pile of coins and notes at the rustler's elbow grew steadily smaller and smaller, and the pile at Eddie's side increased steadily in value.

Not a word was exchanged between the players, save such as the game demanded, and Crowther was down to his last gasp when, after Eddie had dealt, he suddenly sat back on the packing-case that served him as a stool, a huge grin on his face.

"Will any gent stake me a few hundred dollars?" he asked; and Eddie saw a mean-

ing wink pass between Red Crowther and Salmon, another of the gangsters. Therefore the lad wasn't surprised when Salmon came forward and stripped the required amount from a wad of notes, grinning jubilantly at Polo as he did so.

"That's my stake, Mr. Fourflusher!" said Crowther, with a sneer. "What're you going to do about it?"

"Cover it, of course," said Eddie. "And raise you another five hundred. Maybe Mr. Salmon will oblige you still further!"

Mr. Salmon, however, required a look at Crowther's cards before risking any further cash, but after he had seen them he placed his whole roll in Crowther's hands.

"Halves in the winnings is all I want," he said; and Red nodded happily in agreement.

For five minutes the play continued, both men with their cards flat on the table. Crowther leaned forward as he placed his last batch of notes on the table.

"That yew air," he snarled. "And I'll see yer!"

"I think not," said Eddie calmly, as he shoved the remainder of his money into the pool. "I'll have a look at your hand first!"

Crowther grinned, and laid his cards face upwards on the table. And a gasp of astonishment went round the whole circle as everybody saw that he held four aces—a hand that cannot be beaten in poker.

Crowther's hands were grasping the notes and coin in the pool, a triumphant grin on his face, when, quite suddenly, without rising in his seat, Eddie Polo grabbed his gun and shoved it against Crowther's teeth.

"Not so fast, my friend!" said the lad. "I've played a lot of poker in my time, and in a few queer places. But I've never seen anywhere, at any time, a pack of cards that contains five aces. Look at this!"

With his free hand he tapped one of the cards he had himself laid on the table. Crowther's eyes fell on it, and he turned a sickly green as he saw lying there the ace of diamonds—twin card to one of those he had himself exposed!

There was a swift hissing intake of breath from the surrounding crowd as they saw the fifth ace in Eddie Polo's hand. Then the voice of Sheriff Bludsoe cut into the silence like a knife.

"No monkey-tricks from anybody," said the old man, the click of his gun-hammers accompanying his words. "I saw Crowther pull that fifth ace—the ace of diamonds—out of his boot, and I see as he deserves all that's a-comin' ter him. So no interferin' atween the lad an' him. Let 'em settle it atween themselves."

Salmon looked up at the old man, and found, as if by accident, that the muzzle of a hefty revolver was trained on his heart. Therefore he rapidly altered his ideas about pulling a gun and butting in, as Eddie, rising to his full height, with the gun still thrust into Crowther's face, motioned the cheat to sit back on the packing-case he was using for a seat. The remainder of the crowd surged forward a little the better to see what was happening.

"It's lucky for you, Mr. Red Crowther," said Eddie slowly and pleasantly, "that I'm a sworn deputy-sheriff, even if only a temporary one, or I should let these men serve out to you the punishment that is usually handed to those caught cheating at cards—a tall tree and a stout rope—lynching, I believe you'd call it. And I dare say they'd do it readily enough. But, in the interests of justice, I'm going to guarantee you your safety on one condition—that you never touch a card again in this village, either with young Hymans or any other fool that exposes himself to your antics. Well, is that a go?"

"It is, darn yew!" snarled the cornered man. "But I'll be even with yew fer this, mind that, and I won't wait long fer their chance, either!"

"That's a thing that remains to be proved," said Polo, sitting back. "In the meantime, pick up your hat—no, leave your gun there; young Hymans might like to tote it around as a memento of his association with you—and get, quickly, before I repent of being lenient to you."

The man raised himself with another malevolent look, and, striding across the floor, disappeared through the door, which he banged behind himself in an access of impotent rage. Eddie made a sign to the sheriff, and that worthy reluctantly stowed away his artillery, grieved because he hadn't had even a chance of ridding the place of a few of the rustlers who formed Red Crowther's gang. Who they were was plainly evidenced during the next few minutes when,

having cast evil looks upon the sheriff and the temporary deputy-sheriff, they slunk, one after the other, out of the saloon, leaving the decent citizens in a crowd congratulating Eddie Polo on his smart handling of the rustler.

"That's all right, gentlemen," said Eddie, half shyly. "I just happen to have a keen pair of eyes, that's all. Besides, I myself cheated—cheated in serving Crowther out with those three aces on purpose, so that he could work in the card I knew he was keeping somewhere in reserve. Well, I've won a huge pot of money, Mr. Bludsoe, and I vote that we go and call on Mr. Starmer and then on Mrs. Hymans and distribute the wealth where it will do most good. Gentlemen," continued the lad, silencing a cheer with an upflung hand, "I want you to show your appreciation of this night's work in a tangible form. I want you to promise me that, in the future, whenever you see gullible youngsters like Hymans falling into the clutches of rustlers like Crowther you'll just step in with a few kindly words of warning to the rustler, and not waste time and breath by trying to offer advice to the pigeon that's

cinema matters, most of which were Greek to the non-technical sheriff.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Hymans!" said Eddie. "Jim at home?"

"Yes, and in bed; been there a long time," said the grey-haired, sweet-faced lady, with whom Stella had at once fallen in love. "He came home very dejected an hour ago, and wen straight to his room. I'll call him if you want him."

"No, don't trouble," replied Eddie, politely. "I've just called to hand you some money that belongs to your son—his very own. I believe he asked Mr. Crowther to look after it for him, but Crowther's had to leave the district unexpectedly and hurriedly, and hadn't time to bring it down himself. I believe your son was saving it up to make you a surprise present, so I'm only anticipating matters a little by handing it over to you now. And we—Jim and I, that is—want you to keep and use it for yourself, because every cent of it belongs to you now—a gift from your son Jim. And that isn't all my good news, either. Mr. Starmer, who is a close friend of mine, tells me he's raising Jim's salary ten dollars a week, and the



As Eddie swept under an overhanging branch he gave a quick jump upwards into the foliage out of the saddle. The horse cantered on and drew up near the waiting man. (See page 16.)

being plucked. Such advice usually puts up his back and drives him the more into the company of the hawks, whereas the feel of a gun muzzle and a straight warning makes the hawks wary. That's all; come on, sheriff!"

And, amidst a storm of cheering, the lad walked out of the saloon, the sheriff at his heels, straight into the arms of Stella Cleaver and Dick Fordyce.

Sheriff Bludsoe regaled this latter pair with a full account of Eddie's latest exploit as they walked down the path to Starmer's house. Here Eddie disappeared and got rid of quite a quantity of the notes, having prevailed upon Starmer to say nothing to Hymans about his debts having been repaid, and to keep the lad employed at the bank, instead of dismissing him, as the banker had intended to do.

"Sheriff, you'll have to buy me a new hat—preferably an elastic one," said Polo, as he came out again. "Or, if you sing my praises much longer, my head will swell so much that this present topper will pinch all round. Forget it, there's a good chap! How far did you say it was to Three Elms?"

Deftly he turned the conversation, and by the time they arrived at Widow Hymans' abode the quartette were discussing such things as crops, and working days, and the effect of light upon the eyes, and other

barkeeper at the saloon says that Jim's signed the pledge, and booked a front seat on the water-wagon, because he wants to spend his evenings home with you. You might tell Jim when he wakes up that I've told you all about it. Say Eddie Polo called and told you. You'll not forget the name, will you—Eddie Polo."

The old lady regarded the young man with a queer look for a moment, and then stepped forward, tears in her eyes. Eddie retreated, pushing Stella in front of him.

"Hold her, Stella," he gasped, "while I make a getaway. I do believe the old lady intends to sprinkle me with kisses—a most distressing and depressing manner of saying 'Thank you!' Come on, sheriff, let's leave these young people to the waterworks exhibition."

He slipped out of the door as he spoke, and he and the sheriff stood and chuckled together as they waited for Stella and Dick. But neither Polo nor Bludsoe might have been so comfortable in mind had they known that at a frame window, some ten yards away, James Hymans was taking aim at them with a hefty revolver, and attempting to screw his courage up to the sticking point to press the trigger. But he never reached that point, and when, in due course, Stella and Dick made up the party once more, the four moved off to their various places of abode,

Dick demanding details at first hand of Eddie's hold-up of the infamous rustler. And Eddie eventually dropped off to sleep talking to his friend, leaving Fordyce more than a little exasperated because the story had then only reached the end of the first instalment.

**Roped In!**

**L**OCATION to-day, Eddie," said Dick, as the two chums made a bounteous breakfast next morning. "There's the last two scenes of the 'Western Union Hero' play to shoot, and old man Morrison's just keen on getting us through with it, so that we can rest up a few days. Come on! Don't struggle with that egg all day, my lad, or you'll be suffocated!"

Polo laughed light-heartedly, and grabbed his hat. The next minute they were in the saddle, riding out to location for the filming of the picture upon which they were engaged, other adventures which befell them being mere sidelines. One by one the rest of the company appeared, and the film worked merrily to a climax, Terence, the camera fiend, and his cheery assistant Miles turning their handles with great gusto, and every now and then stopping to exchange glances and chuckles of suppressed merriment, which, seeing that the scenes they were filming were deadly serious, required a little explanation.

"You two camera guys seem to have struck a pay reef of humour!" called Morrison. "Surely you're not planning to play me for a sucker, and to do me down for a month's holiday on full pay, or something of that sort, are you?"

"Not quite, boss," said Terence. "The way we figger it out, you'll have the surprise of your life presently—and it'll be a good surprise, too. But, as things are, there's just a chance that the surprise might be spoiled; so, though Miles and me finds the idea pretty hum-erous, you'll forgive us if we don't let you all in on the joke—at least, not yet awhile. I'll stake you to the big laugh the very first minute, but neither me nor Miles will be responsible for paying the doctor's bills if your sides ache and your ribs bust with laughing at it, that's all. Camera!"

At the shout, Eddie Polo, mounted on the big roan horse, rode in like a streak of lightning, and wrenched Stella out of still another awkward situation, while the camera handles clicked merrily in a most subdued tone that could scarcely be heard, and would certainly not be noticed by those accustomed thereto. But the sound seemed to breed that infectious laugh on Terence's and Miles' faces again, and they laughed outright as Eddie performed his thrilling stunt.

Eddie said nothing, and presently, after consulting his watch carefully, Terence begged permission to leave the location with his camera, Miles carrying on. It may, or it may not, have had anything to do with Terence's absence, but about half an hour afterwards a dishevelled and obviously excited lad dashed up on a dilapidated white horse, and demanded to speak to Eddie Polo, "the deppity-sheriff."

Eddie proclaimed himself, and the company fell back out of earshot, all except Miles, who kept on turning the camera handle as if the thing had been rehearsed. He certainly got some fine pictures of Eddie Polo talking to the lad.

"Say, if yew're Eddie Polo, yew're wanted real bad back in Alkali Springs, I guess," said the newcomer. "Sheriff Bludsoe said I was ter tell yew as Red Crowther's back in town, that he's 'eld up an' robbed ther bank this mornin', as ever wus, and as he's now a-layin' fer yer outside the Golden Hope Saloon with a gun in each fist, an' 'is gang a-keepin' watch fer yew at each end of Main Street. Sheriff ses if yew wants ter keep yewr hide free of 'oles, yew're ter beat it ter the prairie right away, 'cos 'e's lyin' low till Crowther and the rustlers is gone."

Eddie Polo's brows came close together in thought. His keen eyes seemed to burn right through those of the messenger, as if trying to sense the information behind this message. He realised that it was quite possible that Red Crowther and his gang would be "laying for" him, and that robbing a bank would be all in their day's work. He wondered for a second if Hymans or Starmer had been hurt, and weighed the value of the sheriff's advice to keep clear of Alkali Springs for the present. Then he made up his mind swiftly.

He turned to where Mr. Morrison stood, watching the little scene.

"I say, boss," said Polo, "I seem to be wanted badly in that town. The bank's been robbed, and Red Crowther, the card-sharp, is waiting for me with a battery of pocket artillery and scouts thrown out in force. Somehow I feel that this rustler hasn't learned his lesson yet. Have you any objection to me knocking off work now and paying the man a visit?"

"None at all; in fact, we're practically through, except for a few finishing touches, and we can do without you for them," said Morrison. "Wait, though; you'd better make the final close-up with Stella here on your horse's back and in your arms before you go, and then it won't matter if you do get pumped full of lead—at least, not so much, anyhow."

Eddie smiled at the left-handed compliment, and then posed for the final "shooting." He had his work cut out to keep from smiling as he kissed Stella long and lingeringly for the final pictures of the film. Then he set her gently aside.

"Keep a hand on that boy, boss," said Eddie, as he wheeled round his horse. "I don't want any heralds running back to Alkali Springs to tell Crowther I'm coming. The welcome may be too warm if he expects me, and I aim to call when he isn't quite ready to receive me. So-long, everybody!"

And, with a cheery wave of his hand, the lad cantered off. And he didn't see that Miles, the camera fiend, after a second's conversation with Morrison, jumped into one of the company's small cars, and sped after the acrobat, his camera handle clicking the whole time.

Eddie approached the township with infinite caution, and the way he took cover among the sparse trees was an education in scouting. Then suddenly, as he swept underneath an overhanging branch, he gave a quick jump upwards into the foliage out of the saddle. The horse cantered on for a second, drew a shot from the revolver of a man who had walked out suddenly into the open, and, true to its oats, turned round and cantered back to the place where it was stabled. And at the same time Miles dismissed the light car, and, carrying his camera, took cover himself on foot.

Eddie stayed aloft in his tree for a full ten minutes, and then, dropping to the ground, divested himself of his coat. He drew his gun, twirled the cylinder to see that it was fully loaded, and replaced it. Then, like a shadow, he began to worm his way towards the town.

By dint of skirting the end of an out-lying lane he managed to reach the sheriff's house, and, peering through the window, saw the old man lying, gagged and bound, upon a long stool in the centre of his own living room. It was an easy matter for a trained acrobat to pull himself to the window-sill and to burst open the window, and a minute later the sheriff himself was verifying the message the boy had brought. Even as he concluded his tale a fusillade of shots rang out.

"That's Crowther's gang shooting at the peaceful citizens," explained the old man. "They've been at it all the morning. They arrived in town—twenty of 'em—this morning just about the time the bank was opening, and after they'd tied me up they held up the bank. They brought their spoils to this house for counting, and they left 'em in that black box you'll find under the table, ready to divide later on. Some of 'em was for hitting the trail into the sage right away, but Red Crowther wouldn't hear of it. He said he'd get you if he had to lay for you all day, and to stop anybody getting out to you and giving you the office not to come to town he posted his men at each end of the town. I got Johnny Ludlow—that's the lad you saw—to fake a chance on getting word through to you—and here it now, deputy? What're you going to do about it now, deputy?"

"Seems a pretty tough proposition, sheriff," said Eddie. "First of all, though, I think we'll take charge of these notes and hide 'em elsewhere. Then we'll borrow a couple of your guns, and do a bit of thinking. No, don't follow me—I'm going out the same way as I came in. In about ten minutes' time wriggle out of the window yourself—if you aren't too fat—and gather a few citizens where they can help you best. Leave Crowther to me; I'll do my best to get him. And once he's out of the way—either shot up or captured—I don't think the others will show much fight. And as Red is laying for me, he's my meat. So-long! See you presently, and help you to make the arrests in proper form."

And with a wave of his hand Eddie Polo clambered back through the window he had entered by, and, keeping carefully under the lee of the backs of the houses, stole towards where the Golden Hope Saloon stood a little isolated from its neighbours.

As he approached, very carefully, an outhouse, the door was opened a few inches, and then hastily closed again. Eddie's hand flew to his gun, and with a swift urge he crashed his shoulder against the flimsy door. It went back on his hinges with a swing, and Eddie found the scared face of the barkeeper looking into the muzzle of his hefty gun.

"Put 'em up," said the lad. "And be mighty quick about it. That's better. Now we can talk. First of all, are you in league with Crowther, or on my side against him?"

"Seeing that the doggoned cuss has lifted my takings for a week, I'm all for stringing him as high as the topmost branch of any tree hereabouts!" retorted the barkeeper, with a scowl. "He ain't no friend of mine, and never has been!"

"That's just as well," said Eddie, "'cos I'm planning to drop in to tea and a chat with him, and I shouldn't like to spoil the pleasantness of the surprise by anybody's tongue wagging. Now, just where is Crowther?"

"He's setting on the veranda of the saloon, where he can look at both ends of the main street at once," said the other.

"He's got his two best guns loaded to the breeches, and a couple o' bottles of my best whisky on the table alongside him jest so's he sha'n't find the waiting for you monotonous like. And, meantime, he's amusing himself with taking potshots at every face and nose that shows itself outside a door in this township, and he ain't making bad aiming, neither, sence Black Dave Morrow and Ted Currin is both a-waiting fer the crowner's inquest through his bullets now."

"That sort of thing is dangerous," said Polo. "But whisky and guns never did run well together in double harness. Now, then, Mr. Barkeeper, what you've got to do is to keep guard over these boots of mine till I come back for them, and if it should be that Red Crowther gets me before I get him—well, keep 'em in your family as a memento of me. That's all—keep the door shut and your ears open. Sorry I can't give you a pass to the show that's just going to open."

He carefully reconnoitred the country before issuing from the outhouse, and then, with a quick, short run, his stocking feet making no noise on the hard earth, ran towards where a rainpipe depended from the side of the house. Nobody saw him, as far as he knew, as he started to swing himself, hand-over-hand, up this frail support, which threatened every second to collapse and send him crashing to the ground below. It seemed to the lad that death grinned at him a hundred times before his fingers grasped the guttering beneath the eaves of the saloon, and even as he swung between earth and heaven he felt this frail substance trembling under the weight of his body.

He had time to think whether there might be a man with a gun on the roof wait-

**MARZIPAN of the JAPES**



The comical antics and practical jokes of Marzipan, the almost human ape, will keep you in roars of laughter. Read the grand complete tale of this great new comic character in Tuesday's

**GREYFRIARS BOYS' HERALD**

The Schoolboy Weekly Price 11d.



ing for him; he realised that he must either draw himself up on the instant to the safety of the stronger structure or go crashing, with the guttering, into the courtyard below. But luck was on his side; that portion of the peaked roof, at any rate, was free of humans other than himself. Eddie now thanked his good sense for prompting him to take off his shoes, for had he still worn them he could never have accomplished that nerve-racking climb up the side of the roof to the apex.

And, reaching the apex, he was compelled to crouch low and pray that he hadn't been spotted, for, in plain view, coming up the street was one of Red Crowther's band, apparently carrying a message to his chief.

Eddie's eyes appeared over the edge of the ridgepole of the roof as he watched the newcomer stride up the street, and halt immediately opposite himself, but, of course, on the other side. He heard words passing from the street to the veranda, and then Crowther's voice, quite close at hand.

"So ther young cub's left ther party, has 'e?" asked the leader. "Waal, when Polo strolls inter this main street he'll get ther surprise of 'is young life, and tbet life won't last long afterwards fer 'im ter enjoy ther surprise. Mind, nobody's ter shoot at 'im—my gun's got a special set o' bullets in its chambers, all marked with Eddie Polo's name. I'll larn 'im ter interfere with Red Crowther when I'm persooin' me lorful occasions. Off yew go back ter yewr station, Martin, and keep yewr lamps skinned fer ther young cuckoo."

Eddie ducked sharply, so that only his dirt-stained finger-tips were visible, and the man Martin wheeled on his heel and strode off again. Then, as soon as the street was clear, the lad drew himself over the ridge of the roof, and started to lower himself down the other side, intending to stop at the eave, draw his gun, and hold up the blood-thirsty Crowther.

"Seems to love me that chap," smiled Eddie to himself. "But I rather think the surprise will be from the other direction, and

that those bullets with my name on will never be more than souvenirs to me. Crumbs, what the—"

A slate gave way under his fingers; he made an ineffectual grab at the hole in the roof as he found himself sliding, and then, with a rush of air in his ears and a queer thudding of his heart, Eddie Polo's body gathered speed and slid helplessly down the sloping roof. Onwards he plunged—and then, with a yelp of dismay, he reached the edge, fell over it, and dropped sprawlingly, helpless, clean on to the shoulders of Red Crowther, where that worthy was seated at a table.

Crowther emitted an oath, and tried to rise to his feet, but Eddie's well-developed body was somewhat more than a feather-weight, and the man went crashing to the earth. He strove to reach his gun, lying on the table, to shoot up this stranger who dropped, as it were, from the clouds upon him; but Eddie, realising swiftly that the surprise had been even more complete than he anticipated, wound his legs round the man's body, and prevented him using his arms. At the same time, bending his own back almost double, Eddie put the stranglehold on the man with one arm and drew his own gun.

"You monkey, yew—" began Crowther. Then he was suddenly gagged by the unmistakable muzzle of a hefty gun.

"That's all that's coming from you, Red Crowther!" snarled Eddie, as he applied pressure with his other arm. "There's six bullets in this gun, all marked with your name, and if you don't want to collect them without delay, you'll just lie flat on your back quietly till I relieve you of any artillery in your belt. Then we'll talk a bit!"

Crowther goggled at the sound of the voice, and, relaxing his hold, spread himself flat on the veranda, his arms outstretched. Eddie stepped back, the gun directed full in the desperado's face, a twinkling smile in his own eyes.

"Some surprise, eh?" he said. "Though

not exactly as you'd planned it, Red, I'm afraid. It was a cute wheeze of yours to hold up the bank and deposit the loot in the sheriff's cabin while you set guards at each end of the town and lay for me here, but it didn't quite work, because you didn't look well after your rear. And, I expect, it'll cost you a little neck-stretching before you are through with it. Just a minute; I've got a thing to do!"

He picked up Red Crowther's gun from the table, and, holding it into the air, pressed the trigger repeatedly till all six shots had been fired. Then he laid it down again, as faces and heads appeared at the windows below.

"Just to make sure you haven't any more bullets with my name on them, Red," explained the lad, "and to attract the attention of folks. Apart from my desire, as an actor, to always be in the spotlight, it'll serve to tell 'em that I'm running the show, and I shouldn't be surprised if before long we have some more of your gang of rustlers in custody with you!"

Even as he spoke doors were thrown open down below, and the citizens who had been kept indoors by Crowther's gun streamed forth. Some of them—and all were armed—ran to mount the veranda to Eddie's aid, while the others streamed off down towards where Crowther's guards were posted at the ends of the street.

And even as the first shots of the combat rang out Eddie looked down into the street, and there, oblivious of the flying bullets, calmly turning the handle of his picture-taking machine, was Terence the camera fiend, having emerged from a house right opposite to where Eddie had performed his thrilling but involuntary stunt of dropping from the roof. And at the same moment Miles, the camera assistant, with a grin of triumph on his face appeared on the veranda and began to take close-ups of Eddie Polo and the still prostrate Red Crowther.

(Don't miss the next instalment of this grand life story.)

## A COWARD'S BLOW.

(Continued from page 5.)

Remove, white and worn and weary. No one spoke a word to him, and he had not the courage to speak.

There was no sleep for the bully of the Remove that night.

He lay, wakeful and weary, tossing from side to side, and ever before his mind was the white face of Alonzo Todd.

The face haunted him. It looked at him from the dark shadows, and when he closed his eyes he saw it still.

Would he ever forget it?

He was glad when the light of dawn stole in at the high windows of the dormitory and the rising-bell rang with a muffled peal.

Weary, unrefreshed, but comforted at least by the daylight, Bulstrode rose from the bed where he had hardly closed his eyes.

The juniors went down, and Harry Wharton's first action was to inquire after Todd. Mr. Quelch had comforting news to give.

Todd had passed a quiet night, and was now conscious and in possession of his senses. He was in a low and weak state, but the doctor had every hope.

Bulstrode was called into the Head's study in the course of the morning. He went there with heavy steps and drooping head.

Dr. Locke looked at him as much in sorrow as in scorn.

"Bulstrode," he said quietly, "I have heard the particulars. I do not think I need emphasise to you the cruelty, the baseness of your action."

"I know it, sir."

"If you have repented of your cruel act, and—"

"Oh, sir, I—I am horribly sorry!" said Bulstrode, in a choking voice. "I'd do anything to make poor old Todd well again. I would indeed!"

"I am glad to see that you are repentant, at least, Bulstrode," said the Head coldly. "If Todd recovers, you may escape all punishment—excepting, of course, that you can no longer remain at Greyfriars."

Bulstrode bowed his head.

"When Todd is fit to be moved," went on

Dr. Locke, "he will be removed to his uncle's house. He will not be able to resume his studies here for a very long time to come. You are responsible for that, Bulstrode, and you may thank your good fortune that it is no worse—that you are not charged with crime! But you will be expelled from the school! You may go and pack your box now."

"Oh, sir—"

"Not a word! Go!"

Bulstrode tottered out of the study.

Mr. Quelch passed him as he went along the passage. The Remove master looked with something like pity at the bully's white, drawn face.

Mr. Quelch entered the Head's study.

"Todd wishes to see you, sir!" he said.

Dr. Locke rose.

"I will go at once."

He found Todd propped up on pillows, weak and white, but looking better. He was in full possession of his senses. The dazed, dull expression was gone from his face. It was evident that the presence of his uncle had done him good.

"You wanted to see me, Todd?" said the Head kindly.

"Yes, sir," said Alonzo, in a weak voice. "It's about Bulstrode, sir."

"Do not speak of that wretched boy, Todd."

"But I must speak of him, sir. I—I am afraid that you are going to punish him, sir," said Alonzo faintly.

The Head was silent.

"Is it so, sir?"

"Yes, Todd."

"You—you are not going to expel him, sir?"

"I have no alternative, my dear boy."

Todd panted for breath.

"Oh, sir, I—I should be so sorry to be the cause of Bulstrode's career being ruined in this way! And I can't help thinking of his parents, too, sir. I—I wish you wouldn't punish him on my account. I am sure that he never meant to hurt me so much. Could you forgive him, sir?"

The doctor whispered to the Head.

"It would be dangerous to excite him now, Dr. Locke. Accede to his wishes if you possibly can."

"I will not expel him," said the Head slowly. "You are a noble lad, Todd! Bulstrode shall be left to the punishment of his own conscience!"

"Oh, thank you so much, sir!"

The Head quitted the sick-room, and a

message was sent to Bulstrode by Harry Wharton.

Wharton found the bully of the Remove in the dormitory. Bulstrode had been packing his box, and his things were scattered about him, but Bulstrode had sunk down on his bed in an attitude of the utmost dejection. He looked up miserably as Wharton came in. A bitter smile curled his lips.

"So you've come to triumph over me," he said. "Well, I'm expelled. You'll have it all your own way in the Remove now. Goodness knows I wouldn't care, if only Todd were well before I went!"

Wharton's face softened a little.

"I haven't come to do anything of the sort," he said. "The Head sent me with a message. Todd has asked him to pardon you, and he's going to do it. You are not to be expelled after all."

Bulstrode sat silent for a full minute.

"Todd asked him?" he said at last.

"Yes."

"He's a splendid chap!"

Bulstrode said no more. But there was a new look in Bulstrode's face, and it occurred to Wharton as he left him that what had happened had made a great difference to the bully of the Remove. The bully's remorse had changed his character. It was probable that the Bulstrode of the future would be different from the Bulstrode of the past.

The next few days were anxious days for all the fellows who knew Todd. But the lad slowly mended, and ere the week was out all danger of a relapse was over, and the juniors were permitted to visit him in his room. They found him the kind, patient, sweet-tempered Alonzo of old.

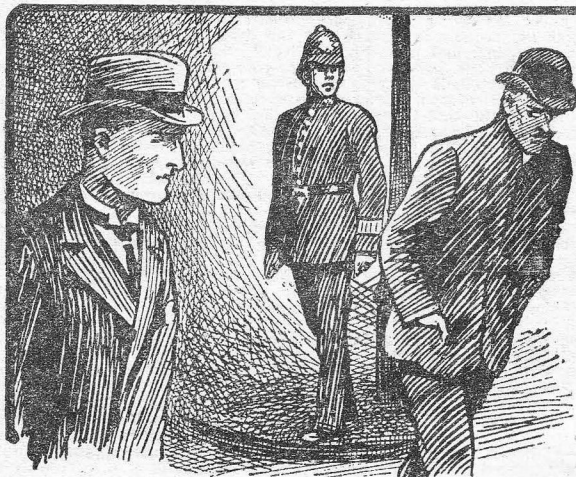
Bulstrode did not dare to go until Todd asked specially to see him. And then he went, and he sat by Todd's bed, talking with him in low tones for quite a long time. And when he left there were tears in Bulstrode's eyes, a fact which many fellows observed with silent amazement.

All through Todd's illness Uncle Benjamin had stayed at Greyfriars; and when at last the lad was well enough to be removed from the school, he went in charge of his kind uncle. But ere he went Todd's uncle stood a glorious feed at the tuckshop to all the Remove, and the whole Form walked down to the station to see them off.

THE END.

(Look out for another splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next Friday's issue, entitled: "Bulstrode Minor!")

## A STORY OF A GREAT REVENGE.



# A MARKED MAN.

—:— A Grand Story, —:—  
dealing with the Adventures of Ferrers Locke, the World-Famous Detective.

## THREADS OF THE STORY.

Adrian Vaughan, after having served five years, leaves Dartmoor 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 falls in with an old acquaintance of the prison, by name of Demottsen, and secures a suite of splendidly furnished rooms, where they intend to plan a great scheme. Later Vaughan appears before the public as a singer and musician, and makes a great name for himself as Paul Rutherford.

Later, Demottsen informs his partner that he has discovered that Leishman is really Mr. Leigh, the criminals' moneylender.

They employ the services of John Firth, who is the double of the ex-convict, and it is arranged that the latter helps Firth to discover the whereabouts of Judas Leishman, a man who had wronged him in the past.

Firth pays a visit to the Marquis of Ranguvy to entertain the guests as a musician, using the name of Rutherford, whilst the real man burgles the house of the most valuable possession, the Golden Cup.

When the alarm is given, the guests search the grounds, and the body of Raymond Marcommen is found, evidence points to the fact that Vaughan is the murderer.

Ferrers Locke discovers several important clues, but none help him in disentangling the mystery. Vaughan, in his fine mansion in Hyde Park, plans another big scoop. He calls in his double—John Firth—to give him his orders.

(Now read on.)

### Vaughan Turns the Tables!

**Y**OU will be Paul Rutherford tomorrow night. You are to sing at the Town Hall, Burndale—after the banquet. If possible, do something to make yourself well remembered—hand your fee back to the mayor to be given to a local charity, or something of that sort. Just when convenient, return here and forget everything—except your visit to Burndale. That is all."

John Firth withdrew, and Vaughan sauntered leisurely back to the balcony.

At a quarter to eleven the next night Vaughan's car put him down at the wide main entrance to the Royal Edward Hall, already thronged with carriages and motors. He gave up his ticket, hat and coat, and joined the richly-dressed throng winding its way slowly to the ball-room.

Ten minutes to eleven. Only ten minutes more. At eleven Count von Diehling would come. Vaughan's eyes gleamed at sight of the priceless jewels leaping to life before him. Scarce a woman there but carried a fortune at her throat, in her bosom, or in her hair. Coronets of diamonds, ropes of pearls, gleaming pendants of sapphires and emeralds were to be had only for the taking by those who were clever enough to essay a master-stroke of criminal genius.

Suddenly Vaughan started at sight of a big, burly fellow moving with apparent unconcern among the throng.

"Apparently I'm not the only one think-

ing the same thoughts," he muttered. "That fellow's a Scotland Yard detective, I'm sure. By Jove, yes, and there's Barton Dawe, too!"

He watched the two men as they halted beneath the Royal box and entered into a whispered conversation.

"It's impossible they suspect my presence or my motive in being here to-night," was the sudden suspicion, instantly to be dismissed.

Eleven o'clock. A last twirl round the shining floor, the sudden forming of a gem-studded human ring, that glittered at a myriad points about the great arena, a soft hush, broken by the loud fanfare of trumpets; then the orchestra leapt to life with a stirring air, and the grand procession, the culminating event of the famous ball, came into view.

A few minutes later young Count Diehling came within range of vision.

Behind Adrian Vaughan a man and woman were speaking quite audibly.

"It's true—absolutely true! That's why the detectives are here," the woman was saying. "They believe a gang of Continental thieves are behind it. Already the Duchess of Barshire has lost a diamond pendant, and Lady Vorley has missed her string of pearls."

"But whom do they suspect?" the man asked.

"Impossible to say among such a crowd. Everybody is being watched. Of course, they don't suspect any well-known people or their friends."

The couple moved away, leaving Vaughan cold with amazement.

A hand touched him on the wrist; he swung round to see the young count standing before him.

"Why, Mr. Rutherford, I'm glad to see you!" he said in a pleasant voice broken by a curiously-foreign accent.

"Of course, count," Vaughan said slowly. "I came here almost purposely to meet you."

"This is a red-letter night for me—to have the honour of dining with the great Mr. Rutherford," the young count said.

Vaughan bowed.

"You overrate me, count. The privilege is mine."

As he bent smilingly over his plate, Vaughan was busy mentally appraising the value of a diamond-studded cigar-case, the top edge of which peeped from Count Diehling's pocket. From guesswork he put its value at anything between fifteen and twenty thousand pounds.

Between now and the time they parted, in some adroit fashion, the diamond case must pass into his keeping. Half-way through the meal a knock sounded on the door and a uniformed attendant entered.

"The Count von Diehling, with the baron's compliments," he said, and laid a small parcel upon the table.

Vaughan glanced up curiously. The wording with the gift struck him as peculiar.

Swiftly Count Paul slipped the packet into his pocket.

Vaughan insisted on filling his glass a second and a third time.

Again that knock on the door, and the entry of a second messenger. A large box

was handed in, with the same quaint formula, "The compliments of your father, baron!" Then the fellow laid a telegram beside the count's plate.

Vaughan begged permission to light a cigarette. Apparently what was going on did not interest him, for his gaze seemed fixed on the gay scene below. Once again a small white packet came to view in the count's hand, and vanished with extraordinary quickness. Then he threw the empty box carelessly on to a settee.

"I think I shall have to be going now," he said; "but I'm awfully glad to have met you!"

Vaughan looked at him curiously. Why had the count been so anxious to make his acquaintance for such a short time, and what was the meaning of the white packages which had been delivered to him?

And then he recalled the conversation of the two women about the jewellery which had been stolen from the guests.

Was it possible Diehling was one of the culprits?

At any rate, he had on his person a cigar-case worth probably twenty thousand, and that was good enough for Adrian Vaughan.

"Perhaps we shall meet again," he said, clapping the count's hand.

"I hope so," said Diehling, moving away.

By the time the count was in the street, engaging a taxi, Vaughan was only a few paces from him. He heard Von Diehling's instructions to the driver, "Liverpool Street, please!"

The count stepped in.

The door closed, and the vehicle moved away; the count drew down the blinds, and leaned back.

"Safe! Safe!" he murmured. "Everything successful!"

The words died in his throat, and he sprang up with a startled cry, for the door had opened, and Adrian Vaughan sprang in.

He took the seat facing the count.

"I crave your pardon," he said apologetically, as his right hand disappeared for an instant beneath the folds of his coat, "but we have business to settle between here and Liverpool Street Station."

"What do you mean?" Von Diehling breathed.

A pistol flashed to view in Vaughan's hand.

"I mean, Count Paul, that, without a moment's delay, you must hand over to me your cigar-case and the two packets given to you by the attendants this evening!"

"You have made a mistake!" the count bluffed. "I don't know to what you refer!"

"Ten minutes will see you aboard the Continental express. Before then I must relieve you of your valuables!" laughed Vaughan. "Come now, the packages, please!"

The younger man from the corner eyed him defiantly.

"I know nothing of any packages. You are trying to take advantage of me, Mr. Rutherford!" he breathed. "Will you be so good as to relieve me of your company?"

Vaughan toyed with the pistol, and his handsome face broke into a smile.

"Certainly! It is just as easy for me to step out and call a policeman, only the consequences for you wouldn't be so pleasant!

Don't you see, count, I am trying to make matters for you as easy as possible?"

"Mr. Rutherford, do you really think I have done anything wrong?" Count Paul asked.

"Mr. Rutherford has no part in this affair!" the other replied, his manner growing suddenly cold. "Unfortunately, your invitation to Mr. Rutherford to attend the Royal Edward Ball fell into my hands, and I have made the best possible use of it!"

"You are not Mr. Rutherford?" the count cried.

"Paul Rutherford, the society entertainer, is, I believe, at present in Lancashire—at Burndale, to be precise. I—well—my dear fellow—I am a stranger to you. My name is Adrian Vaughan!" And he leant back, laughing mockingly. "You have played your part in a very clever scoop which isn't coming off, so far as you and your friends are concerned, because I have stepped in and taken a hand. I give you exactly twenty seconds, count. At the end of that time, either I hand you over to the police, or you hand me your cigar-case and the stolen jewels!"

"How did you know?" the count asked, in sudden fear.

"By putting two and two together!" laughed Vaughan. "Merely a contest of wits. You are entitled to know how I work. Count von Diehling, I know you to be associated with one of the biggest gangs of Continental crooks. One or two confederates of yours were granted invitations. They worked among the guests, relieving first one then another of their valuables, while you placed yourself above suspicion by appearing on friendly terms with Paul Rutherford, the well-known society entertainer, who, of course, is above suspicion."

"How did you learn all this?" the young count said.

"Compose yourself, my dear young man," returned Vaughan. "I regard you merely as the tool of scoundrels cleverer than you are. Your great danger lay in the thefts being discovered too soon. The thefts were discovered, and Scotland Yard men swarmed everywhere. To save themselves, your confederates handed the stuff over to you. You have the jewels on you at this moment done up in the two packages. As you and I were together, you were naturally not suspected, and so could get easily away with the swag. A telegram was sent to you, telling you to catch the Harwich boat train, and to hand the jewels over to your accomplice either on that, or in Holland. My dear count, I relieve you of the necessity!"

"I regret the necessity which compels me to do this," Vaughan said pocketing the jewels. "All the same, by so doing I am perhaps saving you from a life of crime. My advice to you is this, don't keep this appointment with your brother, Count Otto von Diehling, but go quietly away. Write to him, and tell him that the one who took the spoils from you was Adrian Vaughan, and that if either he or any of his infamous gang try to terrify you into criminal acquiescence again, they will answer to me for it! I wish you a very good-night!"

He sprang on to the step as the cab's speed was momentarily checked, and, lifting his soft felt hat, bowed, and, opening the door, sprang out, and was lost to sight.

**Ferrers Locke Makes a Move!**

**"DARING JEWEL ROBBERY AT THE ROYAL EDWARD HALL.**

**THIEVES GET AWAY WITH £55,000 WORTH OF SPOIL.**

**DUCHESS' GREAT LOSS.**

**THREE ARRESTS!**"

From the corner of the settee on which Ferrers Locke had thrown the copy of the "Evening News," the headlines that told of the most perplexing robbery of the century stared up at him. The opening of the door caused him to look up with a start as Baker came slowly in.

"You look about used up. Sit down while I mix you up a drink." Locke went to the sideboard, while Baker hopped into the welcome arms of a big chair.

"For once I don't deserve my name!" laughed the never-tired man. "The chase after that blessed motor-boat has pretty well done me in. Thanks!" He took a deep draught from the brimming tumbler. "That's better. I'm sorry, but there's no luck!"

Locke filled his huge pipe thoughtfully.

"You discovered nothing?"

"Nothing to give the slightest clue to the identity of the man who tried to kill Poltniron; no trace of the present whereabouts of the motor-craft, no sign of the fellow's having made the slightest effort to return to the fence's house in Shadwell again. For five days and nights I've watched the place, without closing my eyes; I must confess I'm tired."

He leant back, a splash of colour stealing into the cadaverous grey face as the spirit did its potent work.

Locke evidenced no sign of surprise.

"I'm not altogether astonished. We're working against fellows who are the very top-notches in the world of crime, and they won't make the going easy for us. Every day brings fresh evidence; but all these happenings which have left us and the police so far baffled—the theft of Ranguy's gold bowl, the murder of Marconnon, the strange affair

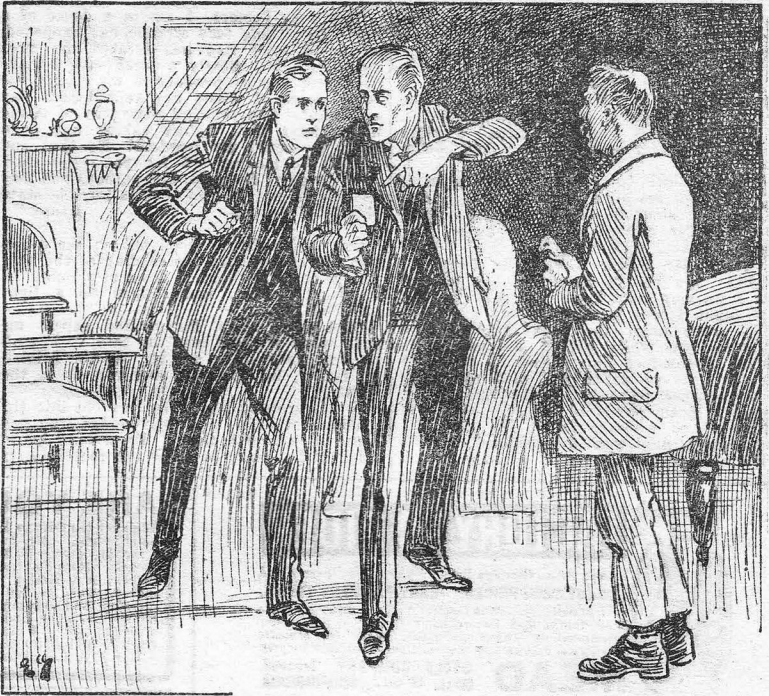
Barshire loses a rope of pearls worth £13,000; the Honourable Adele Minsey-Drew, a crescent of diamonds valued at £3,000; Sara, Duchess of Deepdene, a pendant of blue-water Brazilian stones representing £14,000; Mrs. Moutney Levisin, a knot of pearls worth £8,000; and so on. Thieves were suspected; Barton Dawe, Chief-Inspector Fee, and even Sir Oliver, chief of the London police himself, were there."

"And the thieves got away?"

"Quite easily. Who planned the robbery? The authorities believe a gang of Continental sharks. Who actually carried out the theft? Three men were detained on suspicion. But where are the jewels? Each man was systematically searched before he left the building, yet not a single trace of the valuables was found."

"H'm! And where does this touch us—and our affairs?"

Baker's lethargy was beginning to fall away.



The labourer thrust a piece of crumpled paper into the detective's hand. It was in the handwriting of Harry Leigh, and Ferrers Locke started as he recognised it. "I found this fastened to the leg of the pigeon," announced the man. (See page 20.)

at the house in Shadwell, and something else which I'll talk to you about later, are all confined to a very narrow circle of participants. So you've brought no news of any kind?"

Baker yawned.

"I can't say that. I've been over every inch of the South Shore from the Lower Port to Chelsea Road, and I've found out that about three o'clock on the morning of Poltniron's shooting, a small petrol engine-driven boat put into a creek near Mariner's Reach; a man got out carrying a parcel. He walked with it towards Bentley Mills, but from there all trace of him disappears. Nor has the motor-craft been seen again."

An almost imperceptible sigh broke from Locke. The links were slowly being forged; if only they could be joined up and a chain put round Adrian Vaughan from which there was no escape.

"Have you seen to-day's papers?" he asked, after a pause.

Baker's gloomy hound's eyes lit up.

"I've been out of the world for five days. Has anything happened?"

"Something which only makes our task the more difficult and necessary to be successfully handled." He leant over and picked up the newspaper.

"Three nights ago, Baker, a great Society function was held in the Royal Edward Hall. Everybody of note was present. Not until to-day does the full story leak out. Lady

"At one very important point. Of course, I'm not touching this case; the police have it in hand, but I understand one of the guests was none other than Paul Rutherford, the musician."

A low whistle of surprise broke from Ferrers Locke's assistant.

"Strange. Mr. Rutherford was at Kingswear Hall when the golden goblet vanished."

"But stranger still, Baker, he did not turn up at the Edward Hall at all. That night he was at Burndale. As soon as I read the account I telephoned through to the mayor, who with his own lips assured me that Mr. Rutherford was in his company from six o'clock on Thursday evening until afternoon the following day."

"Again, then, I fail to see how you are interested."

"Because the man who got hold of Rutherford's invitation, and who accepted it in person, went to the ball, made up to represent the society entertainer. Isn't it more than a passing coincidence that the fellow who stole Ranguy's priceless cup shot poor Marconnon, and then sold the proceeds of his crime to Poltniron, should bear such a striking resemblance to Paul Rutherford?"

"I should think so. Then you deduce that this fellow at the Edward Hall was really Adrian Vaughan?"

"I've no alternative; although I must confess I haven't a shadow of proof to back up

my theory, except the cartridge clue in the Marconnon murder case, and his threats of vengeance on the dead man. Vaughan has vanished utterly. It remains for me to find him and identify him with the man we want. Come in!"—as a knock sounded without. "Well, John, what do you want?"

Ferrers Locke's general factotum entered silently. "A man wants to see you downstairs, sir—a man with a pigeon."

Locke glanced at the Empire clock on the mantel. "I'm sorry, John, I can't see anyone to-night. Ask him to leave his card, or write me."

John ran a horny hand through straggling silver-grey locks.

"He ain't that sort o' chap, sir. I doubts if he can write his own moniker. He said he'd brought the pigeon and you was to give him five pounds."

A shadow of perplexity settled on the young detective's face.

"Five pounds for a pigeon! Baker, this sounds interesting. We'll see the joker. For once I'll break through my rule. A pigeon at five pounds interests me. Show him up, John."

A minute later a tall, bull-necked fellow, in the garb of a labouring man, stood in the soft, rose-red light of the electric chandelier. In his grimy left hand he grasped a white pigeon; the other held a well-brushed bowler hat.

"You wished to see me?" Locke said, setting down his pipe.

The other shuffled awkwardly, gave a twirl to his bowler, cleared his throat twice, then began speaking at a rapid rate.

"You're Mr. Ferrers Locke, the detective? Right! My name's Barker—Jabez Barker. I'm a working man, I am. At seven o'clock last night I was working on my allotment which runs near the line at Leighton Buzzard. A white pigeon dropped down almost at my feet—this pigeon. I picked it up. A piece of paper was tied round its foot; another piece under the right wing. I've got both pieces of paper. One was addressed to whoever found the bird. I found the bird. I want five pounds."

He had rattled on like a country police-

man giving evidence before a local magistrate. His story only left Locke more mystified than ever.

"How does this affect me? Do you mind my seeing the slips of paper?"

"You can 'ave the fust one. Then I want my five quid," the fellow answered doggedly. He thrust a square of crumpled notepaper into the detective's hand. At the sight of it a cry burst from him, for the handwriting was unmistakably that of Harry Leigh. This is what he read:

"If the finder of this will take the sealed note from the pigeon's wing and deliver it immediately, with seal unbroken, to Mr. Ferrers Locke, 602, Baker Street, London, Mr. Locke will give him five pounds for his trouble."

In a flash the money was passed to Jabez Barker, who thereupon disgorged the second note, which proved even more startling than the first. It ran as follows:

"My dear Ferrers,—I am in a deuce of a hole. Something very strange has happened, and ever since dad has treated me most curiously. For nearly a week now I have been kept a close prisoner in my rooms, the outer doors of which are kept locked day and night. Can you find some way of seeing me secretly first, before taking any open steps to secure my freedom? To that end I shall be looking out for you after dusk of every day. Do come, and perhaps you may be able to put an end to this terrible state of affairs. Yours, HARRY."

Beads of moisture stood out on the detective's forehead when the reading of the note was done. Without a moment's delay he dismissed Barker, and slipped on a light greatcoat.

"Get some sleep, Baker, and expect me back when you see me," he said. "I'm off to Northampton to see Mr. Justin Leigh—or, rather, his son. I'll ring you up in the morning."

It was growing late when he crept into the spacious grounds that surrounded the big house in Kilworth Grove. From long knowledge of the place he knew the rooms Harry

occupied. A light burned in one—the window of which was open. A dozen times, from the shelter of the garden, he sent a curious call across the silence that separated them. At last Harry himself came to the window and caught sight of him momentarily outlined as he passed rapidly across a shaft of moonlight.

Locke waited for more than an hour—in fact, till he judged the last of the household had retired to rest—before embarking on the task of reaching his friend. At last, however, the thing was done.

"Thank goodness, you've come, Ferrers!" Harry whispered. "This business is pretty awful."

"Sit down, old man, and tell me just what has happened," the detective said quietly. "Your note reached me only a few hours ago."

Harry told a startling, but dramatically simple story.

"Last Saturday morning I woke very early—I judge between a quarter to four and four. The light was just beginning to break beyond the trees at the end of the garden. Somehow I felt restless. Anything's better than lying in bed in such a state. I got up, stepped into a dressing-gown, and looked out of the window. Then I saw something moving stealthily among the trees. The thought that perhaps burglars were about the grounds frightened me. I drew back and watched. Outside everything was still—no sound except the faint rustling made by the man in the garden. After a time he went away—some tramp, possibly, who had found a night's shelter among the trees. I decided to get back into bed, as I felt cold. I went to the window to close it, when a curious sound fell on my ears—the sound of the man digging in the garden. Ferrers, it was rotten to listen to the dull thud as the spade struck into the earth. I wanted to know that the man in the garden was not burying a body."

"Don't think of such things," Locke said. "Leave me to solve the mystery of the strange man and the hole he dug. Well, what occurred next?"

(Plenty of excitement in the next instalment.)



**FACTORY TO RIDER**

Packed Free. Carriage Paid. Fifteen Days' Free Trial. LOWEST CASH PRICES. EASY PAYMENT TERMS.

Prompt delivery. Save Dealers' Profits. Big Bargain! Shop Soiled and Second-hand Cycles. Satisfaction guaranteed or Money Returned. Write for Moustache Size Free Lists and Special Offer of Sample Bicycle.

**MEAD CYCLE COMPANY, Incorp.** Dept. B-607, BIRMINGHAM.

**TOBACCO HABIT POSITIVELY CURED IN THREE DAYS.**—Famous Specialist's prescription, 1/6.—H. HUGHES (Box B.F.), HULME, MANCHESTER.

**PHOTO POSTCARDS OF YOURSELF,** 1/3 doz., 12 by 10 ENLARGEMENTS, 2d. ALSO CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL, CATALOGUE AND SAMPLES FREE.—HACKETTS, JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

**FREE FUN!** The Latest Scrambling Funny Surprise Novelty, causing roars of laughter, FREE at all sending 1/- for 70 Cute Conjuring Tricks, 12 Jolly Joke Tricks, 6 Catchy Coin Tricks, 5 Cunning Card Tricks, 5 Mystifying Magic Tricks, 6 Jokers' Comical Cards, Sensational Ventriloquism Secret, and 1,001 Stupendous Attractions. Thousands delighted! Great Fun! Postal Address: C. HUGHES, 15, Wood St., Edgbaston, Birmingham. (Big box Demon Moustache Grower, 1/2 post free.)

**FREE BOOK FOR ENGINEERS**

**ENGINEERING. EARN MORE MONEY. KNOW YOUR TRADE.**

Complete Correspondence Courses in:

- ENGINEERING
- DRUGHTSMANSHIP
- ELECTRICITY
- MOTOR-CAR ENGINEERING
- MATHEMATICS
- AERO ENGINES

Write and say which subject you wish to study, and we will send you a FREE Book pointing out your chances and explaining our system: State age and send 2d. stamps for postage.

**THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF ST. BRITAIN, LTD.**  
41, Thanet House, 231 & 232, Strand, London, W.C.2.

**CUT THIS OUT**

"The Popular." **PEN COUPON.** Value 2d.

Send this coupon with P.O. for only 5/- direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet St., London, E.C.4. In return you will receive (post free) a splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6. If you save 12 further coupons, each will count as 2d. of the price, so you may send 13 coupons and only 3/-. Say whether you want a fine nib, or broad nib. This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to the POPULAR readers. (Foreign postage extra.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Self Filling, or Safety Models, 2/- extra.

Printed and published every Friday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Limited, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Subscription rates: 3s. 6d. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa, The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. Saturday, January 8th, 1921. **DN**

**ARE YOU SHORT?**

If so, let the Girvan System help you to increase your height. Mr. Briggs reports an increase of 5 inches; Dr. H. F. Johns, Mr. Ratcliffe 4 inches; Miss Davis 3 inches; Mr. Dutton 4 inches; Mr. Ketley 4 inches; Miss Ledell 4 inches. This System requires only ten minutes morning and evening, and greatly improves the health, physique and carriage. No appliances or drugs. Send 3 penny stamps for further particulars and £100 Guarantee to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N. 4.



**25 COMIC SONGS,** 8 Funny Recitations, 30 Parlour Games, Tricks, etc., etc., lot 1/- carr. pd.—HILL CO., 8, Triangle, Clevedon, Som.

"**CURLY HAIR!**" "Mine curled at once," writes Major. Thousands of testimonials, proof sent. Summers' "Curlit" curls straightest hair. 1/5, 2/6 (stamps accepted).—SUMMERS (Dept. P), Upper Russell St., Brighton.

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

**HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS** from £1.—Real Value. Films Galore. A Boon for Winter Evenings. Lists Free.—Desk E. DEAN CINEMA CO., 94, Drayton Avenue, West Ealing, London.

**VENTRILQUIISM** made easier. Our new enlarged book of easy instructions Wonderful Laughable Art. Only 1/- post free. "Thousands Delighted." (Dolls supplied.) Thought-Reading, 2d., Mesmerism, 1s. 2d.—G. Wilkes & Co. Stockton, Rugby, Eng.

**MODEL STEAM ENGINES.**—Locomotives, Railways, Electric Motors and Dynamos, Batteries, Accumulators, Model parts, fittings, etc., etc. Interesting illustrated catalogue, 6d. (P.O.'s only).—MODEL CO., 38 (A.P.), Queen's Road, Aston, Birmingham.

**THE WONDERFUL WAY TO INCREASE HEIGHT.** HONoured BY COMMANDS FROM KINGS, ROYALTY. (Copyright.) Particulars Free. Apply—Dept. F., PERCIVAL CARNE, CAERPHILLY, CARDIFF.

"**CURLY HAIR!**"—Wonderful results by using Boss' "WAVEIT." Waves and curls straightest hair. Hundreds of testimonials. 1/5 and 2/5 (stamps accepted).—BOSS (Dept. F), 173, New North Road, London, N.1.

**LOOK! A SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM.**—Write now for YOUR OWN GHOST, which appears and disappears at will. Only 1/3.—MILLEY CO., 5, WINGHELSA ROAD, TOTTENHAM, N.17.

**CONJURING TRICKS,** 2/6, 5/-, and 10/-. Sample Trick, 1/-.—IDEAL COMPANY, OLDCHURCH ROAD, CLEVEDON.