THE GREY * * CAVALIER

By GUY BOOTHBY.

Author of "Dr. Nikola," "A Bid for Fortune," etc.

Christmas at Penterton Hall was like the rite of matrimony, a thing not to be taken in hand "wantonly or unadvisedly." It was a festive season which few who had participated in it are ever likely to forget. In the first place the old squire was not the sort of man to stand any nonsense. He invited you meaning that you should have a good time while you were with him. He welcomed you with the same intention. He looked after your comfort and amusements from the day that you entered his hospitable doors until you left them again. And it when that sad moment arrived you departed with the opinion that Christmas at Penterton was not what it had been described, well then you did what no other man had been known to do before you, and deserved to suffer as such. Why, the mere sight of the squire's jolly red face was sufficient to make a man enjoy himself, to say nothing of his cheery voice and inexhaustible fund of anecdotes, which everyone had heard before, but which all longed to hear again. As a host he was one man in a thousand, and when you can say is that she is just one in a million, and I don't mind who knows my opinion. How it came about that the squire had never married has never been properly explained. Between ourselves, however, I fancy there is some mystery in the matter. There are not wanting people indeed who assert that the squire and his brother both loved and wooed Winifred's mother, that the squire and his brother both loved and wooed Winifred's mother, that the squire and his brother both loved and moved who assert that the squire and his brother both loved and moved winifred's mother, that the squire and his brother both loved and moved who assert that the squire and his brother both loved and moved who assert hat the squire and his brother both loved and moved who assert hat the squire and his brother both loved and moved who assert hat the squire and his wife died of a broken heart on receiving the news, he took the little orphan girl to live with him, and gave her every scrap of his great how much a server be start of the look and i

away disconsolate. How were they to know that her heart was already given and, as is often the case, to the very man of all others whom the squire was least likely to approve? Handsome, devil-may-care Dick Reverley, the Ruinrd Squire of Blicksford, was a charming companion of irreproachable birth and manners. As a set off, however, against these advantages, it was well known that he had squandered his patrimony, had been rusticated from Cambridge, and was in consequence the horror of virmous mothers with marriageable daughters for many miles around. That he should have fallen in love with pretty Winifred Dycie seemed only natural, for they all did, but that she should have reciprocated his affection and have promised to be his wife seemed to be out of the proper order of things. However, it was a fact, and one that was likely to cause a considerable amount of trouble for all parties concerned in the neat future. One day the young man screwed up his courage and rode over to the hall for an interview with the squire. The latter listened to him patiently and then spoke his mind.

"Impossible," he said, "quite impossible, What you ask is out of the question."

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"You mean. I suppose, that you have heard all sorts of things about me. That I am hard up and have been a bit wild. I don't deny it, but if I gave you my word that I will reform and that I will not marry your niece until I have set the old place on its feet again, will you accept that as sufficient proof of my love, and sanction our engagement?"

"I can sanction nothing." the Squire answered. "I can only repeat that what you ask is impossible."

"Entreaty will more me," the other replied. "My mind is made up."

Seeing that it was useless to say anything further, Dick bade him good-bye, and that night, at a stolen meeting, in a wood behind the Hall, informed Winifred of what had occurred, at the interview. Some meddlesome person told the Squire of the meeting, and he spoke to his niece upon the subject. She confessed her love, and vowed that without young Beverley life for her would be a blank. Then the Squire lost his temper, and said things for which I can assure you he was sorry afterwards. The result was a misunderwards. The result was a misunderwards. out young lieverley life for her would be a blank. Then the Squire lost his temper, and said things for which I can assure you he was sorry afterwards. The result was a misunderstanding and a tiff, which on the Squire's part took the form of a letter to the young man in quest'on, warning him to have no intercourse with his niece, Winifred, under the pain of his, the Squire's, severe displeasure. In less than a month he had come to hate the young man as he had never hated anyone in his l'fe hefore. His very name was an alomination to him. What was more, he shepherded his niece more 'closely than ever, and seldom allowed her out of his sight. In consequence the lovers were not permitted to meet, and Winifred began to look pale and heavy-eyed, and life at the Hall was the reverse of cheerful. There could be no doubt that the affair was causing the dear old Squire a great amount of misery. He was not the same man at all. He had no desire to be unjust, nor, had he considered young Reverley a suitable match, would he have stood in the way for a moment. As a mutter of fact he tid not know much about him personally, and what little he did know was told him by busy-bodiles who doubtless had their own reasons for desiring to the deepest dye. On one pitiable occasion, he was driven into saying

something which at any other time he would rather have cut his tongue out than have uttered. When he left the drawing-room, where the interview had taken place, and returned to his own room, Gregory, his ancient butler, informed him that Mrs Gibbs. the housekeeper, desired to speak to

"Send her in, send her in," said the Squire a little sharply, for he was not in the humour for domestic worries. Then to himself, he added: "What on earth can the woman have to say to

nearth can the woman have to say to me?"

It turned out that Mrs Gibbs' errand was of a peculiar nature. A domestic crisis was imminent and chaos reigned in the servants' hall. I'ut into plain words it amounted to this: the Grey Cavalier, the famous Penterton ghost, who was known to pace the quadrangle at the back of the house when any great trouble was about to happen to the family, had made his appearance on three occasions of late, and had been plainly seen by a footman a lady's maid, and a housemaid. The footman had been reduced to a state of collapse, the females to a condition of idiocy. According to their atatements he was standing in the moonlit quadrangle at the time, gazing sadly at the house. Then, with a wave of his hand, he had disappeared in the direction of the chapel, back to his tombehind the altar. They indignantly denied any possibility of their having been mistaken. They had seen his great grey boots, his love locks, his love locks, his love ruffles, and his grey beaver hat, and as a result nothing could induce them to stay after their month was up, or to cross the Quadrangle after dark.

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them to stay after their month was up, or to cross the Quadrangle after dark.

"Your maids are a pack of fools, and the footman is something worse," cried the irritable Squire, not, however, without a thrill of satisfaction as he thought of the story he would now be able to tell concerning the famous Spectre. However, he sent Mrs. Gibbs about her business, and then sat down at his writing table to pen a letter to his best friend in the world. He told him of his difficulty regarding young Beverley, of his niece's state of health, and asked his advice. Two days later an answer arrived, and in it the old Colonel promised to do his best to exorcise the fatal passion that had taken possession of the pretty Winifred, and for this reason he would spend Christmas at the Hall, and bring as many of his young friends as he could collect with him. Now, if the Colonel knew one eligible young man be knew a dozen, the respectability, wealth and culture of whom he was prepared to guarantee with his life. What was more, he knew half a dozen girls of transcendent beauty and accomplishments, who would act as excellent foils and would put Winifred upon her mettle. With such a force at his hack it would be strange indeed, he argued, if they were unable to rout Beverley, and drive him from the field, never to return. Although Winifred protested against such an invasion, the necessary lavitations were despatched, and in ducourse accepted by the parties concerned. In the meantime Beverley was supposed to be in London, and Winifred's heart was about as sad as it was possible for the heart of a mulden to be. Indeed, the only person who seemed to be enjoying the festive season at all, was the grey ghost of Sir Michael, who, within the previous month, had been twice seen on his accustomed promenade. The result was so upsetting from a domestic point of view that, instead of venerating htm as he had been brought up to do, the Squire began to look upon his supernatural relative as a nuisance second only to Beverley himself. Though he protest

a diversion.

At last the great day came, and the stables found their time fully taken up meeting trains and conveying guests to the Hall. Holly and mistetene decorated the corridors, great logs splittered on the fires, and all was gaiety and merrymaking. The Squire, to all appearances, was joility itself. He had a warm welcome for each new arrival, a joke for the men, and, well, if the truth must be told, a kiss for

the girls. The seeds of some promising flirtations were sown at afternoon tea, and by the time the dressing gong sounded for dinner, all was as merry as a marriage bell. Indeed, it was not until late in the evening, just as the bedroom candlesticks made their appearance, that a damper was cast upon the spirits of the party. Then, one young lady, more courageous than the rest, turned to the Squire and asked if it were true, as her maid had told her, that the Grey Cavalier had been making his appearance rather too frequently of late.

The Squire gazed at her in amazement. The temerity of the young lady staggered him. As a rule the Grey Cavalier was never mentioned, save with bated breath, and never by any chance within an hour of bedtime. He noticed also that Winifred's hand trembled, and that she turned deathly pale. He remembered the fact that she had always entertained a great fear of the Spectre, and his warm old heart went out to the girl for that reason, and, perhaps, if the truth must be told, for still another. He was well aware that she loved young Beverley, and he was filled with sorrow that it should have failen to his lot to have been compelled to differ from her as to the merits of the man of her choice. However, as the matter stood, it was impossible for him to draw buck, and accordingly he was forced not only to let her suffer, but to suffer himself at the same time. He thought of this when his guests had departed to their various bedrooms, and he and Winifred stood at the bottom of the great staircase, bidding each other goodnight. His old heart was troubled and it was made none the cusrier when Winifred clasped her arms about his neck and said: "Dear old uncle, you must try to think better of me. You have been so good to me, and I have repaid your kindness so poorly. You will never know how grateful I am to you for it all."

"Poob, pooh," said the squire, "you must try to bed and come down to break-

ror it all."
"Poob, pooh," said the squire, "you mustn't talk nonsense, little girl. Run away to bed and come down to breakfast in the morning with the roses on your cheeks."

your cheeks."

He noticed that the girl heaved a heavy sigh as she turned to go upstairs, and though he could not understand the reason he was even more upset than before. He began to wonder whether young Beverley might not, with encouragement, turn out better than he expected, and if he should give him the chance. This led him to think of his dear dead brother, and of Winifred's mother, both of whom at that very moment were per-Winifred's mother, both of whom at that very moment were perhaps watching him and sighing at his treatment of their
orphan child. He accordingly heaved
another heavy sigh, more doleful than
the first, and accompanied old Gregory
on his locking up operations with an
even sadder heart than ever. He had
not retired to his couch more than a
couple of hours, however, a
sleepless couple, by the way,
when the unmistakable click on his locking up operations with an even sudder heart than even. He had not retired to his couch more than a couple of hours, however, a sleepless couple, by the way, when the unmistakuble click of an iron latch in the quadringle below reached his ears. What could it mean? He sprang out of bed and hastened to the window. He was only just in time, for there, crossing the open space, was a tall, grey figure, habited in the costume of a Cavalier. It was a frosty night, and the moon shone so cold and clear that every detail of his costume was plainly observable, even to the love locks and the long grey boots. For the first time in his life the squire was looking upon the apparition whose appearance was supposed to foretell death or disaster to his family. Suddenly, however, something struck him as being somewhat singular, and when he had seen the figure disappear by the small door into the chapel on the other side, he lieft the window and began to dress. Then, taking a candle, he departed from his chamber and set off on a tour of inspection. The house was lintotal darkness and as silent as a grave. He did not hesitate, however, but pushed on, passed the billiard ruem, passed his own study, until he reached the door in the long corridor, which opened into the chapel itself. Once there he blew out the light and softly opened the door. Creeping in he found the worshipping place of his annestors in total darkness, save where it was lighted by the moonbeams which entered through the lancet windows on the further side. The marble effigies of his long departed relatives showed stiff and dark above their tombs, but in the centre of the alse stood (wo figures whom he clearly recognised, one was the grey Cavalier; the other