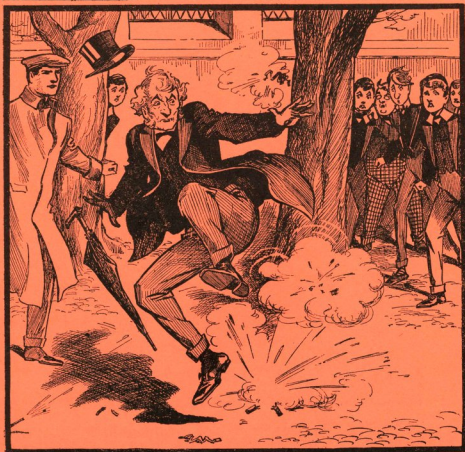


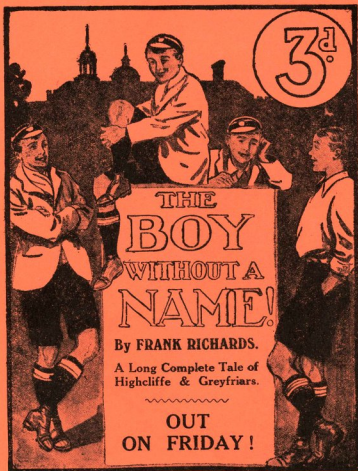
SPLENDID NEWS INSIDE!



Dr. Locke, utterly taken by surprise, hopped and skipped and jumped, as the crackers banged and roared around him. Bang, Bang, Bang, BANG, BANG! Whizzz! Whoosh! Fizzzzzzzzzz! (An exciting scene in "Skinner's Scheme," the magnificent, new, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. contained in this issue.)

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SKINNER'S SCHEME!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The Removites looked on breathlessly while the detective stepped gravely towards Skinner, and thrust his hand into his inside jacket pocket. There was a general gasp as he drew his hand out, with the watch in it! The rolled gold glimmered in the sunshine. "My watch!" yelled Bunter. (See Chapter 7.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Not as Per Programme!

"A.L. ready?" Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, asked the question, with an anxious glance over the crowd of juniors gathered just inside the doorway of the School House.

And the crowd replied with one voice:
"Ready!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Indian junior, added emphatically that the readiness was terrific.

"Lead on, mighty chief!" said Bob Cherry. It was a serious occasion, but Bob could not help being humorous.

Wharton looked over his followers, like a very careful shepherd over his flock. There were fifteen or sixteen fellows in the crowd, most of them belonging to the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars. Some of them were looking very serious. Some were not.

"Got your mouth-organ, Morgan?"

And the disturbed and incensed Head hurried away, quite unsteadily, leaving the distinguished visitor to follow Trotter to the rooms that had been prepared for him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

"O—If crinoids?" "What an awful mucker!" "There'll be a row!" "There's been one, I think," said Bob Cherry, with a feeble grin.

"It—It went with a bang, anyway!" murmured Wibley. "Oh, don't be funny!" groaned Wharton. "The Head'll never believe we meant well. He'll take it for a joke! Oh, my hat!"

"And he'll be in a frightful wax!" said Bolsover major. Nobody has any doubt on that point. The dismayed juniors had retreated to the Remove passage, overwhelmed with dismay. Instead of a striking welcome to the distinguished visitor, they had nearly scared the Head out of his wits, and put him through a remarkable gymnastic performance, which would have been funny if the performer had been a less august and awful personage. But there was nothing funny in inflicting such a terrific surprise upon the headmaster. The consequences were likely to be too awfully serious.

"Well, it was Wharton's idea," said Skinner, after a pause. "He can take the blame, as he was such a thundering ass as to think of the thing at all! I'm off." "Rotter!" growled Bob Cherry. "We're all in it together! The Head can't sack the whole crowd of us, anyway. It'll mean a flogging."

"The flogfulness will be terrific," said Hurree Singh dolefully.

"And he won't believe us if we explain," said Vernon-Smith. "He won't be calm enough to listen to reason. He didn't look calm, did he?" "Ha, ha! No!"

Harry Wharton & Co. waited for the inevitable summons to the Head's study. Skinner and two or three others sneaked away, hoping that the Head hadn't recognised them, and leaving it to the boldest spirit to bear the brunt. Sampson Quince Ilbey Field, the Australian junior—who was called Squiff for short—uttered a sudden exclamation. "I've got it!"

"You're going to get it, you mean!" growled Wibley.

"I've got it!" said Squiff emphatically. "Look here—that chap—Ferrers Locke—he's a good-natured beast, ain't he?"

"Wasn't Ferrers Locke who was bombarded, it was the Head," growled Peter Todd.

"But suppose we explain to Locke, and ask him to intercede for us," said Squiff. "After all, he ought to be pleased—ahem!—at our planning a welcome for him, even if it worked out rather badly."

The Famous Five looked more hopeful. Ferrers Locke had struck them as a good-natured man. It was a chance.

"Let's see him before the Head sends for us," said Squiff. "We can explain—"

"He won't believe us, after the way it's worked out," said the Boulder.

"It's a chance, anyway."

"Come on," said Wharton. "We'll try it. We know where he is. They were getting ready the rooms over the library for him. He'll be there now. Come on!"

The Famous Five started off, with Squiff, on that forlorn hope. The other fellows remained where they were, looking on that forlorn hope as decidedly "N.G."

The chums of the Remove arrived at Ferrers Locke's door, and Harry Wharton gave a respectful tap.

"Come in!" said a deep and pleasant voice. That voice had a reassuring sound, and the juniors entered in a hopeful mood.

Ferrers Locke looked sternly at the half-dozen Removeites, evidently surprised by their visit. He had been surprised by their prank on the Head, as he regarded it, and he was by no means prepared to condone such a very disrespectful prank.

"Well?" he said crisply.

"Ahem!" said Harry Wharton.

"You are the young rascals who exploded the fireworks, I think?"

"We were there," confessed Bob Cherry; "but—"

"But, you see—"

"There was a—a bungle," said Wharton.

"The bunglefulness was truly terrific, esteemed sahib."

"And—and we've come to explain," said Johnny Bull.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 360.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"It was a bungle. The fireworks weren't meant for the Head at all, Mr. Locke."

"Indeed! Were they meant for me?"

"Yes, that's it. So—so we want you to intercede for us."

Ferrers Locke stared.

"You want me to intercede for you—when you had intended to explode your fireworks at me!" he ejaculated.

"Shut up, Bull, old man, you're making matters worse," growled Squiff.

"You see—"

"You had better run away," said Ferrers Locke. "I think Dr. Locke intends to flog you, and I must say that you deserve it, in my opinion."

"Ahem!"

"We—we thought you'd be pleased," stammered Wharton.

"You must have extraordinary ideas as to the way of conferring pleasure, then," said Ferrers Locke drily.

"Don't you see?" explained Wharton. "It was a bungle. That ass Todd dropped matches into the fireworks. They weren't meant to go off like that. It was to be a welcoming display—fireworks in honour of the distinguished visitor, you see. Only—that fathead Todd exploded 'em all together at the wrong moment—"

A smile dawned upon Ferrers Locke's face. He began to understand.

"Oh! Then it was not a prank—what you call, I think, a joke—on your headmaster?" he exclaimed.

"Great Scott! No! We never jape the Head, it's bad form, and—and, besides, we should get flogged."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"I see! But why—"

"You see, it was to be a grand display of welcome," said Wharton ruefully. "We felt it a great honour—ahem!—for Greyfriars to be entertaining such a distinguished public character—"

"Oh, good!" said Ferrers Locke gravely.

"Such a famous and celebrated and well-known character—"

"Hear, hear!" said all the Co., feeling that they were getting on.

"And we had a mouth-organ performer to play 'The Conquering Hero,' and we were going to cheer, and—and have a grand display of fireworks, you know. Only the fireworks went off at the wrong time, and—and the organ bit and the cheers didn't come off, you see."

"That's how it was," said Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ferrers Locke laughed heartily. The juniors were greatly encouraged. It was evident that the detective believed their explanation, at least; which, as Bob Cherry said afterwards, showed that he was a man of judgment. Some fellows would have suspected the unfortunate juniors of pervervation. Indeed, their story might have seemed incredible to a man of less keen judgment than Ferrers Locke.

"So—so you see how it was," said Wharton. "The Head's in an awful wax, and he's going to flog us, as safe as houses. Of course we can stand a licking, but—"

"But we don't want to," said Johnny Bull.

"Ahem! Not only that, but we don't want the Head to think that we're being disrespectful towards him—and towards you, Mr. Locke. And—I don't think he'll give us time to explain when we go in—"

"Possibly not," said Ferrers Locke. "Well, as you were planning this extraordinary welcome in my honour, I suppose I must put in a word for you. I will go to the Head at once."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You're awfully good, Mr. Locke."

"Wait here for me," said Mr. Locke good-humouredly.

He quitted the room, and the juniors waited in considerable uneasiness and trepidation for his return. He was absent quite a considerable time.

"He's putting it nicely to the Head," said Squiff hopefully. "The Head will have to listen to him, of course, as he's a visitor. He'll have to come round. He may take some persuading, but he must come round."

Squiff proved to be a true prophet. Ferrers Locke came back at last, and the juniors regarded him eagerly.

"I have explained to the Head," said Mr. Locke. "He was very angry. But—in consideration of your good intentions—he will not inflict the flogging."

"Hurrah!"

"You may tell the others so. Your punishment will be two."

3

SPLENDID NEWS!

(See Editor's Chat on
Page 20.)

"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

NEXT
MONDAY—

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

hundred lines each, for every boy who was concerned in the affair. I think that you are getting off very lightly."

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry joyfully. "We don't mind the lines! We owe it to Mr. Locke, and we're awfully obliged."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"The thankfulness is terrific, august sahib."

"Not at all," said Ferrers Locke politely. "I recommend you to leave out the fireworks next time you are welcoming a distinguished visitor. Good-bye!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. trooped away in the best of spirits, to carry the joyful news to the rest of the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Little Too Clever!

"TWO hundred lines!" growled Skinner. "Rotten!"
"Begad, I think we're getting off pretty cheaply, my dear fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer.
"Better than a flogging, anyway," said Vernon-Smith.

"The betterfulness is terrific."

But Skinner was not satisfied, and some of the other fellows shared his views. They had taken a lot of trouble to prepare that welcome for Ferrers Locke. Certainly, it had gone wrong, and in place of a handsome demonstration for the distinguished visitor, they had nearly blown up their headmaster. Still, Skinner held that the will ought to be taken for the deed. They had meant jolly well, and in honouring Ferrers Locke they were honouring the Head himself, and he might have let them off. Indeed, Skinner thought that the Head might have called them into his study and thanked them.

"Oh, you're a grousing ass!" said Bob Cherry. "But for Ferrers Locke, we should have got a flogging all round. We ought to be grateful."

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner.

"Two hundred lines isn't much," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "And it was really worth it, to see the Head hopping like that. 'Taint every day you see the Head hop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I wasn't really in it at all," said Skinner. "I don't suppose the Head saw me, and you fellows needn't mention me. I'm not going to do any lines."

"Oh, don't be a cad!" said Wharton. "The Head has given us a couple of hundred lines each. They ought to be done, whether he spotted you there or not."

"I don't see it," said Skinner obstinately.

And Skinner did not do his lines—chancing it, as he said. Harry Wharton & Co. set to work to do their impositions cheerfully; they knew they were being let off lightly. But Skinner's example was followed by some of the others. After all, in the confusion of the moment, the Head couldn't have recognised all of them—probably he hadn't noticed any of them—and it would be safe for some of them, at least, to leave their lines undone. On second thoughts, the Boulder followed Skinner's example, and Bolsover major and Snoop followed Vernon-Smith's.

When Wharton had done his lines, he came out of his study with them, with his brows knitted. He felt that, under the circumstances, it was up to the fellows to do their imposts, whether they had been spotted or not. The whole party could not have followed Skinner's example; and it was not "cricket" for some to slack, and leave the lines to be done by the more conscientious members. Wharton looked into Micky Desmond's study. Micky and Morgan had just finished their imposts; but Wibley, who shared their study, was busy with a box of theatrical props. "Wibley was a keen amateur actor, the best in the Remove Dramatic Society, and all his spare time was given to his hobby. He was carefully repairing a damaged wig now, and was very busy."

"Done your lines?" asked Harry.

"Too busy," said Wibley. "It's all right. Morgan and Desmond can do enough for this study. I shan't be noticed."

"You ought to do them," said Harry, frowning.

Wibley nodded cheerfully.

"I agree!"

"Then why don't you do them?"

"How can I write lines when I'm repairing this wig?" demanded Wibley, in an injured tone. "I have most of the trouble of looking after the stage props. That's enough, without doing beastly lines."

"Oh, rats!" said Harry crossly. "You ought to do them, you jolly well know that."

"I'll tell you what," said Wibley. "You do them for the Magnet Library.—No. 360."

me, and I'll take them in, if you like. I'll do that much. Then we shall both be satisfied."

But Wharton did not seem to consider that a satisfactory idea at all. He was fed up on lines.

The Famous Five went together to the Head's study with their finished imposts. Dr. Locke received them with a severe brow. In spite of Ferrers Locke's explanation and intercession, it was not easy for the Head to forget his startling experience in the Close, and the absurd figure he must have cut hopping among the fireworks. But the Removites were very meek and respectful, and they departed without any fresh vials of wrath being poured out upon their heads. After their visit, there was a steady stream of visitors to the study with lines to deliver.

All the lines that were done were taken in, and Skinner & Co. waited with some inward misgiving, wondering whether they would be missed.

They were soon enlightened. Early in the evening, when the juniors were beginning their preparation, Trotter the page came along the Remove passage. He had messages for five juniors—Vernon-Smith, Skinner, Stott, Snoop, and Bolsover major. They had to take their lines in before bedtime.

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Bolsover major angrily. "Fancy the old sport having spotted us all like that. What a downy old bird!"

"Rotten!" said Vernon-Smith to his study-mate Skinner. "Better pile in, Skinny."

Skinner shook his head.

"But you've got to, now," said the Boulder. "The Head knows you were one of us. He's awfully keen, you know, and he saw us all."

"I'm not going to do any beastly lines!" snapped Skinner. "It's too late. I've got to do my prep, or have trouble with Quelch in the morning."

"You'll have trouble with the Head to-night if you don't."

"I'll chance it."

The other fellows hurried through their lines and took them in, and Harold Skinner chanced it. Shortly before bedtime he received a summons to the Head's study, and he went there with outward calmness, but inward uneasiness. Skinner had not been brought up at the feet of George Washington, and he was not very affectionately attached to the rigid truth, and he trusted to his fertile imagination to "spook" the Head. But he found the Head in a grim humour. Having let the delinquents off very lightly, the Head was naturally determined that that light punishment should not be eluded.

"Your lines, Skinner?"

"My lines, sir?" said Skinner, in surprise.

"Yes. Are they done?"

"I haven't any lines, sir."

"You were one of the boys concerned in that outrageous explosion of fireworks in the Close, Skinner!" said the Head sternly.

"I, sir? Not at all, sir!"

"Do you mean to say that you were not there?" demanded the Head.

"Certainly not, sir! I was talking to Fishy in his study at the time, and I happened to see it from the study window."

"I saw you there, Skinner."

"Ahem! In such a crowd, sir, it—it's easy to—to make a mistake, sir. I assure you—"

"You need not assure me as to the truth of a falsehood, Skinner. Hold out your hand."

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Skinner.

Swish, swish!

"Groooh!"

"You will do four hundred lines now, Skinner; and you will take them in to your Form-master by tea-time to-morrow. I shall speak to Mr. Quelch. You may go."

Skinner went.

"How did you get on?" asked Peter Todd, meeting him as he came back to the Remove passage. It was hardly necessary to ask. Skinner's brow was like a thundercloud, and he was squeezing and twisting his hands furiously.

"Ow, ow! The suspicious beast didn't believe that I was in Fishy's study at all!" groaned Skinner. "Ow, ow! I've been kicked!"

"Serve you right, for telling whoopers!" said Todd unsympathetically.

"Oh, rats!" snorted Skinner.

Skinner spent the rest of that evening growling over his aching palms, and all his leisure time the next day in writing lines. He had been a little too clever, as he often was; but he declared to the unsympathetic Removites that he was going to get his own back somehow. But exactly how he was would do that was not quite clear.

FERRERS LOCKE was the recipient of a good deal of attention at Greyfriars. The famous detective had come down there for a quiet rest in the country, after being engaged upon an arduous case, and he seemed to enjoy his holiday. He sauntered along the country lanes in the mornings, or strolled along the cliffs, and enjoyed the keen breeze from the North Sea. The fellows often saw him in the Close or the Cloisters, chatting and strolling with the masters, and he spent a good deal of time in the magnificent school library. He was often seen with a book in his hand; and the juniors learned, with awe and admiration, that the books were in all sorts of different languages.

He always had a kindly nod or a cheery word for the juniors, too; and he proved himself a good-natured fellow. One afternoon he was found helping Mark Linley in his study with his Greek. On another occasion he aided Temple of the Fourth in a specially difficult "construe." He talked in French with the French master, Monsieur Charpentier, who was heard to remark that Monsieur Locke's French was "tout a fait" Parisian. He made friends with the German master, Herr Gans, who had recently returned to Greyfriars after his absence; and he talked to him in a language which Bob Cherry compared to cracking nuts, but which was apparently German. But the juniors admired him more than ever when he joined the First Eleven in a footer match, and played for Wingate's team in a manner that was beyond all praise.

With all his gifts and good qualities, the famous detective was a very quiet and unassuming man, and as Peter Todd observed, nobody would have known that he was a great man at all simply by looking at him. He was so good-natured that the Famous Five screwed up their courage to invite him to tea in No. 1 Study; and Ferrers Locke accepted the invitation with great heartiness, and the feed was a tremendous success.

But, while he was generally popular, there were some fellows in the Remove who bore him a grudge. Skinner was the chief of them. Skinner could not forget his licking and those four hundred lines.

It was scarcely just to lay his punishment at the door of Ferrers Locke. But Skinner did not bother about being just. If Locke hadn't come to Greyfriars, Skinner wouldn't have been licked and "lined"—that was how he looked at it.

And it was Skinner who thought out and proposed the great scheme of pulling the leg of the famous detective. Skinner was a great humorist, and his humorous efforts were not always good-natured.

He was so taken with the idea of "ragging" Ferrers Locke that he called a meeting of the leading spirits of the Remove to propound the great scheme to them. Most of the juniors were generally ready for a jape, and as Skinner said, where could they find a better object than Ferrers Locke?

Skinner propounded his scheme in the Rag to a dozen or so juniors. Peter Todd, who was a born practical joker, approved at once. Peter liked Ferrers Locke immensely, but he would have japed his own grandfather for the sake of a little fun.

"My belief is that he isn't such a tremendously sharp chap as you fellows think," declared Skinner. "He really isn't a bit like a detective! Just an ordinary, quiet chap, like you meet every day. It would be a jolly good idea to spoof him and show him up, you know!"

"You couldn't spoof him," said Harry Wharton.

"I think I could, anyway."

"Rats!"

"I don't know about showing him up," said Peter Todd. "That's all rot, of course. But it would be a ripping idea to spoof him if we could. Jolly good fun to take in the most famous detective of modern times—what?"

"Not a bad idea," said the Bounder. "We really owe him one for those lines, too. It's up to us to get even!"

"Rot!" said Wharton.

"The rotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Smithy."

"I guess it's a good stunt," said Fisher T. Fish, whose English was sometimes almost as remarkable as Herree Singh's. "I reckon he's no great shakes of a detective, either. We have detectives in the Venevited States that could lay over him, sir, and go one better—just a few! Your blessed Ferrers Locke cuts no ice with me!"

"Well, what's the wheeze?" asked Bob Cherry. "No harm in a little joke; and it may live things up for Mr. Locke, too. It's up to us—ahem!—to make his stay at Greyfriars enjoyable if we can!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Skinny!"

"Well," said Skinner, pleased at the support he was receiving, "my idea is for a theft to occur in the school—"

"My hat!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 360.

NEXT "THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

EVERY MONDAY,

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

"Not a real theft, of course; but something can be taken from somewhere to look like a theft. Mauly's banknotes, for instance. Mauly always has a wad of banknotes, and he's a careless ass. Or Quelch's typewriter, or something. Well, when the missing article is missed, and nobody knows anything about it, there will be an inquiry, and, of course, Locke, being on the spot, will be called upon to investigate the mystery."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" said Harry Wharton. "He will find the missing article, and then you'll have to prove that you didn't really steal it!"

"He won't find it about me!" grinned Skinner. "My idea is to hide it in his own room. When he does his tracking, and investigating, and all that—a la Sexton Blake—he can track down the missing article, and find it in his own collar-box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A shout of laughter greeted Skinner's humorous suggestion. The idea of Ferrers Locke being called in to find a missing article, and finding it among his own collars, struck the juniors as funny. Wharton could not help laughing.

"It will pull his leg a treat," said Skinner. "When he finds it, of course, he will know that we've been rotting him. And if he doesn't find it, it will show that he's no great shakes of a detective. It would be awful fun if he carried something away with him in his bags when he left, and discovered it afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner's idea caught on at once. Harry Wharton did not approve; but he was accused at once of being a sport and a killjoy, so he held his peace. And Skinner & Co. proceeded to develop their plan with great ingenuity.

"Mind, mum's the word," said Skinner. "You fellows who don't want to take a hand in the jape have got to keep it dark—that's understood!"

"That's all right," said Wharton. "We won't say a word, of course. But my opinion is that you'll make a giddy failure of it!"

"Oh, rats."

"Now for the missing article," said Skinner. "What about your gold watch, Smithy?"

"No, thanks," said the Bounder promptly. "Missing articles might get lost. I'm not chancing it with my gold tickler!"

"Your tie-pin, Wharton?"

"My tie-pin's staying where it is," said Wharton cheerfully.

"You can have my footer-boots," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Blow your footer-boots!" said Skinner crossly. "Ferrers Locke hasn't a bag big enough to put 'em in!"

"Look here—"

"Then we'll lift Mauly's banknotes," said Balsover major.

"Begad, you won't!" said Lord Mauleverer, who had been sitting and listening to the discussion with his eyes half closed.

But he woke up as he heard that suggestion.

"What about Quelch's type?" said Peter Todd.

"Well, that's jolly heavy, and it's too big to go into Locke's collar-box."

"Bunter's watch and chain," suggested Micky Desmond.

"Rolled gold," sniffed Skinner.

"Sure, that doesn't matter entirely. Bunter always says they're rayle, and if they were missing he'd stick to it more than ever that they were rayle. And he'd wake the whole school if they were missing!"

"By Jove, that's a good idea!" said the Bounder. "Bunter would make a frightful fuss about it, and that's what we want. There would be an uproar, and Ferrers Locke would take up the trail—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good!" said Skinner, rubbing his hands. "Bunter's watch and chain, then. Not a word to the fat duffer about it, mind!"

"Not a giddy syllable!"

"Easy enough to lift them in the dorm," continued Skinner gleefully. "Bunter sleeps like a top. They can be taken out from under his pillow, and shoved into Ferrers Locke's quarters. He has two rooms, and while he's asleep in his bed-room a chap can sneak into the sitting-room and hide the plunder. You can do it, Smithy; you're an awfully keen chap—"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder. "I'm keen enough not to do it, Skinny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, perhaps Toddy's the man," said Skinner thoughtfully. "I'll take the watch out from Bunter's pillow, and Toddy can take it to—"

"Bow-wow!" said Peter Todd.
 "Look here, there's nothing to be afraid of," said Skinner.
 "Locke here, there's nothing in the other room."
 "Quite so! You can do it without a bit of risk, Skinny," said Todd blandly.
 "Ahem! Perhaps Desmond had better do it. Irishmen are afraid of nothing—ahem! It's up to you, Micky."
 "Sure, I won't rob ye of the glory of carrying out yere own idea, Skinner darling!"
 "Perhaps Bob Cherry—"
 "Count me out!" grinned Bob.
 "Perhaps Inky—"
 "The perhapsful is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Skinner."
 "Well, well, we'll leave it to Fishy. A—a Yankee never gets left, you know," said Skinner. "You're the man, Fishy!"

"I guess I'm dead in this act," said Fisher T. Fish calmly.
 "There was a choice for the juniors:
 "It's up to you, Skinny!"
 Skinner did not look quite pleased. He was a great man at evolving schemes, but he preferred to see them carried out by others. There was no escape for the humorist of the Remove.

"Pile in, Skinny!" said Squiff, with a chuckle. "We'll all stand ready to applaud."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, all right!" said Skinner ungraciously. "I dare say I could manage it better than you duffers, anyway. I'm on!"
 And so it was settled. And the young rascals looked forward with great glee to the pulling of the leg of the famous detective.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Loss!

BILLY BUNTER opened one eye and yawned as the rising-bell clanged out the following morning. Then he settled under for another nap. The Owl of the Remove was a great slacker, and he never turned out till the last possible moment. But this special morning the Removites were anxious to see him up early. Most of the Form were in the secret, and they wanted to see William George Bunter make his startling discovery.

"Up with you, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.
 Snore!
 Then there was a roar from Bunter, as Bob squeezed a sponge over his head. The fat junior sat up in bed, blinking with wrath.

"Groogh! Yow! Beast! Ow!"
 "Turn out!" said Bob severely. "What are you slacking for? Don't you know the rising-bell's gone?"
 "Blow the rising-bell!"
 "I'll help you, Bunter, old chap!" said Squiff; and he grasped Bunter's bedclothes and jerked them off.
 "Varoosh!"

Johnny Ball kindly contributed a powerful kick, and Billy Bunter rolled out of bed. He groped for his glasses and jammed them on his fat little nose and blinked furiously at his rude awakers.

"Ow! Beasts! Yow! There's lots of time! I don't need all the washing you dirty bouncers do! Ow!"
 Bunter turned sulkily to his morning toilet. Cold baths did not agree with Billy Bunter, and his washing was never very extensive. He dressed before he washed—and on cold mornings his wash was a decidedly scanty one. Indeed, some of the fellows declared that they could discern the high and low water-marks on Bunter's fat countenance. The fat junior sputtered and gasped over the cold water, though he did not use much of it.

"What's the time, Bunter?" called out Vernon-Smith.
 Bunter had not yet made his discovery. Some of the juniors had heard Skinner moving in the night, and they knew that the "robbery" had been effected. And they were impatient.

"Find out!" growled Bunter.
 And he finished his meagre wash and finished dressing. Then he groped under his pillow for his watch and chain, which he always placed there for security—not that the most enterprising burglar would have been likely to trouble about them.

Bunter's watch and chain were of great size, but the value was not equally great. Bunter's tale that they were a birthday present from a titled relation was taken with a very large allowance of salt. Skinner had said that they were a birthday present all right, but came from an uncle of Bunter's who kept a pawnbroker's shop in Seven Dials—an imputation that Bunter vigorously denied. If the articles had been made of gold they would certainly have been worth a very large sum; and, indeed, Bunter asserted that they were thirty-five carats, which would have been at least unique.

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Bunter groped in vain for his property under the pillow. The Removites watched him with grinning anticipation. The fat junior snorted, and pitched pillows and bolsters off the bed, but the watch and chain did not come to light. He turned down the mattress and blinked further. But no glitter of rolled-gold met his eyes.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, in alarm, "my gold watch ain't here!"

"Not there?" exclaimed Skinner, in great astonishment.

"No! Somebody's taken it!"

"Perhaps it's rolled away," suggested Skinner. "It's that kind of gold, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Bunter. "That watch and chain are solid gold—thirty-two carat—I mean, thirty-seven! It was a birthday present from the head of my family—Lord de Bunter. If that watch has been stolen there will be a row, I can tell you!"

"Watches are made to go," remarked Skinner.

"Look here, who's got my watch?" howled Bunter. "If any silly ass has taken it for a lark he'd better hand it back at once!"

"How could it be taken for a lark?" asked Vernon-Smith. "From the size, it might be taken for a full-grown turkey!"
 "I don't want any of your funny jokes, Smithy. I want my watch. And the chain, too. The chain's gone!"

"You should keep a watch on it," said Skinner.

"Oh, shut up! Where's my watch?"

"Oh, where, and oh, where can it be?" sang Squiff softly.

"Now look here," said Bunter, "that watch has been taken! If it ain't found, I shall claim the value from the Head. The Head is responsible for lost property in the school. I shall go to him and claim the value!"

"I dare say he's got a threepenny-bit about him," said Skinner soothingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That watch cost thirty guineas!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean it!" said Bunter. "Somebody's stolen my watch. If it's a lark, you can own up before I leave the dorm. I warn you that I'm going straight to the Head."

Nobody owned up.

Bunter gave a final blink round the dormitory, and started for the door.

He was in deadly earnest. He had stated so often that the watch was tremendously valuable one that he had fallen into the habit of believing it himself. Now that it was gone—lost, stolen, or strayed—Bunter felt that his loss was immense. And he meant to have his valuable watch back, or compensation to the full value—fixed by himself.

Bunter departed from the dormitory, and slammed the door after him. Considering the extent of his loss, he felt that his Form-fellows were very unsympathetic. He rolled away down the passage and ran into Wingate of the Sixth in the lower hall.

Wingate caught him by the shoulder.

"Steady, you fat ass!"

"I say, Wingate, my watch has been stolen!"

"Oh, rubbish!" said Wingate tersely.

"I tell you it's been stolen!" roared Bunter. "I'm going to the Head!"

"The Head's not down yet," said the prefect. "Look here, is your watch really missing?"

"Of course it is! Haven't I told you so?" howled Bunter.

"Perhaps one of the kids has hidden it for a lark."

"We've asked them all."

"Was it worth much?" asked Wingate, frowning. The idea of a thief being in the school was a very unpleasant one.

"Thirty-five guineas," said Bunter.

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you it cost thirty-five guineas! It is a birthday present from a rich relation. It was solid gold, forty-two carat."

"Fathread!" said Wingate. "Still, if your watch has been taken, I must see into it. I dare say it's only a joke. Keep your silly head shut till after breakfast, and I dare say it will be given back to you. If not, I'll see into the matter."

"But the thief may be selling it this minute!"

"Nobody's gone out of gates," said Wingate. "Shut up, I tell you!"

"Look here! My watch has been stolen—"

"What is that?" rapped out a sharp voice, as Mr. Quelch came down the stairs. "What are you saying, Bunter?"

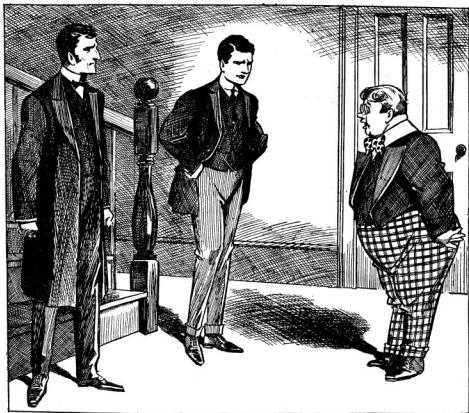
"My watch has been stolen, sir—my splendid gold watch!"

"Take only the watch, though that's forty guineas; but it was a birthday present, sir! It's been stolen!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I cannot believe it, Bunter! When did you miss it?"

"This morning, sir, when I looked under my pillow for it."



"Look here," yelled Bunter furiously, "my watch has been stolen!" "What is that?" rapped out a sharp voice, as Mr. Quelch came down the stairs. "What are you saying, Bunter?" "My watch has been taken, sir—my splendid gold watch. It's been stolen!" (See Chapter 5.)

It's been taken away in the night. It's a very valuable watch, sir."

"Come with me," said Mr. Quelch.

He made his way quickly to the Remove dormitory, followed by Bunter. The Remove were not out yet. Bunter, for the first time in his life, had been first down. The juniors looked serious enough as the Form-master came in with Billy Bunter at his heels.

"Bunter states that his watch is missing," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust that it is only a foolish joke. Has any boy here Bunter's watch in his possession?"

"No, sir," came from all sides.

"Has someone hidden it in the dormitory for a joke?"

"No, sir."

"Search in your bed again, Bunter, and under it. It may have fallen or slipped somewhere."

"I've searched, sir."

"Do as I tell you!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

Bunter grunted, and obeyed. He fairly stripped the bed, under the keen eyes of the Form-master. But there was no sign of the watch. Mr. Quelch frowned a worried frown. He looked so extremely annoyed that some of the practical jokers began to wish that they had let Skinner's little scheme severely alone. If the facts came out now there was condign punishment waiting for the jokers concerned. Mr. Quelch's sense of humour was not keen enough to appreciate that kind of joke.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

"Tain't here, sir," said Bunter. "It's been stolen."

"It must have been taken, certainly," said Mr. Quelch. "I refuse to believe that it has been stolen until there is no possible room for doubt in the matter. Perhaps some boy came in from another dormitory and removed it, from a mistaken sense of humour. I shall endeavour to correct his sense of humour if that is the case," added Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips into a tight line.

"May I make a suggestion, sir?" said Skinner meekly.

"What have you to say, Skinner?"

"Ferraers Locke, sir, he's a great detective. Perhaps he would undertake to find the watch if you asked him, sir."

"Nonsense, Skinner! I should be scarcely likely to trouble Dr. Locke's guest with this matter."

And the Form-master swept out of the dormitory, his face dark with vexation. When the juniors came down, they found a notice on the board, in Mr. Quelch's handwriting:

"A watch belonging to Bunter of the Remove has been taken from under his pillow, presumably for a joke. The boy who has taken it is requested to bring it at once to my study. If it is not placed in my hands before morning lessons it will be concluded that a theft has been committed, and measures will be taken accordingly. H. QUELCH."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bolsover major. "It's getting serious! Where is the blessed watch, Skinny?"

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Skinner chuckled.

"In Ferrers Locke's hat-box,"

"His hat-box! Oh, crumbs!"

"Where he keeps his topper, you know. To-morrow's Sunday. He—he will want his topper for Church-parade, so he's bound to find it then. He don't wear a topper other days, so he won't find it till then—see?"

"Quechy is awfully ratty!" said Snoop uneasily. "If it should come out—"

"How can it come out, fathead? It will come out that it's a jape when Ferrers Locke finds it, but they can't possibly guess who did it."

"I suppose they can't," agreed Snoop.

"Of course not!" said Bolsover. "It's the joke of the season!"

"Picture his face when he finds it!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the practical jokers waited in great anticipation. Mr. Quech was waiting, too, but the missing watch was not handed into his study before morning lessons. It was not handed in at all, and the Remove-master, as his notice had announced, concluded that it was a theft, and took his measures accordingly.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ferrers Locke Takes up the Case!

"EXCUSE me, sir—"

Ferrers Locke was strolling in the Close when the juniors came out after morning lessons. He paused as some of the Remove came up to him, taking their caps off very respectfully.

"Certainly!" said Mr. Locke. "What is it?"

"I dare say you've heard what has happened this morning, sir?" said Skinner.

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"Mr. Quech hasn't told you about the theft?" asked Skinner.

Mr. Locke looked grave.

"A theft!" he said.

"Yes, sir. One of the fellows has had his watch stolen."

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it."

"Yes; it's awful!" said Skinner. "You see, with a thief in the school nobody can feel safe about his things any longer. We've thought Mr. Quech would be bound to mention it to you, Mr. Locke."

"He has not done so."

"Well, sir, considering what a serious matter it is, we thought that perhaps you would like to help," said Skinner.

"To help!" repeated Mr. Locke.

He did not appear to understand. Skinner hastened to enlighten him.

"To help find the thief, sir. As it's in your line of business, we thought it was jolly lucky you happened to be at Greyfriars. We might hunt for the thief for months and months and months, and never find him. And it's an awfully valuable thing—Bunter's gold watch. Bunter prizes that gold watch because it was a present."

"A birthday present," said Peter Todd.

"From a relation," said Vernon-Smith.

"A titled relation," added Bolsover major impressively.

"Bunter is awfully cut up. He is wondering what he can say when his uncle the marquis calls, and finds that he hasn't got the watch."

Skinner gave Bolsover major a warning glance. "Rotting!" the famous detective was all very well, but it might make him suspicious if it was piled on too thick. Ferrers Locke was looking at Skinner already with a very singular expression. He had observed that cheerful youth before, and he read his character with perfect ease, deep as Harold Skinner prided himself upon being.

"I am very sorry for Bunter," said Ferrers Locke.

"We thought you would be, sir," said Skinner diffidently.

"Of course, with your experience, it would be merely child's play to you to find the missing article. I dare say you've found thousands of lost watches in your time."

"Ahem!" said Ferrers Locke. "My work has not chiefly been finding lost watches. However, I have little doubt that I could deal adequately with so simple a case, if your Form-master asked me to take the matter in hand."

"He feels that he can't ask a guest of the Head to bother himself about it," explained Skinner. "He said something like that to us in the dormitory. But Quechy—ahem, I mean Mr. Quech—is frightfully worried. He feels that this is a slur on the whole school—a thief being in the place."

"It is certainly very unpleasant," assented Mr. Locke.

"Awful disgrace, sir," said Todd. "The fellows in the other Forms are chipping us about it. Temple has already nicknamed the Remove dorm the 'Thieves' Kitchen'!"

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"Quechy doesn't like to ask you, sir," said the Bouncer. "But if you offered, he'd jump at it. You see, he doesn't want to worry the Head with it. It would be a very painful shock to Dr. Locke, and as he is your relation—"

"That's what we thought, sir," said Skinner. "With your experience, it would be simply a gaudy to you to arrest the scoundrel!"

Ferrers Locke looked fixedly at Skinner—so fixedly that the humorist of the Remove felt a little uncomfortable. But that keen look vanished the next moment, and Skinner felt at ease again, as a thoughtful frown came over the detective's brow.

"Are you sure the watch has not simply been taken as a joke?" suggested Mr. Locke. "I believe you young fellows sometimes play jokes upon one another."

"We've asked every fellow in the Form, sir, and nothing has been heard of it," said Skinner diplomatically.

"And Quechy put a notice on the board," said Bolsover major. "If the watch wasn't handed to him before morning lessons, the fellow who'd taken it was to be treated as a thief. And the watch hasn't been handed in."

"Are any steps being taken?" asked Mr. Locke.

"Quechy—" began Skinner.

"Who?"

"Ahem! Mr. Quech, I mean, is going to order a search of the Remove. Bunter is raising Cain about his watch, and he is going to claim thirty guineas if it isn't found. Of course, if you would be kind enough to spot the thief, it would save heaps of trouble, as well as getting rid of the awful rascal, for, of course, he will be sacked from Greyfriars."

"Of course I cannot interfere in the matter unless requested to do so by someone in authority," said Mr. Locke. "But I will certainly speak to Mr. Quech and offer my services."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You may give me the particulars," said Mr. Locke thoughtfully. "When was the watch missed?"

"This morning, sir, when Bunter got up. He put it under his pillow overnight—he always does that because it's a tremendously valuable watch—and when he got up this morning it was gone—vanished—disappeared!"

"Then it must have been taken during the night?"

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Was anyone awake during the night?"

"Every fellow I've asked tells me that he was fast asleep, sir," said Skinner, with a shake of the head.

"And you—were you fast asleep?"

"I never wake up till rising-bell, Mr. Locke. I'm an awfully sound sleeper."

"And last night you slept as soundly as usual?"

Skinner was fairly driven to it. To take in the detective without telling a barefaced "shopper" was impossible. But Skinner was capable of the most whopping whoppers when necessary to carry out his little schemes. He hesitated a second—a second's hesitation that did not pass unnoticed, though the detective gave no sign—and then replied:

"Sound as a top, sir!"

Peter Todd made an involuntary grimace. Peter Todd was a great humorist, too, but his humor did not go to the extent of telling lies. And Peter's involuntary expression, momentary as it was, did not escape the detective.

Ferrers Locke assumed a very thoughtful expression.

"You are fortunate to sleep so soundly," he remarked, "it is one of the gifts of youth. I sleep very lightly myself."

"I do you, sir?"

"Yes. Even a slight sound in an adjoining room is sufficient to wake me," said Mr. Locke.

Skinner's jaw dropped.

"Ye-es; is that so?" he stammered.

"Yes. However, to return to the subject of the watch. I should be sorry to think that there was a dishonest boy in the Remove—I am more inclined to the opinion that the watch has been taken for a joke, and perhaps hidden somewhere—perhaps in the most unexpected sort of place."

"Oh?"

"I trust that it will turn out to be merely a joke. But we shall see. I will speak to Mr. Quech, and then I will consider the matter very carefully."

And, with a nod to the boys, Mr. Locke walked away towards the School House.

Skinner & Co. exchanged uneasy glances.

"Does he smell a mouse?" muttered Bolsover major.

"How could he?" grunted Skinner.

"Well, he must be pretty sharp, you know, or he wouldn't have made such a whacking reputation as a detective."

"Blow his reputation! I think he's been overrated—most of these johnnies are," said Skinner. "Anyway, I know he jolly well hasn't got anything out of me. Let's get in, and see whether Quechy's let him take it up."

"I think I was to have been the victim," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"You!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I think so. Otherwise the watch would not have been placed in a hatbox, where I found it, after searching my rooms for it," said the detective.

"I—I do not understand—"

The Removites stared at Ferrers Locke open-mouthed. Skinner gazed at him dazedly. The juniors had supposed that Skinner had left the watch in his own pocket by mistake. Skinner himself had thought that he must have done so, though he could have sworn that he hid it in Mr. Locke's hatbox. The detective's words took them all by surprise.

"Let me explain," said Mr. Locke genially. "Master Skinner this morning kindly asked my assistance in finding the watch, and told me all about it. He was probably unaware at the time he had betrayed himself to me; but, as a matter of fact, I am not quite so simple as Master Skinner supposed."

Skinner groaned. He realised now that the famous detective was not simple.

"Last night," resumed Ferrers Locke, "I woke, and heard a slight noise in my room that adjoins my bed-room. I did not trouble my head about the matter then. But after what Master Skinner told me to-day, I thought of it. I put two and two together, in fact. When I took up this extremely interesting case I retired to my room, with the intention of searching for the watch."

"Oh!" said Skinner.

"I found it in my hat-box," said Ferrers Locke calmly.

"I brought it here in my sleeve," said Skinner.

"You—your sleeve!" murmured Skinner.

"And, in order to surprise Master Skinner into a confession, I made a pretence of discovering it in his pocket," added Ferrers Locke. "I am glad to say that the little trick succeeded perfectly."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

"It was the only way to obtain evidence, though I was quite satisfied in my mind as to whom the practical joker was," added Ferrers Locke. "And now, sir, if I may venture to ask a favour, may I beg you to forgive Master Skinner? As the victim of his practical joke, I am the offended party, and it would be painful to me to be the cause of the infliction of punishment upon any boy here."

Mr. Quelch's expression showed how little he was disposed to accede to the detective's request. He looked at Skinner as if he could eat him. But he could not very well refuse the request of the Head's guest.

The boy has acted foolishly and inconsiderately, and he has told falsehoods, Mr. Locke," said the Remove-master. "However, for your sake I will pass over the matter."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

Mr. Quelch rustled into the house, not in the best of humours; and Ferrers Locke, with a kindly nod to the juniors, sauntered away. And the Removites gathered round Skinner to tell him what they thought of him and his schemes.

They told him at considerable length, and not in polite language; but Skinner, for once, hadn't a word to say. He had been utterly beaten by the detective, whom he had set out to jape, and he had to admit it. But Skinner was feeling very sore over his defeat, and his feelings towards Ferrers Locke were far from amiable. And he confided later to his chum that he wasn't done with the boast yet.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wibley is Wanted!

WIBLEY of the Remove was busy in his study after lessons on Monday, when Skinner and Vernon-Smith came in. They stared at Wibley. The amateur actor was standing before the looking-glass, making up his face with grease-paints. His complexion was that of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, and it looked so natural that, for a moment, the juniors did not know him.

"What the deuce—is that you, Wibley?" ejaculated the Bouncer.

Wibley grinned—a mahogany grin, that made his painted face look very queer.

"It's I," he said cheerily.

"What on earth are you doing that for?"

"Only practice," said Wibley. "What's wanted? I'm rather lousy."

"The fact is, we've come in to talk to you," said Skinner. "Well, you can talk while I practise making-up," said Wibley, turning to the glass again.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Vernon-Smith. "This is im—
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portant. I say, you make up jolly well, Wib. You are a topper at it, and no mistake."

"It's simply marvellous," said Skinner.

Wibley looked at them suspiciously.

"What's the little game?" he demanded. "I've got no money to lend."

"Ahem!"

"We really think so, Wib. You're simply a marvel—the very best word!" said Skinner enthusiastically.

"Thanks," said Wibley. "But you didn't come here to tell me what a clever chap I am. What do you want?"

"Hum! We—we don't exactly want anything. We—we've got an idea—about that bouncer of a detective, you know—we've thought of a way of pulling his leg—"

"Then you can leave me out," said Wibley promptly; "I'm fed up! He's too jolly sharp for me. Why, he spotted you the other day as easy as falling off a form. My advice to you is let him alone. You can't spoof him."

"I—I was thinking that you could, Wib."

"Thank you for nothing," said Wibley sarcastically. "I am jolly well not going to pull your chestnuts out of the fire, Skinner. Besides, he's a good chap—we should have had a licking all round on Saturday if he hadn't bottled old Quelch up. It was jolly decent of him, I think."

"The rotter!" growled Skinner. "He wouldn't have bowled me out if he hadn't taken me by surprise."

"But he did take you by surprise," chuckled Wibley.

"Don't work off any more of your missing-watch wheezes on him, Skippy. It's no good."

"I ain't saying a thing of that kind this time, Wib. It's the joke of the season—a really screaming wheeze; and you're the only fellow who could carry it out, because you're so—so jolly clever at making-up you know."

"Any charge for 'soft sawder'?" asked Wibley.

"Ahem! I mean it! The idea is this—"

"Take it away and bury it!" said Wibley.

"But it is such a good wheeze," said Skinner pleadingly.

"Then carry it out yourself."

"I can't do it. It requires a lot of skill in disguising oneself," explained Skinner eagerly; "that's what you can do in first-rate style, Wib—now you can't deny that."

Wibley was very far from wishing to deny it. He was exceedingly proud of his skill in disguising himself so that the fellows didn't know him. He had played many tricks on the Remove in that particular line. And, in spite of himself, he began to relax a little under the influence of Skinner's skilful soft sawder.

"You know how you spoofed all the fellows the other day, Wib, making up as Bunter's uncle," said Skinner.

"I know how you bumped me for it afterwards, too," granted Wibley.

"They won't bump you this time. This is up against the blessed detective. He's done us once, and it's up to the Remove to down him," urged Skinner.

"For the honour of the Form, Wib," said the Bouncer solemnly.

"Well, let's hear it," said Wibley, relenting.

"We want you to make up. You make up so splendidly, you know—"

"Cut that out!" said Wibley. "Get on with the washing!"

"And—present yourself to Ferrers Locke as a client!"

"A—a client?" ejaculated Wibley.

"That's it," grinned the Bouncer. "What do you think, Wib?"

"My hat!" said Wibley.

"He won't know you from Adam, the way you do it," said Skinner. "You can pass yourself off on him for a client—chap who's heard that he's down here, you know, and rushed to see him. Missing wife, or murdered grandfather, or something. Pile it on thick, and take him right in, up to the chin, and send him off on a wild-geese chase."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley.

Vernon-Smith and Skinner exchanged glances of satisfaction. Wibley had evidently caught on.

"You see, you could do it, and nobody else could," said Skinner. "Make up as an old colonel, with white whiskers, or a lawyer in glasses, or an Indian prince or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll do it, Wib?"

"Oh, I'll do it!" said Wibley, chuckling. "If I can't fool him that way, nobody can. I'll wager that nobody would bowl me out when I'm really made up. I've been thinking of getting some new things to make up as a retired Indian colonel—white moustache and whiskers, bald head, and so on—special set of clothes—"

"Good!" said Skinner and the Bouncer together.

"It happens that old Lazarus in Courtfield has the very things in his new stock," said Wibley confidentially. "He showed them to me the other day, and I wanted them badly,

They would come in rippin' for a character in our next play, you know. But they come rather expensive, and I told Lazarus I couldn't afford them."

"But for a special wheeze like this—"
"Just what I was thinking. For the sake of downing that giddy detective, and showing him that the Remove can pull his leg, it's worth the money," said Wibley.

"That's right," said the Bouncer, "well worth it."
"And by paying cash, I can make old Lazarus do it reasonably," said Wibley in a thoughtful sort of way.

"Good man!"
"In fact, I could screw him down to three quid for the clothes, the disguises, and the whole shoot," said Wibley.

"Do you think that's too much to spend on a wheeze like this?"
"Not a bit of it," said Vernon-Smith, wondering a little, too, for Wibley was by no means rich, and sometimes was quite unable to make the purchases he desired to make to add to his dearly-beloved stock of theatrical properties.

"You think it's really worth it, Smithy?"
"Every bit."

"Then it's a go," said Wibley heartily. "I'll get some cards printed, too—Colonel Snooker, of the Indian Army!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'll do it all in the three quid," said Wibley. "You are sure that you think it's worth the money?"

"Not the slightest doubt of it."
"Good! Hand it over, then."

"Wha-a-at!"
"Of course, I haven't got the money," explained Wibley calmly. "But as your father is a giddy millionaire, Smithy, you can afford it; and you say yourself that it's well worth the money, every bit of it."

"I—I didn't mean—I—"
"That's what I meant," said Wibley. "I'll accept the things as a present in consideration for my services in playing the part. You said distinctly you thought it was well worth the money."

"But—but I meant your money—"
"Well, I meant yours, and you've got plenty," said Wibley coolly. "However, if you don't think it's worth the money, on second thoughts, you can hook it."

And Wibley turned to the glass again, and went on with his make-up.

"Suppose you borrow the things!" suggested Skinner.

"Rubbish! Smithy said it was worth the money. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I want the things badly, and I'll stand a quid towards the expense," said Wibley, with great generosity.

"It's up to you, Smithy," murmured Skinner. "Dash it all, you've got plenty of dibs, and you said yourself that it was worth it."

The Bouncer laughed. He felt that he was fairly caught.

"It's a go," he said. "I've got the cash, and I'll stand two quids to Wib's one. I don't care."

And Vernon-Smith produced a leather purse crammed with one-pound and one-shilling notes, and carelessly tossed two pound notes on the table. Skinner blinked enviously at the wads of notes.

"You lucky bargee!" he growled. "I wish my father was a moneylender—"

"What!"
"I—I mean a great financial magnate," said Skinner hastily. "Now, Wib, it's up to you. When are you going to get the things?"

"To-day," said Wibley, with great briskness, "I'm on. And to-morrow morning, after lessons, I'll make-up immediately, and call on Ferrers Locke. I'll send him off on a mission of life or death without his lunch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the two young rascals left the study highly satisfied. This time, Skinner declared, Ferrers Locke's leg would be pulled, and no mistake. If anybody could do it, it was Wibley of the Remove, with his wonderful powers of impersonation. And to make sure that no hint of the intended jape should reach the ears of the victim, the three japers kept the scheme entirely to themselves, not taking a single member of the Remove into their confidence.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Colonel Calls!

IMMEDIATELY the Remove were dismissed from the Form-room the following morning, Wibley and Skinner and the Bouncer hurried up to the Remove passage.

Wibley had brought his new purchases home from Court-field the previous evening, and all was ready in his study. The Remove were all out of doors, and the plotters had the study, and indeed the whole passage, to themselves. Wibley at once proceeded to make-up, Skinner and the Bouncer leaving him their aid.

Wibley was certainly a past-master in the art. By means of boots with elevators, he increased his height by three inches, which made a considerable difference. He donned a suit of light brown clothes, padded out to a considerable

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stoutness. He made up his face to a dark, sunburnt red, added white whiskers, white moustache, and a thin white beard. He put in wrinkles with great art, and Skinner and Smithy watched him with wonder. When he added the bald scalp, with the fringe of grey hair round it, he looked at least sixty—a somewhat short, stout veteran of sixty or more.

He put on a brown bowler hat, white spats and gloves, and screwed a monocle in his eye. The effect, when he had finished, was extraordinary. Had not the two juniors been present during the transformation scene they would certainly have taken him for a veteran officer of the Indian Army.

"My hat!" exclaimed the Bouncer, surveying the disguised junior in great admiration. "It's ripping! This is better than your bit as Bunter's uncle. You look as old as Bob Cherry's pater, and very like him."

"Haw!" said Wibley, in a deep voice. "Have I the honour of addressing the celebrated Ferrers Locke—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Topping!" said Skinner. "If Ferrers Locke spots that, Wib, we'd better give him up as a bad job."

Micky Desmond came into the study. He started at the sight of the Indian officer.

"Be jabbers, I didn't know there was a visitor in my study," said Micky. "Is it Wibley ye're wanting, sir, or Moran?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and where does the laugh come in?" asked the puzzled Irish junior.

"I have—haw!—called to see Ferrers Locke," said the stranger. "Can you tell me where Mr. Locke is?—haw!"

"Sure he isn't in the Remove passage," said Micky Desmond. "He's in his own quarters, bedad."

"Thank you, my lad! Where are his quarters?"

"I'll show ye if you like, sir."

"No, I don't think I'll be taken there by a Remove kid," said Wibley, in his natural voice. "Thanks all the same, Mick."

Micky Desmond nearly fell down.

"Begorra and bejabbers!" he gasped. "It's Wib!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howley mother av Moses! And I didn't know ye at all, at all," said Mick. "Phwat's the little game intirely?"

"We're pulling Ferrers Locke's little leg once more," chuckled Skinner. "Mum's the word, you know. Get off, Wib!"

"Begorra!"

Wibley left the study. He descended the stairs without being observed, the house being nearly empty after morning lessons. He stopped in the lower hall, and calmly rang the bell. Trotter the page appeared. He looked at Wibley, evidently without the slightest suspicion that he was not what he appeared to be.

"Is Mr. Locke in?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, sir; he's just gone up to his room," said Trotter.

"Haw! Take in my card, please. Tell him I have called upon a matiah of the greatest importance."

"Yessir."

Trotter took away the card, which bore the name and style of Colonel Cholmondeley of the Dumdam Fusiliers. He came back in a couple of minutes to say that Mr. Locke would be pleased to see Colonel Cholmondeley.

Vernon-Smith and Skinner watched the colonel follow Trotter to Ferrers Locke's quarters, with a slow and stately tread. They chuckled gleefully. Trotter certainly hadn't the faintest suspicion, and there was no reason why Ferrers Locke should have any. This time the detective's leg would be pulled with a vengeance, and the defeat of the Remove humorist would be avenged.

The colonel was ushered into Ferrers Locke's pleasant sitting-room, with its big windows looking out on the Close. The detective was seated by one of the windows, with a book on his knee. He rose politely as the colonel stepped in, and gave him a courteous bow.

"Colonel Cholmondeley?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" said the colonel, in his deep throaty voice. "Have I the—haw!—honour of addressing the celebrated Detective Mr. Ferrers Locke?"

"I am Ferrers Locke."

"Then, sir, I wish to speak to you on a matter of the greatest importance."

"Pray take a seat, colonel."

The colonel took a seat. Trotter had retired and closed the door. The colonel sat down with his back to the light, and leaned both hands upon his heavy Malacca cane.

"I trust—bah!—that you will excuse my call, as I understand that you are now—h'm!—resting from your professional duties, Mr. Locke?"

"That is so," said Ferrers Locke. "But if I can be of any assistance to you—"

"You can be of the greatest assistance, sir, if you will take up my case."

"Pray let me have the details."
The colonel lowered his voice mysteriously.

"It is a case of German espial, sir."

"Indeed! That is certainly of importance."
"I reside in this vicinity," said the colonel. "My little place is near the coast—ahem!—Cholmondeley Lodge. You may be aware, Mr. Locke, that German spies have been already arrested in this vicinity. The country swarms with them, sir, begad!—fairly swarms with them! If I had them in Indiah, sir, I would show you how I would deal with them—begad!"

"No doubt," smiled Ferrers Locke. "You could probably use very drastic measures there. But here—"

"Heh, sir, they handle them with kid gloves," said the colonel, in a tone of great disgust, "and the result is, sir, that they flourish in our midst, and send off their information, sir, every day to Berlin, sir. But there are some of us who keep our eyes open, and I am one of them, by gad, sir! And I have made a discovery—and hearing that you were in the vicinity, sir, I took the liberty of calling upon you, to ask you to look into the case."

"I should be glad to do anything I could, to help rid the country of the pest of German spies, undoubtedly," said Ferrers Locke. "I may say that I am entirely at your service, colonel."

"Begad, I expected as much of you, Mr. Locke! Now, near my place, Cholmondeley Lodge—ahem!—there is a bungalow, inhabited, sir, by Germans. The bungalow is called Sea View. You may be aware that there are a large number of bungalows on this coast, used by visitahs in the summer. At this time of the year, of course, they are all empty; but the people at Sea View have remained—in this season, sir! They bear an English name—Brown, sir—and they speak English. There are two of them—men. But I have heard them, sir, speaking in German to one another."

"That certainly sounds somewhat suspicious."

"Suspicious, sir!" exclaimed the colonel. "It's a clincher, sir! I've called upon them as a neighbour, and they showed us the door, sir. But I've kept an eye on them, begad! And I have seen them making signals with lights of a night, sir—to some vessel out on the North Sea. They begin at midnight—and show all sorts of lights—electric flash lights—for an hour at a time, on and off. If they are not spies, sir, what are they doing that for?"

"What, indeed?" asked Ferrers Locke thoughtfully. "Have you given information to the police, sir, of those suspicious circumstances?"

"The police—ahem! No, sir. I heard that you were here, and came to you," said Colonel Cholmondeley. "They will easily pull the wool over the eyes of our local police, sir. If they are visited by the police, begad, they will stop using the lights, and will use some other rascally dodge, sir, not so easily detected. You, Mr. Locke, are the man to look into this. I haven't the slightest doubt that you will detect their villainy, and bring it home to them at once. I have heard of your reputation, sir. If you will take up the case, you may look to me for remuneration, sir. Although not a rich man, I am willing to stand the whole cost of the case, for my country's sake, sir. Some of us are patriots, even in these days, by gad!"

"I hope so," assented Ferrers Locke. "What steps would you suggest my taking, colonel?"

"I should suggest a visit to the place immediately, sir, to learn the lie of the land. Then you could keep watch to-night for the lights, if you wished. But, of course, I leave the whole matter in your hands. Act as you think best. Still, I should suggest a stroll along the beach to the bungalow to see the place, without losing time."

"An excellent idea!" said Ferrers Locke, rising. "In so important a case, no time should be lost. We will go at once."

"Haw—ahem!—we?" murmured the colonel.

"Yes. You will accompany me, of course."

"Ahem! You—you see, these rascals know me by sight, and know that I have been observing them," the colonel explained. "If I should come with you, and you are seen with me, they might take the alarm. I should suggest your going alone, Mr. Locke. I can give you full directions to find the place."

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Ferrers Locke nodded.

"And the directions?" he asked.

"You walk to the village of Pegg, leave Cliff House School on your left, and follow the beach," said the colonel. "Two miles further on you come to the bungalow. You cannot fail to see it."

"Excellent!" Ferrers Locke looked at his watch. "It is getting near lunch-time. You will stay to lunch, colonel?"

"Ahem! Thank you, I have to get off," said the colonel. "Thank you very much. Now that I know you will take up the case I am easy in my mind, Mr. Locke. I will not detain you any longer." And the colonel rose.

"I will see you to the gates," said Ferrers Locke politely. The colonel almost gasped. He did not want to be seen out of the school gates.

"Ahem! I—I am not going just yet," he said. "I—I have to see my—my nephew, a young fellow in the Fifth Form here, Mr. Locke. But don't let me detain you another minute, if you are going before lunch."

"One moment!" said Ferrers Locke. "Excuse me—you will wait a moment—"

The detective crossed to the door and opened it. He seemed to fumble for a moment with the lock, and then stepped out of the room and drew the door shut after him. The colonel looked after him in surprise.

Click!

The colonel jumped up.

He made one bound to the door and grabbed the handle. It was locked on the outside. In the passage without, the footsteps of Ferrers Locke were dying away. Colonel Cholmondeley was a prisoner. He stood rooted to the carpet, staring blankly at the locked door.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Catching the Colonel!

SKINNER burst into a sudden chuckle.

"There he goes!"

Ferrers Locke had taken his hat from the hall, and sauntered out of the house. Skinner and Vernon-Smith watched him with great glee. Evidently the great detective had started off on his fool's errand.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled the Bounder. "This takes the cake! Wib has done it!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wherefore the cackle?" asked Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five came in, Bob with a muddy footer in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's on?" asked Harry Wharton, in surprise.

"The catch of the season!" chuckled the Bounder.

"What have you caught?"

"Ferrers Locke! Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner explained, his explanation being punctuated with chuckles. The Famous Five grinned as they heard it. Other fellows gathered round to hear the funny story. There was a general cackle of merriment.

"I guess this does your giddy detective brown!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "Didn't I tell you he was no shakes of a detective—what?"

"And he's really gone?" asked Peter Todd.

"Faith, and he's just gone out, anyway!" said Micky Desmond. "He's been taken in intirely, begorra!"

"The takefulness must have been terrific. But where is the esteemed and ludicrous Wibley?"

"Yes, where's Wib?" asked Bolsover major. "We'll make him tell us the whole yarn. Where is the bounder?"

"Getting that rig off in the study, I suppose," said Skinner. "Ferrers Locke has gone to look for German spies in a bungalow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's too bad," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "He'll miss his lunch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and see Wib!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

There was a rush to Wibley's study. But Wibley's study was empty.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's not come back yet," said Bob Cherry.

SPLendid NEWS!

(See the Editor's Chat on
Page 20.)

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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Nosey staggered back from the table, his face deadly white, his eyes wild and staring. For a moment or two he gazed at the detective's calm, clear-cut face in blank terror; then, with a whimpering glance, he bolted for the door. Ferrers Locke's voice rang out sharply: "Stop!" (See Chapter 14.)

"The duffer—he ought to get those things off," said Vernon-Smith. "It's getting near dinner-time, and he's got to change before dinner. He can't go into the dining-room as Colonel Cholmondeley."

"Ha, ha! Hardly."

"Where the dickens can he be?" exclaimed Todd.

"Wib! Wib! Where are you, Wib!"

"Wib, you ass! Where are you, you fathead!" roared Skinner.

But there came no reply from Wibley. He was evidently not in the Remove quarters at all. The eager crowd rushed down to the common-room, but he was not there. Skinner began to feel vaguely uneasy.

"The—duffer can't have stayed in Ferrers Locke's room, surely!" he exclaimed.

"It's high time he changed," said the Bounder uneasily. "If he's late for dinner, it may lead to trouble."

"Let's look for him there," said Todd. "Ferrers Locke is out, anyway."

There was a rush upstairs again. Twenty fellows gathered outside Ferrers Locke's door, and Skinner turned the handle.

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The door did not open. It was locked, but there was no key to be seen.

"Wib!" Skinner called out cautiously through the keyhole.

"Thank goodness you've come!" came back Wibley's voice from within. "Let me out!"

"Eh?"

"Let me out! It's close on dinner-time, and I've got to change before dinner," said Wibley anxiously through the keyhole. "I'm locked in."

"Locked in! Ain't the key inside?"

"No; it's outside."

"Tain't here!"

"What?"

"But what—what—what's happened?" stuttered Skinner. "Haven't you taken him in? We saw him go out ten minutes ago!"

"I took him in all right, but—but—he suddenly whipped out of the room, and locked me in!" stammered Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I can't think he's spotted me," said Wibley. "But—"

out I think he must be mad, or something. Fancy locking up a client in his room?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" howled Skinner angrily. "This isn't a laughing matter, Bob Cherry."

"Sorry, I thought it was," howled Bob. "Ha, ha, ha! Isn't it a joke?"

"It seems to have gone wrong, somehow," said the Bouncer. "He must have spotted the colonel—must have seen that he wasn't genuine, somehow. He wouldn't lock him in like this if he believed he was genuine!"

"Well, hardly!" chuckled Wharton. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, get that door open somehow," said Wibley through the keyhole. "I've got to get out, you know. I—suppose the beast spotted me!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites were howling with laughter now. There was much doubt that Ferrers Locke had spotted the pseudo Colonel Cholmondeley. It certainly could not be a custom of the famous detective to lock a client in his room and then go out for a walk.

"Stop that cackling, and get me out!" yelled Wibley. "The bell will be going soon! What's going to be done?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's another door," said Bolsover major. "Try the bed-room door!"

"I've tried it," said Wibley. "It's locked, too!"

"Try the window!"

"Fathead! It's thirty feet, and nothing to hold on!"

"Then you're done for, Wib," chuckled Bolsover major. "You'll have to wait here till Ferrers Locke comes in. If he's gone to the Sea View Bungalow, he'll be back in about three hours!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He can't be gone there, if he hasn't been taken in," groaned Skinner. "He must have spotted Wib, and he's just locked him in and gone for a walk!"

The juniors yelled.

"Let me out!" shouted Wibley.

"Can't be done," said the worried Skinner. "We can't break in the door, Wib. You'll have to stay there!"

"I—I can't stay here! Quelchey will want to know where I am if I don't come in to dinner!" howled Wibley. "You silly asses! You got me into this fix! You've got to get me out!"

"You got into it yourself, you fathead!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Why didn't you take him in, as you undertook to do?"

"Oh, go and eat coke! Get me out somehow!"

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes. The unfortunate Colonel Cholmondeley was a helpless prisoner until Ferrers Locke's return. There was no help for it. The Removites could hardly venture to break in the door, and they had no key; and at any moment now the bell might ring for dinner. Wibley's position was decidedly unenviable. Sincerely enough he wished that he had never thought of pulling Ferrers Locke's leg.

"You'll have to stand it, Wib," said Skinner desperately.

"When—when the beast comes back, ask his pardon, and—he'll let you off!"

"Quelchey won't let me off if I don't come in to dinner!" howled Wibley. "Besides, I want my dinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you silly idiots! Get something and bust the door open!" yelled Wibley.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "We should have the masters up here if we started doing that, my dear fellow. Take it calmly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young fellows seem to be very much amused about something," said a cheery voice.

The Removites started round, and stared at the calm and smiling face of Ferrers Locke. The detective had just come upstairs.

"Ahem!" said Skinner. "We—we—we—"

"Let me out, you silly idiots!" came Wibley's voice from within. He did not know that Ferrers Locke was there.

"Bust in the door somehow! I'm not going to stay here till that beastly detective comes back! Look here—"

"Shut up, Wib—"

"Sha'n't shut up! Lemme out!" yelled Wibley.

"Dear me!" said Ferrers Locke. "That must be my client, Colonel Cholmondeley! But his voice seems to have changed considerably; it has become quite boyish!" He tapped at the door. "Are you there, colonel?"

"Oh!"

"Let him out, sir," said Harry Wharton. "It—it was only a—a little joke, sir. He'll get into a row if he isn't in for dinner."

"That is why I returned," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "I have taken a turn round the Close to give the humorous young gentleman time to reflect over his position." He took a key from his pocket and opened the door. "How do you do, colonel?"

The disguised junior blinked at him sheepishly. He hadn't a word to say.

"Quite an excellent get-up," said Ferrers Locke calmly. "But you should remember, my dear boy, that I have had some experience in disguises, and in detecting them. Also that, as I was sitting at my window, I should have seen Colonel Cholmondeley come into the house, if he had come from outside, and not from a Remove study!"

"Oh!" murmured Wibley.

"Now run along, and get changed in time for dinner," said Ferrers Locke, bursting into a laugh.

The juniors laughed, too, very relieved to see the detective taking the matter good-humouredly. Wibley was only too glad to "run along." He sneaked out of the study, and bolted.

Ferrers Locke, still laughing, closed his door; and the juniors followed Wibley to the Remove passage. In his study, Colonel Cholmondeley stripped off his disguise at lightning speed. The bell was beginning to ring for dinner.

"Oh, my! What a lapse in guard!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"What's the next little game, Skinner?" How are you going to pull Ferrers Locke's leg next time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing succeeds like success!" chuckled Squiff. "After these brilliant successes, Skinner, you ought to pile in like anything! Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Skinner crossly.

The juniors tumbled away, laughing. Wibley was two or three minutes late to dinner, and when he rushed in, in a hurry, there were still traces of grease-paint about his eyebrows and his ears, and his face was very flushed.

After dinner he told Skinner and Vernon-Smith what he thought of them and their wheezes in painfully plain English, and announced his intention of "doting" the eye of any fellow who ever proposed to him again to pull Ferrers Locke's leg. But the practical jokers of the Remove were not making further plans of that sort. Even Skinner seemed to be discouraged.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Schemes Not Required!

"I THINK it's up to us!" growled Skinner.

There was a general chorus of "Rats!"

There were six or seven juniors in No. 1 Study, a couple of days after Wibley's historic visit to Ferrers Locke as a client. And they all said "Rats!" together in reply to Harold Skinner's remark.

Skinner, in spite of discouragement, still held to his idea. He averred that it was up to the Remove to spoof Ferrers Locke somehow, if only to show that they could do it.

The laugh was up against them, Skinner said indignantly, and the Remove always bragged that they never got "left." It was up to them to do something for the honour of the Form.

"I'd up!" said Harry Wharton. "You can't spoof him—you can't pull his leg—and you will get a licking next time. Perhaps he won't be so good-tempered next time, and then you will get it in the neck!"

"Here comes Nosey with the grub!" added Bob Cherry. "Sit down and have tea, Skinny, old man, and don't give us any more schemes. We're fed up with them—right up to the chin."

"Trot it in, Nosey!" said Harry Wharton.

"Nosey"—otherwise, Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy Mimble, trotted it in. Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy Mimble was Mrs. Mimble's little boy, and he was bringing supplies from the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble, who kept the school shop in the corner of the old Close at Greyfriars, had been a great novel-reader in her time, evidently, and the splendid collection of names bestowed upon her son was a result. Master Mimble did not live up to his names of Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy. He was not a nice youth. He was given to listening at doors, and to other shady ways, and he was called Nosey for short, and in allusion to his little ways. Nosey certainly didn't sound so nice as Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy, but it was really more suitable.

Nosey planted a large basket on the study table, and turned out the contents. Harry Wharton had had a handsome remittance that day, and, as usual, a considerable portion of it

ANSWERS

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," &c.

Every Wednesday.

Every Friday.

Every Saturday.

was going in an extra special tea. There were ham and eggs, and nice rashers, and a cake, and several bags of biscuits. "Well, I think it's up to us," said Skinner. "We oughtn't to be downed. And I owe the beast one, anyway!" "Oh, rot!" said Bob Cherry. "It's no good—simply N.B.G.! You can't spoof him, I tell you! Besides, you've shown your hand now! Suppose there was another spoof theft? Suppose you took Mauly's banknotes and hid them somewhere? They'd know at once you'd done it, and instead of Ferrers Locke looking for a burglar, Quicky would come and look for you with a cane."

"And the carefulness would be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

Skinner snorted. "Well, if you fellows won't back me up—" he growled. "Fed up!" said Frank Nugent, with a yawn. "Give us a rest, Skinny!"

"Hullo, hallo, hallo! Where's the rest of the biscuits?" said Bob Cherry, taking up one of the bags Master Mumble had deposited on the table. "There ought to be a pound of 'em here! Beginning to give short weight in your establishment, Nosey—what?"

"That's a pound, Master Cherry," said Nosey, looking alarmed.

"Rats! Feel the weight!" Bob looked suspiciously at Master Mumble. "None of your little games, you know. I know you, Nosey! Turn 'em out!"

"Which I ain't touched one!" said Nosey.

"What's bulging out your pockets, then?"

"There ain't nothin'—"

Bob Cherry laid a sudden grasp upon Nosey and upended him. Nosey roared, and there was a shower of biscuits from his trousers.

"Ouf!" yelled Nosey. "Yow! Lemme down, Master Bob! I won't never take no more of them!"

"You little beast!" said Bob, in disgust. "You could have some if you wanted them, but if I catch you stealing again—"

"Tain't stealing!" snuffled Nosey, as he gained his feet.

"I jest nicked a few!"

"Nick is Latin for stealing," said Nugent solemnly.

"Keep your paws from picking or stealing, Nosey, or you will end up in the stone jug. Kick him out!"

And Nosey was kicked out.

That was one of Nosey's little ways; but for the sake of his worried mother, who had had a great deal of trouble with Rognald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy, the juniors had always been patient with Nosey.

"I was thinking of a dodge about Mauly's banknotes," went on Skinner, after the door had been closed on Master Mumble. "He always has about thirty or forty pounds, and he is a careless ass with it."

"Rats!" said Wharton. "I tell you they'd spot you at once! Look here, we're fed up with it! If there are any more japes on Ferrers Locke, we'll bump you, Skinner."

"Hear, hear!"

Bob Cherry stepped to the door and opened it quickly. Master Mumble almost fell into the study. His ear had been to the keyhole.

"You young rotter!"

"Jump on him!" roared Johnny Bull.

Nosey picked himself up like lightning and fled. As he went scudding down the passage, he collided with a fat junior who was coming along to Study No. 1. There was a bump, and Billy Bunter sat on the floor and groped wildly for his spectacles, while Nosey fled down the stairs.

"Ow—ow—ow!" roared Bunter. "What beast was that? Where's my glasses? Grooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll have that young rotter kicked out!" yelled Bunter.

"To run into me—me! I say, you fellows—"

"Serve you right!" said Bob Cherry. "I just caught him listening at the door!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—" Bunter adjusted his big glasses, and came into the study. "I hear you fellows have got a feed on."

"How did you hear it?" demanded Wharton.

"Ahem! I—I happened to be behind you when you opened your letter—I—I mean, I came along on spec," said Bunter.

"You—you see—"

"Outside!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Buzz off!" said Wharton. "We've just kicked Nosey out for playing the eavesdropper, and we must be fair all round. Fair play's a jewel! Kick him out!"

"I say, you fellows, I— Oh, crumbs!"

Billy Bunter departed from the study with a roar. Then the juniors sat down to tea. But Skinner was looking sulky. Skinner did not like to give up his little scheme, and he had not forgiven Ferrers Locke for declining to fall into his little traps. But the rest of the Remove were fed up with Skinner's schemes, and they told him so with their usual directness. And every time Skinner started on the subject he was met

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with a shout of "Cheese it!" and at last he "cheesed" it. It was evident that if the humorist of the Remove planned any more japes on Ferrers Locke he would not have any assistance from the rest of the Form. As Bob Cherry remarked, enough was as good as a feast, and they were fed up.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Lord Mauleverer's Loss!

"BEGAD!" Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, felt in one pocket, and then in another. He wore a worried look.

Mauly had been standing a feed in the tuckshop, and had felt for his pocket-book when the time came to pay the bill. There were always banknotes in Mauly's pocket-book; the school-boy millionaire was well supplied with those useful articles. But just now he could not find the pocket-book.

"Eight shillings, please!" said Mrs. Mimble, who had been making a laborious calculation upon a sheet of wrapping-paper.

"Yas," said Lord Mauleverer. "I can't find my pocket-book, though, and I've run out of small cash. Anybody seen my pocket-book?"

"Where did you leave it, ass?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Well, it ought to be in my pocket," said Lord Mauleverer.

"That's what they're made for, you know. But it ain't."

"Feel in your other pockets," said Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer did so. But the pocket-book did not come to light. The dandy of the Remove was so careless with his cash, having so plentiful a supply of it, that it was quite possible that he had left his pocket-book somewhere and forgotten all about it.

"Much in it?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Well, there were some fivers," said Mauly thoughtfully, "and some pound notes, and some of those red ones—ten-hobbers, you know. I forget how many."

"Got the numbers?"

"My dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer plaintively, "I have enough things to do without taking the numbers of banknotes!"

"It will turn up!" growled Bob Cherry. "You're a careless ass, Mauly!"

"Yas."

"And a thumping idiot!"

"Yas."

"And you ought to be bumped!"

"Yas."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "this is one of Skinner's little jokes again. I'll bet you he knows where Mauly's pocket-book is."

"Why, of course!" said Harry Wharton. "We ought to have thought of that at once. It's Skinner again."

"Begad, I'm getting fed up with Skinner and his little jokes, you know!" said his lordship. "If Skinner plays tricks with my pocket-book I shall dot him in the eye, don't you know—or I would if it wasn't such a fag. Of course, he's got it. Will somebody lend me eight bob to pay for these things? Oh, never mind! Here's a quid, by Jove!"

Lord Mauleverer fished a forgotten sovereign out of his trousers-pocket and paid Mrs. Mimble's little bill. Then he sauntered elegantly out of the tuckshop to look for Harold Skinner.

Skinner was in his study when Lord Mauleverer found him. The Bouncer was there, and he was saying "Rats!" as Lord Mauleverer entered, so it was probable that Skinner was on his old topic again. The Bouncer, like the rest, was fed up.

"Hallo, Mauly!" said Skinner, as his lordship came in. "Sit down, old man!" Skinner was always polite to the millionaire schoolboy.

"Haven't come to sit down, thanks!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I want my pocket-book!"

"Eh?"

"Pocket-book!" said his lordship.

"Well, what the dickens do I know about your pocket-book?" asked Skinner. "Have you lost it?"

Lord Mauleverer jawed.

"Don't be funny," he said. "Hand it over. Joke's a joke; but 'nuff as good as a feast. Hand it over. I want to get to my study. I'm tired."

"Hand what over?" demanded Skinner.

"Pocket-book."

"I haven't got it."

"Now, do be sensible, old chap!" said Lord Mauleverer, with a tired look. "Makes me tired to jaw, begad! Hand it over."

"You silly ass!" roared Skinner. "I tell you I don't

know anything about your blessed pocket-book! If you've lost it, go and look for it, and don't talk like an ass!"

"Begad!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer, in astonishment. "Do you mean to say that you haven't got it, Skinner?"

"Of course I haven't, you fathead!"

"Isn't it one of your little jokes on Ferrers Locke, begad?"

"No, no, ass!"

"Honest Injun?" asked his lordship.

"Yes, idiot!"

"Begad, then it's very queer!" said Lord Mauleverer, in wonder. "It's gone, you know!"

"Rats! You've laid it somewhere."

"No, I haven't!" Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"I'm awfully careful with my money, you know—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Anyway, I never leave my pocket-book lying about. It was in my pocket right enough. I remember putting it there last night—clear as anything. And now it's gone. Can't have dropped out. Been taken! See!"

A dozen juniors had arrived at the study door, and they all addressed Skinner at once, in a sort of chorus.

"Hand it over, Skinny! We're fed up with your japes! You'll get a licking from Quechy this time, you ass! Chuck it! Choose it! Give Mauly his pocket-book, and have done with it! Don't play the giddy ox!"

Skinner glared at them.

"I tell you I haven't seen it or touched it, and don't know anything about it!" he exclaimed savagely.

"Rats! Rubbish! Hush! Draw it mild!"

"Don't you believe me?" roared Skinner.

"How the deuce can you expect anybody to believe you?" demanded Bob Cherry. "We've heard you telling lies enough—barefaced whoppers! And you've been scheming to play a trick with Mauly's pocket-book. We all know that!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"Well, I haven't touched it!" said Skinner.

Harry Wharton looked at him sharply. Skinner's face was angry and sullen. Whether he was telling the truth or not it was impossible to guess. That he was not at all particular upon that point they knew only too well.

"I say, you fellows, he's going to stick to it!" chirruped Billy Bunter. "He would have stuck to my splendid gold watch if he could!"

"You fat beast—"

"Well, it had better be found—and as soon as possible!" said Harry Wharton. "If it's gone, somebody must have taken it. When did you see it last, Mauly?"

"Last night."

"Where was it?"

"Begad, I put it in my pocket, you know, after I'd settled a bill! By Jove, that reminds me! Young Noser hasn't brought me my change," said Lord Mauleverer. "I gave him a quid note to take to the tuckshop, and there should have been five bob change!"

"You didn't take it out of your pocket again?"

"No, my dear fellow."

"What did you do with your jacket?"

"Wore it till I went to bed, of course. Then I put it in the usual place."

"Was the pocket-book there when you got up this morning?"

"Blessed if I know! I didn't look. You see, I haven't wanted it this morning, not till I had to pay Mrs. Mimble just now."

"Have you had that jacket on since you got up?"

"Yaas."

"Then the pocket-book must have been taken out of it over-night in the dormitory?"

"Yaas."

"Just like my watch was!" hooted Bunter. "Fellow who would take a watch wouldn't take a pocket-book, though Mauly's pocket-book ain't so valuable as my watch."

"Shurrup! Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we'd better all pile in and bump for Mauly's pocket-book. He's ass enough to have dropped or laid it somewhere. If we find it, we'll bump him for giving us so much trouble."

"Begad!"

"If we don't find it we'll bump Skinner till he hands it over!" added Wharton.

"Hear, hear!"

"I tell you I haven't it!" yelled Skinner.

"Rats! You've taken it for your silly schemes of japing Ferrers Locke, of course," said Wharton. "No good piling it on; we don't believe you. If you want to be believed, you should never tell whoppers. However, we'll give you the benefit of the doubt till we've hunted for the blessed thing."

And a crowd of the Remove fellows proceeded to hunt for the pocket-book. They hunted in vain. The ringing of the

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dinner-bell put an end to the search. The juniors gave Skinner grim looks as they went in to dinner.

"We haven't found it," Wharton told him. "You've got to hand it over, Skinner, or you'll get into Queer Street."

"I haven't it!" said Skinner fiercely.

"Bosh!"

And no more was said on the subject till after dinner.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Missing Money!

SKINNER came out of the dining-room, looking very morose. Whether he had taken the pocket-book or not, it was not easy to say. He denied it strenuously, but suspicion was fixed upon him. All the fellows had jumped to the conclusion that he had taken the pocket-book, to carry out one of his little jokes on Ferrers Locke. But as he so stoutly denied it, their suspicions began to take a darker tinge. There were twenty or thirty pounds in the book, and Lord Mauleverer, with his usual carelessness, had neglected to take the numbers. And Skinner was not rich. And his general character was not of the highest. If he did not hand back the pocket-book, it was certain that he would be suspected of having stolen it. Which was hard upon Skinner if he was telling the truth. But no one believed that he was telling the truth.

A crowd of the Remove fellows followed him into the Close. Skinner had a hunted look as they surrounded him.

"Now, Skinner—" came in a chorus.

Skinner clenched his hands fiercely.

"I tell you I don't know anything about the rotten thing!" he said, between his teeth. "Let me alone! I'm telling you the truth!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bolsorer major. "I don't believe you could do that if you tried. Give Mauly his pocket-book."

"Hand it over, Skinner."

"Yaas: be a good chap, and stop playin' the giddy goat!" urged Lord Mauleverer. "You don't want to steal my beastly banknotes, do you?"

"You crass idiot—"

"Begad! Look here, Skinner, if you don't give me my pocket-book, I shall really think you want to keep it, don't you know. Yaas?"

"I haven't seen it!" shrieked Skinner.

"Rot! You've been planning for a long time to take it and plant it on Ferrers Locke," said Wibley.

"I know I have, but I haven't done it," said Skinner. "I gave up the idea, as you fellows were all down on it."

"Well, now you've given up the idea, give up the pocket-book," said Squiff.

"I can't give it up when I've not got it."

"Have you planted it on Mr. Locke?"

"No, idiot!"

"Then you must have it still," said the Australian junior.

"I suggest bumping Skinner till he confesses where Mauly's pocket-book is."

"Hear, hear!"

"I tell you—" shrieked Skinner. "Hands off!"

He made a rush to break through the ring of juniors, but he was promptly collared and swept off his feet, in the grasp of a dozen pairs of hands.

"Bring him into the Cloisters," said Peter Todd. "Can't be seen there. Don't want to have Quechy or the Head dropping on us. They'll be a row if Quechy knows that Skinner has been at his tricks again."

It was good advice, and the juniors acted upon it. Skinner was rushed away into the Cloisters, where the raggos were not likely to be interrupted. Then he was requested again to give up the pocket-book, and in reply he struggled and hit out furiously.

"Skinny, old man, be sensible!" urged Vernon-Smith.

"We're all up against any further larks on Ferrers Locke. Do the sensible thing, and hand it over."

"I haven't got it!" yelled Skinner.

"Oh, I'm fed up with you!" growled the Rounder, in disgust. "Bump him, if he won't own up. Bump it out of him! I dare say it's in his pocket all the time."

Bump, bump, bump!

Skinner roared as he came into rough contact with the hard and unsympathetic flagstones of the cloisters. He struggled furiously, but there was no escape for him.

"Now will you hand it over?" demanded Wharton.

"I—I—I haven't got it!" wailed Skinner. "I can't hand it over when I haven't got it, can I? I haven't—honest Injun!"

"Rubbish!"

"The rubbishfulness is terrific!"

"Leggo," yelled Skinner, as the bumping recommenced.

"Leggo! Stop it! Yarcosh! Help!"

"By Jove! What is the matter?"

It was Ferrers Locke.

The detective was strolling in the Cloisters after lunch. He paused in astonishment as he came upon the scene of the rragging. The Removies released Skinner, looking round a little sheepishly. Skinner sat on the flags, and panted for breath.

"A little game, what?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Ahem! Something of the sort, sir," said Harry Wharton. "We're arguing with Skinner. He is rather an obstinate chap, and we're trying to make him see reason."

"Yaas, begad!"

"I ain't!" yelled Skinner. "I've told the truth! I say, keep them off, Mr. Locke. I ain't going to be bumped. You."

"I guess it ain't any good appealing to Mr. Locke," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "He's the galoot you were going to spring it on."

"I wasn't. Yowow! I haven't seen the rotten pocket-book! Mr. Locke, somebody's taken that silly ass's pocket-book, and they think I did it, and I didn't!" howled Skinner.

Ferrers Locke gave him a hard look.

"You told me an untruth the other day," he said quietly.

"I—I— That was a joke. I'm telling the truth now. I haven't seen his pocket-book, and I haven't had anything to do with it. I swear it!"

"Cammion!" said Bob Cherry.

"The cammionfulness is terrific, my esteemed Skinner!" said Lark, with a shake of the head. "The own-fulness is the proper caper."

"I can't own up when I haven't done anything," said Skinner, almost blubbing in his excitement. "You silly idiots, what right have you to suppose that I took it? Anybody in the dormitory might have taken it."

"You took my splendid gold watch!" howled Bunter.

"That was a joke. All the fellows knew I was going to take it."

"Perhaps you have been a little hasty, my young friends," said Ferrers Locke, after a very searching look at Skinner's flushed and excited face. "Is there any proof that Skinner has taken the pocket-book?"

"Oh, lots!" said Johnny Bull. "He was planning to take it; to plant it on—on somebody for a joke."

"On me, perhaps like the watch?" suggested Ferrers Locke.

"Ahem!"

"I own up," said Skinner. "I was planning that, Mr. Locke. But all the fellows were down on it, and I gave up the idea."

"Then you did not take the pocket-book?"

"No, I didn't."

Harry Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully. It occurred to him that perhaps they had been a trifle hasty.

"Well, nobody actually saw Skinner take it, Mr. Locke," he admitted; "but we concluded he had, of course. If he didn't, though, who did? Mauly left it in his jacket pocket when he went to bed last night, and this morning he missed it. He had worn the jacket ever since he got up, so the book must have been taken from the dorm. in the night. Somebody took it."

"Yaas, begad!"

"Whose was the book?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Mine," said Lord Mauleverer.

"You are certain you left it in your pocket when you went to bed?"

"Yaas."

"It could not have dropped out of your pocket this morning?"

"No, begad! Never dropped it in my life, you know."

"If it was taken in the dormitory, certainly somebody must have taken it," agreed Ferrers Locke. "I hope for a joke. Was anyone awake last night?"

There was a general shaking of heads. The Remove were all pretty sound sleepers. Nobody had been awake.

"It might have been any boy in the Remove, or a boy from another dormitory," said Ferrers Locke. "Anybody could enter the dormitory, I presume?"

"Oh, yes, quite easily," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, if there was somebody in the house, a burglar wouldn't take only a single pocket-book, and a stranger wouldn't know Mauly had one, anyway. It was one of the fellows."

"Was it a valuable pocket-book?" asked Ferrers Locke, looking at Lord Mauleverer.

"Blessed if I know!" answered his lordship cheerfully. "My uncle gave it to me. It was made of a rather nice leather, so I suppose it must have cost something."

"I mean, were the contents valuable?"

"Yaas. Banknotes are valuable, you know."

"A large sum of money?"

"Twenty or thirty pounds, I believe."

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Ferrers Locke looked rather eddily at the Dandy of the Remove. A junior schoolboy who "believed" that the contents of his pocket-book came to twenty or thirty pounds was something new, even in his experience.

"Mauly's a guide millionaire," explained Wharton, with a grin. "He rules and bathes in filthy lucre, and never takes the numbers of his notes. It would take him too long to copy 'em all down, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You should be more careful with your money, my boy," said Mr. Locke. "By carelessness, you place a temptation in the way of poorer persons, who have not very good and fixed principles. Skinner, you give me your word that you did not take this pocket-book?"

"Honour bright, sir!"

"Then it looks as if it has been taken for the purpose of theft. I should recommend you, my boys, to withhold your judgment until you are sure of the person. There is no reason to suspect Skinner more than another."

"Thank you, sir!" said Skinner, for once really grateful.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here it is!"

"My hat!"

Mr. Mimble, the Head's gardener, came into the Cloisters with a somewhat dusty leather pocket-book in his hand.

"That's yours, my lord, I think?" he said.

"Yaas, begad!"

"Where did you find it, Mr. Mimble?" asked Harry Wharton.

"It was in the gardening," said Mr. Mimble. "Looked as if it had been thrown over the wall, and fell there. I've seen it in his lordship's 'and, so I knew it was his; and I've been looking for him."

"Thank you very much, my dear man," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Don't mention it, my lord," said the gardener, and he touched his hat and retired. The juniors all glared at Skinner.

"Thrown over the wall into the Head's garden!" exclaimed Squiff. "Now will you say that you didn't do it, Skinner? Do you think there's another silly practical joker here as enough to risk losing a lot of money like that?"

"I didn't do it!" said Skinner stubbornly. "I haven't touched it! I don't know how it came there."

"Well, it's all right now, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"I've got it back, anyway."

"One moment," said Ferrers Locke, as Lord Mauleverer was slipping it into his pocket. "Examine the contents, my boy."

"Begad! I might as well," assented Lord Mauleverer.

He opened the pocket-book, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and dismay. The pocket-book was empty.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Ferrers Locke Takes a Hand!

"S TOLEN!"

"Begad!"

There was no doubt about it now. The banknotes were no longer in the pocket-book. The juniors all looked very grave now, for it was no longer possible to suppose that the book had been taken for a joke. The banknotes had been deliberately removed from it, and the pocket-book had been thrown into the Head's garden, evidently in the desire of the thief to get rid of it. Where were the banknotes?

"Give it to me," said Ferrers Locke.

Lord Mauleverer handed the pocket-book to the detective without a word. His face was very thoughtful. The loss of the money did not hit the schoolboy millionaire very hard, though it was a large sum. But a theft had been committed, and that meant disgrace and ruin for someone.

Ferrers Locke examined the pocket-book carefully. It was dusty, where it had lain in the garden, and there was a stickiness on the leather cover, as if it had been held in jammy fingers. The detective took a pocket magnifying-glass out, and examined the cover with scrutinising care, watched with great interest by the juniors.

"You had better leave this matter in my hands," he said gravely. "I fear this is a case of theft, and I shall take charge of it. I will speak to your Form-master. Will you let me keep this for a time, Lord Mauleverer?"

"Yaas, certainly."

"Let me see your hands, please," said Ferrers Locke, as he slipped the empty pocket-book into his pocket.

Lord Mauleverer jumped.

"Mum-m-my hands!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, please."

Lord Mauleverer, in great astonishment, held out his carefully-manicured hands, with their elegant, well-trimmed finger-nails, for inspection. Ferrers Locke gave them a glance, and appeared satisfied.

"Thank you! I will look into this matter, and I will do my best to recover your property."

"I—I say, Mr. Locke, I—I don't want a row made about it," stammered Lord Mauleverer. "I—I was a bit careless. I don't want to be the cause of anybody being sacked—"

"I am afraid that is out of your hands, my lad," said Ferrers Locke. "This matter will, I imagine, be the talk of the school before long. There must be an investigation, whether I take part in it or not."

"Yaas, that's so," admitted his lordship.

Ferrers Locke gave the juniors a kind nod, and walked away, with Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book in his pocket. The Removites slowly left the spot with very gloomy looks. It was an utterly unpleasant occurrence. There was a thief in the school. There was no doubt about that now. It was a disgrace for the Remove, if the thief was discovered in their Form. It was a disgrace for the school, anyway. Harry Wharton & Co. adjourned to the tuckshop to discuss the matter over refreshing ginger-pop. Master Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy Mumble was behind the little counter, helping himself to jam-tarts. Master Mumble not infrequently helped himself in that way when his mother's back was turned; a little way that sometimes brought him into unpleasant contact with a certain strap that hung beside the fireplace in the head-gardener's little house.

"Ginger-pop, Nosey!" said Bob Cherry.

But Nosey had bolted with his jam-tart, fearful of being caught there by his maternal parent, and Mrs. Mumble came in to serve the juniors.

"This is a rotten business!" growled Squiff. "It's not fair to suspect Skinner, as it turns out not to be a practical joke. It might have been anybody. As it happened in our dorm the fellows will think it was a Remove chap. Temple & Co. and that ass Coker will never let us hear the end of this!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, don't bother, Bunter, and take your sticky paw off my sleeve!" grunted Squiff.

"Oh, really, Field—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry suspiciously. "How long have you had that jam on your paws, Bunter? Did you wash them this morning?"

"Oh, really—"

"There was a jammy paw-mark on Mauly's pocket-book," said Bob. "The detective was squinting at it through his microscope. I suppose it wasn't yours, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him in speechless indignation. "You—you—you beast!" he stuttered. "I didn't know Mauly had all that money in his pocket-book—I mean, I wouldn't have touched it if I had known. I've a jolly good mind to lick you!"

"Lick away!"

"But I shall treat you with contempt instead," said Bunter loftily.

"Look here," said Bob seriously. "I know what a thumping ass you are. You found a banknote of old Wingate's once, and fancied it was your own because you wanted it. If you've been playing the giddy ox, Bunter, you'd better own up before it's too late."

The Co. regarded Bunter anxiously. Bunter's ideas of right and wrong were so exceedingly mixed that there was no telling what he might have done, or might not have done, satisfying himself with some peculiar mode of reasoning.

"I tell you I haven't!" roared Bunter. "You're an insulting beast, Bob Cherry. After that, the least you can do is to stand me a ginger-pop."

Bob Cherry laughed, and stood the ginger-pop.

By the time the bell rung for afternoon lessons all Greyfriars knew what had happened. It was impossible for such a happening to be kept dark, with all the Lower Fourth buzzing with excitement over it. And what the Co. expected happened. Temple, Dabney, & Co. were very funny on the subject, and Coker of the Fifth shook his finger warningly at the Famous Five as he met them in the Form-room passage.

"We shall have to keep a policeman stationed in the Remove, if you young sweeps don't mend your ways," said Coker. "Which of you was it this time—what? Oh! Yow!"

The great Coker roared as he was bumped over by a sudden rush of the juniors. The Removites were in their Form-room before he could take vengeance.

Mr. Quicquid wore a heavy frown that afternoon. He had been angry at the pretended thefts; but the "real article" disturbed him greatly. He had been very glad to leave the matter in Ferrers Locke's hands; and the Head, to whom it

had been duly reported, agreed with him. Not under any circumstances, if it could be avoided, did they wish the police to be called into the school. But it was absolutely necessary for the thief to be discovered, and that promptly. But it could not have been left in better hands than Ferrers Locke's.

During afternoon lessons, it is to be feared that the juniors gave more thought to the theft of Mauly's banknotes, and to the detective's investigations, than to their Form work. They wondered what Ferrers Locke was doing. Doubtless he was pursuing his investigations while they were doing their lessons; yet they wondered what line his investigations could possibly take. So far as they could see, there was no clue; and the only chance of discovering the banknotes lay in a rigid search of the whole school.

But a search had not been ordered. The longer it was left, the more chance the thief had of concealing his plunder in some safe place, so it was pretty evident that Ferrers Locke did not pin his faith to a search. What he did pin it to was a mystery. All that they could be certain of was that he was not idle.

Glad enough were the juniors when lessons were over and they were dismissed. When they came out of the Form-room into the early winter dusk, their first thought was to see how Ferrers Locke was getting on.

The detective was not to be seen. The Famous Five hunted up Trotter, the page, for information. They found Trotter in the boot-room.

Trotter looked in surprise at his unaccustomed visitors.

"Wot's wanted, young gent's?" he asked.

"Information, my son," said Bob Cherry. "You've been about all the afternoon. Have you seen Mr. Locke?"

"Which I 'ave," said Trotter, "and a werry queer gentleman he is, too."

"You've seen him at work?" asked Harry Wharton eagerly.

"'Dunno as I'd call it work," said Trotter. "Which it seems to be as he's off his blooming napper, and no error. Asking heverybody right and left if all the winders is fastened of a night. Course they is."

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances.

"That means that Mr. Locke thinks it may have been a burglar," murmured Squiff. "I jolly well hope it turns out to be a burglar and not a Greyfriars chap."

"Same here," said Bob fervently. "What else has he done, Trotty?"

"He's been guin' round sniffin' at all the winders," said Trotter. "Course they was all fastened, and I told him so, and so did Mrs. Kebble. Then he ups and he says, says he: 'Wot about the box-room winder?' says he. Now, I put it to you, young gent's," said Trotter, in an injured tone, "could Mrs. Kebble, or could me, fasten that box-room winder till the fastening's been mended?"

"Of course you couldn't," agreed Bob. "I didn't know the fastening was broken, though. It wasn't broken last week."

Bob Cherry had the best of reasons for knowing that, since the previous week he had "scouted" out of that very window to break bounds for the noble purpose of a dormitory feed.

"It was broke yesterday," said Trotter. "Night afore last it fastened all right. But last night it was found broke. Some silly lass 'ad done it for a joke. I s'pose, 'cause a winder-fastening couldn't break itself—now, could it? Master Skinner is always playin' some little joke, p'haps it was 'im. And Mrs. Kebble wrote to the man to come and mend it this werry afternoon. Which he ain't come yet, but, that ain't my fault. 'Course the winder wasn't fastened when the fastening was broke, and I ups and tells Mr. Locke so, straight. But he only larfed."

Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the boot-room, puzzled and thoughtful. There was no more information to be gained from Trotter.

"Mr. Locke suspects that it was a burglar from outside," said Squiff. "That's why he was so particular about the window fastenings. And, look here, as it happens that that window wasn't fastened, a burglar could have got in all right. We know how easy it is to get in at that window from the ground!" he added, with a chuckle.

"But—but a burglar couldn't know anything about Mauly's pocket-book," said Harry Wharton, with a shake of the head. "How could he know which jacket to come to—even which was Mauly's dormitory—even if he knew anything about Mauly?"

"That's rather a poser, I admit."

The chums of the Remove gave it up. They had to admit that it beat them. They could only wait in anxiety to hear the result of Ferrers Locke's investigations—an anxiety that was very keenly shared by Skinner. For, in spite of all Harold Skinner's overtures, his Form-fellows persisted in looking upon him with eyes of suspicion.

"Come in!" called out Ferrers Locke. The door opened, and Reginald Bertie Cecil Fitzroy Mimbble, otherwise Nosey, presented himself, with a little bundle in his hand.

"Ah, my little purchases!" said Mr. Locke genially. "Yes, sir," said Nosey surlily.

He laid the parcel on the table, with sticky marks on it from his fingers. Nosey was in his usual slovenly state, and his fingers showed signs of recent jam-tarts—probably purloined. He did not look good-tempered. Nosey objected to work in any shape or form, and he had had to come upstairs with the parcel. Why Ferrers Locke should order things in the tuckshop and have them sent to his room was a mystery. Nosey thought it unreasonable, especially as he had to carry the parcel there.

"Wait a moment, my boy!" said Ferrers Locke, as Nosey turned towards the door.

Nosey turned back, brightening a little in anticipation of a tip.

"Close the door!" said Ferrers Locke. Nosey obeyed in some surprise.

Mr. Locke pushed an envelope across the table towards him.

"You want this ere posted, sir?" asked Nosey.

"It must be sealed first," said Mr. Locke. "Will you be good enough to seal it for me?"

"Suttl'ingly, sir."

Nosey couldn't see why Mr. Locke couldn't seal his letter himself, but he had no choice but to oblige. Mr. Locke passed him a stick of sealing-wax and lighted a candle. Nosey heated the wax in the candle-flame, and dropped a big blob of it on the back of the letter.

"It must be pressed down," said Mr. Locke.

"Where's the seal, sir?"

"Use your thumb, my boy!"

Nosey squeezed his thumb on to the blob of warm sealing-wax. He drew it away, leaving the letter quite safely sealed, and a clear impression of his thumb imprinted upon the sealing-wax.

"Is that all, sir?"

"No, that is not all. Wait a moment! Give me the letter!"

Nosey passed the letter across the table again with his sticky fingers. Ferrers Locke drew a photograph from his pocket, and Nosey stared. He had only a glimpse of the photograph, but it looked like a meaningless blur to him. Mr. Locke picked up his microscope, and examined the sealing-wax on the letter. Then he referred to the photograph, and then to the seal again.

Nosey watched him in wonder, mingled with a curious feeling of uneasiness that he could not quite account for.

Ferrers Locke raised his eyes at last.

He fixed them upon Nosey with a peculiar expression, and Nosey felt his inexplicable uneasiness intensify.

"Can I go now, sir?" he asked sullenly.

"No; there is one more thing you can do for me."

"What's that, sir?"

"You can give me the banknotes you have taken from Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book!"

Ferrers Locke spoke those startling words quite quietly, as if he had been saying "You can pass me the inkstand."

But their effect upon Nosey was electrical.

He staggered back from the table, his face deadly white, his eyes wild and staring. For a moment or two he gazed at the detective's calm, clear-cut face in blank terror; then, with a whimpering glance, he bolted for the door.

Ferrers Locke's voice rang out sharply:

"Stop!"

Nosey stopped.

"Come back!" said Ferrers Locke. "Give me the banknotes you have stolen, you young rascal, and I will do my best to intercede for you! I know what a trouble you are to your mother already, and I would willingly spare her further pain on your account. I must leave the matter in Mr. Quelch's hands to deal with, and I hope he will be satisfied with thrashing you as you deserve, though I promise nothing."

Mr. Quelch came into his study after dismissing the Remove that afternoon, and found Ferrers Locke seated in his arm-chair, waiting for him there. The detective rose as Mr. Quelch entered.

"Ah, Mr. Locke," said the Remove-master, "you have been busy this afternoon!"

"Yes; a little."

"No clue yet, I suppose? It is too early to ask for that."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Something better than a clue, Mr. Quelch—the banknotes."

The Remove-master jumped as Ferrers Locke laid a little The Magnet Library—No. 360.

NEXT MONDAY—

wad of banknotes upon the study table. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

"They—they are Lord Mauleverer's banknotes!" he ejaculated.

"Yes."

"And you—you have recovered them already?"

"It appears so, does it not?" said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"And—the culprit?" asked Mr. Quelch. "You have, of course, found him, as you have recovered the stolen property? I—I hope it was not a boy in my Form?"

"It was not a schoolboy here at all, Mr. Quelch. It was young Mimbble, the son of the good lady who keeps the school shop here."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You—you have proof?"

His confession, and the banknotes, which he took from their hiding-place under his floor, in my presence."

"The young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch indignantly.

"What a blow for his poor mother! She has had trouble with that boy before, I remember now."

The detective nodded.

"For that reason, sir, and as the stolen property has been recovered, I venture to suggest that the matter should not be made public. A sound thrashing from you or from his father would do the boy good, added to his present terror, and I think would give him a lasting lesson."

"Perhaps so, Mr. Locke. But—but how—may I ask how you made this discovery? I confess that my thoughts never turned in that direction at all."

"It was not a difficult matter," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile.

"Not for you, perhaps; but I confess that I was utterly puzzled. There seemed to be no clue. It might have been anyone in the Remove dormitory, or outside it—"

"Quite so, at the first glance. My first step was to narrow down the field of investigation, if possible. Of course, I could not suspect an outside burglar—such a man would have known nothing about Mauleverer's pocket-book. At the same time, it was possible that the thief came from outside the house. Now, if he came from outside, my field of search was very limited—not more than eight or nine persons belonging to Greyfriars sleep outside the house—in other buildings, so it was clear that if the thief came from outside my search would be minimised. I, therefore, ascertained that point first. If I had discovered nothing to prove that the thief came from outside, of course my task would have been longer. But I made such a discovery at once. A window fastening was broken in the lower box-room, which showed that an entrance could have been made to the house—"

"Could have been made certainly," said Mr. Quelch; "but not that it had been made, surely."

"By deduction, yes; for the window-fastening was broken only yesterday, and it was not hard to guess that it had been purposely broken by the thief, in order to leave a way open for entrance at night. By careful examination of the fastening, I easily ascertained that the breakage was no accident. No one dwelling inside the house could have had any object in breaking it."

"Quite so."

"I was satisfied, therefore, that the thief came from outside. My field of investigation was narrowed down—I had to consider the chauffeur, the coachman, the gardener, the porter, the stableman, Mrs. Mimbble, and her boy. Now, the knowledge of Lord Mauleverer's property, and of his habits, showed that the theft had been committed by someone acquainted with the interior of the house, and the customs of the boys. That made it unlikely that I should be successful in examining the chauffeur, for instance, or the coachman, or stableman, who have little or nothing to do in the house, and see little of the boys."

"Very true."

"The same applies to the gardener and the porter. Mrs. Mimbble, of course, I could hardly suspect of climbing into a window at night. There remained her boy—the likeliest of all. I strolled into the school shop and chatted with Mrs. Mimbble, and learned from her some of that unpleasant youth's characteristics, which made it only too probable that he was the proper person upon whom to fasten suspicion."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"Quite so. But proof is a different matter—"

"Having once found a person who could be reasonably suspected, that was easy. I have Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book here. Look at it."

Mr. Quelch took the pocket-book and examined it with some curiosity. Then he shook his head.

"You must forgive me," he said, with a smile. "This tells me nothing."

"It told me a good deal," said Ferrers Locke. "The boy

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who stole it had sticky fingers, and you may observe that he has left a finger and a thumb mark clearly imprinted on the leather."

"To a trained eye, doubtless clear," said Mr. Quelch. "I confess I should not have observed it."
"It was sufficient for me," said Ferrers Locke. "I borrowed Mr. Front's dark-room and apparatus, and made a very careful photograph of those prints. After that was completed, I visited the tuckshop again, ordered some things—which I shall have to present to some junior, I suppose—and asked Mrs. Mimble to send her boy with them. When he came into my room I made him seal this letter." Ferrers Locke drew the envelope from his pocket. "If you use my microscope, Mr. Quelch, you will see that the thumb-mark on the sealing-wax precisely corresponds with the thumb-mark in the enlarged photograph."

"Bless my soul!"
"Having that certain proof in my hands, I taxed the boy with it. He confessed—for, of course, a careful search would have revealed the stolen notes, and condemned him," said Ferrers Locke.

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.
"The young rascal!" he said. "It is very, very fortunate that you were here, Mr. Locke. I have no doubt that the little rascal had heard the story of Skinner's foolish joke with Bunter's watch, and supposed that this would be believed to be another affair of the same kind."

"No doubt. And he judged correctly," said Ferrers Locke; "the juniors undoubtedly suspected Skinner."

"I admit that I myself suspected him. But for you, Mr. Locke, this would have remained a mystery—and unpleasant suspicions would have attached to Skinner, and perhaps to others. I hardly know how to thank you."

"That is not necessary," said Ferrers Locke, with a smile. "I have already acquainted the Head with the matter, and he is inclined to show the wretched boy mercy, and he leaves it in your hands, Mr. Quelch."

"For his mother's sake the matter shall be kept from publicity," said the Remove-master, after a pause. "I will acquaint his father—a very honest man—with it, and leave it to him. I have no doubt that Master Mimble will be made to feel very sorry for what he has done, and that it will be a lesson to him in the future."

"Begad!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Mauly!"
"What's the news?"
"Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round Lord Maul-
ever, who was standing in the passage with a wad of bank-
notes in one hand, a sticky pocket-book in the other, and an
expression of blank astonishment upon his noble face.
"Begad!" he stuttered. "Oh, begad! This beats it!"
"The banknotes!" yelled Skinner. "You've got 'em!"
"Yass."

"Where the dickens—what the deuce—"
"Quelch called me into his study and handed 'em to me,"
gasp'd Lord Maul-
ever; "Ferrers Locke was there. Said he'd found 'em—and had proof that a thief had got in by the
box-room window, and it wasn't a fellow in this school at all.
Wasn't one of our chaps—begad! He said the thief was
going to be punished. Then Quelch lectured me about being
careless with money—as if I'm careless, begad! I can't help
it if they leave box-room windows unfastened and thieves get
in, can I?"

"Hs, ha, ha!"
"Wasn't a Greyfriars chap?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.
"That's jolly good news, anyway. But how did the de-
tective find it all out?"

"Blessed if I know! Quelch scotched me out of the study,
and I could only gasp like a giddy fish, you know."

"Well," said Squiff thoughtfully, "Ferrers Locke seems
to be keeping dark how he did it; but one thing's plain, here
are the banknotes, and another thing's plain, Mauly was a
careless ass, and a blithering chump, and a few other things
too numerous to mention—and money ain't safe in his
pockets, no way—so I propose that he makes up for all the
trouble he's given, and reduces the amount of the money he's
going to lose next time, by standing a feed to the whole
Form!"

"Begad!"

"Hear, hear! Good egg!"
A few days later Ferrers Locke left Greyfriars, and the
juniors gave him a great cheer when he went. But there
were no fireworks.

THE END.

(Next Monday's grand, long, complete tale of the
chums of Greyfriars is entitled "THE RIVAL VEN-
TRILOQUISTS." Order your copy of the MAGNET
LIBRARY well in advance. Readers should also note
that splendid story of Ferrers Locke, Detective,
appears in CHUCKLES, every Saturday.)

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1d.
Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2d.

The EDITOR'S WEEKLY CHAT WITH HIS READERS.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand, long, complete tale of the chums of famous Greyfriars School the Remove is thrown into a state of unrest by the persistent practices of a ventriloquist, and Billy Bunter is booked for a very warm time. But, although the Owl of the Remove receives severe punishment many a time and oft, the ventriloquism continues, throwing every-
thing into a state of disorder. It transpires later, however, that the sins of someone else have been visited upon the wretched Bunter, who, for once in a way, was not to blame. Naturally enough.

"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUIST"

is brought face to face with his day of reckoning, and there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

SPLENDID NEWS!

For some time past I have been the recipient of hundreds of letters urging me to publish stories of Harry Wharton's earlier schoolings. Up to the present time, however, such a step has proved absolutely impossible, owing to the lack of space in any of our companion papers for such a gigantic feature.

This week, though, I have amazing news for my chums—news which will give boundless delight and satisfaction to all lovers of the fine stories of Greyfriars School. ON THURSDAY NEXT I am taking over the control of the well-known boys' weekly called

"THE DREADNOUGHT."

in which I intend to introduce, week by week, the ever-popular Greyfriars characters.

The magnificent tale, by Frank Richards, which appears this Thursday, is entitled:

"BOB CHERRY'S TRIUMPH."

and describes the stirring adventures of this cheery youth. Mr. Richards has put his best into this yarn, and it should not be missed for any consideration whatever. My chums should see to it, therefore, that they secure a copy of the "DREADNOUGHT" this Thursday morning AT ALL HAZARDS!

In addition to the splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, the paper is packed with many fine features. Here's to Thursday!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

R. Marton.—A book on Spanish can be obtained from Messrs. Glaisher, 32, Charing Cross Road, W.C.

A. H. C. Bush (Newcastle-on-Tyne).—Many thanks for your most interesting letter.

D. Rowe (Gateshead).—The stories you mention are purely fictitious.

W. B. Stone (Ilford).—If you will send me your full address, I shall be pleased to forward you particulars for increasing your height.

S. Smith (Leeds).—David Goodwin does not write for "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library at regular intervals. It would be best to keep a look-out for his name as the Library is issued.

A. C. (Vancouver Reader).—Even the old favourites have to take hard knocks in life. Very glad to hear from you.

AT LAST!

The long-promised "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled,

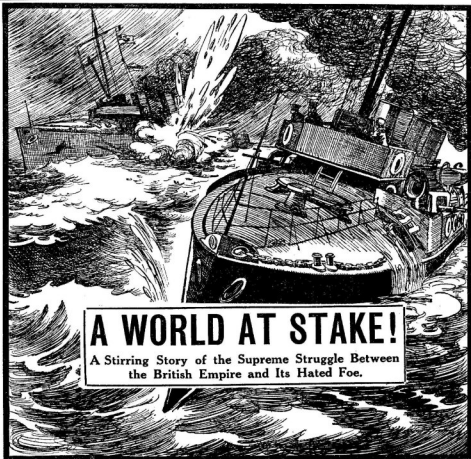
"THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME."

and written by famous Frank Richards, will be on sale throughout the universe on Friday. There seems every indication that this yarn will meet with splendid success, and it is with a feeling of real pride that I send it forth to flourish among my chums. Every boy who has not already done so should order a copy of this book AT ONCE. A finer story of school life was never penned.

He Little

Our Magnificent Serial Story!

Start To-day!



A WORLD AT STAKE!

A Stirring Story of the Supreme Struggle Between
the British Empire and Its Hated Foe.

READ THIS FIRST.

Thorpe and Dick Thornhill, brothers, and joint owners of the wonderful airship named the *Falcon*, play a prominent part in the great war with Germany on land and sea. The country is invaded, and the town of Colchester is the scene of a tremendous battle. The Germans are numerically superior, but Thorpe Thornhill, in the *Night Hawk*, bombards them in the rear, and the aliens are put to flight. Meanwhile, Dick has constructed a new machine, known as *Falcon II*, in which he chases a German airship, suspecting the Kaiser to be on board. There is a sharp fight in the air. Both machines descend, and the fugitives escape in a powerful motor-car, after killing its owner. Dick chases the car in his airship to Berwick. The Germans, however, abandon the stolen motor, which dashes over the cliff. Dick attempts a rescue, but finds he has been duped with a dummy. Those on board the airship cannot locate Dick. A German torpedo-boat, coming on the scene, picks him up, and he safely reaches the deck.

(Now go on with the story.)

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

Captured!

Knowing that, although he spoke fair German, his accent might betray him, Dick pretended to be much more exhausted than he really was, and lay on the deck, breathing heavily, whilst the German in command ordered a rocket to be fired to summon the airship.

Dick had experienced many hairbreadth escapes, as we know, but possibly no minutes ever flew by so slowly, or were so laden with anxiety, as those which elapsed whilst *Falcon II* approached the gunboat, and he could not restrain a sigh of relief when at last she hovered nearly overhead.

"We have your comrade," commenced the German officer.

"Lower a ladder and take him on deck."

"Eh—what?" came from *Falcon II*.

And Dick remembered, almost too late, that not a soul on board his ship save himself could speak the invader's tongue.

The German started and turned upon Dick, his eyes showing the suspicion he felt; but the apparently exhausted boy had recovered his strength in an almost miraculous manner. Springing to his feet, he felled the German with a well-delivered blow between the eyes, crying, first in English, then in German:

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Now the would gain a few feet, now the engine would start ahead, and, whether losing or gaining, the rope which connected the two strained and away, threatening each moment to hurt the intrepid young inventor from his precarious hold.

There was another danger, which Dick did not dare contemplate. Not only Lord Roberts' life and those on board the special, but Dick Thornhill's own existence depended upon his stopping or reversing the engine in time. Did the collision happen whilst he was suspended between earth and heaven, nothing could save him.

He dared not look down lest he should turn giddy and loose his hold.

Presently, after a few moments, which seemed like years to the dauntless boy, a cry of thanksgiving burst from his lips as his feet touched the boiler of the engine. In another second he was on the footplate by its side; then, the rope slackening for a moment, he released the anchor from its hold, and the airship sprang aloft.

Then, and then only did he glance towards the special, to see sparks flying from beneath her wheels, as her driver, conscious now of the danger that menaced him, put on the brakes.

Knowing, though he did, that if he could not stop the runaway engine his life would pay the forfeit, Dick did not hesitate a moment, but, clambering into the cab, pulled the reversing-lever as he threw all his weight upon the brake.

Round and round flew the brake-wheel under his eager grasp, and the engine, her onward career checked by the powerful brakes, swayed and trembled, whilst her piston-rods and cylinders, striving to overcome the forward momentum of the wheels, groaned and creaked as though they would burst asunder.

"Good heavens, she can't do it! She'll never do it!" cried Dick aloud; for, although by this time the driving-wheels' action was reversed, the heavy engine still moved slowly onward.

Then, with despair in his heart, he looked towards where the special had come to a dead stop. The next moment there was a jar, and, ere Dick well knew what had happened, the engine, rebounding from the contact, was speeding swiftly back towards Berwick.

Stretching forth his hand, he shut down steam; then, overcome by the fearful strain to which he had been subjected during the last few minutes, sank unconscious in a corner of the cab.

When Dick Thornhill recovered consciousness, it was to find himself lying by the side of the road, with Lord Roberts and several staff-officers surrounding him.

"Thank Heaven I was in time, my lord!" were his first words.

The old veteran smiled kindly.

"It is I who should say that, my lad, and I do so from my heart!" Then he added admiringly: "But thank Heaven Britain has such sons as the Thornhills to assist her in her hour of need! What reward the Government will give you when this unfortunate war is over I cannot say. Mere money will never repay the services you have done the British Empire."

"We have but done our duty, Lord Roberts. Had I captured the German Emperor, then indeed I would have done something to be proud of," replied Dick modestly.

Lord Roberts looked puzzled, and Dick, who by this time had completely recovered, gave him a brief account of his exciting chase as they neared the special.

"So my information was correct. You are certain it is the German Emperor you have been pursuing? Have you ever seen him before?" asked the Commander-in-Chief.

"I was brought before him in Kiel Fortress, and I cannot be mistaken," returned Dick confidently. "He is a great man. It is a pity he has allowed ambition to get the better of him in this disastrous war."

"True, true!" returned Lord Roberts sadly. "But now, if you will have me, I will avail myself of your airship to reach the Scottish Army as quickly as possible. A member of my staff will do all that I require at Berwick."

Only too pleased to have the honour of carrying the Commander-in-Chief to his destination, Dick ordered the airship to be lowered to the ground, and Lord Roberts stepped on board. Then her fans were put in motion, and she rose gracefully in the air.

It was the first time "Bohs" had been on board an airship, and his intelligent appreciation filled Dick Thornhill with not unnatural pride.

"What a weapon!" was the old veteran's comment. "And yet I cannot but feel sorry it has been invented. It will ruin a soldier's career. The battles of the future will be fought in the air."

"Or, rather, my lord, will it not make future was impossible!" suggested Dick.

"I earnestly hope so, my lad. But who can tell?"

Then he lapsed into silence as he watched the constantly moving panorama over which they flew.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 360.

NEXT MONDAY—"THE RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS!"

EVERY MONDAY,

The "Magnet" LIBRARY.

ONE PENNY.

An Appeal for Help.

About midday they reached the Pentland Hills, already white with the tents of the British Army, hastily summoned to attack the German invaders who had seized Edinburgh.

Here, amidst loud cheering, Dick Thornhill landed his distinguished guest; then, in obedience to a previously arranged plan, staved for the Fifth of Forth, to report on the state of the invading force, and, if possible, get in touch with Thorpe.

Indeed, he was rather astonished that he had not heard or seen anything of the sister airship.

He found the hills immediately around Leith and Edinburgh occupied by a strong German army, and the Fifth of Forth dotted with their transports and men-of-war; whilst the destroyed bridge of Queensferry, the smoke-blackened ruins of countless once prosperous towns and villages, told that the ruthless invaders had hurled death and destruction on every hand.

Terrible indeed had been the German advance on Scottish soil, but terrible indeed was the vengeance of aroused Britain that was awaiting them, for they had gone as far as they might go. A constantly increasing British army was bombing them in on every hand. From Falkirk to the borders of Haddingtonshire a line of steel barred their passage, and all that Dick feared was that they would re-embark ere the British Fleet could arrive to cut off their retreat.

Having secured as much information as he could, Dick turned his airship's head once more to the British headquarters; but he was destined not to see Lord Roberts again for many adventure-laden hours.

As the white tents of the British Army came in sight, he was startled by hearing from the chart-room the quick metallic clink of his marconigraph.

In a moment he was mounted on the high stool in front of the instrument, and his heart almost ceased to beat as he read out the ominous message:

"Help! Disabled midway between Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond."

This, repeated over and over again, told Dick that his brother was indeed in great danger, or he would never have flashed out so insistent an appeal for help; and he tapped out the rapid answer:

"Hold on, old chap! I'm coming!"

Swiftly the answer came back:

"Glad I have found you at last! Three airships threatening me on every side!"

Dick waited to hear no more, but returned on deck, wrote a hasty despatch to Lord Roberts, which he gave into the charge of one of his crew, who dropped to earth with the help of a parachute.

Then Falcon II., her fans humming merrily, her wings beating the air with a loud, hissing roar, rushed to the assistance of her inventor.

"How goes it, Thorpe?" asked Dick through the wireless telegraphic installation.

"In a bit of a hole. But I think we can hold out. Stern smashed by German shell, and aft battery put out of action," was the answer; and Dick knew that his brother was indeed in sore straits.

But they had been flying at a great speed, and half an hour should carry them to their goal.

"Keep the beggars engaged. I'll soon be with you now," he tapped out.

There was no response, and although he repeated the message again and again, his receiver remained silent.

A great dread filled his heart. What if, after all, he should be too late—if, at the very moment of his triumph, Thorpe Thornhill should be slain!

Presently, as he paced with agitated steps the deck of his flying ship, a sound reached his ears which gave birth to renewed hope, for it was the booming of heavy guns, and it told him that his brother was still keeping his aerial foes at bay.

Ten minutes later a tiny speck of light flashed for a moment on the horizon, and as they drew closer, wreaths of pike, almost invisible, smoke circled in the air.

Eagerly Dick raised his glasses and scanned the spot from which the smoke arose. Presently he saw an airship's hull lying helpless on the brink of a precipice. Again despair filled his heart, for there was no one near the wreck; the battle seemed to have moved off in a more northerly direction.

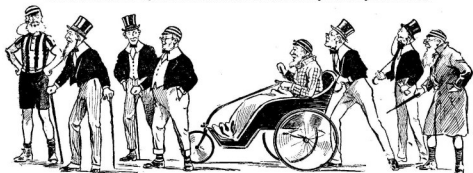
Issuing an order through the telephone, he caused the airship to descend in the direction of the wrecked aerial vessel. As they drew nearer, a sigh of relief escaped Dick's lips, for it was not the Night Hawk, but one of the German vessels which had been thus stricken.

(An extra long instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE!

A Novel Sketch of Special Interest to Lovers of the Boys of Greyfriars School.



PART II.

AS before, the cloud-like shapes obscured the mirror for a time, but soon dispersed. The picture which emerged was that of a long, bleak-looking corridor, with numbered doors fading into the distance. It was a lonely, uninviting place, and the watchers wondered for a moment what it could be.

Presently a uniformed figure appeared, walking with a regular stride down the corridor.

"He's a warder!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

"And the place is a prison!" echoed Wharton.

At the same instant another made his appearance, and with him was an old, grey-bearded man, spectacled and stooping. Every now and again he wagged an admonishing forefinger at his guide.

"It is the esteemed and ludicrous ass, Alonzo!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Rot!"

"Come off, Inky!"

"It is, though, you chaps!" said Nugent. "Look at the book he's carrying."

The sight of the article in question banished all doubt as to the aged figure being that of Alonzo Todd. The large, heavy-looking volume had a title, which was easily conspicuous—"Meditations on Mushrooms."

The first warder was on guard, and at the request of his superior he unlocked one of the doors and admitted the aged Alonzo into the cell.

The picture changed, to show the bleak little compartment in which the convict whose fate it was to be invaded by Alonzo's society spent his days.

The convict, looking up, and observing who his visitor was, scowled ominously.

Alonzo, with a frown of reproach, wagged his bony forefinger at the hapless prisoner.

"He's started on the poor chap!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"Rather! I pity the wretched convict when Lonzy gets properly under way."

"My hat," said Johnny Bull suddenly, "it strikes me pretty forcibly that there's something familiar about that convict!"

His chums looked at the figure on the screen intently.

"What d'ye mean, Johnny?" asked Wharton.

"I know!" Nugent broke out. "It's Bolsover major!"

Nugent was correct. The convict was, in very truth, none other than Percy Bolsover, the one-time bully of the Greyfriars Remove. How he came to be occupying a position in one of His Majesty's prisons would take too long to narrate. Suffice it to say that after leaving Greyfriars, he had developed into a prizefighter, and his many dark doings in the Ring had met with their just reward.

"Wish we could hear their conversation!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Alas, my dear Bolsover, I regret to see that you have trodden the downward path!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Why did you not listen to my entreaties at Greyfriars—far back in the irretrievable past?" chuckled Nugent.

"How your dear grandmother must pine for her errand Percy!" said Johnny Bull.

"Shush, you fellows! Look!"

The figure of Alonzo continued to act upon the screen.

With a sympathetic look at his old schoolfellow who had fared so badly in the battle of life, Todd made as if to offer his book, which had, no doubt, cost him the labours of a lifetime, since it contained, as Bob Cherry jealously remarked, three hundred and thirty-three chapters. It was no doubt written on the same lines as that famous work of which Todd had been the proud possessor at Greyfriars—"The Story of a Spud; from the Seed to the Saucepan."

When the grey-bearded philanthropist commenced reading, it was more than the unfortunate criminal could stand. Stone-breaking, oakum-picking, and skilful he was used to; but this was more than human flesh could endure.

He rose from his plank-bed, which also served him as a sofa in the day-time, and advanced threateningly towards the unsuspecting Todd.

In another second a large, knobby fist shot out. The presentation volume of "Meditations on Mushrooms" flew to one corner of the cell, and its owner flew to another, where he remained in a helpless heap, feebly beating the air with his bony hands.

At this stage the warder came running up. He was a humane man, and seemed to understand what the convict had been through, for he shot him a sympathetic glance. He then helped the aged Alonzo to his feet. The meek and mild visitor to the cells collected his hat, book, and spectacles, smiled in a dazed sort of way, and moved towards the door.

The picture ceased abruptly.

"Something gone wrong with the works," said Bob Cherry. "Not so," spoke Alonzo from the gloom. "The time is short, and there is more to be seen. Whom shall my Magic Mirror next portray?"

"Let's see Billy Bunter in his old age!" cried Nugent.

"The beautiful Bunter in his esteemed dotage will be immensely ludicrous!" Hurree Singh chimed in.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fire away!"

"On the ball!"

"Quiet, then, for the mysteries of the future!" warned the wizard.

The Removites settled themselves down to another demonstration of the remarkable powers of the magician.

The picture this time showed the interior of a prosperous-looking eating-house. Customers were seated at various tables, both consuming and waiting to be served with cutables. A portly person of ripe years was issuing directions to the hard-pressed waiters, who were kept constantly on the move by the hungry patrons of the restaurant. Sausages seemed to be in great demand, and there were many advertisements commending them on the walls. They said, "Try Bunter's Succulent Sausages."

The stout gentleman advanced into the foreground of the picture, and his features could easily be traced. The watching Greyfriars boys roared with merriment.

"It's Billy Bunter!" howled Wharton.

"Fatter than ever!" sobbed Bob Cherry.

They were wrong, however, for the real Billy Bunter—who was by this time an old man of seventy—suddenly appeared through the doorway, and motioned to the other stout personage, to whom he bore a very marked resemblance.

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

The explanation dawned on the Removites like a flash. The younger man was none other than Sammy Bunter, who was apparently in partnership with his elder brother. Sammy was evidently taking active charge of the establishment, while Billy sat at the receipt of custom.

The aged Bunter spoke with his younger counterpart for a few moments, and motioned to him to mind the shop. As he passed, his speckled face could be distinctly recognised, retaining its plumpness still. It also had the crafty look the juniors knew so well, accentuated by reason of his commercial dealings in sausages, which dealings had, moreover, been very successful, judging by the number of customers enjoying the fare he provided.

Indeed, William George Bunter was the sole inventor of the particular brand of sausage named after him, and the name "Bunter's Sacculent Sausages" was copyrighted in America, and well-known there, too. The person who, long years before, had been wont to cadge postal-orders from his more affluent brethren, was in a fair way to making his fortune out of the Sacculent Sausage, and people who tried them once would not voluntarily touch any others. There was, however, about them, they said, that was simply indecipherable—which caused still. Billy Bunter had retained his wonderful powers in the cooking line for which he had been noted in the Greyfriars Remove.

Although Bunter had amassed a considerable fortune, he was not averse to acquiring more wealth, and, having attained the requisite age, he was about to go to the post-office to put in a claim for the Old Age Pension.

Bunter's ripo years were accompanied by a severe form of gout, and he was obliged to lean on a stout stick for support. The picture followed him on his painful way to the post-office.

He gesticulated to the young lady behind the wire screen, and smiled cunningly as he stated his case. He was not fated, however, to receive the coveted pension, and was forced to admit the possession of considerable wealth in the proceeds of his enterprise in sausages. At length, after much vain expostulation, he staggered sorrowfully into the street. The magic mirror ceased its wonderful revelations, and William George Bunter, the erstwhile prize porpoise of Greyfriars, was seen no more.

PART III.

BEFORE the Famous Five had ceased to chuckle over the misadventures of Billy Bunter, the magic mirror had switched on to another subject. It now showed a scene they all recognised from the numerous pictures they had witnessed of it. It was the interior of the House of Commons.

A figure, familiar in spite of the lapse of years, was standing and gesticulating from his place. The whole House was held with rapt attention, and every now and then the listening Members waved their hands, and seemed to be cheering enthusiastically.

Nugent's keen eyes recognised the eloquent orator as Harry Wharton.

"Bravo, Harry!" he exclaimed delightedly.

"Sir Harry Wharton, M.P.," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Sounds good!"

"Shut up, fathead!" exclaimed Wharton, devoutly thankful that the darkness screened his crimson countenance.

Meanwhile, the whole of the assembly on the screen had been worked up to fever-heat by the eloquence of the old Greyfriars boy. He sat down, amid a perfect hurricane of clapping and cheering, modestly acknowledging the demonstration in his favour.

The Members then rose and trooped out, and the House was adjourned.

In the Lobby quite a crowd assembled round Harry Wharton, showering upon him their hearty congratulations. Conspicuous among them were Cherry and Nugent.

Bob Cherry, a bronzed and genial veteran, who had served his country with no small distinction, was now Secretary of State for War. Nugent, the leader of the Opposition, had made a name great in history; while Mark Linley, who was also present, had, in his position of Labour Member, wrought yeoman service to his country by bringing about the improvement of the social and industrial affairs of Lancashire.

A smart Daimler car was in waiting outside the House. The statesmen got in, and, amid the cheers of a huge and appreciative crowd, the vehicle glided swiftly away.

Involuntarily the boys drew a long breath of delight.

"Ripping!"

"Bravo, Harry!"

"Good old Franky!"

"Chuck it! The show's starting again!"

Clouds were rolling upon the frosted glass of the mirror, and when they dispersed a place appeared with which the juniors were very well acquainted. It was Greyfriars School, a venerable pile, whose ancient Close could be seen quite distinctly.

An aged figure appeared, leaning for support upon a stout

stick. He was followed by another and another, till there were a score. They roamed slowly about, with looks of regret, over the place where, sixty years before, they had so playfully romped—a horde of ink-fingered fags!

The movements of most of them betokened a vague longing for the past.

Some of them the juniors recognised. "Who's that long, thin, old jesser?" asked Bob Cherry irreverently.

"Peter Todd, I should imagine."

"My hat! Fancy a skeleton like that as head of No. 7 Study!" gasped Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were other characters, too, whom Wharton and his chums recognised. The keen-featured old gentleman in a loud check suit was Fisher T. Fish, the American millionaire, whose position as President of the society for Providing Suspenders for Savages was attended with a handsome income.

Hobbling slowly round the old Close were Dick Rake and Dick Russell. These two were in partnership together as expensers of a wonderful banjo—the invention of Bernard Glyn, late of St. Jim's. In fact, there were few firms of so flourishing a character as that of Russell & Rake.

Many "old boys" were conspicuous by their absence, for they had passed over to the great majority, or "thrown up the sponge," as Bob Cherry brutally put it.

For some moments the scene continued, gaining in interest, until suddenly the picture ceased and the lights went up. The juniors looked round for Ahmees, but he had vanished.

"Where's the Wandering Jew?" cried Wharton.

"He's bunked!" said Bob Cherry. "By Jove, I could have sat looking into the future until further orders! Make him giddy as some more!"

But the Eminent Wizard seemed to have disappeared entirely, and the Famous Five, after a futile search, wended their way to Greyfriars, well satisfied with the afternoon's entertainment.

Study No. 1 presented a very cosy appearance when Harry Wharton & Co. returned from Courtfield. A cheerful fire was crackling in the grate, and the table groaned beneath the weight of the goodly viands, as a novelist would say. The chums of the Remove were in funds, and were doing things on a more sumptuous scale than usual.

Harry Wharton looked very thoughtful as he opened a tin of sardines.

"We're had a ripping afternoon, kids!" he exclaimed. "The magic mirror showed us some fearful and wonderful things. At the same time, I think I'd rather remain young."

"Hear, hear!"

"Nothing can compare with the days of our youth," said Bob Cherry sagely, turning a red face from the fire-grate, where he was engaged in making toast.

"Of course, it's all jolly fine to think of becoming substantial and distinguished men," said Nugent. "Some of us seem to have ripping careers carved out for us. We shall 'make good,' as they say in America, and make a giddy success of our lives. But, after all, we've had some rattling good times at Greyfriars, and are destined to have many more."

"Fancy Billy Bunter being the proprietor of a giddy sausage-shop!" chuckled Wharton.

"Ha, ha! He's in his element there, and no mistake!" grinned Nugent.

"More likely to end his days in prison!" growled Bob.

"Ahmees was a jolly sight too lenient!"

"The intemperate and toadful cad may reform," mused Hurren Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not much fear of that, Inky. You're quite off-side, old man!"

"Most likely he'll pine away in Pentonville, charged with circulating counterfeit coin!" said Johnny Bull.

"Or forging postal-orders?" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Inky might be right, though," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Shakespeare said that they are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

"Oh, hang Shakespeare," growled Bob Cherry, "and pass the jam!"

"Then we are still to inflict our merry adventures on the MAGNET readers!" queried Harry.

"Certainly! They'd much rather read of us as we are than as a decrepit, toothless set of johnnies, tottering under the infirmities of old age!"

"Right-o, then! Their wish shall be gratified. Here's to the Famous Five!" exclaimed Wharton. "Long may they reign!"

The five juniors, bound together in close comradeship by many heroic and thrilling adventures, sprang to their feet with noisy acclamation and drank the toast.

THE END.

Our Grand Ferrers Lord Serial Story.



THE UNCONQUERABLE.

A Magnificent Story of Thrilling Adventure

By SIDNEY DREW.

How Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga Invaded the House of Mystery—Martin Arkland—Doors and Shutters of Steel—In the Trap.

Hendrick piloted them into a snug anchorage, where a yacht drawing much more water than the *Fatality* could lie in safety.

"Whether the island is private property or not," said Thurston, "I hardly think they'll object to visitors. I know I shouldn't, if I lived in this out-of-the-way hole. Get a boat out, Madcock, and throw a bundle of newspapers into her. Odd that nobody's come to inspect us."

"Maybe there isn't anybody here, Ru."

"But I saw smoke coming from one of the chimneys. I'll wake them up."

The siren uttered three hoarse blasts, awakening a dozen echoes, and starting the seabirds.

"O-o-h! I know what she means, Chingy. Dey all deaf," said Gan-Waga. "Give me a matches, and I whispers to dems low and softful."

But even the crashing report of the signal gun met with no response. Ching-Lung, Thurston, Prout, Gan-Waga and Barry O'Rourke landed.

"Hullo, here's a lift!" said Thurston. "But I'm afraid we shall have to go up the steps, unless you like to wait to get steam up."

They peeped through the window of the brick engine-house. The machinery was bright and clean, but the boiler was cold. Their climb brought them to a garden, well laid out and trimly kept, but there was no sign of a gardener, and their curiosity increased.

"Bedad, they must have all gone off for a holiday," said Barry. "Taken a trip to the mainland, Oi reckon."

The front of the house was covered with eucalyptus—a creeper that flourishes best in salt air. There were green sunblinds over the windows, and the paint was fresh and new. Ching-Lung went up to the door, and raised the highly-polished brass knocker. No answer came.

"By honey," said Prout, "this is what I call queerous! That knocker was cleaned this very mornin', or I'm a Dutchman. Are they all dead?"

Instead of knocking, Ching-Lung tried the door, and it opened, showing a handsome hall and a richly-carpeted staircase.

"I'm going in," he said, "and risk being taken for a burglar. This is getting a bit too uncanny. Come along, Gan. They can't eat us!"

"Hub! I'm not 'fraides,' said the Eskimo. "I gives dem cinderghosts if dey eats me. Coo-eel! Anybody at homages, tank yo'. Say if you notes."

They went from room to room. All showed evidences of recent occupation; all were tidy, elegant, and spotless.

"May as well see the lot now," said Ching-Lung. "Here's another staircase, and the last of them. Hullo!"

Here was a locked door at last—the only one they had met with. Ching-Lung put his eyes to the keyhole, but could see nothing.

"Locked on the inside, Gan," he whispered. So Ching-Lung knocked and knocked again. There was a rustling sound, and the key was turned, and the door thrown open.

"I have to apologise," began Ching-Lung, "for—Great Scott! What, you, Martin Arkland!"

The thief of the Unconquerable stood blinking at them—a shabby, helpless-looking figure. The tumbled bed behind him showed that he had been asleep. Ching-Lung grasped him by the shoulder, but not roughly.

"Of all the joyful surprises!" he exclaimed. "You could knock me down with a bar of lead, Martin! Why, we've

been looking everywhere for you. We never dreamed you owned this island mansion. Stealing submarines seems to pay better than hard work. Dear me, this is a surprise!"

"Ole Tommy Sprouts and Barry Looonsticks are dying to hug yo', Martin!" grinned Gan-Waga. "Ho, ho, hoo! Dey caties yo', Martin, dey love yo' so muchies!"

Arkland wiped his forehead, and tried to free himself. He seemed half dazed.

"I—I did not expect this," he said hoarsely. "Give—give me a drink of water! Who are you? I—I don't know you, or—or understand you."

"If you don't know us, we happen to know you very well indeed, Arkland," said Ching-Lung; "and I've got a good idea who owns this place. His name begins with a G, and ends with a y, don't it? This is where you intended to bring the Unconquerable, I imagine, instead of smashing her up on Scarran Island, as you unfortunately did. What luck for us, and what luck for you! You'll be sorry when you meet our chief, Arkland."

"Give me a drink of water. I am not well. My head burns. I have been ill—very, very ill. I cannot remember, and I do not know you."

Den I nimprouces each other to boths of us," said Gan-Waga. "I do dem most nobles and glorious Gan-Waga, de buterfuls boss of de show. I de great Eskimo chief, and dis little boyves wid de plait down hims back, he Ching-Lung, who looks afters my dog. Ho, ho, hoo! I pay him sixpence every leap year fo' doing dat. He a bits yaller in de faces, 'cos he been eatin' dandelions. Ho, ho, hoo! We gotted him, Chingy, and we gives him a drive at de pumps. Ohmi—ohmi! Tom and Barry, dey justs holler."

Arkland was as limp as a rag, pitiful, shivering. He cowered back against the wall when Ching-Lung released him.

"Be quiet, Gan," said the prince. "Look here, Arkland, you've played the rogue, and you'll have to face the music. Ferrers Lord may not be hard on you, for I think he's after bigger game. I must take you; can't get out of it. Hold up, man—hold up! Phew! Catch him, Gan! Caught, sir!"

Martin Arkland had collapsed. Except for Gan-Waga's restraining arm he would have fallen in a limp heap.

"The misery!" said Ching-Lung. "Put him on the bed, Gan. Look about for some water!"

"If I find a pail of it, Chingy, I sticks him ugly heads in," answered the Eskimo. "I sours him shamming, Chingy. What he do to my Prouts, and my dears ole Barry, hunk? I nots sorry fo' the blackguards. He a bad lode, Chingy!"

"Oh, let that slide, and find some water. He's fainted."

"Don fetch yo' own waters!" retorted Gan-Waga. "I nots. He a frauds, Chingy—a buterfuls bad 'nuff frauds!"

Just as you like," said Ching-Lung. "Perhaps your mighty lordship will step down and ask Rupert Thurston to come here."

"I nots," said the Eskimo defiantly. "We carry him down, Chingy! I nots trusts him, Chingy, and I nots likes de places. Ohmi! What dat, hunk?"

There was a rattling, metallic sound that made them both turn to the door.

"Chingy—Chingy, he gone—he gone!" cried the Eskimo, glancing back. "He gone—gone!"

The tumbled bed was there, but the limp form of Martin Arkland was no longer there, and Ching-Lung rubbed his eyes. He dragged the bed aside.

"Down stairs, and see what made the row, Gan!" he cried. "By Jove, I was a fool not to listen to you! Search out, Schwartz—search out!"

He was in the circular turret they had seen from the yacht. The dog dashed here and there, and Ching-Lung tapped the floor with his heel, and hammered the walls with the handle of a brush he had found on the dressing-table. Then came a shout from Gan-Waga.

"We shutted in, Chingy! We all shutted ins!"

"What?"

"De stairses shutted ins, Chingy."

"Come back, then, but keep outside the door," said Ching-Lung. "We're not trapped yet!"

Crash! He dashed a chair against the floor, and broke off one of the legs. Then he sprang upon the dressing-table, and shivered one of the circular windows. Half the leg of the chair remained in his hands, cut off cleanly, and Ching-Lung was in semi-gloom. Steel shutters had closed over the four windows.

"Chingy—Chingy, helps!"

There was terror in Gan-Waga's voice. The dog's back bristled, and he rushed away, barking furiously. The bark ended in a mournful yelp of agony. Ching-Lung dashed out, and fell, rather than ran, down half a dozen steps. The way was barred by a door of steel. The dog lay close to it on his side, feebly twitching his legs. Where was Gan-Waga? Ching-Lung grasped his poor weapon, and stood to face the unknown.

(A splendid instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Order your copy now.)