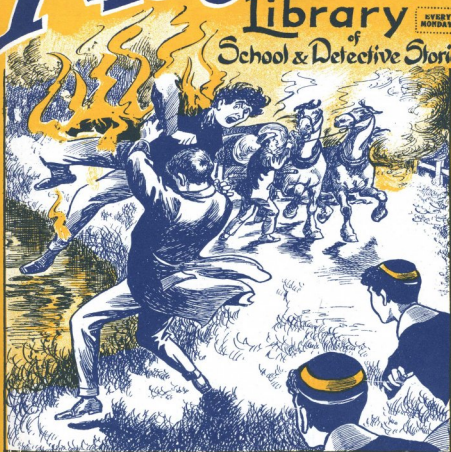


EXTRA-LONG STORY OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.
INSIDE.

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(A thrilling incident from this week's magnificent Grayfriars story.)

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Mysterious Message!

HE little station up on the hill sweltered under the glare of the hot sun. The Indian had, during the last few hours, been as unbearable as it could. At this hour there was but one thing worth living for—or two, rather—an iced drink and a long sleep.

At least, this is what Harry Raskurn, of the Indian Police Force, thought as, with three of his bosom chums, he reclined on the veranda of the "cassimery," watching the slow flow of the great river sweeping round in a giant bend away to the distant mountains.

"Of course, seeing that he's some sort of a connection of yours, Harry, we don't want to be too rough on the brute, but I think you'll agree with us that Luke Walters is about the most insufferable cad that ever joined the Force—certainly the worst we've had at Galphat!" said Raymond Conyers, blowing out a lung cloud of smoke.

"I'm afraid I must admit he's not straight enough for clean any decent fellow's boots," replied Harry; "but, still, as long as he doesn't come howling round here, I think we'll leave him alone."

Apparently, there was little to justify good-natured Harry Raskurn sticking up for his relation, for at that very moment he came into view at the further end of the veranda. He was the image of Harry in boots, but not in disposition. His first words showed it. The four chums were evidently comfortably settled—were enjoying themselves, in fact—which was not at all to Luke Walters' liking.

Without a moment's hesitation he packed Howlett, Ferrars, and Mitchell off on some stamping job. The young fellows were new recruits, and Walters was anxious to make his authority felt.

"Considering you've broken up our gathering, Luke, I'll find someone elsewhere," said Harry, angered at the other's petty action.

"Any more from you, and I'll report you to the 'sup'!" rejoined Walters triumphantly.

Harry said nothing, but bit his lip and walked away down the hillside into the town. The bazaar was filled with a bustling crowd.

Till the afternoon waned and the short twilight fell, the young policeman wandered about from what he staid, purchasing here and there, chatting and passing the time of day. At last he stood apart from the noisy throng, his eyes fixed on the distant station up on the hill.

The pad of a soft footfall behind him caused him to turn. A native confronted him deferentially. Almost before the young policeman knew what had happened, a small folded slip was pressed into his palm. He glanced at it, then looked up for the messenger. He had gone unnoticed into this air. What could it mean? Harry turned the paper over in his palm. The inscription was what? Could it be that it was written in Ramnast, that strange language, so little

known, and used only by a few secret societies whose objects were the pursuance of crime. Harry looked again. There was no doubting it. He himself knew the language—had studied it and the code of signs by which members of the fraternity were enabled to recognize each other.

On one side was this in Ramnast: "Our offer is 4,000 rs. On the eve of the Feast of Kali, at the house of the Fear, the bargain will be complete."

On the other: "By him, known to you as the Faithful One, I send all I know. What does this mean to me?"

"I should have read this side first, I suppose," said Harry, "for the reference to 4,000 rupees is evidently an answer to it. Now, why was this paper given to me? A case of mistaken identity, I suppose."

He crushed it in his hands, but a thought caused him to stay his purpose of throwing it away. He glanced again at the writing on one side.

"By giva, I know that lot!" he muttered. "Whose it—whose? No, I can't think just now; perhaps the recollection will come in time."

It was now dusk. He retraced his footsteps up the slope towards the station. Half-steps up, a dark form barred his progress, looming out of the darkness like some specter.

"That you, Raskurn?" a familiar voice called.

"The same, Dicky Ferrars!" replied Harry.

"Had news, say long—dozed had news? Just came looking over the wire. Inspector-General Mason, who, you know, was to be here to-morrow early, has disappeared—vanished, vanished, spirited away, ceased to exist on the earth, or whatever you like to call it."

"Never!"

"Fact! Case stands thus: Mason started from Madras yesterday instead of, as arranged, to-day. Went by train to Goolgapor, which left yesterday at two o'clock. Set out thence to ride here with two native dungs. Distance, twelve miles. Should have been here by three. That's getting on for thirty hours ago. Mason's gone; two faithful shikarees, been with him for years, found dead. Where's his gun?—that's the question. Every inquiry has been made; country has been searched, river dragged."

"It's awful!" commented Harry. "Come on! Let's get up to station!"

There intense excitement prevailed. The whole affair was an impenetrable mystery, and likely so to remain for some time.

More than a week passed by; still nothing had been heard of the missing man. All India was roused, and every man in the Indian Police longed for an opportunity to distinguish himself.

Meanwhile, Harry had chanced upon a strange discovery. Comparison of the writing on one side of the paper which had so curiously come into his possession revealed to the young policeman an astounding fact. The penmanship was identical with that of Luke Walters. The result of this was that Harry determined to keep the appointment

at the house of Durga, the tower, a native cavalryman.

"I can see what's happened," the fat told himself. "That blessed thobee mistook me for my precious cousin. What does he know that is worth 4,000 rupees to this secret society? Anyway, my losses or not, I'm going to get to the bottom of it!"

Then an unpleasant recollection crossed Harry's mind. It occurred to him that the one man about all others who would be as well with the particulars of the inspector-general's projected visit to Galphat was Luke Walters. Surely between the two occurrences there could be no connection?

Be this as it might, the policeman put his resolve into effect. The night of the eve of the Feast of Kali came, and with it, at the door of the house of Durga, the son, Harry Raskurn. His knowledge of Ramnast and of the secret signs used by the Brotherhood of Equity—which was another name for a gang of plunderers, slayers, and evil-doers in general—carried him into a closely-guarded inner room.

Here he found himself in the presence of a man of great refinement as it would be hard to find elsewhere on the face of the earth.

The first words of him who was evidently the leader presiding at the society revealed to the young policeman the plot in its entirety.

"Walters said," he said, speaking in the fraternal tongue, "you have served us well. The man about us here above all others is in our power. Rupees to the number of 4,000 are yours! Take them!"

Harry moved mechanically as if to pick up the heavy bag. He paused at the next revelation.

"Mason sahib, who has done so much to break up the secret societies of India, will be held in ransom. He lies now in the care of Esmuttul, the fakir, in the hills beyond the river. A hundred thousand rupees is what we shall ask for him. That money will be ours. You will help us to get it."

"And Mason will be restored to the authorities!" said Harry, scarce trusting himself to speak.

"A mocking laugh was the answer.

"We might not the money, but never shall the Indian Government have back again its inspector-general of the Police. No, Mason will die ten minutes after the ransom is paid—less of a poison."

"And how am I to help you?" Harry was asking.

He had no further, for at that instant a tragic interruption occurred. The wind at the door was nearly flung from his feet; a dozen excited natives sprang up and drew formidable knives. The next moment a dishevelled figure rushed into the room.

It was Luke Walters. He had overheard all, had witnessed Harry's deception, springing forward, he hung himself upon his cousin.

"Fools, all of you!" he cried. "Don't you see this fellow is a spy?"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Night-Birds.

AT Luke Walters' words a dozen weapons flashed in the dull light of the flickering lamp, a dozen eager, frantic, passing forms rushed in, right and left upon Harry, each intent upon his destruction.

But Harry, like most of his class, was well

(Continued on page 23.)

It has been said by the sage of old that the leopard cannot change its spots. This remark would appear to apply to one Slinker Bates, a wild and unruly youth who suddenly shows up on the horizon of James Hobson's peaceful and rather uneventful life. If your sympathy does not, at the conclusion, lie with the primitive Slinker, your admiration will at least go out to James Hobson, of the Shell at Greyfriars, the junior who sees—



True To His Word!

A Magnificent Story of
Harry Wharton & Co.
of Greyfriars, intro-
ducing James Hobson
of the Shell, and
Slinker Bates—a
reformatory boy.

BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Runaway!

"TRAIN'S late," said Harry Wharton.
"As per usual—blow it!" granted Johnny Bull. "These blessed local trains—"

"It's the engine-driver," explained Bob Cherry. "He's spoons on the grill in the buffet at Wapehot Station, I believe."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That explains it, then," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Anyhow, it should be here by this time. We might just as well have walked to Friarale."

Harry Wharton & Co. were getting just a trifle impatient. The Remove team had been playing Courtfield Council School, and the juniors were waiting on Courtfield Station for the local train for Friarale. There were quite a number of other juniors doing likewise, and they were getting impatient, too. It was draughty on the station platform; and, moreover, they wanted to get home to tea.

"This sleepy old station wants waking up!" remarked Bob Cherry. "It's worse than Friarale—and that's saying a lot! Suppose we— Hallo, here she comes!"

A train rumbled into the station, and Harry Wharton eyed its approach and chuckled.

"No, she doesn't!" he grinned. "That's the London train, Bob, you ass!"

"Oh, is it?" grumbled Bob Cherry, turning away in disgust. "Never mind! It'll bring a bit of excitement into this sleepy hole, anyway!"

It did. The arrival of the London train usually did bring a mild flutter of excitement to the sleepy old station. But on this occasion it brought more than a mild flutter—as Bob soon found out.

Before the train had rumbled to a standstill at the platform, one of the carriage doors flew open suddenly—too suddenly for the careless Bob, who happened to be standing in the way.

The swinging door crashed into Bob's

back, sending him nose-diving to the platform with a wild yell.

But that was not all.

The next instant there arose a chorus of yells, as a youth—a lanky, red-headed youth, wearing some kind of uniform, plunged madly from the carriage, sending the group of juniors sprawling to right and left.

"What the thump——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yarrough! What the——"

Crash! Clatter! Clatter! Crash!

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull were sent spinning against a pile of empty milk-cans, and these in turn went spinning and rolling over the platform with an appalling crash and clatter.

What happened after that Harry Wharton least of all had any clear idea. But as he went down he caught a brief glimpse of a man—also in uniform—leaping out of the carriage on the heels of the red-headed youth, and shouting furiously as he did so.

Both of them landed in sprawling heaps on the platform, and even as he landed the man made a frantic clutch at the grovelling youth.

But the lanky fugitive was too quick for him. He wriggled away from the clutching hand like an eel, and leaping to his feet went racing up the platform.

The burly, uniformed man sprang to his feet with an angry roar.

"Stop! Stop that young varmint!" he roared. "Stop 'im! After 'im!"

He jumped forward in pursuit, fell over an overturned milk-can, and measured his length on the platform with a crash and a howl.

But the juniors were on their feet by now, and they were wrathful, to say the least of it. Bob Cherry had skinned his nose badly on the rough planking, and scarcely one of the juniors had escaped without some hurt or other.

"After him—yes, we'll go after the rotter all right!" snorted Bob Cherry. "My hat! I'll smash the dangerous dunnery! On the ball, you chaps!"

"What ho!"

The fugitive was still in sight, dodging in and out as he evaded the clutches of porters and passengers, and the juniors went in chase with a rush. The local train was just steaming in on the other side of the platform; but they were heedless of that now. The uniformed man had scrambled to his feet, gasping and panting furiously, and he brought up the rear, shouting as he thundered after them.

"Stop 'im, someone! Stop that young villain! Confound it! 'E'll get away, blow 'im!"

It certainly looked like it. The fugitive was almost at the end of the platform by this time, and Harry Wharton & Co. were twenty yards behind him. Two Greyfriars fellows were standing chatting at the far end of the platform, and they looked round and stared as they heard the commotion.

The two were James Hobson and his chum Hoskins of the Shell at Greyfriars, and they fairly blinked as they saw the crowd racing towards them.

Then someone raised the cry of: "Stop thief!" and as he heard it Hobson seemed to grasp the position.

His jaw set grimly, and he jumped out to meet the fugitive. Hobson was a hefty handful to come to grips with, and it looked as if the chase were as good as ended.

But the red-headed youth didn't stay to come to grips with Hobson.

He ducked like lightning, and butted the Greyfriars fellow full in the waist-coat. Then he raced on. Hobson grunted, and collapsed like a pricked balloon.

But almost at once he was up again, gasping and panting, his face red and wrathful. James Hobson wasn't the sort to take it lying down—or sitting down, as it were.

"I'll—I'll smash you for that, you rotter!" he howled. "I'll—I'll——"

He started off without finishing. His chum Hoskins sent a yell after him:

"Here—stop, you ass! Train's in, Hobby!"

"Blow the train!" roared Hobson. And he went in chase like a mad bull. The Friardale train wasn't likely to wait; but, like Wharton & Co., Hobson felt that vengeance couldn't wait, either.

Before the Famous Five had reached the end of the platform, Hobson was racing along the permanent way with his quarry scarcely a dozen yards in front of him.

"Hobby's got him all serene!" panted Bob Cherry, as the chums crossed the gleaming rails and started along the cindered pathway beside them. "He'll easily catch that merchant up!"

The chums put on speed, hoping to be in at the death. But that hope was not realised. A sharp curve in the cutting hid Hobson and his quarry from the juniors' sight for a few moments, and when they rounded it Harry Wharton gave a yell.

Lying on the cindered pathway—alone—was James Hobson. Ahead of him, racing merrily alongside the gleaming rails, was the fugitive. Farther ahead still was a goods train, just moving across the points from a cutting on the left on to the main line.

"My hat!" panted Harry Wharton. "The beggar's making for that goods train! Buck up!"

The fugitive's intention was obvious, and the juniors simply flew the next few yards. But long before they had reached Hobson, that youth was on his feet again in pursuit.

What followed almost took the juniors' breath away.

The train had been moving at a crawl, but now as the last van crossed the points it began to gain speed; and at that instant the fugitive leaped it.

He made a flying leap upwards, and his fingers closed on a heavy chain hanging from the low truck. Then his feet got a foothold on the buffers, and he clambered like a cat up the side of the truck.

He had scarcely reached safety when Hobson came racing up alongside. "Get down!" yelled Harry Wharton. "That fool Hobson means to follow! We must stop the ass!"

But they were too late! Even as Harry yelled, Hobson made a flying leap as the fugitive had done; and luckily he also made no mistake. His fingers clutched the swinging chain, and at that moment later the reckless junior was swarming up the side.

The juniors still raced on; but they soon realised that further pursuit was hopeless. The goods train was moving at a fair speed by now, and though they ran hard, it drew farther away every second.

Gasping and panting, they halted at last.

"Done, by Jingo!" panted Bob Cherry. "That ass, Hobson—"

"He was an ass to jump on after that beggar!" exclaimed Harry Wharton breathlessly. "It wasn't worth it! Hallo, there she goes!"

The goods train had receded far into the distance now, and as they watched it vanished from sight round a bend in the track.

At that moment the uniformed man and a single porter came pounding up, puffing and blowing. The rest of the pursuers had dropped out long ago.

"He got away, then?" choked the uniformed man savagely. "By hokey, there'll be a rapscallion about this! Hang the young varmint!"

"Who is he?" asked Harry Wharton. "What was—"

"Who is 'e?" growled the man savagely. "He's the biggest pest as ever entered a reformatory. Led us all a nice dance at Woodlands, he did. The

little rat was too much for us, and we was just taking 'im to Borstal. There'll be a thunderin' row when—"

"You can pound down the line," said Harry. "The train will be through Friardale by this, but you'll get him at Moorside if you're quick."

"Get 'im? That ain't likely!" snorted the big man. "Slinker Bates is too slippery to be caught that way. He's a big terror. He'll ang on to that train till it slows down, and then he'll drop off, an' we'll never catch the varmint!"

"There's a chance yet," said Harry. "Old Hobby—that's the chap who went after him—won't let him go if he can help it."

"What 'opes!" granted the man despondently. "I tell you, young gent, that kid's a terror! He's the worst sneak-thief and worst character as ever entered Woodlands. Blow me if he ain't! He ain't safe to be at large. We was glad to get shut of 'im—"

"Well, you've got shut of 'im now," grinned the porter, who seemed to take the affair as a huge joke. "What you gonna do about 'im?"

"Got to catch 'im all the same!" snapped the man. "I'll get the bloomin' sock for this, maybe. 'Ere, I'll come back and try the phone, then I'll get the police on the job."

And next moment the angry warden was pounding back towards Courtfield Station.

"We might as well move, too!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as the Famous Five watched the grinning porter follow the warden. "No good standing here; no good going back to Courtfield, either. I vote we cut across the fields and go home through Friardale Woods, you chaps."

"Right ho!" said Bob Cherry. "My hat! Wonder how poor old Hobson's got on?"

"Reckon he can take care of himself," said Nugent.

"I hope he's all serene, anyway," said Harry.

But as the Famous Five swarmed up the embankment and started across the fields towards the distant Friardale Woods, Harry Wharton, at least, was feeling anything but easy in his mind. Hobson was a plucky youth, and well able to take care of himself, he knew. But if Slinker Bates was all that the warden had said he was, then James Hobson was in for a warm time, thought Harry.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Rascal and Hero!

THOUGH Harry Wharton & Co. did not know it, James Hobson had had a very good reason for leaving taken that mad leap on to the moving train after the fugitive.

He had easily caught the red-headed youth round the bend, and the two had gone down on the cinders with a crash, struggling furiously.

So far Hobson had not given a thought as to whom the runaway could be. His one idea was to punch the stranger's nose, and punch it hard.

Under his worst Hobson still had an echo where the youth's bullet head had butted him, and Hobson wanted vengeance badly.

But during that brief struggle by the gleaming rails something had happened to strengthen Hobson's intention considerably.

The athletic Shell fellow was more than the runaway's equal in size and weight, but the lanky youth was as agile

as a cat, and he fought with the ferocity of a tiger.

Kicking and scratching and biting, he evaded all the junior's efforts to hold him, and hardly had the two floundered to earth when a savage lunge of the fellow's knee took Hobson clean under the chin.

Hobson yelled as his teeth clashed together, and in that instant the junior felt a sharp tug at his watch-chain as the slippery youth leaped to his feet and dashed away.

Though half-dazed, Hobson had realised instinctively what had happened, and his hand flew to his watch-pocket.

His watch had gone, likewise his chain. That settled the matter for James Hobson. The watch as a gold watch, and was valuable. Moreover, it had been a present from Hobson's father. The Shell fellow would have gone through fire and water to get that back.

Needless of his sobbing jaws and teeth, he leaped to his feet and went in pursuit, his lips set hard.

And now he was clinging to the swinging truck as the train rumbled on its way. For a few moments he clung there brazenly, and then he swarmed up and flung one leg over the top.

Then he paused. Crouching down in the far end of the truck was the fugitive, his glittering eyes fixed craftily on the Greyfriars fellow.

Now Hobson got a good look at him; he grasped at once the kind of fellow he had to deal with. The tall-tale uniform told him that.

"A blessed reformatory boy, by jingo!" breathed Hobson.

The two regarded each other grimly for a moment. The fugitive stared defiantly, his pinched, cunning features white and haggard. He looked just what he was, little more than a lined animal. The other was a well-natured, easy-going junior at heart, Hobson felt a sudden pang of pity for the hunted wretch.

And then, remembering the watch and chain, Hobson's features set hard, and he dropped lightly down into the shaking, rumbling truck.

"Now, you rotten sneak-thief!" he said quietly. "Hand over that watch, my poppin'!"

Slinker Bates snarled then, and an ugly look came over his crafty face. He snatched up a chunk of coal from the bottom of the truck and raised it aloft menacingly.

"I ain't got your bloomin' watch!" he panted. "Don't you come no farther, or I'll bash this at your 'ead, later you'll be a heffy chunk of coal, and the reformatory boy's glittering eyes were savage and determined. But Hobson only hesitated a moment, and then he ducked and charged.

As he dived he felt, rather than saw, the ugly missile as it whizzed within an inch of his head, and the next moment he blundered against the side of the truck as the slippery Slinker dodged away from his grasping hand.

And in that instant the train dived into a tunnel with a rumbling roar.

Hobson scarcely realised it for a moment. His heart almost missed a beat as blackness suddenly descended upon him, and his ears were filled with a ringing of bells and a clanging of metal. Then, as the blinding, choking smoke and showers of sparks began to envelop him, he understood and almost grinned with relief.

The tunnel was familiar to him, and, realising it was only a matter of seconds before they were out again, he wisely remained motionless, waiting for the daylight to reveal his adversary.

The daylight came quickly enough with a rush, and as he blinked about him Hobson got a sudden shock.



The carriage door crashed into Bob Cherry's back, sending him spinning to the platform with a wild yell. From the compartment emerged a lanky, red-headed youth wearing some sort of a uniform. He plunged madly from the carriage, sending the group of juniors scattering to right and left. "What the thump—" "Oh, my hat!" "Yarrough!" "What the—" yelled the Famous Five in chorus. (See *Chap. I.*)

Save for himself, the truck was empty. Slinker Bates had vanished.

"Good heavens!" panted the junior. He rushed to the side of the truck and peered out fearfully. He became aware then that the train had slackened speed. He caught a glimpse of a signal-box in the distance, and realised that the signal was against the train. Jumping to the far side he glanced over the side of the truck.

Then he drew a deep breath of relief. Below him, crouching on the footboard, was Slinker Bates. He looked up, and as he saw the junior peering down at him his hardened young face twisted into a triumphant grin.

Then the runaway released his hold of the truck, and dropped. He struck the cinders, spun round, and went rolling over and over in the gutter against the signal wires. But he was up on his feet again and scrambling madly up the embankment in a flash.

Hobson waited to see no more, nor for the train to pull up.

"The little brute's got pluck, any way," he breathed. "What he can do I can do, though. Here goes."

He scrambled over the side, and as his feet touched the footboard he turned to face the engine and jumped outwardly. He landed with a jar that shook every bone in his body, and, just as the runaway had done, he spun round and rolled in the gutter beyond the cindered path.

"Oh crumbs!"

He staggered up the next moment, shaken and bruised; but luckily no worse harmed, and, without hesitation, he began to scramble up the embankment.

Reaching the top, he glanced round. Then he gasped in bewilderment.

There wasn't a soul in sight. The field beyond was empty, neither was there a hedge or ditch near whereon a person could hide.

Then suddenly Hobson caught a glimpse of something moving to the left of him, and his eyes gleamed.

Some twenty yards away, on the top of the embankment, lay a row of huge earthenware drain-pipes. They were more than big enough to hide a boy,

and Hobson knew that one of them hid a boy now.

"All serene, my pippin'!" breathed Hobson softly. "I'll have you in a sec, old sneak thief!"

But the Shell fellow did not approach his quarry directly. He climbed the white fence and slid down the steep bank into the field beyond. Then he ran softly along for a few yards and swarmed up the bank again.

He had judged the distance to a nicety, and dropping quietly over the fence, he made a sudden rush for the drainpipe near which he had glimpsed the movement.

The next moment he knew his eyes had not deceived him. From the huge, earthenware pipe there sounded a sudden, startled gasp, a gasp that turned to a snarl of rage as the fugitive hiding in the pipe looked up to see the junior standing above him.

"Got you, my sneaky friend!" snapped Hobson. "Out of that—quick!"

"You ain't got me yet, hang you!" snarled the youth, showing his teeth savagely. "Touch me, and—"

He lunged out viciously with his foot as Hobson made a grab at him. Hobson howled as the heavy boot trapped his fingers against the side of the pipe.

Hobson's face went red with wrath then, and his jaw set hard.

"I'll jolly soon have you out of that!" he yelled. "Here goes!"

He stooped low, and, fairly flinging himself inside the drain-pipe, clutched desperately at the runaway's arm. But Slinker Bates wasn't caught like a rat in a trap yet.

The other end of the pipe was unguarded, and with a swift, snake-like glide and wriggle he retreated, lashing out viciously with his feet as he did so.

"Would you, old top!" panted Hobson.

His grasp closed on the red-headed youth's ankle, and he hung on desperately, heedless of the lashing, smashing blows from the other boot.

By now Hobson himself was fairly inside the pipe, and his quarry was outside, save for the foot in Hobson's grasp. Though noted for his physical prowess,

Hobson had never been noted particularly for his brains, and he only realised now the un wisdom of his rash dive when too late.

He realised it more so the next moment. There followed a few seconds' savage tug-of-war, and then happened the thing that Hobson was likely to remember with horror all his life.

A sudden desperate tug unbalanced Hobson, and he rolled over on his side, and his weight caused the drain-pipe to roll also. Even so, all might have been well had the junior only remained still, or realised what was happening, and flung his weight over on the other side.

But Hobson had only thoughts for his escaping quarry. He had lost his grasp on Slinker's ankle, and nuddly he strove to regain his balance and his grip. Only when the heavy pipe rolled completely over did Hobson realise his danger, and then it was too late.

The hapless junior heard a hoarse yell of warning from Slinker Bates, and the next moment he felt his brain reeling, and his body flung violently from side to side, as the drain-pipe went rolling and bounding down the steep embankment.

The situation would have been comical to an onlooker had it not been so full of deadly peril to the unfortunate inmate of the huge pipe.

The ungainly thing went rolling and jumping down the incline, and then, with a final, grotesque leap, it cleared the signal-gutter at the bottom, and crashed on the permanent-way, smashing into a thousand fragments as it did so.

And amid the fragments lay the luckless James Hobson in a limp heap across the six-foot way. That he could have escaped being brained seemed a miracle—though Hobson himself scarcely knew if he was still alive or not.

That headlong descent had sent his brain reeling madly, and that final crash had all but stunned him. He lay there, scarcely conscious, a horrible feeling of giddiness sweeping over him, his mind a welter of confused emotions.

And even as he lay there, like one in the grip of a terrible nightmare, he felt the ground and rails upon which he was

lying, trembling—trembling with ever-increasing violence. As in a dream he heard the roar of the approaching train until the whole world seemed to him to be full of thunder, and as in a dream he realized what it was.

Frantically he strove against the deadly mission that seemed to be overwhelming him. He succeeded in raising his head, glumped the iron monster roaring down upon him, and fell back with a shudder at the nerve-racking sight. He strove to scream, but no sound came from his parched lips.

What took place after that Hobson could never afterwards tell clearly.

Quite suddenly he felt rough hands gripping him—felt himself dragged away violently, and then dropped. To him, like a moving picture on the screen, he glimpsed a figure struggling with something on the line, heard it fall with a crash, and then, as the huge shape of the engine loomed above them, a mighty roaring filled Hobson's ears, and he knew no more.

How long he lay thus Hobson did not know. But when he came to be found himself alone. He sat up and glanced dazedly around him. "The train had gone by, and all was silent in the gloomy cutting.

He staggered slowly to his feet, confused and bewildered. His head throbbed madly, and his face felt stiff with dried blood from a nasty gash on his forehead. He stood there, shaking like a leaf and swaying drunkenly.

Then, quite suddenly, he saw the smashed drain-pipe—the huge piece of earthenware that his rescuer had hurled from the track in the nick of time—and he remembered with a shudder.

"Well, my hat!" he gasped weakly.

He felt strangely uncomfortable, and, looking down suddenly he almost jumped.

The clothes he was dressed in were not his. His trousers, jacket, and waistcoat were gone, and in their place was the dingy uniform Slinker Bates had worn. Almost mechanically Hobson felt in the pockets. He brought to light a jumble of dusty matches, string, and cigarette-ends.

Hobson flung the stuff from him with a shudder of disgust and glanced about the quiet cutting again. But not a living thing was in sight. And Hobson seated himself on a huge stone by the permanent-way to think things out.

He was still dazed; but one thing was becoming increasingly clear to him. The boy who had robbed him—the wretched, hunched, reformatory runaway, who had stolen his watch, and robbed him of his clothes—was the boy who had saved him from a terrible death. Moreover, he had probably saved that express from a terrible disaster. That ugly, enormous piece of jagged earthenware would for a certainty have derailed the express. Hobson realized that with a thrill of self-fulfillment.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Hobson again.

Rascal and hero! A sudden, queer sort of lump came to the junior's throat at the thought. Gone was all desire to recover his property, to exact vengeance on the wretched fugitive—now.

"Sneak-thief, or no sneak-thief," whispered Hobson to himself, "he's a blessed hero! He's got good stuff in him, by jingo! I hope—yes, by Jove!—I hope the beggar does get away. He deserves to do that. And I'm hanged if I'm going to be the chap to get him nabbed. If the poor beggar does get collared it won't be through an act of mine!"

And Hobson got to his feet with sudden resolve showing on his rugged, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 542.

honest features. He carefully removed all traces of the broken pipe from the track, and rolled the unbroken half into the deep ditch. He realized that the engine-driver could not have seen what had happened or he would certainly have pulled up.

"They'll think that young beggar's got away on that goods-train," he mused. "Well, let 'em! Nobody's any need to know he's still hanging round, nor what's happened here. I'll wait about until dark, and, with a bit of luck, I'll be able to slip in without any of the fellows seeing me. Then I'll change and hide these beastly clothes."

And, with that resolve in his mind, James Hobson scrambled up the embankment. At the top was a thick clump of bushes, and behind these the junior slung his aching body down. He was hungry, he was tired, and sick with pain and exhaustion. But he scarcely noticed it. All his thoughts were of the wretched fugitive, and he found himself praying from the bottom of his heart that the hunted wretch would win his liberty.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout's Protege I

HARRY WHARTON & CO. arrived at Greyfriars well before dusk, and after a rather late tea they went along to the study Hobson shared with his chum Hoskins, the musical genius of Greyfriars. The juniors had already visited the study once to inquire after James Hobson, but had found the study unoccupied.

Now, however, they found Hoskins at home, and he looked a trifle worried, and more than a trifle wrathful.

"You've got back all serene, Hoeksy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton in some concern. "I say, hasn't old Hobby returned, then?"

"No, he hasn't!" snapped Hoskins crossly. "What on earth did the silly dromsny want to chase that runaway kid at all for? Let's me to walk back alone!"

"You know what happened!" asked Wharton. "Ho—"

"The porter told me," said the long-haired genius. "You—you fellows don't think anything rotten's happened to him?"

"I hardly think so," said Harry. "He's well able to keep his end up, I suppose. But you never know. Unless that goods-train didn't stop at Moorside he should have been back by this, Hoskins."

Hoskins had the greatest faith in his chum's ability to keep his "end up," but he was plainly worried now.

"We ought to do something, you fellows!" he muttered. "Hacin's! I better tell old Hacker what's happened?" "Better give Hobson a bit longer, I think," said Bob Cherry, looking at Harry Wharton. "He may come in any minute, and old Hacker will only jaw him and p'raps lick him for being so thundering rash!"

Harry Wharton nodded. "That's so!" he began. "I think we'd better wait—"

He broke off abruptly as the door opened to admit a burly junior. It was James Hobson. He was changed and washed, but he still showed many signs of his terrible adventure. His somewhat pugnacious face was white, and several ugly scratches and a deep cut showed on his forehead.

Hoskins jumped up from the tea-table joyfully.

"Oh, good!" he said. "You're safe, then, Hobby?"

"All serene," said Hobson rather grumpily. "I suppose I'm too late for tea!"

"I've had tea," said Hoskins. "But I'll jolly soon brew you some, old man. What's happened, old chap? You look as if you'd been through a mangle! Did—"

"Yes, what's happened, Hobson?" said Harry Wharton eagerly. "Did you collar that reformatory merchant? Did that train—"

"Blow the train!" snapped Hobson ungraciously. "I'm hungry, and I want my tea. You kids can shunt. Clear!" "Look here, Hobson—" began Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"No need to get ratty," said Harry quietly. "We were just beginning to get worried about you, Hobson. Surely you can tell us—"

"I'm telling you nothing!" grunted Hobson, flushing slightly, as he met Hoskins' curious glance. "I've told you kids clear, hasn't I?"

Bob Cherry clenched his fists, while Harry Wharton took a deep breath. Hobson was a rough-and-ready fellow—more than a little overbearing, in fact. He was in the Shell, and liked to fancy himself as "no small beer," and liked also to practise high-handedness over the Remove fellows whom he chose to class as "fags" and "kids."

Naturally, such a state of affairs did not please Harry Wharton & Co.—it usually ended in trouble, for Hobson. It would have ended in trouble for Hobson now had not Harry Wharton seen that the burly Shell fellow was "done to the world," and in no fit state to meet trouble.

"All serene, Hobby," said Harry, eyeing the Shell fellow curiously. "We'll clear, though I'm hanged if I can see why you can't tell us. Come on, you chaps!"

Bob Cherry snorted, but he turned to follow Harry. And at that moment a fat junior, who happened to be passing the open door, stopped and blinked into the room. It was Billy Bunter of the Removes.

"Oh, here you are, old fellow," he said, addressing Wharton. "I've been looking for you, Harry, old chap. I say, you fellows heard the news?"

"No, and we don't want to, old fat lard-barrel!" growled Bob Cherry. "Out of the way!"

"Ho, really, Cherry?" said Bunter, without moving his fat form from the doorway. "Rotten, I call it. Fancy old Prouty bringing a blessed tramp into the school!"

"What?"

"Fact," grinned Bunter, having gained attention at last. "You know how soft-hearted old Prouty is, silly ass! He found a blessed tramp lying unconscious near the path through Fricardale Woods. Chap had been knocked down by a car or something, and had crawled there, so he said. Anyway, old Prouty's had him brought to the school and shoved in the blessed sanny. Cheek, I call it, I bet the Head will give old Prouty a wigg!"

"You would!" sniffed Bob Cherry. "You fat cad! Prouty only did what any decent chap would have done. The Head would have done the same."

"Who is the chap?" asked Harry Wharton. "Have they found out, Bunter?"

"Didn't I tell you—a tramp," grumbled Bunter. "I say, I saw them carry him in, you know. It was jolly queer. He'd got good clothes on, and yet—"

"Thought you said he was a tramp?" sniffed Nugent.

"Must have been," grinned Bunter. "Hob-nailed boots, and talked like a blood-stained old soldier as good, though—quite a natty dark grey suit, you know. Must have pinched 'em, I bet!"

"You would," said Harry disgustedly. "Anyway—"

"You should have seen his chivvy, though," grinned Bunter. "Like a blessed rat's, and mud and blood all over it. Fact! I got a good look at him. Got hair like a mop—red hair, too. I say, don't you think it a bit thick, Wharton—bringing a chap like that here? Why, I might have to sleep in that same bed some time. It's too thick!"

"And so are you, Bunter," snapped Bob Cherry. "Too thick in many ways, you fat rotter! Here, perhaps this'll make you a bit more charitable, you fat cad!"

He was about to raise his foot behind Bunter's fat person when Hobson appeared in the doorway. His face was paler than ever now. He had heard all that had been said, and Bunter's story had raised a sudden dread suspicion in his mind. As he glanced quickly at the juniors' faces he was amazed that they had not, apparently, jumped to the same conclusion.

Certainly it seemed impossible. And yet—

"What's that, Bunter?" he demanded, striving to make his words careless.

"Only too glad to have the pleasure of telling the news again, Bunter repeated Mr. Prout's adventure—in greater detail this time.

Hobson's face set hard as he finished. "Was—was he a young chap, or old, Bunter?" he asked, trying to steady his voice. "You—you're spoofing, I believe!"

"Oh, really, Hobson! Why should I?" said Bunter warily. "It's true enough. I saw him. Chap about your age and height, only thin as a blessed eel. Wearing a grey suit—just like that suit you were wearing this afternoon. Hobby. Hadn't got a cap, though."

"Oh!"

"Rotten shame, I call it," grumbled Bunter. "Don't you think so, old chap? Might have taken the ugly brute to the workhouse or—Yarrough! Stop it, Cherry, you beast! Yoooop!"

Bunter's head was swelling, and Cherry helped him away with a last lefty drive of his boot. Bunter's way of looking at things did not appeal to the good-hearted Bob.

Hobson stood motionless. He had no doubts in his mind now. The boy to whom the good-hearted Mr. Prout had used the role of the good Samaritan was none other than Slinker Bates—he was certain of that. Everything tallied—or almost everything. Thin as a lath, with a thin, rat-like face, red hair, and wearing a dark grey suit. Hobson had not seen Bates that afternoon—he had worn a dark grey lounge suit, and Slinker Bates had purloined it while he lay unconscious.

It must be Slinker Bates. He had evidently been injured when he had made that gallant rescue from the experts, and he had gone on, fearing capture, until he had dropped unconscious.

Hobson gave Wharton another sharp look. He met Wharton's eyes fixed curiously upon him. But Wharton was only curious to know why Hobson was so interested in Bunter's story. The burly Shell fellow usually met Bunter's first words with a hefty boot. It was queer,

The idea that Mr. Prout's protegee was none other than Slinker Bates had never even entered Wharton's mind. He naturally supposed that Hobson did not wish to relate what had happened that afternoon because the runaway had given him the slip—had proved too much for him. He imagined that Slinker Bates was miles away by now, as did his chums. Moreover, the runaway had worn uniform when they had seen him.

Hobson licked his dry lips, and then with a sudden movement he entered his study and slammed the door after him.

"What's bitton the silly ass?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know," said Harry Wharton, shrugging his shoulders. "Blow him! I expect that runaway kid this afternoon put the kyboosh on him, and he's humpy about it. Let's go and start prep."

And the Faucous Five walked away, not a little puzzled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In Clover!

"TEA'S ready, Hobby!"

Hobson looked up from the fireplace as Hobson re-entered the study. He had not been interested in Bunter's story. But he was interested in the fact that Hobson seemed to be interested in it.

"What's that fat kid gassing about, Hobson?" he asked. "You seemed to be—"

"Oh, blow the fat gibber!" grunted

Hobson. "I say, Hooly, old man, tell me about that new—new thing you've composed. A symphony, or something, wasn't it, old chap?"

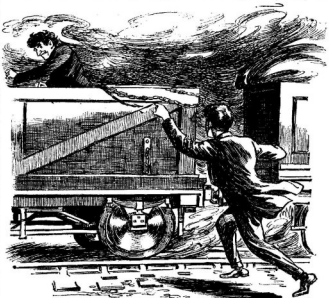
"Concerto—concerto in F minor" corrected Hobson, fairly beaming at his chum. Hobson was very fond of his musical chum, but it was a rare thing for him to ask to hear about his compositions. Hobson didn't want to hear about the concerto in F minor now, in fact; he only wanted to stop his chum asking awkward questions. And Hobson jumped at the bait, as Hobson had guessed he would.

So while Hobson started his tea, his chum Hoskins talked music, and Hobson listened—or appeared to be listening. In point of fact Hobson scarcely heard a word of his chum's discourse. His mind was not on Claude Hoskins nor on his concerto in F minor, either. And when James Hobson jumped up suddenly and walked resolutely out of the room Hoskins fairly blinked after him.

But Hobson had forgotten Hoskins and his tea. His mind was too full of the amazing discovery he had made. That Slinker Bates—an escaped reformatory boy—was within the precincts of Greyfriars filled him with alarm. The boy was a thief—a bad character—as Hobson had good reason to know. It was Hobson's duty to his school to disclose the facts.

And yet, how could he? Rascal or not, he had saved Hobson's life. He owed him a deep debt of gratitude.

There was another point. The boy himself was not safe at Greyfriars. Wharton and many others had seen him



Hobson made a flying leap at the truck as the fugitive reformatory boy had done. His fingers clutched the swinging chain, and a moment later the reckless junior was swarming up the side. "Now, you rotten sneak-thief," he said quietly.

"Hand over that watch!" (See CHAP. 2.)

already—they would recognise him at once at sight.

It was a problem, and Hobson's thoughts were troubled and uneasy as he left the House quickly and hurried round to the school sanatorium.

A light was burning in a window on the second floor, and after a moment's hesitation Hobson set his teeth, and his hands gripped the ivy running up the wall. Then he started to climb, hand over fist.

He reached the open window, and peered within the quiet ward. Then his heart sank.

It was Slinker Bates—right enough. He lay in bed, looking anything but comfortable in the pyjamas the authorities had evidently supplied him with. A bandage was round his head; but there was no mistaking the thin, crafty features and red, tousled hair.

He was alone in the ward, and, with sudden decision, James Hobson swung himself over the sill and dropped lightly into the room. The slight sound started the run-away, and he glided swiftly round. Then his jaw dropped.

"Yes, it's me!" breathed Hobson, through his teeth. "You've no need to be alarmed, though—I won't give you away. I owe you something for what you did this afternoon, Slinker Bates?"

The outcast stared at Hobson's earnest face stupidly. Then he frowned to guess Hobson's meaning, and he grinned craftily.

"You—you ain't goin' to give me away!" he echoed eagerly. "That's good! 'Cause I yanked you from before that there train. I s'pose? I'm in clover 'ere, I am. That soft bloke as brought me 'ere said I could stay till I was better. I'm all right 'ere—ain't going to get better in a hurry, neither."

"You've got to get out of here quickly!" he muttered. "You—you don't seem to be badly hurt. Did—did that rotten engine touch you—"

"I watched that," grinned the run-away. "It was a chunk of that there drain-pipe—it flew up and hit my head; fairly cut it open. If it 'adn't bin for that I should 'ave got clear by this. I managed to get into the woods, and then I came over—dizzy-like, and that soft bloke found me. I knowed nothin' until I woke up 'ere."

"Look here," said Hobson desperately. "You've got to get better quickly; you've got to get out of this for your own sake! Some of the fellows here have seen you; they'd recognise you at once. Listen! I don't want you to get caught. But you've got to clear!"

The outcast looked alarmed at that. "You understand?" snapped Hobson grimly. "If you don't want to find yourself in the hands of the police tomorrow you'd better go in the morning. You'd better tell 'Front—that's the master who found you—first, though. He'll suspect something if you sneak away."

"I'll go!" groaned Slinker Bates, in disgust. "Bloomin' hard line, though, mister. I thought I was on a good thing 'ere, blow me if I didn't! Is this 'ere the school?"

"Yes; but—"

"And they're all rich young gents 'ere like 'ros, mister?"

"Some of them are, and some—"

Hobson broke off, and looked sharply at the runaway. Something in the words brought sudden suspicion to him.

"Never mind that!" he snapped curtly. "Look here! You'd better play straight and go in the morning. I'm grateful for what you did for me. But I can't save

you from capture if anyone spots you. You can keep my clothes and what was in them. But before I go I want my watch and chain back. Where—"

"I ain't got your watch, gov'nor!" muttered Slinker, his eyes gleaming cunningly. "I ain't see— Here, what the—"

He leaned suddenly out of bed and made a grab at the pile of dark grey clothes folded on a chair at the bedside. But Hobson was too quick for him.

He snatched up the coat—his own coat—and in an inside-pocket he found his gold watch and chain. He placed them in the pocket of the coat he was wearing. Then he took his wallet out, extracting a couple of Treasury notes, and flung them on the bed.

"There's all I've got—two quid," he said briefly. "It'll be more useful to you than a watch, I reckon. And now I'll—"

He broke off, listening. To his ears sounded a soft footfall in the passage outside.

"Nurse comin'!" he hissed. "I'm off. Don't forget—clear out of this in the morning. Good-bye and good luck!"

And without waiting for an answer, Hobson slipped over the sill and dropped swiftly down the ivy-clad wall. He reached the ground below in safety and sped through the darkness to the School House. A couple of moments later he was back in his own study again.

Hobson was still there, and he eyed his chum curiously.

"I say, Hobby," he began warmly, "what did you rush off like that for? I'd nothing like finished—"

"Oh, dry up, old chap!" growled Hobson crossly.

"But—hang it all, Hobby, I'd nothing like finished explaining about my concerto in—"

"Blow your blessed concerto, Hosky! I want to do my pen now. Do dry up, there's a good chap," said Hobson.

And he got his books out and sat down to the table. Hoskins grunted, and got his own books out. He was hurt and disappointed. But he said nothing. He was used to Hobson's grumpy moods, and he usually let his chum "have his head" when the fit took him. A moment later silence reigned in the study.

But Hobson did little prep that night, though he pretended to. He had got Slinker Bates' promise to go in the morning for what that was worth. But he was still worried. He could not forget the young rascal's queer questions concerning "rich young gents," and he felt strangely uneasy.

Had Slinker some rotten scheme in mind? he wondered. And he was still wondering when he went up to bed that night.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Midnight Prowler!

HARRY WHARTON was a long time getting to sleep that night. For some reason or other his brain was too active for slumber. He lay in the dark dormitory until long after his Form-fellows had dropped off to sleep, and he would sleep in vain.

And strangely enough, as in Hobson's case, it was of the escaped reformatory boy that he was thinking. He could not get the affair out of his mind; why, he knew not.

Certainly that afternoon's adventures had not been an everyday occurrence. But a boy as heartless as Harry Wharton would have dismissed the adventure from his mind by this time—would have forgotten the very existence of a fellow like Slinker Bates—a wretched individual outside his world altogether.

But Harry Wharton was not hard-hearted; he was what Billy Bunter—and probably many other fellows—would have called "soft." A hopeless and incurable young rascal Slinker Bates might be—most probably was. But he was human, and he was young. He was, no doubt, more sinned against than sinning; had been brought up amongst crime, and knew no other life or standard of conduct.

Harry Wharton could feel for the poor, hunted wretch. In his warm, comfortable bed, he wondered where Bates was now. Was he still crouching, shivering, in that miserable truck? Was he lying asleep under some hedge, or was he in some cold prison cell for the night?

Wharton found himself almost admiring the wretched young outcast's mild and desperate bid for liberty. He certainly pitied him. And he found himself hoping he had retained his hard-won spell of freedom.

For hours Harry Wharton lay tossing and turning, but at last he drifted off into slumber. His last conscious memory was of hearing the dull boom of midnight from the Greyfriars clock-tower.

He seemed to have been asleep only a few seconds when he woke again—abruptly. What had awakened him he did not know; but as he sat up in bed and blinked round the dark dormitory his eyes caught a glimpse of movement at the foot of his bed. Then he caught the quick hiss of sharply drawn breath.

"Who—who is that?" he breathed.

"That you, Bob?"

There was no answer; there was no sound save the soft breathing of his Form-fellow, and a resonant snore from the direction of Billy Bunter.

Harry fumbled quickly for a match. There followed a quick rustle and soft padding of feet, and as the match flared up, the junior caught a swift glimpse of a dark form passing through the open doorway.

Harry Wharton was out of bed in a flash.

"What's the matter? That you, Harry, you ast?"

The drowsy voice was Bob Cherry's; evidently the striking of the match, and the light, had roused him. Harry crossed to his bed, Bob Cherry was sitting up, rubbing his eyes and blinking.

"Someone just been in here—I spotted him," whispered Harry. "Quick—alrove some things on, Bob!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob, wide awake now. "Temple and his pals up to their games, I bet!"

"It isn't a Form raid—couldn't be!" breathed Harry. "It was someone sneaking about, up to no good. Hurry, you ast!"

The tense excitement in Harry's voice roused Bob to action, and a moment later both were hurriedly pulling their coats over pyjamas. Then Harry found his pocket-porch, and the two juniors slipped out into the passage.

Even as they halted there in the darkness, a stealthy creak sounded from the stairs, and they hurried along softly, and began to descend. They reached the bottom, and there they halted, listening.

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For what seemed an eternity they waited; but no sound came—the stillness was deathly. Harry caught his chum's arm at last.

"Come on!" he whispered. "No good standing still."

He led the way, and they started a tour of the passages. It was not until they reached the Remover studio that they got a clue as to the prowler's whereabouts. Then Harry halted suddenly as his eyes caught a faint gleam of light from beneath one of the study doors.

"Mauly's study," he breathed.

"Come on!"
He twisted the knob and flung open the door. They started as if to rush into the room, and just as suddenly they stopped dead as if petrified.

The midnight prowler was there—he was bending over Mauly's desk, searching it by the aid of a stub of candle stuck on the table close by. But it was the identity of the prowler that staggered the juniors.

"Slinker Bates!" breathed Harry Wharton.

There was no mistaking that shock of reddish hair, the thin, foxy face. But that the runaway, whom they imagined to be miles away, was here at Greyfriars was an amazing discovery. And that he should be wearing slippers, and with a seat, grey coat over his pyjamas was more amazing still.

But Slinker Bates did not give them the chance to stare long. His hand sent the bit of candle spinning, and darkness fell upon the room.

"Go for him, Bob!" gasped Harry.

Harry slammed the door shut, and put his back to it. He knew the type of slippery customer he was dealing with. Bob Cherry made a blind rush in the darkness, fell over a wriggling form, and went headlong.

But his hand had closed on a leg, and he held on desperately.

"I've got him, Harry!" panted Bob. Bob Cherry and his antagonist went rolling over and over, and Harry jumped so an electric-light switch and flooded the room with light.

Then he jumped to his chum's help. And Bob needed help. The runaway fought with the savage ferocity of a wild-cat. He had not been brought up in an environment where the Marquis of Queensbury's rules were recognized, and he kicked and bit and scratched desperately.

Sturdy juniors as they were, it took Harry and Bob all their time to overpower him. But they did so at last. Panting and gasping, they gripped him fast as he lay on his back, his eyes glittering with rage and despair.

"Let me go, young gents," he whined.

"I was doing 'no harm. I ain't done—"

"Not much, my pippin," panted Bob Cherry.

"Well," he beats the band, Harry. How on earth did this merchant get here—rigged up like this, too? Shall we—"

"I think I can guess the truth now," said Harry, his eyes gleaming with sudden light. "Don't you remember, Bob, what Bunter said about the merchant old Proot brought to the school? My hat! And we never guessed—never dreamed it could be this chap."

"Great Scott! You—you think—"

"There's no think about it, Bob!" snapped Harry. "We'd better shout—Hain, someone coming. Good!"

There sounded a footfall in the passage, and an instant a junior appeared in the doorway, a coat over his pyjamas. It was James Hobson of the Shell.

He blinked in at the scene, and then his face went white, and he almost groined aloud.



Hobson heard a hoarse yell of warning from Slinker Bates, and the next moment he felt his brain reeling and his body flung violently from side to side as the drain pipe went rolling and bounding down the steep embankment. (See Chapter 2.)

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Hobson's Madness!

"HARRY'S an old pal of yours, Hobby!" grinned Bob Cherry, recognising the Shell junior.

"Here's your chance to get a bit of your own back, old top. We collared the beggar rooting about in here. Run and bring Quelchey, or someone—quick!"

"I—I—I—" stammered Hobson.

"Buck up, you staring ass!" snorted Harry Wharton, not noticing the junior's agitation. "We daren't let go; he's slippery as an eel. Go on, you fool!"

But Hobson did not move. He was stunned—though he had almost expected something like this. He realised now that his suspicious the previous evening had been only too well founded. Slinker had promised to go, and apparently he meant to go. But he had intended to rob the school—to help himself to what he could get from the "rich young gents" before going.

He had not taken Hobson's advice to "play straight," after all. And now he was caught!

What on earth should he—Hobson—do?

As he stood in helpless indecision Slinker twisted his head round and observed him. His crafty eyes lit up with sudden hope.

"Eip me, guv'nor," he pleaded hoarsely. "Make 'em let me go. You said as you wouldn't get me copped."

The whining appeal was enough for Hobson. In a flash there came to him a mental picture of the gloomy cutting—of himself lying helpless amid the debris of the drain pipe, of that terrible moment when the iron monster came rushing down upon him. He could almost hear the roar of its approach now.

His jaw set squarely with desperate resolve. He had a debt to repay, and he resolved to repay it if he could, in the only way he could.

What took place next almost petrified Harry and Bob.

Another instant Hobson stood, marking the juniors' positions, and then he sprang to the electric-light switch and plunged the study into darkness. Next he flung himself at the crouching forms of Wharton and Cherry, hissing a command to Slinker as he did so.

"Run for it, kid—run for it!"

The sudden charge took Harry and Bob completely by surprise. They were bowled over helplessly. Their grip relaxed, and Slinker sprang to his feet. The juniors clutched desperately in the darkness, but it was Hobson that gripped—and Hobson gripped them, and held on.

"Hobson, you fool!" gasped Harry, amazed. "Let go—quick! He's getting away!"

Hobson heard the quick patter of receding footsteps in the passage without, but he still held on grimly. Harry Wharton lost his temper then—as did Bob Cherry.

"Are you mad, you fool!" panted Bob savagely. "Let go, or I'll punch—"

He broke off and began to struggle furiously. He half-rose to his feet, but Hobson wrenched him down again. Hobson was a hefty handful at any time. He was much more so now. Sturdy as Harry and Bob were, they could not subdue him all.

They had him on his back at length, though even then it was all they could do to prevent his continuing the fight.

"You—you mad idiot!" hissed Harry Wharton angrily. "You helped that chap to get away, you fool! What on earth do you think you're playing at, Hobson?"

Hobson said nothing.

"Let him get up, Bob," said Harry curtly.

He rose up himself as did Bob Cherry, and at this time Hobson made no attempt to stop them. He knew that Slinker would be well away by this time. Harry Wharton realised the hopelessness of pursuit also.

He switched on the light once again, and the two of them regarded Hobson for a tense moment in silence. Hobson eyed them defiantly. He was flushed and heated with his frantic struggle.

"How do you perhaps you'll explain just what you meant by playing the goat like that, Hobson?" snapped Harry. "You knew that chap—you must have guessed what he was doing in here."

"It's thundering near playing the traitor to the school!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Have you gone potty, Hobson?"

Hobson's face set stubbornly.

"You can go and eat coke!" he said savagely.

He was turning to the door, but Harry reached it first. He closed it and placed his back to it.

"No, you don't, Hobson," he said quietly. "That's not good enough for us. You know what a dangerous character that fellow is; you know what he—"

He broke off as a sudden thought occurred to him.

"Look here, Hobby," he exclaimed. "There's something jolly queer about this. Did you know before that the chap Prout brought to the sanny was Slinker Bates?"

"Find out, blow you!" muttered Hobson.

There was a silence. Harry and Bob did not know what to make of things at all.

But before Harry could speak again a sudden alarming thought seemed to occur to Hobson. He only seemed to realise then what this would mean.

"You—you're going to report this, I suppose, Wharton?" he breathed.

"Of course," ejaculated Harry. "It's only a fellow's duty, isn't it? We can't allow a chap like that to be roaming at will through Greyfriars, you see! But if you're sure I'll report you for helping the chap," he went on, seeing the sudden dismay in Hobson's face, "I'm not going to do that, so you needn't worry. You ought to be jolly well made to explain, though, Hobby."

"I should thumping well think so!" snapped Bob.

Hobson clenched his teeth.

"It's not myself, Wharton," he said in a low voice. "I don't care a hang about myself. But—but— Look here, you fellows. You know something now, and I don't see why you shouldn't know it all. I can trust you. You say I helped that chap to escape—and I did. And,

what's more, I mean to help him all I can—if it means the sack for me."

"But—but what on earth—" gasped Wharton.

"I'll tell you," said Hobson grimly. "You fellows wondered why I wouldn't tell you what took place between Slinker and me yesterday afternoon. I'll tell you now. That chap—the fellow you called a dangerous character just now—has got splendid stuff in him. He—he saved my life; and, unless I'm mistaken, he saved the lives of a good many other people as well."

"Pshaw!"

Harry and Bob whistled at that; but they related still more as Hobson went on to relate his adventures with Slinker Bates. He told them everything.

"So now," he added quietly. "You fellows can, perhaps, understand how I feel about it. I vowed that if the poor kid was captured it should be through no act of mine; I vowed to repay the debt in the only way I could. You'd have done the same in my place."

Harry Wharton nodded slowly.

"Yes, I understand, Hobby," he said quietly. "But—but all the same, that—that fellow cannot be allowed to remain at Greyfriars. I'm sorry for the poor wretch, he's earned his liberty if ever any chap did. But it wouldn't be right, Hobby."

"I know that," said Hobson. "I realised that last night, and I managed to sneak into the sanny and see him. I told him he'd got to go. He promised he would in the morning. But I guessed he might get up in his rotten tricks before he went. It worried me. I was too worried to sleep to-night. That's how I came to hear noises and hurried down to investigate. He—he seems as if he can't help stealing, poor brute. It's born in him."

Harry nodded again, his brow troubled. Hobson went on, his voice earnest and pleading.

"Look here, Wharton, you—you can't get him captured after what I've told you. Give the poor wretch a chance. He's bound to make himself scarce after this. He knows you spotted him—he won't dare to return to the sanny. There's no harm done—I hope not, at least. If there is, if anything's missing, I'll make it right with the owners somehow. I mean it. Say nothing about this."

Harry Wharton frowned and looked at Bob Cherry. That junior nodded after a moment.

"There's no harm done, after all," as Hobson says," muttered Bob hesitatingly. "That chap could hardly have had time to pinch much, if anything. It isn't likely he'd dare to show up at Greyfriars again, Harry. What about it, old scout?"

Wharton was silent for a time. He did not like it. He felt that, all things considered, it was unwise to allow such a character to be at large. His common-sense told him he ought to report the matter without delay—his heart pleaded with him to give the poor wretch a chance in a contest between heart and head—and heart won.

"Very well, Hobby," he muttered at last. "We'll agree to keep mum about this—at least, I mean if all's well to-morrow. I hope to goodness it will be. Now let's get this room put to rights and go to bed. It's a marvel nobody's heard the rumpus."

"Oh, good!" breathed Hobson. "You—you promise that, Wharton?"

"Yes; we'll give the beggar his chance to get clear," said Harry.

And having settled upon that, the juniors set to with a will, and soon had the disordered room put right. Then they crept up to bed. None of the three saw the pair of crafty eyes that watched them go from the slightly opened door of the study opposite; they did not dream that through the keyhole of Mauly's study door a pair of sharp ears had heard all that had taken place in the room. They had scarcely gone upstairs when a lanky form emerged into the passage.

It was Slinker Bates. He stood quiet still for some seconds, listening, a cunning grin on his thin features. Then he passed softly into Lord Mauleverer's study again, and closed the door after him.

At the door of the Remove dormitory, Harry Wharton & Co., parted from Hobson in the passage, like Hobson himself, that the night's adventures were not over yet.

And blissfully unconscious of the truth, Hobson walked along towards his own dormitory. His brow was clear now. He imagined that Slinker was far away by this—that he had seen the last of him. He did not realisingly underestimate the daring and ruthless craftiness of Slinker.

Quite lighthearted now, Hobson walked on, when suddenly he got a shock—a startling shock.

He was just passing Mr. Prout's door when it swung open and a shaft of light shot into the passage. He saw the Fifth Form master framed in the doorway, with his famous Winchester repeater at his shoulder.

Hobson fairly jumped.

"Hands up!" commanded the portly Mr. Prout, his voice trembling slightly. "I have you covered, you rascal. Move on—Bless my soul! So it is you, Hobson?"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Hobson, stepping back a pace nervously. It was not a pleasant sensation to find oneself looking down the barrel of a rifle, especially in the hands of a gentleman like Mr. Prout. "I—I say, sir, is—is that rifle loaded?"

Mr. Prout suddenly realised he was still pointing the rifle at the junior, and he lowered it quickly.

"Bless my soul!" he repeated, with a gasp. "So it is you, Hobson? I imagined I had rascally burglars to deal with. I heard suspicious noises, and I was just bringing my rifle to investigate. But—but why are you roaming about the school at this hour of the night, my boy?"

"I also heard noises, sir," stammered Hobson, thankful that he could answer that question truthfully. "I—I left the dorm to see what was wrong. But—"

"You should not have attempted to investigate alone, Hobson," said Mr. Prout sternly. "It was foolish and reckless, my boy. You should have awakened some responsible person. However, you must return to the dormitory without delay. If there is danger—"

"It—it's all right, sir," gasped Hobson. "Everything's all right downstairs."

"Of that I am not at all satisfied," said Mr. Prout, blinking suspiciously along the dark passage. "I propose to make an immediate tour of the building, Hobson. I have my rifle, and," said Mr. Prout, his eyes gleaming valiantly, "it shall go hard with the burglars if burglars there be!"

"Ahem! Very good, sir!"

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2!

And Hobson walked away, grinning slightly. If Mr. Prout wished to wander about Greyfriars armed with a rifle for nothing, he did not mind. He only felt thankful that Mr. Paul Prout had not decided to do so earlier.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Shot in the Night!

CRACK!
The sharp report rang through the stillness of the night with startling suddenness. It echoed and re-echoed through the silent, deserted passages of Greyfriars, and awakened almost every fellow in the School House.

In the Shell dormitory it brought James Hobson up from his pillow with a jerk. He had scarcely settled himself in bed when the sound rang out, and he knew at once what it was.

But what did it mean? Mr. Prout was rather an excitable old gentleman; but it was hardly likely he would use his rifle without cause. Was it possible that Slinker Bates hadn't bolted after all? He was certainly a daring young rascal. But—

Almost instinctively Hobson realised the truth. Slinker had "done" them after all! And with the thought Hobson leaped from his bed again, his heart thumping madly. Other fellows were sitting up in bed now, and there was a buzz of whispering questions. But Hobson scarcely heard. He grabbed his slippers and slipped silently from the room, unseen in the darkness.

In the Remore dormitory Harry Wharton had just dropped off to sleep again when the shot rang out, and it brought him to instant wakefulness—as it did almost every fellow in the room. Even Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed blinking round him.

"I—I say, you fellows," he mumbled drowsily. "Who's that cracking nuts in bed? Heavily mean. I call it!"

"Shut up, you silly ass!" came Bulstrode's voice. "That was a rifle-shot, if you ask me, you fellows."

"Wonder what's up," grunted Peter Todd. "Sounded like old Prout's blessed gun."

"Then that means somebody's sneaked," chuckled Skinner. "I always said he'd kill somebody with that old gun of—"

"Shut up!" snapped Harry Wharton heavily. "Something's wrong. Listen!"

Something was undoubtedly wrong. There came the sound of opening doors, and the scurry of feet in the passage.

"Come on, you chaps!" exclaimed Bulstrode eagerly. "Let's be in this."

Practically every fellow in the room leaped from bed, and there was a rush for the door. Mr. Quelch and Wingate were just hurrying past, looking not a little startled.

"Boys, go back to bed at once!" ordered Mr. Quelch, over his shoulder. "Do you hear me?"

The Removites heard, but for once they heeded not the voice of their Form master. They joined a group of Shell fellows who were hurrying past, and went down the stairs on the heels of Mr. Quelch and Wingate.

Mr. Quelch and Wingate were the first to reach the scene of the trouble. In the Sixth Form passage they found Mr. Prout. He appeared to have just staggered to his feet, and his precious rifle was still smoking in his hands. His pale features were trembling with excitement, and something else—wrath, and amazement.



"Manly's study," breathed Wharton to Bob Cherry. "Come on." They started as if to rush into the study, and just as suddenly stopped dead, petrified. The midnight prowler was there—he was bending over Manly's desk. But it was the identity of the prowler that staggered the juniors. "Slinker Bates!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Go for him, Bob!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Mr. Prout," ejaculated Mr. Quelch, in great alarm. "What ever has happened? Are you hurt?"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, who had been among the first on the scene awaited the answer breathlessly. Though they had not, like Hobson, seen Mr. Prout, they had jumped at once to what they believed must be the only possible conclusion. It was Slinker Bates again!

In the light Mr. Quelch carried, Mr. Prout's eyes fairly glittered with wrath.

"You—you may well ask that question, Mr. Quelch," he almost thundered. "I have been grossly treated—actually assaulted by a boy of this school. But for his rascally action I should have undoubtedly captured the scoundrel. I had the villain held up at the point of my rifle. I had him at my mercy when I—"

"Pray, calm yourself, Mr. Prout!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, eyeing the rifle rather nervously. "I must confess that I quite fail to follow you. I do not—would you mind very much not pointing that gun in my direction, Mr. Prout. If it is loaded—"

"It is loaded—with blank cartridge, sir!" barked Mr. Prout, striving to control himself. "I will explain—though time is precious, if we are to apprehend the miscreant! Tonight, Mr. Quelch, I awoke hearing noises downstairs—suspicious noises. I hurriedly dressed, and

was just emerging from my room to investigate when I discovered Hobson, a Shell boy, in the passage."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in surprise.

"Yes, indeed!" snorted Mr. Prout. "He claimed to have been investigating the noises; and I believed him. I then ordered him to bed, and proceeded to make a tour of inspection with my rifle. I then," proceeded Mr. Prout impressively, "came into contact with the burglar!"

"Burglar!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Yes—undoubtedly a burglar!" declared Mr. Prout. "I caught a brief glimpse of the fellow emerging from one of the Sixth Form studies, Mr. Quelch. I commanded him to halt. He thereupon bolted—not towards me, but towards the far end of the passage."

"Ah!" said Mr. Quelch. "That is proof, Mr. Prout, that the fellow was unacquainted with Greyfriars?"

"Exactly, Mr. Quelch. The far end of the Sixth Form passage is a cul-de-sac; from this I concluded he was a stranger. I then fired that shot to summon aid, and approached him. He could not pass me—I had him trapped, sir! But," proceeded Mr. Prout, his voice vibrant with indignation, "even as I stood thus on guard, waiting for aid, I was savagely assaulted from behind. I was gripped

and held fast while the miscreant rushed past him and escaped."

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Queekh. "And—this fellow who assaulted you, Mr. Prout—"

"Was a member of Greyfriars!" thundered Mr. Prout. "Even in the darkness of the passage I recognised the rascally boy! It was Hobson of the Shell Form, Mr. Queekh!"

"You—you amaze me, Mr. Prout!" exclaimed Mr. Queekh. "But—but where—"

"He decapitated the moment his fell work was accomplished!" asserted the Fifth Form student, open-mouthed junior. "Mr. Prout had no eyes for anyone but Hobson, however."

"Hobson?" he thundered. "Come forward at once!"

Hobson, who had just arrived on the fringe of the crowd, stepped forward, his face white. He had hoped that in that mad rush to the aid of the rascally Slinker he had not been recognised by Mr. Prout. He held that hope no longer.

"Now, boy," stammered Mr. Prout, "I demand an instant explanation of your astounding and—"

He broke off abruptly. From somewhere along the passages came the sound of a distant struggle, and this was followed by a cry:

"Help! I've got him! Help! This way!"

The voice was the voice of Loder of the Sixth. It came with such startling suddenness that nobody moved for a moment. And then, with a gasp, Hobson of the Shell jumped past Mr. Prout and went racing away.

"Dear me!" gasped Mr. Queekh. "Loder appears to have captured someone—"

"That unknown miscreant!" thundered Mr. Prout. "We shall capture the villain after all! Quick! Follow me! I am armed—"

"Mr. Prout, I beg of you—"

But Mr. Prout was gone. He dashed away, narrowly escaping braining Mr. Queekh with the butt of his rifle as he went. And after him went the juniors and seniors with a rush.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Hobson Again!

JAMES HOBSON was anything but a reckless youth, but he was certainly in a reckless mood that night.

In that moment as the cry for aid rang out he forgot everything else—forgot the respect due to masters, the fact that he was already booked for trouble enough without seeking more trouble.

He knew now for a certainty that the troublesome Slinker was still in the school, and he knew at once what that cry of Loder's meant.

Slinker had been caught again. Being a stranger to his surroundings, the young rascal had evidently been vainly seeking a way of escape, and had blundered full into the arms of Loder of the Sixth.

The thought reminded Hobson afresh of the debt he owed the wretched fugitive, and he rushed away heedless of everything else.

The cry had come from the direction of the Fourth Form passage, and Hobson

raced that way, careless of the darkness. He reached the end of the corridor, and in the dim light from the landing window glimpsed a pair of struggling forms.

Loder heard his approach and gave a yell.

"Quick! The fellow's as slippery—Here, what—"

Crash!

Hobson didn't stop to make sure the other fellow was Slinker Bates. He came up like a thunderbolt and bottled Loder desperately with his lowered head.

Loder crashed against the passage wall as he attempted to yell, and Slinker—it was, indeed, he—gave a wringing wrench and leaped away.

"You young fool!" roared the astounded and wrathful prefect. "Leggo! What the—"

He struggled furiously to free himself, but Hobson wrapped his arms round the prefect and hung on desperately. But on hearing Mr. Prout's booming voice and the sound of many feet the junior leaped Loder and sped after the departing Slinker.

That slippery youth was rushing from door to door, vainly seeking a way of escape, and Hobson caught him up in a flash.

"In here, you young fool!" he panted. He fairly flung the door of a class-room open, and hurled Slinker inside. Then he followed him in and slammed the door. There was no key in the lock, and with frantic haste Hobson dragged forms and desks to the door and jammed them against it.

"Corks!" gasped Slinker with a chuckle. "That there was a blinking near cap, and no error! What's the next move, mister!"

The youth's coolness amazed Hobson; but he was in no mood to admire Slinker's coolness then. A glimmer of daylight streamed through the tall window of the Form room, and blundering across the room, the junior wrenched at a catch and flung a window open. Thunderous blows were already sounding on the door. There was no time to be lost.

"The next move is yours, you rotter!" hissed Hobson savagely. "Get out! It's only a six-foot drop. You've got your chance to get clear—take it!"

"What the—!"

The daring young rascal chuckled again, and clambered on to the sill. As he did so a clink of metal sounded, and a sudden thought struck Hobson.

He grabbed Slinker's ankle swiftly.

"Stop a bit!" he hissed. "I'm helping you to get clear, but I'm not letting you take any plunder, you cad! Hold on—"

"Ere—leggo, mister!" snarled Slinker in sudden alarm. "You leggo, or I'll bash—"

He wrenched savagely at his foot, but Hobson was too quick for him. Though desperately anxious to prevent the runaway's capture, the junior was standing no nonsense. His arm went round the crouching form, and his hand flew to a bulging pocket.

It came out, holding something which glinted in the starlight, and Hobson gritted his teeth.

"You rotten sneak-thief!" he hissed. "Why, your dashed pocket's full of stuff! Out with it, quick! If you don't—"

Hobson's words ended in a smothered yelp, as Slinker's slipped foot thudded into his face with vicious force.

The sheer unexpectedness of the blow sent the junior staggering backwards, and before he could recover himself Slinker Bates was through the window and had vanished.

Hobson stared after him a moment, and then his rugged face flushed with anger.

It was not because of that blow, however, Hobson dimly realised that gratitude for services rendered was a quality unknown to Slinker—that the finer feelings were as a sealed book to the lawless outcast. It was at the thought that Slinker had robbed the school, and owing to his aid, was escaping with the plunder.

With a growl of mingled alarm and fury, Hobson sprang forward and clambered on to the window-sill. And at that moment the barricade before the door gave way before a determined onslaught, and Wingeate and Mr. Prout, followed by an excited crowd, burst into the room.

Wingeate caught a swift glimpse of the form of Hobson crouching on the window-sill, and he was across the room in a flash. His hand closed on the junior's collar in the nick of time.

"No, you don't, Hobson!" snapped Wingeate grimly. "You young fool! Are you mad?"

He snatched the junior down from the window. Someone switched on the light, and Hobson went white to the lips as he noted the staring, dumbfounded looks of his schoolfellows.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Queekh, hurrying forward. "It is Hobson again, then. This is his most extraordinary. Loder, what—"

Loder's eyes glittered with fury and malice.

"He deliberately charged me from behind!" he said through his teeth. "I had that fellow fast, and—"

He was interrupted by a sudden, angry bellow from Mr. Prout. This excited gentleman had just discovered that the window was open, and that his quarry had apparently escaped.

"Quick! We are wasting valuable time!" he thundered. "While we are discussing trifles that villain is escaping us."

He jumped to the window and blinked out into the night, his finger on the trigger of his beloved rifle, his eyes glinting behind his spectacles with a bloodthirsty glint. Had he seen anything suspicious then, Mr. Prout would apparently have fired a blank cartridge in that direction, though what good that would have done only Mr. Prout himself perhaps knew.

But evidently he saw nothing suspicious, for after blinking this way and that way for some moments he withdrew his head with a snort of disgust. Usually a very genial and good-natured little gentleman, Mr. Prout was obviously in a royal rage now. He was also bitterly disappointed that his famous Winchester repeater had been of no avail, after all.

That famous weapon was Mr. Prout's most cherished possession. Indeed, Billy Bunter avowed that he took it to bed with him every night. Be that as it may, Mr. Prout loved it as a brother. With that well-polished rifle he claimed to have hunted grizzlies in the Rocky Mountains, he claimed to have been a mighty water of big game in his time.

But though the rest of Greyfriars had little respect for Mr. Prout's claims in that direction they had a great and wholesome respect for his rifle, and they crowded back hastily as he turned from the window, his finger still on the trigger.

"Mind—mind that rifle, Mr. Prout!" exclaimed Mr. Queekh hastily. "I beg of you—be more von, and more Prout, to be careful with that dangerous weapon."

"Dangerous weapon—pooh!" snorted Mr. Prout. "Pooh, pooh! Nonsense, Queekh! I would remind you that a

(Continued on page 16.)



Supplement No. 108.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending March 29th, 1924.

MONARCH OF THE RING!

(After Gilbert & Sullivan.)



Written by Dick Penfold.
Bellowed by Bolsover Major.

When I was a kid, I learned to fight
At a training-school in the Isle of Wight.
I sparred with giants who were twice my size,
I punched their noses and I blacked their eyes,
I punched their noses so effectively
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!
I blacked their opines so successfully
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!

In the little green isle I was such fame
That a first-class pugilist I became,
And when they sent me to Greyfriars School
I won nine fights out of ten, as a rule;
I won those battles so decisively
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!
The frail little fags were afraid of me,
So now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!

I scrapped with Skinner, and I boxed with Brown,
I fought with Fisty, and knocked him down,
I gave my opponents such socks, you know,
That off to the sunny they had to go!
I sent so many to the sunny, why, gee,
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!
I proved such a terror with my fist, (that's me!)
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!

Of my own achievements I never, never prate;
But I won such glory as a welter-weight
That the folk came flocking for miles, you know,
To see me administer a knock-down blow!
And that blow was delivered so heartily
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!
I fought my foes so ferociously
That now I am the Monarch of the Ring, you see!

Now, boxers all, whoever you may be,
If you want to climb to the top of the tree,
If you want to become a Dempsey or Wells,
Just read this rhyme, and the moral it tells.
Simply copy the style of a man like me,
And you all may be Monarchs of the Ring, you see!
Just follow in the footsteps of Percy B.
And you all may be Monarchs of the Ring, you see!

Supplement 4.]

SCRAPS!



Some Lively Recollections by Greyfriars Boxers
—and Others.

BOB CHERRY:

I've taken part in so many thrilling tussles with the gloves that it is difficult to pick out the best. Perhaps I ought to award the palm to a scrap I once had with Tom Merry of St. Jim's. We hammered away at each other for a dozen rounds without settling the argument, and in the end I got the verdict on points. It was a grueling affair, and no quarter was asked or given. But I thoroughly enjoyed it, in spite of the fact that Tom Merry sent me back to Greyfriars with a chivy that was punctured in about fifteen places!

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

The finest forp I ever had was against a small fag who didn't know how to defend himself properly. I simply made a punching-ball of him, and knocked him all over the place. Fortunately, there was an ambulance within call, and after I had finished with my frail opponent, they took him up tenderly, lifted him with care, and carried him off to the Cottage Hospital. Some of you may feel inclined to call me a beastly bully; but life would be a tame affair if we couldn't put a few fragile fags out of action occasionally!

LORD MAULEVERER:

It's too much fag to fight, and it's too much fag to write for "The Greyfriars Herald." These editor chaps are fearful pests, begad! They're always butting in just when a fellow's trying to take forty winks! I've just pasted a placard outside my study door:

"HIS LAZY LORDSHIP DESIRES TO BE LEFT IN PEACE."
I hope these concretic editor johnnies will take the hint!

ALONZO TODD:

A boxing bout is a brutal and a barbarian business! I have faithfully promised my Uncle Benjamin that I will not indulge in pugilistic. Look at the shocking injuries which are inflicted by these pugnaconic pugilists! My Cousin Peter has just come into the study, with his nasal organ swollen double, his eyes discoloured, and his lip bleeding. It is a revolting spectacle! Excuse me now, dear readers, while I hasten to render first-aid!

DICK PENFOLD:

Let dogs delight to bark and bite; but schoolboys much prefer to fight. The finest scrap I ever had, was when I was a little lad. I fought a fellow twice my size; I punched his nose and blacked his eyes. The chap—I think his name was Perry—fell on his knees and begged for mercy. "Get up, you foolish funk!" I said. "And don't behave as if half dead!" He staggered to his feet, and so, I dealt him many a hefty blow. I knocked him here, I knocked him there; I whacked and smacked him everywhere. I fancy he survived the strife; but doubtless he's deformed for life!

ABDOLPHUS—THE KITCHEN CAT:

The finest "scrap" I ever had was a tasty kipper, which I found on the floor in the fags' Common-room. I shall "kipper" sharp look-out, and see if I can find some more dainty morsels in the same "place." Yes, verily! By my "ballad!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 642.

A BOXING ALPHABET! By Tom Brown.



A's for the ANGUISH a boxer bestows
By flooring his foe with a punch on the nose!

B is for BUNTER, who thinks he's a Wells;
But if you just tap him, he boilers and yell's!

C is for CHERRY, a boxer sublime;
It's wise to say nice things about him in rhyme!

D's for the DAMAGE which Belovser enjoin
Inflicts on his foe, when he fights for a wage!

E's for the ENTERPRISE Russell displays;
He'll be the World's Champion one of these days!

F's for the FIST of a fellow who fights;
It punches and punches, it smashes and smites!

G's for the GYM, where the boxers assemble,
Where heroes are happy, and funks always tremble!

H is the HIT which encounters the air,
And makes you go sprawling, with groans of despair!

I is the INK which I'm scattering now;
There's a smooch on my nose, and a blob on my brow!

J's for the JOLT to the jaw, which is painful;
You measure your length, and your foe looks disdainful!

K's for the KNOCK-OUT, a terrible blow;
And man wants but little of that here below!

L's for the LEFT, which is brought into action;
It's straight from the shoulder, and tuned to a fraction!

M's for the MUSCLE, its size is stupendous,
And makes your opponents all mutter, "Defend us!"

N's for the NOVICE, who thinks he can box,
And then, in the ring, gets a series of shocks!

O's for the ORDEAL of being knocked out,
When there isn't a stretcher or bath-chair about!

P's for the PUNCH which is given with force,
And makes your opponent see comets, of course!

Q's for the QUEER sort of feeling you get
When your enemy says, "I will finish you yet!"

R's for the RING, which is famed and historic
In Kent and in Surrey, in Worcester and Warwick!

S is the SPONGE which is squeezed on your face
When you sit in your corner, and rest for a space!

T's for the TUMBLE, delightful and keen,
Which in the gymnasium of Greyfriars is seen.

U's for the UNCLE who sends you his blessing,
And hopes you will give your opponent a dressing!

V's for the VIM and the VALOUR you show
When fearlessly fighting with friend or with foe!

W's the WISDOM the seconds impart
By saying, "Keep rolling!" or "Keep a stout heart!"

X is for XENOPHON—no, not a fighter;
I rather believe the old boy was a writer!

Y's for a YOUTH up at Highcliffe, called Monson;
The fatheaded clump thinks he rivals Jack Johnson!

Z is the ZEST which we bring to each scrap;
(Excuse me, dear readers; I've challenged a chap)
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 842.

BUNTER ON BOXING!

BOX! I should say so! Why, I'd undertake to knock the stuffing out of—a Christmas turkey!

I learnt to box almost as soon as I could toddle. At the tender age of two, I competed for the Bonnie Babine's Belt. It was a jolly good weight, and I am able to all the other babies at a disadvantage. They couldn't stand up to my hefty punches, and I knocked them sprawling and squealing into their mummies' arms!

Of course, I wear the belt. I'm wearing it to this day.

It was my pater who presented the belt. In fact, I have painful recollections of him giving me the belt more than once!

I'm hot-stuff in the boxing-ring, though you might think I am slow and cumbersome. Perish the thought! My footwork is dazzling to behold, and I can dodge and duck and faint in a most amazing manner.

Harry Wharton is very fond of saying, in his "Answers to Correspondents," that Bob Cherry and Dick Russell are the Removos's best boxers. Don't you believe it! Wharton isn't a George Washington, by any means, and he tells more untruths in an hour than I do in a month of Sundays.

"I'm not going to beat the big drum, and shout about my own achievements. That's not my style. But the fact is, there's only one really "class" boxer in the Removo, and that's little me. But Wharton would not care to admit it, and I am not going to put up with jolliness. A rather narrowing statement to make, but it's true.

Wingsed of the Sixth recognises my wonderful debility as a boxer. He said to me the other day, "I really can't understand, Bunter, why they don't send you up to Aldershot, to compete in the 'Porker-weight Contest.'" (Bob Cherry says that Wingate was nearly being sent there, but Bob Cherry is a beast!)

Did you ever hear how I knocked out Belovser major in five seconds? Did you ever hear how I fought forty fellows in one day, and looked the lot? No! Then your education has been sadly neglected. But I realise that it isn't your fault. It's the fault of the Greyfriars scribes, Mr. Frank Richards. He never mentions, in his stories, all my wonderful and thrilling exploits in the ring. I believe Wharton & Co. have bribed him not to!

(I hope Mr. Richards will pinch your fat ear, the next time he visits Greyfriars G.P.)

I'm never properly appreciated at my own school. But my old pal, D'Arcy of St. Jim's, has asked me to go over there and fight a twelve-round contest with Baggy Trimble, my rival—a rival, if you know what the Greyfriars scribes will know of a jolly good feud. I have accepted the challenge, and it will be a scrap well worth seeing. But there can be only one possible result. I shall wipe up the floor with Baggy Trimble, and turn him upside down, and he'll be so dizzy he'll be unable to stand on his feet, and he'll be so dizzy he'll be unable to stand on his feet, and he'll be so dizzy he'll be unable to stand on his feet.

Poor old Baggy! Little does he dream of the terrible fate that's in store for him!

By the way, did you ever hear how I gave Harry Wharton a couple of black eyes and a broken-nose? (No; and they're not going to hear now! You've said quite enough for one week, my fat toad!)—Ed.)

EDITORIAL! By HARRY WHARTON.

SO far as the science of letters is concerned, the Removo Form at Greyfriars is divided into three sections—(1) those who think they can box, and can; (2) those who think they can't box, and can't; (3) those who admit they can't box, and nevertheless!

Bob Cherry and Dick Russell and Vernon-Smith, and a host of others, come in the first category. Billy Bunter and Fisher T. Fish are among those who think they can box, and can't. And Alonzo Todd belongs to the tribe of non-combatants. Boxing is repellent to the gentle Alonzo. It shocks—nay, disgusts him!

The Public Schools Boxing Tournament has just been held, up at Aldershot. The Greyfriars representatives acquitted themselves nobly; but I'm not going to tell you all about it in this editorial chat. That can safely be left to Mr. Frank Richards, who will describe the encounters in a future story.

Greyfriars has always been well to the fore in the matter of boxing. The old school has turned out some great men, who have risen to fame in the ring, and become amateur champions, both in Army and civilian boxing.

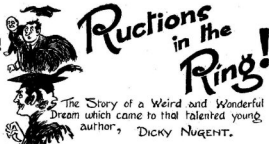
I pity any fellow who takes notice into the Removo Form and doesn't know how to use his fists. A good boxer has an easy time of it, because his schoolfellows dare not "check" him, lest they should receive a painful punch on the nose, or a hit, which is commonly called the "bill on the cheek." But there are some sinners for whom the Removo. Next to sneak, a funk is the most despised person under the sun.

Boxing comes third on the list of popular pastimes at Greyfriars. Football is an excellent thing, and comes cricker, and then boxing. Even such delights as skating and tobogganing, and motor-riding and aerial gliding have to play second fiddle to boxing.

The wit-and-humour merchants have been very busy in this issue, which I feel certain will make a well-deserved hit with all lovers of the noble art of self-defence. We have dealt chiefly with the humorous side of boxing. Records out of the ring! Time!

HARRY WHARTON.

[Supplement #.



DREAMS are funny things. Sometimes you dream that you're topping over the edge of a precipice, and you wake up and find you've fallen out of bed. Sometimes you dream that you're swimming the Niagara Falls, and you are rooily awakened by having a wet sponge squeezed over your clavary. Or, you might dream that you're being crushed to a pulp under a steam-roller, and you wake up and find that there's a pillow-fite in progress, and somebody is sitting on your chest.

I don't dream very often—only when I've had an extra big supper at Gatty's Fish and Oyster Bar, in the fags' Commu-ner. And I don't think I've ever dreamed about boxing, until last night.

It was an extraordinary dream that came to me in the silent clocks of the night. (Gatty says it should be the silent "watches"; but Myers says it should be the silent "timepieces"; but I prefer to call them the silent clocks. You can pay your money and take your choice.)

I dreamed that all the Greyfriars masters took part in a boxing tournament. There was the Head, and Prout, and Quelch, and Twigg, and Capper, and Hacker, and Wally Bunter, and Larry Lascelles—to say nothing of the French master, Monsieur Charpentier.

It was the Head who first suggested the tournament.

"I say, you fellows!" he said. "Wouldn't it be a lark if we sloshed each other in the ring?"

"Not I," said Prout.

"Going to put up a Gold Cup for competition between us, sir?" asked Quelch.

"No—not a gold one," said the Head, with a laff. "I'm afraid the funds won't run to that. But I'll put up an egg-cup."

"Rapping!"

"When shall we start?" asked Wally Bunter.

"Hear and how!" said the Head. "First of all, I'll write out the names, and shove 'em in my mortar-board. Then I'll draw them in pears."

"Right-ho, old bean!"

So the Head scribbled out the names—there were nine people taking part in the tournament—and he folded up the pieces of paper, and put them in his mortar-board.

"Now, gents," he said, "are you satisfied that I've got nothing up my sleeve, and that everything is fair and above-board?"

"Quite!" said Quelch. "Draw out the merry names!"

The Head shut his eyes, and plunged his hand into the mortar-board. He drew out two pieces of paper.

"Prout versus Quelch!" he announced.

"Oh, good!" chorled Mr. Prout. "I could lick old Quelch with my eyes tied behind my back and my hands kindof!"

"Hats!" said Mr. Quelch. "I could lick you, my dear Prout, by merely using my tongue!"

"Dry up, you two," growled the Head. "And let's get on with the washing!"

He drew out two more names.

"Lascelles versus Charpentier!" he oggeclaimed. "And the next pear is Hacker versus Bunter. And the next, Twigg versus Capper. That's the lot!"

"Hi! What about you, sir?" asked Wally Bunter.

"Me?" said the Head, with a grin. "I've drawn a bye."

"Oh!"

"I pass automatically into the second round," said the Head.

"I believe he wangled it!" muttered Capper, under his breath.

The masters soon got to business. Prout and Quelch put the gloves on, and started to scragg each other for all they were worth. Prout gave Quelch a dot on the dial. Quelch

returned the compliment by giving his opponent a buff on the beko. And the other masters stood round in a square circle and cheered them on.

"Go it, Prouty!"

"Make him sit up!"

Mr. Prout panted.

"I'm trying to make him lie down!" he muttered.

It was a ding-dong, hammer-and-tongs, thrilling, stirring, rousing, oggating tussle. Old Prout was diskwalled after about ten minutes, for hitting his opponent in the unawares. Then Lascelles and Monsieur Charpentier had a go, and Lascelles polished off the French master in less time than it takes to write it.

Wally Bunter tied poor old Hacker up into Notts, and he looked a Surrey specimen when it was all over. "I ken understand why I put up such a rotten show!" he growled.

After that, Twigg and Capper settled their little argument, and Twigg gave Capper a mity swipe that rendered him horse do combah.

"Good!" said the Head. "Now for the semi-final: Lornee see. There's Bunter, Lascelles, Quelch, Twigg and myself left in. I will again draw the names in pears."

The Head did so. First he drew out the names of Bunter and Lascelles; then the names of Quelch and Twigg.

"Once again," he said, with a grin, "I've had the good luck to draw a bye!"

"Lucky beggar!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "But I'm jolly certain you wangled it!"

The semi-finals resulted as follows: Lascelles beat Wally Bunter after a terrific tussle, and Twigg put the kybosh on Quelch.

"That leaves Lascelles, Twigg, and my worthy self," murmured the Head. "My giddy aunt! I look like winning the Cup!"

"And you haven't struck a single-blow yet, sir!" said Prout reproachfully.

"Go and eat coke!" snorted the Head. "We will now put the three names into my mortar-board and draw out two."

The two names drawn were those of Lascelles and Twigg. Yet again the Head—artful old bounder!—had drawn a bye.

The scrap between Lascelles and Twigg didn't last long. Lascelles simply wiped up the floor with his opponent. Then, without waiting to pick up the little bits of Twigg that were lying around, he turned to the Head.

"Now, sir," he said briskly, "between us we will settle the destination of the Cup!"

"All serene," said the Head, peeling off his coat. "But look here, Lascelles. Just a word of warning before we begin. In the Army, as you know, it is a grave offence to strike your superior officer. It is just as grave an offence for a junior master at a public school to strike his head-master. If you dare to hit me, you'll go out of this school on your neck!"

So poor old Lascelles had to act on the defensive all the time, and allow the Head to neck him about, without being able to retaliate.

The Head walked all over his helpless opponent, and panted him without mercy.

"Packs!" growled Larry Lascelles at length. "I give you best, sir!"

The Head stood with folded arms, like Napoleon Bonaparte, and surveyed the assembly with an air of pride.

"Behold in me," he said majestically, "the boxing champion of Greyfriars! I think I'll make it a Gold Cup after all! So-long gents!"

The Head stalked away with his nose in the air.

And then I woke up!

TRUE TO HIS WORD!

(Continued from page 12.)

rifle is as safe in my hands as a golf-club or an umbrella. I am perfectly at home with firearms, my dear Quelch. When in the Rockies in the early 'nineties—

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Quelch hastily. "Nevertheless, I would much prefer that you did not point that rifle in my direction, Mr. Prout. And I would point out that the hour is late, and that we can do no more good by concentrating on problems of the present instead of indulging in reminiscences of the past."

Mr. Prout glared. But before he could speak Loder suddenly stooped and picked something from the floor. It was a gold pencil-case that had evidently dropped from Slinker's pocket during that brief struggle.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Wingate, as Loder held it up. "I think that belongs to me. How on earth—"

"I think that's fairly obvious!" exclaimed Loder, with a sneering glance at Hobson. "What's that you hold in your hand, Hobson?"

Hobson started, suddenly aware that he still clutched in his hand the article he had taken from Slinker's pocket. He eyed Loder defiantly, and, opening his hand, disclosed to view—a gold watch.

There was a deep murmur, and Hobson flushed a deep red as he felt all eyes fixed upon him. Then his somewhat heavy jaw squared, and the stubborn look his chin Hawkins knew so well came over his face. He began to see then what an exceedingly awkward position he was in, unless he chose to explain.

And Hobson had no intention of explaining. He knew there was grave trouble ahead of him, but he did not flinch. In that moment James Hobson resolved that, come what might, he would hold fast to the vow he had made. "That is Maulverer's watch, I believe, sir," said Loder, looking at Mr. Prout. "I think this clears up the mystery. Hobson and his confederate were just raiding the studies when you came—"

"Kindly be silent, Loder!" snapped Mr. Quelch, though he gazed curiously at Hobson. "Do not talk nonsense! Now, Hobson, will you explain how these articles came to be in your possession, also what is the meaning of your extraordinary conduct to-night?"

Hobson compressed his lips. But he did not speak.

"Do you hear me, Hobson?" said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice.

"Yes, sir," muttered Hobson defiantly. "I'm explaining nothing, sir."

There was a buzz. Harry Wharton & Co., who were watching aghast on the fringe of the crowd, looked at each other.

"Well, the thumping fool!" breathed Bob Cherry. Mr. Quelch set his lips and glanced at Mr. Prout. That gentleman was looking astounded.

"Hobson," gasped Mr. Quelch, "isn't it possible that there is some truth in Loder's suggestion?"

Silence.

"Very well, then!" snapped Mr. Quelch, raising a pause. "This is no time for a lengthy cross-examination. I will

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ask you one more question, Hobson, however. Who is the person you were so successful in aiding to escape, boy?"

Hobson did not answer. Mr. Quelch waited a full minute, and then he turned to Mr. Prout. Now the affair had taken such a serious turn, the Fifth Form master's wrath seemed to have vanished. He was looking not a little distressed.

"I think you will agree with me, Mr. Prout," said Mr. Quelch, "that this extraordinary affair had better be left until morning. I confess that I am utterly at a loss as to how to deal with it."

"I also am of that opinion," said Mr. Prout gravely. "It appears to me to be a matter for the headmaster to deal with."

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Loder. "But wouldn't it be as well to phone the police and to make an instant inspection of the various studies?"

"Certainly not, Loder!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Matters must be left until morning. If anything is found to be missing then, the owners can report to Mr. Prout or to me. You will return to bed at once, boys. You should never have left your dormitories in the first place. Wingate, kindly close that window."

"Yes, sir," Wingate closed the window, and the juniors trooped from the room in a buzz of excitement. Mr. Quelch turned to Hobson, who still lingered.

"You may go, Hobson," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "You will doubtless be required in the headmaster's study in the morning. I would advise you then to make a clean breast of your part in to-night's happenings. You may go."

Hobson went, still looking defiant. In the passage outside he found Harry Wharton & Co., who had lingered behind.

"Well, you thumping ass," breathed Harry Wharton, "you don't mean to say you're going to keep this rot up, going to keep mum after what's happened, Hobby?"

"Yes, I am," said Hobson. "But—but you'll be asked, you fool!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Besides, it isn't right, Hobby. If other fellows have lost cars—"

"I don't care," said Hobson doggedly. "I'm going through with it."

"Then if you won't speak we will!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"No, you won't, Wharton!" snapped Hobson, gritting his teeth in the darkness. "I'm keeping you to your word, Wharton. You gave me your word not to spilk. I'm keeping you to it. I know you well enough, Wharton, to know that if you won't break it, unless I tell you to. That's enough!"

"But—but—"

"Go and eat cake!" And with that savage expression Hobson walked after the rest of the astonished, bewildered crowd. Wrong or right, he had made his decision, and he was doggedly determined to stick to it.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

That was all Harry could say then. That Hobson should still stick to his resolve after what had taken place filled him with amazement.

But he knew that Hobson would keep his word, and that he would keep them to their word. And it was in a very worried and uneasy state of mind that Harry Wharton & Co. retired to bed once again on that night—or, rather, morning—of eventful happenings.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Hobson's Defiance!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter stopped the Famous Five as they were going in to breakfast on the following morning, and his fat face was ablaze with excitement.

Though Billy Bunter had not been present during the events of the night—being disinclined to leave his warm bed—he had very quickly learned all about it. Indeed, there wasn't a person in the school who didn't know about the affair now. All Greyfriars was buzzing with the news long before breakfast.

As a rule, Billy Bunter was the very last to leave his bed at rising-bell. But on this occasion he was one of the first out and about. He believed in the early bird catching the worm, where news was concerned. And it was obvious that the fat busybody of Greyfriars had picked up some fresh news now.

"I say, you fellows," he began. "What do you think?"

"What do we think?" echoed Bob Cherry. "My dear man, we are not in the habit of entering our thoughts before sunrise, old tulip. But if you really want to know, Billy, we think you are the fattest, laziest, ugliest nose-parker that ever noseayed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Oh, really, Cherry?" he snorted. "I suppose you think that funny? I say, what do you think, though? That chap, that beastly tramp that old Prouty had brought to the sanny has sloped—clean gone. What do you think about that?"

"Well, what about it?" Harry Wharton asked the question, though his eyes were gleaming.

As a matter of fact Bunter's news was just the news the Famous Five had been expecting to hear. They were not surprised, they would have been surprised had it been otherwise. Daring and reckless as Slinker Bates undoubtedly was, it was scarcely likely that he would dare to remain at Greyfriars after what had happened.

It was a relief—a great relief—to know that he had gone. But it was also unpleasant to know that fact. For one of the first things the fellows had made sure of doing that morning was to examine their belongings. And as Harry Wharton had feared, they had made the discovery that quite a number of valuables had gone—watches, wallets, sleeve-links, tipons, and in some cases money.

Certainly if Slinker had gone, then it was unlikely they would be recovered easily.

But Harry Wharton asked the question because he saw that Bunter had his own ideas as to why Slinker had gone.

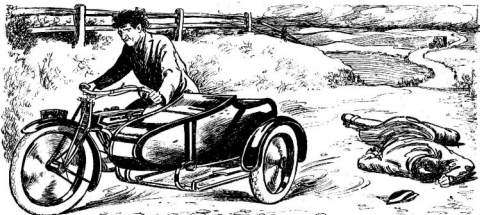
"What about it?" asked Bunter witheringly. "I should jolly well think you could see that, Wharton. It's jolly plain, I think. That beastly tramp was the chap who raided the studies last night, of course. Quelch thinks so, too—so do lots of other fellows."

"Oh, I see!"

"Prouty doesn't think so, though," grinned Bunter. "Silly as I be—I happened to overhear Quelch and him gassing about it. Prouty got quite waxy when Quelch suggested it, you know. As if it wasn't plain enough."

"Oh, dry up!"

"Why did he bolt, then, if it wasn't him?" grinned Bunter. "Without his blessed money and boots, too? Funny that! But, I say, you chaps, it's jolly queer about Hobby. He must have



Slinker Bates was about to plunge his hand into Hobson's coat pocket when his keen eyes observed a taxicab racing towards him at a mad, reckless speed. The hunted look came to his eyes and he leaped into the saddle of the bike. His nimble fingers tumbled with the controls, the engine burst into a roar and the machine suddenly jumped forward, missing a neighbouring gatepost by a fraction of an inch. (See Chapter 10.)

known the— Here, don't you fellows walk away while I'm talking to you."

But the fellows did walk away. Dunster blinked wrathfully after them for a moment, and then was about to follow when the breakfast-bell rang, and he hurried indoors. Gossip and slander could wait, but in Dunster's view breakfast couldn't.

"So—so they've tumbled to that much," breathed Harry Wharton, looking at his chums. "I thought they would. But it means— Hallo, here's Hobby now."

The juniors had been about to follow Dunster indoors; but they stopped on sighting Hobson crossing the Close. The junior's face was flushed, and there was a curious look in his eyes.

"Well!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as he came up to them. "You've fairly under a mess of things now, Hobby. You mean to go on with this mad game?"

"Yes, I do—until that poor beggar gets a clear anyway," said Hobson doggedly.

"Have you seen the Head yet?"

"No! I'm to go after breakfast, I believe."

"You know what it means?" said Harry in a low voice. "You'll be flogged in any case, for assaulting a master and a prefect. That alone is serious enough. But—but if you don't clear yourself on the other charge—"

"I don't care."

"You must care, you fool!" snapped Harry. "You know what the fellows are saying about you, Hobby—you know what they're thinking!"

"Let them think what they like—be hanged to them!" said Hobson bitterly. "They already look at me as if I was a thief."

"It's your own fault," said Bob Cherry grimly. "You know that Slinker has looked, I suppose? You know that some of the fellows guess he was the chap; so does Quitchy, I believe."

"I know."

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"Look here, Hobson," he said quietly, "we were keen enough at first to back you up over this business, but—but it's got too serious now. It isn't right to hide the facts now the fellows have lost things. It's not good enough, Hobby."

"I know," said Hobson. "I—I wouldn't care but for that. I'm going to get them back, though."

"It's too late now, unless you expose him and get someone on his track soon, you fool!" snapped Harry. "I'm sorry for the fellow. I understand how you feel about it. But he's had his chance; he has shown he's hopeless. You're not going to play the goat any further, Hobby. You're not going to be dishonoured, be kicked out of Greyfriars in disgrace if we can help it, Hobby. If you won't save yourself we're going to save you!"

"I—I—I—" Hobson stammered and stopped. It was obvious that Wharton's threat had alarmed him. He hesitated a moment, and then he spoke.

"Look here, you fellows," he said. "I wasn't going to tell you—I was going to try to put things right on my own if I got the time and chance. You—you think Slinker's gone, that he's far away?"

"Of course!"

"He's not gone," said Hobson. "I've just seen him!"

"What!"

There was a simultaneous gasp. "He's still here—hiding in the ruins," said Hobson grimly. "I guessed it. I knew he wouldn't risk going far as he was in pyjamas and a coat. He couldn't very well."

"Buster told us he hadn't taken his other things," said Nugent. "It's a wonder he didn't try to get them last night—"

"He did," said Hobson. "In the darkness he couldn't find the window, though. He's been shivering in the ruin since last night, poor beggar, waiting for a chance to see me. I suspected he would find his way there, somehow. I went prowling round on the off-chance. He was there right enough. He spotted me

and called out to me. He—he's shivering and hungry, poor wretch."

"Serve him right," said Johnny Bull blithely.

"I'm just going in to try to get him some food and clothes," said Hobson, ignoring Bull. "I sha'n't—"

"He'll bolt, then, and you'll never get the stolen things back," said Harry Wharton quickly.

"Oh!"

Hobson, plainly, had never thought of that. He went on desperately:

"I'll get the stuff from him first somehow, you fellows. Look here, give that poor beggar another chance and method your hand for a bit. I've got a plan. I'm going to get him clothes and food first. Then I'm going to sneak Coker's motor-bike and sidecar. I'm going to shove him in the sidecar and turn him loose miles from here, with cash in his pocket. He'll be all right, then."

"Then you'll come back and clear yourself," asked Harry eagerly.

Hobson's face set stubbornly again.

"Not until I know he's got clear, not until he writes to tell me he's safe," he muttered doggedly. "I've vowed to see him through, and I'm going to."

"He will write, I don't think," sniffed Bob Cherry. "In any case, you'll be at home by then—sacked, Hobby!"

"I'm risking it! I'm doing it," said Hobson. "And I've got to do it at once, before the Head sends for me. He'll sentence me, and I'll be shovelled in detention soon. I've got—"

He broke off suddenly and hit his lips as he spoke. A senior was crossing the Close towards them. It was Wingate. He was too late. Hobson realized that. It was hopeless to run away from Wingate.

"I'm just looking for you, Hobson," said Wingate briskly. "You're wanted in the Head's study at once. Come along—sharp. You other kids get in to breakfast."

Hobson hesitated a moment. Then he gave Wharton an appealing look and nodded towards the old ruins. Wharton nodded to show that he understood, and

then Hobson turned and followed Wingate.

"Wait a sec, you chaps!" murmured Harry.

He waited until Wingate and Hobson had vanished indoors, and then he turned to his chums.

"You saw what he meant, the way he looked at me as he nodded towards the ruins. I mean?" he asked. "He wants us to see to that rotter. He knows he'll have no chance now."

"I thought that," said Bob.

"Well, we'll do it," said Harry grimly. "We'll do it—up to a point. We'll give the fellow clobber and grub—in exchange for the plunder. What we do after that depends on what happens to poor old Hobby. He's an ass, but he's a good ass. He's too good an ass to have his career ruined through that fellow, whether he saved Hobby's life or not. Expelled from school for complicity in thefts—no, it's not good enough. After breakfast we'll do it. Come on, we're fast!"

"Right-ho!"

And, having arranged that, the Famous Five went into breakfast. They took it for granted that Hobson would be sentenced—or placed in detention pending sentence. But Harry Wharton & Co. took too much for granted there.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Before the Head!

"HOBSON, sir!"

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, ushered Hobson into the Head's study and went out, closing the door quietly. With Dr. Locke were Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch. All three masters subjected Hobson to a very keen gaze as he took his place before the Head's desk—a gaze in which curiosity was the dominating quality.

Obviously the masters had discussed the matter without coming to any conclusion—they were utterly at a loss. And as he realised it, Hobson set his teeth and mentally vowed that they should remain at a loss.

"Hobson," began the Head quietly, "I have heard from Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch of the extraordinary events which took place in the school during the night. You understand, of course, why I have sent for you in connection with them?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are charged, in the first place, with assaulting a master and prefect of this school—a sufficiently serious crime in itself," said the Head gravely. "That, however, is unfortunately not all. You are also charged with complicity in the theft of various articles of value from your schoolfellows."

"Yes, sir," said Hobson.

The Head frowned. He did not like the trace of defiance in the junior's tone at all.

"I am quite satisfied, from the evidence of Mr. Prout and Locke," he went on quietly, "that you acted as you did in order to bring about the escape of the unknown thief. That much is obvious. You do not propose to attempt to deny that, Hobson?"

Hobson did not hesitate; he knew it was futile to attempt denial, had he any intention of doing so.

"No, sir," he said slowly.

"Very well, Hobson," said the Head gravely. "It only remains now for me to hear your explanation of such astounding conduct, and for you to acquaint me with the identity of the thief. I am waiting, my boy."

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Hobson paled slightly; but he did not hesitate.

"I have nothing to say, sir," he muttered, "except that I am not a thief."

"Does that mean that you refuse to explain, Hobson?"

"I'm sorry, sir—yes," said Hobson, almost in a whisper.

"You will not give me the name of the actual thief, Hobson?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I—I can't!"

The Head pursed his lips.

"It has been suggested to me, Hobson," he went on quietly, "that the unknown person found in the school last night was the youth whose Mr. Prout had brought to the sanatorium. Both Mr. Quelch and myself believe that to be the case. Have you ever met this youth before, Hobson?"

Hobson did not speak. The Head waited fully a minute, and when he spoke at last his voice was ominous.

"Hobson," he said gravely, "I do not think you fully realise your position. Unless you can give me a satisfactory explanation of your astounding conduct, I shall be forced to the conclusion that you are guilty; I shall be obliged to send you home in disgrace. Your refusal to speak leads me to conclude that you are unable to explain. Indeed, it is difficult for me to guess otherwise. You have admitted aiding the actual thief to escape, and you were discovered with two of the stolen articles in your possession."

The Head paused, and eyed Hobson searchingly.

"Your school record, however, is above reproach, Hobson. There are also extraordinary features in the case which lead me to suspect that there is something mysterious behind the affair," he said, glancing at Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch. "I am, therefore, reluctant to deal hastily with the matter. I am determined to give you every opportunity to think the matter over. You still have nothing to say, Hobson?"

"No, sir," muttered Hobson slowly.

"Very well, my boy. I will give you until six o'clock this evening, and I sincerely hope that by that time you will be in a more sensible frame of mind. For the present you will not be placed in detention; but you are on no account to leave the precincts of the school. You may go, my boy."

"Thank you, sir," said Hobson quietly.

He left the room. Outside the door, he drew a deep breath of relief. He had scarcely dared to hope for such luck. He which to get Slinker away to safety.

But he had no intention of losing a moment for all that. The fellows were all at breakfast still. He might not get another chance like this.

The junior acted swiftly. From the dormitory he raised a pair of old trousers of his and a pair of boots, and then he nudged his study cupboard for foodstuffs. There was not a soul to be seen about, and in less than three or four minutes the junior was hurrying round to the old monastery ruins.

He had almost reached the steps leading down to the vaults, when he stopped suddenly, his eyes gleaming.

Some yards away, half hidden by piles of broken masonry, was a lurking form. It was Slinker Bates. He appeared to be digging, and he had not apparently heard nor seen Hobson's approach. On the ground close by him was a small bundle wrapped in old racking.

With a deep breath Hobson dropped behind a pile of stonework and watched. He guessed at once what the rascally youth was doing. He was hiding the plunder. He knew he had got to go,

and he knew Hobson would never let him take the plunder with him. He was hiding it, intending to recover it at a more favourable time.

"So that's your little game, my peepin'!" breathed Hobson. "Well, we'll see about that!"

He watched breathlessly. He saw Slinker begin digging, and place the bundle in the hole. Then, after covering it up with loose earth and a huge stone, the runaway raced for the vaults and vanished down the steps.

Hobson only waited a minute, and then he stepped softly to the hiding-place of the plunder. He dropped the bundle he carried, and in a couple of seconds he had unearthed the small, sack-covered bundle, and had replaced the earth and stones.

Then Hobson glanced round him quickly. There was another pile of broken masonry a few yards away, and, hurrying to this, the junior hid the plunder behind a projecting stone. This done, he recovered the bundle of clothes and foodstuffs, and walked boldly to the vaults.

He stepped down the crumbling steps to find Slinker crouching at the bottom. The shivering wretch looked up, and his cunning eyes lit up as he recognised Hobson.

"You—you've got the duns, then—and some grub, mister?" he panted eagerly.

Hobson regarded him grimly. The plunder was safe now; but the junior realised that if he did not mention it, then Slinker would be suspicious at once. He had already told the runaway what his plan was, and he had made the return of the stolen goods a condition of the compact.

"Yes, I've got the stuff!" he snapped savagely. "Despite his pity for the wretch—despite the fact that he owed him his life—he won't even let himself be spoken kindly to the youth. Yes; here it is, Slinker Bates. But—before I hand it over I want that stuff you pinched last night. Hand it over!"

"I ain't got nothing; I've told you I ain't!" whined Slinker, his eyes falling before the junior's steady gaze. "I chucked it away when I boozed last night; I wasn't going to be caught with the stuff on me. That's the truth, mister."

Hobson knew perfectly well that it wasn't the truth. But he appeared to accept it as truth. He nodded, and Slinker hid a crafty grin.

"Right, Slinker," said Hobson shortly. "Here's the clothes. Get into them quick. Then climb that old wall, and you'll find yourself in the playing-fields. Turn to the right, and keep close to the wall until you reach Friarfield Lane. The grub you can stuff in the sacker. Got that?"

"Yes, mister!"

"Good! Then I'm off. Wait there for me, and with luck I'll soon be along."

And Hobson hurried away, and running round by the church, he soon reached the cycle-shed. He very soon had Coker's motor-bike and sidecar out, and hurriedly looked it over. What the mighty Coker would say, and do, when he knew he had "boned" his precious machine, Hobson did not know or care.

He had enough worries without worrying about Schoon House. He had to get past the lodge and Gosling, yet.

But Hobson's luck was in.

He sprang into the saddle, and a moment later was racing down the drive, heedless of rules. As he rounded the School House, and came in sight of the gates, he heard someone about to hound him. It was Harry Wharton! But Hobson did not know that. He did not even look round.

As he reached the gates Gosling's door flew open, and the old porter rushed out with a yell.

"Stop! Master Hobson, you ain't to go out! You rascal! What I says is this 'ere—don't you dare—"

But Hobson did not stop to hear what "this 'ere" was; he was well out of earshot by the time Gosling had said it. He turned and lurched back until he reached the end of the school wall, and then he pulled up with a jerk.

As he did so Slinker tore himself through the hedge and jumped into the roadway.

"In you get," said Hobson curtly. Slinker scrambled in, and almost immediately had settled himself, the machine was racing away. At the cross-roads Hobson took the Pegg Road, and went snorting along it at a mad, reckless pace.

He was through the little fishing-village of Pegg in a flash, and then Hobson setled down to the job in earnest. There was hardly a soul on the long, lonely Cliff Road, and Hobson fairly made the machine fly.

Hobson did not speak a word during that breathless journey; nor did Slinker—he couldn't. He had long ago finished the sandwiches Hobson had provided him with, and now he clung on to the side of the car, his small eyes streaming with moisture, his thin, pinched face wearing a fixed grin. He was unused to such speed; but it was obvious that he felt no fear—he was enjoying it.

Hobson pulled up at last on a stretch of deserted common.

"Jump out!" he snapped.

Slinker grinned and climbed stiffly out of the sidecar.

"Crums, mister," he grinned, "you know how to shove her along, and no error. But what I wants to know—"

"I'm dropping you here, Slinker," said Hobson quietly. "You're now over twenty miles from Greyfriars, and less than a mile from Billingsgate—a large manufacturing town. You'll be safe enough there. Get along there and lose yourself. We may be followed; the Head might telephone for someone to stop us. You're got clothes now, and you've got your chance. Take my advice and go straight after this. You've got some money—I gave you—"

"What-oh!" chuckled Slinker.

There was something in the sly chuckle that made Hobson look sharply at Slinker. In a flash he understood. Slinker had certainly left the bundle of plunder behind—but had he left it all? It was hardly likely he would leave money behind him, I gave you—

"Look here, Slinker," said Hobson grimly, "before I let you go I'm going to go through your pockets, my pippin! Turn them out—sharp!"

Slinker drew in his breath with a hiss.

"What! Look 'ere, mister— He 'ome words broke off as he caught Hobson's gaze fixed on his coat-pocket. From it bulged a pocket-wallet. "That wallet isn't yours; you know it isn't!" snapped Hobson. "You'll hand—"

Without finishing his words Hobson leaped forward and, snatching the wallet, he crammed it into his own inside pocket.

Slinker's face underwent a change—his face went evil. For a moment he stared at Hobson, and then he hurled himself at the junior.

The sudden charge sent Hobson reeling backwards, and he went down with a crash. Slinker sprang up on top of him. He felt the junior's head struck the axle of the sidecar, and he went limp in Slinker's grip.

Slinker glanced at the junior's white, stiff face, and got slowly to his feet. His own face had gone suddenly white; but as he examined the junior he suddenly chuckled.

He stooped, and was about to plunge his hand into Hobson's inside coat-pocket when he straightened himself abruptly. His sharp ears had caught the distant hum of a motor, and, looking back along the white ribbon of road, he saw a taxi-cab racing towards him at a mad, reckless speed.

Slinker guessed what it meant at once; he remembered Hobson's words concerning the possibility of being followed.

All thoughts of the wallet vanished from Slinker's mind then. The hunted look came to his eyes, and he leaped into the saddle of the bike.

He had never ridden such a machine before—he had no knowledge of the mechanism. But his sharp eyes had watched Hobson start the engine, and next instant his foot had kicked the

starter, and his nimble fingers were fumbling with the levers. The engine roared suddenly into a roar, and the machine jumped suddenly forward. Then it shot away, the daring Slinker wrenching nimbly at the handlebars.

By the fraction of an inch it missed a neighbouring gatepost, and, hurtling back on to the road, the bike and sidecar went roaring noisily along, rocking and lurching from one side of the road to the other as Slinker struggled manfully to steer a straight course.

As the driver nodded and stared. "You see that motor-bike and sidecar in front?" said Harry. "Ten bob your fare if you catch it. Are you on?"

"But—but—"

"Yes or no?" snapped Harry.

The driver nodded then, and grinned. As the junior started the motor, the car started with a jerk and sped away.

It was, fortunately, a new car from Courtfield, and the driver knew how to handle his engine. He fairly made the dust rise as the taxi tore on, bounding and lurching.

An eye clear of Pegg, the driver, like Hobson, settled down to the business in real earnest. It was not a bad road, and at that time in the morning was deserted.

By this time the bike and sidecar was out of sight; but Harry had guessed that Hobson was making towards Billingsgate, and he had set his teeth accordingly.

Inside the taxi, Harry Wharton & Co. watched the road ahead of them eagerly and anxiously. They realised that Hobson had made matters far worse for

himself by picking up Slinker and taking him out of the vicinity of Greyfriars.

That Hobson had not been placed in detention, after all, Harry did not dream. He supposed that the reckless junior had bolted and got on Wingate the slip in order to carry through his plan in regard to Slinker Bates.

If that were so, thought Harry swiftly, it was hardly likely that Hobson would trouble about the stolen goods—would stop to try to recover the stuff from Slinker. Indeed, Harry did not believe Hobson could get the articles from the crafty, slippery rascal without aid.

All this flashed through Harry Wharton's mind as he saw the sidecar and rider flash through the gates.

He turned abruptly to his chums, his brow dark and angry.

"Come on! He's gone to pick up that rascal along the lane!" he snapped. "We'll stop them if we're sloppy. We're not allowing that merchant to get clear with his plunder, after all—Hobson or no Hobson! Buck up!"

"My hat! Yes, rather!"

"They were down the steps in a flash and racing for the gates. The dumb-founded and wrathful Gosling saw them coming, and raised his voice anew.

"Exc—exc, Master Wharton! Don't you go after a foller—"

The racing juniors were round the old porter in a flash, and they pounded on, heedless of his warnings. But they were too late.

When still fifty yards away they saw Slinker Bates spring from the hedge and climb into the sidecar. Then the machine bounded away and went tearing down the lane.

"Done, after all, by jingo!" panted Harry Wharton, coming to a breathless halt.

"I didn't see Slinker carrying anything," gasped Rob Cherry. "Perhaps he's not got the stuff, after all. If he hasn't it's a deadly matter." Lat the beggar go, and good luck to him!"

"If he hasn't—yes," said Harry grimly. "But—but I don't like it, you fellows. You know what a daring, unscrupulous young villain he is. He'll play some dirty trick on Hobson before the silly has got a word of me."

Harry paused, and his eyes gleamed. From the gateway of Major Thresher's residence along the lane a taxi had just emerged. A glance showed Harry that it was empty, and he ran towards it and sprang on to the step.

"Want a job?" he asked the driver eagerly.

The driver nodded and stared.

"You see that motor-bike and sidecar in front?" said Harry. "Ten bob your fare if you catch it. Are you on?"

"But—but—"

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THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Debt Repaid!

AS Harry Wharton stood on the School House steps and watched the juniors vanish through the gates he could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes.

Certainly he had half expected to see something of the sort. Having heard the engine of the motor-bike just as the Famous Five were leaving the ding-hall, he had fed his chums out with a rush. He had guessed in a flash that Hobson had taken matters into his own hands, after all.

And now he saw that his fear was only too well-founded. Hobson had gone—

himself by this mad act of holding—if he had bolted. They also realized that, if Slinker had got the stuff—if the articles were never recovered—then the case was serious. Even if he cleared himself in time, Hobson was to blame for their loss.

It was just as the juniors were beginning to think that they had lost their quarry that the driver grunted round at them and nodded ahead. "It was it there—a bike and sidecar standing in the road in the distance.

Even as they glimpsed it, they saw a figure jump into the saddle and the machine go careering away in a curious zigzag manner. They also saw the form of Hobson stretched out on the white road.

"Good heavens!" gasped Harry, jumping to his feet.

He guessed at once something of the truth. As he had feared, Slinker had turned the tables on Hobson in the end.

The driver had also seen that something was wrong, and he made the car burn for the rest of the way. As it stopped at last, and the juniors tumbled out, Hobson was just staggering to his feet. His hand was to his head, and his face was white. He fairly blinked at the juniors as they rushed up to him.

"You—you fellows followed, then?" he stammered, eyeing the juniors dazedly. "I—I hit my head on something. It fairly knocked me out. But—but Coker's bike—"

"Leave that to us, Hobby," said Harry grimly. "Get in the car. You can rest there, and we'll soon catch that merchant up, unless he comes to grief first."

It was a miracle that Slinker had not come to grief already. They could see him careering along recklessly, and the juniors piled into the car with Hobson, and the driver went off in chase again. Could Coker have only seen his precious machine just then he would have had a dozen fits, as Bob Cherry remarked.

The chase which followed was not a long one. Indeed, the juniors did not expect it to be. Slinker was all at sea on the bike, and he obviously did not know how to increase speed.

The racing-car rapidly overhauled him, and then, when there was only a matter of fifty yards or so between them, the car came with startling suddenness.

A sudden turn in the road had hid the bike and sidecar from them for a few seconds; but as they honked round the

corner the juniors gave sudden alarmed cries.

Lurching and bounding down a steep hill before them was Slinker, and his steering resembled the mad antics of an intoxicated monkey.

He had obviously lost his head, and apparently did not attempt to shut off his engine or apply his brakes. It was probable he hadn't the slightest idea how to do either.

But that was not all. At the bottom of the hill was a dangerous turning that flanked the river, and slowly tumbling round the sharp turn was a big timber wagon that well-nigh blocked the whole of the road.

Even should the reckless youth ever reach the bottom of the hill in safety—and it scarcely seemed that he would—he would crash into the timber-wagon for a certainty.

The juniors jumped to their feet and watched his progress in siber horror.

The driver of the timber-wagon looked round suddenly and gave an angry yell. But on seeing that the racing machine did not slacken speed, he jumped to his horses' heads and strove to urge them on frantically.

But he was too late!

At least a score of times the careering machine missed hedges and ditches and telegraph-poles. It would have been better for the wretched Slinker had he risked it and taken a hedge headlong.

But he didn't. He reached the dip between the hill-bottom and the sharp turn in the road, through which peeped a shining expanse of river, and strove frantically to steer his machine through this narrow space that separated the wheels of the wagon from the hedge.

It was a hopeless task—for Slinker. It would have been better had he plunged straight into the river. As it was he missed a projecting tree-trunk by a hair's breadth, and then came a resounding crash as the machine smashed into the wheel of the wagon.

What happened then the juniors hardly saw clearly. They saw the machine crumple up, and then a burst of flame went up.

The petrol-tank had caught fire.

The taxi raced up, and stopped with a jarring of brakes, and the juniors and the driver leaped into the road, their faces white. They found the wretched Slinker flung lying in a crumpled heap against the wheel of the timber-wagon,

and, worse, his clothes were a mass of flames.

"Quick!" panted Harry Wharton hoarsely. "He'll be burned to death."

They raced up, hardly knowing what they would do when they got there. But someone else was before them. Someone passed Harry like a flash of lightning. It was James Hobson.

He reached the hapless youth, and, heedless of burns, he wrapped his arms round him and heaved him up. Hobson was a strong youth at ordinary times, but he seemed to have the extra strength of a man now. He lifted the blazing form high in the air and sent it hurtling into the river.

There was a hissing splash, followed by another splash as Hobson dived into the river after him. There came five further splashes as the Famous Five went in after them, one by one.

The driver of the wagon dropped down on to the towing-path, and after seeing his wagon clear of the blazing machine and pulling the cartons of horses, he joined the rescue-party. He was just in time to help the taxi-driver and the Famous Five to land Hobson and Slinker.

Both rescuer and rescuer were unconscious, but as they laid Hobson on the cushions of the taxi, Hobson opened his eyes and saw Wharton bending over him.

"Is—is Slinker all right?" he gasped, in a whisper, his face twisted with pain. "He—he's not—"

"No, he's alive," said Harry scerily, glancing at the still form on the other seat. "He's unconscious, though. He's badly burned, but he doesn't seem to be much injured otherwise. We're taking you both in the taxi to the hospital. You—you've paid your debt, Hobby, old man—in a splendid manner, too. I fancy everything will be all right now, Hobby."

Harry Wharton proved a true prophet. Everything was "all right." Hobson was sent home that same evening and placed in the sanatorium at Greyfriars. But long before that Harry Wharton had placed all the facts before Dr. Locke. It had all come out then. Hobson had failed to carry out his vow—to prevent the runaway's capture—but he had failed splendidly, and as it happened it all turned out for the best. For while Dr. Locke heard the story he had intervened with the reformatory authorities on behalf of Slinker, like the kind old gentleman he was, and told of Slinker's bravery on the line, of how he had saved Hobson's life, and possibly averted a grave train smash; and it was owing to his influence that the hapless outlaw got a fresh start in life when at last he came out of hospital.

Coker, naturally enough, was not pleased to hear that his motor-bike and sidecar was "done in." But as Hobson was in the sanny when he heard the news, the great Horace did not say, or do, what he otherwise might have said and done. As it happened, though, Hobson's people, who were fairly well off, came to the rescue by providing the great Horace with a new machine.

As for Hobson himself, there was no question of punishment for him when it became known how he had repaid his debt to the hapless Slinker. Like the rest of Greyfriars, Dr. Locke felt proud of the loyal, but possibly wrong-headed, fellow of the Shell, who had been True to His Word!

THE END.

(Don't miss "Pen's" Poll!—next Monday's ripping Greyfriars yarn, boys.)

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The Brotherhood of Equity!

(Continued from page 2.)

endowed by Nature, and, above all, knew how to use his fists. "A straight-from-the-shoulder" caught one greasy ruffian full on his ugly jaw, a swinging backhand sent a carved knife clattering to the floor.

Swiftly the stragglng policeman fought his way across the room in the direction where Luke stood. An almost superhuman effort on Harry's part sent a couple more of the natives reeling to the floor, gasping at gurgling from the force of the Britisher's blows.

His path now clear, he rushed straight for the traitor.

"You cur! You absolute, low-down cur!" he shouted, seizing the trembling Walters by the throat. "You dirty scoundrel, you're not fit to wipe the floor with!"

Half-maddened with fury, he flung the trembling wretch off his feet, then seizing him in two places by his clothing, held the stragling form lengthwise before him.

The general attack which, owing to the Britisher's prompt and energetic action had mercifully slackened. Now commenced again.

A big rush and the rascals were at him, but none more ferociously than ever. Harry did not pause in his determination.

He knew he was in a tight hole. Escape he must.

With one powerful heave he swung Walters' form high above his head; then, putting all his strength into the effort, he threw the traitor full into the oncoming press of ferce and angry men.

Crash! In his furious one of Walters' wild-kicking legs struck the lamp. In a second it overturned, and blazing oil filled the stifling room.

The natives shrieked and danced about in the burning liquid as it ran like lightning over the floor.

"Don't lose your heads, you dogs!" cried Walters, leaping to his feet. "Close on the spy! Now with a rush—quick!"

Despite his desperate efforts to reach the door, Harry found himself this time no match for his antagonists. He was swept off his feet by a strong hand encircling his ankle. He went down in a heap, a medley of forms struggling over him.

Then, under a shower of blows driven home with the handles of native knives, he layed into insubmissibility.

No sooner was it seen that the Britisher was helpless, than willing hands seized him, and swung them over the burning workwood. A vigorous stamping of feet served to distinguish the flames.

The paper found in the young policeman's pocket explained to Walters how it was his cousin had tumbled upon the scheme in which he was engaged.

Luke resolved swiftly. Harry must die. He expressed his conclusion to Durga, the treacherous sowar.

Durga acquiesced. But how to get rid of the young fellow without exciting suspicion? Durga was cunning.

"We must have a burial, Walters inhibit. The spy shall be taken to the Tower of Silence. There, tied to the grating, he will await for foam. The birds of the air will keep his company. His blood will not be upon our heads."

It was agreed upon. Shortly after, a silent procession stole out into the night, carrying a limp, inanimate form. Harry Raskurn was going to his doom.

They went afar, away from the hill station, far away into the plain, beyond the river, where are the grim Towers of Silence—those grisly structures, where the native dead are left resting high up on a grating at the top.

The work was quickly and silently done; none would ever know what had become of Harry Raskurn. His disappearance would be quite as inexplicable as that of Inspector-General Mason. And as one still, white form lay helpless, powerless but to await the dawn of a new day, the party wheeled ever nearer in their flight, the guilty band stole back to their lair.

A horrible croaking, a flapping of wings, a

sudden whirring sound awoke Harry Raskurn with a start. The consciousness of his peril was with him. He tried in vain to move. It was impossible. What—what could this mean? He was on a grating—tied to the bars.

A cold sweat settled upon his brow. He struggled, twisted, turned until the skin was chafed and rasped from his bleeding limbs. In vain. He could do nothing but await the last long day.

A moan of agony left his parched lips. To die like this was horrible—perched up there fifty feet from the ground, alone except for the night-birds.

For a long time he remained as one in a trance, literally stanned by the grim fate awaiting him. And still the onsets of death hovered about his head.

But what was that? Harry listened with fast-beating heart! Something heavy flew upwards to strike with a clang against the stonework of the tower. It fell to the earth, only to be cast again. This time it lodged, straining his eyes, the youth could make out a large boot.

Even as he looked wonderingly at it a stealthy, silent form appeared over the parapet. He sprang lightly on to the grating. A fresh horror burst upon the young policeman's mind.

"He has come to kill me," he thought. "But no. The stranger knelt down beside the still form, and fumbled for the out-stretched right hand."

"Ah, my ring! He's after that!" Harry told himself, as, with closed eyes, he awaited what he thought was certain death. The fellow tried to turn the hand. The arm was bound too tightly. A deft cut, and the rope was severed.

Harry felt it slaken across his chest. He knew, by that cutting of his bonds, he was free. Even as the robber fingers wrenched at the ring on his hand, Harry tore his left arm from the grating, and, with a swift movement, encircled the native in a grip of iron.

Grasping the hand which held the knife, he crushed the fellow to him. Harder and harder he pressed. The rascal kicked and

blew in his desperation, but to no purpose. He seemed that the very life must be squeezed out of him.

At last he reeled over, and lay a limp, moaning mass. Harry struggled to his feet. He looked over the side of the tower. A thin rope of native texture trailed to the ground.

In a second he was over the parapet and swinging in mid air. But even as he hung in space he heard a sound above him. The native had recovered the use of his limbs.

Hand under hand Harry went, until almost half of his journey was completed. Then a dark shadow above caused him to look up. In the moonlight, outlined as he bent over the parapet of the tower, was the figure of his keen knife in his hand. A quivering of the rope told Harry that the scoundrel was hacking at it for all he was worth. The next instant a cry escaped him as the strands parted and fell swiftly to earth. The severed rope came twisting down in a coil about him as he struck the ground with a force that shook every bone in his body.

You may be sure it did not take Harry Raskurn of the Indian Police, long to reach the station, and divulge the story of the abduction of the Inspector-General; nor did many hours pass before a strong force was scouring the hills for the missing man.

He was found; snatched from the jaws of death, as he himself expressed it.

Did Harry Raskurn reap the rewards of his discovery, you may ask? Well, I don't think the Inspector-General of the Madras Presidency Police Force is the sort of man to forget a good service.

And what of Luke Walters? Up to the time he died, four years ago, he, with a number of fellow-conspirators, was working out his days in an Indian penal settlement, which, for obvious reasons, shall be nameless.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's thrilling complete Mounted Police story, entitled "Winning Through!"—a yarn dealing with the hardy policemen of Canada.)



With one powerful heave Harry swung Walters' form high above his head. Then, putting all his strength into the effort, he threw the traitor full into the oncoming press of furious men.

It is Not Too Late to Start Reading This Splendid Stage and Detective Serial, Chums!



The Tall Stranger!

"But—UT—but," stammered the C.I.D. man, in amazement, "do you really imagine that those newspapers will help us?"

"I do most emphatically," returned Ferrers Locke. "But it will mean a journey to California for one of the chaps at the Yard. I cannot afford the time to go myself, much as I would like to."

"Really," exclaimed the inspector with knitted brows, "you do talk in riddles, Mr. Locke. What are you driving at?"

"That I will explain at a later date, Pycroft," said Locke, with an air of finality. "But I'm on the trail—hot on the trail, in fact."

Inspector Pycroft pouted a lip in his disgust at not being let into the secret, whilst Jack Drake, who knew his master's reticent mood, smiled cheerily.

"When the gov'nor talks like that, he's reminded to Huntingdon, " you can bet your sweet life that he really knows something."

Whilst Inspector Pycroft was frowning and fuming Ferrers Locke was carefully making a few notes in his memorandum book. Then, crossing some of the newspapers into a small package, he tucked them under his arm and signalled to his companions that he wished to depart.

On the way back to the hotel Pycroft plied his unofficial colleague with a host of questions, but Locke gave them scant attention. He replied in each case in a non-committal tone that exasperated the C.I.D. man.

"All in good time, Pycroft," said the Baker Street detective at length. "You must curb your impatience. Come, come, I'm ready for lunch. But I am forgetting. Lunch must wait for a bit so far as I'm concerned, for I have promised to see Chaerton off at the station. See you later."

And without another word of explanation the sleuth hurried away to meet Mark Chaerton at his hotel. He arrived at the Mecca just as the famous playwright was hurrying out.

"You are in time," smiled the playwright. "Good, we will take a taxi."

The commissaire at the door hailed a passing taxi, and Locke and Chaerton entered it. The drive to the station took a quarter of an hour, and throughout the journey the playwright appeared to be labouring under some uneasiness. Several times he glanced out of the small window at the back of the cab, and then smiled uneasily at his companion.

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At a favourable moment, when Chaerton's eyes were not upon him, the sleuth, too, gazed out of the window at the rear of the cab. But all he saw was another taxi following in their wake.

Arrived at the station, Chaerton made a rush for the barrier, and with a hurried word to Ferrers Locke, asking him to keep a watchful eye on things during his absence, he almost ran on to the platform. Not a few yards behind him, apparently in just as much a hurry as the playwright, was a tall, bronzed man clad in a check suit that was obviously a "ready made."

IN THE LIMELIGHT.

THE YELLOW CLAW, a mysterious and powerful organisation that preys upon wealthy Englishmen.

SIR MALCOLM DUNDERFIELD, a successful City financier, whose family the Yellow Claw has threatened to wipe out.

JOHN HUNTINGDON, his nephew. An actor by profession, Huntingdon invariably fills the leading role in Mark Chaerton's plays.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous detective, of Baker Street, who has been engaged by Sir Malcolm to bring the dreaded society to book.

JACK DRAKE, the sleuth's clever boy assistant, who is given a job as dresser to Huntingdon.

INSPECTOR PYCROFT, a Scotland Yard detective, who has joined forces with Ferrers Locke.

MARK CHAERTON, a successful playwright, who has also been threatened by the Yellow Claw. He, too, seeks Ferrers Locke's services when his theatrical company starts its tour of the provinces.

After an exciting series of adventures, Ferrers Locke gets on the trail of the Yellow Claw at Blackpool. A chase in motor-cars ensues, which culminates in the car supposed to contain the Yellow Claw himself, hurtling over the North Shore cliffs at Blackpool. Later it is discovered that the master-criminal was not in the car when it plunged over the cliff. In point of fact, he had erected a dummy figure behind the steering-wheel, locked the steering gear, and set the car in motion, in the hope that it would lure his pursuers to their doom. Locke carefully examines the dummy figure—which has been salvaged by the coastguards—and discovers that it is stuffed with innumerable copies of the "Calliformer News." The sleuth sends to Pycroft that the newspapers present a valuable clue as to the identity of the Yellow Claw.

Chaerton's face changed into a ferocious frown when he saw the stranger close on his heels, and he hurried still more. From his position at the barrier Ferrers Locke had noticed that the tall, bronzed man was the passenger of the taxi that had followed in their wake. He caught a glimpse of the fellow's face and stored it away in his mental picture-gallery of crooks, for the features were distinctly unprepossessing, and the eyes were shifty.

"Friend of Chaerton's?" The sleuth asked himself the question as he saw the stranger catch up with the playwright. "Don't admire his choice, anyway."

He watched the playwright enter a first-class compartment, and noticed, too, that the tall, bronzed stranger accompanied him. Then, with a perplexed frown on his finely chiselled features, the sleuth vacated the station and scuntered back to the Criterion. For half an hour after his arrival the sleuth was busily plugging Scotland Yard. And when at length he rejoined his companions there was a satisfied smile upon his features.

The House in Kensington Square!

MALCOLM DUNDERFIELD, a well-known portrait painter of London, Fellow of the Royal Academy and a host of other institutions devoted to the study of Art, laid aside his palette and passed a weary hand over his forehead. He treated the canvas on the easel before him to a critical scrutiny, and seemed disappointed at the half-finished oil painting upon which he had been engaged for over a week.

"Not so good of Malcolm as I should like it to have been," he reflected. "And looking at it reminds me that neither of us is getting any younger as the years roll on."

Mervyn Dunderfield, bachelor, was a cousin of Sir Malcolm Dunderfield, the big City financier—a relationship that was more than indicated by the extraordinary likeness between them. Many a visitor to the cosily-appointed flat in Kensington Square, upon meeting the artist and his cousin together, had been at a loss to tell who was who.

The portrait painter gazed round his untidy studio with a rather cynical smile on his face. His eyes wandered over the busts, the half-finished sketches, the costly pieces of drapery and bric-a-brac that abounded everywhere, and upon which layers of dust had been allowed to accumulate, and then, with an

exclamation of weariness, he walked over to the large window. He remained there a minute, looking down into the street below for about five minutes, a prey to a fit of bitter depression. Then a slight sound behind him caused him to wheel sharply. But at first he saw nothing to account for it. He picked up his palette and brushes, and was about to turn to the easel again when he became aware of the shadow—a shadow of a man thrown across the floor. Fascinated, Mervyn Dunderfield traced the shadow to its starting-point—the screen which sheltered the little alcove set apart for the convenience of his models.

And, about three feet from the floor, round the wooden upright of the screen appeared a man's hand—a hand that clenched a peculiar-shaped weapon somewhat on the lines of a pistol, its shining muzzle directed full at Dunderfield's breast.

"What the deuce is this!" he gasped. "Who are you?"

"I am the Yellow Claw!" came a shrill voice. "Mervyn Dunderfield, I must ask you to accompany me—nay, not ask you, for I take it upon myself to command your consent. Advance."

As the crowd fawned out the finger moved round the trigger of the peculiar-shaped pistol. Followed a slight hissing sound as a cloud of bluish-grey vapour left the barrel and shot through the air in the direction of the portrait painter. With a strangled gasp Mervyn Dunderfield clutched at his throat, and then pitched to the floor.

And as in his last moments of consciousness he watched on the carpeted floor a cruel mocking laugh proceeded from behind the screen. Then as the drugged man's struggles ceased the screen was thrust aside, and a masked figure came into view.

"So," muttered the Yellow Claw, gazing down at his victim, "the plot runs smoothly."

He turned to his head and began to rummage in the drawer of small barrels. With a satisfied grunt, he drew to light an automatic pistol. Coolly he examined the magazine, noting that it was fully loaded. Then he drew a chair up to the easel and sat facing the door, with in hand.

"One minute late!" he muttered, glancing at the watch. "That means he's had an extra minute of life."

Even as he spoke there sounded a bell in the hall beyond. With another smirk of satisfaction the tall, masked figure in a greatcoat crossed to the window and stared down into the street below. What he saw satisfied him, for he recessed the door and pressed a button on the wall. A pressure on this button was "the equivalent of opening the door of the flat with a key. There came to his ears the creaking of the outer door as it automatically swung open, and a second or so after came the tread of feet.

The masked figure settled himself comfortably in the chair, one hand in his jacket-pocket.

The footsteps drew nearer, and finally halted outside the half-open door of the studio.

"This way, my friend," said the masked figure in the chair. "Come right in."

The door opened wider, and a tall man clad in a check pattern lounge suit came into view. He darted back in astonishment as his eyes encountered those that glittered through the black velvet mask of the figure seated in the chair. Then they took in the picture of the drugged portrait painter lying in a crumpled heap on the floor.

"See you, guy," he exclaimed in a

hoarse voice, "who are you? Where's Charton?"

"I am the Yellow Claw!" hissed the man in the chair. "And you are my victim!"

The automatic was slipped from his pocket as he spoke, its barrel levelled full at the heart of the newcomer.

"Say here, you picture guy," he growled, "stop fooling, and put that toy away!"

Crack!

A spurt of flame issued from the levelled automatic, and a bullet travelled on its way. The tall stranger crumpled up, and with a low moan crashed to the floorboards. With the snaking automatic still clenched tightly in his hand the masked figure moved forward and stood over his victim. He sounded his heart, but there came no response—that shot had pierced a vital spot, that shot had added another name to the already lengthy list of the Yellow Claw's victims.

"He thought he was mighty clever," growled the Yellow Claw. "And his blunders left me no alternative but to despatch him. It's a pity, in a way, for I liked Chip Sawyer."

Placing the revolver on the little table, the masked figure brought to light from behind the screen a suitcase. He opened it and drew therefrom a Chinese robe, richly embellished. Next he lifted out a pair of bejewelled slippers, a Chinese set complete with pistol, and a set of metal finger-nail sheaths.

Then, moving silently and swiftly, the masked figure crossed to the outer door of the flat and locked it.

Returning to his last victim, he dragged the body on to the carpeted floor and began to turn out the pockets. Letters, wallet, a passport, a watch—everything that might knit itself to the man's mind was taken up and placed carefully in the suitcase.

For ever an hour he busied himself with his victim. Then, satisfied at last with his handiwork, he stooped, gathered up the inert figure of Mervyn Dunderfield, and carried him from the flat, into the next suite of rooms, the door of which was only on the latch.

Half an hour later a private car departed via the back entrance to the mews that ran alongside Mervyn Dunderfield's flat. And in the well of the car was the bound and gagged figure of the portrait painter himself. Before the car had proceeded many yards it was passed by a taxi travelling at a good speed. With a grinding of brakes the taxi pulled up alongside the kerb facing the portrait painter's flat. From its interior leaped a man in a tweed cap. With a look of astonishment on annoyance and anger in his face the fare ordered the taxi-driver to wait, and then he sprang to the bell-push under which was engraved the number 12a and the name of Mervyn Dunderfield, first floor. He rang the bell feverishly, until the taxi-driver, who could hear the piercing note made from an kerb, wondered whether his fare had been suddenly taken mad.

But to all the ringing there was no reply.

"This is funny!" muttered the caller. "The driver distinctly said Number 12a—and yet nobody seems to be in Dunderfield. Dunderfield why, that's Sir Malcolm's cousin! I wonder who he is."

He broke off sharply as the door, against which he had leaned rather heavily, suddenly swung open. Without further waste of time the man in the tweed cap, who was none other than Inspector Morrison, of Scotland Yard, raced along the short passage that lay beyond the closed carpet into every room. But it was not until he had

opened the door of the studio that he found anything to excite his curiosity. And what he saw there brought a gasp of astonishment to his throat.

"The Yellow Claw!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "The Yellow Claw!"

With the exclamation he darted forward and knelt on one knee beside a masked figure that lay in a huddled heap on the floor, clad in a richly embroidered Oriental robe. From one side of the robe issued an ugly stain of crimson, and Morrison needed no telling that the man before him was dead. He gazed with fascinated horror at the mask, through the oblique eyeholes of which stared two glassy eyes. Then with a whistle of amazement he plucked the mask away from the deceased man's face, for on closer examination of the features that remained viable the inspector had noticed traces of grease paint. Once the mask was withdrawn the inspector saw before him a clever reproduction of the features of a Chinaman, traced skilfully with yellow grease-paint and complete with queue and trailing, plaited mustaches that bespoke a master-hand in the use of grease-paints and character make-up.

"Well, I'm blessed!" grunted the Scotland Yarder. "He's not a Chinaman, after all! I'd better leave him as he is for the time being. Who's shot him? I—hallo—"

His eyes caught sight of an automatic pistol that lay on the carpet a few feet away. He picked it up and turned it over in his hand, noting that it had recently been fired, first by reason of the strong odour of burnt cordite that permeated the barrel, secondly that the cartridge-case of the bullet reposed another foot away, where it had been automatically ejected from the barrel.

"This looks bad for someone," he murmured, "even although the dead man was the Yellow Claw. And where is Mervyn Dunderfield? Ah, I've got it! This scoundrel who cloaked his atrocities under the name of Chinaman met a tough hand in Mervyn Dunderfield. I remember now that it was the Claw's threat to wipe out the whole of Sir Malcolm Dunderfield's family—and Mervyn Dunderfield is the old chap's cousin. But it looks for all the world as though the Yellow Claw has been wiped out himself, and that Mervyn Dunderfield has hopped it. Ferrers Locke will feel bucked to think that his trunk call this morning indirectly led me to this little lot."

The inspector moved over to the telephone and rang up headquarters. He asked to be put through to the chief constable, and in a few minutes a long had clapped the quick, jerky voice of his superior hummed over the wires.

"Well, Inspector Morrison, what have you to report?"

"The death of the Yellow Claw," replied Morrison, with a grin of satisfaction which luckily his chief could not see.

"What? The word thundered across the wires. "Are you joking, man?"

"No, sir; I will explain. I trailed the man in the check lounge suit from the station at Euston this afternoon according to your instructions, sir. He parted company with Mr. Charton, and loafed about town for some time. At a quarter to five he hailed in a taxi, and I was unfortunate enough to lose him. But an hour later, by great good fortune, I met the cabby who had driven him standing in the usual rank. I asked him if he could remember where he had driven the fellow, and he gave me the address. I arrived at the place and found the man. And in the studio I found

the surprise of my life, for the Yellow Claw is as dead as a door-nail, sir!"

"But where are you?" bellowed the Chief excitedly. "What studio?"

"Mr. Mervyn Dunderfield's studio, sir," replied Morrison respectfully. "No. 12a Kensington Square. And there's no sign of Mr. Mervyn, sir," he added.

A gasp of astonishment echoed across the wires.

"Jove, Morrison, this is a surprise! I'll be with you in a quarter of an hour. By the way, what's happened to the fellow Ferrers Locke phoned up from Blackpool about—the chap in the ready-made check lounge suit who travelled with Chaerton?"

"Heaven only knows, sir!" replied Morrison. "There's no sign of him here!"

The Chief did not wait for any further conversation. Morrison heard him snort, and then there came the sound of the receiver being replaced on the books.

With a puzzled frown on his heavy features, the Scotland Yarder stood staring down at the silent figure on the floor. Suddenly, his attention was arrested by a portion of one of the trouser legs that protruded from the edge of the embroidered robe. Kneeling beside the deceased man, Morrison lifted the robe, which had been merely drawn over a lounge suit—a lounge suit of check pattern, identical in that respect with that of the man he had trailed from Euston.

"I wonder—" muttered the Scotland Yarder. "I'd give a month's salary to get a squint at the chap's face without all that confounded grease-paint on it. But I dare not remove any of it until the Chief arrives. I wonder if this chap who has led us such a dance is the fellow I trailed all the afternoon? Didn't look much like a master-criminal from what I saw of him. Criminal—yes, but not the

type to run a gang like the Yellow Claw. Perhaps it's only a coincidence that this suit is of a check pattern. After all, there are thousands of people wearing check suits."

And with that comforting reflection Inspector Morrison settled down to await the coming of Colonel Horlingston, the Chief Commissioner.

The Clue of the Robe!

IT was not long before Colonel Horlingston, the Chief Commissioner of Police, arrived at the house in Kensington Square, much to the relief of Inspector Morrison. There was something eerie and uncanny about the grim figure stretched prone across the floor that got on his nerves.

He hurried to open the outer door as the bell whirred its warning note in the small hall beyond. At the heels of the chief followed two other high officials of the Yard.

"Ah, inspector!" greeted Colonel Horlingston in his gruff voice. "Lead the way."

Saluting smartly, the inspector led the party to the studio. And as the three Scotland Yard officials saw the weirdly-dressed figure on the floor they gasped simultaneously.

The chief himself, recovering from his momentary lack of control, coughed heavily as if to cover up such a trace of weakness in so high an official, and promptly knelt by the side of the murdered man. He, like his subordinate, was quick to note the grease-paint make-up on the deceased man's face, and for some moments he stared hard into the set features undecided what to say or do.

"It's the Yellow Claw all right, sir," volunteered Morrison. "But his assassin has flown."

"So it would appear," muttered the

chief, gnawing the ends of his moustache viciously. "Shot through the heart, I should say. Have you any proof that this man was the Yellow Claw besides the fact that he is wearing the garments reputed to be those adopted by that infamous scoundrel, inspector?"

"Yes, sir," replied Morrison. "I found these articles in the pockets of his robe."

He held out to his chief a strip of yellow-painted transfers, each bearing the design of the dreaded society, together with the peculiar-shaped weapon which had played so important a part in their murderous campaign.

"It's pretty conclusive evidence," said one of the chief's companions—a remark that found support from the remaining member of the party who had journeyed from the Yard.

"Shall I remove the make-up from his face, sir?" asked Morrison, coming forward.

Before the Chief Commissioner could make any reply there sounded a violent ringing of the bell in the hall.

"Who the deuce can that be?" he granted suspiciously. "See if you can spot the visitor from the window, will you, inspector?"

Morrison hastened to obey. By pressing his face close to the window-pane he was able to see the outline of a figure standing in the small porch that gave entrance to the block of flats. The face of the visitor was not visible, and after waiting a second or so in the hope that the man would turn his head, Morrison rejoined his superior officers and related what he had seen.

"Wouldn't be Dunderfield," said Colonel Horlingston slowly. "For he would have no occasion to ring the bell of his own flat. Kindly admit the visitor, inspector," he added. "And,



About three feet from the floor, round the wooden upright of the screen, appeared a man's hand—a hand that clutched a peculiar shaped weapon somewhat on the lines of a revolver, its shining muzzle directed full at the breast of the portrait painter. "What the deuce is this?" gasped Mervyn Dunderfield. "Who are you?" "I am the Yellow Claw!" came the grim reply. (See page 23.)

gentlemen"—this to his two companions—"behind the screen."

He moved over to the screen as he spoke, and his subordinate officers followed close at his heels. Meanwhile, Inspector Morrison was opening the door to the visitor. He gasped in astonishment as he came face to face with Mark Chaerton, the playwright.

"You, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What—?"

A pleasant smile crossed Chaerton's face.

"Didn't know you were a friend of Mr. Dunderfield's," he said laughing. "Is he in?"

"Er—well—" stammered Morrison, undecided what to say.

"Will you come this way?"

"Certainly!" was the gracious response.

The inspector opened the door of the studio and allowed the playwright to enter. But no sooner had Chaerton gazed at the huddled heap of lifeless humanity



"I am sorry to have to disillusion you," said Locke, pointing a dramatic finger at the still figure on the floor.

"But that man is no more the Yellow Claw than you are, Colonel Horlingston!" (See page 26.)



on the floor than he stricken and backed a pace.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped, wringing his hands. "What—what is this? Inspector, you are not indulging in a horrible joke, are you?"

"Not much joke about it," grunted Morrison, eyeing the playwright piercingly.

"But—that looks like the Yellow Claw!" stammered Chaerton, advancing a step and gazing down at the robed heap on the floor. "It is the Yellow Claw!" he added excitedly.

"You should know," rapped the Chief Commissioner of Police, stepping from behind the screen and accompanied by his two subordinate officers. "Should you not, Mr. Chaerton?"

The playwright started violently as he became aware of the number of persons in the room.

"What has happened, gentlemen?" he asked, his lean fingers fidgeting with the cravat at his throat. "I—I—don't understand—"

"You are gazing on the remains of one who has terrorised Society for this last two years. The Yellow Claw is dead!"

"Shot?" supplemented one of the other officials. "You should feel relieved to think, Mr. Chaerton, that you will no longer be troubled by such a scoundrel."

"Shot?" echoed the playwright. "But who shot him?"

"That is what we have yet to discover," said the chief. "Mervyn Dunderfield will have to give an account of his movements, I'm afraid, but everything points to his having killed this—the scoundrel. But tell me, Mr. Chaerton, what are you doing here?"

"I came to see Mr. Dunderfield in connection with a portrait he was going

to paint for me," replied the playwright easily. "I had a business appointment in town with a gentleman from New York this afternoon, and I thought I'd fill in the time between trains, as it were, by calling on my friend Dunderfield."

"I see," said the chief slowly. "And may I ask what happened to the tall, bronzed gentleman who accompanied you up from Blackpool, Mr. Chaerton?"

For a moment the bushy eyebrows of the playwright came together in a heavy frown, and then as quickly he broke into a smile.

"Why you took me off my balance at knowing so much of my movements," he answered chidingly. "But I left the gentleman who travelled first-class with me from Blackpool at Euston Station as soon almost as I alighted from the train. But why do you ask?"

"Do you know him?" asked the chief, disregarding the question.

"I met him in Blackpool yesterday for the first time," answered the playwright. "He was worrying me to finance some company or other he was promoting."

Again the chief's remarks were interrupted by a ringing on the bell in the hall beyond.

"Who is it this time?" he grunted, motioning Morrison to answer the summons.

The inspector withdrew from the studio and reappeared a moment later with a familiar figure at his back—no less a person than Ferrers Locke.

For one moment the sharp eyes of the sleuth rested on the inanimate heap on the floor, and the next he was treating the company to a piercing scrutiny.

"Oh, Mr. Locke!" exclaimed Chaerton, starting forward and gripping the detective's hand heartily. "This is a surprise! This—"

"What in the name of thunder are you doing here?" boomed the chief's heavy voice. "Thought you were in Blackpool, Locke!"

"I decided to catch the next train to town," replied the sleuth, with a sly wink at the Chief of Scotland Yard.

"Had one or two very important matters to attend to. I called in at the Yard and was informed by one of the clerks that you had travelled on here—so here I am."

"And you have walked into a pretty little drama, by the look of things," said Colonel Horlingston. "The Yellow Claw is dead—murdered."

"Indeed?" was Locke's quiet rejoinder. "And where is Mr. Dunderfield? I see he resides here by the name and number on the bell plate below?"

"Ah, where is he?"

"May I inspect the corpse, sir?" said Locke, after a lengthy pause.

"By all means," replied the chief, and he commenced to recount the events of the afternoon as first related to him by Inspector Morrison.

"So you lost the man in the check suit, did you?" said the private detective, looking directly at the inspector.

"And was fortunate enough to pick up his trail an hour afterwards," grinned Morrison rather sheepishly. "As it has turned out, it was for the better, for the Yellow Claw is far more important than the man in the check suit who accompanied Mr. Chaerton to town."

"Hum!" Ferrers Locke's ejaculation jarred on the nerves of the company present. It implied something to the contrary.

He knelt beside the deceased man and examined the figure intently for over ten minutes. Suddenly his keen eyes observed a glint of metal coming from

beneath the robe of the deceased man. Seeing that the police-officers were engaged in deep conversation, the sleuth quickly and swiftly slid his hand under the robe, drew something away and placed it in his trousers pocket. At length he rose to his feet and turned to the company with a mocking expression on his intellectual features.

"What's tickling you, Locke?" demanded the chief.

"I am sorry to have to disillusion you," began the celebrated detective of Baker Street, pointing a dramatic finger at the heap of lifeless humanity on the floor, "but this man, with all his Chinese paraphernalia, is no more the Yellow Claw than you are, Colonel Horlingson!"

Had the proverbial bombshell fallen, the result of those few words could not have been more productive of effect. The police-officers started violently, and their jaws dropped. Only Chaerton seemed to have control of himself. He stood with his deep, luminous black eyes bent on the clever face of the private detective as though they would see and read what was passing behind that cunning smile. But his voice was as loud as any when speech returned to the amazed police officials.

"What!"

Five voices bellowed the word simultaneously. Ferrers Locke chuckled and commenced to load his briar with a slow, deliberate air that exasperated his companions.

"What on earth made you utter that absurd statement?" demanded the chief truculently. "This is no occasion for levity, Mr. Locke!"

"I quite agree with you," replied the sleuth, putting the delicate stem of his pipe between his teeth. "The only one who is not more productive of effect is the Yellow Claw himself."

"But man," roared Colonel Horlingson, "he is there—dead! The bullet pierced his heart!"

"Is that all you have to recommence the theory?" said Locke, earnestly now.

"No. Look at these!" exclaimed the chief triumphantly. "Do these belong to the Yellow Claw?"

He held out the gas pistol and a strip of yellow-painted transfers.

"They certainly belong to the Yellow Claw," said Locke, after examining the trophies. "I will grant you that!"

"Is it the make-up that you are stumbling over?" hooted Horlingson. "For it is well known that the Yellow Claw was no Chinaman—he adopted that disguise to terrorize his victims."

"Admitted!" agreed Locke. "I know as well as anyone that he is not a Chinaman—better than some, perhaps. But there is just one thing you have all overlooked in forming your decision as to this man's identity"—he indicated the Chinese man on the floor—"and that is the nature of his death!"

"But he was shot through the heart—innocuous death!" bellowed the chief angrily.

"Exactly!" said Ferrers Locke calmly. "And therefore you will admit that if that is the case, the bullet must first have passed through this Oriental robe he is wearing!"

"Of course!" said the chief, kneeling beside the deceased man, whilst the party watched his every movement. "See,

the robe is stained crimson, and the rent in his robe is—"

He broke off, and a look of stupefaction crossed his heavy features—a look that found reflection, as it were, in the faces of his subordinate officers. For, although the Oriental robe was saturated a crimson, there was no sign of a hole in the material!

Where is Mervyn Dunderfield?

"GOOD—good heavens!" exclaimed Colonel Horlingson, deeply moved. "What trumped-up crime is this?"

"You see my point?" asked Ferrers Locke quietly. "I will disprove any theory that the man clothed himself in these garments after he had been shot by saying that this poor fellow died immediately. Again, I will venture to say that he was dragged from the doorway yonder—where he fell—and brought to this part of the room, for on the woodwork of the floor that surrounds the carpet one can plainly see two lines of scratches beginning from the door and ending here, that denote he was dragged by the shoulders. Those scratches are the results of his heels scraping against the polished floor."

"By Jove, you're right, Mr. Locke!" admitted the chief, biting his moustache.

"Marvelous!" exclaimed Chaerton enthusiastically.

"On the contrary, Mr. Chaerton," said the sleuth, in a tone of reproof, "is merely elementary. But what concerns us most now, gentlemen, he added sternly, "is the finding of Mervyn Dunderfield. I have a feeling that he is the victim of foul play. Before we set out on a fresh trail, however, I think it would be advisable to discover the identity of this unfortunate fellow. That grease-paint hides a lot from us, I feel certain!"

"You're right!" granted the chief. "I was about to have the beastly stuff removed when Mr. Chaerton here paid us a visit."

With the sleuth's keen eyes upon him, Chaerton felt constrained to explain his presence there.

"But I did not know, Mr. Locke," he said in conclusion, "that you had phoned Scotland Yard to watch my movements."

"The tall stranger's movements," corrected the sleuth gently. "It was in your interests, Mr. Chaerton," he added, with a smile. "I did not like the look of him."

"Neither did I!" affirmed the playwright. "But what about the threat of the Yellow Claw concerning the opening of my play at Blackpool-to-night? Heaven knows what will happen if you are not there to keep an eye on things!"

"Don't worry about that," said Locke. "I have an idea that the threat was a piece of bluff to keep me in Blackpool what time the Yellow Claw scoundrel did his dirty work down here in London. Anyway, Mr. Chaerton, it would be impossible for the scoundrel to be here in London and in Blackpool as well. Besides, to guard against anything untoward that might occur, I have left Inspector Pycroft and my assistant Drake with the company."

"And you think everything will be all right?" asked the playwright anxiously.

"I would wager you to that effect if I were a betting man," was the sleuth's confident rejoinder. "Have no fear, Mr. Chaerton, I know more about this Yellow Claw scoundrel than you would imagine. I am merely waiting my opportunity to step in and smare him."

"For Heaven's sake be careful that he does not smare you first!" said Chaerton in an earnest warning. "We can't afford to lose such a capable detective as you, Mr. Locke!"

During this exchange of words, Inspector Morrison had been intent upon removing the disfiguring grease-paint that had obscured the face of the deceased man. But at last he wiped the last streak of paint away with an oily rag, and then he gasped.

"The chap in the check suit!" he exclaimed, drawing aside the robe. "The bronzed stranger, Mr. Locke!"

"No more than I expected," said the private detective coolly.

"What?" bellowed Chaerton. "It can't be! The fellow was alive and well when I left him at four o'clock. But what was he doing here. Y-yes, it is him right enough!" he added, as he gazed into the features of the dead man.

"But what the deuce does it all mean?" asked the chief, passing a weary hand over his forehead.

"It means that the Yellow Claw has put a dangerous enemy out of the way," continued Ferrers Locke, "and has attempted to place the guilt on the shoulders of Mervyn Dunderfield. You remember the threat of the Yellow Claw, Colonel Horlingson—that he would wipe out the whole of the Dunderfield family? This is the next move of the game. We have yet to discover where Mervyn Dunderfield is—whether he is alive or not."

The police officials stared at each other in blank amazement, and Inspector Morrison rubbed his chin thoughtfully. For over three minutes complete silence reigned. Mark Chaerton broke it.

"I cannot stay here any longer," he said nervously. "This gruesome scene is getting on my nerves—I must get out of it!"

"By all means!" said the Chief Commissioner curtly, by no means glad that a member of the public had been an eyewitness to the faulty reconstruction of the crime by the police. "But you had better remain in London, Mr. Chaerton," he added, "in case you are needed at the inquest."

"Very well," said the playwright timidly. "I—I shall be at my home in Eton Square. Good—good—evening, gentlemen!"

With a shudder he turned on his heel and vacated the studio. Gazing from the window, Ferrers Locke saw the nervous playwright walk quickly down the road that led out of the square, every now and then casting an apprehensive glance over his shoulder.

"Nervous blighter, isn't he?" granted the chief laconically. "He gives me the creeps when he starts that hysterical stuff!"

"What would you with a genius?" said Locke simply. "And, by the way," he added, "I must get off, too, gentlemen. I have one or two important calls to make. It was my intention to ask you,

(Continued on page 28.)



"PEN'S PAL!"
By Frank Richards.

DO you like old proverbs? I don't mean the dusty, ancient, richly whiskered variety which have served their turn, and ought by rights to be turned out to grass, but the sound and always useful sort. There is one honourable adage about a cobbler sticking to his last. What has that to do with Richard Penfold? It has a good deal. Dick Penfold's father is a cobbler, and in next Monday's gripping MAUSER yarn of Greyfriars we meet Penfold pere as well as his son. Dick, as a hard-working scholarship fellow has always had a stiffish fight against Fate. That will do him no harm. But neither so far as that goes did his cobbling father expect such a hard rub from destiny as complete financial disaster, owing to Mr. Penfold listening to the wiles of some scheming City locket-shop swindlers. They are as treacherous as the sirens of old. Mr. Penfold had saved up money, for he is a frugal, thrifty person.

"MONEY FOR JAM!"

Then the persuasive "financiers" tackle the old man. They tell him how he can amass much wealth if he invests his earnings with them! Mr. Penfold listens to the soft inducement, and loses the lot! That is what happens, and that gives Mr. Richards the peg for a particularly ingenious and well-thought-out story. It is a bitter blow for the Penfold family, and we see Dick thinking out matters. He would give anything to discover a means of assisting his father through the bad time.

NEWLAND GETS A NEGATIVE!

That brings me to the part played in this captivating story by Monty Newland. Newland belongs to the ancient faith. Jews hang together. One of the finest, most touching characteristics of their race is their inter-loyalty. The Jew who is down and out has friends always ready and willing to hurry up and help. Monty Newland is generous by nature, and would stand by a chum, whatever his nationality or belief. But when he shops his keenness to assist his pal, Dick Penfold, he meets with a firm refusal. I shall not go into the reasons for that attitude on the part of the cobbler's son. Dick has his ideas. From that stage on you will find yourself reading of a mystery, and asking yourself countless questions as you read, for there is a very striking motive underneath the workings of this outstanding story of a broken friendship and all that follows on.

AN APRIL NUMBER!

The "Greyfriars Herald" has taken old Time by the grey forelock, and plunged into an April Number. It is a wonderful month altogether. You never know where you are with April. The violets and primroses are out, but, all the same, you may, if you are lucky, tumble into a first-class snow-storm in April, and the next minute get frizzled like a morning rasher in the hot sun. The capable editor of the "Greyfriars Herald" has taken April well in hand. He shows that you can deal with spring without getting sloppy about the sea-on in question.

"THE YELLOW CLAW!"
By Hedley Scott.

Next week's instalment of this thriller shows Pycroft still feeling round in the inky darkness as to the identity of the web-seconded. Ferris Luckie is "warmer." The high pitch is maintained to the full, though the fall of the curtain is near at hand.

"WINNING THROUGH!"

You will appreciate the tense and exciting yarn of the Canadian Mounted Police. It is an out-of-the-way story, with grit in it.

Your Editor.

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THE YELLOW CLAW!

(Continued from page 20.)

colonel, to despatch a man on a special courier to California for me, but, in view of what I have discovered here, I think I can collect all the information I require by calling over to a detective-agency in New York. They'll send a man along for me to Murdoch City."

"But, what's the game—what do you want at Murdoch City?"

"Information concerning this poor fellow here and an old friend of his," said Locke, indicating the still figure on the floor.

"But how will you cable the description of this man?" asked the chief, puzzled. "There must be thousands of people with the same type of face in Murdoch City as this chap here."

"Maybe," was the quiet response.

"But I have the key to his name and address."

"What?" bellowed Horlington, in amazement.

For answer, Ferrers Locke held up two or three keys on a ring. And attached to the ring was a small brass plate with several words embossed upon it and a number. The wording on one side of the brass plate ran:

"Californian Mutual Insurance Society, L. V. 482,870, 307, Twenty Seven Street, Murdoch City."

On the reverse side of the plate was the number of the keys attached to the ring and brass plate return them to the address overleaf, he would be rewarded.

"A key insurance plate!" exclaimed the chief excitedly. "But where on earth did you get that, Mr. Locke?"

"By the side of the dead man," said the private detective. "It is evident that his pockets had been turned out by the Yellow Claw, and the strip of transfer and the gas pistol had been left delib-

ately to mislead us. But in the process of turning out the pockets the keys must have been overlooked. You know what criminology teaches us, sir," he added. "Every crook, no matter how clever he may be, always leaves a clue behind him. Sometimes they are found—sometimes they are not. But in this case the clue has been found."

"Of course, we want to know the identity of this fellow," said the chief. "But it beats me how you can contact anything between him and the Yellow Claw by routing through California."

"It is a little theory of mine, that is all," returned Ferrers Locke. "Perhaps it will bear fruit, perhaps it won't. We shall see."

(Be sure and read next Monday's special instalment of this powerful detective serial. The curtain is about to be rung down on the activities of one of the cleverest soundtracks which ever walked the earth. Who—is—the—Yellow—Claw?)



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