

THE MAN WHO CAME BACK!

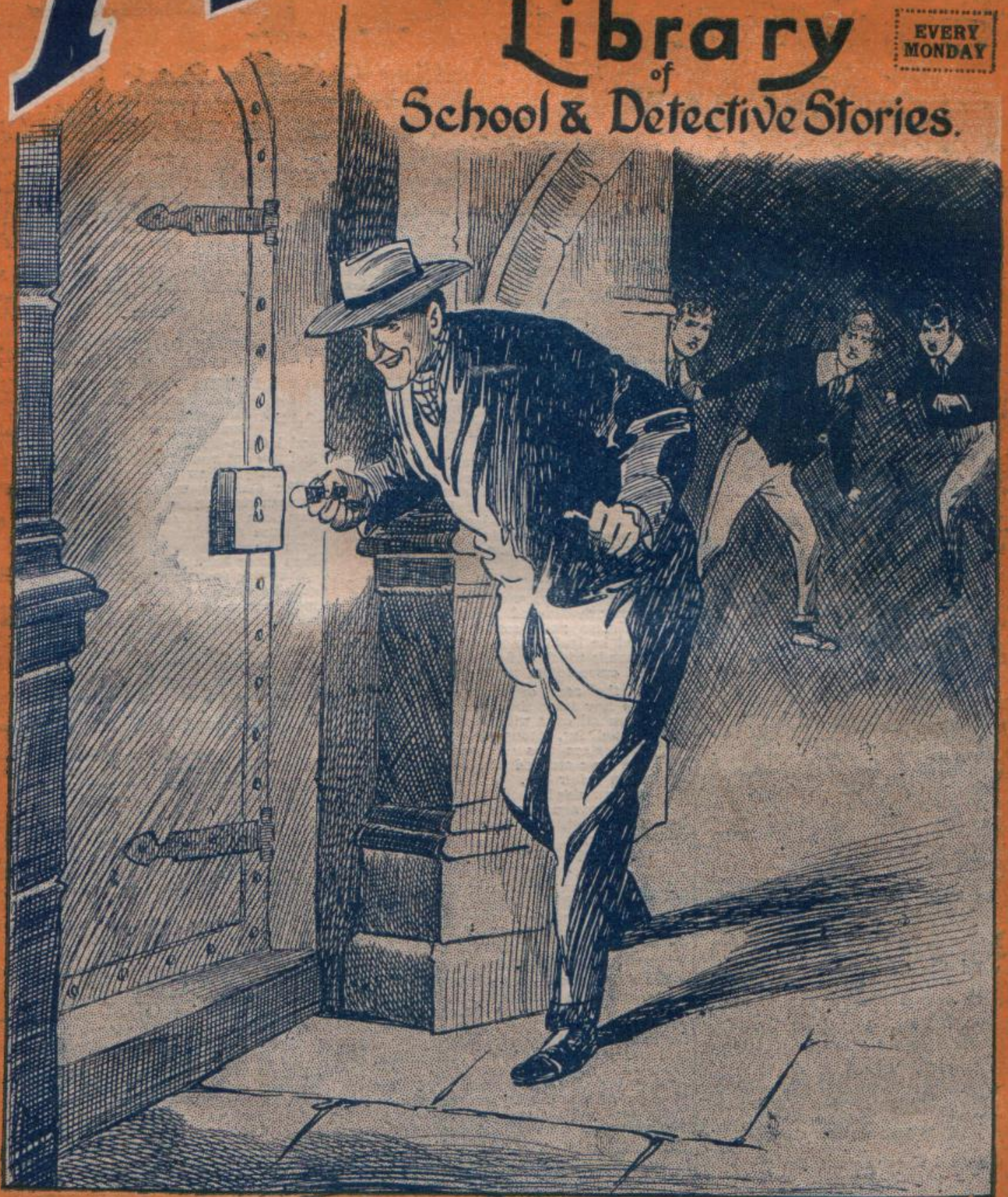
(This week's extra special story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)

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The Magnet 2^d

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WHO IS THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR TO THE CRYPT?

(A dramatic situation in this week's grand long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, inside.)



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Morgan's Treachery!

"VILLAIN!"

"Be quiet, you fool, or I will kill you!"

"You tell me to be quiet, while there is a human tiger in my house, plotting to murder every soul in it! You shall never let your hang-dogs in if I can prevent it, not if you were Morgan the buccaneer himself!"

It was night, and the scene was the entrance hall of the house of Ralph Chisholme, a rich planter, which was situated about twenty miles from Kingston, on the shore of Jamaica.

An intense stillness had hung over the house, to suggest that all under its roof were fast asleep, when a man had come down the broad staircase, stealthily and softly, holding a candle, and with the air of a villain bent on evil work.

He was a powerfully-built man, dressed in the silver grey clothes of a peaceful trader; but his face, which was very swollen, wore a dark and cruel expression, and his eyes were alight with cunning and villainous triumph.

Noiselessly he began to shoot back the bolts in the ponderous front door. Anyone seeing him could have no doubt that he was about to admit robbers into the house.

On the previous day this man had arrived at the plantation, footsore and weary, and apparently starving, and had said that his name was Simon Scott, and told how he had been robbed and cruelly maltreated by a Harry Morgan and his buccaneers, who had been lurking on the sea coast.

Morgan was a Welshman, and one of the most daring and ferocious leaders of the buccaneers—the wild freebooters who warred against the Dons. But Morgan was not satisfied to plunder the Spaniards, but preyed on and killed even his own countrymen if he thought they had any gold worth stealing.

The so-called Simon Scott had been given shelter by Ralph Chisholme, who was gone of the richest planters in Jamaica, and whose house was well worth plundering.

The planter had not suspected his guest at first, but in the dead of night he was awakened by suspicious sounds, and had hastily gone down the stairs, to find the stranger opening the door to admit a gang of scoundrels.

"I believe you are Morgan the buccaneer himself!" repeated the planter, as he threw himself on the traitor.

The fight was a desperate one, but was waged in silence. The villain had naturally no wish to awaken the sleepers in the house, and he gripped Ralph Chisholme's throat so tightly as to prevent him from calling for help.

The planter had come down the stairs so hastily that he had forgotten to bring a weapon with him, while his opponent carried a knife and a pistol concealed under his clothes.

There was a sudden flash of steel, and Ralph Chisholme fell back with a low groan.

"Dead!" the man muttered. "It is well he is out of the world, so that he cannot betray me. I am Morgan the buccaneer, and

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I tricked him finely into taking me into his house as a poor stranger! Now to admit my jolly boys. But where is the key of the door?"

There was no key in the lock, but Morgan—for the treacherous villain was, indeed, none other than the crime-stained buccaneer—was kneeling by the body of the dead planter, to see if he could find the key in his pocket, when a most sudden and unexpected attack was made on him.

While Morgan and Ralph Chisholme were fighting, a boy of between nine and ten years had stolen down the stairs. This was Arthur Chisholme, the planter's son. Too paralysed with horror to call out, Arthur was for a moment rooted to the stairs. Then he dashed down and intrepidly attacked Morgan.

But brave though he was, the boy had no chance against the buccaneer. Gripping him fast with one arm thrown round him, Morgan crushed the other hand over his mouth, and forced back his head.

He would have strangled him, but at this juncture another newcomer appeared on the scene.

This was a gigantic negro, one of Ralph Chisholme's slaves, whose name was Zuba, and who was devoted to Arthur. He slept in the house as a sort of human watchdog, and he had been aroused by the same faint sounds which had awakened his master, and had come to see what was the matter.

With the roar of an angry lion, Zuba tore the boy from the buccaneer. It would have been all over with Morgan had he not been armed, for, strong man though he was, the black slave was so much stronger that he could have crushed him to death had the fight been a fair one.

"Die, you dog!"

With a savage curse the buccaneer drew his pistol, and, thrusting the muzzle close to the black's breast, pulled the trigger. Zuba flung up his arms and went down in a heap.

With a triumphant laugh Morgan kicked the body brutally; and then seized the key and opened the door. The buccaneers, who had been lurking outside in the darkness, came pouring in before the dead planter's servants knew of their peril.

Ere dawn the evil work was done. The house had been plundered and fired, and its inmates either killed or driven as homeless fugitives into the forest. And Morgan and his band had disappeared, loaded with booty, and carrying little Arthur Chisholme with them as a fast prisoner.

They left Zuba the black behind them, thinking he was dead. But when they were gone the black slave crawled out of the blazing ruins. He was bleeding and scorched,

and his features were distorted with rage as he shook his clenched fist in the air.

"The bad white man has won now!" he cried. "But let him beware! He shall not escape the Obi man or the doom of the Crimson Cave!"

Then he crawled into the forest, leaving a track of blood behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Peril in the Forest!

"BEWARE, Sir Harry Morgan, traitor! I am the Obi-man, who can foretell life and death, and I warn you that your crew, whom you robbed and left to die, are on your track. If they find you out you are a dead man, and I alone can tell you how to escape them!"

The ominous words were uttered in the African tongue, and the scene was the Jamaican forest, some parts of which were so dense and hidden that no white man had been known to penetrate to its heart and then come back alive.

Standing against a mahogany tree, as if to guard himself against being attacked in the rear, was a man in the dress of a Quaker, with long white hair and a white beard. He wore an expression which, regarded superficially, looked meek and almost sanctimonious, but which, in reality, now scarcely concealed the savage, desperate nature which lurked beneath it, like a caged tiger behind iron bars.

This man was Morgan the buccaneer in disguise!

After his attack on Ralph Chisholme's plantation, Morgan had hastened with his booty-laden crew to the seashore, and had embarked on his ship and escaped to the Spanish Main; but ere he had done this he had sold little Arthur Chisholme as a white slave to a villainous planter, whose home was on the other side of the island, with whom he was in league, and who promised that the boy should never have a chance to get free and avenge his murdered father.

So the buccaneer's greed triumphed at last, and he sold Arthur for a heavy sum in gold, as it was easy for him to do in those days.

After this Morgan sailed on many more exciting adventures, until finally he and his crew had amassed a great treasure, which was trusted to the leader to secure in a safe hiding-place until it could be divided. Instead of doing this, however, Morgan stole the gold, and fled to Jamaica.

By paying a heavy bribe to King Charles, he not only saved himself from being hanged, but had himself made a knight.

But he was afraid the crew he had tricked and robbed would find him out and kill him; and so he had disguised himself, taken a new name, and bought a large plantation near the great forest, where he hoped to live safely and in luxury on his ill-gotten gains.

When walking in the forest on this afternoon, however, some seven years after he had committed the foul crime at Ralph Chisholme's plantation, Morgan was startled to hear some ominous words in the African tongue.

(Continued on page 20.)

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An ex-scholar of Greyfriars, who was expelled from the school a few years back, returns to Greyfriars in the capacity of cricket coach. From the first it is obvious to Harry Wharton & Co. that the fellow is a wrong 'un. That the Famous Five have hit the right nail on the head in thus summing him up you will agree when you have finished reading the shady adventures of—



The Man Who Came Back!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Trail!

"DON'T look back!" murmured Bob Cherry.
"Eh?"
"What?"

"We're being trailed. It's jolly old Bunter! Let him get on with it."

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove chuckled.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and a glorious summer's afternoon. The Famous Five had turned out of the school gateway in a cheery party and were following the leafy lane towards Friardale Wood. In Bob Cherry's hand was a large bag, and in that bag were packed the good things required for a picnic in the woods. It was absolutely certain that Billy Bunter of the Remove would spot that bag and guess what it contained. Bunter had a wonderful nose for such things.

And so Bob Cherry, happening to glance back at a turn in the lane, was not surprised to see a fat figure rolling in pursuit.

William George Bunter was on the track of the Famous Five—or, rather, on the track of the picnic. In the chums of the Remove he took no interest whatever. In the picnic his interest was deep.

But Billy Bunter was not openly stalking the five juniors. He was following them with great caution.

Harry Wharton & Co., without looking back, walked on cheerily down the leafy lane. As soon as they reached the woods it would be easy to dodge Bunter if they wanted to do so—equally easy to let him overtake them and bump him in the grass. In the meantime, they took Bob Cherry's advice and let him "get on with it."

Frank Nugent stooped to his shoelace, and thus took a surreptitious glance to the rear.

He discerned Bunter.

That fat and fatuous youth was apparently understudying the trailing methods of a Red Indian. He was walking on the belt of grass beside the road so that his footsteps could not be heard,

and he kept his eyes fixed on the backs of the Famous Five, ready to dodge into cover if they glanced over their shoulders. Several times, with great caution, Bunter backed into the hedge, or flattened himself behind a tree.

But the Owl of the Remove was rather handicapped for playing the part of Chingachgook. Without his big spectacles he could see little—and with them he could not see very much. So he remained blissfully unconscious of the fact that his pursuit had been spotted. Cautiously and cunningly he trailed the Famous Five, never dreaming that they knew he was there and were cheerily leading him on.

"The fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton, laughing, as the juniors reached the opening of the footpath in the wood. "He will soon lose us here."

"No fear!" answered Bob. "Let him keep it up! A walk as far as the old Priory will do him good. I'll whistle."

"Oh, my hat! Don't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's whistle was loud and piercing. But it could not be called tuneful. And when Bob was whistling a tune it was always a little difficult to detect what tune it was.

"You see, I've got a wheeze," said Bob, pausing after a few bars, much to the relief of his comrades. "What do you think Bunter is tracking us down for?"

"The grub, of course," said Johnny Bull.

"Exactly! He's looking for a chance to pinch this bag. Well, my idea is to let him pinch it."

"What?"

"It's not worth much," said Bob. "It was an old bag when I picked it up for sixpence last term."

"But the tuck—" exclaimed Nugent.

"We'll take that out first."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"That's the idea," chuckled Bob.

"It's all in paper bags, and we can stack them in our pockets. We'll fill the bag again with leaves and things, and leave it for Bunter to pinch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he comes!" murmured Frank Nugent.

The footpath, deep in the shade from the summer sun, wound through old oaks and beeches, thickly overhung with foliage, which in places had to be pushed aside to allow a passage through. An Indian tracker would have found ample cover there to conceal his pursuit. But Billy Bunter was not quite a Chingachgook or a Pathfinder. His fat figure was in full view as the chums of the Remove glanced back through the drooping foliage. He was treading very cautiously, almost on tiptoe, his little round eyes gleaming through his spectacles.

Harry Wharton & Co. stepped from the path into the wood. They knew almost every inch of the old wood of Friardale, and were easily able to pick their way through to the old ruined Priory, without following the footpaths. The trees and thickets swallowed them up, and Billy Bunter certainly would have lost the trail had not Bob Cherry's unmelodious whistle burst forth again.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter. "They are off the path! I hope they'll stop soon, the rotters! I'm getting tired! Beasts!"

A very little exertion sufficed to tire the Owl of the Remove. He had a great deal of weight to carry, and it was a warm afternoon. But he kept on manfully. The lure of tuck was before him; he knew there were good things in the bag carried by Bob Cherry, and Bunter's mouth watered at the thought of those good things. A dozen times at least he had offered to accompany the Famous Five on their excursion—even offering to carry the bag. But the five had declined the honour. They had, in fact, only tuck enough for five—and with Bunter added, tuck for at least twelve would have been required. So they resisted the fascinations of Bunter's society—without an effort. Hence the cautious and surreptitious pursuit by the Owl of the Remove.

William George Bunter left the path and followed on through the thickness of

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the wood. Perspiration bedewed his podgy brow and trickled down his fat neck. But the tuck was ahead—he felt that he was suffering in a good cause. Through the dusky wood Bob Cherry's shrill whistle guided him onward.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Where the thump are they going? Why can't they stop? Beasts!"

But the Famous Five still, like Felix, walked on.

They were out of Bunter's sight among the trees; only Bob's shrill whistle guided him now. And Bunter did not guess how they were occupied. Bob was taking the contents of the bag out, article by article, and the various articles were disposed of in the pockets of the five juniors. As soon as the bag was empty Bob proceeded to refill it—with quite a different kind of contents. Leaves and twigs and lumps of turf, fragments of broken branches, were crammed into the old cloth bag till it was filled to the full.

By that time the chums of the Remove were close on the Priory—an ancient ruin almost in the heart of the wood. The summer sun shone down brightly on the crumbling brick walls and old masses of masonry and dismantled windows. In the old broken doorway, of which the upper part of the arch was gone, the Famous Five came to a stop. Not a fragment of roof remained of the ancient building; the sun streamed down into it hot and unshaded, baking the old mossy stones.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry, glancing round.

"Is Chingachgook still on the track, I wonder?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"You bet! Look out of the corner of your eye and you'll see the giddy tracker."

Billy Bunter had stopped on the edge of the wood. Keeping in cover—as he supposed—he was blinking towards the halted juniors. The sun caught his spectacles, and they gleamed like fire from the shade of the trees, and almost the whole of his fat figure could be detected as he peered out of cover.

"The awful chump!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Of all the silly asses—"

"The chumpfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, with a chuckle.

"Come on!" said Bob.

The juniors walked on into the ruins, and Bob Cherry's inharmonious whistle resounded again through those ancient recesses. Frank Nugent made a painful grimace. He had a musical ear; apparently Bob hadn't.

"Can't you think of something more cheerful to whistle, Bob?" he asked. "Don't stick to the 'Dead March in Saul' all the time."

Bob Cherry left off whistling to glare.

"You silly ass, I was whistling 'Yes, we have no bananas,' " he answered.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Chuck it, anyhow, old chap!" urged Johnny Bull. "Chingachgook can see us now, and we're suffering for nothing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Bob.

Chingachgook, otherwise William George Bunter, was creeping cautiously into the ruins after the juniors. He was still under the impression that he was in cover. Sometimes his head, sometimes his broad back, sometimes nearly all of him showed among the old masonry as he stalked the juniors across the old Priory. But he was in happy unconsciousness of it, so it did not worry Bunter.

"Here's the place!" said Bob Cherry, stopping at last near the old crumbling stone stair that led down to the dark vaults under the ruins. "This is the place!"

He slammed the bag down on the cracked flags.

"We'll leave the bag here, the place is quite deserted," went on Bob, in a loud voice. "It's all right. Let's get a ramble in the wood, and get back here at four—what?"

"Good!"

"We don't want to carry this heavy bag about till teatime, you know," went on Bob gravely.

"That's so!"

"I suppose it will be all right there," said Nugent solemnly. About half of Bunter could be seen as the trailer crouched among the masonry at a little distance, and he was within easy hearing. Every word came to his fat ears.

"Oh, right as rain!" said Bob.

"The rightfulness is terrific!" said the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Come along, then!" said Wharton.

And, leaving the bag reposing on the old flags, the Famous Five strolled away, back to the old shattered doorway. They passed within six feet of Bunter, who crouched low in cover. Like the ostrich hiding its head in the sand, the Owl of the Remove apparently supposed that he could not be seen because he could not see. But as he crouched there was an extensive view of expansive trousers, and the chums of the Remove chuckled as they quitted the ruins.

Once outside they did not go farther. With grinning faces they stopped and looked back through the crannies of the old wall. Billy Bunter rose from cover, and blinked this way and that way, like Moses of old. A fat grin overspread his visage. He had hoped fervently that he would get a chance at Bob Cherry's bag, but he had never anticipated that it would be so easy as this.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

Satisfied that the Famous Five were safe off the scene, William George Bunter made a rush for the bag. In a moment more it was in his grasp.

A few more moments, and it would have been opened. But it was not Bob's idea to let Bunter discover the nature of his prize so soon. He gave a sudden shout.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's somebody about, after all. Come back, you fellows!"

There was a trampling of footsteps.

Billy Bunter gasped.

The prize was in his clutch, and the picnicers were coming back. In a few moments he would be discovered.

He thought of flight, but the bag was heavy, the sun was hot, and Bunter was already in a state of perspiring fatigue. The stone stair to the old crypt was close at hand. With the bag in his grasp, Billy Bunter plunged down the stone steps. Loose stones rattled and clattered along with him as he went. Bunter did not pause. It was the only safe refuge, and in less than a minute Bunter had passed under the old dark arch, and was stumbling down the steps into the crypt, still with his valuable prize in his clutch.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Mystery of the Vault!

"HA, ha, ha!"
The chums of the Remove roared.

They had a full view of William George Bunter vanishing down the old steps to the crypt, though Bunter was quite unaware of the fact. They heard the clattering stones that accompanied him, and they heard a breathless snort below, as Bunter finally disappeared under the stone arch at the bottom of the stair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear old Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He always was a funny merchant, but I think he's funniest as Chingachgook. I wonder when it will dawn on him that we've seen him all the time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now for the jolly old picnic!" added Bob.

The five juniors unpacked the good things that had been stacked in their pockets, bulging them very considerably. They sat down on old mossy fragments of masonry, using a larger mass as a table. Ginger-beer was opened, and lemonade, and cakes and jam-tarts turned out of the paper bags. Near the entrance to the crypt a remnant of the old wall shaded a corner of the ruins from the hot sun, and in this spot the Famous Five sat down to their picnic.

Bunter, if he emerged from below, would pass within full view of the camp. But he seemed in no hurry to emerge. He knew that they were there; undoubtedly he had heard them close at hand. With the bag in his possession, he did not care to show himself. The thought of Bunter skulking in the dark, damp old crypt, in happy possession of a bag containing nothing but leaves and turf and roots, made the chums of the Remove chuckle.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly.

The Famous Five fairly jumped, as a sudden, startling yell came from the depths below.

It was followed by another and another.

That it was Bunter who was yelling they could not doubt, but they could not recognise his voice, so changed was it with horror and fright. The juniors sprang to their feet.

"What on earth—" exclaimed Wharton.

A wild shriek came from the darkness of the crypt.

"Help!"

"What—" gasped Nugent.

There was a hurried trampling of feet. A fat figure emerged from the underground arched opening, and panted up the steps. It was Bunter, his face white as chalk, his eyes wide and glaring with affright behind his spectacles. He no longer carried the bag. That had been abandoned in his terrified flight from the vaults.

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton.

"Oh! Ow! Help! Ow!"

Billy Bunter staggered towards the startled juniors and dropped on the old flags at their feet, almost fainting with terror. Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round him, casting rather uneasy glances towards the dark opening of the crypt. What could have happened in those gloomy depths to have terrified Bunter like this?

"Oh dear!" mumbled Bunter. "I—I say, you fellows, thank goodness you're here! Keep him off!"

"Him! Who?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

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A wild shriek came from the darkness of the crypt. "Help!" There was a hurried trampling of feet, and a fat figure emerged from the underground arched opening. "Bunter!" shouted Wharton. "Ow! Help! Wow!" shrieked Bunter, staggering towards the startled juniors. (See Chapter 2.)

"He—he collared me in the dark!" moaned Bunter. "He— Oh dear! I—I— Ow, ow, ow!"

Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior by the shoulder and shook him.

"Pull yourself together, fatty!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say there was somebody in the vaults, and he frightened you?"

Billy Bunter sat up and blinked round him. Evidently he had been frightened almost out of his fat wits. But in the open air and sunshine, and with the five juniors round him, he recovered his courage, though he blinked very uneasily towards the crypt.

"I—I wasn't frightened!" he gasped.

"What!" roared Bob.

"Not frightened. Startled a bit," admitted Bunter. "Any fellow might have been startled. I dare say you fellows would have been frightened. Not me!"

"You cheeky owl! You were yelling at the top of your voice with sheer fright!" exclaimed Johnny Bull indignantly. "What do you fancy you saw down there, you funky ass?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Where's the bag?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I dropped it there—I mean I never had a bag! I don't know anything about your bag, Bob Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I say, you fellows, there's somebody in the vault—an awful ruffian—"

"Rats! You were frightened in the dark, and thought there was somebody," said Johnny Bull contemptuously.

"I wasn't!" roared Bunter. "I tell you he's there! I—I thought it was a ghost at first—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beasts—"

"There wasn't anybody, of course," said Frank Nugent. "Just Bunter's silly funk in the dark!"

"The funkfulness was terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh.

"I tell you he collared me!" yelled Bunter.

"Rats!"

"Hold on, you chaps!" said Harry

Wharton quietly. "I fancy there's something in it. Look there."

He pointed to Bunter's collar. Bunter's collar was not exactly clean. It was seldom that William George was seen in anything that was quite clean. But there were marks on Bunter's collar now that exceeded the limit even of Bunter's slovenliness. The collar was crumpled at the back, and thick, dirty marks were on the linen, as if the collar had been tightly gripped in a dirty hand. The chums of the Remove looked, and were convinced.

"My hat! It looks like it," said Bob. "But what on earth is anybody scuttling about the vaults for, and why the thump should he collar Bunter?"

"People often explore these old ruins," said Wharton. "We've done so ourselves. Some tourist, very likely—and perhaps Bunter startled him."

"He hadn't a light," said Bunter. "He was there in the dark."

"Chap couldn't explore the vaults in the dark," said Bob. "Jolly likely to break his neck, I should think. The place is full of old crumbling steps and holes and pitfalls."

"Well, he's there!" said Bunter.

The chums of the Remove were quite puzzled. Somebody, it appeared, was in the old crypt—a dangerous place to venture in without a light. What his business there could be was a mystery.

"Tell us exactly what happened, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove, at last.

"I—I went down the steps and under the arch," said Bunter. "I wasn't going farther than that without a light, of course. I was only going to keep out of sight till you beasts cleared off—I—I mean—"

"That's all right—get on!"

"Well, I kept under the arch," said Bunter, "and all of a sudden that awful beast clutched at me from behind in the dark!" Bunter shuddered at the recollection. "I—I hadn't the faintest idea that anybody was there, of course. I—I felt awful when he suddenly caught me by the neck—"

"Enough to make any chap jump," said Bob. "And what next, fatty?"

"I—I yelled—"

"We heard you," grinned Bob. "You could have been heard nearly as far as Greyfriars, I think. Did he let you go?"

Bunter paused a moment.

"I—I turned on him, and—and felled him to the ground with one fearful blow straight from the shoulder—"

"Chuck it!" roared Bob. "Tell us what happened, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bump him!" said Johnny Bull. "Bump the truth out of him—if any!"

"I—I say, you fellows—keep off, you beasts—I mean he let go my collar when I yelled, and I bolted up the steps!" gasped Bunter. "That's what I really meant to say!"

"Not much difference!" grinned Nugent.

Harry Wharton walked over to the entrance to the crypt. His chums followed him. They were perplexed and mystified. Billy Bunter sat and gasped for breath.

"I say, you fellows, you go down and root him out!" he exclaimed. "He ought to be jolly well ragged for startling me like that!"

"Come along and lead us down, Bunter."

"I—I'm rather tired—"

"Not afraid?" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Not in the least. I hope I've got more courage than you chaps!" said Bunter. "But I'm a bit tired. I'll stay here."

Harry Wharton looked down the crumbling stair that led to the underground arch. In ancient days the spot had been covered by the massy buildings of the old Priory; but the buildings had vanished centuries since, and the once-subterranean arch was open to the view. But beyond it all was hidden in deep darkness. It was difficult to believe that any man in his right senses could be lurking in those gloomy depths; yet plainly someone was there. There was not a glimmer of light, and no sound came from the silent vaults.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come out, whoever you are!"

Bob's voice rang and echoed through the ruins. But there was no answer to his hail.

"Let's go down and root him out," said Bob. "Whoever he is, he's no right to play tricks on a chap like that. Might have frightened that duffer Bunter into a fit."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Let's!" he assented.

The thought crossed the minds of the juniors that they might have some stray lunatic to deal with. But there were five of them, all sturdy fellows, and they were not afraid. Most of them had matches in their pockets. Harry Wharton led the way, and as he reached the sunken arch he struck a little bunch of matches and held them up. With that wavering light to show the way, the Famous Five entered the crypt. Bob Cherry rolled together several of the paper bags that had contained the pastry, and lighted the roll with a match to use as a torch. Keeping close together with their eyes well about them, the chums of the Remove boldly entered the dusky recesses under the old Priory.

In their keenness to discover the mystery of the vault, they had for the moment forgotten their interrupted picnic. But there was one who had not forgotten.

Billy Bunter had recovered from his fright now. And as the Famous Five disappeared below, Bunter turned his attention to the good things spread out in his view. He grinned cheerily, and started. "Chingachgook" had trailed down the picnic after all!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Unknown!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

His powerful voice rang and echoed through the subterranean recesses with a sound like thunder.

From somewhere in the darkness came a sound of a falling stone. In the deep gloom, someone unknown and unseen was retreating before the juniors.

The unknown, whoever he was, was trying to keep out of their way. The chums of the Remove followed on.

Vault after vault opened before them, dark and gloomy, heavy with damp. In other days, as the juniors knew, a secret passage had extended from the Priory vaults to Greyfriars—a dark, damp passage that ran under Friardale Wood and under the old school quad. In those far-off days Greyfriars had been a part of the same old monastic establishment. But that passage was now bricked up. Venturesome fellows had risked life and limb in exploring it, and the Head had ordered the passage to be closed. It was no longer possible for any bold explorer to follow the windings of the old tunnel from the Priory in the wood to the vaults under the school. The juniors, of course, were aware of it, and they knew that they had only to follow the unseen man to the last vault of the series in order to corner him. Striking match after match to light their way, the Famous Five pressed on, watchful and wary. From the darkness ahead, vague sounds came as the unseen man retreated farther and farther.

"Must be off his dot, I should think," said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "If not,

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what the thump is he doing here, and what is he skulking away for?"

"Show yourself, you silly ass!" shouted Johnny Bull.

No answer came from the darkness.

Whiz!

"Ow!" roared Bob.

A whizzing fragment of stone struck him, and his match dropped and went out. Bob clapped his hand to his face, and yelled.

Whiz! Whiz!

With the matches flaring, the juniors offered a good mark to the unseen man in the darkness farther on. Jagged fragments of stone whizzed at them.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oooooop!"

"Put out the light!" exclaimed Wharton.

The matches went out.

In the darkness the juniors stood together, wondering uneasily whether it was a madman they had to deal with, and whether there was to be a sudden rush at them in the shadows. But there came no sound from the unknown.

"Better get out of this!" breathed Nugent. "We can't find the rotter in the dark."

"Come on!" muttered Wharton.

The juniors picked their way cautiously back to the arch. It was not an easy task in the dark, and they did not care to burn more matches to guide the missiles of the unknown enemy. They reached the arch at last, and clambered up the old steps into the sunshine again.

There they looked at one another. There was a cut on Bob Cherry's cheek where the stone had struck him, and both Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had bruises. Bob Cherry dabbed the cut with his handkerchief, which was spotted with red.

"The rotter!" he muttered. "I'll jolly well make him sit up for this, whoever he is. We'll wait here till he comes out. He's bound to show up sooner or later."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rubbed his shoulder. He had a rather painful bruise there.

"The esteemed and execrable rascal is asking for a terrific thrashfulness," he said.

"And he'll get it when he comes out!" growled Bob. "Let's get on with the giddy picnic, and wait for him."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter—"

There was a shout of wrath from the Famous Five. They had been about a quarter of an hour in the vaults under the Priory. In that quarter of an hour Billy Bunter had been very busy. His fat jaws had never slacked down for a moment. Never had fifteen minutes been put to better use. Scarcely a crumb remained of the picnic, and Billy Bunter, with a fat grin of satisfaction on his face, was breathing rather hard after his exertions.

"I say, you fellows—" Bunter jumped up as the wrathful juniors came toward him. "I—I say—"

"You've scoffed our picnic!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I—I've had a—a snack!" gasped Bunter. "But it's all right! There's the bag, you know."

"The bag!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes. I dropped it at the bottom of the steps. It's still there. It's crammed full," said Bunter.

Bob Cherry stared at the Owl of the Remove speechlessly. The bag which Bunter had captured was, undoubtedly, crammed full; and Bunter still supposed that it was crammed with tuck. But Bob Cherry, who had crammed the bag with leaves, and turf, and moss, and

roots, for Bunter's benefit, certainly was not inclined to picnic on the contents of the bag.

"Haven't you brought the bag up, you fellows?" inquired Bunter. "You'd better get it. That rotter down there may collar it, you know, and scoff what's in it."

"The scoff-fulness is not likely to be terrific," grinned Hurree Singh.

"You—you—you—" gasped Bob Cherry. It really looked as if Bob's little joke with the bag was coming home to roost, as it were.

"It's all right," said Bunter. "I suppose you're not going to make a fuss about these few things I've had, when you've got a bagful of tuck yourselves? I'll pay for these things if you like," he added, with lofty scorn.

"Will you? Shell out, then!"

"Remind me to-morrow," said Bunter. "I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"What?"

"A postal-order—from one of my titled relations," explained Bunter. "Remind me, and I'll square. Better remind me, as a trifle like this might slip my memory. A wealthy fellow can't be expected to remember paltry trifles like you chaps do."

"Scrag him!" gasped Bob.

"Here, I say, yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove turned to flee. As he fled, Bob Cherry let out a heavy boot. It came with a terrific impact upon Bunter's tight trousers, and fairly lifted him on his way.

"Whooooop!"

Bunter fled for his life. After him went Bob Cherry, letting out right and left alternately, and the Owl of the Remove, yelling frantically, was fairly dribbled out of the Priory.

He vanished into the wood, still yelling, and Bob returned in a rather breathless state to his comrades.

"Bunter's gone, anyhow!" he grunted.

"So is the picnic!" said Nugent ruefully.

"The gonefulness is terrific."

"There's still some ginger-beer left," said Harry Wharton. "Let's be thankful for small mercies. It's all the fault of that rotter in the vaults, whoever he is, and we'll take it out of his skin when he shows up."

"Yes, rather!"

The chums of the Remove were quite determined to square accounts with the unknown lurker of the vaults. They finished the ginger-beer, and then sat down to wait near the entrance to the crypt, keeping silent, and keeping in cover among the old mossy fragments of masonry. Sooner or later, they felt certain, the unknown would show up, and then they were ready to collar him and make him give an account of himself.

But it was an hour or more before they heard a sound from the crypt.

A loose stone rattled on the steps, and the juniors exchanged glances; they knew now that the man was coming.

Wharton peered from behind his cover, and watched the opening of the stone stair. A man rose into view there, dusty and dirty from the vaults. He was a man of about thirty, with a hard, clear-cut, clean-shaven face, and keen, watchful eyes. His watchful eyes glanced to right and left, with foxy wariness, as he emerged into the sunlight. But the juniors were not to be seen, and the man stepped out, and started off for the old shattered doorway. As he did so, the five juniors leaped up as if touched by the same spring, and rushed at him from all sides.

"Collar him!" bawled Bob Cherry.

The man uttered a startled gasp, and broke into a run. But the chums of the Remove were upon him in a moment, and he was collared, and came down on the old flagstones with a crash and a wild yell.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nothing to Say!

"**G**OT him!"

"Fair catch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars juniors laughed breathlessly. The man of the vaults had fairly fallen into their hands; the capture had been swift and easy. He struggled angrily, savagely, as they held him, but he had simply no chance with five pairs of hands on him. The Famous Five held him with perfect ease.

He ceased to struggle, and panted, and uttered a string of fierce words—words that were by no means suitable for youthful ears to hear. Bob Cherry, without ceremony, knocked his head on the hard flags, and the man yelled furiously.

"Shut up, you rotten blackguard," said Bob. "If you want another knock, you've only got to swear again, you rotter!"

A loud malediction was the answer, and Bob, with a grip on the man's ears, promptly repeated the knock.

"Ow! Ooooo!" roared the prisoner. "Let me go, you young scoundrels! How dare you touch me? Release me at once, you rascals!"

"That's all right," said Bob cheerily. "You can slang us as much as you like, old bean. But you mustn't swear. It's naughty!"

"I—I—I—"

"Take it calmly," said Harry Wharton. "We're not going to hurt you, though you jolly well hurt some of us with those stones in the vaults."

"The hurtfulness of my esteemed and venerable self was great and considerable," declared Hurree Singh.

The man stared at him.

The nabob of Bhanipur had a flow of language that often had a surprising effect on strangers.

"Let me go! What have you collared me for?" growled the man. "I'm doing no harm here, I suppose. Like your confounded cheek to lay hands on me, I think."

"Like your ditto cheek to bung stones at us in the vaults," retorted Bob Cherry. "You cut my cheek with one."

"You shouldn't have followed me."

"Then you shouldn't have collared Bunter and frightened him out of his wits. What did you do it for?"

"Mind your own business! Let me go!"

"Any hurry?" smiled Bob.

The juniors were not in the least disposed to be kind and gentle with the fellow. His outburst of brutal language when they had collared him, and during the struggle, showed that he was a good deal of a "bad hat." They were quite determined to make him explain himself before they let him go. What his game could have been, hiding in the vaults, was a mystery. But his actions had been, to say the least, suspicious. They would not have been surprised to discover that he was a law-breaker of some sort.

The man stared at them with knitted brows and glinting eyes. It was plain that his savage temper was still uppermost, though he did not venture to speak as he would have liked to speak. Two knocks of his head on the hard flags had taught him a needed lesson.



Whiz! whiz! With the matches flaring the juniors offered a good mark to the unseen man in the darkness further on. Jagged fragments of stone whizzed at them. "Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "Put out the light!" The matches went out. "Better get out of this!" breathed Nugent. "We can't find the rotter in the dark!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Look here, I'm in rather a hurry," he said at last.

"Is that why you skulked an hour at least in the vaults?" asked Nugent, laughing.

"That's no business of yours, hang you!"

"You're going to explain what you've been up to there, and what it all means, anyhow," said Wharton.

"I shall tell you nothing!"

"Then we'll sit on you till you do!" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The man made a sudden effort, and wrenched himself loose. He sprang to his feet, and ran away. But he was not given time to escape. Bob Cherry caught his ankle as he leaped away, and the man came down again with a crash and a yell of pain.

"Bag him!"

"Got him!" grinned Johnny Bull, grasping the fallen man by the collar.

"Oh! Ow! Oh!" gasped the prisoner. "Oh, you young villains! I'll have you locked up for this! Ow! Oh!"

"I'm not so jolly sure that you're not the kind of fellow to be locked up," said Harry Wharton coolly. "You're up to no good here, that's certain. Are you going to explain yourself?"

"I've got nothing to explain," panted the man.

"What were you doing in the vaults?"

"Find out."

"Why did you clutch at Bunter and scare him?"

No reply.

"Why did you wait till you thought the coast was clear before coming up out of the vaults?"

"Find out."

"He's a shady card of some sort," said Nugent. "But I'm blessed if I can guess what his game is."

"Bump him," suggested Bob Cherry. "A bump or two will shake the truth out of him."

"You young ruffians—"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper," declared Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Give the esteemed and disgusting rotter the kybosh."

"Let me go!" roared the man, struggling savagely.

"Are you going to explain yourself?" demanded Wharton.

"No!"

"Bump him!" said the captain of the Remove.

The man struggled wildly as he was grasped in five pairs of hands, and bumped on the flags. A terrific yell rang through the ruined Priory.

"Give him another!" said Bob.

Bump!

"Yoooooooooop!"

"And one for luck," said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

The man roared like a bull. But it was evident that he intended to give no explanation of his strange conduct. His face was convulsed with fury and malice, and only the fear of further punishment kept back the torrent of curses that rose to his lips.

"That's enough," said Harry Wharton. "I'm pretty sure that he's a bad lot, and up to something shady. But I suppose that's not our business. I dare say he's sorry by this time for chucking stones at us. Let the rotter hop."

The man was released. He scrambled to his feet, and his hard, strongly marked face was turned on the juniors, inflamed with rage and hatred. He clenched his fists, as if disposed to rush on them; but, fortunately for himself, he restrained that desire. They regarded him coolly, not in the least disturbed by the anger and evil in the hard face.

He muttered something indistinctly, jammed his hat on his head, and tramped away. The Famous Five watched him as he disappeared into the wood.

"That's a jolly queer customer," remarked Bob Cherry. "What on earth could he have been up to in the vaults?"

"Goodness knows!"

"He had a lantern in his pocket," said Nugent. "He must have been exploring the place. I suppose he shut off the light when Bunter went down, so as not to be seen. But why the thump shouldn't he want to be seen?"

Harry Wharton shook his head. He was completely mystified. Bob Cherry rubbed his cut cheek.

"Anyhow, he will think twice before he bungs stones at fellows again," he said. "Whoever he is, and whatever he was up to, he's a rotter, and he was up to no good. Bother him!"

And the Famous Five walked out of the ruins, and took the road to Greyfriars. The picnic was "off"—very much off, owing to William George Banter, and it was necessary to get home to tea. As they walked back to the school the chums of the Remove thought a good deal about the mysterious affair of the Priory vaults—without being able to guess a solution. They dismissed the matter from their minds at last—not supposing that they would ever see the man again. They little dreamed, just then, how soon they would see him again, and where.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Bob Cherry!

"BLAGDEN!"

Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars, repeated the name, with a slight start, and pursed his lips. He stared over his glasses at Trotter, the page, who stood waiting.

"Yessir!" said Trotter.

"You may show him in, Trotter," said the Head, after a long pause.

"Yessir."

Dr. Locke frowned thoughtfully as Trotter retired. The name of the caller seem to have awakened associations in the old gentleman's mind, and not of a pleasant sort.

He glanced up and rose to his feet as the visitor entered.

"Mr. Blagden?"

"Yes, Dr. Locke."

The headmaster of Greyfriars scrutinised him. He saw before him a young man of about thirty, with a hard, clear-cut face, and keen eyes that seemed strangely wary and watchful.

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"I do not quite recognise you," said Dr. Locke quietly, "but I presume that you are Philip Blagden, once of the Sixth Form of Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"Expelled from this school long ago?" said the Head.

"Yes, and with reason, as I must confess," said Blagden. "No doubt you are surprised to see me again, Dr. Locke?"

"I am more than surprised," said the Head coldly. "I certainly never expected to see you or hear of you again. It is certainly no pleasure to me."

"You are not interested in the career of an Old Boy of Greyfriars?" said Blagden.

"I do not regard you as an Old Boy of Greyfriars. You were expelled from the school, at a time when I had not been long here as headmaster. You richly deserved it. You were guilty of wild and reckless conduct yourself, and of leading others into the same courses."

"I admit it, sir. But that is many years ago, and surely there is always room for repentance," said Blagden humbly.

"No doubt, no doubt," said the Head, his stern manner relaxing. "If you have repented of your follies and faults—"

"I can assure you on that point."

"I am glad to hear it," said the Head. "Sit down, Mr. Blagden, and tell me why you have called."

The Head's manner was not cordial, but there was a trace of kindness in it now. He sat down, his eyes, over his glasses, fixed on his visitor. Blagden was respectably, but somewhat shabbily, dressed; the bowler hat he held in his hand had seen service. He did not look as if he had prospered since leaving Greyfriars School so long ago. The Head could sympathise with a man who was down on his luck, and he realised that the faults—even the sins—of the boy should not be visited on the man. It was quite possible that Mr. Philip Blagden was quite a different person from the one-time Blagden of the Sixth of Greyfriars.

"I have been unfortunate, Dr. Locke," said Blagden, with the same humility of manner. "I frankly confess that after leaving the school in disgrace I went from bad to worse. I was dependent on my uncle, who practically cast me off. He died a few years later, and I was left on my own resources. When the War came I joined up as a private. Since the War—" He hesitated.

"Well?"

"Since the War I have done little good, but I have kept straight. There is little room for such as I in the labour market. What I learned at Greyfriars is of little commercial value, and I have forgotten most of it. You may remember that I was a good cricketer—"

"I remember you were captain of the cricket eleven."

"That is so. It is for that reason that I am here," said Blagden. "I hoped that you might help me, sir."

"In what way?"

"Possibly by an appointment as games master at my old school—"

"Quite impossible!" said the Head decidedly. "The post is already filled, for one thing."

"At least I am qualified to act as cricket coach to the boys. I ask little—next to nothing—in the way of payment. Give me a chance of earning my bread honestly, and I ask no more than that. Give me a chance of proving how I have changed since the old days when you knew me as a foolish and reckless boy," said Blagden earnestly.

There was a long pause.

"I would gladly help you," said the

Head, at last, "but no man can be admitted to this school whose character is not above suspicion. I am willing to believe the best of you, but your past does not inspire confidence."

"I know it! But if I can prove to you that, although luck was against me, I have earned my bread honestly since the War—"

"Can you do so?"

"I can. I have been to sea as a common seaman before the mast. I have my discharge papers, and can refer you to my late skipper and his owners."

Dr. Locke pursed his lips thoughtfully. "It was a fall in the world, for a Greyfriars man," said Blagden bitterly. "But I know that I threw my chances away, and at least I have done honest work and earned my bread. I sailed under an assumed name—that of Brown. No one here need ever know that an old Greyfriars man worked before the mast. From you, of course, I should not think of concealing anything."

There was another long pause.

Blagden waited patiently, respectfully, humbly. His eyes were on the floor, but they were as watchful as ever, and he did not lose a single shade of expression in the Head's kind old face.

"I will consider this matter," said Dr. Locke, at last. "Far be it from me to be hard upon one who has sinned and repented. But I have my boys to consider, and I can leave nothing to chance in such a matter. I shall consult with Mr. Quelch and take counsel with him, and if investigation should prove your statements to be correct, you may rely upon my assistance."

"That is all I can ask, sir," said Blagden. "I am sure you will understand, sir, what it will mean to me to be back at my old school, in any capacity. I have knocked about the world for years. I have no home, and no relative that cares to be troubled with me. The thought of Greyfriars has always taken the place of the thought of home with me."

"I understand that," said the Head, and his look was very kind. "But in such a matter as this, Mr. Blagden, I cannot possibly act in a hurry. Where can I communicate with you?"

"At the Courtfield Arms. I have a room there."

"Very good." The Head reflected for a few minutes, Blagden watching him intently, though he did not appear to be looking at him. "Will you call here to-morrow at the same hour, and I will ask Mr. Quelch to be present—I rely very much upon his judgment—and we will go more deeply into the matter."

"Thank you, sir."

Blagden rose. The Head touched a bell, and Trotter appeared at the door.

Dr. Locke hesitated a second, and then held out his hand to the young man. Blagden took it with great humility, and then followed Trotter from the study. Dr. Locke resumed his seat with a deep frown of thought upon his brow, as the study door closed.

Blagden followed Trotter down the passage. A junior of the Remove was coming along from the opposite direction with a sheaf of impot paper in his hand. It was Bob Cherry, who had a hundred lines to hand in to the Head—the penalty for descending the big staircase by way of the banisters instead of the stairs.

Blagden started as his eyes fell on Bob. At the same moment Bob Cherry noticed him, and uttered an ejaculation.

"My hat! You here?"

Blagden hurried on. Bob Cherry turned in the passage and stared after him blankly.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed.

In a mystified state Bob went on to the Head's study and handed in his lines. Then he sought Trotter, who had shown the visitor out. Philip Blagden was striding away towards the gates.

"Trotter, old duck!" exclaimed Bob. "Who was that merchant?"

"Name of Blagden, sir," said Trotter.

"He's been to see the Head?"

"Yes, Master Cherry."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob.

Bob Cherry returned to the Remove passage in a very perplexed frame of mind. He looked in at Study No. 1, where Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were at tea.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Whom do you think I've seen?" exclaimed Bob. "You'd never guess."

"Well, if we'd never guess, no good trying," remarked the captain of the Remove. "Who was it?"

"That rotter——"

"What rotter? Lots of them about."

"The chap we handled at the old Priory last Wednesday."

"Oh, you've seen him?" exclaimed Nugent. "You've been out of gates?"

"No; I've just been to the beak with my lines."

"Then how——"

"His name's Blagden, and he's just called on the Head!" said Bob. "He's only just gone. I think you'd see him from the window."

Wharton and Nugent, in great surprise, jumped up and ran to the window of Study No. 1. They were in time to see Blagden disappear in the direction of the gates.

"That's the man?" asked Nugent.

"That's the merchant! Now what the thump could he want at Greyfriars?" said Bob. "What was he doing in the ruins the other day? And what's he doing here? The Head can't know him."

"Looks as if he does, as the man called," said Harry Wharton. "It's a bit of a puzzle. I'm pretty certain that the man's a bad hat!"

"Jolly sure of it!" said Bob emphatically. "A fellow who'd swear as he did can't be much class. He's a bad lot. Looks to me as if the Head's making undesirable acquaintances—a thing he's often warned fellows against."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about dropping in on the Head and warning him that evil communications corrupt good manners?" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled; but they were puzzled. They had never expected to see again the mysterious man of the Priory; and to find him calling on the Head of Greyfriars was distinctly perplexing. That he was some sort of a bad character they felt assured—but the Head could not be supposed to number bad characters on his list of acquaintances.

"It's a giddy puzzle!" said Bob.

And his chums agreed that it was.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Don't!"

"I say, there's news, you know," said Bunter, unheeding. "You fellows never hear anything until I tell you, you know."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"You'll always know the news first, so long as they make keyholes to doors, Bunter," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"



"Collar him!" bawled Bob Cherry. The man uttered a startled gasp and broke into a run. But the chums of the Remove were upon him in a moment, and he was collared and came down on the old flagstones with a crash and a wild yell. "Got him!" exclaimed Wharton grimly. (See Chapter 3.)

"What's the giddy news now? Cough it up and get it over. I can see we've got to have it."

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the Famous Five. This reception was not really grateful or comforting to the Owl of the Remove. But Billy Bunter did not depart in dignity with his news untold. His inquisitiveness in gathering information was only equalled by his eagerness to impart it when gathered.

"It really concerns you fellows more than me," he said. "You need more coaching at cricket than I do."

"Oh, my hat! Do we?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Of course! I don't suppose I shall want anything from the man—not a finished cricketer like me," said Bunter. "But you fellows don't amount to much—frankly, you know. Look at your batting, for instance, Bob Cherry."

"What's the matter with my batting?" breathed Bob.

"Life's too short to tell you all that, old fellow," answered Bunter cheerily.

Bob Cherry glared at the fat junior, but his glare gave place to a grin. It was not worth while being angry with Bunter—and the Owl's cricket criticisms really did not matter very much.

It was over a week since the affair of the Priory, which the chums of the Remove had almost forgotten by this time. The summer weather was glorious, the cricket season was in full swing, and the Greyfriars fellows, for the time, were living, breathing, and dreaming cricket. The five were going down to Little Side after classes, when Bunter rolled up with

news to impart—and little as Bunter's news interested them as a rule, his mention of cricket excited some faint interest. Apparently his news had something to do with the great summer game—which to the Famous Five was, at present, the chief thing going on in the universe.

"What's that about coaching? And who's the man you're talking about?" demanded Harry Wharton. "You don't mean to say you've heard we're getting a new games master?"

"Oh, no; only a coach," said Bunter. "A special cricket coach for the Lower Forms."

"Oh," said Bob, with interest. "I don't know that we want one; but some of the fellows do. Skinner could do with some tips on cricket—and somebody to make him play. So could you, Bunter. I hope the new coach will be empowered by the Head to boot fat slackers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's not likely to know more about the game than I do," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I say, he's coming to-morrow."

"Is it on the board?" asked Nugent.

"Not likely; I always get the news first," said the Owl of the Remove complacently. "I heard Mr. Quelch speaking to old Hacker about it—and Wingate knows, too. I heard Wingate mention it to Gwynne of the Sixth."

"Well, let the jolly old coach come," said Bob. "I'll ask him what he thinks of my late cut."

"I don't suppose he'd tell you, if he's a civil chap, you know," said Bunter brightly.

"Wha-a-at?" roared Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that isn't all," went on the fat junior. "The coach chap is an old Greyfriars man."

"Oh, that's interesting, anyhow," said Johnny Bull. "Sure of that, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather! Quelchy mentioned it to Hacker, and Hacker said he remembered the man. He was here at the time."

"And what's his name?" asked Bob.

"Blagden!"

The Famous Five came to a sudden halt. They stared at Billy Bunter in blank surprise. That name fairly took their breath away.

"Blagden!" repeated Bob.

"Yes, that's the name! He was Blagden of the Sixth when he left Greyfriars, ever so many years ago."

"Impossible!"

Bunter blinked at five astonished faces. "I say, you fellows, do you know anything about him?" he asked. "You can tell me, of course!"

Cricket and cricket coaches had no interest whatever for Bunter; but his thirst for information was insatiable.

"Are you sure of the name?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, of course—Philip Blagden. He was captain of cricket in his time—not captain of the school, though. They were two jobs at that time; he wasn't both, like old Wingate now."

"It can't be the same man!" said Bob at last, looking at his chums. "After all, I suppose there are lots of Blagdens."

"It's not a common name," said Nugent.

"No, but there must be lots. It simply can't be that merchant who's coming here as cricket coach."

"Impossible!" said Johnny Bull.

"The likeness is not terrific," said Hurree Singh. "The Head would not be such an esteemed and venerable ass."

"I say, you fellows, what are you talking about?" howled Bunter, boiling with curiosity by this time. "Do you know anything about an old Greyfriars man named Blagden?"

"Oh, lots!" said Bob.

"Well, what do you know, then?"

Bob Cherry grinned. Without discussing the matter, the Famous Five realised that it would not do to tell the tattler of Greyfriars what they knew. If the new cricket coach was in fact the mysterious man of the Priory, it was unnecessary to make the matter the talk of the school.

"What do you know, I say?" howled Bunter eagerly.

"Shall I tell you what I know?" asked Bob seriously.

"Yes, yes! Go it, old chap!"

"We know that a still tongue shows a wise head," said Bob.

"Eh?"

"And that silence is golden," went on Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on to Little Side, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them in a state of burning curiosity and annoyance.

The chums of the Remove were perplexed and rather troubled. At first it had seemed impossible that the Head could have engaged, as cricket coach for the juniors, a man whom they could not help looking upon as a suspicious character. But on further thought they realised that it was practically certain that the man was the man of the Priory.

It was not a common name. Besides, the man of the Priory had called on the

Head a week before, evidently having some business with him. It seemed that this was the business.

Thinking it over, the juniors could not help coming to the conclusion that the man was the man they had handled at the Priory, and it was surprising to them, and rather disturbing. Whatsoever the man's mysterious business had been in the ruins, they were certain it was something shady, though they could not guess what it was. The language he had used on that occasion was sufficient to show them the kind of man he was, of which it was quite certain that Dr. Locke must be unaware.

Needless to say, the Famous Five were keen to see the new coach on the following day. In the meantime they sagely decided to say nothing of what they knew. Whatever they thought of the man, they had nothing definite to allege against him, and it was obviously a case where silence was golden.

On the following day Bunter's news was confirmed. The cricket coach arrived at Greyfriars School.

After classes, as the Remove came out of their Form-room, the Famous Five sighted him, standing in talk with Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth.

The juniors glanced at him in passing, and they heard Wingate address him as Mr. Blagden. They knew the hard, sharp face at once, and the restless, wary eyes. The man did not glance at them, but they had an impression that his watchful eyes took them in all the same. The chums of the Remove walked out into the quad in thoughtful mood.

"It's the man!" said Bob.

"Blessed if I catch on," said Harry. "I'd never have taken that blackguard—for he is a blackguard—for an old Greyfriars man. I suppose it's no bizney of ours, but I don't like the fellow being here."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!"

"That's Blagden!" said Bunter. "I say, I've got some news—"

"Oh, bother your news!" said Bob crossly.

"All right, I won't tell you now," said Bunter loftily. "All the same, it's queer the Head giving him a job here, after sacking him from the school years ago."

"Sacking him!" ejaculated Wharton. Bunter grinned.

"I've been talking to old Gosling," he said. "You see, he's been here for about a hundred years, more or less, so I thought he might remember Blagden. So I asked him, and he told me a chap of that name was sacked from Greyfriars years ago—expelled by Dr. Locke, you know, for blagging."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob.

"He seems to have been a regular goer in his day," grinned Bunter. "It came out, when was sacked, that he had been in the habit of breaking bounds at night, and he used to have smoking and card-playing parties in the school. He and his friends used to sneak down into the vaults at night and have a high old time. It was Gosling found them out. They bagged the key to the vaults from Gosling, and Blagden got another made like it, you see, so that he could get into the school vaults whenever he liked. He was expelled for being a—a—a corrugated influence."

"A what?"

"I think that was what Gosling said the Head called him. He led a lot of fellows into blagging."

"A corrupting influence, I suppose," said Harry, laughing.

"I believe Gosling said corrugated, but I dare say it's the same thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. He was a corrugated character, and was bunked for it," said Bunter. "Not that I'd be down on him. I'm a bit of a dog myself when I get going."

"Do you mean a bit of a hog?" asked Johnny Bull.

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, he was bunked," said the Owl of the Remove. "Queer that the Head should give him a job after that. I suppose he's down on his luck, and he's pulled the old beak's leg. Anybody could pull Dr. Locke's leg, you know. He's an awful ass! If he took my advice—"

"Oh, bow-wow!"

The chums of the Remove walked on, leaving Billy Bunter to impart his startling information to others. With such a topic Bunter was not likely to lack listeners.

"It can't be right," said Bob. "Bunter's got it wrong. Let's go and ask Gosling."

"Let's!" assented Wharton.

William Gosling, the school porter, had a crusty look when he was run down in his lodge by the Famous Five. Gosling generally was crusty; now he seemed crustier than ever. He grunted when the name of Blagden was mentioned to him.

"Don't you ask me no questions, and I won't tell you no lies," was his answer.

"But you know whether you remember the chap," said Bob.

"I remembers him!" growled Gosling.

"Was he bunked from Greyfriars?"

"Better ask the 'Ead if you want to know."

"Did you tell Bunter—"

"Bother Bunter!"

Gosling retired into his lodge and slammed the door, more crusty than ever. The subject seemed an unpalatable one to him. Why, the juniors could not guess. But the nabob of Bhanipur thought it out after a few minutes.

"The esteemed and disgusting Bunter has got it right," he said. "The worthy rotter Blagden was sackfully bunked from the school, and Gosling knows it. But he has been tipped—"

"Tipped?" said Bob.

"He has been given the esteemed tip not to say so. Probably the venerable Head does not wish it to be talked of, and has conveyed his august wishes to Gosling."

"But he told Bunter—"

"That was before he was warned that he was not to talk about Mr. Blagden," said Hurree Singh shrewdly. "Now he is annoyfully cross because he has said too much."

And the juniors, on reflection, agreed with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The discovery that, long before their time, Blagden had been expelled from Greyfriars for bad conduct, confirmed their opinion of the man. He had been a "bad hat" then, and he was a bad hat now. But it was clear that he must have imposed on the Head somehow. Dr. Locke certainly must believe that he had changed since his blackguardly early days. But, as Bunter had said, it was not difficult to impose on the Head. The kind and unsuspecting old gentleman was not likely to be the match of Philip Blagden in cunning.

"I suppose it's no business of ours," said Harry Wharton at last. "The Head knows best, I suppose. Anyhow, the less we say about it the better!"

And his comrades agreed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Missing Key!

PHILIP BLAGDEN—whatever he was, and whatever he wanted at Greyfriars—soon showed that he was fully equal to his new duties. As a cricket coach for Lower boys he certainly was excellent. Fellows were keen enough to be coached by a man who had been cricket captain of Greyfriars in his time, and Blagden became rather popular with the juniors in a very few days.

Bunter, of course, had told everyone who would listen that Blagden had left Greyfriars under a sentence of expulsion. But that story was generally regarded as one of Bunter's "yarns"—for there was no confirmation of it. The Head and Mr. Hacker could not be asked questions on the subject—but Gosling could—and was. And Gosling declined to say a word. Had Blagden made himself unpopular, the story probably would have been believed and kept as a topic. But most of the fellows who came in contact with him liked him more or less.

The Famous Five found that he knew the great game of cricket inside out, and they picked up valuable tips from him. Fellows who wanted to play hard found him a good coach. Fellows like Bunter and Skinner and Snoop, who wanted to slack, found him very easy in his dealings. He never reported slackers; and this, though not very dutiful, enabled him to avoid being disliked by anybody.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been rather curious to know how Blagden would act at their first meeting. As it happened, he did not seem to recognise them, and treated them as strangers, exactly like the other fellows in the Remove.

That this was pretence on his part they were quite assured. He could not so soon have forgotten the fellows who had handled him—especially Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, whose dusky complexion was not so easily forgotten. But if Blagden wished the incident of the Priory to be obliterated, as it were, the Famous Five had no objections to make. He did not refer to it, and so they did not.

They could not like the man, and somehow they could not trust him; but after a day or two they gave him little heed. And they had some respect for a man who, whatever his faults, was a good cricketer, and played a good game.

Within a week of his arrival at the school, the First Eleven played the Lantham Cricket Club, and Blagden played for Greyfriars in Wingate's team. Lantham, who had played the county, were a much more powerful crowd than the Greyfriars First; but the school remained the victors, owing to Blagden's help. That victory made the cricket coach many friends in the upper Forms.

If no new incident had drawn the attention of the Famous Five to Blagden, they would have grown accustomed to his presence in the school, and would have ceased to heed him, except when they came in contact with him at games practice. Excepting on those occasions they had nothing to do with him, and seldom saw him. But soon after the Lantham match there was a new incident. One morning Gosling, the porter, entered the School House, with a more than usually crusty face, and saw the Head. Billy Bunter declared that something was "up"; and as soon as they were assembled in their Form-room the Removites learned what was "up." Before beginning the usual business of the day, Mr. Quelch, the



"Bump him!" said the captain of the Remove. The man struggled wildly as he was grasped in five pairs of hands and bumped on the flags. A terrific yell rang through the Priory. "Give him another!" said Bob. Bump! "Yoooooop!" "And one for luck!" grinned Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!" Bump! The man roared like a bull. But it was evident that he intended to give no explanation of his strange conduct. (See Chapter 4.)

Remove master, addressed his Form, with a severe brow.

"Has any boy here taken a key from Gosling's lodge?" he inquired, looking over the Form.

"There was no answer."

It was a surprising question to the Remove. This was the first they had heard of a key being missing from Gosling's lodge.

Mr. Quelch paused, like Brutus, for a reply. As no reply was forthcoming, he went on:

"You are aware that the key to the Greyfriars vaults is in Gosling's charge. He keeps it, with other keys, on a rack in his lodge. It has been abstracted at some time when Gosling was out of his lodge. He discovered the fact this morning. The Head has directed that the whole school be questioned on the subject."

Mr. Quelch paused again. But the Lower Fourth had nothing to say. They only stared at their Form master.

"This is not the first time," resumed Mr. Quelch, "that the key has been taken by some foolish boy desiring to explore the vaults—a thing strictly forbidden by the Head. If any boy in my Form has taken the key, I command him to produce it at once."

No answer.

"If the key is produced immediately, the delinquent will be punished with an imposition of a hundred lines!"

"What an inducement!" murmured

Skinner; and the fellows near Skinner grinned.

"If the key is not produced," went on Mr. Quelch in a deeper voice, "investigation will be made, and the boy who has abstracted it will be flogged by the Head. If the delinquent is present, I warn him, for his own sake, to produce the key at once."

Had the purloiner of the key been present, undoubtedly he would have produced the missing article at that point. As Skinner humorously remarked, a hundred lines in hand were worth more than a flogging in the bush.

But no one spoke or stirred. It was pretty clear that the key to the vaults had not been abstracted by a Remove fellow.

The subject was dropped, and lessons started. After lessons there was a good deal of talk about the missing key.

All the Forms had been questioned, and with the same result. The key remained missing, and nothing was learned on the subject. The matter was not of great consequence, as the Head had another key to the vaults locked in his desk; but it was obvious that whoever had taken the key had done so with the intention of exploring the old vaults under the school. And that was a serious matter, for the ancient vaults were full of dangers for the unwary.

For the rest of that day Sixth Form

prefects were inquiring and investigating right and left, hunting for the purloiner of the key. They did not find him—or the key. Fellows asked one another, but nobody admitted having the key in his possession. It was generally expected that, with so much fuss being made on the subject, the key would be quietly returned to its place on the rack in Gosling's lodge. But it was not returned. In the Common-room the next evening Billy Bunter announced that he knew all about it.

"I say, you fellows, it's plain enough," said Bunter. "That key won't turn up, you know. I shouldn't wonder if Loder of the Sixth has got it. He bagged it from Gosling's lodge yesterday. I fancy."

"Loder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Bunter winked.

"Loder's a bit of a giddy goat," he said. "I know jolly well that he smokes and plays cards in his study."

"What the thump has that got to do with it?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"Lots!" grinned Bunter. "You remember what I told you about that man Blagden—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Blagden, when he was a Greyfriars chap, got a key to the vaults to do his blagging in a safe place," persisted Bunter. "Well, that's what's happened now, of course. It's Loder, or some chap like Loder, on the same tack. Of course, you fellows wouldn't think of it. I'm rather keen, you know!"

"Rot!" repeated the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"That key isn't used once in a blue moon!" said Vernon-Smith. "It would make no end of a row turning in that old rusty lock. I know, because I bagged it once to get into the vaults. If Loder started unlocking that door at night he would wake the House."

"But somebody's got it!" howled Bunter. "It went yesterday, didn't it?"

"Some ass who's thinking of using it on a half-holiday," said Smithy. "Some ass like you, Bunter!"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had been listening quietly, and he now strolled out of the junior Common-room. There was a peculiar gleam in the dark eyes of the nabob. Harry Wharton, catching a sign from him, followed him into the corridor.

"What's up, Inky?" he asked.

"Follow your esteemed leader, old scout!" answered Hurree Singh.

Wharton, in surprise, followed him. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh led the way to the old, iron-studded oaken door that gave admittance to the vaults. That door was at the end of an old vaulted passage between the School House and the ancient chapel of Greyfriars. It was lighted in the daytime by little deep windows like loopholes. The stone-arched doorway and the solid oak door closed the end of the passage, and as there was no egress that secluded quarter was seldom visited by anyone. Even the housemaids were not very careful to keep up regular visitations, and dust and cobwebs had accumulated. There was no burner in the passage, and at night it was black as pitch.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh drew a little electric-torch from his pocket and turned on the light. The two juniors reached the old door in the arch, and the nabob turned the light upon it. The lock was an ancient and massive one. The key belonging to it—the missing key—was a heavy iron article at least nine inches in length. There was no doubt that, as the Bounder had said, anyone

turning the key in the old stiff lock would have made a considerable noise.

Hurree Singh concentrated the light on the old huge keyhole. Then he uttered a low exclamation.

"Look, my esteemed chum!" he murmured.

His dusky finger pointed out the plain traces of oil on the old lock. Wharton started.

"It's been oiled!"

"Exactly, and quite latefully," murmured the nabob.

Wharton examined the lock curiously. It was easy to see that someone had squirted oil into it, probably with a bicycle oiler. The oil had been squirted in very liberally. It had been wiped off afterwards where it had run down the door, but the traces were quite plain. Three or four drops of oil had oozed out afresh, and hung clotted there in the dust.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh put the electric-torch back in his pocket, and the juniors walked away.

"Looks as if Bunter's right, after all," said Harry Wharton. "Some chap has oiled that lock so as to open the door quietly. Some dashed outsider like Loder, following Blagden's example, I suppose. May have had the idea put into his head by Bunter's chatter about what Blagden did in his time here."

"It is possible. But—"

"You don't think so, Inky?"

"The answer is in the esteemed negative."

"Look here, Inky, you've got something in your noddle!" said Harry Wharton abruptly, stopping and looking at the nabob as they came back into the lighted corridors. "What are you thinking of? Do you know who's got the key?"

"I do not knowfully feel certain, my esteemed chum, but I have the terrific suspisfulness."

"And who do you think—"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's reply made Wharton jump.

"The esteemed Blagden."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Hurree Singh's Suspicion!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH sat in the armchair in Study No. 1 in the Remove and smiled a dusky smile. Four other juniors regarded him with inquiring and curious looks. Downstairs in the Common-room the talk was going on on the subject of the key, missing now for two days, and apparently likely to remain missing. But the Famous Five had repaired to Wharton's study, to hear what Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh had to say, unheard by other ears. Quiet and unassuming fellow as the nabob was, his comrades knew that he was remarkably keen, and they wondered a good deal what he had to say. The affair of the missing key did not, so far as they could see, concern them or any fellow in the Remove. But the nabob seemed to think that it did.

"Well, give it a name, old scout," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton says you've got something to cough up, old black bean."

"About that dashed old key?" asked Johnny Bull.

The nabob nodded.

"Blest if I see how it matters to us!" said Johnny. "We've not got it, and it doesn't matter who has, does it?"

"Inky thinks that man Blagden has bagged it," said Harry.

"Blest if I know why he should! But, even if he has, what does it matter to us?" asked Johnny Bull, mystified.

"Lots!" said Hurree Singh. "In fact, my esteemed and thick-headed Johnny, the lotfulness is terrific. If there is foul play going on in Greyfriars, it is up to us to chip in and see that it is a boot on the other leg."

The juniors chuckled.

"Well, get on with it!" said Bob.

The nabob proceeded to get on with it.

"You rememberfully recall rooting that esteemed rotter out of the ruins at the Priory," he said. "He was up to something, which was something no good. Why was he exploring the vaults under the venerable Priory?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Exactly! But he was doing it. When the esteemed Bunter went down he shut off the light. He did not want to be discoverfully caught. As Bunter remained there he clutchfully caught the fat and excellent duffer by the back of the neck and frightened him out of his wits, such as they are."

"He did," said Bob. "But what—"

"He had a reason," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Whatever he was in the vaults for it was a secret reason. He frightened Bunter to scare him away. Had we not been there the fat and funky Bunter would have fled at topfull speed, and nobody would have seen the execrable Blagden about the Priory vaults at all."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes, it's fairly clear why he frightened Bunter," he said. "Whatever his game was there he wanted to keep it dark. But I can't imagine what he was up to. Can you, Inky?"

"Then, no; now, yes," said the nabob. "Now that I know he is an old Greyfriars man. You fellows know that there used to be a secret passage leading from the Priory crypt to the vaults under this esteemed school. It was blocked up in our time. But that was many years since Blagden's time. Suppose he had wanted to get into the vaults under the school and—"

"Why should he?"

"Suppose he did?" persisted the nabob gently. "He is a man of not good character. He was once expelled from Greyfriars. It was not easy, I fancy, for him to get a footing here. But if that underground passage had not been blocked up he could have got into the school vaults by following it from the old Priory. My esteemed opinion is that that was why he was there, and he found that the passage had been bricked up and gave up the esteemed scheme."

Wharton reflected some moments.

"That's likely enough," he said. "But what makes you think that he has any object in getting into the school vaults?"

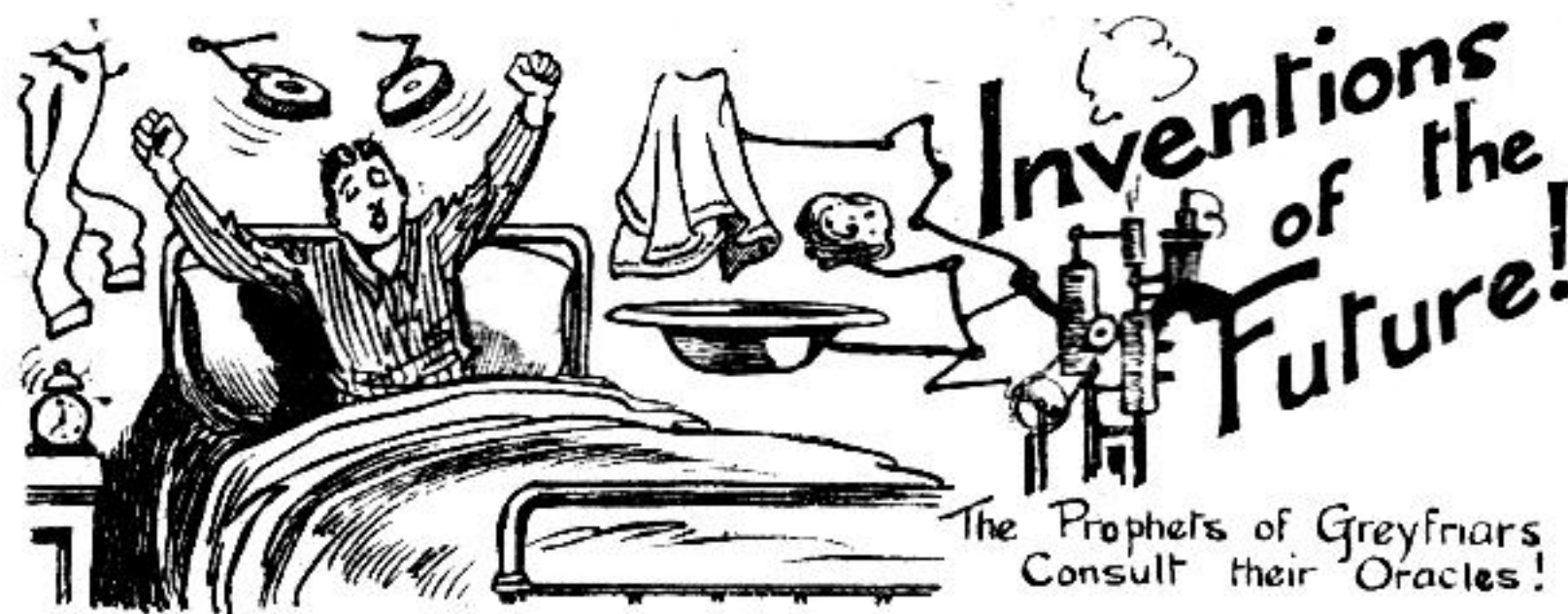
The nabob smiled.

"My esteemed chum, he is now at Greyfriars, and shortly after he comes the key of the school vaults is taken."

"Any fellow may have taken it," said Nugent. "Smithy took it once. Why, we did ourselves last term!"

"True, my esteemed and fatheaded Franky! But a fellow would not keep the key two days with a flogging hangfully impending over his head. It is a terrific coincidence that the key is missing soon after the execrable Blagden arrives here. Putting two and two togetherfully, it appears to me that, having failed to get into the Greyfriars vaults by way of the Priory passage, he came here and has honourably abstracted the key. It was easy for him, as he has a way of dropping into Gosling's lodge to chat with him, and who could possibly want to chat with the excellent and crusty Gosling?"

(Continued on page 17.)



EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

MANY letters have reached me during this last two months in which the writers clamour for a special number of the "Herald" dealing with inventions. I have handed this subject to my contributors and the result of their labours you have before you.

One might say that the whole world is built up on inventions. When we read of the difficulties under which people lived, moved, and had their being, so to speak, in the "good old days," we begin to wonder if those days were so "good" after all. Fancy jolting about in a stage coach for days if one wanted to travel from London to Manchester! No trains, no electric trams, no motor-cars, no wireless concerts, no bicycles, no telephones, no— I could go on quoting for a month.

Take, for instance, the ordinary steel pin, and its blood brother, the safety. Can you imagine any household without such simple articles? And yet our forebears managed to do without them. In a hundred years' time people will say the same of us. Fancy taking two hours to travel a hundred miles, they will remark. Two hundred miles to them will be nothing—a distance traversed in the space of a few minutes. Already aeroplanes are travelling at two hundred miles an hour. If scientific progress goes on at that rate the world would be better described as "whirled."

Some of our contributors have original ideas in the matter of inventions, and those ideas will doubtless cause you some amusement. But behind the amusement one can see the serious side. We have reached a stage to-day when nothing really is impossible of accomplishment. There are already conquerors of the air, the land, and the sea. And as competition goes on present results looked upon to be marvellous will rank as "merely experimental stages" in scientific history of the future.

For myself, I am quite happy with the present day. Inventions are all very well, but they tend to make the peoples of the world move faster. Everywhere the cry is "Labour Saving." If that continues to be the war-cry I can see Lord Mauleverer's invention of the future—which you will read of elsewhere—coming true!

Next week we soar to dizzy heights, for the supplement deals with "Climbing." Apart from the funny side of the subject, there are a lot of tips to be picked up, chums. Look out for it!

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LORD MAULEVERER:

I can see the day when some particularly clever johnny will invent a machine that wakes you in the morning, washes and dresses you, and gives you your breakfast. It would not be too much to expect that this same machine would be able to perform the work of the day for its lucky owner. I only wish these brainy inventors would get a move on and bring such a machine into existence in my time. Life at present is too much fag—yaw-aw-awn! (The kind of machine you require, Mauly, is an energising one—one that keeps you on the move from morning till night. Something with a charge of dynamite attached to it would be the very thing.—ED.)

HAROLD SKINNER:

I shouldn't be surprised to find that in a few years a machine will be invented which will absorb a roomful of smoke in less than two seconds. Such an invention would be very useful to me at the present moment. I am smoking a choice Havana-de-cabbaga as I write. Should one of the beaks chance to drop into this study there would be trouble for yours truly. With a machine such as I have described stationed behind the bookcase, for instance, I could go on smoking until further orders without fear of detection. (You will never live to see such an invention on the market, Skinner. Cheap fags and rotten cigars will have done their fell work long before the machine you describe comes along.—ED.)

TOM REDWING:

I have visions of the time when an ordinary fishing-smack will be navigated by wireless. I understand that at present engine-driven craft have been experimented with, and that the results have been fairly successful. With sailing-boats, however, the task is rendered more difficult. When science reaches this stage of perfection my old dad—if he's alive—will simply have to sit at home in his cottage and direct his fishing-boat by means of wireless control. Much safer than braving the fury of the elements night after night.

Supplement i.]

GOSLING:

What I says is this 'ere. I don't 'old with these 'ere preventions, as ever was. But if some brainy merchant put his think-box to the task of preventing a machine wot did a porter's work for 'im, I'd rejoice and be exceedin' glad.

BILLY BUNTER:

The day is not far distant, and I shudder to think of it, when we shall all take our food in tabloyd form. I understand that a crack-brained sientifick idiot is at present devoting his labers to the discuvvery of a process whereby all foods and likkers can be turned into tabloyd form. Fancy eating a wafer about one inch square and being told that it was the equivalent to a cut off the joint and two veg. My stomach revolts at the bare thought. This sientifick idiot says that such a process would elliminhate the ills to which flesh is hair. (A case in which invention is not better than cure.—ED.)

MR. QUELCH:

I should not be the least surprised if, at some future date, an automatic typewriter was invented. The present day unfortunate man who has innumerable words to write would simply have to speak into a microphone and the words would automatically appear in typescript. Such an invention attached to a typewriter would be of great service to me. My History of Greyfriars is a long way short of completion, whereas, with such a machine I could finish my labours in less than a week. The dictaphone heralds the approach of the automatic typewriter, and I, for one, shall be pleased to see such an invention come to pass. (So would we. Impots could be rattled off at a great rate, without any discomfort.—ED.)

TOM BROWN:

I am dreading the time when the automatic cane springs into existence. All old Quelchy will have to do is to order his victim to touch his toes, and then switch on the power of his automatic caning-machine. The trouble is that each stroke of the cane would be as severe as its predecessor, whereas at present there is always a sporting chance of Quelchy's arm tiring.



A HUNDRED quid!" Jack Jolly, the kaptin of the Fourth at St. Sam's, bellowed the words in a whisper, and playfully dotted his chum Merry on the probosphorous by way of emfasis.

"A hundred quid!" The chums of the Fourth were standing by a large poster, about fifty yards long by two rods or a cupple of ladders wide. On it in big tipe was the following:

"STUPENDO INVENTIONS' COMPETISHUN."

One Hundred Pounds (£100) will be awarded to the inventor of a patent vacuhum carpet sweeper that fulfils the rules layed down in this competishun. Motiff power must be serplied by hand, etc."

Jack Jolly shut his eyes and looked at the notiss, with his ears flapping intelligently—a habit which he usually indulged in when lost in deep thought. His pal Merry almost looked like his name. There was a miserable expresshun on his face that Jolly, even with his eyes shut, had never seen there b4.

"A hundred quid!" repeated Jolly for the first time. "I could just do with that little lot. I've been wanting to bye a pear of bed-room slippers for a long time."

Which just showed how ambitious was the hero of the Fourth at St. Sam's. When he set his mind on a thing he always had it. His mind was on the poster now, and several people who had congregated on the spot told him to fish somewhere else, as he was destructing the view of the oridience.

"I'm going to win that hundred quid," said Jolly. "I fancy myself as an inventor."

Merry nodded. He had great beleaf in his chum's inventive fakulties. He had already invented several tall stories which Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, had swallowed. And if Jolly was capable of inventing stories that masters swallowed, surely he was capable of inventing a macheene that swallowed dust. That was how Merry looked at the matter.

For the next two days Merry and Jolly were very busy in the school workshop. Only Bright was let into the secret—and Bright was the fifth member of the jolly quartet that shared the famous apartment in the Fourth Form passage.

At last Jack Jolly announced that his invention was completed. There remained now only to try it out. It was a minute detail that the macheene was so large that it wouldn't pass through the door of the workshop, and that Jolly had to take it to peaces and dissemble it again outside in the yard. Jolly always did his work thoroughly.

The three juniors created quite a stir amongst their schoolfellows when they marched into the dining-hall with their patent vacuhum carpet sweeper between them. It was a weerd and wonderful affair. If you closed your eyes quickly and took a squint at it the first depression you received was that of a hippopotomusus' mouth. There was a huge canvas sack made of linen attached to the square silinder. This silinder was like the gentleman's sock—opened at both ends. Inside the huge mouthpiece were a number of elektric fans, that were driven by an

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ordinary currant of air. That currant of air, serprising as it may seem, deer readers, was dispensed by Jack Jolly's waving a fan—an ordinary Chinese Japanese paper fan from Wapping.

Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, jumped to his feet in amazement as the weerd processhun bearing the invention appeared in sight.

"Jolly!" he thundered—and a lightning hush fell upon the whole assembly. "How dare you storm into the dining-room in this manner! What is that xtrordinary object you are carrying?"

"An invention," said Jolly meckly. And he dropped his eyes to the floor. (Nobody attempted to pick them up, however.)

"A whatter?" almost screemed Mr. Lickham.

Jack Jolly repeated his stsmment for the first time.

"How dare you waste your substance in idle inventions?" barked Mr. Lickham, baring his teeth, and his right arm. "You are sent here to be eddicated. What do you think you are going to do with that absereid contrapshun?"

"Win a hundred quid!" replied Jolly. "This patent vacuhum carpet sweeper will carry off the first prize in the competishun or my name's not Muggins."

"Hindeed!" said Mr. Lickham dryly, licking his moist lips. "A hundred pounds!"

The master's eyes glinted evilly. What wouldn't he do to possess a hundred quid at that moment! He had been dodging the serving of a summons for non-payment of his lawndry bill for three years now.

"Yes, sir, a hundred pounds," said Jolly. "I shall be able to buy my pear of bed-room slippers, after all."

"You will do nothing of the such!" replied Mr. Lickham sternly, with a cheery grin. "I could not countenance such xtravagence. I shall take it upon myself to confiskate that contrapshun. Hand it over this moment!"

But b4 Jack Jolly could obey his Form master's summons, a man, whose blue-pink-white whiskers danced breezily on his clean-shaven face, appeared in the dining-hall, holding a blue paper that looked like a summons in his mouth.

Mr. Lickham darted back, with a cry of fear, as his gaze fell on the newcummer.

"I must not be seen," he roared quietly. "That man must not see me. Save me, Jolly, and I'll be your jolly pal for life!"

"Whom do you want?" asked Jack Jolly, retreating forwards across the newcummer's line of root.

"I want a Mr. Lickham," said the newcummer, towering below his diminootive qeschuner. "Is he here?"

THE GREYFRIARS CONCERT PARTY.

This troupe is merely asking for trouble if it sticks to its touring programme. Music has charms, but Bunter on the big bassoon is not an entertainment for everybody. I dare say you have noticed that some people do not understand high art. It is their misfortune. You cannot help them. If the musicians of Greyfriars do get going this season it is to be hoped that full consideration will be shown that section of the public which has not yet risen to the highest flights of minstrelsy.

"No, I'm not here," said Mr. Lickham, playing for safety.

"Good! Then I shall have to find him," said the other. "I want to meet Mr. Lickham badly. He's worth a few quid to me."

At the menshun of muneey Mr. Lickham's knees knocked together. He had been evading this summons from the County Court for the last three yeers, and had never been court. He eyed Jack Jolly appealingly, and jestikulated wildly, with his ears in the direckshun of the patent vacuhum carpet sweeper.

"Rubbish!" he said, in shorthand.

And Jack Jolly, who had been a "pit-man" in his old age (couldn't resist that joak), grasped his Chinese Japanese fan and directed the hippopotomusus' mouth of the carpet sweeper right at the newcummer. Himedately the fan began to create a suction in the square silinder, and, to the horror of the juniors, the man found himself drawn into the huge canvas sack that was attached to the patent vacuhum carpet sweeper. Not only that, but all the school crockery was drawn into the sack.

Mr. Lickham almost danced a foxtrot when he saw the man he had grown to hate and to dodge for three years disappear into the sack. At last he would be free.

"Put him in the rubbish heap in the back yard at the front!" cried the Form master.

The Fourth-Formers obeyed.

They collected up the huge sack, which Jolly thoughtfully tyed round the neck and detached from the main apperhatus and carted it away to the rubbish heap. The dustmen were just collecting the rubbish, and they soon bundled the sack into their cart.

And that was the last Mr. Lickham saw of the man who had been trying to serve him with a summons. He disappeared from the earth like the school dinner service. But to his horror he red in the newspapers the next morning that his uncle, General de Lickham Lickham, had passed away the day before, leaving him his ntire fortune. The papers stated that a special lawyer had gone down to St. Sam's with the last will and testament of the old general, in which he left all his muneey—four penny stamps and a threepenny bit, with a hole in it—to his nephew, Mr. Hecan Lickham, of St. Sam's.

And it afterwards transpired that the lawyer's remains were discuvered in an insinerator—I beleve that's where they burn all the rubbish in—and in his hand was a pile of ashes, which defectives from Scotland Yard claimed to be the missing will. But, of course, it was inelegible then, and to-day Mr. Lickham is as poore as he was to-morrow.

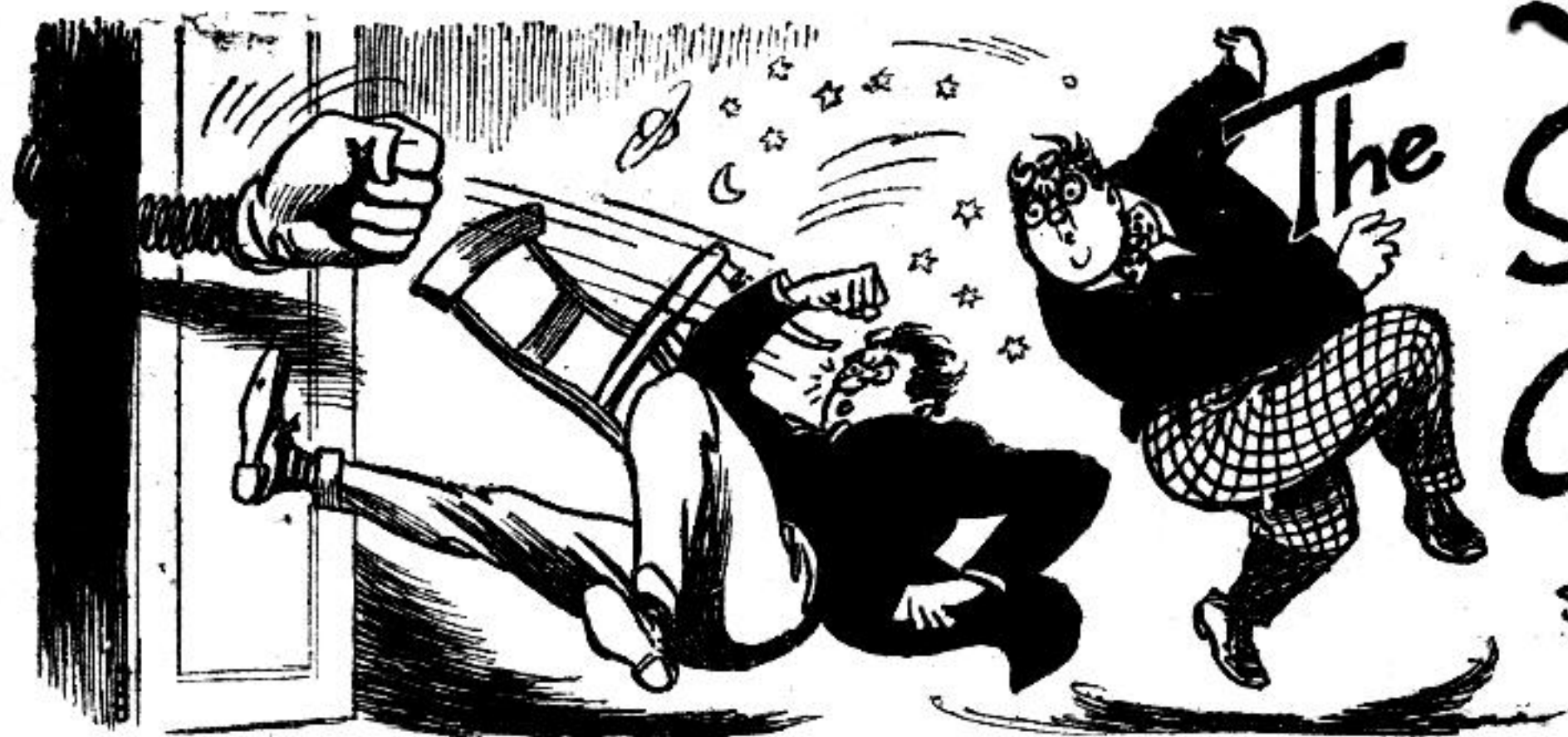
Had it not been for Jack Jolly's generosity, for Jolly won threepence-haypeny as a consolation prize in the grand vacuhum carpet sweeper competishun, Mr. Lickham would have served a life sentence in goal for non-payment of his laundry bill.

And, needless to say, the youthful inventor of St. Sam's had to igo his bed-room slippers.

THE END.

(And if you send me any more stories as "tall" as this one, Dicky, my lad, they'll share the same fate as the lawyer gentleman who had a "will" that wasn't his own.—Ed.)

[Supplement ii.]



The Secret of the Cupboard!

By
S. Q. I. FIELD.

"IT'S the limit!"

Bob Cherry made the remark as he turned a wrathful face from the cupboard in Study No. 1, which, like Mother Hubbard's celebrated cupboard, was bare.

"Absolutely the outside edge!" agreed Frank Nugent.

The Famous Five had just come in from a hard afternoon's practice at the nets. Their appetites had been sharpened to an unusual extent. But they had consoled themselves with the reflection that there was a good "feed" to come.

Harry Wharton had received an unexpected remittance that morning, and he had improved the shining hour by laying in a goodly supply of tuck. When the Co. had journeyed down to the nets Wharton had taken the precaution of locking the study cupboard. The cupboard had been locked when they returned to Study No. 1, but the "feed" had mysteriously disappeared. There certainly was no sign of the jam-tarts, cream-puffs, and the extra-special Genoa cake Wharton had purchased. The only article of food remaining in the cupboard was a tin of sardines. That tin of sardines had been purchased more than six months ago, and the Famous Five had ceased to take an interest in it. Evidently the mysterious plunderer who had "lifted" their grub had considered the tin of sardines as beneath his notice.

"Bunter!" suddenly exclaimed Wharton. "Look at those fat finger-marks on the paintwork of the door!"

"My hat!" breathed Bob Cherry wrathfully. "I'll scalp him!"

"Bunter all right," said Johnny Bull grimly, after examining the finger-marks on the door.

"The pigfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter is terrific," purred Inky. "He needs a needful lesson."

"You leave it to me," growled Johnny Bull. "I've got an idea. If it works in practice as well as it does in theory Bunter will give this study cupboard a wide berth in the future."

"What's the idea?" asked Wharton.

"Lend me your ears," said Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five sat down at the study table and listened to Johnny Bull's brain-wave. At the conclusion of the scheme Harry Wharton chuckled.

"The very thing!" he exclaimed.

"Top-hole!" agreed Bob Cherry. Whilst Hurree Singh agreed that the "top-holefulness was terrific."

For the next two days Johnny Bull was busy with springs, padding, hammers and screwdrivers, and sounds of labour proceeded from the interior of Study No. 1. At last everything was in readiness.

Supplement iii.]

"We've got to prime the fat rotter with a yarn about a feed," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, that will be easy enough!" said Wharton. "Bunter would swallow any story concerning grub."

"He'll get more than he bargains for this time," said Johnny Bull. "I've fixed the stunt in the cupboard, and it works like a clock!"

"Good egg!"

The Famous Five were so deeply engrossed in the discussion of their "stunt" that they failed to observe that the study door was slightly open. Had they been able to see through the thick oaken door they would have observed the fat, crouching form of William George Bunter—tying his bootlace. It was a remarkable thing, but Bunter's shoelaces had a happy knack of coming undone just when he most wanted them to—usually outside an open door.

The fat junior's ears tingled as he heard his name used freely in the discussion, and in equal measure rose his indignation. Bunter was a very virtuous and guileless youth—in his own imagination. And to hear the disparaging terms uttered by the Famous Five against a Bunter was enough to send all the fighting blood of the Bunter de Bunters surging through the fat junior's frame.

"Beasts!" he muttered wrathfully, as he moved away from Study No. 1. "Rotters! Just as if I should be interested in a beastly feed. But they won't catch me with their stunt. He, he, he! I'll turn the tables on them."

Bunter sat down in Study No. 7 immersed in deep thought. It wasn't often that the Owl was given to thinking; Nature had not given him sufficient of the wherewithal to indulge in such a practice. But this occasion found Bunter's mentality at its best. He had not the faintest idea what lay behind the cupboard door in Study No. 1, but he knew instinctively that it was something decidedly unpleasant. Whereat the Owl's fat brain pictured a list of names of his schoolfellows whom he bore a

grudge—imaginary or otherwise. Their names were legion, but at last Bunter decided upon one particular person whom he detested more than the others. And that unfortunate person was Gerald Loder, the prefect. Here was a chance to get even.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "I shall be killing two birds with one stone. I'll teach Wharton to lock his study cupboard and lay traps for me. Anyone would think that I wanted his measly grub. The last feed was a rotten one, anyway. Not that I opened the study cupboard with one of Fishy's keys; I should hope such a practice was beneath the dignity of a Bunter. I—"

So engrossed had the fat junior been in his own thoughts that he failed to notice that Peter Todd had entered the study, and that Peter was accompanied by Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove carried a large parcel in his hand.

"So it was you, old fat top, who wolfed our last lot of grub, was it?" asked Harry Wharton, in a tone more suggestive of reproof than anger.

"Not at all," said Bunter hastily. "I know nothing about your grub, Wharton. I didn't borrow a cupboard key from Fishy—you ask him. Besides, the cake was rotten. Not that I went anywhere near your study on Wednesday."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"All right, Bunter," said Wharton good-naturedly. "I'll forgive you. But you keep your fat hands off this parcel. This is going to my young cousin at Belmont. It's his birthday to-morrow, and I'm sending him a parcel of tuck. I'll run it down to the post-office to-night."

Bunter sniffed.

"I wouldn't touch that parcel with a barge-pole," he said.

And for once in a way Bunter was telling the truth.

Wharton walked out of the study talking with Peter Todd. Bunter heard the captain of the Remove remark to Peter that he was going to lock the parcel in his cupboard. That, no doubt, was really intended for Bunter's ears.

"He, he, he!" chuckled the Owl. "Wharton thinks I've bitten the bait. He, he, he! I'll bet Loder does!"

The fat junior, still chucking to himself, hung about the passages until Wharton and his chums went down to the cricket. Then he scuttled away to Loder's study. The unpopular prefect was at home.

"I say, Loder—" began Bunter breathlessly.

"Outside!" roared Loder.

"But I believe they are going in for smoking!" gasped Bunter.

(Continued on next page.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 854.

**ARE YOU FOND
of
CLIMBING?**

See what Harry Wharton
& Co. have to say on the
subject in their

NEXT SUPPLEMENT!

THE SECRET OF THE CUPBOARD!

(Continued from previous page.)

"Eh?" exclaimed Loder, interested at once. "Who's smoking?"

Loder had risen to the bait like a fish to a worm.

"Wharton and his crowd!" exclaimed Bunter virtuously. "I heard them say that the smokes were safe enough in the study cupboard. They've just gone out."

Loder rose to his feet, a malignant gleam in his eye. This looked like a gilt-edged opportunity of taking a rise out of the Famous Five. He picked up an ashplant and followed Bunter into the Remove passage.

Study No. 1 was deserted when Bunter and Loder pushed open the door. The prefect's eyes gleamed as they rested on the cupboard behind which, according to Bunter's story, were "smokes."

Loder pulled into view a bunch of keys, and after some difficulty found one that fitted the lock. He turned the key, and a grunt of satisfaction escaped his lips. But the satisfaction only half lived, as it were, for no sooner had the key released the levers of the lock when the cupboard door flew open, and a huge object shaped after a giant's fist leaped out.

Crash!
"Yaroooooooh!"
The "fist" caught Loder full on his long nose and sent him sprawling. Bunter, who had remained directly behind Loder in his anxiety to see what the cupboard contained, got the full benefit of Loder's fall. The fat junior, howling piteously, was lifted off his feet and finally landed in the fender.

"Yow-ow-yaroo!" groaned Loder, dabbing a handkerchief to a stream of crimson that was issuing from his nasal organ.

"Grooooooh! Yowp!" wailed Bunter, feeling himself over tenderly. He certainly had not bargained for this treatment. His gaze rested resentfully on the huge "fist" held in readiness by a many-coiled spring that was fastened to the rear of the cupboard. And even Bunter understood its simple mechanism. While the door of the cupboard was locked the "fist" was held in check. Once the door was opened the spring was released. And the person opening the door got the full benefit of the fist.

But Billy Bunter had little time to appreciate fully Johnny Bull's invention, for Loder was feeling for his ashplant. The prefect realised that he had walked into a trap—a painful trap at that. And Loder was prepared to make his decoy smart for his cheek. But Billy Bunter showed great presence of mind for once in a way. He jumped to his feet and bolted from the study, whilst Loder, hot on his trail, ran full tilt into the Famous Five.

It would be a merciful thing to draw a veil over the remainder of that eventful afternoon. Loder was always looking for trouble, and on this occasion he got it—got considerably more than he wanted.

But the outcome of Johnny Bull's invention was that Bunter never tampered with the cupboard in Study No. 1 for many days to come. In dragging Loder to the slaughter, as it were, Bunter had fully intended to kill two birds with one stone.

But even William George Bunter's powerful intellect had failed to foresee that he himself would constitute one of the "birds."

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 854.

INVENTIONS CHATTER!

By Bob Cherry.

I HEAR that Billy Bunter is inventing a new story for the especial benefit of Mr. Quelch. It transpires that Bunter hasn't done his prep. If I know anything of Quelchy, it will have to be something entirely new—for Quelchy wasn't born yesterday.

Skinner has invented a mixture which he claims will alleviate the effects of a caning if rubbed on the palms of the hands before castigation. Skinner is putting this new process up for sale, and at time of writing he is doing a roaring trade. Methinks the buyers will be roaring, too, when the preparation is put to the test.

Mr. Prout has invented a new golf club. He is playing Sir Hilton Popper on the links next week, and he hopes to beat him. If Prouty's golfing is anything like his shooting, I have no doubt that he will "beat" Sir Hilton Popper—if he stands within striking distance of this new club. We would advise Sir Hilton to "pad" himself before entering the lists. It might be said of Mr. Prout's golfing that "the first time he hit the ball he missed it—the second time he hit it in the same place."

Coker has been talking about inventing a safety device which he intends to fix to his motor-bike, for the special benefit of careless pedestrians. It would be more to his credit if he scrapped the bike and had done with it. There's not much safety for anyone when Coker's running amok on his stink-bike.

I understand that Loder of the Sixth has invented a special card-table with a reversible top, which answers to the pressure of a lever. No doubt he hopes that this device will save him from disgrace should a master happen to look into his study when the "game is fast and furious." It would serve him right if the "reversible top" refused to work at the required moment. There's no room for card-tables or Loders at Greyfriars.

Maully has just confided in me that he once knew a fellow—a heavy sleeper—who used to tie a lighted candle to his big toe when he went to bed. There was sufficient fat in the candle to keep the wick alight for eight hours, at the expiration of which time the burning wick would drop on the flesh of the heavy sleeper, causing him to leap from his bed. I shouldn't advise Maully to adopt such a drastic measure. It would be a "burning" shame if the bedclothes caught alight, for instance.

Dicky Nugent is starting a new society under the guise of "The Invention of Croolty to Fags." I presume he means prevention.

St. Jim's boasts an inventor of no small merit in Bernard Glyn. But some of Glyn's "inventions" have been wash-outs. I remember the time when I had

occasion to visit Tom Merry at St. Jim's in connection with a cricket-match. Bernard Glyn was in the laboratory trying to invent a new powder. It was only partly successful, however. The powder nearly blew the roof off the laboratory, and Glyn went about St. Jim's for the next few months practically bald. At the time of the explosion I was talking to Tom Merry. When the rumpus had died down, I looked for Tom, but I had to walk down two corridors before I found him.

Wun Lung is busy inventing another new kite. He told me the original model would fly for hours without needing any control from the ground. It did. Wun Lung launched the kite three days ago. It sailed up in the air to a dizzy height, and has never been seen since.

Bunter bought a pair of water-wings yesterday. They were really remarkable things to look at. The inventor claimed that they would support any weight up to a ton. But he's either a first-class fibber, or Bunter is putting on more weight than we give him credit for. They supported our tame porpoise in the Sark for exactly half a second, after which both disappeared. We salvaged Bunter all right, but the water-wings, like the lady in the song, are "gone and lost for ever."

I would warn any petty pilferers that Study No. 1 has a special way of dealing with grub raiders. There's a nice surprise packet behind the cupboard door for any chap nosing after our grub. It's a rare knock-out.

ODE TO A PIN!

By Alonzo Todd.

AS I passed by a draper's shop,
I chanced its windows to look in.
What struck my eye and bade
me stop,
Was just an ordinary pin.

My Uncle Ben has often said
The pin's a really good invention.
Such thoughts from uncle's worthy head
I always view with close attention.

I really think you will admit
The pin it wants a lot of beating.
Simplicity? It's simply it!
Hail, inventor, herewith greeting!

I must confess I've seen the point,
And felt it, too, on some occasions,
Quite near an unprotected joint,
When I've been lost in meditations.

Such use, of course, is misapplied
By fellows in the Form-room who
Sit next to me on either side,
And make me utter "Ow! Yaroooh!"

The pin is found—well, everywhere;
'Tis indeed a boon—a blessing.
Its usefulness I here declare
Extraordinary when dressing.

Fellows say without dissension
That the pin is here to stay.
Ranks a truly great invention;
What do my dear readers say?

I would like to meet the johnny
Who gave the world a boon like this.
Shake his hand and call him bonny.
But that's a treat I'm doomed to miss.

[Supplement iv.]



(Continued from page 12.)

The juniors grinned.

"But why on earth should the man want to biff into the vaults under Greyfriars?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Nothing there, excepting damp and dust and spiders and cobwebs and frogs and things."

"I do not know his esteemed motive; but he has one, and it is a bad one," answered the nabob quietly. "You may as well ask why was he trying to keep it secret that he was exploring the Priory vaults? His motive is an esteemed mystery, but he has a motive. My esteemed suspicion is that he was then seeking the subterranean passage to the school, and, having failed, he has spoofed the worthy and ludicrous Head into taking him on here as a cricket coach, and has taken Gosling's key. Someone last night oiled the lock of the vaults door, and used the key. My excellent opinion is that it was the execrable Blagden."

The chums of the Remove looked at Inky, and looked at one another. The suggestion was probable enough, if only a motive could have been found for the man's secret explorations. Such a motive it was hard to guess. Yet certainly the man must have had a motive for rooting about in the Priory vaults, and seeking to keep his presence there a secret; and for the same motive he might be seeking to gain the free run of the school vaults.

"I know!" ejaculated Bob suddenly.

"Go it!"

"He used to go blagging in the vaults in the old days. Perhaps he dropped a cigarette-holder or something, and now he's come back to find it."

"You silly ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

Bob chuckled.

"Well, that's the only thing I can think of," he said.

"Anyhow, somebody has the key, and goes rooting into the vaults at night," said Harry. "It wouldn't be Loder, as that ass Bunter thinks; there's too much fuss been made about the missing key for Loder to think of following Blagden's old example. And I shouldn't think any of the fellows would want to explore the vaults at night—they're rather creepy. A fellow would do it on a half-holiday, same as we did last term. But it looks as if somebody went down last night."

"I thinkfully suppose that it was the esteemed Blagden," said Hurree Singh. "It was Bunter mentioning his name that put it into my head. It is not certain, but it is very likely. And if it was this excellent rotter, it is clear that he came to Greyfriars specially for the purpose; so he must have a strong motive. He is a bad hat, and he is after no good."

"That's pretty certain," said Wharton.

"Therefore, my esteemed chums, I suggestively propose that we keep an open eye on the vaults to-night—"

"After lights out?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes; and we shall see who uses the key to the vaults. If it is a Greyfriars fellow, we can let him rip. If it is the excellent and disgusting Blagden, we can make him explain himself."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That's not a bad idea," he said. "I know the man's a bad hat, and if he's up

to some shady trick, he ought to be shown up. It's known that there are secret doors and passages down below, and Blagden may have found some of them out in the old days when he was here. If he's bad enough he might let thieves into the school by way of the vaults, now he's got the key. It sounds rather thick, but if he's got the key he's got to explain himself and give it up."

There was general assent to that.

"I say, you fellows—"

The discussion ceased all at once as Billy Bunter butted into Study No. 1. The fat junior eyed the five inquisitively through his big spectacles.

"What were you fellows talking about?" he asked.

"About ten minutes," said Bob humorously.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Take a little run, old fat bean," suggested Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, do you think it's old Quelch who bagged that key?"

"Quelch!" yelled the juniors.

The Owl of the Remove nodded sagely.

"Looks like it to me," he said.

"What do you think? I saw him going down that passage to-day, and watched him—I mean, I didn't watch him, because I'm incapable of such a thing, but I happened to notice that he was nosing over the vaults door. Now, he never goes there—so what do you think?"

"I think you're a born idiot!" said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And I think you're a burbling chump!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"And I think I'm going to bung this cushion at you, Bunter," said Johnny Bull, taking aim.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter vanished.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night!

"**Q**UIET!" murmured Harry Wharton.

It was close on midnight.

After lights-out that night there were five fellows in the Remove dormitory who did not sleep. The Famous Five were quite determined to test Hurree Singh's suspicion, and ascertain whether Blagden, once of the Greyfriars Sixth, was playing some secret and shady game in the old school. But by ten o'clock Nugent was fast asleep, and by half-past ten Johnny Bull was deep in the land of dreams. When, at half-past eleven, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh turned out of bed, and shook his comrades in turn, Nugent and Johnny Bull answered only by inarticulate grunts, and the nabob grinned and passed them by. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, however, turned out.

By that time they were not quite so keen on testing Inky's theory; the matter seemed rather different at midnight. But the nabob was resolved; and his chums turned out to back him up. Three fellows were quite enough, so Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent were left to repose. The trio dressed quietly in the darkness, put on rubber shoes, and left the Remove dormitory.

The House was very still and silent. The last light had been extinguished; the last door had closed.

But the juniors knew their way over every foot of Greyfriars, and they were soon downstairs and in the vaulted passage that led to the oaken door in the arch. Wharton and Bob manfully suppressed their yawns. The nabob did not yawn, however; he was wide-awake

and very keen and watchful. His chums had noticed, too, that he had slipped a heavy ebony ruler into his pocket, evidently to be used as a weapon in case of need.

In a recess near the entrance of the vaulted passage the three juniors waited, and heard midnight toll out from the clock-tower. After that the minutes dragged by on leaden wings.

But suddenly the nabob gave a start, and his hand pressed Wharton's arm in the darkness.

There was a sound from the silence of the great building—a sound that was not the creaking of an old wainscot, or the scuttling of a rat behind the ancient walls.

It was a soft, stealthy footfall.

The three juniors thrilled at the sound. Someone, treading softly and stealthily, was approaching in the deep darkness. Evidently—for it could not be doubted—it was the unknown purloiner of the vaults key. The passage led nowhere else.

It might be some adventurous junior, though that was extremely unlikely. It might be some "blagging" senior, like Loder or Carne; but that was not really probable. Inexplicable as the man's conduct seemed, it was most likely that Inky was right, and that it was Philip Blagden. At all events, the question was soon to be put to the proof.

The stealthy footsteps passed within a few feet of the hidden juniors, and they almost held their breath.

The footsteps went straight on to the arch of the door at the end of the passage.

Then a light gleamed suddenly.

It was the gleam of a pocket-torch.

Silent, almost breathless, the juniors watched that flicker of light playing on the old lock of the door. The man who held the torch was a mere shadow; but they could discern that it was a man, not a boy. There was a faint sound as the key was inserted in the lock—a faint click as it turned. But for the well-oiled state of lock and key, there would have been a heavy grinding, grating noise. But the oil had done its work and there was only a slight sound.

The old iron hinges must have been oiled, too, for the heavy oak door opened almost silently. A cold breath of air came like a gust along the passage.

Listening intently in the stillness, the juniors heard the key withdrawn from the lock, and then the door closed. The man—whatever he was—had passed through, and shut the door behind him.

Bob Cherry whispered:

"We can follow him, if we like. The door doesn't lock on the other side, you remember."

"Hush!" breathed Wharton.

With utter amazement, the juniors heard footsteps in the gloom. Someone else was up and stirring that night.

They kept close in the dark recess, and held their breath as the footsteps came along the passage.

The unseen man passed them, and stepped on along the vaulted passage to the oaken door, as the first man had done.

Again a light gleamed out.

But this time it was a match; and in the flicker of the match the juniors, staring along the dark passage, recognised the man who had struck the light.

It was Mr. Quelch, their Form-master. He had his back to them, but they knew him at once. He was examining the keyhole of the oaken door.

The juniors remembered what Bunter had told them. Undoubtedly Mr. Quelch had discovered that the lock had

been oiled, and so knew that the missing key had been used the night before. He was now out of bed for precisely the same reason as the chums of the Remove—to discover who was the mysterious explorer of the Greyfriars vaults.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This is getting thick."

"Hush!"

"As I thought!" In the deep stillness they heard Mr. Quelch mutter the words. "The door is unlocked now! We shall see."

The match was applied to a candle in a candlestick the Remove master carried in one hand. The door was pushed open, and the Remove master passed through. He left the oaken door wide open behind him. The flickering light of the candle faded away down the stone stairs of the vaults beyond the oaken door.

"Well, my hat!" said Harry Wharton. "So Quelch is after him! No need for us to worry."

"We are followfully going on, my esteemed chums."

"No need for us, with Quelch after the merchant," said Bob.

But the nabob, without replying, led the way along the vaulted passage, and his comrades followed him. Cold and almost noisome air came from the staircase beyond the doorway, and all was dark. With the nabob in the lead, the three juniors crept down the stairs.

At the foot of the stone staircase the vaults opened, and there they caught the light of Mr. Quelch's candle again. The Remove master had crossed the first vault, and paused in the gloomy arch that gave admittance to the second. As the three juniors reached the bottom of the steps they heard his voice.

"Philip Blagden! What are you doing here?"

There was a startled cry from the second vault. The gleam of an electric lamp was suddenly shut off.

Mr. Quelch placed his candlestick on a stone ledge, and stood like a grim image.

"I have seen you, Philip Blagden!" His voice was cold and cutting. "I know now who purloined the key from Cosling's lodge. I did not expect to find that it was you. But I have seen you, and you may as well show yourself."

There was a muttered curse in the darkness, and then Blagden came into the radius of the flickering candlelight. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, remained silent, motionless, on the stone stair, breathlessly watching the strange scene.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Desperate Measures!

PHILIP BLAGDEN stopped a few paces from the Remove master, and fixed his restless, gleaming eyes upon him. Mr. Quelch's manner was cold, contemptuous, suspicious.

"So you have been watching me, Mr. Quelch?"

"Not at all," said the Remove master coldly. "I observed to-day that the lock had been oiled, and guessed that the key had been used. I decided to investigate the matter—not in the least expecting to find you here. What explanation have you to give?"

Blagden did not reply.

"You have some motive for this conduct, which you will be required to explain fully," said the Remove master. "I have not forgotten your old reputation in this school, Blagden. I hesitated

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A FORTNIGHT'S TIME!

very much to concur in the Head's opinion that you should be given a chance here, but I would not be hard on a man who was unfortunate. But I have observed you very carefully, and have come to the conclusion that if you have changed since you left Greyfriars, you have not changed for the better. Now I find you surreptitiously lurking in the school vaults—entered by a stolen key. What does it mean?"

"Nothing with any harm in it—"

"Spare your falsehoods," said the Remove master icily. "You can explain to me or to the Head to-morrow, as you choose."

"Listen to me," said Blagden, eyeing the Remove master evilly. "I swear that what I am doing means no harm to anyone. I cannot explain, but that is true."

"If there is no harm in it, you can explain," said Mr. Quelch. "In fact, you will have to explain fully or leave the school to-morrow."

Blagden gnawed his lip.

"I cannot leave the school," he said.

"You will leave to-morrow morning unless you fully satisfy both the Head and myself—and in any case you will not be allowed to enter these vaults again."

Blagden's eyes burned. The juniors, watching his face from the darkness of the stair, were startled by the evil in it.

"I must explain, then," said Blagden.

"This was my only chance of finding what I seek. I cannot leave Greyfriars, and I cannot be barred from entering the vaults. Had the old passage from the Priory been still open, you would never have seen me here." He came a step nearer the Remove master. "I will tell you all, Mr. Quelch, and you will pledge your word not to betray me. In return, you shall share all that I find."

"You speak in riddles. What do you mean?"

"You know that when I was at Greyfriars I had a key to the vaults. I used to descend here with my friends—you know why—"

"To smoke and gamble. And you were found here, and expelled for your rascality. I know."

"True. But that was not all," said Blagden in a low voice. "I learned my way about the vaults—every inch of them. I had to. More than once I had a narrow escape from detection. And I learned more than you would guess. You have heard the legend of the treasure of Greyfriars, Mr. Quelch."

The Remove master started. Three juniors, hidden in the darkness of the stair, started, too. It was like a gleam of light where all had been dark.

"A mere legend," said Mr. Quelch.

"Not a mere legend by any means," said Blagden. "There were many stories of the treasure—one that the monks had buried their gold when Henry the Eighth dissolved the monastery here; another that smugglers had accumulated a treasure; a third that a gang of pirates in the old days had used these vaults as a treasure-house, reaching them by a secret passage from the caves by the sea. It was related that the sea-robbers used to hold their revels in a secret vaulted chamber under the old monastery."

"Absurd!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Not absurd," said Blagden, "for when I was a Greyfriars boy, and passed a great deal of time in these vaults, I discovered clues that were an undoubted guide to the lost treasure."

"What?"

"Keep in with me, join me in this search, and I will tell you all," said Blagden, his eyes gleaming at the Remove master. "We shall share and share alike. Had I remained at Greyfriars in the old days, I think I should have made the discovery before I left school. As you know, I had to leave suddenly—and in such disgrace that I could not appear at Greyfriars again. I never forgot what I had learned, however, and often and often, while I was living by my wits, I thought of the Greyfriars treasure, and swore that I would yet find it and handle it. Then came the war—and for years I could take no measures. And after the war—"

He paused.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch.

"I will tell you everything, for you must join me," said Blagden. "After the war I was in prison—I was suspected of—never mind what. Anyhow, I was in a convict prison till a very recent date. The papers I have shown the Head belong to a seaman named Brown—"

"You stole another man's papers?"

"Exactly. I had to tell some story," said Blagden, with a shrug of the shoulders. "The Head would not have admitted me here to search for the treasure on my own account."

"I think you must be out of your senses!" exclaimed the Remove master. "The treasure if it exists, and if it be found, does not belong to you. Half would go, by law, to the Government—"

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Blagden started convulsively as the three juniors rushed him down. Before he could stir Wharton's fist smote him, and he reeled, and his savage grasp on the Remove master relaxed. The Form-master lay gasping on the stone flags, unable to help. (See Chapter 10.)

the remainder would belong to the Foundation of Greyfriars. No doubt you would be allowed a proportion as the discoverer."

Blagden laughed harshly.

"I know that! That would not satisfy me."

"If your story is true, you have only to tell it to the Head, and he would grant every facility for the search," said Mr. Quelch.

The man laughed again.

"I am not seeking a fortune for others," he said. "I am seeking wealth for myself. This is my last chance, and I am not losing it. I have told you everything frankly. Go in with me, and I will tell you the clue I have discovered—which I am assured will lead to the discovery of the treasure."

Mr. Quelch eyed him with incredulous disgust.

"Are you asking me to join you in a criminal enterprise?" he asked scornfully. "Are you out of your senses?"

"I am a desperate man, Mr. Quelch."

"Pah! You are a rascal, and the sooner the gates of Greyfriars close behind you the better," said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"You will not join with me?"

"You must be mad to ask such a thing. Certainly not."

"Will you swear not to betray me, or to interfere with my search in any way?"

"Nothing of the kind. I shall acquaint the Head with the whole matter to-morrow morning."

"Then——" breathed Blagden.

"Then what?" snapped the Remove master.

"Then there is only one way."

And with that the ruffian sprang at the Remove master like a tiger. There was a crash as Mr. Quelch went down on the stone flags, with the ruffian's fingers gripping his throat.

The Remove master struggled.

But he was no match for the ruffian, and he struggled in vain. His starting eyes looked up at Blagden, gleaming wildly in the candle-light. There was no mercy in the ruffian's face—his eyes burned down at his victim, and the cruel

grip of his fingers grew tighter and tighter on the Form-master's throat.

For some moments the three juniors on the stair had stood spellbound, utterly taken by surprise and dazed by the terrible scene. But they realised what was passing—that the Remove master's life was at stake; that the ruffian had become utterly desperate at the thought of being baulked, and for ever, in his search for the hidden treasure of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton leaped from the stair, and rushed forward to the rescue of the Remove master. Bob Cherry and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were only a second behind him.

Blagden started convulsively as the three rushed him down—before he could stir Wharton's fist smote him, and he reeled, and his savage grasp on the Remove master relaxed. He leaped up and sprang at Wharton, and the captain of the Remove almost crumpled up in his grip. Bob Cherry grasped at the ruffian and held on. Mr. Quelch, gasping exhaustedly on the stone flags, was unable to help. There was a sudden gleam of steel in the candle-light—the ruffian had a knife in his hand!

Crash!

A heavy fall followed.

"It is luckily fortunate that I brought this esteemed ruler," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

The heavy ruler, descending with all the strength of the nabob's sturdy arm, had struck Blagden fairly on the head, and stunned him. Philip Blagden, once of the Greyfriars Sixth, lay senseless on the flags.

Bob bent over the gasping Remove master.

"All serene now, Mr. Quelch!" he panted.

But for some minutes Mr. Quelch could only gasp and gasp. He staggered to his feet at last.

"Watch that ruffian!" he panted.

"The esteemed and ludicrous villain is quite safe, sahib," said Hurree Singh. "If he should move, I shall crackfully smite him again on his ridiculous napper."

But Philip Blagden did not move. He

was still unconscious when the alarm had been given, and half a dozen of the Greyfriars Sixth came down into the vaults, in amazement and wonder. When Philip Blagden came to his senses he was safe under lock and key.

Greyfriars heard the story the next day with amazement.

It was a nine days' wonder; and the old school buzzed with the strange story.

Many and various were the stories told of the supposed Greyfriars treasure—some fellows believed in it more or less. New boys were often set looking for that treasure, by way of pulling their legs. But now it seemed certain that the old legend had some foundation in fact—and the school was agog with the excitement of it.

Whether the treasure had a real existence or not, Philip Blagden had no further chance of seeking it. From the school he went to Courtfield gaol, to stand his trial for the murderous attack on Mr. Quelch; and from Courtfield he went to penal servitude for five years—as he richly deserved.

He went—and was almost forgotten. But the treasure was not forgotten. What "clues" Blagden might have discovered he never told, and no one could guess. But more than half the fellows in the school resolved to hunt for those clues. It was almost impossible to keep the fellows out of the vaults for days and weeks afterwards—and lines and lickings fell as thick as leave in Vallombrosa.

"We're on in this!" Bob Cherry declared, in Study No. 1. "If anybody's going to find that giddy treasure it's little us."

"What-ho!" agreed the Co.

The Famous Five were very keen on it. So were nearly all the Greyfriars fellows. But the search for the mysterious treasure, and what came of it, is another story.

THE END.

(And a jolly good story it is, too, chums! You'll be sorry if you miss next Monday's long complete yarn of Greyfriars—"Treasure Trove!" Make sure of your MAGNET by ordering it NOW!)

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BUCCANEERS The MAIN!

No. 6.—THE MYSTERY OF
THE CRIMSON CAVE!

(Continued from page 2.)

He never went about unarmed, and instantly his hand went into his coat-pocket to grasp a loaded pistol which was lying there, while at the same time he looked in every direction at the dense foliage and undergrowth which surrounded him.

Once more the ominous voice sounded in the ears of the buccaneer, to whom it echoed with a strangely haunting note.

"Fire, if you dare, Sir Harry Morgan, traitor! But I am the only man who can save you from those who seek your life, and if I am dead you are doomed!"

And now, at last, the buccaneer saw who was speaking to him.

Crouching among the choking undergrowth which grew between two pimento trees was a skeleton-like, black shape, partially covered with skins, and with circlets of rattling bones, dried serpents' heads, and other horrible objects dangling round his neck, wrists, and ankles.

And the face!

It was painted like a death-mask, and was distorted with hate, which also glittered in the sunken eyes.

Morgan knew that this was an Obi man—an escaped slave, who had fled to the forest, and then become a black wizard or medicine man. The Obi were men priests of the dark, mysterious religion of the black slaves, and claimed the power to set a spell of death on any white man they hated.

"How do you know me?" Sir Harry Morgan cried hoarsely. "You shall never live to threaten me again, you black dog!"

But, though his eyes touched his pistol, they refused to close on and draw it from his pocket. The glittering eyes of the Obi man seemed to fascinate and paralyse him.

"I know you, Sir Harry Morgan!" came the mocking, threatening response. "You cannot fire against me. Your crew are on your track to kill you. I will denounce you to them, and help them to capture you, unless you meet me at the Devil's Pine in the forest at midnight, and follow whither I lead, and do as I bid you! Fail to come, I say, and I will denounce you, and you will be doomed!"

With a shriek of mirthless laughter, the Obi man vanished. As he did so, the spell which had held Morgan seemed to fall from him, and he could have fired, but at that time it was too late.

It was in vain that he tried to track the mysterious Obi man through the impenetrable depths.

Baffled, he paused at last. As he did so, there came to his ears a deep, startling sound.

"The baying of bloodhounds!" he muttered. "Some escaped slave is being hunted through the forest!"

Scarcely had the words dropped from his lips when there burst through the brushwood near him a white youth of about seventeen, who was brave and handsome, despite that he was half naked, and that his flesh was branded by cruel floggings, and by the livid cinctures left by the fetters with which he had been loaded.

He was Arthur Chisholme, whom Morgan himself had sold into slavery.

The buccaneer knew him instantly, but the boy did not recognise his enemy; and, staggering towards Morgan, fell at his feet.

"Save me, if you know what pity is," he gasped. "The bloodhounds are hunting me for my life, and I can do nothing more for myself."

As he was speaking, the foremost bloodhound crashed through the undergrowth and leaped towards him, with gleaming, white fangs and rolling, bloodshot eyes. The powerful bloodhound was within a few feet of the crouching youth when Sir Harry Morgan drew his pistol and shot it through the head.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Avenged!

As the bloodhound rolled over in its death-agony, the disguised buccaneer raised Arthur from his crouching position and dragged him away through the forest.

"Come with me, poor youth," he said, in tones which seemed very compassionate. "I will give you food and shelter, and help you to escape those who are hunting you so cruelly."

Arthur was completely deceived, and little guessed that he was trusting himself to the guidance of a black-hearted, ruthless foe.

They eluded the other bloodhounds, and Morgan led the youth to his own plantation, where he concealed him in a secret chamber, and gave him food and drink.

And Arthur told Morgan how his tyrant planter master had treated him with such intolerable cruelty that he had fled from him.

"I was guarded so closely that this was the first chance I had of getting away during the seven years I have been a slave," Arthur said. "I felt that I would rather be torn to pieces by the bloodhounds than live such a life any longer, and I would sooner die than be dragged back to the plantation."

"Do not fear, poor youth!" said Morgan. "I will be your friend. I was a friend of your murdered father, and an enemy of that wretch, Morgan the buccaneer, who sold you into slavery. Trust in me, and I will help you to escape."

He spoke in such a soft, lying tone, that Arthur was further than ever from suspecting that he was not the good-hearted old Quaker he appeared to be.

But Morgan, the buccaneer, intended to betray Arthur to his doom.

The villain was sure of two things—that his betrayed crew were on his track, and would kill him if he did not flee from the plantation; and that the Obi man, for some reason or other, hated him, and wished to lure him to his doom.

Now, Morgan had heard—as had many others in Jamaica—rumours of the existence of a mysterious Crimson Cave, hidden in the buried heart of the forest.

"So I can kill two birds with one stone!" chuckled the villain. "I will trick Arthur Chisholme into meeting the Obi man in my place, and then, if the black leads him to the Crimson Cave, I can steal after them, and thus learn where the black slaves keep their hidden treasure."

It was a cunning plot, and the villain never doubted of its success.

It was close on midnight when Morgan aroused Arthur from a weary sleep. A profound stillness hung over the plantation, but the villain whispered:

"Quick! Your enemies have found you out, Arthur. Put on these things that I have brought, so that you may not be recognised, and then come with me, and I will guide you to safety."

Morgan had brought with him a complete facsimile of his own disguise—even to false beard and white hair. When Arthur had donned these, he presented a fair likeness to the disguised buccaneer, especially in a dim light.

Then Morgan led Arthur to the forest.

At last they came near to the Devil's Pine—a gnarled tree, which had been struck by lightning.

"I must stop here, to see that your enemies do not follow you, Arthur," Morgan whispered. "But I have found a new guide for you. Go on, and follow the man you will find waiting for you. Do not be alarmed by his hideous appearance. 'Tis but a disguise to frighten fools away."

Morgan, crouching among the undergrowth, saw Arthur meet the Obi man under the Devil's Pine, and then followed them as they went through the forest.

All that night, all the next day, and during a great part of the following night, they proceeded on their way.

At last they came to the mouth of the Crimson Cave.

Stealthily Morgan followed them, until he found himself in the heart of the cave, which was illuminated by a mysterious, phosphorescent, crimson glow.

Then he stepped on a hidden trap-door set in the floor of the cave. It crashed down before him, and he pitched headlong into a black, fathomless abyss, and the world never saw him again, alive or dead.

The Obi man was Zuba, who had fled to the forest to seek revenge on Morgan, and to find and rescue his young master.

Zuba made Arthur rich with the treasures of the cave, and then helped him to make his way to Kingston, where he proved how he had been unjustly sold by Morgan, and gained his liberty from his tyrant master.

THE END.

(Now look out for the next thrilling Buccaneer story—"Marooned on the Carib's Isle!"—which appears in next Monday's bumper issue of your favourite paper.)



"Save me, if you know what pity is," gasped the lad, falling at the feet of Morgan. "The bloodhounds are hunting me for my life!" Even as he spoke the foremost bloodhound crashed out of the undergrowth. On the instant, Morgan drew his pistol and shot the animal through the head. (See Chapter 2.)

WHAT DO THE PURPLE SANDALS CONTAIN?

The QUEST of the PURPLE SANDALS

No. 9.—THE SECRET OF THE SACRED RIVER!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Rescue!

A TUMBLING blue ocean and a sail like the white feather of a gull protruding from the water on the distant horizon—that was the vision before the eyes of a sun-bronzed man in tattered sailor's garb, standing on the high poop of a derelict windjammer somewhere among the isles of the East Indies.

The man had descended from the mainmast, which was one of the only two standing on the battered vessel, and for some minutes had remained motionless, gazing across the wide expanse of tropic sea.

The man was Ferrers Locke, the great English detective. The circumstances which had been responsible for his presence in that water-logged derelict were among the most amazing in the annals of his career.

Between two and three months previously, Ferrers Locke and his young assistant, Jack Drake, had solved the mystery of an amazing crime committed in Dulwich, near London. Professor Arnold Erskine, a noted scientist, had been foully assassinated in his home. Locke had proved definitely that the crime had been committed by a well-known Harley Street specialist in tropical diseases, named Dr. Harvey Kruse. Unfortunately, through no fault on the part of either Locke or Drake, this man, who proved himself to be one of the most amazing crooks in history, escaped from the country.

At first Ferrers Locke had been unable to discover the motive for the crime, but a midnight summons to Whitehall, where he had an interview with no less a personage than the British Home Secretary himself, threw a startling light on the mystery.

It appeared that the professor had discovered the formula for converting base metal into gold. Even the Home Secretary himself was not aware of the secret process, but he knew that there was a paper in existence on which the

formula was set out. The only other person who knew of the existence of this paper was Dr. Kruse.

The commission given to the detective was to find the secret formula and destroy it. At first his only clue was the last words spoken by the professor after the assassin's bullet had entered his breast—"Don't open the sandals—"

The quest of the sandals had taken Locke and Drake across the Atlantic and through the Dominion of Canada to Vancouver. There they had obtained a clue that a Hindu named Bhana Singh had come into possession of the purple sandals, and had taken passage in a steamship called the Sunderbund for Calcutta.

While waiting for a ship in which to follow, Locke and Drake had tried to capture Dr. Kruse, who, in disguise, had reached Vancouver. And this hunt had resulted in their being trapped aboard a four-masted barque, the Siwash Queen, on which Kruse, disguised as a Scandinavian sailor, known as the "Dutchy," was serving before the mast.

Kruse, with the object of raising money by the sale of some machinery among the cargo of the ship, induced the crew to mutiny. But Ferrers Locke had laid his plans well, and the attempt resulted in the capture of the super-crook.

Then Nature had taken a hand in the game. A violent storm had arisen, and the ship was so badly damaged that it was feared she would sink. At the eleventh hour Locke gave his captive a chance of life by releasing him from his shipboard prison. But instead of getting away in one of the two boats, Kruse had fallen and struck his head.

With room for but one more in the second boat, Locke had insisted on the men taking the injured skipper of the windjammer, while he himself had remained on the wreck. Instead of sinking, the Siwash Queen had become water-logged.

Locke had recaptured his arch-enemy by an astute ruse, and once more had him in a cage-like structure on a lower

deck. And the sight of that sail growing more distinct with the passing minutes set his heart beating high with hope that not only would he himself be saved, but that before many days should pass he would see the notorious Dr. Kruse safely behind the bars of an English gaol in Singapore.

Unable to find a telescope in the ship, Ferrers Locke remained on deck until the strange sail was within a few cables' length of the derelict. By this time he could make out that the craft was a native dhow with the towering stern which has been a feature of this type of sea-going vessel for a thousand years. The dhow had a crew of over a dozen half-naked brown men, whom Locke recognised to be Malays.

He had hoisted some bunting to the peak of the mainmast, and now, taking off his singlet, he waved it frantically in the air above his head. A response, in the form of a shout from one of the men, came to his ears faintly across the heaving blue water.

Hastily donning his singlet, Ferrers Locke made his way below, where his prisoner sat scowling behind heavy wooden bars.

"You will be interested to hear, Dr. Kruse," he said, "that there is every probability of our being transferred to a Malay dhow within the next fifteen minutes. From my point of view it is unfortunate that the rescuing vessel is not a British steamer. Matters would have been so much more simplified in dealing with you then. However, I want you to bear in mind that I am armed. Should you attempt any more of your tricks I shall shoot to kill!"

Dr. Kruse, bearded, and with a countenance as bronzed as that of the sleuth, gave a sneering laugh.

"To attempt to outwit the great Ferrers Locke would be impossible," he said. "I trust you have no objection to my being released from this cattle-pen before our rescuers come on board?"

"I have every objection," replied

Ferrers Locke. "My intention is to explain the situation to these men before we transfer to the dhow. That is," he added, as an afterthought, "if any of the beggars can speak English."

Leaving the captive, he went on deck and stood by the starboard rail on the forward wall-deck as the dhow came alongside.

No sooner had the great triangular sail come down with a rum than Locke heaved a line over the side for the men to make fast. As soon as this had been done, excited jabbering broke out among the crew of the dhow.

"Say, do any of you fellows speak English?" cried Locke.

The only response was a jabbering in the jargon of the Malay Peninsula.

Half a dozen of the little brown men swarmed over the side of the wind-jammer and clustered round the detective, plying him with questions. Racking his brains, Ferrers Locke strove to remember some of the Indian vernacular which he had known in the past days. But his attempts to convey the situation in a mixture of English and Indian brought no light of understanding to the faces of the native crew of the dhow.

It was clear that the little brown men were friendly disposed toward him, and would willingly take him aboard their craft, which he gathered was proceeding to Singapore. It was equally clear, from the way that the eyes of some of them began to rove towards the hatchways, that they intended to take a bit of loot out of the derelict vessel as well.

As the Malays showed their intention of going below, Ferrers Locke saw that the matter of his prisoner must be dealt with, without his having been able to offer an explanation.

Beckoning to his rescuers, Locke himself led the way below, and pointed out the prisoner in the cage-like structure.

"Prisoner!" said the sleuth. "Prisoner—you savvy? Must keep prisoner till dhow makes Singapore!"

But the little brown men were staring at the prisoner with saucer-like eyes and open mouths, clearly at a total loss to understand this extraordinary situation.

Dr. Kruse, standing upright in his prison, gazed from the little men to Ferrers Locke, his brow black as thunder.

"I think, Mr. Locke," he said, "you might have the decency to take off that padlock. It is—er—hardly the thing for a crew of dirty natives to see a white man in this undignified position!"

Locke shot the criminal a glance of unutterable contempt.

"A white man!" he echoed. "Heaven help the white race if there were many like you, you fiend! As I cannot convey you to the dhow in that cage I am forced to turn you loose. But I repeat my warning—any tricks, and you will get half an ounce of lead to digest!"

And he significantly tapped the hip-pocket of his tattered duck trousers. From the other hip-pocket he drew out a pair of handcuffs.

"Now, Dr. Kruse," he said, "place your wrists together and hold out your hands!"

"I'll be hanged if I do!" snarled Kruse.

"You'll be hanged whether you do or don't," answered Locke. "Anyway, you will remain where you are until you agree to my condition. If you prefer it, we will let these Malays depart in their dhow without us, and wait for another ship. Possibly we shall be more lucky. It may be a British vessel next time."

A look of cunning crept over the evil countenance of the master-crook, and

with a sudden movement he thrust out his gnarled hands. There was a metallic click, and the "darbies" snapped on his wrists.

Directly this had been accomplished Ferrers Locke unfastened the padlock and allowed his captive to come forth.

Plainly the Malays were puzzled in the extreme. They gesticulated and jabbered like apes. Locke again tried his hotch-potch of English and Indian, but without avail. Then a sudden thought struck him.

"Perhaps, Dr. Kruse," he said, "you could explain that we are now ready to leave the ship?"

The astute doctor regarded his captor through half-closed eyes which held a gleam of malicious humour.

"My dear Mr. Locke," he said sarcastically, "I am not a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. Malay, I am afraid, is not one of my accomplishments."

By signs a stocky little Malay with a face like seamed leather revealed his desire that the white men should go on deck. In friendly fashion Locke and Kruse were escorted by two or three of the crew of the dhow, and assisted from the derelict into the little craft that bobbed like a cork on the water alongside.

For over half an hour the dhow remained there close to the disabled wind-jammer. During this time the little brown men removed from the barque a number of articles and fittings which took their fancy.

When the transfer had been completed the great triangular sail was hoisted, and the dhow sheered off.

Ferrers Locke and Kruse were given seats on some dirty matting under the poop of the vessel, and some rice, dried fish, and acid water were handed to them for a meal.

Attempts were made to converse with them, but Locke could neither understand nor make himself understood, despite repeated efforts. Kruse, too, shook his head to questions that were put to him, his face as blank as that of his fellow-countryman.

As the day wore on the furrows settled deeper in Locke's brow.

Fortunately, the Malays had accepted the situation of his keeping Kruse in handcuffs, which he had feared they might have raised strong objections to. But he foresaw many problems ahead of him should the dhow be any great distance from port. Naturally, he himself had not the faintest idea of his position, save that they were somewhere among the East India islands.

As luck would have it, the dhow herself brought a measure of relief to his anxiety. The little craft rose and fell tremendously to the big swells of the ocean that had succeeded the typhoon. Locke himself was an excellent sailor, but within a few hours Kruse was completely "under the weather."

That the doctor was feeling the effects of the quick, dancing motion of the dhow after the more regular movements of the water-logged derelict, was evidenced by the sickly greenish hue that gradually crept over his face.

"A jolly good job for me," thought Locke. "There's not so much likelihood of his getting up to any tricks."

All that day and through the long night Ferrers Locke remained awake, hoping against hope that the voyage of the dhow would not be a long one. On the following morning the sea subsided, and the dhow glided through smooth water at a reduced speed.

Sleep, the one thing that Locke dreaded, would have to come to him at last. The opportunity for snatching a

brief nap occurred on the following afternoon, when most of the crew of the dhow were taking a siesta. Presently Kruse himself, who had recovered from his sickness, stretched out upon the deck and began snoring heavily.

Afraid to omit any precaution in dealing with the astute crook, Locke quietly obtained a light rope of fibre, slipped it round the body of his captive, and secured the doctor to one of the thick bamboo supports of the poop. Then he himself settled a few feet away for the brief sleep his whole being craved so urgently.

It seemed to him as though he had slept but ten minutes when the sound of gruff voices speaking in Malay awakened him. Somewhat to his astonishment he saw half a dozen of the crew of the dhow gathered about him. He made a movement as though to rise to his feet, when, without a second's warning, the little brown men piled themselves on top of him! A gasp left the detective's lips, and his hand went back to secure his shooting iron. But hands that gripped him like steel vices held his arms, and others closed about his throat, almost choking him.

Held on the deck by sheer weight of numbers, he was bound hand and foot by cords of the very type as that with which he had secured Kruse!

Suddenly the weight of men was removed from his body. Red, perspiring, and furious, he gazed upwards from his prone position on the dirty deck of the dhow. And there, standing among the Malays, his white teeth bared in a wolfish smile, he saw his arch-enemy, Dr. Harvey Kruse!—And a voice fell with crushing sarcasm on his ear:

"How strange are the workings of Fate, my dear Mr. Locke. Amazing as it may seem, the tables are turned!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Escape from the Dhow!

IT took some moments before the mind of Ferrers Locke could grasp the full meaning of this extraordinary change of situation.

How had Kruse managed to get the Malays to take his part?

The problem was solved speedily enough. Kruse turned to the stocky brown man who was in command of the dhow, and fired off a stream of sentences in the Malay language, which the natives, of course, understood perfectly.

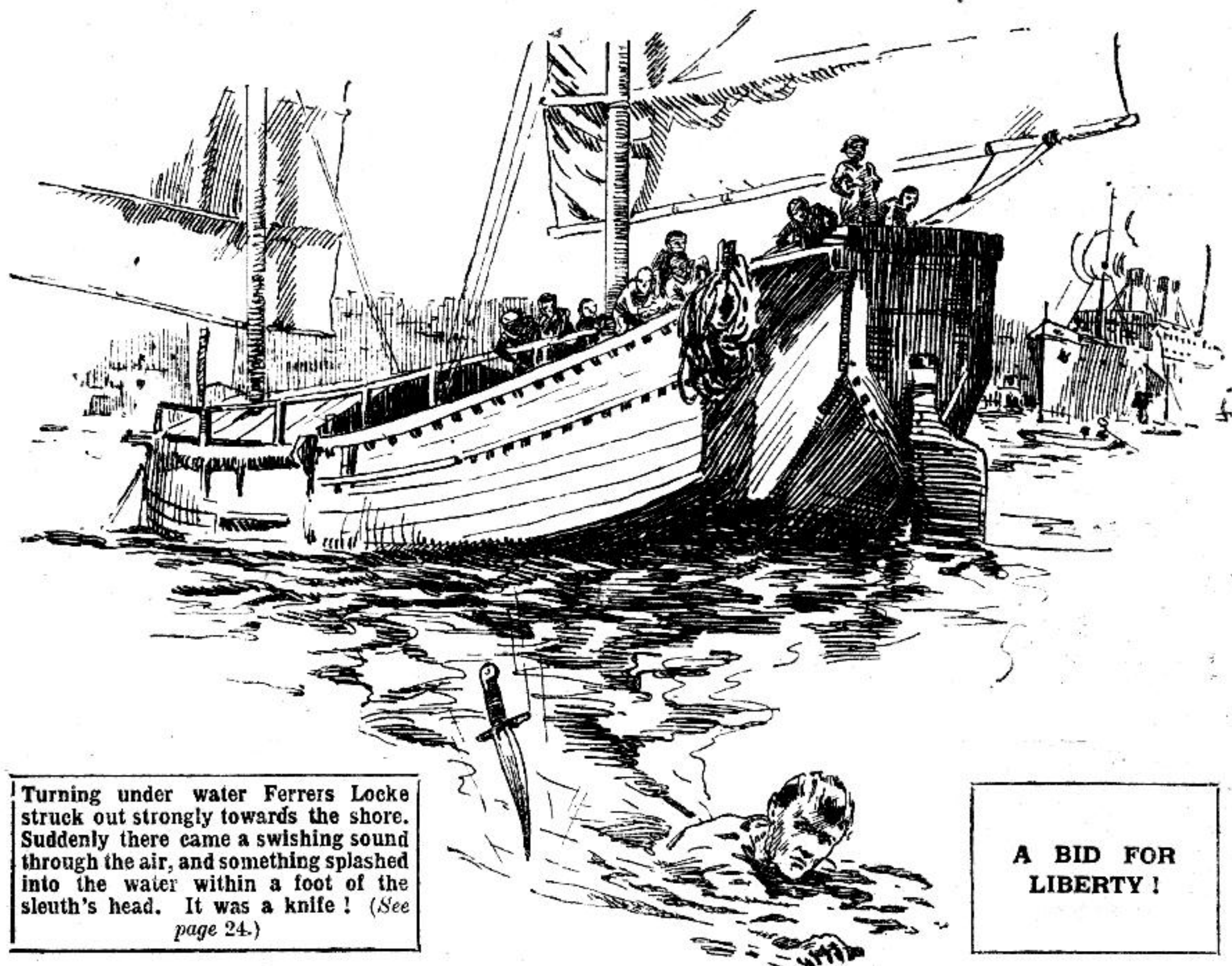
The skipper of the dhow stooped, and, fumbling in Locke's pockets, took out a revolver and a small key. The revolver he stuck in his belt. With the key he unlocked the handcuffs on Kruse's wrists. Freed from his manacles, Kruse stretched his cramped limbs with intense satisfaction.

"I am sure, Mr. Locke," he said, addressing the trussed detective, "that you will pardon my little deceit in pretending that I was ignorant of the Malay tongue. It served my purpose, you see, to wait for a more favourable opportunity than that on the derelict to explain the situation to these honest little seafarers."

"Explain!" spluttered Locke, squirming at his own impotence. "You mean—you mean, you've told them a thundering pack of lies!"

Dr. Kruse laughed, and accepted a white Burmese cheroot which the native captain of the dhow handed to him.

"Tut, tut, Mr. Locke!" he said. "I may have mentioned a few things which were not strictly according to fact. But you could hardly expect me to explain that you were an English detective, whilst I am a man wanted for a few—"



Turning under water Ferrers Locke struck out strongly towards the shore. Suddenly there came a swishing sound through the air, and something splashed into the water within a foot of the sleuth's head. It was a knife! (See page 24.)

A BID FOR
LIBERTY!

'um—breaches of the—er—rather exacting laws of our civilisation.”

“You scoundrel!” blurted out Locke. “In giving you your life on the Siwash Queen I acted too fairly with you. I suppose in return you will take the earliest opportunity of quietly doing away with me?”

With the utmost calmness Kruse seated himself cross-legged on the dirty rice-matting, and lighted his cheroot from a smouldering fragment of teak-wood supplied him by one of the dhow's crew.

The little brown Malays, including the skipper of the dhow, stood round in a grinning circle, interested spectators, although unable to understand a word of the conversation of the two strange white men.

“Of course, Mr. Locke,” said Kruse, in the tone of a man having a quiet conversation at his club, “it will be necessary, as you can see, for me to—er—take an opportunity of removing you from my path before the dhow puts in at Singapore. You have been a regular thorn in my flesh, Mr. Locke, and I shall not feel really comfortable, I confess, until you are removed. Unfortunately,” he went on in a meditative voice, “these little brown men would not, I am sure, be parties to your—ah—removal on this dhow. I had hoped to be able to persuade them to do this work themselves, but they would only agree to your being a captive in my stead.”

Despite the terrific peril of the situation in which he found himself Ferrers Locke was consumed with curiosity as to what Kruse might have said to the Malays to cause them to act as they had done. He bit his lip, however, and asked no questions. But Kruse himself supplied the answer to his unspoken query.

The doctor watched a curling wreath of acrid smoke go swirling from his cheroot under the dhow's poop, and resumed the one-sided conversation.

“Doubtless you are wondering how I managed to turn the tables, my dear unfortunate Mr. Locke. It was ridiculously easy. I pretended to sleep, and waited until you yourself were in repose. Then when the skipper of the dhow happened to pass along I astonished the little fellow by addressing him in his own language. I told him that you and I had been left by accident aboard the disabled sailing ship, and that you had partially lost your reason. In your madness you had seized me and padlocked me below decks, where you had attempted to starve me, so that you yourself might have more food.”

“You're a wonderful liar, Kruse,” said Locke, gritting his teeth.

“Thank you, Mr. Locke!” said Kruse, with a gratified smile. “It is no small achievement to earn the praise of so illustrious a person as yourself. Yes, I flatter myself I did tell the tale rather well. Certainly it aroused the sympathy of the skipper of the dhow and those members of the crew whom he beckoned about him. To-morrow, barring bad weather, we shall reach Singapore—that is—er—the crew and I. You, I hope, Mr. Locke—greatly though it grieves me to express such a wish—will be among the very strange finny denizens that inhabit the straits. Even if you are ever seen again by human eyes, Mr. Locke, I doubt whether you will be recognised as the well-known detective of Baker Street, London, when the sharks have finished with you.” And rising to his feet, the scoundrel insolently sauntered forward along the deck of the dhow.

The hours that followed were sheer mental agony for Ferrers Locke. Well

he knew that Kruse had voiced his true intention with regard to himself.

The sun went down and the stars peeped from a sky of velvet, but there was no sleep for the heavy eyes of the captured sleuth. With every shuffling footstep on the deck he feared that at last his arch-enemy was approaching to accomplish his foul purpose.

Shortly after midnight Kruse actually made an attempt. He crept within arm's length of the prostrate detective and struck savagely downward with a short piece of timber. In the nick of time Locke swung his head aside to avoid the blow by a fraction of an inch.

Before Kruse could repeat his murderous attack, one of the Malays leaped upon the crook's back. The captain of the dhow and others rapidly swarmed to the spot, aroused by the cries of the Malay who had witnessed the assault. For a time there was a babel of voices. It was evident to Locke that Kruse had aroused the anger of the little brown men, who apparently had the idea in their minds of taking both him and Kruse alive to Singapore.

The incident proved a most fortunate one for the sleuth. After that Kruse himself was kept, if not a prisoner, at least under close watch.

So after darkness had fallen on the following day the dhow drew in towards the light of Singapore. As the stout little vessel made its way among the ships in the harbour, Ferrers Locke, lying on the deck, and now wearing the handcuffs which had been on Kruse the day before, raised his voice in the hope of attracting attention. The only result was that the Malays tied a gag of coarse sacking, smothered in molasses, about his mouth.

After what seemed hours, he heard the splash as the great anchor of the dhow was dropped over the side. Raising himself, he could clearly see the port and the riding lights of the steamers, and the yellow illumination of the buildings bordering the harbour.

While Locke was stretched on the dirty deck, fuming in his impotency, he saw Kruse approach.

"It grieves me thus to leave you a prisoner, my dear Mr. Locke," murmured the crook suavely. "I had hoped you would be fathoms deep ere this. Unfortunately, my good friends, the Malays, did not see eye to eye with me in the little matter of disposing of you. They are well known here at Singapore, and their intention is to hand you over to the police. I have just volunteered to go ashore and find a police officer to take charge of you." Dr. Kruse gave a chuckle as though seeing a joke in his words. "Needless to say, I shall not return."

Ferrers Locke positively writhed on the deck as, with staring eyes, he watched his arch enemy calmly walk to one side of the dhow and assist in the lowering of the queer little single-oared boat the craft carried. He saw Kruse step over the side on to a bamboo ladder, and a few seconds later the creak of an oar came to his ears.

Dr. Harvey Kruse had gone!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man with the Withered Hand!

SO closely had Ferrers Locke been watched aboard the dhow hitherto that attempts to free himself from his bonds had been impracticable.

Now that the anchor was down, two or three catamarans (small native craft) gathered about the dhow, hawking fresh fruit and rice.

It was to their fellow countrymen in these boats that the dhow's crew turned their attention, bargaining and arguing loudly.

Squirming a couple of yards along the deck, Ferrers Locke quietly began to rub the bonds of rope fibre that held his wrists against a piece of split bamboo which formed one of the rungs of the ladder leading to the poop.

Luck was with him. The minutes passed, and he remained unobserved. At

last he snapped his bonds. To take the ropes from his knees and ankles and remove the gag was the work of a few minutes more.

Suddenly the captain of the dhow turned his coarse brown face in the direction of the captive. A guttural cry left the man's lips.

Locke reached his feet and leaped for the side with a panther-like bound. A Malay whipped out a kris and tried to knife the sleuth; but Locke sent him crashing headlong to the deck with a terrific right to the jaw. Next instant he had hurled himself over the bulwark of the dhow and had plunged with a resounding splash into the dark waters of Singapore Harbour.

Turning under water, he swam completely under the vessel and came up on the other side, striking out strongly toward the shore. A dozen angry brown faces lined the dhow's rail. There was a swishing sound through the air, and something splashed into the water within a foot of his head. It was a knife!

Locke dived and swam under water, coming to the surface again ten yards farther away from the dhow.

Now he turned on his side and swam with a sweeping overarm stroke, feeling himself reasonably safe, for he knew that the dhow had but one boat, and that had gone away to the shore with Kruse.

Then ahead of him loomed the giant bulk of an ocean liner, moving slowly out to sea. The detective raised his voice in a series of shouts to attract the attention of those on board.

The steamer altered course slightly, and her propellers ceased to revolve. No longer fearful of being drawn under by the suction of the screws if he approached the ship too closely, Ferrers Locke swam towards her. A rope was hove over the side, and the sleuth, wringing wet, climbed aboard.

Hardly was he in the ship when the telegraph-bell rang down in the engine-room, and the propellers began to revolve again. Once more the liner held her course towards the open sea.

A number of the passengers and crew of the steamship gathered around the rescued man, firing a volley of questions at him.

Locke held his peace and demanded to see the captain.

"He's on the bridge," said the fourth

officer. "You won't be able to see him till we get clear of the harbour."

And then the throng surrounding the sleuth parted suddenly as a young athletic figure broke through.

"Chief!"

An exclamation of delight left the sleuth's lips, and a moment later he was wringing the hand of his young assistant.

In quick, whispered sentences the two exchanged news. Drake informed his chief that he was aboard the Coraba, of the Indo-Burma Line, bound for Calcutta. It was good news to Locke to learn that all the others who had left the Siwash Queen in the two boats had been picked up by a tramp steamer, which had landed them in Singapore.

The detective, on his part, told the boy of his own adventures, and how once more the super-crook had eluded justice.

"My aunt!" muttered the youngster. "It's going to be the dickens of a job to get ashore now and on his track!"

"I have no intention of going ashore, even if it were possible," answered Locke. "A wireless message from this ship to the Singapore police will put them hot-scent on the track of Kruse. Our job, my boy, is to find the purple sandals. Bhana Singh proceeded to Calcutta from Vancouver. We, too, are on our way to Calcutta. And, by Jove, even if Kruse is still at large, we've got a clear start of him!"

So Ferrers Locke remained on board the Coraba. He left to Drake the task of despatching the wire. He himself obtained a change of clothes from one of the passengers of the ship. A visit to the barber's shop on board restored him once more to some semblance of the keen-looking, handsome investigator so well known in Baker Street.

A quick run up the Bay of Bengal found the liner entering the Hoogli River three days later. No sooner was the anchor down in the great port of Calcutta than Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake went ashore. They took a gharry direct to the office of the steamship company which owned the Sunderbund, the ship on which Bhana Singh had booked a passage from Vancouver. Both agreed that the tracking of Bhana Singh held the most prospect of recovering the sandals.

At the steamship office they learned that the Hindu actually had arrived in Calcutta, but where he had gone no one knew.

There followed many weary days of searching on the part of the investigators. The difficulties in their path were immense, and they did not hesitate to take advantage of the very fine Indian Police Service in their search.

Then, when hope of tracking the elusive Hindu had almost deserted them, a smart Sikh policeman put them in possession of a piece of information which was destined to prove invaluable. This was that an old fruit-seller, who was the uncle of Bhana Singh, resided in the big native bazaar at the back of the Chowringhee, the principal thoroughfare of Calcutta.

Directly this news was given them, Locke and Drake leaped in a gharry and drove direct to the bazaar with a police-interpreter. From the old fruit-seller they discovered that his nephew, Bhana Singh, had taken the train to Benares. As they talked, one of the native beggars, who swarmed about the sahibs like flies round a honey-pot, grovelled at the feet of the sleuth, moaning monotonously for alms.

The man, who wore but a dhoti, or loin-cloth, prominently exposed his right hand, which hung feebly from his wrist,

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as though in the hope that the two white men would take pity on him.

"Poor beggar!" murmured Drake, as he gave the man some money; "he's got a withered hand!"

Locke was not so sure; he well knew how clever the beggars of the East are in apeing deformities for the sake of exciting pity in the beholders. But he, too, gave the man a couple of rupees, and bade him depart.

After extracting all the information he could from the fruit-seller, he rewarded handsomely the gratified old Hindu. Then he, Drake, and the interpreter entered the gharry and drove back to the hotel.

Half an hour later Locke and Drake boarded a Great Indian Peninsula train at Howra Station, with tickets for the sacred city of Benares on the Ganges. It was a long and hot journey, for the monsoon had not yet burst over India.

It was nearly ten o'clock on a wonderful Indian night when at last the train slowly steamed along the bank of the Ganges with the lights of Benares a few miles ahead.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake were collecting the small amount of luggage, which they had procured in Calcutta, in the first-class compartment which they alone occupied, when suddenly they heard a scraping noise outside the door.

Locke swung round sharply, and there at the window he glimpsed the dusky face of the beggar with the withered hand, whom he had seen in the bazaar at Calcutta. Then there was a crash of shattering glass, and a small cylinder descended with a thud on the floor of the compartment.

"Christopher! A bomb!"

It was Drake who gave vent to that excited exclamation, and before Locke himself could stoop to grasp the cylinder, the plucky lad snatched it up and hurled it through the opposite window toward the murky waters of the Ganges.

He was not a moment too soon. There was an ear-shattering report as the missile burst in the air and several windows of the train fell into fragments.

Dashing to the side of the carriage where he had seen the native, Locke glimpsed the fellow rolling down the embankment. The sleuth whipped out a revolver and fired low at the man, with the intention of winging him; but the native grasped a piece of protruding bamboo fencing with both hands, and leaped lightly over it, disappearing into the night.

To make the dangerous leap from the train and go in pursuit of the fellow seemed a hopeless prospect. Besides, Locke's great object was to get into Benares and find the sandals.

From other compartments he and Drake could hear excited shouting, and several Europeans and a native guard dashed along the corridor to discover the cause of the commotion. The excitement was even greater when the detective described the attempt which had been made on the life of himself and his young assistant.

His story had to be repeated to officials at Benares Station, when he and Drake disembarked from the train. Then, after copious notes had been made by officious natives, they were allowed to depart. They entered a gharry and ordered the gharry-walla to drive direct to police headquarters. Locke had taken the precaution of wiring instructions to the police of Benares to get on the track of the man, Bhana Singh.

As they drove through the humid, odoriferous streets of the sacred city, Locke turned to Jack Drake with a worried air.



A rustling sound in the dirty reed matting which formed the roof of the building caused Locke to look up sharply. Peering through a hole was the brown face of the man who had thrown the bomb into the train near Benares. "Dr. Kruse!" exclaimed the sleuth in amazement. (See page 28.)

"My boy," he said, "there is little doubt that the man who attempted our lives was no Hindu beggar at all. I distinctly saw him grasp some bamboo fencing by the line with both hands. That very action proved that he had no more a withered right hand than either you or I. There was something in the movements of the fellow that was strangely reminiscent of one we know well!"

"Dr. Kruse?"

"Yes."

Once again at the police headquarters Locke swiftly told the story of the attempt which had been made on their lives in the train. But he found, to his disappointment, that the police had not succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of Bhana Singh, though the man was suspected of being in the neighbourhood.

They were just about to take their leave when a native policeman excitedly entered headquarters.

For a few moments he and the police-superintendent conversed swiftly in the vernacular, and then the superintendent turned to Locke with excitement in every line of his sallow face and spoke in English.

"A remarkable thing has happened, Mr. Locke. A native has just been taken out of the Ganges. He is dead, and there is evidence of foul play. From evidence found on him there is little doubt that it is the very man you are seeking—Bhana Singh!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Locke. "Where is the unfortunate man now?"

"My subordinate will take you to him." He addressed the native policeman, who indicated the door.

"Come, sahibs!"

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake followed the man from the police bungalow, and, entering the gharry, were rapidly driven to the burning ghats by the sacred stream, where the body of the man had been left. The ghats are compounds on

the river-bank where the bodies of Hindu dead are cremated before the ashes are thrown into the sacred river.

A native policeman, and an attendant of the ghats was by the side of the deceased.

By the aid of lanterns Ferrers Locke examined the man. A red caste mark on his forehead proclaimed him to be a Hindu. He was dressed in a white, flowing costume, with a waistcoat buttoned over his body. The fingers of his right hand still clutched a fragment of green cloth of some light material. Deep fingermarks on his dusky throat suggested that the unfortunate man had been strangled before being cast into the river. A grubby, folded envelope in the waistcoat-pocket of the man was addressed to Bhana Singh, Benares.

"Somebody killed him, sahib," said the police guide, who could speak some English.

"Obviously, my man," said Locke. "This is Bhana Singh, without a doubt. His description tallies with that I received of him in Vancouver. This waistcoat is of American cut—it probably was purchased in the Canadian West, and I should deduce that he met his death at the hands of a Mohammedan."

"A Mohammedan, sahib?"

"Yes; this piece of green cloth doubtless was torn from the turban of a Hadji, who, as you know, is a man entitled to wear the green turban on account of his having made a pilgrimage to Mecca. The nail on the right forefinger of the slayer was at least a quarter of an inch longer than any of the others on his hands, as the marks on his unfortunate victim's throat clearly show."

From another pocket of the waistcoat of the dead man Ferrers Locke drew forth a large, cheap-looking watch. It had stopped, and the hands pointed to the hour of seven-fifteen.

"At what time was this poor fellow taken out of the river here?" inquired Locke of the native policeman.

"Ten-forty-five, sahib. I took him out myself."

The sleuth turned to his young assistant.

"Drake, my boy," he said, "find a boat to take you out to that steam-yacht lying in the stream. Without doubt aboard her you will be able to learn from her master the exact speed of the stream. It is most important that we should know this."

Accompanied by one of the policemen the boy set off. It was twenty minutes ere he returned, but he had secured the information required.

"I was in luck, sir," he said to Locke. "The captain of the yacht was an Englishman, and he tested the stream with a patent log. The current runs at four miles an hour."

With a notebook held in the light of the lanterns by the bank of the Ganges, Ferrers Locke made some swift mathematical calculations.

"Good!" he said, looking up. "The watch was stopped at seven-fifteen, and it is safe to presume that it ceased to function when Bhana Singh was thrown into the river. The body was found at ten-forty-five. Therefore, it was three and a half hours in the water. Granting that it was not held up by anything in the river, it would have travelled fourteen miles in that time."

With this in mind, Ferrers Locke returned to the police bungalow with Jack Drake and the native official. There he obtained a map and looked at the places portraying the Ganges to the west of Benares. And, by a simple calculation on the scale map, he discovered that a small place called Paka was exactly fourteen miles away.

Having no better clue to work on, he decided to journey to this town at once with Drake, in the hope of discovering the slayer of Bhana Singh.

The Benares police, proud to be of assistance to the great English private detective, willingly put a fast motor-car and native chauffeur at Locke's disposal.

After an exhilarating ride along the main Paka road beneath the low-hanging Indian moon, the sleuth and his young assistant reached the other Ganges town. The fact that they had not slept during the previous day did not trouble them. Immediately they began their inquiries, having introduced themselves at police headquarters.

Now fortune swung round completely in their favour. A booking-clerk, who had been on duty between six p.m. and midnight on the previous night, was able to remember a Hadji, who resembled in a respect the man whom Locke sought. The babu, or clerk, remembered the man because he had been one of a mere handful of natives who had booked first-class on a train leaving Paka for the Punjab at eight-twenty-three. When the man had tended his fare the clerk had noted with curiosity the length of his nail on the right forefinger, compared with the others on the same hand.

The intelligent babu was able to give such a good description of the man that Locke rewarded him most handsomely. Then he purchased tickets for himself and Drake to Agra, the city to which the Hadji had booked.

The gratified babu left his office and salaamed the two sahibs all the way down the platform to the train that was waiting, leaving half a dozen natives fuming in their impatience to buy tickets.

Many weary hours were spent in the train journeying through the hot, dusty plains of the Punjab. At length, wearied in mind and body, Ferrers

Locke and Jack Drake came to Agra, that great city of the ancient Moghuls, famous as the site of the most supremely beautiful shrine, the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the world. But the two investigators had no time to gaze upon the pearly whiteness of the wonderful monument erected by Shah Jehan.

It was in the evening when they reached Agra, and, hiring a gharry, they drove through the bazaars to visit the police bungalow.

The teeming native life fascinated them as it had done at Benares. And then suddenly Drake gripped the arm of his chief and gave a startled cry.

"My giddy aunt!"

"What is it, my boy?"

"Do you remember, sir, that when we started the quest for the sandals in London what the chauffeur of Kruse told us? He said that he and the doctor were present when the professor bought the sandals at a shop in Agra, behind which you could see the blue dome of a mosque. I'll eat my sun-helmet if we haven't just passed the place!"

"Surely not?"

Nevertheless, Ferrers Locke sharply ordered the gharry-walla to turn round and drive slowly back through the bazaars.

Jack Drake pointed out the sandal-maker's shop he had noticed. The two dismounted from the gharry, and, crossing the road, gazed directly at the ramshackle building. Truly it was in the shadow of the blue dome of a Mohammedan mosque.

Ferrers Locke led the way across the street and peered inside the recesses of the curious raised native shop. An old, white-haired native was sitting there driving a bargain with a customer, who seemed to be trying to sell him something.

The detective's nostrils expanded. Then he bounded forward into the shop and snatched the articles from the hand of the native.

"The purple sandals!"

Drake, who had been swift to follow his chief, flung himself on the customer of the old sandal-maker. It was the Hadji in the green turban, and whose single, elongated finger-nail proved him to be the slayer of Bhana Singh:

Thrusting the precious sandals into his pocket, Locke whipped out a pair of handcuffs, and, ignoring the feeble protests of the astounded sandal-maker, snapped them on the wrists of the wanted man.

Swiftly a crowd collected, through which a stalwart Indian policeman burst his way.

Explanations followed, and Locke handed over the discomfited Hadji into the hands of the law, to meet the punishment which he so richly deserved.

When this had been done Locke and Drake went with the old sandal-maker, who could speak English a little, into the room at the back of the premises.

The sleuth speedily put the old man in a satisfied frame of mind by a handsome tip. Then he took a knife from his pocket and ripped open each sandal in order to find the professor's formula, which he and Drake had been commissioned by the British Home Secretary to discover and destroy. Bit by bit he cut the layers of cloth and reed out of the footwear. At last he had two little piles of debris on the floor before him, and a deep groan escaped his lips.

"The sandals contained nothing!"

Keenly he questioned the old sandal-

(Continued on page 28.)

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for his triumph is as complete as it is deserved. Make sure and be in at the death, chums, by ordering your MAGNET now.

"CLIMBING!"

A giddy subject, some of you will be saying, and rightly, too. But the cheery contributors of the "Herald" have handled this subject in a fascinating fashion all their own. Climbing has its pleasures as well as its perils. People lose their heads—yes, and their feet. But the "Herald" staff never loses sight of its goal, and that is to make the world laugh. I think H. W. & Co. have succeeded very well in this coming supplement.

"MAROONED ON THE CARIBS' ISLE!"

Another magnificent, complete story of the good old days, boys, completes the list of good things in store for you next Monday. Gerald Leigh, the central figure in the story, will make a great appeal. Mind you make his acquaintance.

"SHERWOOD GOLD!"

Don't forget the title, boys, of the stupendous serial story booked to start the week after next in your favourite paper. Without hesitation I pronounce this stirring story of the good old days of our forefathers as the finest story I have ever had the pleasure of putting before you. When you have read the opening chapters of

"SHERWOOD GOLD!"

you will say that your Editor has given you the goods, has done you a real good turn. Knowing that, I feel certain that you will do your best to spread the news, thereby doing your Editor a good turn. Tell all your pals about this magnificent yarn—they'll thank you for it, sure as "heggs is heggs," as Gossy would say—and see that they give a standing order at their newsagents' for the MAGNET—the finest schoolboys' paper in the world!

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MAGNET, 21/6/24.

NOTE TO READER.

Write your full name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it and post as directed above. Mark envelope "Sample Dept."

N.B.—If your hair is GREY enclose extra 2d. stamp—6d. in all—and a FREE bottle of "Astol" for Grey Hair will also be sent you.

THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE SANDALS!
 No. 9.—The Secret of the Sacred River!
 (Continued from page 26.)

maker about the purchase of the footwear, which the old native himself had sold the professor. The old man claimed to remember distinctly the sale to the sahib many months before, for the sandals had been the only ones of their kind he had ever made.

By his keen questioning, Locke discovered a fact which suddenly illuminated the whole case of the professor's secret to him. For the sandal-maker remembered that when Professor Erskine had purchased his sandals, the white man had with him a sandalwood box of unique workmanship.

"By Jove!" said Locke, turning to

Drake. "Can it be that we have travelled three-quarters of the way round the globe on an utterly fruitless quest? Remember the last words spoken by Professor Erskine after he had received the assassin's bullet at Dulwich: 'Don't break open the sandals—' Of course, his sentence must have been cut short. It was not the sandals, he meant, but the sandalwood box, which had also been sold out of his collection. We must get back to England just as fast as we can travel!"

A rustling sound in the dirty reed matting which formed the roof of the building caused him to look up sharply, with the thought that a snake might have made its way into the covering.

Peering through a hole was the brown face of the man who had thrown the bomb into the train near Benares.

"Dr. Kruse!"

Both the detective and Drake rushed out of the sandal-maker's shop and round the building, but their quarry had gone.

Evidently he had made a hasty descent from the low roof of the building, and had mingled in the jostling throng of natives in a narrow side turning.

For an hour they hunted high and low for the elusive doctor, but without success. Then, after a visit to the police, to whom they described their enemy, they hastened to the station to catch the Bombay express.

Kruse had overheard the conversation in the sandal-maker's shop. Could he find the means or the money to get back to England? If so, it would be a wild race home for the possession of the sandalwood box!

THE END.

(You simply must not miss the final story in this brilliant detective series, which rings down the curtain on the most amazing quest of Ferrers Locke's career. Look out for the title—"The Triumph of Ferrers Locke!"—and be in at the death, chums.)

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