

"THE VENGEANCE
OF THE SHEIK!"

"FOUR AGAINST THE
WORLD!"

SPECIAL HUMOROUS
SUPPLEMENT!

GRAND BICYCLE
COMPETITION!

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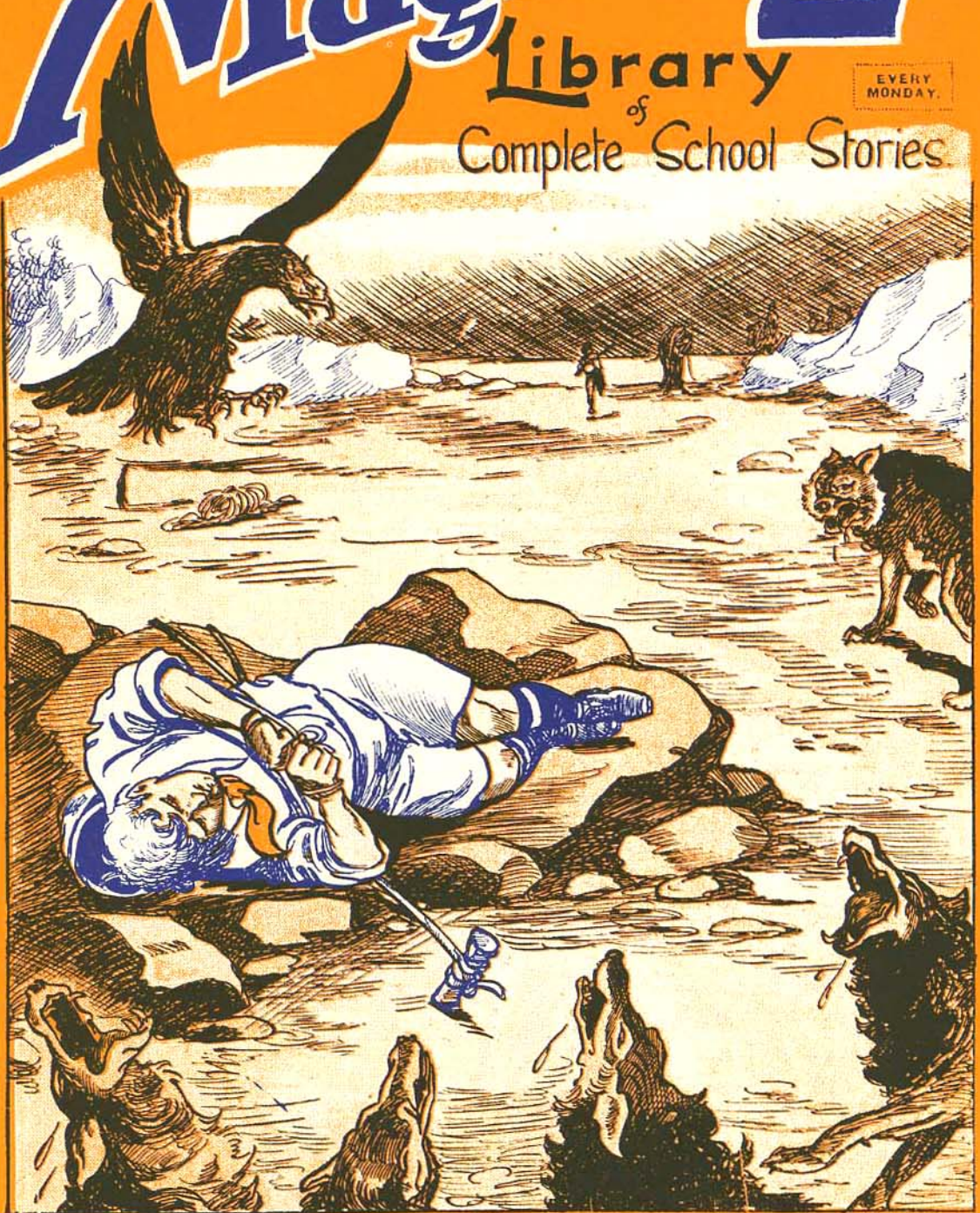
Week Ending October 4th, 1924

The Magnet 2nd

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Complete School Stories

EVERY
MONDAY.



THE VENGEANCE OF THE SHEIK!

BOB CHERRY'S TERRIFYING ORDEAL IN THE HEART OF THE DESERT!

(A gripping incident in this week's magnificent 25,000 word complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., inside.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR.

"BILLY BUNTER'S WEMBLEY PARTY!"
By Frank Richards.

MOST of my readers who live within easy reach of the greatest Exhibition the world has ever known have taken the opportunity of paying it a visit. For myself, one visit was not sufficient fully to appreciate the hundred and one exhibits, and so Your Editor passed through the turnstiles on three more occasions. But this is by the way. What concerns us most is the fact that it struck me as being a good idea to stage one of our Greyfriars stories within the Exhibition walls. The idea had no sooner taken root than Mr. Frank Richards was notified. Result—the above-named story, which features the Famous Five and the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove "doing the sight" at Wembley.

BUNTER'S GENEROSITY!

It is not often that Billy Bunter surprises the natives at Greyfriars with a generous invitation to accompany him anywhere—those who are foolish enough to accept usually find themselves "cashing" innumerable postal-orders. Therefore, Bunter's latest invitation is turned down on all sides—at first! No one believes that the Owl's intention to take a party of juniors to Wembley at his expense is founded on fact. Strange as it may seem, however, it is founded on fact. How all this comes about I will leave Mr. Richards to explain. There is a rare twist to this coming yarn which I am sure you will appreciate. Don't miss it.

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"
By Hedley Scott.

Once again we see big George Melton in the ring at Belcher's Stadium. This time his opponent is none other than the British heavy-weight champion. There is plenty of "punch" in this coming instalment, as well you might guess, and I know where your sympathy will lie when the curtain rings down on as memorable a fight at Belcher's as its patrons have ever known. There's a big surprise in store for you, chums. Mind you are present at the ringside. In other words, order next week's MAGNET in good time.

CHARACTERS.

This is not a lecture, chums, but just a reminder that the MAGNET competition is going as strong as ever. Bikes are being won every week, and there are plenty more awaiting delivery. All of you are conversant with the characters selected week by week. All of you know, for instance, that Lord Maulverer—this week's character—was born tired, that he is a schoolboy earl, that he has unlimited cash at his disposal, that he is good-natured and free with his quidlets, that he never takes part in any sport unless Bob Cherry drags him down to the playing-fields and keeps a watchful eye on him. There are many more sides to Maulvi's character which I could quote, but space does not permit of their appearance in these columns. Still, in the foregoing there is sufficient subject matter from which to build a three-word phrase. Have a shot at it this week. The coupon's on page 8.

YOUR EDITOR'S SURPRISE GIFT!

This is something that concerns all MAGNET readers who have been loyal to their Editor's standard. It takes the form of a series of beautiful photogravure presentation plates, twelve in all, printed on fine art

paper, that will outshine anything presented elsewhere both in size and quality. The whole set has just passed through my hands, and without hesitation I declare that these photogravure plates will grace the album of any collector with credit. That there will be a rush to secure these presentation photogravures goes without saying, and in order that my regular readers shall not be disappointed when the first one of the series appears I am giving them the tip well in advance. Watch next week's Chat for further particulars, and safeguard yourselves by placing a regular order with your newsagent at once!

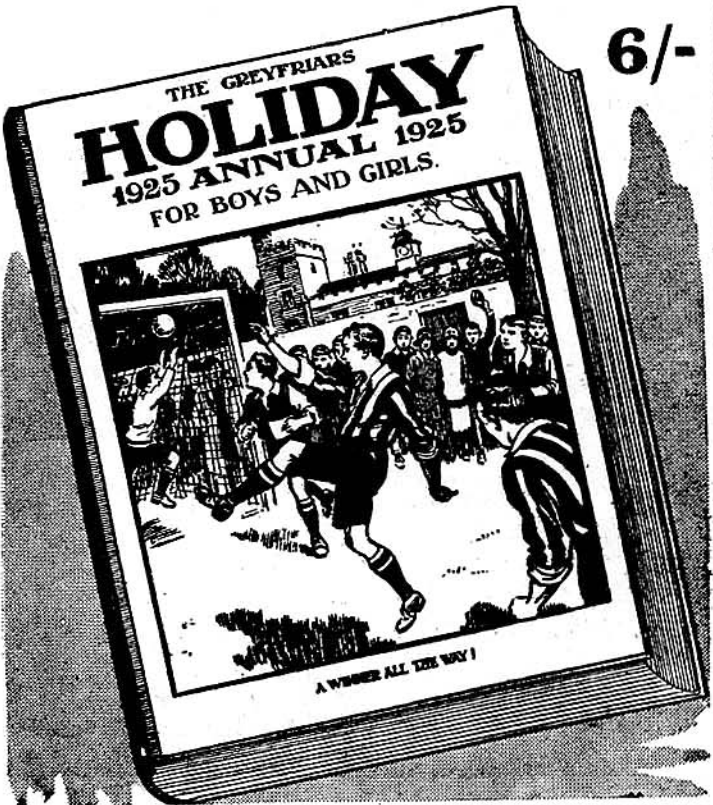
THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

This world-famous volume is already selling like hot cakes. From all over the globe orders are flocking in; such is the reputation of the "H. A." A smile of satisfaction crosses Your Editor's face when he reads the report of the "Annual's" lightning sale on the market—that is only natural in the circumstances. But, by the same token, I feel anxious on my readers' account. Some of them, I know, will leave their order for the 1925 "Holiday Annual" till to-morrow. When to-morrow comes something, perchance, will happen to postpone the buying of the "Annual," and then—perhaps disappointment. That can be avoided if my chums act on the following advice now. All of you live fairly close to a newsagent's, I'll be bound. Well, then, next time you pass his shop stop a minute, ask him for a glimpse of the 1925 edition of the "Holiday Annual," and my advice is not needed further! Automatically you'll want your "Annual," and you will give the newsagent the order on the spot. You see!

Your Editor.

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For six shillings the 1925 Edition of the world-famous "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" presents an unparalleled value-for-money proposition. Every British boy and girl should make a point of securing a copy before it is too late! 360 pages crammed full of first-class school and adventure stories, plays, tricks, puzzles, how-to-make articles, poems, wonderful photogravures and gorgeous coloured plates, etc.—for **SIX SHILLINGS!**



BUY YOUR COPY TO-DAY, CHUMS!

THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY! Once a proud and haughty chieftain Mustapha ben Mohammed now finds himself a regular Ishmael of the desert, with every man's hand against him. But before his usurper standard is lowered Mustapha wreaks his vengeance upon Major Cherry by driving out his son, bound to a camel's back, into the illimitable desert, to face a death of torment from hunger and thirst.



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., staged in the illimitable deserts of Northern Africa. Told by Popular--

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In Merciless Hands!

ANOTHER shot rang on the still desert air, and Harry Wharton felt the wind of the bullet as it passed.

But he did not stir.

The sun was up on the Sahara; on the wide desert and the sandy hills was a blaze of heat and blinding light.

The sun-rays poured down upon the flat roof of the Bordj.

Wharton looked over the brick parapet on the roof of the little tower, his face pale and set.

At a little distance, beyond the circling wall of the courtyard, Arab sharpshooters were lurking in cover, and at frequent intervals a report echoed dully, and a bullet splattered on the brick walls of the Bordj.

Farther in the distance, half-hidden by the irregular rocks, stood a great tent—the tent of the Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed.

Round about the tent many figures were moving—dusky Arabs in dirty burnous and turban. Sometimes they looked towards the little tower, to scowl and make threatening gestures, or to loose off a futile shot. But no shot replied from the Bordj. Cartridges were running short in the little garrison. What was left of the ammunition was reserved for the next attack, when it should come.

From the tent a tall, imposing figure stepped out.

It was the sheik.

Mustapha ben Mohammed turned his black, glittering eyes towards the Bordj, his dark, aquiline face convulsed with a scowl of hatred. He stood for a moment or two, a grim, threatening figure in his white robes and spotless turban, his brown face marked by every evil passion. Then he moved away, and the rocks hid him.

Wharton drew a hard breath.

Somewhere there, in the lair of the desert robbers beyond the rocks, Bob Cherry was a prisoner.

With the new day he was to die—to die by torments in the sight of his comrades besieged in the Bordj.

That was the threat of the sheik, and well the Greyfriars party knew that Mustapha ben Mohammed would keep his word.

The long night had worn away, the new day had come, but the sheik seemed in no hurry to execute his threat. It was noon, and still the prisoner was not to be seen. It was easy to guess that the robber sheik found a pleasure in keeping his enemies in the torture of anxiety and suspense.

Harry Wharton did not feel the heat. His face, burned brown by the African sun, was pale under its tan. His comrade was doomed, and there was no help!

Crack!

Another shot rang from the Arabs lurking by the courtyard wall. They had seen the set face peering over the parapet.

A strong grip on Wharton's arm dragged him back into cover as the bullet whizzed over the roof.

"Do you want to throw your life away?" rapped out Major Cherry.

"I don't think I care much," muttered Wharton, his lips quivering. "If we can't save Bob—"

"There are others to think of, Harry," said the major quietly. "We have the two girls to care for. But for that, I should not be here now—I should die with my boy. But duty comes first."

"I—I know. But—"

Wharton broke off with a groan.

Fortune had favoured the Greyfriars party till now. Against all hope they had succeeded in rescuing Major Cherry and Ali ben Yusef from the power of the sheik. They had torn Marjorie and Clara from the grasp of the robber Arabs. Within the strong walls of the Bordj they had held their own, and beaten off all attacks. And Ali ben Yusef had escaped in the night, and gone to call his tribesmen to the help of the beleaguered rescuers.

Through a thousand perils the Greyfriars party had won their way, and now—

Now it all seemed to go for nothing. Fortune, that had favoured them so far, had now turned a cruel foe.

What was the worth of their success, if they were to see Bob Cherry die without being able to lift a hand to save him?

Wharton looked round at his comrades.

They were all on the roof of the Bordj, waiting for the terrible sight which they knew they must see. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull looked white and worn, Hurree Janset Ram Singh's dusky face was full of misery. Even Billy Bunter, though not much given to thinking of anyone but himself, was troubled and subdued.

Ibrahim, the Arab guide, had lost his smiling cheerfulness. It was Bob who had risked his life to save Ibrahim from the lion in the desert, and the guide, rogue as he was, had not forgotten. Ibrahim moved about restlessly, muttering to himself in Arabic.

The vengeance of the sheik had already fallen upon those who had baffled and defeated him. Bob Cherry's friends were not likely soon to forget these long, long hours of anxiety and anguish.

If they could only have helped him, even at the cost of their lives! But it was impossible.

To emerge from the shelter of the brick walls of the Bordj was to fall riddled with bullets, even before they could reach and come to blows with the besieging Arabs.

That consideration alone would not have stopped them. But Marjorie and Clara were in the Bordj, and they could not be left to their fate. Even at the cost of looking on idly while their chum was sacrificed to the vengeance of the sheik the Greyfriars party had their duty to do.

The major's face was set like iron. What he was feeling Harry Wharton &

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Co. could well guess. But little of it showed in his grim, bronzed visage.

There was a step on the brick stair in the interior of the Bordj, and Marjorie Hazeldene looked out into the sunlight.

The major made a quick gesture.

"Go down, Marjorie! Go down, my child!"

Marjorie's eyes scanned the party on the roof.

"Where is Bob?" she asked. "Tell me! I know that something happened in the attack last night. Tell me, is he—is he—?" Her voice broke.

"He is not dead!" said the major hastily.

"He is—hurt?"

"No."

"Then what—?"

"He is a prisoner!" said the major reluctantly. "So far, I do not think he has been hurt, and—and we must hope for the best."

Marjorie's face grew very white. She had heard the threat that Mustapha ben Mohammed had shouted, after the failure of the night attack, but she had not understood the Arabic. But that savage, demonic voice still seemed to ring in her ears.

"Go down, my dear," said the major gently.

Marjorie bowed her head, and descended to the upper room of the Bordj, where Clara Trevlyn awaited her. She had not been told, but she knew that there was no hope. She knew that Bob Cherry was irrevocably doomed in the grasp of the ruthless Sahara sheik. The tears ran unchecked down her face, while on the scorching roof, with aching hearts, her friends waited and watched for the terrible scene that they knew must come.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Fearful Doom!

"SON OF A DOG!" Bob Cherry glanced up wearily.

He was bound hand and foot with thick camel rope, as he lay in a niche of the rocks.

For long, long hours—ages as it seemed to him—he had lain there unheeded by his captors. Now and then an Arab, passing near him, would spit on him, or growl out an Arabic curse. Otherwise he had been left alone since he had been flung there after his capture in the night.

Why his life had, so far, been spared he did not know. He had looked for instant death at the hands of the sheik. He realised clearly enough that if he was spared it was from some evil motive. He wondered whether he was reserved for torture. It was only too likely. Yet, in his weariness, he had slept for hours, till the heat of the sun had awakened him. In the niche among the hot rocks it was like an oven, under the pitiless rays of the African sun.

He looked up at the deep, cruel voice, and saw the sheik standing over him. It was long past noon now—the sun was sinking in the crimson west. But there were still many hours of daylight and blazing heat.

"Son of a dog, your hour has come!" said Mustapha ben Mohammed, his black, fierce eyes burning at the prisoner.

Bob did not answer.

The sheik lifted his hand and touched a gash, half-healed, on his brown, hard cheek. It showed where a bullet had furrowed.

"This came from your hand!" he said.

"It was your shot."

"I wish it had gone through your head," said Bob Cherry quietly. "That was what I intended."

Mustapha ben Mohammed bared his teeth in a savage grin that was like the snarl of a wild animal.

"Son of a pig, you shall repent it with tears of blood. You first, then the others."

"Not the others," said Bob. "You will never touch them. Your men will never take the Bordj. Twice you've tried, and twice you've failed. And how many of your men have gone down?"

"You at least," said the sheik. "Son of a dog, your death shall be one of torment that will linger on for days and nights—nights and days of suffering."

Bob was silent.

The sheik watched his face, perhaps hoping to read there the terror he expected his words to inspire. But the Greyfriars schoolboy's face was calm.

"And yet," said Mustapha ben Mohammed, after a pause—"yet even now I might spare your life. Even now I would send you safe to your father if the price were paid."

Bob looked at him questioningly.

"You know the price—the Eye of Ahmed," said the sheik, watching him.

"If the major will hand to me the amulet of the Oued Tahar, you shall go back to him in safety."

Bob smiled faintly.

The offer came too late, even if Major Cherry would have ransomed his son's life with a treasure that was not his own. For the Eye of Ahmed—the hereditary talisman of the chiefs of the tribe of Oued Tahar—was no longer in the Bordj. It was gone with Ali ben Yusef.

Unknown to the sheik, the words brought solace to Bob. For they showed that Ali had succeeded in getting through the enemy in the darkness of the previous night, during the tumult of the attack on the tower. Had he been captured the talisman would have been already in Mustapha's hands.

The sheik, watching him, looked puzzled. He did not understand the smile that flickered for a moment on Bob's face.

"What do you say?" he exclaimed abruptly. "Listen to me! In yonder tower are your friends, your father, the two English girls. Hunger and thirst will deliver them into my hands at last. But if the amulet be given up to me I will withdraw my men, their lives shall be spared, they shall be free to go whither they list. Answer, dog!"

Bob shook his head.

The sheik scowled savagely and called to his men. A couple of Arabs came forward, and Bob was lifted to his feet. The rope round his ankles was unbound, so that he could walk, but his hands still remained tied.

The two Arabs grasped him and led him away, following the sheik, who strode ahead.

In a few minutes they came in sight of the Bordj.

Bob Cherry's eyes fixed longingly on the little brick tower, whose walls sheltered his friends from the hate of the sheik.

He caught a movement on the roof. He knew that his friends were there. He was now in full sight from the Bordj.

Leaving him standing between the two muscular Arabs, Mustapha ben Mohammed strode on towards the tower.

"Abdullah!"

He rapped out the slave's name without turning his head. The Nubian

lifted a white flag and walked before the sheik towards the gate of the courtyard.

Full in view of the garrison, in easy range of the rifles on the roof, the Sahara sheik stood, with the Nubian beside him, holding the flag of truce.

In a moment the parapet above was lined with faces.

There was no danger of a treacherous shot from the Arab marksmen while their chief stood exposed to the fire of the garrison. Major Cherry leaned a rifle on the brick parapet, the muzzle covering the tall figure of the sheik.

Mustapha ben Mohammed smiled sarcastically.

Villain and robber as he was, the Arab sheik had no fear in his savage nature. He looked calmly on the rifle in the hands of the man who longed to send a bullet through his wicked heart.

"Does not the Roumi soldier respect the white flag?" he asked, with a sneer.

"So long as your soundrels respect it, yes," answered Major Cherry from the roof of the Bordj. "At the first shot, the first sign of trickery, you are a dead man, Mustapha ben Mohammed!"

Mustapha shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I have bidden my men not to fire. My life is in your hands, Roumi, if they disobey me."

"Why are you here?" rapped out the major.

Mustapha ben Mohammed swept his brown hand towards Bob Cherry, standing between the two Arabs at a distance in the blaze of the sun.

"You see your son?" he asked.

"I see him."

"What will you give for his life?"

The major's lip quivered.

"My own, if that will satisfy you," he answered. "Send the boy safe here and I will take his place."

The sheik laughed harshly.

"What will that profit me?" he said. "Your own death would be a light revenge compared with the torture of your boy. Yet you have that in your hands which I will take as the price of his life."

The major was silent.

He knew what was coming now—a demand that it was no longer in his power to grant, even had he wished.

"The Eye of Ahmed," said the sheik. "You shall ransom the boy's life with the amulet of the chiefs of Oued Tahar. Give it me, or give me word where I shall find it, and the boy lives."

"I cannot," said the major hoarsely.

Harry Wharton & Co. listened in silence. Had Ali ben Yusef been still in the Bordj with the Eye of Ahmed in his possession, they would have deemed the talisman a cheap price to pay for Bob Cherry's life and liberty. But Ali was far away, doubtless by that time already on the palm-shaded banks of the Oued Tahar, among his tribe. If his mission was a success, if his tribesmen rallied to his call and to the magic of the talisman, he would return and save the garrison of the lonely Bordj. But he could not return in time to save Bob Cherry.

The sheik's eyes gleamed up at the major's bronzed face.

"You do not believe me?" he said. "But listen! The Eye of Ahmed cannot save you now. It cannot help you. It will not serve the boy, Ali, whom you have taken from my hands, but who can never escape from my power. You have driven off my men. Many of my kinsmen have fallen in the struggle, but hunger and thirst will place you in my power ere many days have passed. What is the worth of the talisman to the boy



A dozen horsemen rushed towards the tall, savage figure of the usurper sheik. It was the order for Mustapha's death that All ben Yusef had given. With a sudden spring Mustapha leapt on the back of the great, black Barbary horse and, urging his steed in full flight, raced for the valley. (See Chapter 5.)

Ali when I shall order his head to be struck from his shoulders? Let it come into my hands and I will swear by the beard of the Prophet to ride away with my men and leave you in peace!"

The major's eyes rested on Bob. Had it still been in his power, would he have surrendered the talisman trusted to him by the dead sheik Yusef, the birthright of Ali, to save his son? He hardly knew. But it was no longer in his power. The Eye of Ahmed was far away.

"Your answer!" snarled the sheik.

"No!"

"Fool!" hissed Mustapha ben Mohammed, his black eyes flaming with rage. "I shall yet possess the talisman, in spite of you. When you are in my hands again, torture shall wring from you where it is hidden."

"Do your worst, dastard that you are!" said the major steadily. "Your punishment will come! Already among the tribes of the Oued Tahar your life is not safe, save in the desert among your own kinsmen. Ali ben Yusef will appear among the tents of the Tahar, with the amulet of his fathers in his turban, and call on the tribes to avenge the death of the Sheik Yusef, whom you murdered in the desert. Your hour will come—perhaps before many days have passed. Son of a thousand dogs, get out of my sight before I forget to respect the white flag!"

"That is your answer?"

"That is my answer. Go!"

The tall, powerful form of the desert sheik shook with rage.

"Then look your last on your son!" he shouted furiously. "Dog of a Roumi, hear what his fate is to be. He shall be bound to the back of a camel and driven into the desert. For days and nights he shall look on the sun and the stars while death slowly creeps upon him—death by hunger and thirst and pain. The hyenas of the Sahara shall pick his bones, when at last his starving camel sinks under him, and he lies at their mercy on the desert sands."

Major Cherry gripped his rifle.

"Villain! Go, or—"

The sheik swung round on his heel and strode away by the gateway of the courtyard. Not once did he hasten his steps.

He disappeared; the white flag vanished. There was a burst of sudden rifle-fire from the Arab marksmen; but the defenders of the Bordj were already in cover of the parapet.

Major Cherry wiped the sweat from his brow.

"My boy," he whispered.

Harry Wharton & Co. spoke no word. They waited, their hearts sick with horror.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Vengeance of Mustapha!

MUSTAPHA BEN MOHAMMED fixed his eyes upon Bob Cherry. His dark face was malignant with hatred and revenge.

Bob stood silent, calling on all his courage to bear the ordeal that was before him. Not if he could help it, should these scoundrels of the Sahara see one of English blood tremble.

The sheik growled out an order in Arabic.

A camel—the powerful camel that had once belonged to Ibrahim, the guide—was led out by the Arabs.

The animal kneeled to take up his burden.

Bob Cherry was lifted on the humped back of the animal! He was stretched there on the camel's rough hide, with his face to the sky.

Strong ropes bound him to the camel's back.

The Arabs were grinning as they bound him, knotting the ropes with savage care.

Bob's eyes turned towards the Bordj.

He knew that his friends could not help him; he knew that with the two girls to guard and save they could not even die with him. He was taking his last look at life before he went to his

hideous doom in the burning sands of the Sahara.

There was no hope in his heart now. Ali ben Yusef might return with his tribesmen and save the others. They could not save him. His friends—his home in far-off England—the green old quad at Greyfriars—he would never see them again! But he was calm. Well he had known the risk when he came into the desert to the rescue of his father. He had known it, and faced it quietly. Now that he had to pay the price he did not complain.

The evil, brown face of the sheik loomed over him like some ghastly vision of horror seen in a nightmare.

"Dog, and the son of a dog!" hissed Mustapha ben Mohammed. "Go—go to your death! Go to your torture! Go where your friends shall follow when they fall into my power!"

With his clenched hand the sheik struck the face of the boy bound upon the camel's back.

Then he snarled an order in Arabic to his men, and the camel was released. With cracking sticks and loud shouts, the Arabs followed it down the rocky valley towards the open desert.

Bob Cherry closed his eyes against the blaze of the sun.

He could not see the Bordj now; He wondered whether the eyes of his comrades were still upon him.

Faster ran the camel, snorting with anger and pain under the harsh blows rained on it by the Arabs.

Many of the blows fell upon the Greyfriars schoolboy stretched on the back of the beast.

With loud shouts and ceaseless cracking of the sticks, the savage Arabs drove the maddened camel onward.

The low, rocky hills were soon left behind; before the thudding camel stretched the open, limitless sands of the Sahara, baking in the tropical sun.

There the Arabs halted.

A last savage beating, a last burst of shouts and yells, and the camel tore on

over the sands, kicking up the shining particles as he trudged on.

With mocking laughter, the Arabs turned back towards their camp; Bob Cherry was left alone in the desert.

He was able to move his head, though not his limbs. He raised his head and looked about him.

The camel, maddened by pain, was still running swiftly, the long, ungainly legs covering the ground at a great speed.

Already the low hills in the midst of which stood the Bordj were sinking into the level of the desert.

Round the racing camel stretched the sand—the yellow sand of the thirsty Sahara, unbroken for many a long hundred miles.

Not a speck on the horizon! Not a palm-tree! Not a trace of life! Dreary emptiness where the burning plain met the burning sky.

Bob Cherry's head sank back wearily against the camel's hump.

Once or twice the camel's long neck twisted round, and he looked at his rider as if surprised by his strange posture. His pace was slackening now—now that he was no longer driven by the yells and blows of the Arabs.

But he was still running, churning up particles of glistening sand with his thudding feet.

Bob closed his eyes again.

No hope—no hope! He wondered how long it would last. The sun scorched his face and his limbs. He was aching from his bonds—aching, aching. And yet the pain seemed little in comparison with the fierce, blinding heat that poured upon him.

How long was it to last? Sunstroke, perhaps, might put an end to his conscious sufferings. The camel might carry on a gibbering lunatic to death in the desert. Bob shuddered at the fearful thought. At any price of pain or suffering, he prayed that he might keep his reason to the end. They had left the sun-helmet on his head. He wondered whether it was from a merciful impulse or from an intention to prolong his torments.

The camel's speed slackened more and more. The animal dropped into the usual loping trot of the camel of the desert. Bob raised his head again. The low hills had sunk below the sand now. He was not even sure in which direction they lay.

Alone in the Sahara!

Still the camel loped on, unguided, following his own fancy. Still the burning sun scorched on the helpless captive. Bob Cherry prayed for the night to come.

His throat was dry and parched; all the treasures of the mines of Africa would have been a light price to pay for a gulp of cool water. The sand-dust burned on his lips.

When would the night come?

The western horizon was a sheet of crimson and gold; the sun, a red ball of fire, was sinking into the boundless desert.

When would it be night?

With the suddenness of the tropics it came. The round red sun plunged below the horizon, and it was night.

Night in the desert!

The camel loped on. Darkness came as a blessed relief to the Greyfriars junior. His wide-open eyes stared at the velvety sky. The torturing sun was gone. Slowly the terrible heat faded. Darkness and coolness: for a time it seemed to him that he could ask no more, so immense was the relief.

Through the darkness the thudding hoofs of the camel echoed eerily. From

somewhere in the distance came a low howl. He knew that it was the cry of a roaring hyena.

Once, fierce, hungry eyes shone in the darkness. But the camel raced madly on, and the savage brute, whatever it was, vanished in the night.

One by one the stars came out in the desert sky—bright, placid, shining down peacefully on the desert. Under the scintillating stars of Africa the camel lauded on with his burden, on and on in the journey of torment and death.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"HE is gone!"

Harry Wharton descended the brick stair in the Bordj, stumbling almost blindly.

Bob Cherry was gone—gone to a fearful doom, and his comrades had watched him go, unable to lift a hand to help him. It seemed to Harry then that the misery of it was greater than he could bear. He reproached himself for having stood idle while his comrade was done to death. At least he could have rushed on the enemy and died with him if he could not help him.

"Harry!"

Marjorie looked out of the upper room of the Bordj as the captain of the Remove came stumbling down the narrow stair. She shivered as she saw the ghastly look of his face.

She caught at his arm to stop him.

"Harry, tell me—I heard what Mustapha shouted—is it possible that—that—"

"You must know it now," muttered Harry brokenly. "We sha'n't see old Bob again!"

"Oh!" breathed Marjorie.

"What have they done?" whispered Clara, her colourless face glimmering from the dusk of the room, almost like the face of a phantom.

"They've bound him to a camel and turned him loose in the desert!" muttered Wharton.

Clara gave a cry, and covered her face with her hands.

"We could not help him!" groaned Wharton. "We've got to keep those fiends off till help comes—if it ever does come. Bob would have been the first to say so. But it's horrible!"

He went on down the staircase. In the lower room of the Bordj it seemed densely dark after the blazing sunlight on the roof. Only through the loopholes came shafts of gleaming light.

Nugent and Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull followed the captain of the Remove down. Ibrahim, the guide, came down, and the major was left alone on the sunlit roof. In that terrible hour Bob Cherry's father wished to be alone.

The juniors did not speak; there was nothing to say. Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles. But even Bunter forgot to complain and grumble. The fat junior curled himself up on the rugs in the corner, but for once he found it difficult to sleep. Ibrahim the guide moved restlessly about in his baggy blue trousers and gold-braided jacket, his brown face full of trouble.

"My fine gentlemen," murmured Ibrahim, at last. "he is gone. It is the will of Allah! We shall not see the brave one again. But if the boy Ali shall return with his spearmen we shall avenge him. The Sheik Mustapha shall die. I, Ibrahim, with my own hands, will place the burning irons on his feet."

Wharton shook his head without speaking.

He longed, with a fierceness he had never believed himself capable of for vengeance on the Sahara sheik. But it was not Arab vengeance that he thought of.

"If Ali should come back—if he should be saved," muttered Nugent, "there may be a chance yet! Ibrahim, would there be any chance of finding Bob in the desert, of tracking down the camel?"

Ibrahim shook his head.

"The sands of the Sahara tell no tales," he answered sorrowfully. "And who shall say whither the camel has wandered? This night—" He broke off.

"This night—" repeated Johnny Bull, looking at him.

Ibrahim made an expressive gesture.

"The lions of the desert, the hyenas, the jackals," he said, "the camel will not escape them, be he as swift as the wind. If we seek for the brave one tomorrow, we shall find the bones that the jackals have left."

Wharton shuddered.

"Enough!" he muttered.

There was no hope, and they knew it. Only by a miracle could Bob Cherry be saved; only by a miracle could they find him, even if they were free to seek. And they were still besieged in the Bordj by numerous and savage foes, and still it was death to take one step beyond the door.

In dumb misery the hours passed.

The juniors' thoughts followed their lost comrade in his wild and terrible journey through the trackless desert. Already in the sunset he might be twenty miles away swallowed up in the trackless Sahara; already the teeth of wild beasts might have torn him limb from limb; already the glare of the sun might have driven him from his senses. It was terrible, it was futile to think of it, yet they could think of nothing else.

The day was gone at last. Night descended on the Bordj. Once more the juniors ascended to the roof to keep watch and ward. Billy Bunter slept at last, but no one else thought of sleep. In the upper room Marjorie and Clara scarcely closed their eyes. On the brick roof, under the shining stars, Harry Wharton & Co. watched wearily.

They would have welcomed an attack, they would have welcomed the fierce war-shouts of the Arabs—any danger and toil to break the fearful monotony of their vigil, to drive torturing thoughts from their minds.

But there was no attack.

The robber Arabs had suffered too severely already in the struggle to capture the Bordj. Too many of the fierce kinsmen of Mustapha had fallen in the fight. Almost half his band had given their lives, and given them in vain.

Round the Bordj the Arabs watched, like tigers watching for their prey, content to wait, with the knowledge that sooner or later their enemies must fall into their hands. It might be days, it might be weeks, but the end must come. Food must fail, water must fail, and then the grasp of Mustapha would close on the Bordj and its garrison. Help could not come, there was no hope. Of Ali's departure the sheik knew nothing. He still believed that the son of Yusef was in the Bordj.

That Ali ben Yusef had succeeded in getting clear the defenders knew now. But the success of his mission was still in doubt. He would reach the tents of his tribesmen. But would they follow the lead of a schoolboy, though he was the son of their former chief. Mustapha ben Mohammed had never succeeded in establishing himself as the Sheik of the Oued Tahar, lacking the Eye of Ahmed, the hereditary talisman of the sheiks, the

symbol that claimed the obedience of the wild tribesmen. And Ali would appear in the tents armed with the Eye of Ahmed. But the little garrison of the Bordj doubted and feared. They could scarcely believe it possible that help would come.

But if it came, if the tables were turned on the savage foe that prowled round the tower in the darkness, then at least Bob Cherry should be avenged, even if he could not be saved. At least Mustapha ben Mohammed should pay the price of his wickedness.

It was a dreary night. Once or twice the Juniors nodded and dozed, while the major paced the flat roof, a grim, silent figure.

But the dawn came and found them sleepless and weary.

As the sun came up over the desert and the hills, Harry Wharton put his field-glasses to his eyes and swept the horizon. Far in the distance, through an opening of the hills, the desert could be seen, the endless sands stretching under the rising sun.

Wharton looked—and looked again. Something was stirring in the desert—something glanced bright in the light of the sun. His heart beat faster.

Was it some troop of jackals—or horsemen? Was it possible that a French patrol had come? The Bordj had been built long ago, to shelter the desert patrols. It was possible. But as Wharton stared at the cloud of dust moving under the sun, through the glasses he made out the figures of horsemen in flowing burnous and turban, and the glitter of spears that glanced back the sun-rays. They were Arabs who were riding in from the desert.

Wharton's heart throbbed.

He called to Major Cherry, and handed him the glasses. The major placed them to his eyes.

"Some more of Mustapha's band, coming to join him?" asked Harry Wharton anxiously. "Or—or—"

He left the question unfinished.

The major did not reply for some moments.

"Ali!" he said at last.

"Ali!" repeated the Greyfriars Juniors.

The major handed the glasses back to Wharton. The captain of the Remove looked again.

The horsemen were clear to view now, by the help of the glasses, from the top of the tower. To Mustapha's camp below they were still invisible, and would remain so until they rode into the shallow valley in the hills.

Two hundred at least the riders numbered—dusky men in burnous and turban, some with rifles, some with spears and scimitars—all of them armed. And at their head, on a gallant horse, rode a figure that Wharton knew well—that he could now recognise—the figure of Ali ben Yusef, once a schoolboy at Greyfriars, now an Arab of the Sahara, riding at the head of his tribesmen, with the Eye of Ahmed blazing in his turban in the blaze of the sun.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Coming of Ali!

"ALI!" The name was uttered by all the Greyfriars party, on the roof of the Bordj. Their faces lighted up as they looked on the young Arab, riding at the head of his men. Soon the horsemen were visible to the naked eye—firce, dusky men with spears and rifles, with hard brown faces and black shining eyes—men of the same kidney as the men of Mustapha, that was clear enough—many of them, doubtless, robbers of caravans in the desert, but friends at least to the English party besieged in the tower. They followed Ali ben Yusef, and it was therefore evident that they came as friends.

The major's bronzed face worked as he looked on the galloping troop.

Ali had succeeded.

That was plain now.

Mustapha and his kinsmen, besieging the lonely Bordj, were far from the tents of the Oued Tahar; in the encampments of the tribe it was probable that Ali had

found no enemy. But he had found many who recognised him as the son of Yusef, the murdered sheik, who had hitherto believed that he had died with his father in the desert. And the Eye of Ahmed had done the rest—for long ages it had been the symbol of sovereignty and submission in the tents of the Oued Tahar. The glamour of its influence would have established even the usurper Mustapha, had he been able to appear among the tribes wearing it in his turban, and claiming obedience as the holder of the talisman. Much more it had drawn to the son of Yusef the allegiance of the wild tribesmen who had not forgotten their old sheik.

Ali had succeeded. Two hundred armed men rode with him on horses and camels—and a thousand more, probably, could have been called to follow him given due time to gather them from their scattered encampments. But two hundred men were more than ample to deal with Mustapha's reduced band—scarcely fifty all told.

It was success. It was victory and vengeance! But the major's face worked, and his heart was heavy. Twenty-four hours sooner this help would have saved his son; but in that time it could not have come. Twelve hours sooner, Bob might still have been saved; but there had not been time. Even to reach the Bordj on the morning of the second day Ali must have hastened—it was clear that he and his troop had ridden all through the night.

Too late to save Bob, but in time to save the rest—in time, at least, to save the girls. For that the major was thankful. But his heart was heavy for his lost son.

Even yet the men of Mustapha were unaware of the horsemen who were approaching from the desert.

From the top of the tower they were clearly seen, horses prancing and camels thudding, in the bright Sahara sunlight. But the rocks and ridges still hid them from the sight of the camp of the Arabs in the valley.

A shot rang from the camp of Mustapha, and the bullet whizzed over



Squealing shrilly, the camel wheeled and raced for the desert. Bob Cherry, bound to the animal's back, heard a rushing sound and knew that it was the lion springing. Thud! The great beast had leaped, and fallen short, as the frantic camel fled. (See Chapter 8.)

the roof. An Arab marksman had loosed off, in ignorance of the overwhelming force of rescuers now close at hand. That shot was heard by the advancing riders, and the juniors saw Ali ben Yusef start and spur on his horse.

Marjorie and Clara came up to the roof. Billy Bunter came up, with his mouth full, from breakfast. All eyes were fixed on the troop that rode in from the Sahara.

The folds of the hills hid them from sight a few minutes later. But the sound of many hoof-beats came now on the air.

There was stirring in the camp of Mustapha.

Arabs stood staring towards the sound of the hoof-beats, waiting for the newcomers to appear in sight in the valley.

Mustapha ben Mohammed came out of his tent.

Distant as he was, he was visible to the watchers on the roof. Harry Wharton turned the field-glasses upon him, and read in his brown, harsh face perplexity and doubt. The sound of the advance of many riders had alarmed the sheik; though certainly he never dreamed that Ali, the son of Yusef, was coming at the head of his tribesmen.

Three or four Arabs dashed away, obviously to scout. Through the glasses Wharton saw one of them come running

back, with a startled face. The sheik listened to his report, and his dark face grew black with passion. He had learned, at last, that Ali was not in the Bordj—that Ali ben Yusef was free, and at the head of his father's men. It was terrible news for the sheik, who saw, in those moments, his last hopes vanish of establishing his power over the tribes of the Oued Tahar.

No hope was left to him—he would never be sheik of the desert tribe; even if he escaped with his life he would be fortunate. Mustapha ben Mohammed knew it, and he ground his teeth with savage rage. His dark glance turned on the Bordj, sheltering the enemies who now would never fall into his power—who would soon be triumphant, and pursuing him with their vengeance.

The sheik shouted orders in Arabic. But for once there was hesitation to obey.

The men round him were his kinsmen; to them, he was the sheik, though the rest of the tribe did not acknowledge him. They had followed him to the desert—they had stood by him in his desperate attempts to possess himself of the Eye of Ahmed. But now that they found themselves arrayed in arms against their own tribesmen, against the bearer of the talisman, they wavered.

The Nubian slave, Abdullah, brought the sheik's horse—a magnificent Barbary steed. But of the mob of startled Arabs, only a dozen mounted at the sheik's order. The rest stood uncertain, babbling to one another in excited Arabic.

Ali and his troop were in sight now. They came riding down the rocky valley towards the Bordj, Ali ben Yusef at their head.

Mustapha shouted to his men again in a voice that was hoarse with rage. But not a weapon was lifted.

The enemy were four to one. A charge of the fierce horsemen would have scattered Mustapha's men like chaff before the wind. The conflict was hopeless; only in his rage and despair would the sheik have put it to the test. The Arabs called to one another, and pointed to the Eye of Ahmed that blazed in Ali ben Yusef's turban. The men who had mounted dropped from their horses now. Even Abdullah, the Nubian slave, stepped back from holding the sheik's horse, with a derisive grin on his black face. Mustapha's power was broken like a reed; and in all his camp, even the slaves refused him obedience.

Clatter, clatter! Ali and his tribesmen rode up and halted with a shouting and waving of spears. From the roof of the Bordj the besieged watched in tense silence.

Once more Mustapha shouted to his men.

But they did not answer, they did not heed. No weapon was touched, and more than half his band moved away to range themselves with the newcomers. And the rest stood motionless. They would not raise their hands against their kinsman, but they would not fight against their tribesmen and the bearer of the talisman.

Mustapha ben Mohammed cast a haggard glance around him.

An hour before he had been the lord of life and death in his camp, his slightest nod anxiously obeyed. Like Lucifer, son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

Ali ben Yusef raised his hand, his eyes gleaming at the sheik. He pointed to Mustapha ben Mohammed.

A dozen horsemen rushed on towards the tall, savage figure. It was the order for Mustapha's death that the boy sheik had given.

Once more, for an instant, Mustapha's haggard glance swept round him. Spears and scimitars were raised to take his life, and not a hand moved to aid him.

For that instant he stood, and it seemed that he would be swept down by the horsemen, and hacked to death by the flashing steel that glanced in the sun.

Then, with a sudden spring, he was on the back of the great, black Barbary horse, urging his steed in full flight up the valley.

With a wild clatter of hoofs and a jingle of harness he went, in frantic flight, an outcast henceforth from his tribe—a lonely Ishmael of the Sahara.

Ali shouted again.

The horsemen galloped on in pursuit of the fleeing sheik. In a few minutes pursued and pursuers vanished among the folds of the rocky hills.

Ali ben Yusef gazed after them for a few moments, and then wheeled his horse and rode in at the gates of the courtyard. He rode up to the door of the Bordj, and knocked on it with the butt of his spear.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Journey of Death!

BOB CHERRY opened his eyes. He had slept. He had not believed that he could sleep, but weariness had told on him. For long hours he had slept, bound as he was, while the camel lay sleeping in the sand.

His eyes glanced round wildly as they opened.

He was conscious of aching pain, of parching thirst. The camel lay at rest in the sand, sleeping. The rising sun glimmered on the expanse of the desert—limitless, unbroken. Not a tree, not even a shady rock—nothing but sand, endless sand.

But there was a stirring close by him, and his startled eyes rested upon other eyes, dark and fierce and watchful. Round the sleeping camel had gathered the jackals of the desert—nine or ten of the savage brutes, squatting in the sand—watching, watching. The cowardly animals dared not attack—they were seekers of carrion, and they were watching for their prey. In the Arab caravans that traverse the great desert a sick camel sometimes falls by the wayside and is left, and the jackals gather round him, waiting for him to die. So it was now. While there was a stirring of life in the victim the brutes held off and watched with fierce, unrelenting eyes.

Bob gave a hoarse cry.

His cry startled the jackals, and with a snapping and snarling they crowded back a few paces. The sleeping camel awakened, the long neck stretched, the camel's startled eyes beheld the waiting, watching scavengers of the desert. In a moment the camel scrambled up, squealing, and loped away. The journey of death had begun again with the new day.

Snarling savagely, disappointed of their prey, the jackals shambled in pursuit. But it was no sick or disabled camel they had to deal with now, but a strong animal in full vigour. Bob Cherry swung helplessly on the rough back as the camel raced across the sand. Soon the disappointed howls of the jackals died away in the distance behind.

High over the sandy waste the sun sailed in a sky that had no cloud. The heat of the day was coming on—the terrible heat of the Sahara.

The prisoner's weary eyes swept the arid waste of sand. Death was all that he could hope for—the only release from his sufferings. And death was long in coming.

The vengeance of Mustapha was long and slow—of Mustapha, in those very hours himself a fugitive in the desert, with savage foes tracking him to take his life.

Higher and higher rose the sun, till at the zenith it poured down pitiless heat.

The camel loped on.

To the strong-limbed animal, born and bred in the arid desert, the heat was little or nothing. Accustomed to pass whole days without food or water, it had not suffered. And by now the camel had grown used to the strange burden on his back, and did not heed it. The animal was tasting freedom now—the freedom of the wild camel of the remote recesses of the Sahara.

Bob Cherry wondered dully whether the loping trot of the powerful beast was carrying him. No doubt some instinct was guiding him in his strange journey in the trackless desert. Perhaps to some oasis, where there was shade and water. Perhaps to some hidden recess of the desert where no human foot had ever



"Allah is great," said Ibrahim. "It is the will of Allah that we should follow in the footsteps of the lost one!" "What!" exclaimed Wharton. "What have you found?" Ibrahim pointed to the marks in the soil. "Him camel tread," he said simply. "The lost one—him bound to camel's back. Ibrahim him know footprint of him camel!" (See Chapter 9.)

trod, and where he would be safe from recapture and servitude.

At a steady pace that neither increased nor diminished the camel loped on over the glistening, shifting sand, heedless of the torrid heat and the blinding light.

Bob Cherry's eyes were closed against the merciless sun, but at intervals he opened them to sweep the desert with a wild gaze, of despair rather than of hope. It was not likely that the strange journey would lead him back to the habitations of man; by an instinctive understanding he realised the camel's rejoicing in his new-found freedom. At the most he could hope to fall in with some of the wandering Arabs or Tuaricks of the desert, to whom the camel would be a prize of value, and who would take the trouble to capture it. And in that case he had nothing to expect for himself but a savage blow that would end his sufferings.

Yet he longed, with an intense longing, for the sight of a human form, even that of a savage. The deadly solitude of the desert weighed on him like lead. It was almost as terrible as the burning heat of the sun.

Suddenly he started convulsively, and the light of hope dawned in his haggard face.

He raised his head against the camel's hump, and looked, and looked again, and

cried aloud, unconsciously, with joy and relief.

The dreary expanse of sand was broken at last. In the distance, where only sand had met his gaze before, waved tall, graceful palm-trees, and there glistened and rippled the water of a spring. Water—clear, cool water—shining in the sun.

Water, more precious than gold, more precious than precious stones! Water, for a draught of which he would have given all the treasures of the world! It glistened and sparkled, and reflected the graceful shapes of the nodding palms.

The camel trotted steadily on. He was heading directly for the glad scene that had met Bob's aching eyes. Yet he did not hurry—not by a stride did he increase his speed.

But he was approaching the oasis. It seemed to Bob that the tall trees nodded nearer and nearer—that he could almost hear the rippling of the water that sparkled in the sun.

And then, suddenly as it had come, the vision vanished. Bob stared, uncomprehending.

Where the tall palms had waved, where the water had rippled and sparkled, there was sand, sand, sand! Sand that shifted in the hot wind in glowing, burning particles.

Was he out of his senses? Was it a vision of madness that he had seen? And then he understood.

"The mirage!"

He groaned the word aloud.

It was the mirage he had seen—the picture of some distant, inaccessible scene that so often mocks the parched traveller of the desert.

The tears started to his aching eyes. The disappointment was bitter. It came as a crushing blow. Only the mirage—gone now, leaving the endless sand to meet his aching gaze. Only the mirage that had come to mock him in his misery.

He closed his eyes again and groaned. When would this end?

Quietly, steadily, the camel loped on, the dust of the desert sand rising ever from his thudding feet. But now his strange rider was no longer silent. From the boy, bound on the camel's rough back, came strange mutterings and babblings—incoherent words of home, of kind faces for ever lost as the grip of delirium fastened on the hapless victim of the sheik's vengeance.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Quest!

THE Bordj was no longer besieged. The palm-wood door stood wide.

In the valley there was again an Arab camp, but it was the camp of Ali ben Yusef's tribesmen—shaggy, savage men, but from whom there was nothing to fear. For the sway of the schoolboy sheik was as autocratic as that of Mustapha's once had been. Among the wild tribesmen of the Oued Tahar the word of Ali was law, his nod a command.

To the little garrison of the Bordj the coming of Ali had brought life and security. Of Mustapha's men, some had gone to their tents far away, the others had joined with Ali's followers. Of Mustapha ben Mohammed the fate was not known. His pursuers had returned to the camp in the valley baffled. The sheik's powerful Barbary steed had saved him. Somewhere, afar in the desert, roamed the once powerful sheik, a fugitive and outcast, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him.

The Greyfriars juniors scarcely knew Ali now. To them he had been the schoolboy of the Remove, the strange junior at Greyfriars whom they had befriended. But the boy sheik of the Arab tribe was quite a different person. There was a new reserve about Ali, an air of haughty command. He seemed to have left them a boy, and returned a man. They realised that Greyfriars had been but a passing episode in his life. At heart he was the Arab of the Sahara. His life, his thoughts, all his being were bound up in the desert that had been the home of his forefathers.

He was richly dressed now in the finest linen, and jewels of great price gleamed on the hilt of his scimitar. In his spotless turban gleamed and glittered the great diamond that was called the Eye of Ahmed.

He was a warrior now among fighting men, and the schoolboy of Greyfriars was gone for ever. Ali had entered into his inheritance, and henceforward his life was with his tribe, his horizon bounded by the sands of the Sahara.

But Ali, changed as he was, was still in one respect the Ali they had known. His friendship was faithful and unchanged. Chief and sheik as he was, he salaamed humbly to the major when

they met at the door of the Bordj, and he greeted the chums of the Remove in quite his old way, and in the odd English that had once amused them in the study and the quad at Greyfriars.

"I'm being very glad to see you again," he said. "I coming fast as horse can go for saving my friends. And soon you seeing Mustapha ben Mohammed die."

But Ali's handsome dark face grew very grave when he learned of the fate of Bob Cherry.

At once he gave orders to his men, and fifty of the swiftest horsemen of the Oued Tahar rode from the valley to scour the desert in all directions in search of the camel that had carried the Greyfriars junior away to death.

It was all that Ali could do, and Bob's comrades hoped that it might serve. But they knew that Ali himself had little hope or none.

Many hours had passed since the camel had been driven into the desert. A long night had come and gone. That Bob Cherry still lived was a faint hope in the hearts of his comrades; that he could be found in the trackless wastes of the Sahara a fainter hope still.

But they did not abandon hope. Never, till it was beyond all possible doubt, would they believe that they had looked for the last time on the rugged, honest face of Bob Cherry.

In the hour of rescue and safety all looks were grave, with the exception of Bunter's. Billy Bunter seemed to be rather bright.

"I say, you fellows, the sooner we get out of this the better," he said. "All very well to say that those black and brown beasts yonder are friends. They look to me much the same as Mustapha's gang. I can jolly well tell you I don't trust them."

Nobody troubled to answer Bunter. "Getting deaf, Wharton?" hooted the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!" said Harry impatiently.

"Look here, we'd better get going!" exclaimed Bunter. "They've found our camels in Mustapha's camp. We've got back all those thieves robbed us of. Ali's bound to stand us grub for the journey. Of course, that's important. Well, the sooner we go the better."

Wharton looked at him. "We're not going without Bob!" he said curtly.

Billy Bunter's fat face fell a little. To do him justice, he was not unconcerned on Bob's account. He was really sorry, but not to such an extent that he was prepared to run more risks in the desert and face more discomforts. The Owl of the Remove wanted to find a roof over his head and an ample and well-cooked series of meals before him. He wanted that, and he wanted it badly. Other considerations were minor ones in comparison.

"I'm sorry about Bob," he said. "I know it's rotten, poor old chap! He was one of the best, poor old fellow!"

"Oh, cheese it!" grunted Johnny Bull. Bunter's use of the past tense in speaking of Bob jarred on Johnny's nerves.

"Well, perhaps you didn't think so much of old Bob as I did," said Bunter, with a sniff.

"What?" roared Johnny. "He was my pal," said Bunter. "He always thought more of me than he did of you fellows. He just stood you. He liked me."

"Will you dry up, you fat idiot?"

"No, I won't! As I said, I'm sorry about Bob. But it can't be helped, and you know it. The best thing we can do is to get back to Biskra before something happens to the rest of us, see? I don't trust those black-jowled Arabs yonder. And, if you ask me, I don't think much of Ali, either. Too jolly haughty to suit me, and only a blessed nigger, too, like you, Inky!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh turned his glance on Bunter, but did not reply.

"There's the girls, too," said Bunter. "Perhaps you've forgotten Marjorie and Clara. I haven't. I'm chivalrous. The very first thing is to get them back safe to Biskra. Let's get off at once. Think of poor old Hazel, not knowing what's happened to Marjorie, and her parents, too. Haven't you any hearts?" demanded Bunter warmly. "Look here, let's pack up and start!"

"Ali has already sent off a messenger to Biskra," said Harry quietly. "He has taken a letter to Mr. Hazeldene, to tell him that Marjorie and Clara are safe. And he is going as fast as the swiftest horse can gallop. So you needn't worry about that, Bunter."

"As if he's worrying about anything but his own fat hide!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!" howled Bunter. "I'm fed-up with this, and I want to get back to Biskra, so there! And I think you fellows might have the decency to see me safe back after bringing me here. How do you know what may happen to me?"

"What the thump can it possibly matter what happens to you?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You will be safe here, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "We're going in search of Bob, and a guard will stay here at the Bordj. Some of Ali's men. Plenty to keep the place safe. You've nothing to fear."

"I hope you don't think I'm funky, Wharton," said the Owl of the Remove, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm not quite the kind of fellow to think about safety first. In the forefront of the battle—that's my style."

"Eh?"

"If you fellows are going buzzing about in the desert, among lions and hyenas and savage Arabs, somebody will have to stay here to protect the girls," said Bunter. "I'll do it! Rely on me!"

"There will be fifty of Ali's men camped in the courtyard, and no danger at all," said Harry.

"I'm prepared to take the post of danger, as usual," said Bunter, unheeding. "That's all right! If you refuse to go back to Biskra with me, in your selfish way, I shall stay here, in the post of danger, and protect Marjorie and Clara."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"After all, the girls will be glad to have somebody about who isn't an Arab, though it's only Bunter," remarked Nugent. "Bunter can fetch and carry for them, and if he doesn't make himself useful we'll kick him when we come back."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Now shut up, Bunter. There will be plenty of grub, and you can sleep all night and snooze all day, when you're not eating—so you'll have nothing to complain of."

"Beast!"

Harry Wharton & Co. wasted no more time on Bunter. They were in need of rest, but they were not disposed to take any rest. Ali ben Yusef had made his

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2

arrangements without losing time. He had sent to the encampments of his tribe for supplies of all kinds to make the room in the Bordj more comfortable for the two girls; he had picked out fifty men to guard the place till the major and the juniors should come back—giving his orders to the dusky ruffians of the desert with a quiet authority that astonished the Greyfriars juniors.

"We're going, Marjorie," said Harry Wharton, on the stair in the Bordj, while Ibrahim held his camel outside. "You'll be quite safe here—and Bunter is staying. The Arabs will keep camped outside the Bordj; you'll have the house to yourselves. I'd like to take you both back to Biskra without losing a minute, but I know you think we ought to lose no time. If Bob still lives every minute may make a difference."

"Of course," said Marjorie. "We shall be safe here; you need not think of us. But oh, we shall wait so anxiously!"

"Bring poor Bob back with you, Harry," said Clara huskily. "Poor, dear old Bob! I'm trying not to think of it—it's too terrible to think of."

"We're going to try hard to find him," said Harry.

Marjorie and Clara waved their handkerchiefs from the loopholes of the upper room as the Greyfriars party rode away. Their hearts were with the searchers who went clattering away towards the open desert. The hoof-beats died in the distance, and Marjorie and Clara were left, with heavy hearts, to watch and wait.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Desert!

"HALLO, hallo! Wake up, you fellows—it's rising-bell!" Strange words to be heard in the arid desert—if there had been ears to hear them.

But there were no ears to hear—silence and solitude reigned around the Greyfriars junior bound to the back of the trotting camel.

For long hours, as the camel loped on in the sunlight, babbled words had fallen from Bob's dry lips. Sometimes in his delirium it seemed to him that he was back at Greyfriars, and well-known faces came before his bewildered eyes, well-known voices sounded in his ears. Now he was "up before the Head," now he was in class with the Remove, and Mr. Quelch was calling on him to construe, and he couldn't get his construe right. Now he was "scrapping" with Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth Form; now he was ragging Coker of the Fifth. Now he was struggling with Coker, and the Fifth-Former's powerful arms held him fast, and he struggled and struggled in vain to be released, and shouted to the Remove for rescue. It was the camel-ropes, cruelly knotted, that held him, but he was no longer conscious of it.

Once or twice the long neck of the camel swerved, and he looked at his strange rider, as if the babbling, incoherent talk surprised him. Still the words ran on, hoarse and husky, wild and meaningless.

"Rescue, Remove! Wharton—Frank—Inky—" muttered Bob. "They've got me. Roll up, Remove!"

For hour after hour it had lasted. Thirst and heat and torturing sunlight had been too much for the unhappy victim of the sheik.

But suddenly, like one awakening from a dream, Bob Cherry came out of the delirious fit.

His face was wet.
His haggard eyes stared round him.

Sand and sand and endless sand—nothing but sand! But the blinding sun rays no longer beat on his tormented face—the blaze of ruthless light was gone from his dazzled eyes. Rain was falling—rain, thick, heavy rain. He could not believe it at first. Until his senses had fled he had been parched and burning and scorched, and it seemed to him that he was lost in a universe of heat and fire. It had seemed that there was no such thing as rain, that there never would be rain again under the heavens.

And now—
It came down in torrents. It drenched and soaked the sand of the Sahara. It ran in rivulets in the furrows of the sand, or gathered in pools where the camel's heavy hoofs trod deep.

Rain—blessed rain!
It was real—it was no dream—no torturing deceit like the fatal mirage! One of the sudden sweeping rain-storms of the Sahara had come on—sudden, overwhelming, torrential.

Bob Cherry leaned his head back on the camel's hump, and opened his mouth to the rain.

The drops on his parched, cracked lips were like manna from heaven.

The rain drenched him—drenched him to the skin. He felt the water oozing in his clothes, and blessed it. It ran and dripped from him; it steamed on the camel's hide. It soaked his sun-helmet

and his hair, it splashed unceasingly on his burning face. Ere long his parching thirst was satisfied, but still he welcomed the rain, still he blessed its coolness, and rejoiced in the feel of it.

The camel thudded on through the blinding downpour, seeking shelter. But there was no shelter.

The desert was changed to a sea of watery sand. The horizon was a drenched mist. The rain struck on the camel and the rider almost with the force of blows.

The sun was gone, semi-darkness reigned. The hot wind, that had seemed like the breath of a furnace, was now cold, bitter, penetrating. Bob Cherry began to shiver with the cold, though still his mind, obsessed by the terrible heat he had endured, could scarcely accept the fact that he was cold.

And then, as suddenly as it had come, the rain-storm passed.

From the clouded sky the African sun shone out again, bright and blazing.

The clouds rolled away, the mists lifted from the horizon like a curtain, burned away by the returning blaze of the tropical sun. Once more it was the African day.

The camel thudded on.

Bob Cherry licked his wet lips. There was renewed life in him—new life, and almost hope. The torture of thirst was gone, and he was conscious of hunger.



From the camel's back Bob Cherry gazed at the trickling water, oozing here and there amid half-dried mud. He struggled frantically with his bonds—but he could not reach it; the sight of the water mocked his burning thirst. (See chapter 10.)

But hunger was little compared with thirst. His eyes were almost bright as he raised his head once more to gaze round at the desert.

Palm-trees in the distance!

He almost laughed with bitterness. The mirage again, to deceive and disappoint him.

But this time it was not the mirage! Against the sky, now blue again and cloudless, graceful palms nodded their tall heads, offering shade and shelter.

It was an oasis in the desert.

The camel was heading directly for the little spot of verdure in the midst of the barren sands. Some instinct had guided it there, through many and many a long league of parched desert.

Sun-blaze and heat—the heat, searching and burning, that he knew so well. The sun was sinking westward; the burning rays had sucked up the rain; the sand that churned under the feet of the camel was already dry and parched once more, as if water had never touched it from the day of creation.

But the palm-trees were close now—close and comforting. Bob eyed them hungrily as they nodded against the blue, closer and closer as the camel sped on.

At long last the feathery frondage was over him, and the searching sun rays were shut off from his fevered face.

It was a tiny oasis—a dozen palm-trees, clustered close where some hidden spring welled up from under the sand. There was a fringe of scanty herbage round them. Here and there water glistened in the sun—the water of the spring that welled up, and, after flowing shallow a few yards, sank away to nothingness in the parched sand close to the source. Thirst was already returning. Bob gazed longingly at the glimmer of water in the green.

The camel halted.

If it lay down Bob could at least reach the welling water, and dip his burning face in it, and suck it from the hollows of the sand.

But he could not control the steed to which he was bound: he had to wait the camel's pleasure. It seemed that the beast was seeking rest, as he snuffed among the herbage round the group of palms.

But suddenly he leaped back, his head thrown up, with a shrill, startled squeal. There was a stirring in the coarse scrub, and a head was thrust out into the sunlight—a great head, backed by a tawny mane, with fierce eyes that rolled and gleamed—the head of a gigantic African lion.

Bob stared at the lion, fascinated by the sudden, terrible appearance, like one in a dream. There was a low, fierce growl, and the sinuous body of the great brute quivered.

Squealing shrilly, the camel whirled and raced for the desert. Bob heard a rushing sound, and knew that it was the lion springing.

Thud!

The great beast had leaped, and fallen short, as the frantic camel fled. Scarcely six feet behind the fleeing camel the lion dropped to the sand.

Loud and menacing, like the roll of thunder, came the roar of the baffled brute, echoing with a thousand heavy echoes across the expanse of the desert.

The camel raced on.

Swinging helplessly in his bonds on the camel's back Bob Cherry was borne along. At every instant he expected to feel the claws of the springing lion—to feel the terrified camel dragged to the ground, steed and rider to fall a prey to the hungry jaws of the lion. Amid the tattooing thud of the camel's hoofs

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he could hear the soft padding of the lion—soft but swift—in fierce pursuit.

Again he heard a heavy thud in the sand—the fall of the lion as he sprang again, and again fell short of the racing camel.

Then the padding died into silence behind. The baffled brute had given up the chase, outsped and out-distanced by the fugitive camel. There was silence, save for the thudding hoofs.

Bob lifted his head to look about him. He could see nothing of the lion—nothing of the palm-trees that had been so welcome to his sight. The oasis was below the sandy horizon now. Nothing met the eye, save the sand—the endless sand, stretching to infinitude under the scorching sun.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Footprint in the Oasis!

WHITHER?

That was the question that Harry Wharton & Co. asked themselves, with sinking

hearts. To search the desert for their lost chum; never to give up while the faintest hope remained, that was their fixed determination. But as they rode out from the low hills, leaving the Bordj and the Arab camp behind them, the hopelessness of their quest was borne in upon their minds with crushing force.

Whither?

Where, in that limitless, trackless expanse, were they to seek for the comrade they had lost?

The shifting sands bore no trace of passing feet. Track there was none—to north and south, to east and west, stretched the desert without a sign.

If the camel's fleeing hoofs had left a trail it had been long lost and hidden by the unrelenting sand that shifted, and ever shifted, under the hot wind.

All they knew was the direction the camel had taken when it was driven forth by Mustapha ben Mohammed's men. That much they knew from the ruffians themselves, some of whom were now in Ali's band, under Ali ben Yusef's orders. To the south-west, according to the Arabs, the camel had fled; in that direction it had vanished from their sight twenty hours ago!

To the south-west stretched the desert

for a thousand miles towards the distant Niger!

With sinking hearts the Greyfriars juniors scanned the boundless plains. Major Cherry's grim, bronzed face was grimmer than ever. He was seeking his son, with little hope in his heart.

Honest Ibrahim, the guide, was troubled and thoughtful. Ibrahim was riding with his "fine gentlemen" in search of the lost junior, on what he knew to be a hopeless quest. Chance, or a miracle, might help the searchers; otherwise there was no hope.

With the Greyfriars party rode Ali ben Yusef, with a dozen picked hunters of his tribe. In a dozen other directions parties of Ali's men were riding and scouring.

But the Arabs at least did not expect to see the missing junior alive again. And Bob's comrades were conscious of the hopelessness of it; only they could not, they would not, realise that all was lost.

Had the fleeing camel taken the northern direction they might have hoped that he was heading for what had been his home, for they knew that Bob had been bound to the camel that had once been Ibrahim's. But obviously the brute was heading away from Biskra—away from the settlements of white men. His servitude had probably been a hard one, and it was freedom that he was seeking.

"My fine gentlemen," murmured Ibrahim, as the Greyfriars party rode south-west over the sand, "I, Ibrahim, will not tell you that there is hope, for when one is lost in the desert one is lost, and it is the end. But I think that my camel will keep on in the direction he has taken."

The major looked round quickly.

"Why?" he asked.

Ibrahim smiled.

"I buy him camel from a Tuarick," he said. "Him born in the Tuarick country. Now him free, Ibrahim think go back to Tuarick country."

"How far is that?" asked Harry.

Ibrahim shrugged his shoulders, and gesticulated with his brown hands. He did not know; he only knew that it was a great distance.

"Many days, many days of the desert," he said. "Kilometres, and kilometres, and more kilometres!"

"More than five hundred miles into the heart of Africa," said Major Cherry quietly.

The faint hope that Ibrahim's words had raised in Wharton's breast died away.

"Five hundred miles," he repeated.

"The camel would never live to make that journey in the desert, then."

"Him live," said Ibrahim. "Camel go without food or water many days in the desert. Him live. Him find food and water when him need—oases in the Sahara. Camel live, but—"

Ibrahim did not finish. But the juniors knew what he would have said. The camel would live in the desert, but the rider would perish. For a day, for perhaps two or three days, the bound schoolboy might survive; then thirst and suffering would have done their work. The camel, if he was seeking his old pastures in the Tuarick country, might and would live to reach them—but he would carry there a dead body as his rider.

But it was something, at least, to know the probable direction the fleeing camel would take—probable, though not certain. To the south-west, towards the distant land of the wild Tuaricks, the Greyfriars party rode.

(Continued on page 16.)

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Supplement No. 194.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending October 4th, 1924.

WHAT I WANT TO BE!

Our contributors make no secret of their ambitions.

BILLY BUNTER:

When I grow up I want to be the sooper-visor is some big restering. The sooper-visor has a jolly good time. He is called the sooper-visor bekwase he looks after the soop. He also has to taste a sample of every course before it is served to the diners. That's a job that would suit me down to the ground. But I'm afraid there wouldn't be many courses left by the time I'd sampled them! I have already applied for the post of sooper-visor at the Hotel Sizzle, in London. I wrote some days ago, enclosing an unstamped envelope for a reply, but up to the time of going to press no reply has come. Our postle serviss badly needs overhauling. It's a disgrace to the nation!

PETER TODD:

I'm looking forward to the time when I shall be a barrister in wig and gown. It will be rather ripping to appear as counsel for the defence if one of my old Greyfriars pals finds himself in the dock. And it will be rather funny if I appear as counsel for the prosecution in a case in which Bolsover major is charged with causing bodily harm. But it won't be funny for Bolsover! I have steeped myself in the law, and I know it as well as I know my A B C. Already, in my mind's eye, I can see myself strutting to and fro in the gardens of the Inner Temple!

BOB CHERRY:

I dare say I shall follow in father's footsteps, and enter the Army—if there's an Army left by the time I've grown up. There's certain to be an Air Service, anyway, and thrills and spills of a pilot's life rather appeal to me. Wonder whether my "lofty" ambitions will ever be realised?

LORD MAULEVERER.

Goodness only knows what I shall be when I grow up! It's too much fag to start pickin' and choosin' a profession, begad! I shall probably spend my life in a cosy bath-chair, bein' pushed along the promenade of some popular seaside resort. If any fellow would like a job as a bathchair-attendant, he's only to say the word. Whatever profession I choose, I shall make jolly certain that there's no work attached to it! Bob Cherry says I ought to become a "sleeper" on the railway. He will have his little joke, bless him!

HAROLD SKINNER:

I haven't given much thought to the future as yet. I shall probably become either a cardsharp or a bookmaker's tout. At all events, I've no desire to enter any of the "highly respectable" professions!

PERCY BOLSOVER:

What am I going to be? Why, the world's champion boxer, of course! I've got the physique, and I've got the pluck—in fact I've got all the necessary qualifications. As Basher Bolsover, I shall make a great hit—a good many great hits, in fact. Of course, I shall refuse to fight unless somebody puts up a purse of at least ten thousand pounds. I shall also refuse to fight anybody of my

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own size and weight. Cripples and chronic invalids are about my mark. Whenever you see my name billed to fight at the Albert Hall or the Holborn Stadium, don't forget to book a front seat, and I'll give you an exhibition of fistie fireworks!

SAMMY BUNTER:

I'm going to be a millionaire—if somebody will advance me tuppence capital to start with! A life of lucksury will suit me down to the ground. How nice to glide about in a Rolls-Rice all day, and do nothing for a living!

FICKLE FANCIES!

By Dick Penfold.

I had a wish, when I was three,
To sail upon the stormy sea;
To be a bold, bad buccaneer—
But that profession's dead, I fear.

I had another wish at four
To get a safer job on shore.
I thought I'd like to be a doctor,
And told my mater, but it shocked her.

Then, at the tender age of five,
At "playing soldiers" I would strive.
I had a wish to be a major—
A ranting, regular rampager!

But when I reached the age of six
My fond desires were in a mix.
Which should I choose—the sword or pen?
I don't know now—I didn't then!

When I attained the age of seven,
I met an uncle down in Devon,
Who urged me to become a jockey.
Alas! I was too stout and stocky!

I felt, as soon as I was eight,
A farmer's life would be first-rate.
I'd run the show, and none would boss me.
But what if maddened bulls should toss me?

I reckoned, at the age of nine,
To be a millionaire was fine.
But then I very soon lost heart;
I had no capital to start!

No sooner had I got to ten,
I met some quaint old fishermen.
Who told me tales of hidden treasure.
But as for fishing, where's the pleasure?

The years passed by—they fairly glided,
And still I hadn't quite decided.
Whether to be a butcher, baker
A burglar, or a motor-maker!

Now that I've come to man's estate
(I've turned fifteen, at any rate)
I think I ought to be a poet;
These topping verses go to show it!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

THE Greyfriars fellows are Peter Pans. They flatly refuse to grow up. It will be a long, long time before you see Bob Cherry with a flowing beard, or Billy Bunter in a bath-chair. And the prospect of Bolsover major, wrinkled with age, shuffling down to the post-office to draw his old-age pension, is very distant.

But I suppose we can't remain Peter Pans for ever and ever. Some day, no doubt, we shall cease to be boys, and find ourselves on the threshold of manhood. Then we shall have to choose our careers.

When I lie awake in the Remove dormitory at night I often wonder what my schoolfellows will be when they arrive at maturity. In some cases we can tell in advance which professions will be chosen by certain fellows. Peter Todd, with his uncanny knowledge of the law, will become a barrister. Tom Redwing, who has the sea in his blood, will follow his father's calling and sail the ocean blue. Frank Nugent, who has what is known as the "artistic temperament," will blossom forth as a black-and-white artist. And Alonzo Todd is practically certain to become a missionary. I do not say this in a sneering spirit. Everybody knows Alonzo's unselfishness and his desire to help others.

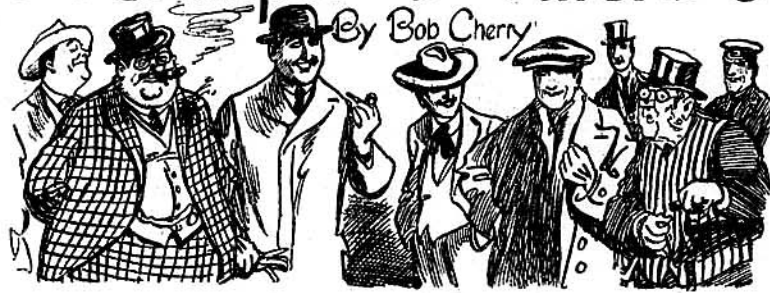
But what of Billy Bunter? There is a long list of professions for him to choose from; but I can't imagine him being very successful in any particular one—unless he takes on a chef's job at some big hotel. Or, of course, he could become a ventriloquist. But can you picture Billy Bunter as a barrister in wig and gown, or as a doctor? I can't! In the latter capacity our tame porpoise would prescribe a "good round meal" as a certain cure for any ailment under the sun, but I'm afraid his patients wouldn't see eye to eye with him. One can safely predict a failure for "B. B." as a doctor.

I thought it would be a rather ripping idea to have a special number dealing with vocations and the future generally. We will let the Greyfriars fellows speak for themselves and tell us what they want to be, and why.

Speaking for myself, I am torn between the desire to become an editor and an explorer. Two very different things, eh? But I might be able to combine both by setting sail for the North Pole and launching a paper called the "Arctic Times"! At this suggestion Bob Cherry gives me a "freezing" stare!

HARRY WHARTON.
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A Glimpse of the Future!



GREYFRIARS was humming like a hive with excitement on a certain September day in 1944.

It was the day of a great reunion of Old Boys. They were coming from north and south, east and west, to revisit the old school.

I travelled to Greyfriars with my old school chum, Colonel Harry Wharton. Harry had grown into a fine, upstanding man, and his face was bronzed with service in the East. We chatted gaily together as our car sped along the leafy lanes.

"It will be fine to see all the old familiar faces again, Bob!" said my companion.

"Yes, rather! I wouldn't miss the Old Boys' reunion for worlds!"

I confess my heart was beating overtime as we drove up to the gates of Greyfriars, and I could see that Colonel Wharton was equally excited. It was like putting the clock back twenty years, and renewing again the delights of our youth.

A bent, decrepit figure came shuffling out of the porter's lodge. In his horny hand he carried a bunch of keys.

"Gosling!" we exclaimed simultaneously.

"Still at his post after all these years!" added Colonel Wharton. "He must have discovered the elixir of life to keep going all this time!"

Gosling unlocked the gates, and Wharton steered the car through. Then he took the porter's hand in a hearty grip.

"Jolly pleased to see you, Gossy? Do you remember me?"

"Why, it's Master Wharton grown up!" gasped Gosling. "A Harny officer, too! An' drat me if that ain't Master Cherry—also grown up! He's one of them there aviaticks, by the look of 'im!"

"An aviator, Gossy," I corrected. "Any other Old Boys arrived yet, my venerable old patriarch?"

Gosling nodded.

"Which you'll find a whole crowd of 'em in the junior Common-room," he said. "They're holdin' a meetin' there or summat."

Accordingly, we made our way to the junior Common-room. When we opened the door, and stood on the threshold, there were welcome shouts of "Harry!" and "Bob!" and a dozen men came striding forward to greet us. Some we recognised easily; others we had to look at twice.

It was with great joy that I grasped the hand of dear old Mark Linley, my bosom pal when we were boys together. Mark had made his way in the world, and was now a famous novelist. His latest book, "The Merry Heart," was in everybody's mouth—or, rather, on everybody's bookshelf.

"Marky!"

"How ripping to meet again like this!" There was a sudden interruption.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bust me if that isn't Billy Bunter!" I exclaimed.

And there, sure enough, was the ex-portfolio of the Remove, now grown to manhood. Had he got thin during the past twenty years? Not a bit of it! He was as plump and portly as ever. He was loudly dressed in a check suit, and he greeted us with an air of superiority. He airily informed us that he was now the proprietor of the Hotel de Poshe, in London. But we afterwards learned that he was merely the chef at that establishment.

Billy Bunter seemed to regard colonels and aviators and novelists as very small beer by comparison with himself. He was simply bursting with conceit, and we felt half inclined to bump him, as we used to in days of yore.

But there were other people present who soon banished Billy Bunter from our minds. We were introduced to Peter Todd, now an eminent King's Counsel; to Captain Tom Redwing, R.N.; to Frank Nugent, who had won fame and fortune as a black-and-white artist; to William Wibley, who had made a name for himself in the theatrical world; and to Dick Penfold, who had just been appointed Poet Laureate—which meant that he would never have to write any more poetry!

There was a big, burly man present, with a scar on his cheek and a "cauliflower" ear. At first I failed to recognise him; but Mark Linley whispered to me that it was Bolsover major. Bolsover claimed to be the heavy-weight boxing champion of England, and he defied anybody to contradict him. Nobody did! We wanted nothing so undignified as a "scrap"—though twenty years previously we would have revelled in one.

It was a great gathering of the clans at Greyfriars, and we spent a most enjoyable day viewing the old familiar scenes of our boyhood.

When Colonel Wharton's car drove away, with Harry and myself on board, Billy Bunter came puffing and panting in our wake.

"I say, you fellows!" he shouted. "Hold on a minute! Don't be in such a mighty hurry! I want to know if one of you will advance me a fiver? I've been expecting a postal-order—I mean, a cheque—and there's been a delay in the post! So if you would oblige—"

The car sped on, leaving Billy Bunter far in the rear, waving his arms like a windmill.

The last observation that was borne to our ears on the wind was:

"Yah! Beasts!"

ADVICE TO THE AMBITIOUS!

By Tom Brown.

HORACE C. (Fifth Form) writes:

"I wonder if you can give me some advice about choosing a career? As you know, I am a fellow of brains and brawn, and have a big crop of talents. Would you advise me whether to become a Professor, or a Scientist, or a Private Detective, or a Newspaper Proprietor? I want a career with plenty of money attached to it.

The only career for which you are fitted, my dear Horace, is that of a comedian. On leaving Greyfriars you should offer your services to one of the big music-hall proprietors. You would also do well as PUNCH in a Punch and Judy Show. But I'm not suggesting that your Aunt Judith should be the JUDY!

DICKY N. (Second Form) writes:

"I am sending you the manuscript of the latest story I have written, and I want you to tell me if you think there's any chance of me being a big literary man like Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling. Please be frank."

I will be brutally frank, my precocious infant. You will never make a Hardy or a Kipling, not even if you outlive Methusalem. I have read your manuscript, and have no hesitation in describing it as perfect piffle.

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and brainless balderdash. When you have mastered the rudiments of grammar, and when you have learned that c-a-t spells cat and that d-o-g spells dog, I shall be pleased to criticise a further effusion from your leaky pen. Meanwhile, you had better devote your attention to the breeding of white mice!

HAROLD S. (Remove Form) writes:

"I want to get hold of a soft job when I leave Greyfriars. Can you help me?"

The only "soft" jobs I know off-hand are those of asylum-attendants and cushion-makers. But I can see what you mean, my skinny friend. You want a profession where you can get plenty of money without having to work for it. Well, there are several shady professions which would suit you, but I'm not going to give you any advice. Never let it be said that it was Tom Brown who started you on the downward path!

GEORGE TUBB (Third Form) writes:

"My pater has just written to me, telling me that when I leave Greyfriars I shall have to carve out a career. But he hasn't sent me a penknife to carve it out with. Will you lend me yours?"

Not on your life! If you want to carve out a career, you'd better ask the cook to lend you a carving-knife. I'm not going to have my penknife blunted by ambitious young beggars like you!

GERALD LODER (Sixth Form) writes:

"I understand you are giving advice to fellows concerning their future careers. What do you think I am best fitted for?"

A fellow like you, brimming over with the milk of human kindness, would do well as a philanthropist, or as President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Fags. You have such a kind heart that you would shine in any sphere of benevolence. Why not found a Home for small boys who are destitute? You would never scold them or strike them, or bully them in any way. You wouldn't harm a fly; and all your small charges would sing a song about you: "Kind, kind and gentle is he!" But—methinks you would have to be a very different Loder from the bully and braggart you are at present!

WUN LUNG (Remove Form) writes:

"Me tinkee me make a velly good jockey when me leave Greyfriars. What you tinkee, handsome Tom Brown?"

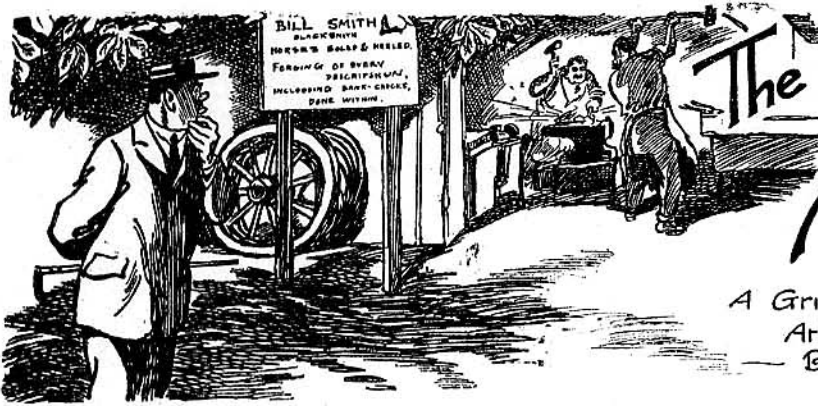
Well, my Chinese friends, the "odds" are "ten to one" that you would be a great "favourite" on a racecourse. You would not be "saddled" with any difficulties in the matter of "weight," as you are such a light and nimble fellow; and, of "course," you are not an "outsider," so I think you will "romp home" a "winner" if you choose the profession in question. I'm "stake" a term's pocket-money on this!

[Supplement ii.]

The Children's Best Coloured Paper

JUNGLE JINKS

Out on Thursday—Price 2d



The Boy Who Made Good!

A Gripping, Seizing and Arresting Story
— By DICKY NUGENT. —

SMITH of the Sixth was about to say good-bye to St. Sam's. The time was ripe for him to leave the old school, and to plunge into the big, bustling world beyond.

Nobody was sorry Smith was leaving. You see, he was practically a pauper, having come to St. Sam's on a skollership. His father was the villidge Smith at Little Mudford. He was one of those fellows of whom the poet writes:

"The smith a mity man is he
With large and sinewy mits;
And the mussels of his brawny arms
Give his opponents fits!"

The St. Sam's fellows natcherally looked down on such a humble perfession as shoeing horses. They themselves were the sons of millionaires and belted carls and prosperu; peers. Some were the sons of welthy bookmakers. But Smith of the Sixth was the son of a Smith—a humble villidge blacksmith. And he was very much despised in consequence.

What made matters worse was the ugly roomer that Smith the Smith had once been sent to prison for forging. His son declared that it was quite all right for a blacksmith to forge; but the St. Sam's fellows shook their heads, and agreed that the Smiths were a bad lot.

So when Smith of the Sixth shook the dust of St. Sam's from his feet, nobody turned out to give him a jolly good send-off.

Even Fossil, the porter, merely gave a grunt as Smith went staggering out of gates with his portmanteau balanced on his back. He was too poor to hire a conveyance, so he had to turn himself into a beast of burden, and carry his own luggage.

Smith twisted his neck in order to have a last longing, lingering look at the old school. A sob shook him from head to foot, and a grate tear splashed in the roadway.

Still twisting his neck, he looked upon his Elmer Mater for the last time.

"Farewell, St. Sam's!" he cried, in a strangled voice.

Then he realised that he was no longer a kid. He was a man, and he must play a man's part in the world. He pulled himself together, and strode away in the direckshun of Little Mudford.

Yes! There, under a spreading chessnut-tree, stood the villidge smithy—the home of his fathers. As he approached, he could hear the bellers roar, and the lusty swipes of the hammer as it crashed upon the anvil.

Outside the smithy was the familiar board, bearing the inscription:

"BILL SMITH,
BLACKSMITH.

Horses soled and heeled.
Forging of every descriptshun, inlcuding
bank-checks, done within."

Supplement iii.]

Young Smith gave a shudder. Was he eggsppected to follow in his father's footsteps and become a blacksmith and a forger? Was he to spend the whole of his life in Little Mudford?

What was the good of all the nollidge and learning he had gained at St. Sam's if he was going to berry himself alive in a country villidge?

At that moment Smith senior stepped out from the smithy.

"Welcome home, my son!" he eggclaimed. "This is a happy day for me! Now that you have left St. Sam's, you will be able to assist me in the smithy. 'Bill Smith & Son—Blacksmiths and Forgers.' Sounds fine, don't it?"

Smith shook his head firmly.

"I'm a Smith by name, but I refuse to be a Smith by perfession!" he said. "Why, it's played out. There's no munny in it. In these days of motors, horse-traffic is being driven off the road. Nobody wants horses soled and heeled nowadays."

"But, my son—" began Mr. Smith, in startled tones.

"Well, dad?"

"The Smiths have had this smithy for jennyrations! The bizness has been handed down from father to son, right through the senturics. It was established in the rain of King Solomon. Surely you won't desert the perfession?"

"But there's no munny in it, dad!" persisted Smith. "The bizness is going to rack and ruin. And I'm not going to stop in Little Mudford and starve!"

"But—but what will you do, my son?" asked Mr. Smith, in grate distress.

"Go abroad and make a fortune," was the prompt reply. "And the sooner I start, the better. There's no time like the prezzant. Good-bye, dad!"

Mr. Smith fell upon his knees, and pleaded with his son to think better of it.

"Don't go, my boy!" he implored. "Stay here and be my right-hand man! I'm getting old, and I'm not such a cunning forger as I used to be. I need your help. If you go—if you forsake the dear old dad—it will brake my hart. Stay, I entreet you!"

But young Smith was blind and deaf to all reezon. Picking up his portmanteau, he strode away down the villidge street, with the last despairing wail of his father ringing in his ears.

(Interval for readers to have a quiet weep.)

The years passed by. They have a habit of doing this.

Five long years had passed since young Smith left home, and his father had heard nothing of him during all that time. He had vanished from mortle ken, so to speak.

Meenwhile, the bizness had gone from bad to worse. In the old days, before motors came into eggistence, Mr. Smith had to shoe duzzens of horses a day. But now he was idle. An occasional cart-horse was brought to him to be soled and heeled, and that was all.

Things had become so bad that the blacksmith had been obliged to pawn most of his tools. He hadn't even a file left to file a petition in bankruptsy.

He was standing in the doorway of the smithy, on a sunny September morning, when a smart Rolls-Rice car came dashing down the villidge street. It slowed down outside the smithy, and the driver—a prosperu-looking young man, with a fat siggar in his mouth—jumped out, and promptly threw his arms round the blacksmith's neck.

"Father!" he cried.

It was a tense and drammatick moment. The prodigal son had returned!

"Guess you're surprized to see me, dad," said young Smith, with a larf.

Mr. Smith could not speak, owing to his inward commotion.

"I dare say you'd given me up for dead," went on young Smith; "but I'm still very much alive. What's more, I've made my fortune. You can pack up this mizzerable bizness and take a mansion in Park Lane as soon as you like!"

Mr. Smith's face glowed like an autumn sunset.

"My son!" he gasped at last. "Tell me. How did you mannidge to make a fortune?"

"Film-acting," was the breek reply. "I've had five years at the game, in America. By the way, I gave up the common name of Smith long ago. My perfessional name is Smyth-Fairbanks."

Mr. Smith opened his eyes wide.

"And what are you going to do now, my son?" he asked.

"See you comfortably settled in your mansion and then pop back to America and make a few more millions," said Mr. Smyth-Fairbanks.

And then he drove up to St. Sam's to parade his prosperity before all the fellows. He had tea with the Head, and when he heard that Dr. Birchmall happened to be hard-up, he promptly advanced him a thousand dollars.

Such, in breek, is the story of the Boy Who Made Good.

THE END.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 869.

**HAVE YOU
BOUGHT YOUR
"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"
YET ?**



(Continued from page 12.)

Many times Ali's huntsmen dismounted, at their chief's order, to search the sand for traces. But traces there were none. Once or twice in the sand they found what was left of former travellers—here and there the bones of a camel, long whitened—once or twice the grinning skull of some traveller who had perished. Those hideous relics struck them with grim forebodings of their lost comrade's fate.

Late in the afternoon, far away to the south, the sky was darkened, though where the juniors rode all was light and blaze. Ibrahim pointed to the distant gloom.

"Him storm!" he said. "Rain!"

"A cloudburst," said the major.

They rode on. They were riding directly for the distant storm, of which not a breath reached them. It faded away before their sight, and when they rode where the rain had fallen the sand was already dry. The sun was low on the horizon now, its level rays sweeping the desert with fire.

Ali looked questioningly at the major. To halt was bitter to the anxious searchers; but when the darkness came it was useless to keep on. Riders and beasts required rest and food; and in the darkness search was futile.

"Halt when the sun is gone," said the major briefly.

Ali nodded.

"There being an oasis where we may camp, and there being water," he said. "We reaching it by time the sun is down. My hunters know of it, and there we stopping till dawn."

The party rode on, and in the red sunset the graceful tops of palm-trees came in sight at last over the sand.

It was the oasis of which Ali ben Yusef's hunters knew.

The sun dipped below the horizon before they reached the palms. They rode on in the darkness and came to the trees. There they dismounted and camped for the night.

Where the water of the spring lapped away into the sand the bones of a gazelle lay, picked clean. Ibrahim stood and looked at them.

"Him lion was here," he said. "He wait and watch by the spring, and when gazelle him come to drink, him lion leap."

Frank Nugent looked round rather quickly into the shadows under the palms. Ibrahim grinned.

"Him lion gone," he said. "Many hours since him kill him gazelle. You see—him gone!"

Ali's Arabs had noted the traces of the lion's feast, and they were beating the oasis, lest the fierce beast should be lingering near at hand. But the lion was no longer there.

"How do you know it was a lion, Ibrahim?" asked Johnny Bull.

Ibrahim grinned again complacently. "Ibrahim, him know," he said. "You see here is earth by the spring, not sand. And you look, you see where lion him lie and watch. You see—"

Ibrahim broke off suddenly.

He dropped on his knees and bent his gaze earnestly upon a mark in the wet earth close by the oozing water.

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His brown face was full of excitement as he looked up at last and met the wondering gaze of the juniors.

"Allah is great!" said Ibrahim. "There is no God but one, and Mahomet is his Prophet! Allah is great! It is the will of Allah that we should follow in the footsteps of the lost one."

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

"What have you found?" exclaimed the major.

Ibrahim pointed to the mark in the soil.

"Him camel tread," he said simply.

"But—" breathed Nugent.

"The lost one, him bound to Ibrahim's camel—him camel that Ibrahim ride when he come with him fine gentlemen into the desert," said the guide. "Ibrahim know footprint of him camel; all Arabs know. Here Ibrahim's camel him tread, it is not many hours."

"The major's eyes gleamed.

"You are sure?"

Honest Ibrahim made a dignified gesture.

"You trust Ibrahim; him do your business," he said loftily. "Ibrahim, him know. All Arabs know footprint of him own camel. It is not one time that Ibrahim lose him and find him again. Ibrahim, him know. Where we stand Ibrahim's camel him have stood. By the beard of the Prophet I tell you so, my fine gentlemen."

"Oh, good luck!" breathed Wharton. Major Cherry drew a deep, deep breath.

Ali ben Yusef was on his knees now scanning the camel-track, careless of his fine attire. Twice again the track was picked up, and each time Ibrahim identified it as the track of his own camel, the camel to which Bob Cherry had been bound. But on the edge of the oasis the track vanished: the sand held no sign.

But the major's bronzed face was brighter now.

"The camel passed this way," he said. "It is probably the first oasis on the way to the Tuarick country. It lies south-west from the Bordj—the way the camel went. The animal's instinct would lead him here through the desert which has no track or guidance to our eyes. Here he stopped—perhaps to drink—perhaps to rest. Perhaps—"

"Perhaps him find lion," said Ibrahim. "Lion wait and watch for gazelle to come to drink. If lion here, camel no stay."

Wharton shuddered.

"But—but then—"

"If lion here, him no catch camel," grinned Ibrahim. "If lion him catch him, we find bones of camel and of the lost one. But we find only bones of gazelle."

"True!" muttered Wharton. And he breathed more freely.

Supper and sleep were not thought of now. Ali and his men searched every foot of the oasis. Traces were found where the lion had crouched long and patiently, watching for his prey. But of the camel there was no sign; none of the bound rider. If Bob Cherry had arrived there while the lion waited and watched he had not fallen a victim to the hungry brute. But that he had passed that way long hours before was certain now, and every heart in the search-party beat with renewed hope.

The camel had reached the oasis and left it again with his rider living or dead. It could now be taken as certain that the freed camel was heading for his ancient pastures in the heart of Africa—in the far-off Tuarick country. Unexpected, un hoped-for, the desert had yielded a clue to the lost one; and if

was Ibrahim, the guide, the rogue and rascal of Biskra, who had found it. Truly, when Bob Cherry had risked his life to save that of the Arab guide he had cast his bread upon the waters to return after many days.

It was a gleam of hope—only a gleam. But it came where there had been the darkness of despair. And all hearts were the lighter now.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hunted in the Desert!

NIGHT in the desert!

The sun was gone—the scorching, cruel, ruthless sun! To Bob Cherry, stretched on the back of the wandering camel, the coming of night brought relief. In the gloom even the pangs of thirst were not so bitter. On the previous night—the first night of torment—the camel had rested in the sand and Bob had slept. But now the animal did not halt. While the darkness lay like a cloak on the Sahara he kept on and on and on with unresting, thudding feet.

Bob knew that his strength was going, but his brain was clear enough now. The rainstorm of the day had revived him. For that once, at least, his bitter thirst had been slaked. Chance had befriended him and might befriend him again. Over him glittered the stars in a sky of velvet. The sandy horizon was hidden from his sight; but he knew that it still stretched round him, barren, limitless. He found himself wondering whether the camel had a definite object in his speeding-on; whether there was a goal ahead that the animal was striving to reach. For half-consciously during the day he had noted the position of the sun, and realised that always he was keeping the same direction. And now the glittering constellations above told him the same story. The camel was not wandering at haphazard; ever and ever he kept on with scarcely a swerve as if for a destination he knew.

Had Bob known that the camel had been one of the herds of animals raised by the Tuarick camel-traders he might have guessed that his steed was heading for the pastures where once he had been free and untrammelled. But that knowledge would have brought him little hope; for the Tuarick country lay many a long day's journey distant in the regions of the sun.

At long last, doubtless the camel would reach the pastures where he had been bred, but long before that time came his rider would be dead and his bones picked by the obscene birds of the desert. It would be a skeleton that the camel would carry into the sun-scorched land of the Tuarick tribes.

In Bob's heart there was a glimmering of hope that the camel was heading for some settlement of the French, perhaps for one of the native cities of the Sahara. At least it seemed clear that there was a destination to which the animal's instinct was leading him. It was a false hope, but it brought a gleam of solace to the junior. He longed, with an aching longing, to see a human face, to hear the sound of a human voice. Was it hours or centuries since he had been bound upon the camel and driven into the solitude of sand?

On and on and on, under the stars that glittered down on the unending stretches of sand.

Bob's eyes closed. Weariness overcame him. He slept in fits and starts, shaken into continual wakefulness, only to fall into exhausted slumber again.

Through the night the camel loped on, seemingly unwearyed. But in a dreamy languor Bob was conscious at last that the animal was lying in the sand. Even the iron limbs of the Sahara camel claimed repose at last.

When Bob's weary eyes opened, the stars were still glimmering, but there was a faint flush in the east. Day was coming.

With the dawn the camel stirred.

He struggled to his feet and snuffed the air, and shook himself again and again. It came into Bob's mind that the camel was seeking to shake himself free of the strange burden bound upon his back. But there was no chance of the cruel thongs breaking or loosening.

The long neck twisted, and the camel's eyes gleamed at the bound rider. The wide mouth was open, and the teeth showed in a snarl. A shudder ran through Bob from head to foot. Already, with his freedom, the natural fierceness of the camel was reviving, and Bob understood that the beast was tempted to tear with his teeth at the burden that clung to his back.

But the habit of servitude was not yet shaken off. The human eye still had power over the growing fierceness of the freed brute. The camel glared at his rider sullenly, savagely, but he did not yet understand how utterly helpless the rider was. He shook himself again and again impatiently, and then, as if submitting to the inevitable, loped off on his journey again, ever to the sun-scorched south.

Bob shivered.

A new horror was added to his torture in the evident fierceness that was growing in the uncontrolled beast. If the sharp teeth should rend him he was powerless. But as yet it did not come, and the camel loped on and on, while the sun of a new day rose higher in the unclouded heavens.

Weary hour after hour, till the dull monotony of the death-ride was broken. The thudding of the camel's hoofs on the soft sand changed to clattering as he traversed hard rocks. Bob's aching eyes glanced round. Rocks were under him now, and the camel was descending what seemed the sloping side of a rocky watercourse, the bed of some stream that had dried up in the fierce heat of the sun.

Water!

His heart throbbed.

At the bottom of the watercourse there was mud, with trickles of water in it, and the camel had stopped to drink. From the camel's back Bob Cherry gazed at the trickling water oozing here and there amid half-dried mud. He struggled almost frantically with his bonds, but he could not reach it. The sight of the water mocked his burning thirst. And the camel, once satisfied, clattered on up the opposite side of the rocky watercourse to the level of the desert again. Behind Bob's despairing eyes the glimmer of the trickling water vanished.

Fate seemed to be mocking him in his agony.

Fiercer grew the heat over and around him. With parched throat he gasped for breath. And now he longed wildly for death, for anything that would end his suffering, even for the spring, the tearing claws, the crunching jaws of a lion.

A red mist floated before his eyes. He realised that his senses were leaving him, and he struggled hard against delirium. And then he found that the camel's steady pace had slackened, dropping to a slow amble, and the brute was glancing to right and left, as if uncertain. He raised his heavy head to scan the desert, and his heart leaped in his breast. Ahead of him the sandy waste was no longer

unpeopled. Strange, wild figures moved there—horsemen. He closed his eyes, fearing that they had deceived him. But when he opened them again the horsemen were still visible. Dark men in shabby burnous and dirty turban—men of the desert, half-Arab, half-negro, waving spears as they galloped towards the hesitating camel.

For a moment or two Bob wondered if they might be some of the men of Mustapha ben Mohammed. But he realised that he was far, far from the men of the Oued Tahar. These men were the wanderers of the desert—Bedouins, perhaps; sometimes traders, sometimes hunters, always robbers and thieves. And the sight of the free camel, wandering in the desert, had excited their greed. The powerful camel was a rich prize for him who could capture it. There were a dozen of the horsemen, and they spread out into a half-circle as they rode at the camel, seeking to cut it off from escape.

The camel's hesitation was brief.

Well he understood that if the grasp of the wild men of the Sahara fastened upon him his new-found freedom was at an end, and the life of servitude and labour would be his lot once more.

Between him and the pastures he was seeking, far off in the Tuarick country, was this half-circle of fierce riders, seeking to ride him down. The camel swept round and broke into a racing speed towards the rocky watercourse he had crossed an hour before.

Back he went at full speed, and after him rode the horsemen, waving their spears and shouting.

Faster and faster!

More than once Bob lost consciousness as he was shaken and jolted on the heaving back of the camel.

Once more they were descending into the rocky watercourse—once more the camel climbed the rocky side, now on the north. Back the way he had come, with the horsemen of the desert speeding on his track.

In full flight the camel raced across

the sand, which his swift hoofs seemed scarcely to touch as he fled.

To Bob's dazed ears came the echoing of the shouts from behind, the loud shouting of the desert riders calling to one another. Sometimes he caught glimpses of the riders by raising his weary head. Quite close some of them seemed, and he saw the hard, dark features and black eyes, the swarthy skin wet with sweat. He hardly knew whether he hoped that the camel would be captured. Little consideration had he to expect from these savage wanderers. The thrust of a spear was most likely to be their way of disposing of him. But even that was better than slow, torturing death in the baking sun.

Thudding, thudding—galloping, galloping! The rocky watercourse was left far to the south again. The camel thudded madly on soft and yielding sand. Dust flew from his rapid hoofs, rising round him and choking his unhappy rider. Still rang behind the galloping of the wild horsemen.

Again and again Bob looked back, with aching eyes, in the blaze of the sun. Some of the horsemen had dropped from sight, others were strung out afar. One, more powerfully mounted than the rest, seemed to be gaining; at least, he was holding his own in the race. To him the prize was to fall if it fell to any. And the capture of the camel meant something like wealth to the beggarly nomad of the Sahara. He was urging on his horse to furious efforts.

But when Bob looked again the horseman was farther off. The straining steed was losing ground. The camel was a powerful brute and amazingly fleet, and he was fleeing for his freedom. The bound junior tossed and swung on the heaving back incessantly.

From the distance a shot rang out.

A bullet whizzed over the camel. It passed within a foot of Bob's scorched face. He understood that the horseman, defeated in the race, had fired savagely at the camel, to kill it if he could not capture it.

ANOTHER £8 BICYCLE WON THIS WEEK!

Result of "Johnny Bull" Characters Competition!

In this competition the prize of a Gent's "Royal Enfield"
Bicycle, listed at £8, has been awarded to:

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1, Victoria Buildings,

Cleve Terrace,

Bath Row,

BIRMINGHAM,

for the following line:

"Brick" Nobody "Lays."

There are plenty more handsome bicycles waiting to be
won, chums! Have a shot at this week's competition—
you'll find the coupon on page 8.

Another shot rang.

But it flew wider than the first; and after that there was no further sound or sign from the hunter.

Bob looked again, and in the sun-blaze, he thought he caught a glimpse of a disappearing turban—the turban of the horsman, riding back sullen and disappointed to the south.

The sheik's victim was alone in the desert again. The camel thundered on. Bob closed his eyes and groaned. Hope was gone, and it seemed that even death was denied him as a relief.

When would the end come?

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Outcast of the Desert!

"KISMET!"

The Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed muttered the word, and bowed his head.

He stood in the blaze of the sun, in the solitary desert. From the level of the sand a great rock emerged, standing high over the waste, a landmark for many a long mile across the level. Where the fierce sun smote it the hard rock was burning to the touch; but on one side there was shade. But the fleeing sheik had not reached the shade of the rock when his horse stumbled and fell.

The Barbary steed was spent.

By day and night the outcast sheik had fled. He had left behind the tribesmen of Ali ben Yusef; they had lost trace of him in the desert. Many and many miles had fled under the hoofs of the Barbary steed since then. For Mustapha ben Mohammed knew that he had no time to lose. Ali ben Yusef had a father's death to avenge, as well as the wrongs of his friends. And the revenge of the Arab is unsleeping. Even as he would have dealt with his enemies, so the sheik expected to be dealt with, if he fell into the hands of the schoolboy chief—and he would not have been disappointed. Death awaited him among the tribesmen of the Oued Tahar, in the tents where he had dreamed of reigning supreme.

Death lurked for him in the desert—force riders were seeking him, at the order of Ali ben Yusef. A price would be placed on his head, and ere long the wild nomads of the desert would be watching for him, to deliver him to Ali and receive the reward of his blood. He knew it, and with unrelenting speed, he had fled from the country he knew. All had been lost but life—and life itself was a doubtful possession now—only on the speed and endurance of his horse did it depend.

Far, far to the south, towards the untrodden heart of Africa, the sheik had fled—far from the lands and the faces he knew. Only with wide wastes between him and the tribes of the Oued Tahar could he hope to live. Every hand that he had known would now be lifted to take his life.

Yet he did not despair—his fierce pride and courage did not fail him. Far to the south there were new lands, Arab robber tribes whom he might join, whom he might lead on their raids. Sheik of the Oued Tahar, he could never hope to be; but a robber chief of the Sahara, a slave trader and slave hunter—that was still possible to him. And his fierce thoughts went farther—of days to come, when he might be the chief of some numerous robber band, and with armed horsemen invade the territory of his old tribe, and revenge his defeat and exile by spreading death and desolation by the banks of the Oued Tahar.

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And now his steed lay at his feet, dying.

The sheik looked down upon him, and muttered "Kismet." It was fate; it was not the will of Allah that he should escape. With Oriental resignation the Arab bowed his head to his fate.

Round him swept the desert—sandy, thirsty, illimitable. Thirst was parching his throat, and burning on his lips. Only the great rock, baking with heat, broke the monotony of the waste. The eagle eyes of the sheik swept the horizon. Sand—and sand—and sand—and the fierce sun beating upon it.

There was a shiver in the body of the fallen horse—his glazed eyes turned for the last time on his master.

Then the steed lay still—very still.

The Barbary courser was dead.

Mustapha ben Mohammed muttered in Arabic. On foot in the desert, already burning with fierce thirst, he knew that he was doomed. He knew that he must sink down to die in the sand, under the pitiless sun; that his bones would be picked by the jackals. A dark spot appeared on the cloudless blue of the sky. It was a vulture, already winging his flight towards the carrion that lay in the baking sun.

The sheik stirred at last.

Even his iron strength was waning. With weary feet he trod towards the great rock, and sank down in the shade of it.

On a jutting ledge of the rock he sat motionless, and gazed across the desert.

He looked to the south—to the glowing south that he now would never reach. His brief dream of a new dominion was gone. That lonely rock in the desert would mark the grave of the Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed.

From where he sat he could hear the croaking of obscene birds over the carcass of the horse. Silence followed only the skeleton, picked clean, lay glimmering on the sand in the sun-rays. The sheik did not heed. Soon, only too soon, that was also to be his own fate. He sat and gazed at the desert.

At last he stirred, and raised his head, and a new gleam came into his savage eyes, under his knitted, rugged black brows. Southward a moving spot appeared on the sand—something was stirring in the desert, hitherto lifeless, still.

His brown, sinewy hand touched his scimitar; a grim and terrible smile flickered for a moment on his dark face. The moving spot was approaching—whether it was a camel or a horse, he could not yet see, but he knew that some rider was approaching across the arid waste. Some Bedouin wanderer—some Tuarick hunter—some messenger of the far-off French garrisons—it mattered little to Mustapha ben Mohammed. It was a steed—and the life of its rider was nothing in his estimation. His brown fingers closed on his scimitar. The death of the rider—the capture of the steed—and renewed life and hope for Mustapha ben Mohammed.

He watched.

It was a camel—he could see that now. A tall and powerful camel, but evidently fatigued, almost spent. It was trotting mechanically, wearily. And the sheik's brows knitted with a puzzled expression. He could see the camel, but he could see no rider. Was it some wandering brute that had escaped from an Arab caravan and taken to the desert? And then, as the trotting camel came nearer and nearer, Mustapha ben Mohammed saw that there was something on its back.

He started.

He knew now! There was a rider on the back of the wandering camel; but the rider lay stretched on the rough hide,

bound to the animal with strong bonds. And Mustapha ben Mohammed knew that the camel was the one that had been driven forth from the far-off Bordj, with Bob Cherry bound upon his back.

Evidently the camel had fled southward—far, far to the south-west—the direction in which the sheik also had fled. Something had turned him back—for now he was coming northward.

Mustapha ben Mohammed bared his teeth in a savage grin.

He had never dreamed of looking again upon his victim; but he was destined to look upon him again. Once more his ruthless eyes were to gaze upon the boy whom he had driven to so terrible a doom.

By what strange chance the camel had been turned back he did not know, and cared not. The brute was trotting on, as fast as his exhausted limbs could carry him, straight for the great rock that rose from the sand, evidently seeking the shelter of it from the sun, to lie down and rest.

The sheik rose.

Something had scared the camel, to turn him back—doubtless the sight of some Bedouin horseman who would have captured him. If he sighted the sheik he would turn from his present course, careering on in the unshaded desert, rather than submit to capture. Mustapha ben Mohammed trod softly round the great rock, to hide himself from the eyes of the animal.

Soon he could hear the thudding feet of the camel echoing in the stillness of the desert.

Closer and closer came the beat of the camel's hoofs, as the exhausted animal drew nearer to the shelter of the great rock.

Closer and closer!

Mustapha ben Mohammed peered round a jutting spur of rock. The hoof-beats had ceased.

In the shade of the great rock the camel had sunk down on the sand to rest. From his back, the wild, haggard eyes of his bound rider looked, and closed. The camel lay exhausted, panting, in the grateful shade. And Mustapha ben Mohammed trod softly from his lair, and in a moment or two more his grasp was on the camel.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Sheik's Last Blow!

BOB CHERRY opened his eyes. The shade of the great rock, where his wild steed had sunk down to rest, had been a relief to him. The blinding sun was no longer on his face. It was a relief from aching suffering—but Bob knew dimly and dazedly that the end could not now be far away. He was only half-conscious, and strange visions were dancing before his eyes. But if he was to die, better to die in the grateful shade, away from the burning sun that had tortured him.

He opened his eyes.

A fierce, dark face was looking down at him, with a mocking, derisive grin. Bob did not believe that it was real. It was one more of the delirious visions that haunted him in his pain. He did not believe that he was looking on the face of the man who had doomed him to a death of torment.

But slowly it was forced into his mind that this was no vision—that it was the Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed who stood over him, regarding him, mocking him.

The camel was tethered now. A dagger was driven to the hilt in the sandy earth, and to the handle of the

dagger a cord secured the camel, captured at last.

The sheik was speaking now, but the words were in Arabic, strange and incomprehensible to the ears of the Greyfriars boy.

Bob stared at him in helpless wonder. It was the sheik; it was no delirious vision. Mustapha ben Mohammed himself stood there, in the shade of the great rock, looking down on him with savage derision.

"You!" muttered Bob at last.

The words came scarcely audible from his parched lips.

"We meet again, son of a thousand dogs!" said the sheik, speaking in English.

Bob stared at him in silence. He could not understand. How many long miles he was from the Bordj, from the country of the Oued Tahar, he did not know, and could not even guess, but he knew that the distance must be great. What was the Sheik Mustapha doing there, alone in the desert, dismounted and alone, far from his tribesmen? By what miraculous chance had they met in the boundless Sahara?

Mustapha ben Mohammed drew his scimitar from his girdle. Bob's gaze did not falter. It was death now, but death was welcome to put an end to his torture.

The sheik read his look, and smiled grimly.

"Not yet," he said—"not yet, Roumi. That is too easy a death. Do you know why I shall release you from the camel? Know, dog, that I am an outcast now, that Ali ben Yusef has triumphed, and the tribesmen of the Oued Tahar seek my life. But it is not the will of Allah that Mustapha should die in the desert. The camel shall carry me to life and safety—to power and revenge in the days to come. But you, son of a dog, you shall not find your death the easier."

"Kill me," whispered Bob, faintly and huskily. "Scoundrel, are you not satisfied yet? Kill me!"

The sheik laughed.

"Death is not yet near at hand," he said. "When death is longed for, life is slow to depart. Shaitan will still wait for you, dog of an unbeliever!"

He drew the sharp edge of the scimitar across the bonds, and they fell apart.

Bob Cherry rolled loose on the sand.

A thousand fiery agonies darted through his freed limbs. He cried out with pain as he rolled on the sand.

Too exhausted with pain and suffering to lift a finger in his own defence, he lay moaning, at the mercy of the merciless sheik.

Mustapha ben Mohammed looked at him with a cruel grin. He knew that he had no resistance to expect. He gathered up the camel-ropes that had fastened Bob so long.

"Rise, dog!"

But Bob could not move. The sheik bent over him, and grasped him, and lifted him from the sand as if he had been an infant.

In the Arab's powerful arms Bob Cherry was carried to the sunny side of the rock. From the shade he emerged into the full glare of the African sun.

Mustapha ben Mohammed looked about him, seeking the spot upon which fell fiercest the glaring rays of the sun. There he laid his helpless burden against a slope of the rock—there he bound him hand and foot, little as bonds were needed now. There he secured the loose ends of the rope to jagged points of rock, that the prisoner should have no chance of rolling out of the blaze of the sun when he was left to his fate.

Bob lay on his back, silent, spent. The



From Bob Cherry's parched throat came muttered words of delirium. Then consciousness returned, and he was alive to his surroundings once again. Something was snuffing and snarling close by him—he opened his eyes to see foul jaws within a few inches of his face. A hoarse and terrible cry burst from his dry throat, and a jackal, startled, snarled and backed away. (See Chapter 12.)

sheik stood looking down at him for some minutes. A hunted outcast from his tribe, Mustapha ben Mohammed had lost all that life held dear to him; but revenge still remained, and revenge was still sweet to the savage Arab.

He moved away at last, and returned to the camel.

The exhausted animal refused to stir, but savage blows drove him to his feet, with the sheik on his back.

The sun-blaze before Bob's eyes was darkened for a moment, and he looked on the sheik again, mounted on the camel. Mustapha ben Mohammed gazed down at him mockingly.

"Mas salaamah, Roumi!" he said. "Farewell to you, for the last time, son of a thousand dogs! I go to the south; and if it is the will of Allah some day I shall return, and Ali ben Yusef shall die in the tents of the Oued Tahar. Die in torment, son of a dog!"

He wheeled the camel, and with savage blows drove the fatigued animal on its way.

Bob watched him go.

Away to the south, towards the rocky water-course that the camel had twice crossed, the sheik rode. He rode slowly, for even the great strength of the camel was almost spent now; but blows raining on his hide drove the unwilling beast onward.

The camel and his rider became a speck in the distance, swallowed up at last by the sands of the Sahara.

The sheik was gone.

Bob Cherry moaned faintly and closed

his eyes. Burning, pitiless, the sun blazed on his scorching face, parching his cracked lips. Under him the rock burned his skin. He would have welcomed the slash of the sheik's scimitar; but because he would have welcomed it his ruthless enemy had denied it. Slowly, slowly death was to creep on him, in slow pain and torment.

His senses were going now. From his parched throat came muttered words of delirium. Then consciousness came back, and he was alive to his surroundings again. Something was snuffing and snarling close by him. He opened his eyes to see foul jaws within a few inches of his face. A hoarse and terrible cry burst from his dry throat, and the jackal, startled, snarled and backed away.

Bob lifted his heavy head.

Five or six of the hideous beasts were round him, sitting on the sand, watching him, with glowing, hungry eyes. Fierce, restless eyes, snarling, hungry jaws surrounded him. The jackals of the desert were gathered for the feast; but, true to their cowardly breed, they dared not touch him while life remained. The restless, flickering eyes watched and watched as they waited for him to die.

He cried out again and again. The jackals stirred uneasily. They came no closer, but they still watched and waited. When would the end come?

Again his mind wandered. He was in the old quad at Greyfriars; his comrades were round him. In glimmering visions he saw the faces of his friends. They

were looking at him, bending over him, touching him.

He felt the touch of their hands, he heard their voices in his ears. And he laughed—horribly, jarringly, hoarsely. It was a vision that had come to mock his dying moments; but he was not to be deceived. He was alone in the desert, dying in the blaze of the Sahara, with the jackals waiting to rend him limb from limb. The faces that he saw were a cheat and a delusion, mocking him as life ebbed.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"IBRAHIM, what do you see?"

Harry Wharton asked the question huskily as the guide shaded his face with his brown hand, and stared across the sunlit desert.

The searchers were riding on—riding ever on, heedless of the blaze of heat. Hope was almost extinct now. But the search went on, with passionate determination if with little hope.

Ibrahim did not reply for a moment. Under his shading hand he stared across the desert.

"What is it, Ibrahim?" breathed Nugent.

"There are bones that lie in the sand, my fine gentlemen," said Ibrahim at last.

The juniors shuddered.

"We've seen such things before. No need to believe that—that—" Johnny Bull broke off huskily.

"We shall soon see," said Major Cherrily quietly.

They drove on their tired camels faster.

Far ahead of them a great rock jutted from the sand, visible for two score of miles across the sandy plain. And it was near the great rock that Ibrahim's keen eyes had detected the glimmer of white bones in the sands.

Such relics of former travellers they had passed only too often in the arid waste already. But their hearts were heavy with foreboding for the lost one as they rode swiftly on.

They reached the spot at last near the great rock. A skeleton, picked clean by the teeth of jackals and the beaks of vultures, lay in the sand. But it was the skeleton of a horse, not of a camel. Bob Cherry's steed had not perished there.

Ali ben Yusef sprang to the ground.

Many of the trappings of the horse lay torn in the sand, torn away and disregarded by the hideous creatures that had feasted on the carcass. The gilded bridle, the saddle-cloth of the finest texture told that the dead horse had belonged to someone of chief's rank. And one of Ali's men—one who had followed the Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed before the coming of Ali—caught up the bridle and shouted excitedly in Arabic.

Ali's face was grim, his eyes gleaming.

"Mustapha!" he said.

"You think this was Mustapha's horse?" asked the major.

"It is certain," said Ali. His eyes swept the desert. "He has fled to the south, the assassin of my father. He has passed by yonder rock, and here his horse fell. It is the will of Allah that he should die for his crimes. On foot in the desert he cannot escape."

Ibrahim pointed to the great rock.

"Him perhaps die already," he said. "The jackals are there. They gather for the dead."

Leaving the skeleton of the horse and its torn trappings, the Greyfriars party

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rode on to the rock. They heard the snapping and snarling of the jackals, scattering in fear as they approached. With howls and whines the brutes scattered into the desert. And suddenly Harry Wharton gave a great cry and leaped from his camel, and tore onward to the sun-scorched rock, wild with excitement.

"What—" exclaimed the major.

Then, as he passed a jutting corner of the great rock, he also saw what Wharton had seen, and he cried out.

"Bob!" shouted Nugent.

They were round him in a moment more.

It was Bob Cherry, burned by the sun, bound on his back on a sloping facet of the great rock. The scared jackals had fled. Bob's friends were round him now. But he looked at them with eyes that did not know them, and he laughed—the laugh of delirium.

"Bob!" breathed Wharton, and the tears were running down his cheeks.

The bonds were cut loose. Bob Cherry was raised from his resting-place. With tender hands he was carried round the great rock to the shady side, and laid on rugs in the shade. Water was placed to his parched lips. But even the desire to drink seemed to be gone. With unseeing eyes he stared at the friendly faces, and still he laughed and muttered, words that came faintly and almost unrecognisably from his parched throat.

"Harry! Father! Oh, father!"

"My dear, dear boy!" The major was on his knees beside his son. The tears coursed unconsciously down his rough, bronzed face. "My boy! Your father is at your side."

"He's taken the camel." The wandering words came huskily, almost inaudibly. "The sheik—that fiend—he's gone! He's taken the camel! Follow him—follow him! He's gone to the south! Follow him! He left me here to die! Oh, father!"

The parched lips were wetted by the cup of water that the major held. Harry Wharton & Co. stood back, watching the ravaged face of their chum.

They had found him. Against all hope they had found him in the desert. They had found him living. But had they found him only to lose him again, and to lose him for ever? That terrible dread was in every heart.

"Drink, my boy!" whispered the major. He bathed his son's burning forehead with cool water.

Bob's eyes closed. He made a sound that was like the purr of a satisfied animal as the cool water laved his brow. Ali ben Yusef turned from the scene. He had caught the muttered delirious words. He knew where to seek for his enemy. And, leaving Bob Cherry in the care of his friends, Ali ben Yusef called to his men and rode across the desert to the blazing south.

They did not heed him. Whether Mustapha ben Mohammed lived or died mattered little to them, so that Bob Cherry lived.

Bob's eyes opened again.

The wild light was gone from them. He drank from the cup his father held, drank with deep avidity. His puzzled glance turned from face to face. A cry came from him.

"Father! Is it you? It's not the mirage again? It's not madness? Father!"

"It is I, my son," said the major. "My dear, dear boy, we have found you, and all is well now."

"We're here, Bob, old man," said Frank Nugent huskily. "We're here. You know us now, old fellow?"

"The knowfulness is terrific, is it not, my esteemed Bob?" almost sobbed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry smiled faintly.

"It's old Inky," he said. "It's really you fellows? It's not a dream, then? Oh, but I'm glad to see you again! I never thought I'd see you. Are the girls safe, then?"

"Safe, yes, old fellow," said Harry. "Mustapha fled for his life when Ali came back. The girls are safe and well guarded at the Bordj. Thank Heaven we've found you, old fellow!"

"Thank Heaven!" whispered Bob.

"You must rest, my boy," said the major gently. "Drink again, and try to sleep."

Bob smiled.

"I think I could sleep!" he said.

And ere long he was sleeping in the shade; and while he slept his father watched by his side, patient, tireless.

Harry Wharton & Co. pitched their camp in the shadow of the rock. Ibrahim, grinning now in his old style with glee, was in great spirits. He had found his "fine gentleman" who had saved his life, and Ibrahim sang softly an Arab song as he helped pitch the camp. And Harry Wharton & Co. moved about with bright faces and light hearts. Bob Cherry had been found. He was restored to his chums. They had saved him from the desert, and he would live to tread once more the old quad at Greyfriars. Once more his merry voice would be heard ringing in the Remove passage.

They camped, careless how long they remained in the desert now, now that Bob was found. When he had recovered enough to travel they would ride back to the Bordj, then, with Marjorie and Clara, to Biskra. After that the railway, the steamer, and home. Home! It was a magic word, a word of comfort in the heart of the Sahara sands.

And still Bob Cherry slept, and his comrades trod softly, while his father watched his slumbers—and far to the south, under the blaze of the sinking sun, Ali ben Yusef and his men closed in slowly but surely upon the fleeing sheik, and Mustapha ben Mohammed looked back with haggard eyes upon the doom that was overtaking him—the doom that came upon him ere the sun was gone.

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THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Home!

MARJORIE looked from the roof of the Bordj, and her eyes were bright.

In the shining afternoon, far in the distance, approaching the valley from the desert, appeared a cavalcade. The chums of Greyfriars were returning—and with them Bob Cherry.

For several days the Greyfriars party had remained camped by the great rock in the desert, while Bob rested, and slowly recovered his strength. But at once a swift rider had been despatched by Ali ben Yusef to carry the glad news to the girls at the Bordj.

Day by day Marjorie and Clara waited and watched, their hearts light now, their faces bright. Even Billy Bunter shared in the satisfaction. Bunter had had quite a good time, in his role of "protector" of the two Cliff House girls at the Bordj. What "protection" Bunter gave them was rather a mystery; his time was chiefly devoted to eating the excellent provisions that came from Ali's tribesmen, and to sleeping in the shade.

At night Bunter very carefully barred the door of the Bordj, but whether on Marjorie and Clara's account, or on his own, cannot be said. Certainly he was very careful all the time of his own precious skin: and had any danger threatened, it was not probable that William George Bunter would have shone as a protector. But there was no danger to threaten; the days passed peacefully and cheerfully, when once the news had been received that Bob was safe.

"They're coming!" said Marjorie, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking at the party that came trotting in from the desert.

"Good egg!" said Miss Clara.

Marjorie laughed.

Miss Clara was her old cheery and smiling self again now, full of high spirits and rather given to slang. The clouds had rolled by: and she was once more the Clara of Cliff House School. To both the girls, the time of their captivity in the power of the sheik seemed like some evil dream that was long past, and which they strove to forget.

"Won't it be jolly to see old Bob again," said Clara. "Bunter—where's that fat bouncer?"

"Oh, really, Clara—"

"Oh, there you are! Is that your tenth or eleventh lunch, Bunter?" asked Miss Clara.

Billy Bunter was squatted in the shade of the parapet, eating from a dish of sweet Arab cakes. He blinked at Clara through his big spectacles, and grinned.

"It's only a snack," he said. "Have some, Clara! They're really good, you know. I can't say I think much of that chap Ali, but he seems to have told his blessed niggers to look after us all right."

"Get up and cheer, if you haven't eaten too much to move," said Clara.

"Eh! What is there to cheer about?" asked Bunter.

"Harry and the others are coming back—"

"Is that all?"

"They're bringing Bob with them." "Are they really! Good! I say, you ought to have one of these cakes," said Bunter, coming back to the more important subject. "I sha'n't mind in the least—their's lots."

"Aren't you going to cheer?" demanded Miss Clara.

"Too jolly hot," said Bunter. "I'm glad Bob's coming back, of course. He's



"They're here!" said Marjorie joyfully. "Hurrah!" chirruped Miss Clara. The Arabs in the courtyard were crowding out now to welcome the return of their chief. With a clatter of hoofs and a barbaric burst of Arab music the cavalcade rode up to the Bordj. In the lead rode Ali ben Yusef, the Eye of Ahmed gleaming in his turban. (See Chapter 14.)

rather an ass, but I'm glad. I didn't really expect those duffers to find him—I really thought I should have to go and look for him myself—and it would have been a fag for a fellow, in this beastly hot country. I say, do have one of these cakes!"

"Rats!" said Miss Clara.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"They're coming," said Marjorie joyfully.

The Arabs in the courtyard were crowding out now, to welcome the return of their chief. With a clatter of hoofs, and a barbaric burst of Arab music, the cavalcade rode up to the Bordj.

In the lead rode Ali ben Yusef, with the Eye of Ahmed gleaming in his turban. Round him rode his wild Arabs, waving their spears. In the midst of the numerous cavalcade rode Major Cherry and the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove.

Marjorie and Clara ran down to meet Bob. Bob Cherry was still looking worn, but he was a good deal like his old self again now. Slowly the effect of his terrible experience was wearing off—slowly he was putting behind him the remembrance of his wild Mazeppa-ride in the scorching desert. His rugged face lighted up as Marjorie ran to meet him.

Billy Bunter half-rose, and then sat down again. He was glad, as he had said, that Bob Cherry was returning safe and sound. But the cakes were good, decidedly good, and there were still plenty of them undemolished.

Bunter proceeded to demolish them, leaving the greeting of Bob Cherry till this more important matter had been attended to.

It was a day of rejoicing among the Greyfriars fellows and their friends. Marjorie pressed Bob's rough hand softly, and almost kissed him in her joy at seeing him again, alive and well. Miss Clara quite kissed him, on both cheeks, turning Bob's sunburned face crimson.

"It's ripping to see you again, old top," said Miss Clara. "Just topping, old bean, what?"

Bob chuckled.

"And what has become of the sheik?" asked Clara.

"The sheik?" repeated Bob. "Ali's the sheik now—no end of a big gun, sheik of a dozen tribes and thousands of giddy fighting-men."

"But Mustapha—"

Bob's face became grave. "Nobody will ever see Mustapha again, Clara," he said, and she understood and asked no more.

A grim smile crossed Ali ben Yusef's face.

His thoughts ran back to the desert, where by the rocky water-course Mustapha ben Mohammed had been run down. Swift and sure, ruthless as his own ways had been, had been the doom of the usurper sheik. In the lonely desert, the jackals and hyenas had long

(Continued on page 28.)

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THE WORD—THE BLOW! People who indulge in foul tactics on the football field are a menace to the world of Sport. To Matthew, born and bred among "clean" football, this ankle-tapping, foul charging, etc., comes as an unpleasant eye-opener. He stands a lot of it without a murmur until, his hot temper getting the better of him, he hits out on the field of play. There's only one possible outcome of such an action—the Football Association hits back—hard!



Under Suspicion!

SOON the place was in an uproar. From all parts of that spacious ball-room people were complaining now that their jewellery had been stolen. The Meltons were separated in the scuffle, and George, moving forward in the gloom, uncertain where to tread, suddenly ran foul of another gentleman.

"I'm sorry!" he apologised. But before the apology had escaped his lips he felt something thrust into his hands—a box-shaped article from which came a peculiar glitter.

For a second or so he stood there gazing down at the box in his hands, too amazed to do aught else. Then the peculiar glitter was accounted for.

"Diamonds!" he said hoarsely. "This box is packed with them!"

He moved off at a tangent, trying to sense the way the fellow had gone who had placed the box in his hands. He found himself at the window and stood there undecided how to act.

Then, feeling along the edge of the woodwork, he became aware that the window was open, by reason of the gentle breeze that played about his face. And the window had been shut before the lights had suddenly gone out—all the bottom windows had, at any rate.

"The rogues have beaten it through this window," George muttered. "Guess, I'll follow the trail!"

He slid one leg over the sill as the reflection took root, and then remembered that he still held the box in his hands. He was about to plunge it into his pocket when the lights suddenly beamed on again. For a moment the sudden glare blinded him as it must have done the other occupants of the ball-room. Then, above the deadly silence that reigned, rose a woman's voice:

"There he is!" she pointed. "Look, astride the window sill! He's got some of the stolen jewellery in his hands!"

A number of men dashed forward and grasped George, forcibly dragging him back into the ball-room.

"Caught!" exclaimed one of them. "Caught red-handed!"

Then another voice screeched in unpleasantly on George's dumbfounded ears—the voice of Justin Mahone.

"There's the thief!" he exclaimed. "I know him well. He was expelled from St. Bartholomew's College two months ago!"

A ghastly silence settled on the assembly. Sir Humphrey Dallas stood like one in a dream unable to believe his eyes. This gallant young fellow who had risked his life to save him, a

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

GEORGE MELTON—a powerful, well-built fellow approaching twenty years of age. A boxer of great promise.

MATTHEW MELTON—a clever footballer, two years his junior.

DICKY and MARCUS MELTON—known as the Twins.

DR. SAUNDERS—headmaster of St. Bartholomew's.

JUSTIN MAHONE—the Meltons' guardian.

The brothers have been expelled from St. Bart's for being the principal ringleaders in a rebellion against the Head, who, to cap a whole string of tyrannies, had cut football out of the school curriculum.

Soon after the Meltons arrive in London George rescues Sir Humphrey Dallas from a blazing train wreck. Later, the baronet offers to start George on a professional boxing career. The Meltons move down to a cottage in Cobham belonging to Sir Humphrey, and George gets down to hard training under the tutelage of Sandy Robson, a veteran pugilist. In course of time George is matched with an opponent—Mike Bratton. The fight takes place at Belcher's Stadium, and the moment that George has the fight in hand, as it were, he experiences a peculiar revulsion of feeling which restrains him from dealing the knock-out blow. He loses the verdict, and disappoints all his friends and his backer.

The following day the brothers are invited to a reception Sir Humphrey is giving in his town house. In the middle of the festivities the ball-room is suddenly plunged into darkness. Then, above the tumult and confusion, shouts ring out that a thief is at work; ladies are being robbed of their jewellery.

(Now read on.)

stranger, was a thief! It seemed incredible, and yet there was no mistaking the evidence.

More in sorrow than in anger he confronted George Melton and demanded an explanation.

Indignant to the point of rage at the accusation laid against him George spoke hotly. He told of the encounter with an unknown man in the dark, of the box being placed in his hands, of the finding of the open window and his determination to follow on the track of the thief or thieves. All this was listened to in silence by the baronet. He knew now how to act. Then came Justin Mahone's scraping voice again:

"Sir Humphrey, I'm sorry to have to tell you, but this young man you have taken up and thrust before the public as a coming champion boxer is a thorough bad lot. He was expelled from his college two months ago! See, he cringes to hear the truth!"

A man in evening-dress, whose carriage proclaimed him to be in the service of the police, moved forward. From his jacket pocket came an ominous clink of steel. He moved alongside George Melton and coughed discreetly. Slowly the handcuffs came into view.

But before the charge could be made, before the arrest could be carried out, another tall, well-proportioned man stepped from the throng and, with an imperious gesture, stopped the plain-clothes officer from performing what he thought to be his duty.

"Stop!" he said, in a quiet, yet ringing voice. "Inspector Pycroft, if you arrest that man you will be committing the biggest blunder of your career. I declare that he is innocent—I know that he is innocent!"

The man addressed as Inspector Pycroft blushed uncomfortably and shifted uneasily on his feet.

"If you say this man is innocent, Mr. Locke," he said quietly. "Then, indeed, he is innocent! I am sorry, my dear sir," added the inspector, turning to George Melton.

"What name did he say?" asked Justin Mahone, of his neighbour, in a hoarse voice.

"Mr. Locke," was the whispered reply. "Ferrers Locke—the finest criminal investigator in the world!"

A Friend in Need!

JUSTIN MAHONE started violently as he heard the name of the great detective pronounced, and something like a spasm of fear racked his frame. The brilliant lights from the glittering chandeliers above gave a peculiar greenish aspect to his pallid features that was at once observed by Inspector Pycroft of the C.I.D. The next moment, however, and Justin Mahone was his old suave self again.

"I am very relieved to hear you say so, Mr. Locke," he said, with an irritating smile—"very glad! But may I ask what manner of proof you hold thus to declare this—this fellow innocent?"

"You may ask," said the great detective coldly. "But there will be no answer. I presume, sir, that you are not one of the victims of this regrettable robbery?"

"I am not," came the reply. "But these victims you refer to will surely need something more tangible to cling to than just your word that this fellow is innocent."

"Ferrers Locke's word is enough for me," interpolated one of the guests.

"And I would remind you, Mr. Mahone," said Sir Humphrey Dallas, "that Mr. Locke has never yet arrested the wrong man."

"I am indeed glad to meet so formidable a detective," said Justin Mahone sarcastically. "But even detectives make mistakes, I suppose?"

"Sometimes they do," answered Ferrers Locke. "But I am happy to say that it is not a habit of mine. I repeat that this gentleman is not the thief."

George Melton gave the famous sleuth a grateful nod, and Matthew and the twins moved closer to their elder brother.

"But while we are talking, my dear sir," snapped Justin Mahone, "the thieves are getting clear away!"

"I fancy not," replied the sleuth coldly. "And, in any case, all the stolen jewellery is in this box, I'll wager my reputation!"

"You talk in riddles!" said Justin Mahone. "As far as I can see, no steps have been taken to arrest the thieves."

"As far as you can see," repeated the sleuth. "That is, however, no concern of yours, Mr. Mahone. Now, Pycroft," he added, turning to the inspector, who was returning the stolen jewellery to its rightful owners, "what have we on the missing list?"

"Nothing, Mr. Locke!" grunted the Scotland Yarder. "Everyone's satisfied. The whole thing turns out to be quite simple. One of my men discovered that the electric cable from the main had been severed. It's been connected again now," he added.

No one was more pleased to hear the C.I.D. man's words than the host. Sir Humphrey moved among his guests, urging them to forget the regrettable affair and to make the most of the evening. At a nod from him, the musicians struck up a popular dance tune, and inside five minutes the ball-room floor was peopled by gracefully moving couples, who now seemed oblivious of the little drama that had just been enacted.

Justin Mahone had withdrawn into the crowd, and George was shaking Ferrers Locke by the hand,

"I can only offer you my thanks for saving me from as uncomfortable a position it has ever been my lot to fall into," he said. "The whole thing leaves me gasping, I'm all at sea!"

"Don't you worry, Mr. Melton!" smiled Ferrers Locke. "By a great stroke of luck, I was thrown into the way of the thief; for there was only one man operating this frame up, I'll be bound. And Ferrers Locke always makes the most of his opportunities," he added.

"You mystify me still more," said George. "Frame up? Do you really think that the affair was a frame-up?"

"I have said so," replied the sleuth, in a manner that suggested his unwillingness to discuss that part of the affair further. "But come, Mr. Melton," he added; "I should like to have a chat with you. That man Justin Mahone is your guardian, I believe?"

"He is," said George, with a grimace. And forthwith he made the celebrated sleuth acquainted with the facts of his expulsion from St. Bart's, his manner of meeting Sir Humphrey Dallas, and the latter's goodness to the Melton brothers.

"A very interesting story," said Ferrers Locke, when the ex-St. Bart's man had concluded. "I should like to be of assistance to you. You have just informed me that you are the breadwinner of the family. Cannot the others find some sort of employment?"

"I am afraid they can't," said George ruefully. "The twins are willing to do

anything; but their age is against them—fourteen. Matthew is mad on football, but I can't see how he's going to get a living at the game. That profession's overcrowded already, although I'm sure a good many clubs would like to possess a right-winger like Matthew."

"Then he's above the average—eh?" asked Ferrers Locke thoughtfully.

"I should just say he is. That's the one thing Matthew can do, and do well. First eleven man at St. Bart's, you know. Got his cap two years ago."

"Ah, I remember now," said the sleuth, a remark that puzzled his companion. "I can help you—providing you'll allow me to, of course."

"At the moment I should jump at some form of assistance as long as it's not charity," said George earnestly. "You see, Mr. Locke, I don't know how long my own job is going to last. You, doubtless, have read of my poor exhibition at Belchers yesterday. Well, I can't make another mistake like that. I can't live on Sir Humphrey's generosity any longer!"

"Tut, tut, sir!" chided the sleuth. "You won't make any more mistakes like that. All the same, your brother Matthew must have some work to do. I will take him along to a friend of mine who has a pull with a well-known First League football club. After that it's up to Matthew to win his own laurels."

"He'll do that," affirmed George. "Very many thanks, Mr. Locke."

The pair chatted for some twenty minutes or more until the twins and



"There he is!" came a shrill voice. "Look, astride the window sill! He's the thief!" A number of men dashed forward and grasped George, forcibly dragging him back into the ball-room. "Caught!" exclaimed one of them. "Caught redhanded!" (See page 22.)

"Your name is Matthew Melton, is it not?" asked the sleuth.

"Yes, of course," was the astonished reply. "But—"

"You remember a certain match last season—to be precise, the match St. Bart's played against Trinity College, Cambridge?"

"Should think I do!" returned Matthew. "What a game it was to be sure!"

"What a game!" repeated Ferrers Locke. "And what a right-winger St. Bart's had—eh?"

"Were—were you present at the match?" asked Matthew, reddening.

"I was," said Ferrers Locke. "A nephew of mine was the skipper of the Trinity eleven. I went down specially to see him play. And in the second half I forgot all about my nephew's footer prowess," added the sleuth, "so engrossed was I in watching the St. Bart's right-winger."

"Oh!" said Matthew blankly.

"And that's that!" chuckled the sleuth. "Now you know why I'm putting myself out a bit to get you fixed up."

"It's extremely good of you," said Matthew gratefully. "I shall play like the very dickens!" he concluded resolutely.

"Good!"

In anticipation of good news the twins had prepared a special repast for Cobham. George was delighted with the tidings Matthew brought.

"You'll win through!" he exclaimed heartily. "Here's to our Matthew—a coming pro!"

And the twins, in the exuberance of their spirits, danced a jig round the tiny room, glasses of foaming ginger-pop in their hands.

The day of the try-out came round, and with it a little nervousness on Matthew's part at thoughts of the stake for which he was playing. The twins gave him a right royal send off from the station, much to the amusement of the passengers on the platform and to the discomfiture of a tall, elderly gentleman wearing a silk-hat.

This unlucky individual was endeavouring to board the train when Marcus' exuberance smote him—on his silk-hat. Marcus had brought with him a wooden rattle, which he was twirling with reckless abandon, filling the air with a discord of noise. The old gentleman had successfully ducked away from that twirling rattle on two occasions, and perhaps thinking that the third time was lucky, essayed another attempt to enter the compartment.

But the third time was not lucky. The rattle crashed down on his spotless silk-hat, crushing it over his eyes like a concertina.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter went up from the people on the platform, and the laughter infuriated the elderly gentleman. He said one or two uncomplimentary remarks to the irrepressible Marcus, and, finding them of no avail, attempted to smite that cheerful youth with his umbrella.

But it was the elderly gentleman's unlucky day apparently. The umbrella whistled through the air. It landed on something. And the something was the dear old gentleman's toe.

"Yah!" grinned Marcus cheekily. "Knocked your own wicket down!"

The situation was saved by the guard. He waved his flag, bellowed to the elderly gentleman to "get a move on," and signalled the train to start.

It drew out of the station slowly, two faces peering out from its windows.



"Hey—foul!" Just as Matthew's foot was about to touch the leather he was swept off his balance by a vicious charge that was more than suggestive of a foul. (See page 27.)

One belonged to Matthew, who was grinning broadly, the other belonged to the infuriated gentleman with the crushed silk-hat. He scowled at the twins on the platform, waved his umbrella at them threateningly, and yelled out some remark that was certainly in ill-keeping with a silk-hat.

"You young rascals!" said George, as he piloted the twins out of the station. "You'll get yourselves locked up if you go on like that."

"That old gent will if he doesn't moderate his transports," chuckled Dicky. "And did you notice what a boko he had, George?"

The elder brother grunted to stifle the outburst of laughter that threatened to make itself manifest. He could never remain angry with the twins for long. And while the twins, on the way home to their cottage, discussed the old gentleman's "boko," Matthew, in the train, was thinking of the ordeal that awaited him.

But he need have had no qualms, for upon his arrival at the Rovers' ground he was soon put at his ease by the "boys." And as soon as he felt the leather at his feet Matthew, the sensitive youth, was displaced by Matthew, the footballer, the opportunist, the winger, who showed the cleanest pair of heels on the field.

Ferrers Locke, in the grandstand, nudged Montague Roberts occasionally when Matthew accomplished something noteworthy. The sleuth had arrived on the ground unknown to his young protegee.

"What do you think of that, Roberts?" he chuckled, as Matthew, dropping on to a pass like a hare, flashed down the touchline, and sent in a glorious centre. "You haven't a winger as good as Melton I'll wager you an even five!"

"Hum!" grunted the director sourly. "I— Oh, well played, Melton!"

He changed his tone suddenly, much to Locke's amusement, as Matthew flashed in a shot from the touchline that beat the goalkeeper all ends up.

"Well?" queried the sleuth.

"Not at all bad," said Roberts grudgingly, although the sleuth, who knew his friend's peculiar manner of withholding praise, was aware that Matthew had had several "good marks" notched against his name.

"That will do!" bellowed out the director when the practice evenings had been "going it" for a good forty minutes. "Pack up!"

Matthew came off the field, a healthy glow in his cheeks, a sparkle in his eye that was good to behold. He was beckoned by the director.

"Hum!" grunted Montague Roberts, running a searching eye over Matthew's slim figure. "Where did you learn your football, young fellow?"

"At St. Bartholomew's," answered Matthew.

"And why did you leave—" Mr. Roberts broke off short as he realised the question might be regarded as personal. "And—er—er—I mean—come with me, young fellow," he added.

Thankful that a delicate situation had been successfully navigated, for Matthew was not a bit anxious to explain his reasons for having left school, he followed the director into the committee-room.

"You wish to turn out for us, Mr. Melton," began Montague Roberts, when the former had seated himself, "as a paid player. You are willing to sign a contract, eh? You will be ready to play for us on Saturday? Sign here, if you please."

Matthew was so astounded at the series of quick-fire questions, the obvious eagerness of the grudging Mr. Roberts to secure his services, that he stammered and stuttered unintelligently, and to cover his confusion, picked up the pen in front of him and wrote his signature opposite the spaces indicated by the Rovers' director.

"Thank you, Mr. Melton!" At Montague Roberts' coldness of tone had returned now that the official forms had been filled in. He wiped his pince-nez and replaced them carefully in their case, rising to his feet as he did so. "I wish you luck, Mr. Melton," he added, as the case snapped shut. "The very best of luck. Here is our fixture list. Saturday

is a very important fixture. You will do your best. Report here in the morning to the trainer at ten-thirty. Good-morning—good-morning, Mr. Melton."

And before he knew what was happening, Matthew Melton found himself standing outside the closed office door.

"Ha, ha!"

The chuckle came from somewhere close at hand, and Matthew, wheeling sharply, found Ferrers Locke grinning at him.

"Funny old stick, isn't he?" chuckled the sleuth. "Knocked you all of a heap, eh?"

"Sure thing," said Matthew faintly. "I don't know whether I'm on my head or my feet."

"Ah, you'll shake down soon enough, my lad," said Locke. "He treats everyone like that. I take it that you are engaged?"

"Pending official acceptance by the F.A.—yes," returned Matthew. "I'm to turn up to-morrow—for training, I suppose."

"Good lad!"

Ferrers Locke extended his hand and gripped Matthew's firmly. "Good luck to you! Now you and I must part, Melton. I'm a busy man, you know. Still, I shall find time to keep an eye on you, and in any case you know where to find me."

"Right-ho, Mr. Locke," said Matthew. "I'm more than grateful for what you've done for me. Thank you very—"

"Tush!" laughed the sleuth. "You must excuse me. Good-bye!"

And with a swinging stride Ferrers Locke vacated the spacious playing ground of the Rovers, leaving Matthew Melton staring after his retreating figure, admiration expressed in every line of his face.

Matthew's homecoming that same day was the occasion of another celebration by the twins. It certainly seemed as if the fortunes of the Meltons were on the up grade. In addition to the good news Matthew had brought back from Pendlebury, George crowned all by the information that another fight had been fixed up for him. This time his opponent was to be none other than Britain's heavyweight champion—so redoubtable an exponent of the noble art being persuaded to enter the contract no doubt by reason of the gigantic purse offered by the promoters. Of the purse in question, seventy-five per cent was to go to the champion, win or lose, while twenty-five per cent represented George's "end" of it.

"Hurrah!" roared the twins, aiming simultaneous blows at their elder brother. "Give him one of those!" exclaimed Marcus, dealing George a playful tap under the third waistcoat button. "And one on his boko, like that!" chirruped Dicky, making an ineffectual leap at his brother's head.

"Here, chuck it, you kids!" laughed George, good-naturedly. "I've got to go over your lessons. Hand over your books—sharp's the word!"

The laughter died out of the faces of the twins. When George had departed for his training quarters that same morning, he had given the twins a "chuck" of Virgil to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. It was evident that the twins had done anything but appreciate the works of the learned P. Virgilius Maro, for they flashed each other guilty glances.

"You young rascals have been shirking," said George, noting the hesitancy of the twins. "Where have you been all day?"

"On—on the downs!" said Marcus uneasily.

"On—on the downs!" muttered Dicky in sympathy.

"Have you?" exclaimed George grimly. "Well, you'll have to pay the price for dodging lessons. Bend over, Marcus!"

Eying uneasily the slipper George had picked up, Marcus stooped and touched his toes. He received a light flick from the slipper, and was ordered to "straighten up." Dicky took his place, and underwent the same treatment, much to the amusement of Matthew, who could scarce control his mirth.

"Let that be a lesson to you," said George sternly, twirling the slipper in his hand. "You young rogues must grind away at your lessons while Matthew and I stick our part of the job. Savvy?"

"Yes, George," said the twins demurely. "We won't dodge classes again."

"Good! That's the spirit," said George. "Now we'll have a stroll down to the village. Matthew will want some footer boots and shorts, and I think I'll order an ashplant while I'm about it. After all, slippers would soon be ruined on you two imps of mischief."

He winked at Matthew while the twins were getting their caps.

"Don't mean it, really, old scout," he said, laughing. "But the twins mustn't run too wild."

"Quite agree with you, old boy," said Matthew. "They're good sorts, really."

Thus the ensuing days passed with all the Meltons performing their allotted tasks. George was busy preparing for his next fight. Matthew journeyed to and from Pendlebury every day training with his "new chums" in the Rovers, and the twins assiduously studied their lesson-books much the same as if they were still at St. Bart's.

Then came the Saturday when Matthew was due to make his debut as the Rovers' new right winger. He was accompanied to the ground by the twins and George, who found seats in the grand stand, and then he left them.

They saw him again when he trooped out of the dressing-room in the blue and white jersey of the Pendlebury Rovers F.C., the object of everyone's curiosity in that vast enclosure. Already the papers had got wind of the newcomer to the local club, and speculation was rife as to his merit. When the majority of the spectators clapped eyes on him they were disappointed. His slim build, his fair, boyish face seemed totally out of place amidst that rugged eleven who had earned their salt at the grand old winter game for many years.

But once the vast multitude saw young Matthew in action, their eyes were opened. He was the one man on the field worth watching; the biggest thorn in the opposing side from the commencement of the game to the finish.

"Gee! Ain't he a mover!" declared one enthusiast. "Greased lightning ain't it with him!"

"Got some pluck, too!" averred another supporter of the Rovers. "He's not afraid to go into them hefty fellows."

And the hefty fellows were doing their best to put a stop to Matthew's little capers. They charged him, they sandwiched him—when the ref's eyes were elsewhere—with deliberate intent, but Matthew's star was in the ascendant. He could do nothing wrong. His feet twinkled in and out of his more slowly moving opponents in a manner fascinating to watch; the ball was always well under control, his passing perfect and unselfish.

And ten minutes before the finish of the first half, Matthew had notched the first point of the match in the Rovers' favour.

"Bravo, young 'un!"

The shout went up from a thousand throats as the teams lined up for the replay. Above them all, and more sustained, were the frantic cheers of the twins. Little they cared for the hostile glances thrown in their direction. At St. Bart's they had always been instructed to make a noise when their side was in action, and right well had they taken the lesson to heart. Matthew never wanted for encouragement; the twins were hoarse when the twenty-two mud-stained players came off for a breather. And no one needed the breather more than the twins.

The second half was a repetition of the first, so far as Matthew's play was concerned. He seized every available chance put in his way, made others for himself when there was a sporting chance of doing so, and fed his centre-forward with some sensational passes.

When the long whistle blew the Rovers had three goals to their credit against their opponents' blank score-sheet, and the man who had brought two of those points was the new right-winger. The followers of the Rovers' club shouted themselves hoarse when Matthew, tired but jubilant, came off the ground. Such enthusiasm had not been witnessed on the Pendlebury ground since the Rovers had first been accounted a League team.

Even Montague Roberts forgot his usual role. Praise came spontaneous now from his pessimistic lips; he even forgot himself to the extent of clapping Matthew on the shoulder. But in the moment of his triumph Matthew had the good sense to thank his fellow-players for the support he had been given, thereby earning their esteem and friendship.

It was a tired Matthew who accompanied the twins back to their home in Cobham that evening, for he had gone all out in that hard tussle of the afternoon; but his heart was light, his gratitude to Ferrers Locke for having started him on the ladder of success uppermost. And when the "family" arrived at Cobham they ran into a telegraph messenger cycling towards their cottage. He hailed them and brought them to a halt.

"Mr. Matthew Melton?" he asked of the brothers. "Telegram, sir!"

Eagerly Matthew slit the envelope and drew out the single sheet of paper. A pleased expression took hold in his face as he read the message. It ran:

"Bravo, Matthew! Heard of your achievements to-day. Good luck! Words vindicated.—FERRERS LOCKE."

Thrown Off the Field!

DURING the following days Matthew Melton's name occupied a prominent position in the sporting papers, a rival to that of his brother's. The public were beginning to inquire into the circumstances of these Melton brothers, their sporting achievements providing an animated subject of discussion at clubs, taverns—everywhere where men congregated for a "pow-wow."

With so much publicity it was not surprising to find a record attendance at Sheffield when the Rovers met their next opponents, the Donflow Wanderers. The

Wanderers had the reputation of being a "hefty" team, accustomed to using their extra weight when opportunity offered.

When they trooped on to the field it was noted how superior they were in weight as compared with the Pendlebury Rovers. But both teams looked in the pink of condition, and the dry state of the ground was in favour of the visiting eleven.

The Rovers won the toss, and the game broke into life.

A fine forward movement brought the visitors without a single check right up to the goal-line of the Wanderers. Matthew was in possession of the ball, making it answer his slightest tap, his every whim.

"Centre!" roared a portion of the great crowd. But the advice was not needed. Matthew's right foot was swung back preparatory to despatching the ball to his inner men before the cry was half-formed. "Centre—Hey! Foul!"

The cry changed from advice to abuse. Just as Matthew's foot was about to touch the leather he was swept off his balance by a vicious charge that was more suggestive of a foul. The referee, however, thought otherwise, for he shook his head, and the game was resumed. But the danger had been averted, the ball was sailing into the Rovers' territory now. And the crowd soon forgot its animosity against the half-back who had bowled Matthew over.

Matthew himself was positive in his own mind that the half-back had deliberately fouled him. And during the next ten minutes of play that opinion was confirmed. The half-back in question was an old, seasoned warrior of the rugged type. He indulged all his complement of "dirty tricks" without drawing the referee's eye upon him, without, in the majority of cases, drawing the disapproval of the crowd. Ankle-tapping—one of the most hated and low-down methods of the unsportsmanlike player—he brought into force time and time again.

Matthew found his temper rising. As a public schoolboy, he had been accustomed to clean play, for nowhere on this earth can cleaner play be witnessed than between two public schools. This professional ruffianism, as he characterised it, was something to be stamped out, not endured.

He managed to whisper a few words to the half-back when play was going on in the opposite wing.

"You've been playing some dirty tricks!" he muttered angrily. "Can't you play the game?"

"I'll knock yer bloomin' head off, young shaver, if you talk to me like that," growled the Wanderers' left-half. "You've been at the game five minutes—I've earned my bread-and-butter at it for years. Don't you come your 'igh and mighty airs 'ere!"

"Well, cut out the fouling," answered Matthew hotly. "Play the game—you're big enough to be able to!"

Further conversation between them was rendered impossible during the next second or so, for the ball was travelling towards Matthew. He pounced on it, and was away like the wind, the half-back in full cry at his heels. To the roars of derision from the crowd, Matthew left the half-back standing, as it were. He outdistanced him by yards, and then flashed in a perfect centre.

But the Wanderers' defence were well set now, and it lined up a formidable barrier for the Rovers' centre-forward to penetrate. He decided to get rid of the ball, and away it went—this time to the left wing. The outside left gathered it



In response to the urgings of the self-appointed leader of the crowd Matthew was thrown out into the roadway. He sprawled in the dust, threatening fists and angry voices raised round him on every side. (See this page.)

neatly in his stride and sped away, performing much the same as Matthew had done a few moments before. In came another centre.

The Rovers' centre-forward was on it in a flash, likewise the Wanderers' left-back. There was a bit of a scrimmage, and the ball was seen to trickle out to Matthew. Like the rare opportunist he was, Matthew essayed a first time shot at goal. But again, even as his foot swung back, the Wanderers' left-half crashed into him.

Smack! Both of them went sprawling to the ground, the ball meanwhile being captured by the Rovers' inside-right, who at once started off for the goal. The attention of the crowd and the referee was more centred on the attacking forwards than on Matthew and the Wanderers' half-back sprawling on the ground. Consequently very few people saw the vicious kick the half-back aimed at Matthew's stomach as he started to scramble to his feet.

It knocked all the breath out of Matthew's body, sending a sickening feeling through his frame. And then as he recovered somewhat and saw the evil, malicious grin on the half-back's face he forgot himself—forgot where he was, forgot the possible sequence to his contemplated offence.

Thud! His fist flashed out like a piston-rod, and caught that ugly face like a battering-ram. Up went a shout from the crowd; the referee's whistle sounded, bringing the game to a temporary standstill, and the players surged forward. The half-back was on his feet now, streaks of blood on his mouth. Appealing to the crowd to witness that he had not struck the first blow, he sailed into Matthew like a bull at a gate. Inside two seconds the pair were tramping up and down, fighting furiously, regardless of the frenzied shouts of the referee who called them to order.

Smack! Thud-thud!

In the midst of a lively exchange the referee endeavoured to separate the combatants. So hot was Matthew's fury, so blind his anger, that he did not see the referee stride before his opponent. And when he did observe him it was too late. Two blows—a left and right-hook—landed full on the referee's jaw.

Amid a mighty gasp from ten thousand throats the referee sank down to earth, and lay still, stretched out on the short grass. And, like some huge audience watching a horrifying spectacle, that multitude of football lovers gazed aghast at the young footballer who had struck those fatal blows.

"Off the field with him!"

"Chuck him off!"

"Yah! Dirty player!"

Hundreds of shouts went up, directed against Matthew Melton as he stood, half-dazed, looking down at the fallen figure of the referee. At that moment he did not see the malicious grin that spread over the half-back's face or he might have awakened out of his trance. As it was he became aware of the hostility of the crowd when the foremost in it seized hold of him and dragged him, struggling now, to the main gates of the ground. The police attempted to interfere, but they were useless against that mighty throng, and were perforce obliged to hover in the background.

Poor Matthew! He was punched and kicked by innumerable fists and hefty boots on that never-to-be-forgotten journey to the gates. Then, in response to the urgings of the self-appointed leader of the crowd, he was thrown out into the roadway. He sprawled in the dust, decidedly the worse for wear, threatening fists and angry voices raised around him on every side.

(What is in store for the player who has struck a referee? Will the F.A. believe him when he tells them that it was an accident, or will they suspend him? Next week's grand instalment of this fine story will tell you. Don't miss it!)

THE VENGEANCE OF THE SHEIK!

(Continued from page 21.)

since torn the mortal remains of Mustapha ben Mohammed: and Ali the Sheik reigned without a rival over the tribes of the Oued Tahar. In the sandy desert, in the green Ziban, Mustapha ben Mohammed would be seen no more.

"I say, you fellows—"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in quite his old merry tone. "Fat as ever!"

"Oh, really, Cherry— Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as Bob smacked him on the back, with a vigour which showed that his strength undoubtedly was returning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a joyful day. It was the last at the Bordj: on the morrow, the Greyfriars party packed and broke camp for the last time. Across the desert, northward, Ali ben Yusef and a band of his tribesmen escorted them, till Biskra was in sight after many days.

When the white villas of Biskra appeared in the sunshine, the Arabs halted. Ali ben Yusef was finished with the towns of the white men—henceforth the desert was his home, the tents of the Oued Tahar his abiding-place.

"You won't come back to Greyfriars, old chap?" asked Bob Cherry, half in jest.

Ali smiled and shook his head.

"The Sheik Ali ben Yusef will dwell with his tribe," he said; "but he never forgetting his English friends—he never forgetting the lovely English misses! It is written that the Arab shall dwell in the tents of the desert! Mas salaamah!"

And so they parted.

Major Cherry gripped the schoolboy sheik's hand for the last time. Many a peril had he found in the desert, but his expedition had been, after all, a success: he had saved Ali from the power of the sheik, and his ward was in his rightful

place at last, the undisputed ruler of his tribe.

They parted: and Ali ben Yusef and his men rode back to the desert. Ali turned once to wave his hand, the sun glinting on the Eye of Ahmed that blazed in his white turban: and the Greyfriars party waved back. Then he rode on and disappeared; and the Greyfriars Arab was gone.

Major Cherry and his party rode on into Biskra, and Hazel came tearing out of the white villa to greet his sister. Marjorie's father and mother were waiting for her—they had long known that she was safe, but they were overjoyed to see her again.

"And we've jolly well had enough of Africa," said Hazel. "I shall be glad enough to see Greyfriars again."

"What-ho!" said Billy Bunter with deep feeling. "We shall get back in time for the new term: and I shall jolly well stand a study spread first thing. I've almost forgotten what a jam-tart is like! These Arab cakes are all very well! But give me good home-made pastry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said the Owl of the Remove.

"I can tell you, I'm going to stand a study spread, to celebrate our coming back—after all the fearful dangers we've been through. The Remove fellows will hardly believe me when I tell them my adventures, and the awful perils I've pulled you fellows through in the Sahara."

"They won't—quite!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A few days later, a numerous party boarded the north-bound train from Biskra—the Hazeldenes, and Miss Clara, and Major Cherry, and the Famous

Five. Ibrahim the guide, bowing and smiling and attentive to the last, saw them off on the platform, and brought a cushion for Clara, and a bunch of flowers for Marjorie. Ibrahim the guide was more resplendent than ever, once more the Arab dandy of Biskra, in new and voluminous trousers of a brilliant blue, in a new scarlet jacket that glittered with gold braid, in yellow boots that reflected the rays of the sun. A rich reward had been Ibrahim's, and he was now a wealthy man among his associates, and he carried his head loftily among the guides of Biskra. But he was still the devoted servant of his "fine gentlemen."

"You go," said Ibrahim, with a smile that showed nearly every gleaming tooth in his head. "You go, but some day you come back to Biskra, and you ask for Ibrahim—Honest Ibrahim—him the best guide and most honest man in Algeria! Yes, what? Next time you come, you not forget to ask for Honest Ibrahim—you trust Ibrahim, he do your business! Him the only honest guide."

And Ibrahim stood on the platform, shining in the sun like a tropical beetle, his brown hand respectfully to his turban, till the train ran out of sight.

Greyfriars once more!

It was the new term, and Greyfriars fellows gathered from all quarters at the old school. Among them came the Famous Five, sun-browned from their African journey. Glad were the chums of the Remove to see the grey old walls, the shady old quadrangle, once more. The study spread mentioned by Bunter duly came off—but Bunter did not stand it, owing to a disappointment about a postal order. But it came off all the same, and Marjorie and Clara came over from Cliff House for the occasion: and all was merry and bright. Far off now was Africa, far off the cruel sands of the Sahara and the burning sun: and even from Bob Cherry's mind the remembrance was fading of the journey of death in the desert, and the vengeance of the sheik.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's grand extra long story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "Billy Bunter's Wembley Party!"—a real corker, chums! Order your MAGNET now!)

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