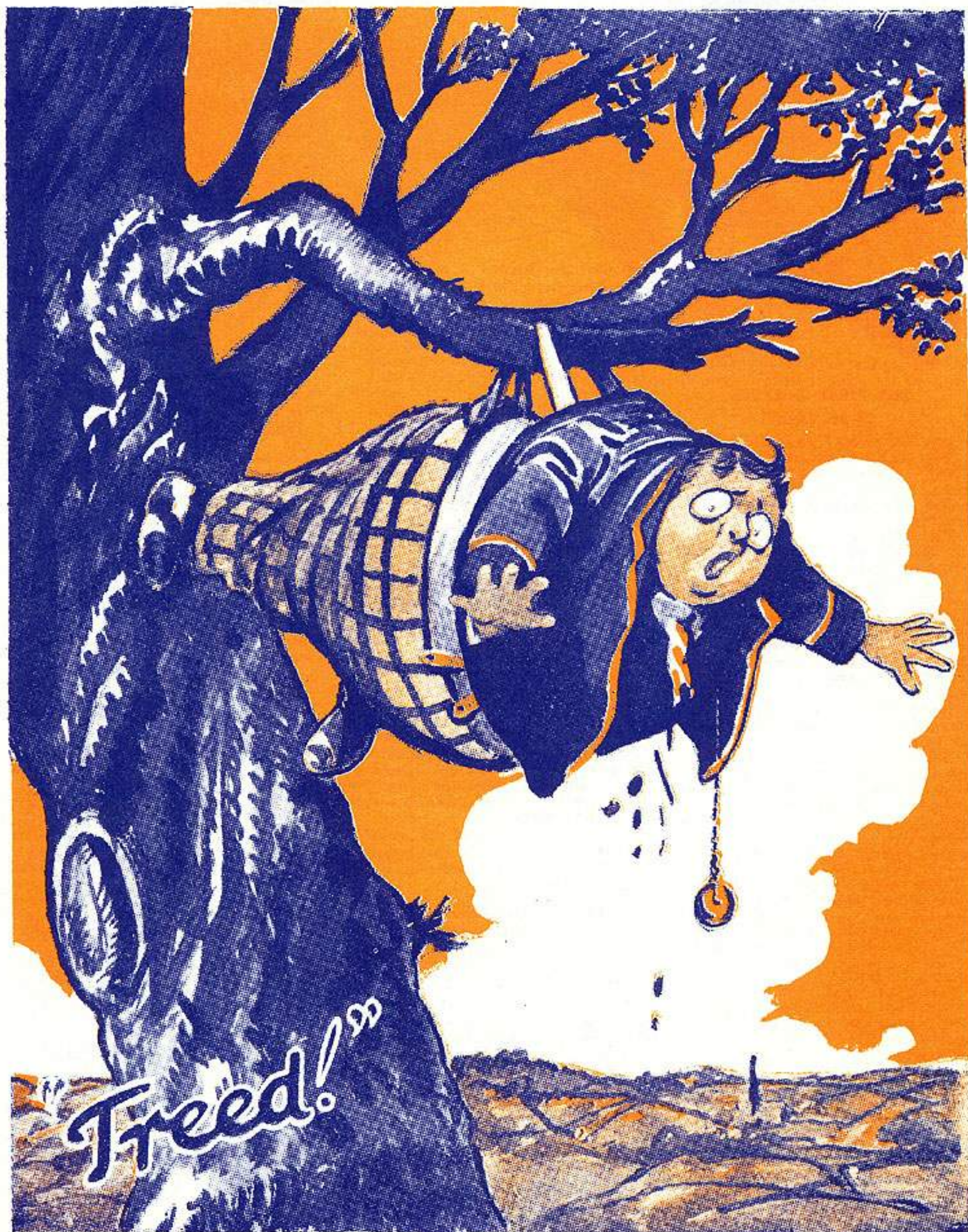


**Schoolboy Cracksman versus Famous Detective!**

Read the thrilling complete story inside.

# *The* **MAGNET** 2<sup>D</sup>



# THE WAY OF THE WIZARD!



Amazing long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Turned Down!

**S**ARDINES!" said Billy Bunter. He sniffed. It was tea-time at Greyfriars School, and Billy Bunter had rolled into his study No. 7, in the Remove.

He stood blinking at the table through his big spectacles with a disparaging blink.

It was not much of a spread that met the eyes of William George Bunter. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton had sat down to tea and seemed fairly contented with what was before them. But Billy Bunter did not look contented. He looked extremely discontented.

"Sardines!" he repeated. "Look here, Toddy! Is that all you've got for tea?"

"Plenty of bread!" said Toddy.

Another sniff from Bunter! Even when funds were short in junior studies, there never was a shortage of bread; that commodity being supplied by the school. But it was said of old that man cannot live by bread alone; and certainly Billy Bunter couldn't.

"And some butter!" said Toddy. "But lay it on thin, or it won't go round!"

"I could get bread-and-scrape in Hall!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Good idea!" said Peter Todd heartily. "Do!"

"Look here, Toddy!"

"Shut up, anyhow!" added Toddy.

"Anything in the cupboard?" demanded Bunter.

"Yes."

"Oh, good!" Bunter's fat face brightened a little. "What's in the cupboard, Toddy?"

"Lots of things. There's a bottle of ink—"

"Eh?"

"And a duster—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,218.

"What?"

"And a pair of slippers—"

"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "I mean, is there anything to eat?"

"Fraid not," said Toddy, shaking his head. "But if sardines ain't good enough for you, Bunt—"

"Sardines!" sniffed Bunter contemptuously.

"Then it's lucky they're good enough for me!" said Toddy.

The supply of sardines was not large. Such as it was, Peter had divided it into three equal portions. Now, however, he took up Bunter's plate and carefully divided its contents between his own plate and Tom Dutton's. Billy Bunter watched that proceeding, with his little round eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

Dutton looked up in surprise. Tom Dutton had the misfortune—or the good fortune, as it might be considered in the case of Bunter's study-mate—to be deaf. He had been spreading thin butter on thick bread, oblivious of the fat Owl's remarks.

"Isn't Bunter going to tea here?" he asked.

"Bunter doesn't want any!" explained Toddy.

Dutton looked still more surprised.

"What does he want a penny for?" he asked. Dutton's auricular affliction often caused these little misunderstandings.

"Doesn't want any sardines!" roared Peter.

"These ain't penny sardines! We gave eightpence for this tin," answered Tom, still more surprised. "If Bunter can get a tin of sardines for a penny, he had better go and get one. We can do with some more."

"Oh dear!" said Peter, and he gave it up.

"Look here, Toddy!" roared Bunter, in breathless indignation. "What am I going to have for my tea?"

"Echo answers what," said Toddy,

"or, as Inky would say, the whatfulness is terrific!"

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. As Billy Bunter seldom, or never, stood his "whack" in providing tea in the study, it might have been supposed that the fat Owl would take his share of what was going, and be thankful for the same. But no one who knew William George Bunter would have supposed that.

If Bunter never stood his whack, at least he was always going to stand his whack when his postal order came. Unfortunately, that celebrated postal order, long expected, never came.

"Well," said Bunter at last, in a voice thrilling with indignation, "that does it!"

Toddy smiled, and ate sardines. They were quite good sardines, and they vanished at quite a good speed.

"That does it!" repeated Bunter.

"Dear me!" said Toddy, not appearing unduly disturbed by the news that "did" it.

"I've been a pal to you," said Bunter. "I've stuck to this study. I've been friendly with you, and never had it up against you that you're a measly solicitor's son, a fellow I can hardly know socially. I've stood you and that deaf dummy, Dutton, for a long time. I've always meant to stand you a splendid spread when my postal order came. Now I won't!"

"That's all right," said Toddy affably. "I don't suppose I shall care much for tuck by the time your postal order comes, old fat man. I shall be an old, old man!"

"Since Wharton went," continued Bunter, "I've thought of changing back into my old study. I used to be in Study No. 1 with Nugent before Wharton came to Greyfriars. He'll be jolly glad to have me back now Wharton's gone!"

"Wharton isn't gone, ass—and if he was, Nugent wouldn't take you back into his study at any price, idiot!"

"Oh, he's gone all right!" said Bunter. "We shan't see Wharton again. Franky and I used to be great pals before Wharton butted in. He's been looking jolly miserable the last day or two for some reason, and it will cheer him up to have me back. In fact, I rather think that that's what's on his mind, only he hasn't cared to mention it."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter.

"If you'd treated me decently," said Bunter, "I'd have stuck to you! I'm not the fellow to let a fellow down! A loyal and faithful pal—that's my strong point. But you're too horrid mean for me, Toddy! It's not much I eat, as you know!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"But I never could stand meanness or selfishness. I've often thought that I might grow selfish myself, Toddy, associating with you!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Well, I might," said Bunter. "It's not in my nature; but evil communications corrupt good manners, you know. I'm done with you, Toddy! I'm going to chum with Nugent in Study No. 1 after this!"

"You fat chump!"

Bunter waved a scornful fat hand.

"You needn't say any more, Toddy. I've decided. You can get along the best you can in this study without me. It's no good asking me to change my mind. It's settled now, and it's too late!"

"You burbling idiot!"

"That will do!" said Bunter contemptuously. "I'm going! After all I've done for you, after all my kindness to you, this is how you treat me! I'm going!"

"Shut the door after you!" said Peter, unmoved.

"These ain't bad sardines!" said Tom Dutton. "I wish we had some more!"

I say, Bunter, haven't you got anything for once? It's jolly well time you stood your whack, you know! You always leave it to Toddy and me!"

Peter grinned. Dutton's happy affliction had left him in blissful ignorance of the torrent of scorn Billy Bunter had poured on the study, and of his fell intention of shaking the dust of that study from his feet.

Bunter gave the deaf junior a scornful blink.

"I'm going!" he roared. "Can't you hear? I'm going!"

"You're going to stand your whack?" asked Dutton, in pleased surprise. "Good! As I said, it's time you did. I don't want to rub it in, but I must say it's high time you stood something. As a matter of fact, I'm rather hungry. What have you got?"

"You deaf dummy!" hooted Bunter.

"Well, I don't know about chummy, but it's only decent for a fellow to stand his whack along with other fellows in a study. If you've got anything for tea, trot it out, and not so much jaw."

"I'm turning this study down!" snorted Bunter.

Tom Dutton jumped.

"You potty idiot! What do you mean? You'll be stopped pretty quick, if you start burning the study down. Are you off your rocker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Turning, you deaf fathead, not burning—turning it down—"

"Brown? What about Brown? Do you mean Tom Brown?"

"I'm done with you!" howled Bunter. "See? I'm done with Toddy, and I'm done with you."

"Jew? Who's a Jew? Newland's a Jew, but you jolly well know I'm not!" said Dutton, staring at Bunter. "What are you calling me a Jew for?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" gasped Bunter.

"Who's a make?"

Billy Bunter gave it up at that. He turned to the door, to roll contemptuously out of the study. Tom Dutton jumped up. Dutton's look was wrathful.

"I've done nothing to you, that I know of," he exclaimed; "and you butt into the study and call a chap a Jew and a make! Well, I'd rather be a Jew, or a make, either, than a fat, flabby, footling fathead with a face like a squashed jam-roll, and chance it. And if you think you can slang a fellow for nothing, you're jolly well mistaken, see?"

Bunter had intended to roll majestically out of the study, shaking its dust from his feet with lofty scorn.

The dignity of his lofty departure, however, was rather marred by Tom Dutton's next proceeding.

Bunter had reached the door when Dutton reached Bunter.

Thud!

There was a terrific yell from Billy Bunter as Tom Dutton's foot landed on his tight trousers.

Bunter left the study much more rapidly than he had intended. He fairly flew.

Bump!

"Ow! Oh, my hat! Wow!" roared Bunter.

Tom Dutton glared at him from the

**The cleverest cracksman in England is a school-boy at Greyfriars; and the cleverest detective in the world, engaged to round him up, is a guest under the same roof!**

doorway of Study No. 7 as he sprawled in the Remove passage.

"Now come back and call me names again, and have another!" he hooted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

But Billy Bunter did not come back. He did not want another. He rolled away, scrambled up, and departed—with more haste and less dignity than he had intended. Dutton grunted, and slammed the door. He frowned as he returned to the tea-table.

"My belief is that that fat idiot is going off his rocker, Toddy," he said.

"First he talks about burning the study down, and then calls a fellow a Jew and a make—for nothing! What's the matter with him, Toddy?"

But Peter Todd did not attempt to explain. He only chortled.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Bunter Begs For It!

**F**RANK NUGENT came across the sunny quad towards the House, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the ground. His brow was darkly clouded. Nugent had gone down to Little Side with his chums, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, after class. But the hearts of the juniors were not in cricket as usual, and Frank had soon "chucked" it. In class that day Frank had been so inattentive that the other fellows had expected the "chopper" to come down, and to come down heavy; but Mr. Quelch had been uncommonly considerate, and he had passed Nugent over without a word of reproof.

Poor Nugent was well aware that, at a school like Greyfriars, a fellow was expected not to wear his heart upon his sleeve, and not to betray his personal feelings to indifferent or derisive eyes. But he could not help it. His best chum was missing from the school, his fate unknown except that it was certain that he was in lawless hands; and the blow had been too hard for Frank to bear with equanimity; all the more because he had been on less friendly terms than usual with Harry Wharton when the disaster happened.

Skinner of the Remove, watching him pass, grinned, and murmured a jesting remark to Snoop about a face like a fiddle.

But for once Snoop failed to play up as Skinner's faithful echo.

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" he grunted. "Feeling frightfully sympathetic, and all that?" sneered Skinner.

"Oh, rats!"

Snoop walked away.

Nugent went on towards the House without even seeing Skinner. He was thinking, and the cad of the Remove had no place in his thoughts.

But a tap on the shoulder roused him, and he glanced up at Herbert Vernon-Smith. The Bounder's hard face was unusually kind.

"Buck up, old bean," said Smithy. "We'll be getting news of Wharton soon, you know."

"I—I hope so."

"Bet you two to one on it," said Smithy. "Ten to one, if you like, in doughnuts."

Nugent smiled faintly.

"I suppose you know Ferrers Locke is here?" added the Bounder.

"Yes, I know."

"Well, he will find Wharton! He could find a needle in a haystack, according to his jolly old reputation. So cheer up and smile."

Nugent nodded, and walked on. He knew that the Bounder meant well; but the cheering words found no echo in his heart. Harry Wharton had vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up, and there seemed to be no clue even for so keen a detective as the celebrated Ferrers Locke to work upon.

Two Sixth Form men were standing by the doorway as Nugent approached the House. One was Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, the other Lancaster, the new fellow in the Sixth.

Both of them glanced at the clouded face of the Remove junior.

Wingate's face became serious, and Lancaster's had a strange expression on it for a moment. It was as if what he read in Frank Nugent's face hurt him somehow.

"Poor kid!" muttered Wingate. "That kid is Wharton's best chum, Lancaster—they've been pals ever since Wharton came to Greyfriars. He looks rather knocked over."

"He does!" said Lancaster quietly.

"Cheerio, kid!" called out Wingate, as Nugent passed him.

Frank glanced up again and coloured. He realised that his dismal looks were drawing attention upon him, and he certainly did not want that.

"Never say die, you know," added the captain of Greyfriars encouragingly. "There'll be news soon, most likely; and, anyhow, there's no reason to suppose that Wharton's been hurt. Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Yes, Wingate."

Frank pulled himself together and

tried to look a little more cheerful as he went into the House. But in a few minutes the cloud returned to his brow. He could not help it. His heart was like lead.

"Nugent!"

The junior was going towards the staircase when he heard the voice of Lancaster of the Sixth. He stopped and turned. Lancaster had left Wingate and followed him into the House.

There was a faint flush in Lancaster's handsome face.

"Look here, kid," he said, "you'd better brace up! No good looking on the black side of things. I feel assured myself that nothing serious has happened to Wharton. Why should it?"

"Where is he, then?" muttered Frank.

"That's what they've got to find out, of course," said the Sixth Form man, after a second's pause. "It looks as if he's been kidnapped—by somebody—"

"That's certain," said Frank.

"I suppose it must be. But—there's no reason to believe that anyone would harm him—"

"If a fellow only knew—" muttered Frank.

Lancaster of the Sixth opened his lips to speak; but closed them again. He gave the junior a nod, and turned away. His brow was as clouded as Nugent's as he walked away towards the Sixth Form studies.

Nugent went up to the Remove passage. It was tea-time; but he was not thinking of tea.

Fellows were going into their studies; other fellows were going into Hall. Frank had forgotten that it was tea-time.

He opened the door of Study No. 1 and went in. In a mood of miserable dejection and trouble, he preferred to be out of the sight of his school-fellows.

He expected to find Study No. 1 empty; he had had it to himself since the disappearance of Harry Wharton.

But the study was not empty. A fat figure was reclining more or less gracefully in the armchair.

Billy Bunter did not trouble to rise as Nugent came in. He gave the junior a blink through his big spectacles.

"Oh, you've come in!" he said.

"What do you want?"

Nugent did not want company just then, and least of all William George Bunter's.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Don't bother!" said Frank curtly.

He crossed over to the window and stood looking out into the sunny quad, bright in the sunshine of a June afternoon. Many cheery faces met his glance as he looked down. Plenty of fellows felt concerned about Harry Wharton and his mysterious fate; but the school was going on the even tenor of its way. Billy Bunter squirmed round in the armchair and blinked indignantly at Nugent's back.

"I say, Franky, you needn't turn your back on a chap," said Bunter. "I say, I've got some rather good news for you, old fellow."

Nugent spun round.

"News? News of Wharton? What—" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Eh! No!" Bunter blinked at him irritably. "I wasn't going to speak about Wharton! You make a fellow jump!"

"You fat fool!"

"If that's what you call civil, Nugent—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Look here, old fellow, I said I've got some rather good news for you, and

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,218.

I have," said Bunter. "I mean it! You remember that we used to be together in this study before Wharton came to Greyfriars."

"Oh, don't jaw, Bunter!"

Frank Nugent turned to the window again. He did not know what was coming, and did not want to hear it, whatever it was. Bunter's conversation never was a treat at the best of times. Now it was; to Nugent's ears, like the droning of a troublesome insect.

"Oh, really, Franky, you haven't heard what I'm going to say yet. We got on rather well in this study before Wharton came. He butted in! Of course, I don't want to say anything against the chap now; still, he did butt in, didn't he? Altogether, I never cared to stay in this study, and I changed out. Well, now I'm coming back."

Nugent did not answer.

"I'm coming back," said Bunter.

"Don't you understand, old fellow? You're left alone here now, now that Wharton's gone, and I'm taking pity on you, see? Not that he's much loss; he always had a beastly temper! Only one day last week he kicked me because I happened to look in at the cupboard without noticing that he was in the study. And on Wednesday he wouldn't come over to St. Jim's to see the First Eleven play, because he'd got something up against Lancaster of the Sixth! And—"

Frank Nugent turned round.

"Will you shut up?" he asked.

"I haven't finished yet, old chap! I needn't talk about Wharton's temper; you know as much about that as I do, or more. I've often wondered how you stood it! I wouldn't have," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Still, to come to the point, he's gone, and we're not likely to see him back at Greyfriars. They haven't found the body—"

"What?"

"The body," said Bunter cheerily. "Some of the fellows think he's been kidnapped! That's all rot! Why should anybody kidnap Wharton? People kidnap rich fellows—fellows like me, for instance. My belief is that he fell over the cliffs—"

"Shut up!"

"Or walked under a car, or something. Anyhow, never mind that; I dare say we shall know sooner or later. About the study—"

"Get out!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"You don't seem to catch on," he said. "I've come back! I've turned down Toddy—too mean for me. And that deaf idiot Dutton—I can't stand him! Now that Wharton's gone, I'm coming back here. We shall get on all right, old chap. You needn't have been shy about asking me to come back—"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Franky! Well, what about tea?" asked Bunter. "I was going to stand rather a spread—sort of house-warming, you know, to celebrate my coming back. But I've been disappointed about a postal order. How are you fixed for tin, old chap?"

Nugent did not answer. He only stared at the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"It's tea-time, you know," said Bunter.

"Past, in fact! I've been waiting for you to come in. Look here, Nugent, I hope you're not going to be mean, like Toddy. What about tea?"

Nugent pointed to the door.

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

"If you don't want me in this study, Frank Nugent—" began Bunter indignantly.

"I don't! Travel!"

"He, he, he! I can take a joke, old chap," said Bunter. "Now, what about tea? Of course, I knew you'd be glad to have me back now Wharton's gone—"

"Wharton isn't gone, you fat fool! Get out!"

"Oh, he's gone!" said Bunter. "I don't know why they haven't found the body yet, but—"

"Get out!" yelled Nugent.

"But they'll find it sooner or later. And—here, I say—leggo! Wharrer you up to?" roared Bunter, as Frank Nugent grasped him with both hands and spun him doorward. "Leggo, you beast! Ow, you rotter! Wharrer marrer with you? 'Tain't my fault that they haven't found the body, is it? Yaroooooh!"

Crash!

For the second time that afternoon William George Bunter flew through a study doorway with the assistance of a boot.

He roared as he landed in the Remove passage, and roared again as he rolled.

The door of Study No. 1 slammed after him.

Billy Bunter picked himself up. He was breathless, and crimson with wrath and indignation.

"Beast!" he yelled through the key-hole. "Beast! Rotter! You come out here, you cad, and I'll mop up the passage with you!"

After which defiance Billy Bunter rolled away in haste. Frank Nugent remained alone in Study No. 1. No doubt he was lonely there now that his study-mate was missing from Greyfriars; but he had made it clear that he did not want his loneliness to be relieved by the fascinating society of the Owl of the Remove.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### The Prisoner!

**H**ARRY WHARTON set his teeth and his eyes glinted as he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. They were coming again, after long hours of solitude in the barred room.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove was standing at a window, high up in the unknown building in which he was a prisoner.

The window was barred with iron; so thickly barred that only narrow spaces were left between the bars. Through those slits Harry Wharton had his only view of the outer world.

He could see the stretch of garden far below, enclosed by tall sycamore trees. Beyond the tops of the trees there was a glimpse of a green hillside unmarked by road or path.

Where was he?

He could not guess.

The car in which he had been taken had travelled many miles, more miles than he could calculate. He might have been twenty miles from Greyfriars School; he might have been a hundred. He could not tell.

The building in which he was a prisoner was large, and stood in its own grounds, which were extensive. It was somewhere in the country. That was all he knew.

He was a prisoner; for two nights and two days he had been a prisoner in that unknown building. The sun was

setting again, and he was still a prisoner.

Escape, which had filled his thoughts from the first hour, seemed impossible. A length of chain fastened round his waist and securely fixed to a staple in the wall allowed him but limited movement.

Wrought-iron bars secured the window. The door was locked and barred on the outside. The walls of the room were thick and strong. But the imprisoned junior had not given up hope. They could not keep him there for ever. And deeper and deeper anger was growing in his breast.

He knew, of course, to whom he owed

mysterious house—some member of the lawless gang into whose clutches he had fallen. Of that gang he knew only two—the low-browed, ferret-eyed Weasel, who was his gaoler; and Richard Lancaster of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars, the schoolboy crook. But there were others—many others. He had heard many footsteps, many different voices. But since he had been a prisoner he had seen no one but the ferret-eyed Weasel.

The sound of footsteps approaching his door was a relief to him in the silence and solitude. Even the evil, lowering face of the Weasel was welcome. But he clenched his hands as he turned from the window and faced the

voice that cut short the Weasel's grumbling words.

Wharton's eyes were fixed on the doorway.

A handsome face, a slim, athletic figure appeared there. Behind it scowled the lowering face of the Weasel. He knew now who had ridden the motor-bike he had heard arriving. Lancaster of the Sixth had a motor-bike, and he had ridden across from Greyfriars. The school, then, was not too far away for a run on a motor-bike.

"Look 'ere, Dick—" The Weasel was grumbling.

"Shut the door."



"I'm turning this study down!" snorted Bunter. "Burning the study down?" queried Dutton. "No, you deal fathead!" roared the Owl of the Remove. "Turning it down!"

his imprisonment. Hardly a word had been spoken to him by his captors; but he did not need telling. He alone knew the secret of the schoolboy crook at Greyfriars, and it was to keep that secret that he was hidden away in this remote den. How long did they intend to keep him there? Could Lancaster of the Sixth intend to remain at the school, purchasing his safety by keeping the Remove junior a hopeless prisoner in a hidden den? It seemed impossible; and yet, if it was not so, what did they intend?

The window was open—inside the bars. The summer breeze played on his face as he stood looking out. From somewhere below he had heard the chug, chug! of a motor-bicycle. Someone, unseen by him, had arrived at the door of the prison-room. It seemed

hopeless to pit his strength against that of the ferret-eyed ruffian and with the rascal's associates within call. But that was the desperate thought in his mind as he heard the bars removed from the door.

The door swung open.

There was a mutter of voices without, and Wharton unclenched his hands. His gaoler had not come alone this time.

"Ho's here, Wizard!" It was the Weasel's husky voice. "If you want to see him he's 'ere. But—"

"That's enough!"

Wharton's heart beat. He knew that strange nickname, the Wizard—the name by which Richard Lancaster was called in the gang, of which he was a member. It was Lancaster who had come. He knew, too, the calm, quiet

The ruffian drew the door shut, with a grunt.

The Sixth-Former of Greyfriars was left alone with the prisoner. They stood facing one another across the prison-room.

Lancaster's handsome face was pale. He flinched from the scorn in the face of the junior.

Wharton did not speak; he waited for Lancaster to break the silence, but words did not seem to come easily to the schoolboy crook. Twice he opened his lips and closed them again. The colour flushed into his pale cheeks.

But he spoke at last in a low voice. "I'm sorry for this, Wharton!" he said.

Wharton's lip curled. "You villain!" he answered. "You  
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,218.

cur! This is how you kept faith with me! I might have known it, knowing that you were a crook! I was a fool to trust you!"

There was no anger in Lancaster's face as he listened to the bitter words.

"You think worse of me than I deserve," he said in the same low voice.

"You rotter! I don't think anybody could think badly enough of you!" exclaimed Wharton passionately. "I found out by chance, by accident, against my own wish, what you were—a crook, a thief, a villain, playing the part of a schoolboy to cover up all sorts of rascality! I gave you a chance to get out of the school—to get away quietly with nothing said. You asked me to keep silent till after the St. Jim's match, because Wingate relied on you to play cricket for the school. I trusted you to that extent; and while the cricketers were at St. Jim's, while you were safely off the scene, your confederates kidnapped me and brought me here. That was what you meant—"

"That was not what I meant," said Lancaster.

Wharton gazed at him.

"I never knew what they intended," said Lancaster. "Slimy had said that you would be kept silent. I never knew what he intended. When I got back to Greyfriars after the St. Jim's match I thought you were at the school. When I learned that you were missing—"

He broke off.

"You knew then, if you had not known before."

Lancaster nodded.

"Yes, I knew then."

There was a silence. Harry Wharton watched the face of the schoolboy crook, and, in spite of himself, he felt his anger die away.

There were lines of deep trouble in the handsome face; there was remorse,

if not repentance. And there was something strangely touching in the droop of that proud head, in the lowering of the fearless eyes. The Sixth-Former of Greyfriars, the magnificent cricketer, the idol of the school, dared not meet the eyes of the Remove junior, flinching and wincing from the scorn in them.

In spite of himself, Wharton could not look on Dick Lancaster as a crook, as the associate of such rascals as the Weasel and the unknown Slimy. Somehow, he was still the Sixth-Former of Greyfriars to the junior.

"I never meant this, kid," said Lancaster at last. "When I knew that you had found me out I thought the game was up for me at Greyfriars; I meant to go. I meant every word I said to you. I thought that Slimy would see that the game was up and let me off. But I'm not my own master."

He paused again.

"Slimy—you needn't know his other name—is the head of the gang. He's got me in his hands. If I kick he will throw me over. I'd not care a brass button for that; I'm fed-up with him, fed-up with the gang, fed-up with the part I have to play! I'd get out of Greyfriars to-morrow—to-day—I'd never see the school again if—if—if I could! But I can't!"

"Why can't you?"

"I can't!" said Lancaster. "I've got friends there, I'm respected there; I can't let them know! I couldn't face that! Wingate, Gwynne—all the fellows—they'd know what I was, what I am; they'd think of me as you think of me now. I can't! Slimy would give me away. If I leave the school it will spoil all his plans, and he will have no mercy. Anything else—but I can't face Greyfriars knowing the truth. I don't suppose you'll understand, but there it is."

"I do understand," said Harry.

"Then, you see—" muttered Lancaster. "I never knew what Slimy had planned for you; but now I know, I'm helpless. He's got me, I tell you! I'm more powerless in his hands than you are. You, I dare say, hope to escape somehow, hope to be rescued; there's no escape or rescue for me."

There was a quiver in his voice.

It touched Wharton strangely. The anger was quite gone from his face now; for the moment he felt only compassion.

"This can't go on," he said at last. "What do you mean? What do you intend? Do you think I can be kept a prisoner here while you remain at the school—weeks, months, whole terms? You must be mad! The man you call Slimy must be mad to think of such a thing!"

Lancaster smiled faintly.

"That is easier than you think," he answered. "Do you know where you are?"

"No."

"Do you imagine that anyone else does?"

"I—I suppose not."

"You fancy, perhaps, that you are in some den of crooks. You are in a country house, belonging to a man who keeps up respectable appearances, who pays his rates and taxes like any other citizen—a house that has never attracted the attention of the police, and never will. Every man in the house is a crook; but no one in the neighbourhood has any suspicion of it, least of all the police. You could be kept here for years and not a soul the wiser."

Wharton felt a chill at his heart.

"You are at a great distance from Greyfriars—"

"Not too far for you to come on a motor-bike," said Harry.

Lancaster gave him a quick look. For the moment he was the wary Wizard again.

"A motor-bike can cover any distance very swiftly," he said.

"But you would not dare to be missing; to have a long absence to explain," said Harry quietly. "You are not in a position to have questions asked."

"Quite! You are a keen-witted kid," said Lancaster, with something like his old disarming smile. "Still, you are a good distance from the school—a safe distance. There is no hope for you, kid, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless we can come to terms somehow," said Lancaster. "If I could rely on your silence—if I could persuade Slimy to rely on it—"

Wharton made a gesture.

"Cut that out!" he said. "The moment I am free I go to my headmaster and tell him who and what you are."

"You may change your mind after a time. I hope so—I hope so! In the meantime—"

"In the meantime, I am kept a prisoner here," said Harry. "Well, it can't last! My friends will find me—my uncle will find me—the police—"

"Put what faith in that you can, if it is any comfort to you," said the schoolboy crook. "But that is not what I was going to say. You can imagine that your friends are anxious about you."

Wharton compressed his lips hard.

"Yes, I can imagine that."

"Nugent—I believe he is your best chum—"

"Oh, you rotter!" breathed Wharton. "Yes, I know what old Frank will be feeling like! And you'll let him—"

"Let me speak! They suppose at the



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school that you've been kidnapped—they can't suppose anything else. But Nugent fears that it may be something worse. I spoke to him to-day"—Lancaster paused—"I'd like to relieve his mind, as far as possible. You'd like it, surely. If you'd care to write a letter to—"

"A letter?" repeated Harry.

"Yes. Nothing in it that Slimy could object to, of course—nothing to betray me. You understand that. A few words to your chum, to tell him that you are safe and well-treated. That will relieve him of his worst fears. It will relieve the mind of your old uncle—a man I like and respect, though you may not understand it. Write such a letter, and I will see that it reaches Frank Nugent at Greyfriars."

Wharton stood silent, but his face was brighter. Lancaster laid a sheet of paper on the table and a fountain-pen.

"Write!" he said.

Wharton sat down at the table. For a few moments he sat in thought. Then he wrote.

Lancaster picked up what he had written and read it through. Then he nodded.

"That will do. Here is an envelope—address it."

Wharton did so.

"That is all I can do for you—and for your pal," said Lancaster. He took the letter and the envelope and turned to the door.

He hesitated, and turned back.

"Wharton! You know—you can see how hard this is for me! I've got to keep on—I've no choice! You can't give me away—here. You're helpless! If we can come to terms—"

"We cannot."

"You must be silent—here! If you would be silent at Greyfriars—"

"Silent—and an accomplice of a crook—the confederate of a thief!"

Lancaster winced.

"Is that your last word?"

"Yes."

Lancaster, without speaking again, opened the door and quitted the room. The door closed, and the bars dropped into their sockets again. Wharton was left alone, with a strange mingling of feelings in his breast. Faintly, through the open window, came the sound of a motor-bike, dying away swiftly into the distance.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ferrers Locke at Greyfriars!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's voice lacked its usual cheery ring. Frank Nugent looked round from the window.

Bob's sturdy figure and mop of fair hair were framed in the doorway of Study No. 1.

Behind him could be seen Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Wanted, Franky!" said Bob.

Nugent shook his head.

"I'm not coming down! I—"

"It's Mr. Locke!" explained Bob.

"Oh!" said Frank. He came across the study at once.

"Locke wants to see us," said Johnny Bull. "I dare say he thinks we may know something that may be useful in looking for Wharton. If we do, I don't know what it is."

"The esteemed Locke is terrifically downy," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The downfulness of that ridiculous detective is preposterous. Possibly he is already on the absurd track of our missing and idiotic chum." Frank Nugent smiled faintly.

He had great faith in Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective of Baker Street. But he did not suppose that even Ferrers Locke had found a clue to the missing junior. He doubted whether even Ferrers Locke could find one. So far as Frank Nugent and his chums could see, at all events, Harry Wharton had disappeared without leaving a vestige of a clue behind.

"Anyhow, Locke wants to see us, and we're to go to him," said Bob. "So trot along with us, old bean."

"I'll come, of course," said Frank.

He joined his chums, and they went down the Remove staircase together.

A LAUGH A DAY KEEPS THE BLUES AWAY!

Read and enjoy this amusing rib-tickler which has earned for Harry Armes, of 11a, Saxon Avenue, Hr. Crumpsall, Manchester, one of this week's

USEFUL POCKET KNIVES!



An old gentleman was walking round a corner, when suddenly a boy, running quickly, bumped into him.

"What are you doing?" roared the old man. "Training for a race?"

"No," answered the youngster, running off. "I'm racing for a train!"

All you've got to do to win one of these topping prizes is to catch the judge's eye with a rousing ribtickler.

GET BUSY RIGHT AWAY!

They were aware that Ferrers Locke had arrived at Greyfriars that morning, but they had not yet seen him. Locke had arrived during morning class; and Mr. Quelch had been called out of the Remove-room to be present at the interview between Mr. Locke and his venerable relative, the headmaster of Greyfriars, and Colonel Wharton. Harry Wharton's uncle had left the school after that interview, and Locke had gone out before the juniors left the Form-room, and, so far as they knew, had been out of the school all the afternoon.

Probably he had been pursuing investigations in the direction of Courtfield, as it was known that Harry Wharton had started up the Courtfield road on Wednesday when he had disappeared. Now he was back at the school and had sent for Wharton's chums. They were keen enough to see him,

both because Locke was an old acquaintance, and because they trusted him to solve the mystery of Harry's disappearance. They felt, at least, that if any man alive could solve it, that man was Ferrers Locke.

Locke had a sitting-room and a bedroom near Mr. Quelch's quarters, and it was clear that he was going to stay at the school for the present. Bob Cherry tapped at his door, and the well-known voice of the Baker Street detective bade him enter.

The juniors entered.

The rather lean figure of the detective rose; the calm, clear-cut features relaxed into a pleasant smile. Locke shook hands with the four juniors, one after another.

"I'm glad to see you again, my young friends," he said, "though I wish that we had met in happier circumstances."

"It is a terrific pleasure to behold your absurd countenance again, worthy and preposterous sahib!" declared Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Any news, sir?" asked Frank eagerly.

Locke shook his head.

"As yet, none," he said.

The cloud, that had lifted for a moment, settled on Frank's face again. Locke gave him a keen look. It was easy enough for him to read how hard the junior had been hit.

"Brace up, my boy," he said quietly. "I have no doubt that Wharton is standing this with courage, and you must do the same."

"You think—that—he—he—"

Nugent stammered.

"That he lives? I have no doubt of it," answered Ferrers Locke. "There is, at present at least, no reason whatever to suppose that anyone can have any motive for harming him. Had his life been aimed at, why should he have disappeared?"

"That's what I keep on telling Franky," said Johnny Bull, with a nod.

"Search has now been going on rigorously for two whole days," said Locke. "No trace of Wharton has been found. It is not possible to suppose any longer that his absence is due to an accident. It is obviously a case of kidnapping. Had a more terrible crime been committed, some trace would have been found. Neither can any motive be adduced for the concealment of a body which could not fail to be discovered sooner or later. Put such a thought out of your mind."

Frank Nugent nodded.

There was comfort in that assurance, from a man like Ferrers Locke. Yet he could not banish the dread from his heart.

"That's what Lancaster says," he muttered. "He thinks the same. But he—"

"I do not know Lancaster, whoever Lancaster may be," said Locke, with a smile, "but he is evidently a sensible lad. Sit down, my boys. I want you to tell me anything you can."

"Only too jolly glad, sir," said Bob. "But the trouble is, that we know absolutely nothing."

"That's the rub," said Johnny Bull. "If we had the faintest idea—"

"But the knowfulness is not terrific, esteemed sahib," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"You may know more than you realise," said Ferrers Locke. "There are circumstances which I think you may be able to explain."

Four faces brightened up.

"Go it, sir!" said Bob eagerly.

"I have already discussed the matter, of course, with Dr. Locke, with Mr. Quelch, with Colonel Wharton, and

with Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield," said the Baker Street detective. "They have been able to tell me little. It seems that on Wednesday afternoon Wharton started to walk in the direction of Courtfield—Gosling, the porter, saw him go. He did not return; and from the time Gosling lost sight of him he vanished from all knowledge!"

"That's it, sir!"

"Now," said Locke, his eyes keenly on the juniors, "you four boys are very close friends of Wharton's. I believe you are generally together, especially on half-holidays. It seems a little odd that on this especial occasion, when enemies were apparently watching for him, not even one of his friends was with him. How was it that Wharton came to be going out alone on a half-holiday on this occasion?"

The juniors coloured uncomfortably. Nugent's lip quivered.

It was heavy on his heart and on the hearts of his chums that there had been trouble in the Co.; and that but for that trouble Wharton might not have fallen a helpless victim into the hands of his enemies.

"I see that you have something to tell me," said Locke quietly.

"It has nothing to do with Wharton's disappearance, of course," stammered Bob. "It—it happened that—that we'd had rather a—a sort of tiff. We weren't on the best of terms just then!"

"All four of you?"

"Well, yes," said Bob reluctantly. "It wasn't our fault, Mr. Locke. Even after what's happened, I can't say it was our fault. Of course, I'm not saying that old Wharton was to blame!" he added hastily.

"Never mind the question of blame," said Locke. "Trouble sometimes arises between the best of friends. You were on unfriendly terms with Wharton that day?"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Frank. "Not unfriendly. Only—only we weren't as chummy as usual!"

"Sort of stand-offish!" said Johnny Bull. "We couldn't agree with Wharton about old Lancaster, and he was obstinate. I mean——" Johnny paused. "Well, it's best to speak the facts. He was obstinate!"

Locke was silent for a few moments.

"This disagreement between you and Wharton may have no connection whatever with what has happened," he said. "But it seems to have played into the hands of his unknown enemies!"

"That is so," agreed Bob. "If we'd been on the usual terms, he would have come with us."

"You spent the afternoon away from the school?"

"Yes. It was St. Jim's day," explained Bob. "We went over to St. Jim's to see the finish of the cricket match."

"We asked Wharton to come," said Frank. "I asked him again at the last moment. But he wouldn't."

"This is very singular," said Ferrers Locke. "He refused to accompany you to St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"And remaining behind by himself he fell into the hands of unknown enemies," said Locke. "I must know more of this! Had you become so unfriendly with your former chum that he would not go where you went?"

"Oh, no! It wasn't that!" said Bob. "It wasn't so bad as that, Mr. Locke. He would have come to St. Jim's, only—well, he told Nugent he had a reason

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,218.

for not coming. I thought at first that he was on the high horse, but it wasn't that. He had a reason."

"And the reason?"

There was a gleam in Locke's eyes. It dawned on the juniors that the Baker Street detective discerned some possible connection between Wharton's reason for remaining behind on St. Jim's day, and what had happened later that day. It was, at least, a coincidence that Wharton should have had some mysterious "reason" for a line of conduct that had thrown him into the hands of the kidnapers; and Ferrers Locke was not likely to pass over such a coincidence without investigation.

"Well, his reason was having his back up against old Lancaster," said Bob uncomfortably.

"Lancaster! Who is Lancaster?" asked Ferrers Locke.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Was It the "Wizard"?

"LANCASTER!" repeated Ferrers Locke.

He repeated the name musingly, as if it were familiar to him; though it was clear that he had never heard of Lancaster of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars School.

There was a thoughtful wrinkle in his brow.

"Who is Lancaster?" he repeated.

"A splendid chap!" said Bob Cherry.

"A ripping fellow!" said Johnny Bull. "One of the best!"

"A terrific and preposterous cricketer," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Lancaster of the Sixth Form here," said Nugent. "He's new here—I mean, he came only this term. Everybody likes him."

"Except a few rotters," said Bob.

"And Wharton?" asked Ferrers Locke.

The juniors coloured uncomfortably.

"Well, Wharton liked him as much as anybody when we met him in the hols, and afterwards, when old Popper brought him to Greyfriars," said Bob. "He liked him no end, as we all did. He turned against him suddenly for no reason."

"That was not like Wharton, as I remember him!" said Ferrers Locke gravely.

"Well, no! But he did. It puzzled all of us, and put our backs up," confessed Bob. "One day he couldn't sing Lancaster's praises loud enough—the next he turned his back on him in the quad, and insulted him before a hundred fellows! We couldn't stand that!"

"Couldn't be expected to!" said Johnny Bull. "We had rather a row with Wharton over it. Couldn't be helped!"

"But his reason?" asked Locke.

"He gave none."

"You asked him to explain?"

"Lots of times. He wouldn't say a word."

"That is very odd, and not at all like Wharton!"

"Well, when Wharton had his back up, he had it up!" said Bob ruefully.

"He's one of the best chaps going, but he's jolly obstinate sometimes!"

"I suppose he fancied he had some reason for being down on one of the best fellows breathing," said Johnny Bull. "But he wouldn't condescend to tell us what it was."

"And it was because of this sudden and unaccountable dislike of a fellow he had once liked and admired that

he refused to go over to St. Jim's with you for the afternoon?"

"That was it!" said Bob. "He didn't want to see old Lancaster knocking up centuries for Greyfriars!"

"That was hardly sporting, was it?"

Bob coloured.

"Wharton didn't mean it that way," he said. "He was a sportsman all over. But he fairly had his back up against old Lancaster, and couldn't stand him at any price!"

"Against one of the best fellows breathing?"

"Well, yes."

"You are sure that that was Wharton's motive for remaining behind on Wednesday?"

"Oh, quite! He told Nugent that he had a reason; and that was the reason plain enough."

Ferrers Locke was silent, his eyes on the flushed faces of the juniors. The subject was distasteful enough to them, as he saw.

Perhaps the Baker Street detective was disappointed. When he had heard that Wharton had a reason for remaining behind on Wednesday, his mind had leaped to a possible connection with the kidnapping.

But if that reason was merely a dislike of one of the men who was playing for Greyfriars at St. Jim's, there was nothing in it.

Even Ferrers Locke was not likely to deduce any connection between a junior's dislike of a senior at his school, and the kidnapping that had taken place while that senior was many long miles away.

"I'm afraid that doesn't help, sir," said Bob Cherry. "It was only because Wharton barred old Lancaster that he wouldn't come with us. It's got no connection with what happened afterwards."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Apparently not," he assented. "Let us follow another line. Inspector Grimes has told me that some time back Wharton was instrumental in preventing a burglary at Hogben Grange. He was able to describe one of the cracksmen to the police—a rascal called the Weasel."

"That's what we've been thinking about, sir," said Nugent. "I dare say you've heard of that villain Weasel?"

"He is a crook well known to the police," said Locke.

"Well, I can't help thinking that that brute may have got after Wharton, for revenge," faltered Frank. "Wharton prevented the robbery; and the brute would feel sore about that."

"But he escaped," said Locke. "From what I have been told, it seems that Wharton heard this ruffian, Weasel, in talk with another crook whom he did not know, but whom the Weasel called 'Wizard'——"

"Yes, that's well known now," said Bob. "Wharton reported the whole thing to Mr. Grimes. I dare say you've heard of the Wizard, too, Mr. Locke, whoever he may be."

Locke smiled.

"The name of the Wizard is well known," he said. "It is the name, or nickname, of the most skillful cracksmen in existence. Only his name, however, is known to the police. He has never been seen, except by his own confederates, and his real name is unknown and unsuspected. Hitherto, he has worked in secret, and defied detection."

"Well, he was with the Weasel that night at Hogben Grange," said Bob. "If it hadn't been so dark, Wharton could have described him to the police. But it seems that he didn't see him—only heard his voice——"



For a few minutes the chums of the Remove gave Bunter their special attention. Then they walked chuckling out of the study, leaving the Owl of the Remove on the floor, trying to get his second wind!



"Then he knows more of the Wizard than is known at Scotland Yard," said Ferrers Locke.

Nugent gave a start.

"Mr. Locke! Is it possible—can that be the reason why Wharton has been kidnapped? That brute Weasel might have knocked him on the head, but I can't see why he should kidnap him. But—this fellow called the Wizard—if he thinks Wharton knows something of him—"

"Wharton knows his jolly old voice, anyhow," said Bob. "Still, I suppose he wouldn't be likely to hear it again. If he did, he could lay his finger on the rotter; but it's jolly unlikely."

"Very unlikely, I should say," said Ferrers Locke. "A Greyfriars junior is not likely to find himself in the company of crooks—except by such peculiar circumstances as happened that night at Hogben Grange. I cannot imagine any circumstances in which Wharton was likely to hear a second time, the voice of the Wizard."

"I—I suppose not!" said Frank. "But if it isn't that gang of rogues who have got hold of Wharton, Mr. Locke, who is it then?"

"That is what we have to discover," said Ferrers Locke.

He remained for some moments in deep thought.

"You can tell me nothing more?" he asked, at last.

"Nothing at all, I'm afraid, sir," said Bob.

"You do not think that Wharton was aware that he was in danger?"

"I'm sure not."

"Couldn't have been, or he wouldn't have gone out alone," said Johnny Bull. "Besides, he would have told us—we weren't on the best of terms, but we weren't really unfriendly. He knew jolly well that we wouldn't have left him alone that afternoon, if we'd had the remotest idea—"

"You know of no enemies he may have had, excepting the ruffian Weasel, and possibly the cracksman, the Wizard?"

"I'm sure he hadn't any."

Locke rose.

"Well, I shall see you again," he said. "Perhaps I shall have some more questions to ask, later."

The juniors took their leave. They went with a feeling of deep disappointment. Locke, so far as they could see, was absolutely without a clue, and might as well have left the matter in the hands of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield.

When the door closed on the juniors Ferrers Locke paced the room, with a deep wrinkle in his brow.

He was thinking—hard!

The Wizard!

That was the name that haunted his mind.

The skilful cracksman, whom no lock could defy; the unknown crook, who defied the police even to guess at his identity; the hidden, mysterious breaker of the law, whose secret was so carefully kept that many doubted his real existence.

Scotland Yard knew nothing of him, but his nickname. Ferrers Locke knew no more.

No eye had seen him, no ear had heard his voice—save one. Harry Wharton of Greyfriars had heard him speak, had heard his voice, speaking in black darkness to a confederate. Harry Wharton would know that voice again if he heard it. He, and he alone, would know the mysterious Wizard if he heard him speak. Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, and he alone, held a clue to the mysterious Wizard. And Wharton had disappeared.

Could a schoolboy of Greyfriars ever, by any strange chance, come into contact again with the unknown crook—could what he knew constitute a danger for the Wizard and his associates? It seemed impossible.

Yet—Wharton had disappeared.

On that night at Hogben Grange, the Wizard had been in the vicinity of the school. But surely he had gone—and gone for good. That seemed assured—and in that case, he could have nothing

to fear from Wharton. Yet—the boy had disappeared.

He had not disappeared for nothing. There must be a powerful reason. What was the reason? Could it be that, from some inexplicable cause, the Wizard was still in the vicinity of the school—and, therefore, had cause to fear the boy? It seemed unlikely—impossible. Yet—again the answer came—Wharton had disappeared.

In the whole kingdom there was only one who possessed a clue, howsoever faint, to the identity of the mysterious crook. And that one had disappeared. If it was not a clue, it was at least a gleam of light where all else was dark.

Ferrers Locke paced and paced. The wrinkle was deep in his brow.

Was it a clue?

If the Wizard was responsible for Wharton's disappearance, if his safety demanded that the boy should vanish, it could only mean that the unknown crook was still in the vicinity of the school. Otherwise, he would not have feared the boy and what he knew or suspected. Not only in the vicinity of the school, but in contact with Greyfriars fellows—in danger from a Remove boy. In danger from Wharton meant in contact with Wharton—close at hand. Only at Greyfriars, or within a narrow radius of Greyfriars could the Wizard have been in danger from Wharton.

Was it, then, within sight of the school buildings, that the Baker Street detective had to look for the cracksman who had so long baffled Scotland Yard? It seemed impossible!

But—

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Letter from Wharton!

**M**R. QUELCH jumped. The elderly and sedate master of the Remove was not given to jumping. But he jumped as he stared at the letter in his hand.



# CRICKET STARS of the FUTURE



This week our contributor turns the "spot lime" on M. S. Nichols, the lightning bowler of Essex C.C.

## Starting Young!

**M**Y first meeting with M. S. Nichols, one of the most promising of all-rounders who have appeared for England in Test matches, was at a small place called Wickford, near Southend-on-Sea. In the early days of the War I used to get some practice on the very nice ground of the Wickford Cricket Club, and very often a youth of about fifteen would sneak into the enclosure from an adjoining motor works, where he was supposed to be at work.

He never tired of bowling to the members, and because of this he would be allowed to bat. As time went on he began to show really good form, but on at least three occasions he volunteered the information that he had been caught and was under notice. That boy was M. S. Nichols, who was eventually chosen by the M.C.C. to represent England both in Australia and in this country.

For some reason—perhaps he was a good worker, or probably because of his charming personality—the youth continued at his job and played for Wickford in their matches right up to 1919, in which year the Australian Imperial Forces team toured England. On one of their "idle" days, three of them—Collins, Oldfield, and another—were included in a scratch eleven which were brought down to oppose Wickford. Freeman, Reeves, and Buckenham, all Essex First Eleven men, also played. It was a severe test for Wickford, but young Nichols was the star of the day with a fine innings of 49 not out.

His father, who was a fair cricketer, was a farmer, and I remember going across a field one Sunday afternoon when young Nichols was about fifteen years of age and finding him playing cricket with about a dozen other boys. It was unfortunate that the village parson should have chosen that afternoon for a walk, because his sense of right received a rude shock when he saw the boys breaking the Sabbath.

Nichols had just thrown in a ball from the outfield when he was "buttonholed" by the reverend gentleman.

"I am surprised to find you playing cricket on the Sabbath," said he. "Pray tell me, what would your father say about it?"

A smile spread over the boy's face as he replied: "I don't want to be rude, sir, but you'd better ask him—he's over there, keeping wicket."

## A Demon Bowler!

**I**N 1919 Mr. Nichols moved to a farm near Chelmsford, and his son was taken from the motor works in order that he, too, should learn farming on his father's land; and for a period of five years the young man—for he was eighteen years old when the change was made—worked hard, played hard, and made centuries in rural matches.

Then, in 1924, the farm was given up, and young Nichols was offered a job on the ground staff of the Essex County Club, at Leyton. It was the late J. W. H. T. Douglas who was instrumental in this engagement, and he advised the Committee to give Nichols an early trial in two County Championship matches—*v. Yorkshire* and *v. Northamptonshire*—but the young colt had to bat on sticky wickets on both occasions and, the conditions, plus nervousness, it was not surprising that he did not do himself justice.

Up to that time Nichols was regarded as a batsman, but one day, while bowling in the practice nets to Percy Perrin, the famous old England player, he, out of pure devilment, tried to bowl fast, giving an imitation of a well-known fast bowler. On the next day Mr. Perrin was captaining a "club and ground" eleven, in which

Nichols was included, against Ilford, and nobody was more surprised when he tossed the new ball to Nichols, saying: "Bowl as fast as you possibly can. Don't worry us to where they pitch or where they go, but put all your strength into them."

Nichols did as he was instructed, got some wickets, was coached by the late J. W. H. T. Douglas on the ground at Leyton, and in the following season became the opening bowler for Essex—and a very fast one at that.

So great was his success that in the next year—1926, when England was visited by a wonderful Australian team—Nichols was asked by the M.C.C. to take part in the Test Trial Match, at Sheffield, as a fast bowler. Unfortunately, however, it rained so hard that the game was never played. Later, in the match Essex *v. Australia*, Nichols bowled Mr. Collins, the colonial captain—who was said to be the most difficult man to dismiss in the whole world—for a duck's egg.

## Confidence is Everything!

**T**HERE is a world of romance in the world of first class cricket, and quite a large number of our greatest players never would have revealed their wonderful gifts but for the intervention of "chance." It was through bowling fast for fun that Nichols became a great fast bowler. It was his success in the trial match, England *v. the Rest*, at Lords, in 1927, that Sir Julian Cahn chose him as his best bowler for the team to visit the West Indies in the following year. And it was the ability to bowl as well as to withstand the effects of tropical heat on that tour that influenced the M.C.C. in choosing Nichols as the fast bowler for England in Australia during the next winter.

Nichols tells an amusing story about the trip to the West Indies. Two other great bowlers were with the party, these being Durston, of Middlesex, and Mercer, of Glamorgan, and during the outward voyage these two not only discussed the number of wickets each would take in the opening match, against the Colts of Kingston, Jamaica, but made bets as to which would claim the more victims. When the game was eventually played Nichols was too unwell to appear, so Durston and Mercer opened the bowling, and had a clear field. The analysis at the close of the Colts' innings read: "Durston, no wickets for 106 runs; Mercer, no wickets for 99 runs."

Unfortunately for Nichols, the M.C.C. tour in Australia was made under adverse conditions. Nearly every match was interfered with by rain, and so the wickets did not lend themselves to successful fast bowling. Still, with the Australian and New Zealand matches together, he took 86 wickets and scored nearly a thousand runs, with a batting average of 46.

Last year Nichols was chosen to play in the Fourth Test match—at Manchester—and opened the bowling before about 50,000 onlookers. He bowled beautifully, but as Chapman kept changing his attack, only took two wickets at a cost of 16 runs each. The game fizzled out as a draw; and when I asked Nichols how he felt when about to bowl the first ball in such an important match, he replied:

"I thought of that day when Mr. Perrin told me to bowl fast and not to mind where the ball pitched nor where it went. I saw the 50,000 people, and imagined each one was asking: 'Is it going to be straight, a full toss, or a long hop?' And then I sent down a good length one, straight and fast, and that gave me confidence. Believe me, the atmosphere of really big cricket brings out the best in every player."



Toddy!" yelled Bunter, in consternation.

"Your mistake, old fat bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows! Yaroooooh! Whooop!" roared Bunter.

The next few minutes were quite hectic for Bunter.

Bunter rather prided himself on his strategy. But his strategy did not seem to have worked, somehow. After all those unpleasant things he had recited as coming from Peter Todd he had expected Peter to get the rugging, instead of which Bunter was getting it.

For a few minutes the chums of the Remove gave Bunter their special attention. Then they walked, chuckling, out of the study, leaving William George Bunter on the floor, trying to get his second wind.

Horrible gurgles and gasps followed them from the strategic Owl.

"Grooogh! Gug-gug-gug! Oooooogh! Woooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Owl! Beasts! Wow! Oooooooogh!"

The juniors walked away cheerily to the cricket. Billy Bunter sat up on the floor of Study No. 1 and gurgled and gasped, and gasped and gurgled. It was quite a long time before Bunter rolled out of the study, and when he rolled out he was still gasping and gurgling.

wondered by how big a margin they would be licked.

Ferrers Locke had been a cricketer in his time, and still played the game occasionally, and he was rather interested in the fellow of whom all Greyfriars talked with the wildest enthusiasm. And, strangely enough, though he had been five or six days at the school, he had not seen Lancaster yet.

True, he had spent most of his time out of the school. Still, it was a little odd that the fellow who filled so big a space in the eyes of all Greyfriars had not happened to come under his eyes. He was rather interested in Lancaster as a fellow who broke all Greyfriars cricket records, though he was new that term, and as a fellow whom his young

"Look out for another four!" said Bob Cherry.

"Poor old Redclyffe!" murmured Nugent. "They didn't know what Wingate had got up his sleeve for them!"

"So that is Lancaster?" said a quiet voice behind the juniors.

Bob Cherry glanced round, and the juniors "capped" Mr. Locke respectfully. He gave them a smile, and fixed his eyes on the batsman again.

"That's Lancaster, sir," said Bob. "You've seen him here?"

"No. This is the first time I've seen Lancaster here."

"I believe Loder of the Sixth said once that you'd met Lancaster, sir, at some place," said Bob.

"That is so," said Ferrers Locke.



THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

"How's That?"

"BRAVO!"  
"Well, hit!"  
"Good man, Lancaster!"

A hundred fellows were shouting on Big Side. Ferrers Locke, coming in at the school gates, heard the roar from the distance, and turned his steps in the direction of Big Side.

The Baker Street detective had been several days at the school. At first he had drawn much attention. Every fellow in the school was keen to see the celebrated detective. But the Greyfriars fellows were used to the lean figure and the clear-cut face now. But had Ferrers Locke been still a novelty he would not have drawn a single glance as he walked down to the cricket field. All eyes were fixed on Richard Lancaster of the Sixth Form, the finest cricketer that had ever played for Greyfriars.

Lancaster had knocked the ball away, and the two white figures were running. Fellows were used to a splendid innings by Lancaster, and the news that he was batting drew even the slackers to the field to watch him. It was seldom that he was not worth watching. He seemed at the top of his form now, and the most hopeful of the Redclyffe men had given up the hope of a win, and only

friends in the Remove idolised, and also as the fellow against whom Harry Wharton had so strangely and inexplicably turned without any given reason. Now that he heard Lancaster's name shouted by a hundred throats he walked down to the cricket field to see him.

Standing there, with his head overtopping the Greyfriars crowd, Ferrers Locke fixed his calm, clear, penetrating eyes on the figure at the wickets.

He gave ever so slight a start. His gaze became concentrated.

Lancaster had made good at the wicket, and was getting the bowling again. It was good bowling from Redclyffe; but the way Lancaster handled it made the Greyfriars crowd grin with glee.

"Hook it, old man," said Lancaster, thinking it was a Sixth-Former who had entered his study. "I told you I'd got work to do." "Excuse me—" It was Ferrers Locke who spoke.

"I've had the pleasure of meeting him. I did not know that it was the same Lancaster when you mentioned him to me."

"Isn't he the goods, sir?" said Bob. "He seems a splendid cricketer."

"You've seen him play before, sir?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes, I saw him play once at a country house. He will be a prize for his county some day," said Locke.

"What-ho!" agreed Bob Cherry. "There he goes!" yelled Nugent.

"Hurrah!"

The leather was whizzing again, far from the desperate clutches of the panting and perspiring field. The batsmen were running.

"Good man!"









through slowly and carefully, and remained staring at it with knitted brow.

When he rose to his feet at last he struck a match, and carefully burned the paper to the last fragment.

### THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Hobson!

"TODDY, old chap!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Dear old Toddy!"

"Rats!"

"You rotten beast!"

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

Billy Bunter stood in the doorway of Study No. 7, blinking at the two juniors therein. Tom Dutton grinned, but took no other heed of the fat junior. Peter Todd also grinned; but likewise he drew a ruler across the table, as if to be in readiness.

Bunter, about to roll into the study, paused in the doorway. He did not like the look of that ruler, and he was sure that he would not like the feel of it.

There were wrath and indignation in Bunter's fat face. He had "chucked" Study No. 7 to return to Study No. 1; and his return to Study No. 1 having turned out a frost, naturally he desired to fly back to his roost, as it were. But it was in vain that he assured Toddy that he had never meant to turn him down—that he couldn't dream of parting with such a pal—that he hadn't been serious in the very least. Whether Bunter had been serious or not, Peter persisted in taking him seriously.

Bunter had to be let into the study for prep. On other occasions he found a lion in the path, as it were, in the shape of Peter Todd, with a ruler, an inkpot, or a poker.

It was hard lines on Bunter. He liked taking his ease in an armchair; and as the only armchair in the study belonged to Toddy, he had been accustomed to taking his ease in Toddy's armchair. Now that he no longer belonged to Study No. 7 he could not sit in that armchair without being tilted out.

Tea was a still more important matter. The postal order, which had been anxiously expected for so long, had never come. Bunter had to tea in Hall, or "stick" some study in the Remove, or assume the privilege of a study-mate and tea with Toddy. Feasting with Toddy was a thing of the past now! Tea in Hall was not attractive. "Sticking" another study was sometimes successful—more often unsuccessful.

Nugent, being alone in Study No. 1, might have been expected to be glad of Bunter's company. But he wasn't.



Billy Bunter's eyes opened wide as the Sixth-Former hid something in the high hollow of the old oak-tree!

Nobody seemed to be glad of Bunter's company, nice as it was. Even Peter Todd seemed beast enough to take advantage of Bunter's having turned him down to keep, as it were, turned down. In vain Bunter strove to turn him up again!

Bunter, almost filling the doorway with his ample person, blinked at Peter, and blinked at Dutton. His blinks were disregarded.

There was quite a nice tea going on in Study No. 1, and Bunter stood gazing, like a podgy peri at the gate of paradise.

"I say, old fellow, that looks a nice cake!" said Bunter sorrowfully.

"Quite!" agreed Peter.

"I say, old chap, I never meant to turn you down! I should be frightfully sorry to part with a pal like you!"

"There's something rather attractive about me, isn't there?" grinned Peter.

"Yes, old chap, awfully!"

"It's the cake, isn't it?"

"Yes—I mean—I—I mean, there's such a thing as friendship, Peter! Look at all I've done for you!"

"I haven't a microscope handy."

"Beast! Look how I've stuck to you through thick and thin," said Bunter. "Like Damon and Pontius Pilate over again."

"Do you mean Damon and Pythias, you fat idiot?"

"I never looked on you as a freak, Peter, like all the other fellows. I've never told you what I thought of you."

Peter Todd chuckled.

"I've stood by you nobly! I've always meant to stand you a splendid

spread when my postal order came. I—I say, Peter, let's be chums again! I—I've had no tea."

"A healthy and sufficient meal is provided by the school—" began Peter, quoting from the school prospectus.

"I've had tea in Hall," said Bunter. "What's tea in Hall to me? I—I say, Peter, I'm coming in. I—I'm going to have tea with you, old chap."

"I think not, old fat bean."

"Look here! This is my study! I'm coming in!"

Bunter made a step into the study. Peter picked up the ruler. Bunter made a step out again.

"Peter, old bean—"

"I'll tell you what," said Toddy blandly. "You want to tea in the study again—"

"Yes, old chap."

"Well, you can tea here to-morrow."

"Beast!"

"To-morrow" was Saturday, and on Saturday it was well known that Toddy was going out, to watch the First Eleven playing at St Jude's. Tea in No. 7 in Peter's absence was not of much use to Bunter. It would have been a minus quantity.

"I've a jolly good mind," said Bunter, in a concentrated tone, "to come in and mop up the study with you, Peter Todd!"

"Do!" said Peter. "Don't mind me!"

"Look here, Peter! Hobson of the Shell asked me to tea, and he's got a topping cake! I turned him down for you!"

"Turn him up again."

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the doorway of Study No. 7. It seemed that there was nothing doing there.

Tea was going on in several Remove studies; but Bunter had tried them all, and drawn them all blank, before he made one more effort to soften Toddy's stony heart. It really looked as if Bunter would have to be satisfied, for once, with tea in Hall. That was rather serious, for at tea in Hall Bunter had only been able to bag enough provender for three fellows.

He rolled down the stairs in a morose and peevish mood. But a gleam came into his little round eyes, behind his big round spectacles, at the sight of a Shell fellow going towards the door.

It was Hobson of the Shell.

Bunter had spotted the handsome cake which James Hobson had brought in for tea. There was no chance whatever of Bunter getting asked to tea in a Shell study, and his thoughts had lingered on that cake, as one's thoughts may linger sometimes on the unattainable.

Now it seemed to Bunter that the cake might have been brought within the limits of the attainable. Hobson could not have had tea yet. He must have left the cake in his study. And he was going out of the House.

As if to help the Owl of the Remove to make up his fat mind, Hobson of the Shell called to him.

"Seen Hoskins?"

"Yes, in the Cloisters," answered Bunter promptly.

He had not seen Hoskins of the Shell for two or three days. But the Cloisters were at a good distance from the House. Bunter was not trammelled by any undue regard for the truth.

If Hobby went as far as the Cloisters to look for his friend, that was all Bunter wanted.

James Hobson grunted, and ran out.

Bunter grinned.

He hurried away in another direction.

Hobson was gone to look for Hoskins. Bunter was gone to look for Hobby's cake.

In two minutes Bunter was in Hobson's study in the Shell. Table was laid for tea—graced by that handsome cake that Bunter had seen Hobby buy in the tuckshop. In less than a minute more Billy Bunter had caught up a small lunch-basket that lay in a corner, crammed the cake into it, and whisked out of the study. He rolled away hurriedly to the door of the House.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Hobson and Hoskins came in together, and met him in the doorway. James Hobson glanced at Bunter, and gave him a glare.

"You fat chump!" he said.

"Oh, really, Hobson—"

"What did you mean by telling me Hoskins was in the Cloisters? I ran into him in the quad."

"Oh! I—I thought—I mean—"

Bunter dodged a kick, and rolled out of the House. Fortunately Hobson had not recognised his own lunch-basket—such baskets were much alike. But Bunter had a feeling that he would suspect something when he got to his study and found it in the same state as Mother Hubbard's celebrated cupboard.

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Billy Bunter lost no time in fading over the horizon.

The two Shell fellows went to their study.

"The fat idiot!" said Hobby, still wrathful. "Pulling a man's leg, you know! I might have gone rooting about in the Cloisters looking for you if I hadn't spotted you in the quad. I say, I've got a ripping cake for tea."

"Good!" said Hoskins.

"I've got it all ready— Why—what—where— who—"

James Hobson stared at his study table.

"What—"

began Hoskins.

"Gone!"

"Eh?"

"Bunter—"

"What?"

"The—the—the fat scoundrel! That's why he wanted to send me rooting in the Cloisters—that's what he had in that basket—that— Oh, my hat!"

Hobson of the Shell stayed only to snatch up a cricket stump.

Then he rushed forth in search of Bunter.

And, to judge by the expression on James Hobson's speaking countenance, it was just as well that William George Bunter had cleared out of gates, and placed a safe distance between the cake and its infuriated owner.

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### THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

#### The Wizard is War!

"FIT, old man?"

"As a fiddle!"

Wingate grinned.

"You're always fit," he remarked. He was standing in the doorway of Lancaster's study in the Sixth, talking to the fellow stretched lazily in the armchair. "I'm relying on you for to-morrow, of course."

"The fact is—"

said Lancaster slowly. The Greyfriars captain's expression changed a little. He held up a warning finger.

"Don't say you want to be scratched for the St. Jude's match! You're coming over with us to make them open their eyes wide."

"After all, I'm a new man here," said Lancaster, "and there are a lot of good men—"

"Leave that to me, old bean," answered Wingate. "You don't mean that I'm putting too much on you—"

"No, no!"

"Don't feel yourself getting stale?"

"No. But—"

"I understand." Wingate grinned again, his cheery, good-natured grin. "You never care much for the limelight, and you don't half like bagging all the kudos. My dear man, that's rot! You're coming over to play at St. Jude's to-morrow, if we have to carry you in a sack!"

Lancaster laughed.

"Coming down to the nets now?" asked Wingate.

"Well, no, I think not. You see—"

"That's right. Take a rest. We shall want you to go all out to-morrow." And George Wingate, with a nod, walked down the passage.

Lancaster sat with a thoughtful brow.

There were no classes on the morrow for the men of the First Eleven. They had to start early for St. Jude's for a whole-day match.

They would be away from Greyfriars all day. Lancaster, if he went to St. Jude's with them, would be away all day, from nine in the morning until the cricketers returned in the summer sunset.

And Ferrers Locke was still at Greyfriars.

Lancaster did not want to cut the cricket match—and he was aware that if he cut the match without good reason, it would cause a lot of comment, and comment was what he wished to avoid.

But if he left his quarters for a whole day, with the Baker Street detective in the building—

Did Locke suspect?

Nothing in his look or his manner gave the faintest hint that he suspected. But the schoolboy crook was not likely to judge by appearances—especially in dealing with such a man as Ferrers Locke.

If there was the remotest suspicion in the mind of the Baker Street detective, he would not lose such an opportunity as the morrow offered.

With Lancaster safe off the scene for a whole day, there would be a careful, meticulous, minute search of his quarters.

There would not be a sign left to show that the search had been made. But it would be made—and it would be thorough.

If there was a shred of evidence to be found connecting Lancaster with the cracker of cribs, Locke would find it.

Lancaster did not suppose or surmise that. He knew it. He had never before entered into a contest with the Baker Street detective, but he knew what to expect in such a contest.

He rose to his feet, locked his study door, and turned to his desk. That desk had been installed in the study some time after Lancaster had become a Greyfriars man. It was a strong oaken desk, and the locks on it were of an unusual design. No man at Greyfriars could have unlocked that desk; but it would have been child's play to Ferrers Locke. No man at Greyfriars, even if he had got the desk open, would have been likely to find a certain secret drawer hidden in the interior. But a secret drawer would be the first thing that Ferrers Locke would look for if he suspected Lancaster to the extent of searching his study at all.

A rather grim smile passed over Lancaster's handsome face, making it look much less handsome for the moment.

From the secret drawer in the desk he drew a leather wallet.

He gave one glance into the wallet, at the array of strange steel tools it contained.

He laughed slightly.

The Wizard's outfit would have been

enough, more than enough, for Ferrers Locke had his eyes fallen on it. And his eyes would have fallen upon it if it remained within the walls of Lancaster's study while the Sixth Form man was away with the cricketers on the morrow.

Lancaster slipped the wallet into a hidden pocket inside his loose lounge jacket, closed the desk, unlocked the door, and left the study.

He sauntered out of the House.

At a distance under the elms Ferrers Locke could be seen walking and talking with Mr. Quelch.

Lancaster's eyes glimmered as they fell on the detective. Locke did not glance in his direction. The handsome Sixth-Former strolled away carelessly towards the gates.

He passed out of the gates with a pleasant nod to Gosling, who gave him a crusty grin as he touched his hat. A "werry" pleasant young gentleman, Gosling thought him. Gosling's opinion of boys in general was that they ought to be "drowned," but he made an exception in favour of Lancaster of the Sixth.

Out of gates, Lancaster seemed in no hurry to go on his way. At a little distance he leaned against a tree and gazed away towards the distant sea rolling bright and blue beyond the cliffs.

It was a very pleasant view on a bright June day, with white and brown sails dotting the blue in the far distance. But Lancaster did not give his whole attention to the view, pleasant as it was. The corner of his eye was on the school gates.

Perhaps he was wondering whether Ferrers Locke would emerge. It was

not likely. Even if the detective suspected him, he was not likely to take so obvious a step as shadowing him when he left the school. But Lancaster, with the Wizard's strange tools hidden under his jacket, was not taking chances.

He remained where he was, admiring the scenery, for a quarter of an hour or more. Fellows came out of the gates and went in, but he saw nothing of Ferrers Locke.

One of the fellows who came out was James Hobson of the Shell. Hobby of the Shell had a stump under his arm and an excited expression on his rugged face. Catching sight of Lancaster, he ran towards him.

"Seen Bunter?" he asked.

"Bunter? No."

"He's bagged my cake!" hissed Hobson. "I've hunted all over the show. I thought he might have gone out—"

Lancaster laughed.

"Sorry—I've not seen him."

"I'm going to slaughter him when I get hold of him," said Hobson, and he went back through the gateway.

Lancaster strolled on at last.

His way led him down to the river. After classes there were a good many Greyfriars men on the river or clustered round the boathouse. Lancaster sauntered along the towpath, his hands in his pockets, his manner one of casual carelessness.

At a little distance from the boathouse, however, he turned into the wood that bordered the towpath. Thickets and trunks and leafy branches shut him off from sight as he stopped under a

massive old oak; and after waiting, watching, and listening for a long minute, slipped his hand under his jacket and drew out the wallet of cracksman's tools.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### In Hiding!

**B**ILLY BUNTER trembled. "Boast!" he murmured inaudibly.

The way of the transgressor is undoubtedly hard.

Not that Billy Bunter felt himself a transgressor! In matters of tuck Bunter pleased himself. The rights of property made absolutely no appeal to Bunter when tuck was involved.

It was not on his fat conscience that he had bagged Hobby's cake. But he knew that Hobby would be frightfully wild.

Hobson of the Shell, it was certain, would know who had bagged that cake and would hunt for him. If Bunter was found with the cake, the results would be dire. And he would lose the cake.

Once the cake was safely packed away inside Bunter there would be no tangible evidence that he had ever had it. And even if Hobby did not give him the benefit of the doubt, the cake would be safe, anyhow. That would be so much to the good.

So Bunter, when he cleared out of gates, sought a spot where he could retire, like a shy violet, from the public eye.

There were plenty of such spots round  
(Continued on next page.)

# "Well run Sir!"

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# WRIGLEY'S

1<sup>D</sup> PER PACKET



about Greyfriars. The nearest was the wood that bordered the towpath. As the nearest, it appealed to Bunter; he did not like exertion.

Several fellows saw Bunter roll along the towpath; one or two made jesting remarks about the lunch-basket. He was glad to disappear into the wood.

But if that beast Hobson sought him so far afield he was likely to pick up information from the fellows who had seen Bunter roll by. Bunter realised that he was not safe yet.

But there was safety at hand—ample cover even for the fattest fellow at Greyfriars. Bunter blinked at tree after tree, seeking a favourable one to climb. It had to be easy to climb or it would not suit Bunter. He blinked at a massive old oak, but there were no low branches to make the task easy. The next tree, however, an ancient beech, had irregular branches easily within Bunter's reach. The fat junior clambered into the beech, settled himself in a fork of the boughs completely hidden by foliage, and rested from his exertions.

He was safe and secure now, and could venture to open the lunch-basket and commence operations on the cake.

And he lost no time.

For many happy minutes there was a low sound of munching in the branches of the beech-tree.

It was quite a large cake. There would have been enough for Hobson and Hoskins. There was almost enough for Bunter!

His fat face was happy and shiny when he had finished.

He had enjoyed that cake. And there was no evidence against him now—after he had carefully brushed the crumbs off. The lunch-basket could be left sticking in the tree. Bunter felt happy and satisfied.

And then came a rustling in the wood below, and his fat heart almost leaped into his mouth.

He had no doubt that it was Hobson of the Shell tracking him to his lair.

Bunter remained perfectly still. He scarcely breathed.

He was thankful that he had taken the trouble to climb the beech. The

foliage hid him; there was no sign of him to be seen from below! That utter brute, Hobson of the Shell, could hunt as long as he liked.

Bunter had trembled for a second. Now he grinned. And he kept very, very quiet.

The rustling in the thick wood ceased quite close to the beech. Billy Bunter felt a new qualm. The beast couldn't have spotted him, surely! But if not, why had he stopped so close at hand?

Bunter quaked and listened. He half-expected to hear the infuriated voice of Hobson calling him to come down. But there was no voice, and the rustling had ceased.

Then there came a faint brushing sound, and Bunter's eyes opened wide behind his spectacles.

Somebody was clambering up a tree close to the beech. It was the massive old oak, only six or seven feet away, whose branches mingled with those of the beech.

Bunter's fat heart thumped.

If it was Hobson after him, the beast was getting into the wrong tree. If it wasn't Hobson, who on earth was it, and what was he at?

Through the foliage of the beech Bunter could not see the ground, but he could see into the neighbouring oak.

He had a glimpse of a climbing figure, the back of which was turned towards him.

He started.

Certainly it was not Hobson. It was a much bigger fellow than Hobson. If it was a Greyfriars man, it was one of the Sixth.

It was truly amazing.

Sixth Form men, even Fifth Form men, did not climb trees like juniors. They disdained such things. But Bunter was sure that it was a Greyfriars man. He had had a glimpse of a cap with the school colours, and now he could see quite plainly a section of a dark grey lounge jacket which was quite familiar to his eyes. It was Lancaster of the Sixth Form who was clambering into the adjacent oak.

If Bunter had not been silent from

caution he would have been dumb now with astonishment.

He had not seen the clamberer's face. But he glimpsed the figure several times, and he knew that slim, athletic figure as well as he knew Lancaster's features.

The figure disappeared in the oak.

Bunter blinked—dumb.

Lancaster of the Sixth, climbing into an oak-tree like a kid in the Third! What was the man up to?

Bunter's eyes and spectacles were fastened on the oak. He wished that the intermingled foliage of the trees had not been so thick. He could see nothing now.

But he heard a sound from the oak. There was a brushing and groping sound.

What was the man up to? Bunter's curiosity was intense. It sounded like something being shoved into a hollow of the tree. Bunter could have understood that had the climber been a fag; his minor, Sammy of the Second, for instance. Bunter himself had more than once sought a safe hiding-place for such an article as a tin of toffee, till the owner had forgotten that it was missing. But it was scarcely possible to suspect a Sixth Form man of "scoffing" tuck and hiding it away. Yet, if Bunter's fat ears did not deceive him, the Sixth-Former was hiding something in the oak-tree in some hollow high up in the ancient trunk.

There was a quick rustle and a thud below. Lancaster had dropped lightly from the oak to the ground.

Without pausing a moment he walked away through the thickets, and Billy Bunter heard the rustling he made die away towards the river.

There was silence again; Lancaster of the Sixth was gone. The fat Owl in the beech was alone once more.

Bunter gasped.

"Well, my hat!"

Lancaster of the Sixth Form had concealed something in the oak-tree. There was absolutely no doubt on that point, in Bunter's fat mind. It was amazing—astounding—but there it was!

"My hat!" repeated Bunter.

He had almost forgotten Hobson of the Shell now.

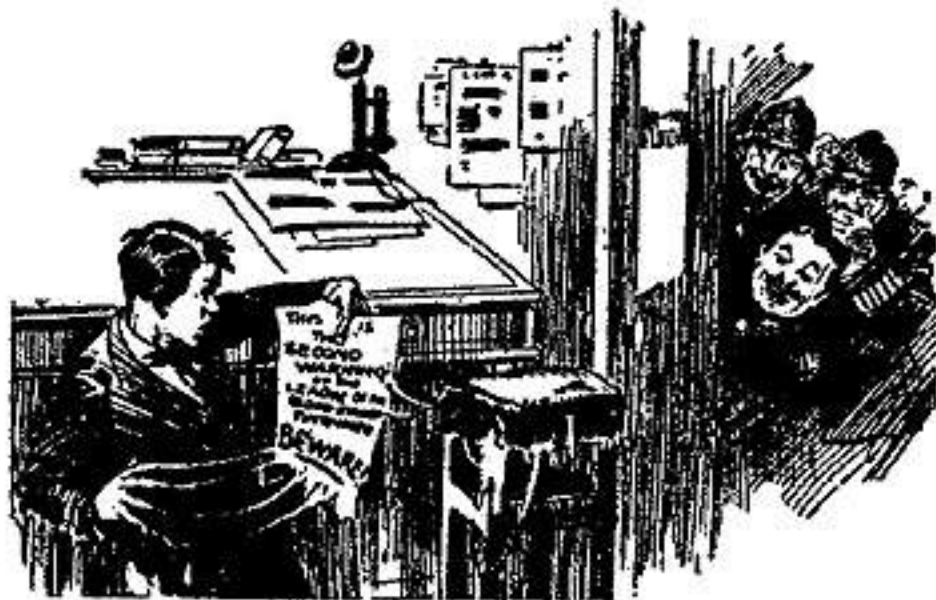
Amazing as Lancaster's action was, it did not, of course, concern Bunter. No doubt for that reason it interested him all the more.

Billy Bunter was a fellow who never could mind his own business. He made up for that, however, by giving a lot of attention to other people's business.

But a less inquisitive fellow than Bunter might have been curious about the strange proceedings of the Sixth Form man.

Bunter squatted in the beech and wondered. Lancaster was gone—nobody else was at hand. The idea came into the fat junior's mind of rooting into the oak and discovering what it was that the senior had concealed there. But he shook his head. Lancaster might come back, Hobson might come hunting him, and it was getting near time for call-over at Greyfriars, too. It was a half-holiday on the morrow, and there would be plenty of time then.

Bunter grinned. He liked Lancaster as much as it was in his fat nature to like anybody. Certainly he would never have dreamed of harming the popular senior in any way. But curiosity was Bunter's ruling passion. Bunter always wanted to know. And he was going to know what Lancaster had hidden in the oak-tree. He was quite resolved on that. And he did not dismiss the



## WALLY, the Boy 'TEC!

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matter from his fat mind until he rolled into Greyfriars for call-over, when he had to dismiss it and think about Hobson of the Shell.

### THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

#### The Mouse and the Lion Over Again!

**FERRERS** LOCKE stood among the crowd of Greyfriars men who saw the cricketers off for St. Jude's the next morning.

When the brake rolled away, nearly all Greyfriars had gathered; the bell not having yet rung for morning school.

Handsome and fit, Lancaster drew many glances among the cricketers. The eyes of the Baker Street detective were upon him, reading the handsome, careless face, and reading nothing there.

It was seldom that Ferrers Locke was puzzled, but in the strange case that occupied his mind now he had to admit perplexity.

Looking at Lancaster, it seemed impossible to imagine that he was anything but what he looked—a schoolboy, happy and careless, and thinking at the moment chiefly of cricket.

Lancaster did not seem to observe Locke among the crowd. He chatted easily and pleasantly with the other fellows. Bob Cherry waved his cap as the brake rolled off, and yelled:

"Give 'em beans, Lancaster!"

Lancaster smiled at that.

The cricketers departed, and the crowd dispersed. Classes claimed the Greyfriars fellows.

Ferrers Locke strolled in the quad that morning. Fellows who happened to notice him wondered if this was the way the Baker Street detective set to work to find a fellow who was missing from school. Greyfriars men were already beginning to make jesting remarks about the detective. Coker of the Fifth told Potter and Greene that Locke was a much over-rated man; and for once Potter and Greene were inclined to agree with Coker. Certainly the Baker Street detective had been a week at the school now, and nothing had come of it so far.

When the fellows came out in morning break, Bob Cherry sighted Locke sauntering under the trees and grunted.

His faith in the man he had regarded as little short of a genius was falling to a rather low ebb.

"There's Mr. Locke," he remarked. "Looking for Wharton in the quad, it seems. Well, he won't find him in the quad."

"Seems to be taking it easy, and no mistake," said Nugent.

"The easiness seems to be terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But perhaps the esteemed Locke is thinking it out."

"He's had plenty of time to think it out, I should say!" grunted Johnny Bull.

In break, Hobson of the Shell found



**Bump! "Yoop!"** There was a heavy thud, followed by a howl, and Ferrers Locke turned round to see Bunter sprawling beneath the old oak, gasping and spluttering.

Bunter. And in third school Bunter was wriggling very uncomfortably on his form. Hobson had not given him the benefit of the doubt. He had given him a severe kicking. And he had promised him another when he met him again. The way of the fat transgressor was undoubtedly hard.

After dinner that day plenty of fellows were going over to St. Jude's. The distance was not great, and Bob Cherry and his friends wheeled out their machines to bike it. They were keen to see how the First Eleven was getting on, and especially Lancaster.

"Tea in the study to-day, Bunter!" said Peter Todd cheerily.

"Beast!"

And Toddy grinned and departed on his bicycle.

Bunter frowned after him.

Toddy would be teeing out, and there was nothing in Study No. 7 for Bunter. And Hobson of the Shell had met Bunter after classes and kept his promise. Bunter was feeling sore.

There was, however, one gleam of comfort for Bunter. He had wondered and wondered and wondered again what on earth Lancaster of the Sixth could possibly have hidden in the oak-tree in the wood by the towpath. It seemed incredible that a Sixth Form man could have hidden tuck there. On the other hand, if it was not tuck, what could it possibly be?

Bunter's fat thoughts ran naturally on tuck. Tuck was unlikely; but anything else seemed more unlikely still. So Bunter nourished a faint hope that the mysterious article hidden in the oak might be of an edible nature. If it turned out to be so, there would be something for tea after all, as well as what Bunter called "doorsteps and dish-water" in Hall.

Few fellows remained within gates

that afternoon. Whole crowds of them, seniors and juniors, went over to St. Jude's to watch the cricket there. Others went on the river or on the usual holiday rambles. When Ferrers Locke sauntered into the Sixth Form passage, there was no eye to observe him. He stepped into Lancaster's study and quietly locked the door.

The Baker Street detective was busy in that study for nearly half an hour.

Not an inch of space in that time remained unexplored by the detective.

The result was nil.

Whether his suspicion of Lancaster was well-founded or not, he had really expected no other result.

A schoolboy had nothing to fear from a search. A crook would take care to leave nothing to be unearthed by a search.

But Locke did his work thoroughly.

There was nothing to be discovered which meant either that Lancaster was what he seemed—or else that he had anticipated a search during his absence for a whole day.

Only on the strong oak desk Locke's eyes lingered. It was an unusual article of furniture in a schoolboy's study. It was fitted with locks that could not have been opened by anyone at Greyfriars except the Baker Street detective. He had found a secret drawer in it, and found it empty. But if Lancaster ever had anything that he desired to keep safe from prying eyes, that desk was a safe place for it.

Locke left the study quietly.

His impassive face expressed nothing, but his thoughts were busy.

Of the mysterious Wizard nothing definite was known; but there were many rumours. One rumour was that the mysterious crook was a mere lad, trained by older rascals to exploit his

strange gift of cracking safes. At Danby Croft, Locke's thoughts had undoubtedly turned on Richard Lancaster with a vague suspicion. All that he had learned since he had been at Greyfriars had strengthened that suspicion.

The fellow had been left without a "bean," so far as could be ascertained. Yet he seemed well provided with money. Since he had been at the school there had been the attempted robbery at Hogben Grange, and another at Highcliffe. On the other hand, there had been an attempt to rob Greyfriars, and Lancaster had defeated it. There had been the bank raid at Courtfield, and Lancaster had joined in the pursuit of the thieves. But they had escaped—possibly owing to his intervention.

He had been acquainted with the rascally Weasel; on the other hand, he had gone to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield and told him all he knew of the man—or all he chose to tell. Evidence seemed to be equally divided for and against him. A search of his study had revealed nothing. Yet, if he was the Wizard—if he had been the cracksman at Hogben Grange—he must have his professional tools at hand. And where else could he safely conceal them? On the other hand, if he was a crook, he had certainly anticipated that search of his quarters during a whole day's absence and taken his precautions.

Ferrers Locke was puzzled.

And in his puzzlement there was a slight sense of irritation. He was accustomed to dealing successfully with master crooks; and a schoolboy was beating him. All this time the missing junior was a prisoner in some unknown place; and if Locke was on a false scent, Wharton's case seemed almost hopeless. All was theory, so far; and if he was following a false scent, the real trail was growing older—more difficult to pick up—while precious time was wasted. He needed something definite—something concrete—something more than theory. Where was he to find it?

He strolled out of gates down to the sunny river. Lancaster was playing cricket at St. Jude's, the cynosure of a shouting, cheering crowd—an innocent schoolboy enjoying the game—or a secret crook laughing in his sleeve at a baffled detective? Locke set his lips.

The grim look faded from his face, and he smiled at the sight of a fat figure rolling down the towpath.

Billy Bunter blinked cautiously behind him as he came.

Bunter did not want to be seen rooting about for what Lancaster of the Sixth had concealed in the oak-tree.

It was getting towards tea-time, and Bunter was getting hungry. More and more it seemed to Bunter that what was hidden in the oak was possibly tuck. The hungrier he grew, the more probable it seemed.

Bunter stopped by the wood where it bordered the towpath and gave a last cautious blink round him.

That blink revealed Ferrers Locke looking at him and smiling, and Bunter gave a jump.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

Locke was leaning on a tree by the towpath. He had been looking out over the shining river, but now his eyes were fixed on Bunter, with amusement in them. That the fat junior was up to some mischief was obvious; but Locke did not concern himself with Bunter's proceedings.

He gave the Owl of the Remove a nod and looked away again.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,213.

Bunter blinked at him cautiously for a few moments, and then rolled into the wood. Locke seemed to have forgotten his fat existence, as probably he had, and Bunter was reassured. Locke didn't matter, anyhow.

The fat junior stopped under the oak. He blinked up doubtfully.

It was not so easy to climb as the beech in which Bunter had taken refuge the previous day. That, indeed, was the reason why Bunter had passed it by and climbed the beech. Possibly it was the reason why Lancaster had selected it.

Bunter eyed the oak very doubtfully and made the attempt at last.

He reached the lower branches after a struggle and then halted, puffing and blowing. Having got back his wind, the Owl of the Remove ventured a little higher. His foot slipped, however, and he lost his balance and fell. Luckily, or unluckily, a branch hooked itself into the Owl's braces, and he remained suspended between heaven and earth like a fat jellyfish at the end of a line.

Ferrers Locke had forgotten Bunter. His mind was brooding over the problem he had to solve, and had no room for the antics of the Owl of the Remove.

But he was reminded suddenly of Bunter's unimportant existence.

Bump!

The braces had given way under the strain of supporting Bunter at last.

"Yoooooooooop!"

It was a thud, followed by a howl. Ferrers Locke smiled and stepped into the wood. Under the wide-spreading branches of the oak Billy Bunter sat and spluttered.

"Hurt?" asked Locke, giving the fat junior a hand up.

"Ow! Yes! I've broken my back—I mean my leg—ow! I—I think I've dislocated my spinal column! Ow!"

"Not so bad as that, I think," said Locke, with a laugh. "You shouldn't climb trees, you young donkey!"

"Oh, I can climb all right," said Bunter. "Active as a monkey, you know. I—I say, Mr. Locke, would you mind giving me a bunk up?"

"Better leave that tree alone, Bunter," said Locke. "If you want to climb there are easier trees. Better still, don't climb at all!"

"Well, I specially want to climb that oak," said Bunter. "Just—just to see if I can, you know. It's all right—I saw a fellow climb it yesterday. I fancy I can climb as well as a Sixth Form man—better, in fact. Just give me a bunk up for a start."

Billy Bunter did not see the glint that came into the eyes of Ferrers Locke. The detective smiled.

"Climbing trees is rather an unusual game for Sixth Form men, isn't it?" remarked the Baker Street detective.

"Well, he did it," said Bunter, "and so can I. I—I say, will you give me a bunk up, Mr. Locke? I—I only want to climb the tree," he added, with his usual fatuous caution. "I'm not looking for anything."

"You are not looking for anything?" repeated Locke.

"Oh, no! Nothing at all! There isn't anything there," explained Bunter. "If there was, I shouldn't touch it. I'm not the fellow to bag a fellow's tuck, I hope."

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"I—I just want to climb the tree, just—just because I'm jolly fond of climbing," explained Bunter. "If you'll give me a bunk, I—I can manage it. Oh, of course, you needn't mention seeing me here," he added hastily.

"You think the Sixth Form man might whop you?"

"Well, he couldn't whop me—he's not a prefect," said Bunter. "Still, he might be waxy."

"You may rely upon my not mentioning it to him," said Ferrers Locke. "What particular Sixth Form man was it?"

"Only Lancaster! Not that he hid anything in the tree—and I don't suppose it's tuck, anyhow," said Bunter.

Locke smiled.

"Then Lancaster did not see you—when you had your eyes on him?" he asked.

"No fear! You see, I was in that beech. That beast Hobson was after me about a cake," said Bunter. "He makes out that I had his cake."

"I see!"

Ferrers Locke dropped his hand on a fat shoulder.

"Now, Bunter," said Locke, "I certainly will not mention this to Lancaster, as I have said I will not. But you seem to me to be a prying young rascal—"

"Oh, really, Mr. Locke—"

"You have no concern with whatever Lancaster may have concealed in the tree. You must not be an inquisitive and prying young rascal, Bunter. If I were your Form master I should cane you!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm jolly glad you're not my Form master!"

"You had better cut off!" said Mr. Locke.

Billy Bunter gave the frowning face a blink and rolled away.

Locke stepped to the edge of the wood and watched the fat form roll out of sight. Then he stepped back to the oak.

His eyes were gleaming.

Swiftly and actively he swung himself into the oak boughs. The climb that had baffled Bunter was easy enough to Ferrers Locke.

High up in the thick old tree, ten minutes later, Ferrers Locke's hand slid into a hollow of the old trunk. It came out with a leather wallet in it. He opened the wallet, and his eyes glittered at the bright steel instruments it contained. He closed it again, slipped it into an inner pocket, and dropped from the tree. He walked quickly away.

An hour later, Billy Bunter succeeded, at last, in clambering into the old oak. But his search there was unrewarded. Lancaster, he was certain, had hidden something there; but perhaps the beast had taken it away since. Anyhow, nothing was there to reward Bunter, and it was a tired, dusty, grubby, and peevish Owl that rolled back disappointed to the school.

Lancaster, with the cricketers at St. Jude's, was playing a great game, amid roars of cheering from a wildly excited Greyfriars crowd.

Harry Wharton, in a barred room far from Greyfriars, was wondering, with a clouded brow and a heavy heart, whether rescue would ever reach him.

Ferrers Locke, in his room at Greyfriars, was examining the strange tools that had done strange work in the hands of the Wizard!

He knew now!

It was no longer theory; it was knowledge. He knew!

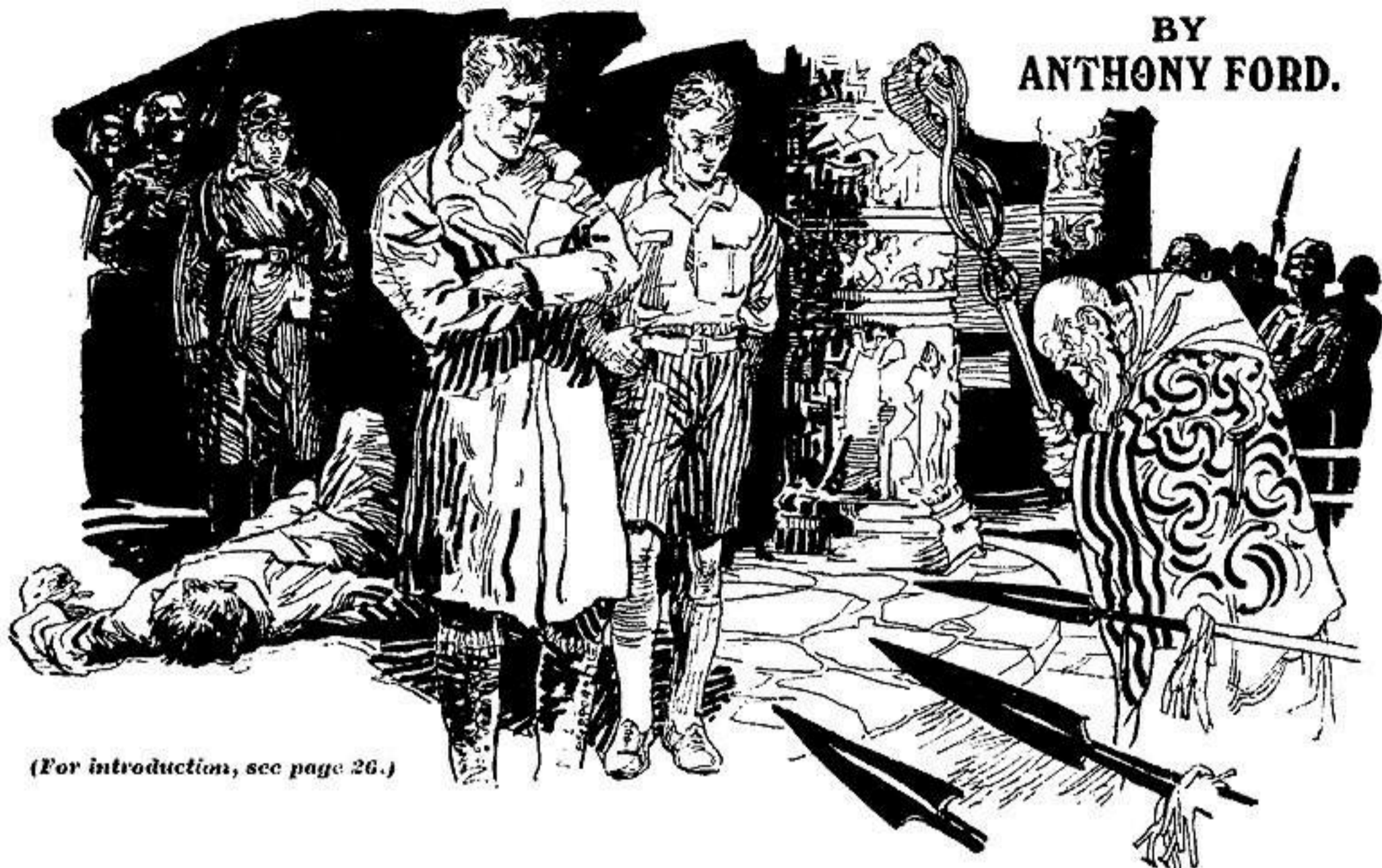
The net was closing on the schoolboy crook, and hope was dawning for the junior who was missing from school.

THE END.

(Boys, you really must not miss the final yarn in this splendid series, "A CRACKSMAN'S REWARD!" It's one of Frank Richards' extra-specials!)

# LAND of LOST PLANES!

BY  
ANTHONY FORD.



(For introduction, see page 26.)

## A Slim Hope!

**T**HE temple walls beat back the terrific reverberations of the sounding gong. As the first harsh notes clanged out Bill Lyon leapt from the dais. Doak and the Chief had started up, violently awakened from sleep, and their hands had instinctively flown to the revolvers they carried in their holsters.

It was Doak who had unwittingly betrayed them. He, a servant of the "god," supposed to be dumb, had talked in his sleep! Treachery had instantly suggested itself to the simple mind of the spearsman, and there he stood, violently beating at the huge gong with the butt-end of his spear to summon the Maya people and the priest, while the seven others stood around with their spears out-thrust, ready to lance the first to make a suspicious move.

But they in their simplicity could not know of such modern weapons as fire-arms. The revolvers in the hands of Doak and the Chief held no significance for them. Not for a moment, even when red fire and hot lead belched from the muzzle of the gun in Doak's hand, and he who was beating at the gong sprawled to the ground with a strangled grunt.

A red hole appeared like magic to the left between his broad, bare shoulders. Blood trickled from the gaping hole. He tottered slowly for a moment, sprawling finally in a heap beneath the still echoing gong.

The eyes of his seven companions fell upon him in fear. Bill Lyon leapt from the dais, crashed on to Doak, and kicked the gun out of the gunman's hand.

"I warned you!" Bill growled. "You brainless killer! We might have explained——"

Sheer rage boiled within him, at

Doak's wanton killing. The man, it seemed, just had to kill when things went out of their normal run. With an inarticulate grunt of rage, the airman smashed at Doak's white face with clenched fists. The man was still dazed from sleep and the suddenness of his awakening. He sagged under Bill's terrific onslaught, became senseless as the stone step on which he sprawled. Bill only ceased beating at him when he found Shane Dexter tugging at him, bawling in his ear that he'd kill the man.

The young airman looked up dazed. The spearsmen were staring at the dead

## Crack airman, taken for a god, forced to undergo the ordeal of the Temple of Death!

body of their fellow-guard. They sent up clamorous shouts and raised their spears. One was flung, passing between Dexter and Bill. Its tip grazed Bill's arm and blood flowed freely, despite the fact that it was merely a scratch. More shouting went up from the guards.

Such a being as they imagined Bill to be—Kodon, their god, Son of the Sun—he should not suffer hurt like ordinary men if he were genuine. But this man bled at the scratch of a spear's head!

Turmoil reigned in the temple. The light glowing from the huge lamp suspended somewhere in the shadows of the lofty roof was dimmed as there came a rumbling sound, and the two huge doors of the temple rolled back, letting in the faint rosy light of dawn.

There came the swarming patter of bare feet rushing into the temple. The entire Maya tribe surged in, golden

skins gleaming, spears waving, their black tips shining as if with menace. At the head of the golden-skinned men, thrust forward hastily by the force of the rush of men behind him, was the old priest, his robes gathered around his withered, shrunken form, his claw-like hands still clutching the emblem of his power—the long staff around which were twined two serpents.

The seven guardian spearsmen checked their shouts, withholding the throwing of their spears at the entry of the priest and the other Mayas. Fresh babble broke out as they stormed and gesticulated, pointing to the crumpled form on the floor beneath the gong, pointing at Doak, and pointing at the blood which flowed from the scratch on Bill's arm.

Bill folded his arms and waited. There was nothing they could do against this rabble. They would be overpowered within three seconds, unless he could still force them to believe that he was their god Kodon.

The old priest advanced, stared down at the now rigid form of the shot spearsman. Doak was sprawled out on the stone step, breathing heavily. His revolver lay on the ground a dozen paces from him.

The priest spoke to Bill, pointing to the dead Maya.

"You'll have to translate for me, Shane," Bill told the American. "I can't make head or tail of what the old scout says."

"He wants to know why the man was killed by the fire-stick—his name for a gun. His guards have already told him their version. He wants to hear ours."

"Tell him that while my servants slept I gave 'em the power to speak, since my father says I'm not to talk Maya until after the feast is over. Say that the guard got suspicious because he

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,218.

thought they were dumb. Say he was killed because of his suspicion of the gods, and that if they're not careful the whole lot will be treated the same way."

Dexter duly translated the message, while Bill, arms folded, stared haughtily in front of him and tried to look as god-like as possible. The lives of all of them depended upon his being able to make the Mayas continue to believe him Kodon. If he failed, they'd all be sacrificed at noon that same day.

As Dexter delivered the message to the priest the old man looked troubled. It was obvious that he wanted to believe Bill. The Mayas had been expecting their god to visit them for centuries past. It was bitter for them to find that the being whom they had thought their god should turn out to be a mere man like the rest of them. But if it were true that he had given his servants the power to speak when they were sleeping, then indeed he must be a god.

He bowed low towards Bill, then spoke to Dexter. Dexter listened attentively. Every Maya there, spears no longer grounded in sign of peace and respect, but levelled towards the dais menacingly, listened to what the priest said. When he had finished a low murmur of approval went up, and every dark eye there was turned upon Bill expectantly.

Dexter's face was impassive as he translated the priest's words to Bill, but his eyes were troubled.

"I knew it would come," he said flatly. "I'll repeat the old bird's words letter for letter. He says that the Mayas love and respect their god Kodon, Son of the Sun, and consider him mighty. But human beings are frail, and their minds unable to grasp greatness. Therefore they ask for some sign by which they might know that you are indeed Kodon, Son of the Sun. As a token they ask that you walk into the Temple of Death!"

"And very nice, too," muttered Bill. "I suppose it had to come. All right, I'll do it—"

Shane Dexter burst out:

"But say—you can't do that, Bill! Why, it's certain death. I don't know what there is in there that is so deathly, but it's something that can't be overcome. Within living memory no man has ever been in there and returned. With my own eyes I saw Poincau go in. He never came out. According to the glyphs and markings on the walls of the temple here, which Kaxn, the priest, has translated to me sometimes, it appears that the Temple of Death is the spot where the very early Mayas, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, hid all their treasure. He says there is a spirit in there which guards it from human defilement—"

"Treasure!"

The man called the Chief burst out with a single word. His pale eyes gleamed behind his pince-nez.

"The Maya treasure," he repeated. "Of course—I remember. I have heard of it. The Mayas were antecedents of the Aztecs. The Toltecs were originally Mayas, too—Mayas who were adventurous, and wandered up from their own land to settle in Mexico. But these people are the genuine thing, remnants of the original Maya people. Then we must be in Central America. And there is treasure here. Money. Millions. Worth a thousand times more than the paltry jewels you carry, Dexter."

He licked his lips nervously.

"Listen, boys," he continued. "Listen! Let's forget our enmity. Let's all get together on this thing. Somehow we can overcome—"

Shane Dexter drawled coldly:

"Feller, you're a rat! A yellow, stinkin' rotten rat! Exceptin' for another yellow-livered rat like Doak, a Chicago racketeer or a New York gangster wouldn't touch you with the end of a forty-foot barge-pole. There's bigger things than treasure hangin' in the balance right now. There's Bill Lyon's life, for one, and our own, too. Get that into your money-mad brain, and then pipe down."

Contemptuously, he turned his back on the Chief. The Chief glared, but fell silent.

"Listen, old timer." Dexter was addressing Bill Lyon now. "You can't do a thing like that. It's just throwing your life away, and it won't save us either. You'll go in there. Whatever it is will get you. And when the time comes we'll all be sacrificed. Why not let's put up one glorious scrap right now an' mop these guys up?"

Bill smiled. His eyes roved over the assembled Mayas. More than two hundred of them were there, hemming in the dais. What earthly chance could they stand against that crowd? They might account for six, or even ten. And then—

"No, Shane," he said to the American. "I'm going through with it. But I'm going to make one order. That is, that while I am gone, the feast to Kodon, Son of the Sun, be postponed for one day. That'll give you fellows thirty-six hours to try to make a getaway. "It's a slim hope, but in that time you might hit on some plan."

"But what about you?" cried Dexter.

"Me? Aw—don't worry about me!" Bill grinned at the American. "Why—I might yet make friends with the oogly-boogly or whatever it is in the Temple of Death!"

### The Temple of Death!

**D**OAK, sprawled on the stone steps of the dais, opened his eyes. None there saw him. Every eye in the place was fixed on Bill Lyon. The gunman's eyes closed again, while he strove to collect his scattered thoughts. Above all things, burning hate against the English pilot consumed him.

### INTRODUCTION.

*Entrusted with a fortune in jewels, Shane Dexter, a crack American pilot, sets out to fly the mighty Atlantic, but is caught in a wind-belt and forced down in some uncharted country. His wireless signals for help are picked up by a notorious crook, who, anxious to get his hands on the vast fortune, orders his underlings to kidnap Bill Lyon, chief pilot of the Transcontinental Airways Co. In the hope of rescuing his old friend Dexter, Bill agrees to fly the "Chief" and his henchman, Doak, through the wind-belt. Arriving eventually on the fringe of a dense jungle they find Dexter, a prisoner in the hands of a horde of spearmen, destined to be offered up as a human sacrifice to their god, Kodon, Son of the Sun. Bill bluffs Dexter's captors into thinking that he himself is Kodon. For the purpose of the bluff, Doak has appeared to be dumb, but he gives the show away by talking in his sleep. A terrified spearman immediately raises the alarm by beating on a copper gong.*

(Now read on.)

How many times had he felt the iron of those bunched fists! How many times had Bill bested him! Murder burned in him. Hate. If he died for it, he'd bump off Bill Lyon.

His eyes opened again, furtively, and then fell on the revolver a dozen paces from him. His muscles bunched together as he lay still. Then suddenly he jumped up, diving for the fallen revolver and taking everyone unawares. He had been, apparently, insensible. He'd been forgotten.

Sweeping up the gun he whirled before a movement was made, and fired point-blank at Bill. The young pilot felt the wind of the bullet as it sang by his cheek. He ducked as the gun spat again. As a gunman in this instance, Doak was a washout. He was quick; his long supple finger worked the trigger like a machine, so that the gun spat five times in as many seconds. And yet, miraculously, Bill was unhurt. From ducking the first shot, he weaved towards the gunman in zigzag steps, swiftly.

Cursing, Doak upended the gun, and flung it in Bill's face while he was yet a dozen steps away. The pilot's hand flashed out, caught the gun. He whirled it himself and sent it crashing back at the gunman. Bill was more accurate. The revolver smacked hard against Doak's bullet head, and drew a livid, red streak across his forehead where it ripped through the skin. A thin trickle of blood streamed, and Doak, with arms upflung, crashed to the stone floor of the temple.

A low murmur went up from the Mayas. When that gun had exploded, almost in Bill's face, they had half expected to see him crumple and fall, as their own spearsman had done. But nothing like that had happened. Was he then, after all, Kodon, Son of the Sun, that the death from the fire-stick could not touch him?

His position was strengthened by his luck in dodging Doak's bullets. Doak was picked up, held tightly by two of the stalwart spearmen, his head sagging forward. The fight, the hate, would be dead in him for a long time to come. If his thick skull wasn't fractured by that terrible crack with the gun, at least it would be hours before he regained consciousness.

It wasn't for the sake of Doak or the Chief that Bill was willing to enter the Temple of Death. It was for the sake of the American flying man. Either one, or both of them had to die. Then better let it be one. Even with this last display of "magic," in escaping unharmed from Doak's bullets, Bill could see by the expression on the old priest's face that he was still expected to walk through the Temple of Death.

And so, deliberately, he was the first to make a move. With great dignity he stepped down from the dais. The Mayas fell back in awe as he moved across the floor of the temple towards the open door.

Slowly they followed him at a distance, the old high priest tottering along behind him, the seven spearmen surrounding the three white men—Doak being half dragged by two of them—the rest of the Mayas farther behind still, walking in slow procession.

For a moment, as he stood in the early morning sunlight, looking across at the grim, squat Temple of Death in the distance, Bill had a wild impulse to make a bolt for it. It was a very human impulse—but he checked it



almost as soon as it arose in his mind. It would do no good—he would die at the spears of the Mayas. Where there was life there was hope—even in that grim templo. He ignored the tale of the men who had died seeking to penetrate its mystery throughout the hundreds of years.

He had the automatic he had taken from Doak. It had a comforting feel, stuck in his belt. He laughed shortly. It probably would be little good against the death which lurked there in the darkness.

"But I might get one lucky smack in!" he muttered.

Within a few hundred yards of the Temple of Death, the procession following him halted. They spread out fan-wise, till a long line of them faced the wall of the temple. He could see the one small, dark opening, the red and black walls were bare; great solid blocks through which no man could force his way, except after days of work with tools.

At the small, arched opening, Bill turned and looked at the assembled men. At least Shane Dexter had a reprieve from sacrifice. Kaxn, the priest, had given his word that it should not take place until the morrow, and Bill knew that he would keep it. He waved his hand in farewell salute to the American, who, white-faced, was standing tensely watching him. Dexter made a gesture, stepped forward as if to follow the English pilot, but a barrier of spears flashed, holding him back.

Bill stooped. Darkness, and a cold clamminess gripped him as he entered the archway. He moved forward. Farther still. The thought struck him suddenly—why not wait here, hidden from the Mayas in the darkness, and then reappear a few hours later as if he had been inside the Temple of Death all the time? He half-turned in the narrow passage-way where he was now standing, and suddenly he felt the ground shift very slightly under his feet. The faint light seeping through the entrance was blacked out entirely as a huge stone block settled steadily into place.

Entire and utter darkness, so thick that he could almost feel it, closed in around Bill. He felt the hair of his head rise, felt beads of sweat start out on his face. The whole thing was so eerie—the silent settling into place of the huge block of stone; the terrible, thick darkness.

"Steady, Bill, steady!" he muttered shakily to himself. "You're not dead yet. I don't think there's anything spooky about that slab swingin' into place. It must be that as I cross a certain part of this passage-way it moves a stone which alters the balance of the slab, and it falls into place. As I proceed, I walk off the balancing stone, and the slab's lifted; but I'm no longer interested by that time—I'm dead! Gosh! Let's have a smoke and see where we are!"

He pulled out his battered old briar and stuck it in his mouth. He knew there was a heel of tobacco left in it. He smiled twistedly as he fumbled for his lighter.

"Needn't have troubled to fill it," he said.

The light flared up. He saw that he was in a passage so narrow that he could touch both walls with his elbows. The light only glimmered through the darkness a yard or so—past that was thick, heavy black.

He put the flare to his pipe and puffed. The lighter, scarcely used since he had filled it, gave out a big flame as

he puffed. It caught his fingers, and he yelped, dropping the lighter.

"That's funny!" he muttered, as he watched it.

The flame had gone out a yard before it reached the ground. Bill stooped to fumble on the ground for the lighter, and almost choked as his head came near the ground. Darts of light flashed before his eyes. He felt as though fingers gripped his throat.

Somehow he managed to stagger upright. His knees felt weak, but the awful choking—he had the word—drowning!—feeling passed. He began to breathe normally, feeling as if he'd been pulled out of water when sinking for the last time.

"Now, what's down there, yet isn't up here where my head is?" he muttered. "Gee, I've got to find that lighter!"

He fumbled carefully with his foot. His boot touched something that tinkled. The lighter! He held his breath, placing the toe of his boot on the lighter, then swiftly stooped, his hand groping for it. Immediately he held the lighter he stood upright, expelling his breath slowly. No invisible hands gripped his throat this time; nothing squeezed the breath from his lungs.

Hope flared suddenly in his heart. Perhaps he wasn't doomed to die, then! Perhaps there was some way—

The lighter flared up again. He clenched his teeth hard on the stem of his pipe, began walking boldly forward, the lighter held out in front of him, and low, on a level with his waist. Still the passage. Ten yards—a dozen—twenty. Still in the passage, which wound and zigzagged like a maze. For a hundred yards Bill followed its turns, the light still burning steadily in front of him. Once or twice he lowered it, but each time the light went out, as if doused by an invisible hand.

Bill had lost all sense of direction now, following the intricate winding of the passage. He thought that the walls of the temple must be amazingly thick for this passage to wind through its bulk in this way. Then he checked suddenly, as the passage came to an end.

He was standing in an archway, similar to the small one he had entered by. A flight of twelve wide, richly carved steps led downwards to the floor of the Temple of Death, ten feet below where he was standing. If he leaned forward he could see that it would be possible for him to touch the roof from his position at the top of the steps. It was a mere three feet over his head.

Then suddenly he gasped and shuddered. Faintly outlined against the flickering yellow flame of the lighter, he saw at the foot of the steps, in grotesquely crumpled attitude, a figure in flying kit, Poincau, the French pilot, and beyond him other shapes. Some glimmered white. A skull grinned at him in gruesome invitation to join the dead there.

Bill Lyon, crack flying man, nerveless, brave, felt nausea grip him suddenly. But for bracing himself

against the wall he would have dropped the lighter from his shaking hand. He fought the sickness which possessed him, forced himself to peer into the gloom. But he took no step forward, for Death awaited him there.

The young airman saw carved idols of wood, rotted and splintered with age, saw great urns of fire-hardened clay, and could only feebly guess at the riches they held, since this was indeed the treasure vault of the Mayas. Hugo ornaments of gold glimmered faintly in the farther darkness. Immeasurable treasure lay here—against which the jewels of Levania were a pony bauble. "If the Chief were here?" Bill thought.

He was beginning to fathom the secret of the Temple of Death. Now, where he was standing, he was safe for a time, until what air there was in the passage should be used up. Up to his knees was an invisible belt of death. As he passed down the steps into the vault, the belt would pass higher—to his waist, to his shoulders; then, he estimated as he looked down, when he reached the fourth or fifth step from the bottom, it would reach his mouth.

"Gas! Carbon-monoxide gas!" he muttered, dry-lipped.

Heavier than air, the gas had slowly accumulated in this dread place of darkness throughout the thousands of years that the temple had stood. It was no magic. It was simply an act of Nature, as natural here as the same poison gas in the deep mines of the earth. Entering it, a man would drown as surely as he entered a pool of water and allowed it to rise above his head. It was more dangerous, though, for it could not be seen, nor felt.

"Then," Bill decided suddenly, "there must be two entrances to this temple, and one has been sealed. There has been no draught for centuries, and that's how the stuff has accumulated. A good draught of air through here would clear the place—only on account of the winding of that passage, and the other exit being sealed, what air gets in isn't strong enough to shift the monoxide. If there had been but that one exit, then the monoxide would have formed within the lifetime of the builders of the place, and there is no record of that."

Bill leaned forward, poised there on the top step, peering into the darkness across the pool of invisible death. He felt his hair rising. Something moved in the darkness beyond.

(For the conclusion of this thrilling yarn see next week's MAGNET.)

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YOUR EDITOR INVITES YOU TO—



# Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**H**ERE is a topical query, which comes from a Horncastle reader. He wants to know

## HOW TO MAKE ICE-CREAM?

Just to read his letter has made my mouth water! It's decidedly warm in my den to-day, and the thought of a large ice cream is—well, I'd better get on with the job of answering his query!

Although I haven't made any myself, I am told that the following recipe is quite economical. Take one pint and a half of milk, four ounces of castor or icing sugar, half an ounce of cornflour, and half a teaspoonful of vanilla essence. Mix the cornflour with a little milk, and boil the rest of the milk with the sugar. Add the mixed cornflour, and simmer gently for two minutes. Then strain, and, when cool, add the vanilla essence. You must then freeze the mixture in a freezer, which you can obtain at any good ironmonger's.

Here is a little sea story for you, the truth of which is vouched for by several authorities. It concerns

## A GHOST SHIP.

In 1927 the Gloucester fishing schooner Columbia foundered in a hurricane and went to the bottom with all hands. Some considerable time later a trawler caught something with its trawls, and then, to the amazement of everyone aboard, a ship suddenly rose from the depths of the sea. It was the long-lost Columbia!

For some minutes she remained there—a ghost ship raised from her last resting-place! Then the cables of the

trawls parted, and she disappeared again from sight, taking her long-dead crew again with her!

Curiously enough,

## AN OLD SAILORS' SUPERSTITION

says that something is always bound to happen to a vessel the name of which ends in "a." I mentioned this to a seafaring friend of mine, and asked him if there was any truth in it. "I don't know," he answered. "I've only served twice in ships the names of which ended with 'a.' One was the India, which was sunk by a German submarine during the War, and the other was the Orotava, which sunk once in Australia, was raised to the surface; sunk again in Tilbury Docks, and, having been raised a second time, was nearly smashed up in a hurricane during the voyage I was aboard her.

**O**NE of my readers wants to know if Billy Bunter is the hungriest person who has ever lived. Well, I happened to be reading the other day of a man who

## OUT-BUNTERED BILLY BUNTER!

This was a man named Nicholas Wood, who lived in Kent. It was said that two loins of mutton and one loin of veal were the same to him as three sprats would be to any other man. Once he is known to have eaten as much as would have been sufficient for thirty men, after which he went to sleep for eight hours. His host on that occasion happened to be a worthy knight, who, when he heard

how his guest had abused his hospitality, promptly put him in the stocks for another eight hours!

There is another fellow in history who reminds me of Billy Bunter. He was Baron Trenck, who has been described as

## THE GREATEST LIAR WHO EVER LIVED!

Trenck was a German who gained the enmity of Frederick the Great, who promptly put him in prison. But, by means of bribes, lies, and every sort of chicanery, he managed to escape time and time again. He was invariably recaptured, and finally found himself in prison in Paris during the time of the French Revolution. And from there he very successfully "fied" himself to the guillotine.

Had he kept quiet, he might have remained in prison until the fall of Robespierre, when he would have been released, as his fellow-prisoners were. But he used to invent the most amazing lies about what was happening outside the prison that at last the gaolers set a trap for him, and discovered that it was he who was circulating all sorts of rumours. That was enough! Baron Trenck was marched off to the guillotine and executed.

**S**TILL, you'll find our fat friend Bunter carrying on as usual next week in

## "A CRACKSMAN'S REWARD!"

By Frank Richards,

which is the title of next week's fine long complete tale. You'll find all your other favourite characters featured as well, and I can tell you that this, the final yarn in the series featuring Dick Lancaster, will make you sit up and take notice!

„Then comes the winding-up of "Land of Lost Planes!" which will give you thrills galore. You'll find plenty of chuckles in the Greyfriars Herald, and also in the jokes and limericks sent in by readers.

YOUR EDITOR.

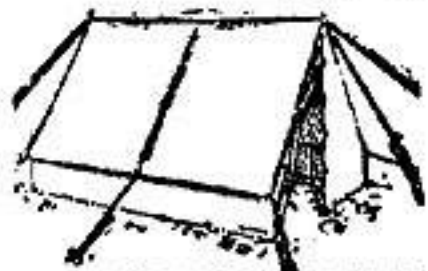
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# Greyfriars Herald

Edited by  
 HARRY WHARTON,  
 F.G.A.  
 LATEST EXTRA GOOD EDITION

**"Help! Help! I Can't Swim!"**  
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## TARZAN THE SECOND

"Back to Nature!" says Coker

### THREE UP A TREE



Three fellows dressed like Alpine guides tramped down to the gates of the other afternoon. The leader of the three seemed to be arguing rather warmly with his two lieutenants. "What about tea?" asked Potter. "Yes, what about it?" asked Greense om-physically. "Blow tea!" roared Coker. "Here am I doing my best for you—getting you to lead the simple life of our forefathers up in the trees, and you talk about tea!" "We yollod, Coker, then, was going back to Nature. It seemed funny. Potter and Greense glared. "Buzz off, you kide!" snapped Potter. "Now, look here, Coker, simple life or not, we've got to have tea!" "Wrong!" said Coker. "Our primitive fore-bears didn't have tea." "What did they have, then?" "Nuts and berries and roots, with water from some pure, bubbling stream." "But there aren't any nuts at this time of the year!" "In that case," said Coker coldly, "we can live on leaves and bark, and so on!" "Ye gods!" "Ha, ha, ha!" Potter's face was worth a guinea a box. "Follow me!" said Coker gruffly. "And don't jaw!" Potter and Greense followed Coker. They pulled up eventually at a tree in the woods off the Friarstable Lane. It seemed an ideal tree for climbing. There happened to be a ladder against it which a couple of woodmen had been using, you see. Coker, with the aid of the ladder, soon got well out of sight among the leaves. Potter and Greense, muttering to themselves, followed suit. But tragedy came along soon after, in the shape of the two woodmen, who walked off with the ladder without a suspicion that they were leaving their back-to-Nature enthusiasts stranded about thirty feet up in the air. We waited. Eventually, there was a rustling in the branches and a leg appeared from the foliage, waving wildly. "Where's the blessed ladder?" howled Potter. "Gone!" was chorused. "They took it away." "What!" shrieked Coker & Co.

### SMITTHY MAKES A SPLASH

There's no arguing with Smitthy when he's like that. Redwing didn't keep on at it. He fell in with Smitthy's wheeze—whatever it might be! It turned out to be the best possible wheeze for dealing with Pon that afternoon. And it worked like a charm. When, after a lot of hard pulling, they came in sight of the Anglers' Tea-House, Pon & Co. were sitting round a table in the garden, having tea and smoking cigarettes—they do these things in the open at Highlife. Smitthy guided the skiff to the bank at a spot where they were screened by trees. Pon's speedboat, which, by the way, he had named Spithre, was moored close by. Smitthy and Redwing landed; and, by keeping low, the Bounder was able to rope up his skiff to the stern of Pon's craft. Having done that, Smitthy boldly stood up, and Redwing joined him and advanced on the Highlife. "Care to apologise, dear men?" asked Smitthy sweetly. Pon & Co. jumped to their feet with oaths on their lips—as they say in novels. Apparently they didn't care to apologise. Smitthy and Redwing didn't want them things up in another way. So they argued about it; and very soon, they were arguing rather forcibly—with their knuckles! The odds were four to two against the Friars, but numbers don't count for much when they represent chaps like Pon and his merry men. Pon & Co. were soon fighting with their backs to the wall—or, rather, to the river. The time came when they would have actually gone into the river. But Smitthy's skiff saved them. Designedly, by the way, for no sooner were they all in the skiff than Smitthy leaped into Pon's speedboat. A moment later, he had started up the engine. Redwing jumped in just as the Spithre moved away from the bank, towing the skiff and its four yelling occupants behind it. "Smitthy, you see, you'll drown us!" shrieked Pon. "Jolly good job!" was the Bounder's heartless comment. Then he opened out the throttle, and a roar from the engine drowned all further talk. And in that way they returned to the Greyfriars end of the river—Smitthy and

### A PUGILIST'S PROGRESS

**Bolsover A Future World's Champion?**  
 Greyfriars sportsman are following with great interest the remarkable career of Percy Bolsover, the celebrated slogger. Even in his early days at Greyfriars, Bolsover's amazing prowess as a scrapper was amply demonstrated. With an advantage of only two stones and a half in weight, he managed in his first week at the school to administer the k.o. to Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form. Fellows who saw the scrum still talk with bated breath of the amazing heroism with which he took the slaps and digs which Nugent gave him before he was overcome! Since that memorable scrum, Bolsover has gone from victory to victory. In quick succession he defeated Hop H, the Chinese midget, Gatty and Myers, and Bunter Minor. In none of these cases did his advantage in reach exceed two or three feet, while none of his redoubtable opponents was less than eighteen inches shorter than he. These early achievements are, of course, a byword at Greyfriars. But Bolsover has not been content to rest upon his laurels. With characteristic boldness he has now started choosing opponents from a higher Form than the Second. With a courage that is really staggering, he challenged Paget and Tubb of the Third, and after herculean efforts, actually loked them! So far, he has hesitated to meet anyone in his own Form, but we fully expect this to be his next move. Can it be wondered at that Bolsover's name is already being whispered as the coming champion of the world?



Redwing in the speedboat and Pon & Co. in the trailer, clinging to the sides and yelling with fear every yard of the way. It was great! There was a big crowd of Friars to greet the arrivals at the end of the journey and the cheers were almost as loud as the laughter. Pon & Co. crawled out of the skiff looking more dead than alive. Water was streaming from them and their knees still knooked together with fear as they walked. They returned to Highlife by road—the river had lost its fascination for the time being. Here's a vote of thanks to Smitthy and Redwing, anyway. We fancy they've taught dear old Pon the invaluable lesson that river-begging doesn't pay

## RIVER-JOGGING DOESN'T PAY

Speedboat long Rounded-Up

### How Removites are Behaving

With the idea of encouraging the nightingale to sing, Alonzo Todd went out into the quad at midnight last night and started playing a tin whistle. Net result: One cat concert, two dog-barks, three protests from a sereech-owl, four old boots from down windows and no nightingale! Manieverer astonished the natives during the recent minor hearwave by strolling out in a heavy overcoat and fur gloves. Not having awakened properly since Christmas, he didn't quite realise what time of the year it was. Tom Dutton, our hard-of-hearing champion, created a bit of a sensation in the backshop recently. Peter Todd put the question: "What about having a oidor?" and Dutton immediately rushed off to Mr. Proust's room, borrowed a gun, and started blazing away for dear life. Later it transpired that he understood Peter to say: "What about shooting the tiger?"

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## MYSTERIOUS ICE-CREAM VENDOR

Who Was He?

### CORNET MERCHANT MELTS AWAY

Who was the strange ice-cream vendor who came to Greyfriars the other afternoon? Whence did he come? Whither did he go? These are the questions that Greyfriars fellows have been asking, each other ever since the mysterious visitor's flying visit. He slipped through the gates, pushing an ice-cream barrow, while Gosling's back was turned. He wasn't very tall and he wasn't very fat. Rather lean, in fact, with a sharp face and a rather hooked nose which was somewhat familiar. It was the complexion and the moustache that put us off. The former was a muddy brown and the latter jet-black and rather one-sided. We simply couldn't think of anyone we knew who had a muddy brown complexion and an ill-fitting jet-black moustache. Yet he was familiar. "Well, what are you doing here?" Wharton asked him. "I guess I no speaka da English. Speaka Italian, I kinder reckon. I calculate I'm hyer to solia da ice-cream!" "Strange!" This voice, 'oo, was familiar. Where had we heard it before? Puzzled, we gathered round the barrow and ordered ice-cream wafers and conotte by the score. The strangely-familiar Italian did a roaring trade and sold out in no time. Having sold out, he went out. Five minutes later another Italian gentleman entered, yelling and gesticulating in a most excited way. We gathered that someone had walked off with his barrow while he had parked it near the school. We took him down the lane to help him find our first mysterious visitor. We found the

barrow all right; but the black-moustached gent had vanished! After a whip-round for the victim, we adjourned. And the mystery remains a mystery still. The only Removite whose movements proved unaccounted for, was Fisher T. Fish from Xoe York, who respereed a little later, looking rather dirty about the face, as usual. He could only tell us that he hadn't seen a sign of an Italian anywhere. The problem seems altogether too baffling. The only way of avoiding an epidemic of brain-fag in the Removite is to give it up.

