

THE BEST PAPER FOR BEST SCHOOL YARNS!

The MAGNET 2^D



*Harry Wharton's
Peril!*

A CRACKSMAN'S REWARD!



A SPARKLING
LONG COMPLETE
STORY OF HARRY
WHARTON & CO.
AT GREYFRIARS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Return of the Cricketers!

"GOOD old Lancaster!"
"Here they come!"
"Yell, you men!" shouted Bob Cherry.
"Hurrah!"

There was a swarm of fellows in the old quadrangle at Greyfriars School under the golden June sunset.

A roar of voices awoke every echo of the ancient buildings.

"Hurrah!"

"Here they come!"

A lean man, with clear-cut features, looked from an open window on the quad. Below him fellows were swarming and shouting and waving caps. Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective, looked down on the Greyfriars crowd, with a smile. Bob Cherry of the Remove was shouting with all the force of his lungs, which was considerable. Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh were with him, adding their voices to the uproar. A hundred other fellows were yelling.

"Hurrah!"

"Shoulder high, you men!"

"Good old Lancaster!"

The cricketers were returning from St. Jude's. The name of Lancaster was on every tongue. From all directions it came to the ears of Ferrers Locke as he stood at the open window.

"Cherry!"

The quiet voice from the window reached Bob Cherry, and he stared round and looked up.

He grinned up at Ferrers Locke.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "They're coming in. Mr. Locke! We got back first on the bikes! Haven't you heard?"

"I gather that Greyfriars has won!" smiled the Baker Street detective.

"What-ho! By an innings and a

sackful of runs! It was Lancaster's game. What do you think of a century and a few over and the hat-trick twice?" gasped Bob.

"Ripping!" said Ferrers Locke.

"The ripfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamet Ram Singh.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Lancaster!"

"Shoulder high, you men!" came the deep voice of Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars.

"Rot!" came another voice—the voice of Dick Lancaster of the Sixth Form.

"Chuck it, you fellows! I tell you—"

"Up with him!"

"Hurrah!"

Ferrers Locke's eyes fixed on the handsome, laughing, protesting face of Lancaster of the Sixth. In spite of his protests, the hero of the hour was swung up on the shoulders of the two big Sixth-Formers—Wingate and Gwynne. They bore him towards the House amid a roaring mob of fellows wild with excitement. Handsome, flushed, a picture of boyish health and good looks, Dick Lancaster was the centre of the crowd, the cynosure of all eyes. But there was a cloud on the brow of Ferrers Locke as he looked down on him.

"Chuck it, you fellows!" He heard Lancaster's protesting voice again.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Lancaster!"

"Hip-pip—"

They swept on towards the House.

Dick Lancaster looked up.

There were two hundred fellows surging round him, dozens more at the windows. Yet something seemed to

impel Lancaster's glance towards the window where the Baker Street detective stood.

Their eyes met.

It was only for a moment; then Lancaster was swept on. But as he went, the laughter had died out of his handsome face and the ruddy colour paled in his cheeks.

It seemed as if the steady, penetrating look from the detective had sent a chill to the heart of the fellow who was idolised by all Greyfriars.

The crowd swarmed into the House. Lancaster, tossing over a sea of heads like a storm-tossed bark, passed from the view of the Baker Street detective at the upper window.

Ferrers Locke set his lips.

He turned from the window, his brow more darkly clouded.

Fellows were still shouting in the quad. The House echoed to the tramp of feet, the buzz of voices. The name of Lancaster could still be heard amid vociferous cheering.

It had been a great victory at St. Jude's, and Lancaster, as usual, had played a magnificent game. Even the fat squeak of Billy Bunter could be heard among the voices that cheered the conquering hero. Masters as well as boys joined in the ovation; Dick Lancaster was as popular with the staff as with the seniors of his own Form and the juniors of the Lower School.

"The pity of it!"

The words dropped almost unconsciously from the lips of Ferrers Locke as he paced his room.

"The pity of it!"

That handsome schoolboy, that magnificent cricketer, that gallant-looking lad who was the idol of the school—who was he? What was he?

Only Ferrers Locke knew—and one other! And that other—Harry Wharton of the Remove—could not tell what he knew, for he was missing from school—missing, as Locke knew now, to keep the secret that he had learned by chance.

Vague suspicion, vague theory, had crystallised into certain knowledge, and Ferrers Locke knew what Dick Lancaster was—a crook and the associate of crooks.

At Greyfriars, a schoolboy who won all hearts, a cricketer who carried all before him. Outside Greyfriars, the "Wizard," the secret cracksman who had long baffled Scotland Yard and the police of a dozen cities.

The pity of it!

Ferrers Locke's face clouded more darkly. Only that day proof had come into his hands while Dick Lancaster, little dreaming how the Baker Street detective had been engaged, had been playing cricket at St. Jude's winning one more victory for his school.

He had come back with the cricketers, happy and light-hearted, seemingly care-free, knowing nothing of the sword of Damocles that was now suspended over his head. Yet his face had blanched under the gaze of the detective, as if some instinct warned him of his danger.

Ferrers Locke looked from the window again.

The sun was sinking behind the old elms. The windows of Hall were lighted now. From the crowded Hall came an incessant buzz of voices, ripples of cheering. Lancaster was there—with what thoughts in his mind? Ferrers Locke wondered.

The detective's face hardened.

There was compassion in his heart—a compassion that the Baker Street detective seldom felt towards a crook. But the path of duty lay plain before him.

The schoolboy he could pity, but the Wizard was his quarry.

His hand slid into his pocket, and there was a faint clink of metal. He watched the sun sinking while he listened to the cheering that shook the rafters of the old Hall, knowing that before another sun rose on Greyfriars the handcuffs would have locked on the wrists of the schoolboy crook.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Whack!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Any news, Bunter?"
"I'm hungry!"
"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ass!"

Bob Cherry and his chums had come up to the Remove passage. It was Saturday, and there was "Sunday prep" that evening.

The chums of the Remove were not feeling much disposed to study the great works of that eminent epic poet, John Milton.

They had forgotten other matters while they were watching the cricket at St. Jude's and during the excitement of the ovation that had followed Dick Lancaster's return with the cricketers. But the thought of their missing chum was always at the back of their minds, and they were thinking of Harry Wharton now.

Where was Wharton?

For more than a week the captain of the Greyfriars Remove had been missing from his accustomed place.

Why he had been kidnapped, and by whom, was a mystery to the whole school.

That he was living was certain, for a letter had been received from him; but it gave no clue to his whereabouts. The kidnappers had allowed him to write, apparently, to relieve the minds of his friends, but they had been careful that the letter should furnish no clue.

As Billy Bunter rolled up to them in the Remove passage the chums of the Remove hoped for a moment that there was news. Ferrers Locke had been over a week at Greyfriars, and he was there to find the missing junior. But the Baker Street detective seemed, for once, to be at a loss.

The juniors' faith in Ferrers Locke was sinking to a low ebb. They did not expect him to perform miracles, but they did expect something to come of his investigations into the disappearance of Harry Wharton. Yet day followed day, and nothing was made known.

"No news of Wharton?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Wharton? Not that I know of," answered Bunter. "Never mind Wharton—"

"You fat chump!"

"It's rotten!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I really think Mr. Locke ought to have hit on something by this time."

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" sighed Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"The newfulness of our esteemed and

Imprisonment stares the schoolboy cracksman in the face now that his secret is known. Then Fate intervenes and he is given the chance, for which he has longed all his life, to make good!

ridiculous chum would be a boonful blessing."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Looks as if Ferrers Locke is going to make a permanent job of this," grunted Bob Cherry. "I'm rather losing faith in him."

"I suppose he's doing his best," said Frank Nugent.

Grunt, from Johnny Bull.

"Nothing's come of it, anyhow. He seems to me to be doing nothing but loaf about the school. Wherever Wharton is, he isn't here! I suppose Locke doesn't expect to spot him in the quad some day?"

"Perhaps the esteemed Locke has something up his absurd sleeve!" suggested Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Time he trotted it out if he has!" said Bob.

Billy Bunter blinked impatiently at the chums of the Remove. It was just like them to be discussing this trifling matter, when there was a matter of immensely greater importance to be considered. Wharton had been missing over a week, and they might really have got used to it by this time, Bunter considered.

"I say, you fellows, do be serious," said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, I was going to tell you—"

"Anything about Wharton?"

"Oh, blow Wharton! For goodness' sake leave off talking about Wharton! I was going to say—"

"Fathead!"

"My postal order hasn't come—"

"What?" roared Bob Cherry.

"It hasn't!" said Bunter, blinking seriously at the chums of the Remove

through his big spectacles. "I believe I mentioned to you fellows that I was expecting a postal order. Well, there's been some delay in the post, and it hasn't come. I had to tea in Hall today. I've had nothing since."

Billy Bunter paused, quite dramatically.

Apparently he expected this statement to impress on the juniors the real seriousness of the situation.

Bunter was hungry! The mysterious disappearance of the captain of the Remove was a very slight matter in comparison—in Billy Bunter's estimation, at least!

"If there was only something a fellow could do!" muttered Nugent.

"Eh? There is, old chap!" said Bunter.

Nugent stared at him. He was thinking of Harry Wharton—a trifle that was not worth Bunter's attention. Bunter was thinking of supper.

"You fat ass, what can a fellow do?" demanded Nugent. "I've thought it over and over and over, and I can't think of anything. We're just helpless!"

"What rot! The tuckshop's still open—"

"The tuckshop?" repeated Nugent

blankly. "What's the tuckshop got to do with Wharton, you fat chump?"

Billy Bunter gave an impatient snort.

"You ass, who's talking about Wharton?" he hooted.

"I was, dummy!"

"Well, don't!" snapped Bunter. "For goodness' sake be serious! There's no time to lose before the tuckshop closes, if we're going to have a study supper. Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Carthage was burning! Look here, you fellows—"

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Look here, you can leave the shopping to me," said Bunter. "If you've got a pound note—"

"You benighted idiot—"

"Well, a ten-bob note," said Bunter.

"For goodness' sake leave off jawing about Wharton and let's think about supper. I was going to stand you fellows a spread if my postal order had come in time. It hasn't! I've had nothing since tea, and I can tell you I'm jolly hungry! If you fellows have got something in the study—"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"I've got something in my study," he said. "I'll stand you a whack in what I've got if you like, Bunter."

Billy Bunter beamed.

"Come on, old fellow!" he said, quite affectionately. "That's what I call pally!"

"Look here—" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, come on!" said Bob. "There's plenty to go round, if you fellows would like any. But I'm going to stand Bunter his whack first."

Bob closed one eye at his chums, unseen by the Owl of the Remove. Bunter tugged at his sleeve.

"Come on, old chap!" he urged.

Bunter rolled along the Remove passage to Study No. 13 with Bob. The other fellows followed on. Mark Linley and little Wun Lung were in the study, and they looked round inquiringly at the crowd that arrived in the doorway. Billy Bunter rolled in.

"Where is it, old bean?" he asked eagerly. "In the cupboard?"

"No; on the shelf," answered Bob.

Bunter blinked up at the shelf. He could see nothing on the shelf but a row of books and a cricket stump.

"I don't see—" he began.

"Here you are, old fat bean!"

Bob stepped across to the shelf and took down the cricket stump.

Bunter blinked at it.

"Wharrer you mean, you ass?" he demanded. "You said you had something in your study and you were going to stand me a whack."

"Right on the wicket! I've a cricket stump in my study—"

"Eh?"

"And I'm going to stand you a whack—"

"I say—"

"And here it is!"

"Yarooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack!

"Yow — ow — ow — ow — woooop!" roared Bunter, as the cricket stump established contact with his tight trousers. "Yow—ow—ow! Beast! Leave off! Whoop!"

"My dear chap, I'm standing you a whack! There's plenty to go round, if the other fellows want any. But I don't suppose they do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yarooooooooh! Beast! Whoop!"

Billy Bunter made a frantic jump for the door. Apparently he had had enough of what Bob Cherry had in his study, and he did not want any more.

"Have some more!" chortled Bob. "There's lots, Bunter! Don't hurry away, old chap! Have some more! Have another whack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beast! Wow!"

Billy Bunter faded away down the Remove passage. Evidently the Owl of the Remove was satisfied with the whack he had already received.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In the Dark Hours!

MIDNIGHT!

Greyfriars School lay silent and sleeping under the stars that glistened in the calm, clear sky of June.

But there was one who was not sleeping, even at that late hour; perhaps more than one.

No light burned from a single window, in the great mass of buildings. But a window in the Sixth Form studies was partly open, and a face looked out into the shady quadrangle.

Lancaster of the Sixth was wide awake.

He had had a tiring day. He had played a hard game at St. Jude's. But there was no look of fatigue about the handsome Sixth-Former. Every other fellow in the Sixth was fast asleep at that hour; but the Wizard was accustomed, from of old, to wakefulness while others slept.

There was a slight paleness in the cheeks of the schoolboy crook, and his eyes were restless as he stared into the starlit quadrangle.

The last chime of midnight had died away. All was silent. Lancaster wondered whether Ferrers Locke was sleeping.

What had he to fear?

The detective had been more than a week at the school. Obviously, he had found no clue to the missing junior. Several times he had talked with Lancaster of the Sixth, and his manner had not varied from his manner towards other senior fellows. The Wizard's eyes were keen, but they had read nothing in the impassive face of the Baker Street detective.

Did he suspect? Could he?

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Had he searched the study while Lancaster was away playing cricket at St. Jude's that day? Not a sign of a search had met Lancaster's eyes, but he knew that Ferrers Locke would leave no sign if he searched.

If he had searched, at all events, nothing had rewarded him. There was nothing in the schoolboy crook's possession to betray him—save the wallet of strange tools that the Wizard used when he cracked a crib. And that wallet had been hidden in the hollow oak, by the towpath, the day before, safe from curious eyes. Ferrers Locke had been welcome to search the study if he chose.

He was safe. If there was a vague suspicion in Locke's mind, it could come to nothing. Yet there was a deep uneasiness in Lancaster's heart. It seemed to him that he had read something in the detective's eyes as he looked down from the window on the returning cricketers. Fancy, perhaps—yet it haunted him.

A sigh left the lips of the schoolboy crook.

Since Ferrers Locke had been at Greyfriars, all his wits had been on the alert, his nerves tensed. Yet his heart was not in that unspoken contest. Incessantly his thoughts wandered to the schoolboy who had been taken away from his friends, who was a prisoner in a barred room far from the school.

It could not go on! Slimy Sugden had made a crook of the boy, whose training had been in his hands; but he had not been able to eliminate his conscience. He had placed him at Greyfriars to carry out his own cunning schemes, never allowing for the influence of such surroundings on the hapless lad.

But Greyfriars had worked a change that surprised Lancaster himself—and that puzzled and enraged the master crook. Left to himself, the boy would have thrown up the whole thing—thrown over the gang—faced poverty, faced anything that might come, rather than keep on as a secret breaker of the law.

Slimy Sugden had one hold on him now—only one—but that was irresistible. If Lancaster failed him, all Greyfriars would know what he was, who he was—and the whole school would ring with it. And the hapless victim of a cunning schemer felt, with a shudder, that he could not face it. Anything but that—that, never!

He was thinking of it now—thinking of the cheery faces that had encircled him in Hall, of the thunderous cheering that had made the old rafters ring—of Wingate, Gwynne, Blundell, his many friends. If they knew—

They must never know! But if they were not to know, the junior who knew his secret was doomed to hopeless imprisonment. That could not be—he felt that it could not be! But there was no alternative!

The half-hour chimed.

Lancaster stirred at last. Softly, quietly, he slipped from the window, silently he drew down the sash.

Like a shadow among shadows, he flitted across the quad. He flitted through the darkness of the old Cloisters.

He had left the wallet of cracksman's tools concealed in the hollow oak by the river. They were safe there; but the sooner they were back in his own care the better. Chance might lead to their discovery if they remained long in the hollow oak.

Not that the Wizard intended to use those tools again while Ferrers Locke was at Greyfriars. Even Slimy Sugden

had agreed to that, keen as he was for the Wizard to be at work again. Many a rich "crib" had been marked out by the master crook for the Wizard's light fingers. Greyfriars School was a centre from which the secret cracksman was to work, unsuspected.

But while the Baker Street detective was on the scene the Wizard was to disappear, leaving the Greyfriars Sixth-Former in his place. Even Sugden agreed that it was necessary while Ferrers Locke was there.

It was a respite. It made Lancaster glad, at times, that Ferrers Locke was there. He was at the master crook's mercy, and he had to obey orders, or face the consequences. Yet his whole soul shrank from carrying on the surreptitious, nefarious work for which he was at the school. So long as Locke remained, he had a respite.

He reached the wall, and climbed lightly. Before dropping into the lane outside, he paused and listened.

His heart gave a throb.

Some faint sound reached his alert ears, from the deep darkness of the old Cloisters behind him.

He listened with straining ears.

But there was no further sound. A bitter smile came over the pale, handsome face.

"It was the wind! You're losing your nerve!" he muttered. "Ferrers Locke is sleeping—and if he were not—pah!"

He dropped from the wall.

The starlight lay in silvery pools among the trees. But the gliding figure of the schoolboy crook did not appear where the starlight fell. Caution was second nature to the Wizard. Taking advantage of every shadow, he went noiselessly on his way.

The starlit river gleamed before his eyes. There was a faint murmur in the silence of the summer night, as the Sark rolled on its way to the sea. Lancaster hurried along the towpath, and turned into the wood.

A few minutes, and he stood under the massive oak. It was densely dark under the thick, overhanging, intermingled branches of the wood. But the Wizard was accustomed to working in the dark. He knew where he was, and he clambered lightly into the branches of the oak.

High up in the massive old tree there was a hollow in the trunk, and into that hollow the schoolboy crook thrust his hand. It came into contact with a leather wallet.

He breathed more freely.

Locke, he was fairly certain, had searched his study during his absence at St. Jude's. Failing to find what he looked for, he had no doubt sought further. But what chance could have led him to the oak in the wood by the towpath? There had been nothing to fear—nothing! Yet there had been, in Lancaster's mind, a haunting fear that the hidden wallet might have been found, and it was with deep relief that he felt it under his hand.

It was there—where he had left it! He drew it from the place of concealment. A twig snapped in the wood below.

Was his nerve failing him? It was a natural sound in the wood, yet it made his heart leap and throb like that of a hunted animal.

He remained quite still, listening.

His eyes strained downward. Thick foliage intervened between him and the ground, and the darkness was intense. He could see nothing—and now he could hear nothing. Was it that his nerve

was failing him, or was it the old instinct of the Wizard warning him of danger? Was that a faint rustle in the thickets below—was it the wind from the sea? His ear-drums throbbed with the intensity of listening.

It was nothing—nothing! It was because he had repented, because shame and remorse tortured him, that he was losing his old nerve. He thrust the wallet into an inner pocket, and swung himself down the branches.

He dropped lightly to the ground. And as he dropped, a grasp closed on him, sending a shuddering thrill through his body—a grasp more powerful than his own, strong as he was. For a single instant of horror he yielded to that powerful grip. Then his teeth shut hard, and in the black darkness under the oak, silently, savagely, he fought.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

By a Hair's Breadth!

BLACKNESS was round the schoolboy crook, as he struggled with his sudden, unseen assailant. He could see nothing. But he knew whose grasp was laid on him. He did not need telling that.

He could hear a deep breathing—deep but steady. Those iron arms were locked round him in a resistless band.

Silently, savagely, he resisted. He was strong, but the other was stronger. In spite of his stubborn resistance he was borne over, borne to the ground.

He fell, and a knee was planted on his chest. His wrists were seized and dragged together.

He knew what was to follow. The click of the handcuffs! Then he would be a powerless prisoner—then he would be dragged from the blackness of the wood into the starlight—recognised, known beyond all doubt—and in his pocket were the tools of the Wizard—He had asked himself an hour ago whether it was possible that Ferrers Locke suspected him! Even then, Locke had been laying this trap! He heard a chink of metal.

He heard panting breath and running feet.

The sounds died away. Ferrers Locke—if it had been Ferrers Locke—was gone. But the schoolboy crook waited long minutes before he dropped from the tree again.

He dropped at last, silently, and stood leaning against the trunk. He breathed hard and deep. His brain was still in a whirl; but he calmed himself and tried to think.

Ferrers Locke knew! He could not doubt it further. Locke—he could not imagine how—knew that the Wizard's wallet of tools had been hidden in the hollow oak. He had found them there, and no doubt taken them away for examination; and replaced them afterwards where he had found them in order to catch the schoolboy cracksman in this deadly trap. Had he shadowed Lancaster from the



"I said I was going to stand you a whack," said Bob Cherry. "Well, here it is!" Whack! "Yow-ow-woop!" roared Bunter, as the cricket stump established contact with his tight trousers.

He knew now what that snapping of a twig in the silence had meant. His instinct had been true, after all. He knew that Ferrers Locke stood in the darkness beneath the oak, waiting for him to descend—into his hands. And he had dropped—into the grasp of the Baker Street detective. And as he struggled, seeing nothing, feeling only that iron grasp, he knew that he was trapped; that the handcuffs were ready to fasten on his wrists; that he was taken, with the cracksman's tools on him, proof of what he was. Proof—for all Greyfriars to know—proof, for all the world to know! And he shut his teeth harder and fought with all his strength.

The man who grasped him was strong, sinowy; the grasp of the unseen hands was like that of a steel vice. But Lancaster was strong, too, and he was desperate.

As if that sound, knelling doom to his ears, gave him a new and desperate strength, Lancaster made one more frantic effort, and tore his right hand free.

The next instant, clenched, hard as iron, it crashed upward into the shadowy face above him.

He heard a grunt. He struck again, fiercely; tore himself loose from the grasp that, for a moment, relaxed, and rolled aside.

A second more and he was on his feet, plunging away through the thickets. A grasping hand, barely missed him as he ran.

He ran desperately. Suddenly he stopped, groped to a tree-trunk, grasped it, and dragged himself up.

Silent, stilling his throbbing breath, Lancaster listened. There was a crashing in the thickets.

school, or had he been waiting in the wood for him to come and remove the hidden wallet? It mattered little. He knew, and he had planned to capture the boy cracksman with the tools on him. But he had failed!

He had failed—and whatever he suspected, whatever he knew, he had no proof.

The game was not up yet! Lancaster moved from the tree at last. With cautious steps he picked his way through the wood. He listened at every step, like a hunted hare. But there was no sound.

Ferrers Locke was gone. Back to the school, most likely, to watch there for Lancaster's return.

Not till he was a mile from the scene

of that brief but desperate struggle did the schoolboy crook emerge from the deep cover of the wood. He came out on the bank of the river at last.

In the dim glimmer of the midnight stars he gathered stones, and crammed the wallet as full as it would hold.

Then, with a swing of his arm, he tossed it into the middle of the river.

There was a splash, a widening circle of ripples.

The wallet disappeared.

Lancaster breathed more freely.

The cracksman's outfit was safely hidden now—never to meet a human eye again.

He turned, and followed a footpath through the wood back to the school. But he did not enter by way of the Cloisters, as he had left. Ferrers Locke had failed, and if he found Lancaster now he would find a Sixth-Former of Greyfriars out of bounds at night; but the evidence that connected him with the Wizard was safe at the bottom of the Sark. But if he was watching, Lancaster did not intend that the keen eyes should fall upon him. It was by way of the Head's garden that he reached the precincts of the school again; and he did not head for his study. Silently, in the shadows, he circled the building, and a back window—easily enough manipulated by the light fingers of the Wizard—admitted him to the House.

There was a sardonic smile on his face as he fastened the window behind him and crept away by dark passages and stairs.

The Sixth Form passage was silent when he reached his study door. He had left that door locked; he found it locked still. Silently he unlocked the door, glided into the study, and closed the door behind him.

Silently he stepped to the window.

Outside, in the starlit quad, the deep shadow of an elm fell. In that deep shadow Lancaster thought he discerned a darker shadow.

His lip curved in a sneer.

Ferrers Locke, watching for his return! Did the detective think that he would return the way he left—did he think that the Wizard's tools were still in his keeping?

He shrugged his shoulders.

For a long moment he gazed from the window, the sneer on his handsome face. Then he stepped back.

A few minutes more, and he was in bed.

Still a few more minutes, and he slept! If Ferrers Locke was watching and waiting in the shadow outside the schoolboy crook's window, he watched and waited in vain. Within the room Dick Lancaster slept as peacefully as if no care troubled his mind; and in his slumber he was dreaming, not of that desperate struggle in the wood by the towpath, not of the narrow escape he had had of utter disaster, of disgrace and ruin, but of the game he had played that day on St. Jude's cricket ground. In slumber, at least, he could forget the Wizard, and remember only Dick Lancaster, schoolboy and cricketer.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Escape!

HARRY WHARTON breathed hard.

Through the bars at the window of the room where the Greyfriars junior was a prisoner fell shafts of sunlight—the sunlight of a bright June morning. The chain with which his captors had first secured him to a staple in the wall had been taken

away now. Evidently his captors had not considered it necessary for a mere boy. In that they under-estimated the Greyfriars junior.

Wharton, as he stood in that solitary room, had his eyes fixed on the door—the door that was locked and barred on the outside.

Footsteps were audible approaching the door.

Once every day the kidnapped junior was taken from the prison-room to walk in the garden between the two ruffians who took turns in watching him.

It was time now for his morning exercise, a concession, as Wharton guessed, that he owed to Lancaster.

Slimy, Weasel, and the rest of the gang would have cared little if his health had failed; indeed, he had no doubt that they would have been glad to be relieved of the trouble of guarding a prisoner.

He knew that he owed life itself to Lancaster. He had been kidnapped because he knew the Wizard's secret; but only too well he knew that, but for the Wizard, it was not by means of kidnapping that the gang would have secured his silence.

The schoolboy crook stood between him and a terrible fate. He knew it; and weary and bitter as his imprisonment was, he could not but feel something like gratitude towards Lancaster.

For weeks now he had been a prisoner. Hope of rescue was almost dead in his breast.

But every day his determination grew and strengthened—to escape. And now he was ready to put it to the touch. If he failed, he failed; but at the risk of life he was resolved to make a fight for his liberty.

One of the rascals was coming to take him down the stairs. Another would be waiting at the door below. There were always two of them at hand when he was taken out of the house. And care was taken that he saw nothing when he was outside the walls. He was always blindfolded before he passed out of the door.

The footsteps drew nearer.

Wharton stepped softly towards the door. The crooks had been careful that there should be nothing in the prison-room that he could use as a weapon. But the Greyfriars junior had found a weapon—a leg broken from a chair—which he could use as a cudgel.

He grasped it almost convulsively in his hand—his hand behind him. It was useless to pit his strength against a man's in a struggle—with others within hearing. And he knew that he would have time for only one blow—if he had time for that.

It was a desperate attempt, with all the chances against success—but the kidnapped junior was desperate.

He waited with beating heart.

He heard footsteps stop at the door of the prison-room; he heard the key turn back in the lock, the bars removed.

The door swung open.

A scowling low-browed face looked in, with ferret-eyes. It was the Weasel.

Without a word he stepped towards Wharton, to grasp his arm and lead him from the room.

It was now or never.

Wharton's courage did not fail.

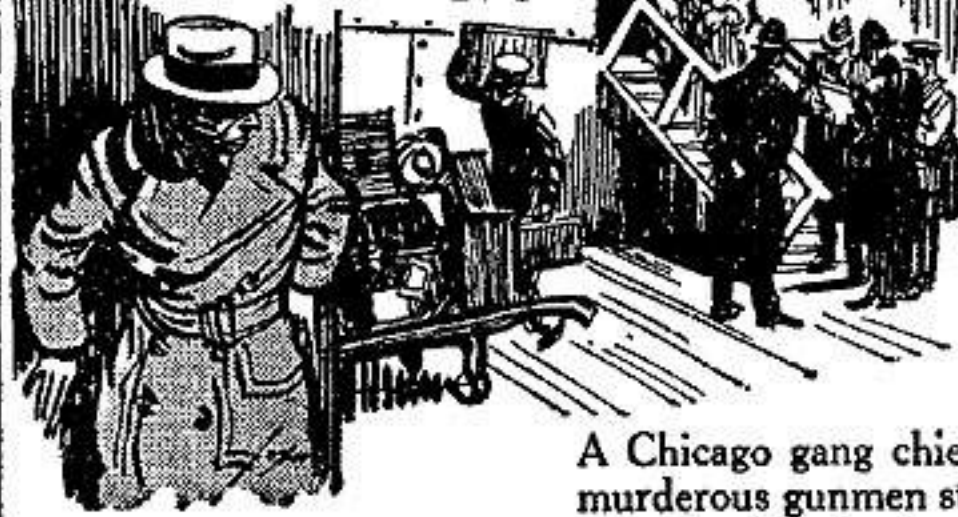
As the rough hand was stretched out towards him, Harry Wharton's right hand flashed out from behind him, the cudgel in it.

Crash!

The smashing blow was struck, before the Weasel had a chance of guarding, of even knowing that it was coming.

The cudgel crashed on the bullet head

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and the Weasel staggered back with a gasping cry, and fell heavily to the floor.

Wharton panted.

He had put all his strength into the blow; and the ruffian sprawled on the floor, half stunned.

In an instant Wharton was past him, and had leaped out of the room. He stayed a second to slam the door and turn the key. There were other foes—how many he did not know—but from the Weasel's pursuit, at least, he was now safe for a time.

Before him was the staircase, down which he was led daily to the garden door. The door on the garden was open; by it stood a sharp-featured man, whom Wharton had heard the Weasel address as "Ratty." Ratty the Rogue had the muffler in his hand which was to be used to blindfold the junior before he was taken out. But for the moment his back was turned; he was looking out into the sunny garden.

Wharton glanced round him hurriedly. There was a passage beyond the head of the staircase, with rooms opening on it.

He dashed along the passage, and opened the first door he came to.

The cudgel was ready in his hand, if the room was occupied. But it was a bed-room, and vacant. He ran in, closed the door and locked it. As he did so, he heard a roar from the direction of the prison-room, and a sound of hammering fists. The Weasel, hard as he had been hit, was already on his feet, shouting, and hammering to give the alarm.

Wharton did not stop to listen. There was a window looking on the garden from the bed-room in which he found himself. He darted across, threw open the window, and stared out breathlessly.

It was a large garden, with shrubberies extending towards a distant wall. The drop from the window was steep.

But he had no choice. He dropped the cudgel, climbed out of the window, and hung to the sill with both hands. Then he dropped.

His feet struck into a flower-bed below, and he rolled over. In a twinkling he was on his feet again, and running.

From the direction of the house behind him came shouting, yelling; the whole place hummed like a hive of bees. Evidently the alarm had already spread.

Wharton raced through the shrubberies, heading for the distant wall. He was free—for the moment—free, if he could keep his freedom! Beyond that wall was liberty.

He ran as he had seldom run before.

From a path in the shrubberies a man started up before him—a fat man with a shiny, greasy complexion. Billy Bunter would have known him by sight, for Billy Bunter had witnessed a meeting between Lancaster, of the Sixth, and Slimy Sugden. Wharton did not know Slimy Sugden; but he knew that the fat man must be an enemy. He did not stop—he rushed straight on, and crashed into the man.

There was a gasping grunt from Slimy Sugden, and he sprawled over.

Wharton reeled from the shock.

But he recovered himself and rushed on. Without looking round, he knew that several men had emerged from the house and were racing after him. But he had a good start. He tore on. With set teeth and glinting eyes, he raced for the wall—nearer now.

Bang!

Slimy Sugden had gained his feet, panting, gasping, spluttering with rage. He did not attempt to pursue the junior—the chase would have been hopeless for the fat man. He grabbed an automatic from his hip pocket, and

fired. But the crash of his fall had shaken the crook, and the bullet missed by a yard or more.

Wharton panted.

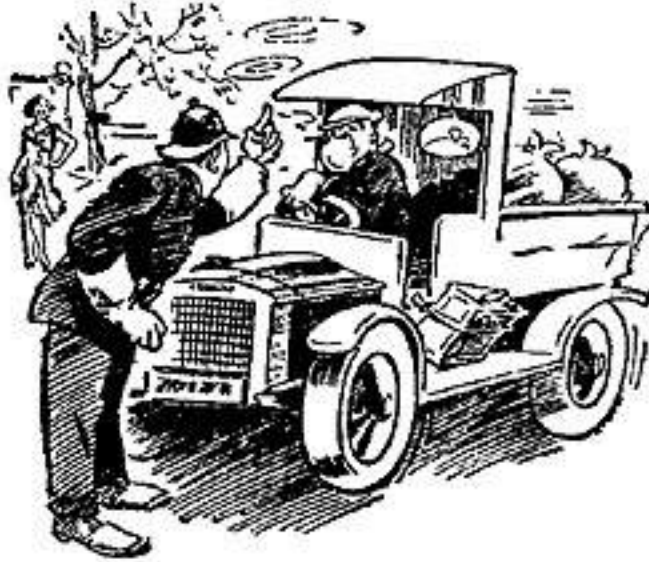
He was at the wall now. It was seven feet high—and, without pausing in his run, he leaped and caught the top.

There was a yelling of voices behind him, and the automatic cracked again. The bullet splintered the wall within six inches of Wharton's head.

The next moment the Greyfriars junior had dropped into the road outside. Gulping in breath; the junior stared round him. A long white road wound away over a hillside—in the distance, the smoke of a farmhouse rose against the blue sky; nearer at hand cattle were grazing in the fields. But

**SPIN A YARN
and
ROPE IN A PENKNIFE**

like N. H. Shephard, of 3, Tenbury Road, King's Heath, Birmingham, who wins one of this week's topping prizes with the following amusing storyette:



Policeman: "Hi, you, don't you know that this is a 'one-way' street?"

Lorry-driver: "Well, what are yer worryin' abaht? I'm goin' one way, ain't I?"

NOTE.—All jokes and Greyfriars limericks should be addressed to: c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

the countryside was lonely; there was no man in sight. He heard the clang of a gate farther along the wall. The pursuers were close. Even yet he would be run down before he could escape and find help—

Chug-chug-chug!

It was the sound of a motor-bike; and it came like music to the junior's ears on that lonely road.

Chug-chug-chug! Honk!

He ran into the road.

A motor-cyclist was coming along swiftly. He would be on the scene in a few moments. Wharton waved his hand to the rider.

"Stop! Help! Help! Help!"

The rider shut off. Wharton ran desperately to meet him. On the road he could hear running feet.

"Help! Help!" he shouted. "Help! Give me a lift—help!"

He saw the motor-cyclist leap from the saddle. The machine went reeling, as if the rider had forgotten it. He leaped towards Wharton.

"Help—"

The cry died on Wharton's tongue.

He stared dizzily at the rider from whom he had expected help.

"Wharton!"

"Lancaster!"

The junior, desperate, turned to run. Lancaster's hand fell on his shoulder.

"Wharton—" he muttered hoarsely. Wharton struck his hand aside and ran. But it was too late. Ratty the Rogue and two other men were on the spot now, and their grasp closed on the Greyfriars junior. For a moment he struggled, and then, as they grasped him on all sides, he knew that all was lost.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Friend and Foe!

SLIMY SUGDEN came panting up. The master-crook's fat face was distorted with rage.

"You've got him!"

"We got him!" snarled Ratty.

"Get him in—get him out of sight—quick! Quick!" panted Sugden. "Anyone might pass—quick—"

Wharton, resisting feebly, was dragged along to the gate and bundled headlong in. Lancaster, his face white as chalk, followed. Slimy Sugden closed the gate and barred it.

"Now—" he hissed, between his teeth.

"Let that kid alone!" Lancaster found his voice at last. He strode towards the struggling junior, and shoved aside, unceremoniously, the men who were holding him. "Leave him to me."

"Look here—" snarled Ratty savagely.

"Leave him to me, I tell you!" snapped Lancaster.

"You're not boss here, Wizard! I tell you—"

"Stand aside!"

The ruffians scowled savagely; but there was something compelling in the voice of the schoolboy crook. They stood back, and Lancaster dropped his hand gently enough on the junior's shoulder. Wharton, exhausted by the struggle, leaned on him, panting.

"Dick!" Slimy Sugden's voice was husky with rage. "Dick! Keep out of this! The kid's had his chance, and now—"

"Cut it out, Slimy," said Lancaster coolly and contemptuously. "You're not going to harm the kid."

"He nearly got away!" snarled Sugden. "If he'd got clear—"

"He would have got clear, very likely, if I had not come up!" snapped Lancaster. "You owe it to me and to chance that the police will not be coming down on your den."

"You'll go too far, Dick!" muttered Sugden. "You'll go too far—"

"Oh, cut it out! I heard shots—it's you that are in danger of going too far, Slimy! If you'd hurt the kid—" Lancaster's eyes blazed. "Fool! Can't you take care of a prisoner who's safe in your hands? If you'd hurt him I'd see that you got what was coming to you! Thank your lucky stars that he's not hurt. I'd see you safe in the stone jug if he was—you, and every man in the gang!"

There was a growl of rage from the crooks, and Slimy Sugden's eyes burned at the Sixth-Former of Greyfriars. From the direction of the house the Weasel came, a stream of crimson running down his brutal face, his features convulsed with rage. His ferret eyes gleamed at Wharton.

"You got him!" breathed the Weasel.

He sprang at the junior. Lancaster's fist shot out, landing fairly between the

ferrety eyes. The Weasel went down like a log.

"Lie there, you dog!" snapped Lancaster.

"Dick!" hissed Sugden.

His fat face was working, his fingers shaking with fury. Harry Wharton stood silent, close to Lancaster. The gang were like tigers round him, and if Lancaster failed to protect him now he knew that he was lost.

Cool as ice, Lancaster faced the enraged crook. His glance swept scornfully over the fat, greasy face. Sugden's hand was in the pocket that hid the automatic.

"Cut it out, Slimy!" said Lancaster. "You can't afford to quarrel with me, and you know it! And you know that if anything happens to this kid while he's in your hands I will bring the police down on you! You know that I'm a man of my word, and you'd better keep your gang in order!"

He turned to the junior.

"Come, Wharton!"

He walked up the path to the house, Wharton at his side. There was a sound of muttered curses behind them.

Silently Wharton re-entered the house he had hoped never to enter again. He had failed, and his attempt to escape had roused the savage fury of the brutes who held him a prisoner. Silently, with a heavy heart, he followed Lancaster up the stairs, back to the prison-room. His heart was like lead as he entered it. But there was no chance of resistance now, no chance of life if Lancaster ceased to stand between him and Slimy Sugden's gang.

"You're safe!" Lancaster spoke quietly, calmly. "They are raging, but they dare not harm you! They know I will keep my word."

Wharton nodded without speaking.

Lancaster stood looking at him. The flush had died out of his face, and he was pale.

"I'm sorry, Wharton!" he said at last. "More sorry than I can say—more than you may believe! If only you'd never found out—"

"I never wanted to—"

"I know! I know!" Lancaster paced the room with hurried, irregular steps. "It can't go on! But where's the help? I can protect your life; they dare not harm you! I can do no more! If I had the choice—"

"You have the choice, Lancaster," said Harry quietly. "Throw the scoundrels over. What can you have in common with villains like that?"

"I am one of them," said Lancaster bitterly. "I have always been one of them. If I could get clear, if only I could get clear—" He broke off. "But to let the school know, to let all Greyfriars know that Lancaster of the Sixth is a crook, a thief, a liar, and rascal!" He shivered. "I can't! It's too much to ask! I can't!"

Wharton stood silent.

Crook the fellow was, crook and outcast, a breaker of the law, a danger to society. Yet the junior could neither dislike him nor despise him. In spite of all, he felt his old liking for Lancaster of the Sixth. Uppermost in his mind was the same thought that had been in Ferrers Locke's—the pity of it!

Crook, outcast, breaker of the law—yet the good in him predominated over the bad! A bad training in the hands of bad men had made him what he was; but his nature turned to the light, not to the dark. It was the good in him that made him cling to Greyfriars, to the faith and respect of his friends there. But for that, Wharton realised, he would

have turned his back on the past, turned his back on Slimy Sugden and the gang. But the master crook had that one hold on him—he dared not let Greyfriars know the truth.

"It's no good talking!" Lancaster spoke abruptly. "I don't know how it will end, but it can't last! But—"

He broke off.

"You're safe, at all events," he said. "Don't try it on again—you'll have no chance! But you're safe! Keep that in mind when you think of me, kid, and think as kindly as you can."

Without another word he stepped from the room, closed the door, and Wharton heard the key turn.

He was a prisoner again.

Outside the June sun was shining, and the song of the birds reached him through the window, open behind the bars. He was a prisoner, and no escape would be possible now; the crooks would be too careful for that. And rescue?

Hope was almost dead in the junior's breast. Yet strangely enough, he was thinking, as he stood in the silent room, less of himself and the hopeless days that stretched before him than of the schoolboy crook and the stricken, tormented face of Lancaster when he had left him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Danger!

SLIMY SUGDEN lifted his eyes from a heap of papers on a roll-top desk and turned on his swivel-chair. The greasy face was calm now; all traces of anger and excitement had passed. In his business-room at the house where Harry Wharton was a prisoner, and which was the headquarters of the gang, Slimy was attending to business, and he had plenty to which to attend. Moneylender, fence, master crook, and many other things, Mr. Sylvester Sugden had many irons in the fire.

He turned from his desk as Lancaster came quietly into the room, and fixed his shiny black eyes on the Sixth-Former of Greyfriars. He did not rise, as Lancaster came over to him, and the Greyfriars senior smiled in a curious, sardonic way as he saw the papers on which Sugden had been busy. Mr. Sylvester Sugden, of Beech House, Surrey, was filling in his income-tax return, though had he filled in all particulars as to "sources of income," as the law demanded, he would certainly have made the local tax-inspector jump.

"Well?" said Sugden.

"Oh, get on with it, and don't mind me!" said Lancaster sarcastically. "All profits from whatever source—are you putting down the profit on the gold plate looted from Marsden Manor? I believe you're entitled to set losses against profits, so don't forget to put in the loss on the job at Hogben Grange, which never came off."

Slimy Sugden grinned.

At Beech House, Sugden was known as a moneylender, and he paid his rates and taxes like any other citizen. But it was only his moneylending business that was mentioned in his income-tax return. He was not likely to enter his profits as a receiver of stolen goods and as the director of robberies in all parts of the country.

But the grin faded from the greasy face as Lancaster throw himself into a chair. It was easy for the master crook to see that something had happened to the schoolboy cracksman.

"What is it, Dick?" he asked quietly.

"What has brought you here? You're not allowed as a rule, I suppose, to

career about the country in the morning on your motor-bike?"

"I got leave this morning. I'm 'persona grata' with my headmaster, and have only to ask," said Lancaster. "I had to see you, Slimy! Lucky I came, as it turns out—"

"Never mind that! The boy is safe again," said Slimy. "What has happened at Greyfriars?"

"The game's up!"

"So you said before when the boy Wharton found you out," answered Slimy Sugden calmly. "But the game was very far from up. I took measures to make the boy keep his secret, measures that have not failed. You are weakening, Dick, and losing your nerve."

Lancaster shrugged his shoulders.

"The game's up!" he repeated. "If you fancy that you can deal with Ferrers Locke as you dealt with the boy Wharton, go ahead."

Sugden's eyes narrowed to pin points.

"Put it plain!" he snapped.

"Locke knows."

"What does he know?"

"Everything—or nearly."

"Yet you are free," said Sugden.

"The handcuffs are not on your wrists. You are still at Greyfriars."

"Locke knows," repeated Lancaster. "How, I cannot guess—but the man is a demon! Yesterday I played in a cricket match, at a school some distance from Greyfriars. I foresaw, of course, that Locke would probably search my quarters while I was absent for a whole day."

"The possibility existed, at least," assented Sugden. "But I presume that you took your precautions."

"I concealed the Wizard's wallet of tools in a hollow cak, to remain there till after I returned."

"Well, then—"

"Last night I slipped out to get them back. They were still there—but Locke had found them. He left them there for me."

"How do you know?"

"Either he shadowed me from the school last night, or else he was waiting in the wood—the former, I think. I dropped from the tree—into his hands!"

Sugden started.

"And then—"

"I had luck—I got away. It was black darkness, and he did not see me." Lancaster laughed. "He knew that it was I—I am sure of that. Had he flashed a light on me, to make sure, I should have escaped—a split second would have been enough. He did not take the chance—he grabbed me in the dark. But I had luck—I broke away and got clear."

"Good!" breathed Sugden. "If he had caught you with the goods on you—"

"That was his game, of course. He knew, but he had no proof. But with a set of cracksman's tools on me—"

"He is cunning! And the tools—"

"At the bottom of the river."

"And—"

"I got back by a different way. I fancy that he waited under my study window to watch for my return. If so, he had his trouble for his pains."

Slimy Sugden pursed his lips. His thick brows were drawn together, and his black eyes glinted under them.

"You have seen him since?" he asked.

"I saw him, and gave him good-morning, in the quadrangle, before I left on my bike," answered Lancaster coolly. "He has a bruise on his face—where my knuckles landed last night."

Sugden smiled faintly.

"Then you are sure that it was Locke who seized you?"

"Quite sure."

"But is he sure that it was you whom he seized?"

"If he shadowed me from the school—yes; if he was merely waiting in the wood to seize the owner of the cracksman's tools, which he must have discovered in the hollow oak—I cannot say."

"He gave no sign?"

Lancaster shrugged his shoulders.

"Is Ferrers Locke the man to give a sign? He failed last night—and he knows that he cannot pin me down. His manner to me was absolutely normal—as mine was to him. But he knows."

"It is not certain that he knows," said Sugden, slowly and thoughtfully. "It would seem that he must have discovered the wallet of tools hidden in the tree. He may not have connected that discovery with you; he may simply have watched the place to discover the owner."

"It is possible. But——"

"But what?"

"He knows!" said Lancaster. "I know it by instinct, if nothing else. I tell you, Slimy, Ferrers Locke knows."

The master crook sat silent for a few moments. His brow was wrinkled in thought, and the glint in his eyes was like that in the eyes of a snake.

"From the moment Locke came to the school there was danger," he said slowly at last. "He is a man to be feared. I was never satisfied that he suspected nothing over that job at Dandy Croft. There is no certainty yet that he knows, but it is probable. But the game is not up, Dick!"

"Do you think you can kidnap Ferrers Locke?" demanded Lancaster scornfully. "And if you can, do you think you could hold him?"

"No."

Lancaster leaned towards the greasy man.

"Mark me, Slimy," he said in a low voice, "I know what is in your mind. You've made me a crook and a thief, but you shall never make me a party to murder! I know what you are thinking! The Weasel, or Ratty the Rogue could get at Locke, at the school. Cut it out!"

"Locke will not always be in the school!"

"He will remain at the school until he has clapped the darbies on the Wizard, and rescued Wharton."

"You are afraid of him?"

Lancaster's eyes glinted.

"I am remaining at the school—does that look as if I am afraid of him? I shall fight it out to a finish. If I can help it, Greyfriars shall never know what I am. But for that I would throw up the game, throw the gang over, throw you over. You know that, Slimy! If I can save my name, I shall save it. Locke knows—and he will get me sooner or later! I feel it! But so long as there is a chance I shall face the music."

"It would be easy," muttered Sugden,

his eyes on the face of the schoolboy crook. "You in the house—with your help Locke would be at our mercy——"

"Cut it out, I tell you!"

"Not even to save your name at Greyfriars—the name that is so precious to you?" sneered Sugden.

"Not even for that!"

There was a long silence. Lancaster expected a burst of anger from the master crook; but Slimy Sugden was cool and calm. There was a point beyond which the master crook could not drive the boy who was in his power, and Sugden was well aware of it.

Lancaster rose at last.

"I've told you," he said. "If you've got sense, Slimy, you'll see that the game is up. Let me leave Greyfriars. The boy Wharton will hold his tongue when he is set at liberty, if I have left the school. He has no ill-will towards me. Let me go from Greyfriars leaving a decent name behind me. After that I am at your orders."

was on his way back to Greyfriars. Sugden touched a bell.

"Tell Ratty and the Weasel to come here," he said to the man who answered it.

In the consultation that followed the name of Ferrers Locke was mentioned many times. Ferrers Locke, perhaps, knew; but if Slimy Sugden could help it he would never live to make use of what he knew.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Sir Hilton!

SIR HILTON POPPER grunted. He was looking at a card that the butler of Popper Court had brought in. It bore the name "Mr. Ferrers Locke."

The lord of Popper Court had heard that name. He knew that Ferrers Locke was a celebrated private detective. But he could not begin to imagine what



As a rough hand was stretched out towards him, Wharton raised the cudgel. Crash! The smashing blow was struck, before the Weasel had a chance of guarding!

"Too late!" said Slimy quietly. "If Locke knows, he will never lose sight of you again."

"I can escape him. If I abandon the Wizard's game he would not even seek me. Let me go—you have done me harm enough!" exclaimed Lancaster passionately. "I will leave the country. I ask nothing at your hands; in some new country I can work and begin afresh. I am not afraid of work—not afraid of poverty! Let me go!"

He broke off under the cold malignancy in the face of the master crook.

"It is time for you to return to the school," said Slimy Sugden coldly. "You have a long ride before you."

Lancaster drew a deep, hard breath.

He went out of the room without another word. Slimy Sugden sat in thought for a long time. From the distance the sound of the motor-bike throbbed on the summer air. Lancaster

business a detective could possibly have with him.

It was morning, and Sir Hilton Popper had breakfasted. Now he was intending to go out with his gun and kill something. That was always Sir Hilton's resource when he had time on his hands.

Of late the household staff at Popper Court had found their lofty master in a better humour than of old. Mortgages were still as thick on his estate as leaves in Vallombrosa. He was still as deep as ever in the toils of the moneylender. But Mr. Sylvester Sugden, the moneylender, was tempering the wind to the shorn lamb now. He had advanced the money Sir Hilton required to meet the demands of the tax-collector, and saved him from the dire necessity of cutting down his old oaks to find the money. He seemed to have forgotten the interest that was due. Sir Hilton

still regarded him as a greasy scoundrel; but he admitted that the greasy scoundrel was a man of his word, and knew how to keep a bargain.

No doubt trouble was only put off. Debts had to be paid some day. But Sir Hilton hoped that things might take a turn for the better. Taxes must come down some day, and he might yet save his estate, and even his old trees. Sir Hilton was not much given to thinking. The passing day was good enough for him. So, since he had yielded to Sugden's demand that he should place Dick Lancaster at Greyfriars, and the moneylender, on his side, had made things easy for him, the lord of Popper Court had taken a more cheerful view of life.

But he grunted with annoyance as he looked at Ferrers Locke's card.

It was a fine June morning, and he was anxious to get out with his gun and kill some of the furry creatures that found a home in his extensive park.

But he gruffly bade the butler admit the man.

Ferrers Locke was shown in.

Sir Hilton did not trouble to rise. He gave Locke a jerk of the head. That was enough from so great a man as Sir Hilton Popper towards a person who was merely a detective of some sort.

A faint smile glided over Locke's face.

"I am sorry to interrupt you, Sir Hilton," he said.

"Please come to the point, sir!" said Sir Hilton Popper. "I have no idea what business you can have with me."

"Possibly you have heard my name?"

"I have heard it, sir. I believe you are a detective or something."

"Precisely!"

"Please be seated," grunted Sir Hilton ungraciously, "and come to the point as soon as possible. My time is valuable, Mr.—er—Locke."

"Mine is also of some value, Sir Hilton," remarked Ferrers Locke, as he sat down. "I will endeavour to be brief. I understand from Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, a relative of mine—"

"A relative of yours?" repeated Sir Hilton. "I see that the name is the same. Oh!"

Sir Hilton's expression hinted that Locke had rather risen in his estimation, while at the same time he was surprised to hear that the venerable Head of Greyfriars had a relative who was a detective. Detectives, in Sir Hilton's mind, were associated with shabby men in bowler hats.

"I understand from Dr. Locke that you, as a governor of Greyfriars, placed a new boy in the school this term."

Sir Hilton stared.

He had wondered what Ferrers Locke could possibly want with him. Certainly, he had never dreamed that Mr. Locke had called in connection with Lancaster of the Greyfriars Sixth.

"That is the case, Mr. Locke," he answered. "But I do not see—"

"What I am about to say is, of course, confidential," said Locke. "If it is agreeable to you I should like you to answer a few questions. I may add that I have Dr. Locke's authority for asking them; and you can, if you so desire, satisfy yourself on this point by telephoning to the headmaster of Greyfriars."

Sir Hilton grunted.

"I have no objection, sir. But I see no reason for this. The boy has given satisfaction at the school, I presume?"

"He has made his mark there, and is equally popular with boys and masters, I believe," said Locke. "He has turned out a wonderful cricketer, and at the

same time has won a distinction in classes."

"I thought him a decent lad," said Sir Hilton Popper. "He stayed with me a few days before I took him to the school, and I certainly had no fault to find with him."

"But there are a few circumstances which it would be of advantage to clear up," said Ferrers Locke. "I learn that the boy's fees are paid through a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn—a most respectable firm. He has, it seems, no near relatives. His father fell in the War, and his uncle died some years ago. Unless he is a relative of yours, sir—"

"He is not!" snapped Sir Hilton.

"No doubt you have known him a very long time."

"Nothing of the kind!"

"That is the point that it is desired to clear up," explained Ferrers Locke.

"The headmaster of Greyfriars, of course, accepted the boy on your recommendation. You are a governor of the school, and that was sufficient."

"I should imagine so, sir!" grunted Sir Hilton Popper.

"Yet it appears that the boy is no relative of yours, sir—"

"He is not."

"And your acquaintance with him is very recent?"

"Quite."

"Yet you had no hesitation in recommending him to Greyfriars and taking the responsibility incurred thereby."

Sir Hilton compressed his lips.

"To what responsibility do you refer, sir?" he snapped. "The boy is a decent lad, son of an officer killed in the War. That is enough."

"It is usual, sir, for anyone, even a governor, recommending a boy to Greyfriars to be well acquainted with him and his antecedents," said Ferrers Locke. "So far as appearances go, the boy is creditable in every way to the school. If, however, appearances should prove deceptive, responsibility certainly falls upon you."

Sir Hilton tugged at his moustache and grunted again.

It had been with many misgivings that he had acceded to the demand of Mr. Sylvester Sugden to place Lancaster at Greyfriars. The boy certainly made a favourable impression on him personally, and he was the son of a man who had given his life for his country. But only under pressure would the old baronet have had anything to do with the ward of a greasy moneylender.

"As you, sir, placed the boy at the school, you must be acquainted with his connections, whatever they are," said Ferrers Locke. "As he is an orphan, he has, I presume, some guardian?"

"So I understand, sir."

"And the name of this guardian?"

Sir Hilton paused.

"You say, Mr. Locke, that the boy has given satisfaction at the school?"

"His headmaster is more than satisfied with him, Sir Hilton."

"Then I see no need to discuss the matter. In point of fact, I prefer not to discuss it."

"The matter can hardly be left there, Sir Hilton. It is necessary for you to state the name of the gentleman from whom Lancaster came to you."

"Necessary, sir?"

"Quite."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Locke," said Sir Hilton, his brows knitting. "I am not accustomed to being questioned."

"Probably not. But I must ask you to answer that question," said Ferrers Locke, unmoved. "Without going into details, I may say that it is desirable indeed, indispensable for the boy's connections to be known."

"I have answered for him, sir. That is enough!"

"It is not enough, Sir Hilton!"

"I think this interview had better terminate, Mr. Locke!" said the lord of Popper Court haughtily.

"You object to stating the name of Richard Lancaster's guardian?"

"I prefer not to discuss the matter."

"If you prefer to answer the official police instead of a private detective, Sir Hilton—"

The old baronet jumped.

"The—the—the police?" he ejaculated.

"Precisely!"

"You have said that there is nothing against the boy!" Sir Hilton's face was startled and scared. "By gad! Do you imply that he has connections—good gad!—of such a nature— Sir Hilton's voice failed him.

"That is what must be ascertained, Sir Hilton. I require to know the name of Richard Lancaster's guardian, in order that the matter may be looked into."

"Good gad!" muttered Sir Hilton. "Of—of course, I know nothing of the boy. He looks a decent lad, and his father was an Army man. He was represented to me as satisfactory in every way. I admit that I took him on trust. I was under certain obligations to his guardian, a Mr. Sugden—"

"Sugden?"

"A Mr. Sylvester Sugden."

"You are, of course, well acquainted with this Mr. Sugden?"

"In matters of business, sir. Only in matters of business," said Sir Hilton hastily.

"May I ask what he is?"

"A—a—a financial gentleman," said Sir Hilton. "In point of fact, he holds certain mortgages on my estate. I believe that he is a perfectly sound man in a—a—a business sense."

"There is a well-known moneylender, of that name," said Ferrers Locke, his eyes curiously on the baronet's troubled face. "His London address is in Chancery Lane. Is that the man?"

"That is the man," said Sir Hilton Popper.

"You are not acquainted with any other connection of Lancaster's?"

"None."

"And this Mr. Sugden is his guardian?"

"So I understand, sir."

Ferrers Locke rose.

"Thank you, Sir Hilton. I will take up no more of your time."

"If—if you see this Mr. Sugden, kindly do not mention that you—you learned his name from me," muttered Sir Hilton. "I am, as I have said, under certain obligations to the man—the—the gentleman, I mean—I do not desire to offend him."

"I shall certainly not mention your name, sir; and on your side I take it that you will not acquaint Mr. Sugden with the fact that a detective has made inquiries—"

"Certainly not! Certainly not! I am not likely to see him, as a matter of fact—our business is conducted wholly by correspondence now; but I certainly should say nothing."

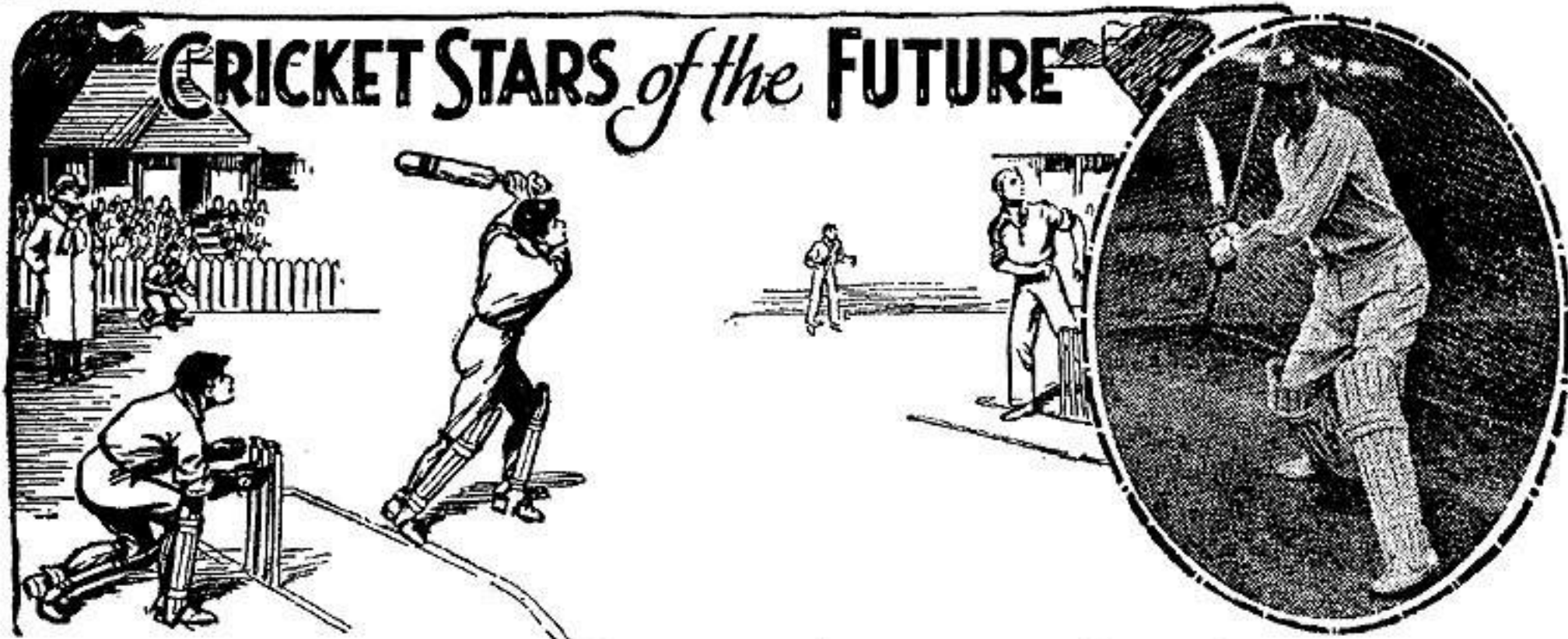
"Thank you, Sir Hilton."

Ferrers Locke took his leave.

Sir Hilton was left pacing the room in a state of considerable agitation. He had had misgivings—many misgivings. Under the pressure of the moneylender, he had given in, and hoped for the best. All that he had heard of Lancaster, since the boy had been at Greyfriars, had relieved his mind. But now—

Sir Hilton did not go out with his

(Continued on page 12.)



Below our cricket expert gives you some interesting titbits about K. S. Duleepsinhji, of Sussex and England.

"Ranji's" Successor!

VERY many years ago, when the famous K. S. Ranjitsinhji—now the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar—played for Sussex, I was staying with him at his beautiful estate, and our conversation turned on hereditary cricketers.

"What a pity it is," I said to him, "that you haven't any member of your family to keep up your traditions."

He laughed, as only "Ranji" could laugh; and then he observed:

"One cannot be sure of the future, but it is quite likely that one day a relative of mine will shine in the glorious world of cricket, and put my own personal performances to shame. And when he comes along he will remain in England and play for Sussex, the county I love."

He, the successor, in the form of Duleepsinhji, has arrived, and been elected captain of the Sussex team. This wonderful batsman is not yet twenty-six years of age, and, judging him on his performances since he commenced playing in first-class matches in 1925, he bids fair to eclipse the dazzling deeds of his renowned uncle.

Kumar Shri Duleepsinhji was born in India, and came over to England at an early age in order to receive the benefits of a Public school education. He was entered at Cheltenham when thirteen years old, and almost immediately made his mark as a batsman at that seat of learning.

But the Cheltenham authorities did not give him his school colours until 1921. Then it became known throughout the Public school world that Cheltenham had a wizard playing for them, and Heaven help those school bowlers who had the job of trying to get him out. I think it was in 1922 that he was asked to play for Lord's Schools against the Rest. In this match he scored a great personal triumph, making 108 with the bat and taking five wickets for 41 runs. He was then only seventeen years old.

Centuries For Sussex!

IN the autumn of 1924 he went up to Cambridge, and played for his Varsity through the season of 1925, scoring two separate hundreds and then getting 75 in the Oxford and Cambridge match. In the following year he again did well; playing for both Cambridge University and Sussex, for which county he had by this time become qualified.

His first match for the southern county was against Leicestershire, and as he scored in delightful fashion, much in the same style of his famous uncle, everybody thought that he might get a century, as did Ranji in his first county game; but unfortunately he missed this great feat by three runs, getting 97.

When the season of 1927 opened, "Duleep" electrified the cricket world by scoring 101 in his first match (v. Yorkshire) and 254, not out (v. Middlesex) in the next game. But soon afterwards he was stricken by a serious illness, and was unable to play again until 1928, when he performed well for Cambridge, besides scoring 1,082 runs for Sussex in nineteen innings. He got six centuries.

In 1929 his batting was wonderful. He compiled 2,545 runs, and had an average of over 40 for sixty-three innings, passing the century on eight occasions. His best performance was for Sussex against Kent, when he scored 115 in the

first innings and 246 in the second at a rate which was dazzling. This took place at Hastings, when the town was full of holiday-makers, and when it became known that Duleep was in form the ground became thronged.

It was characteristic of the young Indian when, immediately he closed his innings of 246, he gave audience to a complete stranger who sent word into the pavilion that he had known the great Ranji. Duleep was hot and tired, and was about to jump into a bath when an attendant told him of the caller. In a second the stranger—who turned out to be a Sussex farmer over whose land Ranji had done some pheasant shooting—was shown in and was treated as if he were of royal birth. And the young prince insisted upon the farmer accepting the bat with which the 246 had been made as a memento of the visit.

Picked For England!

LAST year Duleepsinhji made more runs in first-class cricket than anybody else, totalling 2,562, his highest score being 333 against Northamptonshire, at Brighton. He scored the largest number of centuries, having nine to his credit; and, being chosen to represent England against Australia in four of the Test matches, had the proud distinction of scoring 173 for England at Lords. This was his first Test match against Australia, and I cannot remember any cricketer being cheered as he was at the completion of his innings.

He was also chosen for the Gents v. Players, at Lords, and in this game he scored 125 in the first innings and 103, not out, in the second. On the same classic ground, for Sussex, he made two separate centuries in one match against Middlesex, again being not out in the second innings.

As a young man of nearly twenty-six years old, Duleepsinhji bids fair to eclipse anything which has ever been done on the cricket field. There are some enthusiasts who would ask if the writer has forgotten Don Bradman. He hasn't! The meteorological conditions of England and Australia differ extraordinarily, and while Bradman has learnt his cricket on "plate-glass" wickets, Duleep has had to struggle along on wickets that are hard on one day, sticky on another, and perhaps sodden with rain on the next.

Duleepsinhji has never been known to question an umpire's decision; nor to appeal for a decision unless he is assured of there being honourable grounds for doing so. His attitude on the field is one of cordiality with his colleagues and charming politeness with his opponents, and it is said that on only one occasion was he ever guilty of sarcasm, that being when a certain well-known county captain came in to bat and took elaborate care about his guard, after which he had the sight screen moved a few inches; then he patted down imaginary lumps on the surface of the pitch, winding up with a careful survey of the position of each fieldsmen.

At last he put himself in an attitude to play the ball, which, however, passed the bat and bowled the off stump out of the ground. "Duleep" was fielding at first slip, and his remark brought joy to the faces of those who overheard it. "Hard luck, sir!" he said. "And just as you were getting set!"

A CRACKSMAN'S REWARD!

(Continued from page 10.)

gun that morning. The furry denizens of Popper Park had reason to be thankful that Ferrers Locke had called on the baronet. Sir Hilton was too disturbed and agitated even to find solace in killing something.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

BILLY BUNTER gasped. He was alarmed. He had cause for alarm. The cause was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

Coker was not aware at the moment, that he was causing alarm. He was coming up the Fifth Form passage, after classes, with his usual heavy tread. Coker's tread could be heard at a considerable distance; and there was no mistaking it. Either an escaped elephant had got into the Fifth Form passage, or else Coker was coming along. And Billy Bunter, who was in Coker's study, did not venture to hope that it was merely an escaped elephant. He knew that it must be Coker.

Bunter, of course, had no business in a Fifth Form study. Bunter often found himself in places where he had no business.

A hamper had arrived for Coker that day from Coker's Aunt Judy. Coker had not yet unpacked it. He was coming to the study now to do so. Had he only known, he might have saved himself the trouble, for the hamper was already unpacked. Bunter had been busy in Coker's study for some little time.

Bunter's intention was not merely to save Coker the trouble of unpacking the hamper. As fast as he unpacked the good things from Aunt Judy, Bunter packed them away again. Good things disappeared down Bunter's extensive gullet at an alarming rate. Bunter had intended to nip into the study and nip out again promptly. But the good things in the hamper tempted him, and he fell. He had placed aside a large cake to take away with him; but there were other excellent things in the hamper, which he could not carry off—unless he packed them for transit within his ample circumference. That was how Bunter was occupied, when he heard the heavy tread of Horace Coker.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He spun round from the hamper. He clutched up the cake. He jumped towards the door.

But it was too late. Bunter realised that it was too late. That beast, Coker, would see him as he emerged. There was no escape for the fat grub-raider. He made one jump towards the door—and another jump back.

He blinked wildly round the study through his big spectacles. There was a big armchair standing with its back to a corner.

Billy Bunter dodged behind the armchair and crouched low, the cake on his fat knees.

Coker's heavy footsteps reached the study doorway.

Coker tramped in.

The Owl of the Remove tried to still his breathing behind the armchair in the corner. If Coker found him there—

"Great pip!"

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It was Coker's voice. Horace Coker was staring into the open hamper. He stared with bulging eyes.

"Who—what—who—" stammered Coker.

Bunter palpitated.

Coker strode to the door. He glared up and down the Fifth Form passage. Two fellows were chatting at the end of the passage, near the door of the games-study.

"Potter!" bawled Coker. "Greene!"

The two Fifth-Formers looked round.

"Here!" roared Coker.

Potter and Greene paused a moment. Coker was in the imperative mood; and his face was excited. He beckoned wildly. Potter and Greene did not seem eager to obey the summons.

"Do you hear?" roared Coker.

"It's not tea-time!" called back Potter.

"Blow tea-time! Come here!"

"Oh dear, what on earth is it now?" sighed Potter. "Better go, I suppose, before he raises the roof."

They walked up the passage.

"My hamper's been raided!" roared Coker.

Potter and Greene looked serious at once. Coker was going to stand tea with the contents of that hamper. So the matter was as serious for Coker's chums as for Coker.

"Who—" began Greene.

"That's what I want to find out. Have you seen any measly sneaking rotter in the passage?"

"Only you, old chap—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"Did you see anyone in the passage, you footling fathead? Have you been using your eyes as well as your silly chins?"

"I've seen nobody," said Potter, shaking his head. "We've only been here a few minutes—"

"Of course, you wouldn't see anybody!" snorted Coker. "I dare say he could have walked off right under your noses without you noticing him. Still, he may have been gone some time. Half the stuff's gone! There was a big cake in the hamper—Aunt Judy specially mentioned it in her letter—and there's no cake there now! He's had the cake, and a lot of other things. Who was it?"

Coker glared at his chums, as if he expected them to answer that question on the spot.

Potter and Greene shook their heads.

"Blessed if I know!" said Potter.

"Same here!" agreed Greene.

"Sure you haven't seen that fat villain Bunter hanging about?" asked Coker. "Ten to one it was that fat frowsy scoundrel. It wouldn't be the first time he's raided my tuck."

"Haven't seen him—"

"Do you ever see anything?" hooted Coker. "Well, come with me, and we'll look for him. He can't have bolted that cake yet—and if we find it on him, we'll smash him into small pieces."

Horace Coker strode out of the study, and Potter and Greene followed him down the passage.

From behind the armchair there was a gasp.

"Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter rose from his hiding-place, and blinked across the top of the armchair. Evidently it had not occurred to Coker's powerful brain that the pilferer might be still in the study. Bunter was thankful for that oversight on the part of the great Horace.

He crept to the door.

If Coker & Co. proceeded to the Re-

move quarters in search of the pilferer, Bunter had time to escape. Prudence counselled him to relinquish the cake, which was indubitable evidence against him if he was seen with it in his possession. But it was a large cake, a luscious cake, a scrumptious cake; one of Aunt Judy's largest and nicest cakes; and prudence counselled in vain, Bunter stuck to the cake.

The fat junior peered cautiously out of the doorway.

Coker & Co. were disappearing round the corner by the landing, near the games-study.

Bunter grinned breathlessly.

Evidently they were heading for the Remove passage, to look for Bunter there. They were welcome to do so, as far as Bunter was concerned.

Bunter crept from the study.

The door of the games-study was shut. If there were any Fifth Form men there they could not see Bunter as he crept down the passage towards the landing. From that landing a passage led in another direction, that communicated with the masters' quarters. Bunter reached the passage, and scudded into it. He turned another corner, and felt himself safe from Coker & Co.

He was in a passage now on which a number of rooms opened, among them Mr. Quelch's bed-room and the bed-room and sitting-room of Ferrers Locke.

Bunter hoped to find the coast clear.

Once he had negotiated that passage there was another staircase by which he could escape.

He rolled along the passage.

But Bunter's luck was out. Up the staircase, as he almost reached it, a head and shoulders rose into view. They belonged to Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Bunter stopped dead.

Apparently the Remove master was going to his room. It was like the beast, of course, to be going to his room at a moment most inconvenient for William George Bunter.

"Oh crikey!" murmured the helpless Owl.

Between Mr. Quelch in front, and Coker behind, Billy Bunter was like an ancient mariner storm-tossed between Scylla and Charybdis.

Before he could make up his fat mind whether to advance or to retreat, the gimlet eyes of Henry Samuel Quelch were upon him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear! I mean, yes, sir."

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" demanded the Remove master.

"N-n-nothing, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I came here, sir?" stammered Bunter.

He cudgelled his fat brains for a reason why he was in that quarter of the House, where schoolboys were not supposed to penetrate. Obviously he could not give Mr. Quelch the real reason.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Quelch. His gimlet eyes bored into Bunter. "What is that under your arm, Bunter? It appears to be a cake."

"Oh! Ah! Yes, sir!"

"Explain at once, Bunter, what you are doing here—with a cake."

The gimlet eyes fairly penetrated Bunter.

"I—I—I—"

Invention seemed to flag. Bunter was generally ready with a "whopper." Now his powers in that line seemed to fail him.

"Bunter—"

"I—I—I was going to see Mr. Locke, sir!" gasped Bunter.

It was an inspiration, in the nick of time.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch coldly. "Is Mr. Locke in his room now? I was under the impression that he had gone out."

"Yes, sir—no, sir! The fact is—"
"I fail to understand you, Bunter! I find you with a cake, and you state that you were going to see Mr. Locke, who is certainly not in the House at the present moment."

"I—I meant I—I was going to his room, sir, to—to—to take this—this cake!" gasped Bunter. "It—it's for Mr. Locke, sir. He—he asked me to take it there, sir."

"Indeed!"
"I—I think he's having some—some of the fellows to tea, sir." Once Bunter's inventive faculty started working, it worked like a charm. "This—this cake is for—for some of the fellows, sir, who—who are going to tea with Mr. Locke, I—I think, sir."

Mr. Quelch was suspicious. There was no doubt about that. He gave the Owl of the Remove a very keen look. Then he nodded.

"Very well, Bunter! You may take the cake to Mr. Locke's room. Leave it there, and go immediately."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"
Billy Bunter rolled to Ferrers Locke's door, and opened it. He rolled into the room with the cake.

"Oh lor'!"
Quelch was suspicious—that was evident! His suspicions would be allayed, of course, if Bunter left the cake in Mr. Locke's room and departed. Bunter wanted to allay his Form master's suspicions. But he did not want to leave the cake in Mr. Locke's room.

There was no help for it, however. Mr. Quelch had gone into his room; but he had left the door open, and Bunter was aware that the suspicious gentleman was going to see him off.

Bunter laid the cake on the table in Mr. Locke's room. But he lifted it up again. If Mr. Locke found that cake there when he came in he was sure to be surprised, and to inquire how it had come there. Bunter did not desire inquiry on the subject of that cake. In fact, he shunned it. But the fat pilferer was not at the end of his resources. There was, of course, no fire in the room, in June; the fire-grate was hidden by a Japanese screen. Bunter hastily dropped the cake into the empty grate behind the screen. It

was safe there—at least until the maids came in next morning.

The fat junior rolled out of the room. As he fully anticipated, Mr. Quelch glanced out of his doorway and observed him.

Undoubtedly Mr. Quelch, who knew his Bunter, had suspected him of looting that cake; but seeing him depart, after leaving it in Mr. Locke's room, the Remove master had to conclude that he had, for once, misjudged Bunter.

His gimlet eyes lingered on the fat junior till he was out of sight down the staircase.

Then he turned away, satisfied. Mr. Quelch was satisfied; Bunter, on the other hand, was not! But in an imperfect universe it was impossible for everybody to be satisfied. Bunter had to remain dissatisfied.

"Oh, roll away, barrel!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Ball—"
"And shut the door after you," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! That beast Coker is looking for me—"

"Coker had a hamper to-day," grinned Johnny Bull. "If you've been pilfering in Coker's study, you fat villain—"

"I hope I'm not the fellow to touch a fellow's tuck! But that beast Coker is suspicious, you know," explained Bunter. "He seems to think it was me. I keep on dodging the beast, but he's after me! Oh crikey!"

Bunter rolled hastily into the study. There was a heavy tread in the Remove passage.

The next moment, Coker of the Fifth



"Have you seen that villain Bunter hanging about?" asked Coker. "Ten to one he's the fat merchant who's raided my tuck!" The Owl of the Remove crouched low behind the arm-chair, the cake on his fat knees.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Whose Cake?

"I SAY, you fellows—"
"Br-r-r-r!"
"I say, old chaps—"
"Rats!"

Tea was going on in Study No. 1 in the Remove. Frank Nugent, who had that celebrated study to himself, now that Harry Wharton was absent from Greyfriars, had his chums to tea with him—Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh. Not one of the juniors seemed pleased to see the fat face that looked in at the doorway.

"I haven't come to tea, you fellows," said Bunter, with dignity. "In fact, I've had a snack. But I say—"

glared in at the doorway of Study No. 1. He fixed a basilisk eye on Bunter.

"Where's that cake?" he roared.
"Oh, really, Coker—"
"Where's that cake? You can't have scoffed it yet! Where is it?" roared Coker.

He strode into the study, and Bunter dodged round the table. Bob Cherry & Co. rose to their feet.

"Gently does it, Coker, old bean!" said Bob cheerily. "You can't come on the high horse in the Remove passage, you know."

"He's bagged my cake!" roared Coker. "He's got it about him now! If you young sweeps chip in I'll mop up the study with the lot of you."

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

"The mopfulness will be terrific," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Go aheadfully, my esteemed Coker!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I never had the cake!" squeaked Bunter. "I say, it's rotten to make out that I had the cake when I never even knew Coker had a cake. I say—"

"He's got it now!" roared Coker.

"You can search me, if you like!" gasped Bunter.

Coker glared at him. Obviously, the cake was not on Bunter's fat person. It was too large to be concealed there.

"What have you done with it, you fat rotter?" bawled Coker. "You've hidden it somewhere. Don't I know you?"

"I disdain to answer that!" said Bunter, with dignity. "You've got a suspicious mind, Coker! I call it rather low."

"I—I—I'll—"

Coker made a stride round the table. Four Removites blocked the way, and Horace Coker glared at them as if he could have eaten them.

"Gerrout of the way! I tell you—"

"How do you know Bunter had the cake?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I know he had it."

"Did you see him?"

"Think I'd have let him get away with it if I'd seen him, you young ass?"

"Then how do you know—"

"If it wasn't Bunter, who was it?" snorted Coker.

"Might have been Potter or Greene," suggested Bunter. "Or perhaps it was the cat! That is, if you ever had a cake at all. My belief is that you never had any cake."

"You fat sweep!" said Bob. "Did you bag Coker's cake or not?"

"Certainly not. If you think I'd bag a fellow's cake, Bob Cherry—"

"I know he had it!" roared Coker. "And I'm going to smash him. If you don't gerrout of the way I'll smash you, too!"

Coker charged.

"Back up!" yelled Bob Cherry.

The juniors backed up promptly.

Whether Bunter had had the cake or not, they did not consider that it was cricket to find him guilty without evidence; and a Fifth Form man was not allowed to throw his weight about in the Remove passage, anyhow.

So the four Removites promptly collared Coker as he charged.

Horace Coker went down, with a roar, and the juniors sprawled over him.

For several minutes there was a terrific mix-up on the floor of Study No. 1.

Horace Coker was a mighty man of his hands; but the odds were heavy. They were too heavy even for the mighty Coker.

Struggling and roaring, Coker of the Fifth was rolled through the doorway into the passage outside.

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Still struggling, and still roaring, he was rolled along to the Remove staircase.

"Roll him down!" panted Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" squeaked Billy Bunter, from the rear. "I say, you fellows, give him jip! Making out a fellow had his cake! Give him beans!"

"Yaroooh! Ooop!" spluttered Coker. "Potter! Greene! Yarooooooh!"

But Potter and Greene were not at hand. Had they been at hand, probably they would have departed in another direction, not being so keen on a shindy with fags as the great Coker was. There was no rescue for Coker. He rolled down the Remove staircase and bumped to the next landing.

"Oooooooh!"

Coker sat and spluttered for a few moments. Then he scrambled to his feet and charged back.

It was magnificent, but it was not war! By this time the odds, already heavy, were heavier. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing had arrived on the scene; after them came Peter Todd, and Squiff, and Tom Brown, and Bolsover major, and six or seven more Remove men. Coker charged into quite an army.

What happened next Coker of the Fifth hardly knew. But he knew that it was wildly exciting.

It was a dusty, dishevelled, dizzy, dazed Coker that reached the lower landing a second time. He sprawled there and spluttered.

"Come on, Coker!"

"Come up again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker staggered to his feet. But he did not accept that pressing invitation into the Remove quarters. Coker had had enough. Coker did not charge the Remove again. He departed by the lower stairs, gurgling and gasping as he went.

"Dear old Coker!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Always asking for it, and always getting it! Let's get back to tea!"

The chums of the Remove returned to Study No. 1 to finish the interrupted meal. Billy Bunter rolled in after them.

"I say, you fellows, you've stood by me like pals," said Bunter. "Of course, that was only decent, after all I've done for you. Still, you've stood by me, and I'm jolly well going to stand by you! Like a cake for tea?"

Bob Cherry & Co. jumped.

"A—a—a cake?" stammered Bob.

"Yes. As it happens, I've had a cake from Bunter Court to-day," said the Owl of the Remove, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "A ripping cake, I can tell you! I'm going to whack it out with you fellows, after you've stood by me like this. I want one of you to fetch it."

The juniors gazed at Bunter. They had felt that it was only cricket to give him the benefit of the doubt. But there did not seem to be a lot of doubt left now.

"You—you—you've got Coker's cake, after all!" gasped Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Certainly not! I don't believe Coker ever had a cake! I haven't been near his study, and I never got behind the armchair while he was there—I—I mean, I know absolutely nothing about Coker's cake. I'm speaking of quite a different cake—one I've had to-day from Bunter Court. I'm going to whack it out with you fellows if one of you will fetch it for me. That's only fair!"

"And why can't you fetch it yourself, you fat freak?"

"Well, that beast Locke may have come in—"

"Locke?"

"Yes. You see, Quelch saw me with the cake when I was dodging away from Coker—I mean, when I wasn't dodging away from Coker—and he was suspicious. I could see in his eye what he thought! He's a frightfully suspicious old bird, you know. So I told him Locke had asked me to take the cake to his room, and—and I had to leave it there. Presence of mind, you know," explained Bunter. "That's me all over—presence of mind. Well, one of you fellows cut off to Locke's room—"

"You've parked Coker's cake in Ferrers Locke's room?" gurgled Bob.

"Nunno! Not Coker's cake—my cake! I happened to have one to-day from Bunter Court—just a coincidence! C-c-coincidences do happen, you know! Look here, if Locke's come in, one of you fellows get him out of the room—say it's a message from the Head—"

"My hat!"

"Or say Wharton has been found—that's sure to fetch him out—"

"You—you—" gasped Bob.

"And then another of you can nip in and get the cake! See?"

"My esteemed and preposterous Bunter—"

"No good wasting time," said Bunter. "I'd go myself, only—only I don't want to be spotted there again. Tell Locke, if he's there, that Wharton's been found—or say his body has been found—that's better—say his body has been found, and Locke's absolutely certain to come out, and then— Yaroooooooh!"

Four pairs of hands closed on William George Bunter. He was swept off his feet, and he came down on the floor of the study with a bump.

"Yoooooop! Leggo! Yaroooh! Help! Fire!"

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Now all kick together!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yoooooooooooooop!"

Billy Bunter hardly knew how he got out of Study No. 1. He hardly knew whether he was still in one piece when he got out. But he knew that feet that seemed innumerable were impinging upon his fat person, and he knew that it was unpleasant. The fat Owl poked himself up and fled for his life. It was clear—painfully clear—that he was going to get no help from Study No. 1 in recapturing Coker's cake.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Man in the Night!

"YOU fellows asleep?"

It was a whispering voice in the Remove dormitory.

Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed wide awake.

He blinked round in the shadows anxiously. But there came no answer to his whisper. The Remove were all asleep.

The hour was late.

For several hours, since the lights had been turned out in the Remove dormitory, Bunter's deep snore had roused the echoes, as usual. But the Owl of the Remove had awakened at last.

Coker's cake was on his fat mind.

He was hungry. The mere thought of food was enough to make Billy Bunter hungry. He had dreamed of the cake while asleep; now that he was awake he was thinking of it. His fat mouth watered at the thought of the cake. But

he was not only thinking of that. The cake was hidden in Mr. Locke's sitting-room grate. It would be found when the maids did the room in the morning—unless Bunter recaptured it in time.

The discovery of a cake in such a very extraordinary spot as a fire-grate, was certain to cause surprise and inquiry. Mr. Quelch was certain to remember Bunter's proceedings of the day before. The facts were sure to come to light. Not merely a kicking from Coker, which was serious enough, but a caning from his Form master, loomed over the grub raider of Greyfriars. That cake had to be recaptured.

Bunter crept out of bed.

After all, it was safe enough. Five minutes would see him at Ferrers Locke's room. The detective's bed-room adjoined the sitting-room, but he would be asleep; he was not likely to hear Bunter. One minute in the room, and the cake would be recaptured. And the prospect of a gorgeous feed, sitting up in bed, compensated for the risk. Bunter had made up his fat mind.

He dressed quickly in the dark. On tiptoe he crept to the door of the dormitory.

Silently he opened the door and tiptoed out.

How late it was, Bunter did not know. As a matter of fact, it was nearly two o'clock. The House was very silent and still. A glimmer of starlight at high windows guided Bunter on his way. He crept down a staircase and along a passage, and arrived, with palpitating fat heart, at the door of Locke's room.

There he paused and listened.

No sound broke the stillness.

Cautiously he turned the door-handle. A doubt smote him at the last moment that the door might be locked. But it was not locked, it opened to his hand.

The room was deeply dusky; only a pale glimmer of the summer stars came in at the window. Bunter stood and blinked into the room through his big spectacles.

Across the room was the door leading to Mr. Locke's bed-room. Bunter's eyes fixed on it.

No doubt the detective slept; but Bunter wanted to make sure before he entered. He did not want Ferrers Locke to drop on him rooting about in the middle of the night. Very much indeed he did not want that.

He made out the glimmer of the oak door in the starlight from the windows. It was shut. But against the lower part of the door was a black shadow that puzzled Bunter.

He blinked at it intently.

At first he supposed that it was a chair, or some article of furniture. But it was scarcely possible that an article of furniture could be leaning against the door. His second thought was that it was a shadow cast by some object that intervened between the starlit window of the sitting-room, and the door of the bed-room. But there was nothing in the way to cast such a shadow. Bunter was quite perplexed.

Then, all of a sudden, a thrill ran through him, and he felt as if the blood in his veins was congealing into ice.

That black shadow at the bed-room door was a kneeling figure, a figure clothed in black.

Its back was towards Bunter; it kneeled there without a sound, with hardly a movement. But it was a kneeling figure of a human being.

Bunter's little round eyes distended behind his big round spectacles. His fat heart scarcely beat.

He became aware now that the sitting-room window, looking on the quad,

was open. A faint breeze of the night stirred the curtains within.

Bunter's brain almost swam.

It could not, of course, be Ferrers Locke who was kneeling in the darkness at his own bed-room door. The open window showed how the man, whoever he was, had entered. It was a burglar, yet that, too, was strange enough; it was extraordinary that if a burglar had entered the school he should seek the room occupied by the Baker Street detective. Valuables could hardly be expected to be found there, and the

occupant of the room was not a man any burglar would be likely to want to meet. Had Bunter been able to think the matter out, he might have guessed that the purpose of that midnight visitor was more deadly than the purpose of robbery.

But Bunter was not thinking—he was only staring in utter terror at the dark, kneeling figure. He was not capable even of flight, his feet seemed rooted to the floor. He could only stare at the back of the kneeling figure, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

There was the faintest of clicks.

The terrified Owl understood that the detective's bed-room door had been locked, and that it was now unlocked. That was why the dark figure was kneeling there—picking the lock.

Bunter saw the bed-room door slip open without a sound. He saw the dark figure rise to its feet, the head bent forward a little, listening.

It did not turn. Obviously, the midnight visitor was utterly unaware that the sitting-room door was half-open, and that a terrified junior was staring at him across the room. Bunter had made no sound, and the villain was intent on the task he had in hand.

The dark figure stood motionless, listening. Then a black-gloved hand slid into a pocket, and came out with something in it. The horrified Owl knew that there was a weapon in the hand.

A moment more, and the dark figure had glided noiselessly into the room where the Baker Street detective slept.

Bunter's fat knees knocked together.

Ferrers Locke was in danger! An armed man had crept into his bed-room in the darkness. That was clear to Bunter. The fat junior clutched at the doorpost for support. The bare thought of drawing the attention of that dark, creeping figure upon himself was terrifying. Bunter was not courageous, and what courage he had, had oozed out at his fat finger-ends. But there was a limit, even for Bunter. Terror or no terror, danger or no danger, he had to warn Ferrers Locke.

He opened his mouth—but his tongue seemed to cleave to it. He tried to shout, and his voice failed him. His throat was dry. Then, with an effort, he yelled.

"Help! Wake up! Oh dear! Burglars! Ooooooooooh!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes the Cake!

FERRERS LOCKE awakened. The Baker Street detective was a light sleeper.

A sound was in his ears; the sound of a husky, strangled, frightened shout.

It was more than enough for Ferrers Locke.

Almost as his eyes opened, his finger was on the switch of the bed-lamp, and electric light streamed through the room.

An instant more, and Ferrers Locke had leaped from the bed—leaving the bed between him and the dark-clothed figure that, scarce a yard from the bedside, grasped a loaded stick.

Crash!

The loaded stick descended, missing the detective by a foot, and landing with a thud on the bed.

Before the weapon could be lifted again, the automatic in Ferrers Locke's hand was levelled across the bed. Locke's eyes glinted over it.

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YOU SEND A WINNING GREYFRIARS LIMERICK— WE SEND A HANDSOME POCKET WALLET!



When Cherry goes out to the wicket,



You're sure to see really good cricket.



With his eye on the ball,



He makes fielders look small.



His drive to the off—you can't beat it!

The above winning effort, illustrated by our artist, was sent in by W. Johnstone, of 23, Everton Street, Belfast.

"Stand where you are!" The Baker Street detective's voice was tranquil. "Move a finger again, and you are a dead man!"

From the eye-holes of the black-cloth mask that hid the face, a pair of glittering eyes blazed at the detective.

But the assassin did not move. Ferrers Locke's voice was cool as ice, but there was no mistaking his intention. The life of the assassin hung on a thread.

"Drop that stick!"

The loaded stick thudded on the bed.

"Put your hands together, over your head."

For a split second, the masked man hesitated. Locke's jaw squared, and the hands shot up and were clasped over the head of the assassin.

"Just in time!" said Locke quietly. "You dog, if you value your worthless life, do not trifle with me. I would shoot you like a mad dog!"

A mutter came from under the mask. "You've got me, Locke! You've got me!"

"I've got you!" said Ferrers Locke. "Lift a finger, or make a movement to escape, and you know what to expect."

He came round the bed, the automatic still levelled, his eyes gleaming over it. The burning eyes from the mask watched him like a cat's. But Ferrers Locke gave the desperate man no chance.

Still keeping the masked man covered, he drew a pair of handcuffs from a pocket of his coat hanging by the bed. A moment more, and they clicked on the wrists of the assassin.

Another moment, and Locke had jerked away the mask. He smiled grimly at the sight of the thin-featured face and ratty eyes.

"Ratty the Rogue!" "You've got me!" muttered the Rogue sullenly.

"Stand where you are!"

Locke stepped into the communicating doorway and switched on the light in the outer room.

"Bunter!" he ejaculated, in amazement.

He had wondered who, or what, had awakened him. He stared blankly at the fat, colourless face and bulging eyes of the Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter!" he repeated.

"Oh! Oh crikey! Oh dear! Ow!" gurgled Bunter.

Locke's face relaxed into a smile.

"Step in, Bunter! All is safe now, my boy! I have the scoundrel handcuffed! You need have no fear."

"I—I—I say, you—you—you're sure you—you've got him safe?" gasped Bunter.

"Quite!"

Billy Bunter tottered in. He was shaking from head to foot, and his fat face was like chalk.

He blinked through the communicating doorway at the savage-faced rascal in the bed-room. The sight of the steel handcuffs on the wrists of Ratty the Rogue reassured him.

"Oh!" he gasped. "All right! Of—of course, I—I wasn't frightened, you know."

"Of course not!" said Ferrers Locke, with a laugh.

"Not at all!" Bunter was recovering now. When there was no danger, William George Bunter could be as brave as a lion. "The—the fact is, I—I was rather—rather enjoying this, you know!"

"You look it!" said Locke.

"I—I say, is—is he a burglar?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes—though his intention was not

burglary on this occasion," said Ferrers Locke dryly.

"I—I saw him at your door, you know, kneeling—picking the lock, I suppose. I—I was—I mean I wasn't—awfully scared! I—I never turned a hair, you know! I—I woke you up!"

"You did," said Locke gravely, "and I have reason to be thankful that you woke me, Bunter. It is all the more credit to you that you ventured to do so, as you were terribly frightened—"

"Oh, I wasn't frightened!" said Bunter. "Don't get that idea into your head, Mr. Locke! Brave as a lion, you know! Ask any man in the Remove! They'll tell you! Pluck's my long suit!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"It was fortunate that you came here, Bunter! But kindly explain how you came here at this hour of the night."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. He had quite forgotten Coker's cake. "I—I—I came, you know, because—because—because I—"

"Well?"

"The—the fact is, I—I came to warn you—"

"Please tell me the truth, Bunter. I shall not blame you, since your visit has turned out so fortunately; and I shall not report you to your Form master. But tell me the truth at once."

"Oh, all right!" gasped Bunter. "You needn't mention it to Quelch—he wouldn't understand. Or—or to Coker—Coker of the Fifth, you know—he wouldn't understand, either! No need to mention it at all, you know! You see, it's my cake."

"Your cake?" repeated Locke.

"Yes! I had it from Bunter Court to-day; but Coker makes out that it's his cake—and it's no good arguing with Coker. So—so I hid it in your grate."

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Ferrers Locke blankly.

"You see, being my cake—"

Bunter rolled across to the fireplace, removed the screen, and lifted the cake from its hiding-place. Bunter was himself again now. The lowering ruffian in the adjoining room, scowling savagely, was nothing to Bunter. Bunter's attention was on the cake.

"So that was why you came here, Bunter!" There was a glimmer of laughter in Ferrers Locke's eyes.

"Yes. You see, you were sticking in the room all the evening, and a fellow had no chance! And—and those beasts wouldn't help a fellow! And—and—"

"You may take it, Bunter! I will not go into the question of the ownership of the cake. Go back to bed without awakening anyone. There is no need for an alarm to be given; I have this man safe. Go back quietly to bed."

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

He was only too glad to go back quietly to bed—with the cake. He tucked Coker's cake under a fat arm and rolled away. Five minutes later he was sitting in bed in the Remove dormitory, and the steady sound of incessant champing mingled with the breathing of many sleepers.

Ferrers Locke closed the door after Bunter.

Then he turned back into his bed-room.

Ratty the Rogue eyed him with malevolent eyes. Locke scanned the rat-like face quietly and keenly.

"Who sent you here, Ratty?" he asked.

"You'd like to know!" muttered the Rogue derisively.

"I think I know already," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "But you will not report your failure to Mr. Sugden."

Ratty the Rogue gave a violent start. For the moment he was taken completely off his guard. There was fear in the ratty eyes that glittered at the Baker Street detective.

In a moment, however, the Rogue had recovered himself. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Sugden?" he repeated. "I don't know the name."

"For a name that you do not know it seemed to produce a rather startling effect on you," said Locke dryly. "But you need tell me nothing, Ratty; I fancy I know as much as you could tell."

The Rogue eyed him evilly, but he did not speak. Ferrers Locke pointed to a settee.

"You will remain here for the rest of the night," he said.

"You're not sending for the cops?"

"Not till the morning."

Locke did not fail to note the gleam that shot into the ratty eyes. He smiled faintly.

Ratty the Rogue hoped—for what? Ferrers Locke did not need telling. He made a gesture, and the captured rascal shrugged his shoulders again and stretched himself on the settee. Quietly, coolly, the Baker Street detective bound his feet to the settee, and then gagged him. Ratty's eyes blazed at him.

"No," said Locke quietly, "I am not sleeping again to-night, my friend. I am watching—and if you have a confederate in the house, if he seeks to release you, you will not warn him that I am on the watch."

Quietly the detective dressed himself, and then turned out the light. He stretched himself on the bed, but his eyes did not close.

His thoughts were busy.

Did Lancaster know?

It seemed impossible—impossible that the schoolboy crook could be a party to this. The Rogue had entered by a window which was not easy of access—that did not look as if he had help within. If Lancaster did not know, if he was no party to this murderous attempt, Ratty's hope could only be faint; a vague hope that the schoolboy crook might be wakeful, that he might learn what had happened, and seek to give aid, as he had aided the Rogue to escape after the bank raid at Courtfield. But if Lancaster knew—if he was in this desperate game—then he would come, seeking to help the man who had failed—and he would come to share his fate.

But the long hours passed without a sound.

The summer morning glimmered in at the windows. The schoolboy crook had not come. And Ferrers Locke was conscious of relief. Lancaster, whatever he was, was not capable of this—he did not know that Ferrers Locke's life had been threatened that night. Ferrers Locke knew that now, and it was a relief to him to know it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

At the Cross-Roads!

LANCASTER of the Sixth strolled out of the House in the Summer morning, his hands in his pockets, his usual cheery expression on his face. If there were dark thoughts in the mind of the schoolboy crook, his handsome face gave no sign of them.

He smiled slightly at the sight of Ferrers Locke. Locke was walking in the quadrangle after breakfast, impassive as ever.

"Good-morning, Mr. Locke!"

The Baker Street detective smiled as he returned the greeting.

There was still on Locke's face a trace of the blow Lancaster had struck. The Sixth-Former wondered whether the detective knew who had struck that blow.

It seemed certain—and yet there was a doubt. If Locke knew, he had given no sign of his knowledge.

It was possible that he did not know who had hidden the cracksman's tools in the hollow oak; that he had watched, not knowing who was to fall into his hands. It was not likely; but it was possible.

If he did not know—if he did not suspect—the schoolboy crook was safe at Greyfriars. Even if he suspected Lancaster was still safe—the man could not act, could not even speak, without something more than suspicion to go upon. Safe—only there was the tormenting memory of the junior who was imprisoned far away, taken from his friends, despairing in a barred room. Lancaster tried to shut that memory from his mind; but it returned and returned.

"A lovely morning, Mr. Locke."

"Very! I feel myself lucky to be in the country in June—it is an agreeable change from Baker Street," said Locke. "I have had a very pleasant walk back from Courtfield."

"You are an early riser."

"Always," said Locke. "But I had special reason for rising early this morning. You did not hear the taxi?"

Lancaster's face did not change. The schoolboy crook was on his guard. But he sensed danger.

"I had to take a man to hand over to Inspector Grimes at Courtfield," explained Locke casually. "I thought it better to get him clear before the boys turned out."

"I don't quite catch on!" Lancaster smiled. "Has something happened that I haven't heard of?"

"Probably the whole school will hear of it soon—but the less fuss that is made the better, of course. I had a visitor in my room last night—a crook called Ratty the Rogue—"

Lancaster's heart seemed to turn to ice. He felt the penetrating eyes on his face, and not a muscle changed.

"Indeed! Your stay at Greyfriars is going to be exciting, Mr. Locke, it seems. A burglar?"

"One of the gang who had kidnapped Wharton, I think," answered Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "The good man came with a loaded stick, and had I not been awakened in time, I should not be talking to you now, Lancaster. But a miss is as good as a mile."

Lancaster breathed hard.

"I suppose you are accustomed to danger in your profession, Mr. Locke. You do not seem greatly disturbed."

"Merely an incident!" said Locke. "It is not my first experience of the kind, as you may imagine. But I am glad that a dangerous rascal is now safe under lock and key—safe for five years to come, I think."

"And you conclude that he is connected with the rascals who seem to have kidnapped Wharton, of the Remove—"

"It seems probable, at least."

"That implies that they have reason to fear that you are on their track," remarked Lancaster.

"No doubt."



"Roll him down!" panted Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" Coker was rolled down the Remove staircase, and bumped to the next landing, where he lay sprawling and gasping.

"And we may hope that something will come of this, Mr. Locke, I suppose? I mean, if this man—what did you call him—"

"Ratty the Rogue—a well-known crook," said Locke.

"Well, if this man knows where Wharton is, no doubt he will tell what he knows, now that he is under arrest," said Lancaster. "That may lead to the poor kid's release."

Locke shook his head.

"There is very little hope in that direction, I fear," he answered. "This man, Ratty the Rogue, is not what they call a 'squealer.' I fancy he would have more to fear from his friends than from the police if he gave them away. No, I do not think we shall learn anything from him."

"That's rather rotten," said Lancaster. "I hoped for the moment that this would mean news of Wharton—that we might expect to see him back at the school."

"I am afraid that, in that direction, my work remains still to be done," answered Locke, with another shake of the head. "There is not even any actual proof that this villain is connected with the kidnapping gang at all, though I strongly suspect it."

He gave the Sixth-Former a nod, and went into the House. Lancaster glanced after him, and walked on.

Fellows who passed Lancaster, of the Sixth, in the quad, saw nothing out of the common in his looks. He looked as usual, when the Sixth Form gathered in their Form-room.

But Lancaster was not giving much attention to Dr. Locke in the Form-room that morning.

Black and bitter thoughts were in his mind.

Slimy Sugden had struck. The blow had missed—but the master-crook was not the man to rest under a failure—he would strike again. Ratty the Rogue was in a safe place now, and the "Wizard" had no pity to waste on him. But other thugs were at the orders of the master-crook—and the blow that had missed would be repeated.

Lancaster knew that.

He knew that Sugden could not afford to fail. If Locke suspected Lancaster, as seemed almost certain, the master-crook's safety was at stake. His connection with Lancaster was not known at Greyfriars—it had been very carefully kept a secret. But Ferrers Locke, if he was once on the track, was not likely to be long in unearthing that secret. There was a connection between the two in Sir Hilton Popper, who had placed Lancaster at Greyfriars at the money-lender's dictation. By that route, Locke, sooner or later, must arrive at the master-crook. It was not merely to make Greyfriars safe for the schoolboy crook—it was for his own safety's sake, that Slimy struck at the Baker Street detective's life.

To the headmaster's eyes Lancaster seemed the same as usual that morning. As a matter of fact, Lancaster heard hardly a word that dropped from Dr. Locke's learned lips.

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After class he went out into the quad; thinking, or trying to think. Wingate joined him, and talked cricket; the Greyfriars captain was thinking of the return match with Rookwood. Lancaster hardly knew what he answered, but he got away at last. He went out of gates, and walked swiftly in the direction of Courtfield.

His mind was made up, at last. Safety—freedom—his good name at the school—anything and everything should go, rather than this! They had made him a crook, they had made him a thief, they had made him a thing unclean in his own eyes, but they should not make him a party to the last and most terrible of crimes! It had come to murder now—and it was the breaking-point! That sunny June morning, the unhappy boy stood at the cross-roads—the cross-roads of life. On the one side, the loss of all that made life sweet—on the other, the descent into the foulest of crime! Never—never—never—the word hummed in his brain as he strode across the green common.

In the High Street of Courtfield he had a glimpse of a lean figure and a clean-cut face. He hardly glanced at Ferrers Locke.

He went into the post office, and asked for a trunk call. He gave the number of Beech House, in Surrey.

He was going to speak to Slimy—to warn him! Another attempt on the detective's life and it was the end. The police should know—all the world should know—and that warning would be enough! After that, Slimy would not dare! If he dared, the schoolboy crook would carry out his threat—he was resolved on that. They had made him a crook—they should not make him a murderer. Death itself sooner!

He waited long for the trunk call. But no answer came. From the exchange he could only learn that the connection with Beech House, Surrey, was cut off. He gritted his teeth as he left the telephone box. What had happened at the headquarters of the crooks? Something must have happened. He stepped to the telegraph counter. It was dangerous to send a telegram—but the Wizard cared nothing now—he was past caring.

*Sylvester Sugden, Beech House,
Surrey.
Try again and take the consequences.
DICK.*

The telegraph clerk glanced at him curiously as he took in that message. It clicked off, and Lancaster left the post office. Slimy would grind his teeth when he received that wire, and Lancaster cared nothing. He had warned the villain, and he would stand by the warning. There was a weight off his mind as he left the town and started across the wide common back to Greyfriars.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rescue!

HARRY WHARTON felt his heart beat faster.

Days—that seemed like weeks, or months, to the imprisoned junior—had passed since his attempt to escape.

Since then he had been a prisoner in the barred room, watched and guarded more carefully than ever.

Hope had almost died.

Now, in the bright June morning, he was standing at the window, looking through the bars on the green gardens,

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and the hillside beyond the road that wound past the gates.

The sunshine, the green hillside, the wind across the hill, seemed to call him to freedom. Would he ever be free again? How long was this to last? His uncle, Colonel Wharton, would be leaving no stone unturned—the police must be searching for him. Was it all in vain? How long was he to linger in this dreary, heart-breaking imprisonment?

From the direction of the gate on the road, he suddenly caught sight of a running figure.

He had seen the man before—it was one of Slimy Sugden's men, who had taken turns in coming to the room with his meals.

The man was running hard, panting as he ran. His face was wildly excited, his eyes almost starting from his head.

Wharton's heart throbbed as he stared down between the bars.

There was surprise, terror, consternation in the running man's face. He vanished from the junior's sight in a few moments, disappearing into the house below.

Wharton breathed hard and quickly. Something had happened—what? Something had scared the ruffian, and sent him speeding to the house! Was it an alarm?

Was it—the police?

Harry Wharton almost tottered. Was it—could it be, help and rescue at last—at long last?

He crossed the room swiftly to the door. He placed his ear to the door and listened.

There were sounds in the usually silent house—indefinable sounds that told of sudden confusion. It was the alarm!

He listened, his heart thumping! Would they come for him? There was no sound of footsteps approaching the room.

He ran back to the window.

Between the thick bars he stared down into the sunny garden. He caught his breath at the sight of a helmeted figure.

Never had he dreamed it possible that he would ever feel so glad, that his heart would bound with such delight at the sight of the familiar uniform of a police constable.

In another direction, another man in uniform appeared—and in still another, a third. He could guess that the police were there in force; that they were surrounding the house, though he could see only the three from that window. They were closing in on the building; they disappeared from his sight. But for a moment he had a glimpse of a police inspector fitting under his eyes. Then, to his utter amazement, a tall man with a grizzled moustache appeared on the drive from the gate—and he recognised his uncle, Colonel Wharton.

His heart bounded.

It was help at last—rescue at last! It seemed like a miracle, but it was true!

He was saved!

He shouted through the bars of the window, wildly

"Uncle! Colonel Wharton! Uncle!"

The distance was great, but that desperate shout seemed to reach the colonel's ears, for he started, and stared round. Then he hurried on towards the house.

Wharton's eyes danced.

He listened to the sounds below in that house of mystery and secrecy. He heard footsteps racing in passages, on staircases—shouting voices—cries of alarm—slamming doors! Suddenly, with a noise that seemed like thunder to his straining ears, there came a shot. They

were resisting—the desperate gang were not to be taken tamely.

Wharton seized a chair, and hammered on the door of the prison-room.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The chair flew into fragments as he crashed it and crashed it again. He did not hope to break the strong oak door—he hoped to draw the attention of the rescuers. They were there for him—surely they were there for him! In any case, he did not mean to leave them in any doubt that he was there.

Crash! Crash! Crash! Crash! With a leg of the broken chair, he continued to hammer on the door.

"Help! Help! This way! Help!" he shouted.

It seemed to the Greyfriars junior an age before an answering shout came back at last. But at last it came.

"Harry!" It was his uncle's deep voice. "Harry! Where are you?"

"Here! Here! This way!" shrieked Wharton.

He hammered frantically on the door.

A heavy tread approached from outside. Wharton, panting, threw down the chair-leg. He heard the key turn back in the lock; he heard the bars dragged from their sockets. The door flew open.

"Harry!"

"Uncle!" panted Wharton.

"My dear boy! Safe?"

"Quite safe! All right—right as rain! Oh, uncle!" gasped Wharton.

"You've been anxious, of course, and Aunt Amy, but it's all right now—right as rain! Those scoundrels—"

"My dear, dear boy!" Colonel Wharton's bronzed face worked for a moment. "My dear boy, I've found you—or, rather, Ferrers Locke has found you. Heaven bless him!"

"Ferrers Locke? Is he here?"

"No, he is not here; the police below are led by a special officer from Scotland Yard, with a search warrant—but it was Locke who set them in motion."

"How did he know? How could he know?"

The colonel shook his head.

"It's no use asking me that, Harry—Locke has his own methods—but I had faith in him. My faith in him never wavered all through these weary days. You owe your rescue to him, my dear boy! Gad, it was like him to give me a chance to take a hand in the game! I came with the police—Locke gave me word last night! Thank Heaven I have found you safe! Those scoundrels have been secured—not a man in the house has escaped."

"I heard a shot!"

"Yes; one of the rogues—a greasy-looking scoundrel—pulled a gun. A constable has been slightly wounded—that is all, fortunately, but it will add some years to the villain's sentence. Come, my boy!"

Colonel Wharton led his nephew from the room. He held his arm—Wharton almost tottered as he went. It seemed almost like a dream to him. Free at last—free! Free of the barred prison-room—free from the sullen-faced ruffians who had watched and guarded him—free! His brain was in a whirl, but his heart beat joyously as he went down the stairs by Colonel Wharton's side.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

FERRERS LOCKE was seldom taken by surprise.

Seldom, indeed, had the Baker Street detective been caught napping.

But on that sunny June morning, in broad daylight, on Courtfield Common, the wings of the Angel of Death shadowed the man who was the terror of evildoers.

Perhaps Locke was not looking for another attempt so soon after the attack that had failed in the hours of darkness. And he was thinking—he had much to think of. At the police station, in Courtfield, he had seen Inspector Grimes, and learned—as he quite expected—that Ratty the Rogue had refused to make any statement. But he had been on Inspector Grimes' telephone, and heard a report over the wires that brought a grim smile of satisfaction to his face.

In those very hours, when Lancaster of the Sixth had been wrestling with his problem and coming to his resolve, the blow had fallen, at the house far off in Surrey, had the schoolboy crook only known it.

Ferrers Locke was on his way back to Greyfriars now, following a solitary path across the common. The schoolboy crook was in his thoughts—he had to deal with Lancaster, and with regard to Lancaster he was undecided. And, for once, the detective was taken off his guard.

He was following the path where it passed through masses of gorse, when two figures suddenly leaped on him.

Before he knew what was happening, the Baker Street detective was on his back on the ground.

Over him, with a knee planted on his chest, was the low-browed, ferret-eyed Weasel; and another ruffian was grasping the detective.

"We've got him this time!" hissed the Weasel.

His ferret eyes burned down at Locke. "Tadger, quick! Keep him quiet!" hissed the Weasel. "Give him the butt, quick!"

The other ruffian had whipped a revolver from his pocket. Grasping it by the barrel, he swept down the heavy metal butt at Locke's head.

But Ferrers Locke, though he had been caught napping for once, was himself again in the twinkling of an eye.

He twisted like an eel, and the murderous blow missed his head by a couple of inches, the pistol butt crashing in the grass.

"Fool!" snarled the Weasel. "I'll get him! I'll—" snarled Tadger.

"Quick, you fool! If he yells—" Ferrers Locke did not waste his breath in calling for help. He had not passed a soul on that solitary path, and he knew how unlikely it was that anyone was at hand, unless someone happened to be taking the same short cut towards the school.

He bent all his energies to the struggle.

His iron grasp was on the Weasel, and the ferret-eyed rascal whirled over into the grass.

Locke gained his knees. Even as he struggled with the Weasel he twisted and eluded another crashing blow from the pistol-butt.

He released one hand, and jabbed a sharp blow under the chin of the ruffian who struck, and Tadger, with a grunt, dropped back in the grass, the revolver falling from his hand.

Locke reached at it. But the Weasel was on him like a cat. He was rolled over, and again the Weasel was uppermost.

Again the detective hurled him aside, though the Weasel still clung to him tenaciously. Tadger reached at the

fallen weapon, spitting out oaths, and Locke caught his wrist in time and dragged him over. The next moment Tadger was struggling with him, and they rolled in the grass, tearing loose from the Weasel.

The Weasel staggered to his feet, his eyes aflame, his teeth set, his lips drawn back in a snarl. Locke's hands were full, for the moment, with Tadger, and the Weasel caught up the revolver.

He gripped it by the barrel and sprang towards the struggling figures. At the same moment Ferrers Locke got home with a crashing blow, and Tadger stretched out in the grass, senseless.

Like an eel the detective writhed from the sweep of the descending pistol-butt. His hand went to his hip for his automatic. But he had no time to reach it. The Weasel flung himself headlong on the detective, and Locke went down under him.

There was a sound of running feet. Locke heard it, and shouted: "Help!"

The Weasel snarled. Someone was on the lonely path running towards the spot as he heard the sounds of conflict.

The Weasel reversed the revolver in his hand. He had wanted to work in silence—lonely as the spot was, the shot would be heard by many on the Courtfield road, and in other places. But he was desperate now. His fingers closed round the butt, he jammed a finger on the trigger—and Locke grasped his wrist only in time. The barrel was turned aside as the Weasel pulled the trigger, and the bullet crashed into the earth an inch from the detective's ear.

Snarling like a wild beast, the Weasel dragged his hand loose. Another moment and he would have pulled the trigger again.

But at that moment his wrist was grasped from behind, and the muzzle of the weapon turned to the sky.

"Stop!" "Dick!" almost screamed the Weasel.

The running feet had reached the spot. The Weasel stared round in amazement at the set face of Lancaster of the Greyfriars Sixth. It was Dick Lancaster who held his wrist, and held back the death-shot from the brain of the Baker Street detective.

"Dick!" "Stop it! You dog, let that man alone!" Lancaster's face was white, his eyes blazed. "You hound—you murderer—"

"Let go my hand!" "You dog!"

The Weasel's face was white with fury.

"By thunder, Dick! It's Slimy's orders—you know it—let go my hand, or—"

Ferrers Locke made an effort, and the ruffian kneeling on him rocked. Lancaster dragged the murderous hand aside.

"For the last time, Dick!" screamed the Weasel.

"You murderous dog! You—"

"Take it, then!" And the Weasel, twisting the revolver round on the Sixth-Former of Greyfriars, fired.

Ferrers Locke, at the same moment, made a terrific effort, and almost threw off his assailant. It was that movement that saved the life of Dick Lancaster. The bullet, intended for his heart, crashed into his side.

One sharp cry came from Lancaster, and he reeled back and fell.

Instantly the revolver swung back at Ferrers Locke. But it was too late! A fist crashed into the ferret face, and the Weasel rocked over, and, as he fired, the bullet flew wide. He had no time for another shot. He rolled over in the detective's grasp, and the weapon was torn from his hand. A moment more, and Locke was grasping it by the barrel, and the heavy metal butt descended on the Weasel's head.

One groan the wretch gave, and he sank insensible into the grass.

Locke leaped to his feet, panting.

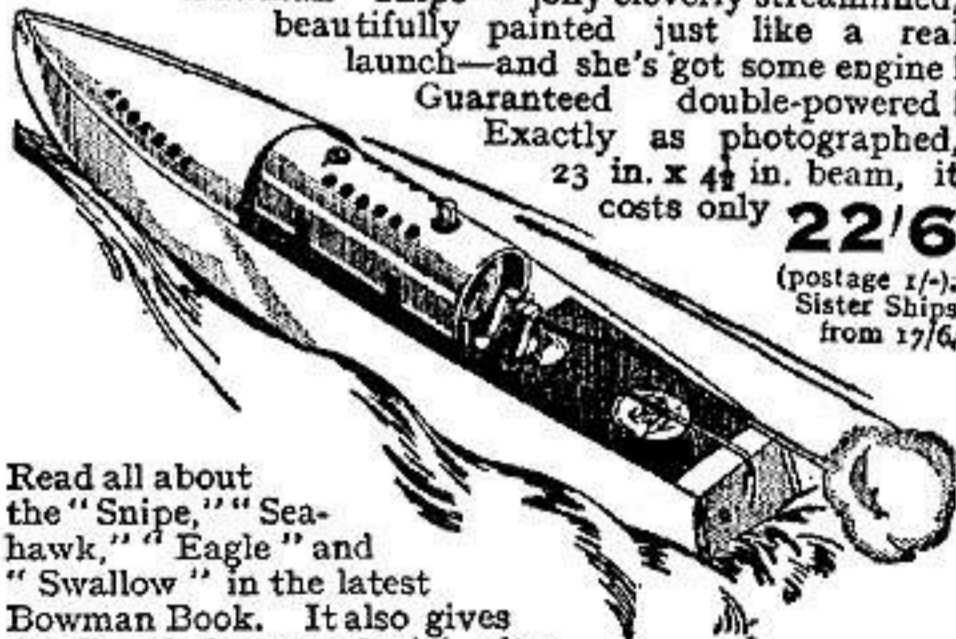
He had come through that desperate fight unscathed; but he knew only too well how near he had been to death, and that only the intervention of Dick Lancaster had saved his life.

He dropped on his knees beside the schoolboy crook. The boy was still conscious, though his face was colourless, and Locke felt a pang of dread as he saw the crimson that was oozing in the grass.

(Continued on next page.)

A mile at racing speed

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"Lancaster!" he breathed.

The half-closed eyes opened, a smile—Lancaster's old smile—flickered over the deathlike face.

"You've got me, Ferrers Locke!" The voice was a whisper, husky and low. "You know now, if you did not know before—you've got me, what's left of me. But there's a way out of even your hands, Ferrers Locke, and I think—I feel—I'm going that way!"

His eyes closed.

"You've saved my life—whatever you are, I am your friend, not your enemy—you've saved me—and I will save you from—"

But there was no sign in the deathlike face; the dulled ears did not hear. And Locke, with a shudder, wondered whether indeed the schoolboy crook had passed out of his hands.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Back to Greyfriars!

SLIMY SUGDEN stood between two constables, his fat wrists drawn together, linked by the handcuffs. The greasy, shiny face was calm, but the black eyes were burning. Harry Wharton, as he came down the stairs with the colonel, glanced at him, and met the fierce glitter in the black eyes. He knew the man again, who had fired on him in his attempt to escape—the man who, he knew, was the master spirit of the lawless gang. Three other men were in handcuffs, in charge of constables, and the Scotland Yard inspector was busily making notes.

There was a sound of many footsteps in the house—the police were there in force. The blow had fallen suddenly on the gang that had so long defied the law; it had been long in coming, but now that it had fallen it was crushing. Already, from various places in Beech House, the stored loot of many robberies was being uncarthed. It was for a kidnapped schoolboy that the police had come; but their search of Beech House had a rich reward.

Slimy, looking at the rescued schoolboy, possibly felt glad that the Wizard

had stood between him and what he would have done but for Dick Lancaster's intervention. Probably he realised that it was owing to the boy crook that he was not now arrested on a capital charge. Wharton glanced at the hard, greasy face with repugnance, and passed on with his uncle. Sugden and the other prisoners were taken to a room under guard while the search through the house went on. From the expression on the Scotland Yard inspector's face it was easy to see that he was reaping a rich harvest at the headquarters of the crooks.

The inspector spoke a few words to Colonel Wharton, and gave the junior a smile and a nod. Harry Wharton was glad enough when he was outside the house of crime and mystery. He walked down to the gate with the colonel. At a little distance down the road the colonel's car was waiting, and they stepped into it.

"Greyfriars?" asked Harry, as he sat down beside his uncle.

Colonel Wharton nodded.

"Yes; I shall take you back to the school immediately. It is a two-hours' run at good speed."

Wharton's face was bright as the chauffeur set the car in motion. He was thinking of his chums. But another thought came into his mind as the car raced on by green country road. Lancaster!

Slimy Sugden and the rest were in the grip of the law. But Lancaster? Was the same fate to fall upon him?

Wharton's heart was heavy at the thought.

Lancaster was a crook and a breaker of the law; it was to secure his safety at Greyfriars that Wharton had been made a prisoner. But he had saved the junior's life—there could be no doubt about that. Lancaster had stood between him and Slimy. There was only pity in Wharton's heart for him, and a lingering of his old liking for the fellow he had once liked and admired so much. He shuddered at the thought of the handcuffs on Lancaster's wrists; of that handsome face looking from the prisoner's dock; of that proud head bowed low among common criminals.

Yet already, perhaps, it had come to pass—for the raid on Beech House could only mean that Ferrers Locke knew all. Was Lancaster of the Sixth already a prisoner?

He shivered.

"Your friends will be glad to see you, Harry." It was the colonel's voice. "By gad, this will be a surprise at the school!"

"I don't understand yet," said Harry. "You've told me that Ferrers Locke had—"

"Dr. Locke sent for him when you were kidnapped, my boy. We owe everything to Ferrers Locke." The colonel tugged at his moustache. "I know little more than you do, as yet. Locke has spent all his time, or nearly all his time, at Greyfriars, since he took the case in hand—yet he has rooted out that den of thieves eighty miles from the school!"

Wharton knew the connection, if his uncle did not. Obviously, it could only have been through Lancaster of the Sixth that Ferrers Locke had put his finger on the headquarters of the crooks, eighty miles from Greyfriars, in another county.

"From what I hear," continued Colonel Wharton, "the man Sugden carried on a moneylender's business in the City—he was quite well known, and at Beech House, in Surrey, he lived as an ordinary citizen, unsuspected. How Locke put his finger on the man, I do not know. It is a mystery to me how he found a clue while he was at the school."

"There has been no arrest—at Greyfriars?" faltered Wharton.

"At Greyfriars!" Colonel Wharton stared. "I have heard of nothing. What do you mean?"

Wharton breathed more freely.

"I—I mean—" The junior broke off. Evidently Colonel Wharton, at least, had heard nothing of the Wizard.

"Are you aware, Harry, why these rascals kidnapped you?" asked the colonel. "That is a mystery to me, so far."

Wharton was silent for a few moments. Had Lancaster been warned in time, he wondered, and made his escape? He could not help hoping so. The truth had to be known now. Yet the junior who had been kidnapped, who had passed so many days in weary imprisonment in lawless hands, was thinking of mercy for the schoolboy crook, of saving Lancaster if he could.

"I know their motive, uncle," he said at last. "I think I know through whom Mr. Locke must have learned about Sugden. Mr. Locke must know that there is a Greyfriars man mixed up in this."

"Good gad! What do you mean, Harry?"

"You remember Lancaster?"

"Lancaster? You do not mean—"

"Yes."

"Good gad!" repeated the colonel blankly. "Are you dreaming, Harry? Dick Lancaster, the son of my old comrade in arms, mixed up with a gang of crooks! What can you mean?"

"It's rotten, uncle, but it's true!" said Harry miserably. "But—in spite of that—Lancaster's a splendid chap. He was in bad hands. That villain Sugden made him what he was, and I know that he would have thrown them over if he could have. Uncle, he saved my life—he stood between those villains and what they would have done. You would not have found me alive at Sugden's place but for Lancaster."



ST. FRANK'S Under Canvas!

The whole school camping out; an open air life for Nipper and his cheery Chums of St. Frank's. And what great fun it is, too! There's only one fly in the ointment. Amos Whittle wants to upset the whole apple-cart. But when he comes up against Nipper & Co.—well, he finds them a tough handful. Here's a breezy school yarn that you simply must read, entitled; "St. Frank's Under Canvas." It appears this week in the

NELSON LEE

On Sale Wednesday, June 24th. Order Your Copy To-day—2d.

A dark figure, grasping a weapon, glided into the room where Ferrers Locke was sleeping. Bunter's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth for a moment. Then, with an effort, he yelled: "Help! Wake up! Oh dear! Burglars! Oooooch!"



"Tell me all!" muttered the colonel. His old, bronzed face was pale.

Wharton told him, as the car raced on, the whole story, so far as he knew it, of the schoolboy crook.

The colonel listened in silence.

"Good gad!" he said at last.

"Mr. Locke must have spotted him at the school, somehow," said Harry. "It must have been through him that he learned of Sugden. He must have known who and what Lancaster was, and found out the connection between them. Then I suppose he must have had Sugden watched, must have had Beech House watched, and satisfied himself that Sugden was at the bottom of it all. He must have had it pretty clear before he put it to Scotland Yard, and they obtained a search-warrant. Uncle, if—if they've got Lancaster, something must be done for him. You will stand by him, uncle?"

The colonel was silent.

"I know that I owe him my life," said Harry earnestly. "And I know that he would gladly have given up the whole, wretched thing—thrown over that gang of scoundrels; but that villain Slimy Sugden threatened to let all Greyfriars know—and he could not bear the thought of the fellows there knowing the truth. That was all that held him in that villain's power.

"I'm not making excuses for him; but—but, uncle, if he had a chance, now the game's up, he would never touch anything of the kind again—I'm certain of that. I know he's a crook, but I believe that by nature he's the straightest fellow breathing. He never had a chance—"

"We shall see," said Colonel Wharton quietly. "Ferrers Locke will know.

We shall see. We shall soon be at Greyfriars now."

Wharton's heart leaped, at last, to see the grey old tower rising above the trees in the distance. He had almost despaired of ever seeing the old school again—and the cheery, friendly faces of the Co.

Greyfriars at last!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Clear!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Harry!"

"Old bean!"

"My esteemed and ridiculous chum—"

Four fellows rushed at Harry Wharton and fairly hugged him. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, Hurree Janset Ram Singh, could scarcely believe their eyes as Harry Wharton stepped from the car with the colonel.

"Back again!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"The back-againfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Harry!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Well, this is good!" said Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hurrah!"

Greyfriars fellows rushed up from all sides. Colonel Wharton, with a smile on his face, went into the House. Harry was left in the midst of a surging crowd of excited fellows. Wingate of the Sixth clapped him on the back; Coker of the Fifth gave him a friendly dig in the ribs that made his gasp. His chums hugged him. The bell rang for afternoon school, and nobody heeded it.

"Wharton's back!" The news ran through the school like wildfire.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, let a fellow speak!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I say, Wharton, old chap—I say, I've been simply longing for you to come back. I've missed you frightfully. I say, old chap, I've been disappointed about a postal order, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lancaster will be jolly glad to see you, old bean!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Where's old Lancaster? I don't see him here. Lancaster told us all the time not to worry, he was sure you were safe—"

Wharton's face changed.

Evidently nothing was known yet at Greyfriars! Was Ferrers Locke keeping the schoolboy crook's secret? If so Wharton did not mean to reveal it.

"Lancaster?" he repeated. "He's not here?"

"Seems not."

"Where is Mr. Locke?"

"Blessed if I know! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch came out of the House. There was a smile on his crusty countenance as he shook hands with Harry Wharton and welcomed him back to the school. He took the junior into the House, to the Head's study, leaving an excited crowd buzzing in the quad.

From Dr. Locke Wharton received a kind welcome; but he soon saw that the Head knew nothing of Lancaster. And he did not mention the name; neither did Colonel Wharton. Ferrers

(Continued on page 27.)

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LAND of LOST PLANES!

(For introduction
see page 25.)



BY
ANTHONY FORD.

the bats do. Huh! If I don't, I'll be sprouting wings soon enough!"

He held the flaring lighter rigidly before him, so that the light flickered on a level with his waist. Then he went down one of the steps. The light still flared. He trod on the next. He felt the stair shift beneath him. It was scarcely a movement so much as a gentle sinking of about an inch.

"That's the step that reopens the slab at the far end of the passage," muttered Bill.

He moved a trifle—and the light went out.

"Back you go, my lad—quick!" he muttered, and backed up the steps till he was at the top again. "But," he went on, "I'm not going back out of that opening yet. The Mayas would believe I was a god all right now. But I'm going to see this through. There's another way out of here, or I'll eat my hat."

The young airman glanced behind him. His belief that by his treading on the third stair down he had reopened the slab that had closed behind him was strengthened. No breeze came down to clear the deadly gases away—that was impossible until there was another outlet for a draught to pass out of. No light gleamed down the cavernous passage along which he had come. But there was a difference in the quality of the darkness. It was less thick, less cloak-like.

Now, looking down into the treasure vault, he estimated the height of the roof to the floor was fourteen feet. And of those fourteen feet ten were gas-laden. He was six feet tall; if he could add another five feet to his height he would be able to walk safely through the belt of invisible death, with his head one foot above it.

In order to make no mistake—a miscalculation would mean death—the young airman tried to visualise it as a lake of water ten feet deep, and he smiled wryly to himself as a plan entered his mind.

"Well, I've been reckoned a good diver—I'm going to do a dive right now," he said.

He held his breath, stooped, placing the flaring lighter on the top step against the wall. And immediately it passed into the belt of poison gas, the flame flickered and died. But Bill had expected it. He had singled out his object while the light showed; and now, with his breath held deeply, he plunged down the shallow steps till he reached bottom, and then sprinted across to a painted wooden idol, and heaved it up.

The head of the idol almost reached the roof of the vault. But the thing was hollow, carved of ironwood. It had rotted in parts, but the main bulk of it had held remarkably well. The sweat poured down the pilot's face as he staggered back to the steps bearing the bulky idol in his arms. His lungs felt as if they must burst, as he laboured up. He counted the steps, then exhaled his breath with a tremendous

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Invisible Death I

HAD Bill Lyon not possessed nerves of steel he would surely have been a raving lunatic right now after what he had been through. Even so, his stomach turned over at that whispering sound in the darkness there before him. His mouth felt dry, suddenly, and he felt the sweat, cold, trickling down his face, down his neck, soaking his thin shirt.

In that dark place of dead men, where the yellow flame of his lighter showed faintly the prone corpse of Poincau, the French pilot, a grinning grey skull, farther, dim and horrible shapes—it seemed incredible that there could be anything that lived.

Bill stifled a yell and ducked instinctively as the whispering sound came again, and something flitted near him. And then, suddenly, he laughed. It was a hoarse, unnatural croak; but he laughed. For he realised that what had made his heart seem pulp inside him was a bat; that there were a number of bats in the Temple of Death, and he had disturbed them. They were flitting about, squeaking. A

leathery, cold wing brushed across his face. He lashed out savagely, glad of the action.

"Well," and he spoke aloud, striving to regain his mental balance, "thank the stars I'm not the only living creature here!"

As Bill spoke the thought occurred to him—where there was life there must be air, too. The treasure vault at his feet was filled with gas, else Poincau and the rest would not have died from it.

How was it, then, that bats lived there? A bat needed air the same as any other creature with lungs.

"Because," he answered his own question, "there is air sandwiched between the roof of the dark place and the belt of gas. The same as air would be sandwiched between the roof and a pool of water. I've got to regard that gas as if it were material—as if I could see it. And then, maybe, I'll be safe!"

Talking, he felt better, and he continued, arguing aloud to himself.

"As if it were a pool of water. Therefore, the thing to do, Bill, my lad, is to find out just how deep it is. Then find a way of floating over the top of it like

gasp as he reached the second from the top. He was safe here, he knew.

However, he could bring the idol up no farther—at least, not in its present upright position—already its head was jammed against the roof. He stood leaning against the wall, while he fought to get breath again. His hands fumbled in his pockets, and he produced his knife.

It was a good knife, with a stout steel blade. But, as Bill flicked the light on again, and surveyed the blade and then the idol, a groan burst from his lips. It had been his idea to try to hack two long pieces of wood from the idol and fashion a pair of stilts from them that he might walk over the top of the layer of gas. But he knew that what little air there was left in the place he would use up—long before his slender blade could even hack so much as a sliver from the wood that had withstood the rot of centuries.

"But," he decided swiftly, "I can sit on the old joss's head and have a look around the place more clearly."

The young airman shifted the base of the idol to the broad surface of the bottom step, leaving the head about a foot from the roof. Once again taking a deep breath, Bill doused the lighter and walked down into the pool of gas, until he felt the idol looming against him. Then he started to climb.

That was easy. The thing was richly carved, affording plenty of hand and foothold, and in a few moments Bill was once again breathing easily, his legs straddled around the neck of the idol, one hand clutching its head, the other holding the lighter aloft.

Now, since he was farther within the vault and the lighter could cast a wider radiance, Bill could make out the opposite walls which had hitherto been invisible. A low cry of satisfaction escaped his lips as, dim in the shadows, he saw another set of wide, shallow steps, the replica of the steps he had just descended, on the opposite side of the vault. At the top of them was set a narrow, oblong stone—the long-closed exit that had been sealed many centuries ago.

"Well," grunted the young airman, "here goes for a ride in 'Rotten Row'—for that seems to me to be the only way of getting across there!"

He took a firmer grip of the idol's head with his right hand, then wriggled in such a manner that the base of the idol moved. It shifted an inch, wobbled momentarily on the edge of the bottom step—then slipped off and thumped to the floor of the vault. For a moment Bill swayed precariously on his perch; but he steadied the wildly rocking idol by holding on to the roof above his head. Then he jerked again, so that the base shifted forward. The young airman felt peculiarly child-like, squatting on the grotesque shoulders of the idol, shifting it gradually forward by spasmodic jerks as a child will shift a chair on which it has been sat.

"Kids who ride hobby horses," he grinned to himself, "have got nothing on me!"

The Fear of Death!

IN that terrible journey across the dark vault Bill lost all count of time. His faculties were concentrated on keeping his precarious perch. If the idol broke under the strain of his moving it, if it wobbled a

little too far as he swayed it forward, then he must be hurled down to terrible death—a death where invisible fingers would squeeze the life from his lungs.

When at last the base of the idol reached the bottom step of the second flight across the vault Bill was white and shaking, drenched with sweat. For a moment he kept his position across the shoulders of the idol, panting, striving in some measure to regain his nerve-balance.

At last, when the trembling of his muscles ceased, the young airman shifted carefully from his position and went to climb down the idol. He took a deep breath, holding the lighter carefully in front of him that he might see the steps.

Laboriously Bill clambered down. His foot felt for and found the carved hands of the idol folded across its protuberant body. He tested the strength of the wooden hands with his foot. It seemed all right. He allowed his weight to rest—and disaster came.

There was a soft, splintering, tearing sound as the wood, rotted in the passing of centuries, gave way under his full weight. Blind instinct made Bill hold his breath still. The lighter shot from his hand and went out long before it tinkled, lost in the darkness on the floor of the vault.

His hands waving wildly, Bill crashed to the floor. He landed on his back. Every ounce of breath was forced from him by the impact. His outflung hand found the bottom of the step with a smack that nearly broke his wrist. He gasped—he couldn't help it. Somewhere, deep in his mind, a voice told him that it was fatal—but human lungs cannot contain a vacuum. He inhaled as he sprawled on his back.

Strangling fingers seemed to clutch at his throat. There was a roaring in his ears. He felt something trickling down his face wet and warm. His nose was bleeding. He was going through all the agony of a drowning man.

With superhuman effort the young airman dragged himself to his knees. The strength was sapped from him, but somewhere back of his fast-slipping consciousness he knew that if he failed to find air at the top of those steps he was a dead man. His fingers clawed wildly at the steps. The blood pounded in his ears.

Step by step Bill heaved himself up. There was but one thought in his mind—to breathe! He did not know how

INTRODUCTION.

Entrusted with a fortune in jewels, Shane Dexter, a crack American pilot, sets out to fly the 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. As a proof of this, the young airman agrees to enter the Temple of Death from which no white man has ever emerged alive. Here Bill discovers vast treasure, and the skeletons of previous airmen who had breathed their last in an invisible belt of gas in a vault beneath. Bill is peering over the pool of invisible death when something moves in the darkness beyond.

(Now read on.)

many steps he managed to crawl up. He knew he could last no longer; his tortured lungs could no longer contain the poison-gas they had already inhaled. He must breathe! He gasped, sprawling there on the surface of a step—and new life flowed into him. Here there was air!

For a long time the young airman lay there, near unconscious, breathing stertorously. What little air was left was foul, but it was mighty sweet to him. At last he crawled to his knees, heaved himself up by hanging on to the wall, and mounted the steps to the top. There he rested again until coherent thought returned to him.

"I've got to get out this way now!" he determined.

His fingers found the cracks around the slab of stone. It protruded a matter of six inches from its socket, as if it had moved recently. And then Bill remembered the working of the other stone at the far entrance beyond in the passage—how the step had moved it into place. When he had crawled up these steps, had he moved this stone from its place? And had it, on account of its being sealed so long, got stuck?

With all his strength Bill heaved on the protruding sides of the stone. He felt it shift a little in his grasp. Something from the other side seemed to be holding it back. The sweat poured down him as he strained. It moved again. There came a tearing sound as of rending bushes and falling boughs. The stone slab gave inwards, almost falling on top of him, but he dodged aside in time.

Blinding sunlight streamed in on Bill; good, fresh, pure air blew in his face. A wild, fierce exultation shook him. It was to him as a pool of fresh water is to a desert-man dying of thirst. He flung out his arms and raced up through the gaping hole out of that dank, evil place of darkness and death.

When his eyes became accustomed to the bright sunlight he found that he was under the outside of the stone wall which he remembered surrounded the Maya temples for a circumference of something like four miles. Jungle grew all around him. He found that the stone slab had been overgrown thickly by creepers, lianas, and brush.

Sheer joy at the sight of day gripped at Bill's heart. He was filthy dirty, tattered, torn, and bruised—but he was free!

A distance away, where the serpentine wall curved, he could see the carved steps which he had descended from the jungle with the chief, Doak, and the Maya guides who had found them. Beyond, a mile away through the jungle, lay the monoplane, resting with the other grim relics of flight in this Land of Lost Planes.

The young airman could find the trail by working back to the spot where the Mayas had brought him and the other white men. He could keep out of sight of the Mayas within the bowl on the other side of the wall by skirting through the fringe of the jungle.

Turning swiftly, he plunged into the green depths, leaving behind him the gaping hole, through which blew clean, fresh air, driving out the poison-gas from the Temple of Death.

The young pilot had come through the terrible ordeal unharmed. But what had become of his monoplane? And Dexter, the Chief and Doak? He must rescue them at all costs!

Paying the Penalty!

BILL LYON, as my mechanic of International Airways, Ltd., would agree, was tough and a hard worker. But now he was just about spent. He had gone through a terrible ordeal in the Temple of Death; he had floundered through a practically unknown jungle, finding his way by landmarks he had seen but once.

Reaching the monoplane, with his own two hands he had righted her, so that now her tail was level with the ground, and no longer sticking up at an angle of forty-five degrees. Her undercarriage was patched up; the broken wreckage of the cabin-nose taken right away. She was ready—as ready as she could be under the circumstances—for flight.

"She'll do!" Bill gasped. "By gosh, she'll do!"

He swung over the prop of the first engine four times before she fired; and then, with a splutter and a cough, she took the gas. She backfired, died, coughed; and then a steady roar shook the quiet of the jungle as the first engine started.

The second took up the tune almost instantly. Bill let them race for a few moments while he took his bearings and saw that he had a clear runway; then he clambered into his seat.

And, for the first time in its grim history, the Land of Lost Planes saw an aeroplane rise from its sinister landing ground.

Past those scattered skeletons of flying ships, brought here by the aerial vortex thousands of feet above, Bill Lyon piloted the battered monoplane. Gradually the wrecked nose lifted, gradually the strain was taken off the patched-up landing gear. In a few moments she was skimming over the ground, then lifting and flying.

It was a matter of sentiment with Bill that he dipped once in salute to the white skeletons of the lost planes beneath him, then he turned westward.

In a few minutes the bowl wherein lay the Maya temples was under him like a vast red-and-black chess-board. And as he swooped and circled over it he saw the tiny dots of figures come rushing out of the main temple. He swooped lower still. The figures seemed to crouch back as if in fear.

Then, more clearly, Bill saw Shane Dexter, surrounded by the Mayas, and with him Doak, the gunman, and the chief. Now he was so close he could almost see the expression on their faces. Relief and hope in Dexter's, fear in the chief's and Doak's—fear that he was going to fly off and leave

them there. That is what they would have done.

But they need not have feared that. Carefully, on account of the weak landing-gear, Bill flattened out and brought the plane into a perfect landing on the mosaic floor of the bowl. He let her run right up towards the biggest temple, then turned her so that she was ready for a clear run out again.

Grinning, he clambered out. The Mayas were prostrate before him on the mosaic ground. Kaxn, the high priest, was murmuring prayers for forgiveness of their doubt.

The airman was indeed Kodon! Kodon the Mighty, Son of the Sun! He had walked through death and returned from the skies!

"You did it, Bill! Gosh, you're a wonder! How'd you manage it, feller? What happened? What is there in there?"

It was Shane speaking, bubbling over, congratulating him.

"Gas!" Bill said laconically. "Carbon monoxide. Place was drenched in it; but, thanks to my lighter goin' out, I discovered it. I also found the other opening, and got out through it. Found I was the other side of the surroundin' wall, so nipped through the jungle an' got the ship goin' again."

Thus briefly did he relate his adventures. But his wan face, his worn, battered appearance, told all that he left unsaid. But the chief wasn't thinking of any of these things. He snapped suddenly:

"And the treasure. Did you bring any of that with you?"

Bill grinned.

"Oh, yeah!" he said elaborately.

An eager, cunning light flared in the chief's eyes. The words fairly tumbled out of his mouth.

"You did? You got some gold? Jewels? Where are they? Are they with—?"

"Yeah, I brought the treasure out," Bill went on placidly. "But not that kind. I reckoned I was more valuable than all the gold and jewels they've got stowed away in there, so I just brought myself out."

The man swore luridly under his breath. Doak was staring at Bill with hate in his black eyes. His white face was puffed and swollen where Bill had hit him. His forehead was red with blood where Bill had thrown the revolver at him before his journey through the Temple of Death. The chief whirled on him suddenly.

"They won't go without us," he snapped. "They wouldn't dare face civilisation again having to say they'd left us. Come, Doak!"

He swung round, speeding towards the opening to the Temple of Death, swung wide again, since Bill had dislodged the step which operated its opening and closing.

Doak followed the chief. The two were possessed of a kind of courage—a courage bolstered up by the lust for gold, for which they would kill and risk swinging. The chief argued that where Bill could get out alive, he could, too.

"The fools!" Dexter cried. "If the Mayas find their treasure is going to be raided there'll be bloodshed!"

He started to follow them, but already a score of spearsmen had leaped up from their prostrate position before Bill and were racing after the disappearing white men. Kaxn had muttered something as soon as Doak and the chief had bolted for the opening to the temple.

There was nothing Bill and Dexter could do but wait to see what happened when the two crooks returned.

Kaxn was staring at the two pilots, a curious expression in his fathomless, dark eyes. Something like a half smile was on his withered old face. As he looked at Bill there was still reverence in his expression, and something almost fatherly, too.

"Do you think he really believes I'm Kodon?" Bill whispered. "D'you think he's realised there's been gas in there all the time, and that he's played up like that to guard the treasure of the temple? Ask him?"

Shane Dexter said in the few words he had learned:

"Kaxn, what thinkest thou of Kodon now?"

The old priest replied:

"The ways of our Father the Sun are strange, but they lead always somewhere. Kodon will doubtless be returning to his father in the great white bird, and

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BANDITS OF THE LINE!



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FERRERS
LOCKE—
Detective.

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taking you, as his sacrifice, with him."

"Yes," Dexter nodded. Aside to Bill he said simply: "He knows. He knows we're human. But he had his duty to do to the Mayas, and they wanted to see their god. Well, they've seen him, and he'll die happy, knowing he's done his duty and tried to guard the treasure, as he—"

His words snapped short. There was a muffled report from the temple—another and another. Then a tremendous clamour arose from within its dark recesses.

"They're scrappin'!" Bill cried. He rushed to the plane, with its engines ticking over easily, and clambered inside, gesturing for Dexter to follow him.

"We'll be ready to make a quick getaway as soon as they reach us. Get ready to pull 'em in!"

They waited, the plane quivering. Kaxn watched them, his face inscrutable. They had no eyes for him. They were watching the entrance to the Temple of Death. The clamour died away. In a minute or so a Maya came out. Blood streamed from a wound in his shoulder. Others followed, and then came Doak and the chief.

They were dead, transfixed by a score of spears, and being carried in triumph by half a dozen Mayas, the people whose sacred treasure they had sought to violate. They had not heeded the grim name of the treasure vault—the Temple of Death—and they had paid for their sins. Bill, white of face, met the steady glance of Kaxn. Kaxn made a gesture—almost a shrug. With a sigh, Bill gave the monoplane the gun. The engines roared. The Mayas fell flat as the monoplane slipped forward, then gathered speed.

Shane Dexter and Bill Lyon leaned over the side, and they caught the grim smile that flitted over Kaxn's face as they went. The ground dropped from them. They turned north. No need to fear the belt of wind that had brought them here. They could fly beneath that until they reached landmarks, the American flyer would know.

Up North, ahead of them, but a few incredible hours away, lay the United States, civilisation. Men and women, and motor-cars, and more aeroplanes. Progress and science.

Swiftly they sped onwards, leaving behind them, like some scarce believable memory, an incredible dream—the Land of Lost Planes!

THE END.

(Now look out for the thrilling opening instalment of our grand new serial: "BANDITS OF THE LINE!" full particulars of which appear on page 26.)

A CRACKSMAN'S REWARD!

(Continued from page 25.)

Locke, they learned, was absent from the school, and when the Head went to the Sixth Form room he found that Lancaster was absent also.

Mr. Quelch, with rare tact, gave four members of the Remove leave from class that afternoon. Wharton, when he left the Head, found his chums waiting for him. They marched him off to Study No. 1. Wharton had missed his lunch, but a study spread compensated for the loss, and his face was bright as he looked round the old study. Even yet he could scarcely believe that he was back at Greyfriars with his comrades round him.

"Ferrers Locke will be jolly glad to see you when he comes in," said Bob. "I suppose it must have been Locke who worked this somehow. I was beginning to think that Ferrers Locke was a back number, and then—here you are!"

"Here I am!" agreed Wharton, with a cheery grin.

"The esteemed Locke is terrifically downy!" remarked Hurrec Janset Ram Singh. "I suggestively remarked to my absurd friends that the ridiculous Locke had something up his sleeve."

"So you did, Inky, old black bean," said Nugent. "Harry, old chap, it's good to see you here again."

"It feels good!" said Harry, laughing.

He had to tell his comrades all that had happened; but he was careful to make no mention of Lancaster. They strolled in the quad, while the other fellows were at class, and Ferrers Locke came in at last. The Baker Street detective smiled and shook hands with Harry, but the juniors could see that he was very grave. Harry Wharton left his chums and went into the House with Locke. In the detective's room he came to the subject that was heavy on his mind.

"Mr. Locke, of course you know about—about—"

"Lancaster?" said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"I knew that you must know, of course," said Harry. "Mr. Locke, can—can anything be done for him? He saved me from those villains—he is a decent chap at heart. Nobody here knows anything yet. It was to save his name here at Greyfriars that he kept on with the gang. I know that now. That villain Sugden had him there. But—but now it's all up with them, Sugden can have no motive for betraying him, and if he can be spared—"

Wharton's voice faltered.

"I know more than you can tell me, my boy," said Ferrers Locke. "The

boy was more sinned against than sinning, and I, as well as you, owe my life to him. He lies now in Courtfield Hospital, terribly injured. He was shot down in defending me."

"Good heavens!" breathed Wharton.

"He will live!" said Locke. "But it will be long before he recovers. He will not, of course, see Greyfriars again. But he has a friend in me. He has atoned for all, and when he recovers he will go free. And if his name can be saved here I shall save it. I owe him much, and I shall leave no stone unturned to repay the debt. His faults are the faults of his training in villainous hands, his good qualities are his own, and he will yet make good."

Greyfriars never learned the truth. All the school knew was that Lancaster of the Sixth had received his wound in risking his life to save Ferrers Locke.

Slimy Sugden kept his own counsel. Indeed, now that the blow had fallen the master crook was glad that the Wizard, at least, had escaped. Slimy went to the place that had long waited for him, but he went silent.

And Ferrers Locke was silent. Needless to say, Harry Wharton never breathed a word, even to his chums.

The secret of the Wizard was buried deep.

It was long, long afterwards that Dick Lancaster was restored to health. When he left the hospital it was to be removed to Wharton Lodge. In the care of Colonel Wharton and Aunt Amy he recovered, and there Harry saw him once more to say good-bye.

The Wizard was dead and gone and almost forgotten now, but Dick Lancaster was no longer Lancaster of the Greyfriars Sixth. He had good friends to help him in a new life, in a new land where he was not likely to see again any of the lawless associates of earlier days, where he was to make good and forget the shadows of the past.

He was missed at Greyfriars. But he was remembered there with kindness and affection, most kindly of all by Harry Wharton, the only fellow at Greyfriars who knew the true history of the schoolboy crook.

THE END.

(That was a jolly good yarn, wasn't it, chums? And so is the one you'll read about next week. It features the one and only Coker on the dirt-track! Look out for "SPEEDWAY COKER!"—but first order your copy of the MAGNET. It saves disappointment.)

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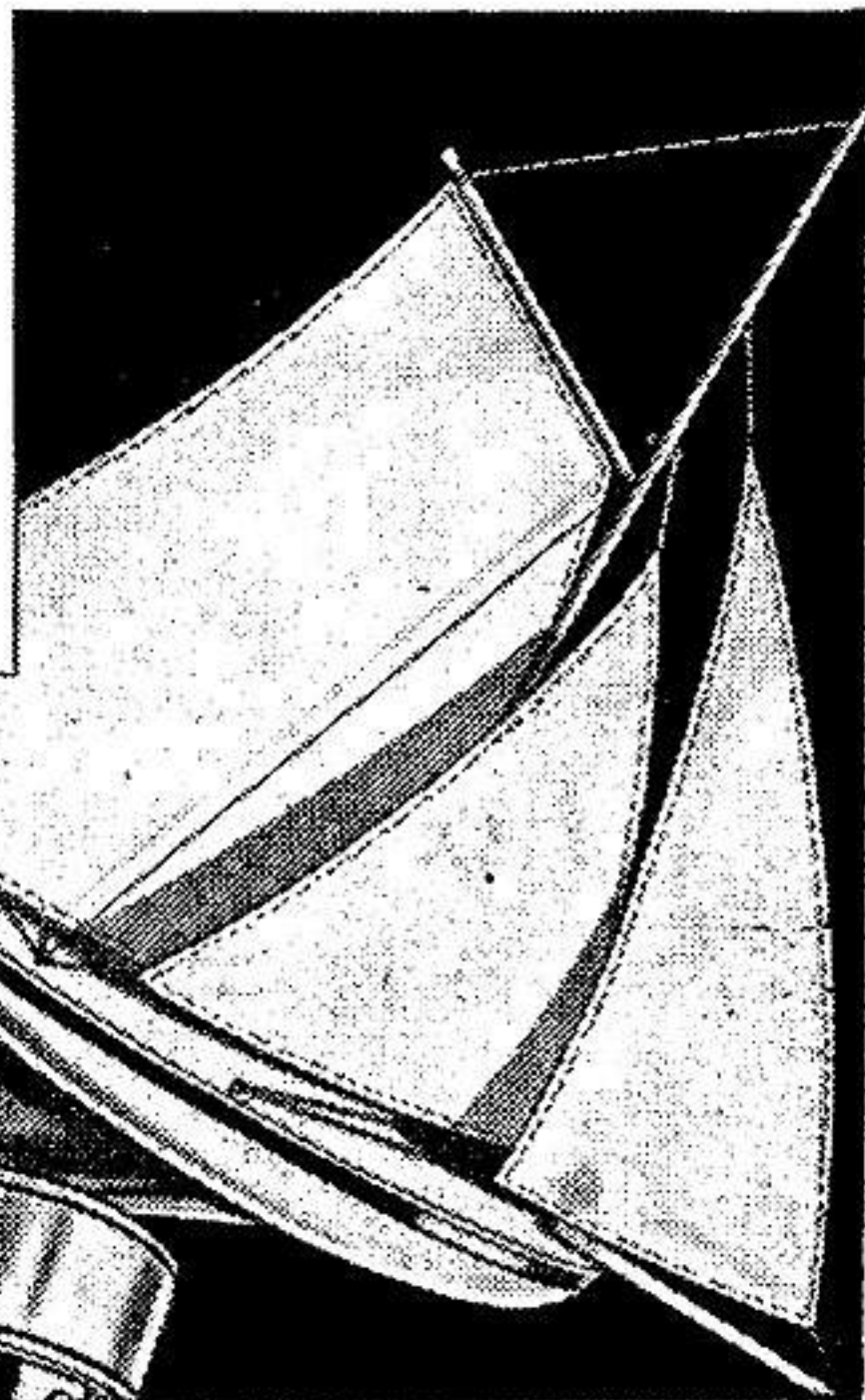
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Daily Herald

No. 51.

LAUGH AND GROW FAT.

Edited by
HARRY WHARTON,
 F. G. R.

LATEST EXTRA GOOD EDITION

June 27th, 1931.

STRONG CAMERA REQUIRED.
 Seventeen broken cameras offered in exchange. I am determined that I will, somehow or other, take a photo of Bolsover Major.
MONTY NEWLAND.

WALKING TOUR SENSATION

Belted Earl
Collapses from Strain

Lord Mauleverer, the champion slacker and slumber specialist of the Remove, celebrated the Founders' Day holiday this year in a unique way by going on a walking tour.

There was a rush for his study when the news got round. Manly received the crowd, sprawled out on a sofa, liberally sprinkled with cushions.

"This true about your walking tour?" the belted earl was asked.

"Yaas," was the reply.

"How long will it take—a week?"

"No."

"A day?"

"No."

"An hour?"

"No, my dear fellow. Five minutes."

"That wasn't long, of course, but it was something for Manly. We asked him whether he proposed to tour the lane down to the village. The answer was in the negative. Was he going down to the cricket field? No. To the gates? No. Then where the blump was he going?"

"To the tuckshop, dear boy!" replied Manly, simply.

"Well, that wasn't a bad sort of tour for Manly, anyway. In a state of great curiosity, a huge crowd turned out to wait for him at the School House steps.

A bathchair was parked at the foot of the steps, with an aged veteran in charge. In due course, Manly came down and calmly flopped into the bathchair.

"Tuckshop, Beever!" he yawned, addressing the aged gent.

"Beever," hauled him across the quad to the tuckshop, where Manly ordered an ice-cream, and consumed it without alighting.

"Home, Beever!" he yawned, after that.

"Beever" hauled him back to the School House and assisted him out. But the strain had been too much for the noble earl. He collapsed in a heap half-way up the steps, and was carried unconscious to his study. It was a sad end to the "walking" tour. All the same, we shall have to revise our opinion of Manly. Who, in all conscience, can call him a slacker after this?



BOWLER AWARDED FIFTY LINES
 Something New in Cricket Matches

Last year the Masters played the First Eleven. The First Eleven scored 240 for three wickets and the Masters were all out for 13.

Probably that explains why they decided to play the Remove this year!

Mr. Lasecelles, the maths master, fixed it all up. We felt honoured, of course; but we didn't exactly hail the challenge with delight. A beak's all right in his natural haunt—a Form-room; outside that area, he's apt to be a nuisance.

Anyway, the match duly came off, and at the appointed time, Larry Lasecelles led the old crocks down to Little Side. Two of the masters' having dodged the issue, there were only nine of them left, so they had co-opted Gossling and Mimbale. They all looked very grim—particularly Gossling and Mimbale, who didn't seem at all keen on being yanked out of their normal spheres!

Larry won the toss and elected to bat first. He and Mr. Wiggins went in to open the innings, the latter facing our demon bowler, Inky, for the first time.

Five seconds later, there was a musical "click" from Mr. Wiggins' wicket.

"How's that, umpire?"

"Out!"

Mr. Wiggins took the vacant place at the wicket. He squarred up to the bowler with a "do-or-die" look in his face.

Mr. Wiggins' stumps were scattered far and wide. After blinking at them for a few seconds, Mr. Wiggins followed Mr. Wiggins back to the pavilion. Mr. Trout was next man in. He adjusted his glasses and took a good look round the field before getting down to it.

"Get ready to run as soon as I strike the ball, Lasecelles!" he said.

Click!

Something evidently went wrong with the programme, for Prouty didn't strike the ball at all. To make up for his omission, the ball struck his wicket!

"Hart-trick!" chorused those of the spectators who were out of the range of the beaks. But Mr. Prouty didn't move.

"Hart-trick—nonsense!" he boomed. "That was of course, a trial ball. Put up those stumps and tell your bowler to try again!"

"Oh corky!"

"We don't mind!" said Wharton, as he saw Lasecelles threatening to chip in. "Bowl again, Inky!"

Inky, with a dusky grin, played, and again there was a "click." And dear old Prouty didn't bother

FORM PICNIC

Vernon-Smith's Innovation

The Remove held its First Annual Picnic this week, the function being organised by the well-known and popular sportsman, H. Vernon-Smith, Esq.

Mr. Vernon-Smith chose a field near Fraridale Woods as his venue, and it proved ideal for the purpose. The only drawback was that the owner of the field turned up with two ferocious dogs just before the start and chased the ponickers off his territory.

The organiser rose to the occasion in fine style and quickly found another field where the only fly in the ointment was a mad bull. By setting relays of fellows to keep this creature busy, the function was allowed to proceed.

The picnic started. At least, it would have started, but for the last-minute discovery that Mr. Bunter had taken the opportunity offered by the removal to scold all the grub. The start was consequently delayed for half an hour to allow fellows to go into Fraridale for fresh supplies.

The cheery ponickers at last waded in and enjoyed a meal which would have been perfect in every respect but for the fact that it consisted of foodstuffs in the last stages of decomposition.

Smith proposed morris-dancing by the entire company. The proposal was taken up with enthusiasm, and a delightful exhibition of old English dancing followed, marred only by some of the dancers' treacherous feet, which led to a free fight.

Many other equally enjoyable pastimes would have followed, but for the outbreak of a terrific thunderstorm soon afterwards.

Before breaking up, H. Wharton Esq. suggested that some practical form of gratitude be shown to Mr. Vernon-Smith. The suggestion was immediately taken up, and the smilingly protesting organiser was bumped, rolled in the mud, trodden on, and finally thrown in an adjacent pond.

The Remove are looking forward to many equally successful social gatherings in the future. We understand, however, that owing to pressure of other business, Mr. Vernon-Smith will be unable to undertake the organisation of the function again.



SHOCK FOR PROFESSOR
 Finds Greyfriars WORSE THAN REFORMATORY

"Heard the latest?" asked Bob Cherry, burling into the Common-room after morning classes the other day; then he added, in the same breath: "The Daily Depress" is sending down a reporter to write up Greyfriars!"

We set up and took notice. The "Daily Depress" had been running a series of articles on the degeneration of public school life, which had not been very popular at Greyfriars.

"So they're sending along to see if we've degenerated," remarked Wharton, primly to disappoint "em!"

"Eh?"

"They not give this reporter chap something to write about?" asked Wharton, with a grin. "We can stodge plenty of bullying and so on, just for his benefit!"

It was a brilliant wileeze for pulling the pressman's leg, and we waited our opportunity.

The visitor was strolling slowly across the quad when we looked out, gathering impressions of the school, by the look of him.

"Jump to it!" clinched Wharton.

We jumped. Vernon-Smith and Bolsover started a murderous-looking attack on Alonzo Todd. Johnny Bull and Cherry and Brown and Russell pounced on Wun Lung and began by all appearances, to tear him to pieces. Slimmer, having made a raid on Mr. Prout's cigar-box, handed round cigars which the recipients made a pretence of lighting. Snoop started playing pitch-and-toss for half-crowns with Trevor. Wibley held up a crowd of fellows with a property-revolver, and calmly started going through their pockets.

For about ten seconds, the quad resembled a corner of the underworld. At the end of that time, the gentleman, for whose benefit it had all been arranged, suddenly let out a yell.

"Stop! Boys! Wretched, misguided young ruffians! Follow me to your headmaster!"

Wharton looked surprised.

"Why, I thought you'd be pleased about it," he said.

"After the articles you've been running lately on public schools—"

"I don't understand what you're talking about!"

"Then—then who are you?"

The stranger's reply made us gasp.

"I am Professor Frye, the new member of the Board of Governors!"

A dismal group went up from our cheery band of pretenders. Some of us made stealthy tracks for the wide, open spaces, but Professor Frye wasn't having that.

"I shall remember every one of you, even though you slip away now!" he snorted. "It is useless trying to escape. Follow me!"

There was a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth when we left the Head's study. The real reporter from the "Daily Depress" arrived while it was at its height.

And now you know why the "Depress" startled the world in its next issue with a leading article: "Misery at Public Schools!"

OUR "HEART-TO-HEART DEPARTMENT"

Bring Your Courtship Queries To Us



Bouquets and Brickbats from our Postbag

Letters, both complimentary and abusive, are always pouring into the Editorial Office of the "Herald". Here are a few:

"ARCTIC EXPLORER."—"Yours is the best paper I ever tasted!"

"CONVICT 899" (Dartmoor).—"Your paper's great. If you'll send all the back numbers, it will help me to escape from the monotony of my surroundings." Please wrap up a dlo in the parcel."

"RETIRED HEADMASTER."—"Disrespectful that such a scurrilous rag should be permitted. Bah!"

"INSPIRED POET."—"Your paper is really wonderful. Herewith a poem in 3,000 verses. Kindly remit cheque in payment by return."

"GANGSTER" (Chicago, Ill.).—"You boys are just the smart guys I been looking for. Come over and join my racket!"

"P.P." (Masters' Common-room).—"She doesn't seem impressed when I tell her how I shot grizzlies in the Rockies."

"Our advice is, go back and keep on shooting 'em till she is impressed!"

"P.P." (Masters' Common-room).—"I shall never be able to get you slip away now!" he snorted. "It is useless trying to escape. Follow me!"

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And now you know why the "Depress" startled the world in its next issue with a leading article: "Misery at Public Schools!"

So many readers have asked our advice lately on affairs of the heart, that we've decided to devote a separate section to them. Here are this week's answers:

"LORCRESS AND TROCKLES" (Remove).—"I told her she was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen, and even then she old cat refused to give me half-a-dozon jam-tarts on tick." We are afraid, "Luckless and Tuckless," that your cause is hopeless. Console yourself with the reflection that you are only skin-deep and she must be a very mercenary creature despite her good looks. Try another tuckshop!

"BOYS" (Remove).—"I spent an hour telling her about my glorious victories over fogs half my size; then she seemed to turn cool. I hear she is a member of the Be Kind To Kids Society. Why shall I do?"

"IGNORE HER, 'LOLKY.'" The girl who fails to appreciate mainly grit and heroism is not worthy of your affection!

"SEREN KISSA" (Fifth).—"She forgave me for nocking

WHY GO BALD?

When a Bottle of Fisher's Hair-Raising Tonic will give you a luxuriant crop that will be the envy of all your friends! Thousands delighted! Mr. Prout writes: "While in the

her over with my motor-bike, but I still wonder if she really cares for me."

"Nock" her over again, old chap; if she forgives you a second time, she really does!"

"P.P." (Masters' Common-room).—"She doesn't seem impressed when I tell her how I shot grizzlies in the Rockies."

"Our advice is, go back and keep on shooting 'em till she is impressed!"

"P.P." (Masters' Common-room).—"I shall never be able to get you slip away now!" he snorted. "It is useless trying to escape. Follow me!"

There was a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth when we left the Head's study. The real reporter from the "Daily Depress" arrived while it was at its height.

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