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A SCHOOL TALE DEALING WITH
THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY
WHARTON AND HIS CHUMS.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Makes Reprisals.

"BUNTER!"
"Yes, Bulstrode."
"Come here, you young rascal!"

Bulstrode, the bully of the Greyfriars Remove, was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1, his eyes glinting, and his heavy brows dark with anger.

Billy Bunter was alone in the study, getting tea ready, expecting the arrival of Harry Wharton and his chums, Nugent and Cherry, every moment. He had looked up at the sound of the door opening, but instead of seeing his study-mates, he beheld the threatening face of Bulstrode.

"Wh-what is it, Bulstrode?" said Billy Bunter nervously. "I—I can't come just now. I'm getting tea ready, and the chaps will want it when they come in."

"Come here, I tell you!"

Billy Bunter slowly laid down the teacups and saucers he was arranging, and adjusted his big spectacles, which had earned him the nickname of the Owl, in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

He was a timid lad, and he felt a very natural uneasiness when he found the threatening eyes of the Remove bully fixed upon him. Bulstrode had once been a dweller in Study No. 1, and Billy had often experienced his brutality. But, although Billy Bunter would rather have gone anywhere in the world than near Bulstrode at that moment, he did not dare to disobey.

He slowly approached the burly Removite, a good deal like a helpless animal fascinated by a reptile, blinking uneasily; while Bulstrode watched him, with a grim, sneering smile.

"Wh-what do you want, Bulstrode?" faltered the junior.



"I—I can't come now, you know. I'm getting the tea for Wharton and the others."

"Hang Wharton and the others!"

"Certainly, Bulstrode, if you wish," said the Owl pacifically. "But—"

Bulstrode reached out and gripped him by the shoulder with a powerful hand, and the smaller lad gave an anticipatory wriggle.

"Oh, don't, Bulstrode!"

"Don't what?" demanded Bulstrode.

"I—I mean—I—"

"You know what you deserve. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Oh, no! But— Oh, don't!"

"You do," said Bulstrode, compressing his grip upon the junior's shoulder till he writhed with pain. "You know what you've done, and you know why I've dropped on you, you greedy young rascal!"

"Ow! I—I haven't done anything. Bulstrode—I really haven't! I wouldn't do anything you didn't like, you know, I respect you too much—I do, really!" mumbled Billy Bunter. "Oh, don't shake me like that—please don't, or my spectacles will fall off, and if they get broken, you will have to pay for them."

"You greedy young cad! What have you done with the grub out of my study?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"Grub out of your study, Bulstrode?"

"Yes. What have you done with it?"

"I—I haven't seen it—I haven't, really! I don't know what you're talking about, Bulstrode. I haven't touched any grub in your cupboard."

"Don't tell lies!" said the bully of the Remove roughly. "If you didn't take it, who did? Answer me that."

"I can't, Bulstrode—I can't, really! I don't know who took it, or whether it has been taken at all."

"Don't I tell you it has been taken?"

"Ye-es, but you always tell such untruths, you know. No, I don't mean that!" wailed Billy, as Bulstrode shook him till his teeth chattered. "I—I mean, you are so truthful that I admire you immensely. I haven't taken any grub out of your study."

"Who has, then?"

"How should I know?"

"You're the hungriest and greediest little brute in the Remove!" said Bulstrode, again shaking him. "If any grub's missed, it's pretty safe to set it down to you. What I want to know is, where is it?"

"I really don't know, Bulstrode. You see, I haven't taken it. I didn't know there was any there; and besides, I wouldn't have taken it, anyway. I know my spectacles will fall off if you go on shaking me like that. I really wish you wouldn't do it—I do, really!"

"Where is the grub, then?"

"Oh, don't—don't!"

"I'll shake the life out of you if you don't tell me!" exclaimed Bulstrode savagely. "Several of the fellows have been missing grub from their cupboards the last day or two, and I know very well that you take it. Now, I'm not going to waste my grub on a greedy young pig like you. Tell me where it is!"

"I don't know."

"You can't have eaten it all. It was all there at dinner-time, and you must have slipped in immediately after school and taken it, while we were all out in the Close. You haven't been out, have you?"

"No-o-o, but—"

"That's it, then. I know you had it, so you may as well own up. Perhaps it's my grub you are getting ready for Wharton's tea."

"No, it isn't, Bulstrode—it isn't, really! I don't see why you should pick on me. There is Vaseline. He shares your study, and he'd take anything from anybody."

"Would he?" exclaimed another voice, at the door, as Hazeldene of the Remove looked in. "Give him another shake for that, Bulstrode!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Hazeldene!" said the unfortunate Billy. "I mean that you wouldn't have taken it on any account, that's what I really meant to say."

Hazeldene—Vaseline, as the Removites called him—laughed unpleasantly as he came into the study.

"You're the champion prevaricator, Bunter. That shows how much we can believe your word. And as you're the greediest young brute in the Form, it stands to reason you took the grub. There has been a lot of grub-lifting lately in the studies, but I've noticed that nothing's been heard of any grub being taken out of this study."

"That's so," said Bulstrode. "Naturally, he wouldn't rob his own quarters."

"I shouldn't wonder if Wharton and Cherry send him out to collar other people's tommy," said Hazeldene. "I dare say it comes cheaper in the long run. As it happens, the grub that's missing is as much mine as Bulstrode's, as we're chumming up in the commissariat line now. Have you taken it?"

"No, I haven't—I haven't, really!"

"Oh, of course, we can't believe a word you say. The best thing we can do, Bulstrode, is to make a clean sweep of the table here. I'm pretty certain that our grub has been brought here, so if we collar all this—"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Bulstrode heartily.

"You mustn't!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "This tommy belongs to Wharton and Cherry, and they are just coming in to tea."

"I'm afraid they'll have to miss their tea, then," said Hazeldene, gathering up the supplies on the table. "H'm! Jam-tarts, cream-puffs, chocolate-biscuits. Good! Ham and tongue, brown bread, and a nice pat of butter. Good!"

Marmalade! We have some of that, so we'll leave this. We'll have the sugar."

"And the tea-caddy!" said Bulstrode.

"Good! I think that's enough. Lend me a hand with them, will you? I don't want to stuff all of them into my pockets; it would spoil some of them."

"Right you are!"

Bulstrode released Bunter, and helped Hazeldene to pack up the eatables on the table. Their movements were rather hasty, for they didn't want to be caught in the middle of the raid by the chums of the Remove.

Billy Bunter watched them open-mouthed. This bare-faced brigandage was a little new even for Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove; and since he had been licked in fair fight by Harry Wharton, Bunter wondered at his nerve.

"Buck up!" said Bulstrode. "That's all right. We'll get these into our study, and half a dozen fellows to come and help us eat them, and then those three bounders can come and look for trouble if they like."

"Good wheeze!"

"I say, you fellows—" began Billy Bunter.

"Oh, shut up, you young ass!"

"You mustn't take those things!"

"Get out of the way!"

"I can't stop you, but—"

"But I can!" said a quiet voice, as Bulstrode and Hazeldene stepped to the door; and Harry Wharton stood before them.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth, and Hazeldene stepped back, drawing a little behind his companion.

"Let me pass!" said Bulstrode savagely.

Harry Wharton made no reply. He stepped further into the study, and closed the door behind him, and stood facing the bully of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Who?

BULSTRODE'S face became crimson with rage. Until of late it was new to him for any fellow in the Remove to stand up against him. Harry Wharton had done so, and had been the victor in a hard-fought fight; but Bulstrode's spirit was far from tamed as yet.

"Get out of my path!" he hissed.

Harry Wharton did not move.

"It seems to me that you've been taking rather a liberty in my study," he remarked quietly. "What are you doing with my things under your arms and crammed in your pockets?"

"Mind your own business!"

"It is my business, I imagine, when I find a fellow raiding my study and carrying off my tea!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "I can take a joke with anybody, but this is really a little bit too thick."

"If you want to know, the things belong to us."

"How do you make that out?"

"If you send a rotten little fag round stealing in the studies, you can't expect to be allowed to keep all the things he brings home!" said Bulstrode savagely.

Wharton turned pale for a moment.

"Are you speaking seriously, Bulstrode? If this is a joke, I admit that I don't see the point of it."

"You know grub has been missed from some of the studies lately, Wharton?" said Hazeldene, in the conciliatory, insinuating manner which had gained him the name of Vaseline in the Greyfriars Remove.

"I have heard so."

"Well, it must have been Billy Bunter who roped in the things!"

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"It wasn't!" interjected Billy Bunter.
"You shut up, kid!"
"I'm not going to shut up when you say I—"
"Dry up. I tell you! I say it was Bunter who collared the things, and so we came here to get them back—didn't we, Bulstrode?"
"Yes, we did," growled Bulstrode.
"Do you mean to say that some of the articles in this study belong to you?" asked Harry Wharton.
Hazeldene shifted uneasily.
"Well, perhaps not exactly that, but—you see—"
"I don't see! Can you identify any article here as belonging to you?"
"Well, no, if you put it like that."
"Can you, either, Bulstrode?"
"You know I can't! But I know jolly well that it was a fellow from this study who has been raiding our rooms!"
"How do you know it?"
"Well, nothing has been taken away from this study, for one thing."
"There are some other studies from which nothing has been taken, I believe."
"Very likely. I don't know, and I don't care. But you've got the greediest little rotter in the Remove in this study, and he—"
"You think Bunter has been raiding the studies?"
"I know he has."
"How do you know it?"
"Well, I do know it," said Bulstrode obstinately. "Who is more likely than Bunter to have raided the grub, I'd like to know?"
"It's not a question of what's likely. If you have any proof, or any reasonable suspicion, against Bunter, it's different. But you haven't. You've just jumped to a conclusion, without the slightest reasonable grounds, as far as I can see."
"I'm satisfied about it, anyway."
"But you can't expect me to be satisfied, when it's my grub you are carrying off," said Wharton, smiling slightly.
"I don't care a rap whether you're satisfied or not. Get out of the way, or you will be hurt."
"Probably someone else will be hurt if you try to shift me."
"We're two to one," said Hazeldene. "Better get out of the way, Wharton; we don't want to hurt you!"
"I'll get out of the way," replied Harry, "when you have replaced those things on the table; not before."
"That's right!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Cherry and Nugent will be here in a minute, and then we'll kick these rotters out!"
"Come on, Vaseline!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in no wise inclined to leave the tussle until the other two juniors arrived to turn the odds against him.
Bulstrode and Hazeldene rushed at Wharton. Harry did not flinch from the unequal encounter. He hit out with his right, and Hazeldene reeled back against Bunter, who pushed him off, sending him with a bump to the floor. Bulstrode sprang upon Wharton and jammed him back against the door.
Almost at the same moment the door was pushed from outside, and a cheery voice called out:
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was the usual greeting of Bob Cherry of the Remove. "What are you shutting the door against your uncle for in that way?"
"Come in, Cherry!" shrieked Billy Bunter. "Bulstrode and Vaseline are here, and they're trying to collar the grub!"
"By Jove; are they?"
And Bob Cherry hurled himself at the door.
It came flying open under his weight, and Harry Wharton and Bulstrode reeled away, still grappling fiercely with one another.
Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent sprang into the study.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"
Hazeldene staggered to his feet. He was quick to realise that the game was up, with the odds against the raiders.
"It's all right, chaps," he exclaimed; "don't lose your tempers over a little joke, you know! It was all in fun!"
Bulstrode tore himself loose, and made for the door. Harry Wharton set his back against it.
"No, you don't," he said grimly; "not till you've emptied your pockets, my son!"
"Let me pass!"
"Rats!"
"Come off, Bulstrode!" said Hazeldene. "Can't you see it's no good? I'm quite willing to empty my pockets, Wharton! It was all in fun, of course!"
And the cad of the Remove, with assumed cheerfulness, replaced his plunder upon the table. Bulstrode, after a brief hesitation, did the same. Then the precious pair were allowed to depart. Harry Wharton opened the door for them, and shut it again when they had gone.

"I say, you fellows, it was jolly lucky you came, really," said Billy Bunter. "They would have carried off nearly all the grub, you know. I'd have stood a feed like a shot, only the postal-order I'm expecting hasn't arrived yet."
"What was the cause of the rumpus?" asked Nugent.
Wharton explained.
"Well, it's true enough that a lot of grub has been missed from the studies this week," said Nugent thoughtfully. "I say, make the tea, Bunter; you must be useful, as you can't be ornamental. But it was like Bulstrode's cheek to jump on the Owl like that without any proof. Of course, Bunter is the most likely person to take the grub; there's no denying that."
"Oh, I say, Nugent!"
"Did you take it, Billy?"
"No, I didn't."
"The truth now," said Harry Wharton, laying his hand on the youngster's shoulder, and looking straight into his eyes; "the truth now, Billy! Was it you who took the things from Bulstrode's study and the other studies?"
"I'll swear it wasn't, Wharton," said Billy earnestly.
Harry gave a nod.
"I believe you, Billy. What do you others say?"
"Oh, that's all right," said Nugent; "I believe him for one! But it's queer, all the same, you know. Somebody has been rummaging round the studies and collaring the grub. Who could it be?"
Wharton looked puzzled.
"It ought to be looked into," said Bob Cherry. "I know some of the fellows have complained to the Form-master about it. I suppose it is a fellow in the Remove playing the giddy goat, and he ought to be dropped on. The fact that this study has not been victimised points suspicion to us to a certain extent, although I know there are some other studies that haven't been touched."
"Tea's made!" said Bunter.
"Pour it out, then," said Harry. "As Bulstrode has accused this study of being at the bottom of the matter, we might as well look into it; and it wants looking into, anyway. When did the thing start—let me think!"
"Oh, I remember!" said Nugent. "It was the day after we saw the foreigners off at the station. Russell told me next morning that somebody had been in his study overnight, and simply cleared out the cupboard!"
"Yes, now I come to think of it, none of the thefts happened while the foreigners were here," Bob Cherry remarked.
Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.
Lately, a number of foreign lads had been at Greyfriars, most conspicuous among them being Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, who had shared Study No. 1 with the chums of the Remove.
The foreigners were gone, and the Nabob of Bhanipur had gone with them; most unwillingly, for he had become very strongly attached to Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent during the time he had shared their study.
Wharton remembered that the mysterious purloining from the studies had not commenced till after the departure of the foreigners, now that it was mentioned.
"Well, I don't understand it," he remarked. "It's a trick being played by somebody, of course, but I can't say I like the kind of trick, especially when this study gets accused of it!"
"We'll look into the thing."
"That's the idea! So far as I've heard, most of the purloining has taken place at night," Harry Wharton went on. "The fellow, whoever he is, goes prowling round after lights out, and goes into the studies."
"Looks like it."
"Bulstrode said his cupboard had been cleared out during afternoon school, or just after," Billy Bunter remarked.
"H'm; then it must have been a chap who was absent from classes!" said Wharton thoughtfully. "It might have been any of a dozen though, as we don't know what time in the afternoon it took place. As something seems to have been taken pretty nearly each night, I think it's quite possible the rotter will be on the prowl again to-night. Suppose we get out of the dormitory after lights out, and look for him?"
"But if the fellow is in the Remove, he'll see us get out, and know we're on the watch," Nugent remarked.
"We can manage it quietly, without alarming anyone."
"Well, yes, it will be dark, and we may be able to get out silently."
"It's settled, then?"
"Yes; if we— What on earth's that?"

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Mystery of the Box Room.**

THE study door flew open with a crash. A junior, with white face and starting eyes, dashed in, and collided with the fellows at the tea-table, and there was a smash of crockery as they all started to their feet at once, and the table lurched to and fro.

"What's the matter?"

"It's Skinner!"

"He's mad!"

"Collar him!"

"Hold on," said Harry Wharton quietly; "there's something wrong. He's frightened out of his wits. What is it, Skinny?"

It was Skinner of the Remove who had burst suddenly into the study. He clutched at the edge of the table to support himself, and turned a chalky face upon the chums.

"Sh-sh-sh-sh—"

"What does he mean by 'Sh-sh-sh-sh'?"

"He's off his giddy rocker!"

"Sh-sh-shut the door!" gasped Skinner.

"What for?"

"Shut it! Oh, shut it! Oh, dear, shut it!"

Harry Wharton stepped to the door and closed it. He could see that Skinner was terribly frightened about something, though he could not imagine what. It was better to humour the scared junior, at all events.

"Lock it!" cried Skinner.

"Oh, what rot!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton locked the door.

"Now what's the matter, Skinner?"

The junior looked nervously at the door. The dusk of evening was thick in the Close, but the study was bright and cheerful, and in the lighted room, with four fellows round him, the terror of the junior subsided.

"It—it—it—" he stammered.

"It!" What do you mean by 'it'?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Give him time!" said Wharton.

"I—I wasn't really scared, you know," said Skinner; "but—"

He was interrupted by a shout of laughter.

"No, of course not," assented Bob Cherry. "You didn't look scared. Did he, chaps?"

"Nothing of the sort," agreed Nugent. "Just a little bit flurried, perhaps; only a trifle; nothing to speak of."

"Oh, come, Skinner!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You were in a blue funk! What was the reason of it? You've smashed our crockery!"

"I'm awfully sorry!"

"We shall make you awfully sorrier, if you haven't got a jolly good explanation to give for bolting into our study like that!" said Harry.

"I—I say, you chaps, do you—do you believe—"

"Do we believe you're an ass?" asked Bob Cherry. "Oh, yes, certainly! We haven't the slightest doubt upon that point."

"I didn't mean that. Do you—do you believe in ghosts?"

Harry Wharton looked searchingly at the junior.

"What on earth are you talking about, Skinner? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Ye-e-e-es, I believe so."

"Ass!" said Nugent.

"Well, I saw something," said Skinner. "It was very dark up in the box-room, and I didn't see it very clearly."

"What—the box-room?"

"No, the ghost."

"You've seen a ghost, have you? What have you been drinking?"

"Don't be an ass, Nugent!"

"Well, what was he like?" asked Bob Cherry. "Hoofs and horns and tail, and flaming eyes, or anything in that line?"

"No; he had a face like chalk."

"Perhaps some fellow has been chalking his face? That would account for it."

"Look here, if you can't take a serious matter seriously—"

"Oh, go on with the yarn! What was he like?"

"I—I couldn't see very well. It had a fearfully white face, as white as chalk, and two glaring eyes."

"Any nose?"

"I tell you—"

"And you saw it in the box-room?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, I did."

"What were you doing up in the box-room in the dark, in the name of wonder?"

"Well, it's not quite dark there yet, and I was going up to fetch down my old cricket-bat, to oil it this evening," said Skinner. "I knew just where it was, so I didn't

trouble to take a light. I had just got the bat out when I heard a noise—"

"A horrible groan, I suppose?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"No, just a slight sound; I thought it was a rat scuttling among the old boxes. I looked up, and there in the shadows was that awful face staring at me."

And Skinner shuddered. Whether he had been mistaken or not, he had certainly been terribly scared.

"And what did you do?"

"I? Oh, I bolted."

"Why didn't you dot him in one of his glaring eyes?"

"I'd like to see you do it. I was scared—well, startled."

I bolted, and came down the stairs four or five at a time. I rushed into the first room that had a light in it—it happened to be this one. I—"

"It was some fellow playing a joke, of course," said Nugent.

"Well, now I come to think of it calmly, perhaps it was," said Skinner. "But it was a jolly startling thing to see, anyway."

"I don't quite catch on," said Harry Wharton. "Had you told anybody you were going up to the box-room to fetch your bat, Skinner?"

"No, I just ran up."

"Then the chap who played the trick didn't know you would be there?"

"Certainly not."

"He can't have intended to play the trick on you, then?"

"N-no, I suppose not."

"It's queer," said Wharton. "He couldn't have known that Skinner was coming there, and he couldn't have expected anybody to go into the room. Nobody goes up to the box-rooms after dark. And I suppose he didn't go there to play ghost just to amuse himself, all on his lonesome."

"Perhaps it was a real ghost," quavered Billy Bunter.

"Perhaps you're a silly ass," said Bob Cherry. "We can bar the theory that it was a real ghost at the start. The question is whether it's somebody playing a trick, or whether Skinner only imagined that he saw it all."

"Think I should be likely to imagine it?" snapped Skinner. "I suppose I'm not afraid of the dark at fifteen, am I?"

"Well, it was a jape, then."

"Let's go up and search the box-room," said Nugent. "Come on, Skinner!"

"No, thanks," said Skinner promptly. "Of course, it was only a jape, as you say. But—but I promised to play a game of chess with Russell in the common-room, and I'm late already. I must be off." And Skinner unlocked the door and was gone.

Bob Cherry gave a chuckle.

"He doesn't want to go in for any ghost-hunting," he remarked. "We may as well have a little run up to the box-room. The ghost can't hurt three of us. If it's a fellow who has chalked his face, we'll make some of it black for him, for a change."

"Good!" said Nugent. "I can see that Bunter is simply burning to start. Come on, Billy; you shall lead the way. We won't take a light."

Billy Bunter turned almost green.

"I—I—I don't think I'll come, if you don't mind, Nugent," he stammered. "I—I want to run downstairs and see whether my postal-order has arrived yet." And Bunter fairly bolted from the study.

"Ha, ha, ha! Let's go, you chaps!"

Harry Wharton took an acetylene bicycle-lamp from the cupboard, and released the tap. A minute later he had it burning.

"Come on," he said; "one of you bring a cricket-stump. If it's a fellow playing a jape, we may as well give him something for his trouble."

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, picking up a stump from the corner. "Lead on, Macduff!"

And Harry Wharton, lamp in hand, led the way upstairs to the box-room.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**The Ghost Hunters!**

DARK and gloomy looked the box-room as the three adventurous juniors entered it. It was an extensive apartment, and pretty well filled with lumber, and well coated with dust. Harry Wharton flashed the light of the lamp to and fro as he advanced into the shadowy room.

"There's Skinner's bat!" chuckled Bob Cherry, picking up a cricket-bat from the dusty floor. "He didn't stop to take that with him."

"No; he must have been scared. I hardly think he can have imagined it all," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"Skinner's a chap—not much given to imagining things

Perhaps the silly ass who frightened him just came into the box-room to chalk his chivvy, intending to go out in the passages afterwards."

"It's a bit early to start playing ghost; it's only just dark."

"Yes, that's curious, too. Well, let us look for him."

The juniors hunted carefully through the box-room, but not a sign of the mysterious apparition could they discover. They ransacked every corner of the room, and even peered into the empty boxes, but not a trace of anything out of the common could they find.

They stopped at last, disappointed, and somewhat soiled from the dust they had disturbed in their quest.

"Nothing in it," said Nugent. "We've wasted a quarter of an hour, got ourselves filthy, and the tea's spoiled."

"Nice sort of a Job's comforter you are," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Well, let's go and get a wash and a brush down, for goodness' sake!"

"Wait a minute," said Harry Wharton. "Where does that door lead to?"

He pointed to a low door set in the wall of the box-room, almost hidden in the shadow of a great box. Nugent glanced at it.

"Oh, that opens into a passage leading into the disused wing, behind the cloisters, you know. Nobody ever goes there."

"The ghost may have gone that way."

"Well, if it was a real ghost, it may have gone up the chimney or out of the window. If it was a fellow playing a jape, I can answer for it that he didn't go into the disused wing at this time of day alone. It's dark and full of pitfalls for the unwary. The chaps are not allowed to explore it because it's too dangerous. It's a part of the ancient abbey that was here in King John's time."

"The door is never opened, then?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, it's been opened lately, anyway," said Wharton, looking closely at it. "The dust is brushed off near the handle here."

Nugent grinned.

"That's easily explained. I showed Hurree Singh through the passage the day before the foreign chaps left Greyfriars. He was curious to explore it."

"Oh, I see."

"But we went in the daytime; it's too risky after dark."

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, "the chap who was playing ghost—and I am convinced that there was somebody—couldn't have gone down the stairs in the usual way. He couldn't show himself with the chalk on his face. He's not here, so I think he has cleared out that way."

Nugent gave a grunt.

"You determined bounder! I can see you have made up your mind to explore the ruined wing of Greyfriars!" said he.

"I haven't been over it yet, as a matter of fact; you have been going to show me, and we may as well have a look at it now."

"It's all gaps, and broken mortar, and cobwebs, and dust."

"We can't get much dustier than we are now."

"Well, that one's comfort. Come on, then!"

Nugent pulled open the little oaken door. It creaked rustily on its hinges, and a gust of cold, close air came from the dark passage beyond.

"Ugh!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I can't say I like the look of the place, anyway."

"Take care," exclaimed Nugent, as Harry Wharton advanced into the passage, throwing the light before him, "the floor's shaky!"

"All right, I'll be careful."

Harry Wharton went steadily along the passage. Suddenly there was a sharp clink and a rattle, and Nugent and Cherry jumped.

"Wh-what was that?" exclaimed Nugent nervously.

Wharton laughed. His laugh had a strangely hollow ring in the gloomy passage.

"Only something I have just kicked against."

"Oh, was that all?"

"Yes, there it is." Wharton stopped and flashed the light upon an object lying in the dust. "Why, it's a salmon-tin!"

"My only hat! How did that get here?"

Bob Cherry picked up the tin, and the juniors stared at it in blank amazement.

It was a common tin such as salmon is preserved in, and had evidently only lately been opened, for there was no unpleasant smell to the fragments remaining attached to the tin.

"A salmon-tin—here!" ejaculated Nugent, breaking the silence. "My only aunt! Does the ghost live on potted salmon, then?"

"Very probably," said Harry Wharton. "I begin to see light, I think. It did not occur to me before that there might be a connection between the ghost of the box-room and the purloining of grub from the junior studies."

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation.

"My hat, you've hit it!"

"I believe you have," said Nugent slowly, as he stared at the tin. "The chap who bones the grub brings it here to eat it. Is that what you mean?"

"Well, it looks a great deal like it, doesn't it?"

"By Jove, it does!"

Bob Cherry dropped the tin to the floor. The light thud was followed by a slight sound further up the passage, and the juniors started.

"Was that an echo?" whispered Bob, taking a firmer grip upon his cricket-stump, while Nugent's fingers closed hard upon the cane handle of Skinner's bat.

"I don't know; come on and see." And Harry Wharton intrepidly led the way.

The discovery of the empty salmon-tin seemed to show pretty plainly that the ghost was of the human variety, but the eerie sound in the gloom of the deserted recesses had set the nerves of the youngsters a-quiver. But they followed Wharton without hesitation. Harry, picking his way carefully, led them on to the end of the passage. There was no door at the other end, though a pair of rusty hinges still adhered to the stone wall, where they had probably been attached for many centuries. Beyond lay a stone chamber, with a flagged floor and an arched roof. There was a deep window, so overhung with ivy that even in broad daylight hardly a glimpse of the sun could have penetrated to the room.

"Mind the floor!" muttered Nugent.

The warning was needed. In some places the flags were broken, and here and there was a black gap, yawning and dangerous. The juniors trod lightly. A false step might have precipitated them into the chamber below, to death or terrible injury upon the stone.

"The chap must have a nerve if he scuttles about here in the dark," muttered Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't care for the thing myself."

Nugent gave a sudden gasp.

"Look!"

His cry was so sudden that his companions involuntarily jumped. Harry Wharton flashed the light round.

"What is it? Where?"

"There—there! It is gone now!"

Nugent had turned white. His hand was raised and pointing towards a low, dark gap in the further wall. Wharton and Cherry stared in the direction, but could see nothing but the bare stone.

"What was it?" muttered Harry tensely.

"A face," Nugent's teeth were chattering. "A—a face, just as Skinner described it. White—horribly white—with flashing eyes."

"Are you sure?"

"I tell you I saw it."

"You might have Skinner's description on the brain, you know," said Bob Cherry, "and a flash of the lantern might have—"

"Rats!" growled Nugent. "I saw it!"

"Then we'll see it, too," exclaimed Harry, hurrying across the room towards the opening of the passage on the further side.

"For Heaven's sake, take care!" shouted Nugent.

"You'll be through if you don't!"

"I'm all right."

Several fragments of mortar, displaced by the junior's feet, rolled through the gaps in the flagged floor, and clinked down into the darkness below. But Harry, though swift in his movements, was careful, and he reached the passage without mishap. A cold breath of charnel-like air came from it. He flashed the lantern inside, and saw the top of a flight of stone steps.

"We can't go down there," said Nugent; "the steps lead down to the Greyfriars vaults. They're immense, and extend under the whole school, and there's a passage leading away into the Friar's Wood, too. If the chap's had the nerve to go down there, we've got no chance of catching him."

Harry Wharton hesitated.

"There's another thing," said Bob Cherry; "we don't want to break our necks, and we don't want to make him break his, whoever he is. He might, buzzing about in a hurry to get away from us."

"There's something in that," assented Harry.

"Let's get back."

"Is there any other way out of this place besides through the box-room?" asked Harry, flashing the light round.

"Yes, there's the big door of the vaults, but that's always kept bolted," said Nugent. "There's another door into the corridor, but that's always bolted on the outside, too, and locked. The Head has all the keys. He takes care of that to keep the juniors from getting in here. The little door

in the box-room used to be locked, too, but a chap busted the lock once, months ago, and it hasn't been noticed."

"Then if the fellow comes back, he will have to come out by way of the box-room?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good! We needn't trouble to follow him. We have only to keep a watch on the stairs, and he can't get back into the school without our knowing it."

"Good! That will settle his hash."

The idea was certainly a good one. It was only a question of how long the vigil would last. If a Greyfriars' fellow were playing this trick, he would have to get back into the school before bedtime, at latest, or he would be missed. The chums of the Remove had only to keep a watch upon the stairs.

"Come on, then!" said Harry, leading the way back.

The chums passed through the passage, and regained the box-room. Nugent closed the little door. They left the box-room, and on the stairs Harry extinguished his lamp. They went downstairs, and emerged into the lighted passage, and came face to face with Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

The juniors halted in dismay. The Remove-master stared at them as if he could hardly believe his eyes. They were smothered with dust, and cobwebs were clinging lovingly to them in places.

"Where have you been?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. How the Owl Kept Watch.

MR. QUELCH asked the question, but it was a superfluous one, for he knew perfectly well where the boys had been. There was only one place in Greyfriars where they could possibly have got into such a state.

"Where have you been?"

"In the box-room, sir."

"Where else?"

"Well, sir, it was like this—" began Bob Cherry.

"You have been in the deserted wing?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Follow me to my study," said Mr. Quelch. "Not a word! Follow me!" And the Remove-master turned and stalked away majestically.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another glumly, and followed. Their plan of watching the staircase to the box-room was knocked on the head at once. But as they went down the passage Billy Bunter met them. Harry Wharton whispered hastily to the short-sighted junior.

"Bunter, will you buzz along to the stairs up to the box-room?"

"I—I can't!"

"Ass! I don't mean go up to the room. Just stay at the foot of the stairs, and see if anybody comes down."

"Oh, certainly, Wharton; I'll do that with pleasure."

"Mind you stay there till I come."

"Certainly!"

And Billy Bunter hurried off. The chums of the Remove, somewhat relieved in their minds, followed their Form master to his study. Mr. Quelch's grim face as he ushered them in did not bode a very happy interview.

"You have been in the disused wing, against the head-master's direct orders?" he rapped out sharply.

"If you will allow me to explain, sir—" began Harry Wharton.

"I am waiting for you to do so."

"We have been looking for somebody."

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"You have been looking for somebody in the deserted wing," he said, in measured accents.

"Yes, sir. You see—"

"H'm! I presume it was the Greyfriars' ghost you were looking for?" the master of the Remove remarked sarcastically.

"Yes, sir."

"Eh? Are you venturing to jest with me, Wharton?"

"Oh, no, sir. We were looking for a ghost, all the same—that is, a fellow who had been playing ghost, and frightening a chap in the box-room."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Quelch, looking a little less stern.

"Someone has been playing ghost in the box-room, is that it?"

"That is it, sir."

"And have you discovered who it was?"

"No, sir; he got away somewhere."

Harry Wharton did not add that he would not have told who it was even if he had discovered it. Sneaking was not one of his failings. But it was useless to explain all that to a Form-master.

"And what boy was frightened by this supposed ghost?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Skinner of the Remove, sir."

"H'm! I will not question Skinner, because I can place reliance upon your word," said Mr. Quelch. "This alters the case somewhat; but even for this reason you had no right to enter the disused wing. It is too dangerous to anybody, and therefore it is placed out of bounds by the Head. I have no alternative but to punish you for disobeying orders. You will remain within doors the whole of to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, sir—"

"Not a word, Cherry! You might have broken a limb, or even have been killed, by this reckless conduct, and I intend to make it an unprofitable escapade, for your own sakes," said Mr. Quelch. "By the way, I understood that the box-room door giving upon that old stone passage was locked."

"The lock was broken long ago, sir," said Nugent.

"H'm! I will see that it is replaced. You may go, boys."

The dismayed Removites filed out of the study. Three gloomy faces looked into one another in the passage.

"Gated for a whole afternoon!" growled Bob Cherry. "What the dickens did he want to remember that to-morrow was a half-holiday for?"

"Oh, it's just like Quelch," said Nugent: "he always comes down heavy like this. Can't be helped."

"Did you notice what he said about having a new lock put on the door in the box-room?" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I hope that ghost will be safe out before it's put on, or he'll get shut up in the ruined wing."

"Oh, he could get out into the quadrangle, by climbing down the ivy from one of the old casements," Nugent remarked. "That couldn't be done in daylight without his being spotted, though."

"It wouldn't do to speak to Mr. Quelch; we can't give the fellow away."

"No. Let's go and see if anybody has passed Bunter on the stairs."

The chums of the Remove hastened to the spot where Billy Bunter was supposed to have taken up his stand. But there was no sign of the Owl to be seen.

Harry Wharton looked round wrathfully.

"The young ass! He's not here!"

"Can he have gone up to the box-room?"

"Wild horses wouldn't have dragged him up there," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "He's gone off somewhere. Hallo, here he is!"

There was a patter of feet in the passage, and Billy Bunter came running up. His jaw dropped at the sight of the three chums standing at the foot of the stairs.

"I say, you chaps—" he gasped.

"Why didn't you come here as I told you?" exclaimed Harry.

"I did, Wharton, I assure you."

"Then why didn't you stay here till I came?"

"I was going to, only—"

"Only what, you young ass?"

"Vaseline came by, and he said the postman had just brought a registered letter for me. I have been expecting a postal-order for some time, and I thought it had come at last, so I just buzzed down to see about it. I should have been back in a minute. But it was only a joke of Vaseline's, and there wasn't any registered letter at all," said Billy Bunter ruefully. "But I haven't been away more than four or five minutes at the very most."

"Oh, get out of sight!" said Harry gruffly.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, travel; don't ask questions."

"Certainly not, Wharton. I'm not at all curious, but what's the matter?"

"Shall we take him up to the box-room and lock him in?" asked Bob Cherry, looking questioningly at his chums.

There was no need for them to answer; the suggestion was enough. Billy Bunter went along the passage as if he were on the cinder-path. He disappeared in a couple of seconds, and the Removites burst into a laugh.

"Do you think the rotter has escaped while Bunter was away?" asked Nugent, glancing up the staircase.

"It's impossible to say, but it's quite likely he saw the stair was watched, and was waiting for an opportunity."

"Then it's no good our staying here watching?"

"Not much, when we don't know whether the fellow is there or not."

"Well, I want a wash and a brush-up, for one," said Bob Cherry. "Come along, kids. After all, we shall have another chance to-night, when we lay for the bounder. If he does any more of his raiding on the studies, we shall have him, as dead as nails!"

"We'll keep watch, at all events," Harry Wharton assented.

And the chums of the Remove walked away, in search of a wash and a change of clothes.

Quite unknown to them, a resolution similar to their own had been arrived at by others in the Remove. Bulstrode

and Hazeldene were talking the matter over in the junior common-room, in low voices.

"And you still believe that it was Bunter?" Hazeldene said.

The bully of the Remove nodded emphatically.

"I am certain it was."

"I should hardly think he would have nerve enough," Hazeldene remarked dubiously. "He's a greedy young hog. I know, but he's got no nerve."

"He would have if there was somebody behind him."

"You mean Wharton and the rest in Study No. 1?"

"That's it. You noticed how Wharton fired up in defence of him. How could he know anything about it, for that matter?"

"Well, his view was that there was no evidence against Bunter."

"If you're going to take Wharton's side, Vaseline——"

"I'm not," said Hazeldene hastily. "I thought you wanted to get at the facts. Very likely it was Bunter."

"And he had those cads behind him, to back him up," said Bulstrode savagely. "We know very well that some of the fellows in the Sixth encourage their fags to collar things from the juniors. Carberry, for instance, doesn't pay much for what he has on his table at tea-time. Wharton is working the same idea."

Hazeldene was silent.

He knew perfectly well that Bulstrode's statement was false, and he did not believe that Bulstrode believed it himself. But it was not his policy to quarrel with the bully of the Remove, if he could help it. He had done so before, with direful results to himself. It suited him best to keep on the right side of Bulstrode.

"Well, what do you think?" snapped Bulstrode.

"Why, I think you're about right."

"No, you don't," growled the bully of the Remove. "You don't think anything of the kind. But I do, and that settles it. Anyway, whether Wharton has a hand in it or not, I know very well that Bunter does the pinching, and we're going to show him up."

"How?" asked Hazeldene.

"By keeping watch to-night for the rascal. He's bound to go for another raid; it's been done every night for the last two or three nights, at least."

Hazeldene nodded.

"That's not a bad idea. But Wharton may see us getting out of the dormitory."

"No, he won't; not if we're careful. We'll leave it till eleven o'clock, when the fellows are all asleep."

"Good; I'm agreeable."

"We'll catch the young rotter in the act," grinned Bulstrode; "and even if Wharton didn't put him up to it, we can make him implicate the rotter. He'd say anything to save his own skin. We may be able to fix this on Wharton, so that he won't be able to get rid of it all the time he stays in the Greyfriars Remove."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In the Dead of Night.

THERE was suppressed excitement in more than one breast in the Greyfriars Remove as that Form marched upstairs to bed that night.

Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry had kept their own counsel as to their intended vigil, save for Billy Bunter, who was in the secret, because he had unavoidably heard them talking it over in the study. But it had been impressed upon Billy that if he chattered he would be visited with unheard-of punishments, and for once in his life the chatterbox of the Remove kept a still tongue.

Bulstrode and Hazeldene had kept their secret, too. The latter was not very whole-hearted in the enterprise, but Bulstrode was "top dog," and the cad of the Remove had to follow his lead.

To Hazeldene, a warm bed on a cold spring night was more than discovering the culprit, but Bulstrode was obstinately determined to make out some kind of a case against Study No. 1.

The Remove dormitory at Greyfriars was an extensive apartment. The Remove, or Lower Fourth Form, was a numerous one, and the long rows of white beds stretched away with seeming endlessness. There were three doors to the dormitory, all giving upon the same passage, and a huge window at either end. The dormitory contained four fire-grates, at intervals of its length, which were ablaze in winter, but at this time of the year fires had already been stopped in the Remove sleeping quarters. It was a chilly night, and the Removites warmed themselves by the usual horse-play before getting into bed. Carberry, the worst-tempered prefect at Greyfriars, looked in to see lights out, and warned the Remove expressively what would happen if they were not all in bed in another five minutes.

There was a howl from the Remove as the prefect turned to go again.

"What's the odds on Bonny Boy, Carberry?"

The prefect turned round with a crimson face.

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet." ONE HALFPENNY.

The question was an evident allusion to his sporting proclivities, which were quite well known to the Remove, although unsuspected by the Head of Greyfriars—not an unusual state of things in a public school.

"Who said that?" shouted Carberry.

A howl of laughter was the only reply he received. The prefect glared at the juniors, looking greatly inclined to run amok, but there were too many of the Remove. He scowled, and strode from the dormitory, and slammed the door.

The Removites tumbled into bed, and when Carberry looked in again five minutes later, with a dog-whip in his hand, they were all quiet and apparently slumbering. The prefect turned out the lights, and scowlingly withdrew.

There were five of the Remove who did not think of sleep. Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent had three end beds in the dormitory, and as it happened Bulstrode and Hazeldene were at the other end. Each of the juniors had determined to remain awake, but Bob Cherry dropped off first, and then Nugent. Harry Wharton sat up in bed, feeling that he would go to sleep if he remained lying down.

Half-past ten rang out from the clock tower.

Then Harry made a movement. It was time to take up the watch, as the corridors would now be deserted, and the opportunity of the raider had come. There had been no sound in the Remove dormitory; but Harry was already pretty well convinced that the mysterious prowler of the studies did not belong to his Form.

He slipped quietly out of bed, and tapped Bob Cherry on the shoulder. Bob opened his eyes sleepily.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" was his lucid and intelligible remark.

"Wake up, Bob!"

Harry's low whisper scarce broke the silence.

"Wharrer marrer——"

"Bob! Shut up! It's time!"

"Oh!" murmured Cherry, fully awakening.

He slipped out of bed, shivering a little, and hastily put on his clothes. Harry shook Nugent, who, after a preliminary grunt, turned out, and dressed himself. The juniors had taken care to provide themselves with rubber-soled shoes for the occasion, so that their movements made no sound.

Although there were no blinds to the dormitory windows, the darkness of the night made the interior of the room almost pitchy. There was no danger of being observed, even if other of the Removites should happen to be awake.

"Quiet!" whispered Harry Wharton.

"Right-ho! Lead on!"

"Jolly cold, ain't it?"

"Never mind the cold. Come on!"

Harry Wharton led the way to the nearest door. It opened without a sound, and the three juniors passed out into the corridor.

"Where are we going to watch?" asked Bob Cherry, with chattering teeth.

"Down in the second corridor," replied Harry. "No good remaining here. There are two staircases a fellow could come down by, as I'm pretty certain he's not in the Remove. We'll be close to the studies, and we are bound to see or hear something if the rotter is on the war-path to-night."

"Jolly dark to see anything."

"Well, we have our ears, anyway. And if he goes into our study, he's bound to knock over the chair we've placed ready for him to run into in the dark. If he has a light, we shall spot him at once."

"Let's get on the spot, then."

The chums descended a flight of stairs, and entered the wide oak-floored passage upon which the Remove studies opened.

It was a curious circumstance that most, if not all, of the raiding had been confined to the Remove studies, a fact which seemed to indicate that the purloiner belonged to that Form, and had an idea of committing all his depredations at home, as it were. At least, that was how it seemed to most of the Remove. Harry Wharton had a suspicion that it might be a fellow in the Upper Fourth, or even in the Shell, or the Fifth, who was thus favouring the juniors with his kind attentions, and who let his own Form alone so as to leave no traces near at hand.

The passage was dark—and cold. It was necessary to be quiet, but the juniors could not keep still in the cold, draughty passage. They exercised to keep themselves warm, and they were going through silent evolutions in the dark when eleven boomed out solemnly from the tower, the strokes ringing with eerie distinctness through the sombre silence of the night.

"Eleven!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We've been out of bed nearly half an hour, and no grub pincher yet!"

"Not even a ghost!" muttered Nugent.

"Ugh! Don't talk of ghosts now!"

"Quiet, kids! I believe I heard something!" Harry Wharton whispered.

"THE NABOB'S DIAMOND!"

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

The chums were silent, listening tensely.

A faint sound had come to Harry Wharton's ears; a curious sound which would not have been noticed in the daytime, but which was audible enough in the night silence. It was the distant creak of an old stair. It was repeated as the chums of the Remove stood statue-like, still, in the darkness, listening with strained ears.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "It was somebody on the—"

"The old stair to the box-room."

"Yes."

"I know that creak," muttered Wharton. "All these stairs are part of the new building, but that old stair has been there for centuries, and—"

"And it always lets you know if anybody is going up or down," chuckled Nugent. "We shouldn't hear it so far away in the daytime, but now everything is so still—"

"That's it. There it is again!"

"It must be the box-room stair, from the direction and the way it sounds," said Harry Wharton, wrinkling his brow thoughtfully.

"No doubt about that, Harry."

"But—but what on earth can it mean? The raider can't have been in the box-room, can he?"

"The chap who played ghost—"

"He must have turned up for bed-time, or he'd have been missed. There was no talk about anybody being missing."

"True. Perhaps he's gone up to the box-room first."

"Before raiding the studies? Why should he go up there and come down again for nothing?"

"Blessed if I know."

"It's not that," said Wharton decidedly. "If that's a chap coming down from the box-room now, he hasn't been up from one of the dormitories."

"But he must belong to the school!"

"I can't make it out."

"I say, it—it's not possible that—that—" stammered Nugent.

"Are you thinking of the ghost again?"

"Well, not exactly; but—but it's strange, isn't it?"

"Very strange. Did you tell me something about there being a subterranean passage from the Greyfriars vaults to the wood?"

"Yes, so some of the fellows say—from the vaults below here, to the ruined chapel in the Friar's Wood."

"Then it may be a stranger."

"My word! I never thought of that."

"But why should a stranger come here?" said Bob Cherry. "If it was a burglar, I could understand. But for a fellow to take so much trouble for the sake of a bit of grub—that won't hold water, Harry."

"How do you explain it, then?"

"Oh, I can't explain it! It's a mystery."

"There's one way," said Harry, setting his teeth. "We are going to collar that fellow, whoever he is, and make him explain. Man or boy, Greyfriars fellow or stranger, he's going to be shown up."

"Right!" said his comrades tensely.

"Silence now! He's down the stair."

There was no further sound from the darkness. The mysterious prowler of the night had left the ancient stair, and was in the oak-floored corridors, where the solid wood gave no creak at his footsteps.

"Hark!" murmured Harry suddenly.

There was a sound on the stairs. Cautious footsteps, but audible enough to the chums of the Remove.

"He's coming!"

"There's more than one."

"It must be burglars, then!"

Harry Wharton's eyes glinted in the darkness.

"Burglars or not, we're going to tackle them. Are you game?"

"Yes."

"But, I say, they're coming from the direction of the dormitory," whispered Bob, after a moment's silence. "They can't have been on the box-room stairs, then."

That had already occurred to Harry Wharton.

Was it possible that there were two parties of raiders about that night in Greyfriars, or had the impunity of the

raider tempted others to follow his example? But there was no time to think out the puzzle. The stealthy footsteps were entering the passage where the chums stood. They crouched against the wall. From the high window at the end of the passage came the merest glimmer of light, but it sufficed to dimly reveal two dark forms stealing quietly along.

Harry Wharton nudged his companions.

"Follow me!" he whispered.

And the chums of the Remove sprang upon the dim figures, and bore them to the floor with the suddenness of the attack, and there were two wild, terrified yells in the quiet night.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Mutual Mistake.

"O W!"

"Oooooooooh!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"What—how—who—?"

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Here's a capture, and no mistake! Why, they're Bulstrode and Vaseline!"

"Bulstrode and Vaseline!"

"The rotters!"

"So it was them all the time!"

"We've caught them!"

"Gerrof me chest!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Yes, we'll let you get up, you rotters! Light the lantern, Bob!"

There was a scratch and a glimmer of light. Bob Cherry lighted the bicycle lamp. Its rays glimmered upon Hazeldene and Bulstrode, lying sprawled on the floor, with Wharton and Nugent pinning them down.

The sudden attack in the darkness had startled the two Removites, but at the present moment they were more enraged than scared, as they recognised whom their assailants were. Bulstrode was gritting his teeth.

"You cads! Let me get up!"

"We've caught you!"

"We've caught you, you mean!" snarled Bulstrode.

"Eh?"

"I know very well what you three fellows were doing in the passage here. You can't take me in by this trick!" growled the bully of the Remove.

"What trick? What are you talking about?"

"This jumping on us suddenly when you knew we were bound to find you," sneered Bulstrode. "I'm not a baby to be taken in so easily as all that, I promise you! The whole Remove shall know to-morrow who it is steals grub from the studies!"

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Bob Cherry. "To try to turn it round like that, when we've caught them in the very act!"

Bulstrode glared at him.

"What do you mean? In the act of what?"

"Of going to pilfer in the studies."

"Why, you utter idiot, we came down from the dormitory to watch for the pilferer!" snarled Bulstrode. "We didn't expect to find three—"

"And we didn't expect to find two!"

"Do you accuse me, Hazeldene, and me—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Wait a bit," said Harry Wharton quietly. "It looks to me as if Bulstrode were telling the truth."

"Accidents will happen!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Bulstrode, do you deny that you came down here to go through the studies and raid the grub?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, of course I do! But you—"

"You came down to watch for the raider?"

"Yes, we did."

"Of course we did," said Hazeldene. "You surely don't think, Wharton, that we came to pinch the grub, do you?"

"Yes, I did think so, and I shouldn't be surprised at your doing it, either, Vaseline," said Harry Wharton, in his direct way. "But I shouldn't have expected anything of

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"I'm afraid your study-mates will have to miss their tea," said Hazeldene; and Billy Bunter watched open-mouthed, as the two bullies gathered the good things up.

the sort of Bulstrode. If you say that you came to look for the raider, and not to make a raid yourself, Bulstrode, I believe you."

"Well, that's what we came for."

"Then I'm satisfied."

Bulstrode and Hazeldene were allowed to rise. There was a savage sneer upon the face of the bully of the Remove.

"You may be satisfied," he exclaimed, "but I am not! What were you three fellows doing here? That's what I want to know!"

"I have already told you," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We were here watching for the raider, and when you came along, we thought we had got him!"

"Yes, so you say."

"Does that mean that you doubt my word?" asked Harry, with flashing eyes.

"Oh, it's not a question of any fellow's word, but of evidence," said the bully of the Remove. "I'm not going to make it a personal matter, and let you crawl out of it that way, Wharton. It concerns the whole Form. You three fellows have been found here—"

"So have you two, for that matter."

"That's different."

"I don't see how you can make it out."

"Well, for one thing, our study has been robbed twice, and we should naturally look for the rotter who did it. You haven't lost anything. If you have been doing the raiding yourselves, that accounts for your study being left alone. I thought you were putting young Bunter up to it. Instead of that, you're on the job yourselves; or perhaps he's lost his nerve, and you've got no choice in the matter now. It's all pretty clear to me. You sneaked out of the dormitory to raid the studies—"

Harry's eyes blazed, and his clenched fist went up, but Bob Cherry pulled him back by the shoulder. Harry gave him an annoyed glance.

"Hold on, Wharton!"

"Let me alone!"

"Don't start rowing here in the middle of the night.

You don't want to bring a master down on us, do you? Quelchy would give it to us pretty stiff if we woke him up, especially after this afternoon."

"Quite right," said Nugent. "You can make Bulstrode take his words back, or else give him a hiding to-morrow, Harry."

Bulstrode sneered.

"Good! We'll see what the Remove says about it to-morrow," he said. "Come on, Hazeldene, no good waiting here in the cold, now. We've discovered the thieves, and if there's anything taken now, we shall know jolly well who took it!"

"I don't think it was Wharton really, Bulstrode," muttered Hazeldene, who was afflicted with a desire to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, a policy which frequently brought down upon him the wrath of both parties he tried to propitiate.

"Don't you?" exclaimed Bulstrode, turning upon him. "I suppose you are going to take his side against me, you young cad."

"Oh, no, I don't mean that!"

"Then shut up and come along."

Bulstrode and Hazeldene made their way upstairs again. The chums of the Remove followed. The noise of the scuffle had fortunately not been heard. Harry Wharton's face was dark as he mounted the stairs. Bulstrode and Hazeldene entered the Remove dormitory, and Nugent and Bob Cherry were about to follow, when Harry Wharton stopped them.

"What is it, Harry?" Nugent asked.

"Close the door. I want to speak, and I don't want these rotters to hear."

Bulstrode and Hazeldene were in the dormitory, going towards their beds. Frank Nugent pulled the door shut.

"You've forgotten about the sound we heard just before Bulstrode came down," said Harry, in a low voice.

"By Jove, so we had!"

"I am convinced that Bulstrode told the truth, in one

respect. He really came down to look for the raider, not to collar anything himself."

"Yes, I rather think that much was true."

"And I believe that whoever it was we heard coming down from the box-room ten minutes ago is the rotter we are looking for."

"He must have heard the row in the passage."

"Yes; and it may have scared him off, or he may have taken cover to wait till we're all quiet in bed again."

"Very likely."

"That's why I came up with Bulstrode. We'll remain here for a bit, and listen on the stairs. If the chap is still in the house, he'll make some sign presently. You're game to see this out to a finish, aren't you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we'll see it through," said Harry Wharton determinedly.

"Good!"

"Don't make a sound. Come down the stairs quietly, and we'll listen for a sound in the passage. The place is so still that we're bound to hear him if he goes into any of the studies."

"Right you are!"

The chums of the Remove crept cautiously down the stairs again in their rubber shoes, making no sound.

On the second of the wide stairs they waited, and, in silence, listened intently for the faintest sound to break the stillness of the night.

It was long in coming!

From the night came at last the chime of the hour—or, rather, the half-hour—the peals indicating half-past eleven from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

The sound died away with many an echo amid the ancient buildings of Greyfriars, and silence, seemingly all the deeper, reigned again.

It was broken by a faint sound.

It might have been a rat scuttling behind the wainscot; but it made the chums of the Remove start and thrill as much as if it had been a sudden clap of thunder.

It was repeated, and then they had no further doubt. Someone was moving in the passage upon which the Remove studies opened!

They could see nothing, hear nothing, but that faint, scarcely audible sound of stealthy footsteps in the dark. But that was enough for them.

Harry Wharton nudged his companions, and, with beating hearts, the chums of the Remove crept forward from the stairs along the passage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face.

HARRY WHARTON suddenly stopped, and caught Bob Cherry by the arm.

"Look!" he muttered.

"My hat!"

In the dense darkness of the passage there was a glimmer of light. It came from under the door of one of the studies; that belonging to Skinner and Russell. The door was closed, but the light from underneath showed that there was somebody in the room. The mysterious depredator had closed the door to keep the light concealed while he raided the cupboard.

Harry Wharton smiled grimly.

"We've got him now!" he whispered.

"Rather!" muttered Nugent.

"He's shut himself up in the room, and we've got him cornered! We've only got to take care that he doesn't get away, that's all!"

"Who on earth can it be?" muttered Bob Cherry. "My hat; I'm anxious to see him in the light!"

"So am I! Not a sound, you know; come on!"

The three juniors stole down the passage towards Skinner's study, and stopped outside the closed door. There they listened intently for a sound from within.

The light continued to glimmer from under the door, and as it was steady and did not move, the chums guessed that the raider had lighted the gas, and that it was not light from a lantern.

This seemed to knock on the head the theory that the fellow might be a stranger to Greyfriars. He must have known his way about pretty well to explore the rambling interior of Greyfriars without a light.

Sounds came from within the study; faint sounds, but clear enough to indicate the occupation of the unknown individual within. He was evidently removing articles from the cupboard, and the click of crockery and the sound of a falling fork were not to be mistaken.

The chums of the Remove hesitated a second or two. Now that they were on the spot, almost face to face with the mysterious raider, they felt a strange thrill at their hearts. There was so much that was mysterious, inexplicable,

about the whole affair. If the raider were a Greyfriars fellow, what had he been up in the box-room for before the raid? There was absolutely no explanation of that. If he were not a Greyfriars fellow, how did he know his way about the school so well? Yet, if he were an outsider, how came he to content himself with merely taking articles of food, when valuables were to be had easily enough when once the entrance to Greyfriars was effected?

Harry Wharton set his teeth, and laid his hand upon the handle of the door. Even if the boys were called upon to face some hulking ruffian—perhaps an armed man—he was not afraid.

"Come on, chaps!"

The sounds within the study had suddenly ceased. Had the raider heard some faint sound, and taken the alarm?

It looked like it, for, at the very moment that Harry Wharton opened the door, the gas was turned off, and the room was plunged in darkness.

The chums were about to rush in, but as a wall of darkness rose as it were before them, they halted and hesitated in the doorway.

For a moment there was a tense and thrilling silence.

They could see nothing, but they knew that the—the thing was there; whatever and whoever it was, there it was, within a few paces of them, hidden in the gloom—perhaps preparing to spring!

At the thought, they receded a little. Wharton groped in his pocket for matches. There was a sound of quick breathing in the darkness of the study.

"My—my hat," muttered Bob Cherry faintly; "look!"

A glimmer of white had made itself visible in the darkness. The ray of a star, falling through the study window, fell upon a white face—strangely, terribly white—with strangely sparkling eyes.

The three juniors started back; the sudden and terrible vision was a little too much for their nerves!

They started back into the passage; and the next moment there was a sound of running feet, and something brushed past them in the darkness, and disappeared.

"What was that?"

"Was that you, Cherry?"

"I? No, I—"

"I've got him," gasped Nugent, almost hysterically;

"I've got hold of his arm! Lend a hand here!"

"Let go, you ass; it's my arm you've got hold of!"

"Your arm, Cherry, eh?"

"Yes; let me go!"

"Sorry! Have you got him, Wharton?"

"No; he brushed past me. I nearly had him, but Cherry got in the way. But we won't lose him!"

"I say, did you see his face?"

"Yes; it's got up with chalk."

"Oh, you think it's only chalk, then?"

"Of course I do! Did you think it was a ghost?"

"I—I—"

"Never mind talking now! After him! He's bound to make for the box-room, and we'll have him as sure as a gun!"

"Good; come on!"

Harry Wharton led the way towards the box-room stairs at a sprinting pace. There was a sound of running feet and heavy breathing from the darkness ahead. The raider had abandoned his loot in Skinner's study, thinking only of escape. But the chums of the Remove were close upon the track, running as if they were on the cinder-path in keen competition. They knew every inch of the irregular passages of Greyfriars, and could venture to put on speed, even in dense darkness.

They heard a stumble ahead.

Perhaps the stranger knew the way less than they did—perhaps his haste had made him stumble. The sound of a heavy fall reached their ears.

"We've got him!" gasped Wharton. "Come on!"

He dashed on in a spurt, and reached the foot of the box-room stairs. Without pausing a moment, he dashed up, and into the box-room. There, fearful of falling over the lumber in the darkness, he halted, and then felt his way towards the little door leading into the hidden passage. There was no sound in the room, save what he made himself, and the door, when he reached it, was closed. Harry Wharton felt a thrill of triumph.

The fugitive could not have got ahead of him so much as that. Undoubtedly he had shot ahead of the raider and cut off his escape.

"Have you got him?"

It was Bob Cherry's voice from the door of the box-room.

"Not yet!"

"Has he got through?"

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"I am sure not; I should have heard him open the door. We've got ahead of him. Strike a light, and let's get the lantern started!"

There was a scratch and a flare. Bob Cherry picked his way towards Wharton with a lighted match between his finger and thumb. Harry opened the lantern and the match was applied. The hero of the Remove flashed the light to and fro. Nugent came in, and they hunted through the box-room. There was no trace of the fugitive.

"Here's not here," said Nugent.

"That's plain enough," Bob Cherry remarked. "The question is whether he got ahead and escaped through the passage before we arrived here."

Harry Wharton shook his head decidedly.

"I'm certain that wasn't the case, Bob. We should have had him if he had kept on after that stumble; we were so close. I thought he had kept on and ran up here; but, as a matter of fact, he must have dodged away in the dark, and I passed him."

"Yes; I fancy that's the case."

"We're ahead of him," said Wharton grimly, "and we've got him shut up somewhere in Greyfriars. It's only a question of time, running him down now."

"He may go straight back to his dormitory," suggested Nugent. "As he seems to have left all his loot behind, he has nothing to come here for. I suppose his usual dodge was to come here and hide it?"

Harry shook his head again.

"There's more in it than that, Nugent. If he could go back to a dormitory, why should he make for the box-room in the first place when he ran? How was it we heard him coming down from the box-room before the raid?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Well, I know; at least, I can guess."

"What's your idea, then?"

"He's not a Greyfriars fellow," said Wharton, with conviction. "He's somebody who's in hiding in the deserted wing, for some reason or other."

Nugent whistled.

"I say, that sounds a little steep, Harry!"

"I don't care," said Wharton firmly. "It's my theory, and it's the only one that covers the ground, too. Some fellow is in hiding in the ruined wing, and, of course, he requires grub to live on, and so he comes out at night, or when the fellows are all in the class-rooms, and raids the studies."

"But how do you account for his knowing his way about the school so well, then?"

"Perhaps he's an old Grey Friar himself," suggested Bob Cherry. "An old boy would know the ins and outs as well as we do."

"Seems too steep for me," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

"Have you any other theory to offer, then?" asked Harry.

"Oh, no; I don't undertake to explain it. It's a giddy mystery, and it's a size too big for me to tackle," Nugent confessed.

"Well, I believe I've hit the right nail on the head, though I know I can't account for all the circumstances," said Wharton. "If I'm correct, we've only got to take care that he doesn't escape this way, and then we can run him down on our leisure."

"That's so. Quelchy was going to have a fastening put on this door—"

"It hasn't been done yet; but there's a lock to the box-room door. We can lock it on the outside, and take away the key, and then the chap will be done when he comes up here."

"Ha, ha! That's good!"

The Removees crossed to the box-room door. Harry Wharton took the key out of the lock. As he did so there was a slight sound on the stairs. Harry sprang through the doorway, and flashed the light of the lantern upon the stairs. He was just in time to see a dim form disappear.

"What was it?"

"He was on the stairs," said Harry Wharton. "That's proof enough. But he won't escape this way in a hurry, I imagine."

The Remove chums stepped outside the box-room, and Harry reversed the key, and locked the door on the outside. Then he slipped the key into his pocket. The escape of the mysterious night-prowler was cut off now with a vengeance.

"And now to run him down!" said Harry Wharton grimly.

And the chums of the Remove descended the stairs from the box-room to commence the hunt for the mysterious raider.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Run Down.

"BOOM!" The first stroke was followed by eleven more. Midnight had rung out from the tower of Greyfriars, and still the three Removees were on the hunt. They had searched far and wide for the unknown raider, and had not seen or heard a sign or sound of him. He had vanished!

There was really nothing surprising in that, for Greyfriars was an ancient, rambling building, and there were a hundred nooks and crannies where a fugitive might hide, and only be discovered by luck.

In any of the studies, in the empty class-rooms downstairs, in the alcoves in the wide passages, in the deep window recesses—the chums of the Remove could not have searched every possible hiding-place in a week.

The fugitive might have slipped into any of the dormitories, and might be hiding under a bed; but it was impossible for the chums to risk disturbing the sleepers in their quest.

Harry Wharton stopped at last as the final stroke of midnight boomed out through the gloomy night.

"It's no go," said Bob Cherry; "and I'm getting jolly cold. What price a warm bed now?"

"Just what I was thinking," Nugent confessed. "But I don't want to give up if you fellows want to keep on. What do you say, Harry?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No good keeping on," he said. "I should have liked to run the fellow down, but there are a hundred places where he might have hidden himself. It's no go. And, anyway, we have discovered something. We know now that it can't be a Greyfriars chap. It's some fellow hiding in the ruined wing, though I'm blessed if I know what he can be doing it for, unless it's some tramp. And then it's curious his not stealing anything besides the grub. I suppose he'll get away by one of the lower windows. But, after to-night, I should hardly think he would have the nerve to visit Greyfriars again."

"That's pretty certain," assented Nugent. "We might capture him by waking the school, and having a general hunt."

"We don't want to do that. I suppose he has no right to be here; but he isn't a thief, and we've given him an exciting time," grinned Harry. "Besides, he may have got out by a window on the ground floor already."

"Yes, that's possible."

"We've done about all we can do. Let's get back to bed."

This direction from their leader was gladly obeyed by the Remove chums. They were tired and cold, and now that the excitement of the chase had died out, there was nothing exhilarating in poking about in empty studies looking for a fugitive who, in all probability, wasn't there.

The chums returned to the Remove dormitory, and entered by the door nearest their own end of the room. There was a faint sound in the dormitory as they entered, as of someone moving, but it was followed by complete silence.

"Hallo! Still awake, Bulstrode?" said Harry Wharton cheerily.

There was no reply.

"You awake, Hazeldene?"

No answer came from the cad of the Remove.

"Sulking, I suppose," grinned Bob Cherry. "Somebody is awake, anyway. I heard someone move, I know that."

"It sounded like someone out of bed."

"Exactly."

"I thought it came from this end of the dormitory, though," Nugent remarked.

"Did you? So did I."

Harry Wharton gave a slight start.

"I say, is it possible—"

"What do you mean?"

"He can't be here, surely!" whispered Wharton.

"He! Who?" asked Nugent and Cherry together.

"The rotter we were hunting for."

The chums of the Remove gave a simultaneous jump at the suggestion.

"My only Panama hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That would be a bit of a surprise! But we thought he might have nipped into one of the dormitories, didn't we?"

"Yes; and why not this as much as any other?"

"True—why not?"

Harry Wharton's eyes were gleaming now. The thought of being successful in the hunt, after all, and unearthing the mysterious raider was inspiring.

"Lock the doors, Cherry!" he whispered. "If the rotter is in here, we'll soon have him out of wherever he's skulking."

"Good!" grinned Bob Cherry.

To lock the doors of the Remove dormitory and extract the keys occupied less than a minute. Meanwhile, Nugent lighted the gas. Several fellows, awakened by the light, looked up blinking from their pillows, and demanded to know what the matter was. Bulstrode sat up in bed and growled.

"What on earth are you fellows up to?" he demanded. "Aren't you gone back to bed yet?"

"We look as if we haven't, don't we?" Bob Cherry remarked cheerfully.

"Turn that light out!"

"All in good time."

"How do you think I can go to sleep with that light glaring in my eyes?" howled the bully of the Remove.

"Haven't thought about the matter at all."

"I'll jolly soon make—"

"Oh, shut up, Bulstrode!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "We've been hunting for the raider, and we have an idea that he may be hiding in this dormitory."

"They are," sneered Bulstrode, "all three of them, and I could tell you their names."

"Oh, shut up! If any of you fellows feel inclined to join in the hunt, you can get up and lend a hand."

"By Jove, rather!" exclaimed Skinner, tumbling out of bed at once.

Russell and Morgan and several others followed his example.

"Locked the doors all right, Bob?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! Now let's hunt for the rotter!"

The Removites joined joyfully in the search. There were enough of them to effect the intruder, if he were there, whomsoever he might be. No sound had been heard since the first alarm; but Harry Wharton was almost convinced that the fugitive was indeed in the dormitory, crouching under one of the beds. If he were, capture was only a matter of a few minutes, for there was no escape from the room.

The Removites went along the dormitory, each of them peeping under the beds, which formed the only likely places of concealment in the lofty, barely-furnished apartment.

Harry Wharton went to his own bed, and stooped and lifted the coverlet. He jumped up again with a startled exclamation.

In spite of his feeling that the fugitive was near, he was startled to see the dim outlines of a crouching form under the bed. Bob Cherry looked across at him.

"Seen anything of him, Harry?"

"Yes."

"What?"

There was a general exclamation and a crowding towards Wharton. Harry's face was pale with excitement now.

"Is he under your bed, Harry?"

"Someone is."

"My hat!"

Even Bulstrode was out of bed now, as excited as the rest. He joined the crowd, with Hazeldene. Billy Bunter, as excited as anybody, was feeling wildly about for his spectacles. The whole Remove came crowding round Wharton's bed, and the ring of lads was five or six deep. There was no hope of escape now for the mysterious raider of the Greyfriars studies. Harry Wharton stooped again, and threw back the coverlet.

"Come out!"

There was a gasp under the bed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. An Amazing Revelation.

COME out!" howled the Greyfriars Remove as one boy. Another gasp under the bed, a sound of hurried breathing. The sound of a shifting body! But the concealed fugitive did not come out.

"Come out!"

"Reach under and lug him out!" said Bulstrode.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "He may have a knife!"

"Pooh! It's not a burglar."

"It's not a Greyfriars chap!" said Bob Cherry quickly.

"We don't know who it may be. Don't reach under till we do know."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton. "Bring me a poker from the grate, Bunter. I'll jolly soon shift him with that!"

"Certainly, Nugent."

Billy Bunter ran up with the poker. Harry Wharton took it from him, and bent down to lunge under the bed, but he gave the hidden fugitive a last warning first.

"Will you come out? I've got a poker here, and I'll give you a dig that you will remember if you don't show yourself!"

There was a gasp again, and a slim form rolled into view. It was that of a lad, evidently no older than Harry Wharton himself; but he was totally unrecognisable to the Removites.

He was dressed in Etons, but so thickly caked with dust and grime that the original colour of the cloth was hardly discernible.

But his face was most startling of all. It was deathly white; but now that it was seen closely in a good light, it could easily be seen that the white was caused by a thick coating of chalk.

This mysterious figure rolled out from under the bed, moved at last by the threat of the lunging poker. The Removites stared at him in blank amazement. He picked himself up nimbly, and stood in the midst of a circle of wondering faces, blinking in the light.

"Who are you?"

A dozen voices shouted out the question. The stranger blinked dazedly round at the Remove.

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Look at his hands!"

There was a shout of astonishment from the Greyfriars Remove.

The stranger hastily thrust his hands out of sight, but it was too late. They had been seen. And those hands were seen to be of a dark olive colour, and were evidently not those of an English boy.

"He's a nigger."

"Or a Hindu."

Hindu! The word furnished the clue.

"My only hat," roared Bob Cherry, "it's Hurree Singh!"

"Hurree Singh!"

The name was exclaimed far and wide. Hurree Singh—the Hindu nabob, who had been in the Greyfriars Remove, and who had come to the school with the foreign pupils, and had left with them, and had not been seen since, although he had been often thought and spoken of by the chums of the Remove.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The raider of the Greyfriars studies blinked and grinned. The grin had a strange effect on his curiously whitened face.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent seized hold of him in a twinkling, and gave him a terrific shaking.

"You young ass!"

"You silly young monkey!"

"You rank fraud!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur gasped for breath.

"Have the kindness to be less violent in your greetings!" he gasped. "You shake the totality of the breathfulness from my respected carcase."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If the Remove had any doubts, the hearing of Hurree Singh's beautiful variety of the English tongue would have removed them.

There was only one person in the wide world—at least, as far as their experience went—who could speak that kind of English; and that person was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry released the nabob at last. They had relieved their feelings a little, and shaken most of the breath out of him.

"Hurree Singh! And what is the meaning of this little jape?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by leading us this dance?"

The nabob grinned.

"My heart had the hungerfulness for the respected school where I was happy in the attachfulness of my chums," he said.

"Have you run away from the other place?"

"I never went there, my worthy chum."

"You—you never went there?"

The Removites stared at the nabob in astonishment. Hurree Singh sat down on the edge of Harry Wharton's bed, and laughed.

"No. The respected establishment of the admired Herr Rosenblum has not had the distinguished honour of sheltering my noble person."

"But you left Greyfriars with all the foreign fellows, and we saw you off at the station, when you gave me that diamond as a farewell gift," said Harry Wharton, looking puzzled.

"That is trueful, but I left the train at the next station."

"My hat! And then—"

"I took the nextful train back."

"Of all the nerve—"

"I lingered about the vicination of the school till after dark, and then I sneaked in quietly," grinned the nabob. "Nugent had shown me over the ruined wing, and I knew just where to hide."

"You young bounder! But what was your little game? Do you mean to say that you've been in hiding ever since the foreign chaps left Greyfriars?"

"That is the exactfulness of the case."

"But—but what was the game?"

"I did not wish to quit the schoolful dwelling where I made the chumfulness with my respected friends."

"And we didn't want you to go, either, old chap; but you can't stay without permission. You couldn't hang out in the ruined wing for ever."

"I did not think much about that. I thought that in time I might find a way of staying. I wrote to my guardian in London to tell him I wanted to stay, and that I would not leave Greyfriars of my own free willfulness."

"Ha, ha! And so it was you who raided the studies?"

The nabob grinned gleefully.

"I had to have the foodful supply for the bodily wants," he explained. "I took the grubful supplies from the honourable studies, and a spirit lamp from one place, and a kettle from another, and other useful articles from other places, and I have been rather exceedingly comfy in the ruined wing."

"You might have broken your neck in some of the pitfalls there."

"The breakfulness would be due to the carelessness, and my carefulness has been terrific," said the nabob. "I was inclined many frequent times to confide my secret to my chumful friends—"

"Why didn't you, you ass?" asked Nugent. "We'd have stood by you and helped you out, instead of chasing you up and down Greyfriars like a giddy burglar."

The nabob chuckled.

"Was it you who were chasing me this night, my worthy chums? Of course, my knowfulness was limited, and I did not recognise you in the darkful gloom. But I never let on to you, as you express it in English, because I thought you might be questioned as to whether you knew of anyone who was in hiding, and raiding the grubful supplies in the studies. You would then have been placed in the situation of terrific difficulty."

Harry Wharton nodded.

Hurree Singh had acted in a thoughtful and considerate manner in keeping the secret of his presence in Greyfriars from the chums of the Remove.

If they had known they could and would have helped him, but their knowledge would have placed them in a very awkward position had questions been asked.

"You were right, Hurree."

"Yes, I think I was correctful in keeping the secret," said the nabob. "If I had shown any want of confidence in my chums the apologise would be terrific. But that was not the sweet reasonableness of the matter at all. As your poet Shakespeare says in his beautiful poem, 'The Absent-Minded Beggar,' 'I must be cruel only to be kind.'"

"Ha, ha! That's in Hamlet!"

"Excuse me, I think I can say with confidentialness that it is in the poem I have named," said the nabob, gently but firmly. "I studied the English poets under my master in the Bengal College before coming to this respected country, and I have a terrific acquaintance with the great works of Poet Shakespeare."

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind Poet Shakespeare now. What have you got that chalk daubed all over your beautiful complexion for?"

"That was in case I should be seen, and then the recognisableness would not be so easy," explained Hurree Singh. "Had anyone spotted a dark face like mine at any moment, the whole cat would have been out of the bagfulness, as your English proverb says."

"Good old English proverb!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"So I made my face whiteful with the chalk!" grinned Hurree Singh. "I have once or twice been seen, but I think confidentially that no one has recognised a Nabob of Bhanipur under this disguisefulness."

"You're right there," said Wharton. "I shouldn't have known you from Adam, even now, if I hadn't seen your hands and heard your voice. But I say, what are you going to do now. You can't go back to the ruined wing."

"Why not?" said Hurree Singh. "If all the persons here will keep the strict mumfulness which reveals the wise head, there will be no harm done by the little adventures and the chafefulness of the night."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm afraid it's asking too much of the Remove," he said. "Somebody would be bound to talk, and this affair would get out—"

"It is out already!" grinned Bulstrode. "Hark!"

There was a sharp rap at the door of the dormitory. The juniors looked at one another in dismay. They knew the rap of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Return of Hurree Singh.

O PEN this door immediately!"

"Turn out the light!" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Back to bed; buck up!" exclaimed Nugent.

"No good," said Harry Wharton quietly. "He's seen the light under the door; he knows the door's locked, and he's heard our voices. The game's up!"

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE HALFPENNY.

Hurree Singh's chalky face wore a worried look.

"Do you think the masterful sahib has heard my talkfulness?" he whispered.

"I expect so."

"Then the gamefulness is up for me."

"Looks like it. But he may not have heard. Pop under the bed again, and we'll see if we can stick it out."

"The wheeze is good."

And Hurree Janset Ram Singh disappeared under Harry Wharton's bed. The next moment Bob Cherry unlocked the door, and the master of the Remove made his appearance. Mr. Quelch was looking decidedly angry.

"Ha! So I find you all out of your beds!" he exclaimed, glancing round. "I expected as much."

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"Do not answer me in that impertinent manner, Cherry."

"No, sir."

"Cherry, you will take fifty lines."

This time Bob thought it better not to answer at all. Mr. Quelch shook his head warningly at him, and turned to Harry Wharton.

"The punishment of to-day seems to have had no effect upon you, Wharton. I find the whole Form out of bed at past midnight, and I am not surprised to find you dressed. Whose voice was it I heard just before I knocked at the door?"

"Mine, perhaps, sir."

"It was not yours. It was a voice I should have been certain belonged to a boy who was lately at this school, if it were possible that he could still be here. Is it within the bounds of possibility that the Indian youth, Hurree Singh, has been smuggled into the school in any way?"

The Removites were silent.

Mr. Quelch looked round him and then fixed his eyes upon Harry's face again. The strange suspicion in his mind had become a certainty now.

"Is Hurree Singh here, Wharton?"

Harry did not speak.

But it was not necessary, for Hurree Singh saved him from the difficult situation by crawling out from under the bed.

Mr. Quelch gazed at the Indian lad in blank amazement. "Who—who is that? What does this absurd masquerade mean?"

"If you please, worthy instructor sahib—"

"Hurree Singh!"

"I have the honourable pleasure of presenting my excellent respects to you, sahib," said the nabob, with his politest bow.

"How—how—what—how do you come here?"

"I came in by the door, sir."

"How is it you are in Greyfriars at all?"

"I had too great regretfulness at leaving the school where I happily dwelt in the respected study of my chums, sahib. I returned and hid in the ruined wing, and the whitefulness on my face is of a disguiseful nature."

"I—I really—H'm! Wash your face, Hurree Singh, and get into your bed. It is vacant here. You—you—but I cannot deal with the matter now. I shall take you before the Head in the morning. Boys, go to bed immediately!"

The Remove quietly obeyed. Mr. Quelch put out the light and retired, the most amazed man in Greyfriars. The voice of Hurree Singh was heard after the door closed.

"All is up now, my worthy chums. The upfulness is terrific. I fear that the doctor sahib will send me forth-fully away."

"We'll all intercede for you," said Bob Cherry.

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We'll go in a body to the Head, and ask him to keep Hurree Singh at Greyfriars."

"That is a ripping idea!" said Nugent. "We'll make a Form matter of it."

"I thank you from the base of my heart, my respectable chums!" exclaimed Hurree Singh gratefully. "As your Poet Shakespeare says, 'how sharper than a serpent-tooth it is to have a thankful child.' Good-night! The chafefulness has fatigued my honourable carcase."

"Good-night, Inky!"

And slumber at last reigned in the Remove dormitory.

None of the Removites woke till rising-bell was clanging on the fresh morning air, and then it seemed like a dream to the chums to see the cheerful olive face of Hurree Janset Ram Singh looking at them from the bedclothes.

"The topfulness of the giddy morning to you, my worthy chums!" exclaimed the nabob cheerily. "Can anybody lend me a suit of clothes? My own are in a condition of extremely terrific dustfulness."

"You're about my size," said Nugent. "I'll manage it. I hope they'll let you stay, Inky. It does me good to see your twopence-coloured chivvy here."

"And I am glad to behold the features of my respect-

"THE NABOB'S DIAMOND!"

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

able chum, though as features they are not much to gaze at," said the nabob. "You English have a proverb that 'association makes one satisfied with anything,' have you not?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's one for Inky!" said Bob Cherry. "It's a pleasure to hear him chirping again. If the Head doesn't let him stay with us, we'll get up a mutiny in the Remove."

The Removites went down to breakfast, and Hurree Singh rather nervously took his place at the Form table with the rest. There were wide-eyed stares from the other tables at the sight of the Nabob of Bhanipur in his old place with the Remove. As the boys left the dining-room after breakfast, Mr. Quelch made a sign to the nabob, who approached him meekly enough.

"You will go to the doctor's study immediately after prayers, Hurree Singh."

"Certainly sir! I hope—"

"You may go!"

Mr. Quelch walked away, and bent his steps in the direction of the principal's quarters. Dr. Locke did not breakfast with the school, and the Remove-master found him in his study. The Head was looking rather worried over a letter he held in his hand.

"Ah, come in, Mr. Quelch!" he exclaimed, with a nod to the master of the Remove. "I have had another letter from Herr Rosenblum. He has not yet found the lad who left his party on the day the foreign boys left Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"You will remember my telling you, Mr. Quelch, that Herr Rosenblum wrote to me, the day after the boys left, to say that the Indian lad, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, had separated himself from the party en route to Beechwood and had disappeared, leaving absolutely no trace behind."

"I remember, sir."

"I was very much concerned, but I hoped that the lad had been found by this time. But I have a letter this morning to say that he is still missing, and the Herr expresses a most curious suspicion."

"Indeed, sir! What is that?"

"He mentions that the Indian lad had grown very much attached to his friends at Greyfriars, and that he seemed very restless at leaving, and thinks he may have had some idea in his mind of returning here. He asks me if I will inquire if anything has been seen or heard of the boy in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch smiled again.

"Of course, such a thing is not likely—"

"On the contrary, sir, it is not only possible, but it has actually happened," said Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke stared at the Remove-master.

"Eh? Have you heard anything, Mr. Quelch?"

"More than that, sir; I have seen him."

"You have seen the Indian lad—where?"

"Here, sir; at Greyfriars."

"You amaze me. Pray tell me all!"

Mr. Quelch explained. The Head listened in utter amazement. He ran his fingers through his scanty locks.

"Dear me! I am astounded! I never heard anything like this before. And the boy has been in hiding in the ruined wing for two or three days. Amazing!"

"Quite amazing, sir. I have ordered him to report himself to you after prayers, so that you can deal with him."

"H'm—h'm! He deserves a severe punishment. Yet—yet it is hard that the boy should have to leave the school, if he has grown so deeply attached to the place and to his friends here, Mr. Quelch."

"I was thinking so myself, sir."

"It is really flattering to us, and to the school, to some extent; although, of course, it would be impossible to justify such an extraordinary proceeding."

"Exactly, sir! If it could be arranged with his guardian and Herr Rosenblum, it might be possible for him to stay."

"I must think about that."

The Head glanced at the Remove when they went in to morning prayers. The nabob was in his place in the Form, with his usually calm expression. After prayers, the Remove filed out, and while the rest of the Form went off to the class-room, three of them remained with Hurree Singh. The three, needless to say, were the chums of Study No. 1.

"We're coming with you to see the Head," said Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry slapped the nabob on the back.

"We're going to back you up!" he exclaimed. "Come on!"

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "We'll explain to the Head."

"The gladfulness of my heart will be extreme if the doctor sahib gives the permissibility for me to remain with my esteemed chums," said the nabob wistfully.

Harry Wharton knocked at the Head's door.

"Come in!" said the deep but kindly voice the boys of Greyfriars knew so well—knew and respected and liked, in spite of occasional severity from their headmaster.

The chums of the Remove marched in. Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows a little at the sight of four Removites instead of one. He coughed slightly.

"H'm! I believe I sent only for Hurree Singh," he observed.

"That is correctful, sahib," said the nabob. "My chumful friends have come with all due respectfulness to explicate matters to your serene judgment. They—"

"My dear lad—"

"If you would allow Hurree Singh to remain, sir," said Harry Wharton respectfully, "he is sure his guardian would consent, and Herr Rosenblum would not mind. We all want him with us, sir—all of us in the Remove."

"That's so, sir," said Bob Cherry and Nugent together.

The Head smiled a little.

"Very well," he said. "You have done wrong, Hurree Singh, but I can find excuses for you, and I am very pleased to observe this attachment among my boys. I shall not punish you—"

"The overflowingfulness of the esteemed gratitude—"

"Exactly! I will represent matters to the best of my ability to your guardian in London, and I hope the matter will end satisfactorily to all of us. That is all I can say at present. You may go back to the Form now."

"Thank you, sir!" said four voices in unison.

And the chums of the Remove left the Head's study pretty well satisfied in their minds. The Head's manner had been encouraging, and they had little doubt that the matter would, as Dr. Locke put it, be arranged satisfactorily for all concerned.

"I think that the esteemed Head will arrange the matter nicely," said Hurree Singh, as they walked towards the Remove class-room. "I shall be happy to be placed out of the suspendedness, however. The suspense is killing, as the deacot remarked when he was suspended by the neck to a tree."

The chums entered the class-room, and Hurree Singh took his old place, next to Harry Wharton. Mr. Quelch treated him exactly as if he had never left the Remove at all, but the fellows kept casting glances towards him, as if to assure themselves that it was really the Nabob of Bhanipur who was sitting there, and not a ghost. They could not soon get used to the return of the nabob.

And after morning school Hurree Singh had something to say to the Remove, which made even Bulstrode glad that he was back again.

"During the hidefulness in the ruined wing, the spur of famine forced me to take the grubful supplies from the Remove studies," the nabob explained to a knot of fellows in the passage. "It was with great regretfulness that I raided the studies, but I had no alternative resourcefulness. I spared the study of my esteemed chums—"

"You didn't spare mine!" growled Bulstrode.

"But you are not my chum," said the nabob. "Nor do I esteem you. I—"

"Are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Certainly not. I am at peacefulness with all the world, and I do not seek to enter into disputefulness with any esteemed rotter present. What I was going to say, when you interrupted me rudely, was, that I had raided many studies of the grubful supplies, and that now I should be pleased to make the compensation. I would not insult the esteemed Remove by offering to make the cash payfulness, but I should be gratified if all the sahibs whose grub was taken would come and feed with me in the tuckshop this afternoon, and call for whatever they like."

"Bravo!" was the general shout.

"And to make the thing complete, not only the grubfully-raided sahibs, but all the rest of the esteemed Remove might honour me by their presence on the ludicrous occasion," said the nabob.

"Hurrah!"

There was no doubt of the heartiness of Hurree Singh's welcome back to Greyfriars, if he were allowed to stay. And that evening all doubt upon that point was set at rest by a communication from Dr. Locke. He had settled matters with Hurree Singh's guardian, an official at the India Office in London, and with Herr Rosenblum, and the nabob had full permission to remain at Greyfriars.

The news was received with loud cheers in Study No. 1, which were echoed in the junior common-room when the news was spread there. And so Hurree Jamset Ram Singh became once more a member of the Greyfriars Remove, and an inmate of Study No. 1—to share the future fortunes of the chums.

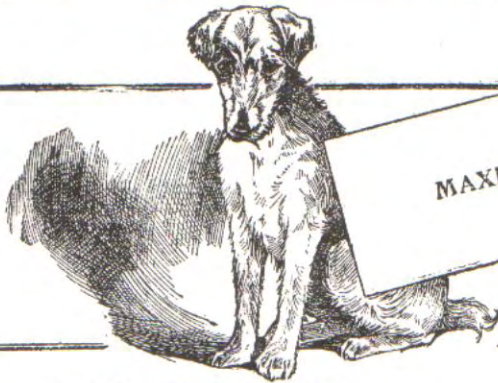
THE END.

(Another long story dealing with the chums of Greyfriars next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.)

"THE NABOB'S DIAMOND!"

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.



NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxenniss."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually getting threatening picture post-cards from Leigh-on-Sea; from some man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax starts off for Leigh, and in the train gets into conversation with a young Jew.

Solomon Abrams effects a Sale in Postcards.

"Ah," observed the Jew, "a man must mind his business; you're right; if he don't, no one will for him!"

"Sometimes they will; and then he wakes up one fine morning and finds that he's got no business to mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Hebrew aloud. "That was good—very good! Ha, ha! Now my business was in there!" And he patted the leather case beside him.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, it was; and it was all my own!"

"Then you'll be proud of it?"

"It will do as a beginning. Now, what you think it is?"

"Cheap jewellery, perhaps?" Lomax suggested.

"No, it was not. That was good, but this is better! See!"

The fellow took the case on his knees as he spoke, pressed a spring, and it flew open. Within were sheet upon sheet of picture postcards, six on a sheet, with perforations between, so that each might be easily detached.

Picture postcards interested Robert Lomax just then, and he leaned forward to examine these gorgeous bits of paste-board with some attention.

"Lovely, was they not?" inquired the Jew, believing that the superb magnificence of his wares had called forth this display of interest, and turning over the sheets, that his companion might feast his eyes upon the highly-coloured presentments of lake and river, sea and cities, landscapes, seascapes, animals, and all the rest of the menagerie.

"Was they not beau-u-tiful, my friend?"

"They are, beyond a doubt!" Lomax said heartily. That the style of beauty they displayed was not that which appealed to him was not to say that others might not appreciate it.

"And so cheap as they was beautiful!" continued their proud purveyor.

"Never!"

"But they was. I sell these at twopence-ha'penny the sheet."

"By Jove; there are some people who get hold of bargains!" Lomax said with enthusiasm. And his acquaintance looked really pleased.

Lomax took several of the sheets in his hands and examined them attentively. No doubt they were cheap; certainly those who bought the cards got plenty of colour—even some to spare—for their money. Never in Nature did or could one see sunsets and sunrises so appallingly vivid, leaves and grass of so gorgeous a green, flowers of such brilliant hues, or animals—cats, dogs, farmyard creatures, or wild beasts—with skins so aggressively bright and glossy. Nowhere on earth, surely, ever existed persons with complexions of quite the same shade as that given to the soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, drunken men, and swells, who figured on these cards. The blaze of colour dazzled one's eyes; it fairly made them ache. What was lacking in accuracy of drawing was more than replaced by the lavish use of bright colouring.

Some of the cards would have given the most case-hardened, superlatively indifferent and insensitive cab-horse, or costermonger's jackass, pains in the stomach. Only a mule could have viewed them without any disturbance of its equanimity.

"Lovely, was they not?" asked the Jewish gentleman again.

Lomax couldn't bring himself to agree a second time.

"You take them to the shops, I suppose; do you sell many of them?"

"My friend, they sell in thousands!" the Jew replied. "The profit, of course, is small," he added quickly.

"So I should say, at tuppence-ha'penny the half-dozen!"

"But the quality—ah, it was good! Yes, I sell them in the shops; I go about here, there, and everywhere near London. I cover a lot of ground. I sell a lot in the towns; but, my friend, I sell my cards the best in the country—at the cottages and the farmhouses they buy them as if they was pure gold!"

"You must be making a mint of money," suggested Lomax.

"It is a small profit."

"But if you sell so many that profit mounts up!"

The Jew laughed softly.

"I was not doing so bad," he said; "soon I will have half a dozen men working for me, selling these all over England. Now, I sell only a little piece of the country. I am my own traveller, and I print the cards myself; I draw them—I design them. One week I will work so hard at my printing—every day, every night—and the next week I will take those cards I have printed, and I will go over the country selling them. Southend I go to; so far as Dorking; and St. Albans, and sometimes to Reading. And I sell my cards. Will you let me sell you some?"

"Well, bless me if I don't feel inclined to buy some, if it's only by way of encouragement; though it doesn't seem as if you needed any of that!" Lomax replied.

"Well, you can choose the best," said the young Jew delightedly. "It was always a pleasure to me to sell anything to those who can appreciate it, and I can see that you do. How many sheets will you have? If you will take five, I can sell them to you at one shilling the lot. See, you will gain one ha'penny, and you will have thirty such beau-u-tiful postcards that you could not ever get better, and will be a joy to you for ever after. Will you have the five sheets?"

"I think I will," the young detective said slowly, scarcely hearing what was said to him, so closely was he looking at the cards; though not, as their designer, printer, and seller believed, in earnest admiration of their artistic merits, but for quite a different purpose.

"That is right; you will make one ha'penny profit, and you will be a sensible man into the bargain. But the cards do sell themselves. When I open my case, the country people do throw up their hands in wonder at such beauty. These are but my samples; I have great case—ah, ever so big!—in the guard's van. But to such a gentleman as you, I do not mind to sell my samples."

"And what's this figure; your trade-mark?" Lomax asked, placing the tip of his forefinger on one of the cards—a flamboyant view of Windsor Castle—where a faintly apparent tracing in one corner, implanted on a rich dark green slab of colour, which represented the shadowy side of a moss-covered stone, was to be seen by a careful eye.

"That is so; my private mark—my sign of hand. Wherever you see cards with that mark on them—it is an A within a ring—you may buy it without fear, for you will know that it is one of mine—Solomon Abrams. I mark them all so, that people may not be cheated. Look for the A inside the ring, I say to them, and then you will not be done."

"Ah!"

It occurred to Lomax that he had seen Mr. Solomon Abram's private trade-mark before; it had caught his eye when examining Mrs. Brewer's batch, now reposing within the bag on the luggage-rack above his head.

Lomax paid over his shilling, made his choice of the cards before him, separated them, and put them in his bag.

"Suppose I'll see some of your handiwork adorning the shops in Leigh, Mr. Abrams?" he observed, this operation being concluded.

"Yes, I have done business in Leigh, I sell a great many there; but I sell many everywhere," Mr. Abrams answered; "and all so good and beau-tiful as these you have now bought. And no complaints—never no complaints."

"And who's your best customer in Leigh? Maybe I could do some business with him, too."

The Jew's eyes suddenly became hard, the oily smile faded from his lips.

"You sell picture postcards, too?" he cried sharply.

Lomax burst out laughing.

"No, no," he answered; "I deal in something very, very different from postcards, Mr. Abrams. Don't imagine I'm a possible rival of yours—though, for that matter, I don't see how it would be possible to rival your productions; they're simply unapproachable. I merely asked because I wanted to know who is the most substantial tradesman in the place; though I'm not a commercial traveller at all. I'm staying in Leigh for a few days, and I want to know who's the best man to go to for what I want."

The Jew resumed his ordinary expression.

"Then, my friend," he said, "I would recommend you to Mr. Lawrence; his is the best shop in Leigh. But I do not sell my goods to Mr. Lawrence; he have his from a London firm, and he will not look at my goods."

"More fool he," Lomax murmured sympathetically.

"He was a fool; but I sell them elsewhere. At the school I sell a lot, until one day a master come, and he order me off. He called me a dirty thief—a Jew pedlar—and would not let me sell any more. Said I defrauded the servants and the pupils."

"Did he think you didn't give them value for their money?"

"Maybe; but that was a lie. I sell them at a ha'penny each, six for twopenny-halfpenny, and thirty for a shilling. Can a man do fairer than that?"

"I should say not. And, while I think of it, Mr. Abrams, what is your address, please? I might want to see you, to get some more cards off you, and I might not have the luck to run across you as I have done to-day."

"Certainly, my friend—certainly! This is my address, 142, Middlesex Street; that is where I live and do my printing and my designing. A letter there will always find me."

"Much obliged, I'm sure!" The train was entering a station, and Lomax rose to his feet. "And now I'll bid you good-afternoon, Mr. Abrams; with many thanks for your company and conversation, and the most wonderful post-cards I've ever seen in my life!"

The Jew shook hands warmly; informed Lomax that he might see him again shortly, as he'd probably be in Leigh either the next day, or that following; and, grasping his bag, Lomax walked quickly out of the little station and up towards the little street which has the honour of being the principal thoroughfare of Leigh-on-Sea.

A short inspection convinced him that the Railway Hotel was the only one with possibilities, and, after having arranged for installing himself there for the night, he took one of Solomon Abram's wonderful productions, and walked off to the local post-office.

A pleasant-faced girl was behind the desk, and, when Lomax asked for the loan of a pen to address the card, she readily complied. The card lay in full view of the desk, and Lomax, suddenly looking up, caught the girl's eyes fixed upon him with a curious expression.

"What's the matter?"

The girl blushed, and hesitatingly answered:

"Nothing."

"Is it the card?" Lomax inquired.

"Well, yes. I was thinking the friend you're sending it to won't get it."

"Why not?"

"Because we received directions from the General this morning to keep back all those cards. There's to be an inquiry, or something."

What Lomax Did.

Robert Lomax slept soundly that night, after a good supper and an exhaustive consideration of the business that had brought him to Leigh. The girl at the post-office had not been busy; she was communicatively inclined, and Robert had had a lengthy conversation with her. He had returned to the Railway Hotel feeling fairly well satisfied.

The transmission of the postcards from the unknown sender at Leigh to Mrs. Brewer had at last attracted the attention of the post-office authorities, or, rather, it was the nature of the communications which the missives bore; they had determined to take action, with a view to ascertaining the identity of the sender, and placing information with the police.

Thanks to Mr. Solomon Abrams, picture postcards were a favourite form of communication between Leigh folk and their friends elsewhere. The Jew pedlar's productions seized the fancy of the villagers; they bought of him largely, and numbers of the gaudy pictures were handed in every day to the sorter. From what the girl had said, it was plain that all such and other picture postcards were to be subjected to a scrutiny before being despatched.

But there were other letter-boxes in the village besides that outside the post-office; and though it would be easy to ascertain at which the threatening missives, if any more were sent, were posted, to find out who was the actual poster would be a little more difficult and a longer operation. And whether the discoverer would feel inclined to give his information when acquired to Robert Lomax was, as the latter put it, a horse of a very different colour. Lomax made up his mind to acquire the knowledge by his own efforts, and in another fashion.

That morning and afternoon he made an unostentatious tour of the village, finding every shop and cottage where the cards might be obtained, and holding conversation with the proprietors and occupiers thereof. There were several more or less regular purchasers of cards at two or three of the emporiums, where, besides cards, such articles as fishermen's nets, wood, coal, provisions of miscellaneous kinds, clothing, beer, and teas, "with shrimps or winkles and cake," were to be had.

In an artful, roundabout fashion Lomax tried to find out the names of these persons. At the end of the day he had acquired three names, a Miss Bella Diamond, a Mr. Steve Gilliard, and a Master Dick, surname unknown, but a pupil at the school from which Mr. Solomon Abram had been warned away.

Lomax intended looking these persons up the next day. Meanwhile he returned to his hotel, and spent a good deal of time in the further examination of the cards, and the devising of some plan enabling him to approach these persons without awakening suspicion.

Miss Diamond he learned before going to bed that night to be the barmaid at the Railway Hotel where he was staying, and he had a short and interesting conversation with her, but valueless from his point of view. Many postcards she admitted to sending, but these were either to her many girl friends or her equally numerous "young men." Besides, she didn't give one the impression of being likely to send threatening missives to anyone, even in fun; her ideas of humour ran in other directions.

(Another long instalment of this story again next Tuesday. Please order your copy of THE MAGNET Library in advance.)

For Next Week

The Editor, "MAGNET" Library, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, will be glad to hear from you.

"THE NABOB'S DIAMOND."

Thrilling events follow on Hurree Singh's gift of a large and valuable diamond to Harry Wharton.

'Tis said "uncasy lies the head that wears a crown," and when you have read "The Nabob's Diamond," you will question also the benefits of being the possessor of a jewel worth something like £100.

THE EDITOR.



**Next
Tuesday's
Cover!**

**THE
'Magnet'
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Harry Wharton has his fortune told: "Sound at heart, high-spirited, a born leader of boys—and then of men!"

(An interesting incident in next Tuesday's Long, Complete Tale, entitled "The Nabob's Diamond.")

OUT THIS WEEK!

"GILBERT NAMELESS."

A Story of 'Prentice Life
in Old London.

BLACK ENGLAND.

A Tale of the Nail and Chain Industry
By Allan Blair.

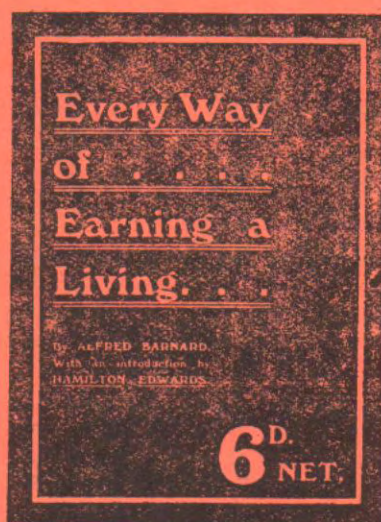
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