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The Rivals' Test

A Splendid New,
Long, Complete
School Tale
of
Harry Wharton
and
Vernon-Smith
at Greyfriars.

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Stormy Meeting.

"YAH!"

"Boo!"

Stamp! Stamp! Stamp!

The Remove Form-room at Greyfriars seemed to be in a state of eruption. Fellows in the passage outside listened and grunted. The shouting of voices and the tramping of feet were incessant, and the din could be heard a considerable distance along the Form-room passage.

"Yah!"

Tramp! Tramp!

Coker, of the Fifth, had been along to the Form-room once, to point out to the juniors that they had better leave off making that giddy row, but he had been met with a

hurricane of yells and hoots, followed up by books and inkpots, and he had beaten a rather hurried retreat. The Remove were very much excited, and in no mood to stand any nonsense from Coker or anybody else, as they told him in the plainest of plain English.

It was doubtful, indeed, if a prefect of the Sixth would have been able to quell the tumult. The wilder spirits of the Remove were out for a rag, and they certainly seemed to be having it.

"Yah!"

"Boo!"

Four juniors belonging to the Remove came down the passage towards the door of the Form-room, looking very serious and very determined. They were Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull—sometimes called the Famous Four in the Greyfriars Remove. Wharton

was captain of the Remove; having been lately elected to that post by a bare majority of one, in the place of Bulstrode, who had resigned.

Wharton compressed his lips as he caught the din from the closed Form-room.

"Looks like trouble!" he remarked.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Sounds like it, at all events. Rather rotten for a new captain's first Form meeting."

"We'll get 'em into order," said Johnny Bull. He clenched a rather large and heavy fist as he spoke. John Bull was a sturdy youth, and he had only one idea of the way to straighten out a tangle, and that was by hitting out straight from the shoulder.

Coker, of the Fifth, who was rubbing ink from his face with a handkerchief, bestowed a glare at Harry Wharton & Co. as they came along the passage.

"You'd better get those young rotters quiet, Wharton," he exclaimed. "You'll have the prefects along here soon. I've a jolly good mind to go in and lick the lot of them myself!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"File in, then," he said. "We'll look on and see fair play."

Coker grunted, but made no other reply, and the four chums of the Remove walked on. Wharton opened the door of the Form-room. The hubbub within ceased for a moment, and then it broke out with renewed violence.

"Here he is!"

"Here's Wharton!"

"Here's the giddy captain!"

"Yah!"

Wharton walked calmly into the room, his chums round him. Bob Cherry closed the door, and thoughtfully turned the key in the lock. If the prefects did come along to interview the Remove, they were very likely to bring their canes with them, and it was just as well to have the door locked.

Harry Wharton looked round the room. It was easy to see that the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars—was divided into two parties. Wharton's friends formed one party, and the backers of Vernon-Smith, his rival in the captaincy election, formed the other. And they were almost equal in point of numbers. Twenty-one fellows had voted in the election for Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, and twenty-two for Wharton. According to the rules which governed the school elections, Wharton was indisputably captain of the Form, but the election had been so very close that the Vernon-Smith party, perhaps, were justified in refusing to regard it as final. This was the first Form meeting called by the new Form captain, to discuss various matters of importance which had to be settled, and it was evidently the intention of the Bouncer and his party to break up the meeting, and prevent anything from being done.

Wharton's backers gathered round him as he came in, and the shouts of the rival party redoubled.

"Yah!"

"Boo!"

"Rats!"

And then they stamped their feet and rattled their boots furiously.

Wharton jumped on a form.

"Look here, you fellows—" he began.

There was a roar.

"Yah!"

"Go home!"

"Get down!"

"Shut up, you fatheads!" shouted Bob Cherry. "If you've got anything to say, say it, and don't make a row like a lot of blessed lunatics!"

"Order!" bawled John Bull.

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"Get down!"

Harry Wharton did not move. He stood on the form, a handsome and athletic figure, looking at the shouting juniors with perfect calmness, and waiting for a lull in the din before he spoke again. The hubbub died down; most of the juniors were out of breath by that time. Then Wharton's voice was heard, cool and clear.

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hurrah!"

"Rats!"

"Well, rats, then, if you prefer the term," said Wharton calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove, and rats of Vernon-Smith's party—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have called this meeting—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

"THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Yah!"

"And we're going to bust it up!" said Vernon-Smith, standing with his hands in his pockets, and surveying the Form captain with an insolent grin. "We don't consider you captain of the Remove. You got in by one vote—by rushing in an extra voter at the last moment—a blessed nigger, too, who has been away from Greyfriars a long time. We don't consider the election fair."

"Rather not!" bawled Bolover, the bully of the Remove. "We don't recognise the election."

"Never!" yelled Snop.

"If you want the election over again—" began Wharton.

"What's the good?" said the Bouncer, shrugging his shoulders. "You've got just one vote too many. You've got round Hazeldene, who was going to vote for me if you'd let him alone. It's not cricket!"

"Fair play!" yelled Trotter.

"You've had more than fair play," said Wharton scornfully. "It's true that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh arrived at the last moment to vote, but it's equally true that you got in votes by swindling!"

"Yah!"

"It's an open secret that you paid Bunter, at least, to vote for you," went on Wharton, unmoved, "and you tried to get round Hazel in the same way. If the election had been conducted honestly on your side, you wouldn't have had more than fifteen votes, at the outside."

"Not more than a dozen!" said Bob Cherry. "But you got licked, all the same, after all your rotten foul play, and serve you right!"

Vernon-Smith sneered.

"You can put it how you like," he said, "but we don't consider the election conclusive in any way, and we're not going to acknowledge you as skipper. You're captain of half the Remove, and I'm captain of the other half."

"Hear, hear!" roared Bolover.

"And we're not going to allow you to skipper the Form," the Bouncer continued coolly. "We're going to attend every Form meeting in force, and break it up. We're going to muck up things generally, till you come down off your perch. Bulstrode had to resign because the Form were sick of him, and you'll have to do the same."

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I shall not resign while I have a majority in the Form."

"A majority of one!" sneered the Bouncer.

"I've called this Form meeting as captain of the Remove, and it is going to be conducted properly," said Wharton firmly. "Any fellow who persists in interrupting the proceedings will be put outside."

"You'll have twenty of us to put outside, then," yelled Bolover. "We're standing up for Vernon-Smith! Yah!"

"You'll all go out on your necks if you don't shut up!" said Wharton. "And we'll begin with you, Smith. Are you going to be quiet?"

"No!" said the Bouncer coolly.

"Will you let the meeting go on quietly?"

"No!"

"Then out you go!"

Harry Wharton jumped down from the form, and advanced upon the Bouncer of Greyfriars, his hands clenched, and his eyes glowering. The Bouncer pushed back his cuffs, and faced him coolly. He was not a match for the captain of the Remove, but, black sheep as he was, the Bouncer of Greyfriars had never been accused of wanting pluck.

"Line up, you fellows!" he shouted.

There was a rush of Vernon-Smith's party to back him up. Wharton's friends rallied round their captain at the same moment. One moment more, and the Bouncer was in Harry Wharton's grasp, and was being whirled towards the door.

"Rescue!" yelled the Bouncer.

Another second, and the two parties were mingled and mixed in a wild struggle. Two scores of angry fellows surged to and fro in whirling conflict. The din was terrific. In the midst of the uproar there came a sharp knocking at the door.

"Open this door at once!"

Bob Cherry gasped.

"My hat! It's Wingate!"

Someone unlocked the door, and the captain of Greyfriars—Wingate, of the Sixth—strode into the room with an angry brow.

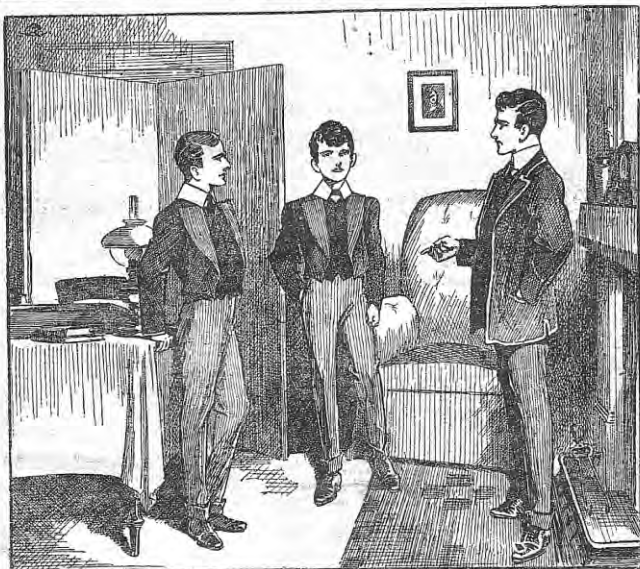
THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wingate Umpires.

WINGATE, of the Sixth, glared round at the excited juniors. The struggle ceased, the combatants breathing deeply, and regarding one another with fierce looks. Even the presence of the captain of the school barely sufficed to restrain them. Feeling had never run so high before in the Greyfriars Remove.

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

In This Thursday's Number of
"The Gem" Library, 1d.



"You will both do your best," said Wingate to the two rival candidates for the Captaincy of the Remove, "and if either of you succeeds in discovering Miss Hazeldene, or in helping towards her discovery, I shall judge him the winner of the first test." (See Chap. 4.)

"What does this mean?" rapped out Wingate angrily. "How dare you make such a row as this in the Form-room? Wharton, if you're captain of the Remove, you'd better learn to hold a Form meeting a bit more quietly than this!"

Wharton flushed.

"It's not Wharton's fault!" broke out Nugent hotly. "Those rotters have come here specially to break up the meeting!"

"Nonsense!"

"Ask that cad, Vernon-Smith, then!"

Wingate looked at the Bounder. Vernon-Smith had been released by Wharton, and he was looking very torn and ruffled. He was dabbing away a stream of red from his nose. But he was as cool as ever, and his eyes had a dangerous gleam in them.

"It's true, in a way," he said coolly. "I appeal to you, Wingate. I'm willing to leave the matter in your hands, if you will decide between us."

"I agree to that," said Harry Wharton promptly.

The big Sixth-Former hesitated.

"I don't want to get mixed up in your Form rows," he exclaimed, after a pause; "but if there is really anything to be settled that you can't settle among yourselves, I'm willing to act as umpire. You can't settle anything by punching one another's heads, and turning the Remove room into a bear-garden."

"Right enough," said Bob Cherry. "If you'll hear the case, Wingate, and give a decision as umpire, we'll stand by it."

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Do you all agree to that?" demanded the captain of Greyfriars.

There was a shout of assent, as loud from Vernon-Smith's party as from their opponents. Wingate was the most popular fellow in Greyfriars, and his word was law among the juniors, not only because he was captain of the school, but because they knew that they could rely implicitly upon his fairness.

"Very well," said Wingate, "stop your row, and some of you explain the thing quietly."

And Wingate, calming down himself, sat down on a desk, and prepared to act as umpire. A torrent of explanations broke forth at once.

"You see, Wingate—"

"It's like this—"

"Those rotters—"

"Those cads—"

"We don't consider—"

"Considering that the majority was only one, and—"

"It's not cricket—"

"They won't do the fair thing—"

"That cad Vernon-Smith—"

Wingate jammed his fingers into his ears.

"Shut up!" he roared. "Do you call this explaining things quietly?"

"Well, you see—"

"Faith, and I'll explain to ye—"

"Look here—"

"Shut up, all of you! Wharton and Vernon-Smith, come

By FRANK RICHARD?
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forward, and I'll hear you. Every other young ass present is to hold his tongue!"

The Remove grinned. Wingate always had a very plain way of speaking. The shouting died away, and the two rivals of the Remove came forward.

"Smith first," said Wingate. "And if any fellow interrupts, I'll give him a hundred lines. Now, then, Smith, go ahead."

"Faith, and I—"

"Take a hundred lines, Desmond. Now, then, Smith."

Micky Desmond made a grimace; and there were no more interruptions as the Bounder went on to explain, in his cool, clear voice.

"This is how it is, Wingate. We had an election for Form captain, and the votes had to be taken. There were just twenty-one on each side, for Wharton and myself. At the last moment, Hurree Singh came back to the school. You know he's been away for a long time, and we didn't count on him. He was rushed in after the counting of the votes had actually begun, and he voted with the rest."

"The vote-fulsness was terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a grin on his dusky face.

"Take a hundred lines, Hurree Singh. Go on, Vernon-Smith."

"We don't call it fair," said the Bounder. "A chap who has been away for a long time, and only gets back after the election has started, hasn't a right to vote when his single vote is enough to turn the scale."

Wingate wrinkled his brows in reflection.

"It's rather hard cheese on the other party, certainly," he agreed. "Now, Wharton, what have you got to say?"

"Smith's given you the story," said Harry Wharton. "I've only got to say that Hurree Singh is just as much a member of the Remove as any other fellow here, and has just as much right to vote. I'd rather have a bigger majority, but a majority of one is enough. That's the rule. If Vernon-Smith had been able to get a majority of one, I should have taken it as settled, and he would have expected me to."

"I shouldn't have thought of rushing in a stranger at the last moment," said Vernon-Smith.

"You did worse than that!" retorted Wharton. "You lent fellows money to vote for you!"

"I deny that!"

Wingate gave Wharton a sharp look.

"Can you prove that, Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"I'm not likely to be able to prove it. The fellows who had the cash won't stand up and say so," replied Harry. "But the whole Form knows it."

Wingate frowned.

"You've no right to say so, unless you have clear and positive proofs," he said. "Suspicion isn't enough, and hearsay is not evidence. I think you have placed yourself very much in the wrong, Wharton, by making a charge of that kind."

Wharton bit his lip.

He felt that Wingate was right; but, at the same time, it was common knowledge in the Remove what Vernon-Smith's tactics had been. But common knowledge in the Remove did not penetrate to the Sixth Form studies, and Wingate naturally did not want to hear any charges that could not be definitely proved.

"The less talk of that kind there is, the better," went on Wingate. "There's no good in flinging mud at one another. It's a rather peculiar case, and certainly, Wharton, although your election is valid, it's not a satisfactory state of things for a Form captain to have exactly half the Form against him, and determined not to consider him captain. It must lead to endless trouble. I'm willing to act as umpire in the matter, if you are both willing to abide by my decision."

"I'm willing," said Harry.

"I stand by anything you decide," said Vernon-Smith at once. "I know you will do the fair thing, Wingate."

"Yes, rather."

"Hear, hear!"

Wingate thought for a few moments.

"Suppose some test were imposed to prove which of the two candidates would make the best captain?" he suggested. "Would all my fellows be willing to recognise the winner, and back him up loyally?"

There was a shout of assent.

"Good egg!"

"We'll stand by what you say, Wingate."

There was no doubt that the Removes meant it. The idea of a test between the rivals caught their fancy, too. It was likely to be an interesting one. Possibly, afterwards, the Bounder would give trouble if he lost, but he would find few followers. Wharton's position as Form captain would be firmly established. And if the Bounder won, there was no doubt that Harry Wharton would abide loyally by the result.

"It's a jolly good idea!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "It's ripping!"

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"WINGS OF GOLD."
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Hazeldene spoke very keenly. He had voted for Wharton in the election, but he was on very friendly terms with Vernon-Smith, and he had been placed in a very awkward position. Some of the Removes guessed that it was his sister Marjorie's influence that had made him take the right side; but it was suspected, too, that he owed money to the Bounder, and that he would have an unpleasant time as a result of the fine he had taken.

Hazeldene's words were echoed by the rest.

"Good idea!"

"Ripping!"

"Very well!" said Wingate. "Now, suppose I make up, say, three tests, to be taken in succession, to give each candidate a chance of proving his quality. I shall divide which is the winner each time, and the winner of the rubber—best two out of three—becomes captain of the Remove."

"Good!"

"Hear, hear!"

Vernon-Smith's eyes glistened. It was better for him than he had expected. For he had no doubts about his powers. He had nearly pulled off the election, though at first few had supposed that he had any chance. And, given a test like this, he had not the slightest doubt of his ability to win the rubber.

"You agree, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"And you, Smith?"

"Yes."

"Then it only remains to set the tests," said Wingate. "I will think the matter out—"

There was a sudden interruption.

The door of the Form-room was thrown open, and Nugent minor, of the Second Form, dashed breathlessly into the Form-room.

"You fellows—!" he gasped. Then his voice failed him, and he could only gasp and stutter.

There was a roar from the Remove.

"Get out, you cheeky-fag!"

"Buzz off, and don't interrupt!"

Nugent minor clung to a desk, gasping. His face was red with exertion, and perspiration poured down his cheeks. His nubby boots showed that he had just come in, and he had evidently been running hard.

"Hands off!" he panted. "I—I say, is Hazeldene here?"

"Hazel?"

"What's the matter?" asked Hazel, coming towards the fag in wonder. "What's up, kid? Anything happened?"

"Yes!" gasped Nugent minor. "Your sister—"

Hazeldene started.

"Have you been over to Cliff House?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—yes."

"Is Marjorie ill?" exclaimed Hazeldene, gripping the fag by the shoulder, and shaking him in his excitement.

"Quick!"

Hazel's face had grown deadly-pale. There was a very strong bond of affection between Hazel and his sister Marjorie, and a week salient passed without the junior paying a visit to Cliff House School, half a mile from Greyfriars, to see her, and not infrequently Marjorie came to Greyfriars. There was a buzz of excitement at once. The election, the question of the tests, the Form meeting, all were forgotten for the moment.

"What is it?" exclaimed Harry Wharton anxiously.

"What's happened to Marjorie? Is she ill?"

"Quick!" gasped Hazel.

Nugent minor panted.

"She's disappeared!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Mysterious Disappearance.

"DISAPPEARED"

"Marjorie disappeared!"

"My hat!"

"You—you don't mean that she's fallen into the sea, or anything like that, Dick?" exclaimed Frank Nugent, shaking his minor by the shoulder.

Nugent minor gasped for breath.

"Nobody knows," he replied. "They only know she's gone. I—I was passing Cliff House, coming back from Pegg, when I saw there was something on, and Miss Clara told me. Marjorie went out after morning lessons at Cliff House, and she didn't come back. Miss Primrose had her searched for, thinking she might have lost her way somewhere. They found her scarf on the cliffs, and that was all. She hasn't come back, and the police have been sent for from Courtfield to search for her."

And the breathless fag panted again.

"Good heavens!" muttered Harry Wharton, his face as pale as Hazeldene's.

"Disappeared!" muttered Hazeldene. "Disappeared! Oh!"

"Must have been an accident," said Nugent below his breath.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another, startled and pale.

Accidents were not at all uncommon among the wild, rugged cliffs that surrounded the Bay of Pegg; and Wharton well remembered an occasion when he had been caught in the tide, at the base of the great Shoulder, and had narrowly escaped with his life.

Had that happened to Marjorie?

"Buck up, Hazel!" said Harry, as the junior reeled weakly against the desk. "Buck up! A dozen things may have happened. Don't think the worst until we know."

Hazelene groaned.

"It was the tide!" he whispered. "You remember—once before—"

Wharton shuddered. He remembered only too well.

"Don't think of that yet, Hazel," he muttered. "Look here, we'll search for Marjorie, and if she is to be found, we'll soon find her."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent.

Hazelene turned to Wingate.

"I suppose I can go over to Cliff House?" he said.

Wingate nodded.

"Certainly! I'll give you a pass out, kid. Some of your friends had better go with you. Bring back what news you can."

Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry hurried out of the Form-room with Hazelene. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, followed them. The dusky junior had been a great friend of Marjorie Hazelene's, and he had not seen her since his return to the school—the return which had caused so much excitement in the Remove.

Hazelene did not speak a word as the juniors tramped down the lane, round the base of the Black Pike, towards the bay and Cliff House School. And the other fellows were silent, too. They were thinking of Marjorie, and what might have happened to her. They hurried along in the thickening dusk of evening with gloomy faces. The roar of the sea, as it came to their ears from afar, seemed to bear a grim message. Had those heavy waves, breaking on the cliffs of the bay, drowned for ever the sweet voice of Marjorie Hazelene?

It was a hideous thought, and they strove to drive it from their minds, but it would return.

Wharton uttered a sudden exclamation.

"It wasn't the tide, Hazel."

Hazel turned his head.

"How do you know?"

"Dicky said that Marjorie went out after morning lessons. Well, the tide is only just coming in. It was out all the time. Marjorie couldn't have been caught in it."

Hazel drew a deep breath.

"You're right, Wharton. Thank goodness for that. She may have fallen among the cliffs somewhere—"

"If that's the case, we'll soon find her," said Bob Cherry. "We may find that she has turned up by the time we get to Cliff House."

Hazelene nodded without replying. His hope of that was very faint. The juniors hurried on. The village of Pegg, with its red roofs glimmering in the last rays of the sun, came into sight. Cliff House stood by the road outside the fishing village. There was a rustle in the dusky hedge by the lane, and a burly figure came into the view of the juniors. It staggered into the middle of the lane, and they had to stop.

A look of angry disgust came into Harry Wharton's face. The burly stranger was evidently under the influence of liquor. He was a powerfully-built man, in a velvet jacket and leggings, and had a soft hat on the back of his head. His hair was long and worn in ringlets, and his face dark, swarthy, with keen little black eyes. He looked like a gipsy. He had a large cudgel in his right hand. He fixed a somewhat uncertain look upon the juniors of Greyfriars.

"You stop, burn yer!" he muttered, swaying in the road before them. "You stop! You know who I am, hey?"

"I don't know, and I don't want to," said Harry Wharton sharply. "Get out of the way!"

The ruffian's eyes glittered, and his sinewy hand took a harder grasp upon the cudgel.

"You talking to me?" he muttered thickly.

"Yes," said Harry. "Let us pass."

The man did not move.

"Don't row with him, Harry," muttered Nugent. "He's drunk. He's just come from the Ship Inn, at Pegg, and he's simply rolling. Dodge the brute!"

"I'm Barengro, the gipsy," the man muttered, glaring at the juniors in drunken anger. "You 'nd over your money, burn yer, or—"

Wharton pushed past the burly gipsy.

The man muttered an oath, and swung the cudgel into the air, making a clumsy lash at the junior's head. If the blow had reached its mark, Wharton would have fallen, stunned.

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into the road, but it did not. The blow was clumsy enough, and the junior easily dodged it; and then he leaped forward at the burly ruffian, hitting out straight from the shoulder with his right.

"Ow!"

Wharton's fist, clenched and seemingly as hard as iron, caught the ruffian on the point of the chin, and he went over backwards as if he had been shot.

His cudgel flew from his hand and over the hedge into the field beyond. Barengro, the gipsy, as he called himself, fell with a crash into the muddy road, and lay there, gasping and cursing.

The juniors did not wait for him to rise.

They hurried on, and the gipsy's furious voice died away behind them. Five minutes more, and they reached the gates of Cliff House School.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The First Test.

MISS PENELOPE PRIMROSE, the kind old headmistress of Cliff House School, was in a state almost of hysterics.

She greeted the juniors from Greyfriars in tears. Miss Hazelene had not returned, and she had not been found.

Miss Primrose was almost beside herself with anxiety.

What could have become of Marjorie was a mystery. The tide had been out, so that could not account for her disappearance. The police from Courtfield had been searching the shore, and a number of men from the fishing village had voluntarily joined in the search. But with the exception of finding Marjorie's scarf on the cliffs near the Shoulder, at the end of the bay, nothing had been discovered.

Miss Primrose was almost hysterical with anxiety, and she could give Hazelene no comfort.

Miss Clara, Marjorie's chum in Cliff House School, was very pale and worried. She told the juniors all she knew, and it was little enough.

"Marjorie went out after dinner," she said. "She was going along the cliffs for a walk, that was all. I was to meet her halfway back, as I had some lines to do. When I went out to meet her, she did not turn up—and she hasn't been seen since. I can't imagine what has happened."

"We must search for her," said Hazelene.

"The policemen from Courtfield have searched, and they have only just given it up," said Clara. "Some of the fishermen from Pegg are going on searching through the night, with lanterns."

Wharton wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Have the police any idea what may have happened?" he asked.

"Only that Marjorie may have fallen from a cliff."

"Oh!" muttered Hazelene.

"But Marjorie wasn't likely to fall from a cliff," said Harry. "She has spent plenty of time in climbing the cliffs, and she knows her way about them—and she was a good climber. She was quite at home in the cliffs here. There must be some other explanation."

Miss Clara looked hopeless.

"What else can it be?" she asked.

"I'm blessed if I know!" said Wharton.

It was a mystery. The juniors stayed at Cliff House for some time, and did not return to Greyfriars till it was time for calling-over. When they returned, they found the whole school eager to hear their news.

But they had none to tell.

Marjorie Hazelene had disappeared, and the police and fishermen of Pegg were searching for her, and that was all.

Hazelene looked sick and ill.

There was nothing he could do to help his sister, and, indeed, he seemed too utterly knocked over by the news to have any strength or nerve to do anything, if anything had been possible.

A gloomy group of juniors gathered in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage for a late tea, and to talk the matter over.

All Marjorie's friends at Greyfriars were anxious and disturbed, and all keen to do something—they hardly knew what to help.

But there was nothing they could do.

Policemen and fishermen were searching the shore with lanterns through the hours of darkness, and that was all that could be done. The boys would have been of no assistance there, even if the Head would have allowed them to go.

"Oh, it's rotten!" Bob Cherry exclaimed for the fiftieth time, or thereabouts, as he put down a slice of cake untouched. "Blessed if this hasn't taken my appetite away!"

"Blessed if I feel like eating, either!" said Nugent.

"It's beastly!"

"The beastliness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "We've got to do something, somehow," said Harry Wharton determinedly.

"But what?"

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," said Wharton, not in an amiable voice.

The door opened, and the Bounder of Greyfriars came into the study. The chums of the Remove looked at him grimly enough. Vernon-Smith was particularly unwelcome at that moment, when they were all feeling worried and depressed.

"What do you want?" asked Wharton abruptly.

"Only a word or two," said Vernon-Smith calmly. "I hear that Marjorie Hazeldene has disappeared, and the police cannot find her."

"That's right."

"Well, I'm going to have a try," said the Bounder quietly. "You remember that Wingate said he would impose tests upon us, to see which of us showed up best—"

"How the tests?"

"The tests will decide which of us will be captain of the Remove—"

"I don't care twopenny who's captain of the Remove!" growled Wharton. "Hang it! I'm thinking of what's happened to Marjorie."

"But I was going to suggest that you should come with me to Wingate, and suggest—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Wharton, it's got to be settled—"

"Oh, ring off! I tell you I won't talk about it now!" said Wharton angrily. "I've got something else to think of. It can stand over for the present."

"I shan't let it stand over!"

"Oh, go and out cock!"

The Bounder, with a venomous glimmer in his eyes, stepped out of the study and closed the door behind him. Bob Cherry gave a growl.

"Just like Smith, to be thinking of himself and his rotten schemes, at a time like this. Hang him!"

"The languishness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Blunham.

Five minutes later a fag looked into No. 1 Study.

"Wingate wants you, Wharton," he said.

Wharton rose with a grunt.

"Oh, all right!"

Wharton made his way to Wingate's study. He wondered whether the Bounder had anything to do with Wingate's wanting to see him, and he was not surprised to find Vernon-Smith in the study of the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate nodded to Wharton.

"Come in!" he said. "Vernon-Smith has made a suggestion to me, which I think is a good one."

"Very well," said Wharton.

"The Head is going to give the school a whole holiday to-morrow, if Miss Hazeldene is not found, so that everybody can join in the search," Wingate went on.

Wharton's face brightened.

"By Jove, that's ripping!" he exclaimed.

"It was my suggestion," said Wingate. "A couple of hundred fellows searching up and down the shore ought to be able to find Miss Hazeldene, if she can be found. There won't be a yard of ground left unexplored. The Head thought it was a good idea, and Miss Primrose is going to telephone first thing in the morning whether Miss Hazeldene has been found. If she is still missing, Greyfriars will turn out en masse to help hunt for her."

"Oh, good!"

"Now, I think this will make a good test for you two, the first of the rubber," said the captain of Greyfriars. "You are both keen to find Miss Hazeldene, of course?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry. "I was going to ask permission of the Head to miss lessons to-morrow to help look for her."

"Same here!" said the Bounder.

"Well, you will both do your best," said Wingate, "and if either of you succeeds in discovering the missing girl, or in helping towards her discovery, I shall judge him the winner of the first test."

"Good!" said the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith suggested it to me, and I think it is a good idea," said the Greyfriars captain. "A test of this kind will put you both on your mettle, and it will be a good thing if anything comes of it. You agree, I suppose, Wharton?"

"Certainly!" said Harry. "I should have done my best in any case, and I'm only too glad to have a chance. I agree."

"Very good! That's settled, then."

Harry Wharton left the captain's study. Vernon-Smith

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"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SYDNEY DREW.

followed him into the passage. There was a cynical grin on the Bounder's face.

Wharton stopped and looked at him.

"Are you going to join me in this, or are you going on your own?" he asked.

"On my own," replied the Bounder at once. "I'm going to succeed, too."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I hope you will," he said. "I don't see what you are so cocksure about, though. So far as I can see, there isn't a single clue."

The Bounder laughed.

"So far as you can see," he assented, "very likely. But perhaps I can see a little farther than you can."

Wharton started.

"Do you mean to say that you have some idea what has become of Miss Hazeldene?"

"Yes."

"What is it, then?"

"That's my secret," said the Bounder coolly.

Wharton breathed hard.

"If you have the slightest suspicion that would help those who are looking for her, you are bound to say so out plainly," he exclaimed.

"Oh, they wouldn't listen to me, if I did!" said the Bounder carelessly. "If I told them what I suspect, they'd think it was far-fetched, you see, and they wouldn't take any notice; and if it turned out to be wrong, I should look as ass. I'm not saying anything at present. Least said, soonest mended. But I think I shall be the one to rope in the first test, all the same."

Harry Wharton walked away without replying. The Bounder shrugged his shoulders and went into his study. There was an air of confidence about the Bounder which showed that he relied very much upon the theory he had formed, whatever it was.

But whatever it was, not a word concerning it passed his lips. The Bounder was not thinking so much of the missing girl as of his own chance of winning the first of the three tests, and he kept his own counsel.

Greyfriars was still in a state of excitement when bedtime came. Up to a late hour the Head was in telephonic communication with Cliff House. Dr. Leche's younger sister, Miss Leche, was second mistress at Cliff House, and in Miss Primrose's state of collapse she had taken the head of affairs there. The latest news was that nothing had been discovered. And in the morning, when the fellows, seniors and juniors alike, asked eagerly for news, there was the same reply—nothing!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Many Searchers.

GREYFRIARS had a whole holiday that day—an unexpected boon that was received with great pleasure. That it was to be spent in helping on the search for the missing girl made it all the more welcome. The fags especially were very keen upon clambering over the cliffs and exploring the sea-caves, where of old the smugglers of Peggy had hidden their contraband goods. Nugent minor, of the Second Form, made up a party after breakfast, hoping to win laurels for themselves by success in the search. Another party of the Third Form, composed of Tabb and Paget and Bolsover minor, and half a dozen more fellows, started out soon after Nugent minor & Co.

Coker, of the Fifth, of course, came out strong. Coker and Potter and Green and Brandell and Bland marched off together early in the morning, with the air of fellows who were going to settle the matter off-hand.

Wingate and most of the Sixth joined in the search at an early hour.

All along the sunny cliffs of Peggy Bay in the morning sunlight Greyfriars caps could be seen dotted here and there, and the juniors especially certainly liked their new task better than grinding Latin in the classrooms.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, joined in the general task, in company with Mr. Prout, of the Fifth, and Mr. Capper, of the Upper Fourth. The three Form-masters were seen tramping down to the shore together, in thick boots, with cane on, and sticks in their hands.

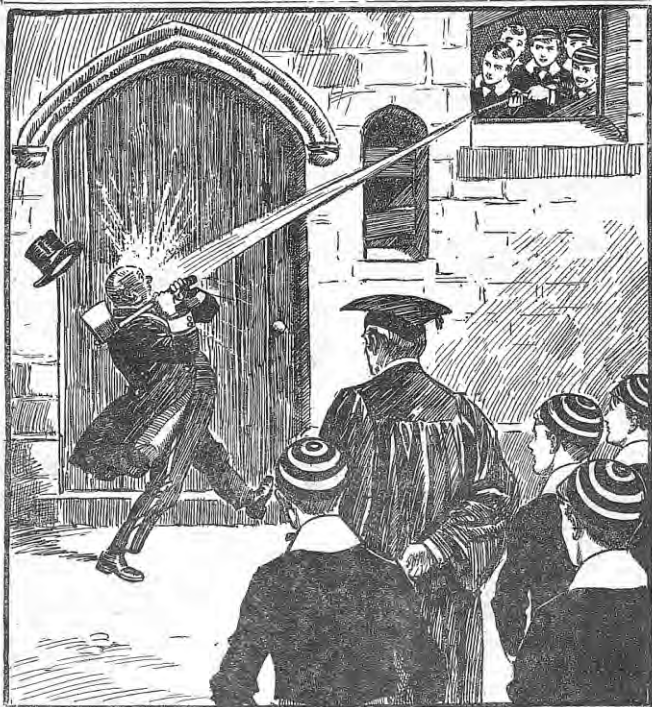
Harry Wharton & Co. were among the first to begin.

There was hardly a fellow in the Remove who was not keen to help. Even Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove and the fattest junior at Greyfriars, showed a keenness which was quite surprising.

"I'm coming with you, Wharton," he exclaimed, putting his head into No. 1 Study, where the chums of the Remove were making their final preparations for the start.

Wharton, who was wrapping up sandwiches in an old newspaper, looked round, and shook his head.

"Sorry, Bunter; you wouldn't be any good," he replied.



Whiss-s-s-sh! The jet of water flew with deadly aim, and caught Taggles in the face, as he was raising the axe for a second blow. "Yaroo!" yelled Taggles, fairly jumping into the air in his surprise. (The above incident is taken from the grand, long, complete school tale of TOM MERRY & CO., entitled "THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S," which is contained in this week's splendid issue of our Companion Paper "THE GEM" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

"You can come, if you like, of course, but you'll soon get left behind."

Bunter blinked at him through his big glasses.

"Oh, I simply must come, Wharton!" he exclaimed.

"Well, come, then," said Frank Nugent. "Blessed if I expected you to be very keen about it. It means hard work tramping over the cliffs."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, even Bunter may be decent at times," said Bob Cherry. "Let him come."

"I say, you fellows—"

"It's all right, Bunter, you can come."

"Look here, you fellows! I think this affair ought to be managed sensibly," said Billy Bunter. "You won't want to waste time coming back to Greyfriars for meals, of course. It will be better to—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"We're taking sandwiches," said Johnny Bull. Bunter grunted.

"Sandwiches aren't much good to make a day of it," he said. "There's no sense in getting weak from want of nourishment. Look here, the best idea would be to form a base, you know, somewhere on the shore—a sort of camp, to keep the supplies, and one of us could remain there to look after the grub. I would volunteer—"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry, his face turning very red. "Blessed if I oughtn't to have known you were on the make, as usual, you fat cad!"

"Oh, really—"

"Buzz off!"

"But I say, you fellows, it's a ripping idea," urged Bunter. "I'm willing to do all the cooking, and stay at the camp looking after the grub, you know, and—and to make

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myself generally useful, and—and take all the responsibility, judgment, much as he disliked him, and despised his character.

I think—
Bob Cherry made a stride towards the fat junior.
The Owl of the Remove promptly dodged out into the passage.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Buzz off!"

"Ye-es, but I suggest—"

Bob Cherry ran at the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter turned to fly, a second too late. Bob Cherry's heavy boot crashed upon him, and he leaped forward with a wild yell.

"Yarrop!"

"Now come back and have another!" roared Bob.

"Yarrop!"

Billy Bunter did not accept the invitation. He disappeared down the passage at record speed, and Bob Cherry growled and went back into the study.

"The fat rotter!" he growled. "I should have thought that even Bunter wouldn't want to make anything out of what's happened. I don't believe there ever was such a worm! You fellows ready?"

"I'm ready," said Hazeldene.

"Right-ho!" said Wharton.

There were six of them in the party—Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, John Bull, Harroo Singh, and Hazeldene. The rest of the Remove had split up into parties of four or five. Mark Linley, Bulstrode, Tom Brown, Leigh, and Orilly had made up one party, and they had already started out. Vernon-Smith, too, was the head of a band of his closest chums. The Bouncer and his comrades were already in the Cloak when Harry Wharton & Co. came out. It was a keen, sunny February morning, with a soft breeze from the wide waters of the German Ocean.

The Bouncer glanced towards Harry Wharton & Co. with a sneering grin.

"Just starting?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Where are you going to look?"

"On the shore."

"Any special place?"

"We shall begin at the place where Marjorie's scarf was found," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose you are going to do the same?"

"Yes. But after that!"

"I don't know."

The Bouncer laughed.

"Well, I do know," he said. "Ta-ta! I wish you luck!" Hazeldene uttered an exclamation as the Bouncer turned away with his friends. Bolsover and Snoop and Trevor were with Vernon-Smith, and all three of them were grinning, as if they shared the peculiar confidence of the Bouncer.

"Smith, hold on a minute!"

The Bouncer looked back.

"What do you want, Hazel?" he asked.

"You spoke as if—as if you knew something—as if you had some idea where to look for my sister," exclaimed Hazeldene. "Is there anything in it, or is it only gas?"

"A nice, polite question, I must say," said the Bouncer, with a grin. "But I don't mind telling you. It's not gas. I never gas. You ought to know me well enough to know that."

"You think you will be able to find my sister?"

"I hope so."

"You think you have a chance, a clue?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I'm on my own in this game," said the Bouncer coolly; "I'm not giving chances away. You've chosen to join Wharton; you can stick to him, and see where he'll lead you." Hazeldene bit his lip.

He glanced to and fro from Wharton to Vernon-Smith. He could not help being impressed by the cool confidence of the Bouncer. He knew that Vernon-Smith had an almost uncanny way of seeing things that were hidden from other fellows, and that he seldom turned out to be in the wrong.

"You can come with me, if you like," said Vernon-Smith.

Hazeldene hesitated.

"Hullo yourself, Hazel, of course," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, if—if you don't mind, I will," said Hazeldene.

"Vernon-Smith says he knows something—"

"Lying, most likely," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Vernon-Smith sneered.

"We shall see," he replied. "Hazel can suit himself, but he'd have more chance of finding his sister if he came with me."

"If you don't mind, Harry—"

"Not at all!"

"All right, then."

Hazeldene joined the Bouncer's party, and walked out of the gates with them. Harry Wharton's brow was deeply wrinkled. He, too, had faith in the Bouncer's keenness and

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

On the Track.

"HERE we are!" exclaimed Nugent.

It was a lonely spot on the path over the cliffs; that is to say, it was as a rule a lonely spot. Just now there were Greyfriars caps to be seen in all directions. Down on the beach Coker and the Fifth-Formers were searching for some imaginary tracks, and on the cliff Temple, Dabney & Co. could be seen very busily at work. There was hardly a fellow in all Greyfriars who was not keen to have a hand in discovering the secret of Marjorie Hazeldene's disappearance—though probably Harry Wharton and the Bouncer were the keenest of all.

Harry Wharton and Co. had arrived upon the spot where Marjorie's scarf had been found. Many feet had trampled the place. The Courtfield police had searched there the evening before, and looked for traces of the missing girl among the rocks, without finding what they sought.

Wharton looked round him. The path ran over the rugged cliffs, and in some places it was dangerous, with long precipices sloping down to the sands below.

But Marjorie could not have fallen over the cliffs to the beach, or some trace of the catastrophe would have been discovered below.

Upon this spot she had lost her scarf—it was the last trace that remained of the missing girl.

"The accident, or whatever it was, may have happened here," Harry said thoughtfully. "Or Marjorie may merely have had her scarf blown away."

"Quite likely," said Bob Cherry.

"It might have been blown some distance, too," said Wharton. "Still, it's the only clue we have, and we must begin here."

"How?" said John Bull.

They had arrived upon the spot, and Johnny Bull was willing to do anything that could be done, but he did not see what could be done at all.

"We've all had some practice as scouts," said Wharton. "If there are any tracks to be found, we shall find them."

Nugent made a hopeless gesture.

"There must have been a hundred pairs of boots over this place, at least, since Marjorie passed this way," he said.

"I wasn't thinking of looking for tracks on the path. If Marjorie disappeared here, she must have left the path," said Harry.

"I don't see why she should do so."

"Neither do I—but she must have, if this is the place where she disappeared," said Wharton practically. "Let's begin."

"Well, there's something in that," admitted Bob Cherry.

"It's a giddy mystery, and we can only search."

Wharton looked about him with keen and anxious eyes. On one side, a rough slope of rocks ran down precipitously to the beach. It was dangerous to climb down, unless the climber was very careful and had plenty of nerve; but there were a good many Greyfriars fellows on the rocky slope searching for traces. On the other side of the path, the cliff ascended still more ruggedly, and this part of the place was deserted. No one imagined that Marjorie could have left the path and climbed up the rugged cliffs, for no apparent reason.

Wharton turned to the cliffs, and looked for a way up. His companions followed him, with doubtful looks. Wharton read their doubts easily enough.

"You see, if Marjorie left the path to go downwards, there are enough fellows searching down there," he said. "We can take this direction."

"Oh, all serene!" said Bob Cherry.

"On, there doesn't seem a way up," Nugent remarked.

Wharton did not reply. He was moving along the rough path, scanning the rocks that rose ruggedly on the left.

"This way!" he exclaimed suddenly.

He clambered up from the path.

Between two big rocks there was an easy way, and Wharton disappeared among the big, rugged, piled boulders.

The juniors followed him.

Once upon the cliff, Harry Wharton found that it was a path that could be followed, and it wound over the cliffs in a

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direction he had never taken before, often as he had explored the ranges of cliffs by the towering Shoulder.

"It's a path taken by fellows looking for seagulls, I think," he said, pausing to rest after a time. His comrades were panting. "It's a path that has been used before, I can see that."

"But where is it leading us?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Over the Shoulder, I think."

"But—but we can't imagine that Marjorie came this way," said Bob Cherry.

"Can you imagine what has become of her?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, no!"

"Then we may as well keep on. Look here," Wharton paused for a moment, breathing hard. "Look here. You remember the Boulder saying that he had a clue—an idea, at least—"

"Oh, that was only gas!"

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't think it was gas," he said.

"But how could he know anything?" John Bull asked dubiously.

"He's jolly keen, and he worked it out—and I've been thinking, too," said Wharton abruptly. "I wonder I didn't think of it before."

"What have you thought of, then?"

"Marjorie hasn't had an accident. Some trace of it would have been found by now. A hundred people or more have been searching the shore; and we know she wasn't caught in the tide. It wasn't an accident."

Bob Cherry stared.

"You don't think she's gone away of her own accord, surely?" he exclaimed.

"No, no!"

"What, then?"

"She may have been taken away."

"What!"

"People have been kidnapped before now," said Harry.

"Don't you remember when we were first at Greyfriars, Marjorie was kidnapped by gipsies?"

"But that wasn't a real kidnapping; they took her away to rob her, and then let her go again," said Nugent.

"Yes, I know. But what's happened once might happen again. It's the only way I can account for what's happened."

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath.

"My hat! If it's true, we'll make the kidnapper sit up when we find him!"

"I believe that's the idea that Vernon-Smith has got into his head," said Harry, with conviction. "I suppose he thought of it from the first. And if Marjorie was taken away by some brute, either to be robbed, or to be held for ransom afterwards, this is just the place the rotter would choose."

"Well, it's possible."

"She may be in the hands of some rascals, who've got her hidden away somewhere, and intend to get money for releasing her, as soon as the search has failed," said Harry, with growing conviction. "When Miss Fairmore finds that she cannot be discovered, she will be willing to agree to any terms to get her back to Cliff House unhurt."

"Yes, I suppose that's so."

"Look!" exclaimed Nugent suddenly.

He pointed down the cliff.

From the high point upon which they stood, the chums of the Remove could see the path they had left, and where their search had begun.

Upon the rugged path four juniors could be seen, reduced in size by the distance; but the chums easily recognised Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major, Hazeldene, and Snoop. They were examining the rugged cliff, evidently for a path upwards as Wharton had done.

Wharton's eyes gleamed as he saw his rival in the track.

"You can see that Vernon-Smith is on the same track!" he exclaimed.

"My hat! It looks like it."

"Let's get on," said John Bull.

"The get-onfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhaupur.

Harry Wharton led the way.

The path led them through rugged hollows and over rocky slopes, further and further out upon the wild loneliness of the Shoulder—the huge cliff, honeycombed with caverns, that closed in the end of Pegg Bay like a massive wall.

Round the base of the Shoulder, towards the sea, were dangerous rocks, where the water curled and glowed in lines of foam, and where many an unwary craft had come to grief.

Suddenly Wharton gave a sharp cry, and ran forward.

The object lay in the path—something that glimmered with colour in the sun on the cliffs.

"Look here!" shouted Wharton.

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His voice rang and echoed among the hollows of the great cliff.

Upon the rock at the feet of the searchers lay a little velvet toque, which they knew only too well; they had seen it last upon the dark hair of Marjorie Hazeldene.

Wharton picked it up.

It was Marjorie's, there was no doubt about that; and it was proof positive that the girl had passed that way.

The junior stood regarding it with grim silence, as Wharton held it up in his hand.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tracked Down.

HARRY WHARTON was the first to break the silence.

"Marjorie's hat!" he said.

"I'd know it anywhere," said Nugent. "She was wearing it when Hazeldene brought her over to Greyfriars to tea last week."

"I remember it," said Bob Cherry.

Bob Cherry was never likely to forget anything that belonged to Marjorie Hazeldene.

"She lost it here, last evening," said Harry Wharton, in a low tone. "Her scarf may have been blown away by the wind, but not her hat as well. I believe Marjorie was being forced to follow this path; and very likely she tried to struggle in this spot, and go back."

Bob Cherry clenched his hands hard.

"We can't imagine Marjorie coming this way, unless she was being forced," said Harry.

"No; that's certain."

"The certainfulness is terrific!"

"But where does the path lead?" Nugent exclaimed, puzzled. "It is sloping downwards now, and can only lead towards the sea."

"Yes; the sea-caves at the foot of the Shoulder."

Nugent shivered.

"Do you think Marjorie may be in the caves?"

"I don't know; it would be a safe place to hide her."

"But who—who?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know—some scoundrel! Someone who knows this coast well, too."

"But there's nobody belonging to Pegg or Friarale who'd be such a villain," said John Bull. "Besides, he couldn't expect to do it in safety. It would have to be someone who could clear out afterwards, after getting the money."

"Some gipsy, perhaps?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

"What are you thinking of now?"

"That fellow we met last night as we were going to Cliff House. You remember that drunken ruffian—"

"By Jove!"

"He looked capable of anything," said Nugent. "I shouldn't wonder. He called himself Barenzo, I remember. Now I come to think of it, there was a Barenzo in that gang of gipsies who robbed Marjorie a long time ago."

Wharton nodded eagerly.

"It might be the same rotter!" he exclaimed. "I didn't recognise him; but he's been in prison, and I dare say he's changed—and I never looked at him very carefully either. I shouldn't wonder if it was the same. The fellow who was his accomplice at that time is still in prison, I believe."

"Come on!" said Bob Cherry, setting his teeth. "Back up!"

"Hold on!" said Nugent. "We—we never thought of this kind of thing, and we have no weapons of any sort. If we run into a gang of ruffians—"

"We must risk that!"

"I'm willing to risk it; but I don't think we should have much chance against them," said Nugent. "But come on! Let's find out the truth, anyway."

"If we find where Marjorie is, we can get help to rescue her," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Back up!"

The juniors pressed on their way.

The rugged path led them ever downwards now, and they caught a glimpse of the sea between the big rocks that barred in the path. They were more than two miles from the spot where the search had begun and where they had last seen Vernon-Smith & Co.

They came out at last upon the beach at the foot of the great cliff. Round them was dead silence and loneliness. That part of the beach was never trodden by human foot, save when someone landed from a boat, which was probably very seldom. There was nothing in the barren shore and the dangerous currents to attract a visitor.

In the deep, dark cliff several caves opened, and some of them had been explored at other times by the adventurous juniors of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.
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"Look!" muttered Wharton.

From one of the caves came a gleam of red.

It was evidently caused by the ruddy glow of a fire within the hollow of the cliff.

The juniors caught their breath as they looked.

A certain glow had led them on, and yet they were startled, breathless, to find that their theory was correct, and that there were really human beings in this desolate solitude of rock and shingle.

Far away across the bay the houses of Pegg could be seen, dots in the great distance; but this barren shore of the bay was as lonely and abandoned as an island in the Pacific.

"Someone is here!" said Nugent, in a low voice.

"And we're jolly well going to see who it is!" said Harry.

"Good! Come on!"

The juniors moved cautiously towards the cave.

The ruddy glow of the fire was well within the hollow of the rocks. As they came nearer they could see a thin streak of bluish smoke stealing outwards and losing itself against the face of the cliff.

Wharton stepped boldly into the cave.

His foot grated on the shingle, and there was a sharp exclamation in the gloomy depths of the cavern.

Three sticks were arranged over the fire, and from the centre was suspended a pot, in which something was boiling. A harsh-featured, swarthy woman sat by the fire, and she started to her feet as the juniors came into sight.

She caught up a billet of wood from a heap beside the fire. Wharton held up his hand.

"Stop that!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Barengro! Barengro!"

The gipsy woman's shrill voice echoed in the cave.

A man who was stretched upon a dirty blanket near the fire rose to his feet, blinking at the juniors, with the mists of heavy drinking still upon his bearded eyes.

It was the ruffian they had encountered in the lane the previous evening.

He glared at the juniors with savage rage in his little, bloodshot eyes.

"What do you want here!" he exclaimed, snapping his yellow teeth.

Wharton eyed him fearlessly. The other fellows gathered behind their leader, ready for trouble.

The gipsy certainly looked as if he meant giving trouble. He came slouching towards the juniors, with an evil, savage look upon his dark face.

"We are looking for someone," said Wharton quietly.

"Looking for someone? Whom?"

"Miss Hazeldene."

"Do you expect to find her here, camping with the poor gipsies?" asked Barengro, with a sneer.

"Yes," said Harry quietly, "we do expect to find her here. We want to search the cave."

Barengro raised a dirty hand and pointed to the beach.

"Get out!" he said.

"We are not going till we have searched the cave."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

"There is no one here," said the gipsy sullenly. "No one but Mother Petulengro and myself—no one else."

"It is true, young gentlemen," croaked the old woman.

"We must see for ourselves," said Wharton. "Miss Hazeldene has disappeared, and we know that she came in this direction."

"How do you know?" demanded the gipsy sharply.

"We have found traces."

Barengro laughed sneeringly.

"You are dreaming! Why should a girl come here?"

"She may have been brought by force," said Wharton calmly. "I believe you are the same man who had a hand in kidnapping her before, though I cannot be certain that I recognise you."

"I do not know what you are talking about," said the gipsy sullenly. "There is no one here. I am here alone—I am an outcast from my tribe. There is no one else."

"Your tribe knows a thing or two, I should say," remarked Bob Cherry.

Barengro gave him a savage look. He pointed towards the beach again, where the sunlight fell outside the cave.

"Go!" he said.

"We shall not go!"

"You want to search the cavern?"

"Yes."

"I shall not allow it! Get out!"

The juniors drew more closely together and clenched their hands. The gipsy was a powerful fellow; but they thought they could handle him together. In any case, they were willing to take their chances.

"We shall not go till we have searched the cave," said Harry between his teeth. "If you try to stop us you will get hurt!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In This Thursday's Number of
"The Gem" Library, 1d.

The gipsy laughed savagely.

"I shall not be the one to get hurt," he said; "I have a weapon—"

"You will not dare to use it!"

"You shall see!"

The gipsy caught up an axe from the heap of faggots. It was a heavy weapon, with a bright, keen edge that glauced as he swung it in the air.

The juniors started back involuntarily.

The man's look was savage and desperate, and he was evidently still under the influence of liquor.

"Put that axe down, you scoundrel!" shouted Harry Wharton.

The gipsy laughed mockingly.

"I will strike down the first who attempts to pass!" he said, showing his yellow, tobacco-stained teeth in a snarl like a savage dog.

Wharton made a movement forward.

The axe swept in the air, and Harry's chin was dragged him back. It was evident that the gipsy would carry out his murderous threat.

"Hold on, Harry! You can't tackle him!"

"Come on!" said Barengro. "Come on!"

"You bound—"

"I will kill the first who tries to pass me!"

"It's no good!" muttered Nugent in Wharton's ear. "The man's half mad with drink now. We don't want murder done. We can get back with help in an hour."

"Very well," said Wharton between his teeth.

It went very much against the grain; but there was evidently nothing else to be done. The juniors backed out of the cave, and the gipsy stood watching them with sullen, burning eyes till they disappeared.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Fight on the Cliffs.

BOB CHERRY clenched his hands hard as he tramped out of the cave into the sunshine on the rocky, pebbly beach.

Although the juniors had seen nothing of Marjorie Hazeldene in the cave, the gipsy's action had been proof enough that their suspicions were correct. Unless Barengro was the kidnapper of the missing girl, he would not have opposed so savagely their desire to search the cave.

"She is there!" and Harry Wharton, as the juniors paused on the beach.

"Certainly!" said Durree Singh. "In fact, the certainty is terrific!"

"The poor girl has been shut up in one of the caves," said Wharton, clenching his hands hard. "Still, we've found her, and it's only a question of time before we get help. If we'd only thought of this—"

"We could have come ready for such a thing if that cad Vernon-Smith had told us what he guessed!" said Bob Cherry.

"If I'd even had a cricket-stump in my fist I'd have chance it!"

"The chancefulness would have been terrific, my esteemed chum," murmured the Nabob of Bhanpur, with a dashful shake of the head.

Wharton set his teeth.

"We're going for help, and we'll soon be back," he said. "There's no way the villain can escape, excepting by this path, and if he tries that he could never think of getting Marjorie away in the daylight. Besides, one of us can stop behind and watch the path, while the others buzz off to get help."

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry.

"Pegg is the nearest place," said Harry. "Look here, you fellows buzz off. You can separate, and take the shortest cuts you can find; it won't be necessary for you to go round such a long way as we came. If you separate, one of you may get in much before the others, and guide the fishermen here. Anyway, you can bring back some cudgels or something, and we could have a go at that scoundrel ourselves."

"And you—"

"I'll stay here and watch the cave, in case the villain tries to get away."

"Oh, good!"

It was evidently the best thing to be done.

The juniors clambered up on the cliff-path again from the beach, Wharton reaching a favourable point for watching the mouth of the cave in the distance.

Barengro could not issue from the cave without being seen. And if he should make any attempt to come up the path

ANSWERS

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

to dislodge the watcher, Wharton was determined to resist, in spite of the desperado's weapon. There were loose stones on the path, and it was quite possible that he might hold his own against the ruffian. The path upward was very steep.

"Well, we'll buzz off here," said Nugent. "Perhaps one of us had better stay with you, Harry, old chap—"

Wharton shook his head.

"N-no! The more of you that go, the more chance you've got of getting help quick. There's not a second to be lost. Buzz off!"

"Oh, all serene, then!"

"The serenefulness is terrific."

And the Co. departed and scattered, seeking short paths over the cliff to gain the village of Pegg in the shortest possible space of time.

In a few minutes they had disappeared from sight; though amid the cliffs Wharton could still hear the rumbling of stones displaced by the clambering juniors.

The sounds died away, and all was silent.

Behind and around Harry Wharton rose great, bulging cliffs. Below him was the rugged path, so steep as to be almost in steps, and beyond that the beach and the sea, and the whirling currents marked with lines of white foam. Beyond that, the wide bay, with the little islands in the distance—and the broad sea, dotted here and there with white sails and the smoke of passing steamers. Far out at sea he caught a glimpse of fishing-boats belonging to the village of Pegg. There were sturdy fishermen in the boats who would have come quickly enough to his aid if he could have let them know.

The junior sat upon a boulder and watched the path and the cave. A quarter of an hour had passed, when the slovenly, muscular figure of Barengio the gipsy emerged from the cave into the sunlight.

He stood blinking round in the light, and looked towards the cliff. He caught sight of Harry Wharton on the path, and for a moment his face was convulsed with rage. His hand rose and pointed, and he shouted something; but his words were carried away by the wind.

Wharton could guess their import, however.

The gipsy was uttering threats, and his actions showed that he intended to carry them out if Wharton did not go.

The junior had no intention of going. He stooped, and gathered up a little heap of jagged chunks of rock. They were the only weapons he could have, but they were dangerous enough in such a place. Wharton was a splendid bowler on the cricket-field, and he would be hurling the missiles at close range if the ruffian came charging up the steep path.

The boy thrilled a little as he realised that he was not only danger to face, but danger for his life.

The ruffian was evidently desperate, and he was still under the influence of strong liquor. Wharton could guess that he had already robbed Marjorie Hazeldene of what money she had about her, and had spent it in the Ship Inn in Pegg the previous night; and doubtless he had brought a supply of rum to the cave with him. The man would be little more responsible for his actions than a madman; and the junior knew the terrible risk he would run.

But he did not falter.

The gipsy's looks made him suspect that Barengio had some other way of quitting the spot than by taking the steep path over the cliffs. By that route, the man could never expect to carry off his prisoner in safety. It occurred to Wharton that there might be a boat hidden in the cave—and if Barengio intended to escape by sea, it would be fatal to his safety to have Wharton watching him from the cliff, and ascertaining in exactly what direction he steered.

Wharton filled his jacket-pockets with the chunks of rock, in case he should have to retreat, and piled up a heap of them ready to his hand. He had chosen the steepest part in the path in case he should be attacked.

There was no thought in his mind that help would come. However rapid were the movements of his chums, help could hardly arrive under an hour or two.

He had only himself to depend upon, but his courage did not waver.

Barengio shook his fist from the beach, and shouted again, and then started towards the cliff.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

The gipsy came clambering up the steep path, and Wharton raised his hand with a jagged lump of stone in it.

"Stop!" he shouted.

The ruffian clambered on.

"Stop! Do you hear?"

A savage, crimsoned face was turned upwards towards Wharton, and Barengio, as he saw the raised hand, the heavy stone, paused, in spite of his fury.

"Put that stone down!" he hissed. He was near enough now for his voice to be heard.

Wharton's lips set hard.

"If you come nearer, one step nearer, I shall knock you backwards with this stone," he said. "Mind, I mean it!"

"Burn you! I'll—I'll—"

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NEXT
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"THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Go back!"

A torrent of curses burst from the ruffian. He clambered upward again, with quick, breathless haste.

"Go back!" shouted Wharton.

Barengio did not answer.

"For the last time—go back!"

The ruffian clambered on savagely.

Wharton's hand swept through the air, and the jagged stone flew with deadly aim.

Whiz!

Crash!

Right upon the bullet head the heavy stone crashed, and Barengio the gipsy went reeling backwards with a wild yell.

He sprawled helplessly upon the rugged path, clutching out wildly to save himself, but the path was too steep; once his hold was lost he could not recover it. He rolled heavily down the slope, catching wildly at the rocks, and with a shower of loose stones whizzing and clinking round him.

Bump!

The ruffian, half-stunned, with blood streaming down his face, rolled out upon the beach at the foot of the cliff, and lay there groaning and gasping.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder to the Rescue.

HARRY WHARTON'S face was pale, but steady and determined. A single stone hurled at the ruffian with a steady hand had been sufficient to fling him from the steep path. Wharton was safe, unless his courage failed—and that was not likely to happen.

Barengio lay for a long time in the sun on the single—so long that Wharton might have felt a terrible fear of the results of his fall, but for the sound of the gipsy's groans, echoing dully among the rocks.

The ruffian rose to his feet at last.

He pressed his hand to his head, where the jagged stone had struck him, and it came away stained. There was a deep cut under the thick hair, and in his fall the gipsy's face had been cut in several places.

His features were convulsed with rage, as he shook his heavy fist at the junior on the cliff.

"Burn you!" he shrieked. "Burn you! I will kill you for this! Burn you!"

Wharton smiled scornfully.

He had shown pretty plainly that he could defend himself, and the gipsy's enraged shrieks and threats were not likely to scare him.

"Come on again, if you like," he called out.

Barengio ground his teeth.

He gathered up stones from the beach in both hands, and with savagely glittering eyes, began to hurl them up the path at the junior.

But it was easy for Wharton to keep in cover among the rugged boulders, and he replied to the hail of stones with greater advantage from above.

His missiles crashed upon the gipsy right and left, and Barengio staggered under the shower of them; and in a couple of minutes he was only too glad to relinquish the contest.

He retreated out of range of the stones, and for some minutes he stood shaking his fist at the hero of the Remove, and pouring out strange, unintelligible words—which Wharton could not understand, but which he knew were not blessings.

He wondered what the ruffian would do next. The time was passing, and every minute brought help nearer.

In a couple of hours at the outside, men would be upon the scene who would handle the gipsy, desperate as he was, easily enough.

Wharton could afford to wait, but Barengio could not. And the junior watched him keenly, prepared for any desperate attempt on the part of the ruffian.

Barengio ceased his useless cursing at last and moved away along the cliffs. He disappeared among the rugged projections of the Shoulder, and Harry Wharton drew a deep, deep breath.

He thought he could guess the gipsy's plan. Barengio intended to attempt to clamber up the cliff in some other place, gain a higher point, and drop upon Wharton from above—or else pelt him with stones and drive him from the path.

Whether there was any other way of scaling the cliff Wharton did not know, but he was very uneasy.

After a few minutes' thought he retreated silently and carefully about twenty yards farther up the path, and there stopped and waited. The path was still steep and winding, and closed in by huge projections of rock. Farther behind Wharton it opened out into broad, rugged spaces, and there he now would have had no chance of stopping the gipsy.

In his new position he stopped and waited, watching breath-

leaving. A quarter of an hour passed, the seconds with leaden wings.

Then there was a sudden crash that made Wharton start and catch his breath.

Crash!
A heavy stone came upon the path in the place he had left, and split on the rock, and rolled in fragments down to the beach. If Wharton had been still upon the spot, it would have struck him, and hurled him down as Barenegro had been hurled.

He shuddered.
Above, from a rocky ledge where it would have seemed that even a gull could hardly have found a footing, an evil-bearded face looked and grinned. It was Barenegro, peering down to watch the effect of his missile.

He caught sight of Wharton twenty yards farther up the path, and his expression changed.

"Burn ye!"
Wharton heard the savage words clearly, and he saw the gipsy disappear again among the ledges and crevices up the high side of the cliff. The man was climbing like a monkey.

Wharton stood for a few moments undecided. Then he turned and scrambled farther up the rocky path.

There was a scraping on the rocks, and a scrambling figure came hurtling down upon him amid a shower of loose stones.

It was the gipsy!
Barenegro fell upon the rocky path, and picked himself up like a cat, and leaped at the junior of Greyfriars.

"Now, burn you!" he snarled.
Wharton returned grip for grip.

Powerful as the gipsy was, the Greyfriars junior put up a good fight. He knew many tricks of wrestling, and it was Barenegro who fell in the struggle, with Wharton on top of him.

"Burn you!"
But the powerful grip twisted the junior over upon the rocks, and the gipsy dragged himself uppermost, and now the dark savage face was above the boy, the fierce black eyes were gleaming down upon him.

"Now!" muttered Barenegro.
"Help!" shouted Wharton.

It was a despairing cry; he had little hope that it would be heard. The gipsy grinned savagely.

"Help! Oh, help!"
There was a rush of footsteps along the rocky cliff path.

Wharton heard them, and shouted again desperately.

"Help! Rescue, Greyfriars!"
Three figures came tearing along the path. Wharton could not see them as he lay under the weight of the gipsy, but he heard them, and he shouted:

"Rescue!"
"We're coming!"

It was the voice of the Bounder.
Barenegro's grasp relaxed, and he turned his head—Vernon-Smith, Bolsover, and Hazeldene were rushing upon him.

They were upon him in another moment.
The Bounder was the first to grasp him, and tear him away from his victim. The gipsy rolled over on the stones, and the three juniors piled upon him. Barenegro was struggling furiously with all three of them in another moment.

Wharton lay and gasped. He was too exhausted by the struggle to rise and lend aid to his rescuers.

Barenegro struggled fiercely. He shook off the juniors, and leaped to his feet. With a bound he was gone along the rocky path, and disappeared among the rocks.

Wharton sat up, his head swimming. Vernon-Smith turned to him, with a cynical grin.

"So it's you, Wharton?"
"Yes," gasped Harry.

"We seem to have come just in time," grinned Bolsover.
"Yes, thank you!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.
"That's all right," he said. "Who was he?"

"A gipsy—Barenegro."
"What did he go for you for?"

Wharton gasped for breath, and Hazeldene helped him to his feet. Wharton had no idea of keeping secret what he had discovered, and he saw, too, that the Bounder guessed.

"He has kidnapped Marjorie," Wharton gasped—"at least, I believe so!"

Hazeldene gave a cry.
"Kidnapped her?"

"I believe he has," Wharton looked at the Bounder.
"That was what you suspected all the time, Vernon-Smith."

"I suspected it immediately I heard Marjorie had disappeared," said the Bounder coolly. "There was no other explanation that would hold water. But I didn't think you would be the fellow to run him down." The Bounder's eyes gleamed for a moment. "But the game isn't over yet. Have you seen Marjorie?"

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"THE GREAT DARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"

By MARY CLIFFORD.

In This Thursday's Number of

"The Gem" Library, Id.

"No."

"Then you are not sure about it?"
"Pretty sure. That scoundrel was in the cave down there, and an old gipsy woman; and he threatened us with an axe when we wanted to search the cave. That makes it pretty clear."

"It's clear enough," said Hazeldene.
"Where are the other fellows?" Bolsover asked.

"Gone to get help. I stayed to watch that villain, in case he should try to get Marjorie away."

"Come on!" said the Bounder abruptly.
"Where?" asked Bolsover.

"We're going to rescue Marjorie. That's what we came here for."

"You heard what Wharton said," replied Bolsover uneasily. "We can't tackle a fellow with an axe! Don't be an ass, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith set his teeth.
"I came here to find Marjorie Hazeldene," he said. "I'm going to do it!"

"But I tell you—"
"I'm going on, if I go on alone!"

Wharton looked at him.
"The man is half mad!" he said. "He doesn't care what he does! We had better wait for help."

"I'm going on," said the Bounder.
And he tramped on obstinately down the path.

Wharton's eyes flashed.
"If you're going on, I'll come, too!" he exclaimed. "I think you're a fool, but you shan't go there alone!"

The Bounder waved him back.
"I don't want you," he said, curtly. "This is my chance. You've had your chance, and you didn't choose to take it. Now I'm going to try."

"I'll back you up—"
"I don't want you to," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "Fair play! You had your chance, and now it's my turn."

"The man may murder you."
"I'll risk that."

"Hold on!" said Hazeldene. "I'm as keen to find Marjorie as anyone, I suppose; but it's no good being a reckless fool, Smithy!"

"I'm going on!"
And the Bounder disappeared.

Bolsover grunted.
"I'm jolly well not going on!" he said. "Trevor and Snooty have given it up already—the cliff was too steep for them—and I'm chucking it here."

And Bolsover, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, and with an angry frown upon his face, tramped back the way he had come.

Hazeldene looked uncertainly at Harry Wharton.
"What had we better do?" he asked.

"I'm going after Vernon-Smith," said Harry. "Come on! He's a reckless fool, but we may be able to save him."

"I'm on, then."
And they followed the Bounder.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Vernon-Smith's Scheme.

BARENegro looked out of the cavern, with a sullen, savage brow. He had dragged out a small skiff that was hidden among the boulders, and he was looking to see if the coast was clear. The gipsy had been at the row-bottle again, and his dark face was flushed and ferocious. He was about as safe to tackle at that moment as a wild beast driven to its lair.

The Bounder was crossing the shingle towards the mouth of the CAVE.

Barenegro's eyes glittered at the sight of the junior, and his long, sinewy fingers worked and twisted.

The Bounder held up his hand in sign of peace.
"Hold on, my man!" he said coolly. "I'm not going for you! I want to speak to you, and it will pay you to listen!"

Barenegro watched him suspiciously.
The Bounder came nearer, but still keeping on his guard against a treacherous spring.

"You've got Miss Hazeldene hidden in there," went on the Bounder, with a nod towards the cave. "You're getting that boat out to take her away, because Wharton has run you down. You needn't deny it—I know she is there!"

The gipsy showed his yellow teeth in a snarl.
"You'd better go!" he muttered.

The Bounder did not move.
"You found her on the cliff path, and you forced her to come here, just as I hear you and your gang kidnapped her once before," he went on. "How much money do you expect to make by this?"

Barenegro watched him without speaking. He did not understand the coolness of the junior, nor the drift of his

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

words. Vernon-Smith was playing a desperate card, and he knew it; but he was as cool as ice.

"You meant to keep Miss Hazeldene hidden for a few days, until the hue and cry had died away," went on the Bounder. "You thought that when her people discovered that they couldn't find her, they'd be willing to pay for her to be sent back."

Barengro's eyes glittered.

"Now you're found out, you can see that the game's up," said Vernon-Smith. "We all know she's here, and it's only a question of an hour or two before the police are here. Then you'll be laid by the heels, my fine fellow, and you'll go to two or three years' penal servitude, instead of getting drunk on the money you've been expecting."

"Burn ye!" muttered the outcast gipsy.

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I'm offering you a chance," he said. "How much money did you expect to get out of Miss Marjorie, or the girl's people? Twenty pounds?"

"A hundred," said the gipsy, watching him.

"You would never get that. The Hazeldenes are not rich. You might have got fifty if the game had worked, but it hasn't. Now, look here," said the Bounder, coming a step nearer and sinking his voice. "I'll make you an offer."

"What do you mean?"

"I want to take Marjorie Hazeldene back. If you'll stand out and let me do it, I'll give you as much as you could have expected to make by holding her to ransom. And I'll leave the way clear for you to escape. You've got, perhaps, half an hour clear to get away in your boat."

"You are trying to fool me!" said Barengro, watching the junior with his rat-like eyes. "I do not believe you!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"I knew Miss Hazeldene had been kidnapped," he said. "I came prepared to find that it was so. I've got the money."

"How much?"

"Twenty-five pounds."

"In notes—which could be traced?" sneered the gipsy.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"In gold," he said.

"Where did you get it?"

"From Courtfield Bank this morning, when I stole."

"It is lies! I do not believe you!"

Vernon-Smith drew a bag from his inner pocket—a little leather bag that gave out a musical clink.

"There is the money!" he said.

"Twenty-five pounds?"

"Twenty-five of the best, if you choose to take it and leave Miss Hazeldene here."

The gipsy made a sudden movement, and Vernon-Smith backed away a pace.

"No, you don't!" said the Bounder coolly. "You can have the money in return for Miss Hazeldene, but not for nothing."

Barengro wrinkled his bushy brows as in reflection.

Vernon-Smith watched him. He had laid this scheme, with his usual cunning. To the son of the millionaire the money was nothing, and Vernon-Smith had great faith in the power of money.

The fact that what he was doing was actually against the law did not trouble the Bounder of Greyfriars at all.

It was the plan he had formed—the only plan, he believed, by which he would be able to succeed in rescuing the kidnapped girl.

For anything else in the matter he did not care. Even for the rescue of Marjorie he cared little. He was thinking of winning the first of the tests which were to decide who was to be captain of the Remove.

"Well, what do you say?" he demanded, after a pause. "The police will be here in half an hour more, and then it will be too late."

The gipsy eyed him suspiciously.

"And why not leave it to the police, then?" he sneered. "Because I want to be the one to take Miss Hazeldene back."

"And who are you—a mere schoolboy—who can hand out twenty-five pounds?" asked the gipsy, with a curious gleam in his eyes.

"Oh, that's nothing to me! My father is a millionaire!" said the Bounder, with some of his old boastfulness.

The gipsy's eyes glittered.

"Your father a millionaire?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Vernon-Smith."

"Ah! I have heard that name," said the gipsy. "If you are telling the truth, your father is one of the richest men in England."

"It is quite true."

The Bounder glanced back. Harry Wharton and Hazeldene came into view at the foot of the cliff path, and they had passed, in surprise, at the sight of the Bounder in talk with the gipsy.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE JAFE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Better decide at once," said Vernon-Smith.

The gipsy held out a brown hand.

"I will do as you ask," he said. "Hand me the money."

The Bounder smiled. He did not mean to run any risk of being caught napping.

"Get into your boat and push off," he said. "I will lose the bag into the boat after you. I shall keep faith with you."

"Be it so, young Gorgio."

"Buck up, then; time's passing!"

The gipsy nodded, and turned to his boat. The oars lay in it, and they rattled out upon the floor of the cave as the gipsy dragged at the boat. Barengro stooped and picked up one of the oars, and instead of tossing it into the boat, he swung it round suddenly, and before Vernon-Smith could grasp against the treacherous attack he was swept off his feet by the sweep of the heavy oar.

He crashed to the ground with a loud cry.

"Burn you! It's my turn now!"

Barengro sprang towards the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith, his face convulsed with rage, scrambled up, and as he did so the heavy flat of the gipsy crashed upon his forehead, and he gave a sobbing cry, and fell stunned and senseless upon the rocks.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. No Chance for the Bounder.

HARRY WHARTON gave a shout, and started running towards the cave, with Hazeldene at his heels. The Bounder lay where he had fallen, evidently insensible.

The gipsy glared savagely at the two juniors as they came racing towards the cave. He ran to where the axe lay, and caught it up in his sinewy hand, and ran to meet them.

Hazeldene gave a cry.

"Run for it! He means murder! Run!"

And Hazeldene tore back towards the cliff, and clambered up the steep path in frantic haste.

Wharton paused.

The gipsy was coming straight at him, the axe in his hand. The man's face was swollen and still bleeding from the injuries he had received in the fight on the cliff.

Wharton had no weapon.

With his bare hands he could not tackle the armed gipsy, unarmed and alone. He turned and followed Hazeldene.

He was scrambling up the cliff the next moment, and the gipsy paused, breathing hard, and hurled a volley of taunts and curses after him.

From the steep cliff the two juniors, breathless and furious, watched him.

"Vernon-Smith's hard hit," muttered Hazeldene.

Wharton nodded.

"He's stunned!" he said, in a low voice.

"Will that villain—will he—!" Hazeldene faltered.

"I don't think so. I warned Smith, and he wouldn't listen." Wharton set his teeth. "We can do nothing unarmed; we must wait for help."

"He's going in that boat."

"We shall see where he goes."

"The bound!" muttered Hazeldene. "And we can't do anything."

"Nothing at present."

They watched the gipsy. Once or twice they saw him turn a savage glance towards the cliff, but he did not advance in that direction again. He knew that he had no time to lose.

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He bent over the insensible Bounder, and with fragments of cord bound him hand and foot.

Then he dragged the boat down to the water, and pushed it out into the sea.

"My hat!" muttered Wharton suddenly. "He's putting Smith into the boat! He's going to take him with him!"

"Looks like it."

Wharton frowned. He had not heard what the Bounder had said to the gipsy, but what he had seen had been enough. That had been the Bounder's cunning plan—to find the kidnapper, and buy him off. But he had had to deal with one more cunning than himself. Barendro had scored, and if he could find a secure hiding-place among the caves of the Shoulder, Vernon-Smith would be in a bad position.

The old gipsy woman came out of the cavern and clambered into the boat, rocking on the waves that curled over the shingle.

"Marjorie!" muttered Hazeldene, catching his breath.

Wharton's heart beat.

There she was!

Barendro emerged from the cave, leading the girl by the arm. Marjorie Hazeldene was very pale, and her hands were tied. She walked to the boat, looking neither to the right nor to the left. It would have been futile for her to attempt to resist the gipsy. She did not see the strained, anxious faces on the cliff.

Barendro stepped into the boat, and pushed off.

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. It was bitter to him to see it, but what could he do? He had tried his strength once against the gipsy's, and had failed. Hazeldene was no help to him. What could he do?

The gipsy pulled at the oars, and the boat glided away among the huge, piled rocks at the foot of the Shoulder, and disappeared.

"Gone!" muttered Hazeldene.

Wharton clenched his hands.

He ran down from the cliff to the shingly beach, but the boat had disappeared—the towering rocks hid it from sight. The gipsy was gone!

It was a quarter of an hour later when Vernon-Smith, stretched in the boat, bound hand and foot, opened his eyes.

The Bounder did not realise for the moment where he was. He tried to rise, and fell back, sick and giddy, with a groan.

The savage face of the gipsy looked round at him.

"You were too clever, young Gorgio!" said the outcast Romany, with a grin. "You are in my hands now."

The Bounder groaned.

He had been playing with edged tools. He realised, too late, that he had been over-confident in his own cunning and resource.

The gipsy had scored, and he was a prisoner. He wondered what the outcome of it would be. Where was the man taking him? It was clear that the ruffian knew every inch

of the coast—probably it was not the first time he had hidden from the law among those rocky recesses.

The boat glided into a deep, dark cavern, where the water flowed in with a musical murmur against dark walls of rock.

Where were they?

The Bounder's eyes fell upon the shrinking figure at the end of the boat beside the gipsy crone, and he gave a start.

"Miss Hazeldene!"

Marjorie looked at him.

"I hoped to get you out of this," said the Bounder. "I was looking for you when I fell into the hands of this scoundrel."

"I am sorry," said Marjorie. "My brother—"

"He is looking for you, too. Greyfriars has a whole holiday to-day on purpose. The whole school has turned out to look for you," said the Bounder; "and I have found you, only the gipsy has found me at the same time, and I can't help you. I'm sorry."

Even then the Bounder's coolness had not deserted him. Bump!

The boat grated on the rocks.

The Bounder sat up, with dizzy, aching head, and looked about him.

The boat had come to the end of the sea-cave. Walls of rock shut it in on every side.

The Bounder was puzzled.

This was no hiding-place—any craft passing along the cliffs outside would be able to find them.

He wondered what the gipsy's intention was.

He soon discovered.

The tide was going out, and the level of the water in the cave was sinking every moment.

The gipsy pulled out a pipe, and crammed it with strong shag, and lighted it, and settled down to smoke. Mother Petulengro was smoking, too. The Bounder, cramped in his bonds, sat and watched them.

As the water sank lower a gap in the rocky wall appeared above the level of the sea, and the Bounder understood.

The cave extended further back into the rock, but it was only possible to enter it at low tide.

It was some time before the water was low enough to admit the boat under the heavy arch of damp, glimmering rock.

When the level was reached the gipsy put away his pipe, and seized an oar again. He fended the boat from the rocks, putting slowly into the blackness of the passage.

Cold, clammy air struck upon them as the boat glided on into the darkness.

Under them the Bounder could feel a grating at some moments as the keel of the boat touched the rock below.

Outside, in the great cavern, the water fell lower, and he realised that, when the tide was well down, this passage into the cliff would be well above the level of the sea, and as impenetrable as when it was covered with water.

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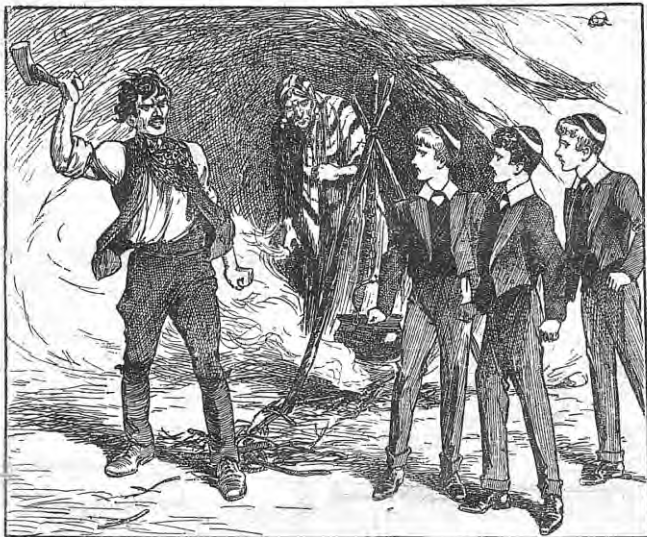
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The gipsy caught up an axe from the heap of faggots. It was a heavy weapon, with a bright, keen edge that gleamed as he swung it in the air. "I will strike down the first who attempts to pass!" he said mockingly as the juniors started back. (See Chapter 7.)

It was only once each tide, and then for a space of perhaps about twenty minutes, that the passage could be entered at all.

The Bounder's heart sank at the thought.

Barengro could hardly have found a more secure hiding-place.

Round the boat the passage was very narrow—in some places so narrow that the sides almost grazed the rocky walls in passing.

Then it broadened out into a wide cave again, deep in the heart of the Shoulder, and from overhead came a glimmer of light from some far-off opening in the top of the great cliff.

Barengro pushed the boat to the side of the cave, where a slope of the rocks led up to a portion of the cavern above the level of high water.

He sprang out upon the rocks.

"Burn you! Do you think that your friends will find you here?" he said, showing his yellow teeth in a hideous, savage grin.

The Bounder made no reply, and Marjorie Hazeldene drew a long, quivering breath. They had little hope of it. Their friends might search for them for days, weeks, but what chance had they of finding them?

Round and above them the great mass of the Shoulder hid them from sight—hid them like the walls of a great rocky prison.

The Bounder's eyes met Marjorie's.

"The game's up!" he muttered. "We shall have to make terms with the scoundrel!"

Marjorie did not reply.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Means Business.

THE sun was setting on the cliffs; the bay was red in the sunset. The great shadow of the Shoulder lay dark upon the water.

Harry Wharton & Co. were weary, but they were still searching. Nugent and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, had returned with help, but only to find that the bird had flown.

Police from Courtfield, sturdy fishermen from Pegg, fellows of all Parns from Greyfriars School, crowded along the beach and the cliffs; fifty boats and skiffs were on the water, searching among the caves and hollows of the Shoulder. The islands in the bay had been searched; almost every nook and cranny of the cliffs had been scanned.

And the result? Nothing!

The gipsy had disappeared, and with him had disappeared the kidnapped girl and the Bounder of Greyfriars.

As darkness rolled over the sea and the shore many of the searchers, wearied out, gave up the hopeless task.

Fellows were streaming back to Greyfriars, dusty and muddy and worn out, and hopeless. Harry Wharton & Co. did not give in. But when darkness fell they were ordered to return to the school.

"It is useless to stay here," Mr. Quelch said, kindly enough, for he saw how the juniors were cut to the heart by their failure. "You have done very much, Wharton. You have discovered that Miss Hazeldene was kidnapped, and who the kidnapper is. The rest is only a matter of time. The secondred must be found."

"Let us stay and have a hand in it, sir," said Wharton eagerly.

The Remove-master shook his head.
"You can do nothing more," he said. "The coastguards are going to search along the cliff again by lantern-light, and you can do nothing to help them."

"But, sir—"
"Come, come, Wharton, you must allow me to know best. You must return to the school," said Mr. Quelch sharply.
And the juniors, with heavy hearts, tramped back to Greyfriars.

There was one who did not go, and that one was the Bounder. He was a prisoner in the hands of the kidnapper. The police and coastguards were hunting for him now, as well as for Marjorie Hazeldene.

Gloomily enough, the juniors tramped back to the school. As they ate their evening meal, weary and glum, the talk was all of the day's searching, and of the hiding-place of the gipsy kidnapper.

"I suppose we shall have another run to-morrow," Bolsover remarked, in the junior common-room.

"Wingate says no," said Ogilvy. "Dr. Locke is very much upset about the Bounder being kidnapped, and it seems that he won't allow us out again."

"Oh, that's rotten!"
"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, all that's been discovered so far was by Greyfriars chaps, and not by the police, intirely."

"Begad, yass!" said Mauleverer. "It's too bad!"
Wharton's brows knitted hard together.

"Come up to the study, you fellows," he said abruptly.
And the "Co." retired to No. 1 Study.

"It's all rot!" said Harry, when the study door was closed.
"Vernon-Smith got himself into this by rushing into the thing. I warned him to keep off, but he would go on, and it's not fair that we should be kept from helping in the search because that ass has got himself into trouble."

Nugent shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"No good explaining that to the Head," he remarked.
"Dr. Locke is thinking of what our people would say, I suppose, if anything happened to us."

Wharton frowned.

"That's all very well, but Marjorie's got to be found."

"Have you got any idea where that scoundrel may have hidden himself?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I think I have."

"Oh, good!"

"The goodfulness is terrific!"

"Do you remember, some time ago there was a smuggler in the caves at Pegg, and we came upon him, exploring the caves there," said Harry Wharton. "It came into my head a little while ago. There was a cave that could only be entered when the tide was in a certain state—the entrance is below water at high tide, and a long way above the sea at low tide."

"I remember," said Nugent.

"It would make a safe hiding-place for anybody who knew about it," said Harry. "It's a place very few people know about—we came on it by chance."

"But the gipsy—"

"He may know about it, too, and it's just the place he would choose."

John Bull whistled softly.

"If he knows the cliffs and caves so well, it's not much use the police trying to run him down," he said. "He will be a watchful beggar, and at the first sign of them he will slip off into some safer place."

Wharton nodded.

"I know that, and for that reason I don't want to leave it to the police."

"But we can't go—"

"We must!"

"Against orders," said John Bull, with a shake of the head.

"We can't get away from lessons to-morrow without the Head's permission."

"I'm not thinking of to-morrow," said Wharton calmly.

"I'm thinking of to-night."

"To-night!" echoed the juniors, in a breath.

"Yes, if you fellows are game—"

"We're game enough," said Nugent slowly, "but—"

"We shall have to break bounds," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Still, we've done that before, and we can do it again."

"The goodfulness of the esteemed prefects will be easy for old birds like our worthy selves," remarked Hurree Singh.

"But that chap's pretty dangerous for boys to tackle," said Frank. "You remember how hefty he was with the axe—"

Wharton frowned.

"We shall go ready for him this time."

"H'm!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

"THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I don't want to drag you fellows into it," said Harry. "I know it's jolly risky, but I think I'd run any risk to get Marjorie out of that villain's hands. He's a drunken brute, and only half responsible for his actions. Her life even might be in danger!"

Nugent shivered.

"I shouldn't wonder!"

"Anyway, he means to keep her hidden until the hue and cry is over, and then try to get money for releasing her," said Harry. "It might be weeks before she is free."

"We'll go!" said Bob Cherry.

"The goodfulness is terrific!"

"Only if you fellows don't like the idea, I should go alone."

That's all, said Harry Wharton. "I've made up my mind about that."

"That's rot!" said Bob. "If you go, we go. That's settled."

"Quite settled," said Frank.

"Then it's a go," said Harry Wharton. "We'll leave it pretty late, to make all sure; we don't want to be stopped by a prefect."

"Better keep it dark, then."

"Yes; mum's the word."

"We'll take a cricket-stump apiece, and I think we shall be a match for that rascal," said Johnny Bull. "We might catch him napping, too."

"We'll try."

"Only keep mum," said Nugent. "If a hint got out about it we should be ordered to keep indoors, and then we couldn't go. It's impossible to go out against direct orders from the Head."

"I know that, but—"

"Hut!"

Nugent rose softly to his feet, and stepped noiselessly to the door. A faint sound in the passage had caught his keen ears. He threw the study door suddenly open, and there was a roar as someone tumbled into the room.

The juniors jumped up.

"Bunter!"

"You cad!"

"You were listening. Collar him!"

"Ow! Ow!" roared Billy Bunter. "I—I wasn't listening! I never heard a word! I don't know that you're going to break bounds to-night, and I won't say a word about it. Ow!"

Harry Wharton regarded the fat junior with silent anger. Nugent shut the door, and Billy Bunter sat up on the carpet, blinking at the juniors. They gathered round him with very grim looks.

"I—I say, you fellows," panted Bunter. "I—I was passing just by accident, you know, and—and I happened to be leaning against the door, and—and—"

"Don't tell lies!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The cad knows all about it now, and he'll chatter," said Bob Cherry hopelessly. "We'll give him a jolly good lick ing, anyway."

"Ow! Ow! Ow! I say, you fellows—"

"You worm!" said Wharton, grasping the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and dragging him to his feet. "If you say a word—"

"Ow! Ow! D-d-don't shake me like that, Wharton. You'll make my glasses f-f-fall off, and if they get b-b-broken you'll have to p-p-pay for them. Ow!"

"Did you hear—"

"I didn't hear a word. Ow! I hope I'm above listening to a fellow's private conversation. Ow! Look here—"

"If you say a word about what you've heard, we'll rag you until you think life isn't worth living," said Wharton, between his teeth, as he flung the fat junior from him.

"Ow! Ow! Look here—"

"You cad!"

"The cadfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, setting his spectacles straight upon his little fat nose, and blinking at the enraged juniors. "I—I'll keep it dark, you know. Of course, I wouldn't think of giving you away. You'd get into a jolly row if the prefects know you intended to break bounds to-night, and go looking for the gipsy."

"Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Bull! Look here, you know, I'll keep it strictly dark, but—but one good turn deserves another, you know."

"What do you mean, you cad?"

"I was coming here to mention to you fellows that—that a postal-order I was expecting hasn't arrived," said Bunter. "That has happened before—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I believe it has!"

Billy Bunter grunted.

"Pleased if I can see anything to cackle at," he said

peevishly. "I've been thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General about it, it certainly ought to be seen to." But just now I'm rather short of money, owing to this scandalous delay in the post."

"Go on!"

"If you fellows cared to advance me five bob on the postal-order, I should take it as a great favour," said Bunter. "Rats!"

"Of course, you can please yourselves. But I shall have to consider whether it's my duty to let the postmen know that you are going to break bounds."

"You shall have the money, you said!" said Wharton.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"And if you say a word, we'll squash you!"

Bunter extended a plump palm.

"Cash down!" he remarked tersely.

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't trust you," he said.

"The carefulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "He would take the money and talk afterwards."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"You shall have the money to-morrow morning, if you hold your tongue," said Wharton, frowning.

"I'd prefer it now."

"I dare say you would, but you're not going to have it now," said Wharton.

"Look here—"

"That's a bargain," said Harry quietly. "Hold your tongue, and you'll have the five bob in the morning. Say a word, and we'll rag you till you think life isn't worth living. Now get out of the study."

"Oh, really—"

"Get out!"

"But I say—"

"Get out!" shouted Wharton, angrily.

And Billy Bunter thought he had better get out.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. went up to bed a little later, feeling somewhat uneasy on Bunter's account. But Bunter had said nothing. He blinked reproachfully at the chums of the Remove when they came into the dormitory, but they took no notice of him. Bunter had decided to hold his tongue, which was just as well for him. If he had given the plan away, he would certainly have experienced the ragging of his life.

The Remove dormitory was in a buzz of discussion after lights out. It was long before the juniors slept. But the voices died away at last.

There were five juniors, however, who did not sleep. They were Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

They were not inclined for sleep.

As soon as all was silent, and the coast was clear, they intended to start upon their expedition.

They waited patiently, while the Removees dropped off to sleep one by one.

Eleven o'clock rang out from the old tower of Greyfriars.

There was deep silence in the Remove dormitory.

Most of the seniors and the masters were in bed by that time, too. The great house was very still and silent.

Wharton waited another half-hour to make all sure. Half-past eleven sounded in a soft chime through the quiet night.

Then Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered.

"Hello, ha, ha, hello!" came in a murmur from Bob Cherry. "I'm awake, for one."

"Same here."

"Tumble up, then."

The five juniors turned out of bed.

They dressed themselves quickly and quietly in the gloom. There was a moon over the clock-tower, and a shimmer of silvery light fell in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory.

In five minutes the chums of the Remove were ready. Wharton moved quietly towards the door, and as he did so there was a sound from one of the beds.

"I say, you fellows."

It was a sneaky voice in the gloom, as Billy Bunter sat up in bed and jammed his spectacles upon his fat little nose, and blinked at the five dim figures moving towards the door. Wharton drew a sharp breath.

"Quiet, Bunter!"

"Are you going out?"

"Yes. Shut up!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hold your tongue, I tell you!"

"Don't go out, or I shall have to shout after you, and that would wake the fellows up," said Billy Bunter calmly. The juniors halted, clenching their hands. Bunter was master of the situation now, there was no doubt about that.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 312.

NEXT

TUESDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

EVERY TUESDAY. The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"Upon the whole, I think I'll have cash down, after all," said Bunter. "Would you mind handing it over? You might lose it while you're out scrambling into rocks and things, you know."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"You said!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't see that it makes any difference to you, you know! I'd rather have the ten shillings now, in case you lose the money."

"You said five," muttered Nugent.

"Did I? Oh, that was a mistake, then; the postal-order will be for ten shillings," said the Owl of the Remove coolly. "Would you mind handing it over?"

The chums of the Remove would have given more than ten shillings to drag Bunter out of bed and bump him hard upon the dormitory floor. But the least alarm might have spoiled the whole plan.

Wharton extracted the money from his pocket, and stepped towards Bunter's bed. The ten shillings were placed in the fat hand of the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, thanks!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, will you have this back when my postal-order comes, or shall I put it down to the account?"

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

"Oh, really—"

The five juniors quitted the dormitory. Bunter, with a soft chuckle, settled down to repose again.

All was dark in the dormitory passage outside.

Harry Wharton stole downstairs on tiptoe, and reached the lower passage, where a window overlooking the roof of an outhouse afforded a means of getting safely out.

Wharton opened the window softly.

One by one the juniors crawled out, and dropped from the outhouse to the ground.

Harry Wharton was the last to leave, and he closed the window quietly behind him. Then he dropped, and joined his companions.

"All serene?" murmured Nugent.

"Yes; come on."

"The serenefulness is terrific."

The juniors crept silently round the dark School House.

Five minutes later, they had climbed the school wall, and dropped into the road outside.

The moon glimmered over the trees; the long, white road lay glimmering before them; far in the distance rose the dark summit of the Black Dice. Through the still night air they could hear the distant murmur of the sea.

With their cricket-stumps gripped in their hands, the five juniors tramped away on the road to the cliffs.

Their hearts were beating with suppressed excitement.

They had got safely out of Greyfriars; but their adventure was only beginning. And they knew only too well how full of terrible danger it might be for them.

But they did not falter.

Through the silent night, they tramped steadily on towards the sea, and soon the shingle was crackling beneath their feet.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Into the Unknown.

THE juniors halted upon the beach, where the fishermen's boats were pulled up out of the reach of the sea.

Wharton selected a boat which the juniors had sometimes hired from its owner, Silas Trumper, the fisherman. The oars, of course, were not in the boat, but the juniors knew where Trumper kept them, and Wharton disappeared into the shed behind the fisherman's cottage, and soon came back with the oars. The boat was pushed down to the water, and the juniors crowded into it.

Out in the bay, the sea glimmered like dull silver under the moon. Far-off at the end of the bay the great Shoulder lay a black mass. That was the destination of the chums of the Remove.

In the dark recesses of the great cliff, Wharton had once explored the submerged cave, used of old by the smugglers; and there, as he suspected, the gipsy kidnapper lay hidden, safe from the arm of the law.

Harry Wharton knew the rocks of the Shoulder as well as he knew the football-field at Greyfriars. Many a summer's afternoon the juniors had spent in boats in the bay, or in swimming at the foot of the cliffs.

There was hardly a foot of the rocky coast that Wharton and his chums did not know as well as the oldest fisherman in the village of Pogg.

Harry Wharton took the lines, and the other four fellows settled down to the oars.

The boat glided out into the moonlit bay.

From the darkness of the Shoulder, as the Greyfriars fellows pulled towards it, came at moments flashes and

twinkles of light, and now and then the splash of an oar sound faintly echoing through the night.

"They're still searching," said Nugent.

"And they've had no luck," Bob Cherry remarked.

There were half a dozen boats searching the cliffs in the hours of darkness; the twinkling lights came from the lanterns of the coastguards.

But it was evident that the search was not successful.

The hiding-place of the gipsy kidnapper was too obscure, and the searchers, eager and numerous as they were, had not succeeded in getting upon the track.

"We shall have to give those chaps a wide berth, though," Wharton remarked, with an anxious look. "We don't want to fall in with them, and be shifted off the scene."

Nugent chuckled.

"No; they mightn't realise, as we do, that we're more likely to run down the gipsy than they are."

"The more-likelyfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

"Quite so; but we can't expect them to see it," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Just so," said Wharton; "we'll keep out of their way. When we've found the gipsy, it will be a different matter."

"Yes, rather."

"You remember just where the cave was, Wharton?" asked Johnny Bull. Bull had not been at Gryffriars at the time of Wharton's adventure with the smuggler.

"Oh, yes," said Harry confidently. "I'm not likely to forget it. We were jolly nearly drowned there. I believe I could steer to it blindfold."

"Good."

The boat glided swiftly over the bay.

Blacker and larger the great mass of the Shoulder rose before them.

"Steady, now," said Wharton.

Little lines of white foam were curling round the boat. The craft glided on slowly among jutting rocks.

"Hold on, all!"

The boat floated to a standstill.

Before it rose a steep, black cliff, like a wall in the darkness.

Blacker than the mass of the cliff was a wide, deep opening—the opening of a cavern that extended into the cliff to unknown depths.

"Is this the place?" whispered John Bull.

"This is it."

"Ugh! It looks gloomy enough."

"Jolly rotten place to be caught in," said Nugent. "At flood tide the water fills it right up to the roof."

"Then what about the gipsy here?"

"There's a higher ground further in," Wharton explained.

"There's a big hollow in the cliff, and the opening goes right up to the top. In the daytime, there's a sort of twilight in the cave from above."

"Oh, I see!"

"Only it's a difficult place to get into, and since we were here there has been a slide of rocks that has made the passage narrower. The sea cuts away the rock here, you see, and every now and then there is a collapse."

Wharton lighted a lantern, and stood up in the boat, flashing the rays to and fro as they glided slowly into the cavern.

Round the boat rose walls of dripping rock, wet from the recent high tide, and here and there upon ledges and crevices could be seen creeping things of the sea—starfish, and other strange creatures, abandoned there by the receding tide.

The place was dark, gloomy, silent as the tomb.

The juniors shuddered at the thought of the girl from Cliff House being shut up in the gloomy place with the savage gipsy as her gaoler.

Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"There's the passage."

High above the water was a fissure in the rocks.

At highest tide it was covered, but now it was several feet above the water, and it looked like a mere crack in the rocks.

Johnny Bull eyed it very doubtfully.

"Is that the place, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"It doesn't look as if that rift up there leads more than a yard or two into the cliff," said Bull doubtfully.

"But it does, when you come to look at it."

"Well, if you're sure of the place, it's all right. How are we going to get into it?"

"We shall have to climb."

"And leave the boat here?"

"Of course. It's no good waiting for the tide."

Nugent made fast the painter to a point of rock. The boat floated under the fissure, grating against the rough rocks.

The fissure was six or seven feet above the heads of the juniors as they stood up in the boat. The rock was wet and slippery. Harry Wharton stood upon the gunwale of the

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boat, and prepared to climb. Slippery as the rock was, it offered projections as a hold for the hands, and Wharton drew himself steadily up.

The boat rocked as he jerked himself away from it. The juniors stood watching him breathlessly as he dragged himself upwards.

In a few minutes he was able to put his arms into the opening, and draw himself into it, somewhat breathless.

"All serene?" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Yes, all right."

"Can you see anything yet?"

Wharton strained his eyes into the darkness of the fissure.

"Not yet," he said.

"Take these things up!" said Bob Cherry.

Wharton leaned down as low as he could, and the stumps and the dark lantern were handed up to him.

He placed them beside him, and then reached down his hand to help the other fellows in the ascent of the slippery rock.

One by one the Removites climbed up, and gained the fissure beside Wharton, and the boat rocked empty below.

"Well, here we are!" said Bob Cherry, picking up his cricket-stump. "And now to look for our friend the enemy."

"The lookfulness is terrific."

The juniors strained their eyes into the darkness round them.

Now that they were in the fissure, they could feel the cold air from the cave, showing them that a great hollow lay beyond.

If Wharton had not known of the existence of the old-time smugglers' cave, he would certainly never have thought of exploring the fissure, and the juniors fully realised that the coastguards and fishermen who were exploring the cliffs had no chance of stumbling upon the place, unless by the merest chance.

The rescue of Marjorie Hazeldene depended upon them, and upon them alone.

And the knowledge of that made them very cautious. If the gipsy was there, as they hoped, their task was not easy. The man was desperate, and probably under the influence of drink, and unless they surprised him in his drunken slumbers there might be a terrible fight in the cave before they succeeded in rescuing the kidnapped girl.

Not a sound broke the silence of the cliff as they peered through the darkness, vainly seeking for a gleam to guide them.

"Shall we show a light?" asked Nugent doubtfully.

"We must!" said Wharton. "The place is full of fissures and pitfalls. We don't want to break our necks."

"If the gipsy sees it—"

"We must chance that."

"The chancefulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton turned on a mere gleam of light, barely sufficient to guide the juniors upon the dangerous path, and led the way.

The Removites followed him, stepping slowly and cautiously, the cricket-stumps grasped in their hands, and their hearts beating hard.

They tramped on silently in the darkness.

There was a swish of water ahead, and the glimmer of the lantern shone upon an expanse of water at their feet, and they halted.

"No ingress," murmured Bob Cherry.

Wharton contracted his brows.

"It's the water left here when the tide goes out," he said.

"When the sea is out this is a kind of lake."

"We want the boat now."

"But we can't get it here. If there's no way round we shall have to swim for it," said Harry quietly.

"Grou!"

"We can stand it!"

Harry Wharton moved round the edge of the dark lake, rapping at the rocks in the heart of the great cliff.

There were rough rocky ledges in the wall of the cave, which afforded sufficient footing for the adventurous juniors.

Suddenly Wharton stopped, with a suppressed exclamation, and turned off the glimmer of the dark-lantern.

"Look!" he breathed.

"What is it?"

"A light!"

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!"

"Can you see it?" whispered Wharton.

"Yes, it's a fire!"

"And the gipsy's there!"

FROM the black darkness of the cavern a faint, red glow had struck upon the eyes of the Greyfriars juniors. How near or how far it was they could not tell, for it was the inmost glimmer of red from the velvety blackness.

It was the low gleam of a dying fire, and it proved beyond doubt that the cavern was not deserted.

There was only one who could have taken the cavern as a refuge, and the Greyfriars juniors knew that they had run down the kidnapper to his lair.

They stood for some minutes in the darkness, with beating hearts.

The red gleam died down, and flared up again, twinkling, and occasionally disappearing in the gloom as they watched it.

"He's there!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"He must be!"

"The mustfulness is terrific!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"Most likely he's asleep now. We may take the brute by surprise. He won't be expecting us, that's certain."

Bob Cherry chuckled softly.

"It's rather a late hour for visitors," he murmured.

"We shall catch the rascal upon the esteemed hop," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"He, ha! Rather!"

"Quiet!" murmured Wharton. "We shall have to get on without a light now, in case the brute is awake, and watching. Mind you don't tumble into the water."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors moved on cautiously.

They moved at almost a snail's pace over the sloping rocks of the cavern wall, stealing steadily nearer and nearer to their prey.

As they came closer, they saw that the fire gleamed upon a high ledge of rock above the level of high water. It was burning very low, but the light was clear enough to illuminate the immediate surroundings.

An old gipsy woman was sitting with nodding head beside the fire. Barengro, the gipsy, was extended upon the rocks, evidently fast asleep. Further back was the Bounder, in a sitting posture, leaning against a rock. His hands were bound, and his face glimmered pale in the light of the fire. His chin had fallen upon his breast, and, in spite of the discomfort of his position, he was fast asleep.

"Where is Marjorie?" muttered Bob Cherry.

The girl was not to be seen.

"In the boat, perhaps," said Wharton. "The villain has a boat here somewhere."

"Yes. Look!"

Nugent pointed out the dark shape of the boat moored at the edge of the lake. There was what looked like a bundle of rugs in it, and the juniors had little doubt that the rugs covered Marjorie Hazeldene.

"She's there!" said John Bull.

"You fellows ready?" muttered Wharton. "We're in jolly good luck! We've run the scoundrel down. Now we've got to collar him before he can get at a weapon."

"We're ready."

"The readiness is terrific!"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Come on, then!"

They pressed forward slowly, cautiously, silently, with gleaming eyes. Nearer and nearer to the dull glimmer of the fire they pressed, and the heavy breathing of the gipsy came plainly to their ears.

The crone by the fire stirred in her dozing, and looked round. Some slight sound had caught her ears.

There was a sudden discordant shriek from the hag.

"Barengro! Wake!"

The gipsy started up from his slumbers.

"Burn you! What—"

"At him!" yelled Wharton.

Caution was useless now. The five juniors rushed on, and hurled themselves at the gipsy as he rose.

Barengro was taken utterly by surprise, and his brain was still clouded by the heavy drinking of the night before. He was blind with drunken sleep. And the juniors showed him no mercy. They did not mean to give the desperate a chance to get at a deadly weapon.

As the gipsy staggered to his feet, Wharton's cricket-stump came crashing on his head with so terrible a force that it broke in two, leaving Harry with but half of it in his hand.

Barengro gave a cry, and fell.

Before he could rise again the juniors were upon him. Bob Cherry's knee was planted upon his chest, pinning him down, and Nugent caught one of his arms, and Johnny Bull the other.

Wharton stood ready to strike again, if it were needed, with the fragment of the stump that remained in his hand. The gipsy woman advanced as if to help her associate, but Hurree The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

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TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

Singh flourished his stump, and she shrieked and retreated. Barengro had to fight his battle alone, and he had no chance from the first.

No second blow was needed.

The ruffian was half-stunned, and at any time he would have had little chance against the four sturdy juniors in deadly earnest.

In spite of his struggling and his cursing, he was held down to the rock, under the weight of his captors.

"The rope—quick!" gasped Nugent.

Wharton had the rope ready.

Bull and Nugent dragged the gipsy's wrists together, and Wharton bound them fast with the rope, knotting it tightly. The gipsy's ankles were then tied at ease, and the ruffian lay a helpless prisoner upon the rocks.

The juniors rose, panting but triumphant from the struggle.

"Got him?" gasped Nugent.

"Huray!" roared Bob Cherry.

And the juniors echoed the shout, till the hollows of the cavern reverberated again.

"Huray! Hip, hip, huray!"

The cheer was hung back with stunning reverberations from the hollows of the cliff. Vernon-Smith had started from slumber, and he was upon his feet now, gazing wildly at the juniors.

"You fellows!" he gasped. "You here!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grinned Nugent.

"Let me loose!"

Hurree Singh let the Bounder loose. Johnny Bull remained to watch the gipsy crone, lest she should make an attempt to release Barengro, and Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry ran down to the boat.

Marjorie was there, and she was already awakened by the noise.

A pale sweet face looked out of the shadows.

"Marjorie!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Who is it?" gasped the girl. "Is it—is it—rescue?"

"Yes, rather!"

"We're here."

"It's all right now, Marjorie."

"Oh, thank Heaven!"

They helped the almost fainting girl from the boat.

Marjorie was crying.

"I began to think that I should never be saved," she whispered in trembling tones. "Oh, it has been terrible!"

Wharton pressed her hand.

"It must have been," he said softly; "but it's over now, dear Marjorie. We're going to take you straight back to Cliff House."

"The all-overfulness is terrific, esteemed miss."

Marjorie sobbed.

"Thank Heaven you came," she murmured.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had stirred up the fire, and it gleamed brightly through the cavern.

Barengro, the gipsy, pouring out a stream of curses as he lay bound upon the rocks, Marjorie looked at the ruffian with a shudder. But Barengro's flow of eloquence was soon stopped. Nugent drove a stuffed handkerchief into his mouth, and tied it there with a string round the back of the gipsy's head, and Barengro's voice died away in impotent mutterings and growlings.

The Bounder was rubbing and chafing his cramped wrists. There was a bitter smile on his face.

"You've beaten me, Wharton," he said.

Wharton stared at him, not for the moment understanding. He had been thinking wholly of the rescue of Marjorie, and of nothing else that might be the outcome of the perilous adventure.

"What do you mean?" he said. "We've saved you."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You've beaten me—in the first of the tests," he said.

"I had forgotten all that," said Harry quietly.

"I had not." The Bounder gritted his teeth. "Thank you for fishing me out of this—though it's no more than I did for you on the cliff to-day, after all."

Wharton smiled. He understood the repugnance of the Bounder to admit himself under any obligation to his rival.

"No more at all," he agreed. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Quite so. You've beaten me in the first round; but there are two more, and I think I shall win the rubber."

"We shall see about that."

Wharton glanced round him. The gipsy woman had disappeared into the shadows. Barengro lay wriggling and numbing on the ground.

"We'll take the boat across the lake, and then this scoundrel won't be able to get away, even if the woman sets

him free," said Wharton. "He can wait here till the police come for him to-morrow."

"Good!"

"Come, Marjorie!"

The shivering girl was placed in the gipsy's boat, and the juniors shoved off, and the boat glided away over the dark waters of the hidden lake.

It took the juniors less time to return to the fissure by which they had entered the inner cave than it had taken to reach the gipsy's camp. In the boat they made a direct line for it, and the fire, now blazing up, showed them light.

Across the lake, they stopped, and Marjorie was helped out of the boat. The juniors followed, and then the boat was thrust under water. It filled and sank, and Barengro's last chance of escaping from the cave was gone.

As the juniors clambered through the fissure, they heard in the distance the furious voice of the gipsy. The old crouched and evidently released him from his bond. There was a sound of scrambling on the rocks; the ruffian was making a desperate attempt to get round the cave, to overtake the juniors before they could reach the outer cavern. But he had no chance. The juniors passed through the fissure, and Marjorie was helped down into the boat in the outer cave, and the juniors took the oars.

The boat glided out to sea.

As they passed from the cave, into the moonlit sea without, they could hear from the hollows of the rock the reverberating echoes of the gipsy's curses. But the ruffian's fury was harmless enough now. He was a helpless prisoner in the cave till the police should visit the place to take him into custody.

Lights were still twinkling along the cliffs, and the juniors no longer avoided the boats of the searchers. Wharton hailed one as it glided by in the distance, and his hail was answered. The boat glided up, and an astonished constabulary looked at the juniors in the glare of a lantern.

"What on earth are you boys doing out here?" he demanded.

"We've found Miss Hazeldene," said Wharton calmly.

"What?"

"Look!"

"Great Scott!"

"The Great-Scottfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"And where's the kidnapper?"

Wharton explained, and gave directions for entering the cave. The constabulary in the boat listened in utter astonishment.

"Well, you young beggars take the cake! We'll have that gipsy scoundrel at once. You'd better take Miss Hazeldene to Cliff House now."

"That's where we are going."

And the juniors pulled on.

A quarter of an hour later Wharton was tugging at the bell of Cliff House School; and Marjorie Hazeldene was delivered into the arms of Miss Ponelope Primrose. And Harry Wharton & Co. tramped back to Greyfriars feeling decidedly pleased with themselves, the only member of the party who was not in a state of exaltation being the Bounder.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winner!

GREYFRIARS was awake when the juniors arrived in sight of the school. The gate was open, and a light gleamed there, and Gosling, the porter, was looking out into the road. Across the Close, lights could be seen gleaming in several windows of the School House. Frank Nugent uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"They're found out we were gone," he exclaimed.

"Looks like it. There will be a row," remarked Bob Cherry.

"I don't see that it matters," said Harry Wharton, "as we've rescued Marjorie, we should have to tell the story in the morning, anyway. I don't think the Head will be hard on us—under the circumstances."

"Nothing succeeds like success," grinned Nugent.

"Exactly."

Gosling, the porter, looked grumpy at the juniors as they came tramping in.

"So you've come back," grunted Gosling.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Bob Cherry. "But we didn't expect to have the pleasure of seeing you, Gossy. So now you can sit up for us, and save us the trouble of getting over the wall."

Gosling grunted.

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"THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In This Thursday's Number of
"The Gem" Library, 1d.

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

"Young rips!" he said. "Wot I says is this 'ere, all boys oughter to drowned, I says. You are to go straight in to the 'ead. He's hup."

"Is he really hup?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere, you're going to get a 'iding all round," said Gosling. "I dunno wat this school's coming to. I think—"

"We'll hear what you think another time, Gossy," said Nugent sweetly. "We'll get in now. Good-night!"

Gosling replied only with a grunt, and the juniors tramped in across the Close. The door of the School House was open, and a light streamed out into the night.

As the juniors entered, Wingate, of the Sixth, met them, and the face of the Greyfriars captain was very grim.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"Ahem—"

"I had an idea that some of you young, reckless rascals might make a break in the night," said Wingate, "and I went to look into your dormitory before going to bed."

"So you found us out!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't find that a laughing matter!" said Wingate grimly. "The Head has taken out a special cane for you."

"Groat!"

"You're to come at once to— Great Scott!"

"To whom?" demanded Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To the Head, you young asses!" said Wingate, laughing to himself. "But—but—where did you find Vernon-Smith. You don't mean to say—"

"Yes, we do—"

"Of course, I guessed that you had gone to look for Miss Hazeldene, but you don't mean to say that—that you've found her!" shouted Wingate.

Wharton nodded calmly.

"That's exactly what we do mean to say," he replied.

"Great Scott!"

"And the Bounder, too," said Nugent. "We've brought the Bounder home, and left Miss Hazeldene in Cliff House. And the gipsy's arrested by this time."

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

There was a cry from the staircase. Hazeldene was out of the dormitory, with his nightshirt tucked into his trousers.

"Wharton—did you say—"

"It's all right, Hazel."

"You've found Marjorie?"

"Yes, rather!"

"And rescued her?"

"She's at Cliff House now."

"Oh, thank Heaven!"

"You fellows will have to come to the Head, all the same," said Wingate, when he had recovered from his amazement.

"I shouldn't wonder if he lets you off the caning now."

"Well, I think he might, under the circumstances," said Wharton.

It seems almost too good to be true, but I'm glad you cheeky young beggars have done it," said Wingate, with a deep breath. "By the way, it occurs to me that you have won the first round of the tests, Wharton."

"Yes, I think I can fairly claim that," said Harry. "Vernon-Smith does not dispute it."

The Bounder shook his head.

"I admit it," he replied. "It's clear enough. Wharton wins in the first round, and I'm going to win in the second and third."

Wingate laughed.

"We shall see about that," he remarked. "Come to the Head now. He will be jolly glad to hear your news."

Wingate was right. Dr. Locke's face was very stern when the juniors were taken into his study; but the doctor's expression changed very much when he heard what they had to tell him.

"Miss Hazeldene rescued?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir."

"The rescuefulness was terrific, honoured sahib."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Bless my soul!" He pushed away the cane that lay ready to his hand. "You must tell me about it, my dear boys—all about it from the beginning."

Harry Wharton explained.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, when the junior had concluded. "Bless my soul! I was going to punish you boys very severely for breaking bounds at night; but under the circumstances I shall certainly not do so. I am very glad that Miss Hazeldene has been rescued; and very glad to see

you back again safe and sound, Smith. I am very glad, indeed. I shall give each of you boys fifty lines for breaking bounds; but at the same time, I am very proud of you—very proud of you indeed!"

And the Head shook hands with each of the juniors as he dismissed them.

Harry Wharton & Co. went up to the Remove dormitory, and they found it in an uproar.

Hazeldens had spread the news, and the whole Remove was up, and the dormitory, late as the hour was, was a blaze of light.

A yell greeted the entrance of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Here they are!"

"Here come the giddy heroes."

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

Vernon-Smith went quietly to bed. The whole Remove rushed upon Harry Wharton & Co., and lifted them shoulder-high, and bore them in triumphant procession round the dormitory.

The Bounder's look was very bitter.

In the crowd that greeted Harry Wharton and his friends so enthusiastically, the Bounder saw many of his own backers in the election contest. There was no doubt that if Wharton succeeded in winning the tests, he would find a united Form to follow him, and that there would be very few opponents to stand by Vernon-Smith, and give the Form-captain trouble.

And a doubt assailed the Bounder as he lay there, looking on at the scene of wild excitement—a doubt of his own powers to beat his rival in the remaining tests.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"Hip-hip!"

The Remove dormitory rang with cheering.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Nuff's as good as a feast. Let a chap go to bed. I'm dog-tired."

"The dog-tiredness of the tired is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and give 'em another yell, darlings!" shouted Micky Desmond.

And the yell was given with a will.

"Hurrah!"

The dormitory door opened, and Wingate looked in. The captain of Greyfriars was laughing.

"Stop that awful row!" he exclaimed. "You can do the rest of your celebrating in the Close to-morrow. Go to bed now."

"Faith, Wingate, darling—"

"Shut up, now, and go to bed," said Wingate. "You're waking the whole house! Now, tumble in!"

And the juniors tumbled in, and the rescuers slept the sleep of the dog-tired for the remainder of that night, and they were still sleeping soundly when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning. But, sleepy as he was, Harry Wharton's face was very cheerful as he came down in the morning. He had won number one of the Rivals' Test!

THE END.

(Next week's grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled "The Jape Against the Fifth," by Frank Richards. Order your copy of "THE MAGNET" Library well in advance. Price 1d.)

CHING-LUNG IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND.

A Wonderful Story
of Ferraers Lord,
Millionaire,
Rupert Thurston,
and Gan-Waga.

THE OPENING INSTALMENTS.

THROUGH TRACKLESS TIBET!

BY
SIDNEY
DREW.

(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferraers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwan-Hai, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into The Forbidden Land, when they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. These are beaten off, and the party, after a period of hard travelling, reach the first Tibetan village. Here they are surprised to find that the head man is an Irishman, Barry O'Rourke by name. They stay at his house for a time, and while at dinner they are startled by the arrival of Argal-Dinjat, who bears the news that Storland Sahib and his followers are riding towards the village. Storland and his brigands attack them fiercely, and the party takes refuge in a couple of sheds, where they are hotly besieged. Ferraers Lord promises to save them if they can hold out another hour, but the brigands fire one of the sheds, and the party have to rush across to the other.

"Twenty-five minutes more, Ching!" whispers the millionaire. "Can we do it?" "We must hope. We can do nothing more than hope and fight!"

(Now read on from here.)

Ching-Lung Rescues the Cattle, and Proves that Water is not the Only Thing to put out a Fire—A Twelve-Pounder Gun—Charged by Storland Sahib's Wolves—Ferraers Lord Fulfills his Strange Promise in a Startling Fashion.

The thatch of the second shed was bone-dry and terribly inflammable. It burst into flame, and blazed furiously. The shed, too, was smaller than the other, and the windows and doors were much narrower. The air grew hot and scorching instantly, and volumes of choking smoke poured down.

Triumphant yells greeted the successful shot. It was more like the howling of a pack of fiends than the sound of human voices. The other thatch was a mass of roaring flame, and glowing sparks shot into the air. The light breeze blew the sparks towards the biggest shed, where the mules and ponies were.

"We can't stand this very long!" said Thurston anxiously. "If we don't scorch to death, we'll be stifled."

They were all coughing, and their eyes smarted. Ferraers Lord, sitting on a sack of corn, was again using his lead-pipe. Gan-Waga panted like a dog. Heat was not natural to him, and he felt it dreadfully, though he had stripped himself to the waist.

"Look there, sir!" said Prout, pointing through the smoke. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy early.

The flying sparks had set the thatch of the cattle-shed on fire. Mules and ponies began to squeal and snort with terror. Ching-Lung took out his knife. Though the door was open, the poor brutes were tied. Ching-Lung rushed through the smoke, and, though a dozen shots were fired at his shadowy, running figure, he was not hit.

The cattle were half madd with fear, and plunging and leaping to break their halter-ropes. To go near them was to face a danger almost as great as Storland Sahib's bullets. It was risking life and limb, and even Ching-Lung hesitated. He could not leave the poor brutes there to die a death of horrible torture. He had plenty of cartridges.

"I'd better shoot them all," he thought. "They'll lame me for certain if I try to cut them loose."

He levelled his rifle hesitatingly. It seemed a dreadful thing to kill them while there was the remotest hope of setting them at liberty. He glanced up, and noticed a beam, which ran the whole length of the shed above the manger, to which the animals were tied.

"Here's where an scroab shows his quality," he thought. "Cheer up, my beauties; you're not dead yet!"

There was a space of six inches between beam and thatch. Every instant the roar of the flames increased. The smoke grew thicker, the screams and plunging more pitiful. One

spring, and Ching-Lung was hanging from the beam, the knife held between his teeth. Then he was dangling by his hands, holding the knife in his hand. He advanced, moving one leg after the other, safe from kicks. Though he could not reach the halter-ropes, he could just reach the tops of the animals' heads to cut the halters there.

One by one, feeling themselves free, they galloped out, until only four were left. Ching-Lung moved his right foot, but something stopped it. A cross-beam ran above the other just there.

"I daren't go down to them," muttered Ching-Lung, "for they are worse than all the others put together. If I drop now they'll trample me to bits. I wonder how side the thing is?"

He hung by one foot, and felt with the other to find out the width of the beam. He could just graze its edge with his toe, but could not get round it. He could hardly see, for the place was filled with smoke. He set his teeth, and, hanging by his left foot, swung to and fro for a few moments, and let go.

It was a trick that in any circus would have evoked thunders of applause. His right foot was round the cross-beam. Cautiously he pulled the other after it, and cut the four halters. The ponies bolted madly, and Ching-Lung, alighting on hands on the straw, turned a somersault that brought him upon his legs again.

But there was more work to do. In one corner of the blazing shed stood a pile of large leather trunks, with rounded bottoms and thick straps. Each one was specially made to fit on a mule's back, and they were filled with ammunition. It was too precious to lose, and if the fire reached it, it would be lost for ever.

One at a time Ching-Lung carried the heavy cases to the window and dropped them out, till his arms ached and the perspiration streamed from every pore. Then he rushed back into the other shed, the bullets from the house coming just too late to find a billet.

Through the mist he saw some of his comrades, their faces black, and their eyes red with the smoke. In spite of all they were firing gamely.

"Where are the others, Maddock?" he asked.

"Out at the back, sir," they've got a few tools, and they're tryin' to dig a trench. We've got to move soon."

"It's a spanking idea," said Ching-Lung. "Stick to it, Ben. Don't give in."

"Not this side Christmas twelvemonth!" growled Maddock, as he sighted his rifle. "We ain't that sort."

Ching-Lung uttered a shout of warning, and they pushed out of the shed through a hurricane of sparks and blazing straw. The fire had eaten its way through, and the remnants of the thatch fell in with a roar. Stillier rose the wretched orie.

"They'll charge now, lads," said Ferrers Lord. "Load your revolvers, and don't waste a shot. We ought to stop a few of them. Ten minutes more—only ten minutes!"

"Wait!" yelled Ching-Lung. "We're not half dead yet. The sacks, lads, the sacks!"

"In the big shed. Hurrah! They're filled with meal, and meal won't burn. Make a floor of it."

They gave a cheer and ran. Working for their lives, they flung sacks of meal out of the big shed, and tossed them into the smaller one from which the thatch had fallen. The floor was a glowing mass of straw, but they paved it literally with meal. Hands were blistered, and faces burned; but they did not heed their injuries. Hitherto the smoke had screened them, but suddenly it cleared away for a second, and a sharp fire sent them scampering into cover. Ching-Lung's voice rang cheerily from the blazing shed.

"The boundaries might have given five minutes more. Never mind, we've got brains. Catch, my lads, and pull!"

The end of a rope fell at Prout's feet. He tugged with all his strength, and another sack slid across the ground.

"Bravo, Ching!" cried Thurston.

"Sling it back!"

Ching-Lung had discovered a way of removing the meal without exposing themselves to the rifle-fire from the house. And the effect of the meal on the fire was amazing. Sack after sack was emptied on the glowing straw, and the result was wonderful.

Panting, coughing, half blinded, they toiled to empty the meal over the floor. It was almost as good as water. The smoke became less dense, and it was easier to breathe.

"Ben," said Prout, "I'll ax you a riddle."

"I'm listenin', Thomas."

"It's this. If you get hold of a thousand clever men, took out their brains, B'fied 'em down, and put 'em into one other's head, whose 'ead would that be?"

"Ching-Lung's!" said Maddock promptly. "That's as easy as eatin' sponge-cake."

"Shakes, old son; you've guessed it just go!"

The enemy had caught glimpses of what they were doing

in the roofless shed. It baffled Thurston why they had not charged at once. Though they might have lost heavily, they must have been victors.

"Ching," cried Ferrers Lord, "bolt for it! That thatch won't last another minute!"

"I'm coming. This is the last sack. Haul away!"

"It ain't 'easy," said Prout. "Come on, you warmint!"

The sack slithered across the open space into shelter. Then it stood up, and Ching-Lung's grinning face looked out from its folds.

"I've arrived!" he chuckled. "It was a bit of luck, though, for I wasn't labelled."

Even Ferrers Lord joined in the laugh. Ching-Lung had left it at the last moment, for just then the thatch collapsed.

"Good job you come, Ching," said Gao-Waga, "or you been roast pork soon."

"Do you know that's the same as calling me a pig, you rascal?"

"Ain't you a pig? Sure you ain't a pig, Chingy?"

"Of course I'm not, you rascal!"

"Don," murmured Gao-Waga, "if you not a pig, why get labelled?"

Even poor Gao-Waga could just now that the withering heat had gone, and the men smacked his naked back for his smart question, until he threatened to slaughter the next person who came near him. Ferrers Lord had vanished. He was watching the sky.

Suddenly a breeze sprang up and swept the smoke away.

"What's that, sir?"

Prout pointed to the ridge, and then all knew why Storland Sahib's wolves had not charged. A puff of smoke hung over the brown incline.

Boom!

Something shrieked over the roofless shed and fell beyond it, and exploded with a roar. Brays as they were, every face turned white.

"A twelve-pounder shell!" said Prout. "It's about over now. They'll get the range next time."

"Get hold of it, Tom!"

"Lie down, lads!" shouted Ching-Lung.

Again the men shook hands all round. The shed was no protection now. They held their breath as the smoke belched out a second time. The shell struck the wall.

Crash!

A red light flashed out. The explosion tore a hole in the angle of the wall, and filled the shed with smoke and dust. Silence followed, broken by Ching-Lung's voice:

"Who's hurt?"

"Poor Hendrick's dead, sir!" said Joe sadly.

"Anyone else?"

Hendrick was the only victim, though several men had received cuts and bruises.

"We can't stop in here," said Ching-Lung. "It's safer under the wall outside. Bring Hendrick, Tom!"

Prout carried the dead body in his strong arms. Ferrers Lord's features twitched as he saw the corpse. Crouching under the outer wall, they awaited the next shot without being able to fire in return. Once more, calm and impassive, the millionaire checked the calculations he had made in his pocket-book.

"Your watch, Ching," he said, "and yours, Thurston. Thank you!"

The two watches showed the same time to the tenth part of a second. His own, according to them, was forty-six seconds slow. Ferrers Lord bit his lips. Which of the three watches was correct?

Boom!

They heard the impact of the shell, but it failed to explode. Something was amiss with the detonator. The millionaire disappeared into the shed for a sextant. He set up the tripod and glanced through the eye-piece. His pencil moved over the paper.

"My lads," he said, "owing to some magnetic influence, my watch, which is perhaps one of the most accurate that can be made, has misled me. It is nearly seven minutes fast. This has upset my calculations. We have still seven minutes to wait."

What did he mean? Seven minutes to wait! It was an eternity. They looked at each other. They were a miserable group, with scorched clothes and black faces. Seven minutes! Ching-Lung began to whistle. "Now we sha'n't be long," but in such a doleful key that it set their teeth on edge.

Four minutes went by—five—six!

Boom! Thud!

The shell was well aimed, and fired from the gun with a weaker charge. It curved downwards, and fell into the shed.

"Stand clear of the wall!" cried Ferrers Lord. "Out into the open, lads!"

The shell exploded as they fled. Half the wall rocked and

fell onwards with a crash just where Prout, Maddock, and Can-Ware had been crouching. With wild shouts and a thunder of hoofs, the fierce horsemen of Storland Sahib charged. Thirty of them tore across the yard and swept past the sheds.

The fugitives turned to fight their last fight. It was every man for himself. Crack! crack! crack! Rifles blazed, and horses fell. Gleaming eyes, savage faces, and tossing manes loomed through the smoke. There was no time to reload. Revolvers were emptied. Thirty yards, twenty yards! And then the millionaire's voice rang out again:

"Double round the sheds!"

They ran for their lives. They could turn more swiftly than the galloping horses. Very few of the Mongols possessed revolvers, and their long Manners and Leo-Metfords were heavy and clumsy weapons for mounted men. They reached the sheds, with the horsemen clattering in pursuit.

And then came a shout of amazement and dread that was answered from the house and ride. A strange droning sound set the air trembling, like the noise of a stiff breeze blowing through a mass of telegraph-wires.

Barry Ferrers Lord.

The Mongols, with protruding eyes and mouths agape, stared at the sky. And what did they see?

A black, conical object was rushing across the bright sky. With headlong speed it raced closer, growing larger and more distinct. The *Prout* rose to a shrill scream. Then a dozen puffs of smoke swept across its dark sides, and three of the Mongols pitched lifeless out of their saddles.

The rest, lashing their horses to madness, tore away towards the hills to escape from the flying demon that spat out death from the clouds. Ferrers Lord smiled as he regarded his astounded followers.

"My hob," he said quietly, "the seven minutes I spoke of have developed into eleven; but you must excuse that. Give a cheer for my new vessel, the Lord of the Skies."

The Wonderful Aeronaut—Ching-Lung Shows that He Knows How to Play Football—The Happy, Happy Home of Mr. Barry O'Rooney—A New and Welcome Recruit.

The aeronaut had checked its flight, and was sinking groundwards. Men were looking over the railing that ran round the decks and waving caps and handkerchiefs.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The flying vessel halted about a yard from the ground. Figures in trim blue uniforms leapt out, and the wondering gazed and hearty rescuers found themselves shaking hands. Painted on the vessel's bow in large gilt letters was her name: Lord of the Skies. Ching-Lung and Thurston saluted their astonished eyes to disperse the fancied vision. But when they looked again, the airship was in the same place, her ponderous driving screws motionless, the sun flashing on her spotless brasswork, and her suspensory screws spinning rapidly with the same buzzing sound.

"Ton," said Maddock desperately, "is it a nightmare?"

"I dunno, old boy. Wake up and see. Pull its tail, and if it's a nightmare it'll kick you. Try it wif a bit of corn."

Maddock chewed tobacco, thoughtfully, and Joe nudged him.

"Ere's a scarecrow, Ben," he whispered. "Twig that prize-puck there. Is it alive, or what?"

The boy's grin faded from ear to ear. O'Rooney was sitting on the ground, his big mouth open, and his eyes, twice their natural size and shape, staring fixedly at the airship.

"It's some new kind of money box," grinned Prout. "The mouth is where you put the coppers in."

"Coppers be jiggered!" said Joe. "You could put the six fattest coppers in London in there wifout missin' 'em, and a couple o' sergeants as well. If he don't shut it soon, somebody'll be takin' it for a cellar and shoutin' a load o' coals down it. Say, Mr. O'Rooney!"

O'Rooney started, put his cap on with the back to the front, and got up slowly and deliberately. He put his hand into his pocket and counted his money. And then he set off towards his house.

"Ere," cried Prout, "where are you shuntin' to?"

"Bedad," said O'Rooney, "O'm goin' to fetch a bit o' birdlime to thry and catch that big sparrow."

The men shivered; but there was not even a twinkle in the Irishman's eye. He came back slowly.

"Say, mister," he remarked, confronting one of the blue uniformed crew, "yez came wid that bird?"

"I did, sir."

"Faith," said O'Rooney, scratching his head, "did yez, now? Well, p'raps yez'll answer a few questions?"

"With pleasure, sir."

The men clustered round. They had learned already that when Mr. O'Rooney made remarks they might expect something funny. He looked as grave as an owl, and spoke as seriously as a judge condemning a criminal.

"O've always had a wakeness for nat'l history," he said, "evin when Oi was a wee baby bin used to boote the pup's tail to listen to him squawkin'. That's a mighty THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

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

feine bird, sir, though he's a bit poor in the feathers. Tell me, is it a cock or a hen?"

"Good lad!" muttered Prout. "That's a power!"

"Not a bit of it!" answered the man. "Every vessel's a 'she,' so it must be a hen."

"Good enough," said Joe. "Get along, O'Rooney!"

"It's a hen, eh?" went on the Irishman. "Bein' a herf bird, in course it can't sing. Would yez kindly inform me, sor, what kind of an egg that bird lays, and what yez feeds at on? Does it roost on a perch or on the fure? Does it ate corn or surrus, and what kind o' a nest does it build in the swale springtime when the vields are green?"

Roars of laughter drowned Mr. O'Rooney's voice, and a grin slowly overspread his visage.

"Old chap," said Ching-Lung, who had been listening, "that Irishman has got to go with us if we have to kidnap him."

"I dare say we can arrange that," answered Ferrers Lord. "Let us go aboard."

"Aren't you going after that brute Storland Sahib?"

"No, my boy. Let him go for a time. I have a reason. When I promised to capture him, I pledged myself to fight him by his own methods. It is his wonderful mobility that makes him so hard to capture, and his knowledge of the mountains. He reminds me of some of the Boers. I want to capture the whole gang. Once they knew the Lord of the Skies was in pursuit, they would scatter in ones and twos. Before very long we will take the field against Storland Sahib and hunt him down."

A ladder was dangled over the airship's side, and Thurston and Ching-Lung followed the millionaire to the deck. An airship was no new thing to them, but they both uttered cries of admiration. The deck was covered with thick, corrugated rubber, giving a firm grip to their feet.

From stem to stern the Lord of the Skies measured one hundred and twenty yards. Her narrowness made the distance seem even greater, for her greatest width was only thirty-six feet.

"I cannot say that any of the ideas are new," explained the millionaire. "The system is as old as the hills, but as yet only one engineer ever managed to carry it out, and that was poor Professor Huxley. You know the old child's toy—a piece of thin, flat wood, fastened to a light stick. You stick the stick swiftly in your palms to give it a rotatory motion, and the flat piece sails into the air, and falls when it ceases to spin. That is the principle of my vessel. I have sixty of these suspensory screws, each of them six feet long, and capable of lifting a weight twelve times heavier than the vessel."

"And the motive power that works these wonders?" asked Ching-Lung. "Is it electricity?"

"It is. The nineteenth century was the age of steam, and the twentieth will be the age of electricity. I make it not with dynamo. The metals and chemicals I use are my own secret, but the quantity of electricity they give off is astounding. Here is the steering-house."

It was a glass structure, similar to the deck-house of the submarine vessel, the Lord of the Deep. Levers, controlling all the machinery, were placed here. There was no necessity to signal to the engine-rooms. The steerman could make the vessel perform any manoeuvre by stretching out his hand.

"Chief-Engineer Honour," said Ferrers Lord.

A tall, broad-shouldered man assented. He had crisp, curly hair, and cleanly-cut features, that spoke of a powerful will, energy, and resolution. His grey eyes were bright and alert. One glance told Ching-Lung that Ferrers Lord seldom blundered in choosing his men.

"I am delighted to see you!" said the prince, holding out his hand. Harold Honour smiled, but did not speak. He had a grip of iron.

"I like that fellow's looks," said Thurston, as they turned away.

"I fancy you will get on well together," answered Ferrers Lord. "He has rather queer ways. He never speaks unless asked a question, or when it is absolutely necessary."

"An Englishman?"

"A Canadian, and as tough as leather. What do you say to a wash?"

A wash was just what was needed. They descended the companion ladder. The corridor below ran the whole length of the ship. Like the deck, it was covered with rubber of different colours, so beautifully blended that it had all the appearance of a rich Brussels carpet.

"By Jove," said Thurston, "it's finer than a Royal yacht! Look at the silk hangings!"

"Only indiarubber, Rupert," said the millionaire. Thurston convinced himself by touching the fabric, with its delicate tints and beautiful pattern.

NEXT TUESDAY: "THE JAKE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

By FRANK RICHARDS. Please order your copy early.

"I could hardly have believed it!" he said. "But why rubber?"

"Because indiarubber is a non-conductor of electricity, and the vessel becomes heavily charged with that fluid. Were it not for that protection we should get some nasty shocks. Here are the lavatory and bath-rooms."

"Marvelous!" cried Ching-Lung. "Old chap, be careful! These dazzling surprises of yours are gradually weakening my heart. Why don't you take us into your confidence? Had you planned all this before you left us?"

"All what?"

"Where this vessel should find us."

"Certainly I had," answered the millionaire; "but I did not expect the circumstances to be so dramatic. Honour had his orders, and I had carefully mapped out our route, measured the journey, and reckoned the time it would take you to reach this place. As it happened, we arrived here a good many hours before the time I calculated. That is why I agreed to stay another day with O'Rooney."

"Jupiter!" said Ching-Lung. "You're a walking wonder, old chap! Oh, what joy and rapture! Marble basins, marble baths, marble floor—"

"Rubber," said Ferrers Lord—"all rubber."

Rubber they were, but they imitated white marble perfectly. Even the taps were sheathed over with the same material.

"You'll find clothes and clean linen in Cabin No. 4, lad. No, I'll send them."

The millionaire shut the door, and Ching-Lung and Thurston undressed, and luxuriated in a warm bath each.

"Glorious!" spluttered Ching-Lung, as he unlatched his pigtail.

"Grand!" answered Thurston. "Good old soap and water!"

They grinned at each other through the steam, and splashed like happy seals. A knock at the door heralded the arrival of fresh clothes. Ching-Lung examined them as he donned his towel.

"Here's another miracle, Rupert. Hanged if these clothes aren't made by my tailor, Sheng-Shang, of Pekin!"

"Never!" gasped Rupert.

He bounded out of the bath, and examined the tweed suit intended for him. The label on the coat read:

"Geesman and Coventry, Court and Military Tailors, Bond Street, W."

"Why, these are my tailors, Ching! He's had the suits made for us!"

"He's a stunner!" said Ching-Lung.

"You bet on it, old chap! He never forgets anything! By Jove, I feel a new man!"

Although Ching-Lung had to replace his pigtail, he was dressed long before Thurston. He was very eager to persuade O'Rooney to join them, and he went off to find the Irishman. He met Prout.

"Hallo, Thomas!" he asked. "What are you looking for?"

"Soap and water, sir."

"Downstairs, third on the right; and you look as if you wanted a wash. Seen O'Rooney?"

"I think he's gone into his shanty, sir."

Ching-Lung sprang down the ladder. The crew of the Lord of the Skies were stretching their legs. They had rigged up a set of goalposts, and were playing a football match. As on a previous occasion Gan-Waga had been appointed referee. They were all old comrades, for the crew of the airship, with the exception of Hal Honour, had sailed on board the Lord of the Deep.

After watching them for a few moments, Ching-Lung pounced upon the ball, and went down the field like a flash of light.

"Stop him!" roared Maddock, who was a fine player. "Knock him off it! Jump on him!"

They tried their best. He was like an eel. He threaded through their ranks, dodged the backs, shot through the goal with the ball at his toe, turned, and, to make matters even, decided to score at the other end. The whole twenty-two tried to check him, and Gan-Waga blew his whistle wildly. Ching-Lung tricked them all, punted the ball between posts, and, with a brilliant screw-kick, kicked it.

With both hands in his pockets, and a cigarette between his lips, Ching-Lung walked towards the house. He did not enter, but stopped to listen. A mournful voice was chanting:

"Oh, the brokers are sittin' on the backyard wall,

Waitin' for that two-pound-two;

An' the pore little bantam in the rabbit-butch

Han't got the strength to cock-a-doodle-do.

The cat and the lodger have done a slope

Far across the ragin' foam.

Bodad, boys, I'll niver, niver wandher

Away from me happy, happy, home."

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"THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In This Thursday's Number of
"The Gem" Library, 1d.

The song ended, and the singer heaved a deep sigh. It was such a painful sigh, and so full of grief, that Ching-Lung felt sad. There was no need to open the door, for Storland Sahib's wolver had been thoughtful enough to save him the trouble by knocking it off its hinges.

There sat Barry O'Rooney in the midst of the wreckage. They had destroyed everything. The whisky-still—O'Rooney's swate Irish cow—had been hammered to pieces, crockery littered the floor, holes had been knocked in the walls, flung into the well, and every breakable thing broken. It was a scene of wanton devastation and destruction.

"The pigs!" said Ching-Lung. "Cheer up, Barry!"

O'Rooney clobbered bitterly into a red handkerchief ornamented with blue cockroaches, or some similar animals.

"Sorra, sorra, sorra!" he wailed. "Oh, the murthin' warmints—the thavin' rogues! Where's me bootiful home that Oi built for me old age? Luk at it, and tell me! Where's me Sunday suit, that was as good as new, ev' there'd been a fresh patch on the trousers and a fresh sleeve in the coat? Oh, the burlin' leathens! Oh, oh, oo-oh!"

Mr. O'Rooney rolled over, buried his face in his hands, and kicked and choked in a paroxysm of agonised sorrow.

"Say, old chap," murmured Ching-Lung, with deep sympathy, "don't take on—"

"Hoek it! Slide! Lave me!" moaned O'Rooney. "Lave a roined old O'Rooney alone wid his sorrow! Young man, lave me to dole of a broken heart! Blow out me brains, or bring me a peck of arsenic!"

Ching-Lung was quite touched.

"But, my poor fellow—" he began.

"Lave me to dole! Let me dole in pace! Let me pay in me checks wid comfort!"

"Poor old—"

"Will ye lave me to dole?" yelled O'Rooney. "How can Oi dole wid yer chatter, I ax ye?"

"But I don't want you to die! Buck up! Dash it all, what's the good of yulping about a barracks like this? Everything in it wasn't worth a five-pound note!"

"It was my home—me hon-oo-ome! And they've lost it up! Lave me to dole!"

"Not a bit of it!"

"Yez won't!"

"Of course I won't, you idiot!"

"That," said Mr. O'Rooney, sitting up and grinning, "althers the question. Oi can't dole in pace wid Misher Ching worritin' me, so Oi'll give it up. A liver, did ye say?"

He jabbers, wid de bacon out of ut, Oi wouldn't bid three half-crowns for the lot! Ha, ha, ha! Did Oi take ye in?"

"By Jove, I believe you did!" laughed Ching-Lung.

"I'm sure you did at first!"

"Did Oi, now? Ha, ha, ha! Faith, Oi 'ope they've not broke me scent-bottle! Let's luk and see."

The little bedroom was another scene of devastation. The walls were splattered with blood, showing that Ching-Lung's explosive bullets had done some execution. But, whether dead or wounded, the bodies had been removed.

Mr. O'Rooney knelt down in a corner, and, lifting a board, took out a bulky knitted stocking. It was heavy, and its contents jingled with a metallic sound.

"There's more than wool in there," said Ching-Lung.

"There is, sor. That's O'Rooney's bank, and it's full o' yaller bloys! Faith, could ye do a drink?"

"Could a monkey climb a tree?"

Again O'Rooney's hand disappeared into the darkness under the board. Out came a box of cigars, and then a bottle of champagne. The Irishman wiped the dust from its gilded neck, and winked.

"That's the little thrille of a scent-bottle!" he chuckled.

"Oi could ye to be careful not to break it. A pore old roined man nades somethin' to kape his heart up. And here's two glasses, and a knife to open the bottle wid."

For a ruined man, O'Rooney was amazingly cheerful. He cut the wires and filled the glasses.

"Success!"

"Hold on!" cried Ching-Lung. "We'll drink that toast later. Will you join us?"

"Yez are too late, Misher Ching."

"Surely not! Don't say that!"

"But yez are! I soigned on wid Misher Ferrers Lord twenty minutes gone."

"Hurrah!" yelled Ching-Lung. "Give me your flipper! Now success, if you like! Drink!"

Ferrers Lord Proves the Merits of His Amazing Vessel—
The Chasm in the Mountain—A Terrible Fall.

"Now," said Ching-Lung, "what are we going to do?"

"I repeat Ching's question," added Rupert Thurston.

"What is to be the arrangement?"

The millionaire lighted a cigar, and leaned back in his chair.

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

"I shall leave the decision with you," he answered. "Give your opinions."

Dinner was just over on board the Lord of the Skies. The table was piled with delicious flowers and fruits. They were discussing future plans.

"It strikes me," said Ching-Lung, "that this big bird, as O'Rourke calls it, is going to knock all our schemes into a cocked hat. There's no fun for me where there's no danger. If we stick to the Lord of the Skies the whole expedition will be a farce. It's too silly!"

"I think the same, Ching."

Ferrers Lord turned to Hal Honour, who was smoking silently.

"The voting is against you," he said to the engineer. "Our vessel is scoffed at and insulted."

"Never mind your vessel, old chap," put in Ching-Lung. "We'll play with it another day. We started out to explore Tibet in the old-fashioned way, and we're going to do it. Flying is out of it, so you can frighten your big dicky bird away as soon as you like."

It was a long time before Thurston could sleep that night. The ceaseless rattle of the propellers and the whole novelty of being high above the ground, kept him awake well into the small hours. There were other causes, too. Now and then mysterious cracklings and creakings startled him, and occasionally flashes of ghostly blue light darted across the ceiling of his cabin.

Everything on board the vessel was absolutely saturated with electricity.

At last Rupert sank into a dreamless sleep; and awoke to find a man beside him with a cup of coffee and his shaving-water. Ching-Lung had been up an hour before, and Gen-Wage, who had slept in the bath, had accompanied him for a while. Most of the runaway mules and ponies had come back, only two or three being missing.

Ferrers Lord and the silent engineer made a careful inspection of the vessel's machinery. For this purpose she rested on the ground, and Rupert and Ching-Lung could examine her thoroughly. She was a thing of beauty and wonder, and they went into raptures.

"By Jove," said Thurston, "we must have a spin on her and see what she can do before we start tramping again!"

"We must, sonny," answered the prince. "I'll ask the chief to give us a show. Hallo! Here's O'Rourke!" Top of the morning, your honour!"

O'Rourke grinned and saluted. "Same to yourself, son, and many of 'em! Has this bird laid an egg yet?"

"Oh, give us something new! That's stale!"

"Do ye mane the egg or the joke, son?" asked the Irishman.

The joke, Barry. Let's have something fresh, if it's only fresh air. I go to find the chief, and we shall meet at Philip-di-J mean, Philip-di. Farewell till then! And don't forget to take your meals regularly."

He met Ferrers Lord in the lower corridor, and the millionaire, proud of his vessel, was quite ready to give them an example of its powers. A bell clanged to summon the men to their posts. Hal Honour took his stand at the wheel.

"Are we all here?" asked Ferrers Lord.

"I think so, sir," said Tom Proust.

The millionaire was about to give the signal to ascend when there was a yell, and Mr. Barry O'Rourke rushed from the house, brandishing an enormous umbrella. He sprang up the ladder.

"Bedad," he said, "O' nearly missed ut, didn't Oi? That's the worst of birds—yez never know when they mane to floy. U's lucky Oi put a bit o' salt in me pocket to stick on us tail!"

"But what, in the name of Nicodemus, have you brought that umbrella for?" asked Rupert.

"Umbrella, indeed!" growled O'Rourke, in injured accents. "U's no umbrella at all, but an illigant parachute. Faith, av the bird breaks whin ut's floyin', do yez think Oi want to fall and hit the ground loike a lump of rock? No, son; Oi loike to come down gently. Ut 'ud be a shame and a pity to break me watch in the descent."

Mr. O'Rourke opened the ragged umbrella, closed it again, and began to suck the handle.

"Do put it up again!" said Proust. "Don't let the son spile your vessel!"

"Hold fast!" cried the millionaire.

Hal Honour touched a lever, and the vessel, her suspensory screws revolving swiftly, rose into the air. Looking over the rail, it seemed that the ground was rushing away from them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 212.

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

The huts grew smaller and smaller, the mules and ponies looked like mice.

The Ferrer became a scream as the speed of the screws quickened. The driving-screws were still at rest, and the vessel was rising vertically. Every instant of the upward flight made breathing more difficult. The cold grew terrible, their ears tingled, and Gen-Wage's nose began to bleed. Ice formed on the glass of the wheel-house, and their breath coagulated into a powdery snow.

"Enough!" said Ferrers Lord.

The vessel began to sink rapidly into a warmer and denser atmosphere. Then her driving-screws began to churn. Ferrers Lord stood with a little instrument in his hand, and called out the speed.

"Ten knots!"

She was heading towards the peaks at an easy pace. Great padded, fur-lined overcoats were served out, and gloves and masks. The speed increased.

"Twenty knots!" said the millionaire.

Thurston cheered. Twenty knots is an excellent pace, and even at twenty knots they did not find the greatcoats very inconvenient, for the breeze was a stiff one.

"Hold fast! Forty knots!"

The vessel leapt forward like a horse feeling the spur.

"Sixty knots!"

They were clinging to the rails and uprights, and the wind shrieked past them. It was the speed of an express train.

"Hold fast!" rang the millionaire's voice. "Eighty knots!"

They held fast for their lives as the vessel rushed on. The wind was frightful, the whole vessel shivered and throbbed as the great engines worked. And above the clatter and din rang Ferrers Lord's calm voice:

"Hold on for your lives! One hundred knots!"

One hundred knots! It is the speed of the hurricane which tears up forests and wrecks towns. They crunched down, with their backs to the yelling gale. One man alone could face it. He stood against the wheel-house, his arms folded, while the vessel he had built rushed on. No human beings had ever travelled before at such a pace and lived. But even that stupendous speed was not the limit of the Lord of the Skies.

"One hundred and twenty knots!"

Again the aerial increased her speed by one-fifth. If she could maintain such a speed she could go round the world in less than eight days. Roughly, reckoning the knots as miles, she would be able to cover two thousand nine hundred miles in twenty-four hours, or circle the globe in one hundred and ninety-two hours. It was astounding!

"Enough!"

The Lord of the Skies slowed down as her screws were reversed. She came to a standstill.

Then came a deafening burst of cheering in the millionaire's honour. He smiled as he entered the wheel-house and took the wheel.

The aeronef was at an altitude of six thousand feet, or a little over a mile. Before her and high above her towered the peaks on whose crests the snow never melts. She was gliding easily along.

Hal Honour whispered to Ferrers Lord, who scanned the huge mountain.

"What is its height?" asked Ferrers Lord.

Honour glanced at the chart. The great mass was eleven thousand feet high—more than six miles from base to summit. Its sides were terribly precipitous.

"Serve out the helmets."

The helmets were made with a front of thin, clear glass, and a bag of air fitted over the wearer's shoulders to enable him to breathe in comfort however rarefied the atmosphere. They gave the crew a weird effect. In their huge coats and helmets they looked oddly like a lot of divers.

And then the flying vessel began to rise higher and higher. She passed through a thick layer of cloud, so dense that the men could not see each other, and emerged again into the dazzling sunlight. In less than twelve minutes she was above the snowline. She soared higher still. She was close to the summit.

Thurston caught Ching-Lung's arm and pointed down at the dark, yawning mouth of a tunnel. Ferrers Lord saw it, too, though it had been invisible from below. The upward

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

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movement ceased, and the aeronef halted before the cavern, for such it appeared to be.

The hole was at least a hundred yards wide, and considerably more in height. Ferrers Lord peered forward, and the next moment the aeronef glided in between the rocky walls, and all was dark.

But only for a moment, for two powerful searchlights flashed out, and the great arc-lamps that hung from the uprights burnt dazzlingly. To the right and left they saw the walls of the cavern. Above them was a jagged roof. What was below? They bent over eagerly, and saw nothing but darkness.

Ching-Lung opened the door of the wheel-house, passed in, and closed the door after him. He removed his helmet.

"This is rather a fine, old chap," he said. "We can't see any floor at all."

"It is the crater of an extinct volcano, Ching."

"Well, I want to know how far it goes down," said Ching-Lung. "Can we work it?"

"We'll try. Come with me."

The millionaire belched to Honour, who took the wheel. Then he raised a trap-door and disclosed a ladder. Ching-Lung followed him. Below the wheel-house was a second room. Ferrers Lord switched on a light. There were numerous levers here, too, and a twelve-pounder gun. In the floor was a circular piece of thick, clear glass.

"Look through that," said the millionaire. He touched a couple of switches in succession. The lights on the deck were immediately extinguished, but two other beams poured down from searchlights in the hull. Ching-Lung lay at full length; and pressed his face to the glass. Slowly the Lord of the Skies began to sink.

Five minutes passed, but still the lights did not reveal the bottom of the vast crater.

"It's a caution," said Ching-Lung. "It's as deep as the sea. When are we coming to the next station?"

Still the descent continued into the unknown abyss. Hal Honour, at the wheel, watched the walls of the shaft, ready to bring the vessel to a halt the moment the shaft narrowed. But, instead of narrowing, it grew wider. The barometer registered a fall of over three thousand feet.

And then the lights gleamed on something that hung back their rays.

"Water!" shouted Ching-Lung.

Ferrers Lord uttered a cry that made Ching-Lung spring up. He saw the millionaire staring at the gauge that registered the electrical power.

His face was white. He wrenched back a lever, unscrewing the suspensory screws.

"What's wrong?" asked Ching-Lung.

"I don't know," answered the millionaire. "Either the power is failing or we have found some electric influence which is taking away our power. Are we rising? Can you see the water still?"

Ching-Lung looked down.

"We are stationary."

Ferrers Lord hurried upon deck. The lights were dwindling, telling that the current was failing. Hal Honour still stood at his post. In the air, ghostly light the helmeted figures looked like limps. The screws buzzed with a fainter sound. Something was amiss.

"We are falling again," said Ferrers Lord—"falling steadily."

All knew that something was wrong. They gathered round the wheel-house. Blue flashes leapt from the poles which hold the suspensory-screws, and mimic lightning darted overhead. The effect was hideous. What influence was robbing the machinery of its power?

The descent was gradual, but certain. When Ferrers Lord had reversed the screws the aeronef had risen a few hundred feet; but now the screws were not revolving fast enough to sustain the vessel, much less raise her. The chaos was full of electricity. Some magnetic influence was draining away the fluid that ought to have worked the engines. Instead of doing its proper work, it was leaving the vessel.

And then every light was extinguished, and the awful darkness closed down.

"Cling on for your lives!" bellowed Ferrers Lord.

She was falling like a stone, her screws motionless, all her power gone. And in the fearful blackness her crew clutched at any hold.

She plunged into the icy water, and foaming billows swept her decks and tore the men away. A few shrieks, almost deadened by the roar of the waves, rang through the darkness, and then all was still.

After the Fall—A Pit of Horrors—Wanted, a Light!

Ching-Lung rose to the surface. Wave after wave tossed him here and there. They were the result of the aeronef's plunge, for the unknown lake could know no storms. In THE MAGNET LIBRARY, No. 212.

"THE GREAT BARRING-OUT AT ST. JIM'S!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In This Thursday's Number of
"The Gem" Library, id.

"WINGS OF GOLD."
By SYDNEY DREW.

the pitchy darkness he raised himself, shook the water from his ears, and listened. The swish of the disturbed water was the only sound he heard.

Could all have perished? Was he left alone here to die in the horrid blackness? The water made his lips smart, and it had a choking, sulphurous stench. It was no trouble to swim. He found himself floating easily, without even moving hand or foot. What direction should he take? Had the aeronef foundered? Where were his comrades?

He uttered a shout. A voice answered him, to his delight and fervent thankfulness.

"Dat you, Ching?"

"Yes, Gan. Thank goodness you're here! Can you tell me where I am?"

"Whistle, Ching, and I find you."

Ching-Lung whistled a few notes, and, guided by the sound, the Eskimo swam to his side. Their hands met in silence. Then other voices came echoing through the darkness.

"There's O'Rooney," said Ching-Lung; "and that's Maddock. Hi! Answer to your names!"

"Maddock!" came the cry.

"O'Rooney!"

"Flensing!" called a third voice.

There was silence again. Ching-Lung's heart sank.

The crew of the Lord of the Skies numbered no less than thirty-three. Could only five be left? And what chance of life had they in this horrid, evil-smelling pit?

Maddock reached them first. All of them had been standing together in the stern before the vessel struck the water.

But where were the others? And where was the Lord of the Skies?

Ching-Lung hazily remembered being flung through the air and pitched into the water. That must have been some time before the aeronef ended her downward plunge. The sulphur was choking all of them.

"Let us swim for it, sir," said Maddock, "and keep together. I've not a cut on my 'and, and the water's making it smart-awful."

"Keep together, then."

"Wait!" said Gan-Waga. "You not tire yourselves. Me swim best of lot, 'cept Ching. Me go find shore, and holler."

He darted away like a seal. The others turned on their backs and floated. It seemed hours before they heard a splash of water.

"Found ship!" cried the Eskimo. "Over here—very long way. Lots of chairs dere. All right!"

"Is she afloat?"

"No! sunken. Masts stickin' out. Come 'long!"

O'Rooney was a poor swimmer, but the water was so buoyant that there was no danger of drowning. Ching-Lung told the Irishman to lie flat on his back. They tied a handkerchief to his foot, and, taking the end between his teeth, Gan-Waga towed him.

They heard voices calling them, and reached the aeronef at last. She had foundered, but her uprights stood out well above the water, and to those the survivors were clinging. Their position seemed hopeless. Ching-Lung's first thought was for Ferrers Lord. The millionaire was safe.

They shook hands in the blackness.

"Swim out with me, old chap," whispered Ferrers Lord.

"We seem to have lost a few men."

"Where's Proust? Where's Rupert?"

"Both safe, so far. I have accounted for twenty-six men. We were fools to enter the shaft, and we are paying for our folly. My poor vessel! It's hard to have her wrecked on the first voyage. But if I can only save my brave lady I do not care for her. This is a horrible place!"

They swam out of earshot of the others. Ferrers Lord's voice vibrated with anxiety, calm though it was when he spoke again.

"Cling on for a light, Ching!" he said. "I could work wonders then; but without light I am helpless. There's truth in that old proverb of pride coming before a fall. I was immensely proud of the Lord of the Skies. The whole system is wrong and unsafe. At any time an airship, working on the same principles, might meet with the same disaster. I must invent a new motive-power."

"Don't you think we had better get out of this first, old chap?" suggested Ching-Lung mildly.

"Of course. The ship lies in about four fathoms. One of the suspensory-screws is still working, so some of her machinery must be intact. If we could only get a light, Gan-Waga might dive into the wheel-house."

But what possible hope was there of obtaining light? What possible hope was there of escape?

(Another splendid instalment of this grand new serial will appear next week in "The Magnet" Library. Order your copy in advance.)

LEAVES FROM GREYFRIARS SCHOOL CHRONICLE.

Being the Adventures of One-time Members
of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School.

This Week: "THE LABORATORY MYSTERY!"

LEIGH DESMOND, the most successful physician in London, was strolling down Piccadilly on his way home from his club, whither he had gone for just an hour's recreation from his arduous work, when he felt himself suddenly clutched by the sleeve.

"Desmond, at last I have found you. I have been to your house, to the hospital, to the club, and was just going home in distraction, when I caught sight of you from across the road. Thank heavens I have found you!"

Leigh Desmond started at the young man at his side. The new-comer's face was rather pale, his manner one of intense nervous excitement, and he seemed to be utterly prostrated by grief and fatigue.

"Why, my dear Marlow, what on earth is the matter with you?" said Leigh Desmond. "You look ill, old chap! Here's a quiet restaurant; let us go in here. Come, now!"

The man whom Desmond had recognised as George Marlow murmured a word of thanks, and followed the famous physician into the restaurant.

Taking their seats at a corner table, Leigh Desmond ordered coffee, and then waited for his friend to speak.

"Thank Heaven I have found you!" said Marlow, after a pause. "I am in despair, and I feel that you are the only living man who can help me!"

"Do not place too much reliance in my ability to help you," said Desmond, with a smile; "but I take it your business is urgent, and I will do all I can for you. I do not forget that we are old school chums. It is many years now since I have seen you; but I often think of the times we had when at Greyfriars. I admired you when at school, Marlow, old chap. I have never forgotten the day when you thrashed old Rics and Hemmings for bullying me. I was a year or two older than you, I believe, but you were a regular demon with your fists in those days. We had some fine times in the Remove together, and I was very sorry when you had to leave school so suddenly—under such tragic circumstances, too!"

"Yes," murmured Marlow. "My father died before I got home that day, and I never returned to Greyfriars. I, too, often think of the times we had together."

"Yes, it's a fine place, and I have a nephew there now. He, too, is in the Remove Form. He is a young rascal. But come, now, what is the matter? I heard your family mentioned only the other day, but of no misfortune to you or yours."

"The misfortune is, indeed, not with my family," said Marlow, with a sigh. "It is the members of my fiancée's family who are suffering—who are dying—and in so strange a fashion that I cannot think their sickness natural."

The coffee arriving, Leigh Desmond lit a fragrant cigar, leaned lazily back on the cushions, and, clasping his hands, said:

"Begin at the beginning, old chap. Make everything clear, and I will endeavor to help you."

George Marlow wiped his forehead with his emerald handkerchief, drew a deep sigh, and went on:

"A year ago," said he, "my dear Mabel's father died. He was taken ill of Asiatic cholera in its most violent form about midday, lingered in great agony until night, and then went quietly off into that deep sleep from which there is no awakening. He left two children—Mabel, to whom I am to be married, and Arthur, a lad scarcely out of his teens. William Willard, their uncle, was left guardian by the father's will. He took up his residence in their home at Maids Vale, and everything went happily until about six months ago, when William Willard was also suddenly seized with an attack of Asiatic cholera, and died, as his brother had done, before the shades of night had fallen. This second death from the terrible disease terrified us all. William Willard, as he lay dying, begged that his brother Charles should be appointed guardian. Charles accepted the position, but fulfilled his duties as well as he was able from abroad. He had business matters of some importance to attend to at Tunis, and he wrote saying that he would not be able to come to London until the end of the year."

Here Marlow paused, and, burying his face in his hands, groaned in the anguish of his heart.

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NEXT
TUESDAY: "THE JAPE AGAINST THE FIFTH!"

"I remember the cases of cholera," said Leigh Desmond musingly. "They caused an immense sensation at the time, terrifying and mystifying all London; but, my dear chap, all that is past and gone. Pray, come to the point of your narrative."

"The point!" cried Marlow, raising his agonised face. "Desmond, the point is speedily come at. The boy, Arthur Willard, Mabel's brother, was seized with an attack of cholera this morning, and, I fear, must by this time be dead. I was in the house at the time. I sent for doctors; did everything which lay in my power. But horrifying suspicions numbered my brain, and rendered me almost mad. It seemed that these deaths, so mysterious and so awful, following one after the other, and in the same family, as though some dread fiend were executing his vengeance upon them, could not be natural, and, seizing my hat, I fled to you. You were out when I arrived at the Mall, but I thought I might find you at the hospital or at the club."

"What you tell me is terrible, indeed!" said Leigh Desmond, rising, and drawing on his coat. "Indeed, I don't know whether it be within my power to aid you; but if there is foul play in this, and my experience as a doctor can help find the criminal, found he shall be!"

George Marlow pressed the great physician's hand.

"But where are you going to, Desmond?" said he. "Let us go to the house of death," said the old Greyfriars boy solemnly, "for, from what you tell me of this matter, I fear the lad will be dead ere we have time to reach Maids Vale!"

A smart hansom, which had been waiting outside, carried them as fast as the horse could travel to the pretty suburb of Maids Vale.

The house of the Willards was wrapped in gloom when they arrived, and George Marlow fell back with a shudder. "Dear—dead!" he murmured, shivering as with the ague. "One after the other they die. It will be Mabel next. My Heaven, I shall lose her as well!"

Leigh Desmond looked at the young man with a keen, comprehensive glance, and rang the bell, taking care not to make too much noise within that house of death. As the door was opened, Desmond gave vent to an exclamation of astonishment.

"You here, Burke!" said he, holding out his hand to the Scotland-Yard detective. "Why, surely there is no police-court business done here?"

"I'm afraid there is," was Burke's answer. "Is your name Marlow?" he added, turning to the young man, who stared at the officer as if fascinated.

"Yes."

"Then I arrest you on a charge of murder!"

There was a clink of steel, and a moment later George Marlow stood between the two, a prisoner of the Law.

"Arrest me?" gasped the startled old Greyfriars boy. "Why, what have I done? There is no evidence against me! This means ruin! Mabel—I shall lose her! Who will protect her now?"

Leigh Desmond stepped up to Inspector Burke.

"Burke," said he, "I fear you have made a horrible mistake! That lad is innocent. I will stake my life on it! What evidence have you against him?"

"Oh, the evidence is purely circumstantial," said Burke haughtily. "The prisoner borrowed a sum of £200 from the dead man. He was playing a fine game, as I see it. The father and the uncle's out of the way, and the boy as well. He had only to marry the girl to become possessed of the entire fortune of Mr. Willard!"

"That man, Marlow will be rich in his own right. There is nothing to incite him to murder, and he is obviously suffering more than tongue can tell from this series of unnatural deaths."

"Remorse and fear," quoth Burke. "All the rest is nonsense. I was sent for to take up this case, as the authorities were not satisfied. I decided, as I dare say you did, that the deceased man had been murdered, and I think I have arrested the criminal. Allow me to do my business in my own way."

Leigh Desmond said no more. He turned to his old school chum, whose head was bowed, and whose muscles were twitching convulsively.

"My old friend," said he, "I don't think you guilty, and have no fear. I'll clear you from every suspicion before many days have passed by."

"God bless you for that!" said Marlow.

"Now, tell me, is it true what Inspector Burke has just told me about the money you borrowed from Arthur Willard?"

"Quite true. It was £200, and he lent it me so that I could pay off a—a person who was blackmailing me. Before I met Mabel Willard, I was mixed up with a set whom I found to be dishonourable sharpers. They had a hold on me. When I

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became engaged to Mabel. I thought it only right that Arthur should know of it. It was then that he proposed to lend me the money, not wishing me to have trouble with my own father. It was lent me with the approval of Mr. Willard, and I was just about to repay the debt."

"That will do, old chap; and now, whatever happens, be of good heart."

George Marlow gripped Leigh Desmond's hand in thanks, and there was a brighter look in his eyes as he was led down the steps towards the cab which waited to carry him away to his prison.

Desmond now stood alone in the hall. He closed the door, walked softly within the house, and stood for a moment irresolute. The sound of a woman's sobbing came from a room near by. With rapid intuition he knew this must be Mabel Willard who was crying so bitterly.

Opening the door, he entered the room. He saw a young woman sitting by the window, her head bowed in grief. She started as she caught sight of him.

"Don't be afraid," said he. "I am your friend, and Mr. Marlow's. I have come to help you. My name is Leigh Desmond. Perhaps you may have heard of me, as I was an old chum of his at Greyfriars School. In fact, we were always in the same study together."

"Heard of you? Oh, yes," she cried, rising, and coming to him. "George told me he was going to find you out. Oh, Mr. Desmond, my brother is dead! Alive and strong this morning, he is dead—the third of my family to die within a year! There is a curse on my house—I know it—I feel it!"

"Be calm, my dear young lady!" said Desmond, placing her within a chair. "And now, do not be shocked at what I am about to tell you. The police, who think there has been foul play, have made an arrest!"

"I know—I know!" she wailed. "They have taken George from me! As if I had not already suffered enough! They searched the house, they entered his laboratory, and now they have arrested him!"

"A laboratory!" said Desmond, looking at her keenly.

Leigh Desmond took the letter from her hand and opened it. Himself an expert at reading character from the handwriting, he hoped to be able to learn something from the calligraphy of Mr. Charles Willard. In the letter was an envelope for reply, ready addressed, and of peculiar substance. Leigh Desmond carefully read the letter through before turning to this.

"Please reply at once," he quoted. "With my usual forethought, dear niece, you will see that I have enclosed an envelope for reply!"

Leigh Desmond turned the envelope over and over, and once more quoted the last line of the letter from the man in Tunis.

"May I ask if it is a custom of your uncle's to enclose an envelope for reply?" he asked.

"Always. That is one of his eccentricities. He would be cross if we did not do as he wished."

Desmond, who had been looking at the envelope, jumped to his feet, and started examining the gum of the flap by the aid of the gas-jet.

"Can it be possible?" he cried. A moment later he turned, with his face quite pale, to the sickening girl.

"Did your father have such a letter as this you have shown me shortly before he died?" he asked.

"The day before," she answered wonderingly.

"And he used the envelope this man had sent him?"

"Yes."

"And your uncle also?"

"Yes."

"And your brother this morning?"

"Replied, using the enclosed envelope."

"And is dead? Ah, I think I have the better of Burke, after all! I must ask leave to keep this envelope, madam."

The girl rose to her feet.

"Surely," she cried, "you don't think that—"

"Miss Willard, I think I have found the murderer of your father, your uncle, and your brother. And now, sit still here while I examine the sick chamber and the laboratory."

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"Had my poor old chum a chemical laboratory, and in this house?"

"Yes. My poor brother insisted on George coming to live with us. He thought it might afford us greater protection, for Arthur was always convinced that father and uncle did not die natural deaths, and that they have produced as damning evidence against poor George."

"You do not think Mr. Marlow guilty, then?" asked Desmond.

"He is as innocent as—as I am!" was the answer.

Leigh Desmond was puzzled. Here was a dense maze, from which he could scarcely hope to find a clue.

"Tell me," he asked—"I would not bother you, Miss Willard, if life or death did not hang in the balance—but tell me, who could possibly benefit by—let us say your death, now that the others are gone? Please do not think me cruel, Miss Willard!"

She shuddered, but answered bravely:

"My Uncle Charles would benefit."

"Ah, yes, the uncle in Tunis!" said Desmond, with a gleam in his dark eyes. "Tell me more of this man, I beg, Miss Willard!"

"He is the black sheep of our family," she went on. "He ran away to see many years before my poor father made his fortune. I only saw him once in my life, when he came to stay with us for a few days. I took an instinctive dislike to him, though to this day I cannot say why."

"A dislike! That is something. Is he a peculiar man?"

"He is very eccentric. In fact, he does nothing that an ordinary man would do. He is a doctor much esteemed in Tunis, so I have heard. At times he would write us extraordinary letters—"

"Have you any of the letters by you? Can I see one?"

"Yes. I have one here. It came to me this morning, with the one for poor Arthur. My brother was taken ill before I had time to write my reply, and so my letter is still unwritten."

Leigh Desmond did not waste time. He made his way at once to the chamber of death.

The young man lay quite still, with his handsome face distorted with the traces of the agony he had suffered in his dying moments. Leigh Desmond took peculiar notice of the lips, which were swollen, and the tongue, which was of a peculiar colour, and much inflamed.

The famous physician next made his way to the laboratory of his unfortunate old school chum. Here there was ample evidence of the young man's aptitude and cleverness, but nothing to strengthen the belief that George Marlow was a murderer, for not a sign or trace of a germ of disease could he find. While there, a cat came into the place, and rubbed itself against the doctor's leg, meowing softly. Desmond looked at it.

"It is cruel to rob so lovely a creature of its existence," murmured Desmond slowly, "but in the interests of humanity—"

And, taking the cat up within his arms, he forced it to lick the gum of the envelope which Charles Willard had sent from Tunis. Then, placing the animal down on the ground again, he let it run away.

Making his way downstairs, Leigh Desmond found Miss Willard utterly prostrated, but being well cared for by some of her friends.

He begged to be allowed to stop within the house for the night, and the following morning rose early, for he had work in hand.

The first thing he did was to get out into the large shaded garden at the back. Here he was not surprised to find the cat of the evening before. It was lying in the centre of the gravel-path, stone dead.

That evening, Leigh Desmond left England for Tunis, after sending his old chum a message of hope. On his arrival in

(Continued on page iii. of cover.)

Tunis, he made his way up the hill towards the Rue de la Pay. Here, in a large house, dwelt Charles Willard.

Asking for the Englishman, and saying he had come on business from Mabel Willard, Leigh Desmond had no difficulty in getting an interview.

"You come from my poor niece?" said Charles Willard, eying his visitor fixedly. "I trust she is well!"

"She is well," answered Leigh Desmond drily, with difficulty refraining from a shudder of abhorrence at the sight of this infamous man. "But I came from England with the intention of telling you a story, Mr. Willard. Once there were two brothers. One was industrious and clever. He remained in England, his native land, and made money. The other was a lazy, unscrupulous man, who cared nothing for honest work. He ran away to sea when a boy, and lived by his wits in a foreign country, where, falling in with a clever native "quack," he learned something of medicine, and studied the germs of disease. Learning late in life of his brother's fortune, he visited England, made sure that his brother was well off, and, returning afterwards to his home in Tunis, set to work to bring about the death of his brother and his brother's children, and in such a way that no suspicion could rest upon him. He posted letters to his brother, enclosing envelopes for reply. One of these he poisoned with the germs of cholera, which he had carefully prepared in a bed of gelatine. The poison, of the most deadly kind, being inserted in the gum of the envelope, was easily transferred to the body of the victim, and his brother died."

Charles Willard had risen to his feet, and was now staring at Leigh Desmond with ghastly eyes and dribbling lips.

Desmond rose also.

"Shall I tell how this scoundrel murdered his second brother after inducing him to appoint him guardian in case of his death?" said Desmond. "Shall I show how he murdered his nephew, and also arranged for the murder of his niece? Shall I explain how I discovered this ghastly plot, or have you heard enough, Mr. Charles Willard?"

He received no answer.

Leigh Desmond took from his pocket a pair of handcuffs. "I have come to Tunis to tell you this," he said sternly, "and I have brought with me a warrant for your arrest, duly granted in both countries, and you are my prisoner!"

But with a howl the wretched man dashed from the room, with Leigh Desmond in close pursuit. Through the passages which was darkened and doubly protected by heavy doors and windows, which prevented any harm resulting from the dangerous experiments which Charles Willard conducted there. From the quick glance Desmond gave round him, he knew at once that he was within Willard's laboratory. Here it was that he had cultivated the deadly germs of the disease which had already made him a triple murderer.

Willard, with a howl of rage, shattered a glass covering, and snatched a pad from beneath it. With a second cry he closed with Desmond, and tried to force what he held over the mouth of the famous physician.

In spite of his fortitude, Desmond gave a cry of fear. He knew what it was the villain held there. It was a pad saturated with the most deadly bacteria. If once that pad fell upon his lips, he was a dead man.

They struggled up and down the laboratory.

It was a fight to the death. Gradually Desmond felt himself borne backwards. The other gave a cry of triumph.

"We shall see!" he hissed. "It is you who will die, my friend!"

Desmond saw a pair of glaring eyes staring into his, saw the distorted face of the villain drawing nearer, and the pad descending slowly—slowly, bringing with it death—death, lingering and horrible.

He tried to cry out, but his tongue refused utterance.

At that moment there came a fierce outcry from outside, and into the laboratory burst half a dozen officers of the law, drawn there by the noise of the fighting and the crash of the breaking glass.

In a moment Willard was overpowered, and stood a hopeless prisoner in the hands of the law.

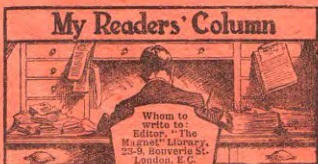
The deadly pad lay at his feet, and, glancing from it to his prisoner, Desmond, with a wild look, gave a shudder of horror. "He will not live to be tried for murder," he murmured. "There is death upon his lips!"

The lips of the doomed wretch were already blue and swollen. Desmond had guessed right—the deadly pad had touched his lips. He was doomed.

That night he died in hospital, raving like a madman, with none near to help or pity him. No skill could ever have availed against the disordered brain contracted so horribly, and before the dawn broke the unhappy man passed away in even worse agony than his many victims did.

Leigh Desmond returned to England at once, and an hour or so after his arrival in London, George Marlow was a free man again. And now it is the delight of these two old school chums to relate the adventures they both performed, not only at Greyfriars, but when one was in the depth of despair.

THE END.



For Next Tuesday.

For next Tuesday Frank Richards has excelled himself in writing the special, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at the Greyfriars School, entitled

"THE JAFE AGAINST THE FIFTH."

The second of the three tests which is to decide the captaincy of the Remoute proves a hard one, and the rivalry between Harry Wharton and Vernon Smith is of the keenest. The test, however, is decisively won by the organizer of the famous

"JAFE AGAINST THE FIFTH."

But I will give my readers till next Tuesday to guess which of the rivals it is who thus triumphantly comes out on top!

A WONDERFUL SERIES OF THRILLING, COMPLETE DETECTIVE TALES.

I should like here to draw the attention of those of my readers who are interested in really clever, complete, detective tales of thrilling interest to the splendid series of this description which are now appearing every week in our companion paper, "The Gem" Library. These clever short stories deal with the adventures of Frank Kingston, that marvellous man who is now directing his energies towards the righting of wrongs, and the punishment of wrongdoers. This week's story, "Frank Kingston's Grim Race," which appears in this Tuesday's "Gem," is one that should not be missed by lovers of thrilling and interesting fiction.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Sophie J. (Victoria Park).—Thanks for your postcard. I think you will find that the characters you mention will appear again before long.

S. G. (Lancashire).—I am sorry that I cannot insert such requests as yours in this column. The "Correspondence Exchange," which is such a popular feature of our companion paper, "The Gem" Library, is open to you if you will observe the few simple rules attached to it. In regard to your second question, the answer is: "Yes, there is every likelihood of such an event occurring before very long; but I cannot promise it for some time yet, at any rate."

George R. (Rock Ferry).—I am sorry the back numbers you mention are out of print; and the only way in which you may be able to obtain them is to send up a request in "The Back Numbers Wanted" column, which is a popular feature of the "Chat" page of our companion paper, "The Gem" Library.

Albert P. (Liverpool).—Thanks for your card and suggestion, which latter, however, I cannot see my way to adopt, at any rate, for the present. If properly carried out, your scheme would take up a great deal of space, which would necessitate the shortening of the stories—a step which I do not think the majority of my readers would approve of at all.

Reginald H. (Shanklin).—Thank you for your suggestions, to which I am giving my best consideration. From the many letters I get on the subject, I am sure that the majority of my readers prefer Sidney Drew's serial story, dealing with the adventures of Ferris Lord, to anything else that I could put in its place. As regards your last question, if you feel the desire for any extra reading matter than that with which THE MAGNET and "The Gem" Libraries provide you every week, may I suggest that you take in "The Boys' Friend Threepenny Complete Library," three numbers of which are published every month?

Jennie and Robert M. (Auckland, N.Z.).—I was very pleased to get your letters, which I am acknowledging here together, although Master Robert's chiefly concerned our companion paper, "The Gem" Library. I am glad to have the further proof, which is contained in your letters, of the widespread popularity of the good old MAGNET and "Gem" Libraries in far-off New Zealand.

THE EDITOR.

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