

THE FOUR HEROES!

Grand 50,000-word School Tale.

THE SPECTRE OF NO. 1 STUDY

A Schoolboy Play for Christmas Parties

THE Magnet

Liberty GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER

2^D



JUST OUT!

Three New Additions to "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. Complete Library.

JUST THE BOOKS FOR WINTER EVENING READING.

No. 247:

"The Worst Fellow at Burnside!"

A Grand, Complete School Tale.

No. 248:

"The Ghost of Rupert Forbes!"

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale of
Sexton Blake—Detective.

No. 249:

"For Greed of Gold!"

A Splendid Tale of Adventure. By CECIL HAYTER.

These Splendid Books are now obtainable
at all newsagents', price 3d. each.

INSIST UPON HAVING

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. Library.

Fatty Fowkes

The Famous Goalkeeper
of the Blue Crusaders.

A. S. HARDY'S stories of the Blue Crusaders and Fatty Fowkes, their giant goalkeeper, are absolutely grand. They're exciting, thrilling, and funny. Read the magnificent yarn in the Christmas Number of "The Sports Library," out on Wednesday, which also contains

TALES OF
Boxing
Rugby
School



The Sports Library

Think of It!!

ONLY
for this
GRAND
GRAMOPHONE.

WRITE
TO-DAY
FOR
LISTS



I will send a magnificent Gramophone direct to your home on seven days' free approval. Cabinet is solid oak, sumptuously decorated with carved pillars and oxidised art metal ornamentation. Handsomely tinted 20-inch Horn yields exquisite tone. Motor extra powerful, sleek, and guaranteed for five years. Honestly worth 44 to 46. **NET PRICE** is only 44s. cash or 4s. monthly. All the best makes of Gramophones and Records supplied on Easy Terms. Only a small deposit required. Money returned in full if dissatisfied. Cheaper Gramophones for 12s. cash or 2s. monthly. Write at once for Bargain Lists.

GNAS. T. ROBEY, LTD., The World's Provider.
(Dept 3), COVENTRY.

6/6 each



The "LORD ROBERTS" TARGET PISTOL

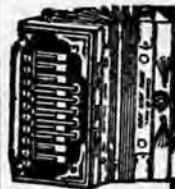
Beautifully plated and finished. May be carried in the pocket. Trains the eye and cultivates the judgment. Range 100 yards. Targets 9d. per 100. Noiseless Ball Cartridges, 9d. per 100. Shot, 1/6 per 100. Send for list.

CROWN GUN WORKS, 6, Whittall Street, BIRMINGHAM.

89 CONJURING TRICKS, 27 Joke Tricks, 69 Puzzles, 69 Games, 12 Love Letters, 439 Jokes, 12 Shadowgrams, 22 Money-making Secrets (worth £20), and 1,000 more stupendous attractions. 7d. P.O. inc.—MUGHER, PUBLISHER, Harborne, BIRMINGHAM. 25 Screaming Comic Readings, 7d.

RED NOSES

Permanently Cured and Restored to their Natural Colour in a few days by a simple home treatment. Particulars free. Enclose stamp to pay postage.—Mr. H. A. TEMPLE (Specialist), 30, Maddox Street, Regent St., London, W.



ACCORDIONS

These beautifully finished organ-toned instruments, made of the finest selected materials, are unsurpassed for power and richness of tone, for which these instruments are famous. All the latest improvements. Exceptionally low prices. Sent on Approval. Easy Installments. Catalogue Free.

Douglas, 56, King's Chambers, South St., London, E.C.

IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material or Cameras, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE—Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

FUN for SIXPENCE.

VENTRILOQUIST'S Double Throat; fits roof of mouth; astonishes and mystifies; sing like a canary, whine like a puppy, and imitate birds and beasts. Ventrioloquism Treatise free. Sixpence each, four for 1s.—BENSON (Dept. 6), 230, Pentonville Road, London, N.

BLUSHING.

FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all colouring and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 30, Maddox Street, Hanover Square, London, W.

CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS. Cowboy, Comic, Science, etc. 50 ft. 1/-, 100 ft. 1/11, 150 ft. 2/6, 200 ft. 3/6, etc., post free. "Film" film cement 8d. per bottle, post free. Satisfaction guaranteed.—WHITAKER BROS., Film suppliers, 135, St. Margaret's Road, Bradford.

SEA All wishing to become Stewards on Ocean Liners, Clerks, Engineers, Trimmers, Deck Youths, etc., get "The Applicant's Guide"; also tells how to get on the Stage, 7d.; "What to Invent and how to Patent It," a book that none with ideas should miss, 1/-; The two, 1/6, post paid.—PROGRESS CO., WEST KIRBY, CHESHIRE.

Increase Your HEIGHT SEVERAL INCHES. Natural methods. 3/9 Cheapest and best system. Never fails. Price only 3/9 complete. Get it to-day.—F. ROSS, 16, LANGDALE ROAD, SCARBOROUGH.

A Real Lever Simulation GOLD WATCH FREE



A straightforward, generous offer from an established firm. We are giving away watches to thousands of people all over the world as a huge advertisement. Now is your chance to obtain one. **WRITE NOW**, enclosing P.O. 5d. and 2 penny stamps for postage, packing, &c., for one of our fashionable Ladies' Long Guards or Gent's Alberts to wear with the watch, which will be given Free (these watches are guaranteed five years), should you take advantage of our marvellous offer. We expect you to tell your friends about us, and show them the beautiful watch. Don't think this offer too good to be true, but send to-day and gain a Free Watch. You will be amazed.—Colonial Orders, 1/-.—WILLIAMS & LLOYD, Wholesale Jewellers (Desk 16), 83, Cornwallis Road, London, N.

A Complete School
Story book attractive
to all readers.

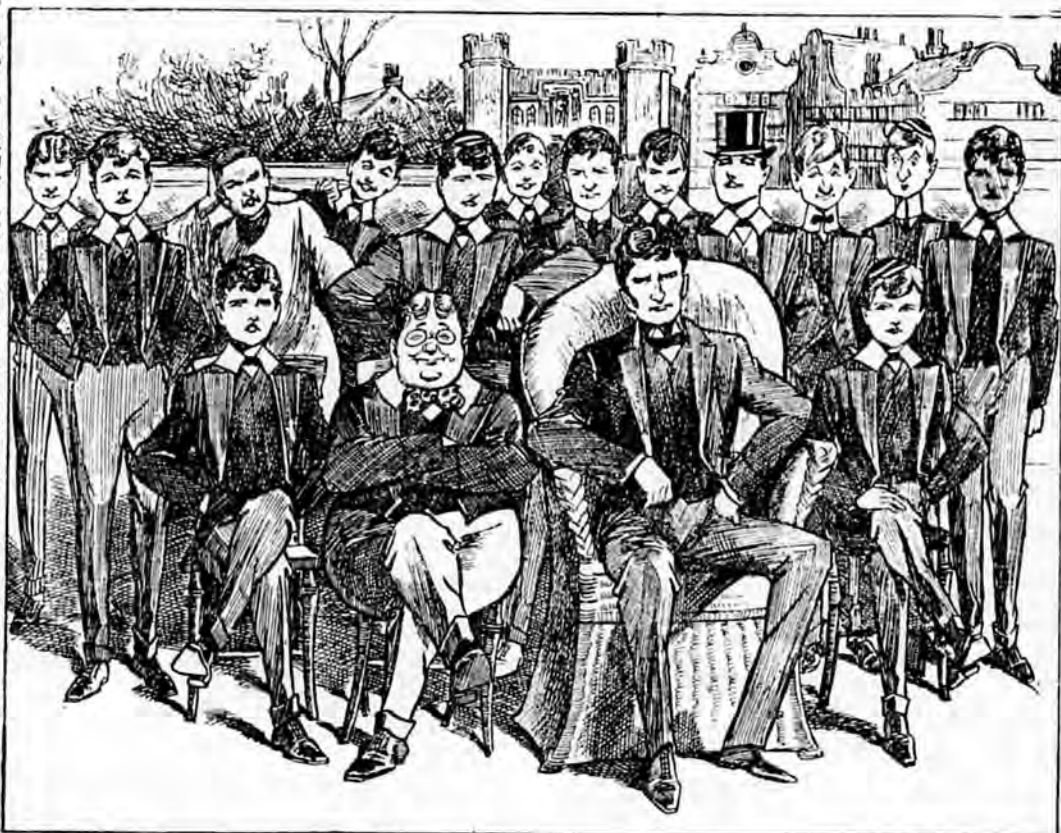


The Editor will be obliged
if you will hand this book
when finished with to a
friend

THE FOUR HEROES!

*A Magnificent New 50,000-word, Long Complete Story
dealing with the exciting adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.,
at Greyfriars. Specially written for this issue of The Magnet.*

By FRANK RICHARDS.



GROUP OF SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE REMOVE FORM AT GREYFRIARS.
Back Row : (Reading from left to right):—Vernon-Smith, John Bull, Wun Lung, Micky Desmond, Harry Wharton, Bulstrode,
Percy Bolover, Tom Brown, Lord Mauleverer, Peter Todd, Alanzo Todd, Hurree Singh.
Front Row :—Frank Nugent, Billy Bunter, Mr. Quelch, Bob Cherry.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Left Out!

HARRY WHARTON paused before the school notice-board, with a paper in his hand. Instantly the eyes of all the Remove fellows in the hall were fastened upon him. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, was skipper of the Form football team and the fellows knew that the paper in his hand contained the list of the eleven chosen for the last fixture before the breaking-up for the Christmas holidays. Hence the keen interest in that paper.

Every fellow who had the least claim to be played in the Form eleven was anxious to see whether his name was there.

And all the fellows were very curious to know whether Vernon-Smith's name was there. Vernon-Smith, the fellow who was called the Bounder of Greyfriars, was talking to Bolsover major as Wharton came along. He looked round quickly as the Remove skipper stopped before the notice-board. Bolsover major understood his expression, and grinned.

"Your name won't be there, Smithy, or mine either," he remarked.

"I know yours won't," said the Bounder. "But mine—"

"You're left out."

Vernon-Smith set his teeth.

"There'll be trouble if I'm left out!" he said. He joined the crowd of juniors who gathered round the notice-board, upon which Harry Wharton had pinned the paper.

Eagerly enough the juniors read down the list: "Bulstrode; Bull, Brown; Cherry, Peter Todd, Linley; Ogilvy, Nugent, Wharton, Penfold, Hurree Singh."

That was the list. The name of Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, did not appear.

The Bounder's brow knitted, and he swung round towards Wharton, with a glitter in his eyes.

"You're leaving me out?"

Wharton nodded.

"I told you I should leave you out," he said. "You know the reason—all the Form knows it. I'm sorry. I wanted you to play. But you left me no choice."

"That's right enough, Smithy," said Bob Cherry. "You've got nothing to complain about. It was open to you to play—if you liked to do the right thing."

The Bounder's lip curled.

"If I allowed Wharton to meddle in my private affairs, and dictate to me as you let him dictate to you!" he sneered.

Wharton flushed.

"It's nothing of the sort, and you know it!" he said sharply. "I've never meddled with you, though I think you're looking for the sack if you keep up your rotten ways. You will be bowled out sooner or later."

"That's no business of yours."

"Quite so. Only you don't play in the eleven. That's my business. You cracked up in the match with Redclyffe, and we were beaten. We all know why you cracked up. You'd been out the night before, after lights out, pub-hunting, and you'd been smoking in your study. You weren't fit to play, but I let you because you were a member of the team, and you've often played well for us. The match was thrown away."

"Accidents will happen—"

"That wasn't an accident. You could have played well if you'd liked, only you thought it more important to play nag over-night at the Cross Keys," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "If you think more of that kind of thing than of football, you can't complain at being left out of the team."

"I'm fit enough now."

"How do I know you'll be fit when this match comes off? I've made you a fair offer. Give me your word to chuck up smoking and breaking bounds after dark, and I'll play you with pleasure. But I want your promise—honour bright."

"That's only fair, Smithy," urged Bolsover major. "Of course it is," said Bob Cherry. "Why don't you chuck up playing the giddy ox, Smithy, and do the sensible thing?"

"I'm not going to be dictated to."

"Every chap in a football eleven has to let his skipper dictate to him to some extent," said Wharton quietly. "I can't put a crock in the team."

"You mean you won't put in a better player than yourself, and get out of the limelight for once!" the Bounder exclaimed scornfully.

"Put it like that if you like."

"You mean I'm not going in?"

"Yes, I mean that."

"Then you're a rotten cad!" exclaimed the Bounder

passionately. "And I've a jolly good mind to—" He paused, his fists clenched and his eyes glittering.

Wharton's eyes gleamed like steel as they met the Bounder's.

"Well, you've a good mind to—what?" he said quietly. "Go on!"

"That!"

The Bounder's fist lashed out straight at Harry Wharton's quiet, scornful face. But the blow did not reach the mark. Wharton's hand came up in a flash, and the Bounder uttered a cry of pain as his wrist was rapped hard and knocked aside.

"Well saved!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder trembled with rage.

"Will you come into the gym with me?" he muttered between his teeth.

"No, I won't! I'll meet you, with or without gloves, after the match this afternoon, but not before," said Wharton quietly. "You're not going to crock me for the Court-field match, Vernon-Smith. That's what you want."

"Funk!"

Wharton laughed.

"We'll talk that over after the match," he said. "We'll talk it over before the match!" said the Bounder furiously. "You'll put up your hands or take a licking."

And he rushed straight at Wharton, hitting out. There was a shout from the juniors. The Bounder had completely lost his temper, and he was almost beside himself with rage.

"Stand back, you fool!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The Bounder did not heed. He rushed on. But he did not reach Wharton. Three or four of the juniors collared him at once, and Vernon-Smith struggled furiously in their grip.

"Let me go! Hang you! Let me go!" he shouted.

"Hold him!" said Johnny Bull coolly, as he fastened his grip on the back of the Bounder's collar. "Don't mind if you hurt him. It doesn't matter in the least. Now, Smithy, are you going to behave yourself?"

"Let me go!" shrieked the Bounder. "Let that funk defend himself, if he's not afraid!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob Cherry. "You can have all the scrapping you want after the match, Smithy. We know your little game, and we think you're a rotten worm!"

"The rottenfulness of the esteemed Smithy is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I suggest the esteemed frog's-march."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, Smithy—"

"Let me go! I'll—"

"Frog's-march!" said Bob Cherry. "This way! Yank him out into the Close, or we shall have the prefects down on us."

And the Bounder, struggling madly, was rushed out of the School House and down the steps into the Close. Across the Close he went, experiencing the joys of the frog's-march. He yelled and struggled as he went.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow! Let me go, you rotters! Yow! Oh!" roared the Bounder.

"Are you going to keep the peace, and leave scrapping with Wharton till after the match?"

"No!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Then we'll frog's-march you till you do!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Amid a roar from the Removites Vernon-Smith was trundled on.

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, bore down upon them with a frowning brow.

"Stop!" he shouted. "What's this row about? Stop that ragging at once!"

The crowd stopped, but they did not let go Vernon-Smith. "It's all right, Wingate," said Bob meekly. "We're only giving Smithy the frog's-march, you know. He's been asking for it."

"What's the row about?"

"Wharton's hiding himself behind those rotters!" yelled Vernon-Smith. "He's afraid to meet me with the gloves on!"

"Oh, rot!" said Wingate.

"Smithy wants to hammer him just before our match," Bob Cherry explained. "We want Smithy to leave it till afterwards. We're arguing it out. I think we shall make Smithy see reason in the long run. We're willing to take any amount of trouble."

Wingate grinned.

"I understand," he said. "Let him go! Now, Vernon-Smith, you're going to keep the peace. I shall keep an

**"THE GEM" LIBRARY
FREE CORRESPONDENCE-EXCHANGE
COUPON.**

M

305

To be enclosed, with coupon taken from page 2, GEM No. 305, with all requests for correspondents. This may only be used by readers in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Canada, India, or other of our Colonies.

See Page 26, "The Gem" Library, Number 305.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

eye on you. If you're mixed up in any row till after the junior match, I shall march you into the Head. Understand that!"

Vernon-Smith panted, but made no reply. Wingate was head prefect at Greyfriars, and had to be obeyed. The senior strode away, and Vernon-Smith turned a glare of rage upon the crowd of juniors.

"Take it calmly," advised Bob Cherry. "When you're cool you'll be sorry that you acted like a beastly cad, you know. And you can fight Wharton all the evening if you like—or as long as you can stand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bouncer shook his fist at the grinning Removites. "You rotters! I'll make you sorry for this before the Courtfield match is over! Mark my words!"

"More likely to mark your chivvy if you talk silly piffle," said Bob Cherry. "Run away and play, and don't talk out of the back of your neck! Rats!"

And as the bell rang just then for third lesson, the Removites trooped off, leaving the Bouncer to follow them to the Form-room with a scowling brow.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Match in the Snow!

DURING third lesson in the Remove Form-room that morning a good many glances turned towards the high windows.

It was a sharp, frosty December day.

There was a fall of snow in the early morning, and ridges of it were white upon the sills and upon the leafless branches of the old trees.

Was it going to snow again?

In Christmas weather the juniors generally welcomed the snow, but on this particular day they were far from desiring it. They were very keen about the last match with Courtfield School, and they didn't want it to be postponed till after the Christmas vacation. But even the keenest footballers in the Remove would not have proposed to play Courtfield in a snowstorm.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, found attention wandering sometimes, and he dropped on Bob Cherry at last.

"Cherry!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Bob, turning his face suddenly from the direction of the window behind him, and looking guilty.

"What are you staring at the window for?"

"The—window, sir?"

"Yes. It is the third of fourth time."

"I—I was looking at the weather, sir."

"You need not consider the weather during lessons," said Mr. Quelch severely. "If you look out of the window again, Cherry, I shall cane you!"

"Oh!" murmured Bob.

And with a heroic effort he restrained himself from looking at the window again during the remainder of the lesson.

As it was a half-holiday that day, third lesson was also last lesson. The Remove were dismissed at last, free for the day, until the hour of evening preparation. There was a rush at once to the big doorway.

A slight powdering of snow was falling in the Close. The little, light flakes floated softly down, and drifted against the faces of the juniors as they stood in the doorway.

"What beastly luck!" said Frank Nugent. "But if it's no worse than this we can play. The Courtfield fellows won't mind a few snowflakes."

"No," agreed Wharton. "It's not as if we were playing Highcliff. The Highcliff chaps scratched a match once because the ground was muddy, and they didn't want to soil their nice little boots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Bouncer looks rather ferocious," Johnny Bull murmured, as Vernon-Smith swung by.

Vernon-Smith's brow was knitted in a scowl. He had his overcoat and scarf on, and was evidently going out.

Bolover major spoke to him at the door.

"Going out before tiffin, Smithy?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The

"Magnet" will be the usual price

1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank

Richards,

NEXT
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Yes; I've got leave."

"My hat! Dining out—eh?" said Snoop.

"I'm going over to Highcliff," said Vernon-Smith, loud enough for Harry Wharton & Co. to hear. "I'm dining with Ponsonby & Co. That's all."

Wharton did not appear to hear. While Vernon-Smith was in the Remove eleven he had broken off with his former friends at Highcliff, who were on the worst of terms with Harry Wharton & Co. Now that he was out of the eleven, he evidently intended to resume his old friendship with them. But it was no concern of Wharton's, and he affected not to hear the Bouncer's remark.

Vernon-Smith strode out of the house and across the Close to the gates through the soft powder of snow.

The Greyfriars fellows trooped into their dining-room at the sound of the dinner-bell a little later.

The snowflakes came down steadily.

After dinner Wharton scanned the Close with anxious eyes. The snow had stopped by that time, though the sky was banked with clouds, telling that there was more to come later.

"It's all right for play," said Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in the Remove footballers.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "A little snowfulness is nothing to us."

"Then we're going!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter bustled up, and dug his fat fingers into Wharton's ribs, in the objectionable way he had, to draw his attention. "I say, I hear that you're not playing Smithy to-day!"

"Quite right," said Wharton.

"Don't puncture me, you ass!"

"Do you want a really first-class player in Smithy's place?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Well, I'm your man!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows! You know I kept goal the other day, and we beat the Fourth Form hollow!" Billy Bunter cried indignantly. "I'd rather play centre-forward, but I don't mind keeping goal. What do you say, Wharton?"

"Oh, I say rats!" said Harry.

"Look here—"

And the Remove footballers went up to their dormitory to change for the match, leaving Billy Bunter blinking indignantly.

Courtfield was a County Council school, and their ground was marked off on the town common. They were not blessed with a dressing-room, and the Remove fellows changed before starting. With heavy coats and mufflers on over their football clothes, Harry Wharton & Co. came down from the dormitory. They were to walk to Courtfield. The distance was not great, and it was warmer walking.

As a rule, a good many fellows followed the team to see the matches that were played outside, but on this occasion the footballers started by themselves. Nobody wanted to stand with cold feet in a snowfall and a keen wind to watch them. There were likely to be very few people on the ground beside the players.

The team tramped along the road through the snow towards Courtfield, the keen wind from the sea behind their backs.

Their caps and coats were powdered with fresh snow by the time they reached Courtfield, the flakes having started falling again.

Courtfield Common was a wide expanse of white when they reached it.

In the distance, beyond the common, rose the buildings of Highcliff School. Highcliff was a public school considerably larger than Greyfriars, though of more recent foundation.

There was a keen rivalry between the juniors of the two schools, and at one time there had been regular football fixtures. But the fixtures had been marked off now.

The Highcliffians did not play the game. A victorious team had been mobbed on their ground once, and after that

the Greyfriars fellows were "fed-up" with them. Highcliffians and Greyfriars fellows seldom met without the exchange of remarks more or less polite, and sometimes there were fistie encounters, in which Ponsonby & Co. generally had the worst of it.

But the Remove footballers were not thinking of Ponsonby & Co. now. All their thoughts were given to the coming match.

The Courtfield fellows were already on the ground when they arrived, putting about a footer to keep themselves warm. The snow had ceased once more, for the time, and the ground had been swept clear, but it was very damp and considerably muddy.

Trumper, the Courtfield captain, shook hands cordially with Harry Wharton.

"I thought you'd come, and blow the snow!" he remarked. "We're ready for play if you are. If it gets too bad, we shall have to chuck it, that's all."

"Well, we're not afraid of a bit of snow," said Harry cheerfully, "and if we get muddy, it will come off. We're ready."

"We've got the giddy place all to ourselves," Tom Brown remarked, looking round on the gleaming white expanse of the common.

There was not a soul in sight.

Only the footballers, the referee, and the linesmen were there, and there was not a single spectator.

But that did not trouble the footballers; they had come there to play the game, not to be looked at.

Wharton and Trumper tossed for choice of ends, and they got to business at once. As the teams lined up, the flakes began to drop softly again.

But Harry Wharton kicked off cheerfully against the wind, and the game started.

It was a bitterly cold day, but the footballers were warm enough—excepting the goalkeepers, who stamped about and waved their arms in their respective "chicken-runs" to keep themselves warm.

Harry Wharton & Co. led off with a hot attack on goal, with the wind in their teeth. Then the Courtfield goalie was given enough—to keep him warm, for some minutes.

But the defence was good, and the ball was cleared out, and the tussle went over the line into the Greyfriars half.

The snow was coming down quite thickly now.

But the players hardly noticed it in the excitement of the match. Both teams were in great form, and both very keen. But Harry Wharton missed the Bounder on the right wing—Vernon-Smith had been a tower of strength there, and the reserve who had taken his place was nothing like his form.

Trumper and his men were quick to discover the weakest spot, and to concentrate their efforts there.

And it was on the Remove right wing that the enemy came through, and rushed for goal.

In the flickering, dancing snowflakes, Trumper and the Courtfield forwards brought the leather right up to the goal, and Trumper kicked.

Bulstrode, in goal, leaped at the whizzing ball a second too late. It dropped in the net. And there was a joyous buzz from the Courtfielders.

"Goal!"

It was first blood to Courtfield.

Bulstrode tossed the leather out, and the Remove fellows looked very grim as they lined up again, with the wind beating the snowflakes in their faces.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Fight!

PUHP! At the shrill plip of the whistle Harry Wharton kicked off. In a few minutes the Remove forwards were besieging the Courtfield goal, but the wind deflected the ball as it went in from Wharton's foot, and the shot did not materialise.

There was not another chance, the game swayed away to midfield.

The wind was growing keener, and it was thick with snow. But the Removevies, as they devoted their efforts to defend, hoped for better luck when they changed over in the second half. Meanwhile they did their best.

In the keen excitement of the match, none of the footballers noticed that spectators were arriving on the ground.

Fellows warmly wrapped in overcoats and mufflers came by twos and threes from the direction of Highcliffe School.

Quite a crowd was gathered on the snowy ground. But the players did not heed them.

Once more, in the teeth of the wind and the snow, Harry Wharton & Co. were rushing upon goal. Hurree Singh had the ball, and as he was tackled, he passed in to Penfold, and Penfold, racing on, passed it to Wharton. Wharton dashed

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

on, and two Courtfielders who rushed upon him slipped in the snow and fell. Wharton kicked for goal, and the Courtfield goalie watched, all eyes and hands, for the flying leather. But it grazed his finger-tips, and lodged in the net; and then it was the turn of the Removevies to chortle:

"Goal!"

Bob Cherry panted, as he dashed snowflakes from his face. "Jolly warm work, but we've equalised. And we'll wipe up the giddy ground with them in the second half, when the wind's behind us!"

"The wipefulness will be terrific!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob, as he glanced across to the crowd on the ground. "We're getting a crowd!"

"Highcliffe chaps, all of them!" said Nugent.

"And Smithy!"

"My hat!"

The Remove fellows could not help being astonished. There were two score at least of the Highcliffe fellows on the ground now, mostly juniors, but with a few Fifth-Formers among them. And among them, too, was Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. He had come down to the ground with Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson, his special friends.

There was a very ugly expression on the Bounder's face, and his eyes were glittering. Harry Wharton, as he caught sight of Smithy's face, knew that this visit of the Bounder and his friends portended trouble. The Highcliffians were hardly likely to have turned out in the snow for the mere pleasure of watching the Remove play Courtfield County Council School.

And the form the "trouble" was to take was soon apparent. Most of the Highcliffians were busy—making snowballs! There was plenty of snow on the ground for that purpose, and by this time the Highcliffians had made quite a pile of missiles.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened as he observed it.

"They're going to snowball us after the match," said Johnny Bull. "Well, I don't mind a little scrap with the rotters."

"They're going to snowball us during the match," said Wharton quietly.

"Oh, crumba! They wouldn't be cads enough to interrupt a footer match—even Ponsonby & Co!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"The cadfulness would be terrific!"

"That's what they're going to do, all the same," said Wharton between his teeth. "That's what Smithy went over to Highcliffe for—to tell them we should be here, and put them up to this rotten trick."

"He wouldn't dare! We'd rag him bald-headed afterwards!"

"He isn't afraid. That's what he intends."

"Better speak to them, and warn them off," said Nugent uneasily.

Wharton nodded.

"Hold on a minute, Trumper," he said. "Those cads are going to interrupt the match."

"Phew!" said Trumper. "That's a cad's trick!"

Wharton strode over to the touch-line to speak to the crowd beside the ground. The Highcliffe fellows chuckled as he came. Their looks showed only too plainly that they meant mischief.

"Look here, what's your little game, you fellows?" Wharton demanded abruptly.

"We've come to watch you do great things," Ponsonby explained smoothly. "No harm in that, surely. It will be quite a lesson to us, you know, to see how you play."

"As good as watching the monkeys in the Zoo—and cheaper," remarked Gadsby.

And the Highcliffians roared.

"No harm in your watching us," said Wharton. "And if you want a scrap, we'll scrap you after the match with pleasure. But none of your tricks while we're playing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you bother us while the match is on, you'll get hurt!" said Harry.

Ponsonby chuckled.

"Well, if eleven of you can hurt forty of us, my son, we shall get hurt!" he agreed. "But otherwise, I think very likely you will be the party to get hurt—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton walked back to his team. It was useless appealing to the Highcliffians' sense of fair play. They hadn't any. And, with the odds so tremendously on the Highcliff side, force could not very well be used.

"They mean trouble?" asked Trumper.

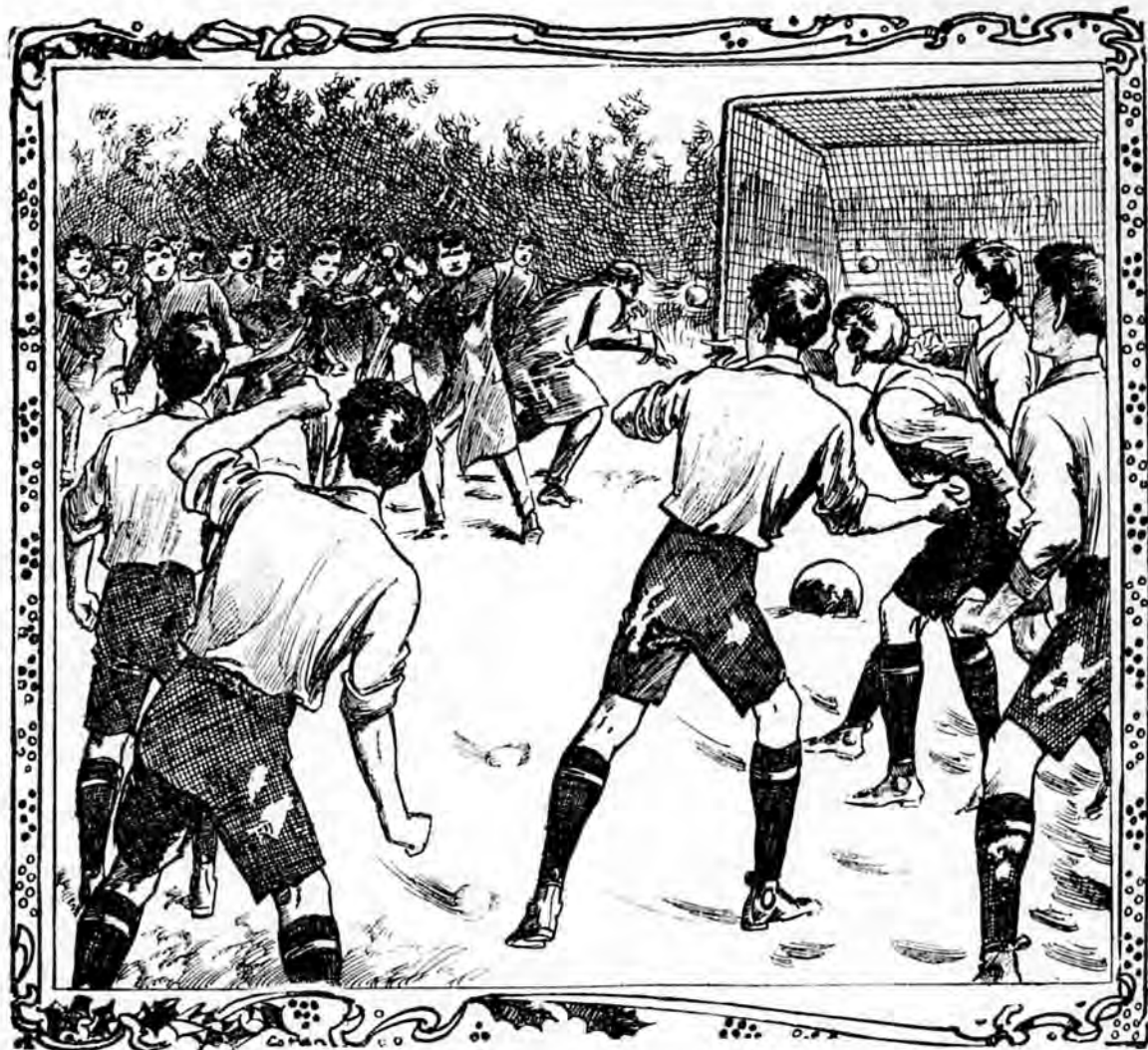
"I think so."

"We'd better go on?"

"Oh, yes."

Phip!

The game restarted, and the footballers were quickly busy.



Leaving the leather lying in the snow, the teams dashed straight at the Highcliffe crowd. But Ponsonby & Co. stood their ground, and met the rush with a perfect fusillade of snowballs. (See Chapter 3.)

Harry Wharton & Co. were borne back by the onslaught of the Courtfielders, but they defended well. Wharton spotted his chance, and brought the leather through the Courtfield line, and made a break for goal. There was a whiz, and a snowball caught him full in the face, smashing as it struck, and he reeled back, slipped in the snow, and fell.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of derisive laughter from the Highcliffians. It was the beginning of the attack. The next minute the air was thick with flying snowballs. Ponsonby & Co. had made a pile of them—hundreds of them—and so they had plenty of ammunition. The snowballs whizzed among the players on all sides. The two goalkeepers dodged about their goals to avoid the shots, but they dodged in vain. On the field play had to stop. The players were bowled over on all sides by the whizzing missiles.

Prominent among the assailants was Vernon-Smith. It was his ball that had knocked Wharton over in his run for goal, and stopped what would have been an almost certain shot. And he was delivering his missiles with swift and deadly aim, well backed up by the crowd of Highcliffians.

"Grooh!" gasped Bob Cherry, as a ball smashed on his mouth. "Ow! This is rather too thick! The awful cads!"

"Ow!" yelled Trimmer, as a ball caught him in the ear.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"Yow! I say, Wharton, we shall have to chuck the match and stop those cads!"

Wharton's eyes were blazing.

"Come on!" he shouted.

And the teams, leaving the leather lying in the snow, rushed towards their enemies, the goalkeepers rushing out of goal to join them.

They dashed straight at the Highcliffe crowd.

But Ponsonby & Co., two to one in numbers, stood their ground, and they met the onrush with a perfect fusillade of snowballs.

The juniors reeled back under the crashing missiles.

Breathless and baffled, they reeled away, and the Highcliffians yelled with derision.

"Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Plenty more! Come on!"

"Yah! Funks!"

Wharton picked himself up out of the snow. His face was crimson, and his eyes gleaming with the light of battle. He shouted breathlessly to his comrades.

"Come on! Come on! Back up, Remove!"

"Back up, Courtfield!" yelled Trimmer.

And they surged forward again. Whizzing missiles in thick clouds met them, but this time they did not stop. They rushed and scrambled on, and reached the Highcliffe fellows,

and then it was the latter's turn to retreat. The footballers' blood was up, and they hit hard, and Ponsonby & Co. did not like hard-hitting at close quarters. Back went the Highcliffians, and the footballers gained possession of the pile of snowballs, and then the missiles began to fly in reverse order, Whizz, whizz! Smash! Crash!

The Highcliffians scattered and scrambled under the fusillade. They grabbed up handfuls of snow to return the fire. But some of them were already in full retreat, having had quite enough of the tussle. Few in numbers as the footballers were, they would probably have had the victory at that moment if the Bounder had not been with the enemy. Smithy's loud voice called the scattered Highcliffians together.

"Back up, Highcliff!" shouted the Bounder. "You're two to one! Back up, and rush them! Follow me!"

"Back up!" shrieked Ponsonby.

The Highcliffians responded with a yell, and charged again. Snowballs flew as thick as hail on both sides, till they came to close quarters, and then snowballs failed, and they resorted to fists. The Remove were all good fighting men, and Trumper & Co. backed them up gallantly; but the odds were too great. They were driven back, by force of numbers, across the football field, clear to the other side. Ponsonby & Co. took possession of the field, and from that point snowballed the gasping footballers.

It became pretty clear that that football match would never be finished.

"They've done us!" Bob Cherry gasped. "But they shan't keep the field! Charge the rotters!"

"Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Hurray!"

Right at the enemy the footballers came again, but the Highcliffians stood their ground this time. There were red smears on most faces, dark circles growing round most eyes. The fight was fast and furious. But again numbers told. The juniors, rolled over in the snow, pitched over and punched and trampled on, receded at last, and once more the Bounder and his comrades were left in victorious possession of the football field.

"They've done us!" gasped Solly Lazarus, the Courtfield centre-half. "The beathits have done us brown!"

"Diddled, dished, and done!" growled Bob Cherry. "But, my hat, won't we make the Bounder smart for this!"

Whizz, whizz, whizz! Smash, smash!

The snowballs were flying again. Vernon-Smith and the Highcliffians were advancing, showering snowballs as they came. Ponsonby & Co. were in greater force than ever now, more and more fellows having arrived on the ground. There was nothing for it but for the footballers to retreat. They put on their coats, and retreated, sending back snowballs and disputing the ground every inch; but they had no chance. Right off the common into the road they were driven, battered on all sides by crashing snowballs.

"Match unfinished!" grinned Trumper ruefully. "We'll make those rotters pay for this some time! But now—"

"We're done!"

"Done brown!" agreed Harry Wharton. "Can't be helped. There's one of our chaps among the rotters, too—the rotten traitor! He will be sorry for it when he comes home to Greyfriars. Good-bye, Trumper, old man! We'd better get off."

"Good-bye! We'll play it out after Christmas."

"Yes, rather!"

And the two teams separated, Trumper & Co. tramping away into Courtfield, and the Remove fellows towards Greyfriars. The Highcliffians did not follow them further, but they sent after them a yell of derision that made the juniors grind their teeth.

"If we only had a crowd of our chaps here!" sighed Bob Cherry.

"But we haven't!" growled Johnny Bull. "Come on! But when the Bounder comes back—"

That was the only comfort the defeated footballers had—to reflect upon what they would do to the Bounder when he came back. That was what they discussed as they tramped home wearily to Greyfriars. Something lingering, with boiling oil in it, was what he deserved, as Bob Cherry remarked, and there was no doubt whatever that the Bounder's punishment would be severe.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith's Return!

FINISHED early!"

Bolsover major made that observation as the Remove players, weary and wet, came tramping into the School House at Greyfriars.

"We haven't finished," said Harry Wharton.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Bolsover major sniffed.

"Afraid of a bit of snow?" he asked.

"Rats!"

"Well, I'd have played it out!" said Bolsover.

"You wouldn't have played it out with forty or fifty Highcliff cads pelting you with snowballs!" said Bob Cherry tartly.

"Oh, my hat! Was that it? What a rotten, caddish thing to do!" said Bolsover.

"And Smithy was leading them!" grunted Bob.

"Smithy!"

"Yes."

"Oh, rot!" said Bolsover major incredulously. "Smithy wouldn't spoil a Greyfriars match like that! Even Smithy wouldn't!"

"But he did!" snapped Wharton.

"He must have been awfully wild to do a thing like that," Skinner remarked. "He was ratty at being left out of the team."

"And now we're ratty, and Smithy is going to get it in the neck!" said Bob Cherry grimly. "There will be a warm time for him when he comes back."

"Well, I don't hold with anything of that kind," said Bolsover major. "If Smithy did that, he ought to be ragged bald-headed. It's a matter for the whole Form to deal with."

"We'll give him a Form trial," said Bob. "We'll have him in the Rag with all the Remove there, and see what he has to say for himself. It's not a personal matter at all, it's a Form matter."

"Blessed if I can understand it," said Bolsover major, still astonished. "Smithy is an awfully reckless beggar; but that is the giddy limit. I shouldn't have expected that even of Smithy."

And Bolsover's astonishment was shared by all the Remove when they heard the story. And their indignation was greater than their surprise. Vernon-Smith was a blackguard of the first water—and he was known to be utterly reckless when his passions were aroused—but what he had done this time was, as Bolsover said, the limit. To interrupt and stop a footer-match, and lead the juniors of the rival school against the Greyfriars fellows, was altogether too "thick." Any kind of ragging that could possibly be devised was hardly severe enough for the traitor.

And the Remove chimed in unanimously with the suggestion of a Form trial. A trial by the Form was an old custom at Greyfriars, and was resorted to in dealing with serious matters that concerned a whole Form. The accused would be judged, the whole Form being the jury, and if found guilty he was given a Form ragging—a much more severe punishment than an ordinary one.

Given his trial, Smithy would be at liberty to make what defence he could, and he was welcome to justify his action if he could do so; but if he failed, an exceedingly rough time was in store for him. And many of the Remove fellows were already getting ready knotted handkerchiefs and slippers, all ready for Vernon-Smith when he was found guilty and condemned by the Form.

The arrangements for the Form trial were simple. It was to take place in the Rag, a large room on the ground floor, which the juniors used for amateur theatrical rehearsals, and meetings of the debating society, and other functions of that sort. The table in the Rag was dragged to the wall, and a chair was placed upon it for the judge. Another chair formed the prisoner's dock. Two more chairs were for the advocates or either side, and the rest of the court had to stand. There was a certain amount of excitement in a Form trial, in which the fellows followed as closely as they could the forms of a real court of law.

All was soon ready for the trial, and all members of the Remove were warned to keep within doors ready to obey the summons of the court.

But the Bounder seemed to be in no hurry to return.

Harry Wharton & Co. had tea in their study, and after tea they came down; but the Bounder had not appeared.

He was evidently spending the rest of the afternoon with his friends at Highcliff, and perhaps looking forward with uneasy foreboding to what was certain to follow his return to Greyfriars. He had acted recklessly and disloyally, and he must know very well that his conduct could not be pardoned.

"He can't miss calling-over, anyway," said Bob Cherry. The chums of the Remove stood in a group at the doorway, looking out into the December darkness, broken only by the glimmer of snowflakes.

Wharton frowned.

"The rotter's putting it off as long as possible," he said. "But he can't be long now. He ought to be kicked out of the school for what he's done, only we can't do that. But we can make him run the gauntlet, and send him to Coventry."

"Yes, rather."

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Begad," remarked Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, "it was really too thick of Smithy, you know! He's got his good points, all the same."

"Blow his good points!" growled Bob Cherry. "It's his bad points that we're worrying about now!"

"Yaas; but he must have been in a rotten temper, don't you know?"

"We'll give him something to help cure his rotten temper!" said Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Through the snow and darkness in the Close, a figure in cap and overcoat came striding. As it came into the radius of light from the doorway, the juniors recognised Vernon-Smith. He came coolly up the steps, and into the hall. There was a reckless sneer upon his hard, clear-cut lips.

"We're waiting for you, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"Really? You needn't have taken the trouble."

"No trouble at all. We want you. Will you have the goodness to step into the Rag?" asked Bob, with elaborate politeness.

The Bounder cast a quick, searching glance at the juniors. "No, I won't!" he said shortly.

"You've got to," said Harry Wharton.

"It's a rag—eh?" sneered Vernon-Smith.

"It's a Form trial!"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not going to take part in any such rot!"

"Will you step into the Rag?"

"No!"

"Then we shall carry you!"

Half a dozen pairs of hands fastened upon the Bounder. His eyes blazed, and he hit out furiously, and Bob Cherry rolled over with a roar. Then the Bounder was swept off his feet, and rushed headlong into the Rag.

Bob Cherry followed them in, his hand to his nose, his fingers red!

"Ow!" murmured Bob, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "The beast! Mind he doesn't get away!"

The Bounder made a fierce effort to drag himself loose. But he was bumped on the floor, and a number of feet were planted upon him to keep him there. He lay with a savage, glowering face, and burning eyes, helpless.

"Call in the fellows!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

And the Remove gathered at the call, crowding into the Rag, and then the door was locked to keep out outsiders. All was ready now!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

At the Bar!

BOB CHERRY had constituted himself master of the ceremonies.

Harry Wharton's face was very stern and grave; but there was a glimmer of humour in Bob's rugged, good-tempered face. It was very difficult for Bob Cherry to look glum, even in the most serious moments, and the ragging of an outsider like Vernon-Smith was not, after all, the most serious of matters. Not that Bob had any intention of letting the traitor off lightly. But he was prepared to rag the Bounder most thoroughly, in the most perfect good-humour. The swelling that made his nose a little more prominent than usual did not detract from his good-temper.

Harry Wharton preferred to stand aside in the matter, and act merely as a member of the Form without taking the lead. His old enmity with the Bounder made him unwilling to take an active part against him. He wanted justice to be done, but he did not want anyone to be able to hint that personal dislike was at the bottom of it. He was glad to leave it in Bob's capable hands.

Bob Cherry proceeded in a business-like manner. The door having been locked to prevent intrusion, Bob directed the court to constitute itself. The locking of the door was a necessary precaution, for a good many fellows were very curious about the proceedings, and they had wanted to come in and witness the scene. But the Remove did not want any outside interference. Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Fourth kicked at the door, and demanded to know whether the Remove supposed that the Rag belonged to them, a question to which the Removes did not trouble to reply. The voice of Coker of the Fifth was heard, commanding the juniors to open the door, and Ogilvy took the trouble to shriek "Rats!" through the keyhole as a reply to Horace Coker.

"All the Remove here?" demanded Bob.

"Every man Jack!" said Bulstrode.

"And no outsiders?"

"Hallo, here's young Tubb!"

"Chuck him out!" said Bob tersely.

"You let me alone!" roared Tubb of the Third truculently.

"I suppose I've got as much right in the Rag as you Remove bouncers, haven't I?"

"Shouldn't wonder," assented Bob Cherry; "but you're

going out all the same. No strange dogs wanted in the giddy kennel."

"Look here——"

"Outside!" yelled Bob.

"Shan't!" yelled Tubb.

"On his neck!" said Bob.

Nugent unlocked the door, and Bulstrode and Johnny Bull yanked Tubb to the doorway, and hurled him forth. He landed among the indignant Fourth-Formers collected there, considerably increasing their indignation by hurling them right and left as he landed. Temple, Dabney, & Co. fell upon Tubb, and smote him hip and thigh, and the grinning Remove fellows slammed and relocked the door of the Rag.

"Court is cleared!" said Bulstrode.

"No more outsiders?"

"There was a yell."

"Here's your minor, Nugent, hiding under the table."

Nugent minor was dragged forth, roaring.

"Hands off! Franky, you rotter, stand by me, do you hear?"

Nugent major grinned.

"No fags allowed here," he said. "Out you go, Dicky!"

"Why, you rotter——"

"Hold on," said Bob. "Those bounders outside will rush in if the door's opened again. They're all ready. Drop that fag out of the window!"

"Yarook! Leggo! Yow!"

"Does it matter if we break your minor's neck, Franky?"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Nugent.

"Right-ho!"

The window was raised, and Dicky Nugent was jerked through it, struggling and kicking. He was dropped gently into the soft snow outside, and the window was jammed down again. A further search revealed no more intruders, and the court constituted itself.

"Put the prisoner in the dock," said Bob.

"This way, prisoner!"

"Let me alone, you fools!" snarled the Bounder. "I'm not going to take any part in this silly fag's game!"

"Contempt of court will be punished according to law," said Bob Cherry. "Put the prisoner in the dock. Nugent and Johnny Bull are appointed warders to see that he behaves himself. Warders are allowed the use of slippers to see that the prisoner behaves himself in the dock."

"Hear, hear!" said the warders.

Johnny Bull and Nugent took Vernon-Smith by either arm and marched him to the chair that represented the prisoner's dock. Smithy seemed inclined to struggle again; but the Remove fellows were quite ready to handle him if he did, and he gave up the idea. He stood at the dock between the two warders, each of whom held a slipper, to be used in case of contempt of court.

"The next step is to appoint a judge," said Bob Cherry. "Some disinterested chap must be judge—not a member of the eleven—as we want to be quite sure of conducting this important trial without prejudice."

"I propose Lord Mauleverer!" said Nugent. "In all law cases the final appeal is to the House of Lords."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Passed unanimously!" said Bob.

"How can it be passed unanimously without taking a vote on the subject?" asked Peter Todd.

Peter Todd was the son of a solicitor, and was supposed to know whole heaps of mysterious things about the law. He was of opinion that he was the most suitable person to fill the place of judge.

Bob Cherry frowned.

"I pass it unanimously myself," he replied. "Mauly! Where's Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer had been dragged by force into the Rag to participate in the trial. The champion slacker of the Remove had been discovered dozing before the fire in his study, and now he was dozing before the fire in the Rag. Bob Cherry woke him up by pulling away his chair, and his lordship rolled on the floor with a howl.

"Ow! Begad!"

"Wake up, you ass! Are you awake?"

"Ow! Yaas!"

"You're going to be judge."

"Begad!"

"Come and take your chair."

"My dear fellow——"

"This way!"

"Ow! Leggo my collar, you ass!"

Bob Cherry did not let go Lord Mauleverer's collar till the judge had taken his seat. His lordship sat down and grunted, and put his collar straight.

"Now to business," said Nugent.

"Hold on! Prisoner at the bar, do you want an advocate?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Contempt of court!" said Bob Cherry. "Two strokes with a slipper are the legal punishment of contempt of court."

Whack! whack!

Vernon-Smith gave a howl, and turned ferociously on the two warders.

"In case of resistance to proper authority, the prisoner is to be bound hand and foot," said Bob. And Vernon-Smith lowered his clenched fists. In spite of the hilarity that marked the proceedings of the court, he could see that his Form-fellows were in deadly earnest, and were not disposed to be trifled with.

"Any fellow offer to act as prisoner's counsel?" asked Bob, looking round.

Peter Todd stepped forward.

"I'm your man!" he said. "Counsel for the defence."

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "There's nothing to be said in the defence; and if there is, Smithy can say it himself."

Peter Todd sniffed.

"I appeal to his lordship the judge against irrelevant interruptions from attendants of the court," he said.

"Oh, bosh!" said Johnny Bull.

"If warders are allowed to express opinions, I protest against the whole of the proceedings, and resign my brief!" said Todd loftily.

"Shut up, Bull!"

"Rats!"

"Order!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, order, you know," said the judge. "If I'm judge in this court, I'm going to keep order, don't you know, my dear fellows! Yaas, certainly, order!"

Johnny Bull growled, and relapsed into silence.

"Counsel for the prosecution," said Bob, looking round—"that will suit you, Wharton?"

Wharton shook his head promptly.

"As captain of the footer eleven, I'm a witness," he said. "Can't be prosecuting counsel and witness too."

Bob rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose not," he agreed. "Who volunteers?"

"Morgan," suggested Nugent. "Morgan's brother is a barrister."

"Trot up, Morgan!"

"I'm willing," said the Welsh junior. "But I don't see how I can act if Todd is opposing counsel. Solicitors can't act as barristers."

"Todd isn't a solicitor; his pater is," said Bob. "That's all right. None of your blessed second-hand professional etiquette here, please! Walk up!"

Morgan walked up.

"The court is now constituted," said Bob. "I'm clerk of the court, to explain the law to the judge—same as in real law courts."

"Gentlemen of the jury, take your seats—or stand; just as you like. Mauly, you ass, you're going to sleep again!" roared the clerk of the court.

"Eh? No, I'm not. I heard all you fellows were saying!" gasped the judge.

"Keep awake, you ass!"

"Yaas."

"Now pile in! If the judge goes to sleep again it's the duty of the clerk of the court to stick a pin in him!" Bob Cherry remarked. "Now pile in, Mauly!"

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer. "I find the prisoner guilty of rotten bad form, and I sentence him to—"

"Ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "You can't find him guilty till he's been tried!"

"Can't I?" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer, in surprise. "I thought a judge could find anybody guilty if he liked."

"Oh, you fathead! What's the good of a jury, then?"

"Blessed if I know! Is it any good?" asked Mauleverer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in court! Lord Mauleverer will now open the proceedings, and if he doesn't talk sense he'll get a thick ear!"

"Oh, begad!"

"You have to ask the prisoner whether he's guilty or not guilty first, fathead!"

"Yaas. Prisoner at the bar, are you guilty or not guilty first, fathead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The clerk of the court has to ask that, I think," said Nugent dubiously.

"Does he?" said Bob. "All serene! Prisoner at the bar—"

"Rats!"

"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Bosh!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"The prisoner declines to plead," said Bob. "The trial will therefore proceed. Counsel for the prosecution will now hop in."

"Go it, Morgan!"

And Morgan went it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tried by the Form!

THERE was a buzz of talk and laughter in the body of the court as the counsel for the prosecution opened his case.

"My lord, and gentlemen of the jury——"

"Go it, Morgan!"

"On the ball!"

"Don't be long-winded!"

"Cut it short!"

"My lord, I appeal for order in court!" said the prosecuting counsel.

"Yaas. Order in court, my dear fellows! Otherwise, I shall order the court to be cleared, don't you know, begad!"

"You can't order the jury to be cleared out of court," said Billy Bunter. "He, he, he! That blessed judge don't know the law!"

"Somebody give Bunter a thick ear!" said Bob Cherry. "Order! Silence! Shut up! Go on, Morgan."

"There are a few salient facts I wish to bring to the notice of the jury," said Morgan; and there was quite a murmur of admiration for the way he put it. "In the first place, the prisoner at the bar has been guilty of the most reprehensible conduct. Words fail to describe the unparalleled infamy of this depraved wretch——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Draw it mild!"

"Order!"

"This wretch!" pursued Morgan, pointing a dramatic finger at the scowling Bouncer. "Look at him, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury—look at the scowling face, that beetling brow, that whole countenance cast in the mould of crime and wickedness——"

"You silly ass!" roared Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Morgan!" yelled the juniors encouragingly.

Morgan was certainly going it strong, and his eloquence was great.

"What is the prisoner at the bar accused of?" said Morgan eloquently. "He was left out of the Remove footer eleven—why? Because he breaks bounds of a night, smokes and plays cards with other scum and refuse of humanity——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And, in consequence, is not fit to play the grand old game—that game that has made England and Wales what they are!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The Duke of Wellington——" proceeded Morgan.

"Oh, bother the Duke of Wellington!" said Bob Cherry. "He wasn't a Greyfriars chap, and he hasn't anything to do with this biznev. Stick to the subject!"

"My lord, if I am not allowed to conduct my case my own way, I shall have no alternative but to throw up my brief," said the prosecuting counsel, appealing to the judge.

"Yaas. Shut up, Cherry!"

"The Duke of Wellington," pursued Morgan victoriously, "declared in a famous remark that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. With all possible respect to the conqueror of Napoleon, I beg to observe that the duke was off-side in that remark. The Battle of Waterloo was won on the football-field of Greyfriars!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And where was the Battle of Majuba lost?" asked Micky Desmond.

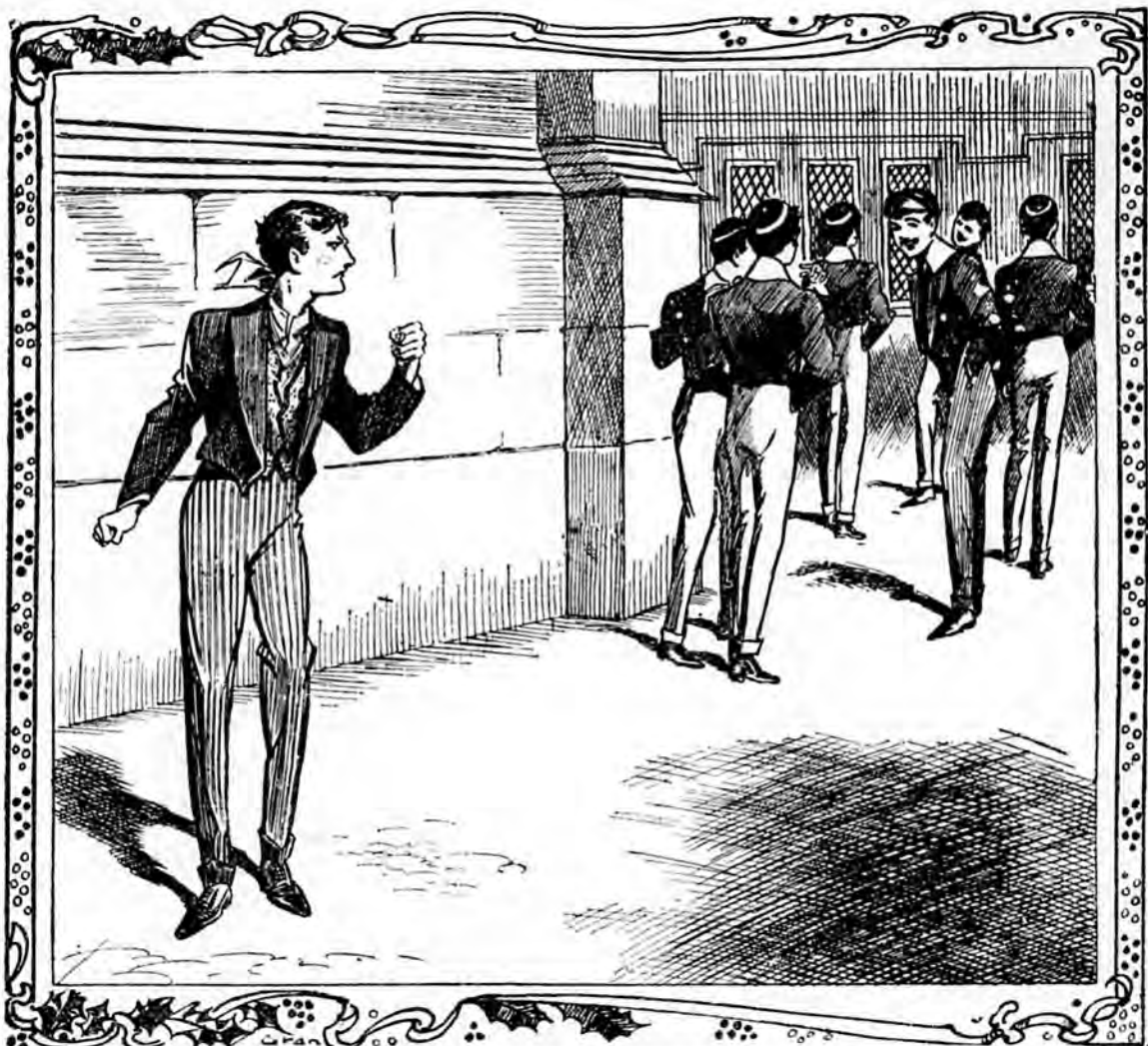
"Silence in court!"

"It has always been the aim of the Remove to keep alive the glorious traditions of the game," continued Morgan. "Vernon-Smith has failed in that respect. By riotous living——"

"Oh!"

"By riotous living," said Morgan firmly, "Smithy has rendered himself unfit to play the grand old game which has caused the British Empire to become what it is. And then what does he do? Left out of the team because he cracks up, he proceeds to league himself with a horde of ruffians, and to interrupt a football match—the last word in moral depravity. A fellow who doesn't play footer is a slacker. A fellow who doesn't keep himself fit to play well is a slacker and a toad. But a fellow who spoils a game for other fellows—with what words, gentlemen of the jury, shall we describe him?"

"Rotter!"



The Bounder snook his fist at the grinning Removites. "You rotters!" he cried. "I'll make you sorry for this before the Courtfield match is over! Mark my words!" (See Chapter I.)

"Blighter!"
"Worm!"
"Outsider!"
"Cad!"

The gentlemen of the jury evidently had a large supply of words suitable for the occasion.

"Of this heinous conduct I accuse the lowering, scowling, crime-hardened reprobate who stands slinking before you," said Morgan, more eloquently than ever. "And now I will proceed to call witnesses to prove my case. Wharton?"

"Adsum!" said Wharton.

"What is your name?"

"Wharton, you ass!"

"What on earth do you want to ask Wharton his name for?" demanded Bob Cherry, in amazement. "Have you gone off your rocker, Morgan?"

"A court of law has to proceed according to forms of law," said Morgan. "My major's a barrister, look you, and I know what I'm about. Wharton, I understand that you are captain of the Remove footer eleven?"

"You know I am."

"What I know is not evidence," said the prosecuting counsel severely, "and I beg the witness to keep to the point. Are you or are you not captain of the footer eleven in the Remove Form, otherwise known as the Lower Fourth Form?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave the prisoner at the bar out of the footer eleven?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price

eleven on the occasion of the fixture with Courtfield County Council School?"

"I did."

"What were your reasons for so doing?"

"The prisoner cracked up in the Redclyffe match last week and lost us the match, owing to having been out on the razze the night before, when all respectable persons were in bed. For this reason he was scratched out of the team."

"Now describe what happened at the match to-day."

"The prisoner appeared there with a gang of hooligans belonging to Highcliffe School, and raided the footer ground and stopped the match."

"You may stand down. Mark Linley!"

"Here!" said the Lancashire lad.

"Were you present on this occasion?"

"Of course; I was in the eleven."

"Did you witness the occurrences that Wharton describes?"

"I did."

"Very well; you may stand down. Bulstrode!"

"Hullo!" said Bulstrode.

"Do you corroborate the evidence given by the previous two witnesses?"

"What-ho!" said the Remove goalkeeper.

"Thank you! That will do. Gentlemen of the jury, I have a number of other witnesses who can corroborate the evidence already given, if necessary. I think, however, that that will be sufficient. The prisoner at the bar is accused

and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled, **HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER.** By Frank Richards.

of treachery, disloyalty, and violence. I claim that my witnesses have proved his guilt by their unimpeachable testimony. Gentlemen of the jury, that is my case!"

And the prosecuting counsel sat down triumphantly. It was unfortunate that a member of the jury, of practical joking tendencies, had removed his chair while he was speaking. Morgan sat down, quite unintentionally, on the floor.

Bump!

"Ow!"

Laughter in court!

Morgan jumped up in a fury.

"What silly idiot moved my chair, look you!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"I'm going to punch his silly head!" bellowed Morgan.

"Order!"

"Yas, order in court, you know," said Lord Mauleverer. "Gentlemen, the prosecuting counsel has stated his case eloquently. I find the prisoner at the bar guilty, and I accordingly sentence him—"

"Ass! The counsel for the defence hasn't spoken yet!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"Oh, begad!" said the judge resignedly. "Pile in, counsel for the defence, and cut it short, or we shall be all night about it!"

Peter Todd stood up.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I appear in defence of this unhappy man—"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Go it, Todd!"

"This unhappy man, at whom the finger of scorn is pointed, whose conduct naturally raises loathing in every honourable breast—"

"I say, you're counsel for the defence, you know, not for the prosecution," hinted Bob Cherry, in surprise.

"I beg to be allowed to conduct my case in my own way, without unseemly interruptions," said the counsel for the defence. "I am sure his lordship will protect me!"

"Yas; pile in, kid!" said his lordship.

"Look at this unhappy man!" pursued Peter Todd.

"Look at the lowering brow, the sneering lip, the baleful eye! Is not crime and vice written in every line of that debased, depraved countenance? Gentlemen, I base my defence on the character of the prisoner—the utterly bad and irredeemable character of the prisoner! Brought up amid the vile and debasing influences of a millionaire's home—"

"Oh!"

"Surrounded by the corrupting influences of filthy lucre, the prisoner has never learned to be a decent fellow; he has never had the advantages that attend the upbringing of the son of an honest and respectable workman! Is it, therefore, surprising that he has turned out to be a rotter? Gentlemen of the jury, considering the vicious home surroundings that inevitably fall to the lot of a millionaire's son, I say that it would be surprising if he had not turned out to be a rotter. On these grounds, and these grounds alone, I appeal for a verdict of not guilty!"

There was a cackle of laughter in the court. Peter Todd's defence seemed rather more damaging to the prisoner at the bar than Morgan's prosecution. It was a case, as Frank Nugent observed to Johnny Bull, of save me from my friends.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I have done! I appeal for the acquittal of the wretched, slinking malefactor now standing before you, on the grounds that he has never really had a chance to be decent. Had his father been a respectable workman on a pound a week, gentlemen, this person would never have appeared before you to be judged. Will you condemn him for the corrupting influences of the wealth he did not create? What is it that has made him wilful, obstinate, reckless, and pigheaded? The super-abundance of enervating wealth, gentlemen! I claim that this wretched specimen of a bloated millionaire class is more entitled to pity than to condemnation. Gentlemen of the jury, that is my case!"

And Peter Todd sat down, taking care to glance behind him first to make sure that his chair was still there.

"Is that all, my dear fellow?" asked the judge.

"That is all, my lord."

"Good egg! I sentence the prisoner to—"

"Fathead! The jury have got to find him guilty first!" howled Bob.

"Oh, begad, have they? Gentlemen of the jury, you will now proceed to find the prisoner guilty," said the judge; and again there was laughter in court.

The jury did not take long to deliberate. Tom Brown, the New Zealander, was foreman of the jury, and he consulted his comrades. The jurymen reached their decision in about three seconds.

"Well, gentlemen, what is your verdict, don't you know?" asked the judge.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Guilty!"

"Guilty, begad! I sentence the prisoner at the bar—"

"You have to ask him if he has anything to say first."

"Yas? Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you according to the giddy law?"

"Go and eat coke!" said the prisoner at the bar.

"I sentence the prisoner to be hanged, drawn, and quartered," said the judge severely. "After that, he is to be frog-marched round the Rag, and made to run the gauntlet, and sent to Coventry by the whole Form."

"Hear, hear!"

The sentence of the judge met with unanimous approval. The trial was over, and it only remained to carry out the sentence of the court—which the Remove proceeded to do with great gusto.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Punishment!

"COLLAR him!"

Vernon-Smith was promptly collared.

The Bounder had stood with a sulky, sullen face during the trial, with bitter rage and animosity in his heart.

He had acted with utter recklessness in leaguering himself with the Highcliffe fellows against his own school, and stopping the football match; and he did not expect to be forgiven for it. Yet it was a blow to him to find the whole Form against him, not excepting his own friends. Bolsover major and Snoop and Skinner were with the rest in condemning him. The Bounder had sometimes evoked admiration by his recklessness and dare-devil courage—but this time he had gone too far, and there was no pardon. Even Billy Bunter was indignant, and loud in his condemnation. And his conduct must have been very bad indeed, to be condemned by Billy Bunter.

There was anger, hatred, and all uncharitableness in the Bounder's heart now. And he had to go through with his punishment—there was no help for that. But he would not submit tamely. He tore himself away from Nugent and Johnny Bull, and put up his hands, as the vengeful Removites closed round him.

"Stand back!" he said, between his teeth.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out of the way, Bunter, you ass!"

"But I say—I've got a suggestion to make—hold on a minute!" exclaimed Bunter excitedly. "Look here! Instead of ragging the Bounder, why not impose a fine?"

"What!"

"Let's fine him a feed for the whole Form!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, you porpoise!"

"Well, I think it's a jolly good idea," said the Owl of the Remove. "It would punish him all right, and we should have the feed, and—Ow!"

Bunter went whirling away from Bob Cherry's elbow, and the Bounder was collared. He struggled and hit out furiously, but he was quickly secured.

"Frog's march!" said Bob Cherry.

Round and round the Rag the juniors went in the frog's march.

By the time they had finished, the Bounder was in a sadly dishevelled state. His collar was torn out, his tie was gone, and his jacket was split up the back. He was covered with dust, and his face was crimson with fury.

"Now form up for the gauntlet," said Bob.

Two lines of juniors were promptly formed.

Each of the fellows held something in his hand wherewith to smite the Bounder as he ran between the lines—slippers, or stuffed socks, or knotted handkerchiefs.

"Start!" shouted Bob.

The Bounder set his teeth.

"Hang you! I won't!"

"Won't you?" said Bob grimly. "Then you'll be made. You're going to learn, Smithy, that you can't muck up a Remove footer match without trouble to follow. Are you going to start?"

"No, confound you!"

"Start him!" said Bob.

Half a dozen fellows detached themselves from the line, and started Vernon-Smith, by the simple process of applying their boots to his person. He was kicked into the opening between the lines, and then the blows began to fall.

It was better to run than to stand still, there, and the Bounder ran desperately, while showers of blows descended upon him from all sides.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

With gritting teeth, and flaming eyes, the Bounder ran,

and the juniors almost fell over one another to get their blows in.

The uproar was terrific; and the fellows of other Forms, out in the hall, banged at the door of the Rag, and demanded to know what was going on.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Lemme get at him!"

"Give him another."

"Pile in!"

The Bounder was through at last. He staggered out of the lines, gasping for breath, and sank exhausted on the floor.

"Run him through again!" proposed Snoop.

But Wharton shook his head.

"Enough's as good as a feast!" he said. "He's had his punishment."

"Excepting the Coventry!" growled Johnny Bull.

"And he's going to get that. Vernon-Smith, you understand that you're sent to Coventry for the rest of the term. Any fellow in the Remove speaking to you will be sent to Coventry as well!"

"Hang you!" groaned the Bounder.

"If you want somebody to speak to, you can go over to your giddy chums at Highcliffe," said Bob Cherry.

"You're in Coventry here," said Wharton. "That's settled. Now we're finished here—"

There was a sharp rap at the door.

"Open this door at once!"

"Wingate!" muttered Bob Cherry.

It was the voice of the captain of Greyfriars. The uproar in the Rag had evidently attracted the attention of the prefects—which was not at all surprising, considering the din that the raggers had been making.

Harry Wharton unlocked the door and threw it open, and the captain of Greyfriars strode in with an angry brow.

"What is all this uproar about?" he demanded.

"Only a little ragging," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "All over now, too!"

Wingate's eyes fell upon Vernon-Smith. The Bounder had staggered to his feet, and he stood, panting for breath, his face dusty and furious.

"Smith," exclaimed Wingate, "what is the matter with you? Do you mean to say that you have all been ragging Vernon-Smith, Wharton?"

"Yes. It was a Form ragging."

"Looks to me more like bullying," said Wingate, his brow darkening. "You will have to explain this, Wharton."

"It's easy enough to explain. Vernon-Smith joined the Highcliffe fellows, and stopped the footer match we were playing at Courtfield to-day," said Harry quietly.

"Oh! That alters the case. You did that, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, I did," said the Bounder defiantly.

"Then you deserve all you've got, and perhaps a little more," said Wingate sternly. "If you hadn't been well ragged, I'd give you a thorough licking myself for such a rascally thing. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

The Bounder scowled sullenly, and made no reply.

"No more of this, though, you understand," said Wingate.

"All serene," grinned Peter Todd. "The judgment of the court has been carried out, and justice is satisfied."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Wingate left the Rag. There were some cases in which raggings were by no means justifiable, but in this case it was more than justified, and the prefect had no desire whatever to interfere. Vernon-Smith limped towards the door after him. At the door he paused, to fling back a savage look at the Removites.

"I'll make you sorry for this, all of you!" he said, between his teeth.

"Rats!"

"And especially you, Wharton—wait a little, and you'll see!"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

The Bounder limped out of the Rag. Curious glances from the fellows in the hall met him, but he only scowled in reply to questions, and dragged himself away to the Remove dormitory. He was, as Coker of the Fifth remarked, very badly in want of a wash and a brush-up.

"The giddy demands of justice are satisfied," Peter Todd remarked. "I don't think even the Bounder will forget that lesson."

"The lessonfulness has been terrific, my worthy chum!"

Billy Bunter gave a snort.

"Much better to fine him a feed for the whole Form, you silly asses!" he said. "We should have the feed now, and—ow!—leggo my ear, Peter Todd—ow!"

"Shurrup, then!" said Peter.

"I am not quite sure whether my Uncle Benjamin would fully approve of this proceeding, my dear Peter," remarked Alonzo Todd slowly and thoughtfully, as if he had given that point a great deal of consideration.

"Lucky Uncle Ben hasn't anything to do with it, then."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The Magnet, and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled, "HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER."

grinned Peter. "Give him a rest, Lonzy, and give me a rest, too."

"My dear Peter—"

But Peter walked away without waiting for the rest of his cousin Alonzo's views on the subject. Alonzo Todd was the only fellow who had any doubts upon the matter—the rest of the Remove were satisfied that justice had been done. As Bob Cherry put it, the Bounder had asked for it, and now he had got it—and that was all.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

By Sentence of the Form!

VERNON-SMITH remained in his study the rest of that evening.

No one came there to see him.

He knew that sentence of Coventry had been passed upon him by the Form, but at first he had not taken it seriously. He expected that his own friends, at least, would stand by him. But he soon found out his mistake.

Skinner, with whom the Bounder had lately made it up after a long-standing quarrel, kept away, though he shared the same study with Vernon-Smith. Bolsover major did not drop in for a chat. Snoop did not come. Stoid did not come. Even Billy Bunter did not blink in at the door in search of a cheap supper.

The Bounder was left severely alone.

He did his preparation, and then sat in the armchair before the fire, with a book in his hand, but not reading.

He was plunged in gloomy reflections.

He had been carried away by animosity in what he had done that afternoon, and when it was all over, he realised that he had gone too far, and he would have retrieved the false step if he could. But that was impossible, and he had hardened himself to take the consequences.

But the consequences were more far-reaching than he had expected. He had anticipated the ragging, but to be sent to Coventry in addition was unexpected. And yet, when he came to think of it, there was nothing to be surprised at.

Even Wingate, of the Sixth, who took no interest in the Remove affairs personally, had been disgusted at his conduct, and pronounced that the ragging was well-deserved. And the Bounder, deep in his own heart, had to acknowledge also that it was well deserved.

The fact that no one came to the study showed that the sentence of Coventry was being carried out, and the Bounder did not care to descend and face it in the common-room and the passages. But he felt a keen desire to be assured upon the subject, and presently when he heard footsteps in the Remove passage, he rose and opened his door and looked out.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was coming along the passage. Vernon-Smith called to him, as the Nabob of Bhanipur was passing with averted face:

"Inky!"

The nabob did not reply, but walked on. Vernon-Smith scowled fiercely.

"Can't you hear me?" he shouted.

No answer.

"You confounded nigger!"

Still no reply. Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth as he watched the Indian junior go into his study. Inky's door closed. Smithy went back into his own room, slammed the door, and sank into the armchair again.

It was evidently real enough. The kind-hearted, good-natured Nabob of Bhanipur had cut him; and if Inky did so, it was pretty certain that the rest of the Form would do so.

Vernon-Smith lighted a cigarette, and thought the matter out as he smoked in his study. He was sorry for what he had done, in view of the consequences; but, otherwise, he did not repent, and his breath was full of anger and malice.

To be cut by the Form was a heavy punishment—to be ignored by "rotters" like Snoop and Bunter, as well as by decent fellows, was a bitter humiliation. But that was what it had come to, and it would last the rest of the term. After the Christmas holidays, perhaps, when all the fellows came back fresh to Greyfriars, he would be able to make a fresh start—schoolboys do not have long memories. But for the short remainder of the term he must live the life of an outsider, a pariah, a fellow who was ignored and cut. The mere thought of it made him grind his teeth.

Plunged in bitter thoughts he did not observe the time, and half-past nine, the bed-time of the Remove, passed, and he was still sitting in the armchair, his brows knitted in thought, and quite a pile of cigarette-ends growing in the fender.

Meanwhile, the Remove had gone up to their dormitory.

Loder, of the Sixth, came to see lights out, and he frowned

as he saw that one of the Form was not there. The duties of a prefect were a bore and a bother to Loder, though he was glad enough to possess the privileges of that office.

"Where's Smith?" he rapped out.

"I think he's in his study," said Bob Cherry.

"Go and fetch him!"

Bob hesitated. By sentence of the Remove he was unable to speak to the Bouncer, and he had no intention of doing so, prefect or no prefect. Loder stared at him angrily.

"Well, why don't you go?" he snapped. "Go and tell Smith at once to come to bed!"

Bob Cherry left the dormitory, and descended to the Remove passage. He knocked at the door of Vernon-Smith's study, and opened it.

The Bouncer started in his chair, and swung round.

Bob took a stump of pencil from his pocket, and scrawled in his big, schoolboy hand upon a sheet of impot. paper that lay on the table:

"Bed-time. Loder's waiting!"

He held it up and showed it to Vernon-Smith, who glared at him as if he would eat him.

"You silly ass!" growled the Bouncer. "Haven't you got a tongue?"

Bob Cherry made no reply. He laid the paper on the table, and walked out of the study without a word.

"You fathead!" shouted the Bouncer. "Can't you speak?"

Bob walked away in silence.

Vernon-Smith scowled, and rose to his feet. He collected up the cigarette-ends, and stirred them carefully into the fire, and then turned out the light and left the study. He came into the Remove dormitory with a black brow.

If it had been any other member of the Remove, Loder would have given him lines for keeping him waiting; but Loder, the black sheep of the Sixth, had many things in common with the black sheep of the Remove. They were on uncommonly good terms for senior and junior—indeed, some of the fellows said that they joined the same card-parties sometimes, after lights out, in the back-parlour of the Cross Keys in Friarale. So Loder only rapped out:

"Get to bed, Smith! You've kept me waiting!"

"Sorry," said the Bouncer. "I didn't notice the time."

"Well, turn in!"

Vernon-Smith turned in.

Loder put out the light and left the dormitory.

Vernon-Smith lay in silence, listening to the cheery buzz of talk that ran from bed to bed. He did not join in it; he knew that any observation he made would not be answered. It was a bitterly humiliating position, for he had always held his head high, and had always disdained to court anybody's society. The millionaire's son expected to be courted, and one of his grievances against the Famous Five was that they did not care twopence for his wealth.

Most of the juniors were discussing the coming Christmas holidays, before they went to sleep, chatting cheerfully over the prospect. It had been understood that Bolsover major was going home for the holidays with Vernon-Smith, and the Bouncer wondered now whether that arrangement would be kept.

Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, had always chummed more or less with the Bouncer. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire, had taken a place in the country near Wharton Lodge, Harry Wharton's home, and there Bolsover was to have spent part of the vacation with him. A good many fellows would have been glad to be asked to the millionaire's home. But that seemed to be changed now.

The voices died away at last. Then Vernon-Smith spoke:

"Bolsover!"

No reply from Bolsover major.

"Are you asleep, Bolsover?"

Silence.

"Snoop, are you asleep?"

No answer.

"Bunter!"

No.

Vernon-Smith did not believe that they were asleep. But he did not speak again. He turned his head upon the pillow, and closed his eyes.

He was in Coventry, and the fellows who might have stood by him, either from friendship or from interested motives, had joined with the rest against him.

It was a long time before the Bouncer slept. He was revolving in his mind schemes of revenge upon Harry Wharton & Co.

But he slept at last.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, the Bouncer, as usual, was one of the first out of bed. For the moment he had forgotten the sentence of Coventry.

"Jolly cold, isn't it?" he said, as Bulstrode turned out of the next bed.

"Yes," said Bulstrode unthinkingly. Then he coloured, and turned away his head.

"Coming out for a run before brekker?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Why not?"

No reply.

"Haven't you got a tongue?" asked the Bouncer savagely. Bulstrode did not seem to hear.

"Haven't you got a tongue, either, Skinner?" sneered the Bouncer.

Skinner looked uncomfortable, but did not speak.

Vernon-Smith dressed and went down by himself, his brow dark, and his eyes gleaming. The Remove were in earnest—and he was in Coventry—and he was realising that it was a most uncomfortable place to be in.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In Coventry!

MR. QUELCH, the Remove-master, glanced sharply at Vernon-Smith in the Form-room that morning. He could not help noticing the junior's dark, sullen face.

But the rest of the Remove did not seem to notice Vernon-Smith at all.

When morning lessons were over, and the Remove were filing out, Mr. Quelch made the Bouncer a sign to remain.

Vernon-Smith stopped by the Form-master's desk while the other fellows left the Form-room.

"You are in trouble with your Form fellows, I think, Smith?" said Mr. Quelch quietly and kindly.

Mr. Quelch took some interest in the Bouncer. He was reckless, often disrespectful, and sometimes as insolent as he dared to be. On one occasion which had never been forgotten, he had openly defied his Form-master, and would have been expelled from the school; but then, strangely enough, the better side of his nature had come to light, and Mr. Quelch could not forget that the Bouncer had risked his life to save him from a terrible peril. The boy who could do that could not be all bad, Mr. Quelch thought, and since that time he had been very kind to the Bouncer.

Vernon-Smith did not reply to the question, but the scowl upon his brow deepened. He did not want Mr. Quelch's compassion.

"I hear that there was trouble yesterday—a ragging, or something of the kind," said Mr. Quelch. "You have made no complaint, and I do not wish to inquire into the matter, Vernon-Smith. But I am sorry to see you at variance with the others. I have been very pleased of late to see you on better terms with Wharton and his friends. I presume that you have quarrelled with them again?"

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith.

"I will not ask upon which side the blame lies," said Mr. Quelch. He had, as a matter of fact, very little doubt upon that point. "But I am sorry to see this, when you were getting on so well."

"I don't complain," said the Bouncer.

"But surely, Smith, it would be wiser, if you have given offence, to acknowledge your fault, whatever it is, and let the present state of affairs cease," said the Remove master kindly.

The Bouncer was silent.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, with a sigh. "I spoke to you with the kindest motives, Smith. You may go!"

And the Bouncer went.

There had been another fall of snow during the night, and most of the juniors had swarmed out into the Close for snow-balling. The Bouncer stood in the doorway, and regarded them sullenly. He was not wanted.

Snoop was standing in the doorway, too; he was not addicted to healthy exercise. The Bouncer looked at him grimly, as he edged away a little.

"So you don't want to speak to me?" he said.

"I—I don't mind!" muttered Snoop, after a glance round to see that no Remove fellow was within hearing. "But you're in Coventry, you know, Smithy."

"What do you care whether I stopped the footer-match, or not?"

"Not a jot," said Snoop promptly. "But—but it's by order of the Form, you know. If I speak to you, I shall be sent to Coventry, too."

"So you let Wharton dictate to you, like all the rest?"

"It isn't that—it's the whole Form. And—and it was a

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 365.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

rotten, mean thing you did, Smithy, you can't deny that—joining with the Highcliffe cads against your own school."

"Shocked, ain't you?" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, it wasn't playing the game," said Snoop.

"If some of the fellows would stick to me, Wharton would have to chuck this rot," said Vernon-Smith. "Half a dozen fellows would be enough."

Frank Nugent came down to the doorway, and he looked quickly at the two.

"Snoop," he said quietly. "You know what you're going to get if you talk to that fellow for the rest of this term."

"I—I wasn't talking to him," stammered Snoop. "He spoke to me. Look here, Smithy, you let me alone. I don't want to have anything to say to you."

And Snoop went out into the Close with Nugent.

The Bounder hung restlessly about the passage till Bolsover major came by. Then he made another attempt. Bolsover was walking by as if he did not see the Bounder at all, but Vernon-Smith caught him by the arm, and stopped him.

"Look here, a word with you," said Vernon-Smith savagely. "Are you going to stick to Wharton like this, up against me?"

"You're in Coventry," said Bolsover shortly. "I'm not a very particular chap, but I draw the line at what you did. It was rotten—utterly outside. You jolly well ought to be cut by every decent chap."

"Are you coming home for the holidays with me?"

"No, I'm not," said Bolsover; and he walked away.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands. He went out into the Close, and tramped through the snow to the little tuckshop on the other side. Billy Bunter as usual, was in the tuckshop. He was trying to persuade Mrs. Mimble to let him have a single solitary jam-tart. It appeared that he was expecting a postal-order, from a titled relation, that very evening. But Mrs. Mimble had heard of that postal-order before, and she was adamant.

Bunter blinked at Vernon-Smith as he came in, but did not speak. He had been warned of the direful things that would happen to him if he spoke to the Bounder. But Bunter was hungry, and when he was hungry he forgot every other consideration. As a rule, the Bounder treated Bunter with disdain; but just now the friendship of the Owl of the Remove would have been a boon to him.

"Hard up?" he asked genially.

"Yes," groaned Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you know, owing to the delay in the post at Christmas-time—ahem! I suppose you couldn't let me have half-a-crown?"

"Certainly!" said Vernon-Smith.

Bunter's face lighted up.

"I say, that's jolly decent of you, Smithy," he exclaimed. "I don't hold with the chaps sending you to Coventry, you know."

Vernon-Smith smiled, and laid half-a-crown on the counter. Billy Bunter was quickly consuming refreshment liquid and solid to the exact value of two shillings and sixpence. When his supply was finished, he blinked doubtfully at Vernon-Smith. The prospect of being bumped by Bob Cherry, or kicked by Harry Wharton, considerably discounted his gratitude to the Bounder, now that he had had his feed.

"Coming out?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Ahem!"

"We'll have a little run before dinner."

"Ahem! You see, you're in Coventry, you know!" stammered Bunter.

"I thought you didn't quite approve of that," said Vernon-Smith, with a steely glitter in his eyes.

"Nunno! Quite so; b-but it's the order of the Form, you know. I can't have all the fellows down on me on your account. Sorry, you know. Good-bye!"

Bunter rolled out of the tuck-shop, leaving the Bounder gritting his teeth.

Even Bunter, whom he despised heartily, had failed him. The Owl of the Remove would speak to him if he was fed, and just as long as the feed lasted, and no longer. The Bounder drove his hands deep into his pockets, and walked out of the tuck-shop by himself. It was useless—he knew it now. He was in Coventry, and he had to make up his mind to stay there, and make the best of it. And he was not much comforted by the knowledge that he had brought it upon himself, and had only himself to thank for it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Extraordinary!

THE Head was astonished. He was sitting in his study, with a letter in his hand, which he had read through three times, and was now reading for the fourth.

It amazed him.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head. "This is—extraordinary! Really extraordinary!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The Magnet will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

He touched the bell, and Trotter, the page, appeared in the doorway.

"Kindly ask Mr. Quelch to step here, Trotter," said the Head.

"Yessir."

In a few minutes Mr. Quelch came into the study. Mr. Quelch was the Head's right-hand man, and was frequently consulted by Dr. Locke. But he had never been consulted upon so extraordinary a matter as now.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Quelch. I wish to ask your opinion about a matter—a most unusual and extraordinary occurrence," said the Head.

Mr. Quelch looked interested.

"I am quite at your service, sir," he said.

"I have received a letter," said Dr. Locke, "a most amazing letter. I should certainly consider that it was a jest, a hoax—in fact, a practical joke—but it has been accompanied by a sum of money. I presume that even the most absurd practical joker would not part with twenty pounds for the sake of a foolish joke."

"I should imagine not, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile. "I should regard it as very improbable indeed."

The Head pointed to a banknote for twenty pounds that lay upon his desk.

"That banknote came in the letter, which was registered," he said. "Look at it—it is undoubtedly a genuine banknote."

Mr. Quelch looked at the note, and nodded.

"Quite so, sir."

"And now, pray, read the letter, and tell me what you think of it," said Dr. Locke. "I think you will agree with me that it is extraordinary—very extraordinary indeed."

The Remove master took the letter the Head handed to him, and cast his eyes upon it. An expression of great astonishment came over his face.

"I thought you would be surprised," said the Head.

"I am astonished."

And Mr. Quelch read the letter through again. It was certainly the most extraordinary letter that had ever been received by the Head of Greyfriars, and the most extraordinary letter that the master of the Remove had ever read. It ran:

"To Dr. Locke, Headmaster of Greyfriars School.

"Dear Sir,—Pray excuse me, a perfect stranger, for addressing this letter to you.

"I have a debt of gratitude to pay, and I address you, the Headmaster of Greyfriars, as the most appropriate person, under the circumstances.

"I am a stranger in this country, from a distant Colony.

"One day last week, while in the vicinity of Greyfriars School, I fell into a great danger, from which I was rescued by a boy belonging to your school.

"I do not know the boy's name, and am only aware that he is a member of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars.

"I am desirous of making this brave boy a Christmas present, as a slight acknowledgment of my gratitude to him. For this purpose I enclose the banknote for £20—Twenty Pounds.

"May I beg you to discover which boy in the Remove Form risked his life to save that of a stranger, and to hand him the enclosed banknote? This is not a payment, but merely for the purchase of some souvenir of the occasion, and therefore need not offend the noble boy's susceptibilities in any way.

"This very day I am compelled to leave England to return to my own country, and cannot therefore have the pleasure of paying you a personal visit. But I am sure you will sympathise with my desire to acknowledge the great service done me by a Greyfriars boy.

"May I make a suggestion? It is barely possible that, when inquiry is made, some lad may desire to obtain the reward, and may therefore make an unjust claim.

"As I cannot give the boy's name, care must be exercised in the matter.

"I request that this letter may be put up on the school notice-board, for all the Remove Form to read. Thus it will come to the knowledge of the boy I desire to find.

"I should suggest that, say a couple of days later, the school should be assembled in Hall, and the boy called upon to come forward.

"He may be identified in the following manner:

"In saving me from the danger I have spoken of, the noble lad had the misfortune to cut his arm just below the elbow—a deep cut, which cannot have been quite healed by this time, and must have left a mark.

"The boy, therefore, who has a cut on his right arm just below the elbow, is the boy who risked his life to save mine, and to whom my Christmas present is due.

"Will you do this, sir, to oblige a stranger in the land.

13

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

who has no other means of acknowledging his gratitude for a great service rendered?

"With the greatest respect, sir, I am,
"A COLONIAL TRAVELLER."

The Head and Mr. Quelch looked at one another as the Remove-master laid the letter upon the desk beside the banknote for twenty pounds. They were equally amazed.

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Quelch. "A very extraordinary letter indeed! It is curious that he does not sign his name."

"And he gives no particulars of the danger from which he was rescued," said the Head thoughtfully, "neither does he specify upon which day it occurred."

"That is very curious."

"Very curious indeed. I should regard it as a hoax, but—"

"But there is the banknote," said Mr. Quelch. "It is a genuine note. A foolish practical joker would not part with twenty pounds, I suppose, for nothing. Besides, where does the joke come in?"

"Quite so. If there is no claimant for the note the whole matter falls through, and if there is a claimant it will prove the genuineness of the occurrence."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"Twenty pounds is a large sum of money for a junior schoolboy," he said. "I fear it might be coveted by some lad not entitled to it. I hope there is no such boy in my Form, certainly, but it is hard to be sure."

"But the identification will be easy, if the statement in the letter is correct."

"Have you heard anything of such a happening lately?"

"No, sir. It has not come to my knowledge."

"But there are boys in your Form who are quite capable of such an action as risking life for the sake of a stranger?"

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Mr. Quelch at once. "I could name several boys—Wharton, for instance, and Linley, and Brown—and, indeed, Vernon-Smith."

"The boy in question must be very modest as well as very brave, as he did not give his name to this Colonial gentleman, and as he has not mentioned the matter in the school."

"Yes; and that is more like Wharton or Cherry than Vernon-Smith," said the Remove-master thoughtfully. "I think, sir, that this letter must be genuine, and that the Colonial gentleman is simply a little eccentric in the way he has chosen to show his gratitude. There can be no harm in a boy receiving such a handsome Christmas present from a man whose life he has saved."

"None at all," said the Head heartily.

"There are few boys in the Form to whom such a sum would be of little moment. Lord Mauleverer, Vernon-Smith, Hurree Singh, Wun Lung, they are the only boys who have command of very much money. At Christmas-time, too, money is generally very acceptable to boys. I see no objection to it."

"My own thought exactly," said the Head, "and, eccentric as the Colonial gentleman appears to be, he seems to have a kind heart, and certainly the whole affair redounds to the credit of Greyfriars."

"That is very true."

"Then I think that I shall carry out the desire of this unknown gentleman," said the Head. "Otherwise, indeed, I should hardly know what to do with the banknote, as he has given no address whatever to which it could be returned, and I could not, of course, retain it. You approve, then, of carrying out his wishes?"

"Quite so, sir. And I am very gratified that it is a boy in my Form who has done this action and brought credit upon the school."

"Then the letter shall be placed on the notice-board to-day," said the Head, "and to-morrow evening the school shall be assembled for the purpose of identifying the boy and handing him the Colonial gentleman's Christmas present."

"Very good, sir!"

A quarter of an hour later the Colonial traveller's amazing letter was pinned on the notice-board in the hall, and all Greyfriars read it with amazement and the keenest interest, but the Remove Form that the unknown hero belonged. But which fellow was it? That was what all Greyfriars wanted to know.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The First Claimant!

"GREAT SCOTT!"

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!"

"Who's the giddy hero?"

"Twenty quid!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"It must be a jape!"

"Sure, twenty quids is a lot of money!"

All sorts of remarks were passed by the keenly interested Removeites as they clustered before the notice-board, where that remarkable letter was displayed.

Some member of the Form was entitled to the banknote for twenty pounds now in the possession of the Head.

Who was the lucky man?

Naturally, the Remove were very much excited about the matter.

The members of the other Forms were a little envious.

"I dare say the traveller made a mistake, and it wasn't a Remove kid at all," Hobson of the Shell declared. "Much more likely to have been a Shell chap."

"Or one of the Fifth, more likely," said Coker, of that Form. "I wonder—"

And Coker's face assumed a very thoughtful expression. Perhaps he was trying to remember whether he had saved a Colonial traveller's life the week before and forgotten all about it.

"Was it you, Coker?" grinned Potter of the Fifth.

"Well, the chap doesn't say how his life was saved," said Coker.

"Shouldn't wonder if it was Coker," said Frank Nugent.

"In fact, I think it's jolly likely."

"Do you?" said Coker, very pleased.

Nugent nodded solemnly.

"Yes; you might have saved his life without knowing it quite easily."

"I don't quite see how," said Coker doubtfully. "How do you make it out, Nugent?"

"Yes; I'm blessed if I see it, either," said Johnny Bull, in surprise. "How on earth do you make that out, Frank?"

"Quite simple. Suppose Coker met him on the road, say, without noticing him specially—"

"Yes?" said Coker, greatly interested.

"And suppose the man was looking straight at you—"

"Yes?"

"And you turned your head before he saw your face—"

"Well?"

"Then he would have passed you without seeing your face—"

"Yes?"

"And that saved his life!" said Nugent, with owl-like gravity. "Otherwise, he might have died of shock to the system."

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors, and Nugent scudded off just in time, as the infuriated Coker made a rush at him.

It was not likely that the Colonial traveller's life had been saved in the manner Frank Nugent suggested, but it was a puzzle to guess how it had been saved. If he had fallen into the river, good swimmers like Wharton or Mark Linley might have fished him out, only they hadn't. He might have been walking over the level-crossing, when a Remove chap rushed up just in time to warn him that the express was coming, only it hadn't happened. Some gallant youngster might have saved him from Farmer Johnson's black bull, but if so, he would surely have remembered it, and nobody in the Remove could recall such a circumstance.

What was the danger from which the Colonial traveller had been saved? It was certainly very careless of him not to have specified the circumstances.

Indeed, every fellow in the Remove might have invented a story of a hair's breadth escape if he had so chosen, for the Colonial traveller had plainly stated that he was leaving England the same day that the letter was written, so he would certainly never be on the spot to deny it.

The fellows asked each other questions, and all of them were trying to think of some heroic deed done and forgotten.

Some of them, it is to be feared, were also trying to make up a plausible story; perhaps trying to convince themselves before they started trying to convince others.

As Bob Cherry observed, twenty quid was not to be sneezed at, especially just before breaking up for the Christmas holidays.

Lots of things could be done with twenty pounds.

A new footer and complete footer rig-out, for instance, or a new bike, or a stunning feed to wind up the term before breaking up. Or a trip abroad during the holidays—that could be run on twenty quid.

It was a large sum of money to a junior schoolboy; and, of course, the fellow who had saved the Colonial traveller's life was entitled to it. Even Lord Mauleverer said that there would be nothing derogatory to a fellow's dignity in accepting that handsome Christmas present. Most of the juniors did not bother about the dignity in the matter, though. They thought chiefly of the banknote, and whether they could possibly lay a claim to it.



Wharton strode over to the touch-line to speak to the crowd of Highcliffe fellows, whose looks showed only too plainly that they meant mischief. "Look here, what's your little game, you chaps?" he cried. (See Chapter 3.)

"The Co. ought to bag that twenty somehow," Bob Cherry remarked thoughtfully. "I suppose you didn't pull the man out of the river, did you, Wharton?"

"No," said Harry, laughing.

"You might have let it slip your memory, you know."

"Hardly!"

"Did you save him from a mad bull or an escaped lion, Johnny?"

"Not that I remember," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Well, you haven't got much of a memory, you know. You forgot that you were going to do half my lines yesterday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nugent may have rushed forward at the critical moment and dragged him from under the engine of the London express?" suggested Bob.

"Must have been sleep-walking when I did it, then," said Nugent, with a chuckle. "I don't remember it."

"Did you save anybody's life last week, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his dusky head sorrowfully.

"The regretfulness is terrific, my worthy chum, but I cannot say with truthfulness that I did. I should have been delightfully pleased to save the life of the honourable and ludicrous Colonial Traveller. But it was not so."

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The 1D, and will contain a splendid "HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

"And I suppose I didn't, either," he confessed. "I suppose a chap couldn't do it and forget all about it? I'm sorry we can't have that twenty quid. We could have had a stunning spread with it."

"But who on earth was the giddy hero?" said Harry Wharton.

"I wonder."

"I say, you fellows——"

The Co. turned towards Bunter. Billy Bunter's eyes were glistening behind his big spectacles, and he looked excited.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "Have you spotted the winner, Bunter?"

"You fellows seen that letter on the board?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, ass."

"I suppose I'm entitled to claim the money?" said Bunter. There was a roar from the Famous Five.

"You!"

Bunter nodded.

"Yes, me! You chaps know what a plucky chap I am——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think you're going to do me out of my reward you're jolly well mistaken! I'm the chap, and all other claimants are spurious."

"When did you do it?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Last Wednesday," said Bunter, "while you fellows were

gone over to Courtfield to play ~~later~~ ^{later}, you know. I took a walk along the river."

"Go on!" said Wharton.

"Well, suddenly I heard a fearful shriek, and I looked round and saw him struggling in the water. To throw off my jacket was the work of a moment—"

"Yes, it generally is in such cases—anyway, in books," said Nugent. "What else did you do? Throw off your waistcoat?"

"No; I plunged into the raging flood—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I seized him by the collar and swam ashore with him—"

"You can't swim!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Well, I—I can swim a bit, you know," stammered Billy Bunter, rather taken aback, having forgotten that somewhat important circumstance, "and—under the influence of—of a noble devotion, you know, I—I swam better than usual. I dragged him ashore—"

"I suppose the water was cold?" asked Bob.

"Yes, very."

"Very sharp, in fact?"

"Yes, awfully sharp."

"And that was how you came to cut your elbow?"

"Eh?"

"The Colonial traveller says that the giddy rescuer cut his elbow."

"That—that was done on a fragment of the ice," said Bunter.

"The river wasn't frozen last Wednesday?" yelled Bob.

"Ahem! I mean I cut my elbow on—on—on a branch."

"Let's see the cut!"

"The—the cut!" stammered Bunter.

"Yes. Pull up your sleeve and show us the cut. I suppose you've still got it?"

"Ye-es, of—of course."

"Well, show it to us."

"I decline to show it to chaps who doubt my word," stammered Bunter. "I—I refuse to do anything of the sort! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter retreated, followed by a yell of laughter. Bunter went directly to his study, and locked the door, and a few minutes later a yelp of pain might have been heard by anyone who had passed the door of No. 7 in the Remove passage. But when Billy Bunter came out of the study again he had a cut on his arm just below the elbow—an indubitable proof that he was the fellow who had saved the life and earned the undying gratitude of the Colonial traveller.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Heroic Skinner!

WHO was it?

Who was the hero who was hiding his light under a bushel?

It was a most interesting question.

Peter Todd, who was quite anxious to secure the twenty-pound banknote for No. 7 Study, questioned his study-mates on the subject at tea that evening. Alonzo Todd shook his head sadly. He hadn't saved anybody's life so far as he was aware. Billy Bunter had—or he said he had—but Peter declined to listen to him. Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, did not make a claim, but Peter questioned him. Dutton was just the chap to go into the river to pull somebody out, and if he had done it, it meant glorious times of plenty for No. 7 Study till the school broke up.

"Was it you, Dutton?" Peter bawled in his ear.

"Yes," said Tom Dutton, in surprise, looking up from his ham and eggs; "certainly!"

Peter Todd's face was irradiated with delight.

"My hat! Dutton, old man, why didn't you say so before?"

"Eh?"

"Why didn't you tell me?" shouted Peter.

"You didn't ask me. Besides, what does it matter?"

"Matter? It matters twenty quid!"

Dutton laid down his knife and fork, and stared at his study-leader in astonishment.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "Who's going to give me twenty quid for chewing?"

"Chewing!" gasped Peter.

"Yes. You asked me if I chewed."

"Oh, you ass! Oh, you fathead!" roared Peter. "I said was it you?"

"Yes, of course I chew when I'm eating," said Dutton. "I think you must be going potty, Peter. How could I eat without chewing?"

"Did you save the Colonial traveller's life?" shrieked Peter.

"The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 505.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"That's a whopper!" said Dutton promptly. "You've never seen me eat with my knife! Besides, what's eating with a knife got to do with chewing?"

"Haven't you seen the letter?"

"I don't think it's better. I think it's a dirty trick, eating with one's knife. I'm sure I never do it!"

"Have you seen the letter?" yelled Peter with all the force of his lungs. "Did you save the life of the Colonial traveller?"

"Oh!" said Tom Dutton. "No, I didn't! And don't rave at me like that; I'm not deaf!"

Peter Todd groaned.

"Well, if you're not deaf I never saw a doorpost that was. I say, this is rotten! This study ought to bag that twenty quid somehow."

"This study is going to bag it!" said Bunter, glowering over his spectacles. "I tell you I saved the man's life, and I've got the cut on my arm to prove it."

"Rats!"

"I'll tell you how I did it. He was walking across the level-crossing—you know the level-crossing between here and Courtfield?—and the express was coming. I rushed forward and seized him in my arms, and carried him—"

"Carried him!" gasped Peter. "Carried a full-grown man—and those Colonials grow to a big size, too!"

"Dragged him, I mean—dragged him out of the way of the express just in time. The engine grazed my arm, and—and cut it—"

"Oh, crabs!"

"And there's the cut!" said Bunter, pulling up his sleeve and displaying an undoubted cut on his arm.

Alonzo Todd blinked at the cut in surprise.

"Dear me!" he said, while Cousin Peter snorted incredulously. "Dear me, I am very gratified to hear this, Bunter. It proves that you are not merely a funk, as I have always supposed. My dear Peter, I think you should accept Bunter's story as veracious. Even the most unpleasant persons may have some good qualities, my dear Peter. I have certainly never observed any in Bunter before, and I am truly gratified."

"You silly chump!" said Bunter ungratefully.

"My dear Bunter—"

"That cut hasn't been made more than a few hours," said Peter, scanning it. "Shut up, Bunter. You haven't brains enough to start in business as an Ananias."

"Oh, really, Todd!"

"When did it happen, my dear Bunter?" asked Alonzo.

"Last Wednesday afternoon."

"But I was with you all last Wednesday afternoon, and you did not leave the school, Bunter," said Alonzo in surprise.

"I—I mean Saturday, of course."

"But you did not go out on Saturday, either. Don't you remember—it was raining, and you stayed in."

"I haven't a very good memory for dates," said Bunter. "It was Friday, when I come to think of it. Yes, Friday."

"Liars ought to have good memories, you know," commented Peter.

"I'm going to claim that twenty quid when the school's assembled for it to-morrow," said Bunter defiantly.

Peter chuckled.

"You'll have to give chapter and verse," he said. "The exact time the train passed, you know, and if it turns out that there wasn't a train at that time on the level crossing, what are you going to say then?"

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Besides, you've already told the other fellows that you saved the Colonial traveller's life by pulling him out of the river—Cherry told me!" grinned Peter.

"I decline to take any notice of what Bob Cherry says," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I know I'm going to claim that reward."

Peter Todd grinned, and left the study. He looked into No. 1, where Harry Wharton and Nugent were at tea.

"Found the giddy hero yet?" he asked.

Wharton shook his head.

"I say, do you think it could have been the Bounder?" asked Peter. "He's the only chap who hasn't been asked."

"Might have been. He's got pluck enough," said Wharton. "But he'd have said so. He isn't the chap to hide his light under a bushel."

"Well, no. But it doesn't seem to have been anybody else unless it was Bunter. Bunter says he dragged the man from under an express train."

"Ha, ha, ha! After he had dragged him out of the river or before?" yelled Nugent.

"The river was the first edition—the express train is the second," grinned Peter. "He's got a cut on his arm now to prove it. It was made about a couple of hours ago, to judge by the look of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Bounder's in Coventry," Peter remarked. "I suppose a chap could speak to him to ask him whether he's the giddy hero, though?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Suit yourself!" he said.

"Thanks. I will!" said Peter unperturbably.

And he looked into Vernon-Smith's study. The Bounder was alone there, with his feet on the fender, and smoking a cigarette. He stared gloomily at Todd.

"Excuse my speaking to you, as you're in Coventry," said Peter politely. "I suppose you've seen the letter on the noticeboard?"

The Bounder nodded.

"Are you the giddy hero?"

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm trying to do," said Peter, with undiminished politeness. "Are you the noble youth?"

"Go and eat coke!"

And Peter had to retire unsatisfied. The Bounder grinned when the door was closed.

"I wonder how many claimants there will be?" he murmured. "Half the Fort, I dare say. Well, I shan't be one of them—ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd passed Skinner in the passage, and brushed against him. Skinner uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Look out, you ass!"

"Hallo, what's the matter now?" asked Todd.

"You hurt my arm—the cut there!" Skinner explained.

"It isn't quite well yet."

Peter stared at him.

"You've got a cut on your arm, have you?" he asked.

"Yes," said Skinner calmly. "I got it in saving that chap's life—the Colonial traveller, you know."

"Oh, my hat! You've never said anything about it before."

"Well, a chap doesn't like to mention those things," said Skinner modestly. "It looks like bragging, you know. There didn't happen to be any Greyfriars chap there to see me, and I never referred to it. But I think I'm entitled to mention it now—now that the man wants to make me a Christmas present of twenty quid. Don't you think so?"

"Oh, certainly! How did it happen?"

"I was strolling across Farmer Johnson's land last Saturday afternoon, you know—when his black bull—you know his black bull—"

"I haven't been introduced to him," said Peter. "But I've seen him."

"He was there. I saw him rushing upon a chap—a Colonial chap I thought he was, as he had a sunburnt face and—and a Buffalo Bill hat on. I rushed up, caught the bull by the horns—"

"Yes, that's a proverb—always take the bull by the horns!" said Peter gravely.

"And dragged him aside. Fortunately, he fell down, and the Colonial chap got away, and—and so did I," said Skinner. "But one of the horns ripped up my sleeve, and cut my arm. I've still got the jacket with the sleeve ripped."

"Good egg!" said Peter cheerfully. "Was it after Bunter pulled him out of the river, and before Bunter rescued him from the express?"

"Eh?"

"There seems to be a horrible amount of danger for Colonial travellers in this country," said Todd, with a shake of the head. "The way they fall into rivers, and walk under express trains, and get into the way of ferocious bulls, is really unerving. It's jolly lucky for them that there's always a Greyfriars chap standing by to rescue them in the nick of time. Don't you think so?"

"Look here, you silly idiot!"

"Sorry—no time. I'm going to ask Snoop how he rescued the traveller."

"Snoop!" yelled Skinner.

"Certainly. Don't be greedy. If you rescued the Colonial traveller, why shouldn't Snoop have done the same?" demanded Peter. "He may have walked into lots of dangers that afternoon last week, and Snoop may have yanked him out of one of them. I'm going to ask him, anyway."

"You blithering idiot!"

Peter whistled, and walked away to Snoop's study. He was really curious to know how many Remove chaps had rescued the Colonial traveller that famous afternoon. A list of them, with the particulars of the rescue, would make interesting reading in the columns of the "Greyfriars Herald," Peter considered.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

More Heroes!

SNOOP of the Remove was in his study. He was standing by the table, and he swung round with a start, his face changing colour, as Peter Todd came in.

Peter grinned as he noted that Snoop's sleeve was rolled. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The **1D** and will contain a splendid "HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richard.

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

up, and that he had a penknife in his hand. There was a streak of red on the blade of the penknife. In a moment the sleeve had rolled down, and the penknife had disappeared into Snoop's pocket. Peter Todd did not appear to have observed them.

"I've come to hear all about it," he remarked.

"Eh! About what?" stammered Snoop.

"About the way you rescued the Colonial traveller!" said Peter genially.

Snoop stared at him.

"How did you know I did it?" he asked.

"Well, you're just the chap who would, you know," said Peter, adding, under his breath, "I don't think!"

"Well, I wasn't going to say anything about it until the school assembled to-morrow, for the Christmas present to be handed out," said Snoop. "But I don't mind telling you, Todd. It happened last Saturday."

"And you never said a word?" exclaimed Peter admiringly.

"Well, a chap wouldn't care to brag of those things," said Snoop. "It happened like this. I was walking through Courtfield, just where they're putting up those new houses, you know. I dare say you've seen them."

"I've seen them," assented Peter.

"I noticed a chap with a sunburnt face walking just in front of me."

"Was his head transparent?" asked Peter, with interest.

"His head! Transparent? No," said Snoop. "What do you mean?"

"I thought it must be, if you noticed that his face was sunburnt while you were walking behind him," explained Peter.

"Oh, don't be funny! I noticed his face when he—he looked round. Well, just then a man dropped a hod of bricks from the scaffolding, and one of the bricks came right down on his head."

"Cosh!" said Peter.

"Well, it would have given him an awful cosh, killed him, perhaps, but I rushed forward, seized him by the arm, and pulled him aside in the nick of time. The brick grazed my arm, tore my sleeve, and cut me just below the elbow."

"Got the cut?" said Peter.

"Look!"

Snoop pulled up his sleeve; there was undoubtedly a cut there. Peter gazed at it, duly impressed.

"Looks rather fresh, considering," he remarked.

"It broke out again when I knocked my arm to-day," said Snoop casually.

"Jolly clean cut for a brick, too! Looks just as if it might have been made with a penknife!" said Peter thoughtfully.

Snoop turned red.

"What do you mean?" he demanded angrily.

"Nothing," said Peter airily. "Nothing at all. But that Colonial traveller must have been jolly glad to get out of England, after the frightful dangers he ran here in a single afternoon!"

"If you doubt my word—" began Snoop.

"My dear chap, I know you couldn't tell a lie if you tried," said Peter amicably. "It's not in your nature. You'll lend me a quid out of the twenty, won't you?"

"Oh, rats!"

Peter Todd chuckled, and quitted the study. There were already three claimants for the Colonial traveller's Christmas present, and Peter wondered how many more there would be.

He decided to give Bolsover major a look in. He found Bolsover major in his study, looking very thoughtful, with an expression on his face as if he had just suffered some kind of a pain. Peter was not surprised to see a penknife on the table, and a red smear on the blotting-paper, as if the penknife had just been cleaned there.

"Does your arm still hurt?" asked Peter sympathetically.

Bolsover gave a start.

"My arm! What do you mean, Todd?"

"Wasn't it you who saved the life of the Colonial traveller, and got a cut on the arm doing it?" inquired Peter.

"I don't see how you know anything about it, as I've never mentioned it to a soul in the school," said Bolsover.

"Then it was you?"

"Yes, it was, as a matter of fact. I don't see why I shouldn't say so, as the man wants me to accept a Christmas present of twenty quid."

"How did it happen?" asked Peter, as softly as a cooing dove.

"Runaway horse," explained Bolsover. "It happened last Thursday. I'd been down to Uncle Clegg's in the village, you know, for some tuck, and there was a runaway horse in the road as I came back. The Colonial chap was walking



across the road—didn't see the gee-gee—thinking about home, perhaps, and that kind of thing."

"And you rushed in in the nick of time—" suggested Peter.

"Exactly."

"And pulled him out of the raging flood—"

"What?"

"I mean, you seized the express by the arm—"

"What are you getting at?" demanded Bolsover testily. "I grabbed the runaway horse by the bit, and dragged him away just in time. Otherwise, the Colonial chap would have been knocked down and killed. Something grazed my arm and cut it; I hardly noticed what it was in the excitement of the moment—"

"You hardly would," agreed Peter.

"The man was very grateful," said Bolsover casually. "Of course, I didn't think much of it; any chap would have done it. But he was very grateful—wanted to know my name, and all that. I didn't tell him my name, but he got out of me that I belonged to the Greyfriars Remove. The matter had really slipped my memory, but when I saw the notice on the board—"

"Naturally, you brushed up your memory a bit," said Peter. "I think the Government ought to do something about it. It's not right that Colonial travellers should run such awful risks when they visit the Old Country. Falling into rivers, walking into express trains, getting in front of mad bulls, and blundering into runaway horses—it simply raises your hair to think of it!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Bolsover testily. "I know I saved the man from a runaway horse, and I'm entitled to the Christmas present. But you needn't say anything about what I've told you, Todd. It's quite possible that some rotter might make a claim, you know. I don't want to have to argue it out with another chap before the Head to-morrow."

"Not a word!" agreed Peter.

He chuckled as he left the study. Billy Bunter was waiting for him when he came back into No. 7. Bunter blinked at him eagerly.

"I say, Toddy—"

"Hallo!" said Peter. "Have you thought of a third edition? The raging blood and the tearing express are a bit thin, you know, and they don't agree with one another."

"I've been thinking—"

"Good! What's the latest lie?" asked Peter cheerfully.

"Oh, really, Todd! Look here, we want that twenty quid in this study, don't we?" said Bunter persuasively.

"Yes, if it belongs to this study."

"It's occurred to me that some other liar—I mean, some liar may lay claim to the quids," explained Bunter. "In that case, it would be a jolly good thing to have a witness. Of course, as I'm telling the exact truth, it wouldn't hurt you to say you were there, would it?"

"What?" roared Peter.

"Now, do be reasonable," urged Bunter. "Twenty pounds isn't picked up every day. Quids don't grow on every bush. Suppose you were there when I did it—"

"You didn't do it, and I wasn't there!"

"Ahem! You might have been there. You might have happened to take a walk in that direction, you know; and—as you might have done it, I don't see why you can't say that you did do it. It's the same thing, you know. You can be a witness; and then, if any other chap claims the quids, your evidence will—Yah—oh—yaroooh—ow! What are you doing, you silly idiot?"

"I'm giving you a licking," said Peter Todd grimly. "You rotter! You want me to become as big a liar as you are! Take that—and that—and that!"

"Ow—ow! Yow! Yah!"

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"

"Yaroooh! Ow! Yah! Help!"

Billy Bunter tore himself away, and fled from the study roaring. And, though he did not give up his idea of claiming the twenty pounds so kindly offered as a Christmas present by the unknown Colonial traveller, he quite abandoned the scheme of getting Peter Todd as a witness in his favour. Peter was evidently determined to be unreasonable on that point.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Pals!

VERNON-SMITH had passed most uncomfortable days of late.

He would never have supposed that a sentence of "Coventry" could be such a severe infliction, if he had not experienced it.

No one in the Remove addressed a word to him, or answered if he spoke.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

Fellows in other Forms were not much inclined to be bothered with him; and, indeed, most of them agreed with the Removites in condemning him, when they knew what he had done.

The Bounder, too, was too proud to go about seeking for society. He drew sullenly within himself, and endured his punishment grimly.

But he found it very hard, and against the fellows who had been his own special associates his feelings were very bitter.

That Harry Wharton & Co. should be down on him was natural. They were his old rivals and enemies—and they had, too, high and honourable natures, as the Bounder had to admit to himself, and they were disgusted with his conduct. There was reason for them to be down on him. And fellows like Russell, Bulstrode, Ogilvy, Penfold, Mauleverer, and others, who did not belong to either of the rival parties in the Remove—they were right enough in condemning the Bounder and punishing him. Smithy admitted to himself that he could not expect anything else from them.

But his own special friends—that was the worst of all. What right had they to be down on him? Bolsover major was a bully, and none too particular in his ideas—it was altogether too "thick" for him to set up in judgment on the Bounder. Snoop was a sneak and a telltale, and mean enough for anything. He did not really care what the Bounder had done, and he only went with the rest. Skinner, too, was as big a rascal as Vernon-Smith himself. For Skinner to pretend to be shocked at anything Vernon-Smith did was simply a joke. And Billy Bunter, who had been willing to toady to the millionaire's son to any extent—that even Bunter should raise his heel against him was the very last straw.

And the Bounder could not help seeing that his whilom friends were far from displeased at his bad luck.

He had been overbearing enough to fellows like Snoop and Bunter and Skinner, who had courted him for his money, and now they were glad to be able to retaliate in kind.

The position had changed. Instead of the little circle courting the Bounder, the Bounder had had to appeal to them, and they had taken delight in showing him that they had the upper-hand now.

And so it was that Vernon-Smith felt far more bitter towards Bolsover, Skinner, Snoop, Bunter, Stott, and a few others than towards the Famous Five.

His own friends had been as bad as himself, if not worse, and it was bitterly galling to be cut by them as well as the rest of the Form. If they had stood by him, it would have been something, at all events, and the other fellows would have come round in time.

Whether it was from secret malice or cowardice that they abandoned him made no difference—they ought to have stood by him. And, indeed, there was some justice in the Bounder's view of the case.

Half a dozen fellows sticking to him would have made the sentence of "Coventry" null and void, and after the first day or so the rest of the Form would have looked on with indifference. Harry Wharton & Co. would have been compelled to interfere personally to enforce the sentence, and that would have made a personal matter of it, and put matters on their old footing—the Bounder & Co. against the Famous Five.

But his friends had failed to stand by him, and the Bounder was keenly anxious to make them sorry for it.

He looked into Bolsover's study that evening, while the Remove fellows were all discussing the letter of the Colonial traveller and the twenty pounds.

Bolsover looked at him grimly.

Of Smithy's former associates, Bolsover was the only one who really condemned him, in his heart—but Bolsover was sincere enough in that. He thought that Vernon-Smith had acted like a cad, and ought to be punished.

"I want to speak to you," said Vernon-Smith very quietly. "I want to give you a chance, Bolsover."

"To give me a chance!" said Bolsover, surprised into speaking. "What are you driving at?"

"I've stood this for some time now," said Vernon-Smith, still very quietly. "I know it's not easy for you to stand against the Form. But you're not afraid of Wharton like the rest. Will you drop it?"

"The Coventry, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Can't be done."

"You can drop it if you like!"

"The sentence of the Form is till the end of the term," said Bolsover doggedly. "It's only a few days now, and you'll have to stand it, Smithy!"

"From you, as well as the rest?"

"That's it," said Bolsover, with a nod. "You knew what

you were doing when you did it. It was a dirty, caddish thing. You knew that."

"You've never done any dirty, caddish things, I suppose?" said the Bounder fiercely. "Who are you to set up in judgment on anybody? You bullied and ill-used your young brother when he first came to Greyfriars, till the kid ran away from school."

Bolsover flushed crimson.

"I treat him well enough now," he said.

"You're a rotten bully—you make the fags' lives a terror to them—and you set up to judge me!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Thanks! Will you get out of my study?"

"Then you won't drop it?"

"After your polite remarks?" said Bolsover major sarcastically. "No!"

"You'll be sorry for it."

"If you mean that you won't lend me any money, you needn't," said Bolsover. "I expect to have a good bit of pocket-money soon."

Vernon-Smith burst into a harsh laugh.

"Are you claiming the twenty quid?"

"Why not?" said Bolsover defiantly. "I did it, and why shouldn't I have the Christmas present from the Colonial chap?"

The Bounder looked at him very curiously.

"You saved the man's life?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I don't want to talk to you," said Bolsover. "Clear out! I'm not going to say another word. You can hook it."

Vernon-Smith left the study without another word, either. There was a grin of malicious satisfaction on his face. Somehow or other he seemed to be gratified by the information that Bolsover major intended to claim the Colonial traveller's twenty pounds.

He looked for Skinner next. But Skinner did not speak to him. He stared Vernon-Smith in the face and walked past him. Smithy caught him by the arm.

"Only one word, Skinny," he said.

"Let me go."

"Are you going to claim that twenty quid?"

"Yes."

"I thought you would. And you don't want to speak to me?"

"No, I don't!" said Skinner. "You've always been too jolly high and mighty. Now you've been brought down a peg or two, and serve you right. Go and eat coke."

He jerked his arm away and walked off. Snoop was coming down the passage. At the sight of Vernon-Smith he went into his study and slammed the door.

The Bounder went moodily downstairs. Billy Bunter was there, and the Bounder spoke to him.

"Expecting a postal-order?" he asked.

"Yes—if you can lend me a quid, I'll let you have it back out of my postal-order-to-morrow morning, or out of the twenty quid," said Bunter.

"So you're claiming that?"

"Of course I am—I saved the man's life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scowled over his spectacles.

"Don't you talk to me, Smithy. You're in Coventry. Rats!" And Bunter rolled away with a contemptuous sniff.

Vernon-Smith found Stott in the common-room. Stott looked very uneasy as he came up, and began talking to Morgan.

"I say, Stott—" began the Bounder.

Stott went on speaking to Morgan, apparently not hearing the voice of his former friend. The Bounder gave him a fierce look, and walked away.

He returned to his study and sat down wearily to his preparation—alone.

"Only a few more days!" he muttered. "I shall make a fresh start after the Christmas holidays, anyway. But those rotters—" His eyes gleamed. "The cads—to desert me like this! The rotters! They'll be sorry for it—to-morrow!"

And a cynical smile came over the Bounder's face as he thought of what was to happen on the morrow.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Many Claimants!

"SCHOOL assemblies after lessons to-day!" Bob Cherry remarked on the following morning. "I wonder—"

He paused.

"How many claimants are there going to be for the twenty pounds?" said Wharton.

"Yes."

Harry Wharton frowned. He sincerely wished that the famous letter of the Colonial traveller had never reached Greyfriars. The doctor, in the innocence of his kind heart,

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The Magnet will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

imagined that the matter would reflect credit on the Lower Fourth and on Greyfriars generally. Wharton, for one, did not share his opinion.

Wharton was pretty certain that there would be more than one claimant for the prize. It was quite likely that there would be half a dozen.

Only one of them, of course, could be truthful and honest.

The rest would be "spoof."

And the result would be that discredit would fall upon the whole Form—that the rest of the school would laugh at them, and jeer at them, as a set of spoofers. Harry Wharton, in his mind's eye, could already see the result—the chuckles and grins of Coker of the Fifth, and Hobson of the Shell, and Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth—the derision of the fags in the Lower Forms. Half a dozen self-declared heroes, claiming the Christmas present of the Colonial traveller, would be more than enough to bring ridicule upon the Form they belonged to.

And if there were rival claimants, the matter would have to be gone into and examined—amid the laughter and scorn of the other fellows.

"It's rotten!" said Wharton.

"The other chaps will grin at us if there's a whole gang of claimants," said Bob Cherry reflectively.

"I should jolly well say so. It will be a standing joke in the school."

"They'll nickname the Remove the Heroes, or the Noble Youths!" groaned Frank Nugent. "Young Tubb asked me this morning if I was a Noble Youth or a Hero, and I bumped him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish the man had kept his blessed twenty quid to himself!" growled Wharton. "It will make us all look silly asses!"

"And some of us look rogues, too," said Johnny Bull. "Every chap who claims it without being entitled to it will be a swindler."

"And it won't be pleasant to have the other fellows saying that we've got half-a-dozen swindlers in our Form."

"Rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"Still, there'll be a certain amount of credit in having the hero in the Remove," said Mark Linley. "After all, it isn't every day that a chap risks his life to save a stranger."

"And the giddy glory of the genuine hero will make up for the disgrace of having the spoofers in the Remove," Bulstrode remarked.

Wharton looked worried.

"Ye-es—perhaps!"

"Well, the chap must be one of us, you know. The Colonial traveller says plainly in his letter that it was a Remove chap who saved his life."

"Then why haven't we heard something of it?" said Harry abruptly. "I don't understand it. It looks to me like spoof all through."

"But why should a perfect stranger give away twenty pounds to spoof us?"

"That beats me!" Wharton confessed.

"Practical jokers don't pay so heavily for their little jokes," said Tom Brown, with a shake of the head. "Besides, where does the joke come in? Showing up a number of chaps in the Remove as spoofers wouldn't be a joke—not for a stranger, at any rate, and one who can't be here to see the fun."

"That's quite true. I suppose it's genuine, but—but—"

"Oh, it's genuine enough!" said Bulstrode. "The bank-note proves that."

"But I wish it had never happened. We shall never hear the end of it."

But Harry Wharton's private wishes on the subject did not count. The whole school, seniors and juniors alike, looked forward eagerly to the assembly after lessons, when the "giddy hero" was to be brought to light, and presented with the handsome Christmas present of the Colonial traveller.

Chipping on the subject had already started. Coker & Co. of the Fifth began by addressing the Removites as Noble Youths, and the other fellows took it up. Harry Wharton & Co. were soon fed-up with it, but there was no way of stopping it.

After morning lessons, when the Remove came out into the Close, there was a chirrup from Coker & Co., of the Fifth.

"Here come the giddy Heroes!"

"Behold the Noble Youths!"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How many of you saved the Colonial traveller's life?"

"Noble, noble youths!"

Bob Cherry stooped for a handful of snow, and delivered a snowball into the countenance of the great Coker, filing his

HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER. By Frank Richards.

mouth, which was open to emit a roar of laughter. Coker's roar changed into a gurgle of suffocated wrath.

"Groo—hoo—gooo!"

"Give 'em some more," said Harry Wharton. "Pile in!"

Coker, Potter, and Greene rushed wrathfully upon the Removites. Snowballs showered upon them from all sides, and they were simply bowled over.

The juniors rolled them in the snow, and left them, and Coker sat up, breathing hard, crimson with rage.

"Ow, ow! The little beasts! I'll pulverise them. I'll spifficate them! Ow, ow!"

"Groogh!" groaned Potter.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

More snowballs rained upon the heroes of the Fifth as they scrambled up, and they fairly had to run for shelter, whizzing snowballs following them right into the house.

"They won't be so funny again!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The order had been posted on the board for the school to assemble in Big Hall after lessons, and at the appointed time the Greyfriars fellows crowded in.

The whole school was there.

Sixth and Fifth, Shell and Fourth, Remove and the fag Forms, were ranked in the big hall, with the prefects walking up and down and keeping more or less order.

There was a buzz of excited talk in the crowded hall, while the fellows waited for the Head to come in.

Who was the lucky man to be?

That was the great question.

And how many claimants were there going to be? That was another question that interested the fellows immensely. Speculation on that point produced much merriment. It was certain that the Colonial traveller's life had been saved only once, and only by one person—so if there was more than one claimant, the whole proceeding became farcical instead of solemn as it should have been. Harry Wharton, as he thought of the laughter that would greet the appearance of two or more claimants, frowned with annoyance. He did not like to give the other fellows a chance of scoring over the Remove. Indeed, it almost seemed to him that the letter had been written, and the whole affair planned, for the special purpose of making the Remove look ridiculous, and for showing up as "rotters" all the fellows who were mean enough to make a false claim. But that was really a wild theory; and it could not be supposed that a complete stranger to Greyfriars could possibly have had such an object in view.

It had leaked out that there would be more than one claimant. The intended claimants had kept their own counsel, to some extent—but such things will leak out. And it was to be observed that glares of defiance were exchanged between fellows who found themselves to be rivals for the Colonial traveller's Christmas present.

"Silence!" called out Wingate, of the Sixth, as the Head entered the hall by the door at the upper end.

The buzzing died away.

Upon the dais, the Head stood with Mr. Quelch. The good old gentleman surveyed the crowded hall with his accustomed benevolent glance.

"My boys," said Dr. Locke, "I have called you together upon a most extraordinary and gratifying occasion. You have doubtless all read the letter which was placed upon the notice-board yesterday. You are aware that a boy in this school—a member of the Lower Fourth Form—has distinguished himself by heroic conduct."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Coker, of the Fifth.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Wingate.

"This boy—modest as becomes a really brave lad—has hitherto concealed his act of heroism from public knowledge," continued the Head. "He has preferred to hide his light under a bushel, so to speak—to blush unseen. I approve of this—but the time has come for that boy to stand forward. The gentleman whose life he so nobly saved desires to acknowledge his gratitude. He has sent me a handsome Christmas present which he wishes me to bestow upon his brave rescuer. There can be no objection to the lad in question accepting this gift—I approve of it entirely."

There was a buzz.

"I now call upon the boy who, one day last week, risked his life to save that of a stranger, to stand forward," said the Head.

A breathless pause.

Then Skinner of the Remove came out from the ranks of his Form-fellows, and walked calmly up the hall.

The Head's eyes fell upon him, with a slight expression of surprise. He would certainly not have supposed that Harold Skinner was a hero.

"Skinner!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Skinner smoothly.

Before the Head could speak again, there was quite a bustle in the Remove ranks.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

Three juniors detached themselves from the Form, and hurriedly followed Skinner up the hall.

They were Bolsover major, Sidney James Snoop, and Billy Bunter.

All three of them were looking excited.

Dr. Locke frowned.

"What do you boys want?" he exclaimed. "You should not interrupt. Please go back to your places."

"But I'm the chap, sir!" said Snoop.

"What!"

"I'm the fellow, sir," said Bolsover major.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows! I'm the chap who saved the man's life!" howled Billy Bunter. "I'm the chap, sir, and the twenty quid belongs to me!"

Four claimants!

The Head gazed at them blankly.

And from the whole school, in spite of the presence of the reverend and respected Head, there came a sudden yell or irrepressible laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Believed!

DR. LOCKE frowned and raised his hand.

"Silence!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, I say!"

The Head's commands, and the authoritative voices of the prefects, succeeded in restoring silence at last. But the fellows were still grinning. All the solemnity of the scene had vanished. Four claimants to a deed that could only possibly have been performed by one person seemed to the school to be irresistibly comic. The chances were, as Coker whispered to Potter, that all four were spoofers.

Silence being restored, the Head spoke again, with an exceedingly stern glance directed upon the four self-declared heroes.

"This is a very serious matter!" he exclaimed. "Am I to understand that all four of you claim to have performed the action mentioned in the letter of the Colonial gentleman?"

"I did it, sir," said Bunter.

"It was I, sir."

"It was me!"

"Me, sir!"

"Don't all speak at once," said the Head severely. "One thing is certain, that three of you must be making a false claim."

"Or four!" murmured Coker.

And there was a chuckle in the ranks of the Fifth, which drew a severe frown in their direction from the Head.

"Pray keep silence! This is not a laughing matter! This incident, which I hoped would reflect credit upon the Lower Fourth and upon all Greyfriars, appears to be likely to have the reverse effect. Three boys, at least, seem to be base enough to lay claim to a distinction to which they are not entitled."

The four claimants glared at one another.

"However, the matter must be gone into," said the Head. "I must carefully examine the claims of each boy before awarding the Christmas present. Fortunately, there is a means of identifying the genuine claimant. Each of you will roll up his right sleeve, and show me his arm."

"Yes, sir!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"I'm ready, sir."

"Look at my arm, sir!"

Four sleeves were promptly rolled up. Four right arms were exposed to view. And four cuts just below the elbow were exposed to the astounded gaze of the Head.

Dr. Locke could scarcely believe his eyes.

He adjusted his glasses carefully, and looked at the tell-tale marks upon the four right arms—each of which proved its owner to be the genuine person—or proved him to be a spoofer gifted with considerable forethought.

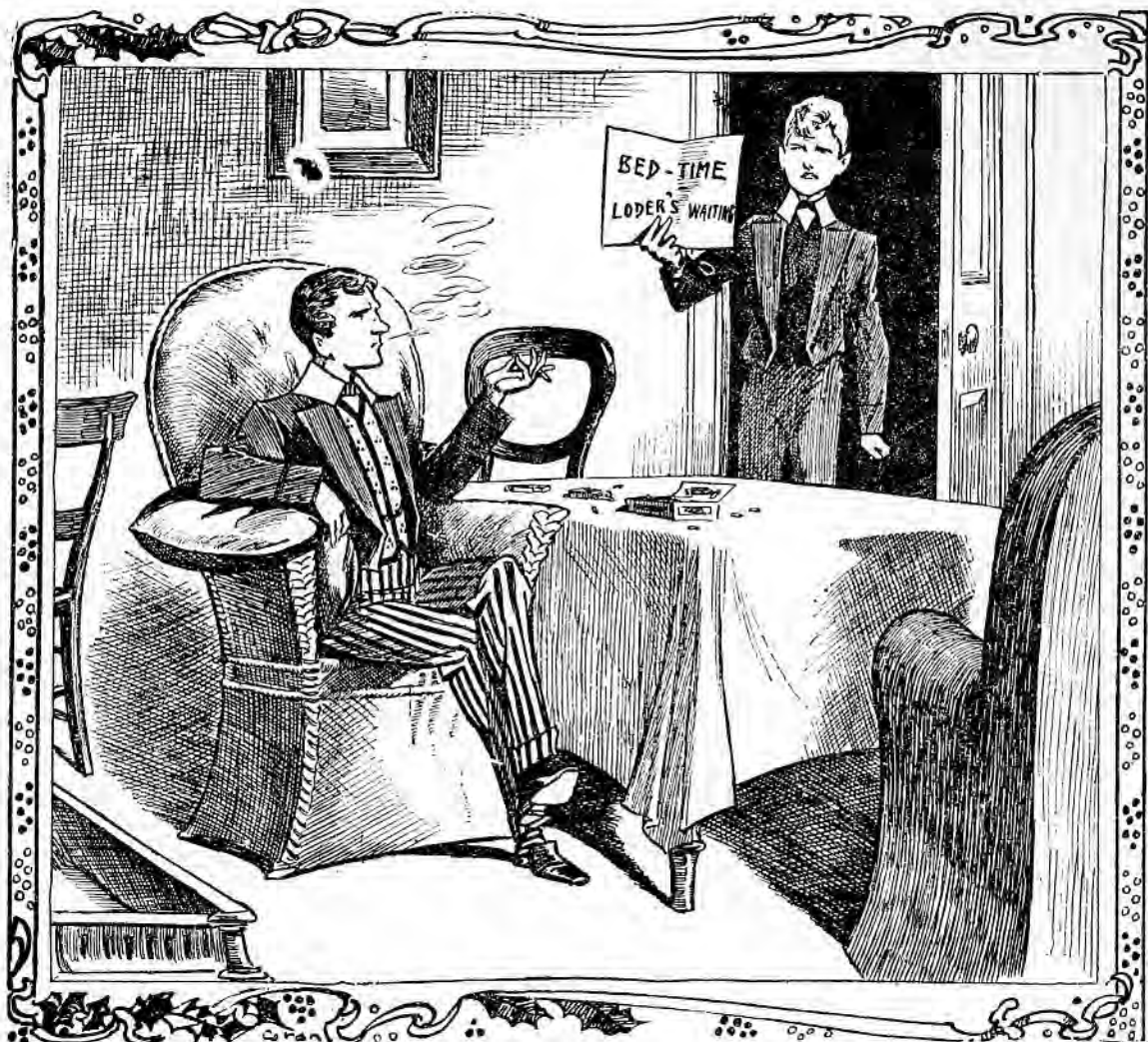
"Extraordinary!" the Head exclaimed, in amazement. "Mr. Quelch, what do you think of this? All four of these boys have the same mark on their arms—the mark by which the Colonial gentleman declared that the identity of his rescuer could be proved."

There was another roar from the assembly. The discovery that the four claimants were all provided with proofs of identity made the joke seem richer than ever.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Coker. "The awful spoofers! I wonder the whole giddy Form didn't make cuts on their blessed arms, and go Co. in claiming the reward!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Bob Cherry took a stump of pencil from his pocket, and scrawled on a sheet of impot paper: "Bed-time. Loder's waiting." Then he held it up to Vernon-Smith, who glared at him as if he would eat him. "You silly ass!" growled the Bounder. "Haven't you got a tongue?" (See Chapter 8.)

"Silence!"

"Order!"

The Head's frown was deepening. Mr. Quelch was looking portentously wrathful. Both the masters were beginning to wish that the Colonial traveller had not been so grateful, and had left his rescuer to blush unseen. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was seen to smile. He remarked to Mr. Capper, of the Fourth, in a whisper, that he was glad the distinction had not fallen on his Form.

"This is extraordinary!" said Dr. Locke, in a tone of great severity. "At least three of you boys must have deliberately made those marks, in order to prove a false claim."

Again the claimants looked inclined to eat one another.

"I will question you in turn," said the Head. "I warn you to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Bunter, come forward!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled forward.

"You declare that you are the boy mentioned in the Colonial gentleman's letter, Bunter?"

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"Kindly tell me exactly what happened, and when and where."

"It was last Friday, sir," said Bunter glibly. "I had THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

gone out for a stroll, and went over the bridge on the Sark, sir. You know the old stone bridge, sir—"

"Yes, yes! Continue!"

"I suddenly heard a cry for help. I looked over the bridge, and saw a man hanging upon it by his hands, sir."

"Not by his feet!" murmured Coker, and the Fifth-formers chuckled.

The Removites, who had heard Bunter's previous accounts of his exploit, simply gasped.

The raging flood and the express train had evidently been abandoned by the fat junior, on second thoughts, for a more probable story.

"The man had fallen over somehow, sir," continued Bunter calmly. "He was just losing his hold when I saw him. The agony in his face—"

"Never mind that. Tell me exactly what happened."

"I sprang upon the parapet, sir, and held down my hands to him, and caught hold of him. By sheer force I pulled him up. I was very nearly pulled down into the river, sir. If I had been I should have been drowned. As it was, I scaped my arm on the parapet of the bridge and cut it. But I got him up, sir, and—saved his life."

The Head regarded him scrutinisingly.

"I hope that is true, Bunter."

"Every word, sir."

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

"And what time did this happen?"

"Friday afternoon, sir."

"You say you went out for a stroll after lessons?"

"Exactly, sir."

"Then you must have gone out after the gates were locked, as the gates are closed at dark, and it becomes dark very early now."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Very well; I will inquire of Gosling whether he opened the gates for you."

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"I—I—I— Excuse me, sir. I—I got out over the wall."

"You broke bounds!" exclaimed the Head.

"Ye-es, sir. Under the circumstances, I—I considered that I was justified in breaking bounds, sir, as a man's life was in danger."

There was a shriek of laughter from the whole school. Bunter was an incorrigible Ananias, but he was the clumsiest fibber that ever fibbed. He could never possibly construct a story that would hold together, and, as soon as he was called upon to give particulars, he could always be relied upon to flounder and convict himself. The Head's frown became quite terrifying.

"As there was a man's life in danger!" he exclaimed.

"Ye-es, sir. The—the Colonial traveller, you know," stammered Bunter.

"What! Do you mean to tell me that you knew beforehand that this man was hanging upon the bridge—before you left Greyfriars?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Answer me, Bunter!"

"Yes—I mean, no, sir," stammered the fat junior. "You—you see, sir, I—I—I—"

"I see that you are speaking falsely, Bunter!"

"I, sir! Oh, no, sir! I—I never told a lie in my life, sir, and I don't think I should know how to."

"I am satisfied, Bunter, that your whole story is false."

"Oh, really, sir! After the way I risked my life to save the chap, sir, plunging into the raging river—I mean, springing before the rushing express—that is, the—the bridge—," stammered Bunter, growing confused.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! You will stand aside, Bunter! I shall flog you for having made a false claim!"

"But, sir, I—I—I—"

"Enough! Stand back!"

Wingate dropped his hand upon the fat junior's shoulder and jerked him away. Bunter's claim had been disposed of. The Head fixed a stern glance upon the other three. Snoop, and Skinner, and Bolsover major were looking and feeling somewhat uneasy now. They certainly looked more like culprits than heroes at the present moment.

"I trust," said the Head, in a deep voice, "that I shall be successful in discovering whose claim is just in this matter. I may state that each of the claimants who is proved to be speaking falsely will be severely flogged. Snoop, you may now come forward."

And Snoop, looking as unlike a hero as it was possible for anybody to look, came forward, with a very visible shaking of the hands and knocking together of the knees.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Snoop Has No Luck!

ALL eyes were fixed upon Snoop.

Nobody in Big Hall believed for a moment that Snoop had risked his life to save that of any traveller, Colonial or otherwise. Sidney James Snoop was not at all likely to do anything of the sort. But all the fellows were interested to hear what sort of a story he would put up.

"Now, Snoop!" said the Head. "You declare that you are the boy mentioned in the letter?"

"Yes, sir," faltered Snoop.

The example of Bunter, and the stern glance of the Head, had a disconcerting effect on Snoop. He began to wish that he had not thought of putting forward that claim to distinction. But it was evidently too late to retreat now. He had to go forward with it, and make out the best case he could.

"If your claim is genuine, you have nothing to fear, Snoop," said the Head, not unkindly. "You need not be nervous. The strictest investigation will be made, and you need have no uneasiness that strict justice will not be done."

As a matter of fact, Snoop was uneasy that strict justice would be done; but he could not very well admit it.

"Yes, sir," he stammered.

"Tell me how it happened, Snoop," said the Head. "First of all, what day was it?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Last Saturday, sir."

"At what time?"

"About three in the afternoon, sir."

"What happened?"

"I was walking through Courtfield, sir, where they're putting the new houses up. A man on the scaffolding dropped a brick on the head of the Colonial chap—I mean, it would have fallen on his head if I hadn't rushed forward and pulled him back."

"H'm!" said the Head, looking keenly at Snoop. "The letter states, however, that the rescuer risked his life."

"Yes, sir. The brick hit me instead of him, and if it had hit me on the head it might have killed me, sir."

"Couldn't have knocked his brains out," murmured Nugent. "If he had any brains he would have made up a better yarn than that."

"Quite so, Snoop," said the Head. "And how did this accident cause the cut on your arm?"

"That was where the brick hit me, sir."

"And cut you?"

"Yes, sir. It was a broken brick, I think, with a jagged edge, and it cut my arm where it hit me. There was a bruise, too, but the bruise has gone away."

"To cut your arm in that manner, Snoop, the sharp edge must have cut through your jacket as well."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then you can produce the jacket with the sleeve ripped by the brick?"

Snoop caught his breath.

"The—the jacket, sir!"

"Undoubtedly. In the first place, I cannot quite understand how the edge of a brick, however jagged, could cut your arm with a clean cut, apparently like that made by a penknife. But most certainly it could not have reached the skin without cutting through the jacket."

"Of—of course, sir."

"Fetch the jacket here."

"The fact is, sir, I—I gave it away to a beggar," said Snoop. "I thought it wasn't any good with the sleeve ripped open, sir."

"You gave a jacket away to a beggar because the sleeve was cut?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! But the cut must have gone through the sleeve of the shirt as well. You did not, I presume, give away the shirt as well as the jacket?"

"The—the shirt, sir?" stammered Snoop.

"Yes. Kindly fetch the shirt here, and I will examine the sleeve."

Sidney James Snoop gasped for breath. As he said afterwards, he didn't know that the old duffer was going to understudy Sherlock Holmes when he made his claim.

"I—I gave the shirt away too, sir," he muttered. "I didn't think it was any good, with the sleeve torn, and it was a pretty old one, as it happened."

"That is very unfortunate, Snoop."

"I—I never thought there would be any inquiries about the matter, sir, you see," Snoop explained, regaining courage. "I never supposed that I should hear anything about the man again. I just did what any fellow would have done, sir."

"I hope that is the case, Snoop, for your sake. It happens, however, that the house-dame keeps a list of clothing belonging to the juniors. She will know whether one of your jackets is missing."

Snoop's jaw dropped.

"I will send for Mrs. Kebble, and ask her to examine your wardrobe," said the Head. "If a jacket is missing, I shall regard your statement that you gave one away as correct."

Snoop's face was pitiful to see at that moment.

"I—I—I—" he muttered blankly.

"Well, Snoop, do you wish me to send for Mrs. Kebble?"

"It—it wouldn't be any good, sir," gasped Snoop. "It happened to be an old jacket that I was wearing, one I cast off last term, sir, and happened to put on because—because—"

"Why did you happen to put on a cast-off jacket on that particular occasion, Snoop?"

"Oh, it—it came handy, sir, that's all!"

"Is it a custom of yours, Snoop, to put on a cast-off jacket when you go for a walk in Courtfield on a half-holiday?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"The house-dame will know the extent of your linen also, Snoop, and will be able to tell me whether a shirt is missing."

"It—it was an old shirt, sir," said Snoop, in despair.

"A cast-off shirt?" demanded the Head, in a terrifying voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you expect me to believe that, Snoop?"

"Ye-es, sir."

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Then you overrate my powers of credulity, Snoop," said the Head, with crushing sarcasm. "I cannot possibly believe anything of the kind."

"It—it—it's true, sir."

"It is not true, Snoop. You did not foresee this questioning, and you were not prepared for it, or I have no doubt you would have had a more plausible story prepared. Neither a jacket nor a shirt will be found missing from your wardrobe, and therefore you cannot have given them away, as you state. Nor do I believe that such a cut as that on your arm could be made by a falling brick. If necessary, I would send for Dr. Pillbury, and ask his professional opinion upon the point. But it is not necessary. You have spoken falsely, Snoop."

Snoop was dumb.

His story was too lame, and the Head did not believe him; indeed, when he thought of it afterwards, Snoop wondered how he could have had the nerve to offer Dr. Locke such an explanation. It was the best he could think of on the spur of the moment, but it certainly was not good enough.

Dr. Locke waved his hand.

"Stand aside with Bunter, Snoop. You have lied to me. You have endeavoured to claim a distinction and a reward to which you are not entitled. You are a bad and unscrupulous boy, Snoop. You will be flogged."

Snoop, looking quite sickly, joined Bunter. His claim was disposed of now, and there remained only Bolsover major and Skinner.

"Bolsover!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly give me your explanation."

Bolsover major stepped forward with a firm step. He had much more nerve than Snoop, and though he wished he was well out of the affair, as he had to go through with it he went through it with coolness and nerve. His manner made a better impression upon the Head and the school generally than Snoop's. After all, Bolsover, bully as he was, had plenty of pluck, and it was not impossible that his claim was founded upon truth. At all events, it was between him and Skinner, and the fellows considered that the chances were in Bolsover's favour. He was certainly more likely than Skinner to have risked his life for a stranger.

The burly Removeite met the Head's sharp glance calmly. The attention that had been bestowed upon Snoop was now all transferred to Bolsover major, but the bully of the Remove did not seem disconcerted by the fact that two hundred and fifty pairs of eyes were fixed upon him.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "Looks as if Bolsover is the man, to my mind. He's got plenty of nerve, anyway."

"Now, Bolsover!"

And amid a dead silence, all the fellows craning forward to hear what he said, Bolsover related in his turn his thrilling tale of heroism.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hero!

BOLSOVER major spoke with perfect coolness and self-possession. He was satisfied that, even if he could not prove what he said, at all events no one could disprove it, so even if he did not get the bank-note, he was not in much danger of getting the flogging.

He explained concisely how he had rescued the sunburnt gentleman, undoubtedly the Colonial gentleman who had written the letter, from the runaway horse in Friardale Lane.

Peter Todd was observed to nod his head at every sentence.

"Just as he pitched it to me in his study yesterday, when he made it up," Peter Todd murmured. "Bolsover ought to be a journalist."

There was a chuckle in the Remove, instantly silenced by the prefects.

"I am glad to say that your story bears the impress of truth, so far as I can judge, Bolsover," said the Head graciously. "I must, however, make the strictest investigation, as Skinner also makes a claim."

"Quite so, sir," said Bolsover easily.

"When did this happen?"

"Last Thursday, sir."

"At what time?"

Bolsover major considered.

"It must have been between half-past twelve and one, sir. I walked down to Friardale after morning lessons, and I was coming back when it happened."

"Where had you been in Friardale?"

"Uncle Clegg's tuckshop, sir."

"You made purchases there?"

"Yes, sir; six jam-tarts. I brought them back with me, and we ate them after dinner, sir. I gave some to Ogilvy and Russell, sir, and they will remember."

"You are willing that Mr. Clegg should be referred to, and asked whether you actually visited his shop at that time?"

"Certainly, sir!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The

"Magnet" will be the usual price

1D, and will contain a splendid

long complete story, entitled,

NEXT
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

That part of Bolsover's story, at all events, could be substantiated. He had certainly paid that visit to Uncle Clegg's tuckshop, and purchased the tarts. Evidence to that effect would not be lacking.

"Was there anyone in the road at the time you stopped the runaway horse, Bolsover?"

"I did not see anyone, sir."

"No one belonging to Greyfriars?"

"Not that I noticed, sir."

"Do you know to whom the horse and cart belonged?"

"No, sir. After I dragged the horse aside, I ran to help up the gentleman, who had fallen into the road. The horse dashed on."

"And what caused the cut on your arm?"

"I think it must have been a part of the harness, sir; but I didn't see. I did not know it was there till afterwards, I was so excited; but the Colonial gentleman called my attention to it, and asked me if I was hurt."

"The cut must have been made through the sleeves of jacket and shirt."

"Of course, sir."

"Then you can produce them?"

"I think the shirt is in the wash, sir," said Bolsover calmly. "But I am wearing the same jacket now. The cut has been sewn up."

There was something like a sensation among the fellows at this statement. Either it proved the justice of Bolsover's claim, or that he had foreseen questioning, and deliberately cut and sewn up the sleeve of his jacket to be in readiness.

"Show me your sleeve, Bolsover."

The junior held up his arm for inspection.

"The cloth has certainly been ripped up and re-sewn," said the Head. "Who sewed this up for you, Bolsover?"

"I did it myself, sir."

"Indeed! It is customary for the juniors to ask Mrs. Kebble to get their mending done for them."

"Yes, sir; but in this case I thought I'd do it, as it would have led to questions being asked how it came there. I didn't mean to say anything about the matter at all, as it would have sounded like boasting."

The Head pursed his lips thoughtfully. Bolsover's story hung together excellently well, and proof, so far as proof could be had, was there. At all events, there was no detail lacking. The school looked on with breathless interest, wondering what the Head would say next. Certainly there seemed no means of disproving Bolsover's statements, true or false as they might be.

"I am glad to say, Bolsover, that your explanation sounds quite true to me," said Dr. Locke, at last. "If there were no other claimant, I should have no hesitation in awarding you the Christmas present offered by the Colonial gentleman."

"Thank you, sir."

"But before I decide I must hear what Skinner has to say. Stand aside a moment!"

"Very well, sir."

Bolsover major stood aside. His look was quite satisfied, and he cast a triumphant grin at Snoop and Bunter. He had beaten them, at all events.

"Skinner!"

Skinner advanced into the limelight, so to speak. Skinner was quite as cool and collected as Bolsover. He faced the Head's searching eyes with perfect calmness.

"The matter lies between you and Bolsover, Skinner. One of you is making a false claim, and I must decide which. Kindly give me your version."

"It happened on Saturday afternoon, sir," said Skinner.

"It was all owing to Farmer Johnson's bull—the black bull that attacked some Greyfriars chaps, sir, some time ago. I was crossing by the footpath close to the field, when I heard the bull bellowing. I looked through the hedge, and saw him rushing upon a chap—a gentleman with a very sunburnt face and a Panama hat. The man didn't see him, I suppose, or perhaps he didn't know how ferocious he was, being a stranger. Anyway, there was the bull rushing upon him, and I nipped through the hedge just in time, and sprang between them!"

"Indeed! And then?"

"I came at the bull from the side, sir. I've read that a bull don't see well sideways, sir, in some book about Spanish bull-fights, so I thought I had a chance with him. I grabbed him by the horns, and dragged at him, and he went over on his side just as he reached the gentleman. The man was knocked down, but he got up and ran, and I ran, too. We both got over the hedge just in time. Then I found that one of the horns had ripped up my sleeve and cut my arm."

Dead silence greeted Skinner's story.

It was quite as plausible as Bolsover major's—excepting that no one who knew Harold Skinner believed for a moment

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

that anything would have induced him to enter the field where Farmer Johnson's black bull was kept.

And one thing was certain—either Bolsover or Skinner was lying. The Colonial gentleman's life had been saved only once—not twice—and if Bolsover had rescued him from the runaway horse, Skinner had certainly not rescued him from the ferocious bull. And if, on the other hand, Skinner had rescued him from the ferocious bull, Bolsover major had certainly not rescued him from the runaway horse. One of the two stories was a cleverly-concocted fabrication—if not both of them.

Dr. Locke was evidently puzzled.

"Where is the jacket you were wearing at the time, Skinner?"

"I've got it on now, sir."

"Show me the sleeve."

Skinner calmly showed the sleeve. Undoubtedly there was a tear in the cloth, which had been sewn up again.

"Who sewed this for you, Skinner?"

"Stott, sir."

Sensation!

If Stott had sewn up that sleeve for Skinner at the time it happened—before the Colonial traveller's letter reached Greyfriars—it was proof positive of the truth of Harold Skinner's story.

Dr. Locke was visibly impressed.

"One moment," he said. "Why did you not take the jacket to Mrs. Kebble to be sewn, Skinner?"

"I didn't want to say anything about the matter, sir. Some of the fellows might have thought I was gassing—ahem!—I mean, boasting."

"But you must have told Stott."

"He came into the study, sir, while I was sewing up the sleeve—"

"At what time?"

"Just after I got back to Greyfriars, sir."

"On Saturday?"

"Saturday afternoon, sir."

"And you told him what had happened?"

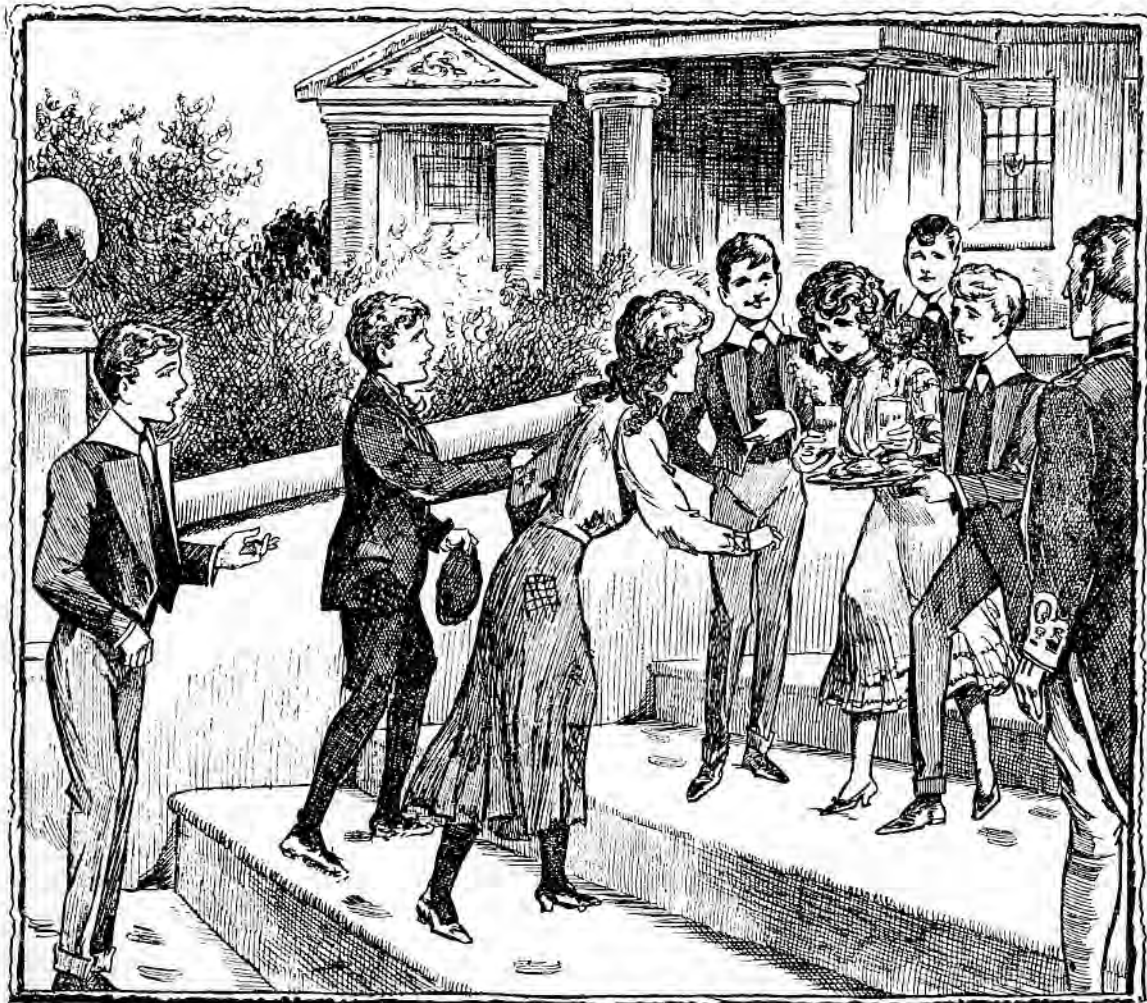
"Well, I had to, sir," said Skinner. "He asked me what had happened. I was pretty dusty, and there was a bad cut on my arm, and he thought I had been in some accident. So I told him about it, and asked him to keep it dark. I didn't want to look like a swanker, sir, making a lot of what I had done. It wasn't very much, after all. Any fellow would have done the same."

"I suppose Stott will corroborate what you say, Skinner?"

"I suppose so, sir. I haven't spoken to him about it since, but I suppose he hasn't forgotten. He sewed the sleeve up



GOOD TURNS.—No. 22.



A party of lucky Magnetites interrupt their own merry Christmas festivities to minister to the needs of a ragged girl and boy, to whom Christmas otherwise would bring but little good cheer. A good turn which illustrates the true Christmas spirit!



Four sleeves were rolled up, exposing four right arms to view. And four cuts just below the elbow were exposed to the astounded eyes of the Head! Dr. Locke could hardly believe his eyes. "Extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Quelch, what do you think of this? All four of the boys have the same mark on their arms—the mark by which the Colonial gentleman declared that the identity of his rescuer could be proved!" (See Chapter 16.)

for me, because my arm was stiff, sir, and I couldn't hold the needle very well."

"Stott, kindly come here."

Stott of the Remove came forward. There was a whisper from Peter Todd.

"Skinner's a deep' un! He's going halves with Stott, you bet!"

And the Remove fellows generally took Peter's view of the case; but the rest of the school were impressed. Skinner, at all events, was the only one of the claimants who had a witness—or who had had the forethought to provide a witness, as the case might be.

"You have heard all that Skinner has asserted, Stott?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Stott firmly.

"Do you remember the circumstances?"

"Yes, sir."

"Skinner's statement is correct?"

"Every word, sir."

"You found him with his arm out and his sleeve torn in

his study last Saturday afternoon, and sewed up the sleeve for him?"

"Yes, sir."

The Head looked searchingly at Stott, but Stott's heavy face was quite impassive. And the good old doctor was far too simple-minded to guess, as Peter Todd had guessed, that the two rascals had concocted the story between them, with the intention of "going halves" in the Colonial gentleman's twenty pounds.

There was a buzz from the school. Bolsover's face had lost its look of satisfaction. He realised that matters were becoming serious for him. That Skinner would have a witness to his story he never dreamed. Skinner was, in fact, the only one of the four claimants who was qualified by natural cunning and unscrupulousness to make out a good case.

"Skinner wins it!" murmured Coker of the Fifth. "Looks true, too!"

There was a hush again as the Head turned to Bolsover major.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER. The Bounder Steps In!

DR. LOCKE'S brow was very severe. He believed Skinner's story, corroborated as it was by the evidence of his Form-fellow. It followed that he had no alternative but to disbelieve Bolsover.

"Bolsover!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir," faltered Bolsover.

"What have you to say now?"

"Skinner's lying, sir."

"Do you still declare that you have told the truth, and that you rescued a gentleman from a runaway horse?"

"Yes, sir," said Bolsover major. "Of course, it's possible that the man I rescued wasn't the man who wrote that letter. He may have been a different man altogether."

"I am afraid, Bolsover, that the occurrence did not take place at all."

"I don't see why you should believe Skinner any more than me, sir," said Bolsover major sullenly. "Everybody knows that Skinner is a coward, and wouldn't risk his little finger to save anybody!"

"Silence!" said the Head sternly. "You will not clear yourself, Bolsover, by casting aspersions upon a boy who has proved himself brave and generous!"

Bolsover snorted.

"The least you can do now, Bolsover, is to admit that you have fabricated this story, in the hope of receiving the reward!" said the Head sternly. "Doubtless you hoped that the modesty of the real claimant would prevent him from coming forward in public to claim his just due!"

"I know Skinner's lying, sir. Ask anybody in the Form—they'll all tell you that he's a rotten funk! Ask any Remove chap if he thinks Skinner would face a wild bull. It's all rot!"

"There is evidence to prove Skinner's story. However, as it is barely possible that you may have aided some other man in the way you have described, Bolsover, I shall let your case stand over for a little. Strict investigation will be made as to whether there was a runaway horse in Friar-dale Lane between half-past twelve and one o'clock on Thursday afternoon last week. If there was, others must have seen it, and the owner of the horse can be found. Rather than commit an injustice, I will take any amount of trouble to ascertain the exact facts; but if your story is proved false, you will be flogged like Bunter and Snoop, Bolsover. You may go back to your place!"

And Bolsover sullenly retreated.

"And now," said the Head, "an act of justice may be done, and I cannot express how glad I am that we have been able to arrive at the truth. It is very fortunate, Skinner, that Stott knew of this at the time, otherwise you would have run the risk of being disbelieved, like these three unscrupulous boys!"

"Oh, sir!" said Skinner.

"I am satisfied of the truth of your story, Skinner, and I am very glad that the facts have come to light. My boys," continued the Head, looking towards the Remove, "if it is true, as Bolsover has stated, that you have a poor opinion of Skinner's courage, I trust you will now alter that opinion, after the proof he has given you of the contrary. He has acted very bravely and very nobly!"

"Perhaps!" murmured Peter Todd.

"I shall now bestow upon Harold Skinner the generous Christmas present offered by the Colonial gentleman!" said the Head. "I should be glad to hear cheers for Skinner, who has brought credit upon his Form and upon his school!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Coker of the Fifth.

"Bravo, Skinner!"

"Hip, pip, hurrah!"

The Head's words removed the last doubt in the minds of the Greyfriars fellows. If Dr. Locke was satisfied, there was no reason why they should not be. And if old Skinner had proved himself a hero, there was no reason why he shouldn't have his meed of praise. So all the school joined cordially in the cheering, seniors and juniors alike.

Peter Todd closed one eye significantly. He was not convinced. And a grim, cynical smile was upon Vernon-Smith's face. It had been there during the whole of the proceedings.

The Bounder evidently didn't believe in the genuineness of any of the claims put forward for the Colonial traveller's twenty-pound note.

"Skinny's the giddy hero," murmured Peter Todd. "I don't think!"

"He's a cleverer liar than the others," said the Bounder.

"You shut up!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "Skinner's made out his case, hasn't he? You go back to Coventry!" And Bob joined more enthusiastically than ever in the cheering.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Bravo, Skinner!"

The doctor held up his hand for silence, and the shouting died away. Skinner was looking very modest, as became a true hero who suddenly found himself the observed of all observers, and admired by everybody.

"Skinner, I shall now present you with the Christmas present forwarded to me by the Colonial gentleman, at the same time commending you for your courage, your generous help to a stranger, and your modesty!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Skinner.

The Head took out his pocket-book, opened it, and revealed the crisp, rustling banknote.

Skinner's eyes glistened. Billy Bunter gave a faint groan. He had looked upon that banknote as practically his own property, and it was very hard to see it pass into the hands of a rival Ananias.

At that moment Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, stepped out of the ranks of the Remove, and advanced coolly up the hall.

All eyes were turned upon him.

What the Bounder could have to say at that moment was a puzzle to everybody. But it was quite evident that he had something to say.

Mr. Quelch waved his hand to him.

"Go back to your place, Smith," he said.

"Excuse me, sir, I have something to say about this—something that the Head must hear before he gives Skinner the banknote."

"Nonsense! Go back!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Return to your place, Vernon-Smith!" said the Head severely. "I presume that you do not intend, at this late moment, to make a claim to the banknote."

"Certainly not, sir. I only wish to point out that Skinner's claim is false!"

"Nonsense!"

"I can prove it, sir!" said the Bounder calmly.

Dr. Locke hesitated. Skinner's eyes turned on the Bounder with a savage gleam. He could not see how the Bounder could upset his cunningly-contrived story in any way; but he was vaguely uneasy. He was afraid of the Bounder.

"If you really have anything to say, Vernon-Smith, I must hear you," said the Head, at last. "But be brief. What is it?"

"I can prove that Skinner's story is false, from beginning to end, sir," said the Bounder, and his words caused a buzz of excitement in the hall. "It is as false as the story told by Bolsover, Bunter, and Snoop!"

"What!"

"There is not a word of truth in anything they have said, sir. They did not rescue a Colonial traveller from danger, for a very good reason."

"And that reason?" said the Head sternly.

"There never was any Colonial traveller to rescue, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" said Coker.

"The plot thickens!" grinned Peter Todd. "What did I tell you, you fellows?"

"Begad! Look at Skinner's face!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

"Silence!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Vernon-Smith, what do you mean by making that wild and foolish statement?" demanded the Head angrily. "You are perfectly well aware that I received a letter from the Colonial gentleman, which was displayed on the school notice-board. You are aware that this twenty-pound note was sent to me as a reward for the Remove boy who saved his life!"

Vernon-Smith smiled grimly.

"I am aware, sir, that the whole story is a hoax from beginning to end."

"Smith!"

"And I can prove it!"

"Unless you do so, Smith, you will be punished most severely for having spoken in this manner," said the Head sternly.

"Very well, sir. I am willing to take that risk. There never was any Colonial traveller to be rescued," said Vernon-Smith deliberately. "That letter, and that banknote, were sent to you for a certain purpose. That purpose was to show up those cads in their true colours. I should have thought there would be more claimants for the banknote. But those four I knew would claim it—and now they are shown up!"

"I do not understand you, Smith. You speak as though you knew that that letter was to be sent to me."

"I did know it, sir!"

"You knew it beforehand?"

"Yes, sir."

"I cannot believe you, Smith. Give me proof of your statement. Do you mean to tell me that you are acquainted with the person who wrote that letter?"

"Yes, sir."

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"You can prove it?"

"Quite easily, sir."

There was a buzz. How the Bounder was going to prove his statement was not clear yet, but his words carried conviction with them. Skinner's face was almost green. Bolsover, Snoop, and Bunter were grinning. They had been proved to be false claimants, and they were extremely pleased to find their hitherto successful rival in the same boat.

Dr. Locke drew a deep breath.

"Very well, Vernon-Smith," he said, "I will give you an opportunity to prove what you assert. You say you know who wrote that letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then who was it?"

"Myself, sir!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Hoax!

A PIN might have been heard to drop in Big Hall.

In dead silence, craning their heads forward to hear what the Bounder would say, the Greyfriars fellows had listened to hear the name of the unknown person who had written that famous letter to the Head.

The Bounder's reply came out sharp and clear in the stillness:

"Myself, sir!"

The silence lasted a moment longer—the silence of stupefaction.

Then there was a roar.

"Smithy!"

"It was a hoax!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"The Bounder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Locke's face was a study for a moment. Whatever he had expected the Bounder to say, he certainly had not expected him to say that. That any Greyfriars fellow should coolly state that he had worked off a tremendous hoax on his headmaster and the whole school—that was far beyond the limit! The Head did not wish to believe it, but the Bounder's tone carried conviction. It was only too clear that he would be able to prove what he stated.

"Vernon-Smith!" gasped the Head at last, finding his voice. "You wicked, unscrupulous boy! Are you aware of what you are saying?"

"Quite, sir."

"You say that you wrote that letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Prove your statement!"

"Certainly, sir. You have there a banknote for twenty pounds, which has not been out of your possession since it came here in a registered letter, sir."

"That is true."

"I can give you the number of the note!"

"You—you can give me the number of the note!" stammered the Head.

"Yes, sir. No. 008642648!" said the Bounder, reading from a number written in pencil on his shirt-cuff. "Is that correct, sir?"

The Head glanced at the banknote that he still held in his hand.

"It is correct," he said.

That settled it. The banknote had not been seen by any eyes at Greyfriars, excepting Dr. Locke's and Mr. Quelch's, since its arrival. The Head knew that it had been locked up in his desk all the time. It was impossible that the Bounder could have seen it since its arrival at the school. It followed that he had seen it before it was posted to Dr. Locke.

"My father sent me the note, sir; I asked him for it!" continued the Bounder. "My father always keeps the numbers of his banknotes, so if you care to refer to him, he will tell you that that note was sent to me."

"Boy!"

"I have also the receipt from the post-office for the registered letter," said the Bounder, taking it from his pocket.

"If you care to examine it—"

The Head waved it aside.

"I do not require any further proof, Vernon-Smith. It is only too unhappily evident that your statement is true. This banknote, which belongs to you, will be returned to you. Take it!"

The Bounder took the banknote with perfect coolness, and crumpled it carelessly into his pocket. That the affair had been a practical joke had seemed impossible, because a practical joker would hardly have spent twenty pounds on a jape. But it had cost the Bounder nothing, as was now evident. As soon as he chose to make his explanation, the banknote was returned to him as a matter of course.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Skinner, turning away from the Bounder for a moment. Harold Skinner was quaking, and fervently wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

NEXT
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"

LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Skinner!" The Head's voice was deep and terrifying. "What have you to say now?"

Skinner mumbled helplessly.

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"Do you still hold to your wicked story of rescuing a Colonial gentleman from Farmer Johnson's bull?"

"I—I— N-n-unno, sir!"

"You will be flogged for your unscrupulous falsehood, Skinner. Bolsover, I know now that your story also was undoubtedly false. All four of you will be publicly flogged. Stott!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" gasped Stott.

"You lied in bearing witness to Skinner's statement."

"I—I—I—" stuttered the unfortunate Stott, with a glance of fury at Skinner. "I—I did it to oblige Skinner, sir. He—he suggested to me to go halves in the twenty pounds if we could get hold of it, sir."

"You will be flogged, like the others; you are equally bad. You have borne false witness. Mr. Quelch will you kindly send for Gosling?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Quelch.

And the five culprits quaked miserably. They knew what that meant, and they already seemed to feel the birch lashing upon them. There was to be no delay in their punishment. Whatever happened to Vernon-Smith, he had succeeded in his object—the four friends who had failed him in his extremity, the four unscrupulous young rascals who had assumed lofty airs of scorn over a fellow no worse than themselves, were shown up as plainly as could be, and the finger of scorn would be pointed at them as it had never been pointed at the Bounder.

"And now, Vernon-Smith," said the Head, and his voice was deep and almost terrible. "I will hear what you have to say in extenuation of your conduct. You have dared to play a wicked and absurd hoax upon your headmaster. You have placed me in a most intolerable position. What have you to say?"

"I know you'll punish me, sir," said the Bounder steadily.

"I knew what I was risking, and I'm not afraid. I had good reasons for what I did. The Remove have sent me to Coventry, and I don't care if I leave Greyfriars."

"You understand, then, that I shall expel you for this act of gross disrespect?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"You can hardly expect anything else, Smith."

The Bounder's face hardened.

"I don't expect anything else, sir. I've been sent to Coventry by my Form, and I'd rather leave Greyfriars than stand it—or than cringe to the other fellows to make it up with them. Those four fellows always pretended to be my friends, but when I was sent to Coventry they deserted me. What I did was wrong—I own that—but I was carried away by my temper. The Form were all down on me—and I didn't complain of that—I should have been down on any chap who'd done as I did. But those fellows ought to have stood by me. They weren't any better than I was. What right had they to desert me, and put on airs of superiority?" The Bounder's voice was ringing and bitter. "I made up my mind to show them up—to make it plain to all the school that they were hypocrites when they pretended to be down on me—and I've done it. I knew they'd make up claims to that banknote. I knew that every fellow in the Remove who was a cad and a liar would try to get hold of it, so I was certain of them. I shall have to leave Greyfriars, but I don't envy them. I'd rather be kicked out, than stay here as they're going to do—with every fellow in the school knowing that they are liars, swindlers, and cheats!"

The Bounder ceased.

There was silence in Big Hall.

The Head broke it.

"Am I to understand, then, Vernon-Smith, that you have done this for revenge upon the boys whom you regard as false friends?"

"I did it to punish them, sir—and all the Remove, too, in a way. They know now that I'm not the only black sheep in the Form, at any rate."

"You have acted wrongfully, wilfully, and with a cunning far beyond your years, Vernon-Smith," said the Head slowly. "Your only excuse is that you seem to have acted under a sense of wrong, and that the four boys you have exposed are undoubtedly very bad and unscrupulous. But I cannot pardon you for your gross disrespect to your headmaster."

"I don't expect it, sir."

"You will leave Greyfriars this evening, Smith."

The Bounder's face paled a little. He had expected it, and he preferred it either to Coventry, or to the humiliation



of seeking the good-will of the other fellows. But it was a hard blow.

But the Bounder, with all his faults, was game to the backbone. He set his teeth, and answered quietly and steadily:

"Very well, sir!"

And the Bounder turned and walked to the door, followed by all eyes in the hall. And there was something like admiration in the glances of the Greyfriars fellows. The Bounder's step was firm, his head was erect. There was no limit to his nerve; and at all events he cut a very good figure in comparison with the fellows he had so bitterly exposed and humiliated.

The Bounder disappeared. Gosling entered as he left; and then followed the punishment of the false claimants. In the presence of the assembled school, the four young rascals and Stott were hoisted in turn upon the school porter's back and soundly flogged, and loud sounds of anguish were heard in the crowded hall as they received their punishment one after another.

Then the word was given to dismiss.

Bolsover major, Skinner, Snoop, Stott, and Bunter crawled away, feeling as though life were not worth living. Their punishment had been severe, and they were likely to feel the effects of it for some days to come; but more bitter than the lashes of the birch was the scorn and contempt in the faces of their Form-fellows. In comparison with them, as Bob Cherry remarked, the Bounder might be regarded as a giddy saint.

And towards the Bounder the feelings of the Remove had undergone a change. The cool nerve with which he had worked off that tremendous hoax upon the Head and the whole school, and the courage with which he stood his punishment could not fail to evoke admiration among the juniors. And his punishment was so severe that nobody wanted to make it heavier; and by tacit consent the sentence of "Coventry" was dropped for the few hours that yet remained to Vernon-Smith at Greyfriars.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Exit the Bounder!

VERNON-SMITH was a little pale, but quite calm, when he came downstairs later with his coat over his arm.

The trap that was to take him to the station was waiting outside, and Gosling had already placed his boxes in it.

A crowd of fellows had assembled to see the Bounder start.

Most of them were sorry for him.

After that hoax on the Head, Dr. Locke could not be expected to pardon him, but all the fellows felt that his punishment was hard.

Indeed, Coker of the Fifth, in the kindness of his heart, even proposed a deputation to the Head on the subject, to beg the Bounder off. But nobody was inclined to back up Coker in "deputating" to the Head. The Bounder had to go, and the fellows could only show him their sympathy by shaking hands with him, and wishing him good luck and a merry Christmas.

The Remove fellows, who had all agreed in sending the Bounder to Coventry, were as cordial as the other fellows now that Vernon-Smith was going.

Only four of them stood aloof—the four false claimants to the banknote, whose punishment had been publicly administered in Big Hall. Bolsover major and Skinner, Billy Bunter and Sidney James Snoop, rejoiced in the Bounder's downfall, as far as they were in a condition to rejoice at all. It was the one consolation for the smart of their flogging.

The Bounder, with his coat on his arm, and a cool and steady expression on his face, went to Mr. Quelch's study as soon as he came downstairs. He knocked at the door and opened it, and Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, with a somewhat peculiar expression on his face.

"You are going, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir. I've come to say good-bye, if you would care to say good-bye to me."

"I am glad to speak to you before you go, Smith. I am very sorry that it has come to this," said the Remove-master quietly. "After your outrageous disrespect in playing such a prank upon your headmaster, Dr. Locke had no alternative but to expel you. You must see that for yourself."

"I suppose that's so, sir."

"You have acted wrongly all along. I have been making some inquiries, and I am now aware of the grievance your Form-fellows had against you. They were fully justified in sending you to Coventry for what you did, Vernon-Smith."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"I admit it, sir."

"Yet it is very unfortunate. You have shown so many signs of improvement—I was in hopes that you would become a very creditable member of the Form. You have very great natural gifts, if you cared to use them in the right way. I hope you will have better fortune elsewhere. And I cannot forget, Vernon-Smith, the brave action which caused me to pardon you the last time you were in trouble. I am sorry you are going."

"You are very kind to say so, sir." The Bounder hesitated. "I suppose there's no chance for me—to come back next term, I mean?"

"At present, I fear—none. The Head is, naturally, greatly incensed. By your trick you placed him in an intolerable position. It was wildly reckless and unjustifiable, though I quite understand your desire to punish the false friends who deserted you. Yet it would have been better to treat them with contempt, Smith, and taken no active measures for their punishment—above all, measures of this wild and reckless kind."

"I know I've made a muck of my chances here, sir, and it's no good saying I'm sorry for it now that I've got it in the neck," said the Bounder. "If the Head lets me come back next term, I'd try to do better."

"I think you would, Vernon-Smith; and for that reason I shall approach the Head on the subject, after some days have elapsed. You may be assured, at all events, that you have a friend here who will do his best for you, and, if possible, bring about your return to Greyfriars. That is the best I can say."

For once the hard face of the Bounder softened; he was moved. He had not expected that kindness from the usually quiet and severe Form-master.

"Thank you very much, sir," he said. "I shall hope for the best. And—and I want to say that I'm sorry for all the trouble I've given you while I've been here."

"That is all forgotten, Vernon-Smith," Mr. Quelch held out his hand. "Good-bye, my lad; and I hope to see you again at Greyfriars."

"Thank you, sir! Good-bye!"

And the Bounder left the study with a lighter step and a lighter heart.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on the steps of the School House as he came out. Wharton was looking a little uncomfortable, but he spoke what was in his mind.

"I hope you'll believe I'm sorry you're going, Smithy," he said. "I can't say I'm sorry we sent you to Coventry, because you deserved it. But I'm really sorry it's come to this. Give me your fist before you go!"

The Bounder hesitated one moment, and then he held out his hand.

"May as well part friends," he said. "I admit I acted like a rotter in leaguering with the Highlife chaps against you. It was my rotten temper, I suppose. Well, we all make mistakes at times, and I've got it in the neck over this. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye and good luck!"

"The good-luckfulness is terrific, my worthy and ludicrous Smithy."

The Bounder shook hands in turn with all the Co., and then stepped into the trap.

A crowd of fellows watched it as it rolled away in the December darkness.

The Bounder was gone.

Harry Wharton & Co. turned back into the house with clouded faces. They had not liked the Bounder—his ways had made it scarcely possible to like him—yet they knew that they would miss him from his accustomed place. They were sorry to see him go.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Bob Cherry at last. "He knew what he was doing when he hoaxed the Head."

"We may see him again during the holidays," said Wharton. "His father has taken a place near my uncle's house at Wharton Magnus. I think I shall be glad to see him again."

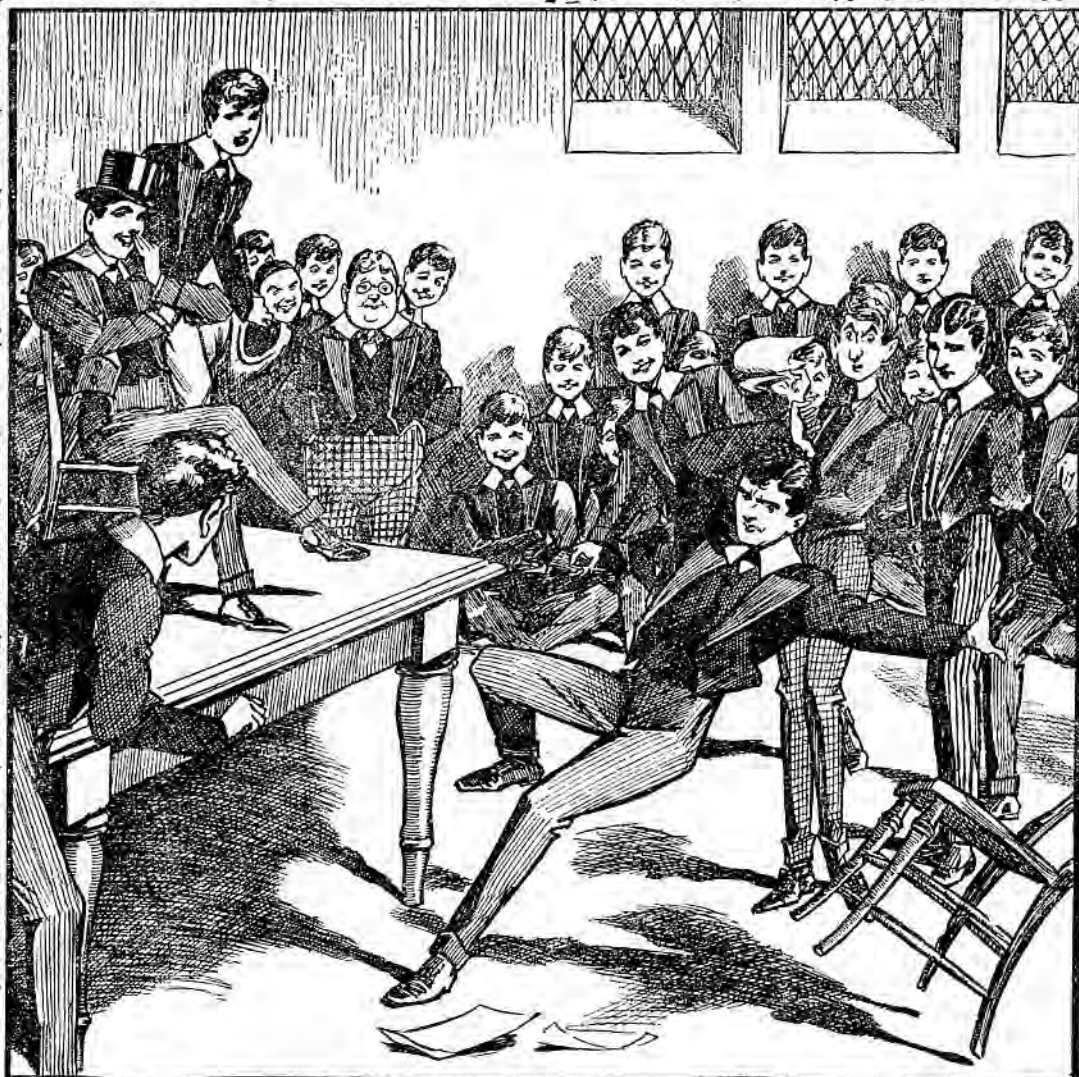
"Same here," said Nugent. "He was a bounder—a thorough bounder—but he had his good points. Jolly few chaps would have the nerve to do what he did—or the cheek! If we see him again we'll let bygones be bygones."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

The next day the Bounder's place in the Remove Form-room was empty.

That day there were four gloomy faces in the Form—the faces of the four claimants for the famous twenty-pound note. The four self-declared heroes, the doers of the deed which had never been done at all, were longing for breaking-up day, so that they could get away from the mockery and



"Gentlemen of the jury," wound up Morgan eloquently, "I claim that my witnesses have proved the prisoner's guilt." And the prosecuting counsel sat down—on the floor! Someone had removed his chair while he was speaking! (See Chapter 6.)

derision of their Form-fellows. They hoped that the story would have died a natural death by the time next term began.

Boisover major felt the shame of it more keenly than the others. He was far from being wholly a rascal. Stort wanted to make out that he had acted purely out of friendship for Skinner, but his explanation was scouted. It was known quite well that Skinner had promised him "halves" if he succeeded in bagging the Christmas present of the mythical Colonial traveller.

Skinner and Snoop kept silent, and avoided their Form-fellows as much as they could.

Billy Bunter, however, appeared to labour under a sense of injury. To the astonishment of the Removites, he persisted that his story was true, in spite of the proof that the supposed Colonial traveller had never existed, and was only a figment of Vernon-Smith's fertile brain.

Bunter naturally found no believers, but he repeated his assertions so often and so emphatically that he came almost to believe them himself.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled, "HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

But Peter Todd, who felt keenly the disgrace Bunter had brought upon No. 7 Study, adopted a drastic method with him. When Bunter came into No. 7 to tea that day there was a cricket-stump lying on the table.

Peter held up his finger at the fat junior.

"Now, Bunter," he said, "you've been lying all day, and the time has come to chuck it. Do you savvy?"

"Oh, really, Todd, I've told the whole truth, you know! You fellows ought to know what a truthful chap I am. I can't help it if Smithy hoaxed the Head. But I know I plunged into the river—I mean, I rushed before the express—that is to say, I yanked the chap up when he was hanging on the bridge—"

Peter rose to his feet.

"You still stick to that?" he asked.

"Yes, I do."

"Then you've got to unstick," said Todd. "I've sorted out a cricket-stump to help you. You're going to tell the truth, if it costs me that stump. I'm willing to break it on you if necessary."

"Look here, Toddy—"

"Collar him!"

"Lenmie alone!" roared Bunter, as Todd and Dutton collared him, and slammed him on the carpet face downwards. "I—I— Oh! Yah! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The dust rose from Bunter's tight garments.

"Now then, did you rescue the giddy traveller?" asked Peter, pausing with the stump in the air.

"Ow! Yes! Ow! Yarrah!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Did you perform that giddy rescue?"

"Ow! No, I didn't! Yow!"

"Was it all lies from beginning to end?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Do you admit that you are an Ananias, a Munchausen, and a Rougemont and a journalist all rolled into one?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow! Anything you like!" groaned Bunter. "Beast! Ow!"

"Good!" said Peter, laying down the stump. "Mind, if you tell another whopper this term, I'll stump you again!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

And after that nothing more was heard of William George Bunter's heroic exploits.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Too!

THE following day Greyfriars broke up.

It was a keen, snowy December day. The juniors made their preparations for departure in great spirits. The Famous Five were all going together to Harry Wharton's home for the Christmas holidays, and Hazeldene, of the Remove, was going with them. The party numbered six, but according to Billy Bunter it ought to have numbered seven. Billy Bunter had spent a vacation at Wharton Lodge, and he intended to spend his Christmas holidays there.

Bunter often related glowing accounts of the glories of his own home, but it was observed that he was never anxious to spend vacations there, and he was a famous fisher for invitations.

Wharton, who was very good-natured, sometimes allowed the fat junior to inflict himself upon him, but this time he was very firm. Bunter's conduct on the occasion of the Bounder's hoax had disgusted the chums with him more than usual, and they told him in the plainest of English that they wouldn't have him.

But Billy Bunter was blessed with the thickest of skins.

When the chums of the Remove came down to start that morning Billy Bunter was waiting for them. He collared Harry Wharton at once.

"Your boxes are in the brake," he remarked.

"Thanks!"

"So's mine."

"What!"

"I thought I'd tell Gosling to put it there," explained Bunter. "You see, I'm really not the chap to desert my old pals at Christmas-time. You really didn't think that of me, did you?"

Wharton glared at him.

"If your box is in the brake I'll jolly soon pitch it out," he said.

"Oh, really, you know! I knew you were only joking when you said I wasn't coming," said Bunter. "I can take a joke of course. He, he, he!"

"You can 'he, he, he!' as much as you like, but you're not coming," said Harry. "You are a beastly spoofer and liar, and I don't want you!"

"That was really a little joke, you know," murmured Bunter. "I never really intended to take the twenty-pound note. The fact is, I knew all along that Smithy was spoofing—"

"Eh?"

"And if the Head had given me the banknote I was going to hand it back at once to Smithy, you see."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Time we started!" said Bunter. "Of course, I must come. Didn't Hazel say that his sister was coming to your place later on, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"Well, I ought to be there, you know. Marjorie will expect to see me. You wouldn't like to disappoint Marjorie Hazeldene, would you?"

"Rats!"

"You know jolly well that Marjorie won't consider it a holiday at all if I'm not there," said Bunter. "No need for you chaps to be jealous, either. It's not my fault if girls like me. Some fellows are born with a way with them, you know. I don't brag of it, but there you are! It's a way I have."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath.

"I don't want to slaughter you on the last day of the term, Bunter," he said, in measured tones, "but you had better shut up."

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"You go and eat coke! I'm talking to my old pal Harry—"

"I'll 'old pal Harry' you if you don't cheese it!" growled Wharton. "Come on, you fellows! Good-bye, Linley, old man! Lots of luck! Good-bye, Browney! Come on!"

The Co. were catching an earlier train than most of the fellows. They piled into the brake, which already contained their luggage. Gosling, the porter, and Trotter, the page, stood by with unusually sweet smiles, in expectation of Christmas tips. Good-byes were said, and the Famous Five departed from the old school.

Bunter blinked after them through his big spectacles and grunted.

"Not gone, after all!" grinned Bulstrode.

"I'm going!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is only Wharton's little joke," Bunter explained. "He knows I shall get to the station in time. It's a little joke of his to make me walk. Good-bye, you fellows! See you next term!"

"They've shoved your box out!" yelled Tom Brown, as Bunter started.

Bunter blinked at the trunk.

"Never mind; my pals will lend me anything I want. Good-bye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away towards the gates.

The brake dashed at a good rate down the lane, between the trees gleaming white with snow. Harry Wharton & Co. were in great spirits.

When they reached the station, a snail motor-car was standing outside, and luggage was being taken in by the porters.

"Highcliffe chaps going!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We shall see our dear Ponsonby again before we go. That's his name on the trunk yonder."

"Good egg!"

The Greyfriars juniors poured into the station. On the platform were the Highcliffe chums—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, Monson, Merton, and another. They looked grimly at the Greyfriars fellows, and seemed a little uneasy. They had not forgotten the last meeting, with Harry Wharton & Co. on the Courtfield football-ground.

The Greyfriars fellows, and the Highcliffians as well, had driven to Courtfield to catch the express. And the express, when it came in, was crowded. The juniors made a rush for the train. Bob Cherry, by accident or perhaps not by accident, came into Ponsonby's way, and the Highcliffe leader stumbled over his foot and rolled on the platform. There was a crunch as he bumped on his silk topper.

"You rotter!" yelled Ponsonby. "You did that on purpose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, ain't it?" chuckled Bob. "As funny as mucking up a footer match!"

There was one empty carriage as it happened and all the juniors were making for it. There was quite a tussle outside the carriage. Harry Wharton & Co. had not forgotten the spoiled footer match, and they were quite pleased at an opportunity of scoring off the Highcliffians before they parted. Six elegant youths—no longer elegant—sprawled on the platform as the Greyfriars fellows crammed themselves into the train.

Ponsonby staggered to his feet.

"Rush 'em!" he shouted.

"Stand back there!" roared a porter.

"Idiot!" said Ponsonby. "We've got to catch the train, haven't we?"

"Come on!" howled Gadsby.

The carriage door was still open—and the Highcliffians made a rush. Bob Cherry's big fist came through the doorway, and Gadsby sat down on the platform again. Then a bag descended upon Vavasour's beautiful silk hat, and crushed it down over his ears.

"Come on!" sang out Johnny Bull. "Lots of room—if you can get in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The porter slammed the door.

Ponsonby & Co., red with fury, rushed along the train in search of other places.

But it was too late.

The express was in motion, and it rolled out of the station, and the Highcliffians were left standing on the platform, dishevelled and furious, and shaking their fists at the grinning faces of the Greyfriars Co. in the carriage window.

"Lost the train, poor kids!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "I think we can call the account square now. This is where we smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
Ponsonby & Co. brandished their fists. There was a sudden yell as a fat figure came tearing on the platform.
"I say, you fellows, wait for me! Stop that train! I'm going! I say—"

"Bunter!" roared Nugent.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The express rushed on, and the last the Greyfriars fellows saw of Bunter, was the fat junior being kicked along the platform by Ponsonby & Co. They had no special quarrel with Bunter, certainly, but they were glad to wreak their wrath upon somebody belonging to Greyfriars—and Bunter had arrived in the nick of time for that, if not for the train.

Bob Cherry sank back into his seat, gasping with merriment.
"Poor old Bunter! I wonder how much they will leave of him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
It was a merry journey. And a warm welcome awaited the party at Wharton Lodge, from Colonel Wharton and his sister. Miss Wharton's kind face always lighted up at the sight of his nephew—and she was glad to see his comrades. Harry Wharton & Co. sat down to a "spread" with keen appetites, and in great spirits. They were enjoying themselves, and the excellent fare Miss Wharton had provided, when there were sounds of arrival—and a voice was heard in the hall.

"Having lunch, are they—all serene—I'll go right in. I lost the train, but Harry is expecting me."
The juniors simply jumped.

"Bunter!" murmured Bob Cherry.
"My hat!"
The door opened, and Billy Bunter came in—with an effusive smile on his face, though with a rather uncertain expression in his eyes.

"Bunter!"
"Yes! Sorry I lost the train—I did my best," said Bunter. "I was ragged at the station by a gang of High-cliffe rotters, you know. But I came on, all the same. You didn't think I'd leave you in the lurch over the Christmas holidays, did you? Not my old pals! How do you do, sir? You remember me—Billy Bunter, of Greyfriars, top of the Remove Form? So jolly glad to see you again, Miss Wharton! Ripping to be together like this for the vac., isn't it, you fellows? Yes, I'm rather hungry—thanks!"

And Bunter sat down to lunch.
Wharton gazed at him speechlessly. In the presence of his uncle and aunt, he did not like to eject him "on his neck." Billy Bunter had had his way—by sheer impudence. He stayed!

THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER. Home for the Holidays!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Br-r-r-r!"
"Smithy's here!"
It was the morning—a bright and crisp winter morning. Bly Bunter joined the chums of the Remove in the grounds with some excitement in his face.

"I've seen him!" he said. "Smithy, you know. He's just ridden by the gates—jolly good horse, too. Those beastly millionaire bounders do themselves down jolly well, don't they?"

"I knew he was staying near here," said Harry.
"I spoke to him," said Bunter. "Under the circumstances, being Christmas-time, too, I thought it was up to me to overlook his rotten conduct, and know him. I shouldn't mind going over to his place, to show there's no ill-feeling—he has ripping feeds, you know—but the rotter just stared at me as if he didn't know me, and rode on. Just fancy a chap who's been expelled from school, riding the high horse like that! I'd have given him a jolly good licking, only—only—"

"Only he'd have given you one instead," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Blow Smithy!" said Nugent. "Marjorie arrives to-day. I'm going down to the station, for one."

"Same here!"
"You fellows needn't trouble," said Bunter, blinking at them. "I'll meet Miss Hazeldene at the station. She'd rather see an old pal than you chaps."

Whiz!
Smash!

A snowball from Bob Cherry's hand caught the fat junior full upon his fat little nose, and broke there. Bunter sat down in the snow with a yell.

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Yah!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scrambled up furiously and rushed towards Bob Cherry, with his fat fists clenched, and wrath gleaming behind his spectacles. Bob pushed back his cuffs and waited for him calmly—and Bunter slacked down.

"Well, I don't want to make a row in Wharton's place," said Bunter, on second thoughts. "I hope I've got better

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.
Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D, and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

manners than that, Bob Cherry, whatever you may have. Otherwise, I'd wipe up the ground with you."
"Don't mind me," said Harry, laughing. "I give you full permission to wipe up the ground with Bob, if the order isn't too big."

"Same here," said Bob. "Here I am, and here's the ground. Start in!"

"Ahem! I can overlook a joke!" said Bunter, with a feeble smile. "But, as I was saying, my old pal Marjorie—" He dodged just in time to escape a whizzing snowball from Nugent, and roared. "Look here, Nugent, you ass, stop it! I don't like it!"

"I don't suppose you do," agreed Nugent. "But you'll get a snowball every time you mention Marjorie's name."

"Why, you ass—you fathead!" roared Bunter indignantly. "Marjorie's my old pal—Yaroop!"

Three snowballs smashed on him, and he sat down once more. The juniors walked away, leaving him gasping in the snow.

They walked down to the station through the fresh, keen, morning air, and met Marjorie when her train arrived. Marjorie and Miss Clara, her friend in Cliff House School, arrived together, both looking very bright and charming. As they walked down the old High Street of Wharton Magnus, they met the Bounder. Vernon-Smith was in riding-clothes, and he was chatting with a horsey-looking man as he came along. He paused and raised his cap to the Cliff House girls, and nodded to the juniors, and walked on without speaking. Hazeldene paused.

"I want to speak to Smithy!" he remarked.
And he left the party and joined Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton's brow knitted a little as Hazel walked down the street with Smith and the horsey-looking man. Marjorie's bright face clouded. She had never liked her brother's friendship with Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. It had brought trouble enough upon Hazeldene, and trouble enough upon his sister.

There were a good many stories current in Greyfriars of the wild doings at Vernon-Smith's place during the vacations. But for the recent untoward happenings at Greyfriars, Hazeldene and Bolsover major would have been Vernon-Smith's guests for the Christmas holidays.

And the thought that their old connection was to recommence, while Hazel was a guest under Wharton's roof, troubled the girl's mind greatly.

But, as it happened, there was nothing to fear. Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed like steel as Hazel joined him in the village street.

"Rather a surprise to see you here, Smithy," said Hazel.
"And a bigger surprise for you to be so chummy," said the Bounder coldly. "It wasn't quite like that when I was in Coventry at Greyfriars."

Hazel coloured.
"Well, it was by order of the Form, you know," he said. "You did a rotten thing, and you were sent to Coventry. You've left Greyfriars now—no good raking that all up again. I'm willing to be friendly if you are."

"I'm not!"
"Ahem! I—"

"When I was down, I wanted my friends to stand by me!" said Vernon-Smith bitterly. "They didn't, and I made them squirm for it. I was surprised that you weren't among the claimants for the twenty quid, along with Bolsover and Snoop and Skinner and Bunter. I expected you'd be one of them. I wish you had been, and got it in the neck like the rest! You didn't speak to me at Greyfriars when I wanted you to, and I'm not going to speak to you now! Go and eat coke!"

And Smithy walked away, leaving Hazeldene staring after him with a flush in his face.

Harry Wharton & Co. and the Cliff House girls were half-way to the lodge when Hazel rejoined them, looking very moody.

"Smithy's very bitter about being sacked from Greyfriars," he remarked uneasily. "I—I thought I'd speak to him, but he doesn't want to have anything to do with us."

"Sacked!" exclaimed Miss Clara.
"Yes; and serve him right!"

"How did it happen?" Marjorie asked. "I didn't know."

The juniors explained.
"And we're rather sorry," Wharton added. "He was an awful bounder, but he was a good sport in some ways, and we haven't forgotten what he risked to help us win the St. Jim's match. We're sorry he's sacked."

Marjorie nodded, but she did not say she was sorry. She could not be sorry to know that the Bounder's dangerous influence was removed from the neighbourhood of her weak and wayward brother.

31

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

And the subject of Vernon-Smith was dropped.

Billy Bunter came tramping up with a frowning face.

"You fellows walked so fast I couldn't keep up with you!" he growled. "How do you do, Miss Marjorie? Jolly glad to see you again, Miss Clara! You knew I should be here?"

"No," said Marjorie.

"Couldn't desert my old pal Harry for the Christmas holidays," explained Bunter. "I had to refuse Mauleverer—you know, Lord Mauleverer? He begged me with tears in his eyes to go home with him to Mauleverer Towers, but I stuck to Harry. Friendship comes first, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The river is frozen as hard as a brick," went on Bunter. "We can get some skating there this afternoon. I'm rather a dab at skating, and I'll take you round, Marjorie, if you like."

Marjorie did not reply.

"No, you won't!" said Hazel. "You can't skate, and nobody's life would be safe with you, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"We'll get some skating after lunch," said Harry Wharton.

"You'd better keep off the ice, Bunter; you can't skate!"

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"I'm jolly well not going to keep off the ice!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to show you chaps how to do figure skating. Unfortunately, I've left my lovely new skates at Greyfriars—a Christmas present from a titled relation. But you will lend me some skates, I suppose?"

"I can lend you some skates, but I can't make you able to stand up on them!" said Harry, laughing.

"You'll see this afternoon!" said Bunter, with a snort.

And that afternoon they did see, though what they saw was not in the least what William George Bunter intended them to see.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

On the Ice!

"RIPPING good ice!" said Bob Cherry enthusiastically. "Splendid!"

It was a clear, bright afternoon. The river was like a gleaming steel mirror, frozen hard over its whole surface. Only in one place, by the opposite bank, was thin ice, and there a board appeared above the frozen surface, with the word, in large letters, "Danger!"

Billy Bunter sat down on the bank to put on his skates. Bunter fancied himself as a skater; but, as a matter of fact, he never could learn. But he was determined to show Marjorie that she would do well to trust herself to his guidance. Having donned the skates, he stood up cautiously on the ice.

"Look out!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "That ice is slippery, you know."

Bunter grunted.

"It—it feels rather slippery," he murmured. "I—I can skate all right, though. Ow!"

Bunter's right leg suddenly shot away in advance, and at the same moment his left leg beat a sudden retreat to the rear.

The fat junior threw up his hands with a wild yell, and collapsed.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Don't put a strain like that on the ice!" shouted Johnny Bull. "We want to skate on that ice, fathead!"

"Ow!"

Bunter made a desperate attempt to rise, but his feet ran away, and he rolled on his back and roared.

The sight of the fat junior turned turtle made the juniors yell. Marjorie and Clara were laughing—they could not help it.

"Beasts!" yelled Bunter. "Grrr! I'm as good a skater as any of you—ow, ow!—once I get on my—ow!—feet! Can't you come and lend a chap a hand? Ow!"

Bob Cherry slid on the ice, and bent over Bunter, and Johnny Bull seized him on the other side. With a combined effort they yanked him up, Bunter's legs beating like flails. It was fortunate that the ice was very thick in that spot, or Billy Bunter would certainly have beaten it through.

The fat junior clung to them frantically.

"D-d-don't leggo yet!" he gasped. "I'm not quite on my f-feet yet! Ow! The beastly ice is beastly slippery! Ow!"

"Cluck him ashore!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yow! I won't go ashore! I'm going to skate! I'm a THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY.
Every Wednesday.

better skater than you are, any day! Ow! Somebody's pushing my feet away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bob Cherry, as Bunter's foot came with a crash on his leg, in the wild efforts that fat junior was making to get a footing. "Ow! I'm lamed!"

He let go Bunter.

"Oh, help! Rescue!"

Bunter threw both arms round Johnny Bull's neck. Bunter was not a light-weight, and Bull, sturdy as he was, bowed under the burden. His skates clattered, and he very nearly went over, but he righted himself and slid on.

"Hold on to my arm, you giddy ass!" he growled. "Don't suffocate me! Gerroff my neck!"

"Ow!"

"Leggo my neck, you howling duffer!"

Johnny Bull violently unclasped Bunter's arms, and pitched them off. Then he seized the floundering Owl of the Remove by the back of the collar.

"Ow, ow! Hold me up!" stuttered Bunter. "I'm g-g-going!"

"I'll hold you up!" growled Bull. "Kim on!"

And he skated off, still grasping Bunter by the back of the neck, and propelling him along. They went along the frozen river with a rush, followed by yells of laughter from the other fellows.

Johnny Bull was a first-class skater, and he had no difficulty in holding up Bunter and propelling him along. But he went at a rate that made the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove gasp.

"G-g-go slower!" gurgled Bunter. "I shall f-f-find my f-f-feet son! I'm only a b-b-bit out of p-p-practice!"

"Look-out!" shouted Wharton from the bank.

A gliding figure, coming along at terrific speed, appeared on the ice. It was Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars. He was a splendid skater, and he was coming down the frozen river at full pelt. He did not know there was anybody on the ice, and he was certainly going at too reckless a speed to see them in time if they were there.

Harry Wharton's shout of warning came too late. The Bouncer, unable to stop himself as he spotted Johnny Bull and Bunter, rushed right into them.

Crash!

It was a terrific collision.

Johnny Bull had to let go Bunter as he spun backwards. Billy Bunter sprawled helplessly on the ice, roaring, and Johnny Bull went whizzing away blindly, zigzagging on one leg, and making wild endeavours to right himself.

The Bouncer staggered from the shock, but found his feet, and skated on, laughing loudly as he raced up the frozen river.

Johnny Bull ran into the bank and collapsed into the frozen rushes, and rose again, shaking a furious fist after the disappearing Bouncer.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "Come back, and be pulverised! I'll wipe up the river with you if you come back, you frabjous ass!"

Apparently the Bouncer did not consider the offer good enough. At all events, he did not come back.

Billy Bunter wriggled ashore on his hands and knees, with gasps and grunts and snorts of fury. He demanded a helping hand to begin again; but helping hands were lacking. The juniors had come there to skate, as Nugent remarked, not to drag a porpoise about.

Harry Wharton and Marjorie were already making figures on the ice, and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh had started with Miss Clara. The nabob's dusky face was glowing with satisfaction, and he confided to Miss Clara that his joyfulness was terrific. Nugent and Bob Cherry followed them, and so did Johnny Bull, when he had disentangled himself from the rushes.

Bully Bunter sat up on the bank, and regarded them with enraged eyes through his big spectacles.

"Beasts!" he growled. "Sheer rotten jealousy, that's what it is! They don't want Marjorie to see what a jolly good skater I am. Pah! But I'll show 'em!"

And Bunter advanced upon the ice again, holding on to the bough of a willow while he "found his feet."

Bob Cherry shot past him like an arrow, and gave him a playful dig in the ribs as he passed.

"Going at last, Porpoise?" he called out cheerily.

"Go and eat coke!"

Nugent whizzed by, and tapped Bunter on the ear.

"Look out for the thin ice!" he said. "Don't go near the notice-board."

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter did not even see the notice-board. It was right across the river, and the Owl of the Remove was short-sighted.

The skaters were travelling up the river now, and Bunter was left alone. He quitted the aid of the willow at last,

and ventured out on the ice. He soon found himself going, and was satisfied that he was all right at last. But his satisfaction was short-lived. For in a few seconds he made the additional discovery that he could not stop.

He shot away across the river, in a curiously bent attitude, at a pace that took his breath away.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Ow! G-g-good heavens! Wharrer-marrer? Help! Oh, help! Fire!"

The other fellows, and the Cliff House girls, were almost out of sight. But down the river another figure appeared in sight. It was the Bounder returning. Vernon-Smith, his face flushed with exercise and the keen winter wind, was coming along like an express.

But he slackened down as he saw Bunter.

"Look out!" he shouted. "Bunter! Stop, you idiot! You're making right at the notice-board! You'll be on thin ice in a tick!" The Bounder's voice rose to a yell. "Bunter, are you mad? Stop!"

Bunter would have given a great deal to stop, but he could not.

He whizzed right on. "Bunter! Danger!" yelled Vernon-Smith, his own face going pale as he saw the Owl of the Remove rushing to destruction.

Right on rushed the unhappy Owl of the Remove. He saw his danger now, but he could not avoid it. His face was white with fear, his eyes staring wide behind his spectacles. He was too unnerved even to make an effort. Right at the warning board he dashed, and over he went. The ice was already cracking under him, with long, ominous cracks that sent the chill of deadly terror to Bunter's heart. And as he went over there was a terrible crash of breaking ice.

Crash, crash, crash! The black water bubbled up over the shattered ice. There was a heavy splash, and Billy Bunter disappeared into the river.

A white, terrified face gleamed for a moment upon the surface of the black, bubbling water.

Then Billy Bunter was gone!

Vernon-Smith stood transfixed for a moment.

He was the only fellow anywhere near the scene of danger. The others had seen what had happened, and they were speeding back, but they were far off.

Vernon-Smith's face was white and set.

The hideous gap in the ice, the black water surging below, the floating fragments, seemed to swim before his eyes for a second. In that second the head of the submerged junior appeared for a moment, with eyes wildly staring with terror. Then it vanished again.

Bunter was under the ice!

"I—I can't save him!" Vernon-Smith panted out the words. "The fool ran into it himself! I'm not going to die for him! It's death to get under the ice! The fool! I won't do it!"

The words came from Vernon-Smith's lips, but not from his heart. For even while he was speaking he was tearing off his skates to dash to the rescue. Black sheep, bounder, blackguard even, but he had a heart as brave as a lion's; and it was in such a moment as this that all that was best in the Bounder's nature came to the surface. He had faced dire peril before, and had never shrunk from it.

"I won't do it! It's too much! I won't!"

But the generous prompting of the heart was too much for the cold, cautious, calculation of the mind. Vernon-Smith was rushing towards the gap in the ice even while he spoke, and as Harry Wharton came tearing back he saw the Bounder plunge in.

Splash! A plunge in the water, bubbles on the surface, dancing fragments of broken ice, and silence—stillness as of death!

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Luck and Pluck!

HARRY WHARTON dashed up, breathless.

But he was too late! Somewhere under the frozen surface Bunter was in the grip of the icy water, somewhere there, in the blackness, the Bounder was fighting for his life and the life of another.

Wharton's face was white. "Oh, good man!" he muttered. "Good man! He sha'n't go in alone."

Bob Cherry's grasp on his arm dragged Wharton back in time.

"No good!" he said tersely. "Stay where you are! We can help them when they come up. The Bounder's a wonderful swimmer!"

"But—"

"It's too late. You could never find them!" It was only too true. Wharton could do nothing—nothing but wait with heart-racking anxiety for a sight of the Bounder.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305. Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

Where were they? Round the widening gap the juniors and the girls gathered with white faces.

They smashed the hole larger with their skates to help the Bounder to return, and Bob Cherry skated off at top speed to the bank for the pole and rope placed there in readiness in case of accidents.

The seconds passed. In the horrible anxiety seconds seemed hours, years, centuries!

Would the Bounder rise again?

Where was he?

Had the current swept him away far beneath the ice, away to death in the icy depths of the river, with the boy he was trying to save?

It was only too likely.

Powerful swimmer as he was, how could the Bounder stem the current that ran under the ice, how could even his iron frame endure the bitter cold of the water?

And he had gone in to save Bunter, one of the fellows he had risked so much to punish at Greyfriars. He was risking more now to save him.

Would he ever rise?

Wharton set his teeth.

"I'm going in, Bob. I must—"

"Look out!"

A head appeared on the water; the dark head of the Bounder. The juniors gasped with relief and joy.

Wharton, holding the rope, plunged recklessly in. The rest of the skaters held on to the rope.

Harry Wharton's grasp was upon the Bounder at once. Vernon-Smith's face was like chalk, he was numbed with the cold, but there was something in his grasp. As Wharton seized him and supported him, Bunter's head came over the bubbling water.

Bunter's face was white and stiff, his spectacles were gone, his eyes were closed. Alive or dead, Vernon-Smith had saved him from the freezing waters.

"Pull!" gasped Wharton.

The juniors dragged on the rope. Marjorie and Clara lent their aid. Wharton gained the edge of the ice, with the Bounder in his grasp, the latter still holding to Bunter.

Ready hands helped them out.

The Bounder was still conscious as he was dragged on the ice.

Something like his old cynical smile flickered on his lips.

"Close thing that!" he muttered.

"Smithy, old man, it was ripping—ripping!" gasped Bob.

"Oh, rats!"

And with that characteristic reply the Bounder closed his eyes, and sank back on the ice unconscious.

"Quick—to the house!" exclaimed Wharton.

Vernon-Smith and the Owl of the Remove were raised in the juniors' strong arms, and rushed off the river, and up to the house.

The alarm of the accident had already spread, and Colonel Wharton met them half-way.

He took Bunter into his strong arms, and carried him into the house, and the juniors carried in the Bounder.

In a few minutes they were tucked up in bed, with hot-water bottles at their feet, and the blankets piled on them, and Colonel Wharton was telephoning for the doctor.

Bunter was living. He had had a fearfully narrow squeak, but he was living. The Bounder—the expelled junior of Greyfriars—had saved his life!

By the time the medical man arrived to attend his patients, the Bounder was sitting up in bed. In another bed close at hand Billy Bunter was breathing stertorously.

The Bounder was still white, and his eyes had a strained look, but otherwise he was quite himself.

"I'm all right," he said, when the doctor asked him how he felt. "All serene—only a bit queer. I'm not going to be ill."

The medical man smiled.

"You have a splendid constitution to thank for it," he said. "I am afraid the other lad will not get over it so easily."

"But there is no danger?" Colonel Wharton asked anxiously.

"No danger, but care will be needed."

"Both shall have the best of care. Vernon-Smith, you must remain my guest for a time," said the Colonel kindly.

"I have already telephoned to your father, and I have no doubt he will be here soon."

"Sorry to give you a lot of trouble, sir," said the Bounder.

"No trouble I could take would be too much for so brave and generous a lad," said the colonel. "But it is no trouble."

"No fear!" said Harry Wharton. "Smithy, old man,

you're a giddy hero! It isn't every chap who'd have gone under the ice—especially for Bunter!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"You would have," he said.

"I—I hope so; but, as it happens, you did and I didn't," said Harry, "and it was ripping of you!"

"The rippingfulness was terrific!" said Hurree Singh softly. "We are proud of our honourable and esteemed Smithy! And if anybody should propose to suggest sending him to Coventry again, I shall punch his ludicrous head!"

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Bunter wasn't worth the trouble, especially considering what a cad he was to me at Greyfriars," he said. "I'm blessed if I know why I did it. Silly impulse, I suppose."

"An impulse, but not a silly one, I think," said Colonel Wharton, with a smile. "Your school should be proud of you, Vernon-Smith. Dr. Locke will be very pleased to hear of this, too."

"Not likely, sir. I don't belong to Greyfriars now, you see."

"You have left?"

"Sacked!" said the Bounder tersely.

Colonel Wharton looked astonished.

"Expelled! You! I should have supposed that such a lad would be a credit to his school!" the old gentleman exclaimed.

"You don't know me, you see," said the Bounder coolly. "I've never been a credit to anybody or anything. I've always been a black sheep, and I've got it in the neck at last. What surprises me is that I didn't get it in the neck before. I don't complain—Hallo, there's Bunter waking up! How do you feel, Tubby?"

Bunter groaned.

"Grooh! Where's my spectacles?"

"You've lost them, Bunter," said Colonel Wharton gently. "Lie quiet, my lad, and don't speak now. You must rest." Bunter blinked at him.

"It was all Bob Cherry's fault," he said. "He ought to have stopped me. I fell into the water. It's a whopper to say I can't skate. I can skate as well as any of them—better, in fact. They're jealous of me because I put 'em in the shade, you know. How did I get out of the water?"

"Vernon-Smith rescued you."

"Did he? I don't see why he couldn't have stopped me before I fell in," said Bunter peevishly. "If I saw a chap in danger I should stop him."

"I was too far off, fatherd!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Did you get wet?" asked Bunter.

"No. It was nice and warm and comfortable in the river," snorted the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I shouldn't have got into danger if my pals had stuck to me," said Bunter. "I think it was rather rotten of Wharton, after fairly forcing me to accept his invitation, to come here for Christmas! And while you were about it, you might have fished up my spectacles. They cost seven-and-sixpence."

"I had enough trouble fishing you up, you fat idiot," said the Bounder, "and I didn't think of your blessed gig-lamps!"

"They're worth seven-and-six—"

"Yes; if I'd had any sense I should have fished up the spectacles instead of you," said Vernon-Smith. "You're certainly not worth seven-and-six!"

"Well, under the circumstances, I shall expect Wharton to pay for the spectacles. I consider that it was his fault."

"You shall have a new pair of spectacles, Bunter," said Colonel Wharton, who was regarding the fat junior with utter amazement. He had expected words of fervent gratitude from Bunter addressed to the Bounder, who had risked and nearly lost his life to save him. But he did not know William George Bunter.

"Thank you, sir! I've got a bump on my head. I suppose it was knocked on the ice," said Bunter. "That's just like Smithy; he was always clumsy."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 365.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The hatfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum!"

Colonel Wharton's brow grew stern.

"Have you no word of gratitude or acknowledgment for the boy who risked his life to save yours, Bunter?" he exclaimed severely.

Bunter grunted.

"Oh, I don't suppose there was much danger," he said. "Smithy wouldn't have run into danger for me. I suppose he's piling it on. He played a rotten trick on me at Greyfriars. I know that, and they sacked him, and serve him jolly well right!"

And having delivered that valuable opinion, Billy Bunter closed his eyes and went to sleep.

"Worth while going in for him, wasn't it?" said the Bounder, with a cynical grin. "If I felt strong enough, I'd get up and kick myself."

"Never mind Bunter's ingratitude," said the colonel. "We at least know how to appreciate your action, Vernon-Smith. And I think it may have consequences of which you do not think at present."

Then the Bounder was left to repose.

Colonel Wharton's last words had puzzled him considerably, but the next day he had the explanation of them.

That day the Bounder was downstairs, though Bunter still kept his bed. Bunter had no objection to passing a few days as an invalid, with kindness and care on all sides, and living on the fat of the land. But the Bounder was strong enough to go down, and down he went. Wharton had asked him to pass the vacation at the Lodge, and Vernon-Smith smilingly agreed—indeed, the Bounder was so cordial and agreeable now that Bob Cherry confessed that he hardly knew him.

A letter arrived for Vernon-Smith that day.

He looked at the superscription in surprise.

"That's the Head's list!" he said.

Wharton's face brightened up.

"Dr. Locke! Good egg! I think it's good news!"

"Blessed if I know what it can be about, unless old Quelch has been putting in a word for me," said Vernon-Smith, puzzled. "He said he would."

"Perhaps someone else has," smiled Harry.

Vernon-Smith opened the letter. His face lighted up as he read it, and he gave a shout:

"Good egg! Hurray!"

"Good news?" asked Marjorie cordially. Marjorie's opinion of the Bounder had considerably improved since the rescue of Bunter.

"Oh, ripping! Read it out, Wharton!"

Wharton read out the letter.

It was a brief note from Dr. Locke. It stated that he had been informed by Colonel Wharton of Vernon-Smith's gallant action in risking his life to save that of a schoolmate, and that, under the circumstances, he had rescinded his judgment, and the Bounder was free to return to Greyfriars at the beginning of the new term if he chose so to do.

"I'm so glad!" said Marjorie, sincerely enough.

"Hurray!" shouted Bob Cherry.

And the juniors joined in a ringing cheer.

The roar of their voices brought the colonel in, and as soon as he heard the good news he congratulated the Bounder heartily.

"I owe it all to you, sir," said Vernon-Smith gratefully. "I didn't know you had written to the Head. The Head's a brick, too! I'm jolly well going back for the new term—what-ho! My pater will be delighted. He was awfully hard

hit at my getting the sack. And I'm going to be a bit more careful next term."

"You owe it to your own pluck," said Colonel Wharton. "You have fully made up your fault, my dear boy."

"And I'm going to be jolly careful after this!" said the Bounder.

And he spoke sincerely enough.

The good news for the Bounder was heartily welcomed by all the Co. And it brightened the Christmas holidays for all of them. That Christmastide was a very happy one for the chums of Greyfriars.



THE END.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

The Second Long, Complete Story contained in this Issue of
The "Magnet" Library.

BY SHEER GRIT!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Story dealing with the Amazing Adventures
of a Young Britisher.

By FRANK WITTY.



"Drop that gun in the water, or I leave you!" said Jim; and Grimple was forced to obey. Then, turning on his side once more, Jim swam on. (See p. 42.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Jim Gratton—A Hard Blow!

THE door of the Fifth Form-room opened, and the Headmaster entered. He whispered a few words to the Form-master, and then looked at the boys.

"Gratton!" he called.

"Here, sir!" answered a fair-haired, square-jawed boy of about seventeen. He was one of those broad-shouldered, determined-looking fellows, who you know instinctively would not "stand any nonsense."

"Come with me, Gratton," said the Head. "Mr. Bishop will excuse you. And I have something to tell you."

Jim Gratton rose and followed Dr. Martyn, who walked on without speaking until he reached his study. At the door he turned, and put his hand on Jim's shoulder, and walked with him into the room.

"Gratton," he said, "I had hoped you would have stayed with me some time yet; but, my boy, I have some bad news for you."

"My father, sir—" began Jim.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

"No, it is not that, Gratton. Your father is well—in fact, I had a letter from him this morning. It is to acquaint you with the contents of his letter that I have brought you here—"

The Head paused, as though he did not quite know how to proceed.

"Gratton," he said suddenly, "you remember when you were stroking the eight against Belding's last term how, when they began to draw away from you coming round the bend, you gritted your teeth, and won the race for us?"

"Yes, sir, indeed I do!" said Jim, his eyes gleaming at the remembrance.

"Well, I want you to do that now, my boy. Keep a firm hold on yourself, for you've got to stand up against a hard blow." The Head paused for a moment, and then continued: "Gratton," he said, "I heard from your father this morning, and he wants me to tell you that you will have to give up all ideas of entering the Army."

"Give up the Army, sir!" said poor Jim, in dismay. "Why, father has always wanted me to enter his old regiment! What can he mean?"

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

"My boy, your father's regiment was one of the crack regiments, and to be an officer in a crack regiment is an expensive business. He wants me to tell you that he is now a poor man. When your mother died, he set his heart on making money for your sake, so that you should not have such a hard time as he had when a young man. He tells me in his letter that practically all his money was invested in a South American gold mine, but that it has been steadily doing worse for some years. A few days ago he heard from his manager out there that the capital is all gone, and that the mine is hardly paying its way."

"Now, Gratton, I know how you have set your heart on going to Sandhurst, and I know, too, that you would have done credit to your old school there. But I know more than that—I know that you will be a credit to us wherever you go, even though it is only to an office in London."

"An office, sir?"

Poor Jim! His heart sank. In five short minutes all his dearest hopes had been crushed to earth. And the poor old dad! Do what he could, Jim thought the lump that suddenly came in his throat was going to choke him.

Dr. Martyn then went on to explain that Colonel Gratton felt he could not come up from his home in Yorkshire, as this blow had made perfect quiet necessary to him, but that he had written to a prosperous business man he knew in London, who had replied that if Jim would be at his office at nine o'clock on Monday next he could start work at twenty shillings a week.

And to-day was Friday! To-morrow he would have to leave the old school and all his chums—not to go to Sandhurst, but to a stuffy office.

Every boy in the school went down to see Jim off the next day—the Head gave them special permission to do so—and such cheers had not been heard for many a day as suddenly echoed through the building when the train slowly steamed out of the station.

Jim sat back in his seat, feeling very sick at heart, and it is more than likely that he would have succeeded in making himself thoroughly miserable had he not been roused by the words:

"Hallo, young shaver! You're lookin' very sorry for yourself!"

Jim pulled himself together and looked at the speaker—the only other person in the carriage. He was an elderly, jolly-looking man, very sunburnt, and with a closely-cropped grey beard. Jim was thinking of something to say, when the other continued:

"Getting into trouble? Well, you're not the first boy to be expelled—no, not by a long way!"

Jim, who was glad of somebody to talk to, explained that he was not being expelled, and told the stranger all about his troubles.

He of the sunburnt face grew serious, and then broke into a loud laugh.

"You in an office?" he roared. "Might as well put you in a prison, and expect you to make good there! I know a man when I see one, if I don't know anything else, and you're cut out for a soldier or a sailor, I'll bet my boots on it!"

"Well, I'd jolly well give anything not to go into that rotten office! I hate the place already!" said Jim sadly.

"You just keep a stiff upper lip, my boy, and things will come all right. You're not the kind that gets sat on. By the way, my name's Captain Roper, s.s. Hyslop. What's yours?"

"Jim Gratton."

"Well, then, Gratton, you come right along to the dining-car with me and have lunch. It'll buck you up a bit. Hallo! we're stopping. I suppose this is one of the places where they punch holes in your ticket. Lot of rot. I call it! Sha'n't have any ticket left soon. And I had to pay enough for it, too!"

The restaurant-car was right in front of the train, and as Captain Roper led the way along the narrow corridor they were continually jostled by people getting on to the train from the platform of the busy junction at which they had stopped, and got separated.

Suddenly Jim heard the captain's voice, loud above the station din:

"Take your hands off me, you dirty sneak-thief! Take your hands off, d'you hear, or I'll—"

His voice suddenly ceased in a gasp. In one quick glance, Jim saw Roper fall to the ground, and a seedy-looking man, with a tweed cap well over his eyes, snatch a fat wallet from his coat-pocket. The thief got out on the platform, and, quick as lightning, Jim was after him, nearly knocking an old lady over in his excitement.

But Jim was much the faster of the two, and caught his man just as he was reaching the station exit. The thief

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.
"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

turned, and, seeing Jim only a yard or two behind him, drew from his hip-pocket a murderous-looking little "life-preserver" and aimed a swinging blow at the boy's head before he could pull up. Jim Gratton ducked, but his hat flew off, and he felt a sharp, stinging pain burn its way across his head; and then—well, then he landed that fellow a good, clean "well" on the "point," sending him on his back, and it was not long before the wallet had changed hands—or, rather, pockets—once more.

When Jim had got the pocket-book safely stowed away, he relieved his prisoner of the life-preserver, and let him get up. The thief eyed Gratton for a moment or two, but did not seem to think it would be a healthy undertaking to attempt any more fighting, and, with one quick look round the station, slunk off.

Jim picked up his hat, and made his way back to the train. The whole incident had only taken about four or five minutes, and when he boarded it Captain Roper was only just recovering from the hit below the belt dealt him by the pickpocket.

"Here's your pocket-book, sir!" said Jim, smiling. "It hasn't been away long, has it?"

"Do you mean to say you got it back? Shake, my boy!" And the captain did his best to put Jim's arm out of joint. "But you are bleeding, sonny! Come along and have a wash, and then tell me all about it! Thank goodness, the train's started again! Let me see, we were on our way to lunch when that low-down bag of bilge-water got the drop on me. Here we are, Gratton! Pop in and bathe your head, and follow me on to the dining-car."

As they sat over their meal Jim told the captain what there was to tell—which did not take long—after which Roper asked him more about himself, which Jim told him also.

"Anyhow," said Jim, laughing, "I've got a keepsake of this business," and drew from his pocket the life-preserver.

When the captain saw the wicked little weapon he wanted to stop the train and go back to look for the owner, but was pacified by Jim telling him that he had thoroughly enjoyed the adventure.

He little thought as he sat sipping his coffee in the comfortable dining-car how useful the life-preserver was going to be to him, and before so very long, either!

"Look here, Jim," said the captain, "do you really want to dodge going into this office of yours?"

"I do indeed!" said Jim.

"What would you like to do?"

"Anything in the open air: I don't care what it is."

"Well, there's precious little use in England for a fellow who hasn't got any money, old son. Why don't you have a cut at something abroad?"

The idea almost took Jim's breath away.

"Abroad?" he gasped, with gleaming eyes. "I wish I could! Oh, I should love it!" Suddenly his face fell.

"But travelling costs such a lot, and I've only got five pounds in the world."

"Oh, well, whether it costs a lot or not just depends. If you want to travel in a brass-bound, plush-lined sort of cross between Madame Tussaud's and the National Gallery, it does come expensive certainly. But if you're not afraid of a bit of coal-dust and a few blisters, it needn't cost you more than the price of a mouthful of cold air!"

Jim was still in the dark.

"I see you don't understand poetry," said Roper, laughing. "I mean, that if you have got a backbone as well as a wish-bone, and really want to go abroad, you can work a passage. That's what I mean. I'm only pottering round the coast just now, or I'd take you myself. But a friend of mine is skipper of a meat-ship lying in the next berth to me at the docks, and if you like I'll take you on board in the morning, and try to fix you up. He's sailing to-morrow night for the Argentine. What do you say?"

Jim felt quite dazed for a moment. Certainly, he thought, adventures seemed to be springing up all round him. His mind was soon made up, however.

"I'll go," he said.

"That's the sort! Waiter, bring the bill please! Yes, I'm paying this trip. Hurry up, old fellow-my-lad, with your figuring—here's London once again!"

They hurried back to their carriage, and by the time they had collected their things the train had pulled up.

"Got anywhere to go for the night?" said Roper, in his quick way.

"No," said Jim, beginning to feel rather miserable all of a sudden.

"Come along, then, and see what my old woman can do for you. Here—taxi!"

In they jumped, and almost before Jim knew what had happened they were in the heart of London. A little later he saw the tall masts and funnels of ocean-going ships, and

heard the buzzing, fussy sound that comes from the busy little tugs. A smell of tar was in the air, that seemed to bring a feeling of freedom and adventure with it.

They got out of the taxi, and made their way, followed by three or four men carrying their things, through a perfect maze of cargo that lay about by the water's edge, until suddenly Jim saw, written large on a lifebuoy on the deck of one of the ships; "ss. Hyslop—London."

"Here we are, sonny! Nip on board while I pay off these men!"

Several sailors came off, and took charge of the luggage, and Jim walked across the planks that joined the ship to the land.

The captain soon joined him, and led the way below to a cosy little saloon, where they discovered his wife sewing.

"Here I am, you see, old girl," said Roper. "And here is a young friend of mine, Jim Gratton, who has saved us a lot of money to-day; but I'll tell you all about that later on. The great thing is, can you fix him up for the night?"

"Why, of course I can, Tom, and glad to do it! But what's brought you here, Mr. Gratton, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Well, my dear," said the captain, answering for him, "that's a long story that I'll tell you another time. But Jim here is going to work his passage to the Argentine on Johnny Sullivan's meat-ship, sailing to-morrow."

"Work his passage—eh?" said Mrs. Roper, looking at Jim. "Well, many a good man's done that before now. But here comes the tea, thank goodness! Sit down, Mr. Gratton, and make yourself quite at home!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On Board the Hyslop—The River Plate.

FOR quite a long time after he woke in the morning Jim thought he was still dreaming, and not until Captain Roper came into his cabin with a cup of tea for him did he realise where he was.

"Now then, son, it's eight o'clock, and breakfast will be ready in less than half an hour. Nine o'clock will be about the time to catch Johnny Sullivan, so don't waste any time—that is, if you still mean to sail with him."

"You bet I do!" answered Jim. "Here's a letter I wrote last night, before I went to sleep, to the dad, telling him that I was going to work my passage. Oh, and I told him I was going to call myself Jim Winter, as I thought he might not like his name associated with a mere tramp, and I told him to write to me at the G.P.O., Buenos Ayres. I suppose I shall get the letters all right?"

"Bless you, yes! Buenos Ayres is one of the finest cities in the world. Well, I'm glad you haven't changed your mind; somehow, I should have been disappointed if you had!"

"No fear of that!" laughed Jim. "I'm not the sort to turn back when I've started."

After breakfast the two walked round to the Merry Maid—Captain Sullivan's boat. They found him standing by the wheel-house, watching some coal come aboard.

"Hallo, Tom, my buck! How goes it? Brought your eldest round to see me?"

"Get on with your fooling, John! This is a young friend of mine who is a bit down on his luck, and who wants to try and change it in South America. How do you like the look of him as a passage-worker?"

Sullivan, who was a tubby little man, with a shrewd, fat face, by way of an answer, grabbed at Jim's hand and examined it.

"Soft as a baby's," he said, throwing it away from him. "What do you think you could do on board?" he asked.

"Anything you told me to," answered Jim promptly, though he felt very nervous all the same.

"Hum! Well, all right. Bring your traps on board; you can start at once. Got a mattress and blankets?"

"Blankets? No, I haven't."

"Get 'em, then," said Sullivan. "And I should advise you to get your hair cut, too."

"There you are, my boy," said Roper, as they left the ship. "Soon done, wasn't it? You mustn't mind Johnny Sullivan's manner. He's a real white man underneath. I'll fix you up with a mattress and blankets; don't you bother about that. But nip off and get your hair cut, and post your letter to your dad. I'll get your things taken on board for you. I'll tell 'em to dump them in Johnny's saloon; he won't mind. You can take some duds out of my slop-chest to work in."

Jim thanked him, and went off to get his hair cut. Before he posted his letter he added a note, telling his father the name of the boat he was sailing in. When he had dropped it into the letter-box, he felt that he had cut the last link with his old life.

He returned to the Hyslop, and found Captain Roper waiting with a couple of suits of "dungarees," four "sweat-rags," and a pair of thick boots.

"Here you are, Jim, my boy. Not exactly Bond Street, are they, but you'll find 'em useful on board, and they'll save

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The **D**, and will contain a splendid, long complete story, entitled, **"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER."** By Frank Richards.

your clothes. You'd better change now, and take that suit you've got on wrapped in paper. I've got a mattress and a couple of blankets here for you?"

Jim thanked him as well as he was able, and went into his cabin to change.

When he came out again Roper laughed, and called to his wife.

"Here, mother. Come and say good-bye to our quick-change artist."

Mrs. Roper came out and shook him by the hand, and wished him "Good-luck!" For the life of him, Jim could not help the tears springing to his eyes.

"There, there, my lad," said the captain kindly. "You'll get used to saying 'Good-bye' before you've finished your travels. But it's a beastly word, for all that, so I'm only going to say 'au revoir,' for we shall meet again, never fear!"

Jim gripped the hand of the kindly sailor, and, shouldering his bundle, containing the other suit of "dungarees" and the suit he had just taken off, left the Hyslop, and boarded the Merry Maid, that was to be his home for many weeks.

"This way, young feller-me-lad!" called out a burly man in a peaked cap. "Your quarters are far'ard there, not in the saloon, this trip, ye know! Get a move on! Dump yer duds on a sparo bunk, and come aft again; there's some coal to be shifted!" Then, as he saw Jim looking round, wondering where he was to "dump his duds," he called to a sailor:

"Hi, Bowtle, take his nibs to the fo'c's'le, and stow his gear for him, and then send him down to No. 2 hatch."

Bowtle jerked his head in the direction of the bows as a signal to Jim to follow him, and walked far'ard. The ship seemed all on one side to Jim, and he found it difficult to walk straight.

He found the fo'c's'le a very different place to the snug little cabin he had slept in on board the Hyslop. It was small and stuffy and dark. The bunks were in two tiers, and Bowtle advised Jim to grab one of the top ones near a port-hole, which he did.

By Bowtle's advice, he made his bed and left his bundle of clothes lying on it, so that there should be no doubt about the bunk being owned, after which his new friend guided him to the hatch. Here he met the bo'sun, the man who had first spoken to him, who told him to climb down through the hatch. Jim got down, and found himself surrounded by coal on all sides.

The bo'sun pointed to a square hole in the deck, and, telling him to try and fill it with coal, left him.

Jim picked up a shovel that was lying handy, and started work.

At the end of half an hour his arms were aching horribly; at the end of an hour his hands were terribly sore, but he stuck at it. By the time another hour had passed he felt as if his spine had been kicked by a mule, but that hole in the deck was no nearer being full than it was when he started. Poor Jim! He did not know that the hole was simply a shaft down to the bunkers, and that as fast as he pitched the coal down it, it was shifted by a trimmer working in the bowels of the ship.

Then he heard Bowtle's voice calling to him:

"Come on, young 'un—grub-time!"

Gladly he dropped the shovel, and once more made his way far'ard to the fo'c's'le, where he found his future companions gathered round a small table that had been let down from overhead.

Nobody took any notice of him; they all continued talking to each other, so he sat down on the corner of a bench and helped himself to a piece of tough meat that he would probably have turned his nose up at a couple of days previously, but which he now devoured with great joy.

When he had eaten, and, what is more, enjoyed his food, he once more resumed his shovelling, and by the time he knocked off had cleared away most of the coal.

The sailors were all very nice and friendly to him when he reached the stuffy fo'c's'le again, for though he did not know it, the word had gone round that the passage-worker "wasn't a slacker, anyway!"

Jim was not sorry to get his clothes off and roll himself up in his bunk. The bed was hard, the blankets rough, and the air stuffy—but how he slept! Not even after a hard Soccer match had the night ever passed so unconsciously or so swiftly.

In the morning he was so stiff and sore that he felt as though he would never be able to use his muscles again, but he forgot all about that when, on going on deck, he saw the coast-line of Old England slipping past.

He was at sea!

He stood, thinking of all the changes that had come upon him in the last three days, but was suddenly roused from his dreaming by the bo'sun calling to him to "fetch a broom and

join in "swabbing down" the decks. This got rid of the stiffness, and by the time he knocked off for breakfast he felt as fit as a fiddle.

After breakfast he was put on to wash down the paint-work, which kept him busy till the middle of the day.

None of his jobs during the trip were particularly heroic, yet, all the same, Jim began to feel more of a man than he had ever felt before, and he would not have changed places with anyone.

One day, just before they sighted Madeira, the mate asked Jim to pull up a bucket of water. Jim had often seen the sailors do this, and thought it looked easy enough, so getting a bucket, and making a length of line fast to the handle, he heaved it overboard. But he had forgotten that the ship was travelling about as fast as an ordinary motor-bus, so that when the bucket hit the water he felt his arms being pulled out of their sockets.

He hung on like grim death to that rope, and was only saved from being pulled over the side by the mate catching him round the waist. When the mate could speak without laughing, he explained to Jim the proper way to fill a bucket. Taking the line and bucket he put the latter over the side, and lowered it until it almost touched the water, but not quite. He then swung it to and fro, until it was possible, by letting the line slip through his fingers, to shoot the bucket some yards towards the bows. The bucket, of course, filled at once, and could be pulled up before, or as soon as the line became perpendicular—that is to say, before it got behind him and dragged in the water.

Jim thanked him, and felt that he had learned something more.

A week passed in doing odd jobs on deck, at the end of which time Jim felt quite at home.

Then, one afternoon, at about three o'clock, the mate came to him and told him he was to work in the stokehole for the rest of the trip. One of the trimmers, he said, was an old fellow who was a bit past the work, and who needed help. He told Jim he could knock off till eight o'clock when he would have to start on his new job.

Jim went back to the fo'c'sle feeling rather scared, as he had always heard the stokehole spoken of as a terrifying and awful place.

"However," thought he, "I knew I was going to have a rough time, so it's no use grouching."

When eight o'clock came he made his way to the heart of the ship. Down, down, ever so far he went, on an iron ladder that was so hot it burnt his hand.

"If it's like this all the time," thought Jim, "I shall not be able to stand it!"

But he did not know that between the deck and the stokehole there is no ventilation, so that, of course, the heat is tremendous. But in the stokehole itself he was glad to find that a big ventilator kept a current of air running through all the time. The atmosphere was more than warm even then.

Three firemen, stripped to their waists, were standing about, and wished Jim "Good-evening!"

"Old Joe," the trimmer, whom he had come to help, was an aged veteran, bald-headed and round-shouldered, older than Jim's father. He came down to the stokehole about two minutes later, and, telling Jim to follow him, crept through a dark hole about the size of an ordinary fireplace.

Jim found himself in a dark place, surrounded by coal—mountains of it! There was one little, very smelly lamp to see by, and Jim was kept busy for the first few minutes dodging lumps of coal that came hurtling down as the ship rolled.

Suddenly he heard a fireman rattling his shovel on the iron deck of the stokehole—a sign that he needed coal—and then the work started.

The coal had to be chucked through the hole by which he had entered, when it was again taken by a fireman and thrown on to one of his three fires. There were nine fires in all and three firemen. Old Joe and Jim had to keep one of these firemen continually supplied with coal.

The shovelling that he had done the first day he came on board had been a picnic compared to this. During the former he could take an occasional rest, but now he had to keep at it, or the firemen's shovels started rattling.

Old Joe was about done for, poor old chap, and the firemen hinted darkly that this would be his last trip. His career on that boat, at any rate, was brought to an end very shortly.

The ventilator was also used as a shaft, up which the ash buckets were hoisted when the time comes for raking the fires and pitching the ashes overboard.

These buckets are heavy, weighing, perhaps, half a hundred-weight, and during the time they are being used the men are forbidden to stand under the ventilator. Old Joe systematically ignored this rule whenever he got a chance, and so it happened that one evening an ash-bucket came unhooked and

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 395.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR"
Every Friday.

fell, crushing his foot. Jim was, therefore, obliged to work on by himself, but the firemen saw he was not a slacker, and gave him a few tips that made the work very much easier, though they had no sympathy to waste on old Joe.

One evening Jim said to one of them:

"It's jolly rough on old Joe having his foot hurt. I suppose he'll get something for that when the ship gets home, won't he?"

The fireman spat in disgust.

"Get something? Get a jolly good hammerin' for being under the bucket; that's wot 'e ought to get!"

In fact, Jim found that so used were the men to hardship, that very little notice was taken of any kind of misfortune, except the loss of a pipe. That was always considered really serious.

One day, between watches, he was on deck watching the captain's Japanese steward washing up the dinner things. The ship was in the tropics at the time, and the heat below in the stokehole was awful.

He was surprised to see a fireman come up on deck and fall down in a fit. It was heat apoplexy. The only notice the steward took of the poor chap was to glance at him, and say:

"Have seen one cat have fit just the same!"

Jim, however, ran to him, and poured some water over his head, and when he came to himself again helped him to the fo'c'sle.

The time soon slipped away. His hours were "four on and eight off." That is to say, he trimmed in the stokehole for four hours, and then had eight hours to himself. This made the days pass very quickly, and he was quite surprised when he discovered that they were steaming up the smooth waters of the River Plate.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Beach-combers—An Adventure in the Boxing Booth!

"WELL, good-bye, my boy!" said Captain Sullivan. "You've worked thundering well, and have earned your passage! When I see old Tom Roper next you can bet your shirt I shall give a good report of you. And if ever you want to get home the same way, and the Merry Maid is here—well, just you walk on board, that's all. But you'll be going home first-class on a Royal Mail boat, or I'm a Dutchman! Well, good-bye once more! The ship-chandler's launch is waiting for you."

As the little launch drew away from the Merry Maid the firemen came to the side, and cheered.

"So long, young 'un! Think of us when you've made your fortune! Don't forget the old Merry Maid!" And so on.

Jim felt quite sorry at leaving, for though he had had a rough time of it, the men had all been very nice to him. He had learnt a lot, too, and was harder and fitter than he had ever been in his life before.

As the launch neared the shore, the ship's chandler, who was an Argentine, but spoke English, came up to him.

"Ever been here before?"

"No," said Jim. "And I want to find some lodgings as cheap as possible."

"Right! I know just the place for you!"

He was as good as his word, too, for directly they got on land he helped Jim to get his boxes to a lodging-house, kept by an old Irishwoman. The room Jim was shown into was beautifully clean, and only two dollars—about 3s. 6d.—a day, which is dirt cheap in Buenos Ayres.

Jim agreed to take the room by the day, and paid one day in advance. He felt that he might strike a job at any moment.

When he had put his box under the bed he went out to look round.

He had not gone far when a dejected-looking Englishman, in ragged clothes and old boots, came up to him. In spite of his down-at-heel appearance, this man spoke English like an educated man.

"Ah, good-afternoon!" said he. "Easy to see you're an Englishman."

Jim, who was feeling just a little bit lonely in this strange land, where nobody seemed to talk English, was glad enough to talk to a fellow-countryman, and his life on the Merry Maid had knocked all the snobbishness out of him.

"Yes, I'm English all right," he said.

"Been long in this country?"

"Two hours," answered Jim, laughing. "And I was just off to try and find job somewhere. Where had I better try, do you think?"

"You come along with me. I've got a pal who will fix you up! By the way, what's your name? Mine's Riley—Honest John I'm generally called."

"Mine's Winter—Jim Winter!"

"Right-ho! Come along, Winter! I'll show you something I'll bet you've never seen before."

Chatting about all sorts of things, "Honest John" led Jim along the banks of the river beyond the houses and docks, until they came to a part where its banks were still in their original state, wild, and about twelve feet high. Jim followed his guide down a steep path, and suddenly found himself in the presence of a dozen or more of the roughest and most desperate-looking men. Not till then did he realise that he had been trapped. Trapped, like many another "tenderfoot" has been by the most contemptible and most unscrupulous men on earth.

Jim was in a den of beach-combers!

However, he had enough sense not to show that he realised the sort of men they were.

His guide smilingly addressed the ragged gathering of blackguards.

"My friend Mr. Winter, gentlemen; just arrived from England!"

The drink-sodden loafers rose to their feet, and gathered round him, shaking him by the hand, and patting him on the back.

In a moment Jim realised that he was being hustled, and stepped back quickly, but not quickly enough. A sound of thunder seemed to deafen him, as one of the gang dealt him a blow with a club. He remembered looking and seeing their evil faces grinning at him, and then—oblivion.

That night the moon shone down on the docks and the shipping, shone on the mighty River Plate, shone on the Merry Maid, lying peacefully in mid-stream, and also on the silent, motionless form of Jim Gratton, as he lay where the beach-combers had left him, beside a refuse heap.

But he was made of tough material was Jim, and slowly but surely consciousness returned to him.

He sat up, and spent a quarter of an hour trying to remember where he was, and how he had got there.

Then he remembered! Rising unsteadily to his feet, he felt in his pockets. They were empty. His watch, too, had been taken, and even his cuff-links, the last present his old dad had given him.

He staggered down to the water, and bathed his face and head, and then slowly made his way towards the lights of the town.

Thank goodness he had paid for one night's lodging, at any rate!

By keeping along the side of the river he eventually found his lodgings, and, taking no notice of the landlady's exclamations of surprise, went wearily to bed and to sleep. Next day he went out, tired and sore, to look for a job, no matter what, that would enable him to earn the price of some food and a night's lodging.

He had not gone far when he found himself walking behind two well-dressed men, and his heart bounded as he heard they were talking English.

One of them was a short, thin man, dressed in black, office-looking clothes; but the other was tall, broad-shouldered, and wore tweeds.

It was he who was speaking.

"No; an Argentine boy won't do. They are too excitable. I want a young Britisher, and I'm hanged if I know where to find him!" he was saying. "I don't care tuppence whether he can speak Spanish or not!"

"Yes; that's all very well," answered the little man. "But where are you going to find your precious young Britisher? Now, an Argentine would be easy enough; and, as you've only got a couple of hours, I should advise—"

"Excuse me," said Jim, stepping up between them, cutting the little man's speech short, and addressing the other, "but if it's a young Britisher you're looking for, who can keep his head and not get excited, try me! I don't care what I do!"

The big man looked him up and down for a moment or two, then burst out laughing.

"By Jove!" he roared. "The very man! You don't believe in wasting time, at any rate, young fellow. What's your name?"

"Winter—Jim Winter!"

"Come along in here, then, Winter, and have a coffee while we talk things over! Good-bye, Johnson; see you at Palermo this evening!" he called to the little man.

They sat down at a small table, and nothing was said until after the waiter had brought the coffee, and, Jim was glad to see, some sandwiches also.

Then his new friend turned to him, and said suddenly:

"By the way, my name's Upjohn. You say you don't mind what you do—is that right? Help yourself to sandwiches, boy! Tuck in!"

"That's quite right," said Jim, at the same time biting into a sandwich.

"Well, I'm just beginning to make a bit of money after a jolly rough time; but I can't run the show on my own any longer, and I should think you would do to give me a hand."

"What is the job?" asked Jim.

"Well, it's not what would be called classy," answered The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The D, and will contain a splendid "Magnet" will be the usual price 1 long complete story, entitled,

Upjohn, laughing; "and I dare say you won't care for it, I—"

"Don't you?" asked Jim. "What is the job, anyway? I'm broke, and must earn some money somehow or other!"

Upjohn glanced at Jim, evidently taking stock of his good, well-cut clothes.

"Nobody would think so to look at you," he said. "How long have you been out here?"

Jim told him.

"It hasn't taken you long to get broke, my boy. Hope you haven't been playing the fool?"

Jim laughed.

"I've been a fool all right," he said, "but not knowingly." And he proceeded to tell Upjohn about his adventure with the beach-combers.

Upjohn whistled.

"So you've been up against Honest John and his gang, have you?" he said. "Then let me tell you, my son, that you may thank your stars you are alive and kicking at this moment! That collection of cutthroats have thrown more than one dead man, after they have been through his pockets, into the river!"

He was silent for a moment or two.

"However, you're not in the river, but you are broke, which is not quite so bad, but bad enough. I've been broke myself, and I know what it's like—get on with the sandwiches; I don't want any—and I know that anything's worth while when you're like that. So I'll tell you how you can earn five dollars a day if you care about the job."

"I shall care about it, whatever it is!" answered Jim eagerly.

"I want someone like you to come and give me a hand in a boxing show I'm running. You may not have much to do, or, on the other hand, you may have the very dickens of a time—it all depends."

"How do you mean?" asked Jim.

"Well," said Upjohn, "these fellows get so excited over the fights, and they mostly have more money on the result than they can afford to lose, though it is the excitement over the fights that makes the trouble."

"Why, what do they do?"

Upjohn laughed.

"What don't they do, you mean? A sparring match—it may be quite a tame affair—will be going on, when perhaps two men, in the interval between the rounds, will start an argument, and before you know where you are, they'll whip out their knives, and you're in for a rough house!"

"And where do I come in?" asked Jim, laughing.

"Well, in that case, you would have to try and get the two who were scrapping outside. It doesn't matter so much if they mangle each other in the street. But, as a matter of fact, I can't tell you what you'll have to do—you will have to do what you can when the time comes. By the way, you and I will probably be the only two white men in the place. Well, I must be getting off!"

He took up a newspaper.

"Here," he said, pointing to an advertisement, "that's the place. Be there at six o'clock to-night, will you?"

When they reached the door of the cafe, Upjohn suddenly stopped, and, pulling out his purse, said:

"You'd better take a day's pay in advance. I expect you can do with it. Keep away from the beach-combers this time!" he added, laughing.

And he went off, leaving Jim gazing at the five-dollar bill as though it had dropped from the skies.

He spent the rest of the day walking about the city, and looking at the shipping in the docks. Everything had happened so quickly, and he had had so little time to think things over, that he still felt at times as though he ought to be at his desk in the Fifth Form-room.

That evening at six o'clock he presented himself at the door of the boxing show, where he found Upjohn.

The ring was raised in the middle of the room, and the seats were in tiers all round it. At half-past the crowd began to come in.

The greater part of the audience was composed of Argentine and Italian working-men, dark-skinned, and dressed in shirts and loose trousers called "Bombachos." Jim noticed that practically every man carried a knife.

Just before the first fight took place a Britisher came in, and took a seat that happened to be vacant close to the ring. He was a queer-looking fellow, and, though unmistakably British, his clothes were evidently the work of a native tailor, and he wore the black sombrero of the Argentine.

Jim could not see whether he, also, carried a knife or not. He was to make that discovery later.

Nothing happened during the first three fights, which were all between natives, though the excitement was tremendous and bets were made and several small quarrels took place.

But during the interval between the third and fourth fight

Jim felt that there was an air of expectancy and suppressed excitement throughout the audience. The Britisher, in particular, showed signs of intense excitement.

The reason for this was obvious the moment the opponents entered the ring, for one was an Argentine—almost a nigger—while the other was a Britisher. At the end of the third round it was clear that the latter was getting the worst of it, and the Britisher in the audience was shouting imprecations at the coloured man and getting into a frenzied state of excitement.

The moment they stepped into the ring at the commencement of the fourth round he stood on his seat, and began shouting to the white boxer, in English and Spanish:

"Kill the black beast! Don't let yourself be wiped out by a nigger! Kick him, if you can't hurt his head!" and so forth, until the Argentines sitting round him began to look at him in a threatening way.

Seeing this, Jim went up to him and told him to sit down and behave like a gentleman. The only answer he received was a vacant glare that showed he had either been drinking or was carried away by the excitement, or race hatred.

At that moment the white boxer was being severely punished by the coloured man, and, brushing Jim on one side, the Britisher, shouting a foul expression at the whole Argentine nation in general and the coloured boxer in particular, tried to get into the ring.

Jim held him and tried to force him back into his seat, while several of the Argentines got up and came threateningly towards the excited man.

Before he quite knew what had happened, Jim felt something burn into his cheek, and knew that his countryman had tried to "knife" him! The excited audience gathered round while the two struggled together.

The fight in the ring stopped, and everyone became absorbed in the duel between the two Britishers. At last Jim managed to get his man to the ground, and, by forcing his wrist backwards, succeeded in getting the knife away from him. Upjohn came hurrying up, and, taking the man by the shoulders, shook him like a rat.

"We must get this fool outside, Winter, or we shall have the police in! By Jove, he's unconscious! Catch hold of his feet; I'll take his head!"

When they got him outside, Upjohn called a cab, and, almost throwing the unconscious Britisher inside, told the driver to clear out with him, and not bring him back!

When they regained the hall, Upjohn, who spoke Spanish perfectly, made a speech to the audience that quieted them down, and the fight, which was the last of the evening, went on, and, incidentally resulted in a victory for the coloured man.

As soon as the hall was empty, Upjohn told Jim he had better clear out and have his face seen to, as it was bleeding very freely.

"You might be here at nine in the morning, Winter, if you feel all right; I want to alter the chairs a bit," he said.

Jim went back to his room and examined the wound, which proved to be nothing worse than a long, but not deep, cut. Anyhow, it did not keep him awake, for he slept dreamlessly till morning.

When he got to the hall at nine o'clock he was surprised to find the man who had caused all the trouble on the previous night, talking to Upjohn.

As Jim joined them Upjohn said:

"Well, we had better leave it for Winter to decide. It's like this, Winter, Mr. Grimple here—"

"No, no, Mr. Upjohn; this is my say!" interrupted the other. "See here, young fellow, I reckon you saved me from getting killed last night by the men in the hall. I don't know what came over me, but I can't stomach seeing a black man getting the best of a Britisher, and as sure as Fate, if it hadn't been for you, I should have made trouble for myself!"

"You didn't make things too nice for Winter, as it was!" growled Upjohn.

The other frowned slightly.

"Now, Winter," he went on, "you seem to be a likely sort of youngster, and are the sort of man I want out at my place, so if you care to come with me, I'll start you at two hundred dollars a month and your keep. What do you say?"

"What's the work?" asked Jim, trying to think where he had heard the name of Grimple before.

"I manage—well, I own—a gold-dredging proposition up North, and I want someone who won't stand any nonsense to look after the niggers—see? You seem to be the right sort for that job," he added, rubbing his head.

"By the way," said Upjohn, "what is the name of your gold outfit, Mr. Grimple?"

"The Santa Rosa, and a fine little business it is, too."

The Santa Rosa Gold Dredging Company! Jim could hardly believe his ears. That was the name of the concern

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

that had swallowed nearly all his father's fortune! And Grimple—yes, now he remembered! Grimple was the manager's name!

So he owned the mine, did he?

"Yes, I'll go," said Jim, trying to speak as carelessly as possible. "When do you want me to start?"

"To-night, with me. So if you mean to come you had better get off and make any arrangements that may be necessary. Come round for me at the Northern Railway Station at six o'clock to-night. Well, I must be off. Good-bye, Mr. Upjohn! I shall see you to-night, Winter!"

When Grimple had departed, Upjohn turned to Jim.

"I don't like the look of that fellow, Winter."

"Nor do I," said Jim.

"Then why on earth are you going right into the wilds with him? It's a nasty part of the country round about that mine of his."

Jim looked at Upjohn's honest face, and decided to tell him all about the mine, and how his poor old dad had been told that it was a failure.

"The Santa Rosa a failure!" cried Upjohn. "Don't you believe it!" He thought for a moment. "My hat!" he cried at last. "This is like something out of a book! It looks as though you were going to be rather a nuisance to Mr. Grimple!"

"I hope so," said Jim grimly.

Upjohn became thoughtful again.

"How are you off for money, my boy?" he asked, looking up suddenly.

Jim laughed.

"I've got ten dollars forty cents left out of the fifteen you gave me yesterday."

"Good heavens, you must have more than that! Look here, come along to the bank with me! I'm going to lend you five hundred dollars. You'll be able to pay me back, there's no doubt about that." He laughed. "And when you want a new manager, perhaps you won't forget that what I don't know about gold-dredging is precious little."

Jim thanked him as well as he was able as they walked towards the bank. He also told Upjohn his real name, and who his father was.

"Gratton—Colonel Gratton? Isn't he the man who led the famous charge at Mooifontaine?"

"Yes; that's the pater," said Jim proudly.

"Well, then, I'm only too glad to be able to help my old colonel's son! I was a Tommy under him—got into trouble at home and enlisted—the same old story, you know!"

When Upjohn had handed Jim the five hundred dollars, he said:

"Now, Gratton, the first thing you've got to do is to buy a good revolver and five hundred rounds. Get a small automatic pistol. It won't show under your clothes. And if there is anything I can do for you at any time, write to me at the British Club, here. Now, good-bye, Gratton, and the best of luck!"

Jim went and bought a revolver at once, and spent the rest of the day seeing the sights of Buenos Ayres. He also wrote a letter to his father, simply telling him that he had got a job up-country, and that he might not be able to write for some time.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Up-country—Grimple's Brutality—Father and Son.

JIM found Grimple waiting at the station for him in the evening.

"Oh, here you are!" he said. A good deal of his friendliness of the morning had disappeared. "Cut it rather fine, haven't you?"

"It's five to six now. You told me to me here at six," said Jim shortly.

"Oh, did I? Well, come along! I've taken two sleeping bunks. We've got to spend two nights on this train."

As soon as they steamed out of the station, Grimple said they had better get some food, and led the way to the dining-car. He remained, after he had finished eating, sitting at the table drinking, so Jim—who never drank anything but water—rose and sought his bunk.

Two hours later Grimple staggered along, talking to himself, and threw himself on his bed, which was below the one Jim was in.

"Asleep?" he called.

Jim did not answer.

"Sound asleep!" muttered Grimple, and remained silent for some time. Then he rose from his bunk, and Jim could feel that he was standing looking down at him. "This young guy will do as well as anyone else to take my place—and the curses—when the time comes for me to clear out!" he continued, and lay down once more.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR."
Every Friday.

"A hundred and fifty thousand pounds!" he murmured sleepily several times, and then fell sound asleep.

Jim rose early in the morning, and had some coffee in the dining-car, while Grimple snored on. The early morning sun shone down on the rolling prairie, and Jim would have given a lot to have had his old pater sitting opposite to him. How he would have enjoyed it!

Grimple hardly spoke to him that day, but continued drinking at intervals throughout the remainder of the journey.

The train pulled up at Santa Rosa at seven o'clock the next morning, where a light waggon, with a team of six horses, was waiting for them, in charge of an Indian.

Grimple, taking no notice of the man's salute, ordered him to put their things on board, after which he mounted the box, and, signalling Jim to jump up behind, drove off at a gallop. At the end of about two hours they arrived at their destination.

The dredge was working, and Jim was glad to see that there was an Englishman on board of her.

The camp consisted of two corrugated-iron buildings, one a large one containing provisions, and the other composed of three small rooms—two bed-rooms and a sitting-room. There were also eight or nine ragged tents, in which the Indians lived.

"Shove your things in here, Winter," said Grimple, opening one of the doors. "You and Gibson will share this room. Go down to the dredge when you've fixed yourself up, and tell Gibson I want to see him."

Jim lost no time in delivering the message to his roommate, as he was anxious to see the sort of man he had to live with.

He found Gibson an elderly man, with a strong, sunburnt face and keen, grey eyes. He told him that the boss wanted to see him. "And a fine temper he's in, I'll bet!" said Gibson. "Always is when he comes back from a holiday. You a friend of his?"

Jim explained that Grimple had brought him out to look after the natives.

Gibson whistled. "Now what's his game, I wonder? Look after the natives! Poor devils, it's little looking after they want! They are seared to death of old Grimple, and no wonder! Ah, well, I'll go and see what he wants, anyhow."

Jim stayed away from Grimple all that day. He stayed on the dredge with Gibson and tried to remember the names of the natives. The two Englishmen had their meals in their room, Grimple preferring to have his in solitary state.

That night, when they were both rolled up in their truckle-beds, Gibson suddenly said:

"Look here, Winter, you take my advice and hop it! This fellow Grimple is a regular rotter, and I am sure he is up to some shady business or other. I'd go myself, only I've been here so long now that I think I'll stay on till I find out what his little game is."

Jim was going to tell Gibson how Grimple had robbed his father, when he heard his name being shouted excitedly outside.

Pulling on a pair of slippers, he ran out in his pyjamas, to see Grimple standing, in the moonlight, over the cowering form of the Indian girl who looked after the house.

"Here, Winter! Bustle along! Think I want to wait out here all night for you?" he bellowed. "Here's your first job! Take this whip and thrash the nigger!"

Jim walked up to him and took the whip.

"What's the matter with the girl?" he asked.

"The matter with her! What the blazes has that got to do with you? You give her a good hiding! That's what I'm paying you for!"

"I want to know what you want her thrashed for."

"Well, hang you, if you want to know, this black beast has forgotten to make my bed! Now get on with it!"

"I see," said Jim, looking him straight in the eyes.

"That's the sort of man you are, is it?"

"What do you mean, you young pup?" foamed Grimple.

"I mean that you're nothing but a low-down bully!" retorted Jim promptly. "I mean that, before I'd thrash these poor things at your bidding—not to mention a girl—I'd starve on the prairie! And I mean that while I'm here I'll not let you do it either! That's what I mean!"

"Give me back my whip, you twopenny smug-faced idiot, or it'll be the worse for you!" roared Grimple, with the old, mad look in his eyes.

"I'll give you back your whip, but remember what I said!"

Grimple took the whip, and, grasping it firmly, hit the girl a savage blow with it. She fell prone on the ground, moaning.

A 7d. NOVEL THAT COSTS 3d.!

The "Fiction Lover's Library," at all Newsagents' and Booksellers', Published twice a month. Equal in quality and quantity to any 7d. or 1/- novel.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

This was too much for Jim. He literally sprang at the bully's throat, and the two rolled on the ground.

Grimple managed to twist himself on top, and, as he held Jim down with one hand, he hit him over the head with the butt end of the whip.

Jim let go of the bully's throat, and with both hands caught at the wrist that wielded the whip. Bit by bit he bent Grimple's hand backward till, with a curse, he was obliged to drop it.

The pain also caused him to loose his grip of Jim's throat, and in a fraction of a second the positions were reversed.

As soon as Jim found himself on top he grasped the whip and sprang to his feet. He then proceeded to thrash Grimple for all he was worth.

The thought of his father at home breaking his heart over the supposed loss of his money gave him the strength of three men, and Grimple was soon howling for mercy.

Jim left him on the ground, and walked back to his room with the whip.

Gibson had been standing in the doorway watching the whole business.

"My word," he exclaimed, as Jim came up, "you've done it now! The boss'll murder you to-morrow! You take my tip and clear out!"

"Not I!" said Jim, and proceeded to tell his room mate what he knew of Grimple's "little game."

"But he knows your name, doesn't he?"

"My real name's Gratton," said Jim. "This brute doesn't know that I am anything to do with the man he is robbing!" Gibson whistled softly.

"The plot thickens!" he exclaimed joyfully. "But supposing he kicks you out to-morrow, as he's sure to do? That'll rather upset your plans, won't it?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Jim. "Well, anyhow, I can't help it. I have done what was right under the circumstances, and I'm going to sleep now. Good-night!"

Gibson's prophecy proved correct. Before they were up—almost as soon as it was light—Grimple stormed into the room. He looked as though he had been walking about all night. He shook Jim roughly.

"Get up, you skunk, and clear out! Do you hear? Clear out before I put a bullet in you!"

Jim shook his hand off.

"There's no train to Buenos Ayres to-day," he said.

"I don't care a hang whether there's a train or not! Out you go, you Psalm-smiting young cub, within half an hour, or it'll be the worse for you!"

Gibson put his head out of his blankets.

"If Winter is slung out to-day, I go with him," he said.

"And you'll find it rather a job to run the dredge without an engineer," he added.

"Oh, that's the way the wind blows, is it?" said Grimple, snarling.

"Yes, that's the way," answered the engineer.

"All right: the young lout can stay till to-morrow morning. But"—here he turned to Jim—"don't let me see you in the camp after sunrise to-morrow, or I'll turn the niggers you're so fond of on to you to chase you to the station!"

"Strong words from a weak stomach don't frighten anybody," said Jim, getting out of bed.

Grimple left the room hastily.

"We'll see about that!" he said, as he went out, slamming the door.

"Thanks very much, old chap!" said Jim to Gibson, as soon as they were alone.

"Don't see that I did much good. You've got to go to-morrow, anyway!"

"I'm not so sure," said Jim thoughtfully. "Let's go down to the dredge; we shall be more private there."

There was still some time before work would commence, so when they reached the dredge Gibson made some cocoa from the stores he kept on board, and the two were soon having a sort of breakfast in the little engine-room.

"What does Grimple do with the gold?" asked Jim suddenly.

"Takes it up to Buenos Ayres himself about every ten days. I suppose he banks it in his own name, the dirty thief!"

"And where does he store it while it is here?"

"Oh, he's got a huge safe in his room, big enough to take thousands of pounds' worth of dust! There are drawers full of papers, too, and no doubt there are documents and things of your father's amongst them that would prove him to be a thief at once!"

"Gibson, have you got an Indian we could trust to go into Santa Rosa to send off a telegram?"

"Yes, rather! In any case, they'll be willing to do anything for you after what you did last night!"

"Well, then, I'm going to send a wire to that chap Upjohn I told you about, asking him to send up some 'tees from

Buenos Ayres to arrest Grimple. I don't suppose we could trust the local police; they have probably been squared!"

"By Jove!" Gibson thought for a moment. "It would be safer to wire from Torino, the next station. I'll go and wake up old Pedro, if you'll write the wire out. He's the father of that girl you wouldn't thrash last night. Here's a pencil and some paper; write it out as quick as you can!"

Jim wrote out his wire and handed it to Gibson, who said:

"I'll tell Pedro to wait for an answer. It may take some time, but the boss'll never notice that he's away. You'd better stay here; I'll be back in a few minutes."

Gibson went off, leaving Jim alone, who, to pass the time, took up a piece of waste, and set to work polishing up some of the valves and things.

But while Jim and Gibson had been plotting together, Grimple also had been busy. He was of the sneaky type, and when he had watched the two safely on to the dredge he went into their room and examined Jim's box.

Something about the boy, that very likely he could not have explained, had struck him as being out of the ordinary, and he meant to see if he could find out something more about him.

Jim's box was unlocked—it is considered very bad form to lock your things up when you are sharing a room—and one of the first things Grimple came across made him curse and look nervously towards the dredge.

It was a photograph of Colonel Gratton!

He dived his hand into the pockets of a coat, and pulled out a letter in the colonel's handwriting—which he knew only too well!—addressed to "Jim Gratton, Esq., Poste Restante, Buenos Ayres."

Glancing once more towards the dredge, he thrust the letter and photograph back in the box, and left the room.

"So that young cub is the old fool's son, is he? What on earth made him come across me in this way?"

He was striding up and down his own room, muttering to himself. A stiff dose of raw spirits seemed to pull him together a little.

"I'd nearly forgotten! I've ordered the young beast to leave the camp to-morrow! I must put that right; he shall never leave here again!"

Just then he saw Gibson leave the dredge, and, thinking he was going to rouse the natives, which he knew would take a little time, he put on his hat and went on board.

Jim, busy with his polishing, did not notice anyone come on board, and was therefore surprised to hear himself being spoken to by Grimple.

"By the way, Winter," he was saying, "I've come down to apologise to you. I'm afraid I quite forgot myself last night and again this morning. I've got a beast of a temper, I know; but you mustn't take everything I say quite seriously!" He held out his hand, of which Jim took no notice. "And, of course," he went on, "I don't really mean you to go to-morrow! You just stay on here, and we shall get along famously!"

Jim, who was trying hard to understand the reason for this sudden change, answered not a word. Grimple turned to go.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I want you to come with me this morning to prospect a claim a little higher up the river. It will be a good chance for you to learn something of the business, so be ready in about half an hour, will you?"

He then left the dredge, and a few minutes later Gibson returned.

"It's all right," he said. "Old Pedro is on his way now, and the wire will reach Buenos Ayres in about an hour and a half. When we get a reply depends on whether Upjohn is in the club or not. Now, what's the next thing to be done?"

Jim then told Gibson what had happened since he left the dredge, which made the latter become very serious and thoughtful.

"I don't like it, Jim, my boy," he said, using Gratton's Christian name for the first time. "I don't like it a little bit."

Neither spoke for a moment or two; then—

"I shall see it through now," said Jim slowly. "After all, Grimple may be trying to be decent!"

"Don't you believe it?" grunted Gibson. "You've got a gun, haven't you?"

Jim nodded.

"Well, take it with you, and don't turn your back to him for a second—not a second, mind! I know this country and I know Grimple better than you do!"

They shook hands, and Jim left to join Grimple.

The two started off along the river-bank, carrying shovels and pans. It was a scorching hot morning, quite sultry enough to make talking a nuisance, so that neither spoke.

Jim was careful to let Grimple lead the way, and mile after mile The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

mile passed in perfect silence, as they drew further and further away from the scanty civilisation of the camp into the wild, overgrown bush.

The uncertainty of what Grimple might be going to do, the silence and loneliness of the scenery, began at last to get on Jim's nerves. Suddenly a piercing shriek rang in his ears, and something soft brushed past his face. His nerves were thoroughly on edge, and Jim, with a gasp, started and fell as a huge, sleepy owl flapped lazily across the river.

In a second Grimple was on the top of him, his crafty face lighted up with a look of fiendish joy at this, to him, unexpected piece of good luck.

"The last card's with me, you dirty young sneak!" he snarled. "Daddy's boy is going to feed the fishes!"

Jim was powerless to move, yet a strange calm had come over him. Having something certain to face had braced his nerves.

Grimple, his eyes shining with the light of madness, spat in his face.

"You'll come skunking round me, will you? You'll do the fine gentleman, and be the niggers' darling, will you? You, you flabby chip of that old military blockhead! Oh, I know who you are all right, so you know what to expect, don't you, my pretty boy? Did you think I asked you to come out for a walk with me for the pleasure of your company, you fool?"

He raised one hand, and drew out a knife.

"I meant this for you, but the river is better; there are things in there that will finish you much better than I could!"

Then Grimple became in a moment like one possessed. He struck Jim in the face and over the head; took him by the throat, and shook him till the boy was half dazed. Then, gripping him round the arms and body, dragged him to the edge of the twelve-foot river-bank.

Jim took one despairing look round, and noticed that there was an island about twenty yards from the shore. In a flash new strength seemed to come to him. If he had to go Grimple should come with him.

With a sudden movement he managed to get his arms round the madman's body—one mighty heave, and the two crashed down the rotten bank into the slimy river.

Jim was a powerful swimmer, and had nothing to fear from the water, but what had Grimple meant by "the things in the river"? His thoughts, however, were taken off himself by a gurgling cry from his would-be murderer.

The two had separated as they toppled over the bank; Jim, with the instinct of a swimmer, had struck out immediately, but with Grimple it was different. As he saw his enemy clutching madly at the plants and grass that grew on the bank his heart leapt within him.

Grimple could not swim.

"Help me, Gratton—help me!" panted the drowning man.

"I can't swim!"

"Seems to me," said Jim grimly, "as if the last card's not with you, after all."

"Never mind about that. Help me, for the love of Heaven!"

The plant he was holding on to came away from the loose earth, and, with a scream, he disappeared.

When he came up again he was crying and choking with fear. Jim noticed a branch of a tree floating down the stream. A sudden idea entered his head. He swam to it, and, keeping hold of one end pushed the other within reach of Grimple, who caught hold of it wildly.

"Hold on!" said Jim shortly, and swam out into mid-stream, taking Grimple with him. When he was well away from the bank he stopped swimming, and floated on his back.

"What are you stopping for, you fool!" shrieked Grimple. "Do you want the alligators to get the two of us?"

"You didn't mind about me much a few minutes ago, did you?" said Jim. "Anyhow, I'll tell you what I've stopped for. Pull that knife of yours out and hold it up in the air, you dog!" Grimple did so. "Now drop it in the water!" And Grimple meekly obeyed. Still Jim did not move.

"Go on, man—go on!" whined the thief.

"Half a minute! I want to see your revolver follow the knife!"

"I won't do it—I won't do it!" he screamed like a peevish child. "Besides, the cartridges are all wet now!"

"Don't be a fool, Grimple! Do you think I don't know enough about guns to know that revolver cartridges are waterproof, you idiot? Drop that gun in the water, or I leave you to drown!"

And Grimple was forced to obey. Jim, once more turning on his side, swam on. The man was completely in his power now, but he did not mean to give him a chance to get away or do him further injury of any sort.

In a few more minutes they reached the island and
(This story is concluded on page 48.)

THE SPECTRE OF No. 1 STUDY.

A Splendid New Schoolboy Play for the Christmas Holidays.



BILLY BUNTER.

H. WHARTON.

HURREE SINGH.

VERNON-SMITH.

F. NUGENT.

BOB CHERRY.

JOHNNY BULL.

Special Pen Portraits of the Characters in this Play.

NOTE: This Play is Copyright, but it may be performed by readers of "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY without Fee on condition that the words: "By Permission of the Editor of "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY," appear on the front of all programmes.

CHARACTERS.

HARRY WHARTON, Captain of the Remove.

FRANK NUGENT

BOB CHERRY

JOHN BULL

} His Chums.

HURREE SINGH, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

BILLY BUNTER, His Ally.

SCENE I.

Harry Wharton's Study.

(WHARTON turning a flushed face from the fireplace, at which he is kneeling, frying eggs):

Buck up, and buzz about there, Bob!

Your lazy limbs want oiling!

I've shoved the kettle on the hob,

And soon it will be boiling.

CHERRY: Well, give a chap a giddy chance,^

I've set the chairs out ready.

But look at Frank—he's in a trance;

Look out, you idiot—steady!

(Nugent staggers towards the table in a dreamy manner with a pile of plates, which totter for an instant, then fall over with a crash.)

BULL: To juggle in a way so rum

Is scarcely scientific;

NABOB (holding his ears):

The dinfulness, my worthy chum,

Is really most terrific!

NUGENT (carefully surveying the wreckage):

I've done it now! This blessed "pill

Will get me in bad odour.

We may not mind, but someone will—

The plates belonged to Loder!

WHARTON: If he should come upon your track:

A poker he'll be using!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1 D., and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

NUGENT: Upon the coming Christmas yao.

My mind was sweetly musing.

CHERRY: It can't be helped, but pass the ham,

And I'll commence the carving.

That soap-dish there will hold the jam—

Ye gods! I'm simply starving!

WHARTON (rising, the eggs being finished):

The close connection with the grate

Has made my face quite ruddy.

My word! there's not a single plate—

We'll ransack someone's study!

BULL: Just drop the eggs upon this dish;

I'll get some plates from Fisher Fish.

WHARTON (turning the eggs into the dish with relish):

I like a really ripping egg,

There's nothing quite so decent;

"And 'pon my soul," said Uncle Clegg,

"The things was laid quite recent!"

NABOB (who is making toast at the fireplace):

Bananas in a luscious bunch

Content my humble wishes:

At tea or at the worthy lunch

They form the finest dishes.

(Re-enter Bull with a pile of plates, which are distributed, and the feast commences.)

CHERRY: These eggs among the finest rank,

So prithce do not tarry;

But pass the bread-and-butter, Frank,
And pour the tea out, Harry.

WHARTON (*rising, after serving the tea*):
Here's health to us, the Famous Five
Of good old Greyfriars College!
To lead the way we'll always strive
In every branch of knowledge.

(*All solemnly raise their cups and drink the toast. Suddenly Bunter is desecrated peeping into the study.*)

NUGENT (*threateningly*):
Intruding porpoise, off you trot!

BUNTER: Oh, what a ripping feed you've got!

WHARTON: We want no uninvited scum!

BUNTER: Is that the way you treat a chum?

NABOB: The beastful Bunter is a cad—
His hateful presence makes me mad!

BUNTER (*edging further into the room*):
I say, you fellows—just one tart!

WHARTON: Vainoose!

CHERRY: Absquatulate!!

BULL: Depart!!!

BUNTER (*looking longingly at the feast*):
Come, don't be cads! A bun will do—
Or else a piece of— Ow! Yarook!

(*Cherry hurls a loaf at Bunter's head, and the fat junior retreats from the study in wild disorder.*)

WHARTON (*laughing*):
You are a splendid marksman, Bob,
That shot was jolly clever;
But why not make a perfect job
And floor the worm for ever?

BULL: Resume! I'm hungry as a hunter.
Thank heaven we've seen the last of Bunter!

(*All sit down and resume tea.*)

VOICE FROM WITHOUT:
Yah! Beasts! Cads! Rotters!

(*Cherry and the Nabob rush from the room, and a scuffle is heard outside. After a few seconds have elapsed they return to the study, dragging Bunter along by the ears.*)

WHARTON (*sternly*):
Just hold him for a tick, my lads!
Now, Bunter, did you call us cads?

BUNTER (*gasping and spluttering*):
Oh, no! I never said a word!
'Twas someone else you must have heard.

WHARTON (*angrily*):
Beware, you blessed Anania!
No scum of your sort dare defy us!

BUNTER (*in tones of injured innocence*):
Alas! my word is always doubted.
I know 'twas someone else who shouted.

WHARTON (*turning to the others*):
I really feel inclined to clump him;
But, on reflection, why not bump him?

OTHERS (*in chorus*):
Yes, bump him! Bump him!

BUNTER (*greatly alarmed*):
Hands off, you cads! Or else I'll tell
The Head, and Mr. Quelch as well!

(*Bunter is seized by the Famous Five, and lumped three times on the floor, yelling and struggling. Then he is bundled unceremoniously from the study.*)

WHARTON: Now we have bruised and bumped the beast,
We'll recommence our ripping feast.

(*Bunter reappears in the doorway, dusty and dishevelled. Each of the feasters immediately seize an available missile.*)

BUNTER (*malevolently*):
The way you chucked me out was neat;
But wait, you cads! REVENGE IS SWEET!

Exit.

SCENE II.

Vernon-Smith's Study.

The Bounder is lounging comfortably back in an armchair, smoking, and scanning a sporting paper. On a table near at hand is a glass containing contents of a suspicious character. Suddenly a double-knock sounds on the door. Vernon-Smith jumps up in alarm, sweeping the glass from the table in so doing, and throws the cigarette into a corner of the room. The knocking is repeated with greater violence. He waves the paper frantically to and fro in an endeavour to remove all traces of smoke; then, controlling his countenance with an effort, he mutters:

Good heavens! what a frightful din!

I mustn't lose my nerve. (*Louder*) Come in!

(Enter Bunter.)

SMITH (*angrily*):

Be off, you base, intruding beast!

You're always spying, dah you!

And if you came to find a feast,

To smitherens I'll smash you!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

BUNTER: Oh, Smithy! I suppose you're joking?
I'm sorry I disturbed your smoking.

SMITH (*aside*):

What can the silly idiot mean?

No signs of smoking can be seen!

BUNTER (*advancing into the study*):

I've guessed the rotten tricks you play.

And p'raps may let you off with lenience,

Which just depends! But, anyway,

A keyhole is a great convenience!

SMITH (*seizing a cricket-stump*):

You spy! I'll thrash you till you're dead!

BUNTER (*retreating with an amiable smile*):

Good-bye! I'm off to tell the Head!

SMITH (*hurriedly*):

Come back, you idiot! Don't be silly!

Would tarts be very tempting, Billy?

BUNTER: I feel that I could go great guns!

But, mind, they must be twopenny ones!

(*The Bounder tosses Bunter a coin.*)

BUNTER (*about to depart*):

Thanks, Smithy! Now I'll have some fun

As well as Study No. 1.

SMITH:

What's up with Wharton and Bob Cherry?

Are both the rotters making merry?

BUNTER: I chanced to pass the study door,

And through the keyhole looking,

I quite collapsed upon the floor,

So fine a feed they're cooking!

SMITH:

But did you have the nerve to stop

And help the rotters scoff it?

BUNTER (*mournfully*):

With lusty kicks they made me hop,

And meant to keep me off it!

SMITH (*grinning*):

I guess you beat a sad retreat!

But what has Wharton got to eat?

BUNTER: Sardines, and jam, and eggs, and cake,

And doughnuts quite delicious;

'Tis done in style, and no mistake,

And makes me jolly vicious!

SMITH (*edging closer to Bunter*):

Then why not rob them of their feed,

And make the cads look silly?

A steady nerve is all we need,

So will you help me, Billy?

BUNTER: I'm game! But afterwards, I fear,

The pair of us will rue it!

And, by the way, it is not clear

How you intend to do it!

(*Vernon-Smith paces to and fro for a moment in deep thought.*)

Then he gives a start.

My word! we'll have the cads on toast,

As sure as I'm the Bounder!

We'll institute a giddy ghost!

What project could be sounder?

BUNTER (*doubtfully*):

No doubt 'twill give them fits and starts,

And make the rotters dread it;

Yet how a ghost can get us tarts

Is more than I can credit.

SMITH:

'Twill make them in a frightful funk,

And stop their hearts from beating;

And when the cads have had to bunk,

We then commence the eating.

BUNTER (*doubling up with laughter*):

Ha, ha! the plan is simply prime—

For nerve it can't be beaten.

But if you don't dress up in time,

The grub will all be eaten!

SMITH:

Some paint and powder, and a sheet,

And then you'll see a transformation!

I think the dodgo is really neat—

It makes me jump with jubilation!

(*He prances delightedly from the room.*)

BUNTER (*throwing himself into a chair and kicking up his heels with merriment*):

Ere long my stomach will be packed

With ham and eggs and buttered toast;

And trouble, if the wheeze won't act,

'Will fall on Smithy—he's the ghost!

SCENE III.

Harry Wharton's Study.

(*The feast is proceeding merrily, and the chums are in high feather.*)

CHERRY (*leaning back in his chair with a contented sigh*):

A better feast could not be found

In all the country far and wide!

(*Wharton offers him the toast.*)

I could not eat another round—

My inner man is satisfied.

NUCENT (*shaking his head as the plate of toast is passed to him*):

If any more grub I endeavour to pack
I'm bound to be blessed with a bilious attack!

WHARTON: Will no one finish off the toast?

Come, now, do justice to your host!

BULL: My "little Mary's" far too full,
So no more, thanks, for Johnny Bull!

NABOB: Your good and worthy English dish
Gives strengthfulness to every sinew!

I'll make so boldful as to wish
That such repasts may long continue!

ALL: Bravo, Inky!

WHARTON: But what of all this extra grub?

It seems a rotten shame to waste it;
Where can we put it?—there's the rub,
We don't want Bunter here to taste it.

CHERRY: No fear! I'd scalp the giddy glutton!
Let's give the grub to Todd and Dutton.

WHARTON (*slapping Cherry on the back*):

Not bad for Bob! There's something in it;
I'll fetch the fellows in this minute.

(*He rises to his feet, just as the door is thrown open, and Vernon-Smith, clad in a long white sheet, and with his features powdered and rendered ghost-like by a snow-white beard, enters the room. A scene of panic ensues. Wharton staggers back aghast, while his chums remain at the table, gazing with terror-stricken eyes at the strange apparition.*)

WHARTON: What is the thing, for goodness' sake?

CHERRY (*rubbing his eyes*):

Great Scott! you chaps! Ain I awake?
(*The "ghost" utters a series of low moans.*)

WHARTON: This is a most uncanny visit,
And makes me creep! What ever is it?

GHOST: Withhold your tongue, infernal fool!

I am the ghost of Greyfriars School!

While lurking in the gloomy cloisters

I thought me of sardines and oysters;

And seeing both are on this table,

Depart as fast as you are able,

That I may speedily enjoy

A meal of fish instead of boy!

WHARTON: If this is meant to be a hoax,

Depart, my friend, with expedition!

It must be one of Smithy's jokes—

You cannot be an apparition!

GHOST: Insulting infant, get thee hence,

Or face the fearful consequence!

WHARTON (*turning to his chums*):

United we stand—divided we fall!

I don't believe it's a ghost at all!

CHERRY: If not, what ever can it be?

BULL (*seizing a lump of butter*):

Stand back a bit, and you will see!

(*Bull hurls the butter with deadly precision, and it strikes the "ghost" full in the face. He starts back with a yell.*)

NUCENT (*laughing*):

It's clinging to his face like mud!

The thing, no doubt, is flesh and blood.

WHARTON: Advance, the five so good and famous!

A measly ghost shall never shame us!

ALL: Never!

(*The spectre backs away in alarm, but is seized and borne to the floor, struggling fiercely. He is soon overpowered, and Wharton wrenches off the beard and outer garments, then utters an exclamation.*)

WHARTON: I knew the thing was all

a myth;

The spook, you chaps, is

Vernon-Smith!

(*The others crowd round threateningly.*)

SMITH: Hands off, you rotters!

Lemme go!

'Twas only just a joke,

you know!

NUCENT: It was a plot to bone our

feast—

A poor attempt, to say

the least.

(*A scuffling noise is heard without,*

and Cherry dashes from the room.

After a few seconds he returns,

dragging Bunter along by the

collar.)

CHERRY (*rolling his victim on the floor*

in a heap):

I found this crafty worm

outside,

He constitutes the second

victim:

With Smithy he became

allied

Because we previously

had licked him.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid "long complete story, entitled, **HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER.**" By Frank Richards.

BUNTER (*sitting up, and adjusting his glasses*):
'Twas Smith alone the plot did hatch,
For I've been playing in a match.

WHARTON (*incredulously*):

You worm! you couldn't kick a ball,
And couldn't run, or even crawl!

NUCENT: No doubt beneath the bar he sat

And watched the skylark soaring;

And as the porpoise is so fat

He kept the rest from scoring!

SMITH: He's not been near the football field;

It's no good, Billy—all's revealed.

WHARTON: Does anyone possess a cane—

Effective, strong, and supple?

I think we will impart some pain

To this delightful couple!

BULL: I've got one in my study cupboard;

It's quite an age since Bunter blubbered!

(*He leaves the room, and returns shortly after with a cane.*)

BUNTER: Hold on! You know I'm very weak,

And if you hit me I shall shriek,

Or else will go and fetch the Head,

And you will all be flogged instead.

WHARTON: Although you may create a babel,

We mean to hoist you on the table

And flog as hard as we are able!

(*Cherry and Nugent proceed to lay Bunter across the table, while Wharton bends the cane into a convenient shape.*)

WHARTON: I think I'll give him three or four,

Although he merits quite a score.

NABOB (*stepping forward*):

The Christmastidefulness is here,

A time of peace and goodfellow cheer;

And though my worthy chums may scoff,

I would suggest we let them off.

NUCENT: I can't help thinking Inky's right;

Besides, the cads have had a fright.

WHARTON: A licking each is what they need

Without the slightest question;

Instead, we'll give them both a feed

Through Inky's kind suggestion.

SMITH: I thank you, Wharton. Here's my hand!

Your sportsmanship is simply grand!

WHARTON (*shaking hands*):

Your thanks to Inky should be given,

'Tis he who for your cause has striven.

BUNTER (*seated at table*):

I say, you chaps, these tarts are great!

The feed is going down first-rate!

BULL: The porpoise takes away my breath—

One day he'll eat himself to death!

CHERRY: I reckon Smithy must be doft,

Or else there will be nothing left!

SMITH (*joining Bunter at the table*):

This pie looks absolutely prime,

But ere I start upon a plateful

I'll wish you chaps a cheerful time,

And, honour bright, I'm

very grateful!

BUNTER: In sampling this delight-

ful dish

I also will express the

wish

That all you chaps may

be supplied

With quite a ripping

Christmastide!

(*Vernon-Smith and Bunter continue*

their meal, while the others all join

hands.)

WHARTON: Then here's to us, the

Famous Five

Of good old Greyfriars

College!

To lead the way we'll

always strive

In every branch of

knowledge!

SMITH: To Wharton's remarks I

would say "Hear,

hear!"

May your faces with fun

soon be ruddy!

WHARTON: And I, in return, give

the grandest good

cheer

To the Spectre of No. 1

Study!

CURTAIN.



Our Grand Serial Story!

MYSTERIA



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'-shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Subsequently, Ferrers Lord leads a night expedition on to the island, and succeeds in recapturing the launch. By dint of his unparalleled ingenuity and hard work, Hal Honour, the engineer, succeeds in repairing the Lord of the Deep sufficiently to allow her to leave her dangerous situation in the island harbour. As they are steaming along one day the bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. A continuous booming, caused by the cracking of shrivelled weeds, comes from the floating island, which also gives forth a disagreeable odour. Before sunrise the next morning, a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and then Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel, and injuring his head. Ching-Lung and the millionaire, after extricating Barry, explore the tunnel, but a loud roar from the interior causes them to beat a hasty retreat, and return to the submarine.

(Now go on with the story.)

How Hal Honour, Prince of Engineers, Set Out to Blow the Skull off Mysteria, but had to Retire Defeated.

For a day and a night Mysteria had played them no tricks, but the double watch was still kept. The sea was practically a dead calm, but that curious booming sound had not disappeared, small as was the surf that broke against the weedy shores of Mysteria. The same mists gathered over the island at dusk, hiding her from view. At intervals strange noises startled the men on watch. Still, there was nothing exceptional to report, and when the dawn came the island was still lying off the submarine's port quarter, invisible owing to the fog, but still there.

"I shall want you in the morning, Honour."

Ferrers Lord spoke from the bridge that spanned the engine-room. Although the engines were silent and motionless, Honour sat smoking in the huge leather chair that overlooked his steel favourites. He seemed to find as much pleasure in them as a true artist finds in a beautiful landscape, or a collector in a splendid old print or a piece of ancient china.

The man of silence smiled and nodded. He was always ready. His blue eyes looked the question:

"For what?"

"To cut a hole through the roof of Mysteria," said the millionaire. "To light up the cavern I spoke to you about."

Hal Honour nodded, and waved a "good-night" with his hand. Though he seldom spoke, he was familiar with almost every word in the English language except two. "Failure" and "impossible" he had erased from his vocabulary and his mind.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"I'd give something to know what Hal thinks about all the time, Ferrers," said Ching-Lung, as they turned towards their cabins. "He squats there like a sphinx, and looks as solemn as a brace of them."

"I think I know, Ching."

"What?"

Ferrers Lord laughed, and shook his head.

"Secrets are secrets, Ching, even from you. Harold Honour will astound you one day."

"And I suppose you won't help at all?"

"Who knows? We have many schemes on hand. Adios, amigo Ching, and sweet dreams attend your slumbers."

"Adios, senor," said Ching-Lung, in soft Spanish. "For goodness' sake, though, don't wake me up in the middle of the night!"

It was so hot, and the stench exhaled by the island was so unpleasant, that Ferrers Lord telephoned to the deck to submerge the submarine. Now that he had visited the island, the millionaire felt confident that he would not lose her except in the case of a violent storm that might break through and flood the cavern. The barometer, however, promised a long spell of fine weather, although in such latitudes it was not greatly to be trusted. The mercury was very steady, but the thermometer stood unpleasantly high. Still, under present conditions, the millionaire thought it unnecessary to stand guard over Mysteria.

And Gan-Waga, who had more than missed his watery couch, was highly delighted.

"What? Another midnight job?" growled Ching-Lung, as Joe switched on his electric light. "What the deuce is the time?"

"Past seven, sir," answered Joe. "We ain't rise to the top yet, sir; that's why it's dark, sir."

"Risen, Joe—risen," said Ching-Lung, taking his coffee-cup. "Your grammar, Joseph, is dreadful. Anyhow, the coffee looks pretty decent, so I'll forgive the grammar for once. So it's past seven, like yourself? Give me another lump of sugar."

Joe obliged, and Ching-Lung went for his dip. The ascent of the Lord of the Deep left them high and dry just as Gau-Waga was teaching the Prince of Kwai-hal how to light a cigar under water, for there was nothing that amazing Eskimo could not accomplish in the element he had made his own.

"What rudeness!" said Ching-Lung, as the tropical sunshine, flashing through the portholes, dimmed the gleam of the electric light. It's a lot easier to smoke outside, all the same; and there's frozen salmon for breakfast."

Gau chortled, for he liked salmon. "Den I gets dressed quicks, Chingy," he grinned, "and talks to dem salmon. Salmon good 'nough butterfuls. Love dems."

Mysteria looked brighter and clearer than it had ever looked, but the pale island—a rotting corpse—was uglier and more repellant in the sunshine. And the stench was more intolerable.

"I suppose you'll want to go and examine the site before commencing operations, Hal?" said Thurston.

"No."

"You mean you'll drag your tackle there without inspecting the place?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're such an odd kind of fellow that I expect you'll turn up trumps," said Rupert. "You have always done so up to the present. We expect marvels from you, so don't disappoint us and lose your reputation, old man."

Hal Honour smiled. He knew himself even better than the others did. He had never failed yet.

When breakfast was over, a gong boomed through the ship. The unfamiliar call to arms was quite unexpected, but it was answered instantaneously. In a moment the deck bristled with armed men, standing line behind line. Ferrers Lord stepped out, and the flashing bayoneted rifles saluted him. A smile crossed his lips as he answered the salute. The Lord of the Deep was no mere exploring vessel, but a fighting ship unexcelled in the history of the world.

"Dismiss!" cried Prout.

The sound of drilled feet beat against the deck as the men swung past.

"By hokey," said the delighted steersman, "we aint been lightin' for a bil, but do they forget it? Who said so?"

"Oi niver did, bedad," grinned Barry. "Good luck to them, the gallant bloys! Hurroo!"

This time Joe and Maddock joined the landing-party. In addition to their rifles, some of the men carried spades, pickaxes, and crowbars. Honour scanned the hill through his glass.

"Forward!"

They entered the forest in single file. The flies had found the decaying island at last, and they rose in buzzing swarms.

"This place will be too hot to hold us very soon," said Ching-Lung. "The flies and the smell will drive us away."

"Then we must hasten matters," answered Ferrers Lord, "for I mean to explore the cavern if it is humanly possible to do so. Mind lads! This is one of the stinging kind. Don't touch it!"

"Ware shocks!" cried Ching-Lung. "If you start making friends with that chap, you'll get electrocuted!"

"Bedad," remarked Barry O'Rooney, who had suffered, "a hissing-hot lump of iron is a gentle lamb to play wid compared to that baste. Ut can boite loike a shark, and buuru loike a little volcano, bad luck live wid ut for iver. Oi say, Ben, how'd you loike the scenery in the park? Isn't ut a sight for sore oies, alanna?"

"It's the ugliest thing Oi ever seed barring your face, souse me!" snapped the polite bo'sun, "and that's sayin' summat."

After this mild rebuff, Barry thought he would keep quiet and think for a time. He did not like the way the others giggled. The men evinced some excitement when they reached the edge of the black pool, hoping fervently that they might get a sight of the creature that inhabited it, and also a shot at it.

"Forward!"

Ferrers Lord knew that they must waste no time. The process of decay was going on so rapidly that the island would soon become a death-trap. Barry sighed as he fell reluctantly into Ching-Lung's wake.

"Why sighest thou so dolefully, friend Barry?" asked the prince.

"Faix, Oi wanted to shake hands wid the swate craytur, and stroke ut's silky whiskers," answered the boy from THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 305.

Next Monday's Number of The "Magnet" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled,

Ballybunion, "and p'raps invoice ut back to tay. Ut sames so cold and lonely for the poor dear down yonder."

"Maybe you'd like to take it to bed wi' you, by hokey," suggested the steersman.

"Oi wud wid joy av ut had swallowed Tom Prout and the blayguarrd was inside ut," retorted Barry. "Oif kapa the intilligint darlint in luxury for loife, and fade ut on champagne and oysters."

Naturally, they made much faster progress than on the previous day, for they followed a well-marked route. In two hours they were at the scene of Barry's accident, the tunnel that gave access to the cave of terror and mystery.

"Now, Hal," said Ferrers Lord, "we have come to our limit. The rest is a terra incognita to me—an unknown land."

He tapped the side of the cliff that stood in their way like a wall. The oar-shaped leaves of the submarine trees pressed against it so closely that they were unable to guess at its height or to catch even a glimpse of the sky.

"An anger," said the engineer.

The tool was placed in his hand. He drove it into one of the tree-stems, and bored a hole. From that he passed to another and another. Ferrers Lord pressed blasting cartridges into the holes, and Joe rammed them with clay, and brought the fuses to a centre.

"Run!" said the millionaire.

He stooped and applied the flame of a match to the fuse, and the men dashed away. Four minutes passed, and then a crashing roar rumbled through the forest, shaking down rotten leaves and snaky weeds. They ran forward. The trees had been shattered to fragments, and a hole, forty yards across, had been torn in the matted roof. Through it the glorious sunshine poured. They stared upwards with eager eyes.

"Higher than I fancied," said Ferrers Lord. "Six hundred feet at least."

It was six hundred feet to the first ledge, and probably the hill sloped still higher above that.

"Why not blast through the cliff at the side here?" asked Rupert. "Wouldn't that do equally well?"

Both the millionaire and the engineer shook their heads.

"Why not, then? Is the rock too thick?"

"On the contrary, Rupert, I have a notion that it is too thin," answered Ferrers Lord. "To blast it might be to bring down the whole cave like a pack of cards, and knock the bottom out of Mysteria and all our plans. That is also Harold's idea, I am pretty sure."

The man of silence nodded again.

"If you're thinking of busting the show, please give this child due notice," said Ching-Lung. "I don't want to be a flying-machine at present. It strikes me you mean to be rude enough to Mysteria as it is without busting her altogether."

The cliff looked utterly inaccessible, and they could not tell how far it extended on either hand. Barry stared up and down.

"Ut sames to me," he remarked, "to use that lovely word invented by Bill Shakespeare, whose aunt used to do our mangling when Oi was a blue-oied, golden-haired choild at Ballybunion, that we're flummoxed!"

"Anybody got a balloon or a hairship in his pocket, souse me?" grinned Benjamin Maddock.

Hal Honour smoothed his beard with a thoughtful air.

"Can you overcome the difficulty, Harold?"

"With time. Time is too valuable. Find another way."

He swung his axe over his shoulder, and turned back into the forest, slashing a path for himself and the others as he went.

"Hal is right," said Ferrers Lord. "We have no time for building ladders. Mysteria will soon be a festering heap of poison, and then goodbye to all chance of unveiling her secrets. We must find another way."

"But you could invent some kind of a breathing apparatus," said Thurston—"something to overcome the fever germs?"

"I could, but not in a moment. I noticed to-day that the island is rapidly losing her buoyancy. She is nearly a foot lower in the water than she was yesterday, according to my marks, and I expect her to subside more every day than that. Sunshine is doom and death to her, but rain would prolong her stay under the sky. Once the water makes its way into the cavern, she will go down like a bullet."

"Or blow to bits, Lord!" observed the engineer.

(This grand serial will be continued next Monday. Order early.)

47
"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER." By Frank Richards.

BY SHEER GRIT!*(Continued from page 42.)*

scrambled on shore. Jim was pretty well winded by this time, and Grimple was too shaky to do anything but swear in a feeble sort of way, so that neither spoke for a few minutes.

"Don't see the sense of coming on to this hanged island, anyway!" said Grimple at last.

"Well, you will in a minute," said Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Mind your own business!" said Jim shortly.

Then, when he felt quite fit again, he walked down to the water's edge and surveyed the opposite bank for a suitable landing-place.

"Hang you!" shouted Grimple, rushing down to him.

"You're not going to leave me here, are you?"

"That's right," said Jim; "at least, till the police arrive."

"You sha'n't get away!" yelled Grimple, coming up to him in a threatening attitude.

Jim did not trouble to say anything—he landed the man one on the chin that sent him on his back in the mud, and dived once more into the river. Thoughts of alligators filled his mind, and he swam as he had never done before; never stopping till he had crawled safely up on to the opposite bank.

How long he lay there he never knew. He was roused by a shout from the river, and, looking down, saw two canoes coming to shore at the same spot at which he had landed. One contained Gibson, Pedro, and a lieutenant of police; the other, two more Indians and three policemen.

Gibson and Pedro came up to Jim, and rapidly rubbed him all over as he was still almost unconscious, and the lieutenant gave him a few drops of brandy from his flask. Then Gibson, answering Jim's unspoken question, told him how they came to be there.

"Upjohn must have been at the club, for his answer arrived about two hours after you had gone. He told you to apply to his friend Lieutenant Gonzalez, whom you see here."

—the lieutenant bowed—"at Santa Rosa. I then sent Pedro to the lieutenant with the telegram, and a note from myself, telling him that you had gone off alone with Grimple. He came out at once with three of his men, and we started immediately in canoes to find you. And a jolly good job we did, too, or you would have had fever for a certainty. Now, I suppose we must take that rotter back to camp and look after him. However, lieutenant," he said, laughing, "that's your job, thank goodness!"

The officer, without saying a word, signalled to Pedro and his men. In another five minutes Grimple was sitting, handcuffed, in the bottom of the canoe, and in another hour the little procession arrived in the camp.

There they found another, and this time a very long, cable from Upjohn, telling Jim that he was starting that night for Santa Rosa, and that he had cabled Colonel Gratton to come out immediately and put things straight.

Grimple was taken off to the police-station to await the arrival of Colonel Gratton.

When Upjohn arrived they turned out the contents of the safe, and found sufficient evidence to convict Grimple even should Colonel Gratton decide to remain in England.

In course of time, however, the old colonel arrived at Santa Rosa, and Mr. Grimple found himself journeying to the prison near Buenos Ayres.

Colonel Gratton offered the post of manager to Upjohn, who gladly accepted it.

"And you, my boy," said he to Jim, "what about you? I suppose you will go into the Army now, old chap?"

"I'm not sure, dad," answered Jim dreamily. "I think I'd like to stay here for a bit, and then do some more travelling in other parts of the world."

"Well," said Upjohn, laughing, "you're a glutton for adventure, and no mistake! But one thing is certain, you seem to be born with a knack for getting out of trouble, and that's worth a good deal!"

"Indeed, it is!" said the colonel, as he grasped his son by both hands. "A great deal!"

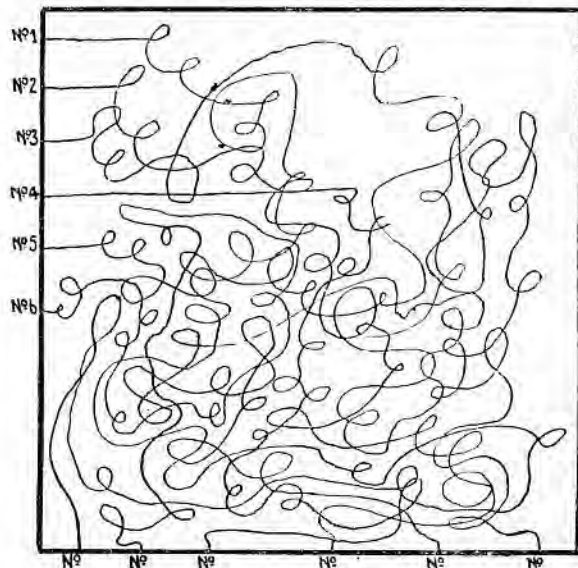
THE END.

GRAND NEW FEATURE. No. 8.

OUR WINTER EVENING PROBLEM CORNER.**TANGLED LINES.**

This week there is quite a difficult problem set, and it will prove a severe test of skill to my chums. Below, in the second column, you will find a series of tangled lines. The lines start from the numbered points on the left-hand side—they finish at the six points at the foot of the puzzle. Which line finishes at which point? You should begin at the numbered starting point of each tangled line, and carefully trace your way along its whole length until you arrive at its correct finishing point at the bottom. Here you should fill in the number which marks the starting point of that particular line. Next Monday's issue of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY will contain the correct solution of this puzzling problem.

1. GORCEE TINWAGE	GEORGE WINGATE.
2. OBB HERGRY	BOB CHERRY.
3. ROBLOVES	BOLSOVER.
4. ILLBY RUNBET	BILLY BUNTER.
5. ROTCOD COKLE	DOCTOR LOCKE.
6. NUW UNGL	WUN LUNG.
7. YARRH WONHART	HARRY WHARTON.
8. RM CHQUEL	MR. QUELCH.
9. NFKRA TENCUN	FRANK NUGENT.
10. ROLD LEVERRAMUE	LORD MAULEVERER.
11. NOYNJH LULB	JOHNNY BULL.
12. LENDZEHAE	AZELDENE.



This is how last week's form should look when correctly filled in.

No. 9 PROBLEM NEXT MONDAY.



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE
 FARRINGTON STREET LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
 EVERY WEDNESDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor
 is always
 pleased to
 hear from
 his Chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

HEARTY CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO ALL MY READERS.

It is only a matter of days now before we shall all be plunged into the bustle and gaiety which has been associated from time immemorial with the Christmas season. Our thoughts are busily occupied with the choosing of presents and Christmas cards, or the planning of festivities. At the same time, even in this busy season, there are few of us who do not look forward to an occasional quiet hour by the fire with our favourite story-paper—and this is where the

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY

comes in. Seasonable reading-matter of the best kind is what I have aimed at providing in this special issue; and I shall be well repaid by the thought that I have succeeded, perhaps, in adding my quota to the Christmas happiness of my reader-chums; this festive season. However this may be, from my heart I wish all my chums the old, old wish—plenty of good cheer and

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In this grand long, complete school tale, the chums of the Remove Form at Greyfriars decide to bring out a Christmas Number of the Form newspaper—"The Greyfriars Herald." This decision is more easily arrived at than carried out, however. In addition to the usual trouble with importunate contributors, a rival Editor appears on the scene, causing all sorts of trouble. In the end it is only by much burning of midnight oil that

"HARRY WHARTON'S CHRISTMAS NUMBER!"

actually makes its appearance. Don't miss this story—it is a grand one!

A READER COMMENTS ON OUR LATEST SCHEME.

In commenting on my scheme for a new Halfpenny Companion Paper to the "Magnet" Library, which, as the result of a reader's suggestion, and the "postcard vote" taken thereon, I propose to put before you early in the New Year, a keen "Magnetite" signing himself J. L.D. of Poplar, makes the following remarks:

"Whatever you do, Mr. Editor, you must get Frank Richards to write a school story for our new Companion Paper. With a rattling Frank Richards story, and a

lot of humorous pictures in it, a halfpenny companion to the good old MAGNET would go simply like hot cakes—believe me, there is not the slightest doubt about that! I expect Mr. Richards is busy enough as it is, but you simply must get him in the new paper somehow."

I am inclined to think that the majority of "Magnetites" will agree with J. L.D. on this point, which he emphasises so greatly; and to reassure my Poplar chum, and all who think as he does, I may say that I have already determined to do as he suggests. At the present time, Mr. Frank Richards and I are busy "plotting a plot" which will, I hope, result in a series of school stories which will create the right sort of sensation.

For the present, however, I must ask my readers to await developments as patiently as they can.

HOW TO SAVE MONEY.—No. 2. (Special Article.)

Have a Goal.

Now I should like to suggest another plan to people who want to save money but who find a difficulty in doing so. The plan will be sneered at by the very superior people who are above being very fond of the good things of this world. You can describe the plan in three words: Have a goal. Do you not remember how easy it was to save money when you were a very small child and you had set your mind on getting something you considered necessary to your own happiness? You saved your pennies until you got it, and then when you had saved enough for it, very likely you found that it was something else you really wanted.

Adopt the same plan now when you want to save money. Fix a goal. Calculate how long it ought to take to save, say, £5. Don't be miserly, but make up your mind to forego little luxuries until you have £5 you can call your own. You will probably find that the best plan is to put something by regularly every week, and never to carry any large sum with you. If you find that you can allow yourself fifteen shillings a week, begin each day with only half a crown in your pocket. If you do not spend it all, put the balance away, and take another half-crown on the next day. You have then saved money. You will soon find that you will get into the habit of thinking that you must not look at anything which costs more than half a crown.

A few words of advice. Save for a holiday. Don't take it as a matter of course. It is true that a holiday is a necessity, but the average person is not usually content with a mere change of air. He wants amusements of some kind, and not all the amusements of a holiday resort are actually necessary. Don't be miserly. Don't talk to anybody about your poverty when you are

secretly saving money and are therefore not so poor after all. Don't allow the saving of money to be the sole object of your life. Be cheerful with your friends and family even if you do have to give up little luxuries. Lastly, beware of false economy when you are spending money. As a rule, it pays to get a good article by giving a good price for it, and many a man who has refused to spend money on a much needed holiday or on a doctor's fee when he has been out of health has lived to discover that the sum he attempted to save has lost a hundredfold.



The Editor

PAIN BROTHERS' XMAS PARCEL 13

POST FREE

PAIN BROS'.
XMAS PARCEL,
THE 1913

"BIG-
VALUE"
PARCEL.



BARGAIN NP294.

The 1913 "BIG-VALUE" PARCEL contains 12 of the choicest of Xmas Cards, also



13
FREE GIFTS
IN EVERY
PARCEL.

13 FREE GIFTS

of lovely Xmas Cards (all 25 are Booklets), & will be sent by return, post free, on approval, for 1/3 Postcard Order, or 1/4 Stamp. Re-jection or Money Back. Don't miss this Bargain! The "Biggest Value" on "Earth." Just fancy! All the following Art Treasures: Nos. 1 & 2 - TWO REAL CELLULOID CARDS, ALONE WORTH NEARLY HALF THE 13, both Beautiful Floral Designs. No. 3. Sparkling Jewelled & Gold-mounted Masterpieces. No. 4. Charming View of Country Cottage, etc. No. 5. Quaint Old English Design. No. 6. Embossed Pansy Design. No. 7. Lovely Pictures Mounted Design. Nos. 8 to 11. - Four Beautiful Floral Designs. No. 12. Pretty Country View. (Nos. 1, 2 & 3 are illustrated in miniature.) In addition, we give entirely free of charge 13 FREE GIFTS of Xmas Cards (making 25 Cards in all - the 13 alone being worth more than the small amount charged for the entire parcel) & include Delightful Floral, Choice View, Superb Gold-mounted, Artistic Gold-embossed, etc., Designs.

ALL 25 ARE GUARANTEED GOOD 1d., 2d., 3d., & 4d. BOOKLET XMAS CARDS, all are finished with Silk Cord or Ribbon Bows, & have Seasonable Greetings, mostly in Gold, & well-chosen Verses or Quotations, also spaces for writing names. Several are the favourite Art & Parchment Cards, & all are different. There are cards for all tastes.

FREE ENVELOPES. - To save you trouble & expense, envelopes are included free, for all cards that will not go to envelopes of ordinary size. (FOR A FURTHER ASSORTMENT OF XMAS CARDS, write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)

IT'S YOURS FREE.

Yes, it's yours free for the asking - our NEW BARGAIN CATALOGUE (with PRETTY ART COLOURED CALENDAR for 1914 - Dog & Banner Design), illustrating Thousands of the Biggest of 'Big Bargains by Post, for Now, Xmas & After, from 6d. to £5 each. Reliable Watches from 2/6; Reliable Clocks from 2/6; Jewellery, Musical Instruments (including latest improved Gramophones at Half-Price, from 2/6), & Double-sided Records from 1/3; Plate, Cutlery, Domestic Articles, Novelties, Fancy Goods, Toys, Xmas Cards, Pictures, Post-cards, Albums, etc., etc. It also contains TESTIMONIALS & PRESS OPINIONS. Drop us a letter or post-card - to-day for this. USE IT TO BARGAIN BUYING & we will send it by return, post free, to any address "On Earth." It will repay you a thousandfold! A few typical examples of our GREAT VALUE are here shown. We guarantee safe delivery (by return post) of all goods to your door, & take all risk - YOU RUN NO RISK.

A SIGNED GUARANTEE.

With all goods we supply we send a Signed Guarantee to Return Your Money in Full, if goods are not in every way satisfactory to you.

BARGAIN NP165. The "Lite-Lite" Powerful Electric Pocket Lamp, new, Large & Improved shape, imitation crocodile leather body, with nickel-plated ends & large Powerful Bulb's eye. Gives 5,000 brilliant flashes. Guaranteed. Size 2 1/2 by 4 1/2 ins. 10d., postage 2d. extra. Worth 2/6. Re-fill batteries, 6d. each. post free.



BARGAIN NP87. Pretty "Bird & Ivy" Brooch. Length 1 1/2 ins. Real silver, 1/3; silver with real gold mounts, 1/3; all gold, 4/6. Either post free. (For a Further Assortment, write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)

BARGAIN NP69. "Miss Daisy Dain." Very pretty undressed Doll. Has curly hair, real hair eyelashes, unbreakable head & washable leather body. Goes to sleep. Height 14 ins. 1/3 post free. (For a Further Assortment, write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)



BARGAIN NP112. Gent's strong Plush leather Purse (tank), with 6 safety pockets & 3 patent fasteners. Size 4 1/2 by 2 1/2 ins. when closed. 1/3 post free. Worth 2/6. Will wear for years.



BARGAIN NP177. The "Right-Time" Half-Price Lever Watch (GENT'S Keyless). Extra strong works, dust-proof cap & Bright Nickel-Silver Case. The cheapest reliable watch made. Praised by thousands. Cash price, 2/6 - only, - post free. LADY'S Nickel-Silver "Right-Time" Keyless Watch, each price, 3/3, post free. Warranted Perfect Timekeepers. (For a Further Assortment, write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)

HAND-PAINTED



BARGAIN NP171. A wonderful offer! Hand-painted Post-card Album, Fountain Pen & 50 superior Penny Coloured View Post-cards, all different. Album is 14 1/2 by 8 1/2 ins., & is made to hold 250 cards. 1/6 the entire lot, post free. (For a Further Assortment, write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)

THE
'QUEEN
OF
DOLLIES

(See description to left of top of illustration.)



BARGAIN NP148. Writing Case, made to stand up (as shown), dark green imitation crocodile leather, fitted with Notepaper, Envelopes, Post-cards, Pen & Blotting Pad. Size 10 1/2 by 4 1/2 ins. when closed. 1/3 post free. Worth 2/6.



BARGAIN NP183. The "Toot-Toot" Motor & Chauffeur, coloured metal clockwork toy. Runs along & toot-toots automatically as it goes. Large size 8 by 4 ins. - 1/3 post free. (For a Further Assortment of Toys, etc., write for Illustrated Catalogue, post free.)

FULL SATISFACTION OR FULL MONEY BACK.



BARGAIN NP123. Large Hall-marked Metal, with shield for engraving. Size 1 1/2 ins. to top of ring. Solid Silver, 1/3, or Silver with real gold shield, 2/6. Either post free.



BARGAIN NP168. The "Astomding" Box of Gent's Jewellery. 13 full-size articles, all Gold-cased (like Gold) & well-finished. Watch Chain, Medal, Pencil Case, Links, & Studs, Tie Pin, Tie Clip, Safety Tie Pin & Expanding Ring. 1/3 post free. Wonderful value!

PAIN BROTHERS' DEPT. 4, THE "PRESENTS HOUSE," HASTINGS, Eng. (Estab. 1889.)

