

STIRRING SCHOOL STORY!



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HER BROTHER'S HONOUR!



CUT OFF BY THE TIDE! ARCHIE HOWELL AND HARRY WHARTON IN A TERRIBLE PREDICAMENT!

(A Great Scene in our Grand Tale of Grayfriars School.)



For Next Monday:

"CHUMMING WITH LODER!"

By Frank Richards.

By a curious chance, Billy Bunter gets Gerald Loder, prefect and cad, into his clutches, and the manner in which the Owl of the Remove wields his power makes one of the most amusing yarns we have ever had from the pen of our favourite author.

Bunter has a great time; but, needless to say, it does not last, and the chums of the Remove are instrumental in getting Loder out of a very bad position.

"CHUMMING WITH LODER!"

If you want to make certain of next week's issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY, you are urged to order your copy in advance. This especially applies to readers who happen to be visitors at seaside resorts.

A HINT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

We are always being told that this country owes no end of money. Now, the best thing in such circumstances is to pay up and look pleasant, and no less a personage than the office-boy has found a way of doing it. It is as easy, evidently, as having your dinner when you happen to be peckish. Just listen to this:

The office-boy owed a clerk threepence, the clerk owed the cashier twopence, and the cashier owed the office-boy twopence. The office-boy had one penny, which he handed over to the clerk, who in his turn paid the cashier, thus diminishing his debt by one penny; and the cashier gave the penny back to the boy, saying: "Now I only owe you one penny."

The boy again gave it to the clerk, who liquidated his debt by paying it to

the cashier, and the cashier gave it to the boy, and the boy cleared off the remaining part of the threepence he owed the clerk by giving it to him. Thus sevenpence was paid by one penny.

It looks as though the whole business could be got through by passing a few five-pound notes from hand to hand. I am thinking of asking Peter Todd, with his mighty brain power, to investigate the whole affair.

EVER-CHANGING LONDON TOWN.

The man who went away to make his fortune some years since and came back to London—I hope with his fortune all made, but that is his private affair—would hardly recognise the City. I have any number of jokes sent in about what a smart American said concerning the speed with which houses, etc., are run up in the States. But this old country is not far behind, after all is said and done. It is startling to see the alterations in the Metropolis. The old Strand, such as ancient fogies remember it, had little in common with the Strand of to-day. Whole streets have been packed up and taken away in carts to the scrapheap. Most likely they deserved their fate, but, though modern London is getting grander, and has taken to wearing frills, the old-time city had its merits, though the thoroughfares were narrow and the corners wanted careful negotiating.

GAY PAREE!

The same thing happened in Paris. It is going on again now, since the war came to an end. Paris went in for wide streets during Napoleon III.'s time. The Emperor set Baron von Haussmann on the job, and the result was good to look at. But here, again, it is the same. Old Paris was a narrow, tortuous city, with tiny streets, and houses which leaned forward and stared in each other's faces. We are all for width these days. So long as broad minds go with the change there need be no growling. The motor-omnibus rendered narrow streets hopeless.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED.

I want to mention a request just received from Pte. L. R. G. Russell, 20036, 1st Troop, B Squadron, 12th Royal Lancers, Ponsonby Barracks, Curragh, Ireland. This correspondent tells me that a few copies of the Companion Papers would be gratefully received by him and his chums.

Your Editor

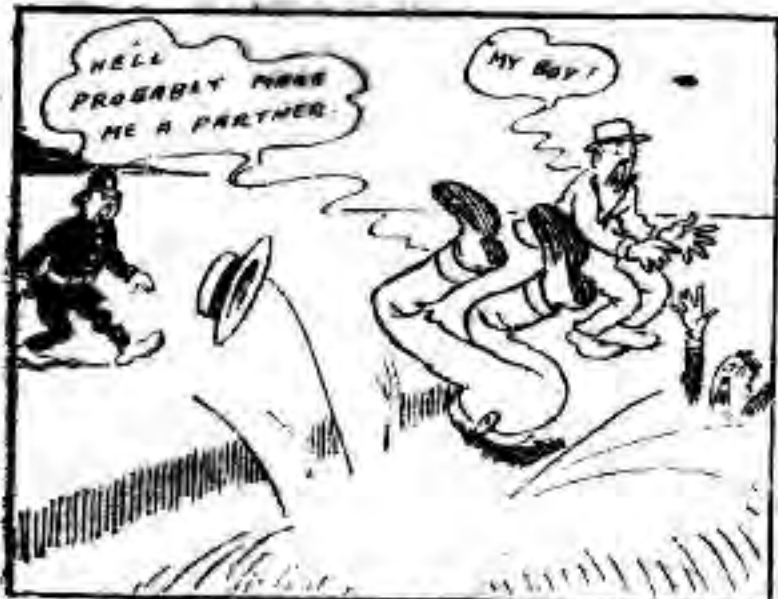
PERCY THE PUSHFUL GETS THE PUSH.



1. Percy Bearlam was standing on the quay beside the wavy water, when he spotted his boss admiring the beautiful view of a tiddler chasing a tadpole. "Ho, ho!" said Percy. "If I rescue this innocent little che-ild from drowning I'm bound to get in the old man's good graces!"



2. But as the ladlet was in no danger of drowning for the moment, Percy gave him a playful push in among the haddocks and kippers. "Won't the old man be bucked when he sees me dive to the rescue!" he chortled. "I shouldn't wonder if he presents me with a gold-plate alarm-clock!"

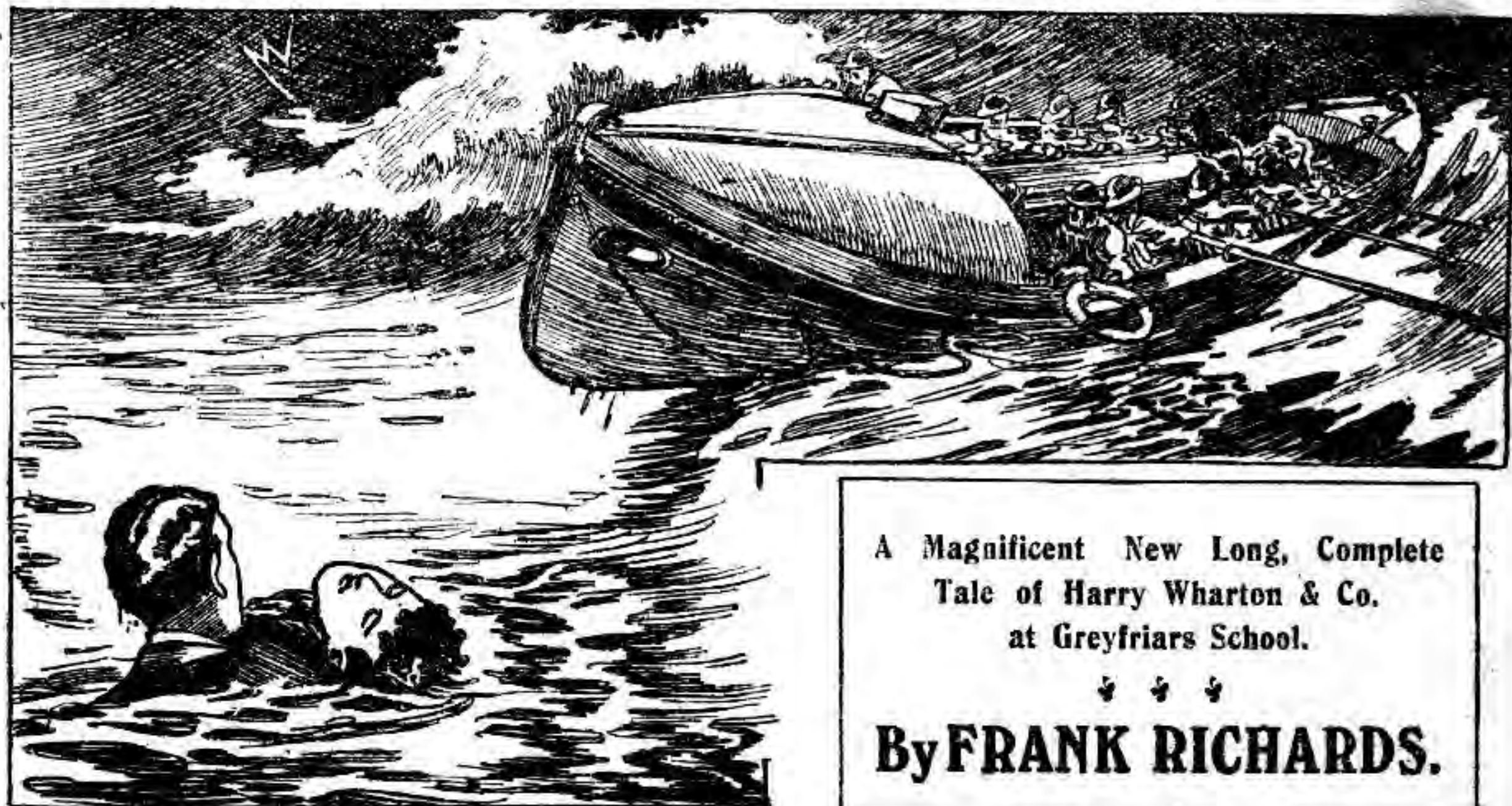


3. And in he went, heels-over-head, into the briny to the rescue of the unfortunate youthlet, who was struggling in the clutches of a whale a short distance from the quay. But meanwhile old Sackham, Percy's boss, had discovered that it was his own son in the water.



4. So, of course, when, after the rescue, the unfortunate infant quoth that it was Percy who had accidentally pushed him in for the purpose, the old man was so wrath he landed out the push to our pushing young hero on the spot. So Percy's spirits also received a severe damper.

HER BROTHER'S HONOUR!



A Magnificent New Long, Complete
Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
at Greyfriars School.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Awkward Situation!

"MISS PHYLLIS is coming over to tea this afternoon," said Bob Cherry.

Bob's tone was far from being cheerful.

As a rule, the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were very keen indeed to have the pleasure of Phyllis Howell's company. But on this particular afternoon they were quite dismayed at the prospect.

At the time they had sent the invitation to the Cliff House girl everything in the garden had been lovely.

But trouble had sprung up since, and the cause of all the trouble was Archie Howell, the new boy, and Phyllis' brother.

Archie shared Study No. 1 with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, but they were not on speaking terms with him. Nobody was. He had been sent to Coventry by the Form. And it was an awkward predicament, to say the least of it, to have to entertain the sister of a fellow who was in Coventry.

"Why not put Miss Phyllis off?" suggested Frank Nugent, at length.

"Too late," said Johnny Bull, who was standing at the open window in Study No. 1. "She'll be here at any moment. Matter of fact, she's coming now."

"Oh crumbs!"

The Famous Five blinked at each other in great consternation.

Phyllis Howell would be sure to see that there was something wrong. She would make inquiries, and then the juniors would be under the painful necessity of explaining to her that her brother was a cad and a rank outsider—that he had put himself right outside the pale.

"It's a jolly awkward fix to be in, and no mistake!" grunted Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Let's hope that Howell doesn't turn

up," he said. "Then we might be able to get through all right."

The next moment there was the sound of a light footstep in the passage, followed by a tap at the door of the study. "Trot right in, Miss Phyllis!" said Johnny Bull, with forced jocularly.

Phyllis Howell entered the study, with her usual bright smile. But as her glance roved round the apartment the smile faded.

"Where is Archie?" she asked.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Haven't the foggiest notion, Miss Phyllis," he said.

The girl looked surprised.

"Surely you know where your own study-mate is?" she exclaimed.

"Sorry, but I've not seen him since afternoon school."

"I expect he's gone out," said Bob Cherry hurriedly. "Let's have tea."

"I will cookfully roast the fatheaded calf!" said Hurree Singh.

But, for once in a way, Phyllis did not smile at Inky's quaint English.

"I'm not having tea without Archie," she said firmly. "He belongs to this study, and he ought to be here. Will you fetch him, Harry?"

Wharton hesitated.

"I will," said Bob Cherry, relieving his chum of the distasteful task.

And he quitted the study and went in search of Howell of the Remove.

Bob fervently hoped that the new boy would be out of gates. But his hopes were soon dashed. He found Archie lounging on a form in the junior Common-room, engrossed in the "Boys' Friend."

Archie looked up as Bob came in.

"Hallo!" he said. "Lookin' for me—what?"

Bob Cherry did not reply. Howell was in Coventry for a week, and Bob had no intention of entering into conversation with him.

Archie frowned.

"Still keepin' up this fool's game?" he asked.

Bob Cherry was about to make an angry retort, when he checked himself and crossed over to the mantelpiece. He reached down a slate and a piece of chalk, and started to write. Archie Howell watched him in wonder.

"What the thump——" he ejaculated.

Having chalked his message on the slate, Bob Cherry held it up for Archie's inspection. This was the message:

"YOUR SISTER WISHES YOU TO COME TO TEA IN STUDY No 1."

"You burbling clump!" exclaimed Archie. "Why couldn't you have told me that by word of mouth?"

No reply.

"Is Phyllis here?"

Bob Cherry nodded, without speaking.

"An' she sent you along to fetch me?"

Bob nodded again, but no word escaped his lips.

"I suppose," said Archie, rising to his feet, "that you're afraid of speakin' in case you break a blood-vessel. Is that it?"

Silence.

"If you think you're hurtin' me by cuttin' me dead, you're jolly well mistaken!" continued Archie. "Lead the way, my tongue-tied friend!"

In silence the two juniors made their way to Study No. 1.

"Oh, here you are, Archie!" said Phyllis. "Where have you been?"

"Common-room, Phyl," said Archie briefly.

"What have you been doing?"

"Readin'."

"You knew I was coming over?"

"I knew Wharton invited you the other day, but I thought he might have cancelled the invitation since."

Phyllis looked astonished.

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"What ever made you think that, Archie?"

"Pass the scones," said Archie evasively as he dropped into a chair.

Phyllis glanced curiously at her brother, but she asked no more questions just then, and the meal started.

It was not a merry meal. The Famous Five looked worried and ill at ease. They had quite made up their minds to send Archie Howell to Coventry, and they were not going to retract from their decision, even though Phyllis Howell was present. Their conduct might seem very churlish in the girl's eyes, but they could not help that. Archie had disgraced himself, and the juniors had no intention of conversing with him for the space of a week.

Phyllis saw at once that there was something wrong, but she went on eating.

As for Archie, he did not seem in the least abashed.

"Toppin' weather for the time of year!" he remarked.

Silence.

"I hear they're openin' some new swimmin' baths in Courtfield," said Archie, after a pause.

Silence.

"This heat-wave that we're havin'," continued Archie, "is positively over-powerin'! It makes some fellows too tired to talk!"

The Famous Five did not look up from their plates. Occasionally they exchanged a word or two with Phyllis, but they ignored her brother altogether.

"Who are the Remove playin' on Saturday, Wharton?" asked Archie, at length.

It was a direct question, but the captain of the Remove did not heed it.

"Jam this way!" he said, turning to Johnny Bull.

"How does this weather affect your appetite, Nugent?" inquired Archie pleasantly.

"Another cup of tea, Miss Phyllis?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, please," said Phyllis. "But didn't you hear Archie speaking to you?"

Nugent nodded rather sullenly.

"Then why didn't you answer him?"

"Ahem!"

"You all seem to be leaving Archie severely alone," said Phyllis, looking puzzled. "Not one of you have spoken a word to him since the meal started!"

There was an awkward pause.

"Why is it?" demanded Phyllis.

"Tell me, Harry!"

Wharton flushed.

"Do you insist upon knowing, Miss Phyllis?"

"Of course!"

"Then I'll tell you. We—we're not on speaking terms with your brother."

Phyllis looked grave.

"Why is that?" she asked quietly.

"He has been sent to Coventry for a week."

"Good gracious!" gasped Phyllis. "Is that so, Archie?"

"If you hear it from the lips of the Great White Chief himself, it is so!" murmured Archie.

Phyllis turned sharply to Harry Wharton.

"What has my brother done that you should send him to Coventry?" she demanded.

"I—I—must I tell you, Miss Phyllis?"

"Certainly! I insist upon knowing!"

"Well," said Wharton, tackling his unpleasant task with resolution, "your brother has behaved like a cad and a rank outsider!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

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Phyllis Howell rose angrily to her feet.

"How dare you say such a thing?" she exclaimed.

"It's true, unfortunately," said Frank Nugent.

"Nonsense! It can't be true! Archie would never act like a cad. I've known him much longer than you have, and, although he has his faults, like the rest of us, he would never do anything dishonourable."

"I will tell you the facts, Miss Phyllis," said Harry Wharton, "and then, perhaps, you will change your opinion of him—"

"Never!"

"Yesterday afternoon," said the captain of the Remove, "your brother's name was down to play against Rookwood. We were counting on him to make a useful score, and to take quite a lot of wickets. But he cut the match and—"

"Left us in the lurch!" said Johnny Bull, in his blunt way.

"And we were badly licked," continued Wharton. "When your brother turned up, after the match, we demanded an explanation. He admitted that he had been over to Courtfield, that he had kept an appointment there with somebody; but he refused to say who that 'somebody' was. I think you'll admit, Miss Phyllis, that it looked jolly suspicious."

"Not at all!" said Phyllis. "It is quite possible that Archie had an appointment which was far more important than a cricket-match."

"Then why couldn't he have explained who the appointment was with?"

"Perhaps he didn't choose to. After all, it was no business of yours!"

Wharton winced at this scathing remark. But he stuck to his guns.

"Last night," he went on, "your brother broke bounds after lights out. I happened to wake up and discover that his bed was empty, and I waited up for him."

"That was rather mean, don't you think?" said Phyllis.

"No, I don't," said Wharton. "I've got my duty to do as captain of the Form. I can't allow fellows to play fast and loose. If it was my best pal who had broken bounds, I should have waited up for him just the same, and asked him for an explanation."

"Did you ask Archie for one?"

"I did, and he told me that he had been over to Courtfield again. He refused to say what he had been doing, so I could form only one conclusion."

"Namely?"

"That he had been on the razzle."

"On the razzle!" echoed Phyllis.

"What do you mean by that?"

"He means," interposed Archie Howell, "that I'd been smokin' an' gamblin', an' sowin' my wild oats."

"Is that so?" demanded Phyllis, turning sharply to the captain of the Remove.

"Yes," said Wharton. "What else is a fellow to think in the circumstances? If your brother had offered a reasonable explanation, I should have understood. But he refused to explain, and we were left to draw our own conclusions. The opinion of the Form was that your brother had been mixing with shady company, so we sent him to Coventry, as we would send any other cad who acted in the same way!"

"Hear, hear!" said the other members of the Famous Five, in chorus.

Phyllis Howell moved to the door. In the doorway she paused and surveyed the juniors with flashing eyes.

"You are the cads!" she cried passionately. "You are condemning Archie on

a mere supposition! You haven't a shred of real evidence against him. You are treating him abominably—unjustly, and I shall never speak to any of you again—never!"

The Famous Five made no reply to this vehement outburst. And Phyllis Howell, beckoning to Archie to follow, whisked out of the study, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. quite limp in their chairs.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Loyal to Her Brother!

ARCHIE HOWELL followed his sister out into the passage.

"Say, Phyl, I've never known you to let off steam like that before!" he said. "You were like a blessed she-dragon!"

"I am very angry!" said Phyllis.

"You look it, dear gal!"

"They had no right to say such horrible things about you!" declared Phyllis wrathfully. "They are treating you shamefully! And I have quite made up my mind to have nothing more to do with them!"

"Be calm, Phyl—"

"Calm, when your honour is at stake? Calm, when they tell me to my face that my brother is a cad and a rank outsider?"

"Oh, they'll get over it in time, bless their hearts!" said Archie.

"But I sha'n't! I feel simply furious!"

"Are you goin' straight back to Cliff House?"

"Yes!"

"Then I'll come along."

Brother and sister proceeded in silence for some moments. Phyllis was looking very upset, but Archie seemed quite unruffled.

"Tell me, Archie," said Phyllis, at length, "is it true that you cut the cricket-match yesterday, and went to Courtfield?"

"Quite true, dear gal."

"Was the appointment of more importance than the match?"

"Naturally, or I shouldn't have kept it."

"Who was the appointment with?"

"I can't tell you, Phyl."

Phyllis stopped short in the roadway.

"But surely you can trust me—your own sister?"

"It's like this," said Archie, laying his hand gently on the girl's shoulder, "I've given my word of honour that I won't breathe a word to a soul—not even to my own flesh an' blood."

"Oh!"

"So please don't press me for details. I can trust you, Phyl, implicitly—I'd never be afraid to take you into my confidence, but on this occasion it can't be done!"

"I understand perfectly," said Phyllis, greatly to her brother's relief. "Come! We will walk on."

They did not pause again until they reached the gates of Cliff House. Then Phyllis said:

"Is it also true that you broke bounds last night, Archie?"

"Yes."

"You had another appointment?"

Archie nodded.

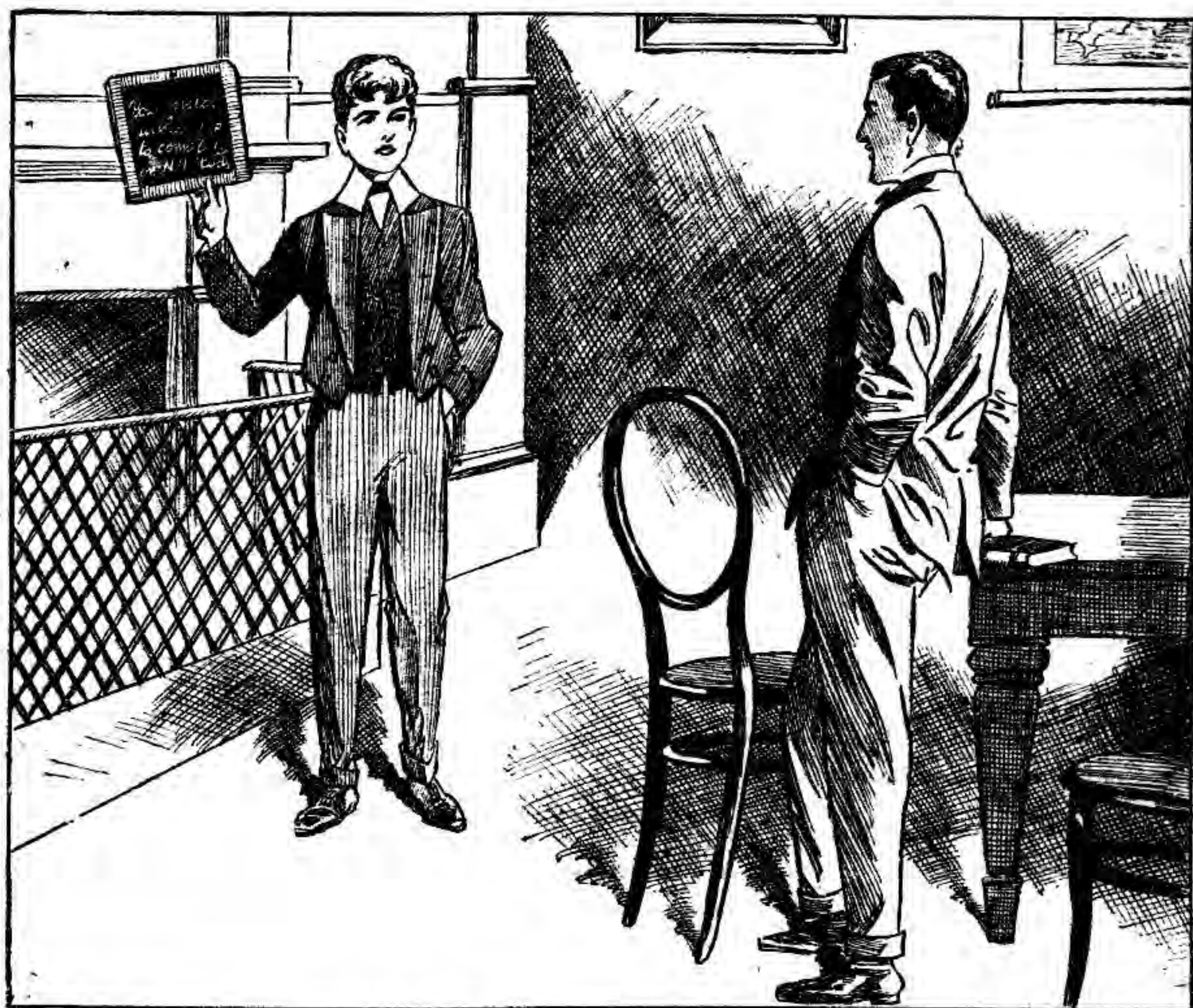
"With the same person you met in the afternoon?"

"Yes."

Phyllis looked serious.

"I'm not trying to pump you, Archie," she said. "You're bound to secrecy, and you can't break your word. But I do hope that you're not mixed up in anything that is likely to lead to trouble."

"I give you my word of honour, Phyl,



Having chalked his message on the slate, Bob Cherry held it up for Archie's inspection. This was the message: "Your sister wishes you to come to tea in No. 1 Study." The junior who had been sent to Coventry read it in amazement. (See Chapter I.)

that I'm playin' with a straight bat. I'm not paintin' the town red, or anythin' of that sort."

"Thank you!" said Phyllis. "Your word is quite good enough for me, though it doesn't seem good enough for those cads up at the school!"

"Don't be too hard on them, Phyl. After all, they can hardly be blamed for thinkin' as they do. When a fellow breaks bounds, an' refuses to explain what he's been doin', the natural assumption is that he's playin' a crooked game."

"They are beasts to doubt you——"

"You must make allowances, Phyl. They don't know me so well as you do. I've only been a few days at Greyfriars."

"It is monstrous that they should send you to Coventry!"

"Well, it's certainly a bit exasperatin' to go about without bein' spoken to," admitted Archie. "But the fellows will come round in time—before the week's over, most likely."

"I hope so."

"Don't you worry about me, dear gal. I shall be all right. I've got plenty of books to read, an' when I'm feelin' bored stiff I dare say you'll allow me to come over to Cliff House to tea."

"Come over as often as you like!" said Phyllis heartily.

"Thanks awfully! So-long, Phyl!"

"So-long!" said Phyllis.

Archie Howell walked back to Greyfriars in a thoughtful mood.

He had pretended not to be hurt by the punishment which had been meted out to him by his Form-fellows, but in reality he was keenly alive to the humiliation of being sent to Coventry. Archie was a sociable fellow, who thrived on friendship. He couldn't bear to be alone. And he was quite alone now, save for the fact that his sister was on his side.

One word of explanation from him and Harry Wharton & Co. would welcome him back to their society with open arms.

But that word of explanation could not be given.

Archie's visits to Courtfield had not been made with the object of having a gay time. He had gone—and he was going again—in order to help Mr. Montgomery Bragg out of a tight corner.

Mr. Bragg was the director of a theatrical touring company which was shortly to produce the musical comedy, "H.M.S. Pinafore," at Courtfield.

The leading actor—Danny Denver—was stricken down by illness, and Archie Howell, who was an accomplished vocalist and actor, had undertaken to fill the breach. But the name of Danny Denver would still appear on the programmes, for Mr. Bragg did not want the public to

know that there had been a change in the cast.

Archie had broken bounds in order to rehearse his part. And he had given Mr. Montgomery Bragg a solemn undertaking that he would not "let on" to anybody. Once it became known that Danny Denver's place was being taken by a substitute, the audiences would melt away, for Denver was the star turn—the one man whom people flocked to see.

And so Archie's tongue was tied. He was unable to say anything in his defence, beyond the fact that he was not acting dishonourably.

And nobody believed him—nobody at Greyfriars, at any rate. He had made many friends in the Remore, but they had now turned to foes. They concluded—and it was a perfectly natural conclusion, in the circumstances—that Archie broke bounds in order to sow his wild oats.

"I shall be jolly glad when I've seen this 'Pinafore' business through!" murmured Archie. "Thank goodness the actual performance comes off to-night, an' it's only runnin' for three nights. I didn't know what I was lettin' myself in for when I made that promise to Bragg."

On arriving at the school Archie made his way to Study No. 1.

The Famous Five had finished tea. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 648.

They glared at Archie as he came in, but no one spoke.

"Well, you set of speechless mummies," said Archie, throwing himself into a chair, "how long is this tomfoolery goin' to last?"

The juniors still kept silent, but their expressions were eloquent of scorn and contempt.

"When I came to Greyfriars," Archie went on, "I expected to find myself amongst a jolly, sociable crowd of fellows. Evidently I expected too much!"

Silence.

"Why, I believe you've all been struck dumb!" exclaimed Archie. "Wonder if you'd squeak, Cherry, if I were to press you in the region of your waistcoat?"

Bob Cherry made no reply. But he produced a sheet of notepaper, and inscribed upon it, with a blue-lead pencil, the following terse message:

"GET OUT! WE'RE FED UP WITH YOU!"

Archie Howell laughed as the message was thrust under his nose.

"He will have his little joke, bless him!" he said. "But understand this, Comrade Cherry, I'm not budgin' from this study for you, or for anybody!"

Harry Wharton made a signal to his chums, and the Famous Five rose, and strolled out of the study, leaving Archie Howell to his own devices.

And Study No. 1, which only a few days before had resounded with happy schoolboy laughter, now seemed to Archie Howell to be as drear and desolate as a hermit's cell.

And he—Archie—was the hermit, isolated from the society of the fellows who had sent him to Coventry!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Grim Adventure!

"COME in!"

It was Wingate of the Sixth who rapped out the words, in response to a knock at the door of his study.

When the captain of Greyfriars saw that his visitor was Archie Howell, his rugged face clouded over.

"Well?" he said gruffly.

"Quite well, thanks!" said Archie. "An' yourself?"

"That's enough cheek!" said Wingate sharply. "What do you want?"

"A late pass, please, Wingate."

"Well, you'll be unlucky!"

Archie Howell was by no means disconcerted.

"Afraid I must insist upon havin' a late pass," he said.

Wingate frowned.

"Oh, you insist, do you? Well, I'll insist, too! I'll insist upon giving you a round dozen with a cricket-stump, if you don't buzz off!"

Even that threat failed to move Archie.

"Might I inquire why you refuse to give me a late pass?" he said.

"I only issue late passes to kids whose conduct has been satisfactory," said Wingate; "and yours has been anything but satisfactory. When you came here you were placed in the Fifth, and you misbehaved yourself, and had to be sent down to the Upper Fourth. Then you gave further trouble, and were relegated to the Remove. And from what I've heard, you're still playing the giddy goat. I understand that you've got into disgrace, and that you've been sent to Coventry. And it serves you jolly well right!"

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"Look here, old top——"

The captain of Greyfriars, who was unaccustomed to being addressed in that disrespectful manner, promptly picked up a cricket-stump. Then he strode towards Archie Howell, and seized him by the collar.

"Now, you cheeky young cub," he panted, "I'll endeavour to teach you better manners!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Archie Howell writhed a little under the lashing stump, but he made no murmur.

Wingate administered three more strokes, and then he hurled the cricket-stump into a corner.

"Now clear out!" he growled.

Archie slipped down from the table. There was a dangerous glint in his eyes, and he looked as if he was about to defy the captain of Greyfriars. But he thought better of it, and retired from the study without his late pass.

There was only one thing to do, under the circumstances. And Archie decided to do it. He must take French leave, and go to Courtfield, trusting to luck that his absence would not be noticed at calling-over.

It was a very risky proceeding. But Mr. Montgomery Bragg was counting on Archie to turn up for the performance.

Without Archie, the play would have to be abandoned; for nobody else could undertake to play the leading part at a moment's notice.

"I must chance my arm!" muttered Archie.

And as soon as he had recovered from the castigation he had received at the hands of Wingate he set out for Courtfield, taking care that nobody saw him go.

Archie arrived at the Theatre Royal half an hour before the performance was due to commence. In the vestibule he encountered Mr. Montgomery Bragg, who was striding to and fro in a state of great agitation.

"What's wrong, Mr. Bragg?" inquired Archie. "Were you thinkin' I was never goin' to turn up?"

"No; I knew you wouldn't let me down," said the theatrical manager.

"Then wherefore that worried brow?"

Mr. Bragg fairly exploded.

"It's that fool—that imbecile—that chuckle-headed chump Sawyer!" he spluttered.

Archie grinned.

Mr. Sam Sawyer was a prominent member of the touring company. He was prominent in bulk, and he played a prominent part—that of the captain of H.M.S. Pinafore.

Sam Sawyer was a splendid actor—when he was sober. The tragedy of it was that he was seldom in a state of sobriety. Times out of number he had lurched unsteadily on to the stage, and rendered his songs in a far more rollicking, roystering manner than Messrs. Gilbert & Sullivan had intended they should be rendered.

Mr. Montgomery Bragg had had his hands full in keeping Sam Sawyer away from the White Horse, the Red Lion, the Dun Cow, and other undesirable "animals." And this evening Sam had slipped through his fingers, and was probably at the present moment partaking liberally of the cup that cheered.

"Isn't Sawyer here?" asked Archie.

"No." Mr. Montgomery Bragg glanced at his watch. "An' there's only twenty-five minutes to go!" he said savagely. "It's just like Sawyer, to land me in the cart!"

"Where is he?"

"Haven't the foggiest notion!" said Mr. Bragg, with a helpless shrug of his

shoulders. "He's gone to one of the taverns, I suppose—but goodness knows which one! P'raps he's makin' a tour of the lot!"

"Can't you get someone to deputise for him?"

"No. The mad fool must be found, or we shall have to cancel the performance!"

"My hat!"

"I can't go an' hunt for him myself," said Mr. Bragg. "I've got to give an eye to things here."

"That's all right," said Archie. "I'll go an' see if I can rout him out."

"Good!" said Mr. Bragg. "But you'll have to look jolly slipper. The audience is beginnin' to roll up already."

"Cheer up!" said Archie. "Smooth those wrinkles from your manly brow. I hope to locate Sam Sawyer in a few minutes—an' I trust he'll be in a fit state to go on the stage."

Mr. Bragg grunted doubtfully.

"From what I know of him, he'll be pretty well lubricated by this time," he said. "But if you see him, fetch him along, whatever his condition."

"I'll bring him, if I have to tow him along the pavement with my boot!" promised Archie.

And he hurried away on his mission.

It was a far from palatable task which Archie had undertaken. It necessitated a visit to the various saloon-bars in the town. And Archie had never been in a saloon-bar in his life, despite what his schoolfellows might think.

But the junior realised that Sam Sawyer must be found at all hazards—otherwise the performance of "H.M.S. Pinafore" would be "off."

It was to the Courtfield Arms that Archie first went. He popped his head through the doorway of the saloon, and, after a hasty glance at the revellers within, he withdrew.

Sam Sawyer was not there!

"I'll try the White Hart next," murmured Archie.

The White Hart was situated at the far end of the High Street. And from its front parlour came sounds of revelry.

Archie recognised the familiar voice of Sam Sawyer, who was engaged in giving a premature performance on his own.

The junior went along the narrow passage, and halted in the doorway of the parlour.

Half a dozen men were seated within, and Sam Sawyer was on his feet, singing lustily:

"I am the capt'in of the Pinafore,
An' a right good capt'in, too!
I'm very, very good, an', be it understood,
I command a right good crew!
Though related to a peer, I can hand,
reef, and steer,
Or——"

"This way, Sam!" interposed Archie Howell. "You've evidently mistaken this place for the Theatre Royal!"

Sam Sawyer turned to the intruder, whom he seemed vaguely to recognise as one of his fellow-actors.

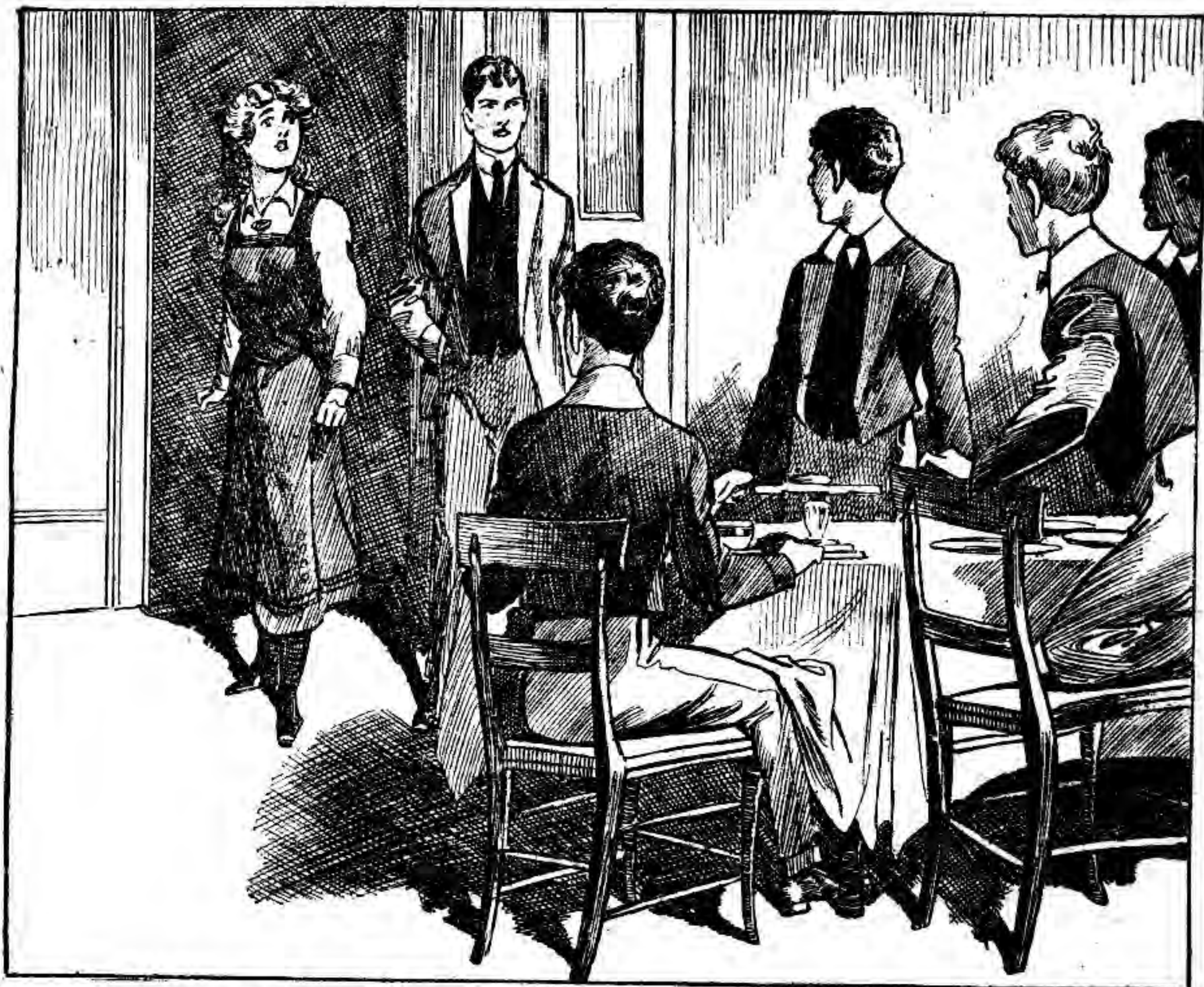
"What cheer, me boy!" he said boisterously. "What's yours? Lem'nade with a dash of soda? Right yar! You shall have the pleasure of drinkin' the health of Sam Sawyer, the finest actor that ever signed the pledge!"

There was a chuckle from the other occupants of the parlour.

Archie Howell advanced a step nearer to Mr. Sawyer.

"This way!" he repeated firmly.

"Eh? You lemme alone, young shaver! I don't want no promptin' from



"You are the cads!" cried Phyllis passionately. "You are condemning Archie on a mere supposition! You haven't a shred of real evidence against him. You are treating him abominably—unjustly, and I shall never speak to any of you again—never!" (See Chapter I.)

anybody. I'm ready to take me part, here an' now!"

And Mr. Sawyer burst into song.

"I am the capt'in of the Pinafore,
An' a right good capt'in, too!
I'm very, very good——"

"You're very, very bad, to stay here imbibin', when you ought to be gettin' ready for the performance!" said Archie. "Pull yourself together, man! There's a crowded house waitin' to hear you. An' the curtain rises in a quarter of an hour."

"Let it rise!" said Mr. Sawyer recklessly.

Then he broke forth into a fresh ditty:

"Fair moon, to thee I'll sing,
Bright regent of the hevings!
Say, why is everything
Either at sixes or at sevvings?
I have lived hitherto——"

"You won't live much longer if you go on at this rate!" said Archie grimly. "Now, come on! You want to be sacked from the show, I suppose?"

Archie's words had a sobering effect upon Mr. Sawyer, who was not really intoxicated, but excessively merry.

"I'll come!" he said. "Sam Sawyer never yet failed to respond to the call of dooty! Lead on, McDuff!"

Archie was only too glad to escape from the stuffy parlour. He linked his arm in one of Mr. Sawyer's, in order to steady that gentleman, and he escorted his convivial companion into the street.

No sooner had Archie set foot on the pavement than a stern voice hailed him.

"Howell!"

Archie released Mr. Sawyer's arm as if it had been red-hot. Then he spun round, with a look of consternation and dismay, and found himself confronted by the imposing figure of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Like a Lamb to the Slaughter!

"HOWELL!"

Mr. Quelch's thunderous voice sounded to Archie like the detonation of a bomb.

For an instant the junior stood petrified, unable to move or speak. He realised in a flash the gravity of the situation.

A Greyfriars master had caught him red-handed, so to speak, emerging from the parlour of the White Hart!

"What are you doing here in this disreputable place?" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "But it is superfluous to ask. You can have only one motive in coming here."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Archie. "I—I——"

"Wretched boy! I am not surprised at your inability to make a coherent statement. You have doubtless been imbibing strong liquor!"

Archie flushed crimson.

"I haven't, sir! I assure you——"

"I regret I cannot accept the assurance of such a depraved young rascal!" said Mr. Quelch. "You will come with me!"

At this juncture Sam Sawyer stepped up to the Remove-master and gave him a resounding slap on the back.

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Quelch, very nearly losing his balance. "How dare you molest me in that violent manner?"

"Violent?" echoed Mr. Sawyer. "Why, I'm as gentle as a lamb, an' as shober as a judge into the bargain!"

"Who—who are you?"

"Me?" said Mr. Sawyer. "Why——"

"I am the capt'in of the Pinafore,
An' a right good capt'in, too!"

Mr. Quelch eyed the singer with extreme disfavour.

"You are intoxicated!" he exclaimed in tones of disgust.

"Me—intoxicated?" roared Mr. Sawyer, becoming suddenly aggressive.

"Here, hold my coat, somebody, while I knock that insult back in his teeth!"

The actor was struggling to remove his coat when Archie Howell intervened.

"Get along to the theatre, you mad idiot!" he muttered. "If you start playin' the giddy goat like this you'll stand a jolly good chance of bein' arrested!"

Mr. Sawyer took the hint. With his hat perched on the back of his head and his hands thrust deeply into his pockets he set off jauntily along the street.

"Ain't you comin' along, too?" he called back over his shoulder.

"No," replied Archie Howell, rather grimly. "Afraid I'm wanted elsewhere."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath of relief as soon as Sam Sawyer was out of sight.

"Now, Howell," he said, placing a firm grip on the junior's arm, "you will return with me to the school!"

"I don't need any assistance, sir!" said Archie.

But Mr. Quelch seemed to think differently. He maintained his grip on Archie's arm, and marched him along the street.

The passers-by threw curious glances at master and junior as they went.

Nothing further was spoken on the way to the school.

Mr. Quelch was evidently quite satisfied that Archie Howell had been keeping revel with shady companions at the White Hart.

And Archie, for his part, had nothing to say. He realised the futility of speech. It was doubtful if the angry Form-master would have given him a hearing.

In the gathering dusk Mr. Quelch escorted his captive through the school gateway.

Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling in the Close, and they surveyed the arrival of prisoner and escort in astonishment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's up now?"

Harry Wharton looked grim.

"Looks as if Howell's been bowled out!" he remarked. "I guessed the books would be on his track before long."

"Quelch must have spotted him coming out of a Courtfield pub!" said Frank Nugent.

"That's about the size of it," said Johnny Bull.

"It serves the bounder right!" growled Bob Cherry. "Fellows who play fast-and-loose are bound to be bowled out, sooner or later."

"Howell looks pretty sick," observed Wharton.

"He'll look still more so in the morning, when he's fired out of Greyfriars!" was Nugent's comment.

Mr. Quelch marched the captive junior straight to the Head's study.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Locke, looking up from his papers. "What is wrong, Quelch?"

"I have a very serious matter to report to you, sir," said the Remove-master. "I had occasion to go into Courtfield this evening, and I caught this boy in the act of quitting the disreputable hostelry known as the White Hart."

The Head's stern glance rested upon Archie Howell.

"Is that correct, Howell?"

"Quite correct, sir," said Archie in a low tone.

"Moreover, sir," continued Mr. Quelch, "Howell was in the company of a repulsive scoundrel who was the worse for drink!"

Dr. Locke looked very grave. But it was not his way to condemn a junior unheard.

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"What have you to say, Howell?" he asked quietly.

"Nothin', sir; except that I haven't done anythin' to be ashamed of."

"You have visited a low-down tavern in—"

"Yes, sir. But not to—to drink, or gamble, or anythin' of that sort."

"Then why did you go there?"

"To fetch somebody away, sir."

"I am afraid you will have to be more explicit, Howell," said the Head, frowning. "Whom did you fetch away?"

Archie was silent. He realised that he had already said too much. If he explained to the Head that he had gone to the White Hart to fetch Sam Sawyer, he would be called upon to explain what connection he had with that individual. And then it would all come out that he was taking—or was supposed to be taking—Danny Denver's place in the cast of "H.M.S. Pinafore."

Archie felt that he could not break his promise to Mr. Montgomery Bragg, not even now, when his own fate hung in the balance.

"Well, Howell?" said the Head, after a pause. "I am waiting!"

"I've nothin' to say, sir," said Archie, "except what I said before, that I haven't been drinkin', or gamblin', or anythin' of that sort."

"Denial is futile, Howell!" said Mr. Quelch. "When I saw you you were flushed and excited, and your arm was linked in that of your drunken companion."

Archie made a final appeal to the Head.

"I give you my word of honour, sir, that I've not acted dishonourably!" he exclaimed. "I ask you to believe me—"

"I fear you are asking too much of me, Howell," said the Head coldly. "Mr. Quelch's evidence is sufficient to convince me that you have entered a low tavern—and all such places are out of bounds to the boys of this school—and also that you have consorted with undesirable companions. You have behaved in a manner calculated to bring this school into disrepute; and your brazen denials only aggravate your offence. Reluctant though I am to expel a boy when he has been only a few days at the school, I fear that in your case I have no alternative."

Archie Howell's face was very white.

So it had come to this—expulsion!

His promise to Mr. Montgomery Bragg had cost him dear. It had caused him to be misunderstood and condemned by his schoolfellows, and now, because his tongue was tied, and he was unable to clear himself without breaking his word to Mr. Bragg, he was to be expelled from Greyfriars.

"Take him away, Quelch!" The Head's tone was cold and contemptuous. "He will remain in the detention-room to-night, and will be publicly expelled in the morning."

For a moment Archie wavered.

Should he make a clean breast of everything?

After all, the performance of "H.M.S. Pinafore" could not possibly come off this evening now that he, the leading player, was absent. And there was, therefore, no object in continuing to keep that promise to the theatrical manager?

For a full moment Archie Howell argued with his conscience. And eventually he decided that he must keep Mr. Bragg's secret until he was given permission to reveal it. He must play the game by Mr. Bragg. He must not let it be known that Danny Denver was ill, and that he—

"Come, Howell!"

Archie turned as Mr. Quelch addressed him, and he followed the Form-master from the Head's study.

His chance to clear himself was gone. He must now resign himself to his fate.

Mr. Quelch led the way to the punishment-room, the gloomy, cheerless apartment in which many an offender had spent his last night at the old school.

Not a word, either of reproach or consolation, did the Remove-master utter. In silence he opened the door for the junior to pass in. And then the door was closed, and the key grated in the lock.

Archie Howell was a prisoner!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Archie's Resolve!

IT was a wild night.

The gale shrieked furiously round the old roofs and turrets of Greyfriars.

When Mr. Quelch had escorted Archie Howell back to the school the skies had been dark and overcast. And now the storm had burst in all its fury.

It was not yet locking-up time, but the fellows who were still out of gates hurried back to the shelter of the school. And Harry Wharton & Co. adjourned from the wind-swept Close to the junior Common-room.

The wind blew up from the sea in great gusts, and it was punctuated at intervals by violent hailstorms.

Windows rattled and doors creaked all over the great building.

Lights gleamed from the majority of the windows. But the punishment-room was in darkness.

Archie Howell was seated on the solitary hard chair, absorbed in gloomy reflection.

This was to be his last night at Greyfriars. His short innings at the old school was over. In the morning there would be a general assembly in Big Hall. The name of Archie Howell would be expunged from the school register, and he would be expelled, cast out in disgrace.

And all because he had decided to assist Mr. Montgomery Bragg out of a tight corner!

It was a gloomy outlook.

Archie knew that his father, whose patience had been sorely tried in the past, would not be prepared to give him another chance.

Mr. Howell's parting words now came back to his son.

"You have been a constant source of worry and anxiety to me, and to the various tutors I have engaged to coach you in your lessons. And unless you make good at Greyfriars, and win for yourself a good name and a good position in the school, I shall have nothing more to do with you! I have been an indulgent father to you. I have given you every opportunity; but there is a limit even to paternal generosity. And should it ever transpire that through your own misconduct you are expelled from Greyfriars, you shall not spend another night under my roof! I shall send you out into the world to make your own way!"

Archie had paid little heed to these words at the time they were uttered. But he heeded them now. And he knew that his father had been in earnest.

It would be useless for him to go home. His father would be furious, and would promptly disown him.

But what was the alternative to going home?

The condemned junior pondered over this for a long time. And presently the booming of the breakers on the distant shore reawakened a thought which had often been in Archie's mind.

He would run away to sea!

Archie loved the sea. It was in his bones and blood. His ancestors on his mother's side had all been distinguished sailors. One of them had fought under Nelson's flag.

Yes, the call of the sea was irresistible.

Archie Howell sprang to his feet. His eyes were gleaming.

"I'll go!" he exclaimed. "And I won't wait till the morning. I'll clear out now!"

It was a rash impulse. But Archie had ever been the creature of rash impulses.

He crossed over to the window and threw up the sash, and peered out into the darkness and tempest.

The storm was at its zenith. The branches of the old elms in the Close swayed and shook in the fury of the gale. The hailstones rattled upon the outer window-sill like a deluge of pebbles.

Archie welcomed the storm. It would aid him in his flight.

It was improbable that any Greyfriars master or prefect would be out of doors, and the way of escape was clear.

Archie did not worry about his belongings. They could remain where they were, in Study No. 1. After all, they were not of great value.

Then came the problem of how to descend to terra firma.

Archie had heard of runaways who had knotted a number of sheets together in the form of a rope. But in his case this would be impossible, for there were no sheets on the camp-bed in the corner.

The bed had not yet been made up, but at any moment somebody might come along to do it. And Archie realised that delay would be dangerous.

There was one other means of descent—the rainpipe, which ran down the wall, embedded in ivy.

It had never occurred to any prospective runaway to make use of that pipe, because the majority of the Greyfriars fellows were aware that it was broken off at a distance of ten feet or so from the ground. And, apart from this, the pipe afforded a very perilous and precarious means of descent.

But Archie Howell was unaware of these facts. In the darkness he could not see where the pipe terminated. And he concluded that it descended to the base of the wall.

"Here goes!" muttered the junior.

And he clambered through on to the outer sill.

The sill was a narrow one, and a fierce gust of wind, buffeting slantwise against the junior, nearly swept him from his perch.

Archie's fingers sought the pipe, and gripped it firmly.

And then began the descent.

Archie swung his feet clear of the sill, and went down the pipe with the agility of a monkey.

The surface of the pipe was wet and slippery, and on more than one occasion the reckless fellow nearly lost his hold. Had he done so it would have meant almost certain death.

But Fortune favoured him—or perhaps a kindly Providence was befriending the junior—and he continued his descent without mishap until he came to the end of the pipe.

Archie had not expected to reach the

end of it just yet, and the suddenness of doing so caused him to lose his hold.

But the drop was not great, and Archie landed on all-fours on the flagstones of the Close.

He staggered to his feet, and the wind beat into his face, and the hail lashed upon his bared head.

But he was free!

Archie battled his way across the Close. He clambered over the school wall, and dropped down into the roadway on the other side.

Then he paused, uncertain how to proceed.

He intended to make for one of the big seaports, but he did not know in which direction the nearest seaport lay.

Finally, he decided to take the shore road leading to Pegg. And he turned up his coat-collar, buttoned it tightly about his neck, and set off along the road.

The hour was not very late; but the storm was raging with such violence that Archie did not suppose he would encounter anybody on the road.

Before he had proceeded a hundred yards, however, the sound of ponderous footsteps came to Archie's ears.

And then, whilst the junior stood irresolute, the rays of a bullseye lantern were directed full upon him, and an imperious voice exclaimed:

"Got yer, you young rip!"

"Tozer!" muttered Archie.

It was the portly constable from Friardale who confronted Archie Howell in the gloom.

Mr. Tozer had an exasperating habit of interfering with Greyfriars juniors, especially if he discovered any of them outside the precincts of the school after locking-up time. And the gates of Greyfriars had been locked nearly half an hour since.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," said the constable. "Wot are you doin' on the road at this time o' night, without a coat an' 'at on?"

"Stand aside!" growled Archie.

But the policeman planted himself squarely in the junior's path.

"Young rip!" he ejaculated sternly. "Which it's my belief that you're runnin' away from school!"

"Stand aside," repeated Archie, "or I'll—"

The constable advanced threateningly upon the junior.

"You come along o' me!" he said. "I'm goin' to take you before yer 'ead-master!"

Archie did not stand upon ceremony. He lowered his head, and hurled himself full-tilt at the oncoming constable.

"Ow!"

Mr. Tozer reeled backwards, and collapsed in the roadway like a punctured balloon.

Archie's lowered head had found a billet just below the constable's chest, and Tozer was winded.

Without waiting for his victim to rise, Archie Howell darted past him, and sped along the road like a hare.

After a brief interval the sound of pursuing footsteps reached his ears. But the footsteps soon died away in the distance.

Mr. Tozer was not athletic. The cooks of Friardale had looked after his inner man too well!

Archie Howell paused, pumping in breath. Then, satisfied that he was no longer being pursued, he tramped on in the teeth of the storm.

His arrival at Greyfriars by aeroplane a few days before had been very dramatic. And his departure from the school had been equally dramatic, but not nearly so pleasant!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Too Late!

"PERFORMANCE cancelled!"

That announcement, chalked upon a board, greeted the gaze of Phyllis Howell as she paused outside the Theatre Royal, Courtfield.

Phyllis had been given permission by her headmistress, Miss Primrose, to go and see the performance of "H.M.S. Pinafore." She was very keen on musical comedies, and her consternation as she surveyed the curt notice which was chalked upon the board showed itself in the expression of her face.

Hundreds of disappointed people had been turned away from the theatre by that announcement. They had not stopped to inquire why the performance had been cancelled; but Phyllis Howell did. She approached the box-office, and, finding nobody there, she went round to the manager's room at the back of the building.

Here Mr. Montgomery Bragg was engaged in wringing his hands, though he would have preferred to wring Sam Sawyer's neck.

"What is it, missy?" he asked, as Phyllis entered.

The girl halted inside the disorderly little room.

"Would you mind telling me why the performance has been cancelled?" she inquired.

"Our leadin' player hasn't turned up," explained Mr. Bragg.

"Oh!"

"An', of course, it's impossible to hold the show without Howell—I mean, Danny Denver!"

Mr. Bragg looked very confused. He had made a slip of the tongue, and he hoped that his fair visitor hadn't noticed it.

But Phyllis Howell turned upon him quickly.

"What was that?" she said sharply.

"Did you mention the name of Howell?"

"I did," confessed Mr. Bragg.

"Is that the name of your leading player?"

Mr. Bragg was a fluent liar on occasion; but somehow he felt that he could not prevaricate to this young girl. Besides, now that the performance was cancelled, there was nothing to be gained by concealing the facts.

"Yes, missy," he said. "Danny Denver's health has broken down, and I engaged a clever young kid from Greyfriars to take his place—a kid called Archie Howell."

"That is my brother!"

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Mr. Bragg, in surprise. "Well, your brother has caused the performance to be cancelled. But it wasn't his fault!"

Phyllis looked astounded.

"Do you mean to say that Archie has been attending all your rehearsals?" she exclaimed.

Mr. Bragg nodded.

"Yes," he said. "An' he played his part so well that if he had gone on the stage this evenin' nobody would have been able to twig that he wasn't Danny Denver!"

"Did you bind him to secrecy?" asked Phyllis breathlessly. "Did you make him promise not to tell anybody that he was taking Denver's place?"

"I did. I thought it would be wise, an'—"

"Then that explains everything!"

Mr. Bragg looked puzzled.

"I don't quite follow you, missy," he said.

"Do you know that Archie, by keeping his promise to you, has got into bad odour up at the school? Do you know

that all his chums have turned against him, and suspected him of coming to Courtfield in order to have a gay time?"

It was Mr. Bragg's turn to look astounded.

"Pon my soul, I didn't know that anythin' of that sort had happened!" he exclaimed. "Your brother never said a word to me—"

"Of course, he wouldn't!" said Phyllis. "He meant to see the thing through without letting you know how much he had suffered. That's Archie's way. And where is he now? Why hasn't he turned up?"

"He went out—just about an hour ago, it was—to rescue Sam Sawyer."

"Who is Sam Sawyer?"

"A strollin' player—an' the best part of his strollin' takes him to the public-houses!" said Mr. Bragg savagely. "He strolled this evenin', frinstance, an' your brother volunteered to go an' find him."

"And what happened?"

"Why, that reprobate Sawyer came back alone!"

"And Archie?"

"Sawyer says that he was collared comin' out of the White Hart by a tall gent in a topper. The tall gent marched him away."

"Good heavens!" gasped Phyllis, in alarm. "That must have been one of the masters from the school!"

"The same thought occurred to me," said Mr. Bragg.

"Then why on earth didn't you go up to the school and explain why my brother had gone to the White Hart?"

"I couldn't leave this place—"

"But you could have telephoned! Don't you realise what this means to Archie? The master who caught him will think that he had been drinking and gambling!"

"But he could have explained—"

"No, he couldn't. That would have meant breaking his promise to you. I dare say he has been flogged by this time, expelled, for all we know!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Mr. Bragg.

"Oh, you—you—" Phyllis could scarcely find words to express herself. "Why couldn't you have cleared Archie? It would have been perfectly easy for you to ring up Dr. Locke, and explain to him that you had engaged Archie to play the leading part, and had bound him to secrecy!"

"So it would—so it would!" agreed Mr. Bragg. "But I was so flustered and flurried, what with that scoundrel Sawyer an' the cancellation of the performance, that I hadn't a thought for anythin' else. But I'll ring up Dr. Locke now!"

"No!" said Phyllis. "I'll go and see him myself!"

And she hurried away.

The storm had burst in all its fury when Phyllis emerged into the street. But she did not heed the fierce gusts of wind which buffeted her face or the lashing hail, which sent dozens of pedestrians scurrying for shelter. She was thinking solely of Archie.

Phyllis had nothing but a thin raincoat to protect her from the deluge, and she was soon drenched. But she ran on, never pausing until she reached the gates of Greyfriars.

She clung for a moment to the bars, panting for breath. Then, rousing herself, she gave a violent tug at the bell-pull.

Several moments elapsed, and Phyllis rang again and again. And presently Gosling, the porter, came shuffling out of his lodge.

"Open these gates—quickly!"

The command was so imperious, so insistent, that Gosling did not think twice

about obeying it. He produced his keys, and the gates were swung open.

Phyllis hurried across the Close and into the school-building.

In the passage she encountered the Famous Five of the Remove. They had just come out of the junior Common-room.

Phyllis had declared that she would never speak to Harry Wharton & Co. again. But she forgot that declaration in the excitement of the moment.

"Tell me," she panted, "where is Archie?"

The Famous Five surveyed the girl's flushed face and dripping garments in astonishment.

Harry Wharton was the first to speak.

"Your brother is in the punishment-room, Miss Phyllis," he said. "According to Billy Bunter, who has been doing a bit of eavesdropping outside the door of the Head's study, Quelch caught your brother coming out of the White Hart, in Courtfield."

"That's so," said Bob Cherry. "It appears he had been on the razzle—"

"That is a lie!"

Phyllis Howell's voice rang along the passage.

The Famous Five looked—and felt—decidedly uncomfortable.

"This is a jolly unpleasant business, Miss Phyllis," said Frank Nugent. "It's only natural that you should stick up for your brother. But there's no doubt that he's kicked over the traces—"

"Listen," said Phyllis, "and you shall hear the true facts of the case!"

And then she explained everything—that her brother was innocent—that he had been innocent all along—that he had been unable to give a satisfactory explanation of his frequent visits to Courtfield because of his promise to Mr. Montgomery Bragg.

The Famous Five stood spellbound during Phyllis Howell's recital. And when the girl had finished they felt utterly sick with themselves for having doubted Archie.

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



JULY.

5th Monday	- - -	9.48 p.m.
6th Tuesday	- - -	9.46 "
7th Wednesday	- - -	9.45 "
8th Thursday	- - -	9.45 "
9th Friday	- - -	9.44 "
10th Saturday	- - -	9.43 "
11th Sunday	- - -	9.42 "

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "We've fairly done it now, kids!"

"We have!" groaned Johnny Bull.

"Howell's innocent!" exclaimed Wharton. "And we sent him to Coventry—we washed our hands of him!"

"No wonder Miss Phyllis said she'd never speak to us again!" said Nugent.

"It's up to us, my worthy chums, to offer the humble and esteemed apology!" murmured Hurree Singh.

But Phyllis Howell did not wait for the juniors' apology. She left the abashed and remorseful group and made her way to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke rose to his feet, thunder-struck, as the girl burst into his sacred apartment.

"Bless my soul! Miss Howell! What ever is the matter?"

"I have come about Archie, Dr. Locke—"

The Head frowned.

"I regret to state that your brother is under sentence of expulsion for serious misconduct."

"Nonsense!"

The Head fairly jumped.

"What—what did you say?" he gasped.

"Nonsense!" repeated Phyllis.

"Archie is innocent! He was unable to clear himself, because he had been pledged to secrecy. It is absurd—it is horribly unjust—to say that he went to the White Hart in order to drink and gamble, and so forth. I am astonished, Dr. Locke, that you should be so ready to condemn my brother!"

"My—my dear girl—"

"I will tell you why Archie went to that place."

And Phyllis explained the full facts of the case to the astonished Head.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Dr. Locke, when the girl had concluded her narrative. "Is it possible that I have done your brother an injustice? I have no wish to doubt your word, Miss Howell, but your story seems incredible!"

Phyllis waved her hand towards the telephone.

"Ring up Mr. Montgomery Bragg, at the Theatre Royal, and he will confirm what I have told you, Dr. Locke," she said.

The Head got through to the theatre at once, and asked for Mr. Bragg.

The theatrical-manager bore out Phyllis Howell's story, and he was loud in his praise of Archie.

"He is a most generous lad, Dr. Locke—a real brick! He saw what a tight fix I was placed in through the illness of Danny Denver, and he undertook to fill the breach. Little did I dream that he was under a cloud—that his schoolfellows doubted and distrusted him—that he was risking his reputation, an' sacrificin' everythin' in order to keep his promise to me. Had I known these things I should have informed you right away, an' cleared the lad of the charges which were bein' made against him. I hope I am not too late to save him from punishment, Dr. Locke?"

"I was about to expel him from the school," replied the Head. "Happily, however, your explanation has been made in time for me to cancel the sentence. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Bragg, for confirming what the boy's sister has just told me. Good-evening!"

The Head rang off and turned to Phyllis.

"My dear child, you are drenched to the skin. You had better see the matron with a view to getting a change of clothing."



"I regret to state that your brother is under sentence of expulsion for serious misconduct," said the Head, with a frown.
 "Nonsense!" exclaimed Phyllis. "Archie is innocent!" (see Chapter 6.)

"I shall be all right, Dr. Locke," said Phyllis. "All I want is to see my brother released. I understand he has been sent to the punishment-room?"

The Head nodded.

"He shall be liberated forthwith," he said. "Pray come with me!"

After obtaining the key from Mr. Quelch, the Head accompanied Phyllis Howell to the punishment-room.

Whilst Dr. Locke was fumbling to unlock the door Phyllis rapped on one of the panels.

"Archie!" she called out. "Are you there?"

There was no response from within.

"Archie! I've brought good news for you!"

There was still no response.

Phyllis turned pale.

"Why doesn't he answer?" she exclaimed.

"Doubtless the poor lad is asleep!" said the Head.

And he turned the key in the lock and pushed open the door.

Phyllis fairly bounded into the room. She peered around her in the gloom, and then a startled exclamation burst from her lips.

"Too late!"

"What?" gasped the Head faintly.

"Too late!" repeated Phyllis. "Archie has gone!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Search of a Runaway!

"GONE!" echoed the Head, dazedly. "But—but how?"
 "He must have got out of the window," said Phyllis, "and run away."

"Run away?"

"Yes, rather than wait and face the ordeal of expulsion. Poor Archie! Heaven knows where he may be at this moment! Out somewhere, in the thick of this terrible storm. But where?"

The girl's voice faltered, and presently she broke down completely. The strain was too much for her. She had spared no effort to vindicate her brother. She had run practically all the way from Courtfield, she had explained everything to the Head, and to Harry Wharton & Co.

And she was too late!

"My—my dear girl," murmured Dr. Locke, in great distress, as he endeavoured to comfort the distracted Phyllis, who was sobbing bitterly. "You must keep up your fortitude. You must preserve a stout heart. I cannot bear to see you give way to grief like this!"

"Oh, he has gone!" moaned the girl in her anguish. "We are too late!"

"He cannot have been gone long," said the Head hopefully. "I will arrange for search-parties to be sent out immediately. I have no doubt that the unfor-

tunate lad will soon be found. Probably he is sheltering from the storm, not far away, in which even he will speedily be discovered and brought back."

The Head's words had a cheering effect upon the overwrought girl. She hurriedly dashed away her tears, as if ashamed of her own weakness.

"I am going out to look for Archie!" she said resolutely.

"No, no! You cannot venture out again in this dreadful storm. You will remain here in the care of the matron."

"Remain here, when every moment is precious—when the chances of ever seeing my brother again are growing more and more remote? Why, I should never dream of it!" said Phyllis vehemently.

"I am going out to search for him!"
 "Then you must at least change your garments before you go," said the Head. "Otherwise, child, you will be courting serious illness."

Phyllis suffered the Head to conduct her to the sanatorium, where the kindly matron bustled about and procured for her a complete change of dry clothing.

Then Dr. Locke proceeded to his study and summoned the captain of Greyfriars. He briefly outlined the facts to Wingate—that Archie Howell had run away whilst under sentence of expulsion; that he was innocent, and that a search-party must be formed at once with a view to finding him and bringing him back.

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Wingate was amazed, but he lost no time in carrying out the Head's bidding.

Shortly afterwards a party of prefects set out in search of the runaway, and Phyllis Howell accompanied them.

Five minutes later Harry Wharton & Co. presented themselves at the Head's study. Their expressions were earnest and eager.

"Well, Wharton?" said the Head.

"May we go out as a separate search-party to look for Howell, sir?" inquired the captain of the Remove.

Dr. Locke hesitated.

"You are junior boys, and it is nearly your bed-time," he said.

But Harry Wharton & Co. were persistent. They would get no rest, they informed the Head, until Archie Howell was restored to the school. And they were quite sure that if they were given permission to go, their quest would prove successful.

The Head began to waver, and he was about to give the juniors permission to take part in the search, when the door of the study was thrown open, admitting the portly form of P.-c. Tozer.

"Well, Tozer?" said Dr. Locke.

The Head was getting used to surprise visits by this time.

Mr. Tozer glared at Harry Wharton & Co. Then he straightened his belt and proceeded to make what he considered would be a sensational announcement.

"Which I begs to report, sir, as 'ow I saw one o' your boys in the hact of runnin' away from school!"

"Did you apprehend him?" asked the Head quickly.

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"The young rascal bowled me hover, sir, in the roadway, afore I could lay 'ands on 'im! Haassaulted me, he did, with great vilence! An' wot I says is this 'ere—"

"In which direction did the boy go?" demanded Dr. Locke impatiently.

"Towards Pegg, sir. Of course, I went in pursoot, but wot with the dark an' this 'ere blindin' storm—"

The Head motioned to Harry Wharton & Co.

"You may go, my boys," he said.

"And you know now which direction to take. I trust you will be successful in your quest."

Mr. Tozer gave a contemptuous snort.

"Where the harm of the law 'as failed, it ain't likely that these young warmints will succeed, sir!" he said.

"That will do, Tozer!" said the Head sharply. "You may go!"

"But look 'ere, sir—"

"Go!" repeated the Head, in such a thunderous tone that the portly constable jumped backwards into the passage.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co., clad in their raincoats, had set off on their enterprise.

"Whew! What a night!" panted Nugent, as the juniors fought their way across the Close.

"Talk about a giddy cyclone!" gasped Bob Cherry. "This is simply awful!"

"Howell can't have got far, that's one consolation!" said Harry Wharton.

"I expect we shall find him taking shelter somewhere!" said Johnny Bull. "Keep your optics open, you fellows!"

The Famous Five hurried along the rain-soaked road which led to the little fishing-village of Pegg.

On arriving at the village they decided to separate.

Harry Wharton detailed Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent to visit the various fishermen's cottages, in order to ascer-

tain if the fugitive was taking shelter in one of them.

Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were sent down to the shore to make investigations, and Harry Wharton himself decided to scour the cliffs.

"If Howell came within a mile of Pegg," said the captain of the Remove, "we're bound to locate him."

"Unless he's gone out to sea in a boat," said Nugent.

"Don't be an ass, Franky! No boat could live in such a sea as this. Look!"

And Wharton indicated the roaring breakers, which rose mountain high and dashed themselves upon the rugged shore.

"You're right, Harry," said Bob Cherry. "Howell would never have put out to sea in such a storm as this!"

"Jove, how it blows!" panted Johnny Bull.

"And I am drenchfully soaked to the skinfulness!" said Hurree Singh.

"Never mind the weather!" sang out Wharton. "It can pelt as hard as it likes, and it can blow as hard as it likes, so long as we find Archie Howell!"

"We'll find him all right," said Johnny Bull grimly, "even if it means staying out all night!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If you fellows have no luck at the fishermen's cottages and on the shore," said Wharton, "join me on the cliffs."

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry.

And the juniors dispersed.

Harry Wharton's face wore a very determined expression as he commenced to climb the steep cliff-path.

Archie Howell must be found!

That was the resolve which beat like a hammer in the junior's brain.

Archie had been grievously wronged, and it was up to the Famous Five to seek him—far and wide, if necessary—and to take him back to the school and make amends for their past treatment of him.

And then there was Phyllis. For her sake Archie must be found. Harry Wharton felt that he would never be able to look Phyllis in the face again unless he succeeded in his quest for the missing junior.

And so the captain of the Remove toiled up the cliff-path, through the blinding storm, grimly determined that he and his chums should not return to Greyfriars empty-handed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Night of Peril!

MEANWHILE, what of Archie Howell?

After he had bowled P.-c. Tozer over in the roadway, Archie proceeded in the direction of Pegg.

He was feeling very wet and very hungry and acutely miserable.

Now that the excitement of running away from Greyfriars was over, the reaction had set in.

It was easy enough to tramp to the nearest seaport and stow himself on board one of the big liners—easy enough in theory, but in practice it was a very different proposition.

The nearest seaport might be twenty miles away. And how could Archie cover that distance, exhausted as he was, in the midst of a raging storm?

"I must wait till the beastly storm gives over!" muttered the junior.

"There's a shelter up on the cliffs."

On reaching Pegg, therefore, Archie ascended the cliff-path. And presently he reached the summit, and the long grass waved and rustled at his feet, and the wind played havoc with his curly hair.

Exposed to the storm, he stood there, and gazed far out to sea, where twinkling lights denoted that a big vessel was passing.

"Bet they're none too comfortable on board!" reflected Archie. "If that's a liner, it's ten to one that every passenger is seasick! But, for all that, they're a jolly sight more comfortable than I am! Where is that shelter?"

Archie peered around him through the gloom, and presently he discerned the wooden structure which had been erected by the parish council of Pegg.

The exhausted junior threw himself on the seat. His face was wet with rain and perspiration; his drenched garments hung limply about him.

And the storm showed no sign of abating. The thunder rolled and boomed, and vivid flashes of lightning darted across the sky.

The wind had gone down, but the hail-storms were more violent and frequent than ever.

For nearly an hour Archie remained in the shelter, and he began to despair of the storm giving over.

"It's no use stickin' here!" he muttered. "There's just a chance that search-parties have been sent out to hunt for me. An' it would be simply awful to be collared an' taken back to the school!"

Archie decided to continue on his journey.

How or when he was going to reach the nearest seaport he didn't know. But it was no use hanging about here on the cliffs of Pegg. To be discovered and taken back to the school would be a crushing humiliation.

The junior stretched his cramped limbs and quitted the shelter.

As he stepped out into the darkness and the storm a familiar voice hailed him.

"Who is that?"

Archie paused, his heart thumping against his ribs.

"Wharton, by gad!" he gasped.

An electric torch flashed out through the gloom, and Archie stood blinking in the powerful rays.

"Howell!" exclaimed Wharton triumphantly.

Archie mistook that note of triumph. He jumped to the natural conclusion that the captain of the Remove had been sent out to track him down. He anticipated that Wharton would try to overpower



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him and take him back to Greyfriars. And, with jaw firmly set, he determined to fight tooth and nail for his freedom.

Before Harry Wharton could explain that he was a friend, not a foe—before he could explain that Archie's innocence had been established, the runaway was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

The electric torch was knocked from Wharton's grasp, and a pair of sinewy arms encircled Wharton's waist.

It was impossible now for the captain of the Remove to explain the position to his assailant. He was sent whirling backwards into the long grass, and then began a fierce wrestling bout.

Wharton had no desire whatever to injure Archie, who had already been injured enough in other ways. But he was obliged to struggle fiercely, and to return grip for grip, in sheer self-defence.

With their arms interlocked, with their breath coming and going in great gasps, the juniors rolled over and over. And so intent were they upon the struggle that neither noticed how near—how perilously near—they were getting to the edge of the cliff.

And as they wrestled, each striving for the mastery, the storm raged around them, and from far below came the warning boom of the breakers as they dashed tumultuously upon the rocky shore.

The pressure of Archie Howell's grip was almost more than Wharton could bear. He strove to free himself; he struggled with the strength of desperation; and finally his assailant's arms relaxed, and Wharton was able to wrench himself away and stagger to his feet.

Archie Howell rose, also, and for one dramatic moment the two stood face to face.

And then, summoning his remaining strength, Archie hit out straight from the shoulder.

The blow took Harry Wharton full in the chest, and sent him reeling backwards.

"Take that, you cad!" panted Archie. "I'll never come back!"

The speaker suddenly stopped short, with an exclamation of alarm.

Where was Wharton?

What had happened?

A startled cry rang through the storm. There were sounds as of stones and turf being dislodged.

And then Archie realised, with a shock of horror, what he had done.

He had knocked Harry Wharton over the edge of the cliff!

For a moment the junior stood rooted to the spot.

When he had struck that fatal blow he had not known that his opponent was standing on the extreme edge of the cliff. He had been so engrossed in his task of overcoming Wharton and securing his freedom that he had had no thought for anything else.

And now Wharton was gone—gone, in all probability, to his death!

A shudder ran through Archie's frame. He did not know how big a drop it was from the cliff-top to the rocks below, but he could guess that it was considerable.

Archie's anguish of mind was terrible. After a time, when he had recovered the power of action, he dropped on his knees on the edge of the cliff and peered down into the abyss below.

Apart from the white line of foam and the dark outline of the rocks he could distinguish nothing.

"Wharton!" he shouted. "Are you there? Wharton?"

No reply came to Archie Howell's ears as he knelt there, peering down into the gloom.

"I—I've killed him!" panted the horror-stricken junior.

And then a mad impulse came to him to leap over into that abyss himself.

But in a few moments Archie became calmer.

Perhaps, after all, the worst had not happened.

There had been calamities of this sort before, and in several cases the victims had been able to check their descent by clinging to roots, or by finding a foothold on the face of the cliff.

Perhaps Wharton had done this. Perhaps he had not fallen a great distance. He might even have replied to Archie's frenzied shout, but his voice may have been drowned by the storm. On the other hand, Archie's own voice might have been lost in the roar of the elements.

After a brief hesitation, Archie decided to descend the cliff in search of Wharton.

It was a perilous, almost an impossible descent at that part. But Archie was not yet familiar with the geography of the district. He did not know that a quarter of a mile away there was a cliff-path which was comparatively easy of descent. Nor did it occur to him to descend to the shore by the same path up which he had toiled an hour previously.

Without pausing to reflect that he was placing his life in jeopardy, Archie lowered himself over the edge of the cliff.

There were roots to which he could cling, and he clung to them with great tenacity, and worked his way downwards.

For a long time he was unable to find a foothold, and his body was supported by his arms alone.

Eventually, however, Archie came to a narrow ledge which abutted from the face of the cliff. And on this ledge he paused, in order to recruit his energies and to take stock of his surroundings.

He stood suspended, as it were, between sea and sky.

Above him towered the summit of the cliff, which was dominated by the storm-swept skies. And below him, the angry waters churned and hissed among the rocks.

There was no sign of Harry Wharton, and Archie's spirits sank to zero. His hopes of finding the captain of the Remove alive were now very faint indeed.

But he determined to continue the descent—to leave no stone unturned to discover the whereabouts of the fellow whom he had inadvertently knocked over the edge of the cliff.

"Wharton! Where are you?"

Archie Howell put all his lung-power into that cry.

But it remained unanswered.

Archie gave a groan.

He felt positive, now, that Wharton had fallen from the top to the bottom—that at the present moment he was lying huddled upon the rocks below.

Archie quitted the ledge on which he stood, and continued his descent.

The lower part of the cliff was so steep that the junior practically slid from the ledge down to the shore.

He was cut and bruised. His hands were bleeding where they had come into contact with prickly fungus.

But the descent had been accomplished, and it now remained for Harry Wharton to be found.

Archie commenced to explore the rocks at the base of the cliff.

In between the rocks lay stretches of sand. And it was on one of these sand-patches that Wharton was eventually discovered.

The captain of the Remove lay in a huddled heap—unconscious.

In a flash Archie dropped on to his

knees beside the prostrate figure. He wrenched off Wharton's collar and tie and unbuttoned his shirt. And then he applied his ear to the junior's chest.

He expected to hear no heart-beats—to discover no sign of life.

But, to Archie's joy, his expectations proved false.

Wharton's heart was still beating. He was alive, at any rate, and Archie Howell drew a deep breath of relief.

The fact that Wharton had fallen on to the sand and not upon the rocks had undoubtedly saved him from a terrible fate. Had his body alighted upon the rocks, he must inevitably have been killed.

On further examination, Archie discovered that no bones were broken.

Wharton must have lessened the force of his descent by obtaining a temporary grip on roots and branches as he fell.

Archie Howell breathed more freely now that the period of harrowing suspense was over.

What was to be done?

On reflection, Archie decided that he must wait there with Wharton until help was forthcoming.

But when he glanced around he saw that to remain at that spot would mean certain death.

For the tide was coming in fast, and in an hour—perhaps less—the waters would engulf the two juniors.

"We must get out of this!" muttered Archie.

But that was easier said than done.

The descent of the cliff had been fraught with great peril and difficulty. But to ascend it with the burden of an unconscious junior would be impossible. Even the most experienced climber could not have hoped to succeed.

The rising tide came on apace.

Crouched beside the insensible form of Harry Wharton, Archie gazed wildly out to sea.

But no help seemed to be forthcoming from that direction.

And at Archie's back rose the towering wall of the cliff, which defied ascent.

The junior's lip quivered. His face was very pale—not with dread of his own impending fate, but with concern for the unconscious junior who was with him.

"Help!"

Archie's voice rang out over the turbulent waters.

But there was no reply. There seemed to be no loophole of escape.

Archie Howell and Harry Wharton were at the mercy of the treacherous tide.

They were doomed!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Fight for Life!

FIVE minutes passed—they seemed like five years to Archie Howell—and then Wharton opened his eyes.

"Wharton!" said Archie quickly.

"Hallo! That you, Howell? What on earth—where am I?"

"I knocked you over the edge of the cliff," muttered Archie remorsefully. "It was an accident——"

Harry Wharton passed his hand over his forehead.

"Yes, I remember now," he murmured.

"Feelin' groggy?" asked Archie.

"Not too bad. You see, I was able to check my fall. But—but how did you get here?"

"Clambered down the cliff."

"Good heavens! It's a wonder you weren't killed!"

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"It seems," said Archie, "that we've popped out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"How's that? We're safe here, surely?"

Archie Howell pointed to the white line of foam which drew ever nearer.

"Tide's coming in fast," he said.

"Oh crumbs!"

"There's no way out that I can see," said Archie. "Expect you'll think I'm a Dismal Jimmy, but there's no sense in hidin' the truth. In another hour—maybe less—we shall be food for fishes. Barrin' miracles, of course!" added the speaker.

Harry Wharton sat up and took stock of his surroundings.

"Why, I know this spot well," he said.

"We're only a quarter of a mile from Pegg Bay."

Archie sprang to his feet. His eyes were gleaming.

"Do you mean to say we can walk it—that we can race the tide?" he exclaimed.

Wharton shook his head.

"We can walk as far as the headland—that's about half-way," he said. "But we shall be cut off there by the tide. It comes in much quicker at that part."

"Well," said Archie, after a moment's reflection, "we can walk as far as the headland and swim the rest."

"Speak for yourself," said Wharton, with a faint grin. "Personally, I don't believe I could swim a stroke just now."

"In that case, dear boy"—Archie Howell had quite forgotten that he was supposed to be at enmity with Wharton—"I must tow you along."

"Don't be such a duffer! You wouldn't be able to save yourself, let alone both of us. It's doubtful if any boat could survive a sea like this—and a swimmer, no matter how good he might be, wouldn't stand the ghost of a chance."

"The sea's certainly a bit rough—"

"A bit rough! Why, man, it's like a cauldron! If you attempted to swim in it, you'd be dashed to pieces on the rocks!"

"Better that than waitin' here until the tide comes up over our heads," said Archie. "We'll get away from this place, anyway. Can you walk?"

"Of course."

But when Wharton came to try a sense of weakness assailed him, and he would have collapsed had not his companion shot out his arm to support him.

Archie escorted his schoolfellow along the rocky shore at the base of the cliffs.

The water had risen by this time almost to the junior's knees.

"Strikes me we shall have to start swimmin' sooner than we bargained for," said Archie grimly.

Harry Wharton said nothing. He staggered along as best he could, supported by Archie's arm.

After a nightmare journey, they succeeded in reaching the headland.

The water had risen still higher, and they were in danger of being swept off their feet.

But the storm had abated considerably, and the sea, although far from being as smooth as a lake, had calmed down a good deal.

"We can go no farther," said Archie, straining his eyes ahead of him through the gloom. "We must swim now. Ready to take the plunge?"

"Look here—"

"Ever done any life-savin' drill?" asked Archie. "You have? Then we shall manage it quite easily. All you've got to do is to lay flat on your back. Leave the rest to me."

"Look here—" protested Wharton again.

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"We'd better get rid of our jackets an' boots, I think," said Archie. "They'll only be an encumbrance."

"I'm not going to let you make this mad attempt—" began Wharton.

"My dear fellow, you've got no choice in the matter. Besides, this is our only chance. If we've got to die—an' I don't think for one moment that we shall—better to die fightin' than to wait here an' let death overtake us."

Harry Wharton realised the futility of further argument. He saw that Archie Howell's mind was made up—that wild horses would not turn him from his purpose.

The juniors removed their jackets, and then, with some difficulty, their boots. They left them on the rocks, and then, Archie Howell going first, they waded into deeper water.

"Now!" muttered Archie, when the water was up to his middle.

And he flung himself over on his back.

Harry Wharton followed suit, and Archie Howell supported him with his hands, at the same time striking out powerfully with his legs.

The fight for life had begun!

Progress was naturally slow, and Archie, although he would not have admitted it for worlds, was on the verge of exhaustion.

He must keep pegging away, he told himself. This was his one chance of saving the life of the fellow whom he had inadvertently knocked over the cliff.

"All right?" he jerked out.

"Yes!" panted Wharton.

And then a big wave enveloped them both. They held their breath as it surged over them; but it seemed an age before their heads came to the surface again.

"That was a nasty one!" gasped Archie.

"Save your breath!" said Wharton.

"You'll need every ounce of it!"

Archie continued to shoot out his legs with the utmost vigour, and occasionally he turned his head, as if in the hope of sighting their destination—Pegg Bay.

But the bay was not yet in sight.

"I fancy I can go a little way on my own now," said Wharton, at length.

"I'm not goin' to let you try the experiment," replied Archie. "I'll keep on towin' you."

"Think you can stick it out?"

"I'm sure I can!"

But the strain of that grim struggle for life soon told upon Archie Howell's already exhausted frame.

The bay was in sight at last, but Archie knew, in his heart, that he would never be able to reach it. He was utterly whacked, and every wave that buffeted his head made him weaker and weaker.

Harry Wharton noticed at once that the pace had slackened.

"You're tiring!" he said.

"No fear!" muttered Archie heroically.

"I'm just takin' things easy for a bit."

But Wharton was not to be deceived.

"You're done," he said. "I knew I should be too much of a burden for you. Let go, and I'll get along as best I can."

But Archie refused to release his hold.

He was making scarcely any progress now.

It was tantalising to be in sight of the bay and yet unable, through physical exhaustion, to reach it.

Archie's senses seemed to reel. He was choking for breath. He had come to the end of his tether.

And at last he admitted the gravity of the situation.

"It's all up!" he gasped.

"No, it isn't!" panted Wharton joyfully.

For, leaping towards them over the surface of the waves, came the lifeboat from Pegg!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

"Au Revolt, but not Good-bye!"

HELP had arrived in time. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent had been instrumental in procuring it.

After a futile quest for Archie Howell at the fisherman's cottages, Bob and Frank had gone up on the cliffs to rejoin Wharton. But they had not found him. They had found, however, his school cap lying close to the edge of the cliff, and they concluded that a calamity had occurred—that Wharton had missed his footing and fallen over the edge.

Instead of descending the cliff as Archie Howell had done, the two chums had promptly summoned the lifeboat, and had persuaded the crew to row out to the base of the cliffs at the spot where Wharton was presumed to have fallen.

The lifeboat had set out on its mission, and it had not proceeded very far before a vivid flash of lightning had revealed two fellows struggling in the water.

Both Archie Howell and Harry Wharton would assuredly have lost their lives had not the lifeboat arrived so opportunely on the scene. As it was, both juniors lost consciousness on being hauled into the boat.

In an agony of apprehension, Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent awaited the return of the lifeboat, and whilst they waited they were joined by Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh, to whom they communicated their fears for Wharton's safety.

"Here it comes!" said Nugent at length, straining his eyes out to sea.

"Already?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Yes!"

A moment later the lifeboat ran ashore, and the four juniors dashed towards it.

"You've found him?"

Bob Cherry's voice was tense with anxiety.

"Yes," replied one of the men.

"Found both of 'em!"

"Both!"

"There's another besides Master Wharton—a young gent we've never seen before," said the leader of the crew. "They were evidently tryin' to swim ashore."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull, in astonishment. "It's Howell!"

As he was being lifted out of the boat Harry Wharton regained consciousness. But he was still dazed, and unable to comprehend where he was, until he heard the familiar voice of Bob Cherry.

"Thank Heaven you're safe, Harry!"

Wharton was about to speak, but Frank Nugent interrupted him.

"Come along, old man! Your story will keep till later."

Harry Wharton's chums assisted him to the nearest fisherman's cottage, and the lifeboatmen carried Archie Howell, who was still unconscious.

At the cottage Wharton was given some brandy, and the juniors, drenched and exhausted after their long exposure to the elements, were enabled to dry their garments.

Meanwhile, Dr. Short was summoned from Friardale.

The medical man arrived shortly afterwards in his car.

Archie Howell had recovered consciousness by this time. But he was delicious, and the doctor looked grave.

"He must be removed to the school."

(Continued on page 19, col. 2.)



"THE SILENCE!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR
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CHAPTER 1.

A.D. 1924.

"The Silence!"

TOM HOPE, the son of Admiral Sir Headley Hope, a midshipman in the Navy, and Dick Elliott, a keen young inventor in the Flying Force, are great friends, and Dick is very fond of Madge Hope, Tom's sister.

When Tom arrives at Seahaven after a cruise he is met, as he comes ashore, by Dick Elliott, who asks him whether he has heard the news.

"What news?" said Tom.

"Phew! Fancy discovering anyone who doesn't know about the silence of America, Japan, and China!"

"Well, the main part of the matter is this: No news has come from either China, Japan, or the States for nearly a month past. They seem to be cut off from the world. Wireless messages have been ignored, cables unanswered, and their own Consuls here are as puzzled as everyone else is. Every ship from America, Japan, and China is weeks overdue, and, consequently, no mails. Here's, perhaps, the most serious part of the whole business. About ten days ago, as soon as the situation began to impress the Government that something was really wrong, the Admiralty sent some fast cruisers on a mission of inquiry to New York, and, though our wise men have attempted to smother the truth, the fact has just leaked out that those ships have disappeared!"

"Eh? Well, I'm— D'you mean to say that several cruisers have vanished into thin air?"

"Unfortunately, that's exactly what I do mean!" said Elliott grimly. "They signalled 'All well,' their last message, from somewhere in the Atlantic, but no news since."

"And our ships on the China and other Eastern stations—what about them? And what of Canada, Newfoundland, and—"

"Silent—all silent, old man!" cut in the other.

The two boys meet Admiral Sir Headley Hope, who tells them that an old Chinese servant of his has recently mesmerised Madge, and compelled her to rob him of some highly important papers. Later on, Dick and Tom are instrumental in rescuing Madge and capturing Ah Ling, the missing servant; but discover that copies have been made of the missing papers.

Sir Headley then tells the boys the secret of the papers.

Dick Elliott suddenly gave a cry of astonishment.

"What is it, boy?" exclaims Sir Headley. "Are you ill?"

(Now continue with the story.)

Dick Elliott's Startling Disclosure!

"**N**O, no; I'm not ill, sir. But—but— May I examine those papers more closely?" said Dick Elliott calmly.

Sir Headley Hope, wondering, handed them to him, and dead silence reigned as Dick minutely examined each sheet, making hurried calculations from time to time. Presently he passed them back, his self-possession quite restored, and his voice steady as he said:

"I believe I might be able to help you, sir! I—"

The admiral half-rose, gripping the edge of the table so tightly that his knuckles showed white through the drawn skin.

"You what?"

"Just as I say, sir, though I can't exactly promise," answered Dick evenly. But Sir Headley shook his head hopelessly.

"I'm afraid not, my lad," he returned. "Men who have spent all their lives among chemicals are at a deadlock, so how could you accomplish what they have failed to do?"

But Elliott was not to be shaken, and Tom, who knew him so well, guessed there was something substantial behind his apparently rash statement.

"Would it surprise you to learn, sir," pursued Dick, "that the main idea of this thing is not new to me?"

"Not new to you! Good heavens, boy, what do you mean? You cannot have heard anything of Wilton—"

"No, sir. His name was, and is, perfectly strange to me; but, although I took up flying, I have never let my chemistry researches lie idle. Indeed, to cut a long story short, I have been working on a somewhat similar invention myself for months past, but I, too, am stumped for the time being."

The admiral gasped, but was too astounded to make any comment. Dick continued:

"Most of Wilton's formula is almost the same as my own; but the main point is that I believe I still hold what these papers lack, or a workable substitute, at least. Wilton gives here two of four things I could not hit upon, whilst I have a blend of three chemicals which I am almost sure would take the place of what you are searching for. Indeed, they may be the identical ones Wilton originally used."

"My stars!" chuckled Tom. "Trust old Dick if you want surprises! Yet I never thought you'd do any good to humanity, except blow yourself up—"

"Be quiet!" snapped Sir Headley shortly. Cool, businesslike sailor though he was, he was now the most excited of

the trio, and Elliott himself the calmest. "If this is a joke, my lad, you'll not find it a very pleasant one! There's a great deal depending on the discovery of these missing ingredients, which will go far towards making our country absolutely invincible."

"I am serious, sir, quite serious!" answered the young aviator. "It only remains for you to test my plan. Give me three weeks, and trust me fully. I can only fail at the worst, yet I've got great hopes of succeeding."

"Of course I trust you, boy, but the thing is almost unbelievable! Here are four of our cleverest scientists baffled, yet you come along with— Oh, it's preposterous!"

"But I can try, sir, can't I?"

Sir Headley considered for a minute ere making up his mind. The matter was so vital that he seemed almost afraid to decide. But presently he nodded slowly.

"Yes," he replied; "you must come to London, where all you require shall be placed at your disposal. I'm consenting on my own responsibility, but no doubt the others will be glad to seize any opportunity, no matter who provides it, if it ends by putting us in possession of the full secret. You shall have quite a free hand, and may you succeed! The reward will be big, I promise you!"

"If my efforts place my country in the position you name, sir, that will be all I ask," said Dick gravely, though his eyes were shining at the chance just given him. "When do I start?"

"At once! You must not have an hour's unnecessary delay. From what has occurred, and from what may be occurring elsewhere, the Wilton Ray may be required sooner than any of us expect. Oh, that we knew something definite! This silence is terribly unnerving!"

They were interrupted by a slight sound from the couch, and, turning round, saw that Madge had just awakened. She seemed quite fresh and rested as she crossed lightly over to the table where Dick was busy making several notes on the margin of Wilton's formula.

"And that's what all the trouble is about!" she said. "Who would think a few papers could cause such unpleasantness?"

"It largely depends on what those papers are!" returned Sir Headley quietly. "But then, my child, you don't understand these things. Run along now! Tom will see you safely to the station, after which he must return to his ship. Dick and I desire to be alone for a while."

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A hurried farewell, and they had gone. Then Elliott and the admiral once more became deeply immersed in the vital work before them.

The Strange Story of H.M.S. Wolfhound —“England Expects”—

STARTLING though the circumstances connected with Ah Liog and Hanson had been at the time of their arrest, the happenings of the ensuing fortnight quickly put them into the background. So much so, indeed, that their ultimate fate did not seem to interest people overmuch.

For, shortly after the events recorded in the preceding chapters took place, a simultaneous rising of the Chinese population throughout Britain gave the authorities as much as they could do to cope with. It was a well-organised affair, evidently the outcome of much thought, and upset the centres involved to a serious extent. The inexplicable silence still continued, and, coupled with this latest sensation, things were in a mystifying condition all over the kingdom.

The Alien Act of 1920 had paid little or no attention to the yellow races, the recent war with the Central Powers influencing the Government to apply the Act specially to the undesirables of Europe. Consequently, Chinese immigrants were allowed to pour into the country unchecked, spreading like an epidemic all over the land, and steadily increasing their population.

Then, when the rebellion broke out, sudden and unexpected as it had been, it was like the stroke of a gigantic hammer. No cause for the affair could be arrived at, for the Chinese had always pulled well enough with their white neighbours, and there had been no preliminary friction, which suggested to many, who were shrewd enough to read between the lines, that this was merely a cloak to conceal something bigger, at present obscure.

During that fortnight Dick Elliott had been almost ceaselessly at work upon his version of the Wilton Ray, and had now confirmed his previous suspicions that his own substitutes would fit in with the original formula. Sir Headley Hope and the others in the secret were well satisfied with the progress made, several tests having proved entirely successful, and it now only remained to manufacture the peculiar camera-like apparatus in order to complete the work. This, however, was tricky, and had taken Dick more time, in proportion, than the actual perfection of the Ray itself, for, Wilton's apparatus having been destroyed, he had practically to discover a new method of transmission—that is, unlike the chemical ingredients, he had no half-finished instructions to work on, and the problem caused him many a sleepless night. Finally, however, by considerably altering one of the several instruments which the others had previously been experimenting with, he at length succeeded in producing an apparatus which gave excellent results.

It was towards the end of the third week that a fresh shock again upset the country, caused by a torpedo-boat destroyer steaming into Seahaven with some startling news. She had been operating with the rest of her flotilla far out at sea, when a strange-looking airship had suddenly appeared overhead as though from nowhere, hovering immediately overhead. This was joined by

two others, seeming to “solidify,” as it were, out of the clear sky. But none of them flew any flag or other distinguishing mark.

They were quite unlike any aircraft so far seen, possessing at each side two enormous wings, which worked much in the same manner as those of a bird; whilst, as the newcomers became stationary, these wings ceased motion, each ship being then supported in the air by a quartette of whirling fans revolving on four masts.

No hail came from any of the strange arrivals, nor was any answer given to the inquiries of the flotilla leader, upon which the latter ordered full steam ahead and guns to be manned.

Marvellous to relate, however, these commands could not be carried out. The engines refused to work, while the guns were in a similar condition. The whole flotilla remained absolutely stationary, its crews gaping in astonishment. A wireless message was next essayed, but that, too, failed—the installations were unworkable also.

Whilst this was taking place not a form had been visible on any of the three airships; but then, as the crews of the torpedo craft thronged the decks, staring upwards in amazement, a uniformed figure leaned over the side of the central air-cruiser. No word was spoken, and the man drew back almost at once, yet not quickly enough to prevent those below recognising his nationality. He was Chinese.

Presently the airships moved forward, the whole flotilla—wonder of wonders!—following them like so many dogs, their speed growing faster and faster as the vessels above increased theirs.

The destroyer concerned—the Wolfhound—was at the end of the line, and made several attempts to go astern. All were futile for the time being; her engines refused to respond or her propellers to revolve, yet minute by minute the forward pace was quickening. Suddenly, however, her commander noticed a gradual increase in her distance from the next torpedo-boat destroyer ahead, and ordered his men to redouble their efforts below. By now the three airships had again melted into the blue, and were quite invisible, yet their uncanny influence was still felt as before.

All at once the Wolfhound's screws churned the water into foam, and she backed swiftly. The remainder of the ships were now a long distance ahead, speeding none knew whither; but, save for them, the sea was deserted. Not a sail, not a wisp of smoke in sight—only the “mosquito craft” rushing through the waves, naturally enough apparently, could any casual spectator have chanced to look upon them.

Bewildered and shaken by the extraordinary affair, the Wolfhound's commander took his charge under forced draught to headquarters, where his story was received with no little scepticism; but he resolutely stuck to his guns, supported by the evidence of his crew, and the fact that the flotilla showed no sign of returning, though it was now overdue.

Dick Elliott was at the Admiralty in consultation with Sir Headley Hope and a couple of other high officials when the strange news came through; but the Sea Lord had scarcely been listening sufficiently long to learn full details ere the voice at the other end abruptly ceased. Frantically he strove to get reconnected, but in vain; there was no answer, and finally he replaced the receiver with a trembling hand.

“The connection has been cut off,

gentlemen, but an answer to the riddle of the silence is surely forthcoming, and we must be prepared to meet it, whatever form it takes,” he said, his voice vibrating slightly, despite his efforts to control it. “The airships are evidently Chinese; the Chinese in Britain are in revolt, and China is one of the cut-off countries. This is no pure coincidence—of that we may be sure—and I fear it means war. There cannot be no other explanation!”

The rest of the company bowed their heads in understanding. Ay, it must mean war! What else could it mean?

“The Wilton Ray is a complete success,” continued Sir Headley. “Apparati are being manufactured even now, and will be installed all through the country, and in the Fleet as well. Considering the power these strange air-vessels seem to have, I am almost afraid to make any random guesses with regard to the Navy. Our larger ships might be immune, yet the cruisers which lately disappeared so mysteriously seems to answer in the negative. They were biggish craft enough, and they have gone—whether by the same agency or not, we, of course, can't say, though it's quite probable.”

“But the Ray must have caused some anxiety,” suggested one of the others present. “Look what a determined effort was made to secure its secret!”

“That's just what I was about to say,” replied Sir Headley. “There were other inventions under our consideration at the same time—some, indeed, which were already proved of great worth—but apparently only Wilton's formula was desired. Yet, if the spies were clever enough to learn of it, they could have done likewise in the other cases. You are quite sure there can be no hitch, Elliott?”

“None, sir!” answered Dick decidedly. “You have seen the tests, which you yourself admitted were at least as successful as Wilton's. Indeed, I think I can say without boasting that my apparatus is slightly more effective than his under some circumstances.”

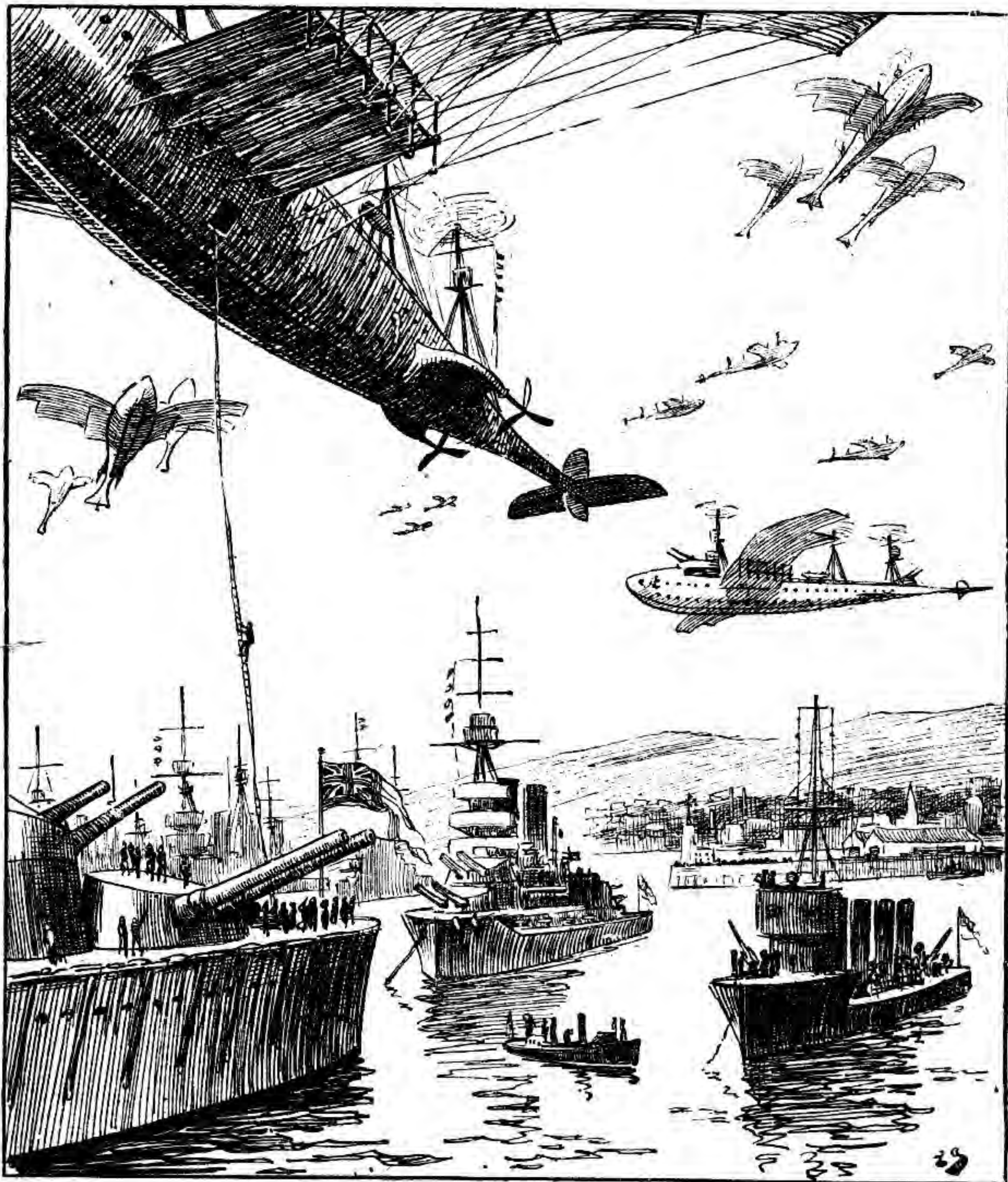
“True, true; but— However, we must place special reliance on this new arm, for we are evidently up against something, the like of which mankind never dreamed of before. It now only remains for the bombshell to fully burst, and I don't think the wait will likely be a long one. The revolutions are being successfully overcome, but it is quite plain on the face of it that they were not intended to do anything but occupy our energies for the time being. Thank Heaven, we have resolutely attended to this other matter and carried it to a successful completion!”

The time passed wearily, but not idly. Several further efforts were made to get a fresh connection; but it was no use, nor was any attempt to pick up the Fleet by means of the Admiralty's Marconi installation successful. There was no reply to either.

“The wireless not working does not surprise me, since that officer from the Mammoth—who spoke said he was obliged to ‘phone, as the other method was mysteriously disorganised; but I can't understand not being able to even get the Exchange at Seahaven—”

Whir-r-r-r! The telephone-bell suddenly sounded again, cutting short the admiral's further remarks. He snatched up the receiver, his face growing grey as he listened; then the article dropped from his fingers, clattering on the table, and the others started forward in alarm.

“Great Heaven, it has come! The Home Fleet is lying useless, not a gun



When the tension was nearing a breaking point, one of the larger airships moved until it was suspended directly over the Mammoth's quarter-deck; a rope ladder swished down, and a uniformed figure—the first sign of human life they had seen since the air fleet arrived—nimble descended. (See page 14.)

workable nor a piston-rod able to stir, whilst the town itself is held up by the same invisible force—trams and trains immovable, motors and taxis motionless, telephones unable to be used—

"But where did this message come from, sir?" gasped Dick. "How—"

"From some distance nearer. It was the same man. He couldn't finish his first message, and the rest has happened since, so he managed to get through from another call-office by riding some miles on horseback. The 'phone there was quite in order then, but Heaven knows

what may have happened by now! Gentlemen, this is war—war under such conditions as might well appal the greatest of all nations, but Britain will face it as steadily as of old! 'England expects—'

"Clear for Action!"

AS Midshipman Tom Hope, with three companions of the gun-room-flat, lolled in a shady corner of the Unconquerable's sunlit deck and watched the snake-like units

of the First Torpedo Flotilla hurry seawards, he heaved a sigh of regret.

"What's wrong wi' ye, Tammy?" asked MacDongall, a red-haired youth, who always looked as though a kilt and tartan would suit him better than the uniform of his Majesty's Navy. "Ye're nae often sighin', I'm thunkin'."

"Am I not?" answered Hope. "Well, I try to keep my feelings down, but when I see those lucky dogs running in and out at all hours, while we are stuck here as motionless as the Nelson Column, it

makes my heart bleed! Who wouldn't be a torpedo-boat destroyer commander?"

"I wouldn't, anyway!" said Mac. "While I'm here I've space for breathe, but in you timpts—ugh!"

He finished with a shudder of horror, which neither Tom nor the third midde noticed; for Hope was still staring after the retreating boats, whilst Lonsdale sat deeply immersed in a letter from home.

Presently Tom stood up, stretching his long arms as a bell sounded, and passed quickly along the deck to take charge of a pinnace which was bringing some of the crew ashore.

Tom took his seat in the stern of the pinnace, glancing good-humouredly at the crowd of "leavers" in the packed boat straining at the tow-rope behind. None, to look at him, could credit that he was not the happiest of them all; he never showed any save a smiling face to Dreadnought—yet, in his heart of hearts, Tom sometimes felt himself almost wishing another war would break out! That such desire was wrong, he knew well enough, but it would mean action and excitement and thrills, which were almost as necessary to his nature as his food and drink. Little did he realise, as the wheel of that puffing little shore-going launch jumped and quivered beneath his hands, how soon his half-formed desire was to be gratified.

It was late afternoon when the shock came. A tiny speck showed between the great promontories flanking the wide bay—a speck which grew larger and larger with each succeeding minute, until finally a T.B.D. dashed up alongside the flagship, like a tiny black splash against the vast background of grey hull.

"What's the Wolfhound in such a hurry for, anyway?" said Hope to MacDougall, as they watched from the Unconquerable's deck.

But the Scot shook his fiery head, as though the occurrence was not sufficiently important for a scion of the Clan MacDougall to worry over.

Shortly afterwards, however, something happened which sent every ship of the Fleet buzzing from stokehole to conning-tower. A roll of bunting ran up to H.M.S. Mammoth's mast and broke on the gentle breeze. Hope's hands gripped the rail till his knuckles showed white.

"Clear for action!" he gasped. "Clear for—Good lor! Mac! What's up? Is the boss mad?"

"Sir Stanford's nae often ta'en that way!" replied the hardy Scot drily. "They finished a' but 'mosquito' manoeuvres here twa months ago, sae it's scarcely likely—Ay, mon, there's queer things happenin' the noo, ye know! I'm feelin' the tension mase!"

Mac, of course, was referring to the mysterious silence and the inexplicable revolutions, which were naturally the most prominent topics of conversation among all classes.

The Unconquerable was now throbbing with newly-awakened life, as was every other unit of the mighty Fleet. Her guns—the very last word in destructive power of the day—swung to and fro, up and down, in their steel barbettes, as every elevation was thoroughly tested. Whistles piped, bells rang, little wisps of smoke began to pour from a forest of funnels, growing thicker and heavier, until a pall overhung the bay. It was a sight to stir the most sluggish heart—a great force waking to life at a few

moments' notice; yet such has been the habit of the Navy since Nelson's day—ay, and long before that!

"England expects—"

The Holding-up of the Fleet—What is the Power?

THE movements of the guns ceased. Every man stood silently at his appointed post, watching the Mammoth's signal-mast for further instructions. None came, however. Evidently that terse command had only been a warning for preparation; yet the sudden arrival of the Wolfhound, and the hasty manner of her coming, told those who watched that upon her rested the cause of that unexpected order.

The destroyer still lay alongside the flagship. Her commander had been seen to havey aboard the larger vessel, and had not reappeared. So the great Dreadnought had become the object of all eyes as the Fleet waited for it knew not what.

Ah! Up went another roll of bunting, bursting into a coloured stream.

"First Cruiser Squadron make ready for sea!" spelt out Tom. "Hallo! There goes the boss's wireless! He's sending a message ashore or to headquarters!"

The tiny flashes, just visible in the late afternoon light, flickered on the tracery between the flagship's tripod-masts, and then abruptly ceased.

"Short and sweet!" muttered Hope, as he watched. "No! There she goes once more! Stopped again! Phew! Someone will get a wiggling over that!"

Another flag signal ran up to the halyards.

"Our wireless out of order! Unconquerable prepare for message to, send headquarters! Beginning!"

A signaller, armed with a couple of flags, appeared on the Mammoth's bridge. It was a long message, and its recipient on the Unconquerable was white-faced as he jotted down the last word and dashed for the wireless-room.

"Guid snakes!" gasped MacDougall, who had read the strange news the flags sent across the water. "Did ye ever know o' sic a thing? Hallo! What's up now? Here's the 'owner'!"

The captain was hurrying towards the bridge, followed by a signaller, both of them watched eagerly by the rest. Then a surprised murmur went round as they read what was sent over to the flagship.

"Our wireless broken down also! Cannot understand cause!"

"Our wireless scotched, too!" exclaimed Tom, in amazement. "What on earth—Ah, there's a pinnace putting off from the Mammoth! She's coming here—no, she's not, though! See, Mac? They must be going to send the message from the town—by 'phone, probably!"

All eyes were bent on the panting little launch and her couple of occupants, as she raced shorewards, swiftly reaching the jetty steps, where one of the officers sprang ashore and quickly disappeared.

Then, some minutes later, a strange low hum sounded in the air above, and a great shadow fell upon the sea. Hope and MacDougall glanced up, and reeled back in amazement.

"Great Scott!" gasped the former. "Look, Mac—look! And there's another—and another!"

Three extraordinary objects had appeared in the sky just overhead—airships of some kind, but of such size and so strangely built that they put even

Germany's mightiest Zeppelins completely in the shade. No one had noticed their approach until they had actually arrived—they, indeed, seemed to have emerged from the blue sky like a picture slowly forming on a screen.

First three, and then more, in ones and twos, they appeared from nowhere, until they clustered above both sea and town like a flock of mighty birds. Each possessed a pair of enormous wings, beating slowly up and down, and carried a quartette of slender masts, which, in turn, supported four whirling fans.

Then came the crowning surprise of all. Not a gun would work, not a propeller revolve. The whole fleet was locked by some invisible force, the power of which must have been something extraordinary.

"No, the Wolfhound's boss wasn't drunk," breathed Tom Hope; "for here's the story of the flag-signals being enacted over again. Heavens above! Look at the shore!"

A huge crowd had collected on the front, staring transfixed at the peculiar shapes hovering overhead. The airships were now absolutely motionless, their wings steady, and suspended only by their whirling fans, which produced a faint buzz not unlike that of a distant high-powered motor-car.

Then, when the tension was nearing a breaking-point, one of the large airships moved until it was suspended directly over the Mammoth's quarter-deck; a rope-ladder swished down, and a uniformed figure—the first sign of human life they had seen since the air-fleet arrived—unhappily descended.

Tom Hope raised his glasses and focussed them on the flagship. The newcomer was tall and strongly built, possessing a yellow visage, which indicated Eastern nationality. His clothes, both in colour and cut, were not unlike those of our Service-men, and his salute was quite the regulation one, as Sir Stanford Martyn advanced from a group of astonished officers clustered beyond.

A few words were exchanged between the pair, who then disappeared in the direction of the admiral's quarters, Sir Stanford walking a trifle unsteadily, and followed by the other.

We must now follow the movement's of the Mammoth's officer, who had leapt from the pinnace, and reached the head of the jetty steps, almost before the little craft had come alongside.

He dashed across to the nearest call-office, and got through to the Admiralty without delay, pouring the story of the Wolfhound into the amazed ears of Sir Headley Hope. Then, when he had nearly finished, a great, hurrying crowd attracted his attention through the glass panels. They seemed in a panic, and, thinking that this might mean fresh news, the officer laid down the receiver and stepped out into the street, gasping with amazement at the sight which met his gaze.

Over the town several strange shapes were hovering, and others hung suspended above the bay. Trams, motors, and taxis were at a standstill, the only sign of movement being the huge, jostling throng. It was for all the world like a cinema film in which a portion of the objects had been stopped with a sudden jerk, letting the remainder continue their activities. The lieutenant dashed back to the 'phone.

"Hallo!" he called frantically. "Hallo, sir! Are you there?"

But as no reply came, he was replacing the receiver, and had gripped the

little crank-handle at the side of the box in order to ring up again, when a startling thing happened.

The receiver seemed literally torn from his fingers, crashing into its resting-place as though thrust home by an invisible hand, and the crank-wheel refused to turn, despite his utmost efforts.

Stupefied with astonishment, the lieutenant hurried out into the open, where the crowd had grown thicker than ever. He tried three other call-offices, with the same result—all the instruments were useless—all fast locked, as though made of one solid piece.

Then, as he left the last one, chagrined and desperate, he noticed a taxi drawn up at the kerb some distance away. This street was not so crowded as those nearer the sea, and he had a better opportunity of looking round him. The driver was staring at his cab in puzzled dismay.

"Engaged?"

The man looked up, almost savagely.

"Engaged!" he echoed. "Yus, I should think I am—to stay 'ere for good! She won't budge an inch, nor will any other motor, train, tram, or even bike, in the whole place! If ye want to get anywhere, sir, ye'll 'ave to walk, or find a 'oss," he added more civilly, as he took in the other's uniform, and his dulled senses grasped the fact that he was speaking to a naval officer; then he glared skywards, shaking his fist.

"Hang them, whoever they are! They've got us in a pretty grip, an' the Fleet as well! Yus, that's a fact, sir. Didn't ye know? Why, the noos 'as 'eaked out, an' everyone's half-crazed! Not a gun, let alone a ship, can stir!"

"What?"

"Just wot I say! If it ain't true, why ain't the Fleet blowin' the innards out o' them things, up there? I s'pose, after seein' wot's taken place all over the town, ye'd like me to believe the whole biz is some peaceful manoeuvre—eh, sir?"

"Where can I get a horse?" the lieutenant suddenly gasped, his brain reeling at what he heard.

The chauffeur jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Just yonder. See the stables across there? They'll let ye 'ave one."

"And where's the nearest town or village from here—any direction? One with a call-office, I want."

"Mayburn, four or five miles away. Take the first turn on the left, an' then it's a straight road, sir."

Inwardly praying that the Mayburn phones would be in working order, the officer was soon tearing along the country road as swiftly as the thundering hoofs could take him. At Mayburn he succeeded in sending the second, and more startling message; but, though he did not know it at the time, it was touch and go. A quarter of an hour later that particular telephone was unworkable, as were all others for a radius of several miles. The circle of the influence had been extended.

(There will be another splendid long instalment next Monday. Order your copy of the MAGNET in advance.)

"HER BROTHER'S HONOUR!"

(Continued from page 14.)

sanatorium at once," he said. "I will take him in my car—in fact, I will take all of you."

Archie Howell's wet clothing was removed, and he was wrapped in warm blankets, and laid on the seat at the back of the car.

When the car arrived at Greyfriars it was met in the Close by the Head, a party of prefects, and Phyllis Howell.

The prefects and Phyllis had scoured the countryside for the missing junior, but without success, and they were astonished and delighted to find that Archie was in the car.

But when they saw him, when they heard him chattering wildly in his delirium, their delight was changed to the deepest anxiety.

Archie was promptly conveyed to the sanatorium, and for the remainder of the night the Head, the doctor, and Phyllis stayed at the bedside of the delirious junior. And when the day broke, with cloudless skies and scarcely a trace of the fierce storm which had raged overnight the delirium passed, and Archie Howell sank into a peaceful slumber.

Dr. Short rose from the bedside. He was smiling, and he met Phyllis Howell's eager glance of interrogation quite reassuringly.

"He will live!" he said.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not slept a wink that night.

An hour before rising-bell the long period of suspense was over.

Wingate of the Sixth came into the Remove dormitory.

"Go to sleep, you kids," he said. "You have the Head's permission to remain in bed till midday."



For the remainder of the night the head, the doctor, and Phyllis stayed by the bedside of the delirious junior. (See Chapter 10.)

"Sleep!" echoed Wharton bitterly. "How can we sleep when Howell—"

"Howell is out of danger," said Wingate. "The crisis is over, and the doctor says there is now not the slightest cause for anxiety."

And then Bob Cherry gave a ringing cheer, which awakened every occupant of the dormitory.

But it was not until the following day that Harry Wharton & Co. were allowed to visit their schoolfellow.

And when they did visit him they were full of remorse and contrition for ever having doubted him.

"We've been cads and fools and silly asses!" declared Bob Cherry.

"And it will serve us jolly well right if Miss Phyllis keeps her threat about never speaking to us again!" said Frank Nugent.

"My dear fellows," murmured Archie. "Phyl has no intention of doin' that, have you, Phyl?"

"Of course not!" said Phyllis, smiling. "The past is done with now, and I know—we both know—that you will never doubt my brother again."

"Never!" said Harry Wharton solemnly.

"As soon as you are fitfully well, Archie," said Hurree Singh, "we will cook the fatheaded calf for your esteemed benefit."

"Hear, hear!"

"As soon as I'm fitfully well enough to be moved," said Archie, with a smile, "I'm goin' home."

"Oh crumbs!"

"But only for a time. The Head thinks it advisable, an' I don't like contradictin' the Head. It's not safe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must buck up and come back to the Remove, Archie," said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull.

"We sha'n't be happy until we're able to make it up to you for having treated you so shabbily—"

"If you dare to mention the past again, Bull," said Archie aggressively, "I'll bang a pillow at you!"

"Time's up!" said Wharton, glancing towards the door. "Here's the matron come to turn us out."

And the Famous Five retired from the sanny, happy in the knowledge that they had won the free and full forgiveness of Archie Howell and his sister.

Later in the day Archie had other visitors. And one of them was Mr. Montgomery Bragg, who had good news to relate. He explained that Danny Denver had made a rapid and unexpected recovery from his illness, and that "H.M.S. Pinafore" would positively be performed that evening at the Theatre Royal.

And so everything ended happily, and in due course Archie Howell, his honour vindicated and his sufferings over, bade au revoir to his chums of the Greyfriars Remove—"Au revoir, but not good-bye!"

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "Chamming with Loder!" Make a point of ordering your copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY in advance.)

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READERS' NOTICES.

Correspondents Wanted and Back Numbers for Sale and Required.

T. Dawson, 53, Pridham Road, E., Thornton Heath, Surrey, has for sale 210 "Magnets," 120 "Gems," and 106 "Penny Populars." What offers?

A. Savage, 4, New Road, Portland, has first six numbers of the "Greyfriars Herald," several "Magnets," including "A Very Gallant Gentleman," also "Boys' Friend Libs.," including "Rivals and Chums," and other books. Will exchange for "Gems" or "Boys' Friends."

Alex. Huitson, 3, Princes Street, North Shields, wants correspondence with readers in New Zealand and the Indian Empire.

George Hay, 28, Gardner Street, Partick, Glasgow, has for sale "Gems," 530 to date; "Magnets," 530-534, 594-641; "Boys' Friends," 878-989; "Boys' Realm," New Series, 1-60; "Union Jack," 819 to date; "Penny Popular," 4-10, New Series; "Greyfriars Herald," 2-30, 9d. per dozen, or best offer. Also "Holiday Annual," 3s., and several Libraries, 3d. each.

Leonard Clifford, 156, Meadow Lane, Leeds, has for sale Summer Double Number "Gem," 1915; also Christmas Double Number "Magnet," 1915; also Double Number "Nelson Lee," 1910. What offers? Stamped envelope.

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