

HERE'S VALUE! TWO LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL AND DETECTIVE STORIES,
SPECIAL 4-PAGE SUPPLEMENT AND TWO EASY COMPETITIONS

No. 801. Vol. XXIII.

Week ending June 16th, 1923.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

School & Detective Stories



SAVED FROM CERTAIN DEATH!

(A dramatic incident, featuring Harry Wharton's pluck, from the long complete yarn of Greyfriars, inside.)

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"BUNTER'S BARRING-OUT!"

By Frank Richards.

Next Monday's long, complete school story of Greyfriars brings well into the limelight the complex character of the great W. G. Imagining himself to be the object of everyone's venom, so to speak, Billy Bunter, after a string of very unfortunate occurrences, resolves to show his metal. That he determines upon a most unusual course to accomplish this end it is hardly necessary for me to say. Quite by accident the egregious Owl does show his metal. He comes out very strong in a burglar scene, thereby rendering Greyfriars a great service. But that is the culminating point in this coming yarn. Long before it is reached, however, you will be splitting your sides with laughter at the weird and wonderful adventures of the Remove's prize porpoise. Make a point of reading this splendid story, chums. You won't regret it.

"THE CASE OF THE COINER!"

By Owen Conquest.

Ferrers Locke is one of the principal characters on the stage in the above-named story, and his thrilling adven-

tures amongst the denizens of the underworld will grip you with intense excitement from first to last. Jack Drake also, the sleuth's able young assistant, plays no mean part in bringing to justice a precious gang of scoundrels who have long been a menace to society in general, and Scotland Yard in particular. Don't miss this exciting story. It's a real searcher!

GYMNASTICS!

Once again the "Herald" staff has given proof of its versatility in the journalism line. Taking the above subject as their starting point, Harry Wharton & Co. have contributed a sparkling supplement, in which fun and frolic, to say nothing of a spice of drama, are carefully worked up. By the time you have finished reading their "Gymnastic" Supplement you will, like Oliver Twist, be asking for more.

A WARNING!

A correspondent in Staffordshire tells me of his experience with regard to somebody who wrote to him from the Malay States and asked for a loan. My

chum generously sent the cash, since which he has heard nothing of the matter, though for months previously there had been a very friendly exchange of letters. I am sorry my chum should have suffered in this way. The correspondence column of the Companion Papers is intended for a pleasant interchange of opinions between readers. It is only fair to warn my supporters against begging-letter writers who presume on the openhandedness of regular Companion Paper readers.

AN ASTOUNDING SUGGESTION!

It comes from Suffolk, and reveals deep interest in the Remove Form. "Do you think," writes the correspondent, "that in the MAGNET there might be the signatures of the chaps in the Remove Form?" There might, but what about the signature of Bunter? It is nothing to write home about—an odd little business, with a smudge and a blot or two. Would it be worth the space? I know the average of the Remove is good—I said the average, but here and there you get a chap who writes his name, and the result looks like a choice collection of beetles' legs and broken twigs. The astonishing part is that in the everyday world a large number of people seem to think that it is enough to put a dash, a splash, and a twirlywig at the end, just for effect, which is only conceit. Signatures ought to be legible, but as often as not they would baffle the warriest expert who ever took a microscope to decipher what was set down.

Your Editor.

THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION!

NO ENTRANCE FEE REQUIRED.

First Prize - - - £1 1s. 0d.
and

CONSOLATION PRIZES OF 2/6 FOR ALL EFFORTS PUBLISHED.

In order to win one of the above prizes all you have to do is to supply the last line of the verse given below, taking care to see that your effort bears some apt relation to the theme.

RULES GOVERNING THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION.

- 1.—The First Prize will be awarded to the sender of what, in the opinion of the Editor and a competent staff of adjudicators, is the best Last Line received.
- 2.—Consolation prizes of 2s. 6d. will be awarded from week to week to those competitors whose efforts show merit.
- 3.—The coupon below entitling you to enter this competition must be either pasted on to a postcard, in which case your Last Line must be written IN INK directly beneath it, or enclosed separately in an envelope with your Last Line effort attached.
- 4.—Competitor's name and full postal address must accompany every effort sent in.
- 5.—Entries must reach us not later than June 21st, 1923, and MUST NOT be enclosed with entrance forms for any other competition. They must be addressed "MAGNET Limerick No. 10," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4.
- 6.—Your Editor undertakes that every effort sent in will receive careful consideration, but he will not hold himself responsible for coupons lost or mislaid, or delayed in the post. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.

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7.—This competition is open to All Readers of the Companion Papers, but the result each week will appear only in the MAGNET.

8.—It is a distinct condition of entry that your Editor's decision must be accepted as binding in all matters. Acceptance of these rules is an express condition of entry. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

"MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION No. 10.

A frisky young fag named Hop Hi
Was flying his kite in the sky,
When a gust, I declare,
Bore him into the air—

THIS EXAMPLE WILL HELP YOU;
And we'll pick up the bits by-and-by!

M.

CUT HERE



The latest addition to the Greyfriars Remove makes a bad beginning with Harry Wharton & Co. He loses no time in displaying his tendency to live a "sporty" life. With the idea of reforming the new junior the Famous Five chip in, and, helped by Wibley of the Remove, some astonishing situations are reached. Can the leopard change his spots? The answer is given in this story by

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not Neighbourly!

"WAKE up, Bob!"

"Get a move on, you ass! Bowl!"

"Let her rip, Cherry, you duffer, or let someone else have the ball," called Harry Wharton impatiently. "Fallen asleep, or what?"

It was a fine summer afternoon, and lessons were over at Greyfriars, and quite a number of Removites had assembled on Little Side at the nets for practice. Harry Wharton was at the wicket, and it had come to Bob Cherry's turn to try to shift him.

But for some reason or other Bob Cherry did not bowl. He stood, with one arm raised, the ball clutched in his hand, and was staring across the cricket field.

"Thinks he's posing for his photograph," remarked Peter Todd. "Watch me change the spirit of his dreams."

And picking up a clump of grass and earth, the humorous Peter let fly. It was quite a decent shot, and it caught Bob Cherry just under the left ear. Squelch!

"Yarough! Oh, crumbs! Ow-ow!" "Well stopped, sir!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! My hat! What the—who threw that?" gasped Cherry, clawing frantically at his neck. "Oh, all right, Toddy, you ass!"

"Serves you right, Bob!" said Wharton, as he ran up, laughing. "Shouldn't fall asleep over cricket, you slacker! What's the matter? What the thump were you staring at?"

Bob Cherry grunted and pointed across the cricket-field.

"Look for yourself—those grinning monkeys on the wall there," he growled. "Don't you see who they are?"

"My hat!"

As Wharton's eyes fell upon the boundary wall, at a spot some little distance beyond the nets, he gave a start, and understood why Cherry had stopped to stare.

That wall was the boundary line between the premises of Greyfriars and the house and grounds of Major Thresher, a peppery, old, retired army officer.

But it was not the wall itself that attracted Wharton's attention, but the

sight of four youths who happened to be sitting astride it. Three of the four were well-known—only too well-known—to him. They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, the nuts of Highcliffe School. Who the fourth boy was Wharton did not know.

"What on earth are they doing there?" ejaculated Wharton. "The rotters are smoking, too!"

"Right under our very noses," said Bob grimly. "The thundering cheek of it! I was just wondering if I could knock one of the grinning apes off the wall with a long shot, Harry. Think I could?"

"Don't be an ass!" laughed Harry. "After all, they're not actually on school property. I expect that chap's a relative of old Thresher's, and happens to know Pon. Anyway, let's get on with the practice. Buck up, Bob!"

"I say, you fellows! I say, Wharton!"

At that moment a fat figure came rolling across the ground. It was Billy Bunter, and his fat face was ablaze with excitement.

"I say, you fellows," he began. "I know who that chap is. He's Major Thresher's nephew, and he's——"

"Get off the ground, Bunter!" roared Wharton, who had run back to his wicket. "Go it, Cherry!"

"But, I say! It's about that chap on the wall, Wharton."

"Out of the way—buzz off, you fat chump!" shouted the exasperated Wharton. "For goodness' sake, bowl, Bob! We'll have it dusk before——"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, I've got news——"

Biff!

Bob Cherry had bowled at last—or rather had got rid of the ball. The leather left his hand, and, either by accident or design, it hit Billy Bunter playfully in the chest, and almost bowled him over. It was now Bunter's turn to yell:

"Ow! Oh crumbs! Yow!"

"You ass, Bunter!" exclaimed Cherry in pretended indignation. "If you hadn't got in the way that would have taken his middle stump."

"Ow! Oh dear!" groaned Bunter, bending double. "I believe my breast-bone's dislocated. Yow! I think my heart's ruptured, too! Ow! You did that on purpose, Cherry, you beast! Ow! I—I'll—I'll——"

Bunter blinked at Cherry, his eyes glittering with rage. For a moment the grinning juniors imagined he was about to assault Bob. What he did do, however, was something quite different.

Stooping suddenly, he grabbed the cricket ball and bolted off the cricket-pitch, his fat little legs going like clock-work.

It was an action typical of Bunter, but utterly unexpected none the less. Nobody attempted to stay him—they were laughing too much for that. Then Wharton gave a yell:

"Here, bring that dashed ball back, Bunter, you fat villain! Cherry, you ass——"

Cherry grinned, and set off after the flying Bunter at top speed. But Bunter was off the pitch now. Hearing the thud of heavy feet behind him, Bunter flung the ball wildly away from him, and streaked away at a tangent for the distant school.

"Oh, look out!"

"Heads!"

A yell went up as the ball was seen to be speeding straight for the group seated on the boundary wall. Ponsonby and his chums heard the warning yell. They ducked their heads with gasps of alarm. Whizz!

The ball whizzed a foot above their heads and vanished over the wall into the garden beyond.

"Now for trouble!" groaned Wharton.

Bob Cherry, ignoring Bunter now, ran towards the wall. As he came up to them the "nutty" Highcliffe juniors greeted him with lofty and supercilious grins.

Bob ignored them and addressed the stranger.

"Would you mind getting our ball, please," he requested politely. "Or shall I come over and get it?"

The boy—Major Thresher's nephew, according to Bunter's information—gave Bob an insolent stare.

"I say, Pon, old bird," he remarked in a lazy drawl. "Who's this scrubby little beast?"

"Oh, that!" grinned Ponsonby. "Oh, he's nobody, really! You're right about him being a scrubby little beast, though, Cecil, old man. Not our sort, of course. His name's Cherry—or gooseberry is it? Anyway, he's one of the goody-goody."

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pie-merchant sort—rum looking little beast, what?"

"Oh, absolutely," chortled Vavasour.

The four chuckled in chorus, and a flush came to Bob Cherry's face. And it was just then Ponsonby did something he would never have dared to do at any other time or place.

He took the cigarette from his mouth and pitched it towards Bob Cherry.

The thing scarcely went within a yard of Bob, but the sheer insolence of the action sent the hot blood rushing to his face.

"You—you smoky cad, Ponsonby!" he shouted. "I'll smash you for that! I'll—I'll—"

Stooping suddenly, Bob grabbed up a turf from a heap near the wall and let fly.

It took Ponsonby clean under the chin. There came a wild howl from that luckless youth, a brief vision of wildly waving legs, and next second the legs vanished, and from beyond the wall came a crash of breaking glass, followed by a dismal wail of woe.

"My hat, you've done it now, Bob!" exclaimed Wharton, running up.

"Now for fireworks," remarked Vernon-Smith, as he joined the group. "If I'm not mistaken we'll have the galloping major on the job now."

"Yes, rather!"

From beyond the wall came yells of pain and cries for help. Gadsby, Vavasour, and the major's nephew had vanished from the wall now.

"Better see what's happened," grinned Bob Cherry.

He pulled himself on to the wall. Then he grinned still more.

The hapless Ponsonby had fallen into one of Major Thresher's cucumber-frames. The gallant major's cucumber-frames were a special kind, built to the major's own design, and they were the delight of his heart.

But one was "done in" now. Ponsonby had smashed clean through one of the panes—fortunately without cutting himself badly—and was tightly wedged in the framework.

"You—you silly fools!" he was yelling wildly to his pals. "Why don't you help me out, instead of standing like dummies? Oh, dash it all!"

"Oh—er—absolutely!" mumbled Vavasour helplessly.

He grabbed hold of Ponsonby's right arm, and Gadsby took a grip of the left. They gave a terrific wrench, and there came a wild howl from Ponsonby. But he still stuck to the cucumber-frame.

Bob's grin turned to a roar of laughter.

"What's happened?" asked Harry Wharton, shinning up to his chum's side. "Why—Oh, my hat!"

"Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall," chanted Bob Cherry gleefully. "I say, Pon, have you taken root, or what?"

Ponsonby did not reply—unless a savage glare could be called a reply. It was Cecil Thresher who answered.

Now the juniors were near him they saw he was rather a good-looking boy, though sadly marred by a discontented expression, and a somewhat foppish appearance.

His face was ugly with wrath now.

"You—you beastly louts!" he hissed. "Look what you've done! My uncle will—"

"Blow your uncle!" said Cherry sweetly. "Do you mind passing over our ball, please? It's over there by the greenhouse."

"Hang you! I'm dashed if I will!" was the savage reply.

Thresher glanced round quickly, and as his eyes fell on the ball, he ran over to it and snatched it up. Running into the hot-house, he kicked open the little door of the stove.

As he grasped his intention, Bob Cherry gave a yell, and dropped down into the garden.

"Here, none of that! Don't you dare to—"

But Cecil Thresher had dared and done. He threw the cricket-ball into the glowing embers of the fire, and slammed the furnace door to.

From the wall came a roar:

"You cad!"

"The beastly little rotter!"

"Go for him, Bob!"

Bob's face was red with wrath.

"You—you rotter!" he breathed.

"Put up your fists for that!"

"I'll jolly soon do that!" said young Thresher, with a sneer. "Here's something to be going on with, hang you!"

He snatched a half-grown tomato from a plant near the door, and hurled it full into Bob's face. The tomato was hard, and it caught Bob full in the eye.

That was too much for even the good-natured Bob. With a howl of wrath, he dashed through the doorway, grabbed the major's nephew, and fairly hurled him out. Next second the two were at grips.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Major!

"GO it, Bob!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Knock some of the swank out of the silly cad!"

But Bob Cherry was already trying to do that. Gadsby and Vavasour looked on rather uncertainly; but as Wharton, Nugent, and Smithy dropped into the garden, they decided to keep their distance.

"Buck up, and finish him off, Bob!" urged Wharton, glancing towards the house. "You'll have the blessed major—Cranabs! Here he comes now!"

It was too true! From the direction of the stables a portly, military gentleman was hurrying. He had apparently just returned from a drive, for he was wearing coat and hat, and in his hands he carried a business-like driving-whip.

"Now for fireworks!" murmured Vernon-Smith. "Look out, Cherry!"

But Bob Cherry was too busy to heed the warning. He was driving the lofty Cecil all over the garden. That youth had already realised he had taken on more than he could manage. But, despite the fact that he was getting severely punished, he stuck to his guns with savage desperation.

"Give in, you ass!" panted Bob Cherry. "You've already had more than enough!"

"Shut up, hang you!" muttered Cecil Thresher.

And he flung himself into the fray with fresh energy. It was just at that moment that Major Thresher arrived on the scene. For a moment he glared at the group, his face growing purple. Then he gave a bellow.

"What—what's the meaning of this—hey?" he stormed angrily. "Fighting in my garden, begad! Stop at once! Do you hear? You impudent young monkeys! Haw! Cecil, you young rascal, stop, before I lay this whip about you both! Haw!"

The threat was enough for both combatants. They drew apart, breathing

heavily. Cecil Thresher blinked rather apprehensively at his uncle.

"Disgraceful!" barked the gallant major. "What's it mean—hey? Trespassing, and fighting, begad! Cecil, how dare you turn my garden into—Bless my soul!"

Major Thresher's eyes suddenly fell upon Ponsonby, who was still struggling to escape from the cucumber-frame. His grizzled moustache fairly bristled.

"You—you scoundrel!" he choked, shaking his whip at Ponsonby. "You—you dare to damage my cucumber-frames! Sitting in 'em, begad! My cucumber-frames! Huh! If you're not out of that in one minute, young man, I'll horsewhip you! D'you hear?"

Ponsonby heard all right. Nobody within half a mile could have failed to hear.

"I—I can't get out!" he stuttered, wriggling painfully. "I'm—er—stuck, sir!"

"Oh, are you, begad!" said Major Thresher grimly. "Then I'll make it my business, sir, to unstick you!"

And with that, Major Thresher advanced, brandishing his whip. The sight was enough for Ponsonby. He gave one desperate wrench, and there followed a crashing of glass and splintering of wood, as the rest of the framework of the cucumber-frame collapsed.

There also followed a wild yell of woe from Ponsonby as the major's whip curled round his thin legs. But he was free now, and, leaping to his feet, he bolted towards the house, and after him went the enraged martinet. From the juniors lining the wall came a roar:

"Go it, major!"

"Up and at 'em, guards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Taking advantage of the little diversion, Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and the Bounder, shinned up the wall and joined their chums there. It was much safer there with the gallant major on the war-path. They had scarcely done so when the old soldier came back, puffing and panting from his unusual exertions.

"Haw! That's settled the young rascal, begad! I'll teach 'em to trespass and damage my cucumber-frames. Disgraceful! Cecil, you young rascal—"

"I—I say, uncle," gasped Cecil Thresher, "it—it wasn't his fault. He wasn't a trespasser. He was my guest, sir. You—you told me I might bring my friends here—"

"Friend! That young cub your friend?" snorted Major Thresher. "Then let me tell you, sir, that I do not admire your choice of friends! Bah! That young cub is a villain, and he looked it, every inch of him, begad! Guest, hey? That's how he returns hospitality—smashing my cucumber-frames! Huh!"

"But—but—"

"As for these young jackanapes," snorted the major, glaring at the shivering Gadsby and Vavasour, "be off at once—d'you hear? I'll report—"

"Look here, uncle," muttered Cecil Thresher. "You—you don't understand. These are my friends, too. What happened was the fault of those cads on the wall there. We were sitting quietly on the wall when one of them threw a turf at Ponsonby and knocked him over into the cucumber-frame."

"Hey? What's that?"

The major turned his attention to the grinning juniors lining the wall. He understood then—or thought he did.

"So—so you're the young rascals responsible for this!" he fumed, shaking

A scream from beginning to end—

his whip at the juniors. "Hah! I might have guessed it! This is not the first time my property has suffered through your confounded games! I won't stand it, begad! I will give you a taste of the whip, my fine fellows!"

And Major Thresher made a sudden rush for the wall, brandishing his whip.

The grinning juniors vanished from the wall as if they had been swept therefrom by the waft of a magic wand. From beyond the wall came a merry peal of laughter.

"Cheeky young villains!" snorted the major. "I'll teach 'em! Huh!"

What took place after that in Major Thresher's garden the juniors neither saw nor heard. They retreated from the danger zone while the going was good.

It was already growing dusk, and by common consent they decided to abandon further practice for that afternoon. Some of the juniors were looking rather thoughtful now.

"There's bound to be trouble, of course," remarked Wharton, as they trooped back to school. "Major Thresher isn't a bad old stick at bottom. His bark's worse than his bite. But the old fire-eater will kick up a fuss about that cucumber frame—bound to. And we can't explain matters without sneaking about Pon and his pals."

"And we've lost a good ball," granted Johnny Bull. "My hat! What a young reptile that young Thresher is! Fancy burning our ball like that! Burr!"

"Nice boy," was Cherry's grinning comment. "Wish we had him in the Remove! We'd break him in!"

"I don't!" said Wharton grimly. "We don't want his sort here; Skinner and his pals are enough. Wonder how he became pals with that cad Ponsonby?"

As the cricketers entered the Remove passage they met Bolsover major. He gave Wharton a grin.

"Quelch is asking for you, Wharton," he observed. "Better see what he wants."

The juniors looked at each other.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Cherry. "Old Thresher can't have reported it already?"

"Must have done!" groaned Wharton. "I expect the old hunk has telephoned. Now for trouble!"

And with grim forebodings of trouble ahead, Wharton proceeded to the Remove master's study. To his surprise, however, Mr. Quelch greeted him with a smile. Perhaps it wasn't trouble after all!

"You—you were asking for me, sir," murmured Wharton.

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Quelch. "I just wished to inform you, Wharton, that a new boy will join the Remove Form tomorrow morning. You know our neighbour, Major Thresher, of course?"

"Wha—Ahem! Ye-es, sir."

"Well, this new boy—Cecil Thresher—is his nephew, and is staying with his uncle for some time while his parents are abroad. He is not, however, coming to Greyfriars as a boarder, but as a temporary day boarder."

"Oh!"

"I sent for you to explain this, Wharton," proceeded Mr. Quelch, "because the major particularly wishes his nephew to become friends with the right kind of boys. I should like you to take an interest in the boy until he settles down, at all events."

"I—I sus-see, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"I do not, of course, expect you to—er—to dry-nurse the boy," remarked Mr. Quelch, smiling. "But you would be conferring a great favour upon Major Thresher, and be of great help to the boy if you would—er—keep an eye upon him, and take a friendly interest in him. That is all."

And with a kindly nod, Wharton was dismissed.

He tottered dizzily out into the passage.

There was a compliment in Mr. Quelch's request, of course; but Wharton did not see it then—he was too staggered.

"Oh, my stars!" he groaned, as he went along the passage. "Fancy being dry-nurse to that smoky little sweep! So Bob's got his wish after all! He'll get his chance to break him in—though I fancy he won't find it such an easy job. Friendly interest in him—eh? Oh, great Scott!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In the Enemy's Hands!

THAT evening all the Remove had heard the news.

A day boarder at Greyfriars was something entirely unusual. And the Remove especially were excited and keen to make his acquaintance. Their enthusiasm and interest soon gave place to wrath and disgust, however,

when they had heard about the affair of the cricket-ball. Such unsportsmanlike conduct wasn't the sort of thing to make the new boy popular with the Greyfriars Remove.

When Cecil Thresher took his place in the Form-room the next morning he was met by curious and rather hostile looks from the majority. But he did not seem to mind. He returned the looks with interest. As a matter of fact, he was angry and savage at having been sent to Greyfriars at all, and he had no desire to gain popularity, or even to stay there.

"He's a sulky brute as well as a cad!" granted Johnny Bull, as the Famous Five came out from dinner that noon. "I notice he's already palled on with Skinner. Birds of a feather—eh?"

"Met Skinner's gang before, I expect, when they've been with Ponsonby," remarked Frank Nugent. "Skinner says he's known Pon for years. Talk about an unholy alliance! I bet his old war-horse of an uncle would prance if he knew the sort of pals he was cultivating."

"Blest if I can understand why the old chap hasn't reported us for yesterday!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Plenty of time yet, though."

Wharton shook his head. Since the previous evening he had been expecting a call from Mr. Quelch with regard to the damage done to Major Thresher's cucumber-frame. But as night and morning passed without the expected trouble materialising, his growing relief had developed into a feeling of safety.



Leaping to his feet Ponsonby bolted towards the house, and after him went the enraged martinet, his whip curling about the junior's thin legs. From the juniors on the wall came a roar: "Go it, major!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Billy Bunter's Barring-Out"—next Monday!

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"I fancy we're safe enough now," he said. "I expect he's decided it is just as well not to kick up a fuss just on the day his nephew's coming here. He'd guess it would make the kid unpopular at the start. Anyway, blow that now! I've got to go into Friardale—promised to run over with Wingate's bat. So I'll be off. You chaps can be getting some practice in on Little Side, and I'll join you later."

"I think I'll come with you, Harry," Nugent said. "I want to get some local views from the post-office to send home."

"Oh, good! Back up, then!"

Bob Cherry, Bull, and Hurree Singh went upstairs to change into flannels. Wharton and Nugent hurried round to the cycle-shed. In a couple of minutes they were on their way to Friardale.

It was a half at Greyfriars, and there was no match on that day; but they rode hard, anxious to get back to take part in the cricket practice.

Half-way to the village they overtook Skinner, Stott, and Snoop, and with the three cads of the Remove was Cecil Thresher. But the two juniors passed them by with scarcely a glance; they had no interest in the movements of those dingy youths.

In a very short time they had reached Friardale, and, after carrying through their business there, they started back at a good pace. As they swept round a bend in the lane, Frank Nugent gave a sudden exclamation.

"Look out, Harry!" he muttered. "Highcliffe cads!"

Standing at the corner where the Highcliffe road joins Friardale Lane was a group of juniors. Four of them wore Highcliffe caps, and they proved to be Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson. The other four were Skinner & Co. and Cecil Thresher.

"Keep your eyes peeled, Franky!" remarked Wharton, frowning. "You never know!"

Frank Nugent nodded. In their perpetual feud with the Famous Five, Ponsonby & Co. rarely invited a scrap, even at odds of four to one. They preferred safer—and more underhanded—methods.

But after the previous afternoon's affair Nugent felt—as Wharton did—that it was just as well to be prepared for trouble.

And on this occasion trouble came quickly enough, though Ponsonby did not start it.

As the two Greyfriars juniors were whirring past, Cecil Thresher stooped suddenly and caught up a thick turf from the grassy bank.

Both Wharton and Nugent saw the action, and they ducked involuntarily.

Whizz!

Frank Nugent ducked just a second too late. He gave a wild yell as the heavy clod of earth caught him full in the ear. The sudden jolt caused him to swerve, and his front wheel touched Wharton's back wheel.

"Ow! Oh crumbs! Look out!"

Crash!

The machines staggered and collapsed with a terrific clatter. Wharton crashed to earth, and his chum piled over him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffe juniors and Cecil Thresher roared. Skinner, Stott, and Snoop looked rather scared. Wharton and Nugent staggered to their feet, gasping and furious.

Fortunately, they were not seriously hurt, though they might easily have been. But they were bruised and badly shaken.

"You—you howling cad!" shouted Harry Wharton, rushing over to the grinning Cecil. "Put your thumping fists up! I'll finish the job Cherry started yesterday, you rotter!"

"No, you dashed well won't!" grinned Ponsonby, with a meaning glance at his chums. "We're eight to two, my pippin, so you'd better keep your fists down, Wharton! This chance is too good to miss—eh, you chaps? You've got to go through it. Wharton, old top!"

Wharton's answer was to turn away from Thresher, and his clenched fist took Ponsonby full on his aristocratic nose, and he fell down in the road.

"You—you beastly lout, Wharton!" he yelled furiously. "I'll—I'll make you sit up for that, hang you! Go for 'em, you chaps!"

He jumped to his feet and rushed at Wharton. Wharton's fist took him in the chest, but Ponsonby scarcely noticed it in his fury.

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£10 in Cash Prizes!
**RESULT OF WEST HAM
PICTURE-PUZZLE
COMPETITION.**

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The first prize of £5 has therefore been divided between the following two competitors whose solutions contained one error each:

JOHN HOGGEN,

35, Bournemouth Road,
Folkestone.

MISS M. G. REDDING,

Butler Street,
Astwood Bank,
Nr. Redditch.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The second prize of £2 10s., and the ten prizes of 5s. each, have therefore been added together and divided among the following twenty-three competitors whose solutions contained two errors each:

W. Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; C. H. Harrison, 86, Walsingham Street, Walsall, Staffs; N. Willis, "Whelford," Leckhampton, Cheltenham Spa; James King, 29, Fore Street, Westbury, Wilts; Frances Ashworth, 131, Burnley Road, Padiham, Lancs; G. A. Withers, Station Road, Harby, Lincoln; J. Hooper, 27, Morgan Street, Barry Dock, Glam; Bernard Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol; J. de Gruchy, Market Street, Woodstock, Oxon; Alice Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; T. Topping, 62, Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; Cyril Danny, 11, Mildenhall Road, Clapton, E. 5; Alfred Carr, 70, Bargate, Boston; J. W. Chapman, 50, Pembrey Road, Llanelly, S. Wales; H. E. Oxenham, 3, Colwith Road, Hammersmith, W. 6; N. D. Snaith, 51, Park Street, Kendal; C. Ayres, 9, The Walk, Birdwell, Nr. Barnsley; A. Lawton, 78, Rose Street, Hanley, Staffs; May Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh; W. S. Village, 41, Empress Road, Derby; Harry Morgan, 27, Victoria Road, Folkestone; J. Ellis, 197, Easton Road, Bristol.

SOLUTION:

The history of West Ham is like that of various other famous football clubs. A steady rise from a humble start. Progress is their motto. They have put up a remarkable fight for the English Cup this season, and outlasted some far better clubs, including the well-known Spurs.

Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson hesitated. But it was only for a moment. They knew what to expect from their leader if they hung back now.

"I—I say, come on, you chaps!" muttered Gadsby. "Go for 'em!"

"Oh, absolutely!" murmured the flabby Vavasour.

And they piled in, though with obvious reluctance. In a moment Wharton and Nugent were surrounded and fighting furiously against the five, for Cecil Thresher had piled in, too.

"Come on, Skinner, you funk!" shouted Ponsonby. "Help us, hang you! What—Ow! Yow! By dose!"

Once again Harry Wharton's fist struck Ponsonby's prominent nose, and he sat down yelling. But still Skinner & Co. hung back. They were pals of Ponsonby & Co. and deadly enemies of the Famous Five. But they were Greyfriars fellows, for all that, and they knew what to expect from the Famous Five later on if they did chip in.

And, as it proved, Ponsonby and his chums could have done with the help of Skinner & Co. very well. Despite the odds against them, Wharton and Nugent were more than holding their own. They had retreated until their backs were against the huge trunk of a tree, and now they were hitting out right and left.

"By gad!" breathed Skinner. "I—I believe those two rotters are getting the best of it! Oh, my hat!"

It began to look like it, certainly. Only Cecil Thresher and Ponsonby seemed to be putting up anything that could be called a fight, and Ponsonby had already been down three times and was obviously nearly done.

"Rush 'em, you fools!" panted Ponsonby desperately. "Rush—Vavasour, you rotten funk, come back!"

But Vavasour did not come back—then. Under a punch from Frank Nugent's fist he had gone down yelping, and instead of getting up again he had scrambled away hurriedly on all fours like a mongrel that expected to be kicked.

This reduced the odds to four against the Greyfriars juniors. It had little effect upon the scrap so far as Wharton and Nugent were concerned, but it had a moral effect upon the gallant Monson and Gadsby.

They weakened visibly, and appeared to be about to follow Vavasour's example, when at that moment a new-comer appeared.

He was a tall and exceedingly smartly dressed young fellow of between twenty and thirty, with close-set, shifty eyes and a blotchy face. He came up, walking softly on the grass, and at sight of him Ponsonby gave a delighted yell.

"Here's the captain, chaps! Oh, good! You're just in time to lend us a hand with these cads, Gerald, old man! Oh, what luck, by gad!"

Wharton glanced round quickly. His brow clouded as he recognised the new-comer, Captain Devereux, as he styled himself, was known to him by sight and by repute. He knew him for a rascally card-sharper and a general "wrong 'un." He had seen him once or twice in Ponsonby's company, but he had had no idea they were on such friendly terms until Ponsonby addressed the captain as "Gerald."

"Good gad!" gasped Captain Devereux, glancing at the battered and disreputable group, with an unpleasant grin. "What's the little game, Pon, dear old boy?"

The great W. G. comes out strong as a rebel—

"Only a little rag!" grinned Ponsonby. "These two are Greystriars cads! We're putting 'em through it, and—"

"Looks to me as if they have been putting you through it!" remarked the captain blandly. "My mistake, of course! Still, where do I come in? Want me to tickle 'em with this cane—what?"

"Not a bad notion!" said Ponsonby, giving Wharton a malicious grin. "Collar the rotters, you chaps—"

"Half a minute!" snapped Wharton, his face setting hard. "If you dare to lay a finger on us, Captain Devereux, you'll regret it! I warn you that I shall strike back, and—"

Harry said no more then. At the junior's words, the captain's face had darkened, and, with one stride, he stepped forward and gripped Wharton by the collar, grinding his knuckles cruelly into the junior's neck. He was a born bully, and in this he saw a chance also of ingratiating himself still further with the affluent Ponsonby and his pals.

"You insolent little rat!" rapped out the captain, shaking the junior. "I have no desire to take part in a schoolboy's rag; but I feel justified now in punishing you for your insolence! You agree with me, Ponsonby?"

"Quite!" grinned Ponsonby. "Better get the little beasts out of sight, though! My hat! Quick! Someone coming!"

There came the sound of rapidly-approaching wheels from the lane, and, tightening his grip on Wharton, the captain began to drag the struggling junior towards the bushes lining the lane. At the same moment Ponsonby and his chums flung themselves upon Nugent. On hearing the sound of wheels Wharton felt a gleam of hope.

"Stick it, Franky!" he shouted. "Help! Rescue, Greystriars!"

He struggled furiously to free himself; but he was as a child in the grown man's grasp. Before the shelter of the bushes was reached, however, a smartly turned out pony and trap came bowling round the bend in the lane. It came to a halt, and a young, though clear and imperious voice, cried:

"Stop!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Thresher's Sister!

As the cry rang out, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent ceased to struggle, and glanced quickly round.

The single occupant of the trap was a young and exceedingly attractive girl of about their own age. She was a perfect stranger to the juniors, and they stared at her in amazement.

Ponsonby and his friends stared at her, too, though in a different manner.

Ponsonby eyed her uneasily, as did the other Highcliffe fellows.

Captain Devereux frowned, while Skinner & Co. grinned. But Cecil Thresher was taken aback the most. His face flushed scarlet.

"Oh, gad!" muttered Ponsonby. "It's your sister, Thresher!"

Cecil Thresher said nothing, but he bit his lip as the girl stepped lightly from the trap. Throwing the reins round a nearby gatepost, she advanced towards the group, her eyes flashing, a red flush on her cheeks.

She glanced once at the bruised faces of Nugent and Wharton, who were still



Nugent uttered a wild howl as a clod of earth caught him full in the ear. His machine swerved, and his front wheel crashed into Wharton's. The two juniors lost their balance and pitched to the ground. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffians. (See Chapter 3.)

in the grip of their captors, and then she faced her brother.

"You coward, Cecil!" she said indignantly. "I am ashamed of you! Five of you and a full grown man against two boys! I knew you were thoughtless, but I did not know you were such a bully! Tell your friends to let those boys go at once!"

Her brother flushed again, but this time with anger more than shame.

"Look here, sis," he muttered savagely. "You clear out! This is only a rag—"

"It looks like it!" said the girl, with a defiant glance at Captain Devereux. "Do you usually enlist the help of grown men in order to bully other juniors? I can see—"

"Here, I say!" interrupted the discomfited captain. His face wore a mocking smile, but his eyes were glittering angrily. As a matter of fact, Captain Devereux had not heard Ponsonby's remark, and he had not grasped the situation yet. "Pardon me, madam," he went on, with a mock, insolent bow, but you do not appear to be aware that you are insulting me in addition to these boys. May I ask what business this is of yours?"

"It is the business of any person with a sense of fairplay to try to put a stop to bullying and injustice!" was the frank reply.

And, giving the discomfited captain a look of scorn that made him visibly shrink, the girl turned her back upon him.

"Now, Cecil," she demanded, with spirit, "are you going to do as I ask?"

Cecil Thresher gave his sister a savage look. To tell the truth he was very fond of his sister, and just a bit afraid of her. He looked helplessly at Ponsonby; then he said:

"Look here, Sis. Hang it all, this is a bit thick. This is no business of yours! Why should you chip in? We were only—"

"Just a little rag, Miss Connie," explained Ponsonby uncomfortably. "No harm, you know! Only—"

"I've heard about your little rags, Ponsonby!" snapped Miss Connie disdainfully. "Cruel bullying is the right term—not ragging! You are a cowardly cad, and I'm disgusted with my brother for becoming friendly again with you! Release those boys at once! If you don't—"

"But—but, I say!" stammered Ponsonby. "I don't see—"

Miss Connie stamped her foot angrily. Evidently she was accustomed to being obeyed. She took a business-like grip on the whip she carried.

"I'll give you one minute, Ponsonby!" she asserted grimly. "If you haven't released that boy by then, I shall lay this whip about you! I mean it!"

"Oh, gad!"

Ponsonby gasped with dismay, and stopped back a pace. He was inwardly seething with rage. But he only hesitated a second. A glance at the girl's bright, steady eyes told him she would carry out her threat.

With a muttered word, he released his grasp on Nugent. His fellow nuts were only too glad to do likewise.

—and resolves to show his metal!

Miss Connie turned to Captain Devereux, who was looking anything but happy.

But the elegant captain did not wait for his turn; he had no desire to be still further humiliated. By now he had grasped the fact that this remarkable young lady was Thresher's sister, and for reasons of his own he deemed it best to climb down. Like Ponsonby & Co. he was inwardly furious; but he passed it off with a laugh.

"My dear young lady," he remarked blandly, "of course, we will release our innocent young victims, if you desire it. I can assure you that we intended nothing dreadful. Go on, you young idiots, cut off while the going's good."

He gave Wharton a by no means gentle push as he spoke, and Harry stumbled forward, his face scarlet.

With mumbled thanks, Wharton and Nugent turned away, raising their caps awkwardly. They were feeling none too happy at having been rescued by a girl; but they were glad to get away for all that, and felt gratitude and admiration for the girl who had so pluckily championed them.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wharton, as they left the group. "Fancy this happening! Isn't she a stunning girl, though?"

"A jolly good sort!" agreed Nugent. "Fairly put the wind up Pon, didn't she?"

The Greysfriars juniors walked over to their bikes, which lay where they had fallen in the roadway. Miss Connie, with a cool nod to her fuming brother, followed them into the road, and sprang lightly into the trap. Her face was flushed with excitement, and it was evident she had forgotten the fact that the pony was still tethered to the gate-post.

But her brother had no intention of letting her go without having his say in the matter. Just as she was looking round for the reins, he came running after her, his eyes gleaming with fury.

"Look here, Connie!" he hissed, his voice trembling with rage. "I've got something to say before you go. What do you mean by making a fool of me before all these fellows—interfering in my affairs like this? I jolly well won't stand it!"

Miss Connie smiled sweetly.

"Would you mind handing me up the reins, please, Cecil?" she said coolly. "I quite forgot them!"

Cecil gritted his teeth.

"You needn't try to be clever!" he said furiously. "I'll pay you back somehow for this, Connie, you see if I don't! You'd no right—"

"You forget your manners, Cecil," reminded the girl. "I asked you for the reins. Get them, please!"

"All right, it can wait!" muttered her brother. "I'll talk to you about this when I get home!"

He flung away, and, snatching the reins from the gate-post, threw them to his sister—or, at least, he intended that. Unfortunately, in his temper, his aim was wild, and, instead of reaching her, the reins curled round the shaft, and whipped across the pony's face.

The result was startling.

The pony—a young four-year-old recently broken in—had been standing pawing the ground and moving about restlessly. And now, as the reins whipped its face and curled over its ears, the pony reared up convulsively.

"Look out!" yelled Wharton involuntarily.

It all happened in a flash.

Nugent was just picking up his machine. Startled at Wharton's shout he dropped it again, and the sudden clatter put the finishing touch to the pony's terror.

It shuddered in every limb and, wheeling completely round, set off, with a maddened squeal, at a furious gallop.

"Good heavens!" gasped Wharton. "It's bolted. Quick, Franky!"

The pony had bolted, undoubtedly. It was tearing away with the loose reins flogging its flanks, and the trap bounding and swaying dangerously behind. Standing up in the trap and making a plucky attempt to reach the flying reins over the splashboard, could be seen the figure of Miss Connie, her hair blown out by the wind.

Cecil Thresher stood staring after her, petrified, his face white. It was Harry Wharton who acted. He wrenched his bike round, and sprang into the saddle. Next instant he was pedalling in pursuit, putting every ounce of energy he possessed into the leg thrusts.

Scarcely a second after him went Nugent. He had seen what Wharton had seen—that the maddened brute had taken the Pegg Road. This was a narrow, winding lane, and doubly dangerous as, on passing Cliff House, the lane took a sudden, perilous dip towards the sea.

With eyes fixed anxiously upon the swaying vehicle ahead, Wharton tore on, his head bent low, his feet fairly whizzing round. He realised with a sinking heart that he stood little chance of catching up with the runaway; but he meant to keep going, for all that.

Fortunately, the lane was rarely used, and it was deserted now. But Harry knew the danger would be outside Cliff House School, where the lane would probably be thronged with girls, and the thought made him grit his teeth and ride as he had never ridden before.

But as it happened the runaway never reached Cliff House.

In its headlong career, the trap swayed and lurched from one side of the narrow lane to the other, and suddenly what the girl had been expecting happened.

One of the wheels slid into the shallow ditch lining the lane. The trap lurched and tilted sickeningly, and only by gripping the side of the vehicle with all her force did the girl prevent herself being flung out.

With the one wheel crashing and bounding along the ditch-bottom, the trap thundered on for fully fifty yards. And then the pony swerved again suddenly, and with a terrific jolt the wheel left the shallow ditch, and the trap righted itself.

But the rubbish-filled ditch and grass hillocks had acted like a powerful brake. They checked the pony's maddened gallop, and before the brute could get into its stride again Harry Wharton came up with a rush and whirl of cycle-wheels.

He swept past the straining animal, and for a few breathless seconds he tore on ahead. Then he leaped from his machine and sent it spinning into the hedge.

"Keep clear!" cried the girl. "You'll be killed! Out of the way!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Good Turn Repaid!

THERE was a note of command in the voice, and just the faintest trace of a tremor in it. But Wharton ignored the girl's plucky cry. He braced himself, and at the critical moment leaped for the pony's head.

What happened next was too swift and bewildering for anyone to see clearly.

By great good luck Harry's grasp fastened on the flying reins within a few inches of the pony's foam-flecked mouth. For a few breathless seconds the boy was swept clean off his feet as the brute tossed its head with a frightened squeal and swerved alarmingly.

But it recovered itself almost immediately, and then, amid a bewildering clatter of hoofs and jingling of harness, it plunged on again, the frantic beast and the boy fighting hard for the mastery.

Clutching desperately to his hold, Wharton was dragged along for twenty or thirty yards by the snorting, plunging brute. But his grim hold never relaxed, and then Frank Nugent came up with a rush.

He flung himself from his machine and leaped instantly to Wharton's aid, tackling the pony on the other side.

"Hold on, Harry!"

From that moment the issue was, not in doubt. As Nugent took grip and brought his weight into the scale, as it were, the beast gave another terrified squeal and struggled madly. But its head was down now, and soon it had pranced to a standstill, shaking in every limb, its body glistening and steaming.

"All serene, Franky!" panted Wharton. "Hold on a sec!"

He released his grip and was about to rush to help the girl alight, but she sprang lightly into the road before he could reach her. Her eyes were sparkling with excitement, and with her flushed cheeks and streaming hair she looked very charming.

"Oh, thank you both, ever so much!" she gasped breathlessly. "I do hope you're not hurt. I— Why, your hand is injured."

"Only a scratch!" smiled Wharton. "I must have caught it against a buckle or something. I'm all serene, Miss Thresher. Are you all right?"

"Quite. Oh, it was splendid, coming to my help like that. I'm deeply grateful to you both—"

"No need to be," said Wharton awkwardly. "It was splendid the way you came to our help just now, so we're quits. How did it happen? I scarcely saw it?"

"It was that silly brother of mine," said Miss Connie, her face clouding. "He threw the reins to me carelessly, and they struck the poor pony full in the face. No wonder it was startled, poor thing."

She stepped to the shivering pony and patted its glistening shoulders tenderly.

"Quiet enough now," remarked Nugent. "We'd better see you safely home, though, Miss Thresher."

"Oh, dear!"

Miss Connie gave an exclamation of dismay.

"Marjorie and Clara will be wondering what has happened to me," she exclaimed. "I promised to take them for a drive this afternoon."

"You—you mean Miss Hazeldene and Miss Trevlyn of Cliff House?"

"Of course," said Miss Connie, with a merry laugh. "You see, I have soon made friends there. I joined Cliff House School on Monday as a day-boarder, just as my brother joined Greysfriars to-day. I suppose you are Wharton and—"

"Frank Nugent, my chum," smiled Harry. "We're in the Remove at Greysfriars—your brother's Form!"

Miss Connie nodded.

"I've heard quite a lot about you

As an able-seaman Billy Bunter knows no equal!

already," she said. "In fact, I've learned a great deal about many people. I'm horribly inquisitive."

"Then—then that explains why you gave poor old Ponsonby such a slanging," laughed Nugent.

"Partly—yes," chuckled the girl. "As it happens, though, my brother and I have known him for years. We lived quite near to his home for a long time. I knew he was a foppish slacker; but until Clara and Marjorie told me things I had no idea he was such a cad. I only wish—"

The girl paused. Her face went grave and her eyes became troubled. She turned impulsively to the juniors.

"You may, perhaps, think I was dreadfully rude and high-handed with Ponsonby just now," she exclaimed earnestly. "But you don't know how I detest him; you don't know how it worries me to see him friendly with my brother. My brother isn't wilfully wicked; but he's weak and easily led. I'm afraid Ponsonby will lead him astray."

The Greyfriars juniors said nothing. From what they had seen so far of her scrapegrace of a brother they felt he did not need Ponsonby or any other fellow to lead him astray. But they could scarcely tell Miss Connie that.

There was a pause. Miss Connie hesitating strangely. At last she spoke, her face flushing.

"I—I don't like asking another favour of you after what you've just done," she said quietly; "but—but if you could do anything—could use your influence with my brother to put a stop to his foolishness, and to his friendship with those cads, I should be ever so grateful. You will think me dreadfully cheeky, I know. But if my uncle knew what is going on he would rave. He detests card-playing and smoking, and he would refuse to have Cecil in the house if he caught him. And I'm afraid Cecil will take bigger risks still after this week, when uncle goes away."

"Is—your uncle going away, then?" said Wharton.

"Yes; he's going to stay with an old Army friend in Scotland for a fortnight, and I'm dreadfully afraid Cecil will take advantage of his absence. He'll have his friends over-running the place. It will be hateful having that cad Ponsonby about, and especially that man they were with this afternoon. I don't know who he is, but—"

"He calls himself Captain Devereux," said Wharton grimly. "But I don't think that is his real name, and I don't believe he's ever been an officer in the Army. I'm afraid he's not the kind of friend your brother ought to have, Miss Thresher."

"I feared it," said Miss Connie, looking distressed.

"Here comes your brother," interrupted Frank Nugent quickly.

It was Cecil Thresher right enough. He came running along the lane, his breath coming in great gasps, his face red with exertion; but there was an expression of deep anxiety in his eyes.

"You—you're safe, then, sis?" he panted, as he ran up. "Oh, thank Heaven! I—I feared—"

"I'm safe enough, yes—thanks to these boys you were bullying," she rejoined coldly.

The anxious look left his face, and he scowled at the juniors. He was thankful—deeply thankful that no harm had come to his sister. But he felt no gratitude to her rescuers—quite the reverse. The fact that it had all happened through him, and that his enemies had saved her from

the results of his own folly, filled him with bitter anger and mortification.

"They—they had their bikes, and only did what anyone else would have done!" he muttered, with a sneer. "It—it was nothing to make a song about!"

"Cecil!"

Miss Connie stamped her foot, and her face flushed with indignation. But before she could speak again, Harry Wharton had given his chum a quick, meaning glance. The pony was docile now, and he saw no reason to stay, nor did he wish to witness a quarrel between brother and sister.

"We—we must be moving now. Chaps will be waiting for us on the cricket-field," he said hastily. "Good-bye, Miss Thresher! Perhaps see you again some time."

Miss Connie understood. She flashed them a smiling good-bye, and they turned away, raising their caps. They left the two together, and walked back to their machines.

These were quite uninjured, and in a few moments they were riding hard for Greyfriars.

"My only hat!" breathed Frank Nugent, when they were out of earshot. "Fancy that little cad having a sister like that! I'm beastly sorry for her, though. She looks no end worried about the little rat. I wish we could do something to put a stop to his little games. But I'm afraid this afternoon's work will make him hate us more than ever."

Wharton nodded, frowning.

"I'm afraid so," he said.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Not Wanted!

"I SAY, Skinner, old man—"

Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 11 in the Remove passage, and carefully closed the door behind him. There was a knowing and confident expression on his fat face.

It was just after tea-time at Greyfriars, and the crockery and what was left of tea still lay on the table. Skinner and his study-mates, Stott and Snoop, were there, and with them was Cecil Thresher, the new day-boarder. Cecil Thresher had now been over a week at Greyfriars, and he had become very chummy with Skinner & Co. He had stayed to tea with his new pals before going home, and now the four were lounging about, chatting.

As the fat face and gleaming spectacles of Billy Bunter appeared in the doorway, Skinner glanced round with a yawn. Then he waved his hand lazily to Bunter.

It was not a wave of welcome; it was an intimation to the fat junior to get out.

"I say, old fellow," went on Bunter, ignoring Skinner's expressive gesture. "I—see you've finished tea, then. I was hoping—"

"Oh, get out!" snapped Snoop, stifling a yawn. "Clear out, you fat toad; we've no time to listen to your silly chin-wag!"

"But it scarcely matters," proceeded Bunter, ignoring Snoop. "I only called in for a little chat. In fact, I've dropped in about the party to-night, you know."

"The—the party?"



Miss Thresher glanced at the bruised faces of Nugent and Wharton, who were still in the grasp of their captors, and then she faced her brother. "You coward, Cecil," she said indignantly. "Tell your friends to let those boys go at once!" (See Chapter 4.)

But a life on the ocean wave does not come up to his expectations!

"Exactly," grinned Bunter, with a fat chuckle. "I rather expected you fellows—or, at least, old Thresher—to send me an invite. But he hasn't. Not that it's necessary between pals, of course. Still, I'd like to know the time it starts, so as to be there on the tick. Got me?"

Skinner, Stott, and Snoop fancied they had. Their drowsiness had gone now. They eyed Bunter sharply. Cecil Thresher was scowling and looking puzzled. He had been long enough at Greyfriars to learn quite a lot about Billy Bunter; but he scarcely understood the fat junior's tortuous way of coming to a point. But the others did, and they glared at Bunter with growing suspicion.

"You—you fat toad!" hissed Skinner furiously. "You've been spying as usual—I mean, I don't understand you! What are you driving at?"

Bunter gave him a knowing wink.

"Oh, come off it, Skinner—do!" he urged. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes, you know. Think a cute fellow like me could miss spotting what's been going on since the major went away—not likely. Still, you've no need to—"

"You—you little sneaking rat!" muttered Cecil Thresher. He understood now. "What do you know about it? Nothing's been going on since my uncle went away, you fool!"

"What about the little parties in the round tower?" grinned Bunter. "He, he, he! That's touched you up, hasn't it? Still, you've no need to fear me splitting—not if you treat me as a pal, of course. I don't quite approve of smoking, and card-playing, and all that, but I'm willing to waive a point. I'm not strait-laced, I hope. Skinner knows that. I don't mind a little smoke; and as for cards, I'm a dab hand at 'em. And if there is a feed at the end of it—well, I'm sure I don't mind joining the little—Ow! Yow! Stop shaking me, you beast! You'll have—ow!—my glasses falling off! Yooop! If they break—wow!—you'll have to pay for them! Oh crumbs! Stop him, Skinner! Yow!"

Skinner jumped up and laid a restraining hand on Cecil Thresher, who was shaking Bunter like a rat, his face dark with fury. Skinner was looking alarmed now. Like the rest of the shady gang, he had imagined that nobody knew anything about the little parties they had been enjoying in the old tower at the bottom of Major Thresher's garden these last few days. But evidently Bunter knew, and intended to turn his knowledge to material gain.

"Leave him alone, Thresher, old man," muttered Skinner. "Can't you see he knows!"

"I'll teach the sneaking toad to spy on me!" hissed the new boy.

He gave the yelping Bunter a last savage shake, and flung him against the table. Bunter leaned against it, gasping. It became borne in upon his obtuse mind that Cecil Thresher had no intention of treating him as a pal.

"Ow! Oh dear! Keep him off, Skinner! You—you beast, Thresher! I—I despise you!" gasped Bunter, his eyes glittering with rage. "I wouldn't come to your rotten card-parties if you went on your bended knees! Yah! I'll tell everybody! It's my bare duty to—"

"Look—look here, Bunter, old man," began Skinner hastily.

But Bunter seemed to have made up his mind now. Apparently he had suddenly decided that he was strait-laced, after all. He interrupted Skinner loftily.

"No good, Skinner. I can't come. Don't ask me!" he said, with dignity. "I've got my conscience to consider. Gambling's a rotten game—so's smoking. Beastly bad form, and only fit for cads and rotters, like your lot. After all, I'm afraid it's my duty to put a stop to such goings on. I'd better tell Quelch. The major ought to know, too. Of course, if you—Ow! Here—Grough! M-m-m-mum!"

Bunter made those last few remarks through a thick slab of butter that Cecil Thresher had slapped into his fat face. After doing that, the new fellow snatched up the teapot and emptied the dregs over the fat junior's head. Then he grasped Bunter, and whirled him to the door. Jerking it open, he sent Bunter sprawling into the passage, planting a heavy boot behind him as he went.

"Now, clear, you fat lump of blubber!" he snapped. "I'll teach you to spy on me, hang you!"

Thresher slammed the door and returned to his pals, breathing hard.

"You've—you've done it now, old man!" breathed Skinner, looking scared. "You—you ought to have bluffed the fat beast. He'll go telling everybody now!"

"Think I care!" muttered Thresher furiously. "Think I'm having a fat lout like that with us? Not likely! And what if he does tell? He can't prove anything. He's only guessing, I'm certain! Hang the beast!"

And the new fellow seated himself, feeling he had effectually settled Billy Bunter. But Skinner did not feel that—nor would Thresher have done so had he seen what happened after he had pitched the fat youth out.

For some moments after the door had closed Billy Bunter sat and roared and spluttered. Then he staggered to his feet and tottered away along the passage, wiping his face on a dingy handkerchief, and groaning.

He had not taken many steps along the passage when a door, a little higher

up, opened, and from Study No. 1 emerged Harry Wharton & Co. They stared at Billy Bunter's dripping hair and buttery face in amazement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called Bob Cherry, grinning. "What's the matter, Billy? You look like a blubber-eating Eskimo."

"It—it was that beast, Thresher!" mumbled Bunter. "Oh dear! He's been pitching into me just because—because I—"

Bunter paused, and his little round eyes glittered vengefully. There was little chance now of his being invited to the secret parties; but he could, at least, have a bit of his own back.

"I—I say, Wharton," said Bunter virtuously. "I think I ought to tell you about this—it's my duty to expose the cads. Thresher and Skinner pitched into me like this just because I bowled 'em out. I've discovered their guilty secret. I've spotted them holding card-parties in the old round tower in Major Thresher's garden. Fact!"

"My hat!"

"You ought to look into it, Wharton," said Bunter. "Major Thresher ought to know about it, too. Fancy taking advantage of the old chap's absence like that! Scandalous, I call it!"

Wharton looked at Bunter and then at his chums. He had little doubt that Bunter was speaking the truth. He remembered now Miss Connie Thresher's fear of what would happen when her uncle had gone to Scotland. Since that afternoon when her pony had run away the chums had met Miss Connie several times. But she had been with her girl chums from Cliff House, and they had had no opportunity of discussing anything with her concerning her brother.

Harry had not forgotten her request, however—nor Mr. Quelch's request to take an interest in the new fellow. More than once he had gone out of his way to speak to Thresher—to make friends with him, much as he hated the task. But all his efforts had failed, as he expected they would.

Wharton's face was troubled now as he looked at Bunter.

"Look here, Bunter," he said quietly. "How do you know this?"

"'Cos I've seen 'em!" said Bunter. "I've had my eye on the beasts lately. Trust me to spot anything like that. I saw Skinner and his pals shin over the wall this afternoon, and I watched 'em. I saw it all through that little window in the tower. There was a whole crowd of them—Ponsonby and his pals, and a swagger sort of chap, besides Skinner and his lot, and Thresher. And I say, Wharton, I believe there's another party on to-night—"

"To night?"

"Yes; a blessed midnight card-party," said Bunter virtuously. "I over—I happened to hear Skinner talking about it. It's a fact! I say, Wharton, hadn't you better tell Quelch?"

"They—they wouldn't dare to break bounds?" muttered Nugent, looking at Wharton.

"I don't know," said Harry slowly. "Look here, Bunter. Better say nothing about this—leave it to me," he went on, after a thoughtful pause. "I should cut off to the bath-room now and get that muck cleaned off. Quelch may spot you and ask questions."

Harry Wharton turned away with his chums. Billy Bunter rolled towards the bath-room. He was grinning now. Wharton had said it could be left to him,

Next Monday's Star Programme!

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Greyfriars, for the nonce, loses its prize porpoise—

and he knew the skipper of the Remove would take the matter up.

And he was right there. Instead of going to the Common-room, as they had intended, Harry led the way into Study No. 1 again. He was looking grim.

"Look here, you chaps!" he began, as they entered the room. "We're going to look into this. What these rotters do in the daytime's their own look-out, and we can't interfere perhaps. But when they start breaking bounds to play cards and smoke, it's time somebody chipped in."

"You think there's truth in the fat idiot's yarn, then?" asked Bull.

"I do," said Harry. "We'll watch to-night, and if the rotters do go out we'll follow them. And we'll find a way of putting a stop to their little game. You chaps on?"

"Yes, rather!" came the chorus.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Smoky Affair!

"WAKE up, Bob!"

Harry Wharton whispered the words as he gently shook his sleeping chum.

In the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars all was dark and still. It was about an hour since the Removites had turned in at lights out, and true to his resolve, Wharton had kept awake, on the look-out for any movement from Skinner & Co.

And his vigil had not been in vain. Bunter's information had been only too true. From his bed Harry had watched the dim figures of the three "doggy" Removites stealthily leave the dormitory, and now he was hurriedly rousing his chums.

Those juniors had also gone to bed fully intending to keep awake. But against their wills they had dropped off one by one until Wharton was left to stick it out alone.

But as Harry roused them one by one they quickly grasped the situation, and were out of bed and dressing rapidly. Well within five minutes of Skinner & Co.'s departure they were all fully dressed and outside in the star-lit quad.

As they crossed the quad, shivering a little in the keen night air, Wharton gave a sudden exclamation, and pointed across the dark playing-fields.

"There's little doubt about it now," he exclaimed grimly. "Look, a light in the old tower! The rotters! Come on!"

In a few moments the dim shape of the tower at the bottom of Major Thresher's garden loomed before them, and the juniors halted in the shadow of the wall.

"Up you go!" whispered Wharton. "Quietly now, and see that nobody's hanging about the garden."

The juniors pulled themselves cautiously to the top of the thick wall. By standing on the flat top of the wall they found themselves level with the little barred window from which the light proceeded.

As he peered through the thick, leaded panes, Wharton gave a whistle, though what he saw was only what he expected.

Evidently the round chamber was used as a home workshop, for a bench stood near the arched door, and various tools were scattered on it. In the centre of the little room was a big coke-stove, from which a round iron chimney ran up through the ceiling to the top of the tower.



As the Famous Five crossed the quad Wharton gave a sudden exclamation, and pointed across the dark playing-fields. "Look! A light in the old tower," he said. "Come on, you chaps, the rotters are busy." (See Chapter 7.)

But the room was not being used as a workshop now.

The light from a couple of oil-lamps, set on the bench, shone on green-baize covered card-tables, and on little piles of money and scattered playing-cards. Round the tables were seated many familiar figures, and their laughter and conversation reached the watchers' ears faintly. And the atmosphere of the room was thick with cigarette smoke and the fumes from the lamps and stove.

The juniors recognised the players at a glance.

There were nine altogether—Ponsonby, Monson, Gadsby, and Vavasour of Highcliffe, Skinner & Co., and Cecil Thresher of Greyfriars, and last, but not least, the elegant form of Captain Devereux.

Wharton's chums gave exclamations of disgust as they peered over his shoulders at the scene.

"What a beastly hole!" grunted Johnny Bull. "My hat! Fancy preferring this to beauty sleep! What utter fools!"

Harry Wharton nodded, his face grim.

"The smoky, shady rascals!" he muttered. "No wonder Skinner and his pals have been looking washed-out lately! Phew! Talk about a gambling den!"

For some moments they gazed at the busy scene in stupefied silence. Suddenly Bob Cherry gave a chuckle.

"I'll leave you chaps for a sec," he whispered, chuckling again. "Just hang on and watch! Those beauties seem to

like smoke. Well, I'm going to see they get more—much more."

"What d'you mean, Bob?"

But Bob didn't stay to explain further. To his chum's amazement he took a firm grip of the ivy covering the tower, and next instant he was hauling himself up hand over hand.

The ivy rustled and crackled under his weight, but the stout roots held, and he reached the battlements of the low tower safely. Hauling himself over on to the flat, loaded roof, Bob paused a moment to regain his breath, and then he began to hack and tear handfuls of the ivy away.

He was satisfied at last, and with the little heap in his arms, he crossed to the short length of stove-piping jutting up from the roof. From this a steady stream of smoke was rising from the stove below. But Bob Cherry soon altered that.

Squeezing handfuls of the ivy together, he stuffed them into the narrow chimney. It was a dirty, smoky job, but he stuck to it cheerfully until not a wisp of smoke came from the piping. Then Bob lowered himself down the ivy again.

He reached the wall safely; but he did not stay there—he hadn't finished yet.

Ignoring his wondering chum's whispered questions, he dropped into the garden below. As he did so, his feet caught against something, and he almost stumbled headlong. Looking down, his eyes beheld a circular object whose black depths glimmered strangely.

But there is no weeping or wailing on that account!

Bob stopped over it, and as he did so he sniffed.

"Tar," he murmured. "A blessed bucket of tar. Narrow escape for me—nearly dropped right—My hat!"

Bob Cherry grinned in the darkness. Evidently old John, the gallant major's general man-of-all-work had left it there, and forgotten it. At all events, the sight of the bucket of tar gave Bob Cherry an idea.

He picked it up and staggered with it across to the foot of the stone steps leading up to the doorway of the tower, and placed it exactly in the centre of the lowest step.

"They may fall over it, and they mayn't," murmured Bob. "If they do, though, the tar will be something soft for 'em to fall on. Glad I thought of—Hallo! Here's where the merry old party starts to break up!"

From within the tower came a sudden clamour. As he heard it, Bob leaped up the steps, and grasped the old iron handle of the door. Placing one foot up against the stone doorpost, he braced himself, and prepared for the coming tug-of-war.

It was not long in coming. There came a wild stampede for the door, and Bob felt the handle twist in his grasp. He grinned and tightened his grip. For fully three or four minutes he held on grimly, while the commotion within the tower became a perfect pandemonium of sound.

Then, quite suddenly, Bob released his grasp and, carefully avoiding the bottom step, bolted for the wall and rejoined his chums. He found them grouped round the little window, and they were almost choking with suppressed mirth.

"You—you ass, Bob!" spluttered Harry Wharton. "You've fairly given 'em smoke. They'll be like smoked herrings soon. Just look at 'em!"

Bob peered through the little window. He could not see much for smoke. It was pouring from the stove in a dense, black volume. But his eye caught a glimpse of upturned tables, and of Cecil Thresher, with blackened face and red-rimmed eyes, poking furiously at the stove.

Even as he looked the new fellow dropped the poker and rushed, gasping and choking for the door. Round this the rest of the gang were already struggling, hindering each other in their frantic efforts to get out. From the room came a clamour of yells, and coughs and sneezes.

"Get the door open, you fools!" yelled Cecil Thresher. "What's the matter with you? Why don't—"

"The dashed thing won't open," came Ponsonby's hoarse yell. "Oh, by gad! What on earth—Oh, good!"

Thresher's angry charge into the coughing, choking group of struggling figures had cleared the way and enabled the—now not very elegant—captain to open the door.

With an angry wrench he dragged it open. Out into the sweet night air rolled a dense volume of smoke, and with it went the unhappy revellers. They went through the doorway like a shot from a gun, in one wild stampede.

Almost immediately a sudden clatter rang out, followed by a succession of thuds and dismal wails.

"What the thump—" began Harry Wharton.

"It's all right!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I'm afraid I carelessly left a bucket of tar on the bottom step. I

think someone must have fallen over it. Fancy that, now!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The grinning juniors moved along the wall, and cautiously peered round it. Then they choked.

Someone had fallen over the bucket of tar, without a doubt. As Bob had expected, they had rushed down the steps, and the first one—who happened to be Ponsonby—had gone headlong over the bucket, and over him had gone the rest of his precious pals in a sprawling, struggling heap.

In the shining stream of tar from the upturned bucket, their dim forms could be seen in a whirling, struggling mass; they were fairly wallowing in tar. Their gasps and grunts and expressive remarks reached the ears of the juniors clearly.

"Hark to the dear old captain!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I never believed he had really been in the army; but I do now. What language! Never mind! I suppose they're all tarred with the same brush—or, at least, the same tar. I really think we'd better be going now, chappies."

The rest of the Famous Five thought so, too. As the hapless midnight revelers staggered to their feet, the Famous Five dropped from the wall silently, and drifted away, almost helpless with laughter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Enter Wibley!

"I'VE got it!"

Harry Wharton made that expressive remark to his chums, Nugent, Bull, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh, the Indian junior. He made it at prep time in Study No. 1, three evenings later.

Though it was prep time, the juniors were not doing prep. They were discussing a subject which had been exercising their minds a great deal lately. It was how to deal with Skinner & Co., and their midnight card-parties.

For, as Harry Wharton had feared, Bob Cherry's little wheeze, though it had doubtless been an unpleasant experience to Skinner & Co., had not stopped them going out at night.

The previous evening the Famous Five had determined to stay awake again and watch. Unfortunately, even Harry Wharton had dropped asleep within an hour of lights out. They did not know if Skinner and his sporty pals had gone out; but from their sleepy manner and washed-out appearance in the morning, the Co. guessed they had.

But to-night they knew the Remove cads intended going out. Bunter, who had made it his business to keep an eye on Skinner & Co., had overheard them discussing the matter once again; and he had acquainted the Famous Five with the news.

And now, instead of doing their prep, the chums had foregathered in Study No. 1 to discuss ways and means of dealing with the intending bound-breakers. But up to the time of Harry making the foregoing remark, none of the five had put forward a sensible suggestion.

"You've got what, Harry?" inquired Nugent eagerly. "An idea?"

"Yes," grinned Wharton. "It's a stunner, too. What about Wibley?"

"Eh? Wibley? Are you potty?"

"Not at all! What about old

Wibley?" went on Wharton eagerly. "You know what a topping impersonator he is—"

"Yes; but—"

"There's not a fellow I know can touch old Wibley when it comes to acting and impersonating people. You know that, too," said Wharton. "What about getting him to impersonate old Thresher—the major, I mean?"

"Yes," said Johnny Bull. "But what for? What's the game?"

"What for?" echoed Wharton witheringly. "Can't you spot the wheeze? You thick-skulled lot of fatheads! What about old Wib making up as the major and catching 'em at their little games to-night?"

"Oh!"

"It would give the rotters the fright of their lives!" said Harry. "Wib would do it like a shot—and carry the thing through, too! He could give the cads a thorough dressing-down! Might even give each of 'em a good licking—Wib's got nerve enough for that! What about it?"

"But—but Skinner will spot it. He may suspect us now," said Johnny Bull.

"I don't think so. If he suspected we had a hand in that smoking-out affair the other night, he'd have shown it. They'll only think the major's come back sooner than he intended."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's a ripping wheeze, Harry! We'll do it! If anything goes wrong, we'll be at hand to look after Wib!"

Harry Wharton got to his feet.

"I'm going to see Wib now," he said grimly. "He's a beggar for a jape, and he'll jump at it."

And Wharton proved to be right there. He was absent from the study some twenty minutes, but when he returned his face showed his satisfaction. As he had opined, William Wibley, the dramatic star of the Remove, had jumped at the chance to exercise his art. Moreover, he loved a jape, and he foresaw lots of fun in Wharton's plot.

"He'll do it!" said Wharton, grinning. "I had to tell him everything, of course; but he's not the sort to gas. He's as keen as mustard, too. To-night, my pippins, we're going to be giddy night-birds again!"

For some minutes the juniors discussed the proposed wheeze. Then Cherry, Bull, and Singh departed for their own studies to get on with their delayed prep, leaving Wharton and Nugent to do theirs.

But when the Remove trooped up to their dormitory that night, six at least of the juniors were unusually excited. And this time the Famous Five did not make the mistake of falling asleep. Neither did Wibley.

And once again Bunter's information proved to be correct. Half an hour after that fat junior's snores had started to echo through the dark dormitory a movement was noticed from Skinner's bed. A few whispered words passed between him and Stott and Snoop, and then the three dressed quickly in the darkness and left the dormitory.

"Now, you chaps!" muttered Harry Wharton.

In a flash the six juniors were out of bed and dressing at top speed. This done, they also stole out of the dormitory, and descended the stairs to Study No. 6 in the Remove passage. Then, in the light from an electric lamp, Wibley began to get busy.

Everything had been left in readiness

(Continued on page 17.)

Like a bad ha'penny, the Owl turns up at the school again!



Supplement No: 120a

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week ending June 16th, 1923.



THE CONFESSIONS OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS WILL RAISE MANY A LAUGH.

BOB CHERRY:

You can't beat a faithful fox-terrier. I don't own one myself, but I should like to. I have always been a great lover of dogs, and the fox-terrier, whether a thoroughbred or a mongrel, appeals to me most. Every fellow to his taste, of course. Some fellows would prefer to keep a tame hedgehog.

HAROLD SKINNER:

My favourite pet is a snake—tame, of course! Some fellows say that I'm a snake in the grass myself, and that the words "snake" and "sneak" have much in common. Snakes aren't very popular, I know, but, personally, I'm awfully keen on them. So if any fellow happens to come across a snake in Friardale Wood, I hope he'll hand it over to yours truly.

MARK LINLEY:

I don't know whether it is correct to call a horse a pet, but I am very fond of horses. They are brave, lovable creatures, and many of them are wonderfully intelligent. When I speak of horses, I include pit ponies. I have seen plenty of these in my native Lancashire, and I feel intensely sorry for them. A dog is often styled "the friend of man," but I think a horse is even more so. It is, at any rate, vastly more useful.

DICKY NUGENT:

It's all very well to sing the praises of hoarises and dogs and so fourth, but what about the white mice? I think white mice are perfectly ripping. I've got a duzen of the little fellows, and they are the apple of my eye. I wouldn't part with them for anything. I reared them and trained them myself, and I've grown awfully fond of the little beggars. Cats, dogs, rabbits, and other wild beasts are all very well, but give me white mice every time!

MR. QUELCH:

I confess at once that household pets do not appeal to me. I once had a puppy, and it chewed up the first six

chapters of my History of Greyfriars, so I was obliged to get rid of it. I also had a cat, but was unable to sleep at night on account of its nocturnal

TO MY UNCLE!

By DICK PENFOLD.

My dear Uncle Harry,
I prithee don't tarry
To send me a present right now!
My birthday's to-morrow:
Let no lines of sorrow
Adorn your avuncular brow!

I don't want a monkey,
My priceless old nunky;
They're fearfully awkward to train.
I don't want a rabbit;
They have the bad habit
Of driving a fellow insane!

White mice I abhor,
And I've told you before
That a mouse is a horrible pest.
The one thing that matters—
A parrot which chatters.
I beg of you, send me the best!

As soon as you catch it,
Make haste to dispatch it,
And send it to me in its cage.
I don't want a "beaver";
I will not receive her
If she should be past middle age!

A parrot at present
Would prove very pleasant.
So send one along—and be quick!
I feel rather funky
At asking you, nunky;
But hope you'll oblige me.

Yours, DICK.

serenades. At the moment I have no pets, and I think it is just as well.

ALONZO TODD:

Who dares to lift up his voice in deprecation of the tabby cat? Cats are wonderfully docile creatures—if you rub them the right way up. My Uncle Benjamin had a most charming cat called Ophelia, but alas! it perished in the springtime of its youth. It attempted to jump one day from the window of the top bedroom on to the sill beneath; but it misjudged the distance. The unfortunate creature had no parachute, so it was unable to avert the tragedy. It fell from a height of sixty feet, and disproved the theory that a cat has nine lives. We laid it to rest next morning in the garden, with the following epitaph:

"Here lie the bones of Thomas Cat,
Who used to feed upon the mat.
He jumped from a tremendous height,
But missed the mark, and died outright!"

Excuse me, my dear fellows, whilst I shed a silent tear!

HURREE SINGH:

What is wrong with the esteemed and furry rabbit? In my humble opinion, it is a worthy and ludicrous pet, and I wish the Head would permitfully allow me to keep about fifty of them. Dogs are too fond of the yapfulness and the snapfulness for my liking; and cats are too fond of the scratchfulness, and the midnight concert on the tilefulness. But the tame rabbit delights me muchfully, and I prefer it above all other pets.

WILLIAM GOSLING:

What I says is this here: Pets are all right in their proper place. But when you've got a dog what makes holes in people's trowsis, or a cat what kicks up a hullabaloo on the tiles at night, they're reg'lar noosances as ever was, and ought to be destructivated. (That's a good word, Gossy!—Ed.) I've got no pets of my own, and what's more, I ain't at all keen on having any. Them as wants to go in for such luxuries may do so, but William Gosling prefers to remain pet-less!

TOM BROWN:

I regard a nice, chatty parrot as a boon and a blessing. I keep asking my Aunt Sophia to send me one of these bright birds, but it's no use. If I had a parrot as a pet, the first thing I should teach it to say would be, "Down with Form masters!" But it would be rather awkward if old Quelchy came into my study and had that remark hurled at his head!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 801.

Fun and Mirth in the Gymnasium—next Monday!



SAVING THE SITUATION!

... BY ...
MARK LINLEY.

COKER of the Fifth stopped short. Strolling down the village street, his attention had been arrested by an announcement which was displayed in the window of the little general shop:

"SHEEPDOG FOR SALE.
Apply Rose Cottage, Courtfield
Common."

"Ha!" ejaculated Coker. "The very thing! I've been wanting a dog for ages. I don't suppose old Prout will take kindly to the idea of my keeping one. Dogs are rather a nuisance at Greyfriars. I ought really to get Prout's permission first, but—"

Coker decided to buy the dog first and then get permission to keep it—which was typical of the asinine way in which Coker acted.

The Fifth-Former glanced at his watch. There would be plenty of time, he reflected, to go to Rose Cottage and make his purchase. It was a glorious summer evening, ideal for a walk.

As he strode along, Coker pictured the amazement of his pals when he turned up at Greyfriars with a sheep-dog trotting behind him.

Coker had not decided where he was going to keep the dog or how he was going to arrange about its food—which, again, was typical of the asinine way in which Coker acted. He would get the dog first and make all arrangements for its board and lodging later.

It was rather a long way to Rose Cottage, and dusk was beginning to fall when Coker reached it.

The cottage was a ramshackle affair standing on the outskirts of Courtfield Common. It was aptly named Rose Cottage, for roses were clustered in great profusion round the porch.

Coker marched straight up the grassy path leading to the cottage. Before knocking at the door he paused and took stock of his surroundings.

The parlour window was open, admitting the evening breeze. An oil-lamp stood on the table, shedding a subdued light. Rose Cottage did not boast of electric light or even gas.

Without intending to be inquisitive, Coker found himself peering into the little parlour.

The occupants of the room were a man and a dog. The man's face was pinched and drawn, and his clothes were shabby. His evening meal appeared to have consisted of bread and cheese. Such a luxury as a four-course dinner was unknown to Rose Cottage.

The dog lay stretched at the man's feet, gazing up wistfully at his master. He was a big, shaggy, likeable sort of dog. Coker reflected that such an animal would suit him down to the ground.

Presently the man stooped, and patted

the sheepdog's head. Then he spoke to it, and his voice was a trifle husky.

"It's good-bye, Jack, old fellow! I can't afford to keep you any longer. You're licence is a couple of months overdue—you're eight months old now, you know—and at any minute I'm liable to get a summons. Old Tozer, the bobby, has already cautioned me. I told him you were only six months old; but I can't keep on telling him that, can I? If only I could scrape up seven-and-sixpence from somewhere—"

The man paused. Coker had made a movement outside the window, and the man had heard it. He looked up quickly, but saw nothing, for it was now dark outside. He supposed the sound must have been caused by the breeze.

"I've had to advertise you for sale, Jack," the man went on. "It's going to well-nigh break my heart to part with you. But there's nothing else for it. If old Tozer finds that I'm still without a licence for you, I shall be hauled up to the police-court and fined—and I sha'n't be able to pay. And they've a short way with people who can't pay fines!"

The dog seemed to understand all that was said to him. Its eyes were wonderfully intelligent, and it rubbed its shaggy head affectionately against its master's knees.

Coker, standing outside, felt a queer gulp rise in his throat. He drew back a few paces and groped in his pocket, bringing forth three half-crowns. These he proceeded to wrap in a piece of plain paper. Then with a stump of pencil he inscribed the message:

"For your dog lysense."

Stealing cautiously back towards the window, Coker made sure that the man was not looking. Then he pushed the little packet through the open window and deposited it on to the little side table within.

Having thus saved the situation, Coker hurried swiftly away into the night.

Good old Coker! He cannot spell for toffee, but his failing in this direction is amply atoned for by his goodness of heart.

NOW ON SALE! SEXTON BLAKE 4d. LIBRARY.

No. 287. THE OUTLAW OF
YUGO-SLAVIA.

No. 288. DOWN EAST: or,
Tracked Through the Slums.

No. 289. THE GREAT REVUE
MYSTERY: or the Fourth Wall.

No. 290. THE LAST CLUE.

"A Straight Talk!" by Fisher T. Fish—next week!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 801.

OUR PET COLUMN!

By **BOB CHERRY.**

LORD MAULEVERER is thinking of getting a dormouse for a pet. It is quite on the cards that Mauly will follow his pet's example and go to sleep all the winter!

* * *

S. Q. I. FIELD declares that he is going to keep a goat, and tether it to the Head's garden gate. But I cannot help thinking that Squiff is "kidding" us—playing the giddy goat, in fact!

* * *

DICKY NUGENT'S white mice are reported to be suffering from colds in the head. That is what comes of leaving the poor little beggars out all night. Dicky clean forgot to do his duty to put them under cover before he went to bed. Alonzo Todd is taking the matter up with the S.P.C.V.—Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Vermin!

* * *

MONTY NEWLAND was foolish enough to adopt a hedgehog as a pet. He is sorry he did so now. Keeping and feeding a hedgehog is a job which "bristles" with difficulties!

* * *

SAMMY BUNTER has made a pet of a limpet. But the creature is not at all happy. Sammy's treatment of him is one of the things he "can't stick"!

* * *

GEORGE TUBB asked Mr. Twigg for permission to keep a chimpanzee. But Mr. Twigg informed him that he was a "young monkey" himself!

* * *

GOSLING, the porter, is making negotiations for the purchase of a bulldog. We should advise Gossy to be very careful, or he will be losing his "seat" in "the house"!

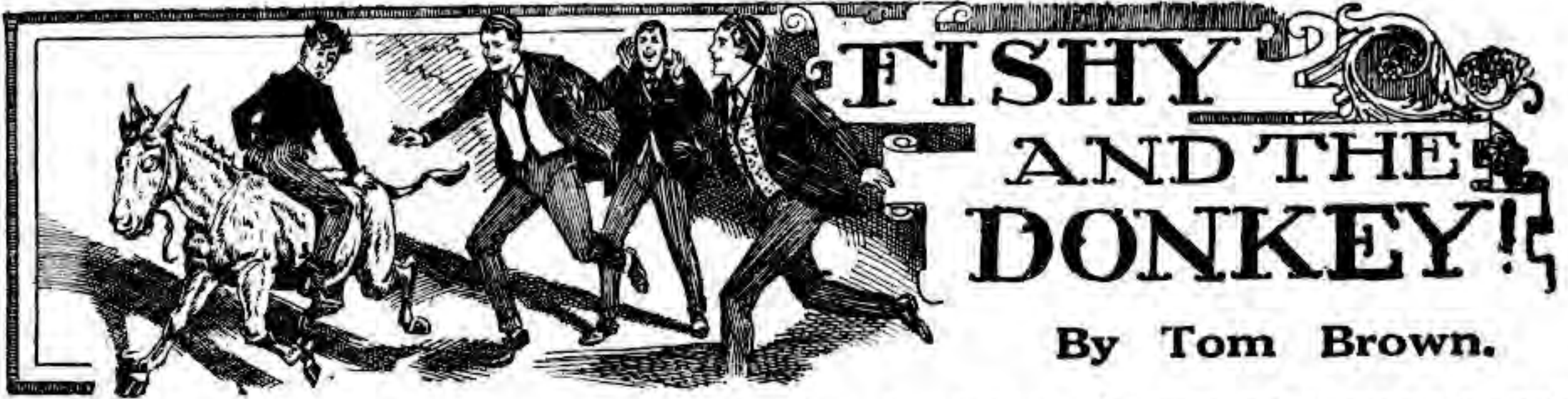
* * *

WE heard Billy Bunter talking about an "old cat" the other day, and at first we thought he was alluding to a pet of his. But it transpired that the "old cat" was Dame Mimble. She had refused to allow Bunter credit at the tuckshop!

* * *

ONE hears a good deal about the faithfulness of dogs, but what price the kitchen cat at Greyfriars? Two of the cooks came to camp with us, and the cat followed them all the way from Greyfriars to Pinehaven! For an example of feline devotion this is hard to beat. But I do wish the animal in question had refrained from singing in the night. My beauty sleep, alas! was spoilt three nights in succession.

[Supplement ii.]



"Oh, my giddy aunt! Look what's comin'!"

It was Ponsonby of Highcliffe who spoke. Pon and his cronies were lounging along Friardale Lane, arm-in-arm, when a donkey came trotting towards them. It was a fat, contented-looking donkey, and it was on its own. Neither owner, trainer, nor jockey accompanied it.

"Relation of yours, Pon?" asked Gadsby, with a grin.

"Shurrup!" growled Ponsonby.

The donkey halted when it came to the Highcliffe juniors. It was quite friendly, and not a bit afraid. It began to sniff at Ponsonby's coat-pocket, possibly in the hope of finding a carrot therein. But the donkey was unlucky. Ponsonby was not in the habit of going about with carrots in his pocket.

"Well, this is a rum go," said Monsen. "Wonder who this beast belongs to?"

"Seems to have broken loose from somewhere," said Drury. "There's a giddy rope round its neck."

The juniors glanced up and down the road, half expecting the owner of the donkey to come into view. But the only person who came into view was Fisher T. Fish, of the Greyfriars Remove.

A gleam came into Ponsonby's eye.

"Greyfriars boulder!" he exclaimed. "Rippin' chance for a lark."

"Yes, rather!"

Monsen grabbed at the donkey's rope and hung on to it. The rest of the Highcliffe "nuts" awaited the approach of Fisher T. Fish. When the American junior drew level with them they promptly pounced upon him.

"Hellup!" panted Fish. "Wharrer you up to?"

"We're goin' to give you a donkey-ride!" chuckled Ponsonby.

Fishy didn't take kindly to the idea. He didn't mind donkey-rides in their proper place—at the seaside—but he didn't want to be made a laughing-stock of. However, he was at the mercy of the Highcliffians, and not being a fighting-man, he was not able to escape from the hands of the Philistines.

"Heave him on to Neddy's back!" ordered Ponsonby.

"Let up, you jays!" howled Fish. "Guess you've no right to lay hands on a free Amurrican citizen!"

But the free Amurrican citizen was hoisted on to the donkey's back without ceremony.

Ponsonby & Co. seated their victim the wrong way round, with his face towards the donkey's tail. Then they secured him to the donkey by means of the rope. Fishy shouted and expostulated and entreated, but all to no purpose.

Having secured their captive, the practical jokers turned Neddy's head in the direction of Greyfriars, and gave him a push from behind, which caused him to break into an unwilling trot. Then they

chased Neddy down the road, so that he would not slacken speed.

The expression on Fishy's face made the Highcliffians shriek with laughter. Fish wasn't enjoying his donkey-ride at all. To begin with, he could not see where he was going. But he could tell. Ponsonby & Co. were going to drive the donkey into the precincts of Greyfriars. The Close was bound to be crowded with fellows, and Fishy could well imagine what sort of reception he would get.

"Say, you galoots!" panted Fish. "I'll give you a dollar if you'll take me off this hyer donkey!"

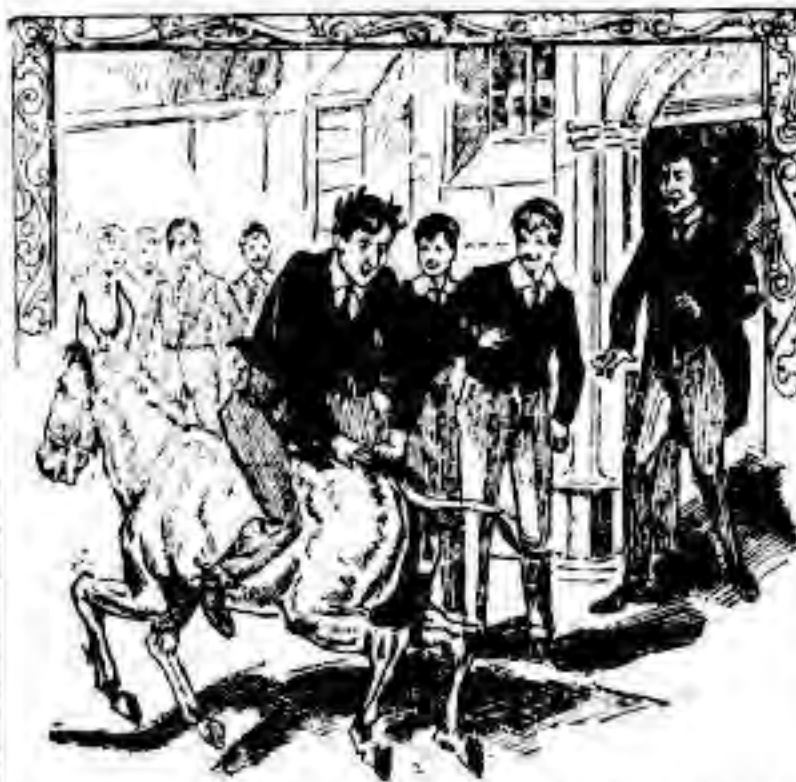
"Nothin' doing!" said Ponsonby with a chuckle. "It's worth a term's pocket-money to see you enjoyin' yourself."

"I'm not enjoyin' myself!" hooted Fish.

"No?" said Pon in surprise. "That's curious. Most kids like havin' joy-rides on their brothers' backs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The gates of Greyfriars were in sight by this time. They stood wide open.



"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Fish! What on earth are you doing?"

Ponsonby & Co. gave the donkey a final push, which sent it through into the Close. Then they slammed the gates and abandoned Fisher T. Fish to his fate.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Close, indulging in a game of French cricket. On catching sight of Fisher T. Fish they nearly went into hysterics.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hold me up, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The donkey's "jockey" gave a hollow groan.

"Stop cackling, you guys, and untie me!" he exclaimed.

But the juniors seemed in no hurry to do that. The spectacle of Fisher T. Fish careering round the Close on a donkey was a sight that was not seen every day, and the Removites meant to make the most of it.

Unfortunately, Fish was not in a position to guide the animal, or he would have hurried it away to some lonely spot, far from the madding crowd.

Neddy seemed to regard the Greyfriars Close as a very suitable exercise-ground, and he cantered round and round very contentedly.

At this juncture Mr. Quelch came out into the Close. The Form master's eyes fairly started out of his head when he caught sight of Fisher T. Fish.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Who has trussed Fish up in that absurd manner?"

"Not guilty, sir!" murmured Bob Cherry. "It was somebody outside the school—some Highcliffe fellows, I believe."

"Pray release Fish from his unfortunate position," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir!"

The capture of the donkey was a fairly simple matter. And Fisher T. Fish was freed from his bonds and able to dismount. He did so with a gasp of relief.

"To whom does this animal belong, Fish?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Guess I don't know, sir. It was straying in the lane, I believe."

"Then it doubtless belongs to a local farmer," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall advertise for the owner. Meanwhile, the donkey had better remain here. There is a waste piece of land adjoining the cricket-ground, where it may disport itself."

The donkey was led away to the place in question. But nobody came forward to claim Neddy, and Fisher T. Fish grew very excited.

"If nobody claims that donkey," he said, "I guess it will become my property."

"But what on earth do you want with a donkey?" asked Harry Wharton in amazement.

Fish chuckled.

"I guess I've hit upon a brainy wheeze," he said. "There's plenty of holiday-makers down at Pegg Bay, and I shall take the donkey on to the sands and organise donkey-rides at a tanner a time."

"My hat!"

Fisher T. Fish was ever on the lookout for a chance of making money. And his latest scheme was typical of the cute American business man.

But Fishy's scheme was not destined to bear fruit. For a few days later a circus proprietor turned up at Greyfriars and claimed the donkey as his property.

It was a great blow to Fisher T. Fish, who had hoped to make quite a good income by exploiting Neddy on the sands of Pegg. And it was a very disappointed Fish who gazed from his study window and saw the circus proprietor passing out of the gates with the donkey trotting behind him.

THE END.

And "Thrills and Spills!" told by George Bulstrode. Both winners!

CROOLTY TO ANIMALS!



By Billy Bunter.

IT'S high time they formed a Sossiety at Greyfriars for the proteckshun of dum animals. I was dum myself once, so I know what it's like!

I won't go so far as to say that the fellows who own pets are vishusly crool. They are just thoughtlessly crool.

Take the case of Dicky Nugent and his white mice. Sometimes he goes to bed and forgets to feed them, with the rezult that their boans are sticking through their flesh next morning. I spoke to Dicky on the subject, and he said: "Oh, that's all right. The little beggers can always prow around and pick up a few biskit crumbs hear and there."

"You hartless beast!" I cried. "How would you like it if the Head deprived you of all your meals in hall, and said: 'That's all right. The little begger can always pick up a few scraps hear and there.' Why, you'd jolly well starve!"

To which Dicky Nugent retorted that his white mice were his own property, and he wasn't going to be dictated to as to how many meals they should have per day, and all that sort of thing. He told me, with more emfassis than perliteness, to mind my own bizziness.

Then, take the case of Bolsover miner and his puppy. He makes the poor little thing perform all sorts of anticks. He makes it walk along on its hind legs, and jump through his hoop, and beg for biskits, and all that sort of thing. Down-right croolty, I call it. How would Bolsover miner like it, if he had to get up and beg every time he wanted a jam-tart or a doe-nutt? How would he like to have to walk along on his hands—for that's the equivalent of a dog walking on its hind legs. How would he like to be made to jump through hoops till he hadn't a breth left in his body?

Bolsover miner says that his puppy likes doing all these trix. But I don't believe it.

Take, also, the case of Blundell of the Fifth and his parrot. (We don't hear much of Blundell's parrot, but he's got one, all the same.) Blundell makes it croak "Annie Lorry," or "Where my Sharrabang has rested," until the poor bird gets a soar throat! And he makes it chatter and jabber by the hour. I remarked just now that we didn't hear much of Blundell's parrot. Neither do we, so far as the Remove is konserved. But the Fifth-Formers hear a jolly sight too much of it!

I mean to put my foot down with a

firm hand, so to speak, on all cases of croolty to dum animals, inseecks, birds, and other reptiles. So the pet-owners of Greyfriars had better beware!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

THIS, my cheery chums, is our Special Pets Number. I hope the printer, in setting up the word "Pets," won't put the "s" before the "t," and make it a Special Pest Number!

Some people contend that there is no difference between pets and pests. Yapping dogs and creaking parrots are among their pet abominations. Most of the Greyfriars fellows, however, think kindly of pets.

Greyfriars has harboured many strange pets in the course of its history. There have been monkeys, and canaries, and parrots, and white mice, and tame bunnies; and I once heard of a fellow having a pet pig. (No, its name wasn't Billy Bunter!)

Of course, there are some pets which don't take our editorial fancy. Snakes, for instance. How any fellow can make a pet of a wriggling, writhing rattle-snake passes our comprehension. Yet some people are fond of tame snakes!

Other people capture rats, tame them, and convert them into pets. Personally rats are my "pet" aversion. There is something sly and sinister about a rat which gives me the creeps. Not that I'm afraid of the brutes—I've been on many a rat-hunting expedition when the great crusade against rats was in progress—but I shouldn't like to have a rat for a pet, by any means.

Many of my readers have pets of their own. And even those who have not are keenly interested in the subject; so I need have no qualms as to the reception this number will get. The bright and breezy contributions of our tame humorists are bound to cause beaming faces and happy laughter. And clean mirth is the finest tonic in the world.

More special numbers coming along—as full of snap and sparkle as ever!

"Heraldite" (Hastings).—"I revel in your bright, bonnie, breezy, beautiful, bewitching paper!" Bravo, brainy boy!

"Hard Up" (Coventry).—"You have a nice, kind face." But nothing to give away, so you'd better try the Editor of "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

"Kentish Cob" (Lympne).—"The name of my native place is pronounced 'Lim.' I wonder why?" Ask me another. By the way, have you heard Dick Penfold's latest limerick:

There was a young lady of Lympne,
Who went every morn for a swympne.

When her friends asked her why,

She made the reply:

"I find that it keeps me in trympne!"



MY MERRY ANTICS!



By the Kitchen Cat.

The fellows call me "Tiger Tim,"

I'm ten years old to-day;

But still I'm sound in wind and limb,
And love to romp and play.

I dash across the kitchen floor

In hot pursuit of mice;

I bolt them whole, and mew for more—
They vanish in a trice!

When first I came to Greyfriars School,
A kitten small and shy,

Unconsciously I broke a rule,
And stole a rabbit pie.

Dame Kebble, with a rolling-pin,
Chastised my furry hide;

I tried my level best to grin,
But then broke down and cried.

And now I'm much too wise to peep
Into the kitchen larder;

In case the Dame should make me weep
And lam me even harder!

I rather like the Greyfriars chaps,
At least, the decent fellows;

Bob Cherry, who delights in scraps,
And Johnny Bull, who bellows.

But Skinner is a heartless brute,

He loves to pull my tail;

And if I wasn't black as soot

I'm certain I'd turn pale!

The cook, who's quite a decent sort,

Brings me a brimming saucer;

And I, who love the good old sport,
Salute her with my paw, sir!

I warble on the roof at night

Till Quelchey gets quite frantic;

My tuneful ditties don't delight
That person so pedantic!

I'm ten years old—a perfect pet,

The handsomest of cats;

And for my birthday cook will get
A pound of salted sprats!

"Herald" the approach of the "Special Gym Supplement." It's next!

THE GREYFRIARS DAY-BOARDER!

(Continued from page 12.)

before bed-time, and it did not take long. The Remove Amateur Dramatic Society's property-box was well stocked, and having padded the suit he had selected, and put it on to his satisfaction, Wibley set to work with grease-paints, false scalp and moustache. When at last he turned from the study looking-glass, he was greeted with gasps of admiration from the Famous Five.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Wharton. "You're a wonder, Wib! If I didn't know it was really you I'd swear you were the giddy major or his twin-brother, if he's got one!"

Wibley chuckled, and grasped a stick from the corner.

"Huh!" he exclaimed in an exact imitation of Major Thresher's well-known tones. "Cheeky young rascals, begad! Smashing the roof of my greenhouse—hey? If any more balls come over into my garden I'll confiscate 'em—I will, begad! Disgraceful! Huh!"

"Stunning!" gasped Bob Cherry. "My hat, Wib, old man, you've fairly got him off! Buck up and let's get on the job!"

Wibley announced that he was ready, and they left the sleeping school and started across the playing-fields, little dreaming how their little wheeze was going to end.

There was a light showing in the old tower again, but this time they did not make straight for that. Wharton had decided it would be safer for Wibley to approach the tower from the house, and, accordingly, they stopped under the wall quite close to the house.

With a few parting instructions to Wibley, Wharton led his chums along the wall towards the tower, while Wibley sealed the wall and dropped down into the garden. He was grinning to himself, and not a scrap nervous. Wibley had carried through many far more dangerous japes than this.

For a few moments he crouched down in the shrubbery, listening intently. And it was well he did so, for just as he was about to make a move his quick ears caught the sound of footsteps approaching up the garden.

Wibley crouched lower, his heart thumping a little now. He heard the footsteps leave the path and begin to cross the lawn in his direction. Then, sooner than he had expected, a dark form loomed above him—the form of a man.

But just as Wibley felt that he was discovered, the man brushed past the scrub behind which he was hiding and walked towards a french window looking on the short stretch of lawn. The window was—though Wibley did not know it—the window of the library, and it was unlocked, for the man passed through at once, closing it softly after him.

Wibley was frankly startled. Wharton had told him that John, the major's handyman, had gone away with the major, and that beyond the female servants and Cecil Thresher and his sister there was nobody else left in the house.

Who, then, could this man be?

Wibley was curious now. He crept up closer. After closing the french window the man had drawn the curtains across. Wibley peeped through a chink just in time to see the dim figure cross the fire-lit room and flood the library with light.

Then Wibley saw and understood. The man was Captain Devereux. Wibley knew him by sight, as did most Greyfriars fellows.

"So it's that rotter!" grunted Wibley to himself. "What an ass I am! I thought—"

Wibley broke off with a stifled gasp, for Captain Devereux's movements after that were certainly queer, to say the least of them.

He placed a chair against the wall and took down a picture. It was a portrait—an oil-painting—and not very large. It was not much to look at—in Wibley's eyes, at least.

But apparently the captain regarded it as something of value, for he handled it with great care. Carrying it to a low table near the window, he laid it upside down gently. Then, taking a small pair of pliers from his pocket, he began to remove the pegs which held the canvas in the frame. He worked swiftly, yet with methodical neatness. Wibley watched him, fascinated and bewildered.

After removing the pegs—it was the work of a few moments—the captain next took a knife from his pocket, and gently cut the picture itself away from the tacks which held it to the canvas-stretcher.

This done, he gazed with gleaming eyes at the picture for a brief moment. Then he laid it on one side, and crossing to a coat lying over a chair-back, took from an inside pocket a long, rolled package wrapped in American cloth.

Unrolling this, he brought to view a picture—a picture that, to Wibley, seemed exactly the same as the one taken from the frame. Quickly he smoothed this over the empty stretcher, and, without troubling to fasten it in, pressed the picture into the gilt frame.

But the tightness of the frame held the picture in place. Standing on the chair, the captain then replaced the picture on the wall.

Wibley began to have a dim glimmering of the truth then. The picture now hanging on the wall was like the other, yes; but it was but a copy—a worthless print!

"Phew!" breathed Wibley. "What a go!"

He watched breathlessly now as the captain carefully rolled up the painting—the original one—in the piece of American cloth, and stepped over to the electric-light switch. Then, as the room was plunged into the fire-lit gloom again, Wibley slipped back softly among the bushes.

Not a moment too soon. The french window opened and closed behind Captain Devereux, and, after listening a second, the fellow moved along the wall for a yard or so. Then he stooped, and a rustling of ivy reached the junior's ears. It only lasted a second, and then Wibley saw the dark figure of the captain cross the strip of lawn, and, reaching the path, vanish in the direction of the tower.

Then Wibley moved. Stepping quickly to the spot where the captain had paused, he fumbled about among the ivy. He soon found what he had expected to find. Hidden in the ivy was a rolled package wrapped in American cloth.

Then Wibley breathed freely again. The whole incident had taken place in a few brief minutes, and he hardly grasped the full significance of it yet.

But one thing was clear. Evidently the picture Captain Devereux had taken from the frame was valuable; equally evident was the fact that the captain had stolen it, and hidden it among the ivy, intending to retrieve it again later.

"We'll see what Wharton thinks of this!" mused Wibley grimly. "I'll put this in a place of safety first, though. My hat! Dear old Cecil looks like getting more than one surprise to-night!"

After looking about him a little, Wibley hid the package in an open cucumber-frame. Then he went in search of his chums. He found them astride the wall behind the tower, patiently waiting for the performance to begin inside the tower.

But they soon forgot all thoughts of that when Wibley explained. As they listened they fairly blinked at him.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Wharton. "It's as plain as anything could be! I've heard the major's a bit of an art connoisseur, and owns one or two pictures worth a mint of money. He thinks the world of 'em, too. I expect that scoundrel has heard about them. Possibly that young ass Cecil has shown them to him out of pure swank. My hat, we'll put a spoke in his wheel, though!"

"We saw the beggar leave the tower—just got to the window in time!" murmured Frank Nugent excitedly. "We heard him tell Thresher he'd left his cigarettes in his raincoat pocket in the library. Thresher offered him his, and told him not to bother to fetch 'em; but the rotter insisted, saying he wanted to stretch his legs a bit."

"I wondered how the cad had got away from his pals!" grunted Wibley. "I say, I suppose this puts the tin hat on our wheeze, Wharton?"

Wharton frowned.

"No it doesn't—no fear!" he said, with sudden decision. "I think I see a way to teach that little bounder Thresher a lasting lesson—to bring the young fool to his senses. Listen!"

And Wharton proceeded to propound his scheme to his chums. When he had finished, Wibley gave a soft chuckle.

"Ripping, Wharton! Then you'll keep your eye on the merry old captain, and I'll do the rest. Now for dear old Pon and his doggy pals. Cheerio, chaps!"

And with that Wibley dropped down into the garden again. Moving cautiously to the steps of the tower he mounted them, and paused at the arched doorway a moment to listen. From within the tower came the faint hum of voices and the chink of money.

Wibley took a deep breath. Carefully adjusting his walrus-like moustache, he gave an excellent imitation of Major Thresher's well-known cough, and flinging open the door, stamped angrily into the lamp-lit room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wibley Enjoys Himself!

AS the door flew back with a crash, the effect on the occupants of the dingy chamber was electrical.

They sprang to their feet, jerking up the tables in their alarm, and scattering cards and money over the tables and floor.

"Oh, gad!" groaned Ponsonby.

Introduce your pals to Billy Bunter. He's worth knowing!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 801.

In stupefied silence they blinked through the dim haze of tobacco-smoke at the—to them—awe-inspiring figure in the doorway. Nemesis had overtaken the shady revellers at last—or so they believed. Ponsonby & Co. and Skinner & Co. had gone pale; the captain looked merely uneasy. But Cecil Thresher's pasty complexion was as white as a sheet.

"Un—un—uncle," he stammered, through suddenly dry lips; "I—I—"

The old gentleman in the doorway brought down his stick with a thump that made Ponsonby jump quite a foot into the air.

"Boy!" he barked, his features seeming to grow purple. "Rascal! Ingrate! So—so this is how you repay my hospitality, sir; this is how you take advantage of my absence, begad! Huh! Disgraceful! Turning my premises—my premises, mark you—into a gambling-den—a—a sink of iniquity—hey?"

"Look—look here, uncle—"

"Don't attempt to deny it, sir! I return unexpectedly, and find you holding a—a disgusting orgy in my tower—on my premises, begad! You depraved young scoundrel! An accomplice of gamblers, and—and worthless rascals! I am astound—"

"Here, I say, sir!" snarled Captain Devereux furiously. "Major Thresher or not, I won't have you—"

"Silence!" thundered the "major" angrily. "Not a word from you, sir! I will deal with you, my fine fellow, presently! Huh!"

The major—or, rather, William Wibley—was warming up to his job now. Just at first the dramatic genius of the Remove had felt a tiny doubt as to the possibility of Cecil Thresher penetrating his disguise. He knew his make-up was perfect—that in the dimly-lit, smoky atmosphere it was extremely unlikely anyone would see through it. He knew also that he had got the gallant major's voice and quick-fire manner of speaking off to perfection. He was, however, a trifle shorter than the major, and he had wondered if they would notice and suspect.

But they had not done so, and his confidence grew. He closed and locked the door, placing the key in his pocket.

"I—I demand an instant explanation, Cecil!" he stormed. "How—how dare you take such liberties? How dare you bring such a villainous gang as this on my premises for such—such disreputable pursuits? Hah! Confounded impudence, begad! What's the meaning of it—hey? Answer me, sir! What—"

"It—it was only a—"

"Silence, sir; not another word!" thundered the major, a trifle unreasonably. "I won't have it! I shall report this to— No, begad, I won't! I'll deal with you myself, you young rascal! As your uncle, I feel justified in punishing you myself. I will attempt to point out to you the error of your ways by a judicious application of corporal punishment. Get across that bench, sir!"

"But—but, I say, uncle," panted Cecil Thresher. "Listen—"

"I refuse to do anything of the kind! Get across that bench, you rascal! D'you hear me?"

The major's nephew heard all right. He gave rather an apprehensive glance at the stout stick in Wibley's hand, and then he slowly stooped across the low bench.

"I need scarcely add," exclaimed the disguised Wibley, pushing back his right cuff and glaring round at the startled onlookers before beginning, "that it hurts me much more to administer corporal punishment than it hurts you to receive it, my boy. Huh!"

There sounded a sudden half-controlled splutter from outside the little barred window; but those inside the room did not hear it—fortunately. For, with that time-honoured gag, William Wibley had brought the stick into action. And the steady beating of the stick smothered all other sounds. It was like beating a carpet!

Whack, whack, whack!

Wibley was a strong youth—a fact that was being borne in upon the mind—and feelings—of Cecil Thresher now. He fairly raised the dust, and Thresher writhed, and gasped, and panted.

But, though his eyes were gleaming, not a cry escaped his clenched lips. As Harry Wharton & Co., who by now were thoroughly enjoying the scene from the window outside, had already discovered, Cecil Thresher was no coward, whatever other faults he had. He took his punishment like a man.

Wibley stopped at last.

As Cecil Thresher raised himself, writhing and gasping, the cheery impersonator turned suddenly upon the shivering Ponsonby & Co. and Skinner & Co.

"And now, my fine fellows," he remarked grimly, "I will deal with you. I will give you the choice of two evils. Either you take a licking—ahem!—a chastisement, from me, or I will make it my business to report your behaviour to your respective headmasters! Huh! I

will give you just one minute to decide! Hah!"

"But—but look here, sir," stammered Ponsonby, "you—you can't intend to—to—"

Ponsonby broke off hopelessly. There was no escape, and he knew it. The major had his watch out, and his face looked grim and determined. As the seconds ticked by, Ponsonby looked at his dismal pals, and they looked at him. The impersonator closed his watch with a snap.

"Your answer?" he rapped out.

"I—I— We'll be expelled if—if—" mumbled Ponsonby. "We—we'd rather be—be licked—"

"Hah! I expected that would be your decision—glad of it, begad! And as I have good reason to believe that you, my friend, are the ringleader in these—these disreputable orgies, I will deal with you first. I will endeavour to impress upon your twisted mind the truth of the old saying that the way of the transgressor is hard—begad, I will!"

And he did. It was fortunate that the house was some distance from the tower, or someone would certainly have been aroused by Ponsonby's wild howls. The cheery Wibley did not spare the rod. Unlike a master, he was not troubled by the fear of overdoing it. When he had finished, the hapless Highcliffe nut was fairly blubbing.

Then came Skinner's turn, and after Skinner, the rest of the luckless midnight revellers. Wibley took them as they came forward; they did not come forward very willingly.

When the major's double had gone through the list, his arm was beginning to feel numbed, and the chamber resounded with gasps, and groans, and cries of woe.

"There," panted Wibley, as the last victim tottered away. "That should be a lasting lesson to you—begad, it should! Huh! You can go now. But understand this. If I catch any of you on my premises again, it will go hard with you! I will horsewhip you next time! Huh!"

And with that, Wibley unlocked the door and threw it open. The crowd of unhappy gay dogs tottered out one by one and disappeared into the night. Wibley turned to where Captain Devereux was still standing. He had watched what had happened with a look, half of amusement, and half sneering, on his dark features. Now, however, he faced the masquerader, a nasty, dangerous gleam in his close-set eyes.

"I presume, Major Thresher," he sneered, "that you propose now to deal with me? I advise you to be careful. If you think I will allow an old fool like—"

Wibley interrupted him. He pointed with his stick to the door.

"Get out, you rascal!" he rumbled. "I may possibly deal with you yet, my fine fellow! If you are not off these premises in two minutes, I will telephone for the police—I mean it, begad! Come, I will see you off the premises myself! Huh!"

"My raincoat is in the library," muttered the captain, biting his lip savagely.

"Cecil will get it for you. Come!"

The captain scowled; then, as if he had suddenly thought of something, he gave a curious laugh, and lounged carelessly through the door. Wibley motioned to Cecil, and, blowing out the lamps, he left the tower and accompanied the captain and his nephew towards the house.

"Magnet" Limerick Competition (No. 4).

In this competition the first prize of £1 ls. for the best line sent in has been awarded to:

ALF. HOWDEN, West End, Holbeach, Lincs, whose last line was:

My "outlook's" as "black" as the night.

Four prizes of 2s. 6d. each for the next best have been awarded to the following:

BERNARD WALLIS, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol.

AUBREY BAGGS, 65, Beaconsfield Road, Enfield Wash, Middlesex.

WILLIAM BRIDEN, Herewood House, Southbury Road, Enfield.

PAUL BROOMFIELD, Rosebery Road, Felixstowe.

Don't forget—Frank Richards writes only for the "Magnet" and the "Popular"!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Exit "Captain Devereux"!

"O H. crumbs!"

"What a scream! Oh dear!"

"My poor sides!"

"Hold me up, someone!"

"Oh, to be able to laugh!"

Thus the Famous Five!

The dim figures of "Major Thresher," Cecil Thresher, and the captain had scarcely disappeared in the gloom when Wharton and his chums left their position at the window of the tower and dropped into the garden below.

Through the grimy window they had seen—and heard—all that had taken place in the room, and they had taken it all in with unholy glee. And their mirth, though necessarily subdued, still held them helpless. They held their sides, and fairly shook, almost exploding with suppressed laughter.

"Good old Wib!" gasped Wharton, at last. "Isn't he a perfect genius? But, my hat! Better be getting a move on now; we've got a more serious job to tackle yet."

"Yes, rather!"

Keeping a careful look-out, the five juniors—serious now—trod along the path in the wake of the others. Keeping some distance behind, they watched as the pseudo Major Thresher showed the fuming captain out by the side gate near the stables, and they heard the murmur of voices as the cheery Wibley gave him a few parting remarks.

Then, as Wibley and Cecil Thresher entered the french window of the library, and the door closed behind them, Wharton gave the word, and they hurried up close to the house and hid themselves among the shrubbery.

They had scarcely done so many seconds, when the french window opened, and the short, stocky figure of the pseudo major appeared on the threshold, outlined against the firelight inside.

He stood there a moment, and then, closing the door behind him, stepped on to the lawn and hurried down the garden. He was absent some seconds, and when he returned he was carrying a rolled package wrapped in American cloth in his hands.

He approached the shrubs behind which the juniors were hiding, and whispered stealthily:

"You chaps there?"

"Yes, all serene, Wib," whispered Wharton back. "My hat, Wib, old man, you played up like a trojan! You're a blessed—"

"Shush! No time for compliments now!" murmured Wibley, with a soft chuckle. "I don't fancy the dear old captain will turn up yet awhile—not until he thinks everybody's in bed, at least. But we mustn't take any risks. You chaps sit tight. I've got the blessed picture all serene."

And with that Wibley opened the french window and stepped inside the library. Cecil Thresher got up from the chair he had been sitting on, and eyed his supposed uncle wonderingly. The boy was still pale and frightened; but he was also bewildered now. There was something about his uncle's demeanour and movements he could not understand.

"Cecil," said Wibley sternly, "I wish you to come out into the garden for a few minutes. Come!"

"But—the garden!" stammered Cecil. "Why, what—what's the matter, uncle?"

"You will know soon-enough, my



To the pseudo major's astonishment Captain Devereux carefully cut the valuable oil painting from its frame and substituted for it an exact copy. Then, standing on a chair, he replaced the picture on the wall. (See Chapter 8.)

boy," was the grim reply. "I will, however, tell you this now. Someone—one of your friends—has stolen something of great value from this room. He has—or rather, had—hidden it in the ivy by the window here, and intends to come for it—perhaps during the next few minutes."

"But—but—" gasped Cecil. "I don't understand you!"

"You will presently. Do as I order and come at once!"

There was a note of finality in the tone, and the new boy passed out into the garden, his face showing his amazement.

Wibley closed the window, and led him unresisting to a clump of shrubs a yard or so from the spot where the Famous Five were hiding. Then he gripped the wondering junior's arm and pulled him down.

"Stay as you are, and not a sound!" he whispered. "You will see why, presently."

In his own excitement Wibley was almost forgetting the part he was playing; though he still retained the real major's gruff voice, he was forgetting to make use of his little mannerisms. But apparently Cecil Thresher noticed nothing wrong—he was, in fact, too startled and dazed to notice anything then.

In grim silence they crouched down amid the shrubs, their hearts thumping. It was a still night, but occasionally a breath of wind rustled the ivy and trees. And more than once Cecil fancied he heard a rustle in the shrubs near them.

He little dreamed who was hiding in those shrubs.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed. Then, just when the watchers were feeling they could not stand the strain of waiting much longer, a sound came from the wall of the garden quite close to them. It was repeated, and next instant a dim form appeared on the wall.

For an instant it remained there, still, and then it dropped softly into the garden. Moving to the wall, it stopped, and next second there sounded the rustling of ivy.

Cecil Thresher felt the grip on his arm tighten, and in that instant something happened which almost made him leap out of his skin.

There came a sudden rustle, and from the shrubs near him leaped five youthful forms. They sprang up simultaneously, and fairly hurled themselves upon the midnight prowler.

There followed a sudden gasp, a furious exclamation, and sounds of a desperate struggle. But it did not last long. Evidently the prowler was no fighter, for he was down with the five juniors sprawling over him in a very short time.

With the astounded Cecil at his heels, Wibley hurried to the group.

"You've got him, then?" he exclaimed grimly. "Huh! The scoundrell! Bring him into the library, my boys."

At the sound of the major's voice—or what he believed to be the major's voice—the stranger ceased his struggling. He evidently saw that it was hopeless. Unresisting, he allowed himself to be led into the library. When all were inside,

Keep your eyes on the Chat. There are some real treats in store!

the "major" closed the window, and crossed to the inner door.

For a moment he listened there; but evidently the slight sounds of the disturbance had alarmed nobody in the house, for, he heard nothing. Then he switched on the electric light.

The prisoner was Captain Devereux. He stood, with the juniors clinging to him, and on his face was a mingled look of baffled rage, and hopeless fear.

The face of Cecil Thresher was a picture. He gazed at his "friend" in stupefied amazement.

"Now I can deal with you, my fine fellow!" exclaimed the pseudo major. "Caught red-handed, begad! Cecil!"

"Ye-e-es, uncle?" almost whispered the new boy.

"You will open that package on the table there!" ordered Wibley.

Fumblingly the wondering boy did so. As the American cloth was taken away and his eyes fell upon the painting, he gasped aloud, and a scared look came to his face. Almost unconsciously his eyes went to the copy on the wall.

"I—I don't understand!" he muttered, blinking at the copy in the gilt frame. "Is—that—"

"A copy—a worthless copy!" rapped out Wibley. "The original Gainsborough, wretched boy, is in your hands. It was stolen this evening by your rascally friend there. Under pretence of getting his cigarettes from his coat, the scoundrel removed the portrait and substituted that wretched imitation. He knew that the theft would not be likely to be discovered until he had made good his escape. He then hid the package among the ivy, and

has now returned for it. Now do you understand?"

The scared junior did understand. His face crimsoned, and he gave the glowering captain a look of bitter hate.

"You may well look at your friend!" snorted Wibley. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? This has happened through your criminal folly. This is what comes of associating with rascals, with shady characters! Huh! You have been harbouring a scoundrel—a rascally thief!"

Cecil Thresher hung his head. Captain Devereux—if that was his real name—was about to speak, when Wibley walked to the French window, and flung it open.

"Go!" he rumbled, glaring at the astonished captain. "Little as you deserve it, I am going to allow you to escape scot-free. But for the lateness of the hour I would horsewhip you, you scoundrel! But I warn you that if you dare to show your face in this district again, the police shall have you! Go!"

The trembling captain was astounded. Visions of prison, of penal servitude, had been before his mind.

But as the juniors' hands fell from him he realised the truth—that he was still a free man—and he awoke to sudden life. In a flash he was through the French window. They heard him crashing through the bushes. Looking out, Wibley saw his dark form vanish over the wall. Wibley grinned, and re-entered the room, closing the French window after him.

Then he faced round, and swiftly removed his walrus-like moustache, his bald scalp, his heavy eyebrows. Then he

chuckled, and grinned cheerfully into Cecil Thresher's face.

That junior almost fell down. He fairly blinked at the smooth, smiling countenance of William Wibley.

"Wib—Wibley!" he gasped. "You!"

"Little me," said Wibley cheerily, in his natural voice. "Now, Wharton, old top, it's your turn to exercise your chin. Mine's aching, and my throat's sore. Go ahead!"

And Wibley dropped, with a sigh of exhaustion, into the nearest easy-chair. Cecil Thresher was still staring at him—but with a look of unutterable relief on his flushed face. He was beginning to get a glimmering of the truth now.

"Wha-what does it mean, Wharton?" he panted. "Has—hasn't my uncle come back? Is—is it a jape?"

Wharton was not grinning; he was looking grave. He gave the new Greyfriars day-boarder a grim look.

"I'll tell you, Thresher," he said quietly. "Listen to me."

And Wharton explained fully.

"You've had a jolly narrow escape, Thresher!" he ended up grimly. "I don't know what the picture was worth, but I expect it was valuable. It—"

"It was a genuine Gainsborough!" muttered the new fellow huskily. "It has been valued at fifteen hundred pounds. My—my uncle thinks the world of it. He—he would—"

"That's all the more reason why this should be a lasting lesson to you, then!" snapped Wharton. "But, in case it hasn't been, I will tell you this. So far, nobody but ourselves and you know of
(Continued on page 27, column 3.)

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TERRORS SHOCKE, DETECTIVE.

THE CASE OF THE COLLARED CUFF-LINK!

A Special Contribution from PETER TODD of the Greyfriars Remove.

"A CURIOUS case, Shaker," remarked Terrors Shocke, tossing the telephone receiver on to its hook, and turning to me. "A very interesting case, withal. You have heard of Mr. Paul Pontifex Prout?"

"The master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars?" I interrogated.

"The same."

"What has happened to him, Shocke? Has he inadvertently blown out his own brains with his Winchester repeater?"

"If that were the case, a coroner would be required, not a detective," Shocke replied. "No, Shaker; Mr. Prout has not yet fallen a victim to his own erratic marksmanship. The fact is, he has sustained a serious loss.



It did not take us long to disguise ourselves as a couple of peppery martinets.

During the night a gold cuff-link was stolen from his bed-room."

"Good gracious!"

"Note the significance of that fact, Shaker. Only one link was stolen—not a pair. The thief had access to both links, yet he only took one. Is not that extraordinary?"

"Very!" I murmured. "How do you account for it, Shocke?"

"I can only conclude that the cuff-link was taken for a practical joke," was the reply.

"Have you any idea who took it, Shocke?"

"Really, Shaker, how do you expect me to name the thief off-hand, without a single clue? My name is not Maskelyne or Devant, neither am I endowed with second sight. But I have no doubt that we shall soon be aware of the thief's identity. We will go down to Greyfriars, Shaker, in disguise."

"In disguise!" I echoed.

"Yes. We are too well known at the school by this time to go down as we are."

It did not take us long to disguise ourselves as a couple of peppery martinets.

Our distinguished bearing secured us seats in a first-class carriage, and we travelled down to Greyfriars in comfort.

Mr. Prout, of course, failed to recognise us, especially as Gosling, the porter, had handed in our names as General Barkenschnort and Colonel Fiery Sparkes.

My friend placed his mouth close to Mr. Prout's ear, and uttered the one word:

"Shocke!"

Mr. Prout jumped as if it were an electric one.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "I had no idea it was you, Mr. Shocke. And this is your friend Shaker?"

Shocke nodded. He then proceeded to question Mr. Prout.

"Your cuff-link is of great value, I understand, sir?"

"Yes, yes; it is priceless. It is eighteen-carat gold, and although I cannot recollect

the actual price I paid for it, I know it was considerable."

"And the link disappeared during the night?"

"Yes. I left it in my shirt-cuff. This morning I found it had vanished."

"You have searched the room?"

"Every inch of it."

"H'm! I should like to examine your bed-room, Mr. Prout, if I may."

"By all means," said the master of the Fifth.

And he conducted us to his sleeping quarters.

Terrors Shocke accomplished a remarkable feat when we entered. He swept the room with his eyes. I thought he would afterwards proceed to dust it with his nose, but no! He walked over to the window-sill, and examined the outer ledge minutely.

"Ah! What is this?"

Leaning out of the window as far as he dared, Terrors Shocke thrust his bony arm downwards, and groped in the ivy which covered the wall. His fingers closed over a sheet of paper—evidently a letter.

Soaked though it was by recent rain, the handwriting was easily discernible.

Terrors Shocke read the letter aloud. It ran thus:

"To W. G. BUNTER, Greyfriars.

In reply to your request to be allowed to join the Society of Good Sports, which meets in Courtyard three nights a week. I am directed by the President to inform you that we do not admit paupers to our select Society.

You cannot possibly become a member, neither will you be admitted to any of our meetings, unless you can produce some brass.

(Signed) CECIL PONSONBY,
Vice-President,
Society of Good Sports."

"The mystery is solved!" Terrors Shocke announced triumphantly.

Mr. Prout gave a gasp.

"I fail to understand you, Mr. Shocke. True, you have discovered a letter written by Ponsonby, of Highcliffe, to Bunter, of this school. But I cannot connect this letter in any way with the theft of my cuff-link."

"Then you are dense, sir."

"Mr. Shocke!"

"As dense as a doped dormouse! As I say, the mystery is solved. The person who stole your cuff-link was W. G. Bunter."

"Shocke!" I gasped. "How, in the name of all that is wonderful, did you arrive at this conclusion?"

"I do not believe Mr. Shocke knows what he is talking about," said Mr. Prout dryly. "In saying that Bunter committed the theft, he is merely making a blind guess."

"Blind guesses, sir," said Shocke, with some heat, "are the speciality of Scotland Yard. I never indulge in them myself. If you will send for Bunter, and question him, you will find that my hypothesis is correct."

A bag was promptly despatched for Billy Bunter, who arrived on the scene a few moments later.

"You sent for me, sir?" he said, blinking at Mr. Prout through his big spectacles.

"Yes. It has been suggested, Bunter, that you broke into my bed-room during the night, and appropriated one of my cuff-links."

Billy Bunter gave a gasp of alarm.

"Oh, crumbs! I—I didn't know you were awake, sir, at the time!" he stammered.

"I was not awake, you stupid boy! Then you admit breaking into my bed room?"

"Yes, sir—I mean, nunno, sir! I don't know anything about your cuff-link, sir—honour bright!"

Terrors Shocke turned to Mr. Prout.



"How did you know it was concealed in Bunter's shoe, Mr. Shocke?" gasped Mr. Prout.

"If you will make Bunter remove his right shoe, sir," he said, "you will find an object of interest concealed therein."

"Bless my soul! Take off your right shoe, Bunter."

"Ahem! I—I'd rather not, sir—"

"Do as I tell you!" thundered Mr. Prout.

Billy Bunter removed his shoe, and as he did so a glittering object dropped out on to the carpet. Mr. Prout pounced upon it at once.

"My cuff-link!" he exclaimed. "How did you know it was concealed in Bunter's right shoe, Mr. Shocke?"

"Simply by reason of the fact that he limped painfully on his right foot when he came into the room," said the detective.

"But I still fail to understand the significance of the letter which you found in the ivy."

"Density, thy name is Prout!" murmured Terrors Shocke. "Bunter was keenly anxious to join the Society of Good Sports. Ponsonby wrote and told him that the society was only open to people of means, and that Bunter would not be admitted to any of the meetings unless he produced some brass. Whereupon, Bunter paid a visit to your bed-room during the night and appropriated your cuff-link."

"But my cuff-link isn't brass! It's eighteen-carat gold!" hooted Mr. Prout.

Terrors Shocke shrugged his shoulders, and, leaving Mr. Prout to deal with Billy Bunter, we went downstairs.

"Shaker," said my friend, clasping me playfully by the nape of the neck, "it is said that Professor Darwin discovered the missing link. That statement is totally incorrect. The missing link was discovered by me!"

THE END.

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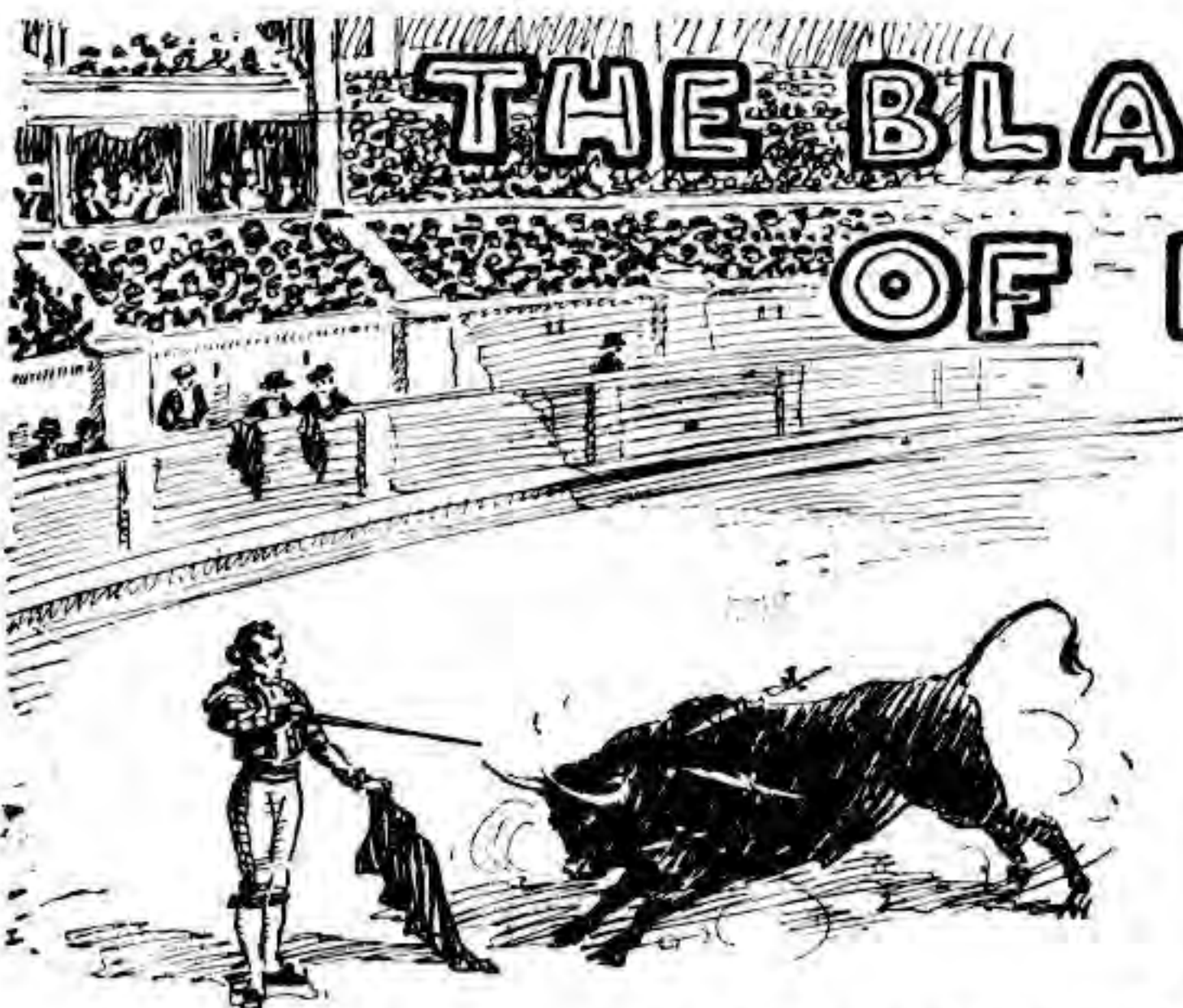
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Assault by the Plaza!

"A WONDERFUL night, my boy—a night such as we seldom see in England, alas." The speaker was Ferrers Locke, the world-famous private detective, and the person to whom he addressed the remark was Jack Drake, his clever young assistant.

After much strenuous work upon cases in England, the sleuth and the boy had shaken the dust of Baker Street from their feet, temporarily. They were spending their holiday by taking a walking tour in Spain.

Skirting the plains of Andalusia they had come to Seville. And now, at the end of a happy, healthy day, they were approaching the City of Bareda. Here they intended to spend the night.

Truly, as Ferrers Locke remarked, it was a wonderful night. The moon hung a ball of gleaming silver in a violet, star-encrusted sky. The gardens and fields were broken by the black shadows of trees and walls and bushes. But the dusty road the wayfarers were treading shone white as marble as it wound its way down towards Bareda. The music of a mandolin fell softly on their ears from the open window of a cottage they passed, and the scent of flowers wafted to their nostrils on the gentle night breeze.

"I have been in Bareda before, my boy," said Locke, after a silence. "It is a picturesque town and truly Spanish. There's a decent inn where I stayed some years ago where we can put up."

"It's jolly useful your being such a fluent speaker in the Spanish lingo," said Drake. "This country isn't like France, where most of the folk know a smattering of English."

"Well, you've gained a smattering of Spanish during the few days you've been in Spain," replied Locke, with a smile. "A few weeks in this delightful country and you'd have quite a decent knowledge of the lingo yourself."

Chatting together, the pair came to the outskirts of the city and followed the road through the old town.

Suddenly, turning a corner, they found themselves faced by the colonnades of an imposing building of stone.

"What's that place, sir?" asked Drake curiously.

"That, my boy, is the plaza des toros—the Bareda bull-ring."

"The bull-ring!"

Jack Drake gazed at the place with a greater interest.

"It was here in this Bareda plaza," went on Locke, as they marched along, "that only some three months back one of the most famous of the Spanish toreadors met his death in the arena in a fight with a Miura bull."

"Crumbs!" said Drake. "I thought it was a pretty safe sport—except for the bull. Did you ever see a bull-fight, sir?"

"Yes," answered Locke. "To English eyes it is not a nice spectacle. Anything from ten to twenty unfortunate horses may be sacrificed during an afternoon's entertainment, and usually six first-class Andalusian bulls come to a sticky end in such a plaza as the one before us. Bull-fighting is cruel and very un-English in character."

As Locke and Drake drew nearer to the plaza they saw a solitary figure of a Spaniard standing outside. So engrossed was he in looking at the towering columns that he neither saw nor heard the two approaching.

Suddenly, he raised his hand aloft. Then he took a few short quick steps and struck a defiant attitude. The detective and Drake stopped in a deep shadow under the outer wall of the bull-ring and watched the fellow curiously.

"My aunt!" said the boy. "That chap's potty, I should say."

"He's certainly acting very strangely," was Locke's comment. "His attitude reminds me of old Ajax defying the lightning!"

"He's a queer-looking guy, too, sir. See, he's got a short pig-tail! You can just see it as he turns sideways."

"By Jove, so he has! That explains something. The fellow must be a bull-fighter."

"A bull-fighter!"

"Yes, and no small cheese in his own line. The toreadors—or matadors as they're sometimes called—wear a rather short pig-tail high up on the head. When at the end of his career a toreador retires from the bull-ring he cuts off that plait of hair, or coleta as they call it in

Spanish. Usually, it is the saddest moment of his life."

"So I should imagine, sir. But bull-fighting must be a pretty tough way of earning a livelihood."

"It is an exacting life and not without its dangers. Three times within recent years the life-blood of popular toreadors has mingled with the sand of the Spanish bull-rings. Yet there is a theatrical glamour in the life, and the danger is an additional spice. Besides, whereas in the old days a toreador would kill a bull for about a pound—speaking in English money—a popular favourite to-day will require fifty pounds."

But Drake had his eyes riveted on the Spaniard, whose strange actions had raised the topic of conversation.

"My hat, that chap seems to think he's in the bull-ring, now, sir," said Drake, with a chuckle. "Just look how — Great Scott!"

That last ejaculation left the boy's lips as four figures glided from the shadows near the man. There was a glint of steel in the moonlight, followed by a hoarse cry.

Locke and Drake bounded forward like greyhounds from the leash.

Both had taken in the situation on the instant. The man with the little pig-tail was in the gravest danger. He had been set upon by four armed men, and, although he had put up a stout resistance immediately, the assault could have but one ending.

Into the melee went the sleuth and his assistant. Locke swung his right, and sent one of the attackers reeling from a crashing blow on the ear. Jack Drake leaped upwards and grasped the uplifted hand of another rogue. The stiletto which the man held clattered down to the cobble-stones of the roadway.

As the other Spaniards who had taken part in the attack on their fellow-countryman turned away from their intended victim, Locke whipped out a small revolver and fired a shot. Locke merely aimed past them at one of the columns of the plaza. The report of the pistol, like a thunderclap in the quietude of the night, had the desired effect. All four of the attackers took to their heels and dashed off as though pursued by a thousand fiends.

Doors of houses in the nearby streets

Ferrers Locke will be here again next Monday!

were thrown open. Shouts arose from several directions as the citizens of Bareda emerged and came running on the scene. Locke and Drake confined their attention to the man with the pig-tail. The latter had dropped to his knees, his left hand across his body and clutching his right shoulder.

"You are hurt, senior?" said Ferrers Locke, as he and Drake gently raised the man.

"A cut in the shoulder," replied the Spaniard. "It is but a scratch. But for you, seniors, it would have gone hardly with me. I owe you my life, and you have earned the everlasting gratitude of Bombetto, the bull-fighter."

He removed his left hand, red-stained, from his injured shoulder, and, placing it on his heart, bowed low to his two rescuers.

So this was Bombetto! The sleuth had heard often of the man who was one of the most famous toreadors in Spain. But he had been under the impression that Bombetto had retired from the bull-ring, for the matador had passed already the age when it was safe to tackle the fierce bulls of Andalusia in the sand-strewn arena. Yet Bombetto still wore the short plaited pig-tail high up on the back of his head, a sure sign that he was on the active list.

But now a number of the Bareda citizens, including two short, pompous policemen, arrived on the scene. The Spaniards all began talking at once, and the effect produced was as the chattering of a flock of parrots. The four men who had assaulted Bombetto had not been caught. The bull-fighter himself was not able to give a description of any one of them, and the police concluded that it was a case of attempted highway robbery.

Locke and Drake accompanied Bombetto to a hospital in the city, while the police and crowd melted away. After the bull-fighter had had the flesh wound on his shoulder dressed, he cordially invited his rescuers to spend the night at his home. Tired after their long tramp during the day, the sleuth and the boy readily accepted the invitation.

The home of Bombetto, the toreador, was situated but ten minutes' walk from the hospital. As the three strolled towards it, Locke casually suggested that it was surely dangerous to visit the plaza des toros alone at night if armed robbers infested the city.

"But few robberies take place in our city, senior," replied the bull-fighter, in Spanish. "I did not tell those bump-tious police all that I know. To-night, as I occasionally do, I went to the plaza where I have achieved some of my greatest victories of the ring."

"I have fought the bulls in the plazas of Madrid and Seville, and other of our Spanish cities. But it has been always in the plaza of Bareda that I have been most inspired. So, sometimes, when I am in the mood, I make my way alone to the plaza to revel in the memories of the past and fight again my battles of the ring."

"But surely, senior, you will be retiring soon?"

"Alas, yes. My last appearance in the bull-ring will be at the great fete here in three days' time. I should have retired before. My eye is not so keen nor my limbs so supple as they were. I trust, seniors, you will be my honoured guests until the fete, and that you will visit the plaza."

"A thousand thanks, senior," said Ferrers Locke. "But we are on a walking tour, and must go on our way. I

am afraid, moreover, as Englishmen, we are not keen on the bull-fight."

Bombetto shrugged his shoulders. Being a Spaniard, and brought up in the atmosphere and excitement of the national sport of Spain, he experienced pity for these foreigners who could not appreciate the bull-fight.

A short silence was broken by Locke again.

"You stated, senior," said he, "that you had not told the police all that you knew about the assault to-night. Pardon my curiosity, but have you any inkling of the identity of your assailants?"

A black scowl settled over the bull-fighter's swarthy face.

"I have," he answered. "I will sever my coleta from my head if Blasca, the bull breeder, was not concerned in the affair."

"This Blasca is an enemy of yours, senior?"

"Caramba! He is! He hates me, and I hate him. Blasca owns a great tract of land on the Andalusian Plains, where he breeds fighting bulls. Twenty years ago we fought over the fairest

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senora of Bareda. I won, and the lady became my wife. She died last year, senior."

The toreador reverently crossed himself and continued:

"For twenty years Blasca and I have remained enemies. Our hatred of one another has developed into a family vendetta. But whereas the Bombettos fight straight, Blasca and his scum are as snakes in the grass. But here, seniors, is my residence!"

The home of the bull-fighter proved to be a charming white bungalow surrounded by flower gardens, which breathed fragrance into the night.

An old retainer helped Locke and Drake to discard their knapsacks and escorted them to a tiled bath-room, where they partook of a refreshing wash.

When they had finished, the old servant led them to a charmingly furnished sitting-room. A light supper with wine was spread on the table, and here Bombetto received them and introduced his son, a tall, swarthy young man of about eighteen or nineteen years of age.

Bombetto's son, whose name was Juan, shook hands with the two guests and addressed them in excellent English.

"Welcome indeed, seniors!" said he. "My father has told me of his adventure and of your gallant rescue of him. Allow me to add my thanks to his."

The party sat down to their late supper, and Bombetto, turning to his son, said:

"You went out early, Juan. Where did you spend the evening?"

Juan hesitated, and then answered:

"In the Cafe Espanol!"

Bombetto's black brows met in a frown.

"You know that is not a resort I approve of, my son. With whom did you go?"

Juan flushed to the roots of his black hair, his hands outstretched in a gesture of annoyance.

"Must I account for my every act to you?"

Both Ferrers Locke and Jack Blake felt extremely uncomfortable. The detective tried to restore harmony between father and son by interpolating a remark. But Bombetto did not listen to him. The grim, swarthy face of the bull-fighter was filled with suspicion. His black eyes glowed with two pin-points of fire. Then he brought a scarred, gnarled fist down on the board with a thump that set the wineglasses trembling.

"Caramba," he vociferated, "how dare you speak so to me, Juan? Are you not my son, and do you not break bread beneath my roof? I would know with whom you went to the Cafe Espanol to-night. Speak!"

The countenance of the youth paled a trifle. But he inherited the hot Spanish blood of generations of bull-fighters, and his eyes flashed back the fire in his parent's.

"Am I a child to be thus questioned?" he cried angrily. "I choose my own friends, senior, and it is my business."

"Ay, and I will make it mine to discover with whom you were consorting to-night!" snarled the old bull-fighter. "To-morrow I myself will pay a visit to the Cafe Espanol!"

And although the subject was dropped there was thunder in the atmosphere of Bombetto's home.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Blasca, the Bull-Breeder!

ON the following morning Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake awakened to the singing of birds outside their window. By the strength of the sun streaming into their room they judged they had overslept. As a matter of fact, it was nearly nine o'clock.

After they had indulged in the luxury of a cold bath, they dressed and went in search of their host. The old retainer ushered them into a pleasant room with wide-open doors leading to the gardens. Breakfast was set on a snowy table.

"Where is your master, Pedro?" asked Ferrers Locke in Spanish.

"Senor Bombetto has gone for a stroll, senior," replied the servant. "I expect him back any minute. Senor Juan has been called, but he has not yet risen."

Hardly had he spoken when Bombetto himself was heard entering the front door of the house. The old bull-fighter greeted his guests politely enough, but resentment and anger were lurking in his brow.

"Where is Juan?" he demanded of the servant. "Tell him I await him!"

As the retainer left the room, Bombetto motioned his guests to seats at the breakfast-table.

"You must excuse me," he said. "I

"The Case of the Coiner!" is his latest masterpiece!

am much upset this morning. I have been to the Cafe Espanol."

"Surely, senor," said Locke, "you might have let that trivial matter drop."

"The matter was not trivial to me!" retorted the bull-fighter. "With whom do you think Juan was watching the tango in the Cafe last night? The youth Alonzo, the son of Blasca, my bitterest enemy!"

The information left the sleuth cold.

"Surely, senor," he said, "because you quarrelled with Blasca twenty years ago, it is not necessary for the sons to continue to wage warfare."

Bombetto thrust his chin forward.

"It is a vendetta," he said. "That my son should consort with the enemy is treachery."

Locke knew not what to say. The presence of himself and Drake in this house in the circumstances seemed most unfortunate. He knew it was useless arguing with the old toreador about a family matter on which the latter felt so strongly.

An awkward pause was conveniently broken by the arrival of the servant bearing a letter on a silver salver. Bombetto took the missive and dismissed Pedro with a gesture of his hand. Excusing himself, the old bull-fighter opened and read the note.

When he had finished reading the letter the face of the old bull-fighter was terrible to see. With trembling fingers he handed the missive to Ferrers Locke.

Very reluctantly the great English detective scanned the writing, which was in Spanish, but the message was surprising enough.

"Senor," it read, "you may be interested to learn that your son Juan was seen in the company of Blasca's son last evening, and that your own son took part in the assault on you."

The letter was unsigned, and the writing obviously disguised.

"Well?" said Bombetto through his clenched teeth, as the sleuth looked up. "Have not my suspicions proved correct? It is terrible—terrible!"

"Pay heed to my advice, senor," said Ferrers Locke earnestly, "and take no notice of this communication. An anonymous letter is not worth troubling about. You should have stronger proof than this before you condemn the boy."

Bombetto rose from his seat.

"The letter is enough," he said. "It is clear that Blasca and his scum have won my worthless son over to them."

He swung round as a brisk step was heard approaching the room. Locke and Drake exchanged uneasy glances. The very air seemed charged with electricity as the son of the house entered to greet his father.

No bitter rankling over the incident of the previous night showed in the young man's face. His white teeth were revealed in a pleasant smile as he bade his father good-morning and greeted the guests.

Without a word Bombetto handed him the letter. Rather puzzled, the youth glanced over the communication, and his countenance flushed.

"You do not believe this, senor?" he said to his father in a quiet tone.

"Were you with Alonzo last evening?" hissed the old bull-fighter.

"I was!"

Bombetto's mouth worked with fury.

"And you, my own son, were one of the scum who tried to assassinate me?"

"That's a lie! Caramba, do you believe that of me? I thought that Alonzo was a decent fellow. Last night during a quarrel I had with him he revealed

himself in his true colours. I had no intention of continuing a friendship with him. He left me in the Cafe Espanol and went off alone."

"Pah!"

Bombetto's mouth curled contemptuously and his finger pointed to the door.

"Get out of this house!" he snarled. "You are my son no longer!"

Juan folded his arms across his chest and held his head high.

"You will be sorry for this, father," he said. "I did not wish you to know I had been associating with the son of Blasca, especially as I had finished with the fellow. But I have never acted dishonestly towards you."

For answer Bombetto reached up on the wall between two mounted bulls' heads with gleaming horns. From a hook he took down a sword and turned the point towards the breast of his son.

"Get out of here!" he roared, "or I will send this blade to your heart as though you were cattle in the arena!"

For perhaps two seconds, which seemed like long-drawn minutes, father and son faced each other. Then, with an apology to Locke and Drake for the scene and a shrug of his shoulders, the son of Bombetto, the bull-fighter, turned on his heel and strode proudly from the room. Directly Juan had gone the sword dropped from the old bull-fighter's hand. He sank back into a chair, and, trembling like a leaf, buried his head in his hands.

"Drake, my boy," whispered Locke, "this is most upsetting. We can do no good by remaining here. Bombetto will wish to be left alone. In my opinion he has acted most unwisely."

Without referring to the painful scene which had been enacted before their eyes, the sleuth and the boy took leave of their host and left the house.

Walking through the sunlit principal street of the city they espied Juan ahead of them, and, quickening their pace, caught him up. At first Juan did not appear pleased when they spoke to him. But he allowed himself to be led to a table beneath the bright yellow and white awning of an outdoor cafe where Locke ordered lemonade.

"Believe me, senors," said the young man, "I had nothing to do with the attack on my father. Yesterday, for the first time, I discovered Alonzo's true character, and I shouldn't be surprised to know he was mixed up in the affair. Blasca has sworn to kill my father, but he is a coward at heart, and his hired assassins have hitherto been too yellow-livered to do their job properly. He will make other attempts no doubt, but my father wears an ivory charm and his life is safe."

"Don't be too sure, young man," said Locke seriously. "Charms aren't much good against the keen-edged stiletto of a determined ruffian. What are your own plans for the future?"

"I shall stay here in Bareda till after the fete," answered Juan. "Then I shall go to Madrid and seek employment with another matador. Hitherto I have served with my father as one of his assistants in the arena."

When Locke and Drake bade good-bye to the son of the bull-fighter, the sleuth

suggested that they should stroll down to the Cafe Espanol.

"The assault on Bombetto took place at about eleven o'clock," remarked Ferrers Locke. "Probably the proprietor of the cafe or a waiter will know what time Juan left the place. If the lad was there at eleven it would seem that he is indeed speaking the truth. I should like to know."

"Same here, sir," said Drake. "Juan strikes me as a rather decent kind of chap."

But there was little the two could learn in the Espanol. From the head waiter, however, Locke gathered that Sabanez, who purchased the bulls for the Bareda ring, had sat at the table next to Juan, and had chatted with the lad. But Sabanez had gone out to Blasca's place on the plains to buy the bulls for the great "corrida," or bull-fight, on the fete day.

"What do you say to walking out to Blasca's ranch, Drake?" asked Locke as they left the cafe. "We could perhaps effect a reconciliation between father and son. Moreover, it would be an experience to see the breeding grounds of the fighting Andalusian bull."

"I'm game, sir!" cried Drake enthusiastically. "I'd like, too, to come back here for their great fete."

"Very well, my boy, we will."

Leaving Bareda they marched over the plains towards the north. They knew that Blasca's lands lay in that direction. During the heat of the afternoon they took a siesta in a comfortable white-washed inn, and then marched on again. From some workers in a vineyard they ascertained the exact locality of the grounds owned by the famous breeder of fighting bulls.

It was towards evening when they reached Blasca's estates. In one great field a curious ceremony was in progress. A herd of cattle were rounded-up in one part of a huge field. Then a young bull was released through a gate by which a number of horsemen were waiting. Immediately the bull made at full speed towards the herd of decoy cattle, closely pursued by two of the horsemen. Then a picador, or professional spearman, rode forth and singled out the young bull, and induced it to charge at him.

For some moments Locke and Drake watched the picador staying off the young bull's charges with his spear. Then the boy asked:

"What's the stunt, sir? It looks jolly cruel."

"They're testing the qualities of the young bulls for the arena, my boy," replied Ferrers Locke. "The number of times that a bull will face the spear of the picador decides his quality. The bulls, however, are not usually put into the arena until they are five years old. At that age a good bull may fetch as much as seventy or eighty pounds."

Drake whistled.

"They go through a kind of training here on the breeding-grounds, sir?"

"Yes; though some breeders do not believe in 'cheating them with the rag,' that is to say, using a red cloak to annoy them with. It is left to the toreador during the third, or final stage of the bull-fight proper, to use a small red cloak, or muleta, as the Spaniards call it, to divert the charges of the bull. For, as you know, a red rag will attract a bull like a honeypot will attract a housefly."

After the testing of the last young bull, Locke and Drake entered the field. Immediately a burly Spaniard wearing a broad-brimmed sombrero rode up. From a description which Bombetto



The "Tiger" is a man in a thousand! Keep your eyes on him!

had given them they knew the rider to be none other than Blasca, the bull-breeder, himself.

"What do you want here, strangers?" asked Blasca in no very cordial tone. "This land is my property!"

"We are English tourists, señor," replied Ferrers Locke in Spanish. "We have heard from afar of the fame of your fighting bulls. We trust that you will grant us permission to roam over your estates and see your herds."

"Very well, señor," granted Blasca. "You have my permission; but you do so at your own risk."

He dug his spurs into the flanks of his horse and rode off, leaving Locke and Drake to their own devices. The two made their way round towards the group of decoy cattle and got into conversation with a herdsman. This fellow, for a few pesetas, was glad to give all the information he could. From him the two learned that among the horsemen at the far end of the field was Alonzo, the son of Blasca, and Sabanez, the buyer of bulls for the Bareda plaza des toros.

While Locke was still chatting to the herdsman, Sabanez himself rode across after one of the young bulls. As the picador again set to work to test the mettle of the beast, the detective introduced himself to Sabanez. The latter proved to be an excellent Spanish gentleman who had lived in England, and who spoke English fluently.

"I am most pleased to meet you, Mr. Locke," he said. "Your name and fame has long been known to me. I have just completed the purchase of six excellent bulls for the great Bareda Fete. There will be good sport. That black bull which you can see in the next field is one of the finest beasts Blasca has ever bred. It is game without being too cunning, and should provide Bombetto with an excellent kill when he takes farewell of the arena. To-day I have had it branded with a Maltese cross. That should give my friend Bombetto good luck, don't you think?"

Locke laughed gaily, and seized the opportunity of asking the buyer whether he remembered being in the Cafe Espanol in Bareda the previous evening.

"I do, indeed, señor," replied Sabanez. "I chatted for some time with Juan, the son of Bombetto. But why do you ask?"

Ferrers Locke explained his reason. The answer of Sabanez was quite definite.

"Juan did not leave the cafe until after eleven o'clock," he said emphatically. "It is monstrous that his father should think he was concerned in the assault by the plaza. I will speak to my old friend on my return to Bareda."

Locke thanked him and bade adieu to the buyer, who rode back to Blasca and the other horsemen. Thereupon the herdsman, thinking perhaps of earning another tip, touched the sleuth on the arm and suggested that he might like to see the five-year-old fighting bulls which had been set aside for the great fete. Willingly Locke and Drake followed the man. They gazed interestedly, mingled with a trace of pity, at the fine animals which soon were to meet their fate in the Bareda bull-ring.

A great black, unbranded animal, alone in a kind of corral, attracted the sleuth's attention. He commented upon it, and the herdsman shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know why Senor Blasca keeps that bull," said the man. "The beast is the worse for cunning and temper we have ever had. It is mad, señor. No one dare go near the animal, and it

is too uncertain a quantity even for the arena."

By the time the herdsman had shown them round, the horsemen had dispersed. Locke again tipped the herdsman, and suggested to Drake that they should set off for an inn which they knew to be some five miles distant.

"If we shin over that stone wall and across that field, my boy," said Ferrers Locke, "we shall cut off a bit of the journey."

A herd of fighting bulls was in the far end of the field. A river flowed along one edge of the field, and had Locke known a little more about the habits of the Andalusian bulls he would never have crossed between it and the herd.

It is said that ignorance is bliss. And, very blissfully, the great English detective and Jack Drake marched across that field. Then of a sudden, the great bull

and struck out for the opposite bank. They were only in the nick of time, for the enraged fighting bulls came tearing down to the water in a solid mass, pushing and jostling one another into the river.

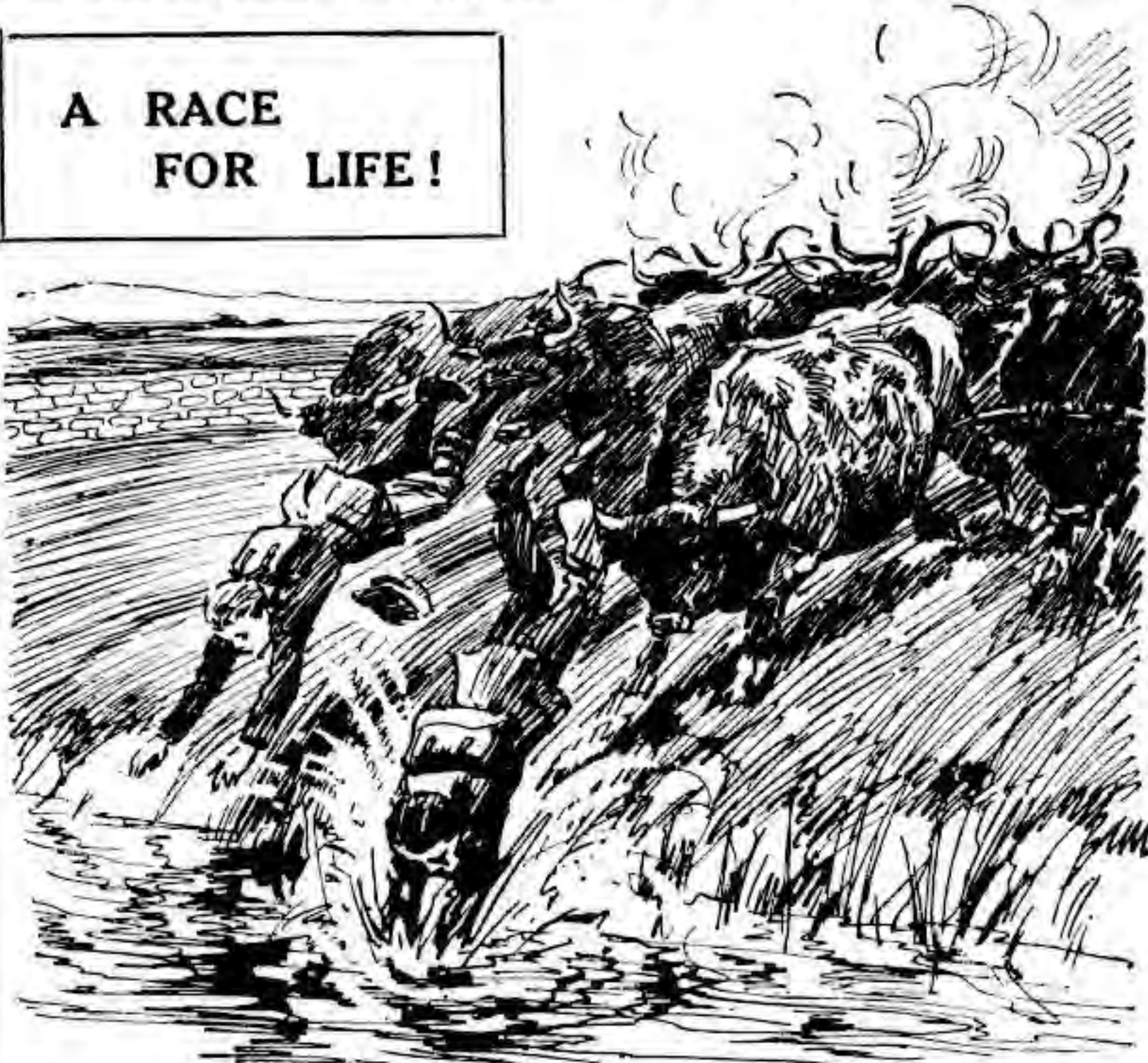
But now Locke and Drake held the advantage. They quickly scrambled out on the opposite bank, while the beasts in front strove to get back among the rest of the jostling herd.

Soaking wet, Locke and Drake looked at each other, and laughed.

"Crumbs, we're in a pretty pickle now," said the boy. "Shall we go and ask old Blasca to put us up?"

"There's a shed in that field beyond the footbridge," answered Locke. "Possibly there's some hay in it. If so, we might make a bed there for the night. We could hang our clothes up on a string—we've brought plenty of that—

A RACE FOR LIFE!



With heads lowered the whole herd of bulls swept towards the fleeing detective and his assistant. "Quick, Drake," panted Ferrers Locke, "into the river!" He suited the action to the words and dived into the water, followed a second later by Jack Drake. (See Chapter 2.)

who was the leader of the herd began to move down towards the river to drink. He saw the two humans and gave a bellow of rage. Then, lowering his head, he charged straight at them.

At once it became a game of follow-my-leader. The rest of the herd bellowed and charged after the big mottled bull. Locke and Drake saw an array of lowered heads and glistening, sharp-pointed horns coming at full speed towards them.

"My hat!" gasped the boy. "Run, sir—run for your life!"

Both started off at full speed back toward the stone wall. But the whole herd descended upon them in a thunder of hoofs.

"It's no good!" panted Locke. "Into the river, my boy!"

He suited the action to his word, and dived into the water. Drake followed,

and we've sleeping-suits in our waterproof knapsacks."

They crossed the footbridge two fields farther downstream, and entered the field in which was situated the corral of the mad, black bull. The shed was at the far end. There proved to be unlimited clean hay in it and the two were glad to get out of their wet clothes and don dry sleeping-suits and socks. Then, after hanging up their clothes to dry in the evening breeze, they partook of a meal from their knapsacks and settled themselves to sleep.

Early in the morning they were awakened by hearing voices in the field outside. They arose, and peered out of the door of their airy sleeping quarters. Two men were walking towards the corral—Blasca and Alonzo. Between them they were carrying a curious contraption not unlike an automatic signalling

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semaphore, such as is used on the bridge of a warship or liner. There were the two movable arms, but the central post was padded with sacking made up to represent the head and body of a man.

While Locke and Drake, unseen by the bull breeder and his son, looked on curiously, the two men reached the corral. Blasca then went round to one side of the corral and attracted the attention of the black bull. Meantime, Alonzo hoisted the queer semaphore arrangement into the paddock and stood it upright. To one arm of the rig was attached a square, silken red flag.

As the black bull turned, Alonzo nipped over the stout fencing of the corral like lightning. He held a long string in his hand, with which he was able to work the arm of the semaphore holding the red rag.

Blasca took up his position by his son, and the entertainment started. By pulling the string Alonzo caused the wooden arm to move and the flag to wave. The bull charged, and Alonzo threw the arm outwards at full length. But, instead of chasing the flag, the bull sent the figure toppling to the ground with its horns.

Blasca and his son laughed, and, leaving the bull to tear the sacking of the semaphore to pieces, returned to their home.

"Well, I'm blessed!" muttered Jack Drake. "That was a queer go. What did you make of it, sir?"

"I didn't quite understand the object of it," admitted Ferrers Locke. But half-formed at the back of his mind was a dull suspicion.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fifth Bull!

IT was the day of the great fete in Bareda. Early in the morning the streets of the city were alive with holiday-makers. Throngs of young men jostled their way towards the plaza dea toros. On their way they passed great yellow and black placards, with the name Bombetto in great capitals.

For, besides, being the fete day, this was also Bombetto's day. The favourite bull-fighter was to make his last kills in the sanded arena, and then he would part company with his little plaited pig-tail, and retire into private life.

The festivities in the plaza itself began in the morning with a diversion known as the Brandy Bull. An inferior bull, with great wooden knobs firmly placed over the points of its long horns, was loosed into the arena. Then, anyone, for the payment of a sum—equivalent to about twopence—could enter the arena and try to attract the attention of the animal to himself by waving a cloak or by any other means.

And, on this great fete day in Bareda, any number of the "lads of the village" set out to bait the Brandy Bull. After a time the arena became thronged with a rabble, laughing and shouting, and leaping to avoid the rushes of the angry animal. They were comparatively safe, though some took a few bad tumbles. Then the bull struck against a barrier and knocked one of the wooden knobs off its horn. Turning savagely it gored one young hooligan badly in the ribs, and turned the fellow's laughter into howls of pain. Before the ring could be cleared the beast had injured a dozen other youths.

Towards the afternoon, when the real bull-fighting was to take place, the excitement grew in intensity. Ferrers

Locke and Jack Drake arrived back from their short tour in the north in time to partake of a meal and to book seats for the afternoon's show.

They confidently expected that by this time there would have been a reconciliation between the old bull-fighter and his son, Juan. They did not know, however, that Sabanez, the buyer of bulls, had been far too busy with his own affairs to make known to Bombetto the fact that Juan was in the Cafe Espanol at the time of the assault.

Directly after their meal Locke and the boy made their way amidst the throng towards the bull-ring. Suddenly they saw a figure clad in gay silk. There was something familiar about the lithe, athletic form of the man. Catching him up, they found it was Juan.

"Hallo, my friend!" was Locke's greeting. "Are you not taking part in the procession of bull-fighters to the ring?"

"No, senor," replied the young man. "I have left the service of my father, and I have secured no other engagement. But the ring officials do not know this. I can easily give an excuse to get in to the corridor between the seats of the public and the ring barrier. I wish to see my father's last fight."

"We have booked seats on the shady side of the arena," said Locke.

"Come with me if you care to, senors," said Juan. "Besides the fighters there will be some police and soldiers and one or two privileged Pressmen in the corridor. I will give a good excuse for your presence, and it will be an exceptional experience for you."

Locke hesitated, and then accepted the offer.

Juan was as good as his word. He buttonholed an official of the plaza and whispered in the man's ear. So the three entered the plaza and took up a favourable position in the wide corridor between the principal stands and the sanded arena itself. One or two dapper policemen looked askance at them, but they were not interfered with.

The stands on the shady side were packed with fashionable townsfolk before the president, who was the chief city dignitary, took his seat. On the sunny, or cheap side of the arena, the spectators were packed like sardines. They formed a wonderful sight with the fans and mantillas of the women giving colour to the picture.

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The excitement became intense. Great doors were thrown open beneath the president's box. Then, to a thunder of applause, four magnificently-garbed toreadors entered abreast, Bombetto walking in the honoured position on the left. Each was clad in gay satin, a wonderful cloak, round black velvet hat and silken stockings. The costume of each would have cost close on a hundred pounds of English money!

Following in file behind each toreador came his own cuadrilla, or band of assistants—the banderilleros, and, lastly, two picadors mounted on horseback.

The procession wended its way across the arena, and then the ring was cleared save for the two picadors. These men took up their positions about twelve yards on either side of a stout door.

Suddenly a trumpet blast sounded. The door was flung open. And into the arena bounded a great mottled bull!

The beast swung round in a swirl of sand and sighted one of the picadors. It gave a bellow of rage, lowered its head and charged.

The picador awaited the onslaught, his garrocha, or spear, pointed at the infuriated animal. The spear glanced off the bull's shoulder-blade, and, before the picador could wheel his horse to the left to safety, the beast's horns struck the unfortunate horse in the side.

Instantly Bombetto leaped over the barrier and flaunted a small red cloak before the bull's eyes. With consummate skill he drew the beast away from the fallen man and leaped back to safety. Then the other picador took up the game, punishing the bull with his spear until his horse in its turn was sent down.

"Crumbs!" muttered Drake, rather pale of face. "It's sickening to see horses treated like that! I'd rather see a decent cricket-match any day of the week!"

"Same here," answered Locke. "But wait, my boy. We will go directly Bombetto has finished his act."

The next stage of the fight was conducted by the banderilleros. These men armed with banderillas—long darts to which were attached lengthy strips of coloured paper—took up their positions in the ring facing the bull. One of the men, holding a couple of the darts in his hands, approached the bull, which was pawing the sand uncertain as to which to attack. Then the beast charged. The banderillero attempted to plant a dart between its horns as he leaped aside. But the dart dropped to the sand, and the crowd showed its disapproval by whistling loudly.

The man's next two efforts were successful, and the bull was decorated with two darts planted between its shoulders. It charged blindly about the arena, the banderillas rattling against its horns, and the coloured papers streaming over its back.

A great hush fell on the assembly as Bombetto stepped in again to take the coveted honour of killing the first bull. After dedicating the animal to the president according to custom, he walked towards the animal holding a glistening blade in his right hand and a small, silken, red cloak in the other. Time and again as the animal charged he sent the beast swerving past his body with the silken cloak fluttering over the animal's horns.

Then Bombetto laid a handkerchief less than a foot square, on the sand, and planted his feet firmly upon it. His body

inclined over to the left. The bull charged. Bombetto fluttered the red cloak and straightened his body without shifting his feet. The beast's wicked-looking horns missed his chest by a hair's breadth. The steel flashed and the bull dropped with a clean thrust through the heart.

The crowd went wild with delight. The hand of the old torreador had not lost its cunning. And perhaps of all that throng only Locke and Drake, who cared not at all for the spectacle, failed to give any sign of approbation. Even Blasca, the bull breeder, who was chatting to a couple of soldiers in the corridor, applauded his old enemy.

"Magnificent! Magnificent!" cried Juan.

More horses and three other bulls met their fate. And then came the titbit of the afternoon—the fifth bull, which, by custom is always the best of the whole six. And this was to be Bombetto's bull—the last ere he cut that short pigtail from his head and retired into private life.

The door swung open again. Into the arena bounded a huge black bull, branded with a Maltese cross, its eyes flaming fire.

The fight began as usual with the picadors. But there was no stopping the animal. It was like a wild beast possessed. Horse after horse was sent reeling to the sand. Only by the amazing skill of Bombetto, who risked his own life time and again, did the picadors themselves escape destruction.

"The bull is mad—mad!" cried Juan. "I have never seen its like!"

Ferrers Locke started and looked towards Blasca, who was some ten yards distant from him. There was a set, almost frightened look on the heavy face of the famous bull breeder.

Flashing through the detective's brain was the thought of what he and Drake had seen on the Andalusian Plains. A grim suspicion possessed him. Was this bull indeed the one that Sabanez had purchased, or was it the mad bull he had seen in the corral? Had Blasca, to revenge himself on Bombetto, branded the mad black bull with the Cross and sent this to Bareda? What was the object of that semaphore arrangement which Blasca and Alonzo had placed in the corral?

To these questions Locke found but one answer. Blasca, by means of that strange contraption of his, had trained the mad bull to charge not the red rag, but the man! And this animal it was that Bombetto, armed only with a sword and a little red cloak, had to meet alone in the final tussle. Suspicion had become certainty in Locke's mind.

Ferrers Locke pressed forward right to the barrier as Bombetto faced the bull in the final stage of the fight. The banderilleros had done their work after one had been badly injured. Everyone present about that great arena realised that here was a bull such as had never been seen in a Spanish plaza before. All eyes were glued on the old bull-fighter as he stood calmly awaiting the onslaught of the great beast.

The position of Bombetto was close to the barrier where Locke was standing. The bull swung round in a great wide circle, its hoofs spurning the sand in clouds. At full speed it came along by the barrier towards the solitary figure that awaited it. Bombetto sent the red silken cloak fluttering before its eyes. But the bull deviated not an inch from its course. Its horn struck the old

torreador in the shoulder. The sword went flying through the air. And Bombetto, the pride of the bull ring, went hurtling backwards to the sand!

Ten thousand throats set up an excited shouting as the bull drew off and prepared to gore the fallen man. Its head was lowered. Its long cruel horns pointed at the fallen torreador. And then an amazing thing happened!

A lithe figure, garbed in the civilian dress of an Englishman, sprang over the barrier. It was Ferrers Locke! His feet struck the bull full on the flank, diverting it slightly from its course. Its horns tore up the sand close at Bombetto's side. Next instant Locke had fallen on the sand and was gathering the wounded man in his arms. With a mighty heave he sent Bombetto hurtling over the barrier. The bull bellowed in fury, turned and charged. Locke dodged like lightning. And then Juan leaped the barrier, snatched up his father's sword, and buried it in the heart of the maddened animal!

It was all like a dream to Locke after that. He and Juan clambered back over the barrier. The crowd roared. Whether they were pleased or not at this unusual spectacle, the slouch neither knew nor cared.

He and Drake and Juan entered the little chapel beneath the covered stands where the bull-fighters repair before entering the ring. Here they found Bombetto surrounded by officials. At the sight of his son the injured bull-fighter raised himself, and anger flashed in his dark eyes.

"Caramba!" he cried. "Begone! Why have you come here?"

"Am I not your son, senor?" said Juan, a catch in his voice. "Come, father, let bygones be bygones!"

"Never! Did you not make an attempt on my life?"

Ferrers Locke stepped forward, and, in a few words, explained what he had learned from Sabanez.

"Sabanez is an honest man," he said. "Your son was in the Cafe Espanol at the time of the assault by the plaza."

Bombetto hesitated, and then held out his hands to his son.

As the doctor was dressing the old bull-fighter's wound, Bombetto learned how Locke had saved his life. His eyes spoke his gratitude. Then the throng in the chapel were pushed aside, and Blasca and Alonzo came to Bombetto's side.

"Forgive us, senor," said the bull breeder. "It was who hired four assassins to attack you, and I specially trained a mad black bull in the hope that you might be killed to-day in the arena. It was who sent the unsigned letter to you to cause bad blood between you and your son. I am glad I have failed. You are a brave man. I am prepared to pay for my treachery, but I have finished with the vendetta."

For some seconds the old bull-fighter gazed at his enemy, his eyes flashing scorn. And then a smile gradually overspread his swarthy lips, and he stretched his hands upwards for Blasca and Alonzo to clasp.

So ended the great vendetta between Bombetto and Blasca, and Locke was glad that he had had some small part in bringing about this happy conclusion.

THE END.

Don't miss next Monday's sensational detective story entitled
"THE CASE OF THE
COINER!"

By Owen Conquest.

You've enjoyed this number? Of course! Next week's better still!

THE GREYFRIARS DAY-BOARDER!

(Continued from page 20.)

this night's work. But I warn you solemnly, that if you don't stop your foolish, reckless tricks, if you don't turn over a new leaf, and agree to have nothing more to do with Ponsonby's crowd, or with Skinner and his lot, we intend to tell the full story to your uncle on his return. There it is. You can take your choice."

Thresher was silent for fully three minutes. When at last he looked up his face was set and his eyes shining.

"You've no need to threaten me, Wharton," he said huskily. "I've had my lesson—a lesson I won't forget. I own up. I've been a fool. As for Pon and that crowd—the way they took their licking was enough for me. They—they're a lot of cowardly sweeps. I've finished with them for good. I've finished with cards and smoking, too. I've had my eyes opened to-night. And—and, I say, Wharton—"

"Well?"

"You—you thought I wasn't grateful for—for saving my sister when her pony ran away that day—you and Nugent. But I was—I am. I've hated myself ever since for treating you like I did. I—I—"

"That—that's all right," said Wharton hurriedly. "Anyway, it's getting jolly late now—better be going. We can talk things over to-morrow. All serene. Come on, you fellows! I expect Skinner has discovered our absence and guessed something."

"Blow Skinner!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I bet we sleep better than he does to-night—or, rather, this morning."

Bob's remark broke the tension, and the juniors laughed. Hastily they helped Cecil to replace the precious portrait in the frame temporarily until the morrow. Then, tired out, but satisfied, the juniors made tracks for Greyfriars—and bed.

The next day the juniors had early proof that Cecil Thresher intended to keep his word, when they learned that he and his old pals, Skinner & Co., had had a violent quarrel, and that the partnership was at an end. But later that afternoon the Famous Five and Wibley had further proof in the shape of invitations to tea with Cecil and his charming sister. And there the juniors learned that Cecil had sealed his compact by making a clean breast of the whole affair to his sister.

The tea was held in the old tower—cleared now of its dingy card-tables—and was a huge success. Miss Connie could not do enough to show her gratitude. And that tea was the first of many during the day-boarder's stay at Greyfriars.

From that night on Captain Devereux vanished utterly from the district; which was just as well for the district, and the pockets and characters of certain of the weaker elements at Greyfriars and Highcliffe Schools.

THE END.

(Another magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "Billy Hunter's Barring-Out!" Order your MAGNET early!)

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