

"THE HOUSE OF PENGARTH!" This week's splendid mystery story of
Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

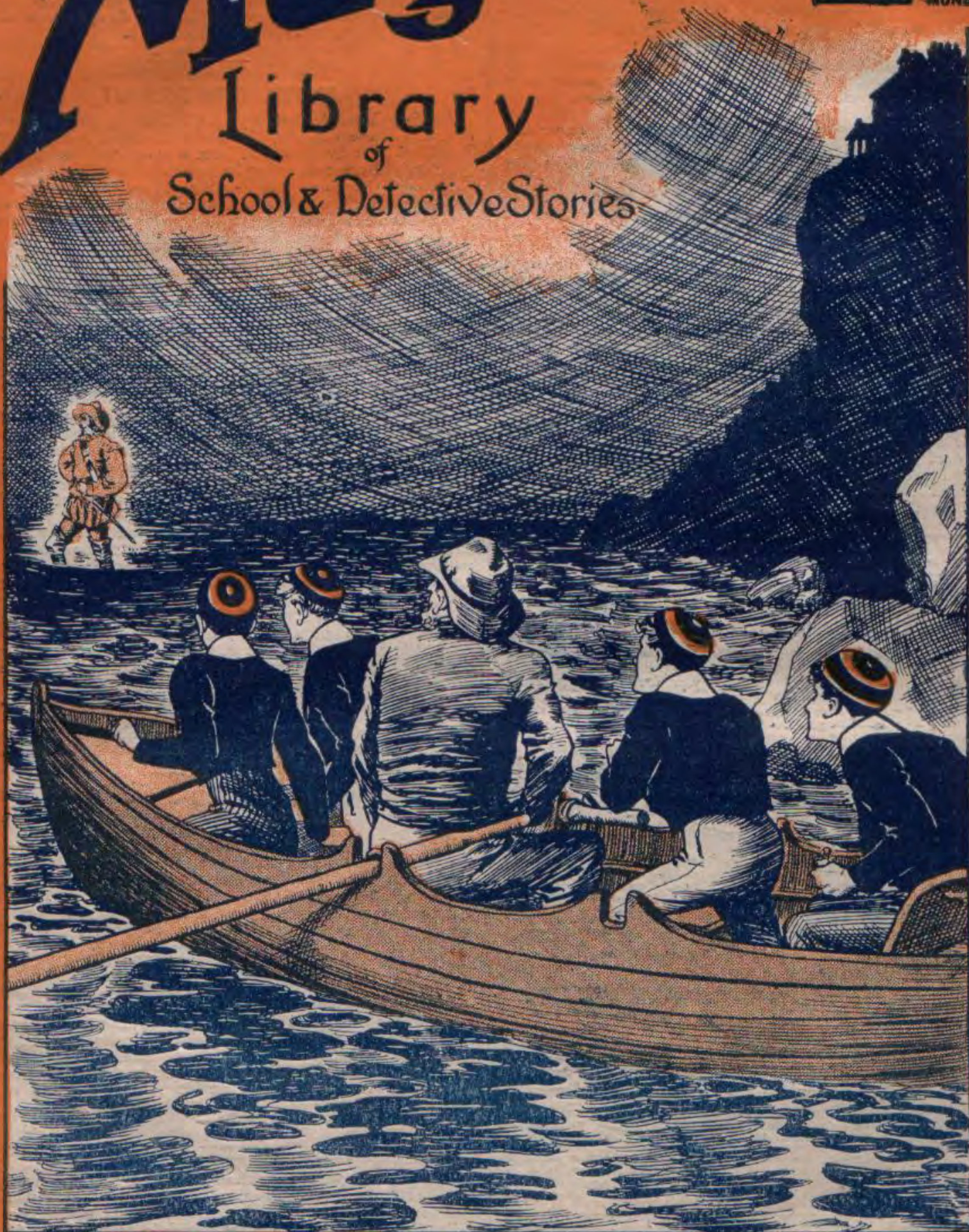
No. 811. Vol. XXIV.

Week ending August 25th, 1923.

The Magnet 2^d

EVERY MONDAY

Library of School & Detective Stories



THE SPANISH CAPTAIN MAKES HIS DREAD APPEARANCE!

(A startling incident from the long complete story of the Chums of Greyfriars, within.)



"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

THERE will be sorrow and deep lamentation unstinted on the part of anybody who fails to secure a copy of the new volume of the "Holiday Annual." The great work will receive its first blushing honours on September 1st, when it will be on sale everywhere. Be on the qui vive! Those fellows who have not placed their orders should do so right away. The "Annual" this year is a treatier treat than ever. It contains topping yarns of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood, but to mention that fact is only the beginning, merely touching the fringe of a mammoth programme, as it were. There are tales of adventure; the new issue contains some brilliant pages of romance; it gives fascinating peeps into history; it supplies attractive puzzles for an evening, or when you are resting after doing the needful at camp and do not feel disposed to turn in for an hour. There are coloured pictures in plenty; hobbies are well attended to by master hands. But that is not all by a great, long way. Just a word about one very important feature. This concerns the Greyfriars yarn which has a commanding place in the new "Annual." There is a certain distinguished visitor to Greyfriars.

WHO IS THE MAN?

Well, he is no other than Martin Clifford himself—a smart, well-informed gentleman who does Greyfriars the signal honour of turning up in the most informal fashion, and paying his respects to Greyfriars, likewise to Mr. Quelch, Mr. Lamb, of chess renown, and also not forgetting the illustrious Paul Pontifex Prout. You will get a hearty

laugh over the whole adventure. The special yarn in question just ripples along, and there is much behind it all, for Bunter takes his share in the dramatic activities so cleverly narrated. Mr. Prout tells Martin Clifford of his sparkling adventures with the coy grizzly in the depths of the Rocky Mountains; Bunter does his best to monopolise the celebrated stranger—though it seems hardly cricket to style Martin Clifford like that. There is a pulsating plot, and many immense things might have happened if the famous author of the "Gem" had not taken his departure in the smart little car which he drove a bit too fast for the Bunterian nerves. It is only fair to draw your special attention to this record yarn. Get the new volume of the "Holiday Annual," and read all about it.

IN THE NEAR FUTURE!

Another big sensation may be looked for pretty soon. It concerns Ferrers Locke, the great detective, whose brilliant activities have for long past been a prominent feature of the MAGNET. I am not going to say much at this time about the fresh attraction, but it may suffice to point out that Ferrers Locke leaves England on vital business in the North. His mission is a tremendous affair, and you will be entranced by the coming story of how the incredible difficulties he faces in Russia are handled by the front line crime investigator. I said this was all for the future; but it is something worth waiting for—a big yarn in every respect, full of life, presenting in a fashion vivid as lightning the thrilling tragedy of the Russian situation. It will leave you spellbound.

"THE SECRET OF THE CAVES!"

Next week's story of Greyfriars deals with the further adventures of the holiday-makers from Greyfriars at Pengarth, the lonely spot on the Cornish coast where legends are rife, and mysteries as numerous as blackberries in September. The yarn is in Mr. Frank Richards' most telling style, and shows in dramatic fashion the lifting of the curtain on the dread secret of the remote old stronghold in the West. Nobody is going to blame Harry Wharton & Co., with their sturdy common-sense, for declining to swallow whole the astounding theory about the wraiths of Spanish mariners who are declared to be in possession of the ancient mansion. Greyfriars wants something more than misty rumours out of the old past, and fantastic tales of what happened to the ill-fated sailors of the Armada which King Philip the Second of Spain sent over to England on a mission of conquest. Frank Richards has woven a grand yarn out of the business. The interest is palpitating, and there are some very strange moments of dire peril for the Greyfriars fellows. If succour had not come up in the shape of a party of chaps from St. Jim's, there is no telling whether the age-old mystery might not be a mystery still.

"DEAD OR ALIVE?"

Ferrers Locke has a weird case next week. It concerns two personalities, and the problem was difficult enough to baffle the brainiest representatives of Scotland Yard. Luckily, the Ferrers Locke method met with more success, but there was rough going all the time.

"RIVALS OF THE ROAD!"

Galloping Dick meets with a rival next week, and the story would take a lot of beating for sheer excitement. The newcomer stands at nothing; but in Galloping Dick he meets his equal if not his match. The series of yarns of the exploits on the highway will be carried on to a bigger success than ever—thanks to next week's stirring episode of the road!

A "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" SUPPLEMENT!

What more appropriate than that Harry Wharton and his team of writing experts should lay themselves out to do justice to the new "Holiday Annual" volume! The new "Greyfriars Herald" will be found to treat of the famous book in graphic fashion. It scintillates with wit. All the best men have been busy on a subject which, be it said, is more than usually worthy of their skill.

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MAG. H., 1923.

The silence of the night is broken by wild and piercing shrieks for help. Harry Wharton & Co., their nerves strung to a high pitch, dash in the direction of the sounds. Ultimately they come upon Sir Jimmy Vivian in the centre of his bedroom, his hands clutching at his throat, and moaning pitifully. He declares that he has been the victim of a savage attack, but signs of his mysterious assailant there are none. What has happened?



A Magnificent Story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, dealing with their thrilling adventures during the vacation.

Told by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Stopped on the Road!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"We're stopping—"
"Look out!"

Seven Greyfriars juniors were seated in the car, speeding along the hilly road in the sunset. From Penzance the road had been good; but the chauffeur had turned off the turnpike into hilly lanes, on the way to Pengarth Bay and the House of Pengarth. The road was rough, the lane was winding, and the car jolted and bumped, but Harry Wharton & Co. chatted away cheerily.

The chums of Greyfriars were rather tightly packed in the car, but nobody grumbled, excepting Skinner a little. Skinner had asked several times whether Bob Cherry could not hang his feet out of the window; which, according to Skinner, would have doubled the available space inside the car. But nobody minded Skinner.

Then, suddenly, as the car whirled round a corner, there came a jamming of brakes, and so sudden a jolt, that the occupants of the car were pitched into one another's arms in a struggling heap.

The car halted, quivering; and from the interior rose a chorus of wild yells.

"Get off my neck!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Stop jamming your elbow in my eye, fathead!"

"Ow! Wow!"

"Help!"

Harry Wharton sorted himself out first. He opened the door and jumped out, and helped out Sir Jimmy Vivian, who clasped his nose in anguish with both hands. Somebody's knee had smitten that nose, and the schoolboy baronet felt the effects.

Frank Nugent was the next to escape, and then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Johnny Bull detached himself from Skinner's neck, and followed. Skinner had suffered the most. He was at the bottom of the car, and Bob Cherry was still seated on his chest. Skinner's voice, choked with dust and fury, came in muffled tones.

"You silly beast! Gerroff!"

"Give a chap time to move!" said Bob.

"Ow! You're squashing me!" howled Skinner. "Gerroff! Dragginoff, you chaps!"

"Bob, old fellow—" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Coming," said Bob. "It's all right, Skinner—"

"Gerroff!"

"I've got my feet to carry, you know," said Bob amiably. "Can't move feet like mine in a hurry."

"Grooogh!"

Bob Cherry rose from his resting-place on Skinner's waistcoat, and stepped cheerily from the car.

Skinner sat up and spluttered.

He had swallowed a good deal of dust—he felt as if he had swallowed a cart-load. He spluttered and gasped on the floor of the car, while the other fellows proceeded to ascertain what was the matter.

The chauffeur had descended from his seat, and was standing staring at the block in the road ahead. The car had been following one of the sunken lanes of the West Country—on either side the banks of red earth rose a dozen or fifteen feet, crowned by the greenest of grass and the brightest of flowers.

It was a narrow lane, without room for two vehicles to pass one another. When two vehicles met, one had to back and back, till it reached a hollow in the side of the lane, and could back into it out of the way. But it was not another vehicle ahead that had stopped the Greyfriars car. It was a fallen tree—a much more serious matter.

"It was a big tree, and it had grown on the summit of the high earthen bank. Now it had crashed down and blocked the lane with huge branches thick with foliage. A foot-passenger could have wormed his way through, but nothing so large as a bicycle could have passed. As for the car, it was out of the question.

"Looks like we're done, sir!" said the Penzance driver calmly. "Never get the car past that!"

"We ought to have come in an aeroplane," said Bob Cherry, shaking his

head. "Cars aren't much good in Cornwall—not in this part, at any rate!"

"I'd have brought you right to the inn at Polpen, sir," said the driver. "But now—"

"Rotten!" said Nugent.

"It's queer, too," said the chauffeur. "I passed that tree last week, and never a sign of its tumbling. I fancy somebody has been larking."

"Some silly ass blocked the road for a lark?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Well, it looks like it to me! That tree ought to have stood for another hundred years!" said the Penzance man.

"That would have given us time to get our holiday over all right," remarked Bob Cherry. "We should have been home again before then!"

"But what's to be done?" asked Wharton.

"Well, I can take you back to Penzance!"

"We're not going back!"

"No fear!" said Sir Jimmy Vivian. "We're expected at Pengarth for one thing. Keeley will wait up for us."

"How far are we off Polpen now?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Not a quarter of a mile!"

"We can walk that easily enough," said Harry Wharton. "But what about the baggage?"

"Well, we can't carry it, that's a cert!" said Nugent. "Isn't there another road, driver?"

The chauffeur nodded.

"I've got to back out of this," he said. "Then I shall have to go round—it's a good many miles. Couldn't do it to-night. Plenty of good hotels in Penzance."

"Oh, blow Penzance!" said Bob Cherry. "We're going on. Sure you couldn't manage it to-night, driver?"

"It'll be dark before I've backed out of this, sir!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, we're going on!" said Harry Wharton, looking at his comrades. There was a general nodding of heads.

"The Greyfriars Remove never turns back!" said Bob.

"The neverfulness is terrific," said THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 811.

Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed baggage can be brought on to-morrow by the other road."

"That means roughing it to-night," said Harry Wharton. "But really we expected to rough it a bit at Vivian's place. We can put a few things in a couple of rucksacks and carry them."

"Good egg!"

And the juniors set to work. Skinner was out of the car by that time, and he was frowning. Skinner did not like roughing it, and said so.

"Better get back to Penzance and put up there for the night," suggested Skinner. "What does a day matter?"

"We're not going to be beaten," said Bob.

"Oh, rot!"

"Besides, Sir Jimmy's man will be waiting up for us at Pengarth."

"Let him wait."

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here—" growled Skinner.

"You can go back to Penzance if you like, Skinner," said Harry Wharton.

"We're keeping on!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Skinner. "I'll stop in the car, and come on with the bags to-morrow—what?"

"Good!" said the juniors all together. As a matter of fact, they were not keen on Skinner's company when it was a question of "roughing" it. Skinner was too much inclined to grouse over little difficulties.

It did not take the juniors long to sort out a few indispensable articles from the baggage, and Bob and Johnny Bull shouldered a rucksack each.

Then six juniors shoved and clambered a way through the fallen tree's branches, and the chauffeur was left to the joyless task of backing the car out of the long, winding lane.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Strange News!

"BEST foot foremost!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

The Famous Five and Sir Jimmy Vivian tramped on. Occasionally, through openings in the high banks of the lane, they caught a glimpse of the sea—the blue Atlantic rolling up to the cliffs of the western coast of Cornwall. It was an inspiring sight, and the chums of Greyfriars were glad that they had not turned back with Skinner.

"This 'ere is a bit of orlright!" remarked Sir Jimmy Vivian in the English he had learned in his hard days before coming to Greyfriars School.

"It is—it are!" assented Bob Cherry. "You're a lucky little bargee, Jimmy, to inherit a jolly old house in a beautiful region like this. These things never happen to me."

Sir Jimmy grinned.

"I'm glad you fellers 'ave come," he said. "I 'ope you don't mind Skinner joining up. He seemed keen to come when we was at Greyfriars; but he don't seem so keen now."

"Oh, Skinner will be all right," said Bob. "He wants to take his exercise sitting down, that's all. Why, I wouldn't have missed this walk for Skinner's weight in doughnuts. Jevver see such scenery?"

"It's top-hole!" said Wharton.

And Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh declared that the topholefulness was terrific.

"Which way now?" asked Bob Cherry suddenly.

The juniors arrived at a point where the lane forked. A bulging hillside hid

the sea from their sight now, and there was no sign of a habitation or of a finger-post. They had the choice of two ways, and there seemed nothing to choose between them.

Harry Wharton & Co. came to a halt.

"Now, which is the giddy way to Polpen?" asked Bob Cherry. "Anybody good at conundrums?"

It was a puzzle.

"Bless that tree!" said Nugent. "We should have been at Polpen by this time."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's a giddy native!"

A man came from a field footpath and dropped into the lane. He was a weather-beaten old fellow, who looked as if he had stood all weathers for sixty years, and could stand them for almost another sixty.

"Hold on!" called out Harry Wharton. "Can you tell us if this is the right road to Polpen?" He pointed down one of the lanes.

The Cornishman nodded.

"Yes, zur!"

"Oh, that's good!" said Bob. "Sure it's not the other lane—what?"

"Yes, zur!"

"Eh! It can't be both!"

"Yes, zur!"

"Is the chap pulling our legs?" murmured Frank Nugent.

The countryman had stopped, and was looking at the schoolboys with stolid good-humour.

"You belong to these parts?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, zur. All the folk to Polpen know Dick Pengelly!"

"Then you can tell us which of these roads to take, Mr. Pengelly," said the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

Mr. Pengelly grinned, a grin that broke up his mahogany face into a thousand wrinkles.

"Either or both, zur," he further explained. "Left will take you right to the Rose Inn, and the other'll take you round by t' parson's."

"Well, it's the Rose Inn we want, not the parson's!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We'll take the left. I fancy I want a snack at the Rose Inn before we go up the cliffs to Pengarth."

Mr. Pengelly ceased to grin suddenly.

"You be going to Pengarth?" he asked.

"Yes; it's round the bay from Polpen, isn't it?" said Harry Wharton.

"It be, zur. But you be not going to stop the night at Pengarth?"

"We are, and a good many more nights!" said Harry Wharton. "We're going there for a holiday."

"Lord bless us!" said Mr. Pengelly.

"What's the matter with Pengarth?" asked Sir Jimmy Vivian rather warmly.

Sir Jimmy was very proud of what he was rather fond of alluding to as his "property in Cornwall!"

"It be haunted, zur!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, Vivian's inherited the ghost along with the property, I suppose," said Bob Cherry, laughing.

"This be young Maister Vivian?" asked Dick Pengelly, staring at Sir Jimmy with great interest.

"Yes, rather," said Sir Jimmy loftily.

"The blooming show belongs to me, and I'm a blooming baronet, and don't you forget it."

Mr. Pengelly stared harder. He would not have expected, perhaps, a baronet of the United Kingdom to talk in that manner. But Sir Jimmy was a very

original member of the honourable baronetage.

"I be going back to Polpen now," said Dick Pengelly. "Mun come with me, I'll show mun the way."

"Thanks no end!" said Bob. "There may be some more conundrums farther on."

The fisherman started down the lane with the juniors. He glanced at them very curiously from time to time.

It was evident that he had been startled by hearing that they intended to put up at the deserted old mansion on the cliffs.

Harry Wharton & Co. felt their curiosity roused. They knew nothing of Pengarth, save that it was an ancient and half-ruined house that had belonged to a distant relative of Sir Jimmy's and had been in Chancery for many years. For two decades at least it had been deserted and unoccupied, save by an old man named Keeley, who lived there as a sort of caretaker.

Sir Jimmy's guardian had sent instructions to Keeley to prepare the place for visitors, and the juniors planned to camp there for their holiday on the Cornish coast, it being understood that a great deal of roughing it would be involved. But Harry Wharton & Co. were not afraid to rough it; in fact, the prospect of camping in a semi-ruined old house on a cliff facing the wild Atlantic attracted them strongly.

This was the first they had heard of Pengarth being haunted, and it made them curious to hear more.

"You know the place well, I suppose, Mr. Pengelly?" asked Harry Wharton.

"As well as my hand," said the seafaring man. "But I ain't been nigh it for years, and don't want to. There's not a man in Polpen would go near it after dark, nor in daylight, neither, if he could help it."

"Did you ever happen to see the ghost?" inquired Bob Cherry, suppressing a grin.

"I've heered un," answered Mr. Pengelly briefly.

"Oh, my hat! What sort of a ghost—groans and clanking chains and so on?" asked Bob.

"Folk that come from London know everything," said Mr. Pengelly. "But you'll learn more if you stay a night to Pengarth. I've heered un shrieking in the night, and there's folk to Polpen who've seen them walking."

"Seen whom?" asked Nugent.

"The dead Spaniards," answered Mr. Pengelly, sinking his voice. "The ghosts of them that was drowned under the cliff when the Spanish ship went down hundreds of years ago. They haunt the cliff and the old house, and folk have heard them calling in their own tongue."

"Somebody larking, more likely," said Bob.

"There isn't a man to Polpen speaking a word of Spanish," said Mr. Pengelly. "But the spirits have been heard calling in that tongue. They can't rest so far from their country, folks say. There was a gent from London stayin' to Polpen years ago, and he would go up the cliff to the House of Pengarth, and he came back white as snow at Christmas. He'd seen un, and heered un. And he told me a word he had heard which he said was a Spanish word, him knowing that tongue."

"And what was the word?" asked Wharton.

"Manana!"

"Anybody know what manana means in Spanish?" asked Bob Cherry.

Don't miss "The Secret of the Caves!"—next Monday's—

"It means to-morrow," said Nugent. Old Pengelly nodded. "That's what the gentleman told me," he said, "and there was no native of these parts knowed it."

The juniors were silent. They were not likely to believe in phantoms from the other world, revisiting the glimpses of the moon. But it was clear that the old fisherman believed the story. And the incident he had related was curious, to say the least of it. Some foolish person of the locality might have played ghost to cause alarm, impersonating the spirits of the dead Spanish sailors who were supposed to haunt Pengarth; but no practical joker of Polpen was likely to know even one word of Spanish.

"But," said Harry Wharton, at last. "There's a man who lives at Pengarth—Keeley, who takes care of the place. Isn't he scared by the dead Spaniards?"

"Black Keeley isn't like other men," said Pengelly. "He don't belong to these parts, neither. He came with the Vivian who lived at the house when I was a boy. A drinking, hard-living man he was, and I reckon nobody was sorry when he fell in the bay—saving your presence, young gentleman!" added Pengelly, glancing at Sir Jimmy.

"Oh, I never knowed him," said Sir Jimmy. "He was only a sort of uncle's cousin or cousin's uncle, or something. But was there ghosts in Pengarth when Sir Brandon Vivian lived there?"

"There's always been ghosts to Pengarth," said Pengelly.

"Here's the village!" said Nugent.

The juniors had entered Polpen by this time. The sea, red under the sunset, stretched illimitable to the west. On the beach boats were drawn up, and fishermen sat on them, smoking. The juniors halted before the Rose Inn, and Dick Pengelly, touching his hat, walked on and left them there.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Turned Back!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. enjoyed a late tea at the Rose Inn, at Polpen. They were a little tired, and very hungry; and they rested, and fed, and finished up with luscious strawberries and beautiful cream. There was still the walk to the House of Pengarth before them, however, so they rather reluctantly dragged themselves away from the old gabled inn. Tregellis, the red-faced landlord, pointed out the House of Pengarth to them across the bay.

Tregellis, like Dick Pengelly, seemed surprised to hear that they were going to stay in the haunted house. He mentioned Keeley, whom he referred to as "Black Keeley," and though he said little, the juniors could see that he did not like Mr. Keeley, and they wondered what sort of a man the guardian of the House of Pengarth might be. Keeley, they gathered, sometimes came down to Polpen to drink at the inn, but he had no friends in the Cornish fishing village, and was not liked there.

"There's the house!" said Mr. Tregellis, pointing with a plump forefinger across the shining waters of the bay.

The juniors looked.

At first it was a little difficult to make out the house, built of grey stone and backed by the grey cliffs. When they discerned it, it had an effect of a nest perched on the cliff-face. Round it and

behind it the cliffs rose in rugged masses.

"It's a half-mile, across the bay," said Mr. Tregellis. "But a good mile going round by the path. You'll have to hurry to get in before dark."

"I suppose the path's easy to follow," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, you wouldn't mistake it," said the innkeeper. "But you'll have to be careful; it's steep in places."

"It's a jolly odd place to build a house," said Bob Cherry. "Couldn't a cart or a trap get there?"

"Bless your heart, no," said Tregellis. "There was a road once, but it was blocked by a fall of the cliff years ago. You can only get to it by the path now."

"How's our baggage coming up, then?"

"On men's shoulders, by the path," said Tregellis, "some of the lads here will carry it up for you, when it comes, and leave it at the gate. They wouldn't enter the house for love or money."

"Your house seems to have a jolly reputation in these parts, Jimmy," said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Looks like it, don't it?" assented the baronet. "But the ghosts won't frighten us away."

"No fear!"

"Well, we'd better be off," said Harry Wharton. "The house will be in sight most of the way, so we can't very well lose ourselves."

And the juniors started.

A dozen or more of the inhabitants of Polpen gathered, to watch them go, and the juniors could not help smiling.

If they had been a party of reckless adventurers going into desperate danger, their movements could not have excited more interest in Polpen.

At a short distance from the village they lost sight of Polpen, and found themselves ascending a steep path on the great granite cliffs.

Below them was the beach of the round bay, on which the incoming tide was thundering.

The scenery was grand and wild; at two hundred yards from Polpen, they seemed to be in the midst of an uninhabited waste, where it was difficult to believe that human feet trod. Seagulls screamed over the cliffs above them on the left; on the right the tide thundered on the pebble ridges.

The sun was setting deeper into the sea. Several times, as they tramped on, they caught sight of the House of Pengarth—dark, silent, seemingly deserted, and strangely forbidding in its aspect.

In spite of themselves, the silence and eeriness of the place and the gathering shadows, had an effect on the spirits of the Greyfriars party, and they fell very silent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

He stopped.

In the midst of the path, which was narrow and winding at that point, lay a huge rock, that had evidently rolled from the cliffs above.

It blocked the way of the juniors.

"Dash it all, this is getting past a joke," said Harry Wharton. "This is



A big tree had crashed down, and blocked the lane with huge branches. "Looks like we're done, sir," said the driver. "Never get the car past that." "We ought to have come in an aeroplane," grinned Bob Cherry. (See Chapter I.)

the second time we've been stopped on the road."

"We can climb over this," said Bob.

"Yes, rather."

"Look out!"

There was a rumble on the cliff-face above them, and a heavy stone came hurtling down.

It crashed on the rock, glanced off, and then hurtled down the steep face of the lower cliff, into the boiling tide twenty yards below.

The juniors jumped back.

Another and another stone followed, and then a huge chunk of rock, that crashed into fragments on the path.

"Better get out of this," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's a landslide, I should say."

The juniors hurried back the way they had come.

If a landslide was in progress on the steep cliff, it was death to linger on the path; and the stones continued to roll down.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

The party halted at a distance from the falling rocks, debating what they should do. It was dangerous to advance, but they did not want to turn back.

"I'm blessed if I can make this out!" said Harry. "First a tree falls and stops the road—then there's a fall of rock on this path just as we're coming along. It's a jolly odd coincidence!"

"But there it is!" remarked Bob.

"Yes—but—"

"But what?"

"I—I suppose there can't be anybody playing tricks on us," said Harry Wharton slowly. "Somebody trying to keep us away from the House of Pengarth, for some reason."

Bob Cherry opened his eyes wide.

"Why should anybody want to keep us away?" he asked. "Unless it was the giddy ghosts, of course." He chuckled.

"Ghosts don't leave rocks and pitch over trees, whatever they do!" remarked Nugent.

"Well, it's jolly odd," said Wharton.

"You remember that before the holidays, at Greyfriars, a man tried to kidnap Vivian. He got Bunter by mistake, and let him go when he found it out."

"But what—"

"Well, Bunter told us that when he was in the kidnappers' hands, he was to be kept a prisoner for the midsummer vacation. They told him so, thinking he was Vivian."

"I remember," said Bob. "But what—"

"Well, if it had been Vivian they got hold of they wouldn't have let him go," said Wharton. "Nobody's been able to find them, or to find out why they wanted to kidnap Vivian. But if Vivian had been kept a prisoner for the vacation it would have prevented us from coming here, as we're coming as Vivian's guests."

"That's so!" said Sir Jimmy.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"So the jolly old kidnapper only wanted to bag Vivian, to keep a holiday party from coming to the House of Pengarth!" he exclaimed. "But why?"

"I don't know why; but it begins to look like it. Now we've come, we've been stopped twice on the road, and I don't believe that either stoppage was by chance."

"But we shall get there all the same," said Nugent.

"Yes, but whoever it is may count on making us get fed up with the place," said Harry. "Or—" He paused. "If one of those falling rocks had hit us, there would have been serious damage done."

"My hat!"

"But why the thump should anybody want to keep us away!" demanded Johnny Bull.

Wharton shook his head.

"I can't guess that. I can only say that it looks like it. And it fits in with the ghost story, too. We know there aren't any ghosts of dead Spanish sailors at Pengarth, but the yarn keeps the whole neighbourhood clear of the place."

"But who—"

"I don't know that, of course. But if there's some underhand game on it's being worked by the same fellows that tried to kidnap Vivian and got Bunter by mistake."

"But why—"

"No good asking me why," said the captain of the Remove. "I can't even

begin to guess. But one thing's certain, we're not going to be kept out of the House of Pengarth by men, or ghosts, or anything else. If there's somebody playing tricks on us we'll jolly well find him out and make him smart for it."

"Hear, hear!"

Crash!

A jagged rock hurtled down from the upper cliffs and crashed on the path only six or seven feet from where the juniors were standing.

"Here, let's get out of this!" exclaimed Bob. "The next may catch us on the nappers."

The juniors hurried back, and did not stop till they reached Polpen again. Whether it was a natural fall of loose rocks, or whether an enemy hidden in the upper cliff was rolling the fragments down, in either case it was impossible to follow the path. Outside the Rose Inn they found Mr. Tregellis talking to Dick Pengelly and smoking his pipe. He blinked at the juniors.

"Back again?" he asked, grinning.

Wharton explained what had happened. The innkeeper nodded thoughtfully.

"There's often a fall of rocks on that cliff," he said. "It's a dangerous path if you're not careful."

"Well, we can't follow the path," said Harry. "We want to hire a boat to take us across the bay and land us at the house."

Tregellis looked at Pengelly.

"Dick here's got a boat, and he knows the bay like a book," he said. "But—"

"But there's bad luck to Pengarth," said Pengelly, shaking his head. "It's a warning to you to keep away, I'm thinking, young gentlemen."

Wharton smiled.

"Well, we're going on," he said. "Will you row us across the bay, or lend us your boat and let us row ourselves?"

"The bay ain't safe for strangers, and the tide coming in and all," said Dick. "You'll find your death in the shifting sands, I'm thinking."

"Well, we're going," said Wharton, setting his lips.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"If we can't get a man to row us we'll row ourselves, and chance the tide," said Bob.

Dick Pengelly looked at them. He was obviously unwilling to approach anywhere near the House of Pengarth, but still more unwilling to let the schoolboys go into a danger which he understood better than they could.

"If you're determined on it, young gentlemen—" he said at last, very slowly.

"Quite!"

"Then I'll row you across, and land you on the pebble ridge afore the house," said Dick Pengelly. "But it'll be dark—"

"That's nothing."

"We're not like the chap in the song, who couldn't go home in the dark, you know," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "Trot out the boat."

And Pengelly, with evident misgivings, went to prepare his boat for the run across the bay.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Phantom Boat!

THE sun had disappeared by the time the Greyfriars juniors stepped into Dick Pengelly's boat. It was run out into the sea by several fishermen. The weather was calm; but there was always a rough tide in the bay when the sea came in, and surf boiled round the boat. Harry Wharton took the rudder and the big Cornish fisherman put out the oars and pulled.

In the darkness the juniors could make out little but the white edges of the surf; but the old fisherman knew every inch of the bay, within sight of which he had lived for sixty hardy years. The heavy boat rolled, the heavy oars creaked, and the lights of the Rose Inn disappeared in the night behind.

The red sunset had been followed by complete darkness; hardly a star glimmered in the black vault overhead. As they peered about them the juniors were glad that they had not started to row across the bay on their own.

Without Pengelly at the oars they would have been utterly lost. The dull roar of surf on granite cliffs filled the air with sound on all sides.

When the lights of Polpen were hidden by jutting rocks there was not a glimmer to guide them.

"Keeley might be showing a light in a window!" growled Johnny Bull. "But I suppose he won't guess we're coming by water."

"He might show a light, anyway," said Harry Wharton. "But he may have given us up, as we were not in before dark."

"Likely enough."

"I'll jolly well tork to that bloke," said Jimmy Vivian. "He ought to be showing a light."

But there was no light to break the darkness till the stars came out.

How Dick Pengelly worked his way across the bay without a mistake was a mystery to the Greyfriars juniors.

But the Cornishman was never at a loss.

Through the darkness a thicker blackness seemed to rise at last, and the juniors guessed that it was the mass of cliffs behind the House of Pengarth. They were approaching the mysterious house of phantoms at last.

Dick Pengelly suddenly rested on his oars.

"Keep her steady, zur!" he said in a low voice.

"Right-ho!" answered Wharton.

"What are we stopping for?" asked Bob Cherry.

Pengelly did not answer. The juniors could see that he was straining his eyes into the darkness.

"I heered a boat," said Pengelly, at last, in a low, hoarse whisper. "There's a boat to Pengarth."

"Keeley's been out in a boat perhaps," said Harry.

"Maybe—maybe!" Pengelly's voice faltered. "But after dark the dead men's boat rows out from the House of Pengarth, manned by the spirits of dead Spaniards."

"What rot!" grunted Vivian.

"Hark!"

Through the darkness, from the direction of the landing-place, a little cove at the foot of the cliffs, there came the unmistakable sounds of a boat; clearly the juniors heard the oars straining in the rowlocks.



"Look out!" roared Bob Cherry. From the cliff-face above them a heavy stone came hurtling down, followed by several pieces of rock. The juniors jumped back in alarm. "Better get out of this," said Harry Wharton. "It's a landslide!" (See Chapter 3.)

In the darkness they could see nothing; but they knew that a boat was approaching them.

Pengelly's face showed white in the gloom as he rested on his oars. The juniors felt their hearts beat.

Unless the man Keeley was in the boat it was difficult to guess what the craft was doing there, as the haunted spot was avoided by all the fishermen of the coast. Fishing, of course, was carried on out at sea, and it was hard to imagine what business could have taken a boat's crew to the little cove below the House of Pengarth. And that it was not Keeley alone, if it was Keeley at all, was soon clear, for the juniors heard the sounds of at least two pairs of oars. And it was well known that "Black Keeley" lived entirely alone at the haunted house.

Harry Wharton & Co. felt their hearts thrill.

In the gloom, and the silence broken only by the mutter of the surf, with Pengelly's white face before their eyes, they felt, for the moment, a thrill of superstition, picturing the phantom boat, manned by the spirits of the hapless Spanish sailors, who had gone down to their death in the wild waters in the far-off days of the Spanish Armada.

Bob Cherry jumped up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he shouted, and the ringing hail broke the spell upon the juniors.

"Boat a-bo!" shouted Johnny Bull. "What boat's that?"

There was no answer from the night.

The straining oars were still heard, but no human voice broke the silence.

"They'll not answer a hail!" breathed old Pengelly. "Lord have mercy on us!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Can't you answer! Speak, can't you?"

Only the straining oars answered. "Pull for them!" exclaimed Bob angrily. "We'll jolly well make them tell us who they are!"

Pengelly did not dip the oars, but Wharton pulled the rudder-line. The boat had easy way on her, and she swung round slowly.

"Pull!" shouted Bob.

There was a yell from Sir Jimmy.

"Look! Oh, look!"

From the darkness, where the straining oars were still heard, a ghostly light glimmered.

The juniors stared, with thumping hearts.

They could not see the boat, but a figure came into sight, standing in the unseen boat.

It was outlined in a phosphorescent glow, strange, eerie, uncanny, against the background of blackness.

And the figure was that of a Spanish sailor of olden days, a Spanish captain, who had sailed in the Armada galleons. The trunk hose and doublet, the sea-boots, the broad Spanish hat with its plume, all were outlined in ghostly light.

The face was dark, only a glitter and gleam coming from where the eyes should have been.

—their determination to "see things through" knows no set-back!

The juniors, clutching the gunwale of their boat, gazed at the apparition spell-bound, their hearts almost ceasing to beat.

From the other boat came the rattle of the oars, and the terrible vision faded away in the darkness towards the open sea.

For several minutes there was deep silence in the Greyfriars party. Harry Wharton spoke at last.

"It's a trick!"

"It—it must be!" muttered Bob Cherry, his teeth chattering. "But—but—but—"

Nugent shuddered.

"Are we going back?" muttered Johnny Bull. "I'm for going on, ghosts or no ghosts!"

"We're going on. Pull on, Pengelly!"

"I'll pull you back to Polpen," said Dick Pengelly hoarsely. "You're not going on after a sight like that?"

"We are! Land us at Pengarth, and you can get back as soon as you like."

Pengelly said no more. He dipped the oars, and the boat ran on into the little cove, and crashed on the pebble ridge banked up by the tide.

The juniors scrambled out.

"If you'd rather come in for the night instead of going back alone, Pengelly—" said Harry Wharton.

Dick Pengelly shuddered.

"Not for a whole fortune, zur!" he answered. "And I beg you to come back with me before worse fall."

"No fear!"

"We're all serene, old top," said Bob. "We're not scared by a practical joker in a fancy dress, done up in phosphorous. We'll jolly well find him out to-morrow and punch his head."

"Of—of course, that's all it was!" said Nugent, with a deep breath.

"Yes, rather."

"But—but it looked—"

"Give the boat a shove off," said Harry, and the boat was pushed off the pebbles. The juniors called good-bye to Pengelly, and stood listening to the oars till the sound died away in the night across the bay. Then they turned to find their way to the House of Pengarth.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

FROM the cove a stair in the rock led upward—great steps a dozen feet wide, rugged and mossy, winding up the steep cliff. It was like the old street of Clovelly on a small scale. The juniors groped their way and found the steps. By this time there was a glimmer of stars in the velvety black of the sky, and the great cliff of Garth was dimly, uncertainly visible. They even thought they could catch a glimpse of the sloping slate roofs and grey walls of the House of Pengarth. Dim and mossy, wet with the spray, and perilous to climb, the rock stair rose before them, and they began to clamber up.

Several of the party had electric torches packed in their bags, but the bags were now reposing at the hotel in Penzance with Skinner. But they had matches, and one was struck occasionally. But it was slowly, and with caution, that they clambered up the rugged, steep rock staircase, hacked out in the living rock centuries before, in the old days of the House of Pengarth.

Their very eagerness to solve the secret of the caves—

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"And I was thinking that we might bring our bikes!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Looks like it, doesn't it?"

Some of the juniors chuckled.

"An aeroplane or two would come in useful," continued Bob. "Why don't they hurry up and invent air-bikes? It's bound to come before long, and they'd be jolly useful here. Still thinking about that chap in fancy dress, Franky?"

Nugent started.

"Well, yes," he said. "I know it was only a trick when I come to think of it. But it was horrible to look at."

"Well, I admit it made me jump," said Bob. "It's a bit of a surprise to have panto stunts sprung on you at night on the Cornish coast. I'd like to meet the merchant who was trying to scare us. I say, Harry, if you're right about some Johnny trying to stop us from getting to Vivian's place—"

"I'm more certain of it than ever," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "That phantom boat business proves it, to my mind."

"Well, then, what a chance the Johnny would have here," said Bob.

"Here?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, on this giddy sky staircase. A rock rolled from the top would smash us all into pancakes. Nowhere to dodge."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"The great pipfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "Your esteemed jokefulness is rather ghastly, my worthy Bob."

"But I'm not joking," said Bob. "It's as I say. A rock rolled down on us would leave only greasy marks to show where we'd been standing."

"Ugh!"

"Bother it!" said Nugent. "Let's hurry!"

"I don't think there's much risk of it," said Harry Wharton. "A rock rolled on us here would kill us, or some of us at least. The man, whoever he is, knows that, too. That means hanging. Ghost stories wouldn't keep the police away from a place where murder was committed. The man knows that, too. The

game is to frighten people away, not to commit a crime that would bring the police on the scene. About the last thing the rotter would do would be to take our lives."

"Well, that's a comfort," grinned Bob. "I was just thinking how it would spoil my best necktie if a ten-ton rock caught me in the neck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sound of laughter rose strangely, eerily, in the gloomy silence. Bob had succeeded in infecting his comrades with his good spirits. The phantom in the boat had not troubled Bob for long; indeed, probably a genuine ghost could not have worried him much, when he was on a holiday, with the keen sea air in his healthy lungs.

As the laugh died away, there came a sound that made the juniors grave again:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was—was that an echo?" exclaimed Nugent.

"These rocks are full of echoes," said Wharton uneasily.

"There it is again!"

"That's not an echo."

Wildly, from the darkness above them, the laugh rang out—a strange, wild laugh, full of mockery.

It rang and echoed among the rocks, and was followed by a heavy silence, through which came the murmur of the surf on the pebbly beach of the cove below.

"I—I say, this is getting too much of a good thing!" exclaimed Bob. "Let's get on, for goodness' sake!"

The juniors clambered on up the rough rocky steps, and came out on the cliff at last. From where they stood, level ground stretched back to higher cliffs, and on the level stood the House of Pengarth, backing against a wall of granite that was twenty feet higher than the highest chimney.

"Well, there's the house," said Nugent, with a sigh of relief.

"No blooming lights!" grumbled Sir Jimmy.

There was a wall surrounding the house and gardens—or what had once been gardens, now a tangled and neglected mass. The wall was broken down in a dozen places, and where the gate had been, only rusty iron hinges hung to a stone pillar.

"Wants some repairing, Jimmy, if you're ever going to settle down here," murmured Bob Cherry. "Pity I didn't bring my tool-box!"

The juniors passed through the gateway, and up a wide path covered with sand and pebbles and weeds. It led them to an ancient arched porch, with an iron-studded door.

"Ere we are!" said Sir Jimmy.

"I shouldn't wonder if Keeley's given us up and gone to bed," said Harry Wharton. "They go to roost early in these parts. Anyhow, we've got to get in."

There was no sign of a bell or a knocker; but Sir Jimmy picked up a fragment of rock and hammered on the door.

Bang, bang, bang!

The crashing on the door rang and echoed through the old house, with a din that might have awakened the Seven Sleepers.

But there was no gleam of light; no sound of footsteps within. As Sir Jimmy ceased to hammer, silence followed when the echoes had died away.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood and blinked at one another in the dim starlight, which was growing lighter and

clearer now. It was a fine evening, and one by one the stars were coming out over the sea and the cliffs.

"Well, this beats it!" said Bob. "We've got here, but we can't get in. This door would take some busting."

"It's too rotten bad," said Sir Jimmy. "You fellows will be sorry you came 'ere for your 'oliday!"

"Rot!" said Bob. "I'm jolly glad we came, for one. This is a bit more exciting than Merry Margate or Sunny Southend. Nobody's ever seen a ghost at Margate, or a spook at Southend."

"This does seem a place for spooks, and no mistake!" said Harry Wharton. "I'd swear I saw someone move just now—yonder in the garden, where those rose-trees are broken down."

"A jolly old Spanish sailor, I suppose," grinned Bob. "Where did you see him?"

He picked up a fragment of rock.

Wharton pointed out the place where rose-trees, that had once been trained over a stone wall, grew in a tangled stack, evidently neglected for many a long year, but growing luxuriantly as everything grows in that favoured corner of Great Britain.

Bob Cherry stared hard at the dim mass of tendrils and flowers and foliage. He caught a movement where it stirred, and with unerring aim he hurled the fragment of rock.

Crash!

There was a wild howl.

"Carambo!"

Then a rustle, and silence.

"My only hat!" breathed Bob. "It hit somebody—and—and he cussed in Spanish!"

"Come on!" muttered Wharton. And he rushed to the spot, with his chums at his heels.

But there was nothing to be seen. If anyone had been there, he had vanished now.

"Well, it wasn't a ghost that howled; a ghost wouldn't mind a biff or two," said Bob. "You chuck a thing at a ghost, and it goes straight through him—at least, it would if there were any ghosts. If that johnny was a Spaniard he was a live Spaniard."

"But how could a foreigner be hanging about these parts, without everybody knowing it?" said Nugent. "Every stranger in a place like this is observed at once!"

"Chap can talk in Spanish without being a Spaniard," said Bob shrewdly. "He's learned some words to keep up the tale of the drowned Spanish sailors."

"It's impossible! But—"

"Well, let's get in, somehow," said Bob, and the juniors went back to the door and hammered on it.

It seemed impossible that the man Keeley was no where about the place, as he had received strict orders from Sir Reginald Brooke to make all ready for the reception of the Greyfriars holiday party. It was possible that he was asleep or deaf. The juniors hammered on the door till their arms were tired.

"We've got to get in," said Sir Jimmy. "Let's try a winder."

The juniors moved round the building, looking for a practicable window. They found a little diamond-paned casement, deep in the stone wall, standing wide open.

"Might have thought of this sooner," said Johnny Bull. "We can get in here easily enough."

The juniors stared in at the casement. It gave a view, in the daytime, of the old hall of the House of Pengarth. They

made out a faint red glow at the upper end of the long hall, which looked as if a fire had been lighted there and had almost died out. But there was no other light to be seen.

"I'm going in, and chance it!" said Johnny Bull.

And the sturdy junior climbed in at the window. He felt his way carefully, and dropped inside.

"All serene!" he said. "Follow on."

The rest of the party climbed through and joined Johnny Bull in the flagged hall. Together they advanced up the long apartment, and reached the fire, which was of logs and driftwood, on a huge open hearth with a vast chimney. Harry Wharton stirred it together with his foot, and a blaze shot up, strangely illuminating the shadowy old hall. It showed high old walls and a vaulted ceiling of carved oak, two black oak staircases, and the remains of antlers and other hunting trophies fastened to the walls, and high, deep windows. And it showed, as Wharton looked round, a still figure that lay on the flags of the floor—a human form stretched motionless, almost at the feet of the juniors.

Then the blaze died down and left them in the darkness again.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Enter "Black Keeley!"

"WHAT—what was that?" Bob Cherry's voice was subdued, shaking. Even Bob's spirits were dashed at last, for the moment, at least.

Wharton drew a deep breath. His own nerves were shaken, and he realised it, and pulled himself together.

"It's a body!" breathed Sir Jimmy, in trembling tones.

"It's a man," said Wharton. "Keeley most likely. He—he may be asleep."

With a firm hand Wharton raked together the fire, and added fuel from a stack of dry twigs. The fire blazed up again, and burned brightly, fully lighting the old hall.

Then he knelt down beside the motionless figure.

It was that of a man of lean but muscular build, with a leathery, weather-beaten face, and a black beard. His eyes were closed, and his bearded lips hard set.

"He—he's not dead?" whispered Nugent.

"No. He seems insensible. It's not sleep. Fainted, perhaps," said Harry Wharton.

"Why should he faint?"

"It must be Keeley," said Sir Jimmy. "There wouldn't be anybody else 'ere. I think a bloke might faint, being all alone in this 'orrid place. P'raps he thought it was ghosts when we 'ammered at the door."

There was a low groan from the man on the floor.

His eyes opened—black eyes that glittered strangely in the light of the leaping fire.

"It's all right," said Wharton reassuringly. "We're the chaps from Greyfriars. I suppose you're Keeley?"

"That is my name."



The blaze from the fire strangely illumined the shadowy old hall, and it showed, as the Greyfriars juniors looked round, a still figure that lay on the flags of the floor—a human form stretched motionless, almost at their feet. (See Chapter 5.)

—all but costs them their lives! See how they escape!

The man sat up, resting a little on Wharton's strong arm. He cast sudden and fearful glances round him into the dancing shadows cast along the walls as the blaze rose and fell.

"You've seen him?" he whispered.

"Him? Whom?"

The man stared at him.

"Ain't you seen anything?"

"We've seen a good many things on the way here," said Wharton. "There was somebody dodging about the garden before we got in."

"There was no living man here but myself, sir," said Keeley. "You didn't by chance see—" He hesitated.

"What, then?" asked Harry.

"The Spanish captain."

"Not here, at all events," said Harry.

"Do you mean to say that you have seen anything of the kind? Is that why you fainted?"

Keeley rose to his feet. A dogged look came over his rugged, bearded face.

"I don't reckon I fainted!" he said. "I s'pose I was knocked over. It ain't the first awful thing I've seen here, sir—and heard, too. But they won't frighten me away! I've lived here forty years, man and boy, looking after my old master's property, and, ghosts or no ghosts, I'm sticking to it!"

But while he was speaking his rough hands were trembling, and he cast wild glances over either shoulder into the shadows.

"But what happened exactly?" asked Bob.

Keeley shivered.

"I'd given you gentlemen up, as it was so late," he said. "I let the fire go down, and I was going to bed, when there came a knock at the door. I reckoned it was you gentlemen, after all, and I was going to the door when he came in."

"The Spanish captain?"

"Yes!" said Keeley in a shaking voice. "And the door never opened! Right at me he came, and I reckon I fainted then! It's the first time I'd seen him so close!"

"You really believe—" exclaimed Wharton incredulously.

"You young gentlemen won't believe it till you see it!" said Keeley. "But if you stay in the House of Pengarth, you'll believe more in a few days than you ever did before!"

"It's nerves, living alone in this old, lonely place," said Bob Cherry. "I wonder you can stand it."

Keeley made no reply to that.

"Well, let's get some lights and look

at the place," said Sir Jimmy. "We ain't going to be scared off—that's a cert!"

"Which of you young gentlemen is Sir James Vivian?" asked Keeley, scanning the juniors in the firelight.

"Little me!" grinned Sir Jimmy.

"I'm glad to see you here, sir," said the man respectfully. "I never thought the time would come when I should welcome a Vivian to my old master's house—but I'm glad, sir, if you'll allow me to say so. I hope, sir, you'll have a pleasant holiday here, and I'm sure I'll do my best. Everything Sir Reginald ordered for you is here and ready. I'll get lights."

He moved away and disappeared down a stone passage.

"Seems a decent old chap," murmured Bob Cherry. "But I should think he'd go potty, staying up here by himself. No wonder he fancies that he sees ghosts!"

When Keeley returned he made no further allusion to the phantom, and seemed quite self-controlled and quiet, and extremely respectful in his manner to his new master and his master's guests.

A large petrol-lamp was pumped and lighted, and filled the old hall with a light equal to electricity. It had a very enlivening effect on the Greyfriars juniors, and their faces brightened. They piled logs on the fire, and made it roar with a hollow boom up the old stone chimney. Warm as the day had been, the night was chilly in the house high up the cliff, facing the winds of the Atlantic.

Keeley moved about actively. Evidently a good many preparations had been made. He lighted the juniors up one of the old oak staircases, and showed them their rooms, in every one of which a log-fire was laid ready on the hearth, and was now lighted. The appointments of the rooms were by no means luxurious, but everything that was necessary was there, and the juniors could guess that Sir Reginald Brooke had given extensive orders in Penzance for the goods to be delivered at Pengarth before the holidays began. Old Sir Reginald was not a man whose orders could be neglected, and it was evident that Keeley had carried them out to the letter—whatever his personal feelings may have been about the invasion of the House of Pengarth by the Greyfriars party.

With fires and lighted lamps in the bed-rooms, and the huge log-fire blazing in the hall below, the House of Pen-

garth presented a much more cheerful aspect, and the juniors' spirits rose.

Wharton explained to Keeley how the baggage had been left behind, and the man nodded thoughtfully.

"I wondered why you didn't arrive, sir," he said. "I never thought of a tree falling on the road, of course. I'm glad you got here safely, sir. I'm happy and contented in my way at this old place, but it does me good to see young faces round me, if you'll allow me to say so, sir."

"Glad to hear it!" said Wharton, with a smile. "Don't you ever have a friend up from Polpen to keep you company?"

"They wouldn't come up here for love or money, sir! They're too afraid of the dead Spaniards!"

"Do you know anybody in the district who speaks Spanish?" asked Harry.

Keeley shook his head.

"There ain't anybody, to my knowledge, sir," he said. "All the folk in these parts speak English or a Cornish dialect, and there's no foreigners that I've heard of."

"The man who was dodging in the garden called out in Spanish when a stone was chucked at him."

"You are not the first, sir, who's heard the voices of the dead Spaniards," said Keeley. "You can hear them whispering in the gardens at night, and down by the cove they call across the sea. I know you think it's fancy, sir; but ask any man in Polpen, or as far down the coast as Trevenna. But it's not good to think about it!"

And Keeley moved away to bring in the supper. A table was set in the hall near the leaping fire, and it was laid with a very ample supper of cold viands that had evidently been sent to the house packed in hampers. But the juniors were hungry by this time, and they enjoyed their supper. Keeley retiring to the kitchen and leaving them to themselves.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, as he negotiated a cold chicken, "it's a bit of a queer holiday; but we're not going to starve, that's clear! And I'm jolly well going to enjoy the House of Pengarth—ghosts and all!"

"Ear, ear!" said Sir Jimmy. "I say, that Keeley seems a useful sort of bloke. He's been living here so long, I figured it out he mightn't like us coves butting in; but you can see he does like it."

"I should jolly well think so!" said Bob. "If I were living up here on my own I'd be glad to see even Billy Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From somewhere in the recesses of the old stone hall came an echoing laugh:

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors started and looked round. Only themselves were in the hall, and that strange, wild laugh came from they knew not where. They looked at one another across the table, and supper was resumed in silence.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Horror of the Night!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. went to bed that night in a somewhat subdued mood.

The strange mysteries of the House of Pengarth were beginning, perhaps, to have effect upon them.

RESULT OF

MAGNET Limerick Competition (No. 14).

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

MARY KYDD, 79, Guthrie Port, Arbroath, whose line was—

"There it is"—and a clothes one he shows 'er!

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

G. SEARCH, 64, Silvester Road, E. Dulwich, S.E. 22.

SID SMITH, 4, Chipley Street, New Cross, S.E. 14.

HAROLD SAXON, Enfield Trades & Labour Institute, Enfield.

When two highwaymen "hunt" the same territory there's—

That the "ghost of Pengarth" was some kind of trickery. Harry Wharton felt assured; he could scarcely believe anything else.

But why was such trickery being played? For years Polpen and the vicinity had been scared by ghost stories of Pengarth. It was not merely on account of the Greyfriars party that these eerie tricks were played.

Someone, or more than one, desired to keep strangers away from the old house; but why?

That was a perplexing problem.

And all the time Keeley lived in the house; he, at least, was not kept away by the phantom voices and gliding ghosts.

It was natural that the thought should cross Wharton's mind that the old man had had a hand in the ghost trickery. But it did not seem likely when he reflected upon it.

Keeley had been found in a dead faint on the floor of the old hall, frightened into unconsciousness by his superstitious fears. That, of course, might have been a part of the trickery; certainly the strange circumstances of their arrival had given the juniors a thrill of horror.

But why should the man play such a part?

Living alone in that dismal, shadowed house, it might have been supposed that he would be eager for almost any company. The ghosts of the dead Spaniards kept away all the neighbours, and left Keeley in grim solitude. Surely he would have liked the fishermen to come up to the house sometimes to break the solitary monotony. Why should he want to keep them away?

There seemed no reason; and the old man, too, had been so attentive and civil that Wharton felt a little ashamed of doubting him.

And that eerie laugh at supper could not have been a trick played by Keeley. When the juniors heard it in the hall, Keeley was in the kitchen at the end of a long stone passage; the juniors had heard him moving about there.

Was there, then, some other person hidden in the ancient recesses of the House of Pengarth, seeking to scare away the newcomers?

But who, and why?

Harry Wharton remembered the incident of the attempted kidnapping of Sir Jimmy Vivian. That, he believed, had been designed to keep the party from visiting Pengarth.

The ghost business was the same game, played by the same hand, it appeared probable; but why, why?

What was the mystery of Pengarth; who was interested in keeping it clear of all visitors?

Harry Wharton puzzled over that problem for a long time before he fell asleep, but he found no answer to it; and he slept at last, tired with the experiences of the day.

The juniors had arranged to fasten their doors that night. There were no keys to the locks on the old oaken doors; the locks themselves were rusted with age, and useless. But it was easy to jam the door, which opened inwards, with wedges, and this the juniors had arranged to do. It gave them a greater sense of security.

Harry Wharton slept soundly enough, but his slumber was visited by dreams. In the visions of the night he saw again the phosphorescent figure of the Spanish captain floating through the darkness in the phantom boat. He seemed to hear the voices of the ghostly sailors calling,



Crash! The door flew open and Harry Wharton sprang through, Bob Cherry holding the lamp to light him as he went. Wharton was prepared to use the axe if he found an enemy. But the light showed only Sir Vivian crouching in the room. (See Chapter 7.)

calling from the depths of their watery grave, so far from their native land.

The calling changed to shrieking—wild shrieking. In his dream Wharton heard the shrieks, sharp and shrill, and full of terror. He awoke suddenly, and the shrieks were still ringing in his ears.

He started up in bed.

Loud through the silent night came the shrieks, loud and shrill, and they came from close at hand.

It was one of his companions who was shrieking; Wharton realised that with a thrill of horror. He leaped from the bed and ran to the door of his room.

He jerked away the wedge and tore the door open. Louder sounded the shrieking voice in the chilly stone corridor. It came from Sir Jimmy's room.

Wharton ran along to the door of Vivian's room, groping and blundering in the darkness. He could recognise Vivian's voice now.

"Oh! 'Elp! 'Elp! 'Elp!"

Wharton shoved at the door in the darkness. It did not move. He remembered that it would be fastened inside.

"Jimmy!" he shouted.

"'Elp!"

"Jimmy, open the door! I can't get in."

"He's got me! Oh, 'elp!" shrieked Vivian from within.

There was the sound of a struggle.

By this time Wharton's comrades were roused, and out in the corridor Bob Cherry had lighted a lamp.

Wharton drove his weight against the

bed-room door, but it did not move. The wedge held it securely within.

Shriek on shriek rang from the room. "We've got to get the door open!" panted Wharton. "Something to smash the lock—"

"Here's Keeley!" gasped Bob.

The old man with the black beard was hurrying up the stairs with a lighted lantern in his hand.

His face was startled.

Wharton caught his arm.

"Get something to smash in the door, quick!" he shouted.

"'Elp!" came Sir Jimmy's shriek.

Keeley's knees knocked together.

"Can't you open the door, sir?" he stammered.

"It's fastened inside."

"Then there can't be anybody in the room with Sir James, sir. There ain't no other door."

"'Elp!" yelled Sir Jimmy. "He's choking me! 'elp!" Shriek on shriek followed.

The juniors gave one another ghastly looks.

Who—what was in that room with the schoolboy baronet, a room with only one door, which was fastened on the inside, and could not be opened? The window, as they knew, looked on a sheer wall fifty feet above the gardens.

Wharton pulled himself together.

Keeley, tottering against the wall, looked helpless. Wharton did not heed him. He caught the lantern from him and rushed down the stairs and sought for a weapon to break in the door. There was an axe in the kitchen, and

—bound to be friction! Read "Rivals of the Road!" It's next!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 811.

Wharton tore up the stairs with it in his hand.

"Hold the light, Frank. Stand clear!"

Wharton swung the axe with both hands.

Crash, crash, crash!

The rusty, old hinges, the worm-eaten oak, did not stand up long against that furious attack.

Crash, crash!

The door creaked, and groaned, and gave. The shrieks in the room died away, followed by a low moaning and mumbling.

Crash!

The door flew in, and Harry Wharton sprang through the opening, Bob Cherry holding the lamp to light him as he went.

The axe was still in Wharton's hands, and he was prepared to use it if he found an enemy in the apartment.

But the light showed only Sir Jimmy Vivian, crouching and shuddering, in the middle of the room, at a distance from his disordered bed.

The juniors crowded in; the lamp and the lantern together illumined every corner of the room, gleaming on the black oak wainscots.

"Jimmy!"

Vivian groaned.

"He's gone!" he said faintly. His fingers were at his throat. "I—I— Oh, I'm so glad you've come! Oh!"

Johnny Bull raised him up and helped him to the bed. Sir Jimmy sat down there weakly, his fingers still at his throat. Johnny held him with an arm about his shoulders, while Sir Jimmy shuddered and moaned; and the rest of the juniors searched the apartment in every recess. But there was nothing to be discovered, no sign of an intruder. They gathered about Sir Jimmy again with white faces.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Looking After Sir Jimmy!

IT was some time before Sir Jimmy Vivian was calm enough to speak; and the juniors did not press him with questions. They waited. But the schoolboy baronet's self-possession returned at last, in the light, and with his friends round him.

Vivian looked up at them with a haggard face at last.

"It was awful!" he muttered weakly.

"But what happened, old chap?" asked Wharton.

"You won't leave me alone agin?"

"No fear! We'll all keep together for the rest of the night," said Harry. "Perhaps we ought to have done that from the first."

"I wish we 'ad!" groaned Sir Jimmy. "Oh, it was 'orrid!"

"But what—"

"I was fast asleep, I think," said Vivian, with a shudder, "and then I woke up and felt a hand like ice—a hand like a dead man's hand—touching my face!" A long shudder shook him from head to foot.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

It was no wonder that the hapless boy had been scared by such an experience, and Wharton would have given a great deal to get within hitting distance of the dastard who had played such a trick.

"And then——" said Bob.

"I was dragged out of bed," said Sir Jimmy. "He got 'old of my throat, and was choking me!"

"But you were able to call out," said Nugent.

"Yes; I s'pose I hollered a good bit,

and made a fearful row," said Sir Jimmy. "But I can feel his fingers on my throat still. He was jest choking me!"

"It was a trick," said Wharton. "He wanted to frighten you, kid, not to choke you. If he'd really been choking you, you couldn't have called out as you did!"

Vivian nodded thoughtfully.

"I s'pose that's so, but it felt like it," he said. "He was a strong brute, whoever he was. I was 'elpless in his hands. 'Ow did he get in here when the door was fastened?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I—I suppose you're sure it wasn't a nightmare, Jimmy?" asked Frank Nugent doubtfully.

"Course I am!" exclaimed Sir Jimmy indignantly. "I tell you I can feel his 'ands on my throat now. I wish we hadn't never come 'ere for the holidays."

"That's what he wants you to wish, I fancy!" said Wharton, between his teeth. "It's a trick to frighten us away."

"You—you don't think it was a blooming ghost?" faltered Sir Jimmy.

"Rubbish!"

"Then 'ow did he get in?"

Wharton cast a glance round at the black, oak-panelled walls.

"There's another way in, of course," he said. "Lots of these old buildings have secret passages. One of these panels opens, I suppose."

"Of course!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"That would be it."

"Jolly unlucky for Vivian that he happened to be in this room," said Johnny Bull. "If there's a secret door to this room, whoever was in this room would have got that visit."

"I fancy Vivian was picked out because he's the giddy host," said Harry. "If he could be scared away, I suppose we should all go."

"But how could the man—whoever he is—know that Vivian was in this room?" asked Bob.

"Because——"

Wharton paused abruptly. Keeley was looking in at the doorway. Keeley had arranged the rooms; it was owing to his arrangements that Sir Jimmy Vivian was in the room with a secret door to it. Wharton's eyes searched the face of the black-bearded man with new suspicion.

But Keeley only looked startled and scared and concerned. His hands were trembling, his bearded lips quivering. If he was playing a part, there was no doubt that he was playing it well.

"Look here, Keeley!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You must know this old place inside out. Is there any secret door to this room?"

"Not that I've ever heard of, sir," answered Keeley.

"Have you ever found any secret passages in the house?"

"There's nothing of the kind, sir, that I know of."

"Well, there certainly is something of the kind, and we're jolly well going to find it to-morrow!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming. "There's some scoundrel lurking about this place, trying to frighten us away, and we're going to rout him out!"

"It's the dead Spaniards sir, that haunt the House of Pengarth!" said the old man in a trembling voice.

"Rubbish!"

"The rubbishfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "To-morrow we shall find the esteemed scoundrel, and make an honourable example of him."

"And to-night we'll all camp in here," said Bob Cherry.

"That's the idea," said Harry, "and I hope the rotter will come back, with all of us here to tackle him!"

"No such luck!" said Bob.

"Let's get the things here," said Harry.

Keeley lent his aid at once, and the beds were carried one by one into Sir Jimmy's room. The bedsteads were too heavy to be shifted; but the juniors were prepared to camp on the floor.

Keeley left them, shaking his head and muttering as he went; and Wharton closed the broken door as well as he could. The lamp was left burning.

But it was long before the juniors were able to sleep.

They were convinced that there was trickery at the back of the strange manifestations in the House of Pengarth; but at the same time, the solitude and silence of the lonely old house did not fail to have effect on them. They were all longing for morning.

"This ain't much of a holiday for you blokes!" Sir Jimmy said dismally. "Look here, I'll tell you what! Let's clear out of it to-morrow, and get over to Penzance. We can have a jolly time there."

"And let that rotter frighten us away!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Well, I'm thinking of you blokes," said Sir Jimmy. "What sort of a summer holiday is this 'ere?"

"Never mind the holiday!" said Wharton. "There's some rascal determined to keep people away from this house—even the owner. Let the holiday wait—while we deal with him. We're not going to let you be driven out of your own house by dirty tricks, Jimmy!"

"No jolly fear!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "Besides, it will be no end of a game hunting that rascal out!"

"The gamefulness will be terrific!"

"Besides, there's something underhand going on here," said Harry Wharton. "All this trouble wouldn't be taken for nothing. There's some secret in the place that they're trying to keep—something that won't bear the light."

"But what on earth——" said Bob Cherry.

"I don't know—but I'm going to know. We've got to get right to the bottom of the matter before we leave the House of Pengarth. You're willing to stay here if we do, Jimmy?"

"Yes, rather! I'd rather see it through," said the schoolboy baronet. "I was thinking of you and your holiday!"

"Oh, blow the holiday! That's settled, then."

A low, mocking, eerie laugh echoed through the room. The juniors started and peered about them.

"Wha-what was that?" stammered Sir Jimmy.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"It was that trickster again—hidden behind the wall somewhere," he said. "There's a secret passage, of course. It would be a wonder if there were no secret passages in an old place like this. And we're going to find them to-morrow."

The juniors settled down to sleep at last, with the light burning. Once they were asleep they did not awaken again till dawn was glimmering in at the window, and the lamp burned pale in the rising sunlight.

The first night at the House of Pengarth had ended, and it had been a

if you want a thrilling week-end—

terrible night. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking pale and almost haggard as they went down for a dip in the sea before breakfast. But a swim in the sunny waters of the cove, and the keen sea breeze that came in from the Atlantic, freshened and invigorated them wonderfully, and they came back to the house with keen appetites, and an ample breakfast completed their restoration.

The horror of the night faded from their minds, and in the sunny day they were keen and eager to tackle the task of hunting out the mysterious enemy that lurked in the dim recesses of the House of Pengarth.

LOOK! THE TREAT OF THE YEAR!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Knows Better!

"SKINNER!" said Bob Cherry.

It was noon when Skinner arrived at the House of Pengarth. He came by boat across the bay, and the baggage, which had been brought to Polpen, was landed at the rock staircase.

Then the boat pulled back across the bay, and Skinner was left standing on the rocks.

Harry Wharton came down from the house to meet him.

All that morning the juniors had spent in exploring the House of Pengarth, in hunting for traces of the unknown enemy.

They had found nothing.

Sir Jimmy's room had been searched and searched again, the walls tapped, the floor examined, even the ceiling scanned, but no trace of a secret opening had been discovered.

The juniors were disappointed and puzzled, and towards noon they gave it up for a run along the sunny shore before lunch.

Then they sighted Skinner. Skinner was looking cheery as Harry Wharton met him on the rock stairway. Evidently he had passed a more peaceful night in Penzance than Harry Wharton & Co. had passed on the Garth cliffs.

"Well, here we are again!" said Skinner. "Had a good time?"

"Rather an exciting one," said Harry.

"Seen any ghosts?"

"Lots!"

Skinner chuckled.

"I've been hearing ghost stories in Polpen, and in the boat coming over," he said. "Sort of stuff they keep for innocent strangers—what?"

"They believe in the stuff themselves," said Harry; "and it's not surprising, considering the things that happen here."

"Ghosts of jolly old Spaniards—what?" yawned Skinner. "Sailors drowned in the Armada days? Rather too thin for me. I suppose you fellows have been scared out of your wits already?"

Skinner's manner was not pleasant. It became still less pleasant when he joined the party at lunch, and heard the story of the strange happenings of the night.

Skinner chuckled with great merriment.

"You shouldn't have these nightmares, and frighten the poor fellows, Vivian," he said.

"It wasn't a nightmare?" growled Sir Jimmy.

"What had you had for supper?"

"Oh, rats!"

"There's something going on here, Skinner," said Harry Wharton quietly. "It's not ghosts. But somebody got into Vivian's room last night, somehow."

"How?" asked Skinner.

"We haven't found that out—yet."

"Dreams, old man—just nightmares," said Skinner airily.

"I s'pose I couldn't dream a feller holding my throat with both hands, and dragging me out of bed?" snapped Sir Jimmy.

"Of course you could! I had an elephant kneeling on the back of my neck one night," said Skinner. "I'd had lobster late. My dear kids, you've let yourselves be frightened by ghost stories; and after that you were certain to see things and hear things."

"We weren't frightened, you cheeky ass!" said Bob Cherry, breathing hard.

"Oh, no; of course not!" agreed Skinner. "Only a little fanciful."

"There's some secret way of getting into Sir Jimmy's room," said Frank Nugent. "That accounts for it."

"Looked for it?" asked Skinner.

"All the morning."

"Found it?"

"No."

"You never will," said Skinner cheerily. "You don't want to hunt in Jimmy's room; you want to look into your nervous systems for the root of the trouble. Take my word for it."

"Look here—!" roared Jimmy Vivian.

He broke off suddenly, remembering that Skinner was his guest. To a guest he could not talk as he would have talked to a cheeky Removite at Greyfriars.

"Well?" said Skinner, smiling.

"Oh, nothin'!" mumbled Sir Jimmy.

"Don't mind me speaking plain," urged Skinner blandly. "You want to pull yourselves together, that's all. Pity I wasn't with you last night. You

wanted a little cool, solid common-sense, that's all. Don't you think so?"

"You would have been with us if you hadn't been such a rotten slacker!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Thanks!" smiled Skinner. "Don't work off your rattled nerves on me, old chap."

"My nerves aren't rattled!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Sounds as if they might be," said Skinner, still bland. "You all look a bit peaky. I'll look after you to-night; and if the ghosts walk, I'll make 'em walk off."

"You cheeky ass!"

"Thanks, again!"

ON SALE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS NEXT WEEK!

Skinner persisted in being bland and genial. Doubtless he realised that that was the easiest way of irritating his holiday companions. Sir Jimmy was already deeply regretting that he had asked Skinner to form one of the party, but it was rather late to think of that now.

As a matter of fact, the deserted, solitary House of Pengarth did not come up to Skinner's expectations, and he did not seem likely to get quite so good a holiday as he had anticipated; so there was a good deal of annoyance in Skinner's breast. He would have preferred a seaside resort, with bathing-machines, a line of big hotels, a band and a promenade, and perhaps he had expected to find something of the kind at or near Pengarth. The wild, magnificent scenery of the Cornish coast did not appeal to Skinner; he would have given all the scenery in Cornwall for an hour at the cinema.

Skinner did not think that he was going to enjoy his holiday very much, the only consolation being that it would cost him nothing. He found some solace in chipping and irritating the chums of the Remove.

It made the Famous Five very sore to be chipped by Skinner on such a subject as "nerves." Skinner was very far from being a hero; but in the sunny daytime he was quite airy on the subject of ghosts; it was probable that he would change his tune after nightfall. It pleased Skinner to persist that the juniors had been scared by ghost stories into fancying things, and that was very hard for the Famous Five to endure with patience.

For Sir Jimmy's sake, however, they were as patient as possible. They were Skinner's fellow-guests at the House of Pengarth, and they did not want to distress Vivian by handling their fellow-guest.

Skinner ran on in the same airy strain during lunch, greatly delighted by the gathering frowns of the juniors and the thunder that grew in the brow of Johnny Bull.

"So you don't believe that anything happened here last night, Skinner?" said Bob Cherry at last.

Skinner smiled.

"I believe that Vivian had a bad attack of nightmare," he answered. "I

(Continued on page 16.)

THERE'S NOTHING TO BEAT



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—What's the matter with the "Boys' Friend"?

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 811.



How Do You Keep Fit?



Different people have different methods, which are described below.

BOB CHERRY:

I keep fit by taking my outdoor exercise in hefty doses. I don't believe in stuffy studies; and when I'm compelled to stay indoors I always see that the windows are wide open. As a result, I have been dubbed a "crank" and a fresh-air fiend; but fancy names don't worry this child! I still maintain that fresh air goes a long way towards physical fitness.

BILLY BUNTER:

The surest way to keep fit is to take plenty of murrishment at frekwent intervals. That's what I do. I always carry a tin of beef cubes in my pocket, and I swallow a duzen or so whenever "that sinking feeling" comes over me. The human engine will always keep going so long as you feed it with plenty of fuel. But if you go without grub, you must eggpect to feel out of sorts and below pa. A light snack every half-hour will keep the spark of life flickering.

HAROLD SKINNER:

Whenever I feel depressed or run down I always smoke a Flor de Cabbagio cigar. Its mild fumes have a soothing effect, and my drooping spirits quickly revive. In addition, I find that a lively game of "nap" or "poker" always keeps me in fine fettle.

(It pleases Master Skinner to be funny; but if ever I catch him smoking cigars or playing cards I shall feel inclined to skin a Skinner! No sensible fellow will need to be told that smoking, in any form, is injurious to health.—Ed.)

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

I spend half an hour each morning knocking spots off the punching-ball in the gym. My biceps are as hard as iron, and I'm in first-class condition. If there's a more beefy and burly fellow than me in the Greyfriars Remove, produce him!

DICKY NUGENT:

I never take any trubble about keeping fit. I am far more konserned about the state of my exchekker than the state of my health. If you never worry about your health you'll always be fit; but the moment you start dosing yourself with fizicks and tonnicks, your health brakes down, and you become a nervuss wreck. Live a natcheral life, and eat and drink
(Continued in the next column.)

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

"HE who hath health is rich," runs the ancient proverb.

Bob Cherry interrupts me to say that I'm always hurling stale proverbs at the heads of my readers. But a proverb is very appropriate, and sometimes true—though not always.

I noticed in a recent issue of that lively and laughable journal, "Billy Bunter's Weekly," that several contributors stated they would rather be wealthy than healthy. What on earth could they have been thinking about? It's jolly nice to have plenty of dollars to throw about, but how can you enjoy being wealthy if you're a nervous wreck, or a martyr to indigestion, or a constant sufferer of aches and pains? Personally, I'd rather be a healthy pauper than a wealthy invalid. But tastes differ.

The majority of schoolboys enjoy good health. If they don't it is generally their own fault. A fellow who shuts himself up in his study and never plays games can't expect to feel fit. Neither can a fellow who smokes in secret.

You will find a good many laughs in this issue, for our cheery contributors can squeeze humour out of every subject they handle. Even if this was a Special Funeral Number, I guarantee it would not be depressing.

HOW DO YOU KEEP FIT?

(Continued from the previous column.)

and sleep as much as you want to, and you'll be as fit as a sandboy, and as happy as a fiddle!

ALONZO TODD:

How do I keep fit? Let me tell those who scoff and sneer at the gentle summer exercise of catching beautiful butterflies that there's more in it than meets the eye. What do I do in the winter? I read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the enlightening works of the learned gentleman, Professor Balmcrumpet. Thus do I keep fit mentally, which is just as important as taking physical exercise.

WUN LUNG:

Me keepee fit by turning somelsaults at frequent occasions—to shake up my blains, as Bob Chelly puts it. Then again me velly good in the gym. Me climbee up the lopes, me climbee up wall-bars, me glasp the trapeze lings, and— (Then you ling off, old son. Time and tide wait for no man. And neither does the printer.—Ed.)

MR. PROUT:

There is no need for me to answer this question, because I am never "run down"—except when Coker happens to be coming along behind me on his motor-cycle!

DICK PENFOLD:

I've found a way of keeping fit, A way that's absolutely "IF." I get up long before the lark And then go swimming in the Sark. Swimming (the healthiest sport, they say) Brings every muscle into play. And when I've swum a mile or so I feel a fresh, delightful glow In every fibre, every limb; There's nothing like a morning swim!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

I contrives to keep fit by balancing hefty trunks and portmanteaus on me broad back. They sort of weighs me down, and gives me "that crashin' feeling." The amount of luggage I has to cart through the Close each day is well-nigh unbelievable. I'm a human pantechnicon, as ever was! When the young gents of Greyfriars wants any furniture removed they never sends for a furniture-van. They sends for me!

THE HEAD:

I feel that gentle exercise with a birch-rod is a very effective way of keeping fit. There were no less than three public floggings this morning, and I have felt in excellent condition all day!

Laugh and grow fat—read our supplements!



"W. G. Bunter, Greyfriars, Friardale.
—Arriving Greyfriars about three.—
UNCLE."

Billy Bunter blinked at that telegram in dismay. He took it for granted that the message came from his Uncle Robert. And he groaned aloud.

Uncle Robert was a very stern old gentleman, who was furious with Bunter for having got such a shocking school report at the end of last term. He had promised to make things warm for the fat junior when next he visited Greyfriars.

And he was coming this very day. At three o'clock, or thereabouts, his portly and ample form would appear at the school gates.

"It's awful!" groaned Billy Bunter. "Uncle Robert will go for me bald-headed! I—I can't face it. I must dodge the old buffer somehow!"

It was Wednesday afternoon, and it would have been a simple plan for Billy Bunter to vanish out of gates, and not show up again till looking-up, by which time his uncle would have gone. Unfortunately, however, Bunter happened to be "gated." He was not allowed to leave the school premises.

Bunter put on his thinking cap, and presently a desperate scheme occurred to him. He produced a piece of chalk from his pocket, and proceeded to whiten his podgy cheeks. Then he rolled away to the sanny.

The matron was in the school surgery,

bandaging a damaged finger for Dicky Nugent, when Billy Bunter came on the scene.

The manner of Billy's arrival was dramatic, to say the least of it. He staggered a few paces, and then fell, then he scrambled to his feet, and staggered forward again.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the matron. "What ever is the matter with you, Master Bunter?"

"Yow! I feel faint!" bellowed Bunter. He seemed to have plenty of lung-power for a fellow who was on the verge of fainting. "My head's going round and round, and my brain's in a whirl. Oh dear!"

The matron surveyed the fat junior in alarm.

"You certainly seem very pale," she said. "What has caused this sudden faintness and dizziness, do you think?"

"Lack of grub, ma'am!" said Bunter promptly. "I haven't had a square meal for at least two hours. Not to put too fine a point on it, ma'am, I'm starving!"

"Nonsense!" said the matron. "I am inclined to believe that you are suffering from too much food, instead of too little. I will prepare a bed for you at once, and I have no doubt you will feel better by this evening."

So Bunter was bundled off to bed. And there he lay, groaning so piteously that the matron became really alarmed.

"Are you in pain, Master Bunter?" she asked.

"Yow! Yes. I'm racked and torn

with pain in about a dozen different places!" groaned Bunter.

"Then I had better send for the doctor—"

"No, no!" said Bunter hastily. "The pains will pass off by this evening, I expect. But I'm much too ill to see anybody. You won't let anybody come in, will you, ma'am?"

"Of course not!" promised the matron.

"It's just possible that an uncle of mine may be coming this afternoon. If he comes poking his nose in here, warn him off. Tell him I'm in a critical condition."

"I shall not tell him that," said the matron. "It would not be true. But I will tell him you are suffering from violent pains, and must not be disturbed."

"Oh, good!"

Billy Bunter converted a chuckle into a groan in the nick of time. And the matron bustled away to attend to her duties.

Bunter remained in the sick-bay all the afternoon. Nobody came near him, with the exception of the matron, who brought him a lightly-boiled egg and some thin bread-and-butter at teatime.

In the evening the patient experienced a sudden change for the better. The pains ceased as if by magic, and Bunter announced that he was quite well enough to get up.

The first person Billy encountered when he went downstairs was his minor, Sammy. The fag's face was beaming like a full moon.

"You seem mighty bucked about something," said Billy. "What's happened?"

"Uncle's just gone," said Sammy; "and he tipped me ten bob."

"What! I always thought Uncle Robert was an old miser!" shouted Billy.

"So he is! But it wasn't Uncle Robert who came this afternoon. It was Uncle Jack."

There was a startled shriek from Billy.

"He tipped me ten bob, and he would have tipped you the same amount," said Sammy, "only we couldn't find you anywhere. We hunted high and low for you. Where have you hidden yourself all the afternoon?"

Billy did not reply. Like the scribe of old, he went out and wept bitterly.

HEALTH HINTS!

By BILLY BUNTER.

I am so good at curing other people's ailments that I shall soon be known as the "doctor" of the Remove, and shall have a brass plate fitted to the door of my study. I don't believe in curing illness by drugs and fizzes. I've got a method of my own, and it works jolly well.

Bob Cherry came to me in grate distress one day last week. He confessed to me that he had eaten a whole seed-cake for tea, and he felt very "seedy" in consequence. I made him walk round the Close on his hands six times, and then duck his head a duzen times in the bowl of the school fountain. Then I made him stand me a feed at the tuckshop. "You will be so interested in watching another fellow feed," I said, "that you will forget your own aches and panes." And, sure enuff, he did!

Tom Brown staggered into my study the other day with a temperament of 104. "I don't want to go to the sanny if I can help

it," he said. "But I shall have to go, unless you can think of some way of reducing my high temperament." I made Browney sit in Mrs. Minble's ice-cream tub for half an hour, by the end of which time his temperament dropped right down to normal!

Alonzo Todd complained to me that his bones were sticking through his flesh. This is a complaint from which I frekwently suffer myself, so I know all about it. I put Alonzo on a course of my home-made toffee, which contains all the nurrishing properties of cod-liver oil and malt. He at once began to put on weight, and now he is nearly as plump as me.

On going into my study the other day I saw Tom Dutton rolling on the floor in anguish. He told me that his tooth, like the heathen of old, was "raging furiously." I went and borrowed a pair of pliers from Gosling, and eggstracted the offending molar without any trubble. Dutton tells me that I have left a stump in his mouth, which is all rot. He'll tell me next that I've left a cricket-bat in there!

My miner, Sammy, stopped me in the Close, and said he was suffering from eye-strain. I shut him up in the dark coal-seller for two hours, to ease his eyes, and he is now as right as rain.

MY PRICELESS PETS!

By BOLSOVER MINOR.

Six splendid pups I once possessed,
They really were delightful babies;
But one of them was called to rest,
Through catching rabies.

A further tragedy then came;
My youngest puppy, christened Sonia,
Expired one day (an awful shame!)
It got pneumonia.

I fattened the remaining four
With milk and biscuits, rice and eggs;
In spite of this I lost one more—
It had lumbago.

"Another's ailing now!" I cried;
"Can anybody tell me why 'tis?"
That very night the poor thing died—
It had bronchitis.

In spite of all my tender care,
And all my skilful nursing tactics,
Another perished, I declare—
It got rheumatics.

The sole survivor has a cough
I've tried to cure with strawberry ices;
But fear it will be carried off,
Alas, with phthisis!

Special "Holiday Annual" feature next Monday!

THE HOUSE OF PENGARTH!

(Continued from page 13.)

dare say he yelled for help, as you say so."

"Nothing more than that?"

"Nothing!"

Sir Jimmy Vivian opened his lips and closed them again. Once more he remembered in time that Harold Skinner was a guest.

"You think there was nothing to be afraid of in Sir Jimmy's room?" went on Bob Cherry.

"I don't think—I know!"

"Very well; then you won't mind taking that room for to-night, and staying there alone?"

Skinner paused.

There was a general grin round the table. That grin brought a flush to Skinner's cheeks, and he answered angrily:

"I don't mind a bit! I'd just as soon have that room as any other."

"It's a go, then," said Harry Wharton. "I fancy you'll cry off before bedtime, all the same."

"The cry-off-fulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You'll see!" growled Skinner.

And, lunch being over, Skinner walked out into the gardens by himself, to smoke cigarettes.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Strange Adventure!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. spent the afternoon in exploration. Apart from the mystery of the House of Pengarth, the rambling old place was full of interest for the Greyfriars juniors.

A great part of it was in ruins, and among the ruins it was dangerous to explore. But they rambled about the place, and explored the deep, dungeon-like cellars below, and climbed the high cliffs at the back and looked for caves in the rocks. They came on no trace of the unknown who had played ghost; but there were a thousand crannies where anyone might have lurked hidden, and endless crevices and caves in the rocks.

And in the old, thick stone walls they were certain there were secret passages, though so far none had been discovered, and Black Keeley professed complete ignorance of anything of the kind.

When they gathered for tea, they found that they had forgotten Skinner's existence, and he did not turn up. They had not seen him since lunch, and they wondered how he had spent the afternoon.

He did not come in; and after tea, Harry Wharton's wonder as to his whereabouts was a little tinged with anxiety. There were dozens of dangerous places in the cliffs where a fellow might fall and get severely hurt, and Wharton wondered whether anything had happened to Skinner.

"Better look for him, I think," said Harry.

"Bother him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I suppose he can take care of himself."

"He may have taken a tumble somewhere."

"He went out to smoke," grunted Johnny. "I saw a packet of cigarettes in his hand when he went."

"Well, he can't be smoking all this time. I'll go round and see if I can find him, at any rate."

"Oh, we'll come!"

The whole party started looking for Skinner. He was certainly not in the house, and they searched the tangled gardens for him in vain.

"Gone down to Polpen," said Bob Cherry. "He'll come walking in presently, and laugh at us for being alarmed."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"He wouldn't go by the path, after we told him about the falling rocks," he said; "and he hasn't taken Keeley's boat. It's still there."

"Well, keep on," said Bob. "Anyhow, we're getting a ramble."

The juniors left the gardens, and began to search round the cove, where the blue water broke on shelving sand and pebbles at the foot of the cliffs.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "What's that?"

They listened.

Faintly, from the distance, came a cry:

"Help!"

"That's Skinner's voice!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Come on!"

The juniors started at a rapid run along the beach, a narrow strip between the sea and the cliffs that shut in the cove. The cry came from directly ahead of them.

"Where are you, Skinner?" roared Bob Cherry, his powerful voice awakening every echo of the rocks, and startling the gulls high above.

"Help! This way!"

The juniors ran on. The voice was quite close at hand now, but they could see nothing of Skinner; it was as if he was shouting from the earth under their feet.

"Look out!" exclaimed Wharton suddenly.

In the beach before them, where the sand gave place to hard rock, a deep gully opened. It was not more than three feet wide, and it extended from the cliffs to the water, the sides dropping sheer to unknown depths. It was a deep cleft in the rocky foundation of the beach, opened by volcanic action long centuries ago. The juniors knelt on the verge and looked down.

There was Skinner.

He was standing on the sand at the bottom of the gully, a dozen feet below, with water washing round him up to the knees.

The rocks on either side of the narrow gully jutted out into the sea, so that the opening of the end was closed by the waves. And the rocky sides, slippery with wet, would have been difficult for a cragsman to climb, and quite impossible for Skinner. His face was white and furious as he stared up at the juniors.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! How did you get down there?" called out Bob Cherry.

"You rotters!"

"Eh?"

"I've been here for hours!" yelled Skinner furiously.

"Well, that's not our fault," said Harry Wharton mildly. "You'd have been there all night if we hadn't come to look for you."

"You shouldn't have tumbled in, clumsy!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I didn't tumble in, you cad!" yelled Skinner. "I was chucked in!"

"Oh, my hat! Who chucked you?"

"You did!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"One of you, anyhow!" yelled Skinner. "I'll pay you out for it, too."

"Well, my only aunt!" ejaculated Bob

Cherry, in astonishment. "What is the silly ass talking about? We haven't seen you since dinner."

"Don't tell lies!"

"Why you cheeky rat——" roared Bob.

"Get me out of this, you rotters!" screamed Skinner. "The tide's on the turn, and I shall be drowned here if I'm not got out."

"Lots of time!" said Harry Wharton cheerily. "We shall have to get a rope. I'll cut back to the house for one."

The captain of the Remove started off at a run. Skinner filled in the interval by telling the juniors what he thought of them. It was evident that he regarded them as being at the bottom of his misfortune, though for what reason they could not even guess.

Wharton returned with the rope, and it swished down the rocks to Skinner.

"Tie it under your arms!" called out Harry.

"I'm doing it, fathead!"

"Well, give the word when you're ready."

Skinner knotted the end of the rope securely under his armpits.

"Ready!" he called out.

The juniors all seized the rope, and pulled together. Skinner came up quickly enough, and was landed high, if not dry, on the pebbles of the beach.

He threw off the rope, and staggered to his feet. His eyes were glittering with rage.

"Now, which of you shoved me into that?" he demanded.

"Don't be a silly ass, Skinner!" said Wharton. "We've not seen you since you sneaked off with your smokes after dinner."

"Tell us what's happened to you!" suggested Nugent.

Skinner snorted angrily.

"You know jolly well what's happened! I came along here for a smoke, and then I lay down on the sand, in the shade of the rock yonder, to take a snooze. Somebody collared me suddenly, and somebody else held a paw over my eyes. There were two of you in it."

"Not two of us," said Wharton quietly. "What else?"

"They—you—whoever it was—jerked me along, and dropped me into that gully," said Skinner. "I'd have broken my legs, only there was a foot of water at the bottom, with soft sand under it. I've been there for hours, yelling for help."

"Well, we couldn't hear you at the house—it's too far off," said Harry. "We shouldn't have found you at all if we hadn't come hunting for you. You might be decently grateful."

"Yes, I'm likely to be grateful for being chucked into the water!" snarled Skinner. "I might have been drowned there when the tide came in."

"Oh, rot! The gully fills with the tide, and you can swim," said Bob. "You'd have floated out all right."

"I want to know which of you played that trick on me?" howled Skinner, glaring at one after another of the chums of the Remove.

"None of us!" said Harry. "Don't be a fool! Haven't you sense enough to see that we didn't touch you?"

"I know you did!"

"Look here, Skinner——"

"That's enough!" snarled Skinner, and he stalked away to the house, his face white with fury.

Evidently it was of no use trying to convince Skinner that the other fellows had not played that trick on him. Harry

Place your order for the "Annual" early, chums!

Wharton & Co. followed him more slowly back to the House of Pengarth.

"I say, who do you reckon played the fool with Skinner?" asked Sir Jimmy anxiously.

"The same jolly joker who played the fool with you last night, I fancy," said Bob Cherry. "While we were looking for him about the house, he was along here, and he found Skinner asleep and pulled his leg—or, rather, they did. Skinner says there were two."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"It's part of the game to make us fed up with staying at Pengarth," he said. "It won't succeed."

"I fancy Skinner's getting fed up already!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, 'blow Skinner!"

At supper that evening Skinner was in a savage temper, which he made no attempt whatever to disguise. He was convinced that the Removites had played that trick on him, as a punishment for his mockery earlier in the day; and nothing would shake his opinion. In that mood, Skinner was not a pleasant companion, and his scowling presence cast rather a damper on the spirits of the Greyfriars party.

Added to that, with the fall of night came the knowledge that the trickery of the unseen enemy would recommence, and that was not pleasant to reflect upon. Skinner became more and more morose as the evening wore on. Now that it was dark, and the outer world was shut away by a wall of blackness, Skinner was not nearly so airy and mocking on the subject of the ghosts of Pengarth, and it was probable that he repented of his boast to sleep alone in Sir Jimmy's room. That consideration added to the moroseness of his temper.

But he did not draw back; he could scarcely do so. At bedtime he took his lamp and went to the room. Harry Wharton spoke to him at the door.

"Better cut it out, Skinner," he said. "We're all going to camp together in one room. You do the same, with us." Skinner sneered.

"You're afraid of shadows, and I'm not," was his answer.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"Well, if you put it like that, there's nothing more to be said," he answered. "Better keep the light burning, at any rate."

"I shall," said Skinner, "and I'm keeping a lump of rock near my pillow. Anybody who comes sneaking in to play tricks on me will get it in the neck. That's a tip!"

"More power to your elbow," said Bob Cherry. "It won't be one of us, if there's anybody, Skinner."

"Oh, rot!"

And the chums of the Remove went on to the next room, where they were camping in company, and left Skinner to himself.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Happened in the Night!

MIDNIGHT!

Skinner lay in uneasy slumber on Sir Jimmy's bed.

He had not undressed; he had thrown himself just as he was on the bed, to be ready for anything that might happen. In spite of his airy scepticism earlier in the day, Skinner had gone to the room uneasily. He feared that the juniors might play some trick to scare him in the night—and he feared more than that, in the solitude

and silence, though he could hardly have said what he feared.

It was a long time before he slept; and he lay blinking in the light of the lamp, listening to the eerie sounds of the wind in the echoing old building.

But he slept at last, uneasily, his slumber haunted by dreams.

He awakened suddenly.

What had awakened him he did not know, but he knew that he awoke in a cold sweat of fear.

The room was in darkness.

The lamp, which he had left burning near his bed, was extinguished; deep



The juniors kneeled on the verge of the cliff and looked down. There was Skinner. He was standing on the sand at the bottom of the gully, with water washing round him up to his knees.

gloom swallowed up his surroundings, and he could not see his hand before his face.

He sat up on the bed, shivering and palpitating. He groped for the fragment of rock he had placed by his pillow; it was gone.

"The—the rotters!" breathed Skinner. "They—they've come in and put the light out, to scare me! I know their game."

He sat trembling on the bed. He knew that there was someone else in the room, hidden in the blackness. Was it

one of the Greyfriars juniors, bent on scaring him as a punishment for his disbelief. Skinner tried to think so, but he could not quite succeed. Suppose there was, after all, some unseen, mysterious enemy—suppose there was, after all, a secret door in the wall which placed him at the mercy of the unseen; it did not seem so improbable to Skinner now.

He longed to spring from the bed, and rush from the room; but he dared not move. He was afraid of coming into contact with the unseen, mysterious presence that he felt near him.

His heart was beating painfully, and he felt at every moment as if it would cease to beat.

Suddenly, from the dense darkness, came a glimmer of a greenish, strange, phosphorescent light.

Skinner started, and gulped.

As if outlined in ghostly fire on the darkness, a figure loomed into view; a figure in trunk hose and doublet and plumed hat—a Spanish figure of olden time.

Skinner almost ceased to breathe.

His terror was so great that he could only sit still, scarcely drawing his breath, his eyes fixed, glued, upon the awful apparition.

The figure moved towards him, slowly.

As if outlined in ghostly fire in the raised. The nearness of it broke the spell of terror; and Skinner, with a wild shriek, leaped from the bed.

He came into contact with something that moved—his hair bristled on his head with horror.

"Help! Help!"

Skinner's wild yell rang through the house.

Something grasped at him—he felt an icy touch on his face. Beside himself with fear, he struck out madly with both fists. Then he found himself groping hold of the shattered door, and dragged himself into the stone corridor without.

"Help! Help!"

From under the door of the adjoining room came a glimmer of light. Harry Wharton & Co were there, and the lamp was burning.

There was a rustling sound behind Skinner, as if of pursuit; and he made a frantic bound to the door of the juniors' room, and tore at it.

"Help!"

The door was dragged open from within; the light streamed out into the corridor. All the juniors were wide awake now, and on their feet. Skinner staggered into the room, with a face like chalk, and slammed the door.

Then he sank down on a chair, panting.

"What——" began Harry Wharton.

"I've seen it!" moaned Skinner.

"Seen it—what?"

"The ghost!" said Skinner, through his chattering teeth. "The—the same that you told me you saw in the boat! It—it touched me—it was like ice——" Skinner moaned with horror.

"We oughtn't to have let you stay in the room alone," said Harry Wharton. "But——"

Skinner looked round quickly. Even at that moment he did not forget to be suspicious. But Sir Jimmy and the Famous Five were all in the room; it could not have been one of them that had played ghost in the adjoining apartment.

Wharton picked up a heavy stick, and the lamp.

—There's bound to be a rush! Out next week!

"Come on, you fellows!" he said.
 "We're looking into this!"
 "Don't leave me alone!" screamed Skinner.
 "Follow on, then."
 "I—I daren't!"

Wharton did not heed. Bob Cherry opened the door, and the captain of the Remove led the way, with the lamp in his left hand, the cudgel in his right. His chums followed him, and Skinner, too terrified to remain alone, hurried after them, trembling from head to foot. But the lamp was not needed. There was a lamp burning in Skinner's room, and he stared at it blankly.

"It was dark—" He stammered.
 "It was dark when I woke!"
 "The lamp's burning now," said Bob Cherry dryly.

The juniors entered the room. The lamp burned steadily on the table near the bed, and the room was vacant. There was no sign to be seen of the terrible apparition that had terrified Skinner.

"Well, he's gone!" said Johnny Bull.
 "Where's the rock you were going to heave if you were disturbed, Skinner?"
 "I felt for it—it had been taken away," muttered Skinner.

"Is that it?"
 Skinner stared. On the bed, close by the pillow, lay the fragment of rock he had placed there, to use as a weapon. He stared at it blankly.

"It's been put back," he stammered.
 Johnny Bull looked at him suspiciously.
 "Or else you dreamed the whole thing," he said tartly.

"I didn't!" shouted Skinner. "I saw him—a figure like fire—and—and then he touched me in the dark." Skinner shuddered.

"Well, there's no sign here of anybody," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better bring the blankets and camp in the next room with us for the rest of the night, Skinner. You don't want to stay here alone again, I suppose?"
 "I'd die rather!" groaned Skinner.

The juniors returned to their own room, Skinner accompanying them. Not for worlds would Skinner have remained a minute alone in the House of Pengarth.

Skinner's eyes did not close again that night.

When dawn glimmered through the casements Skinner was still awake, white and haggard with watching.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Enough for Skinner!

THERE was none of Skinner's airy persiflage at breakfast that morning. He was quite a changed Skinner. Even with the sun streaming in at the old windows of the hall, Skinner glanced continually to and fro and over his shoulder. Keeley watched him curiously at moments, but Skinner did not heed the old man.

He hardly spoke during breakfast, and he ate very little. He rose from the table before the other fellows had finished.

"How do you get away from this rotten place?" he asked.

Wharton looked at him.

"Do you want to get away?"

Skinner scowled savagely.

"Do you think I'm going to stay after what happened last night? I'm out for a holiday, not that kind of thing."

Another day and night in this place would drive me potty, I think. I was a fool to come here."

Sir Jimmy Vivian grinned.

"Let's all clear off to Penzance and have a holiday," suggested Skinner, more amicably. "You fellows must be fed up with this rotten hole, I should think."

"Are you always as polite as that when you go visiting, Skinner?" asked Bob Cherry, with an air of polite interest.

"Oh, go and eat coke. Are you fellows coming away?" demanded Skinner.

"No fear!"

"I know I ain't," said Sir Jimmy Vivian. "I ain't going till I've found out the bloke what's playing tricks in my 'ouse. The other fellers can please themselves."

"We'll please ourselves by staying," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "We're getting to the bottom of the thing before we shift."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Well, you're a set of fools," growled Skinner. "I'm not staying another hour. How am I getting away? That's what I want to know."

"Keeley's going over to Polpen for provisions to-day," said Sir Jimmy. "He can take you across in his boat if you like."

Skinner looked relieved.

"Good! I can get a lift on something at Polpen, and get back to civilisation," he said. "If you fellows are fools enough to stay, stay and be blowed to you. I'm going!"

"Sorry to lose you!" said Sir Jimmy, with a faint touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, rot!" said Skinner.

Skinner's nerves were still in a jangle, and he had no politeness to waste upon his host.

As a matter of fact, nobody was very sorry to lose Skinner's company. The only regret the juniors had was the fact that the unseen enemy would have succeeded in frightening away one of the party. If all the fellows had been like Skinner the haunting presence in the House of Pengarth would soon have been left to itself. But Harry Wharton & Co. were made of sterner stuff.

It was a glorious day, and the spirits of the juniors rose as they came out of the House of Pengarth with Skinner, the latter carrying his bag. Old Keeley's weather-beaten face was expressionless as he came down the rock stairway and pushed out his boat. But once or twice Harry Wharton thought that he detected a curious gleam in the old man's eyes. He could not help wondering whether Skinner's hurried departure was a victory for Black Keeley, as undoubtedly it was for the unseen haunter of the old mansion on the Cornish cliffs.

More than ever it was borne in upon Wharton's mind that Keeley knew more than he cared to say. But Wharton said nothing of that. Keeley took his oars and stepped into the boat, and Skinner threw in his bag and followed. Far away across the bay the slate roofs of Polpen glimmered and glistened in the almost tropical sunshine.

"You're fools not to come," called out Skinner.

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"Good-bye, Skinner!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" retorted Skinner.

That was Skinner's polite farewell. Old Keeley bent to the oars and pulled out of the little cove and across the sunny bay to Polpen.

In the sunlight the juniors watched the boat, and they could still see it, tiny in the distance, when it pulled in beside the old stone Polpen quay.

Harry Wharton turned back to the house, drawing a deep breath. Silent, grim, mysterious, the House of Pengarth stood before the juniors, the old grey stone walls hiding their strange mystery.

"We're seeing it through, you fellows," said Wharton quietly.

"We are!" said Bob.

"Skinner's gone! I dare say that the rotter we've got to deal with will count that as a victory," said Harry. "I fancy he will figure it out that Skinner's the first, and the rest of us won't be long in following. That's his game, anyhow."

"But it won't work out according to programme," said Nugent.

"There's another thing," said Wharton, in a low voice. "Keeley! I can't believe that this kind of thing has gone on so long without his knowing something about it."

"He's got a hand in it," said Johnny Bull.

"I believe so. We've got to keep an eye on Keeley. But whether he's in it or not, we're seeing it through; and we're not leaving Pengarth till we've laid the rotter, whoever he is, by the heels."

"Hear, hear!"

As if in mockery to the juniors' words, a shrill, hideous laugh echoed out from the surrounding cliffs, rising to a triumphant crescendo.

And with that strange laugh still echoing in their ears Harry Wharton & Co. re-entered the House of Pengarth, where such strange adventures had befallen them—and where stranger yet were to follow.

THE END.

(You must not miss the thrilling climax to this sensational series, dealing with the adventures of the famous Chums of Greyfriars, entitled "The Secret of the Caves!" Make certain of your copy of the MAGNET, chums!)

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By DAVID GODDARD

This Week:
**THE MISER
OF FERRIS
HALL!**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mistaken Identity!

"**N**OW, landlord, my score, please; and order my mare to be saddled at once. I must be going."

The landlord hurried forward in response to the clear tones in which the order was given. Two men who were sitting over a couple of tankards of ale in the far corner of the room looked up, and one of them, suppressing a whistle of surprise, nudged his companion.

"By the holy poker!" he said, under his breath. "Do you know who that is?"

"Not I," said the other. "Smart-looking lad, though."

"Smart! Why, man, it's Galloping Dick, the highwayman!"

"Faith, is it?" returned the other. He scanned the handsome features of the young stranger with interest. "A highwayman, do you say? And dressed like a peer's son at that! Does he dare show his nose in a public inn, then?"

"Ay; he fears nothing an' nobody. They say all the poor folks hereabouts worship him, and he gives out half his gains to the cottagers who need it. There's two hundred guineas reward offered for him!"

The eyes of both men twinkled greedily. They were bagmen—or commercial travellers, as they would be called nowadays—and both were strong, prosperous-looking fellows, with a keen eye to the main chance.

"Two hundred guineas!" echoed the second man, as the object of their attention paid his score and walked out. "Burn me, I should think he's cheap at the price! Fancy being stopped by him just as you had collected fifty guineas or so of your master's money from the country drapers—to say nothing of your own little commissions and perquisites! Two hundred guineas gone walking out o' that door as cool as you please! Why shouldn't we finger it?"

"I'm with you!" exclaimed the other. "We've a stout stick apiece, an' night's coming on. We could follow him over the heath and club him from behind!"

"He's got pistols, of course?" said the other.

"Tush, man! These fellows are all brag and bounce. There are two of us, both stout and strong, an' we could nobble him before he had time to draw. A hundred guineas each! It's worth a bit o' risk!"

"Come on, then!" said the other.

The two sturdy bagmen took a stout stick apiece, and hurried out. They saw the object of their attentions going at an easy pace a few hundred yards ahead, presently turning his mount on to a short cut over the heath.

"That's a good black mare he rides!" said the first bagman. "If he takes it into his head to canter, we sha'n't see much of him!"

"We must take him quickly," said the other, "before he lets her go. Come, man, you're not afraid, are you? It's only the reputation he's got among the country clodhoppers that makes him dreaded. I warrant we dish him!"

The horseman was ambling carelessly along, seeming to look neither to left nor right. The two bagmen stole up quickly and quietly, keeping in the shade of the furze-bushes till they were close to the mare's heels on opposite sides.

With a sudden rush they closed in. Before the rider could move hand or foot, the big bagman flung his arms round him, and hauled him out of the saddle, while the other flung a cloak over his head.

"Stun him, Ned!" cried the big bagman, as the prisoner struggled furiously. "He'll be whipping a knife or a pistol from somewhere, an' killing one of us! I know the beggars. Give him a clout with your stick—that's it!"

The heavy cudgel descended on the head beneath the cloak, and the prisoner grew still. His captors took the cloak off him and looked at him.

"Only stunned a bit," said the first. "A hundred guineas each, Ned, old boy, for this piece o' work! Hallo, who's this?"

Joe Moffat, the old tanner of Moreton Hamlet, came walking up the path, and stopped on seeing the two bagmen. He looked at the silent figure on the ground, and turned pale.

"Why, what be this, sirs?" said he

anxiously. "Has Master Dick Langley come to grief?"

"Ay, gaffer," said the bagman; "grief for him, gain for us. We've caught your highwayman, an' you'll be able to go your ways without fear of your purse on the darkest night."

The old tanner sighed.

"I s'post 'tis but law an' justice," he said sadly. "But I'm main sorry to see it. The rich had robbed him, so, being turned from house an' home by them, he robbed the rich. He gave freely to the poor, an' the sick and needy could always look to him for help."

"They'll look to him swinging in a gibbet now!" said the big bagman brutally. "There's an assize in Milton in three days, an' they'll run him through quick. Tie his wrists with the stirrup leathers, Ned, hoist him up, and let's be off."

"It don't seem like the same place without him!" muttered old Joe Moffat, as he walked gloomily along Blackwold Heath Bridle-path three days after the capture of the young highwayman by the two bagmen.

"What beats me is how he came to let himself be taken by them two swabs—him as fooled the King's riders an' all the magistrates o' Milton, an' has been through as many dangers as there are hairs on my head. It don't seem like him. But what's here?"

An excited horseman came along the bridle-path, swearing like a trooper, and shaking his fists as if possessed. He was richly dressed, and his horse was ambling along slowly, but he made no attempt to urge it on. He seemed wrapped up in his own troubles.

"Robbed! Robbed in broad daylight!" he screeched. "Eighty guineas taken off me by a young ruffian with a tongue as smooth as a lady's-maid's, and the impudence of Beelzebub! Is there no law in England, that a man of my position should be skinned by a cursed highwayman at high noon? Get out of my way, you old runagate!"

He cut at Joe Moffat, who stood staring in the middle of the path, with his riding-whip, and rode on, cursing and storming.

"He be in a fine rage, sure 'nough!"

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said old Joe, looking after him. "But who can it be who's taken Galloping Dick's place so soon on the heath? They do say when one highwayman's hanged it ain't long till another takes his place. Ah, I doubt this 'un won't be like the last!"

He walked on for some distance, looking at the ground before him, and speculating on the kind of man this new knight of the road might be. Presently the light patter of hoofs on the turf ahead made him look up.

He gasped and turned pale, putting up his hand as if to ward off the sight before him.

"Why, Joe," cried the approaching horseman cheerily, "what ails you, man? Have you seen a ghost, or has John Brady paid you what he owes you?"

"Muster Dick!" gasped Joe. "It is Muster Dick! Why, sir, I be gladder to see you than if I'd come into a fortin! How did ye get out o' gaol? 'Twas a rare smart bit o' work, I'll be bound!"

Dick Langley, for it was certainly he, stared in astonishment.

"What are you talking about, Joe? What do you mean? Got out? Gaol?"

It was Joe's turn to stare again, and he did it.

"Why, sir, 'tis but three days since I saw ye lying stunned in the hands o' they two bagmen fellows, an' taken off to Milton Gaol!"

"Joe, you old rascal, you've been at the ale in the Blue Boar," said Dick. "Odd's fish, man, I'm ashamed of you! Addled before twelve o'clock o' the day-time! Be off home with you!"

"Then the whole o' Milton's in the same case as I am, Muster Dick, for every man in the town knows it, and the trial was to be held to-day. Ah, you're a deep one, sir. You don't want to tell me, I can see."

"Let's have this out, Joe," said Dick, knitting his brows. "Who is this man they've taken, and why is he supposed to be me? I've been away at Crowford these four days."

Old Joe looked perfectly stupefied. He felt that Dick was telling the truth; and, in fact, outlaw that he was, the young highwayman drew the line at falsehood.

"Then, sir," said Joe in amazement, "it's the queerest thing I ever knowed. I saw a man who might ha' bin your twin brother, dressed much like you be now, lying stunned, and prisoner to two bagmen, three days back. They took him as Galloping Dick, and Sir Mostyn Frayne identified the prisoner, and paid the reward. He has been hugging himself ever since, like a bear with a cone of sugar. I would have sworn to the man they caught myself. Ay, 'tis marvellous! He has a black mare, too; though, now I think on't, she was heavier than Kitty, and her coat was not clipped."

"Of course," said Dick, "it was not Kitty; and Heaven knows who the man is. Why does he not prove himself?"

"They tell me he denied he was you, but several ha' sworn to him. They'll hang him fast enough!"

"Hare and hounds!" exclaimed Dick. "And where is he to be tried?"

"He be at the bar at this minute, afore Judge Merton at Milton Assizes, an'—"

Dick waited to hear no more. He wheeled the black mare sharp round, and galloped it at full speed towards Milton.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Lions' Den!

"SILENCE in the court!"

"But, my lord," cried the prisoner, in a voice of anguish, "I declare upon oath that I am not the man Langley, but plain John Macrae, of—"

"My good sir," said the counsel for the defence, a sheep-faced man in a shabby wig, "pray entrust your case entirely to me, or you will only do yourself harm."

The dusty, crowded court-house of Milton looked even gloomier than its wont on that lowering winter's day. In the dock, a warder on each side of him, stood the man whom the charge-sheet described as "Richard Langley, alias Galloping Dick."

He looked pale and haggard now, his face lined with anxiety and want of sleep. His hands gripped the rail of the dock convulsively.

In the witness-box, calm, well-dressed, and supercilious, stood Dick's arch-enemy, Sir Mostyn Frayne.

His evidence was already half given, and the prisoner's outcry was in response to the baronet's clear-spoken assertion that it was Richard Langley, and no other, who stood in the dock. The case was already drawing towards its close, and Sir Mostyn had arrived late.

The sheep-faced counsel who defended the prisoner was cross-examining the witness, and doing it very badly.

"Are you absolutely certain, sir," he said, "that the prisoner is the former owners of Langleys, and the highwayman in question? Will you swear that he is not a stranger who strongly resembles him?"

"Certainly I will swear it!" said Sir Mostyn, who was wearied of the discussion, and had no doubt about it himself.

Witness after witness was called, and, with little hesitation, they all swore that the prisoner at the bar was the notorious Galloping Dick.

The speeches for the prosecution and defence were made, the judge summed up, and the jury retired. They were absent for a short time before they trooped in again.

"Are you agreed upon your verdict, gentlemen?" asked the judge curtly.

"We are, my lord," said the foreman.

"Do you find that the prisoner is Richard Langley, or that he is not?"

"We find that he is Richard Langley, my lord, and we find him guilty on all counts of the charge."

Judge Merton turned to the prisoner.

"Have you any reason to give why sentence should not be pronounced upon you?" he said.

"My lord," said the prisoner, who was ashy pale, "I can only repeat what my counsel has said on my behalf. I am innocent of this charge. I am not Richard Langley, but John Macrae, son of a deceased British merchant at Amsterdam. I arrived at Harwich last week from a ship which has passed on to the East."

"I have no friends in this country, as I said, and no one to identify me. I am the victim of a terrible blunder, and how it has come about I cannot tell. I am innocent!"

There was a hush in the crowded court, and Judge Merton, picking up a square of black velvet, the dread emblem of death, placed it on his head. At the back of the court there was a sudden stir and the sound of voices.

"I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead!" the deep voice of the judge boomed through the room. "Thereafter your body shall be—"

"My lord!" said the prisoner's counsel, rising in a sudden flutter. The judge turned livid with rage, and gasped for breath: but before he could speak the barrister hurried on with his speech. "I humbly crave pardon, my lord, but a witness has come with news of Richard Langley!" he said, all in a breath. "He brings evidence which will turn the case, and I pray you hear him!"

Even Judge Merton seemed impressed. He choked down his choler, and ordered the witness to be sworn.

A tall figure in a dark cloak, and muffled to the eyes in a crimson silk scarf, stepped into the box.

"Sit down, Mr. Stearns!" said the judge sternly to the prisoner's counsel. "The case is out of your hands. I shall examine this witness myself. Now, sir!" he said, turning sharply upon the strange witness. "You bring news of Richard Langley?"

"I do!" said the witness gruffly.

"Is not that he in the dock?"

"It is not. He is nearer to your lordship than that."

"No riddles, sir!" said Judge Merton angrily. "Where is he, then?"

"Judge for yourself!" said the witness.

He threw off the cloak and muffler. It was Galloping Dick!

A hush of silent stupefaction fell on the court. The magnificent audacity of it amazed every man who saw, and the marvellous likeness between the prisoner in the dock and the witness was more amazing still. The spell broke.

"Arrest him!" cried a dozen voices. "It is the highwayman, true enough!"

But even before the silence broke, Dick leaped out of the witness-box and dashed for the door, with a ringing laugh.

He flung aside the bailiff who rushed at him, and vanished through the door into the hall. A wild shout outside rose above the uproar, the clatter of a horse's hoofs galloping down the stony street, and the sound of pistol-shots rang out.

Ten minutes later two bailiffs ran panting into the demoralised court-house.

"My lord," they cried to the judge, "it was Galloping Dick, sure enough, and he has mounted his black mare and put a mile between himself and his pursuers! The riders follow him, but he has got clear away!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Saving His Purse!

"DOING well, are you? Faith, I'm glad to hear it," said the old man in a sharp, cracked voice.

"Go on and prosper, my lad, for if you're ever in want of money, you'll get none from me!"

"Thank you, uncle," said the young man on the bay horse. "I won't trouble you if I do come to grief!"

"You'd have your trouble for your pains. I'm glad to see any of the family prospering; but I give nothing away. Because why? I haven't got it!"

He hugged himself closer in his shabby old riding-cloak, and his eyes shone with a cunning gleam.

They were an odd couple to the eye, and they were travelling on the road between Cleabury and Barton Ferris. The elder man, about fifty years old, had a gaunt, starved-looking face, with a bony nose and twinkling eyes. He was riding a woebegone nag that was kept out at grass winter and summer, and



"You bring news of Richard Langley?" asked the judge. "I do!" said the witness gruffly. "Is not that he in the dock?" "It is not," replied the witness. "He is nearer to your lordship than that." "No riddles!" said Judge Merton sternly; "where is he?" "Judge for yourself!" laughed the witness. And he threw off the cloak and muffler. It was Galloping Dick himself. (See Chapter I.)

never knew the touch of a curry-comb, or the taste of a sieve of corn.

His dress was more odd still, for he was clad in what seemed to be an old footman's coat and knee-breeches, with the rusty riding-cloak over all.

"Cheer up, uncle!" said the younger man, who looked well fed and well dressed, and altogether prosperous. "I've never bothered you for money yet, and I'm not likely to. I've made a good income since I was called to the Bar."

"You'd best give me your savings to take care of," said the elder man, with a greedy flash in his eyes. "I can look after it better than you, and—Odd's fish!"

He muttered an exclamation of dismay, and began to tremble violently.

A tall horseman, on a fine black mare, barred the road, having suddenly stepped out from the wood that lined the highway, and his long pistol seemed to distribute its attention equally between the two travellers.

"One moment, gentlemen," said the horseman, who wore a black velvet mask. "I shall not detain you long, but I wish to call your attention to this pistol. It is a really fine piece of workmanship, and is one of Joe Manton's best."

The elder of the two travellers was beyond speech, but the younger had a cool head, and was not scared.

"The pistol is no doubt admirable."

he said, "though whether it is a true Joe Manton, I doubt. If you will lend it to me a moment I will soon tell you."

Galloping Dick, for it was he, smiled serenely.

"I can assure you of its genuineness," he said. "And it has another peculiarity. If anybody at whom it is presented does not present his purse within two minutes, it invariably goes off. One minute and a half have already passed."

"Oh, my dear master!" broke out the elder traveller, addressing his younger companion. "Pray surrender him your purse without delay! What are a few guineas to your precious life? Ah me, I could never serve another if you, the last of your family, were killed!"

The young man's face was a study. He looked sourly for a moment at his companion, who wore the impression of a faithful servant advising a young master. The young man reluctantly drew out a purse full of guineas and handed it to the highwayman.

Galloping Dick took it with a bow, and glanced at the other horseman.

"You are a prudent fellow," he said waggishly. "Are you, then, a servant and adviser to this young gentleman?"

"I am his very humble retainer, and a man of peace," said the elder man cringing. "I have nothing about me worth your honour's attention; but if you wish—"

"No, no," said Dick curtly. "I pluck only those who can spare the money, and you are safe enough from me. Now, sir, you may ride on about your business, with my deepest apologies for having delayed you."

The two travellers, the younger one looking very sour indeed, touched their horses, and went on their way.

"Come, I think this neighbourhood will do for a day or two," said Dick to himself, as he rode over the downs above Cleabury. "It is never wise to milk a cow too dry, and the Milton district was getting rather shy of me."

He had taken himself and his mare a hundred miles along the North Road since his flight from the court in Milton, and already the rich trembled for their purses whenever they went out.

The King's men and the runners were in despair, having twice failed to catch him, and the poorer cottagers already knew him for one who never refused a handsome dole to any poor man in distress.

"Personally," said Dick pensively, "I am not one of those who delight to stop a Londoner or Hounslowman one day, and a dalesman in Yorkshire the next week, or to flit from Portsmouth to Bristol and back, like some. There is more sport in knowing a neighbourhood thoroughly, and—Hallo, Steve, you

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rascal! You've been poaching! There's a hare inside that jacket of yours, I'll warrant!"

Steve Dowsing, who at that moment came across Dick's path, was a young villager in very ragged clothes, who looked as if he never had enough to eat—which was perfectly correct; he had not.

"Ay, sir," he said, touching his cap, for Dick had befriended him once already. "I've got an owd 'are buttoned under me jacket; an' a good job, too, or mother wouldn't get her supper to-night. You stops the gentlemen, you see, an' I stops their game. You didn't get much out o' owd Henry Graham this morning, though. I was lyin' up in the copse for a pheasant, and heard the whole thing. Ho, ho! Excuse me, sir, but he took you in fine!"

"What do you mean, Steve? His purse was not princely, indeed, but well filled enough for a prosperous young lawyer, as I take him to be. What is he—a duke in disguise, then?"

"Naw, I don't mean the young gentleman. Owd Graham, in the rusty cloak," said Steve, chuckling.

"What, the serving-man?"

"He's no serving-man, sir! That's Henry Graham, the young gentleman's uncle, an' worth fifty times what he'll ever be. An' I know he'd been to Olenbury Bank that morning, an' had most like a couple o' hundred guineas about him. He played the servant to save his gold. I'd ha' come out an' told you, only I daren't meddle in a hanging matter."

"Odd's blood!" cried Dick, clenching his bridle-hand. "Did the old sinner befool me, then?" His brow cleared, and he broke into a laugh. "It was cleverly done. Well, the youngster will get his money back from his uncle, then, of course. The old man will be well pleased at having saved the rest. I would not have touched the nephew's purse had I known."

"You don't know Henry Graham, sir," said Steve, with a bitter smile. "It's little o' that money his nephew'll ever see."

"What!" said Dick, growing angry again. "Do you mean to tell me he wouldn't—?"

"Ay, I do! Have you never heard o' the miser o' Barton Ferris, sir?" said Steve.

"Yes, I've heard of him."

"Well, Henry Graham's he, an' may the curse light on him! That man, sir, has got more guineas hidden in his house at Barton than there are drops in the pond there, an' he's the meanest owd villain in the country. He washes in gold o' nights, they say, and sartain there's loads of it in there. But only he knows where it's hid. Robbers broke in once and left him for dead, but they didn't find the bulk o' the gold."

"He starves himself rather than spend, an' he's the cruellest man to deal wi' alive. He's the landlord o' our bit o' a cottage where my mother lives. Two years ago I was out o' work—she depends on me, ye see—an' behind two weeks wi' the rent. Graham comes to me, and gives me the choice o' signing a new lease, bindin' me to do four days work for him for nothin' by way of rent, or bein' turned out."

"My mother was ill at the time, and I had to sign. She's bedridden now, and can't be moved, and I can't get the lease altered. He's got me tight, an' gets four days' work a week for two-an'-sixpence rent. Result is, I can't get work nowheres else, an' the both of us

starves. It's only by this poachin' that I'm drove to, that we keep alive at all. An' we're only one family of a dozen that he grinds down to starvation to fill his moneybags and gloat over."

"Can such things be?" cried Dick, his eyes blazing. "Tell me quickly, where does this man live?"

"Barton Ferris Hall, a big, owd house, very lonely an' broken-up like, two miles down the lane past the village."

"Does his nephew lodge with him?"

"Lodge with Graham? He wouldn't give a crust to his brother if he was dying! His nephew lodges at Barton Inn. There's nobody at the Hall but one old body-servant that Graham keeps to do the rent-collecting and dirty work for him."

"Be at your cottage to-night, Steve, about eight," said Dick grimly. "I shall want you. Here's a guinea for you. Mr. Henry Graham is about to learn a lesson he will never forget."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Miser and the Horse-Pistol!

It was very dark, and rain swept over the fields in sharp squalls before a driving wind.

The gaunt old house of Ferris Hall looked particularly gloomy on that winter night, and about half-past seven o'clock the outer gate was opened, and a bent old woman hobbled feebly to the door of the house and knocked. She was wrapped in a black cloak, tattered and stained, and it was some time before she got any answer.

At last a step sounded inside, the door was opened an inch or less, and a low voice growled:

"Who's there?"

"It's only old Mrs. White with her rent," whined the old woman.

"Well, this ain't the time to bring it!" growled the voice.

"Ay, but I can't get it off my mind!" growled the old woman. "An' I've come to see if old Mr. Graham won't let me have a shillin' of it back till next time, for my husband's dying, and he—"

"No; he won't let you have no shilling!" snapped the manservant, opening the door a little. "It's about time old White did die, for the lease ends with him, an' we can get a better tenant, an' raise the rent! Give it here, as you've brought it! Blood and hounds!"

He winced and flung up his arm, for the old woman's cloak dropped, and the form of Galloping Dick stood before him. A cocked pistol stared the manservant in the face, and he stood dumbstruck.

"I am not pleased with you, Mr. Steward!" said Dick. "I do not like your way of doing business! Move, and you are a dead man!"

The steward dared not utter a word, and Dick, seizing a scarf, stuffed it into the man's open mouth as a gag, and bound his wrists behind him. Then he entered the hall, led the man into a cupboard that was standing open, tied the man's feet that he might not kick and raise an alarm, and thrust him in.

"If you make the least noise," he said, as he thrust him in, "it will be your last!"

Dick pocketed the key, and walked noiselessly into the house. He wanted very badly to find Mr. Graham.

At first his search was fruitless. The great, lonely house, now that the manservant was safely stowed in the cupboard, seemed lifeless as a vault, and not a light could be seen anywhere. Dick

groped his way about as best he could, and presently went down to the ground floor.

There, at last, he saw a faint light showing through a chink at the end of a cold, brickwork passage.

"That will be Mr. Graham, amusing himself with his gains," thought Dick.

He crept up to the door and listened. The musical chink of coins greeted him, and occasionally a low, dry chuckle.

He felt the door all over, giving most attention to the lock. The key was turned, but he decided the door would give way to a heavy blow.

He retired some distance, took a run, and charged the door with his shoulder, putting all his weight into the rush. The door burst open with a crash. There was a wild cry, a clatter of coins, and Dick found himself in a small, bare room, faced by a miser, who had darted up from his seat at a table laden with golden guineas, and was quivering with rage and fright.

Dick's horse-pistol covered him in a moment.

"Fill your pockets with that gold!" ordered the young highwayman. "Fill them to the brim, and cram as much more into your wallet! Then come with me! Quick!"

"Robber! Assassin!" screamed Graham loud and trembling. "I defy you! I will die first!"

He flung himself on the table and embraced his beloved money with both arms.

Dick stepped forward, the muzzle of the pistol pressed against the miser's neck. The shock seemed to sober him.

"Decide quickly!" said Dick. "If you do not obey I will shoot you like a dog, and distribute your wealth to the poor! You are not fit to live! Choose swiftly! Obedience or death!"

There was a pause, and the miser rose. His face was the face of a man in torture, but he grasped handfuls of guineas and stuffed them into his pockets and wallet until they could hold no more. What this meant he did not know; he only knew he was going to lose them.

"Walk out before me!" said Dick. "And, remember, one false step, one treacherous move, and you are a dead man!"

He marched the miser out of the house and away into the windy dark. Graham, the pistol always at his back, walked like one in a dream.

Presently a light shone ahead. It was Steve Dowsing's cottage. Dick made his prisoner open the door, and walked him in.

Old Mrs. Dowsing, on her couch in the corner, and her son stared as though they saw a ghost.

"Good-evening, dame!" said Dick. "Steve, I told you I should want you. And now, Mr. Graham, I will explain. You suffer from the vice of avarice, and you have mercilessly trodden down the poor over whom you have power to gratify your lust for hoarding gold. These are two very ugly faults. I intend teaching you a lesson to-night."

The miser stared stupidly. He could scarcely take his eyes from the threatening pistol. Steve and his mother were not less astonished.

"We will begin here," said Dick.

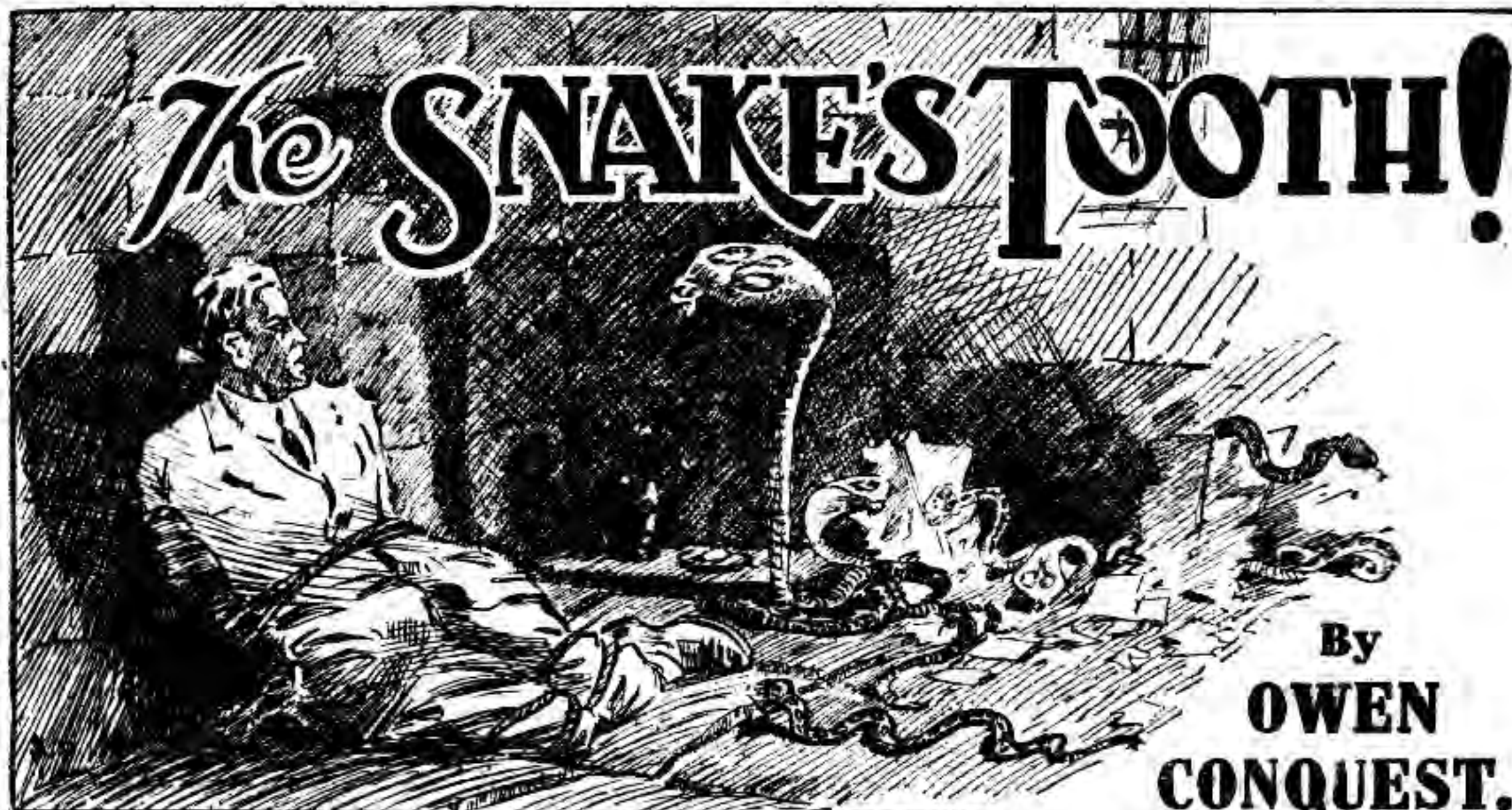
"You will remit, on the spot, the last two years' rent of this cottage. That comes to thirteen guineas. Count them out and hand them to Steve Dowsing!"

"Now sit down! Pen, ink, and paper, Steve, if you have them. Mr. Graham will grant a lease of the cottage at two

(Continued on page 28.)

You've enjoyed this story? Next Monday's highwayman yarn is better still!

A taxi-driver arrives at the destination given by his two passengers, and his curiosity is aroused when they fail to alight. Peering in at the open door of the cab, the driver is astonished to find but one passenger. A closer examination reveals the horrifying fact that he is dead. Now read how Ferrers Locke tackles this intricate problem.



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CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Mystery of the Taxicab!

FOR you, guv'nor." Jack Drake took the telephone-receiver from his ear and handed it to his chief, Ferrers Locke, who had just entered the consulting-room.

"Hallo!" drawled the sleuth into the mouthpiece.

In response a gruff, familiar voice flooded the telephone. Locke recognised it instantly as belonging to his old friend, Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard.

For nearly two minutes the famous private detective listened with but an occasional interjection. Then, with a final crisp "Yes," he hung up the receiver and turned to his young assistant.

"Poor old Pycroft's in the curry again," he said. "He wants me to go down to Westminster and meet him outside Central Hall. Simply begged me to go and give him what advice and assistance I could."

"And you said 'Yes,'" said Drake. "It's the Munda Singh case, I suppose?"

"A coconut first shy!" cried Locke jocularly. "If you've finished indexing that fresh volume of finger-prints, you may as well come with me. There's nothing very special to do to-day."

After telling Sing-Sing, the Chinese servant, that they would be out for the morning, Ferrers Locke led the way downstairs and round to the garage. They entered the sleuth's beautiful motor-car known as the Grey Hawk, and were soon bowling from Baker Street to Central Hall, Westminster.

Outside the hall they discerned the burly form of Inspector Pycroft. The Scotland Yard man greeted them warmly and stepped into the car.

"Drive me round to the mortuary in Little Wilson Street, if you don't mind, Mr. Locke," he said. "I will explain matters as we go."

Purposely Ferrers Locke drove slowly, so that the inspector could talk before they reached Little Wilson Street.

"It's this affair of Munda Singh," said Pycroft. "As you doubtless saw in the papers this morning, a Hindu of that name was found dead in a taxicab. The circumstances of his death are most extraordinary."

"Poisoned, eh?" murmured the sleuth, dexterously skirting a coal dray.

"So the doctor said," answered Pycroft. "There wasn't a mark on the fellow's body. The doc who saw him last night at the police-station plainly gave it as his opinion that the victim was poisoned—and by some subtle Eastern poison. The amazing thing is that the Indian was all right and in the best of spirits when he entered the taxi at

Aldgate Station. At least, so the taximan stated."

"But there was another Hindu with him when the cab was engaged?" said Locke.

"Yes; I was just coming to that. The taxi was near Aldgate Station last night when it was hailed by two Indians. One of these men—Munda Singh—requested the driver in excellent English to take them to Birnie's All-Night Restaurant near Russell Square. The driver stopped at the cafe. But no one alighted from the cab. So he went round to investigate affairs. Only one man was in the taxi. It was Munda Singh. The other Hindu had disappeared."

"Of course, the driver hadn't the foggiest notion that one of his passengers had alighted?"

"No, Mr. Locke. He said he was knocked all of a heap. Only this chap, whose name we discovered from subsequent inquiries was Munda Singh, remained in the cab. He was half sitting on the seat, with his head drooping towards the floor of the vehicle. And he was quite dead."

"How did you discover the name of the victim? By making inquiries among the Hindu colony at Hampstead?"

"Yes. One of my men from the Yard found out that Munda Singh had lived in Hampstead for some months. The fellow was a medical student at the Highland Hospital. There's no doubt about it, in my opinion, that he met his death at the hands of some samiti, or secret society. There are two or three of these known to us among the Indian colony. But so thorough and cautious are they in all that they do, that it's next to impossible for us to get any evidence against them."

"And yet you expect me to do it, my dear Pycroft," said Locke, with a chuckle.

"I should appreciate any help you can give," replied the inspector seriously.

"Frankly, the Yard is baffled. Despite the most searching inquiries, we have been utterly unable to trace the other Hindu who was with Munda Singh in the cab last night. If the earth had opened and swallowed him up, he could not have disappeared more completely."

"I should like to have a few words with that taxi-driver," murmured Ferrers Locke thoughtfully.

"You shall, Mr. Locke," said Pycroft. "I have arranged for him to come along to the mortuary this morning. He may be there waiting for us."

"Good!"

There was a brief silence whilst Locke skillfully extricated his car from among a jam of traffic and turned into Little Wilson Street.

"You may wonder why I've got the wind-up so early in this case, Mr. Locke," said

Pycroft, with a trace of reluctance in his tone. "But the fact of the matter is, I'm worried about the impending visit to London of the Maharajah of Panderhah. That one of the Hindu samiti has become active and killed a man with impunity is—h'm!—to say the least, very disquietening. But here's the mortuary—the red-brick building on the left."

As Locke neatly brought the Grey Hawk to a halt by the kerb, a taxicab swung round a corner and stopped just behind. The driver alighted, and Pycroft at once beckoned to him and introduced him to Ferrers Locke.

"This is the man in whose car the body of Munda Singh was found, Mr. Locke."

"That's me!" said the taxi-driver, regardless of grammar. "Bill Brown, at your service."

"An honest English name," commented the great private sleuth, with a disarming smile. "You will, of course, have no objection to repeating to me what you have told the police about this extraordinary affair?"

"None whatsoever, guv'nor. Though I'll say as 'ow it's thirsty work talking."

Locke let him talk, and then plied him with questions.

Just as for the twentieth time Bill Brown drew his hand across his mouth and looked significantly at his taxi, the sleuth said:

"One more question and I have finished. Nothing was found in your cab with the body. But tell me, did the other man who got in near Aldgate Station have anything with him?"

"No, he hadn't got nothin'," said Bill Brown, in a tired voice. "No macintosh, no walkin'-stick, no umbrella, no—". Then a sudden flash of remembrance crossed his mind. "By Jiminy, yes, he had, though! In course he had! I clean forgot that."

"What was it, my man?"

"Somethin' wrapped up in a couple o' old newspapers."

"Ah, a parcel, eh?"

"That's the ticket, guv'nor. But it wasn't tied up with no string. It was just—just somethin' wrapped about with paper. What it was I haven't got the faintest notion. But I remember now that this other bloke had it with him when he got into my cab."

"And obviously he had it with him when he alighted," said Locke quietly. "It might be very interesting to know what the missing Hindu had in that parcel."

"His washin', maybe," suggested Bill Brown helpfully.

"Maybe," murmured Locke—"maybe. After all, at this stage it doesn't appear to be of much consequence. Still, my dear Pycroft, it is as well to bear in mind that the wanted man did have a parcel—something wrapped round with newspapers."

A man in a thousand—Ferrers Locke I

He quietly slipped a ten-shilling note into the hand of the gratified Mr. Brown, and, having bidden the taxi-driver good-day, followed Pycroft into the grim old mortuary.

Here the sleuth and Jack Drake had the grisly experience of viewing the body of the victim of one of the most extraordinary affairs which had taken place in London for some time.

"Poison all right," muttered Pycroft, as he, Locke, and Drake stood with bared heads. "Not a mark on the chap's body."

"The doctor who examined the body had no great knowledge of Eastern poisons, I presume," said Locke. "He did not express an opinion as to what might have been used, or how the poison was administered?"

"No, beyond saying that he believed Munda Singh had been poisoned, the doc seemed at an absolute loss. But Caird, the famous Harley Street pathologist, who is the greatest living authority on Eastern drugs and poisons, is going to make an examination at noon. He couldn't attend before."

Ferrers Locke stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"If I were you, Pycroft," he murmured, "before the pathologist arrives, I should send for a barber."

"A barber?"

"Yes." With a gesture, the detective indicated the thick black hair, beard, and eyebrows of the motionless Hindu.

The inspector shrugged his shoulders; but Locke whispered a few earnest words into his ear, and persuaded Pycroft to follow the course he suggested.

A barber was sent for and the work performed. Directly it was done Locke dropped on one knee beside the body of Munda Singh.

Suddenly the forefinger of his right hand stiffened. Pycroft and Drake bent down. There on the forehead of the slain man were two tiny punctures which had been concealed by his right eyebrow.

"Pin marks!" muttered the Scotland Yard man.

"No," answered Ferrers Locke quietly. "The marks of a snake's fangs."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Eyes of Old Moghul.

IT was nearly two hours later when Ferrers Locke garaged his car behind his house at Baker Street, and entered the residence with Jack Drake.

The visit of the famous pathologist to the mortuary had definitely established that Locke was right as to the manner of Munda Singh's death. The Hindu had been struck with the fangs of a krait—one of the most deadly snakes known on the Indian Peninsula. But beyond this all remained a mystery.

After hearing the expert opinion of Caird, the pathologist, Locke had driven round to Birnie's All-Night Restaurant, near Russell Square; but he could learn nothing here.

Despite this, Ferrers Locke had the greatest hope of being able to give his old friend, Pycroft, some good help with the case. Over a late lunch served by the admirable Sing-Sing, he discussed the strange affair with his young assistant.

"My boy," he said, "there is one detail which we learnt this morning that now takes on a tremendous importance."

"That parcel, sir?"

Ferrers Locke nodded approvingly.

"I see you have been thinking keenly about the case, my boy. Yes, I refer to the 'somethin' wrapped about with newspapers' mentioned by Bill Brown, the taxi-driver. That something, I firmly believe, was a basket. In the basket was the snake. It affords a valuable clue."

"You mean, sir, that it may be possible for us to find out from where they got the reptile?"

"Exactly! These two men engaged the taxicab near Aldgate Station. That is in the East End of London. And it is in the East End that three of the best-known naturalists conduct their business. They are Garley, Savage & Dean, and Hangle. All these firms import and sell wild beasts, reptiles, birds, and insects. Directly we have finished our meal we will pay each of these a visit. Doubtless we shall be able to learn if any of them sold a krait recently."

Instead of using the magnificent Hawk car for their round of visits, they went to the

East End that afternoon by means of Jack Drake's motor-bike and sidecar.

The first calls were made at the business premises of Garley, and then at Savage & Dean's. But both these firms were able to state with absolute confidence that no krait had been sold by them. There was no demand, they said, for that type of snake, and it was only imported on special order for exhibition at zoos.

At Hangle's, in Limehouse, they met with more success.

Herman Hangle himself, fat and Teuton-looking, received them.

At first his little pig eyes gleamed suspiciously through his round spectacles; but upon learning the name of Ferrers Locke he became markedly deferential.

"A krait?" he said. "Ach, it is so. We haf sold one. Dot is to say, my assistant sold one yesterday."

"Ah!" said Locke, with considerable satisfaction. "And is your assistant here now?"

The animal dealer puffed at his pipe and shook his head.

"Der man was not show up to-day," he answered; "but he haf left some of his things, and may come in later."

"Who is your assistant, Mr. Hangle?" asked Locke. "Can you give me his address?"

Again the dealer shook his head.

"Dot I cannot say. Der man was not in my employment for long. He is vat you call an Indian."

"A Hindu?" asked the sleuth eagerly.

"No, I tink not. He vas a Punjaubi, I tink. He goes by der name of Moghul—Old Moghul."

"I should like to interview that assistant of yours, Mr. Hangle," said Ferrers Locke. "But how came it that you had such a deadly reptile as a krait in your possession? Was it ordered by one of your clients?"

"Der krait was ordered for a private zoo owned by a gentleman in Northumberland. But before der snake arrived my client had sold his collection to various peoples, and had left der country."

"So it was left on your hands?"

"Dot is so. And I was surprised and pleased when my assistant sold der snake in my absence yesterday. He got five pounds for der creature, and I was glad to get it. I do not know der name of der purchaser. Old Moghul only said dot it was a foreigner who bought der snake. If you like, when my assistant returns I will send him to your house, and you can ask him any questions dot you may wish."

"That's very good of you, Mr. Hangle! Thank you for your courtesy!"

Taking leave of the animal dealer, Locke and Drake returned forthwith to Baker Street.

That evening the boy went out to attend a meeting of a football club which he intended to join. Ferrers Locke remained at home, quietly reading in the big armchair in his consulting-room. Although time was drawing on, he still held hope that Hangle's assistant might turn up; but when the clock struck the hour of ten he gave it up as a bad job. Mentally he decided that on the morrow he would return to Limehouse, and, by making further inquiries, try to get on the track of the fellow.

It came, therefore, as something of a surprise to him when a few minutes later he heard the front door bell ring. Then Sing-Sing, who had received instructions in advance, showed in the very man the sleuth most wanted to see.

Old Moghul—for it was he—glided into the room past Sing-Sing in a silence which the Chinese himself might have envied. Ferrers Locke laid aside his book, rose from his chair, and gazed searchingly at his visitor.

The assistant to the animal dealer was undoubtedly a Punjaubi, so Locke, with his knowledge of Indian races, gauged at once. He was small and bent, and his withered, brown features were wreathed with a thousand tiny wrinkles.

"You wished to see me, sahib?"

The words were spoken in excellent English, and in a mellow tone out of all keeping with the Indian's aged appearance.

"I did. It is good of you to come. Pray be seated!"

The sleuth ushered his visitor into the armchair. He himself took a seat opposite the Indian. Then he went straight to the point.

"Yesterday," he said, "you sold a deadly snake, known as a krait, during the absence of Mr. Hangle. I understand it was sold to a foreigner?"

"Yes, sahib."

"To one of your fellow-countrymen, eh?"

Slowly Old Moghul sat more upright in his chair. His coal-black eyes met those of the detective and held them fast. They were great dark, luminous eyes, as unfathomable as the Indian Ocean.

"Yes, sahib," he repeated, "it was a Hindu who called upon me yesterday."

"Ah!"

Locke caught his breath. But his eyes remained glued upon those of the Punjaubi, and every nerve of his body tingled curiously.

"I had guessed, sahib, that Munda Singh had died of a snake bite when I read the newspapers this morning. I recognised his description. Without doubt he was one of the two Hindus who called upon me yesterday. I had never seen either of the men before. But after my fellow-countrymen had left the premises I found this."

Raising his withered, brown hand, he took a small object from his turban. This he held up between his finger and thumb before the gaze of the sleuth. It was curved and white, and Locke knew it to be one of the poison fangs of a serpent.

"A snake's tooth," murmured Old Moghul. "Gaze at it intently, O sahib! Gaze at it steadfastly, I say. I command you, look at it well. Gaze upon it. See how white and shining it is, and—"

The oily murmur of the Indian's voice ran on. Locke gazed at the white fang before him as a rabbit might gaze upon a snake about to devour it. And all the time the coal-black eyes of the awful old man ate their way into the detective's brain.

Locke's mind began to reel. He seemed to possess no thoughts of his own. The old man commanded—commanded him to gaze upon that wicked-crooked fang—and he obeyed. He could not do otherwise. He was bereft of the power to think or act for himself. He was hypnotised!

Then suddenly Old Moghul and the horrid tooth faded from his vision. Sitting motionless in his chair, unable to move hand or foot or to cry out, he appeared to be gazing upon an empty room.

Gradually he became aware of something on the carpet—something long and sinuous, slowly moving towards him. It was a cobra!

But the snake disappeared from his vision as suddenly as Old Moghul and the tooth had done. He heard a voice as though speaking from a far distance telling him to rise and follow the speaker.

In his mind was no power of resistance. He rose slowly to his feet, and followed the old Indian from the room.

Going downstairs the two came face to face with Jack Drake, who had returned from the meeting of the football club. The boy looked from the wizened old native to his chief in surprise. Standing to one side, he addressed Ferrers Locke.

"You're going out, sir?"

In a dim, subconscious kind of way the sleuth was aware of the presence of his young assistant. He wanted to reply in the negative, but his faculties were not his own. They were controlled absolutely by the terrible little brown man ahead of him. He heard the word "Yes" fall from his own lips, though he had half-framed the answer "No" in his mind.

Drake noticed that the eyes of Ferrers Locke were fixed straight ahead in a stare almost like that of a sleep-walker. But the boy merely thought that his chief was occupied with his own thoughts.

"May—may I come along with you, sir?" asked Drake, rather diffidently.

"No."

The monosyllable came at once in reply from the detective, though it certainly was not he himself who willed the answer.

He took his hat from the hall-stand with nerveless fingers, and left the house in company with the old Indian. His only further recollection for some time was howling along

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rapidly in a taxi, with the old man at his side. Why he had left Baker Street, and whither he was going, were dark, unfathomable mysteries!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Basket of Death!

THE next thing of which Ferrers Locke had any cognisance was a series of insistent reports like the cracking of a whip in his ears.

He came to himself with a start. Immediately his eyes lighted upon Old Moghul, who was vigorously clapping his hands. And even as he saw the old man, recollection came back to him in a flood.

With a brain as acute as when the wizened old man had first walked into his room at Baker Street, he realised the whole situation. He had been hypnotised, and the clapping had been performed to awaken him from his trance.

During his vast experience as a detective he had learned something of the Black Magic practised in the Far East. But it was his first experience of close contact with a man capable of hypnotising him against his will. And the fact that he had been induced to follow the guidance of Old Moghul against his own wish filled him with grim dread and foreboding.

The place in which he found himself was a room furnished gaudily in Indian fashion. There was not, however, a chair in the place. About half a dozen Hindus sat in a semi-circle on small mats laid on the fawn-coloured Indian carpet. Each of these men wore European clothes except for a coloured turban. A small representation in bronze of a cobra was fastened in front of the turban. The lower part of the faces of the men was covered with a dark veil not unlike the purdah worn by Mohammedan women in the Orient. Their foreheads were bedaubed with ashes.

Old Moghul himself squatted cross-legged on the floor immediately in front of Ferrers Locke. The old man was stripped except for a dhoti or loin-cloth and some brass bangles which encircled his arms and legs. His back was marked with a number of small scars. From these Ferrers Locke gauged that Old Moghul had been an ascetic, or Holy Man, in his own country.

For two or three moments Ferrers Locke gazed at the strange company in which he found himself without speaking or making a sign. His ankles were bound with thongs, but his hands and arms were free.

Directly he knew this was the case the instinct of self-preservation caused him to drop his right hand swiftly into his coat-pocket. It was here he usually carried a small automatic pistol. But this pocket was empty—and so were all his others. During his hypnotic trance he had been searched thoroughly, that was evident.

The Indians watched their captive with sardonic smiles, although only the eyes above the veils testified to their amusement.

One, wearing a turban of gold cloth, who appeared to be the leader, addressed Locke in English. And the tone and accent of his voice was that of an Indian who had had a good 'Varsity education.

"I bid you welcome, O Locke sahib!" he murmured. "You are the first Englishman to be present at a specially-convened meeting of the Sacred Society of the King Cobra."

Ferrers Locke folded his arms on his chest and gazed calmly on the speaker. Since he was not likely to get out of this place by force, he had best try other means.

"You honour me, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," he answered facetiously. "But as I have no desire to interrupt your deliberations, perhaps you will kindly permit me to return to my home."

The Indian who had first spoken nodded his head sagaciously.

"There will be no objection to your returning to your home, most excellent Locke sahib. On my honour as Gwalor Singh, chief of this samiti, I say that you shall go free on one condition."

"And that is?" said Locke.

"That you and your assistant immediately abandon this case of Munda Singh in which you engaged yourselves."

"And suppose I refuse?"

"Then death will be your portion." Gwalor Singh clapped his hands, and a member of the samiti called Chowleep Singh by the

others pushed a wicker-basket before Old Moghul. "Death will come to you out of the basket, O Locke sahib. But we know you to be a man of honour. Therefore, if you will but give your word not to seek longer how Munda Singh met his end, you may go."

Keeping one eye glued on the basket, Ferrers Locke rapidly reviewed the situation. Not even to save his own life would he deliberately promise not to continue the case and then afterwards act the traitor. But a theory which he had had in mind relating to the death of Munda Singh suggested a way out of the difficulty.

He shrugged his shoulders, and assumed an indifferent air.

"Why do you worry, gentlemen?" he said. "There surely is no mystery about the death of Munda Singh?"

The coal-black gleaming eyes of Gwalor Singh opened wider.

"You know, sahib?"

Ferrers Locke inclined his head. Then, relying on his own deductions and a little guesswork, he said:

"Surely Munda Singh met his end owing to an accident. One of you—probably your chief—accompanied by the deceased, went to the premises of Hangle, in Limehouse. There

said Gwalor Singh. He paused, as though thinking deeply. "Now, listen, sahib!" he resumed. "There is no reason why we should conceal the truth from you. I it was who was with Munda Singh in the taxicab. His death occurred almost exactly as you stated, but for reasons of our own we do not wish the samiti to appear publicly mixed up in this affair. We wish for no police interference. Now, promise that you will say nothing to anyone of what you know, and will forget the existence of the Sacred Society of the King Cobra, and you may go free."

Ferrers Locke remained silent for a few seconds. After what Inspector Pycroft had said regarding the forthcoming visit of the Maharajah of Punderhab to London, his suspicions were aroused as to the intentions of this secret society. That there was some sinister reason behind the request of Gwalor Singh for absolute secrecy he was convinced. To go free into the world again, and be bound by an oath not to interfere with these men, was out of the question.

Having made this mental promise, he did not flinch.

"I can make no such promise," he said. "But if the death of Munda Singh was an



Locke kicked his feet wildly. The cobra went hurtling into the air, its poison fangs snapping off in the detective's heel. The body of the reptile struck Gwalor Singh across the face like the thick thong of a whip, and the chief of the samiti gave a startled yell. (See Chapter 3.)

Moghul—who, for reasons I do not pretend to know, had obtained a job as assistant—sold you a snake known as a krait. The basket was wrapped up in newspapers to make it less conspicuous. Unfortunately, the lid lifted while the basket was on the floor of the cab. Munda Singh stooped to close it, and was struck by the snake on the head. His companion became alarmed, thrust the lid of the basket over the snake, and quietly slipped out of the cab at the first opportunity."

Guttural exclamations of astonishment left the lips of the seated Indians. For a few moments they conversed volubly in Hindustani, though Locke, with but a mere smattering of the language, was only able to catch a word here and there.

The conversation ceased with the suddenness with which it started, and Gwalor Singh quietly riveted his gaze on Locke's face.

"How did you know, O Locke sahib, that Munda Singh was a member of this samiti?"

"I judged that to be the case," remarked Locke, "for I found a small tattooed figure of a king cobra on the pate of his head. Moreover, you—the members of the Samiti of the King Cobra—are in mourning for him, as witness the ashes on your foreheads."

"You have sharp eyes, O Locke sahib,"

accident, as I believe, and this society is guilty of no wrong-doing, you have nothing to fear from me."

Gwalor Singh gave a sarcastic laugh, and made a signal to Old Moghul. The latter took a musical instrument made of short reeds, bound together with grasses, from one of the other Hindus. Then he whipped off the lid of the wicker basket, which had been pushed forward almost to Locke's bound feet.

At once there was a hissing sound like a slight escape of steam, and up shot the beautiful, lithesome form of a giant king cobra!

Ferrers Locke gave a gulp, and, as far as his bound ankles would permit, leaped backwards as the snake's head darted forward.

Old Moghul placed the reed instrument to his lips, and a low, flute-like note floated through the room.

The effect on the cobra was amazing. A third of the reptile remained coiled in the basket; the remaining two-thirds stood poised and motionless. Then as the music of Old Moghul droned forth, the cobra began swaying from side to side, the hood just below its head expanding and

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contracting, and its forked tongues darting venomously in and out of its mouth.

"You see, O Locke sahib," said Gwalor Singh, "Old Moghul is possessed of strange powers. That cobra is as much under his influence as you were but a short time ago. If I give the signal for that music to cease, your doom is sealed!"

Locke's lip curled in a disdainful sneer.

"You are all talk, O Singh!" he said hotly. "Take care lest the reptile mistakes not one of you for its victim! Had you not better seek a safe place ere it leaves its basket?"

The taunt left the Indians unmoved.

"By the black magic of Old Moghul we are immune from snake's bites," said Gwalor Singh quietly. "Even were we not, the old man has but to sound a note on his reeds to prevent the snake from striking. But, come, O Locke sahib, we do not desire your death! Promise to leave the samiti in peace, and you are a free man!"

"I can make no promise!" said Locke firmly.

The chief of the samiti raised his hand. The flute-like music of Old Moghul died away. A deathly silence fell upon the room, broken only by the sudden hiss of the snake.

The beady, black eyes of the reptile were fixed upon Ferrers Locke, who retreated slightly. Its excitement and anger was revealed by its widely-expanded hood.

To die of a snake-bite in the teeming City of London—where the detective still believed himself—was irony indeed. He had missed death by that method in the tropics on many an occasion, and he did not intend to go under now without a fight.

Slowly the cobra glided from the basket, and, whether by some black magic of Old Moghul or of its own accord, it kept its attention upon the detective.

Ferrers Locke retreated again, awkwardly on account of his bound ankles. The cobra glided forward along the carpet, and, by retreating in a circle, moving each time the snake poised itself to strike, the detective avoided the creature.

At first it seemed ridiculously easy to avoid falling a victim to the snake. But the Indians formed themselves in a circle and gradually closed about him, each veiled man now held a gleaming, broad-bladed knife in his hand. He knew that, if he attempted to hop beyond that circle of knives, a sharp reminder was in store for him.

The situation was desperate. As well die by the knives as by the poison of a serpent. And yet to step back too far seemed the more suicidal. He stood still and watched the snake as though fascinated.

The cobra coiled and poised itself, swaying gently to and fro. Then into Locke's mind flashed the remembrance of a trick he had seen performed by an old snake-charmer. The man had warded off the snake with the loose end of his dhoti much as a bull-fighter would cause a bull to miss with a red silken cape.

Locke took a handkerchief from his pocket and waited. The head of the cobra, with that awful expanded hood, shot forward. Like lightning Locke flicked the handkerchief across his body. The lithesome snake followed, its poisonous fangs tearing a couple of slits in the cambric.

"Phew!"

The gasp of relief escaped the sleuth involuntarily. The Hindus remained motionless. This was a sport which appealed to the members of this sinister secret society.

But the cobra drew back, and struck again with such speed that Locke was taken off his guard. He hurled himself backwards, slipped, and went headlong.

The now-furiously reptile struck again. Locke raised his feet from the carpet. There was a dull thud as the teeth of the snake embedded themselves in the heel of his left boot.

At once a ray of hope filled the heart of the man who had imagined himself doomed to die a terrible death. He kicked his feet wildly upwards. The cobra went hurtling into the air, its poison-fangs snapping off and remaining in the detective's heel. The body of the reptile struck Gwalor Singh across the face like the thick thong of a whip, and the chief of the samiti gave a startled howl. Next instant, as the creature

dropped to the carpet, the reed music of Old Moghul broke out.

But Locke sat up, breathing a heartfelt sigh of relief. The deadly king cobra had been rendered harmless.

Not so with the Indians, however. With snarls of rage at the treatment accorded to their sacred snake, they hurled themselves on the sleuth, their knives gleaming in their hands. But even as they did so a door was flung open, and another Hindu rushed in.

"Delali Singh!"

The other members of the samiti swung round with that excited utterance. Locke was forgotten temporarily. The newcomer talked rapidly in the vernacular. But there were two or three words in English that Ferrers Locke understood—"Maharajah," "Panderhah," "Nastoria"—and which held a wealth of meaning for the sleuth. Obviously, the maharajah had arrived in London before the expected time, and had gone to the famous Nastoria Hotel on the Thames Embankment.

That much Locke had gauged before the reed music ceased. He turned, to see Old Moghul holding up the snake's tooth which he had been shown at Baker Street. The eyes of the old Punjaubi held a baleful gleam.

The sleuth felt his senses reeling again. He tried to fight against the inertia that possessed him. But he could not take his gaze from the crooked tooth, and neither did Old Moghul relent in that burning stare. And then, like the drawing of a black pall about him, a terrible darkness settled over the detective, and he knew no more.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Plot Against Panderhah!

WHILE his Highness of Panderhah and his suite settled themselves comfortably in the beautiful rooms on the first floor of the Nastoria overlooking the Thames, Ferrers Locke lay stretched on the damp stone floor of a gloomy cellar.

He blinked and opened his eyes. Then, to his horror, he perceived, a few feet away, an oblong glass tank, in which were caged three cobras and a couple of kraits. These latter he recognised at once owing to their small size and the brown, lozenge-shaped marking on their backs.

Locke stared at the glass case of snakes and meditated despondently. Not only were his ankles bound, but now his hands were securely tied behind his back. With a shudder, he realised how completely he had fallen beneath the hypnotic power of the old Punjaubi.

Glancing round his dungeon, he saw that the ventilation came from a narrow aperture which ran at an angle through a wall at least four feet thick. The air which percolated through was so fresh that he believed the cellar to be at the side of the house and the opening just above ground.

With this in his mind he gave himself to shouting loudly, in the faint hope that his cries might be heard by someone. But, as far as he knew, he achieved no result, and sheer exhaustion caused him to desist.

As he sank back on the floor the door was opened, and the Hindu known as Chowleep Singh entered. He bore in his hands a dish containing chapatties (unleavened cakes), some plain rice, and a bowl of water. These he set down near Locke's head so that the sleuth could reach the food and drink with his mouth, dog fashion.

"It is useless to shout, sahib," he said in a tone that was almost kindly. "This house is set in its own grounds, and there is no one to hear."

Gratified to find that the man seemed to be friendly disposed, Ferrers Locke plied him with questions. Somewhat to his surprise the fellow answered readily enough.

According to Chowleep Singh, Ferrers Locke had been a prisoner the whole of one night and a day. But the sleuth, having been in a hypnotic trance for the greater part of the time, had been quite unaware of the flight of the hours. It was now nine o'clock on the evening following his departure from Baker Street. The house

in which he was a prisoner, according to the Hindu, was situated in a select part of Highgate.

"And what do you fellows intend to do with me?" asked Locke.

"I know not, sahib. You are a brave man, and all our members are disposed to spare your life if it can be done with safety—that is, all but one. Old Moghul frets that you have escaped the snake."

"Bloodthirsty old ruffian!" muttered Locke.

"I would I were not a member of the samiti now, O sahib!" said the Hindu tensely. "I like not the plan they have afoot. I served," he added proudly, "as a subadhar in the 91st Malabars in Mesopotamia during the Great War! Killing an enemy is meat to me, but I like not this slaying of those who have done me no harm."

He said no more on the subject, and Locke deemed it wise not to let the fellow know he suspected the plot against the Maharajah. The next words of the Hindu gave him an inkling of the time at which it was intended to put this plot, whatever it was, into execution.

"Yes, sahib," went on the Hindu, as he watched Locke eating; "if nothing disturbs us till eleven o'clock to-night you will be safe. For in two or three days, when the samiti have dispersed and left the country, means will be taken to notify someone of your whereabouts. If trouble comes before eleven, you will be killed!"

"How?" asked Locke calmly.

Chowleep Singh gestured towards the glass tank containing the snakes.

"The glass will be broken, and the cobras and kraits will deal with you, sahib!"

"How extraordinarily unpleasant!" said Locke in as cheery a voice as he could summon. "But, come, my man!" he said, lowering his voice. "You do not wish me to die, I am sure. Why not make your escape now while the going's good, and take a message for me?"

The Hindu started.

"It will be to your own advantage if trouble comes from the police later," insisted Locke in a tense whisper. "I shall not forget. Take a message to Drake, my assistant, at Baker Street, and it may be the means of saving your neck if your society's plot miscarries."

An interval of silence elapsed. Then suddenly Chowleep Singh spoke.

"I will do it, sahib! You are a brave man! Should trouble arise, you will not forget me?"

"My word on it!" said Locke.

Quickly he reviewed the situation in his mind. He reckoned that he had nearly two hours, but he was not unmindful of possible treachery on the part of Old Moghul.

"Go to Baker Street, Singh," he whispered quickly, "and instruct Drake how he may find this house and the position of the ventilator of this cellar. He is to proceed at top speed to Haugie's at Limehouse, rouse the proprietor, and purchase the mongoose he has there, no matter the cost. Then he is to come as near this house as possible on the motor-cycle and speak to me through that ventilator-shaft. You understand, Singh?"

"I do, sahib. And it shall be done. I rely on you never to speak a word of what I shall do for you."

The Indian withdrew. Locke was left again, a prey to his own thoughts. Would Chowleep Singh carry out the contract? If he did, he might yet be saved. His suggestion regarding the mongoose was something in the nature of a brilliant brain-wave. A mongoose could be put through the ventilator, and would prove a match for any cobra or krait should the snakes be loosed. If it were pushed through, with its hind legs tied loosely with a handkerchief, he would be able to keep it behind him out of sight should anyone come in.

The minutes dragged on each like an hour. Ages seemed to pass, and still Drake did not put in an appearance. The detective's hopes sank. Then suddenly the door opened. Old Moghul, fully dressed, entered the cellar. Reaching into the glass case, the old Punjaubi drew out a small krait by clutching it at the back of the head. This he put into a flat tin box, which he placed beneath his coat.

Pausing, he bestowed a look of bendish cruelty and cunning on the sleuth. Next instant he raised his boot and crashed it against the glass tank. The pieces of glass fell with a clatter to the stone floor, and the snakes were free!

Ferrers Locke, in a sitting position, watched the reptiles come gliding forth, awakened from their lethargy by the rude shattering of their home. Old Moghul gave a demoniacal laugh, and hastily left the cellar, banging the door behind him.

A krait wriggled slowly towards the sleuth, and Locke rolled himself rapidly back to the wall of the cellar as far from the reptiles as he could get.

The krait turned aside, and a cobra glided slowly and surely towards him. Locke shouted, and the snake stopped and poised itself, hissing, and expanding its hood. Now the plight of the sleuth was desperate indeed. Directly one of the reptiles got within striking distance he was most assuredly doomed!

His gaze turned instinctively from the reptiles to the ventilator. A violent start convulsed his frame. There was a movement outside. He was positive of it!

"Drake! Drake, my boy!"

"Chief!"

The answer came at once.

"The mongoose! The mongoose!" almost shrieked Locke. "Have you got it? If so, shoot it in at once—untied!"

But the boy had already seen the danger to his beloved chief. With great trouble he had carried out Locke's instructions in getting the mongoose from Hangle after receiving the message which Chowleep Singh brought to Baker Street.

There was a slight scuffling in the ventilator shaft. Into the cellar descended the little creature, looking for all the world like a cross between a ferret and a badger.

The effect on the snakes was magical. As though by instinct they sensed the presence of their deadliest enemy of the animal world—the little Ricki Ticks Tavi.

The cobra nearest to Locke struck at the little animal. But the mongoose leaped in a semi-circle through the air, descending just behind the reptile. There was a sharp click like the snapping of a small trap as the teeth of the mongoose met in the brain of the cobra, killing it instantaneously.

"Drake, my boy," called the sleuth to his young assistant outside, "proceed at full speed to the Nastoria Hotel, and warn the Maharajah of Punderhah to get out of his room at once! Then phone Scotland Yard, and tell them to raid this house!"

The boy set off, but engine trouble developed in his machine, and delayed him somewhat. He reached the Nastoria, and warned the management of possible danger to their distinguished guest. The Maharajah was induced to leave his room, and a search was made of the premises. And at the foot of a high iron fire-ladder at the back of the hotel premises was found the body of Old Moghul, with a small dead snake beside him. Apparently he had made his way to the floor reserved for the Maharajah's suite, with the intention of slipping the krait through the window of the Maharajah's room, and had slipped just before he was able to insert the reptile.

The police raid resulted in the release of Ferrers Locke. But the members of the samiti were only apprehended later after great difficulty.

All received terms of punishment, and if Ferrers Locke did not receive much public credit, he at least earned the gratitude of Inspector Pycroft.

It was seldom that Locke ever gloried in the death of a human being. But he was not ashamed to confess his relief that Old Moghul, the dealer in hypnotism and black magic, had met the doom he so richly deserved!

THE END.

(Now look forward to next week's fine story.)

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THE MISER OF FERRIS HALL!

(Continued from page 22.)

shillings a week for three years. That is a fair rent. Sign it, please! Excellent! By this the former lease is cancelled."

Steve and his mother broke into heartfelt gratitude, but Dick stopped them hurriedly.

"Come, Steve," he said; "I want you to guide me and Mr. Graham to all his other tenants. After that we will visit the poor of the neighbourhood."

Henry Graham was not sure whether

this journey was a nightmare or a terrible reality. With the inexorable pistol at his back, and Steve Dowsing trotting alongside to show Dick the way, he was marched round to all the cottages in the vicinity.

His beloved money, of which his pockets and wallet were full, flowed like water. He felt as though he were parting with the very blood from his veins. Here a poor cottager was relieved, there a starving family received a handful of guineas, and yonder a new and easier lease was granted and signed by him.

Whenever he hesitated the cold pistol-muzzle gave him warning to hasten.

Steve Dowsing led the way, and showed the houses of those in need; Dick decided the sum his prisoner was to hand out. At last, when the last guinea was given away, Graham was marched back to his house.

Then Galloping Dick mounted the black mare and rode on his way. And the miser of Ferris Hall was left biting his nails on his own doorstep, wondering whether he was asleep or awake.

THE END.

(There is another splendid complete story of the Highway, entitled "Rivals of the Road." Look out for it in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET.)

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