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STARTING THIS WEEK!

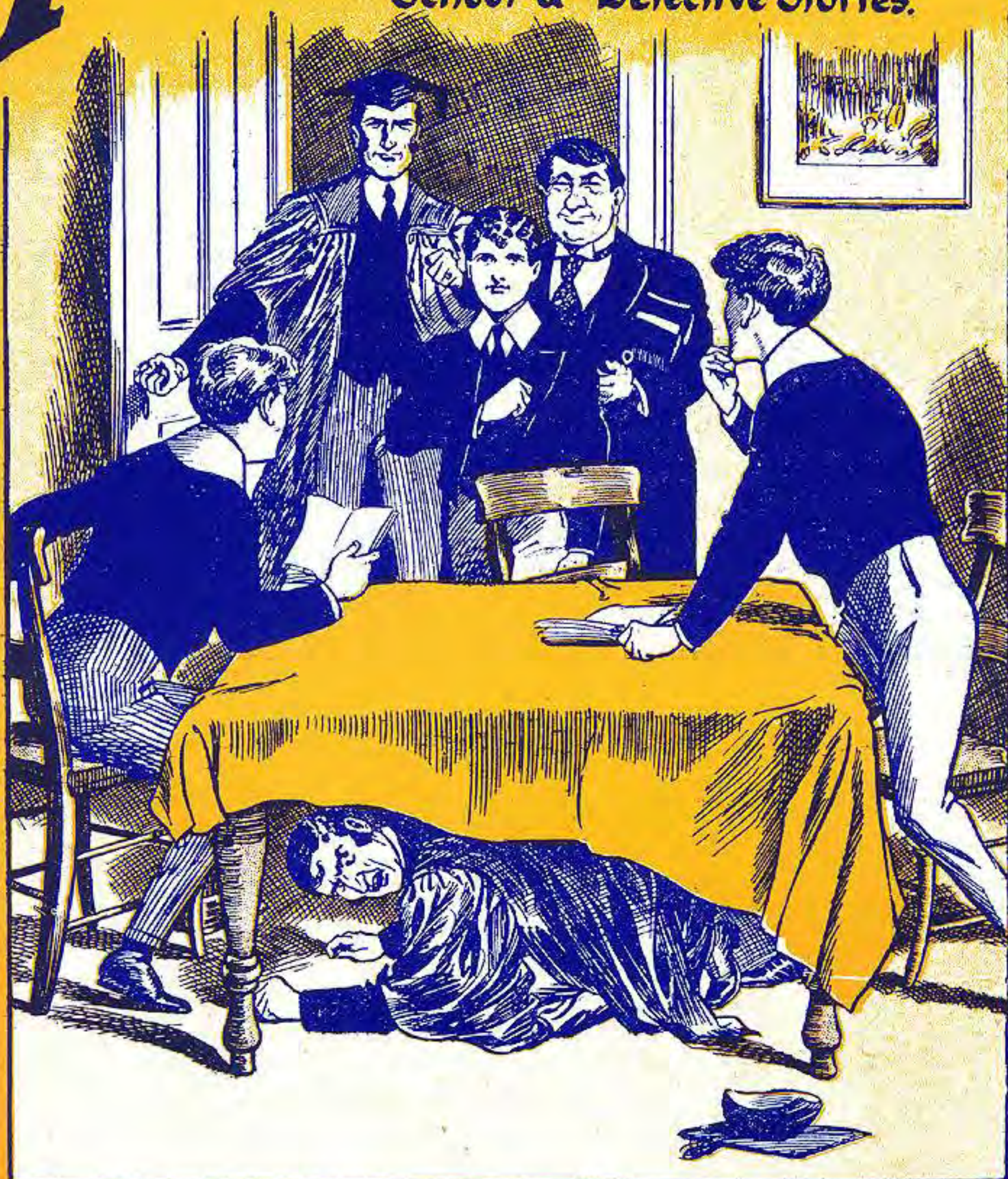
No. 814. Vol. XXIV. Week ending September 15th, 1923.

The Magnet 2^d

Library

School & Detective Stories.

EVERY MONDAY.



THE IMPOSTOR TAKES COVER!

MR. QUELCH'S UNTIMELY APPEARANCE FILLS THE BOGUS FORM MASTER WITH PANIC!



"THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE WHITE HEATHER!"

Next week's MAGNET will contain a further long instalment of this trenchant story of Ferrers Locke in the disturbed North. The tale gets more and more thrilling with each chapter. I should like to mention here that it is the work of a certain mysterious "X." Who is this "X"? Well, that is a question which I am not permitted to answer. There are some facts which cannot be divulged, as to reveal the truth might endanger the safety of people whose identity must, for obvious reasons, remain concealed. But the authorship of this positively amazing record of the inner history of distressed Russia is a good enough guarantee of the reliability of the story. Sensation follows sensation, but to those who know what has been happening in distracted Muscovy there will be nothing remotely suggestive of the impossible. I regard this wonderful and impressive romance as a big scoop for the MAGNET. Don't miss a line of it.

"FISH'S FRIENDLY SOCIETY!" By Frank Richards.

This story arranged for next Monday shows Greyfriars at its best. There is plenty of amusement, of course, since you cannot get away from the funny side when Fisher Tarleton Fish is at the helm. Maybe it is a bit of an exaggeration to speak of the clever

American fellow being in command, but, anyhow, he has a leading part. This remarkable Friendly Society of his is something quite original in its way. It makes you wonder sometimes whether it is really as friendly as its name suggests. But the yarn is tip-top. It has the real old ring of good humour, with, too, a dash of the serious interest at which Frank Richards is always infallible.

A LAWN TENNIS SUPPLEMENT.

Correspondents have been writing to me of late to inquire whether the chums of Greyfriars patronise tennis. The answer is in the affirmative. It was partly on account of this doubt—though it beats me why there should have been any doubt on the matter—that we decided on a special Lawn Tennis issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." The result, needless to say, is quite up to the "Herald" standard.

"WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK!"

You will find a vividly interesting carry-on story of Galloping Dick next Monday, full of the daring spirit of the road as it was in the old days which lie back over the shoulder. Highwaymen yarns have all their old grip—that is when they are written with the audacity and the spirit which characterise this brilliant series. The prime movers

in next week's tale are met with in circumstances of great intensity. Galloping Dick has the cut of a hero. We can safely leave out of count for the moment all the hard things that have been said about highwaymen, simply because they are highwaymen. There are some situations in which a knight of the road is able to show his real mettle for the common weal.

JUST REMEMBER THIS POINT!

The MAGNET has a crowd of features coming on for the late autumn. Somehow or another life gets busier than ever at this time of the year. The season is a general rally. With the footer season in full swing, and all the energetic people pulling up their socks ready for fresh endeavour during the winter, there is plenty doing. It is a bit amusing to hear the winter cried down. I am inclined to think that for sport and everything else the spell now on to March takes a lot of beating.

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

This splendid and indispensable volume is on sale everywhere, and for the moderate sum of six shillings you have a feast of delight which will bring good hours for months to come. The book is more than ever this year a special draw for readers of the Companion Papers, while it casts its pleasure net wide enough to catch the attention of everyone besides. No newcomer who picks up the "Annual" will fail later to become an ardent reader of the MAGNET.

You will find in this wonder-book a splendid new story of Harry Wharton & Co., and Dick Penfold contributes several extremely clever ballads, and probably the most amusing pages are those occupied by "Billy Bunter's Yearly!" Get your copy before they are all sold.

Your Editor.

GRAND AUTUMN PROGRAMME of Stories for Boys Out This Month!

The Boys' Friend Library.

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A Masterpiece of Mystery and Thrills on the Red Planet. By Fenton Ash.
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A Story of Thrilling South American Adventure, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and the Hon. John Lawless.
- 300.—**THE CASE OF THE FIVE DUMMY BOOKS.**
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A Tale of Sexton Blake and Tinker in a Sensational Case of Mystery and Adventure. By the Author of "The Case of the 'Wizard' Jockey," etc., etc.
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A Romance of Amazing Intrigue and Thrilling Adventure in London and Cornwall. By the Author of "The Mystery of the Dover Road," etc., etc.

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Montague Snooks would have it known amongst the juniors that he is the heir to a vast property, and that his life is in danger from a "wicked uncle." William Wibley, however, thinks that the new boy is romancing, and determines to put his suspicions to the test. A surprise packet awaits Montague Snooks, the nature of which will amuse you as much as it annoyed him.



Montague the Mysterious!

A rollicking, long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, introducing Montague Snooks.

Told by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Alarming!

"QUELCHY'S coming!"
"Oh, great Scott!"
Billy Bunter put a grinning face into Study No. 1 in the Remove, and made the announcement. And there was alarm in Study No. 1. There was cause for alarm.

Wibley of the Remove was giving one of his celebrated "impersonations" in Study No. 1. Wibley, the schoolboy actor, leading light of the Remove Dramatic Society, was, as all Greyfriars knew, great at impersonations. He could impersonate anybody, from the Head of Greyfriars to Gosling, the porter. His skill in make-up was marvellous, his command over his features still more wonderful. Indeed, many Removites declared that Wib's features were made of indiarubber. Mr. Quelch himself had smiled genially at the sight of Wib impersonating Temple of the Fourth, and saying "Yaas" and "Absolutely, don't you know?" in Temple's well-known accent. But—

On this occasion Wib was giving a telling representation of Mr. Quelch himself.

There were eight or nine Remove fellows in Study No. 1 watching Wibley.

He was doing it well. There was no doubt about that. He looked Mr. Quelch to the very life, though normally there was no resemblance whatever between Wibley and his Form master.

Mr. Quelch was a somewhat severe gentleman, with a severe cast of countenance and a gimlet eye. It had never occurred to Mr. Quelch that there was anything of a comic nature in his manner or aspect. Such a suggestion would have surprised him.

But Wib's impersonation undoubtedly struck the Remove fellows as funny, and there were loud chortles in Study No. 1.

Those chortles died away suddenly as Billy Bunter put in a grinning, fat face, and announced that Quelch was coming.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, the owners of the study, exchanged a startled look of dismay. Mr. Quelch was

about the last visitor they would have desired to look in just then.

Their guests looked equally dismayed. And Wibley, who was going strong when the alarming announcement was made, stopped suddenly, as if frozen to the floor. There was no doubt that the impersonation was a wonderful success and extremely funny. But it was absolutely certain that Mr. Quelch would not look at it in that light. Nothing could be more certain than that Mr. Quelch would regard Wib's little game as the outside edge in "cheek," and would be correspondingly wrathful.

"There'll be a row!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're for it, you know!"

"Sure, he's coming here?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes. There's a new fellow, and Quelch is bringing him and his pater here," grinned Bunter. "I heard him say—"

"Mayn't be coming to this study specially," breathed Wibley. "Keep the door shut!"

"But he is!" grinned Bunter. "I heard him mention Wharton's study specially to Mr. Snooks."

"Eh? Who's Mr. Snooks?"

"The new kid's pater."

"Blow Snooks!" growled Wharton. "What the thump does a blessed Snooks want to blow in this afternoon for? Wib, old man—"

"And I've borrowed his old gown!" groaned Wibley. "Quelch will know this gown first shot."

"Perhaps there's time to scoot," said Harry Wharton hopefully.

He stepped to the door of Study No. 1, and looked out into the Remove passage.

Study No. 1 was near the head of the Remove staircase, and Wharton had a view of the lower landing, with its big window looking out on the Greyfriars quadrangle.

Three figures were visible, standing at that window.

Mr. Quelch, severe and angular, wearing a mechanical smile for the benefit of the visitor; a portly, puffy gentleman, in a frock-coat, evidently the new boy's

"pater"; and a boy in Etons, equally evidently the new boy himself.

Wharton could guess that the new boy was entering the Remove, the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars, and that Mr. Quelch was showing him and his pater the Remove quarters.

Fortunately, very fortunately, Mr. Snooks had stopped to look from the window, which gave a view of the green old quad, and of the playing-fields in the distance.

Mr. Quelch was pointing out several objects of interest, and Wharton could only hope that Mr. Snooks would continue to be interested in Greyfriars as viewed from the landing window.

Wharton turned back quietly into the study.

"You fellows clear!" he said hastily.

"We've got a minute or two—"

"I can't clear in this rig!" howled Wibley.

"You'll have to hide."

"Oh dear!"

Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Todd and Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh, Johnny Bull and Mark Linley and one or two other fellows scuttled out of the study. But it was impossible for Wibley to go. The doorway was in full view from the landing, and Mr. Quelch's eyes were remarkably keen. What he would have thought had he seen his double scuttling out of Study No. 1, the juniors could not imagine. They did not mean to put it to the test.

"Where am I to hide?" breathed Wibley.

Wharton stared round the study.

"The cupboard's too full," he muttered. "Get behind the door."

"Suppose he shuts the door when he trots in?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Under the table!" said Nugent quickly.

"I shall be seen."

"Fathead! You've got to chance it."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch's deep voice was heard. Evidently he was ascending the Remove staircase with his companions.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 814.

"And this, Mr. Snooks, is the Remove passage!"

"Buck up, Wib!" breathed Wharton.

William Wibley made a despairing dive under the study table. Luckily, the table-cloth was still on it, left from tea, and it partly concealed the space underneath. Wharton and Nugent hurriedly jammed chairs round the table as a further screen. There was an infuriated gasp from under the table.

"Mind my nose, you silly owls!"

"Shurrup!"

"You jammed that chair on my nose, you——"

"Quiet!"

There were footsteps at the door now. It was time for Wibley to be quiet, in spite of the unavoidable damage to his nose. He crouched under the table and palpitated.

Wharton and Nugent sat down and snatched up books, striving to assume an air of careless unconcern, difficult in the circumstances.

There was a tap at the door.

Mr. Quelch stepped in.

Wharton and Nugent rose respectfully to their feet, keeping as close to the table as possible.

"Ah, I am glad to find you in your quarters, my boys!" said Mr. Quelch, with a gracious nod.

All the gladness was on Mr. Quelch's side. But the chums of the Remove looked as pleased as they could.

"Pray step in, Mr. Snooks! This will be your son's study at Greyfriars, and these boys will be his study-mates."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent assumed their politest smiles as they were presented to the portly gentleman.

Mr. Snooks was kind and gracious.

His look was that of a prosperous solicitor. He wore a massive gold chain with seals, upon a well-filled waistcoat; and he had an appraising eye. If the juniors looked a little embarrassed, Mr. Snooks did not notice it specially. It was natural that mere junior schoolboys should be a little embarrassed in speaking to so portly and important a gentleman as Mr. Snooks. Certainly he was not likely to guess that their embarrassment was caused by the fact that a schoolboy, disguised as a Form master, was hidden palpitating under the study table.

"Come in, Montague!" said Mr. Snooks.

The new fellow came in.

Wharton and Nugent were too worried to notice him much; but they noted that he was a rather good-looking fellow, about their own age, with a somewhat thoughtful cast of countenance, and a dreamy eye.

"This will be your study, Montague!"

"Yes, dad."

"And these boys will be your study-mates."

"Yes, dad."

"Wharton, head boy of the Remove, and Nugent," said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, this is Montague Wilfred Snooks, a new boy in your Form. I hope you will be good friends in this study."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Wharton. "Quite so, sir!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Nugent.

Such a name as Montague Wilfred Snooks would probably have had an enlivening effect on the juniors at any

other time. But they hardly noticed it now, with such a worry on their minds.

They hoped from the bottom of their hearts that the undesired visitors, having seen the study, would go.

But Mr. Snooks did not seem in a hurry to go.

He seemed a little spent by his journey up the stairs; and Wharton felt bound to offer him a chair.

He placed the chair with its back to the table, and Mr. Snooks thanked him with a kind smile and sat down.

Mr. Quelch, who probably was quite keen to have done with his visitor and get back to his own avocations, still wore a mechanical smile. Parents were a necessary evil in a schoolmaster's career—things that had to be put up with, like hailstorms and rain. The schoolmaster's view of parents, indeed, was not unlike the schoolboy's view of schoolmasters—unpleasant things that couldn't be helped, and had to be stood.

"Quite a charming little room—quite!" said Mr. Snooks. "I think you will be happy here, Montague."

"Yes, dad."

"This is where you will—er—pursue your studies, and so on," said Mr. Snooks rather hazily. Perhaps he was trying to recall his own schooldays, and the occupations of that dim and distant period. "Here you will—er—cultivate the Muses, Montague."

"Yes, dad!" Montague's vocabulary seemed rather limited.

"I shall expect to receive a favourable report of you at the end of the term, Montague. Work hard and play hard. Mens sana in corpore sano—what? You see, I have not quite forgotten my classics, Mr. Quelch."

Mr. Quelch's face was expressionless; but Wharton and Nugent dared not look at him, as Mr. Snooks trotted out that ancient tag—apparently all he remembered of the "classics." There was a faint sound in the room—it was like a suppressed chuckle—suppressed just in time. Mr. Quelch started, and glanced round.

"You have no animals in this study, Wharton?"

"Animals, sir?" stammered the captain of the Remove.

"Yes—a dog, or a cat——"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"I certainly heard a sound. It is very odd. Are you sure that there is no animal under the table?"

"Quite sure, sir!" said Wharton. William Wibley, of the Remove, could scarcely be described as an animal.

"I think the Head will be expecting——" said Mr. Quelch, after a pause.

Mr. Snooks took the hint and rose.

"Come, Montague!"

"Yes, dad!"

Mr. Quelch rustled out of the study with his visitors, much to the relief of the Removites.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Wharton.

"You fathead, Wib, you nearly gave yourself away!"

"Are they gone?"

"Yes. Lie low for a bit, though—they're slow."

"I thought Quelch had spotted the chump, when he sniffed!" murmured Nugent.

"Well, how could a chap help it, when that old ass trotted out his giddy rot?" said Wibley. "I say, aren't they clear yet? I'm nearly tied into a sailor's knot under this dashed table!"

"Quiet for a bit."

Wharton stepped to the door to scout. To his dismay, he found that Mr. Snooks had stopped on the Remove stair-

case, and was examining, with interest, initials carved in the oak balustrade by some bygone Greyfriars fellow—who had probably been licked twenty years ago for his exploit.

Mr. Quelch, leaving him at it, was stepping back towards Study No. 1, and he almost butted into Wharton at the door.

Wharton backed into the study, and Mr. Quelch followed him in. At the same moment a voice proceeded from under the table.

"I say, surely old Quelch is clear off by this time, isn't he?"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

Wharton and Nugent didn't. They were rooted to the floor with utter horror.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, crumbs!" came from under the table, as William Wibley recognised the well-known tones.

"Wharton! What does this mean?"

"I—I—I——" babbled Wharton.

"Someone is concealed under the table. You told me that there was no one there, Wharton."

"I—I said there wasn't an animal, sir. There isn't."

"A mere quibble!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I was quite certain that I heard a sound under the table, but I did not wish to call you to account in the presence of a visitor. I, therefore, stepped back to ascertain——"

"There—there isn't any animal in the study, sir," said Nugent feebly. "We—we know we're not allowed——"

"Enough! Come out from under the table immediately, whoever is there!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Who is it, Wharton?"

"Wibley, sir!" stuttered Wharton.

"And why is Wibley hiding under the table?"

"He—he didn't want to—to—to—you see, the—the visitors," stammered Wharton. "The—the—you—I—he——"

Wharton was getting a little incoherent. "Why should not Wibley desire to be seen?"

"Because—— Oh, dear!"

"Wibley!" rapped out the Remove master.

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir."

"I cannot understand this. What prank is being played in this study? What does it mean? I insist upon knowing! Come out into view immediately, sir!"

"The—the fact is, sir," stammered Wharton, "we—we were doing some—some private theatricals, sir, and—and Wibley is rather—rather got up, sir——"

"That is no reason why he should hide himself. I order you to come out of that—that place of concealment instantly, Wibley!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Wharton and Nugent stood rooted to the floor as Wibley crawled out. The next moment they almost jumped clear of the study carpet.

Wibley had gone under the table looking like a twin brother of Mr. Quelch, in a borrowed gown and a made-up face. He emerged without the gown, and his face was nothing like Mr. Quelch's now. It was a little like Othello's, perhaps—it was black all over, from forehead to chin, and ear to ear.

Mr. Quelch started violently.

"Bless my soul! Is—is that you, Wibley?"

"Yes, sir," said Wib meekly. "I—I thought I—I might startle you, sir!"

"Absurd!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

He looked very hard at Wibley, and

Look out for Fisher T. Fish's latest money-making stunt!

then turned and whisked out of the study. To the relief of the juniors he went downstairs with Mr. Snooks and Master Montague Wilfred Snooks, and disappeared. Wharton closed the door of Study No. 1.

"How——" he ejaculated.

"How——" gasped Nugent.

Wibley grinned—a black grin.

"Lucky I had the lampblack under the table with me," he said. "I thought I was a goner, till I thought of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat, what a giddy narrow escape!" breathed Wharton.

"A miss is as good as a mile," grinned Wibley. "You fellows can get that gown back to Quelch's room somehow. I shall think twice before I give impersonations of Quelch again. It's too dashed exciting."

And Wibley left Study No. 1. It was not till then that Wharton and Nugent had leisure to realise what were the consequences of the arrival of Master Snooks.

"I—I say, we're going to have that new toad in this study!" said Nugent in dismay. "That's rotten of Quelch! We don't want a new kid planted on us here."

"He looks a harmless sort of ass," remarked Wharton.

"They might have put him in another study. We've had this to ourselves all the term."

"It's rotten!" agreed Wharton.

"Beastly!"

"Batter him!" said Wharton.

"Blow him!" said Nugent.

"Talking about me?" asked a cheerful voice at the door; and Montague Wilfred Snooks of the Remove strolled into the study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Snooks of the Remove!

MONTAGUE WILFRED SNOOKS eyed the chums of Study No. 1, and they eyed him. They coloured a little, realising that their remarks had not been of the politest kind. Nevertheless, it was a fact that they did not want new boys "shoved" into their study. Fellows seldom did. Still, the new fellow was not responsible for the shoving, and it would have been hard to blame him for it.

"So you're Snooks?" said Harry Wharton, by way of saying something.

"Perhaps."

"Eh?"

"Perhaps!"

"What the merry thump do you mean by perhaps?" asked the captain of the Remove in amazement. "I suppose you know your own name, don't you?"

"Trying to pull our leg?" asked Nugent.

Snooks shook his head.

"I'll explain another time," he said.

"The fact is——" He paused and looked at the two juniors, who eyed him curiously. "Can I trust you?"

"Trust us?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. Can you keep a secret—a dead secret?" The new boy lowered his voice cautiously. "Can you be silent as the grave?"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"What are you driving at?" demanded Wharton, gruffly. "If this is a game——"

"Nothing of the kind! If I were sure I could trust you, I would tell you the secret of my life."

"The—the—the secret of your life!"

babbled Wharton. He wondered whether this quiet, dreamy-looking fellow was quite right in his head.

"But no, not yet—not yet!" said the new junior. "Another time, when I know you better."

"Look here, Snooks——"

"Don't call me Snooks, please. Call me Montague."

"We don't call new fellows by their Christian names," said Harry. "You're Snooks, and you'll be called Snooks, Snooks."

"Don't you like your name?" asked Nugent, with a grin.

Master Snooks coloured.

"I'd rather you called me Montague, or Monty. If you were named Snooks, he would you like to be called Snooks?"

"What rot!" said Nugent. "Snooks is a good old name—a good old Saxon name, too. What's the matter with Snooks? Snooks, old man, you're a silly ass."

"Have you had your tea?" asked Wharton.

"Yes, thanks! If I'm going to be in this study I shall want somewhere to put my books," said Montague Wilfred. "I've got a good many. I hope I'm not putting you fellows out in any way by coming here."

"Well, it can't be helped, anyhow," said Wharton. "You're welcome, so far as that goes. You can have a shelf of the bookcase. I'll clear these books off."

"That's a pretty rocky old bookcase,"

said the new junior, looking at it. "They don't do you well in bookcases here."

"Fellows furnish their own studies," said Harry. "We clubbed together to get that bookcase, and bought it for ten bob from old Lazarus in Courtfield. You can buy a new one if you like."

"Done!" said Montague, at once. "At least, I'll send for a new one. That is, if you fellows won't think it swank."

"Not at all!"

"Let's see, a rather nice walnut bookcase with glass doors, what?" said Montague. "I'll ask my uncle to send me one."

"Great Scott!" yelled Nugent. "Have you an uncle who will send you a walnut bookcase if you ask him?"

"Why not?"

"Well, I've got a couple of aunts I'll swap for him, if you like."

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter blinked into the study—"I'm looking for that new chap! Oh, here you are, Snooks! Like me to help you put away your things?"

"Thank you!"

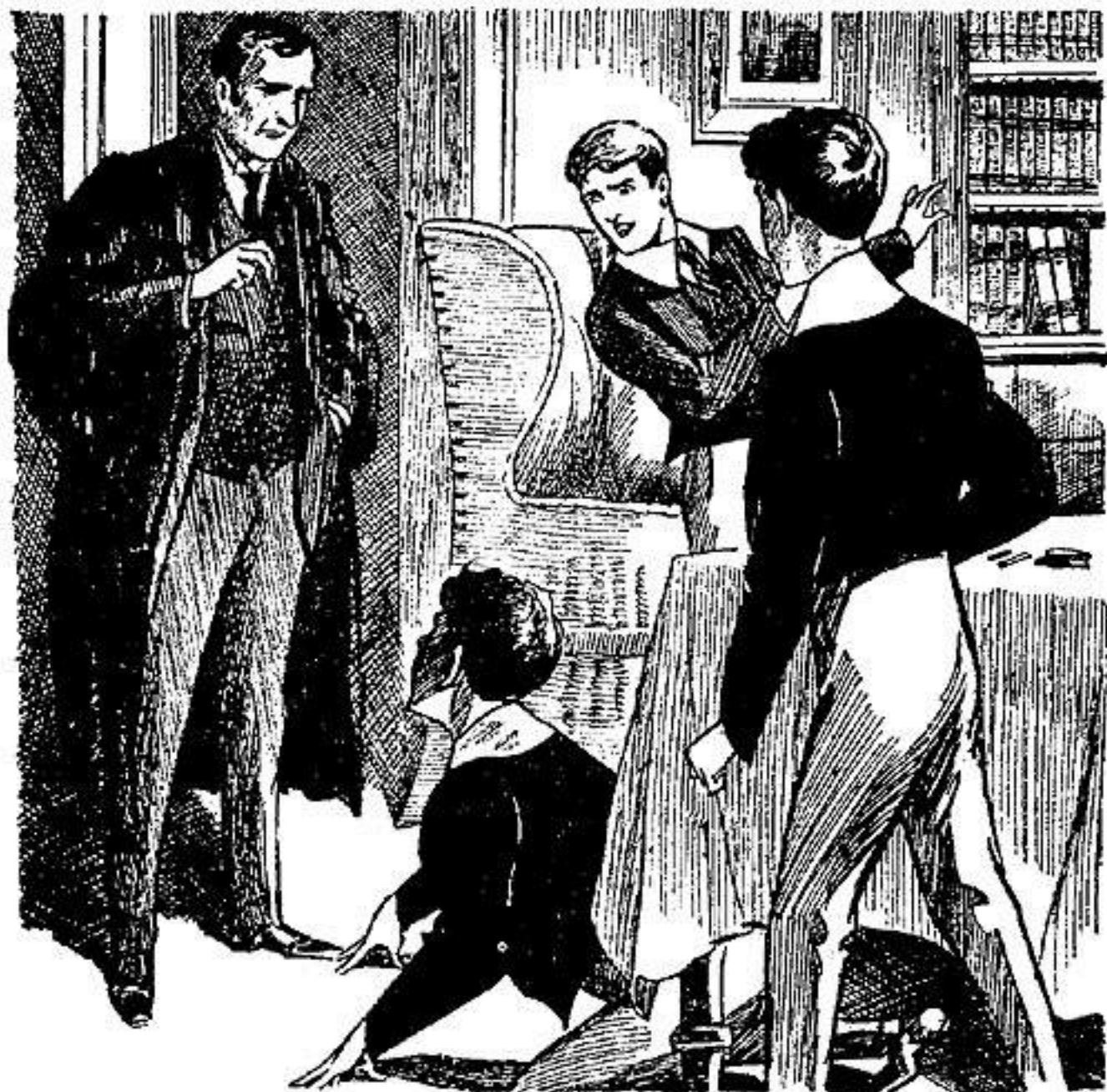
"Glad to oblige," said Bunter affably. "I'm always decent to new kids. Do anything for you."

"Ware Bunter!" said Nugent, laughing. "Bunter generally asks a new fellow to cash a postal order for him. The postal order never turns up."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"You fellows lend me a sheet of paper?" asked Montague. "I'll drop my uncle a line at once and get the bookcase down as soon as possible."

Wharton looked at him.



At Mr. Quelch's request Wibley crawled out from underneath the table. Wharton and Nugent jumped. Wibley had gone into that haven of refuge looking like a twin brother of the master of the Remove. He now appeared as an ordinary Removeite. (See Chapter 2.)

The transatlantic junior "surprises the natives" next week!

"No gammon," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, swank," said Wharton. "I've never heard of a fellow writing home for a new walnut bookcase to be sent to him on his first day at school. Draw it mild, you know."

"Is your giddy uncle a millionaire?" asked Nugent, laughing.

"No; only a baronet!"

"Oh, good! I mean I dare say I know him!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly.

"What's his name, Snooks?"

"Sir Fulke Pulteney."

"What a stunning name!" said Bunter, with quite an affectionate blink at the new junior through his big glasses.

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a glance.

This new junior puzzled them.

His father they would have taken for a prosperous legal gentleman; a perfectly respectable and no doubt admirable middle-class man. But they would not have judged him, on his looks, to be anything more than that. Snooks the solicitor and Sir Fulke Pulteney, the baronet, did not seem to accord somehow. But it seemed incredible that this fellow, Montague Wilfred Snooks, should be indulging in empty swank with a couple of fellows he hardly knew.

"Lend me an envelope?" asked Snooks.

"Certainly. Here you are."

Montague sat down at the table and addressed the envelope. The juniors watched him. The address was: Sir Fulke Pulteney, Bart., Edgcumbe Towers, Wiltshire.

Billy Bunter fairly devoured that address with his eyes. Snooks stamped the envelope and laid it aside.

Then, with Wharton's notepaper, he scribbled a letter in full view of the juniors. It ran:

"Dear Uncle Fulke,—I'm at school now. I want a new bookcase for my study. I'd like a walnut one, about six feet, with glass doors. I know you won't mind.—Your affectionate nephew,

"MONTAGUE."

Montague folded that letter and placed it in the envelope, and fastened down the flap.

"Hold on," said Harry. "There's no address on that notepaper, you know. It's not school paper."

"That's all right. He knows I'm at Greyfriars," said Montague. "Now, if you fellows will tell me where the letter-box is—"

"I'll post it for you, old chap," said Bunter eagerly.

"Will you really?"

"Yes, rather."

"Thanks very much!"

Montague tossed the letter to Bunter, who caught it in his fat hand, and rolled out of the study with it.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton.

Montague looked at him with a smile.

"Own up!" he said. "Until I wrote that letter, you thought that my uncle the baronet was swank."

Wharton coloured.

"Well, I—I— This is a bit unusual, you know. I've got a jolly decent uncle; but I shouldn't have the neck to send him an order like that."

"Oh, Sir Fulke will do anything for me," said Montague carelessly. "I'm his favourite nephew. I'll use this shelf, if you don't mind, till the new bookcase comes."

"We'll lend you a hand to get straight," said Harry.

"Good!"

The three juniors set to work quite amicably.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

BOB CHERRY looked into Study No. 1 after prep that evening, with a grin on his cheery face. Wharton and Nugent had just finished; their new study-mate was not in the room.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's jolly old Montague?" asked Bob.

"Somewhere along the passage," said Wharton. "He hasn't any prep, first day."

"What do you think of him?"

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a glance, and laughed.

"Blessed if I know," said Harry. "He seems harmless enough, but—"

"Not a bad fellow," said Nugent. "But—"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Exactly my view," he said. "Not by any means a bad chap, but—" He chuckled again. "These books his?"

"Yes; we've given him that shelf till his new bookcase comes."

Bob glanced at the row of books belonging to the new junior. The whole length of the shelf was stacked with them, and there were others piled on top. Montague seemed wealthy in books.

Bob gave a whistle.

"My hat! We've got a giddy scholar among us at last," he said. "Look here. 'P. Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoseon'—we don't do Ovid in the Remove. That's for the mighty intellects of the Fifth and Sixth. Does young Snooks wallow in Ovid for the pleasure of the thing? Blessed swot!"

"Looks like it," said Harry. "There's some jolly steep titles on some of those books. There's an Aeschylus, and a Sophocles."

"Great pip!"

All the volumes were neatly fastened in paper covers, apparently to protect the bindings—unusual forethought on the part of a Lower Fourth boy. The titles were written in pen and ink on the outside of the paper covers, and some of the titles were certainly imposing.

Bob—unsuspicious but curious—jerked the Ovidian volume from the shelf, opened it, and looked into it. Then he gave a yell.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! My hat!"

"What's up?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha! Deep!" roared Bob.

"This isn't Ovid—jolly old Ovid on the cover, and a giddy novel inside."

"What?"

Wharton and Nugent ran across to the bookcase. They stared at the volume in Bob's hand.

There was no doubt about it. They had helped Montague park his books on the shelf without thinking of looking into them. Now they discovered that the outside of those volumes were deceptive.

"P. Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoseon" was neatly written on the outside paper cover. But inside was a novel, of which the title was "The Lost Heir of Highclere Hall."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "I suppose he knows that the giddy beaks are down on a chap having shilling shockers, so he's got them all up as school books."

"What a dodge!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Let's look at the others!" grinned Bob.

A dozen volumes were taken from the shelf and peered into.

Apart from the books necessary for his work in the Lower Fourth, Montague Wilfred was not provided with school books, in spite of that imposing array on the shelf. For every volume that was examined appeared to be a novel of the most thrilling kind—some of them quite blood-curdling—all of them extremely romantic.

"The Missing Heir." "The Mysterious Millionaire." "The Gentleman Jockey." "Born in the Purple." "Blood Royal!" "The Dark, Dead Secret." That was a selection of the titles.

The Removites chortled over them.

Montague Wilfred's taste in literature was decidedly romantic and lurid.

"Is the jokefulness terrific, my esteemed chums?" asked a soft voice, as Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh came into the study with Johnny Bull.

"What's on?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Look!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, my hat! Quelchy would make him chuck all that muck in the fire if he spotted it," said Johnny Bull.

"The chuckfulness would be the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"That's why they're got up like this," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If Quelchy noticed this little lot he must have thought Montague a jolly learned man for the Lower Fourth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, this is queer!" said Johnny Bull, glancing at the title-page of one of the novels.

A name was written there, evidently by the owner. But the name was only partly familiar to the Removites. It was "Montague Wilfred de Saumarez St. Leger."

"That sounds a bit more classy than Snooks, doesn't it?" remarked Bob Cherry. "But what the dooce does the ass mean by it? It's his fist. Here's his name in another book, and it's the same hand—Montague W. Snooks—in this volume."

Wharton looked perplexed.

"It's odd," he said. "The chap can't have two names. His name must be Snooks, as his father's name's Snooks."

"Then what the thump has he written St. Leger here for?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Can't have used another name when he was abroad?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Has he been abroad?"

"Yes; we've just been in Russell's study, hearing him. He was telling Russell and Ogilvy about his early life in Italy."

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

The Famous Five looked round as Montague Wilfred Snooks came into Study No. 1. He looked at them, and at the books in their hands, and started a little.

"You don't mind us looking at your jolly old classics—what?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Oh, no, not at all! They're my favourite books," said Montague carelessly. "I thought I might as well put the covers on them, though, because—"

"You'd better keep the covers on them, too!" grinned Bob. "Awful lot of trash, old man."

"The trashfulness is terrific."

"What the thump have you got two different names written in your books for, Snooks?" asked Johnny Bull, in his direct way. "Is your name Snooks, or St. Leger?"

Montague gave a start.
 "St. Leger?" he repeated.
 "That's what's written here—after your Christian names. Is it some sort of a joke?"
 Montague did not reply for a moment. He stepped to the door, and glanced into the passage, and then, closing the door, came back towards the group of astonished juniors.
 "I never meant you to know," he whispered.
 "Eh! To know what?"
 "The knowfulness is not great, my esteemed Snooks!"
 "Now, you must know," said the new boy. "It is a secret—a deep, dark secret. Will you swear—?"
 "No fear!" said Bob. "We don't swear in the Remove! They swear a bit over at Highcliffe, I believe."
 "I mean, swear to keep the secret—give me your word!" said the new junior, earnestly.
 "What secret?"
 "The secret of my birth."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Perplexing Problem!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. fairly blinked at the new junior.

Montague Wilfred Snooks made that extraordinary remark with a manner of deep and serious earnestness.

He looked so terribly in earnest, that it was impossible to suppose that he was trying to pull the leg of the Famous Five. At the same time, it was scarcely possible to suppose anything else.

In novels, of course, it is not at all uncommon for a fellow to be handicapped by his birth being "wrapped in mystery"—the secret being finally revealed by an opportune discovery of certain mysterious documents. But in real life it is very rare indeed for a fellow to have to rub along with mysterious documents instead of a birth-certificate. Certainly the Greyfriars fellows had never heard of a fellow in a queer scrapo like that—though they had read of such things lots of times.

The famous Five were so astonished that for some moments they could only blink at Montague.

"The—the—the what?" ejaculated Wharton at last.

"The secret of my birth."

"Is there any secret about your birth?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Yes."

"Great Scott!"

"Can it?" said Johnny Bull, who was a practical youth. "Look here, Snooks I—"

"My name is not Snooks."

"Not Snooks?" yelled Bob. "What is it, then?"

"St. Leger."

"Oh, my hat! Then what do you mean by coming here as Snooks, if you're not a genuine Snooks bird?"

"I had no choice. My life would have been in peril—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Were my real name known, my life would not be worth twenty-four hours' purchase!" said Montague, with deep earnestness. "That is why my early years were spent in a foreign clime."

"A foreign which?" asked Bull.

"A foreign clime."

"Do you mean a foreign country?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, say a foreign country, then!" granted Johnny. "Speak English, not novel-language!"



"Think I believe all your yarns about the brigands?" said Bunter.
 "You get them out of books." "Oh!" exclaimed Montague.
 "Cheek, I call it!" continued Bunter. "Why, I—yaroooooh!"
 Montague took the fat junior by the ear and shook him. (See Chap. 6.)

"And who's after your scalp, Snooks?" asked Bob Cherry.

"My wicked uncle."

"Sir Fulke, who's sending you the bookcase?" asked Nugent.

Montague started.

"No, no! Another uncle! Heav me! The man you saw come to the school with me—"

"Your pater?"

"I call him father," said Montague gloomily. "He is a faithful solicitor, who served my father well. To save my life he has adopted me as his son. Only my uncle Sir Fulke is in the secret. Until I am of age, I dare not let it be known that I am the rightful heir of St. Leger!"

"Holy smoke!"

"Keep the secret, which you have surprised!" said Montague impressively. "My life may depend on it."

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gammon and piffle! Do you think you can get chaps to swallow bunkum like that?" demanded Johnny Bull scornfully.

"I say, draw it mild, Johnny!" murmured Nugent. "There—there may be something in it, for all we know!"

"Rot!"

"Look here, Snooks!" said Harry Wharton. "Give it to us straight! If you're romancing, own up, and we'll treat it as a joke!"

Montague raised his hand haughtily.

"I have told you my secret," he said.

"You forced it from me, by looking at

my true name written in that book—written in a thoughtless moment. Betray me if you choose—it may cost me my life! I do not care; a St. Leger knows not the meaning of the word fear! I will say no more!"

With that Montague walked out of the study, and closed the door after him with a bang.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder.

"Is he off his rocker?" said Harry.

"Or is there something in it?" said Nugent.

Snort! from Johnny Bull.

"Of course, there's nothing in it, ass! He's been reading these silly novels till he's got them on the brain!"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" said Wharton. "Still, it's jolly queer to start a silly yarn like that on strangers. He hasn't known us a few hours."

"The queerfulness is terrific!"

"Wicked uncle!" snorted Johnny Bull. "Who's ever heard of a wicked uncle outside a silly novel? My uncle is a jolly old sport!"

"So's mine!" said Wharton, laughing. "But—"

"As for his other uncle, the baronet, it's all bunkum!" said Johnny Bull. "His father's a solicitor, and solicitor's sons don't generally have baronets for uncles."

"No; that seems to be genuine," said Wharton. "He's written to his uncle, the baronet, from this study already."

"And let you see the letter?" granted Johnny. "And then put it in his pocket,

—finds its members anything but "friendly"!

What happens?

to chuck him into the fire when you were not looking!"

"Out!" said Nugent. "The letter was posted. Bunter took it and posted it for him."

"Oh!" said Johnny Bull, rather taken aback. "Sure of that?"

"Quite sure; and it was addressed to Sir Fulke Pulteney, Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire."

Johnny Bull whistled.

"Well, that must be genuine, I suppose," he admitted. "But the rest is all bunkum! You've got a potty rabbit in this study!"

The Famous Five left the study, and went down to the Common-room, all but Johnny Bull feeling perplexed. Johnny was quite certain that his opinion was the correct one; but, then, Johnny always was certain, and he was not always right. The other fellows simply did not know what to make of it. That the Greyfriars Remove should contain a fellow who was heir to a great estate, whose birth was a secret, and who passed under an assumed name because he feared for his life at the hands of a wicked uncle, was really too "steep." And yet—

Montague did not appear in the Common-room. Later in the evening Harry Wharton, moved by an impulse of kindness, and remembering the existence of the new boy, looked in the Remove study for him.

He found Montague in Study No. 1—alone. He was seated at the table, writing a letter. He glanced up at the sight of Wharton, and smiled faintly.

"Coming down to the Common-room, Snooks?" asked Wharton cheerily.

"I'm writing to my uncle."

"Oh!"

"You do not believe the strange tale I told you?" said Montague wistfully. Wharton coloured.

"Hem! I— Hem!"

"I do not blame you. Only keep it a secret."

"Oh, we'll do that!" said Harry.

"Look at this letter."

"But why—"

"I should like you to believe me," said Montague, in the same wistful way. "This may help you to believe, dark and mysterious as the affair is. Read the letter."

Wharton looked at it. It ran:

"Dear Uncle Fulke,—My unhappy fate has already pursued me here. In a careless moment I had written my true name in one of my books. I have destroyed it now; but it was seen by a boy in my Form, who showed it to others. I have bound them to secrecy, and I believe that they will keep their word. Do not fear for me. Whatever may betide I shall meet it with the courage of my race. MONTAGUE."

Wharton read that amazing letter, which, if genuine, was a proof of the truth of the new boy's astounding tale.

"There is the envelope," said Montague, with dignity.

Wharton picked up the envelope. It was addressed to Sir Fulke Pulteney, Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire.

"Will you put the letter in the envelope, seal it, and post it?" asked Montague, with the same quiet dignity.

"I—I will if you like," stammered Wharton.

"Please do!"

And Wharton did.

He dropped the letter into the school letter-box, whence, of course, it was impossible for Montague to reclaim it, if

he had wanted to do so. He returned to the School House with his mind almost in a whirl.

Was the strange tale true? Had a chapter of a novel, as it were, suddenly happened in the Greyfriars Remove? If not, what would Sir Fulke Pulteney think when he received that amazing letter?

It was a problem to Wharton, but he wondered—and his chums wondered when he told them—whether there was, after all, "something in it." Even Johnny Bull's conviction seemed a little shaken. At all events, the chums of the Remove agreed upon one thing—to keep the secret.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Chummy Bunter!

MONTAGUE WILFRED SNOOKS took his place in the Greyfriars Remove on the following day.

A good many of the Removites were quite interested in him.

The Famous Five could not help being interested, from their knowledge of his "secret." Russell and Ogilvy were interested, from what he had told them the previous evening of an adventurous life abroad. Billy Bunter was interested, having expectations from a new fellow whose uncle was a wealthy baronet. Bunter looked forward to getting at least one postal-order cashed by Montague. William Wibley was a little interested, from the fact that the new boy's arrival had nearly landed him into a royal row with his Form master.

To most of the Remove, however, Montague was simply a new fellow, of no particular note. Evidently that was how Mr. Quelch regarded him, having not the faintest suspicion that Montague Snooks had any mysterious history or dark secrets.

In Form Montague was quite ordinary in his ways. He seemed to have forgotten the dramatic scene in Study No. 1.

He was quite good at his work, new as he was, and received several words of commendation from Mr. Quelch.

After morning classes Montague left the Remove-room with his Form-fellows, looking quite cheerful and at his ease. Billy Bunter fastened on him at once.

"Like me to show you round the school, old fellow?" asked Bunter affectionately.

Montague glanced round. Harry Wharton & Co. were heading towards the footer-ground for a little practice before dinner, and nobody else seemed particularly keen on Montague's society. So he allowed Bunter to take possession of him.

The Owl of the Remove piloted him across the quadrangle to the school shop. "Showing Montague round" seemed to be showing him to the tuckshop. That was, indeed, the only part of the school in which William George Bunter was deeply interested.

"Mrs. Mimble's got some new tarts in to-day, Snooks," said Billy Bunter confidentially.

"Has she?" said Montague, without much enthusiasm.

"They're prime," said Bunter. "This way, old chap. It's my treat, you know."

"Oh, all right!"

Billy Bunter piloted Montague into the tuckshop, where there were already a dozen fellows. Some of them nodded to Montague.

"Bunter's got the new kid in tow!" chuckled Skinner. "I say, Snooks, have you cashed a postal-order for Bunter yet?"

"Eh, no!" said Montague, with a stare.

"Shut up, Skinner!" roared Bunter ferociously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him find out for himself!" chuckled Bolsover major. "Every new chap cashes a postal-order for Bunter—once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't mind those chaps, Snooks," said Bunter. "What's yours? Ginger-pop and doughnuts—what? My treat."

"You're very good," said Montague, slightly surprised by this hospitality from Bunter. Bunter really did not look like a fellow likely to expend his substance recklessly upon casual acquaintances.

"Not at all," said Bunter. "I say, Mrs. Mimble— By the way, Snooks"—Bunter lowered his voice to a confidential whisper—"I've been disappointed about a postal-order, old chap. Instead of coming this morning, it's held over till this afternoon. You know these country post-offices. I suppose it's all the same to you if you hand me the five bob and take the postal-order when it comes?"

"I—I suppose so," said Montague doubtfully.

Bunter beamed on him.

New boys were Bunter's game. He liked to attach himself to a fellow who had never heard of his celebrated postal-order.

"Thanks, old chap!" he said. "Five bob—thanks! Here, I say, Mrs. Mimble! Ginger-pop, doughnuts—"

Billy Bunter was soon enjoying himself. After his feed he strolled out of the tuckshop with Montague Wilfred.

"Come and have a look at the footer, old fellow," he said. "Some of the chaps are at practice. I say, do you ever go for the holidays to Edgumbe Towers?"

Montague brightened up, as if his companion had touched on a pleasing topic.

"Certainly!" he answered. "It's a fine place."

"What's it like?" asked Bunter curiously.

Montague had a dreamy look.

"An ancient castellated mansion," he said. "The park stretches before the windows almost as far as the eye can reach. The old oak hall contains the pictures of dead and gone Pulteneys from the reign of King John. As a kid I used to hide myself in the old suits of armour."

"As a kid?" said Bunter.

"Yes."

"Was that before you went to Italy?"

"To—to Italy!" said Montague, with a start.

"Yes; I heard you telling Russell last night about being in Italy, and how you were captured by brigands, and escaped by tying the sheets together, and getting down from the ruined tower. Must have been awfully exciting," said Bunter.

"It—it was," said Montague. "That—that was after my childhood at Edgumbe Towers."

"Could you take a pal there next holidays?" asked Bunter.

"Sir Fulke would be delighted."

"Oh, good! I'll come," said Bunter.

"And then you can come and stay at Bunter Court."

"Where?" ejaculated Montague.

"My pater's place, you know," said Bunter.

One long big laugh—next Monday's Greyfriars story!

"Oh!"
Montague walked on in silence for some minutes. He did not mention Edgcumbe Towers again. Perhaps the mention of Bunter Court had made him tired of the subject of great country mansions.

"When you first saw me, Bunter—" said Montague, after a pause.

"Yes, old chap?"

"Were you surprised to hear that I was called Snooks?"

"Not a bit."

Montague coughed.

"We can't all be aristocrats, you know," said Bunter consolingly. "Now, the Bunters are a very old family, connected with practically all the peerage. I dare say you've heard of Sir Bunter de Bunter, who came over with the Conqueror."

swallowed it? I heard him chortling with Ogilvy afterwards, fit to kill him self."

"Oh!" exclaimed Montague.

"Cheek, I call it!" said Bunter.

"Why, I— Yaroooooh!"

Montague took the fat junior by the ears and shook him. Shaking by the ears is a painful operation. Billy Bunter's yells rang far and wide.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yooop! Leggo! I'll hack your shins! Oh, yowp! Whoop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down in the grass with a crash; and Montague Wilfred Snooks walked away, with a thoughtful and gloomy brow.

After dinner Russell and Ogilvy and five or six other fellows came up to Montague in the quad, with smiling faces.

that it was neither Wharton nor Nugent that sighed. It could only be their new study-mate—Montague Snooks, who had now been more than a week at Greyfriars, and was an object of considerable curiosity in his Form.

Peter Todd looked in, with a grin. He had his own opinion of the curious new boy; but the sigh surprised him a little. Toddy's opinion was that Master Snooks was an imaginative youth, who lived in a world of fancy all of his own; but Toddy did not see what there was to sigh about.

Montague was in the study alone, and he was too deeply absorbed to see Peter Todd grinning in at the door. He was seated in the armchair, with a book on his knees that he had been reading. Now his eyes were fixed dreamily on the window and the patch of blue sky there, and his thoughts seemed far away.



Wharton dragged the table aside and gave the combatants room. Temple and Montague fought furiously, trampling to and fro. "What's the row about?" inquired Johnny Bull. "An argument about the jolly old baronetage," grinned Nugent. (See Chapter 8.)

"Wha-a-at?"

"He founded the family," said Bunter. "The name's constantly mentioned in history from the time of the Conquest. Noblemen, powerful barons, statesmen, prime ministers, and all that, you know."

"You young ass!"

"What?" ejaculated Bunter.

"What's the good of giving me that piffle?" demanded Montague, in disgust.

Billy Bunter glared at his companion. Truth is great, and must prevail; but it is not always palatable. Bunter's remarks undoubtedly were "piffle," but he did not like being told so.

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" said Bunter warmly. "What about your own yarns, I'd like to know?"

"Eh?"

"Think I believe that gammon about the brigands?" demanded Bunter. "You got it out of a book. Think Russell

"Tell these chaps that story about the brigands," said Russell.

"Oh, do!" said all the juniors together. But Montague didn't!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Peter Puts it Plain!

THERE was a deep sigh in Study No. 1.

Peter Todd heard it, and gave a little start.

Deep sighs were uncommon enough in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. If a fellow was bothered, he might say "Bother!" or he might say "Blow!" or even "Dash it!" But he never thought of sighing. For a fellow in the Lower Fourth to be heard to sigh was rather a record.

Toddy was coming along to the study to speak to Wharton on the important subject of football. He was quite sure

From the doorway Toddy could see the volume on Montague's knees. On the paper cover that enclosed the binding was written the title "De Bello Gallico." But Toddy had heard all about Montague's books, and he was assured that the volume inside the cover dealt with something much more romantic and airy than the Gallic War.

There was a thoughtful, wistful expression on Montague's face; and as Peter watched him, he sighed again—deeply. Peter chimed in with a deep groan.

Montague jumped.

"What—"

Peter groaned again, deeply.

The new junior stared round at him. "What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Nothing!" answered Peter cheerfully.

"What are you groaning for, then?"

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"To keep you company."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You know what Byron said. Smithy recited it in the literature class the other day," said Peter Todd blandly. "He said: 'Why should I for others groan, when none will sigh for me?' That was reasonable enough—fellow doesn't give something for nothing. But if a fellow does sigh for you, it's only fair play to groan for him—what? So, as you sighed, I groaned. Catch on?"

Montague blinked at the humorous Peter. He was not, apparently, in a humorous mood. But Peter was.

"Go it," continued Toddy encouragingly. "I'll keep it up as long as you do!"

"You silly ass!" roared Montague.

Peter chuckled.

"That's better," he said. "That sounds better than sighing, and more suitable in the Lower Fourth."

"You—you chump!"

"Hear, hear!" said Peter. "I looked in to speak to Wharton—"

"He's out! Go and look for him!"

"Not at all," said Toddy, taking a seat on the corner of the study table. "Now I'm here, I'll give you a few minutes of my valuable time. I'm rather interested in you, Snooks."

Montague looked at him rather uncertainly.

"You're a bit of a queer cuss, you know," observed Peter.

"I believe I'm rather out of the usual run of Lower boys," said Montague, a little loftily.

"You are—no mistake about that. Or, rather, you fancy you are, which comes to the same thing. What's that book you're reading?"

Montague held it up, and showed "De Bello Gallico," written on the cover.

Peter grinned.

"But what's inside?"

Montague grinned faintly, too.

"Oh, a book!" he said carelessly.

"'The Missing Heir,' " asked Peter, "or 'The Lost Baronet,' or 'The Mystery of the Moat,' or—"

"Oh, rats!"

Peter made a jerk at the book, and read the title. It was "The Strange Secret of Bertram Cholmondeley."

"Give me my book, you ass!" snapped Montague.

But Peter, grinning, glanced into the book. It needed only a glance or two to apprise him that Bertram Cholmondeley, though he had started life as a foundling under the name of Jones, had turned out, in a later chapter, to be the son and heir of a particularly highly-connected marquis; after which Bertram had wedded the Lady Annabel, and dwelt in aristocratic splendour at Cholmondeley Towers.

"Give me that book, you cheeky ass!" exclaimed Montague, and Peter tossed it back to him.

"Now I'm going to give you a tip, Snooks!" said Peter, wagging a forefinger at Montague.

"Keep it!"

"You're a young ass," said Peter, unheeding. "I don't think you're a bad chap. But you're a particular ass. The very completest thing in the asinine line; in fact. You read too many novels."

"Mind your own business!" suggested Montague.

"You let them get into your head," continued Peter. "Now, lots of fellows have a jolly active imagination. It's a good thing, within limits. It's amusing to fancy oneself a giddy emperor, or a prime minister, and wonder what one

would do in those circumstances. But a fellow with boss-sense always keeps an eye on the line between imagination and reality. When he forgets to do that, he's liable to develop into a first-class ass, and very likely a terrific liar!"

Montague winced.

"There's Bunter, for instance——"

"Bunter!" ejaculated Montague.

"Yes, jolly old Bunter. From thinking how ripping it would be to have a terrific big place in the country, with jolly old butlers, and footmen, and expensive motor-cars, and all that, Bunter gets on to fancying that he's got it—see? Hence Bunter Court."

Montague made a gesture of disgust. Evidently he was not flattered at being compared with William George Bunter.

"You've just been reading about jolly old Jones turning out to be a merry marquis," went on Peter. "Things like that happen in novels. But in real life, old fellow, the Snooks stay Snooks all their life. No good sighing about it; you can't sigh your way into the peerage. Only solid cash, and a thumping lot of it, will take you there. Now, my tip is this—chuck all this trash into the fire, and pull yourself up, before you develop into a silly gushbag like Bunter. Catch on?"

"Do you think I'm anything like Bunter?" howled Montague.

Peter chortled.

"You don't think you are, but you are!" he answered. "Take a friend's tip, old chap, and come down to facts. You've spun a lot of yarns since you've been here. You're growing funny!"

"Funny!" breathed Montague.

"That's the word—funny! You let your romantic stuff take too much hold of you," explained Peter. "Cut it out! See?"

Montague stood looking at Peter Todd. His face was crimson. Peter slid off the table.

"Chew on it, old bean," he said; and he sauntered out of the study, leaving Montague silent and troubled.

Montague kicked the door shut after him.

Then he moved restlessly about the study. Peter's plain, practical talk had had an effect on him. It was meant good-naturedly, too. Montague could see that. But it was not what Montague wanted.

Montague was an imaginative fellow, and he had allowed his fancy to run wild. Commonplace existence did not satisfy him; he greatly preferred the highly-coloured world of his fervid fancy. Nature had made him a solicitor's son, in an ordinary suburban home, and given him the name of Snooks. Montague's romantic soul soared far beyond such surroundings. He was a Crusading knight, clad in armour, cutting down Saracens; or he was Bertram de Cholmondeley, struggling to retain his rightful title and estate; or he was a gallant sea-captain, the last to leave the burning wreck—largely according to the latest novel he had read; and in the midst of these dazzling visions it really was a little hard to remember that actually he was Snooks, the son of Mr. Snooks, the Surbiton solicitor.

"Oh, rotten!" muttered Montague. He stopped before the study glass and stared at his reflection in it. "Snooks! Oh, gad!"

Montague's lip curled sardonically. Montague's had lately been reading Byron, and, almost unconsciously, he had begun to cultivate a sardonic curl of the lip, in the style of the Giaour and the Corsair.

He roamed round the study again restlessly.

Then he picked up the volume, which had "De Bello Gallico" on the outside, and "The Strange Secret of Bertram Cholmondeley" inside.

He sat down to read again, and forgot Peter Todd and Greyfriars and Surbiton solicitors. Once more he was in his element, far away from the commonplace. Once more he was the missing heir fighting for his rights against a wicked uncle, and that wicked avuncular relative's myrmidons. Then the book dropped on his knees, and he leaned back and gazed at the window dreamily.

Peter Todd had given him good advice. Peter Todd had meant well, but he had done Montague no good at all.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Temple Knows!

"WHERE'S the bookcase?"

"Eh?"

"The bookcase!" said Nugent, with a grin.

It was the following week, and the three juniors were in Study No. 1, getting ready for prep.

Montague looked at Nugent in surprise. Probably he had forgotten the incident of his first day at Greyfriars by that time.

In Montague's fanciful mind vision succeeded vision at a great rate. Possibly, by this time, he was the rightful Duke of Dunderland, or the last of the Stuarts, and had forgotten that he was the favourite nephew of Sir Fulke Pulteney, Baronet.

Nugent grinned and Wharton laughed. Nothing more had been said in Study No. 1 of the dread secret that Montague had confided to the Famous Five, and nothing more had been said of the new bookcase. The secret of the birth of St. Leger-Snooks did not matter, but the bookcase did.

"When is it coming?" asked Nugent.

"Coming?" stammered Montague.

"Yes. You haven't forgotten, surely?"

"Give it a rest, Frank," said Harry Wharton, taking compassion on Montague's evident confusion.

"Well, it's nearly a fortnight now," said Frank Nugent. "High time that the jolly old baronet weighed in with that walnut bookcase, if he means to weigh in at all."

"I—I'll write and remind him," stammered Montague.

"Oh, do!" said Nugent.

And the subject was dropped as the three juniors settled down to prep. After prep Montague started writing a letter. Wharton and Nugent exchanged a glance as he laid on the table an envelope addressed to Sir Fulke Pulteney, at Edgcombe Towers, Wiltshire.

"One of you fellows might drop that into the letter-box, if you're going down," said Montague, with dignity.

Wharton hesitated.

His manners were perhaps a little more polished than Peter Todd's, and he did not care to speak so plainly to Montague. But his opinion of the new boy, by this time, was very like Peter's.

Yet he was puzzled.

The letters to the Wiltshire baronet had been posted; he knew that beyond a doubt. In fact, Montague had taken care that he should know it beyond a doubt. Unless the matter was as Montague stated, what effect would be

Special Lawn Tennis Number of the "Herald" next!

produced on Sir Fulke by such communications—if, indeed, Sir Fulke had any existence outside Montague's imagination! But if there was no such baronet, and no such address, the letters should have been returned to the school through the Dead Letter Office. And certainly they had not been returned.

Wharton was perplexed, but it was his way to give a fellow the benefit of the doubt. He hated to think of any fellow as a reckless liar and braggart.

"I'll post it," he said at last.

And he left the study with Nugent, the letter in his hand. The letter was duly dropped in the school box.

"It's jolly queer!" Nugent remarked, as they walked back to the School House. "Blessed if I understand the fellow, Harry! Is there really such a person at all as Sir Fulke Pulteney?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Wharton. "If there isn't, the letters ought to be returned here."

"That's so. But—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton suddenly.

"Well?"

"The address!" exclaimed Harry. "The letters can't be returned from the Dead Letter Office unless there's an address inside, and you know Snooks put no address on them."

Nugent burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! What a dodge! Of course they couldn't! Those blessed letters are stacked up in the Dead Letter Office all the time, then!"

Wharton did not laugh; he compressed his lips.

"The silly ass!" he said. "The spoofing chump! Making fools of us all the time! That's why he gets us to post the letters—to show us the address. Why, he must be wrong in the head to play silly tricks like this!"

"I'll jolly well speak to him about it!" exclaimed Nugent wrathfully.

The two juniors went up the stairs again, and on the landing they met Cecil Reginald Temple of the Fourth Form.

"Lookin' for you chaps," said Temple.

"What's on?"

"I've got somethin' to tell you," said Temple. "You've got a sort of potty goat in your study named Snooks."

"What about him?" asked Wharton.

"Lots! I think you ought to warn him to stop makin' a giddy ass of himself with his uncle the baronet," said Temple. "Now, you fellows know that my father's a baronet, though I don't swank about it—"

"Don't you?" ejaculated Nugent.

"No!" roared Cecil Reginald.

"Right-ho! My mistake. Get on."

Temple frowned. Temple was a lofty youth, and he was a highly connected youth, and evidently he had heard of Montague's claims to distinction, and had been offended thereby. It was, in Temple's opinion, cheek on the part of a mere Snooks to make out that he was in any way on a par with a fellow like Temple. Cecil Reginald was, in point of fact, a little bit of a snob, though he was quite unconscious of the fact. He was quite annoyed by Snooks' "neck" in butting into the baronetage.

"It's all gammon!" said Temple. "The fellow's a rank outsider, and hasn't any connections at all, in my opinion. Anyhow, he's not got an uncle a baronet."

"How do you know?"

"I've got the 'Peerage and Baronetage' in my study," answered Temple loftily. "My aunt gave it to me for a birthday present."

"My only hat!" said Wharton.



"How dare you, sir," thundered Sir Fulke Pulteney, "write me such ridiculous letters and sign yourself my nephew? Do you dare to assert that I am related to you?" "Nunno, sir," faltered Snooks, miserably. (See Chapter 11.)

"Tactful old lady, your aunt!" grinned Nugent. "Just the kind of birthday present you like—what?"

"Well, I've got it," said Temple, "and I've looked out the name Pulteney in the list of baronets. There's no such name as Sir Fulke Pulteney, of Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire."

"Phew!"

"And I'm jolly well goin' to tell that cheeky outsider so!" said Temple. "It's too thick! Know where he is?"

"We left him in the study," said Nugent, laughing. "Come on!"

Cecil Reginald Temple accompanied the two juniors to Study No. 1. Montague Wilfred Snooks was there.

He was deep in one of his favourite novels, but he looked up as the juniors came in.

"Spoof!" was Temple's greeting.

Montague stared at him.

"What's biting you?" he asked.

"You're a spoof!" said Temple deliberately. "I've bowled you out. There's no such baronet in the list as Sir Fulke Pulteney!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Montague.

"A fair catch!" laughed Nugent. "Own up, Snooks, and don't play the goat any more!"

For a moment Montague's face was utterly dismayed. Obviously, he had never contemplated his pretensions being put to this very simple test. Temple eyed him with lofty contempt.

"So cut it out, see?" said Temple.

"I don't know who you are, or where you came from; but you're a giddy

nobody, and brag don't suit you. Cut it out!"

Montague drew a deep, deep breath. Wharton and Nugent were looking at him, wondering how he would take this. They were surprised at the way he took it. He made a stride towards Temple and struck him across the face with his open hand.

Smack!

Temple, taken quite by surprise, staggered back, and sat down on the study carpet with a bump and a yell.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Fight in Study No. 1!

MONTAGUE WILFRED SNOOKS stood looking down on Temple, with flashing eyes. Temple sat and blinked up at him in astonishment.

"By gad!" ejaculated Temple at last. "You've insulted me!" said Montague.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Wharton. "If the name's not in the official list of the baronetage, Snooks—"

"Perhaps there's a secret about the giddy baronet's birth, too!" suggested Nugent humorously. "Is he known—temporarily—as Snooks, old bean?"

"Probably Temple has an old edition of the 'Baronetage,'" said Montague coldly. "Sir Fulke has only lately come into his title."

"Oh!"

You must not miss "When Greek Meets Greek!"—our next highwayman story!

Temple scrambled to his feet. He jerked off his well-fitting jacket, threw it on a chair, and pushed back his cuffs. "Come on, you spoofin' cad!" he said. "You took me unawares. Let's see if you can do that again!"

"I'm ready for you!" said Montague disdainfully.

Temple rushed at him.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Nugent.

But they did not heed him. Temple, burning with wrath and indignation, was attacking hotly; and Montague was fighting with plenty of courage. He might be a spoofer, but he was no funk. Temple was older and bigger, but Montague stood up to him very gamely.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Trouble in the happy family circle?" Bob Cherry looked in at the doorway.

"I say, you fellows, they're fighting in No. 1!" howled Billy Bunter along the Remove passage.

And there was a rush to the spot.

Half a dozen fellows crowded into the study. A dozen more crammed round the doorway. All were keen to see Montague on the warpath.

Montague had attracted a good deal of attention in the Remove already; but he had not shown up yet as a fighting-man. Now he was showing up unexpectedly well.

Wharton dragged the study table aside to give the combatants room. They fought furiously, trampling to and fro.

"What's the row about?" asked Johnny Bull.

"An argument about the jolly old baronetage!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Go it, Snooks!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

The sympathy of the Remove was with their Form-fellow. But there was strict fair play for Temple of the Fourth.

The juniors kept back to give them plenty of room. Peter Todd suggested gloves, but the combatants were too excited to heed him.

There were no rounds and no gloves. It was hammer-and-tongs from start to finish.

Temple was not getting the best of it.

Temple rather fancied himself as a boxer; and Montague Wilfred Snooks did not, apparently, know very much about that manly art. But Snooks was going very strong.

In the excitement of the combat Snooks was, in fact, no longer Snooks; his active imagination was at work again. He was not Snooks of the Lower Fourth, fighting Temple of the Upper Fourth; he was Bertram Cholmondeley, fighting for his title and estates—and he pitched into the hapless Temple as if Temple had been one of the wicked myrmidons of Bertram's wicked uncle. Snooks of the Remove might have backed away from punishment—but the rightful heir of St. Leger, never! Snooks was going to show these fellows that the fighting blood of St. Leger—or Cholmondeley—ran in his veins. Heedless of hard punishment, he pressed the attack on Temple, and hammered him right and left.

"By gad, Temple's getting it hot!" grinned Skinner. "Snooks is positively dangerous!"

"Man down!" sang out Wibley.

Temple went to the carpet with a crash.

"Wow!" gasped Temple.

"Snooks wins!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"The Snooksfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Temple staggered up.

"Come on, you cad!" he gasped.

"Haven't you had enough?" asked Montague scornfully. "I'm willing to accept your apology, Temple."

"Catch me apologisin' for showin' up a pretendin' cad!" snapped Temple.

"Come on, you rotter! Oh, gad!"

Snooks came on with a terrific rush. Temple was knocked right and left, and he went down again with a crash.

"How's that?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Out!" chuckled Ogilvy.

Temple sat up dizzily. He did not get up this time; he only sat. He was aware that he had had enough.

"Carry him home!" grinned Bol-sover major.

"Good old Snooks!"

Harry Wharton gave the hapless Temple a hand. Cecil Reginald staggered breathlessly to his feet.

"I'm done!" he gasped. "The cad's too much for me. I own that. All the same, he's a spoofin' liar, and his uncle isn't a baronet!"

And with that Cecil Reginald Temple tottered from the study, feeling a little sorry, perhaps, that he had come up to the Remove passage to vindicate the noble order of the baronetage against the pretentious claims of Snooks.

Montague mopped his nose, which was streaming red, with his handkerchief. He blinked at the juniors from half-closed eyes.

Most of the Remove fellows were grinning. They were glad to see a Removite "whop" a Fourth Form fellow—especially the lofty Temple. But there were few who doubted that Temple had stated the facts. Montague's airy pretences were set down at their true value by this time in the Lower Fourth.

"You'd better go and bathe your eyes, Snooks," said Wharton.

"I licked him," said Montague. "I'll lick anybody who doubts my word."

"Phew!"

"That's a big order," grinned Peter Todd. "Are you going through the Remove and the Fourth, from end to end, licking all the lot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Montague, making for the humorous Peter.

"Dear man, you'd fall down dead if I hit you," said Toddy. "I'm not made of putty like Temple. Keep that dangerous nobleman off, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd of Removites. Wharton and Nugent took hold of Montague, and walked him away to a bath-room, to bathe his damaged face, which needed it badly.

And for some days afterwards both Temple of the Fourth, and Snooks of the Remove, had cause to remember that terrific encounter in Study No. 1—both of them being considerably damaged.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Wibley's Wheeze!

"I'VE got it!"

Wibley of the Remove made that announcement, in Study No. 1, about a week after the fight in that celebrated apartment.

Wharton and Nugent were at tea when Wibley came in; but Montague was absent. He was at tea in another study—No. 4. Vernon-Smith had asked him, for the pleasure of hearing him talk. It entertained the sardonic Bounder to "draw" Montague, and listen to his

fanciful narratives, growing more and more fanciful with encouragement.

The Bounder had wagered two to one, in doughnuts, that by a little judicious encouragement, Montague could be made to claim kinship with the blood-royal. So now he was leading him on, in Study No. 4, to the secret entertainment of several other guests, who found it hard to keep grave faces while Smithy drew on Montague from one absurd exaggeration to another.

Wharton and Nugent were not sorry to lose Montague's company. They did not dislike their new study-mate, and they found some good qualities in him. He was good-natured, obliging, and he had pluck. But they were quite fixed in their belief, by this time, that he was an arrant humbug, and would follow the latest fancy that came into his flighty head, with a ruthless disregard for the facts. That kind of thing got on the nerves of a serious fellow like Wharton; and Nugent, who was more tolerant, found that he was soon "fed" with it.

Wharton pointed to a chair, and William Wibley sat down and joined in tea.

"No more giddy impersonations," said Wharton. "I believe Quelch smelled a rat that time."

"Just what I was thinking of—"

"Then eat it out!"

"Oh, I'm done with Quelch!" said Wibley, with a grin. "Too jolly dangerous. But it's not very risky impersonating a chap who don't exist."

"Eh!"

"What?"

"What price me as a baronet?" asked Wibley.

"A—a baronet! What baronet?"

"Sir Fulke Pulteney."

Wharton and Nugent stared at William Wibley. They did not catch on.

"I don't quite follow," said the captain of the Remove. "There isn't such a person as Sir Fulke Pulteney. It was only Snooks' silly gas!"

"I fancy all the Lower School knows that," said Wibley. "But that makes it all the easier. Anybody can make up as an imaginary character. For instance, if a Johnny calling himself Sir Fulke Pulteney dropped in at Greyfriars, Snooks wouldn't know he wasn't genuine, would he?"

"I suppose not."

"Well, that's it!" said Wibley, whose eyes were shining with enthusiasm. "That's my wheeze! I can play the part on my head! I've got the things, too—nearly all I shall want. Of course, I'm not simply thinking of showing off what I can do in the make-up line."

"Oh, not at all!" smiled Wharton.

"I'm simply thinking of doing that crass idiot, Snooks, a good turn," explained Wibley. "He's not a bad chap, I believe, in his way."

"In his way," assented Wharton.

"He's read a lot of silly novels, and got them on the brain," said Wibley. "He keeps on talking out of his hat, and he can't chuck it, somehow, even when he can see that fellows don't believe a word of it. Making a general ass of himself, you know. Some fellows think he can't be quite right in the upper crust, you know, letting his silly fancy run away with him like that. Anyhow, he's making himself ridiculous. It would do him good to bring him up sharp."

"Very likely. But—"

"Well, you've seen me make up. I don't want to brag, but I fancy there

(Continued on page 17.)

Watch the Chat for treats to come!

With his heart full of bitterness against Sir Mostyn Frayne, gamester and rogue, who, in one stroke, has robbed him of a brother and the house and lands which had been the property of the Langleys for generations past, Dick Langley turns highwayman. With a price on his head he roams the countryside, seeking his livelihood behind a mask and a brace of pistols.

GALLOPING DICK!



This Week: THE PHANTOM HORSEMAN!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

At the Sign of the Three Tuns!

"**L**ANDLORD," said the apothecary, as Host Brickell returned to the tap-room, "a word in your ear."

"Step into the parlour, doctor," said Brickell. "'Tis quieter there. Now, then, we are by ourselves."

"Do you know who that was—the young horseman to whom you took the jack of ale?"

"Do I not?" replied the landlord, with a grin. "It's Galloping Dick, the highwayman, of course. He's made the Milton district too hot to hold him for a bit, so he's come over here."

"Ha!" said the apothecary. "So you do know him? And do you know there's a reward of five hundred guineas for him?"

"Yes, I know that, too."

"Have you seen him often?"

"Sure enough. He has come back for a jack of my home-brewed at four o'clock every day for a week. And so he will while he stays in the district. There's no ale like mine, an' he don't care for man or devil, don't Galloping Dick Langley. He'd ride into the Lord Chief Justice's house and call for a flagon of wine, for two pins!"

"Odds bodkins, man, do you mean to say he comes here regularly, and you have made no attempt to catch him, knowing who he is? Are you so rich that five hundred guineas are not worth the earning?"

The landlord pulled a wry face.

"You don't know Galloping Dick, doctor. There's queer tales about o' those who have tried to catch him. Never a one yet but came to grief. I believe he's Old Nick himself!"

"The rascal stopped me in the wood an hour ago," said the apothecary, "and lifted a fat purse from me."

"Faith," thought the landlord, "he's

the first man that's ever got a farthing out o' you, then!"

But he did not say it aloud; and, knowing Dick's ways, he did not believe the young highwayman had robbed the apothecary, even if he had met him.

"Twenty good guineas!" said the man. "But that's nothing. I shall be four hundred and eighty to the good before I've done with him. Nay, not so much as that, for I must have help, and the helpers will want their share, I suppose. I can't do it alone. Landlord, you shall join me in this venture!"

"Not I, sir!" said Brickell, with a scared face. "I don't fancy it!"

"Tut, man! Surely you're not one of those fools who let themselves lack five hundred guineas just because this highwayman has befriended them."

The landlord's small, red eyes winked cunningly.

"Not I!" he said. "'Tis true Galloping Dick's done me a good turn or two, but I'd earn the reward if I saw my way. Only it can't be done, doctor, so no more about it. It would end in our being poorer than before, an' bein' left in goodness knows what plight, an' no five hundred guineas, after all!"

"I can do it," said the apothecary. "And I will, if you'll join me."

"Sharper men than us have failed," said Brickell. "No offence to you, doctor! They wished they'd left him alone!"

"Because they tried force," said the apothecary. "And he's too brisk a rogue to be caught by gun or pistol. That's his trade. But this is mine"—he tapped the black wallet he carried—"and I can beat him at it."

The landlord stared at the apothecary, after a glance at the window and the door, drew forth a small blue bottle.

"Do you see this?" he said. "Put but a thimbleful of it in that jack of ale he comes here for to-morrow afternoon, and half an hour afterwards he'll be past doing harm to you or me."

"What, dead?" ejaculated the landlord.

"No, man, hoccussed! He'll roll off his horse, and for at least an hour he'll sleep like the dead, and nothing will wake him!"

"Ay!" said the landlord, leaning forward eagerly. "I see! And how are we to get hold of him?"

"We must follow him at a distance when he rides away," said the apothecary, his greedy eyes gleaming; "and when the drug has acted we must take him and bind him securely. In case he is not overcome entirely—for he is a strong youngster—we will have one or two brisk fellows to help. It is not necessary, but we shall be on the safe side."

"I'll do it," said the landlord, with an imprecation.

"I will join you here to-morrow before four," said the apothecary, "and by five o'clock Galloping Dick will be in our hands."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Drugged Tankard!

"**S**IXTY-THREE, sixty-four, sixty-five!" counted Dick, dropping the guineas back one by one into the large leathern purse that he had taken from a portly jute merchant on the road over the down the night before. "A goodly purse. Thirty shall go to the cottagers at Braycombe village, for the small-pox has smitten the place sorely, and there are widows and children there without bread-earners to feed them."

He slipped the purse into the pouch on the left flap of his saddle and turned Kitty down the road.

"It would hurt the merchant Johnson more than the loss of his guineas to know they had gone to the poor!" chuckled Dick. "It is his boast that he has never yet given to charity, for he holds that the poor are a curse, and that the

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smallpox is to be thanked for carrying them off."

Dick's face darkened for a moment.

"I will quit this neighbourhood," he said. "I am home-sick for Milton again, and the heather of Blackwold Heath. The men here are knaves. I would not trust a man of them—not even those I have helped with money. Lucky for me, I need trust no one, save Kitty, and my good sword and pistols. You'd die sooner than see me wronged, wouldn't you, old lady? And I'd be hanged by the feet sooner than any harm should come to you. Come, I'll go to Host Brickell's for a last jack of his home-brewed, and to-morrow we'll go back to our own district."

He trotted smartly down the hill, turned at the cross-roads, and pulled up at the door of the Three Tuns.

"Come, mine host!" he cried. "Bring my jack of home-brewed, and quickly. It is for the last time."

The landlord was a little longer than usual in bringing out the tankard, but at last he came, smirking and bowing.

"What, going to leave us, sir?" he said. "That is sorry news."

"Ay, I've had enough of your district, and I dislike the breed of the men that live in it."

"Why, sir," said the landlord, with a sigh, "they are a knavish crew, no doubt. I would there were more men as honest as myself hereabouts. But if you are leaving us, sir, will you not enter and take your ease for an hour before you journey on?"

"Nay," said Dick shortly. "I will not."

"How, sir," said Brickell in a surprised and hurt voice; "do you not trust me?"

Dick looked at the man's small, red, avaricious eyes and slack mouth, and smiled grimly.

"Joe Brickell," he said, "I would not trust you the length of three barleycorns. Give me the tankard."

He drained it to the bottom, unconscious of a lean, dark face that was watching him through the diamond panes of

one of the inn windows. Then he tossed a guinea in the pot and handed it back to Brickell.

"Good-bye, landlord!" he said. "Your ale is the only honest thing about you."

He touched Kitty with his heel, and with a grim nod to Brickell, trotted away down the road. Soon he slowed down to a walk, for the sun was still hot overhead, and there was no need for haste. To escape the oppressive heat, Dick turned aside from the road when he reached Barcombe Woods, and rode at a foot pace through the leafy glades.

A strange, overpowering sense of drowsiness crept over him, and seemed to obscure his sight. He fought against it, but it grew rapidly.

"What makes me so sleepy?" he muttered. "I rested well last night. Odd's fish! I feel as if I had not slept for a week."

He nodded as he rode, and made a desperate effort to rouse himself. It was in vain—the drugged ale was doing its work too well. At last his head sank on his breast, his limbs became limp and powerless, and he rolled helplessly out of the saddle, and lay unconscious on the greensward beneath the trees.

Kitty stood over her master with wondering eyes, and sniffed at him in pity and distress. She whinnied softly, and after trying to rouse him for some time, suddenly trotted away through the scrub.

The mare had hardly departed when Joe Brickell and the black-coated apothecary, with two ill-looking rascals behind them, burst into the glade, and flung themselves on the senseless figure of the young highwayman.

"At last!" cried the apothecary. "I feared he had outridden us. Bind him fast, men! There is no saying when he will overcome the drug, for he is a

strong young rogue, and in the pink of health. He will soon adorn the gallows; and then there will be a pretty dish of guineas to divide."

"What shall we do with him?" said Brickell. "Bind him and carry him into Clewbury?"

"Nay, 'tis too long a job. He may have friends who would try to rescue him on the way if we try to carry him along the roads. Bind him to yonder tree, and let one of you go to Clewbury for a sheriff's officer and half a dozen constables, then we shall be secure. Take care! He is coming to already!"

Dick awoke, with throbbing temples and dazed eyes, to find himself in the grip of his captors. The effects of the drug were rapidly passing from his brain, but he was still weak, and could make little resistance. They bound him to the tree-trunk, pulling the ropes cruelly tight.

"There, you dog!" said the apothecary, striking him heavily across the face. "That is for stopping me on the broad highway and—"

"Look out!" screamed Joe Brickell. "The mare!"

Black Kitty, reappearing suddenly on the edge of the glade, glared for one instant at her master's captors. Her intelligent eyes seemed to take in the situation at a glance. Then, seeing the apothecary strike Dick, she rushed forward with a squeal of rage.

One of the two followers were bowled over like a shot rabbit by the mare's rush, and landed in a thorn-bush. Brickell, brandishing a heavy staff, tried to club the mare between the eyes; but she turned on him like a demon, and striking out with terrible force with her fore hoofs caught him full in the chest. He went down like a log, and lay motionless.

Seeing the apothecary scuttling off as fast as he could, Kitty bolted after him, caught the slack of his breeches with her teeth, and swung him off his feet. He uttered a terrified shriek, and the angry mare shook him like a rat, till Dick's rippling whistle caught her ear.

"Bring him here, Kit!" cried Dick, who was now wide awake again, and struggling in his bonds against the tree-trunk. "Grandly done, old girl!"

The beautiful mare galloped back to the tree, still holding the apothecary, gave him a final shake, dropped him at Dick's feet, and stood over him with bared teeth.

"Now, you cowardly poisoner," cried Dick, "get up and cut me loose, or the mare shall pound the breath out of your body!"

"I will—I will!" shrieked the wretch. "Call her off, and I will do anything!"

"Let him get up, Kitty!" said Dick.

The mare drew back a pace, watching the apothecary narrowly with flattened ears as he rose shakily. With trembling fingers he opened a small pen-knife and cut Dick's bonds. The young highwayman stepped away from the tree, free!

With a grim face he turned to the apothecary. The wretched creature collapsed on the grass, and lay there with ashen cheeks, trembling like a leaf.

"You have had your lesson, I think," said Dick, turning contemptuously away. "Now get back to your bottles, and if you don't make a better use of them than you did to-day, it will be long before you earn five hundred guineas. Come, Kit!"



"Look out!" screamed Joe Brickell. "The mare!" Black Kitty glared for one moment at her master's captors, bared her teeth and then rushed forward, squealing. Brickell tried to club the animal between the eyes, but she turned on him and struck out with her fore hoofs, sending him crashing to the ground. (See Chapter 2.)

A full-of-thrills story—our next yarn featuring Galloping Dick!

And patting the mare on the neck, Dick sprang into the saddle and cantered away through the woods.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The White Rider!

IT was an hour later, and Galloping Dick was holding up a portly merchant.

"Come, sir! You are not the man to prefer a bullet to parting with your money!"

The man, who, with a glum visage, was facing Galloping Dick's pistol, muttered something under his breath, and reached for his purse.

"I care not for a bullet!" he grumbled. "If I am to be held up on the highway by every night-rider, I would as soon lose my blood as my gold."

"So I have heard," said Dick. "And since you have never been known to give either away, I have a mind to ease you of both. Ecod, I could clip off that large ear of yours with a pistol-ball from here, without touching the skull, I dare wager. Hold steady, sir, and you will take no other hurt!"

"Nay, nay!" bawled the merchant, in a terrible fright, thinking Dick was in earnest. "Do not fire, sir, I beg you. I am getting my purse out with all speed, but I am plaguily fat, and it is no easy matter."

"Be pleased to hurry, then," said Dick, laughing hugely at the man's fright, and watching him struggle to haul his purse from the pocket of his tight breeches. "Man alive, do not pull such a face over it! You have never given to the poor in your life, so let it ease you to know that the half of your fat purse will be given to those who need it!"

"The poor!" snarled the merchant, as he handed the purse to Dick, with a wry face. "A curse on the poor! Ah, what's that?"

A cry rang through the stillness of the night, a scream so awful and so full of horror that the merchant turned as white as ashes, and even Dick was startled. It was like the wail of a man dying in mortal terror.

Dick and the merchant sat motionless on their horses during the pause of dead silence that followed the cry, and the young highwayman felt Kitty, his splendid black mare, trembling lightly under him. Then came the quick drumming of a horse's hoofs on the road.

Something swept behind Dick and the man at a furious gallop, and was away round the corner before either could see what it was. Dick wheeled round sharply. The same instant the fat merchant clapped spurs to his back with a terrified scream.

"The Skeleton Horseman!" he shrieked. "The White Rider! I am a dead man!"

He was away in a whirl of clattering hoofs, riding as if a fiend was in pursuit, and galloped furiously off down the road, leaving Dick astonished and anxious.

"What on earth frightened our fat friend so?" he said to Kitty, putting the mare to the trot. "Why, you're sweating and trembling as though a thunderstorm were over us, old lady!"



DAMPING HIS ARDOUR!

"Ha, you villain," cried Dick. "So I have found you out! I saw you put some vile drug in this water. Take that!" He dashed the bucket of water into the man's face. (See Chapter 4.)

That was a terrible cry I heard. Let's see if we can find out what it was."

He rode along the bridle-path that led through the pine-cores on the high and bleak Black Downs, searching where he thought the cry had come from. He found nothing. But it was within half an hour of the dawn, and when the summer sun began to rise, Dick saw a prone form lying in the bracken by the roadside, and jumped hastily down from his horse.

Strong as his nerves were, Dick uttered an exclamation of horror. The man he had found—a respectably-dressed trader by appearance—was dead, but no wound or sign of injury could be seen.

On his face, as if stamped there during his last moments, was a look of awful and unearthly terror.

"It was he who gave that cry," muttered Dick. "Poor fellow, what can have killed him? I see no wound. In any case, he shall not lie there. I will ride to Sam Nethercoats, and have him taken to a house till something is known of his fate."

Outlaw as he was, Dick always had a

soft place in his heart for the troubles of others, and he did not choose that the body should lie unheeded. No doubt there were those who watched for the dead man. Dick rode to a little hamlet where lived several shepherds and countrymen he had lately befriended, roused them out, and led them to the body.

"Ay," said one of them, as soon as he saw the dead man's face, "he's seen the White Rider, poor fellow, that's what he's done!"

"That's it," said the others gravely. "There's many that journeys over Black Down at dark o' the moon, and every now and agin one pays for it. I wouldn't, not for ten thousand guineas!"

"What do you mean?" said Dick. "What is the White Rider?"

"I pray you may never meet him, meester," said the first speaker, "for you be a good friend to us. This down is an accursed place! The White Rider is no rider from this world. 'Tis a white skeleton that rides a black horse, an' of them that sees it few lives to tell the tale. The down is haunted, I tells you."

"Pish!" said Dick. "Nonsense, man!"

"It's the living truth, sir," said the man soberly.

"Who is this poor fellow?" asked Dick.

"'Tis Meester Jonathan Gibbs, a well-to-do linen-draper of Walford," replied one. "Ah, his gowd watch is gone!"

"Turn out his pockets," said Dick. "So there is no purse, either!"

"Some rogue ha' found him an' robbed him," said the men. "We'll take him home, Master Dick, an' let his friends know what's happened. Heaven save the man that meets the White Rider!"

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Close Quarters!

"NOW, what does this mean?" said Dick to himself when the men had taken the victim away.

He rode down to the turnpike-way, below the downs, pondering deeply.

"What can have scared the linen-draper to death, and why was my fat merchant so terrified? Good, does the whole neighbourhood believe this old woman's tale about a skeleton horseman? Likely enough, some stray horseman came by, and the poor linen-draper frightened himself to death over it. They have shocking nerves, these fat city dwellers!"

Kitty suddenly shook her ears.

"And you were scared, too, old lady. I didn't see what came past behind me when the merchant bolted. Can it have been anything? By the way, how came the linen-draper's pockets to be ransacked? I will swear no man found him before I did. Pink me, if I don't keep watch on Black Down to-night, and see if the Skeleton Horseman will ride out and cross weapons with me."

With this resolve in his mind, Dick took a good rest during the day in the heart of the greenwoods, sallying out at dusk to dine at an inn. The thought of the spectre did not affect his appetite, and he made a sumptuous meal.

"Now, Kitty," he said, as he trotted off to Black Down, just as the half-moon was beginning to rise above the trees, "we will try conclusions with this spectre, to meet whom is death! I suspect it will turn out a merry adventure, after all."

He reached the high, bare heath, with its tract of dark pines and undergrowth on the crest, through which the bridle-road to Walford ran, and was soon at the spot where he had stopped the merchant.

The bridle-path was barely a mile long, on the hogged back of the down, winding in and out among the pines. Keeping a sharp look-out, Dick rode at a slow pace up and down the road for an hour or more.

Nothing was to be seen or heard save the flit of the nightjar's wings and the hooting of the owls. No wayfarer came along, and hour followed hour as the night crept on.

"Odd's blood!" muttered Dick. "It seems to me I am wasting time on a fool's errand! It would be more profitable to patrol a highway where rich wayfarers are to be stopped, or else push on upon my journey to Milton."

He pulled up suddenly and stood staring along the path.

"The Skeleton Rider!" he muttered. "Then it was no lie after all! He is out upon his nightly ride!"

It was a grisly sight that met his gaze. Down the path loomed the horrible spectre the cottagers had described. A coal black horse was stepping noiselessly along, and on its back, erect as a dart, sat a tall, white skeleton, the bridle-reins held in its jointed fingers.

The hollow eye-sockets and grinning teeth, lit by the pale moonlight, seemed to glare at Dick, and he felt Kitty gently quivering between his knees, while her ears were cocked forward and her nostrils gaping wide. Even Dick was startled for a moment, but he felt no fear of the unearthly thing, and he whipped his two pistols from their holsters.

"Come on, Sir Hobgoblin!" he cried, urging Kitty forward. "Be you man or

devil I know not, but a bullet will soon prove you!"

Dick heard the whistle of a riding-whip, and the coal black horse, throwing up its head, galloped straight at him, spurred onward by its grisly rider. Like a whirlwind the spectre rode down upon Dick, its eyes glowing with pale light and its fleshless jaws rattling.

Dick waited till it was within ten yards, and then raising his pistols, fired all four barrels straight into the spectre's body. It seemed to wave its white arms mockingly in answer, and Kitty leaped aside and reared up in terror as it swept past, with no sign of hurt, and vanished round the bend.

"Heaven and earth!" said Dick, and he wheeled and galloped in pursuit. "Was it in truth a phantom, after all? I took it for some knave playing a trick on me," muttered Dick; "but the pistol-balls passed through it as though it were air!"

For another hour he rode through the woods, but the spectre did not show itself again, and Dick rode away, wondering greatly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Laid Low!

"HERE'S a fine morning, my good man! Can you let me have a pail of water for my mare?"

Dick, somewhat wearied after his long night on Black Down, and discouraged at having failed to solve the mystery of the White Rider, pulled up an hour after sunrise outside a comfortable-looking cottage. In the yard of the cottage a man was carefully grooming and tending a horse.

Dick wondered for a moment, as he stopped, how the man came to own such a good-looking beast, for it was a better animal than most cottagers owned—a black gelding, with a white blaze on its forehead, and white feet.

The man looked up as Dick spoke, a surly-looking, lean-limbed rascal, with cunning eyes. He peered sharply at Dick, and an ugly look grew over his face.

The man was evidently about to refuse, when he checked himself.

"Ay," he grunted, turning away, "you shall have the water!"

He went round to the back of his house. Dick, whom the man's manner had made suspicious, waited a moment, and then rode on a few yards, till he could see round the cottage. The surly man had drawn a pail of water, and Dick saw him empty the contents of a paper into it. Then the pail was brought round.

"Give it me!" said Dick, jumping down. "No one waters Kitty but myself. But, odd's fish, man, that horse of yours is as parched as a pea! He shall have some first!"

"Nay!" cried the man, springing forward, as Dick pretended to be about to give the black horse a drink. "That he shall not!"

"Ha, you villain!" cried Dick. "So I have found you out! I saw you put some vile drug into this water! Take that, and that, and that!"

He dashed the bucket into the man's face, and laid his riding-whip across the man's shoulders till the knave fled indoors, howling.

Dick stepped across to the black horse with the white star, examined him, patted his neck, and then mounted Kitty and rode on.

"Odd's blood!" he said. "I believe I've learned what I needed. I saw what

the rogue was about before I came up; now I'm sure of it! Anyway, I'll put it to the proof to-night, Kitty, and the spectre sha'n't beat us if I can help it!"

He rested well that day, after tending Kitty and breaking his fast; and when night fell, after a plenteous repast, the rising moon saw Dick once more among the pine-trees of Black Down.

But he did not ride up and down the paths. Instead, he dismounted, and led Kitty into the thickest part of the brushwood, from which he had a close view of the road.

At last, looming round the bend of the road, came once more the grim spectre—the Skeleton Horseman—on his nightly ride. The reins were held in one claw-like hand, and the pale moonlight shone between his white ribs.

"Ha, my friend," muttered Dick. "you are proof against pistol-bullets, but I think I've hit on your secret at last!"

Presently the sound of a horse's hoofs, trotting smartly, broke the silence. The White Rider drew noiselessly aside among the pines.

Round the corner came a traveller—a cheery, portly farmer on a bay nag—evidently returning from a long journey to a distant market. Just as he approached its hiding-place, there was the whistle of a riding-whip, and the black horse and its grisly rider leaped out.

A wild, hoarse cry of terror broke from the farmer's lips. His nag, frightened out of its wits, bounded into the air, throwing him heavily, so that he lay senseless, and then bolted. Out from the pines darted the dark shadow Dick had seen before, and stooped over the prostrate form, while the White Rider sat motionless on its horse.

Out from the thicket bounded Dick. In a moment he was alongside the spectre, seized the grim, black horse by the bridle, and dealt the figure that was bending over the fallen farmer a cuff that sent it reeling.

"So 'tis you, my friend!" said Dick. "I thought I had hit on it!"

The dark form recovered itself and sprang forward. It was the surly-faced man who had refused Dick water in the morning, and he whipped out a knife and sprang at the young highwayman. He was met with a blow from the butt of a horse-pistol that laid him helpless on the turf.

Dick turned from him to the prostrate farmer, whose pockets had been rifled by the knave. He was just coming to his senses, and sat up in a damaged fashion, passing his hand over his eyes.

"Steady, Master Farmer," said Dick, as he saw the man glance at the spectre again, and shrink. "Have no fear! The ghost is laid!"

"Zounds!" said the farmer in amazement. "What does it all mean, sir?"

Dick reached up, and, with a powerful wrench, tore the grim skeleton from its place. It was wired together, and firmly held up by an iron rod that fitted into the saddle.

"It means," said Dick, "that this knave on the grass has turned to profit the legend of the Skeleton Horseman of Black Down, and has made this bogey to frighten travellers out of their wits, so that he may rob them in safety. The rascal skulks in the wood, and the horse is trained to obey his signals, and ride at travellers with the skeleton on its back."

(Continued on page 20, col. 3.)

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MONTAGUE THE MYSTERIOUS!

(Continued from page 12.)

are precious few actors on the London stage who could beat me in that line—if any."

Wharton and Nugent grinned. There was no doubt that William Wibley was a remarkably clever actor; and still less doubt that he had a remarkably high opinion of his own abilities.

"I'm going to get a few more things," went on Wibley, "and then you'll see the jolly old baronet drop in at Greyfriars. Now, Snooks thinks there isn't such a baronet as Sir Fulke Pulteney, or he wouldn't have used the name in his silly swanking. What will he feel like when Sir Fulke turns up, as large as life, and quite real—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Asking what the deuce he means by writing those letters to him?" said Wibley. "All the Remove knows about the letters; Bunter posted one of them, you know, and Snooks has told fellows, too. He keeps on telling fellows things as dead secrets. Blessed if I think there's a chap in the Remove who isn't keeping at least one deep, dead secret for Snooks. Has he told you the secret of his birth yet?"

Wharton jumped.

"Has he told you?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly! It seems that he was found in a basket at the door of Mr. Snooks, the solicitor, years ago, with a letter and a bundle of banknotes, and no end of that stuff," said Wibley. "Now, a fellow who spins yarns like that ought to be stopped somehow."

"That isn't the yarn as we heard it!" grinned Nugent. "Did he tell you anything about a wicked uncle?"

"No; it was a Corsican vendetta."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And Skinner says he's had a yarn from Snooks," continued Wibley. "He's the last genuine representative, according to that yarn, of the Stuart family—"

"Great pip!"

"And he's sort of hidden under the name of Snooks, so that the partisans—that's Snooks' word—the partisans of the Stuarts can't shove him forward to claim the throne—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove shrieked.

"Now, an idiot like that ought to be rescued from his own fatheadedness," said Wibley. "I know the way, and you fellows are going to help. See? What will he feel like when a respectable old gent, answering to the name of Sir Fulke Pulteney, drops in to see him, and asks him to explain?"

"Phew! I should think he would feel like sinking through the floor," said Harry.

"Or bolting up the chimney!" chuckled Nugent.

"Like the idea?" asked Wibley.

"Topping—if you can work it!"

"If!" Wibley sniffed disdainfully. "I could work it on my head! I'll make up this evening for practice, in my study, and you fellows can come and help. Mind, not a whisper to Snooks."

"Not a giddy whisper!"

And Wibley of the Remove departed,

greatly taken with his wonderful wheeze, which was—he hoped—to cure Montague Wilfred Snooks of his extraordinary foible. Anyhow, it would display to all the Remove what a wonderful actor William Wibley was; and that, perhaps, appealed to Wib more than other considerations.

Montague Wilfred Snooks came in to prep, after tea, with a far-away look in his eyes. He had had the time of his life in Smithy's study—having drawn the long bow to an amazing length—Smithy & Co. having politely refrained from laughing till he was gone.

Wharton and Nugent strolled along to Study No. 4, where they were greeted by the sounds of merriment. Four or five juniors were in Study No. 4, and they seemed almost in convulsions.

it out, and making up his whoppers as he goes along! The best of it is, that he's spun different yarns to different fellows—according to the latest novel he's read. I suppose—and they can't all be true!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That evening Wibley's study door was locked, and many chuckles proceeded from behind the locked door. Wibley was rehearsing his part of the irascible baronet—with great success.

A dozen Remove fellows were let into the secret; but not a hint of it reached Montague Wilfred Snooks. That happy youth gave no thought to Wibley, and—dreamer as he was—he never dreamed of the surprise that Wib had in store for him.



"It may interest you to know, Snooks, that there is no such person as Sir Fulke Pulteney of Edgecumbe Towers," said the "baronet" in a different voice. And to Snooks' amazement the baronet proceeded to take off his make-up, revealing the face of Wibley. (See Chapter 12.)

"Smithy's won!" chorled Russell. "He's bagged the doughnuts! It's come out that Snooks is a royal bird!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blood royal, but concealed under the name of Snooks for high political reasons!" yelled Ogilvy. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's rather rotten to pull the duffer's leg like that, Smithy," said Tom Redwing, though he was smiling.

"He pulled it himself," said the Bounder. "I only put in a few leading questions. Poor old Snooks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's as good as a play!" said Ogilvy. "Why, you can see the fellow thinking

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Baronet!

"MASTER SNOOKS!"

Trotter, the page, put his shock head into Study No. 1 on Wednesday afternoon, at teatime. Wharton and Nugent were at tea there with their study-mate, Montague Wilfred Snooks.

"Hallo, kid! What is it?" asked the captain of the Remove. "Is Snooks wanted? What have you been up to, Snooks?"

Montague glanced round at the page.

"Gentleman to see Master Snooks!" said Trotter.

"To see me?" said Montague. "Is it my father?"

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"No, sir! A visitor, sir," said Trotter. He gave his name as Pulteney, sir."

Montague started.

"As—as what?"

"Pulteney, sir—Sir Fulke Pulteney," said Trotter. "He seems to be in a wax, sir. Shall I ask him to step up?"

Montague stood rooted to the floor of the study.

"Sir Fulke Pulteney!" he repeated faintly.

"Yessir."

"Let's see, that's your uncle, isn't it, Snooks?" asked Nugent innocently.

Montague made no reply.

"Let him come up, by all means," said Wharton. "Have you shown him into the visitors' room, Trotter?"

"No, sir; he's in the passage."

"Don't keep a baronet waiting," said Nugent. "Show him in at once."

"Cert'nly, sir!"

Trotter disappeared. Montague Wilfred Snooks did not move; he seemed incapable of motion. Wharton clapped him on the shoulder.

"Your uncle's a good old chap, to give you a look in at school," he said. "Glad to see him—what?"

Montague only gasped.

"I dare say he'll explain why the bookcase hasn't come," remarked Nugent. "I suppose he hasn't brought it with him."

"Hardly," said Wharton gravely.

"Shall we clear, while you're talking to your uncle, Snooks?" asked Nugent.

Montague seemed to wake up, as it were. Dismay and terror were in his face. He gave a hunted look round the study.

"I—I can't see him!" he panted.

"Can't see your uncle?" exclaimed Wharton.

Montague groaned.

"You—you see—" he stammered.

"I don't quite see."

The hapless prevaricator tried to pull himself together. Already footsteps could be heard in the Remove passage.

"Hide me!" breathed Montague.

"Hide me somewhere, for mercy's sake! I never knew there was such a—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"For goodness' sake, help me to hide somewhere!" panted Snooks. "I—I can't explain; but my life depends on it!"

"What?" yelled Wharton and Nugent together.

It was the ruling passion still! Even in that extremity, Montague could not tell a plain tale.

"I can't explain—it's wrapped in mystery!" he breathed. "But I can't see my—my uncle now! I—I dare not! Oh dear!"

"But if you don't see him, won't he go to the Head?" asked Nugent.

"The Head!" Montague almost collapsed. "The—the Head?"

Evidently the hapless pretender had not thought of that, so far. He sank into a chair, helpless.

The study door opened.

"This room, sir!" said Trotter.

"Thank you, my boy!" said a deep voice—a voice that made Wharton and Nugent start a little. It did not in the least resemble the tones of William Wibley of the Remove.

The visitor entered the study. Trotter departed, grinning. There was a half-crown in Trotter's pocket, which he had earned for showing that "visitor" to Study No. 1. The "visitor" had not come from a greater distance than

Study No. 6 in the Remove; but the half-crown had been expended by the japers in enlisting Trotter's assistance, by way of giving the thing a finishing touch.

Montague's eyes almost started from his head as he looked at the visitor in Study No. 1.

He saw a short, stout gentleman, who looked about fifty, with a red complexion, white moustache and whiskers, and white hair surrounding a bald patch. The gentleman wore a well-filled frock-coat, and looked very portly, though certainly not of great stature. A gold-rimmed monocle was jammed into his right eye, and his brow was wrinkled over it. He had a silk hat in his hand, and a gold-headed cane under his arm.

He turned his eyeglass upon the three juniors with a glare.

"Which of you is named Montague Snooks?" he demanded.

Montague's tongue clove to his jaws. It was Wharton who answered.

"This is the chap, sir."

The eyeglass fixed on the unhappy Montague.

"You, sir!" rumbled the visitor.

"Oh dear!" said Montague faintly.

"You know who I am, I presume?" thundered the old gentleman.

"I—I—"

"You have written letters to me—absurd letters! I have come here to complain to your headmaster!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"How dare you, sir!" rumbled Sir Fulke Pulteney. "How dare you, sir, write me ridiculous letters, and sign yourself my nephew?"

Montague gasped helplessly.

There was a chuckle audible in the Remove passage outside. Montague realised that the news of the baronet's arrival had spread. Remove fellows were gathering to catch a glimpse of Snooks' "uncle." Billy Bunter was heard to squeak:

"I say, you fellows, it's old Pulteney! There really is a baronet, after all! Temple got it wrong."

At that moment Montague wished from the bottom of his heart that Temple had got it right! He would have given a year's pocket-money for Temple to have been right! Gladly would he have erased from the honourable list of the baronetage the name of Sir Fulke Pulteney.

"Snooks' uncle's come!" called out the voice of Peter Todd. And there was a chuckle.

Sir Fulke Pulteney turned to the door, and threw it wide open. A crowd of grinning juniors met his view.

"Snooks' uncle, did you say?" rumbled the baronet. "So that wretched boy has told you that I am his relative, has he? You shall all hear the truth before I got to the headmaster!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Ain't you really Snooks' uncle, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boy!" thundered the baronet, fixing his monocle upon Montague again. "Do you dare to assert, in my presence, that I am related to you?"

Montague gasped for breath. He stared at the irascible old gentleman, as if Sir Fulke mesmerised him.

"Answer me!" thundered Sir Fulke, rapping the floor with his cane.

"No!" gasped Montague.

"You admit your imposture?"

"Ow! Yes!" groaned Montague.

"Hub! And now explain, wretched boy, what you meant by writing me ridiculous letters?" demanded the baronet.

Montague's face was scarlet. He dared not meet the sea of eyes at the crowded doorway.

"I—I—I—"

"Do you deny writing the letters addressed to Sir Fulke Pulteney, at Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire?"

"Nunno!" panted Montague.

"Do you dare to claim any acquaintance with me?"

"Nunno!"

"Then what do you mean?"

Sir Fulke Pulteney, like Brutus, paused for a reply. But the hapless Montague could not reply. He could only stand, rooted to the floor, crimson with confusion, staring blankly at the baronet, tongue-tied, and wishing from the bottom of his heart that the floor would open and swallow him up.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Snooks Owns Up!

THERE was a ripple of laughter in the Remove passage. Sir Fulke Pulteney rapped his cane on the floor of the study emphatically, as he waited for Montague Wilfred Snooks to answer. But no answer came. The hapless pretender, the victim of his own too fervid imagination, had no reply to make. He was almost overwhelmed by the discovery that there really was such a person as Sir Fulke Pulteney, Baronet, of Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire. How was he to have known that? He had manufactured that gentleman out of his own inner consciousness, and by some dreadful stroke of ill-luck he had hit upon the name of a living baronet—that, apparently, was how it was. It really was too utterly rotten. Perhaps, he dimly realised, he had read the name somewhere and forgotten that he had read it—perhaps in some newspaper. That would account for his unfortunate selection of this old gentleman's name as a peg to weave his wayward fancies upon.

But then the address. So far as he knew, he had never heard of a place called Edgumbe Towers, in Wiltshire. Indeed, he had selected Wiltshire because it was a good distance from Greyfriars, that was all. It really was an amazing coincidence.

Certainly it would have been distinctly amazing, if it had been a coincidence. Out of his imagination he had created Sir Fulke Pulteney, of Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire! And now, it appeared, there actually existed a Sir Fulke Pulteney, of Edgumbe Towers, Wiltshire! The coincidence was simply astounding and utterly dismaying, and as yet the hapless spoofer had no suspicion that it was anything but a coincidence. What could a perfect stranger have thought on receiving such letters as Montague had written!

That thought was overwhelming.

Montague would have given the wealth of Golconda to be whirled away suddenly from the grim eyes of the baronet and the mocking, grinning looks of the Removites.

But there was no escape for him. There he was, cornered in Study No. 1.



If you want a thrilling week-end—

face to face with the Wiltshire baronet, with the Remove fellows crammed in the passage looking on with great enjoyment. If only he had curbed his glowing imagination and never allowed it to lead him from the straight path of truth! But it was too late to think of that now.

The silence in the study, broken by the ripple of merriment from the passage, grew positively painful.

Sir Fulke's voice rumbled out at last as he gave the floor another resounding rap with his cane.

"Will you answer me, boy? I demand an explanation of the letters written by you, letters which apparently have been copied out of some silly sensational novel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage.

"Why don't you answer your uncle, Snooksey?" yelled the Bounder.

Montague Wilfred Snooks. That unhappy youth dodged round the study table.

"Boy, come with me!" thundered the baronet.

"I—I—mercy!" babbled Montague, terrified almost out of his wits at the bare thought of facing Dr. Locke and owning up, under the Head's stern eyes, to his fatuous folly. "Oh, sir, I—I—I beg your pardon! I—I—I'll never do it again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Explain yourself!" thundered Sir Fulke, with his eyeglass fixed on the wretched Montague like the glittering eye of the Ancient Mariner. "What did you mean by it?"

"I—I didn't mean anything," groaned Montague. "I—I never thought there was such a person as Sir Fulke Pulteney in existence."

"Nunno!"

"Then why did you do this?" snorted the baronet.

"I—I—I—"

"Were you romancing and using a childish trick in order to make your schoolfellows believe that you were speaking the truth?"

"Yes!" gasped Montague.

There was no help for it, the confession had to be made. To judge by the sounds that followed in the Remove passage the fellows there were in danger of hysterics.

"You admit this?" snapped the baronet.

"Yes, sir!" moaned Montague. "I—I own up! Let me off, sir! I—I've got into rows enough at home for the same thing. I—I meant to chuck it when I came to school—I did really! I—I—"



Wibley staggered back against the table. His role of the baronet had ended disastrously, but the juniors reckoned it the cream of the joke.

"Ow—wow!" groaned Wibley. "Keep him off!" "Let me go," howled Snooks. "I'll smash him!" (See Chapter 13.)

"I say, you fellows, he hasn't an uncle at all!" chirruped Billy Bunter. "I knew he was spoofing! I told you so all along."

"Boy," thundered the baronet, "answer!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Montague hopelessly.

"Come with me!"

"Wha-a-at? Where?"

"To your headmaster."

"Oh dear!"

"Make way there!" snorted the baronet. "I will take this boy to Dr. Locke, and demand an explanation in the headmaster's presence!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled Vernon-Smith.

"Go it!"

"Follow in your uncle's footsteps, Snooksey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sir Fulke made a stride towards

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the passage. This confession took the Removites by storm.

"You did not think—" exclaimed Sir Fulke.

"I swear I didn't! I never heard of you, never heard of Edgumbe Towers, never knew there was such a place!" gasped Montague. "I—I made it up—"

"Made it up?"

"Yes. I—I suppose I must have read it somewhere, and—and forgot. I—I thought I made it up. I swear I did!" babbled Montague. "I hadn't the faintest idea—"

"Do you mean to tell me that you wrote letters to a man you did not believe existed, at an address that did not exist?"

"Oh dear! Yes!"

"Why? Are you insane?"

don't know how I slipped into it again—just imagination, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You had better learn to keep your imagination under better control, my boy!" snapped the baronet.

"I—I will!" gasped Montague.

"Do you think this lesson will cure you of your folly?" demanded Sir Fulke.

Montague gasped.

"Oh dear! Yes, sir! I—I—I'll never spin another yarn as long as I live! Oh dear!"

"You are sure of that?" snapped Sir Fulke.

"Ow! Yes!"

"If you promise me that I may let you off without taking you before your headmaster!"

"I promise!" panted Montague.

"Let him off, sir!" gasped Wharton,

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

wiping his eyes. After this, even Snooks won't have the neck to spin any tall stories at Greyfriars."

"I should jolly well think not!" gasped Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall expect you to keep that promise, Snooks!" said Sir Fulke Pulteney sternly.

"On my word, sir!" groaned Montague. "I—I wish I—I hadn't done it! I assure you, sir—"

"Very good," said the baronet, in quite a different voice. "It may interest you to know, Snooks, that your belief that there was no such person as Sir Fulke Pulteney, of Edgcombe Towers, Wiltshire, was well founded."

"Wha-a-at?"

Montague stared at the baronet almost dumbfounded. The change of voice surprised him—the baronet's new voice sounded familiar. To Montague's further amazement, the baronet proceeded to take off his eyeglass, his white moustache, his white whiskers, and his white hair with the bald spot. Montague Wilfred Snooks fairly staggered. Even yet he could not recognise Wibley of the Remove, so good was the make-up on that bright youth's countenance; but he could see that it was a boyish face now.

"What—what—what—" babbled Montague.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. "Good old Wib!"

"I won't take you to the Head, Snooks!" said the Remove baronet. "He might want to know what a Lower Fourth chap is doing in this rig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wibley!" shrieked Montague, understanding at last.

"Sir William Wibley, of Study No. 6, temporary baronet!" grinned the school-boy actor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Montague gasped. Then, with a yell of fury, he rushed upon William Wibley, and smote him hip and thigh.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Good-bye to Montague!

"**H**A, ha, ha!" The Removites yelled almost hysterically. William Wibley yelled in quite another manner.

The infuriated Montague had him round the neck, and Wib's head was in chancery; and Montague was punching away as if he mistook Wib's face for a punch-ball.

"Take that—and that—and that!" gasped Montague.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that—and that—"

"Rescue!" shrieked Wibley, struggling frantically. "Yooop! Draggimoff! Oh, my eye! Ow! My nose! Wooooop!"

"And that—and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton rushed to the rescue, although he was laughing too much to be of much use.

"Snooks, chuck it—"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Snooks, you ass—"

"Rescue! Oh, my nose! Whooop!"

Wharton seized Montague at last, and dragged him away by main force. William Wibley staggered against the study wall—his frock coat split, his collar

and tie torn out, and his face crimson—his nose streaming a still brighter crimson.

"Ow, ow, wow!" gasped Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This was an unexpected ending to Wib's little jape; but to the Remove fellows it seemed like the cream of the joke, and they roared. The joke was lost on Wibley himself.

"Let me go!" yelled Montague. "I'll smash him—I'll—"

"No, you won't!" gasped Wharton.

"Sit down, you ass! Take hold of his other ear, Frank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Montague Wilfred Snooks was plumped into the study armchair, and held there. Wibley, in the wreck of his frock coat, staggered from the study, breathing vengeance upon the youth who had made such an ungrateful return for his kindness. For some days afterwards Wibley, who was so good at impersonations, was, as the Bouncer put it, impersonating a fellow with a black eye and a swollen nose, and doing it to the life!

Montague Wilfred Snooks did not show up in the Common-room that evening.

He stayed in the study, in an overwhelmed state.

The little jape had been intended to do him a good turn, and it was probable that it had done him good. But for the present, the hapless Montague was overwhelmed, and dared not meet the eyes of his Form fellows. When the Remove went to their dormitory, Montague Wilfred Snooks crept in silently with burning cheeks and slipped hurriedly into bed without looking round, and affected to sleep and to be unconscious of the merry chuckles and many remarks of the Removites.

A few days later the Remove heard that Montague was leaving. It came out that he had written to his father to be taken away—so urgently that the Surbiton solicitor consented—possibly guessing something of the reason. Montague would have sneaked away quietly by himself when the time came; but his study-mates found him on his way to the station, and went with him to see him off.

"Thanks for coming, you chaps," said Montague, shaking hands with Wharton and Nugent from the carriage window. "I—I—I suppose you think that I'm a considerable size in asses?"

"Well—hem!" murmured Wharton.

"Hem!" said Nugent.

Montague grinned faintly.

"I've chucked all those dashed novels into the dustbin," he said. "I—I never meant to tell lies—really I didn't! They—they didn't seem like lies somehow. Imagination, you know—I assure you it all seems real to me when I'm spinning the yarns. But I'm going to chuck it—I'll try, at least. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, old chap, and good luck!"

And the train rolled away with Montague Wilfred Snooks—no longer Snooks of the Remove, and no longer—Wharton hoped, at least—Montague the Mysterious!

THE END.

(There is another magnificent long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled "**FISH'S FRIENDLY SOCIETY**" a mirth-provoking yarn that will hold your interest from first to last. Don't be disappointed order your copy of the **MAGNET** early.)

THE PHANTOM HORSEMAN!

(Continued from page 16.)

Dick took a wet handkerchief from his pocket and rubbed the black horse's forehead. A white blaze appeared, and the kerchief was soiled with a black stain.

"Why," said the farmer, "'tis Ben Slinkett, of the cottage below the hill, and his white-starred horse."

"The same," said Dick. "I came upon him this morning, washing the stain away by which he disguises it, and it roused my suspicions, for I thought I recognised the horse's build. He tried to poison my mare, for he knew I was on his trail. I shot at the sham spectro but a few hours before; but, of course, did it no hurt. And now, sir, I am going to give the knave into your charge."

"With right good will!" said the farmer, rising up. "Such a scurvy knave will be better suited at Botany Bay than in England!"

Dick stopped, and jerked the trembling rascal to his feet.

"Now, you knave," he said, slinging the man across the black horse, and binding him along its back, "you shall go to your reckoning!"

He pitched the skeleton on top of the man, and bound it on him with the good hemp rope he had brought, passing the cords under the horse's belly.

"Now, Master Farmer," he said, "your nag is grazing a little way down the road. If you will take this black horse and its burden to the Assize Courts—rogue, skeleton, and all—I'll warrant the White Rider will never again leave a robbed corpse upon Black Down!"

THE END.

(Look out for next Monday's fine highwayman story, entitled "**WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK!**" and be prepared for something extra good, chums.)

READERS' NOTICES!

Jack Bruce, 79, Caxton Street, Quigney, East London, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

W. Drysdale, 17, Railway Cottages, Sydenham, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with Dick Walters, 31, Bronsart Road, Fulham, London, S.W. 6.

Miss Alicia Montonen, 35, Brabant Road, Woodstock, Cape Colony, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere: ages 17—20.

Miss Violet M. Jepson, Vauxhall, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers in Spain, France, Italy, India, and Africa; especially interested in photography; ages 17—20.

A. S. Douglas, 681, Argyle Street, Anderston, Glasgow, wishes to correspond with a French reader.

W. E. Harland, hon. sec., Wesco C.C., 11, Lancefield Street, Queen's Park, Paddington, W. 10, would be glad to hear from any readers willing to join a cycling club; ages 15—21.

Now look forward to "**Fish's Friendly Society!**" It's next!



HARRY WHARTON



FRANK NUGENT



BOB CHERRY

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 142.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR



MARK LINLEY



HURRELL SINGH



PETER TODD

Week ending September 15th, 1923.



Tales of Mean People!

Generous deeds and mean deeds are done each day. Here are some anecdotes of mean people which will take some beating!

BOB CHERRY:

The meanest action I ever heard of was that of Skinner of the Remove. When we go away for the vacation, it is usual to give Gosling, the porter, a generous "tip," for services rendered during the term. Skinner is reported to have handed Gosling a threepenny-piece, and to have said, "Take a penny out of that, Gosling. I'll wait here for the change!" Gosling's reply has never been disclosed, but I'll wager it would shock even the hardened printer!

MARK LINLEY:

I won't vouch for the truth of the following story, but if it is really true it ought to go down to history as the most glaring example of meanness and ingratitude on record.

A big fire broke out in one of the back streets of Courtfield. One house was enveloped in smoke and flame, but all the occupants escaped into the street, with the exception of the small son of the house, a kid of nine. A Greyfriars prefect (he has asked me not to divulge his identity) was passing at the time. He obtained a ladder and reared it to the top bed-room, where the small boy was imprisoned, the staircase being ablaze.

With great difficulty the Greyfriars senior succeeded in rescuing the youngster and bringing him down to safety. He handed the kid over to his mother with the remark, "Here's your boy, ma'am. I managed to rescue him from that awful furnace." "Yes, I know all about that," retorted the mother, "but what about 'is cigarette-card album? It's up in that top bed-room, an' it'll be burnt to bits! Why on earth didn't you fetch it?"

The astonished prefect nearly collapsed on the pavement. And no wonder!

BILLY BUNTER:

The meanest man I know is a certain uncle of mine, who sent me half a pound of cherries for a birthday present, and told me to divide them equally amongst all the fellows in the Greyfriars Remove. It's a wonder he didn't tell me to send him back the cherry-stems after I had finished with them!

SAMMY BUNTER:

This tale of meanness fairly takes the biscuit. A certain fellow invited me to a feed at the Elysian Caffy, in Courtfield. When we got there and seated ourselves at the best table, he said to the

waiter: "Do you make any charge for the sorce?" "No, sir!" was the reply. Then he said: "Do you make any charge for a roll of bread and a glass of water?" Again the reply was in the negative. "Very well," said my mean host. "We'll have bread and water and Yorkshire relish for two!" Needless to say, we didn't get it!

TOM BROWN:

The "hero" of the meanest incident I have ever come across is a Remove fellow. I won't reveal his name, because I don't want to put him in the pillory over it, though he certainly deserves to be shown up. The fellow in question borrowed my bicycle one half-holiday. Through sheer carelessness on his part, he had a nasty smash-up, and my bike was bent, battered, bashed, and busted, and no longer fit for active service. The fellow who was responsible for the damage came to me and said, "Awfully sorry, Browne, but I've busted your bike to bits. I'm afraid it's beyond repair, and you'll have to buy a new machine. Here's fourpence towards it." And he solemnly dropped four coppers on to my study table. You could have knocked me down with a feather!

DICKY NUGENT:

The meanest man I have had the misfortune to meet is old Twigg, my Form master. He went out golfing the other day, and asked me to be his caddy. I gave up a cricket match to oblige him. All the afternoon I trotted round the links, in the sweltering heat, carrying Twigg's golf-clubs. He thanked me profusely when it was all over. "In return for your services, Nugent," he said, "I feel I ought to make you a handsome present." And what do you think the mean old mugwump gave me? A golf-ball that was split nearly in half. I could have wept!

GENEROUS DEEDS OF THE WEEK.

By BOB CHERRY.

The following have received remittances—handsome and otherwise—from their people:

- H. Wharton (uncle) one pound.
- R. Cherry (pater) one pound.
- Lord Mauleverer (guardian) ten pounds.
- Horace Coker (Aunt Judy) five pounds.
- Bolsover major (pater) ten bob.
- Billy Bunter (a titled relation) fourpence in stamps.

HOSKINS of the Shell has been presented with a cornet. But do not be alarmed and imagine we are going to have more unmusical strains. It happens to be an ice-cream cornet!

BILLY BUNTER'S uncle—the one who happens to be a multi-multi-millionaire—has sent him a postal-order. But, of course, it hasn't got here yet. Like all Bunter's postal-orders, it has gone astray in the post!

SAMMY BUNTER has been presented with a fountain-pen. Like himself, it is a "self-filler"!

DICKY NUGENT'S aunt sent him a consignment of white mice. Unfortunately, the kitchen cat was present when

they arrived, and now looks appreciably plumper!

GEORGE TUBB'S uncle sent him an old-fashioned and hideous-looking kite. Fancy sending one "silly kite" to another!

SOME fellows would appreciate the gift of a carving-knife, but Johnny Bull doesn't. In fact, he seems quite "cut up" about it!

BOLSOVER MINOR has received a box of tin soldiers from a doting aunt. He tells me he would rather have had the "tin" without the soldiers!

"Coker Plays Tennis!"—by George Blundell—next Monday's "Special"!



The Remove to the Rescue!

BY
MARK LINLEY.

SELWYN of the Shell was leaving Greyfriars.

I don't suppose you have ever heard of Selwyn. He is a quiet, reserved sort of fellow, and he keeps himself to himself. In fact, his study has always been known as the "Hermitage."

Selwyn was leaving. His people, through no fault of their own, had been suddenly plunged into poverty. They could no longer afford to pay Selwyn's term fees. So he had to quit.

Selwyn was sixteen, and an uncle had obtained a job of sorts for him in a City office. But the fellow hadn't a penny to bless himself with, and he would require a new suit of clothes and several other things to give him a start in life. He couldn't very well turn up at a City office in Etons.

On the evening before he left Selwyn pondered over these things. He sat in his armchair in the Hermitage, and gazed gloomily about him. He would have to raise some money somehow. But how?

There was only one way. He must put up his belongings for sale by public auction. He had no furniture to speak of—at least, no furniture that was of any value. Study furniture at Greyfriars gets a good deal of bashing about, and Selwyn's was no exception. His few items of furniture were practically worthless.

He had a cricket-bat which had been a trusty friend to him. He had a concertina, which had been a better friend

still, cheering his lonely moments, which had been many. He had a collection of books which he prized very highly; but nobody was likely to want to buy them. Come to that, Selwyn wasn't anxious to sell them. He loved his books and his bat and his concertina, and the parting would prove a pang. But they would have to go. It was his only means of raising the wind.

So Selwyn announced that there would be an auction sale of his belongings that evening in the Shell Common-room. He asked Hobson to conduct the auction, but Hobson was playing in a chess tournament, and couldn't. So Selwyn asked Harry Wharton, and Wharton agreed like a shot.

"I'll act as auctioneer with pleasure," said the captain of the Remove. "And I'll ask all my pals to come along and bid."

"Thanks awfully!" said Selwyn. "I sha'n't be there myself. I—I don't think I could bear it. But I can trust you to carry the thing through fairly."

Wharton could see how the land lay. He saw that Selwyn hated to part with his treasures, but had to out of sheer necessity. Wharton told his chums of Selwyn's plight, and between them they plotted a little plot.

Had you attended the auction sale that evening, you would have been amazed with great amazement.

Articles were fetching fabulous prices. Lot No. 1, for instance, was a tin kettle, which had a tendency to leak. It was

worth about fourpence, but it fetched five bob.

Lot No. 2 was an inkstand, just a common or garden glass inkstand. Lord Mauleverer gave a pound for it. Those who didn't know Mauly's motives voted him potty.

The cricket-bat was knocked down to Vernon-Smith for thirty shillings.

The concertina caused quite a frenzy of high bidding, and Lord Mauleverer bought it at a figure which would make you gasp. And the books, instead of being sold at a few pence a bundle, as is generally the case at auction sales, averaged two shillings per volume.

It really seemed as if the Greyfriars Remove had gone mad. But there was a method in their madness. They were out to do Selwyn a good turn, and to give him a useful send-off.

After the sale Harry Wharton ran Selwyn to earth in the Close and handed over the sum of fifteen pounds.

Selwyn nearly fell down.

"Surely my stuff didn't fetch as much as this?" he gasped.

Wharton nodded.

"It was a very successful sale," he said. "The fellows happened to be in funds, and they were generous bidders."

"So it seems," said Selwyn. And he pocketed the fifteen pounds like a fellow in a dream.

There was a further surprise for Selwyn when he took his departure next morning.

When he reached the station and took his luggage off the cab, he found an extra portmanteau there. And, on looking into it, what should he discover but his cricket-bat, his concertina, and his beloved books! A card lay on the top of them, with the simple inscription:

"WITH THE BEST WISHES OF THE
GREYFRIARS REMOVE."

Here was generosity indeed, generosity which Bernard Selwyn would not forget through all the years to come.

Selwyn's eyes were strangely misty as he stepped into the train.

Rhymes of the Times!

By Dick Penfold.

When Prouty went golfing, why, gee!
He was hungry as hungry could be.

The reason is clear,
For it would appear
The worthy old gent "missed his tee."

A master named Algernon Capper
Was typing on Quelch's old "tapper."

He was hard at his work
When a spring, with a jerk,
Shot upwards and damaged his napper!

Old Gosling can't manage a bicycle,
So we'll soon have to get him a tricycle.

If he rides it with vigour
His palsied old figure
No longer will freeze like an icicle!

A fellow named Oliver Kipps
Has a passion for sea-fishing trips.

I once saw some nippers
At work curing kippers,
But no one will ever cure Kipps.

When Bunter went swimming at sea,
A porpoise said, "What can it be?"

I swear it's my brother,
It can be no other,
Because it's the image of me!"

EDITORIAL.

By Harry Wharton.

GENEROSITY means something more than tossing a tanner to a hungry tramp by the wayside. It goes deeper than that. There is generosity of heart, as well as of pocket. My own idea of a generous fellow is:

One who makes allowances for the faults and failings of others.

One who gives unstinted praise where praise is due.

One who assists lame dogs over stiles, either with moral or financial help.

Generosity is a grand thing. Meanness cannot live with it. The two stand in sharp contradiction. In this issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" you will read of generous people and of mean people, and you can "pay your money and take your choice," as the saying goes.

MY UNCLES!

By Billy Bunter.

My Uncle Jack's a generous soul,
He sent me half-a-crown;
With creditors I'll settle up,
And then I'll settle down!

My Uncle Horace is a sport,
He sent me seven-and-six;
I'll buy a puppy dog with that,
And teach it lots of tricks.

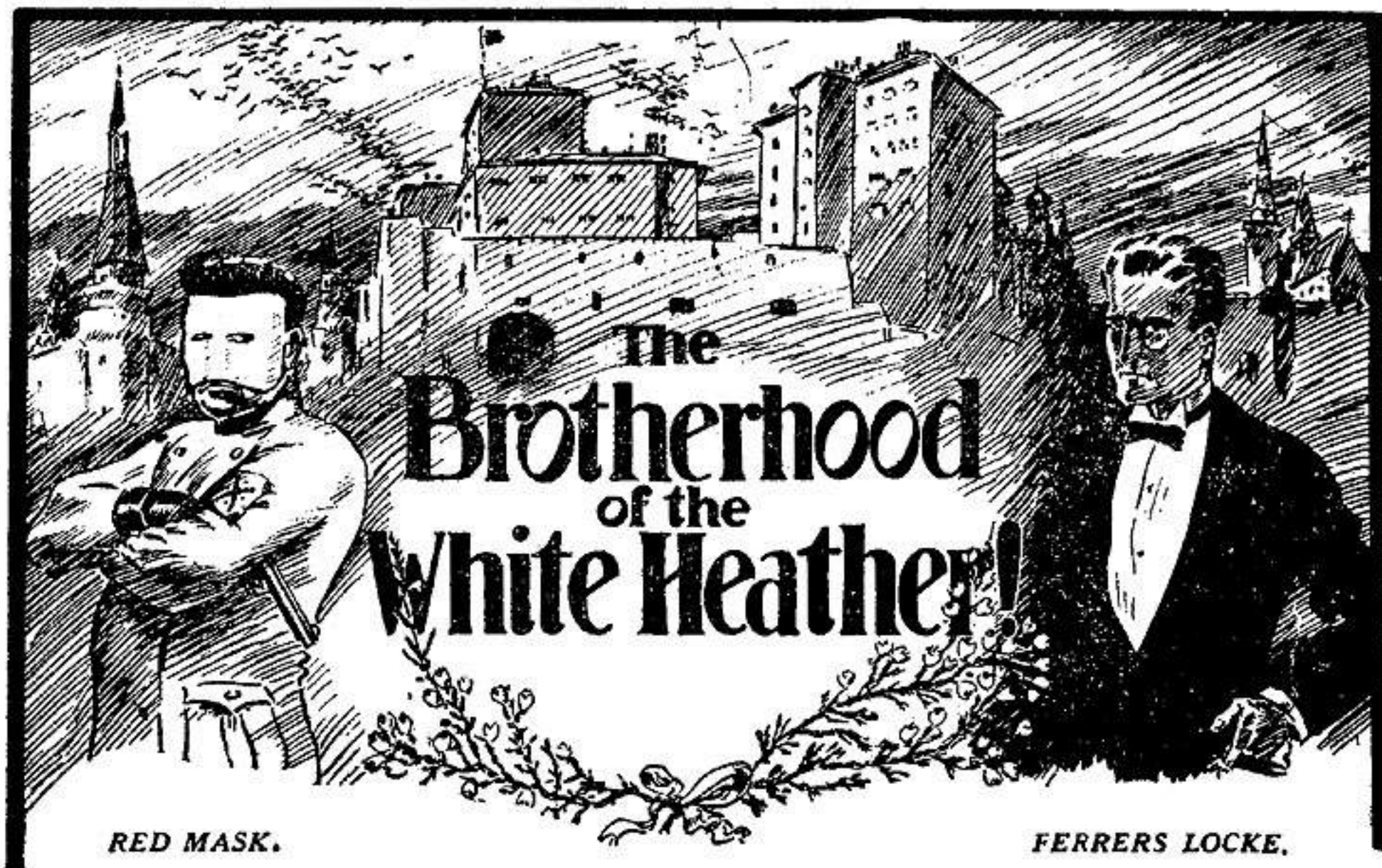
But Uncle Bertie is a beast,
He sent his loving wishes;
But those won't help a chap to buy
Delicious, dainty dishes.

And Uncle Joe's another beast,
He sent me sound advice;
But all the counsel in the world
Won't buy a strawberry ice!

I often dream a rosy dream,
Perhaps it is a silly 'un,
That Uncle Prospero will send
A cheque for half a million!

"Tennis Terms Explained," by Tom Brown—next week!

Plitting like an evil shadow behind the scenes of Revolutionary Russia, there is a powerful and sinister influence casting its tentacles upon harmless Britishers, who are, by force of circumstances, obliged to make Moscow their temporary home. Ferrers Locke undertakes the cause of his fellow-countrymen, and sets out to beat the Hidden Terror at his own game.



RED MASK.

FERRERS LOCKE.

Related by "X."

Strange Happenings!

IN the comfortably furnished sitting-room of his master's chambers Jack Drake was seated by the window, gazing morosely into the street. It was a dull day in September, and it seemed as though the depressing atmosphere outside had communicated itself to the sturdy, broad-shouldered youngster.

But yet Drake's glumness had nothing at all to do with the weather. The truth of the matter was he had been deserted completely by his master, Ferrers Locke. The great sleuth had left London a long three months ago, and, so far as Jack Drake knew, he had gone to Paris for a consultation with a French detective of his acquaintance.

Jack had received one solitary cablegram from the French capital, notifying him that Locke had arrived there. From that moment he had received neither wire nor message from his beloved chief.

It was not by any means the first time that his governor had gone off on some secret mission, but it had never lasted so long as this, and Jack, who bore a deep devotion for the cool, level-brained detective, was worrying his head over and over again, to try and solve the problem.

"What's happened to him? What can have happened to him?" he asked himself now, as he glanced out into the street.

Once or twice certain misgivings had risen in his heart. Ferrers Locke was a man who thought nothing of danger, and it was just possible that he may have been "got at" by some of his many enemies. But that thought Jack Drake banished swiftly from his mind, for it was too terrible even to think about.

Presently a curious figure came round the corner opposite, and, shuffling to the edge of the pavement, glanced up at the house. It was the figure of a man—obviously a foreigner, and well on in years. He was wearing a bottle-green coat, with frayed sleeves and a shabby fur collar, while a black felt hat of a very ancient pattern was pulled down over his lanky locks, and he peered out beneath it in a short-sighted,

furtive way. Then Drake saw him suddenly hurry across the street, and next moment the outer door-bell sounded.

Mysterious visitors were by no means uncommon at that well-known address, and Jack, hurrying down the stairs, opened the door to the caller.

"Does Mr. Ferrers Locke live here?"

The man spoke fairly good English, but there was rather a harsh note in it.

"Yes. This is Mr. Locke's place," Jack Drake returned.

The stranger thrust a narrow hand in the pocket of his coat and withdrew an envelope, which he placed in Jack Drake's hand.

"That's for you," he said.

The next moment he had turned away from the porch. Jack took a pace after him.

"But here—I say! Wait a minute!"

The shadowy figure only increased its pace, and next moment it had vanished round the corner again.

"Now, what the dickens does that mean?" Jack asked himself.

He had walked back to the doorway, and glanced at the envelope. There was no address on it, and it looked as though it had been well thumbed. Raising the envelope to his nose, Jack discovered that it had a strong aroma of stale tobacco; evidently the messenger—whatever he was—had had it in his possession for some little time.

Returning to the sitting-room, Jack eyed the envelope again, curiously. He was standing near the window, when suddenly his keen eyes were attracted to a few faint blue lines on the grimed surface.

"By James! I—I wonder!"

Swinging round, the young detective crossed to the gas-stove, and, kneeling by it, he held the envelope to the blaze for a moment. When he turned it round again a quiet smile of satisfaction crossed his lips, for the heat from the gas had brought to light the words that had been written on the envelope:

"This is for you, Jack. Read it, and get busy.—FERRERS LOCKE."

"The governor! Thank goodness!"

In nervous haste Jack Drake tore open the envelope, and withdrew the single sheet which it contained. He noticed that the

paper was of a rather peculiar texture. It was smooth—almost silky—and had evidently been torn from a larger strip.

The message was written in Ferrers Locke's clear, bold writing. It was in code—a code that Jack and his master had often used—and it did not take the youngster long to decipher it. It ran:

"Three hours after you have received this message, I want you to go to No. 35a, Albery Street, Southwark. A friend will meet you there, and you must place yourself entirely in his hands. I'm on the biggest job that I've ever tackled, and I want you to be in it with me. Whatever you do, don't say a word to anyone. I hope to meet you soon.—FERRERS LOCKE."

Jack Drake heaved a sigh when he had deciphered the message, and his keen young eyes danced with delight. His master had given him three hours, but Jack Drake did not require a third of that time.

It was evident that he would have to go somewhere, and, hurrying from the sitting-room, he dived into his bed-room, and began a hasty packing. He knew the virtues of travelling light, and it was merely a change of undergarments and a few odd articles that the youngster stowed away in his valise.

"Thank goodness I'm on the move at last," he told himself. "I don't care how long I'm away so long as I'm with the governor."

It took him some time before he located 35a, Albery Street, in Southwark. It proved to be a shabby, three-storied building, standing in a line of tall warehouses, near the riverside. So far as Jack could see, most of the warehouses were occupied by hide merchants and tallow manufacturers.

It was still early in the afternoon, and the narrow street was filled with laden lorries and wagons as Jack halted at the door of No. 35a. It did not seem a very prepossessing house. The dingy windows were covered with shabby curtains, and the door looked as though it could have done with a coat of paint.

Jack knocked, and, after waiting for a moment, a thin, lanky girl appeared. She looked at Jack critically, opened the door wide, and beckoned to him.

"You're early," she said. "Come in."

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"You know me, then?" asked Drake.

The pale face of the girl widened into a smile.

"No, I don't know you, but I was told you were coming."

She closed the door behind him, and Jack was ushered into a dingy little sitting-room. He was standing in the centre of the room, examining it, when he heard a footfall behind him. A tall, dark-haired man, in quiet blue serge, entered the room, and crossed to where he was standing. There was nothing particularly conspicuous about the stranger, with the solitary exception that in the lapel of his coat he was wearing a small sprig of white heather. His face was rather swarthy, but it was well-moulded, and his dark eyes were very keen and alert as they studied Jack for a moment.

"So you are to be my travelling companion, eh?" the man began.

"I suppose so," said Jack. "I don't know anything about the affair, you know."

"Let me introduce myself," the other said. "My name is Boris Sarov. I met your governor five or six weeks ago. Knowing that I was coming to England, he asked me to arrange to meet you."

"Where is my governor?" Jack Drake asked.

Boris Sarov shook his head.

"That is more than anyone can say at the moment," he returned. "Your master is a very wonderful man, Jack, and what he is doing now places him in constant peril. I cannot say more at the moment, but you will meet him soon enough."

He crossed to a chair and seated himself, beckoning to Jack to do the same.

"You and I will leave here to-night, Jack," he said. "You will be my—my nephew. Your name will be Alexis Sarov, and you will know very little English. Do you understand?"

"Blowed if I do!" said Jack. "But I'm willing to do anything you say."

A bell sounded somewhere in the interior, and Boris Sarov's neat figure became suddenly alert. The easy look vanished from his face, and a grim, fighting light took its place.

"Keep quiet!"

He raised a warning hand to Jack as he tiptoed to the door. A murmur of voices came to the boy's ears. Then, on the door, came a quick double-knock, followed by a single one.

Boris Sarov reached forward to open the door, and a burly, black-bearded man, in shabby workman's garb, came into the room, removing his cap. He spoke to Boris in a strong, guttural language that Jack could not understand, but as the youngster studied the newcomer, he noticed that he, too, was wearing, pinned under the peak of his cap, a sprig of white heather.

The conversation did not last long, and the rough-looking man departed. Boris turned to Jack again.

"It seems to me that we may have a little trouble in getting away from London," he said. "I've just been warned what may happen. Under the circumstances, I think it will be better for you to travel alone to Dover, where I will join you. Now, if you will come with me, I will give you all the details."

He led the way upstairs into a small bed-room, where Jack Drake saw new garments set out on the bed.

"These are yours," said Boris. "Locke gave me your measurements, and I think you will find they will fit you."

It was a complete change of clothes that lay on the bed—suit, shirt, undergarments, socks, shoes, and hat.

"As soon as you have dressed I'll give you the railway-ticket and passport," Boris went on, as he turned to leave the room.

When the door closed behind him Jack Drake hesitated, but only for a brief moment. He felt inwardly that he was on the eve of some amazing adventure, and, crossing to the bed, he began to change.

As he donned the coat of the suit he glanced at the inner pocket. The clothes had been made by a Parisian tailor, and in the name-space was written "Alexis Sarov." The shirt had also the same name printed on the collar, and there were the initials "A. S." on the handkerchiefs and the undergarments, also on the neat, dark felt hat. It was only a small point, but it impressed Jack profoundly. Boris Sarov was evidently

a man who forgot no detail. If anyone were to search Jack Drake now, those marked clothes would serve to establish his new identity.

"Hallo! A sprig of white heather, eh?"

In the lapel of the coat he had donned was another little sprig of the hardy bloom. Jack glanced at himself in a cracked mirror, and then crossed to the door and opened it. As he did so Boris Sarov appeared from the door of a room opposite. He was carrying a leather wallet and a small hand-bag. He gave the latter to Jack, and, opening the wallet, showed him the contents.

There was a single ticket to Paris, one or two baggage vouchers, and also an official-looking document, printed in heavy, black characters.

"You see, Jack? You're a Russian now, for the time being," Boris explained. "A fellow-countryman of my own, and this is the Russian passport which has been viséd by your consul here. I don't suppose you'll be asked many questions, but, in any case, all you need say is that you are going back to your own country. You had better speak broken English, and keep that up carefully."

Boris glanced at his wrist-watch.

"You will catch the late night train from Charing Cross," he went on. "I shall be on the same train, but you may not recognise me. In any case, whatever happens, you must not interfere. Then you go aboard the cross-Channel steamer, where I will join you."

He put his hand on Jack Drake's shoulder.

"Your master, Locke, says that you are a very reliable and level-headed youngster," Boris added. "If that is the case, then you are going to be of great assistance to us and to our cause. Some day you will find out what it all means, but until then you must just wait."

They went down the stairs, and, a little later, when the lanky girl appeared, Boris invited Jack to have some food in the sitting-room below. And so the day slipped past, until, an hour before the train was due to depart, a taxi halted at the dingy house, and Jack entered it.

It was not by any means the first time that Jack Drake had travelled abroad, and he found it easy enough to go through the various preliminaries. He found a seat in the corner of a third-class compartment, and, leaning back, he watched the platform, with its throngs of passengers and friends.

He was on the look-out for Boris, but as the time for the departure of the express drew near, and there was no sign of the man, Jack began to fret. Suddenly he saw a tall, lean figure in a well-cut blue serge suit, striding down the platform. He was carrying a light travelling-coat over his arm, and was pacing quietly up the platform with a porter, who was carrying his valise. He had almost reached Jack's compartment when an amazing incident happened.

A group of four or five men were standing near the train, and they suddenly flung themselves on the newcomer. Jack saw one rascally-looking ruffian slip his hand into his pocket, and draw out a short, ugly sandbag. Before Jack could even raise a cry, the sandbag came down full on the tall man's temple, and he went sprawling on to his face on the platform.

Next moment the valise was snatched from the prostrate man's hand, and the gang of ruffians bolted headlong through the thronged platform, leaving its senseless victim behind.

A porter raised a shout, but the incident had happened so swiftly that no attempt was made to block the barrier. Jack Drake leaped to his feet, and made as though to jump from the carriage, when a sudden, quick memory came to him. Boris Sarov had told him that under no circumstances was he to interfere, no matter what took place.

Jack sank back in his seat just as a couple of porters lifted the dazed man and began to carry him away. In the lapel of his coat was a little sprig of white heather. It was the fourth time that Jack had noticed that quiet flower, and he realised that there was some significance behind it.

All the way down to Dover Jack worried his brain again and again over the incident on the platform. After the usual Customs examination he went aboard the waiting packet, and took a seat in a sheltered corner. As the lights of the harbour slowly vanished, someone dropped into the chair by Jack's side, and a hand fell on his shoulder.

"You're level-headed all right," a quiet

voice remarked. "I thought you were going to give yourself away when that affair happened at the station."

Jack looked round, and found himself gazing into the dark face of Boris Sarov.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jack. "I don't understand. I thought they'd got you."

Boris smiled grimly.

"They meant to," he said. "But it was necessary that they should fail, and so another man took my place."

Jack whistled.

"You mean to say that that chap knew what was going to happen to him, and yet walked right into it?"

There was a moment's silence before Boris replied.

"We are all brothers—brothers of the White Heather," he said. "And you, too, wear the same emblem. You will find out what it means soon enough. We have to sacrifice ourselves, if necessary."

His eyes lighted up as he looked at Jack.

"Your master is now one of us," he said.

"He joined just three months ago. When he came we were in despair, for it seemed as though our cause was lost; but Ferrers Locke has altered everything. He is a man of men, that governor of yours. To-day, at this very moment, he is fighting the greatest battle of his career."

The voice grew deep and grim.

"He is fighting Red Mask—Red Mask, the terror that broods like an evil spirit over my unhappy town."

Boris Sarov checked himself, as though realising he was saying too much.

"You must have patience," he said. "Wait until you meet your master."

Red Mask!

The very name had a sinister, cruel ring about it. Who was he? What did it all mean? What was this brotherhood of the White Heather, and, above all, how had Ferrers Locke come to get mixed up with it.

"I'll be jolly glad when I meet my governor," Jack Drake told himself, "for I'm getting well out of my depth now."

Miss Cartwright's Friends!

FERRERS LOCKE turned out of the cafe and walked quietly along the broad pavement of the Kuziyetsky, that great fashionable thoroughfare which is the Bond Street of Moscow.

It was late in the afternoon, and the broad, well-kept street was crowded with pedestrians. To a casual eye it might have seemed that Moscow was, as usual, the bustling, busy city, where trade and pleasure go hand-in-hand. The splendid shop-fronts, the glass-roofed galleries with their marble pavements and air of aristocratic prosperity, were attractive enough, and it was only a closer scrutiny of the shops that served to reveal the real position.

The displays were scanty, and two or three presented curtained spaces—a grim proof of the lack of business there. Distress, want, and oppression had set a heavy hand on the beautiful city on the banks of the Moskva—that meandering stream, spanned by innumerable stone bridges, that wanders out into the broad, green plains beyond the town, to be lost in the blue haze of the distance.

As Ferrers Locke paced quietly along, with a cigar between his lips, his calm, expressionless face gave no indication of the thoughts that were crowding in his mind.

Outside an hotel a dapper man, in the uniform of a minor Government official, nodded to Locke. The detective halted, and smiled.

"A pleasant evening, commandant," Locke said.

The little man bowed.

"Pleasant enough for those who have idle moments to spare."

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

"We do not all possess the great capacity for work that you do, commandant," he said. "For me, an hour in the sun and a cigar is good enough."

"Ah! You rich Englishmen—you are the lucky ones. And you still prefer our poor Moscow to Paris and Brussels—eh?"

"Why not?" asked Locke easily. "I have made many friends in your town."

He gave the little official a cigar, and, nodding, strolled on at an easy pace.

The man looked after him with a puzzled frown on his face.

Moscow was a city of spies, and usual

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every man's business was known to the rulers of it. Yet the authorities had to admit that they were puzzled to place this quiet, cool Englishman who had appeared so suddenly in their midst. He had taken rooms in one of the huge residential chambers that looked out over the busy "Bond Street of Moscow," and apparently his object for being in Moscow was the purchasing of curios.

It was known that now and again Locke visited one or two curio shops, and there were also occasions when would-be dealers called on him, while it was known that he had made many friends among the little British colony, whose scattered members were forced to remain in Moscow, either for business reasons or lack of funds to leave.

The Russian mind is a curious one, and though Ferrers Locke gave the officials so little cause to be suspicious, they had kept watch on him day and night. A small battalion of spies had each taken their turn, but all had made the same report. He was merely an Englishman with money, idling away his time in that city where so many had time to spare.

There was a quiet smile on Ferrers Locke's face as he continued down the street. Once, when passing a group of men lounging outside a cafe, he raised his hand to his button-hole, and fingered the tiny bunch of white flowers there. One of the men in the circle made a similar gesture, for he, too, had a sprig of white heather in his coat.

Locke reached the end of the street and turned down a narrow thoroughfare, crossing a quiet square, and entering an arched doorway that gave access to a flagged courtyard. There was a dingy, unkempt look about the court, and grass had grown between the stones. At the end of the court was a small church with a high belfry.

The great, steel-studded doorway of the church had been smashed, but fragments still hung to the huge iron hinges—grim relics of Moscow's stormy past. Reaching the arched doorway, Ferrers Locke halted to light another cigar. Then he slipped quietly under the shadowy arch, and entered the church.

Torn hangings, and a great heap of broken marble to mark where the altar had once been, were revealed by the dim light which came through the windows.

The famous detective halted for a moment, listening, with his head turned towards the great doorway. Of late he had missed that successive battalion of spies, and he had been informed that the authorities no longer troubled over him. He had lived down that first suspicion, and was on the eve of opening his grim campaign.

Satisfied that he had not been followed, Ferrers Locke walked down to the other side of the church, and, passing behind the steep, broken masonry, gained a small arched doorway, which gave access to a circular staircase of stone, up which the detective climbed.

He found himself at last at the top of the tower, and as he paced out into the light two figures that had been lounging by the low parapet arose and came towards him. One of them was a grey-bearded patriot, with faded, blue eyes, and hollow, sunken cheeks. The other was a middle-aged man, with the brisk, alert air of a merchant.

"We saw you enter the court, Locke," said the latter, as he shook hands. "We received your message this morning, and Father Petro and I have been waiting for you since lunch."

"I have to be careful, Mr. Maltby," Ferrers Locke explained. "I know that I'm not now being spied upon, but that only applies to the Government officials."

He turned to the old priest.

"What is your news, Father?" he asked.

The robed priest wrung his hands.

"My news is of the worst, my son," he returned. "I went to the Kremlin to-day to try and see the unfortunate woman whose welfare we of the Brotherhood have at heart, but they would not let me visit her. I hear she was tried last night at the Kremlin. They call it a trial, but it is a judgment without justice. She has been condemned, and I am afraid there is no escape for her. To-morrow she will go to the fortress, and that means the end."

Mr. Maltby swung round to Ferrers Locke fiercely.

"It's an outrage, Locke—an outrage!" he exclaimed. "Miss Cartwright has done nothing—nothing at all. Her only crime was

to incur the enmity of that brute, Red Mask. She was foolish enough to tell about the raid that he carried out on her employer's house twelve months ago, when he forced poor old Prince Ivan to hand over the last of his family jewels. I tell you, Locke, these incidents are beginning to become a nightmare to us. Miss Cartwright is the tenth member of our little British colony who has been got at. She will vanish—just as the others did. Red Mask never fails!"

"'Never' is a very foolish word to use, Mr. Maltby," Ferrers Locke returned quietly. "I am going to prove to you that Red Mask can fail."

He turned to the priest.

"You are quite right, Father Petro," he said. "Your visit to the Kremlin was useless. Miss Cartwright was taken to the fortress last night. She left in a closed carriage shortly after eleven o'clock. The man who drove the vehicle was one of us. He told me this morning that Red Mask him-

officials of the town. Victims marked down by Red Mask would be hauled in front of the tribunal on some trumped-up charge. Then, being sentenced, they would be handed over to the commandant of the Butirka Fortress. It was there that Red Mask held a peculiar sway.

Backed up by some unknown, high authority, he was the real ruler, carrying on his evil deeds unchecked and unquestioned. His very name had become a terror, even to some of his own countrymen; yet it was the foreign element in the town that had suffered the most.

"Listen to me, Mr. Maltby," Ferrers Locke went on. "I came to Moscow a casual stranger, and I heard what was happening. This man, Red Mask, must be exposed and crushed, and I offered to organise against him. The Brotherhood of the White Heather—the symbol of good luck—was started by me, and, as you know, it has grown tremendously. You yourself and Father Petro



The lithe figure of Ferrers Locke lunged forward, his hard-knuckled fist driving home with a dull thud. Red Mask fell like a log. "All right, Miss Cartwright," panted the detective. "Quick! Come! You haven't a moment to spare!" (See Page 26.)

self met that unfortunate woman when she entered the prison."

"Do you mean that Red Mask is back in the fortress again?" Mr. Maltby broke out. "We heard that he was away from Butirka."

"He has never been away from Butirka," Ferrers Locke replied slowly. "Two days ago, you, Mr. Maltby, dined at Palkin's. Red Mask was seated at the table next to you!"

Mr. Maltby leaned forward and caught Locke by the arm.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked. "Are you sure? No one has ever seen Red Mask without his disguise. Have you actually discovered his hiding-place?"

For the last two years the foreign element in Moscow had lived under a reign of terror. A mysterious personality, hidden under the name of Red Mask, had tyrannised over the town, and there had been many victims of his cruelty.

The Government authorities pretended to know nothing about the man's crimes, and it was useless to apply for redress to the

are both members, and there are many others."

"We have followed your lead, Mr. Locke," the middle-aged man returned. "Even so we feel it is all wasted time. What can our organisation do against Red Mask? The case of Miss Cartwright proves how helpless we are. He wanted revenge, and waited his time. She will be another victim. Within a week or two we shall have the usual bulletin announcing her death. Last time, when poor Thomas Gibbs was caught, they gave it out as malaria. No one saw him buried, and no one knew what really happened to him."

His sombre face fell, and he looked across at the famous detective with troubled eyes.

"You are going to measure swords with Red Mask, Mr. Locke," he said; "but I am afraid that he has everything in his favour."

The keen, cool-looking man in front of him shrugged his shoulders.

"To-night will prove whether you are correct or not, Mr. Maltby," said Ferrers Locke.

"And now I've a favour to ask of you. May

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"I borrow one of your vans for a day or so?" Mr. Maltby was general manager of a small tannery on the outskirts of the town. It was an English company that had been taken over by the local government, and Mr. Maltby was still allowed to remain at his post simply because of his expert knowledge.

"You can have half a dozen if you like," replied Mr. Maltby. "We use only one a day when we're slack."

"Then if I call for it this evening it will be ready for me?"

"I'll have one ready in the shed beside the railway," Mr. Maltby returned.

By the way, see that there is a good supply of petrol—sufficient to cover a drive of two or three hundred miles—across the frontier."

Father Petro looked up sharply at the detective's clean-cut, tanned face.

"You really think that you can do something to help that wretched girl?"

"I think I can do something to make Red Mask very, very angry," said Locke grimly.

The "Get-Away!"

A TIRED youngster, in a dust-stained travelling-coat, emerged from the train at Moscow Station, and followed a tall, black-haired man through the exit into the dingy street.

Someone lumbered against the youngster, and a hoarse voice whispered in his ear:

"I am from Ferrers Locke; you have to follow me now. Boris Sarov is not to know."

As he spoke the man thrust a grimy hand forward, and Jack Drake saw on one finger a signet-ring—a ring which he recognised at once as belonging to his chief.

"Keep behind me, but do not speak."

The man shuffled off, and, after a moment's hesitation, Drake followed him, dodging swiftly through the other passengers before Boris Sarov was aware of his going.

His guide led him down a narrow thoroughfare, along which ran a high wall that guarded a tall factory. Finally, they turned into a muddy lane, where a small covered motor-van was standing.

The guide walked right on, past the van, and Jack Drake quickened his pace to overtake the fellow. As he drew level with the van a familiar voice sounded from it:

"Good, sonny! Come along! Get up here and take charge of the van. You'll find a driver's coat under the seat."

It was the voice of Ferrers Locke which came from the canvas-covered interior.

Jack, swinging round, reached under the seat, and drew out a long, linen coat, which he donned. Then stepping in front of the van he started up the engine, and climbed in behind the steering-wheel.

The canvas parted for a moment, and the youngster saw his master's face in the gap.

"Drive on to the end of the lane, and then turn to the right till you get to the end of the street. Go straight through the town, and I'll tell you when to turn over the bridge. Don't forget you've to keep to the right."

"But I say, guv'nor, what are we on?" exclaimed Jack Drake, in bewilderment.

Ferrers Locke laughed at the troubled tone.

"I can't explain just now, my lad," he said. "But I can tell you this much—you and I are going to face the biggest job we've ever had! To-night we make a beginning. We are going to try and rescue an Englishwoman, Miss Ina Cartwright, from the hands of a friend who is known and feared in Moscow as 'Red Mask.' You'll have cause to remember that name, sonny, before we are finished!"

The canvas flap moved slightly, then Locke spoke again.

"This is only the first move," he added; "but I want to succeed. You'll need to keep your wits about you, Jack. Now drive on!"

It spoke volumes for the boy's great adaptability that he fell into the scheme of things at once. The van was of American make, and presently Jack was driving it through one of the wide main streets, finally emerging into a wide thoroughfare which led to the riverside.

A whisper sent him across one wide bridge, and directed him to a road that headed out to the distant steppes. Presently in front of him Jack saw the gloomy outline of a great, dark red fortress loom up.

He swung into a side road that led to the fortress, drove on past the shut gates, and finally, at another quiet word of command, halted near the huge wall.

"Wait here until I return. If anyone speaks to you, remember you're deaf and dumb," came Ferrers Locke's whispered command.

Jack Drake leaned over his shoulder as he heard the back of the wagon creak. He caught sight of a bent, ragged shape staggering away from the van with a huge basket on its shoulder. The figure halted at a small doorway in the wall, and knocked twice.

There came the scrape of bolts, and the door was flung open, and the burdened shape vanished.

"I suppose it was the guv'nor," Jack Drake thought. "By Jiminy, I'd never have recognised him!"

The soldier who had opened the side-door followed the bent figure up the narrow passage until they emerged into a small courtyard, where the basket was deposited with a thud.

"I am an old man, and will carry this no further!" a querulous, cracked voice broke out, in a guttural tongue. "Come you, you great strong tovarisch (comrade), help an old man."

The soldier drew back, and laughed.

"I am not here to help carry your rubbish," he said. "I suppose it is for the commandant?"

"Who else would it be for?" the querulous voice rapped out.

"Who, indeed?" returned the soldier. "But I can tell you the commandant is not here, so you had better perch on that basket of yours, and wait until he comes back."

And with that he turned and walked off, vanishing into the little garden that bloomed on the left. For a long moment the bent shape beside the basket stood still, listening intently.

At the back of the court was a solitary building, two stories high. There was a flight of steps on the left leading to an arched doorway, through which could be seen the main building of the fortress.

A light was glimmering in a narrow window on the second floor, and the man beside the basket suddenly straightened up, and, throwing back his head, gave a low signal—the muffled hoot of an owl.

A moment later a shadow darkened the light at the window, and a slim woman's shape stood outlined. Ferrers Locke—for he it was in the guise of a ragged peasant—with the aid of the stout basket, reached for a small drain-pipe, and clambered up the side of the wall. He gained a ledge which ran beneath the second-floor window, and as he began to work his way along it the slender figure suddenly vanished.

Reaching the window-sill, Ferrers Locke raised his head slowly, and peered into the lighted interior.

He saw a pale-faced girl standing in the centre of the chamber, and, facing her, in the open doorway opposite was a huge figure in a close-fitting black uniform. The man was a giant in girth and limbs, and there was a hint of brute strength about his attitude; but it was not the gorilla-like body that held the detective's eye. The face was practically covered with a red silk mask, and only the lower part of the chin was revealed, while his bristling hair surmounted the red mask stiffly. The man of mystery who only revealed himself once to his victims was there in the flesh.

Locke saw the burly body move out from the doorway, and a cold, rasping voice sounded. The walls were too thick for the detective to hear what was being said, but he saw the girl shiver and back away against the wall, holding her hands to her face.

Red Mask raised his hand, and made another fierce gesture, finally breaking into a harsh, strident laugh. He turned as though to go, and the terrified girl took a pace forward, and fell on her knees, with outstretched hands towards him. She was pleading for mercy, although the words she

used could not be distinguished. Again that brute laugh sounded.

A grim expression crossed Ferrers Locke's face, and, slipping below the sill again, he climbed back along the ledge, finally gaining another window. It was ajar, and, swinging it open, he slid over the sill, and found himself in a narrow passage.

There was a glint of light ahead, shining through the half-opened door of the lighted chamber. With quick, cat-like steps Locke reached the doorway, and halted there in the darkness. And now the harsh, strident voice reached him:

"You will not die quickly, but little by little—slowly, and you will not be alone! There are others that have gone ahead of you—most of them of your own race!"

"But I have done nothing wrong, nothing!" the girl's voice wailed. "And the committee said that I should only be sent to the fortress for a few weeks!"

"What do I care for the committee? I am Red Mask, and a law to myself. You'll go where the others have gone, to something much worse than death—much worse than death!"

A heavy footfall sounded, and the door opened slowly. Ferrers Locke saw that gigantic figure turn swiftly, and, rising silently, the detective clenched his fists and waited.

The man in the red mask gained the doorway, and looked back over his shoulder at the slim, terrified girl.

"You will pay for your loyalty with death!" the strident voice said. "You will vanish—just as the others vanished."

He took another pace into the passage, and his head came round. Under the red mask the huge jaw stuck out, forming a perfect target, and the lithe, athletic figure of Ferrers Locke lunged forward, and his hard-knuckled fist went home with a dull thud.

Red Mask fell like a log, thudding across the threshold, while the room shook to the impact of his massive frame. The quick, frightened cry that broke from Ina Cartwright was stifled as she saw the ragged shape appear in the doorway.

"All right, Miss Cartwright! Quick! Come! You haven't a moment to spare!"

It was the quiet, matter-of-fact tones and the English voice that stilled the girl's fear. She caught at Ferrers Locke's hand, and, with a swift shudder, she stepped over the prostrate body of the man in the doorway.

"Is there a stairway?" asked Ferrers Locke.

"Yes, to the left."

It was the slender girl who led the way now down a circular staircase, and across a narrow paved passage, halting at a heavily-barred door. Locke slipped back the bolt and opened the door. In front of him was a narrow court, and to the left of the passage stood the huge wicker basket.

"Quick—come!"

He caught the girl's trembling hand, and they raced together across the space. Then, with deft fingers, Ferrers Locke undid the catches of the basket, and lifted it, revealing the empty interior.

"There is no other way, Miss Cartwright," he said. "You must get in here. You won't be there for long. Come!"

He lifted the slender figure, and lowered her gently into the huge receptacle, closing the lid and replacing the straps. Then, with an effortless heave, that indicated the immense strength of that tall figure, Locke raised the basket, and, balancing it on his shoulder, paced down the narrow passage towards the side gate.

From the lighted guard-room a couple of figures came, and a bunch of keys dangled in the doorkeeper's hand as he lounged forward.

"I shall wait no longer for the commandant," Ferrers Locke snapped, in a cracked voice. "Open the gate for me, booby, and let me go."

A gust of laughter sounded in the doorway, and the sturdy custodian thrust the key in the lock and turned it. The bent shape, bearing the basket, staggered out and crossed to the back of the van. The basket was slipped under the canvas flap. Then, as the bent figure straightened up, there came a sudden cry. From the narrow courtyard a voice—harsh with rage—broke out in a clamorous command.



"Ho! The guard! Stop them!" The sentry standing in the doorway took his rifle from the side of the wall and made a rush towards the van. Even as he did so Ferrers Locke made his leap and grabbed the fellow by the arm and throat. **"Quick, Jack!"** panted Locke. **"Off you go!"** The van started down the road, a volley of bullets spattering over the rocking vehicle. (See this page.)

"Ho! The guard! Stop them! Stop them!"

The sentry standing in the doorway took his rifle from the side of the wall, and made a rush towards the van.

"Do you hear?" he called. **"It is Red Mask! Stand where you are, little father, or—"**

He levelled his weapon threateningly, and as he did so Ferrers Locke made his leap. A catlike dive saw him lunge under the menacing bayonet. Then, next moment, his hands were on the sentry's throat in a grip of steel.

Again the angry bellow rose from behind the tall wall of the fortress. Then Jack Drake, leaning out from behind the steering wheel, heard the quiet voice of his master.

"Quick, Jack! Off you go! Make for the cross-roads—someone will meet you there!"

The locked shapes awoke out from the van, and Jack caught a momentary glimpse of his master as they crashed against the wall. The next moment the youngster started the van off down the road, gathering speed with every turn of the wheels.

A straggling volley crashed out from the wall on the left, and Jack heard the bullets hiss and snarl over the rocking vehicle, but the van swung round the bend, and went drumming on down the narrow roadway, its head-lamps cutting a clear way through the dusk.

The clatter of arms, the angry shout of harsh voices, and the patter of feet in the narrow passage beyond the doorway warned Ferrers Locke that he had not a moment to spare. He reeled against the wall, jamming his rival against the rough stone, and now, as the armed man made another desperate effort to free himself from that choking grip, Ferrers Locke released one hand, and drove it full into the unshaven chin—a smashing punch that sent the man's head back with a jerk.

Next moment the unwieldy figure collapsed, and the detective gripped at the rifle that fell from the limp fingers. A sudden sound from behind him made Locke leap round. A stocky shape had charged out of the gateway, and now, with bayonet levelled, the

figure came leaping at him. A quick swing of the sleuth's rifle saw the broad, steel bayonet thrust upwards. Then the man tumbled to one side, and Ferrers Locke brought the butt of his weapon round, thudding it against the armed sentinel's head.

He sprawled across the roadway, the rifle clattering from his hand, and Locke turned and darted along the high wall of the fortress, sprinting like a deer. He heard the crash of the volley from the wall above, and saw the van vanish. Then, dropping his rifle, the detective wheeled across the road, took a low mud wall at a bound, and went on across the rough, untilled fields beyond.

He had reached a narrow lane, running between the high earth walls, when a sudden finger of light leaped out in the darkness behind him. It was the huge searchlight from the fortress, and it began to run hither and thither across the open expanse, seeking him. Would it find him?

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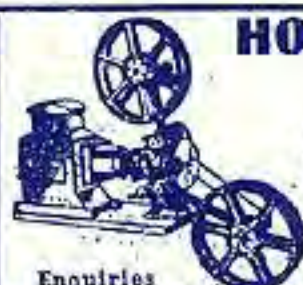
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