

COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD—Part 1 On Sale Feb. 12th. **1/3**

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The Magnet 2^d

EVERY MONDAY.

Library

of
School & Detective Stories.



UNWELCOME VISITORS!

“BUNTER’S POOR RELATIONS!”

(This week’s magnificent story of Greyfriars, inside.)

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"THE WHITE FEATHER!"

By Frank Richards.

NEXT week's magnificent Greyfriars yarn will be remembered for a long time to come. For delicate handling of a difficult situation your favourite author knows no equal. We see such well-known characters as Miss Phyllis Howell of Cliff House, Bob Cherry, Sammy Bunter, and Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe well before the footlights. The last named never could do the decent thing, for his code of honour begins and ends with self. Mr. Richards weaves Ponsonby into his plot as the central figure, and against him in striking contrast of character and manliness is Bob Cherry. That Bob could ever be found a fitting person to deserve the appellation of a "funk" seems incredible, yet Greyfriars in general, and the Remove in particular, are, by overwhelming evidence, driven to the belief that such is the case. I will leave you to thread your way through this splendid story, chums, confident that you will appreciate the master hand and mind that has created it.

"THE YELLOW CLAW!"

By Hedley Scott.

Next Monday's trenchant instalment treats of the tragic death of the actor in Mark Chaerton's play. The atmosphere of mystery is pierced by the clever deductions of Ferrers Locke in a way that leaves certain people gasping. An attempt, too, is made on the life of the world-famous sleuth, but, thanks to that splendid presence of mind which has stood him in such good stead during a stormy and adventurous career the sleuth still wears a smile, so to speak—a smile that speaks volumes for his self-confidence. Tell your friends about this wonderful new serial, boys, and let them share the treats that are to come. 'Nuff said!

A TYPEWRITING SUPPLEMENT.

The "Greyfriars Herald" in the next issue of the MAGNET will deal with typewriting. It is a weird and complex subject. At some time or another we have all suffered from the crazy typewriter. There is the old machine which undoubtedly means well, but the poor thing cannot spell. Then there is the antique contraption which jumps the letters about all over the place; that is nerves, pure and simple. You might not think typewriting was a suitable subject for treatment. Read the Supplement on Monday. Your opinion will swing round as celeritously as the sails of a well-oiled windmill.

"KING'S EVIDENCE!"

This is a dramatic complete about the North-West Mounted Police. Mel Ruthven and Joe Clarke, two troopers of the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 836.

famous Force, show their mettle in the face of deadly peril. Yarns about Canada are always welcome, I know. I often get asked for them. In this coming tale you have something really out of the way, humming with life and reality.

CONGRATS!

A Stockport reader writes: "It is very seldom that I write to the editors of papers, but I felt I must write and tell you what I think about the MAGNET. I have been a reader for the last two and a half years, and I think it cannot be any better than it is now. The first time I bought the MAGNET I thought it was the best book that could be produced, but since then it has become better still, and now I think there is no room for improvement whatever." A letter of this sort does more real good than the writer of it can gauge. Credit where credit is due is not always given, as we all know, but there are piquant exceptions, as here. And the MAGNET will roll on towards even greater success, thanks to such support.

THE OLD QUESTION.

Are the stories in the MAGNET about Greyfriars all imagination, or not? asks a reader in the North. I could not even attempt to say how many times this genial query has been put. Of course, the yarns are fiction, as Mr. Frank Richards could not deal with real people. But they are true to life all the time. It seems to me this little point sometimes gets missed. A story is frequently closer to life itself than anything which has really happened.

HOW TO FEED A TORTOISE.

One of my readers, who signs himself "Tortoise," writes to ask me what food it is necessary to give his tortoise. Tortoises need very little attention—their main feature of recommendation.

**GET YOUR
"HOLIDAY
ANNUAL"**

—NOW!—

These pets are kept indoors by some people, but it is by far better to let them roam about in the garden. They are very fond of lettuce, and also eat most grasses, sow-thistles, dandelions, and also fruit. The tortoise does not hunt for beetles and slugs, as is supposed by many people. A little bread-and-milk occasionally given will be relished greatly. The animal requires very little water, getting its liquid from the juice of the green food.

As the chilly days of October approach, the tortoise will burrow under any mouldy heap, where it can find warmth, and lie there until about April. It is sometimes advisable to take them indoors at October, and place them in a box lined with flannel in a warm position.

OLD TYRES.

An old tyre, which is getting rather rotten, may be made to last a lot longer by pouring half an ounce of glycerine through the valve-hole, and letting it run round the inside of the tyre.

To remove rust, make a paste of fine sand and paraffin, and apply to the rusted parts, and rub with a thick cloth.

If your lamp keeps blowing out on a windy night, tie your handkerchief round it, the four corners being tied to the lamp-bracket. The wind cannot get through the handkerchief, but the light can be clearly seen.

If by chance your wheel gets buckled, take it out and lay it flat on the ground. Standing on the part bent upwards, stoop down and grasp the part bent down; then try to straighten your back, and if the wheel is a good one, after a little pulling it will spring back into shape.

The best lubricating oil is made by mixing five parts of olive-oil with one part of paraffin, as in this proportion the oil does not clog.

A good enamel polish is ordinary furniture cream, applied with a soft flannel.

ROUND THE WORLD

For 1d. a Day.

"Countries of the World" (Part I. of which will be on sale Tuesday, February 12th) gives you an opportunity of seeing the world, with all its most interesting sights and famous beauty spots, for the small gradual outlay of one penny a day. By purchasing each fortnightly part as it is published you can secure a pictorial record of unique interest, and one of which you will never tire.

You can visit the far-off Indies, or take a nearer trip to the red cliffs of Devon, or the wilds of Cornwall or Scotland. Every land—savage or civilised, near or remote—will be pictured in the pages of this superb work, which will include over five thousand photographs altogether, most of them taken specially for the purpose, and published for the first time.

The colour-plates are wonderful. They are not mere coloured photographs, but living presentations of actual places as they exist to-day. There will be eight of them in each part, the price of the complete part being 1s. 3d. Over 130 leading travel writers and explorers will contribute the articles to "Countries of the World."

Your Editor.

Anyone "rolling in durocks" can be sure of the firm and devoted friendship of William George Bunter. On the other hand, anyone "down and out" need expect nothing better than supercilious scorn and lofty aloofness from the fat and fatuous Billy. But a surprise is in store for the Owl of the Remove, likewise his affectionate aunt and uncle. What is it?



Bunter's Poor Relations!

A Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, with Billy Bunter playing a leading part. Told by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Great Expectations!

"TELEGRAM for Master Bunter!" This announcement, made by Trotter, the page, caused quite a flutter in the dovecotes, so to speak.

It was Wednesday morning, and the Remove were at lessons. Mr. Quelch was in charge, and he had been very much on the warpath that morning. The entry of Trotter with the telegram made a welcome interlude. It also made something of a sensation, for telegrams for Bunter were like figs in the average fig-pudding—few and far between.

Trotter had waylaid the telegraph-boy in the Close, and relieved him of the wire, which he now handed to Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you, Trotter," said the Remove master. "You had better wait a moment, in case there should be a reply."

"Werry good, sir!"

Mr. Quelch signalled to Billy Bunter, and the Owl of the Remove rolled out from his place. He looked very pompous and self-important. Morning lessons had been held up solely for his benefit. Somebody had actually sent the fat junior a telegram! It was almost as staggering as if his celebrated postal-order had arrived!

Billy Bunter took the buff-coloured envelope from Mr. Quelch, and slit it open by inserting a fat thumb in the flap. He drew out the flimsy sheet and unfolded it, and stood blinking at it through his big spectacles. All eyes were upon him as he did so. He was the observed of all observers!

"I trust, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "that no bad news—"

The Remove master broke off abruptly. It was quite obvious from Billy Bunter's expression that no bad news had arrived. His plump countenance was beaming like a full moon.

"Oh, ripping!" he chortled. "Best bit of news I've had for ages!"

And the fat junior, utterly regardless of time and place, started to dance around in high glee.

The class grinned, and Mr. Quelch glared.

"Bunter!" he roared in tones of thunder.

The fat junior whirled round and round, brandishing the telegram aloft, and looking very much like a fat cat trying to catch its own tail. Round and round he went, revolving at an ever increasing speed; and there was a titter from the class.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch angrily. "Bunter! You forget yourself, sir! Cease those absurd gyrations instantly!"

Billy Bunter came to himself, as it were, with a jerk. He stopped short, panting, and blinked at Mr. Quelch.

"Awfully sorry, sir," he blurted out breathlessly; "but I was so excited about this telegram that I forgot, for the moment, where I was."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"The Form-room is not the place for ebullitions of excitement, Bunter," he said sternly. "Do you wish to send a reply to the telegram?"

"Nunno, sir!"

Mr. Quelch signed to Trotter, the page, to take his departure. Then he turned to Bunter.

"Pray enlighten me, Bunter, as to the reason for your excitement," he said.

"Oh, certainly, sir! The fact is, my rich relations are coming to see me. They're arriving this afternoon."

There was quite a buzz from the class. The Removites had often heard stories about Bunter's rich relations, but they had regarded them as fairy-tales, and nothing more. Now, however, it seemed as if they contained some element of truth.

"I was not aware, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch dryly, "that you had any wealthy relations."

"Oh, really, sir! My Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel are simply rolling in dough!"

"I always did say they kept a bakery!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch called for silence.

"What do you mean by 'dough,' Bunter?" he asked.

"Splosh, sir."

"What?"

"Dibs, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"I guess he means spondulics, sir!" chimed in Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were enjoying the diversion. Lessons had already been suspended for five minutes, and the Removites, who had no love for Latin, were hoping to hang out the time.

Mr. Quelch rapped sharply on the desk with his pointer.

If there are any further outbursts of merriment, I shall punish the whole Form!" he exclaimed. "Now, Bunter, I am still mystified as to what you mean by the term 'dough.' I suspect, however, that it refers to money."

"That's it, sir!"

"Then you should have said so in the first instance, instead of resorting to unseemly slang. So your Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel are very wealthy?"

"Awfully, fearfully, wealthy, sir. They're simply swimming in shekels—I mean, splosh—that is to say, money. They've got so much, sir, that it's a nuisance to them. They can't spend it fast enough."

"A very enviable situation to be in!" said Mr. Quelch dryly. "And your uncle and aunt are coming to Greyfriars this afternoon, Bunter?"

"Yessir. They'll arrive about two o'clock, according to the telegram. I expect they'll roll up in their handsome limousine. Uncle Claude will toss a fiver to Gosling for opening the gates—"

"Enough, Bunter! I fear that you are exaggerating the resources of your relations. You may go to your place."

Billy Bunter hesitated.

"May I be excused lessons, sir?" he asked.

"Most certainly not!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"But—but I've got to change into my Sunday best, sir, ready for the arrival of my rich relations."

"You may change after lessons—or after dinner, if it comes to that. There is ample time."

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"But, sir—"

"Not another word!" roared Mr. Quelch. And he raised his pointer in such a menacing manner that Billy Bunter promptly rolled back to his place.

The diversion was at an end, and the lesson proceeded.

Billy Bunter found it difficult to concentrate upon Latin. Mr. Quelch had to speak sharply to him on more than one occasion, and eventually he had to address the fat junior even more forcibly—with his cane. But even the pangs of a "licking" failed to subdue Bunter's high spirits. His rich relations were coming! That rapturous thought occupied Bunter's mind to the exclusion of everything else.

At last he would be able to prove to his schoolfellows that the rich relations were not fictitious characters, but actual living persons. When they arrived—in the luxurious limousine already referred to—he would escort them round the place and show them the sights of Greyfriars.

It would be a proud and a thrilling moment for the fellow who had always been regarded as the pauper of the Remove.

In his mind's eye Bunter already saw the handsome car rolling in at the school gates, with Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel on board. Uncle Claude, portly and prosperous, would be puffing at a fat cigar; Aunt Claribel would be wrapped in a fur coat which didn't cost a penny less than a hundred guineas. Oh, it would be a great moment—a grand moment! The onlookers in the Close would stand spellbound. They would behold, at long last, Bunter's rich relations—in the flesh!

Small wonder that Billy Bunter could not concentrate upon such a petty subject as Latin. Small wonder that his mind frequently wandered, and that his gaze also wandered—in the direction of the Form-room clock, the hands of which seemed to be weighted with lead, so slowly did they revolve.

But at last the welcome word of dismissal came, and the Removites flocked out into the passage.

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter was all agog with excitement—"fancy my rich relations turning up!"

"I'll believe it when I see 'em!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Same here," said Harry Wharton. "It's just occurred to me that that telegram might have been a spoof. Somebody's been pulling Bunter's leg."

"What rot!" exclaimed the fat junior. "The wire was genuine enough. Here it is. You can see for yourselves that it's the real thing."

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at the telegram which Bunter produced. It certainly seemed genuine. It bore the stamp of a London post-office, and it briefly stated that Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel would arrive at Greyfriars about two o'clock.

"Wonders will never cease!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Fancy Bunter's swell relations turning up!"

"Going to treat them to a jolly good slap-up feed, Bunter?" inquired Peter Todd.

Bunter grinned.

"I reckon the boot will be on the other foot," he said. "Uncle Claude's a generous old buffer, and he'll treat me handsomely. I dare say I shall get a fiver out of him, too—p'r'aps a tenner."

"And where will Sammy come in?" asked Nugent.

Even as Nugent asked the question Sammy Bunter came up at a canter. The

fat sag could see that there was something in the wind by his major's flushed, excited face.

"What's up, Billy?" he asked breathlessly.

"Great news, kid!" said Billy, beaming. "Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel are coming to see us. Our rich relations, whom we haven't seen for a month of Sundays!"

Sammy gave a whoop of delight.

"Oh, ripping! What time are they coming?"

"They'll be here by two—unless they have a breakdown on the road. And that's not likely. Their limousine's in perfect running order. It never goes wrong. I believe they gave something like five thousand quids for it!"

"Oh, make it five million!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter surveyed his schoolfellows with a lordly and patronising air. His eye, "in a fine frenzy rolling," as it were, was fixed upon them in lofty condescension.

"You fellows will be cadging for favours now that my rich relations are coming," he said. "But I may as well tell you here and now that you'll be unlucky! You've never come to my rescue when I've been hard up. You've kicked me out of your studies when I've come round asking for a loan. And now that I'm in clover I'm not going to ask you to share my prosperity. So you can put that in your pipes and smoke it!"

"No, thanks!" said Bob Cherry. "We don't smoke. We're teetotallers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton bestowed a withering glance upon Billy Bunter.

"You silly fat Owl!" he said scornfully. "We don't want to share your prosperity!"

"In fact, we haven't seen the prosperity yet," said Johnny Bull.

"You'll see it at two o'clock!" was Billy Bunter's parting shot, as he rolled away with his minor. "When Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel arrive you'll all be bowing and scraping as if you were in the presence of Royalty!"

To which the juniors responded, in chorus:

"Bow-wow!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not According to Programme!

BILLY BUNTER surveyed himself critically in the long mirror at the end of the Remove dormitory. The reflection that came back to him was that of a very plump, happy-looking youth, resplendently garbed from top to toe.

As a rule, Bunter took no pains with his toilet. Great men like Bunter could not be expected to worry about such mundane matters as nicely-creased trousers, snow-white collars, and perfectly-adjusted neckties. Neither could they be expected to see that their hair was always carefully brushed, and their shoes polished to perfection.

On this occasion, however, Billy Bunter had devoted a solid hour to improving his personal appearance. And Sammy had followed suit.

Billy's Sunday suit had been thoroughly brushed—every square inch of it. So had Sammy's. Billy's collar and tie were perfectly adjusted. So were Sammy's. Billy's shoes shone so that he could see his face in them. So did Sammy's.

Moreover, the Bunter brothers had conquered their aversion to their natural enemies, soap and water, and had indulged in the luxury of a good wash. Their cheeks glowed from the friction of the towels. As for their hair, it was

plastered back over their heads, and there was a straight pathway down the middle.

"Good!" murmured Billy Bunter in tones of great satisfaction. "I look even more handsome than usual. Wonderful what a difference a good wash makes in a fellow's appearance—though I can't say I'd ever noticed it before."

"How do I look, Billy?" asked Sammy anxiously.

Billy turned to survey his minor.

"Not bad," was the comment. "In fact, you look almost respectable!"

This was hardly complimentary; but, coming from an elder brother, it was praise indeed.

Billy Bunter glanced at the watch which adorned his wrist. It was Peter Todd's wrist-watch. Peter had taken it off and left it on the table in Study No. 7; for he was playing footer that afternoon, and he didn't want to run the risk of the watch getting broken.

Bunter had "borrowed" the watch for this special occasion, and had felt no qualms in doing so.

"Quarter to two," he observed. "They'll be here any minute now. Can you hear the purring of the limousine, Sammy?"

Sammy shook his head.

"I didn't know cars purred," he said. "I thought they snorted, like pigs."

"Ass! Let's go down into the Close."

The two brothers quitted the dormitory and walked sedately down the stairs. Billy went first, looking as majestic as possible, and Sammy followed in his footsteps.

The appearance of the Bunters caused quite a sensation in the Close.

Harry Wharton & Co. had not yet gone down to the football-field. They were standing in a group chatting, and Peter Todd was with them. On catching sight of Peter, Billy Bunter promptly pushed the wrist-watch farther back on his wrist, so that his coat-sleeve concealed it. For if Peter were to catch sight of the watch it was not unlikely that he would be angry—not to say violent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as the Bunters came on the scene. "Here's Solomon in all his glory—twin Solomons, in fact!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"They look as if they've just stepped out of a giddy band-box!" he said.

"Dressed up to the nines, by Jove!" said Nugent.

All eyes were turned towards the two Bunters as they rolled majestically into view.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy, bearing down upon his Form-fellows, "have you seen anything of a gorgeous limousine?"

"We saw a dustcart go by just now," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave a snort.

"My rich relations aren't in the habit of riding on dustcarts!" he said. "They always travel in style. Hallo! What's all this?"

Billy Bunter broke off and blinked in the direction of the school gates. There was quite a commotion going on in that locality. The station hack had turned up—a very ancient vehicle, drawn by an equally ancient horse—and Gosling, the porter, had come out of his lodge, and he was making frantic gestures to the driver of the hack.

"Just you go along out of it!" shouted Gosling. And his voice came distinctly to the juniors' ears. "Op it! D'you 'ear?"

"But I've brought a fare up to the school!" protested the driver. "A couple on 'em, in fact!"

"An' pretty fine specimens of yew-manity, judgin' by the look of 'em!" grunted Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I ain't admittin' no tramps to these 'allowed presinks!"

At this a wrathful face was thrust from the interior of the hack, and a wrathful voice exclaimed:

"Tramps! How dare you allude to us in such a disrespectful manner! Stand aside, base menial!"

The base menial did not budge.

Inside the vehicle were a man and woman. The term "lady and gentleman" did not seem to fit them, nor would Gosling have dreamed of applying it to them. For they were very shabbily clad. Gosling regarded them as a pair of vagrants, and he had every excuse for so doing.

Harry Wharton & Co. watched the little altercation at the gate with smiles of amusement.

But Billy Bunter didn't smile. Neither did Sammy. They stared hard at the station hack and at the florid face which protruded therefrom; and each was conscious of a cold shiver running down his spine.

A dreadful fear crept into the minds of Billy and Sammy.

Surely these visitors could not be the rich relations—the much-boasted Aunt Claribel and Uncle Claude? Perish the thought! As if such superior autocrats would condescend to travel up to the school on the station hack.

And yet—The florid face which protruded from the vehicle bore a striking resemblance to that of Uncle Claude. Although both the Bunters were short-sighted they could not fail to remark that resemblance.

Billy Bunter gave quite a startled squeak. Cold beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead.

"Sammy," he muttered, forgetting his grammar in his agitation, "I—I believe that's them!"

"Never!" gasped Sammy. But there was a strange lack of conviction in his tone.

The very next moment Billy's dreadful fears were confirmed.

"Stand aside, I repeat!" exclaimed the owner of the florid face. "Permit the driver to proceed! We have come to Greyfriars to visit our nephews, William and Samuel Bunter!"

The fat was in the fire now with a vengeance!

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Billy Bunter, in dismay. "Fancy Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel turning up on the station hack!"

"They must have come down from London by train," said Sammy. "What's happened to their limousine, I wonder?"

"They've pawned it, I expect!" chuckled Skinner of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As soon as Gosling the porter learned the identity of the visitors, he permitted the driver of the hack to pass.

The old-fashioned vehicle rumbled into the Close, and a crowd gathered round it as it came to a halt.

Uncle Claude was the first to step out. He was a portly gentleman of about fifty; and, according to Billy Bunter, he was a millionaire several times over. But he didn't look the part. He was extremely shabby and down-at-heel; in fact, there was a large square patch at the back of his trousers, which suggested that the cloth which was there originally had been removed by some ferocious bulldog.

In lieu of a collar and tie, Uncle Claude wore a muffler, the hue of which resembled Joseph's celebrated coat of many colours. All the colours of the

rainbow, and a few more beside, were interwoven in that muffler.

But the most comical part of Uncle Claude's make-up was his hat. It was a top-hat—at least, it had been, once upon a time. But it had not preserved its pristine splendour. Although it had once been a thing of beauty, it had not turned out to be a joy for ever. It was badly battered, as if its owner were in the habit of sitting on it; and it looked more like a concertina than a top-hat.

Uncle Claude certainly looked less like a millionaire than anyone the juniors had ever seen. Gosling, the porter, for instance, was quite a Beau Brummel in appearance, by comparison with the shabby uncle of the Bunter brothers.

As for Aunt Claribel, whom Uncle Claude now assisted to alight from the hack, she looked like a gipsy woman. She wore a very dowdy costume, and a pair of hefty boots which might have suited Bolsover major, but which were very unbecoming to a lady. Over Aunt Claribel's head, and around her shoulders, was a red shawl.

Billy Bunter nearly collapsed on the flagstones of the Close. And Sammy looked as if he was about to swoon.

The two brothers felt like taking to their heels, and disowning the disreputable couple who claimed kinship with them. But there was no escape for them, for they stood close up to the hack, and there was a solid wall of fellows behind them craning their necks to catch sight of the "rich relations."

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "Jevver see such a pair of guys?"

"No, never!" said Skinner solemnly. "They look as if they've just been let out of the workhouse!"

"Dry up, you cad!" muttered Mark Linley, giving Skinner a glare.

At that moment Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel caught sight of their nephews, and they promptly advanced to greet them.

"William, my dear boy!"

"Samuel, my darling!"

Uncle Claude grasped Billy Bunter's hand with affectionate fervour. And Aunt Claribel implanted a resounding kiss on Sammy's plump cheek.

"Ow!" yelled Billy, writhing under the crushing handshake.

"Groooogh!" spluttered Sammy, hastily withdrawing his face from that of his aunt.

And then the driver of the hack gave an impatient shout.

"Hi! Wot about my fare?"

Uncle Claude turned his head.

"Were you addressing me, my man?" he asked haughtily.

"Oh, no!" said the driver, with crushing sarcasm. "I was jest mutterin' to meself, that's all! It's an 'abit I've got. By the way, the fare's three-an'-six!"

The driver spoke rudely enough, for he did not anticipate that he would get a penny more than his actual fare from such a downtrodden pair of persons. In fact, he was beginning to have serious doubts as to whether he would even get his legitimate fare!

Uncle Claude started to go through his pockets. The Greyfriars juniors watched him with amusement, mingled with astonishment. He produced a handful of coppers, and solemnly counted them out; then he shook his head.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Our resources, my dear Claribel, have dwindled down to ninepence."

"What!" shrieked Billy Bunter.



"Good!" murmured Billy Bunter as he surveyed himself in the mirror. "I look even more handsome than usual. Wonderful what a difference a good wash makes in a fellow's appearance!" "How do I look, Billy?" asked Sammy Bunter anxiously. "Not bad!" was the grudging reply. "In fact, you look almost respectable." (See Chapter 2.)

Uncle Claude gazed wistfully at the pile of coppers in his palm.

"Ninepence," he murmured reflectively, "is not what you would call a colossal fortune!"

"But the cabby will change a note, uncle!" said Sammy Bunter.

"No doubt," answered Uncle Claude. "But, unfortunately, I have no notes to change."

"And that's the multi-millionaire we've heard such a lot about!" said Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Uncle Claude turned to Billy Bunter.

"I am sorry, my dear William," he said, "but I must request you to settle with the driver."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Billy.

The fat junior was utterly staggered. His rich relations had arrived at the appointed time, and they were so rich that they could not afford to pay their cab-fare!

Neither could Billy Bunter afford to pay it. Uncle Claude's resources amounted to ninepence; Billy's amounted to twopence-halfpenny. Sammy was "broke," and Aunt Claribel, presumably, was in the same boat. It looked as if the driver of the station hack was going to be unlucky!

But Harry Wharton & Co. came to the rescue, like the Good Samaritans they were. They had a hurried whip-round, without the knowledge of Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, and Wharton slipped three-and-sixpence into Billy Bunter's hand.

Billy paid the driver, who gave a surly grunt, and whipped up his ancient steed. And the station hack rolled slowly out of sight, leaving Bunter's rich relations within the "allowed presinks" of Greyfriars School.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Wanted!

"THIS is too bad of you, uncle!" Billy Bunter spoke in pained, reproachful tones.

"Eh? What is too bad of me, my boy?"

"Why, turning up at Greyfriars like this!"

Uncle Claude looked perplexed.

"I do not understand you, William," he said. "Pray be more explicit!"

Billy Bunter gave a snort. He was almost weeping with mortification. After all his "big talk" about his wealthy relations, they had put him to ridicule by turning up at the school in shabby clothes, and without visible means of subsistence—unless the sum of ninepence could be termed "visible means."

It was appalling! It was outrageous! It was perfectly monstrous!

Harry Wharton & Co. were trying hard not to laugh, lest they should hurt the feelings of Bunter's relations. But Harold Skinner, and others of his kidney, were simply rocking with laughter. They seemed to regard it as the best joke of the term. The "rich relations" had not only turned out to be poor, but they had advertised their poverty in public. Uncle Claude had openly admitted that he was not in a position to change a note—a strange position, indeed, for a multi-millionaire to find himself in!

"When I got your telegram, uncle," said Billy Bunter, "I was awfully bucked. I thought that you and Aunt Claribel would turn up in your limousine, and make quite a big stir."

"Same here!" chimed in Sammy. "We thought you were rich—awfully, fearfully rich!"

Uncle Claude smiled sadly.

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"Riches take unto themselves wings," he said.

"They do, indeed!" sighed Aunt Claribel.

"You—you don't mean to say that you're desperately hard up?" said Billy Bunter, in tones almost of horror.

Uncle Claude nodded without speaking.

"Great Scott! Fancy your being as poor as church mice!"

Billy Bunter spoke as if poverty was a crime. He blinked almost accusingly at his aunt and uncle. Poverty was indeed a crime, in Bunter's opinion. If relations had no money to fling about they were quite useless, and should keep out of the way. The Bunters had no objection to being visited by wealthy and well-dressed relations; but to think that a pair of poorly-dressed paupers should call upon them in this way. It was altogether too thick!

"Life is full of ups and downs," observed Uncle Claude. "One moment you go sailing along on the flood-tide of prosperity; the next you are plunged into the shallows of poverty. We have sampled some of the 'ups,' and now we are sampling the 'downs.' Our railway fares, and the cost of sending you that telegram, have sadly depleted our resources. It is fortunate that we took return tickets, is it not, my dear Claribel?"

Aunt Claribel nodded.

"It would be very awkward to be stranded at Greyfriars without the means of getting back," she said.

"I wish to goodness you hadn't called," said Billy Bunter, quite unable to conceal his chagrin. "You've made us look ridiculous in front of all the fellows."

"How so?" asked Uncle Claude, in surprise.

"Why, just look at your togs!"

Uncle Claude glanced at his shabby, ill-fitting garments.

"Really, William, I fail to see anything amiss with my sartorial equipment!" he protested.

"Nothing amiss!" almost hooted Billy Bunter. "Why, your coat's a misfit and your bags are baggy—"

"What Shakespeare would call 'a thing of shreds and patches!'" chimed in Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Uncle Claude spun round upon the cad of the Remove.

"You are an insolent young jackanapes!" he thundered. "You have done nothing but make rude remarks since our arrival!"

"That's so," said Bob Cherry. "Give him a cuff, sir!"

"Give him a couple, in fact!" added Johnny Bull.

Skinner sneered.

"It's Bunter's uncle who wants a pair of cuffs!" he remarked. "He doesn't seem to be wearing any at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Skinner's cronies. Smack!

Uncle Claude's open palm came across Skinner's cheek with a loud report, like the crack of a pistol-shot.

The cad of the Remove staggered back with a roar and fell into the arms of Snoop and Stott.

"Yaroooo! I won't be knocked about by a beastly pauper!" yelled Skinner. "I—I'll jolly well—"

"Dry up, Skinner!" said Harry Wharton curtly. "You asked for trouble and you got it. Because people happen to be poor, that's no reason why you should insult them!"

Uncle Claude's face softened, and he laid a hand on Wharton's shoulder.

"Thank you, my boy, for those few words," he said quietly.

"That's all right, sir!" said the captain of the Remove. "I admit we're very surprised to see you turn up like this. We understood from Bunter that you were simply rolling in riches. But poverty's no crime, and we're not going to stand by and hear you insulted."

"No jolly fear!" said Nugent.

Uncle Claude turned once more to his nephews. To his surprise, he saw that Billy Bunter was holding out his hand.

"Good-bye, uncle!" said Billy.

"What?"

"Very glad you dropped in, and all the rest of it—I don't think!" added Billy under his breath. "Well, now that you've seen us, I suppose you want to be getting back."

"There's a train from Friardale at three-thirty," said Sammy.

"Bless my soul! We have no intention of returning yet—not for some considerable time!"

Billy groaned. And Sammy groaned. And they both groaned in unison. It was quite a dismal duet.

"Why, my dear boys," said Aunt Claribel, whose cultured voice was strangely out of keeping with her gipsy attire, "you surely do not wish us to depart just yet?"

"Yes, we do!" said Billy defiantly. "I may as well tell you the honest truth, straight from the shoulder. We've no use for poor relations. You can buzz off as soon as you like—and the sooner the better!"

There was a buzz of indignation from Harry Wharton & Co.

"Shame!"

"Play the game, Bunter!"

"Dash it all, you can't treat your relations like that!"

"Oh, can't I?" growled Bunter. "I wish you fellows would mind your own business! This is no affair of yours! Once again, Uncle Claude, good-bye!"

But Uncle Claude did not grasp the proffered hand. He gave his nephew a glance of deep reproach, then his expression became grim.

"We have no intention of departing for a day or two," he said.

Billy Bunter staggered back.

"A—a day or two?" he gasped.

Uncle Claude nodded.

"We shall endeavour to find accommodation in Courtfield," he said.

"But—but you've got no funds—"

"I have no doubt we shall find some hospitable person who will put us up," said Uncle Claude. "I am deeply distressed, William, to think that you and Samuel have no use for us, just because we happen to have fallen upon evil days. Had we arrived here in style and with every outward semblance of prosperity you would doubtless have given us a warm welcome and wished us to remain as long as possible."

"Of course!" said Billy Bunter.

"But because we are without means we are not wanted," Uncle Claude went on. "That is a very mean and contemptible spirit to display, William!"

"Oh, really—"

"We shall stay as long as we like!" chimed in Aunt Claribel. "We have not made this long journey for nothing!"

Again Billy and Sammy groaned. They remembered the old saying about the poor being always with us. Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel had pitched their tent, so to speak, at Greyfriars, and they were in no hurry to go. They would depart in their own good time.

"Well, if you insist on staying," said Billy Bunter after a long pause, "you'll have to amuse yourselves as best you can. Sammy and me are too busy to show you round. We're working on my 'Weekly' this afternoon. It's press day,



"You have done nothing but make insolent remarks since our arrival!" thundered Uncle Claude, fixing an angry eye on Skinner. "Give him a cuff, sir!" suggested Bob Cherry. "Give him a couple, in fact," added Bull. "It's Bunter's uncle who wants a pair of cuffs!" sneered Skinner. "He doesn't seem to be wearing any." Smack! Uncle Claude's open palm came across Skinner's face with a loud report. (See Chapter 3.)

and we've got some urgent stuff to write. So good-bye!"

With this Billy Bunter turned on his heel and rolled away, taking Sammy in tow.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood, thunder-struck. They had never imagined that the Bunters would behave like this. They had calmly turned their backs on their poor relations and left them to their own resources.

"The—the cads!" panted Bob Cherry. "Let's go after them and give them a jolly good bumping!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five of the Remove dashed off in pursuit of the Bunter brothers. They overtook them in the hall and promptly pounced upon them and gave them a sound bumping—out of sight of Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel.

"Hellup!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Leggo, you beasts! What's happening? If you start bullying me I'll report you to Quelch!"

Bump!

"Yooooop! I'll tell the Head!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter descended with a sounding concussion on the floor of the hall. Sammy shared a similar fate. And their yells of anguish would have awakened the Seven Sleepers.

Harry Wharton & Co. were furious at the treatment which had been meted out to the poor relations. And they exercised plenty of vigour in dealing with the snobbish nephews.

"There!" panted Wharton, glaring at the grovelling fat forms. "P'raps you'll behave a bit more decently after this!"

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Leaving the Bunter brothers to sort themselves out, the Famous Five went back to the Close, where Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel were walking aimlessly to and fro.

Bob Cherry whispered something in Wharton's ear, and the captain of the Remove nodded and stepped up to the poor relations.

"Excuse me," he said, "but would you like us to show you round the school? Then, after you've seen all the sights, we can have tea all together in my study."

Uncle Claude beamed. And Aunt Claribel bestowed a grateful glance upon Harry Wharton.

"That is most gracious of you, my dear boy!" said Uncle Claude warmly. "But I fear we shall be trespassing upon your time. I notice you are dressed for football—"

"The footer can stand over," said Wharton. "It was only a practice game we were going to play, anyway. So shall we start the grand tour?"

"Delighted, I'm sure!" said Uncle Claude.

The Famous Five then proceeded to escort the poor relations over the building. And they cheerfully sacrificed their football in order to do so.

It was really the duty of Billy and Sammy Bunter to act as guides, but since they declined to do so Harry Wharton & Co. took on the job right willingly.

The procession was passing down the Remove passage, when a figure in gown and mortar-board approached. It was Mr. Quelch.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Remove master, stopping short. "Who—what—"

Mr. Quelch stared at the poor relations in amazement. He scarcely knew what to make of them. Uncle Claude looked a comical figure in his ill-fitting clothes and his battered top-hat, while Aunt Claribel looked as if she had just emerged from a gipsy caravan.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Uncle Claude, removing the battered article of headgear. "I perceive you are one of the masters here."

"And who, pray, are you?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"I am Bunter's uncle."

"Good gracious!" The information seemed to knock Mr. Quelch all of a heap. "I was aware that Bunter's uncle and aunt were coming this afternoon, but I—I am amazed! I had no idea—"

"You are doubtless surprised at our appearance, sir?" said Uncle Claude.

"To be quite frank, I am!"

Uncle Claude smiled.

"You would do well, sir, to bear in mind that appearances are sometimes deceptive," he said. "People attach far too much importance to dress, in my opinion. They judge a man by the cut of his suit, rather than by his personal qualities. But the fact is, dress is no true index to character. We have many well-dressed scoundrels in our midst, and many shabbily-attired gentlemen."

"I do not dispute that," answered Mr. Quelch. "But—but I have never before seen a millionaire in a muffer! It is an extraordinary spectacle!"

Uncle Claude was about to point out that he was not a millionaire, when Mr. Quelch nodded and passed on. Mr. Hucker had called to him from the other end of the corridor.

The Famous Five continued to escort their guests round the school, and when the tour was over the poor relations were entertained to a handsome spread in Study No. 1. Harry Wharton & Co. waited on them hand and foot, in spite of repeated protests from Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, who declared that they had done nothing to deserve such generous treatment.

However, the chums of the Remove never did things by halves. They were determined that the poor relations should not suffer because of the churlish behaviour of the Bunter brothers.

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It was a right royal repast in Study No. 1, and all went merry as a marriage-bell.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Song and Dance I

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
"Ho, ho, ho!"
Those sounds of hilarity emanated from Skinner's study.

There were two persons present—Skinner and Bolsover major. And both were rolling about, giving vent to paroxysms of helpless merriment. They rocked to and fro on their feet and they were frequently obliged to clutch at the table for support.

"It will be the jape of the term!" gasped Skinner.

"Oh, absolutely!" gurgled Bolsover major. "What a lovely smack in the eye for Bunter's poor relations! Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh dear! I shall burst a blood-vessel, in a minute!" panted Bolsover. "Pon my soul, Skinny, they ought to crown you king of the japers! When are we going to work this wheeze?"

"Right now!" answered Skinner with alacrity. "Come along!"

And the two juniors quitted the study, their faces purple with laughter.

It was not really a clever jape that Skinner had planned. It was a contemptible and a cruel one. Bolsover major had not seen it in that light. He had not stopped to think about it, or he would certainly have washed his hands of it; for Bolsover was a better fellow than Skinner, and he could do the decent thing on occasion. But this was not one of the occasions. Without stopping to reflect that the jape might possibly cause pain to others, Bolsover plunged into it.

"Faith, an' what's the joke?" inquired Micky Desmond, as the two juniors passed him in the passage.

"Wait and see!" chortled Skinner.

"Are you goin' to play a jape, bedad?"

"Yes, rather! The jape of the giddy season! Keep your ears and eyes open. You'll see us again in half an hour's time, playing an unusual role. You'll hear us, too!"

Micky Desmond looked very mystified, but Skinner did not enlighten him further.

The two young rascals passed on, and made their way to the box-room, where the "props" of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society were kept.

After rummaging about for some time, they discovered what they wanted lying at the bottom of a large packing-case, and they dragged the articles forth into the light of day.

There was a very shabby suit of clothes—a suit which had probably been fashionable in the early-Victorian era, but which was now hopelessly out of fashion. Skinner chuckled as he dragged the garments forth.

Then there was a pair of heavy boots of the hobnailed variety, also a multi-coloured muffler and a battered top-hat.

"I shall make a jolly fine Uncle Claude!" chortled Skinner. "When I've got these togs on everybody will know who I'm supposed to represent. I'm afraid you won't be quite such a success, Bolsy, as Aunt Claribel. Still, you'll look funny—dashed funny! Shove those togs on over your Etons."

The "togs" referred to consisted of a very ancient costume, a pair of gigantic boots, and a gipsy's shawl.

After barricading the box-room door so

that they would not be disturbed, Skinner and Bolsover proceeded to don the shabby, out-of-date apparel. They went into fits of laughter when each had completed his toilet.

Skinner looked simply ludicrous in the prehistoric suit. His trousers came down over his boots, and his coat hung upon him like a piece of sacking on a scarecrow. The coloured muffler was entwined round his neck, and the battered "topper" was perched on his head. By means of "make-up," Skinner had made his complexion as florid as that of Uncle Claude.

But if Skinner looked ludicrous, Bolsover major looked quite grotesque. The feminine attire did not fit him anywhere. In fact, the skirt of the costume was very short, revealing several inches of trousering. The hefty boots were several sizes too large, even for Bolsover. And the gipsy shawl, thrown over his head and shoulders, gave the finishing touch to the weird transformation.

Skinner shrieked at Bolsover, and Bolsover roared at Skinner. Each took stock of the other, and they held their sides with helpless merriment.

At last, when they had sufficiently controlled their mirth, the two japers quitted the box-room and went out into the Close. It was not yet dark, and they had ample time in which to carry out their scheme.

There were lots of fellows in the Close, and they nearly fell down when they caught sight of the strange couple.

"What the merry dickens—" began Vernon-Smith in amazement.

"A pair of tramps, by Jove!" ejaculated Tom Brown. "How did they manage to get on the premises, I wonder?"

"Howly smoke!" gasped Micky Desmond, as the strange couple drew nearer. "They're no tramps. Shure, an' it's Skinner and Bolsover!"

"My hat!"

The juniors stared at the forlorn, broken-down pair who came shuffling towards them. Like the prophets of old, they were amazed with a great amazement. They were also considerably amused, for it was impossible to gaze at the grotesque figures and to keep a straight face at the same time.

A peal of laughter rang out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a pair of freaks!"

"Faith, an' Bolsover would take the beauty prize at a cattle show!" gurgled Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner and Bolsover shuffled to a halt.

"Shall we strike the tuneful lyre?" murmured Skinner.

Bolsover nodded.

"What are we going to sing?" he asked.

"Better kick off with 'That Old-fashioned Mother of Mine.' That'll fetch 'em. Now, one to be ready, two to be steady—take a deep breath—go!"

Skinner and Bolsover started to sing. Neither had any pretensions to being a songster. Skinner squeaked, and Bolsover boomed. There was no harmony, but there was plenty of noise.

Some of the listeners were obliged to stop their ears. Others were almost in hysterics. And others, again, called upon the singers to desist.

But Skinner and Bolsover, thoroughly enjoying themselves in their role of "street-singers," went on with their warbling.

Skinner's wailings were like the lamentations of a lost spirit. And Bolsover made a noise like the booming of

breakers on the beach. Both juniors were putting heart and soul into their vocal efforts. They threw their heads back and opened their mouths wide, and exercised their lung-power to the utmost.

"Stop! For pity's sake, stop!" pleaded Tom Brown. "I've never heard such a row in all my natural!"

"Faith, an' it's enough to wake the dead entirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"Pass round the hat, Skinner, and then clear off!" said Vernon-Smith.

But the turmoil—it would be gross flattery to call it singing—continued.

Suddenly an upper window was thrown open. It was the window of Mr. Prout's study. The master of the Fifth thrust his partially-bald pate into view, and looked down into the Close.

Nothing daunted, Skinner and Bolsover went on with their song. After all, they reflected, there was no law against a fellow singing in the Close on a half-holiday. If Prout liked to be nasty about it—well, let him!

But Mr. Prout, being short-sighted, failed to recognise Skinner and Bolsover. He took them for a pair of genuine vagrants who were singing in order to gain a few coppers.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout. "What are these ill-clad nomads doing on the school premises? It was very remiss of Gosling to allow them inside the gates. They are seriously disturbing my studies. I must call upon them to desist!"

And Mr. Prout did so. But his voice was drowned by the voices of Skinner and Bolsover.

Mr. Prout leaned from the window, waving his arms like windmills, and shouting to the singers to stop. But Skinner and Bolsover went on chanting the praises of that old-fashioned mother of theirs.

At last, however, the song came to an end, and Skinner removed his battered "topper," and proceeded to pass it round.

"Spare a copper, gentlemen!" he pleaded in whining tones. "I've been blind from birth, and bedridden ever since I could walk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Elp a pair of poor, 'ungry paupers!" entreated Bolsover. "If you don't," he added threateningly, "we'll start singing again!"

"Oh, help!" groaned Vernon-Smith.

"Anything but that!"

And he groped in his pocket and fished out a couple of buttons and tossed them into the hat.

Suddenly there was a shout from Tom Brown.

"Heads under!"

From his exalted position at the upper window Mr. Prout had hurled a couple of coppers into space. He had intended them to alight in the hat which Skinner held; but Mr. Prout's aim was erratic. The coppers, gathering velocity as they shot through space, alighted with terrific force on Skinner's unprotected head.

"Yarooooooo!" yelled Skinner, clapping his cranium.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sorry," called Mr. Prout. "I had no intention of inflicting any injury upon you. Now that you have received a gratuity, perhaps you will have the goodness to depart! You have no right to be on the school premises. I shall reprimand Gosling severely for permitting you to pass the gates. Vagrants, begone!"

Bolsover major picked up the coppers, which had reached the ground via Skinner's head, and slipped them into his pocket. Then the "ill-clad nomads," as

Mr. Prout had aptly termed them, shuffled away.

But they had no intention of bringing their open-air concert to a conclusion just yet. They lurched and stumbled across the Close till they were out of earshot of Mr. Prout; and then they started to sing a special ditty which Skinner had composed. This was where the caddishness of their jape came in. They were impersonating Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, and Skinner's song was a deliberate gibe at that unfortunate couple.

"We are the poor relations
Of Bunter, W. G.
We have no cash, we cut no dash,
A pair of paupers we.
So kindly spare a copper,
We're very short of 'tin';
We're down and out, without a doubt,
And we've got the brokers in!"

"Oh, I say! That's a bit too thick!" said Tom Brown indignantly.

"Yes, rather!"

"Draw it mild, you fellows!"

But Skinner and Bolsover, being thoroughly wound up, so to speak, had no intention of stopping. They rendered the second verse, which was even more insulting than the first.

Presently a hush fell upon the audience.

Unseen by Skinner and Bolsover, but observed by the others, Mr. Quelch came striding on the scene.

The Remove master's brow was dark with anger. His eyesight was not defective like that of Mr. Prout, and even at a distance he identified the singers. He bore down upon them with rapid strides, his gown flapping in the breeze.

Skinner and Bolsover finished the second verse of their song, and wondered why the audience was so silent. Skinner considered that second verse to be a masterpiece of wit and humour, and he had expected it to produce thunders of applause. Instead of which there was an almost uncanny silence.

"What the thump—" muttered Skinner.

Then, chancing to turn their heads, the cads of the Remove saw the reason for their schoolfellows' silence. Mr. Quelch, wearing a frown which would have done credit to Jove of old, came stalking towards them.

"Skinner! Bolsover! How dare you!" thundered the Form master. "How dare you practise such a cruel imposture!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Skinner.

"We've fairly done it now!" groaned Bolsover.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I have just learned, from a reliable source, that Bunter's relations are very poor," he said. "Their poverty is due, not to any fault of their own, but to an unfortunate combination of circumstances. It is a matter for sympathy instead of sneers. Yet you, Skinner, and you, Bolsover, have had the effrontery to carry out this cruel 'rag,' as I expect you would call it. You will follow me at once to my study!"

So saying, Mr. Quelch turned on his heel, and strode away towards the building. Skinner and Bolsover, exchanging uneasy glances, followed in the Form master's wake.

A few moments later sounds of wild anguish could be heard. They floated across the Close, and they emanated from Mr. Quelch's study.

Skinner and Bolsover were passing through a very painful ordeal, in which Mr. Quelch's cane played a conspicuous part.

The precious pair of japers had already

rendered a song, and they now rendered a dance. But it was not with glee that they danced on the Form master's carpet. It was with dire anguish. And when they emerged from the torture-chamber, squeezing their hands tightly together, and uttering loud lamentations, they were curtly told by their schoolfellows that it served them jolly well right!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Short Way with Snobs!

"HOW are you getting on, Billy?" Sammy Bunter asked the question across the table of Study No. 7.

"I'm not!" growled Billy. "I've been staring at a blank sheet of paper for the last twenty minutes. The thoughts simply won't come. I feel too jolly sick to tackle my editorial!"

Billy Bunter laid down his fountain-pen—or, rather, Peter Todd's fountain-pen—with a grunt. He hurled his writing-pad—or, rather, Tom Dutton's writing-pad—into the corner, with another grunt. Then he rested his plump chin in his hands, and stared moodily into space.

For twenty minutes or so Billy Bunter had been courting inspiration, but he had courted that fickle jade in vain. He

was not feeling in an inspired mood. His thoughts were fixed upon his poor relations—not with sympathy, but with wrathful indignation. To think that they should turn up at Greyfriars in this way, with hardly a penny to bless themselves with! It was perfectly monstrous!

"Penny for 'em, Billy!" said Sammy.

"Haven't got a penny!" snapped Billy. "And neither have Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel—more's the pity! They're broke, and yet they've got the nerve to show their faces at Greyfriars!"

"What's more, they won't go!" groaned Sammy. "They threatened to stay for several days."

"Help!"

"What are we going to do about it, Billy?"

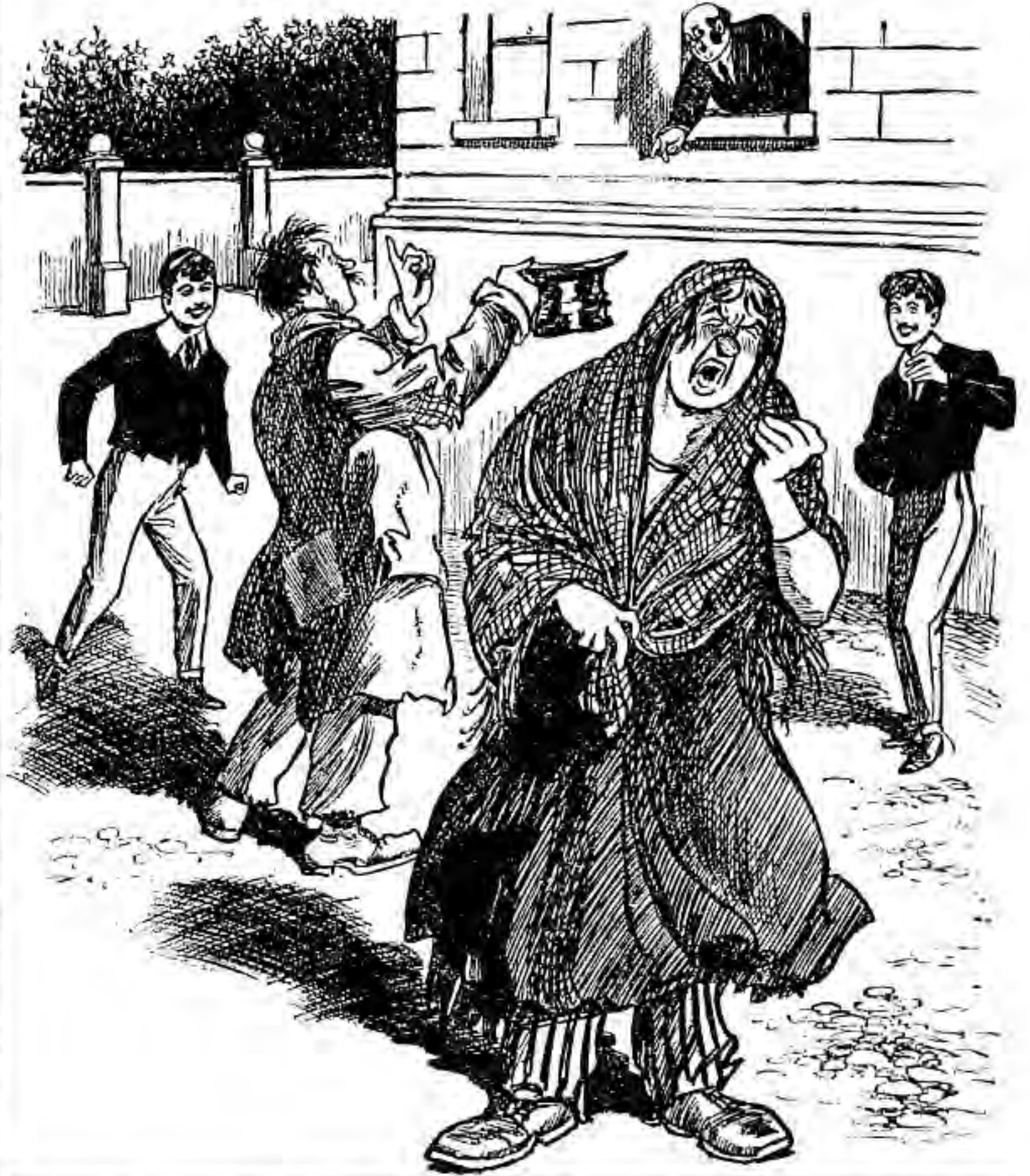
Billy Bunter gave a snort.

"Give 'em the icy mit and the cold shoulder!" he growled. "Show 'em plainly that they're not wanted here, and that the sooner they clear out the better!"

"Where are they now, I wonder?"

"Sight-seeing, I suppose—or having tea with Wharton and his pals. Bless if I can understand Wharton taking a pair of paupers under his wing! He can't get anything out of it!"

It was incomprehensible to Bunter that a fellow should go out of his way to be generous when there was no chance of reaping any reward for his generosity.



"Spare a copper, gentlemen!" pleaded the disguised Skinner in whining tones. "I've been blind from birth, and bedridden ever since I could walk!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Elp a pair of poor 'ungry paupers," entreated Bolsover, looking grotesque in his "female" costume, "or we'll start singing again!" "Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Prout from his position at the window. "What are these ill-clad nomads doing on the premises?" (See Chapter 4.)

"Bless the poor relations!" snorted Billy Bunter.

But it was not a genuine benediction. Far from it!

There was a tramping of feet in the passage, and three juniors came into the study. The foremost of the trio was Peter Todd, fresh and ruddy from his exertions on the football-field. Then came Tom Dutton, also in football garb; and the guileless Alonzo Todd brought up the rear.

Peter Todd bestowed a glare upon the Bunter brothers.

"Wish you'd do your ink-slinging somewhere else!" he growled. "This is a private study, not a giddy rendezvous for fifth-rate journalists!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Peter gazed around him, with a series of snorts.

"There's ink on the tablecloth, and on the carpet, and on the walls, and even on the ceiling!" he exclaimed.

"And there is a big black blob on Bunter's nose!" chimed in Alonzo.

"Eh?"

Billy Bunter promptly drew his hand across his nose, thereby causing the smear to spread.

"Is it off?" he asked anxiously; for famous editors do not like to be seen at their posts with inky nasal organs.

"No; it's worse than ever!" said Peter Todd, with a grin.

Suddenly there was a roar from Tom Dutton, the deaf junior. He pounced upon something which lay in the corner.

"Bunter, you villain! You've been using my writing-pad!"

"What of that?" growled Billy. "It's common property, ain't it?"

"Eh?" asked Dutton, with his hand to his ear.

"He says your writing-pad's common!" shouted Peter Todd.

"Common? My hat! Bunter, you fat toad! I—I'll jolly well—"

"I didn't say anything of the sort!" hooted Billy. "I said it was common property, and I've a perfect right to use anything that you keep—"

"Cheap!" shouted Tom Dutton wrathfully. "Why, I gave half-a-crown for that writing-pad!"

Billy Bunter gave a groan. Tom Dutton's deafness was very trying at times. It was not only an affliction to Dutton himself, but it was a sore affliction to his study-mates.

"I didn't say 'cheap,'" said Bunter, in tones of exasperation. "I don't doubt it's a good pad—"

"Cad, am I?" howled Dutton, clenching his fists.

"Oh, help! I'm trying to make you hear and understand, but if I open my mouth any wider—"

"Outsider, eh?" snorted Dutton, his cheeks flaming. "Why, you fat barrel, I—I'll burst you!"

But before Tom Dutton could carry out his terrible threat, there was a roar from Peter Todd.

"That's my fountain-pen you've been using!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Peter reached out his hand for the pen. It was "taken up tenderly, lifted with care," so to speak. Peter started to unscrew it, and a jet of ink spurted up into his face. Billy Bunter had filled that fountain-pen not wisely but too well.

Peter followed the example of the fountain-pen, and started to splutter.

"You—you—" he blurted out in concentrated wrath. "You've overloaded my pen, you fat imbecile! No wonder there's ink all over the place!"

"Keep calm, Toddy—"

"Calm?" hooted Peter. "Would The Magnet Library—No. 836.

you be calm if somebody pinched your self-filler, and saturated it with ink?"

"Your countenance, my dear Peter," murmured Alonzo, "is black but not comely!"

Peter Todd took a warlike stride towards Billy Bunter. And the fat junior would certainly have had a rough passage but for a sudden diversion.

The study door opened, and Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel came in.

Peter Todd unclenched his hands, and stepped back a pace, and made a respectful salutation.

As for the two Bunters, they rose to their feet, and glared at the intruders.

"My dear William—" began the shabby Uncle Claude.

"My dear Samuel—" began the equally shabby Aunt Claribel.

"We looked in to ascertain if your feelings towards us were still hostile," murmured Uncle Claude. "You told us on our arrival that you wanted nothing to do with us, but it is possible you spoke in the heat of the moment. I cannot really believe that you would turn your backs on us just because we chance to be—er—in the fell clutch of adversity."

"I cannot believe it, either," said Aunt Claribel, gazing at her plump nephews. "It would distress me deeply to know we were not wanted."

Billy Bunter was silent. Sammy, taking his cue from Billy, was silent also.

"You used to be such an affectionate pair—'pon my soul you did!" said Uncle Claude. "Some time ago, when you spent a vacation at our mansion in Park Lane, you were all over us, as the saying goes. Now that our prosperity has waned, can it be that your affection has waned also?"

"Surely, my dear boys, you do not despise us because of our fallen fortunes?" asked Aunt Claribel, almost appealingly.

Billy Bunter eyed the poor relations with withering scorn. He said no word, but he disdainfully took stock of Uncle Claude, from his coarse muffler down to his hobnailed boots. Then he bestowed an equally contemptuous glance upon Aunt Claribel. Having done which, Billy Bunter uttered an emphatic snort, turned his back on the poor relations, and walked to the window.

Sammy Bunter, still taking his cue from Billy, imitated his major's actions to the letter.

There was a painful silence in the study.

Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel could no longer doubt their nephews' feelings towards them. It was the cut direct!

The Bunter brothers stood by the window, with their hands in their pockets, their legs apart, and their noses tilted scornfully. Their broad backs were turned towards the poor relations.

It was Uncle Claude who broke the painful silence.

"There is no longer any room for doubt, my dear," he said, turning to his companion. "We are not wanted here. Neither William nor Samuel will even deign to speak to us."

"Shame!" muttered Peter Todd, bestowing an angry glare upon the broad backs of the Bunters.

"We had better go, Claude," said Aunt Claribel, with a sigh. "To think

that we should be disowned because of our poverty!"

"Never mind, my dear," said Uncle Claude. "We will not humiliate ourselves further by remaining."

The door opened and closed and the poor relations were gone.

"You—you fat cads! You unspeakable snobs!"

Peter Todd's voice rang indignantly through the study.

"Oh, really, Toddy—" began Billy Bunter feebly.

"Kick 'em out!" growled Peter, advancing grimly towards the precious pair.

Tom Dutton did not hear what his study-mates said, but he tumbled to Peter Todd's intentions, and he willingly lent a hand.

Alonzo opened the door, and Billy Bunter was whirled through the aperture, protesting shrilly.

The fat junior shot out into the passage, and Sammy followed, and together they rolled over on the linoleum.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 7 was banged to without ceremony; and the precious pair of snobs lay groaning on the other side of it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Helping Hand!

"AWFULLY decent couple!"

That was Bob Cherry's verdict upon the poor relations. And Bob's chums promptly endorsed that verdict.

"Uncle Claude's a brick," said Harry Wharton. "And Aunt Claribel's a dear old soul."

"Yes, rather!"

"They might be poor," said Nugent, "but they're jolly good sorts!"

"Much too good to be relations of Bunter!" growled Johnny Bull.

Hurree Singh looked thoughtful.

"I feel sorrowfully sympathetic towards them, my worthy chums," he said. "It is a pity they are on the rock-fulness. It must be terrible to be brokefully penniless."

"Yes—especially after being used to a life of luxury," said Harry Wharton gravely. "It's the people who have known better days who feel the pinch of poverty most."

Hurree Singh nodded.

"I have been debatefully pondering the matter, my chums," he said. "You have an English proverb about helpfully assisting lame pigs over sties—"

"First I've heard of it," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "I always thought it was helping lame dogs over stiles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I consider we ought to act upon that excellent proverb," said Hurree Singh.

"And get up a subscription for Bunter's poor relations?" asked Wharton.

"Exactly!"

Hurree Singh's suggestion met with warm approval. The juniors felt it was "up to" them to stretch out a helping hand to Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel in their hour of need. Judging by their shabby attire, Bunter's poor relations were very poor indeed—practically destitute, in fact. And they were such a decent couple that it would be a real pleasure to help them.

"We'll do it," said Wharton. "We'll get up a subscription-list right away. Bunter's aunt and uncle need money

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2?

very badly. They spoke of putting up for the night over at Courtfield, and they'd never be able to do it without funds."

"Let us start collectfully collecting," said Hurree Singh, with enthusiasm.

"I'll set the ball rolling by subscribe-fully subscribing half-a-crown," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Lucky I'm in funds."

Harry Wharton produced a collecting-box from the cupboard, and Bob inserted his half-crown.

Other contributions followed rapidly. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent gave half-a-crown apiece; Johnny Bull weighed in with five shillings; and Hurree Singh, who was particularly flush just then, contributed seven-and-sixpence.

"Good!" said Wharton. "Now we'll go out into the highways and byways and rake in the merry shekels."

The Famous Five made a tour of the Remove studies, Wharton leading the way and rattling the money-box as he went.

"Roll up, gents, and rally round for the good of the cause!" boomed Bob Cherry, thrusting his curly head round the door of Study No. 2.

Tom Brown and Bulstrode and Hazeldene were in the study, roasting chestnuts at a blazing fire.

Three flushed faces were turned towards Bob Cherry.

"Hallo! What's going on?" inquired Tom Brown.

"Collection for Bunter's poor relations," explained Bob briefly. "All contributions thankfully received. Roll up!"

"Broke!" said Tom Brown laconically.

"Same here!" said Hazeldene, turning out his pockets.

"Tuppence any use?" asked Bulstrode.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Every little helps," he said.

Bulstrode clinked a couple of coppers into the box which Wharton brought in, and the collectors went on their way.

In some studies they reaped a rich harvest. In others they received a chilly reception and were curtly told to clear out.

The fellows contributed according to their means—or meanness. All sorts of sums, ranging from a ten-shilling note to a humble halfpenny, found their way into Wharton's collecting-box.

There were two donations of ten shillings, as a matter of fact. One came from Lord Mauleverger, and the other from Vernon-Smith.

"Quite a good stunt, this!" said the latter when he was approached. "I feel awfully sorry for Bunter's poor relations. They used to be well up in the world, by all accounts, but they seem to have come a fearful cropper. I'm pleased to do my little bit. Here's ten bob, and welcome!"

"Many thanks, Smithy!"

"You have cast your breadful loaf upon the waters, and it will returnfully come back to you after many days," said Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five went on their way, and their hearts grew correspondingly lighter as the collecting-box grew heavier. Quite a useful sum was being got together for the benefit of the poor relations.

Of course, the collectors met with several rebuffs. That was only to be expected.

Skinner and Bolsover major flatly refused to contribute. They had not yet recovered from the effects of the terrific swishing they had received; and they had had quite enough of Bunter's poor relations!

There were others who were callously indifferent to the poverty of Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel. It was their own



"That's my fountain pen you've been using!" roared Peter Todd. "Oh, really, Toddy——" Peter reached out for the pen. It was "taken up tenderly, lifted with care," so to speak. Peter started to unscrew it, and a jet of ink spurted up into his face. Billy Bunter had filled that pen not wisely but too well. "Yow—you fat ass!" roared Peter. "Groooough!" (See Chapter 5.)

fault they were poor, and they could jolly well get on with it. Such were the sentiments expressed by the meaner spirits in the Greyfriars Remove.

At length, when the whole Form had been canvassed—and some of the senior Forms into the bargain—the sum of five pounds reposed in the collecting-box. And Harry Wharton & Co. looked very pleased with themselves.

The money was duly counted out on the table in Study No. 1. There were piles of silver coins and a whole host of coppers, in addition to the two ten-shilling notes.

"Jolly good business!" said Bob Cherry. "I reckon five quids will be a godsend to the poor relations."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "Talk about corn in Egypt!"

Harry Wharton surveyed the piles of money with keen satisfaction.

"We'll go along to the tuckshop and see if Mrs. Mimble can give us a five-pound note in exchange for this little lot," said Harry. "Then we'll find Bunter's relations and make the presentation."

Mrs. Mimble willingly handed over a "fiver" in exchange for the money. And then the Famous Five set off in quest of the poor relations.

Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel were run to earth in Vernon-Smith's study. Smithy had seen them from his window strolling in the Close; and, noting how tired and jaded they seemed, he had invited them to his study, so that they might disport themselves for a while on his luxurious couch.

"Come in, you fellows!" said Vernon-Smith.

The Famous Five trooped into the study.

Now that the time was ripe to make the presentation Harry Wharton felt shy and awkward. It was a delicate matter, handing over a "fiver" to the poor relations. It would have to be done tactfully, or there was a danger that Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel might take offence.

"Go it, Harry!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton coughed and his cheeks coloured.

Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel regarded him curiously.

"Ahem!" he began. "We—we've just dropped in——"

"So I observe," said Uncle Claude, smiling.

"In—in order to——"

"Have a friendly chat—eh? Excellent! We shall be delighted to converse with the hosts who gave us such an admirable tea."

"Yes, indeed!" chimed in Aunt Claribel. "Do sit down, my dear boys! I am sure your friend here has no objection."

"Not at all!" said Vernon-Smith.

Harry Wharton looked more confused and awkward than ever. He stammered and spluttered, he floundered and faltered; and finally he took the bull by the horns, as it were, and explained the object of his visit.

"We wouldn't hurt your feelings for THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 836."

worlds," he said, addressing Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel; "but we know what a fix you're in financially, and we decided to have a whip-round on your behalf, and to hand you the proceeds. Please don't think we're a set of giddy philanthropists, or anything of that sort. We felt that the least we could do was to give you a helping hand; and we don't mean to be patronising, or anything beastly like that. It's in a purely friendly and sympathetic spirit that we ask you to accept this little donation."

So saying, Harry Wharton produced the crisp and rustling "fiver" from his wallet and handed it to Uncle Claude.

To say that the poor relations were surprised was to put it mildly. They were overwhelmed.

Uncle Claude drew back a pace. His florid face was quivering with emotion. For a moment he could not speak, and when the words did come they were strangely husky.

"My—my dear lads, I—we are greatly touched by this demonstration of kindness on your part. We are nothing to you, and there was no earthly reason why you should go out of your way to befriend us—to shower kindness upon kindness. Already you have shown us round the school and entertained us lavishly, and now you have performed this crowning act of benevolence. But I cannot accept this money—I could not dream of doing so!"

"But you must, sir!" said Bob Cherry firmly.

"Eh?"

"We insistfully demand that you acceptfully take the esteemed and ludicrous fiver," said Hurree Singh.

"Oh gad! I—I scarcely know what to say!" stammered Uncle Claude.

And Aunt Claribel turned hastily away so that the juniors should not see the tears which had welled to her eyes.

Harry Wharton settled the destination of the "fiver" by thrusting it into one of the pockets of Uncle Claude's shabby coat. Then the Famous Five withdrew, without giving Uncle Claude a chance to embark upon a further speech of gratitude.

Vernon-Smith found himself alone with the poor relations.

"Were you concerned in this generous business, my boy?" asked Uncle Claude.

"Oh, I gave a trifling subscription!" said Vernon-Smith lightly. "Please don't thank me. It's nothing to make a song about."

But Smithy could not escape the grateful thanks of the poor relations. They wrung his hand and thanked him over and over again; and he was mightily relieved when they took their departure.

They told him they were going over to Courtfield.

After they had gone Vernon-Smith jumped to his feet.

"Dash it all! I didn't even offer to see them down to the gates!" he muttered.

And he hurried off in the wake of the poor relations.

It was in the hall that he caught up with them. And he was just in time to witness an extraordinary occurrence. He saw Uncle Claude fold up the five-pound note into a small pellet and then drop it into the collecting-box which hung on the wall—the box which was intended for voluntary subscriptions to the Cottage Hospital.

Vernon-Smith stopped short, with a gasp of amazement.

Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, blissfully unaware of his presence, passed on through the hall. He was too flabbergasted to follow.

"My only aunt!" he ejaculated. "They

—they've given that fiver to charity! What does it mean?"

It could mean only one thing—that Bunter's poor relations were not quite so poor as their appearance and behaviour would suggest. Vernon-Smith was shrewd enough to see that; and he began to suspect that the poverty of Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel was merely a pose.

"They're playing some deep game or other, I'm certain of that!" he murmured. "If they were really as poor as church mice they'd never have parted with that fiver. I must keep my optics open, and see if I can find out what the little game is. Meanwhile, mum's the word!"

And Vernon-Smith strolled thoughtfully back to his study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Transformation!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter rushed breathlessly through the Close in the winter dusk.

Seven juniors were walking ahead. They were the Famous Five of the Remove, and Vernon-Smith and Mark Linley.

Billy Bunter, like the sire of the prodigal son, hailed them afar off. But they did not heed. They walked on towards the school gates, where a taxicab was waiting.

"I say, you fellows—don't be beasts, you know! Wait for little me!"

But the seven juniors seemed blissfully oblivious to the existence of William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was pounding along in the rear as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

Bunter could tell, by reason of the fact that his schoolfellows had chartered a taxi, that there was "something on." And whenever there was something on, Billy Bunter liked to be there or thereabouts.

The fat junior scented a feed. He jumped to the conclusion that Harry Wharton & Co. were going over to Courtfield to "do themselves well" at the Elysian Cafe. And, since Bunter had not been invited, he intended to invite himself.

"Hold on, you fellows! I'll be with you in two ticks!" panted the galloping porpoise.

Still paying no heed, the seven juniors clambered into the taxi, and the driver, saluting them respectfully, started up the engine.

The vehicle was in the act of moving off when Bunter arrived, breathless and flustered. He took a flying leap—a wonderful acrobatic feat for Bunter—and landed on the footboard. Then he grabbed at the door-handle, and tugged at it frantically.

The door refused to budge.

Seven juniors were wedged inside the taxi, and the addition of an eighth—especially such a portly person as Billy Bunter—would have suffocated the passengers.

"Open this door, you rotters!" gasped Bunter.

There was a muffled chuckle from within. The door remained obstinately shut.

Meanwhile, the taxi was fairly on the move, and Bunter grew more and more desperate.

"I—I'm coming!" he panted.

"Your mistake, porpoise!" said Bob Cherry sweetly. "You're going!"

The window was suddenly lowered, and a hand and arm shot out, catching Billy Bunter full in the chest and knocking him off his perch.

"Yarooooo!"

With a wild yell of anguish, the fat junior toppled backwards, and rolled over in the roadway.

Fortunately for Bunter the taxi had not been travelling at a great speed, and there were no serious casualties. But Harry Wharton & Co., as they were borne on their way, heard loud lamentations from the rear.

"Yow-ow-ow! My back's broken, you rotters! And my spine's fractured in at least six places!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The taxi rumbled on its way, leaving William George Bunter to sort himself out. The fat junior scrambled to his feet—a remarkable performance for a fellow with a broken back and a fractured spine—and shook his fist after the retreating vehicle. Then he limped back to the school gates. Gone were his visions of taking part in the feed.

As a matter of fact there was no feed to take part in.

Harry Wharton & Co. were going to Courtfield, certainly; but their destination was not the Elysian Cafe. It was the Theatre Royal.

A new comedy was being staged, and it was the "first night." Harry Wharton & Co. had been saving their money for the event, and in spite of their generous donations to Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, they had enough left to ensure an enjoyable evening. Seats in the stalls had been booked by telephone, and it was a very merry party of juniors that tumbled out of the taxi.

"My hat! Just look at the giddy queue!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It stretches half the length of the High Street!"

"Lucky we've booked our seats!" said Nugent. "Come on!"

"Let us rushfully take the place by storm!" said Hurree Singh.

The seven juniors elbowed their way into the theatre, and, after a sort of Rugby scrum, they succeeded in reaching the stalls entrance. They were escorted to their seats by an attendant, and they settled down to await that thrilling moment when the curtain should rise.

Meanwhile, they glanced about them, and watched the people pouring in.

The theatre filled rapidly. And when at last the curtain was rung up, there was only one place unoccupied. That was one of the boxes. The charge for a box was two guineas, so it was hardly surprising that it remained empty.

But it did not remain empty long.

The first act was in progress, and the artistes were just "warming up," as it were, when the empty box was suddenly illuminated by a flood of electric light, and a lady and gentleman came into view.

At that moment Vernon-Smith chanced to look up in the direction of the box. He looked, and he blinked, and an expression of blank astonishment came over his face.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed.

"Shurrup, you ass!" muttered Bob Cherry, giving his companion a nudge. "Mustn't bawl out like that in the middle of the performance!"

"What's up, Smithy?" whispered Harry Wharton.

"Look!"

The juniors followed Vernon-Smith's gaze. The next moment their eyes fairly bulged out of their heads.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Do I dream, do I wonder and doubt? Is things as they seem, or is visions about?"

Harry Wharton gave a gasp.

(Continued on page 18.)



Supplement No. 162.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending February 16th, 1924.

By
GEORGE WINGATE

WHEN the stormy winds do blow we generally know all about it in this part of the world, for Greyfriars is situated within a mile of the open sea.

This particular corner of Kent has often been visited by fierce storms, terrible in their intensity. When the elements make up their minds to get busy they cause quite a deal of havoc and destruction.

One of the greatest storms on record occurred in 1888. I didn't know much about it at the time, because I hadn't been born! But old boys have often told me of that wild night in January, when a sea storm and a land storm raged together with demoniacal violence.

Although Greyfriars School is as solid a structure as you would find in a day's march, the whole building fairly rocked that night, and the wind whistled and shrieked around the old turrets and towers. Dormitory windows were shattered, chimney-pots came clattering down into the Close, and something like a panic broke out among the weaker spirits.

That storm—or, rather, super-storm—raged the whole night long, and traces of its violence were witnessed in the Close next morning. Broken chimney-pots and fragments of glass lay scattered on the flagstones; and one of the elm-trees, unable to withstand the furious gale, had measured its length.

The morning papers were full of thrilling accounts of disasters at sea, and one unfortunate vessel was dashed to pieces on Black Rock, near Pegg.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows clamoured for a day off from lessons, on the ground that they had had no sleep; but the headmaster of that period was not in the habit of making concessions, and the school routine proceeded as usual.

In 1901 the Greyfriars district was again locked in the grip of a fierce storm, and one of the masters had a narrow escape from serious injury. He was battling his way across the Close, when all of a sudden he was instinctively impelled to halt. Scarcely had he done so when a chimney-pot, falling from a great height, crashed at his feet! His intuition had saved him from a knock on the head

Supplement i.]

from which he would not soon have recovered.

On that same night the roof was taken clean off the cricket pavilion, and was carried bodily away for a distance of twenty yards.

Although the majority of storms have occurred at night, there was one terrible storm—a typhoon almost—which broke out during the day. A football match was in progress on Big Side, and one set of goalposts was blown down, the uprights being uprooted! The storm was accompanied by a pall of darkness, and the game had to be abandoned.

We still get plenty of big storms, but we have grown used to them by this time, and they seldom cause sleepless nights. In fact, I believe Mauleverer of the Remove would sleep soundly through an earthquake!

The people we are really concerned about on these wild nights are those that go down to the sea in ships. A life on the ocean wave is not all honey when the seas are lashed to fury by a mighty tempest. Personally, I prefer my warm bed at Greyfriars!

SHARP PRACTICE.

Mrs. Jordan had "ideas" on the way children should be reared. Her young hopeful, Tommy, caused her a little anxiety in this respect. Now and again, therefore, a serious "politeness" lecture was administered.

"Now, Tommy dear," she started, "supposing you accidentally stepped upon a gentleman's foot, what would you say?"

"I would say, 'Beg your pardon!'"

"That's my own little son!" smiled the pleased mother. "And if the gentleman gave you a penny for your politeness what would you do?"

The innocent look passed from Tommy's eyes as he quickly answered:

"Why, I would stand on the other foot, and say 'Beg pardon' again, of course!"

Jimson: "I do spring-cleaning at all seasons of the year."

Jackson: "How's that?"

Jimson: "I'm a watchmaker."

EDITORIAL!

By
HARRY
WHARTON.

OUR issue this week deals with the weather.

Now, I hope you won't give a grunt of disgust, and say, "Fancy talking about such a commonplace topic as the weather!" Our cheery band of contributors have a knack of treating even the most ordinary subjects in a bright, breezy, entertaining fashion. So, although this number deals with the weather, it will be rather "rough" on us if you vote it "mild" or "dry," or consider it a "frost," because we have done our best to make it thrilling and interesting, and it will be "fine" if we get "storms" of cheers and "thunders" of applause! (I don't know "weather" you'll like all these puns or not!)

When the weather behaves itself, and the sun shines brightly from a cloudless sky, there is certainly nothing much to write about. But when the stormy winds do blow lots of thrilling things happen, and we now propose to place some of them on record.

Numerous and terrible are the storms which rage off the coast, in this corner of Kent. Often, on a winter's night, we lie wide awake in our beds in the Remove dorm, listening to the distant roaring of the surf and the booming of the giant breakers. And occasionally, when "the waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly," we hear the warning echoes of the minute-gun—terrifying sounds, which turn our thoughts to those in peril on the sea.

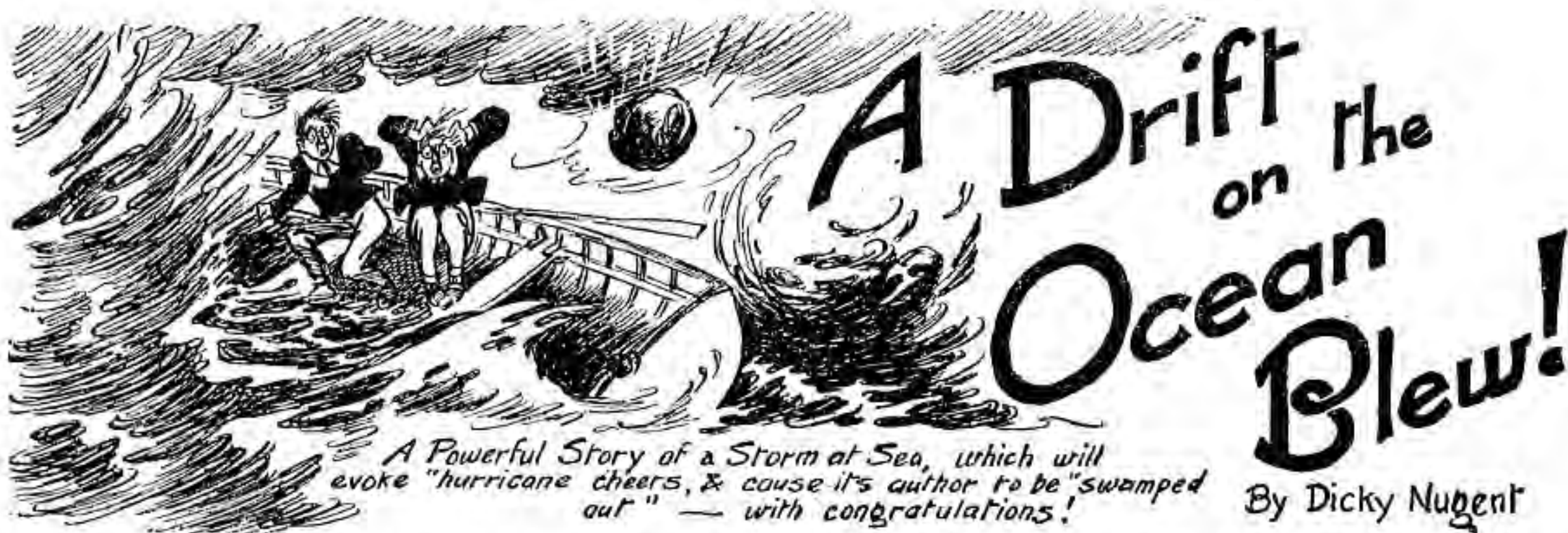
On rare occasions we have been permitted to leave our snug beds and go down to the shore, to render what assistance we can to the unfortunate victims of a shipwreck.

I could fill a whole issue of the "Greyfriars Herald" with details of these night adventures, but I must make way for the more able pens of others.

I hope you will all enjoy Dicky Nugent's latest masterpiece, "A Drift on the Ocean Blew!" When Dicky grows up he ought to make his fortune as a writer of hair-raising romances!

Talking of romances calls to mind the wonderful stage and detective serial from the pen of Hedley Scott. If I am any judge of "good stuff," the MAGNET's latest story dealing with Ferrers Locke and young Jack Drake—who was once a Removeite at Greyfriars—will certainly cause a "storm" of excitement. Get your pals to start reading it right away.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 836.



A Powerful Story of a Storm at Sea, which will evoke "hurricane cheers, & cause its author to be "swamped out" — with congratulations!

By Dicky Nugent

"I'VE made up my mind to sale away!"

The speaker was Jack Jolly, of St. Sam's. His two chums, Merry and Bright, pricked their ears up. (They always carried a cupple of pins about with them for this purrpass.)

"Sale away!" echoed Merry. "Where to?"

"Anywhere!" said Jack Jolly, with the reckless spirit of the bold buck-neers of old. "A crews on the briny ocean is a fine way of spending a half-holliday."

"But what about a boat?" asked Bright.

"We can hire one. There's a boat called the Stormy Petrol down on the beach. We'll hire it for an hour. It will only cost a bob."

"We sha'n't be able to get as far as the Passifick Ocean in an hour!" said Merry, with crushing sarkazzum.

"Never mind. We'll get as far as we can. Come along, chappies!"

And the three advencherus spirits sallied fourth, and tramped down to Salt-water Bay.

It was a glorious afternoon. The sun shone in torrents, bathing the countryside in its splendor.

Had the juniors consulted a weather profit, he would have pointed out to them a dark cloud, about the sighs of a man's hand, which hovered threateningly in the distance. And he would have said: "Do not venchre out to sea, for soon the sun will retire, and a big storm will start getting up."

But Jack Jolly & Co. had no fears or four-bodings. They arrived on the shore, and found the Stormy Petrol lying on the shingle, covered over with tarporing. The old boatmen evidently knew there was a storm brewing.

"There duzzent seem to be anybody about," said Jack Jolly. "So much the better. We sha'n't have to pay for the hire of the boat."

They removed the tarporing, and ran the boat down to the water. Merry and Bright jumped in, and Jack Jolly pushed off. Then he hopped in himself, and got busy with the oars.

The boat glided smoothly across the plassid, pieciful waters. The sea might have been made of glass, for there was not a ripple on its surfiss.

Merry and Bright sat in the stern, giving Jack Jolly destructions in the art of rowing. Not that he needed any destructions. He was the finest oarsman at St. Sam's.

"Wish you fellows would dry up!" growled Jack Jolly. "It's like teaching your grandmother to suck eggs. I can manoeover a boat better than any fellow breething, and you know it. Let's have a song!"

The three chums lifted up their

voices. They were champion weight-lifters, so it didn't rekwire much of an effort.

"Loudly the bell in the old tower rings,
Bidding us list to the warning it brings,
Sailers, beware! Sailers, beware!
Danger is near thee—beware, beware!
Many brave harts have been swallowed
by sharks,
So beware—beware!"

The juniors chanted the corus lightly enuff, without pawsing to reflect that there is many a true word spoken in jest.

The Stormy Petrol was about a mile from the shore, when suddenly, and without any warning, the storm burst!

The plassid seas were whipped into foam. Peel upon peel of thunder flashed across the lowering sky. The lightning roared horribly. The rain came down in great gusts, and a fierce shower of wind swamped the boat.

Jack Jolly turned pail. And Merry looked far from bright, and Bright looked far from merry.

"Oh crumms!" gasped Jack Jolly.

"We are doomed!" wailed Merry.

NEXT WEEK'S WEATHER!

By TOM BROWN.

MONDAY.

There will be a "breeze" in Study No. 7, accompanied by "sudden squalls." Billy Bunter will be bumped by his study-mates!

TUESDAY.

Rumblings of thunder will be heard in the Remove Form-room. Mr. Quelch will be addressing a refractory pupil! Many of the Removites will be rather "windy" in consequence!

WEDNESDAY.

There will be a heavy fall of snow in the Greyfriars dining-hall. It will only be Billy Bunter sprinkling salt on his dinner. It will also rain in the dining-hall, because we are pretty certain to get some "soup"!

THURSDAY.

A big gale will start "getting up"; but Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove, will remain in bed! "Streaked lightning" will be visible in the afternoon, for Bob Cherry intends to take part in a hundred yards' race!

FRIDAY.

The Fifth-Formers are giving a performance of "Hamlet" this evening, so there is certain to be a "frost." Coker & Co. will be made to "feel the draught."

SATURDAY.

The sun will shine to-day, because I shall get a fat remittance from home! And when Billy Bunter's postal-order arrives—if it ever does—there is bound to be an "eat wave." But if the fat junior causes a disturbance at the tackshop, he will get "a cold snap" from Mrs. Mimble!

"No boat could live in such a sea!" groaned Bright.

Even as they spoke, the sea grew ruffer and ruffer. Louder and louder flashed the thunder. Louder and louder roared the lightning. Gustier and gustier grew the rain, and wetter and wetter grew the wind.

Jack Jolly lay down his oars, and berried his face in his hands.

"We are caught like rats in a trap!" he muttered horsely. "The boat will be cut up in a minnit. And I myself feel very cut up about it."

"Same hear!" moaned Merry.

"And I can't swim!" wailed Bright, ringing his hands.

"All the same if you could!" retorted Jack Jolly. "No swimmer could keep afloat in such a sea. Look! The waves are mountain-high! I—I've got a sort of sinking feeling!"

The juniors clung to the side of the boat, and gazed wildy round at the seething waters.

"Wish there were a few lifeboys bobbing about," said Merry. "Then we might be able to save ourselves!"

"There's no sign of a lifeboy—or a life-girl, either!" said Jack Jolly. "At any minnit we shall capsize, and then we shall be food for fishes."

Merry and Bright shuddered. Their hare stood on end; their faces were pail with pannick.

"How deep is the water just hear?" asked Bright. "If it's only about four feet, it will be up to our nex."

"Fathead! It's about four miles!" said Jack Jolly.

"Ow!"

The Stormy Petrol was tost to and fro like an eggshell—the plaything of a stormy sea. It was with diffikulty that the juniors kept their seats. They eggspected each moment to be their last.

A thunderbolt fell in the stern, and nearly knocked Merry and Bright over-board.

The boat rocked wildy, and Jack Jolly uttered a last shrill squeek of despare.

"It's all up you fellows! Let's shake hands and say good-bye, before we go down to Davy Jones' locker!"

It was a drammatick moment. Did our heroes perrish, dear readers? Were they hurled to destruction in those angry seas? Did their lifeless boddies go drifting into Saltwater Bay the next morning?

No! For at that thrilling moment the lifeboat came rushing to the reskew, doing about a hundred noits a minnit.

The boat turned turtle, and Jack Jolly & Co. were shot into the water like stoans from a catterpult. But lifebelts were slung out to them, and they were reskewed in the nick of time, and hauled on board the lifeboat. But they will never forget their terribul eggspereience of being A Drift on the Ocean Blew!

[Supplement ii.



In the Teeth of the Storm!

By
A Vernon Smith

A Thrilling Story of a Football Match in which the Clerk of the Weather played a Prominent Part.

WHEN we found ourselves drawn against St. Benedict's in the third round of the Public Schools' Challenge Cup contest we hardly knew whether to grin or to groan.

You see, St. Benedict's were an unknown quantity. We had never met them before, and we knew nothing of their footer abilities. Still, we guessed they must be pretty good, to have got so far as the third round of the competition.

"It's all in our favour that we're drawn at home," said Harry Wharton. "I don't want to beat the big drum and start bragging, but it will take a mighty good side to lick us on our native heath."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"It is our worthy selves who will impartfully bestow the lickfulness!" said Hurree Singh.

And that was the general opinion in the Remove.

However, we were determined to leave nothing to chance, and we put in plenty of practice, so that we should be fit for the fray.

It was a bitterly cold Saturday in early February when the Cup tie was played. The weather experts in the morning papers had predicted bright sunshine; we therefore confidently expected sleet and hail, and perhaps snow.

The St. Benedict's team arrived by train. And when we saw them we thanked our lucky stars that we had put in lots of practice, for they were as strapping a set of fellows as we had ever seen. They were the same age as ourselves, but taller and beefier. And height and weight count for a good deal in a Cup tie.

The visiting skipper—a fellow named Stewart—seemed quite a good sort. But he was a super-optimist.

"I'm very sorry for you chaps," he said, as we escorted our guests to the ground. "Seems an awful shame that we should have to come down here and knock you out of the Cup."

Wharton grinned.

"You're a bit premature, aren't you?" he said.

"The boot might be on the other leg footfully," said Hurree Singh.

"What!" gasped Stewart. "You surely don't imagine you're going to lick us? St. Jude's imagined that in the first round, and they were beaten 6-0. Belmont School imagined the same thing in the second round, and we licked them 7-1."

"You'll find that we're made of sterner stuff than Belmont and St. Jude's," said Wharton. "Here's the dressing-room."

The St. Benedict's team trooped inside Supplement iii.]

with their bags, and when they sprinted out on to the field shortly afterwards they got a good reception. But it was nothing to the ovation which we received when Harry Wharton led us into the fray.

"Greyfriars for ever!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Pile up the merry goals!"

We won the toss, and right from the kick-off the pace was a "cracker."

The St. Benedict's forwards, led in dashing style by Stewart, went racing through in the first minute. The ball was swung out from wing to wing, and finally it was returned to Stewart at centre-forward, and he fired in a great shot, which we are still wondering how Bulstrode, our goalie, managed to divert round the post.

"Saved, sir!"

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

The corner-kick was taken, and Stewart leaped into the air and headed the ball against the crossbar. A narrow escape for us! Johnny Bell fastened on to the ball as it rebounded, and punted it clear with a hefty kick.

We soon began to realise that we were up against a jolly tough proposition. Our halves, though they tackled like terriers, were beaten time and again by the bustling St. Benedict's forwards. But Bull and Brown, at back, kicked lustily, and Bulstrode's form in goal was a revelation.

We went through the first half without a goal being scored, though on the run of the play St. Benedict's deserved to be at least a couple of goals to the good.

But it was the second half that provided the thrills. No sooner did we line up after the "breather" than a blinding

snowstorm swept across the ground. Without any warning the Clerk of the Weather had sprung his little surprise-packet upon us. It seemed to be snowing, hailing, and blowing a hurricane all at the same time.

If it had been an ordinary friendly match we should have "packed up." But one of the rules governing the Cup contest was that all games were to be played to a finish, regardless of the weather. The referee had power to abandon the match in the event of very bad light, but that was all.

"Grooogh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What a giddy deluge!"

"Is this a footer match or a snow fight?" panted Peter Todd.

"It's the same for both sides," said Wharton. "On the ball!"

In spite of the appalling conditions, we threw ourselves heart and soul into the struggle. The driving snowflakes stung and lashed our faces and half-blinded us, but we played up desperately. Sometimes we skidded on the slippery surface, and went sprawling. But we were on our feet again in a twinkling, and plunging into the fray.

The ground was soon carpeted with white, and the spectators, standing two deep on the touchline, looked like snowmen. As fast as they shook the snow from their overcoats it enveloped them again.

But the excitement kept them warm, and when Wharton sent the ball across to me with a perfect pass, there was a tumult of shouting in my ears as I sped down the touchline.

"Go it, Smithy!"

"Right through on your own, old man!"

A full-back came across with the intention of checking my headlong career, but he slithered in the snow and went sprawling. I ran on, pulled up a yard from the corner-flag, and then sent in a fierce cross-shot.

"Goal!"

It was not a shout; it was a roar. It was as if the Tower of Babel had been suddenly transferred to Little Side.

That goal was the first and last—the one-and-only—the Alpha and Omega of that thrilling Cup tie. From the moment it was scored we had to fall back and help our defence, for the St. Benedict's forwards attacked with the fierceness of desperation.

No words can picture our relief when the final whistle rang out, and we staggered, utterly spent and leg-weary, from the field. But we had beaten St. Benedict's, and got into the fourth round; and to our list of "famous victories" must be added the one which we achieved in the teeth of the storm!

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A St. Benedict's full-back slithered in the snow and went sprawling.



There are some queer tastes at Greyfriars, as the following paragraphs will show.

BOB CHERRY:

A sunny spring morning fits in perfectly with my temperament. I leap out of bed with the feeling that it's good to be alive. After waking the slackers by squeezing wet sponges over their chivvies, I wash and dress, and scamper down into the sunny Close. On such a morning I'm as happy as a sandboy, and I wouldn't swap places with a millionaire!

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

Give me a jolly good thunderstorm, with lots of forked lightning thrown in! I find it agrees with my turbulent tem-

perament. I don't care for sunshine or rain. I like something that makes no end of noise, and kicks up quite a hulla-balloo! Hark! I hear a distant rumble. May it thunder in torrents, as the Irishman said!

ALONZO TODD:

I love the gentle rain from heaven, which "droppeth upon the place beneath," as Shakespeare observes. How delicious it is to lie in bed and listen to the soft pitter-patter on the window-panes! And how fresh and fragrant all the flowers in the Head's garden appear after a kindly shower! Some of my little

playmates object to rain, on the grounds that it interferes with their sports; but, personally, I revel in the rain—always provided I am suitably clad in oilskins which no damp can penetrate. I once knew a poor fellow who got caught in a rainstorm, and soaked to the skin, because he lacked protection from the elements. He contracted double pneumonia, pleurisy, lumbago, rheumatic fever, gout, rheumatoid arthritis, tie-doloureux, and—

(Enough, Lonzy! Such a list of ailments makes "dry" reading!—Ed.)

MR. QUELCH:

Being a devout lover of Nature and all the elemental forces, I have an enthusiasm for any sort of weather, and can truly say, with the poet:

"I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love winds and waves and storms—
Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery."

DICK PENFOLD:

The rain it raineth every day; and it's a splendid thing, they say. But I loathe rain and fog and mist; they make me quite a pessimist! Clerk of the Weather, grant this boon—give me a flaming day in June!

ARE "PRETTY BOYS" POPULAR?

*Some Candid Opinions on Male Beauty
that will cause a "storm" of controversy.*

Collected by **FRANK NUGENT.**

HARRY WHARTON:

No, I certainly don't consider that "pretty" boys are popular. They aren't popular with me, at any rate. I like to see a good-looking fellow, but not one who possesses doll-like, effeminate features. Such fellows are generally (though not always) vain and conceited, and not much good at games. As a rule, they are "dandified" and foppish. They part their hair carefully in the middle, and brush their eyebrows, and use highly-scented soap. Ugh! Personally, I have no use for the pretty boy; but it's a matter of taste, and every fellow is entitled to his own opinion.

BILLY BUNTER:

Pretty boys are not popular, and more's the pity, bekawse I'm a pretty boy myself. The trouble is, everyboddy is jellus of a hansom fellow. They do everything they can to spite him. They won't give him a place in the fooler team; they won't elect him to be kaptin of his form; in fact, they give him a real ruff time. That has been my eggsperiense, anyway, and I sumtimes wish I had been born ugly, instead of being what I am—a mail bewty. That beast Bob Cherry will be accusing me of "making-up" next! But I can assure you I never make up my face. The only things I ever make up are tall stories!

ALONZO TODD:

Whether pretty boys are popular or otherwise, I should very much like to

be pretty. Bob Cherry says I should be, if it wasn't for my face! But a fellow can't help his face, can he? I am afraid I spend most of my time indoors, studying the wise precepts of my Uncle Benjamin; and this sort of thing is not conducive to beauty.

MR. QUELCH:

I am afraid the "pretty" type of boy does not appeal to me in the least. I judge a boy chiefly by his character. Some of the ugliest boys in the school are high-minded, brave, and chivalrous—and such qualities are worth far more than mere good looks.

WILLIAM COSLING:

Which I was never a pretty boy when I was young. My nickname used to be "Monkey-face." I had to suffer a lot of persecution because of my ugliness, which I think was a cruel shame. I hoped to become more handsome as the years went by; but, alas! every day, in every way, I grew uglier and uglier and uglier. Some people can't abide the sight of my face. Even the Head looks on the floor when he's speaking to me. What I says is this here—males ain't supposed to be beautiful, and I don't consider a man ought to be despised just because he's got a face like a boot. I'm thinking of forming a League of Ugly People, and appointing myself President. Our object will be to protect ourselves against the young varmin'ts who mock us and make fun of our ugliness!

JUST MY LUCK!

By **DICK PENFOLD.**

Whenever we get half a day
Of glorious freedom (hip, hooray!)
And there's a footer match to play—
It rains!

Whenever I resolve to go
To see a circus or a show,
And take no raincoat, don't you know—
It rains!

If I propose a picnic grand
Upon Sir Hilton Popper's land—
A perfect picnic, nobly planned—
It rains!

If I should venture out by night
When stars above are shining bright,
Before the school is out of sight—
It rains!

If, with my camera on my arm,
I seek the countryside's sweet charm,
I soon discover, in alarm—
It rains!

If Cherry says, "Hallo, hallo!
I fancy we shall have some snow.
'Tobogganing's the game, what-ho!"—
It rains!

And when the weather experts say,
"It's sure to be a sunny day
At Margate, Pegg, and Colwyn Bay"—
It rains!

And when those selfsame experts write,
"A storm will sweep the Isle of Wight.
But elsewhere 'twill be warm and
bright"—
It rains!

King Sol is banished from his throne.
We have to sit indoors and groan,
And list to Tom Brown's gramophone—
It rains!

But when old Quelch bestows a boon,
And gates me for the afternoon,
For acting like a silly coon—
IT'S FINE!
[Supplement iv.]

HINTS FOR CYCLISTS.

Several of my reader chums who are devotees of cycling have requested me to publish an article dealing with this healthy sport. As the majority of requests deal with the necessary training to fit an amateur cyclist for open races, the following hints will not come amiss.

Quite as much, perhaps even more, training is required for this branch of sport than for any other. In the first place I must repeat the advice that has once or twice been given in these columns, and this is that no lad should think of putting upon himself the strain that racing of any kind necessarily involves without first of all being thoroughly examined by a medical man, and this advice particularly applies to the department of sport with which we are now dealing.

With regard to this point, don't venture on your own opinion as to whether or not your physical condition will stand the strain of cycle racing, but, like a sensible lad, even before you start getting into trim, go to your medical man and say:

"Doctor, I very much want to start cycle racing. Will you examine me and tell me if I am strong enough for track work?"

If your doctor decides in your favour, then you can commence

th initial stage

of preparation, which resolves itself into getting fit. For this you cannot do better than take a moderate but regular course of physical exercise, adopting some system such as that prescribed by Sandow, for instance, combined with a fair amount of walking every day.

You will find that perhaps, more than anything else, walking will improve your condition; it will strengthen your lungs, give the muscles of your body suppleness and pliability, increase your staying power, while at the same time it will help you to get rid of any superfluity of fat that may have accumulated during your idle months.

Now you can start on your training proper. I think it is safe to assume that most of my readers are lads who find the greater part of each day occupied by their work, and, this being so, the only time that they can spare for training will be the evenings. A good start off can be made by taking

a sharp five-mile spin

every night. Choose, if possible, the best road, by which, of course, I mean the straightest and least undulating, on which you will have a chance of maintaining your speed.

After this you can gradually extend your rides, until by the end of six or seven weeks' preparation you are doing as much as two hundred miles in the week, provided, of course, that during the whole of this time you have felt no ill-effects from your exertions. If, however, you find that your appetite is decreasing, or that you are not feeling up to the work generally, you may know for certain that you have been

overdoing it,

On the other hand, should you feel benefited after your practices, and are capable of keeping up a smart pace over the distance you intend to race, then you should endeavour to get practice on a track. Those of my boys who live in or around London—particularly those of them who are members of one or other of the larger cycling clubs—should experience no difficulty at all in accomplishing this.

As a beginning you will do well to commence your track-riding unpaced. Go over your distance, whether it be a half, one, two, three, four, or five miles each night, riding with men as fast, or faster, than yourself, under the latter circumstance making every effort to pass the rest.

Having gone through a week of this, you might

alter your practice

by taking several two or three mile track spins, devoting one or two laps each time to bursts of speed.

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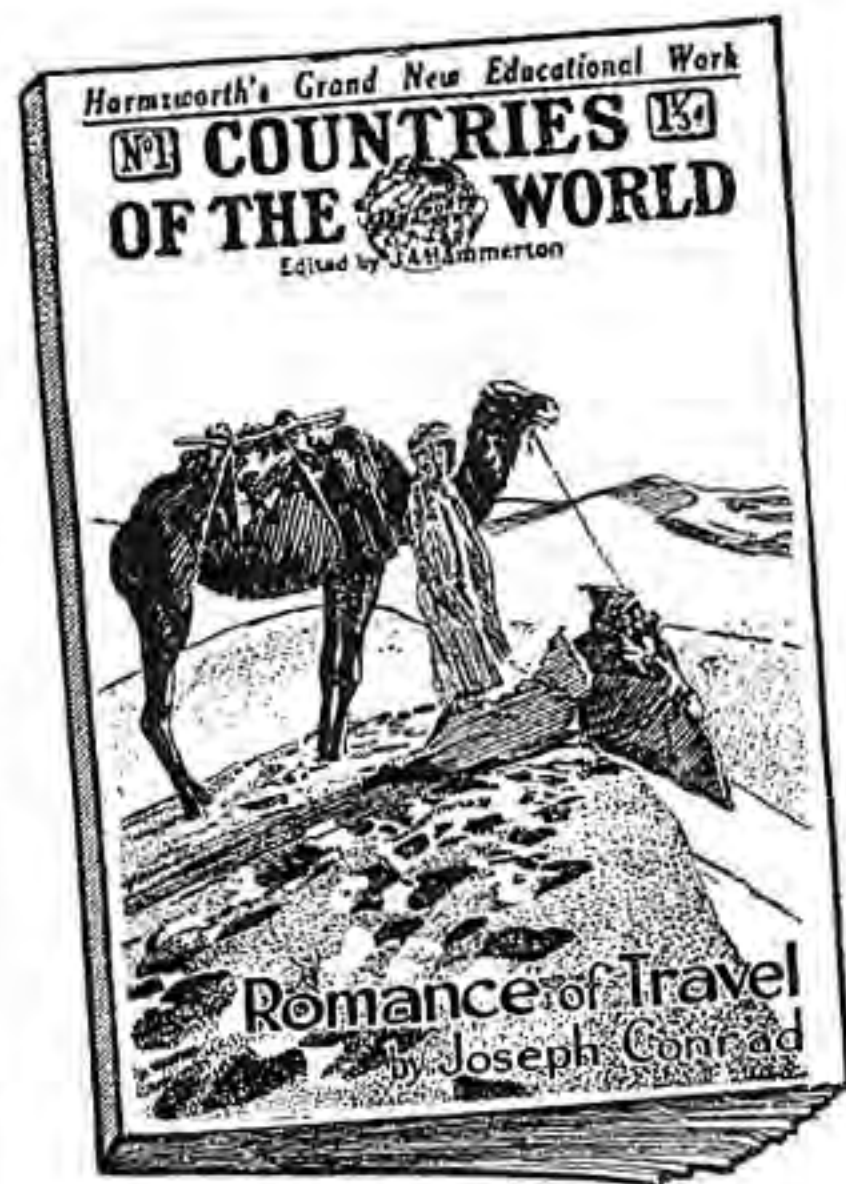
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BUNTER'S POOR RELATIONS!*(Continued from page 12.)*

"The—the poor relations!" he ejaculated.

Seven pairs of eyes were upturned to the box, where Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel had suddenly appeared.

No longer were they shabby and down-at-heel. They had undergone a transformation as startling as it was complete.

Uncle Claude was in evening dress—a resplendent figure from top to toe. He was immaculate and well groomed. Gone was the shabby coat, and the baggy trousers had been replaced by a perfectly creased pair. The coarse muffler had disappeared from Uncle Claude's neck, and in its place was a snow-white collar of the stand-up variety. From the centre of the spotless dress-shirt gleamed a large and costly stud. Uncle Claude looked a living picture of prosperity.

As for Aunt Claribel, the Greyfriars juniors simply gaped at her as she slipped off her opera cloak, revealing a gorgeous evening-gown. She was transformed from a poorly clad gipsy into a lady of fashion. Jewels glittered in her hair, rings glistened on her fingers, and she wore a wonderful necklace. Her attire would not have been out of place on a queen.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not keep their eyes off the resplendent couple in the box. They had almost forgotten the comedy that was being enacted on the stage. Even a thunderous roar of laughter failed to divert their attention from Bunter's poor relations—who now appeared to be anything but poor.

"It's a stunt!" muttered Vernon-Smith excitedly. "I suspected as much, and now I know it for a fact!"

"A stunt!" echoed Wharton. "What do you mean, Smithy?"

"I don't think Bunter's relatives are poor at all! They've simply shammed poverty, for reasons best known to themselves."

"In that case," said Wharton, with a frown, "they played it jolly low in accepting that money."

"But what do you think they did with the fiver? I saw it with my own eyes. They put it in the Cottage Hospital collection-box, in the hall."

"My hat!"

"That's what made me think they weren't really hard up," said Vernon-Smith. "And this absolutely proves it."

"But—but why should they want to pretend they're a pair of paupers?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Give it up! We'll tackle them after the show, and ask for an explanation."

The juniors sat restlessly through the performance. They were longing for the opportunity of "tackling" Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel.

At last the curtain was rung down, and the audience swarmed towards the exits.

The Greyfriars juniors were among the first to reach the street.

Among the cars lined up outside the theatre was a luxurious limousine—the sort of thing that Billy Bunter had prattled about. And it was towards this limousine that Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel made their way on emerging from the theatre.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

And the seven juniors hurried to the spot.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.**A Bombshell for Two!**

"BLESS my soul!" ejaculated Uncle Claude. "We are accosted, my dear Claribel! To use a somewhat melodramatic phrase, the game is up!"

Aunt Claribel smiled.

"I saw our young friends in the theatre," she said, "and I fully anticipated they would waylay us when we came out."

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed in wonder—almost in awe—at the two elegant personages, and at their smart limousine. A liveried chauffeur was seated at the wheel.

"You seem—er—slightly surprised, my dear boys," observed Uncle Claude.

"Slightly surprised?" echoed Bob Cherry. "Why, sir, we're knocked all of a heap!"

"You could bowfully knock us over with an esteemed feather!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Talk about a giddy transformation!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't you think, sir, that we're entitled to an explanation?"

"Certainly, my boy—certainly! I may as well tell you the whole facts of the case, here and now. I should have made the confession sooner or later, in any event."

"You're not really poor?" challenged Vernon-Smith.

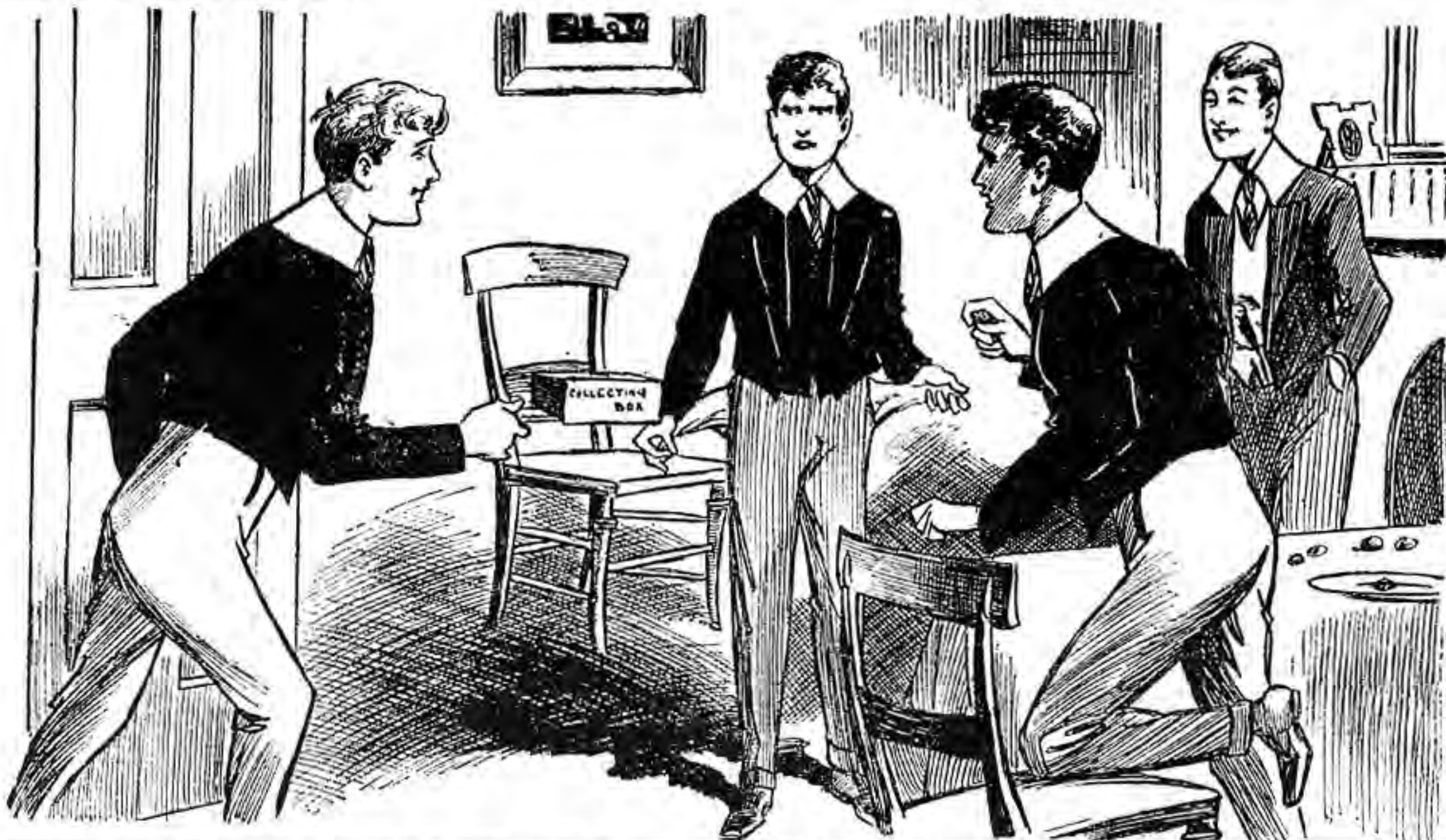
"Happily, no," answered Uncle Claude, with a smile. "I am what the world would call a substantial man—I mean, financially!" added the speaker hastily. "Whilst not exactly a millionaire, I am—well, getting on in that direction."

"My hat!"

"Then you've deceived everybody, sir?" said Mark Linley, with more than a shade of reproach in his voice.

"I plead guilty," said Uncle Claude. "We did not like practising the deception, but we felt it was necessary. You see, we wanted to test our nephews, William and Samuel, to ascertain whether their regard for us was really genuine, or whether they only liked us for our wealth."

"Oh!"



"Roll up, gents, and rally round for the good of the cause!" boomed Bob Cherry. "What's going on?" inquired Tom Brown. "Collection for Bunter's poor relations," explained Bob briefly. "All contributions thankfully received. Roll up!" "Broke!" said Tom Brown laconically. "Same here!" said Hazeldene. "Tuppence any use?" asked Bulstrode. Bob Cherry nodded. "Every little helps!" he said. (See Chapter 6.)

Harry Wharton & Co. began to see daylight. They understood, now, why Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel had simulated poverty.

"We conceived the idea of coming to Greyfriars in shabby attire, and with every appearance of penury," Uncle Claude went on. "Had our nephews been genuinely fond of us, they would have welcomed us with open arms. True affection is manifested in adversity as well as in prosperity—more so, in fact. But you saw—for yourselves what sort of reception we got from William and Samuel. They disowned us—refused to have anything to do with us."

"That's so," said Harry Wharton. "They behaved like cads and snobs."

Uncle Claude sighed.

"I confess it was a great disappointment to us," he said. "We hoped that our nephews were made of the right stuff—that our apparent poverty would make no difference in their feelings towards us. Alas for our hopes!"

"Our nephews were not even civil to us," said Aunt Claribel. "They treated us outrageously, and we propose to have nothing more to do with them. We shall call at the school in the morning to bid them farewell; and that will be our last visit to Greyfriars."

Harry Wharton & Co. smiled. They were thinking of the sensation which would be created next morning, when the "poor relations" drove up to the school in style, in their luxurious limousine.

The juniors were not a bit sorry for the Bunters. They had disowned their aunt and uncle; and now they themselves were to be disowned. And it was no more than they deserved.

"As for you, my dear boys," said Uncle Claude, beaming upon the party, "we have received nothing but kindness at your hands, and we cannot thank you enough for your splendid generosity!"

"Spare our blushes, sir," murmured Bob Cherry. "It was little enough that we did, and we were jolly glad to do it."

"Yes, rather!"

Having shaken hands with Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel, and wished them good-night, Harry Wharton & Co. trooped back to Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter was awaiting their return in the school gateway. The fat junior was furious at having been pushed off the taxi, and the vials of his wrath fairly overflowed upon the heads of his schoolfellows.

"Beasts! Cads! Bullies!" howled Bunter. "You might have maimed me for life! As it is, I expect I shall be bedridden for months, and have to have my spine put in plaster of Paris!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. passed on, chuckling. They said nothing to Bunter about their recent meeting with Aunt Claribel and Uncle Claude. The bombshell would burst upon Bunter in the morning; and the juniors did not want to spoil the effect by warning him before hand. They trooped cheerfully through the Close, leaving Billy Bunter to expend his torrent of abuse on the desert air.

"M-m-my hat!"

Billy Bunter nearly fell down. His little round eyes fairly started out of their sockets. He clutched his minor Sammy by the arm, and pointed dramatically towards the school gates.

It was the morning after. The Bunter brothers were taking a constitutional in



The window of the car was suddenly lowered and a hand and arm shot out. A doubled fist caught Billy Bunter full in the chest, knocking him off his perch. "Yaroooooh!" With a wild yell of anguish the fat junior toppled backwards and rolled over in the roadway. (See Chapter 7.)

the Close when a big, finely-upholstered limousine swung in at the gates of Greyfriars.

Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel were on board. They no longer had the appearance of a pair of paupers. Aunt Claribel was dressed exquisitely, in the very best of taste; and even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like Uncle Claude.

"M-m-my hat!" repeated Billy Bunter, in awestruck tones.

"Billy," gasped the infant Samuel, "I—I must be dreaming!"

But it was no dream. It was sober reality.

The limousine came to a standstill, and Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel stepped out. They advanced majestically towards their astonished nephews.

"We have called, William and Samuel," said Uncle Claude gravely, "to bid you good-bye."

"But—but what does this mean, uncle?" faltered Billy. "This gorgeous limousine—all this swank and finery?"

"It means, William, that we are not impoverished, as we led you to believe. We are well-to-do—wealthy, in fact. Yesterday we were merely playing a part."

"Great Scott!"

"We put your affection to the test, and it has been found wanting," said Aunt Claribel. "It is quite clear that you have never had any real regard for us."

"Yes, we have, aunt!" cried Billy Bunter eagerly. "We've always been ever so fond of you—worshipped the ground you walked on, in fact. Haven't we, Sammy?"

"Not half!" said Sammy.

Uncle Claude smiled grimly.

"Your professions of affection are

somewhat belated," he said. "And they are not sincere."

"Oh, really—"

"You have behaved despicably, both of you, and we do not intend to visit you again—ever!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"This is good-bye," said Uncle Claude, extending his hand.

Then the brothers Bunter fell to pleading and entreating and expressing deep regret for their conduct. Now that the "poor relations" had turned out to be rich, Billy and Sammy were "all over them." But their apologies and entreaties fell on deaf ears. Uncle Claude and Aunt Claribel had quite made up their minds to have nothing more to do with their snobbish nephews. The farewells were insisted upon, and Billy and Sammy had to resign themselves to the situation.

The rich relations then bade a cordial farewell to Harry Wharton & Co.; and Uncle Claude handed over a ten-pound note, as a donation to the Remove Sports Fund.

A ringing cheer followed the big limousine as it rolled away. But there were two persons who took no part in the demonstration. Billy and Sammy had never felt less like cheering in their lives. They gave a last wild look at the departing limousine; then they turned and tottered away towards the school building, with feelings too deep for words.

And that was the last Greyfriars saw of Bunter "Poor" Relations!

THE END.

(There will be another fine story of the famous Greyfriars chums next week, entitled "The White Feather!" by Frank Richards—a grand start to a magnificent programme!)

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A THRILLING ADVENTURE STORY OF NORTH-WEST CANADA!



SMOKE SIGNALS!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Alarm!

MEL RUTHVEN sat on the edge of his bed in the great, sunny barrack-room, busily plaiting tough leather strands between his strong, brown fingers. The door opened and Joe Clarke's head came leisurely into sight.

"Heard news?" he observed in a bored voice.

"No! What?" cried three or four men at once.

"Crees war-dancing in Restigoux Reservation!"

If he had dropped a shell in the room the effect could hardly have been more startling. Every one of the dozen North-West Mounted Police, who, the moment before, had been sleeping or loafing away the hot afternoon, was on his feet in an instant.

"When do we start?" cried Ruthven.

"In an hour, Captain French says," replied Clarke, in the same sleepy voice, and, sauntering over to his bed, he began putting his kit together as leisurely as though he had all day before him.

Three o'clock was striking from the clock in the barrack-square, and the little troop were drawn up in perfect order, paraded ready to start. Even Captain French's keen eyes had failed to find a button or strap amiss.

The word, "Fours! Forward! Trot!" were on the officer's lips, when the rapid beat of horse's hoofs came hammering up the road, and a man galloped into the square, reined his dripping horse by the captain's side, and handed him a note.

The officer read it, and his brows knitted sternly.

"Ruthven, I want you," he said.

The young corporal advanced and saluted.

"Snake Eye escaped from Fort Grizzly this morning," said the officer. "Take two men—I can't spare more—and catch him. Remember, if he once reaches the Restigoux Reservation he will have every buck out on the warpath. At all costs you must stop him before he gets there."

"May I have Clarke, sir, and Martin?"

Captain French nodded, and ordered the two mentioned to fall out. Their

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glum faces, as the others trotted off, betrayed their keen disappointment; but when Ruthven told them what their mission was, even Joe Clarke's impassive face showed a gleam of pleasure.

Ruthven was not long about making his plans, and within ten minutes he and his two companions were cantering sharply across the prairie. There was hardly another man at Fort Alexandra who knew the country as well as he, and he had in his mind's eye an exact map of the probable route which the Indian would take. He aimed to cut in upon this route at a point a few miles in advance of the Indian, and wait for his passing. To do this they must not spare their horses, for it was above all things important to catch the Indian before dark. Otherwise, the crafty old scoundrel would almost certainly slip through their fingers.

"Who is this Snake Eye?" inquired Martin, the third of the party, as they cantered side by side. Martin, generally known as Sand Martin, was a new recruit, but a very smart youngster.

"Worst old Injun in the North-West," was Ruthven's reply.

The three, quickening their pace, galloped steadily along over the coarse brown grass through the sunlit afternoon.

It was past six when the little party reached the Cross River valley, and Mel Ruthven flung up his hand as a signal to halt. Springing out of the saddle, he threw the reins to Joe, and, going down on hands and knees, began carefully examining the trail.

There had been no rain for days, and the untrained eye could not have distinguished the slightest mark on the hard, dry ground. The young corporal's face was very grave as he rose again.

"He's passed," he remarked curtly; and instantly was in the saddle again.

In the far distance a black dot crawled against the skyline.

Now the chase began in earnest. It was barely twenty miles to the Reservation. Snake Eye had a start of fully three.

Not one of the troopers spoke.

Slowly the distant dot grew in size till its form became distinct. The troopers could plainly see the Indian chief leaning low over his pony's withers and lashing the game little beast to even greater exertions.

Another half-mile and Ruthven was within two hundred yards of the Indian. Suddenly Snake Eye wheeled in his saddle. There was a sharp crack, a puff of white smoke jetted out, and a bullet whined close over Ruthven's head.

The latter dropped his reins on the bay's neck and unslung his carbine. Yet he hesitated to fire. He loved a good horse, and it seemed brutal to shoot the gallant pony which had carried Snake Eye seventy miles since dawn; also he desired to catch the red scoundrel himself alive.

In that instant the Indian's rifle cracked again, but even as he fired the worn-out pony put its foot in a prairie dog's hole, and turned a complete somersault, sending its rider flying, in a long curve, through the air. He lit full on his head and lay motionless.

"Hope he's broken his ugly neck," growled Joe Clarke, as he galloped up.

The blood was streaming from his right ear, from which the Indian's last bullet had shorn away the tip.

But it takes more than a fall to break an Indian's neck. And though Snake Eye was knocked silly for the moment, he was not badly hurt. He recovered, to find himself disarmed and tied fast by a raw hide rein to Ruthven's saddle.

The stolid old scoundrel uttered not a word, but his seamed face and deep-set, burning eyes spoke unutterable things as he glared vengefully round at his captors.

"Where now?" growled Joe, as he tied his handkerchief tight round his ear and head.

"We join the others," answered Ruthven.

"Miles ahead of them, ain't we?" observed Sand Martin.

"We'll wait for them in the wood on the hill there. They ought to be up by dark." Ruthven turned to Snake Eye. "March!" he ordered curtly.

At a slow walk they started for the hill, leaving Snake Eye's pony to graze and recover itself.

Having plenty of time in hand, the three policemen took things easily, riding at a foot's pace up through the grateful shade of the trees.

As they neared the summit they passed beyond the trees, and Ruthven warned them to advance with caution. A low ridge of rocks barred their way.

Ruthven dismounted, left his horse with Clarke, and bidding Martin keep a sharp eye upon the Indian, climbed up and looked over.

When he turned back again his face told the others that something was wrong.

"Well?" inquired Joe Clarke abruptly.

"There's a war party of a hundred or more riding round the base of the hill," remarked Ruthven grimly.

"Won't hurt us," was all Clarke said.

"No; but there's a half dozen fools of prospectors down by the river. They haven't seen the Indians."

Clarke uttered a low whistle. As for Martin, in his surprise, he took his eyes off the prisoner for the fraction of a second. It was enough. With one fierce wrench, Snake Eye, who had perfectly understood the whole situation, had torn the rein from Martin's hands and was running with incredible speed down the hill towards the river.

Martin, with one sharp exclamation of dismay, rushed after the Indian, but Ruthven was before him.

As Ruthven ran he was uncoiling a queer tangle of those very same raw hide thongs which his friend had watched him plaiting in the barrack-room, and which he had been carrying all the afternoon under his tunic.

Next instant, pursued and pursuer had passed from Clarke's sight in among the trees.

The Indian was edging to the left. Above all things, Ruthven knew he must stop him before he could get into sight of the war party. Sprinting with all his might, he gained a little, and, as he ran, three short thongs, each with a small leaden ball at its end, hissed round and round his head.

A fallen log barred Snake Eye's way. As he sprang upon it, the whirling balls and thongs left Ruthven's hand, and went humming through the air in a spinning tangle. Next second Snake Eye got the shock of his life. Just as his moccasined feet touched the log, something struck him like a whip-lash behind the knees, and, coiling tightly round his legs, bound them fast together. For the second time that day, he pitched full upon his head on the hard ground. Before he could recover his scattered senses, a pair of powerful hands gripped him by the back of the neck, and Ruthven's knees were in the small of his back. It was a very subdued Indian whom Ruthven and Martin led between them up the hill again. Martin was too deeply ashamed to ask questions, but Joe pointed at Ruthven's queer weapon.

"What'd you rope him with?"

Mel, in spite of his anxiety, smiled.

"Bolas," he answered. "South American dodge I learnt in the Argentine."

Snake Eye growled something to himself. It sounded like, "Bad medicine."

"There'll be some worse medicine for you, my red friend, before I'm done with you," remarked Mel Ruthven grimly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Indian Strategy!

IF the prospectors' lives were to be saved, something had to be done, and done quickly. Five minutes had been wasted, and all the time the Indians had been moving steadily along the base of the hill. It was simply maddening to the three on the hill to watch the prospectors working away down by the river-bed as calmly as though there was not a hostile Indian within a hundred miles.

"Good job they've not got a fire," remarked Martin humbly, for he was still very sore over letting Snake Eye

escape. "If they had, the braves would be down on them pretty quick."

Ruthven started. The words had put an idea into his head. He turned to Joe.

"Do you understand the Indian smoke signals, Joe?"

Joe shook his head.

"But you do!" cried Ruthven, sweeping round on Snake Eye. So sudden was his question that the Indian's face lost for a moment its usual stolidity, and Mel caught a startled glance in his eye.

"You make signals for the braves to go back. Tell 'em the troops are in sight. See? Ah, it's no good looking like that! You understand well enough."

The chief had recovered command of his features. He stood like a statue, apparently neither hearing nor understanding.

A dangerous look came into Ruthven's steel-blue eyes, and his jaw hardened.

Without another word, he seized the end of the rope which bound the Indian's hands, and drove the red man before him into a thick clump of trees close by. Martin stared after them, but Clarke merely winked. "Mel's going to try a little of Father Stick," was his inward comment.

Arrived at the centre of the coppice, Ruthven, with practised skill, lashed Snake Eye firmly to a tree, and gagged him. He was hurrying away, apparently intending to leave him, when, as if by an afterthought, he turned.

"I'll give you one more chance, Snake Eye. Make those signals, and I'll let you go. If you don't, I'll leave you where you are, and risk going to warn the white men. The chances are that we three will all be killed."

"Then no one will know where to find you, and you will stay here, tied fast in this lonely spot, till you die of thirst and starvation, and the range wolves pick the flesh from your bleaching bones."

The last words were poured out with

such fierce earnestness that the Indian quailed visibly. Ruthven stepped back.

"I will count three," he said. "If you nod, I take it you will signal the braves to go back. If not, I leave you."

Snake Eye's glittering little eyes glared savagely at the trooper, but Ruthven stared back with more than equal fierceness.

"One!" came his voice, hard as the ring of steel. "Two!"

A slight pause.

"Three!"

As the word passed his lips the red man's head bowed slightly.

Ruthven stepped close up to him. His revolver was in his left hand.

"If your tongue is forked—" He tapped the long barrel significantly, then slashed the cord, and hurried the Indian back up the hill.

"Gather wood—quick!" he ordered Martin. And then, freeing the chief's hands, but keeping his pistol ready, he gave the red man matches.

The band of braves were terribly near to the clump of trees, which was all that hid them from the luckless prospectors, who worked on, all unconscious of their peril.

Another five minutes, and the leading brave must see them, and a torrent of maddened savages would pour down the slope and overwhelm them. It was far too late for the troopers to warn or help the victims.

"Quick!" urged Ruthven.

He was terribly anxious. Suppose the treacherous old scoundrel played him false? He, and he only, knew the use of smoke signals, which is part of every Indian's education, but the code of which no white man has ever learnt.

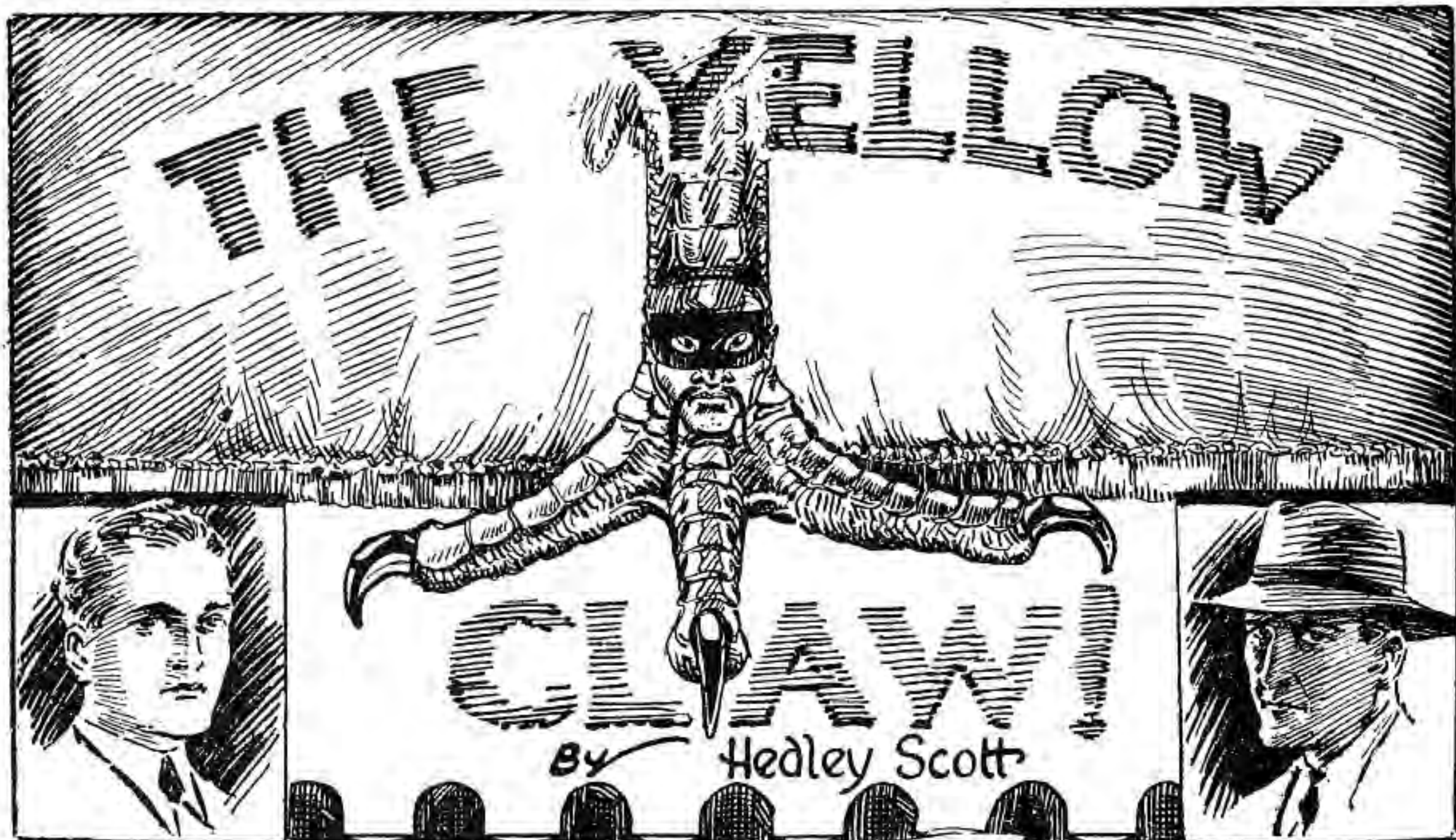
"Green branches," grunted Snake Eye; and Ruthven tore a dozen from the nearest tree.

The chief had arranged six little piles
(Continued on page 23.)



The worn-out pony put its foot in a prairie dog's hole and turned a complete somersault, sending its rider flying in a long curve through the air. Snake Eye lit full on his head and lay still.

START THIS MAGNIFICENT STAGE AND DETECTIVE SERIAL TO-DAY, BOYS!



Featuring the world-famous scientific investigator, **FERRERS LOCKE**, and his clever boy assistant, **JACK DRAKE**.

A Fresh Victim!

WITH a cry of astonishment Ferrers Locke knelt at the inspector's side and turned the inert figure over. To his relief Pycroft's heart was beating regularly. To his momentary perplexity his breathing was a trifle too stertorous to be normal. And then came enlightenment. Inspector Pycroft had suffered in much the same way as had Sir Malcolm Dunderfield—he had been gassed!

Carrying the inert figure of his companion to the settee Ferrers Locke made him comfortable, and then recrossed the room with the idea of obtaining some restoratives. Direct in his line of vision was the table. And on the table was a sheet of notepaper covered with writing, from which the curious yellow sign of an eagle's claw loomed up at him.

Full of curiosity, Ferrers Locke picked up the sheet of notepaper and read the contents. And as he did so his keen, intellectual features registered a mixed expression of incredulity and contempt. The missive penned above the seal of the Yellow Claw was as follows:

"Ferrers Locke,—The society will brook no interference from you. Decline Sir Malcolm Dunderfield's commission at once, or it will be the last time you ever hunt a wanted man. We give you one warning only. Take heed! Persist in your endeavour to trail us, and death stares you in the face.—THE YELLOW CLAW."

"Big words!" muttered the sleuth, with a shrug of the shoulders. "But this Yellow Claw gang of cut-throats mistake my calibre. The swords are out—it is going to be a duel to the death!"

With a coolness that would have exasperated the writer of that threatening letter had he been present to observe, Ferrers Locke carefully folded the missive into four, and, with a grim chuckle, deposited it in a drawer of his desk which contained several documents of a like nature.

"Yet another to my collection!" he muttered. "I must be like the proverbial cat with the nine lives if one can judge from that little pile of rubbish."

His light mood fell from him as he recollected that Inspector Pycroft was still

under the influence of the nitrous oxide gas which was such a familiar feature in the campaign of the Yellow Claw. With a thoughtful frown upon his intellectual features, the detective entered his laboratory, and for the next five minutes was preparing an antidote of his own concoction. Armed with a hyperdermic syringe, the sleuth then entered the sitting-room again and crossed to the side of the sleeping C.I.D. man.

Baring Pycroft's arm to the elbow, Ferrers Locke manipulated the syringe and emptied its contents into the flesh of the C.I.D. man with a steadiness that many a medical student would have envied. Then, syringe in hand, he stared down at the inspector to note any change in his appearance. For one brief second Pycroft's eyes twitched, and his breathing became less stertorous. It was a good sign, and Ferrers Locke was prepared to wait until the Scotland Yarder came to. With the antidote fighting against the drug Pycroft had inhaled, the sleuth reckoned that he would awake within half an hour.

Making his official colleague as comfortable as possible upon the settee, Locke walked over to the night emergency speaking-tube. There was a slight discolouration in the region of the mouth-

IN THE LIMELIGHT.

THE YELLOW CLAW, a mysterious and powerful organisation that preys upon wealthy Englishmen.

SIR MALCOLM DUNDERFIELD, a successful City financier, who has been threatened by the society.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous detective of Baker Street, who receives an urgent summons to the house of the financier.

JACK DRAKE, the sleuth's clever boy assistant.

Having interviewed Sir Malcolm, the sleuth promises to investigate the case on his behalf, and then returns to his own chambers in Baker Street. To his astonishment he finds the inert figure of INSPECTOR PYCROFT—whom he had left in his sitting-room, alive and well, half an hour before—lying in a huddled heap beneath the speaking-tube let into the wall, through which communication from the street below can be obtained.

(Now read on.)

piece, which Locke put down to the action of the gas which had been transmitted through it.

"Very ingenious!" he muttered. "But Pycroft ought not to have been caught napping so easily. Any gas transmitted through the speaking-tube would take a certain time to reach this room from the street below. It is obvious that the Yellow Claw or his agent engaged Pycroft in conversation whilst the gas, which he had first pumped into the tube, was slowly rising. Yes, Pycroft walked into it nicely. Had he had his wits about him he would have been suspicious of the fact that anyone using the special night emergency speaking-tube in broad daylight, when it was quite a simple matter to ring the bell and obtain an answer, was a suspicious character. I'd like to look at the speaking-tube from the street myself."

So saying, Ferrers Locke vacated the sitting-room and descended the stairs to the hall below. The door was wide open, as was customary in daylight, and the brass plate of the speaking-tube which communicated with his rooms was slightly discoloured.

Below the speaking-tube, on the stone step, was a single footprint. Allowing his eyes to roam over the steps before him, Ferrers Locke perceived that there was a similar footprint on each; more still, that the footstep stood out prominently on the pavement approaching the steps as well. And in the gutter at the edge of the pavement Ferrers Locke noticed a puddle of rain water.

"That single footstep is explained," he muttered. "My last visitor, whoever he may have been, was unfortunate enough to step into that puddle of water. I rather think it would be useful if I took an impression of this footstep."

Returning speedily to his rooms, the sleuth brought to light from the midst of his detective paraphernalia a small, box-shaped camera. He slipped a set of unexposed plates into it, and then descended the stairs again. In a very short space of time the sleuth had photographed the footprint half a dozen times, and, satisfied with his labours, he returned to his laboratory.

"Jack Drake can get to work on developing them when he comes in!" muttered Locke, vacating the laboratory, and moving

over to the sitting-room window. He stared out into the street below. "After that it will be an easy matter to make a plaster cast. I—"

His next remark was never concluded, for his keen eyes were following a rapidly moving taxi that was heading in the direction of his chambers.

"That chap's in a deuce of a hurry!" was the sleuth's mental comment. "A regular Jehu, in fact!"

His curiosity was more aroused when he realised that the taxi had drawn to a standstill outside his chambers, and that a tall man, clad in a cloak, had alighted. There was something familiar in the appearance of the newcomer that caused Ferrers Locke to knit his brows in thought. And then came enlightenment.

"Mark Chaerton, as I live!" he exclaimed. "What on earth does he want with me?"

Following closely upon his query, there came a violent peal on his door-bell. Sing-Sing, the detective's Chinese assistant, was about to answer the summons when Locke beckoned to him.

"Sing-Sing," he said, "have you been out of the house this morning?"

"Yes, Mistle Locke," returned the Chinese. "I went to the post-office about half an hour before you returned. I was gone about twenty minutes."

"Ah, thank you, Sing-Sing," said the sleuth quietly. "That will do. Kindly answer the violent summons of our visitor."

The Chinaman moved swiftly and silently to the door. He returned a few moments later with the "visitor" at his back. Ferrers Locke had not been mistaken; it was Mark Chaerton, and the playwright appeared to be in such a state of wild excitement that he did not wait to be announced. He brushed past Sing-Sing, and caught Ferrers Locke by the arm.

"Mr. Locke," he said breathlessly, "I am in fear of my life! I am—"

"A trifle out of breath, too," remarked the sleuth, with a smile. "Sit down, Mr. Chaerton, and pray calm yourself. That's better"—as the famous playwright sank into a deep armchair which Sing-Sing wheeled forward for him—"I can wait for a few moments!"

A volley of excited remarks rose to the lips of the visitor, but they were never uttered. There was something compelling in the detective's look that went home. The sleuth found himself studying intently the man before him. Mark Chaerton was a tall, slim man, who favoured a rather original, if unorthodox, style of dress. He wore his dark, curly hair, which was tinged with grey, very long, so that it fell over his shoulders in a tangled mass. He sported an artist's cravat and a tweed sports coat, over which latter he wore a sweeping black cloak. His nether garments could be best likened unto "plus fours." His stockings were of a fine quality black silk, and his feet were encased in narrow patent-leather shoes, surmounted by a choice pair of silver buckles. To complete his strange and picturesque appearance he carried a black felt hat cut on the lines of a sombrero.

Undoubtedly, reflected the sleuth, Mark Chaerton was an eccentric man.

"I am prepared to commence," said the famous playwright at length, in a shrill, quavering voice, accompanying his remark with an artistic flourish of his long, thin hands. "I have control recovered of myself."

Ferrers Locke was quick to note the slight hesitating voice, suggestive that Mark Chaerton was of foreign origin, and the misplaced verb.

"Good!" he smiled genially. "Now, what's the trouble?"

"The trouble," echoed Mark Chaerton, his gaze fastening on the sleeping figure of Inspector Pyecroft on the settee at the further end of the room, in wonderment, "is the Yellow Claw!"

The Missing Camera.

FERRERS LOCKE sat bolt upright in his chair as the name of the dreaded society reached his ears. But he was complete master of himself in a second. He nodded easily, and clasped his lean fingers together in an attitude of close attention.

"Indeed!" He permitted himself the

remark as though he were exchanging the time of day. "Tell me more."

"I received a letter from this Yellow Claw by the first post this morning," went on the visitor, emphasising his words with a series of gestures that rather got on the nerves of the famous detective. "And I was requested—nay, they demanded the sum of twenty thousand pounds without delay."

"Is it by any chance your birthday, too, Mr. Chaerton?" asked Ferrers Locke. "It seems that this Yellow Claw makes a point of despatching these threatening letters on his victim's birthday."

"No, no," replied the playwright, with a shrug of the shoulders; "it is not my birthday."

"Have you ever had any communications from this Yellow Claw before," asked Ferrers Locke, "or have they threatened you in any other way?"

"They have not. This letter"—the playwright withdrew from a pocket in his capacious cloak a crumpled piece of paper—"is the first attention I have from them received."

The great detective took the letter and perused it. It was practically the same in text as had been the threatening letters received by Alec Muldane and Sir Malcolm Dunderfield. Like theirs, also, it bore a sinister symbol of a yellow claw at the foot of the arrogant signature.

"And do you intend to present yourself at the appointed rendezvous with the exorbitant sum of money they demand?" questioned the sleuth.

"What else can I do?"

"That is for you to decide," returned Ferrers Locke. "I do not underestimate the cunning of the gang myself. They seem to be very familiar with every movement of their victim. I should not be surprised if one of their number had seen you enter my rooms. If he had, it is quite feasible to suppose that he would guess the object of your visit. And, as is pointed out in this letter, 'any attempt to ensnare the member

of the Society who has been appointed to receive the sum of money required at the appointed rendezvous will meet with disaster.' No, Mark Chaerton, I can see it is on the tip of your tongue to suggest that you present yourself at the rendezvous with a force of plain-clothes policemen at your back, ready to arrest the member of the gang. It would be futile. The Yellow Claw is not to be caught napping. You don't for one moment imagine that the scoundrel detailed to collect the money from you would be parading up and down Regent Street with a Yellow Claw badge in his coat, do you? Not a bit of it. I take it you require me to investigate the case in your interests?"

"Indeed, I do, Mr. Locke."

"Then my advice is, lie low for a bit, Mr. Chaerton. Go back to your home just as if nothing had happened, and leave the rest to me. By the way, I understand that the dress rehearsal of your new play is taking place this afternoon?"

"That is so."

"Very well, I should like to be present at the theatre. May I count on you to use your influence to get my young assistant, Jack Drake, a job as dresser in the company?"

"That would be quite simple to accomplish," replied Mark Chaerton eagerly.

"You mean that he could keep a watch on things, in case the Yellow Claw should strike at my beautiful creation, eh?"

"I take it that you mean your latest play?" smiled Locke. "Right-ho! If any such attempt were made with the idea of frightening you into submission, in all probability it would be delivered against John Huntingdon, your principal lead."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mark Chaerton, raising his lean finger ceilingwards. "My play would be ruined."

"Never fear," said the sleuth. "Drake will be a match for any emissary of the Yellow Claw."

"I sincerely trust so," replied Mark Chaerton fervently. "Then I shall see you this afternoon, Mr. Locke, and we will arrange that your assistant—I've heard that he is a very clever lad—shall be given the position of dresser to Mr. Huntingdon. I feel a great deal easier in my mind now that I have consulted you. As you know, my play is touring the first-class theatres in England after a week's performance at the Thespian in Shaftesbury Avenue. I intend to travel with the company—"

"And I shall be close on your heels," smiled Ferrers Locke. "This Yellow Claw is becoming a pest, and must be exterminated."

"Good! I like to hear you speak like that, Mr. Locke," said the playwright. "It puts new life into me. Now, about your fees—"

Ferrers Locke made an expressive gesture with his hands.

"That is a mere detail," he said grimly. "If I succeed—and I have every hope that I shall—in bringing to book this Yellow Claw Society, I shall have done a large public



The visitor appeared to be in such a state of wild excitement that he did not wait to be announced. He brushed past Sing-Sing and caught the detective by the arm. "Mr. Locke!" he said breathlessly. "I am in fear of my life! The Yellow Claw! I am—" "A trifle out of breath, too," remarked the sleuth gravely. "Sit down, and pray calm yourself!" (See this page.)

a great service—reward enough. Good-bye, Mr. Chaerton; we meet again at the theatre this afternoon."

"Good-bye!" responded the playwright, with a polite bow. "Till this afternoon, then!"

And pulling his capacious cloak around him, Mark Chaerton, the eccentric playwright who was the idol of London theatre-goers, took his departure. At the doorway, however, he halted, and made as if to speak. His piercing black eyes were on the sleeping figure of Inspector Pyecroft, and they flashed a question. It was rather an uncommon sight to see a uniformed inspector asleep on the settee of a private detective's chambers in broad daylight. But Mark Chaerton, despite his obvious curiosity, shrugged his shoulders and politely refrained from asking what was in his mind.

"This is getting a regular maze of crime," reflected Ferrers Locke, when from the window he had seen his late visitor enter the waiting taxicab. "My head is beginning to sing with all this Yellow Claw business."

"And so is mine!"

The words came from the direction of the settee, and Ferrers Locke turned sharply in that direction. He saw Inspector Pyecroft sitting upright, a wry smile on his granite features.

"And how long have you been awake?" asked the private detective.

"About five minutes," returned the C.I.D. man. "I decided to keep where I was. You see, I didn't know who your visitor was, or what was his business, so I thought I'd let him remain in ignorance as to my presence here."

"But you know now that he has been threatened by the Yellow Claw?"

"I gathered as much from the few pieces of conversation I overheard, Mr. Locke," replied Pyecroft. "But I expect you are dying to know how I happened to fall asleep, eh?"

"Not exactly," said the private detective, with a smile. "You see, I know already."

"The deuce you do?"

"Pyecroft," said Locke, wagging an admonishing forefinger at his official colleague, "it was very foolish of you to answer that call through the night speaking-tube. You were no doubt speaking to the Yellow Claw himself."

"What!"

"Keep cool, my dear fellow," said Locke. "There's more to come. Can you not construct a motive for such a strange procedure?"

"Blessed if I can!" grunted the C.I.D. man. "I walked over to the speaking-tube and exchanged a few remarks with a madman, it seemed, for I'm blowed if I could understand a word he was saying, and then I suddenly felt dizzy. I remember striking the floor, and that's all."

"Then you will feel annoyed to think that this mysterious Yellow Claw was within a yard of you after you had fallen to the floor?"

"Don't rot, Mr. Locke!" grumbled Pyecroft peevishly.

"But I'm not. When I returned to this room I found you in a huddled heap on the floor and this charming little note on the table." The sleuth withdrew the letter from the drawer of his desk, and handed it to the astonished inspector. "A piece of theatrical 'business,' Pyecroft, intended to terrorise me."

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed the Scotland Yarder. "That's cheek, if you like. And to think that I was in the same room as this infernal Yellow Claw all the time. He gassed me with his confounded drug so that he could enter the room and leave that note."

"Exactly. He knew apparently that I was in consultation with Sir Malcolm Dunderfield and that Sing-Sing was out of the way. I questioned Sing-Sing a few moments ago, and he informed me that he had left the house for about twenty minutes to visit the post-office."

"Then this Yellow Claw must have a jolly well organised gang at his beck and call," said Pyecroft. "How else could he know of all our movements?"

"I agree with you," said Ferrers Locke. "The chase is going to be an exciting one. Already I am fighting on behalf of two clients—Sir Malcolm Dunderfield and Mark Chaerton. Are you still game to throw in your lot with mine, Pyecroft?"

"Of course," replied the C.I.D. man stoutly. "I want to get my own back on the dirty

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dog who put me to sleep. I reckon I'd put him to sleep without any gas," he added.

"Yes, I think you would," smiled Locke, with an admiring glance at the brawny, muscular figure before him. "Perhaps it won't be long before you have the chance."

The famous sleuth then went on to tell of the single footprints he had discovered on the steps below the speaking-tube.

"And you have photographed them," said Pyecroft eagerly. "Perhaps they will afford a clue."

"I rather think they will," said Ferrers Locke. "I intend to let Drake develop the plates for me; but, as he has not returned, perhaps you would like to get busy on them? You'll find the camera on the first right-hand shelf in the laboratory."

"Right-ho!" said Pyecroft eagerly, rising to his feet.

"While you are developing the plates I'll get into touch with Sir Malcolm Dunderfield," said the sleuth. "There will now be no need for me and I to journey to the theatre to see John Huntingdon this afternoon. Mark Chaerton has more influence than Huntingdon has, and Drake's as good as installed as dresser already."

So saying the sleuth reached for the telephone, and was soon in direct communication with Sir Malcolm Dunderfield. He cancelled the appointment with him, saying that there would be no need to acquaint his nephew of the danger in which he stood from the Yellow Claw, as Jack Drake's position in the company had been fixed up satisfactorily.

"I have just interviewed Mark Chaerton," continued the detective, "and he is willing to help, for he, too, has been threatened by this Yellow Claw."

"Good heavens!"

The exclamation came shrilly over the wires. That piece of news had certainly surprised Sir Malcolm.

"Good heavens!" he repeated. "Will this Yellow Claw never be caught? He gets more daring every day!"

"His very daring will entrap him in time," returned Ferrers Locke. "Don't worry, Sir Malcolm. You, at least, have an idea how things will go, for your life is not threatened for some time yet."

"But my nephew—"

"He will be carefully guarded, I assure you. Have no fear. I will phone you periodically to let you know what progress I am making. In any case, I shall see you at the theatre to-morrow night. Au revoir, Sir Malcolm!"

The sleuth replaced the receiver on the hooks just as Inspector Pyecroft rushed into the sitting-room.

"What's biting you?" asked Ferrers Locke, noting the expression of amazement on the face of the C.I.D. man.

"The camera—" began Pyecroft.

"Well?"

"It's gone!"

The Chase Over the Roofs!

FERRERS LOCKE stiffened for a moment as Inspector Pyecroft imparted the startling piece of news, but he swiftly recovered himself.

"Surely, man, you're mistaken?" he said.

The Scotland Yard detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Come and see for yourself, Mr. Locke," he returned. "There's no sign of a blessed camera on the shelf, or in the whole of the laboratory, for that matter. What's more, the window is half-open—"

"What!"

Ferrers Locke rapped out the word fiercely. Then, a steely glitter in his grey eyes, he brushed past the C.I.D. man and entered the laboratory. He paused on the threshold, and his eyes sought the shelf upon which he had placed the camera containing the exposed plates of the footprint he had taken a short time since. But as Pyecroft had remarked, there was now no sign of the camera.

And the lab window was open.

With a muttered ejaculation falling from his lips, the private detective crossed the laboratory and gazed out of the window into the small garden below. But the garden was void of human presence. Whoever had "lifted" the sleuth's camera and made good his getaway was certainly nowhere to be seen. But if the intruder had entered and left the laboratory by way of the window, how on earth had he achieved such a feat, for there was neither feet nor hand hold on the wall, and the laboratory window was situated at an altitude of forty feet above the ground.

"Reckon the fellow entered and left this room by means of a rope strung on to one of the branches of that tree," muttered Pyecroft at length.

Ferrers Locke allowed his gaze to dwell upon the solitary elm-tree that stood back in the garden below for one brief moment, and then he shook his head.

"Right off the rails there, Pyecroft," he remarked gravely. "It would be an impossibility for anyone to swing themselves from a branch of that tree into this window, which was not open in the first place, mark you—"

"You mean that the natural momentum of such a swing would bring the burglar merchant right up against the pane and smash it?"

"Well, that in itself would convince me if I had no other means of telling," said Locke quietly. "But it is the angle of the swing that makes the feat impossible. Again, were it possible, it would require a little preliminary swinging backwards and forwards on the part of the intruder before he attained sufficient momentum. Do you think anyone could do that kind of thing in Baker Street without being spotted?"

"I see your point," admitted the inspector, rather grudgingly albeit.

"No, Pyecroft," continued the sleuth, "the thief entered this lab from the roof above!"

"Eh?" exclaimed the C.I.D. man, scratching his head in astonishment. "From the roof?"

"Exactly," returned the private detective. "Come—you will see the distinct traces of a boot having scraped against the top of the sash! Put your head out of the window. Look—a couple of inches above your head. Don't you think that black smudge was made by a boot scraping against it? Then, again, this sash was freshly painted yesterday!"

"Yes, that's all very well," grunted Pyecroft, stretching his head outside the window the better to examine the black smudge on the white woodwork. "But how do you know the thief didn't enter and leave the lab by the door in the ordinary way?"

"Because, my dear Pyecroft," grinned Ferrers Locke, "there is an electric alarm-bell under the mat on each side of the lab door. Since a certain criminal's midnight visit here, some short time back, I have taken the trouble of wiring what I call my important rooms—the lab, the study, and my bed-room."

"Hum!" muttered the inspector. "I didn't hear any bells ring when I came into the lab just now."

"That is because I switched off the connecting stud from the sitting-room when I asked you to fetch the camera," smiled Ferrers Locke. "I think, Pyecroft, we had better explore the roof. Come, follow me, and—"

The sleuth never concluded his remark, for at that moment a slate whizzed down from the roof above and passed between his head and that of Pyecroft's, missing both of them by a matter of an inch or so, and finally striking the garden below, where it shivered into pieces.

"My word, Mr. Locke," exclaimed the inspector, withdrawing his head to safety, "I'm beginning to think you're right! That was no ordinary loose slate. That was thrown at us, I'll wager!"

But Ferrers Locke did not waste time in listening to his colleague's theories. He had already darted across the laboratory, and was making for the lumber-room situated at the farther side of his chambers. With a grunt that might have meant anything, the Scotland Yard man hastened after the private detective, and was just in time to see Ferrers Locke dragging two large trunks into the centre of the lumber-room.

"Through this old fanlight, Pyecroft!" said the sleuth quickly, at the same time mounting his improvised ladder. "The glass will make a bit of a mess; no time to unfasten the catch. Look out!"

The private detective brought his fist full against the glass pane of the fanlight, and it shivered into fragments. And before Inspector Pyecroft had withdrawn his shielding hand from his face to ward off the flying pieces of glass, Ferrers Locke was climbing through the aperture. Once on the roof, he stooped and stretched out his hand to the inspector.

"Up, man!" he rapped. "We shall get our housebreaker. He can't escape us over these roofs."

With an ease that said well for the

Inspector's agility, he swarmed up through the broken fanlight, and a second or so later stood beside Ferrers Locke. The famous private investigator had drawn his revolver, and he motioned to his companion to do the same. Then, with ears and eyes fully alert, the two crept round the pile of chimney-stacks. At first the roof appeared to be void of any human presence save themselves, but after Locke and Pycroft had moved forward another three paces, and a wider stretch of roof came into view, both of them caught sight of two men—dressed as builders, and carrying a long ladder between them—apparently engaged upon repairing a chimney-stack.

of the ladder, when Pycroft's stentorian voice reached his ears.
"Good heavens! Come back, Mr. Locke!" he roared anxiously. "The villains are dragging the ladder away!"

The Tapped Wire.

FERRERS LOCKE became aware of that startling development at the same moment as Pycroft yelled his warning. The sleuth's outstretched fingers, directed at the foremost rung, clutched at nothing more solid than the empty air. And while he was endeavouring

"Do you mind giving me a hand up, Pycroft?" yelled Ferrers Locke, from his uncomfortable position at the edge of the roof. "I don't fancy myself as a monkey a bit!"

Inspector Pycroft found himself laughing at his companion's levity, despite the seriousness of the occasion, and he hastened to assist Ferrers Locke to safety. But three precious minutes elapsed before the sleuth stood beside the C.I.D. man.

"Thank you!" said the sleuth gratefully, as he once more stood upright on the roof. "But I'm afraid we've lost our quarry. That house yonder is empty. By this time the two scoundrels are footing it hot for the street. We'll retrace our steps, and visit the house next door if you like, but I'm afraid they've got the start of us."

"Reckon you're right!" grunted Inspector Pycroft. "And they've got the camera, too. But what beats me is why they wanted to hang about this roof when they had got their plunder."

"There I think I can enlighten you," smiled Ferrers Locke. "Whilst I was clinging to the edge of the roof a moment ago I found myself gazing at the telephone wire that is fixed by means of the insulators to the chimney. You will observe, Pycroft, that there is a trailing wire from the main cable—"

"Tapping your wire!" exclaimed Pycroft, striding over to the chimney-stack and examining the cable. "This is what they were engaged upon when we surprised them."

"Exactly! And if you approve of that theory your notion of the slate being thrown at us whilst we were looking out of the window of the lab a few moments ago must fall flat, eh?" said Locke, gently.

Inspector Pycroft snorted. Pointed out like that, he saw the weakness of his argument.



Both started violently as the detective and his companion came into sight, and then, breaking into a run, disappeared behind another chimney-stack, still carrying the ladder between them.

"Stop!" yelled the famous detective.

"Put the wind up 'em!" grunted Pycroft, as he broke into a run. "I suppose they're our men, aren't they?"

"Course they are!" rapped Locke. "Keep your eyes open for any monkey tricks."

Inspector Pycroft nodded and forced the pace a little more; but he was not prepared for the "monkey" trick that met his gaze as he and Locke suddenly found themselves at the edge of the roof. For the "two builders" had stretched their ladder across the intervening space between the roof over Locke's chambers on to the roof of the next house, which was semi-detached. And both men were "walking" the ladder with their hands, their feet swaying into space as the ladder gave to the unaccustomed weight, forty-five feet above the ground.

"Hi!" yelled Ferrers Locke, in a commanding voice, "Come back!"

But he knew that his order would not be obeyed. He knew, too, that he was more or less helpless. Certain it was he could not use his revolver, for to do so now would be the equivalent to sending either of the two men hurtling to his death, forty-five feet below. But Inspector Pycroft was not so level-headed.

"Stop," he roared in a bull-throated voice, "or I'll wing you!"

He levelled his revolver as he spoke, and took aim, and had it not been for Ferrers Locke, who snatched at his pistol arm, he would undoubtedly have pressed the trigger.

"Don't be a fool, man!" rapped the sleuth. "You can't pot a chap like that! He'd lose his hold and pitch to the ground!"

A purple tint began to suffuse the C.I.D. man's heavy features at the reprimand, but he saw the wisdom of his companion's remark.

"Great snakes!" he roared, in exasperation. "Are we to stand here like a couple of fools, and let them go scot-free? If that's— Hi! Where are you going?"

His mouth opened wide with astonishment as he became aware of the fact that Ferrers Locke had started to follow the example of the two builders. He was lowering himself over the edge of the roof, preparatory to taking hold of the first rung

Ferrers Locke and Inspector Pycroft were not prepared for the sight that met their gaze when they reached the edge of the roof. For the two "builders" had stretched their ladder across the intervening space between the two houses, and were at that moment "walking" the ladder with their hands. (See this page.)

to regain his balance the inspector's revolver spat fire.

Crack!

"Back, you scum!" yelled Pycroft. "Hands off that ladder!"

His command was obeyed promptly enough. One of the men on the opposite roof emitted a wild howl of anguish and clasped his arm. In so doing he relinquished his hold of the ladder. His companion, not prepared for the sudden weight thrown into his hands, and not caring either for a taste of the same medicine as his scoundrelly partner had received, loosed his hold of the ladder at the same moment almost. Then, taking to their heels and heading for the nearest chimney-stack, what time the inspector blazed away at them with his revolver, the two men disappeared from sight. The ladder, meanwhile, having no means of support, slithered down the edge of the roof and crashed into the small piece of ground below.



"I'll admit that the slate hurtled down at some speed," said the private detective, with the idea of mollifying his companion; "but I assume that one of our choice friends worked it loose unknowingly, and lost his footing. The slate slipped off the roof, carrying behind it an accidental kick, and—look, you can see where the slate was dislodged!"

The detective pointed to a spot about a foot away from the chimney-stack from which a slate was missing.

"You're right again," admitted Pycroft grudgingly; "but this won't help us to capture those two blackguards."

"Come on, then," said Ferrers Locke, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 836.

starting for the fanlight. "I'll dismantle that telephone wire later on."

He climbed through the fanlight, and, from the two upended trunks directly below, leaped lightly to the floor. Pycroft followed him. Together they descended the stairs into the street below, and hurried over to the semi-detached house. A thorough tour of the outer precincts of the empty house revealed nothing beyond the broken ladder, and an old gentleman who was standing gazing at the signboard signifying that the house was "to let." This latter individual, seeing the detective and his companion apparently searching for something or someone, beckoned to Ferrers Locke.

"Are you by any chance looking for the builders?" he asked.

"Er—yes, I am," replied Locke, taking stock of the man, and seeing nothing more in him than an ordinary harmless elderly Londoner. "Can you help me?"

"I can. The builders—two of them—left here in a dickens of a hurry a few minutes ago," replied the old gentleman. "Most unbusinesslike fellows they were, and extremely rude. I asked them if the house was going to be redecorated, and they told me to mind my own business."

"Which way did they go?" asked Pycroft eagerly.

"The taller of the two said that he was taking his 'mate' to the hospital," replied the stranger. "The unfortunate fellow had hurt his arm, I believe. They drove off in their car—"

"In their car?" echoed the inspector blankly.

"Yes, an ordinary contractor's lorry," said the stranger, in equal astonishment. "Still, they were rude—very rude. I shall make a report to their—"

Ferrers Locke cut short the indignant old gentleman's remarks by thanking him for the information he had given him, and, in company with Pycroft, hurried back into his rooms.

"What a go!" grunted Inspector Pycroft, as he sank into a comfortable arm-chair. "Of course, the hospital yarn is all bunkum. The scoundrels are miles away now. There's only one consolation, so far, Mr. Locke."

"And that is?"

"Well, we've seen two of the Yellow Claw's scoundrels, and they are white men, in colour, at any rate. Fairly gives me the creeps when I hear about this Chinese mysterious business. I'd sooner tackle an army of whites than a couple of greasy Chinamen, any day."

Ferrers Locke smiled indulgently, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I expect you'll find this Yellow Claw Society consists of a gang of cosmopolitans," Pycroft. The brains of the society works in the background. The preliminary dirty work is left to the rabble. I'm beginning to think, old man, that some exciting times are in store for us."

"Well, don't look so mighty pleased about it!" grunted the C.I.D. man. "I like straightforward crooks, if you can understand my Irish," he added, with a smile. "You can have all this cut-and-stab-in-the-back crew to yourself."

Further conversation on these lines was interrupted by the appearance of Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's boy assistant. Eyes aglow with excitement, his ruddy face and well-knit frame the embodiment of perfect health, Drake shook his master warily by the hand.

"Got Marsden at last, guv'nor!" he said enthusiastically. "I found out all we wanted to know from an old enemy of his. He blew the gaff on him. Gad, I'm glad to be back. I've had enough of it up North, and I can do with a rest."

"'Fraid, youngster," cut in Ferrers Locke, with a sympathetic shake of his head, "you'll have to postpone your rest. I am tackling now the biggest proposition of my life, and it means that there is work for you to do, my lad!"

"Oh, don't worry about me, guv'nor!" said Drake curiously. "I was only joking about a rest. I'm as fit as a fiddle. But who is the giddy criminal this time?"

"The Yellow Claw," replied Locke gravely. "And he is a foeman worthy of our steel, my lad."

"Now, that's good news, guv'nor!" grinned Drake. "I've been dying to interfere with this cut-throat Chinaman ever since the papers stirred things up about him. Guess I'm ready to start now!"

Ferrers Locke and Inspector Pycroft exchanged smiles at the lad's keenness, and then the former outlined the case from its commencement.

"Jumping crackers!" exclaimed Drake, when his beloved chief had concluded. "They haven't lost any time. And so I'm to tour with 'Man and His Money,' am I? My hat! That sounds ripping!"

"You are to be interviewed by Mark Chaerton, this afternoon, my lad," said Ferrers Locke. "There's a dress-rehearsal on—the show opens to-morrow night—so you will be able to get the hang of your duties in advance. But, serious, Jack, this is a gigantic task we are embarking upon, and a risky one at that."

"Never mind the risk!" grinned Drake, an eager light in his blue eyes. "I'll keep my peepers open behind the scenes, bet

your life. And they won't get at John Huntington if I can help it."

"Bravo, youngster!" said Locke warmly, clapping his assistant heartily on the back. "You're a fellow in a thousand!"

And even Inspector Pycroft, grudging as he usually was in his praise, added his compliments to those of the celebrated private investigator.

First Night.

THE scenes outside the Thespian Hall, Shaftesbury Avenue, on the first night of "Man and His Money," the much-talked-of play by the famous Mark Chaerton—were such that ordinary pedestrians, who had no interest in plays or theatreland, found difficulty in forcing a passage through the clamouring throng intent upon obtaining seats or "standing room."

Long queues of excited people lined every entrance to the theatre, talking of nothing else but Mark Chaerton and his latest creation. Many of the people lined up against the wall leading to the pit had stationed themselves outside the theatre as early as five o'clock that same morning in their determination to be present at the "first night." Not a few of them looked pale and hungry, but they were apparently oblivious to such discomforts, for their eyes shone with excitement as the doors were thrown open, and the attendants called upon the throng to be ready with their money.

Street musicians, conjurers, acrobats, hawkers, and singers—past and present—plied their trade with vim, collected what recompense the waiting crowds thought fit to award them, and then sought another "pitch."

To and from the kerb a steady stream of private cars and taxicabs wound their way, depositing gorgeously dressed women and their no less resplendent male attendants attired in evening-dress. Occasionally, too, a cheer would ring out from the waiting queues, as some person of note stepped from his cab and entered the theatre.

Several of the nobility arrived, their rather apathetic expressions strangely out of place amongst the eager and anticipant crowd who visited theatreland to enjoy themselves, and not because it was reckoned to be "the thing" to attend "first nights."

Inside the spacious and well-lit theatre a buzz of animated chatter went the round, punctuated by the shrill notes of the programme sellers, and the attendants showing the patrons of the theatre to their seats.



The "lead" in Mark Chaerton's new play was lying in a huddled heap in the centre of the stage, and from a rent in his forehead, trickling on to the white dress shirt he wore, merged a trickling stream of crimson. "Ferrers Locke!" exclaimed Sir Malcolm, leaping to his feet. "You have failed! The Yellow Claw has killed my boy!" (See page 27.)

Behind the dropped curtain screening the stage from the view of the audience there was animation, too. The stage manager was busily directing the setting of the opening scene; the property-master fussed about with an anxious look on his face, as though, like Atlas, he carried the world on his shoulders. The "electricians"—the man responsible for the lighting arrangements—gave a final glance at the "floats," and whispered a few instructions to his men operating the "limes."

And in the wings, giving a word of advice here, and a word of praise there, was Mark Chaerton, attired in evening-dress. The whole company was assembled before him. One and all caught some of the magnetic personality of the man as he stood, those few remaining minutes, before the curtain was timed to be raised, chatting with his "babies," as he called them.

Then, just as the stage-manager was calling the beginners to present themselves for the opening of the first act, a sudden commotion occurred in the wings. A chorus of voices were raised in anxiety, and every face was turned in John Huntingdon's direction.

The "lead," a tall, handsome young man of thirty, clad in evening-dress, was seen to stagger for a moment. Then, recovering himself, he gasped painfully for breath, and clutched at his heart. His features, rendered more grotesque by reason of the make-up on them, seemed to be twisted in pain.

Jack Drake, who had been satisfactorily installed in the company as dresser to John Huntingdon, hurried forward and supported him just when it seemed likely that he would collapse.

"I shall be all right in a moment!" gasped Huntingdon, with a feeble smile. "I—"

"Beginners, first act!"

The raucous tones of the call-boy recalled everyone to the urgency of the moment. Mark Chaerton hurried forward, his face a picture of anxious concern. He caught John Huntingdon by the shoulder, and, assisted by Jack Drake, half-carried the "lead" to his dressing-room.

In the auditorium people were beginning to glance at their watches. The curtain was due to be raised.

In the first row of the stalls evening-dressed ladies and gentlemen leaned forward as the sounds of the general commotion going on behind the scenes penetrated the curtain. Ferrers Locke, seated next to Sir Malcolm Dunderfield, the big City financier, looked grave. There was some good reason for the delay, he felt certain. And deep down in his heart he felt that the Yellow Claw had commenced its deadly campaign.

Five minutes late! Ten minutes late! The gallery audience was beginning to get impatient. Boos, whistles, and cat-calls from that direction proved their resentment at being kept waiting.

Ferrers Locke felt Sir Malcolm Dunderfield pluck him nervously by the arm.

"You—you don't think that anything has happened to John, do you?" he asked tremulously.

"Of course not," replied the sleuth warmly, although it was with an effort that he put such conviction into his tones. "Something gone wrong with the back-cloth or something, I suppose. Ah, there she goes!"

Even as he spoke, the heavy plush curtain began slowly to rise, the lights in the auditorium were dimmed. The play had commenced.

Sir Malcolm Dunderfield breathed a sigh of relief. There was his John, safe and well, playing the new role with a fervour and feeling that stirred the audience to great depths. Yes, Mark Chaerton's latest play was going to fashion another rung in the ladder of his success. And the superb acting of John Huntingdon was a thing to marvel at. Trembling with excitement and pride, Sir Malcolm, who was short-sighted, could hardly keep his opera-glasses in focus.

"Very fine performance!" remarked Ferrers Locke as the first act neared its close. "My word, Sir Malcolm, your nephew can act!"

His words were drowned in the terrific roar of applause that rang out as the curtain dropped on the first act. It rose again—rose half a dozen times before the audience permitted the principal "lead" to retire.

The second act commenced with the audience strangely still—sure sign that the performers were "getting their lines over," and that the play was interesting. Even in the gallery no one dared to cough. But when it came to clapping, the gallery scored right along the line. It is a well-known fact amongst the "profession"—as actors and actresses style their calling—that the artistes much prefer to listen to the generous applause of the "galleryites" than to receive from the stalls all the bouquets in the world. Please the gallery, and the play, revue, or whatever the production might be, is certain of success elsewhere.

And Mark Chaerton's "Man and His Money" was a success, judging by the storm of applause that greeted the conclusion of the first scene, act two. By this time the eager audience was wound up to a great pitch of excitement. It was generally felt that a thrilling and unexpected climax was in store. Hearts beat a trifle faster as the "lead," played according to the programme by John Huntingdon, made a dramatic entrance in the second scene of the second act.

With an easy grace he commenced to walk down the stage, halting six feet away from the footlights. He made an impassioned appeal to the female "lead" playing against him—an appeal that obviously, by the intonation of his voice, was approaching a climax.

But the climax was not in keeping with what the audience had imagined it to be, for the young man's words turned suddenly into a piercing and heartrending shriek. He tottered unsteadily on his feet; his outstretched hands clawed the air spasmodically.

Then slowly his knees sank under him; his wildly staring eyes opened still wider in agony. Again a piercing shriek rang through that hushed theatre, touching the heart of everyone present. People covered their faces with their hands now, and shrieked, too. When next they allowed their vision to search the stage, they saw the figure of the "lead" in Mark Chaerton's new play lying in a huddled heap in the centre of the stage.

(Continued on page 28.)

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SMOKE SIGNALS!

(Continued from page 21.)

of dry sticks in a row, and now lit them one after another. Six columns of pale blue smoke rose straight up into the calm evening air.

Almost instantly the watchers saw the war party halt, turn, and stare up towards the hill. Cool as he was, Ruthven's heart beat quickly. What he dreaded was that the chief should signal to his band to attack the hill.

Snake Eye suddenly smothered two fires with green boughs, thus cutting off the smoke for a moment. The war party to a man stood watching.

Ruthven caught a baleful glance from the old chief's glittering eyes.

"If they attack us, you die!" hissed the trooper, and pressed the pistol to the red man's head.

If a look could have killed him, Ruthven would have fallen then and there. But he stared the old savage down.

Quick as a cat, Snake Eye sprang from fire to fire, beating down the smoke of one or another till the air was full of blue columns of different lengths. The war party had now wheeled.

"They're coming up the hill!" muttered Martin.

So it seemed. Yet it was impossible to be sure, for part had drawn off, and were riding back along the way they had come. They seemed to be deploying like a line of skirmishers along the base of the hill.

Ruthven never took his eyes from the Indian.

Suspense was growing to agony, when Joe Clarke spoke.

"Look!" he said, and pointed back in the direction of the fort.

Ruthven's eyes followed the pointing finger. With a sharp exclamation of relief he jerked the chief round.

"See!" he cried, a sharp ring of triumph in his voice.

A fierce grunt broke from Snake Eye's lips, for there, coming full gallop across the prairie, was the whole squad from Fort Alexandra.

THE END.

(Another powerful Mounted Police story next week, boys.)

A SECOND BUNTER!

A reader in Manchester says if he knew a fellow like Bunter he would not let him invite himself to spend the holidays. "By the way, I wouldn't have believed a fellow could reach William's size, except that last year a fellow joined our school who would beat Billy. He doesn't over-eat at all, and I've heard he's a decent chap to talk to, although I've never spoken to him."

THE YELLOW CLAW!

(Continued from page 27.)

And from a rent in his forehead, trickling on to the white dress-shirt he wore, merged a trickling stream of crimson.

This was no play. The "lead" had been shot! No one in that gigantic audience needed any telling on that score.

Sir Malcolm Dungerfield and Ferrers Locke leaped from their seats just as the stage-manager, who had recovered his wits and his power of action, rang down the curtain on that gruesome tragedy. The City financier clutched the detective for support.

"My boy John!" he muttered brokenly. "Ferrers Locke, you have failed! The Yellow Claw has—has killed my boy!"

(Another thrilling instalment next Monday.)

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