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School & Detective Stories.



CAUGHT IN THE SLIPS!

NINTH WICKET DOWN--AND LAST MAN NOT YET ARRIVED!

(An anxious moment for the Greyfriars First Eleven. See this week's ripping story inside.)

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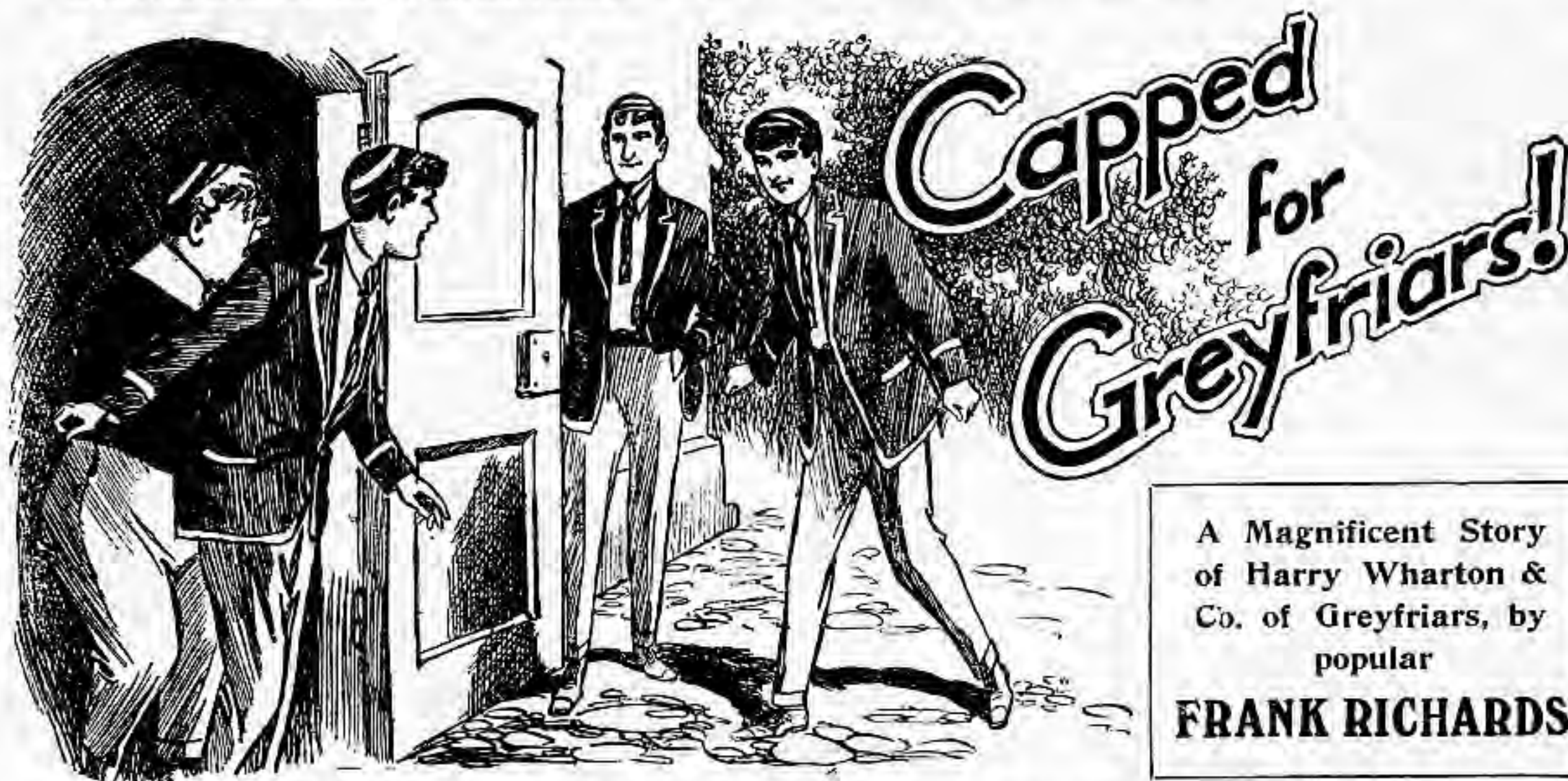


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It is the ambition of many a junior boy to play for his school's First Eleven, but such an honour is seldom conferred upon members of junior Forms. There comes a time, however, when Wingate—the sturdy captain of Greyfriars—falls back on the services of three Removes to play for the "First." One of these juniors more than proves himself; in fact, he is the saviour of the side, and for his excellent exhibition with the willow is—



A Magnificent Story
of Harry Wharton &
Co. of Greyfriars, by
popular
FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

At the Nets!

"THERE'S Wingate! I say, Wharton, really, you know, you ought to let me take my turn next. I'm sure it's to see my form he's come!"

It was Billy Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove who spoke, addressing the Form's skipper and cricket captain, Harry Wharton.

A score or so of the Remove were at the junior nets. That number included most of the Form eleven, and several fellows who were not and never would be in the eleven—Bunter among them.

"Wingate, or anyone else with decent eyesight, could see your fairy form half a mile away, porpoise!" answered Peter Todd.

"Oh, you're jealous, because you're such a skinny beast, Toddy! You'd give anything to have a figure like mine. You can't bat, either. You'll never cut to leg like I do in all your life!"

"I never cut to leg at all," replied Peter. "The thing isn't done in decent society. I've seen you and Skinner and others make attempts at strokes which might have been called outs to leg if the bat had connected with the ball; but as it never did—well, that's that!"

Harold Skinner scowled at Toddy, but did not reply. Wingate, skipper of Greyfriars, had strolled up now.

"Bunter wants you to see him bat, Wingate," spoke Harry Wharton, from one net.

"Bunter? Does Bunter bat?" returned Wingate.

"Of course I do! I'm the best batter in the Remove!" proclaimed the Owl proudly.

"Batter pudding!" murmured Ogilvy.

"Nothin' so wholesome as that," said Vernon-Smith caustically.

"Come out of that, Wharton!" pleaded Bunter. "I'm certain you've had more than your five minutes. Oh, really, because you happen to be cricket captain of the Form, 'tain't to say that you're to stay at a net all the evening! Is it, Wingate?"

"It would be rather greedy, Bunter. An' you can't stand greedy people at any price, can you?" the skipper answered, with something very like a wink at Bob Cherry.

"Do you want to see Bunter perform, Wingate?" inquired Harry.

"Oh, I don't mind! I'm rather curious to see whether he can move without bursting those bags."

Bunter's flannels were a distinctly tight fit, which was due to the fact that they were not really Bunter's at all, but Bolsover major's. That youth was in sanny with a chill, and Bunter had borrowed the bags without the fag and formality of going along to ask whether Bolsover minded. He was quite sure that Bolsover would mind, which was an additional reason for not going along.

Percy Bolsover was the biggest fellow in the Remove; but, for all his burliness, he did not wear flannels calculated to give Billy Bunter action room. Those bags were really terribly tight.

"Hand me over that bat, Wharton!" said Bunter majestically.

"It happens to be my bat, and I don't know that I'm so jolly keen on lending it to a clumsy chap like you, fatty," answered Harry.

"Oh, very well! I wouldn't borrow it now, not if you went down on your hands and knees to me! Cherry——"

"Nothing doing, Bunt—not if you do go on your hands and knees! I use my bat for hitting the ball, and I don't like to see anyone trying to make dents on the pitch with it!"

"Oh, really! Don't you see that you're keeping Wingate waiting?"

"My patience," said the skipper, with a cheery grin, "is almost exhausted."

"Smithy——"

"You can have mine, Bunter. It's a rotten one, anyway."

"Then I don't want it!"

"Please yourself. I don't."

Bunter caught at that.

"You mean I can have it?" he asked eagerly.

Smithy, who had more money than he knew what to do with, might throw aside a disappointing bat thus lightly, not car-

ing to sell it. But William George Bunter would not be too proud to accept it and look out for a purchaser. If none could be found in the Remove, some fag in the Third or Second might be on.

"Oh, you can have the thing, Bunter!" said Smithy.

"You might have found someone a bit more deserving while you were chucking bats about free gratis, Smithy," remarked Skinner grudgingly.

"Yes, I might have handed it over to you," returned the Bounder. "It's a rotten bad bat. But I do really think that Bunter's even a bigger duffer than you are, so he'd better have it."

"And now let's see what he can do with it," said Wingate.

It was not very often that the skipper put in an appearance at the junior nets. An enthusiastic cricketer, he was usually too busy elsewhere.

Therefore, it seemed to some of those present, themselves every bit as keen as was Wingate, that Bunter's turn was a sheer waste of time. Far better that Wingate should see Harry Wharton's stylish batting, or the Bounder's masterly dealing with the bowling, or Bob Cherry's resolute hitting, or Peter Todd's competent work. But if the skipper wanted a comic turn no one cared to gainsay his wish.

And Bunter would not be hurried. He put on pads with great deliberation. It was an unimportant detail that he started by trying to put them on upside down. It was not so unimportant a detail—from the point of view of one fellow, then in sanny, at least—that the stooping to put them on caused the seams of his flannels to start giving.

But Bunter did not notice that.

Delarey had been batting in the next net, with Ogilvy, Russell, and Bulstrode bowling to him. Wingate had given him a critical glance or two, a hint or two, a word or two of praise for deftly executed strokes.

But when Bunter waddled to the wicket the skipper turned all his attention to him, though the twinkle in his eyes suggested that he was not seriously

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considering any claim that Bunter might have to a trial in the school eleven.

Vernon-Smith slung down a fast ball, and the Owl backed away from it in dire haste, till brought up short by the side net, whence he was started on his return to the crease by the application of Delarey's bat to the best-filled part of Bolsover's bags.

"Really, you know, Smithy, that ain't cricket!" protested Bunter. "I don't like fast bowling till I'm well set. I can paste it all over the field then. But if I'm to show my strokes I ought to have something slower."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him something slower," said Wingate, smiling.

Wharton sent down a well-pitched slow ball. Bunter made a wild swipe at it, missed it entirely, and heard a rattle in his timber-yard.

"Good old Bunter!"

"Lost ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, Wharton! Bowling before I was ready!" said Bunter reproachfully. "I might have expected that of some fellows, but not of you. Why, I hadn't even taken guard!"

"Give him guard!" ordered Wingate.

"Shift your fat pedestals half a mile or so west, Bunt!" commanded Bob Cherry. "That's better! Now your bat a yard or so east. H'm! It ain't elegant, but it's as near as I can get you to covering your stumps with your bat without covering them with your stumps. See?"

In point of fact, guard did not matter in the least to Bunter. He was utterly incapable of playing with a straight bat.

Bob sent him down a slow full pitch. Bunter slammed mightily, and by some miracle hit the ball. It soared away about twenty yards, and it would have been an easy catch to mid-off.

"Oh, good, Bunter—nailing good!" yelled Wingate sarcastically.

Bunter felt certain he had made his mark in the cricket-field at long last, and he strutted up and down in front of the stumps like a fat rooster.

And all the time the seams of Bolsover's bags were gaping more and more widely, and none but Bunter failed to perceive the fact. Delarey had pointed it out to Russell, Ogilvy, and the others at his net, and those around Bunter's had got on to it for themselves.

A slightly faster ball from Wharton seemed to curve round Bunter's bat, but just went over his stumps. A still slower one from Bob found him through with his stroke before it reached him, and, hitting the bottom of the stumps, gyrated there without tumbling off the bails.

"That's nothing!" said Bunter, in haste. "It don't count. You didn't bowl me, Cherry—yah!"

"Wait till the next!" snorted Bob.

But the Owl did not get another from Bob Cherry.

The Bounder sent him a daisy-cutter. All along the ground it came, and it seemed to Bunter quite the easiest thing in the world to hit.

He smote with all his might.

The bat jarred upon the hard ground with a force that sprung the handle and sent horrible tingling pains all up Bunter's arms.

"Yow!" roared Bunter, dropping it and staggering backwards.

The ball hit the middle stump. The stagger developed into a tumble. The tumble resolved itself into a disaster. For as Bolsover's bags tightened—one does not expect tightening of bags in a tumble backwards, but the fact that Bunter's anatomy was unique must be considered—they gave way.

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With a rending sound they burst. The flannel was good flannel, but it had been tried beyond reasonable limit.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everyone but Bunter roared with laughter.

The Owl, scrambling to his feet, snatched up the bat and brandished it threateningly at the howling spectators.

"You silly asses!" he roared. "Think it's funny, don't you? But I don't care! These bags ain't mine, anyway! Yah! They're Bols—I mean, of course, they're mine; but it doesn't matter to me about bursting them. I can afford another pair, I suppose; I'm not a poverty-stricken rotter! Yah!"

"Don't be rude, Bunter!" said Wingate reprovingly. "And do be decent! In your present condition you are not fit for the playing-fields. Better clear off at once and get into some clothes that will hold you!"

Bunter rolled away, muttering the things he dared not say aloud on account of Wingate's presence. He carried the bat with him. Possibly he did not realise that the handle was badly sprung, or possibly he fancied the hoped-for buyer might fail to realise that fact.

In the quad he met Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch was not fond of Bunter. Bunter was really not the sort of boy likely to be cherished by a master. As a rule, Mr. Quelch would pass the fat junior with the most casual of nods. But now, just when the Owl would greatly have preferred that no notice should be taken of him, he stopped.

"Bless my soul, Bunter!" he said. "What on earth have you been doing to get into that disgraceful condition?"

"Oh, please, sir, 'tain't my fault, really! I—I was playing cricket, sir, and my ba—my flannels burst!"

"So I perceive. What I do not understand is why your garments should have been made so absurdly tight as to occasion such a catastrophe. I admit that the quantity of flannel required to give room to your abnormal development of adipose tissue is large. But surely your tailor could have fitted you better than that? He must have had more of the stuff in stock, one would imagine."

Bunter could not explain. He wriggled and stammered, tried to hide the split with his fat, grimy hands, and altogether cut a very poor figure indeed.

"Don't stand there attempting fruitless argument with me!" snapped the master. "Go indoors and get properly and reasonably dressed at once!"

Bunter rolled away disconsolately. Then there came to cheer him the thought that he must surely be able to screw several shillings out of some unwary fag for the bat Vernon-Smith had contemptuously given him. The contempt did not matter to Bunter—the shillings did.

He did not worry about Bolsover's bags. He would put them back, and no one need know anything about it. Bolsover would think that the moth had got into them.

Bunter was very like the ostrich which hides its foolish head in the sand and imagines no one can see its body. He forgot that a couple of dozen fellows had seen the bags burst, and that by night half Greyfriars would be chortling over the accident.

It looked like being unhealthy for the Owl of the Remove when Bolsover came out of sanny!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Sixth!

"WELL, what do you make of it, George?" asked Patrick Gwynne of his pal, George Wingate.

Wingate had dropped into Gwynne's study and stood at the window looking none too happy.

"I'm not going back on what I said, old man. If they refuse to turn out, so be it. We can raise an eleven without them. But we shall have to go to the Remove for three or four men, and that means trouble with the Fifth and the Upper Fourth!"

"Sure, and what's that matter?"

Gwynne took things more easily than Wingate.

"It matters a heap. I want cricket at Greyfriars to flourish this season, without these rotten dissensions. We should have a better chance if we could cut Loder and his backers out altogether, but we can't; for some of our best men—from the cricket point of view—are among them. I'm not going to give way to the sweeps in this matter. You've been duly elected vice-captain of the eleven—"

"Sure, I don't mind a bit, George. It's an honour! But it doesn't cut all the ice in the Arctic Ocean. How often are you missing a match? And what does the vice-captain amount to while you're there? Tell me that, dear boy."

"You're too sanguine, Pat!" smiled Wingate. "I might get crocked up for half the term, and then the vice-captaincy would simply matter everything! Think of it in Loder's hands!"

"Well, then, it's myself that's admitting that I can't think of that and feel dead easy!"

Gwynne had begun to look more serious now.

Wingate was skipper of the school eleven again, of course. Gwynne had been elected vice-captain; but the day after the meeting Wingate had received an ultimatum from Loder, the worst black sheep in the Sixth, but a fine cricketer at his best, signed by three other members of the team, including Walker, another really valuable man, to the effect that if Loder were not made vice-captain in Gwynne's place those four would refuse to play in the first match of the season, and could not promise to play in any later match.

They were kind enough to point out how the change might be made. Another meeting could be called. Gwynne could state that he did not care to take on the office to which he had been voted, and therefore resigned it. Loder could be proposed in his place. If anyone else were put up against Loder, all that would be necessary to secure the black sheep's election would be that Wingate and Gwynne should vote for him and thus give him a certain majority. In fact, Wingate's proposing and Gwynne's seconding Loder's appointment, they said, would be enough. No one was likely to kick if those two did not.

But Wingate was kicking hard, and meant to make Gwynne kick, too.

The scheme was unthinkable to the straightforward mind of the Greyfriars skipper.

In the first place, Loder was the last fellow in the team whom he would care to see leading it. And with that feeling personal animus had very little

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"Really, you know," said Bunter peevishly, "this ain't cricket. I don't like fast bowling until I'm well set!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Give him something slower!" chuckled Wingate. Harry Wharton sent down a well-pitched slow ball. Bunter made a wild swipe at it, missed it entirely, and heard a rattle in his timber yard. "How's that?" roared the juniors. (See Chapter 1.)

to do. Wingate would not have denied that he disliked Loder utterly. But it was because Loder was a wrong'un, not because Loder was his enemy, that he could not bear to think of his leading the Greyfriars first eleven on the field.

In the second place, even if Wingate could bend his pride to the proposed arrangement, there would almost certainly be trouble. Others besides Wingate barred Loder. Someone would be put up against him, and the fellow so proposed and his supporters would never be able to understand why the skipper and Gwynne should have gone over to the enemy. It was impossible to explain the situation to every man whose place in the team was secure. The stronger-minded among them would assuredly agree with the course which Wingate proposed to take—make up a team somehow for the first match without Loder and his pals. But their knowledge of the trouble would mean friction in the team later if the four came back.

"We can't have it," said Wingate decidedly. "Some way or another we must let those sweeps see that they're not indispensable for the Lanchester match. But if we're to have a chance of winning the game, we can't get others from the Sixth, and I can't see how to get more than one new man each from the Fifth and the Upper Fourth."

"Who's your Upper Fourth man, then?" asked Gwynne.

"Temple. Oh, he's a young swanker, I know, and there's no denying the fact that his batting is more flashy than sound. But he has pluck. He might make runs any time against any bowling. And he can field."

"Sure, that's true. Well, then, George, what about the Remove? I know you think that there's more genuine cricket talent in that Form than in either the Upper Fourth or the Fifth."

"I don't think, Pat. I know it! But you know the prejudice here against playing juniors in the first eleven. To put in even a couple of Removites will

mean that some fellows in the higher Forms, who might train on if they kept keen, may get disgusted and lose their keenness. They've an argument. The Remove has its own eleven, and, that eleven being pretty strong, it's been allowed and even encouraged to arrange matches and play them as an official Greyfriars junior team in a way that's unusual at any school. The fellows who are dissatisfied will say that the Remove want to have it both ways. Already they've been exalted, in a fashion, above the Upper Fourth, even the Fifth, and now——"

"That's enough, George, old top!" broke in Gwynne. "I see all your points. To me it seems that the chief thing to be considered is whether, granted that we might win the Lanchester match by making use of those kids, it matters more whether we should win it or whether we should risk trouble."

Wingate had been speaking at much greater length than usual. Now he relapsed into something more like his customary brevity.

"It matters a whole heap that we should win the first match of the season, if winning it's anyway possible. And there's bound to be trouble, in any case."

"Then I say go ahead and play your Remove kids," said Gwynne. "I know some of them are pretty hefty. Upon whom in particular have you your eagle eyes?"

Wingate's face brightened. It was good to have awakened Gwynne out of his easy-going attitude and to have his whole-hearted support. The Irish senior was to be depended upon to the uttermost once he was fully aroused; but there were times when he refused to be bothered, and his clum had been fearing that this might prove to be one of them.

"Well, there are half a dozen of them who wouldn't disgrace any school team," the skipper said. "Look at young Vernon-Smith, for instance. He'd get his colours at a good many schools bigger than Greyfriars. Some day he's going to make a name in first-class

cricket, if I'm not mistaken. Then there's Field; he's a real good all round man. Wharton bats in as pretty a style as anyone I know, and he's not merely pretty; he's sound, too, and has a big heart for a stiff fight.

"Cherry's a trifle in the rough as yet, but he can hit and never lets up in the field. Todd's cool and competent. Hurree Singh, on his day, is a bowler out of the ordinary. And I wouldn't say that was a full list of the possibles. But that's enough to choose from."

"You ran the rule over most of them to-day, I take it?" asked Gwynne.

"Yes; though they didn't know that I was running the rule over them with any special purpose; at least, I flatter myself that I kept it from them. Oh, by the way, Bunter was among the fellows I saw perform, and, by Jove, it was a scream!"

And Wingate proceeded to tell Gwynne the story of the burst bags.

He roared with laughter as he told it, and Gwynne roared with him.

The narrative had but just reached its end when there floated out upon the balmy May air the sound of a voice uplifted in fear and agony, and that voice was the voice of William George Bunter.

"Ow—yow! Help! Murder! Oh, yaroooh! Oh dear! Leggo, Bolsover, you rotter!"

"Confound that fat young donkey!" snapped Wingate. "I'd better go, I suppose. Quelch told me the other day that he did not consider that we prefects devoted sufficient attention to his Form, which he flatteringly described as the most troublesome and unruly in the school. I'm not sure that he isn't right!"

"It's a fact, dear boy, that the Remove passage, Form-room, and dormitory can hardly be described as 'abodes of ancient peace,'" answered Gwynne, smiling. "Not that I'd take too much notice of Quelch. I say, I'll go if you like. I don't work as hard as you do."

"Help! Yow—ow—yow! Murder!" yelled Bunter.

"No; I'll go, Pat. I'm not so dashed sure that I sha'n't give that fat young

idiot a hiding when I get there, though."

"Then I wouldn't bother to go—faith I wouldn't," replied Gwynne. "It would seem that Bolsover's after doing that same pretty effectively."

But Wingate went.

Wingate had licence to give a hiding if he deemed it needful. Bolsover major had no such licence, and was something of a bully.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Chain of Circumstances!

PERCY BOLSOVER had come out of sanny sooner than expected—sooner than expected by Bunter, anyway. It was hardly fair and aboveboard to take a fellow by surprise in this way, Bunter thought.

It amounted to something like treachery on the part of Bolsover major. The Owl felt sure that any reasonable fellow would see that.

To find Bolsover an unreasonable fellow was not a surprise to Bunter; all that was surprising was his sudden appearance.

Bunter had tumbled out half the contents of Bolsover's box, meaning to cover up the split flannels, when he heard an angry voice behind him:

"What are you doing with my clobber, you fat sweep?"

"I—I—oh, really, Bolsover, you know very well we ain't allowed in the dormitory at this time of day," replied the Owl weakly.

"Oh, aren't we, then? I am, because I've come to fetch something I need, and there's never any objection made to that. Unless what a chap needs is in another chap's box, and then the second chap is pretty sure to object—see, Bunter?"

The sarcasm of that speech, though not deep, seemed to suggest that Bolsover had been putting in part of his spare time during the last few days in thinking. It was beyond Bolsover's usual standard of repartee, anyway.

Bunter had just sense enough to perceive that this was sarcasm.

"He, he, he!" he laughed, though the laughter was forced. "That's a good one, Bolsy! Best I ever heard you make, old fellow!"

"Think I'm joking, do you, you shivering porpoise?" growled Bolsover, taking Bunter by the collar.

There was no joke about his grip. It hurt. Bunter's face grew redder, and his eyes began to protrude.

He tried to struggle up from his knees, but struggling only meant that the grip on his collar hurt more, so he desisted.

"I—I—oh, don't, Bolsover; you're choking me! Really, old chap, it was only a jape—I mean, it wasn't me at all—at least, I only did it to oblige another fellow—that is, I haven't done anything to your cricket-bags—not a thing! They—they—oh, really, Bolsy, I'm sure the moth must have got into them! Moths are awful, you know—my mater always says so. Oh, thanks, Bolsy! I knew you'd see reason about it!"

But it was from no motive of mercy that Bolsover had given up his grip on the fat neck of the Owl. It was merely that he needed both hands for another purpose.

He snatched at the flannels, which had lain beside the other garments taken from the box, and held them up for inspection.

As he saw the damage they had sustained his big face became convulsed

with rage. The bursting of the bags might have seemed a joke to Bolsover had the bags belonged to anyone else. But, since they belonged to him, it seemed much more like a tragedy.

"So this is what you've done, you fat lump of lard, is it?" he inquired with a snarl.

"Nunno! I didn't do it, Bolsover. It was the moths—my mater says—"

"Rats to what your mater says! You'll be telling me she did it in a moment! Why don't you say it was the cat, or Wharton, or Peter Todd?"

"I—I'm not going to say that it was Toddy, because it wasn't, and you know I never tell lies, Bolsy," replied Bunter. "But it was more Toddy than you might think. In fact, they were all in it—Toddy and Wharton and the Bounder and Squiff and Bob Cherry and ever so many more of them."

"No wonder your bags gave up the ghost with all of us in them, Bolsover," spoke a sardonic voice from the door.

Bolsover and Bunter turned to see Vernon-Smith.

"Do you know anything about this, Smithy?" snapped Bolsover.

"I don't know anything about a joint occupation of your flannels by somewhere about half the Remove," answered the Bounder. "Queer things do happen; but that sounds to me too much of a fairy-tale. When I saw them burst they were on Bunter—at least, Bunter was inside them."

"You fat oyster!" roared Bolsover, collaring Bunter again.

"Help! Don't let him, Smithy! Yow! Help! Everybody knows he's a rotten bully, anyway! Stop him!"

"I couldn't think of it, Bunter," said the Bounder gravely. "He might begin bullyin' me, an' I'm sure I shouldn't like that."

"I—I—oh, really, Bolsover, you must listen! Wingate was coming down to the nets—I heard him—that is to say, he told me so himself—"

"Try again, porpoise!" said the Bounder. "Bolsover an' I are fairly dense an' credulous, but we can't quite believe in confidences between you an' Wingate."

"Speak for yourself, Smithy!" growled Bolsover.

"Sorry, dear boy! Proceed with your veracious narrative, Bunter. It seems that Bolsover is dense an' credulous enough to give it a chance of passin' muster."

"Rats! I only want to see what lie he can hatch up. I'm no more dense and credulous than you are, Vernon-Smith!"

"I—I will tell the truth!" spluttered Bunter desperately. Bolsover's grip on his collar was becoming every second more trying. "Wingate didn't exactly tell me. I happened to be passing his study door when my shoelace came undone—"

"An' you knelt down to wind up your watch an' put your ear to the keyhole of Wingate's door?" chipped in the Bounder sarcastically.

Bolsover grinned.

"Oh, really, Smithy!" protested Bunter.

"Get on, you fat donkey!"

"As I said before, I stooped to pick up a pin," said Bunter—"it's lucky to pick up pins, you know—and I heard Wingate tell Gwynne that he meant to go along to the junior nets this afternoon, to see how some of the Remove fellows shaped, because there was some trouble about making up the team for the Lanchester match, and he might have to play two or three of them."

"Somebody must have been spillin' pins in quantities," remarked the

Bounder. "But go on, Bunter—your shoelace isn't pinned up yet."

"That was all I heard. I was too high-minded to stop there listening. Except—oh, yes, Smithy, I heard him mention your name, and Squiff's, and mine. He said Wharton was no use, and Cherry a duffer, and Peter Todd a bony young idiot; but he seemed to think something of us three."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "Us three—you an' me an' Squiff, Bunter! My hat! Won't Squiff be flattered!"

"I should think he ought to be, being classed with cricketers of our stamp, Smithy. Well, what was I to do? My own bags ain't fit to be seen. They've shrunk so. Besides, they've gone to the wash. And I've given them to Sammy, anyway—I believe in being generous to a younger brother. Well, then? I knew that if I wasn't in flannels I shouldn't get a chance of showin' what I could do. There's so much beastly jealousy about. And I knew Bolsover couldn't have any use for his, being in sanny. So I borrowed them."

"I'm sorry I forgot to mention the fact, Bolsover, and, of course, it's a pity they've split, but you can't say that was really my fault—and now that I've explained everything I trust that you'll see reason, and—Ow! Yow! Ow! Yow! Oh, stop him, Smithy! Yaroooooh!"

"Thanks, Bunter, but I won't meddle," grinned the Bounder. "Bolsover's bigger than I am, an' I always was a bit timid. I say, Bolsover, I wouldn't murder the fat sweep up here if I were you. They're rather particular what's done in the dormitories. Take him down to the study floor an' end his miserable life there."

And with that the Bounder departed, seeing no reason for protecting Bunter, unwilling to be mixed up further in the matter, and much more interested in the possibility that the Owl's story might have some basis of truth than in anything which might happen to the Owl.

Vernon-Smith was ambitious, and the notion of playing for the school eleven was one that appealed to him greatly.

Bolsover screwed his hand more tightly into Bunter's collar, and made him promenade towards the door and the staircase. It was exceedingly painful for Bunter; but he could not yell on the way down, for his throat was too tightly compressed.

The agonised cries that came to the ears of Wingate were uttered after Bolsover had got the Owl into his study, and was there proceeding to deal faithfully with him.

He did not leave off at once when Wingate entered—he was too thoroughly enraged for that.

"Stop that, Bolsover!" snapped the skipper.

Even then Bolsover dealt Bunter another lusty thump before releasing him.

Then he stood and glared at Wingate, his big chest heaving, his heavy face working with anger.

"What's Bunter been doing?" demanded the captain of Greyfriars.

"Nothing! Oh, really, Wingate, I didn't do anything at all—at least—"

"He's burst my bags!" roared Bolsover.

Wingate had all he knew how to do in keeping his face straight. He was bound to treat this matter judicially; but he saw the humour of it.

"I knew he'd burst someone's," he answered. "I saw him do it. And I rather guessed they were not his own, both because they were too clean to be, and because any tailor who knew his business would have allowed him a yard or two more in the slack."

"Well, I don't see but what I've a right to lam him for that," said Bolsover sulkily.

"Seems to me you have lammed him."

"Not half enough!"

"It's got to stop here, anyway, Bolsover," said Wingate firmly.

Bolsover still looked sulky and mutinous. Bunter sidled towards the door.

"What's going to be done about my bags?" asked Bolsover.

"I should think you'd better get them mended."

"They're past that."

"Then it looks as though you'd have to order new ones."

"Right-ho! And this fat sweep will have to pay for them, of course, Wingate?"

"If you can make him. But I understand that he never has any cash, or that he blues it all in the tuckshop directly he gets any. I shouldn't advise you to wait till you can make him cash up, Bolsover. The cricket season might be over before that."

"Tain't fair!" growled Bolsover.

And perhaps he was right. Wingate saw that. But the skipper could not draw blood from a stone. Even had Bunter possessed the money to make good the damage done, Wingate could not have forced him to part with it. That would have necessitated reference to Mr. Quelch or the Head. And Wingate knew that Bolsover major, sulky and ill-conditioned as he was, would not care to report—would consider it sneaking.

"Yah!" ejaculated Bunter, having got round behind Wingate and out of the door.

Then he fled.

"Just you wait!" yelled Bolsover.

"Look here, you know, you've simply got to let this drop, Bolsover," said Wingate gravely. "I'll admit it's pretty hard to put up with. But when you start thumping you thump too hard. You're getting a bad name for yourself."

With that Wingate went.

Bolsover scowled after him. Bolsover had no intention of letting it drop.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Plotting Plots!

THE Bouncer said nothing to anyone but Tom Redwing about what he had heard from Bunter.

Redwing shared Vernon-Smith's study, and was the best chum he had ever had at Greyfriars. The Bouncer was not a fellow who made friends very readily.

"You think it's true?" said Redwing, a trifle doubtfully.

"I think so. Bunter's an awful liar, but he does tell the truth now and then by accident, an' I guess this was one of the accidents."

"Then I congratulate you, Smithy."

"No need for that yet. Wingate may want two or three from the Remove, an' yet not take me."

"Wingate's not such an ass," said Tom quietly. "You're the best bat in the Form, old man, and better than anyone else outside the school team. I should say, ahead of most of those in it. Field's no end good all round, and of course there are Wharton and Todd, and one or two more. But I should think you would be first choice."

"That's your partiality, Redwing," said the Bouncer.

Tom looked him straight in the eyes.

"I don't think it is," he said slowly.

"Anyway, if I were Wingate, I'd take you before any of the rest; and if I wanted two more, I think I should choose Wharton and Squiff. Wharton can get runs in good style and is a rare slip field,

and Squiff is a batsman all right, and can field anywhere. There's Todd, too, I'll admit. But I think you and Wharton and Squiff all come before him."

It appeared that Wingate's judgment coincided with Tom Redwing's.

Wingate's chosen eleven for the Lanchester match included Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Field, with Peter Todd as twelfth man. Besides Loder and those who held by him, one or two more of the Sixth chanced to be unavailable, and Loder and his pals still stood firm.

"Great Jove!" said Carne, when he read the list. "Does Wingate really think that he has a chance of winnin' the Lanchester match with a scratch crowd like that? If he does, let him try it. Let the silly ass stew in his own juice! We've only to wait, an' he'll find out for himself what's what."

Loder was inclined to accept Carne's view, until he had had a talk with Walker.

Walker was not a rank outsider of the type of Loder and Carne. He was weak in many ways, and had a bent towards the kind of things no public senior should do. But there was a core of honesty and decency in him, and he was a cricketer.

"I wouldn't bank on their failure, Loder," he said. "Young Vernon-Smith is real hot stuff, an' the other three can all play the game. Between you an' me, it doesn't matter a dashed lot whether a fellow is fifteen an' a bit or eighteen when it comes to cricket. I've often thought that the Greyfriars team might

be strengthened if the policy of choosin' almost entirely from the Sixth an' Fifth was dropped."

"If you were cricket captain——"

"If I were cricket captain, old man, I wouldn't leave you out, though I might say a thing or two to you about your keepin' fitter. I couldn't leave myself out, of course. But I should think twice about preferrin' Carne an' two or three more seniors to those kids. They may make mistakes in the field, but it isn't for want of bein' all on their toes. Wharton may be the objectionable young sweep you make him out—can't say I see much wrong with him myself—but he's a captain all right. He keeps them up to the mark, an' sets them no end of a good example."

Loder looked black. He hated to hear Harry Wharton praised. The black sheep of the Sixth and the Famous Five had often come into collision, and Gerald Loder had not by any means invariably got the best of the deal. The Sixth-former disliked Nugent, Bull, Cherry, and Hurree Singh most intensely, but he hated Wharton poisonously.

He was not going to have his plans thwarted by the skipper of the Remove.

But he said no more to Walker. It was a stroke of luck for him that Walker, through a tiff with Wingate, had been willing to support him. He knew that Walker would not be game for the sort of thing that must be done if the school's prospect of winning the Lanchester match were to be wrecked.



Bolsover snatched up the flannels which had lain beside the other garments Bunter had taken from the box, and held them up for inspection. As he saw the damage they had sustained his big face became convulsed with rage. "So this is what you have done, you fat lump of lard, is it?" he inquired, with a snarl. "Nunno! I didn't do it, Bolsover!" said Bunter hastily. "It was the moths—yes, that's it—the moths!" (See Chapter 3.)

Carne alone could be trusted to back up Loder in any dirty scheme he might concoct. It would not suit Carne that Greyfriars should win. He cared less about his place in the eleven than Loder cared about his, but he had been betting against his own side, and he could not afford to lose.

So Loder took counsel with Carne.

"I say, Arthur, Walker seems to fancy that those Remove kids will be better value in the team than we should be," he said craftily.

"Oh, rats to that!" replied Carne.

"I'm not so sure that he's wrong, in a way," said Loder. "Walker's a good judge of the game, y'know, old top. It would really be dashed awkward if they should help the team to beat Lanchester. No chance of Wingate's comin' to heel then—what?"

"That's more your look-out than mine," answered Carne, who was every whit as selfish as Loder. "You value your place in the team a heap more than I do mine. I tell you straight, I often think cricket's a fag not worth the trouble it entails."

"But what of your bets?"

"Eh? Oh, they're safe enough. Lanchester's bound to win."

"Walker seems to think otherwise."

"Hang Walker!"

"I have no objection to his being hanged, I'm sure," said Loder. "But I don't see any chance of it. An' you've got to admit that he knows a bit about the game."

"That's true," said Carne thoughtfully. "An' I own freely that I don't a bit like the notion of shellin' out on those bets just now. The dear Banks has had too much out of me lately. But what's to be done, Gerry?"

"I don't know what's to be done," answered Loder ill-temperedly. "If I did I shouldn't come to you. All that I know is that we're in the same boat. It won't suit either of us a little bit if Greyfriars beats Lanchester, or if those Remove cubs make good their claims to places in the team."

"I don't like the notion of that," admitted Carne.

He pulled out a cigarette-case and took a cigarette. Loder, reaching over, also took one, and then struck a match and lighted both Carne's cigarette and his own. Silence followed till both weeds had been smoked almost out.

Then Carne, flinging the end of his into the empty grate, said:

"Skinner?"

"What has Skinner to do with it all?" demanded Loder.

"Oh, don't be so obtuse, old top! Skinner is as cunning as a wagon-load of monkeys, an' he don't like Wharton a whole heap. Besides, he'd sell his soul—if he has one—for ten bob down. He knows all about what goes on in the Remove. You an' I don't. If anyone can put us up to a way of trappin' Wingate's chosen juniors, an' keepin' them away from Lanchester, Skinner can."

"It's an idea, anyway," said Loder. "We'll call Skinner into consultation. Have you ten bob?"

"Yes; but I'm not dead sure that I yearn to endow Skinner with it," replied Carne. "Besides, it's bound to work out at more than that before we've finished."

"Your ten bob, or whatever it is, will be wanted, by gad!" said Loder.

"So will yours. I'm not financin' this on my own."

"Don't I know that! When did you ever?"

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Loder scowled. He and Carne often jangled in this way.

But both felt that they must pull together now. Carne's fag was sent to fetch Skinner, and the black sheep of the Remove joined the two scheming seniors.

It took but a very little time to make Harold Skinner understand what was wanted. An argument as to how much the job was worth occupied longer. But terms were eventually settled to the satisfaction of Skinner, if not to that of Carne and Loder.

"Now, how are you goin' to work it?" asked Carne.

"I shall work it through Bunter," replied Skinner.

"Oh, dash it all, y'know, Skinner, that won't do!" protested Loder. "To let that fat young fool into it will spoil everythin'. He's dead sure to give the whole game away."

Skinner winked.

"You trust me!" he said. "Bunter won't know anything about it. And Bolsover won't, either, though he'll come into it."

And Skinner departed with a ten-shilling note in his pocket, and the promise of double the amount when he had brought off his scheme.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Cross Currents!

"IT'S a jolly good bat, young Wingate," said Bunter. "You know how particular Smithy is always to have the best. He gave me this. Ain't that enough to guarantee it?"

"It ought to be all right, if it was only that it was Smithy's," replied Wingate minor—Jack Wingate of the Third. "But I'd like to be sure that it ain't Smithy's still. See what I mean, Bunter? You want guaranteeing, or whatever you call it, every bit as much as the bat does."

"Oh, really, young Wingate! If you're going to talk like that the deal is off," Bunter returned loftily, his fat little nose in the air. "And I can tell you this—you won't get another bargain like this all the summer."

Wingate minor looked longingly at the bat. It was too big, too heavy for him really, but he was not worrying about details like that. Here was a bat worth at least a quid being offered for seven-and-sixpence, and he had three half-crowns in his pocket, which was not a usual state of affairs with him.

He had handled the bat. He reckoned that he knew something about such things; and it seemed to him a first-rate weapon. Only seven-and-six! It would be folly not to buy it, and yet—well, Billy Bunter's methods were peculiar, like those of the Heathen Chinee. The Owl had been known to sell things that did not belong to him.

"Tell you what—I'll go and ask Smithy if what you say is true," said Wingate minor, struck by a happy thought.

"Really, young Wingate, I'm surprised at you!" said Bunter reproachfully. "Surely you can trust my word?"

"That's just what I jolly well can't do!" answered Jack Wingate, with more candour than politeness.

But few people thought it worth while being polite to Bunter, and those who did think so made a mistake.

Bunter paused. He did not want young Wingate to go to Vernon-Smith. There was a distinct element of danger in it.

But nothing venture, nothing have!

And Bunter stood terribly in need of those three half-crowns—or imagined himself as so standing, which came to much the same thing with him.

"All right," he said. "You're rather a young rotter to doubt my word, but I suppose you don't know any better. So you can just go and ask Smithy."

"You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it! Did you ever hear me say anything that I didn't mean?"

"I've heard you tell lots of whoppers, Bunter. So has everybody. But I reckon it's all right if you're willing I should go to Smithy. So here's the cash, and I'll take the bat."

The three half-crowns were placed in Bunter's itching palm, and the Third-Former went off with the bat.

Bunter felt almost inclined to call him back.

For the bat he had sold to Wingate minor was not the same bat which the Bounder had given him!

He had displayed his gift to some of the Removites, and had been derided. It hurt Bunter in the place where his feelings were tenderest to realise that the Bounder's gift was worthless. A badly sprung bat is not a readily marketable article, and what Bunter needed was ready cash.

Too bad of the Bounder! He must have known that the thing was no good. Was that giving a fellow a present?

Bunter decided that it was not. He made up his mind that Smithy owed him something. He saw no opportunity of collecting that something with Smithy's knowledge and consent, and accordingly he had gone to work to collect it otherwise.

He had stolen into Vernon-Smith's study in the absence of the Bounder and Redwing, and had taken another bat, leaving the sprung one. The other was of the same make, and looked to the Owl exactly like the damaged article. Very likely Smithy would never know the difference. If he found the bat sprung he would have to prove that he had not done it himself, anyway. So ran Bunter's logic.

He had felt uneasy when Jack Wingate had suggested going to Smithy. But he congratulated himself on having bluffed it out really well, though he still had a remnant of doubt.

Stifling that doubt as much as possible, he rolled to the tuckshop.

Meanwhile, Vernon-Smith, highly elated at having been chosen to play for the school, prepared to signalise the honour after his own fashion.

The Bounder had long ago shed the worst of the swank that had earned him his nickname. But he still had a liking for spending his money in rather ostentatious ways, and of money he always had plenty.

Instead of practising with the rest on the Friday, he went down to the garage at Friardale.

"I want a car to drive four or five fellows over to Lanchester at about half-past one to-morrow," he said.

"Very well, Mr. Vernon-Smith," answered the proprietor. "Here's one that you've hired before and liked. Will it suit you?"

"That's all right."

"Do you want a driver, or—"

"Oh, I'll drive it myself!"

"Very well, sir. The car shall be at the Greyfriars gates at the time you mention."

Back at Greyfriars, the Bounder sought out Tom Redwing.

"Redwing," he said, "would you care about seein' the game at Lanchester to-morrow?"

"Oh, rather! I'm no end keen to see how you get on."

"Well, I've hired a car, an' you'll come along with me."

Then Smithy found Squiff. These two had always got along well together.

The invitation extended to the Australian junior was readily accepted.

Peter Todd was found in Study No. 7, with Alonzo, his cousin, and Bunter.

"Care about drivin' over to Lanchester with me to-morrow, Toddy?" asked the Bounder. "I'm havin' a car up from the Friardale garage."

"I'd like it, old chap. But I'm not sure whether it wouldn't be considered rather 'off' by the seniors. In the ordinary way we should travel with them, shouldn't we? They're having a brake. They might not like—"

"Oh, dash all that!" broke in the Bounder, somewhat irritated because that aspect of the matter had not occurred to him, and he saw that there was something in Peter's objection. "We can do as we like, I suppose—what? Because we're goin' to play for the school, to help Wingate out of a hole, it's not to say that we're tied to any senior's coat-tails."

"There's something in that," answered Peter, with his head on one side and a meditative expression on his long face.

"There's everythin' in it, I should say," replied the Bounder. "Take it or leave it, Toddy!"

"I'll come," said Peter. "Thanks, Smithy! It's good of you to ask me."

It was not of intention that Vernon-Smith had left Harry Wharton till last; it just happened so, that was all.

Peter Todd's arguments had ruffled the Bounder's temper slightly. He was inclined at times to resent any suggestion that a course proposed by him was in any way "off." So he was far from pleased when Wharton said:

"I'm much obliged to you, Smithy, but I don't see how I possibly can, and if I were you I think I'd chuck the notion. Wingate told me to-day that they were expecting us to travel with them."

"He didn't tell me!" snapped the Bounder.

"Well, it was very much a matter of course, wasn't it?"

"Then why should he speak to you about it?"

"Oh, well, I suppose he thought I should let you all know."

"If it was a matter of course there was no need for that."

Wharton felt that he was hardly a match for the Bounder in such an argument. At heart he would have liked to accept the invitation, and he was grateful to Vernon-Smith for giving it.

"You can't possibly chuck it, Smithy?" he asked diffidently.

"I might, but I'm dashed if I'm goin' to!"

And with that the Bounder went.

Most certainly he would not chuck it. Wharton might do as he chose. But the Bounder did feel a trifle uneasy that the good relations among the four Removites chosen to go to Lanchester should be strained thus. For Wharton would not like Squiff and Todd cutting loose; and those two would have to make a choice between him and the Bounder, and they would not be too happy about it all.

As he went back to his own study he saw Bolsover major go into Skinner's, and had a fleeting, cynical thought about the spider and the fly. The burly Removite was a big fly for a spider of Skinner's size, but he was just the kind of obtuse fellow upon whom a cunning rascal like Skinner could practise at times.



"All right, Sammy," said Harry Wharton. "I'll run along and see what's the matter with Billy. You take this bag to the gates for me and put it in Vernon-Smith's car." Sammy Bunter blinked up through his big spectacles indignantly. "I say, you know, Wharton, this bag's jolly heavy! Look here, I'll carry it up to the gates for six—I mean twopence." "Here you are, then, you young Shylock!" replied Wharton. (See Chapter 6.)

But the Bounder had no special interest in Bolsover major, and never dreamed that anything Skinner could have to say to him would have any effect upon his own fortunes.

Neither had Bolsover major. For that matter, Harold Skinner was not thinking so much of the Bounder as of another member of the quartet of Removites. And Skinner had no notion of telling Bolsover too much.

"Yes; it's an idea," admitted Bolsover. "I'm going to get even with that fat fraud, for all anyone may say. I don't care a hang about Wingate. If he wanted me to keep off Bunter's track, why didn't he make Bunter pay for the damage he did to my blessed bags?"

"You're right, old man. And the beauty of this scheme is that you can make pretty sure that you'll never be suspected of it. As long as the porpoise doesn't see you you're safe. What's it worth?"

Bolsover grunted. He was far from being high-minded, but he had a standard of decency ahead of Skinner's.

"I don't care about paying you for putting me up to it, Skinner," he growled. "But I'll tell you what I'll do—pay you to do it for me."

"I shall have to do it for you, more or less," Skinner answered. "You would never be able to lure the fat oyster to the crypt. I can do it. But I'm not going to risk locking him up there. You always say you don't mind risks. I don't pretend that I don't."

"I'll jolly well take this one, anyway! You get the key an' entice Bunter there, and I'll do the rest. And I'll give

you—let's see—five bob ought to be enough."

"Better look for someone else. I'm not on at that price," replied Skinner coolly.

"Ten, then?"

"Try again!"

Bolsover hesitated. He wanted revenge on Bunter. An intolerable sense of wrong rankled in his mind. If George Wingate had understood Bolsover major better he would have treated him differently. Even if Wingate had said that it would not hurt Bolsover, who was well heeled, as Fisher T. Fish would put it, to buy new cricket-bags, all might have been well. But as it was, Bolsover, unable to show Wingate his resentment, wanted badly to wreak it on Bunter.

"I'm not goin' above fifteen," he said sullenly.

"Done with you for fifteen!"

"You're to get hold of the key, mind. And you're to get that fat rotter into the crypt. All I've to do is to lock him up and cut."

"That's all."

Bolsover departed, and Skinner reflected that he might have worked it all without his help. But in that case he would have lost fifteen shillings, and moreover would have had to take more risk. For it was Skinner's intention to have a quite convincing alibi in the event of anyone's accusing him of being concerned with the Owl's incarceration in the vaults. Suspicion might fall upon Bolsover major; Skinner could not help that, and did not greatly desire to, knowing that Bolsover could be trusted not to

split. Suspicion could hardly fall upon Harold Skinner.

Thus the borrowing of Bolsover's bags, the rift in the lute with regard to the school eleven, the longing of Loder and Carné to make matters awkward for Wingate, Bolsover's desire for vengeance, the Bounder's swank, Harry Wharton's objection to do anything that would offend Wingate—all these cross-currents were in action.

Skinner fancied that he held in his hands all the threads of the plot.

But there Skinner was wrong.

If he could have foreseen how matters were to work out, it is doubtful whether he would have gone on.

There were times when Harold Skinner persuaded himself that he hated Vernon-Smith. But that feeling never endured. They had been allies in the past; the Bounder had once at least risked much for Skinner; and, mean and treacherous though he was, the cad of the Remove had normally some feeling for the Bounder that was certainly not hatred.

Wharton had more than once been generous to Skinner. But there was no mistake about Skinner's feeling towards Wharton. It was poisonous hatred.

Therefore, it is not likely that Skinner would have been keen on anything calculated to bring the Bounder and the skipper of the Remove into closer comradeship. And in the long run all his plotting was to have that result.

But he did not foresee it. No one could have foreseen it, and no one less than the Bounder himself, who was rather sore with Wharton.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Trapping of Two!

THE Remove eleven were to play a match at Friardale that Saturday afternoon. It was not a tough game, for the Friardale boys, though they numbered among them at least half a dozen a year or two older than anyone in the Remove, were hardly up to the average of the teams which the Remove usually met. Wharton and Vernon-Smith, Field and Peter Todd, could be spared for the Lanchester match. Bob Cherry, who was to take over the captaincy, Johnny Bull, Inky, Frank Nugent, Delarey, Tom Brown, Ogilvy, Russell, Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Micky Desmond ought to be quite able to lick the Friardale crowd.

As sometimes happened when there were matches away on a Saturday the Greyfriars dinner-hour was advanced. The second bell rang at half-past twelve, and the fellows trooped in. The brake which was to carry the seniors to Lanchester was due at the gates at a quarter-past one, and the car Vernon-Smith had ordered at half-past.

Bunter did not appear at the dinner-table.

No one worried. It was not like Bunter to miss a meal. But if he did miss one it was entirely his own lookout. Wharton did wonder where he could have got to, and so did Peter Todd. But neither was really anxious.

Bolsover major and Skinner did not worry, though both knew where Bunter was—shut up in the old crypt!

Skinner had got hold of the key. Skinner had lured Bunter there. The trick was easily done. Bunter's greed was so great that the mere suggestion of a princely tuck-out was enough to lure him anywhere. Skinner, carefully disguising his hand—though even in doing that he was thinking more of others than of the obtuse Owl—had invited Bunter to

a big gorge in the crypt at a quarter-past twelve, and had signed his very friendly letter of invitation "A Friend."

It was easy for Bunter to believe that. Who but a real friend—a friend to be cherished—would send such an invitation?

Bunter went with high hopes.

Then Bolsover major did his part. As soon as Bunter had penetrated far enough into the crypt to be locked in, Bolsover major turned the key, and went off sulkily happy, feeling that he had got even with Billy Bunter at last, and not grudging the fifteen shillings it would cost him. Bolsover exulted over the notion of Bunter's roaring in vain for release through the afternoon. It was not likely anyone would hear.

Bunter had already begun to roar when dinner was only half-way through. Even to the obtuse mind of William George Bunter had penetrated the notion that he had been trapped by an enemy.

He roared, but none heard.

Directly dinner was over the Remove eleven, with Bob Cherry at its head, and with nearly all the Remove in support, started for Friardale. Their match was to begin early.

Now the brake was at the gates, and the seniors were making their way to it. None besides those playing were going over to Lanchester, on account of its being so far away.

Skinner, though he would not have admitted it to Loder and Carné, had practically given up any hope of keeping the Bounder and Squiff away from the match, and was doubtful whether he could work upon Peter Todd, though Peter still had a curious, half-ashamed kind of feeling of responsibility for Bunter.

It was just as Wingate and the rest were making their way towards the gates that Sammy Bunter came rolling up to Wharton in great haste and seeming great agitation.

Sammy had been bought by Skinner at the extremely cheap price of one shilling. It was easy to buy Sammy. The drawback was that when bought he was unreliable. But Skinner thought he had worked that all right. He felt quite sure that Sammy did not understand.

In point of fact, as yet, Sammy did not. He had heard horrible yells proceeding from the crypt. Skinner had managed so that he should hear as if by accident. He had recognised in those horrible yells the notes of his brother Billy's voice. And, prompted thereto by Skinner, he had sought for Wharton, as for the one person who could be relied upon to release Billy.

Wingate and the rest of the seniors got into the brake and prepared to drive away while Wharton was in parley with Sammy. Wingate knew that Vernon-Smith had hired a car, and was not sure but that Harry Wharton, like the other Remove players, might be coming with him. Harry had said nothing definite, out of consideration for the Bounder.

To Wharton, conscious that he had no time to spare if he was to travel with the majority of the team, came Sammy, with a most lugubrious face.

"I say, Wharton, I'm—I'm frightened!" burred Sammy.

It was not wholly untrue. Skinner had worked upon Sammy's fears. There was not much brotherly affection between Bunter major and Bunter minor. Each thought the other a beast. But blood is thicker than water, and the thought of the folks at home helped to put the wind up the egregious Sammy when he imagined his brother in dire straits.

To that appeal the Bounder or Squiff—possibly even Peter Todd—would have answered:

"Go and be frightened somewhere else—don't come bothering me."

But Skinner had counted on Wharton's sense of responsibility and ready sympathy for anyone in distress.

Harry looked down at the contorted fat face.

"What's the matter, kid?" he asked, rather impatiently.

"I—I believe Billy's locked up in the crypt!"

"Why do you think that?"

"I—I— There's awful noises coming from there. Wharton, and they sound just like Billy, and he wasn't at dinner, and you know he never misses his grub if he can help it."

"Better scoot round and get someone to find the key," answered Harry. "I haven't got time to attend to it. I must get off this moment—really, I must, Sammy. Don't blub, you silly young idiot!"

They may have been only crocodile's tears. Sammy must have suspected that it was not for nothing Skinner had told him to look for Wharton, given him a bob, and warned him to say nothing to Wharton about anyone's having put him up to this game.

"It ain't any good!" wailed Sammy. "If you don't rescue him, nobody will. Bob Cherry and all the rest have gone to Friardale, and none of the seniors will take any notice if I go to them. I—I'm afraid he'll have a fit, Wharton—really, I am!"

Wharton thought it not unlikely. Billy Bunter was the sort of fellow whom sheer fright might drive into a fit. Anyway, Bunter ought to be released, and Sammy's arguments were not absurd. As Wharton saw it, he himself was about the only person at Greyfriars—except those in authority, whom the code of schoolboy honour forbade him to invoke or to hint that Sammy might invoke—at all likely to trouble about Bunter's plight.

A joke was a joke, but this was carrying things too far. Harry felt that he could not go off to Lanchester leaving Bunter locked up in the crypt, possibly in a fit, certainly in a most horrible funk.

But the brake would be going in a minute, and it was out of the question to ask Wingate and the rest to wait for him.

Then he remembered the Bounder's hired car. That would not be along for ten minutes or more yet. Vernon-Smith was a decent sort; he would not kick at Wharton's changing his mind at the last moment.

All right, Sammy," said Harry. "I'll go. You take this bag to the gates, and put it into the car that comes along for Smithy. You might tell him that I've changed my mind and would like to drive with him. It will be all right, I'm sure."

Sammy looked down at the cricket-bag.

"It's heavy!" he grunted.

To Bunter minor it seemed that Skinner's paltry bob really did not include payment for lugging that bag to the gates. And, now that he had interested Harry Wharton in the tragical matter of Billy's imprisonment in the crypt, Sammy really felt that he had done all that was necessary. Wharton was a far more efficient person than he was. On Wharton's head be it!

"You young rotter! Don't you want me to go and look after your major? Look here, is this a fake?"

Sammy blinked up at him through his big glasses.

"Of course it ain't a fake, Wharton," he said. "Billy's there all right. But

the bag is heavy. Look here, I'll carry it up to the gates for six—I mean for twopence."

"Here you are, then, you young Shylock!" replied Harry.

He thought Sammy a loathsome young beast, likely to develop in time into worse than his major, if that were possible. But that was not a new thought to him; and it did not matter much about twopence, except on the point of principle. And he was in too big a hurry to worry about that.

Sammy took his twopence, grunted, hefted the bag, grunted again, and started.

But Wharton had started before he had. Harry was hurrying for the crypt, thinking Bunter the biggest nuisance in the world, yet in his extreme conscientiousness unwilling to leave him in the lurch.

Sammy lugged his burden to the gates. The car had just come along, but Vernon-Smith and his companions were not yet there. The Bounder knew that the car could easily catch up the brake.

The bag put his burden on board without a word to the man who had driven up from Friardale. Then he rolled off. He had no longer any need to worry about Billy. That had become Wharton's affair. He had fourteenpence to spend, and he wanted to spend it.

There was a strong family likeness between Billy Bunter and his minor.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Bat!

VERNON-SMITH, Tom Redwing, Peter Todd, and Sampson Quincy Ifley Field—Squiff, for short—came along together in the highest of spirits, and the first to tumble his bag into the car—whichever of them it may have been—failed to notice that a bag bearing the initials "H. W." was already there.

The Bounder took the driver's seat, and invited Redwing to that by his side. The man from Friardale got into the

tonneau with Peter Todd and Squiff, to be set down when the garage was reached. He was duly set down, and still no one noticed.

They were some miles beyond Friardale, the Bounder driving at a good speed, when Tom leaned over from the front to the pair behind, and shouted:

"Look in Smithy's bag, will you? He's worrying because he doesn't think he put the right bat in."

Squiff pulled the bag out from under his own and Peter Todd's, and opened it.

"There's a bat here all right!" he shouted back.

He took it out of the bag. The Bounder was very particular indeed about the bats he used, and Squiff had all the keen cricketer's interest in the subject.

Squiff handled it. Something about it felt all wrong.

"Redwing!" he bawled.

"Yes, old scout?"

"You just tell Smithy that he must have brought the wrong bat! This blessed thing's badly sprung; it isn't a scrap of good!"

Within five yards the car had pulled up, the Bounder jamming on the brakes mercilessly.

"My hat! What on earth is that thing doin' in my bag?" he gasped, his eyes on the bat that Squiff held out for inspection. "It's the rotten bit of willow I gave Bunter because I was so fed up with it. I bought two of them. They looked exactly alike. But one was a beauty, an' the other was a complete wash-out. This is the wash-out; I can tell it by that big bruise there."

The four looked at one another in surprise.

"I suppose you put it in the bag yourself, Smithy?" said Peter Todd.

"No doubt of that. But I'd got rid of the other—I mean, of this! How could I possibly dream of any mistake between them?"

"What are you going to do?" inquired Peter.

"Go back an' fetch a decent bat. I sha'n't have a dog's chance with that thing! We can catch up the brake.

Anyway, we sha'n't be late anythin' worth mentionin'."

Peter and Squiff did not quite like it. They objected to the notion of being late at all. It was no small thing to be chosen to play for Greyfriars, and Wingate would expect them on the ground in time.

It was at that moment that Squiff's eyes fell upon Wharton's bag.

"Hallo! What's this doing here?" he asked.

They gazed at it. Then Peter Todd said slowly:

"Smithy, it looks to me as though Wharton had made up his mind, after all, to come with us, but had, somehow, got hung up."

Vernon-Smith's mobile face took on its most repellent expression.

"He'd no right to do that, after what he said to me," he answered. "I consider it's rather takin' a liberty."

"You mean to go back, anyway?" spoke Tom Redwing quietly. "You can fetch your bat, and if, by any chance, Wharton's been left behind, you can pick him up and bring him along."

"I don't know that I'm on!"

All three looked hard at the Bounder now. He was in one of his black moods. The matter of the bat had irritated and mystified him, and the slight resentment he had felt against Harry Wharton was magnified by it.

"Let's make sure if he's with the rest, Smithy," said Squiff. "We sighted them from the top of the last hill, and we ought to be able to overhaul them inside ten minutes."

Without another word Vernon-Smith got back to the driver's seat, and sent the car along at a speed that would have got him into trouble had any police-constable been upon the road to see it.

In less than ten minutes they had overhauled the brake.

Wharton was not in it, of course.

In three minutes thereafter Peter Todd and Squiff were in the brake, on the way to Lanchester, and the car was turned back towards Greyfriars.



Harry Wharton's first ball was driven back to him breast-high, and looked as though it might well go through him, for he made no attempt to get out of its way. "Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "He's held it! Bravo, Wharton!" A round of applause echoed out from the field at that amazing catch. (See Chapter 8.)

The Bounder's face was set and grim. Tom Redwing had seen it like that before, and knew that the look upon it was portentous of trouble.

"What are you going to do, Smithy?" he shouted.

"Fetch a decent bat!"

"What about Wharton?"

"Oh, dash Wharton! We've an eleven without him. I won't say that I'll refuse him a lift, though he couldn't blame me if I did; but I'm not goin' to waste any time on him. Wharton's not my bizney."

Tom subsided. It was of little use to argue with the Bounder when this mood was upon him. But Tom Redwing was only biding his time.

Now and then he stole a glance at the fellow beside him.

Vernon-Smith's lips made one thin red line; his face was angry. The worse part of him was uppermost. Things had fallen out badly. He hardly knew whom to blame, and was unreasonably inclined to blame Wharton.

They ate up the miles back to Greyfriars, doing the distance in less than two-thirds of the time taken on the outward journey.

While Herbert Vernon-Smith ran up to his study to fetch another bat, Tom Redwing looked round the almost deserted quad, and became aware of Sammy Bunter.

Sammy did not look happy. There was a suggestion of slinking about Sammy's attitude. When Redwing called him he seemed loth to come.

Tom Redwing was not a suspicious fellow. But he had seen a greater variety of life than most Greyfriars juniors, and he had brains.

His thoughts had flown to Billy Bunter in connection with the bat mystery; and it was not a very far cry from the Owl to his minor, especially when that minor looked as he looked at this moment—as though he had something to conceal, yet half wanted to tell it.

"Anything the matter, Sammy?" asked Redwing.

"Nunno. That is, I—I— Nunno, nothing at all is the matter."

"Sure?"

"Of course, I'm sure. 'Tain't your bizney, anyway, Redwing."

"What isn't my bizney? The thing that's not the matter, eh?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I don't altogether. But I'm sure there's something. Where's your major? Oh, and have you seen Wharton, by the way?"

Sammy's little eyes blinked at Redwing from behind his glasses.

It seemed to Sammy that, if Tom Redwing did not know all, he knew more than was safe.

"I don't know anything about Wharton. It wasn't me who put his bag in the car, if that's what you're getting at. And, anyway, he told me to take it—so there!"

"Where is Wharton?" snapped Redwing, catching Sammy by the collar.

Vernon-Smith ought to take Harry Wharton to Lanchester—Tom felt that strongly. It was the decent thing to do.

But the Bounder would not wait long for Wharton, in any case. He would be eager to get on towards Lanchester.

Playing for the school team meant much to Herbert Vernon-Smith. Therefore, Redwing wanted to find Harry at once. And now he felt sure that some trickery had been at work.

"Yow! Ow! Wow!" squalled Bunter minor. "Leave me alone, Redwing! It wasn't me. If it was anybody, it was

Skinner; and Bolsover major might be in it, too—I saw him hanging about!"

"About where?"

"The crypt."

"Do you mean that Wharton's shut up in the crypt?"

"I don't know. How should I? But I believe Billy is. I heard horrible noises coming out of it, and I'm sure they must have been Billy's. I told Wharton, and he went away. I suppose he went to the crypt. I don't know, though. How should I? You needn't go making out that I had anything to do with it, Redwing, so there!"

Redwing released his hold, and Sammy stood wriggling and perspiring, half-minded to bolt, but deterred by the knowledge that the Removite could easily catch him if he tried it.

"Go and tell Smithy. No, that won't do, for you're not to be trusted a yard. You can clear out, you little worm! Hi, Smithy!"

Redwing shouted at the top of his voice, and the cry carried through the open window of the study just as the Bounder was leaving it.

Vernon-Smith stuck his head out.

"What is it, old chap?"

"I'm going to the crypt. Follow as sharp as you can, will you?"

"What on earth for? Hi, Redwing, stop! Well, I'm dashed!"

Tom Redwing would not stop. He counted on his chum's coming after him, even at the cost of losing precious minutes.

From inside the crypt sounded the wailing of Billy Bunter. He could no longer shout, but he could still wail. There was no sound from Harry. He had grown tired of shouting.

"Wharton, are you there?"

"I'm here! Oh dear! Oh, really! Why don't you open the door at once, instead of asking silly questions?"

"That was the Owl, of course."

"I'm here. It's Redwing, isn't it? Thought you'd gone with Smithy."

"That was Wharton. He did not speak excitedly, rather with a kind of dull hopelessness. Wharton had been as keen on playing for the school as the Bounder."

"The key's not in the door. I shall have to find it before I can get you out," said Tom Redwing.

"You'll probably have a job," replied Wharton.

"Redwing! Oh, don't go away, Redwing!" burred Bunter.

Tom met Vernon-Smith as he went away, and told him what had happened.

The Bounder glanced at his watch.

"I say, you know, we haven't got all the afternoon to spare," he said.

"I know. But I can't go off and leave Wharton shut up there. You must do as you like."

"You mean that you think it's up to me to wait until he's got out, an' run him over to Lanchester—what, Tom?"

"No, I think you're the best judge of that."

"Oh, dash it all! Why did I ever chum up with such a conscientious fellow as you are? Who's at the bottom of this?"

"Skinner, I fancy."

"Sounds likely enough. Well, we sha'n't find him. He will have made himself scarce. As for the key—let me think. I'll have a look in that rotter's study, anyway."

"And I'll go and see whether Gosling has it. It is supposed to be kept at the lodge."

But the key was not at the porter's lodge. Gosling wanted to argue with Redwing about it, holding his request

for it suspicious. But Tom broke away from him.

It was not, as far as the Bounder could ascertain, in Skinner's study. On the whole, thought the Bounder, having now had time to think, it was hardly likely to be. Skinner was much too fly for that.

The two seekers met, and went back to the crypt together, uncertain what to do. The Bounder was snappish and irritable. But he had evidently made up his mind to see the thing through.

The minutes were slipping away. Before now the team must have reached Lanchester. The match would be well on its way before Vernon-Smith, alone or with Wharton, could get there.

Then the Bounder's keen eyes sighted the key. It had been thrust into a cranny of the decayed stonework of an ancient buttress within two yards of the crypt door!

Very like Skinner, that dodge. He would not risk having the key found on him or in his study, and he thought he had taken quite enough risk in purloining it from the lodge; he was not going to take more in returning it.

Skinner could wait. It was Wharton that mattered, not Bunter. No one but Wharton had worried about Bunter, and he must have felt sorry he had done so by this time. He had had no thanks, reproaches instead, for being such a soft ass as to let someone slam the door directly he was inside, and make him fellow prisoner with the Owl.

Bunter wanted to say a lot. Wharton had very little indeed to say.

His thanks to Vernon-Smith were cut short.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you, Smithy, though I can't make out how you come to be here. It will muck up the match for you. I—"

"Of course it will! It has mucked it up! Dash it all, don't waste time rubbin' that in! Come along! We've got to get to Lanchester as soon as possible. They're a man short till we do!" growled the Bounder.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Eleventh Place!

VERNON-SMITH sat in the driver's seat alone, and drove the car at a pace that made the two more law-abiding fellows behind him dread trouble.

Tom Redwing explained to Harry what had happened. In doing so he could not avoid saying one or two things that made it clear how sore the Bounder was feeling, and Wharton began to worry about the soreness, as was Wharton's way. He and Herbert Vernon-Smith, enemies once, were very fond of one another at heart now; but circumstances, Wharton's extreme conscientiousness, and the Bounder's awkward temper, often combined to force them into antagonism, and both suffered, but Wharton most.

"I'm sorry, but I really don't see how I could have helped it," he said now.

"I don't see how you could. Don't bother about it. Hallo! What's wrong?"

The car had been halted suddenly. The Bounder flung out of his seat in a worse temper than ever. For the next half-hour he worked and fumed and snapped. The other two gave what help they could, but he was not grateful.

At last they were off again, and Wharton's mind went back to the match. He wondered whether Greyfriars had had first innings. If so, the side would

(Continued on page 17.)



Page-Boys of The Past!

By George Wingate

GREYFRIARS has had a long succession of page-boys. Some of them have held the job for several years, until they were entitled to be called "page-men." Others have only filled the post for a few weeks, and then left, either voluntarily, or "by order of the boot."

Many of the page-boys have left their mark in Greyfriars history. The name of George Tucker will always produce a thrill when it is mentioned. Tucker was the page-boy here in 1844, when the school caught fire in the night. The fags of the First Form were imprisoned in their dormitory, owing to a blazing staircase, which cut off their exit. Tucker at once summoned the school porter, and they fetched a ladder, and reared it up to the dormitory window. Tucker, who was a burly youth for his age, repeatedly ran up the ladder, and rescued each of the unfortunate fags in turn. The dormitory was like an oven; but, although well-nigh overcome by the fumes, Tucker stuck gallantly to his task, until all the "Babes of the First" had been liberated. It was owing to the page-boy's pluck and promptitude that no lives were lost on that exciting occasion.

Another heroic page-boy was Charles Chumley. In 1895 a determined attempt was made by a gang of burglars to plunder the school. Chumley awoke in the middle of the night, and heard sounds which aroused his suspicions. He rose and dressed, and surprised the members of the gang when they were in the act of forcing the Head's safe. They were desperate characters, and they attacked and overpowered the page-boy, but not before he had given the alarm, which led to their apprehension and subsequent imprisonment. Chumley was specially commended by the Head for his pluck, and was presented with a reward, which he richly deserved.

A few years later a boy named Tracy came to Greyfriars in the capacity of school-page. He was a bright, intelligent little chap, who quickly became a

general favourite. But there was a bad streak in Tracy's composition. He was in league with a gang of cracksmen, to whom he imparted valuable information, and also surrendered the keys of the various studies.

The school was plundered on a wholesale scale, and the looters got away with the spoils. Eventually, however, they were brought to book, and they betrayed the page-boy who had helped them. Tracy was sent to an industrial school for five years, as a result of his complicity in the affair.

Perhaps the most amazing sensation in the history of page-boys was caused by Charles Wells in 1904. Wells had been at the school for three years, and had given every satisfaction with his work. Masters who had been at the school for many years declared that Wells was the most efficient page-boy Greyfriars had ever had. He was honest and hard-working, and unusually refined for a lad of his class. Then, in 1904, came a bombshell. Wells was proved to be the heir to a title and large estates. I have no space to recount all the details which led to this remarkable discovery; but it came as a staggering surprise to Wells, and, indeed, to all Greyfriars. In a flash, as it were, the page-boy exchanged his humble billet for a life of luxury and ease. Whether he found the change to his liking or not he has never returned to tell us.

Another page-boy to make a sensation, was Howard Marshall. Whilst at Greyfriars, his chief hobby was sketching. He possessed undoubted artistic genius, and his work attracted the attention of an Old Boy who was the art editor of a monthly magazine. Marshall was promptly sent away to an art school, and he developed into one of the greatest black-and-white artists of our time.

Of course, the cases I have quoted are exceptional. Not every page-boy has been a genius. The majority of them have been steady, hard-working lads, but below the average standard of intelligence. But the cases I have instanced

in this article only go to show that there are latent talents in all of us. And who knows but that Trotter, our present page, may not have the makings of a second Shakespeare? Or, for all we know, he is a potential Prime Minister. It's a queer world, and many a boy in humble circumstances has, like Byron, "awakened one morning to find himself famous."

EDITORIAL!

BY

HARRY WHARTON.

IT is as well to remember that there are other people at Greyfriars besides the pastors and masters and the pupils. There are the members of the domestic staff, and they consider they have been kept out of the limelight too long. William Gosling, the porter and lodgekeeper, stopped me in the Close the other day, and said: "Wot I says is this 'ere, Master Wharton—when am I goin' to 'ave a special number of the 'Greyfriars 'Erald' all to meself, like? About a couple of years ago you happedointed me as hedditor jest for one week, an' the readers went into raptures over wot I writ. They'd like to see me hoccupyin' the hedditorial chair once more. Wot about it?"

I told Gosling I would consider the matter, and went on my way. I then encountered Mr. Joseph Mible, the school gardener. "Axin' your pardon, Master Wharton," said he, touching his forelock, "but when are you goin' to publicate a Special Gardenin' Number of the 'Erald'? I shall be quite willin' to write a barticle on 'ow to grow vegetable marrers, an' 'ow to rear radishes. A Gardenin' Number would jest about fill the bill."

I informed Mr. Mible that I would give the matter my careful consideration, and passed on. I proceeded to the tuckshop in order to partake of light refreshment, and I was promptly buttonholed by Mrs. Mible. She wanted to know if I would publish a Tuckshop Number, and appoint her as editress for one week only. I told her I would see what could be done.

Finally, I bumped into Trotter, the page. He surveyed me more in sorrow than in anger. "Seuse me, Master Wharton," he said, "but you've never 'ad a Special Page-boy Number of the 'Greyfriars 'Erald.' I ain't wot you might call a littery bloke, but I should be pleased to write some retributions for your paper." I smiled. "You mean 'contributions,' surely?" I said. Trotter nodded. "Everybody 'as 'ad a show except me," he complained. "Gosling's 'ad a special number, an' so 'as Mrs. Mible. But I've 'ad to take a back seat. It's crool 'ard, Master Wharton, to think that I can't write for your paper."

I felt sorry for Trotter, and appreciated that he had a just grievance. "Very well, Trotter," I said, "we will have a Special Page-boy Number, and you shall contribute to it." Trotter grinned all over his dial, and pranced off in high glee. It has been one of the dreams of his life to contribute to the "Herald," and this week he has his heart's desire.

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Changing Places with Trotter!

How Would You Like
the Experiment?

BOB CHERRY:

I shouldn't like it a bit, thanks! I'm quite cheery and comfortable in my present sphere of life. I don't want to swap places with anybody, not even the high-and-mighty Head! As for stepping into the shoes of Master Frederick Trotter, the idea doesn't appeal to me a scrap. I should jolly soon get tired of being at everybody's beck and call; and I expect I should organise a page-boys' strike all over the country. We should demand our wages to be trebled, and our duties to be cut down by half; and we should fight tooth-and-nail for our rights. But I'm never likely to change places with Trotter, so such a situation won't arise.

BILLY BUNTER:

I'd willingly change places with Trotter to-morrow—provided they altered the conditions which govern a page-boy's life. At present, the poor little brat is overworked and underpaid—and underfed into the bargain. I respectfully suggest to the authorities that a page-boy should have the following privileges:

Six solid meals per day.

Each working day to consist of not more than two hours.

Prezant sallery to be multiplied by ten.

Staff of sub-page-boys to be appoynted to assist him in his duties.

Page-boy to be given the Freedom of the Tuckshop—that is to say, he can go there as often as he likes, and get as much grub as he likes, for nicks!

If they will interjuice these privileges, I will ask to change places with Trotter to-morrow. I shall make a jolly smart page-boy, and by continually running errands I shall soon work off my sooper-flews rolls of fat!

ALONZO TODD:

Change places with Trotter? Goodness gracious! The mere suggestion makes me tremble and turn pale. Although I am not a snob, I must always bear in mind the advice of my Uncle Benjamin. "Never soil your hands, my dear Alonzo, by doing the work of a menial. It is degrading, disgusting, and demoralising!" This being so, I hope I may never be called upon to change places with Trotter. Besides, I am thin enough as it is, and if I had to run errands all day I should speedily be reduced to a mere skeleton!

DICK PENFOLD:

Being a page is not all honey. There's lots of work, and little money. I'd

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rather earn my daily bread by writing yards of verse instead! If I ran errands all the day, my locks would jolly soon grow grey. And if I cleaned the boots and shoes, I'd soon be smitten with "the blues." Trotter may keep his humble billet; Dick Penfold isn't going to fill it!

HORACE COKER:

I shouldn't have any objectshun to changing places with Trotter, provided they allowed me to run all the errands on my motor-bike. It would be great sport, dashing down to the village fifty times a day, in a cloud of dust; and I'd bring all the purchases back to Greyfriars in my side-car.

(Knowing what a reckless rider you are, Coker, I should say that all your purchases would find a resting-place at the bottom of a duck-pond!—Ed.)

DICKY NUGENT:

catch me changing places with trotter! i wouldn't have his job for anything. the poor little beggar never gets any lezzure of plezzure. they say that brittons never shall be slaves, but poor old trotter's always slaving himself to a shaddo for other people. he's kept on the go from dawn till dusk, and he never has any rest or respitt. i consider it's a crool shame. swetted labor—that's what i call it. i think there ought to be a page-boys' union, and that a jenneral strike ought to be declared right away. My heart goes out to poor old trotter. (Then you'd better go and bring it back again, Dicky!—Ed.)

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CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER

Every Thursday—2d.

OUR COMIC COLUMN!

By BOB CHERRY.

I consider that Trotter's name ought to be changed by deed poll to Crawler. You see, he never trots when sent on an errand. So why in the world should he be called Trotter?

* * *

There are quite a lot of people at Greyfriars whose names are misfits. There's a Walker who never walks; he merely ambles. There's a Potter who has never handled a rifle in his life. There's a Bunter who doesn't get his living by making buns; and, incidentally, there's a Skinner we should dearly love to skin!

* * *

In spite of the fact that he grumbles a good deal about being under-tipped, Trotter took no less than ten pounds in tips last breaking-up day. It is rumoured that he is going to invest in a second-hand Ford car, so that he won't have to "foot it" down to the village any more. But he'd get there quicker by walking!

* * *

Some of our readers may wonder why there is nothing wrong with the grammar and spelling of Trotter's contributions in this issue. The fact is, they were overhauled beforehand by the editor. Had they appeared in their original form, they would have been unreadable!

* * *

Trotter seems to have a perfect mania for dropping things. The other day he dropped a tray containing Mr. Prout's breakfast; then he dropped into Study No. 1; and he dropped his aitches when he spoke to us. It's a bad habit to keep dropping things, Trotter. You'd better drop it!

* * *

Trotter complains that ten shillings per week is a shocking salary, even though board and lodging are thrown in. This has led to a lively debate in the Remove on the subject of Pages' Wages. Lord Mauleverer suggests that a page-boy should receive a thousand a year—but he omits to state whether he means a thousand pounds or a thousand farthings!

* * *

Gosling, the porter, gives it as his opinion that Trotter is "a lazy, good-for-nothing young rip, wot avoids work like 'e would avoid the plague." Considering that Gosling is not exactly a glutton for work himself, this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black!

* * *

In moments of anger Trotter threatens to go away from Greyfriars. "I shall clear out," he declares, "an' leave my buttons behind!" Presumably they will be "continued on the next page!"

* * *

Personally, I think Trotter is quite comfortable in his present job, and will become a fixture instead of a "Trotter!"
[Supplement ii.]



The Page-Boy's Secret!

By Dicky Nugent.



"I CAN'T make head or tale of that new page-boy, you fellows!" said Jack Jolly. "There's some mistery about him! He's quite different from the usual run of page-boys!"

"Yes, I've notissed that myself," said Merry. "Pilkins is quite a polished and refined young fellow—something like me. He isn't an iggnurent young brat, like most page-boys are. His nollidge of different subjects is serprising. He told me the other day that it was Alfred the Grate who signed the Magna Charta, and that it was King John who burnt the cakes. He also knew that Brighton was the capital of England, and that the River Severn rises in the Alps. You wouldn't find many page-boys so brainy as that!"

"No jolly fear!" said Bright. "Pilkins is an amazing sort of chap. Among other things, he can speak French. I heard him say 'Sivvoo play' and 'Parley-woo Frongsay.' That's French, isn't it? And he can talk in Russian, too! I happened to get in his way this morning, when he was carrying a tray along the passidge, and he said: 'Buzz offski! Get out of my wayovitch.' That's Russian, isn't it?"

"Sounds like it," said Jack Jolly. "Pilkins is a wonderful chap altogether. I can't get over him. I tried to, when we were playing leap-frog the other day, but he didn't stoop low enuff, and I came an awful cropper!"

Merry looked thoughtful as he stirred his tea with a penholder.

"The queschun is, what is Pilkins doing as a page-boy?" he said. "He's much too sooperior and diggnified for the part. He never drops his aitches, and he always speaks with a sort of drawl. He behaves more like a member of the Harry Stockrassy than a commoner. I'm beginning to think that he's sailing under false cullers—a sheep in wolf's clothing, you know."

There was a tap at the door of Jack Jolly's study, and a smart boy in buttons stepped into the department. It was Percival Pilkins, the new page-boy at St. Sam's. Let us take a good look at him, dear reader, for he figgers largely in this story. He was a fellow of about fourteen summers and one winter, and his sober uniform fitted him very tight. He had a finely-chiselled nose, a well-modelled chin, and a pair of blue black eyes. On the whole, his features were very classical. His hare was brushed carefully back over his napper, and it glissened with hare-oil. He stood respectfully to attention in the doorway and addressed Jack Jolly.

"Master Jollay," he drawled, "your presence is—haw!—required immediately—haw!—in Mr. Lickham's studay, bai Jove!"

Jack Jolly rose to his feet.
[Supplement iii.]

"What does old Lickham want me for?" he asked.

"I fancy it is his intention—haw!—to administah a castigation," said Pilkins. "In vulgah langwidge, you are about to get it in the neck, Master Jolly!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Howevah, I twust you will not allow the coming ordeal to disturb your equanimity," Pilkins went on. "Pwe-serve a stowical demenner—in other words, keep a stiff uppah lip."

"All serene, Pilkins!" said Jack Jolly. And he hurried off to Mr. Lickham's study.

When he got there he was releaved to find that Pilkins was wrong. There was no licking on the tappis. Mr. Lickham greeted Jack Jolly with a smile.

"Come in, Jolly," he said; and then he waved the junior to the coal-skuttle. "Sit down, and make yourself at home."

Jack Jolly squatted on the skuttle and waited for the Form master to proseed.

"I have sent for you, Jolly, in konnection with Pilkins, the new page-boy," said Mr. Lickham. "He is a continual sauce of worry to me. There is some mistery about him. He behaves more like the son of a belted earl than a page-boy. His manners are as well-polished as his boots, and he is very refined in his speech. When I rekwested him just now to go and fetch you, he did not say 'Right-ho, old bean!' or 'All sereno!' He said: 'Your instructions, sir, shall be carried out—haw!—forthwith.' I am beginning to suspect that Pilkins is something more than a common meenial. I beleieve he is of noble berth, and has no bizziness to be a page-boy at all!"

"That's eggsactly what I've been thinking, sir," said Jack Jolly.

Mr. Lickham nodded.

"I want you, Jolly, to do a little detective work and try and clear up the mistery," he said. "Keep Pilkins under observation, and see if you can find out anything about him."

"Very good, sir," said Jack Jolly.

And he went back to his study and told his chums what Mr. Lickham had said.

After that Pilkins, the page-boy, was shaddoed wherever he went. His foot-steps were dogged with dogged persistence. Jack Jolly & Co. watched all his movements; but they failed to make any discoveries.

About a week later, however, Jack Jolly happened to be glansing through the Aggerny Kollum of a newspaper, when he came upon the following parragraff:

"PERCIVAL.—Return home at once to your sorrowing parents, the Duke and Dutchess of Dartfordshire. All is

forgiven. Oh, why did you run away from these ansestral halls? Come back at once, or you will brake our harts."

At first glanse this parragraff conveyed nothing to Jack Jolly. And then he remembered that the Christian name of Pilkins, the page, was Percival. Quickly he put two and two together and made five of them.

Percival Pilkins was the son and air of the Duke and Dutchess of Dartfordshire! For some reason or other he had run away from home and come to St. Sam's in the capassity of page-boy.

Jack Jolly jumped to his feet, his face flushed with eggsitement.

At that same moment there was a tap on the door, and Pilkins came in.

Jack Jolly fired a point-blank queschun at the page-boy.

"Pilkins," he said, "do you happen to know the Duke of Dartfordshire?"

The page-boy gave a violent start and turned as pail as a turkeycock.

"He is my father!" he muttered.

"Ah, I thought so! Here is a parragraff that might interest you."

Jack Jolly handed over the newspaper and pointed to the par in the Aggerny Kollum. Pilkins peroozed it, and the tears welled to his eyes.

"Forgiven!" he cried. "I can now return to the ansestral halls. They will kill the fatted calf and I shall be welcomed with open arms instead of with the paternal boot!"

"Why did you run away?" asked Jack Jolly.

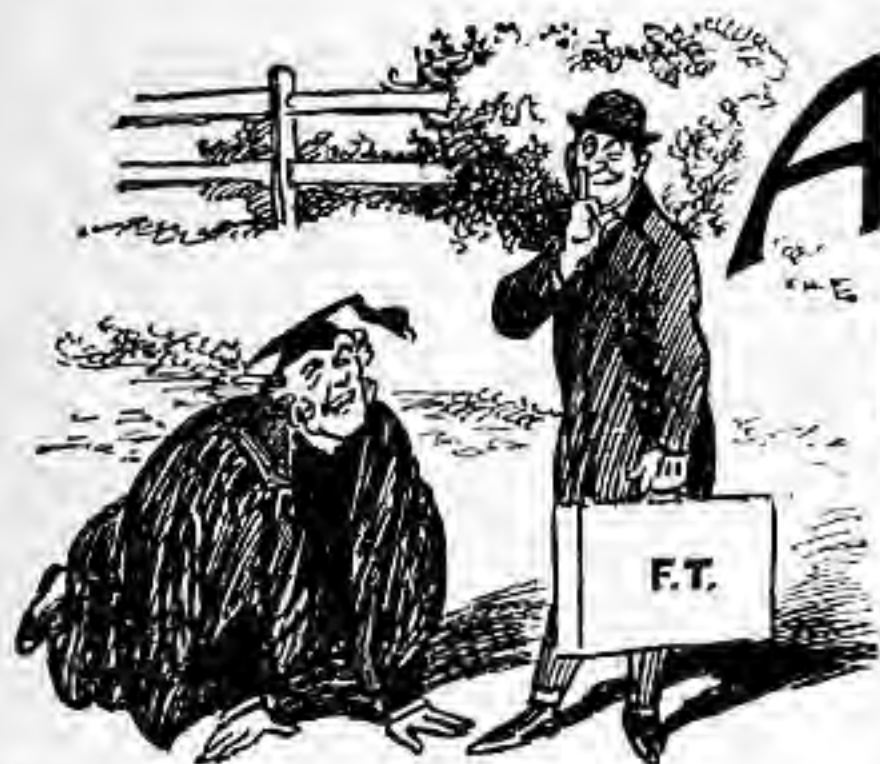
Pilkins wiped his eyes on his sleeve.

"It is a traggick story," he said. "One Monday morning I badly wanted to buy the currant issow of the 'Boys' Friend.' But I happened to be broke. In a moment of weakness I broke open my brother's money-box and stole twopence in order to purchase my favorite paper. I was mortally afraid that either my brother or my pater would find out what I had done. It was a mean theft, bekawse my brother only had twopence-farthng in his money-box, and it would take him munths and munths of saving before he could replace the stolen twopence. The matter prayed on my mind, and at last, fearing discovery at any moment, I could stand it no longer and I absconded—or, as the vulgah would say, buzzed off. I came to St. Sam's and applied for the position of page-boy and got it. That is my story. And now the Proddigal Son will return to the fold, forgiven for his base crime, and everything in the garden will be lovely!"

Pilkins—his name wasn't really Pilkins, of corse—sent a tollygram to his father. And the Duke came to St. Sam's on his maggnificent push-bike and took the proddigal home on the step.

THE END.

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A Page from a Page's Diary!

By Fred Trotter.

MONDAY.

Woke up. I've got a habit of doing this in the morning. Sometimes I wish I could sleep for ever, and forget my troubles. People never stop to think what a poor page-boy has to put up with. I'm kept on the go all day long, and I've no time even to eat my meals. I have to swallow them whole, so to speak. I'm running errands all day long for different people, and it fairly gets my goat. I'm supposed to be a page-boy—merely that and nothing more. But the truth is, I'm an errand-boy, a bootblack, a male kitchen-maid (if ever you heard of such a thing), an assistant porter, a chimney-sweep, a carpet-beater—in fact, a lad-of-all-work. Monday is always my worst day, and to-day has been the limit! I've done so much running about that my legs refuse to support me any longer. I'm utterly worn out, and so are my shoes. I'm sprawling on my bed while I make this entry in my diary. And what a bed! It's simply a solid plank, supported by four legs—or, rather, three, for one of them cracked up badly the other night, and had to be amputated. Why don't page-boys have decent beds to sleep in? That's what I want to know. Echo answers, "Why the merry dickens don't they?"

TUESDAY.

Yesterday over again! Racing here, and chasing there, and racing, chasing everywhere! First the Head sent me to the Vicar of Friardale with a message. I flew down to the village—not in an aeroplane, worse luck!—and delivered the message. Then the vicar sent me on an errand to the doctor; and the doctor sent me on an errand to the chemist; and the chemist sent me back to the doctor again; and the doctor sent me back to the vicar; and the vicar sent me back to the Head of Greyfriars— (And the green grass grew all round!—Ed.)

WEDNESDAY.

A day of tragedy. Gosling, the porter, collared me in the Close, and said he had

found a job for me. Gosling's always finding jobs for me. Wish he'd find a few for himself! "Get a pair of steps, Trotter," says he, "an' clean the 'Ead's winders on the houtsides! They 'aven't bin cleaned for hages an' hages! Instead of bein' wot they calls 'apparent,' so as you can see right through 'em, they're thick with dirt an' dust. Get busy, me lad!" I told Gosling that window-cleaning was his own job, and that I wouldn't do him out of it for worlds. But he wasn't having any. "None of your hinperence, Trotter!" says he sternly. "Get a move on! I'll 'old the steps for you, while you shins up an' does the winder-cleanin'." It was no use arguing with the surly old buffer, so I fetched a pair of steps and started on the job. I was perched on the top of the steps,

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rubbing away at the window-panes, when Gosling suddenly let go of the steps. They collapsed like the House that Jack built, and poor little me came tumbling after! It's a wonder I didn't break my neck. Anyway, I came an awful cropper, and had to be excused work for the rest of the day. Confound that old buffer Gosling! He can clean the windows himself in future; and then I'll have my revenge by suddenly letting go of the steps!

THURSDAY.

In the wars again to-day! Master Loder wanted me to go down to the village to buy him some cigarettes. I refused. "Obey my orders, you cheeky young cub!" he shouted, in that unpleasant way of his. "Sha'n't!" I retorted. "I ain't going to encourage you in your bad habits, Master Loder." That fairly rattled him. He grabbed me by the collar, and slung me across his table, and laid into me with an ashplant. I yelled at the top of my lungs, and Master Wingate came along and rescued me—but not before I had received half a dozen real stingers. Loder's a beastly bullying brute!

FRIDAY.

I overslept this morning, and the House Dame reported me to the Head for being slack and lazy. Me—slack and lazy! What a libel! The Head gave me a month's notice. That's the third month's notice he's given me this week. It doesn't worry me a scrap. You see, the Head doesn't really mean it. If I was to pack my traps and say good-bye to Greyfriars, the Head would come sprinting after me—a flying figure in gown and mortar-board—and implore me on hands and knees to reconsider my decision to go. He knows he wouldn't get anybody else to do all the work I do for a paltry ten bob a week!

SATURDAY.

This is supposed to be a holiday; but there's no holiday for your humble and obedient servant. In fact, Saturday's my busiest day. In addition to my usual duties, I had to oil about fifty cricket-bats this morning, and then I had to roll the playing-pitch. Why don't they engage a cart-horse for the job of pulling the roller up and down? Fancy making a frail fellow like me perform such a hefty task. I'm a page-boy. I am; not a blessed Hercules. But it's all in the day's work, I suppose, and I ought not to grumble. But I often feel sorry that I ever chose the profession of a page-boy. I'm overworked and underpaid, and I'm at everybody's beck and call—morning, noon, and night. If I could start my career over again, I think I'd decide to be a cushion-maker. You see, it's such a "soft" job!

PITY THE POOR PAGE!

By Fred Trotter.

Somewhere a voice is calling,
Calling in vain for me!
Bolsover major's bawling,
"Where on earth can he be?"
Loder is raving wildly,
"Answer my call, you rotter!"
And Alonzo murmurs mildly,
"Come, I beseech you, Trotter!"
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Somewhere a voice is barking,
"Come to my room!"—that's Hacker.
Wingate is rudely remarking,
"Trotter's a lazy slacker!"
Fellows are fuming and chiding,
And growing hotter and hotter:
"Where is that rascal hiding?"
"Hustle along, young Trotter!"

All day, I am hunted and harassed,
Pursued from pillar to post;
Shouted at, stormed at, embarrassed,
Till I want to give up the ghost!
There's a never-ending chorus
From Coker and Greene and Potter:
"Come, lay our table for us,
And shake a leg, young Trotter!"

Oh, for a life of leisure,
In a paradise of peace!
A life of lasting pleasure
And joys that never cease.
Where voices are never calling
With vigour and with zest:
Where the bawlers cease from bawling
And the page-boys are at rest!

Somewhere a voice is shrieking,
"Come hither, thou base varlet!"
And now old Quelch is speaking,
And his face with wrath is scarlet.
He's overturned his ink-well,
And he bellows for a blotter.
Oh, ponder, boys, and think well
On the tragic life of Trotter!

[Supplement iv.

CAPPED FOR GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 12.)

probably be out before he and Smithy arrived. Squiff and Peter Todd would both have batted, of course; it was not to be supposed that Wingate would bat two short.

And that meant that either he or Vernon-Smith would be out of the game!

There would be only one place left to fill. Toddy had gone as reserve man; but if Toddy had batted he was now one of the team, and must remain.

Wharton's mind was made up at once. The Bounder should not suffer for his generosity.

But the Bounder's mind was also at work, and the Bounder did not feel that he had been generous—quite the contrary, in fact.

His wrath was subsiding. Every mile they reeled off lessened it.

After all, what had he to complain of in Wharton's conduct?

He thought of the many times Harry had stood by him.

Dash it all, it was up to a fellow to play the game!

Meanwhile, at Lanchester, Greyfriars had lost the toss, and had got rid of their opponents for the very moderate score of 55. The wicket was drying under a hot sun, after heavy rain overnight. It would probably be easier later on; but it was at its worst during the school's innings, and eight were down for 47.

Peter Todd alone remained to help the skipper. The two missing men had not turned up.

Peter kept up his wicket with care while Wingate hit, and in twenty minutes as many runs were added to the score.

Then Wingate was caught at point, close to the ground, a stroke that looked worth four, but proved his downfall.

"That finishes our innings, I suppose," he said.

But Peter Todd waved his bat towards the pavilion, where Harry Wharton and the Bounder, with Tom Redwing, had just appeared.

"Do you mind if it's more than the proper two minutes before our next man comes in, Jenkins?" said Wingate to the Lanchester skipper, an old opponent. "He's only just turned up, and now I don't know which of them he is. I shall have to settle that."

"That's all right, old fellow," said Jenkins.

"Thanks no end! I won't keep you waiting longer than can be helped."

Wingate ran off. He had made 41 out of the 67 on the board, no one else having reached double figures.

"You'll have to toss for it," he told the two Remove juniors. "I'm not going to choose between you, and I'm not asking questions; so you can leave any explanations till later."

"I'd rather not toss. Let Vernon-Smith play," said Harry.

"It's no good tossin'. I can't play. I shouldn't be a scrap of use. I've strained my wrist," growled the Bounder.

His ungracious manner served to prevent Harry's suspecting that story, as the Bounder had fully intended it should.

But Tom Redwing, with less to excite him than Wharton, wondered how his chum could have driven as he had done with a damaged wrist, also just when it had been damaged.

He guessed that Vernon-Smith was lying. Tom was as truthful a fellow as any at Greyfriars, but he could not find

it in his heart to condemn that generous lie.

Harry Wharton hurried on his pads, and went out to join Peter Todd.

He tried all he knew to subdue his excitement as he made his way to the wicket. The rush to get to Lanchester, the sudden transition from his unselfish resolve to yield up his claim, to finding himself thus thrust into the team without any room for choice, the state of the game—all these things had made his heart beat faster and his head feel giddy.

But as he took guard he found his eyes clearing, his brain growing cool, and he faced the bowler with a straight bat and plenty of pluck.

For a glorious half-hour he and Peter Todd kept together. They could not score fast; but neither gave a chance, and both made good strokes. Of the 29 wanted to put the score above that of Lanchester they had made 27 when Peter was clean bowled.

"I'm afraid that loses us the game," said Wingate to Gwynne. "We shall never get them out again as cheaply. But I'm not blaming Todd—he played up like a man. And as for Wharton, he looked as if he could have stayed all the afternoon."

"Faith, there's heaps of time yet, George," said Gwynne cheerily. "Your young lions were good value, and if I were you I'd give them another chance in the field. All three of them can bowl a bit, and I rather fancy this wicket might suit Todd."

"How did you hurt your wrist, Smithy?" inquired Tom Redwing of his chum.

They had sat side by side without speaking to one another while that last wicket stand was in progress, though

both had cheered every scoring stroke the two Removes had made. And gradually the Bounder's frowning brow had cleared.

Now he grinned as he whispered in Redwing's ear:

"In my imagination, old top!"

Lanchester went in for forcing tactics in their second innings. It was plain that they regarded the match as won, though by the narrowest possible margin, and thought they might as well have some hitting practice.

The 100 went up in less than an hour, with only two men out. All the bowling had been treated alike.

Then suddenly came a change. Peter Todd, bowling a trifle faster than usual, and Squiff, whose pace was always fast, had the batsmen in trouble. In quick succession three wickets fell. But not a man was bowled. All three had been caught by Wharton at second slip, and all three catches were really fine ones, that none but an active and capable field would have been likely to take.

Five for 111 was very different from two for 103.

And soon it was six for 115—a 4 off Peter, and then a batsman bowled middle stump by Squiff.

Then, just as Greyfriars appeared to be getting on top, came a stand.

The next two batsmen, though none too sure, added 40 in twenty-five minutes without giving an actual chance. Todd and Field were taken off, and Wingate and Wharton went on.

Wingate bowled one of the pair with his third ball. Seven for 155.

Harry's first ball was driven hard back to him with a terrific force. It came at him breast high, and looked as though it might well go through him,



Wingate ran out to meet the Remove junior who had made the winning hit for the First Eleven. The skipper's handsome face was glowing with joy and excitement. He snatched the cap from his own head and put it on Harry Wharton's. "You know what that means?" he cried. "You're capped for Greyfriars—you've won your First Eleven colours!" (See Chapter 9.)

for he made no attempt to get out of its way.

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed the Bounder. "He's held it! Bravo, Wharton! I could never have done that. Redwing!"

Tom was not so sure. But he joined heartily in the applause, and was honestly glad to see Wharton doing such big things. From the field came a ringing salvo of cheers, and Jenkins, the Lanchester skipper, stood up in the pavilion and clapped.

Eight for 155.

Then the next man got his leg in front of a straight one, and, to the yell from nearly every man in the field the umpire answered. "Out!"

Nine for 155.

Wingate sent down one of his speediest to the last man, who had got opposite him through a stolen single off Wharton's last ball.

It came breaking in from the off, with lots of spin on it, keeping low. It hit the bottom of the middle stump hard and sent the bails flying. A ball that might have bowled anyone—far too good for the last man of a club team!

All out, 156! Greyfriars with a chance still—158 to win, and 95 minutes to get the runs in!

Ten minutes promptly after the close of the innings Peter Todd and Harry Wharton left the pavilion together, padded and gloved, entrusted with the chance of giving the school a start on the road to victory.

It was a bold move of Wingate's, and a generous action.

"They both batted jolly well in the last innings," he told the other seniors. "They have their ridin' orders now—get runs or get out! I'm confident they'll live up to them. And Field is goin' in next. When we happen on three colts like these we ought to encourage them, I think."

And the rest agreed. Loder and Carne would not have done. Walker might not have done. But Loder and Carne and Walker were away, and the men to whom Wingate spoke were of different breed. Even Cecil Reginald Temple admitted that he considered Wingate right, though he did wish secretly that the skipper had thought of him.

"What a chance this would have been for you, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing, almost sadly.

"That's all right. They've earned their chance," answered the Bounder.

He might not be able to help regretting that the chance had not come his way, but he had made up his mind not to be grudging.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Hit!

IF the Lanchester skipper imagined that Wingate had given up all idea of going for victory he was speedily disillusioned. The two Removites wasted no time. Off the first two balls both broke their ducks, backing one another up in great style, and at the end of the over Todd had scored 7, Wharton eight, every ball having been hit for a run or runs.

But to go all out for runs before one has one's eye in is risky.

Both knew that. Both were ready to take the risk. It was too great in Peter's case.

With his score at 10, he let out at a tempting long-hop, and was well caught in the country.

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Before he had reached the pavilion Squiff was on his way to the vacated wicket.

The Australian junior smiled cheerily at Wharton, took guard, and proceeded to take risks, just as Peter had done.

A slow right-hander was on. Squiff paid him no respect whatever. He carted a straight good-length ball round to the on; cut one for 4, and scored a single past short-leg off the last of the over.

The other bowler was fastish left. Squiff hit him for 2, 2 again, and a single. Then Harry Wharton played two really good balls, and drove a bad one past mid-off for 4.

Squiff, facing the slow man again, slammed another 4. But that was his last scoring stroke. The bowler dropped one a trifle slower, a trifle shorter, and cover held a good catch.

Two wickets had fallen for 41, but meanwhile Greyfriars had kept well ahead of the clock, and Wingate was more than satisfied.

He sent Gwynne in next. The Irish senior was a hitter by nature. He needed no orders.

During the next ten minutes Harry Wharton only played about as many balls, scoring off four of them. Gwynne pasted the bowling mightily. He was missed twice, but both catches were hard ones. Then, in jumping out to drive, he was beaten by a big break and stumped.

He had scored 25, and the total was now 73. So quickly had the runs come that Wingate made up his mind to alter his tactics.

It was he who came in next. Gwynne had been out off the last ball of an over, and while the field changed the skipper called Wharton for a word or two mid-way of the pitch.

"You're playin' the game right up to the hilt, Wharton," he said. "But now I don't want you to risk too much. If I can stay at all you may just go on with your natural game. Smother the good ones, an' wait for the bad ones to hit. That's because I'm relyin' on you to see us through, an' we've more time now, thanks to Todd an' Field an' Gwynne an' you."

Harry was no end pleased. It was a big compliment Wingate had paid him. "Relying on you to see us through"—could any captain well have said more to his most trusted henchman?

It would not be Harry Wharton's fault if he did not help to carry Greyfriars to victory!

But he did not make the mistake of stonewalling. He longed to be in when the winning hit was made, but never for a moment did he put his own interests in front of his side's. He lost no chance of scoring; and, though Wingate made three to his one, he was not slow.

The skipper was going great guns. He was at the top of his form, and the ball looked big to him. Four—four—six, clean out of the ground! It seemed as though the school would win with plenty of time to spare.

But then a big hit failed to carry quite far enough. Long-on waited for the ball to come down, and froze on to it when it came.

Wingate had scored 31 out of 44 put on for the fourth wicket.

The total was now 117 for four.

A minute or two later it was 117 for five. Faulkner had come and gone, clean bowled.

Cecil Reginald Temple came next, jaunty and seemingly self-possessed, but feeling very serious deep down in him.

Temple did his share. He helped Wharton to carry the score to 145, and made just over half the runs while he was in. But he never got fairly set, and

certainly he never looked as good value as did the Removite.

"Don't talk to me!" snapped the Bounder, up in the pavilion, when Squiff said something. "I'm watchin' Wharton."

"He hasn't made a mistake yet," said Tom Redwing gently.

And the Bounder flashed a smile to him. Tom understood better than Squiff or Peter Todd.

Blundell got one too good for him, and retired without scoring. Six for 145! Only thirteen wanted, and time enough still, but the situation grown more critical.

Seven for 147! But it was not Wharton who had gone. Everybody's faith was pinned to Wharton.

Now came a bad ten minutes. The Removite could not get the bowling, and his partner could do nothing with it. The Lanchester men were like cats on hot bricks in the field, determined not to let the victory they had counted as theirs at the end of the first innings slip out of their grasp; and the bowling was better than it had been at any previous stage.

Time was slipping away. The clock had gained ever since Wingate's departure. But it was not Wharton's fault. He was doing all that one man could. And now it was recognised that he could not afford to take any risk.

That, at least, was what the more cautious thought. That might well have been what Wharton, not constitutionally reckless, was thinking.

But Harry saw the matter more clearly.

If he did not get the runs it was not likely anyone would, and the minutes were passing, and the runs were not coming, and it was not a draw Greyfriars played for—if they did not win they were beaten!

A late cut by North got past second slip. It was a good stroke, but the fieldsmen was after the ball at once.

"Come on!" yelled Harry, and North ran for a three.

The ball was flung to the farther end, and he only just got home in time. But he was home, and it had been the first ball of an over, and now, with eight wanted for victory and only five minutes to go, Wharton had his chance.

He played a badly pitched ball for two and still kept the bowling.

Wingate applauded vociferously, and the rest of the eleven joined in with a heartiness that brought a flush of embarrassment to Harry Wharton's set face.

Ah! A short-pitched one. Harry jumped out and drove hard. The ball went between cover and mid off, and reached the boundary.

The Greyfriars yell rose to the skies.

"One to tie—two to win!"

Two balls on the wicket, and both a perfect length. Then one a little shorter, but still a good ball. Harry turned it deftly to leg—a possible run, because North was backing up well, but not an easy one. Again North got home with an inch or two to spare, and Wharton faced the other bowler.

"Last over," said the umpire gravely.

One—two—three balls kept out; good balls all, that took some playing.

"He's as cool as a cucumber," said Wingate. "He'll do it, you see! Hurrah!"

Harry had done it. The fourth ball was a foot wide of the leg stump, and, sweeping round, he had sent it to the boundary!

Wingate ran out to meet him. The skipper's rugged face was glowing with joy and excitement.

He snatched the cap from his own head and put it on Harry's.

(Continued on page 28.)

Begin This Magnificent Series of Complete Detective Stories To-day, Boys!

The QUEST of the PURPLE SANDALS



No. 4.—THE QUEST IN QUEBEC!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Amazing Escape!

"P"ON my word, Drake, I feel ten years younger to-day than I did yesterday!"

Ferrals Locke, the world-famous private detective, said that to his young assistant as he threw himself contentedly into a deckchair on the promenade deck of the steamship Rockarra. Jack Drake seated himself next his chief and gave a sigh of satisfaction as Locke called a steward and ordered a couple of "long" lemonades.

The two, who had been indulging in some cricket practice at the nets with their fellow-passengers, were travelling to Canada in this fast steamer of the Rock Line, on some of the most important business they had ever undertaken. Their client was no less a person than the British Home Secretary himself. The case was the most remarkable and important of their career.

A few days before they had set sail from Liverpool a Professor Arnold Erskine had been slain mysteriously at Dulwich. His dying words had been, "Don't break open the sandals—!" And these had puzzled the great sleuth considerably until the Home Secretary had sent for him. Then he learnt that the professor had unearthed the remarkable secret of converting base metal into gold, and that if the discovery became public a terrific financial panic would ensue throughout the civilised nations.

It was proved that the professor's secret was contained in a document, which could not be found among the dead man's effects. At once Locke had thought of the professor's last words. Discovering that the old scientist had owned a pair of purple sandals of Indian design, he had come to the conclusion that the eccentric old gentleman had concealed his secret in one of them.

Straightway there had commenced the great hunt for the purple sandals. By brilliant detective work Locke had discovered the murderer of the professor—a scoundrel, none other than Dr. Harvey

Kruse, who for years had professed to be the friend of the old scientist.

Speedily it had become clear that Kruse had learnt of the sandals coming into the possession of a Canadian gentleman named Joseph Meech, who had sailed for Montreal in the Ethelbert, of the Viking Line. Eluding the police at Liverpool, Kruse, with astounding cleverness, had succeeded in concealing himself on board the Rockarra.

At sea circumstances had forced his hand, and he had brutally killed one of the liner's passengers. Despite the astounding astuteness with which the amazing crook attempted to cover his crime, Ferrers Locke made no mistake. Within some hours of the committal of the murder Dr. Harvey Kruse, the most dangerous and unscrupulous scoundrel who ever disgraced a honourable profession, was in irons, with an armed sentry over him.

In the light of this, Locke's statement that he felt ten years younger can easily be understood. With Kruse out of the way, the chief danger in his quest for the sandals was removed. For to secure the professor's formula Kruse would have stopped at nothing—indeed, it would have given him the greatest pleasure to have added Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake to the victims of his murderous hand.

As the great sleuth and his assistant sipped the lemonade the steward brought them they felt extremely satisfied with life. Now did their chance of securing the coveted sandals speedily seem very bright indeed.

While thus they took their leisure two burly forms approached along the promenade deck. One was smartly garbed in blue, and bore much gold lace upon his peaked cap and sleeves. It was Captain Balding, the commanding officer of the Rockarra. The other, now dressed in ordinary civilian attire, was Inspector Pyecroft, of Scotland Yard.

The two stopped before Ferrers Locke, and the inspector rubbed his hands together, his ruddy face beaming with satisfaction.

"Well, Mr. Locke," he said, "the cap'n and I have just been down to see the prisoner. There's no chance of his getting away this time."

"Your task as gaoler is an easy one, my dear Pyecroft," murmured Locke. "Personally, I shouldn't be too cock-sure of Kruse, even though the fellow is in irons."

"Phsaw!" said the burly Scotland Yard man. "He won't slip through my fingers."

Pyecroft lighted a somewhat bent cigar with the air of an exceedingly important person. Certainly he felt important. When Locke had captured the master-crook he had generously allowed the inspector to take the credit. Now Pyecroft really was beginning to believe that it was his own astuteness which had put Kruse in irons. Already he saw official promotion staring him in the face.

"I think I ought to explain," put in the captain of the Rockarra, "that I must consider myself responsible for the safe keeping of the prisoner until we berth at Quebec. I shall keep him in irons, and an armed sentry posted continuously on the cabin."

"Wise precautions, sir," said Ferrers Locke, rising and stretching himself. "Kruse is as cunning as a fox and as strong as a grizzly bear. But those qualities are of little use against a revolver-bullet."

During the day the Rockarra kept steadily on her course, her nose pointed towards the American continent. Towards evening, though, an unexpected interruption of the voyage took place.

A Portuguese tramp steamer bound for Bilbao signalled to the ocean greyhound that a member of her crew had become desperately ill. The liner was hove to, and the ship's surgeon proceeded to the tramp in the whaler to diagnose and report upon the case.

Half an hour later the doctor returned to the Rockarra, bringing the patient with him. The man had been smitten with acute appendicitis.

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Long after, when the tramp was hulled down on the ocean, the liner rolled lazily in the Atlantic swells. For it had been found necessary immediately to operate upon the patient, and humanity demanded that passengers and mails must wait while the skilled hands of the surgeon struggled to save a human life.

Within three hours after the successful outcome of this operation a further unexpected delay took place. This time it was due to a breakdown in the engine-room.

Ferrers Locke, who had possessed his soul in absolute patience during the first delay, now fretted and fumed at this extra wait.

In taking passage on board the Rockarra, he had estimated that the liner would reach Quebec easily six hours ahead of the Ethelbert, in which Joseph Meech, the Canadian, had sailed. Now, even if the Rock liner used forced draught, it was exceedingly unlikely that she would beat the slower boat to the Canadian port.

"Hang it!" said Locke to his assistant after dinner that night. "Our luck's dead out, my boy. It's unlikely Meech will dispose of the purple sandals before we see him, but we must take no chances. Providing the sandals are still in his possession—and we've no reason for thinking otherwise—a wireless message to the Ethelbert should do the trick."

So before he turned in that night Locke sent an urgent wireless call to the ship that was ploughing the seas somewhere in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. And even as Locke, with easier mind, prepared to turn in, the message to Joseph Meech flashed through the night:

"On no account dispose of purple sandals until I see you."
"FERRERS LOCKE."

Time passed, and the Rockarra crept in between Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, and so past Rimouski, up the St. Lawrence River to the port of Quebec, made famous so many years before by the epic exploit of General Wolfe.

Locke had received a wireless communication from Meech in reply to his:

"O.K. See you in Montreal."

Before even the Rockarra came to her berth beneath the frowning Heights of Abraham, Locke became aware that the Ethelbert had left Quebec already for Montreal. Whether Meech had gone on in the ship, or had taken train from Quebec, he did not know. Already he had decided that he and Drake would make the journey by rail, that being quicker than the voyage up the St. Lawrence.

Leaning on the rail of the promenade deck, Locke and Drake gazed down upon the wharf, where a crowd was hemmed behind barriers. Before the barriers were one or two members of the Canadian Police Force. Obviously they were there in response to a wireless message that had been sent by Captain Balding, announcing that he had a prisoner on board. A few Customs officers before a shed, through which all passengers must pass before reaching the town, and a number of employees of the steamship company, were also present to receive the liner.

The mooring lines were made fast and the first gangway thrown aboard, and Captain Balding came down from the bridge and joined Inspector Pyecroft.

Noticing them, Ferrers Locke moved along the deck and addressed the captain.

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"I presume, sir," he said, "that you will allow no one ashore until the prisoner Kruse has been removed by the police?"

"That's all right, Mr. Locke," put in the Scotland Yard man rather haughtily. "Of course, the captain has given orders to that effect already. And I myself shall personally see that no one goes ashore. All the same, it is a needless precaution. Kruse is still in irons, and the sentry armed with the revolver is in the cabin with him. I have been down there only a few moments ago. You'd have as much chance of swimming back to England as Kruse has of getting loose in Quebec."

Ferrers Locke smiled. He was quite satisfied. Having washed his hands of Kruse, and having seen the tremendous precautions taken against the chance of the crook's escaping, he really had not the slightest fear of the man getting away.

With a cheery smile he took leave of Pyecroft and the captain in case he did not see them again before he himself went ashore. Then he and Drake went down to their cabin to secure their handbags—the only luggage they had with them.

Going up on deck again some minutes later, they found the gangways ready for the disembarkation of the passengers. The formalities of health inspection had been completed off the quarantine station in the river previously. Pyecroft was in the act of greeting two or three police officials who had just come aboard.

At once the inspector spotted the great private sleuth, and insisted on introducing him to the Canadian officials.

"We're just going to take Kruse to the lock-up, Mr. Locke," announced Pyecroft. "Then you will be free to go ashore."

"Thanks, old man!" said Locke, with a laugh. "We shan't be slow in getting away. No one has gone ashore yet?"

"Not a soul," answered Pyecroft—"except the captain himself."

Ferrers Locke raised his eyebrows.

"The captain! What on earth did he want to go ashore for?"

"He went down to speak to one of the directors of the Rock Line who was on the wharf, Mr. Locke," replied one of the Canadian police officials. "He told us so as he passed us on the gangway."

"Do you know Captain Balding?" inquired Locke sharply.

"No, sir; but—"

"Hang it, Mr. Locke!" broke in Pyecroft. "There's nothing wrong about a captain of his own ship going ashore, is there? I personally saw Captain Balding go down the gangplank."

"You saw his face?"

"No—his back. But 'pon my soul, Mr. Locke, we can't stand here answering foolish questions. We must get the prisoner off the ship—passengers are waiting to be allowed to go ashore."

Without a word Ferrers Locke set his handbag on the deck and inclined his head towards his young assistant.

"Drake," he whispered, "slip past the sentry and go and find the captain of the Rockarra, or whoever went down that gangway a few moments ago! If possible be back at the head of the gangplank to meet me in five minutes' time. I'm going below with these priceless coppers."

While Drake hurried away on his errand, Ferrers Locke made his way down to Deck D with the police officials.

In the darkened starboard alleyway he slipped ahead and reached the cabin used for the prisoner. The door was shut and no one was in the vicinity. Locke placed his hand on the brass handle of the door

and pushed gently. To his stupefaction the door slowly opened inwards to his touch, and brought up against something soft and yielding.

He thrust his shoulder against the door, and it gave sufficiently for him to enter.

In the cabin an amazing sight met his eyes. In irons, sitting on the deck, garbed in the civilian clothes of Harvey Kruse, was the seaman sentry. Full length nearby was the commanding officer of the Rockarra, a sailor's uniform piled untidily upon him.

Inspector Pyecroft and the Canadian police crowded the threshold of the door.

"G-good heavens, Mr. Locke!" gasped the Scotland Yard man in dismay. "What has happened?"

Ferrers Locke swung round and faced the astounded-looking police in the doorway. And the expression on his face was tigerish in its ferocity.

"You howling jackasses!" he roared. "D'you know what you've done? You've let the murderer, Kruse, walk off the ship under your very eyes!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Negro on the Montreal Express!

IF Inspector Pyecroft and the Canadian police officials had been struck on their heads with a large wooden club they could not have looked more stunned than they did upon hearing Locke's news.

But the appalling disaster which had overtaken his plans seemed to have the effect of making the famous private sleuth as alert as a lynx on the trail of its prey.

"Two of you get off the ship at once!" he snapped. "My assistant went on the wharf, and maybe he has picked up information as to the whereabouts of the only man who has left this ship save himself. You others stay here with me."

A couple of the police officials hurried away, Pyecroft and one of the other Canadians remaining.

Stooping down, Ferrers Locke made a hasty examination of Captain Balding.

"He's had a thump on the side of the head with a fist, I should judge. Kruse was as strong as a gorilla, and I bet he laid the skipper out with one blow!"

"B-but how could the doctor have got out of the irons?" whined Pyecroft. "And there was the sentry armed with the revolver here."

"The sentry's still here," said Locke dryly. "But there's no revolver. Kruse has taken that with him."

Leaving the captain, who showed some signs of returning consciousness, Locke turned his attention to the man in irons.

This unlucky individual presented a curious sight. He sat on the deck, the handcuffs on his wrists and the chains about his ankles, slowly swaying backwards and forwards, an insane grin on his face.

"He's been drugged," groaned Pyecroft. "Gosh, why didn't I insist on staying myself with that crook? This wouldn't have happened then."

Ferrers Locke did not seem to hear the remarks of the Scotland Yard man who was chiefly sorry for himself over the affair. Instead, he gazed full into the eyes of the captive garbed in Kruse's discarded clothes. In them he saw a strange light that told him the truth about this amazing episode. The man was hypnotised!

Raising his hand, Locke brought it sharply across the cheek of the seaman. The man shot bolt upright as though jerked into that position by an invisible

wire. It was as though he had awakened suddenly from a deep sleep.

At first he gazed about him wildly as though dreading to see something or somebody of whom he had a terrible fear. Gradually, however, he was able to tell his story while Ferrers Locke unfastened the irons from his body by means of a key he had in his possession.



Suddenly the detective shouted: "Look, he's drawn his gun!" Taken off his guard, the man with the revolver glanced round. Instantly Ferrers Locke kicked upwards wildly with his boot and sent the pistol hurtling out of the man's hand. (See page 23.)

It appeared that while Kruse was awaiting the coming of the police, the seaman had sat in the cabin with the revolver close to hand and the key to the manacles attached to his belt. Pretending that a spark or piece of grit from the open port had lodged in his eye, Kruse had asked the man to get it out.

The seaman had obligingly looked into the eyes of the doctor and found his own held as though in a vice. And it was as clear as daylight that in less than half a minute Kruse had completely gained hypnotic control over the unsuspecting man.

Ferrers Locke had been quite unaware that the doctor possessed mesmeric powers, and the knowledge further enlightened him upon the amazing super-crook against whom he was doomed again to pit his wits.

The rest of the story of the doctor's escape Locke himself was able to reconstruct, assisted by a statement made by the unfortunate captain of the Rockarra upon his regaining full consciousness.

Having hypnotised the sentry, Kruse had ordered the man to unshackle him. The fellow did not remember doing this, but it was only too obvious that he had obeyed without question. Quickly Kruse had exchanged clothes and had manacled the man who had been set to watch over him.

Apparently, Kruse had intended to make a desperate effort to escape in the disguise of a seaman, but Fate furnished him with an even better chance. As he was about to leave the cabin the com-

manding officer of the Rockarra unlocked the door and entered. Kruse, lying in wait, crashed his fist down upon the unlucky skipper's head. Falling like a pole-axed steer, the captain had been hastily dragged inside the cabin and the door closed.

Again Kruse made a speedy change. He was about the build of Captain Balding, and, dragging the clothes off the sea-captain, he donned them himself. The seaman's clothes he tossed contemptuously on the skipper. Then he had glided from the cabin, marched boldly on deck, and, keeping his peaked cap well drawn over his eyes, passed unrecognised from the ship.

"B-but surely some member of my crew was able to recognise the scoundrel?" said the bewildered captain of the Rockarra, after Locke had quickly explained Kruse's manner of escape.

"The crew were busy at their stations by the mooring-lines," answered the sleuth. "Those who did see the man probably only caught a glimpse of his back, like Inspector Pyecroft did. Of course, not for a moment would anyone dream of Kruse being in your uniform. It was the colossal cheek of the whole scheme which insured its success. Now tell me, sir, had you any money in your uniform pockets?"

The captain wrinkled his brow. "By Jove—yes!" he answered at length. "I obtained two hundred dollars from the purser yesterday, and it was in a wallet in my breast-pocket." Ferrers Locke groaned deeply.

"If Kruse has succeeded in reaching the streets of Quebec," he said, "our task will be the more difficult, as he has money. Without money at all, he might have been captured within a few hours. However, let us go up on deck."

Reaching the deck, they were in time to see Jack Drake come bounding up a gangway. Immediately Locke darted across to the boy and grasped him by the arm.

"Well, my lad?" he said eagerly.

"The man in the blue uniform who left this ship has disappeared, sir," panted the lad.

Locke muttered a bitter exclamation beneath his breath.

"And that was Kruse!" he said aloud.

"Snakes! I guessed as much, sir!" said Drake. "The chap marched boldly into the Customs shed. Then, to the amazement of everyone, he took a flying leap over one of the long wooden counters there, and, bowling over a couple of officials, got outside. Dashing down the docks, he leaped into one of the motor-cars waiting for the passengers, and at the point of the pistol ordered the chauffeur to drive away. Some Customs men sprang into a taxi and went in pursuit. It was unlikely I should pick up the trail starting so late, so I returned here to tell you what had occurred."

"You've done well, my boy! Now we must get off this ship and make

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certain that we catch our train to Montreal. Pyecroft and the Canadian police must look after the doctor."

Taking leave of the chastened captain of the liner, the sleuth and his assistant went ashore. While in the Customs shed they were rejoined by Inspector Pyecroft, who was in despondent mood.

"Tut, tut, man!" said Locke. "Set the wires humming all over the Continent! Communicate with the captain of every ship in port and notify the railway officials, giving them a description of the wanted man."

"I'm just going to do all that, Mr. Locke," answered Pyecroft. "I wish, though, you were staying in Quebec a few hours."

"I must leave on the one forty-five train," replied Locke decisively, "and I've only half an hour to catch that! It is absolutely necessary for me to see Joseph Meech in Montreal at the earliest possible moment. Nevertheless, I am as anxious that Kruse should be under lock and key again as you are. I sha'n't feel that the sandals are safe so long as he is at large. If you think that Drake will be of help to you in catching the fellow, he may remain with you."

Pyecroft brightened considerably.

"Drake can speak French," he said, "and I can't. This place is full o' French-Canadians, and he'll come in mighty useful."

So it was arranged. Jack Drake remained to render what assistance he could to the police, while Ferrers Locke took a taxi to a hotel near the railway-station.

Locking himself in his room, he quickly made a complete transformation of his appearance. He judged that Kruse would adopt some kind of disguise at the earliest possible moment, and he might bump across the crook without at first being aware of the fact. So, unless he himself also adopted a disguise, it would give Kruse, who knew him, an advantage which the astute sleuth was loth to concede.

Having given his features a more youthful appearance with some cosmetics, he fixed a sandy toothbrush moustache to his upper lip and an excellent sandy wig over his own natural dark hair. Then he placed a monocle in his eye and drew a check cap down on his forehead.

Surveying himself in the looking-glass, he smiled broadly. He was now, in appearance, a typical English greenhorn just landed from the Old Country.

He put the money in payment for his room on the dressing-table, together with a tip for the chambermaid, and, taking up his bag, left the apartment. At the end of the corridor was a glass door leading to an emergency fire ladder. Ferrers Locke hastily descended the ladder and landed on the ground at the back of the hotel.

By the time that Ferrers Locke had dashed across to the railway-station, or depot as it was called, and had purchased his ticket, barely three minutes was left to him. Quite a crowd of people, mostly from the Old Country, were travelling in the Colonist and tourist coaches, but the first-class cars were not unduly crowded. Locke was fortunate in finding a window-seat, and, settling himself down, lighted a cigarette. Hardly had he set the first blue smoke-ring swirling aloft than the great bell abaft the funnel of the locomotive began to toll and the train to move slowly from the depot.

The train leaving Quebec at one forty-five p.m. was due to reach Montreal at six forty-five. Thus Ferrers Locke had five hours at his disposal.

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At the Quebec depot he had noticed a number of police who had been on the look-out for anyone answering to the description of Dr. Harvey Kruse. The sleuth himself deemed there to be but little likelihood of Kruse being aboard the train. In his opinion, it was far more likely that the astute doctor would try to beat back across the river or reach some other town in the fast motor-car he had commandeered.

Once the train was well under way, Locke moved slowly through the cars, casually observing his fellow-passengers. His own appearance as an English dude created no little amusement, and no one dreamed that the foppish-looking ass with the monocle was in reality the greatest sleuth of the age.

The scrutiny Locke took of his fellow-passengers made him more convinced that Kruse was not on the train. One burly Irishman in a Colonist car was not unlike the doctor in build. But the man was with a party of Irish immigrants, and so well known to a large party of women and children that it was impossible for him to be Kruse.

At Pontneuf, where the train made its first stop at two-forty-six, Locke, strolling up and down the platform, overheard the stationmaster tell the train-conductor a bit of news that set his ears tingling. The news apparently had come through on the railway telephone. It was to the effect that a motor-driver had been found dead behind a disused building just outside Quebec and the car deserted in the roadway.

"Phew!" muttered Locke to himself. "That's Kruse's work! The desperado probably doubled back into Quebec after this fresh crime. Let's hope he fell into Pyecroft's net!"

Upon the conductor shouting the usual "All aboard!" Locke clambered back into the train, and, resettling himself in his seat, lighted his pipe. That favourite briar always helped him when he wished to think over a problem, and he lighted it almost unconsciously on such occasions.

Suddenly he sat up with a start. It was not that he had heard anything or saw anything to disturb the train of his thoughts. But as the train ran on through the Quebec countryside, he subconsciously became aware of a pair of eyes glued upon him. The possessor of the eyes was a burly negro, whose uniform revealed him to be the train porter.

All passenger-trains in Canada and the United States carry these coloured porters, and, being aware of the fact, there was not, to the sleuth, anything remarkable in such a circumstance. Yet, once he had noted the man, Locke felt strangely uneasy and unsettled.

The negro, on his part, after looking curiously at the monocled Englishman, started to shuffle off down the car. On the impulse, Locke called him back.

"Hi, portah!"

The coloured man either did not hear, or pretended he did not hear.

"Hi, portah! I want you, y'know!"

This time a stout gentleman who was ensconced in a seat farther down the car with a gaudily-coloured travelling-rug on his knee, gave the porter a slap on the ribs with his finger. The negro turned round and faced Locke inquiringly.

"Yas, sah? What yo' want?"

"Come heah, portah!" drawled Locke.

Looking none too pleased at the summons, the porter obeyed, and Locke gazed languidly at the fellow as he stood before him.

"Aw, I say, portah," said Locke,

"have you any—aw—iced watah on this beastly twain?"

The coloured man replied in the affirmative.

"Well, bwing me a glass full, fellow," drawled the disguised sleuth.

For a couple of moments the negro remained motionless before the detective. At first Locke thought the man was day-dreaming, and had not heard what he had said. Then he became aware that the fellow's eyes were glued upon the pipe he was sucking.

Involuntarily a flush passed over Locke's face as he curtly sent the man about his business. He remembered that this pipe he was smoking would effectually give him away to any observant person who had known him aboard the Rockarra. That pipe had hardly ever left Locke's lips in leisure moments on the steamship. Now, although disguised as an English dude, he had unthinkingly put on the pipe which he must have been observed smoking scores of times on shipboard.

Perhaps it mattered not a jot. But Locke had got Kruse on the brain. It even occurred to him that this negro porter might be the amazing doctor, though he laughed at himself for the thought.

Taking the pipe from his mouth, he knocked the ashes from it and restored it to his pocket. If by some miracle that negro porter was Kruse, he would have learnt that Algernon Gay—as the sleuth now called himself—and Ferrers Locke were one and the same man.

A few minutes elapsed, and the porter returned, bearing a glass of iced water in his black hand. Ferrers Locke leaned forward to take it, and his eyes gazed keenly at the man's flesh. If this man was indeed a white man his disguise was remarkable. He was not wearing grease-paint, and only a very excellent stain would give such a realistic negroid colour.

And then as Locke took the glass he noted the man's finger-nails. Each finger-nail bore a cleanly-marked cuticle—the little border of skin which overlaps the nail. In a genuine full-blooded negro the cuticle does not exist, and Locke knew it.

Taking a ten-dollar bill from his pocket, Locke dangled it before the darky, and began questioning him about the sights to be seen on the run from Quebec to Montreal. A genuine negro porter he knew would answer questions for half an hour or longer with a ten-dollar bait before his eyes.

This man answered the questions in broad negro dialect, but some of his replies were obviously lies.

"Yo' see, sah," he said, in answer to one poser put to him by the sleuth. "I usually hab been on de trains out Vancouver way."

"Ah, then this is not your usual line—what?" drawled Locke.

"No, sah! Yo' see, sah, Pedro, de usual man on dis train was not up to de scratch, and he axed me to do de run fo' him."

"Is that so?" murmured Locke. He handed the empty glass to the porter, and his hand wandered back to his hip-pocket as though to draw a pocket-handkerchief to dab his mouth. Immediately he received a stunning blow in the face as the negro hurled the glass full at him.

As Locke's hands shot up instinctively towards his injured face, the black man stooped down and whipped the revolver out of the sleuth's pocket. Shouts arose from every part of the car as passengers leaped excitedly to their feet.

"What are you doing, you black scoundrel?" bellowed the old gentleman with the travelling-rug.

The porter held Locke covered with his own pistol.

"Gen'leman!" he cried. "Dis heah man is Slick Skinner, who robbed de mail train at Snake River, Ontario, t'reo



"Look out!" roared Ferrers Locke. "Get down for your lives!" Hardly had the words left his lips when a terrible explosion rent the air. The crate shivered into a hundred pieces, and the horse attached to the wagon leaped upward into the air and then went galloping madly round the docks. (See page 24.)

months since! He hab a berry clobber disguise, but I'd know him anywhere fo' de crooked rattlesnake he is. Jest yo' tug at dat moustache, sah!"

This last remark was addressed to a tall, military-looking man who had been sitting two seats ahead of Locke.

The detective rapidly surveyed the faces of his fellow passengers.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "I've reason for believing this porter to be none other than the English murderer, Dr. Kruse! I am Ferrers Locke, and—"

"Haw, haw, haw!" burst out the porter. "Berry clobber ob yo', Slick! But we'll get de conductor ob de train; he'll soon show yo' up fo' de dirty crook yo' is!"

On a nod from the darky, the military man reached over and removed Locke's sandy moustache. No one recognised the detective whose appearance was familiar but to few people, even though his name resounded through the civilised world.

"Now, sah," said the darky calmly, "kindly hold dis heah pistol yo' saw me take f'om de crook's pocket, and I'll fetch de conductor. Den yo' will see which ob us am speakin' ob de truth."

"Don't let him go! Don't let him go!" yelled Locke.

"Shoot at once, sah, if he attempts to get up," whispered the darky, as he cautiously handed over the pistol.

Locke saw by the steely gleam in the eyes of the military man that he would shoot without compunction if he made any movement. He would do neither himself nor his cause any good by inviting a bullet.

Suddenly he shouted:

"Look! He's drawn a gun!"

Taken off his guard, the man with the revolver glanced round. Locke kicked upwards wildly with his boot and sent the pistol hurtling out of the man's hand. Rising, he lashed out with his fists,

scattering the throng about him. Fighting desperately with those who attempted to hamper his movements, he strove to reach the negro who was hurrying from the car.

Not even the great Ferrers Locke, powerful though he was, could withstand the strength of the dozen men who hurled themselves upon him.

One and all the passengers believed him to be Slick Skinner, the notorious hold-up man of whom they had heard. They had heard him accused by the negro; they had seen the gun taken from him, and had been shown that he was disguised. On the other hand, not one had penetrated the amazingly clever disguise of the sleuth's great enemy.

Firmly they held the sleuth, awaiting the return of the porter with the conductor. But the minutes slipped by, and the negro failed to return. At last someone else went for the conductor, who arrived on the scene bursting with importance.

"We've caught Slick Skinner, the hold-up man!" explained the passenger of the military appearance.

"Rot!" blurted out Locke furiously. "Conductor, have you seen that negro porter?"

"Yes," answered the trainman. "The black idiot has just attempted to commit suicide."

"Suicide!"

The word was shouted in an incredulous chorus by the passengers.

"That's what it looked like to me," answered the conductor. "He took a flyin' leap off the train jest after we passed through Three Rivers."

The eyes of Ferrers Locke rolled upwards to the polished ceiling of the swaying car, and his hands clutched his torn collar.

"Mice and mumps!" he ejaculated. "The man's a giddy masterpiece!"

Thus, in the expressive slang of his young assistant, did Ferrers Locke comment upon Dr. Harvey Kruse, alias Jackson, the negro porter, and the greatest crook against whom he had ever matched his steel!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Rubber Repair Band!

AFTER the train-conductor had informed the company of the negro's leap from the train, the detective had little difficulty in convincing them that he had been speaking the truth. Taking his gun back from the man who had covered him so obligingly, he rapped off a series of questions at the conductor.

From the answers he received he learnt a good deal.

Firstly, he was able to judge pretty accurately how Kruse had managed to secure the temporary post of porter on the train. Apparently he had disguised himself, and approached Pedro, the regular porter, and had bribed the avaricious darky to let him make the trip in his place. Glad of the money, and unaware that his tempter was a wanted criminal, Pedro had written a note to the conductor of the train. In the missive—which the conductor showed to Locke—Pedro stated he was too unwell to make the journey. Instead, he was sending a substitute in his good friend Jackson, who had worked on trains on other parts of the line.

Upon Jackson's, in Pedro's uniform, delivering this letter at the last possible moment in the Quebec depot, the conductor. But the minutes slipped by, and job, overlooking the irregularity of the proceeding for the sake of having a porter on his train.

Three Rivers, the town by which the
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disguised Kruse had made his get-away so cleverly, was a place of about fourteen thousand in population. Motor-cars would be available, and, as Kruse had money, the wily doctor would take full advantage of the fact.

The next hamlet through which the train was due to pass was Pointe du Lac, eight miles farther on. Here the conductor stopped the train, and a telephone message was sent back to Three Rivers, warning the police to get on the trail of the disguised crook. Warnings were also sent to Quebec, Montreal, and other places. Locke was by no means satisfied, though. He felt inclined to back the elusive Kruse against the whole Canadian police force, after his own experience of the amazing cleverness and coolness of the man.

Ferrers Locke proceeded in the train direct to Montreal, his one object now being to get into touch with Joseph Meech, the man who had purchased the purple sandals from the curio-shop in London.

Arriving at the Place Viger Station, Montreal, Locke took a taxi to St. Leger, Mount Royal, the address of the man he was so anxious to see. Mr. Joseph Meech was at home, and he welcomed the famous sleuth in his beautiful library.

From an Irishman in London Locke had received a description of Mr. Meech, and it fitted the man like a glove. Joseph Meech was fat—very fat—he had a scar on his left cheek and a voice that sounded like a penny tin whistle.

"Mr. Meech," said Ferrers Locke, "I have followed you to Canada to ask you to let me see a pair of purple sandals of Indian design, which you bought at Hawthorne's shop in the Waterloo Road while you were in London. You have not disposed of them?"

"No, Mr. Locke. I had no intention of disposing of them. Your wireless message, which I received before the Ethelbert arrived at port, made me exceedingly curious."

"You have the sandals here, Mr. Meech?"

The Canadian gentleman shook his head.

"No; they are in a crate down at the docks," he answered. "All my heavy luggage came in the hold of the ship. I expect it has been unloaded by this time."

Although Locke was unable to give the Canadian his full reasons for wanting the sandals, Mr. Meech amiably agreed to let him have the footwear for the price which he himself had paid for them. In every way he showed his eagerness to help the sleuth, and it was on his own suggestion that he and Locke taxied down to the docks together.

But here another disappointment awaited the detective. The heavy luggage had not been lifted out of the Ethelbert's hold, and was not going to be taken out until first thing on the following morning.

By interviewing directors of the Viking Line, Ferrers Locke tried to get the work pushed forward. But it was in vain. The men were engaged in the more important task of getting some perishable cargo out of the ship. Besides, they argued in response to the sleuth's pleadings, the crate belonging to Mr. Meech was as safe in the ship's hold for the night as anywhere else.

There was no answer to this logic, and, having satisfied himself that Meech's crate was under a pile of other crates and boxes in the ship's hold, Locke accepted the kindly hospitality of the Canadian for the night. He urged

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 849.

Meech to speak to no one about the sandals.

Outside the docks, Locke parted from his host to visit the headquarters of the Montreal police, promising to show up at St. Leger within the hour. At the police headquarters he learnt that a negro had stolen a grey motor-car in Three Rivers, and had headed south. The car had been found deserted near Montreal. Already the police were scouring Montreal in case Kruse had entered the city.

After this news, Locke almost decided to act as sentry over the Ethelbert for the night. But he realised that such was an extreme precaution to take. If he couldn't get at Meech's crate himself, he was certain that Kruse wouldn't be able to. Besides, Kruse would not know the sandals were still in the Ethelbert.

Going to St. Leger for dinner, he entered the library as Mr. Meech was setting down the telephone-receiver.

"I've just been talking with the police-superintendent, Mr. Locke," said the Canadian. "He seemed extremely anxious to help you in getting the sandals."

"What?" said Locke. "Did the man who spoke to you on the phone ask where they were?"

"Yes."

"And you told him?"

"Yes, of course. As it was the police-superintendent, I—"

"Was his voice deep and gruff, or high-pitched?" demanded Locke.

"Very gruff. But surely you don't think that it wasn't the police-superintendent who was just on the line?"

"I'm mighty sure it wasn't," answered the sleuth, gritting his teeth. "I was talking to the police-superintendent myself not more than fifteen minutes ago. He's a pleasant-spoken man, with a high-pitched voice. I'll bet it was none other than Dr. Harvey Kruse, whose voice you heard over the telephone. And now," he added bitterly, "he knows as much about the sandals and their whereabouts as I do. It's a pity, sir, you neglected to follow my advice."

Poor Mr. Meech was so genuinely upset at his mistake that Ferrers Locke put aside his own feelings, and restored the other's spirits with a joke. After dinner Ferrers Locke went out again, and tried to pick up some clue which might put him on the track of Kruse. But in this he was no more successful than the police. In all probability the doctor had found his way into the Montreal underworld, and was lying low among crooks until the morning.

Shortly after dawn on the following day Ferrers Locke and his host made their way back to the docks, to watch the unloading of the luggage from the holds of the Ethelbert. There was not a sign of anyone bearing the slightest resemblance in build or features to the notorious Kruse.

At last, after a long wait, the coveted wooden crate was hoisted out of the ship by the crane. Locke had hired an express wagon to take it to the house directly the Customs officers had appended the chalk mark to free it from the docks.

The Customs, though, were in obstreperous mood. They wanted to examine the contents of the crate, despite the fact that Meech insisted it contained no dutiable articles. A couple of workmen, armed with crowbars, quickly stripped some of the wood from it, making a large opening. Then one of them thrust his hand inside, but, without apparently disturbing anything, suddenly darted away as though he had seen a poisonous serpent in the box.

It was strange conduct, but only

Ferrers Locke seemed to see any dangerous significance in the action.

"Look out!" he roared suddenly. "Get down—for your lives!"

Hardly had the words left his lips than a terrific explosion rent the air. The crate shattered into a hundred pieces, jagged splinters of wood and articles of wear of all kinds flying through the air in every direction.

The horse attached to the express wagon leaped upward into the air, and then went galloping madly round the docks, dragging the vehicle behind it. Joseph Meech and the Customs men fell face foremost on the ground, and remained there as though fearful of a second explosion following the first. Ferrers Locke himself received a blow on the head from a piece of wood which stunned him for some seconds. Luckily, no one was badly hurt.

When he recovered himself Locke hastily searched through the articles that were strewn over the docks within a radius of a dozen yards. But there were no purple sandals to be found.

Frantically he made inquiries. From questions put to eye-witnesses of what had occurred immediately following the explosion, he learnt that a workman in blue overalls had rushed back and rummaged among the debris. A policeman had seen him, and, suspecting him of looting after the "accident," had given chase. But the man had made good his escape from the docks on the dock policeman's own bicycle.

Locke himself remembered the appearance of the man he had seen helping to break open the case. The fellow was a lean, swarthy individual of the half-breed type. Evidently when he had inserted his hand in the crate he had deposited a small time-fuse bomb in it.

The awful suspicion that the man was no common looter, but in the pay of Dr. Kruse, spurred him to swift action.

From the policeman he obtained a brief description of the bike. Gazing at some soft ground near the exit of the docks, the sleuth carefully examined the fresh tyre-marks that were to be seen.

"H'm! You recently had a rubber repair-band fitted to your machine," he remarked to the policeman. "I can see the diamond tread distinctly at regular intervals cutting across the indistinct lozenge tread of the tyre proper."

"Yes, sir," answered the policeman. "I had a Kino tyre-band put on the front wheel only a couple of days ago."

With this clue to guide him, Ferrers Locke set off on the trail. He was easily able to tell the direction taken by the man on the stolen bike, and inquiries helped him considerably.

By dint of great perseverance, and after many delays, the scent led him to Westmount, five miles outside of the city. Here near a disreputable-looking building he discerned the mark of the Kino rubber repair-band again. And in a shed at the back of the building he found the bicycle itself.

For some time he shadowed the house until he actually saw the man he wanted emerge from it. Two minutes later he quietly signalled to a smart Canadian constable, who, with commendable promptitude, clapped the darbies on the wanted man.

Not, however, until the man was taken to the police headquarters in Montreal for questioning upon the subject of the explosion was a further discovery made. For a finger-print test revealed that the workman in the blue overalls was none other than Slick Skinner, the dangerous hold-up man who had robbed the mail-train at Snake River a month

(Continued on page 28.)

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest, yo-ho——"



Thrilling Old-Time Pirate Stories!

No. 3.—IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Man in Grey.

"**S**AIL under the Black Flag—or walk the plank! I offer you your choice for the last time, and I give you a minute to choose!"

It was late in the afternoon, and the crimson rays of the sinking sun slanted on the waters of the Indian Ocean. Drifting on the rising swell was the *Scourge*, a clipper-built craft of rakish and suspicious appearance, from whose decks and ports scowled the muzzles of cannon, and from whose mizzen floated the Black Flag of ocean outlawry.

She was the ship of Ned Teach, commonly called Blackbeard, who was one of the most daring and ferocious pirates by whom the sea was ever crossed.

It was Blackbeard himself who spoke, and a thrillingly dramatic scene was being enacted on the pirate's deck.

Over the side of the *Scourge* had been run out a plank, so balanced that if anyone stepped out beyond its centre it would tip up and throw him into the sea. Standing on this plank, with the dark-green waves heaving and tossing beneath him, was a middy of the Royal Navy; and near the bulwarks stood Blackbeard, aiming a pistol at the lad's head, while the pirate crew were crowded near their leader, jeering, and waiting with savage interest to see the young prisoner go splashing to his death.

The middy's hands were tied behind him, and his torn uniform and the blood which stained his face showed that he had suffered brutal usage at the hands of his crime-branded captors.

He was Arthur Warden, a midshipman belonging to the ship's company of the *King George*, a powerful frigate which had been sent to bring Blackbeard to book.

During a storm a month before the middy had been washed overboard, but had seized a drifting spar, and floated for hours. It was still a doubtful point as to whether or not he had met with a worse fate than swift death, for he had been picked up by the pirate crew, and Blackbeard had done all he could, first with glittering temptations of wealth, then by dint of threats and brutality, and finally by swearing to kill him unless he gave in, to force him to sail under the Black Flag.

The pirate captain's patience was now worn out, and he was in a more than usually savage temper. For weeks he had eluded the pursuit of the *King George*, but now he knew the frigate was on his track, and that at any hour he was liable to hear the thunder of her broadside, and to be forced to fight for existence.

He had made up his mind that his prisoner should not escape him—that before the frigate hove in sight he should be compelled to join the pirates or walk the plank.

"Do you hear me?" Blackbeard said fiercely, as he cocked his pistol. "Take your choice. I give you one more minute to decide!"

The middy turned on the plank so that he could confront Blackbeard and his men. His eyes were blazing.

"A minute?" he cried. "Why, I don't want a second, you cowardly pirate! I'd rather go to Davy Jones any day than disgrace my uniform by sinking to the level of you and your scoundrels! I've got one comfort. Whatever happens to me, my ship will be jolly soon alongside of you, and you'll all swing at the yardarm!"

Foaming with rage, Blackbeard was about to fire his pistol, but checked himself.

"That would be giving him too easy a death," he snarled. "He shall sink into the sea and drown! Here, Julius, fling your cleaver at him, so that you'll hurt him but not kill him, and knock him off the plank!"

These latter words were addressed to the cook of the *Scourge*—a slouching negro, with one eye and a countenance as ferocious as a tiger and as ugly as sin. He was one of the worst of the pirate crew, and was always chosen as Blackbeard's right-hand man when any black work or devilry was to be done.

He carried a heavy iron cleaver, which he raised to throw at the midshipman, when he was stopped in an unexpected fashion.

Up through the main-companion hatchway had come a man with long white hair and beard. He was dressed in sober grey, like a Quaker merchant, and was apparently very old, for he was bent nearly double.

He tottered up the companion-way feebly, but as soon as he saw what was going forward a wonderful change came over him.

As the black cook's cleaver flashed in the air, the man in grey rushed on him, tore the weapon from him, and dashed him to the deck with a single blow.

Then, as Julius rolled over and over, the man who had dashed him down burst through the pirates by striking at them right and left with the cleaver, and, gaining the bulwarks, he sprang on the plank, and, seizing the middy in his arms, leaped with him into the sea.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Black Cook's Galley.

WAS the man in grey mad, and had he gone to his death together with Arthur Warden?

These were the questions which Blackbeard and his men asked themselves as they crowded to the side of the *Scourge* and looked down at the green waves.

The middy and his strange friend had vanished under the sea, on which the evening shadows were deepening as the sunlight died away.

None of his crew dared to say a word to Blackbeard, who was nearly mad with rage. The black cook was picked up and carried below.

In losing the man in grey the pirate captain thought he had lost a valuable prisoner.

At the time when the corsairs had picked up the middy they had been lying in wait

to intercept a trading ship, among the passengers aboard which, they learned, was a certain Master Gilbert, a rich merchant of Bristol, who could pay a heavy ransom if he were captured.

Led on by Blackbeard, the pirates had boarded the trader, but ere they could do much mischief there had been a cry that the pursuing frigate was near. In his enraged disappointment Blackbeard had threatened to scuttle the craft and send all on board her to their deaths unless the Bristol merchant was given up to him.

At this the old man in grey had tottered feebly forward, and, announcing that he was Master Gilbert, had surrendered to Blackbeard.

He had been carried on board the *Scourge*, but the pirates, while looking on him as a valuable prize, had considered him too old and feeble to need guarding, and had allowed him to do pretty much what he pleased.

Hence his attack on the black cook and his leaping into the sea with the middy had come upon them as overwhelming surprises.

They would have been more astonished even than they were had they known what happened after he disappeared beneath the waves with Arthur Warden.

In concluding that the middy and his rescuer had gone to their deaths, Blackbeard made the greatest mistake of his life.

As they sank into the depths, Arthur Warden felt the strong fingers of his companion close on his collar and hold fast. They rose right under the pirate's hull.

The middy could do nothing to help himself owing to his bound hands; but as they floated to and fro in the water they were swept against a rope which hung over the side of the *Scourge*. To the end of this rope was lashed a rather heavy anchor, to which had been fastened a dozen baited fish-hooks.

Someone aboard the pirate had cast this rope overboard, with the anchor to serve as a lead, in the hope of catching some fish.

As the line swished across his face in the water the middy's companion seized it with his free hand.

Would it bear the strain of the double weight?

There was a moment of intense suspense ere this question was answered in the affirmative.

The cord held firmly. Clinging to it for sheer life, the man exerted all his strength to draw Arthur Warden nearer to him.

After a desperate struggle he succeeded in drawing him so close that he touched him. Then he let go of his collar; but, before he could be swept away, he threw his arm round him.

Then, while contriving to hold the middy as securely as before, he had both his hands at liberty to grip the rope, and was able to draw himself and his burden through the dark waters under the hull of the pirate ship.

Hand over hand the middy's companion went up the hull of the Scourge, and then up her side, until at last their hands emerged from under the waves on the opposite side to that from which they had dropped from the plank.

If the pirates were on the watch for them they were lost.

But no! None of Blackbeard's men were looking over the side; all were too sure that their victims were lying dead at the bottom of the sea to trouble about them.

And the night had closed in with tropical suddenness. Already darkness rested on the restless waves, where a faint silvery track of moonlight shone.

"We must go back to Blackbeard's ship," the half-drowned middy heard his rescuer mutter between his teeth. "I'll help to take the pirate, or die in trying."

Clasping Arthur as close as ever, after a pause to listen if any of the pirates were likely to discover him, and to recover his breath, the intrepid speaker began to go up the side of the Scourge. The rope cut his hands until they bled, but he steadied himself by bearing with his feet against the ship's side, and mounted toward the open porthole, from which the fishing-line dangled.

"At last!"

The words came from him in a soft whisper as he came up level with the open porthole. With a supreme effort of strength he dragged himself and Arthur Warden through the narrow opening.

They had found their way into the black cook's galley!

A red fire was glowing in it, to reveal that it was in a state of dirt and confusion, while Julius himself was lying groaning in his bunk, with his head bound up in blood-stained rags. He looked more hideous and bloodthirsty than ever, and his eyes rolled ferociously, and he ground his teeth.

"Ugh—ugh!" he growled. "Curse de ole white debbil dat hit me! If he was alibe now, me would cut him to pieces, an'—"

He ended with a gurgling gasp, for his rolling eyes had fallen on his unexpected visitors. At first he thought they were dripping wet ghosts from the sea come to haunt him.

He fell rather than leaped from his bunk to take to flight.

Ere he could escape, however, and ere the yell that came to his lips could find utterance, the mysterious old man of the sea was on him, and his throat was encircled by fingers which threatened to choke the breath out of his carcass.

When thus brought to bay, however, the black cook of the pirates fought like a demon, writhing and twisting. He bit and scratched, and beat savagely with his clenched fists; but he could not shake off the iron fingers which held him, nor raise a cry of alarm to apprise his comrades on deck of what was going on in the galley.

Suddenly he contrived to pluck out a knife he had thrust in his belt, and made a vicious stab with it.

Quick as lightning his antagonist caught his wrist. There was a final, desperate struggle, and then the knife flashed down: but it flashed into the heart of the black cook himself.

Softly the visitor rose, and, with the knife in his hand, went to Arthur Warden to cut him free. But in the struggle the false beard and wig he had been wearing had been torn away. It was no old man's face, but a young, daring, resolute one that the middy's astonished eyes looked up to.

"Why," he gasped, "it's Lieutenant Brand, of the old King George!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Blackbeard's Last Cruise.

THE lieutenant—for the disguised man was, indeed, none other than one of the most daring young officers of the frigate, and in the Service—smiled grimly, and quickly put his hand on the middy's mouth.

He cut the middy free from his bonds. Arthur rose and stretched himself.

"There's not much to tell you, Warden," Lieutenant Brand whispered, after he had fastened the door of the galley. "I guessed that Blackbeard would stop the trader, and

I obtained permission from Captain Blake"—the commander of the King George—"to disguise myself, and one of the frigate's boats put me aboard her in the night. My plan was to surrender myself to Blackbeard in the place of the old merchant, and then, while on the Scourge, find out a chance to betray the pirates to the King's ship. I never expected to find you aboard; for we all thought you were drowned; but, of course, when the pirate was going to send you to your death, I had to interfere. All honour to you, my lad, for being so true to the flag!"

"I was only doing my duty," Arthur rejoined. "I hope you haven't ruined your plan by saving my life, sir? If you have, I wish you'd left old Blackbeard to do his worst. Why, what are you doing? What does this mean?"

For the lieutenant was busily employed in stripping the dead body of the black cook of its clothes.

"It means that I intend to make our sable friend help us to capture the pirate ship," replied Brand significantly.

In a surprisingly short time the lieutenant had discarded his own clothes and dressed himself in those of the black cook. When he had blacked his face and hands with some corks he burned at the galley fire, and swathed his head and most of his face in the blood-stained bandages, he assumed the slouching gait of Julius, to whom he presented a very fair resemblance.

Then the middy dried his own clothes by the fire.

"Now I am going on deck to see how the land lies," Brand said. "If I am not in my reckoning, the King George ought to run across the bows of the Scourge to-night. You must stay below and wait, in case I need you."

This was not a very palatable order for the midshipman, but he had to obey.

Brand went boldly on deck. His second disguise was as successful as his first had been.

Blackbeard and his men were in high spirits. They fancied that they had given

the King's ship the slip. As the night wore on the moonlight died away, and blackness reigned on the sea.

Most of the pirates dropped below to drink and carouse, but the supposed black cook prowled about the deck.

The pirates showed no lights, but suddenly Brand ignited a lantern, and, leaping on the bulwarks, waved this round his head. Instantly it was answered by a flash of light from the frigate, which had stolen near.

There followed a breathless pause. It was broken at last by the faint sound of muffled oars, to tell that the warship's boats were approaching the Scourge. One of the pirates heard the sound, and would have shouted a warning to his companions; but Lieutenant Brand was near him, and silenced him for ever with a stroke of the knife.

The next instant a powerful boarding-party of King George's bluejackets, led on by Captain Blake himself, swarmed over the pirate's side.

The corsairs came rushing up from below, but the game was lost already, although they fought desperately. It was the middy who did as much as anyone to beat them. Stealing from the galley, he went aloft and nailed a white flag to the head of the mainmast. Simultaneously the lights of the frigate flashed on the Scourge, and the pirates, seeing the white ensign, thought that Blackbeard had surrendered, and lost heart.

When he saw that all was lost, Blackbeard shouted to the supposed black cook to follow him, and rushed below to the powder-magazine. His intention was to blow up his ship, and thus destroy his enemies; but as he was in the act of tossing a lighted match into one of the powder-kegs, Brand shot him through the heart.

Blackbeard the pirate had sailed his last cruise!

THE END.

(There will be another thrilling story of the Spanish Main next Monday, chums, entitled: "Pompey the Great!" On no account must you miss it.)



The strange old man sprang on the plank and, seizing the middy in his arms, leaped with him into the sea.



"THE OUTCAST OF THE REMOVE!"

That is the title of next Monday's extra-long story of the chums of Greyfriars. To satisfy your curiosity I will say right now that George Bulstrode is the unfortunate junior of the Remove who earns the above appellation. Old MAGNET readers will remember the time when Bulstrode was captain of the Remove, and his subsequent dismissal from that place of honour when Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars. Since he was deposed Bulstrode has managed to get on with the Famous Five fairly well, but at times, in bitter mood, his ambitious soul still clamours for the captaincy, and his resentment against Harry Wharton & Co. is very marked. In such a mood Bulstrode challenges Harry Wharton's capabilities as junior captain, and is given the chance of proving his words. But folly never goes well with ambition, and Bulstrode, allowing himself to fall into the clutches of Ponsonby of Highcliffe, makes a hash of things. Moreover, his methods are distinctly mean and underhanded, and they arouse the indignation of the Remove in general, and one and all refuse to associate with him.

IT NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS

is a very true saying as applied to this instance. For although Bulstrode repents of his caddish actions, the Remove get wind of them first and forestall his intention of confessing his misdeeds. Thence onwards Bulstrode finds himself inextricably mixed up in a tangle of circumstances which lower his character still further, and he is swept along unable to help himself. But he possesses a staunch pal in Tom Brown, and it is through Browney in the first place that many matters that have puzzled the Remove are made clear. Don't miss this yarn, boys. It's a great character story.

"THE VULTURES OF THE LINE!"

Another splendid complete detective story featuring Ferrers Locke in his amazing quest of the Purple Sandals, next Monday, my chums. The scent is growing warmer and warmer, but still those elusive sandals evade the grasp of the astute detective. You will enjoy this powerful life story from the moment you commence reading it. Take my tip and don't miss it.

"POMPEY THE GREAT!"

Next on the list of good things is a stirring old-time pirate story. The central figure, as can be gathered from the title, is Pompey—a rough, dark-skinned gentleman who, however, is as white at heart as any white man. Chiefly through the negro's efforts a wealthy planter is saved from the hands of a former employee of his who has turned pirate. You'll like Pompey!

"SNAPSHOTS!"

There are all kinds of snapshots, and amongst the most interesting are those relative to photography. Harry Wharton & Co. have tackled this new subject with a vim and vigour deserving of the highest praise. The camera never lies, we are told; it delivers the goods. And the same may be said of the "Herald" staff. The camera peeps into extraordinary places, and receives impressions of Alonzo playing cricket—a funny enough sight at any time; Bunter doing his favourite stunt—gorging; and Mr. Prout indulging in his favourite pastime—golf. Good fare, boys, and the best programme of healthy literature on the market. Don't be disappointed by leaving your order too late. Pay your news-agent a visit right now, and persuade a chum who is a non-reader to accompany you. No one ever goes back on the MAGNET! It can't be beaten!

Your Editor.

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MAGNET, 17/5/24

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THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE SANDALS!

No. 4.—The Quest in Quebec!
(Continued from page 24.)

previously. He had been living a quiet and almost respectable life in Montreal under the very noses of the police who were most anxious to secure his arrest.

The Canadian police hailed the capture of the hold-up man as a great feather in the cap of the English sleuth. But Locke cared not a jot for compliments. He begged leave to question Skinner, and the man revealed much that the detective had suspected in regard to the strange docks affair.

A burly man had met Skinner and offered him one hundred dollars for bursting open the crate marked with Meech's name and stealing the sandals from it. He was to meet him in a certain pool saloon between Montreal and Westmount, and hand over the goods. Having been supplied with brown paper and string which he carried in his pockets, Skinner had wrapped the sandals up, and carried them openly on the handle-bars of the bike.

The thought of the precious sandals passing into the hands of Dr. Kruse caused Locke to give a deep groan.

"And you handed them to your confederate, and received the hundred dollars?" he prompted, as the man panted in his narration.

Slick Skinner gave a sly chuckle. "I certainly got my hundred dollars," he said, "and that ugly guy got his parcel. I handed it to him in the pool

saloon. Gosh, I'd have liked to have seen his face when he opened it! For y'see, the paper contained only an old pair o' dancin'-pumps I bought second-hand on my way up!"

"What!" cried Locke, in gleeful astonishment. "You didn't hand the sandals to this man at all?"

"I sure didn't! I got my hundred dollars for a pair o' second-hand dancin'-pumps what only cost me a couple o' bucks!"

"But the purple sandals!" demanded Ferrers Locke excitedly. "What did you do with them?"

"Oh," answered Slick Skinner, in off-hand fashion, "I sold 'em at the shoe store for five dollars. Good business, heh?"

In his emotion Ferrers Locke bit clean through the stem of his favourite pipe.

THE END.

(Another grand story of this amazing series next week, chums. Look out for it!)

CAPPED FOR GREYFRIARS!

(Continued from page 18.)

"You know what that means?" he cried. "You're capped for Greyfriars—you've won your first eleven colours! I could hug you, Wharton!"

It was one of the proudest moments of Harry Wharton's life. He had made good in the first eleven; he had scored 57 not out without a bad stroke; but, best of all, he had won the match for the school!

Even in that moment he realised that it did not mean his permanent instalment

as a member of the first eleven. It was an extra cap Wingate had given, as was his right. But Harry would get another chance some time; and he did not really want to desert the Remove team.

The whole story of the plot never came out. Skinner's share in it was discovered; but Skinner did not give away Loder and Carne. It paid him better not to do that. Suffering in body, he profited in pocket. Loder had to find blackmail; Carne's bets caused him to be stony broke for the time being.

Skinner let it be thought that spite against Wharton had prompted his action. Bolsover major owned up frankly that he had locked Bunter in the crypt, but maintained stoutly that he knew nothing of any design against Wharton, and was believed.

Bunter got off more lightly than he deserved. For the Bounder stuck to it that he had only come back to get another bat, and he would not have needed to do that but for Bunter's exchange trick. So that—as Bunter said—it was really through Bunter that Greyfriars had won.

Perhaps the Bounder did not credit that. Perhaps the Bounder felt sure that he could have done what Wharton did. He had never lacked self-confidence, and he was a fine batsman.

But the Bounder never said so. And if he and Harry Wharton ever came to be at odds again Harry would not forget Vernon-Smith's generosity that day of the Lanchester match, which had seen him Capped for Greyfriars!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Monday's ripping story of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled: "The Outcast of the Remove!")



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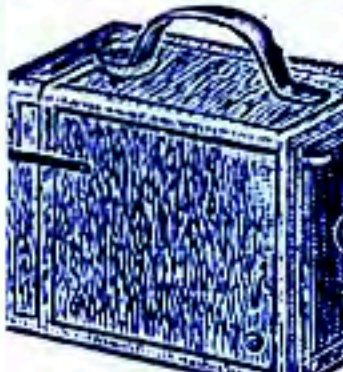
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