

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

Sensational Sporting and Adventure Serial JUST STARTING!

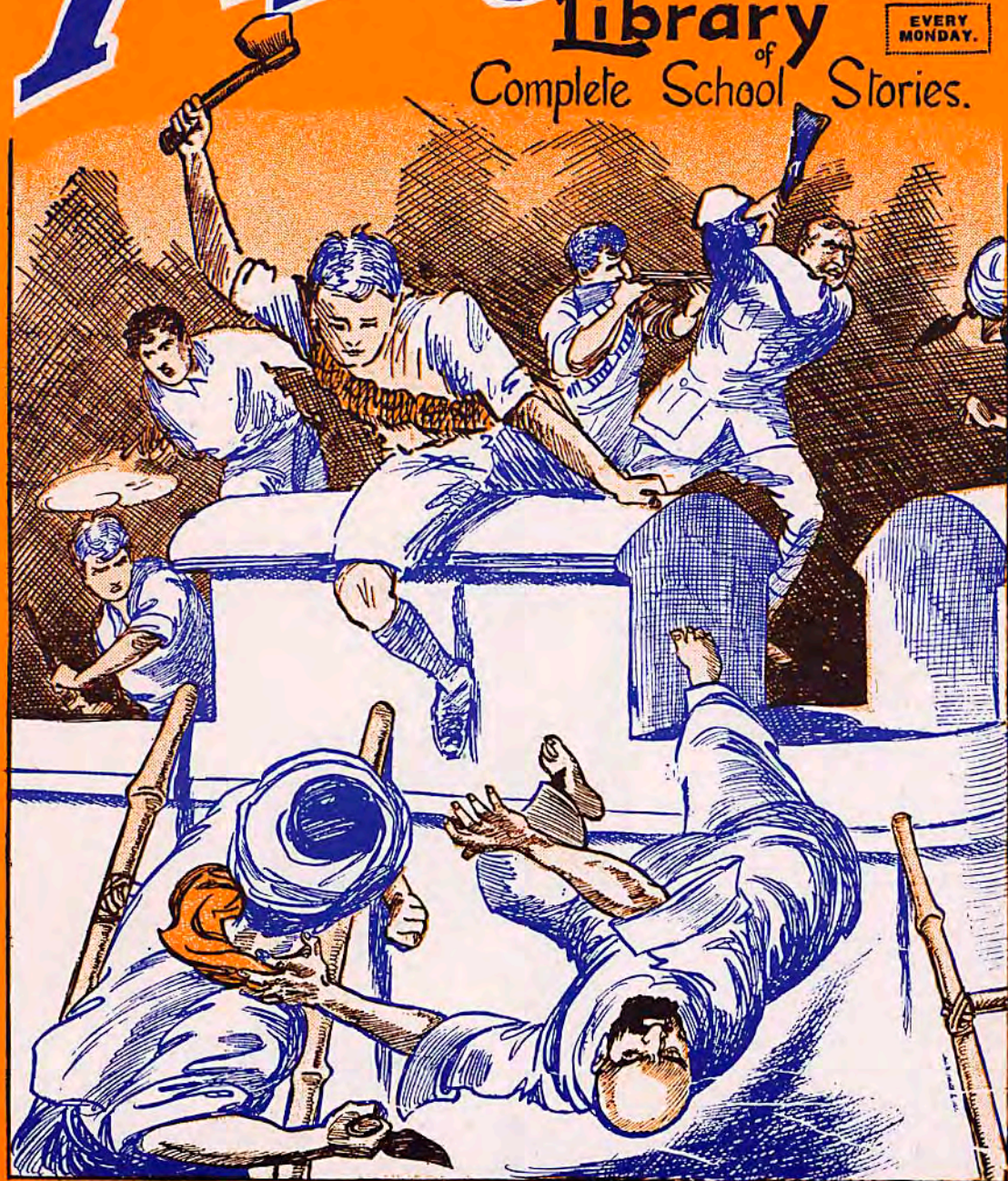
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The Magnet 2^d

Library of Complete School Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY.



HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN A TIGHT CORNER!

AT GRIPS WITH THE SAVAGE SPEARMEN OF THE SAHARA!

(A powerful incident in this week's amazing story of Harry Wharton & Co. in Northern Africa - inside.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY!

IN the heart of the desert, away from the controlling influences of modern civilisation, an Arab chieftain is monarch of all he surveys—knowing no laws of humanity save those he makes himself. His tribesmen, little more than slaves, fly to do his bidding. Mustapha ben Mohammed, although a usurper, is such a sheik; his smile means life, his frown death. Small wonder, therefore, that he shrinks not from putting into practice the fiendish plan his cunning brain has evolved as an answer to Major Cherry's firm refusal to deliver unto him the talisman of the savage Tahar tribe. But while the inhuman Mustapha is striking his revenge through Bob Cherry, son of the old soldier who has so resolutely defied him, Ali ben Yusef, the real, lawful sheik of the tribe, is handing his followers together and marching upon Mustapha ben Mohammed. The usurper sheik's short spell of kingship is rudely shattered, his revenge loses something of its flavour. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, Mustapha falls from his high estate, and great is the fall thereof.

THE VICTIM!

But even though Mustapha is driven from the desert, a regular Ishmael, with every man's hand against him, his victim, Bob Cherry, is doomed to die a horrible death. Even Billy Hunter exhibits concern on Bob Cherry's account, while Marjorie and Clara are beside themselves with grief and anxiety. What is Bob Cherry's fate? Will a merciful Providence save him from a torturing, lingering death, or— Next week's amazing

story of Harry Wharton & Co. in the vast Sahara will enlighten you. On no account must you miss it, boys; it's the finest yarn Mr. Richards has ever given us.

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

By Hedley Scott.

It would seem that a perverse and unkind fate shadows the footsteps of the Meltons, for as soon as a "good mark" is placed against their credit, two bad ones keep it company. I feel sure that all your sympathy will go out to these plucky fellows. George with his big heart, Matthew with his ready understanding, and the twins with their irrepressible good spirits, make a splendid combination of what Britons should be and are. After all, it's easy to smile when the world smiles with you. It's a totally different proposition, however, to keep smiling when everything looks black. But these Meltons smile—they must have been born smiling. You'll like next week's instalment of this grand serial, my chums—don't miss it!

THE FUTURE!

Most of us would give a lot to know what the future holds in store for us. And if some of us knew it beforehand we might feel many an inward tremor. On the other hand, we might feel very backed with things. Well, that is beside the point. Harry Wharton & Co. have decided to give us a supplement dealing with the future: Horoscopes of Greyfriars fellows are cast with a liberal treatment of imagination. The result, although displeasing to some of the selected

characters, is distinctly amusing from our point of view. Look out for next week's supplement—it's great!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

Just a reminder, chums, that this wonder volume is fast selling out. Somebody, as Fisher T. Fish would say, is "going to get left—sure!" It's up to my chums to wade in with their orders now. For six shillings the "Holiday Annual" is the finest value-for-money proposition on the market. Null said!

A GRAND COMPETITION!

All Magnetites ought to have a whack at the spiffing new competition now running in our Companion Paper, the "Boys' Friend." This is a special War-hips Competition, and is just as fascinating an affair as could be imagined. The prizes are equally attractive. There is a Five-Pound Note offered each week, also Six Match Footballs which have got to be won by somebody.

AN OLD READER!

URGENTLY REQUIRED. The past or present address of Arthur H. Leslie, comedian and cornetist, or his next-of-kin. Replies to Box 1910, c/o The Editor, the "Magnet."

BIKES!

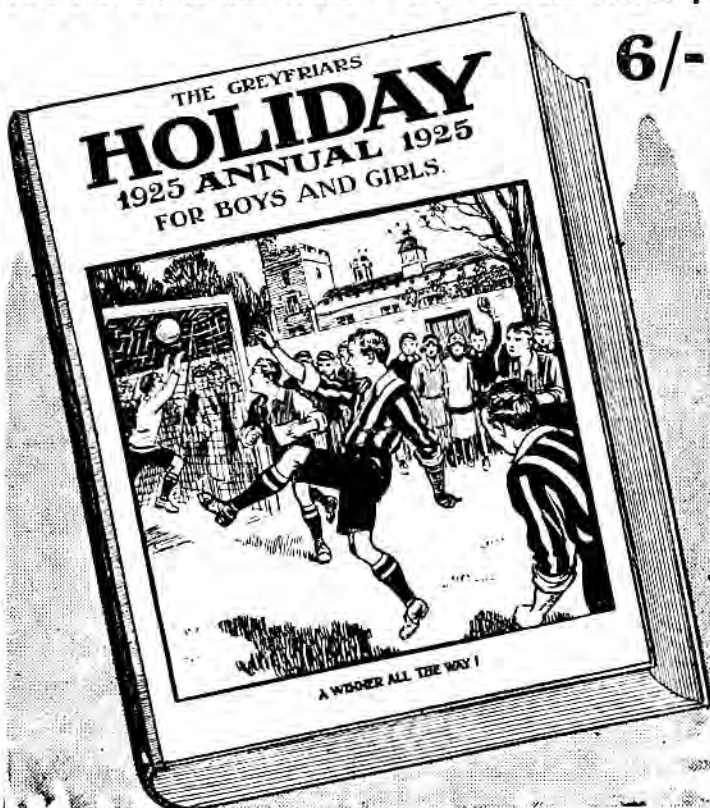
Another splendid £8 Bicycle is offered to my reader chums this week. The coupon and full particulars can be found on page 19. Magnetites should lose no time in availing themselves of this ripping opportunity. A "Royal Enfield" Bicycle for three words constitutes an unparalleled offer.

Your Editor.

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6/-

While a savage sheik of the desert plans a fiendish torture for the prisoners who have fallen into his hands, a party of English schoolboys make a forced march across the illimitable Sahara, scorning the perils that beset them with every fresh setting of the sun, intent only upon rescuing Major Cherry, Ali ben Yusef, and the Cliff House girls from a dreadful fate. Will they succeed?



In The Power of the Sheik!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., recounting their thrilling adventures in the heart of the Sahara Desert. By Popular

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In the Heart of the Desert!

BOB CHERRY pushed back his sun-helmet and wiped his brow. It was near noon, and the African sun blazed down from a cloudless sky.

Scarcely a breath of air stirred on the burning sands of the Sahara. The valley in the range of low, rocky hills was like an oven. Bob was standing on the flat roof of the Bordj—the little tower of sun-baked bricks, planted lonely and forlorn in the heart of the desert. The loop-holed brick parapet that surrounded the roof was scorching to the touch.

Far away among the hills was a gleam of white tents. It marked the encampment of Mustapha ben Mohammed, the desert sheik.

With the aid of his field-glasses Bob could see tiny figures moving among the tents—the figures of the savage Sahara spearmen, who followed the banner of Mustapha. They were like dots in the distance.

While the burning sun climbed higher and higher in the sky Bob had watched the distant tents and the rugged rocks and ravines that lay between the Arab encampment and the Bordj where the Greyfriars party had camped.

He turned away at last, wearily, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. He was alone on the roof of the Bordj. The fierce tropical heat had driven his comrades below into the shelter of the building.

Bob Cherry crossed to the brick stair that led down into the interior of the tower.

It was a relief to step down into the shade of the Bordj, though within the heat was stifling.

In the stuffy upper room Billy Bunter lay on a rug in his shirt-sleeves, his fat face moist with heat.

He blinked at Bob through his big spectacles.

"I say, Cherry—" he gasped.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Feeling the heat, Bunter?" asked Bob, with a faint smile.

"I should jolly well say so!" groaned Bunter. "This place is like a blessed oven. Just like you fellows to camp in a horrid furnace like this! I can tell you, I'm fed-up with it."

"Can't be helped, old man," said Bob patiently.

Bunter sniffed.

"That's all very well. If you'd told me I should be landed into this kind of thing I should jolly well have stayed in Biskra."

"But we did tell you, Bunter, and you wouldn't stay behind," said Bob.

Another sniff from the Owl of Greyfriars!

"Well, I thought it was an excursion, didn't I?" he growled. "How could I guess that you fellows would be potty enough to come here? Why, we must be hundreds of miles from the nearest French fort."

"Quite that!"

"With a crew of savage Arabs only a mile away!" hooted Bunter. "And that beastly sheik, Mustapha, only waiting for a chance to mop us up."

"We're not mopped up yet. While there's life there's hope, you know," said Bob.

"Precious little that I can see. My opinion is—"

Bob Cherry did not wait to hear Bunter's opinion. He went down the lower stair into the lower room of the Bordj, leaving the Owl of the Remove grumbling.

His four comrades were there.

Harry Wharton was cleaning a rifle. Johnny Bull was looking out from a loophole in the brick wall. Frank Nugent had dozed off on a pile of rugs. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the only member of the Greyfriars party who did not seem to feel the heat, sat on the table and fanned himself gently with a palm-leaf.

Wharton looked up quickly as Bob came in.

"Seen anything, Bob?"

"Nothing."

"We can only wait, old fellow," said the captain of the Remove.

"The waitfulness is the painful process," remarked Hurree-Jamset Ram

Singh. "But it is the only thing to be done."

"Ibrahim's bound to be back soon. I should think," said Johnny Bull, turning round from the loophole.

Bob knitted his brows.

"We've waited a long time," he said. "I—I can't stand it any longer, you fellows. My father's a prisoner among those brutes yonder across the hills—they may be torturing him, for anything I know. I—I can't wait here any longer."

Wharton's face became very grave. "I know how you feel, Bob. But we've got to be patient. We've come as far as this through a thousand dangers; we've had jolly good luck to get here alive. We don't want to spoil it all by haste now."

"I know! But—"

Bob Cherry drove his hands deep into his pockets, and moved restlessly about the Bordj. Frank Nugent awakened, and sat up on the rugs and rubbed his eyes.

"Any news yet?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"I—I wonder if something's happened to Ibrahim."

Harry Wharton did not reply to that. The same thought had occurred to him.

The Arab guide had been long gone. The Greyfriars party had expected him back soon after dawn.

It was now high noon and Ibrahim had not returned.

"That's what I can't help thinking," said Bob. "I—I trust Ibrahim, of course. He's proved himself true blue, rogue as he is. But the sheik may have found him out; and you know what would happen if he learned that Ibrahim is backing us up. The poor chap's life wouldn't be worth a snap of the fingers."

Wharton nodded.

"He may be dead, or a prisoner," said Bob. "We may be waiting here for nothing. And if the Arabs find that we are here we shall be surrounded by a horde of them."

"I know! But—" Wharton shook his head. "We must wait a little longer, Bob. Ibrahim may find it difficult to get away without being noticed—lots of

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things may have delayed him. And it would be madness to go near the sheik's encampment in the broad daylight. We should not help the prisoners by throwing our lives away."

"I was thinking of going alone—"

"Wait!" said Harry. "Look here, Bob, I'm as keen as you are. Marjorie and Clara are prisoners in the camp yonder, as well as Major Cherry and young Ali. We've had good luck so far, but everything is against us, and we can't afford to throw a chance away. If Ibrahim gets back with news it will help us—without that, what chance have we got? We must wait, old fellow."

There was a step on the brick stair, and Billy Bunter came down from the upper room.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Don't worry now, Bunter."

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the captain of the Remove. He was deeply concerned for his own fat self—to such an extent that he had very little concern left for anything else.

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, I'm fed-up!"

"We've heard that before," growled Johnny Bull. "We know you're fed-up! Now shut up!"

"You're waiting for that Arab thief to come back," said Bunter. "Well, he won't come back—or, if he does, he'll come with a crew of Arabs to mop you up. I don't trust him. He's tried already to sell us to the sheik, and now he's at it again. That's my opinion."

"Cheese it, Bunter!"

"Sha'n't! As for that thief being grateful because you saved him from a lion—that's all rot! He's a rogue and a rotter, and there's an end of it. My opinion is that he will come back with a lot of his friends to do us in. We've got a chance of clearing off before he comes, see?"

"If that was his game, Bunter, he would have been here long before this," said Harry.

"Well, that's my opinion. We'd better clear," said Bunter. "As for rescuing Major Cherry, that's all rot! And as for young Ali ben Yusuf, he can go and eat cake! He's only a beastly Arab, anyhow!"

Bunter paused for a reply, but no reply was forthcoming. Harry Wharton & Co. did not seem to think that any answer was necessary.

"Getting deaf?" hooted Bunter.

"My esteemed and execrable Bunter—" began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, you dry up, Inky! Look here, you fellows we're losing time. Mind, I'm jolly keen to get Marjorie and Clara away from those beasts; but you fellows can't do it, and you know you can't! If we get safe back to Biskra, we can send help somehow. See?"

"You can get on a camel and hook it as soon as you like," said Nugent. "The sooner the better, in fact."

"Yes, rather!"

"Beast!" said Bunter. "We shall all be killed if we stay here! What good will that do anybody? I say, you fellows, do have a little sense! Let's go while the going's good!"

"Hush!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, turning to the loophole again.

"I say—"

"Hush! Somebody's coming!"

"Oh, crums! It's the Arabs! We're done for!" howled Bunter. And the Owl of the Remove scuttled up the stairs again.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Enemy!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. gathered round the loophole and peered out.

The courtyard of the Bordj lay before their eyes, surrounded by a low brick wall. In the court, close by the tower, the camels were tethered, sleeping in the sun.

At a short distance was the open gateway of the courtyard. In the gateway the figure of "Honest Ibrahim," the guide, appeared.

It was Ibrahim. He had returned at last. He stood there in the bright sunlight, in his baggy, blue trousers and yellow boots and gold-braided jacket, and turban fastened with a sham ruby that sparkled in the sun. Days and nights in the desert had dimmed the Arab dandy's finery, but Ibrahim still had his look of a gorgeous tropical beetle.

"There he is!" breathed Bob. "But—he's not alone."

Two Arabs appeared in the gateway with Ibrahim.

In their dirty burnouses, with their shaggy hair and savage brown faces, and restless, gleaming eyes, they looked what they were—roving robbers of the desert. Evidently they were two of Mustapha ben Mohammed's savage spear-men.

Wharton's grasp closed on his rifle.

He had had faith in Ibrahim, but it looked now as if the guide had played the Greyfriars party false. Rogue and rascal, liar and cheat and thief. Honest Ibrahim certainly was, and the juniors had known it well, and they had had to guard against his treachery. But since the day when they had rescued him from the claws of the lion in the desert, Honest Ibrahim had changed, and he had given proof of good faith. The juniors had trusted him to scout in the sheik's encampment; they had believed that he was faithful, and prepared to live or die with his "fine gentlemen." And now—

"He's sold us!" muttered Johnny Bull, setting his teeth.

"Hold on!" said Harry quietly. "It may be so. But he mayn't have been able to get away alone. He would surely have brought a crowd of the brutes if he had meant to harm us."

"There may be more of them out of sight."

"Wait and see!"

The juniors watched from the loophole in silence.

Ibrahim came into the courtyard at a leisurely pace; but the two wild Arabs, as soon as they caught sight of the tethered camels, broke into loud exclamations in their own tongue, and rushed towards the animals.

It was easy to see that the discovery was a surprise to them. The juniors realised that Ibrahim could have told them nothing of the camp at the Bordj.

The two robbers were evidently surprised and delighted by this unexpected find.

They stood for some moments looking at the camels, and then turned towards Ibrahim, speaking in Arabic, in excited tones.

Ibrahim answered in the same tongue, and the three of them came up to the door of the Bordj.

Harry Wharton & Co. heard every word, but they did not understand the Arabic. But from Ibrahim's looks and tones, they gathered that he was deceiving his companions, affecting to be astonished by the discovery of the camels in the courtyard of the Bordj.

The butt of a spear knocked on the palm-wood door.

One of the Arabs shouted, words that were incomprehensible to the juniors within.

Then Ibrahim called.

"My fine gentlemen!"

"Hullo, hullo, hullo!"

The two Arabs babbled again in their own tongue, and the juniors caught the word "Roumi."

"You listen to me, my fine gentlemen!" called out Ibrahim. "It is safe to speak. These sons of pigs and dogs do not know English. They know that there are Roumis in the Bordj, and that is all. They think I shall trick you into opening the door. Comprenez?"

"We understand," said Harry. "But why did you bring them here with you, Ibrahim?"

Ibrahim grinned, with a flash of white teeth.

"I report to the sheik," he said. "I tell the sheik that my fine gentlemen are dead. I have poisoned them in camp in the desert, and I demand the reward."

"Oh!"

"The sheik him believe," went on Ibrahim. "But Mustapha ben Mohammed is suspicious. Him send two men with me to see the dead Roumis. He pay no reward to Honest Ibrahim till him men tell him that they have seen the dead Roumis in the desert."

"Oh, I—I—I see!" muttered Wharton.

It was clear now that Honest Ibrahim was faithful to his "fine gentlemen," but he had his own tortuous ways. Although he had turned on the sheik and thrown in his lot with the Greyfriars party, he had no moral objection to netting the reward Mustapha had offered him for the betrayal of the Famous Five. But in point of cunning Ibrahim had met his match in the desert sheik. Mustapha ben Mohammed was paying nothing till the traitor had, so to speak, "delivered the goods."

"Mustapha ben Mohammed trust nobody," said Ibrahim. "He take no man's word. Him believe, but he want proof, and if I do not show the dead Roumis to his men I am a dead man—I, Ibrahim. Comprenez? But Ibrahim not dead yet."

The two Arabs interrupted in excited Arabic. Ibrahim broke off, to answer them. His answers seemed satisfactory, for he turned to the door again, and resumed in English:

"These thieves and sons of dogs will steal your camels, my fine gentlemen, and also they will take your money and kill you. I tell them it is a party of tourists that camp in the Bordj, and that I speak you fair in your own tongue, and you open the door. They understand no word that I say."

It was clear that Honest Ibrahim, in becoming faithful to the Greyfriars party, had not lost his gift of treachery. Only his former associates were now the victims of that peculiar gift.

"I say, I lead Mustapha's men to the dead Roumis in the desert," went on Ibrahim. "I lead them by this way, as if it were a chance. You shall understand? They must die. If they take word back to Mustapha we are all dead. Ecoutez! I tell them that you are tourists and unarmed, and you open the door, thinking we are friends. When the door is open you shoot."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"The shots could be heard at the sheik's encampment," said Johnny Bull.

"That is nothing, my fine gentlemen—they think that one shoots at gazelle—this morning Bou Saoud, the son of the sheik, went out to hunt gazelle. It is nothing! You keep ready, and when

the door him is open, you shoot these sons of pigs dead, n'est-ce-pas?"

Ibrahim turned to his companions again and babbled in Arabic. Through the loophole the juniors could see the grins of cruelty and covetousness on the faces of the two dusky rascals. They supposed that they had to deal with a party of reckless tourists who had ventured too far into the desert; and they were prepared to get the door open by friendly words, and then rush in and massacre the party without mercy.

"The brutes!" muttered Johnny Bull. "They don't deserve anything better. Let's do as Ibrahim says."

Wharton breathed hard. It was true that the two treacherous ruffians deserved nothing better; and it was true that the safety of the Greyfriars party depended on their silence. But the ways of the desert were not the ways of the Greyfriars fellows.

"We can't do it!" muttered Wharton. "We can't! We must make them prisoners somehow."

Johnny Bull grunted assent.

"Ibrahim!"

"My fine gentleman?"

"We'll open the door, and cover them with our rifles. Then you can tell them in Arabic to surrender."

"Jamais!" exclaimed Ibrahim, in alarm. "You do not know these sons of jackals. They will escape—they will get to their horses, which are outside the gate. All will be lost!"

"We cannot kill them as you say," answered Harry. "It would be murder."

"My fine gentlemen, they are waiting for the door to be open, that they kill you."

"I know—but they are savages, and we are not," said Harry Wharton resolutely. "Give them the chance to surrender. If they refuse, we'll shoot them fast enough."

"That's right!" said Bob Cherry.

The two Arabs broke in again, impatient and puzzled at the long parley. Ibrahim answered them in Arabic, quietening them. But his voice was anxious as he spoke in English again.

"It is folly, my fine gentlemen! They are suspicious already—it is not

much more, and they suspect me! I have only a knife. But if you do as Ibrahim him say, Ibrahim him do as his fine gentlemen say. Open the door, and stand ready."

"Right!"

The juniors gave a last look at their rifles. Then Harry Wharton removed, one by one, the palmwood bars from the iron sockets at the door.

The bars thudded to the earth floor. The door, pushed violently from without, flew wide open. The blazing sunlight streamed into the dusky interior of the Bordj.

In an instant it was darkened by two wild figures. A fierce Arab rushed in with upraised spear. But the second of the two Arabs did not take more than a step; then he sank down in the doorway with a deep groan, his dirty burnous dyed with crimson. And over him stood Honest Ibrahim, knife in hand, showing his flashing white teeth in a grin.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Prisoners!

"STOP!"

"Surrender, you fool!"

The savage Arab halted, his spear flashing high, as he found himself faced by five levelled rifles.

It needed only the pressure of a finger to send him to the floor riddled with bullets.

He did not understand the words in English; but he understood the levelled rifles, with resolute eyes gleaming over them.

He stopped, panting out savage words in Arabic. There was a breathless pause for a moment.

"Tell him to surrender, Ibrahim!" panted Wharton.

Ibrahim shouted in Arabic.

The desert spearman stared round at him, amazed, dumbfounded. His comrade lay dead in the doorway—a sufficient proof to the desert warrior that Ibrahim had led him into a trap.

Ibrahim had snatched up the fallen man's spear, and stood guarding the

doorway; there was no escape for the ruffian inside.

For some moments it seemed that the robber would hurl himself on his enemies, and die like the savage he was, fighting to the end. But the steady rifles daunted him.

He flung down his spear with a crash on the earthen floor.

"Oh, good!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Well the Greyfriars juniors knew that their struggle with Mustapha ben Mohammed and his men was a struggle for life or death. Well, they knew that blood must flow before they succeeded—if ever they did succeed—in tearing the sheik's prisoners from his grasp. But the lesson of the desert was a hard one for English schoolboys to learn—and they were deeply relieved when the Arab surrendered. If bloodshed must come, it must come; but, at least, they would avoid it if they could.

The Arab stepped back, and folded his arms across his broad chest, with something like dignity.

"Thank goodness we haven't had to shoot!" breathed Nugent. "Get the brute tied up."

"Keep him covered, and I'll deal with him," said Harry.

He picked up a length of camel-rope.

The spearman's eyes blazed, and he showed his teeth in a snarl, like a wild beast. But the rifles were ready, and Ibrahim's spear was close; and he held out his hands sullenly for the bonds.

Wharton bound his brown wrists together securely.

Then his feet were tied, and he was hustled into a corner of the room, and the end of the rope was tied to a heavy stool. The prisoner was safe for the present.

Honest Ibrahim watched these proceedings with a sarcastic grin.

Faithful as he now was to the Greyfriars party, the Arab guide did not try to conceal his opinion that this was an act of folly, and he could scarcely control his impatience.

But the Famous Five did not heed him. They knew, as a matter of fact, that Ibrahim was right, from his point of



"Surrender, you fool!" called out Harry Wharton as the Arab entered. The savage spearman halted, his spear flashing high as he found himself faced by five levelled rifles. His companion, closely followed by Ibrahim, only took a pace forward. Then, with a deep groan, he fell to the floor. Over him, knife in hand, stood Ibrahim. (See Chapter 3.)

view—the point of view of the desert. But his ways were not their ways.

"Him safe now," said Ibrahim. "But no so safe as him other!"

He made a gesture towards the dead Arab in the doorway. Life was cheap in the estimation of Honest Ibrahim.

"Get that away!" said Nugent, with a shudder.

Ibrahim grinned.

"Him go to the jackals!" he said.

He dragged the body outside the courtyard wall, and left it there. In a few minutes the juniors could hear the sound of growling and snarling at a little distance. The scavengers of the desert had not been far away.

In the corner of the room the Arab prisoner sat in sullen silence, his eyes gleaming hate at his captors, and undying fury at Ibrahim. They did not heed him. Ibrahim led his own camel, and the horses of the two Arabs, into the courtyard, and tethered them with the rest. Then at last he gave his news to the Greyfriars juniors.

"You've seen my father?" asked Bob.

Ibrahim nodded.

"Him prisoner. Him tied in a cave close by encampment of Mustapha—cave in hill, cold and dark, dripping with water. Ibrahim have seen him."

Bob gritted his teeth.

"And the girls?" breathed Harry.

"They are in a tent—the two girls whom Bou Saoud brought from Biskra."

"They have not been harmed?"

"Not yet—pas encore," said Ibrahim.

"Even those savage brutes would hardly harm them, I should think," muttered Frank Nugent.

"My fine gentleman does not know Mustapha!" said Ibrahim. "They are to die—why, je ne sais pas—I know not. But it is said in the encampment that they are to die by torture."

"The dastards!" muttered Bob.

"And Ali," asked Wharton, after a pause—"have you seen anything of Ali ben Yusef?"

"There is an Arab boy a prisoner in the cavern with the major," said Ibrahim. "I know him not. It is said that Ali, the son of Yusef, died long ago in the desert with his father, the old sheik."

"It isn't so," said Bob. "My father saved him, and took him to England. He was brought back here by that scoundrel, Bou Saoud—" Bob checked himself. "I—I suppose one shouldn't speak like that of the dead."

Ibrahim opened his eyes.

"Bou Saoud—him dead?"

"He came here and found us," said Harry. "There was a struggle, and he fell on his own knife and it killed him."

"By Allah! That will be news for Mustapha!" grinned Ibrahim. "It was Bou Saoud he would have made sheik of the Tahr after him. The ways of Allah are strange. Bou Saoud is dead, and Ali ben Yusef lives. But if the boy is Ali, the rightful sheik of the Tahr, he is Mustapha's prisoner."

"We shall save him."

Ibrahim shrugged his shoulders.

"I will live and die with my fine gentlemen," he said. "It will be death, but it is the will of Allah."

"How many Arabs are there in the sheik's camp?"

"A hundred."

"Long odds," said Johnny Bull quietly. "But we're trying our luck, all the same."

"They are the kinsmen of Mustapha," went on Ibrahim. "It is only his own kinsmen that Mustapha has round him now. They will follow him to the death. Many of the Tahr do not acknowledge him as sheik. He does not possess the Eye of

Ahmed, the amulet of the Tahr sheiks, and without it they will not obey him. If he should appear with the Eye of Ahmed in his turban, all the tribesmen of the Oued Tahr would follow him. But now he can count only on his own kinsmen."

"Ali had the amulet when he escaped," said Bob. "My father has it somewhere safe."

"Without it the sheik cannot reign in safety by the Oued Tahr," said Ibrahim. "The tribesmen will not follow him. Now I have told you all I can tell you, my fine gentlemen. To-day we can do nothing; but when it is dark I can guide you to the cavern where the major and the boy are prisoners. It is outside the encampment. If Allah so wills it, we can take them away. If that will satisfy my fine gentlemen, it is possible that we may live to see Biskra again."

"We shall not go without the girls," said Harry.

Ibrahim gave another shrug.

"They are prisoners in a tent close by the sheik's tent," he said. "To reach them you must fight a way through a hundred of the spearmen of Mustapha. Pas possible."

"Possible or not, we are going to try," said Harry quietly. "We shall not turn back alive, and leave them in the power of the sheik. Major Cherry will say the same, and Ali, too, I think. But if you can guide us to the cavern you speak of, that will be the first step. If we can release the major, he will take command."

"That's so," assented Bob.

"To hear is to obey, my fine gentlemen," said Ibrahim, bowing his head. "There is a chance—nous verrons! But we must wait for the night."

"Must we wait?" said Bob uneasily.

"To show oneself near the camp of Mustapha is to ask for death," said Ibrahim. "My noble master would be seen, and can my fine gentlemen fight with a hundred?"

Bob Cherry nodded slowly.

It was bitter enough to the Greyfriars juniors to wait for the weary hours to pass, not knowing what might be happening in those very minutes.

But they knew that Ibrahim was right.

Only by strategy and good fortune combined could they hope to effect their purpose. To reveal their presence to the Arabs was to lose the last faint chance of success. Bitter as it was, they had to wait—to wait and watch the long, slow descent of the burning sun, while weary hour followed hour.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Sheik I

MUSTAPHA BEN MOHAMMED, the sheik, looked out of his tent, as the sun sloped westward in a glowing sky.

He stood in the opening of the tent, a massive figure in his flowing white robes, his spotted turban fastened with a bunch of gems. He looked out on the encampment—irregular lines of tents planted on the banks of a tiny trickling stream—a little tributary of the Oued Tahr.

Dusky tribesmen who passed the chief's tent salaamed as they passed to the tall, grave, aquiline-featured sheik. Devotion and dread were the feelings with which Mustapha inspired his followers. Now, as they noted the angry frown upon his sombre brow, the Arabs who passed hurried their steps, as if anxious not to catch his eyes. When the sheik's savage anger was stirred

there was trembling in the tents of the tribesmen of the Tahr.

Mustapha's look was gloomy, as were his thoughts.

He was waiting for his son Bou Saoud to return to the encampment, little dreaming that the swaggering Spahi never would return—never guessing that Bou Saoud had found his death in the desert hills, and would never again urge his fleet steed over the boundless plains of the Sahara.

A hundred or more fierce tribesmen were in the encampment—savage desert riders, ready to throw their lives away at a nod from their sheik. And yet Mustapha ben Mohammed did not feel secure. He had never felt secure since the day that he and his son had slain the old sheik, Yusef, in the lonely desert, and failed to slay Ali ben Yusef along with him.

For Ali, the son of Yusef, had escaped with the help of Major Cherry, and with him had gone the Eye of Ahmed—the great diamond which was the hereditary amulet of the sheiks of Tahr.

Without that talisman, even a sheik of the race of Yusef would scarcely have been acknowledged by the wild tribesmen who dwell in tents along the valleys of the Oued Tahr. Without it, the usurper had little or no hope of reigning over his tribe.

His fortunes were followed by his own kinsmen. All the men of Mustapha's own clan were with him. But the rest of the tribe, the thousands of desert Arabs who had obeyed Yusef, were indifferent. They refused to leave their tents at his call; they refused him tribute; they drove away his messengers from their tents and pastures. Amid the swords and spears of his kinsmen he was safe, as yet; and yet always at the back of his mind was a fear that some kinsman of the dead chief Yusef might call the tribesmen to arms against him.

It was upon the talisman that all depended. The Eye of Ahmed, that was the signal for obedience through all the tribes of the Oued Tahr. The legend was that it had belonged to the Sheik Ahmed, a kinsman of the Prophet himself, who had first governed the tribes that dwelt on the Tahr, and from whom the family of Yusef were descended. By immemorial custom the desert tribe had obeyed whatever chief bore the hereditary amulet, and the sheiks had guarded it as being as precious as life itself. Once it was in the possession of the usurper, he was safe to reign, secure even against the clansmen of the slain Yusef. Without it he dared not dwell among the tents of the Tahr. With his own kinsmen he withdrew from the tribe, scarcely secure even at a distance.

With the help of Bou Saoud, the sheik had laid his plans to secure the amulet.

Bou Saoud had served in the French Army as a Spahi. He spoke French and English; he knew European ways. Major Cherry had taken Ali ben Yusef to England, deeming him safe there till he should reach man's age, and return to claim the allegiance of the tribe, with the amulet in his turban. Bou Saoud had kidnapped the schoolboy sheik. He was a prisoner now in the hands of Mustapha. Major Cherry had followed to rescue him, and he, too, was a prisoner. But the Eye of Ahmed still escaped the clutches of the sheik.

That the major had not brought it into the desert with him he knew. But that was all he knew. If it had been left hidden at Biskra, it was out of the sheik's power to discover it, and no threats of torture could wring a word from his prisoner.

But the plans of the desert sheik, ruthless in the pursuit of his one object,

were laid with cunning skill. In the next tent, Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn were prisoners. Through them, Mustapha ben Mohammed hoped to accomplish his end. What the major would not give to save his own life, or to save the life of Ali—would he not give it to save the English girls from torture?

There was no pity in the iron heart of the Sahara chief—no more mercy in his savage breast, than in that of the desert hyena. The major would yield—the Eye of Ahmed would pass into his possession. And then—

Then, whatever pledge he had given, his prisoners would be ruthlessly butchered—Ali ben Yusef first of all. With the talisman in his hands, Mustapha ben Mohammed would call together the tribes of the Oued Tahar and claim their obedience, which would not be refused then.

The sheik, as he stood in the door of the great tent, watched the westering sun for a long time. Bou Saoud had gone after gazelle early in the morning, and still he had not returned.

He called to a black Nubian slave.

"Abdullah!"

The slave approached cringing.

"Where is Bou Saoud?" the sheik asked in Arabic. "Has he not yet returned from the hunt?"

"He has not returned, O Mustapha!"

"See if he comes."

The black Nubian salaamed, and backed away. But when he returned, his answer was the same; Bou Saoud was not in sight.

The sheik dismissed the slave with a gesture.

He left the tent, and strode away through the Arab encampment, saluted with deep respect and fear on all sides as he passed.

Leaving the tents of the tribesmen behind, the sheik followed the rocky channel of the stream higher into the hill, till it narrowed to a mere ravine.

Into the desolate ravine the sun's rays poured with blinding heat. The rocks would have burned the hand that touched them.

Mustapha ben Mohammed paused where the wall of rock rose almost perpendicular. In the face of the rock a narrow cavern opened.

He stepped within.

The change from the sun-baked ravine was startling. Within the cavern the gloom was so deep that for some moments even the eagle eyes of the Arab could see nothing.

Moisture dripped from the walls and gathered in slinky pools on the sandy ground.

Two dim figures moved as the sheik advanced.

Major Cherry and Ali ben Yusef rose wearily from their uneasy rest on the damp ground. Thick leathern thongs secured them to the walls of the cave, allowing them freedom of movement within a radius of a few yards, but not near enough to aid one another.

The sheik stared at them grimly, while his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom.

Major Cherry eyed him steadily.

"I have news for you, O Roumi!" said the sheik with a hard, savage grin.

The major did not reply.

"I have told you that your son and his friends left Biskra to search for you. I have told you that their guide, Ibrahim of Biskra, was in my pay. He was to hand them over to my men in the desert. They suspected him, and would have fled. He poisoned them in coffee."

The major breathed hard.

"They are dead!" said the sheik. "Dead—your son and his friends who



One by one the rifles were tossed down to Ibrahim, who caught them with unerring hand and laid them on the rock. Then, one by one, the juniors plunged into the pool below, and scrambling out, drenched and breathless, joined their guide on the jutting rock. (See Chapter 8.)

came with him from England! That is the price you have paid for keeping from me the Eye of Ahmed."

"I have done my duty!" said Major Cherry in a low voice. "Even if it is as you say, still I have done my duty."

"You do not believe me?"

The major did not reply.

"I have sent two of my men with Ibrahim to bring the dead bodies here; or, if the jackals have not spared them, to bring proof of their death," said the sheik. "They will return before another sun rises on the Sahara."

Major Cherry was silent.

"And the two English girls whom you left at Biskra, Bou Saoud brought them to my tents yesterday. They are my prisoners! Will you ransom their lives with the Eye of Ahmed?"

"The diamond is not mine to give."

Mustapha ben Mohammed turned to Ali. He smiled mockingly as he met the gleam of hatred in the eyes of the schoolboy sheik.

"And you, Ali, the son of Yusef," he said. "The Eye of Ahmed is yours to give, and at your order this obdurate Roumi will give it. Will you render it to me to save the lives of the English girls?"

"Not to save their lives and my own," said Ali steadily. "It is mine by right. I am the chief of the Tahar, and I will never render up my birthright."

"Spoken like an Arab!" said the sheik. "What are women—what are their lives worth?" He snapped his fingers. "But the Roumis see these matters with different eyes. We shall

see. I have given an order—it will be obeyed! We shall see."

The chief retired to the mouth of the cavern, and blew on a silver whistle he drew from the folds of his garments.

Then he crossed his arms on his chest and waited.

Major Cherry stood silent, his bronzed face deeply troubled. To save his own life—even to save his son's life—he would not have betrayed his trust—the trust reposed in him by the old sheik Yusef who had died under the assassin's hand in the desert. But—

There was a tramping of footsteps in the ravine.

Abdullah, the Nubian, entered the cave.

He held a cord in his hand, and the cord was attached to the bonds on the wrists of two prisoners who followed him. The major's face grew pale as death as he recognised Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn. Behind them, two more black slaves appeared, one of whom carried a pick, and the other a spade.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Order of the Sheik!

"DOG of a Roumi—son of a thousand dogs!" The Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed's deep voice echoed strangely in the hollows of the cavern. "Will you speak now? Slave, where is the Eye of Ahmed?"

Major Cherry's eyes were fixed on the prisoners.

Marjorie Hazeldene was pale as death, but she was calm. Clara cast startled and frightened glances on all sides—at the savage sheik, at the black slaves who only waited a word from their master to commit any savage crime he might dictate.

Since they had been betrayed by the guide into the hands of Bou Saoud, and brought to the tents of the robber Arabs, everything had seemed like a fearful dream to the two Cliff House girls.

Only a few days before they had been in the villa at Biskra, with Hazel, with Mr. and Mrs. Hazeldene—holiday-makers in a crowd of other tourists. Little had they dreamed, when they left England, that their holiday in Africa was to lead to this—that such things could happen in modern days.

It was hard to realise that they were in the power of a lawless desert sheik, that their lives depended on his nod—that no law or authority could touch him if he ordered their death and threw them to the hyenas.

Marjorie was calm, with a deadly, pale calmness. But poor Clara's quivering lips and restless glances showed the terror she could scarcely suppress.

"Major Cherry!" Marjorie spoke in a low but steady voice. "Then you are here."

"Yes, my dear child," muttered the major. "Oh, that this should have happened! You should have been safe at Biskra."

"A guide led us into a trap," said Marjorie. "We have been brought here—I do not know where. What is to happen to us?"

The major groaned. "Where is the Eye of Ahmed?" said the Sheik Mustapha, in a grinding voice. "The lives of these girls, and your own life, and the life of Ali, in return for the talisman."

"Villain!" muttered the major hoarsely. "I cannot do it! The amulet is not mine to give."

"We shall see." The sheik spoke to the black slaves in Arabic.

The two Nubians with spade and pick began to dig in the hard, sandy floor of the cavern.

The two girls watched in silence, not knowing what was intended. The major watched, the sweat streaming down his face. He guessed.

Clink, clink, clink, clink! Pick and spade rang on sand and stone, filling the hollow cavern with echoes.

Deeper and deeper the Nubians excavated, until two pits had been dug, each about three or four feet deep.

Again the sheik rapped out a harsh command.

The Nubians grasped Marjorie and Clara, and lifted them into the pits. The floor of the cavern was on a level with their shoulders as they stood in the excavations.

A groan burst from Major Cherry. His eyes turned on Ali ben Yusef.

"Ali, I have been your friend and your father's friend. Will you save them at the cost of your birthright?"

Ali's lips set hard.

"You do not know that dog of a Mustapha," he said coldly. "Give him the amulet to save them, and he will kill them. He has no more faith than a hyena. You cannot save them by yielding to him; but you can save Mustapha. Without the Eye of Ahmed his life is not safe among the tribes of the Tahir. Some day they will know that he slew

my father, Yusef, and they will slay him and all his brood."

The sheik made a savage gesture. Perhaps the words of Ali ben Yusef found an echo in his own heart.

"He knows it," said Ali. "He will promise anything to gain the Eye of Ahmed. He will keep no faith. Let him kill us, then—we can die but once. His fate will find him out, and that will be our comfort. I tell you he will not spare them if you yield to him."

The major groaned again. He felt that the young Arab's words were true. There was no trust to be placed in the sheik.

Mustapha ben Mohammed broke in. "I will swear by the beard of the Prophet—"

"You would not dare to keep your oath, even if you wished," said Ali scornfully. "You dare not let Major Cherry return to Biskra, and report to the French that you slew their soldiers in the desert. You dare not let these girls return, to tell how they were taken from the protection of the French and carried into the desert. You and all your kinsmen would be hunted down by the French governor, and hanged like the dogs you are, and you know it. No corner of the desert would hide you from the vengeance of the French. You dare not keep your oath if you swear it!"

The sheik's hard face worked with rage.

"Be it so!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Be it so! It is death to you all. Your graves shall be in the Sahara. But at least, I can spare you the torture. Roumi dog, will you not give the Eye of Ahmed to gain for these girls a merciful death, instead of the slow torture of days and nights?"

"It is not mine to give!" repeated the major, in a failing voice.

"Be it so! I shall demand again tomorrow."

Mustapha spoke in Arabic.

The Nubians began to fill in the pits in which the two girls stood. Earth and sand and stones were crammed in round them, and stamped down by the heavy feet of the negroes.

Marjorie and Clara spoke no word. Clara was almost fainting. Marjorie was still calm, her face like stone.

Only the heads and shoulders of the two girls showed above the floor of the cavern when the Nubians had completed their work.

The sheik made a gesture, and the slaves trod softly away, and disappeared from the cavern.

Mustapha fixed his eyes on Major Cherry.

"The sun is sinking," he said. "In an hour it will be night. Look, while you may! When the night comes you will see nothing, but you will know what is here. In the morning I shall return."

No word came from the major.

"I shall return," said Mustapha ben Mohammed. "Then you will speak, and ransom these girls from torture. But if you do not speak, son of a dog, a savage hyena shall then be turned into the cave. What will you see then by the light of the sun?"

The major shuddered. Without waiting for a reply the sheik turned and strode away with rustling garments. He disappeared from the mouth of the cavern.

Major Cherry covered his face with his hands.

The hardy old soldier, who had looked death in the face a hundred times without flinching, was broken at last. Well he knew that the Sahara savage would keep his word. And he knew that he could not bear that last fearful test.

Even by breaking his faith to a dead man he must save the victims of the sheik's cruelty. He covered his face with his hands and groaned.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Talisman!

LOWER sank the blazing African sun.

In the rocky ravine above the Arab camp the shadows lengthened.

The cavern, always gloomy, grew darker and darker, while light yet lingered without.

Dimly, through the gloom, the major could see the two white faces of the hapless prisoners, buried alive by the order of the sheik.

They vanished at last. But still they haunted him, though he could see them no more.

The sudden tropical night shut in over the desert and the desert hills. The cavern was a pit of blackness.

Black as the night around him were the thoughts of the old soldier, stirring restlessly at the end of the leathern thong that secured him to the rocky wall of the cave.

There was no hope.

Long had he known that there was no hope of escape—of life. Of himself he was not accustomed to think very much. When first he had donned the King's uniform, it had been with the knowledge that at any hour he must be prepared to die if need arose. Facing death was a commonplace with him. But it was worse than death that he had to face now. A thousand deaths would have been preferable. Through the sufferings of others, the iron-hearted sheik had been able to reach him. If he still lived it was because the sheik hoped, through him, to gain the Eye of Ahmed. But for that he would have died under the spears when Bou Saoud and his savage men fell on the French escort in the desert. He had had no hope.

From the sheik he had learned that the Greyfriars schoolboys had gone into the desert in search of him. But he drew little hope from the news. It was one more sorrow that he had involved others in his fate. And the news that they had been murdered by a treacherous guide was only too likely to be true. Alive or dead they could not help him, and he could not help the hapless girls who had fallen into the power of the sheik. Only by one means could he save them from the torture—by yielding up the Eye of Ahmed to Mustapha ben Mohammed. And to the dead sheik, the man who had died in the desert, he had sworn to guard the talisman with his life and honour.

There was a deep silence in the cavern. Only faintly from afar came through the silence the murmur of the water-course in the ravine. Faintly, too, there came from afar the howl of a hyena at intervals, the cry of a hungry brute ranging the hills for prey. But no hyena could reach the cavern. Below the ravine lay the Arab encampment; above the cave the ravine narrowed to a mere fissure, filled from side to side by the descending stream. Often and often, during the long, long imprisonment, the major had listened to the hyena cries in the stillness of the black nights.

But now, though he knew that the roaming brutes could not reach the cavern, the harsh cries had a new significance to his ears. On the morrow, with the coming of the sun, the sheik would return—to demand for the last time the Eye of Ahmed. And if a refusal was

given a hyena was to be turned into the cavern—hungry, savage, with the half-buried girls at his mercy.

The ruthless sheik had judged well! Life was nothing, even faith to a dead man counted for little, when it came to that! The major groaned in spirit as he thought of it.

He spoke at last, his voice sounding strangely hollow:

"Marjorie, my child!"

Marjorie's voice came back, in quivering tones:

"Yes."

"I can save you, you and Clara, from the torture. Do not fear that that dastard will carry out his threat. I shall save you from that!"

The major had resolved; the die was cast.

No word came from Ali ben Yusef.

It was his birthright that was to be given to save the girls from a fearful fate; it was what the major had no right to give. But no word came from him.

"I will make terms with the scoundrel," went on the major in a low voice. "You can hear me, Marjorie?"

"Yes. I hear."

"It is true that he cannot spare you without risk to himself—but he will take that risk, to gain the talisman. The diamond shall not be his, till you are in safety, and I have received sure word that you are safe. To this he will agree—for his own life is not secure among his tribesmen if he cannot gain the amulet. My dear girl, endure this terrible night as well as you may; to-morrow there is hope."

"And for you?" asked Marjorie.

"That matters little. Bear up, and keep up your courage," said the major. "Tell Clara to keep up her courage."

"I think poor Clara has fainted," murmured Marjorie, "or else she is asleep."

"Marjorie," said the major, after a pause, "before I left Biskra, on this unhappy expedition, I gave something into your charge—a little leather case. You kept it safe?"

"Quite safe."

"Where is it now, Marjorie?"

"I have it here."

The major started.

"Here?" he breathed.

"Yes. You told me never to let it go out of my possession. When we rode out of Biskra, I hid it in my dress—it is in a hidden pocket," said Marjorie. "We have not been robbed—Bou Saoud only made us prisoners. So it is here."

"That little case, Marjorie, contains what the sheik seeks—the great diamond which is called the Eye of Ahmed."

"I understand."

"And it is here," muttered the major. "Here—in his grasp, if the villain only knew. But he would never guess that I left the talisman in the keeping of a schoolgirl—it was because he could never guess, that I left it in your keeping. And it is safe?"

"It is safe."

Ali ben Yusef broke his silence.

"Give it to the sheik, to save them," he said. "You shall not break your oath, my old friend—for I have the right to give you leave, and I give it freely. If you can save their lives, that is enough."

"God bless you, Ali!" said the major.

There was silence again.

The long, long minutes of the terrible night wore away—each of them seeming hours in duration. For a time sounds were heard from the Arab encampment; but every sound died away at last. In the tents a few hundred yards away the fierce spearmen of Mustapha ben

Mohammed were sleeping. Mustapha slept—and if he dreamed, he dreamed of success at last to his plotting—of the Eye of Ahmed gleaming in his turban, of the thousands of desert tribesmen called under his sway—of undisputed power as Sheik of the Oued Tahar—power to be transmitted to his son, Bou Saoud, after him. He did not dream that, in the very hour of success, fortune was on the turn; and that his son would never inherit the chieftainship of the Oued Tahar—that Bou Saoud's savage heart was already stilled for ever, and that he lay in an unmarked grave in the desert hills. Mustapha ben Mohammed slept at peace—untroubled by the anguish and terror in the cavern in the ravine.

Black as the pit was the interior of the cavern—black as the despair of its unhappy prisoners. At the mouth of the cave was a glimmer of ghostly light; the moon soared over the Sahara, and the silvery beams glimmered in the deep rocky ravine. But scarce a glimpse of light penetrated into the hollow cave.

The howling of the distant hyena had ceased. Only the trickle of the water over the rocks whispered faintly through deep silence. A splash came softly in the stillness—another splash—and the faint clink of a falling stone.

Major Cherry started, and listened.

Were the Arabs coming?

The sheik had said that he would return at dawn. Had his impatience mastered him—was he returning sooner?

Faint sounds—faint, indefinable—came eerily through the stillness. A figure,

dim and half-seen, darkened the glimmering moonlight at the mouth of the cavern.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Forward!

"MY fine gentlemen—"

"Ready?" said Harry.

Sleep was impossible for the watchers in the Bordj.

In the upper room Billy Bunter slept; in the lower room the Famous Five watched and waited with sleepless eyes. Ibrahim had recommended sleep, till he should awaken them at the appointed hour—but sleep was impossible.

Darkness lay on the desert and the sandy hills—the square brick tower of the Bordj was a black shadow among shadows. Through the loopholes by the door moonlight began to gleam.

Ibrahim rose and shook himself. He was calm and cool, though he had said that he was going to his death with his masters. He had resigned himself to it with Oriental fatalism.

Harry Wharton & Co. examined their rifles for the last time, and looked to their cartridges. The five juniors were cool and collected. Death lurked in every shadow; every step they were to take, it was only too likely, brought them nearer to doom. But there was no thought of hesitation. They were only glad that the hour of action had arrived; that the long, weary waiting was over at last.

In the corner of the room the Arab



The juniors stopped and turned, rifle in hand. A number of the Arabs out-distancing the rest came speeding towards them, yelling and brandishing their spears. "Fire!" said Harry between his teeth. The rifles of the Famous Five poured a volley upon the advancing spearmen, for the moment keeping them at bay. (See Chapter 9.)

prisoner sat leaning on the wall, sleepless as his captors, his fierce eyes glowing at them with unsleeping savage hate.

"We're ready," said Bob. "We must call Bunter, to bar the door after us." He ascended the steps to the upper room.

Bunter was sleeping soundly on a pile of rugs. Bob Cherry groped for him, in the dim moonlight that penetrated through the loopholed walls, and shook him by the shoulder.

"Ow! Wharrer marrer?"

"Wake up, Bunter!"

"Tain't rising-bell."

The Owl of the Remove had been dreaming that he was in the old dormitory at Greyfriars.

"Wake up, old man," said Bob gently. "We're going now. Come down and bar the door after us."

"You're going to leave me alone here?"

"Come!" answered Bob.

Bunter scrambled up, mumbling and grumbling. He followed Bob Cherry down to the lower room of the Bordj.

In the dimness he blinked at the juniors.

"Why can't you have a light?" he growled.

"It would not be safe—it might be seen," said Harry Wharton. "Don't put on a light while we are gone, Bunter."

"Look here, I'm not staying here alone."

"Do you want to come to the sheik's camp with us?"

Bunter shuddered.

"Ow! No! I say, you fellows—"

"Bar the door after we are gone, and don't open it to anyone, unless you hear our whistle. You understand?"

"Ow! Yes! I—I say, are you leaving that Arab here?" asked Bunter, blinking uneasily at the bound man in the corner.

"He is quite safe, bound hand and foot," said Harry. "You needn't be afraid of him, Bunter."

"Suppose he got loose—"

"Knock him on the head if he tries to get loose!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh dear!" mumbled Bunter.

The fat junior was in a hopeless state of funk. It was by his own fault and folly that he was with the rescue party at all. But the chums of the Remove did not lose patience with him. In that hour of terrible peril there was no room for anger. They were loth to leave the hapless Owl to his own devices, surrounded by perils in the heart of the desert. But there was no help for it. He was, at least, safer in the Bordj than they were likely to be among the tents of Mustapha's sparmex.

"I—I say, you fellows—" groaned Bunter.

"Keep your pecker up, kid," said Bob Cherry kindly. "If we get back we've got a chance of getting you safe to Biskra. If not, you must shift for yourself. If we're not back to-morrow take the best camel and go."

"Oh dear!"

"Bar the door safely after us, Bunter."

"Ow! Yes," mumbled the Owl of the Remove.

The juniors stepped out of the Bordj into the dim moonlight. Ibrahim remained till the last.

There was a peculiar gleam in the eyes of Honest Ibrahim.

"We're waiting for you, Ibrahim," said Harry.

"Ibrahim him come," said the guide. "Him look at the son of a dog to see all safe."

"Right!"

A minute later Ibrahim joined the juniors outside the Bordj. He had, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 858.

apparently, examined the Arab prisoner to make sure that his bonds were still secure. It did not occur to the juniors that Ibrahim had any hidden motive in leaving that duty till they were outside the brick tower.

Billy Bunter shut the door after them.

One by one the palm-wood bars dropped into the iron sockets. Wharton counted them as they dropped, to make sure that the Owl of the Remove had secured the door.

Then the Famous Five followed Ibrahim.

With his baggy blue trousers and gold-braided jacket glimmering in the light of the rising moon, Honest Ibrahim led the way among the rugged rocks and sandy ravines.

From the top of the tower the juniors had had a glimpse of the distant Arab encampment. On the ground it was lost to their view. To find their way to the place among the wild, trackless rocks in the dim moon-glimmer, would have perplexed the Greyfriars juniors. To Ibrahim it was easy.

He led the way without a pause.

Harry Wharton looked back after a few minutes. The Bordj had vanished from sight among the folds of the low hills.

A trackless wilderness of rock and sand surrounded the juniors, with here and there, in the openings of the hills, a glimpse of the sandy desert glimmering under the moon.

Wharton spoke at last in a low voice. All his thoughts were with the prisoners of the sheik; but he had not forgotten the hapless Bunter, left alone in the solitary tower with the savage Arab prisoner. If by some wretched chance the ruffian should regain his liberty, the instant death of Bunter and the alarm carried to the Arab encampment would follow.

"Ibrahim!"

"Yes, my noble gentleman."

"You're sure you left the prisoner safe?"

Ibrahim's white teeth gleamed in the moonlight as he grinned.

"Him safe, noble master. Ibrahim him swear it."

"Good! If he should get loose—"

"Him no get loose," said Ibrahim coolly. "Him never stir one hand any more. Ibrahim him make very sure."

Wharton started.

"Ibrahim, what have you done?"

"The way of Inglistan is not the way of the desert, my noble master," said Ibrahim coolly. "The son of a dog, him gnaw the cord. Before morning him free, with Ibrahim gone and no watch him more. Now him never gnaw the cord."

"You—you have—" breathed Harry, with a sickening feeling in his breast.

"My noble master him wish the son of a pig to get free and kill Bunter, and give alarm to the sheik?" grinned Ibrahim.

"No, no. But—"

"Ibrahim, him take care of that. You trust Honest Ibrahim, him do your business. We lose time, noble master, and it not safe to talk. The desert has ears."

And Honest Ibrahim plodded on.

Wharton followed him. It was useless to say more, useless to voice the horror and disgust that rose within him. Ibrahim was an Arab of the African desert, and he had acted according to the ways of his own people. And he was right—terribly in the right, for it was only too likely that his savage deed had saved the whole party from disaster. With only Bunter to watch him, it was probable that the bound man in the

Bordj would not have long remained a prisoner.

Wharton said nothing.

In grim silence the Greyfriars juniors followed the guide.

In the Bordj, after they had left it, Billy Bunter moved restlessly about, quivering with terror. He dared not sleep again. He blinked at the Arab prisoner in the corner with unconcealed dread. If the man should get loose, Bunter dared not even approach him to see whether his bonds were secure. As the moon rose higher, and the light strengthened, the Bordj was illuminated through the loopholes, and Bunter's uneasy glances hardly left the still form in the corner. The man's eyes were closed. He slept, or feigned sleep perhaps, to throw the junior off his guard. But as the light grew clearer Bunter noticed a strange and rigid immobility about the man as he sat hunched in the corner. He noted, too, a daub of crimson on the dirty burnous. He noted, with gathering fear and horror, a dark pool that gathered on the earthen floor by the still figure.

Bunter gasped.

He knew it at last. It was a dead man that had been left with him in the Bordj. He remembered a movement of Ibrahim's as the guide leaned over the prisoner as if to examine his bonds. He remembered a hoarse sound he had heard, like a muffled, stifled groan. He knew now what Ibrahim had done.

The fat junior groaned in sheer horror. But with his horror was mingled a deep relief—that he was safe.

But to remain in the Bordj with that fearful Thing was impossible. He hardly dared unbar the door, lest hidden enemies should be lurking without. But he unbarred it at last.

With half-shut eyes, quaking with horror and fear, he dragged at the dirty burnous, and the body was drawn outside the tower. Bunter darted in again, panting, and slammed the door and jammed the bars back into the sockets.

He sank down on a stool, listening and quaking.

There was an uneasy stirring among the camels tethered in the courtyard. He heard the animals snorting and trampling. He heard low growls and snarls. He knew that the hyenas had crept in to seek the carrion. He listened in quivering horror till the sounds died away and the animals were quiet again.

Slowly, with shaking limbs, Bunter crept up the stair to the upper room, and threw himself on the rugs. He slept again at last, and his deep snore echoed through the Bordj—the only sound that broke the silence of the desert night.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

"AND now—" muttered Bob Cherry.

Ibrahim had stopped.

He had led the juniors higher into the sandy hills by paths that wound among rocks and boulders. Now they stood on the bank of a narrow water-course. The thin stream, glimmering in the moonlight, trickled at their feet.

Ibrahim pointed down the shallow stream.

"That is the way," he said. "My fine gentlemen must walk in the water. Prenez garde! You trust Ibrahim!"

He tucked up his baggy blue trousers and stepped into the stream.

Save where it had gathered in deeper pools in the rocky bed, the stream did not rise above three or four inches.

In silence, Harry Wharton & Co. followed.

Ibrahim had described to them the situation of the cavern where the major was a prisoner. He had profited by the hours he had spent in the Arab camp, and he had done his scouting well.

The juniors understood that this was the water-course by which the cavern opened. They were to reach the ravine at its upper end. The lower end was barred by Mustapha's encampment.

In single file the juniors trod down the bed of the torrent after Ibrahim.

In the rainy season the rocky bed would be filled to overflowing, with a thundering, roaring torrent that swept down with resistless force, to join the waters of the Oued Tahar far away.

But in the summer heats the stream was low and thin; there was no danger from the descending water.

The danger was from the slippery wet rocks, from the rugged precipices over which the stream cascaded.

More than once, many times, a foot slipped; many times the juniors had to catch at the sharp rock-edges to save themselves.

But they were active and wary, and no danger, no difficulty, could have turned them back.

"Here, my fine gentlemen shall be careful!" murmured Ibrahim.

A sheer drop of six or seven feet was before them.

Over it the water fell in a cascade, with a loud murmuring and clouds of spray.

Below, the water had gathered in a pool several feet deep. A dozen yards farther on there was a further drop, a steep slope into the wider space of the ravine.

Even in the daylight the descent would have been full of peril and difficulty. In the dim, uncertain moonlight the juniors could hardly see the dangers that encompassed them.

But there was no hesitation; only steady care and quiet resolution. Ibrahim was leader now, and the juniors listened in silence to his directions, and obeyed them implicitly.

The guide leaped down the fall, and was lost to view in the spray of the cascade. The juniors stood in the flowing water above, and waited. A few minutes, and Ibrahim scrambled out of the pool, and reappeared to view, standing on a bulging jut of rock over the water.

One by one the rifles were tossed to him, and one by one he caught them with unerring hand, and laid them on the rock.

Then, one by one, the juniors followed him in the leap, plunging into the pool below, and scrambling out drenched and breathless on the jutting rock.

Ibrahim grinned with satisfaction.

"It is done!" he said. "Bismillah! It is done! Now the way is clear!"

Once more the Greyfriars juniors waded on.

In a few minutes more they were out of the rocky water-course, and able to step on the rocky banks, where the stream flowed through the wider space of the ravine.

There, in the distance, they caught sight of the Arab tents, glimmering in the valley below.

Ibrahim pointed.

"Him cave!" he said.

The black orifice of the cavern showed in the rocky wall of the ravine. Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"My father's there?"

"Him there this morning, my fine gentleman. We find him."

The juniors hurried on.

From the encampment of the Arabs,



All bade farewell to his friends in an even voice, and with a steady hand fastened the camel-rope about his waist. Bob Cherry stared down into the darkness over the parapet, and signalled for the rope to be lowered. With beating hearts the defenders of the Bordj lowered their schoolmate, straining their eyes to see if the enemy had observed them. But all was still. (See Chapter 14.)

below the ravine, came no sound of alarm, only an occasional howl of a dog too far off to scent the strangers. Mustapha ben Mohammed, sleeping in his tent, did not dream that his prisoners were not safe. He knew nothing of the rescue-party. So far as he knew, the Greyfriars party had died by their guide's treachery in the Sahara. And unaided by Ibrahim, the juniors could never have found their way down the tortuous steep of the water-course. The cavern was a safe prison—a place of torture, and a prison that was as safe as the deepest dungeon. On that score, it had never occurred to the sheik to feel the slightest uneasiness.

Ibrahim stepped into the mouth of the cavern.

Blackness reigned within.

From the dense darkness a voice came—a voice that was husky, but which Bob Cherry knew.

"So you have returned, Mustapha."

"No Mustapha!" grinned Ibrahim.

Bob sprang into the cavern.

"Father!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue!

"FATHER!"

Major Cherry stared through the gloom, with starting eyes, as he heard that familiar voice.

For the moment it seemed to him that his senses had deceived him. It was his

son's voice, and his son was dead, or far away.

"Father!"

"Bob!" The major's voice was hoarse and broken. "Bob! It's not possible! Oh, am I going mad at last?"

"It's Bob, father, and we're all here."

"We're here, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed sir!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

There was a cry in the darkness.

"Oh, we are saved—we are saved!" It was Marjorie's voice.

"Marjorie!" panted Bob.

Harry Wharton turned on the light of his electric torch. There was no danger of the gleam being seen outside the cavern.

The sight that met the eyes of the rescuers dumbfounded them.

Major Cherry and Ali ben Yusef, roped to the rocky wall, and two ghastly white faces that looked from the earth—the faces of the two girls buried alive!

Bob gave a cry.

"Marjorie! Clara! Oh, the dastards!"

"We are saved!" whispered Marjorie.

"Clara—Clara dear—we are saved! Our friends have come!"

Clara's eyes opened wildly.

"The demons!" breathed Wharton.

"Quick—quick! Get them loose! Quick!"

Ibrahim drew a candle from the folds of his ample garments. Frank Nugent struck a match and lighted it.

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The juniors were instantly at work. With their bare hands they tore at the earth and sand that had been stamped hard round the half-buried prisoners.

The major watched them, even yet scarcely daring to believe that this was real—that it was not some dream from which he would awaken again to torment and misery.

"Buck up, Marjorie, dear!" whispered Bob. "Only a few minutes—only a few minutes!"

Ibrahim hacked at the earth with his knife. It had been stamped hard, but only a few hours before it had been loosened by the Nubians. With their knives, the juniors hacked at it, and slowly but surely they excavated round the prisoners. Bob Cherry left his comrades for a few moments to the task, while he drew his knife across the major's bonds.

Major Cherry stood free at last.

Bob hurried to Ali. The one-time schoolboy of the Remove at Greyfriars smiled at him.

"I being very glad to see you," he whispered, in his odd English.

A heap of sand and earth was growing on the floor of the cavern.

At last Marjorie and Clara were drawn from their terrible prisons. They were chilled to the bone. Clara was scarcely conscious, and Marjorie, though conscious, was utterly exhausted, and unable to make a movement. It was likely to be long before they recovered from their fearful experience.

"The villains!" Bob muttered again and again.

Harry Wharton trod to the mouth of the cavern and looked out. The moonlight showed the encampment of the Arabs, in the valley below the ravine. It was long past midnight now, and no one was stirring in the irregular group of tents. Only here and there a pariah dog wandered, hunting for bones or offal, and occasionally uttering a mournful howl.

Wharton knitted his brows.

Fortune had favoured the rescuers—they had found the prisoners; they had released them. But getting away from the cavern was another matter.

The major and Ali, though weakened by their long imprisonment in the damp cavern, could doubtless have clambered up the steep watercourse with Ibrahim and the Greyfriars juniors. But it was impossible for Marjorie and Clara; and it was equally impossible for them to be carried by such a route. The rescuers could not return to the Bordj by the way they had come.

The only other way was to descend from the ravine into the valley where the Arab camp lay, and take the chance of discovery. It was barely possible that by silence and great caution they might steal past, as far as possible from the tents, without giving the alarm. The Arabs, utterly unsuspecting anything of the kind, were not likely to be watching—but the howls of the pariah dogs filled Wharton with misgiving. It was fairly certain that the straying dogs would scent the strangers, and would howl and bark an alarm.

But the chance had to be taken.

At all events, by descending the upper end of the water course the Greyfriars party had rescued the prisoners; and it was now only a question of flight. Had an alarm been given before the rescue, all would have been lost.

Major Cherry joined the captain of the Remove at the cavern's mouth. He stepped out into the moonlight, and stood for some minutes surveying the encampment below.

The major was quite himself again now—his bronzed face was stern and resolute as of old.

"You are in command now, sir," said Harry Wharton. "What are the orders?"

The major smiled faintly.

"We have to take our chance of passing the camp," he said. "The dogs will give the alarm—then we shall have to run for it. Bob has told me about the Bordj—if we can get there, we shall have a breathing-space, at least. If we get away without raising an alarm, we shall mount and ride for the desert without a moment's delay—if we are attacked and pursued, we shall defend ourselves in the Bordj, and trust to fortune. More than that we cannot foresee at present. The two girls must be carried—they cannot walk." He gritted his teeth hard under his grizzled moustache. "Mustapha shall pay dearly for it, if fortune is our friend."

He turned back into the cavern.

No time was lost.

The major picked up Marjorie in his strong arms, and at a sign from him Ibrahim lifted Clara from the ground. The two men were to carry them, while the Famous Five and Ali guarded the retreat. Wharton had passed his revolver to the Greyfriars Arab.

In silence they left the cavern.

Down the rocky, rugged bank of the torrent they trod cautiously, ever nearer to the glimmering tents of the kinsmen of Mustapha.

Walls of rock shut them in—it was impossible to turn out of the ravine until they were within thirty yards of the nearest tent.

Then Ibrahim muttered a word and led the way, clambering over rough rocks. The major followed with Marjorie; and the juniors brought up the rear.

They cast backward, watchful glances at the tents as they turned their backs on the encampment of the Arabs.

Loud and long, the howls of the pariah dogs rang through the night. The wandering brutes had scented the strangers.

Fierce, loud howls rang among the tents, and there was a sound of stirring, and of hoarse voices calling in Arabic.

"They're alarmed!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Faster—faster, my fine gentlemen!" called out Ibrahim. "There is death behind now, my noble masters!"

A shot rang out in the tents—apparently a signal. The sound of shouting followed.

Two or three of the Arab dogs were snuffing after the Greyfriars party, as they hurried over the rocks.

They moved swiftly, but the way was rough, and it lay uphill. Dark figures moved among the tents—a shot rang out, and then another.

At first, the Arabs had evidently not suspected an escape or rescue of the prisoners. The alarmed yelling of the dogs brought them out of their tents, doubtless suspecting a raid on their horses and camels by some hostile tribe. But the fierce eye of Mustapha ben Mohammed, sweeping the moonlit valley, detected the little party making for the hills. Dim as the light was, and even at the distance, he recognised the stalwart form of the major—and he could discern that two female forms were being

carried. In amazement and rage he comprehended that his prisoners were escaping from his clutches; and he roared orders to his men in a terrible voice.

Pursuing footsteps rang on the rocks behind the fugitives.

The rugged route Ibrahim was following was too steep and broken for the use of horses and camels, fortunately. It was on foot that the savage spearmen of the Tahar poured in pursuit. But they ran swiftly, shouting and brandishing their spears.

The fugitives had a good start. But burdened with the two girls, their pace did not equal that of the pursuing Arabs.

At every yard of ground the running tribesmen drew nearer, and shots rang out from behind, the bullets spattering on the rocks.

Bob Cherry looked back, with a grim brow.

"We sha'n't get clear," he said. "Let them save the girls, and we can take our chance!"

Wharton nodded.

Ibrahim was going fast ahead, following a rugged path in the midst of jagged boulders on the hillside. The major followed him; the juniors stopped and turned, rifle in hand.

Five or six of the Arabs, outdistancing the rest, came speeding towards them, yelling and brandishing their spears.

"Fire!" said Harry, between his teeth.

The rifles poured a volley upon the advancing Arabs.

Crack! Crack-ack-ack-ack!

The sudden reports filled the hollows of the hills with resounding echoes, like the roll of distant thunder. Three of the pursuers spun over like rabbits under the fire—a fourth staggered away, yelling. The others stopped—and Ali's revolver spat twice, and two of the Arabs dropped on the rocks.

With wild yells, the foremost of the pursuers dropped back, to come on again with a crowd of their comrades. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not wait for them. They had checked the pursuit, and, without losing a second, they hurried on again, only praying that they might have time to reach the shelter of the Bordj with the rescued girls before the enemy closed in on them.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Pressed!

KNOCK! Knock! Knock!

Billy Bunter awoke suddenly. He sat up on the rugs, in the upper room of the Bordj, and rubbed his eyes.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Crashing blows resounded on the hard wood of the door below. The Owl of the Remove quaked with terror.

"The Arabs!"

That was his first thought. But loud and clear came the signal whistle of the Greyfriars juniors. And then Bunter heard the voice of Bob Cherry shouting: "Bunter! Bunter! Let us in—quick!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He stumbled down the dark stairs. Outside there were panting voices, trampling feet. Farther, but plainly to be heard, sounded the yells of the Arabs.

Bunter's trembling hands fumbled with the bars of the door.

"Bunter!" roared Bob. "Quick—quick—they're almost on us! Hurry—hurry!"

(Continued on page 17.)

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Supplement No. 193.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending September 27th, 1924.



Servissess Not Required!

An Article Dealing with
the Trials & Tribulations
of a Famous Footballer,
By Billy Bunter.

I'M not going to start this article by telling you what a fine footballer I am. My abilities in this direction are already known throughout the English-speaking world.

Strange to say, however, my wonderful talents aren't appreciated at Greyfriars. You've heard of people entertaining angels unawares? Well, that's exactly what Greyfriars is doing, only I happen to be a brilliant footballer as well as an angel.

When the season started, I called on Harry Wharton, the footer kaptin of the Remove. (He ought not to be footer kaptin, but that's neither here nor there, as the man said when he searched for his collar-stud.)

I addressed Wharton with brootal frankness.

"Look hear," I said, "if you don't give me a place in the team, you soon won't have a team in the place! You'll be licked in all your matches if you leave me out, and the team will go to rack and ruin."

Wharton wouldn't listen to reezon. He turned upon me with sudden ferossity, and booted me out of his study. He was wearing his footer-boots at the time, too. The cowardly beast!

Nothing daunted, I offered my servissess to Temple of the Upper Fourth. Temple ought to have been proud and pleased to have me in his eleven. But he wasn't. He told me I couldn't play footer for toffy. Then he threw a loaf of bread at me, and it hit me in the waste. What a wicked waist!

I wish Temple had thrown a plum-cake. Then I should have picked it up and taken it away with me. But you can't sit down in some quiet corner and enjoy a meal of dry bread!

I rolled away to Blundell's study in the Fifth Form passidge. If Wharton wouldn't have me, and Temple washed his hands of me, there was still a chance that Blundell would find me a place in the Fifth Form eleven. My hart beat high with hope; but it soon sank into my boots when Blundell—before I had time to eggplain the object of my visit

Supplement i.]

—picked up a cricket-stump and chased me out of his study.

I fled full-tilt down the passidge, and bumped into Wingate of the Sixth. He must have thought that a steam-roller had collided with him, for he went down like a log. When he had sorted himself out, I apollergized for the calamity, and told him I had some good news for him. "Let's hear it," said Wingate gruffly.

"I have decided to play for the First Eleven," I said.

Wingate shook his head.

"Can't be done," he said. "We haven't a hopscotch team in the Sixth."

"I don't mean hopscotch," I said. "I mean footer. If you behave yourself during the next few days, Wingate, and don't punish me for anything, I'll do you the onner of turning out for the First Eleven on Saturday."

Instead of going down on his hands and neeze, and stammering out his grattitude, Wingate started playing football—with me as the football! He dribbled me down the passidge, and when I reached the end I was more dead than alive. I felt as if all my ribs had been stove in.

After being ill-treated in this sayvidge fashion, I shall refuse to offer my servissess to the First Eleven again. In fact, I shan't play for a Greyfriars team at all.

I have just written round to all the leading clubs in the country—Aston Villa, the Spurs, Chelsea, and so on—offering to play for them as a professional. The highest bidder will be allowed to claim my servissess. I egg-spect Chelsea will offer me about five thousand pounds, but if the 'Spurs offer ten thousand I shall go there. Trussed me to know which side my bread's buttered!

So look out, you fellows! You may egg-spect to see me in the cullers of some famous club before the football season is many weeks older. And then Wingate and Blundell & Co. will kick themselves with remorse, and say:

"Why didn't we avail ourselves of the servissess of Britain's best boy footballer when we had the chance?"

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

WE have now reached the time when King Cricket goes tottering from his throne, and football reigns in his stead.

Cricket is a glorious game, with very fine traditions; but in several respects football goes one better. A shower of rain will soon upset a cricket match; a blizzard will not check the progress of a footer match.

But I have not set out to compare the two games, to cricket's disadvantage. Cricket for the summer, footer for the winter. Each game is all right in its place.

Some people have been agitating for all-the-year-round football. Now, I think that this would be too much of a good thing. Even the most ardent football enthusiast would not care about taking part in a strenuous match on a baking day in July.

As it is, the football season extends over a period of eight months, and that is quite long enough. After the brief summer break we can come back to the winter game with renewed vim and eagerness, whereas if football were a perennial affair, played at all times and in all seasons—well, I think both players and public would get a sickener of it.

The Greyfriars fellows are in great trim for the approaching season, and so far as the Remove Eleven is concerned, I think we shall beat more teams than beat us. We have a sound team in every department, and hope to have some thrilling tussles with the rival schools.

I would draw special attention to Wingate's article in this issue. Few fellows are so familiar with the past history of Greyfriars as our popular skipper, and the "Famous Football Feats" he recounts make interesting reading.

Our other features are more or less of a comical nature. That famous humorist, Tom Brown, and that equally famous, but unconscious humorist, Billy Bunter, have given a hand with this Special Football Number, which I hope will add lustre to the reputation enjoyed by our bright little schoolboy journal.

I cannot better conclude my editorial than by quoting the ringing words of Newbolt:

"This they all with a steadfast mind
Bear through life like a torch in
flame;
And, falling, fling to the ranks
behind—
'Play up, play up, and play the
game!'"

HARRY WHARTON.

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A Footballer's Diary!

Some Amusing Extracts
from the Personal
Records of ALONZO TODD.

MONDAY.

I have grown rather tired of receiving letters of counsel and advice from my Uncle Benjamin. His advice is not always reliable. He told me that marbles was a dangerous game, because the constant stooping was likely to cause curvature of the spine. He further pointed out that if a glass marble happened to break in pieces, serious injury might be caused by the flying fragments. Yet I played a game of marbles to-day and received no casualties whatsoever. If Uncle Benjamin is mistaken about marbles, he is probably mistaken about football, which he characterises as "a savage and barbarian sport." At all events, I shall take up football again, and give it a fair trial. My name has been put down to take part in a practice match to-morrow.

TUESDAY.

I duly played on Harry Wharton's side in the practice match, and had the distinction of scoring a goal. But I learned later that I had put the ball in at the wrong end. Instead of receiving the congratulations of my fellow-players, I was thumped and clumped by them until my back was nearly broken. No wonder they refer to me as a fellow without "backbone." However, so far as the

football itself was concerned, I met with no mishaps, so shall continue to play.

WEDNESDAY.

I played for the Remove to-day. Wharton said, "We've got a soft match on, which we're fairly certain to win. So you can play, Lonzy, to make it easier for our opponents." I played, and I must confess that in the whole ninety minutes I didn't kick the ball once. I did a good deal of running about, and that was all. Whenever I was given a pass, some selfish opponent would come up and take the ball from my toes. The Remove won all right, and Bob Cherry says it was because I didn't kick the ball. "Had you kicked it," said Cherry, "it would have gone in the wrong direction. You helped your side by leaving it severely alone." I have a slight suspicion that Cherry was being sarcastic.

THURSDAY.

I managed to get another game this afternoon, but after running aimlessly about for five minutes I lost my wind. I told the fellows what had happened, and said I should have to retire from the game. "Lonzy's lost his wind," said Tom Brown. "Let's see if we can find it for him." And instantly all the fellows went down on their hands and

knees and started exploring the turf. Rather ridiculous, don't you think? You can't recover a lost wind in that way.

FRIDAY.

I was unable to get a game to-day, but Wharton tells me there is a match against Courtfield Juniors to-morrow, and he has very kindly put me down to play. He says I shall never want to play again. What makes him think that, I wonder?

SATURDAY.

Oh dear! I have a tragic tale to relate. I am stiff and sore in every joint. Courtfield Juniors were a very rough crowd, and they gave me a terrible grueling. They seemed to mistake me for the ball, for I was kicked on numerous occasions. I was also tripped and backed and charged and collided with. Very unsportsmanlike of Courtfield, especially as I scored a couple of goals for them. I crawled off the field at the end of the game, feeling much more dead than alive. I ought really to have been conveyed to hospital in the ambulance. However, if I spend the remainder of the week-end on my study sofa I may recover from my injuries. No longer shall I disregard the advice of my Uncle Benjamin. He knows what he is talking about when he describes football as a savage and barbarian sport. I am determined to take no further part in these bloodthirsty tussles.

SUNDAY.

I spent the day on my study sofa, swathed in bandages. I have written a special article for the newspapers, entitled, "The Polly of Football." I hope they will publish it. To-morrow I shall put my football togs and boots up for auction, and concentrate all my energies on winning the ludo championship of the Remove. Ludo is a game which is comparatively free from danger, though there is always the risk that the dice may shoot up and strike you in the face. But that is nothing to the terrible risks one has to face on the football-field.

FAMOUS FOOTBALL FEATS!

By George Wingate.

WHAT is the most remarkable football feat in my memory? I am often asked this question, and I find it not easy to answer, because so many fine performances have been accomplished both on Big and Little Side. But I think the most amazing match I ever saw was that played between the Remove and the Upper Fourth a few years ago. In the first half, with the wind behind them, the Upper Fourth pressed continuously, and piled on the goals. They led at half-time by 4-0. Of course, it looked as if the Remove would be not only beaten, but wiped off the face of the earth, so to speak. I am no gambler, but I should have been prepared to give odds of a thousand to one that the Remove would not succeed in saving the game. However, they not only saved it, but won it! They played up with great vim and dash in the second half, and their forwards were irresistible. The Upper Fourth fell to pieces, and gradually their dashing opponents reduced the arrears. The game was pulled right.

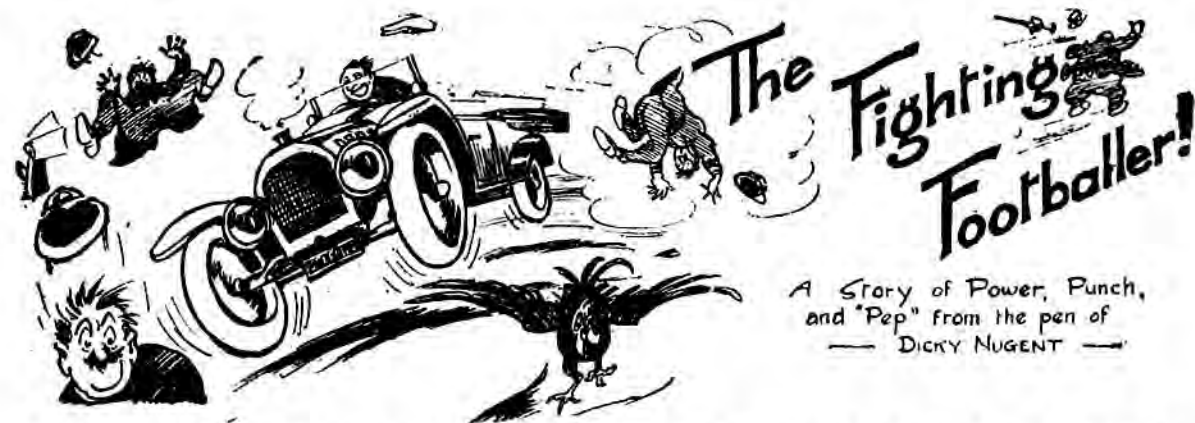
round, and the Remove eventually won by seven goals to five, after being four goals "down" at half-time. Incredible as this achievement may seem, I can vouch for it, as I refereed the match in question.

Have you ever seen a goalkeeper score a goal, apart from a penalty goal? I have. When I first came to Greyfriars, a strapping giant of a fellow, named Standforth, used to keep goal for the first eleven. He was renowned for his mighty kicking, and, without apparent effort, he could send the ball a terrific distance. On one occasion he ran out of his goal in order to clear a dangerous attack. He ran some distance, met the ball squarely with his right foot, and sent it soaring down the field. Aided in its flight by a strong wind, the ball travelled nearly the length of the field. It bounced in front of the goalkeeper at the far end, and before he could gather it, it shot over his shoulder into the net.

Have the "Babes" of the Second and Third Forms even beaten the giants of the Sixth on the footer-field? Astounding though it may appear, the answer is in the affirmative. During the great struggle for the Coker Cup, the seniors were drawn against the fags. There was trouble in our ranks, and Loder and several others refused to play. We went on the field with half a team, and the fags, playing up with tremendous energy, managed to "put it across us." The memory of that defeat still rankles, so I'll say no more on the subject.

There is a "Famous Five" at Greyfriars to-day, and there was a Famous Five in years gone by. I refer to the famous forward line of the Greyfriars First Eleven—Kennedy, Browne, Welsh, Carrington, and Carr. Never have I seen a forward line play with such perfect understanding. On one memorable occasion they actually scored five goals in ten minutes. Passing with clockwork precision, they outwitted the opposing defence and piled on goal after goal. During the three seasons that the "Famous Five" played, Greyfriars was a power in the land. Welsh, the centre-forward, afterwards made a name for himself in amateur football, whilst Carrington and Carr played for a well-known regiment, and assisted it to win the Army Cup.

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A Story of Power, Punch,
and "Pep" from the pen of
— DICKY NUGENT —

DICK DARRANT, the famous senter-forward of the Red Rangers, rubbed his eyes, and awoke.

It was Saturday morning, and the sunshine flooded the little attic in which our hero slept.

Dick jumped out of bed, and performed his usual morning eggserises. He walked round the room on his hands. Then he walked round on his feet, ballancing a brimming water-jug on his hansom, aquileen nose. After which he went to the little hole in the wall which served as a window, and did his deep-breathing eggserises.

Prezantly he espied a little heap of letters which his landlady had pushed under the door. All of them turned out to be bills, egg-sept one. This was an ominous letter—an ominous anonymous one. It was written in red ink, which ran—the letter, not the ink—as follows:

"DICK DARRANT—TAKE WARNING!—If you attempt to play for the Red Rangers this afternoon, you will pay four-feet with your mizerable life.
"THE GANG OF THE RED SPIDER."

Dick clenched his hands, and snorted fiercely through his nose.

"My old enemy!" he muttered. "Tom Fowler has written this letter, or I'm a Dutchman!"

Fowler was the kaptin of a team called Trippingham Arguile. This was the team that the Red Rangers were due to play that day. Fowler was a cunning, crafty ead and a rank outsider. He was always fowling on the field; in fact, there was not a fowler fowler than Fowler throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Now, Fowler knew perfectly well that he could not hope to put it across the Red Rangers if Dick Darrant was playing. Dick was a wonderful player. He could go through a defence like a knife through cheese, and when he shot it was always a certain goal.

Trippingham Arguile hadn't a hope of winning the match, unless by some shady means they could get Dick Darrant out of the way. And this was what Fowler was fully determined to do.

But our hero, instead of flying into a pannick when he read that ominous anonymous letter, simply scrood it up into a ball and kicked it into the fire-place.

"Nothing shall prevent me from turning out for the Rangers this afternoon!" he egg-sclaimed. "Fowler can do his worst. I care not. I fear no foe in shining armer!"

That was the spirit that made Old England what she is to-day—soopreem among the nations. It was the spirit of

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Rally and Drake, Nappoleon and Joan of the Ark, and other Brittish heroes.

Dick Darrant took his morning tub, and enjoyed a harty breakfast. Then he started out on his push-bike for Trippingham, where the great match was to be played.

As he skimmed gaily along the roads, Dick forgot all about that sinister warning he had reeseved by the morning male. His mind was full of the grate match.

Suddenly, a number of masked figgers sprang out at him from the hedge. Before he could realise it, he was knocked off his masheen and sent sprawling in the roadway.

"Coller him!" muttered a gruff voice.

Dick sprang to his feet. His eyes were blazing, and his head was on fire. But his puck was not extinguished. He rushed at his assailants, hitting out right and left.

Biff! Crash! Bang! Wallop!

The cowardly broots tumbled over each other in the roadway. But the odds were ten to one, and Dick could not be eggspected to lay out ten hefty louts.

Gradually our hero was overpowered, and dragged to a car which was waiting in a side-lane. He was bundled inside, and the vehicle bounded forward like a flash of light.

Dick lay on the sent, with a cuple of his captors squatting on top of him.

"Where are you taking me?" he panted.

"To a nice quiet place about a hundred miles from sivilization," replied one of the masked men, with a speer. "The Red Rangers will have to play without their famous senter-forward this afternoon. Ha, ha!"

Dick lay silent after this, but he was watching for a chance to escape.

Suddenly he shot up his fist, and it crashed under the jaw of one of his captors. Then he knocked out the other with a powerful upper-cut. They rolled on the floor of the car, groaning in anguish.

Dick then threw open the door, and although the car was doing seventy miles an hour, he made a daring leap for freedom. His body hit the roadway with a dull thud, but he sprang to his feet and took to his heels.

Glancing over his sholder, Dick saw that the car had stopped, and that the driver had jumped out and was giving chase.

Wizz!

A bullet sang over Dick's head as he ran. He liked to hear a good song, but he never felt comfortable when bullets started singing.

Wizz!

Prezantly, unable to run any farther, Dick lay doggo in a ditch, and waited for his pursuer to come up. When the

man did so, Dick suddenly grabbed him by the ankles, and he went sprawling into the ditch.

"Got you, my bewty!" muttered Dick. "I'll relvee you of that revolver, if you don't mind. It's a danjerous toy in the hands of a dubble-died villen like you."

The man wrapped out a sharp imprecation, but he was at Dick's mersy.

Our hero seazed the revolver, fired a few non-fatal shots at the man to keep him quiet, and then made his way back to the road.

The rest of the villens—plotters in the pay of Tom Fowler—were ordered to step out of the car. It was raining at the time, and they wore no macks, so Dick thoughtfully covered them with his revolver.

"Hands up!" he cried sternly.

The wretched plotters stood in a row, with their hands above their heads. They were wobbling at the knees for fear Dick should riddle them with bullets.

But Dick did not want more bludshed than he could help. Besides, he had no time to start slawtering his enemies, for the great match would soon be due to start, and he was a long long way from the Trippingham football ground.

However, here was a nice car available, and Dick jumped into the driver's seat. Then, with a mocking wave of his hand, he bade farewell to the mizerable hounds who had plotted to kidnap him. They watched him disappear down the road in a cloud of dust.

"This is better than a push-bike, any day!" muttered Dick. "If I keep up a speed of a hundred miles an hour, I figger it out that I shall get to the ground just in time for the kick-off."

Dick did not slacken speed until he reached the town of Trippingham. Then he slowed up, hurriedly changed into his footer togs, and dashed on to the ground, just as the two teams were coming out of the dressing-room.

When Tom Fowler, the cowardly kaptin of Trippingham Arguile, saw Dick Darrant appear on the scene, he nashed his teeth, and started to sware in Spannish.

Need I describe that memmerable match in detail, dear readers? It would be rather sooperfluons, I think. You can guess that the Red Rangers won; you can guess that Dick Darrant scored a dozen goals off his own bat—I mean, boot; you can guess that Tom Fowler was chucked off the field for a particularly fowl fowl on our hero; and you can guess that the crowd went delirious with joy at the suxcess of dashing Dick Darrant, the Fighting Footballer!

THE END.

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Cup-Tie Prospects!

By Our Tame
Humorist, — TOM BROWN.

I WAS the only fellow at Greyfriars who picked out the winner of the English Cup last season. That is an achievement of which any prophet might be proud. But, alas! a prophet is always without honour in his own country.

Harry Wharton, who hails from Hampshire, declared that Southampton would carry off the trophy. David Morgan said, "Cardiff City, look you, will do the trick." Monty Newland, who is a Londoner, was confident that Tottenham Hotspur would put it across all the others. Micky Desmond voted for the Tipperary Terrors, but I failed to find any mention of such a team among the English Cup contestants, so I concluded that Micky was joking.

All these prophets were wrong, except me. I put the names of all the clubs into a hat, and gave it a jolly good shaking, and then I shut my eyes and pulled out one of the slips. It bore the name "NEWCASTLE UNITED," and, sure enough, Newcastle won the Cup. I gave this tip to all my pals free of charge, but they shook their heads and said I was "potty." They looked a bit sick on Cup Final day, when the Novocastrians—good word that—put it across the famous Aston Villa team, and won by two goals to nix.

Having found the winner last season, I see no reason why I shouldn't find it again, despite the fact that the fight for the Cup won't start until January.

Here are my carefully considered views, which should be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested by all football enthusiasts:

ASTON VILLA.

The famous "Villains" got as far as Wembley last season, and I fancy they will do so again. They have a fine, well-balanced side, and the more I think about it the more certain I am that they will see Wembley in 1925.

NEWCASTLE UNITED.

There's no earthly reason why this clever and classy combination shouldn't win the Cup two years in succession. I have studied the form of these fellows very carefully, and am confident they will see Wembley in April.

SUNDERLAND.

This team received an early "knock-out" from the competition last season, but they are not likely to fail a second time, and it's a dead cert that "the team of all the talents," as they used to be called, will reach the Final of 1925.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR.

I hear on good authority that the famous "Spurs" are going all out for the Cup this season. They have won it before; what's to prevent them repeating the performance? I feel convinced of their ability to do so. Yea, verily, O my masters, they will win their way to the Final in 1925.

CHELSEA.

The "Pensioners" were a very disappointing side last season, and they have forfeited their place in the First Division. But I don't think this will trouble them very much, because they are mustard keen on winning the Cup this season. Given ordinary luck, they are certain to get as far as the Final.

CARDIFF CITY.

Always a dangerous team. I don't always see eye to eye with Morgan of the Remove, but I agree with him when he says that the "Welsh Wizards" will reach the Final in 1925.

SOUTHAMPTON.

One of the finest Cup-fighting teams in the country. A Southampton reader of the "Herald" tells me that the "Saints" are seeking the signature of Joe Beckett. If this is correct, all other teams will receive the "knock-out" from the competition. In any case, the "Saints" are certain to reach the Final.

BOLTON WANDERERS.

The "Trotters" won the Cup the season before last, so it's about time they did it again. I think they will, too, for they have a very sound side. Watch out for the Wanderers at Wembley in April.

Of course, this is just a rough survey of the Cup-tie prospects. There are lots of other teams which are sure to be in the running.

Birmingham and Burnley and West Bromwich Albion will be there or thereabouts. Liverpool will make a bold bid. Sheffield United mean to win the Cup, or perish in the attempt. Manchester City have already won the Cup in anticipation. Swindon will go far. Derby County will do wonders. And West Ham, Fulham, and Crystal Palace are brimful of optimism.

When April comes, and the great Battle of Wembley is fought and won, look up this article of mine, and you will find that I have given the winner.

(Our contributor is delightfully vague in his predictions. According to him, practically every team in the country will go to Wembley next April to take part in the Cup Final. It will be "some" Final with about sixty teams playing each other at the same time.—Ed.)

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A HANDSOME BICYCLE OFFERED AGAIN THIS WEEK!

A GO-ANYWHERE MOUNT!





(Continued from page 12.)

Bar after bar dropped from Bunter's fumbling hands.

The door swung open.

Major Cherry staggered in and placed Marjorie on a bench. Ibrahim followed with Clara.

Bunter blinked at them dazedly.

Round the doorway outside Harry Wharton & Co. were gathered, facing the pursuers.

The savage Arabs were already at the gateway of the courtyard, so close were they on the track of the fugitives.

Four or five savage, yelling spearmen came rushing into the courtyard, and the Greyfriars juniors fired steadily. Two of the Arabs dropped, and the others sprang back into cover of the courtyard wall.

"Quick!" panted Harry.

There was not a second to be lost. In a few minutes at the most the whole crowd of savage spearmen would be pouring into the courtyard, and a few shots would not stop them then.

The Famous Five crowded, through the doorway, with Ali ben Yusef. A fierce Arab came speeding after them as they went. Bob Cherry, the last to enter, turned in the doorway and fired, but the bullet only grazed the Arab's shoulder, and he came on.

Wharton dragged Bob inside and slammed the door.

"The bars—quick!"

Johnny Bull already had a palm-wood bar in hand. He jammed it into the iron sockets.

The door was fast.

A second later the hard wood quivered as the Arab's spear crashed on it, and stuck there, quivering.

Wharton, his heart thumping, placed the rest of the bars in position.

They were safe now—for the moment.

"The camels!" muttered Bob.

"Too late!"

The camels and horses tethered in the courtyard were at the mercy of the Arabs. Already thievish hands were dragging them loose. They were a rich prize for the desert robbers.

But it could not be helped.

The Greyfriars party were fortunate to have escaped with their lives so far, and they realised it. That they would be hemmed in and besieged by the sheik's spearmen was certain. Every drop of water and ounce of food had to be considered now. Even had the camels been brought into the shelter of the Bordj, they could not have been fed and watered for long.

Yet it was with heavy hearts that the juniors realised that their means of transport was now gone; that even if they escaped from the encompassing peril they had no means of crossing the hundreds of miles of arid desert that lay between them and safety.

But there was no time to think of that.

It was only too likely that that very night would see the pale angel of death reigning in the lonely Bordj in the desert hills.

There was a loud crashing of spears on the hard door as the Arabs crowded savagely round it.

The juniors heard the deep, furious voice of Mustapha ben Mohammed shouting to his men.

The Arabs prowled round the building, seeking an entrance. One reached up and drove his spear through a loophole in the wall. The glistening point was visible to all in the Bordj. Bob Cherry thrust the muzzle of his rifle through the opening, standing on a bench to reach it, and pulled the trigger. A fearful howl outside answered the shot, and the spear dropped away.

Marjorie and Clara were taken into the upper room of the Bordj, and laid down to rest on the rugs. There they were safe, so long as their defenders could hold the little tower against the overwhelming enemy.

Harry Wharton, Bob, and Johnny Bull ascended to the flat roof, rifle in hand. The brick parapet sheltered them there, and through the loopholes in the parapet they could fire on the Arabs below.

The crashing on the door suddenly ceased.

A single imperative knock rang on the door. Then the voice of Mustapha ben Mohammed, the sheik, was heard.

"Dog of a Rouni, are you here?"

"I am here, son of a pig!" answered the major quietly. "All your prisoners are here, Mustapha ben Mohammed, assassin and thief—never to fall alive into your hands again!"

A savage curse in Arabic answered.

"I will burn the Bordj with every living soul in it!" hissed the sheik.

"There will be many dead among the kinsmen of Mustapha before the Bordj is burned," answered the major coolly.

"I have seen the dog Ibrahim with you. The traitor shall die by a thousand tortures when he falls into my hands!"

Ibrahim shrugged his shoulders.

"There is always death, O sheik!" he answered. "When the gates of death have opened for Ibrahim he will be beyond your power."

"Wait—wait a little!" The sheik's voice was almost inarticulate with rage. "Wait till all my men are here, then you shall see how long these brick walls will save you."

"We shall see!" said the major quietly.

Bob Cherry looked from the parapet above as the enraged chief stepped back from the door.

His eyes blazed down at Mustapha ben Mohammed.

"Coward and villain!" shouted Bob.

The sheik looked up with burning eyes. "Bring your thieves and rascals as soon as you like. They shall follow your son Bou Saoud."

The sheik glared up at him.

"By dawn Bou Saoud shall be looking on your tortures as you die by inches!" he snarled.

"Bou Saoud will never look on your crimes again. Bou Saoud lies within a dozen yards of you—dead!" shouted Bob. "Do you see that heap of sand yonder? Under it lies Bou Saoud."

The sheik gave a violent start.

"Unbelieving dog, you lie!"

"It is true, O sheik!" came Ibrahim's soft voice from within the Bordj. "The gates of Gehenna have opened for Bou Saoud. Already Shaitan has the Spahi in his grasp."

Mustapha ben Mohammed stood still, silent. Belief forced itself into his mind, and his cruel features worked. Even in the iron heart of that wolf of the desert there was a lingering tenderness for the handsome, swaggering Spahi, his only son, the son who was to have inherited his stolen chieftainship.

Bob Cherry's eyes glittered down on

the sheik without pity or compassion. The scene in the cave, the girls who had been buried alive at the order of the sheik, banished pity. Bob lifted his rifle over the parapet.

"Scoundrel," he said, "Bou Saoud is dead, do you hear? Bou Saoud is dead; and you shall follow!"

And he pulled the trigger.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fighting for Life!

MUSTAPHA BEN MOHAMMED staggered.

Two or three Arabs rushed forward to catch him as he fell.

But the sheik recovered himself in a moment, and spurned them aside. Deep on his swarthy face showed the mark of the bullet, and blood streamed down on his white burnous.

But the sheik was not disabled. He turned and strode away, and even at that moment, while in the moonlight he offered a target for the rifles on the roof of the Bordj, he did not hurry his steps. He still retained the savage dignity of the desert sheik.

"Shoot!" muttered Bob. "Remember the cave! Shoot—shoot the scoundrel dead!"

But the spearmen closed round Mustapha ben Mohammed, and bore him in safety through the gateway of the courtyard.

Mustapha disappeared from sight.

Bob Cherry dropped the butt of his rifle to the flat brick roof.

"The brute was hit at least!" he muttered.

The Arabs were scuttling out of the courtyard, where they were exposed to the fire from the roof and the loopholes. The camels had already been driven away by thievish hands. Outside the low brick walls of the courtyard the savage desert warriors crouched in cover and opened fire on the Bordj. Shot after shot rang out, awakening the deep echoes of the hills. Bullets spattered on the walls of the brick tower and sang over the roof.

But the fire was harmless enough; the Arabs were wasting powder and shot on thick brick walls. Only by the merest chance could a bullet penetrate by one of the narrow loopholes.

Major Cherry had expected a rush of the desert spearmen; but the attack was delayed. It was fairly certain that it would come, when the rest of the sheik's men had reached the spot from the encampment in the valley. In the meantime, any hope of escape was cut off by the crowd of Arabs grouped round the courtyard walls.

The moonlight was fading now—faint and dim in the East, came the first pale gleam of dawn. A new day was about to break over the wild Sahara.

The garrison of the Bordj gathered on the roof—with the exception of Billy Bunter. He remained in the lower room—though even Billy Bunter was not thinking any longer of sleep.

Major Cherry scanned the courtyard, and the wall that circled it, and the broken country beyond.

"We have a strong position here," he said quietly. "The Arabs will lose heavily before they carry it, if the ammunition holds out."

"We've plenty of cartridges, sir," said Harry. "We got all our baggage inside when we arrived here—it's only the camels that those rascals have taken."

"And food?"

"Enough for a week, at least—longer, if we go on rations."

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"And water?"

"The cistern is filled—it's a big cistern. I don't think we shall go short of water in a hurry, now that we need none for the camels."

Major Cherry nodded approval.

"We can hold our own," he said. "This tower is strongly built—it was built for defence, of course. The French engineers know their business. A hundred men will not find it easy to rush a position like this—though I'm certain they'll try. We may be glad that Bou Saoud is gone—he was the man to lead such a rush. But—if we hold our own—afterwards—"

He was silent.

The same thought was in all minds.

The coming assault might be driven off—as the defenders hoped. But afterwards? Afterwards, the Bordj would be besieged by the savage Arabs—the Sheik Mustapha was not the man to loosen his grip on his cornered enemies. And when the food and water gave out, what remained? For help there was none—no hope of help or rescue. Hundreds of miles of pathless desert lay between them and the nearest French post.

The sheik's prisoners had been torn from his grasp. But rescuers and rescued were still in the midst of enemies.

But it was futile to think of it. When every minute might bring death, it was useless to consider the sealed book of the future.

The sun leaped above the horizon, and it was day.

Among the rocks of the hills the juniors watched more and more Arabs gathering round the Bordj. Every man in Mustapha's camp had arrived at last—a swarm of savage, fierce-eyed warriors. The desultory firing was still going on. It was evidently only a preliminary to a fierce attack.

Suddenly through the morning air came the fierce beating of a drum.

It was the signal.

"Look out!"

"Fire!"

Through the gateway of the courtyard came a savage swarm of Arabs, with spears and scimitars, rushing at the Bordj. They circled the building, with furious yells.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

From the roof the defenders fired, coolly, steadily, incessantly. The Famous Five handled their rifles, the major and Ali and Ibrahim had revolvers. Almost every shot told on the crowded mass below, and wild yelling foes dropped on all sides.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

A heavy axe beat on the door of the Bordj, and the strong, thick wood creaked and groaned under the assault. Like a scared rabbit, Billy Bunter came bolting up to the roof.

Major Cherry passed him on the stair. The major hurried down to the lower room, where the loopholes commanded the space outside the door.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

He fired again and again into the mass of the Arabs outside, and yells and groans answered. The burly Arab who wielded the axe dropped dead—the axe was caught in another hand, but ere it could touch the door again, the new wielder staggered and fell, with a bullet in his heart. Major Cherry crammed fresh cartridges into his revolver, and still it spat death from the loophole.

The attack on the door ceased.

Outside dead and wounded lay in heaps, and the air was filled with groans and cries and hoarse curses in Arabic.

Loud above the tumult, the fierce voice of Mustapha ben Mohammed was heard, urging on his men.

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Fierce Arabs beat at the brick walls, and clambered on one another's shoulders in desperate efforts to reach the parapet of the roof.

Had the defence slackened even for a minute, the attack would doubtless have carried the day.

But it did not slack.

The sun rose higher and hotter, and blazed down on a fearful scene—on dead and wounded, on yelling savages of the desert, who rushed and rushed again to the furious attack; on the Greyfriars juniors manning the roof of the tower, sweating, fatigued, blackened, ghastly—but still steady and strong, and firing—firing incessantly.

It seemed like some ghastly nightmare to the schoolboys of Greyfriars—as the brown faces and glittering eyes surged round the tower, and savage hands clutched and clambered, and dusky ruffian after ruffian dropped back dead or disabled.

But even their savage hate and recklessness of death, even the infuriated voice of the sheik, failed at last to drive on the Arabs to destruction. Thirty ghastly figures sprawled under the walls of the Bordj when the attack broke at last, and the Sahara spearmen with yells of rage and disappointment, surged away. Almost in a moment, at the height of its fury, the attack ceased, and the shattered mob of Arabs went streaming out of the courtyard.

But the fire from the roof did not cease. It was no time for half-measures. So long as an enemy remained for a target, the rifles rang and rang again, and many of the retreating tribesmen rolled over as they fled.

Then they were gone—crouched once more in the shelter of the courtyard wall—leaving the defenders of the Bordj worn out, but victorious—and the courtyard below cumbered with dead.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Valiant Bunter!

"MARJORIE!"

Bob Cherry tapped at the door of plaited rushes that shut off the upper room of the Bordj from the brick staircase.

"Yes?"

Marjorie's voice was quiet and calm. The door stood half-open—in the dusky room, the two girls had been listening to the fearful sounds of conflict that raged round the lonely tower. Clara was pale, and there were tears on her cheeks. Poor Clara looked little enough now like the cheery, high-spirited, buoyant Clara of Cliff House School.

"It's all safe now," said Bob, looking in. "I thought I'd come and tell you. They're driven off."

Marjorie caught her breath.

"And—and you are safe—all safe—"

"We've got a scratch or two," said Bob, with a faint grin. "But we're all right—the brutes couldn't get at us, you see. We've driven them off, and they've had enough—the rotters! They've paid pretty dear for coming on, too."

"You are hurt!" muttered Marjorie, as she caught sight of a streak of crimson on Bob's sunburnt cheek.

"Nothing—only a scratch—"

"It was a bullet—"

"It missed," said Bob.

Marjorie drew a deep breath.

"You girls keep your pecker up," said Bob cheerily. "Those rotters can't get at us, that's something—thanks to the French engineers who put up this little tower years ago. We've food and water for a long time—that's all right. And

—and it's possible that help may come." He added the last sentence slowly.

"Heaven send us help!" whispered Clara.

Marjorie looked at Bob steadily.

"How can help come?" she asked. "No one in Biskra knows that we are here—whence can help come?"

"Well, there's a chance," said Bob. "You see, this place—they call it a Bordj—is a sort of fortified post, used by the French patrols when they come through this part of the desert. Every now and then a party of French cavalry come along—perhaps once in a year—once in two or three years—goodness knows. When they come this way, they camp in the Bordj; there's lots of such places dotted about the outlying parts of the Sahara now it's under French control. See?"

"I—I see—"

"There's always a chance of seeing the French soldiers," said Bob. "Any day a patrol may ride into this country. So we've got a chance, at least, you see."

Marjorie nodded, and smiled faintly.

Doubtless it was a chance, but she knew how faint it was—how very faint. The chances were a thousand to one that no French patrol would ride that way before Mustapha and his men had completed their fell work. She was very well aware that Bob was trying to encourage and comfort her, and that he had little hope of such a godsend.

"Wouldn't we just like to hear the French bugles now!" added Bob cheerily. "If a jolly old Froggy came along now, I'd treat him like a long-lost brother. Remember we've got a chance, and keep your pecker up. Anyhow, we can keep those brutes off."

And Bob went down the stairs.

Clara's pale face was a little brighter. She was not quite so penetrating as Marjorie, and did not realise that Bob's cheery words were spoken chiefly for encouragement.

"Oh, if the French would only come, Marjorie!" she said. "And it's possible—it's possible! We shall be saved yet."

"At least, we have escaped from that fearful sheik," said Marjorie softly. "Let us hope, my dear, and let's keep calm and take care not to be a burden to our brave friends—they have enough to face."

"I say, Marjorie—" Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway. The Owl of the Remora gave the Cliff House girls a cheery blink. "All serene now, what? We've driven 'em off—fairly smashed 'em up! They've had enough. I fancy I knocked over about a dozen of the rotters!"

Bunter was himself again now.

The defeat of the Arab attack had reassured him. Bunter was not accustomed to taking long views. His idea was that the Arabs were driven off, and that the next step was a return to Biskra—to a comfortable bed, with a roof over his head, and ample and frequent meals. That was a happy prospect.

Now that he fancied the danger past, the Owl of the Remora was brave as a lion. He was already beginning to believe that he had had an important hand in the defeat of the sheik.

"Knocked 'em right and left," went on Bunter. "Nearly wiped out the gang, I think. I say, won't it be ripping to get back to Biskra. And I can tell you, I sha'n't stay long in Biskra. Holidays in Africa are all very well—but give me Blackpool."

Marjorie smiled.

"I'm sure you were in the thick of it, Bunter," said Miss Clara, with something like her old cheery grin.

"Right at the front, of course," said Bunter fatuously. "It looked bad at one time—looked like U P for us—but I called on the fellows to back me up, and they stood to it—my example, you know. I put courage into them, you see. Lucky I was here, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, I say, Clara, what are you laughing at?" demanded Bunter warmly. "If you think I was keeping in cover all the time, you're jolly well mistaken. Let 'em come on again, and you'll jolly well see. But they jolly well won't dare to face me again!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the two girls considerably cheered by his visit. Bunter had unintentionally furnished a little comic relief to the tragedy.

He rolled down the stair, to the lower room, where he found the wearied defenders of the Bordj resting. They were utterly weary after the exertions of the night, and the long, fierce struggle with the Arabs that had followed. The Owl of the Remove surveyed them rather scornfully. He was not fatigued.

"I say, you fellows, isn't it about time we got a move on?" asked Bunter briskly.

"Eh, what?"
"All very well to slack about like this," said Bunter loftily. "But my idea is that we'd better be moving."

"Moving?" repeated Wharton.
"Yes, rather! Now we've driven those beasts off, the sooner we're out of this the better," said Bunter. "I'm jolly well fed-up with this, I can tell you! Who's ready to start?"

"The startfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter," remarked Hurree Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Oh, rot! Let's get the camels loaded and go," urged Bunter. "What's the good of wasting time slacking about?"

The major gave him a look, but did not trouble to speak. Ibrahim grinned with a gleam of white teeth.

"The Arabs have taken the camels, Bunter," said Harry.

Bunter's jaw dropped.
"Oh, crumbs! Do you mean to say that you let them collar the camels?" he ejaculated.

"We couldn't very well help it," grinned Johnny Bull. "Why didn't you go out and stop them, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Bull—"
"You can go out and fetch them back now," suggested Nugent. "Perhaps they'll let you."

"The startfulness is terrific."
"Well, we've got to go, even if we have to go on foot," said Bunter. "We can't hang on here."

"I'm afraid we shall have to Bunter," said Harry. "You see, we are besieged here. We've driven off the Arabs, but there are close on a hundred of them besieging the place. Do you understand?"

"Oh dear!"

The new-found courage of William George Bunter oozed out at his fat finger-tips.

"C-c-can't we get away?" he stuttered.

"No."

"But we can't stay here!" howled Bunter.

"We've got to."

"Oh dear! But—but what's going to happen to us, then?" exclaimed Bunter, in great dismay.

"The future's on the knees of the gods, old chap. We're going to hold out as long as we can, anyhow."

"Ow!"

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Another "Royal Enfield" Bicycle offered next week!

Billy Bunter looked absolutely de-flated. He turned away with a dismal groan.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Hope!

THE blazing day wore on.
About noon an Arab came into the courtyard with a white flag, and shouted in Arabic. Major Cherry answered him in the same tongue.

"Keep on your guard," he said. "They have asked permission to carry away the dead and wounded. But they may mean trickery. Shoot at any man who carries arms. I have told them to come in unarmed."

The Greyfriars party watched from the loopholes with rifles ready. But the Arabs had evidently had enough of the conflict for the time. A dozen unarmed men came into the courtyard and removed the fallen; and there was no attempt at a treacherous attack.

Then silence followed, broken occasionally as some watching Arab loosed off a gun at the Bordj, and a bullet chipped on the hard, sun-baked bricks.

It was clear that the crushing defeat had sickened the desert tribesmen, and they were not keen to rush on the rifles of the garrison again. But all round the

low wall of the courtyard they lay, watching and waiting like wild beasts waiting for their prey.

At a distance a tent had been erected—the tent of the Sheik Mustapha ben Mohammed.

Defeated as he was, the Sahara sheik was as grimly determined as ever. He was camping with his men round the Bordj, cutting off any chance of escape—waiting for his enemies to fall into his hands. Doubtless there would be further attacks—and all the time there would be a determined blockade—and if every attack failed, hunger and thirst must, at long last, deliver the "Roumis" into his hands. With deadly, ruthless persistence, the sheik was prepared to wait for the hour of his vengeance.

In the Bordj the major had taken command; and his instructions were promptly carried out by the Greyfriars party. Coolness and calmness reigned, though there was little hope in any heart.

The provisions were carefully measured, and apportioned into rations; even the water was rationed, though the great cistern of the Bordj was still almost full. Every cartridge was counted. The heavy firing had depleted the stock of ammunition, though the juniors had taken care to be well supplied. And once the cartridges failed all was over—

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once the rifles were silent, the swarming Arabs would sweep resistlessly over the brick walls of the Bordj. Not a shot was fired in reply to the desultory rifle-fire of the enemy.

In the heat of the day the garrison slept—careful watch being kept. But no sign came from the enemy, save the ringing of a futile shot at intervals.

When the sun dipped towards the west Major Cherry stood on the flat roof and looked towards the tent of the sheik in the distance. His brows were knitted.

He had little doubt that when night fell there would be another attack, and no one could foresee the result. The stout walls of the Bordj resisted any weapon that the enemy could bring against them—the door was commanded by the loopholes. But if once the clamorous Arabs gained the roof, the odds would tell. And in the darkness the shooting would not be so effective. And the major could see, too, that there was activity in the Arab camp—many of them were lying in cover by the courtyard wall, watching the Bordj—others were coming and going. In the sheik's place the major's first step would have been to provide scaling-ladders for his men; and it was unlikely that Mustapha ben Mohammed would fail to think of so obvious a device. To the ordinary Sahara Arab, danger, even death, were scarcely so terrible as labour and exertion—but Mustapha was no common Arab. Villain as he was, he was a good captain; and his word was law among his wild followers. Whatever he commanded would be done; and the major had little doubt that he was taking measures to make the next attack a success.

The soft voice of Ali ben Yusuf spoke beside the major, and he turned his head. The Greyfriars Arab looked up at him with a smile.

"When it being dark, they will come," said Ali.

"It is very likely."

"And if they are being driven off again, they watching and waiting till the end."

"Well?"

"I thinking, my old friend," said Ali ben Yusuf softly. "When it is dark, they come—and also it being dark, one may slip away and perhaps escaping through the sons of pigs when there is no light."

"One, perhaps," said the major gruffly.

Ali smiled again.

"If we dying here, we all dying," he said. "You not thinking I would escape and leave you in danger! I thinking of help."

"What help?" The major shook his head. "Even if one could get through them, Ali, there is no help. The nearest French post is a hundred miles away—and even then—"

"I not thinking of the French."

"What then?"

"The tribes of the Oued Tahar," said Ali. "Ecoutez, mon vieux! I, Ali, am the chief of the Tahar, and with the Eye of Ahmed in my turban, the tribesmen will recognise me as their sheik, and follow me. The Eye of Ahmed is here."

Major Cherry wrinkled his brows in thought. He understood now of what the son of Yusuf was thinking.

"But—" he muttered.

"It being the only hope," said Ali gently. "If there being no help, we hold out for days—weeks—but the end is there all the same. We not being taken alive—we die at our posts. Be it so! But there being a chance of rescue if I, Ali, call on the tribesmen of the Tahar."

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They will obey the amulet of the sheiks."

The major was silent for a long minute.

"Listen to me, Ali," he said. "When your father was killed, and I saved you from the assassins of Mustapha, I saved also the Eye of Ahmed. But I took you with me to England for your safety. You were a boy, and until you were a man you could not contend with Mustapha and Bou Saoud. Even the Eye of Ahmed would not have saved you from the assassin's knife or bullet. Mustapha had many followers in the tribe. It was my plan that you should return when you were a man, and call on the tribes to obey you—but—"

"But it is changed now," said Ali. "Bou Saoud is dead—and many of the kinsmen of Mustapha have fallen. The sheik is wounded, and he is tied here—he thinking of nothing now but to take the Bordj and satisfy his vengeance. He has called his kinsmen to him—of the race of Mustapha there is perhaps hardly a man left among the tents of the Oued Tahar."

"That is true."

"There being danger for me," went on Ali calmly. "When I reach the Oued Tahar I may fall to the knife of some follower of Mustapha. The tribesmen may refuse to follow a boy. I may never get through—I may be slain here in sight of the Bordj. There are many dangers, all of them terrible. But what is here if I remain?"

"That is true," repeated the major.

"There is a chance," said Ali, "and even if the tribesmen refuse to follow a boy, there are my kinsmen of the blood of Yusuf—they will follow me. But I do not doubt. If I reach the Oued Tahar, and if there I escaping the spies of Mustapha, the Eye of Ahmed will enforce the obedience of the tribes. I shall return with five hundred horsemen—and yonder sons of dogs will be given to the jackals!"

The major was silent.

"You thinking I am right?" said Ali. "It is danger—but there is no other way; otherwise, we all being lost."

Major Cherry cast a glance towards the encircling enemy.

"You would never get through," he muttered.

"I taking the chance."

"You are a brave lad, Ali," said the major. "If you live to be a man, you will be a great sheik. Let it be so—it is, as you say, the only hope, slight as it is. Take your chance when the sun sets."

Major Cherry descended the stair into the Bordj.

In a few minutes he returned, with a little leather case in his hand—so long and so carefully guarded by Marjorie Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton & Co. came up with him; they had been told of Ali's intention. That the schoolboy sheik would succeed in getting through the enemy was unlikely, and they knew it; but they would not have uttered a word to dissuade him from the attempt. It seemed the only chance of saving Marjorie and Clara, and for that no risk was too great.

The major opened the little case.

"Look!" he said. "This is the Eye of Ahmed—the hereditary amulet handed down from generation to generation of the Sheiks of the Oued Tahar. Look!"

It was a great diamond that blazed in the sun.

Ali's eyes gleamed as he looked at it. "The amulet!" he said. "The sign of obedience to all the tribes of the Oued Tahar."

"It is yours, Ali!"

The brown fingers of the schoolboy sheik closed on the diamond. He cast a vaunting look towards the tent of Mustapha ben Mohammed.

"Son of a dog, your hour is coming!" he said.

The red sun sank lower in the west; the long shadow of the Bordj lengthened. Night was at hand.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Night of Terror!

DARKNESS on the desert.

The sun was gone; desert and hills were blotted out in blackness. For two hours yet the moon would not rise; for those hours, it was the reign of darkness.

Vague sounds could be heard from the camp of the Arabs. Within the Bordj all were on the alert.

From the courtyard surrounding the tower, indefinable sounds crept, and the juniors knew that the stealthy Arabs were creeping in closer to the Bordj, under the cover of the gloom.

Ali ben Yusuf stood on the dark roof with his comrades.

All was ready for the attempt.

A strong camel-rope was to lower him from the roof; after that, his fate was in his own hands.

There was a chance, at least. Ali was an Arab, in Arab garb. Many of the men of Mustapha did not know him by sight, and there was a chance that he would be taken for one of the robber band if he was seen. The Eye of Ahmed was safely hidden under his burnous—not to be shown till he reached the tents of the Tahar. There was a chance of getting through, but if he failed it was death—death by torture in the hands of the sheik. For the Eye of Ahmed would be found upon him, and once the talisman was in Mustapha's hands, his reason for sparing his rival would be gone. His bitter vengeance would follow.

But Ali was calm, and seemed to have no fear.

He bade farewell to his comrades in an even voice, and with a steady hand fastened the camel-rope about his waist.

Bob Cherry stared down into the darkness over the parapet.

Here and there was a glimmer in the gloom—the glimmer of an Arab garment. Closer and closer the stealthy foe were creeping round the tower. There was no time to be lost.

"Good-bye, Ali, old fellow!" whispered the juniors.

And the schoolboy sheik was gone.

Strong hands lowered the rope.

A jerk from below told that Ali was on the ground, and the rope was pulled up.

With beating hearts the defenders of the Bordj strained their eyes over the parapet.

But they could see nothing.

Faint, stealthy sounds, that was all. But if Ali was seized they would hear. He had a revolver, and would fight to the last. They listened in terrible apprehension for the ring of the Greyfriars Arab's revolver.

But there was no sound.

Minute followed minute, crawling by with leaden feet, and still no sound came from the darkness of the night, save the faint sounds of stealthily creeping Arabs.

"He is through!" whispered the major, at last.

It seemed so. The very fact that the Arabs were creeping stealthily into the wide courtyard, was a help to Ali ben Yusuf. Amid the creeping figures in



Bob Cherry rolled on to the ground in the midst of a swarm of Arabs. A knife was at his throat, when the deep voice of the Sheikh, speaking in Arabic, was heard. The knife was withdrawn—savage hands grasped the Greyfriars junior and dragged him away. (See Chapter 14.)

turban and burnous, one more was not likely to be noticed. And the darkness hid his face, even from those who knew the features of the son of Yusef.

Silence!

"He is through!" repeated Bob.

"And now——"

"Look out!"

A sudden flare of light pierced the blackness from the direction of Mustapha ben Mohammed's tent.

It was the signal for the attack.

It was answered by a wild shout from the Arabs, swarming now in the shadows round the Bordj, close to the walls.

Fifteen minutes had elapsed since Ali had gone. Unless he had been seen, and seized in silence, he was through the enemy, and the desert was open before him.

And behind him his comrades grasped their weapons, to fight once more for their lives, and for lives that were dearer than their own.

Loud and fierce rang the yells of the Arabs round the Bordj, as if pandemonium had suddenly broken loose in the darkness.

On all sides rang gun and pistol, and bullets whizzed over the roof.

Crash!

The top of a ladder, roughly made of palm-wood bound together with camel-hide thongs, crashed against the parapet of the Bordj. Up the rungs came clambering the fierce enemy.

"Shoot!" roared the major.

Crack, crack, crack!

The rifles flashed and rang. Dusky ruffian after ruffian rolled yelling from the scaling-ladder, but over the others took their places, clambering up with savage fury.

Crash came another ladder against the opposite wall of the Bordj. Up it the Arabs came swarming.

The defenders divided at once, three or four of them rushing to defend the new point of attack.

Shot after shot rang out. But savage eyes gleamed over the parapet now, savage hands clutched at the brickwork. A burly Arab fell on the roof. As he leaped up, Ibrahim sprang forward, and an axe swept through the air. The

Arab rolled dead on the roof, and Ibrahim grinned over him. At the other ladder the major was wielding a rifle by the barrel, driving back the assailants with crashing blows.

Fierce as the attack was, it was checked. Dead men and dying lay at the foot of the scaling-ladders, and the air was filled with groans and yells. But the savage tribesmen of the desert poured on, clambering like tigers to the assault.

"We're holding them!" panted Wharton.

It was hand-to-hand now, but the defenders of the roof had the advantage. Arab after Arab rolled from the ladders under fierce blows.

Bob Cherry spun round suddenly. A third ladder had been reared, at the front of the Bordj, lifted against the parapet in silence, and in the heat of the struggle the defenders had not heard it; in the darkness they had not seen it. Bob caught the glimmer of a white burnous as an Arab came clambering over.

"Look out!"

He rushed across the roof.

His rifle was empty, but he drove it at the Arab, driving the butt with savage force into the dusky face. The desert robber staggered back, and disappeared over the parapet. There was a crash below, and a roar of rage.

But there were five or six Arabs on the ladder, coming on fast. Bob swept the foremost away with his rifle-butt, sending him crashing to the ground; and at the same moment a dusky hand clutched at him from the darkness. A moment more, and he was grasped in brawny arms that were like bands of steel.

"Back up, you fellows!" panted Bob.

Wharton and Nugent came tearing to his aid.

Bob Cherry struggled desperately, striving to hurl back the Arab, who was half across the parapet. The dusky ruffian lost his footing on the ladder, and went reeling back; but he did not loosen his grasp on Bob. With him went the Greyfriars junior.

The fall swept the ladder below them clear. Bob Cherry was torn from the

Arab's grasp in the fall, and he clutched at a rung of the ladder. For an instant his descent was checked, but only for an instant. Then he rolled to the ground in the midst of a swarm of yelling Arabs.

A knife was at his throat, when the deep voice of the sheik was heard. He was speaking in Arabic, in savage, grinding tones. The knife was withdrawn; savage hands grasped the Greyfriars junior, and dragged him away. He expected instant death, but it was not a swift death that the Sahara sheik intended for him.

In the darkness and the wild excitement, the defenders of the roof had not even seen that Bob Cherry was gone. The Arabs were swarming on the ladder again, and every hand was active. Blow on blow rained on the savage assailants.

Major Cherry had hurled back one of the ladders, sending it crashing on the heads of the Arabs below; but the other two swarmed with fierce foes, and for many minutes, the struggle was doubtful.

But axe and knife and clubbed rifle drove back the clambering assailants. The attack paused, and in the pause, sharp shot poured from the roof of the Bordj into the thick of the enemy swarming below.

"They're done!" panted Johnny Bull.

"They're going!"

Again the sheik had failed.

The attack had cost him dear—fearfully dear. Dead men and wounded lay heaped below the ladders, and more were falling under the fire from the roof.

Savagely, reluctantly, the sheik gave the word to retreat. He realised that his men's lives were being spent in vain, and already half his savage band had fallen in the struggle with the defenders of the Bordj.

With howls and curses, the Arabs retreated.

Major Cherry wiped his brow.

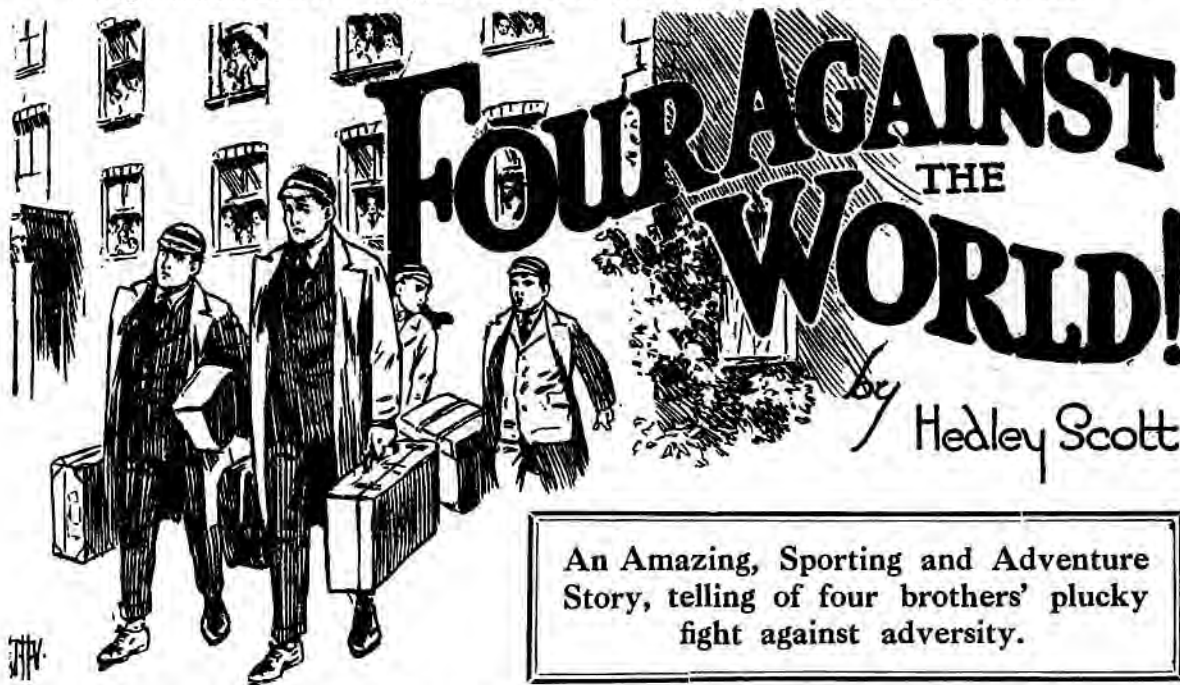
"We've beaten them! Thank Heaven for that!"

"Our luck's in!" muttered Johnny Bull. "After this I fancy they won't be

(Continued on page 28.)

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Have you ever been introduced to a boxer who couldn't "out" his man—who couldn't deal the knock-out blow after having manoeuvred for it? Well, just such a boxer is George Melton—make his acquaintance below!



An Amazing, Sporting and Adventure Story, telling of four brothers' plucky fight against adversity.

Enter Justin Mahone!

FOR some minutes the Meltons stared at their guardian, too stupefied even to give him greeting—not that Justin Mahone's sour face indicated that a greeting was necessary.

"My hat!" Dicky Melton broke the awkward silence, and for his pains was treated to a contemptuous glance from the cadaverous face opposite him that effectually quelled any similar remark he might have thought fit to utter.

"Well?" demanded Justin Mahone suddenly, his eyes glittering through narrowed slits. "What the thunder have you young reprobates to say for yourselves? You weren't all so speechless this afternoon, I'll warrant!"

From which remark it was safe to assume that their guardian was in possession of the day's events at St. Bart's. He eyed the brothers critically, sneeringly, noting their cut and bruised features, their dishevelled clothes. And then he laughed—a gloating sort of laugh with no trace of sympathy in it.

"Disgraceful!" he snapped, his thin lips coming together in a straight line. "Would that your poor dear father could see you now. He was always proud of his sons!" he concluded with another harsh laugh.

"Leave the pater out of it," said George grimly. He disliked being reminded of the best friend he had ever had by this miserable loathsome opposite. "And let's talk business—you and I, sir!"

The eyebrows in that cadaverous face elevated a trifle, and something of the sneer departed. Justin Mahone realised that in George he had a man to deal with, not irresponsible lads like the twins.

"Business!" he snapped aggressively. "What do you mean?"

"Simply this," answered George. "As you are doubtless aware, all four of us were expelled from St. Bart's to-day because—"

"Yes," sneered their guardian. "I was called away from urgent business in The Magnet Library.—No. 858.

town to be told that that was the only possible punishment Dr. Saunders could impose. At the time I thought the sentence severe, and I made a special journey down to the school to intercede on your behalf. But after hearing Dr. Saunders' account of the trouble I was forced to the conclusion he had acted rightly."

"Then there's no need for us to discuss that part of the affair any further," said George, piercing the other's hypocritical mask with a steady gaze. "Let's proceed to talk about the future."

"The future?" Justin Mahone shrugged his shoulders. "That does not concern me in the least. You boys were put to a decent school in accordance with your father's instructions, and you have disgraced yourselves. Your term fees were all paid up; I have done my duty as the executor of your father's will. The future does not concern me until the twins come of age—"

"What the thunder do you mean?" exclaimed George hotly. "I suppose the pater left enough money when he died to provide for us?"

"Your father was an eccentric man," replied his guardian. "In his will he stated that you boys should be educated at no other school but St. Bartholomew's, where he himself had passed his early days. That clause in the will was rendered the more emphatic by its repetition. Again, a deal of the money he left to your interests was bound up in shares. Those shares, George Melton, are almost worthless at the present moment. Also, I am unable to realise on them for your benefit until the twins come of age—"

"But—" began George in amazement.

"One moment more," continued Justin Mahone with a greasy smile. "As I have said before, your father was an eccentric man; his will was eccentric to a degree. In it he said that should any of you disgrace yourselves such a one would forfeit his share of the inheritance."

"And how, and who, for that matter is to decide whether any one of us has disgraced himself?" chimed in Matthew.

"That was provided for by your dear father," said Justin Mahone with a suave smile. "He nominated four well-known business friends of his to decide the issue, one of whom is a judge in the High Courts."

"And to whom, supposing that we all disgrace ourselves," said George quietly, "would the money revert?"

"Ahem!" coughed Justin Mahone, unable to conceal his satisfaction. "That is rather personal, for your dear father, in the event you have just named, left the residue of his fortune to me—"

"Ah, I see," said George grimly. "I see!"

And he shot Justin Mahone a glance that was full of suspicion.

"But," continued his guardian, still with that irritating smile upon his face, "I'm rather afraid that there will be nothing to come at all unless the markets improve—"

"You are referring to my father's investments?" broke in George quickly. "As an executor surely it is your business to sell the shares to the highest bidder before the crash comes."

"Quite so. But you see, my dear George, even executors are liable to make mistakes. I hoped that the markets would improve, but"—here he shrugged his shoulders—"I find that my judgment is at fault."

"Supposing I should ask you to tell me what manner of investment my father put his money into?" said George shrewdly. "Also the value of the shares?"

"I can answer both those questions," came the reply. "Your father took up fifty thousand shares in a so-called goldmine. The shares were ten pounds at par. They are quoted to-day at shilling; their value making in all, therefore, a total of two thousand five hundred pounds."

"Phew, that's a drop!" exclaimed Matthew.

"I agree with you," said Justin Mahone. "If the market shows any tendency to rise I shall sell out?"

"At a loss?" queried George suddenly. Justin Mahone nodded.

"What else can a poor executor do?" he asked with a deploring gesture.

"Well, I must confess shares and the like are outside my sphere of knowledge—as yet," said George slowly. "The chief concern of the moment is some money for me to be going on with."

Justin Mahone scowled. It was evident that the remark did not please him. He recovered his urbanity in a moment, however, and appeared unduly thoughtful.

"Of course," he said slowly, after the manner of a man making a great sacrifice, "I could advance you a little money from my own resources; there's nothing else I can draw on—"

"Then don't trouble," said George firmly. "It amounts to charity coming from a man like yourself, Mr. Mahone. And we Meltons accept charity from no man."

"Hear, hear!" spoke up the twins sturdily.

"Very well," snapped Mr. Mahone suddenly. "I shall not repeat the offer. You Meltons are a headstrong, unruly, and ungovernable lot. Except where it concerns my duty as the executor of your dear father's will I shall wash my hands of you."

As he spoke the train drew to a standstill at Vauxhall Station—one stopping place from Waterloo. Snatching his silk hat and a small attache-case from the rack, Justin Mahone stepped out on to the platform.

"I'll say good-bye," he remarked cynically. "No doubt I shall hear of your goings on—no doubt I shall!"

The train drew out of the station, and George Melton, looking out of the window, caught sight of his guardian standing on the platform staring after the retreating train and rubbing his hands with more zest than was natural in the executor of a "dear father's" will.

"There's something decidedly fishy about old Mahone," he remarked to his brothers a few moments later. "I can't get away from the idea that he is a wrong 'un. This share business doesn't sound a bit straight to me."

"He's a wrong 'un, all right," said Dicky. "I wish I'd helped him out of the carriage—with my boot!" he added, with a savage kick at an imaginary person.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The comical look on Dicky's face forced the brothers into a hearty laugh. And ere it had died away the raucous shouts of the porters at Waterloo Station greeted their ears.

"All change!" chuckled Marcus. "This is where the fun starts!"

But if young Marcus could have foreseen the type of fun that was about to shadow the Meltons he would not have been so light-hearted.

From the Jaws of Death!

"WELL, we're in London all right," said George brightly. "But what we are going to do now that we've arrived I'm-blown if I can see! And I might have chosen a better time to arrive here than eleven o'clock at night. Still, I was optimistic enough to think that if we called on our dear guardian he would have put us up for the night."

"Instead of which he's put us up for good," said Marcus with a grin. "On the shelf!"

"Oh, blow him!" grunted Dicky. "The old blighter's having his supper now, I expect. Hope it jolly well chokes him!"

"Which reminds me that I'm feeling peckish," said Matthew.

"Bitto likewise," chirruped the twins "What about it, George?"

George suddenly became thoughtful. He was visualising the contents of his pockets—a matter of five pounds and a few shillings.

"We shall have to go slow for a bit," he said. "Don't forget the state of the exchequer. Suppose you kids haven't any brass?"

The twins dived their hands into their pockets, bringing forth a sticky collection of string, toffee, stubs of pencils, added to which were a few coins.

"I've got fourpence-halfpenny and two penny stamps," said Dicky. "Sorry, the stamps are Indian ones."

"Beat you there!" grinned Marcus. "I've got a sixpence—the blessed thing's stuck to a chunk of toffee."

"Good job it has," said Matthew "or you would have spent it before this."

"Rats!" cheeked Marcus. "And how much has your highness got about you?" "Thirty bob," said Matthew ruefully. "Not a Monte Carlo collection of filthy lucre, is it, George?"

The elder brother had to smile. These "children" of his were so optimistic and irresponsible that he could do naught else. But George felt the awkwardness of the situation for all that.

"Well, we'll have a bit of something at this coffee-stall," he said at length, indicating a "gutter hotel," as Dicky afterwards called it, just outside the station yard.

"Good egg!" exclaimed the twins in unison.

The four had availed themselves of the opportunity of a wash and brush-up, and although each one of them still bore ample traces of the encounter with the Townies, their appetites were not impaired. They did full justice to "sausage and mash" and "cawfee," leaving the payment for same to George, whom Marcus humorously referred to as the "Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"Where now, oh captain?" asked Dicky, as the brothers gathered on the pavement. "I've often wanted to get a glimpse of the Thames by night. What about walking over this bridge to one of the iron seats on the Embankment? We can chin-wag there, too!"

"Good idea!" said George, who was at a loss to know how to dispose of his

WHO'S WHO.

GEORGE MELTON—a powerful, well-built fellow approaching twenty years of age. Amateur boxer of great promise.

MATTHEW MELTON—a clever footballer, two years his junior.

DICKY and MARCUS MELTON—known as the Twins.

DR. SAUNDERS—headmaster of St. Bartholomew's.

JUSTIN MAHONE—the Meltons' guardian.

The brothers have been expelled from St. Bart.'s for being the principal ringleaders in a rebellion against the Head, who, to cap a whole string of tyrannies, had cut football out of the school's curriculum.

On their way to the railway-station the Meltons ran foul of a gang of village youths who are known as the "Townies," and with whom St. Bart.'s have been at war for a year or more. A thrilling, yet unequal, fight ensues, in which the brothers drive off their foes at great damage to themselves. Then, before the Townies can call up reinforcements, the Meltons beat a strategic retreat to the station. Boarding a morning train, they gaze out of the window at the old stone pile of St. Bart.'s until the school gradually fades away into the dusk. Then they become aware for the first time that another traveller shares their compartment. And his identity comes as a shock—for the rascally face peering out from the corner of the compartment is the face of Justin Mahone, their guardian!

(Now read on.)

young charges for the night. "We've got to decide about our digs. We'll have a pow-wow on the subject."

The Meltons crossed Waterloo Bridge and selected an iron seat, facing the river, near Charing Cross. Soon the twins were drinking in the vista of a lazy flowing river illuminated by a myriad twinkling lights on either bank.

George and Matthew were silent, deeply engrossed in their own thoughts. Suddenly the chatter of the twins died away, and George, looking in their direction, noticed that they had fallen asleep, heads resting against each other.

"Look, Matthew," he said softly. "Poor kids—they're dead beat!"

"They are," agreed Matthew. "Cover them with this raincoat of mine, George. Would be a pity to wake them now; besides, I'm blown if I know where we can put up for the night."

"Just what I was thinking of, old fellow," said the elder brother. "This is a confounded serious business, Matthew. More serious than the twins—bless 'em—imagine. It's up to you and I to do something. We've got to earn our salt."

"I'm on," was Matthew's quiet response. "You won't find me a shirker, old fellow!"

"I know that!" exclaimed George, patting his brother on the back. "We'll pull through—you and I!"

Tenderly, without disturbing them, George placed the raincoat over the twins, a soft expression in his handsome face as he noted the peaceful calm in theirs.

Then he and Matthew stared out over the river, heads between their hands, thinking—thinking of what the morrow held for them, adventurers in a crowded and unsympathetic city.

Long they gazed out over the river, oblivious of the cold that was beginning to pierce their clothing. A policeman doing his beat stopped and gazed at them in wonderment. But their clothing suggested that they were not the usual "down and out" campers of the Embankment, and he passed on, thinking that a party of schoolboys were seeing London by night from preference, not hardship.

Suddenly through the silence of the night—a silence rendered all the more eerie on account of the soft lapping music of the Thames—there came a piercing screech from a train.

At first the elder brothers paid little heed, for they had witnessed the arrival and departure of many trains over Charing Cross railway bridge. It was George who first noticed something out of the ordinary. He watched with fascinated eyes the incoming train roaring its way across the bridge at a pace that was out of all keeping with the short distance it had to traverse now before it reached the buffers of the station.

He jumped to his feet, plucking Matthew by the arm excitedly.

"Look, old fellow!" he said hoarsely. "There's something wrong here. That train will wreck, sure as eggs. She's travelling at thirty miles an hour!"

Even as he spoke, the long line of twinkling lights behind the engine suddenly seemed to crumple up. There was a blinding flash of light, a deep-toned and prolonged roar, and next moment a part of the bridge which spanned the Embankment was seen to crumple up like matchboard.

"Good heavens!" breathed the brothers, breaking into a run.

Through the gap in the wall of the bridge crashed the engine, and the first

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carriage of the train. Like some huge wounded monster the engine hung suspended in mid-air, escaping steam, vivid tongues of flame, and startled yells and screams ringing out from all quarters of the coaches behind.

The weight of the engine was gradually dragging down the first carriage, iron beams and girders were snapping and bending under the strain. And while the brothers watched in wonder and horror, great roaring tongues of flame burst out from the engine, hiding it and the first carriage completely from their view.

The din was terrific now. Men were yelling above the uproar, women were screaming. Across the Embankment came hurrying a score of men—night workers drawn to the scene by the noise and commotion. At their head were two policemen. Leaving the twins, who were still sleeping on peacefully, on the iron seat, the elder Meltons joined the throng.

"Send for the fire brigade!" said George hoarsely. "There are people in the first carriage, and they'll be burnt like rats in a trap. No one can reach them from the top of the bridge."

The policeman sped off to sound the alarm, what time the party below the flaming wreck stood helpless and horror-stricken. Above the din could be heard now the frantic shrieks of the few passengers in the first carriage. Suddenly the flames and smoke lifted in answer to a gentle breeze, and the watchers below caught sight of a man leaping from the wreck. They ran forward, eager to assist him, though how they were to accomplish it none knew.

They might have spared themselves the horror of the spectacle, for the unfortunate person crashed into the roadway below a huddled and lifeless heap.

"This is awful!" said George, in horror. "Can't we do something?"

As he spoke a knot of men came running towards the scene carrying a ladder between them. They reared it against the wreck, or, rather, tried to, but the topmost rung fell short of the flaming, hissing engine by a couple of feet.

"Try the main pillar of the bridge," said George. "A chap could work his way along the ledge of the bridge by his hands and thus reach the first carriage."

"Impossible!" rapped one of the men. "Besides, how would it help?"

"Don't waste time talking!" cried George, taking a grip on the ladder. "Here, rear the ladder against this pillar—I'm going up!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Matthew, clutching his brother by the arm. "It's madness, George!"

But George shook him off. He had seen what the others hadn't seen—a scared figure of a man leaning out of the window of the first carriage—a beseeching figure shrieking for help. The flames had just reached this first carriage, sounds of crackling wood could plainly be heard.

The ladder was reared against the massive stone pillar that supported the bridge from the Embankment.

Before the crowd could stay him, George was mounting the ladder. Up he went like a monkey until he reached the topmost rung. The smoke was almost blinding him; he could feel the heat of the flames even from that distance. But his jaw was thrust out aggressively, the fighting spirit was uppermost. He would try the impossible.

His outflung arms embraced the

circular pillar from an upward leap off the top rung of the ladder, his long, sinewy legs twined round it. Inch by inch he worked his way up that massive pillar until his hands came on a level with the steel ledge that formed the base of the bridge.

"Hurrah!"

"Heaven go with him!"

Fervent cries reached him from below, but George had no ears for them. He was worming his way along that narrow ledge, suspended in mid-air, hanging only by his hands. From the first carriage all the frantic screams had with one exception ceased. George felt an inward tremor as he thought of the poor wretches who had perhaps succumbed to that terrible heat and suffocation. But the one man he had set out to save was still visible when the flames and smoke parted.

Now George was directly above the twisted, crumpled heap of metal and woodwork that had once been a first-class carriage. From the broken window peered an agonised, terrified face.

"Get a hold on my legs!" roared George above the din, worming his way along so that his outstretched legs hung over the window of the compartment.

He breathed a silent prayer as a gust of wind sprang up and hurled the curtain of smoke and flame away from his dangling body.

"Quick, man!" he hoarsed. "Hold my legs!"

It was well-nigh impossible for the imprisoned man below to hear the command, but he did exactly as he was bid. Reaching out to his uttermost, he caught hold of George's outstretched legs and swung away clear from the blazing wreck.

A great cry went up from below—a cry that blended admiration and anxiety—for it was seen that George nearly lost his hold as that dead weight hung on his lower limbs.

But Providence was fighting for the plucky youth. Those strong hands gripped the narrow ledge of steel until the metal bit into the flesh, but they never faltered. Back the way he had come, more slowly now, went George, his long legs with their burden swinging like a pendulum. The muscles in his arms were aching, the flesh urged him to let go and give up the ghost, for the strain was terrible. But an indomitable will conquered in the end, and a few moments later George was hanging over the side of the great stone pillar whence he had set out on his perilous journey.

Just as he arrived at this point he heard a thunderous crash. Turning his head, he saw the great steel-and-iron monster of the track dropping to the roadway below, dragging with it a splintered and crackling jumble of woodwork and iron of the first carriage.

He had not been a moment too soon.

The ladder up which he had climbed in the first place had been taken away, and as George gazed down to the embankment he saw men feverishly roping another ladder to it. The additional length now enabled a man from below to reach the dangling burden that George supported. He was taken from those aching muscles just in time and carried down to safety below. Another moment and the man on the ladder had caught hold of George's body and was helping him down.

Once his feet touched terra firma George felt his senses swim. He remembered smiling into the anxious face of Matthew, and then all became as dark as the pit.

A Lost Opportunity!

"Ah, he's coming round!" A tall, aristocratic-looking gentleman uttered the words as he gazed down at the inert figure of George Melton; and the twins, together with Matthew, breathed deep sighs of relief.

The setting this time was a spacious and well-appointed lounge in the house belonging to Sir Humphrey Dallas—more commonly known as the Sporting Baronet. Few would have recognised in that tall, commanding figure the man who had been imprisoned in the blazing carriage of the express. But such he was.

Immediately upon his recovery Sir Humphrey's first thought, naturally, had been for the plucky youth who had rescued him from an awful fate. His next was to get George away to a quiet place where he could attend to him. Matthew had introduced himself as George's brother; and the twins, who had awakened in time to witness their brother's heroism, were all packed into the first taxi available and taken to Sir Humphrey's mansion in Mayfair.

Just as George had swooned the City Fire Brigade had arrived on the scene of the tragedy, and their gallant efforts had saved many a life along that burning stretch of carriages.

On inquiry it transpired that the express, in attempting to make up lost time, had raced away out of control. Worse still, when the brakes had been applied they had failed to act. The driver and fireman had stuck to their posts gallantly till the end, and at last the brakes had functioned. So great was the speed at which the express was travelling, however, that the sudden brake pressure caused the engine to jump the rails.

"Where—where am I?"

George's eyes flickered open, and the question came faintly through his cracked lips. But he smiled contentedly when he caught the anxious glances of his brothers turned upon him.

"Don't look so confoundedly mournful, you kids!" he managed to blurt out. "This is not my funeral, is it?"

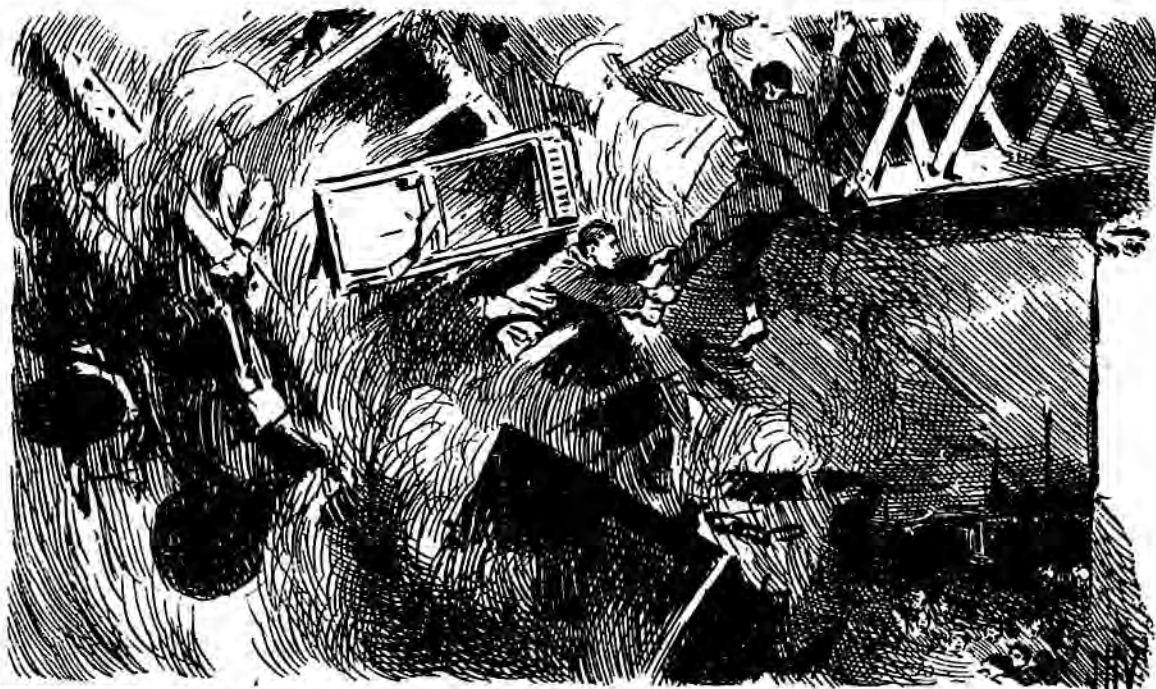
The twins laughed hysterically, and the tension was broken. Sir Humphrey held a flask to George's lips and bade him drink the contents. George's face screwed up into a hundred wrinkles as he drank the stuff. It burnt his throat—in fact, it seemed to be burning his very inside—but, for all that, he was conscious of the bracing heat it transfused through his veins. His head cleared, his muscles shed some of their weariness, and he found himself sitting up.

"Who—"

He blinked in amazement at the tall figure standing over him, blinked again as his glance wandered round that expensive lounge and took stock of its contents. Then he became aware of the retreat of the twins and Matthew. The latter had tactfully given the twins the order to quit, thinking it better that Sir Humphrey should be able to pour out his gratitude unhampered by thoughts of embarrassment.

It was a quarter of an hour later that Sir Humphrey Dallas and George joined the rest of the brothers in the dining-room. There was a cheery smile on the face of the latter—quite recovered now—and an expressive look in the kindly features of the baronet that bespoke a wholehearted admiration for the plucky youth who had saved him.

"Ah, I see the servants have attended to you!" smiled Sir Humphrey, noting the early breakfast that had been prepared for the Meltons. "Good! Tuck in, my lads!"



"Get a hold on my legs!" roared George above the din, worming his way along so that his outstretched legs dangled over the side of the carriage. "Quick, man!" he added hoarsely. Reaching out to his uttermost the imprisoned man caught hold of George's legs and swung away clear from the blazing wreck. (See page 24.)

The twins needed no second bidding; appetites such as theirs were seldom troubled by limits or horrors of indigestion. George and Matthew followed suit, and their genial host to put them at their ease did likewise.

When the meal had concluded Sir Humphrey signed to the Meltons to make themselves comfortable in the armchairs.

"I have learned something of your story," he said, with a smile, "from your gallant brother, and I would like to assist you all in some way. But your big brother—splendid fellow!—will not accept anything in the way of charity—that's the name, at least, he gave to the propositions I put forward. There is, however, one way in which I can assist without offending you. George here tells me that he has got to earn a living. Very good! He tells me, too, that he would like to take up professional pugilism as a livelihood—"

"And a thumping good chap with the mits he is, too!" exclaimed Marcus. "Why, he would have won the Public Schools' Championship if he hadn't been soft enough to let the other fellow off when he had him at his mercy—"

"Indeed!" said Sir Humphrey. "You are too modest, George. You did not tell me that you had gone so far in the ring."

George crimsoned.

"Didn't think it was of any account," he answered.

"But it makes a world of difference," smiled Sir Humphrey. "For you appear to be the fellow England is looking for. One of our future hopes—eh?"

"You are very flattering, sir," said George.

"Maybe," continued the baronet. "But I've a sort of premonition that in my meeting with you to-night I have done myself a double service. But to business! As I have just told you, George, I am vastly interested in boxing, and my one ambition is to discover a British heavy who can take the conceit out of the present world's champion—"

"That's the Mexican half-breed merchant, isn't it?" asked Dicky.

"Sure! Anton Moreno," replied the baronet. "Clever enough with the gloves—in fact, the finest exponent since the days of Belcher, but as a personality something to be avoided."

"Yes, I've heard about him," chipped in Matthew.

"Now, George," went on Sir Humphrey, "you are engaged on the spot—that is, of course, if you think it worth your while as my protégé—at a retainer of eight pounds a week. I know you will be saying that I'm taking a lot on trust; but your battle at Aldershot in the Public Schools' finals comes back to me now. The Press thought you a regular young wonder. What do you say? Of course, the salary I'm willing to pay you holds good only while you are in training. Once you have passed through the eliminating rounds necessary to a successful ring career and can draw a purse for yourself that purse will be yours."

"It seems to me that you are giving all, and receiving nothing," said George. "Well can I see through that retainer of eight pounds a week! Sufficient for us to keep alive in comfort—the boys and I."

"Not at all!" said Sir Humphrey abruptly. "Any potential champion is worth such a retainer. And I shall be getting something out of your engagement," he added. "You leave that part of the business to me."

"Very well," said George. "I shall be pleased to accept. I'm extremely grateful for the chance, and I hope I shall prove all you expect me to be."

"You've proved yourself already, my gallant lad," said Sir Humphrey softly. "A fellow in a thousand!"

Three days later George Melton was installed at Cobham—Sir Humphrey Dallas' training quarters—and placed

under the tutelage of Sandy Robson, a rugged-faced fighter of the old school. Sandy had been a champion in his time, a redoubtable middle-weight, and in his declining years had taken under his wing scores of youngsters who had shown promise at the game.

Up till now, however, Sandy had not brought out a champion. He mourned for the "good old days" when those who donned the mits fought for the love of the game, fought until they hadn't a kick left in them, fought for a purse that barely provided their meals for a week.

But as soon as Sandy clapped eyes on George's stalwart, manly figure his heart swelled. Here was the dream of his life, he felt sure. A real, live "heavy."

George, on his part, took to the old "pug" at first sight. The days that passed strengthened the bond between them—days of hard, gruelling work from early morn till late at night, for when the physical work of the day ceased old Sandy would lecture George on the psychological side of fighting, just as important a feature in ringcraft as the deadly "knock-out."

The days went by into weeks, the weeks into months, what time Sir Humphrey was arranging a bout for his young protégé. The twins and Matthew were comfortably installed in a tiny cottage not far from George's training quarters. Unable to secure remunerative work, Matthew had taken upon his shoulders the responsibility of finishing the twins' education.

And when Matthew donned the cap and gown, as it were, there was no hanky-panky from the twins. In the afternoons the brothers would close their lesson books and repair to George's training quarters, watching their elder brother at exercise, and endeavouring to emulate his example by donning the gloves for a friendly bout between themselves.

At last Sir Humphrey announced that he had fixed up a bout with a fairly well-known heavy-weight, some ten years the senior of George Melton.

"Of course, George," remarked Sir Humphrey, "the fellow is a dangerous customer when he enters the ring fit. One of the champions who has gone wrong in the making, you understand? To him you must show scant chivalry; this will be different from Public Schools' boxing. You will manoeuvre for a knock-out, and when the opening occurs you must take it."

"I understand," said George simply. "I'll do my best, sir!"

"I particularly want you to shine to good advantage," continued the baronet; for the Press have got wind of my dark horse, as they call you, and they seem to expect something out of the ordinary. And you will prove, all they say, providing you do not let your heart enter into the tussle the wrong way. Bluntly speaking, my boy, you've got to develop the killing instinct. Savvy?"

"Quite," returned George. "And when does the fight take place?"

"Wednesday week," was the answer. "You'll be fit by then?"

"I'll see to that, sir," chimed in Sandy. "There's nothing wrong with him now, for that matter. We must avoid over-training."

"I'll leave that to you, Sandy," smiled the baronet. "You've never sent an over-trained man into the ring yet."

During the following days the sporting baronet ran down to the training quarters at Cobham at frequent intervals, and seemed more than pleased at the exceptional advance George had made in the hands of Sandy Robson.

Then came the Wednesday—the debut of Sir Humphrey's protégé as a professional boxer. The contest had been staged at the Belcher stadium, a massive, circular-shaped structure at the back of Baker Street, and the attendance gave promise of being a record one, thanks to the publicity given to the forthcoming bout by the Press.

The preliminary bouts kept a fidgety audience more or less content. Then George Melton and Sir Humphrey

appeared at the ringside. The latter received an ovation all to himself. Then the exuberant crowd turned their attention to the "dark horse." And George looked a dark horse at that moment. As he slipped the dressing-gown from his shoulders the audience became aware of his wonderful physique—the massive chest, the well-developed biceps, the glossy shoulders. The only thing about him that did not proclaim the fighter was his rather handsome face. He was by far the fairest-looking boxer who had ever entered the nineteen-foot ring at Belchers. But there was no mistaking the determined cut of his jaw for all that.

George felt a thrill run through him as he heard the complimentary remarks of that gigantic audience and the thunder of their handclapping. Then his opponent, Mike Bratton, leaped lightly over the ropes and took his corner.

The contrast between them was remarkable. Bratton's face was typical of the prize-fighter. His nose had been broken, flattened permanently, his lips were thick and scarred, his eyes small and sunken. A short, bull-like neck joined a thick-set body, and his whole appearance created the impression that here was a man one could batter mercilessly for a whole fortnight and still find him on his feet.

The contestants were announced, the bandages were examined, and then—

"Seconds out of the ring!"

George leaped from his chair and advanced on tiptoe, his body swaying lightly and gracefully on that delicate poise. Mike Bratton advanced with equal grace, out of place in so inelegant a physique. Then they met.

A few light flicks with the gloves as the pair of them sparred for an opening, and Mike Bratton suddenly led off with a vicious, half-arm swing. It never landed, for George skipped nimbly aside and, jumping in, dealt his opponent a straight left that jerked his head back a couple of inches and caused him to emit a grunt of pain and surprise. Thereafter Mike Bratton took no chances. He realised that this good-looking youngster was a born fighter. Instinctively he knew the right thing to

do and he did it. The first round ended with the honours resting on George Melton. The audience were not slow to applaud this clever exhibition. They reckoned among themselves that this was going to be a fight of lights. And they were not mistaken.

The second round saw the pace quickened by Mike Bratton, saw him putting all his extensive knowledge of ringcraft into the game, but he only held his own. George was infinitely quicker on his feet than his opponent, and he treated the audience to an exhibition of footwork such as they had not witnessed in a heavy-weight for many years past.

Just before the gong George seemed to get Mike Bratton guessing. A series of clever feints, lightning-like in their execution, unnerved Mike Bratton and found him all at sea. Mike was a stereotyped fighter, and not used to such dainty flicks. He shook his head disdainfully, and thus presented the chance George had played for. As the chin moved away from the chest, George lashed out with a punch that carried all his poised weight behind it.

Thud!

The sound of the blow connecting was heard all over that gigantic hall, and heads were craned forward to witness the result of it. Mike Bratton staggered hazily on his feet, his massive fists clawed the air, and it would have needed a very slight punch to have put him down for keeps.

"Go in at him!"

"Give him the knock-out!"

All round the hall people were shouting, were standing on their feet in the excitement.

"Wake up, George," came Sandy's voice from the corner. "Put him out!"

The horror that seemed always to creep over George when he had dealt a fellow creature a blow unduly hard was pierced by Sandy's entreating voice. He shook the sick-at-heart feeling from him and waded in. But before the blow could materialise—the blow he intended to win his first professional fight with—the gong sounded. A golden opportunity had been lost, and in losing it George had revealed himself to be a boxer without the true brute instinct.

Sandy was furious in his corner.

"George, I'll give you a rare hiding myself," he growled, "if you play those gentlemanly tricks here! Gosh, man, you were a cert winner!"

"I'm sorry," said George, a trifle crestfallen. "I'll see it doesn't happen again."

"Ah, old Mike'll see to that, too," grunted Sandy despondently.

"Time!"

A Victim of Fate!

THE third round started with Mike Bratton well on the aggressive. Apparently he was little the worse for the handling he had received in the previous round. His seconds had completely revived him and Mike was determined to end the fight there and then.

Smack, thud-thud!

The sound of the gloves landing made music every second of that round. It was fought out at a whirlwind pace, each man getting as much as he gave. When the gong sounded both of the combatants were breathing heavily, while big red marks showed up lividly on their bodies, ample testimony to the quality of the exchanges. The audience were

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restored to good-humour now. If this Melton fellow had proved himself unable to deal out the "killing" stuff, he had enough pluck in him to take it himself.

The Fourth round. But now Sandy had discovered Mike Bratoon's weakness, and had passed on the intelligence to George with instructions how to make the most of it.

"Whenever Mike leads out with his right," whispered Sandy between rounds, "his head lifts up off his chest about three inches. There's a chance for you, George, to land that famous right of yours."

George indeed was the possessor of a famous right. For weeks past he had nursed that punch, striving to get the utmost power behind it, timing it to a second. Sandy was of the opinion that should he be able to land that punch, any opponent he came up against would of a certainty take the count.

George manoeuvred for an opening now. He skipped about the ring more like a feather-weight than a heavy, and Mike was always lumbering after him like a huge shaggy bear. These tactics began to tell. Bratoon was conscious of the fact that he was appearing ridiculous in the eyes of the audience, and it angered him. He would teach this young bantam that he couldn't do that kind of thing with Mike Bratoon.

Purposely George worked in to close quarters now, leaving himself open for Mike to attempt to lead with the right. It came, sharp as a flash. Had it landed George would in all probability have gone down for a count, but he side-stopped at the critical moment.

Sandy was on his feet, all excitement. Even as he had said, George's opponent had raised his chin from his chest, thereby presenting as beautiful a target a fighter could wish to see.

"Now!" whispered Sandy.

George heard him right enough, his right fist swung back to deal the blow he knew would give the fight to him, but again that strange, unaccountable feeling obsessed him, and he seemed powerless to act.

The audience had seen the opening, too, had seen the preliminary swing of the knock-out, and once again were on their feet. But to their horror the blow never landed. Worse still, Mike Bratoon seized the opportunity that now came his way. Well he knew that he had escaped defeat by a hair's-breadth, as it were. Such a thing was not going to happen again.

Thud! Thud!

A powerful left and right landed on George's jaw even as he stood there undecided. The blows sent a spasm of pain down his good-looking face. He tried to recover himself, tried to skip away out of further danger, but the nimble legs that had served him so well up till then now refused to function.

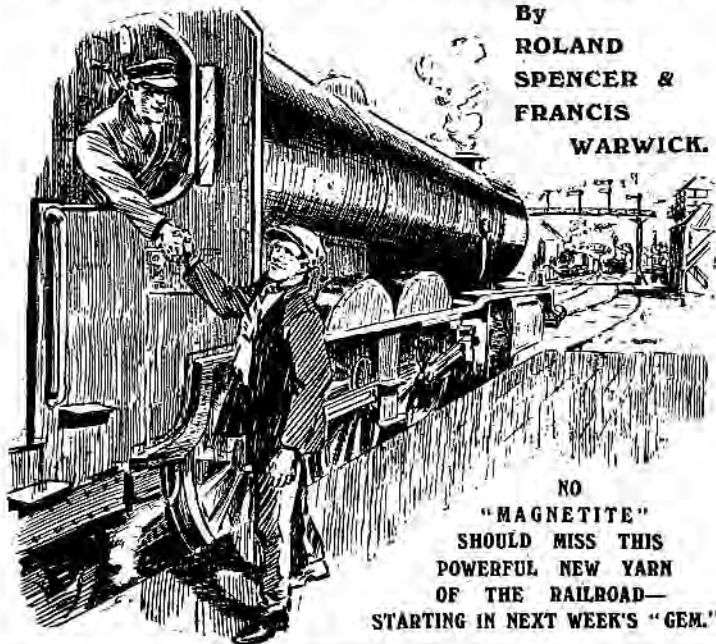
Thud!

The third blow landed—this time full on the mark, the most vulnerable spot next to the point in a boxer's make-up. George's head swam, a horrible feeling of sickness surged through his stomach, robbing him of his power to breathe, and next moment he had crashed to the boards a semi-conscious heap. He heard the referee begin to count as one in a dream, tried hard to rise, but sank down again with a groan, for the moment a useless and beaten wreck.

"Mike Bratoon wins!"

The verdict was not so popular as Mike himself would have liked it to be, nevertheless he had won, although the honours of the conflict went to the vanquished.

CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!



By
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NO
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It would be a merciful thing to draw a veil over the remainder of that day, for George was almost beside himself with remorse, Sir Humphrey and Sandy with disappointment, the brothers with concern for George.

In the morning the papers came out with a full account of that memorable fight, round for round. The majority of the Press representatives declared that George would never make a fighter on account of his natural repugnance to deal the knock-out; one or two, not so charitable, declared that George had a yellow streak.

"I'm sorry, sir!" George apologised to Sir Humphrey for the fiftieth time the next morning. "I promise you on my word of honour that it will never happen again. I'll develop that brute instinct the papers talk about if I have to feed solely on raw meat."

Sir Humphrey smiled.

"Don't take it to heart, old fellow," he said kindly. "I'll admit that I was extremely disappointed last night—but there, it was your first turn out. You'll do better next time, I'll warrant."

"I will, sir," said George firmly.

"And now, let's pass on to pleasanter matters," smiled the baronet. "I'm holding a reception at my place to-night. Would you and your brothers care to turn up?"

"Wouldn't we just!" exclaimed Marcus readily.

"Then it's accepted, I take it," smiled the baronet. "I'll send the car along to meet you. I'll see you have a good time, apart from which, George, there will be some smart people present—useful to you in your future career. Can't have too many patrons when you take up the ring as a profession," he added.

"I shall be content with you, sir," answered George. "Your generosity to us I shall never forget."

"Tut tut, my lad," smiled Sir Humphrey. "See you all to-night, then."

As per promise a smart touring-car drove up at the training quarters at Cobham and the Meltons embarked for an evening's enjoyment. And a thorough

evening it turned out to be. Sir Humphrey was there, finding time it seemed to talk to all of his guests, looking after their comfort with indefatigable energy.

In the ball-room the Meltons saw as brilliant an assembly of titled men and women as they were likely to see in their life-time. All was gaiety and happy good-humour. Only one shadow descended on the Meltons, and that was when Marcus suddenly declared that he had seen Justin Mahone among the guests.

"You've made a mistake, sonny!" smiled George.

"I tell you it was that old buffer, sure as eggs," said Marcus firmly. "Look, there's the old hypocrite!"

The Meltons looked in the direction indicated, and there sure enough was Justin Mahone. But he was soon lost to view in the moving crowd of fashionably-dressed women and the more sombre-clad figures of the men.

At about half-past eleven the fun was at its height, two orchestras were playing popular dance tunes and sixty couples were moving with fairy-like grace over the polished floor. Suddenly in the midst of the jollification, the ball-room was plunged into darkness.

On the instant rose the screams of hysterical women, and the more powerful voices of the men calling for lights. Men and women were bumping into each other in the confusion, everyone was groping about in pitch darkness.

Then rose a cry from the far end of the room that someone was stealing the ladies' jewellery.

"Thieves!"

"Put on the lights!"

"My diamond necklace has gone!"

"My pearls!"

(Don't miss next Monday's long powerful instalment of this ripping serial, boys! More trouble is in store for the Meltons, and their plucky brothers simply reel in trouble. Tell your pals about this grand story—persuade them to read it!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 868.

IN THE POWER OF THE SHEIK!

(Continued from page 21.)

in a hurry to come on again, and if they make it a siege that will give Ali a chance."

"Call the roll!" said the major quietly.

There was not a member of the party who had escaped unscathed. Ibrahim was calmly binding up a gash in his arm; the major's bronzed cheek had been furrowed by a bullet. He called over the names quickly; even yet the defenders did not know whether all had survived that fearful struggle.

But Wharton and Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, and Honest Ibrahim, answered to their names.

"Bob!"

Twice the major repeated the name of his son, but, to the horror of all, there was no answer.

He compressed his lips.

"Look for him!" he said, in a steady voice.

With sinking hearts the juniors searched the dark roof for Bob Cherry. But they found him not.

"He's not here, sir," said Harry, in a faltering voice.

From the darkness came a voice—the voice of Mustapha ben Mohammed, the sheik. In savage, mocking tones he shouted in Arabic, and the major clutched a rifle and fired into the darkness in reply. Then there was silence.

"What did he say?" exclaimed Wharton. "Does he know?"

"Was he speaking of Bob?" panted Nugent.

The major's voice was hoarse and strained as he answered:

"Yes."

"Then what—"

"Bob is in his hands," said the major, with a groan. "That is what he has told me to torture me. My boy!"

"Oh!" muttered Wharton.

"What else did he say, sir?" asked Nugent.

The major set his teeth.

"That to-morrow, in our sight, when

the sun is up, my boy is to meet his fate—the cruellest fate that that dastard can contrive for him."

It was a night of horror on the lonely Bordj in the heart of the Sahara. Through the darkness, and through the dim moonlight, when the moon rose, the Greyfriars party stared hopelessly towards the Arab camp, where their comrade lay a bound prisoner—doomed to a fearful fate. They could not help him. There was no hope. The long, leaden minutes of the night dragged by, while the sands of their comrade's life were running out; and they longed for, and yet dreaded, the rising of the sun on the desert.

THE END.

(There is a faint hope that Ali ben Yusef will arrive in time to save his beleaguered comrades in the Bordj, but will his coming prevent Mustapha from carrying out his threat of putting Bob Cherry to the torture? These questions are answered in "The Vengeance of the Sheik!"—next Monday's ripping story. Don't miss it!)

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