

FREE PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES!
(Important announcement inside.)

No. 872. Vol. XXVI. Week Ending October 25th, 1924.

The Magnet 2^d

Library
Complete School Stories.

EVERY
MONDAY.



"EAVESDROPPING!"

BILLY BUNTER'S UNEXPECTED ENTRY!

(A dramatic incident from this week's magnificent long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Grayfriars, inside.)

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OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

THIS week I am able to get down to brass tacks concerning the wonderful offer of **FREE PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES**, of which I have made mention in the chat columns of previous issues of this paper. Already hosts of queries have poured into my office—my loyal chums are curious. Their curiosity is pardonable in the circumstances, for never in the whole history of the **FREE GIFT** has such a wonderful collection of **FINE ART PLATES** been put before readers of any publication. Your Editor has been at great pains to give his loyal chums something really worth having, and with pardonable pride I have no hesitation in saying the bullseye has been hit. This **FREE GIFT** scheme is spread over a period of twelve weeks. In other words, for twelve weeks every Magnetite will be presented with a beautiful photogravure plate of the latest types of ships at present in commission in the Royal Navy. And each art plate measures

NINE AND A HALF INCHES BY SIX AND A HALF INCHES!

Gee! The size of them alone is an achievement! Wait until you get number one before you. You'll agree with me when I say that every picture is well worth framing. From the collector's point of view, nothing has been omitted—every plate depicts a type of vessel that is the latest of its class. Battle-cruisers, destroyers, battleships, aircraft-carriers, monitors, mine layers, patrol boats, etc.—all are represented in this wonderful series, making as fine a collection in all as it is possible to conceive. And—what you are all dying to know—the first one of these gorgeous art plates will be given away **FREE** with every copy of the **MAGNET**

NEXT WEEK!

Hurrah! The cheer is bound to come, for no class of reader is more appreciative of his Editor's efforts than the good old **MAGNET** chums. Remember, boys, next week's **MAGNET** will be accompanied by No. 1 of these ripping photogravure plates. There's bound to be a scrum at the newsagents' to secure this **MAGNIFICENT FREE GIFT**, so my regular readers would be well advised to place their order for next week's **MAGNET AT ONCE**. Look out for

H.M.S. HOOD (Battle-cruiser),

which launches our Presentation Plate Series, and put it by you until the whole set has been collected. 'Nuff said.

"THE TRIALS OF STORRYDENE VILLA!"

By Walter Edwards.

That is the title of the next grand footer treat in store for Magnetites. It **THE MAGNET LIBRARY**.—No. 872.

takes the form of a series of long complete stories describing the misfortunes of a League club over which a certain newly-created baronet holds sway. This titled gentleman has a habit of bringing his fist down upon the Board table and saying "black is white," as it were. And his weak-minded fellow directors also have a habit of nodding their heads in assent. But there comes a startling change in the management of the Storrydene Villa, and Mr. Walter Edwards handles the situation in a style that is both convincing and interesting. Make sure you read number one of this sparkling series, which is entitled

"THE DICTATOR!"

and when you have finished, drop me a postcard stating your opinion, boys.

"BOTH BUNTERS!"

By Frank Richards.

Once again your favourite author has a story to unfold in which the fat and fatuous Owl of the Greyfriars Remove appears in the limelight. This time Mr. Richards revives that interesting character, Wally Bunter—the fellow who bears an extraordinary likeness to his greedy cousin so far as face and form are concerned, but who, in other directions, is as unlike William George as chalk is from cheese. The extraordinary likeness, however, leads to a lot of misunderstanding on the part of the Grey-

friars Remove, and Wally Bunter is a victim of circumstance. He has a real rough time of it, but Wally, sportsman that he is, takes everything in good part. To say more at this juncture would be tantamount to spoiling a good treat, so I will leave you to fathom "Both Bunters" at your own leisure.

"HEROES!"

The world boasts plenty of such characters, which is all to the good, and it is not surprising, therefore, to find more than one hero at good old Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co. dig them up in true "Herald" fashion. Heroes are plucked, dressed, and served up before you in the "Herald's" inimitable style. You will enjoy this coming supplement, chums—don't on any account miss it.

AN £8 BIKE FOR THREE WORDS!

Several Magnetites have already been successful in winning these ripping Royal Enfield Bicycles, which are being offered every week. All I would say is that there are plenty more bicycles waiting to be won. Why don't you go in and win this week, chum? There's a coupon waiting to be filled up on page 19.

THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!

This world-famous annual is now on sale at all newsagents. How long it is going to remain on sale is another matter. From the report sheets before me the newsagents appear to be doing a roaring business—copies are selling like hot cakes. Make sure of your copy, chum, before it's too late. Take the tip in time!

Your Editor.

BRIXTON READER WINS AN £8 "ROYAL ENFIELD" BICYCLE.

Result of MAGNET Characters Competition (Horace Coker).

In this competition the prize of a Gent's Bicycle has been awarded to:

FRANK WEBB,

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Brixton, S.W.,

for the following line:

"Accidents carefully executed."

ANOTHER £8 "ROYAL ENFIELD" BICYCLE OFFERED AGAIN THIS WEEK, CHUMS. TRY YOUR SKILL!

YOU'LL FIND THE COUPON ON PAGE 19.

THE WINNING SNAPSHOT! Dick Penfold's photograph of a derelict vessel which has been piled up on the sand dunes for many years, and which, by the way, takes a first prize in a photographic competition, starts a most amazing series of adventures for Harry Wharton & Co. and the amateur photographer of the Remove. What is the secret of—



The Mystery Wreck!

A Magnificent New
Long Complete
Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. of
Greyfriars. Told
by popular FRANK
RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Pen's Photo!

"I SAY, you fellows, Pen's tenner's come!"

Billy Bunter made that announcement as he entered Study No. 1 after dinner one Wednesday afternoon.

Bunter was looking excited; apparently the fact that Pen's "tenner" had come was of great interest to Billy Bunter.

The news did not appear unduly to excite the occupants of Study No. 1, however. They merely glared at Bunter; though possibly the fact that Bunter had entered without knocking—a little habit of Bunter's—accounted for the glares.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the study in full muster. They were dressed in Norfolk, and they were deep in discussion as to the best route to take for a cycling spin that afternoon.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon—quite mild for early winter—and they intended to spend it on the open road. They certainly intended to waste no precious time listening to Bunter's chatter.

So when that fat youth interrupted the proceedings they greeted him with glares, and five pointing fingers indicated the door.

"Get out, Bunter!" remarked Frank Nugent. "We're busy!"

"But not too busy to boot you out, if you don't get out!" added Bob Cherry pleasantly. "Shove off, or be shoved off, old fat lard tub!"

"Oh, really you know," said Bunter warmly, "I think you fellows ought to take an interest in a matter that affects the Remove. It's only patriotic!"

"Eh? How the thump does it affect the Remove?" demanded Harry Wharton, staring. "Old Penfold's won a tenner—and good luck to him. But it doesn't concern us, Bunter. Sheer off—do!"

"But it does affect the Remove—of course it does!" insisted Bunter, blinking earnestly through his big glasses at the juniors. "It's not like a blessed

remittance from home. Old Pen's fairly covered himself—and the Remove, mind you—with glory in the eyes of the world!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You can't deny that!" said Bunter firmly. "Now, this is how the matter stands. Dick Penfold's won a prize of ten quid in a photographic magazine for the best snapshot sent in. Well, he deserves it—his snap was a jolly good one. It was published in the magazine only last week, with Pen's name and address; I've seen it. And Pen got his tenner this morning; I've seen that, too. Well, the question is, what's to be done about it?"

"You fat burler—"

"It's no good you chaps being jealous, you know," said Bunter, shaking his head. "Pen's a jolly clever chap, and we ought to show our appreciation of his cleverness—honour him, you know. Now, my idea is to have a bumper celebration—a whacking great feed to the whole Remove."

There was a chuckle at that; but Bunter ignored it.

"I've suggested it to Penfold already," went on Bunter grumblingly. "The beast kicked me out of the study. He's a low, mean beast, you know. But I don't bear malice. That's not my style."

"Isn't it?"

"No; I forgive him. I'm as keen as ever to carry out my idea and honour him. But the beast won't let me, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle, for goodness' sake!" said Bunter irritably. "This is serious. Look here, Wharton, as skipper of the Remove, you ought to take the matter up—make Penfold be honoured. He'll listen to you. Fancy a fellow not wanting to be honoured!"

"Just fancy!" agreed Harry Wharton, laughing. "And who's going to pay for the feed, Bunter? You?"

"Eh? Me—of course not!" sniffed Bunter. "Pen will stand the feed—out of his tenner, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling idiots!" hooted Bunter. "Can't you be serious? This

is not the time for being funny! Yah!"

"It isn't, Billy," agreed Bob Cherry, becoming serious. "It's the time for action. Now, out you go, you fat ass!"

Gripping one of Bunter's fat ears 'twixt finger and thumb, Bob ran the fat junior through the doorway, and dumped him down in the passage.

Leaving Bunter seated on the floor, roaring, Bob re-entered the room, and closed the door. He had scarcely done so when the door opened again, revealing Bunter's fat, angry face.

"Yah! Beasts!" he roared. "Mean beasts! You're only—"

Bunter's wrathful face vanished abruptly, and the door slammed as Bob Cherry picked up a cushion. Bob chuckled, and was about to fling the cushion down again when there sounded a scuffle in the passage, and once again the door opened.

"Hullo, hullo! Here he is again!" said Bob.

Whiz!

The cushion left Bob's hand with terrific force, and slammed full in the face of the junior who entered.

Unfortunately, it was not Billy Bunter.

It was Dick Penfold, of the Remove, and behind him was Monty Newland, his chum.

"Yow! What the thump—"

"Yarrough!"

Dick Penfold's startled gasp was instantly followed by a fiendish howl from Monty Newland, as the force of the cushion in his face sent Penfold staggering back, and the back of his head came in violent contact with Newland's rather prominent nasal organ.

The luckless Monty Newland danced about wildly.

The Famous Five could not help laughing.

"Ow! Oh, my dose!" gasped Monty Newland, clutching his damaged nasal organ frantically. "Ow! Oh crumbs! You—you raving madman, Cherry! Ow!"

"Ha, ha! Sorry!" laughed Bob, though he looked anything but sorry.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

"I meant the cushion for that fat ass Bunter! It was your own fault, though. If you'd knocked before coming in we should have known it couldn't be Bunter."

"B-r-r-r!"
Monty Newland growled; but he was a good-tempered junior, and he was soon grinning ruefully as the pain left his nose. Pen kicked the door shut and chuckled.

"We were too busy kicking Bunter out of the way to knock," explained Dick Penfold, grinning. "You fellows got anything special on this afternoon?"

"Only a cycle spin!" said Harry.
"Good! You chaps have heard that my tenner's come?"

"Bunter told us," grinned Bob Cherry. "He's got a great scheme for a celebration; wants to honour you, Pen—at your expense."

Penfold chuckled.
"He tried the game on with me," he said, colouring slightly. "But—but—well, you chaps know how things are. I can't afford to stand the whole Remove a feed."

"Nobody expects you to, of course," smiled Harry Wharton. "That fat toad ought to be squashed for suggesting it, Pen."

"I'm giving the pater nine quid of it," said Dick Penfold. "He needs it. And I'm keeping a quid for myself—just to stand my own pals a feed."

"And are we your dear pals?" inquired Bob Cherry pathetically. "Now, don't say no."

"That's just what I'm here for!" grinned Dick Penfold. "I was going to ask you fellows to a little feed—just you five, Monty, and myself!"

"Good man!"
"Count us in, old chap!" chuckled Bob. "We're all practically stony."

"As a matter of fact," went on Dick Penfold, laughing, "I'm not sure that I ought not to hand over half of the tenner to Wharton. He suggested the old wreck in Crow's Foot Creek as a subject when I first talked of entering the competition. And I'm jolly glad I took his advice now!"

"What rot!" grinned Harry. "It was your skilful treatment of the subject that won the tenner, Pen. Anyhow, we'll come to the feed like a shot. What time is it to be?"

"That's what I want to talk about," said Pen. "Monty and I were thinking of biking over to Crow's Foot Creek again. I want to take a few more snapshots of that old wreck, and it struck me it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a sort of picnic there—that's if you chaps aren't going anywhere special. We could take the grub, and there's a fisherman's cabin near where we could get hot water for tea."

"Good wheeze, by Jove!"

"Ripping!"

"We'll come like a shot, old man!" said Harry. "It's mild enough for tea out-of-doors, and, come to that, we could have tea on the giddy wreck!"

"That's good enough then," said Penfold. "We'll trot off to the tuckshop now. You fellows can come and help select and carry the grub, if you like."

"What-ho!"

The Famous Five snatched their caps eagerly enough, and their faces were cheery as they followed Penfold and his chum out of the study. The question of the route for their cycling spin was settled now—in a very satisfactory manner. As they trooped out into the passage a fat leg, encased in tight, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

loudly-striped trousers, vanished round the corner ahead with suspicious haste.

The juniors did not see it, however. Had they done so they would have known that the fat leg belonged to Billy Bunter, and that the fat junior had been engaged in his favourite occupation—listening at the keyhole.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Dodge!

"HALLO, hallo, ballo! Bunter!"
The Famous Five, with Dick Penfold and Monty Newland were making their way towards the cycle-shed, loaded up with parcels, when Bob Cherry made that boisterous remark.

Standing outside the cycle-shed, leaning negligently on his bicycle—an ancient "crock," rusty and dilapidated—was Billy Bunter.

"Looks as if he's waiting for someone," grinned Johnny Bull. "Now, I wonder who's ass enough to take Bunter for a spin?"

As the juniors approached him Billy Bunter made a movement, and looked at them.

"Buck up, you fellows!" he said. "I'm just about fed-up with waiting for you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was pretty obvious who Bunter was waiting for.

"Well, the cheeky owl!" breathed Harry Wharton, glaring at Bunter. "He must think he's coming with us, you chaps!"

"What a delusion!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose the fat frog was listening at the keyhole when we were discussing this trip. Just hold this parcel, Inky, and I'll disillusionise him!"

"Oh, really, you fellows," said Bunter, keeping a wary eye on Bob Cherry, "I'm coming, you know! I see you've got your camera, Dicky, old man!"

"Oh, cheese it, and clear!" snapped Dick Penfold.

"You can strap it on my carrier, if you like," went on Bunter, unheeding. "I'll take care of it, Dicky. I'm rather glad you've brought your camera. I'll be able to give you a few tips on—on daylight exposures and all that."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I see you've got plenty of grub, too," went on Bunter. "Good! Not that it matters much to me, though."

"Doesn't it?" gasped Dick Penfold.

"Not a scrap! In fact, I didn't know there was a feed when I accepted your invite, Dicky, old chap. You're usually such a mean, poverty-stricken beast, you know—"

"You—you—"

"But I've decided to accept, for all that," said Bunter generously. "You see, I'm keen on photography, and I'm keen to explore that wreck. I'm interested in old wrecks—"

"I can quite believe that, Billy," agreed Bob Cherry, eyeing Bunter's rusty, dingy bicycle. "That's why you

.....

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hang on to this curious contraption, I suppose. I'm blessed if I can make out whether it's a bike tied up with string, or string tied up with pieces of bike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, you shut up!" sniffed Bunter. "I was talking to my pal, Dicky. Now, look here, Dicky—"

"I'm looking, Bunter!" said Dick Penfold grimly. "And after I've counted three, I'm going to start kicking, my pippin! I didn't ask you to come, and you're not jolly well coming—see? Now I'm going to count: One—two—three! Hold him, Bob!"

But Bunter didn't wait for Bob to hold him. As Dick made a rush at him he dropped his bike with a rattling clatter, and fairly streaked across the Close.

Dick Penfold chased him for several yards, and then returned, grinning.

"That's settled Bunter!" he chuckled. "Now, you chaps, let's get off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In a laughing crowd the juniors entered the cycle-shed, and were soon busy making preparations for the outing. Parcels were strapped on carriers and bikes examined, and well under five minutes all was in readiness.

As the juniors wheeled their bikes out and started for the gates, Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Bunter's not in sight," he remarked. "He's evidently given it up as a bad job!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"His bike's still here—looks like it," agreed Harry Wharton.

But the juniors were not long in discovering that they were quite wrong there.

As they were passing round by the back of the chapel they were startled by hearing a shout—hoarse and appealing:

"Help! Help, Master Wharton—Master Cherry! 'Elp! I've broken me leg! Ow! 'Elp!"

"My hat!"

The juniors stopped dead in alarm. The agonised cries for aid were coming from the old gardener's shed at the back of the chapel, and suddenly Harry Wharton understood—or thought he did.

"That's old Mumble's voice! Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "He must have fallen, or something! Come on—quick!"

With one accord the startled juniors dropped their machines and rushed for the cycle-shed.

The thought that old Mumble, the school gardener, had probably hurt himself seriously, banished all other thoughts—even thoughts of Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton reached the doorway of the dingy shed first, but as he rushed in his chums swarmed in at his heels.

Johnny Bull came the last, and as he reached the doorway Harry stopped dead just inside, and blinked into the gloom.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he muttered. "Stand out of the light, you chaps—doesn't appear to be anyone—"

"Yooough! Oh crumbs!"

Crash! Slam!

A sudden push from behind sent Johnny sprawling on the heels of his chums, and even as he yelled out the door slammed, and they were in darkness.

"What the thump—"

"He, he, he!"

As that well-known cackle came from outside, Bob Cherry gave a yell—a yell that brought enlightenment to all.

"Bunter! It's that crafty worm, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—"

There was no need to doubt that, for just then Bunter's fat voice floated through from without.

"I say, you fellows, listen to me a minute!"

"You fat rotter—"

"You burbling owl—"

"Open this door, or we'll smash you!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The furious juniors answered Bunter's chuckling request with howls of wrath and deadly threats, the while they thumped furiously on the rickety door.

"The crafty, thieving burglar!" yelled Bob Cherry furiously. "He's trapped us in here so that he can collar the grub on the bikes. My hat! Smash the blessed door down—quick!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The door fairly rattled and shook under a thunderous onslaught from the enraged juniors. They understood Bunter's dodge now. He was a wonderful mimic and ventriloquist, and he had obviously made good use of his abilities in that line to trap them in the shed while he helped himself to the grub strapped to the bikes.

But that was evidently not quite Bunter's game, for when they stopped hammering at last, from sheer breathlessness, they heard Bunter still outside the door.

"I say, you fellows," he was calling, "don't make such a row, you know!"

"Row?" breathed Bob Cherry sulphurously through a crack in the door.

"We'll row you for this, you fat worm! I—I'll bust you! I'll break your fat little neck, Bunter!"

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, are you very keen on that spin this afternoon?"

"You—you—"

"If you are," went on Bunter calmly, "you'd better listen to me—what?"

"You sneaking fat worm—"

"Oh, let's hear what the fat ass has to say!" snorted Harry Wharton wrathfully. "We can't stop here all the blessed afternoon. What's the game, Bunter?" he called, raising his voice.

"He, he, he! I'll soon tell you that," was the cackling reply. "You fellows will have to admit that I'm a jolly good ventriloquist now—what?"

"What's the game, you fat idiot?" almost shrieked Harry Wharton. "Open this dashed door—"

"Presently, old chap," said Bunter. "I say, you chaps, you're fairly nobbled, aren't you? What about making a little bargain? If you'll let me come with you, I'll let you out. How's that?"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. He understood Bunter's game now. It was far from pleasant to be forced to give in to Bunter's demand, and yet—

"What shall we do, you chaps?" whispered Harry, gritting his teeth. "We don't want to spend the blessed half-day stuck in here."

"No fear!"

"Tell him yes!" said Bob Cherry, with a sudden chuckle. "We'll let him come—if the fat barrel can keep up with us. And letting him come doesn't mean we'll let him taste the grub. We'll not let him touch a scrap, and we'll give him a warm time."

"Good egg!"

There was a chorus of chuckles in the darkness, and Harry grinned, and raised his voice.

"All right, Bunter!" he called. "We'll agree to that. You can come!"

"Oh, good! Thanks, you chaps!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "There's another little point, though. It's important. If I let you out, you'll promise



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Here he is again!" Whiz! The cushion flew through the air and slammed full in the face of the junior who entered the study. Unfortunately, it was not Billy Bunter. It was Dick Penfold, and behind him was Monty Newland. "Yow—what the thump—" "Yaroooh!" Penfold's startled gasp was followed by a fiendish yell from Newland as Pen crashed into him. (See Chapter 1.)

not to lay a finger on me—make it pax, you know."

"Yes, we'll promise that, Bunter!" called back Harry after a pause. "Now open the door."

"Certainly, old man!"

Bunter opened the door quickly enough, and as a flood of daylight burst in, the juniors crowded out, and eyed Bunter with deadly looks.

Bunter grinned at them coolly. He knew not one of them would dream of going back on Harry's word, and he felt perfectly safe.

"Awfully good of you chaps to agree to let me come," he grinned. "I must say it's sensible of you. I knew you would, though. He, he, he!"

"You fat worm—"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I ought to have stipulated that there'd be no slanging, either," said Bunter. "You're a beast, Cherry. You fellows wait here while I get my bike."

Apparently Bunter felt quite safe in slanging Chery—now he had their promise not to touch him. He grinned in Bob's wrathful face, and rolled away to get his bike.

"The—the crafty toad!" hissed Bob. "Never mind. We'll make him warm presently."

"Yes, rather!"

"Here he comes," said Bob. "Sounds like a blessed milk trolley loaded with empty cans, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha—yes!"

Bunter's old bike scarcely made as

much noise as that, but it made noise enough, certainly. Everything that could work loose on the machine seemed to have worked loose, and the broken mudguards alone made a terrific rattle.

The juniors greeted Bunter's arrival with grins, and Bunter looked at them suspiciously.

"I'm ready now, you fellows," he said, blinking at them keenly. "I say, you know, no larks, mind! You promised I could come."

"We're not going to stop you coming, Billy," said Bob Cherry. "If you happen to drop behind, of course, that's your own look-out."

There was a chuckle, and the party started for the gates, Bunter looking more than suspicious now. It dawned in upon his fat mind that he had only got the promise to let him come, and not to harm him—nothing else. He certainly might have made more stipulations when clinching the bargain.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he began apprehensively, as they passed through the gates. "No larks, you know! I'm not standing—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "We've lost time enough through you, old lard-tub! If you're coming, you'd better stop gassing—you'll need your wind for pushing."

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter.

He was into the saddle before any of the others, and as they started off down the lane he kept a wary eye upon them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

Harry Wharton's last remark was certainly significant—and Bob Cherry's earlier remark had been more so.

To his great relief, however, the smiling juniors made no attempt to leave Bunter behind—yet. They cycled along at quite a steady pace, and Bunter's fears and suspicions began to leave him.

They very soon left Greyfriars behind, and, having crossed the ferry over the Sark, the juniors took the Cliff Road, and began to increase the pace a little.

Until now they had been quite affable to Bunter—the juniors had chatted to him cheerily, and Bob Cherry had even helped the perspiring fat youth up one or two trifling hills.

And then, quite abruptly, when two miles had been covered, a change came over the spirit of Bunter's dream, as it were. Lulled into a sense of security, Bunter had almost forgotten his suspicions, when, on reaching the foot of a fairly steep hill, Bob Cherry turned in his saddle with a chuckle.

"Getting along all serene, Bunter?" he asked cheerily.

"Grough!" gasped Bunter, his fat face crimson with exertion. "You—fellows—slow down a bit. Grough! I say, I'm not pushing up this blessed hill, you know."

"Jump off then, Billy," said Bob kindly. "I say, chaps, Bunter's jumping off here."

"Right-ho!"

Bunter jumped—or, rather, collapsed off his bike. He naturally expected the others to do likewise. But they didn't. They rode on, and Billy Bunter fairly blinked after them. Then he gave a howl.

"Here, I say, you fellows!" he shouted breathlessly. "Whatter you playing at? Stop—jump off, you asses, you're leaving me behind! Can't you see?"

"That's what we intend to do, Billy!" called Bob Cherry over his shoulder. "It's time to say good-bye, old tulip. Thanks for your charming company, but we must push on now. Good-bye!"

"Beasts!" hooted Bunter.

He understood now, and his eyes were glittering with wrath as he started to rush in pursuit, pushing his rattling machine before him.

"Wait for me, you beasts!" he roared. "Oh, crumbs!"

But they did not wait. Instead they pressed harder on the pedals, and shot up the hill, leaving the fuming Bunter far in the rear. To that luckless junior's ears floated back a roar:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" groaned Bunter. "Oh, the awful beasts! They meant to do this all along! Oh dear! I'm not going to be done, though! Beasts!"

With eyes glittering determinedly, Billy Bunter pushed on, and, reaching the top of the hill, he mounted again. By this time the seven juniors had vanished from sight ahead. But Bunter had not lost all hope. Where a feed was concerned Billy Bunter had the steadfast determination of a hungry pike in chase of its prey, and he by no means gave up hope now.

He pushed on, with perspiration streaming down his fat face, and as he pushed he panted out one word again and again, and that word was "Beasts!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mystery!

THERE she is! Jump off, you fellows! We'll leave our jiggers at this fisherman's cabin here."

"Oh, good!"

As he dismounted from his machine, Dick Penfold pointed beyond the low range of cliffs on which they stood to the gleaming sands below.

At that spot the sea ran inland over a broad expanse of mud and sand, and through this ran the creek, its shores clearly marked by rank masses of seaweed and reeds. And securely wedged on its desolate shores was a derelict ship—a black hulk that was the picture of forlorn desolation and loneliness. One mast hung drunkenly over the side, the other was broken off at the cross-trees. Its shattered bulwarks gaped, and but frayed lengths of rotted rigging remained.

"Goodness knows why they called this Crow's Foot Creek; but there it is, and there's the wreck," said Penfold, staring at the solitary hulk. "Jove, no wonder the folks round here say the wreck's haunted. It looks creepy, doesn't it?"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors looked with interest over the sand dunes at the grim sight that seemed to breathe the spirit of death and grim disaster.

Though it was little more than a five-mile run from Greyfriars, the juniors were far from being familiar with the spot. Their seaward rambles usually took them towards Cliff House and Pegg, in the opposite direction, and only Penfold and Newland had explored the creek at all.

"It's creepier still on board the giddy wreck," grinned Monty Newland. "We were jolly glad to get off, I can tell you. It gives one the shivers."

"We'll explore it, anyway," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Let's get rid of the bikes."

The juniors started towards the fisherman's cabin—all, that is, with the exception of Frank Nugent. He still stood staring at the distant wreck, a puzzled frown on his face.

"Come on, Franky!" called Harry Wharton. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing—only I fancied I spotted something move on the wreck," said Frank quietly.

"What rot!" laughed Harry. "It's not getting on your blessed nerves so soon, surely? Come on, you ass!"

Frank smiled, and followed his chums slowly. He had unusually good eyesight, and he was certain he had seen something moving on the distant derelict. It was queer, but—

Deciding not to press the matter, Frank said nothing more, and they were knocking at the door of the cabin a moment later.

An ancient fisherman answered the door, and he willingly gave the juniors permission to leave their machines in the yard at the rear of the cabin.

"We're just going for a ramble over the wreck yonder—to explore it," explained Harry.

The old fisherman looked startled.

"You goin' over that there wreck?" he gasped.

"Yee," said Harry, smiling. "There's something queer about it, isn't there?"

"Queer! Queer ain't the word for it, young gents!" mumbled the man. "Ten years an' more it's bin there, and I ain't bin over it more'n once. It were enough for me."

"What's wrong with it?"

"I ain't over fond o' wrecks," said the fisherman, staring at the distant black hulk on the sands. "And that there wreck ain't an ordinary one. I tell ye there's black work bin done on that ship—evil work. Don't you go near it, young gents. It ain't healthy."

"We're not afraid of spooks," smiled Harry. "But what's wrong with it—what's the yarn?"

"It ain't nothing much—nothing as ye can make much of," said the man slowly. "But it weren't ordinary that wreck weren't. Came in during a storm, and never went out again. And it never will, young gents. She's as fast on them sands as she ever could be."

"Must have been a big storm to bring her in over those sand dunes?"

"It were; but there ain't nothin' queer about that. What was queer I'll tell ye; that ship came in during the night—a rare wild night it was; it came in, an' nobody saw it come in."

The old fisherman paused and frowned reflectively.

"Me and some of the folks round here boarded her next mornin'," he went on.

"We found her deserted—not a single livin' soul aboard. There was a fire still burning in the galley, though; and there were scraps of food and whatnot about—just as if her crew 'ad left her in a hurry. They'd just gone—vanished. Now, why did they do that—why did the captain and crew of that there vessel desert her in a hurry without a word to no one, eh? Tell me that, young gents!"

"Looks queer!"

"It were queer, an' no mistake. There's them round these parts as sez they seed 'em, though—tramping through the dark towards the railway. Foreigners they reckon they were—dark-skinned sailormen with raskils written all over 'em. Mebbe they did see 'em. Likely as not they did."

"Must have been a crew on her, anyhow," said Bob Cherry, glancing at his chums.

The fisherman nodded.

"That's true," he went on. "But that ain't all. We found no cargo aboard neither—nothin' but a few days' supply of water and food. And there weren't no papers nor nothin' in the captain's cabin—nothin' as 'ould tell what 'ad happened. Regular mystery it were."

"Couldn't they find out where she came from—her name and port?" asked Frank Nugent.

"There was a name painted on her bows—the Barcelona, lads," was the brief, significant reply. "But that were all. The name had bin cut out off the boats, and everywhere else, and there wasn't trace to show where she come from. I tell ye, lads, as that craft ain't healthy."

"It's a queer yarn," said Harry. "But—but she isn't supposed to be haunted just because of that?"

The old fisherman gripped Harry's arm fiercely.

"Don't you lads board her, anyway," he said, lowering his voice. "There's them as sez they've seen things. But I myself ain't seen nothing—until this last few days."

"You—you've seen something?"

"I 'ave—queer things. I've seen lights moving on that there wreck at nights—dim lights as if someone was wandering about stealthy like. And I've seen movements aboard in daytime, too. It's only bin this last few days, though. That's the queer part, lads."

"Phew!"

Harry Wharton glanced meaningfully at Frank Nugent. He began to wonder if his chum's eyesight had tricked him, after all.

He gave a short laugh.

"And the old hulk's been stuck there ever since undisturbed, I suppose?" he asked.

"Ay, ay—that it has," was the grim retort. "It weren't nothing but an old tub when she came in; and ye sees what she is now. Nobody ain't likely to touch her. She'll stay there till another big gale comes along and smashes her up, lads."

The juniors' eyes were gleaming with eager excitement now. Despite the old fisherman's dark warnings, they were more eager than ever to explore the ship of mystery now.

They thanked the old man, and smilingly unheeding his frantic advice, they took the parcels of foodstuffs from the bikes, and started out towards the wreck.

"I don't expect there's anything in the yarn," grinned Harry Wharton, as they trod the hard, golden sands. "These old fisherfolk are superstitious, and anything out of the ordinary quite upsets their apple-carts."

"It'll be a bit of a lark to picnic on a blessed haunted derelict, any old how," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"If the spook turns up, we'll ask him to have a jam-tart," chuckled Bob. "The only spook I'm afraid will turn up, though, is Billy Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The thought of the fat junior made the chums laugh, and they looked behind them. They knew the fat youth too well to imagine he would have turned back from the trail. They expected him to turn up at any moment now, and they determined to give him a warm, hungry time when he did turn up.

But there was no sign of Billy Bunter's fat form on the distant cliff road—only the bent form of the old fisherman, who still stood gazing after them.

"He'll turn up, never fear!" laughed Harry. "Come on! Blow Bunter!"

The juniors tramped on over the hard, dry sands towards the wreck. And as they drew nearer they became curiously quiet, and their cheery looks faded. A wreck is always a sad sight, speaking eloquently of wrecked hopes—of unended voyages. The sheer, desolate loneliness of the gaunt, black, lifeless hulk before them sent shivers through the juniors, and they tramped on silently. Somehow the fisherman's story seemed real, and far from fanciful now. The low moaning of the distant surf and the eerie sighing of the wind through the sparse sea-grass conveyed a sense of weird mystery, that added in no little measure to the grimness and loneliness of the black hulk half buried in the embrace of the brown sands of the creek.

"Ugh!" muttered Harry Wharton, speaking at last. "It isn't exactly the cheeriest spot for a picnic, is it, you fellows? Jove, it gives a fellow the shivers!"

"I vote fully suggest," muttered Hurree Singh, with a half-fearful look in his brown eyes, "that we give the esteemed wreck a widful miss, my chums."

In their own hearts the rest of the juniors felt inclined to agree with their more superstitious Indian chum's suggestion. But not for worlds would they have said so.

"We've come to explore the giddy wreck, and we're going to carry the programme through!" said Bob Cherry, with a faint grin. "Cheer up, Inky! No such things as spooks, you know."

"There may be other things on the wreck, though," said Frank Nugent, speaking quietly. "I vote we keep our peepers open, you chaps."

"My hat! Franky's got the wind-up, too!" chuckled the irrepressible Bob.

"I don't quite like the place myself," said Harry, laughing constrainedly. "Anyhow, here we are! We've forgotten about hot water for tea, you chaps."

"Oh crumbs, yes!"

"No good going back, though," said Harry. "We'll call for a drink before starting back. Let's drop the grub here, and explore a bit first."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors halted in the gloomy shadow of the wreck, and lowered the parcels of cakes and tarts to the sands. Harry scanned the forbidding bulk of the wreck.

"We'll climb up that broken mast easily," he suggested. "Jove, isn't it a dismal sight? Come on!"

It was a simple matter to board the low side of the vessel with the aid of the hanging length of broken mast, and soon the juniors had clambered over the bulwarks, and were standing on the deck.

They stood in a silent group, looking about them curiously, their hearts thumping none too steadily. Despite

their screwed-up courage, they shivered unconsciously. The sand and wreck-age-littered deck, with its broken hatchways and smashed tiller, the utter desolation and ruin, coupled with the story they had heard, filled them with a sense of eerie mystery.

"Come on!" whispered Harry.

In silence they followed Harry across the sand-covered deck towards the companionway. But before they reached it Harry stopped short, and pointed to the deck with a startled gasp.

"Look!" he muttered. "No ghost made that!"

It was the imprint of a foot—a big, naked foot in the thin layer of sand on the deck-planking. And it was wet—obviously a recent imprint!

The juniors stared at it in amazement.

"My hat!" breathed Harry Wharton, looking about him a trifle nervously. "This wants some explaining, chaps. Franky thought he spotted a movement here from the roadway; it looks as if he was right. Somebody's been here recently—may be here now."

"Looks like it."

The juniors looked about them as Harry had done. A curious, terrifying feeling that they were being watched by hidden eyes took possession of them, and they almost felt thankful when Harry moved on to the companionway and descended to the cabin below.

The door swung open, and the juniors followed Harry as he cautiously entered the dark, gloomy apartment. Little light came through the broken



"Look out, Harry!" yelled Bob Cherry suddenly. His yell was followed instantly by a sharp whirr of something that flew through the air. Next instant a knife struck the bulkhead above Harry Wharton's head with a dull thud. (See Chapter 3.)

skylight overhead, but the juniors could see all they wanted to see.

The cabin was empty. It was sparsely furnished and was much as it had evidently been when the crew of the mystery ship had left it so hastily and unaccountably—much as it had been, that is, but for one significant change.

Part of the floor-planking had been torn up, and the panels of one wall had been splintered and slashed—damage obviously not done by the hand of time. It had been done recently, and by human hands, for a new, shining axe lay on the floor. Moreover, the remaining deck-planks, deep in dust and sand, bore clear traces of wet footprints—big and recent.

"This is no end queer," whispered Harry Wharton. "Who on earth can be working here, smashing this cabin up—and why?"

"Somebody in bare feet," said Bob soberly. "No giddy ghost, anyway!"

"Perhaps a local fisherman after firewood?" suggested Johnny Bull, trying to smile.

"What rot! Nobody local is likely to come here," said Harry. "And they certainly wouldn't come here for firewood. Rot!"

He crossed the cabin, and leaned forward to examine the broken edge of the panelling. It was newly-slashed, obviously, though the timber was old and rotting. He was just about to step back again when something happened with startling suddenness.

From the skylight above them came a slight sound—a shadow fell across the gloomy cabin. Bob Cherry looked up swiftly and gave a yell.

"Look out, Harry!"

His yell was followed instantly by the sharp whir of something flying through the air, and next instant something struck the bulkhead above Harry's head with a dull thud.

It was a gleaming knife, and it had passed within an inch of Harry's head.

It stuck, quivering in the bulkhead, and the startled juniors eyed each other with ashen faces.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Marline Joe!

BOB CHERRY was the first to recover himself.

"Quick!" he yelled. "I saw the rotter—he's on deck above! After him!"

"My hat!"

Without waiting for his chums, Bob darted out of the cabin and thudded up the companionway stairs. And, after a brief hesitation, his bewildered chums went swarming after him.

They were all looking grim, and their eyes gleamed angrily at the outrage. Harry Wharton had undoubtedly had an extremely narrow escape—or so it seemed. And they were, like Bob, eager to get to grips with the unknown knife-thrower.

They reached the deck almost together, to find Bob Cherry standing near the skylight, staring about him with red, furious face. Nobody else was about; the deck was as silent and deserted as before.

But they knew they were dealing with flesh and blood, and what little fear of the supernatural they had had was gone now.

"I saw him!" snapped Bob. "An ugly-looking seafaring brute he was. I saw him clearly, and I saw him throw the knife. He's vanished, though."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

"That's where he's gone, though," snapped Harry, pointing rather shakily to a double row of wet footprints that led from the skylight across the deck. "He's gone down that hatchway. Come on!"

He was starting towards the after-hatchway, when Dick Penfold, who knew a lot about ships, called out a warning.

"Don't all go! There's usually a way through from the after 'tween decks to the lazarette, and through that to the saloon. He'll give us the slip if someone doesn't guard the companionway."

Harry did not question his chum's knowledge, and a moment later, leaving Bob, Frank, and Inky to guard the companionway, the rest of the juniors followed Dick Penfold as that junior lowered himself down the after-hatch to the 'tween decks.

The door in the after bulkhead was open, and passing through this he led the way, keenly alert for sight or sound of their unknown quarry.

A few packages of ships' stores, rotting and mouldy, were strewn about the dingy place, and, picking a way through these, Dick mounted a short ladder, and they found themselves in a small apartment that obviously was the ship's pantry. And the next moment they were through another door into the cabin they had recently left.

Even as they entered they heard a sudden yell in Bob Cherry's voice, followed instantly by a furious oath and sounds of a fierce struggle.

"They've got him!" hissed Harry. "Quick! We'll teach the dangerous rotter to chuck knives about!"

The juniors went up the companionway with a rush once again, and, as they expected, they found that Bob and the other two had, indeed, "got him."

On the deck, at the top of the stairs, lay a man—a ruffianly, sinister-looking seaman, with a swarthy, evil face, across which ran a livid, ugly scar. He wore rough, seaman's clothes, and had large, gold ear-rings in his ears, and he was bare-footed.

He was struggling furiously with the three juniors, and, far from young as he undoubtedly was, he seemed to have the strength of an ox.

"Quick, you chaps!" panted Bob. "Help! Ow!"

A vicious kick from the rascal's bare foot sent Bob spinning across the deck, but the next moment Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Dick Penfold, and Monty Newland were piling in, and after that the sailorman's strength availed him little.

Squirming frantically, and breathing hoarse and hair-raising threats, the ugly-looking customer was held fast at last, and Harry and Bob ran a length of rope round his legs and wrists.

"Now, my knife-throwing merchant," panted Harry, when this operation was concluded to his satisfaction. "We want an explanation from you."

"You—you young swabs!"

Harry grinned at the look of malignant fury on the seafaring man's rough features.

"No good losing your little temper, my friend," he said calmly. "You'll do as you're told, or we'll put you through it as you jolly well deserve! You tried to kill me—"

"Hang you, let me loose!" hissed the fellow. "I warn you as I ain't the sort o' man as stands no rough stuff from whelps. Cut these 'ere ropes, or by hokey—"

"We'll cut them after you've explained, perhaps," said Harry. "And I might tell you we're not afraid of your

threats. We were doing no harm on this wreck, but you threw a knife at me—jolly near did for me, too. Why? And what game are you up to here?"

"You'll get nothing out of me," he snarled. "Marline Joe ain't the sort as—"

"So that's your name?" interrupted Harry grimly. "Well, that's something to know, and perhaps you'll explain everything to the police if you won't to us."

"The—the p'lice?" echoed the man abruptly. A sudden look of fear entered his fierce eyes, and he changed his defiant tone to a humble whine with remarkable promptness. "You—you won't fetch no p'lice 'ere, guv'nor? I ain't doin' no harm 'ere—jest tramping about when I drops on this 'ere wreck, and, thinks I, it'll be jest the craft to shelter me to-night. That's the truth, young sir."

"You've only been here to-day?"

"That's a fact, guv'nor! I'm a sailor what's roughed it in worse places than this 'ere wreck."

"And you brought that axe with you, I suppose?" said Harry promptly, his lips curling. "You must have worked jolly hard to do all that damage since this morning."

An ugly look came into Marline Joe's dark eyes, but it vanished again abruptly.

"I knows nothin' about no axe, and I ain't done no damage," he stammered after a moment's confusion. "I'm jest an honest sailorman as wants to 'arm nobody. 'Ere, let me go, young gents."

"Harm nobody, eh?" snapped Harry. "You tried to kill me less than five minutes ago. We'll see what the police think of that yarn."

"'Ere, hark to me, young gents," said Marline Joe, with sudden desperate eagerness. "I tell you I swear I never meant to 'arm you. I throwed that there knife, I admits. I only meant to frighten you away. 'Ere, I'll show you if you'll let me loose. Why, I can throw a knife an' cut a orange clean in two what's restin' on a man's head, and not touch a hair. That's a fact. That there knife weren't meant to 'arm a hair of your 'ead, I swears."

Up to then the man had obviously been lying, but he made that last statement concerning the knife with desperate and obviously sincere earnestness. The juniors felt they believed him there, at all events.

"That may be so," said Bob Cherry warmly. "But why did you throw it at all? Why should you want to frighten us away? Tell us that, my pippin!"

"I'll tell you nothing—sink me if I will!" snarled the man, his thick lips setting hard, with sudden rage. "Cut these 'ere ropes an' let me go, or you'll be durned sorry. I tell you I ain't never seen the Heart's Desire afore to-day—ain't never set foot on the bloomin' ship."

"Heart's Desire!" echoed Harry, with a quick start. "This ship has the name 'Barcelona' painted on the bows. You—you mean—"

"That's the name I meant, of course," was the hurried, strained reply. "I—I was thinkin' of a ship I used to be on years ago—jest such another hooker as this she were, too. Of course!"

Harry Wharton met his chums' puzzled looks, and his eyes gleamed. The man's glittering eyes, his hurried correction of his slip—an obvious slip—and his equally obvious fear that they had noticed anything wrong, filled him with strange suspicions. While passing through the lazarette he had noticed—



On the sands before the cliffs the tide was coming in. Between Billy Bunter and the shore was a shining expanse of water. "Oh dear!" muttered Bunter in alarm. He stared at the rapidly rising stretch of water in horror. His only refuge was the derelict ship. "Oh dear!" groaned Billy Bunter again. (See Chapter 6.)

idly enough—that a strange name was carved on the after bulkhead, and that name was the name Marline Joe used—the Heart's Desire.

What did it mean? What was the strange mystery which hung over that eerie wreck—the wreck that bore one name on the bows, and another name elsewhere? And what had Marline Joe, the sinister sailorman with the livid scar across his evil face, to do with the mystery? That the man was lying was obvious now, to Harry Wharton.

"Look here, my man!" said Harry quietly, after a pause. "There's something fishy about this. You know this ship well enough, it strikes me. Let's explore the ship, you chaps, and we'll decide what to do with this merchant afterwards."

"Good egg!"

Marline Joe muttered a husky oath, but they ignored the fuming rascal, and started to search the ship. They hoped to discover some clue to the strange mystery that surrounded it.

But the search came to nothing—as Harry had feared. The cupboards and drawers in the captain's cabin had obviously been ransacked—they were empty, and the rest of the ship, including the deserted fore-castle, produced no evidence whatever.

Disappointed, the dirty and dusty explorers returned to where they had left the bound seaman. They got a shock on reaching the spot.

The man from the sea had gone—vanished. On the sandy deck were the strands of rope—hacked to pieces—and on the deck also was a scrap of dirty paper with a message scrawled upon it—clearly from Marline Joe. It was brief, but ominous and sinister. It read: "Clear out of this if you value your hides—quick!"

"Well, my hat!" breathed Harry, with a harsh laugh. "He's fairly done us one. But—but I think we'd better take his warning to heart, and clear out. I'm about fed-up with this show."

"Same here!"

"The fed-upfulness is terrific, chums," muttered Hurree Singh, licking dry lips. "Let us quickly bunk, Harry."

"Come on!" muttered Harry. "We'll leave that rotten merchant to his game—whatever it is. Blow him! I don't feel like having a feed on this beastly ship now, eh?"

"Rather not!"

"We'll carry the grub back to the cottage, and have tea there," suggested Harry. "Buck up—let's get off!"

All thoughts of ghosts—of the supernatural—had gone now; but the juniors were glad enough to get off the mysterious derelict for all that. Their nerves were thoroughly shaken, and Dick Penfold, who had not even unstrapped his camera yet, had no desire to use it.

They clambered over the low side of the wreck, and a moment later were standing on the sands. Marline Joe had, indeed, vanished, and the sands and mudbanks were deserted.

"Tide's coming in," said Harry, with a shaky laugh. "Perhaps as well we didn't stay too long, I suppose. Hallo! My hat! Where on earth's the grub?"

It was a question none of the seven could answer. The parcels of foodstuffs they had left on the sands, like Marline Joe, had vanished completely. Only a solitary cream-bun lay on the spot to show where the stuff had been.

"Well, this beats the brass band!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Surely that merchant wouldn't have stopped just to pinch that grub?"

"Hardly likely!" grunted Harry. "He'd be far too anxious to get clear away for that. It's queer!"

It was queer—there was no doubt about that.

Harry Wharton ran round the far side of the wreck, and scanned the mudbanks and sand. Nobody was there—nor was there a sign of the parcels there. He returned to his chums, and they eyed each other blankly.

"That's stumped us for tea!" groaned Bob. "What are we to do now, Harry?"

"Go home!" grunted Harry. "No thing else for it, you chaps. No good standing gassing here. I'm thundering hungry, you fellows."

"Same here, blow it!"

All the juniors were hungry, and the

thought of having to ride the five miles home to appease that hunger was not cheering.

So agitated and bewildered were they that it never occurred to them to examine the sands for trails of the unknown raider. Had they done so they would have seen significant tracks—the tracks of cycle tyres, and they would have guessed quickly enough who the unknown raider was.

But they had completely forgotten Billy Bunter by this time, and they started to troop back towards the road in a state of disgust too deep for words.

The fisherman was not at the cottage—they caught a glimpse of his figure some distance along the sands, attending to his lobster-pots.

"No need to fetch the old chap," grunted Harry. "We'll just leave him some cash and get the bikes ourselves."

The juniors did this, and a few seconds later they were in the saddle, riding towards Greyfriars—and tea. They had had an exciting adventure, but that fact failed to appease their healthy appetites, and they felt none too happy. The picnic had certainly not been quite a success.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rode hard, and for the most part in silence. All the juniors' minds were filled with the afternoon's strange adventures, and in addition to being puzzled by the mystery, Harry, at least, was not a little uneasy.

It was fairly clear that Marline Joe, the vagabond sailor, was connected in some mysterious manner with the derelict ship, and that he was up to no good there.

He was, obviously, far from being the harmless sailorman he claimed to be—he was not a peaceful and respectable member of society by any means. And Harry wondered if they were doing right in allowing the matter to rest

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

there. Should they report to the coast-guards, or the police, that such a sinister character was on the wreck?

Harry felt they ought to do so—and yet he hesitated. He had no desire to figure as the discoverer of a mare's nest, and he certainly did not wish to drag himself and his chums—and Greyfriars—into what might prove a criminal affair.

Harry had reached no decision on the problem by the time Greyfriars came in sight. And as they dismounted at the gates, something happened that added still more to the mystery of the derelict.

Hovering round the school gates was a stranger—a youth, older than themselves, who wore the uniform of an apprentice in the Mercantile Marine. He had a handbag in his hand, and a coat over his arm. His face was tanned brown by exposure to sun and sea, and his eyes were keen and bright, his jaw square and hard.

But his face was a pleasing face, and the juniors eyed him rather curiously as they came up.

"Hallo! Who's this merchant?" muttered Frank Nugent.

The youth turned on sighting the juniors, and came striding up to them.

"Excuse me," he said, smiling, "but isn't this Greyfriars School?"

"It is," replied Harry, smiling back.

"Anything I can do for you?"

"I'm after a fellow named Penfold—Richard Penfold," said the stranger breezily. "If you could put me on to him—"

"Here he is," said Harry, indicating Dick Penfold, who had just come up.

"Oh!"

The stranger gave one look at Dick's frank, open face, and then he nodded as if satisfied with his scrutiny. Taking a folded sheet of paper from his pocket wallet, he held it before Penfold's eyes.

It was a page torn from a magazine, and in a flash the juniors recognised it. On it was a reproduced photograph—a snapshot of a stranded derelict, a black hulk fast in the sand and mud of a lonely creek with a background of sea and low cliffs. Underneath were the printed words: "The Winning Snap—sent in by Richard Penfold, Greyfriars School, Kent, to whom has been awarded the first prize of ten pounds."

"My hat!"

The juniors eyed each other queerly. Was this still more mystery?

"You took that snapshot, chum?" exclaimed the stranger eagerly.

"Yes, I took it," said Dick, smiling.

"Why?"

The merchant apprentice folded the paper and replaced it in his pocket.

"I've come a long way—from Bristol—to see you about that," he replied grimly. "I wonder if you would mind telling me where I can find that—that wreck? Is it near here?"

"Certainly," said Dick Penfold promptly, though, like the rest, he was eyeing the stranger curiously. "It's just along the coast—about five or more miles away."

"Right or left?"

"Down this lane we've come by, and turn to the left along the Cliff Road, and on across the ferry."

"Any digs to be got thereabouts—any sort will do?"

"It's a lonely spot—not a house within a mile or two—that is excepting a fisherman's cabin."

"You might get a room there," added Harry Wharton. "But you'd have to

rough it—the old fisherman lives alone, and—"

"I'm used to roughing it—I'll try the place," said the stranger briskly. "Thanks very much. I'm very much obliged to you. Looks like rain, so I'll be off."

He gave the juniors a smiling nod, and strode away quickly. The juniors gazed after him rather blankly. Harry Wharton, at least, would have liked to question the youth; but he had given them no chance to do that—or to mention what they knew about the wreck. His crisp questions and brisk manner had put them off attempting that.

"Well, that's queer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Now what does that chap want with the blessed old wreck?"

"Goodness knows!" muttered Harry Wharton, wrinkling his brows. "It's queer—no doubt about that. If—if he goes there and falls foul of Marline Joe—"

"Great pip!"

"I don't like it," said Harry, staring after the fast disappearing figure of the strange youth. "I—I suppose we ought to warn him. But—"

"Looks well able to take care of himself," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, that's so. But—but— Oh, hang! Let's get in to tea. I don't expect he'd thank us for asking his business, or warning him, either. Come on!"

The juniors were uneasy and doubtful, as was Harry, but they were also very hungry, and they dismissed their fears and qualms, and hurried their bikes to the cycle-shed.

"You fellows will tea with us, of course?" said Dick Penfold, grinning. "I've still some of the quid left, and if you'll trot along and help Monty get things ready, I'll get more stuff from the tuck-shop."

"Oh, good man!"

Dick Penfold hurried across to the tuckshop, under the old elms, and the rest trooped indoors, made just a little cheerier at thoughts of a "feed," after all. And ten minutes later a cheery fire was burning in Study No. 9, and the seven juniors sat down to quite a decent spread.

It proved to be anything but a jolly meal, however. The chief topic of conversation were the events of the afternoon, and all the juniors were more or less worried and uncomfortable. They felt, like Harry Wharton did now, that they had blundered—that they should have gone after the stranger, and warned him against the sinister guardian of the derelict ship.

But they felt it was too late now—all, that is, with the exception of Harry Wharton. When the meal ended, at last, he got up to his feet with a determined expression on his face.

"It's no good, you fellows!" he said quietly. "We ought to have warned that chap—we were idiots not to do so. He'll be there now, and goodness knows what's happening to him. He's a hefty chap, but—but he'll stand no chance against a ruffian like Marline Joe."

"Not an earthly!"

"If the brute was ready to tackle seven of us, he'll not hesitate to tackle that chap," said Harry grimly. "It's not good enough. Look here! I'm going to cycle over to Crow's Foot

Creek again—I'm going to make sure things are all right there."

"But, my dear man—"

"I'm going," said Harry, in a tone of finality. "We didn't do the decent, square thing in neglecting to warn that stranger. You fellows needn't come unless you want to."

"I'm going, if you are, Harry," said Frank.

"Same here!"

It was a chorus—not one of Harry's chums intended to let him go alone. They felt equally responsible, and now they saw Harry's mind was made up they were all ready and willing to accompany him.

"We'll all go, then," Harry went on. "With luck, we should be back before lock-up; but we'll have to risk that. It looks like turning out a wet night, so we'd better take coats or macs. Never mind the tea-things; let's get off!"

There was a scraping of chairs as the juniors jumped up from the table without further ado. They all felt instinctively that they had scarcely played the game in not warning the stranger of danger, and they were eager enough now to make up for it.

But before any further move could be made the study door opened and Peter Todd looked in.

"You fellows got back, then?" he said, glancing round the study. "I say, where's that fat study-mate of mine?"

"Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with a start. "Blest if I know where the fat chump is! Hasn't he come back yet?"

"Loder's after him!" grinned Toddy. "The fat ass isn't about the school anywhere. I thought he went out with you chaps, though?"

"So he did; but we gave him the slip!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "We haven't the faintest idea where he is now, Toddy."

"Blow the fat nuisance!" snorted Peter Todd.

With that, Bunter's study-mate departed, growling.

"Bunter!" breathed Harry Wharton, a startled look on his face. "Well, I'm hanged! It was Bunter—must have been Bunter."

"What the thump—"

"Can't you see?" said Harry excitedly. "It was Bunter who pinched our grub off the sands. I'd forgotten all about that fat ass! He could easily have approached the wreck while we were below. He pinched the grub and bolted."

"Phew!"

"That's it! Oh, my hat!"

"What asses we were not to think of that," said Harry. "We knew he'd follow, and we might have expected it. But—but it's rummy he hasn't returned yet."

"We'll flay him alive when he does return!" vowed Bob Cherry darkly.

"The—the fat toad!"

"I'm not thinking of that, Bob," said Harry in an alarmed tone. "If he'd pinched the grub, and scoffed it there, he should have been back before us. I don't like the look of it."

"You—you think—"

"I'm wondering if he's fallen foul of Marline Joe," muttered Harry. "You know what an idiot the fat chump is!"

"My hat! That's more than likely, Harry!"

"Come on—let's be off, quickly!" snapped Harry. "That fairly settles the matter. We must find that fat ass! Goodness knows what trouble he's in! Don't forget lamps, as it's bound to be dark before we get back."

"Yes, rather!"

ANSWERS
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There was a rush for caps and coats, and within five minutes bicycles were once more being wheeled from the cycle-shed. And within another five minutes the excited juniors were once more on the open road, racing hard for Crow's Foot Creek—and further adventures.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Adventures!

"BEASTS!"

Billy Bunter was, of course, referring to Harry Wharton & Co.

As the Famous Five had anticipated—but afterwards forgotten—Billy Bunter had not given up hopes of taking part in the picnic by any means.

Though the seven juniors had long ago gone out of sight on the winding cliff road ahead, Bunter still pedalled away in chase with the perspiration streaming down his fat face, and as he pedalled he consoled himself by murmuring the one word, "Beasts!"

But the journey's end was reached at last, and at sight of the wreck in the creek Bunter jumped from his machine with a grunt of satisfaction.

He grunted again with satisfaction on sighting the seven bicycles stacked in the yard at the rear of the fisherman's cabin, and started off down the steep path to the beach, pushing his old machine before him.

He could see it was some distance to the derelict, and Billy Bunter was never the fellow to walk when he could ride.

Once on the hard sands, Billy Bunter mounted his "iron steed," and went rattling and bounding away towards the wreck, zig-zagging in and out of the hummocks and pools.

He dismounted within fifty yards of the wreck, and then he approached it cautiously. Not a sound came from the old hulk, or a sign of movement either, and the utter solitude of the scene made Billy Bunter shiver, though he had, as yet, heard nothing of the wreck's evil reputation.

"Beastly show!" grunted Bunter, slackening his footsteps unconsciously. "Ugh! It fairly gives a chap the creeps! Rum, too, where those beasts are! I wonder—Oh, good!"

Billy Bunter's eyes had fallen on the packages of foodstuffs lying on the sand.

He ceased to wonder then. He chuckled. It was clear that Wharton and the rest were aboard the wreck, and it was also clear they were below somewhere, and had not seen his approach.

"My hat!" chortled the fat youth. "What stunning luck!"

He hesitated, and blinked rapidly about him.

To linger would be fatal, he knew, and after a brief blink round he quickly made up his mind what to do. Less than fifty yards away the coastline curved outwards into a rocky promontory in the low line of cliffs, and Bunter's eyes glimpsed a black hole, low down, evidently a hollow or cave in the cliff.

"Oh, good!" breathed Bunter. "Just the blessed place!"

Bunter acted like lightning. He realised he could never carry the foodstuffs and wheel his bike at the same time, so he rushed the bike round the hulk to the far side. Here, amid the thick reeds and sea-grass of the creek, and close beneath the sloping hull, he dropped the machine flat. And then, after making sure it was well hidden, either from above or a few yards away, he hurried back and gathered up the parcels.

A moment later he was trotting across the sands towards the black hole in the cliffs. It proved to be a cave, right enough—a low, sandy cave, dry and cosy.

At the entrance Billy Bunter glanced back to make sure he had not been spotted, and then he dived into the cave with his ill-gotten plunder.

"He, he, he!" he chortled. "I've done 'em one—the beasts! Do me out of the feed, would they? This is a bit of luck, and no mistake!"

There was a pile of dry seaweed spread out on the floor, and Billy Bunter dropped down on to this, and started work on the contents of the parcels. His eyes glistened at sight of the tarts and cakes and cream-buns and chocolate they contained. The juniors had intended them to feed seven, but Billy Bunter intended them to feed one—himself.

Had Bunter only troubled to look about him he would have soon noticed several curious things about the cave. There were the deep imprints of naked feet in the dry sand, and the bed of seaweed looked suspiciously as though it had been arranged as a bed, and that it had been lain on by a heavy body quite recently. Moreover, there was a heavy, dirty, pilot jacket lying in a dusky corner, and a big bundle, tied round with a huge, red-spotted handkerchief.

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But Bunter failed to notice these significant signs.

With his fat back against the rocky wall of the cave he lay back, comfortably on the seaweed, and his jaws worked like clockwork.

"This is prime!" he murmured after a while. "These doughnuts are topping, and these tarts—Good old Mrs. Mumble! He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter was undoubtedly enjoying the "picnic" if Harry Wharton & Co. were not.

But even Bunter's appetite began to slacken at length, and, with a sigh, the fat junior crammed the last few delicacies into his pockets and gave his hard-worked jaws a rest.

"I'll keep them for going home. Expect I'll be peckish again by then," he murmured. "Wonder if those beasts have gone yet?"

Billy Bunter wondered, but his curiosity on that point was not sufficient to make him get up to see if he could discover that. From where he sat he could not see the wreck, and after his heavy meal he felt drowsy and disinclined to move.

With a fat smile of contentment on his greasy, jammy features, he blinked out over the sands and sea, chuckling now and again at thought of his score over Harry Wharton & Co.

But this state of happy contentment did not last long. Billy Bunter was roused quite suddenly from his day-dreams by a sound on the sands outside.

Billy Bunter got up quickly enough then. He made a jump for the mouth of the cave and cautiously peered out.

Then he gasped—a gasp of utter consternation and fear.

Twenty yards away, approaching the cave from the direction of the hulk, was a man—a sailorman in bare feet and dingy clothes, with an ugly scar across his evil, swarthy face, and earrings in his ears.

It was Marline Joe—though Bunter was not aware of that, having never heard the name or seen the man before.

But Bunter had heard of, and seen pictures of pirates, and for one terrified moment he believed he was looking at one now.

"Oh dear!" groaned the fat junior, his knees knocking together with sheer fright. "Oh, mum-my hat!"

Luckily the man had not seen him; he was tramping along with his head down and an ugly scowl distorting his features. And after that first terrifying moment Billy Bunter gave him no chance to do so.

With a gasp, he dived back into the cave, knowing his chance of escaping from the cave was hopeless. Luckily, he had the good sense to snatch up the paper bags littering the bed of seaweed, and, with a jump, Bunter reached the dusky recesses at the back of the cave and dropped behind a pile of rocks, his heart palpitating, his nerves twittering.

He was just in time, for next moment a shadow darkened the entrance, and Marline Joe entered. He was muttering savagely to himself, and his dark eyes were glittering with rage.

For the moment Bunter dared not look out. He heard the man moving about, and then, at the sound of a cork being withdrawn from a bottle, he looked fearfully out and saw the sailor seated on the seaweed.

As Bunter looked he saw the man lower the bottle he had been drinking from, and place it on the sand. Then, from a piece of paper, he took a portion of bread and a chunk of cheese, and with the aid of a clasp-knife started to eat noisily and hungrily.

Scarcely daring to breathe, Billy Bunter watched in shivering fascination. The man finished at last, and then, to the junior's utter dismay, he dragged a pile of the seaweed nearer the mouth of the cave, and dropped down upon it, with his fierce eyes fixed on the wreck across the sands.

"Oh dear!" groaned Billy Bunter to himself. "It'll—it'll be dark soon! What an I to do!"

The man took a short black clay pipe from his pocket, and, ramming a pipeful of tobacco home, he lit up and started to smoke.

For how long Bunter watched he had no idea—it seemed like hours before the sailor moved. And then he moved with startling abruptness.

He jumped to his feet with an oath, and, standing outlined against the mouth of the cave, he stared hard towards the wreck.

Only for an instant, though, and the next he was thudding hard across the darkening sands.

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Bunter.

Hardly able to move his cramped limbs, the fat junior staggered across to the cave entrance, and blinked out. He was just in time to see Marline Joe reach the derelict, and clamber aboard with the agility of a cat.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

From the bottom of his heart the fat youth wished now that he had never attempted to join that luckless picnic-party. True, he felt he could escape easily enough now. A wild dash would take him round the promontory to the sloping beach—climbing the cliffs was out of the question to Bunter.

But there was his bike, hidden amid the rushes of the creek, under the shadow of that horrible wreck! Billy Bunter's bike was a terrible old creak; but it was the only one he possessed, and it was precious enough to the fat youth.

A sudden discovery settled the matter for Bunter. Happening to glance seawards, he became aware that the line of gently-splashing surf was surprisingly close. The tide was coming in. It would soon be knocking lightly at the wreck—and over his precious bike.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Bunter.

He glanced across at the wreck again. A light, dim and flickering, had appeared suddenly at a porthole in the dark hull of the craft.

Now was his chance—or never! The sailor was obviously somewhere below. In a flash Billy Bunter decided to risk it.

Taking a deep breath, the fat junior darted across the sands towards the derelict. He was dimly aware that the skies were darkening and that a thin, rainy mist was falling.

But he scarcely noticed this, and the next moment he was round the black hull, searching for his bike, his heart thumping against his ribs like a hammer.

He soon found it, and, dragging it up, he ran round the wreck again. It was only when he reached the landward side, and was about to climb into the saddle, that he made the second discovery—a terrifying discovery to Billy Bunter.

On the sands before the cliffs, and on the sand dunes where the derelict lay, the tide was "coming in" right enough. But on the lower ground, where the beach dipped before sloping upwards to the roadway, the tide had already come in!

The whole stretch for fifty yards was a sheet of swirling water, fed by the run of water down the muddy bed of the creek.

His escape was cut off—hopelessly cut off.

Billy Bunter stared at it, one foot on the pedal and his mouth gaping with sudden horror.

He stared at it helplessly, and then he glanced frantically back towards the cliffs. But a glance showed him that that would soon be covered also, as would the sands whereon he stood.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter once again.

His only refuge was the derelict—he realised that in a flash. It was a case of any port in a storm, with a vengeance.

Curiously enough even in that moment of shock, Billy Bunter became suddenly surprisingly cool. A glance showed him that the dim light shone faintly from somewhere along the black hull, and he wasted no further time.

It was a simple matter—even to Bunter—to gain the deck above; but there was the bike. Even in what he believed to be a desperate position, Billy thought of his precious bike.

He soon solved the problem, however. A length of rope hung down over the side, and Bunter grasped it, and tied the end to the top bar of the machine.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 372.

Then he scrambled softly up to the deck and started to haul it up.

It was not an easy task. The rope was rotten, and he expected it to break every second. The bike was also no light weight, but sheer desperation lent the fat youth strength.

He hauled away, trembling lest the scraping and rattling should reach the ears of the unknown sailor below. He was not interrupted, however, and at last his hand closed on the machine, and after a strenuous struggle he hauled it over the low, broken bulwarks on to the deck.

But Bunter didn't stop then. The bike had yet to be hidden—and himself! A yawning gap—the broken doorway of a deckhouse—met his glance round, and he ran his bike across the sloping deck to it.

He shoved it inside, and the gloomy interior swallowed it up. Then he followed the bike and crouched down in the gloom, trembling with excitement and fear.

For the time being he was safe—he devoutly hoped he was safe until the tide receded and a chance to escape presented itself. How he wished he was safe back at Greyfriars! Would Harry Wharton & Co. guess where he was when it was discovered he was missing? He wondered.

Then, as the minutes passed, he began to be curious as his glance outside fell on the skylight of a cabin some yards across the deck. Above the broken, unglazed skylight showed a faint glimmer of light from below.

Who was the strange, sinister-looking sailor. And what was he up to on that lonely, deserted wreck?

Curiosity was one of Bunter's besetting sins, and his failing got the better of his fear now.

He watched the flickering glow for some minutes, and then he emerged cautiously from his hiding-place and crept across to the skylight. He leaned over and peered cautiously down.

What he saw almost made him jump. The cabin beneath was lit by a flickering storm-lantern which shed a gloomy light on the wrecked cabin.

Seated on the dirt-grimed table directly below him was the scared sailor. Below him, stretched on the cabin floor, bound hand and foot, was a youth—a seafaring youth in the uniform of a mercantile apprentice.

He was bleeding from a wound on the temple, and his handsome, sunburnt face was white and drawn.

Marline Joe was gazing down at him with glinting eyes, and even as Bunter took in the scene with affrighted eyes, he heard the rascal's husky voice, in a threatening mutter.

"So yer name's Babcock, eh? Babcock o' Bristol!" He was, muttering almost in a frightened tone. "An' yer thinks this here vessel is the old Heart's Desire, the vessel that was owned and skippered by old Nat Babcock, o' Bristol?"

"I know it is," was the curt, defiant reply. "That paint on the bows doesn't deceive me. Who are you? You know more of this ship than you'll admit, you scoundrel!"

There was a silence in the cabin; Marline Joe's features were twisted evilly.

"If you're Captain Nat's grandson," he snarled, "you're here after something, sink me! What—"

Billy Bunter heard no more. He had been leaning perilously over the skylight, and at that moment his foot slipped on the wet deck-planking and

he fell with a crash, face-forwards, across it.

He gave vent to an involuntary gasp of fright, and at the same moment there came a splintering crash of rotten timber as the mouldering framework of the skylight gave way.

One wild yell Bunter gave as he felt himself falling, and then he was through, falling on the top of the brawny, hulking form of Marline Joe, and the two went to the cabin floor with a terrific crash and clatter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Discovery!

"YARROUGH!"

Billy Bunter's wild howl of sheer fright would have aroused the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

It was a howl of pain, also, for as he fell Bunter crashed against the table edge with terrific force before striking the sailor and rolling to the cabin floor with him.

Half stunned, the luckless fat junior lay where he had rolled, shaking with fear. He did not lie unmolested for long, however. After that first shock of surprise and bewilderment Marline seemed to grasp what had happened, and he leaped to his feet with a low-muttered oath.

The next instant Billy Bunter yelled again as the man's savage hand closed upon him, and he was wrenched to his feet.

In the flickering lamplight Bunter blinked up at the ruffian, white-faced and trembling.

From the floor the helpless ship's apprentice also blinked up, astounded and bewildered at this unexpected development.

Marline Joe eyed the fat youth with glinting eyes for fully a minute, and then he shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"Sink me!" he growled savagely. "Another o' them blamed young brats, eh? Well, what you doin' 'ere, you little rat—quick?"

Bunter did not answer—he couldn't. The look of deadly menace in the ruffian's fierce eyes almost made him collapse with utter fright.

"Got left behind be them young rats as came nosin' round 'ere this arternoon, eh?" snarled the ruffian. "Well, that's ye misfortune, young 'un. Now you've come you'll stay—see?"

He flung the junior brutally to the floor, and, snatching a length of rope from the cabin floor, ran it deftly round the junior's legs and arms. In less than a minute Bunter was like a trussed chicken. This done, the man rolled the fat youth under the table, giving his fat form a parting kick as he did so.

The hapless fat youth rolled over on his side under the table, and lay there groaning. Marline Joe turned and regarded the other prisoner.

"Now, Mister Babcock, me an' you kin talk agen," he grunted. "You axed me who I was and what I was doin' here, jest as I axed you. Well, I bin thinkin' it over, and I'm goin' to tell you."

He paused, and placed his clay pipe in his mouth, and, having lit up, he started to smoke, eyeing the youth named Babcock musingly.

"Ye says as this 'ere vessel ain't the Barcelona—well, it ain't! It's what you called it—the Heart's Desire, outer Bristol. An' it was skippered, as you

(Continued on page 16.)



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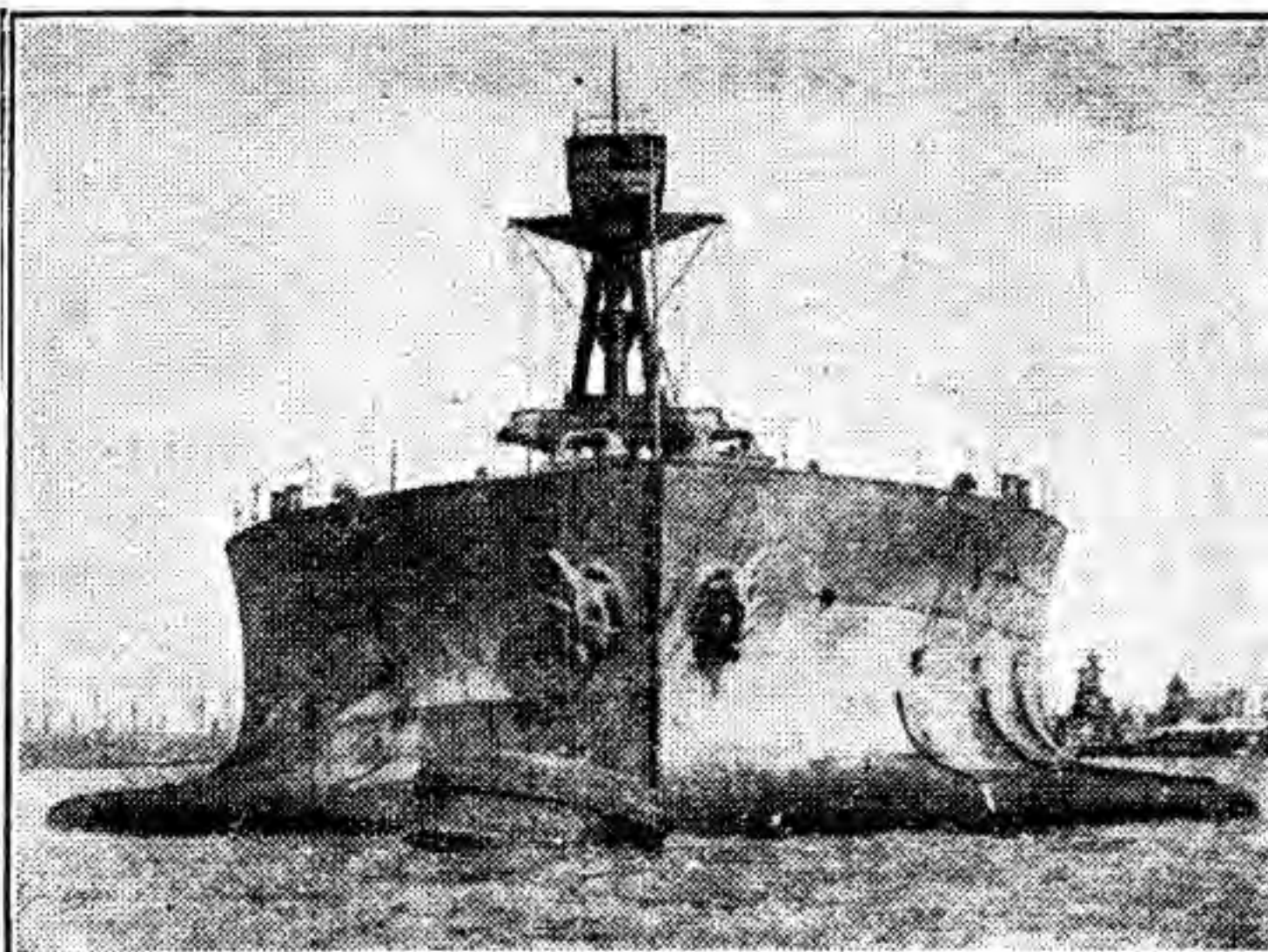
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Supplement No. 196.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending October 25th, 1924.



Knights of the Whistle!

A Number of
Amusing Anecdotes
Dealing with the Ex-
periences of Referees.

GEORGE WINGATE:

I wouldn't mind receiving a sovereign for every match in which I have acted as referee. I should net a fortune! I am always pleased to perform this onerous duty for juniors and fags, and, as a rule, they appreciate it, though they sometimes quarrel with my decisions. My worst experience was when I refereed a junior cup tie a couple of seasons ago. One of the conditions of the contest was that the matches were to be played to a finish, without regard to the weather. Play began in a drenching down-pour of rain, and I was soon soaked to the skin. By half-time the ground was practically under water, and the conditions were more suitable for a swimming gala than for a football match. One of the players facetiously remarked: "Call out the life-boat!" Another implored the spectators to lend him a pair of water-wings, so that he could swim better! The players were in a terrible state. They were plastered with mud from head to foot. After slipping down several times on the greasy surface, I was in a similar plight. My features were scarcely recognisable. But, like the gladiators of old, I endured to the bitter end, and great was my joy and relief when I disported myself in a hot bath after the match.

HORACE COKER:

I'm not going to referee any more matches. I've had enough! Whilst passing through a village on my motor-bike last Saturday, I was approached by the local footer team and asked to referee the match that was about to start. Being an obliging sort of fellow, I consented. Before the game had been in progress many minutes I found it necessary to speak sharply to the home team's right-back. He fouled an opponent very badly. When I reproved him he shook his fist at me, and threatened me with personal violence if I dared to interfere again. He kept on fouling, and at last I got fed-up, and ordered him off the field. He lowered his head and rushed at me like a mad bull. That was the signal for a general assault on the referee. The spectators swarmed on to the pitch, and I had the most painful five minutes I've ever experienced. I was punched and pommelled, and thumped and clumped, and sent sprawling in the mud. Thinking my life was in danger, I flew into a panic, and fled at top speed, with a crowd of hooting hooligans at my heels. I never stopped running till I reached my motor-bike. Then I leapt on to the saddle and went away like the wind. I had left my school cap and my collar and tie in the hands of the enemy. Needless to say, I didn't go back for them! You won't catch me refereeing any village matches again—not if I know it!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 372.

BILLY BUNTER:

It's all rot to say that referees have a bad time of it. I once refereed a match between Friardale and a villidge about fifteen miles from Greyfriars. Being a sensible fellow, I was careful to make all my decisions in favour of Friardale. I awarded them heaps of penalty-kicks, and when one of their men happened to fowl an opponent I pretended not to see it. The result was that Friardale won in a canter by ten goals to nothing. They were delighted, and their skipper told me I was the fairest referee he had ever seen. After the match he escorted me to the bunshop in Friardale and stood me a stunning feed. I felt so full that I could hardly roll back to Greyfriars. People say that referees have a ruff time, but my eggspereience goes to show that it's the other way about.

DICK PENFOLD:

I'd never be a referee—not if they paid a princely fee; for, candidly, it is "no catch" to supervise a footer match. The crowd begins to hiss and hoot; the referee begins to scoot! If he's a sprinter he's all right; he'll swiftly vanish out of sight. But if he cannot make a spurt, he's pretty certain to be hurt. The crowd, resolved to have his blood, will roll him in a sea of mud. They'll punch his nose and black his eyes; a painful plight, you'll realise! They'll lead him such a dreadful dance, he'll have to call the ambulance! Then in a nursing-home he'll dwell, until they've made him fit and well. Pity the poor old referee! I'm sure it's not the life for me!

DICKY NUGENT:

If ever I refereed a footer match I'd dress myself in a suit of mail, and thus be safe from the attack of the angry specked taters. If they tried to punch my nose they'd damage their fists on the tip of my visor! I think that reffs have a very ruff time, and I sympathize with them from the bottom of my heart. I wrote a ripping story for this issue of the "Herald" about a reff who had all his teeth knocked out, and was so badly bashed and battered that he had to be put in plaster of paris for a year. But Wharton said the story was so bloodcurdling that he couldn't think of publishing it. You've mist a real treat, dear readers!

HURREE SINGH:

I have never acted as a referee in the esteemed and ludicrous sport of football. It is not that I value my skinfulness, but I have never been requestfully asked to referee. If ever I am, I shall not shrink-folly hesitate to carry out my duties with thoroughness. I shall say to one player: "You were offsidefully offside; I shall not

allow the goalfulness." And to another I shall say: "The foulfulness is terrific! You are warnfully ordered off the field!" I am well aware that the referee's task is a thankless one, and that he gets more kickfulness than peacefulness, as your English saying has it. But I should never shirkfully shun my responsibilities. If anybody requirefully needs a referee, I am at their esteemed service. I have been practising whistle-blowing, and I find it a splendid exercise for the lungfulness.

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Wot I says is this 'ere—you won't catch me refereein' no football matches! I wants to live to a ripe old age—not perish in me prime. I once 'ad a brother wot became a peressional referee. They buried 'im in Courtfield Cemetery. If the young rips of Greyfriars was to ask me to referee for 'em, I should shake me 'ead an' say "No!"—final an' emphatic. You won't catch William Gosling on any of them perilous stunts!

BOB CHERRY:

Being the champion sprinter of the Remove, I am inclined to think I should make a jolly good referee! At the first sign of hostility on the part of the crowd, I should streak off the field like a champion on the cinder-path! They wouldn't catch me; but neither will they ever catch me refereeing!

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON.

WHEN we published our Special "Future" Number a few weeks ago, and the Greyfriars fellows told us what they wanted to be, and why, I noticed that nobody expressed the desire to become a football referee!

There are several occupations which are too perilous to be comfortable. Every time the coal-miner goes down into the depths he practically takes his life in his hands. Every time the steeplejack scales dizzy heights his life hangs by a thread. And those who choose to become explorers often have grim adventures in the wild places of the earth—adventures which frequently end the earthly career of the adventurer.

But the average fellow would rather be a coal-miner, a steeplejack, or an explorer in preference to becoming a football referee. That unfortunate individual gets more kicks than pence. He is often at the mercy of the mob. However faithfully and impartially he may carry out his duties, he cannot please the partisans of both sides, and he is often obliged to flee for his life.

Perhaps this is a rather exaggerated picture. But, at all events, the referee's lot, like that of the policeman, is not a happy one. Referees at public schools are fairly safe from molestation. When Wingate of the Sixth is taking charge of a junior match the crowd wouldn't dream of swarming on to the pitch and mobbing him. At the same time, even Wingate, popular though he is, has to withstand a good deal of chaff and criticism from the crowd. His decisions do not always meet with their approval.

In village football the referee often gets something more than chaff and criticism. He is offered personal violence. Assisted by my chums, I once went to the rescue of a referee at Friardale. He was being chased by an infuriated mob of villagers, having awarded a penalty-kick to Friardale's opponents! We managed to hustle him into a taxi, and he escaped in the nick of time.

HARRY WHARTON.

Supplement 4.



No Luck for Loder!

— By A Vernon-Smith. —

"L ODER'S going to referee," said Harry Wharton. And there was a general chorus of groans.

Nobody had asked Loder of the Sixth to referee the match between the Remove and the Upper Fourth. And nobody wanted Loder to referee. But Loder, with a malevolent grin on his face, insisted upon refereeing.

"Line up, you kids!" he said.

There were glum looks on the faces of the Remove footballers as they took up their positions. They felt that they not only had the Upper Fourth to beat, but an unscrupulous referee into the bargain.

Loder had a spite against the Remove, and his decisions were bound to be unfavourable to them.

The whistle was blown, and Harry Wharton kicked off.

The Upper Fourth were the first to break away. Temple & Co. were very keen on beating the Remove, and they went "all out" for an early goal.

Temple himself ran the ball through, and then passed it to Dabney, who was standing yards offside.

Dabney fired in a terrific shot, which the Remove goalie made no attempt to save. He saw that Dabney was offside, and was waiting for the referee to pull him up.

But Loder did nothing of the sort. Instead, he awarded a goal to the Upper Fourth.

There was a storm of protest from the Remove players.

"Play the game, Loder!"

"Dabney was offside!"

Loder scowled.

"I'm not going to have any arguments on the field," he said sharply. "That goal will stand."

For the next twenty minutes or so play was of a give-and-take character. Neither set of forwards could break through the opposing defence.

But at last the Remove front line broke away. Passing and repassing with clockwork precision, they worked their way towards the Upper Fourth goal.

Wharton was on the point of shooting, with the goal at his mercy, when the referee's whistle rang out shrilly.

Wharton paused, and turned round with a bewildered look on his face.

"What was that for?" he asked.

"Offside!" said Loder tersely.

"But I wasn't!"

"Don't answer me back, or I'll send you off the field for impertinence!" said Loder.

And he awarded a free-kick to the Upper Fourth.

There was great indignation in the ranks of the Remove. But for Loder's unwarrantable action, Harry Wharton would certainly have scored an equalising goal.

It was quite obvious that Loder was determined to keep the Remove from winning. A few minutes before half-time Harry Wharton again broke through. He fired in a fast shot, which the Upper Fourth custodian only partially saved.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

Loder came running up, after the ball had been gathered out of the net and punted down the field.

"No goal," he said breathlessly.

"N-n-no goal!" stuttered Wharton blankly. "How do you make that out, Loder?"

"The ball hadn't crossed the line."

"What! It went right into the net!"

"No goal," repeated Loder firmly. "And if you say another word, Wharton—"

The captain of the Remove could contain himself no longer.

Supplement ii.]

"You're acting like a rotten cad!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing. "You're bent on stopping the Remove from winning."

"That's enough!" said Loder sharply. "Leave the field!"

Wharton looked for a moment as if he would defy the order. But he realised that the referee held the whip hand.

There were murmurs of sympathy from Temple & Co., as well as from the Remove players, as Wharton turned and walked off the field of play.

"Well, if that's not the absolute giddy limit!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Shush!" muttered Frank Nugent. "If Loder hears you, you'll get marching orders as well. We're a man short as it is, and if another gets sent packing it will be a tragedy."

"It's a big enough tragedy already," growled Johnny Bull. "What are you grinning at, Toddy? Dashed if I can see anything to grin about!"

Peter Todd, the Remove centre-half, was grinning broadly.

"I've thought of a wheeze," he explained—"a wheeze for getting rid of Loder."

"My hat!"

Peter hastily expounded his wheeze, and then his schoolfellows grinned, too.

Shortly afterwards the whistle sounded for half-time.

Loder stalked away to the dressing-room, with the intention of enjoying a quiet smoke before the game was resumed.

As soon as Loder had settled himself in the dressing-room, Peter deftly turned the key in the lock, and Loder—though he did not suspect it as yet—was a prisoner!

Peter Todd slipped the key into the pocket of his football shorts, and rejoined the players.

"Surely he can break the window, and get out that way?" said Dabney, when he had been let into the secret.

"No jolly fear!" said Bob Cherry. "The panes are too small. If Loder tries it on, he'll find himself in the same fix as King Charlie when he tried to escape from Carisbrooke Castle. Hallo! Here comes old Prout. Let's ask him to referee the second half. We'll explain that Loder's been called away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was not an ideal football referee. But he always endeavoured to be just. When approached by the players, he willingly agreed to take charge of the game.

Harry Wharton, of course, returned to the field, and the Remove were at full strength. They were a goal in arrears, but they manfully set to work to make good the deficit.

After ten minutes' play, Frank Nugent crowned a fine individual run with a brilliant goal, thus levelling the scores.

Before the ball was kicked off again, Mr. Prout stopped short. He held up a plump forefinger.

"Listen!" he said. "Do you hear anything, my boys?"

The players shook their heads.

"I fancied I heard someone shouting for help," said Mr. Prout. "The sounds appeared to come from the dressing-room."

"I expect it was only some kids skylarking, sir," said Temple easily. "On the ball!"

Play was resumed at a fast pace. The Remove were concentrating all their energies on getting the winning goal. So were the Upper Fourth.

The game was hotly contested, and each goal was bombarded in turn. It was not until a few minutes from the end that the deciding goal came.

Bob Cherry put Hurree Singh in possession, and the dusky nabob raced along the

touchline. He pulled up within a foot of the corner-flag, and sent across a perfect centre. Harry Wharton met it accurately with his head, and the ball flashed into the net at lightning speed.

"Goal!"

The Remove players danced around in high glee. They were on top now, and on top they remained until the final whistle rang out.

"Hurrah!" chortled Bob Cherry. "We pulled the game out of the fire, after all! Thanks very much for refereeing, sir!"

Mr. Prout did not seem to hear Bob's remark. He was glancing curiously towards the dressing-room.

"I feel convinced there is someone shut in the dressing-room," he said. "Hark at those sounds! They seem to suggest that someone is hurling himself bodily at the door. It is locked on the outside, apparently. Who has the key?"

"I have, sir," said Peter Todd, rather reluctantly.

"Kindly hand it to me, Todd, and I will go and investigate."

"Oh crumbs!"

Peter handed over the key, and Mr. Prout strode away to the dressing-room.

There was great commotion within. The prisoner was making repeated charges at the door, which shook beneath the impact.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout.

He unlocked the door and threw it open. No sooner had he done so than a clenched fist shot out and took him fairly under the chin. With a bellow of anguish, the master of the Fifth staggered back. Harry Wharton & Co., following up behind, were just in time to save him from falling.

"I have been assaulted!" declared Mr. Prout, clasping his chin. "Brutally assaulted by some hooligan! Why, it is Loder!"

The prefect stood in the doorway of the dressing-room, terrified at what he had done. On hearing the key grate in the lock, he had supposed that his captors were coming to liberate him, and in his hot anger he had struck that savage blow.

"I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!" he stammered. "I'd no idea it was you. Those—those young villains locked me in here, and when I heard the door being unlocked I thought it was them."

Mr. Prout glared.

"You had no right to act like a hooligan, Loder," he said angrily. "Do you assert that you were locked in the dressing-room?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"I locked Loder in, sir," said Peter Todd. "He refereed the first half of our match, and his decisions were all in favour of the Upper Fourth. He's got a spite against the Remove, and he was determined to prevent us from winning. He isn't a fair and impartial referee—like yourself, sir."

That touch of flattery had the desired effect. Mr. Prout's sympathies were with the footballers. It was hardly to be expected that they would be with Loder, after that terrific upper-cut which the prefect had dealt!

"I am satisfied, Loder, that you have behaved in a very unsportsmanlike manner," said Mr. Prout. "I do not approve of Todd's action, but you gave him every provocation, and you have only yourself to blame for any inconvenience you have suffered."

Loder could not trust himself to speak. He strode away without a word. And a chuckle followed his retreating figure—a chuckle from the triumphant Remove footballers!

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.



(Continued from page 12.)

says, by old Nat Babcock, your grandfather, I reckon. And, as you says, I knows quite a lot about it. You was right there—I do."

He paused, and then went on again in a low, confidential voice:

"There's them, mister, round these parts as think this here vessel a mystery vessel—which it is, no mistake about that. They thinks it was driven in here by a storm. Well, it was driven in right enough; but not by no storm, lad. She was driven in an' left 'igh an' dry by her crew."

"Go on!" muttered Babcock hoarsely, his eyes gleaming. "You—you were one of the crew, I suppose?"

The man hesitated strangely, and then he nodded slowly.

"I was—I won't go for to deny it, mister," he said. "Though I wants you to understan' as I had no 'and in what happened. I 'ad to stand by and see it done. For why? 'Cause what happened to old Captain Nat would 'ave happened to me if I hadn't. See?"

Young Babcock's face hardened. "What happened to my grandfather?" he demanded huskily.

"I'm a-comin' to that, youngster. Well, it started jest arter we'd left Melbourne, homeward bound—this ten years gone. The Old Man had given it out as it were his last trip home—as he were goin' to retire like, and sell the old hooker. Then the talk started. It got about as the old man 'ad treasure aboard—treasure 'e'd picked up among the islands where we'd bin tradin'. Ye see, some of us were new hands, an' some of us 'ad bin with him, an' we knew a thing or two."

The sailor paused again and lowered his voice.

"That started it, lad. They talked and talked like, and then, in the end, when we was jest goin' to enter the Channel, they—they did it. They trapped old Cap'n Nat, and they finished him, and they threw him over the side."

"Ah!"

Young Babcock gave an involuntary gasp. But he said nothing beyond that. Marline Joe gave a hurried, frightened glance over his shoulder as he paused, and then he went on again.

"But they found nothing—nothing," he went on, a cunning leer distorting his face. They searched this here cabin; they turned it upside down; but they found nothing. They gave it up then. For why? 'Cause they thought there was nothing, arter all."

"And then—"

"Then," said Marline Joe, with another leer. "They daren't land at any port, you see. They was done! So they came along this coast, and they ran this here craft on these sandbanks, and arter they'd divided all they could lay hands on, share and share alike, they lucked her name off the boats an' sichlike, and they painted a new name on her bows, and bolted—went ashore in the darkness and vanished—scattered, ye see?"

"And you—what did you do?" asked young Babcock quietly. "Why are you here now? You—you think—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

"I know," was the leering reply. "I was scared—I daren't stay—and I went like they did. But I knew what they didn't know, mister. I knew as there was something here—treasure in this very cabin. I'd seen it. The very night afore it happened I was taking a quiet peep through this here skylight, and I seed old Nat handling 'em."

He leaned forward, and lowered his voice to a husky whisper.

"Pearls they was—big ones, too—worth a fortune," he whispered gloatingly. "I seed 'em, and when I 'ad to clear, I vowed as I'd come back for 'em and search this 'ere cabin until I found 'em."

"And you've come now—after all these years?" muttered young Babcock, in a curiously strained tone.

"It weren't my fault as I didn't come sooner, I tell you," was the fierce answer. "I'll tell you why. As I sez, I was scared—afereed to come back so soon arter—arter what happened. I jest shipped aboard a vessel goin' to 'Frisco. An' like a fool I got meself in a bit of trouble there, an' I bin in prison—I don't mind telling you this—this last eight years, an' more. A long time, youngster. But"—he paused, and his voice was hoarse—"but I've come now—I've come to find what them shipmates of mine failed to find ten years ago."

He stopped, and silence fell on the gloomy cabin. On his back, young Babcock stared at the evil face of Marline Joe, lit up by the flickering lamplight. His heart was throbbing wildly. How much was true of the strange story he had heard, he could only surmise. But he believed most of it, and his mind was a turmoil of mingled anger and sadness. The one thing he did not believe was the ruffian's claim that he had had no hand in the actual crime. He looked villain enough for anything.

He felt convinced that now, after all these years, he had heard the true story of what had happened to the Heart's Desire—the ship that had vanished so utterly ten years ago, and that was believed, at the time, to have foundered with all hands, somewhere in the Channel. And here, before him, face to face, was one of the rascally mutineers—probably one of the very villains who had taken an active part in the actual crime.

At the thought a wave of fury shook him; but he steeled his voice to calmness as he asked:

"But why are you telling me this?" he muttered. "You know who I am, and yet you—you dare to tell me. Why?"

"I'm telling you," said the man, with a leer, "'cause I wants help—I wants somebody 'ere to help me find that there secret hiding-place. I'm willin' to go 'arf an' 'arf—"

He was interrupted.

"I'll see you hanged first, you scoundrel, before you'll get help from me!" cried Babcock fiercely. "You dare—"

"Here, hold 'ard, youngster!" snarled Marline Joe. "You come here to find that there treasure—I knows you have. Mebbe Old Nat wrote an' told his folks what he was bringin' home. It beats me why you only come now after these years, though, mate. But—but you gets nothin' less you help me—see! Now listen! I'm goin' to find that there treasure, help or no help. But—but—"

He broke off hoarsely, and once again his dark eyes scanned the shadowy walls of the gloomy cabin with a look of fear in them.

"But it's dark down 'ere, mister—dark and lonely," he went on, dropping his voice to a whisper. "I bin working down here for days and days, and I can't stand it no longer—alone. In this here cabin it happened, mind, and—and it ain't healthy, mister. I wants company, and help. And mebbe," he went on, eyeing young Babcock's white face sharply—"mebbe you knows something—mebbe you knows jest where this 'ere secret hidin'-place of old Nat's is? You bein' 'is grandson, like—"

He stopped suddenly and stiffened—his features becoming tense.

For some time now the occupants of the cabin had been dimly aware of faint sounds without—the gentle murmur and fret of the tide against the sides of the old hulk.

And now came a new sound—a single faint thud—the unmistakable bump of a boat against the sides of the derelict.

As he heard it, and grasped the significance of the sound, Marline Joe's features went livid, and, with a single bound, he reached the storm-lantern, and plunged the apartment into deep darkness.

Muttering fierce imprecations, he stumbled to the companionway stairs and went thudding up them.

But under the table, trembling with sudden hope, Billy Bunter had also heard the sound, and instinctively he knew what it meant. He gasped, and then as he heard the tramp of the departing ruffian's feet, he raised his voice in a wild shriek.

"Rescue, Greyfriars! Rescue, you fellows! Help! Rescue!"

Almost at once came an answering shout:

"Coming, Bunter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where are you?"

Billy Bunter rolled himself out from under the table in the darkness, almost fainting with overwhelming joy and relief.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Jack Babcock's Story!

THE voice from the deck above was Bob Cherry's voice. Bunter had made no mistake—the newcomers were Harry Wharton & Co., right enough.

In the falling dusk they came creeping up to the stranded wreck, expecting trouble and quite ready for it.

But as they heard Billy Bunter's wild appeal, all thoughts of caution and secrecy left them, and they swarmed up the sides and on to the deck.

Harry Wharton was the first to set foot on the wet deck. It was still raining, and the juniors were almost drenched; but they hardly knew it in their excitement. Harry glanced about the deck in the misty gloom, and as he did so a burly form emerged from the companionway.

Harry recognised the man in a flash, and he hissed a warning to his chums behind.

"Look out, chaps! Go for him—collar him low!"

As he spoke, Harry Wharton leaped forward and flung himself at the sailor-man. He got a savage jolt from a burly fist, and he staggered backwards, half-stunned by the blow.

But his chums were at his heels, and the next instant, for the second time that day, Marline Joe went thudding to the deck with a swarm of determined juniors clinging to him.

But he was up again the next moment, and after a brief struggle on

the slippery deck, he wrenched himself free with a prodigious effort, and leaped for the bulwarks.

"Stop him!" panted Harry.

But they were too late by a yard. The sailorman was as slippery as an eel, and he wriggled free from the clutching hands, and jumped clean overboard.

The juniors ran to the bulwarks and peered over the side. Marline Joe's burly form was visible lurching rapidly away from the ship. The water was not deep, as yet, and the splashing of his rushing progress became fainter, and then he vanished from sight in the misty rain.

"Shall we follow in the boat?" said Bob Cherry quickly.

"No; let the rascal go!" said Harry Wharton, turning away. "We couldn't follow in the boat, anyway—we came up the channel of the creek, remember. Let's see what's happened to that fat trouble-finder. It was Bunter who yelled, of course!"

"You bet!"

Followed by his chums, Harry ran to the companionway, and a moment later was inside the dark cabin.

"You there, Bunter?" he called.

"Of course I am!" came Bunter's complaining voice. "For goodness' sake hurry yourself, Wharton. You've been a jolly long time!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was just like Bunter to greet them thus, and Harry almost laughed as he hastily struck a match and looked about him.

"Phew!"

There was a whistle as the juniors glimpsed the two bound forms on the floor. In a flash the juniors were across the cabin, and Harry lit the lantern again as his chums released young Babcock and Billy Bunter.

"We almost expected to find something of this sort!" exclaimed Harry. "I suppose that brute trapped you? Hallo, you're hurt!"

"Only a scratch!" laughed the youth, touching the bruise on his temple ruefully. "That ugly merchant took me unawares—I never expected to find anyone here, you see. But—but this affair beats me. Why did you fellows come—"

"We came for this fat nuisance for one thing," said Harry, indicating the dishevelled and groaning Billy Bunter. "And for another—well, we knew that dangerous ruffian was here—we found him here this afternoon, you see!"

And Harry told the story of their adventures.

"I don't pretend to know what it means," ended Harry quietly. "But there's some jolly old mystery about this old ship, and—well, I fancy you know something about it."

The seafaring youth nodded gravely.

"I do," he said grimly. "And I'm going to tell you. I can trust you chaps, I know, and it's due to you after what's happened. This podgy friend of yours knows most of it, anyway."

And with that Jack Babcock—they soon learned that was his name—started to tell the story of that ill-fated last voyage of the Heart's Desire. He told it just as Marline Joe had told it to him, and in almost the same words.

The juniors listened, spellbound.

"So—so that's the story!" breathed Harry Wharton, when he paused at last. "Jove, it seems too romantic to be real."

"There are queer things happening in seafaring life—even in this century," smiled Jack Babcock.

"And—and it happened in this

cabin?" muttered Bob Cherry, looking round the shadowy cabin, with a shiver.

"And—and you think the treasure's still there somewhere?"

"I do—and I'm going to find it!"

"But how did you know about it in the first place, and how—"

"I'm just going to tell you that," was the response. "Well, in the first place my grandfather was a queer old stick—eccentric, you know. He traded mostly in the Pacific, and he was away for years at a time—sometimes he was never heard of for months on end. And then—ten years ago—came that last letter. It was to my father, and it had been posted at Melbourne. It said that the old Heart's Desire was homeward bound, for the last time—with treasure aboard—just that, and nothing else—with treasure aboard! But in another part of the letter he'd mentioned pearls—and my father guessed what it was."

Jack Babcock paused, and his voice became low.

"But the old Heart's Desire never reached port," he muttered. "She just vanished. Folks said she had foundered in the Channel, with all hands. But my father—he was a sailor like myself—went down in a merchant ship, torpedoed during the war," added Jack huskily—"never believed that. He always said there'd been foul play on account of the treasure. Well, as you chaps know, he was right."

Jack Babcock paused, and then he

looked at Dick Penfold and smiled grimly.

"That's the story of ten years ago," he said. "Now we come to two days ago—when I saw your winning snapshot of this wreck. I was ashore from my ship, and happened to call on an old pal. He's a keen photographer, and he just happened to have that magazine lying about, and—well, I saw it. I recognised that old derelict in a shot."

"Oh!"

"A sailor never makes a mistake about the identity of a craft," he went on. "Paint it up, or do what you like, if he's seen it once, he knows it again. I knew it was the old Heart's Desire when I saw that snap. You fellows noticed the queer figurehead—a carved figure, half serpent, half animal—"

"Yes, yes—"

"Well, there isn't a craft sailing the seven seas with one like it. There was no mistaking it. You can imagine what I felt when I spotted it on that snapshot."

"Yes, rather!"

"I knew it was the ship, and I was mad—mad to get away and see it. And I thought about the treasure. I got away as soon as I could, and here I am."

"You think—after all these years—"

"I do. You forget that I knew what Marline Joe suspected—that there is a



"Stop him!" panted Harry Wharton. "Stop him!" But the juniors were too late. The sailorman was as slippery as an eel, and he wriggled free from the clutching hands. He reached the bulwarks with a bound and leaped overboard. "Done!" grunted Bob Cherry in disgust. "Shall we follow him in the boat?"

"No, let the rascal go!" said Wharton. (See Chapter 8.)

secret hiding-place in this cabin somewhere. My father knew there was, and told me. My grandfather was queer—he trusted nobody, and he kept his valuables there. My father didn't even know where it was. I'm going to find it, though."

"You've seen the ship before, of course?"

"No; I've seen old photos of her, though; and there's an old oil-painting of her at home. I knew."

"And now?" asked Harry Wharton breathlessly. "What about Marline Joe? The scoundrel—"

"I'm not afraid of him," said Jack Babcock. "He took me unawares before; but he won't again. It—it makes it awkward, though."

"You ought to hand the scoundrel over to the police," said Harry. "He's dangerous, and as slippery as an eel."

"I don't want the police to be brought into this—not yet," said Jack Babcock in sudden alarm. "Look here, you chaps. I've told you the yarn, but it's in confidence, mind."

"Nobody shall hear about it from us," said Harry, though his eyes lingered rather doubtfully on the fat, curious features of the staring Billy Bunter. "Anyhow, we'll keep mum, and we wish you luck in your search, Babcock. We'll cycle over to-morrow evening again, won't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Perhaps we can give you a hand in the search," went on Harry, glancing round the cabin curiously. "But—but I'm worried about that brute Marline Joe. With him hanging round, it isn't safe for you—"

"I tell you I can look after myself," laughed the seafaring youth grimly. "I sha'n't be caught napping again, chums. I've got a room at that fisherman's cabin, and I'm going to hang on here until I've found what I've come for."

Harry nodded, but his face was worried.

"I don't like it," he said. "But—but you know best, I suppose. Anyhow, I'm afraid we'll have to be getting back—quickly. It must be well after calling-over, and there'll be a rumpus as it is. You'll come ashore with us—now, of course?"

Babcock shook his head, and his eyes gleamed as he glanced about the shadowy room.

"I'm starting the search to-night," he said firmly. "I can walk back across the sands when the tide's down. You fellows get off."

And though the alarmed juniors tried their utmost to dissuade him, Jack Babcock stuck to his guns, and a moment later they said good-bye and left him.

With many misgivings the juniors went up on deck, leaving him to his self-imposed task in the lonely, gloomy cabin.

"I say, you fellows," grunted Billy Bunter, as they reached the deck, "what about my bike, you know?"

"Your bike?"

"It's in that blessed shed place over there," growled Bunter, pointing to the shattered deck-house, just visible in the gathering darkness. "Just yank it out for me, Bob Cherry."

"Well, my hat!"

Up to now the juniors had had no chance to question Billy Bunter as to his adventures—much to that youth's disgust. Bunter felt himself a hero, and an ill-used youth in consequence—not

that he wanted to tell what had actually happened, by any means.

But now Bob Cherry grabbed him grimly.

"We haven't had this fat clam's explanation yet!" he snapped. "Now, Bunter, what about it?"

"Oh, never mind Bunter now!" said Harry hurriedly. "We can talk to the fat idiot again, Bob. For goodness' sake let's get back. Bunter's bike can go in the boat."

The excitement was over, all the juniors were feeling wet, and cold, and miserable, and they were anxious enough to get home. They recovered Billy Bunter's bike, and lowered it into the waiting boat, which swung gently, tied to the broken mast that hung over the side.

Then the juniors dropped into the boat, and it was pushed off. It was a roomy boat, and Bob and Johnny Bull settled to the oars, whilst Harry steered.

"Wonder if that old fisherman Johnny has missed his boat?" grinned Bob, as they pulled away.

"Hardly likely," said Harry. "Any-way, it'll be easier going back."

Harry was right. Coming across before the rescuers had had a difficult, trying time, for the water was shallow, and again and again they had been held up, stranded on hidden banks of sand. But now the boat glided smoothly over the swelling tide, and at last it grounded on the beach, and they sprang ashore, and drew the boat up high and dry as they had found it.

For some seconds they stood and stared back at the sinister outline of the haunted wreck, and then at a word from Harry, they turned and ran up to where they had left their bikes. Harry, good-naturedly pushing Bunter's machine before him.

They reached their bikes, and ran them on to the roadway, near the fisherman's cabin.

"Now for home—we'll have to go all out," said Harry. "You'd better ride in the middle of us as you haven't a lamp. Come on."

But it was not a case of home for the adventurers yet.

For even as Harry put his foot on the pedal of his bike, a sound reached their ears—a sound that made them jump in alarm.

It was the sharp, distant sound of a revolver shot—and it came from the direction of the stranded derelict.

—

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Marline Joe Again!

"MY hat!"

The startled juniors looked at each other in the gloom.

What did it mean? They knew that Jack Babcock had no weapon with him—at least, they believed not. Then who had fired the shot?

Had Marline Joe returned? And had he fired it? If so—

"That's queer," said Harry Wharton, taking a deep breath. "What do you chaps make of it? If that ruffian had had a weapon, he would have made use of it before this."

"Must have gone to fetch it from somewhere," began Bob. "Per-haps—"

"I know, you fellows," said Billy Bunter excitedly. "I know where he hangs out—in a cave along the cliff there. He funks living on that wreck, I believe."

"You fat ass—"

"It's a fact," said Bunter eagerly.

And he told the juniors hurriedly all he had seen in the cave.

"Phew!" said Harry. "Then it looks as if he went there, and he hasn't bolted after all. He must have gone for that weapon."

"Looks like it!"

"We'll have to go back you chaps," said Harry, clenching his teeth. "We can't leave that chap to the mercy of a ruthless villain like that."

"Oh dear!"

"We're in for trouble when we get back," said Harry grimly. "So we may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. And I'm jolly sure I'm not leaving that chap alone without seeing what's happened. Come on!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors hurriedly put their lamps out again, and dropped their machines in the ditch. They were all willing, if not quite eager, to discover what was happening on the derelict; even Billy Bunter did not hang back—though he obviously did not relish further adventures.

In a moment or two the juniors were racing down the beach again, and very soon they were afloat, pulling hard for the wreck, which now showed, a dark, ghostly path against the growing darkness.

Since that ominous shot no sound had reached their ears, and they approached the wreck in silence, their minds full of forboding.

They approached the side more cautiously this time, and the boat scarcely made a sound as it touched the side of the hulk at length. Having made it secure by tying the painter to the hanging length of mast, they swarmed over the low bulwarks, and dropped silently on to the dark deck.

They stood there for some seconds listening, their hearts throbbing with excitement. Not a sound broke the deathly stillness save for the gentle splash and fretting of the tide round the hulk.

Then Harry Wharton's eyes caught the gleam of a light above the broken skylight of the captain's cabin, and he drew a deep breath.

"Quiet, you fellows!" he whispered. "I'm going—"

He broke off abruptly. At that moment the silence was shattered by a series of thunderous blows—the crash of an axe and the splintering of timber.

"Marline Joe!" breathed Harry Wharton, his face paling. "He's searching again. But—but what's happened to Jack Babcock?"

None of the juniors could answer that. But a sick feeling of dread took possession of them. That single shot—what had it portended?

"I'm going to look, you chaps," whispered Harry tensely.

He moved across the deck as he spoke, towards the skylight, and his chums followed, feeling their way cautiously in the darkness.

They reached the skylight safely enough—there was little need for silence now, however, for the crashing of the axe below sounded thunderous.

Harry reached the skylight first, and as he peered through the broken aperture, he caught his breath hard. His fears were realised.

Marline Joe was there—he was wielding the axe savagely and furiously. Blow after blow fell on the splintering panels of the cabin walls.

"He's got the wind up!" breathed Bob Cherry. "He sees the game will be up soon."

"Looks like it," whispered Harry Wharton. "But—but what about that other chap? We must do something."

"What can we do?" said Dick Penfold huskily. "See! His pistol's on the table. Before we could get at him he'd have that to meet us with."

"That's so. If only—My hat!"

A sudden idea occurred to Harry Wharton, and he turned abruptly to Billy Bunter who was hovering in the rear, his teeth chattering with fear.

"Bunter," he said in a low tone, "you remember what you did this afternoon at the woodshed—that ventriloquist trick, I mean? Can you do something like it now?"

"Oh dear!" chattered Bunter.

"That fellow's in a mortal funk in there—and I don't wonder," said Harry quickly. "See how he keeps glancing round! While he has that gun we can do nothing to help Babcock—if it's not too late already to help him. If only you could scare the brute, Bunter, make him clear out—"

"Oh dear!"

"Do it!" hissed Bob Cherry. "Pull yourself together, you fat funk! If you do it, Bunter, I'll give you the biggest feed you've ever had when we get home. If you don't—"

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'll try."

Billy Bunter pushed forward, taking a deep breath as he did so. He was almost dropping with fear, and he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had never come aboard the wreck again. But he knew more than the others did how the burly ruffian below feared the darkness and gloom of that cabin.

He peered down at the scene below, and at that moment Marline Joe ceased his labours, and dropped the axe, panting and breathless.

It was Bunter's chance, and he took it.

In the silence which followed the splintering of timber, there sounded from below—or appeared to sound below—a groan—a deep, bloodcurdling groan.

It appeared to come from the floor of the cabin, and it almost made the juniors themselves jump.

But the effect upon the scoundrel below was electrical. He dropped the axe and stood an instant, trembling, his face working with startled terror. And in that instant Billy Bunter made his second attempt.

This time it was undoubtedly a masterpiece—a low, trembling groan that rose to a horrible shriek that seemed to fill the cabin below.

"Mum-my hat! That's done it!" breathed Bob Cherry.

It had. With one gasping cry of terror the rascal in the cabin below leaped for the door, and next moment they heard the rapid pad of his bare feet on the steps of the companionway.

"Look out!" hissed Harry Wharton just in time. "Down!"

The juniors ducked low, and hid in the shadows, their hearts thumping violently with excitement.

They had scarcely done so when the dark form of Marline Joe leaped into view on the deck. It was visible a brief instant, flying across the deck, and then it melted into the gloom, and to the juniors' ears sounded a sudden splash.

"Mum-my hat!" panted Harry Wharton. "He's gone clean overboard! Oh, good man, Bunter!"

It was something new for Billy Bunter to be praised; but he undoubtedly deserved it this time. Even Billy Bunter himself was astonished at the success of his efforts.

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In the event of my winning, I prefer a Lady's—Gent's—Bicycle. Cross out the word not applicable.

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"Perhaps you fellows will admit I'm a jolly good ventriloquist now?" he mumbled, with a fat grunt of satisfaction. "My hat! Wasn't he in a blue funk? I say, I believe he was one of the villains who did in that captain, you know. He says he wasn't, but I believe he was."

The rest of the juniors could not help believing that, too. Most sailors, they knew, were more or less superstitious. And Marline Joe's fear of being alone in that quiet, dark cabin where the hapless Captain Nat had met his end was more than suspicious.

But it was not the time to discuss that. The coast was clear now; it was scarcely likely the ruffian would return yet awhile. And next moment Harry was leading the way down to the cabin.

The lamp was still burning, and Harry's first thought was to secure the weapon that glinted on the table. He took it to the broken porthole, and pitched it out into the sea, feeling that such a dangerous article was safer there.

Then he began to look about him eagerly and anxiously. So far, they had glimpsed no sign of Jack Babcock, and now Harry lifted the lamp and looked into the shadowy corners, half

expecting to find his bound form there—or worse.

But it was not there, and the juniors looked questioningly at each other.

"It's queer!" muttered Harry. "That scoundrel must have done something with the poor chap, though. Here—"

An idea seemed to occur to Harry, and he shone the light of the lantern under the big, rough, wooden table. He was about to withdraw the light, disappointed, when he gave a cry, and pointed to the floor beneath the table.

"Look, you fellows!" he breathed. "Look! The table!"

The rest of the juniors, surprised and curious, bent to look, and then they whistled.

Something had happened to the table. In the light from the lantern they could see that the massive wooden legs, bolted to the flooring, were tilted slightly, and now they looked they could see that the table-top was tilted slightly also. And that part of the flooring bolted to the legs was tilted, too—tilted and revealing a black slit, an orifice an inch wide at one end, and the same at the lower end.

"I—I say," gasped Harry breathlessly, "this looks rummy!"

He pressed on the slightly-raised patch
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

of floor, and the whole thing, table and floor, swayed slightly and then jammed. "I say, you fellows," panted Billy Bunter, blinking down excitedly at the scene, "I know how that happened. It was when I fell through the blessed skylight. I fell on the table, and I felt it give under me a bit."

"That's it." "I'd forgotten about that," said Bunter. "And when I lay under the table—after that brute kicked me, you know—I felt that blessed floor sway under me. My hat! I got a fright, I can tell you. I thought the blessed floor was going to let me through."

All the juniors were fairly shaking with excitement now. They had almost forgotten Jack Babcock at this amazing discovery.

"It's a secret hiding-place right enough," said Harry in a thrilling whisper. "When Bunter fell on the table he must have jerked the catch, or spring, or something. I say, let's explore it, you chaps!"

He rested the lantern on the floor and started to press with all his force on the table top at one end. The others rushed to aid him, and, after a brief moment of jamming, what they were trying to bring about happened with startling suddenness.

The table tipped up with a harsh creaking, and with it tilted up the portion of flooring to which it was clamped.

As they blinked into the yawning cavity revealed, Bob Cherry gave a shout of triumph, and pointed downwards. In the rusty, cobwebby hole was a small box—an iron-bound box like a cashbox.

Nothing else was there, and after a moment's search Harry lifted the box out, and as the others tilted back the table to its former position, he placed it on the table, and they all gathered round, breathless with excitement and awe.

"The treasure!" cried Harry excitedly. "It's the treasure, I believe, you chaps!"

He had scarcely spoken when from above came a slight sound—the sharp hiss of inwardly-drawn breath.

Harry glanced quickly upwards, and then he gave a yell of alarm.

"Look out!"

The others saw it then—a face at the skylight, an evil, scarred face, with dark, fierce eyes that glinted with rage and greed. The face was quickly followed by a head and shoulders, and then the burly form of Marline Joe swung through the broken skylight, glistening and dripping with water.

It hung suspended above the table for a brief instant, and then it dropped with a heavy thud.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

After Many Years!

CRASH!

What happened next was so sudden and unexpected that scarcely any of the startled juniors realised it all.

As the man's heavy bulk struck the table-top it tilted abruptly under his weight, and he went sprawling downwards, taking the lantern and iron box with him as he went.

The lantern-glass crashed, but the light itself failed to go out, and only a feeble, flickering glimmer lit up the scene of confusion which followed.

The attack had come so utterly unexpected—like a bolt from the blue—
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..... that all the juniors lost their heads for the moment, and before they had recovered themselves Marline Joe had made his desperate bid for victory.

By sheer chance the precious box had fallen close to his hand as he sprawled, and in a flash his huge fist had closed upon it, and he leaped to his feet with a hoarse growl.

Harry Wharton dimly realised what was happening, and he leaped forward; but a huge, brutal fist sent him reeling away, and next instant the ruffian was charging for the doorway.

He sent the juniors spinning to right and left, and in a flash he was thudding up the stairs of the companionway.

"After him!" yelled Harry. "He's got the box!"

"My hat!"

There was a rush for the stairs, and the alarmed, half-dazed juniors went surging up them in pursuit.

"There he is!"

Harry Wharton reached the deck first, and as he glimpsed the figure of Marline Joe just vanishing over the shattered bulwarks, he growled and darted in pursuit.

Even as he ran he guessed what had happened. Marline Joe had possibly seen the boat lying alongside, and had realised it was a trick. Or, more probably, greed of the material had overcome his fear of the supernatural after that first shock, and he had returned—to find they had found the treasure.

But if Marline Joe had seen the boat, then he had forgotten it in his wild excitement now, for as Harry reached the side and stared out, he was relieved to see it still there. And at that moment Johnny Bull's voice rang out:

"There he is!"

He pointed across the gently-swelling water, and they caught a glimpse of a head and shoulders a dozen yards from the wreck.

"Oh, good!" panted Harry Wharton. "The boat! We'll easily catch him up in the boat! Quick!"

In a moment the excited juniors were tumbling into the boat, and Harry Wharton tore at the painter. But his frantic eagerness made his fingers clumsy, and after several futile seconds had passed, he snatched his knife out and cut the rope.

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But precious moments had been wasted, and when they were moving away, at last, the head and shoulders of Marline Joe were barely visible in the misty darkness.

"Quick, or we'll miss him!" cried Harry, in an anxious tone. "Go it!"

Bob and Johnny Bull, at the oars, pulled with a will, and once moving, they rapidly overhauled the swimmer.

From behind them they heard a frantic yelling from Billy Bunter, who had hesitated—and been left behind. But they did not heed Bunter. The swimmer in front occupied all their interest and attention. He was swimming fast, though obviously with one hand only—they guessed what the other hand held.

Only a few yards separated them now, and Harry Wharton stood up in the rocking boat in his eagerness.

"Slow down now, chaps!" he called suddenly. "We've got him!"

The swimmer evidently realised that, for quite abruptly he stopped swimming, and turned at bay. As the boat swept alongside, he raised his free hand and grabbed the gunwale.

"You—you little swabs!" he panted, his voice husky with rage and fear. "I'll do you yet, sink me!"

He made a sudden scramble upwards—whether to attempt to clamber aboard, or whether to try to upset the boat, they never knew. But even as he did so, Bob swung round his oar.

It caught the ruffian a thudding blow on the shoulder, and in the same moment, as he hung half-dazed, Harry Wharton snatched desperately at the box under his arm.

His fingers closed on the small handle, and as he tugged Bob again came to the rescue with the oar.

It took the desperate rascal full in the chest, and he lurched backwards with a fierce imprecation. But Harry had the box, and he gave a yell.

"Pull for it—never mind the brute now! Pull!"

The boat was already half turned, and in an instant of time it was dragged round, and then Bob had settled to the oar again, and the boat danced away. And it was just then that Frank Nugent, who had happened to look towards the wreck, gave vent to a startled exclamation, and leaped to his feet.

"Look!" he shouted, his voice trembling with alarm. "Look—the wreck!"

They saw it then—that which in their excitement they had failed to notice until now—a billow of spark-riven smoke that hung like a pall over the derelict.

Even as they glimpsed it, with staring eyes, a fierce tongue of red flame shot skywards.

The derelict was on fire!

"Good heavens!" panted Harry Wharton. "The lamp in the cabin—I noticed it hadn't gone out. The oil must have run out and set fire!"

"But—but Jack Babcock—"

"Good heavens! Pull—for goodness' sake pull for your lives, chaps!"

The Greyfriars juniors had pulled hard enough going, but they put all their strength and energy into it now. They were certain that the seafaring youth was aboard somewhere.

Harry Wharton & Co. never forgot that mad dash back to the blazing derelict. But they reached it at last, and as they scrambled headlong aboard a fat figure rushed up frantically.

It was Billy Bunter, and in the lurid light his face showed white as chalk.

"He's down there!" he yelled. "I heard him shouting just after you chaps went! He'll be burned to death!"

It was to Billy Bunter's credit that in that terrible moment of danger he thought of someone else instead of himself—for once.

Harry grabbed his arm with a force that brought a yelp of pain from the fat youth.

"Where," snapped Harry—"where is he, Bunter?"

"It sounded through the cabin wall—opposite the door somewhere," mumbled Bunter. "Oh, dear!"

"The lazarette," snapped Dick Penfold.

"Some of you guard the boat," shouted Harry Wharton. "Come on, Bob—you, too, Dick."

With that Harry dashed towards the companionway. But a glance down showed him the hopelessness of making an entry that way. It was like a blazing furnace. Damp and rotting as the old wreck was for the most part it blazed furiously, the fire gaining way with amazing rapidity.

In an instant Harry with his chums at his heels raced round to the after hatch, and lowered himself into the 'tween decks.

How they found their way in the darkness they never knew. Down here the smoke was not so thick, but it was bad enough, and the heat was intense. But a faint cry for help guided them, and in the ship's pantry they found their quarry. Through the smoke a flickering light showed, lighting up the small apartment, and they saw Jack Babcock.

He was lying flat on his back, bound hand and foot as they had found him before. His face showed ashen in the flickering light.

With desperate haste Harry felt for his bonds, and then his knife was at work, slashing them through.

"Oh, thank heaven!" he panted, as they helped him up. "I'm afraid you'll have to help me—I've had a nasty knock. That brute caught me napping, after all. The—smoke must have brought me round."

Half-carrying, half-dragging the almost swooning youth, the three juniors managed to get him back the way they had come, though the task of getting him down the short ladder, and afterwards up the after hatchway, was no easy one.

But they stuck it grimly, and burst at length on to the deck, coughing and choking, their eyes smarting and streaming.

The place was like a furnace above decks now, and the heat was frightful. But it was lighter than day, and it was an easy matter to rush their burden across the deck to the waiting boat.

There willing hands helped them—fortunately Marline Joe had not returned—and within two minutes of escaping from the flames, the boat was dancing away over the fire-reflected waters.

Jack Babcock had dropped to the bottom of the boat with a low groan—and not of pain.

"Too late!" he groaned bitterly. "And all in vain! Oh, what awful luck!"

Harry Wharton smiled faintly, and pressed the box into his hands.

"I fancy not, Babcock," he said quietly. "Look at that—we found it hidden under the floor in the cabin."

Jack Babcock did not answer then—he couldn't. He stared at it in sheer amazement, and joy. And before he could speak, had he wished, the juniors stopped rowing and looked back.

It was a stupendous and awe-inspiring sight—and a saddening one. Nothing on earth could have saved the wreck—it was almost one mass of flames—blood-red flames that leaped skywards, lighting



The juniors reached the blazing derelict at last, and as they scrambled up the side a fat figure rushed up frantically. It was Billy Bunter. In the lurid light his face showed white as chalk. "He's down there!" he yelled. "I heard him shouting just after you chaps went. He'll be burned to death!" (See Chapter 10.)

up the sea around with a shimmering, crimson glow.

The occupants of the boat watched in fascinating wonder. Not until the juniors started to row again did anyone speak. And then Jack Babcock looked round at the juniors' excited faces.

"I've no need to say I'm grateful for this, you fellows," he said huskily. "You've been bricks over this business. You've saved my life—and you've found what I could never have found—a fortune."

"We haven't looked in that box," said Harry awkwardly. "It may not be there after all. But I think—"

"It's there," said Jack Babcock. "I know it is—I feel it, lads."

And Jack Babcock proved to be right. An hour later, in the little kitchen of the fisherman's cabin, the box was opened before the juniors, and with a couple of coastguards and the fisherman as amazed witnesses. And inside they found the pearls—huge shimmering pearls that even to the juniors' inexperienced eyes were worth a fortune. And in the box also, in addition to a collection of gold and silver, were papers—documents that made Jack Babcock's eyes blur as he read them.

And when Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter started homewards at last, they were happy, and more than satisfied. They were drenched through to the skin, they were dog-tired and smoke-grimed and dirty. And the thought of what awaited them at Greyfriars was not a cheering one.

But they were happy—happy in the knowledge that they had thwarted a villain, had brought fortune and happi-

ness to the one who was entitled to it, and had solved the mystery of the wreck.

There is little more to be told. On arrival at Greyfriars at nearly ten o'clock the juniors found a grim-faced Mr. Quelch awaiting them. And that gentleman almost collapsed when he heard their astonishing story—as did Dr. Locke the next morning. As for the rest of the school—they were astounded and excited beyond measure. And Harry Wharton & Co. were very important persons indeed for the next few days. Billy Bunter swanked and swelled in unaccustomed glory—glory which to some extent he had earned—for once.

And Jack Babcock, as he anticipated, had no difficulty in proving his claim to the treasure—the documents in the box were more than enough for that. He stayed in the district for some little time, and became firm friends with Harry Wharton & Co.

As for Marline Joe that sinister ruffian was never heard of again—not by the Famous Five and their chums, at all events. He vanished utterly after that eventful night—as utterly as he and his villainous fellow-mutineers had vanished on that night of the storm ten years ago.

THE END.

(No Magnetite must miss next week's magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. Look out for the title—"Both Bunters!"—and take the precaution of ordering your MAGNET early. There's bound to be a rush for the splendid FREE PLATE of H.M.S. HOOD, which accompanies every copy.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.

WHITE HOPE! That's the name the British sporting public give to big George Melton the next time he steps into the ring at Belcher's. His fight with Anton Moreno is the talk of the day. You'll go just crazy with excitement the moment the gong sounds, boys.



Matthew's Brain-wave!

HIS brain clearing, Anton Moreno saw the stalwart figure of George Melton standing on the pavement. Anton's first thought was one of vengeance. Was he not the champion? But the reflection was stifled at birth. For once in a way Moreno had met a man who had put fear into him. His narrow eyes glinted cruelly at George, but the champion did not return to try conclusions with him. His friends, rushing out to his aid, hailed the first passing taxi, and bundled him into it. George, still waiting on the pavement, watched the champion's retreat, with a contemptuous smile. He saw the dusky fist that was waved at him as the cab drove off, and he laughed.

"The cur!" he muttered. "I'd like to have him in the ring for half an hour!"

Little did he know that Fate was working for a consummation of that desire, as, accompanied by the twins and Matthew, he drove off to his quarters in Bloomsbury. The crowd from the Criterion cheered him off. At the moment they only saw the man who had defended a lady. Later they were to see this baby-faced fellow defending Britain's boxing prestige in the ring at Belcher's.

"Jove!" exclaimed Matthew suddenly, as the cab jolted over an uneven patch of roadway. "I've got it!"

"So has Anton Moreno," grinned Dicky. "Where the chicken got the giddy chopper!"

The brothers laughed, with the exception of Matthew. He was looking very thoughtful. He banged his hand on his knee, and: "Jove! I've got it!" he reiterated.

"What! Again?" sniggered Marcus. "Poor old chap! Must be the lobster you had for supper!"

"Don't be a young ass!" reprimanded Matthew seriously. "A scoop, by gad!"

George looked interested, and Marcus started slightly.

"For the giddy 'Clarion'!" exclaimed the latter, in great excitement.

"Exactly!" smiled Matthew. "Why, the newspapers would give a lot to get hold of a yarn like that: 'Champion of the world pitched into the gutter by an unknown'!"

"Smart!" ejaculated George. "Off you go, Matthew! Your news editor will give you a pat on the back for that!"

Matthew needed no further encouragement. He called the taxi to a halt, transferred into another cab, and was soon speeding towards the "Daily Clarion" offices in Fleet Street. When he left his "chief" half an hour later there was a satisfied smile on his face, likewise on that of the news editor. The "Clarion" ranked as a fourth-rate daily

newspaper, principally on account of the fact that its news saw the light of day usually a few hours later than that published in the pages of its contemporary rivals.

But here was a scoop indeed!

Next morning the "Daily Clarion" surprised the natives and the rival news editors by coming out with a three-column story of how Anton Moreno had suffered a severe handling from a gentleman in the Criterion Restaurant who had upheld the good name of a lady. That alone was a startling piece of news to Londoners; but when the name of the Englishman appeared in print astonishment knew no bounds.

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

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

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

DICKY and MARCUS MELTON—known as the twins. Fourteen years of age.

JUSTIN MAHONE—the Meltons' guardian—who refuses to assist his wards. Something of a mystery man.

SIR HUMPHREY DALLAS—known as the Sporting Baronet. Saved from a terrible fate by George Melton. Sir Humphrey shows his gratitude by starting George on a professional boxing career.

SANDY ROBSON—a veteran pugilist, who trains the Sporting Baronet's pupils.

FERRERS LOCKE—the world-famous detective.

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

Expelled from St. Bart's, the Meltons have had an uphill task to keep themselves alive. Sheer grit has carried them through a host of difficulties. Now the luck is on the change. Far from being penniless, Ferrers Locke declares that within a week he will prove to them that they are being swindled out of a million pounds. Overjoyed at the glad tidings—for the detective has promised to see that the Meltons come into their own—the whole family decide to celebrate the occasion. After a full evening's enjoyment the Meltons adjourn to the Criterion Restaurant for supper. While there Anton Moreno, the Heavy-weight Champion of the World—who is booked to fight Johnny Cavendish, the British "heavy"—insults a lady. With scant ceremony big George Melton floors the champion, and then, as he refuses to apologise to the lady, George grabs him by the scruff of the neck and pitches him out into the roadway.

(Now read on.)

"George Melton!" muttered one big City gentleman, on his way to business the next morning. "That's the fellow who double-crossed the promoters of the fight between him and Johnny Cavendish! Doesn't sound much like a rogue, anyway. Yes, it's him, right enough," added the reader of the "Clarion," searchingly regarding the portrait of George that stared out from amidst the print. "Well, I'm denced glad to hear it!"

That seemed to be the prevailing opinion. Anton Moreno had left a long train of dislike behind him since he had appeared in England. His conceit, his ignorance, his atrocious manners were bywords amongst the reading public. And yet this man, this half-breed, held the world's boxing championship in his fists. Jove, it was good to hear that an Englishman had thrashed him!

Interested followers of boxing walked about that day with happy smiles. But in the camp of Johnny Cavendish all was dismay. The heavy-weight champion of Britain had met with an accident while motoring, and his right forearm was fractured. It was useless trying to keep this intelligence from the public. From a rumour it grew into a fact, and again the newspapers had something to "shout" about. Cavendish's manager made a hurried journey to the offices of Anton Moreno's manager, and used all his powers of persuasion on that exalted person to postpone the fight for another three months.

But Moreno's manager was a collector of dollars. His man, which meant himself also, stood to "collect" a small fortune if the fight went in Moreno's favour, and neither manager nor principal but doubted that that would be the issue.

Moreno himself was adamant. His pride had been ruffled. He was anxious to shake the dust of England from his feet.

"I'm not a waiting for three months!" he said arrogantly. "Ref the British heavy-weight champion cannot fulfil his engagement, then I claim a de money! You see? My contract—it says—"

"Confound the contract!" stormed Cavendish's manager. "A man can't fight with one arm! Where's your sportsmanship?"

"Iana de bank!" replied Moreno, showing a row of even, white teeth in a grin. "I not in de fighting line for the benefit of my health! No, sir! Ref Cavendish is not in the ring at Belcher's on Wednesday next, I claim de stake-money!"

And that was his last word so far as Cavendish's manager was concerned. To Matthew, who had eagerly been awaiting news of the interview, came a sudden thought. Without consulting anyone on the plan he had in mind, he sailed into Moreno's office, and presented a card bearing the inscription, "Daily Clarion."

"Oh, yes!" smiled Moreno, not noticing in the young man before him a witness of his humiliation of the night before. "You are a reporter—eh? You want me to talk?"

"I want your views on the forthcoming fight," said Matthew, flourishing a pencil and notebook. "My paper will pay you a hundred guineas for an exclusive interview," he added, by way of an after thought.

"A hundred guineas!" Moreno smiled across at his manager, and both rubbed their hands with satisfaction. "Very well. The interview shall be exclusive, my friend."

"Good!" said Matthew earnestly. "I understand that Johnny Cavendish cannot fulfil his engagement owing to a fractured forearm, and, quite rightly, too," added Matthew, piling on the "soft sawder," "that you refuse to postpone the fight for three months."

"The only sensible man in London!" granted Moreno's manager.

"Well, I've got a proposition to make to you," continued Matthew, almost shuddering at his own daring. "I know you want to fight in England; I know, too, that the public here is frightfully keen on seeing a world's champion perform at Beleher's."

Moreno smiled pleasantly. He loved flattery as schoolboys like pineapple—in chunks.

"What if my firm—the 'Daily Clarion'—put up a man to meet you next Wednesday, guaranteeing the same purse that you were to have in your fight against Cavendish? Wait a minute!" added Matthew, stopping the remark Moreno was about to utter. "You will be able to claim your prize-money from Cavendish just the same; you will have the satisfaction of meeting a British heavy-weight, of fulfilling your part of the contract; you will have the advantage of meeting a man who has not been in strict training—"

"Gee! That sounds good!" ejaculated Moreno's manager, pausing in the act of lighting a Burma cheroot. "You're not talking through your hat, are you, youngster?"

"Never more serious in my life," averred Matthew. "To prove it I'll hail a cab, and we'll skedaddle right now down to the 'Clarion's' offices in Fleet Street. What do you say?"

For five minutes or so Moreno and his manager spoke in low tones, Matthew watching their faces eagerly. At last the former spoke.

"Reckon we'll sign that contract of yours," said the half-breed. "No, here, is going to get on to Cavendish's manager to make sure de big fight is off," he added.

The manager was speaking into the telephone a few seconds later. When he replaced the receiver he turned, with an oily smile, to Moreno.

"All O.K.," he said, blowing out great clouds of smoke from his cheroot. "I'm going to blow round to Cavendish's office now to git everything signed right and proper. Join you here in half an hour's time."

It seemed like an hour before the half-breed's manager reappeared. But by the complacency of his oily features it was evident that everything had worked out to his satisfaction.

Five minutes later Matthew was speeding his charges to the "Clarion" offices. Leaving them in the care of a news editor, he rushed upstairs to his chief's room and unceremoniously burst into that sacred apartment.

Breathlessly he told his story to a dumb-founded chief.

"Snakes, Melton!" ejaculated the chief. "It's a stunt, I'll grant you. But who on earth is going to fight a world's champion at a moment's notice?"

The answer was swift as light.

"My brother—George!"

"Oh!" gasped the chief, beginning to see daylight. "It's a cute wheeze. But—but the money—"

"That will be all right, too, sir!" said Matthew hurriedly. "I'll guarantee that!"

"What!"

For answer Matthew pulled out of his pocket the letter Dicky had received two days ago from Ferrers Locke.

"See that?" he said excitedly. "See whose name it is at the bottom? Ferrers Locke! He knows what he's talking about, I suppose?"

The chief panted and gasped in astonishment as he read that note. He hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his heels. To think that the youthful reporter

he had engaged a few weeks back, glad to work for a small salary, was likely to "fall" into a quarter of a million pounds before another week had passed was incredulous. Yet there it was in black and white. Ferrers Locke's reputation was known and respected throughout the universe.

"Wonderful!" wheezed the chief, mopping his forehead. "By Jove, we'll do it! All you want is the 'Clarion's' backing, is that it?" he asked thoughtfully.

"That's all, sir," came the eager reply. "Moreno wouldn't deal with us. We've got no public footing; no guarantee behind our names. Again, I rather fancy he won't be overjoyed when I name his opponent."

"Of course not," said the chief thoughtfully. "If this champion fellow let a stranger pitch him into the gutter without returning a blow he is not likely to be extra keen on meeting that same gentleman in the ring."

"Melton," he added boisterously, "I think your brother has found the yellow streak in Mister Anton Moreno. If for nothing more than the good name of English boxing, I'll take on the whole show myself. Hang your quarter of a million! If the fight comes off under the patronage of the 'Clarion,' it will be the biggest scoop in newspaperdom of the year. We'll stand the expense!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Matthew. "Then I'll be off to get George. Will you get all the contracts drawn up in readiness for our return? I'm going to make sure that Anton Moreno doesn't back out by bringing back with me half a dozen of the leading fight promoters in England. Moreno's conceit won't let him back out, mark me well!"

A moment later Matthew was scudding down the stone steps to the street below as if he had a thousand demons at his heels. When Matthew made up his mind to do a thing, that thing was as good as done. Inside half an hour he was re-entering the offices of the "Clarion," this time accompanied by George, Sir Humphrey Dallas, Ferrers Locke, and three well-known boxing promoters. Briefly he had outlined to them the wonderful scheme to save the reputation

of British boxing. And each one of the party caught his youthful enthusiasm, his excitement. George was in the seventh heaven of delight. The prospect of the tussle before him daunted him not a jot. Something seemed to tell him that he would give Anton Moreno the fight of his life.

In a whirlwind rush Matthew hurried the party into the private office. For a moment Moreno stared hard at George as he was introduced, and then he darted back. A flash of hatred came into those dark eyes; the lips parted over the even row of white teeth in a snarl.

"So this is de man I am to fight—eh?" asked Moreno, his voice trembling a little with rage and surprise. "I no fight him!"

"What! Are you afraid?" piped in Matthew, playing on the champion's conceit. "Anton Moreno," declared the champion, striking a massive fist on an equally massive chest, "is afraid of no man!"

"Then you'll fight," put in Sir Humphrey Dallas, "if it's only to avenge the insult of last night—eh?"

For a moment Moreno glared round at that little assembly, snarled at George, longingly eyed the tempting array of figures on the contract before him, and then turned to his manager.

"Vera well!" he said at length. "I fight him! I will avenge myself! I will kill him!"

"Hurrah!" cheered Matthew in a voice out of place with all this talk of killing. "Bravo, Moreno!"

The contracts were signed, and the world's champion departed with his manager, only pausing on the threshold to shake a violent fist at his future opponent.

"Meester Melton will be a thing of de past next Wednesday!" he hissed. "It will be de most savage fight de British public have ever seen!"

He concluded his boast with a lurid string of Mexican imprecations.

"Nice fellow!" said Matthew, when the door had closed on their visitors. "I hope



"So this is de man I am to fight, eh?" asked Moreno, his voice trembling with rage. "I no fight him!" "What, are you afraid?" piped in Matthew, playing on the champion's conceit. "Anton Moreno," declared the World's Champion, striking a massive fist on an equally massive chest, "is afraid of no man!" (See this page.)

you'll give him one for me, George, old scout!"

"You've done me the biggest service of your life!" said George. "My fate leads me to this half-breed scum, I know. I knew it the moment I clapped eyes on him. Sir Humphrey," he added, turning to the sporting baronet, "you've won your wager. I shall be in the ring within a year of the date I fought Johnny Cavendish."

"Hang the wager, my boy!" said the baronet, gripping George by the arm. "Go in and win! Go in and wrest the title from that sneaking Mexican! And, to suit a whim of mine, run down to Cobham and see Sandy. He'll go off his head about this latest engagement of yours."

"I will," said George. "I'm pretty fit, thank heavens, but I bet old Sandy will put me in the ring as trained as a racehorse by Wednesday next!"

"And before the fight takes place," suddenly remarked Ferrers Locke, "I've got some wonderful news to impart to you Meltons. I'll make the denouement an hour before the fight. It will give you a leg-up for the battle before you."

Two hours later the "Clarion" ran out a special edition. George was referred to as Britain's white hope. The news of the hurried contract, so unorthodox, so unexpected, and yet so welcome to those who held the prestige of British boxing at heart, came as the biggest shock of the year. Five hundred thousand copies of the "Clarion" sold like hot cakes, and still the machines were turning them out as fast as the newsboys demanded them. Verily, such a scoop had lifted the "Clarion" out of the rut of nonentities, and placed it on a pedestal in keeping with its successful contemporaries.

The chief slept the sleep of the just that night. Had he not doubled his circulation? Had he not been promised another "scoop" by Matthew when Ferrers Locke unfolded his tale at Belcher's on the following Wednesday? It was the grandest thing he had ever done when he had engaged Matthew Melton as a reporter. He had cast his bread upon the waters, and it had returned.

In the Melton household all was jubilation. Fate—that Fate which had mercilessly buffeted them hither and thither—was now sweeping them along in a warm embrace.

The Raid by Night!

OLD SANDY ROBSON welcomed George with open arms—welcomed the whole family, in fact. The combined room in Bloomsbury had been given up, farewell had been said to the skinny Mrs. Ogbin, and the Meltons, complete with baggage, shifted their quarters to the tiny cottage in Cobham that had sheltered them but a few months before.

Without delay, George went into strict training, entering into his work with a heartiness that brought the smiling wrinkles to Sandy's grizzled features. The slight puffiness that had accumulated on that massive frame of the elder Melton soon began to change into hard muscle. Newspaper reporters, who visited him at almost every hour of the day, went back to their offices highly satisfied with the exceptional progress Britain's white hope was making.

Cartoons featured the two principals in the forthcoming bouts. Melton and Moreno was on everyone's lips. In the enemy camp consternation reigned. Moreno's manager, who had a far insight into the character of "his man," knew that Anton feared the coming ordeal. Why, he could not see. But there it was. Much of the conceit and arrogance had departed from the champion of the world in a single day, and his manager was anxious.

"What's the trouble?" he inquired of Moreno.

The champion looked around him furtively, and then, bending his head, whispered a few words into his manager's ear. A harsh look crept into the face of the latter as he glanced up under drawn brows at the man who had never been knocked out in his life.

"If it's like that, Anton," he whispered in reply, "you had better leave things to me."

From that hour onward, two burly looking fellows took up quarters in Cobham. Their advent excited little comment amongst the villagers. But when old Sandy got to hear of their coming, he was suspicion personified.

"Can't help thinking, George," he confided, when the day's work was done, "that

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something fishy is on the tapis. Moreno's crowd are a dirty lot. I believe they would go to any lengths to secure a verdict in their favour on the night of the fight."

George laughed easily.

"Tut, tut, Sandy! You're a regular old woman for worrying! I tell you I'm going to enter the ring on Wednesday next a fit man. I'm going to thrash that Mexican scum within an inch of his life. If you were a betting man I would say put your shirt on me!"

Sandy shook his grizzled head.

"You've already had a taste of what some unscrupulous boxing folk will do to achieve their ends. It's up to us to be doubly careful on this journey!" he growled.

George shook the pessimistic remarks of old Sandy from him like water. He retired to rest that night with a mind free from anxiety. Even as he laid his head upon the pillow, however, a light gleamed up in a cottage not more than a quarter of a mile away from his shack.

As the yellow flame from the smoky oil-lamp gradually expanded, two fierce-visaged men looked at each other, and then turned to the bottles at their elbows.

"Drink up, mate!" said one hoarsely. "I'll give yer a toast. Here's to the success of our plan!"

"Ere's to it!" granted his companion, emptying his glass at a toss.

Two pairs of eyes sought the open window. Far out in the night could be seen a shadowy silhouette of a cottage in a direct line with their own. In that cottage the Meltons were deeply embraced in the arms of Morpheus. Only Sandy Robson was awake. Sitting at the garden seat in the porch, the old veteran puffed away at his briar, staring away unseeingly into the gloom, a victim to his own pessimistic thoughts.

"I'll watch him like a cat!" he muttered, taking a stronger pull at the briar. "They shan't get at him, if I know it."

But for all Sandy's watchfulness, he failed to observe two slinking forms that suddenly crept within hail of the cottage, failed to see that they separated, that one went to the rear of the cottage whilst the other remained silent, hidden by a thick hedge of hawthorn.

The silence of the night was suddenly broken by the subdued hoot of an owl. It appeared to come from behind the old trainer. He shivered slightly, and half rose to his feet.

Crack!

A few feet ahead of him there echoed out the sharp breaking of a twig. Sandy stopped, his heart-beats quickening, and peered into the gloom. He fancied he saw a shadow cast across the small patch of moonlight road that separated the cottage from a neighbouring meadow. He was not mistaken. It was a shadow, and the shadow moved. Gripping his stout ash stick tightly in his hand, Sandy advanced. Before he had taken half a dozen paces forward he heard the slight sound as of stealthily treading footsteps behind him. Pausing, his eyes expanding to their uttermost, the trainer took a tighter grip on his stick.

Then it came.

A dark shape leaped through the air, a pair of strong hands gripped Sandy's throat, stifling him, robbing him of his breath to shout for help. Down went the old trainer under the impact of that onslaught, fighting like an animal at bay.

Scarcely had he wrenched these terrible fingers away from his windpipe, however, when another shadowy shape loomed up out of the gloom. In two more seconds Sandy Robson was lying a limp wreck on the dew-capped grass. Over him stood two burly figures—the two newcomers to Cobham.

"He's all right, mate," whispered one of them. "He'll keep quiet for half an hour or more. I didn't hit him too hard, you fool!" he added, noting the horrified glance his companion gave to the sandbag that hung in his hand. "Come on!"

The two men trod stealthily to the door of the cottage, and crept inside.

"Upstairs?" One of them implied the question with a jerk of the thumb in the direction of the small landing overhead.

"No!" The reply was indicated by a vigorous shake of the head.

With infinite caution these two marauders stole past the tiny sitting-room on the first floor, until they came to the door that gave access to the twins' bed-room.

Without a creaking of the hinge, the door was softly swung inwards. A shaft of moonlight falling through the window revealed

the faces of Dicky and Marcus, deep in slumber.

With a nod to his companion the taller of the two men advanced to Dicky's bedside, and stood gazing down at his composed features. Suddenly Dicky startled his nocturnal visitors by viciously landing out with his youthful fist.

"That's got him, George!" came his subconscious voice. "Go for him! Dot him on the boko!"

The two visitors looked at each other in relief.

"Talking in his sleep," said one of them. "Thought he was awake, and going to biff me one."

Thereafter the two men went to work in strict silence. A choroloform-pad was pressed over Dicky's nostrils, whilst one of the mid-night marauders stood over Marcus' bed, a heavy sandbag poised ready in his hand, should the youngster awake.

"All ready, mate!" came a whispered remark through the gloom. "Let the young blighter wake up now!"

Dick's inert figure was taken from the bed, and the taller of the two men hoisted him across his broad shoulders. His companion suddenly shook Marcus by the shoulder, sufficient to awaken him.

Then, just as Dicky was being carried out through the doorway, Marcus caught sight of him. He rubbed his sleepy eyes in horror and amaze.

"Hi!" he exclaimed, throwing the bed-clothes from him. "What are you doing? Help! George—burglars! Help!"

The two burly individuals disappeared on the other side of the door as there came a sudden exclamation from overhead. The door was slammed in the face of Marcus, who had pluckily leaped to his brother's rescue, followed by the sound of hurried footsteps.

Shouting at the top of his voice, and drumming the panels of the door with his puny fists, Marcus was helpless to interfere. But overhead George had heard the commotion. He jumped out of bed with alacrity. His slippers were on his feet in a moment, a dressing-gown slung over his shoulders followed as a natural course. Then, excitement running through every fibre of his being, George unlocked the door of his bed-room. In his fumbling haste he took double the time that was necessary to turn the lock. He cursed Sandy Robson for insisting that he should sleep with his door locked.

And then it opened.

Taking the small staircase steps two at a time, he reached the door of the twins' bed-room. In a moment Marcus was explaining what had happened, so far as he was able.

Rushing outside, George was just in time to see the disappearing figures of two burly men. In his eagerness to follow, he stumbled over the prostrate figure of old Sandy, without heeding or noticing the fact. Along the narrow stretch of white moonlight road he could plainly see two men moving at the double. Across the shoulders of the foremost was a bulky burden, which George knew to be that of his brother. Yelling at the top of his voice, George gave chase, leaving Marcus, who had followed him, yards in the rear.

After a hundred yards had been traversed in this manner without George having gained on the kidnappers, the latter branched off abruptly across a meadow. Pounding along for all he was worth, George gradually drew nearer. His mind was concentrated on catching up with Dicky's captors, paying scant heed, if any at all, to the route he was following. A rising piece of ground successfully obscured his quarry from sight just when he had drawn within twenty yards of them. Without swerving from his course George raced on.

Then, of a sudden, he found his feet meeting nothing more solid than empty air. A cry of horror left his lips. Down, down he went, his legs wildly thrashing the air, his arms outflung instinctively, his eyes bulging from their sockets in an endeavour to piece together his surroundings.

Crash!

He brought up against something hard and solid, and all the breath was knocked out of his body. He felt an excruciating pain shoot through his left arm, bringing a stifled cry to his lips. Then all became a blank.

They found him three hours later, pale, and saturated with the heavy dew, his features drawn together in acute pain, his left arm hanging limply by his side.

"Good heavens!" gasped Sandy Robson tearfully. "The dastards! Are you all right, George?"

A feeble cry came up from the depths. Three anxious faces peered over Watson's disused chalk-pit, a lantern in Sandy's hand shedding its flickering rays to the bottom of the pit. They revealed the crouching, hunched figure of George Melton forty feet below.

"Hold on!" shouted Sandy, who had thoughtfully come prepared with a rope. "I'm coming down!"

Tying one end of the rope to a nearby tree, the old trainer looped the end about his middle, and signalled to Marcus and a tall woodman, who had been rudely awakened from his sleep and dragged to the spot, to lower him over the side of the pit. Then, paying out the rope, Marcus and the woodman lowered the old trainer to George's rescue. As soon as Sandy had touched bottom, he unfastened the rope and slipped it about George's shoulders. Then he yelled to the watchers overhead to haul him up. Within five minutes of Sandy's descent, both George and his trainer were standing on firm ground with Marcus and the woodman.

Without wasting time in asking questions, Sandy picked up George's stalwart figure, slung it across his shoulders, taking care not to damage the injured arm, however, and marched off towards the cottage.

At the door the party were met by Dicky.

"Oh, good heavens!" he gasped. "What—what—"

Taking no notice of the string of questions the youngster began to utter, old Sandy made George comfortable on the sofa. Yelling out instructions to the twins to attend to their brother in his absence, the trainer dashed out of the cottage.

He returned ten minutes later, accompanied by a grave-faced medico whom he had literally dragged from his bed. The doctor shook his head as he inspected George's damaged arm.

"It's a break!" he said gravely. "You'll never be able to enter the ring to-night, Mr. Melton."

The calm words of the medico spelt the death-knell to all Sandy Robson's hopes. He groaned aloud. The twins, by his side, blubbered. Only George seemed unperturbed. A flickering smile lighted up his features.

"You're wrong, doc," he said. "I mean to fight Anton Moreno to-night, if it kills me!"

"My dear young fellow," remonstrated the doctor, bandaging a splint to the damaged member, "you are talking nonsense—it's madness! Why, your left arm is useless to you!"

"I'm not talking out of my hat!" smiled George, a look of determination taking root in his face. "But I'll still give Anton Moreno the fight of his life."

The doctor smiled indulgently, and took his departure. But he whispered to old Sandy as he stood at the door of the porch:

"If Mr. Melton fights to-night with a wrist like that, and uses his left fist only once, it might mean an amputation for him."

"Oh, good Aunt Mariah!" groaned Sandy. "This is the foulest blow of all!"

He re-entered the sitting-room, and crossed over to George.

"Stop all the inquiries, Sandy!" smiled George, from amidst the pile of blankets the twins had planted round him. "And let me hear the story. The sight of Dicky here leaves me wondering whether I've been walking in my sleep."

"Don't joke about it!" said Sandy miserably. "There's little to tell, in all conscience. Marcus can tell it better than I can."

"I followed on your heels, George," said Marcus. "I saw the rotters swerve off suddenly in a circle, just before they reached the chalk-pit. Then, even as your cry went up, they put young Dicky in the grass, and hunked for their lives. I was beside myself with anxiety," added the youngster. "I didn't know whether to go to Dicky, or to follow after you. I know more about this neighbourhood than you do, and I had an inkling that we were near the old disused pit. When I reached the edge of it I knew the worst. I could hear you groaning down below. I called out to you, but you never answered."

"And he rushed back to Dicky, and carried him back to the cottage," said Sandy, taking up the story. "I had just come to, then—"

"What, had they outed you, too?" came the astonished ejaculation.

"Course they had!" said Sandy reproachfully. "You surely don't think that I slept in peace while all the row must have been going on?"



Without swerving from his course George raced on. Then, of a sudden, he found his feet meeting nothing more solid than empty air. A cry of horror left his lips. Down, down he went, his legs wildly thrashing the air, his arms outflung instinctively, his eyes bulging from their sockets. (See page 24.)

"Might have known you hadn't," apologised George. "Poor old Sandy!"

"You've all seen more of it than I have," suddenly chipped in Dicky. "I don't remember anything from the time I went to bed until I found Dicky shoving the bottle of smelling-salts under my nose. I've got a splitting head, though," he added ruefully. "And my pyjamas seem to reek of chloroform. Beats me, though, why they yanked me out of bed to drop me on the grass a few hundred yards away."

"I can see it all now!" groaned Sandy miserably. "The cunning scoundrels! They've worked to a cunning plan, and it's succeeded. They evidently knew that they couldn't get at you, George, directly; perhaps they feared the consequences. So they got at you through young Dicky. They banked on your following at their heels as soon as you found that Dicky had been kidnapped. That's why they aroused Marcus before they made their getaway—"

"For me to give the alarm," said Marcus. "Oh, the rotters!"

"They purposely led you along the track to the chalk-pit," continued Sandy, "for the lie of the land round about that vicinity meant almost certain success of the plan."

"You mean, they thought I would stumble over the edge of the pit," said George—"thought I would damage myself in some way?"

"Exactly!" granted Sandy. "A man can't drop forty feet unprepared without meeting with some injury. But the cleverness of it lies in the fact that your injury is your own doing, savvy? It's not the same as a gang of roughs laying you out with knuckle-dusters or sandbags. Bluntly speaking, from a point of law, you only had yourself to blame for tumbling over the chalk-pit."

"Gee, the scoundrels had it all cut and dried," said George grimly. "But I'll disappoint them yet. I take it that the rogues who led me this merry dance are in the pay of Moreno or his manager?"

"Sure thing!" said Sandy. "And they've earned their pay!"

"Not yet!" said George stoutly. "I tell you, Sandy, I'm going to fight to-night if it kills me! Nothing in the wide world short of police interference will stop me meeting Anton Moreno."

It was George's last word before he turned in for a long, deep sleep. Over his bed crouched the anxious figure of the old trainer and the twins. Commonsense urged them forcibly to detain George from

journeying up to town for the fight, pride and faith in a mysterious destiny urged the opposite.

And in the end commonsense yielded to faith.

The Evil Shadow!

AT half-past eight punctually George arrived at Belcher's Stadium in readiness for the bout that was billed to commence at nine-thirty. The news of his injury had thus far escaped the newspaper-men, although Matthew had all he could do to refrain from crying out in his columns the handicap under which George was determined to enter the ring.

Ferrers Locke and Sir Humphrey Dallas were glum. Despite their well-meant advice that it was madness for George to carry out his contract, each received the same answer as had Sandy and the twins.

"I'm going to fight if it kills me!"

"And I had planned a pleasant surprise for you all to-night, too," said Ferrers Locke regretfully. "I had arranged to present to you your 'evil shadow.'"

"Trot him out," said George. "If it's good news, Mr. Locke, I can do with it to-night. It will be a tonic for me."

"Very well," answered Ferrers Locke, "I will humour you. A police-inspector friend of mine has just shadowed into the building my quarry. He's had him under surveillance since six o'clock this morning. I'll signal him!"

The famous sleuth disappeared from the dressing-room, returning a few moments later with a satisfied smile on his face. Shortly afterwards there came a knock at the door. In answer to Sandy's surly invitation to enter, there appeared a man clad in evening-dress, whose cadaverous

features were at once recognisable to the Meltons.

"Justin Mahone!" gasped Dicky.

The Meltons' guardian darted back as if he had been stung.

"I thought, Mr. Pycroft," he said surlily to the man who accompanied him, "that you were going to introduce me to Anton Moreno!"

"My—or, rather, your little mistake," said the genial-faced C.I.D. man.

"Shut the door, Pycroft," said Locke grimly. "And put your back to it. Now, gentlemen," he added, turning chiefly to the Meltons, "gaze on as big a rogue as you'll ever see in your lifetime!"

"Wh-a-at!" exclaimed Mahone fiercely. "How dare you, sir!"

"This man," continued Locke unheeding, "was given the power of executor to your late father's will. This man, this hypocritical scoundrel, has allowed you almost to starve, when over a million pounds was standing to your credit!"

Justin Mahone's pale face grew even paler, his knees showed more than a slight tendency to rock.

"You lie!" he began fiercely.

"The game is up!" broke in Ferrers Locke coldly. "I've had you under surveillance for over a year, Mahone. Before I met the Meltons and learned their story, I was following a case in which a company promoter, under an assumed name, embezzled over twenty-eight thousand pounds, and simply faded out of existence. You, Mahone, alias Samson Destranger, are that man."

A gasp of despair escaped Mahone's thin lips. He glanced about him wildly, like a caged rat seeking a way of escape; but escape there was none.

"To revert to the Meltons' story," went on the great detective easily, "you lied to them when you said the shares of the gold-mine into which Murgatroyd Melton had placed his money were worthless. When you were telling them that those shares were worth only a shilling apiece you knew that in reality they were worth twenty pounds, if a penny. Oh, I know they were quoted at a shilling," he added, as Mahone was about to speak; "but that was a financial wangle, for which you and a scoundrelly mining engineer sent out to prospect the mine were responsible."

"But—but—" stammered Mahone.

"But who bought those shilling shares?" queried Locke suddenly. "Why, gentlemen, Mr. Mahone, the executor bought his own client's shares at a shilling when he knew them to be worth twenty pounds apiece—"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed George heatedly, clenching his right fist. "I always thought there was a shady seam to that talk of shares we had in the train."

"Listen," interrupted Locke. "There's more to come. The rascal having bought in the shares himself began to get frightened

—windy, as you boys would say. But the very eccentricity of your late father played into his hands. In the will Murgatroyd Melton left, he stated clearly that should any member of his family ever be guilty of a misdemeanour that should culminate in his being brought before a court of law, such a member would forfeit his share of the estate."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Matthew. "I'm beginning to see daylight now!"

"That is why, my boys, you were expelled from St. Bart's—" began Ferrers Locke.

"Wh-a-at?" gasped the twins. "Was Dr. Saunders in the plot, too?"

"He was," came the quiet answer.

"Mahone wanted to do his fell work before you twins came of age—that meant seven years in which to work for over a million pounds. It was worth it, at least Mahone thought so then. Thus, Dr. Saunders was dragged into his net of accomplices. You were expelled."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The second stage of the plot," went on the detective, "occurred at Sir Humphrey Dallas' place at Mayfair."

"The bogus robbery—"

"Exactly, Dicky," smiled Locke.

"Mahone was the thief on that occasion. Whether he had accomplices I have yet to discover. Anyhow, I know that he it was who handed George the box containing the stolen jewellery." The sleuth broke off and plunged his hand into his pocket. "Does this belong to you, Mahone?" he asked, holding up to the light a peculiar-shaped emerald ring.

Mahone's dry lips moved, but no word came.

"Of course it does," spoke up the Meltons in unison. Well they recognised that ring. Had not their own father worn it in the days gone by?

"I was standing next to George at about the time Mahone shoved the box into his hands," said Locke calmly. "Evidently he mistook me for George, for he pushed the box into my hands. Instinctively I caught hold of Mahone's hands, and in the 'bump' this ring slipped off—"

"Oh, oh—" Mahone's voice had returned only to die a sudden death. He eyed the ring with fear and trembling in his eyes and cursed himself for ever having worn it—it had always been too large for his skinny finger.

"Plot, part three!" continued Ferrers Locke quietly, "concerns Matthew's debut as a footer player. The half-back who brought about his downfall was in the pay of this scoundrel, likewise a section of the unruly crowd lining the ropes. The half-back, by the way"—he added significantly—"is now in gaol wondering how and why he got there."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Matthew.

"Again, the bogus telegram George received on the evening of his fight against Cavendish was the work of Mahone and his agents. Rumours had been put round that George was going to sell the fight, and the outcome of the telegram gave the finishing touch to that regrettable triumph. Mahone banked on the proprietors of the building prosecuting you, George, which they certainly would have done but for your good friend here Sir Humphrey—"

"Oh!" gasped George. "I never knew of that—many thanks, Sir Humphrey!"

The sporting baronet made a gesture with his hands, signalling for Locke to continue. The sleuth resumed his story.

"Now we come to young Dicky. You remember he secured a job with Simpkin, Watson, and Riley? You do! Right, perhaps the wording of the advertisement passed you by—"

"You mean the fact that Dicky's boss was advertising for a public schoolboy to fill the job of office boy in his firm?" broke in George triumphantly. "How many public schoolboys are looking for work at the age of fourteen?"

"Your perspicuity does you credit," smiled Locke. "That advert. was worded to catch Dicky's eye and none other. You see the managing director of Simpkin, Watson and Riley is and was Mr. Justin Mahone!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

"And Benjamin Thornton, the cashier's clerk, under whom Dicky directly worked," said the great detective, "is a distant nephew of this scoundrel!"

"Glad I got even with him, then," grunted Dicky.

"Benjamin Thornton was given the task of making you out to be a thief," continued Locke. "But for the fact that you answered a telephone call by mistake, Dicky, there's not the slightest doubt that you would have stood in the dock accused of embezzlement. The mere fact that you had stayed away all day from the office after having been sent to pay some money into the bank would have ranked against you. Mahone, with all his scoundrelly agents working for your downfall, knew the result he desired would have been a certainty. In other words a trip to Borstal for you."

"I think in the foregoing I have named enough crimes to keep Mr. Mahone a guest of H.M. Government for twenty years or so. Far from disgracing the Meltons and robbing them of their inheritance Justin Mahone has shown to the world four wonderful specimens of grit, character, and strength. Away with him, Pycroft."

The burly C.I.D. detective unceremoniously jerked Justin Mahone's shrinking

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ONE PENNY

figure to the upright position. A pair of handcuffs glinted in his hands for a moment—the next and they had encircled the wrists of the biggest rogue the Meltons were likely to see in their lifetime.

Without a word, but shaking in every limb as though with the ague, Justin Mahone was escorted out of the dressing-room, a doomed man. And the Meltons, in whom the milk of human kindness flowed with more than average strength, could scarce refrain from pleading for his miserable carcase.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," said Ferrers Locke firmly. "But your pity and sympathy are wasted on that scoundrel. He has ruined more hearts and homes than any criminal of my acquaintance. He must pay the penalty. And now"—as the brothers piled their thanks upon him in an unbroken flow—"I must leave you. George here, needs a rest. I know Sandy has a special way of sending his fighting men to sleep just before they enter the ring. He's dying to practise it on you now."

And with a kindly smile the world's greatest detective, accompanied by the sporting baronet, silently withdrew.

The brothers immediately fell to discussing the sudden change in their fortunes, but old Sandy speedily put a stop to it.

"Out of it, you kids," he growled. "George is going to take a nap before he meets this Mexican half breed scum and—"

"Let Marcus stay," pleaded George. "I want him to sing to me. What with your banjo, Sandy, and Marcus' mellow voice, I'll forget all this exciting news and sleep like a log. But Marcus must stay, you hear—must!"

"Very well," growled Sandy. "Have it your own way. It's a night when old Sandy has got to give in to everything you say."

Marcus treated his big brother to a grateful glance. He had not forgotten his promise—uttered idly at the time, it was true—that Marcus should sing him to sleep before his next big fight. The words were not idly uttered now, however. If there was one person who could always make George forget the cares and worries of the world it was young Marcus when he burst into song.

Inside ten minutes George was stretched on the divan in the dressing-room, his lids half-closed. Sandy was strumming softly a pleasant melody. Ringing out clearly above it, yet full of mellowness and soulful meaning, young Marcus was singing the "song of his life." Sweet and pure rose the notes in harmony with the chords from the banjo. And the combination had the desired effect. A happy smile curved about the face of George Melton, his breathing became deep and regular—and he slept.

White Hope!

"SECONDS out of the ring"—Gong! A hush fell upon the vast assembly at Belcher's when the "brrr-re" of the gong had ceased to echo. The big fight—the fight for a world's championship was about to begin.

The spectators had wondered at the delay that had taken place during the inspection of bandages. Little did they know at the time that George's wrist, set for the special occasion in plaster-of-Paris, had aroused comment from the officials. Little did they understand the incredulous expressions that crossed the features of those same officials when George explained that his wrist was broken.

But it was too late now to call off the fight. George had reckoned on escaping notice until the last minute, and he had not counted in vain.

He advanced to the centre of the ring, adopting the usual poise, left arm half-crooked extended in front of him, his right moving piston-fashion across his ribs. On the face of his opponent there was a peculiar expression—half wonderment, half-suppressed fear. Obviously Anton Moreno had never expected to fight this baby-faced giant. His agents had reported the success of their plan.

Something—something evidently had gone wrong. But the champion heavyweight of the world had little time to ponder over this miscarriage of his plans, for George, with a deadly, determined smile upon his smooth features, was taking the aggressive. Thud—thud!

"THE TRIALS OF STORRYDENE VILLA!"



An amusing incident from next week's opening story of this grand FOOTER SERIES. By WALTER EDWARDS.

Mind you start with No. 1, boys!

Two blows, the second following after a second's interval on the first, took Moreno flush on the jaw and the heart respectively. He grunted with pain as they connected and then danced back out of danger. Now the vast audience at Belcher's saw something of the champion's true quality. He at once became aggressor after that initial onslaught and fairly drove his opponent round the ring.

"Use your left!"

The cry echoed out from all quarters as George now, ever on the retreat, was apparently content to let his left arm hang extended in front of him without once using it.

Round one concluded with the audience on their feet shouting expletives, jeering, booing the "British White Hope." He had taken a thrashing in that one round such as no other man pitted against Moreno had ever undergone. Only pluck kept him on his feet. But the public wanted skill besides pluck. Then, as the following rounds were fought out, whisper by whisper it spread around that giant arena that George was fighting with a broken wrist. As unexpected and sudden as a storm in the tropics so changed the roars of dissension to roars of applause and encouragement. Undoubtedly George's left arm was useless. He had never used it once. And this was the fifth round. Five rounds of gruelling battle had the White Hope kept his opponent at bay with but one arm. It was glorious—it was unparalleled—it was BRITISH!

Now it was that Anton Moreno's real character came uppermost. He knew now that George was fighting with a damaged arm or wrist, and he purposely went out of his way further to injure that member. One particular hefty blow George took on his left glove. A spasm of pain racked his features, sending them white as death. But he kept his feet; his pluck was magnificent. Eight rounds he stood up to this champion from over the water, taking punishment like a solid rock upon which could be left no impression. People were standing on their feet cheering; the hall rang unceasingly to the cheers, although the officials tried their utmost to keep order.

It must not be taken for granted that Apton Moreno escaped punishment. Far from it. His right eye had entirely closed, his thin lips were gashed, his even row of teeth were even no longer. This was the biggest battle of his career—and against a one-armed man, figuratively speaking. Deep

down in him Moreno was troubled by that "yellow streak" which had been discovered when George had pitched him into the gutter in Piccadilly. He had sworn to "kill" this man, and yet the killing was scarcely a one-sided affair.

Old Sandy, in his corner, was mournful and jubilant in turns.

"Oh, George," he muttered, fanning the towel vigorously, "if you could only have the use of your left to land it once!"

George smiled. Despite the severe hammering he had received his confidence in himself, in his destiny, was unabashed.

"Don't worry, Sandy," he reassured. "I'm going to win—to win in this round!"

It was not conceit; a man with one arm useless is not given to conceit. It was an instinctive confidence.

Round 9 started off with George standing up to his man toe to toe, taking all that came his way and hitting back as fast as his muscles would allow him. Moreno was worried; he was beginning to get unnerved. He fought with the ferocity of a tiger, but still that smiling, battered face peered up at him. Then, retreating from a furious advance of George's whirling right, the champion was hemmed into a corner. He side-stepped out of danger, however, and floored his man with a terrific left-arm swing.

"He's down!"

"He's up again!"

The cries intermingled as George, refusing to take advantage of the count, jumped to his feet, and sailed into the attack again. Streaks of crimson were streaming down his face, his eyes—still smiling—were half-closed, his lips terribly gashed. Something in him awoke suddenly. He seemed like a giant refreshed, possessed of superhuman strength and energy. Into his man he went, hammering blows at Moreno's body and face at the rate of one a second. Now there was no pretence at a guard. His left arm hung useless at his side. But was it useless?

Smack!

A terrific right connected with a dull thud on Moreno's jaw, sending him tottering and away.

"Now!" shrieked Sandy.

Smack!

To the horror and amaze of the vast audience, George was seen to swing back his left fist—the broken wrist!

It landed like a ten-ton steam-hammer on Moreno's body just below the heart.

(Continued on next page.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 872.



(Continued from previous page.)

"He's down!"

Down Anton Moreno undoubtedly was. He sank to the floor like a felled ox, and lay still—dreadfully still. Not one syllable of the "count" did he hear; not one imprecation from the vulgar lips of his manager penetrated his dazed brain.

Until the urgings, the appeals, of his party of followers. Anton Moreno was a world's champion no longer. As the referee counted him out, he merely stirred slightly and groaned. Thus had the mighty fallen!

But his vanquisher—what of him? See, he stands swaying slightly from the hips. That fixed smile is still there, although a background of agony mars its original purpose. 'Tis the smile of a man who has gone all out—of a man on the verge of collapse.

The left arm hangs more limply at his side, the head gradually droops, a great shiver passes through that massive frame. Nature is claiming its compensation. But a rugged figure suddenly darts out through the ropes, a cry of agony falling from his lips. 'Tis old Sandy Robson, the tears falling unchecked down his grizzled face.

He has turned out a champion, after all—a world's champion. Poor Sandy! He gathers up that unconscious figure in his

sturdy arms; his tears of joy and grief mingle freely with the great daubs of crimson on that battered face.

And the cheers! Why, they could be heard outside the building a mile away!

"White Hope!"

That was the name they gave George Melton the name he was known by ever afterward. He had saved Britain's prestige in the boxing-ring. He had fought his last fight. For a grave-faced medico, called in to examine him, sorrowfully declared that he would be maimed for life. That left arm would ever hang limply at his side.

In the joy of returning consciousness, however, George regarded that possibility as infinitesimal. He had won! He had proved himself!

What a story it made for the "Daily Clarion"—that fight! What a story also did the secret history of Justin Mahone reveal to a trusting public! And how well those sturdy Melton brothers figured in it! No longer "Four Against the World"—for the world now accepted the Meltons as true and sturdy sons. Their gallant fight against adversity made historic reading for many a day; while in the months to come pedestrians, observing those Melton brothers, would point out the broad, tall figure of the elder brother as the man who had "hammered" all the conceit and arrogance out of Anton Moreno—as the man who had restored the heavy-weight title to Britain at the cost of a maimed arm; the man who had begun and closed a famous boxing career as White Hope!

THE END.

(Don't miss the opening chapters of a splendid series of footer stories—"The Trials of Stordene Villa"—billed to start next week. Each yarn is complete in itself, boys, and shows Mr. Walter Edwards at the top of his form.)



OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

Next Monday's issue of the MAGNET will set the ball rolling with our Free Gift Scheme. In addition to a bumper programme of stories and a simple competition, each copy of the paper will be accompanied by a gorgeous Free Photogravure Plate of H.M.S. Hood—battle-cruiser. It will be remembered by my chums that the Hood was the flagship of Sir Frederick Field, who was in command of the Special Service Squadron that recently visited the Dominions. The ships concerned were away from home waters for a period of ten months.

On their return the Mayor and Corporation of Plymouth turned out to welcome them. A splendid welcome also awaits our series of Free Plates depicting the absolute latest types of warships at present in commission in the Royal Navy. The MAGNET "cruise" will be launched by H.M.S. Hood next Monday, and will extend over a period of twelve weeks. Each plate is a triumph in itself, measuring nine and a half inches by six and a half inches.

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