

"A FORTUNE AT STAKE!"

This Week's Special Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

No. 1,087. Vol. XXXIV.

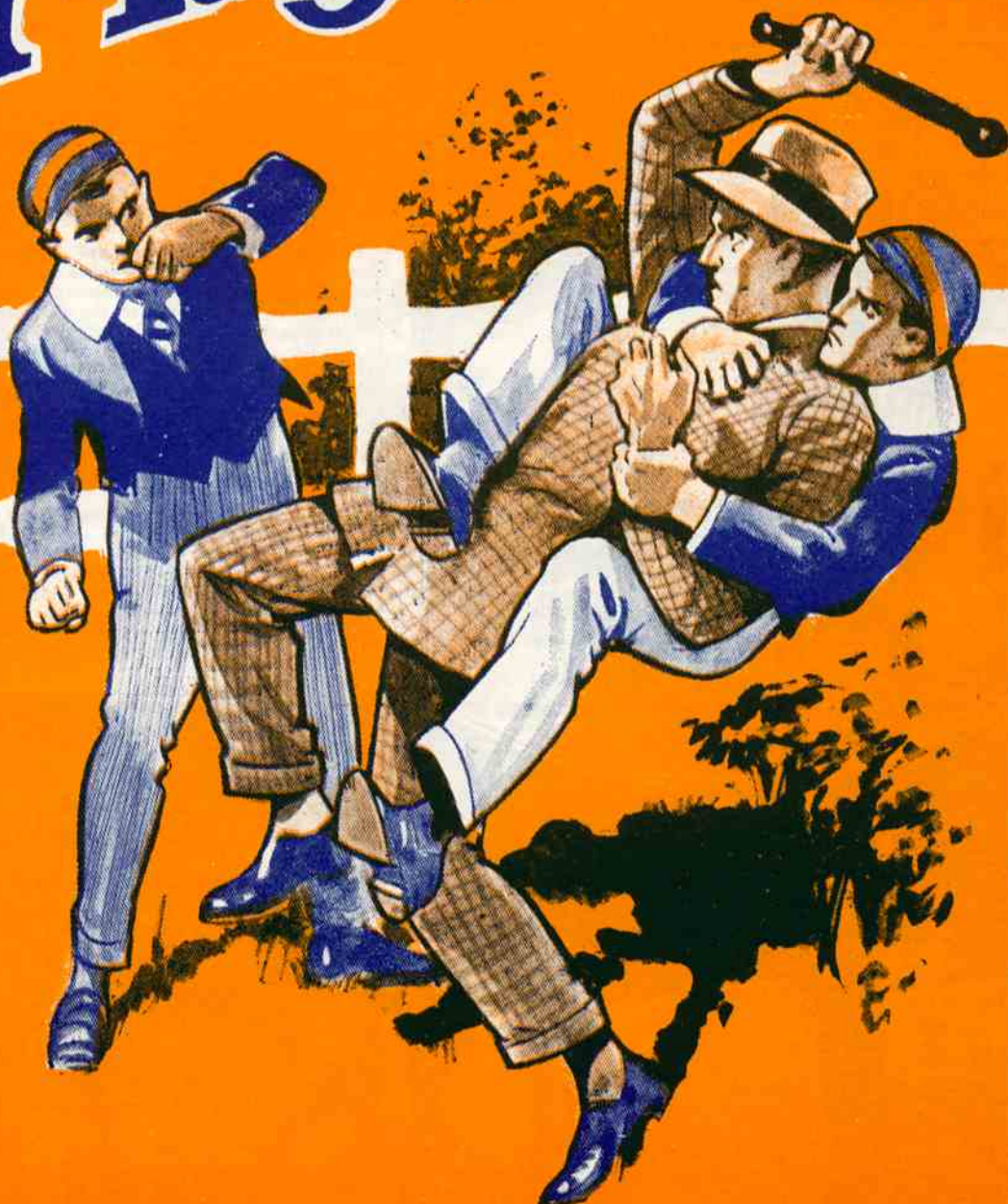
Week Ending July 28th, 1928.

The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



TO THE RESCUE OF HIS CHUM!

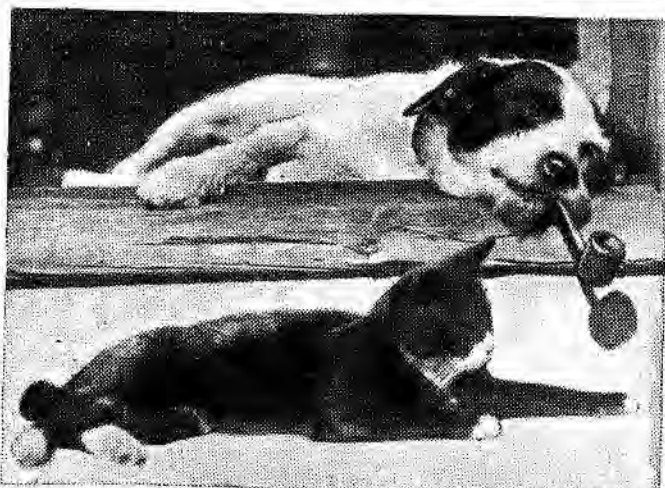
(A vivid incident taken from this week's gripping school story of the Chums of Greyfriars.)

News Pars and Pictures!

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THE PIPE OF PEACE!

Cats and dogs are usually sworn enemies, but, as in everything else, there are exceptions. Here's one. Perhaps the pipe has something to do with it—perhaps not! This amusing animal snapshot was taken in a Leytonstone garden.

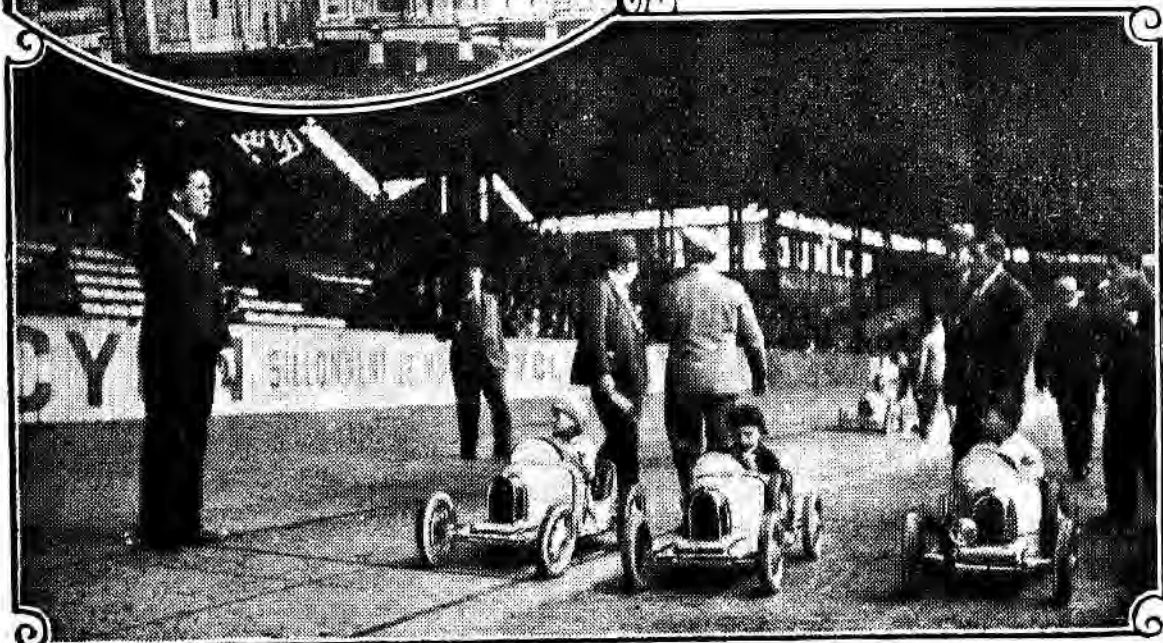
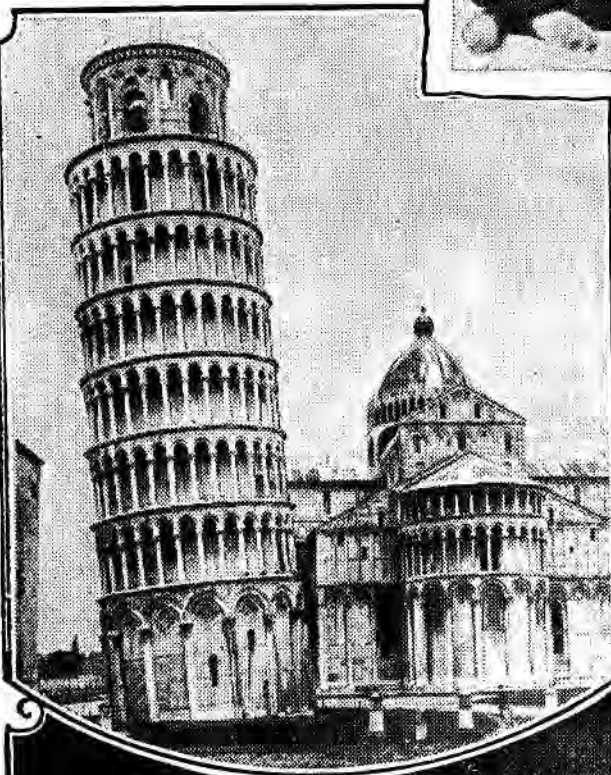


STRAIGHTENING THE LEANING TOWER!

Practically everybody has heard of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, in Italy. But, sad to relate, in a few years hence there will be no Leaning Tower. For work has now commenced on the straightening of this famous building, which, having fallen away to an angle of 10 degrees owing to a subsidence of the earth, has been adjudged dangerous. The straightening process, which can only be done gradually, will take many years to complete.

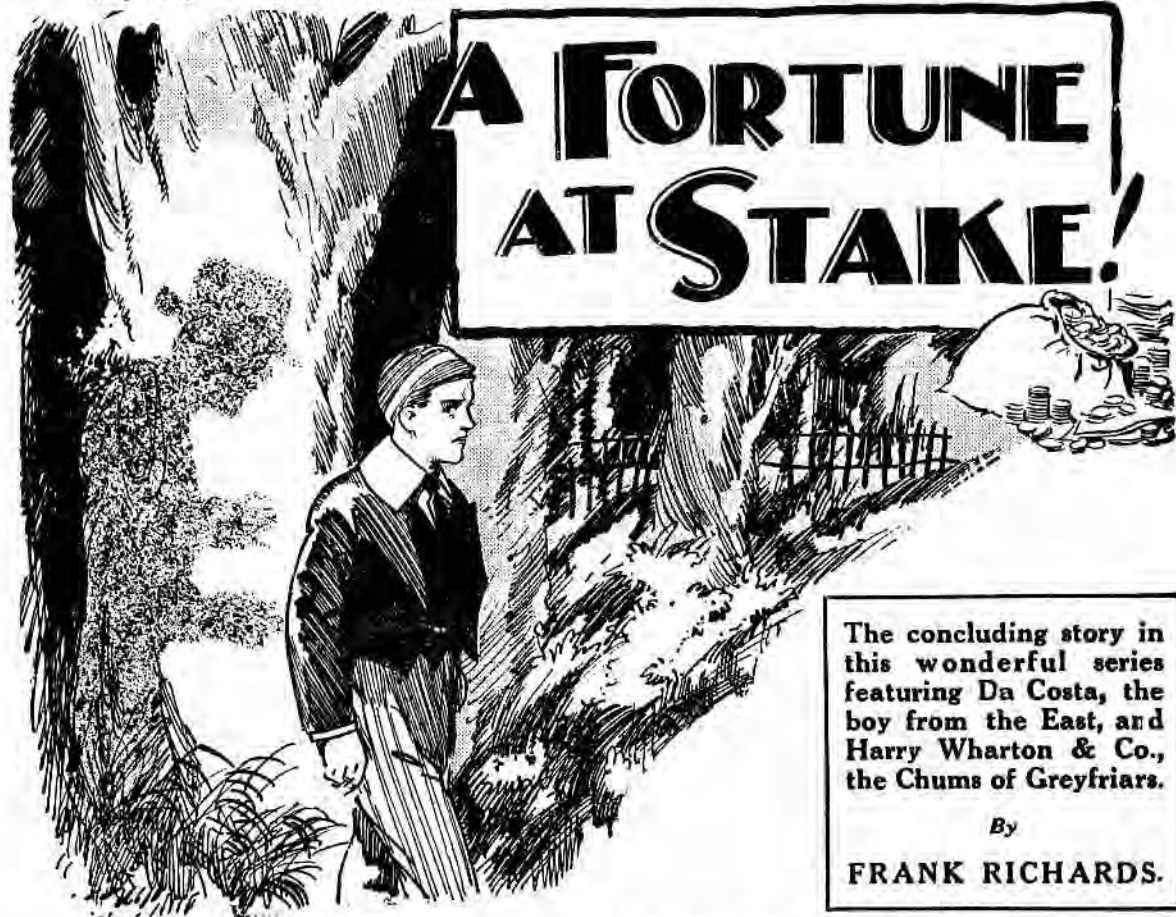
A MINIATURE GRAND PRIX!

There was held recently an automobile race at the Stad Buffalo, near Paris, in which children in miniature racers were the competitors. The sight of these grimly determined youngsters "hurtling" round the track caused endless amusement and excitement among the spectators. Our photograph shows Georges Carpentier, the famous ex-boxing champion, firing the starting gun.



THE FINAL TEST! If any further evidence is needed that Da Costa, once Harry Wharton's bitterest enemy, is now his friend, that evidence is supplied when Da Costa risks his life for the sake of his new-found chum!

A FORTUNE AT STAKE!



The concluding story in this wonderful series featuring Da Costa, the boy from the East, and Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Being Kind to Bunter!

BULLY Boy!" Harry Wharton glanced round.

"Snooker Pool!"

Wharton gazed fixedly at Billy Bunter.

"Gay Colt!"

"My only hat!" murmured the captain of the Remove.

Billy Bunter was sprawling in the window-seat on the Remove landing. He was too deeply immersed in his thoughts to notice, or heed, the captain of the Remove. In his fat hand he held a little paper-covered book, upon which he was bestowing a deep attention that he never bestowed on school books. As he scanned that little book, William George Bunter was muttering to himself, with a thoughtful, anxious wrinkle in his fat brow.

Bunter looked as a fellow might have looked who was deep in a mathematical problem. But evidently Bunter was not deep in maths. What was the matter with him was rather a mystery; unless the Owl of the Remove was going out of his mind. All the Remove would have agreed that he had not far to go.

"Bully Boy!" repeated Bunter thoughtfully.

"What's that game?" inquired Wharton.

Bunter started, and looked up quickly. He blinked at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles, and hastily concealed the little volume under his jacket.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What are you mumbling about?"

"Nothing! I—I was just going over my Virgil," said Bunter hastily. "Quelchy was rather down on me in class this morning, so I'm—I'm having a dig at Latin, you know."

Harry Wharton laughed. Most fellows in the Greyfriars Remove were no better acquainted with P. Vergilius Maro than they could possibly help. But any fellow in the Form would have said that such characters as Bully Boy, Snooker Pool, and Gay Colt did not figure in the Æneid.

As a matter of fact, as the captain of the Remove realised after a moment's thought, those peculiar names could only belong to racehorses, from which circumstance he was able to guess the nature of the little book that Billy Bunter had so hastily concealed from sight.

"What have you got there, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Nothing."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Mind your own business, you know!" said Bunter warmly. "No bizney of yours if a fellow likes to have a little flutter. Not that I'm having a flutter, of course. I'm doing Latin."

"Let's see the book, and I'll help you with the Latin."

Bunter did not accept that generous offer.

"The—the fact is, I—I don't want any help, you know," he explained. "I can play your head off at Latin, same as I could at cricket, if I was given a chance in the matches. I say, isn't that Bob Cherry calling you, old chap?"

Wharton sat down in the window-seat beside William George Bunter. His

face was rather serious now. Of late, William George Bunter had astonished the Greyfriars Remove by developing sporting proclivities. Everybody agreed that William George's room was immensely preferable to his company; but, on the other hand, nobody wanted to see him sacked. So the captain of the Remove took a kindly interest in the matter. He jerked the little book out from under Bunter's jacket, and there was a yell of wrathful protest from the Owl of the Remove.

"Beast! Gimme my book!"

Wharton held up the little book out of Bunter's reach, and looked at it. It bore the attractive title of "Sure Snips: The Sporting Tipster's Weekly Racing Guide." It was open at the page that dealt with racing at Wapshot, a few miles from Greyfriars; and that, evidently, was the subject that had so deeply interested the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove.

"You footling chump!" said Harry. "What would Quelchey say if he saw this precious rubbish?"

"Blow Quelchey!"

Bunter made a grab at the book, and missed. He turned a glare on the captain of the Remove that almost cracked his spectacles.

"You cheeky beast! Gimme my book!" he howled.

"Where did you get it?" demanded Wharton. As the price of the book was sixpence, he did not think it likely that Bunter had purchased it. Bunter's sixpences generally found their way to the tuckshop.

"Find out!" snorted Bunter.

"That's why I'm asking you, old fat

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man. If somebody gave you this book, I'm going to punch his head," explained Wharton.

"Beast! I picked it up," confessed Bunter. "That fellow Ponsonby of Highcliffe dropped it. At least, he chucked it away. It's a jolly good book. Of course, you wouldn't understand. You ain't sporting. I dare say you've never backed a geo in your life!" said Bunter, with crushing contempt.

"Never!" grinned Wharton. "Well, if you want a sure snip for next Wednesday at Wapshot, put your shirt on Bully Boy!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" There was a serious side of Billy Bunter's latest development as a reckless sporting man. Two or three times of late he had had rather narrow escapes of bagging a flogging, but luck had befriended him—fool's luck, according to Bob Cherry. But there was no doubt that Bunter, as a reckless sportsman, had his comic side, too. The suggestion of putting his shirt on Bully Boy for Wednesday's race made Wharton roar.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" growled Bunter. "I can tell you, Bully Boy is a jolly good thing! So is Snooker Pool, and Gay Colt is good for a place. My idea is to back Bully Boy both ways—"

"Eh?" "Win and place, you know," explained Bunter.

"You know all about it," chuckled Wharton.

Bunter smirked.

"Yes, rather! I'm rather a dab at spotting winners!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wharton. "I can see you rolling off with the bookmaker's cash. Bookmakers live on their losses, don't they?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bunter. "Look here, if my postal-order comes in time, and if I can find a man to put my money on Bully Boy, and if he gets home, I shall make a jolly good thing out of it!"

"Rather a lot of ifs!" remarked Wharton. "And can't you do it without this encyclopedia of useless knowledge?"

"Well, no. You see that book gives the weights, and the names of the jockeys, and the records of the gee-gees, and so on. I fancy Bully Boy, but I've got to go into it carefully before I back him. Suppose Snooker Pool pulled it off, after all, you see? Or Gay Colt? Or Mutton Chop? I'm going into the thing carefully."

"Then this book is really indispensable, before you can back your fancy?"

"Yes."

"That settles it!" said Wharton, as he slipped the "Sporting Tipster's Racing Guide" into his pocket, and rose from the window-seat. "That's an easy way of stopping you from playing the giddy ox, and asking for the sack. Good-bye!"

"Gimme my book!" shrieked Bunter, in consternation.

The vision of boundless wealth that had danced before Bunter's eyes—if he backed the right horse—vanished, as he saw that mine of priceless information disappear into Wharton's pocket. Bunter had not yet made up his fat mind as to the various claims of Bully Boy, Snooker Pool, Gay Colt, Mutton Chop, and the other geegees. It was, as he had said, a matter that required care. Spotting winners was not exactly an easy task. Whole tribes of bookmakers lived in luxurious plenty at the expense of people who believed that they knew how to spot winners. Bunter had great confidence in himself, but he knew that winners required some spotting!

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He rolled off the window-seat, and rushed after the captain of the Remove. Without that precious guide to the form of the various "gees," Bunter did not feel at all sure of spotting a winner. Even with its aid, it was really doubtful whether Bunter would have spotted one.

"Gimme my book, you beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Ask again at the end of the term, old fat man! In the holidays your pater can lick you for playing the goat: but in term time you're liable to get bukked," explained Wharton.

"Gimme that book, you beast!"

"Good-bye."

The captain of the Remove walked away to No. 1 Study.

William George Bunter was not a fighting man. But there are times when even the worm will turn. A lioness robbed of her cubs was something like the Owl of the Remove deprived of his infallible guide to spotting winners. He rushed after Wharton and collared him, and the captain of the Remove, taken by surprise, came to the floor with a crash.

"Ow!" gasped Wharton. "Oh, my hat! Why, you fat frog—ow!"

"Gimme that book! I—I—I'll jolly well lick you if you don't!" gasped Bunter.

The next moment Wharton was on his feet, and it was William George Bunter who was on the floor.

Tap, tap, tap! It sounded like a carpenter at work; but it was only William George Bunter's bullet head tapping the floor of the Remove passage.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

"There, you fat ass!" gasped Wharton.

"Yaroooooogh!"

The captain of the Remove went into No. 1 Study—still with the priceless guide to winners in his possession. But William George Bunter did not follow him further. He sat in the Remove passage and rubbed his head. For the present, Billy Bunter had something else to think about: and he rubbed his head and spluttered, and forgot all about spotting winners.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Pal!

"ORDER!" said Bob Cherry impressively.

"What—?"

"I never see Pon's head," explained Bob, "without wanting to punch it. I know you fellows feel the same. And the more Pon's head is punched, the better—as a rule! But on the present occasion, my beloved 'eaters, as we're going over to Highcliffe to tea, and Pon disgraces Highcliffe by belonging to it, let him rip."

Six juniors of the Greyfriars Remove were sauntering along a path across Courtfield common, the short cut to Highcliffe School on the other side. They were following a path that wound among hawthorns and willows: and Bob Cherry's remark was called forth by the sight of an elegant junior, who appeared in view among the thickets. It was Cecil Ponsonby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe; and he was occupied in a way that might have been expected of him—blowing little clouds of smoke from the cigarette he was smoking. As his face was partly turned from the Greyfriars fellows, he did not observe their approach, as their footsteps made no sound on the thick grass.

The Famous Five were walking over to Highcliffe for tea, and taking Arthur

da Costa, the Eurasian junior, with them. They were going to tea with Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, their friends at Highcliffe; and on such an occasion it was, as Bob remarked, judicious to avoid trouble with their Highcliffe enemy, Ponsonby. So there was a general nod of assent as Bob expounded his views—unusually pacific for Robert Cherry, for undoubtedly Bob felt a powerful desire to punch Pon's head whenever he beheld the same.

"Let him rip!" said Nugent. "We don't want a row with Pon."

"The ripfulness is the proper caper," assented Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us give him a friendly and absurd smile, and greet him good-afternoonfully."

"Smoky boulder!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Who is he?" asked Da Costa, glancing at the elegant figure lounging among the trees. Pon appeared to be in conversation with some other person, who was as yet hidden from sight by the hawthorns.

"Highcliffe cad," said Harry Wharton. "We have lots of rows with him and his friends—but we don't want a row to-day. Not that Pon would be likely to hunt trouble now—he likes to have the odds on his side in a scrap."

"Best behaviour!" said Bob Cherry. "Highcliffe rags are barred to-day—positively for one occasion only."

The Greyfriars juniors walked on the path leading them towards Ponsonby, and past the opening in the thickets where he stood. They could hear his voice as they came nearer; but could not yet see to whom he was speaking. But as they drew quite near, Ponsonby heard them, and glanced round. He frowned at the sight of the chums of Greyfriars, and immediately turned his back on them again. With the odds against him, Pon certainly was not hunting for trouble; but it was his way to make himself as unpleasant as he could. The way he turned his back was contemptuous, and distinctly irritating; and Bob Cherry paused for a moment, the expression on his face indicating that he had forgotten his pacific intentions.

"Come on," said Harry.

"After all, why not punch his head?" said Bob.

"Oh, bother his head," said the captain of the Remove. "Bother him from head to foot! Come on; we're due at Highcliffe."

Bob grunted, and the juniors walked on. They were passing within six paces of the dandy of Highcliffe; among the trees at the side of the path, and as they came abreast of him, their eyes fell upon the individual to whom he was speaking. Harry Wharton came to a sudden halt then, and his comrades followed his example. All of them knew the dark-faced, narrow-eyed man who stood leaning against a tree with a cigar in his mouth.

"Captain Marker!" exclaimed Harry.

"Still hanging about here!" said Johnny Bull. "What he wants is another ragging."

The man with the cigar gave a sudden start, as his eyes fell on the Greyfriars juniors.

His narrow eyes glinted at them. It was little more than a week since the chums of the Remove had given Captain Marker the ragging of his life; and their impression had been that the man from India would clear out of the neighbourhood of Greyfriars. Evidently that had been a mistaken impression.

"He has not gone, then!" said Da Costa. "I knew that he would not go! I told you that he would not go."

"You did!" said Harry. "But I



Billy Bunter rushed after Wharton and collared him, and the captain of the Remove, taken by surprise, went to the floor with a crash. "Ow!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! Why, you fat frog—ow!" "Gimme my book!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'll jolly well lick you if you don't!" (See Chapter 1.)

thought the blackguard was gone! I've a jolly good mind—" He paused.

"Rag the cad again," said Bob. "The ragfulness had better be terrific," remarked Hurreo Janiset Ram Singh. "Let us make an esteemed and absurd example of him."

Ponsonby looked round, with an insolent smile on his face.

"You men want anythin'?" he asked. "If not, will you be good enough to clear? You're not wanted here, you know."

Wharton made a step towards him. Captain Marker gritted his teeth, and gripped a heavy Malacca cane he carried under his arm. He seemed to be anticipating trouble. But Wharton did not speak to him; he addressed Ponsonby. He did not like Pon; in fact, he disliked him considerably; but he felt bound to let even the blackguard of Highcliffe know what kind of man he had become acquainted with.

"Just a word, Ponsonby," said Harry, quietly. "That man you seem to have picked up with is Captain Marker—"

"I know that." "A rotter, a rank outsider, and a thorough scoundrel," said Wharton, in the same quiet tone.

Ponsonby stared at him. "You cheeky rotter—" he began. "What the thump are you buttin' into my bizney for?"

"I'm not going to butt in," said Harry. "I'm warning you that you've made the acquaintance of a thorough rascal, very nearly a criminal. It's only fair to tell you so, as I suppose you don't know the kind of rotter he is."

"My friend Marker is an army captain, home from India on leave," said the Highcliffe junior, staring at Wharton.

"Your friend Marker has come from India, to carry out as dirty a trick as any pickpocket ever thought of," answered Harry. "But I've said enough to you—if you've got any sense, you'll keep clear of him, but you can suit yourself, of course. I warn you to keep out of what's going to happen now—we're going to rag him."

Captain Marker's eyes glinted, and he gripped the Malacca harder. He had expected trouble as soon as he saw the chums of the Remove: and his expectations were to be realised.

"What the thump do you mean?" shouted Ponsonby angrily.

"I mean that that rotter is hanging about Greyfriars to play dirty tricks, and we're going to stop him!" answered Harry.

"You'll clear off and mind your own business!"

"This is our business, dear man!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We've made it a rule that that rotter is to be ragged till he's fed up with this part of the country. If he doesn't like it, he can complain to our headmaster. We're quite ready for that."

Ponsonby stared at the Greyfriars juniors, and looked at Captain Marker, obviously puzzled as well as angered. It was in the billiards-room at the Three Fishers that Pon had made the valuable acquaintance of the captain, and he had found Eric Marker a man quite to his taste. But it was plain that he knew

nothing of the captain's connection with Harry Wharton of Greyfriars.

Taking no further notice of the dandy of Highcliffe, Harry Wharton & Co. gave their attention to Marker. He lifted his stick as the juniors circled round him, with determined looks.

"Stand back, you young scoundrels," said Marker between his teeth. "I warn you that you will get hurt—"

"Collar him!"

"Get out of this, you cads!" shouted Ponsonby furiously.

The juniors did not heed Ponsonby. They closed in on Captain Marker and, with a savage face, he struck furiously with the heavy Malacca. The blow was aimed at Bob Cherry, who was foremost in the rush, but Bob dodged it and closed in, tackling the man from India at close quarters. The next moment five more pairs of hands were laid on Marker, and he went to the ground with a crash.

He struggled fiercely in the grasp of the Greyfriars juniors.

"Help me!" he panted.

Ponsonby stared at the scene in amazement and anger for a moment or two, and then he rushed in to help the captain. Bob Cherry gave a roar as he received Pon's fist on his ear.

"Ow!" He released the captain and turned on Ponsonby.

"You will have it, then!" he exclaimed. "You fellows, you handle that rotter, and leave Pon to me!"

"What-ho!"

And Ponsonby, fighting furiously, was driven back under Bob's hefty attack, while the rest of the Co. proceeded to deal faithfully with the man from India.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Thrashed!

CAPTAIN MARKER struggled fiercely. But the odds were too heavy for him, and he was pinned, struggling, in the thick grass. Arthur da Costa caught up the Malacca cane he had dropped.

"Stand clear!" he panted.
"Go it!" chuckled Wharton.

Johnny Bull and Nugent held the captain's wrists, Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh his feet, and he was extended face down in the grass. He wriggled and struggled wildly, but the grip on his limbs was like iron, and there was no escape for him. Da Costa, with a glitter in his black eyes, lifted the thick cane. Captain Marker was very favourably placed for a flogging, and a flogging was what he was going to get. Ponsonby, giving more and more ground before Bob Cherry's attack, was already at a distance, his nose streaming crimson, his breath coming in panting gasps. Probably, by that time, Pon repeated that he had come to the aid of his friend the captain.

There was a terrific yell from the captain as the thick Malacca cane came down.

"You young scoundrels!" he roared.
"Release me! By gad—I—I—"

Whack!

"Yooop!"

Whack!

The captain struggled frantically. He was a powerfully-built man, but he was not in good condition, and he had no chance of getting loose. As he struggled and yelled, the Malacca cane came down again and again. Arthur da Costa putting all his beef into it. The Eurasian's feelings towards the man from India were more bitter than the Famous Five. It was Captain Marker who had sent him to Greyfriars, tempting him by the promise of a dazzling reward to enter into the plot for the ruin of Harry Wharton. It was Captain Marker to whom he owed it that he had almost sunk into crime. What he had done, what he had attempted to do, filled the Eurasian with loathing for himself when he thought of it, so great a change had come over him since he had been at Greyfriars. And it was the captain who had striven to jeer away his repentance; to force him by threats to keep to the path of iniquity.

The captain's presence in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School showed that the plot to rob Harry Wharton of a fortune was still in his mind. Da Costa had failed him, and he had taken the matter in hand himself. What he could do—what he imagined he could do—the juniors could not guess; but that he was plotting evil they knew only too well.

Da Costa lashed with the cane, and lashed and lashed again. Four juniors held the struggling man under castigation.

It was a drastic method of dealing with the schemer, but, as Wharton had said, it was open to him to complain to the headmaster of Greyfriars if he liked. Wharton was quite prepared to explain the matter to Dr. Locke, if the captain chose to take that step—not that the man from India was likely to do so.

"That will do," said Harry at last, and Da Costa, breathless, tossed the Malacca away over the tree-tops.

The juniors released Marker. He squirmed over, and sat up in the grass, his face white and drawn with rage, his eyes glittering like a snake's, his breath coming in spasmodic gasps.

"You—you—you—" he panted.
Wharton fixed his eyes upon him.

"That's another lesson for you, you cur!" he said contemptuously. "Take the matter further if you like. If you don't get away from Greyfriars, you'll get the same every time you're spotted about here!"

The captain's answer was a furious oath.

"What do you think you can do, hanging about here?" went on the captain of the Remove, scornfully. "You get the money under Mr. Cortolvin's will if I am disgraced and expelled from the school. I get it if I keep a clean record. What do you think you can do? Your game is known—my uncle, Colonel Wharton, is consulting his solicitors about it—even if you could do anything, you couldn't keep it dark now that you'd had a hand in it. Before I knew your game you had a chance. Now Da Costa's turned you down, you have no chance at all. But you're keeping on—your hanging about here shows that you're keeping on. Well, every time we come across you, you'll get a lesson like this—you'll get fed up in the long run, I fancy."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Johnny Bull. "The fed upfulness will probably be terrific in the esteemed long run," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Captain Marker gritted his teeth. "I'll make you suffer for this!" he said in a choking voice.

"Better give him a few more!" suggested Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That will do! Let's get on."

And the juniors left the spot—leaving the man from India gasping on the grass.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry rejoined his chums. He was a little out of breath, and he was rubbing his knuckles, but looked very cheerful.

"Where's Pon?" asked Harry.

"Taking a rest under the trees yonder," grinned Bob. "He says he doesn't want any more, and I suppose he knows best."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got a jolly tough boko," said Bob. "I've barked my knuckles on it. Still, I daresay his nose feels worse than my knuckles!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked along the path, and in a few minutes passed the spot where Ponsonby was taking a rest, as Bob described it. The dandy of Highcliffe lay in the grass, completely winded, and clasp his nose with one hand and a discoloured eye with the other. He gave the chums of the Remove a savage glare as they passed him, but said nothing—evidently he did not want any more trouble.

The chums of the Remove arrived at Highcliffe and were greeted cheerily by Courtenay and the Caterpillar. They were at tea in Study No. 4 with the Highcliffe chums when Smithson of the Fourth looked into the study with a grinning face.

"You men seen Pon?" asked Smithson.

Courtenay looked round.

"No; anything happened?"

"Collision with a motor-car, I think," grinned Smithson. "Pon's nose looks as if he had been butting into a lorry."

And Smithson chuckled and went on his way. The chums of the Remove looked a little conscious; they had not mentioned the happening on Courtfield Common. The Caterpillar's glance dwelt on them and rested for a moment on Bob's right hand, which Bob hastily dropped into a pocket.

"Poor old Pon!" sighed the Caterpillar. "I wonder what he butted his nose against."

"I—I wonder!" murmured Bob.

Harry Wharton hastily changed the conversation. When the Greyfriars fellows were leaving, a damaged face and a discoloured eye glared at them from a study window—the window of

Pon's study. Ponsonby spent the remainder of that afternoon bathing his eye and his nose, and nursing thoughts of vengeance.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Taking Care of Bunter!

"WHAT—"

"Oh!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He spun round in alarm. Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from Highcliffe. They came up to the Remove passage in a cheery crowd; and Wharton threw open the door of Study No. 1. Then he sighted Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"What are you doing here, you fat boulder?" demanded Frank Nugent indignantly.

"N-n-nothing!" gasped Bunter.

As the Owl of the Remove had been standing at Wharton's desk, and had turned suddenly from it, leaving a drawer open, it was fairly clear that he had been investigating.

"You fat worm!" said the captain of the Remove. "What have you been rooting into my desk for?"

"Bump him!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Collar the esteemed and preposterous fathead!"

Bunter dodged round the table.

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know! I'm jolly well going to look for my book if I like. I've a jolly good mind to complain to Quelch about Wharton pinching my book."

"What?" ejaculated Harry.

"My book!" snorted Bunter. "You've got it here somewhere. I want it. You've no right to pinch it."

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What is the fat chump burbling about?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Are you off your rocker, Bunter?"

"Wharton knows!" said the Owl of the Remove, with an accusing blink at Wharton. "He knows he pinched my book. I'd ask Quelch to make him hand it over, only I'm too kind-hearted to get him into a row for pinching it."

"Potty, I suppose," said Johnny Bull.

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"It's a giddy racing guide," he explained. "Bunter's studying the form of geegees to back them at Wapshot. I should like to see Quelch's face if Bunter told him about it."

"Well, of course, I'm not going to tell him," said Bunter. "I wouldn't give a fellow away, even for pinching. Still, I want the book. I was looking for it. Hand it over!"

"Fathead!"

"What right have you got to butt in?" roared Bunter wrathfully. "You cheeky chump, you've got no right to interfere."

"None at all!" conceded the captain of the Remove. "It's not a right, but a duty! I leave it to you fellows. Isn't it the duty of the sensible to lend a hand to the silly—"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Of the sane to look after the insane?"

"Hear, hear!"

"You—you—you cheeky idiot!" gasped Bunter.

"So that's settled, fatty," said the captain of the Remove. "I've taken away that rubbish to keep you from making a fool of yourself—Nature did

enough in that line without you adding to it. You see, this is my self-denial week. It would be simply ripping for you to be bunked—think how nice Greyfriars would be without you."

"You beast!"

"And yet I'm going to save you from it if I can. If that isn't self-denial, I should like to know what is."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The self-denialfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter should express terrific thankfulness."

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter.

"So Bunter's still a roty dog, is he?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will get kicked out of the school at this rate," said Harry Wharton. "It would be no loss so far as Greyfriars is concerned—"

"Beast!"

"But think of his people's feelings when he came home for good! How would they bear it? We're bound to think of them, if Bunter doesn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So as a tip what it's like to be kicked out of Greyfriars, I propose to kick Bunter out of this study," said Harry. "It's no good talking to him—and besides, actions speak louder than words."

"Good egg!"

"Ready, Bunter?"

"You—you—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I— Here, leggo! Hands off! I'll jolly well lick you! Yarooogh!"

William George Bunter was collared and jerked to the doorway. He wriggled there in the grasp of the juniors.

"Leggo!" he roared. "I'm going! I—I want to go! I—I don't want that book! I—I make you a present of it! Leggo!"

"Hold him!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll take the penalty kick! Keep him still while I land it."

"Yarooogh!"

Bob Cherry backed across to the farther side of the study, to take a little run before delivering the kick. Bunter, held by the enemy, wriggled in the doorway in deep apprehension.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Keep still, Bunter!" remonstrated Johnny Bull. "If you wriggle about like that, one of us may get the kick by mistake."

"I say, you fellows, leggo!" wailed Bunter. "Yarooogh! Help! Yooop! I say, Peter! Rescue—rescue! Yarooogh!"

Peter Todd, coming up the Remove passage from the stairs, paused to look into the study.

"What's this game?" he inquired.

"Yarooogh! Help!"

"Stand clear, Toddy!" called out Bob. "I'm going to land Bunter right across the passage with one kick. Ready, Bunter?"

"Yarooogh!"

Peter Todd chuckled. He could see—though William George Bunter could not—that a jest was in progress; and that Bob Cherry had no intention of landing the terrific kick that the Owl of the Remove was anticipating.

"Go it!" he said cheerily. "I'll pick up the pieces!"

"Yarooogh! Help! Beast! Whoop!"

"Here goes!" said Bob.

He took a little run, and his trampling footsteps behind Bunter made the fat junior quake with terror. Bunter wriggled frantically in anticipation of the terrific kick which, had Bob delivered it, certainly would have damaged Bunter considerably. But at the same moment, the grinning juniors

let go; and Bunter plunged out of the doorway into the passage unlicked.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"Come back, Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry. "What do you mean? You haven't had your kick!"

"Beast!"

Bunter did not come back. He fled along the Remove passage and bolted into Study No. 7 like a fat rabbit into a burrow. A roar of laughter followed him. Peter Todd went chuckling into his study, and found Bunter gasping there in the armchair.

"Keep the beasts off, Peter!" gasped Bunter.

"Fathead! They were only pulling your silly leg!" answered Peter.

"Oh! Ain't they coming?"

"No, ass!"

"They jolly well know better!" said Bunter. "I'd jolly well lick them if they did! I've a good mind to go back and lick them now. Of course, I knew it was only a lark. I say, Peter, Wharton's pinched something belonging to me."

"What?" roared Peter.

"Don't yell at a fellow," said Bunter peevishly. "Wharton's pinched my racing guide—Sure Snips, you know. He makes out that he's bagged it on my account—like his thumping cheek—no bizney of his. I say, Peter, you go and get it away from him, and I'll give you a ripping good tip for the race on Wednesday at Wapshot! Honest Injun! I'll get a man to put the money on for you! See?"

Peter Todd gazed at his fat study-mate. Then he glanced round the study and picked up a cricket-stump from a corner.

"That's right," said Bunter eagerly. "Take a stump to him, Peter, old chap. Give him a jolly good licking! Here, I say—yarooogh—wharrior you at?" roared Bunter. "I said lick Wharton, not lick me, you silly ass! Yooop! Yarooogh! Oh crumbs!"

And William George Bunter departed from Study No. 7 as hastily as he had entered it, getting a lick from the stump as he went. Peter Todd grinned as he tossed the stump into a corner again, and Billy's wild yell floated back from the Remove passage. The path of a "roty dog" in the Greyfriars Remove was a thorny one.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night!

CAPTAIN MARKER dropped lightly from the old wall into the Cloisters, stood quite still, and listened. It was an hour after midnight, and all Greyfriars lay still and silent. The last light had been extinguished; the last door had closed. A wind from the sea wailed softly among the old stone pillars of the ancient Cloisters.

The man who had dropped from the wall stood for long minutes, listening, watching. It was Eric Marker who had entered the precincts of Greyfriars like a thief in the night; but anyone who had seen him would hardly have recognised him. A thick moustache and beard half hid his face, and a loose cap was pulled down deep over his brows. For long minutes the disguised schemer stood listening, with beating heart; but at last he stirred and moved silently and cautiously along the Cloisters. From shadow to shadow the dim figure glided, till he stood close under the ivied wall of the House. And there he paused again, a long pause, staring up at the many windows.

All was still and silent. In the great building all were sleeping. But Eric Marker's heart was beating sharply. There was risk in what he was going to do—terrible risk. If he was discovered within the school at that hour of the

(Continued on next page.)

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night, having entered it like a thief, he would scarcely be judged as anything but a thief, and would certainly be handed over to the police. But the time had come for him to take risks, if he was not to abandon his dastardly scheme entirely. He had counted on the Eurasian to carry out his plans—and Da Costa had turned him down. Only desperate measures were left to the man from India.

Under the will of the old Calcutta merchant, Harry Wharton was to inherit a great legacy—on the condition that he kept a clean record. That was the condition of the legacy—a condition that the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was likely to fulfil easily enough—with fair play. But if he failed, that great legacy went to Eric Marker—and it was foul play that he had to expect from the dissipated spendthrift who was up to his ears in debt. If Wharton was expelled from Greyfriars, Captain Marker, in spite of reckless waste and extravagance, would be a rich man again. And matters were coming to a climax now. The captain's scheme was known—Da Costa had told all he knew; Colonel Wharton knew of the whole dastardly plot; and though legal proof might be difficult to come by, the captain's position was growing perilous.

What measures Wharton's uncle, the colonel, might be taking, he did not know; but he feared. To give up his scheme meant bankruptcy to the spendthrift; and while a chance remained he would not give it up. But he was driven now to taking desperate chances.

He scanned the many windows, and his eyes fixed at last on the window of Study No. 1 in the Remove. Captain Marker had visited Greyfriars only once, and on that occasion he had been nowhere near the Remove passage. But his acquaintance with Ponsonby of Highcliffe had stood him in good stead. Pon had friends at Greyfriars—Angel of the Fourth, and Skinner of the Remove. Many times Pon had visited the school and dropped into Skinner's study in the Remove passage. From Ponsonby, the captain had learned all that he needed to know; and in the clear starlight of the summer night, he counted the windows, and picked out that of Wharton's study.

He tried his weight on the thick ivy that clung to the wall, and found that it bore him easily. It was not a difficult climb to an active and determined man—and Marker was both. Slowly, steadily, he worked his way up, finding hand-hold and foothold in the thick tendrils of the ivy that had clung and thickened on the wall for centuries. But he was breathing hard when he reached the wide stone sill of the window of Study No. 1, and he was glad to crouch there and rest.

But he stirred again very soon.

The study window was fastened with a simple catch, and it was quickly forced back, and Marker raised the sash.

A few moments more, and he was standing inside the study.

Starlight glimmered in at the window giving him plenty of light for what he wanted to do.

He glanced quickly about the room.

The old oak desk in the corner, carefully described to him by Ponsonby, met his eye at once.

He stepped towards it softly.

He ran his hands over it, and felt the locks of the half-dozen drawers. One of them came open at once—it was a drawer that contained notepaper and

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such things, and was evidently in frequent use. The other drawers were locked.

Once more the midnight intruder paused to listen. But there was no sound in the sleeping school.

From his pocket the disguised rascal drew a bunch of keys. One after another he tried them on the locks of the desk.

A drawer came open under his hand at last. The captain examined the contents—old letters and papers, the sort of lumber that was likely to accumulate during the term. Obviously that drawer was not often used; and it exactly suited Marker's purpose. He drew from an inside pocket a tiny object that glittered and sparkled in the starlight; and the next moment it was thrust out of sight under the old papers in the drawer, and the drawer was closed and relocked.

Captain Marker drew a deep breath. He had accomplished the mysterious object for which he had entered the school so surreptitiously while all slept. It only remained to go—undiscovered.

Quietly he drew himself out of the window, and closed the sash after him. The fastening he could not close from the outside; but that was a trifle. If anyone chanced to notice in the morning that the sash was unfastened, it could only be supposed that it had been left so overnight. Having closed the sash down firmly, he swung himself on the thick ivy and descended to the ground.

Like a shadow he flitted away, and the dusk of the summer night swallowed him.

Five minutes later Captain Marker was outside the precincts of the school and walking swiftly towards Courtfield Common.

In the shadow of the bushes by the path over the common, the captain removed the false beard and moustache and thrust them into his pocket. Then he walked across the dark expanse as far as the Wapshot Road, where, in a shadowy corner, a little car was waiting. A few minutes more, and the car was humming away towards Redclyffe, the captain at the wheel, a gleam of triumph in his narrow eyes. After many failures, he had succeeded at last; it was the last throw of the dice, and he did not see how it could fail. He had a confederate now who was not likely to repent and turn him down as Arthur da Costa had done. At long last the success of his dastardly scheming seemed to be within the schemer's grasp.

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THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby Causes A Surprise!

"WHAT rot!" That was Gadsby's opinion. "Utter rot!" said Monson. Ponsonby shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm goin'!" he said.

"But—" said Gadsby and Monson together.

"It's up to me," explained Ponsonby. He passed his hand over the eye that still showed a dark shade. "It was all a misunderstanding" the other day. I've thought it over, and my belief is that Wharton meant to be doin' me a good turn. I cut up rusty—misunderstandin' him. It's been rather on my mind since."

Gadsby and Monson stared at him. They simply could not understand. That Ponsonby's feelings towards Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, were bitter and vengeful, they knew only too well. That he would stop at

little, or nothing, to repay Harry Wharton & Co. for what he had received at their hands, there was no doubt whatever. So his present attitude was hard to understand.

"It's simple enough!" exclaimed Ponsonby impatiently. "The fellow found me talkin' to a man he fancied was a bad lot, and he gave me a tip on the subject. I cut up rusty without reason, and there was a row. I don't like the fellow, as you know; but that's no reason for not givin' him his due. I'm goin' to speak to him, and tell him I'm sorry I didn't take his tip a bit more reasonably. Any decent fellow would."

"I dare say, but—" Gadsby broke off.

As he was Pon's pal, he did not express his opinion that what was to be expected from a decent fellow, was not to be expected from Ponsonby.

"Well, come along with me!" said Pon. "A walk over to Greyfriars won't hurt us."

"Oh, all right!"

The three juniors of Highcliffe walked out of the gates. Cecil Ponsonby sauntered along the road with the air of a fellow who was quite at ease with himself; but Gadsby and Monson looked at one another several times in doubt and uneasiness.

"Look here, Pon!" exclaimed Gadsby, at last. "What are you really goin' over to Greyfriars for?"

"I've told you."

"I mean the real reason."

"I suppose it's somethin' up against those cads," said Monson. "If it is, we're with you all the way. But you might let a fellow know. Look here, I'm not doin' any scrappin' at Greyfriars! We don't want to walk into the place, and ask for a raggin'."

"I tell you I'm goin' to see Wharton and speak civilly to him. I feel that I didn't treat him well when he meant to be good-natured. And I'm goin' to tell him so."

"Oh, if you stick to that—"

"It's a fact, dear boy."

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!" grunted Monson.

Evidently Pon's pals took the liberty of doubting his word on that subject. But if Pon was not telling the truth, it was rather difficult to guess why he was going over to Greyfriars at all. Certainly Pon was not the fellow to seek the enemy in the enemy's camp with hostile intentions. He could not be going over for a scrap. Gadsby and Monson felt that there was something "on"; but they had to admit that it was too deep for them. They were quite willing to back up their leader in any move against the chums of Greyfriars, and were not at all particular as to the means. But Gadsby and Monson had their limits. And had they known what was passing in Pon's mind at the present moment, they would have turned back instantly to Highcliffe. Ponsonby knew just how much to confide to his comrades.

The Highcliffians arrived at the gates of Greyfriars, Gadsby and Monson still wondering and uneasy, Pon airy and cheery.

The school gates were open, and several Greyfriars fellows were passing in and out. Some of them looked rather curiously at the Highcliffians as they stopped in the gateway—especially at Pon's shady eye.

Ponsonby called to a Remove fellow.

"Hallo, Ogilvy!"

"Hallo!" returned Ogilvy briefly.

Ogilvy of the Remove had no liking for the nuts of Highcliffe, and he was passing on, when Pon spoke again.

"Hold on a minute! I've called to see Wharton!"

"Well, you can cut in, if you like, I suppose," answered Ogilvy. "No charge for admission."

"Not like the other zoo—what?" asked Gadsby blandly.

Ogilvy looked at him.

"Shut up, Gaddy!" exclaimed Ponsonby hastily. "We haven't come here to rag. Look here, Ogilvy, I want to speak to Wharton. But I don't want to go in. There's been a lot of ragging, and I don't want it to begin again here. If you'd give Wharton the tip, he'd come down to the gates."

Ogilvy paused. He did not want to carry messages for Ponsonby, but the Highcliffe fellow's manner was so civil that the Removeite felt bound to answer civilly.

"The fact is, we had a bit of a scrap the other day," said Ponsonby, in his most engaging manner. "I misunderstood somethin' that Wharton said to me, and cut up rusty. We're not friends; but I'm willin' to own up when I'm in the wrong, and I owe Wharton an apology, and I'm here to make it."

"Oh!" ejaculated Ogilvy.

"I'd be no end obliged if you'd give him the tip that I'm waitin' here to speak to him."

"Oh, all right!"

And Robert Donald Ogilvy went in at the gates. Gadsby and Monson looked expressively at their leader.

"If you're thinkin' of gettin' Wharton here and pilin' on him, Pon, forget it," said Gadsby. "We're not takin' a hand in it, I can tell you."

"No jolly fear!" said Monson emphatically. "Why, we'd have a mob of the beasts on our necks in a jiffy!"

"I keep on tellin' you that I haven't come over here for trouble," said Ponsonby. "I'm goin' to be civil, and, if Wharton's civil, too, there won't be any row. If there's trouble, you fellows keep clear of it, and leave me to handle him on my own."

"We jolly well will!" said Gadsby.

"You bet!" said Monson.

The three Highcliffians waited outside the gates. So far as Gadsby and Monson could see, there was no reason whatever why Ponsonby should not have entered the school; but no doubt Pon had his reasons. Apparently, Ogilvy was some time delivering his message, for it was ten minutes or more before Harry Wharton came down to the gates.

Wharton came at last, with a very surprised expression on his face.

Ogilvy had delivered the message, and it had astonished the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at cricket practice on Little Side. And Harry had not been particularly willing to leave the ground. He was putting his men through their paces, with a view to the approaching match with St. Jim's. However, as Ponsonby had sent him so pacific a message, the captain of the Remove decided to see him.

Pon, who was leaning elegantly against one of the ancient stone pillars of the gateway, detached himself from it as Harry Wharton appeared.

"Hallo!" said Wharton, with a nod. "Ogilvy says you wanted to speak to me, Ponsonby. What is it?"

"I owe you an apology, and I've called to make it," said Ponsonby gracefully. "Hope I'm not interruptin' anythin' important?"

"Well, the fellows are at games practice," said Harry. "But it's all right. If you mean what you say, I'm glad to hear it."

He regarded Ponsonby with a puzzled



Harry Wharton & Co. were about to leave Highcliffe when a damaged face and a discoloured eye glared at them from a study window—the window of Ponsonby's study. "How's the eye, old bean?" called out Bob Cherry cheerily. Ponsonby did not answer, but the gleam in his eyes showed that he was nursing thoughts

of vengeance.
(See Chapter 3.)

expression. If Ponsonby was really serious in what he said, undoubtedly Wharton was glad to hear it. But he knew Pon too well to trust him lightly.

"The fact is, I was in the wrong the other day on Courtfield Common," said Ponsonby, with an air of great frankness. "Thinkin' over it afterwards, I thought that you meant to be good-natured in givin' me that tip. You weren't just raggin' as I thought at the time."

"That's quite true," said Harry.

"Well, I'm sorry there was a misunderstanding, that's all," said Pon. "I dare say the matter's of no great consequence, but I wanted to get it off my mind. I got the worst of the trouble, so you hadn't really much to grumble at. Still, I was in the wrong, and I wanted to say so."

"It's all right," said Wharton, in great astonishment. "That man you were speaking to is a thoroughly bad hat, Ponsonby, and we had a good reason for handling him as we did. You may be sure of that, from his letting the matter drop afterwards—he dare not come here and speak to Dr. Locke about it. I'm sorry there was any trouble with you."

Ponsonby nodded cheerily.

"I've no doubt you're right, Wharton," he answered. "I never saw the man before or since, and never knew anythin' about him—I don't expect ever to meet him again. He's nothin' to me, of course—merely a chance acquaintance I happened to pick up. Did you say you were at games practice?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Your return match with Highcliffe

is gettin' near due," remarked Ponsonby. "You'll find Highcliffe in great form when you come over. How are your men shaping?"

"Oh, pretty good!" said Harry, more and more astonished by Pon's genial cordiality, and wondering whether he had, after all, done that superb youth an injustice, in his opinion of him. "We'll give Highcliffe a good game, I hope."

"Any harm in a fellow lookin' on and seein' how they shape?"

"Not at all; come right along, if you like."

Wharton spoke cordially enough; he had no objection whatever to Ponsonby watching the Remove at games practice; indeed, if Pon was taking any interest in cricket at all, it was a sign of grace that Wharton was glad to see. Certainly, cricket was a better thing for Pon than backing horses and playing billiards, out of bounds, and smoking, and slacking, and "rotting" generally.

"Come along, you men," said Pon to his two almost dazed comrades; and the three Highcliffians went in with the captain of the Remove, and walked down to Little Side with him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Inexplicable!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"What the dickens—"
"It's Ponsonby!"
"Well, my hat!"

The crowd of Remove fellows on Little Side stared at Wharton as he
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came along with Ponsonby & Co. Pon sometimes dropped in at Greyfriars to see Skinner, or Angel of the Fourth; but to see him on friendly terms with the captain of the Remove was a novelty and a surprise.

Wharton himself was puzzled. Knowing Pon as he did, he could not help thinking there might be some trickery under Pon's bland geniality; but for the life of him he could not spot it. How Pon could have any secret purpose to serve by paying this visit was inexplicable—so inexplicable that Wharton felt rather ashamed of the suspicion. But if it was genuine, he was glad of it. His friendship with Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe made him only too willing to cease the incessant trouble with Ponsonby & Co. if he could—that feud with a section of the Highcliffe Fourth often made matters very awkward with his friends there. He was never likely to be friends with Ponsonby; but there was no reason why they should be enemies, if Pon could only forget his bitter malice and rancour—as he seemed to be doing now.

Anyhow, there seemed no harm in being civil when Pon was civil, even if it was only a temporary lapse on Pon's part into decency.

Bob Cherry stared at Pon blankly. Ponsonby's face still showed very plain signs of Bob's hefty knuckles. But the dandy of Highcliffe seemed to have forgotten all offences, and he nodded to Bob as cordially as if they had been old friends. And Bob could only gasp.

"Where's that wonderful man you've got, that I've heard such a lot about, Wharton?" asked Ponsonby. "I'd like to see him if he's here. Terrific bowler, I've heard."

"Yes, he's here," said Harry. "Terrific bowler and batsman, too! Send down a few to Smithy, Da Costa."

"Yes," said the Eurasian.

Da Costa's dark eyes dwelt on Ponsonby for a moment or two in scrutiny. Arthur da Costa had changed greatly since he had come to Greyfriars; still more greatly since he had become a friend of Harry Wharton. But if he had lost his wily unscrupulousness, he had not lost his subtle keenness. The glance he gave Pon was keen and penetrating, and it made the dandy of Highcliffe uneasy for a moment.

Vernon-Smith stood up to the bowling from the Eurasian, and Ponsonby watched him with apparent interest. The Eurasian, a born cricketer, was well worth watching with bat or ball; he was the best man in Wharton's eleven, and he was in great form now. Gadsby and Monson, feeling extremely uncomfortable in the surroundings, stood with sheepish grins on their faces, wondering what Pon's game was, and wishing they had not come with him. They were anxious to get away; but Ponsonby seemed quite at his ease.

The practice went on, Ponsonby watching with interest, and Gadsby and Monson shifting from one leg to another in growing discomfort. Harry Wharton remained with the visitors, and, in spite of his distrust of Ponsonby, he found himself answering Pon's genial remarks quite cheerily. Pon seemed to be trying to make up for past shortcomings by an excess of engaging cordiality; and Wharton was really less puzzled than Gadsby and Monson, who could not conceal their surprise and uneasiness. They had a feeling that all this would end in a row, somehow, and they did not want a row in the enemy's camp.

"Well, I suppose I must be goin'," said Ponsonby at last regretfully. "I shall tell Courtenay that he will have to pull up his socks if he thinks he's goin' to beat your crowd, Wharton. Will you walk a little way with us? Some of the fellows mayn't know that this is just a friendly call—and we don't want any trouble here."

Wharton smiled.

"Right-ho! I'll see you off the ground, if you like."

He walked away with the Highcliffians. Ponsonby glanced at Gadsby and Monson, whose haugdog air only too plainly proclaimed their uneasiness.

"You men cut on ahead," he said. "I've got something to say to Wharton."

"Oh, all right!"

Gadsby and Monson were not sorry to cut on ahead; a friendly attitude in the presence of a fellow they thoroughly disliked was repugnant to them. They were not quite so unscrupulous as their pal Pon.

"What is it?" asked Harry in surprise, as Ponsonby came to a halt. They were still in sight of the cricketers, but out of hearing now.

A mocking gleam came into Ponsonby's eyes.

"Only this," he drawled. "I've given you a look-in to-day to see whether you were really the sort of fellow a man could be friendly with. I find you're not."

Wharton stared at him blankly.

The sudden change in Ponsonby's manner took him quite by surprise.

"I find you're just the same old outsider and sneakin' sort of cad I've always thought you!" said Ponsonby.

"What?"

"A low cad, and one of a set of low cads," went on Ponsonby. "Every man at Greyfriars is a rank outsider, and you're the rankest of the lot!"

"Did you come here to say that?" asked Harry, his eyes glinting. But he was more puzzled than angry; the whole line of conduct of Cecil Ponsonby that afternoon was a puzzle to him.

"Yes; among other things," assented Ponsonby. "I won't tell you all I think of you—it would take too long."

"You won't!" said Harry. "You'll get out before you get another eye to match the one you've got, if you're wise. I can't understand why you came here at all; but I might have known it was a trick of some kind, knowing the kind of cur you are! Get going!"

Wharton turned away with that.

Smack!

He started, and almost yelled, as Ponsonby's open hand struck him across the cheek.

Gadsby and Monson, looking back, almost staggered in surprise. Pon had come for trouble, after all, as it appeared; and he had woke up trouble with one of the best fighting-men in the Remove. Gadsby and Monson stared at the scene dazedly.

Wharton spun round on the dandy of Highcliffe. He had been willing to get rid of the fellow without a row; but that sudden and unexpected blow quite altered his intentions. In a second he was springing at Ponsonby, his eyes blazing and his hands up.

In a moment they were fighting.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, staring at them from the cricket pitch. "They're going it!"

There was a rush to the spot.

Ponsonby reeled right and left under Wharton's fierce blows. But he closed in and clinched with the captain of the Remove, struggling furiously. For a minute they struggled, and then Pon-

sonby was thrown away, and fell crumpling on the ground.

He lay there gasping.

Harry Wharton's eyes blazed down at him.

"Do you want any more, you rotter? Get up and take it if you do."

Ponsonby panted.

"Oh! Ow! No! Let me alone, you cad! Ow!"

"Get out, then."

Harry Wharton turned his back contemptuously on the sprawling Highcliffian, and walked back towards the cricket pitch with a flushed face; meeting a dozen of the cricketers on the way. The brief fight was over before they could arrive on the scene of action.

"What on earth was the row about?" asked Nugent.

"Blessed if I know! The fellow suddenly turned on me," answered Harry. "I can't make it out at all—why he came, and why he put on friendly airs, and why he kicked up a row. I suppose he had a reason, but I can't catch on to it. Hang him, anyhow—let's get back to the cricket."

Ponsonby picked himself up and limped away, and rejoined Gadsby and Monson. They stared at him in silence, and the three hurriedly cleared off Greyfriars ground. On the way back to Highcliffe, as Ponsonby did not speak, Gadsby broke out at last.

"What does it mean, Pon? What did you go there for?"

"I told you."

"Then why did you row with Wharton?"

"I didn't! He rowed with me."

"Did he?" said Monson suspiciously. "I never heard what was said, of course, but I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought; he picked a row with me," said Ponsonby; "he called me names, and I smacked his face, and then he went for me. You saw it all. Oh, my nose! What does it look like, Gaddy?"

"Squashed strawberry!" said Gaddy.

"Oh, don't be a fool! Lend me your pocket glass!"

Gadsby produced his pocket mirror, and Ponsonby slid it open, and looked at the reflection of his face in the glass. Then he uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Where's my tie-pin?"

"Is it gone?"

"My diamond pin is gone!" said Ponsonby, feeling over his tie.

"You weren't wearing it, old bean," said Monson. "I should have noticed it."

"I was wearin' it!" said Ponsonby positively. "I remember specially stickin' it into my tie before I came out."

"Well, it's gone, then! You must have dropped it tusslin' with that Greyfriars cad."

"I didn't drop it," said Ponsonby coolly. "It fastens safe enough; but I fancy I know now why Wharton collared me. He's got it."

"What?" roared Gadsby and Monson together.

"He's got it!"

"You—you—you fool!" exclaimed Gadsby aghast. "Is that your game? It won't hold water for a second. You know Wharton hasn't got it! You know jolly well he'd be hanged, drawn, and quartered before he'd take it. What's the good of putting up such stuff? Do you think for a minute that you'll get away with it?"

"Chuck it, for goodness' sake!" urged Monson. "You're wild now, Pon, but you'll think better of it when you're cool. An accusation like that is a jolly serious thing. You know there's

nothin' in it, as well as we do; and it will simply make you look a fool—an' worse."

Ponsonby laughed unpleasantly.

"I'm absolutely certain of it," he answered.

"I tell you it's impossible."

"And I tell you I'm certain; and as soon as we get in, I'm goin' to Mr. Mobbs about it," said Ponsonby deliberately. "I'm not havin' a pin that cost ten guineas pinched without gettin' it back somehow."

"I tell you it's rot!"

"We shall see."

"I tell you you'll look a fool, and worse. Every fellow will know at once that you're tryin' to plant a rotten accusation on Wharton because he licked you. For goodness' sake, chuck it."

"Suppose it's found on him?"

"It won't be!" answered Gadsby. "You didn't have a chance to stick it into his pocket," he added sardonically.

"Well, I'm going to Mr. Mobbs about it."

"More fool you, then."

The three arrived at Highcliffe, and went into the House. They passed Courtenay and the Caterpillar as they went in; and the latter glanced curiously at Pon's face.

"Diggin' up more trouble, old bean?" he asked amiably.

Ponsonby paused, and looked at them, with a bitter expression.

"I've been over to Greyfriars," he said.

"Why can't you keep clear of Greyfriars?" grunted the captain of the Fourth. "What's the good of all this ragging and rowing?"

"I went over to apologise to Wharton for havin' cut up rusty the other day on the common."

"Oh!" exclaimed Courtenay, in surprise.

"He picked a row with me, and set on me," went on Ponsonby.

"I'll believe that if Wharton tells me so," answered Courtenay disdainfully.

"And I've found out what he did it for," said Ponsonby. "He grappled with me, and pinched my diamond pin. I missed it a few minutes after I got away from him."

Courtenay stared at him blankly.

"You lying toad!" he said, at last.

"How dare you say such a thing? Why, you worm—"

"Pon, old man!" murmured the Caterpillar. "There's a limit, Pon! There really is a limit, old bean! You're always forgettin' that there is a limit, Pon—it's your own weakness."

"You don't believe me?" asked Pon. "Believe a rotten, rascally lie!" exclaimed Courtenay scornfully. "No—and if you dare to repeat it, I'll drive the words back again down your lying throat!"

"Will you?" said Ponsonby, between his teeth. "Then you can come along an' do it in the presence of our Form-master—I'm goin' to report it to Mobbs, and you can hear me if you like."

Ponsonby walked to Mr. Mobbs' study, tapped at the door, and entered. Courtenay and his chums stared after him blankly.

"He can't be serious!" exclaimed the Caterpillar, for once startled out of his usual nonchalant calm.

Courtenay, with a grim face, followed Ponsonby. He arrived in Mr. Mobbs' study in time to hear Ponsonby reporting his loss, and making his formal accusation against Harry Wharton, to the master of the Highcliffe Fourth.

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THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Discovery!

"FISHY, old man!"

Fisher T. Fish, the Transatlantic member of the Greyfriars Remove, waved Billy Bunter away impatiently.

Fishy was alone in his study, No. 14, in the Remove. His study-mates, Johnny Bull and Squiff, were at games practice with most of the Remove. Games, or games practice, did not appeal to Fisher Tarleton Fish. Only on compulsory days did he honour Little Side with his lean and lank presence.

Fisher T. Fish was occupied in a way that did appeal to him. It was an occupation in which he found much pleasure. Fishy was calculating exactly how much money he had made that term by selling things to fellows in the Remove—things he had bought cheap from other fellows in times of scarcity. There was perpetual joy to Fisher Tarleton Fish in calculations of this sort.

Naturally, he did not want to be interrupted by Billy Bunter. There was nothing to be made out of Bunter.

Indeed, Bunter owed him a shilling. How Bunter had ever succeeded in extracting the loan of a shilling from the junior from "Noo Yark" was a mystery. Orpheus, with his lute, drew iron tears down Pluto's cheeks; but with the aid of a whole orchestra he could never have extracted a loan from Fisher T. Fish. Bunter had done it somehow; and the loss of that shilling haunted Fisher T. Fish, and almost spoiled his sleep at nights. So William George Bunter was not at all "persona grata" in Fishy's study.

"Absquatulate, you fat clam," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm busy."

"I say, Fishy—"

"Unless you've come to settle that bob you owe me," added Fishy. Hope springs eternal in the human breast; and Fisher T. Fish still nourished a delusive hope that that shilling might yet come home again.

"The fact is, that's exactly it," said Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles.

Fisher T. Fish extended his hand.

"Shell out!" he said laconically.

"I haven't got it at the moment—"

"You fat mugwump!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Absquatulate. I keep on telling you."

"I want you to lend me—"

"Beat it, you galoot!"

"To lend me—"

Fisher T. Fish looked round for a missile.

"Your bunch of keys!" said Bunter hastily.

"Oh!" said Fishy. The merchant of the Remove was always ready to do business, even with a fellow who owed him a shilling which had to be marked off as a bad debt. "If you want a key, it's threepence. If you want to borrow the hull bunch, it's the same. Shell out!"

Fisher T. Fish was the happy possessor of a bunch of innumerable keys, obtained cheaply at second-hand shops. Fellows often lost keys to desks and lockers, and Fisher was always ready to supply the deficiency—for a small consideration.

"I happen to be sorry—" explained Bunter.

"Get out!"

"Because I've left my money in my desk—"

"Tons of it, I suppose!" said Fisher T. Fish sarcastically.

"And I've lost the key," explained Bunter. "Lend me your bunch, and I can get the desk open, old chap."

Fisher T. Fish eyed him. Billy Bunter was a borrower of dreaded skill, and he was seldom or never known to settle a debt. But even Bunter could not be suspected of having nefarious designs on an old bunch of rusty, worthless keys. With such a commodity even William George Bunter could be trusted, even by so suspicious and cute a galoot as Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess I'll lend you the bunch," said Fisher T. Fish. "Bring them back when you've opened your desk."

"Right-ho!"

Fisher T. Fish sorted the jingling bunch of many and various keys out of a drawer and handed it to Bunter. The chance of recovering that long-lost "bob" was worth it, though it gave Fishy a pain to lend even a bunch of old keys for nothing.

The Owl of the Remove rolled away, and Fishy resumed his abstruse calculations.

Billy Bunter grinned as he rolled down the Remove passage. Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon being the smartest, cutest, and spryest galoot ever; so William George Bunter felt quite bucked at having pulled Fishy's Transatlantic leg so easily.

Bunter did not head for his own study; he headed for Study No. 1, and rolled into that famous apartment and closed the door after him.

He gave a fat chuckle as he stopped before Wharton's desk.

It was not to open his own desk in search of non-existent cash that Bunter had wanted that bunch of keys; it was to open Wharton's desk in search of that valuable work, "Sure Snips," without which Bunter felt that it was probable that he would not be successful in spotting winners.

The coast was quite clear. Harry Wharton & Co. were at games practice, and had certainly forgotten the existence of William George Bunter.

Among the innumerable keys on Fishy's bunch Bunter was certain there would be one that fitted Wharton's desk. After which, all was plain sailing. With "Sure Snips" once more in his possession, the "rorty dog" of the Remove was going to spot winners—and a field of illimitable wealth lay open before him.

With a grinning fat face, Bunter opened drawer after drawer of the desk when he had found a key to fit, which he easily did. Drawer after drawer was searched thoroughly; but that infallible guide to spotting winners—which a generous gentleman sold for sixpence, instead of spotting the winners himself—was not to be found.

"Beast!" grunted Bunter, when he had examined two or three drawers without result.

It was possible, of course, that that beast Wharton had put the valuable pamphlet somewhere else. Still, he could not be carrying it about with him, and the desk was the likeliest place. The Owl of the Remove proceeded with his search, unlocking drawer after drawer, and searching it from top to bottom.

Under a stack of old papers in a bottom drawer his fat fingers came in contact with a small, hard object. He drew it out and blinked at it, and his

little round eyes grew wide with amazement behind his big spectacles. The object in his hand glittered and sparkled in the sunlight from the window, flashing as he moved it. It was a diamond tiepin, and little as Bunter knew about precious stones, he could see that the diamond was a valuable one for its size. He stared at it, almost dumbfounded.

Fellows did not sport diamond pins at Greyfriars. The Bunder had one—he had many things of that sort. But certainly Harry Wharton had never been seen with a diamond pin. Such a find in Harry Wharton's desk was simply astounding. For several minutes Bunter blinked at it, amazed. If it belonged to Wharton, he had never worn it at Greyfriars, at least. Back into Bunter's mind came a forgotten incident; he remembered how he had hidden a watch in Wharton's desk which he had taken for a fatuous practical joke. Had somebody played a similar trick with Smithy's diamond pin?

But he shook his head. This was not Smithy's pin; the diamond was smaller and of a purer water.

Bunter thought of Da Costa. The Eurasian had come to Greyfriars wearing a ruby ring, and with several other articles of jewellery—which he had soon learned to discard and keep out of sight. Perhaps this diamond belonged to him. But if it was Da Costa's, it would not have been in Harry Wharton's desk.

Bunter, as he blinked at it, remembered that he had seen a diamond pin like that before. He had seen it gleaming in the handsome tie of Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe School. But this, of course, could not be Pon's pin; Ponsonby's diamond could not be locked up in a Remove desk. Bunter did not think of that for a moment.

"Well, my hat!" said Bunter at last.

Really it was no business of Bunter's. For that reason, no doubt, he was all the more interested.

"It's Wharton's all right!" he decided at last. "I've never seen it before, but it's his all right; bit too dresy to wear at school, that's why he keeps it locked up."

Slowly a fat grin overspread Bunter's face.

He could not find his priceless guide to illimitable wealth; Wharton had apparently put it somewhere else. But he had, as it were, a hostage in his hands now. Wharton refused to give up "Sure Snips"—butting into Bunter's personal business in the most unwarrantable manner, keeping the fat Owl out of trouble, whether he liked it or not. Well, now Bunter had something in exchange—and he would change back when Wharton would!

He chuckled at that idea. What was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander. The diamond tiepin disappeared into Bunter's pocket, and he locked up the last drawer of the desk and rolled out of the study.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Swap!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The Remove fellows on Little Side did not heed Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked round inquiringly. A group of juniors stood there staring at something that was going on at a little distance. Cricket had stopped for the time.

"I say, you fellows, where's Wharton?" demanded Bunter.

"Punching Ponsonby!" answered Vernon-Smith, with a grin.

"Eh?"

Bunter turned his big spectacles on the scene across the field. He beheld Ponsonby of Highcliffe sprawling, Gadsby and Monson waiting a little farther on, and Harry Wharton coming back towards the cricket pitch, with a little crowd of the Removites.

Bunter had arrived just in time to see the final, as it were. He grinned as he saw Ponsonby pick himself up and limp away and disappear with Gadsby and Monson.

Wharton's face was flushed and his brow knitted as he came back to the cricket pitch.

The whole episode puzzled him. He could not understand why Ponsonby should have come to Greyfriars with fair words and a smiling face, only to show the cloven hoof again all of a sudden, and he was annoyed with himself for having wasted so much as a civil word on the cad of Highcliffe.

"I say, Harry, old chap—"

"Oh, seat!" said Wharton.

"I say, I want—"

"Roll away, fathead!"

"Look here—" roared Bunter,

"Hook it!"

And, heedless of Billy Bunter, the juniors returned to games practice. The Owl of the Remove stood watching them, in a state of deep annoyance.

All this time, while he was watching games practice, he might have been studying the form of Bully Boy, Gay Colt, and Snooker Pool, and making up his fat mind which of those geegees to back at Wapshot!

Really, it was hard lines on a rorty dog!

However, there it was. Cricket was the order of the day, and Bunter had to wait. It was not till games practice was over, and the Famous Five were walking back to the House, that Bunter succeeded in making his dulcet voice heard. He rolled after them, and ran them down in the Remove passage at last.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "How did Bunter know that we had a cake for tea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The Famous Five and Da Costa went into Study No. 1 for a rather late tea. Bunter rolled in after them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't say anything," suggested Nugent. "If you've come to tea, help to get it ready."

"I say—"

"The speechfulness is silver, my esteemed Bunter, but the golden silence is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well," remarked Hurren Singh.

"I haven't come to tea—"

"What?"

"Great Scott!"

"Still, I'll stay, as you're so pressing," said Bunter.

"I thought you would!" grinned Nugent. "If you're staying to tea, go and fill the kettle."

"Business first," said Bunter. "I've got to speak to Wharton! Wharton's pinched my 'Sure Snips'—"

"You fat chump!" exclaimed Wharton. "Dry up! Chuck it! If you say 'Sure Snips' again, I'll bang your silly head on the door!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Shan't!" retorted Bunter. "I've asked Wharton to give me back that book. He refuses! All right! I'm going to keep his diamond pin until he does!"

The juniors in Study No. 1, all busy lending a hand towards getting tea, suddenly stopped that occupation to



"Every man at Greyfriars is a rank outsider," said Ponsonby, "and you're the rankest of the lot." Wharton's eyes gleamed. "Unless you want another eye to match the one you've got, you'll clear," he said. "Get going!" Smack! Wharton started back the next moment, and almost yelled, as Ponsonby's open hand struck him across the cheek.

(See Chapter 7.)

stare at Bunter. He had succeeded in astonishing the Co.

"You're going to keep—what?" ejaculated Wharton blankly.

"Your diamond pin. I've been looking for my racing guide," explained Bunter. "I borrowed Fishy's keys, and went through your desk while you were at cricket."

"You cheeky toad!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully.

"Well, what do you expect, when you pinch a fellow's things and lock them up somewhere?" demanded Bunter warmly. "Think I'm going to let you prevent me from making pounds and pounds?"

That question had the effect of disarming the wrath of the captain of the Remove. He burst into a laugh.

"I'm preventing you from asking for the sack, you fat chump!" he answered. "If you go through my desk again I'll scalp you!"

"Well, I ain't going through it again, as the book isn't there," said Bunter. "But I'm going to keep your diamond pin till you hand it over, see? I'll swap with you."

"Swap!" repeated Wharton.

"That's it!" Bunter grinned. "I'll swap your diamond pin for my 'Sure Snips,' see?"

"Is he potty?" asked Wharton, in wonder.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I mean it! I'm keeping your diamond pin so long as you keep my race book! I'm ready to swap when you are."

Harry Wharton stared at him.

"If you've got my diamond pin, you can keep it," he answered. "As I have

never owned a diamond pin in my life, it's a safe offer."

Bunter blinked at the captain of the Remove.

"Mean that?" he demanded.

"Certainly!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I tell you I haven't a diamond pin, and never had one."

"Then whose was the one I found in your desk?"

"You never found one there, fathead! You're dreaming!"

"I've got it in my pocket now!" roared Bunter.

"You've got a diamond pin in your pocket that you found in my desk?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove, stupefied.

"Yes."

"You're dreaming! Let's see it!"

"You said I could keep it," said Bunter cautiously.

"If it's mine, you can keep it, certainly. But I never had a diamond pin in my life, I tell you. If you've found one in my desk it doesn't belong to me!"

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bunter. "I say, if it doesn't belong to you, you must have pinched it!"

"What!" roared Wharton.

"Same as you did my 'Sure Snips' — Yaroooh! Keep off!" yelled Bunter, dodging round the table.

"What are you getting waxy for, you beast? I haven't said anything to offend you, have I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. Apparently William George Bunter saw nothing offensive in an accusation of "pinching."

"You fat idiot!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Turn out that diamond pin at once, if you've got one. I suppose you're pulling my leg, you born chump. Now, then, show it up before I bang your silly napper on the door!"

"Gimme back my race book first," said Billy Bunter. "I'm going to stick to your diamond pin until you hand it over, see?"

Realising words were wasted on the fat Removeite, the captain of the Remove advanced upon Bunter.

Biff!

"Yaroooh!"

"Show up, you fat chump!"

"Ow! I'm just going to! Keep off, you beast! Here it is!" gasped Bunter.

There was a flash and a sparkle in the study, as Billy Bunter jerked out the diamond pin and held it up. Harry Wharton stared at it, dumbfounded. His comrades blinked at it with almost unbelieving eyes. That it was a valuable diamond, and that it did not belong to Harry Wharton, all of them knew. And Bunter had found it locked up in Wharton's desk.

"You say you got that from my desk, Bunter?"

"Yes; it was under the rubbish in the bottom drawer—same place where I put that watch once."

"Was the drawer locked?"

"Yes. I got it open with Fishy's keys."

Wharton's face was a little pale now, and hard set. He turned to look at Da Costa and his chums followed his look. Every eye in the study was fixed on the Eurasian.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The Hand of the Enemy!

ARTHUR DA COSTA stared from face to face, his own growing white.

The juniors had trusted him; they had believed in his repentance; they had given the fullest belief to it. They had not doubted that, whatever the Eurasian had been, he was now playing the game.

But suspicion was reawakened now, in spite of themselves. How had that diamond—which did not belong to Harry Wharton, and therefore must belong to somebody else—come into Wharton's desk—in a locked drawer?

The Eurasian gave a cry—it was like a cry of pain.

"Wharton! You cannot think—you cannot suspect—"

His voice trailed off, and he looked round him wildly.

"You cannot believe—"

Wharton looked at him hard.

"What am I to think?" he said, in a low voice. "I've trusted you. I've believed you. But that diamond was locked up in my desk, just as the things were that Quelchy found, and that you owned up to. You had a key then—"

He broke off. "Goodness knows, I don't want to doubt you, Da Costa. But that diamond belongs to somebody, and it has been stolen—it has been stolen and hidden in my desk—in a locked drawer! What's a fellow to make of that?"

"It looks clear enough!" muttered Nugent. "But—"

"The clearfulness appears to be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But let us not be hasty, my esteemed chums. Make haste slowly in an esteemed proverb."

Arthur da Costa leaned one hand on the study table. He seemed almost giddy, and his breath came in panting gasps.

It was the inevitable result of former treachery that he should be suspected now. That the diamond had been deliberately placed where Bunter had found it by chance, was obvious. It had been placed there by an enemy of Harry Wharton—one more treacherous move in the dastardly plot against the captain of the Remove. Who could and would have done the miserable deed, but the Eurasian?

Billy Bunter blinked at the juniors in astonishment. The matter was developing in a way far from expected by the Owl of the Remove.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, doesn't that pin really belong to Wharton?" he stammered.

"No, you ass!"

"Then that fellow put it there," said Bunter. "You remember I warned you about Da Costa—"

"It is false!" almost shrieked the Eurasian. "Wharton, I tell you—I swear I know nothing of it! I turned

that villain Marker down. You yourselves saw me strike him."

"I—I know," muttered Wharton. "That couldn't have been trickery. You thrashed him under my own eyes. But—"

"I know nothing of it. I cannot understand it. I swear that I know nothing of this!" said the Eurasian huskily. "Cannot you believe me?"

"Then what does it mean?"

"I know nothing. I cannot understand it. But I am innocent of any knowledge of it."

There was a long pause in the study. The Eurasian's statement was incredible, for who else could have concealed a stolen diamond in Wharton's desk—evidently to be found there, and the finding to be followed by an accusation of theft. Yet the haggard earnestness in the olive face impressed the juniors deeply.

Wharton spoke at last.

"I believe you, Da Costa," he said slowly—"I believe you, and I'll trust you. I believe you."

"I will prove, somehow, that it was not my doing," panted Da Costa. "It is a fresh move of Captain Marker's; you all know that. Captain Marker has planned this. I warned you that you were not done with him. Perhaps you have a right to doubt me, but I swear I am telling the truth."

"I don't—I won't doubt you," said Harry firmly. "I hope you fellows all say the same."

"The samefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh quietly; and the other fellows nodded.

"We've got to go into this," said Harry.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter.

"Well?" said Wharton impatiently.

"What about tea?"

"What?"

"Tea," said Bunter. "I'm hungry, you know. Leave it till after tea—what?"

"You fat chump!" roared Bob Cherry. "Shut up your silly mouth, before I bang your silly head on the wall!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up!" bawled Bob; and Bunter shut up.

He did not see any reason for not postponing the matter till after tea, but it seemed that the other fellows did, and Bunter had to give them their heads.

"First of all, we want to find out to whom that diamond pin belongs," said Johnny Bull. "Hand it over."

The diamond pin passed from hand to hand. Arthur da Costa's eyes gleamed as he examined it.

"I have seen that before," he said.

"Then you know—"

"It belongs to that fellow we saw with Captain Marker on Courtfield Common a few days ago—the fellow who came here to-day and kicked up a row."

"Ponsonby!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"Yes. He was wearing this pin the day we saw him with Captain Marker. I noticed it then, and I know it again," said Da Costa positively.

"I remember seeing Pon sport a diamond tie-pin more than once," remarked Bob Cherry.

"The esteemed Da Costa has hit the right nail on its ridiculous head," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I remember that pin perfectly, now that I examine it, my excellent chums. It belongs to the absurd Ponsonby."

"You are sure, Inky? Da Costa's seen it only once."

"But I am sure," said Da Costa.

"The surefulness is terrific," said the nabob. "I can identify that esteemed tie-pin swearfully."

"I say, you fellows, I thought it

looked like Pon's tie-pin," gasped Bunter. "I noticed that when I found it."

Wharton's face was grim.

"Pon's diamond pin!" he said. "So that's why that villain Marker has made friends with Pon. That's why he's hanging about the neighbourhood. He's been spying and getting information, and he's got on to it that Ponsonby's on bad terms with us, and he's got hold of Ponsonby, and he's found him rascal enough to help him."

"Looks like it," said Nugent. "In fact, it can't be anything else, as Pon's pin was found in your desk. It's plain enough that you're going to be accused of stealing it; it couldn't be there for anything else."

"But how did it get there?" asked Johnny Bull. "Pon came here to-day, but he never came near the House. He hasn't been at Greyfriars for weeks, and Da Costa says he was wearing this pin only a few days ago. Pon never had any chance of planting the thing here."

The juniors looked at one another in silence. They had discovered that it was Ponsonby's diamond—they had no doubt that the blackguard of Highcliffe was in confederation with Captain Marker. Yet the matter still remained unexplained. It was obviously impossible for Ponsonby, or any other Highcliffe man, to have placed the diamond where it had been found by Bunter. Arthur da Costa breathed hard. He knew what the obvious explanation was, and he had a hunted look.

"The rogue must have some confederate in this school," said Johnny Bull at last.

"You must suspect that it was I," muttered Da Costa wretchedly. "But it was not. I swear that it was not."

"Of course it was!" snorted Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I've told you that I believe you, Da Costa," said Harry Wharton quietly. "The thing was put there by somebody else, and we've got to find out that somebody. I can't believe any Greyfriars man would do such a thing. Pon has some friends here—Skinner and Angel and Kenney—and one or two others; but they wouldn't do a thing like this; it's impossible. There's no fellow at Greyfriars such a villain as Pon—no other fellow at Highcliffe, either—no fellow outside prison, I believe. No Greyfriars chap put this thing in my desk, and no Highcliffe man, either. Who did it?"

"Goodness knows," said Bob.

"If that fat idiot hadn't been rummaging my desk, the pin would have stayed where it was hidden," said Harry. "I never use that drawer. There's only lumber in it. It was there to be found—after I've been accused of stealing it, and a search demanded by Ponsonby. That's clear. That means that an accusation is coming, and may come at any moment." The captain of the Remove gave a sudden start. "That's why Ponsonby came over here this afternoon. That's why he forced a scrap with me. It was to make out that I'd had an opportunity of pinching the tie-pin. Of course, I could have done it while I was grappling with him, if I'd wanted to, and if he had it on. That was the game."

"And the pin was hidden here all this time," said Bob, in a hushed voice. "What an awful rascal!"

"We know Ponsonby," said Wharton bitterly. "We know he worked up a scheme to get that chap Courtenay sacked, when he first came to Highcliffe, and very nearly got away with it. He's capable of anything. Just the fellow that villain Marker wanted to get hold of." His lips set. "I'm going to Quelchy now. You'll come with me,

Bunter! I'll hand over this pin to Quelch, and tell him the whole story. That's the way to put paid to Ponsonby in advance. When we get the accusation from Highcliffe, Quelch will know how to handle it, knowing the whole story before it comes."

"Good egg!" said Bob.

"Come with me, Bunter."

"I say, you fellows, don't tell Quelch—"

"Fathead! We've got to tell him."

"I mean, don't tell him what I was looking in the desk for," gasped Bunter. "I—I—I don't want Quelch to know about—about Sure Snaps."

"Quelch would like to know," grinned Bob Cherry. "He doesn't know, so far, that he's got a rorty dog in his Form."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Come on, fathead," said Wharton. "There's no need to tell Quelch why you were rooting through the desk. It's jolly lucky you were doing it, as it turns out. There's no time to waste—come on."

And Harry Wharton, taking the Owl of the Remove with him, went down at once to Mr. Quelch's study; where the master of the Remove listened to a story that made him open his eyes wide with astonishment and horror.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Accusation!

"MOBBY!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

"Little Mobby?" said Ogilvy. "I wonder what he wants."

The Bounder grinned.

"He's got Pon with him! Dear old Pon has been complainin' about havin' his head punched here this afternoon." "Pon came here and started that," said Redwing.

"Well, he hasn't come to render thanks, anyway," said Smithy. And the juniors laughed.

A good many fellows looked rather curiously at Mr. Mobbs, the master of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, as he walked up to the House, with Cecil Ponsonby walking at his side. Mr. Mobbs was not an impressive gentleman—he was small, and he was thin, and he had mean features and sharp little eyes that reminded one of a rat; but he had a rather important air as if he strove to make up by manner what he lacked in physique.

The handsome and elegant Ponsonby was almost as tall as his Form-master, and beside the dandy of Highcliffe, Mr. Mobbs looked meaner than ever. Perhaps his nature had something to do with it; Mr. Mobbs was a toad-eater of the first water. His excessive kindness to Ponsonby and other well-connected and wealthy fellows, was only equalled by his acerbity to Smithson and his friends, who were not wealthy or well-connected.

Many a time had Mr. Mobbs whisked into Greyfriars with a complaint to make; his view apparently being that Ponsonby could do no wrong; and that any fellow who punched Pon's nose was committing a sort of sacrilege—even if Pon had punched first. Being punched by Pon was an honour for a common mortal, appeared to be Mr. Mobbs' opinion. If there was trouble, as there often was, Pon was in the right; Mr. Mobbs took that for granted to begin with.

At the present moment, Mr. Mobbs was bristling with indignation and disgust. He had lost no time in getting

over to Greyfriars after hearing Ponsonby's statement that he had been robbed there. It was a matter that could not be settled too soon. The wretched thief had to be exposed, and the plunder recovered, before he had had a chance of disposing of it, or concealing it where it could not be found.

Mr. Mobbs frowned at the group of Greyfriars juniors as he passed them. Ponsonby glanced at them with his usual insolent air, secure in the knowledge that he could not be kicked in the presence of his Form-master.

They entered the House.

From his study window, Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, beheld the visitors, and his lips set in a tight line at the sight of them. When Mr. Mobbs entered, he found Trotter, the page, waiting for him.

"This way, sir," said Trotter.

"I have called to see the Headmaster," said Mr. Hobbs, stiffly.

"Mr. Quelch said show you to his study, sir."

Mr. Mobbs blinked at Trotter.

"I fail to understand," he grunted. "This call was not expected by Mr. Quelch."

"That's what he said, sir," answered Trotter. "This way, sir."

In a very puzzled frame of mind, Mr. Mobbs followed Trotter into Masters' passage. It was impossible that Mr. Quelch had been expecting the call, as he had only decided to come over to Greyfriars after hearing Ponsonby's story at Highcliffe, and had sent no word. However, he followed Trotter, and was shown into Mr. Quelch's study with Ponsonby, and Trotter drew the door shut and departed.

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

The grimness of his face was rather striking to the view. But he gave the Highcliffe master a formal bow, taking no notice of Ponsonby.

"Be seated, sir," said Mr. Quelch, grimly, and he waved his hand to a chair. "I have been expecting this call."

"I will not sit down, thank you," rasped Mr. Mobbs, "and I utterly fail to understand, sir, how you can have been expecting this call. I may add that it is the headmaster I desire to see."

"Your visit concerns a member of my Form, I believe?"

"That is correct; though really—" Mr. Mobbs was surprised and suspicious, and Ponsonby, with all his alert coolness, had a vague feeling of uneasiness. It really was inexplicable how Mr. Quelch knew all this.

"Dr. Locke leaves all matters pertaining to my form in my hands," said Mr. Quelch. "I will therefore hear what you have to say. If you consider it worth while to trouble the Head in the matter afterwards, you are at full liberty to do so. In the meantime, pray allow me to hear what complaint you have to make concerning a Remove boy of this school."

"It is not merely a complaint, sir!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "It is an accusation, a most serious accusation!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, sir!" said Mr.

Mobbs tartly. "This boy, Ponsonby, has been robbed—robbed, sir, of an article of value."

Mr. Quelch's eyes narrowed and glinted.

But he did not look astonished or shocked as might have been expected. Really, it seemed as if Mr. Quelch had been anticipating the accusation as well as the visit. Which was inexplicable, if it was the case.

"Of what has this boy been robbed, sir?" he inquired.

"A diamond tie-pin—an article of great value," said Mr. Mobbs.

"You accuse a Greyfriars boy?"

"I accuse a boy named Wharton."

"Not of your own knowledge, I presume?" inquired the Remove master, with an inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"Naturally, not," said Mr. Mobbs. "Ponsonby reported his loss to me, with all particulars; and I have taken the matter in hand immediately."

"Your accusation, then, depends wholly upon Ponsonby's report to you, Mr. Mobbs?"

"Quite! I trust Ponsonby's word absolutely."

"You will scarcely expect me to do so, when he charges a Greyfriars boy with an act of unscrupulous wickedness," said Mr. Quelch dryly.

"It is a matter for proof!" said Mr. Mobbs, "and the proof will be forthcoming."

"I am waiting to hear it," said Mr. Quelch.

"Ponsonby, as he informs me, came over here this afternoon to see Wharton. Two friends came with him—"

"One moment," said Mr. Quelch. "It has frequently been brought to my notice that this boy, Ponsonby, is on unfriendly terms with Wharton. I desire to know why he came to visit a boy with whom he is on unfriendly terms."

"That is easily explained, and redounds to the credit of Ponsonby. He was engaged in some dispute with Wharton a few days ago, and on reflection he considered that he had acted hastily, and that he owed the boy an apology. He came here specially to tender that apology, sir."

"Very much to his credit, if correct," said Mr. Quelch, "and may I ask what transpired, or what Ponsonby told you transpired?"

"Wharton treated him in a friendly manner while in the presence of other boys. But when Ponsonby was leaving, and out of hearing of the others, Wharton insulted him and attacked him, and there was a scuffle. I have no doubt," added Mr. Mobbs, bitterly, "that Wharton would represent the reverse as having been the case."

"I have no doubt of it, sir," said Mr. Quelch, unmoved. "and I should have

(Continued on next page.)



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no hesitation whatever in taking Wharton's word on that point."

"And I, sir, take Ponsonby's word without question," said Mr. Mobbs, raising his voice a little.

"We will agree to differ on that point, which after all is immaterial," said the Remove master, calmly. "Let us come to the alleged theft."

"While scuffling with Wharton, Ponsonby felt his necktie tugged, but at the time, and in the excitement of the moment, did not specially heed it. It was after he had left the precincts of Greyfriars, and had started to return to Highcliffe with his friends, that he missed his tie-pin. Then he recalled the incident; and very properly reported it to me at once."

Mr. Quelch looked hard and long at Ponsonby. There was something like wonder in his look; and it was not the look that Ponsonby expected. It increased the vague uneasiness that troubled him.

"In a word," said the Remove master, "Ponsonby accuses Wharton of having forced a scuffle upon him, for the purpose of stealing his diamond pin."

"Precisely. That the pin was stolen does not admit of doubt. Ponsonby had it in his tie when he came here, and missed it as soon as he left."

"With your permission, Mr. Mobbs, I will ask Ponsonby a few questions. You will acknowledge that this is a matter that cannot be sifted too thoroughly. Either a Greyfriars boy is a thief, or a Highcliffe boy has made a false, malicious, and infamous accusation from motives of enmity."

Mr. Mobbs started a little.

"Do you suggest—" he exclaimed.

"I suggest nothing, so far; I desire only to ascertain the precise facts," said Mr. Quelch blandly.

Grunt from Mr. Mobbs.

"You may ask Ponsonby anything you please. Ponsonby is perfectly prepared to answer all questions, whether asked by you or by the headmaster—or by an inspector of police," added Mr. Mobbs significantly.

"I think it very probable that this will prove to be a matter for the police," assented Mr. Quelch. "Ponsonby, you state explicitly that the tie-pin was taken from you during your scuffle with Wharton, on or near the junior cricket-ground here?"

"Yes, sir," said Ponsonby, starting a little, however. He wondered how Mr. Quelch knew that the scuffle had taken place on Little Side. Mr. Quelch seemed to know all sorts of unexpected things that afternoon.

"You distinctly state that Wharton abstracted it?"

"Yes!" said Ponsonby firmly.

"You were aware at the moment of his action?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Yet you did not denounce him and claim your property on the spot?"

"Ponsonby was not aware—" began Mr. Mobbs.

"Please let Ponsonby speak for himself, sir," said the Remove master.

"Very well!" snorted Mr. Mobbs. "We are wasting time—but, very well. Answer Mr. Quelch, my dear Ponsonby."

"I was not aware, at the moment, that Wharton had jerked the pin out of my tie," said Ponsonby calmly. "I was rather excited at the time, scuffling with him. I felt him pulling or groping at my tie, but that's nothing in a scuffle. I missed the pin after I'd started for Highcliffe. Then I thought of coming back for it; but, having thought the matter over, I decided that it was my

duty to place it in my Form master's hands. I thought it was too serious a matter to be settled by schoolboys among themselves."

"Very proper!" commented Mr. Mobbs. "Very right and proper, indeed!" Pon had his own Form master's approval, at least, whatever Mr. Quelch thought of him.

"You did not think that the pin might have fallen by accident during the scuffle?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I knew that it was safely pinned," answered Ponsonby. "I knew that it could not have fallen out by accident."

"You have no doubt that it was deliberately taken by the Greyfriars boy with whom you were engaged in a scuffle?"

"None whatever, sir!"

"In a word, you accuse Wharton of theft?"

"I do!"

"You have come here with your Form master to make this accusation, and to claim the return of your property?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch. "If Wharton, of my Form, has committed a theft, the stolen property will undoubtedly be returned, and the boy will be expelled ignominiously from Greyfriars." Ponsonby's eyes glittered for a second. "But in a matter such as this, we cannot be too careful, Mr. Mobbs. May I ask what steps you propose taking?"

"The boy should be called in, sir, and confronted with Ponsonby," said Mr. Mobbs. "If he has the audacity—as I do not doubt—to deny his guilt, he must be searched."

"And then," said Mr. Quelch, "admitting that the stolen property is not found on him, what then?"

"His belongings, sir, should then be searched—his study, any receptacle such as a desk, a box, a locker," said Mr. Mobbs. "Really, sir, those questions appear to me frivolous. Search must be made, and in my presence. I am bound to say, sir, that I refuse to allow the slightest opportunity for the stolen article to be smuggled out of sight."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Indeed!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "This is not a matter for ceremony, sir. I say plainly that unless the search of Wharton and his belongings is conducted in my presence, I shall place the matter in the hands of Inspector Grimes at Courtfield, with a formal accusation of theft against Wharton."

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch, still unmoved. "And if the stolen article be discovered in Wharton's study, for instance, you will take that as absolute proof that he purloined it?"

Mr. Mobbs stared.

"Naturally!" he snapped.

"Naturally," assented Mr. Quelch. "I fear that such evidence might have convinced even me, knowing Wharton's honourable and upright character as I do. It is obviously impossible for Ponsonby himself to have smuggled the article into a hiding-place in Wharton's study, with a view to making this accusation."

"What! Ponsonby is quite incapable—"

"On the other hand, Mr. Mobbs, Ponsonby is quite capable of that action, and I fear of many other acts of wickedness," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Ponsonby, sir, has deceived you, and has come here with a falsehood on his lips, to blacken the character of an honourable lad—and the proof of that, sir, is in my hands."

"Nonsense!" blustered Mr. Mobbs; but Ponsonby did not speak. He stood

pale as death, his eyes hunted in their expression. Only too well he knew that Mr. Quelch was not the man to speak idle words; what he said he meant. And Ponsonby, realising that in some strange way the plot was known, stood in stricken terror, speechless.

"Nonsense, I repeat!" snapped Mr. Mobbs. "Utter nonsense!"

"We shall see," said the Remove master quietly. "It is stated that a diamond pin belonging to Ponsonby has been stolen. This diamond pin, I have no doubt, can be easily identified."

"Certainly it can; I am well acquainted with the article myself, and many boys at Highcliffe can identify it if necessary—as well as Ponsonby's relative, who gave it him. Wharton will escape by no such easy subterfuge as that—"

"Enough, sir! You say that you personally can identify the diamond pin?"

"I can, sir, at a glance."

Mr. Quelch removed his blotting-pad, and there was a flash and a sparkle where it had lain.

"Is that it, sir?" he asked.

Ponsonby stirred slightly, shivering. The diamond tiepin, which Captain Marker had concealed in a locked drawer of Wharton's desk in Study No. 1—as he had told Ponsonby, at least—lay in full view on Mr. Quelch's table, gleaming and sparkling in the sunset.

Mr. Mobbs bent forward.

"That is the article, sir," he said triumphantly. "That is it—a dozen persons can identify it if necessary! I cannot understand, sir, why you have wasted so much time, when the stolen article has already come into your hands. You found this in Wharton's possession—"

"I did not, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "This diamond pin, sir, was found by another junior, in Wharton's desk in his study half an hour before Ponsonby came to Greyfriars this afternoon!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Clean Breast of It!

THERE was a dead silence in Mr. Quelch's study.

Ponsonby, almost sick, put his hand on the back of a chair for support. His legs seemed to be crumpling under him.

Mr. Mobbs stood dumbfounded.

He was taken utterly by surprise, and thrown off his balance. Hostile and offensive as he was, Mr. Mobbs knew, of course, that Mr. Quelch was stating the exact facts; that no consideration whatever would have induced the Greyfriars master to defend or conceal a thief. Hitherto, Mr. Mobbs had not had the slightest doubt of the truth of Ponsonby's statements. That sudden and unexpected proof that Ponsonby's statements were a tissue of falsehoods, fairly staggered him. He stood like a man in a trance, and then suddenly sat down in the nearest chair, gasping.

"This accusation," went on Mr. Quelch's grinding voice, "is false and malicious from beginning to end. In some unknown way, Ponsonby contrived to have this diamond pin concealed in a drawer of Wharton's desk in his study—concealed there in a way that made it utterly unlikely that Wharton would discover it. Had it never been found until a search was instituted, many would have taken it for proof that Wharton had committed a miserable theft—I fear—I greatly fear—that such evidence



There was a flash and a sparkle in the study, as Billy Bunter jerked out the diamond pin and held it up. Harry Wharton stared at it dumbfounded. That it was a valuable diamond, and that it did not belong to their skipper, Wharton's chums knew. Yet Bunter had found it locked up in Wharton's desk!

(See Chapter 9.)

would have made me doubt him. For even now I cannot imagine how the diamond was placed there—though Ponsonby will explain that point before he leaves this study, or else he will leave it in the custody of a constable."

Mr. Mobbs gasped for breath.

"I—I—I fail to—to—to understand this, sir!" he stuttered at last. "There is some—some mistake. You say that this diamond pin was found in Wharton's desk—by whom, sir?"

"By a boy named Bunter. He showed it to Wharton, who, knowing that it was not his, immediately brought it to me."

Mr. Mobbs gulped.

"Wharton brought it to you, sir?"

"He did!"

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Mobbs.

"I have carefully questioned the boys," went on the Remove master. "The diamond pin was found in the desk half an hour before Ponsonby came to Greyfriars this afternoon. Bunter had it in his pocket at the very time that Wharton was scuffling with Ponsonby—Bunter believing, at that time, that it was Wharton's. At the time, sir, that Ponsonby states that Wharton snatched this diamond pin from him in a scuffle, this diamond pin was in the pocket of a boy standing at a distance watching the scuffle."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Mobbs.

"That is why, sir, I expected your visit this afternoon," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Wharton handed the diamond pin into my keeping, and made a statement that it had been placed in a hidden nook of his desk by some unknown person. Bunter stated the time when he found it, and that it was in his pocket at the time Wharton was scuffling with Ponsonby. Wharton warned me that he fully expected a

charge to be made against him by Ponsonby, and left the matter in my hands. He acquainted me, too, with certain other details—such as the name of the man with whom Ponsonby appears to have acted in collusion—a man, sir, who stands to benefit by the disgrace of Wharton, owing to certain conditions under a certain will."

Mr. Mobbs staggered to his feet.

He gave Ponsonby one look—a bitter, scathing look, which indicated his feelings at being landed in a situation like this. Nevertheless, Mr. Mobbs still hoped to carry off the matter with a high hand. Ponsonby could be given a severe lesson later; but at Greyfriars Mr. Mobbs did not want to yield an inch if he could help it.

"I—I cannot accept this, sir," he said. "I cannot accept this story. A concoction between the two boys, Wharton and Bunter, no doubt. Possibly Wharton, frightened at what he had done, gave up the diamond to you, sir, with this tale, in collusion with Bunter. At all events, as the property is recovered, the matter need be pushed no further. Kindly hand me that pin, sir, and I will take my leave. Come, Ponsonby!"

Mr. Quelch picked up the diamond pin from his table, dropped it into a drawer, and snapped the drawer shut.

"That pin, sir, remains here until a constable arrives to take official charge of it!" he answered icily.

"What? What?"

"You, sir, are at liberty to depart as soon as you please; but the same does not apply to Ponsonby. I shall detain Ponsonby here until a constable arrives from Courtfield Police Station to take him into custody."

Mr. Mobbs sank down into the chair again, his legs failing to support him. His face was chalky white. The

thought of the scandal, the indelible disgrace, that was impending, almost overwhelmed him. A Highcliffe boy taken into custody by the police, charged with crime—for this was crime! The name of Highcliffe School bandied from mouth to mouth—in all the newspapers—endless shame and scandal! Mr. Mobbs gasped helplessly. His brief defiance had crumbled away; he fairly crumpled up before the steady, steely eyes of the Remove master of Greyfriars.

"Sir!" he gasped. "Sir!"

"You aver," said Mr. Quelch, in a voice of iron, "that Wharton and Bunter have concocted a tale together—you decline to withdraw your accusation of theft. Very well, sir! I, in my turn, accuse Ponsonby of having secretly and treacherously conveyed a diamond pin into a desk belonging to a Greyfriars boy, and of having followed up that iniquitous action by an accusation of theft against the boy in question. On this charge I shall request a police-officer to take him into custody."

"For mercy's sake, sir!" panted Ponsonby. "I—I— For mercy's sake, sir, don't—don't—oh, don't!"

The cool insolence of the rascal of Highcliffe had deserted him now. He was white as a sheet, and trembling with fear.

Expulsion from Highcliffe was a matter of course, if Mr. Quelch took his threatened action. What the legal penalties might be Ponsonby did not know; but the bare thought of being taken into police custody chilled him with terror to the very marrow of his bones.

Mr. Quelch's steely eyes fixed on him pathetically.

"I have no pity for you, Ponsonby."

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You have acted with a wickedness almost incredible in a boy of your age. You are an unscrupulous scoundrel! More, you are a dangerous character! The most complete and public exposure of your rascality is all that remains. For the sake of the boy against whom you have plotted, I cannot afford to be lenient. This matter must be placed in the hands of the police."

Ponsonby groaned aloud.
"For pity's sake, sir—" he moaned in utter misery and fear.

Mr. Mobbs found his voice.
"Mr. Quelch! Consider, sir! I—I withdraw the accusation against Wharton—I admit that it was all a mistake—"

"A mistake on your part, sir; on Ponsonby's part, a deliberate attempt to injure an honourable lad!"

"I—I admit it, sir! Ponsonby will be punished—severely punished! But think of the disgrace, sir—his father is a member of the nobility, sir—his uncle bears an honoured title—"

"That is quite immaterial, sir. It was for Ponsonby to think of that before he entered into league with a dastardly character to blacken Wharton's name."

"I—I never heard of—of this, sir! You say that Ponsonby was influenced by some person—no doubt that is true, sir. Consider, sir, if the unhappy boy has acted under some wicked influence!" panted Mr. Mobbs. "I place myself at your mercy, sir! Think of the good name of Highcliffe—of this miserable boy's relatives, sir—of the fearful scandal of a police case—"

Mr. Mobbs almost babbled.

Ponsonby had sunk into a chair, his face buried in his hands. He was down and out now, beaten at every point, overwhelmed with shame and fear. This was the end of the scheme concerted with Eric Marker—the scheme in which, as Pon had supposed, Marker had taken all the risks—the scheme that was infallible—that was impossible to fail! A mere mischance—the accidental finding of the concealed diamond before the pretended theft had taken place—that was all! The best-laid schemes of mice and men gauged off; and the merest chance had upset this scheme from beginning to end.

Yet if Ponsonby and his confederate had only considered it, the success that seemed so certain had been all the while extremely uncertain; for falsehood, though never so cunning, can never be made to look quite like truth; and every falsehood carries in it, somewhere and somehow, its own refutation. Every wretched dabbler in crime has discovered, sooner or later, that it is impossible to guard all points; that honesty is not only the best policy, but the only possible policy if there is to be success.

Ponsonby was making that discovery now. He had made it before, more than once, and the lesson had been lost on him.

The wretched schemer had utterly broken down. A dry sob shook him from head to foot as he sat with his face in his hands.

There was a pause.

"I can make no promise, Mr. Mobbs," said the Remove master at last. "The boy Wharton must be protected from further dastardly scheming of this sort."

"Ponsonby will never—never—"

"I must have assurances of that!" said Mr. Quelch icily. "I repeat that

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I can make no promises. But I will say this: I will do my best to keep this matter to our knowledge only, and leave Ponsonby's punishment to his own headmaster, if the wretched boy will, here and now, make a full and frank confession, write it down in my presence, and sign it, with you, sir, and myself as witnesses. This is the very least that I must require for the protection of the boy against whom he has plotted so wickedly."

Ponsonby raised a haggard face.

"I'll do it, sir—I'll do anything—anything—"

"Then speak," said Mr. Quelch. "In the first place, confess how the diamond pin was placed in Wharton's desk unknown to him."

"That villain—Captain Marker!" groaned Ponsonby. "It was his doing from beginning to end! I—I never meant—"

"Keep to the truth, you miserable boy!"

"Who is Captain Marker?" stuttered Mr. Mobbs. "I never heard of him."

"The man, sir, who stands to benefit under a will, if Wharton should be disgraced, and therefore proved unworthy of a certain legacy, left him on conditions. Proceed, Ponsonby!"

"Marker fixed it all up, sir," groaned Ponsonby. "I never knew his reason, except that he had some trouble with Wharton, and I hated him. I—I met him by chance. I—I don't know much about him. He got into Greyfriars last night, and planted that diamond pin in Wharton's desk—"

"How did he know how to find his way about this building?"

"I—I told him—I've been here a lot of times, and I—I told him how to get about," muttered Ponsonby. "I saw him to-day and—he told me it was all fixed—he had a lot of keys and he'd unlocked a drawer in Wharton's desk and hidden the diamond under a lot of things where it wouldn't be found by chance—"

"Good heavens!" breathed Mr. Mobbs. The master of the Highcliffe Fourth was genuinely shocked and dismayed.

"And then you came here this afternoon to force a scuffle on Wharton, to give colour to the story that he had abstracted the diamond pin," said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"It—it was Marker's suggestion, sir. It had to be fixed up somehow that Wharton had an opportunity of taking it. I—I'm sorry—"

"Your sorrow, I think, is entirely for yourself," said Mr. Quelch with biting scorn. "No doubt this charge may be brought home to Captain Marker—he will be required to account for where he was last night—and doubtless his fingerprints may be traced on Wharton's desk by an expert. Where is the man to be found?"

"At the Red Lion in Redclyffe, sir." "Very good!" Ponsonby, you will make out a full confession of this matter, with a detailed account of your dealings with Captain Marker. Sit at this table—here is pen and paper."

Ponsonby wrote, under the Remove master's eye. He wrote feverishly, only hoping that the confession might save him. After he had finished, Mr. Quelch read the paper through, slowly and carefully and then requested Mr. Mobbs to read it and sign it as a witness. Mr. Mobbs having done so, the Remove master signed it in turn as a second witness. Then he folded the paper and locked it in his desk.

"For the present, the matter ends here," he said. He took the diamond pin from the table-drawer. "You may

take this now, Ponsonby, and go! The outcome depends largely upon Colonel Wharton's actions and views and upon Captain Marker's attitude: but if I can help it, it shall not be made public. That is all I can say. Go! Mr. Mobbs, I wish you good-afternoon!"

And the Fourth Form master of Highcliffe departed with a crushed and bewildered look that drew many glances upon him as he went; and Ponsonby went with him—not now the cool, insolent dandy who had stared superciliously around him as he came—he went like a beaten cur, sneaking along wretchedly by the side of his downcast Form-master. Harry Wharton & Co. in the quadrangle, watched them go, and they could almost have found it in their hearts to pity the wretched Ponsonby, as he sneaked miserably away.

"That's that!" said Bob Cherry.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Captain Marker's Last Blow!

ARTHUR DA COSTA stopped suddenly.

The Eurasian junior was sauntering along the path across Courtfield common, the same path that Harry Wharton & Co. had been following a couple of weeks before, when they had come upon Ponsonby and Captain Marker.

Several days had passed since that scene in Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars, when the hapless Mr. Mobbs had departed in so crushed a state with the defeated schemer. What had happened to Ponsonby after his return to Highcliffe, the chums of the Remove did not know. That Mr. Mobbs would visit severe punishment upon him for having placed him in such a false position, was fairly certain; but it was likely that Mr. Mobbs would keep the matter as dark as he could, in order to prevent Ponsonby from being expelled from Highcliffe. So far, nothing had been made public, though Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke had both been in consultation with Colonel Wharton on the subject.

It was Wednesday now, and that afternoon the Remove were playing the Upper Fourth. For a cricket match with Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth, the Remove did not need all their best men and Harry Wharton had left the captaincy in the hands of Vernon Smith, and walked over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay. He was aware that Frank Courtenay knew something of the affair of the diamond pin. Neither was Da Costa in the Remove eleven—so mighty a man was not needed against the Upper Fourth. So after watching the Form match for a time, Da Costa had strolled away, and walked across the common to meet Wharton as he came back from Highcliffe.

It was a somewhat lonely path across the wide common, winding among trees and hawthorn bushes. Da Costa sauntered along in a leisurely way, having plenty of time on his hands. It was the sight of a figure ahead of him on the shady path that caused him to stop suddenly, a gleam coming into his eyes.

At the end of the shady path, beyond which lay the open common stretching to the Highcliffe road, a man stood back under the trees, his back to Da Costa, watching the open expanse.

Da Costa did not need to see his face to know who it was. It was Captain Marker.

The Eurasian stood quite still for a moment and then stepped off the path into the trees.

That Captain Marker was watching and waiting for somebody there, was evident from his attitude—he was watching for someone to approach from the direction of Highcliffe. Possibly it was an appointment with Ponsonby—Da Costa wondered. He stood under the trees, out of sight, and watched the figure of the captain through the openings in the bushes. Da Costa was no coward, but he assuredly did not want to meet Captain Marker alone in a solitary place. He was only a few yards from the spot where he had thrashed the schemer with his own Malacca; and it was certain that Marker would have been glad of the chance to return that thrashing with interest. And alone the Eurasian junior was, of course, nothing like a match for Eric Marker. Arthur da Costa realised that it would be well for him to keep out of the captain's sight.

But Wharton would be returning by that path from Highcliffe very soon now; he was to be back at Greyfriars for tea. If he met the captain alone, on that lonely path—At that thought, Da Costa decided to remain where he was, and watch. And then, like a flash, it came into his mind whom Captain Marker was waiting for—not Ponsonby, but Wharton!

Da Costa drew a deep breath. After what had happened, Ponsonby was very unlikely to meet the captain again, if he could help it; but it was likely enough that Marker was very anxious to see Pon. to learn what had been the outcome of the plot against the captain of the Remove. Likely enough that the man had sent some message to Ponsonby, and was waiting in that lonely spot, expecting or hoping that Pon would come.

At all events, there he was—and possibly he had seen Wharton on his way to Highcliffe. Watching the man through the thickets, Da Costa could see, beyond a doubt, that Marker was in ambush. He kept himself carefully hidden from the open common, the direction of Highcliffe, as he watched from the hawthorns. He could only be seen by anyone coming from the other direction—the direction from which Da Costa had come.

The Eurasian's heart beat faster. Before long, Wharton would be coming along that path. He was sure, or almost sure, that the captain knew it, and was waiting for him.

What did he intend? The defeated schemer, whose last desperate blow had failed, was at the end of his tether now, whether he knew it or not. Nothing was left to him but to abandon his rascally scheme against his rival for a fortune; and that meant ruin to the spendthrift, who was involved in endless debts and difficulties. What did he intend—as he half-crouched there in the hawthorns at the end of the shady path, watching the common? What fierce and desperate thoughts might be working in the mind of the man from India?

The Eurasian breathed hard. He could only wait and watch; ready to intervene, and help, if danger threatened the captain of the Remove. And every instinct warned him that Wharton was in danger now.

There was a sound of running footsteps on the grassy path. Da Costa backed deeper into cover as the captain came running. Marker stopped, not six yards from the hidden junior, and backed behind a tree close to the path. Da Costa could hear his deep, hard breathing as he stood there—watching.

The Eurasian could guess what that

TWENTY TO ONE! FIFTY TO ONE! HUNDRED TO ONE! AND

It's easy money!

What is?

Why, backing horses. At least, so thinks William George Bunter. It's taken the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove a lot of time and trouble to reach this conclusion, but he's certain—absolutely certain—that William George Bunter is the merchant to "skin" the bookies.

Feeds!

Glorious feeds!

Money to burn . . .

Why, the prospect of a little flutter on the Turf with his "fancies" simply rolling in, fairly dazzles Billy Bunter. The big thing, however, is to find a bookmaker who will bet with the podgy Removeite. How a certain bookie comes to the rescue supplies a first-class yarn next week, chums. You will laugh loud and long over

"BILLY BUNTER'S BOOKMAKER!"

By Frank Richards.

ORDER YOUR MAGNET TO-DAY!



action meant. Marker had sighted Wharton coming across the common, about to enter the path through the trees—and he had chosen to wait for the Greyfriars junior in the very heart of the thicket; a proof that he did not desire any eyes but his own to see what was about to happen.

As he stood behind the tree Marker glanced up and down the path, and peered into the thickets round him, sharply, suspiciously.

Da Costa kept close in cover. The expression on Marker's face startled him—so savage and malignant and intense was it. It was the face of a desperate and ruthless man that Da Costa glimpsed through the thickets.

A few minutes later there was the sound of footsteps on the path again, and Harry Wharton came in sight.

He came swinging along carelessly, with a cheery face, evidently unconscious of danger on the path.

With a sudden spring Marker came out into the path as the captain of the Remove was about to pass him.

Wharton stopped.

"You!" he ejaculated.

Captain Marker stood in the path before him, his eyes fixed on the Greyfriars junior.

The malignancy of his expression made Wharton back away a few paces. He clenched his hands, watching the captain warily.

"So I've got you!" said Marker. "I've got you now, boy. Your friends are not with you now. It will be a ragging this time, Harry Wharton!"

"Keep your distance, you rotter!" answered Wharton coolly. "Are you hanging about here to meet Ponsonby? You won't see him again."

"You are still at Greyfriars?"

Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"Yes; and Ponsonby is lucky to be still at Highcliffe. Hasn't he sent you

word? No wonder you're anxious to see him."

"Then you know?"

"Ponsonby has written and signed a confession," said Harry, his lip curling. "The game is up. If that's what you wanted to find out from Ponsonby, you can hear it from me. You are going to be called to account for having broken into Greyfriars at night, and hiding the diamond pin in my study. You've overstepped the law at last, you rotter, and given yourself away! Anything more you want to know?"

"No," said Captain Marker, in a low voice. "That is enough. If that young rascal has betrayed me, I know the game is up. And from what you say it is clear enough. I came here to wait for him, after sending him a message. But I suppose he will not come."

"You can bet on that," said Harry. "He's too busy taking care of himself, and wondering whether he will be sacked from Highcliffe to bother about you."

"No doubt."

"Now let me pass," said Harry.

The captain laughed a low, pleasant laugh.

"The game is up," he said. "I have been beaten all along the line. Now that I know what has happened, I do not want to see Ponsonby. But I am very glad to see you, Harry Wharton, in this lonely place, with no eyes to witness. You are at my mercy here."

"Not quite," said Wharton coolly, though his heart was beating fast. "If you lay a finger on me, Captain Marker, you'll find that I know how to use my hands. I'm not afraid of you."

The captain laughed again—a very ugly laugh.

"Under the will of that old fool in Calcutta you inherit a fortune, if you

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keep a clean record at school—if you do not get expelled as I was in my time. You know that that is why I have worked against you. I have failed, and that game is up. But you will not profit much by beating me. There are other ways, Harry Wharton. Old Mr. Cortolvin's fortune would come to me if you fell into disgrace at school. But it may come to me in other ways. It would come to me if you did not live to inherit it."

Wharton started.
"Have no fear of that," sneered the captain. "I am not fool enough to put my neck into a rope, even to revenge myself upon you. But there are still other ways. What will happen if you are not to be found when the time comes for the fortune to be handed over? If you have been missing all those years, and are not to be found? The fortune will then be mine."

"I'm not likely to be missing, I suppose?" said Harry, staring at the malignant face blankly.

Again came that ugly laugh.

"I think so, boy—I think it very likely. My car is waiting on the road a short distance from here. After dark you will be placed in that car, unconscious, and driven away."

Wharton's hands clenched harder.
"I have laid my plans, boy," said the captain, quietly and menacingly. "You have driven me to more desperate measures than I anticipated; but I do not lose a fortune because of that. At midnight you will be on board a vessel—your destination you will discover later—and you will vanish from all human knowledge. Do you understand?"

"I think you must be mad!" said Harry. "If you are thinking of kidnapping me, you won't get away with it easily."

"What is to save you?" jeered the captain. "There is no help for you here. And one blow from this will place you helpless at my mercy." From under his coat the captain drew a short, loaded stick. "What now?"

Wharton's heart throbbed. He was face to face with an utterly desperate man—a man who, at the end of his resources, had now thrown caution to the winds, and prepared to take desperate chances. The Greyfriars junior sprang back, and the captain followed him up with gleaming, malignant eyes. There was a sudden rustling in the thicket, and a hidden figure leaped out behind the captain as his arm was uplifted to strike. Da Costa, with the spring of a tiger, was on the ruffian, dragging him back.

A yell of rage burst from the captain at that utterly unexpected attack.

He whirled round on the Eurasian.

"Da Costa!" panted Wharton, in joy and relief. "Oh, good man!" And he rushed at the captain to help his friend. Crash!

The loaded stick in the ruffian's hand struck down Da Costa.

With a gasping cry, the Eurasian fell in the grass.

Wharton, his eyes blazing, was on the ruffian at the same moment. His clenched fist struck the captain behind the ear as he was turning back from the fallen Eurasian.

Captain Marker reeled over and fell in the path, dizzy from that hefty blow. The loaded stick dropped from his hand.

"Da Costa!" panted Wharton.
The Eurasian stirred feebly, but no word came from him. Wharton snatched up the fallen stick. There was blood on the half-caste's olive face.

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It was plain that he was badly hurt. Captain Marker was staggering to his feet as Wharton turned on him, fierce wrath in his face, and the loaded stick gripped in his hand. The Greyfriars junior struck with all his strength, and the blow stretched Captain Marker in the grass, stunned and senseless.

"Da Costa!"

Wharton threw the stick into the thickets, and dropped on his knees beside the Eurasian.

"Old chap," he panted huskily, "you're hurt!"

But the Eurasian did not speak, and his dark eyes were closed. A streak of crimson ran from under his thick hair. Wharton, kneeling by his side, gazed at the white, set face in horror. Arthur da Costa, once his enemy, had saved him. And a terrible fear was in Wharton's heart that the Eurasian had saved him at the cost of his life.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Dark Days!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you know Wharton's come in!"

"Oh, Wharton come back from Highcliffe!" said Bob Cherry. "Then we'll get into tea."

The Form match on Little Side was over. Temple, Dabney & Co. had met their usual rapid fate at the hands of the Remove cricketers. Bob Cherry and his friends were strolling towards the House when Billy Bunter met them, his fat face full of excitement.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped, "Wharton—"

"What about him, ass?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Looks as if he's seen a ghost," said Bunter. "I asked him what was up, and he didn't answer, but went into Quelch's study. I say, you fellows, something's happened—something awful!" said Bunter impressively.

"Rot!" grunted Bob.

But the chums of the Remove hastened their steps to the House.

They found a group of Remove fellows at the end of Masters passage.

All of them looked excited. Bunter's news was evidently well-founded for once; something had happened.

"Seen Wharton, you men?" asked Bob.

"He's just gone into Quelch's study," answered Skinner. "What on earth has happened? He was as white as a sheet."

"I say, you fellows, I told you so! Looked as if he had seen a ghost," squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Something's jolly well happened," said Bolsover major. "The chap looked fairly knocked out."

"What the dickens could have happened—he's only been over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay," said Nugent.

"Might have had a row with Pon over there, perhaps."

"Something more serious than that, from his looks," said Hazeldene.

The chums of the Remove had come off the cricket ground in a cheery mood, but they were grave enough now. They waited anxiously for the captain of the Remove to come out of Mr. Quelch's study. Something had happened, apparently, which he had to report to his Form-master, and the juniors wondered uneasily what it was.

"Da Costa was going to meet him on the way back," said Bob.

"Did Da Costa come in with him, you fellows?"

"Haven't seen him!"

"I say, you fellows, Da Costa wasn't with him," said Bunter. "He came in

alone, and when I asked him what was up, he never even answered. Perhaps Da Costa's been run over by a motor-car!"

"Fathead!"

"Or gored by a mad bull!" suggested Bunter cheerfully.

"You fat idiot, shut up!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The door of Mr. Quelch's study opened, and all eyes were fixed on Harry Wharton as he came out.

Bob Cherry caught his breath, at the sight of his chum's face. Wharton was white as chalk, and almost haggard. His usual elastic steps were unsteady as he came down the passage.

Bob Cherry caught him by the shoulder.

"Harry! What's happened?"

"The happenfulness must have been terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, gazing in wonder at Wharton's stricken face.

"Da Costa!" said Harry, in a low voice. "He's hurt!"

"But what—"

"That villain, Marker, attacked me on Courtfield common—on that lonely path, where we ragged him," said Wharton. "Da Costa seems to have come to meet me on my way back from Highcliffe—anyhow he was there, and he chipped in, and he got what Marker meant for me."

"But—but what—" gasped Bob.

"Marker had a loaded stick, and he struck Da Costa down with it," said Harry. "He was stunned. I got him as far as the Courtfield Road on my back and stopped a passing motor-car, and the man gave me a lift into Courtfield with him—to the hospital."

"The hospital! Then—he's bad?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Not—not—" Bob Cherry's voice faltered. There was a hush.

Wharton shook his head.

"They say not—though I was afraid of that, at first. But he's going to be laid up a long time—he's hard hit. He got it to save me—that villain meant it for me—Da Costa's in a rotten state now—bandaged up and only half-conscious—"

"Poor old chap!"

"But—you say Marker went for you and him," said Johnny Bull. "How did you get away with Da Costa, if—"

"I got hold of the stick, luckily, owing to Da Costa chipping in, and gave Marker a lick on the head with it," said Harry. "He was stunned. I left him where he fell down—I wasn't bothering about the brute, you may be sure. I told them at the hospital, and they telephoned to the police station—I dare say the police have taken Marker by this time. He will get a long sentence for this—that's one comfort!"

"The terrific rascal!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

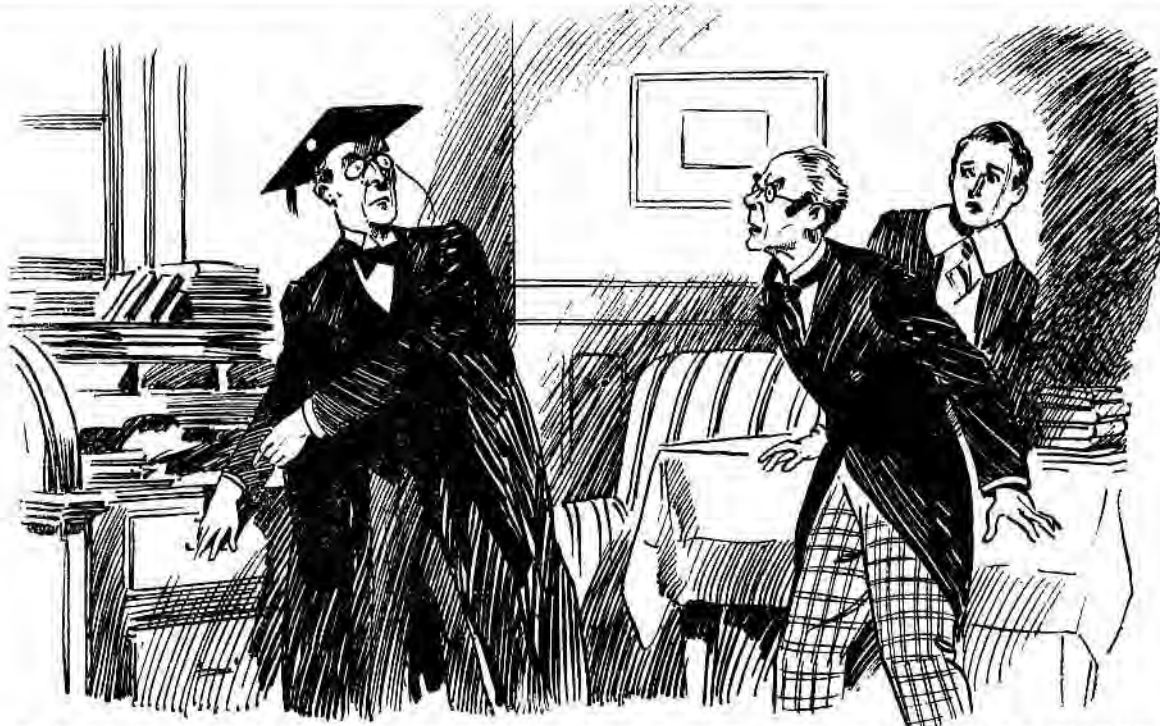
"It's rotten!" muttered Wharton miserably. "I heard them saying something about concussion—goodness knows how it will turn out. And he got it helping me."

Arthur da Costa was missing from calling-over that evening. Mr. Quelch's face, when he took the roll, was very grave.

The next day the Eurasian's place was vacant in the Remove Form-room.

A shadow had fallen upon the cheery spirits of the chums of the Remove.

Of late they had chummed with the Eurasian, and almost forgotten what he had once been, why he had come to Greyfriars in the first place. He had changed, and they had grown to like him and respect him; and now he had given a terrible proof, if proof was



Mr. Quelch picked up the diamond pin, dropped it into a drawer, and snapped the drawer shut. "That pin, Mr. Mobbs, remains here until a constable arrives to take official charge of it. You are at liberty to depart as soon as you please, but I shall detain Ponsonby until a constable arrives to take him into custody." (See Chapter 12.)

needed, that he deserved their friendship and respect. Now he lay in pain in a hospital ward, struck down in defence of the fellow whom he had been sent to Greyfriars to ruin. It was the fullest atonement he could have made. Anxiously, the chums of the Remove waited for news of him.

The news, when it came, was good. Da Costa was booked for a long illness, that was certain; but no permanent injury had been done. That, at least, it was good to know.

Meanwhile, there was no news of Captain Marker.

The police had searched for him on Courtfield Common, but evidently the rascal had recovered his senses before their arrival, for he was gone. The inn where he had stayed at Redclyffe was promptly visited; but the officers could only learn that Captain Marker had returned there in his car, hastily packed his bag, and departed in the car again at a furious speed. After that he seemed to have vanished.

He was a hunted man now; with a term of penal servitude waiting for him when he was captured.

But he was not captured. It was discovered at last that he had left the country; but it was certain that he would not dare to return to India; his career there was ended. Captain Marker was a fugitive now, a wanderer on the face of the earth—a ruined and desperate man slinking from justice; and that, perhaps, was a sufficient punishment for his crimes. Harry Wharton gave him little thought; his thoughts were all for the boy who lay on a bed of pain in a hospital ward.

But the time came at last when Wharton was allowed to visit the hospital to see the fellow who had saved him at such a cost to himself. Arthur da Costa, propped on pillows, still bandaged and pale, greeted him with a smile.

"I'm mending, old fellow," he said.

"Thank goodness for that," said Harry, with a shake in his voice. "Old chap, can you guess what I've been feeling like. I—I wished sometimes that you hadn't chipped in, and that I'd got it instead."

The Eurasian smiled. "I am glad!" he said. "I owed it to you—after all that I had done—"

"Don't speak of that."

"No—but I think of it," said Da Costa. "But you believe in me now, you believe and trust me!"

"Yes, yes! And once we get you back to Greyfriars—"

The Eurasian shook his head.

"I shall not return to Greyfriars,"

he said. "I am sorry—but—I go to my own country. Your uncle, Colonel Wharton, has been here to see me, several times. He would be willing to see me through at Greyfriars, but—"

"You must let him," said Harry. "We won't let you leave."

Again Da Costa smiled, and shook his head.

"The doctors think I shall recover better in my own country," he said, "and I feel that it is so. But I shall not go back friendless and poor, as I was before—I shall not again be the poor and envious wretch that Captain Marker took from the school at Lucknao. Colonel Wharton has made me an offer—which I have accepted because—because I think I shall be able to repay him some day for his kindness, and I know you would not like me to refuse it. I am to be placed at school in Bombay; and when I am older I shall study the law—owing to Colonel Wharton's kindness, my future is assured. But—at Greyfriars or in India—I hope you will always be my friend."

"Always!" said Harry.

"You will forget why I came to Greyfriars, and—and what I have done—and only remember that while I was with you, I learned to play the game!" said the Eurasian softly.

"I shall only remember that you're one of the best fellows breathing," said Harry Wharton.

The time came at last when Arthur da Costa was able to leave the hospital; and for a few days he returned to Greyfriars.

On the day he left, at last, Colonel Wharton came down to Greyfriars, and Da Costa left with him in his car. Almost all the Remove turned up to give him a send-off; and the Famous Five bade him farewell with clouded faces—Hurree Jamset Ram Singh assuring him that the regretfulness and sorrowfulness were terrific.

"We shall miss him," said Harry, as he and his chums walked back to the House.

"The missfulness will be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the esteemed and absurd Da Costa will escape the ridiculous rigour of the execrable English winter, which will perhaps compensate him a little for the loss of our preposterous society."

"Fathead!" said Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter."

"And the St. Jim's match," said Bob Cherry suddenly. "That comes off next week, you know! We had old Da Costa as a rod in pickle for St. Jim's! He won't play now."

"I say, you fellows, that's all right," said Billy Bunter. "You won't miss Da Costa in the St. Jim's match. You can play me instead, and it will be as right as rain."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Billy Bunter's generous offer had supplied the necessary comic relief.

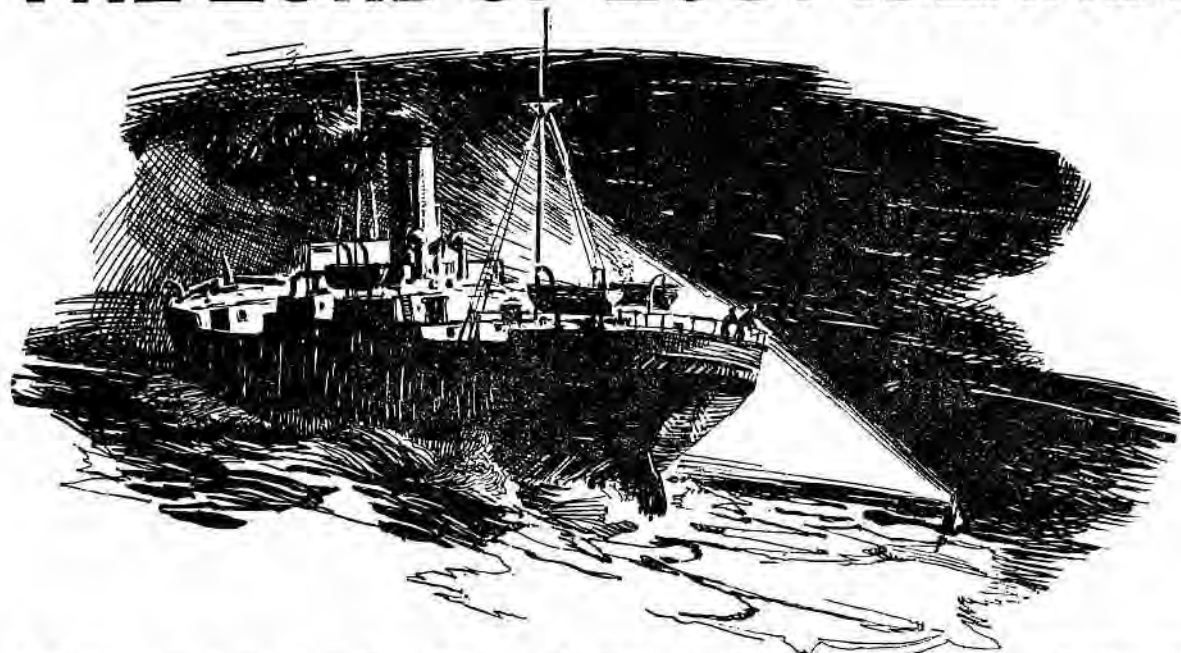
THE END.

(Who says another topping yarn of Greyfriars, featuring the fat and fatuous Bunter? Well, look out for next week's great story, entitled: "BILLY BUNTER'S BOOKMAKER!" and prepare yourselves for a great treat!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,007.

ONCE ABOARD THE . . . No, not the "ligger," but the *Seagull*, whose skipper is about the world's worst roughneck. And this skipper got it in for young Jack Drake, the latest addition to his crew. But Jack's not worrying—he simply revels in a scrap when the odds are against him!

THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND!



A thrilling new story of modern piracy on the high seas, featuring Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street 'tec, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant.

Out of the Darkness!

WHEN the first grey light of the coming dawn was streaking the eastern sky, the *Seagull* stood out to sea. Once clear of the harbour she swung on to a south-south-westerly course, and held to it steadily throughout the day.

Schuller and his negro mate appeared on the bridge towards eight bells in the afternoon watch. They conversed earnestly together as they paced the bridge, and more than once Schuller paused to sweep the horizon with his glasses.

Ferrers Locke and Drake had been assigned to the starboard watch. The *Seagull* carried about one hundred men, including engine-room staff and stokers. They were a rough crowd for the most part, and the Baker Street detective discovered in casual conversation that, with the exception of the officers, the bo'sun, carpenter, and chief engineer, not a soul aboard had ever shipped with Schuller before.

The grub was putrid, consisting of rank salt pork and weevil-infested biscuit. The men grumbled at dinner-time, and half of them refused to eat the filthy stuff. But, beyond that, the day passed uneventfully enough. If Schuller noticed Ferrers Locke or Jack Drake, he showed no signs of it. Afternoon deepened into evening and the shades of night began to creep in across the sea. But still Schuller lingered on the bridge and, at three bells in the first dog watch, he rang the engine-room telegraph for dead slow.

He sent a seaman below and the man returned with a heavy worsted jacket which Schuller donned. Turning the collar up about his neck, Schuller plunged his hands in his pockets and stood against the bridge rail staring out across the darkening sea.

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,067.

lounging by the fo'c'sle head, watched him curiously as he stood silhouetted by the light which streamed from the open wheelhouse door.

It was close on midnight, and the *Seagull* was forging slowly through a choppy and restless sea when, far away on the starboard bow, the darkness was split by a rocket which flared up redly into the sky and dropped seawards in a shower of sparks.

Instantly Schuller leapt into action. He rang the engine telegraph for full speed ahead and roared out an order to the man at the wheel. Immediately the *Seagull*'s bows swung towards the point where the rocket had flared.

INTRODUCTION.

*Ships have been disappearing with alarming frequency in the South Pacific, and Joshua Penningfold, a trusted representative at Lloyd's, is instructed to acquaint Ferrers Locke, the celebrated Baker Street detective, with the facts. Before he can carry out his mission, however, he is brutally murdered. Answering in every way to the description of Black Michael, a pirate who has been terrorising the western seaboard of South America, Ferrers Locke is convinced that a man known as Professor Chalmers is the guilty party. That his suspicions are well founded is proved later when Chalmers' shadower is discovered murdered in the docks with a scrawled note in his pocket threatening Ferrers Locke with a similar fate. Realising the chances are that Chalmers has escaped on the high seas Ferrers Locke, accompanied by his boy assistant, Jack Drake, sails for Buenos Ayres. Shortly after reaching their destination an attempt is made on Ferrers Locke's life by an agent of "Frisco Sam, proprietor of Black Michael's old haunt, who, to save his own neck, tells the Baker Street detective all he knows. After cleverly disguising themselves Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake manage to scrape an acquaintance with "Frisco Sam, through whom they succeed in getting aboard the *Seagull*, an iron-hulled freighter bound for Lost Island. Here they meet Schuller, a gunnman, who quickly recognises Drake as the one who had pulled a gun on him in a gambling saloon. Schuller threatens to take his revenge as soon as the two have seen the "boss." "I'm rather anxious to see this fellow whom Schuller referred to as the boss," says Ferrers Locke, when up on deck that night.*

(Now read on.)

From a rack in the wheelhouse Schuller snatched a heavy Verrey pistol, and the next instant its green magnesium cartridge flared up into the night, to drop hissing into the sea. For fifteen minutes the *Seagull* held on her new course then, directly ahead, there leapt into being the vivid beam of a powerful searchlight. It wheeled on the waste of waters then came to rest on the *Seagull*, lighting up her every bolt and spar.

"*Seagull ahoy!*" came a hail. "Stop your engines!"

"*Aye! Aye!*" roared Schuller, and he rang the engine room telegraph sharply.

Slowly the vessel lost way and lay heaving on the waters. Ferrers Locke and Drake, together with the starboard watch, were leaning against the rail peering towards that blinding beam.

Then, as their eyes became focused, they made out a long, black glistening body, half submerged in the water, like that of some gigantic whale.

"A submarine!" murmured Drake, and the detective nodded.

"*Seagull ahoy!*" came the hail again. "We're coming aboard you!"

Schuller shouted an order, and a rope ladder was thrown over the side. The searchlight beam shut off abruptly, and from out of the darkness came the rumble of oars in rowlocks. A small boat drew in alongside the vessel. Someone clutched at the rope-ladder and commenced to come up hand over fist.

Ferrers Locke slouched casually forward as Schuller ran down the bridge ladder and crossed the deck to meet the newcomer.

A man, muffled in a heavy overcoat, came over the side, followed by two seamen. His head was enveloped in a cap with drawn ear-flaps. As he turned towards Schuller his face was illumined by the sickly light of a binnacle lamp.

It was Chalmers!

Chalmers' Anger!

CHALMERS crossed the deck to the saloon hatchway and disappeared below with Schuller. The two seamen who had accompanied him aboard went off to drink rum in the bo'sun's cabin.

Ten minutes had elapsed when the negro mate came on deck and bellowed for Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. They accompanied him to Schuller's cabin where Chalmers was seated at the table, his heavy coat unbuttoned and his cap on the table by his elbow.

"Stand here, under the lamp!" said Chalmers harshly, and Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake obediently moved forward to the table and stood beneath the swinging oil lamp.

With head thrust forward, Chalmers peered at them, but there was nothing of recognition in his eyes. He studied them appraisingly for a few moments, then turned to Schuller.

"They look fit enough!" he said. "I've never known Sam send me a bad 'un yet!"

The negro shuffled forward, his thick lips parted in a leering grin.

"By jiminy, dese two fellahs has got nerve, sah!" he said, squinting at Schuller from out of the corner of his eyes. "Yessah, I'll tell de world dey have!"

Chalmers glanced at him sharply.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

The negro rubbed his fat hands, grinning maliciously at the now scowling Schuller.

"De young one, he got de drop on Cap'n Schuller way back in 'Frisco Sam's s'loon! Yessah! By jiminy, I tink dat funny!"

"Keep your mouth shut, you black hog!" snarled Schuller.

Chalmers leant back in his chair, an amused smile on his face.

"What exactly happened?" he asked quietly. "Tell me, please, Schuller!"

"Aw, reckon I pulled a gun on a guy what figgered I was cheatin' at cards!" replied Schuller sulkily. "Wal, I warn't lookin' elsewheres for trouble and that there weevil," he indicated Jack Drake with a jerk of his head, "yanked out a gun an' got th' drop on me like what th' nigger ses!"

Whilst Schuller had been talking the smile had vanished from Chalmers' lips. And now he launched himself to his feet, crashing his fist on to the table.

"How many times have I told you, you idiot," he shouted, "that I will not have you stirring up trouble when you are ashore? Can't you realise, you cursed fool, how thin the ice is upon which we are treading?"

"Aw, reckon it was on'y a li'l harmless game of cards, an' a feller figgered I was cheatin'—" began Schuller deprecatingly.

"And the chances are a thousand to one that you were cheating!" cut in Chalmers. "You had no right to draw your gun! You're a fool, and it's criminal folly like yours which will ruin all our plans!"

Schuller eyed him sullenly.

"Meanin'?" he jerked out.

"Meaning that if you were to get taken up by the police, who's going to take charge of the Seagull? You are the only man aboard who knows the latitude and longitude of Lost Island! You never thought of that, did you, you blamed idiot? But I'll wager that you have thought of saving your own skin, and pocketing the police reward by giving me away!"

Schuller leapt to his feet.

"Yuh reckons I'd give yuh away?" he snarled.

Both men were in towering passions. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake looked on quietly, both knowing that any instant might bring sudden tragedy.

"Yes, I do!" replied Chalmers bitingly. "You've asked me and I say, yes! I trust no man—not one!"

For a long moment he and Schuller stood glaring at each other. Ferrers Locke noted that Chalmers' hand had strayed to the pocket of his coat, and he knew that in the pocket a weapon lay ready for instant use.

"You can sit down!" Chalmers spoke with icy calmness, now completely master of himself. "After this, you and I will probably understand each other a little better. But understand this, Schuller, I'm beginning to doubt your efficiency. To pull a gun ashore was the act of a fool, but to have allowed this youth"—and his eyes flickered towards Jack—"to have turned the tables on you was the act of a half-witted son of a sea-dog!"

With flaming eyes Schuller stood for a moment irresolute, then slumped back into his chair.

Chalmers turned to Ferrers Locke and his boy assistant.

"I have had you brought here," he said quietly, "because 'Frisco Sam has marked you as Class A men, which means that, in his opinion, you are men who can be relied upon to serve me well—exceptionally well! At Lost Island the nature of your duties will become apparent to you. Some day you will return to the mainland as wealthy men—if you return at all. The work which you will be called upon to undertake will be work of extreme danger on the high seas. More than that I cannot tell you now. But serve me well, and you will not regret it! You may go!"

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake quitted the cabin. Outside in the passageway the Baker Street detective took Jack Drake by the arm.

"There's going to be trouble with Schuller as soon as Chalmers leaves this ship!" he said, in a low voice. "There was murder in his eyes as he sat watching you whilst Chalmers was talking to us!"

"I suppose he blames me for the row he had with Chalmers!" said Jack.

"Undoubtedly! It is all added to the score which he has against you! But I'm going to the fo'c'sle. I think I've got a plan to put Schuller out of action once and for all!"

Mutiny!

WHILST Chalmers was closeted below with Schuller and the negro mate, Ferrers Locke was in the fo'c'sle talking earnestly with the men. He emerged as Chalmers came on deck escorted by a sullen and tight-lipped Schuller.

The two seamen were waiting by the rail, and they followed Chalmers down into the boat. It pushed off from the Seagull and shot away into the darkness towards the black bulk of the submarine.

Schuller stood looking over the rail for a few moments, then mounted to the bridge. The engine telegraph rang sharply, and the Seagull's engines rumbled into life.

Slowly the ship commenced to forge through the water. Her bows swung away from the submarine which soon merged, and was lost in the darkness.

It was then that Schuller descended the bridge-ladder, and with purposeful stride, crossed the deck to where Jack Drake was lounging with one or two of the watch.

"Now, yuh dog," he snarled, gripping



"Now, yuh dog!" snarled Schuller. "I'm gonna smash yuh!" His fist shot out and caught Jack Drake flush on the mouth, sending the youngster reeling back against the ship's rail. (See page 26.)

the boy by the arm, "I'm gonna smash yuh!"

He released his grip, and his fist shot outwards. It took Ferrers Locke's boy assistant flush on the mouth, and the youngster reeled back against the ship's rail. With lips drawn back from his teeth, Schuller leapt in.

"Raise one hand, yuh dog!" he snarled, "an' I'll shoot yuh down fer mut'ny!"

His fist caught Jack Drake a stunning blow on the temple, and the boy crashed to the deck.

"Git up, yuh blubber!" shouted Schuller. "By hokey, I'm gonna—"

At that moment a hand grasped Schuller roughly by the arm and swung him round. He found himself face to face with Ferrers Locke.

"Take yuh han's off'n me!" snarled Schuller. "or, by hokey, yuh'll be dead meat in—"

"Aw, forgit it!" growled the detective. "Us wants a word w' you, Schuller!"

A stream of foul invective was Schuller's reply to that; but Ferrers Locke did not relax his grip on the man's arm.

"When yuh're through!" said the detective coldly, "us's got sumthing to say, what you'll be mighty tickled to hear!"

For the first time, Schuller seemed to become aware that the majority of the seamen were clustered behind the detective. A look of something akin to fear leapt for a moment into his eyes and was gone.

"Wal, what'n cripes yuh wantin' to say?" he snarled.

"Just this," replied Ferrers Locke coolly. "Th' grub on this ship ain't fit for hogs, let alone sailor-men. Us don't want no high-falutin' vittels, but us does want grub what's fit for a feller's stomach! Us opines, therefore, that unless the food casks what is meant for the officers ain't broached right here and now, there's gonna be trouble! That's right, men, ain't it?"

A growl of assent came from the men standing behind the detective.

"Meanin' to say," sneered Schuller, "that you scum is aimin' to eat the vittels what are meant for th' s'loon?"

"Just that," assented the detective. "Us ain't had a meal since us comed aboard this here craft, and us has reached the limit!"

"By hokey, yuh have!" shouted Schuller.

With a quick movement he wrenched his arm free, and his hand leapt to his pocket. Ferrers Locke sprang forward, his fist whipped out, and, taking the skipper of the Seagull full under the jaw, he sent him sprawling in a heap against the rail.

There came a roar from the bridge, followed by the sharp bark of an automatic. A man screamed, then swayed, and fell to the deck in a crumpled heap. Firing as he came, the negro mate rushed down the bridge ladder.

"Get Schuller!" shouted Ferrers Locke, and sprang towards the giant negro.

Bang!

The automatic barked viciously, and the bullet from it seared the detective's scalp. The next instant the Baker Street detective had seized the man's gun wrist, and, hooking his leg round the negro's, fell heavily on top of him.

They threshed about the deck, but the negro's strength was colossal. He dropped the gun and felt upwards with

his hands, in an attempt to clutch at the Baker Street detective's throat.

Half a dozen seamen rushed to the detective's aid. Somewhere behind him Schuller was screaming and cursing.

"We've gotten him!" gasped a man. "Here, clap the irons on the dog!"

The negro struggled desperately, but the issue was never in doubt. The irons were clapped on his ankles, and handcuffs clicked shut on his wrists.

Ferrers Locke, bruised and dishevelled, staggered to his feet. Four men were holding the frantic Schuller.

"This is mut'ny, yuh dog!" he shouted. "By hokey, yuh'll swing for this!"

"Yes, mut'ny, Schuller!" drawled Ferrers Locke. "But I don't reckon I'm gonna hang for it!"

Lost Island!

WHEN Schuller and the negro were safely locked in their cabins, Ferrers Locke mounted to the bridge.

Below him on the deck stood the whole ship's company, talking excitedly.

"Now, men," said the detective, and every face turned towards him, "neither you nor me knows just what mission this here ship is bound on. But I see'd that feller what come aboard off'n the submarine to-night, and, as I told you, he spoke me fair and square. Another thing I told you, he ain't got much use for Schuller!"

He paused a moment, then went on:

"Us has taken this ship, and for the first time since us sailed us is gonna get a decent meal. When we shipped we was promised good money; and I, for one, ain't turning my back on it. I say, let's pick our officers, and take this here ship to her home port—Lost Island! Schuller will navigate her, with a gun in his back. I don't reckon the feller off'n the submarine is gonna kick much, for us has mere stood out for our rights, and we ain't hurt his ship none."

"If he is gonna kick at us just because we don't aim to fill our stomach w' muck, then I reckon there's enuff of us right here to talk him back mighty straight. We'll work this here ship to Lost Island all fair, square, and shipshape, and I'm aimin' to say we won't find no trouble. Us ain't slaves, and us has started as us means to continue. Give us a fair deal, an us'll work fair. That's what we'll say when we get to Long Island!"

A thunderous cheer greeted this speech. The mutiny had been so simple. The bo'sun and one or two others, whose sympathies might have been with Schuller, had at once thrown in their lot with the men. They were a tough crowd, those men who had shipped aboard the Seagull, and, although they knew little as to her mission, they knew enough to realise that she was under the jurisdiction of no Board of Trade; otherwise they might have hesitated before indulging in mutiny.

They were drunk with success. The ship was theirs. They didn't want to turn back and go home. Explanations might be difficult. No, they wanted to do as their leader said, push on to Lost Island, and risk what the future might hold in store for them there.

So they picked their officers. Ferrers Locke was unanimously elected skipper; a massive Swede was chosen as his first officer, and Jack Drake—the kid who had held a gun at Schuller's head ashore—was picked as second officer.

"Well, mates," said Ferrers Locke, when the matter had been settled, "I'll have them s'loon stores made over to fock's le right now, and Schuller and his nigger can eat the stores they shipped for us. I'm gonna see Schuller now!"

He gave an order to the steward, then went below to Schuller's cabin.

"I ain't wasting no time nor words on you!" he said bluntly to the ex-skipper. "I want that to be understood clear. Yuh're gonna navigate this here ship to Lost Island, or you goes overboard! Which is it to be?"

"I'll navigate th' ship, of course!" snarled Schuller. "By hokey, I will!"

The detective nodded.

"Yeah! I reckon you figgers that I'm gonna swing when I gets there. Wal, us'll see!"

He removed the irons from Schuller's ankles.

"Not trusting you overmuch," he said. "I'm aimin' to keep them handcuffs on. Come on deck. You'll spend eight hours on and four off till us reaches Lost Island!"

Schuller obeyed without any demur. Then for five days the Seagull pounded steadily south-westwards. The crew worked well, what little work there was to be done. Half of them, or more, were merely passengers. Schuller gave no trouble, and the negro was only heard when his meals were taken to him. Then his far-from-melodious voice could be heard promising vile things to the mutineers when they reached Lost Island.

It was towards evening of the fifth day when the Seagull was ploughing her way through a cold, grey sea that Schuller, on the bridge, turned to Ferrers Locke.

"See yonder!" he said, and jerked his head towards the distant horizon, half swathed in the mists of the closing day.

Ferrers Locke peered in the direction indicated, and, as his eyes became focused, he made out what seemed to be a huge rock rising vast and massive from the sea.

"It is Lost Island!" said Schuller. "Better give the order to lie to till dawn."

Red Pete!

THROUGHOUT the long hours of the night the Seagull lay rocking and pitching on a turbulent sea. Towards dawn Jack Drake joined Ferrers Locke on the bridge, and in the grey light of early morning the ship stood in towards Lost Island.

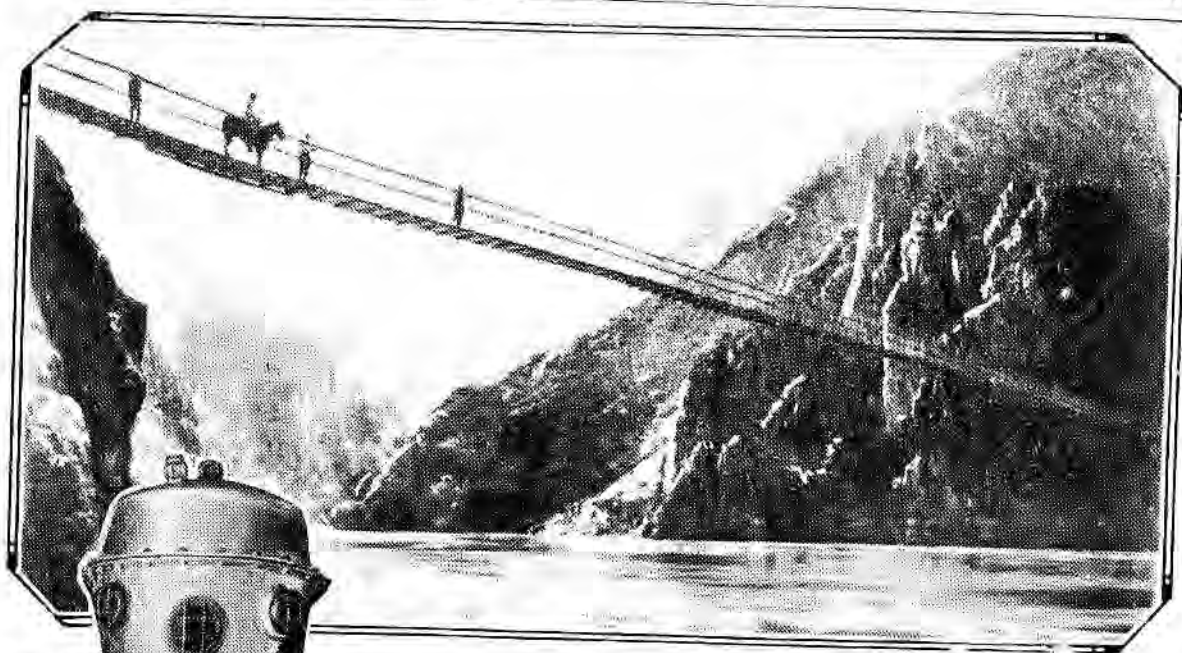
Grim, forbidding, and very desolate it looked as it reared itself, stark and clear-cut, against the morning sky. There were no signs of life about it, not even a solitary, wheeling sea-bird. It seemed roughly circular, and about two miles in diameter. Around the base, stretching far out to sea, was angry, white-capped, broken water, pierced here and there by sharp fangs of jutting rock.

"Best let me take th' wheel!" growled Schuller, who had been brought from his cabin to the bridge. "There ain't three men alive what c'd pilot a ship through them outcroppin' rocks!"

His handcuffs were unlocked and removed from his wrists, and, a grim smile on his thin lips, he stood at the wheel.

Then, for an hour, the Seagull nosed her way through the dangerous reefs. Sometimes her iron plates were brushed by spurs of rock which might well have

(Continued on page 28.)



A SHORT CUT!

This slender suspension bridge across the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, National Park, Arizona, is the only one for hundreds of miles, and by using it passage is obtained to the North Rim which otherwise could only be reached by covering 600 miles. Would you believe it?

DD

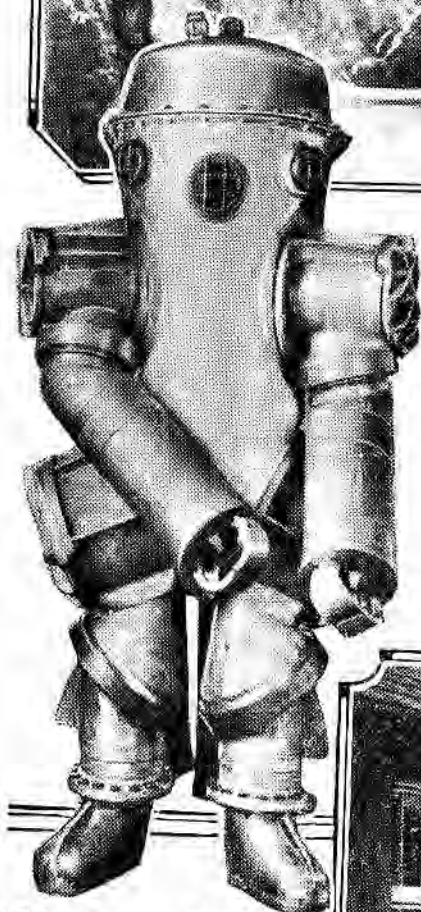
BUDDING AGRICULTURISTS!

Many excellent appointments are obtained throughout the country by pupils trained at the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College, Sutton Bonington, Loughborough. Apart from the usual courses of training pupils are trained in the repairing and adjustment of farming equipment. Photo below shows an instructor giving pupils a lesson in dismantling and erecting a binder.



"SOME" DIVING SUIT!

Another effort to save the treasure of the Lusitania is to be made by Mr. H. L. Bowdoin, of Whiteside, Long Island, U.S.A., who is bringing some remarkable inventions in the form of deep-sea diving equipment, including metal diving suits weighing no less than 1,400 pounds. These suits—photograph above shows one of them—are made on the fish-scale principle of steel and aluminium and are controlled by a series of levers, but they are so delicate that the huge steel gauntlets will be capable of picking up halfpennies!



THE LORD OF LOST ISLAND

(Continued from page 26.)

ripped them from their bolts and rivets. But Schuller stood staring straight ahead, the spokes of the wheel revolving beneath his fingers with mechanical precision, and always in front of the Seagull's bows stretched a narrow, tortuous channel of unbroken water.

At last she was through. Ahead of her, a cable length or more away, towered the cliffs of Lost Island. The spokes of the wheel flew round in Schuller's hands, and, as the ship's bows swung in response, there came into view a narrow channel—a cleft between the towering cliffs which rose almost perpendicular from the water.

Slowly the Seagull passed through, and glided into the still waters of a perfect, natural harbour, almost entirely shut off from the sea by the encircling cliffs. It was about three-quarters of a mile in diameter. On the landward side stood a row of galvanised iron huts, behind a broad, natural jetty of flat rock. Against this jetty was moored a long, black submarine.

The engine telegraph of the Seagull rang sharply, and, as she slowly lost way, her cable rumbled out, and she lay riding at anchor. A boat shot off from the jetty, propelled by the lusty strokes of four oarsmen. In the stern sheets sat a red bearded man, clad in a black peaked, nautical cap, reefed jacket, and blue serge trousers tucked into knee-high sea boots.

Schuller left the wheel and sauntered to where Ferrers Locke and Jack-Drake were standing. The rest of the men on board were living the rails, staring curiously at the submarine and the approaching boat.

Schuller indicated the latter with a jerk of his head.

"Red Pete!" he said laconically. "Second in command on this hvar island. A devil for discipline as you're gonna' blamed well find out! Yuh'll hang for this hvar mut'ny!"

There was little of anger in his tone, just a certain malicious satisfaction.

The boat brought up alongside the ship with smart scarping, and the man in the stern sheets ran nimbly up the rope ladder which had been thrown over the side.

Schuller, Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and the Swedish first officer stood

awaiting his coming. The men on deck watched with ill-concealed interest. Running up the bridge-ladder, Red Pete confronted Schuller. One cursory glance he threw towards the detective and his companions, then barked:

"What are these men doing on your bridge, Schuller?"

Schuller grinned. "Tain't my bridge," he replied slowly. "There's bin a mutiny, and I ain't no longer skipper! These dogs here seized th' ship and clapped me and th' niggers in irons! And him"—he indicated Ferrers Locke—"was th' ringleader! Yuh've gotta hang that man, Pete!"

(That would soon be the fate of Ferrers Locke if Schuller had his way, but Schuller, at the moment, is a nonentity. There are heaps of thrills in store for you, boys, next week. Order early.)

WINNING THROUGH!

(Continued from page 15.)

sion on his dile, Dr. Birchmell kwitted the room.

His efforts proved of little avail, however. "Well, did you get it?" asked Mr. Nollidge, when the Head returned later. Dr. Birchmell shook his head.

"So far I have been unsuccessful," he admitted. "Nevertheless, I cannot bear the idea of your continuing to have a hold over me. Had I anticipated anything like this, I assure you I wouldn't have borrowed half-a-crown from you under any circumstances!"

"I don't suppose you would!" grinned Mr. Nollidge. "Well, sir, I take it, then, that you want the I O U back very badly?"

"If you please, sir!" said the Head, with feeling. "Can't I render you some service instead of paying back the debt in cash?"

"Ah, now you're talking!" said Mr. Nollidge. "Perhaps we can come to terms. You recollect that soon after Mr. Lickham left for London, you eggspelled a boy named Jack Jolly?"

The Head looked nonplussed.

"Dunno how the dickens you got to hear of it so soon!" he remarked. "However, it's quite true that I did sack the boy you mention. Serves him jolly well right! He was a cheeky young bouncer!"

"Never mind about that," said Mr. Nollidge. "We are discussing your I O U not the eggspelled boy's carrierick. I'll

tell you what my terms are. I'll return your I O U and forego the cash, on condition that you cancel Jack Jolly's eggspulsion, and allow him to return to St. Sam's without a stain on his name."

"Grate pip!" mermered Dr. Birchmell, in astonishment.

"Paws before you answer!" warned Mr. Nollidge. "The alternative is a terrible one—eggsplosure to the Guvvners followed by disgrace, degradation, and if you're lucky, the dole! Now, what do you say?"

The Head stroked his beard thoughtfully for a minnit or so, then nodded.

"Very well, I axcept," he said. "I will reinstate Jolly in return for my I O U, though why the thump you should interfere—"

"Let's get it down in writing," interrupted Mr. Nollidge. "Put it in the form of a letter to the eggspelled junior, asking him to return!"

Dr. Birchmell had no other alternatiff but to agree. Five minnits later, he handed the completed document to Mr. Nollidge, who handed him in eggexchange the precious I O U.

Imagine Dr. Birchmell's discumfiture the next moment when Mr. Nollidge tore off his disguise, revealing the cleery dile of Jack Jolly.

"M-m-my hat!" stattered Dr. Birchmell, his eyes almost gogging out of his head. "You—you—so it was you all the time, Jolly? Grate pip!"

"Jevver get left, sir?" grinned Jack. "Now I'll go back to my old studdy and resoom my plaice as kaptin of the Fourth! Won't the fellows yell when I tell them how I got back? Ha, ha, ha!"

"M-m-my giddy aunt!" mermered the Head limply. "Well this beats the band, and no error! Then the Labour Exchange couldn't have sent along a new master, after all!"

"Looks like it, duzzent it?" chuckled Jack Jolly. "I should wring them up, if I were you and make sure of one this time. Ta-ta, sir!"

Grinning all over his dile, Jack Jolly kwitted the studdy, and resoomed his plaice in the Lower skool of St. Sam's.

It only remains to add that in dew corse, Mr. Lickham returned to take up his dooties as master of the Fourth, and that sellybrated Form soon settled down to its normal eggistence again!

THE END.

(Whatever you do, chums, don't miss next week's amusing yarn of Jack Jolly & Co., entitled: **ON THE DOWNWARD PATH!** It will keep you in fits of laughter!)



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"AVE!"

"Here he comes!"

The warning words ran round the Fourth Form at St. Sam's like lightning. Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, was on leave from the school, and the Fourth were awaiting with great interest the arrival of his deputy. Had they known that Mr. Nollidge, the newcomer, was more other than their eggspelled kaptin, Jack Jolly, in disguise, they would have been even more interested. But they didn't.

Mr. Nollidge rushed into the Form-room. In his wake, Dr. Birchmell, headmaster of St. Sam's, came slinking with majestic tread.

"Boys!" cried the Head, his eyes glittering, as he remembered how the Fourth had pulled his shaggy leg on his previous visit. "This is Mr. Nollidge, the new master, who will take you in Mr. Lickham's absence."

"All serene, sir!" cooed the Fourth. "I have already informed Mr. Nollidge that you are a dangerous and violent set of young scoundrels," continued Dr. Birchmell, venomously, "and I have advised him to subject you to a merciless discipline."

"Oh, cikey!" murmured the Fourth, in dismay. "I have given Mr. Nollidge carte blanche to use the cane, and the birch, or any other instrument of torcher he considers appropriate, on the slightest provocation—or even without provocation at all," went on the Head portentously.

"Oh dear!"

"And now, Mr. Nollidge, perhaps you would like to get on with the giddy washing," said Dr. Birchmell, turning to the new master with an ingratiating smile. "I will remain a few minutes in order to assist you, if necessary."

"Very well, sir," asserted Mr. Nollidge, with a laugh. "Perhaps you will be good enough to help me put up this blackboard, then."

"With pleasure!" said the Head. Dr. Birchmell felt very kindly disposed towards the new master, for he had just succeeded in extracting a loan of half-a-crown from him. Little did he dream that in doing so he had helped Jack Jolly in his glib plan to win back his place in the Fourth.

The Fourth watched, with curling lips, as the Head of St. Sam's assisted the new master with the blackboard. They could guess the reason for his unusual display of good nature!

Their eggspessions, however, underwent a sudden change, soon after. Whether by accident or design they couldn't tell, but just as Dr. Birchmell was struggling to lift the blackboard into position, the new master put a foot out, and tripped him up, sending him crashing to the floor, with the blackboard on top of him.

Crash!

"Yoooooooooooooooooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

The juniors could not refrain from laughing.

"Woooooooooooo!" Groooooooooo!" howled the Head, struggling to extricate himself from the wooden framework. "Gimme a hand, someone, for goodness' sake!"

"Allow me, sir!" said the new master. "I'll soon get you out of this!"

Jack Jolly seized Dr. Birchmell by his flowing beard, and gave a terrific wrench that jerked the Head right off the floor.

"Yoooooooooooooooooooo!" shrieked Dr. Birchmell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth simply yelled at the feendish eggspession on the Head's face.

"Grate pip!" This new master's feendish eggspession on the Head's face, tears of mirth streaming down his face.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 1,067.



Jack Jolly may not exactly shine as an angler with rod and line, but as a teacher he catches Dr. Birchmell on a bit of string this week, boys.

"Isn't he just?" eggspelled Mervyn. "If he carries on like this, though, I'm backing him up for one!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Long may he rule!"

There was no doubt that from the point of view of the Fourth, Mr. Nollidge had made a good start.

From the Head's point of view, however, Mr. Nollidge's sensational beginning in class was not at all gratifying. He glared at his new assistant with a glare that the faded Basil Isk might have envied.

"You—you—what the thump do you think you're playing at?" he roared.

"Playing at?" repeated Mr. Nollidge, in pretended surprise. "I wasn't playing at all, sir! I was merely giving you a helping hand, as you remarked!"

"I'm jolly sure I didn't remark you to pull me up by my beard!" roared the Head. "And anyway, wasn't it you who tripped me up, in the first place?"

"Oh, sir, how can you say such a thing?" cried the new master, in pained accents. "I appeal to the class—did I trip up Dr. Birchmell just now, boys?"

"No fear, sir!" yelled the Fourth, grinning all over their faces.

"If that's what you think, you must be suffering from a Lucy Nations," said Mr. Nollidge. "I should advise you to see a doctor at once, sir. Not that I would suggest for a moment that you are in a dangerous condition, of course, but there's just the chance that you are a bit touched, so to speak!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cikey rotter!" roared Dr. Birchmell. "How dare you suggest that I am off my nut? Why, I haven't been in a mental home for several years, now!"

"In that case, I withdraw the suggestion entirely, sir," said Mr. Nollidge, red-faced. "I only shows, though, that one can't always go by appearances, can one?"

Before Dr. Birchmell could think out a suitable reply to that, Mr. Nollidge was busy himself putting the blackboard to rights.

"Now, boys," he said, when he faced the Fourth again. "I propose that we kick off without further delay. To begin with, we'll have history. Who was King Canute?"

"Please, sir," replied Tubby Barrell nervously, "he was the king who never smiled again. The crowd waves sank his barque—"



"Boooooooooooo!"

Interrupted Dr. Birchmell rudely.

"The boy is obviously making it up, Mr. Nollidge. It is scandalous to think that any boy in the Fourth Form should be ignorant of the fact that King Canute was the king who never smiled again."

"I suggest you let the cakes burn. I suggest you stop this ignorant young welp!"

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Nollidge, somewhat to the surprise of the Fourth. "I will certainly do so."

"Look here, sir—"

"Pay no heed to his pleas for mercy!" said the Head, savagely. "Come out, Barrell, and bend over!"

Tubby Barrell rolled reluctantly to the front of the class and bent over, bitterly howling his fate.

The Fourth watched, with baited breath, as Mr. Nollidge accepted the heavy birch which the Head handed him. They were a little disconcerted to find that the new master, whom they had begun to like, should be willing to use the cruel instrument of torcher so soon.

But Mr. Nollidge, alias Jack Jolly, had no intention whatsoever of flogging the Palladium of the Fourth. His aim was in a

totally different direction, as a matter of fact.

"Seek it into him, Mr. Nollidge!"

He roared, rubbing his bony hands with malicious glee, and taking up a position near the new master. "You can give him the first hundred and after that, I'll have a turn!"

"Oh, grate pip!" murmured Tubby Barrell, faintly.

Mr. Nollidge took a tight grip on the birchrod and braced himself up for a tremendous effort.

Then, with a movement like lightning, he lifted the instrument of torcher over his head and caught the grinning Head a terrific swipe across the back.

"Woooooooooooooooooooo!" screamed Dr. Birchmell, as he fell with a thud on to the head, unsympathetic floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then the strange new master did a thing that sent the Fourth into one long yell of laughter.

Turning round on the rekumbent figure of the Head, he pretended to mistake

amazing impudence to apply the birch to my anatomy in front of the entire class. Never before in my scholastic career have I been eggspelled to such an indignity!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence! I cannot believe that these extraordinary incidents were of an accidental nature, Nollidge. You deliberately assaulted me!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Mr. Nollidge, in reproachful accents.

"Having come to that conclusion, I have decided to parade the rest of the masters in the gym with noted handkerchiefs, and make you run the gauntlet fifty times!" said Dr. Birchmell, a cruel grin beginning to spread over his face.

"By the time Chas. Tizer, Justices & Co. have finished with you, I fancy you'll be cured for all time of the habit of playing practical jokes on headmasters."

Strongly enough, the temporary master did not seem a bit disconcerted at the Head's vicious sentence. He nodded and grinned quite cheerily, in fact.

"You may live!" said Dr. Birchmell, with a snarl. "But I assure you, my friend, you'll repent later. I will write for Binding, the page, to order Masters Assembly!"

Dr. Birchmell stretched out his hand to wring the bell, but before he could reach it, a grip of iron descended on his wrist, and he found that Mr. Nollidge had stepped in.

"Halt a minute, dear old bean," said Mr. Nollidge gently.

"Largo my writ!" roared the Head, struggling to release himself.

"Not just yet!" replied Jack Jolly. "Later on, perhaps! Before you wring that bell, I want to have a nice, quiet talk with you, Dr. Birchmell, on a subject which will probably interest you considerably."

"What do you mean?" gasped the Head of St. Sam's, breaking into an icy sweat at those sinister words.

"I am referring to the loan of half-a-crown which you obtained from me when I first arrived at St. Sam's, earlier in the day."

"Grate pip! Surely you don't expect me to repay you so soon as this?"

"Not at all! Knowing something of your reputation, I shall be surprised if you intend to pay it back at all! But I'll just remind you that I hold your I O U for the sum I have mentioned, and if you are going to turn nasty, I shall feel inclined to return the compliment."

"You mean—"

"I mean that I shall send the I O U on to the Board of Governors. And you know what that means—the sack!"

Dr. Birchmell turned ghostly white. "You'd never dare—!" he began.

Mr. Nollidge interrupted him with a mocking laugh.

"Try me, then!" he challenged.

"Oh, grate pip!" murmured Dr. Birchmell.

He didn't attempt to wring the bell a second time. All thoughts of making Mr. Nollidge run the gauntlet had gone, in the face of this unexpected trouble.

"So that's your game, is it?" he said, looking pale and haggard, all at once. "You think you've got me under your thumb because you hold my I O U."

"I'll soon after that state of affairs!"

"Very well, then," said Mr. Nollidge. "Pay me back my half-crown!"

"Jack Jolly knew full well that the Head would find that an impossible task."

"I'm afraid I can't repay you just now," said the Head morfully. "Nevertheless, the thought of remaining under your thumb is intolerable! Wait here for me, and I will endeavor to raise the wind!"

With a more hopeful eggspession

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