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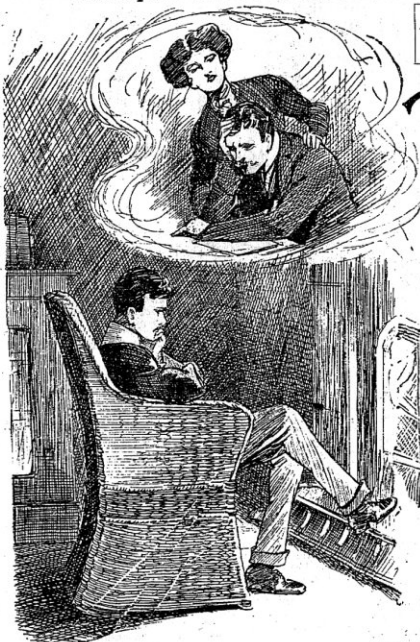
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THE FIRST CHAPTER. All Ready but One.

LORD MAULEVERER, the dandy of the Remove at Greyfriars, wore a worried look. As a rule, Mauleverer had a wonderful equanimity which nothing could disturb. But just now he was looking very much disturbed. He stood in his study, in the Remove passage, and he was going through his pockets, pocket after pocket, with the most scrupulous care. It was

not an uncommon thing at Greyfriars for a junior to go carefully through his pockets on a half-holiday, in the hope of finding therein some coin that had been overlooked in previous explorations. But that could hardly be the case with the school-boy earl, who had as much money as he wanted. Yet Lord Mauleverer was turning out his pockets in the most sedulous way, and as each was drawn blank the worried look upon his face deepened in intensity.

"By Jove!" he murmured at last. "This is simply rotten! What will the fellows say?"

Boom!

It was a stroke from the clock-tower of Greyfriars. It was followed by another, and then by another.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer. "This is rotten! Three o'clock! They'll all be here in a minute! My hat!"

There was a sound of footsteps in the Remove passage. A heavy concussion sounded at the door of Lord Mauleverer's study. The lock was not planned to resist a summons of that sort; it jerked open, and the door flew wide. The cheerful face of Bob Cherry of the Remove looked into the study.

"Three o'clock!" he announced.

"By Jove!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"We're all ready."

"Yaas. But—"

"And you're ready, I suppose?" continued Bob Cherry.

"Yaas. But—"

Tramp—tramp—tramp!

It was a sound of many footsteps on the worn linoleum of the Remove passage. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent came in, and after them came Johnny Bull, and Tom Brown, and Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove. All the juniors were dressed for going out, and all had a look of anticipation upon their faces.

"Here we are!" said Nugent.

"Quite ready!" said Bulstrode.

"Right up to the mark!" said Johnny Bull. "I've put a clean collar on, Mauly."

"Thank you very much!" stammered Lord Mauleverer. "You see—"

"Faith—and I've put on a new necktie, darling!" said Micky Desmond, coming into the study with Leigh and Vane of the Remove. "Doesn't it look nice?"

"Indeed it does!" said Lord Mauleverer. "But—"

"Sure, and ye're ready!"

"Yaas, But—"

"Ripping afternoon for a little outing," said Hazeldene, coming into the study. "I must say you've arranged the weather nicely, Mauleverer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Couldn't have been better," said Ogilvy, from the doorway—there was hardly room for any more in the study, although Lord Mauleverer's study was the largest in the Lower Fourth passage. "We shall enjoy it."

"Yes, rather!" said Morgan, behind Ogilvy. "And I must say it was really ripping, look you, for Mauleverer to manage this little run for a crowd of us."

"Ripping!" said Harry Wharton. "And just like Mauleverer."

"Hear, hear!"

"Only he mustn't keep us waiting," said Bob Cherry. "We're all ready, Mauly—all ready to stand by you like Trojans, and help you cash the fivers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It shall never be said that the Greyfriars Remove refused to stand by a chap who had four fivers to cash!" said Nugent solemnly.

Lord Mauleverer smiled feebly.

All his pockets were turned inside out, with the lining showing. He was looking through his desk now.

"I suppose you put the fivers in a safe place?" Harry Wharton remarked.

"Ya-a-a!" stammered Lord Mauleverer.

"Nothing like being careful with money," said Johnny Bull. "I remember you lost a fifty-quad note once."

"Ya-a-a!"

There was a shout along the passage, which was growing crowded.

"We're all ready. Where's Mauleverer?"

"He's here!" called back Bob Cherry.

"Tell him to buck up, then!"

"Patience, my sons—"

"Rats! Buck up!"

"Three o'clock was the time," said Trevor, "and it's five minutes past now."

"Give Mauly time to polish his topper," said Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer, his expression growing more and more disturbed, searched through his desk, and then turned out the drawer of the table.

The juniors who had found room in the study watched him curiously.

It was a great occasion for the Greyfriars Remove.

Lord Mauleverer was a millionaire, or would be when he came of age, and in the meanwhile he had an ample allowance—two ample, if Mauleverer had not been a youth of unusual good sense and good feeling.

That morning he had received four five-pound notes from his guardian, and he had asked the whole of the Remove upon a little excursion for the afternoon, which, the day being Wednesday, was a half-holiday at Greyfriars.

The Remove had accepted the invitation as one man.

The programme included the hiring of as many motor-cars as were necessary to carry the numerous party round the country, and unlimited tuck en route for all who wanted it, Lord Mauleverer to foot all the bills.

It was a programme which did not often come into the way of the Remove, and naturally they looked forward to it very much.

Needless to say, at three o'clock, the time for starting, they were all ready—even footer engagements had been cancelled for the afternoon.

Fellows in the other Forms had regarded the scheme with envious eyes. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth, and Coker of the Fifth, had delicately conveyed that they would not object to honouring the party with their com-

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pany. But the excursion was limited to the Remove—who certainly made up a sufficiently numerous party.

But now that all the Form had turned out—many of them in specially clean collars for the occasion—there seemed to be a hitch.

Lord Mauleverer was not ready!

He turned out the drawer of the table, and evidently did not find what he sought.

Then he turned a pink face upon the Removites.

"I'm frightfully sorry, you fellows—" he began.

"Not at all!" said Bulstrode genially. "We don't mind waiting a few minutes."

"Not at all!" said the juniors in chorus.

"Faith, not the latest little bit, Mauly darling!"

"Yaas. But—"

"But if you're ready now we'll start," said Bulstrode.

Lord Mauleverer made a last frantic search through his pockets.

"You—you see, I put the fivers in my pocket-book," he stammered.

"Yes?"

"My other money was all there, too—about fifteen pounds, I think."

"My hat! Fancy being such a Croesus!" said Bob Cherry. "Lucky you've got a lot of faithful friends to help you spend it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But come on," said Bulstrode. "We've got to walk to Courtfield to order the cars at the garage, you know—"

"I—I—I—"

"Give him time," said Harry Wharton. "If Mauly wants to change his necktie or put a new topper on we can make allowances."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"It isn't that," stammered Lord Mauleverer. "You see, I had all my money in my pocket-book—"

"Yes, you've told us that before—"

"And—"

"Well!"

"I—I—I—"

"Get it out, my son!"

"I've lost the pocket-book!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

His Lordship Pays the Piper.

"O H!" It was a general exclamation of dismay from the expectant Removites. Lord Mauleverer looked very distressed. The Remove looked very blank.

"You've lost the pocket-book!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Yes, I'm frightfully sorry—"

"You've lost the pocket-book!" roared the Removites in chorus, with a rising note of indignation.

"Yaas, I—"

"And the money, too?" demanded Bulstrode.

"Yaas. You see, the money was in the pocket-book."

"My hat!"

"You ass!"

"You fabjous chump!"

"Of all the silly fatheads—"

"I'm awfully sorry!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Blessed if I know what's become of the pocket-book! You see—"

"You've lost it, you ass!"

"Yaas."

"Then the excursion's off!" demanded Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, putting a very red and angry face in at the door.

"Yaas, I—I suppose so."

"You chump!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Harry Wharton. "Mauleverer is an ass not to take care of his money, but I suppose he didn't lose the pocket-book on purpose."

Bolsover sneered.

"How do we know that?" he said. "How do we know he isn't japing us? I dare say he's planned all this to make us look a set of asses."

"Oh, rats!"

"Quite likely," said Snoop. "I shouldn't lose a pocket-book with thirty-five pounds in it, I know that."

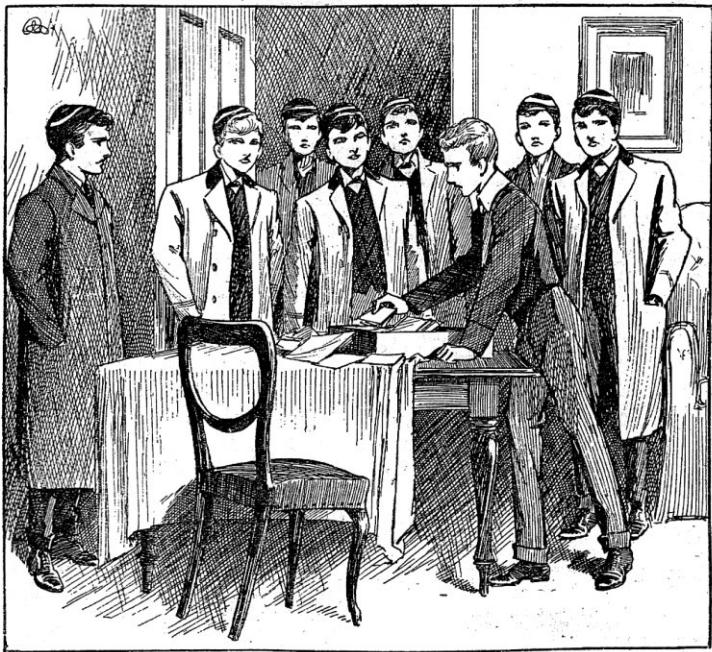
"No fear!"

"I guess not!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, who prided himself upon his keenness. "I reckon Mauleverer is pulling our leg."

"I don't think so," said Dick Penfold. "Mauleverer won't do that."

"What does it matter what you think, you rotten cobbler!" said Bolsover rudely. "Don't shove out your opinion among your betters."

"Yes, shut up, Penfold!" said Snoop.



Lord Mauleverer searched through his desk, and then turned out the drawer of the table, for his missing bank-notes. The juniors watched him curiously. "I'm frightfully sorry—" he began. (See Chapter 1.)

Dick Penfold, the scholarship boy, was silent, with crimson cheeks.

"Oh, don't be a cad, you know, Bolsover!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "Let Penfold alone."

Bolsover scowled angrily.

"Look here, is this excursion coming off or isn't it?" he demanded. "Are you going to make us all look fools before the whole school?"

"We shall be shipped to death by Temple and those rotters in the Fourth," said Hazeldene.

"And Coker, too—"

"Oh, it's rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Mauleverer had no right to do it—"

"Why can't you look after your money, you ass?"

Indignation was growing in the Remove. Bolsover was not the only one who was angry. Lord Mauleverer's carelessness with his money was proverbial in the Remove, but really he might have been a little more careful than usual on an occasion like this, when he had invited the whole Form to an outing. So much had been said about the excursion that the Removeites certainly would look rather foolish if it did not come off.

Lord Mauleverer was evidently much distressed. That he had deliberately japed the Remove in this way hardly any-

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one believed. But his carelessness had had results just as bad as if he had acted deliberately.

Bob Cherry gave a snort of annoyance.

"Well, if it's all off, we may as well get out," he said. "It's not too late to dig up some footer for the afternoon."

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton. "Come on, Franky!"

And Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull—the Famous Four of the Remove—left the study, and pushed their way through the crowd in the passage. But the other fellows did not go. Penfold followed the chums of the Remove, but the others remained, crowding into Lord Mauleverer's study with angry looks.

"I really can't help it, you chaps!" said the unfortunate Mauleverer. "I'm really fearfully sorry. I can't imagine where I lost the pocket-book. It's not in the study anywhere—I've looked. I must have dropped it out of doors."

"Oh, rot!" said Bolsover. "You ought to know where it is."

"Yaas. But—"

"You've no right to lose it, after inviting the whole Form to an excursion!" exclaimed Trevor angrily.

"I'm sorry! Another time—"

"Rats!"

"I believe it's all a rotten jape," said Snoop. "I think

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the boulder ought to be japed for fooling us like this before all the school."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bump him!"

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, retreating, as the Removites advanced upon him with threatening looks. "Hands off, you know! It's not my fault, and I couldn't help it. The pocket-book is bound to turn up, and then—"

"Rats!"

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter, "perhaps it's been stolen, you know!"

"Oh, rot!" said Bolsover.

"We've got some doubtful characters in the school," the fat junior went on. "And that cobbler, chap Penfold has the run of Mauleverer's study—"

"Shut up, you cad!" said Lord Mauleverer angrily.

"Oh, really, Mauleverer—"

"Bump him!"

"Collar the silly ass and bump him!"

It was an angry roar from the Remove.

Lord Mauleverer backed away to the wall of his study, and then he could back away no further. The Removites pressed upon him with angry faces. The schoolboy earl's eyes began to gleam, and he put up his fists.

"I shall hit out!" he exclaimed. "I—"

Bolsover laughed.

"Collar him!" he cried.

And he rushed on.

Bi!

Lord Mauleverer's fists caught the bully of the Remove upon the point of the jaw, and Bolsover reeled back and fell with a bump on the carpet. The other fellows, surging on, trampled over him, and two or three fell upon him.

"Yow!" roared Bolsover. "Geroff! Ow!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Let Mauleverer alone! He's an ass, but—"

But Bulstrode was not listened to.

Lord Mauleverer was in the hands of the angry and disappointed juniors. They swept him off his feet, and bumped him over, and bumped him, and bumped him again.

The schoolboy-earl was left sitting upon his carpet, with his jacket ripped up, and his collar torn out, and his necktie hanging over his back. He gasped for breath, and blinked dazedly at the juniors.

"Oh! Ow! Yooop!"

"Give him another!" roared Bolsover.

"Ow! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then the exasperated Removites streamed out of the study, leaving Lord Mauleverer sitting on the carpet, gasping, a perfect wreck.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Wants His Whack!

"I SAY, Penfold—"

Penfold nodded.

Dick Penfold, the scholarship boy, the son of the village cobbler in Friardale, was sitting alone in his study.

There were many fellows in the Greyfriars Remove who did not care to associate with Penfold; though a more kind and obliging lad it would have been difficult to find in all the school.

It was considered a fatal thing against Penfold that his father was the village cobbler—a fellow who actually mended the boots of the Greyfriars fellows when they were out of repair, as Snoop pointed out indignantly.

Lord Mauleverer said that the only question was, whether Penfold senior mended the boots well; but a nobleman with two million pounds waiting for him when he came of age could be allowed these views, which the rest of the Remove considered to be queer.

All the best set in the Form, certainly, were very kind to Penfold. Harry Wharton & Co., whom all regarded as the leaders of the Remove, treated him on a perfectly friendly and cordial footing. Lord Mauleverer had quite taken him up, and the cobbler's son and the schoolboy earl were often seen in company. Snoop and his friends would say that Penfold was toadying to the schoolboy-millionaire; but, as a matter of fact, there was no sign of that. Dick Penfold never thought of toadying to anybody. He would sooner have passed his life at Greyfriars without speaking to a single soul.

The scholarship junior was alone in his study when Billy Bunter looked in. He was sitting in a chair by the fire-grate, in which there was no fire. The juniors paid themselves for the coal they consumed in their study fires, and

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it was very seldom that Penfold had a fire in his study. He had learned to rough it in a harder life than that that he was leading at the big public school.

Penfold had gone directly back to his study after the fiasco of Lord Mauleverer's little party. Had he known what was going on in Mauleverer's study he would certainly have gone there immediately to help the dandy of the Remove. But he was thinking about troubles of his own when Bunter's fat face and big spectacles were thrust in at his study door.

"I say!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Bunter?"

"Yes," Bunter came cautiously into the study, blinking round through his big spectacles, and closed the door behind him. "I say, Penfold, I've come here as your friend."

Penfold looked at him in surprise. Bunter had certainly shown no great signs of friendship towards him hitherto; and he was not specially in need of Bunter's friendship just now. But Dick was always civil, and he nodded.

"Thank you!" he said.

"Oh, not at all!" said Bunter. "I've come as a friend—it will pay us both. I only want my whack."

"Your whack?"

"My whack!"

"I don't understand."

Billy Bunter blinked at Penfold through his big glasses in an extremely knowing way.

"Of course, that doesn't go down with me," he remarked. "You don't expect me really to swallow that, do you?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Penfold, in surprise.

"If you have anything to say to me, Bunter, please say it and get it over. I don't feel much inclined to talk."

"No. Weighing on your mind a bit, I suppose, isn't it?"

"How do you know there's anything weighing on my mind?" Penfold asked, in astonishment.

Bunter chuckled, his fat cheeks.

"I'm rather a keen chap," he explained. "No good anybody trying to take me in. A chap would have to get up very early in the morning to pull the wool over my eyes, Penfold. Now, everybody at Greyfriars knows you're hard up."

"That's no secret!" said Penfold bitterly. "The son of the village shoemaker is not likely to be rolling in money."

Bunter nodded.

"Exactly!" he agreed. "That's the reason you did it."

"Eh? Did what?"

"Took it."

"Took what?"

"Oh, don't come that game with me!" urged Bunter. "Don't I tell you that I can see through all that?"

"If you have not gone mad, will you explain what you mean—if you mean anything," said Dick Penfold as patiently as he could.

"Oh, very well, if you want it out in plain English!" said Bunter irritably. "Lord Mauleverer has lost his pocket-book. There were four fivers in it, and fifteen pounds in gold, as well as change—so I understand."

"I dare say. But—"

"Of course, we know perfectly well that even a careless ass like Mauleverer wouldn't really lose such a thing. It's been stolen."

Penfold started.

"I hope not," he said. "I should be very sorry to believe that there was a thief at this school."

"My James!" said Bunter admiringly. "You do it well! Of course, if the pocket-book with all that money has been annexed, the chap who annexed it is a chap who's hard up, and one who's had the run of Mauleverer's study."

Dick jumped.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"That's where my keenness comes in!" said Bunter, with

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some pride. "I jumped to the facts at once. The pocket-book has been stolen, and it's been stolen by a chap who had a chance at it, and who was in need of the tin—a chap, too, who comes from the lower classes, and can't be supposed to have very special ideas about honesty and things."

Penfold's eyes flamed.

"Do you know what you are saying?" he asked, keeping his temper with difficulty.

"Certainly!" said Bunter. "Don't be afraid. I don't mean to give you away."

"Give me away?" said Penfold dazedly.

"Yes. You're quite safe."

"Safe?"

"Yes, quite safe—so long as I have my whack. You can keep the banknotes," Bunter explained. "Hand me the fifteen quid. That will be giving you more than half."

"What?"

"I only want my whack. As for Mauleverer, he has plenty of money, and he won't miss it. I was reading in a book about Socialism the other day that there ought to be a new distribution of wealth—and we shall only be beginning it a little early. What do you say? The quids for me, and the banknotes for you. That's fair!"

"What do I say?" gasped Penfold.

"Yes. You see—"

"You dirty little thief!" roared Penfold. "Get out of my study, or I'll kick you out! That's what I say!"

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I—I say, you know—" he stammered.

Penfold threw the door open, and then advanced upon Bunter.

The fat junior backed round the table, blinking at the scholarship boy very uneasily.

"Don't get excited!" he gasped. "I—I only want my whack, you know. I—I'm willing to take ten quid, and leave you the rest, and— Oh!"

Penfold sprang at him.

Billy Bunter made a wild rush into the passage. Penfold slammed the door violently after him, and Bunter narrowly escaped it. The cobbler's son threw himself into his chair, breathing hard. His anger did not last long; the utter stupidity of Bunter's accusation, and his demand for a share of the plunder, seemed more a subject for mirth than for anger.

"The fat fool!" muttered Penfold. "The utter worm! To think that I have taken Mauleverer's money, and then to be willing to share it—"

The door opened a few inches, and Bunter's spectacles glimmered in. Penfold swung round towards the door.

"I—I say, Penfold!" gasped Bunter, "I—I'll take five quid and call it square!"

Penfold jumped up furiously. The door slammed, and hurried footsteps were heard dying away down the passage. The Owl of the Remove was gone at last.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Something Like a Riot!

"FOUND IT!"

That was the question that greeted Lord Mauleverer from a dozen fellows when he came into the junior common-room at Greyfriars that evening.

His lordship was looking his usual cool and unconcerned self now. Nothing disturbed his tranquil nature for long. The bumping he had had in his study from the disappointed Removites did not remain in his memory, and he bore no malice. He was quite willing to admit that the fellows had a right to be exasperated at being deprived of their excursion at the last moment, and they had been very much chipped, as they expected, by the other Forms. Lord Mauleverer had forgiven them in any case, he was too lazy to nurse a grudge against anybody.

"What, my dear fellows?" he asked.

"The pocket-book, ass!"

"Oh, the pocket-book?" yawned Mauleverer. "No!"

"Have you looked for it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Not yet."

"You haven't looked for a pocket-book containing thirty-five quid?" roared Bolsover.

"I suppose it will turn up, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "I'm not going to exert myself for nothing."

"Well, my hat!"

"Suppose somebody finds it and sticks to it?" said Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Impossible! I don't believe any fellow here would be mean enough to steal another fellow's cash."

"You don't know Bunter," grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you've got the numbers of the notes?" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, certainly! They were all written down on a leaf of the pocket-book!"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

EVERY
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PENNY.

"The same pocket-book?"

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha! Then what's the use, you ass, if the pocket-book's lost?"

Lord Mauleverer rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Well, not much use, now I come to think of it," he admitted. "But I could get the numbers from the bank, I suppose. But I'm not going to trouble. The thing is bound to turn up."

"Rot!" said Bunter. "It's been stolen!"

"How do you know?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Well, I do know."

"Did you steal it?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, if you didn't, you'd better hold your tongue!" said Bob Cherry sharply. "It won't do the Form any good to have any silly talk about the pocket-book having been stolen. We don't want the Upper Fourth to start chipping us about having a thief in the Remove. We had that once, and once was enough!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

"I think the thief ought to be found," said Bunter obstinately.

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"If you say another word on the subject, I'll give you a thump!"

"Well, I'll give you another to match!" said Nugent.

"Faith, and I'll give you another!" said Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha! He'll have three then!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Bunter!"

"I'm jolly well not going to dry up! I think—"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down on the floor with great suddenness. Bob Cherry's heavy hand had fallen upon him. The Owl of the Remove sat and gaped. Bob Cherry glowered at him.

Another word on that subject, and you'll get it in the neck!" he said warningly.

And Bob Cherry went up to his study to do his preparation. Billy Bunter rose painfully. There was no sympathy in the looks the Removites cast upon him. If the story should get about that there was a thief in the Remove, they knew that they would never hear the end of it from Temple, Dabney & Co.

Alonzo Todd, the good-natured junior who was called the Duffer of Greyfriars, shook his bony forefinger at Billy Bunter in a remonstrative way.

"My dear Bunter," he said, "you should keep your mind from evil thoughts and your tongue from evil speaking. It is very wrong of you to have such a suspicious mind. My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at you—nay, disgusted!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bunter.

"My dear Bunter—"

But Billy Bunter rolled away in a bad temper. Bunter had a decidedly suspicious mind, and he was given to suspecting fellows of all the meanness he was guilty of himself—and their name was legion.

And Bunter was the chatterbox, as well as the Paul Pry, of the Lower School. He was convinced that Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book had been stolen, and he had not the slightest intention of holding his tongue on the subject. Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows as he sat down to the chess-table with Nugent.

"The fat chump will blab this all over the school!" he said. "It's no good trying to keep it dark. What a holy ass you are, Mauleverer, to lose your silly pocket-book!"

The schoolboy earl looked penitent.

"I'm really frightfully sorry," he said. Lord Mauleverer had a turn for emphatic adverbs. "It's fearfully rotten, I know. I'll be more careful next time—I will, really. But it's my pocket-book, and if I don't mind losing it, I don't see why anybody else should bother his head about it."

"You'd better buck up and find it," growled Nugent.

"I'll have a look round the Close to-morrow," said Lord Mauleverer. "It's too dark now!"

"Oh, rats!"

"My dear fellow—"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

Wharton and Nugent, deep in chess, soon forgot all about Lord Mauleverer and his missing pocket-book. It was not till some little time afterwards that a growing buzz in the common-room made them look up, wondering what was the matter.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, had come in. Temple, Dabney, and Fry and Scott had their trousers-pockets fastened up with huge safety-pins, while rows of them glistening under their short Eton jackets. The chums of the Remove stared at them in astonishment. They knew

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that it must be a jape, but what the object of it was they did not realise for a moment.

"What the dickens are the silly asses up to now?" grunted Nugent.

"Howly mother av Moses! Can't ye see, intirely?" exclaimed Micky Desmond excitedly.

"Blessed if I can!" said Harry Wharton.

"Sure, and they're pretending that there are pickpockets about!"

"Oh!"

The four Fourth-Formers paraded solemnly through the room, and every eye was turned upon them. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers grinned. The Removites did not grin. They looked furious.

Harry Wharton jumped up, bumping against the chest-table in his excitement, and upsetting the pieces.

Nugent gave a roar:

"You ass! There goes the game—"

"Blow the game!"

Wharton strode out into the middle of the room to intercept the marching line of Fourth-Formers. Temple, Dabney & Co. halted.

"What are you up to?" exclaimed Wharton. "What do you mean by this?"

"Nothing!" said Temple blandly. "We've heard that property has a way of getting lost when there are Removites about; that's all, and we've taken precautions!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fourth.

Wharton turned crimson with anger. He could take a joke as well as anybody, but he felt that this was going past the permitted limits of a joke.

"Look here, you grinning asses—" he exclaimed heatedly.

Temple backed away.

"Would you mind keeping your hands off?" he asked.

"I've got five bob in my pockets, and I don't want to lose it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton did not keep his hands off. He rushed right at the humorous captain of the Fourth Form, and smote him. Temple returned smite for smite, and in a few seconds the two juniors were grasping one another, and staggering to and fro in wild conflict.

"Bump the bouncers!" roared John Bull.

There was a rush of the Remove. In a moment more a wild and whirling combat was raging.

"Rescue, Fourth!" yelled Fry.

The Fourth did not need calling to the fray. They were always more or less on fighting terms with the Remove, and it needed only a spark to start a conflagration. Removites and Fourth-Formers closed in on one another from all sides, and the common-room was filled with shouting, trampling, hammering combatants. Wild yells rose above the din of trampling feet.

"Buck up, Remove! Chuck them out!"

"Go it, Fourth!"

"Give 'em socks!"

In the midst of the wild excitement Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, appeared in the doorway, with a furious expression upon his face and a cane in his hand. He did not stop to talk to the rioters. He waded in with the cane, lashing right and left, and the yells became louder and more shrill than ever.

"Bunk!" yelled Nugent.

A wild rush was made for the door. Fourth-Formers and Removites went jamming into the doorway, and streaming wildly down the passage. Wingate stood alone in the common-room, panting for breath, and with a cracked cane in his hand.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets His Whack.

BILLY BUNTER trod gently along the Remove passage, with a fixed and determined expression upon his fat face. Bunter meant business. He paused outside Bob Cherry's study, and hesitated, with his hand upon the handle.

Inside, he could hear voices—the voices of Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, his study-mate.

Bunter listened, with a gleam in his eyes; but all he heard was Linley explaining some passage in Virgil to his chum.

Mark Linley, the Lancashire factory lad, who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship, was far ahead of all the Remove in classics, and he placed a great deal of his time at the disposal of Bob Cherry, who never could get on in Latin. Bob Cherry was the finest half-back the Remove possessed, and he could play both forward and back, if necessary, with great success, and he had kept goal with great credit. At swimming and at sprinting he had few equals, and at cycling and boxing there was no one in the

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Remove to equal him. But in the class-room and the study Bob was frequently found wanting, and Latin conjugations possessed mysteries which he felt that he would never satisfactorily fathom.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

He opened the door without knocking, and rolled into the study. Bob Cherry's study looked very cosy and comfortable. There was a red carpet on the floor and a bright coal fire in the grate. Bob and Mark looked round as Bunter came in, and the fat junior halted just inside the door, and blinked at them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "Have you come here for another bumping?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Or perhaps you want me to advance something off a postal-order you're expecting this evening?" suggested Bob sarcastically.

"I've got something jolly important to say to you," said Billy Bunter sulkily. "If Linley will get out for a few minutes—"

Mark Linley rose. Bob Cherry pushed him down into his chair again.

"Stay where you are!" he said. "I've got no secrets from you, Mark; and this is only some more of Bunter's rot!"

"You'd better let Linley go!" said Bunter significantly.

"Rats!"

"Then come into my study," said Bunter. "I don't want to say it before Linley! You can't depend on him to keep a secret—you know what these lower classes are—"

"What!" roared Bob Cherry, jumping up.

Bunter backed away.

"I—I mean, you—you had better come into my study!" he stammered. "You—you see, it's awfully important, and—I and I don't want to disturb Linley!"

"Oh, rot!" said Bob Cherry crossly. "I know you are only talking out of your hat! Look here, I'll come, but if you are only gassing, I shall give you a thick ear!"

"Well, come on!" said Bunter.

Bob Cherry followed him from the study. In spite of his knowledge of Bunter's character, he began to think that perhaps the Owl of the Remove had something important to say. It was always possible, of course, that Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book had really been stolen, and that Bunter knew something about it.

Bunter led the way into his untidy study, and lighted the gas. Bob Cherry followed him in, with a restless and impatient look. He could not endure the cad of the Remove, and he made no secret of his antipathy.

"Shut the door!" said Bunter mysteriously.

Bob Cherry slammed the door shut.

"Now, what is it?" he demanded.

"I want my whack."

"Eh?"

"I want my whack, and I'm going to have it," said Bunter, keeping the table between him and Bob Cherry, and blinking across at the long-limbed junior in a very determined way. "That's why I wouldn't speak out before Linley. He would want a third share."

"Doty?" asked Bob pleasantly.

"Of course, we know perfectly well that Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book was stolen," said Bunter. "Between ourselves, we may as well be frank. I suspected Penfold at first—"

"Penfold!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes; and I accused him—"

"Accused Penfold?" said Bob Cherry, almost dazed.

Bunter nodded.

"You see, he has the run of Mauleverer's study, and he's horribly hard up—a beggarly scholarship boy, you know, like your friend Linley."

Bob Cherry clenched his hands hard. Bunter went on hastily.

"But never mind Linley now. I know now it wasn't Penfold—he would never have dared to act as he did if it had been—and besides—"

"Well?"

"Besides, I know who it is."

"You know who—"

"Who stole Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book," said Bunter triumphantly.

"You fat chump!"

"Better have it out in plain English," said Bunter, with a grin. "As soon as I saw you trying to hush it up, I guessed who the chap was."

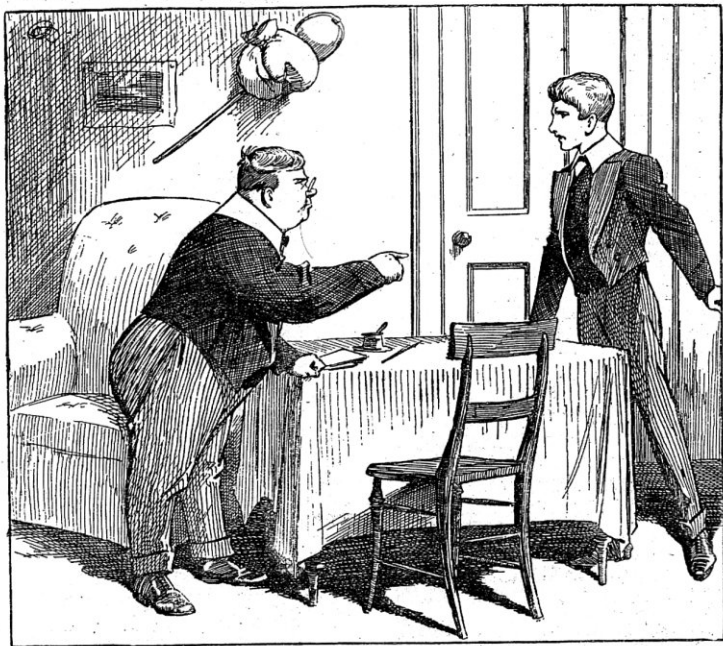
Bob Cherry almost staggered.

"Hush it up?" he repeated faintly.

"Yes; you were trying to shut me up before the fellows, and hush the whole thing up," said Bunter. "I knew then that you had done it."

Bob Cherry jumped.

"I?"



"Better have it out in plain English," said Bunter, keeping the table between him and Bob Cherry. "I want my whack, and I'm going to have it!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Yes, you!"

"I stole Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book?" said Bob Cherry, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"Exactly!"

Bob Cherry stood silent, regarding the fat junior. His silence encouraged Bunter.

"You see, I've bowled you out," he said. "Now I want my whack."

"Your whack?" repeated Bob.

"Yes. My share, you know."

"Oh, your share!" said Bob Cherry, in a dangerously calm voice.

"Precisely!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to give you away. If Mauleverer can't take better care of his money, he deserves to lose it. I want my whack."

"You shall have it," said Bob Cherry.

"Good! You can keep the banknotes—there might be trouble in passing them—and I'll have the fifteen quids."

"Fifteen quids—exactly."

"You admit you've got it?" asked Bunter, grinning.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"What's the good of denying it, when you've got it down so beautifully clearly?" he asked.

Bunter chuckled.

"Well, it wouldn't be easy to take me in," he remarked.

"You're going to give me my whack now?"

"Certainly!"

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"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

"Go ahead, then."

"Here goes!"

Bob Cherry darted round the table, and seized Bunter by the collar before he had a chance to dodge. The fat junior gave an anticipatory yell.

"Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

Bob Cherry, breathing fury, sat down, and dragged Billy Bunter across his knees, with his fat face downwards. He had caught up a Latin grammar from the table, a book of a handy size.

"You rotten, mean, low cad!" said Bob Cherry between his teeth. "You shall have your whack, as hard as I can lay it on."

Bunter struggled and roared. But he was helpless in the iron grip of the indignant junior. Bob's left hand held him pinned, and his right, with the grammar in it, rose and fell with rhythmic rapidity.

Whack, whack, whack!

The dust rose from Bunter's trousers. He was getting his "whack" now, but not in the way that he had meant.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Yow-ow-ow-ow! Oh! Help!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Help! Yaroop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Bob Cherry whacked and whacked till his arm was tired. Billy Bunter's terrific yells rang the whole length of the

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Remove passage. Fellows came crowding from far and near to see what was the matter. The study door was opened, and a crowd of Removites stared in, amazed at the spectacle of Bob Cherry, with Bunter face downwards across his knees, and his right arm rising and falling with sounding whacks.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "What the dickens—"

"What the—"

"Oh! Help!"

"Give it him!" roared Bulstrode. "I don't know what it's for, but I know he deserves it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Yow! Help! Fire! Oh!"

"What's he done, Bob?" gasped Mark Linley.

"Done?" roared Bob Cherry. "He's accused me of stealing that aas Mauleverer's pocket-book, and asked for his whack. He's willing to take the fifteen quid, and leave me the banknotes, the dirty little thief."

"Ow! I didn't—I wasn't—I—Ow!"

"My hat!" said Wharton. "And you—"

"I'm giving him his whack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

Whack, whack, whack! Whack! The Latin grammar split into pieces, and Bob Cherry tossed the remains of it away, and rolled Bunter with a jump to the floor. He rose gasping after his exertions, and glowered down at the panting, groaning Owl of the Remove.

"You've got your whack," he remarked grimly. "If you want any more, you've only got to come and ask for it."

And Bob Cherry strode from the study. Billy Bunter's whimpers and groans were drowned by the roars of laughter from the Removites.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Chucked Out!

LORD MAULEVERER was questioned again about the missing pocket-book when the Remove went up to bed. His reply was the same. He had not found it, perhaps, because he had not looked for it. His reply was received with snorts by the annoyed Removites. The little joke of Temple, Dabney & Co. in the common-room had cut them deeply, and they foresaw more chipping of the same sort on the morrow, and again and again till the pocket-book was found. The loss of the pocket-book, and Bunter's injudicious tattling, had placed the Lower Fourth in a very awkward position. Temple, Dabney & Co. might or might not believe that there was a thief in the Form, but there was no doubt at all that they meant to make as much capital out of the unfortunate happening as they could. As Bob Cherry remarked, the Remove had beaten them hollow at footer, at cricket, at rowing, and at nearly everything else, and they were bound to score when they had a chance. It was not often that they had one.

And it was not only the Fourth that had taken up the subject. Hobson, the captain of the Shell, had advised the Shell fellows to lock their study doors before they went up to bed, giving that sage advice in a loud voice that was heard all over the common-room.

And the Shell fellows had made a great fuss of looking for keys, and so forth, to secure their valuables when they went to bed. Coker, of the Fifth, had been heard to suggest leaving watches and other valuables in charge of the prefects over-night. The Remove chafed under the unpleasant imputations. Nobody in the Form with the exception of Bunter imagined that Mauleverer's pocket-book had been stolen. Mauleverer had more than money that he was always careless with it, and he had once lost a banknote for fifty pounds, and taken it just as coolly.

But his carelessness exasperated the Remove now. It placed them in an invidious position, and they did not like it.

"It's all very well for you to say that it doesn't matter, you aas," Bulstrode growled, "but it's rotten for the whole Form, especially since Bunter started playing the giddy ox on the subject. The other fellows are calling us a pack of thieves already."

"I'm really sorry, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer penitently. "I'd do anything."

"Well, find the pocket-book, you fathead!"

"I'll have a jolly good try to-morrow."

"I'll tell you what," said Bulstrode, "if you don't find the pocket-book before afternoon school to-morrow, we'll give you a jolly good bumping."

"By Jove, you know!"

"And if you don't find it by the evening, we'll give you another, and we'll keep it up till you've found the pocket-book," said Bulstrode.

"Hear, hear!"

Lord Mauleverer looked dismayed.

"I'm going to have a jolly good look for it, you know," he expostulated.

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SIDNEY DREW.

"You'd better find it, that's all," said Bulstrode grimly. "You'll get handled pretty roughly if you don't."

Loder, the prefect, came into the dormitory, with his usual unamiable expression upon his face.

"Not in bed yet?" he growled. "You'd better buck up. Don't keep me waiting."

"But we want to have the pleasure of looking at you a bit, Loder, old man," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Take fifty lines, Cherry!"

"Thanks!"

"Take a hundred lines!" roared the prefect.

"I'll take anything you like," said Bob Cherry, with undiminished cheerfulness.

"Yes, I dare say you would take my watch if you could," said Loder, with a sneer.

Bob Cherry's expression changed.

"What's that?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, get to bed!"

"Explain what you mean first, you cad!" said Bob Cherry. Loder stared at him.

"What? Take two hundred lines!"

"Rats!"

"You're young thief!" said Loder. "I'll have you up before your Form-master in the morning, if I have any more of your cheek."

"Do," said Bob Cherry defiantly, "and I'll tell him you called me a thief, you lying cad!"

Loder strode towards the junior. Bob Cherry did not retreat an inch. He stood firm, and clenched his fists. Harry Wharton and John Bull and Frank Nugent drew closer to him.

"You rotten cad, Loder!" said Wharton, his eyes flashing. "How dare you call Bob a thief?"

The prefect sneered.

"Well, there are thieves here, at any rate," he said. "I've heard about Mauleverer's pocket-book being stolen."

"It wasn't stolen; Mauleverer lost it."

"Begad, yaas, you know!" said his lordship. "I never said it was stolen."

"Oh, rot!" said Loder. "Get to bed, you young thieves!"

"Prefect or not, you're not going to call us thieves," said Harry Wharton. "We won't go to bed at your order, Loder. You can get out."

"Yes, get out, you cad!"

"Yah!"

The Removites gathered round Harry Wharton, ready to back him up. They were half undressed, but all undressing had stopped now. The prefect glared at them savagely.

"Will you go to bed?" he shouted.

"No!"

"Why, you—you—" Loder simply gasped. Open defiance of a Sixth-Form prefect's authority like this was very rare at Greyfriars. He did not quite know how to deal with it.

"Get out of our dormitory!" said Bob Cherry.

"Get out, Loder!"

"Buzz off!"

"Yes, indeed, Loder, I cannot but regard your remarks as reprehensible in the extreme," said Alonzo Todd, with a shake of the head. "My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at you, Loder—nay, disgusted!"

"Kick him out!" roared Bolsover.

"Chuck the cad out!"

And the Remove made a menacing advance towards the prefect. The tables were turned now with a vengeance. Every vestige of the prefect's authority was gone, and he had only himself to blame for it.

"You young cads!" hissed Loder. "Get to bed, I tell you—"

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Get out of our dorm."

"I—I—I—oh—I—" gasped Loder, as the juniors began to hustle him towards the door. "Stand back! Go to bed! I—Oh!"

Loder, losing his temper and his prudence, began to hit out savagely. Bolsover rolled over under a crashing blow, and Hazeldene was knocked across him. There was a roar from the Remove. Their blood was up now. They began to hit as well as Loder, and they hit very hard. Loder was swept towards the door under a rain of blows.

The prefect shouted for help as he was driven out of the dormitory.

He clung to the doorpost, holding on with all his strength, and the juniors tore and grabbed and shoved at him.

There were rapid footpats in the passage, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came hurrying up, with a very angry face. He arrived outside the dormitory, just as Loder was torn from his hold, and hurled bodily into the passage.

The prefect bumped down, with a loud grunt, and sprawled helplessly at the feet of the Greyfriars captain. Wingate stared at the scene, almost petrified with astonishment.

"Loder!" he gasped. "What—what—"
The prefect staggered up, torn and dusty and dishevelled.
"Look at me!" he roared. "This is what comes of your backing up the juniors in their cheek, Wingate. Look—"
"What does this mean, Wharton?" asked Wingate sternly.
"Wharton fuced the captain of Greyfriars undauntedly.
"We've checked Loder out," he replied. "He's a rotten cad, and we've fed up with him. We won't obey Loder!"
"Hear, hear!" roared Bob Cherry.
"Wharton—Cherry—"
"He called Bob a thief!" said Frank Nugent indignantly.
"Oh!" said Wingate.
"He called us all thieves," said Johnny Bull. "We won't stand him any more."
"So they are!" roared Loder. "Young thieves, the whole lot!"

"You've no right to say that, Loder," said Wingate sharply, "and if you want to be treated as a prefect, you'd better behave yourself."

Loder spluttered with rage.
"Do you mean to say that you're going to back them up in this, Wingate?" he yelled.

Wingate's eyes flashed.
"Yes, certainly," he said. "If you insulted the kids in such a way, you deserved all you got. If there's any more of it, I'll report you to the Head myself. Now get out, and I'll see lights out here."

Loder, trembling with rage, went down the passage. He did not dare to oppose the captain of the school. Wingate made a gesture, and the Remove went obediently to bed. They had no desire to disobey Wingate, who was the most popular senior in the school. The captain of Greyfriars turned the lights out, and closed the door. Bulstrode sat up in bed.

"We've shut Loder up," he said; "we'll shut up everybody in the same way who begins on the same business. But it's all Maulverer's fault."

"Yes, rather—the ass!"
"The fathead!"

"Begad, you know—!" began Lord Maulverer feebly.
"Dry up!" growled Bulstrode. "What I said to you holds good; I'll bump you twice a day till you've found the pocket-book, you silly ass! Br-r-r-r!"

And the Remove heartily concurred. There was no doubt that there were painful experiences in store for the schoolboy earl, unless he succeeded in finding the missing pocket-book.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Home of the Scholarship Boy.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
Bob Cherry uttered the ejaculation as he was awakened by a shake. The first rays of the morning sun were stealing in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory. The rising-bell had not yet clanged out, and the Remove were soundly asleep.

Bob Cherry opened his eyes, and stared at the fellow who was shaking him. It was Dick Penfold.

"Wake up, Cherry!"
Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he said sleepily. "What do you want, you ass? 'Tain't rising-bell."

"Twenty minutes yet," said Penfold.

"Then what are you waking me up for!" demanded Bob Cherry indignantly.

Penfold smiled faintly. In the grey morning light his face looked very pale and worn, and Bob Cherry, sleepy as he was, noticed it.

"Anything wrong, Pen?" he asked.

"You told me the other day I could ride your bike if I wanted to," said Pen.

"Did I? All serene!"
"Can I have it now, for an hour?"

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "What the dickens do you want to for at this time in the morning?"

"I want to run down home."

"Oh, I see! Your people must be jolly early risers to receive visits at this hour," grunted Bob Cherry. "Have you got a pass out of gates?"

"Yes, I asked Wingate for it yesterday."

"Good! You can have the bike—key's in my trousers-pocket, or else in my waistcoat, or somewhere," said Bob Cherry. "Next time you want the jigger, take it without waking me in the middle of the night, you thundering ass!"

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And Bob Cherry turned over to go to sleep again. Another shakedown started him up.

"Can I take the key?" asked Penfold.

"Eh? Of course you can, ass!"

"Thank you!"
"Br-r-r-r!"

Penfold extracted the key from Bob Cherry's trousers-pocket, and left the dormitory. Only an early housemaid was up as he went downstairs. He passed out into the fresh, keen air of the Close. The clock-tower was glimmering in the rising sun, and the creeping rays were turning the branches of the old elms into silver. Penfold made his way to the bicycle-shed, and unlocked the padlock which secured Bob Cherry's bicycle to the stand. He wheeled the machine out, and down the path to the gates.

Gosling, the porter, was busy with a broom in front of his lodge. Gosling gave a snort at the sight of the scholarship boy.

Gosling, the porter, resented Penfold's presence at Greyfriars. Penfold's father had mended Gosling's boots many a time, and Gosling did not like having to touch his hat and to say "sir" to the son of a man who had mended his boots. Gosling could not forgive a fellow born in his own station for having got on in the world—not at all an uncommon prejudice, by the way. Gosling was always as impertinent to Penfold of the Remove as he dared to be.

"Gosling, hant—hey!" he said.

"Got a pass hout?" asked Gosling suspiciously.

"Yea."

"Show it me."

Dick's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"I shall not show it to you," he replied. "You can take my word. If you think I haven't a pass, you can report me to my Form-master. Open the gate at once."

His tone was sharp, and Gosling went grumbling down to the gate and opened it. Penfold wheeled the bicycle out, and left the school porter grumbling.

"Nice hairs for a cobbler's son to put hon, I must say!" growled Gosling discontentedly. "Wot I says is this 'ere, this school is coming to somethink. That's wot I say."

And Gosling returned, grumbling, to his sweeping.

Dick Penfold mounted the bicycle in the road, and cycled towards the village of Friarale. The colour came into the lad's cheeks, and a brighter light into his eyes as he rode. It was very pleasant, and very invigorating to ride in the fresh, cold morning air. Penfold had no bicycle of his own; and though many fellows at Greyfriars placed their machines at his disposal if he cared to borrow them, he seldom availed himself of their kindness. Dick Penfold had his pride, and he was almost morbidly sensitive about placing himself under obligations which he could not return, and running the risk of being looked upon as a "sponge."

But he needed a machine this morning in order to get home and back to the school in time for breakfast with the Form.

The old High Street of Friarale was beginning to show signs of life as Dick Penfold peddled into it.

Many people greeted Dick cheerfully and kindly. Dick knew everybody in Friarale—he had lived there all his life until he went to Greyfriars. And many of the villagers were quite proud of the village lad who had won a scholarship and won his entrance into the big public school.

Dick stopped before the little shoemaker's shop and jumped off his machine. Mr. Penfold's shop was one of the oldest in the quaint old High Street. The little window with diamond panes did not let much light into the shop, and in the lightest spot old John Penfold could generally be seen at work. The shop was entered by a step downward from the street, which was a veritable trap for the unwary. Dick leaned the bicycle up against the shop, and stepped down. The shop was already open, and old John was there, seated at his work, early as the hour was.

He stopped, and half rose with an exclamation of pleasure as Dick came in, looking very rosy and healthy after his ride.

"Dick, my lad," he exclaimed, "I didn't expect to see you this mornin'!"

"How's mother, dad?"

John Penfold's face clouded.

"No better and no worse, Dicky, kid. She's awake, if you'll see 'er. She'll be mighty glad to see you, Dicky."

"I've come down to see her, dad. I—I was anxious. What does the doctor say?"

Mr. Penfold made a hopeless gesture.

"Same as doctors always do, Dicky, lad. She wants change of air and better food than we can give 'er, Dicky—but it can't be helped. Your mother don't complain, not her. It would cost twenty pound, Dicky, and where is a poor cobbler to get twenty pound from? All I had in the savings' bank has gone for your mother's illness, and it's all I can do to

ANSWERS

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NEXT TUESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

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pay the rent and keep the wolf from the door. But your mother don't complain."

"I'll go in and see her, dad."

"She'll be glad to see you."

The white, worn woman was indeed glad to see her son. The pale, troubled face lighted up as the handsome lad stood by the bedside.

"It is kind of you to come, Dicky," said the faint, affectionate voice. "But you have not come out without permission, I hope, Dicky."

"No; I have a pass, mother."

"You must be careful at the big school, Dick. I know there must be a lot of things against you," said his mother wistfully.

Dicky's eyelids were wet.

"Oh, mother!" he said. "Sometimes I think I'm wasting my time there. If I were here, helping father with his work, I could get in more money, and things would be easier for you all."

Mrs. Penfold shook her head.

"You mustn't think like that, Dick. You've got a chance in life, and you must make the most of it. It was wonderful, your getting the scholarship as you did, and it would be a sin not to make the best of it."

"But if I were working—"

"You are working, Dicky," said his mother softly. "The money you had with the scholarship has paid the rent here more than once. You had more than you could have earned at your father's trade, Dicky. And you are getting your keep more than you could get at home, I think, in these days. And when you are a man, Dicky—"

"When I'm a man, I shall be able to look after you, mother. But now—"

"Now you must work to get on, at the school, and not think of anything else."

"Yes, mother," said Dick. "It's beastly. There are fellows at the school rolling in money, mother. There's a chap in our form who's just lost a pocket-book with thirty-five pounds in it, and he doesn't even take the trouble to look for it, he has so much money."

The sick woman sighed.

"It's not just!" said Pen passionately. "It's rotten! Twenty pounds would get you all that the doctor says you need, mother."

"It can't be helped, Dicky. Some folks are rich, and some are poor, and we must be patient. And don't you go worrying about me, either. I'm getting better; and doctors always say the same, you know. A poor man's wife can't have as much as a rich woman; it's not to be expected. And I don't suppose the rich are any happier than we are, Dicky. If you come to that. Folks can have too much, as well as too little."

Dick was silent.

His heart was full of miserable bitterness at that moment. For himself, he was willing to rough it. He did not mind wearing shabby clothes, and standing out of the pleasures the other fellows could afford. But that his mother should be sick and deprived of what she needed for want of a small sum of money, while other fellows had as much money as they wanted, that seemed bitterly unjust. Yet, if Lord Mauleverer had known of his distress, and had offered him money, he knew that he would have refused it indignantly. He was not a beggar. It seemed all a tangle.

Dick Penfold remained talking with his mother till it was time to go. How could he get the money that was needed? That was the thought that was eating into his mind and his heart. How? How?

When he left, he left his mother brighter and more cheerful for his visit. But Pen's face was clouded as he remounted Bob Cherry's bicycle and rode back to the school. What could he do to help his sick mother? The thought haunted him, and he was still thinking of it, with hopeless persistence, as he rode up to the gates of the school, and wheeled the machine in.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Little Joke on the Remove.

"I SAY, you fellows, I've got an idea!"

Thus William George Bunter.

The Remove had come out after breakfast. Billy Bunter had been thinking deeply during that meal. He cornered the Famous Four in the passage, and proceeded to deliver himself of his idea.

"Mauleverer hasn't found his pocket-book, you know," he began.

"Yes, I know," said John Bull, walking away.

"Oh, really, Bull, I wish you wouldn't walk away while I'm talking! It puts me out. I say, Nugent, I've got an idea—"

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"THE SCHOOLBOY Nihilist!" In Next Thursday's Number of "WINGS OF GOLD."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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By SIDNEY DREW.

"Go hon!" said Nugent, following Bull into the Close.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"I've been thinking of forming a committee to look for Mauleverer's pocket-book," he said, blinking at Wharton and Bob Cherry, who were showing decided signs of impatience. "I think if it's found, the ready cash ought to be divided among the finders. What do you fellows think of the idea?"

"Oh, rotten!" said Bob.

"Buzz off, and don't bother!" said Harry.

"Yes, but look here, if we form a committee to search for the book, and we find it, I think we ought to have our whack—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Ain't you satisfied with the whack I gave you last night?" Bob Cherry exclaimed, in surprise. "I'll give you some more if you like."

Bunter backed away hastily.

"Hands off, you silly ass! Look here—"

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton, and he walked away with Bob Cherry.

"Beasts!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Dick Penfold was standing by the school door, looking out into the Close with a clouded brow. He started as Bob Cherry gave him a sounding clap on the shoulder.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"What's the row?" asked Bob.

"Nothing."

"You're looking downhearted."

"Am I?" said Pen, with a faint smile.

"Yes, you are. Nothing wrong at home, I hope?" said Bob.

"No. No. My mother isn't very well," said Pen. Of the other troubles that were upon his mind, nothing would have induced him to speak. He felt a sensitive shrinking from exposing his poverty to the eyes of the other fellows.

Bob Cherry's jovial expression changed at once.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Pen!" he exclaimed. "That's rotten! Nothing serious, I hope."

"No; not very serious."

"Sorry!" said Wharton.

"I was going to ask you if you'd like to help in looking for Mauleverer's pocket-book," said Bob. "The Form have promised him a record bumping if it isn't found soon. We might help him out."

Pen nodded.

"I'll help, with pleasure," he said.

"Good! Come on, then."

Lord Mauleverer had decided to have a really good hunt for the missing pocket-book that morning. He had commenced the really good hunt by taking a seat in the window-recess in the passage, and beginning to read a paper. Bob Cherry and his friends had made up their minds to help Mauleverer; but they meant that he should help himself as well. Bob caught sight of him in the window-seat, and hurried towards him. Lord Mauleverer looked up rather nervously.

"Listen, I'm going to look for that pocket-book after third lesson," he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"You're going to look for it now, my son," he said.

"Come on."

"Begad, you know, really—"

"Come on, you ass!"

"I'm feeling rather tired—"

"Nothing like a little exercise to cure that tired feeling. Are you coming?"

"I think I'll leave it till presently— Oh! Yeeeh!"

Lord Mauleverer was whirled out of his seat, with Bob Cherry's grip on his collar. He grinned ruefully.

"I'll come," he said.

"Exactly! Come on!"

And Lord Mauleverer went. The juniors had already looked about the School House pretty thoroughly. They searched in the Close now. Where the schoolboy earl had dropped the pocket-book was a mystery. Lord Mauleverer could not remember in the least even when he might have lost it. He only knew that it was missing when he wanted it the previous afternoon.

Up and down the Close the juniors searched, until the bell rang for chapel. Then they had to give it up; the pocket-book had not been found.

After chapel, as the Remove went to their Form-room, Bulstrode tapped Lord Mauleverer on the shoulder.

"Not found yet?" he said.

"Begad, no!"

"Well, you've got till two o'clock."

"My dear fellow—"

"Oh, rats!"

"But if it really can't be found, you know—"

"It will be rough on you if it isn't," said Bulstrode grimly.

And they went into the Form-room. Mr. Quelch, the

It was the Removites turn to laugh. Bob Cherry changed his grasp to the back of Coker's neck, and shoved him face downwards in the puddle, and Coker spluttered wildly in the muddy water, splashing it on all sides.

Then Bob released him, and the Removites trooped away, yelling with laughter, and Coker's friends hastened to pick him up, and set him upon his feet, as if he had been a wooden soldier.

"Ow!" gasped Coker. "Yowp! Groo! Berroooh! My beastly mouth's full of beastly mud, and I'm beastly wet over all my beastly waistcoat! Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at, Potter?" roared Coker.

Potter jumped back a pace.

"I—I wasn't sniggering, I—I was coughing!" he stammered.

"I'll give you something to cough for!" howled Coker, clenching his big fists. But Potter did not wait for it. He departed quite hurriedly.

Coker mopped the mud from his face, and Greene and Bland tried not to grin—not very successfully.

"Where have those young bouncers gone?" snorted Coker.

"Oh, they've gone," said Greene.

"Why didn't you lick them?"

"Well, you see, we're not quite up to licking twenty kids at a time, but—"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Bah! Silly ass!"

Greene and Bland grinned, and walked away. Coker, still snorting, went into the house to wash his face and change his collar.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Dick Penfold's Discovery.

THE search for the missing pocket-book had recommenced in the Close. All the schoolboy earl's friends were anxious to find it, not only for the value of the pocket-book, but to save Lord Mauleverer from the promised bumping.

That bumping would certainly be his if the pocket-book did not turn up. The Removites were in an exasperated mood, and they meant to teach Lord Mauleverer a lesson in taking care of his property. A dozen or more fellows had taken up the search, but the ground to be covered was very extensive. The pocket-book had undoubtedly been dropped from Lord Mauleverer's pocket, but it might have been dropped anywhere, and Greysfairs was a big place. Harry Wharton & Co. went up and down and round about looking for it. Dick Penfold was as keen as anybody in the search. He was probably the fellow who was keenest to be of help to the schoolboy millionaire. Pen felt very much Lord Mauleverer's kindness in taking him up before the whole school, and the young earl's friendship had meant very much to the scholarship boy in the uphill battle he had to fight at Greysfairs.

But the pocket-book was not to be found. There was no doubt that it was somewhere, and that a sufficiently long search must unearth it. But the search would have to be a long one. If it did not turn up in the course of a day or two, it would look as if Billy Bunter had hit upon the truth, and it had really been stolen.

As the time drew near for afternoon lessons, Lord Mauleverer began to wear a worried look. Significant looks were cast upon him by the Removites. There was no getting out of the punishment the juniors had in store for him.

Afternoon lessons began at Greysfairs at two o'clock. At a quarter to two, Bulstrode and a crowd of fellows came into the Cloisters, where Lord Mauleverer had joined his friends who were hunting for the pocket-book.

"Well!" said Bulstrode grimly.

"I—I haven't found it yet," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm in great hopes of its turning up at any minute, really."

Bulstrode laughed.

"It will turn up too late for you, anyway," he remarked.

"Give him a chance," said Dick Penfold. "We may be able to find it before two o'clock, Bulstrode."

"Oh, rats!"

"You shut up, cobbler," said Trevor. "We don't want your opinion on the subject."

"Perhaps Penfold can give us a hint where it is," said Snoop, with a giggle. "I dare say money is wanted at home to pay the rent."

Some of the Removites laughed. Penfold went crimson. He walked up to Snoop, who began to wish that he had not been so humorous when he saw the gleam in the eyes of the scholarship boy.

"Do you mean that you think I may have taken the pocket-book, Snoop?" asked Pen, in a low, clear voice.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Snoop.

"Then take that!"

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"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In Next Thursday's Number of

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"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SIDNEY DREW.

Smack!

Snoop had to take it—right across the mouth. He backed away, turning very pale.

"Wipe up the ground with him, Snoop," said Bolsover.

"You're bigger than he is. Give the cobbler a hiding."

"I'm not going to fight a cobbler," said Snoop.

Penfold laughed scornfully.

"You are afraid," he said.

"Now, go it, Snoop," said half a dozen voices. "You can't let a cobbler call you a coward, you know."

"He's not fit for me to touch," said Snoop.

"Oh, rot!" said Bulstrode. "You're a funk—that's what's the matter with you. Clear out!"

And Snoop cleared out, followed by hisses from the juniors.

"And you needn't be so handy with your hands, either, cobbler," said Bolsover. "I dare say Snoop was quite right."

Oh!

Smack!

Bolsover reeled back from the blow from Penfold's open hand. The juniors stared. They had not expected Pen to turn upon the burly bully of the Removites. Bolsover gave a roar.

"My hat! I'll smash you for that!"

He rushed at Pen; but Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton jumped in the way at once. Bolsover was flung back like a sack of coal.

"Get out of the way!" he roared. "Do you think I'm going to let a workhouse rat slap me on the mouth!"

"Yes, if you insult him," said Bob Cherry.

"Get aside."

"I won't! You're not going to lay a finger on Penfold while I'm about."

"My dear Bolsover, you are quite in the wrong!" bleated Alonzo Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin would characterise your conduct as—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bulstrode impatiently. "We didn't come here to see you go through your tricks, Bolsover. We are going to deal with that ass, Mauleverer!"

"Look here—" roared Bolsover.

"Bosh! Shut up! We've got something else on hand now."

Bolsover backed away, scowling with a deadly look at Penfold. His look showed plainly what Penfold had to expect when he was without his friends.

"Bad, you know. I think you're a cad, Bolsover!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I think—"

"No time for you to think, Mauleverer," said Bulstrode. "You haven't found that rotten pocket-book of yours, have you?"

"No. But—"

"Then you're going to be put through it."

"I—I say, you know. I've had another remittance from my guardian," said Lord Mauleverer brightly. "It doesn't really matter to me whether the pocket-book is found or not. Suppose you all come to the tuckshop and have a feed."

"I say, you fellows, that's a jolly good idea!"

"Shut up, Bunter! Collar that ass, you fellows!"

"Begad, you know—"

Lord Mauleverer was positively collared. He did not resist; that would have been useless. And his friends did not interfere; the punishment was just. Lord Mauleverer certainly had no right to be so careless with his money.

"Bump him!"

"Begad, you know—"

Bump!

They bumped him once, twice, thrice! Lord Mauleverer stood it with great fortitude. He was hurt, but he did not complain. The dandy of the Removites had plenty of pluck.

"There," said Bulstrode breathlessly, "that will do! But if that blessed pocket-book isn't found before bedtime to-night, Mauleverer, you'll get it worse!"

"Begad!"

The Removites streamed away. Lord Mauleverer dusted his clothes, and adjusted his collar.

"Are you hurt?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Yaas!"

"Then why don't you yell?" asked Ogilvy.

"Too much trouble, my dear fellow."

And Lord Mauleverer strolled away.

"There's still time to look for the pocket-book!" shouted Nugent.

"Oh, bless the pocket-book!" said Lord Mauleverer.

It was close upon time for school now, and the juniors gave the matter up, and left the cloisters. One of them remained behind; it was Dick Penfold. The boy, plunged in the deepest dejection, had gone into the recesses of the cloisters to be alone.

He was in a depressed and bitter mood.

It was hard upon him. There was no ground whatever for Snoop's sneer—yet many of the fellows had been quite willing

to think that there was something in the suggestion of the cad of the Remove—that Dick might be a thief, simply because he was poor, and was not as the others were.

Pen felt bitterly that if he found the pocket-book, and kept the money that he needed so much, they would not think much worse of him than they did already.

The school bell was ringing in the distance, but Pen did not hear it. He was thinking of many things as he paced alone in the dusky cloisters, of his mother's sickness, of his bitter need of money, of the hard fight he had found before him at Greyfriars.

His foot knocked against something lying in the shadow, of one of the old stone pillars, and he kicked it carelessly out of his way.

There was a clink as the object rolled away from his foot. Pen started, and peered down into the shadow. A russet-leather pocket-book, with a silver monogram on the cover, was lying there, and a golden sovereign that had rolled out of it glimmered in the shadows.

Pen bent down and picked up the pocket-book.

He had found it!

It was Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book—the junior had seen it many times before. The schoolboy earl had let it fall there while walking in the cloisters. If the search of the Remove had lasted another ten minutes, they would doubtless have come upon it.

Dick picked up the sovereign, and opened the pocket-book to replace it. Inside, there was a wad of banknotes stuffed in the pocket-book, and in little slits made for their reception were rows of sovereigns.

One, two, three, four, he counted them, fifteen in all, including the one he had picked up, which he replaced in a vacant niche.

Fifteen pounds in gold, and twenty pounds in notes, and a heap of silver in a little compartment fastened with a button.

Dick Penfold looked at the pocket-book, and thought of what it would mean to him if it were his; and then, with a sigh, he turned away, the book in his hand.

He came out into the Close, and started. The big clock in the tower indicated ten minutes past two; the bell had long ceased ringing, and the Remove were all in their places before this.

"The dickens, I'm late!" muttered Pen.

He thrust the book into the inside-pocket of his jacket, and raced across the Close. He could not return the book to Lord Mauleverer now, but he could do so immediately after school.

He came breathlessly into the Remove Form-room. Mr. Quelch, who was making manifold efforts to drive Latin into unwilling heads, turned round sharply.

"You are ten minutes late, Penfold!" he snapped.

"I'm sorry, sir. I—"

"Take a hundred lines! Go to your place!"

Dick Penfold went to his place.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

To be or Not to Be.

AFTERWARDS, when he thought about it, that afternoon seemed to Dick Penfold like a strange, unreal, and terrible dream.

When the black thought first came into his mind he could not tell.

But it did come, and it stayed.

The pocket-book weighed heavily in his jacket pocket, and reminded him of its presence there all the time.

What made him first think of it?

Doubtless it was the miserable thought of what he could do for his mother if the contents of that pocket-book were his.

The money was not his. And when he entered the Form-room, Pen had no thought but to hand the book to Lord Mauleverer as soon as the Remove came out from lessons.

But—

If it were his!

What it would mean to him! His mother, lying sick in the little room over the little shop in the High Street, barely able to keep even a fire in the sick-room, and here was money enough, more than enough, to procure all that she wanted.

Lord Mauleverer would never miss it. Large as the sum was to Pen, the schoolboy earl did not care whether it was found or not.

Would it be stealing to keep it, then?

He knew that it would, of course; but his mind was in a whirl, and the bitter sneers of Snoop and his friends were still in his ears.

They had called him a thief!

If only the money was his!

But to keep it—

He shuddered.

"Penfold!"

It was Mr. Quelch's voice. The Form-master was staring at him strangely; he had spoken three times, and Pen had not heard him. Dick started out of his miserable reverie, his cheeks going crimson.

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EVERY TUESDAY: "THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

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"Yes, sir!" he stammered.

"What is the matter with you, Penfold?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "The Form-room is not the place for day-dreaming!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir! Did you speak?"

"Yes, I did."

"I—I—I—" Pen broke off.

"Construe!" said Mr. Quelch sharply.

Pen stood helplessly. He did not even know what the Form had been doing. At that moment he could not have construed to save his life. He was, as a rule, one of the keenest fellows in the Form at class work. But now—the book seemed to dance before his eyes—the familiar lines meant nothing to him.

"Go on, Penfold!"

"I—I can't, sir!"

"What! What do you mean?"

"I—I—I—"

The boy's distress was so evident that the Form-master saw that there was something the matter. His expression softened.

"Are you not well, Penfold?" he asked more kindly.

"I—I don't feel quite myself this afternoon, sir!" stammered Dick.

"Very well, Penfold, you may leave the Form-room. I know you are not an idle boy," said Mr. Quelch kindly. "You are excused lessons for the afternoon."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

It was a great relief to Penfold. He moved blindly from the Form-room, hardly noticing where he was going. Many of the Removees noticed his queer look, and some of them felt sorry.

"Pen looks awfully queer!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I hope he's not ill!"

"He's worrying about his mater, I think," said Bob Cherry.

"I hear she's ill."

"Oh! Poor old Pen!"

"Poor kid!" said Bulstrode.

"Oh, I didn't know that!" muttered Boisover, rather shamefaced. "If I'd known—"

"You wouldn't have been such a rotter to him, eh?"

"Oh, shut up!"

Penfold walked unsteadily away from the Remove room. The great corridors were silent and deserted; from some of the other class-rooms came a hum of voices. The pocket-book in his breast seemed to be burning him.

The unhappy junior made his way up to the Remove passage. He wanted to be alone, to think.

He closed the door of his study, and placed the pocket-book on the table. Thirty-five pounds! And twenty was all that his mother needed.

Would it be a sin?

"Oh, what's come over me?" muttered the boy, pressing his hands to his burning forehead. "A thief—a thief! But they called me a thief before I thought of this—as well have the game as the name. Oh!"

He rose and paced the study.

He must give the pocket-book back to Lord Mauleverer. He must—he must! If only some fellow would come in and see it lying on the table, then he would have no choice in the matter.

But the fellows were all in the class-rooms; there was no chance of that.

Boom!

The clock in the tower was striking.

One, two, three, four!

In half an hour the Form work would be over, classes would be dismissed. He had half an hour in which to make up his mind.

Make up his mind whether to become a thief or not! A burst of clearness came to his aching, throbbing brain. He snatched up the pocket-book, and ran along the Remove passage to Lord Mauleverer's study. He darted into the study and placed the pocket-book upon the table in the most conspicuous place; and then, not daring to trust himself to pause, rushed back to his own study.

It was done!

For the next half hour Penfold sat in his chair, refusing to think. He had saved himself. Come what might, he was not a thief.

Chime!

It was the half-hour from the clock-tower.

Half-past four!

He started as he heard the strokes.

It was time for the Remove to be dismissed, and the passage would be full of fellows now. It was too late to go to Lord Mauleverer's study and take back the pocket-book, even if he wished to do so.

Pen drew a deep, deep breath.

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It was decided, then.

He sat down once more, and waited—waited till five o'clock boomed out from the clock-tower. Then he rose to his feet. Lord Maulverer must have gone to his study long before this. He had his pocket-book again, and all was well. Pen left his study, and went down to Lord Maulverer's study. The passage was deserted, which was peculiar, if classes were dismissed, but he was too preoccupied to notice the circumstances.

He had only to explain to Lord Maulverer that he had found the pocket-book, and put it in his study for him. Of the wretched temptation that had assailed him he would say nothing. There was no need to mention that. He would forget it as soon as he could.

He knocked at Lord Maulverer's door, and opened it. "Maulverer—"

He broke off.

There was no one but himself in the study. He glanced at the table. The pocket-book was lying there, just as he had left it.

Pen staggered.

He remembered now. The Remove were detained that afternoon—the whole Form had been detained an hour, in consequence of the trick played upon the Fourth Formers. They would not be out of the Form-room until half-past five.

It had all been for nothing. The struggle was not over, and Dick Penfold stood staring dumbly at the fatal pocket-book.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Dick Penfold's Temptation.

THE boy was not himself; his brain was not clear. The mental struggle he had been through had exhausted him, and left him weak and irresolute. He had fought the battle against himself once, and won it. He had not the strength to fight it again. The silver monogram on the russet-leather seemed to taunt and gloom at him, as if to tempt him. He seemed to see, through the leather cover, the rows of glistening sovereigns. Did ever a fellow have such cruel luck? He had returned the pocket-book to its owner's study. If matters had gone as usual, it would have been in Lord Maulverer's possession again long ago. It seemed as if the stars in their courses were fighting against the unhappy boy, as against Siseria of old.

As if moved by some influence outside himself, and independent of his own will, Dick Penfold moved towards the table.

The silence of the study oppressed him. If only some fellow would come in—if only there would come some interruption—to save him from himself! The boy, with a dull despair in his heart, knew that he needed to be saved. Himself, he could not do it. His strength, his resistance, were gone. The pocket-book was already in his hands. In another moment it was in his pocket, where it had lain before.

He was a thief!

But no one would know. That was the miserable thought that came into his mind now. Next to innocence, the thing to be desired was secrecy—safety.

He did not immediately leave the study. Somehow, he seemed rooted to the spot. So long as he did not go, he was not a thief.

There were footsteps in the passage—many footsteps, many voices. The Remove were out at last. It was half-past five.

Dick started guiltily.

If the fellows found him in Maulverer's study, what would they think? They could not guess, but—

Footsteps!

If Lord Maulverer came in—

The study door opened, and Lord Maulverer came in. He started a little on seeing Penfold, and then nodded to him cheerfully.

"Feel better, old chap?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dick dully.

"Good! Going to have tea with me?"

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Pen started.

He had sunk low—low enough, but he could not sit down to break bread with a fellow he had robbed. He shook his head hastily.

"No, no! I—I mean, I think not, thanks!" he stammered.

"Just as you like, my dear fellow," said Maulverer politely.

His look showed that he was surprised to find Penfold in his study, without any apparent object in being there, but he made no remark. Penfold felt that his presence needed explaining.

"I—I came to borrow your Latin dictionary, if you don't mind, Maulverer," he said.

It did not seem to be Dick Penfold who was speaking at all. The words came from his lips, but he listened to them with a kind of dull surprise, as if someone else had spoken. Was it really he, Dick Penfold, who had spoken that deliberate lie so quickly, so easily, so naturally? An inward shudder ran through the boy. Into what depths was he falling?

"Certainly, old chap!" said Lord Maulverer, in surprise. "Here's the dick. Blessed if I ever knew a chap take to Latin dictionaries when he was seedy before!"

"Thanks!" muttered Penfold.

He took the dictionary.

For the moment an impulse came strongly upon him to confess—to tell Lord Maulverer everything, and to hand him the pocket-book.

Just at that moment Bob Cherry and Mark Linley came into the study. Bob Cherry clapped Lord Maulverer upon the shoulder in his jovial way.

"Come on!" he exclaimed.

"Eh? What?"

"You've got to come and look for the pocket-book, my son," said Bob Cherry. "No slacking, you know. Take his other arm, Marky."

Mark Linley laughed, and took Maulverer's other arm. The schoolboy earl was marched forcibly out of the study, and his protesting voice died away down the passage.

Dick had not spoken.

When they were gone, Penfold slowly left the study, and returned to his own.

He closed the door, and took out the pocket-book, and stood looking at it dully, stupidly. What had he done? It was his now—his, and he was a thief! The fearful word hummed and buzzed in his brain.

He made a movement towards the door. It was not too late now. But it was too late! How could he explain now—how could he account for not having handed the pocket-book over at once? Lord Maulverer was not suspicious, but he must guess—he could not fail to guess.

Penfold halted.

Did he really want to give the pocket-book back? He did not know. His brain was not clear enough at this moment for him to know what he wanted, and what he did not want.

He opened his desk, and thrust the pocket-book into the deepest recess, and placed papers over it, and locked the

desk again, and put the key in his pocket. It was the first time he had done so. He did not usually have valuables about him that required to be locked up for safety.

There was a knock at the door, and Harry Wharton looked in. He started at the sight of Penfold's white face.

"My hat! You do look seedy!" he exclaimed.

"I'm all right."

"What is it—a headache?"

"Yes; my head aches a bit," said Pen dully.

"Maul says you've borrowed his Latin dic," said Wharton. "I came in to stop you. No good mugging at Latin when you're seedy. Come and have tea in my study."

Penfold shook his head.

"Thanks, I'd rather not," he said.

"All right, old son."

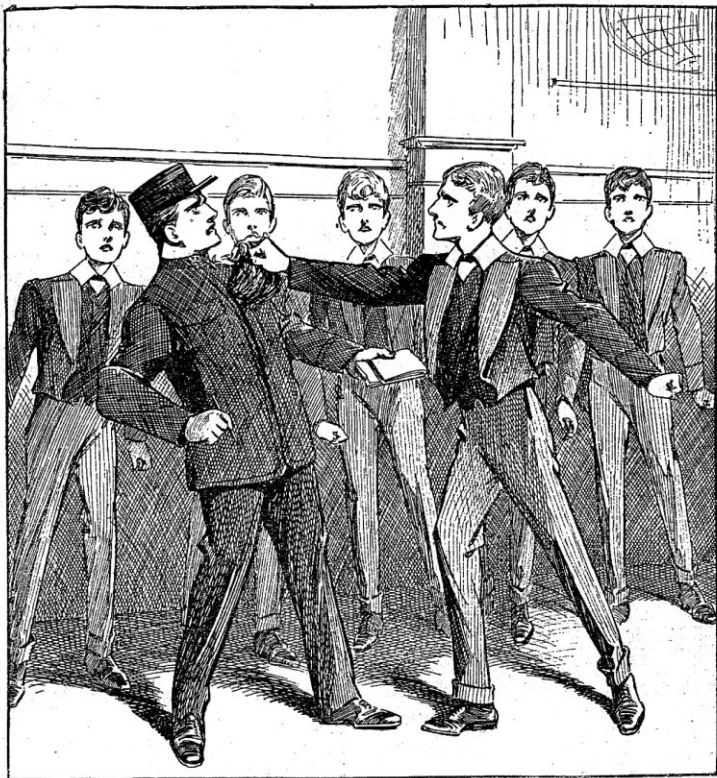
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To the stupefaction of the Removites, the Bounder made a sudden move forward, and grabbed at the inspector's whiskers. There was a yell of amazement as they came off in Vernon-Smith's hand. It changed to a roar of indignation and rage as they recognised the face. "Coker, of the Fifth Form!" (See Chapter 14.)

Wharton withdrew, with a look of commiseration upon his face. He was very sorry for Penfold, and he could guess that the scholarship boy's troubles probably went deeper than most of the Greyfriars fellows knew. But he did not guess the trouble that lay heaviest upon Penfold's heart at that moment—the shame and misery that was gnawing him with bitter torture.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Police.

DICK PENFOLD came down into the junior common-room a little later. He realised that it would not do to shut himself up alone too much. If he was going to keep the pocket-book, it was necessary to act in the

most natural and ordinary manner possible, in order to avert suspicion. Suspicion, indeed, could hardly fall upon him, for no one had the slightest idea that he had found the lost pocket-book. But Pen was nervous and uneasy.

To Dick Penfold, the slightest glance and the lightest word seemed laden with suspicion. He shrank from the eyes of the juniors, yet he felt that he must brave every glance, and must not attract attention to himself by unusual conduct. If he were going to keep the pocket-book— Was he going to keep it? He hardly knew.

The unhappy boy was dallying with temptation. He had made one effort to rid himself of it, and he had failed. But so long as he did not touch the money, he was not a thief. But the book was safely locked up in his desk, and he did not return it to its owner. What he was going to do he did not know. He meant to think it out—to decide, but his

throbbing, aching brain was in no state to think anything out clearly.

He had hidden the book, and he had lied to Lord Maulverer. The shame and misery that weighed upon his mind gave him a dull pain, that he was beginning to endure with a dogged, sullen endurance. He could not tell what he intended to do; but for the present, at least, he did not intend to return Lord Maulverer his property.

In the common-room the lost pocket-book was the general topic of discussion. The Removites were exasperated with Lord Maulverer, and exasperated with the Fourth-Formers, who would not let the subject rest. Temple, Dabney & Co. had the advantage now, and they used it unsparingly. The Remove-room had already been dubbed the Thieves' Kitchen, and the Fourth-Formers had adopted a way of putting their hands over their pockets whenever a Removite came by—a little joke that led to frequent skirmishes.

The Remove were in an angry mood with Maulverer and with everybody else. Billy Bunter, who had again suggested his idea of forming a committee to find the lost pocket-book, and divide the proceeds, had been seized and bumped and kicked out of the room, and had retired groaning to his study. Lord Maulverer was looking forward to bed-time with considerable uneasiness.

The looks of the Removites showed what he had to expect if the pocket-book was not discovered before then, and there was little chance, apparently, of its being found. It was quite clear by this time that the pocket-book had not been lost inside the house, or it must have been found; and out of doors it was now too dark to continue the search.

There had been so much talk and so many rows on the subject that the whole school knew of it by this time. It was only a question of time before the matter came to the Head's knowledge. Then there would certainly be an inquiry, and matters would be worse. The opinion that the book had been stolen was gaining ground. If it had merely been lost, surely it must have turned up before this.

Dick Penfold sat down by the fire in the common-room with a book in his hand, but he did not read—the book was a mere pretence. When he looked at its pages the letters danced before his eyes. Like a fellow in a dream, he heard the discussion that went on round him.

"We shall be called up tomorrow before the Head, and questioned about this," said Bulstrode savagely. "I shouldn't wonder if the police are called in. It will be a pretty rotten disgrace for Greyfriars, and they'll never let us forget it. If the pocket-book isn't found, everybody will conclude that there is a thief in the Form."

"Well, if it isn't found, I guess that will be correct," said Fisher T. Fish. "It must be found if it is only lost."

"If it isn't found, it means that somebody has picked it up and kept it," said Bob Cherry. "But it might be anybody at Greyfriars—not in the Remove."

"Of course it might, but the fellows won't think so." "Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "We'll give Maulverer a jolly good hiding for being careless—that will be some satisfaction."

"Begad, you know—"

"Nice set of asses we shall look, standing in a row, with a policeman asking us questions and making notes in a pocket-book about which of us looks nervous or guilty," said Bulstrode. "It's enough to make anybody look guilty to be questioned about a theft, but policemen don't understand that."

"The blessed thing will have to be found," said Harry Wharton. "It would be horrible to have the police here, and I suppose it will come to that."

Lord Maulverer looked very distressed.

"I'm frightfully sorry!" he said.

"Oh, rats!" growled Bulstrode. "We'll make you sorrier in the dorm."

"Yes, rather!"

There was a sudden patter of feet in the passage, and Tubb of the Third rushed in, with a scared expression on his face.

"Oh, you fellows!" he gasped.

"What's the matter, you young ass?" granted Bulstrode.

"They're coming!"

"Who—the Fifth?"

"No—no!" panted Tubb. "The police!"

"What!" roared Bulstrode.

"The p-p-police!" stuttered Tubb, in his excitement.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nugent, seizing the bag by the shoulder and shaking him. "What do you mean, you silly young ass?"

"It's true! I saw him—a detective—"

"Rot!"

"He's coming here—here he is!" gasped Tubb.

"My hat!"

A stout figure strode in at the door of the junior common-

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"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

room. Behind him were Potter and Greene of the Fifth, evidently showing him the way.

"That's the room, sir," said Potter. "Most of the Remove are there, sir."

"We'll stand at the door, inspector," said Greene. "We'll see that none of the young thieves get out."

"Thank you, young gentlemen!"

The Remove were all upon their feet now.

The person who entered the common-room was a stout individual in dark clothes, with a peaked cap, and large, thick whiskers that almost covered his face. His nose was very red, and his eyebrows were very dark and bushy. His boots were of the largest size, and by themselves looked very imposing and official. He spoke in a deep bass voice, that seemed to be fetched with some difficulty from the depths of his puffed-up chest.

The Removites gazed upon him in uneasy doubt.

"Inspector!" murmured Bob Cherry, repeating Greene's word in a horrified tone.

"The police?"

"My hat!"

"It's come at last!"

"Oh, Heaven!" murmured Dick Penfold. He sank limply into the chair from which he had risen.

The police! Then the Head had already heard of the matter—had called in the aid of a detective—there was to be an inquiry—a search! If the Remove studies were searched the pocket-book would be found in his desk! Dick Penfold, almost overcome with remorse and terror, sat half fainting in his chair. His punishment had come—his sin had found him out quickly. And all that he suffered at that moment he deserved—he knew that. If a fellow became a thief what could he expect but to be found out and exposed to the horror and scorn of all decent fellows?

The thought was in the miserable boy's mind of making a dash from the common-room to get to his study and get rid of the pocket-book. But this would only be betraying himself. No one could fail to guess what he fled for, and he would be followed. Besides, Potter and Greene were standing in the doorway to prevent egress—he could not leave without a struggle, and that would betray him hopelessly. He sat still, with a numb terror in his heart, his eyes, almost glazed, fixed upon the stranger.

The stout man strode into the room.

"I am Inspector Stodgers, of Courtfield," he said. "The Head has sent for me to investigate the mystery of—the lost pocket-book. Stand up in a row here, all the boys who belong to the Lower Fourth."

The Removites obeyed limply.

If the man was a police-inspector, acting under orders from the headmaster, they had no choice but to obey. The Fourth-Formers in the room drew apart, and so did the Shell, and the members of the Third who were present. The Removites formed up in a line. Nearly all the Form were there, and there were a crowd of them.

The stout inspector turned to Potter.

"Are these all, Master Potter?" he asked.

Potter glanced over the line.

"Not all, sir," he replied. "There are a few others in the studies, I think."

"I will begin with these," went on the deep bass voice.

"Boys, it appears that one of you has had a valuable pocket-book stolen."

"Not at all, my dear sir," said Lord Maulverer. "I have lost a pocket-book."

The inspector fixed his eyes upon Lord Maulverer.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am Lord Maulverer."

"You belong to the Remove?"

"Yaas."

"You have lost a pocket-book?"

"Yaas."

The inspector opened his note-book, wetted the end of a stump of pencil, and made a note. Then he glared at Lord Maulverer again.

"What was the value of the pocket-book?"

"Three guineas."

"What! Is that all?"

"Yaas."

"Rot!" said Potter. "It was thirty-five pounds. He's gammoning."

"You had better deal frankly with me, young gentleman," said the inspector fiercely. "I warn you that everything you say may be used in evidence against you."

"Eh?"

"You are bound to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said the inspector, "in any place within the meaning of the Act."

"Begad!"

The meaning of the inspector's remarks was not quite

clear, but his words certainly had a legal sound that was very impressive to the startled and uneasy juniors.

"Now, what was the value of the contents of that pocket-book?" demanded the inspector.

"Oh, the contents!" said Lord Mauleverer. "You didn't ask me about the contents. The contents were worth thirty-five pounds odd, I believe."

"Total value, forty quid," said the inspector, "or nearly."

"Yaas."

"That is a very large sum for a kid in a fag's Form to possess," said the inspector sternly. "I hope you came by that money honestly, young fellow?"

"Yaas."

"And you state that you have lost it?"

"Yaas."

"Where did you lose it?"

"I really don't know."

"Has it been searched for?"

"Yaas."

"But it has not been found?"

"No."

"Then," said the inspector, in a deep voice, "the only conclusion is that this valuable property has been purloined, and it is my duty to find the thief. The thief is here! I shall find him!"

And the inspector thrust a hand into his coat-pocket, and there was a metallic clink, and the sound of clinking handcuffs—for they had no doubt that it was that—sent a chill to the hearts of the Removites.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Donc!

THE Remove were silent, with pale and dismayed faces.

The inspector had decided that there was a thief among them, and he was going to find him. If he found him, well and good. But if he found out an innocent fellow, and convicted him, as the police have been known to do sometimes, that would be very awkward for the fellow in question. Detectives are only human, and they make mistakes like other human beings, only their mistakes are dreadfully serious for the persons concerned. Each of the juniors felt a chill steal along his backbone as the fierce eyes of the whiskered inspector travelled along the line, and travelled back again.

"One of you young fellows has pinched that pocket-book," said the inspector. "I call upon him to confess, and throw himself upon the mercy of the law."

It seemed to Dick Penfold that the inspector's eye singled him out. He shivered, and for a wild moment he had an impulse to speak out, to get this awful terror over.

But he did not.

He closed his lips hard to keep back a cry, and stood fast. Fortunately for him, the rest of the Form were looking pale and disturbed, and his looks were little more dismayed than those of the other fellows.

"Well?" demanded the inspector.

Silence.

"Are you going to confess?"

No reply.

"Very well," said the stern, deep voice. "If the thief will not confess, it only remains for me to investigate and expose him. Come forward!"

His hand rose, and pointed to one of the juniors. For a moment Dick Penfold trembled, but it was Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, at whom the inspector was pointing. The burly Removite started, and his face went very white.

"Yes, you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, you! Come forward!"

Bolsover almost staggered from the line.

"What is your name?"

"P-p-percy Bolsover."

The inspector made a note.

"How many 'P's in Percy?" he demanded.

"Eh! One."

"Then why did you say 'P-p-percy'?" demanded the inspector sternly. "I warn you not to trifle with the law, young man. This looks suspicious."

"If—if you please, I—"

"I don't please. How old are you?"

"Fifteen and a half, sir."

"You are in the Remove?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are old enough to be in the Fourth, at least, if not in the Shell," said the inspector. "This looks very suspicious. Why are you in the Remove?"

"I—I—I don't know."

"It looks as if you are here, sir, specially with felonious designs upon the pocket-book of Lord Mauleverer," said the inspector. "Perhaps, however, you are still in the Lower Fourth because you are too stupid to pass into a higher Form. Is that it?"

"Yes!" gasped Bolsover, hardly knowing what he was saying.

There was a giggle from Potter and Greene. But the

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"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

Removites did not laugh. The matter was too dreadfully serious for that.

"Very good," said the inspector, making another note. "But it is a very common thing in the criminal classes for stupidity to be assumed in order to cover up dishonest intentions. I have my eye upon you, young man. You had better confess."

"I—I haven't anything to confess, sir!" gasped Bolsover.

"Did you steal the pocket-book?" thundered the inspector.

"N-n-n-no, sir!"

"What character does this boy bear in the school, Master Potter?" asked the inspector, turning to the Fifth-Formers in the doorway.

"Rotten, sir!" said Potter. "He's the biggest fellow in the Remove, and he bullies the smaller chaps. He has even been cheeky to the Fifth."

"What!" The inspector made another note. "This is serious—very serious! You say that this young scoundrel has been cheeky to the Fifth Form?"

"Certainly, sir, on many occasions."

"I don't see what that has to do with it, sir," said Harry Wharton courageously. "You are not here to bother about our private affairs, I suppose?"

"Silence!" thundered the inspector. He turned to Bolsover again. "Now then, Rollover—did you say your name was Rollover?"

"No, sir—Bolsover!"

"Ah, yes; Bolsover! Turn out your pockets!"

"What?"

"Turn out your pockets at once!"

Bolsover obeyed. The Remove watched him with painful anxiety. All kinds of articles were turned out of Bolsover's pockets—a ball of string, a pocket-knife, an old letter, a chunk of toffee, and several other things. The inspector looked hard at the articles as they lay upon the table.

"Is that all?" he thundered.

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Is that toffee your property?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"You are sure you did not steal that toffee?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Where did you obtain it?" demanded the inspector.

"I warn you to be careful, young man. I have my eye upon you. I have been informed by a young gentleman named Coker that he saw you, from his study window, rob a fag of toffee by violence—toffee which the fag had purchased for Master Coker, and which he was bringing to my—"

to Master Coker's study. Is this statement true or not?"

Some of the Removites grinned at this, in spite of the state of tension. Bolsover's little way of bullying fags into giving up possession of toffee and other eatables was well known. It was a custom he had—not an uncommon custom in a bully at a school. It was bullying, and it was cruel—and very like Bolsover—but it could hardly be called stealing.

But in the eyes of the law it might assume a most serious aspect. Bolsover began to shake, and he sincerely wished, at that moment, that he had not been a bully.

"I—I—I—"

"The truth!" thundered the inspector. "The truth, now!"

"I—I—I did take the toffee from a fag, sir!"

"Ah! You admit stealing the toffee, the property of Master Coker?"

"I wasn't stealing!" howled Bolsover. "We often raid the Fifth, and the Fifth raid us. Coker had a lot of my jam-tarts once!"

"Quite true!" said Harry Wharton.

"Silence! Bolsover—did you say your name was Bolsover or Rollover?"

"Bolsover, sir."

"Very good! You are convicted on your own confession of having been guilty of a robbery with violence. I do not think we shall have to look much further for the thief. The only question is, who were your accomplices?"

"I never had any—I mean—"

"Do you mean that you stole the pocket-book unaided?"

"I—I—I didn't steal it. I—"

"This prevarication will do you no good!" said the inspector sternly. "The best thing you can do is to own up, and make a clean breast of it. You will be sent to a reformatory, which is the proper place for you. Do you confess?"

"No!" howled Bolsover.

"Very well, stand aside!"

Bolsover stood aside. The inspector's eye roved along the line. It rested upon Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, and he signed to the Bouncer to come forward. Vernon-Smith did so, with a scowl on his face. Vernon-

Smith had been watching the inspector very keenly, with the sharpest eyes in Greyfriars.

"What is your name?" demanded the inspector.

"Vernon-Smith," said the Bounder coolly.

"You are a friend of the boy under suspicion?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Tut out your pockets!"

"Rats!"

"What!" thundered the inspector.

"Didn't you hear me?" said the Bounder coolly. "I said 'Rats!'"

The Remove gasped. Vernon-Smith was known to be a fellow of immense nerve and unflinching coolness. But no one had ever expected to hear him "cheek" a police-inspector engaged in such an investigation.

"You ass!" murmured Hazeldene. "Be careful, or he'll pick on you!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care if he does!" he replied aloud. "Look here!"

The Bounder made a sudden move forward, and to the stupefaction of the Remove, grabbed at the inspector's whiskers. The inspector jerked his head back—but too late! The backward jerk of the head only lent additional force to the pull the Bounder gave at the whiskers. There was a yell of amazement from the juniors as the whiskers came off in the Bounder's grasp. It changed to a roar of indignation and rage as the face, now fully exposed to view, was recognised. In spite of the darkened eyebrows, and the reddened nose, the juniors knew the face, now that the bushy whiskers were removed. And one name rang through the common-room in a roar.

"COKER!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

True to Himself!

"COKER!"
"Coker of the Fifth!"
"Coker!"

The inspector, deprived of his whiskers and his official character at the same moment, started back with an exclamation of dismay. The Remove stared at him, astounded by the trick that had been played upon them. Coker, the leading light of the Fifth Form Dramatic Society, had added considerably to the gravity of the school by his attempts at Shakespearian drama. But if he could not play Brutus or Mark Antony, it was evident now that he was not wholly without qualifications as an actor.

"Coker!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter and Greene. "Come on, Coker, the game's up!"

Inspector Stodgers, of Courtfield—alias Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form—retreated to the doorway. He was grinning now. The jape was over, but it had been great fun for the Fifth while it had lasted. Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"Collar him!"
Some of the Remove rushed at Coker. The hero of the Fifth dashed into the passage. The three Fifth-Formers fled back to their own quarters, roaring with laughter; and in a few moments more sounds of uproarious merriment rang from the Fifth-Form passage. It was evident that the whole Form was in the joke.

In the junior common-room, the Removites remained amazed. Vernon-Smith tossed the false whiskers and beard on the table with a laugh. Bolsover gave a gasp of relief. It was all a cheat—he was not suspected—it was all over. Dick Penfold sank into a chair, almost giddy with the relief, now that the strain was past. But no one noticed Penfold in the excitement.

"Coker!" said Wharton. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Coker—the rotter!"

"The bounder!"

"What a jape!"

"And we always said he couldn't act!" grinned Nugent, the first to recover his good-temper. "My hat! Won't the Fifth chuckle over this?"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"I guess we've been played for a set of suckers," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Coker has rung in a cold deck on us this time, I reckon!"

Some of the Remove laughed. The jape had been a clever one, and they began to see that it was funny, now that it was over.

"Blessed if I know how you saw through him, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "He took me in, all along the line!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Well, he didn't talk exactly like a police-officer," he remarked, "and when I watched his face closely, I made up my mind that his whiskers were false. And Potter and Greene, giggling there, gave him away."

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"THE SCHOOLBOY Nihilist!"

In Next Thursday's Number of

"The Gem" Library, id.

"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SIDNEY DREW.

"Blessed if I saw it, though."

"I had a sort of suspicion—" began Bolsover. But a yell of laughter interrupted him.

"Yes; that's why you answered up as meekly as a lamb!" grinned Bulstrode.

"Look here—"

"You were taken in, worse than the rest of us!" said Harry Wharton.

"I tell you—"

"Who stole the toffee?" piped out Tubb of the Third. And he escaped from the room before the Remove bully could reach him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to make the Fifth ^{up} for this!" growled Bulstrode.

"They've made us stand up, at all events!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's no good grumbling about it—we've been done, and it serves us right for being such asses. Now I come to think of it, an inspector of police would never have acted as Coker did!"

"No; we can all see that now!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The rotter might have gone on searching the lot of us, if Smithy hadn't spotted him," said Nugent. "It was jolly lucky for us that the Bounder was up to snuff. Hallo, Pen—what are you looking so sick about? It's all over now."

Pen tried to smile.

"I was startled!" he said.

"We were all so, I guess!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "When the police start on a case they are bound to nab somebody—and if the guilty party isn't to be found, it comes hard on somebody else. Lucky it was only Coker!"

Penfold left the common-room and went up to his study. His hair was beating almost to suffocation. It had been dangerous, after all; but he felt like a fellow who had had a fearfully narrow escape. Suppose it had been a real detective—and it is quite probable that one would come? What if there had been a search of the Remove studies—every box, every desk turned out? He felt sick at the thought. A voice hailed him on the stairs.

"Hallo, here's one of the thieves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pen turned crimson.

It was only a joke from a group of Fifth-Formers, chuckling over Coker's successful jape on the Remove. But the words cut the boy to the heart. The jokers little knew how near the truth they were.

Pen went into his study and closed the door. He locked it, and then stepped towards his desk. Whether he returned the pocket-book to its owner or not, it must not remain in his study. The other juniors who shared the study with him might feel suspicious at seeing the desk locked—Pen had never kept it locked before. And if there were a search—Pen turned cold at the thought.

He felt in his pocket for the key. As he did so, a hand tried the door, and there was a sharp rap on the outside.

"Hallo! What the dickens have you got the door locked for?"

Pen started, and slipped the key back into his pocket. It was Russell's voice—Russell was his study-mate. He swung round quickly to the door and opened it. Russell came in, looking at him in astonishment.

"New dodge, locking the door?" he asked.

"I—I locked it," stammered Pen.

"Yes, I know you did!" said Russell. "I found it locked. What the dickens do you mean by locking a fellow out of his own study?"

"I say, Pen, you look seedy! If you want the room to yourself, I'll take my fep. into Bob Cherry's study, if you like!"

Pen shook his head.

"No; it doesn't matter," he said, in a stifled voice.

"Right-ho—I'll begin, then!"

And Russell sat down at the table. Pen quitted the study

—he could not bear company at that moment. Luck was against him again! What was he to do? For the present the pocket-book had to remain where it was.

Pen went into the window-recess at the end of the passage—anywhere, to be alone, to be able to think. He pressed his burning forehead against the cool glass, and it gave him some relief. The unhappy boy was almost in a fever.

What was he going to do?

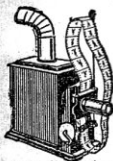
The thought of the stolen pocket-book was like a searing-iron in his brain. What was he going to do with it? Was he going to keep it? He thought of his mother—of the sick woman, and her pale, patient face—of the grim necessities of the poor home! The money would do so much there!

But it was not his!

A new thought came into his mind—what would his

(Continued on page 20.)

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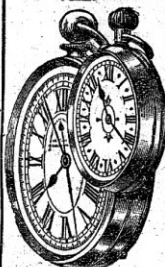
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TEMPTED, BUT TRUE!

(Continued from page 13.)

mother say if she knew of the struggle that was going on in his mind? He knew what she would feel—her horror, her misery, at the thought that her son might become a thief!

And his father—the quiet, steady, hard-working, honest old cobbler of Friardale—what would he think? Pen knew that the old man would rather die of hunger in his shop than lay a finger upon money that was not his. He knew it. He knew that his father would feel more scorn than pity for him, if he could be aware of his present stress of mind. What, if he had been to think of it. If his parents should ever learn the money was come by! He shuddered. To see their averted looks—affection struggling with disgust and contempt—Pen groaned.

But his mother—she was in such bitter need! Alone there, in the dusk of the window recess—alone, in silence, the unhappy boy fought out his battle.

But he won it! It came to him clearly that he must not do this thing—that if he did it, with whatever words and excuses he might gloss it over, the bare, brutal fact would remain that he would be a thief, as base and as contemptible as any criminal serving his sentence in a convict prison!

It came to him clearly, and his mind was made up, his purpose fixed. Whatever happened at home, whatever might come of it, he would not fall into the abyss that had opened so temptingly at his feet—whatever happened, he would be decent.

What a fool he had been to think of it for one moment! Strengthened by his resolution, Pen turned back towards his study—his mind was made up, his purpose clear—to take the book from its hiding-place, and take it back at once to Lord Maulverer before that cruel temptation had time to fix upon him again. The boy had won the fight with the tempter. He had been tempted, but he was true!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night!

THE light was still burning in the study as Pen came along the passage. Russell had left his preparation late, and he was not finished yet, though it was close upon bedtime. Pen groaned inwardly as he went into the study. Was he never to have a chance? Russell looked up as he came in.

"Not finished yet?" asked Pen.

"No. I shall chuck it at bedtime, though."

"Yes, and have a row with old Quelch in the morning," granted Russell. "No fear. It's all Coker's fault. He wasted my time."

Pen remained in the study with Russell till the Remove came tramping up to bed. Harry Wharton looked into the study.

"Oh, here you are!" he exclaimed. "Come on, Loder's in his usual sweet temper, and there will be lines if you're not sharp."

"All right, I'll come," said Russell. He lingered till the last moment. Pen saw that there was no chance, and he left the study with a heavy heart. He realised that this was part of his punishment for having half-yielded to the temptation. Now that he was willing to give the pocket-book back, it seemed impossible to do so. Every moment that it remained in his desk was torture to the repentant boy. But it had to remain there. How was he to get rid of it?

In the Remove dormitory, where Russell was the last to arrive, a grim silence reigned as the juniors turned in. Lord Maulverer was looking very uneasy. He knew what he had to expect, and the painful remembrance of the bumping in the Cloisters was still in his mind. There was no escape for him.

Loder saw lights out, granted in response to Bob Cherry's amiable good-night, and left the dormitory, slamming the door.

Then Bulstrode sat up in bed.

"I suppose you haven't found that rotten pocket-book of yours, Maulverer?" he inquired.

"Sorry, my dear fellow, I haven't."

"Then you're going through it?"

"Begad, you know—"

Pen sat up. If he had acted decently, his friend—the fellow who had been kindest to him in his thorny career at THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 208.

Groffriars—would not have to suffer now. Pen's heart was very heavy.

"Let Maulverer off to-night, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed. "I think we shall really find the pocket-book in the morning."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I—I feel sure of it."

"I don't see how you can feel sure of it unless you know where it is," said Bulstrode brusquely. "You can ring off, anyway. Yank that duffer out."

Bolover lighted a candle. Bulstrode and a crowd of other fellows in night-shirts and pyjamas gathered round Lord Maulverer's bed.

"I say, you know, you might chuck it," protested his lordship. "I'm really going to have a jolly good look to-morrow morning."

"And you're going to have a jolly good bumping to-night," said Bulstrode.

And the schoolboy earl was hauled out of bed. Penfold lay down again, sick at heart. He dared not own up—that was impossible. This must go on, and it was all his fault. Truly, the way of the transgressor is hard. Pen was finding it so.

Bump, bump, bump!

Lord Maulverer bore the infliction without a murmur. The dandy of the Remove had plenty of pluck. He knew, too, that his punishment was not quite unmerited. Bulstrode was breathless when the ordeal had finished, and Lord Maulverer had an ache in every bone in his body.

"There," panted Bulstrode, "and if the pocket-book doesn't turn up to-morrow morning, Maulverer, you get the same again before afternoon school."

"Begad!"

And Lord Maulverer limped into bed.

"I must say it serves you right, Mauly, old man," said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "You should really learn not to be careless, you know. If any chap has picked up that pocket-book, and has been cad enough to keep it, it's all your fault for putting temptation in his way."

"Boosh!" groaned his lordship. "A fellow has a right to expect fellows to be honest, I suppose? If a chap steals, it's because he's a thief. Ow!"

Pen shivered.

The Remove settled down to sleep. But there was no sleep for two of them. Pen was lying awake, thinking of means of getting rid of the wretched pocket-book, and Lord Maulverer was aching too much to slumber.

Ten o'clock rang out, and then eleven! Then Penfold moved. He had thought out a plan. He dared not leave the matter till the morning. When Greyfriars was awake and crossed, he could not be sure that a single movement of his would be unseen. The pocket-book must be got rid of that night while the rest of the Form were asleep.

He could not return it to the place where he had found it at that hour of the night. It was useless to take it to Lord Maulverer's study, for if it were found there, questions would be asked immediately. It would be known that someone had taken it there—taken it there during the night, and Pen would not be able to explain. If he had handed the pocket-book to its owner that afternoon, all would have been well; but how was he to explain having kept it back till night? No explanation was possible, excepting the facts.

He had decided to open his study window, and fling the pocket-book out into the Close as far as he could. Lying in the open quad, it was certain to be found by the first fellows out in the morning. They might be surprised at having overlooked it in their searching, but they could hardly surmise how it had really come there. At all events, it was the only thing that Pen could do.

The junior sat up in bed and listened. There was no sound in the dormitory, save the regular breathing of the sleepers, and the unmusical snore of Billy Bunter.

Pen stepped softly from his bed. He drew on his trousers and jacket, and a pair of slippers. The night was cold, but he hardly noticed it. He moved cautiously towards the door, and stumbled in the dark against a chair. There was a voice from Lord Maulverer's bed. The aching junior was still awake.

"Begad, what's that?"

Pen stopped, trembling.

He had not counted upon Maulverer being awake. He stood quite still, his heart beating like a hammer against his ribs.

He hoped that the silence would satisfy Lord Maulverer, and that he would settle down to sleep again. But the schoolboy earl was sleepless. He sat up in bed, blinking and peering through the darkness towards Pen. Dark as the dormitory was, Lord Maulverer caught a glimmer of the junior's form standing there.

"By Jove, who's that?"

Pen bit his lip hard.

"Jaspers from the Fourth—eh?" said his lordship. "Wake up, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" said Pen, in a voice of agony.

"Hello, Pen?"

"Yes."

"Why the dickens didn't you answer, then?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"I—I—I—"

"What are you doing out of bed—eh?" said Lord Mauleverer, peering at him. "It's blessed cold, isn't it? Going to jape Coker?"

"No, no!"

"Then what's up?"

"I—I'm going down to my study to—to get something," muttered Pen desperately. "It's all right."

"Mind you don't run into a prefect, then!" chuckled his lordship. "Loder!" would be very glad to catch you."

"I'll be careful!"

"What the dickens do you want to fetch from your study in the middle of the night?" asked Lord Mauleverer. "Look here, Pen, you're seedy, old chap. Get back into bed, and I'll go for you."

Pen groaned inwardly.

"No—no!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, yaas," replied the good-natured Mauleverer, putting one leg out of bed. "Begad, it's cold! You might catch a frightful cold in your seedy state, you know. I can't sleep, anyway. I'm aching too much. Get into bed."

"No!"

"Rats!" said Mauleverer, taking Penfold good-naturedly by the shoulder, and pushing him towards his bed. "Now, what is it you want? I'll get it for you."

Pen could almost have laughed in his misery. If Lord Mauleverer had only guessed what it was he wanted from his study!

"Turn in," said Mauleverer. "I tell you you'll catch cold. Blessed if I know what you want from your study at this time of night. Anyhow, I'll get it for you."

"You—you can't!" muttered Pen. "It's locked in my desk."

"Well, you can give me the key, I suppose?"

"I—I'd rather go myself, Mauleverer—I would, really."

"Well, I'll come with you, then," said his lordship cheerfully. "Come on. Wait a minute till I get into my bags, though."

"I—I don't want you to come," muttered Pen. "We—we might get caught, you know, and it's no good both of us getting lines."

"Oh, I don't mind! Snoop does my lines, you know, at a bob for fifty," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'll make him do yours, too. Come on."

"Never mind. I—I won't go!" stammered Pen.

Lord Mauleverer laughed softly.

"You mean that you don't want me," he said. "Why the dickens couldn't you say that at first, Pen? I didn't know there was any secret about it. Buzz off."

And Lord Mauleverer turned back to his bed and tumbled in. Pen hesitated a moment or two. If the book were found in the Close now, would not Lord Mauleverer suspect the truth, especially if it fell anywhere near the windows of the Remove studies? But—but he dared not leave it where it was until the morning. At any risk, it must be got rid of before Greyfriars awakened to a new day.

Pen crept to the door, and crept out into the passage, and on tip-toe, like a thief in the night. As he thought bitterly, he made his way down to the Remove passage. He entered his room, unlocked the door behind him. Then he breathed more freely—at all events, he was safe from interruption now.

He lighted the gas, turning on the merest glimmer, to show him light enough for what he had to do. He unlocked his desk, and the pocket-book was in his hand. He shuddered as he touched it—shuddered to feel how near he had been to becoming a thief, for the sake of what that pocket-book contained.

Pen opened the window as softly as he could—it creaked as it opened. The sound was slight, but it seemed to the straining ears of the junior almost like thunder. The cool, keen air of the night blew in upon him.

He raised his hand, the pocket-book in it. His hand swept forward, and the pocket-book sped out into the night, far, far into the blackness.

Pen bent over the window-sill, with throbbing heart, to hear it fall. But no sound came from the night; there was not a slight echo. The thing had fallen at a distance, and Pen's heart was lighter.

He closed the window.

Although it was near midnight, and the school was asleep, although there was a locked door between him and the rest of the school, the boy would not have been surprised, in his tense state of mind, to have seen someone in the study, looking at him with accusing eyes, with a hand raised to denounce him. But there was nobody—he was alone. He turned out the glimmer of gas, and unlocked the door, and with silent feet crept back to the Remove dormitory.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

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Lord Mauleverer did not speak as he came in—whether the wakeful junior had fallen asleep or not, Pen did not know. He crept into bed, and drew the clothes over him, and laid his head upon the pillow. But there was no sleep for him that night, and when the grey dawn glimmered in at the windows of the dormitory his eyes were still open—tired, restless, feverish, and his face was pale and wan with sleepless anxiety.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gosling's Good Luck.

BOB CHERRY was the first up in the Remove dormitory that morning.

He turned out at the first clang of the rising-bell, and gave Dick Penfold a shake. Dick had closed his eyes as soon as he saw Bob Cherry stirring. He did not want it to be known that he had not slept.

"Wake up!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hallo!"

"You woke me up yesterday morning," Bob Cherry, explained, with a grin. "One good turn deserves another. Jump up, and come for a run in the Close before the other fellows are down. It will do you good. You're looking seedy."

"I—I—"

"Slept well?" asked Bob.

"No. Oh, no!"

"Well, you can't sleep now," said Bob Cherry. "Gosling has nearly finished ringing the bell. Tumble up, and come for a run in the Close."

Penfold shook his head.

"No. I—I'd rather not!" he stammered.

"Oh, don't slack!" urged Bob Cherry.

Pen was not slacking. It seemed to him that luck was never tired of playing him tricks. He did not want to be the first out in the Close that morning, for very good reasons. He did not want to figure as the discoverer of the missing pocket-book. The less he had to do with the matter now the better.

"I—I'm not slacking!" he stammered. "But I hardly slept last night. I think I'll stay in bed as long as I can."

"Oh, rats! That is slacking!"

"No; it isn't, really."

Bob Cherry gave it up, and grunted as he went to his wash-stand. The rest of the Remove were turning out now. The rising-bell had ceased to ring. Dick Penfold was the last up but one, that one being, of course, Billy Bunter. Bunter always stayed in bed till the last possible moment, and when he rose his ablutions were a wonder to behold. Although he began washing after all the other fellows, he was frequently finished first.

Lord Mauleverer grunted a good deal as he turned out. He was still very stiff from the previous night's bumping.

Bulstrode gave him a grin.

"Feeling sore?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"That's nothing to what you'll be feeling like presently, if the pocket-book doesn't turn up," said Bulstrode.

"What-ho!" said Bolsover emphatically.

"Yes; we can't have Bolsover suspected and searched by police-inspectors ad lib, you know," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bolsover. "I wasn't really taken in by that ass Coker. I felt all the time that—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Four were the first down, and Lord Mauleverer followed them. Dick Penfold was taking care to be the last out of the dormitory, and he lingered over his washing, in company with Billy Bunter. Bob Cherry put his arm in Lord Mauleverer's as they left the dormitory, and marched him downstairs.

"You're coming to look for the pocket-book," he remarked.

"After breakfast, my dear fellow."

"Certainly; if it's not found before!" grinned Bob Cherry. "But you're coming now. No time like the present."

"Bogad, you know, I'm getting simply fed-up with that blessed pocket-book!" said Lord Mauleverer. "It seems to me that a fellow has a right to lose his own pocket-book if he wants to without all this fuss being made!"

"That's just where you're mistaken," said Bob cheerfully. "We're going to teach you careful habits. You're going to have some hoss-sense bumped into you, my son."

"But, really, you know—"

"Really, you know, you're coming, and that's flat!" said Bob.

And the reluctant peer was run down the steps into the Close, and then he ceased to object. It was not of much use

objecting when Bob Cherry had made up his mind on the subject.

Gosling, the porter, was in the Close, with a big broom in his hands. Gosling glanced towards the juniors, and came towards them, with an unusual expression upon his face.

"Your lordship, please—"

Gosling was always extremely civil to Lord Mauleverer. The schoolboy earl tipped him as many half-crowns as he had twopences from any other lord. The number of times Gosling could get the words lord and lordship into a single sentence was really surprising.

"Hallo!" said Mauleverer.

"I 'ear that your lordship 'ave lost a pocket-book," said Gosling.

"I 'ave!" said Lord Mauleverer, with great gravity.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," said Gosling. "Many man ought to be willin' to take any trouble to oblige a young gent as is so open'anded as your lordship, my lord."

"I'm sure you're very good," said Lord Mauleverer, a little puzzled.

"Which as soon as I 'eard that the pocket-book was lost, my lord, and 'eard that it belonged to your lordship, I started 'univer for it at once, my lord," said Gosling.

"Which I considered it my dooty so to do, my lord."

"Thank you very much, begad! I hope you've found it."

"That I 'ave, my lord!"

"Begad!"

"Found it!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Found the pocket-book!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes; that I 'ave!"

—And Gosling brought his horny hand round from behind him, and opened it, and there was the pocket-book!

The juniors looked at it. It was Lord Mauleverer's pocket-book, right enough—they knew the russet-leather cover and the silver monogram. The book was a little stained with mud, but that was all. There it was!

"By Jove!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Thanks!"

"Where did you find it, Gosling?" asked Bob Cherry, in amazement. "We've looked everywhere."

"In the Close, Master Cherry."

"In the Close! Where?"

"Hunder the helms."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "I'll swear—"

"Pray don't, my dear fellow—"

"Ass! I'll swear we looked under the elms, over every blessed inch of ground there," said Frank Nugent.

"Perhaps the wind blew it there!" Lord Mauleverer suggested.

"Yes; I think I can see the wind blowing about a pocket-book crammed with filthy lucre, you ass! Sure it was under the elms, Gosling?"

"Yes, Master Nugent; right hunder the helms, hon the ground!"

"That's plain enough," said Harry Wharton. "It's jolly odd, but I suppose it must have been overlooked when we searched. I suppose nobody got up in the middle of the night and chucked it there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors laughed at the idea, excepting Lord Mauleverer. His face was usually grave, and for a moment there was a very queer expression upon it.

Gosling was waiting expectantly. The schoolboy earl opened the pocket-book, and the rows of sovereigns in their little niches glistened in the sunlight. Lord Mauleverer took out the wad of banknotes.

"Yes; better count them," said John Bull.

"What rot, my dear fellow!"

"Ain't you going to count them?" roared Bob Cherry.

Lord Mauleverer looked surprised.

"What on earth for?" he asked. "I suppose they're all right. I couldn't possibly insult Greyfriars by suggesting that there is a fellow here who would stick to any of my banknotes."

"Then what have you got them out for, ass?"

"Only to give one to Gosling."

"My hat!"

The juniors had expected Lord Mauleverer to give Gosling a handsome tip for finding the pocket-book; but a tip of a fiver was enough to take their breath away. It took Gosling's away. He gasped. Lord Mauleverer detached one of the crisp notes, and fluttered it towards the school porter.

"There you are, Gosling! Pray accept that, with my best thanks! I'm sure you don't mind my offering you a slight recognition of your valuable service!"

Gosling did not mind. He grabbed the banknote, and stuffed it into his pocket, as if afraid that the schoolboy millionaire might change his mind.

"Thank you kindly, my lord!" he gasped. "Wot I says is this 'ere, my lord, that I never see sich a open'anded young

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 208.

"THE SCHOOLBOY NIMIST!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In Next Thursday's Number of

"The Gem" Library, id.

gentleman in my born days as your lordship, my lord! It's werry kind of you, my lord, and I accepts your lordship's present with all my 'eart, my lord. Wot I says is this 'ere, you're a gentleman, my lord!"

"Thank you very much!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I had an idea myself that that was so, but I am glad to have my views confirmed by such an able judge as yourself, Gosling!"

And he walked away with the grinning juniors. Balustrade met them at the door of the School House.

"You'd better wire in and find that pocket-book!" he remarked.

"Not at all—"

"Aren't you going to look for it?"

"No."

"Then you'd better look out for squalls—"

"You see, it's found!" his lordship explained calmly.

"Found!"

"Yes; Gosling's found it, and he's just returned it to me. And we'll have that little excursion on Saturday afternoon, if you fellows will come. I shall be very much honoured,"

said Lord Mauleverer, with a bow.

"Oh, we'll come!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But only on condition that you leave the tin with Mr. Quelch, to be locked up safely until Saturday."

"Yaas, with pleasure. Anything to oblige."

Dick Penfold looked eagerly at Lord Mauleverer as he came towards the dining-room for breakfast. The schoolboy earl met his glance calmly.

"I hear you've found your pocket-book!" he exclaimed.

Lord Mauleverer nodded.

"Yaas. Gosling found it for me. It's all serene, thanks!"

"I'm so glad!"

And Dick Penfold turned away. Lord Mauleverer's glance had been searching as it rested upon Pen. Did he connect with the scholarship boy's curious conduct on the preceding night with the strange discovery of the pocket-book in the Close in the morning? His face did not express what he was thinking, and he did not speak to Dick Penfold on the subject, nor did his manner to the scholarship boy after that change in the least. If he had any suspicion of the terrible temptation that the unhappy boy had dallied with, he knew that Dick must have conquered it, and proved himself sound at heart and honest and true. And that could only make the schoolboy earl respect him. But what Lord Mauleverer thought upon the subject, if he thought anything at all, he never uttered.

The finding of the pocket-book was a greater relief to the Remove than to its owner. The Fourth and the Fifth had to cease their little jokes—there was no longer any ground for them. The pocket-book had been recovered intact, and so had evidently not been stolen. Coker and Temple even offered in a kindly way to come out on the motor-car excursion planned for the Saturday afternoon—an offer which was gently but firmly declined.

And Dick Penfold?

The lad had won his battle—he had saved himself. And though it does not always come about that honesty and courage have their due reward in this world, it was the case with Dick Penfold, for when he paid his next visit to the humble turn in Friarland, he found that his mother had taken a turn for the better, and that all anxiety was over. And that night Pen knelt by his bedside, and gave thanks with tears in his eyes that he had been able to resist the temptation. And when Lord Mauleverer's little excursion came off, one of the happiest of the party was the boy who had been tempted, but proved true.

THE END.

For Next Tuesday.

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

A grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, by

FRANK RICHARDS.

And a splendid, long instalment of Sidney Drew's thrilling serial story

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"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SIDNEY DREW.

CHING-LUNG
IN THE
FORBIDDEN
LAND.A Wonderful Story
of Ferrers Lord,
Millionaire,
Rupert Thurston,
and Gan-Waga.THE FIRST CHAPTERS —
THROUGH
TRACKLESS
TIBET!BY
SIDNEY
DREW.

(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferrers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwaï-Hai, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into The Forbidden Land, when they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. These are, however, after a stern fight, beaten off.

Thomas Prout, one of the party, plays a practical joke on Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and is thereupon chased by that gentleman, who takes with him, to inflict the necessary punishment, a good horsewhip.

Prout, in his effort to escape the whip, dives under a mule; but he is closely followed by Gan-Waga, who every minute gains upon him.

(Now read on from here.)

Ching-Lung's Slave!

The chase went on merrily until Prout slipped.

Whizz!

The whip came down upon his back, making Prout bellow, and the onlookers scream with delight. Prout received a second cut, and floundered into a corner behind a mule. He managed to edge out, and rubbed himself.

"Had 'nough?" asked Gan-Waga. "Or do you want—Ow! You pig!"

The mule planked his hoof on Gan's toe at that moment, and then Gan-Waga began to dance.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" roared Prout. "Ho, ho, ho—oh!"

His mirth was short-lived. Prout's laugh was a tremendous one. Perhaps the mule thought the great Thomas was laughing at him, and did not like it. It lashed out when the "Ho, ho, ho!" came, and planted both hoofs on the exact centre of Prout's tunic, just over the third button.

Prout's feet left the ground, and he struck the earth with a shock.

Joe ran to the scene of action to render first aid to the wounded.

"Tom," he said, "why didn't you say you was goin' to sit down, and I'd 'ave got you a harmcheer!"

"Eh?" murmured Prout dazedly.

"Why didn't you wait for a cheer—a harmcheer?"

"I dunno!" murmured Prout.

"He's dying!" murmured Joe, burying his face in his big handkerchief. "His mind's wanderin'! Whisper your last message to yer mother-in-law in my ear."

"Brethren," grinned Maddock, "let us soothe 'is larst moments with this beautiful song."

And then he struck up, while the others shook with laughter, the pathetic words:

"Break the news to muvver,

Say there was no uvver,

To love me when the donkey kicked."

Prout scratched his head, arose, and shook himself. He had been nastily jarred, and the breath was knocked out of him.

"Who made the donkey kick, brethren?" chanted Ching-Lung.

"Ginger!" roared the men.

The great Thomas scowled and rubbed himself. Joe and Gan-Waga were grinning like a pair of crocodiles.

Prout stretched out his long arms, clutched each by the nape of the neck, and brought their skulls together violently. They stopped grinning at once, and started rubbing.

"Break the news to muvver!" roared Prout. "Say there was no uvver—to spank the grinning idiots round here! Gents, I don't know who made the donkey kick; but I know who is goin' to kick a lot of donkeys right away if you ain't careful. Pout! I'm winded! It took my breath away. It wasn't fair either. That mule had knuckle-dusters on, and I wasn't on me guard. I'm afraid he's broken my jewellery."

He took the battered remains of a silver watch out of his pocket, and gazed sadly at the fragments.

"Time lies," he sighed, as he pitched the ruins away—"and so do the sparrers. I won that watch in a raffle, and The Magnet Library.—No. 208.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy early.

it never went till now. And then it went rather fast, didn't it?"

"Tom," said Ching-Lung, "you're getting as smart as a tailor's dummy. Have a cigar!"

"Thank 'ee, sir!" said Prout. "I'd like two better!"

Ferrers Lord came back. He had been to take the saddles from the two dead ponies, and then the fun ended.

"Either the prisoner recovered and got away or they took him," he said. "I have been right back to the camp. We must have hit them hard, for I covered up another body, and found another dead horse. We might as well fetch in whatever is left of the yak before the vultures eat it."

"Will you come, Ching?" asked Thurston.

"Like an express train, my son. Get hold of your catsmeat and come along."

A solitary vulture, swooping down, marked where the carcass lay.

Mounting their ponies, they rode up the slopes. The vulture left its prey, with a croak of disgust. Though the hill pirates had taken the best of the flesh, plenty remained. Ching-Lung drew his knife, and bent down.

Plink-plonk!

A bullet clipped through Argal-Dinjat's bush, and a Mauser rifle uttered its queer double crash. Someone was firing at them, and the first shot came too close to be pleasant.

"Down!" cried Ching-Lung. "Roll off, Rupert!"

Thurston sprang from his saddle, and they threw themselves down upon the ground. Not a vestige of smoke could be seen, and it was impossible to tell from which direction the bullet had come.

"Don't show an inch of yourself!" said Ching-Lung.

"Pack yourselves as flat as a pancake!"

"But the ponies will tell them where we are."

"I'll shift them."

Ching-Lung felt round him cautiously, and found a couple of pebbles. He flung them at the browsing ponies, and they cantered about twenty yards away.

Plink-plonk!

One of the ponies began to squeal and plunge. The bullet had ripped through the saddle, grazing its back. It galloped madly down the hill, followed quickly by the other.

"There's the smoke!" said Thurston. "Look! Just behind the cactus!"

"I see it. How far away do you think it is?"

"About seven hundred yards."

The light was brilliant, and the breeze had died away. The air was abnormally dry and clear, for the great plateau has the driest atmosphere in the world.

"Don't shoot, old chap!" said Ching-Lung hurriedly.

"There seems to be only one of them. Our boys must have heard that old Mauser plink-plonking. If I had that ball of string here—By Jove, I have! Stop there, and we will locate the rascal in no time. I'll be with you again in five minutes. Take hold of this, and pay it out."

He crawled away, trailing his rifle.

Thurston could feel a steady strain on the string as he let it slip through his fingers. The strain ceased at last, after a jerk. Ten minutes dragged away. Then a hand touched his.

"Give me your rifle, old chap. Have you got the string?"

"Yes."

"Then tug it hard."

Bang!

Ching-Lung's rifle, forty yards away, exploded as the string jerked down the trigger.

Plink-plonk! cracked the gun behind the cactus, and the smoke revealed the position of the sniper, who had fired at the smoke from the decoy. It was all Ching-Lung needed.

He fired. A man's head and shoulders and arms leapt above the cactus, and the body fell forward, writhing, and then lay still.

"We'll have to carry the meat," said Ching-Lung calmly. He picked up his knife as if nothing had happened and went on with his interrupted task.

"Ching, old chap," gasped Rupert, in amazement, "how on earth did you make that shot?"

"With that gun, my boy. It is the prisoner we left behind." "And how on earth do you know it's the prisoner at this distance?"

"Because the prisoner had a silver bangle on his wrist, and I saw the light flash on it. By Jove, doesn't yak smell musty?"

"You're a terror!" said Thurston.

Ching-Lung laughed.

As soft answering chuckle sounded almost under their very feet, the dark smiling face and two twinkling eyes looked up to them. Then the tall figure of Argal-Dinjat raised itself erect.

"Sahib!" he said, in broken English. "I seeing shot! You great chief! I being your slave!"

He pressed Ching-Lung's hand against his forehead.

On the March Once More—Hard Pressed for Water—The Witch Well Causes Trouble.

Argal-Dinjat reported that the pirates had ridden southwest, a direction exactly opposite to the route taken by the expedition. It was possible that this might only have been a ruse to put them off their guard, and that the real intention of Storland Sahib was to make a wide detour and wait for them. But the Afghan shook his head when Ferrers Lord mentioned it.

"No, sahib. They will not return for many days; but they will return, for the sahib never forgets."

"And what makes you think they will not follow us to-day?" asked the millionaire.

"I know not, sahib; but it is true. They ride to Casmeera, the village where we bought the goat. They will loot it. And there is drink, and they will swallow it like hogs. It is not good to be near Storland Sahib. Let us advance, sahib. The woodcutter in the jungle knows not when the tiger will spring, and the bad lands are before us."

"What do you mean by that?"

"No water, sahib. The mountain streams fall beyond us to the right and left and join the rivers of the plateau. The ridge we follow is waterless; but it is the best path. It is a strange place, sahib, and the demons people it."

Ferrers Lord sent back Joe and Gan-Waga to refill all the water-bottles and to give the mules a drink.

"I am not quite so easy about Storland Sahib," he said to Ching-Lung; "and as I have the best pony I shall let you get ahead. It seems we are following the ancient caravan route, known now as the Path of Death. In the old days all the rich caravans used to pass this way. An earthquake or an avalanche, however, upset the watercourses, and now it is a dangerous route to follow. Argal-Dinjat talks about demons," he added, smiling. "If you see one, shoot it, and we'll have it stuffed."

"Right you are, old chap. I'll shoot you a brace. Don't get collared. We should miss you if you did."

The caravan moved away as a trot, leaving Ferrers Lord to guard the rear. The wonderful dry air affected all of them with its inspiring influence. It is so dry that meat will keep untainted for weeks.

They laughed, chatted, whistled, and sang. When the road widened and they could ride four abreast Ching-Lung performed a series of circus tricks, jumping from pony to pony as smartly as any trick-rider in the land of sawdust and spangles.

"Houp-la! Allez! Allez!" he cried. "Look out! Ally Sloper! Houp-la!"

"If you rigged up Gan-Waga as a clown," said Thurston, "you could start a full-fledged circus at once. 'Ching-Lung's unparalleled troupe of tumblers, high riders, and giddy goats' would look fine on bills."

Ching-Lung dropped into his saddle.

"A splendid notion!" he said. "We could fill the programme without trouble. Let's see! There's Jerking Gan-Waga, King of Rib-Ticklers and Joke Merchants; Professor Brusello Sprouto, the Red-Haired Feak from Finland; Jolly Joke, the Fastest Man on Earth; Mad Maddock, the Merriest Minrel left Unmurdered; and Euperto Thurstono, the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 208.

"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

In Next Thursday's Number of "The Gem" Library, 1d.

"WINGS OF GOLD." By SIDNEY DREW.

Fasting Wonder, who never eats anything when he sleeps. The chief would make a splendid ring-master, and any of the other lads could take the money at the doors if we had him chained."

"The great bar act would suit you, sir," said Prout sweetly. "You do it splendidly."

"What bar act—parallel or horizontal?" asked Ching-Lung. "Public-house bar," murmured Prout sweetly. And there was a general titter.

"No," said Ching-Lung. "You're mistaken. I know nothing about bars. You're the man for that, Thomas. You've been used to them from your earliest youth."

"By hokey," grunted the steersman, "hark at that! Why, I was a testotaller till I was twenty-one!"

"I was referring to prison bars," said Ching-Lung; and everybody laughed.

The sun began to blaze down upon them parchingly, and its light, reflected from the snow-covered peaks, made their eyes ache. In spite of the Afghan's warning, the men began to drain their water-bottles. Gan-Waga was in a new climate, and he felt more thirsty than any of them. His mouth felt dry, and his lips began to parch.

"One can get too much of this air," said Thurston. "It's very pleasant at first, but the reaction comes. Every inch of my skin tingles as if I had been sandpapered all over."

"Same here, sir," sighed Joe dolefully. "I'm cracking, sir."

"On, sahibs, on!" came the warning voice of the Afghan.

Below them, only a few miles away it seemed, flashed the waters of the river. Every flask was empty now, except Ching-Lung's. Both mules and ponies were moving with flagging steps and drooping heads. The dry air shrivelled them, and not even a blade of grass or a speck of moss grew on those arid slopes.

Gan-Waga was riding in front, swaying in the saddle at every step. They had been travelling for nearly four hours without a stop. The moment the pace slackened, there came the guttural, warning cry of the Afghan.

"On sahibs, on—for your lives on!"

There was no laughter now. Mules and ponies were willing enough, but they were beginning to need whip and spur to drive them forward. And the cool clear water flashed mockingly before their eyes. It was thirty miles away.

"On, sahibs, on!"

"Ugh!" muttered Ching-Lung.

They all drew rein. Below them was the track—the path of death. It was a gruesome sight—a path of skeletons. Skeletons of rags, horses, mules, picked clean by eagles, and bleached into ghastly whiteness; and human bones lay among them—those of men, women, and children. Skulls grinned, empty eye-sockets stared up at the pitiless sky.

Guns, fragments of rag, broken utensils, and decayed saddles, told the stories of the ill-fated caravans. Some of the bones had been gnawed by wild dogs and beasts of prey. It was little wonder that the superstitious natives thought the death-path haunted by demons and imps.

"On, sahibs, on!"

Gan-Waga reeled in his saddle. He had not uttered a single word of complaint, though he was suffering agonies of torture. Ching-Lung caught him.

"Drink this, Gan," he said.

There was only a third of a pint left in the flask. Ching-Lung's throat was on fire.

"No," panted Gan-Waga. "Not take it! You want it bad. Not take it!"

He pushed the flask away. It was as brave an act as well could be imagined, for he was fainting.

"Drink it!" cried Ching-Lung.

"Not take it, Chingy! Me die! Not want you die!"

"Drink it!"

"No," said Gan-Waga doggedly.

Ching-Lung took out his revolver, and pointed it at Gan-Waga's head.

"Take it, and drink it! I'm not jesting, Gan. If you don't drink it, I'll shoot you!"

The Eskimo turned his haggard face, and looked into Ching-Lung's eyes. They were stern and hard, and full of determination. He took the flask, and drained it ravenously, and the men licked their parched lips.

"On, sahibs—on!" cried Argal-Dinjat. "On for your lives."

They lashed their jaded mounts into a feeble trot. Bones to the left, bones to right, skulls grinning at them hideously, as if overjoyed at their misery, and the awful sun blazing overhead!

"We can't last another hour, Rupert," whispered Ching-Lung.

"The cattle can't, at any rate! Hallo!"

Gan-Waga's mule had broken into a gallop, its nostrils distended, and ears erect.

"Water—water! He scents water!" shouted the Afghan. "Allah is with us. The witch-well is not dry."

The other mules and ponies scented it, too, and strained at their bits. They began to trot, and then to gallop. A hollow lay to the right of the road, and they saw the glimmer of the water. It was barely a hundred yards away, and it lay like a shield of burnished silver. Water at last!

They reached the edge and remained dumbfounded, gazing into a deep pit. No water was there. The pit was dry! Argal-Dinjal crossed his arms, and bowed his head.

"Allah is wise," he murmured, "and it is his will. We can but die!"

The Mysterious Well—Water at Last, and Too Much of It, Gan-Waga in his Element.

Unless their eyes had deceived them, and played them a trick, the pit had been brimful of water before.

Drops of moisture still shone on the rocky sides. They stared in bewilderment into the dark pit. A faint gurgling was heard in the far-off depths.

"It's the oddest thing I ever heard of, or saw," said Thurston. "Was it only a mirage?"

"How could it be that?" We all saw it. Besides, the sides are still wet. It's one of those wells that vanish periodically, I suppose. There are one or two in China."

"Then it may fill up again!"

"In a month," said Ching-Lung gloomily. "This is awful luck!"

Ponies, mules, and men looked utterly downcast and dejected. Had they not seen the faithless water, they could have struggled on more doggedly. The disappointment was so acute that they disappeared forlornly into the treacherous well, downcast and helpless.

"Cheer up, lads!" cried Ching-Lung. "It's a nasty knock; and we mustn't go down under it. Let's see how deep it is."

He tossed in a stone, and they listened. At last came the sound of a sullen splash of water.

"Fifty yards, good," said Ching-Lung. "and there's the water down there. We'll jolly soon have some up! Get hold of the rope, all of you, and knot it together. Hurry up, while the water is in reach. Quick, lads—quick!"

They set to work with renewed vigour. Swiftly cords and bridle reins were tied and strapped to form one length. Then a leather bucket went down.

"Not long enough!" said Ching-Lung. "No. We're still ten yards away."

"Here you are, sir!" said Prout.

Breathlessly they waited, kneeling on the edge of the pit. The loaded bucket touched the water, and sank.

"Pull, lads—pull away!"

Up came the bucket, filled to the brim with crystal water, and the men uttered a feeble cheer.

"Help yourselves, lads—help yourselves, and fill your bottles."

It was nectar—pure, sparkling, icy cold. They gulped it down greedily, and felt like new men. Again and again the bucket sank into the pit. The thirst of the cattle seemed insatiable, and arms were aching before they had their fill.

Argal-Dinjal lifted his long arms reverently to the sky.

"Give thanks, sahibs!" he said. "Few, indeed, have found water in the well when they have taken this path. The spirit of the well has favoured us. To others he does but show the water for an instant, and then withdraws it before they can drink, leaving them to die."

"I'm very much obliged to the gentleman for his kindness," laughed Ching-Lung. "and I'm glad we managed to find him in a good temper. We'll rest a bit, and wait for the chief. The water we've got ought to last us out."

"We'll draw another bucket," said Thurston, "and I'll proceed to wash."

When he had finished rinsing his hands and face, the others followed his example in turn, and found themselves delightfully refreshed.

Even Gan-Waga grew lively again, and pipes were lighted and smoked with huge relish.

The flies were the only drawback, and they swarmed round the well. They were a kind of black mosquito, and their stinging resembled a prick of a red-hot needle.

Prout's nose formed one of the main objects for attack, and they stormed it gallantly until it began to swell visibly, and to turn the colour of a ripe tomato.

"The spiteful varmints!" groaned Prout again and again.

"They mean to eat me up by little bits. A man ought to make a fortune 'ere, selling fly-papers. Ouch! Go home, you villain!"

"Why didn't you bring one of your mother-in-law's veils?" asked Maddock.

"Oh, shut up," said Prout sulkily. "They don't worry you, just because no self-respectin' fly would be seen on an ugly face like yours. They like something good-lookin' and tasty."

"They must have asbestos feet in these parts, Tom," remarked Ching-Lung.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 208.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

EVERY
TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE
PENNY.

Prout looked at his Highness thoughtfully, trying to puzzle out the statement. He could not manage it.

"I don't see it, sir. Oh, drat 'em! That's another! Why should they have asbestos feet?"

"Well," exclaimed Ching-Lung, "if they hadn't, your beautiful Roman nose would burn them every time they settled on it, for it's like a red-hot coal. Why don't you sell it for a fog-signal?"

The listeners chuckled. Prout tried to think of a smart repartee, but, as the only thing that had anything smart about it just then was his nose, he gave it up, and grinned feebly instead.

Argal-Dinjal was standing on a boulder, acting as a watchful sentry. A horseman appeared far away down the path like a speck. The eagle-eyed Afghan saw at a glance that it was Ferraers Lord.

"The sahib comes," he said, "and all is well."

Ching-Lung lay sprawled upon the ground, looking lazily into the mysterious well. Beside him sat Gan-Waga, his legs dangling over the brink. Strange rumbling and gurglings came from the depths.

"This is a queer shop, Rupert," said the Prince. "Every effect must have a cause. I should fancy it's fed by a powerful spring; but I can't understand what makes the water go away so suddenly. It's filling up again now. Polish up your brains, and give me an explanation, oh, clever one!"

"I can give you my theory, and it's a clever one."

"Out with it, then, and if I like it I'll present you with a leather medal."

"Get the reward ready, then. I suggest that the well is fed by snow water. The water passes underground by some channel."

"Splendid, my dear boy! Marvellous! What a piece of valuable information! Fancy water running in a channel! How extraordinary!"

"Wait a minute," said Thurston. "The channel passes right through the well. You know how swiftly snow melts, and masses of snow and ice are often washed down. That's the point. On ordinary occasions the channel is large enough to carry off the water. But suppose a great mass of snow or ice forms a barrier high up the mountains? Then the water cannot get away until there is enough to burst the dam. The channel underground is not large enough to carry it rapidly, and so it is forced up until this well is full."

"Bravo, my lump of wisdom! That's not so bad. You may get to the top of the class. Just listen now. The poor old lad must have a bad pain in its inside."

Growls and gurgles sounded from the shaft. Evidently the water was rising, for Ching-Lung could see the reflection of his face and Gan-Waga's feet. The water became violently agitated, and swirled round and round, seething and frothing. There was a wild roaring, and then a cry:

"Look out!"

They rushed back. A column of water, like a geyser fifty feet high, shot up into the air. There was no escaping it as it descended, though they fled right and left.

Down came the torrent covering a circle of twenty yards around.

Ponies, mules, men, and goods were all drenched. And then the water sank back again with a roar into the depths of the earth.

In spite of the unpleasantness of it, the victims laughed, and laugh they did until their sides ached.

Gan-Waga alone felt highly delighted, for water was almost his native element. The others would have gladly dispensed with the soaking. Luckily, the sun was warm, and they stripped to the waist, and spread their clothes out to dry.

"I'm beginning to think that spirit isn't altogether a gentleman," grinned Ching-Lung. "He might have given us the tip to put on macintoshes. You should have heard the water hiss when it touched Prout's nose. Didn't you see the steam?"

You can have too much of a good thing," said Rupert, as he wrung out his shirt. "A little while ago we were panting for spoonful of water, and now we've got more than we want. I'm not going to trust that well again. Spread out the blankets, boys, and rub down the saddles. It's a lucky thing the cartridges are watertight."

They had a busy half-hour wiping down the saddles, and then the millionaire rode in. The half-dressed group that met his gaze surprised him.

He laughed when he heard the story. They could not wait for their clothes to dry thoroughly, owing to the attentions of the mosquitos, who made high holiday with their skins. Damp clothes were preferable to stinging bites, so they dressed quickly.

(Another splendid instalment of this grand new serial will appear next week in "The Magnet Library." Order your copy in advance.)

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy early.

Beyond the Eternal Ice!

The Concluding Chapters of
an Amazing Adventure Story.

BY

SIDNEY DREW.

Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga Get into Difficulties.

It was indeed a ghostly and ghastly sight, and the glow of the watch-fires rendered it doubly so. In the vulgar language of the crew, "There were no flies on Joe!" He might look meek, sleek, and innocent, but he was nothing of the kind. He had been badly scared for the moment. It was quite forgivable, for the sudden appearance of a grisly knight, and the gravelike accents of the spectre's voice, would have scared any person. And there were two of them.

"What shall be his doom, comrade?" asked Ching-Lung, brandishing his battleaxe. "Shall we hack him limb from limb?"

"No-o-oo! Not that!" wailed Joe.

"Shall we draw his teeth one by one?"

"S-spare me! I-I'm engaged to be married! D-d-don't hurt me!"

"Shall we hew him into slices, and roast him in molten brimstone? Speak, comrade of the shades!" Joe's knees bumped against the deck, and he shook like a jelly hampered with a spoon.

"Roast him!" hissed Gan-Waga. "Ha-a-a! Ah-ha!"

"Thou hast heard, human. Thou shalt roast. Come, thou art doomed!"

Joe screwed his face up into the most hideous expression of abject terror, and crawled to Gan-Waga's feet.

"P-please, Mr. Ghost, have pity! Oh, mercy! I don't want to roast!"

"Thy pleadings, mortal, are vain," said Ching-Lung. "Seize him, Faticus!"

Gan-Waga nearly burst his coat-of-mail into scrapiron in trying to choke back his laughter. He clutched Joe by the ear, and placed the cold flat of his sword against Joe's neck. The night was deliciously warm now, and the water of the channel was never chilly. Joe, his knees bumping together in pretended fright, staggered towards the prow. Once he fell with a moan.

"Arise!" hissed Ching-Lung.

Joe arose; but he managed to take a piece of strong cord from his pocket as he did so, and to attach one end to the gun-carriage. They were close to the rail.

"Mortal," said the phantom knight, "we live 'neath the sea. Only once in a thousand years are we permitted to visit the earth from the land of shadows. The first mortal we meet, therefore, is our prey. Thou art the man, and thou must go with us. Dive overboard!"

Joe howled mournfully, and collapsed flat on his face. He kicked and wriggled and sobbed and squirmed. He begged to be let off, and said he didn't want to go to the land of the shadows and to be fried over burning brimstone. He swore he wouldn't dive and spoil his clothes. The clothes were not his own, and he would be robbing his employer. Besides, he had a borrowed watch on, and though it was a Waterbury, it didn't mean it was waterproof. And while he was spluttering out protests and lamentations, Joseph was tying the other end of the cord to the rail, under the useful shadow cast by the gun.

"Pleadings shall avail thee nothing!" said Syr Chyng, the spook, grimly. "Avant! Arise and dive, or, by the sacred bones of my knightly grandfather, my squire shall hurl thee headlong into the watery abyss. Dost hear? Thou craven catiff mortal, arise and take the plunge!"

"Oh-ooo-oh! I can't swim!"

Gan-Waga managed to lift the carpenter's limp form.

"Must I?" moaned Joe, clasping his hands for the plunge.

"Oh, say not so!"

"Or be spitted like a fowl!" hissed Ching-Lung, shortening his blade for a thrust. "Over with thee!"

Joe jumped like a playful kangaroo, but not into the water. He dodged round the gun, dived under Gan-Waga's weapon, and fled across the deck, bounding in the fashion of a ferret pursuing a wounded bird.

The angered ghosts gave chase. Joe could easily have escaped below, but Joe had not finished with the grisly phantoms yet. Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga speedily discovered THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 208.

"THE SCHOOLBOY Nihilist!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In Next Thursday's Number of

"The Gem" Library, 1d.

"WINGS OF GOLD."

By SIDNEY DREW.

that it was not quite so easy to run in armour as in silk sprinting clothes.

Round the wheelhouse darted Joe, and after him, with naked swords, came the spectres. Joe waited for them there. Ching-Lung followed him, and Gan-Waga attempted to head him off. Joe seized the mop, and, springing out suddenly, he brought it down on Gan's head with such a hearty force that the Eskimo fell upon his knees, his teeth rattling like the machinery of a punctured motor-car.

Gan arose; and so did his wrath. Joe hopped away, and Ching-Lung almost exploded. Stringing his bow quickly, the Eskimo drew an arrow from his quiver, snapped off the sharp point, and fitted the arrow upon the string. He took aim at Joe, who was just hopping over the rope. Pang!

The arrow sped on its way, and Gan-Waga, who had used a bow from his boyhood, was a deadly shot.

Joe uttered a wild shriek of agony as the blunt missile struck him on a tender spot. It could not penetrate, being blunt, but it stung like the lash of a whip, and Joe clutched himself and danced, and swore like a man who had sat down heavily on a box of tinnies.

For a moment, in the first throes of agony, he felt inclined to spoil everything by assaulting Gan-Waga with the mop. Had either Prout or Maddock been in the same position they would have done so; but the crafty Joe had more powers of self-restraint.

Again the spectres were in pursuit. Joe yelled once more louder than ever. The men below heard him, and footsteps clattered up the steps.

"Get ashore and bolt for it," said Ching-Lung. "We don't want them to spot us. Chase him into the wheelhouse and shut the door. We can fasten it outside."

The tide was at its lowest, and the gangway communicating with the steps was run out amidships. Joe was standing in the brow, rubbing himself and yelling "Murder!" and "Thieves!" To chase him into the wheelhouse, it was necessary to round the gun.

"Now, Gan!"

They rushed forward side by side, brandishing their weapons. Ching-Lung had not got used to the bars of his helmet, which hampered his sight, and the light was fitful and treacherous. The blow with the mop had knocked Gan-Waga's eye-holes a good bit out of their proper position, and to see at all with any distinctness Gan had to squint horribly.

That was why they did not see the rope.

So they rushed, and the rope didn't. It stayed where it was, waiting to welcome them.

Ching-Lung's ankles first. His Highness felt himself springing wildly to catch nothing as he flew through the air. His chest caught the rail, and the good-natured rail helped him further into space. Then there was a splash, followed by a shriek and a second splash.

Spectre number two had followed spectre number one into the wet land of shadows.

"Just a leetle bit of string," crowed Joseph, "such a tiny little thing tied as tightly as string could be. Ha, ha, ha! Tom, Ben, here!"

Prout and Maddock, followed by several of the crew, poured out of the wheelhouse.

"What's the matter?" roared Prout. "Who's turned out the light, and who in thunder is yelling?"

"Ghosts, Tom—ghosts!" said Joe, peering at the water.

"Ghosts? What?"

"Two 'em, as I'm alive," panted the carpenter: "a fat 'un and a thin 'un! Both of 'em was in hammour, and one had pink and yellar legs, and a football jersey on. They rammed a red-ot pitchfork into me and chased me round. Can't yer smell brimstone? Then they jumped overboard yonder."

Joe pointed to the spot at the left of the gun.

"Joe," said Maddock sternly, as he peered into the carpenter's face, "let me smell your breath. No, you ain't had much. Is this a game, hey? Tell me!"

"If it ain't the truth I'll eat this mop!" said Joe.

"Ark at that!"

A hoarse, gurgling sound, like that of water being poured into an empty bottle, rose from the sea. Then a voice—a weary voice—wailed:

"Ow! Gu-gug-gug! Con-gug-gug—found! Ow!—splutter, splutter—ow!"

Prout made a dive in the direction of the sound.

So did Maddock; so did the others.

Crash! Prout tripped over the cord, shot forward headlong. By a miracle of luck his hands met the rails, and closed on them like an oyster.

Instead of diving overboard with all the easy grace of a sack of coal, he flopped down, using Maddock, who tripped after him, as a cushion.

"Murder!" panted Ben, the bo's'un. "What's hit me?"

Two other men, unable to check themselves in time, joined the party. And the bo's'un, who was underneath, began to

imagine that a small house had collapsed and buried him beneath the ruins. He had between forty and fifty stones of solid flesh on him, and someone was sitting on his head.

As he objected to having his head used as a chair, he managed to seize the offender's ankle, and bit it. The offender—it was Thomas Prout—squealed like an orchestra of steam-whistles, flung the top layer of wriggling humanity aside, and gained his feet.

"If I knowed the willian who did that," he bellowed, hopping about on one leg, and nursing the other, "I'd pound him to a putty. I'm bitten to the bone! By hokey, I'd scalp him!"

"What's the matter?" asked Joe soothingly. "What are they all lying down for?"

"Matter? Thunder and lightning, they've bitten my foot off!"

"The savage beasts!" said Joe. "Shame on 'em! 'Ere, get off! What's wrong with you?"

Prout shook his fists under Joe's nose.

"Look here," he said savagely, "I'm a-going to settle up with you; this joke has gone too far."

"What joke?" asked Joe, with childlike innocence.

"Take off your coat!"

"But—"

"He's tied a rope for us," said one of the men. "Here it is."

"Phew!" whistled the steersman. "So he has! Form a ring, lads, and I'll show you. He has gone to the end of his rope, he has. Joe, you're a nasty, mean, spiteful skunk!"

"Wade in and mash him!" cried several grievous voices.

"Pound him up, Tom!"

Prout took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and squared his great muscular arms, and gave Joe a playful tap on the chest.

"Come on!"

"Steady, mate!" said Joe. "It ain't a joke. As I'm a sailor and live by eating, I seed two ghosts. I repeats they was in harbour, and they chivied me round with swords and spears and battleaxes. May I never smoke another pipe if they didn't bolt overboard when I hollered, and—"

"What's that?"

Prout held up his hand for silence.

"Help! Help!"

"Somebody overboard!" panted the steersman. "Get on the light!"

"Hist, boys!" said Joe, in a hoarse whisper. "It's Ching-Lung and Gan! They tried to spoof me, but I was up to it, boys."

The searchlight shot out: Eager faces lined the rail as the beam began to sweep over the water. It moved round and then stopped. Then wild yells of mirth filled the air, for the ghosts were found.

The tide was at its lowest, and the keel of the Lord of the Deep was lying in the mud. The white circle of light revealed a strange sight.

The weird phantoms had fallen into thirty inches of water, with thirty inches of weedy mud at the bottom. They had managed to regain an upright position, but the weight of their armour prevented them from reaching the shore. They were imbedded firmly in the mud; their faces were black, festoons of muddy weed hung from their helmets, their armour was full of water, and their hearts full of mortification.

Maddock actually forgot the indignations that had been showered upon him, and found enough breath to howl with laughter. Every face wore a broad grin.

"Bless me," said Prout, "if the cook ain't been chucking good sarsepans overboard!"

"Full o' meat, too!" added Maddock.

"I'll report the wasteful rascal. Why, didn't they hear 'emmat?"

"Chuck us a line!" moaned a voice from the interior of one of the "sarsepans."

"That was a hecho," said Joe, "but I don't see why tlem things should be chuckt away for nothing. Tell you what we'll do. We'll make a cockshy of 'em, and pay sixpence each round to the man who sinks them. Are you game? Get back out of sight, and pretend we don't know anything."

Approving grins and giggles welcomed the suggestion. There was a sack of diseased potatoes, unfit to eat, below one of the men remembered. He was patted on the back and sent to fetch it.

"We can't hurt 'em," tittered Prout, "with that iron round 'em, so play away."

Armed with potatoes, they approached the side. Biff! Clank! Biff! Diseased potatoes began to rattle round the unfortunate two, and every hit was greeted with howls of wicked joy by the grinning marksmen. It was rough on the ghosts.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 208.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS!"

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE PENNY.
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Ching-Lung Gets Into Disgrace—News of a New Expedition—The Battle of the Dawn—A Brilliant Victory.

"What's all this, lads?"

The hail of potatoes suddenly ceased as the sound of the millionaire's voice struck their ears. For a moment the men looked sheepishly at each other, and tried to conceal the missiles. Ferrers Lord glanced at the two unlucky knights firmly embedded in the mud. His stern face relaxed, and he laughed. A wild shriek of laughter broke from the crew as Ferrers Lord leaned over the rail.

"Your highness?" he said. "What are you doing there?"

"Getting rusty, old chap," Ching-Lung sighed.

"Then why don't you come out?"

"Can't, old chap; we've taken root. Send somebody with a spade to dig us up."

At a word from the millionaire the dinghy was launched. Gan-Waga and Ching-Lung were plucked out of their wet and miry bed and dragged into their boat. They took all the chaff in excellent part.

Prout and Maddock generously helped them out of their suit of mail, and brought them steaming cups of coffee to warm them after their damp adventure.

"We didn't get the best of that bargain, Gan," said the prince. "Joe won hands down there, the cunning rascal. We'll pay him out, though, some time in this century. Jove, Tcm, this coffee is good!"

Gan rubbed his oily head with a towel.

"Don't like armour," he grunted. "Armour bad, heavy stuff. Made Joe squeal with arrow. Ha, ha, ha! He yell and jump and squeal like scalded pig. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Well, he did catch hold of himself. Hallo, what do you want?"

A man knocked and entered. Ferrers Lord wished to speak to Ching-Lung. The millionaire was in the saloon.

"Oh, Ching," he said, "I've made up my mind to leave Shazana."

"So soon?"

"Yes, almost at once," drawled Ferrers Lord. "Why should we stay? We are not treasure hunters, and we have seen all there is to be seen, and done all we came to do. We have rather a long run before us. I have been puzzling over the prisoners. I do not like to shoot or hang them. Bad as they are, they are not the leaders. What would you advise?"

"I have them behind, and let Vathmoor make them work."

Ferrers Lord shook his head.

"That would never answer. This Jose is no fool. By trade he is a gunsman. He would quickly manufacture guns and powder and make himself king of Shazana. I like Vathmoor too well for that. We have several months yet before the time for claiming the wager expires. I know a charming little island off the New Guinea coast. I shall maroon them there."

Ching-Lung nodded.

"And will they be able to support themselves?"

"By working hard—yes. I shall leave them cows, goats, pigs, and seeds for the land. They will hardly try to escape, even if they succeed in building a boat. And now about these dwarfs. A galley has just come in. The canoes are in great force, but they will not attack before daylight, as they must know they cannot surprise us. I have persuaded Vathmoor to allow us to take a share in the fighting."

"Good for you!"

"Then come and work," said Ferrers Lord, smiling.

"What at?"

"You'll see presently."

The Lord of the Deep was already under way, and running slowly seawards towards the channel. In the fierce glow of the fires they could see the Shazanites bustling about like ants. Many of them carried stakes on their shoulders, and the beat of many mallets rang through the night.

On the deck of the submarine all was bustle, too. Her storeroom seemed to contain every kind of article imaginable. A donkey-engine was rattling noisily, and a crane hauled huge drums covered with wire out of her hold.

She dropped a light anchor, and almost before the chains had ceased rattling she was surrounded by galleys. Into these the drums of wire were lowered. Right along the front of the island galleys were stationed, their crews hard at work driving in stakes. The stakes were placed twenty yards apart, ten feet from the shore.

"What's the game, Ching?" asked Thurston.

"It looks as if they were building a ring fence," said Ching-Lung, "but I fail to see the idea. Where is our boss and chief? I'll ask his mightiness."

Van Witter was putting the same question to Ferrers Lord.

"It's most simple," said Ferrers Lord. "Vathmoor thinks there will be nearly thirty thousand dwarfs. They have

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy early.

captured a cannon, and the news comes from a prisoner three different tribes, usually at war with each other, have joined forces. Vathmoor felt the gravity of the situation when he heard this. Had we not been here Shazana would have been looted."

"Great Scott! Thirty thousand, oh?" gasped the Yankee. "Why, they'd have eaten him up, armour and all! But what the dickens are those poles for?"

"That's the point," said Ching-Lung. "What's the idea?" Ferrers Lord opened his pocket-book, and scrawled a rough plan upon it.

"His majesty and I have been mapping our scheme out," he drawled. "I believe Vathmoor thinks me slightly crazed, but he was too polite to say so. Here is the only place where the dwarfs could effect a landing without serious loss. The shore is level for a mile and a half. All the rest of the island is protected with towering cliffs."

"Yes."

"Well, Vathmoor's fighting galleys will be divided into two fleets. A force on shore will guard the bay here. It will be a weak force. You will see the result for yourselves."

Thurston and Van Witter were still mystified, but a glimmering of the truth dawned upon Ching-Lung as a drum of wire was placed in the launch. Boswell, the chief engineer, was in charge of the little vessel. It throbbed away, followed by a flotilla of galleys. The wire was unwound, and attached to the stakes. All worked with a will. Hours passed, and, at last, the task was done, the whole length of the bay being protected by a wire fence-work.

Just before dawn, Vathmoor himself came aboard.

"Well, king," said Ferrers Lord, "we are ready for them."

"I see thou hast built thy strange cage," answered the king doubtfully; "but unless there be magic and witchcraft in it surely it is too flimsy to keep back the cavern dwellers. A blow from an axe would cut the metal ropes asunder. Thou canst do wondrous things, Chief of the Strangers, but this I cannot understand, when thou tellest me no dwarf shall pass thy cave."

The millionaire laughed.

"Wait, king! It is not magic or witchcraft. But what I will show you will seem wonderful enough. Here are the ends of the wire. Lay your hand upon that!" said Ferrers Lord.

The two ends of the wire lay across the deck on a rubber mat, and vanished into the hold. Vathmoor cautiously touched them with his fingers.

"What do you feel?"

"Nothing."

"But I can make those wires burn. Touch them again!"

Ferrers Lord gently pulled a lever. Vathmoor yelled, and jumped back, blowing his tingling fingers. He looked so utterly astounded that Ching-Lung could not repress a laugh. It was Vathmoor's first experience of an electric shock.

"By the Four Suns of Shazana," he cried, "this is verily witchcraft and black magic!"

"Not at all, king. In my land only the ignorant believe in magic. This is knowledge, learning, science. We have discovered a natural force, and though we cannot understand it, we use it, and make it our servant."

"Wilt thou swear it is not magic and the work of devils?"

"I swear it by the four suns!"

His majesty, though still doubtful, seemed-relieved. He was far from being a savage, but, like the savage, he imagined that everything he did not understand was the work of a supernatural power. Ching-Lung was eager to go with one of the fleets of galleys, but Ferrers Lord was relentless. All Ching-Lung's wheedling and blandishment met with a stern refusal.

"Look here, old chap!" he said, at last. "You're a heart-hearted tyrant! Now, I'm going to have it out with you. Will you kindly tell me what my position is on board this vessel?"

"I hardly know."

"I know jolly well that I don't get paid!" said the prince. "I'm a volunteer and a guest. Such being the case, sir, I refuse to take orders from you! I'm going with Vathmoor. Ta, ta!"

"Very well."

A galley was passing. Ching-Lung hailed it. He was just going to spring on to it as it was coming to the side—or appeared to be—when the millionaire uttered an order.

Prout and Maddock, grinning from ear to ear with unholy joy, gripped Ching-Lung, and before he knew it a pair of handcuffs were round his wrists.

(To be concluded.)

My Readers' Column



FOR NEXT WEEK.

In next Tuesday's grand, long, complete story, entitled by Frank Richards, the famous Junior Dramatic Society of the Remove Form at Greyfriars is conspicuously active, and as a result of much scheming and plotting on the part of the leading lights of that famous Form, another crushing blow is dealt to the prestige of the rival Fifth Form. For a genuine, rollicking schoolboy story, full of quick action and all kind of fun, I heartily commend to all my readers

"THE SCHOOLBOY MINSTRELS."

A Letter From Yorkshire.

Two of my North Country girl readers write me a long and interesting letter, which I wish I had space to publish in full. They pay many tributes of praise to THE MAGNET and "The Gem" Libraries, but the highest one of all, in my opinion, is an unconscious one. They say that the reading of their two favourite books has taught them "not to speak or play ill-natured tricks, which otherwise we might have done without thinking anything about them." That I consider to be the greatest compliment of all—to know that my readers have derived not only pleasure and amusement, but also at the same time real benefit, from THE MAGNET and its companion paper "The Gem." My two Wakefield readers, "Mary M." and "Lily N.," have my best thanks for their nice letter.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

O. C. H., Clifton Hill, Melbourne, Australia.

Thanks for your long letter. You need not fear that you have heard the last of little Joe Frayne in our companion paper yet, by any means. With regard to your query about the camel, this animal has the power of storing reserve supplies of food and water in its humps, which certainly shrink perceptibly when the camel has travelled a long distance without having had the opportunity of replenishing those supplies. It seems, therefore, that you were right in your argument with your friend.

"Bulstrode," Hampstead.

I was very interested to hear of the plan adopted by you and your friends in naming yourselves after THE MAGNET characters. The Christian name of Bulstrode, the ex-bully of the Remove, is George.

"Old Chum," Epsom.

Your newsgasm will probably be able to tell you where to get the records you require. Very likely he will advise you to write to the offices of one of the papers devoted exclusively to sport.

"Grecian," Exeter.—Thanks for your letter. I will consider your suggestion.

Thomas A., Middlesbrough.—I note your requests. Highcliffe School is within a drive of Greyfriars, but St. Jim's is further away, and necessitates a considerable train journey. W. C. P., Southend.—No; the story you mention is not as yet published in book form.

E. B., North Kensington.—Copies of "THE MAGNET Library" can be sent to Canada at the rate of one halfpenny for two ounces.

Frederick H., Bolton.—The first penny number of THE MAGNET was published during the week ending Saturday, February 19th, 1910.

W. Granville, Devonport.—If you will send your full name and address, I will publish your offer of back numbers.

James Hayhurst, Blackburn.—Thanks for your letter. I will give the matter you mention my best attention. In the meantime I hope you will continue your much appreciated efforts to increase the popularity of THE MAGNET.

William B., Beveridge.—I was very interested by your letter, for which you have my very best thanks. If you will repeat your request for a correspondent, this time giving your full name and address, according to rules, I shall have pleasure in publishing it.

THE EDITOR.

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Another of the spikes was treated in the same manner—another, and another, and all the while the ceiling was descending lower. Frank Kingston was on his knees now, and his task was only half completed! It was a race with death—a race that might even yet be lost!

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