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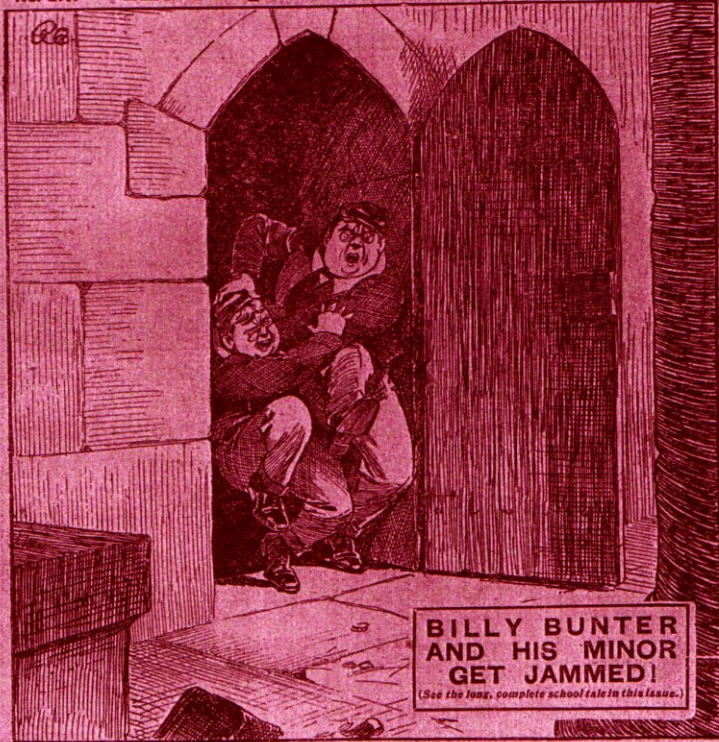
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Music Hath Charms.

"HOUTSIDE!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars. "That sounds like war! Gosling is on the giddy warpath! Kim on!"
"Houtside, I says!"
It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent, the chums of the Remove, were in the old Close, chatting under the elms, when the loud and warlike tones of Gosling the porter broke upon their ears.
They turned at once in the direction of the school gates. Gosling, the porter, was the possessor of a particularly bad

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Long Complete School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

temper, which frequently brought him into trouble with the Greyfriars juniors, and frequently with tramps and mendicants who passed the school on the high-road to Court-field. Gosling's tones, at present, indicated that his bad temper was, as Bob Cherry expressed it, fairly on the go.
"Houtside!" roared Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere. I never 'eard of sich cheek! Never in mo born days! Houtside!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I think Gossy is right this time."
It was certainly a peculiar scene that was being enacted at the school gates. The big iron gates stood wide open, as they generally did in the daytime. A barrel-organ on wheels stood in the open gateway, and two swarthy Italians were striving to wheel it into the quadrangle, and Gosling the porter, his rugged face crimson with wrath and indignation, stood in the way, barring their progress.

Tramps sometimes tried to get in at the school gates, seeking what they might devour; but it was the first time that a hurdy-gurdy had been wheeled in, and it was not surprising that Gosling was wrathful.

"Houtside!" roared the porter. "I never 'eard of sich goings hon! Houtside! Your sort ain't allowed 'ere! Git hout!"

One of the Italians—a short, thick-set fellow, with a very dark Neapolitan face and bright, black eyes, and a gaudy red neckerchief round his neck—waved his swarthy hands at Gosling, as he remonstrated in fluent Italian. The other organ-merchant—a little, broad-shouldered hunchback—stood

between the shafts of the organ, and was trying all the time to push it in, in spite of Gosling's resistance.

"Go hout!" yelled Gosling. "Don't you hunderstand! Your sort ain't permitted in 'ere."

"Non capisco, signor," said the Italian in the red neckerchief deprecatingly. "Good! We play music! Good!"

"I'll capisco yew, whatever that means!" snorted Gosling. "Houtside! If I could talk your blessed lingo, I'd give it to you plain enuff! Git hout!"

"Non capisco!"

"Houtside!"

"Si, si, signor—we come in," said the hero of the red neckerchief, evidently pretending to misunderstand. "Good music! Good!"

And he gently pushed Gosling aside, and the hunchback wheeled the organ in with a quick movement, and rushed it right along the gravel path into the Close.

The chums of the Remove had just time to jump aside, to avoid being run into by the hurdy-gurdy.

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton and Nugent laughed, too; they could not help it. The Italian in the red neckerchief made a deep bow to the juniors as he followed his comrade in.

"Good music, signori!" he exclaimed. "We play to you, and you give us the copper. Me Felice Cesare. Good-morning! Thank you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Felice Cesare hurried after his comrade. The hunchback was making good speed with the hurdy-gurdy, and he was fairly in the Close now. Gosling stood gasping, almost overcome with indignation at the impudence of the itinerant music-merchants.

"My heye!" gasped Gosling. "My heye! The impudence of it! A 'urdy-gurdy in the Close of Greyfriars! Wot is this 'ere school coming to? Where are the perlice? My heye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It ain't no laughing matter, Master Wharton. Wot will the 'ead say? Wot I says is this 'ere, you might lend a 'and and keep them raskils hout. My heye!"

But the chums of the Remove were laughing too much to do anything of the sort. Gosling tramped after the Italians, and the juniors followed him, laughing. They wondered, too, what the Head would say when he heard the strains of a barrel-organ within the sacred precincts of Greyfriars.

The sight of the barrel-organ drew fellows from all sides. Juniors came crowding up in amazement, shouting with laughter. Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, came to his study window as he heard the disturbance in the Close, and gazed upon the scene in astonishment. He threw the window open, and waved his hand to the music-merchants.

"Go away!" he shouted. "You're not allowed in here! What does Gosling mean by letting these fellows in? Go away!"

Felice Cesare took off his hat, and made a bow to the captain of Greyfriars.

"Good music, signor!"

"You ass! Go away!"

"Si, si, signor; we play!"

"I didn't say play—I said go away!" shouted the Sixth-Former, exasperated. "Can't you speak English?"

"Speak him all right," said Felice Cesare, with a broad grin. "Verree good! Also play music—verree good music! Buonissima!"

"Gosling!" shouted Wingate.

"Gosling couldn't keep them out!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's no good, Wingate; they are simply bound to play!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hunchback was turning the handle now, and the mournful strains of a music-hall tune smote the air with discord.

Fellows gathered round the organ on all sides. The Italians had halted it before the School House, quite as if it were a regular pitch, and they were sure that their efforts would be appreciated. The unaccustomed strains of discord attracted fellows from far and near. The windows of the House were soon crammed with astonished faces. Seniors, in outraged dignity, yelled to the organ-men to go away. Juniors yelled to them to keep on, enjoying the joke.

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker, of the Fifth. "This is prime! I wonder what the Head will say! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go, it!" roared John Bull, of the Remove. "Grind away!"

"Good music!" said Felice Cesare. "Good! Buona! Thank you!"

Gosling came up panting.

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"Go hout!" he roared, in a frenzy. "Do you want to git me the sack? Go hout!"

"Non capisco!"

"That means that he doesn't understand, but I'll bet he jolly well does understand," grinned Harry Wharton. "He looks a tough customer, too—if Gossy lays hands on him."

"And he's going to," chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gosling had completely lost his temper. He rushed upon Mr. Cesare, and laid hands upon him, and strove to propel him towards the gates. Cesare's broad grin vanished at once, and a look of ferocity that startled the juniors came upon his dark Southern face. He returned grip for grip, and in another moment Gosling's heels were flying in the air, and the school porter lay upon his back.

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry. "First round to Julius Cesar! Go it!"

"Go it, Gossy!" yelled Bulstrode. "I'll hold your hat! Pile into him!"

"Play up, you chaps!"

"Hurrah! Go it!"

But Gosling did not seem inclined to "go it." He lay upon his back, staring up at the blue April sky, seemingly in a dazed state. The victorious music-merchant glared down at him, and the little man at the organ ground on manfully. The tune was changed now for a Neapolitan air, and "Santa Lucia" was waiving out from the organ. The discordant strains penetrated every corner of Greyfriars. Dr. Locke, the revered Head of that ancient scholastic foundation, came to his window, and gazed out speechlessly into the Close. The organ was almost under his window; and Felice Cesare seemed to imagine that the silver-haired old gentleman had come to the window in order to hear better the strains of melody from the hurdy-gurdy. He took off his hat, and bowed with a cheerful grin.

"Good music, signor! Ecco! You like?"

"Dear me!" gasped the Head. "Where did these men come from! Gosling! Extraordinary! Dear me! Oh, what a dreadful noise! Dear me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boys! Persuade these men to go—give them money—anything—but get them outside the gates!" exclaimed the Head, in great distress.

"Pass the hat round, you chaps!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's worth paying something to get rid of that music!"

"I should say so, begad!" gasped Mauveverer, of the Remove, stopping his ears. "Give them anything to make them leave off!"

"Pass the hat, and pay, pay, pay!" grinned Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Felice Cesare was taking round his ragged hat. The laughing fellows tossed coppers into it, and the Neapolitan certainly needed a very good harvest. Gosling had staggered to his feet, but he showed no desire to come to close quarters with the hero of the red neckerchief again. In that moment, when Cesare's grip had closed upon him, Gosling had felt himself in a grasp of iron, and he realised that the Neapolitan music-merchant was more dangerous than he looked.

"Now you'd better cut," said Harry Wharton, tapping Cesare on the shoulder. "We're much obliged for the music. It's ripping! It seems to rip the giddy atmosphere, in fact! But you'd better cut."

"Non capisco, signor!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd better understand, or you'll get the order of the boot."

Wingate came wrathfully out of the house with two or three prefects. He pointed to the gates, and then to the organ.

"Get out!" he said. "Get out, or you'll be chucked out! Savvy?"

Cesare looked at the stalwart captain of Greyfriars with a critical eye, and apparently he decided that it was time he understood.

"Capisco, signor!" he said, making a great bow, and he spoke to his comrade in the dialect of Naples, which bears as much resemblance to good Italian as chalk bears to cheese.

And the little hunchback, grinning, ceased to grind at the organ, and took up the handles, and wheeled his instrument of torture away to the gates.

A crowd of laughing juniors followed.

Outside, in the road, Felice Cesare took off his ragged hat, once more, and bowed.

"Me come again!" he said. "Good music! Buonissima! Musica di Napoli! Thank you!"

And the hurdy-gurdy went rolling down the road with the two Neapolitans, and a crowd of Greyfriars fellows remained in the gateway, yelling with laughter.



The owner of the hurdy-gurdy passed round his hat. The laughing fellows tossed coins into it, and the Neapolitan certainly netted a good harvest. "You'd better cut now," said Harry Wharton, laughing. (See Chapter I.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Jam for Bunter.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. entered the School House, after the departure of the music-merchants, still laughing. The incident had been very funny; but one of the juniors was looking very thoughtful. It was Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Remove. Fisher T. Fish was very keen in some things, and he prided himself very much upon his Yankee smartness. And he had a true American prejudice on the subject of "Eyetalians."

"I guess there's more in those guys than meets the eye," Fisher T. Fish remarked, as the juniors entered the School House. "That merchant Cesare is deeper than he looks." "Brigand in disguise, perhaps?" suggested Bob Cherry, grinning.

"I guess you can cackle, but he's all there," said Fisher T. Fish, with a wise wag of the head. "Did you fellows notice the way those black eyes of his were all over the giddy place—looking round all the time?"

"I can't say I did," said Nugent, laughing. "Well, I guess I did," said Fisher T. Fish; "and I calculate that those Eyetalians didn't come into Greyfriars just to play the giddy organ."

"What did they come for, then?" asked Harry Wharton. "To spy round, I reckon."

"But what should they want to spy round in Greyfriars for?" asked Johnny Bull, in astonishment.

Fisher T. Fish shrugged his shoulders. "I guess they had their reasons," he replied. "That

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galoot Cesare isn't an ordinary organ-grinder, you can bet your hat on that. He had his reasons for coming here, and he came in with an organ and an organ-man as an excuse. That's my opinion. I shouldn't wonder if he belonged to some gang of cracksmen."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, you'll see what you'll see," said Fisher T. Fish, with the air of an oracle.

"Yes, I don't think there's much doubt about that," assented Harry Wharton. "But I don't think we shall see our friend Cesare again. Look here, you chaps; we shall have to buck up, or we shall be late for the picnic."

"First picnic of the season, too—we mustn't be late," said Frank Nugent. "It would be rotten to let the girls get there from Cliff House first."

"Yes, rather!" "Buck up, then," said Bob Cherry. "The grub's ready packed in the basket in my study. I'll have it down in a brace of shakes."

Bob Cherry hurried up to his study in the Remove passage. The door of the study was shut, but a sound of movement within warned Bob Cherry that it was not unoccupied. Bob shared No. 13 with two other fellows, Mark Linley and little Wun-Lung, the Chinese; but it was neither of those upon whom his eyes fell as he opened the door.

A fat junior was kneeling beside the basket packed for the picnic. The basket had been opened, and Billy Bunter was busily engaged in transferring its contents to his own person. His jaws were busy, and while he was devouring sandwiches, he was cramming bags of tarts and other delicacies into his

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capacious pockets. He was so deeply engrossed in that honourable task that he did not even hear Bob Cherry enter.

Bob Cherry paused on the threshold of the study, in amazement and rage.

For a moment there was no sound in the room save the steady champing of the jaws of the Owl of the Remove.

Then Bob Cherry rushed forward and kicked. Billy Bunter's back was to him, and he offered a fair target, and Bob Cherry's heavy boot came upon him with a buff.

"Ow!" Bunter was hurled forward over the basket he was robbing, and he rolled sideways on the floor, and there was a squelching sound as the tarts and cakes in his pockets were flattened by his weight.

"Ow! Groo! Oh!" "You young villain!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry—" "You—you—you—"

Bob Cherry's voice failed him as he saw what havoc the Owl of the Remove had made in the basket. It had been well packed with a choice selection of delicacies for the picnic in the old priory in the wood. Marjorie and Clara, of Cliff House School, were coming to the picnic, and the chums of the Remove had been lavish in laying in supplies for such a special occasion. But anything eatable was not safe in Greyfriars if Bunter got upon the scent of it. While the Removites had been witnessing the peculiar scene in the Close, Billy Bunter had not been idle. The carefully-packed lunch-basket was a mere wreck.

"You—you fat burglar!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ow—ow—ow!" "Coming, Cherry?" roared a voice along the passage.

"How long are you going to be with that basket?"

"Bunter's at it!" shouted back Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" The intended picnicers came racing along the passage. There was a roar of wrath as they crowded into the study. Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet, and backed away round the table in alarm.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he began feebly.

"You rotter!" howled Nugent.

"He's cleared out the blessed basket!"

"You—you see, I—I asked you if I could come to the picnic, and you wouldn't have it!" said Bunter. "I don't like fellows being selfish. I—I—"

"He's scooped half of it, or more!" roared Bob Cherry. "And the fat beast was stuffing his pockets, too!"

"Bumper the cad!" shouted Nugent. "Hold on! He's got his pockets full! Clear the fat beast's pockets out before you bump him!" said Johnny Bull.

The juniors rushed upon Bunter. The Owl of the Remove made an ineffectual effort to dodge out of the study. He was collared by half a dozen pairs of hands, and held fast, wriggling like an eel—or, rather, like a table-jelly.

"Ow! I say, you fellows—" "Shut up, you cad! Clear out his pockets!"

The juniors cleared out the bags of tarts, and cakes, and buns, and fruit that the Owl of the Remove had packed into his pockets. Every pocket was crammed; but the stolen goods were not much use when they were recovered. They had been squashed out of shape by Bunter's roll on the floor.

Exclamations of wrath broke from all the juniors as they surveyed the burst oranges, and crumbled cakes, and squashed tarts.

"No good!" said Wharton savagely.

"You—you might as well let me have them, then!" gasped Bunter.

"You shall, you fat rotter!" said Bob Cherry, and he caught up the tarts and lathered them over Bunter's fat face.

The fat junior yelled and squirmed.

But he was in for it. The juniors held him fast, while tarts, and jam-sponges, and oranges were squashed and squeezed and squelched over him. The face of Billy Bunter was a mask of jam and other stickiness when Bob Cherry had finished.

"There!" gasped Bob. "Now you've got 'em!"

"Gro-o-o-oh!"

"Bumper the cad!" shouted Nugent.

"Oh, really! Ow! Groo! I s-s-say, you fellows! Gwip!"

Bump—bump—bump!

The fat person of William George Bunter descended upon the study carpet once, twice, thrice. Clouds of dust rose from the carpet, and wild yells from William George Bunter. The final bump sent him rolling under the table, and from the refuge he declined to emerge. "The exasperated juniors picked up the raided basket."

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"We shall have to get this packed again!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Come on! We shall be late, now!"

The juniors hurried out of the study.

Billy Bunter emerged from under the table, gasping and groaning.

"Ow—ow—ow! Beasts! Yow!"

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried down to the tuckshop. They lost no time, and the havoc made by Bunter was set right. With the basket full again, they sallied forth, and took the path through the wood to the ruined priory. The school clock chimed out three as they left the gates of Greyfriars behind them. It was the hour at which they should have arrived at the old priory, and hurry as they would, they must be late now. The girls from Cliff House would reach the rendezvous first, and the juniors murmured anathemas upon Billy Bunter as they hurried on through the warm April sunshine.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. An Amazing Raid.

"W'ERE here first!"

It was Miss Clara who spoke. Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, the girl chums of Cliff House School, had entered the old priory from the footpath that led up from the sea. Very bright and charming the two schoolgirls looked, in their white dresses and pretty hats and parasols. Marjorie glanced round the old priory. It was a beautiful spot. The ruins, which had been ruin for many centuries, were moss-grown, and bushes and flowers grew along the fallen masses of masonry, and thick trees shaded the stone portal which gave access to the vaults under the priory. From those vaults a subterranean passage ran to the old chapel of Greyfriars, which the juniors had explored more than once, though it was out of bounds. The ruins were shady and solitary. It was evident that the Removites from Greyfriars had not yet arrived.

Miss Clara gave a slight sniff.

"Late!" she said. And added: "The bounders!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie mildly.

"The bounders!" repeated Miss Clara, with emphasis. She had picked up many expressions like that from the boys of Greyfriars. "The duffers! I'm hungry!"

Marjorie laughed.

"Well, I'm hungry, too!" she said. "But they won't be long. I dare say something has happened to delay them."

"Rats!" said Miss Clara energetically.

Marjorie smiled, and sat down upon a moss-grown mass of masonry near the old doorway of the stairs to the vaults. Miss Clara, who was always full of energy, walked about instead of sitting down, and cut the heads from flowers with her parasol. Suddenly she uttered a little shriek.

"I believe they're here all the time!"

Marjorie looked up.

"What is that, Clara?"

"There's somebody in there!" said Miss Clara, pointing with her parasol to the arched stone opening of the old doorway, screened with bushes and shrubs. "I heard somebody move in there! They are hiding to startle us!"

"Nonsense!" said Marjorie. "Harry Wharton would not do anything so silly as that!"

"Well, there is somebody there!"

"It was the wind."

"Rats!" said Miss Clara again.

She pushed the twigs aside, and looked into the shadowed cavity. Inside the old stone archway was damp and earthy air and deep shadows. Miss Clara peered into the gloom, and Marjorie looked in over her shoulder.

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A shadow moved in the deep recess, and the two girls started back. For a moment they caught sight of a dim form in the deep gloom, and the next moment they were running as hard as they could out of the priory, frightened at they scarcely knew what.

"There was somebody there!" gasped Clara.

"Yes and it wasn't—"

"Hallo—hallo—hallo!" exclaimed a cheery voice, as the girls emerged from the ruins upon the footpath, and the Greyfriars juniors came out of the wood and raised their caps.

Marjorie and Clara halted, breathlessly.

"So sorry we're a bit late!" said Harry Wharton.

"Bunter got at the lunch-basket, and it delayed us. But—"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he noted the girls' pale and startled faces. "Where were you bolting—I mean, running to?"

"There—there's somebody in the ruins!" gasped Marjorie.

"Yes? Anybody dangerous?" asked Nugent.

"He—it—I don't know who it was—was hiding in the old archway!" gasped Clara. "We—we looked in! I—I was afraid—"

"Oh, it's only the ghost of Greyfriars!" said Johnny Bull cheerfully. "He haunts the priory and the old chapel at Greyfriars, you know!"

"Don't be funny!" said Miss Clara severely. "I was frightened!"

"Some tramp, very likely!" said Harry Wharton. "Anyway, we'll soon see who it is! You need not be alarmed now we're here."

The juniors entered the ruins, the girls accompanying them, with some trepidation. The lunch-basket was set down, and the juniors dragged aside the screen of bushes at the mouth of the stone archway.

A flood of sunlight fell into the dark recess, and the juniors plunged into it. At their feet opened the narrow stairway that led down to the vaults. But above the stairs there was nothing living to be seen, save a lizard crawling on the stones.

"Are you sure you saw somebody here?" asked Wharton dubiously.

"Well, I—I thought I did," said Marjorie. "If there was anybody here, he must have run away while we were gone."

"Some kid from the village, perhaps, larking," suggested Nugent. "Still, we'll look in the vaults if you like."

"Might as well," said Johnny Bull. "I've got plenty of matches."

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

Striking matches, the juniors descended the damp stone steps into the vaults. Marjorie and Clara remained at the top of the stairs, and Hazeldene stayed with them to reassure them. For the moment, the lunch-basket, lying in the old priory outside the screen of thickets, was forgotten.

At the bottom of the stone steps, the matches glimmered with flickering light upon the deep and gloomy vaults stretching away to the left. To the right lay the passage which led underground to the school—damp, dark, unchanged from the days when it had been an avenue of escape to the monks of Greyfriars in times of danger. A revolving stone, of which the Greyfriars fellows all knew, the secret, blocked the opening of the passage, and the stone was now closed.

The juniors looked about them, shivering a little as the damp air from the deep vaults struck upon them.

"Nobody here, that I can see," remarked Bob Cherry.

"We can't go through the vaults without a lamp," said Wharton. "Matches wouldn't be much good. Anyway, if there is any practical joker hanging about here, he can't do any harm. Let's get out."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Johnny Bull suddenly.

"What's the matter?"

"Look here!"

Johnny Bull struck a fresh match, and stooped, looking at something that had caught his eye upon the earthy floor.

It was a half-burnt match.

"Somebody's been here!" he exclaimed.

"We've been using matches—"

"Wax vestas," said John Bull. "That's a wooden match."

It wasn't dropped by one of us."

"Pshaw!"

Wax vestas were struck again, and the juniors looked with interest at the match on the ground. It was quite dry and clean, and had evidently not been on the ground there very long. It had not been dropped by one of them, and it was clear that someone else had been in the vault a very short time before.

The juniors looked round them quickly and anxiously.

Someone had lately been in the old vault. Was he there still? Why was he in hiding? If it were some tramp who had taken refuge in the ruins, there was no reason why he should not show himself. What did it mean?

It was strange mystery.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 217.

TUESDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

"It's jolly queer!" said Nugent, after a long pause.

"Jolly queer!" said Wharton. "But we can't do anything. The matches are nearly all gone. Let's get out."

There was evidently nothing else to be done. The juniors ascended the stone steps, and came out into the upper chamber. The girls looked at them anxiously.

"Somebody's been down there, striking matches," said Wharton. "But there's no sign of him now. It must have been some tramp."

"Then where is he now?" asked Hazeldene.

"Must have scuttled off, I suppose."

"Queer!"

"Yes, it's queer."

The juniors moved away to the opening of the arch very thoughtfully. The incident was certainly very curious, and they could not help wondering. But as they emerged into the sunlight again, a fresh discovery drove all thought of the mysterious lurker of the vaults from their minds.

Bob Cherry pointed to the spot where he had set down the lunch-basket.

It was gone!

The juniors stared blankly at the empty spot.

"Gone!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Somebody's raided our basket!"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors dashed through the ruins to the footpath. It was deserted. They searched the ruins, and the bushes, and the surrounding trees; but it was all in vain. The lunch-basket had vanished, without leaving a sign behind.

They gathered at last in the old priory again, with dismayed faces. The facts were only too clear. While they had been searching the stone chamber and the vaults, someone had raided the lunch-basket, and made off with it; and he was out of reach of pursuit by this time.

"Well, my only hat!" muttered Wharton. "We're clean done! It must have been Bunter followed us from Greyfriars!"

"Clean done!" said Bob Cherry. "What price the picnic now?"

"Looks as if it's off!" growled Johnny Bull.

Marjorie smiled.

"It cannot be helped, and it was not your fault," she said.

"Come to Cliff House to tea instead; we will have the picnic another half-holiday."

"Good egg!" said Miss Clara.

And there was evidently nothing else to be done. The disappointed picnickers walked away towards Cliff House with their girl charms, breathing vows of vengeance upon the Owl of the Remove, if it was he who had raided the lunch-basket. But was it he? Wharton had his doubts; and yet, if it had not been Bunter, who had it been? It was a mystery!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

BILLY BUNTER came out of a bath-room sniffing and grunting with energy. He had had to use soap and hot water and energy in great abundance to clean the jam and other stickiness from his fat visage, and neither washing nor energy was agreeable to Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was in an extremely bad temper, and he was frowning majestically as he rolled down the passage. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, met him on the landing, and stopped.

"Wherefore that lordly frown, my noble duke?" asked Temple, with a grin.

Bunter snorted.

"I've been jammed all over the chivvy by a set of rotters."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've had to wash."

"Awful!" said Temple sympathetically. "I know how that must have made you suffer. Such a novelty for you, too!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Beasts!" said Billy Bunter, and he rolled on down the passage with a discontented grunt.

Other fellows in misfortune could hope for sympathy, but the Owl of the Remove never could. Perhaps that was because he did not deserve any; but that view of the case never occurred to him.

Sammy Bunter, his minor, was in the lower hall, also looking very discontented. Sammy Bunter belonged to the Second Form, and he was just about as popular in the Second as William Gea was in the Remove. He was as like Bunter as one pea is like another; indeed, but for the difference in age and size it would have been difficult to tell them apart.

But a grin came upon Sammy's fat face as he saw his major. He had evidently heard of Billy Bunter's misfortunes, and apparently found something amusing in them.

"You haven't been to the picnic after all!" he remarked.

"No," growled Bunter. "The rotters! They've left me behind; after all I've done for those fellows, too!"

"What have you done for them?" asked Sammy.

"Mind your own business."

Bunter minor chuckled.

"Look here, I've got an idea," he remarked. "They're going to have that giddy picnic in the ruined priory, ain't they?"

"Yes, confound them."

"Look here," said Bunter minor, sinking his voice, "you know there's a secret passage from the old chapel here to the priory—you went along it once—why shouldn't we get on the spot, and see if there's anything good? If they leave the grub for a minute or two without watching it—"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed.

"Come on, then!" said Sammy. "I'd have gone alone, only I don't care about going into that hole by myself. It's jolly dark and lonely."

"We can take Wharton's bike lantern," said Bunter. "I don't want to take my own. A chap might fall down in that place, and the lamp might get broken. I won't be a minute getting it. You get some matches."

Three minutes later, the two Bunters were in the old chapel of Greyfriars. The old chapel was a ruin, some distance from the one that was used by the school. In the midst of the shattered walls a stone stair led down into the crypt. The juniors knew the way well, and they were soon in the crypt below the chapel.

There Billy Bunter lighted the lantern. Wharton's lantern was of the acetylene variety, and once lighted, it shed a brilliant illumination. Billy Bunter shivered a little as the cold air from the crypt struck upon him.

"Rotten graveyard place!" he grumbled.

"May be a feed at the end of it," said Sammy.

And that thought reanimated Billy Bunter.

The subterranean passage made almost a straight line from Greyfriars, passing under the road and under the wood; and it was, in fact, a short cut, though by no means a pleasant one.

Billy Bunter went ahead, with the bicycle lantern in his hand, the light streaming upon the dark, damp walls of ancient stone, and upon the damp earth, where unclean things scuttled away from the unaccustomed rays. Bunter minor followed him close behind. The silence in the subterranean passage was heavy and oppressive, the air thick and unpleasant.

"Rotten place!" growled Sammy Bunter; and his voice, though he spoke in a low tone, seemed to boom in deep echoes through the subterranean recesses.

Billy Bunter gave a sudden start.

"What was that?" he ejaculated.

"What was what, ass?"

"Look here, Sammy—"

"What are you stopping for?" growled Sammy.

"I heard something."

"Only an echo," said Sammy; but he peered uneasily round in the deep shadows through his spectacles. "Don't be an ass! There's nobody here."

"I—I'll swear I heard a footstep!" muttered Bunter.

"Well, then, it would only be some chap exploring the place."

"The door on the crypt was closed."

"Well, there's nobody here. Get on!"

Bunter moved on slowly.

The Owl of the Remove was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. The place was very silent and very lonely, and Bunter remembered the weird story of the ghost of Greyfriars. Of course, he did not believe in ghosts—in the daylight, above ground, at all events. But here in the darkness, and the cold, and the creepy silence, ghost stories seemed much more probable.

He listened with uneasy intentness as he advanced with slow footsteps. Sammy listened, too, and probably both of them would have given up the enterprise, and beaten a retreat, only they did not wish to confess their cowardice to one another.

Bunter halted again suddenly.

This time an unmistakable sound had come echoing and booming through the subterranean passage.

The sound was faint, but the deep silence and the narrow form of the passage gave it a deep and hollow echoing that seemed thunderous to the startled ears of the juniors.

"W-what was that?" gasped Bunter.

"B-b-blessed if I know!" stammered Sammy.

"It-it sounded like—like—"

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"Like somebody drawing a cork," said Sammy. "It was a pop!"

"But it couldn't be!"

"Might have been the wind—"

"L-look!" muttered Bunter, in shaking tones. "There's a l-light!"

It was true.

He had lowered the lantern in his terror, and the rays fell only on the ground, and ahead, from the deep gloom of the passage, came a glimmer of another light.

"Somebody's there!"

Bunter's teeth chattered. But Sammy caught him by the arm, with an exclamation of relief.

"It's Wharton and his lot, of course. They're exploring the passage."

"Oh!"

"Come on, let's see!"

They moved on slowly. In the side of the passage a stone cell was hollowed out, and in the cell was the glimmering light. It came from a lantern that was standing upon a ledge of the stone wall.

In the lantern light the two juniors caught sight for a moment of a strange figure.

A basket lay upon the ground, evidently a lunch-basket, and several eatables had been taken from it, and some bottles of ginger-beer and lemonade. Beside the basket a strange figure was seated upon a block of stone—the figure of a man in monkish garb, with the cowl over the face, pushed back just sufficiently to show the mouth. The two juniors gazed upon the figure spellbound with terror. The stranger caught sight of them at the same moment, and sprang to his feet.

Crash!

The lantern dropped from Billy Bunter's hand, and smashed on the stone floor.

The next instant there was a wild pattering of feet, as the two juniors dashed back in frantic terror along the passage to Greyfriars.

Whether they were pursued or not they never knew.

They fled at frantic speed, falling down and picking themselves up again in wild haste, till the glimmer of light from the crypt at the end of the passage told them that they were at the school again.

They made a rush for the narrow stair leading upward, and jammed upon it together. The stair was too narrow for two to pass at once, especially two persons of the girth of the Bunters. They crammed together, and Billy Bunter gave his minor a savage shove and sent him reeling back. He scrambled upward himself, and burst out into the April sunshine in the old chapel, white and panting with fear.

Sammy emerged a minute later, gasping.

"Ow!" he gasped. "You rotter!"

"You shouldn't have got in the way!" snarled Bunter. "Oh dear! Ow! I shall be ill! I've left Wharton's lamp there! Ow!"

"Blow Wharton's lamp! Oh!" gasped Sammy. "Do you think it was a—a—a ghost?"

"I—I suppose so!" Bunter cast a glance of dread back at the entrance to the crypt. "Let's get out of this!"

And they got out.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

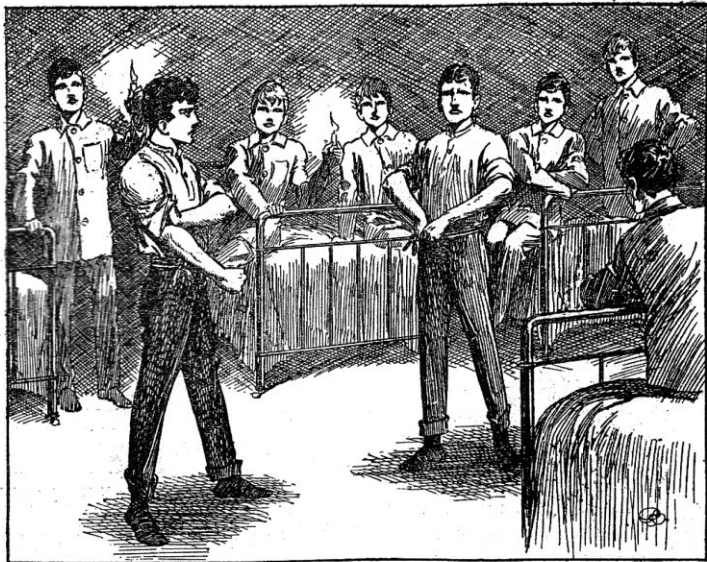
Change for a Sovereign.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came back to Greyfriars at dusk, very well pleased, upon the whole, with the afternoon, in spite of the "frost" that the picnic in the old priory had proved. They were still very much puzzled by the mystery of the lunch-basket. But it seemed as if they would not be able to unravel it.

Upon reflection, it seemed unlikely that Bunter had raided it, and if it was somebody else who had been hidden in the ruins of the priory, he had left no sign behind, excepting the burnt match in the vault. As the lunch-basket had only been borrowed from Mrs. Mimble, the chums of the Remove had the pleasure of paying for it, Mrs. Mimble agreeing to return the money if the basket was recovered—an unlikely contingency.

After settling with Mrs. Mimble, the juniors went into the School House, and they discovered at once that something unusual was "on." Fellows were coming in from the river and the playing-fields, and a crowd was gathering in the Form-room passage, and the chums discovered Billy Bunter in the centre of it. The Owl of the Remove appeared to be the centre of attraction.

Billy Bunter was holding forth, and Harry Wharton & Co. joined the crowd of fellows, to learn what was going forward. Most of the juniors were laughing. It was very clear that Bunter's statements, whatever they were, were being accorded the amount of credence usually given to Bunter's statements—none at all.



In the flickering light of the candles, surrounded by an eager, excited crowd of juniors, Harry Wharton and Vernon-Smith faced each other. "Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 11.)

"I assure you fellows that it's perfectly true," said Bunter. "There he was, a giddy old monk, with horrible eyes that glared like—like fire, you know, and chains rattling like—like anything!"

"You bet!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, really, Fish—"

"Bunter been seeing ghosts?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Yes," grinned Temple, of the Fourth. "He's been exploring the passage from the crypt, and he found the ghost of Greyfriars there. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The passage from the crypt!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "My hat! Then it was Bunter who raided the lunch-basket, after all!"

He burst through the grinning crowd, and caught the fat junior by the collar, and shook him. Bunter wriggled in his grasp.

"Ow, ow, ow! Don't sh-shake me like that, you fathead! You'll make my gi-gig-glasses fall off, you silly ass, and—"

"Where's the grub?"

"And if they bib-bib-break, you'll have to pip-pip-pay for them!" stuttered Bunter.

"Where's the lunch-basket?" roared Bob Cherry. "Look here, you chaps, we were going to picnic in the old priory, and somebody was hanging round the ruins, and raided our grub! If that porpoise has been along the secret passage, that's what he went for!"

"Ow! I did—did—did—"

"He admits it!" exclaimed Nugent.

"I didn't!" roared Bunter. "I d-don't! I did-did-didn't do it! Ow!"

"What were you doing in the underground passage, then?" demanded Bob Cherry.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

"I went to explore it!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! Lemme alone! I had only got half-way through, when I saw the gi-gig-ghost!"

"Rats!"

"On my honour!" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I—"

"Your what?" demanded Bob Cherry. "My dear chap, you haven't any! You've never given a sign of having any!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He says he came on the ghost of Greyfriars in the underground passage!" chuckled Bolsover, of the Remove. "I suppose he saw a shadow."

"It was the ghost, or else somebody dressed up as a ghost!" said Bunter. "I had a light, and I saw him clearly. I had Wharton's bike lantern—"

"The Dickens you did!" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Did you bring it back?"

"Oh, no! I'm sincerely sorry, but when I saw the ghost I dropped it—"

"Dropped the ghost?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, you ass; I dropped the lantern, and I think it broke—"

"You cheeky young villain!" roared Wharton. "I gave twelve-and-six for that lamp!"

"I shall pay for it, of course!" said Bunter, in a very dignified way. "I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and I shall settle for the lamp at once!"

"Yes; I think I can see you doing it!" grinned Bob Cherry. "You'd better make him go back and fetch the lamp, Wharton, and the glass can be mended."

"I—I wouldn't go back into that passage for—for

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

pounds!" said Billy Bunter. "I've had enough of it! You can go if you like!"

"You blessed funk!" said Wharton. "Well, you'd funk going if you'd seen what I've seen!" said Billy Bunter. "I dare say you'd funk going in any case!"

"Ass!" "I don't know," said Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, with his unpleasant sneer. "Let's see you go alone into the passage and fetch the lamp, Wharton!" "Do you think I'm afraid, you ass?"

"Well, yes, I do, as a matter of fact!" Wharton flushed angrily. There was bitter blood between himself and the Bounder, since the contest for the captaincy of the Remove, in which Harry Wharton had proved the victor. The Bounder had done his very best since then to prove a thorn in the side of the new form captain.

"Oh, don't row with the Bounder!" said Bob Cherry, putting his arm through Wharton's and drawing him away. "He's not worth it!"

The chums of the Remove walked away together. They left the crowd of fellows still listening to the wondrous descriptions of the ghost Bunter had seen. Billy Bunter had a fertile imagination worthy of a poet or a newspaper reporter, and he drew thrilling pictures of what he had and had not seen. How much of his yarn was to be believed was a puzzle, which the juniors solved by believing none of it.

Wharton and Nugent went into No. 1 Study to do their preparation. They were busy at their work when Billy Bunter came in half an hour later.

The fat junior blinked deprecatingly through his big glasses. Wharton's hand had slid down towards an ebony ruler. "I say, you fellows—"

Frank Nugent pointed to the door.

"Buzz off!" he said laconically.

"It's about that lamp!" said Bunter.

"Have you fetched it back?" asked Harry.

Bunter shook his head.

"Oh, no! I—I can't go back into the passage! If you'd seen that grisly skeleton, with the bones rattling and the chains clanking—"

"A skeleton?" asked Nugent.

"Yes; a frightful skeleton, with gleaming jaws and glistening ribs—"

"Didn't you say he was dressed like an old monk of Greyfriars?"

"Yes, certainly; in flowing robes and—"

"Well, if he was dressed in flowing robes, how could you see that he was a giddy skeleton, with gleaming ribs and things?" demanded Nugent.

"Ahem! You see—I—Ahem!"

"Yes; I can see you are lying!" said Wharton. "Buzz off!"

"But about the lamp," said Bunter, changing the subject. "I don't want you to be put to a loss. You say the lamp cost twelve-and-six?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, if you'll kindly give me seven-and-sixpence change out of a sovereign, I'll pay for the lamp!" said Bunter, with dignity.

Wharton stared at him.

"Change for a sovereign?" he repeated.

"Yes," said Bunter, holding out a fat hand. Nugent made a swipe at it with a ruler, and the Owl of the Remove jerked it back just in time. "Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Where's the sovereign?" demanded Wharton.

"Well, you see," said Bunter, "it's like this. I'm expecting a postal-order this evening for a sovereign, and when it comes I'll hand it to you entire, if you give me the seven-and-sixpence change. You might as well hand that to me now, as I'm rather short of money. It will be all the same to you, I suppose?"

"You cheeky villain!" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully. "Do you think you are going to spoof me out of seven-and-six, as well as breaking my lamp?"

"Oh, really, it's all the same to you, I suppose, if you have the postal-order when it comes—"

"In the sweet by-and-by!" sang Nugent softly.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Wharton rose from the table.

"I give you two seconds to get out of this study!" he said grimly.

Bunter back to the doorway.

"But I say, you fellows—"

Wharton stepped towards him. The Owl of the Remove rolled hurriedly out into the passage.

Wharton slammed the door.

A voice yelled through the keyhole the next moment.

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"Yah! You're afraid to go into the secret passage to fetch the lamp! Coward! Yah!"

Harry Wharton tore the door open. There was a sound of flying feet in the passage, and Billy Bunter was gone. Wharton closed the door of the study again, and returned to his work with a knitted brow.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Accepts the Challenge.

JOHNNY BULL looked into No. 1 Study a little later, with a cheerful grin. Wharton and Nugent had finished their prep., and were about to go down.

"Coming for a sprint round the Close?" asked Bull.

"Right you are!"

It was dark in the Close, only a few stars glimmering in the sky. Nine o'clock rang out from the clock-tower as the juniors quitted the School House. Mark Linley had joined them at the door, and the four juniors crossed to the gravel path. Harry Wharton & Co. generally had a sprint before bedtime to keep themselves fit. The evening was very fine, the close of a beautiful day in early April.

The four juniors sprinted down the path to the gates. Gosling, the porter, was standing at the doorway of his lodge, and Nugent hailed him.

"Seen the organ-merchants again, Gossy, old man?"

Gosling snorted.

"Which I've, Master Nugent," he replied.

The juniors stopped. They were surprised by the information. They had not expected that Felice Cesare and his comrade of the barrel-organ would come back to Greyfriars.

"You don't mean to say they brought the organ back?" asked Wharton.

"Not the horgan, Master Wharton," said Gosling; "and there was only one of them—the raskil who laid his 'ands on me! He come back by 'imself!"

"Cesare, he called himself," said Johnny Bull—"a descendant of Julius of that ilk, I dare say. What did he want, Gossy?"

"I dunno!" growled Gosling. "I see 'im 'anging about in the road by the wall, and I calls to 'em, and tells 'im I'll set the dog on 'im if he don't bunk! 'E shows 'is teeth as if 'e was a dog 'imself, and bunks!"

"What on earth could he want?" said Nugent, puzzled. "You remember what Fishy said, you chaps? That Italian chap may be on the make, after all."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"If I see 'im agin, I'll set the dog on 'im, and no error!" said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—we don't want them raskilly furnurers 'ere!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Bull suddenly.

"What's up now?"

"Look there!"

Johnny Bull pointed in the direction of the gate. Outside in the road a dim figure could be seen, and a dark, swarthy face was pressed against the bars of the gate. Two gleaming black eyes were staring into the dusky quadrangle.

"The Italian!"

Gosling uttered an exclamation:

"My hey! 'Ere he is again!"

The porter caught up a stick, and rushed down towards the school gates. The swarthy face vanished at once.

The juniors continued their sprint round the Close in a state of wonder. What did the Italian want at Greyfriars? It seemed pretty clear that he was no ordinary organ-man, and that he had some interest in the school apart from collecting coppers for the doleful tunes played on the hurdy-rurdy.

"Fish might have been right," Wharton said, as they returned to the School House. "The fellow may be hanging about here for what he can get. It's curious."

"He doesn't strike one as being a crackman, though," said Mark Linley doubtfully.

"Well, no; I shouldn't think so. More likely a sneak-thief, as Fishy calls it. He must have some reason for hanging round the school."

The juniors thought about it a good deal before bedtime. There was something in the swarthy face and glittering eyes of the Italian that impressed itself upon their minds. Yet it seemed rather too far fetched to imagine that the man had any scheme of robbing the school. He would hardly have shown himself so openly if that had been his intention. What he could want at Greyfriars was a mystery.

"Bed-time, you kids!" Wingate said, looking into the junior common-room, as Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing the matter; and the Remove marched up to their dormitory.

In the dormitory, while the Remove were turning in, the

talk ran on the subject of Billy Bunter's mysterious adventure. The juniors persisted in taking it comically, much to the annoyance of the Owl of the Remove.

"Anyway, I'll jolly well bet that none of you dare go into the secret passage and fetch the lamp back!" said Bunter spitefully. "You can cackle as much as you like, but you wouldn't dare to do it."

"Oh, I'll get it back to-morrow!" said Wharton.

"Rats!"

Wharton swung round upon the fat junior. A reply like that from a "rotter" like Billy Bunter was not to be tolerated by the captain of the Remove.

"What did you say?" he exclaimed sharply.

Billy Bunter promptly retreated behind Vernon-Smith. Wharton's lip curled. He saw at a glance that the Bouncer had a hand in the matter now, and had inspired the Owl of the Remove with his unusual courage.

"I said rats!" retorted Billy Bunter. "You're afraid to go into the crypt after dark. Yah!"

"Why, you fat duffer—"

"Yah! You're a funk! Yah!"

Wharton made a movement towards Billy Bunter. Vernon-Smith stood in the way, and Harry Wharton paused, clenching his hands.

"Are you looking for trouble, Smith?" he exclaimed.

The Bouncer sneered.

"You're not going to pitch into Bunter for telling you unpleasant truths," he said. "You are captain of the Remove, and the Remove have a right to expect their skipper not to be a funk. That's my opinion."

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover and Snoop together.

Wharton turned crimson.

"Do you think I'm afraid to go into the crypt?" he exclaimed.

"I know you are," said Vernon-Smith.

"Put up your hands, you cad!"

The dormitory door opened.

"Get into bed, you kids!" said Wingate, frowning. "Now then, no rowing here. Tumble in at once, or you'll hear from me."

And the threatened encounter was stopped. The Remove turned in, and Wingate extinguished the light and retired. As soon as the door had closed behind the captain of Greyfriars, the voices of the Removites broke out at once.

"Are you going to fetch the lamp, Wharton?" piped the thin, spiteful voice of Snoop.

"No!" growled Wharton.

"Funk!" said Vernon-Smith.

Wharton sat up in bed.

"Look here, Smith—"

"If you don't want to be called a funk, you'd better prove that you're not one," yawned the Bouncer. "A Form captain is called upon to show some pluck."

"Go and fetch the lamp yourself, you cad!" said Frank Nugent.

"So I will," said the Bouncer promptly, "if Wharton will resign and give the place to a better man."

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover.

"If the fellows think I should go and get the lamp, I'll go willingly enough," said Harry Wharton angrily.

He knew that the Bouncer was trying to provoke him, but it was too galling to be called a funk—and he realised that if he did not take up the challenge, a good many of the Remove would believe the Bouncer's accusation. And Harry Wharton was not afraid to venture into the crypt after dark, unpleasant as the task would be. He had courage for greater things than that.

"Well, go, then!" said Bolsover. "If anybody called me a funk I'd go, to prove that I wasn't."

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows," came a voice from Bunter's bed, "don't you think it's time we had a new Form captain? I despise a coward myself!"

"You must feel a frightful amount of contempt for yourself, Bunter," chuckled John Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You'd better go, Wharton," said Mark Linley. "These silly asses will never let you hear the end of it if you don't. And when you come back, I should think that even Smith would have the decency to beg your pardon."

"I'll do that—if he goes," said the Bouncer.

Wharton slipped out of bed.

"I'll go fast enough," he said. "You've called me a funk, Smith. I'll go into the crypt, just to prove to the fellows that you've lied; and to-morrow I'll call on you to

put the gloves on with me in the gym. for giving me the trouble."

"I shall be ready," drawled the Bouncer. "But I won't fight you unless you bring the lamp back. I'm not going to fight a funk."

"Can't be expected to," said Snoop.

Wharton began to dress himself quietly in the darkness. He was feeling very angry, but he meant to go through with the task now.

"You're going, Harry?" asked Nugent, sitting up in bed.

"Yes, Frank."

"Shall I come with you?"

"If he's afraid to go alone!" sneered the Bouncer.

"I'm going alone, Franky," said Wharton quietly.

"We'll come and help you out of the window, and wait for you, if you like," said the Bouncer, slipping out of bed.

"I'll share the risk of leaving the dorm. and getting spotted by the prefects."

"You can do as you like."

Bolsover joined the Bouncer. Nugent and Bob Cherry turned out of bed, too. Wharton put on a pair of rubber shoes.

"Where did you leave the lamp, Bunter?" he asked.

"Half-way along the passage," said Billy Bunter. "I had just reached the cell in the wall there, when I saw the horrible spectre—"

"Oh, don't pile it on!" said Bob Cherry.

"He was sitting there, clanking his chains, and his skull—"

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton moved quietly towards the dormitory door. He opened it. The light in the passage had been turned out, as it generally was when the juniors were in bed. From the passage window it was easy to descend by means of the thick, clinging ivy into the Close.

Frank Nugent opened the window softly.

"Here's a lantern, Harry," whispered Bob; "and a box of matches."

"Thanks, old man!"

"Mind how you go down."

"That's all right."

Wharton swung himself out of the window. The darkness swallowed him up in a moment, and the juniors above listened anxiously to the rustling of the ivy as he descended. A low whistle from the darkness below announced that he had landed safely.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Encounter.

HARRY WHARTON looked cautiously about him, and crossed the dark Close in the direction of the ruined chapel. It was very dark in the quad. The moon, which was rising, was as yet hidden by banks of heavy clouds. A few silvery rays peeped through, and glimmered upon the windows of the School House.

Wharton's face was set as he tramped on. Dark as it was, he did not slacken his speed; he knew every inch of it; way. The captain of the Remove was feeling very angry. He had been badgered into undertaking this task, and the closer he came to it the more unpleasant it seemed. But he was not one to falter in anything he had undertaken.

He kept his eyes well about him as he went; it was far from impossible that he might be "spotted" by some master or prefect making his rounds late at night. And any junior found out of his dormitory at that late hour was certain of a severe punishment—especially the Form captain, who should naturally have been rather more than less circumspect in his conduct than the rest of the Form. The fact that he had been challenged, and called a funk, would not be likely to excuse him in the eyes of Mr. Quelch or the Head.

Harry Wharton reached the old chapel, and entered the ruin.

Dark and silent lay the masses of shattered masonry.

He made his way among them cautiously, and approached the steps that led into the crypt beneath the chapel.

There was a door at the head of the stairs, which had once been kept fastened to prevent juniors from venturing into the unsafe recesses of the secret passages below the school. Some adventurous fellows who wanted to explore the crypt had broken the lock, and it had never been mended since. It was Gosling's duty to see to it, and Gosling was not always so keen as he should have been on getting his duties done.

Wharton found the door leading into the crypt wide open, just as it had been left by Billy Bunter and Sammy after their fight.

ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 217.

NEXT

TUESDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Order Early.

A noisome breath came from within, and he shivered. Courageous as he was, and although he did not believe that any real danger lurked in those dark recesses, the junior halted for a moment.

The place was so dark and silent and solitary that it struck him with a chill to the very marrow of his bones. From the clock-tower in the distance came the chimes of half-past ten.

The sounds echoed faintly through the ruined chapel and the hollow crypt below, and struck desolately upon Wharton's ears.

For a moment he stood undecided, and almost made up his mind to go back, and throw the enterprise up altogether.

But the thought of the mockery he would meet with in the Remove dormitory, and the triumph of the Bounder, restrained him.

He had undertaken to go, and he could not retreat now without confessing that the Bounder's insinuations were well founded, and that he "funkt" the task.

Besides, what was there to be afraid of? Darkness and damp could not hurt him, and he was no coward.

He descended courageously into the crypt.

There he struck a match and lighted the lantern. He could not do so before, in case the light should be seen from the school. A light in the Close at that hour would certainly have caused inquiry if it had been observed.

The crypt was dark and gloomy. Opposite the stairs opening the narrow aperture in the stone wall which gave access to the secret passage. The stone door which had once concealed the opening had long since been removed.

Wharton crossed the crypt with a firm step, and entered the passage.

It was no darker than by day, for no ray of sunlight ever penetrated to those gloomy depths; it was no more silent, for no sound from the upper earth could enter through those heavy walls of stone. But it seemed different, somehow—midnight, and the terrors of midnight, seemed to encompass him.

A lizard whisked across his path, and a toad blinked from a recess in the crumbling stone, and scuttled away from the light, and he started.

Then, impatient with himself for his nervousness, the junior strode forward.

Silence as of the grave encompassed him.

He strode steadily forward, his rubber shoes making no sound upon the flagstones with which the passage was paved.

The light of the lantern gleamed ahead of him, causing strange shadows to play on the stone walls, and in the recesses of the passage.

He knew where was the spot described by Bunter, half-way through the subterranean passage to the old priory.

Suddenly he started, and came to a halt.

A deep, echoing sound had come dully and heavily through the close air.

What was it?

He swung round, and looked back. The sound had come from behind him—he was certain of that. What had caused it, some old stone crumbling from its place, or—or what? He listened intently. The sound was not repeated. Could it have been caused by the door of the crypt slamming in the wind? But there was no wind, and the door was heavy. But if it was closed, it mattered little, as there was no fastening upon it. He would only have to push it from within to make it open again.

He listened for a full minute, with straining ears, but there was no repetition of the sound.

He pressed on his way again.

He was drawing near to the old cell which marked the middle of the long passage, and he kept his eyes about him now for the broken lantern.

He had to take that back with him, as a proof that he had made the venture. If he failed to find it, and returned empty-handed, Vernon-Smith & Co. would declare that he had been no further than the crypt. He knew that.

He uttered a sudden low exclamation.

The light of the lantern had fallen upon something that lay on the stone floor—something that gleamed and glittered in the rays.

It was the acetylene lamp.

The lamp, brightly polished and glittering, threw back the rays, and the broken glass that lay round it glittered, too. The lamp lay just where Bulky Bunter had dropped it; if there was any mysterious lurker in the subterranean recesses, he had not disturbed it. Wharton reached the lamp, and stooped to secure it. His grasp was just closed upon the handle, when a sudden sound smote upon his ears.

It was the sound of deep breathing—the deep, steady breathing of a sleeper.

For a moment the blood rushed to Wharton's heart.

He was not alone in the subterranean passage.

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Someone else was there—someone close at hand, whose deep breathing came clearly through the silence and the darkness.

With the lantern in one hand, and the broken lamp in the other, Harry Wharton stood half-stooping, petrified.

Perhaps he made some sound, or the clink of the broken glass as he moved the lamp to lift it reached alert ears. The steady breathing stopped suddenly, and there was dead silence in the passage.

The sound of a movement followed, the rustling of clothes, as someone moved.

Wharton's heart beat like a hammer.

In the cell opening out of the passage, just round the corner of the stone wall and out of his sight, was someone—whom?

He had no time to think.

A dim figure came springing into the radius of the lantern light, and he caught a momentary glimpse of a monkish robe and a cowl.

A cry of terror broke from his lips, and he spun round and ran.

Brave as he was, that sudden and fearful sight was too much for his nerves. Bunter had not lied, after all; that terrible figure proved it.

Wharton dashed madly along the passage.

From behind, swishing on the stone, came the rustle of the monkish garments, and he knew that he was being pursued.

The being—whatever and whoever it was—was following him.

The boy's heart seemed to leap into his mouth.

He paused a second to blow out the lantern, that its light might not betray him, and then he ran on like a deer.

He came panting and gasping into the crypt, and dashed across it in the pitchy darkness, stumbling over loose stones.

He clambered up the steps, and plunged at the doorway, and reeled back from the hard wood of the door.

He remembered the sound he had heard: the door had closed, after all, wind or no wind. It opened outwards, and as there was no fastening, it should not have resisted his rush upon it. He threw out his hands upon the wood, and pushed frantically, but the door did not budge.

From behind, in the dense darkness, came that horrible rustling. The fearful figure of the subterranean passage was drawing closer to him, and the door was fast.

The full horror of it flashed upon Wharton.

Somehow, he could not tell how, the door had been fastened outside, by accident or design; he had not time to think. It was fast. He was a prisoner in the crypt, and the unknown something, the being he had disturbed in its sleep in the subterranean passage, was drawing closer and closer—closer, till its hot breath fanned his cheek as he crouched in terror on the stairs.

At the window in the dormitory passage, the four juniors waited quietly for Harry Wharton's return. He was certain to be gone some time, and if they left the window unfastened, he could return easily enough without their assistance. But they resolved to wait for him; at all events, Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent did. Probably Vernon-Smith and Bolsover had other thoughts in their minds. Before ten minutes had elapsed, the Bounder uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"Cave!"

There were footsteps on the stairs. The lower hall was lighted, and looking over the banisters, the juniors could see the form of Loder, of the Sixth, the most unpopular prefect at Greyfriars.

"Loder!" muttered Nugent.

"Cut!"

There was nothing else to be done. The prefect would have been very pleased to catch the juniors out of their dormitory, and report for punishment to their Form-master; but they did not mean to gratify him to that extent.

If he discovered them at the window, too, he would be sure to examine the fastening of the window, and to fasten it, and Harry Wharton would be shut out.

The four juniors scuttled silently along the passage.

Nugent, and Bob Cherry, and Bolsover whipped into bed.

They heard the footsteps of the prefect pass along the passage, and die away. Bob Cherry sat up in bed.

"He's gone!" he said.

"Quiet!" said Bolsover.

"But he's gone. We can get out again—"

"Stay where you are. It means that he's on the watch," said the Bully of the Remove. "You know how he would like to catch us napping. And if he catches us, he will



The armoured figure clanked up the hall towards the astounded House-master. The juniors yelled with laughter, and even the masters who were present could not help smiling. "D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Yaas, sir. Here I am. I was tryin' this get-up on, and it won't come off," said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I tried to get it off, sir, and the beastly thing won't budge!" (An amusing incident in "TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE," the splendid long, complete tale of the famous chums of St. Jim's, which is contained in this week's issue of our popular Companion Paper, the "Gem" Library. Price One Penny.) Order a copy to-day.

examine the window. You don't want Wharton to be shut out, and to have to ring up the House to get in."

"By Jove, no!"

"What do you say, Smithy?"

There was no reply from Vernon-Smith.

"Smithy! Are you there?"

Silence!

"He hasn't come into the dorm. with us!" exclaimed Nugent.

"My hat!"

"Has Loder got him, I wonder?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Hard cheese on Smithy if he has, I guess," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"I'm going to see," said Nugent, slipping out of bed again. "Smithy is a cad; but we were all together, and I'm not going to leave him in the lurch."

"Better stay there," said Bolsover uneasily. "Smithy can take care of himself. He may have dodged into one of the other dorms."

"Hark!" ejaculated Micky Desmond.

"Better lie low!" said Bolsover.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

And the other fellows thought so, too. After all, the Bounder of Greyfriars knew his own business best. And any discovery by Loder would be fatal to Harry Wharton's chance of regaining the dormitory undetected.

But the Ramovites waited in a state of considerable anxiety. Vernon-Smith did not come in, and they wondered what had become of him. If he had hidden in one of the other dormitories, it was curious that he did not return to his own as soon as the coast was clear. That might mean that Loder suspected something, and was on the watch in the passage, and that Vernon-Smith knew it. The anxiety of the juniors increased as the minutes passed, and the Bounder did not appear.

At the same time, the Bounder, as a matter of fact, was climbing down the ivy from the passage window. He had waited till Loder was gone, and had then followed in the track of Harry Wharton. The Bounder's face wore a sneering smile as he dropped from the ivy to the ground.

His plan had been made beforehand. He had intended to raise a false alarm to get rid of the juniors from the passage window, and the coming of Loder had saved him the trouble.

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

The Bounder hurried away in the direction of the old chapel. He had not badgered and bantered Harry Wharton into venturing into the crypt simply for the purpose of inflicting a troublesome and unpleasant task upon his successful rival in the contest for the captaincy of the Remove. The Bounder's plans went further than that. It was his intention to follow Wharton secretly to the old chapel, and to close the door of the crypt upon him, and give him a thorough scare, and a cold-hearted and unscrupulous young rascal proceeded to carry out that plan with perfect coolness.

It was easy enough to do. He knew his way about the ruined chapel quite well in the darkness. He reached the stairway to the crypt, and pushed the heavy door shut. It creaked dismally upon its hinges, and closed with a heavy thud, a sound that reached Harry Wharton's ears, as we have seen, in the subterranean passage.

The Bounder chuckled softly.

To jam several fragments of stone under the edge of the door occupied him but a few minutes. The wedges fastened the door more securely than bolts or locks could have done. No force that Wharton could exert from within was likely to move the door. The Bounder chuckled again.

"The young rascal will be sorry he entered the crypt at all," the young rascal muttered complacently, "and by the time he's been there for an hour or two, he will be sorry for himself—hang him! I'll get back now, and I'll be the one to volunteer to go and look for him, and as I shall open the door, no one will suspect how it came to be fastened."

And the Bounder chuckled again.

His chuckle died away suddenly.

There was a clink in the shadowy ruins of the chapel, as a loose stone moved under a footstep.

The Bounder started.

He had believed that he was alone in the ruin. Was it possible that Wharton had already finished his task, and emerged? The Bounder turned cold at the thought. If that was the case, he had been caught in the very act of his cowardly revenge.

It flashed upon his mind what the Remove would say—and do—if they knew, if they found out that his challenge to Wharton had been only a device for luring the Form-captain into the crypt, at his mercy, so that he could take his cowardly revenge upon him.

Clink!

But surely it could not be Wharton, it must be one of the other fellows come to look for him. The Bounder strained his eyes in the darkness, his heart beating violently. He could see nothing, but the dim, almost formless masses of fallen masonry. Who was it that was moving in the ruins so close to him, yet unseen?

His heart was beating so loudly that it seemed to him that he could hear its beats. The moon climbed past the banks of clouds, and a glimmer of light fell into the ruins.

The Bounder, crouching against the entrance of the crypt, stared about him anxiously. A dim, shadowy form for a moment loomed up in the glimmer of moonlight.

Vernon-Smith caught his breath.

The figure was too tall for that of a junior, and it must be either a master or a prefect—a master by the bulk! He was caught! The figure was coming directly towards him, had perhaps seen him.

The Bounder took his courage in both hands as it were. He had to be caught; and it was bolder and safer to own up. If he admitted that he had left the dormitory to explore the ruins by night he would be punished; but the master would not think of looking at the door of the crypt. And Vernon-Smith was feverishly anxious to get the inevitable interview over before Wharton began hammering on the inner side of the door. That might come at any minute now.

The Bounder made up his mind. He rose erect and walked boldly towards the dim figure.

"If you please, sir—"

There was a sudden indistinguishable exclamation.

The Bounder hurried on.

"It is I, sir—Vernon-Smith. I left the dorm—"

He broke off.

For from the dimly-seen form came a sharp exclamation that made the blood rush to his heart with terror:

"Per bacco!"

He knew the Italian voice—he knew that the ejaculation was Italian. Another moment and he knew the dusky face and the gleaming black eyes.

It was the Italian—Felice Cesare—the man who had come into the Close of Greyfriars with the hunchback and the organ.

For a moment Vernon-Smith's heart stood still with fear. What was the man doing there? He remembered hearing the juniors say that Gosling had said the Italian had been seen lurking about the school; he remembered Fisher T. Fish's surmise that the man was spying out the place, with the intention of robbing it. It must be so—else why was he

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there, stealing into the ruins of the old chapel in the darkness of the night?

The Bounder's blood almost froze in his veins. For the sake of his revenge upon Wharton, he had placed himself in the power of a midnight robber—a man whose desperate character could be seen as the moonlight gleamed upon his swarthy face and hard, glittering eyes.

"Oh! murmured the Bounder, "Oh, Heaven!"

"Per bacco! Cesare!" muttered the Italian.

Vernon-Smith stumbled as he turned to fly. But the ruins were round him, and the broad-shouldered Italian blocked up the way of escape.

The man advanced upon him quickly. His hands grasped at Vernon-Smith; and the Bounder, hardly knowing what he did, struck out at him savagely, and drove his way past. A savage exclamation left the lips of the Neapolitan as he reeled under the Bounder's blow, but his grasp tightened upon Vernon-Smith.

The terrified junior opened his mouth to cry for help. Better discovery, better canings and gatings without number, than what might await him at the hands of the Neapolitan desperado.

But a powerful hand was placed over the junior's mouth, and it choked back the cry he would have uttered. The Neapolitan had divined his intention. In the powerful grasp of Felice Cesare the Bounder was crushed to the ground, and a knee was planted on his chest, the hand still pressing upon his mouth.

"Silenzio!" muttered a savage voice; then in English: "Silence, or my knife! You understand?"

Felice Cesare could evidently speak English when he chose.

The Bounder understood only too well, and he collapsed, almost fainting, in the grasp of the Neapolitan ruffian.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In Strange Hands.

"SILENCE, on your life!" The knife was no empty threat. In the dim glimmer of the moonlight Vernon-Smith caught a glitter of steel, and he shuddered.

Who was this man? What did he want? Whoever and whatever he was, it was very clear that he was a desperate man; that his visit to the school with the organ had been a mere pretence, and that he was upon some desperate errand there.

Cesare removed his hand from the Bounder's mouth; there was no fear now that the junior would utter a cry. The glimmer of cold steel in the moonlight was sufficient to ensure that.

"Speak in whispers, signorino," said the Neapolitan. "If you raise your voice you will raise it for the last time, caro. You understand?"

"Yes," muttered Vernon-Smith.

Inwardly he was anathematising his folly. But for his revengeful spite, he might have been safe in the Remove dormitory—safe among his Form-fellows. He shuddered and trembled as he lay in the powerful grasp of the Italian.

"Who are you?" asked Cesare.

"I—I belong to this school."

The Neapolitan peered at him.

"I think I saw you among the boys to-day when I came with the organ," he said.

"Yes, yes!"

"What are you doing out of the school at this hour?"

It was useless to lie. Vernon-Smith stammered out the whole story in broken gasps.

The Neapolitan chuckled grimly.

"Per bacco! You are a hater after my own heart!" he said. "It would be bad for you—hey?—if I should tell this pretty story to your masters."

Vernon-Smith shivered.

"Yes!" he muttered.

"Have no fear. I am not going to do so," said the Neapolitan, grinning. "So the boy—this boy you call Wharton—is shut up in the crypt."

"Yes; or in the underground passage."

"And where does this passage lead to?"

"To a ruined priory in the wood."

"And a man could pass through, and go out into the wood that way?" asked the Italian, showing an interest Vernon-Smith could not understand in the matter.

"Yes, easily."

"I shall not betray you to your masters, caro amico," said the Neapolitan. "But one good turn deserves another, as you English say. You must tell me something I want to know, and you need say nothing about this meeting. Lei capisce?"

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith, understanding that that meant

"Did he understand?"

"Buono!" said Cesare.
"But—but if you are going to rob the school it will come out—"
Cesare uttered an exclamation.
"Rob the school! Are you mad?"
Vernon-Smith stared at him in amazement. It was easy to see that this guest up at the Neapolitan's intentions was a mistaken one.

"I—I thought—" he stammered.
Cesare grinned.
"You thought that I was here to rob the school! Ha, ha! No, signorino; there is nothing in this school to tempt me. I did not come here to rob."
"Then—then why are you here?" gasped Vernon-Smith.
"I am looking for a friend."
"—a friend?"
"Si, si!" said the Italian; and the Italian "Yes" had a sound like the hissing of a serpent as it came from his lips.
And Vernon-Smith understood very clearly that the "friend" the Neapolitan was looking for would have no cause to bless a meeting with Felice Cesare. It was a foe the man was seeking; though why he should be seeking him within the precincts of Greyfriars School was a mystery to the junior.

"I think perhaps you can tell me something of him, signorino," said Cesare; "and if you know, you shall tell, per bacco."

"There—there are no Italians here!" gasped the junior.
The Neapolitan laughed again softly.
"But my friend is not an Italian," he said. "My friend is an Englishman, and he was once belonging to this school. Do you understand? He is what you say, an old boy."
"An old boy of Greyfriars?" said Vernon-Smith.
"Si, si! Certainly!" said the Neapolitan. "And you shall tell me if there is lately come an old boy to visit the school."

"No," said the Bouncer; "not since the Old Boys' footer match—and that was three weeks ago."
"It is but twenty-four hours since he came."
"At night!" ejaculated the Bouncer.

"Siuro—at night."
"I have not seen him, or heard anything of him," said Vernon-Smith, with an astonishment that the ruffian could see was genuine. "What is his name?"
"Never mind his name, if you know nothing of him," said the Neapolitan drily. "This man, you comprehend, holds something that belongs to me, and I shall take it—perhaps his life with it!" His white teeth flashed for a moment.
"But I guessed that he did not come openly. And in the close here-to-day I saw that there were ruins, and I said to myself, 'If my dear friend is in hiding, that is where he is hiding himself. Per bacco!'"

"Oh, you think that he is hiding among the ruins here?"
Vernon-Smith exclaimed, in amazement.
"Exactly!"

"I understand! That is quite possible. By Jove!" the Bouncer exclaimed, a light breaking upon his mind. "He may be the chap that Bunter met."
"What is that?"

Vernon-Smith hurriedly explained. He was only too glad to be able to give some information to the Italian—with the knir's glittering so near to him. Vernon-Smith would willingly have betrayed anybody and everybody to the man just then, to put the ruffian into a good humour with him.

The Neapolitan listened attentively.
"Per bacco! I think you are right!" he said, drawing a deep breath. "In guise as a ghost—aha! He would know the ghost story, having once been at this school! Sapristi! But I think that I shall find my friend!"

"You are sure he came here?"
The Neapolitan chuckled.

"Siuro! For I was close upon his track on the road, and he vanished; and I searched the wood and the fields. And then I said to myself, he had climbed the wall of the school. But then it was dawn, and I could not search for him. But I shall find him; and I know that he came here. Per bacco! And the entrance to this passage, you say, is here?"

"Buono! I—"
The Neapolitan broke off suddenly.
"Hark!"

Crash! Crash!
It was a sudden, terrific commotion in the crypt. Someone inside the fastened door was beating wildly upon it, apparently with a heavy stone.

Vernon-Smith started.
"It's Wharton!" he muttered.

Crash!
"And he seems to be much pressed!" grinned the Neapolitan. "Perhaps he has met our friend the monk, and has been frightened."

Crash!
"Good heavens!" muttered Vernon-Smith, turning white. "I—I never thought of that! I—I was sure Bunter had lied about that! It's enough to turn a chap's brain! I—I—"
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NEXT

TUESDAY:

EVERY TUESDAY. The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"If he has seen the ghost he shall tell me about him," said the Neapolitan. "I will release him. You had better go, caro amico—and say nothing about what has happened, or you will be called upon to explain why you shut your schoolfellow up in the crypt—especially if the fright has turned his brain. Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith shuddered.
"Heaven forbid!"

The Neapolitan released him.
"Go! And not a word! I do no harm here; I merely look for my friend, you understand, and nothing more. It is all simple. You may go! But the silent mouth, or you may learn yet that Felice Cesare has a poniard. Go!"

"I shall say nothing."
Vernon-Smith, trembling in every limb, hurried away. Crash!

It was the last blow on the door from inside. There was a sound of the stone rattling down the steps within, as it fell from the hands of him who had wielded it.

The Italian glanced after Vernon-Smith as he disappeared, and then stepped to the door of the crypt and dragged away the wedges of stone from the outside.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. A Friend in Need.

HARRY WHARTON in those few fearful minutes had lived through a lifetime of horror. The discovery that the door of the crypt was fastened on the outside had almost stunned the unfortunate lad.

The rustling behind him was close—the dreadful form, whatever it was, was at the stairs he had mounted—a hot breath came from the darkness and smote his cheek.

Hardly knowing what he did in his excitement and terror, Wharton drove out his fist, and it encountered something hard in the blackness, and there was a muffled cry.

Then a heavy fall!

The unknown, whoever he was, had fallen under the heavy and sudden blow, and rolled off the steps back into the crypt.

Wharton, his heart beating like a hammer, his back against the door that would not budge, stood with his hands up on the defensive.

Terror thrilled him still, but there was no longer supernatural dread mingled with it, for the resistance his knuckles had encountered, and the sound of the heavy fall and the exclamation, had shown him that, whoever his enemy was, it was an enemy of flesh and blood. It was no spectre haunting the dusky depths of the subterranean passage, but a human being, who had chosen, for reasons of his own, to array himself in the old monkish garb.

"You hound!" panted Wharton. "You villain! Stand back!"

There was another exclamation.

He heard the unseen form rising, he heard once more the rustling of the garments. But though he braced himself for an attack in the darkness, the attack did not come. There was a rustle that died away into silence.

Wharton's senses were reeling, but he realised that the unknown had retreated—that the presence was gone. Whoever and whatever it was, it had gone back the way it had come, as if the words he had uttered had been enough to exorcise it.

Wharton remained where he was, panting, for some minutes. No sound came from the silence—the horror was not returning.

Who was it—what was it?

He did not know—he could not guess. But he felt a feverish desire to escape from the crypt before it should return. The desire to escape from the crypt had gone for a light—for a villain, whoever he was, might have gone for a light—for a weapon. At that thought Wharton turned upon the fastened door and smote at it heavily with his fists, and drove his boots hard against it. But the door did not budge.

The junior, gasping for breath, descended from the stone steps and groped in the darkness till he found a stone. He clambered on the steps again, and began to beat upon the door. Even if he alarmed the whole of Greyfriars, he must escape from that fearful place. The crashing of the stone echoed with a sound like thunder through the crypt and the subterranean passages.

The stone rolled from Wharton's hands at last, and crashed down to the flagstones below. The junior groaned. The battering had had no effect upon the door; it had not budged the fraction of an inch.

He reeled against the door, panting. What was he to do? He could not open it, and at any moment that Thing might return.

As he reeled on the door he felt it move. His heart

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bounded with joy. The door swung open, and he staggered out into the open air.

Then his strength failed him, and he fell, and the moonlight and the ruins swam round him in a dizzy cloud.

Someone had opened the door from without—he knew that—and that someone was bending over him holding something to his lips. A bitter taste burnt in Wharton's mouth, but the fiery liquid revived him. He sat up, and stared wildly round him. The Neapolitan replaced the flask in his pocket, and supported Wharton's head upon his knee, gently enough.

"You are better, signorino?"

Wharton gasped.

"The Italian!"

Felice Cesare nodded with a grin.

"Exactly—the Italian!" he agreed. "I opened the door for you, signorino."

"Thank you!"

"Niente," said the Neapolitan, shrugging his broad shoulders. "It is a pleasure to do you a small service, signorino, when you were so liberal with the centesimi to-day to the poor Italian music-merchant." There was no sign of the knife now, and Felice Cesare's voice was very soft.

Wharton stared at him.

"But what are you doing here at night?" he gasped.

"I look for somebody—a friend of mine—whom I suspect of playing ghost for a good joke in the cellars here—what you call them?" said the Neapolitan.

Wharton started.

"Playing ghost? Then—"

"You have seen someone?" asked Cesare, watching his face narrowly as the moonlight gleamed upon it, showing up the deadly paleness of it.

Wharton nodded, and panted.

"Yes, a man. I—I was duffer enough to think it a ghost for a minute. It came after me, but when I hit out I knew it was a man. He's gone now. I—I never had such a scare in my life! Thank you for opening the door! I—I think I should have gone right off my dot if I hadn't got out of that horrible place!" And Wharton passed his hand across his brow, which was burning and clotted with perspiration.

"It was enough to give you scare, signorino," said the Neapolitan. "I think I find him who play the trick—a rascal who has robbed me."

Wharton started.

"Robbed you?"

"Sicuro! I look for him because he have robbed me, and soon I find him, I think well. He has fled, you say?"

"Yes, he has gone."

"And there is other end to the passage, is it not so?"

"Yes, it opens in the priory in the wood, off the Friardale road."

"Buono! For the safety of the place it is best to close up this door," said the Neapolitan. "He shall not get out this way, is it not so?"

"Yes, yes!" said Wharton, with a shudder.

The Neapolitan closed the door of the crypt. He carefully jammed in fragments of stone under the door, rendering it as secure as it was before he had opened it for Wharton. He grinned as he secured the door.

"Per Bacco! It is secure now!" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton staggered to his feet.

"Yes, but I—I have left the lamp inside!"

The Neapolitan grinned.

"You would not go in again for that, signorino?"

Wharton shuddered.

"No, not to-night. But—but you—you have no right here. I thank you for releasing me from that horrible place, but you would get into trouble if you were seen here," said Wharton uneasily.

"I go at once!" said Cesare. "I am to look for my friend who have robbed me, you understand. I think that he is there. Now that the door is safe he must go by the other end, and I go to stop him or to follow him. Capisca Lei? I have no more time to lose here. It is pleasure to have served a noble signorino. Buona notte!"

"Good-night—"

"You say nothing of having to have met me?" said the Neapolitan. "I go, and I do not return. It is enough—and you do not talk?"

"Excepting to the fellows in the dormitory, not a word," said Wharton. "I'm very much obliged to you, and if you're not coming into the school grounds again there's no need for me to mention that you have been here."

"Sicur! Buona notte!"

The Neapolitan moved out of the ruins. Wharton followed him, and watched him climb the school wall, and heard him drop into the road on the other side. He listened. In the silence of the night he heard the footsteps of the Italian die away in the distance.

There was no doubt that the man was gone. And Wharton was quite assured that he had no harmful intentions towards Greyfriars, whatever he might intend towards the man who, as he declared, had robbed him. And yet— If there was a chance that the man had been deceiving him, he had no right to allow the school to run risks. The junior stepped quietly away to the kennel of the mastiff near Gosling's lodge. On occasions when there had been burglaries in the neighbourhood Gosling's dog had been turned loose of a night, and on such occasions it would have fared ill with any stranger who had sought to enter the school precincts. Wharton unfastened the dog's chain and set him loose. If the Neapolitan kept his word, and did not return, there was no harm done; if he had been deceiving the junior the loosening of the dog made it impossible for him to do harm or to return without the alarm being given.

Leaving the dog loose in the Close, Harry Wharton hurried back to the School House.

He clambered up the ivy, and found the window unfastened, and in a couple of minutes more he was inside, and stealing cautiously along the passage towards the Remove dormitory.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Down on the Bunder,

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Here he is!"

"That you, Wharton, old man?"

"Glad you've got back!"

"The gladfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!" murmured Hurree Jamet Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The exclamations broke out in suppressed tones from the Removites as Harry Wharton came into the Remove dormitory and closed the door softly behind him.

"Where have you been?" Frank Nugent exclaimed.

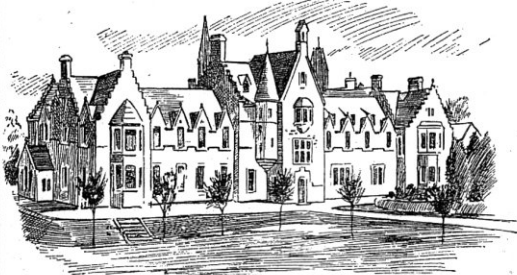
"What's kept you such a time?"

"Have you got the lamp?" demanded Bolsover.

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The man who had emerged from the vaults turned deathly white, and staggered back a pace. "Cesare!" His husky, scared voice reached the ears of the hidden juniors. It was easy to see that the man was a prey to mortal terror. The next instant the Italian came towards him with a bound. "Geoffrey Dorrain!" he hissed. "At last!" (See page 20.)

"Blow the lamp!" said Bob Cherry. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes," said Wharton quietly.

The Bouncer sat up in bed. He had been in bed a quarter of an hour, and he had given the Removites the explanation that he had been hiding in a box-room while waiting for the coast to be clear for his return to the dormitory. No one as yet doubted his statement, and he had had the advantage of telling his story first, before the Removites knew what had happened to Harry Wharton.

"Have you got the lamp?" the Bouncer asked.

"No; I left it just inside the crypt. The fellows can see it there for themselves to-morrow morning if anyone here doubts my word," said Harry Wharton very quietly.

"I don't think anybody here doubts your word, old son," said Bob Cherry. "But why the dickens did you leave it inside the crypt after fetching it out of the passage?"

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"Because I had to drop it and fight—and your lantern, too," said Harry Wharton.

"Fight?" yelled Bob. "Fight whom?"

"The g-g-ghost?" said Billy Bunter.

"Somebody dressed as a ghost, at all events," said Wharton quietly, sitting on his bed and breathing hard. "I think I must have taken it for a ghost at first—I hardly knew what I took it for—but I bolted."

"Same as I did," said Bunter.

"Yes, same as you did, Billy," said Wharton. "The thing followed me, and ran me down in the crypt."

"Good heavens!"

"You must have been in a blue funk," said Bolsover.

"Yes," said Wharton quietly. "I was in a blue funk. I think you would have been, or anybody, especially when you found the door shut."

"How could the door be shut?" said Russell. "There's no fastening on it."

"Someone had managed to fasten it from the outside," said Wharton. "I found it blocked—shut. I couldn't open it. I hammered and hammered, and then the Thing was upon me. I hit out at it, and it fell. I wonder I didn't go out of my senses then, shut up in the dark with the creature. But it left me, and then the door was opened, after I had tried to hammer it open with a stone, and failed."

"Very queer yarn!" said Vernon-Smith. "Curious how the door should get blocked shut in that way."

"Very curious, indeed," said Harry Wharton, in an ominous tone—"so jolly curious, Smith, that we're going to look into it. The door was shut from outside, and bits of stone wedged underneath it so that it couldn't be opened from inside. That must have been done on purpose by somebody who wanted to shut me up in the crypt."

"Faith, and it was a dirty trick!" said Micky Desmond.

"I want to know who did it," said Wharton. "I think you fellows will agree with me that if it was a chap in the Remove he ought to be bowled out."

"Yes, rather," said Bob Cherry emphatically. "We'll have a rather precise account of what you were doing out of the dorm, if you please, Smith."

"I've told you what I was doing," said the Bounder sullenly.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bolsover. "If Wharton was shut up in the crypt, as he says, how did he get out? It seems that the door could be opened, after all."

"It was opened from outside," said Harry.

"By whom?"

"A stranger—*that Italian chap* who came here with the organ—*Felice Cesare*."

There was a general exclamation of amazement.

"Do you mean to say that organ-grinder from Naples was in the chapel, within the walls of Greyfriars?" Snoop exclaimed. "What was he doing there at night?"

"Looking for somebody he suspected to be hiding in the crypt, he told me, and I think he must have been right, for there was certainly somebody in the crypt. I don't think he was a genuine organ-grinder, either. He made use of that man and his organ to come in, and spy round Greyfriars, just as Fish suggested."

"I guess you'll always find me on the mark," said Fisher T. Fish complacently.

"Oh, it's too thick!" said Bolsover rudely. "You want us to believe that you were shut up in the crypt, and that this Italian chap dropped from nowhere and rescued you. You can't pile it on like that and expect us to swallow it." "I don't care twopenny whether you swallow it or not, Bolsover. You're a rotten cad, anyway, and I suspect you of being in this plot with Smith. But never mind that. If the Bounder came back into the dorm, with Bob Cherry and Nugent, all's well. If he didn't I know that he slipped out of the house, and fastened up the door of the crypt after I was in it."

"You've got no proof!" sneered the Bounder.

"I don't want any proof. I only want to know whether you were out of the dormitory," said Wharton.

"He certainly was out of the dormitory," said Ogilvy.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Loder came upstairs, and we had to cut. Nugent and I and Bolsover came back to the dorm, but Vernon-Smith didn't. He came in a jolly long time afterwards with a yarn of having hidden in the box-room till the coast was clear. In fact, he hadn't been here more than ten minutes when you came in. I thought it queer at the time. I know Loder wouldn't be hanging about the passages all that time. Vernon-Smith was no more in a box-room than I was."

The Bounder gritted his teeth. His plan would have worked out successfully, but for the unforeseen presence of the mysterious lurker in the subterranean passage, and of the Italian in the ruined chapel, circumstances that the acutest plotter could certainly not have foreseen. If Wharton had remained half an hour or so shut up in the crypt, and then the Bounder had volunteered to search for him, and had opened the door he had fastened, he would have stood clear. But now, with all his cunning, the Bounder did not see how he was to avert suspicion.

Harry Wharton came a little nearer to Vernon-Smith's bed.

"Have you anything to say?" he asked, between his teeth.

"Nothing to you," said the Bounder sullenly. "I don't see that I'm called upon to defend myself to you. I was in the box-room."

"That is a lie!"

"You can think so if you choose," said the Bounder, with a sneer. "And since we're speaking so plainly, I don't believe a word of your yarn about the door of the crypt being closed, or about that Italian dropping from the skies to let you out."

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover.

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Read the grand new story of the

Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

Wharton set his teeth. He reached out, and grasped the Bounder's bedclothes, and dragged them from him. The Bounder started up with an exclamation.

"What do you mean?" he demanded fiercely.

"Get up!"

"What for?"

"To fight me!" said Harry Wharton grimly.

"Idiot! I'll fight you to-morrow in the gym, if you like."

Not now.

"You'll fight me now, or you'll take a licking now," said Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming. "I haven't been through what I've been through to-night for nothing. You'll get up and take your licking, you cur! You were ready enough to get up to shut me up in the crypt."

"I didn't!"

"Liar!"

"Better go it, Smithy," chuckled Bulstrode. "You were accusing Wharton of being a funk an hour ago, and now you're got to prove that you're not one."

"The prefects—"

"Blow the prefects! You needn't make a row with stockinged feet, unless you howl when you're hurt, and you're not bound to do that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder ground his teeth.

"I tell you I won't fight now!"

"You will!" said Harry Wharton.

The next moment his grasp was upon the Bounder, and Vernon-Smith rolled out of bed, and landed upon the dormitory floor with a heavy bump.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Fight by Candle-Light.

VERNON-SMITH was upon his feet in a moment. His hands were clenched, and his eyes were blazing with rage.

The Bounder was no coward, although he was so cunning and cautious by nature that he generally avoided combats in which he was not sure of gaining the upper hand.

But he had a savage temper when it was roused, and it was roused now with a vengeance!

"Are you ready now?" asked Harry Wharton scornfully.

"Yes," said the Bounder, between his teeth. "I'll smash you! Hang you! I wish you had broken your neck in the crypt."

"Thank you! Get a light some of you chaps!"

The fellows were willing enough to do that.

The Remove dormitory at Greyfriars had been the scene of some exciting happenings, but a fight by candle-light was something a little out of the common.

Candle-ends and lanterns were soon produced from the boxes. The Removites were always prepared for the possible need of illumination after lights out.

Candle-ends were set up on washstands, and a wavering light illuminated the dormitory.

Vernon-Smith dressed himself in shirt and trousers. It was tacitly agreed that the combatants should fight in their socks, and Wharton had already removed his boots, and he stripped to his shirt.

The whole Remove were now up, and gathering in excitement round the ring, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Nothing but the rising-bell could extract William George Bunter from his bed once he was settled in it; and not even the rising-bell, but for the fear of a prefect with a cane to follow. But even Bunter propped himself upon a pillow to watch.

Bulstrode appointed himself referee, and extracted a watch from under his pillow to keep time.

"Ready, you chaps?" he asked.

Wharton stepped forward.

"I'm quite ready," he said.

"So am I," said Vernon-Smith.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Bob Cherry.

In the flickering light of the candles, surrounded by an eager ring of excited juniors, the adversaries "went it."

Wharton's face was set, and his eyes were gleaming, and he attacked the Bounder with steady perseverance. Vernon-Smith had to content himself with the defensive. Wharton was still thinking of his fearful experience in the crypt, and he knew that he owed it to the cowardly trick the Bounder had played him. And he meant to make Vernon-Smith pay for it dearly.

Vernon-Smith was driven twice round the ring, and Wharton followed him, their stockinged feet making hardly any sound—not so much as their deep, heavy breathing. They were watching one another like cats.

Suddenly Vernon-Smith feinted, and rushed in.

But it cost him dear.

his feint was guarded, and as he laid himself open to Wharton's attack, the Remove captain drove out right and left, and then right again, and the Bounder of Greyfriars fell with a heavy bump to the floor.

"Phew!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Time!" said Bulstrode.

Wharton stood waiting. Vernon-Smith was lifted up by Bolsover, gasping and wheezing. It was a knock-down that would have proved a knock-out for many fellows, but the Bounder was game.

His head was singing from the blows, but he was in a greater rage than ever, and more keen to come on.

"Buck up, old man!" said Bolsover.

"Time!"

The adversaries toed the line again. Vernon-Smith commenced the attack this time, springing at his foe like a wild cat.

He threw science to the winds, and attacked savagely, and Wharton reeled a little before the savage onslaught, with several marks of it showing upon his face.

But the captain of the Remove recovered in a moment.

He met Vernon-Smith's furious attack with driving blows, and the Bounder reeled back, and reeled back again, and again crashed to the floor.

Again Bolsover picked him up. The Remove bully was looking grim. He did not think that the Bounder had much chance left now. Indignation had lent Harry Wharton, as it seemed, two fellows' strength, and the Bounder simply had not a look-in against him.

"Going on?" asked Bolsover indifferently.

The Bounder snarled.

"Yes, hang you!"

"Oh, pile in, then!"

"Time!" said Bulstrode.

Vernon-Smith fought hard in the third round. Though all the fellows believed that Harry Wharton's accusation was just, and that the Bounder had shut the door of the crypt upon him, they could not help admiring the fight he put up now. The Bounder had plenty of pluck and determination.

But the third round ended in grim defeat.

He went down again, under a stunning upper-cut, and crashed on the floor, and it was evident to all that he was licked.

Before Bulstrode could call time, however, there was a yell from Bob Cherry.

"Cave!"

A footstep had sounded in the passage.

The juniors made a wild rush to their beds. There was no time to blow out the candles, and, in fact, no time to get into bed, for, before they could dive in, the dormitory door opened, and Wingate appeared on the threshold.

The captain of Greyfriars stood gazing in upon an astounding scene with a clouded brow.

Vernon-Smith still lay upon the floor. Wharton was standing over him, half a dozen juniors were in bed, and the rest diving frantically in.

"You young rascals!"

Wingate advanced into the dormitory.

"So you've been fighting here!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Wharton quickly.

"I must say it is a nice time of night to choose for a scrap," said Wingate. "You will take five hundred lines each, and stay in the next half holiday to write them. I shall report this to your Form-master. You other kids who were out of bed will take a hundred lines each. And if there's any more of this I'll come up with a cane, and you'll remember it till the end of the next vacation."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"There won't be any more row, Wingate, old man. We wouldn't do anything to disturb you for worlds and worlds. We mean you've had broken into your beauty sleep."

"Shut up, you cheeky young rascal! Now, into bed with you!"

The juniors turned in. The Bounder groaned a little as he crawled into bed. He had paid dearly enough for his cunning plot that night. Wingate moved round the dormitory, and collected up all the candles, blowing them out carefully one by one.

"Not going to collar our candles, Wingate?" Nugent asked.

"Yes, you young bounder!"

"But, I say, candles cost money, you know," said Ogilvy.

"Shut up, what to sleep!"

"I'll tell you that, Wingate, old man. You can have the lot at a reduction," Ogilvy suggested.

Wingate laughed. He made a bundle of the candles, and carried them out of the dormitory, and, with a last warning to the Removites to keep quiet, he closed the door on them. The Removites fell asleep one by one; but it was a long time before the Bounder slept. And Harry Wharton, too, was wakeful for a long time. He could not help thinking of the strange encounter in the ruined chapel, and wondering what was the mystery of the man hiding in the subterranean passage, and whether the Neapolitan had found him. Once,

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NEXT

TUESDAY:

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an hour after midnight, as he was dropping into a doze, he heard a sound of loud barking in the Close, and he started up in bed.

It was Gosling's dog, evidently, and something had alarmed him. The barking continued for some minutes, and then ceased.

Did it mean that the Italian had tried to return, in spite of his word? Perhaps he had failed to find the ruined priory in the wood, or the opening under it, and had come back to recommence his search at Greyfriars. But if so, the dog had made him clear off, for the barking died away after a time, only an occasional whine telling that the watch-dog was still on the alert.

Wharton fell asleep at last, and dreamed of Italians, and organ-grinders, and spectro monks and dogs chasing ghosts in ruined crypts, till the rising-bell clanged out on the clear air of the April morning, and he woke to a fresh day.

THE CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Document.

HARRY WHARTON was out of bed at the first clang of the rising-bell that morning.

He was tired from his adventures overnight; but he was keen to get down to the crypt and discover whether there were any signs of the Neapolitan having returned, and also to find the lamp he had left there.

When he quitted the dormitory, a dozen fellows of the Remove went with him. Vernon-Smith did not come. He was no longer interested in the matter. But Bolsover and Snoop went with the party, to make sure that the lamp was really in the crypt, and that Wharton had really fetched it out of the subterranean passage.

Gosling was in the Close as they went out, and he was looking extremely ill-tempered.

"Top of the morning to yez, Gossy!" said Mickey Desmond cheerfully. "And phwy are yez looking so amiable?"

Gosling snorted.

"That blessed dog got loose last night, somehow!" he said. "I've 'ad a reglar job gettin' him back into the kennel. He was barkin' last night suthin' crool, to a pore man who wants a night's rest after a 'ard day's work!"

"Might have been burglars," suggested Ogilvy.

"Yes. I thort it might be them blessed Italians agin!"

said Gosling. "Wot I says is this ere, all furniners order be showin' into prison, I says! Why can't they keep in their own country. I says! That's wot I say!"

"After they came here to bring you beautiful music, too!" said Frank Nugent reproachfully. "They say that music hath charms to soothe the savage breast, but it doesn't seem to have that effect on a savage Gosling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gosling grunted, and the Removites walked round the School House to the ruined chapel. They stopped before the door of the crypt. It was blocked up, as the Neapolitan had left it the previous night.

That was a proof, at all events, that Cesaro had not returned and penetrated into the crypt. If he had come back, Wharton's device of letting loose the dog had been successful.

Harry Wharton drew away the wedges of stone, and opened the door.

Bob Cherry lighted a bicycle-lantern, and descended the stone stair, and the rest of the juniors followed him down.

The rays of the lantern glimmered in the blackness of the crypt.

On the floor, close by the foot of the stone stair, lay the broken acetylene lamp, and near it the lantern Wharton had used to light his way.

"There you are!" said Bob Cherry triumphantly. "Will any of you bounders say now that Wharton didn't fetch the lamp out of the passage?"

Bolsover gave a grunt.

"Well, I suppose he did!" he muttered.

"Well, yes," said Snoop. "Here it is! After all, it wasn't much of a thing to do! Anybody could have done it!"

"Yourself, for instance," grinned Nugent. "Why, you wouldn't have the pluck to go down the passage now, in the daytime!"

And Snoop held his peace. He knew that that statement was quite correct, and so did the other fellows.

"Hallo—hallo—hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

He ran across the crypt, and picked up a fragment of paper that lay upon the floor.

Wharton uttered an exclamation. He guessed that it was something that had dropped from the lurker in the crypt when he knocked him down off the steps.

"We haven't any proof that Wharton really met anybody down here," said Bolsover obstinately. "I expect that was

a case of nerves. Blessed if I know why anybody should stick in a rotten damp hole like that subterranean passage for nothing!"

"Rather steep, of course," agreed Snoop.

Bob Cherry held up the paper.

"Here's the proof, you duffers!" he exclaimed.

"What's that?"

"Let's see it, Bob."

The juniors gathered eagerly round Bob Cherry. There was writing upon the paper, in a heavy, foreign-looking hand. The capitals looked unlike English capital letters, although they were quite decipherable. But the language in which the lines were written was unknown to the juniors.

"Is it French?" exclaimed Nugent.

"No; I should know it if it were."

"Not German, anyway!"

"No fear!"

"It must be Italian!" said Harry Wharton. "I can't read it, but I know how it looks when written, of course. It's Italian, right enough!"

"But the Italian was outside the crypt, you said!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, in astonishment.

"This was dropped by the man who was playing ghost."

"Then he's an Italian, too?"

"Perhaps."

"Let's get it out into the daylight and have a good look at it!" said Bulstrode.

"Good egg!"

Much excited by their discovery, the juniors crowded out of the crypt and into the early sunshine in the ruined chapel.

There Bob Cherry smoothed the paper out on a flat stone, and the juniors spelled eagerly over the mysterious words.

"Ricerate nella Casa del Fauno in Pompei, abasso la sesta pietra passato la fontana, e voi la troverete."

That was all.

There was no signature.

The style of the handwriting showed that it had been written by a foreigner, and the language, as Harry Wharton had said, was certainly Italian.

But though most of the juniors could have read French, and had a good try at German, Italian was beyond their powers as linguists. Italian was not in the Greyfriars curriculum, and was not even among the extras.

"Well, we can't read it!" said Johnny Bull.

"Might get a 'Dago' dictionary and spell it out, I guess!" remarked Fisher T. Fish. "You can guess a lot of words in it. Fontana must mean fountain."

"And casa must mean house," said Nugent.

"And Pompei—that's a town in Italy."

"Place that was ruined by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the first century," said Ogilvy, who was strong on history. "Generally spelt with two I's at the end in this country—Pompeii. But it must be the same place."

"Pietra means stone," said Bob Cherry, after a long think.

"What does sesta mean?"

"Give it up."

"Sixth, I should think," said Harry Wharton.

"Very likely."

"We could get all the nouns and articles out of an Italian dictionary, but dictionaries don't conjugate the verbs," Ogilvy remarked thoughtfully. "And Ricerate is plainly a form of verb, and so is trovarete."

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll read it, somehow," said Harry Wharton. "It's a jolly queer document, anyway! And do you notice how queer the ink looks?"

"Sort of faded deep red ink," said Bob Cherry.

"Something more than that."

"What do you mean?" asked Bob, in a startled tone.

"Look at it closely."

Bob Cherry did so.

Then he shuddered.

"Can it be— But it's impossible!"

"I believe it is."

"Blood!"

"Good heavens!" muttered the juniors, in horror.

They scanned the paper anew, with shuddering interest. There should be little doubt about it. The dull red in which the paper was written was no ordinary ink. The fluid that had dyed the pen had been drawn from human veins.

"This is horrible!" Nugent muttered.

"Jolly interesting!" said Bob Cherry, after a pause. "Chap must have been out of reach of ink or pencil, and stuck a pen into his arm to write with it. Must have been a chap with a jolly nerve, too!"

"I should say so!" said Wharton, with a shudder. "And he must have considered it fearfully important to write this down, to take such a step to get his ink! What can it possibly refer to?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 217.

Read the grand new story of the "Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: **"TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!"** In this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale. 1d.

"Blessed if I know!"

"Buried treasure, perhaps," said Johnny Bull eagerly. "Chaps have found documents giving clues and things to buried treasure, you know!"

There was a laugh.

"There was a story, once, of a giddy Greyfriars treasure," Bulstrode remarked. "But I don't suppose that chap was looking for it down there, and I don't see why a clue should be written in Italian about it. Anybody know the Italian word for treasure?"

"Tesoro," said Frank Nugent, who had come upon the word in a song.

"Well, that isn't here."

"More likely the paper is a recipe for making macaroni," grinned Tom Brown.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then why does it mention a house in Pompeii?" said Harry Wharton.

"Perhaps it's a bakery."

"Ass! Pompeii is a dead city! Nobody lives there! It's been a dead and buried place for eighteen hundred years!"

"Longer than the memory of the oldest inhabitant," suggested Ogilvy, and there was a laugh.

"Well, we'll keep this paper, anyway," said Harry Wharton. "If the owner comes to claim it we may give it to him, if he can prove his claim. But if it's the chap who scared me last night, I'll jolly well give him a swollen nose as well!"

And the juniors returned to the School House for breakfast.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gone!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. thought a great deal over the peculiar incident of the crypt, and the finding of the in Harry Wharton's mind that when Mr. Quelch asked paper, during morning lessons. Indeed, it ran so much him where Magna Charta was signed, and by whom, he said it was by Felice Cesare, at Pompeii—an answer which made Mr. Quelch stare, and brought Harry Wharton a reward of a hundred lines.

The juniors talked amongst themselves about the paper, which Bob Cherry had handed to Wharton for safe keeping. Some of them attached importance to it, and some did not. But there was one who was very curious on the subject, and that was Vernon-Smith, when he heard of the mysterious document.

After morning school, the Bounder stopped Wharton in the Close. The Bounder's face was dark and bruised from the conflict in the dormitory of the previous night, and one of his eyes was partly closed. Wharton thought for a moment that he was about to recommence hostilities, but he was mistaken.

"I want to speak to you about—" the Bounder was beginning.

"Well, I don't want to speak to you!" said Wharton crisply.

Vernon-Smith flushed.

"It may be important," he said. "It's about those blessed Italians. I met that man, Felice Cesare, in the chapel ruins last night."

Wharton gave him a quick look.

"You admit that you were there, then, after all?" he exclaimed.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Evidently!" he said.

"You call!"

"Oh, we've had all that out!" said the Bounder impatiently. "You've hammered me, and I've done some hammering at you, and it's over. Let's talk sense. I was surprised in the chapel ruins by that fellow Cesare. He said there was a man hiding about Greyfriars—he suspected in the crypt or the underground passage—who had robbed him."

"Of what?"

"He didn't say what, but he said the fellow was an old Greyfriars boy."

Wharton whistled softly.

"That would account for a lot of things," he remarked.

"Yes. As I work it out, the man is in hiding because he's afraid of Cesare's knife," said the Bounder. "The rotter drew his knife on me."

"By Jove!"

"I shouldn't wonder if that paper is what he wants," said the Bounder—"the paper the fellows say you have in your pocket."

"It is possible," said Wharton slowly.

"Will you show it to me?" the Bounder asked.

"You cannot read Italian."

"No. I should like to make a copy of it, though, and I can get some chap to translate it to me," said the Bounder.

Wharton hesitated. "No," he said. "You admit that you shut me up in the crypt last night. After that, I think it's a rotten cheek of you to ask me anything. And the paper may be of importance; and until we know what it is about, I don't think it a good idea to let anybody take a copy of it. Afterwards, perhaps."

The Bounder set his teeth.

"You won't show it to me?" he asked.

"No, I won't."

Vernon-Smith turned on his heel and strode away.

Wharton rejoined Bob Cherry, and explained to him the Bounder's request.

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry. "Keep the paper, my son. If there's anything in it, it's ours, not Smithy's—and it looks as if he thinks there's something in it—and the Bounder is a jolly keen chap. We'll keep it to ourselves."

"Quite right!" said Frank Nugent. "I wonder if we shall come across that mysterious chap again? It's clear now who had our lunch-basket."

"Yes, that's clear."

"Vernon-Smith says he's an old Greyfriars boy," said Wharton thoughtfully. "That would account for a good many things. The Italian went off to look for him in the old priory last night. If he found him—"

Bob Cherry whistled.

"If he found him there was trouble, I should say."

Wharton's look grew very grave.

"The Italian chap helped me," he said, "but Smith says the man drew a knife on him. He seems a pretty desperate sort of character, anyway. We might take a trot along to the priory, and see whether—whether anything's happened there."

"Good egg!"

The chums of the Remove walked down to the gates. They were really feeling a little anxious, and were willing to risk being late for dinner.

They quitted the school gates, and took the footpath through the wood to the old priory.

They found it silent and still, with the April sunshine falling in floods into the old nooks and crannies, amid the shattered walls and windows.

"Nobody here!" Bob Cherry remarked.

The chums of the Remove looked round them.

The old priory certainly seemed to be quite deserted.

Harry Wharton pushed aside the screen of bushes that covered the old archway, and entered into the dark, damp aperture.

There was no one there.

The stone door leading into the subterranean passage was closed. Bob Cherry had brought his bicycle lantern, and he lighted it.

"Shall we have a look along the passage?" he asked.

Wharton nodded.

"We'll take a stick apiece with us," he said.

"Good idea; in case we meet his ghostship."

It was the work of a few minutes only to tear from the thicket three sticks. Then, with the lamp lighted, the chums of the Remove plunged into the subterranean passage.

Dark and noisome it seemed after the brilliant sunshine above ground.

There was no sound save that made by their own faint footsteps.

Was the mysterious lurker of the crypt still there? Wharton hardly thought so. After the meeting of the previous night, surely the man would know that he was discovered, and would go. Wharton felt that it would be his duty to acquaint the Head with the matter, unless he found out that the man was gone.

But the man was evidently gone. In the cell, in the centre of the underground passage, the juniors found signs of him. There was the lunch-basket they had lost the previous afternoon, and fragments of eatables and empty bottles round it. There was a monk's robe lying on the stone floor, just as it had been cast off.

The juniors stared at these relics. It came into Wharton's mind that the man in hiding had thrown off his disguise, and fled, immediately after the encounter in the crypt, feeling that his hiding-place was no longer secure.

He had succeeded in frightening the Bunters away by playing ghost, but he had doubtless realised that he would have more trouble with Wharton, and he had gone. Or he might have seen Felice Cesare or heard his voice. At all events, he was gone, and he had left the monk's robe behind him. The juniors looked at it; it was of a coarse and cheap cloth that was quite modern, and roughly stitched together.

"He made this himself," said Nugent. "Must have bought the cloth cheap somewhere, and cut this robe out and made it up. You see, it's only pinned in places, and that's a man's sewing, wherever it is sewn—clumsy enough. But it shows that the chap knew the story of the ghost of Greyfriars, to shove this disguise on at all."

"Well, we've got the lunch-basket," said Bob Cherry, picking it up.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

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Wharton turned his head suddenly in the direction of the passage to the priory.

"Hark!"

A footstep rang with a hollow sound in the stone passage. The juniors grasped their cudgels; they were ready for the ghost of Greyfriars if it appeared. A figure came into the circle of light from the lantern, and they recognised the Neapolitan, Felice Cesare.

The Neapolitan grinned at the juniors and raised his ragged hat.

"Buon giorno, signori!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "So it's you, is it? What the dickens are you doing here?"

"I saw you in the ruin yonder, signori, and followed. Last night I could not find the entrance here." The Italian's black eyes glittered upon the abandoned robe. "Ha, my dear friend is gone!"

He ran towards the robe, picked it up, and searched through it with quick, eager fingers.

He threw it to the ground again with an exclamation of disappointment.

"No; he has taken it. Addio, signori!"

And the Neapolitan hurried back the way he had come.

"What was he looking for, I wonder?" Nugent muttered. Wharton tapped his pocket, where the mysterious document reposed.

"This paper, I fancy," he said.

"My hat!"

"If it's his, he can have it, but he'll have to prove his right to it first," said Harry; "and we shall have to see the man who left it here before we know about that. I shouldn't wonder if we never see him again, though."

"He will come back to look for the paper, if it's valuable. He must miss it sooner or later," Nugent remarked.

"Good; and we may spot him. Well, there's nothing more to see here. It's pretty plain that Cesare didn't meet him last night. Let's get out."

And the chums of the Remove made their way out of the subterranean passage. They had found that the man who had played the ghost of Greyfriars was gone, and they wondered, as they retraced their steps to the school, whether they would ever see him again.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

At Close Quarters.

THE juniors were late for dinner, and they received twenty-five lines each from Mr. Quelch, which they took with great unanimity. After lessons that day they repaired to No. 1 Study, where they scanned the paper over and over again, striving to make out its meaning.

Again and again they read it over: "Ricerate nella casa del Fauno in Pompei abbaso la sesta pietra passato la fontana, e voi la troverete." What did it mean? To a fellow who knew Italian the meaning, of course, would have been clear at a glance. But to the juniors of Greyfriars it was a hopeless puzzle. With an Italian dictionary they might have made out some of it; but there was not such a volume, so far as they knew, in Greyfriars, and the only person in the school who knew the language was the Head, and naturally they did not entertain the idea of asking Dr. Locke to translate for them. He would have wanted to know how they came by the paper, in the first place; and they could hardly explain to the Head about the excursion to the crypt after lights out, and the rest of the story.

"Besides," Wharton said thoughtfully, "if this paper belongs to somebody, and holds a secret, we've no right to make it public. We shall have to know more about that before we show it to anybody who can read it."

And the other fellows agreed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were very keen to see the man who had evidently dropped the paper, and they thought it probable that he would return to search for it. With that idea in their minds, they visited the ruined priory after tea. The evenings were drawing out now, and it was still daylight when they strolled into the ruins in the heart of Friarland Wood.

The old priory was deserted. The juniors sat down to rest upon a shattered wall, as the sun sank lower behind the crest of the Black Pike.

Suddenly, from the gloomy archway that gave entrance to the vaults, they heard a sound.

Harry Wharton sprang up.

"Listen! He's there, by Jove!"

"Cover!" muttered Bob Cherry. "We'll watch the beggar as he comes out."

The juniors dropped quickly behind the wall. Through the broken brickwork they watched the bush-screened arch.

There was a rustle as the thickets at the entrance were parted from within, and a man stepped out into view. The juniors gazed at him eagerly.

He was a man of medium size, slimly built, with a pale and harassed-looking face. He glanced quickly to right and left as he emerged from the arch. He had an extinguished lantern in his hand, which he hid in a recess of the thicket, evidently to be used again on some fresh occasion.

He stood out clear in the light of the sunset, his brows corrugated with deep thought.

"He's been looking for the paper!" murmured Wharton. "Is he the man?"

"No doubt about that."

"Shall we speak to him—"

"Hold on! Look!"

A second figure appeared in the ruins, from the direction of the wood. The juniors recognised Felice Cesare.

The man who had emerged from the vaults evidently recognised him, too. He turned deathly white, and staggered back a pace.

"Cesare!"

His husky, scared voice reached the ears of the hidden juniors. It was easy to see that the man was a prey to mortal terror.

The Italian came towards him with a bound.

"Geoffrey Dorrain! At last!"

"Stand back! I—I am armed!"

Cesare gave a savage laugh.

He did not stand back. He was upon the other with the spring of a tiger, and the man he had called Geoffrey Dorrain went to the ground with a crash.

In another second the Italian's knee was upon his chest, and the swarthy hands were grasping at his throat.

The juniors rose quickly to their feet.

They were behind Cesare now, and he could not see them.

As they hesitated, the Italian's voice rang out savagely.

"The paper—the paper! Quick! Julio's paper!"

"I haven't it!"

"Liar! Why have you been hiding from me if you haven't the paper? Give it to me, or you shall never leave this place alive!"

"I—I have lost it!"

"Lost it!"

"In the passage there last night!" gasped Dorrain. "I swear it is true! I fled last night, after I was discovered there, and this morning I discovered that I had lost the paper, and I returned. Fool! Do you think that I should have returned here otherwise?"

"You had a copy?"

"No."

"But you had read it—you can tell me what was upon it!" cried the Neapolitan.

"Yes, yes; but—"

"Bah! You will lie to me!" exclaimed Cesare. "I know that! I must have the paper! You say you have lost it?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Where?"

"Somewhere in those accursed passages, or perhaps in the crypt—I don't know! Release me! I tell you I have not got the paper!"

"I shall search you—"

"You can search me, if you like!" said Dorrain sullenly.

The Neapolitan's eyes glittered savagely.

"If you have the paper I shall take it!" he said. "If you have not, I shall search in the passages for it; but I shall have no rival in the search. Do you understand? Capisco Lei? You have chosen to put yourself in this matter, to become my rival in the search for the treasure. You must die!"

Dorrain's face became ghastly.

"Are you mad? Would you murder me?"

"Sicuro!"

"You—you—The police—"

The Neapolitan laughed.

"The police will not find a body buried in those recesses, my amico! It is yourself to blame! Why did you interfere between Julio and myself?"

The Neapolitan was groping in his pocket for a weapon.

"Mercy!" shrieked Dorrain.

"Bah!"

The juniors of Greyfriars were spellbound for a moment with horror. This ruffian came from a land where life was held cheap—where the knife was the natural weapon of the bravo. Probably, in the narrow streets and alleys of his native Naples, the ruffian had laid more than one crime to his account. But it was only for a second that the juniors were petrified by the horror of it. As the Italian's hand came from his coat, they hurled themselves upon him.

Three strong pairs of hands grasped the ruffian, and he was dragged over backwards upon the broken flagstones.

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Read the grand new story of the

Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

Crash!

The fall half-stunned the Neapolitan. The knife, not yet opened, clattered from his hand upon the stones. The trio of juniors flung themselves upon him—Bob Cherry's knee was planted upon his chest, and Wharton and Nugent held his wrists in a grip of iron. The ruffian struggled, but he struggled in vain.

"You murderous hound!" exclaimed Wharton. "Hold him, you chaps!"

"We've got him!" said Bob Cherry breathlessly. "Keep still, you rotter, or we'll jam your napper on the stone, and keep you quiet!"

"Maladetto!"

"I suppose that's a swear-word in Italian!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Give him a crack on the napper, and shut him up!"

"Release me!"

"No fear!"

"I—I will go quietly!" said Cesare. "I—I will go away!"

It was but a joke; it was to frighten the fellow! I swear—

"You've sworn quite enough, and you can chuck it!" said Bob Cherry. "And you're telling lies, and you may as well chuck that, too!"

"Signorino—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Dorrain had staggered to his feet. He was white, and trembling in every limb. Wharton looked round at him.

"Don't be scared," he said; "we've got this brute! He can't do you any harm now."

Wharton's tone was not wholly without a touch of scorn. Dorrain was evidently not of the stuff of which heroes are made. There was not one of the chums of Greyfriars who would not have shown more courage.

"Thank you!" stammered the man. "You—you have saved my life! That horrible ruffian meant to murder me!"

"He will have to settle with the police for that, sir," said Bob Cherry. "We are witnesses. And there's his knife yonder!"

The Neapolitan turned pale. The ruffian, who did not shrink from any crime, changed colour at the mention of the police. Stranger as he was in England, and to British law-abiding ways, he knew enough to know that the knife cannot be used in Britain as in the mountains of Southern Italy.

"Signori!" he stammered.

"Shut up, you rascal!"

"Let him go!" said Dorrain. "I—I do not wish to prosecute him! Good heavens! I wish that I had never entered into this matter at all! I have lost the paper, and I have run all this frightful risk for nothing!"

"A paper written in red—in Italian?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. What do you know—"

"We have found it."

The man gave a cry.

"You have found the treasure clue!"

"Per bacco!" muttered the Neapolitan. "If I had known—"

"If you can prove that the paper is yours, you shall have it, sir," said Harry Wharton. "We found it in the crypt. I suppose you were the fellow I knocked down last night!"

It was you, then?"

"Yes."

The Neapolitan struggled.

"Signori, let me go!"

"We'll let you go to the police-station in Friardale!" said Bob Cherry. "We won't let you go anywhere else, you murderous villain!"

"Signori, prego—"

"Oh, cheese it! I don't understand that lingo, anyway! And you're going to the police-station, if you talk yards of it!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Dorrain. "Let him go!"

"But he would have killed you!" Wharton exclaimed.

"It is nothing! Let him go!"

The juniors looked at each other dubiously. It was evident that the man was afraid of the Italian—that he was too much afraid of him even to have him arrested.

"You'd better let us take him to the station, sir," said Wharton.

"No, no! I shall not charge him!"

"It will be safer for you not to do so!" grinned the Neapolitan. "And you, signorino, had better give me the paper!"

Wharton looked at him sternly.

"I shall not give it to you!" he said. "Even if it belonged to you, you have forfeited it by your action. But I know very well it is not yours."

"If he's going, take care of that knife," said Bob Cherry;

"and 'w'll kick him out of the place, so that he'll have something to remember us by."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

And the Neapolitan was allowed to rise to his feet. He looked savagely at the boys for a moment, but he could not hope to tackle three sturdy lads, with stout sticks in their hands.

"I go," he muttered; "but I shall return—"

"Sounds like Catiline's speech in the Latin lesson!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Now, let's dribble him as far as the wood!"

"Hurra!"

The three juniors ran out at the Neapolitan. If his intended victim refused to charge him, he could not be arrested; but they were not disposed to let him escape wholly without punishment. They charged him themselves—in another sense of the word. The Neapolitan turned to run, and as he did so, three heavy boots crashed upon him behind, and he went spinning forward.

"You!" he roared.

"Go it! Goal!" roared Bob Cherry.

But the Neapolitan ran like a hare, and the boots did not reach him again. With a final yell of rage, he disappeared into the wood.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Story of the Treasure of Vesuvius.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. turned back into the priory. Dorrian had sunk upon a shattered stone, and he was still very white. He had had a narrow escape, and it was evident that he was not a man of strong nerve. He was certainly, from appearances, the last man in the world to enter into a contest with a powerful, unscrupulous ruffian like Felice Cesare. He gave the juniors a haggard look as they rejoined him.

"He is gone!" he asked.

"Yes."

"Take care—he will not lose sight of you!" said Dorrian, with a shiver. "You do not know him; he is a bloodhound! For a week he has been tracking me, and I have hardly slept or ate. I wish from my heart that Julio Ciro had never given me the clue to the treasure of Pompeii!"

He paused for a moment. His eyes wandered uneasily round the ruins. He seemed to see the savage face of the Neapolitan in every shadow.

"Listen to me," he said. "If—if that man seeks the paper from you, give it to him. I do not ask you to return it— I have had more than enough of it! My nerves are shattered! I did not know it would mean this, or I would never have taken it from Julio Ciro!"

"But what is the blessed thing?" asked Wharton curiously. "It sounds like a giddy romance!"

The man shuddered.

"That paper was given me by a dying man—Julio Ciro, a native of Naples. He was a guide on Mount Vesuvius, and he discovered a hidden hoard of gold pieces there, buried, so he supposed, by some rich man during the revolutions in Naples. He did not dare to remove them, or to say a word on the subject lest he should be robbed and perhaps murdered by the others. But some of them—and especially this man Felice Cesare—came to suspect him, and he fled from Naples to save his life. He had a plan of returning there secretly, in some disguise, to remove the treasure, or of employing some Britisher whom he could trust, to do so for him.

"He had guided me once when I was travelling in Naples, and he knew my address in England, and came to me, and told me his story. He had nothing to prove it, true; but I knew he was telling the truth. After discovering the hiding-place of the gold on the mountain, he had drawn a chart, which he had hidden in the ruins of Pompeii, in a place where he could easily recover it if he wanted to. You understand that he dared not carry it about him—he might have been robbed of it at any moment. Twice, he told me, he had been seized and searched in Naples, and once nearly murdered."

The juniors of Greyfriars listened with breathless interest.

It seemed to them like a strange tale from some distant clime they found it hard to understand; it seemed to bring the far-off volcanic land of Southern Italy to their minds—a land where the hearts of the people are as volcanic and wild as their soil.

"He told me his story," said Dorrian, in a lower voice, "and then he left my house, and he was struck down in the road, a dozen yards from my window! I found him dying!"

"Good heavens!"

"I believe it was Cesare's hand that struck him down—I do not know. We came up too late to save him, and the assassin fled."

Dorrian gasped for breath. It was evidently in his mind

how he had narrowly escaped sharing the fate of the unfortunate guide of Naples.

"He was dying," he said. "But he wished to tell me his secret first; he did not want the treasure to lie unclaimed. And he wrote that paper down, with his failing strength, with a quill dipped in the blood from his wound. And then he expired."

"Poor chap!" said Bob Cherry.

"I kept the paper," said Dorrian. "It refers to the hiding-place of the chart in Pompeii; but I do not know Italian, and I have not read it. I should have had it translated to me, but I have had no time. Cesare has been on my track. He entered my room that night, and I narrowly escaped him. Against such a man the police could not protect me. I left my house, intending to make a secret journey to Italy. Thence I have had a narrow escape from death. And then I determined to go into hiding, and thus shake the bloodhound off my track."

"And so—"

"I was near this place then, and I knew he was near at hand. I had fled from my inn at the sight of him, and I knew he was close behind me; and I scaled the school wall at night, and so eluded him. I had brought some things with me, intending to hide in the subterranean passages. As I was an old Greyfriars boy, I knew all about the place; and I meant to play the ghostly monk if anybody should penetrate by chance to my hiding-place. That was why I made the robe you saw me in. And twice yesterday I was surprised in my hiding-place."

"First by Bunter, and then by me," said Wharton.

"I—I am sorry I frightened you. But I was more frightened myself, I think," said Dorrian. "At the sound of a step, I feared Felice Cesare. After you found me, I thought it must lead to searching, and I decided to go. I fled again from my hiding-place. But this morning I found that I had lost the paper. I returned for it. And you know the rest."

"And this paper contains the clue to the treasure-chart!" said Harry Wharton, taking the paper from his pocket and regarding it curiously.

Dorrian nodded.

"And you believe in the treasure?"

"Certainly! I believe it was not at all uncommon for people there to bury their money when there were public disturbances—and Naples has had more revolutions and wars than most countries, before it was joined to the kingdom of Italy. I have not the slightest doubt that the gold pieces are there; but I have no intention of looking for them," said Dorrian, with a shudder. "I will never touch that paper again. If I should go to seek the treasure on Mount Vesuvius now I should find Felice Cesare and a gang of his associates there, and my life would not be worth a moment's purchase."

"Nice cheerful sort of chap to run up against on a dark night!" remarked Bob Cherry, with a grin. "I wish I had a chance of going there with a dozen Greyfriars fellows! We'd risk Cesare and his friends and their pig-stickers!"

"What-ho!" murmured Nugent.

"Take care of yourselves!" said Dorrian. "You think that Cesare has gone; and I am quite certain that he is watching us at the present moment. He was watching me, unseen, when Julio Ciro gave me that paper written in his own blood. He is watching us now; and if you give me that paper I shall not reach Friardale alive."

"My hat!"

The juniors glanced round them uneasily. They could see no sign of the Neapolitan. But there was ample cover for the ruffian if he had returned to watch them.

"Then you do not want this paper, Mr. Dorrian?" asked Harry Wharton.

Dorrian shivered.

"I will never touch it again!"

"Findings keepings, if the owner doesn't want it!" said Bob Cherry. "It's ours! We'll get the Head to translate it to us, and have a go at the treasure in the vacation."

"What a ripping idea!"

Dorrian smiled faintly.

"I fancy your headmaster would hardly permit you," he said. "I think you will be quite safe. Keep the paper if you like; but my advice to you is to leave it here for the Neapolitan to find."

"No fear!"

"If you take it with you he will attack you in the wood before you reach the school."

"Good egg! Then we'll get in before dark," said Harry Wharton. "You're safe without the paper, and we'll risk Cesare. Good-bye!"

And the juniors quitted the ruins without delay.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret.

THE shadows were deepening in the wood as the juniors took the footpath that led back to the school. It seemed hardly likely to them that after what had happened the disarmed and defeated ruffian would linger to attack them. But Dorrian's warning made an impression upon their minds, and they were very much on their guard as they tramped along the darkening path.

But the man did not appear.

"No sign of him yet," said Bob Cherry, as the road came into sight and the glimmer of the lamp at the cross-roads came through the gathering gloom.

"No, but— Look out!"

From the bushes by the path a dark figure suddenly leaped.

It was fortunate that the juniors were upon their guard, for the Italian had a heavy bludgeon in his hand, and it was swinging upon them savagely. If they had been taken by surprise two of them at least would have fallen, stunned, before they knew what was happening, and the third would not have had much chance against the powerful ruffian.

But the chums of Greyfriars were on the alert.

Three cudgels went up in a flash to guard the savage sweep of the Neapolitan's weapon, and in the crash of the meeting weapons it was whirled from his hand and flew away among the bushes. His wrist was jarred by the shock, and he gave a cry of pain.

Crash!

Bob Cherry's stick came crashing upon the man's head; it was no time to stand upon ceremony, and the juniors' blood was up.

Felice Cesare reeled backwards.

Crash! Crash!

Wharton and Nugent struck at him, and he fell into the path.

There was blood upon his face now, and he lay gasping, at the mercy of the juniors he had savagely attacked.

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "You were let off once; but you won't be allowed to go this time!"

The Neapolitan groaned, and pressed his hand to his head.

"He has had rather a rapping!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"He might have killed us though—I don't believe the brute cared whether he did or not."

"The paper!" muttered Cesare hoarsely.

"Yes, we've got it, and we're going to keep it," said Harry Wharton. Dorrian is afraid to take it, but we're not. I've got it here!" He tapped his pocket.

The Neapolitan's black eyes blazed.

"I will have it, if it costs your life!" he hissed.

Wharton laughed scornfully.

"You don't seem to have been very successful so far," he remarked. "I think we shall be a match for you, you cowardly scoundrel."

"And a little over!" grinned Bob Cherry.

The ruffian groaned again.

"We'll march him to the station now, and charge him," said Nugent. "He will get three months for this, and give the police time to look into what Dorrian was speaking about. If the awful villain has committed a murder he will be punished for it."

"Good!"

The Italian made a sudden spring to his feet. He was certainly hurt, but not nearly so badly as he had pretended. He had failed in his attack upon the juniors, and he was only thinking of escape now.

"Collar him!" roared Bob Cherry.

The juniors rushed upon the Neapolitan.

But Cesare dodged them, and dashed into the thickets. They followed him a dozen paces, but the deep, dusky wood had swallowed him up.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wharton, halting. "It's a bit too risky to chase him in the dark. Let's go to the school, and the Head can telephone the police-station."

And the juniors went out into the road.

"I suppose we shall have to tell the Head about it now," Frank Nugent remarked, as they tramped away towards Greyfriars.

"Yes, rather! The police must know. They will want to look for that villain."

"He will bolt out of England if he has a chance," said Bob Cherry. "We may meet him again in Naples, if we have a chance of getting there in the vacation to look for the giddy treasure."

"We'll have a try, anyway," said Harry Wharton. "My uncle was going to take me on a long trip this vac, and he'd take me to Italy if I asked him. If you chaps could come, and Johnny Bull, too, it would make a splendid holiday; and if we bagged the treasure, that would be ripping!"

"We'll work it if we can," said Nugent. "And as we've

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got to tell the Head about this, anyway, we may as well ask him to translate the paper for us. He reads Dante and Tasso, so I suppose he can read this."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors reached the school, and made their way at once to the Head's study.

Dr. Locke was there, and he looked in some surprise at the dusty and excited juniors. He was still more surprised when he heard what they had to tell him.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "Extraordinary!"

"I thought we ought to tell you, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"The police ought to look for this Italian chap."

"Yes, indeed! I will telephone for them at once. I will also communicate with Mr. Dorrian, and persuade him to help the police as much as he can. I remember him very well; he was here when I was first headmaster of this school," said Dr. Locke.

"I remember he was always a very nervous lad. Wait a few minutes."

The juniors stood waiting while Dr. Locke rang up the police-station in Courtfield and communicated with the inspector in charge there.

He laid down the receiver at last and turned to the juniors again.

"Under the circumstances, Wharton, I shall say nothing about your expedition into the secret passage last night," he said. "It was a very reckless thing for you to do, and against all rules; but as you have told me of your own accord I shall say nothing about it."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I am very curious to see this paper you mention," said the Head.

Harry Wharton laid it upon his desk.

"We thought you might translate it for us, sir, as you know Italian," he said diffidently.

"Certainly, certainly!" said the Head.

He put on his glasses, and read over the paper. He uttered an exclamation of surprise:

"Dear me, dear me!"

The juniors watched him eagerly. It was curious to their eyes to see the Head take in at a glance the meaning of the written words, which were a mystery to them.

"You can read it, sir?" Wharton exclaimed eagerly.

"Quite easily!" Dr. Locke said, smiling.

"Oh, good!"

"I will write the translation out for you," said Dr. Locke, dipping his pen into the ink. "Look!"

He wrote a line:

"Search in the house of the Faun in Pompeii underneath the sixth stone past the fountain, and you will find it."

"It," said the Head, with a smile—"it" is evidently the chart you have spoken of, which indicates the precise spot upon Mount Vesuvius where the gold pieces are hidden—if, indeed, they are there at all. About that, of course, we know nothing. I have travelled in Naples, and I am aware that to the natives there the truth is quite an unknown quantity. They are a very pleasant people; but Baron Munchausen was a monument of veracity in comparison.

What use do you boys wish to make of this paper?"

"We hoped we might go to Naples in the vacation, sir, and search for the treasure," said Harry Wharton.

The Head smiled again.

"Yes, I guessed that," he said. "That would naturally occur to you. But that rests entirely with your parents and guardians. I do not know that there would be any danger, as this Italian ruffian is certain to be arrested in a few days at the most. But you will have to consult your people about it, of course. Keep the paper—it is yours."

And the juniors quitted the Head's study.

They did not speak again till they were within the walls of No. 1 in the Remove passage.

Wharton closed the door.

"We've read the clue, and we know where to look for the map!" he said. "Now, I've jolly well made up my mind that I'm going to Naples this vac., to look for the giddy treasure!"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

"We've got to bring pressure to bear on our people to get permission," said Harry. "My uncle will be quite willing to take three or four fellows with me when he takes me abroad this vac. And I think I shall get him interested in this treasure hunt—he's an old sport, you know. We've got to work it."

"Hear, hear!"

And so the juniors made up their minds. But whether that trip to the land of the scorching sun and the volcano was ever to come off was another matter!

THE END.

(Next week's grand long complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars is entitled "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy in advance.)

"TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!" in this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale. 1d.

OUR GRAND SERIAL STORY I

CHING-LUNG
IN THE
FORBIDDEN
LAND.A Wonderful Story
of Ferrers Lord,
Millionaire,
Rupert Thurston,
and Gan-Waga.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-Dunjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into the Forbidden Land, when, on reaching a Tibetan village ruled by an Irishman named Barry O'Rooney, they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. Things are looking serious for the party when they are rescued by Ferrers Lord's wounded aide, the Lord of the Skies. They are flying over the crater of an extinct volcano. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeronaut out of the crater into an underground lake. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeronaut out of the crater into an underground lake. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeronaut out of the crater into an underground lake.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ching-Lung's Gorilla Hunt.

"Oi'll have him in a minute," Barry O'Rooney thought, clenching his teeth, "and then Oi'll scarify him!"

"Nice apples, hunk!" said Gan-Waga. "Butterful, eh? You like 'em, hunk?"

"Loike 'em?" Barry said nearer still. "Whoy, Oi could live on 'em!"

"Yo' are funny man!" Gan-Waga looked at him with deep interest. After a pause, he said:

"Dat lubbly po'try yo' tell me—how she depart?"

"Depart, yez ass? Yez manes how does she go."

"Same t'ing," answered Gan-Waga. "Yo' not able go widout departin'. I never forget her. She too much butterful and sad. Make tears come drippity-drippin'. I say it now, but must cry doin' her:

"On'y to see butterful mug again,
On'y to hear butterful smile;
On'y to give one butterful gift,
Me run ten billion mile."

And, remarking "Dere butterful gift!" Gan whipped the melon from behind him, hammering it down on Barry's head, and went flying towards the village.

The last straw breaks the camel's back, and that last present of fruit broke Barry O'Rooney. He was utterly defeated. All his anger gave place to anguish.

Vanquished and sad, he scraped the sticky stuff away, and stared about him in misery.

No doubt it served him right for attempting to frighten a poor, innocent, ignorant savage of an Eskimo.

He began to wonder where the innocence and ignorance came in. There was no doubt that it was all on his side.

He, and not Gan-Waga, had been the dupe. Sick and sad, O'Rooney put his knife away. He was in such a horrible condition of stickiness that he was afraid to go back to the village.

How the men would laugh and chaff! Beaten by the innocent Gan-Waga! He writhed at the thought.

"There's one thing about it," he sighed, "Oi can punch 'em as they rub ut in too hard; but, for the loife o' me, Oi wouldn't be seen loike this. What's to be done? Should Oi go down to the river?"

He could wash his clothes there, and they would quickly dry in the sun.

With slow and painful step he limped into the woods. The moment his figure vanished Ching-Lung darted out, guessing O'Rooney's purpose, and ran headlong to the village.

And as he ran he bit the bullets out of half a dozen Mauser cartridges, leaving the cases blank and harmless.

Quick as thought he snatched up several rifles, and, making sure that the magazines were empty, put a blank cartridge into the breech of each.

"Maddock!" he yelled. "Joe! Where are you?"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order early.

Three men came running out of Barry's house.

"Come quick!" said Ching-Lung, in great excitement.

"There's a gorilla in the woods!"

"A gorilla?"

"It must be. I saw a great, shaggy brute there. Take these rifles—they're loaded. Have you got any cartridges? No? It doesn't matter, for I have plenty. Come along! Hurry up, or we'll lose him! Run as if the police were on your track!"

The thought of a hunt lent them wings. It was not long before they gained the belt of woodland.

Ching-Lung felt sure that O'Rooney would keep in the open spaces as much as possible, and take the nearest way to the river.

To an eye even less skilled than Ching-Lung's the Irishman's track was perfectly plain.

"Don't make a noise, lads! We mustn't startle him!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when Maddock trod on a basking snake that glided away with such an angry hiss that the startled bo'sun could not restrain a yell.

O'Rooney, plodding dismally towards the river, heard it, and turned pale.

Crouching down, he waited to find out the meaning of it. A moment later his heart sank.

He saw four of his comrades advancing direct for his hiding-place. He would have forfeited his whole year's salary rather than have been discovered.

His one chance was to fly, and he took it.

But he was seen.

"There he is, lads—there he is!" shouted Ching-Lung.

"A gorilla, by Jupiter!"

"After him—after him!"

O'Rooney absolutely hurled himself through the undergrowth, and the shouting pursuers came crashing after him.

To his horror, the Irishman saw a broad, verdureless glade before him. If he tried to cross that he must be seen. It was too late to double, for they were close behind.

"Oi'll monkey for ut," groaned Barry, "or Oi'll doie!"

He climbed the first convenient tree. There was dense foliage above, but they seemed a terrible distance from the ground.

He had hardly shinned up the smooth trunk a dozen feet before the hunters broke from cover.

"There he is!"

Three rifles cracked, and were answered by a terrible yell. The shaggy monster slid down into a thorn-bush.

"Don't go near for a minute!" cried Ching-Lung warningly. "They are terrible brutes, and he may be only wounded."

And then the jaws of three of the hunters dropped and the blood fled from their cheeks as a muffled voice from among the thorns wailed:

"Wounded, is ut? Ow, murder, Oi'm dead! Oi'm shot through the heart, and me blood is on yer souls!"

Relates How Barry O'Rooney was a Cold but Lively Corpse, and How the Hunters Fell into a Real Hornet's Nest.

Ching-Lung could not restrain himself any longer. Dropping his rifle, he threw his arms round the trunk of a slender tree, and laughed until the tears came.

His strange conduct horrified the men more than ever. They thought the terrible discovery that they had murdered a human being had turned his brain.

None of them stirred. Suddenly Ching-Lung dashed his hand across his eyes.

"It's all right!" he said, in a hoarse whisper. "We've not hurt him. The cartridges were all blanks. It's O'Rooney. He fancies he's shot. Listen to him!"

"Then—then it's only a joke, sir?" gasped Maddock.

"That's all. Gan-Waga threw a lot of sticky stuff over him, and he was off down to the river to wash."

Three eyes closed in three knowing winks, and six rows of teeth grinned with delight.

"I suppose it's safe now, sir?" said Maddock. "I fancy the brute's dead!"

A hollow groan rose from the thorns.

"Oh, yes, O'Rooney dead, and me blood is on yer sows!"

"Good gracious, sir! I believe it's a man!"

"A corpse, yes, me says!" wailed the hollow voice. "O'm shot in noine places. Oh, murther—murther!"

Ching-Lung's teeth began to chatter.

"Great m-mercy, boys!" he panted. "What does it mean?"

It was an ape! Did our eyes deceive us?"

"N-n-no, sir. I—I see'd his shaggy 'air'!"

"And it 'ad a tail!"

"Don't tell no loies!" groaned the voice. "O'i ain't got no tail. Tell no loies, but lave me to rist. Bedad, don't dishonour the mem'ry of a murdered martyr, whose blood is on yer sows! Avaunt wid yez, and take the last curse of a dead, cowlid corpse!"

Ching-Lung clutched his temples wildly.

"This is an awful country!" he groaned. "It's a case of the transmigration of souls that these priests teach. The soul of some poor man—a Frenchman—"

"It's a loie!" said the muffled voice. "O'i'm not a Frenchman!"

"Has got into this ape," went on Ching-Lung, "and the ape—"

"Ut's another loie! O'i'm no ape, but a corpse!"

"Let us fly!" said Maddock. "My 'air's standin' on end, sor!"

"Floy, yez murtherers!" roared Barry. "Floy, and lave me murdered corpse to doie in pace!"

"It's coming—oh, it's coming!" shrieked Ching-Lung, in accents of horror.

Uttering cries of dread, the four men huddled together and clung to each other. The thorns began to crackle, and the awful face of the corpse appeared.

"Faint, chaps!" whispered Ching-Lung.

He set the example by swooning gracefully. The others dropped to the ground, and lay there apparently senseless.

Barry thrust out his head, and eyed the four motionless figures vacantly.

"Ut's a queer sensation to be a corpse!" he muttered.

"O'i wonderer as all corpses grow whiskers loike O'i do?"

O'i've at laste noine bullets inside me. Now, am O'i dead, or am O'i not?"

He felt his back carefully with his hand.

"Anyway, bein' shot at is an aisy d'ith, for O'i don't faul much pain, O'i'd better write a few loines to tell 'em where O'i put me will, and to let 'em know that O'i want brass handles on me coffin, and not them ugly black things. O'i must be a ghost, at laste, or they wouldn't have dropped down loike that at seein' me. Faith, O'i'll haunt that gentleman wid the pigtail iv'y noight for fifty years!"

Ching-Lung moaned softly. Barry felt his fancied wounds again.

"Bedad!" he said, gasping with astonishment. "O'i must be bullet-proof! O'i don't believe O'i'm hurt at all, at all. And they couldn't have missed, for they weren't ten yards away. Faith, this is a knockout! O'i must be a livin' corpse, and O'i'm badly in need of a wash. O'i'll lave 'em to slape ut out."

He crawled painfully out of the thorn-bush, still feeling himself over for possible bullet-wounds, and made for the river.

He was beginning to think it was all a dream from first to last. When he was out of sight, the four men awoke from their swoon and doubled up with laughter.

"Let's follow him!" said Ching-Lung. "I want to see the end of this!"

The others were quite as eager as himself. Taking care to keep out of sight and to make no noise, they took up the pursuit. The river flashed through the trees, glowing in the vivid sunshine.

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Read the grand new story of the

Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: "TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!"

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"He's talking to himself!" whispered Ching-Lung. "Go steady!"

They could hardly restrain their mirth when they came within view of the Irishman. He was sitting on a log, smoking his pipe, engaged in conversation with an enormous frog that was perched on a stone opposite him. The frog was not in the least alarmed, and it watched Barry stolidly.

"Misther Frog," said the Irishman, "afere O'i had the supreme joy of mating a sensible gentleman loike yerself, O'i was carefully thinkin' the matter over. O'i must admit, between yerself and me, that whin thim guns went off, and O'i alithered down, O'i thought O'i was a gonner."

"Now, here's the argument. O'i was about tin yards away from the guns. They missed me. Considerin' the matter, O'i've niver seed Misther Ching-Lung miss at three hundred yards. Why did he miss, and why did the others miss? As a yaller gentleman of deep larin', O'i put the question."

"C-croak!" remarked the frog.

"Hoax, did yez say? Me dear sor, O'i belaves yez. Ut was a hoax—that faintin' was a hoax. That wretch of a Gan-Waga towld thim, and they started to hunt me. Bedad, sor, but O'i'll be avin wid the rogues—O'i'll be avin wid thim! Misther Frog, O'i should loike to shake yez boie the hand. There's a janus about yer remarks that shows talent. Well, good-boie to yez! O'i'm plazed to have met yez!"

The frog dived into the water, and Barry began to undress.

He took off his outer garments, and began to wash them.

When he had managed to get rid of the stickiness, he looked round to make sure that there were no alligators in the vicinity, and decided to have a swim.

And as he removed his nether garments he sang merrily:

"Av O'i was a merman bold,

Livin' at the bottom o' the sea,

O'i'd have oysthers enough for supper,

And cartloads of shrimps for tea."

Then he balanced himself for a moment on the bank, and dived into the cool water.

"What's that buzzing sound, sir?" asked Maddock.

"It sounds like bees, answered Ching-Lung. "I've been wondering what it was myself."

He crept towards the edge of the bank. O'Rooney was out of sight, but he seemed to be enjoying himself by the way he splashed. Again he broke into a song suitable to the occasion, for Barry was fond of dropping into song and poetry:

"Av O'i was a merman bold,

With a tail instead of fate,

Ut would puzzle me to climb a ladder,

And, be jabbers, ut would dummock me to skate!"

The buzzing sound grew louder. Ching-Lung glanced up, and saw a large hornet's nest in the fork of a tree above his head.

And then the spirit of mischief entered him again, and fickle Fortune favoured him.

A long stick was lying close at hand. Peeping over the bank, he saw Barry floating on his back in the middle of the river.

Ching-Lung whipped garment after garment upon the end of the stick, and hung them on a branch just over the hornet's nest.

All he left was Barry's boots and shirt. Then he dropped the stick into the river, and saw it swirled away by the current.

"I'll take him some time to find a stick as long as that," he thought. "There's another in the whole wood. Poor old Barry! It's a shame to rub it in like this; but he's tried to do me a time or two. I'll make it up to him. As Lord says, 'Whatever will become of me?' I must have been born under a mad star!"

He heard a sniggering in the bushes, and sniggered himself. Barry was unconsciously singing another of his ditties, and the ditty was quite appropriate. His lusty voice rang from mid-stream:

"Av O'i sat down on a wopse's nist,

And the wopsees said, 'What cheer?'

D'y'ez think O'i'd stay to say 'Good-day?'

No, no, me lads—O'i'd clear!"

Chuckling, grinning, and sniggering, they waited for the swimmer to come ashore. He arrived glistening, and Ching-Lung could not help admiring his muscular strength of limb and development of chest. He lighted his pipe again, dried himself in the sun, and then pulled on his shirt.

Not till then did he discover the absence of his clothes.

"Where, in the name o' jumpin' jellyfishes!" he gasped. "What's become o' me duds?"

He glared round him, and sat down to think. At that moment Maddock sniggered.

"Oh," thought O'Rooney, "O' heard that! Very good, me boys! So yez are heidin', are yez?" The snigger came from the bushes, and an upward glance revealed the hornets' nest and his clothes. Barry picked up a Boulder.

"Now, yez rascals," he roared, "come out, or O'll be after droppin' this among yez!" Further concealment was useless, and they rose to their feet roaring with laughter, in which Barry joined.

"Bedad," he grinned, "it's a purty joke—a purty joke!" "Good old chap!" said Ching-Lung. "You take it well!" "Oh, O don't moind!" laughed Barry. "O'm always happy, even

"Av Oi sat down on a hornets' nest, And the hornets said, 'What cheer?' D'yez think O'd stay to say 'Good-day'?" No, no, me lads—no blessed fear!"

They were under the tree. Barry flung off his shirt, hurled the stone right into the centre of the nest, and dived headlong into the river.

The nest fell, and with it thousands of infuriated insects. Barry had scored. There was no escape but by plunging into the stream, and into it they rolled.

Preparations for the Ascent—Some Poetry and a Hen-Hunt—Spinning Yarns—Where is the Aeronaut?—Despair—The Globe of Fire.

Luckily, the hornets did not pursue, but all the men took care to keep under water as long as possible. Barry was mightily pleased with himself. His neat little trick made amends for a good deal, and he could hardly conceal his delight when the heads of his tormentors bobbed up one by one. They laughed, too, and, following Ching-Lung's lead, shook hands with the Irishman.

They landed about a quarter of a mile lower down, after splashing and shouting to scare off any alligators that might have been in the vicinity. As it would have been risky to go back for O'Rooney's clothes before nightfall, Maddock set off to the village for others, while Barry remained in the shade. The sun was so powerful that it would have blistered his skin had he walked back unprotected.

Maddock returned after a short delay. The little aeronaut had made the second voyage successfully, and had commenced the third. However, at present, Hal Honour's vessel was saving lives, and not luggage. The clothes the bo'sun had managed to get hold of were a weird and strange lot. It was hard to say whether Barry looked more like a tramp in very low water or a walking scarecrow when he had got them on. The aeronaut showed as a black speck against the snow of the great peak. They watched her until she dropped out of sight into the tunnel.

"Strange! Strange!" muttered O'Rooney, shaking his head. "Mighty wonderful indade!"

"What's mighty wonderful?" "Why, all that's happened sin' yez arriowed to disturb the peaceful country loife of a poor little orphaned Oirish boy loike me! Dear, dear, dear! All was pace and joy till yez came to worrit an Oirish boy. But, bedad, sin' yez came ut ain't been the same, and that's what Oi calls a howlin' shame. There's original poetry for yez! Doesn't ut foire yer sowla?"

They all groaned sadly and deeply. "It's beautiful," sighed Ching-Lung; "but it's rather risky to take on an empty stomach."

"That's jest what me swate ould grandmother said about grub whin there wasn't anythin' to ate in the mansion we used to inhabit, barrin' a thrille for the pig. But, as Oi was remarkin' afore the poetry got howld o' me, ut's strance indade. Firrst ut's Hector's ghost, thin a foight wid Sthorland Sahib. Thin that big birrd comes along, and Oi take a roide on him. Av coorse the birrd starts to moult, and dropps me down a coal-mine. Next Oi become a collier, and after that a gorilla. Och! Ut's a quare loife. Loife is raal, loife is funny, loife in gaol is rather tame; loife ain't bad wid lot's o' money, loife widout's an orful game. Loife

"Pump on him and choke him before I lose my reason!" moaned Ching-Lung. "Barry, have pity on us!"

"Look here, Mr. O'Rooney," said Maddock solemnly, "we're desperate men."

"What was the last wurd, plaze?"

"Men!" yelled Maddock. "Men, not gorillas!" "Oh, go on, Oi begs yer pudden! Min—eh? Oi'm listennin'!"

"We're desperate men!" roared Maddock. "And, by hokey, sir, be careful, or we'll not leave yer enough life to fill a thimble. Don't go too far! Our blood is up!"

O'Rooney coughed and murmured:

"Their blood is up,
So is the moon;
Black puddens will
Be cheapish soon."

Then they fell upon him, flung him to the ground, and rolled him for twenty yards like a barrel. Barry swore to be good, and never to offend again until the next time. They would have rolled him home, only the sight of a few wandering fowls reminded them that they were hungry. A hot chase ensued, and ended in the capture of three roosters. The air had given them amazing appetites.

Everything they had left behind had been looted by the thieving natives. Mules, ponies, rifles, clothing, ammunition, and medicine—all had vanished. Ching-Lung chuckled as he thought of the medicine. If the thieves indulged too freely in the pills and drugs they would certainly regret it.

It all depended now on the millionaire's plans. Even the engineer could not manufacture ponies, and without them the expedition must come to a standstill. They might, of course, be able to purchase mounts and baggage-animals somewhere close at hand; but when Ching-Lung mentioned it to Barry, the Irishman shook his head.

"But there must be plenty of ponies in Tibet," said Ching-Lung, "and money is money."

"Beggins' yer honour's pardon," said O'Rooney, "money ain't, and O'll tell yez why. Ut is money, and ut ain't money. Av that spalpeen Sthorland Sahib manes no more mischief we can buy horses, but av he manes mischief niver a horse will all yer goold buy widin a hundred moile o' this swate spot. Av he tells 'em not to sell to us, sell they daren't, for he'd shoot 'em down av they did."

"It seems strange that he should have such power." "Wait a mo', sor! Oi know a stranger thing than that. Av ut wasn't for the prastes Tibet 'ud be a good country and a rich wan." Sthorland Sahib manes to be king of it some day."

THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY PUZZLE CORNER.

NEW FEATURE!



PUZZLE No. 1.—How can you tie up a friend with eight or nine inches of string, so that he is perfectly helpless?

To do this, make a slip-knot at each end of your eight inches of string. Ask your friend to lie face downwards, bring his hands behind him, and passing each loop over his respective little fingers, pull the knots taut. Do not have more string than you require to connect one finger with the other. Then bring up the young man's feet, and slip them under his pinioned hands. This will fix him nicely, unless your knots are poor ones.

PUZZLE No. 2.—Hand a friend an ordinary medicine bottle and an ordinary straw. Challenge him to lift the bottle by the straw without first tilting the bottle. When he has declared the feat impossible, bend the straw and slip it into the bottle. It will fix in the "shoulder" of the bottle, enabling you easily to bring off the trick.



PUZZLE No. 3.—How can you cause a coin, placed beneath an inverted tumbler to disappear without touching the coin or the glass?

PUZZLE No. 4.—How can you balance a penknife on the edge of the blade only without forcing the blade into the wood?

(The answers to the above puzzles will be printed, with explanatory diagrams, on this page in next Tuesday's MAGNET Library. Meanwhile, try to solve them yourself.)

Ching-Lung went on plucking the fowl thoughtfully. After all, even if the bandit succeeded, and conquered Tibet, it would not be so wonderful. Mahomet, who conquered practically three-quarters of the then known world, was only a poor merchant. Napoleon was nothing; and in China, his own country, more than one rebel had made himself an emperor. Renegade though he was, Storlad Sahib was a man of pluck and power. If he won it would have been good for Tibet. He would quickly drive out the priests. But would he be satisfied with Tibet, or would he be always harassing the Indian and Chinese frontiers?

"Hallo, old poultry-picker!" cried a cheery voice, that roused Ching-Lung from his reverie.

He looked up, and saw Thurston.

"Hallo, Ru, my Little Boy Blue!" said Ching-Lung. "Hast thou arivenest? What news from yonder coal-mine?" "Everything famous, my boy, and everybody fine. They'll be all above ground in a couple of hours."

"Indeed, the tidings thou bringest are O.K., sweet youth! And here's my only Benjamin Maddock, looking as fresh as a smoke-dried haddock, ready to cook some grub. What-ho! Tom, art thou here also? Seize that other cockerel, and get the fool off his ribs. The question is, did you bring any grub?"

"We had some just before we left."

Barry heaved a sigh of relief that sounded like water being poured down a grating. There were six of them already to dine off three fowls, and if the others had been hungry it would have been a wretchedly poor meal.

The aeroplane was once more rising towards the peak, with the indomitable engineer at her helm.

"We've no bread, and no spuds," said Maddock, sighing. "I ought to have told Mr. Honour to bring some."

"By Jove, it's not too late yet!" cried Rupert. "How's the sun? I'll soon let him know, if he'll only look back. Lord gave the things to me just as I was starting, in case I should want to signal."

He took a couple of mirrors out of his breast-pocket.

"Good old heliograph!" laughed Ching-Lung. "I can work it. Toss it over, sonny."

"Plaze moind yez don't give the koind gentleman sunstroke," said O'Rooney.

Holding one mirror against his breast and the other in his left hand, Ching-Lung caught the light with the latter, and reflected it on to the first brilliantly. Then, by manipulating the mirror in his left hand, he sent out a series of long and short flashes from the other. The message read:

"Please bring some bread and spuds. We are starving. Thank you."

"She's stopped," said Thurston, watching the vessel through his field-glasses. "He's signalling with flags."

"Can you make it out?"

"I can make out 'Re-re'."

"Repeat," I'll bet. He didn't understand at first. I'll make it shorter."

And the mirror flashed out:

"Bring back rations."

"He's signalled 'Yes,'" said Rupert; "and she's moving again. Why, you'll have the stuff before the fowls are cooked. How beautifully he manages her!"

"Did yez remember the whisky, sor?" asked O'Rooney mounfully.

And they all laughed.

A great roaring fire was built, for the ruined house was dismal without one, despite the glorious sunlight outside. They were like men delivered from a living grave, and so light-hearted and merry that even a feeble joke raised a laugh.

It was impossible to imagine a man who could recover his spirit more quickly than Barry O'Rooney. He had already forgiven Gan-Waga for throwing a small fruiterer's shop at him, and he screamed as loudly as anybody when the story of the gorilla and the "doiein" corpse was told. And, before the listeners had finished holding their sides, the drone of screws was heard, the fowls were done to a turn, and the gallant little aeroplane had rescued another batch of men from their gloomy prison in the heart of the great mountain.

One journey more and all would be saved. They cheered the gallant engineer as the little vessel again rose in the air and winged her way towards the peak. She was working splendidly. Every scrap of her machinery ran without a single hitch. Built as she had been built, she was a masterpiece.

Ching-Lung and his hungry comrades soon made short work of the fowls, and, with pipes alight, they gathered round the fire to spin yarns. O'Rooney told them a ghost story of a most blood-curdling and hair-raising kind. The spectre used to appear on a dark bridge near his native village with its head under its arm, wail "Blood! Blood! Blood!" throw

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 217.

Read the grand new story of the "Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled: "TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!" In this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale. 1d.

its head into the river, and then dive after it, and then vanish with a hollow plunge.

It was a long yarn, but O'Rooney told it well. Then Prout gave one, and Maddock gave one. Not to be outdone, Joe related a thrilling tale, which he called "The Purple Poodle; or, the Mystery of the Gore-stained Gridiron." He was just at the exciting part, where the bad villain was going to throw the hero off the top of St. Paul's at a hot-potato man, who was just passing, when Ching-Lung jumped up.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "What time is it?"

"Nearly seven," said Rupert, looking at his watch.

Then the aeroplane ought to have been here long ago—two hours ago!"

He darted out of the house, and a sudden feeling of alarm sprang up in every heart.

What was the reason of this long delay? Had some accident occurred to the machinery of the aeroplane?

The others hurried into the yard. The crimson sun was just hanging like a fireball over the western hills. It tinged their anxious faces with red, and threw long shadows. The snow of the peak was like blood, but no moving speck appeared upon it. Stars were beginning to tremble faintly in the deep expanse of heaven.

"What can have happened, Ching?" whispered Thurston.

"Perhaps nothing at all. I hope so fervently."

"But—"

"Hush, old chap! Hush!"

The same horrible thought was in the minds of both, but the idea was too dreadful. Could there have been a recurrence of the strange, natural phenomena that had caused the wreck of the Lord of the Skies? Had the little aeroplane been robbed of all her power when in the very act of mounting the shaft, to be hurled back into the abyss shattered and ruined? If so, where were the two gallant men who had planned and built her and given her life?

In silence they gazed at the peak, fear and doubt in their eyes. The crimson faded to yellow, the yellow to grey, and huge masses of shadow gathered among the crags. Despair began to fill their hearts. Gan-Waga sat on the ground, moaning and rocking himself to and fro.

"Maddock, Prout, Rupert."

Ching-Lung beckoned the three men he could trust the most, and they followed him into the gloom.

"Well?" asked Thurston anxiously.

"I am afraid it is far from well, my lads," answered Ching-Lung. "Something is amiss. Knowing how terribly anxious we should be, the chief would never have delayed so long if all had been right. Let us take the most hopeful view of the case."

"Which is that, sor?" Prout muttered sadly.

"That some trifling accident has happened to the machinery of the aeroplane; one that, though not serious, may take a long time to repair. We can do nothing."

"That is the bitter part, Ching. At least, we can do nothing to-night."

"But she may turn up," said Maddock.

"Depend upon it they will, unless—"

"Hush, hush, Rupert!" said Ching-Lung, laying his hand on his friend's arm.

Thurston bit his lips, but all knew the unspoken words were "unless they are dead." Surely Providence would not permit the two splendid men who had toiled so gallantly with brain and hand for the rescue of their comrades to die in their hour of triumph?

There was one thing certain, and like a star of hope. Only death or grave injuries could keep Ferrers Lord and Hal Honour prisoners for long. Difficulties and obstacles that would have been insurmountable to ordinary people were child's play to these two giants of science.

"I know one thing," said Prout, "and, by hokey, it's as sartin sure to me as I'm sartin sure I see that star up yonder!"

"What's that, Tom?"

"That they'll let us know what's happened, your 'ighness," answered Prout sturdily. "I don't know 'ow they'll do it, but they will do it. Mark my words, we'll hear from them."

"If we don't, we'll find them," said Ching-Lung. "Living or dead, we'll find them or die ourselves."

"We will," they answered, "if we've got to tunnel through the mountain."

There was no more yarn-spinning, and no more laughter. Darkness fell, but it did not bring the aeroplane. A bright moon rose. Yellow-faced Mongols peered in at them through door and window, but they fled when O'Rooney rapped the floor with his stick.

"Barry," whispered Ching-Lung at last, "we must start to climb the mountain to-morrow."

The Irishman nodded.

"So we must, sir; but moighty few'll iver rache the top, and fewer still will come back. Ut's a dith-thrap!"

"That is what we cannot tell, but we must go. Where can we get ropes?"

"O'il find them, sor, av yez'll give me yer company." Most of the villagers who had fled before Storlad Sahib had returned to their miserable hovels. Barry bored a hole in the handle of his cudgel, and fastened it to his wrist with a piece of string. Prout, certain that the millionaire would find some means of communicating with them, had appointed himself a sentry.

"If we had only brought the wireless telegraphic apparatus with us!" thought Ching-Lung a dozen times.

But regrets were useless. The apparatus had been left behind, and quick and desperate action must be their watchword. If they could reach the mouth of the shaft, Ching-Lung knew that he could send a message to Ferrers Lord and Hal Honour, if only death had not sealed their eyes and closed their ears for ever.

His plan was a simple one. Out of a few old newspapers he had already constructed a small parachute, which he had weighted accurately. He intended to let this float down the shaft. A light, caused by a rag soaked in petroleum, would be attached, which could not fail to attract the attention of the imprisoned men if only death had spared them.

He set out with O'Rooney, and they forced their way into the nearest cottage by the simple method of kicking down the door. The filth and squalor of the place sickened Ching-Lung. A man, wretched in health, and almost mad from smoking the deadly opium, told them that no ropes were to be had in the village.

"Then we must do without," said Ching-Lung. "Impossible, sor. O've heard tell that ut's a dangerous job to climb little anthills loist Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in Europe, and they're only mole-haps to that peak. Ropes we must have. There's an ould thafe of a fisherman livin' beyant the river, and he's sartin to have ropes."

"Let us go to him at once." "Not much, sor," answered Barry, with a wink. "Why walk whin yez can roide? O'il send some o' these yaller blackguards at wance. Bedad, and won't I throunce 'em av they ain't quick?"

Barry went into the street, and began to yell horribly. Three or four men came running out, and brandishing his cudgel, O'Rooney drove them into a corner. His language was more forcible than polite.

"Sons of dogs!" he bellowed. "Pigs, reptiles, vermin, weasels, rats, listen to me! Go to the house of Kiraz-shadjar, and bring all the ropes yez can find. Say I need them, and if he refuses, feed the crocodiles with his carcase. Go, ye monkey-faced, unclean fools! I am the Khan. Obey, or, by Bah!"

O'Rooney gave them a tap on the head all round as a reminder of what they might expect, and they started off in the moonlight. Ching-Lung, who understood the language fairly well, could not help smiling.

"You're not very soothing or gentle, Barry." "Soothing, is ut? A few shillelagh in a fist that knows how to use ut is the finest soothing-syrup for Tibet. Whin O'i first came, sor, O'i started off by breakin' ev'ry head in the parish, and ut knocked respect into 'em. For six wakes after yez cud hear 'em yell koike as if the foire-engines was comin' av only a floy settled on their brain-boxes, they was that sore. In their lingo they call me the 'head-breakin' divil.'"

They walked up and down the dirty, narrow street until the messengers returned, and they brought with them two coils of excellent rope.

"Now, we want some iron-shod sticks, Barry." "Lave that to me, sor. How many?" "About six."

"O'il have the miserable blacksmith at 'em in no toime," said Barry.

Ching-Lung had been thinking deeply. The task before him was terrible and perilous. He had made up his mind not to risk the lives of more than three men in his desperate attempt to reach the mouth of the shaft. He knew that all would be eager to go, and chance would select the three. Thurston or himself must remain behind, for the men could not be left without a leader.

"Rupert," he said, "will you resign in my favour, old chap?"

"No, old fellow." "Then you toss up. I call 'heads.'"

"Then you win," said Rupert, "so I shall remain behind." Then came the selection of the three. Ching-Lung wrote all the names down on pieces of paper, except Gan-Wags's. The scraps of paper were shaken up in a helmet, and Rupert drew three of them. O'Rooney's name came out first. The two others that chance picked out were tough old salts, who had sailed to the North Pole in the Lord of the Deep.

Maddock, Prout, and Joe grumbled at their ill-luck, and Prout went sullenly back to his post.

"Don't be down-hearted, lads," said Ching-Lung cheerily. "Remember, you are coming with us as far up as the snow-line. If we get lost, there must be no attempt at rescue. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 217.

Next TUESDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S WINDFALL!"

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

for that may mean more loss of life still. You are under Mr. Thurston's command. I should advise you to wait here a week, and if you see no more of us in that time, try to get back into India. But cheer up. I'm certain all will come right."

"Here, lads; here, lads! Come quick!"

It was Prout's thunderous roar. They rushed out.

"What's that—what's that?"

Fifty eyes stared through the darkness towards the peak. High up a little light was shining. Was it a star? It grew larger, brighter, rounder. Surely, too, it was sinking slowly? The breeze was driving it towards them.

"A globe of fire!" cried Thurston, as he raised his glasses. "Yes, old chap!" yelled Ching-Lung. "A fire-balloon and a message. Hurrah!"

A Message Comes from the Millionaire and Hal Honour—
Good News—Barry O'Rooney Finds Himself under Fire
—The Mysterious Boat.

As the fiery globe passed overhead, the cheering men ran in pursuit. Under ordinary circumstances, the paper balloon would continue in the air until the buoyancy given to it by the burning wad of cotton-wool was exhausted. That is to say, it would continue aloft until the flame went out, or became too feeble to heat the air sufficiently to sustain the paper globe.

Such balloons have been known to remain aloft for many hours, and to travel wonderful distances. They did not doubt that it had risen up the shaft, and they knew that their comrades had despatched the aerial messenger. In sending it aloft, Ferrers Lord and the engineer had not trusted enormously to chance. In their underground prison it was impossible, of course, to tell in what direction the wind blew, but such a keen observer as Hal Honour would not have failed to study the weather during his journeys to and fro.

Ching-Lung remembered all this as he dashed after the balloon. Hal Honour knew that the conditions of the weather were favourable for launching the flimsy aerostat. He knew that the light breeze action would wait it towards the village, and that the light could not fail to attract attention.

And such men as Ferrers Lord and the engineer, men who weighed all chances and made allowance for everything, would not dispatch a messenger whose capture might necessitate a chase of miles. The balloon in some way would deliver up its news at the very instant the men who had sent it on its voyage had determined it should do so.

They had barely travelled a hundred yards when O'Rooney shouted:

"Bedad, ut's chuckin' out ballast she is! Moind yez don't get a few sand-bags dropped in yer oies!"

A dark object was falling swiftly, and with it what appeared to be a bright spark. Relieved of some weight which had served to steady it and keep it upright, the balloon heeled over, burst into flame, and was consumed in a moment.

"A letter, lads!" cried Ching-Lung, picking something up from the ground. "Maddock was right."

"How did they work it to let it fall?" asked Rupert.

"As easy as easy. A little bit of bootlace did the trick."

"Bootlace, sor? O'vo heard of people gettin' the 'boot,' which manes. O'i take ut, the same as gettin' the sack or the chuck. Sartinly that letther got the chuck, for O'i seed ut. In the wurrds o' the poet Byron:

"What boots ut av we get the boot,
Into the cowl, hard street?
It depends upon the kind of boot,
And the soize of the kicker's feet."

O'Rooney ended the rhyme with a howl, as Prout solemnly kicked him.

"Thank you, Tom," said Ching-Lung. "We are all much obliged to you. If O'Rooney gives us any more of that stuff I shall call a court-martial."

"By hokey!" answered Prout, spitting on his hand. "He won't need any court-martial, but he'll be yellin' for yards of court-plaster to patch his ugly face. I'm about sick of it."

"Is ut a joke?" asked O'Rooney. "Av ut is, kindly explain ut, bekase O'i want to shmoile."

Ching-Lung explained how simply and cleverly the letter had been made to fall from the balloon. It had been attached to the lower part of the paper globe by a piece of silk thread. Across the thread a few inches of ordinary mohair bootlace had been tied. This had been lighted at either end, and had smouldered steadily. Doubtless Ferrers Lord and the engineer had experimented to find out how long the bootlace would smoulder until the fire severed the thread and

By FRANK RICHARDS,
Order Early.

allowed the packet to fall. Then, having calculated the time the balloon would take to rise through the shaft, the strength of the breeze, as Honour had reckoned it, and the distance between the mouth of the shaft and O'Rooney's house, they had sent off the fire-balloon.

The receipt of the message proved the wonderful accuracy of their calculations. When they regained the house, Ching-Lung read the contents of the envelope by the light of the fire. The handwriting was that of Ferrers Lord.

"You need not be uneasy. We trust that this message will reach you, but to make more sure we are sending off several other fire-balloons. The aeronaut worked badly just as we were about to start, and will need to be overhauled."

"We shall have her in proper order in a few hours. The bearings became slightly overheated. The metal is not quite so hard as I could wish. In any case, we shall not attempt to leave the cavern before morning. Let me advise you to keep a watch.—FERRERS LORD."

Proust led the cheers that followed.

"What's that about keeping a watch, Ching?" said Rupert. "I suppose it means look out for Storland Sahib," answered Ching-Lung. "It's pretty sure to be known everywhere that our airship entered the mountain and never came back. The brute won't be satisfied until he knows whether we are dead or alive. It would be ugly for us if his pirates came cantoring along now. We're pretty hard up for rifles and cartridges. That's the worst of going shooting gorillas."

"And foindin' hornets'-nests!" put in Barry. "Ut's four rifles yez have left to the dirty hornets."

"Then here goes to fetch them back, Barry. I'll take you and Proust with me, for the gents with the stings are all in bed."

"Safe in thirr little cots,
Dhramin' swate dhramas of bliss,
And whin yez kiss a hornet,
Plaze moind the ind yez kiss."

"Ay yez don't," added O'Rooney, amid a stony silence, "yez'll find trouble."

The men glared at him, and then one by one, without speaking a single word, they left the house.

The moon was brilliant, the night perfect, though slightly chilly. It was still early, and none of the men were fatigued. Rupert suggested that they should all go in a body to recover the rifles they had left on the bank of the river.

"I've got no objection," said Ching-Lung, "the more the merrier, my bouncing boy. An evening stroll will do us good. Fall in there, or fall out, just as you please."

"There's no risk of catching fever by going near the river at night, is there?"

"Never a bit, sor," said O'Rooney. "We don't get much fever in Tibet. It stands too boigh intirely. Yez can always make sartin of livin' here till yez doie."

"That's cheerful!" laughed the prince. "Quick march!" They struck into the belt of wood. The undergrowth, though dense, did not impede them to any serious extent, and the shafts of moonlight struggled through the branches. They made enough noise to frighten away any beasts of prey, and before half an hour had passed they gained the bank of the stream.

Barry O'Rooney struck a tragic attitude as he gazed at the silver water.

"Hokey!" moaned Proust, feeling round for a stick. "He's goin' to give us more poetry."

"Hit him with a brick!" cried Joe.

"Gag him!" said Maddock.

Still, the Irishman neither spoke nor stirred. Proust prodded him in the back, but that only elicited a grunt. Joe trod on his toe, and one of the men forced a prickly leaf down the back of his neck. Barry's eyes rolled in fine frenzy.

"It is done!" he said tragically. "Lead on."

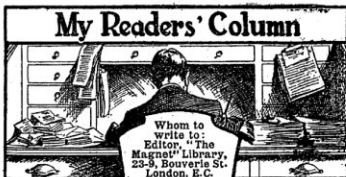
"What's done?" asked Ching-Lung, smiling.

Barry pulled his old helmet over his eyes, folded his arms, and strode away.

"He's composed another poem," said Joe sadly. "The wretch will be—Geo-whooah! I'm stung!"

Joe grabbed his ear and jumped. Something had hit him with painful force. Then one of the men let out a yell, and clutched the back of his neck. The next moment Proust and Maddock were both clutching their faces, and dancing about as if seized with toothache.

(Another long instalment in next Tuesday's issue of "The Magnet" Library. Please order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)



"HARRY WHARTON & Co.'s WINDFALL,"

By Frank Richards.

This is the title of our next week's magnificent long, complete tale of the famous Chums of Greyfriars School, which tells of their further adventures in search of the secret treasure, the clue to which has been entrusted to Harry Wharton. The hunt leads the band of searchers on to Italian soil, and many are the adventures encountered before the last exciting episode, when the treasure is at length brought to light. You will, one and all, enjoy

"HARRY WHARTON & Co.'s WINDFALL,"

so don't forget to order in advance!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. C. S., Kennington.—Thanks for letter and suggestion for a competition, which I will consider.

V., Tidmarsh.—Glad you appreciated the photographic hints so much. Binks, the ex-bootboy, who afterwards came to the college as a pupil, left again for some other school more suited to his peculiar circumstances.

Lion, Rawtenshall.—Any well-known brand of metal polish will answer your purpose.

D. Hazeldene, Liverpool.—I do not remember that Frank Richards has ever mentioned the Christian names of the characters you mention. You had better name them yourself, according to your own fancy. I am afraid I cannot undertake to supply bound volumes from this office, but I will insert your request for the early numbers of THE MAGNET and "The Gem" Libraries in "The Back Numbers Wanted" column on the Chat page of our companion paper, if you will send up the request in proper form, with your name and address attached. The idea you mention in your postscript is one which I will consider.

A. and D. M.—Alonzo Todd has left Greyfriars again.

G. S. M.—Thanks for letter. I wish you luck in your new sphere of life, and hope you will be successful in obtaining THE MAGNET and "The Gem" Libraries wherever you are.

Joe L. (Winnipeg).—Thank you for your letter and the efforts you are making on behalf of the good old MAGNET. If you are disappointed at not seeing a reply to your letter before, I must ask you to remember that no reply can be inserted for at least four weeks after I have received a letter, and many letters have to be held over much longer, owing to the enormous number I am requested to reply to.

Quintin D. (Lisburn).—Thanks for letter. Your suggestion for a threepenny number has been made to me many times, but circumstances have, up to now, prevented me from carrying it out, as I have explained before. Sometimes, perhaps, but I cannot promise how soon.

A MESSAGE FROM AUSTRALIA.

In a welcome letter, one of the members of our popular Free Correspondence Exchange, who signs himself "A Golden City Reader," mentions the satisfactory results which followed the insertion of his request for correspondents among fellow readers living in certain parts of the British Isles.

This is the first part of his letter:

"Bendigo, Victoria, Australia.

"Dear Editor.—The request for correspondents, resident in either Dublin or London, has brought forward to date ten answers—three from Dublin, six from London, and one from a namesake of myself in East Wemyss, Scotland. I was very pleased to hear from them all, and have answered their letters, and sent photos of parts of Victoria, and illustrated papers to some."

My Australia chum's correspondents must have been very pleased with the result of their letters, also, I am sure.

THE EDITOR.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

(See important announcement at foot of this page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

A. Cathbert, care of G. Watford, 117, Goodrich Road, East Finchley, London, S.E., would very much like to correspond with a girl reader. He is 16.

G. Bew, of Stanley House, Ballingdon, Sudbury, would like to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM.

Hunt, of 276, Newton Road, Cricklewood, S.W. (age 16), would very much like to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM or "The Magnet" living in the same district.

G. Bealing (age 17), of 25, Salisbury Street, Shaftesbury, Dorset, would very much like to correspond with any girl reader who is interested in photography, model aviation, swimming, drawing, stamp-collecting, or cycling.

J. Phillips (age 17), care of Wade and Phillips, The Quay, Carmarthen, would like to correspond with a Colonial girl reader.

J. Koen, of 52, Partall Road, Harrow Road, Paddington, London, W., wishes to correspond with a girl reader (age 19) who lives in the country.

G. Hill, care of Mr. Roberts, 5, Hampden Street, Abbey Park Road, Leicester, wishes to correspond with a girl reader.

G. Gillespie, W. H. Smith & Son, Bookstall, Wakefield, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader of THE GEM (age 14).

R. S. Hay, of 25, Campbell Street, Ayr, Scotland (age 15), would like someone of the same age to correspond with him.

W. H. Waler, of 50, Buchanan Gardens, Willesden, London, wishes to exchange picture-postcards with another reader of THE GEM Library. He also wishes to exchange foreign stamps.

Would any foreign or Colonial readers (17 or 18 years of age) interested in photography, care to correspond with Arthur Lunn, of 23, Pictory Road, Ilkley, Yorkshire, with a view to exchange prints and negatives?

R. Pauline, de Levante (age 16), of 12, Beach Street, Bham, Morecombe, would like to correspond with a reader in Scotland, of any age between 14 and 18.

C. P. Hensley, of Saption House, Chesterfield, would like to correspond with a young lady-reader of between 18 and 20 years of age.

E. Horton, of Beech Lanes, Birmingham, would like to correspond with a few girl readers about the age of 15.

Mathew Dolan and J. Dolan, of 6, Edward Street, Carlisle, would like to enter into correspondence with two girl chums (age 14-15).

Miss Daisy Sanders, of 6, Howley Place, Belvedere Road, London, S.E., wishes to correspond with a boy reader between the ages of 13 and 20.

E. H. Evans, of 12, Cowlishaw, Shaw, near Oldham, England, wishes to correspond with a girl reader between the ages of 16 and 18, living in Australia or Wales.

A. Angus, of Maybank, Alford, N.B., would like to correspond with a girl reader whose age is about 17.

G. D. Heath (age 17), of 69, East Street, Coventry, England, wishes to correspond with a girl chum living in the Colonies.

Will any girl reader of THE GEM correspond with S. W. Blackburn and friend, Coronation House, East Ardley, Wakefield, with a view to exchanging photographs (age 16 or 18)?

J. Lithgan, of St. James Street, Paisley, N.B., wishes to correspond with a girl reader (age 14-16) who is like Cornia Ekkel.

Will F. Foxall, of Southfields, correspond with G. Styles, of 47, Blackheath Road, Greenwich?

S. Nathan, of 22, Walden Street, New Road, E. London, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of about 14 years of age. He is 15.

George C. Day, of 178, Dunstons Road, East Dulwich, S.E., wishes to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM whose age is between 15 and 16.

G. H. Stone, of Royal Societies Club, St. James's Street, S.W. (29 years of age), wishes to correspond with a girl chum.

Miss Ella M. Good, Strabane, Leicester Street, Parkside, South Australia, would like to correspond with some readers of THE GEM Library in England.

H. B. Warhurst (age 16), of 43, Langdale Road, Victoria, Zealand, would like a boy or girl reader to correspond with reader of Manchester whose age is 16.

A. W. Brown, of Bank New Zealand, Lyttelton, New Zealand, would like a boy or a girl reader to correspond with him.

E. J. Lawrence, of 36, Briton Street, Narborough Road, Leicester, who is 20 years of age, would very much like a young lady to correspond with him.

G. Gawthrop, of Posseden, Mount Pleasant, Cambridge, would very much like to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries of about 15 or 16 years of age.

Miss Gladys Walton, of Haslemere, 117, Ilford Lane, Ilford, Essex, would like to correspond with a boy or girl reader about 17 or 18 years of age.

Miss R. Baker, of Aberystwyth, St. Helens Park, Hastings, would very much like to correspond with a boy reader of about 17 or 18 years old.

Frank Cox, care of The Cabin, The Green, Edmonton, London, N., wishes to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM.

Miss E. Irwin, of 226, South Street, Park, Sheffield, and Miss Winnie Cooper, 72, Parkside Road, Hillsborough, Sheffield, would like two boy chums (of 17 or 18), to correspond with them.

G. Bunn, of 15, Cragg Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, England, would very much like to correspond with a girl reader (age 16), living either abroad or in England.

H. Benson and E. Stevenson, of 75, Maple Street, Nottingham, would like to correspond with two girl readers of THE GEM Library of about 17 or 18 years old.

D. Rogers, of 51, Pollard Row, Bethnal Green, London, N., England, wishes to correspond with a girl (age 14), living in Australia, New Zealand, or Africa.

G. R. Hurcum (17), of 17, Wilson Street, St. Paul's, Bristol, wishes to correspond with a girl GEMITE living either abroad or in England.

S. Rosenberg (16), of 21, Cumberland Street, Bristol, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living abroad or in England.

Will two tall boy GEMITES correspond with Miss F. Neville, of The Limes, and Miss H. Cole, of Mount Villa, Sedgely, near Dudley?

C. Brown, of 3, School Terrace, Parton Whitehaven, Cumberland, wishes to correspond with any boy reader (under 14 years of age) living in any part of the world.

H. Black (16), of 13, Irvine Terrace, St. Paul's, Bristol, would like a girl reader to correspond with him (one living abroad or in England).

Miss B. Aston, of Stanley Villa, Knowsley Road, Ormskirk, and Miss E. Ormsker, of Bridge House, 40, Moor Street, Ormskirk, would like two boy chums (age 16 or 17) to correspond with them.

Miss M. Coughans and Miss G. M. Wood, of 2, Clark Road, Wolverhampton, England, would like to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in India or Australia.

G. Marshant, of 12, Grantham Street, Dublin, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM or "The Magnet," age 15, who is interested in birds' egg collecting.

W. Austin, jun., age 18, of 48, Prebend Street, Islington, London, N., England, would be very glad to hear from girl readers of THE GEM Library living in Scotland or New Zealand.

W. E. Wetton, of Lessingham, Stenford, Lines, age 17, wishes to correspond with a girl GEMITE of the same age, with a view to exchanging photographs.

Miss Daisy Westgarth, of 53, Campbell Street, Tow Law, Durham, would be glad if a boy reader living in the South of England would correspond with her.

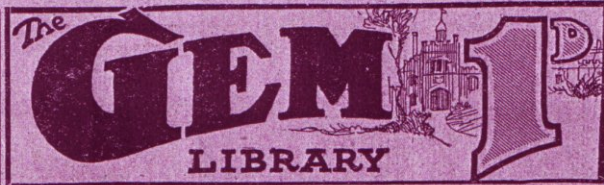
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

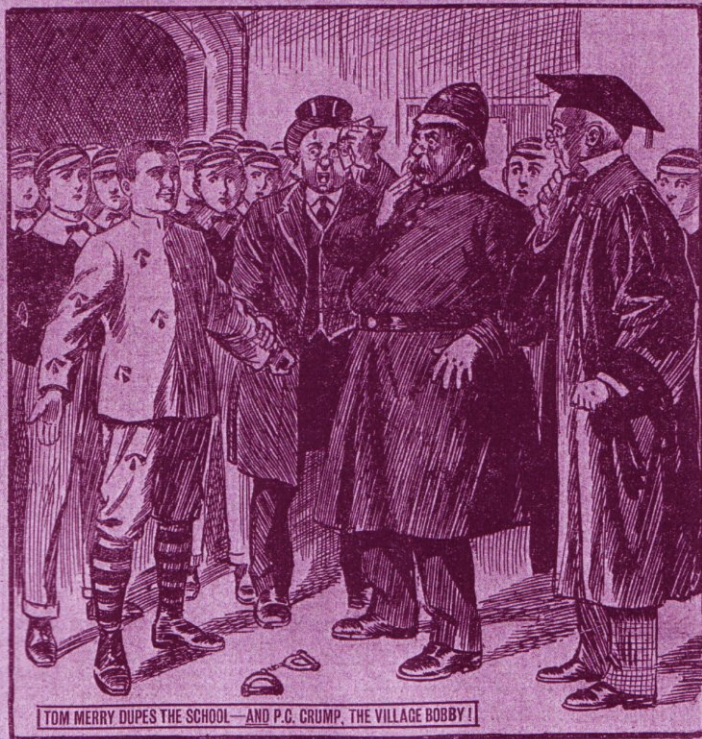
Owing to it having come to my notice that the facilities offered by "THE GEM" Free Correspondence Exchange have been in some cases abused by unscrupulous persons, resulting in inconvenience and annoyance to number of readers, the Editor has reluctantly decided to close down the Exchange forthwith. Readers are therefore asked to note that no further requests will be published. The Editor greatly regrets that necessity has compelled him to take this drastic step, and sincerely apologises to those of his readers who have already sent in requests which cannot now be published.

This Thursday's Number of "The Gem" Library, the cover of which is reproduced below, contains:

'TOM MERRY'S MASQUERADE!'

A splendid new, long, complete school tale of the famous chums of St. Jim's. By Martin Clifford.

Complete Stories for ALL and Every Story a GEM!		No. 217. — Vol. 6. —
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TOM MERRY DUPES THE SCHOOL—AND P.C. CRUMP, THE VILLAGE BOBBY!