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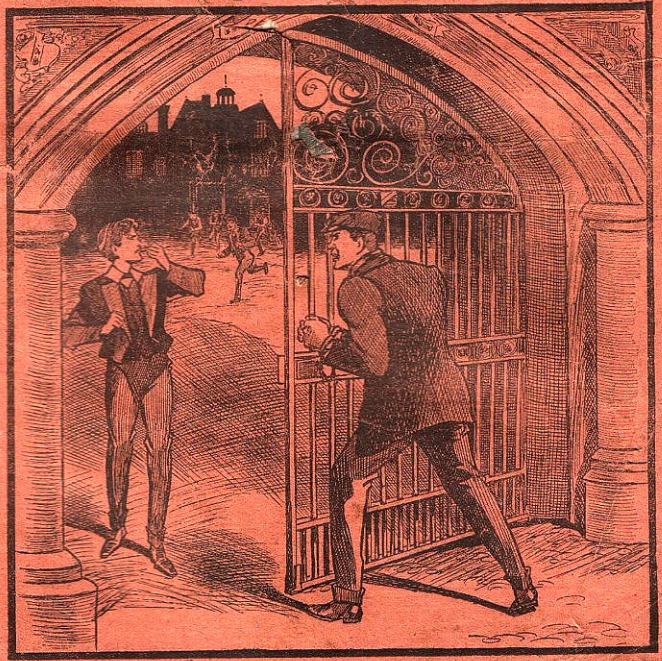

THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE EFFECTS AN ARREST!

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NEXT TUESDAY: **"THE STOLEN SCHOOLBOYS!"** A Grand School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

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THE SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE.

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Slightly Uproarious.

"GURTFIELD! Change 'ere for Friardale and Greyfriars!"

The train clattered to a halt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Here we are again!"

There were four juniors in the carriage—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Johnny Bull—the Famous Four of the Remove Form at Greyfriars.

And they were in high spirits.

It was a whole holiday at Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove had spent it on a visit to Harry Wharton's home, and they were returning to school after a day which Bob Cherry described as glorious.

They were returning laden with good things—a large hamper carefully packed by Harry Wharton's aunt, and several bags and packages which contained things equally precious, calculated to cause chronic indigestion in the Remove dormitory for a week to come.

The arrival of the train had been heralded by the roar of a chorus from the carriage occupied by the chums of the Remove. Bob Cherry jumped up as the train stopped, and threw open the carriage door.

"Shut up, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "We've got to buck up—the train only stops two minutes, and that stuff's got to be got out!"

"Lend a hand with the hamper, somebody," said Harry Wharton.

It was a very large hamper. And its weight was very considerable. It ought really to have been in the guard's van, but the juniors had shoved it into the carriage, and there

it was. The four chums grasped it and swung it towards the door. Bob Cherry put his head out.

"Porter! Hi! Lend a hand here!"

No porter was visible. Three Greyfriars fellows were standing on the platform, evidently waiting there for the local train to Friardale. They looked at the juniors in the carriage, but did not offer to help. They were Coker, Potter, and Greene of the Fifth, and with all the dignity of seniors, they declined publicly to recognise the existence of the noisy juniors of the Lower Fourth.

"Hi, Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry.

Coker looked round haughtily.

"Bear a hand here, Cokey!"

Coker looked at Bob Cherry, with a lofty glance that started at his head and travelled down to his boots, and then rose to his head again. Then Coker turned loftily away. Potter and Greene sniffed, and turned away with him.

"Let's get away from these Bank Holiday bounders," said the great Coker.

And they got away.

"Well, of all the silly asses!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Hi, Coker, you fathead, come and lend a hand with this giddy hamper!"

But Coker did not even look round.

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I'll get out first, and you chaps shove it out to me, and then pitch out the bags!" he explained.

"Right ho! Buck up!"

Bob Cherry jumped out of the carriage, and the three fellows inside pushed out the big and heavy hamper.

"Steady on!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he felt the weight of it. "Mind, it's heavy! Oh!"

The hamper slid out, and Bob Cherry staggered away, unable to support the weight, and the hamper came down with a crash. There was a sound of cracking within as it smote the platform. Bob Cherry sat down beside the hamper with a gasp.

"Oh!"

"Buck up with those bags!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Bags and parcels were tossed out of the carriage. The voice of the porter could be heard down the platform.

"Keep up there!"

"Buck up, you chaps!"

Bob Cherry gave a roar. He was just rising to his feet when a well-filled bag smote him, and he sat down again.

"Oh! Ow!"

Another and another bag smote Bob Cherry as he sprawled on the platform, and then Wharton, and Nugent, and Johnny Bull came bundling out of the carriage. The porter rushed up and slammed the carriage door, and the train glided on. Bob Cherry sat up amidst a sea of bags and parcels, and roared.

"You silly asses!"

"You dropped the hamper, you ass!" said Nugent severely.

"Ow! You fatheads!"

"Why didn't you catch the parcels?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Ow! You chumps!"

"Some of the things will be busted now!"

"Ow! You frabjous jabberwocks!"

"My megaphone is dented," said Johnny Bull, picking up that fearsome instrument. "Look here, you might be a bit more careful, Bob!"

"Ow! You burbling duffers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry scrambled to his feet, looking very wrathful. He pushed back his cuffs, and seemed undecided which of his chums he should rush upon. Harry Wharton held up his hand pacifically.

"Never mind, Bob!"

"Never mind!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'm hurt!"

"You've busted some of the things, but we'll overlook it," said Nugent magnanimously. "It's all Coker's fault for not lending a hand, the ass!"

"Look here, you fathead——"

"Peace, my children," said Harry Wharton, with a wave of the hand. "Don't let's spoil a ripping day out by a row at the finish. It's all Coker's fault. Let's rag Coker!"

Bob Cherry's face cleared.

"Well, that's not a bad idea!" he said. "It's certainly all Coker's fault. Hi, there, Coker! Coker! Coker! Cokey! Coke!"

Horace Coker, of the Fifth, turned crimson. There was quite a crowd of people on the platform, waiting for the local train, and they were all looking on and grinning. The three Fifth Formers blushed furiously at being claimed in public by that gang of rowdy juniors, as Coker described them. Coker, Potter, and Greene stood looking elaborately unconscious, trying to impress upon the observant public that they did not really know those noisy fags. But their conscious blushes gave them away. And the juniors, realising at once what the attitude of the Fifth Formers meant, did not mean to let them off.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Coker! Have a jam tart?"

"Will you have some bullseyes, Coker?"

"I say, Coker, what have you been doing to your face?"

"It is a face, isn't it?"

Coker glared at the juniors. An audible chuckle along the platform made him furious. It was evidently useless to attempt to ignore the Removites. Coker clenched his fists and strode over towards them.

"Look here!" he shouted.

"Can't be done," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head. "You ought to shove on a mask or a fire-screen, or something, before you ask a thing like that, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you shut up, you horrible bounders!" roared Coker. "You—you hooligans!"

"Good old Coker!"

"Go it, Coker!"

"Pile in, Coker!"

"Hurrah!"

Coker glared at the juniors, but he glared in vain. The Famous Four were out to enjoy themselves, and they were enjoying themselves in their own way. Coker might as well have attempted to stem Niagara as the flow of high spirits of the merry Removites.

"Oh, come away, Coker!" said Potter. "Don't get mixed up with these hooligans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Fifth Formers strolled away down the platform, followed by yells and catcalls from the juniors. The Famous Four sat upon the hamper, and they made their presence heard over the whole station. It was a great enjoyment to them to rag the lofty Coker in this way. Johnny Bull roared through his megaphone, and Nugent played on the tin whistle, and Bob Cherry beat with crashing blows upon a biscuit-tin. The din was terrific. It was the Remove way of celebrating a day out, and it was evident that they were not to be sat upon, and all the furious glances of Coker & Co. could not reduce them to anything approaching respectability.

"It's—it's disgraceful!" gasped Coker. "It's like Hampstead Heath on a giddy Bank Holiday! Here, let's get out of this! Come into the buffet!"

And the three Fifth Formers disappeared into the refreshment-room, leaving the victorious Removites in possession of the platform.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Chucked Out.

HARRY WHARTON burst into a laugh. Johnny Bull blew a final terrific blast upon the megaphone, and laid that terrific instrument down and gasped for breath.

"We are victorious!" grinned Bob Cherry, crashing away upon the biscuit-tin. "We have put the giddy enemy to the rout! Ha, ha, ha! This is where we score!"

Crash—crash—crash!

"Oh, stop that awful row, for goodness' sake!" gasped Wharton. "We've beaten the enemy. Chuck it, Bob! Stop that awful whistle, Franky!"

Frank Nugent grinned, and returned the whistle to his pocket. Bob Cherry delivered a last crash upon the biscuit-tin, and rose to his feet.

"Ten minutes to wait for the local," he remarked. "I'm thirsty. Who says ginger-pop?"

"Ginger-pop!" said three voices in unison.

"Come on, then, my infants!"

And the Famous Four strolled into the buffet. Whether they were so thirsty that they felt the immediate need of ginger-pop, or whether they simply wanted to track Coker & Co. to their lair and worry them, we cannot say. They strolled cheerfully into the buffet, where Coker, Potter, and Greene were discussing lemonade, and standing elegantly at the refreshment-counter, with all the repose of manner which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Four ginger-pops, please!" said Harry Wharton politely to the young lady in attendance. "I say, Coker, will you have some ginger-pop?"

Coker turned his back.

"Will you have some ginger-pop, Greeney?"

Greene frowned majestically.

The three Fifth-Formers elaborately took no notice of the juniors. The juniors did not seem to mind it. They drank ginger-pop and ate buns and tarts with great calmness. Coker glanced at the clock, and drew a pocket-book from his pocket. He opened it with a flourish, and selected a five-pound note from three or four others that were jammed in the pocket-book.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker's been robbing a bank!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where did you pick up that pocket-book, Coker?"

"Whose pocket did you find it in, old man?"

Coker tried to look unconscious of the questions as he fluttered the fiver upon the bar. Coker was evidently rolling in money. He had a doting aunt who thought all the world of Horace Coker, and frequently proved her affection by the most extravagant tips. Coker had evidently been to visit his aunt that afternoon, and with the most beneficial results to himself. Coker frequently had more banknotes than other fellows had half-crowns, and he had a careless way of bringing fivers out of his pocket mixed up with old letters, as if they were so much waste-paper to him. He tossed the fiver on the counter with a princely air, and restored the pocket-book to his pocket.

"I shouldn't change that, miss," said Bob Cherry, in a tone of solemn warning. "We know that chap. He makes these fivers himself."

lady had disappeared through a doorway with it—perhaps to make sure that it was a good one before she gave the change.

Coker rapped on the counter.

"Quick with that change, please!" he called out. "The train's in!"

"P'r'aps we'd better go and get the places," suggested Greene, with a glance at Potter.

"Good idea!" said Potter.

"Look here, you stay here with me!" growled Coker. "If we're going to miss the train, we'll all miss it together."

"But I say——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

The three seniors rapped on the counter together. But the young lady seemed to be in no hurry to return with the change. A man who had been drinking a glass of beer in a corner of the buffet rose. He had been watching the Fifth-Formers with a considerable amount of interest. He came over towards them now very respectfully.

The Famous Four sat upon the hamper, and they made their presence heard over the whole station. "It's—it's disgraceful!" gasped Coker. "It's like Hampstead Heath on a giddy Bank Holiday." (*See Chapter* 1.)

"Shut up, you cheeky young cad!" roared Coker.

"It's a risky business, passing them here, Coker," said Frank Nugent, with a shake of the head. "How do you know that the real owner hasn't taken the numbers?"

Coker turned purple.

Potter and Greene grinned a little. But they left off grinning as Coker glared at them. They intended to have a very considerable share of those fivers, and they wanted to keep the great Coker in good humour.

A bell rang, and Harry Wharton put down his glass.

"Train's coming in," he said. "Come on!"

He paid for the ginger-beer, and the juniors hurried out of the buffet. Potter and Greene looked inclined to follow. They did not want to risk losing that train, for if they missed it they would inevitably be late for evening calling-over at Greyfriars, and that would mean trouble. But Coker had to wait for the change of his five-pound note, and the young

"If you like, sir, I will wait for the change," he said, touching his hat.

Coker stared at him.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The man touched his hat again.

"I'm the new porter, sir. You young gentlemen belong to Greyfriars?"

"Yes," said Potter.

"Very well, sir. I'm the new porter for the school, sir, and I'm going there in this train. Name of Cleeke, sir—James Cleeke."

Coker looked at him. The man had a smooth-shaven, sleek face, and quiet, watchful eyes. His manner was the essence of respect and humility.

"Yes, I'm likely to trust my change to a stranger," said Coker rudely. "Rats!"

"Very well, sir," said James Cleeke respectfully.

And he quitted the buffet.

Meanwhile Harry Wharton & Co. had reached the train. They had thrown bags and parcels into an empty carriage, and were making a combined effort to lift the big hamper in. They were staggering under the weight when Cleeke hurried up.

"May I assist you, young gentlemen?"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Take hold!"

Cleeke caught hold of the hamper and lifted it with considerable ease. He was not a powerful-looking man, but he was evidently muscular. The juniors scrambled into the carriage, and James Cleeke pushed in the big hamper after them.

Then he stepped back respectfully.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking out of the carriage. "Thanks very much for helping us, and here's a bob."

Cleeke took the shilling, and touched his hat.

"Thank you, sir!"

"Now we're all right," said Bob Cherry, pulling the carriage-door shut. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here come the giddy Fifth!"

Potter, Greene, and Coker came racing out of the buffet. Coker had obtained his change at last. The three Fifth-Formers cut across the platform. The train was full, and they headed at once for the carriage occupied by the juniors, which was just opposite the buffet.

Coker grasped the handle of the door. Bob Cherry held it on the inside.

"No room!" he said, through the window. "Try the next carriage."

Coker roared.

"Open that door, you cheeky fag!"

"Rats!"

"Let's get in!" howled Potter. "We shall be left behind!"

"Well, you can walk!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "There's a short cut by Courtfield End, you know, past the factory. And a little walk will do you good."

"Let's get in, you rotters!"

"No room! There's a hamper and us here——"

"We'll jolly soon chuck the hamper out!" roared Coker. "Come on, you chaps, back me up!"

The Fifth-Formers rushed at the carriage.

They met with a warm reception.

Nugent jerked out a pea-shooter from his pocket and filled his mouth with peas.

Whiz—swish!

"Ow! Yow! Yarooh!" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter charged right up to the door, in spite of the peas. Johnny Bull reached out, and smote a terrific smite on Potter's top hat.

Crunch!

The hat was reduced to the shape of a concertina at one smite.

"Oh!" gasped Potter, staggering away. "Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stand clear there!" roared the guard.

Coker snorted with rage.

He grasped the handle of the door again, and turned it with terrific force, and the door swung open. Coker plunged headforemost into the carriage. He plunged among the legs of the juniors, and grabbed hold of them. In a moment there was a wild and whirling struggle in the carriage. Coker meant to stay in, and Harry Wharton & Co. meant to pitch him out. There was a loud shriek of tearing cloth as Coker's jacket split up the back. His hat was crunched under foot. The juniors grasped him, and whirled him through the doorway, crashing him against Potter, who was trying to get in. Potter went sprawling back on the platform. Coker was dropped out, and as he fell he was caught in a helpful pair of arms. James Cleeke, the new school-porter of Greyfriars, had run forward just in time to catch him, or Horace Coker would have had a most unpleasant bump upon the platform.

"All right, sir——"

The train began to move.

Coker wrenched himself away from the school-porter and rushed after the train. But the door was slammed shut, and Coker had no chance. The window was packed with the grinning faces of the Removites as the train glided out of the station, and the three Fifth-Formers stood on the platform glaring furiously after the gliding carriages.

"Hope you wasn't hurt, sir!" said the obsequious Cleeke suavely, in evident expectation of a tip for the service he had rendered. But Coker was not in a tipping humour just then.

"Oh, go to the dickens!" he snapped.

"Really, sir——"

"Get out, confound you!"

"I've lost the train, helping you, sir——"

"Br-r-r-r! Serve you right!"

Cleeke stepped back with a resigned expression. Coker ran after the train, and shook his fist at the grinning juniors in the window, and gasped for breath. He looked a curious object, hatless, with his hair wildly rumpled and the halves of his jacket hanging upon him and fluttering in the wind. Suddenly Coker, as if struck by a sudden thought, dived his hand into the pocket of his torn jacket, to see if his pocket-book was safe. His hand came out empty.

"Stop the train!" yelled Coker. "They've got my pocket-book! Do you hear? Stop the train!"

But the train was already vanishing out of the station.

Coker raved.

"My pocket-book's gone, I tell you! Stop the train! One of those young villains has taken my pocket-book, and there's twenty quid in it! Stop the train!"

"Can't be stopped now," said Potter. "You must have dropped it in the carriage, Coker. It's all right. They'll find it and give it to you back at Greyfriars."

Coker grunted.

"That's all very well——"

"No good wasting time here," said Potter. "We shall have to hustle to get in to Greyfriars before locking-up. We've got to walk, Coker—come on."

"I'm not going to risk losing my pocket-book!" roared Coker. "Do you think I can afford to lose twenty-four pounds ten shillings, you silly ass?"

"But if they find it——"

"It will have to be found! I'm going to make the station-master telegraph along the line for the carriage to be searched at Friardale."

"It means wasting time——"

"Blow wasting time!"

"What about calling-over——"

"Blow calling-over!"

"Look here, Coker——"

"Rats!"

And Coker had his way. And when the trio of Fifth Formers left Courtfield Station to walk home to Greyfriars, it was with the cheery certainty of getting there late for calling-over, and having to face an unpleasant interview with Mr. Prout, their Form-master.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Not Found.

"FRIARDALE!" said Bob Cherry.

The Removites had laughed all the way over the discomfiture of the Fifth-Formers. The rivalry between the Remove and the Fifth was never ending, and in this last little tussle it had to be admitted that the juniors had had the best of it.

It was a very short run by train from Courtfield to Friardale, and the Removites were still chuckling over their victory when the train ran into the station.

Bob Cherry threw open the carriage door.

"Porter, come and help with this hamper!" he bawled.

The Friardale porter came up. He did not come alone. The stationmaster of Friardale came with him. They had been standing on the platform, looking at the train as it came in, to spot the carriage that contained the Greyfriars juniors, though Harry Wharton & Co. were not as yet aware of that fact.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerily. "The more the merrier! Take the end of the hamper, you two! Mind; it's heavy."

And the hamper was pushed out.

Mr. Wilson, the stationmaster, and the old porter took the end of the hamper, and it was lowered to the platform. Then the juniors poured out with their bags and parcels. The stationmaster held up his hand as they were turning towards the exit.

"Please, stop a minute, young gentlemen!" he said.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Nothing to pay on the hamper, I suppose?"

"Oh, no! I have a telegram from the stationmaster at Courtfield. A young gentleman named Coker, belonging to your school——"

"Ha, ha, ha! What about Coker?"

"It seems that he tried to enter this carriage at Courtfield——"

"And we chucked him out," said Frank Nugent, with a grin. "That's right."

The stationmaster smiled.

"Yes; I suppose so. But it seems that in the struggle he dropped a pocket-book in the carriage. Have you found it?"

"No, sir."

"Please wait a few minutes while it is searched for, then."

"Certainly!"

"Look in the carriage, George!"

The old Friardale porter stepped into the carriage, and began to search on the floor and under the seats.

"Well, the ass, to drop his pocket-book!" said Bob Cherry. "Why, he had four or five banknotes in it! A chap ought to be more careful!"

Nugent chuckled.

"I believe his jacket was ripped up the back," he remarked. "Coker was rolled about a lot. But I didn't see it fall out. And it's a good-sized pocket-book, too."

"Queer we didn't see it in the carriage."

"It may have rolled under the seat."

"Have you found it, George?" asked the stationmaster.

"No, sir. It ain't here."

"Not there?"

"I've looked everywhere, sir. It ain't here."

"Let me look."

The stationmaster stepped into the carriage, and searched through it very carefully. He stepped out again, looking somewhat dusty, and very grave.

"The pocket-book is not there, young gentlemen," he said quietly.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"No; I was pretty sure that Coker didn't drop it here," he replied. "We should have seen something of it if he had."

"Yes, rather!"

The stationmaster scanned the faces of the juniors.

"You have not seen anything of it?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Then one of you has not picked it up?"

"Of course not!"

"You are quite sure?"

Harry Wharton flushed.

"I suppose you don't think we should keep the pocket-book if we picked it up, do you?" he exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, no, Master Wharton! But you might retain it for a joke—to play some practical joke on Master Coker. That is what I was thinking of. If you have done anything of the kind, let me advise you to give up the pocket-book at once. It is very dangerous playing practical jokes with money!"

"We haven't seen it, I tell you!"

"Very well! But you understand that this is a very serious matter? Master Coker declares that the pocket-book was in this carriage, and there is no sign of it. I hope it is a mistake!"

"Oh, Coker's a silly ass!" said Nugent. "I dare say he'll find that he put it into his trousers-pocket by mistake, that's all."

"I hope so, young gentlemen."

"Get that hamper out on the back, George!" said Bob Cherry. "We've got to get it to Greyfriars. And don't bump it, there's breakable stuff in it."

"Yessir!"

The Greyfriars juniors walked away to the station exit. There was a dark shade on Harry Wharton's face.

"The ass seemed to think that one of us had taken that rotten pocket-book!" he said savagely.

"Well, it's rather awkward for us, Coker losing it at a time when he was tussling with us," said Johny Bull slowly. "I hope it will turn up."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry, looking very uncomfortable. "Twenty or thirty pounds is a big sum of money, and there are chaps who wouldn't stop at saying we know something about it."

"They'd better not say it to me!" growled Harry Wharton.

"I hope it will turn up all right, anyway!"

The chums of the Remove were looking very quiet and subdued as they stepped into the station hack outside the station, and the porter handed in their packets and bags. The hamper was placed on the roof.

Wharton handed old George a shilling, and the hack rolled away towards Greyfriars.

The juniors were silent. The discovery that Coker had lost his money cast a chill upon them. If the pocket-book

was not found, there would be a very unpleasant suspicion cast upon the juniors who had travelled in the carriage.

And what had become of the pocket-book?

It was a large one, and well-filled, and quite a prominent object to be seen, with Coker's monogram in bright silver on the leather case.

If it had fallen between the train and the platform at Courtfield—which was very unlikely—it must have been seen on the line after the train was gone. If it had fallen on the platform it must have been observed. Yet it could not have fallen in the carriage without the juniors seeing it, or without being revealed by the thorough search the stationmaster and the porter had made. What had become of it?

"Coker must have shoved it into the wrong pocket, and he'll find it again," said Bob Cherry, breaking a long silence with that remark.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I suppose that's it," he said. "It's rotten; and Coker ought to be kicked for not being more careful with his money, the silly ass!"

"Here's Greyfriars!"

The hack rolled up to the gates of the old school. The sun was setting, and the crowds of Greyfriars fellows were coming in from all quarters. There was a shout as the hack was seen, with the hamper on top.

"Hallo! Coming home in state!" exclaimed Bulstrode of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, I'll help you with that hamper if you like," said Billy Bunter eagerly.

"With what's in it, you mean!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"We've got to get the hamper into the House," said Harry Wharton. "Where's Gosling?"

Gosling was the school-porter of Greyfriars. But he was not in evidence just now.

"He's gone," said Ogilvy of the Remove. "There's a new porter coming to take his place for a week. Gossy's gone on his holidays."

"The new man ought to be here by now," said Bolsover. "Never mind; we'll all lend a hand with that hamper."

"Yes, rather!"

Quite a number of Remove fellows were eager to help with the hamper. Possibly they had an anticipatory eye upon its contents. Harry Wharton paid off the hack, and the hamper was borne into the School House by a crowd of juniors. It was quite a procession, and the hamper was received with the greatest enthusiasm by the Remove. In the general rejoicing Harry Wharton & Co. forgot all about Coker and his lost pocket-book.

"Where are you going to have it?" asked Tom Brown.

"In the study."

"But there won't be room for all of us in the study," remarked Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Better have it in the Form-room, Harry."

"Right-ho!"

And the hamper was trundled into the Form-room. Half the Remove accompanied it to its destination.

Harry Wharton jumped upon a form.

"Gentlemen of the Remove——"

"Hear, hear!"

"You are all invited to a feed. Some of the things in the hamper have been busted, so I warn you to look out for broken crocks. But there are plenty of things; it was packed specially by my aunt. Cut the cord, Franky. Gentlemen, the festive board is now open!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three cheers for Wharton's aunt!"

"Hurray!"

And the hamper was opened, and the Removites gathered round with the greatest enthusiasm, to do the fullest justice to its contents.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Coker Interrupts!

ALL Greyfriars seemed to know about Harry Wharton's hamper by the time it had been unpacked. It had been a whole holiday at Greyfriars; and, now the day was ending, fellows were coming in from the river and the playing-fields, tired and hungry.

The news that there was a big feed going on in the Remove Form-room spread through the school, and fellows, instead of going to their studies, came into the Remove-room. All the Remove were soon there, and Temple, Dabney & Co. came in with a crowd of the Upper Fourth, and Hoskins and Hobson and a troop of the Shell came in, and a good many fellows of the Fifth. Even two or three of the high

and mighty Sixth dropped in to share what was going. As for the fags, their name was legion. Nugent minor, and a host of the Second, Tubb and Paget and Bolsover minor and a horde of the Third trooped into the Form-room. Every seat was soon taken, and there was standing room only; but the cry was—"Still they come!"

Fortunately, Miss Wharton had been most generous in the packing of the hamper. It was a large hamper, and it was crammed.

There were exclamations of delight as the good things were unpacked and piled up or handed round.

The fellows were very busy. There was little talk; jaws were otherwise engaged. But occasionally remarks dropped from the busy feeders.

"Good!"

"Oh, good!"

"Ripping!"

"Splendid!"

"Wharton's aunt is an old duck!"

"I say, Wharton, I'll swap a couple of uncles for your aunt!"

"Pass the ham!"

"Chicken for me!"

"Where's that ginger-beer?"

"Draw it mild, Bunter!"

It was a numerous and a merry gathering, and, as Bob Cherry remarked, it finished up a ripping day beautifully.

"Jolly decent of you to stand a feed like this, Wharton!" said Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, condescendingly.

"Not at all!" said Wharton modestly. "It's an honour to entertain the Fifth."

"Hear, hear!" said Paget of the Third. "Pass the jam-tarts, Blundey, old buck."

The captain of the Fifth simply glared at being called "Blundey, old buck" by a fag of the Third. But Paget didn't seem to notice it; and under the circumstances Blundell could not very well massacre the Third-Former.

"Pass the rosy wine," grinned Hazeldene—"otherwise, the lemonade! I say, your aunt is a coughdrop, Wharton!"

"Jolly good sort!" said Hoskins of the Shell. "It's a ripping way to finish the day. If you fellows like to come into the music-room after I'll give you some music to wind up."

"Mercy!" said Bob Cherry.

"Why, you ass——" said Hoskins wrathfully.

Hoskins was an amateur pianist of dreaded skill and determination.

"Pass the cold chicken," said Billy Bunter.

"You've finished 'em, you porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy! Pass the ham, then."

"We're getting a giddy big gathering," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle, as the Form-room door opened to admit Loder and Carne of the Sixth. "The more the merrier! Welcome, ucy children!"

"The welcomefulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Pass the ginger-pop!"

"Hand over the tarts!"

"I wish you'd go and see your aunt every day, Wharton!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The celebration was at its height when three frowning Fifth-Formers came in—Coker, Potter, and Greene. They were tired, and they were dusty, and they were very angry. They strode angrily into the Form-room, and there was a shout:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker! Come to the feed?"

"No, I haven't!" exclaimed Coker, striding towards the chums of the Remove. "I've come for my pocket-book!"

"Eh!"

"Where's my pocket-book?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Bob Cherry. "I should suggest your looking in your pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a furious gesture.

"I want my pocket-book!" he said. "I want my twenty-four pounds ten shillings that one of you chaps has collared. You'd better hand it over!"

Harry Wharton leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"Do you accuse us of knowing anything about your pocket-book, Coker?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I do!" said Coker bluntly.

"Then you're a liar!"

It was not an elegant retort, but Harry was very angry. He flung the defiance full at the Fifth-Former.

Coker clenched his hands. The buzz had died away in the Form-room; fellows were looking on with wonder and interest. They could see that something very serious was on the tapis.

"What's the row?" asked Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "Have you lost your pocket-book, Coker?"

"No, I haven't!" roared Coker. "One of those Four rotters has taken it. And I'm going to have it back!"

"That's a lie!" said Bob Cherry.

"And an extra big specimen!" said Frank Nugent. "Go and eat coke! If you don't mend your manners, Coker, you'll go out of this Form-room on your neck!"

"Give me my money!"

"Fathead! If you've lost your money we don't know anything about it. You ought to have sense enough to know that!" said Johnny Bull.

"One of you has got it!"

"Rats!"

"Will you hand it over?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Loder, the prefect, pushing his way forward authoritatively. Coker looked as if he were going to spring upon the chums of the Remove. "Let's have the rights of this matter, Coker. Do you accuse those Remove kids of stealing your pocket-book?"

"Yes!" howled Coker.

"Oh, shut up, Coker!" growled Blundell. "That's too thick! We all know they wouldn't do anything of the sort!"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond of the Remove. "Sure, and Coker is off his silly rocker! Kick the spalpeen out!"

The cry was taken up by a crowd of angry Removites:

"Kick him out!"

"Outside, you rotter!"

Loder held up his hand.

"Order here," he said quietly. "This will have to be gone into. I'm a prefect, and I'll look into it."

"That you jolly well won't," said Harry Wharton quickly. "Prefect or not, you've always been up against us."

"Yes, rather!"

Loder gritted his teeth.

"Look here, Wharton——"

"If Coker wants to accuse us, he can do so before our Form-master," said Wharton fiercely. "Mr. Quelch is the proper person to investigate the matter, or the Head."

"Hear, hear!"

"Somebody fetch Mr. Quelch!" called out Bulstrode.

"Blow Mr. Quelch," said Coker. "I'm going to have my pocket-book! One of these young scoundrels has got it about him, and I'm going to take it!"

He made a step towards the Removites. The Famous Four clenched their fists, and their eyes gleamed.

"You'd better not touch any of us," said Harry Wharton, between his teeth. "You'll get hurt if you do, Coker."

"Kick him out!" roared Tom Brown.

"Fetch Mr. Quelch!"

"Mr. Quelch——"

"I am here," said a quiet voice at the door, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, stepped into the Form-room. "Now, then, what is the matter? What is this disgraceful disturbance about?"

A sudden silence fell upon the crowded room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Accuser and Accused.

MR. QUELCH looked from one party to the other—from the Famous Four, pale and quivering with indignation, to the angry Coker, who stood with his fists clenched, and his brows knitted, but evidently undecided how to act. The Remove-master was frowning.

"What is the matter?" he asked sharply.

Wharton burst out:

"Coker has lost his pocket-book, sir, and he accuses us of stealing it!" he exclaimed.

"The rotter!"

"The cad!"

"The outsider!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Coker, this is a very serious matter. Do you indeed accuse these juniors of a theft?"

"Yes, I do, sir!"

"It's a lie!" howled Johnny Bull.

"Silence, Bull!"

"He's not going to call me a thief, sir! I——"

"Silence! Coker, explain to me what causes you to bring this very serious accusation against these boys in my Form," said the Remove-master sternly.

"They've got my pocket-book, sir."

"Nonsense! I do not believe it for one moment! I should require the very strongest proof that any of those boys could be guilty of theft," said Mr. Quelch. "Tell me what has led you to suspect them."

Coker sullenly complied.

"I met them at Courtfield Station, as we were coming home, sir," he said. "The four of them were kicking up a disgraceful row in the station——"

"That is not to the purpose. What of the pocket-book?" rapped out Mr. Quelch, in his cool, businesslike way.

Potter charged right up to the carriage door in spite of the volley of peas. Johnny Bull reached out and smote a terrific smite on Potter's top hat. Crunch! The topper was reduced to the shape of a concertina at one smite. *(See Chapter 2.)*

"I'm coming to that, sir. My aunt, Miss Coker, gave me twenty-five quid——"

"What!"

"Twenty-five pounds, sir, to purchase some new costumes and things we need for the Fifth Form Dramatic Society," said Coker. "We're going to do a redskin play, and——"

"Keep to the point, please."

Coker snorted.

"I had the five fivers in my pocket-book, sir," he said. "Those fags checked me at the station, and I went into the buffet with Potter and Greene. Wharton and the rest followed us in, and they saw me hand a five-pound-note to the young lady behind the bar, and they must have seen the rest of the money in the pocket-book——"

"You took jolly good care that everybody should see your banknotes," said Nugent. "You always do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Go on, Coker!"

"I was some time getting my change, sir, and I had to rush for the train. I had put four pounds ten in the pocket-book, along with the rest of the banknotes, and I put the pocket-book in the inside breast pocket of my jacket, where I always carry it. These fags tried to keep me out of the train——"

"We did keep you out of it, you mean," interjected Johnny Bull.

"I jumped into the carriage, and they struggled with me and chucked me out," said Coker. "I'm not complaining of that, of course, sir. I shouldn't mention it, only for what followed. When I got on the platform, it flashed into my mind that my pocket-book might have tumbled out in the struggle, especially as my jacket was torn up the back. I felt in my pocket for it, and it was gone. I yelled out to stop the train, but it was nearly out of the station. I looked up and down the platform, and on the line, but the pocket-book wasn't there. Potter and Greene looked as well."

"So we did," said Potter and Greene, at once.

"Then we went to the stationmaster, and made him telegraph along the line to Friardale, sir, for the carriage those fags were in to be searched as soon as the train stopped," said Coker.

"And was it done?"

"Yes, sir. On our way back to the school we went round by Friardale, and called in at the station for the pocket-book. The stationmaster, Mr. Wilson, told us he'd searched the carriage as soon as the train from Courtfield came in, but the pocket-book wasn't to be found."

"And then?"

"He hadn't searched these kids, sir. If he had, he'd have found it in one of their pockets—I know that!"

"That's a lie," said Bob Cherry.

"And so you think one of these boys has taken it, Coker?" asked the Remove-master, very quietly.

"I know they have, sir," said Coker, who evidently firmly believed what he said. "Either one of them snatched it out of my pocket while I was struggling with them, or else it dropped in the carriage, and one of them picked it up after the train was out of the station."

Mr. Queleh turned to the Famous Four. His face was very grave indeed now. He knew the chums of the Remove—he knew them well, and he would have been willing to stake a great deal upon their honour. But Coker's statement was clear and explicit; and twenty-five pounds was a very large sum. Was it possible that one of the juniors, or all of them, had yielded to the temptation to possess such a sum of money?

"What have you to say, my boys?" the Remove-master asked gently.

"It's all rot, sir."

"Lies, sir."

"Coker's a silly ass!"

"We haven't touched his rotten pocket-book."

Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"One at a time, please. You may speak, Wharton. What do you say happened?"

"It's just as Coker says, sir, excepting about the pocket-book," he said. "We had a row at the station—I dare say we were as much to blame as Coker about that—but it was only a row. Coker, and Potter, and Greene tried to rush the carriage we were in, and we kept 'em out. Coker dived in, and we bunged him out—ahem!—I mean we pitched him out on the platform. We never saw anything of the pocket-book, and it certainly wasn't dropped in the carriage. We should have seen it; besides, the stationmaster and the porter at Friardale searched the carriage, and couldn't find it. Coker never left it in the carriage."

"Do you mean that Coker is speaking falsely?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Wharton, after a moment's reflection. "I don't think he'd do that. He's just a silly ass, sir."

"Why, you cheeky sweep!" roared Coker.

"Silence, Coker!" said the Remove-master. "You have said your say, and it is Wharton's turn. You think that Coker is stating what he believes to be the truth, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose so. We're always up against Coker, and he's always down on us; but I can't think he would make up a yarn like this to injure us. It would be rather too rotten, I think."

"Then what do you suggest is the explanation?"

"I suppose Coker has lost his pocket-book, sir, and doesn't know what's become of it. He's a silly fool to think we would take it, and a rotten cad to accuse anybody of stealing it."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

Coker turned crimson.

"Then you know nothing about the pocket-book?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Nothing at all, sir," said the Famous Four, with one voice.

"Is it possible, Coker, that you placed it in some other pocket—or that you dropped it somewhere else?" asked the Remove-master.

"No, it isn't, sir. Potter and Greene saw me put it in the inside pocket of my jacket as we came out of the buffet."

"I saw him quite plainly, sir," said Greene.

"So did I," said Potter, "and Coker ran right across the platform to the train. He certainly had it in his pocket when he dived into the carriage, and he hadn't it when he was chucked out again. That's certain."

"It is your belief, then, as well as Coker's, that these juniors took it?" demanded the Remove-master.

Potter hesitated.

"Well, sir, I thought it must have been dropped in the carriage, and that it would be found and given up at Friardale," he said.

"But, as it was not——"

"Well, they must have kept it, sir!" said Potter. "There's no other possible explanation. One of these kids must have it."

"You think they have stolen it?"

"I—I don't like to think so, sir!" stammered Potter, uncomfortably. "But—but they may have kept it for a practical joke on Coker, and may be afraid to own up about having it now, sir!"

"Is that the case, Wharton?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"You know nothing of the pocket-book, or the money in it?"

"Nothing whatever, sir!"

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"It is a very strange and very extraordinary thing," he said. "I cannot believe that any of these four boys is a thief. It is incredible."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wharton gratefully. "When Coker is cool, I think he will be sorry he has accused us like this."

Coker grunted.

"I know jolly well some of you have got it!" he said.

"There is only one way to settle that point," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "I reiterate my firm belief that some strange mistake has been made, and that these juniors are perfectly innocent. But in order to satisfy the whole school, are you boys willing to be searched, and have your studies searched? That will clear up the matter to the satisfaction of all Greyfriars."

Wharton flushed.

"It's pretty rotten to be searched like criminals, sir!" he said.

"But, for the sake of clearing up the matter beyond possible doubt, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch gently.

"Very well, sir; we're quite willing to leave it in your hands. We can rely upon you, sir," said Harry.

"Very good! Then I will send for the porter, and the search shall be made at once," said Mr. Quelch. "Will one of you juniors go and fetch the school-porter here?"

Bolsover minor hurried out of the Form-room to fetch the porter, and there was a deep and painful silence in the Remove-room while the crowd of fellows waited for him to come.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Startling Discovery.

BOLSOVER minor re-entered the Form-room in a few minutes, followed by the new school-porter of Greyfriars. James Cleeke came in quietly and respectfully, with a very grave expression upon his face. Doubtless he had already learned from the fag who had fetched him something of what was toward.

The Famous Four looked at the new school-porter, and Bob Cherry uttered a slight exclamation. The juniors recognised the man who had helped them with the hamper at Courtfield Station.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! I didn't know that chap was Gosling's substitute!"

"Yes, sir," said Cleeke quietly. "I'm here to take Mr. Gosling's place for a week, sir. That was why I offered you my assistance at the station, sir, and you were so kind as to give me a gratuity."

"This man was a witness of what happened, sir," said Coker.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "You were at Courtfield Station, Cleeke?"

"Yes, sir," said the school-porter. "I was coming on by the train, sir, but owing to the trouble among the young gentlemen I lost it, and had to walk, sir. I have already explained to Dr. Locke that I was late through missing my train, sir, and he was good enough to excuse me. Otherwise, I should have arrived before Mr. Gosling left, sir."

"Yes, yes; never mind that!" said Mr. Quelch impatiently. "You saw what happened at Courtfield Station?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me what you saw."

"These young gentlemen," said the porter, indicating Coker & Co., "tried to get into the carriage occupied by the other young gents, sir, and the other young gents kept them out, sir."

"Did you see anything of Master Coker's pocket-book?"

"After the train had started, sir, I heard Master Coker say that his pocket-book had been taken by some of those young gentlemen, sir. But I did not see it. I was not aware until Master Coker said it that he had a valuable pocket-book about him."

"Then you can throw no light upon the matter?"

"I am afraid not, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch; "I have sent for you, Cleeke, to perform a somewhat unpleasant duty. I wish these four boys to be searched."

The porter hesitated.

"They are willing to submit to the search," said Mr. Quelch.

"Well, sir, if the young gents don't hobject, sir——"

"I have said that they do not! Pray proceed at once!"

"Yes, sir."

The school-porter advanced in a gingerly sort of way towards the juniors. It was evident that the task was repugnant to him. The Famous Four stood erect, proudly erect. They had nothing to fear from a search, but they felt the humiliation of it keenly. They held up their arms in order to make it quite easy for Cleeke to reach all their pockets.

"Go ahead, my son!" said Bob Cherry kindly. "We don't blame you, old man! Get it over, for goodness' sake!"

"Yes, sir."

The porter turned out the pockets of the juniors. Various articles were brought to light, but there was no trace of the missing pocket-book. There was an exclamation from Coker, however, as three sovereigns were turned out of Wharton's waistcoat-pocket.

"Where did Wharton get that money?" he asked.

"That is a large sum for a boy in the Remove to have about him, Wharton, is it not?" said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton coloured.

"My uncle and aunt gave me a sovereign each for a tip to-day, sir," he said, "and I had a sovereign of my own."

"Mine, more likely!" said Coker.

"Silence, Coker! You would not object to my writing

to Colonel Wharton for confirmation of your statement Wharton?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Not at all, sir!"

"Very good! Have you finished, Cleeke?"

"Yes, sir."

The school-porter seemed glad to be finished. There was a cheer from the Remove crowd, led by Bulstrode.

"Bravo, Wharton! It's all right!"

"Yes; it's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "But we'll make Coker sit up for putting us through this, all the same!"

"What-ho!" said Johnny Bull emphatically.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh murmured that the sit-upfulness would be terrific.

"The studies remain to be searched," said Mr. Quelch. "This matter must be investigated to the very end. I suppose you will be able to get the numbers of the notes from Miss Coker, Coker?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the Fifth-Former.

"In that case, the notes can be stopped, and the thief, if there is a thief, will not benefit by his act," said Mr. Quelch. "I am quite assured that when the notes are discovered, they will be discovered outside Greyfriars. However, let us now proceed to the studies!"

Mr. Quelch led the way up the Remove passage. Cleeke followed him, and after them went the Famous Four and Coker & Co., and a crowd of fellows.

The feed in the Form-room was forgotten now by all but Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was still busy there—busier than ever when the others were gone. But all the rest crowded up to the Remove passage, eager and curious.

No. 1 Study, which belonged to Wharton and Nugent, was visited first. Only Cleeke entered the room, and Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway, keeping the crowd out.

Cleeke searched through the study.

He was heard to utter a sudden exclamation, as he stooped into the lower part of the study cupboard. He rose with something in his hand, and there was a gleam of shiny leather and silver.

"What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a start.

"A pocket-book, sir."

"Is there a monogram on it?" shouted Coker from the passage.

"Yes, Master Coker."

"What are the letters?"

"'H. C.,' sir."

"Horace Coker—my monogram!" said Coker triumphantly. "What did I tell you, sir?"

"Give me the pocket-book, Cleeke," said Mr. Quelch, very quietly.

The school-porter handed the pocket-book to the Form-master. Mr. Quelch turned in the doorway, and held it out to view. There was a buzz of voices; that impressive pocket-book was well known by sight. It was a very expensive one, and Coker had shown it off in public on very many occasions.

"Is that your pocket-book, Coker?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you account for its being in your study cupboard, Wharton?"

Wharton gazed at the pocket-book like a fellow in a dream.

"In—the—study—cupboard!" he stuttered.

"That is where it was found, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, his eyes fixed upon the captain of the Remove.

"I—I—I don't understand it, sir," stammered Harry. "I certainly didn't put it there."

"Nor I," said Nugent. "I hadn't the faintest idea that it was there."

"It is very strange," said Mr. Quelch ominously. "Open that pocket-book, Coker, and see whether the contents are intact."

Every eye was upon Coker as he opened the pocket-book. There were several old letters and papers in it, and he took them out. There was nothing else.

"The money is gone, sir," said Coker.

"All of it?"

"Yes, sir. There were four five-pound notes in this compartment, sir, and four sovereigns and a half-sovereign in this pouch with a catch, sir. They are all gone."

"You still deny knowing anything about the pocket-book, Wharton and Nugent?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Most decidedly, sir," said Nugent.

"The money remains to be found. Continue your search, please, Cleeke."

"Yessir!"

The school-porter ransacked the study from end to end. But nothing more was discovered. Mr. Quelch led the way to No. 13, which belonged to Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and little Wun Lung, the Chinee. Mark Linley, the scholarship junior, was there at work, and he rose to his feet as the Form-master entered.

"This room next, Cleeke," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

The study was searched, without result. Then a move was made to John Bull's study, No. 14, which Bull shared with Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. The search there was also fruitless. The pocket-book had been found in No. 1 Study, but of the money it had contained there was no sign; unless, indeed, the three sovereigns in Harry Wharton's waistcoat-pocket were a part of it.

"Thank you, Cleeke," said Mr. Quelch. "You may go."

And the school-porter, his work done, departed. An ominous silence fell upon the crowd in the Remove passage.

"I—I hope you don't take this to mean that we took Coker's pocket-book, sir?" said Harry Wharton, his handsome face flushing crimson. "Neither Nugent nor I can explain how it came in our study——"

"You could if you liked," said Coker.

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, this is a very painful matter. The discovery of the pocket-book in your study disposes of the possibility of its having been lost in Courtfield Station or on the train. That pocket-book has been brought here, and it was placed where it was found; and that is a clear proof that it was taken by someone belonging to this school. It is perfectly clear that it was not lost, at all events. We are faced by two possible theories—one, that either you or Nugent stole the pocket-book——"

"They jolly well did," said Coker.

"Don't interrupt me again, Coker. The other theory is that Coker deliberately placed the pocket-book there from enmity towards you, to throw suspicion upon you."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Coker.

"Do you declare that this is the case, Wharton?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Wharton.

"I didn't!" roared Coker. "Besides, I couldn't have! I've only just got back to school. Potter and Greene know that I went straight to the Remove Form-room when I came in. I knew that Wharton was giving a feed there; Bolsover told me so in the passage."

"That's true," said Bolsover major. "I met Coker as he came in, and he went right into the Remove room, sir. He didn't come upstairs at all, and Potter and Greene didn't, either."

"Very good! What have you to say now, Wharton and Nugent?"

"I—I—I don't know what to say, sir," said Wharton, white as death now. "I believe what Coker says; I can't believe he would be villain enough to plant a thing like this on me, because we'd had a row."

"Thank you!" sneered Coker.

"But—but I don't know how the pocket-book got there, sir, and I know that Franky doesn't know, either."

"I haven't the slightest idea, sir," said Nugent.

Mr. Quelch's brows contracted.

"I am afraid I cannot accept that statement," he said. "The evidence is that you brought the pocket-book back to the school with you, either having taken it from Coker's pocket while struggling with him, or having picked it up in the railway-carriage."

"We did not, sir."

"One or both of you must be guilty. You have taken the money from the pocket-book, and concealed it there as of no further value. Can you expect me to doubt that this is the case?"

"It is not the case, sir."

"The question is, where is the money? You must restore it to Coker——"

"Yes, rather!" said Coker emphatically.

"We cannot restore what we haven't got, sir," said Harry Wharton. He had recovered his calmness now, and was very cool and clear. "We know nothing whatever about the pocket-book. It certainly seems to have been found in our study cupboard, but we did not place it there. Think a minute, sir. Where is the money? You can make every search you like, but you will not find the banknotes on us."

"You've hidden them somewhere," said Potter.

"If we had, we could just as easily have hidden the pocket-book, too," said Frank Nugent quickly.

"That's all very well," said Coker savagely. "But what I want is my twenty-five quid, and I'm jolly well going to have it."

"Calm yourself, Coker! If these juniors have your money, it will be restored to you," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall now go and acquaint the Head with the matter, and leave it in his hands. Let there be no more talk between you; the matter is serious enough without quarrelling."

And Mr. Quelch walked away in the direction of Dr Locke's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Black Suspicion.

THE rest of that evening seemed like a nightmare to the Famous Four.

The feed in the Form-room, the joyous wind-up of a glorious day, had ended—and it had ended in disaster for the chums of the Remove.

The finding of the lost pocket-book in the cupboard in No. 1 Study was a stunning blow to the chums of the Lower Fourth.

To the greater part of Greyfriars it was a convincing proof of their guilt.

But they had many steadfast friends who refused to believe anything of the kind.

The whole school was in a buzz of talk upon the subject.

Half the Remove, at least, firmly believed in Harry Wharton, and hoped that some explanation of the matter would be forthcoming.

But a good many, headed by Bolsover major, and Vernon-Smith, and Snoop and Stott, and other fellows who had never been on good terms with the Famous Four, took the opposite view.

No. 1 Study had already been nicknamed the Thieves' Kitchen by Vernon-Smith, and many of the juniors made an elaborate pretence of buttoning up their pockets when any of the chums came near them.

Vernon-Smith & Co. were only doubtful upon the point—whether all the Famous Four had been concerned in the theft of Coker's pocket-book, or whether only one or two of them had stolen it.

"Most likely Wharton or Nugent saw it lying in the carriage, and snapped it up," the Bounder of Greyfriars remarked in the common-room. "That would account for it being found in their study, and not in Cherry's or Bull's."

"Oh, they were all in it!" sneered Snoop, the sneak of the Remove. To the estimable Snoop the whole affair was a very enjoyable morsel, and he relished it.

"I think not," said the Bounder, with a shake of the head. "In the first place, Johnny Bull is rolling in money; he has as much as he wants, and he's richer than Coker. He wouldn't take money he didn't need."

"Something in that," admitted Bolsover major.

"Then there's Bob Cherry—he ain't a thief," said Vernon-Smith. "He's several sorts of an ass, but he wouldn't steal. I think not."

"Thank you!" said Bob Cherry, coming into the common-room as the Bounder of Greyfriars spoke. "Thank you for nothing!"

"I'm standing up for you," said the Bounder.

"Are you standing up for all four of us?"

"No; I believe Nugent or Wharton, or both, had the loot."

Bob Cherry's eyes blazed.

"Then don't take the trouble to stand up for me, please," he said. "We four stand or fall together. And anybody who says that we touched Coker's dirty money is a liar and a cad, and I'm willing to fight anybody who denies it."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"You can fight the whole Remove if you like," he said. "But that won't alter our opinions on the matter."

"No fear!" said Bolsover major.

"I say, you fellows, it's pretty rotten having a set of thieves in the school, ain't it?" said Billy Bunter. "I'm inclined to think——"

What the Owl of the Remove was inclined to think cannot be recorded, for he was interrupted before he could get any further by a terrific back-hander from Bob Cherry, which sent him sprawling along the floor of the common-room.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Yah! Oooooop!"

"Hold your tongue, then, you fat cad!" said Bob Cherry savagely.

"Ow! Ow!"

"Let Bunter alone," said Bolsover major, in his most bullying tone. "If you want to pitch into somebody, tackle a chap of your own size, Bob Cherry."

"I'll do that fast enough!" shouted Bob.

And he rushed at Bolsover major, and in a moment the two were fighting furiously.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, strode into the common-room.

"Stop that!" he exclaimed. "There's to be no rowing over this. Stop it at once, and take a hundred lines each!"

The two combatants separated, and Bob Cherry, breathing hard, tramped out of the common-room. He left the room in a buzz behind him.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were bending, with gloomy faces, over their preparation in Study No. 1, when Bob Cherry came in. He was holding a handkerchief to his nose, and the handkerchief was stained with red.

"Hallo! More trouble!" said Wharton.

"Yes; Bolsover major," said Bob Cherry briefly. "They're all jawing it over now. This is a rotten bad happening for us!"

"What are they saying?" asked Nugent.

Bob Cherry made a grimace.

"They seem to be willing to leave Johnny Bull and me out of it, and to fix it upon you two."

"Oh, good!" said Frank.

"Let them, then!" said Wharton angrily. "But in that case, what have you been fighting about?"

"Oh, on general principles. I was explaining to Bolsover major that we all four stand together, sink or swim."

"Good man!" said Wharton. "Of course we do! And I think most of the Remove will stand by us, too, in spite of Vernon-Smith and his set. The fellows know jolly well that we wouldn't touch Coker's rotten pocket-book!"

Bob Cherry nodded thoughtfully.

"But how the dickens did it get into your study cupboard, Wharton?"

"I can't guess."

"It must have been brought here. Who brought it?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"You don't mean to say that you're beginning to think that Wharton or I picked the rotten pocket-book up in the railway-carriage, Bob!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Oh, no! I know you didn't! What I mean is, we've got to get on to the chap who did bring it here. Could it have been Coker himself?"

"It seems to be proved that he came straight to the Form-room when he got in."

"Another chap could have done it for him," said Bob Cherry. "Snoop would have done it, or some cad in the Fifth. Coker could have handed him the pocket-book and told him where to put it if it was a plot against this study."

"Yes, that's possible."

"I suppose it must be something of that sort," said Harry Wharton, slowly and thoughtfully. "I've always looked on Coker as a sort of good-natured ass; but there's no doubt that he's got his back up against us very much owing to the lickings we've given the Fifth lately. He may be deeper than we thought, you know. He must be jolly deep if he laid a plot like this to disgrace this study! I wouldn't believe it for a moment, only there doesn't seem to be any other explanation. Coker's pocket-book was found in our study cupboard, and somebody put it there. It must have been a scheme to fix it on us, and nobody could have had the pocket-book in his possession excepting Coker. That seems to make it clear."

"It is clear!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "It's a rotten plot from beginning to end, and Coker's at the bottom of it!"

"Can't be anything else!" said Frank.

There was a knock at the door, and Trotter, the house-page, put his head in.

"Dr. Locke wishes to see you young gentlemen in his study," he said. "I've told Master Bull."

"Right-ho, Trotter!"

In a few minutes the Famous Four presented themselves at the Head's study. They knew what they were wanted for, and they were a little pale, but collected. Coker left the study as they arrived, with Potter and Greene. The three Fifth-Formers had been with the Head. They gave the Removites dark glances as they passed, but did not speak. Harry Wharton & Co. entered the study.

Mr. Quelch was there with the Head. Dr. Locke was looking very grave and troubled. He bent a searching glance upon the juniors as they came in.

"You know why I have sent for you, my boys," he said. "I have heard Coker's story of what happened at the station. Pray give me your version."

Harry Wharton explained what had happened at Courtfield.

"You still deny, I suppose, knowing anything about the loss of the pocket-book?" the Head asked.

"Yes, sir."

"How do you account for the empty pocket-book being found in your study, Wharton?"

"I cannot account for it."

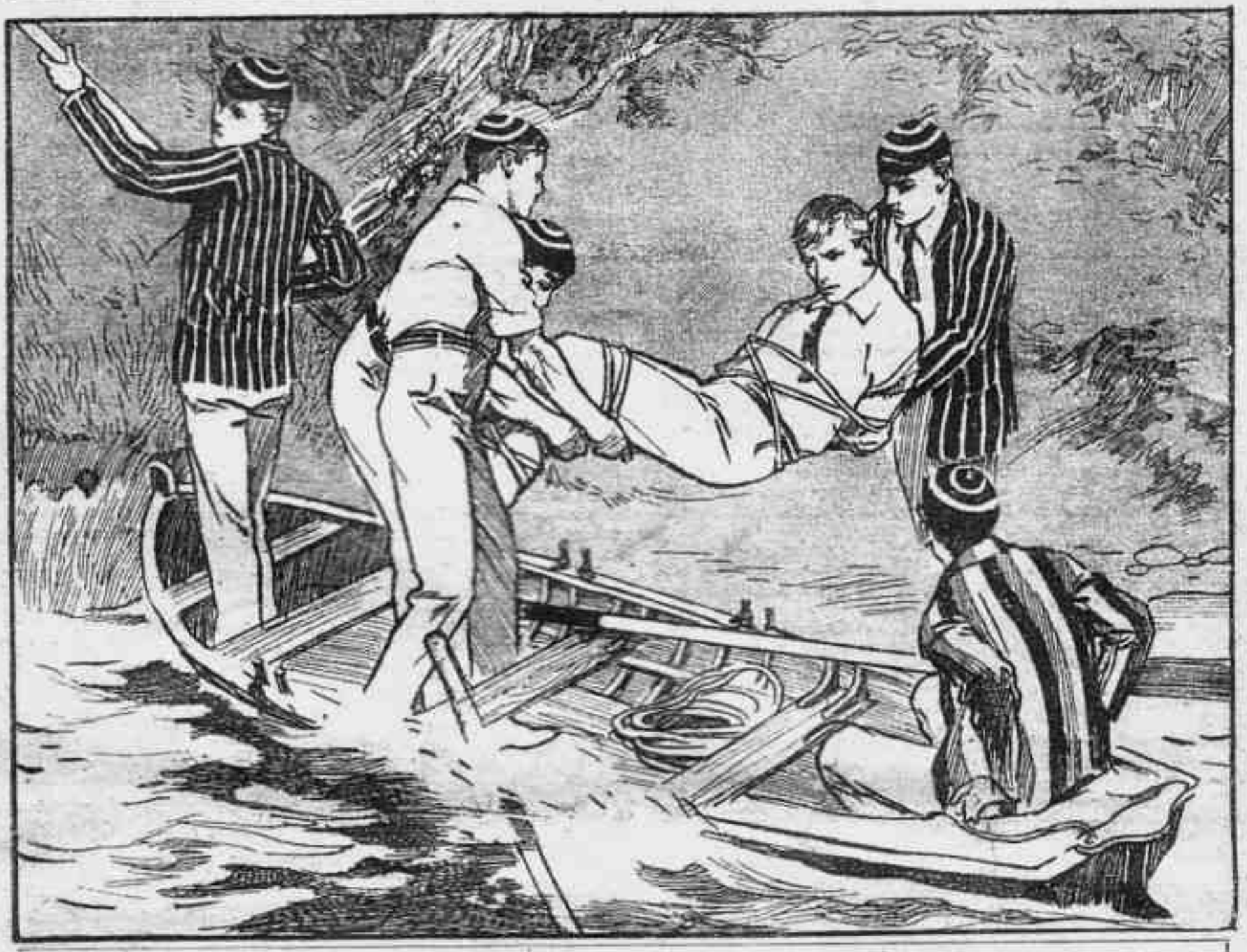
"I suppose you are aware that that, upon the face of it, must be taken as a proof of guilt, unless you have some adequate explanation to offer?"

"I can't say more than that we know nothing about it, sir," said Wharton steadily. "We certainly didn't put the pocket-book there. It must have been shoved there to fix this suspicion on us. There was no money in it. We're supposed to have hidden the money in a safe place. Why couldn't we have hidden the pocket-book just as easily, instead of leaving it where anybody could find it?"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"That is a point well taken, Mr. Quelch," he said.

"Quite so, sir."



In a couple of minutes Crooke was a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot, and three of the juniors lifted him into the boat. Crooke spluttered. "Where are you taking me?" he gasped. "You'll see," said Jack Blake grimly. "If you make a row, we'll duck you in the water! So be careful." (*For the above incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, entitled "THE WHIP HAND!" by Martin Clifford, which is contained in our popular companion paper, "The Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.*)

"Then what do you suggest, Wharton?"

"Well, sir, as the pocket-book was there, somebody must have put it there, and it could only have been done to fix suspicion on us. Coker must have spoken falsely when he said he had lost the pocket-book, or else it must have been found by a chap who had a grudge against our study. But it looks to me as if Coker and somebody else plotted to fix this on us."

The Head frowned.

"Have you ever known Coker to be guilty of a base action?" he asked.

"Oh, no, sir! He's a silly ass, but I've never suspected him before of being a rascal. But that's the only way to account for his pocket-book being found in our study."

Dr. Locke pursed his lips.

"I must consider this case," he said. "The proof against either you or Nugent seems to be very strong, but against which of you cannot be said. Either of you may be innocent, and either guilty, and that makes it impossible to punish either. I should expel a thief from the school; but when a charge lies between two boys, I cannot expel both when one may be perfectly innocent. I have never been placed in so extraordinary and unpleasant a position before."

The juniors were silent. The situation was indeed extraordinary, and it was difficult for the Head to decide what to do. He did not speak for a few moments.

"My decision cannot be taken now," he said. "I must reflect. You may go."

The juniors left the study.

Dr. Locke fixed a troubled look upon Mr. Quelch as the door closed behind the Famous Four of the Remove.

"This is a terrible position for me," he said. "It is possible, as Wharton says, that it is a plot against him. But the evidence is that one of these juniors stole Coker's pocket-book and left it where it was found. But which one? It may have been either Wharton or Nugent, and the other may have known nothing about it. Or it may have been either Bull or Cherry. They could easily have thrown the pocket-book there, and they had equal opportunities of stealing it. Or it may be that the whole four were in the theft—or two or three of them. It is horrible! I cannot punish them all—two or three are in all probability innocent. And if only one of them stole the pocket-book, I cannot punish him without punishing the innocent also."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"It is an extraordinary situation, sir," he said. "There is only one thing to be done, in my opinion."

"And that?"

"There must be a strict investigation, and the truth must be discovered."

"And in what manner?"

"I suggest that you send for a detective."

The Head started.

"A detective!" he exclaimed. "A detective in the school, Mr. Quelch! Good heavens! Besides, what good would a detective do? The mere knowledge that there was a detective in the school would make the guilty party so careful that he would never be discovered."

The Remove-master smiled.

"Yes, sir; but I was not thinking of an ordinary detective. Pray allow me to explain, and I think that you will admit that my suggestion is a good one."

And Mr. Quelch proceeded to explain, and the Head listened, with surprise and repugnance at first, but when Mr. Quelch had finished, he nodded assent.

"I will write to-night, then," said Mr. Quelch.

"Do so," said the Head. "Thank you very much, Mr. Quelch. I only hope that this step will lead to the discovery of the guilty, and, what is more important, the clearing of the innocent."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
A New Boy at Greyfriars.

"WHOOP!"

Crash!

"M-m-my hat!"

Cleeke, the new school-porter of Greyfriars, gave a yell as the box slid from his hands and bumped down the stairs.

It was two days since the affair at Courtfield. Matters had gone on very uncomfortably at Greyfriars since. Harry Wharton & Co.—or, at least, some of them—were under suspicion. That was bad enough for the Famous Four. And Coker was very much annoyed, for the money given him by his fond aunt for the purchase of new costumes for the Fifth Form Dramatic Society was gone, and it was very doubtful if it would be recovered. And Coker, who was planning a Red Indian play for the Fifth Form dramatists, had intended to stage it in a manner worthy of a George Edwardes. And now he had to content himself with the old costumes, and the Fifth Form dramatists were making the best of them.

Coker was trying on the awe-inspiring costume of Black Buffalo, the chief of the Comanches, and he had come out of his study to parade the passage, to the great admiration of his fellow-dramatists.

Coker certainly made a terrible-looking Indian chief.

With the war-paint concealing his features, and his hair decorated with feathers, and the Indian costume encasing his sturdy limbs, and a tomahawk in his hand, the Fifth-Former would have stricken terror to the heart of a plainsman in the Far West.

On the present occasion, however, the only heart he struck terror to was that of James Cleeke, the new school-porter, who was carrying a box upstairs, and came suddenly upon the Indian chief prancing in the passage.

Coker's wild war-whoop made the porter jump, and as Coker bore down upon him with brandished tomahawk Cleeke gave a yell of surprise and terror, and the box he was carrying slid from his nerveless hands.

Crash!

Bump!

Crash!

The box rolled down the stairs, crashing on every step, and finally landed below, and burst. Shirts and collars and other articles came tumbling out of the burst open box, and covered the floor and the lower steps.

"My hat!" ejaculated the Indian chief.

"Oh!" gasped Cleeke.

"You ass!" roared Black Buffalo. "What did you drop that box for?"

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter. "He took you for a real Indian, Cokey."

Coker grinned under his war-paint.

"Well, that shows the costume and the make-up are jolly good," he said complacently. "It's all right, Cleekey; I'm not going to scalp you."

"Oh, Master Coker!" gasped the porter. "You startled me, sir."

"Yes, I dare say I did," said Coker, grinning. "You'd better gather that box up. Whom does it belong to?"

"The new boy, Master Coker."

"It's my box," said a quiet voice.

Coker glanced at the speaker.

He was a new-comer to Greyfriars, and evidently a junior. He had been following the school-porter up the stairs, and had stepped aside to allow the thundering box to pass him as it rolled down, otherwise he might have been swept away by it. He was a somewhat slim, well-built lad, with a quiet, good-looking face, and a very keen pair of eyes and a firm mouth.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "Who are you, kid?"

"My name is Hawke."

"New kid?"

"Yes. I'm going into the Remove."

Coker sniffed. He did not love the Remove.

"Oh, you're going into the Remove, are you?" he said. "Then you can sheer off. You'd better go and collect up your shirts."

"I rather think you ought to do that, as you made the porter drop the box with your silly rot," said the new junior.

Coker glared.

"With my what?" he demanded.

"Silly rot!" said the new boy cheerfully.

"Why, you young ass, I——"

"I'm sure I'm sorry I dropped the box, Master Hawke," said the porter in his suave way; "but I was startled by Master Coker, sir. I 'ope there is no damage done. I will see, sir. Please leave it to me."

"Oh, all right!"

Cleeke descended the stairs after the box.

"Old Gosling wouldn't have been quite so good-tempered about it," grinned Potter. "He would have reported you, Cokey."

"Yes; I must say that Cleeke is an improvement on Gosling," said Coker. "I shall be sorry when he goes and old Gossy comes back. You can buzz off, you Remove kid. We're rehearsing a play, and we don't want fags hanging round."

"Oh, you're rehearsing a play, are you?" said Hawke. "I thought, perhaps, I'd tumbled into a lunatic asylum by mistake."

"Why, you—you——"

The Red Indian made a movement towards Hawke, and the new junior promptly followed the porter. Coker snorted, and returned to his study.

"There's something in belonging to the Remove that makes a kid cheeky," he confided to Potter. "That young sweep hasn't been here ten minutes, and he's as cheeky as any of the rest."

Down on the lower landing a number of fellows had gathered round, drawn to the spot by the crash of the box on the stairs.

"Breaking up the happy home, Cleekey?" grinned Bolsover major. "Whose is that giddy box?"

"Master Hawke's, sir."

Bolsover major glanced at the new boy.

"Hallo! This is the new kid somebody was speaking about," he said. "Another whelp to be licked into shape."

It was a very offensive remark, and quite uncalled for, but it was very like the bully of the Remove to greet a new boy in that way. Hawke looked at him, and a gleam came into his quiet eyes.

"Oh, let the new kid alone," said Bob Cherry. "What a beastly bully you are, Bolsover!"

"I'd rather be a bully than a pickpocket!" retorted Bolsover.

"He, he, he!" cackled Snoop.

Bob Cherry clenched his fists and strode towards the Remove bully.

"I've told you what to expect if you begin on that tack," he said. "Put up your hands, Bolsover."

"Quite ready!" sneered Bolsover.

"Silence, both of you!" said Mr. Quelch, who had just come up to see what the crashing was about. "Bolsover, you have no right to speak to Cherry in that way. It has been explained to the whole school that the affair of the missing pocket-book has not yet been settled, and until the truth is known I recommend silence on the subject."

"We think the truth is known now, sir," said Bolsover.

"Take a hundred lines for impertinence, Bolsover."

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

"Very well, sir. But we think it's rather hard that we should have to associate with thieves in the Remove, sir."

"Hear, hear!" said Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Quelch's lips set hard.

"Come into my study, Bolsover, and Vernon-Smith," he said.

The two cads of the Remove followed the Form-master very unwillingly into his study. The sound of a swishing cane could be heard a moment later, and Bolsover and Vernon-Smith came out of the study with their hands tucked under their arms and dark scowls upon their faces. Mr. Quelch looked out of the doorway.

"Understand, all of you, that the matter is now sub-judice," he said. "No offensive remarks are to be made to the boys upon whom suspicion has unfortunately fallen. Any-one offending will be caned if the matter comes to my knowledge."

And the Remove-master closed his door.

Cleeke re-packed the box and carried it up to the dormitory, and the new boy followed him. There was a curious expression upon Hawke's clear-cut, keen face. Perhaps he was surprised by what had happened, and wondered what it meant.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
An Addition to Study No. 1.

TAP!

"Come in!" said Harry Wharton.

Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry were in Study No. 1 when the tap came at the door. It was the new boy, Hawke, who entered in response to Wharton's invitation. The three juniors looked at him in some surprise.

Hawke was a new boy, but there was none of the diffidence about him which might have been expected of a stranger within the gates. He looked like a fellow who would be cool and self-possessed under any circumstances.

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

Hawke nodded.

"This is Study No. 1, I think?" he said.

"Right!" replied Nugent.

"My name is Hawke—Dalton Hawke," the new boy explained. "I belong to the Remove, and Mr. Quelch has sent me to this study."

"Oh!" said Nugent and Wharton together.

The new boy smiled.

"You don't want a stranger here, I suppose," he remarked. "I can understand it. But I suppose I must come."

Wharton laughed.

"You must come if the Form-master has put you here," he said. "It's quite right—Nugent and I have had this study to ourselves for a long time, and we want to keep it for ourselves. But you're welcome, as far as that goes. We don't want to be inhospitable."

And he held out his hand frankly.

Hawke shook hands with him cordially enough. Nugent followed Wharton's example. Neither of the chums of Study No. 1 wanted a third there, but as there was no help for it they intended to take it cheerfully, and make the best of it.

"It's all right," said Nugent. "After all, there are four chaps in Bob's study, and so I suppose we can make room for three."

"Thank you!" said Hawke. "I hope we shall be friends; and, anyway, I won't bother you more than I can help."

"That's all right," said Wharton, smiling. "But——" He paused.

Hawke looked at him.

"But what?" he asked.

"I'm rather surprised at Mr. Quelch putting you into this study under the circumstances, that's all," said Harry.

"Under the circumstances," repeated Hawke, looking mystified, "I'm afraid I don't quite follow. I'm a stranger here, you know."

"I'd better explain," said Harry, reddening a little. "You'll hear the whole story before you've been here an hour, so you may as well have it from us. Sit down and try the jam-tarts, and I'll tell you how it is."

"Good egg!" said Hawke.

"There's a chap in the Fifth who has lost a pocket-book with a lot of tin in it," said Wharton. "Chap named Coker——"

"Coker! The fellow who was dressed as a Red Indian?"

"Yes. He's an awful ass, you know, and he thinks he can act. He's getting up a Red Indian play, and he's Black Buffalo, or Crimson Coyote, or something of the sort. As a matter of fact, the Fifth Form Dramatic Society is just an imitation of us. We have a dramatic society in the Remove, you know, and we started first. Coker is following in our footsteps with his rotten dramatic society. But to come back to the mutton. Coker's lost a pocket-book with twenty-four pounds ten shillings in it—some money his aunt had given him to get costumes and things for his silly play. The pocket-book was found in this study cupboard, but the money's never been heard of since. Some of the fellows suspect us of having pinched it. That's the story. You'll have it buzzed at you from all sides soon. If you don't care to be in the study, you can ask Mr. Quelch to change you into another, and I dare say he will."

Hawke smiled.

"Thanks!" he said. "But I don't think I'll trouble. But I'm very much interested in what you've said. Would you mind telling me the whole story?"

"Certainly!"

And Wharton explained the whole of the happenings at Courtfield Station on that eventful afternoon.

The new boy listened with keen attention.

"It's jolly queer!" he said, when Wharton had finished.

The Remove captain coloured.

"Does that mean that you suspect this study, too?" he asked.

Hawke shook his head.

"No! I don't know any of you yet, and I can't very well form an opinion. But you certainly don't look to me like a fellow who would pinch anybody's pocket-book. But it's jolly queer about the book being found here."

"Yes, it's queer enough."

"You have no idea how it got here, then?"

"None at all—excepting that it was put in the cupboard by somebody."

"What sort of a fellow is this chap Coker? You were on bad terms with him?"

"In a way, yes. We were always having rows. You see, the Fifth give themselves all sorts of airs, and they want to treat the Remove as fags. We don't stand that."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry, with emphasis.

"We're always having rows with the Fifth," said Nugent.

"The Fifth generally get the worst of it. That gets Coker's back up."

"But he would have to feel pretty spiteful before he tried to plant a thing like this on you," Hawke remarked. "Is he that kind of chap?"

"Well, no, we never thought so," confessed Wharton. "That's the strangest part of the whole bizney. Until this happened we always knew that Coker was a silly ass, but we'd have sworn that he wasn't a rascal. But now it's only too clear that he deliberately planted this on us. There's no other possible explanation. At the same time, I can't quite get on to it. It isn't like what we knew of Coker."

"Might have been some third party in the matter," the new boy suggested. "Couldn't the pocket-book have fallen into somebody else's hands?"

"I don't see how. You see, Coker missed it, or said he missed it, directly after we had chucked him out of the carriage. Either he or us must have had the pocket-book at that moment. We hadn't it, so he must have had it. Therefore he must have been lying when he said it was gone."

"Clear as daylight," said Bob Cherry.

"He might have had his pocket picked on the station?"

"Not just at the minute when we chucked him out of the carriage."

"Well, no, I suppose not," Hawke assented. "Were there many people on the platform?"

"Oh, yes—lots!"

"Anybody close at hand?"

"Only ourselves in the carriage, and Potter and Greene of the Fifth with Coker."

"Nobody else?"

"Yes—the school-porter. I remember he was there—he caught Coker as we pitched him out. The rest of the people had got into the train."

"Potter and Greene, you say. Who are they?"

"Two fellows of the Fifth."

"Friends of Coker's?"

"Yes—they're chums."

"Chums sometimes turn out queerly, you know. Might Potter or Greene have pinched the pocket-book?"

"Well, they might, I suppose," said Wharton slowly. "As a matter of fact, it's pretty well known that they crawl up to Coker because he's got heaps of money. And they knew he had the money in his pocket. But—but I shouldn't care to suspect them."

"Only somebody's got to be suspected, as the pocket-book went."

"Well, yes."

"Had either of them a chance of taking it?"

"Well, I don't think they had. They were there, but I don't see how they could have picked Coker's pocket without Coker knowing it. We could have, because we were struggling with him on the floor of the carriage; but Potter and Greene didn't have a chance, so far as I could see."

"It wasn't Potter or Greene," said Nugent, with a shake of the head. "It rests between us and Coker. And as it wasn't us, the story was trumped up by Coker. It's no good suggesting a third party, because if there had been a pick-pocket on the station he couldn't have brought the pocket-book here. It could only have been put in this study by a fellow belonging to Greyfriars."

"Yes, that seems pretty clear. Was Coker in the study when the search was made?"

"Oh, no! Mr. Quelch kept everybody out of the study. He stood at the door while the porter made the search."

"And the money hasn't been found?"

"No. Coker's got the numbers of the notes from his aunt's banker, and they've been stopped. The sovereigns can't be traced, of course."

"Then the notes won't be any good to the thief, whoever he is?"

"I suppose not."

"Or any good to Coker, if he is keeping them back?"

"Well, no. He can't very well change them; the police would be on to them at once."

"Coker must have known that, I suppose. He was really robbing himself of twenty pounds, if he worked this up as a plot against you."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. It had not struck them in this light before, and they wondered at the keenness of the new boy in getting at the kernel of the matter in this way.

"Well, I—I suppose so," said Nugent slowly. "It's queer."

"Very queer!" said Hawke, with a smile. "If the notes can't be spent they are so much waste paper to Coker if he's keeping them. It would have paid him better to leave them in the pocket-book, to be found in this study. Then they would have been given back to him, and he could have spent them."

"That's so."

"Which would really seem to prove that Coker is innocent in the matter, and didn't have anything to do with putting the pocket-book here!" Hawke suggested.

Wharton reddened.

"Well, that's so—the way you put it," he admitted. "But you're working it out to prove that we pinched the pocket-book. Is that what you mean?"

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Well, it sounds like it!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"I was only trying to get at the facts for you," said the new boy pacifically.

"That's all very well! But if you jaw like that to the other fellows they will jolly soon think that it's proved against us," said Nugent.

"I sha'n't say a word, then."

"You'd better not!" growled Bob Cherry.

Hawke laughed.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I didn't mean to give you that impression. I've said already that you don't strike me as fellows that would pinch anybody's money. Look here, I'll tell you what we'll do. Why not look into the matter, and try to find out what really happened? And I'll help you."

"We'd be jolly glad to!" said Wharton ruefully. "But, unless Coker planted this on us, there simply isn't any explanation to be thought of."

"It is Coker, right enough!" said Nugent decidedly. "He's a silly ass, you know; and I suppose it didn't occur to him that he was really depriving himself of the money. Of course, he can't spend the notes now. But he's got them, right enough. There isn't any other explanation possible."

"Excepting that we are a gang of thieves!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Well, now you know the whole matter, Hawke," said Harry Wharton. "You can see that we're under suspicion—and there's some reason for it, too. The whole business is a rotten one. And if you care to ask Quelchy to change you into another study I've no doubt he will do it."

Dalton Hawke shook his head.

"I'll stay here," he said.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hoskins' Tenner.

"TEN quid!" said Hobson admiringly.

"Ten quid!" said Hoskins of the Shell proudly.

"Ripping, Hosky, old boy!"

"Let's see the quidlets!" said Murray.

The three Shell fellows were standing by the gateway of Greyfriars. The postman had just come, and Hoskins, of the Shell, had gone down to the gates to meet him. He had confided to Murray and Hobson that he was expecting a registered letter, and the two Shell fellows had cheerfully gone down with him to meet the postman. They naturally expected that there would be a visit to the tuckshop to follow. Registered letters received by juniors generally were followed by visits to the tuckshop.

Hoskins had opened the sealed envelope, and he took out a crisp and rustling banknote.

"There aren't any quidlets," said Hoskins. "It's a tenner."

Hobson and Murray looked at the tenner in great admiration. Very few fellows at Greyfriars had tenners to show. Coker, of the Shell, and Lord Mauleverer, of the Remove, were probably the only ones. It was a windfall for Hoskins, too, for, as a rule, he was not rolling in money.

"Your pater?" asked Hobson.

Hoskins nodded.

"Yes."

"Jolly lucky it's a half-holiday today," Murray remarked thoughtfully.

"Jolly lucky!" said Hobson. "We'll have an afternoon out, Hosky."

"Oh, this money isn't to spend!" said Hoskins; and the countenances of his two comrades fell several degrees. "It's to pay for my violin."

"Oh!"

"You know, I'm writing a concerto," said the amateur musician of the Shell. "I've wanted a violin for a long time. I can play it, you know, and I've come across a bargain at old Lazarus's shop in Courtfield. I can get Wharton to play the piano to my violin, and try over my concerto in F Minor. It will be ripping, won't it?"

"Oh, gorgeous!" growled Hobson.

"It's a real bargain, that violin," said Hoskins enthusiastically. "In splendid condish, and only nine pounds."

Murray brightened up.

"Nine pounds!" he repeated.

"Yes. It's made by——"

"Then you'll have a quid over."

"Yes, there will be a quid left."

"Better come and change the note at Mrs. Mimble's," said Murray. "You might lose it, you know."

"Safer to carry a banknote than a lot of sovereigns," said Hoskins, with a shake of the head. "You see——"

"Mrs. Mimble could get the change while we're having some ginger-pop," Hobson remarked thoughtfully, "and then you can take over just the nine pounds to old Lazarus. He mayn't be able to change the note, you know, and he wouldn't let you bring the violin away unless you paid for it."

"Yes; I didn't think of that," said Hoskins. "But I'm not thirsty."

"We are!" said Murray.

Hoskins grinned.

"Good!" he said. "We'll change the tenner. I'll send Cleeke over to Courtfield for the violin, I think. Do you want to earn two bob, Cleeke?"

The school-porter touched his hat respectfully.

"Thank you, sir!" he said. "I should be very glad, sir. I will go over to Courtfield for you with pleasure, Master Hoskins. I have some duties to attend to now, sir, but I could go this afternoon, with pleasure, sir."

"Right you are, then!" said Hoskins. "Come up to my study—or, rather, to the music-room, as I shall be there, and I'll give you the money and a note for Mr. Lazarus."

"Yes, sir."

And the three Shell fellows strolled away towards the tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble opened her eyes at the sight of the ten-pound banknote, and her manner became very sweet. But Hoskins had not come to stand an extensive feed to half the Remove.

"Please change this note, Mrs. Mimble, will you?" he asked. "And give us three ginger-pops."

"Um!" said Mrs. Mimble. "I shall have to send to the School House for the money. I haven't ten pounds here. Is there anything else I can get for you, sir?"

"Yes; three jam-tarts," said Hoskins.

"Twopenny ones," said Murray.

"And some cream puffs," said Hobson. "Did you say cream puffs, Hosky? You see, Mrs. Mimble, Hosky has a pound out of that for himself, and he wants to stand a feed."

"I—I——" began Hoskins.

"Better ask some more of the fellows," Hobson remarked. "You don't often stand a feed, Hosky, and this is rather a chance for you to spread yourself a bit. We'll come to the music-room and hear your symphony afterwards."

"My dear Hobson, one fellow cannot play a symphony all by himself," said Hoskins, with the patience of an artist explaining to a Philistine.

"No!" said Hobson, in surprise. "But you're such a jolly clever chap, Hosky, I dare say you could do it, though other musicians couldn't."

"But there are a great many instruments used to play a symphony."

"Oh, I see! Then you could give us the concerto instead."

"But my concerto in F minor requires violin and piano."

"Make it a piano solo, then," said Hobson. "But let's have the feed first. I say, you chaps, Hosky is blowing a quid on a feed."

"My dear Hobson——"

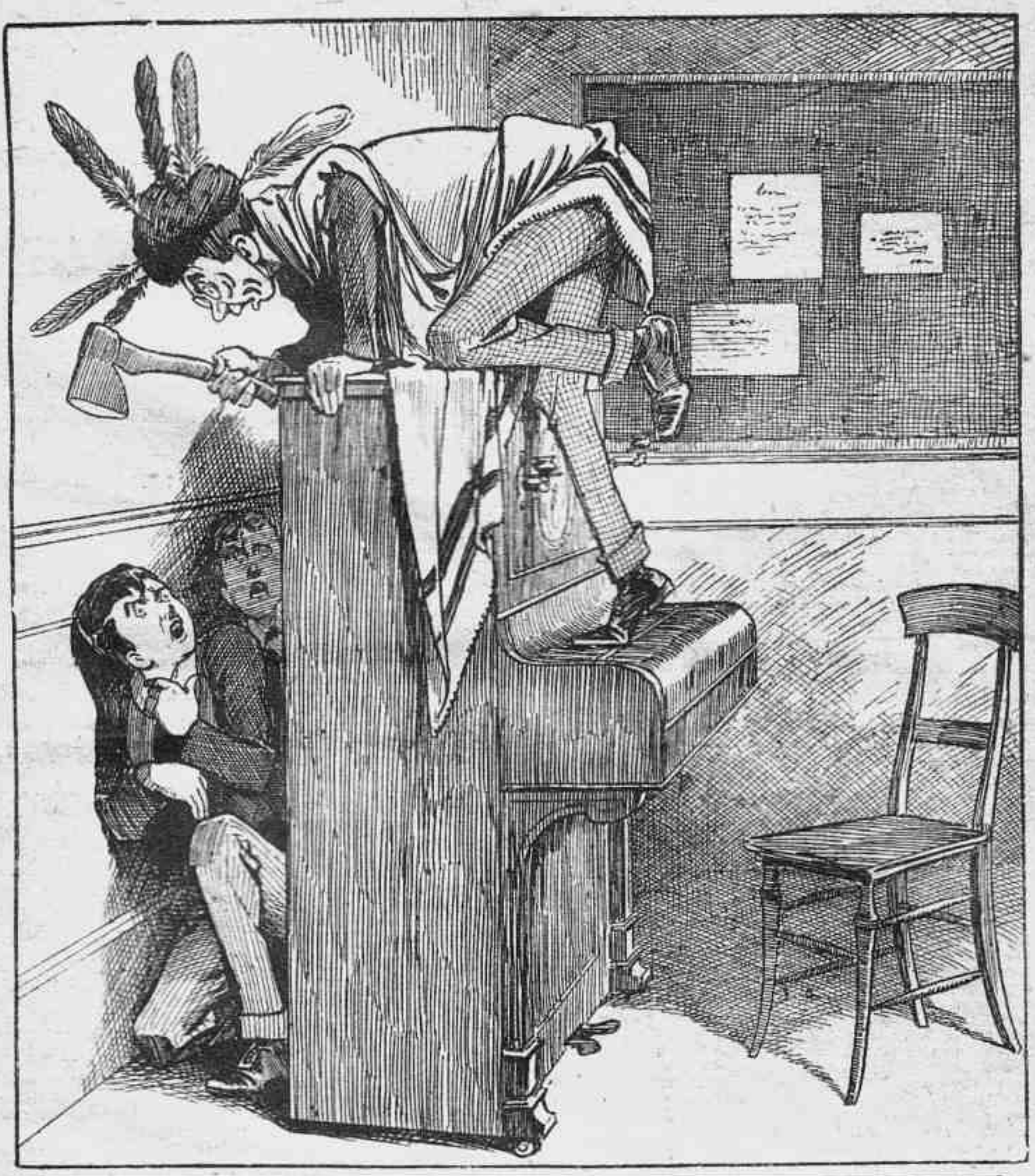
"Walk up, while you've got the chance," said Murray. "Mine's ginger-pop and jam-tarts."

"Mine's lemonade," said Temple, of the Fourth, "and dough-nuts."

"I'll have some cream puffs."

"Meringues for me, please," said Billy Bunter.

It was amazing how quickly the news of Hoskins's tenner had spread. There was quite a crowd in the tuckshop by this time. Hoskins, who was an easy-going fellow, resigned himself to his fate. He had one consolation for the lavish expenditure of his quid—he would at least have an audience afterwards in the music-room. Hoskins was a most enthusiastic pianist; but, like many enthusiastic pianists, he suffered from



"Pay over the gold you have robbed from the red tribes, and you shall live, paleface dogs!" said the Comanche. "Ow! don't!" stuttered Hobson. "I—I say, Coker, old man, I know you're mad, but d-d-don't chop us, old man! Don't!" *(See Chapter 11.)*

lack of audiences. Fellows who would walk a mile to see a cricket match, would walk two miles to escape Hoskins's musical displays. When Hoskins was in the music-room, the room was avoided as if it were a plague centre. Hoskins felt that to be rather hard, but he consoled himself by the comforting reflection that geniuses—especially musical geniuses—were always misunderstood at first. He quoted the cases of Wagner, and Bizet, and Berlioz in proof.

The fellows who declined to listen to Hoskins's Sonata in G major were on an intellectual level with the Parisian audiences who scoffed at "Carmen." The Shell fellows who declined free admission to the performance of Hoskins's Grand March in A, ranked with the sceptical persons who regarded the "Ring" as a weird pantomime set to weirder music.

Hoskins's day would come, when the world would hail the gifted young composer, and Queen's Hall audiences would doze through his symphonies instead of Beethoven's—Hoskins was quite sure of it. And the other fellows were quite willing to agree with him, so long as the jam-tarts and the ginger-pop lasted, at all events.

In ten minutes or so Hoskins's change arrived, and he stowed away nine sovereigns in an inner pocket, and abandoned the tenth to its fate.

Eatables and drinkables to exactly the value of one pound were served out by Mrs. Mimble, and as the supply diminished the crowd of feasters took themselves off one by one. The additional attraction of a performance in the music-room did not seem to fascinate them. By the time the counter was clear, the tuckshop was clear, too; and the amateur musician found that his prospective audience had melted away.

Murray and Hobson remained, but probably only because Hoskins had cornered them, so to speak, and they could not escape.

"Coming along to the music-room?" asked Hoskins gently.

"I—I say, that's Coker calling me, I think!" said Murray; and he rushed quickly out of the tuckshop. He did not return.

Hoskins linked his arm in Hobson's.

"Come on, old chap!" he said.

Hobson hesitated. But he had eaten and drunk, and he was not a bad fellow; he felt that he could do no less than listen to the piano solo.

"Oh, all right, old fellow!" he said heroically.

And he walked across the Close with Hoskins. He cast one or two restless glances round him as he went; but Hoskins had taken his arm, and there was no escape for the unhappy victim. Hoskins walked him into the music-room and closed the door. Hobson sat down, and made up his mind to grin and bear it.

"Shall I give you the Sonata in F, or the Grand March in A?" asked Hoskins, as he sorted out a heap of manuscript music.

"Whichever you like, old chap," said Hobson.

"I'll give you both, if you like."

"Oh, no, no! I wouldn't think of troubling you."

"No trouble at all," said the obliging Hoskins; and he opened the piano, and set his crumply manuscript on the desk. "I'll begin with the Grand March, Hobson. When you've heard it through, I think you'll agree with me that it rather knocks spots off the Grand March in 'Tannhauser.' Listen!"

Hobson had no choice about the matter—or, rather, it was Hobson's choice with him. So he listened. Sounds weird and strange proceeded from the piano. It was something like Wagner, and something like Richard Strauss, and something like a goods train being shunted. And Hobson, mindful of the excellent feed he had just had, bore it like a hero.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Redskin Raider.

IT was a sunny July afternoon, and very few fellows beside Hoskins and his victim were in the house. Harry Wharton & Co. were on the cricket-field. Despite the shadow that hung over the Famous Four, and the fact that a good many fellows in their Form suspected them of being in possession of Coker's banknotes, they were playing cricket as usual. Hawke, the new boy, was fielding. He had become very friendly with Harry Wharton & Co., and as he had turned out to know something of cricket, the captain of the Remove was giving him a trial.

The Famous Four were very cheerful that afternoon; when they were playing the great game they could forget the worry that was upon their minds. Coker had gone out for the afternoon, after in vain endeavouring to induce Potter and Greene to have a rehearsal of the "Redskin Raiders." Potter and Greene declared that it would be a sin to stay indoors on a glorious summer's afternoon to rehearse, and they had marched out after dinner, leaving Horace Coker to rehearse by himself if he pleased. Whereupon Coker had snorted, and gone off in a huff by himself.

Hobson of the Shell would gladly have been out of doors, too; but after the feast came the reckoning. Hoskins was playing the Grand March in A; but it might have been a grand march in X or Z for all Hobson knew. A final terrific crash on the piano, and Hoskins turned round to the listener.

"There! What do you think of that?" he demanded.

"Is that all?" asked Hobson.

"Yes; that's the close."

"Oh, ripping! Seems to rip the giddy piano."

Hoskins looked at him suspiciously.

"I'll try over the Sonata in F now," he remarked.

"Suppose we had a little stroll round first!" Hobson suggested.

Hoskins did not seem to hear.

He placed the manuscript on the piano, and started. There was a sudden yell in the passage.

"Whoop!"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Hobson.

"Only that ass Coker doing his Red Indian rot again," growled Hoskins. "Never mind him."

And he crashed on.

"I thought he'd gone out."

"Well, I suppose he's come in. What does it matter?"

The door opened.

"Whoop!"

The figure of an Indian chief, in blanket and war-paint, with feathers in his hair, and tomahawk in his hand, darted in, and the door was slammed behind him. The juniors did not recognise Coker, but they recognised the costume and war-paint of Black Buffalo, the chief of the Comanches.

"Whoop! Paleface dogs!"

Hoskins turned round on the piano-stool.

"Get out, Coker!"

"Whoop! I'm Black Buffalo, the Redskin Raider!"

"Don't be an ass," said Hobson. "We know you're Coker. I've seen you in that rot before, you know. Buzz off, and don't play the goat!"

The Comanche turned the key in the lock.

"Whoop! Yaroop! Paleface dogs! Yahoooh!"

And he danced a savage dance in the middle of the room, and flourished his tomahawk so near to Hobson's nose that the Shell fellow jumped back in alarm.

"Keep off, you silly ass!" bawled Hobson. "Do you want to brain me, you idiot?"

"Whoop!"

The Comanche made a swipe at Hoskins, and Hoskins swung off the piano-stool in time. The two Shell fellows backed away in alarm. The redskin was dancing round them savagely, and brandishing his weapon. There was a crash as it caught against a chair, and the chair went flying, with the back broken.

"You'll get into a row for this, you madman!" roared Hobson.

"Whoop! I am the Redskin Raider! Hand over your money, paleface dogs!"

"You ass——"

"Yaroop! I will scalp you! Yah-hoooh!"

And the Indian charged at the two Shell fellows.

"He's mad!" gasped Hobson, in alarm. "Stark mad! This Indian foolery has got into his silly head!"

"Harooh! Yarooh! Hooh! Whoop!"

"Mad as a hatter!" panted Hoskins. "Let's get out!"

They ran for the door. The redskin intercepted them, and the juniors scuttled away from the brandishing tomahawk. The redskin chased them furiously, and they scampered round the room and took refuge behind the piano.

"Keep k-k-keep off!" stammered Hobson. "You'll get sacked for this, Coker!"

"Whoop!"

The redskin pranced furiously round the room, knocking over chairs, and scattering Hoskins' manuscript music far and wide. The two juniors could only conclude that Coker of the Fifth had taken leave of his senses. He charged at them, and they crouched behind the piano in sheer terror.

The redskin pranced round the room again, flourishing his weapon, while the two Shell fellows crouched and palpitated.

Suddenly he came for them again. They heard him bound upon the piano, and then he leaned over them from above, the tomahawk raised menacingly.

"Paleface dogs! You shall die!"

"Help!" gasped Hoskins.

"Ow! Don't!" stuttered Hobson. "I—I say, Coker, old man, I know you're mad, but d-d-don't chop us, old man—don't!"

"Pay over the gold you have robbed from the red tribes, and you shall live, paleface dogs," said the Comanche.

"I—I—I——"

"The gold," roared the Indian chief—"the gold, or your scalps, paleface dogs! Whoop!"

"He—he means it," spluttered Hobson. "Give him the tin, Hosky. The Head'll make him give it to you back! Quick—he's mad!"

Hoskins groped in his pocket for the sovereigns. There was no doubt that the Indian was mad. He was glaring down ferociously upon the crouching juniors, and brandishing the tomahawk wildly.

"H-h-here you are!" stammered Hoskins. "Here's the money! I—I say, Coker——"

The redskin snatched the nine sovereigns.

"Paleface dogs! Remain here. Attempt to give the alarm ere I have returned to the Comanche lodges, and you die!"

And he rushed from the room, slamming the door behind him, and locking it on the outside. Hoskins and Hobson dragged themselves out from behind the piano, white and trembling.

"He must be mad!" murmured Hobson. "It can't be a lark! He's mad!"

"We—we'd better stay here for a bit," mumbled Hoskins, through his chattering teeth. "He's raving mad! He might have brained one of us with that tomahawk. I always knew Coker was a silly ass, but I never knew he was mad. We'd better stay here till some of the fellows come in. The house is empty now."

"Yes, rather!"

And the two Shell fellows waited in the music-room; and Hoskins did not even suggest recommencing his Sonata in F.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Puzzled!

"COKER! Coker! Here's Coker!"

"Here he is!"

Coker of the Fifth looked surprised. He had just come in, and as he entered the School House, he found a crowd of fellows waiting for him. Prominent among them were Hoskins and Hobson of the Shell. And Hoskins and Hobson were almost raging. They had remained prisoners in the music-room for more than an hour. Finally, Cleeke, the school-porter, had come to the music-room for his instructions for fetching the violin, and they were released. Coker was absent, and Hobson and Hoskins had related the story of their wrongs on all sides; and quite a crowd gathered to meet Coker when he came in. It was well known that Coker was a very enthusiastic actor in amateur theatricals. But certainly he had had no right to carry realism to this extent. Hobson and Hoskins were convinced that he was mad; but mad or sane, Hoskins meant to have his sovereigns back. Shell fellows and Removites and all sorts of fellows were there, wondering what Horace Coker would have to say for himself.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "What's wanted?"

"My quids!" yelled Hoskins.

Coker stared at him.

"Your quids!" he repeated. "What do you mean? Never knew you had any quids."

"Quite mad!" said Hobson.

"Eh! Who's mad?" demanded Coker, taking a step towards Hobson.

Hobson promptly retreated behind Blundell of the Fifth.

"Keep him off!" he panted.

Blundell pushed Coker back.

"Hold on," he said. "Don't play the goat, Coker! You'd better hand Hoskins back his money, and say you're sorry. It was a rotten joke to play, anyway."

Coker looked bewildered.

"Blessed if I know what you're getting at," he said. "Who says I've got any money off Hoskins's?"

"I do!" yelled Hoskins. "You've got my nine quid, that I was going to let Cleeke take to old Lazarus for my violin."

"I!"

"Yes, you! Hand it over!"

"Oh, you're dotty!" said Coker. "I never even knew you had nine quid. And I don't believe it now, as a matter of fact. You ain't the sort of chap to have nine quid. You're gassing!"

"Hobson knows it—so do all the fellows——"

"We saw Hosky change the tenner in the tuckshop," said Murray.

"So did I," said Billy Bunter.

"And Coker came to the music-room and made me give it to him!" howled Hoskins. "Hobson was there."

"I was there!" yelled Hobson.

"Give him back his money, Coker, and don't be an ass," said Blundell. "This has gone quite far enough."

Coker roared.

"I haven't got his money. I haven't been to the music-room. I've been out all the afternoon. I think you're all potty."

"Why, you—you awful crammer!" gasped Hoskins. "Do you deny that you came to the music-room and took my nine quid?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Then it wasn't a lark, and you're not mad; you're a thief!" shrieked Hoskins. "I'm going to have my money. If you don't give it to me I'll go to the Head. I—I——"

"Hold on," said a quiet voice, as Wingate, of the Sixth, came up. "What's this row about? Keep your hands off Hoskins, Coker, or I'll handle you, jolly soon."

"He says I'm a thief!" choked Coker. "I'll smash him!"

"So you are!" yelled Hoskins. "You've got the nine quid my pater sent me for my violin. I'm going to have it back."

"Quiet!" said Wingate. "No need to tell the whole county. Now then, let's have the rights of this, one at a time."

Hoskins and Hobson spluttered out the story. Coker listened, purple with anger and indignation.

"Now, then, Coker, what do you say?" asked Wingate.

"I say it's all lies!" roared Coker. "I've been out all the afternoon. I haven't put on the redskin things to-day. I was going to, but Potter and Greene wouldn't rehearse, so I went out instead. You can ask the porter if you like. Cleeke saw me go out, and he saw me come in."

"Are you sure it was Coker, Hoskins?"

"Of course I am!"

"Did you recognise him?"

"How could I recognise him when his face was daubed all over with paint!" demanded Hoskins. "He had Coker's Indian things on. That's enough for me."

"Not quite enough," said Wingate quietly. "I suppose anybody could have gone to Coker's study and taken his Indian things?"

"Oh!" said Hoskins.

"Of course they could!" said Coker. "I had put them out all ready for the rehearsal, only those two bounders wouldn't rehearse. I've been up the river all the afternoon."

"It might have been somebody else, Hoskins? Could you swear that it was Coker?"

"No, I couldn't—I thought it was Coker, as he had on that redskin rot!"

"Did you recognise his voice?"

"No; he was putting on a harsh voice to suit an Indian chief."

"Then you don't know that it was Coker at all?"

"I called him Coker at the time, and he didn't deny it," said Hobson.

"That doesn't prove anything. If the fellow, whoever he was, wanted you to take him for Coker, he wouldn't deny it, of course."

"I—I suppose not," admitted Hobson.

Coker calmed down a little.

"Somebody's been borrowing my redskin things, and making himself up as an Indian, to play this jape on Hobson and Hoskins," he said. "I don't know anything about it."

"That's all very well," said Hoskins, "but who was it? Who's got my nine quid?"

"I don't know. How should I know, when I've been out all the time? I know I'll jolly well hammer the chap who's been borrowing my props., when I find him!"

"I suppose you can prove that you were out all the afternoon?" asked the Greyfriars captain. "Anybody with you?"

"No; I was alone."

"That's rather unfortunate."

"Well, I had a jaw with Potter and Greene, and they left me in the lurch," said Coker. "But the porter saw me go out, and he saw me come in."

"Somebody go and fetch Cleeke," said Wingate.

A fag rushed off for the school-porter. Very peculiar glances were cast upon Coker as the crowd waited for Cleeke to come. Coker looked round him savagely. He fixed his eyes on Harry Wharton & Co., who were interested spectators of the scene, and he flushed suddenly with anger.

"I suppose this is one of your Remove japes?" he exclaimed.

Wharton stared at him.

"We've had nothing to do with it," he said. "What do you mean?"

"I know you fags have been talking about raiding our Indian things, same as you raided our nigger minstrel show," Coker exclaimed furiously. "One of you got himself up as Black Buffalo, and did this. I suppose you've got Hoskins's money now, as well as mine. This is just on the same level as your robbing me at Courtfield of my pocket-book."

"My hat!" exclaimed Potter. "It jolly well looks like it!"

Wharton turned crimson.

"You rotter!" he exclaimed. "Wingate, you know we've been on the cricket-field all the afternoon. Hawke was with us, too, weren't you, Hawke?"

"Certainly I was," said the new junior. "We've only just left off playing cricket, Wingate."

"I dare say one of you slipped in and did this, though," said Coker.

"I came up to the house to get my bat," said Frank Nugent, flushing. "I split the old one. I wasn't in the house five minutes."

"We've only got your word for that."

"Why, you cad——"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Wingate angrily. "It's no good bandying accusations like this. Here comes the porter, and we'll see what he has to say."

Cleeke came through the crowd, and touched his forelock respectfully to the captain of Greyfriars.

"You sent for me, sir," he said.

"Yes, Cleeke. We want to know what time Coker went out, and what time he came in. He says you saw him."

Cleeke hesitated.

"You remember my going out, Cleeke," said Coker. "It was just about three."

Cleeke did not reply.

"You were standing outside your lodge, and you must have seen me," urged Coker.

"I—I wouldn't say I didn't, Master Coker," said Cleeke respectfully. "But I don't exactly remember. I remember

seeing Masters Potter and Greene go out, and you were not with them."

"But you were standing there. You must have seen me!" exclaimed Coker anxiously. "I walked past within six paces of you."

"Such a lot of the young gentlemen have been in and out to-day, sir," said Cleeke. "I dessay it's just as Master Coker says."

"But you don't remember seeing him go out, as he says?" asked Wingate.

"No, Master Wingate."

"Did you see him go out at all, any time?"

"No, Master Wingate—not as I remember. I saw him come in, ten minutes ago," said the school-porter respectfully.

"You say you went out at three, Coker?"

"Yes," said Coker, looking bewildered. "And he must have seen me, unless he's blind."

"Where were you at three, Cleeke?"

Cleeke wrinkled his brows in thought. He seemed to be aware that the matter was serious, and to be painfully anxious to make no mistake.

"I was outside my lodge, Master Wingate, just as Master Coker says," he replied. "I remember looking up at the clock, now, when three o'clock struck."

"Then if Coker went out at that time, you must have seen him?"

"Yes, sir; but I mightn't notice. I wouldn't say that what Master Coker says isn't correct, sir," said the porter anxiously. "Don't you think that I'm casting any doubt on what Master Coker says, sir. I wouldn't do such a thing."

"Thank you, Cleeke; that's enough. You can go."

"Yes, sir."

And the school-porter left the scene, looking concerned. Wingate fixed his eyes grimly upon Coker.

"Well, Coker, Cleeke doesn't bear out your statement," he said. "If you went out at the time you state, he must have seen you."

"He—he must have seen me," stammered Coker. "Of course he must, unless he was drunk! So far as I remember, he was looking right towards me when I passed him."

"But he did not see you!"

"He says he didn't."

"I suppose you're not suggesting that Cleeke is giving false evidence about you?" asked the Greyfriars captain sarcastically.

"Well, no. I—I don't see why he should. I suppose he's forgotten, with such a lot of chaps going in and out."

"It's not likely that he would forget. It wasn't long ago."

"Well, then, I suppose he didn't see me; but I certainly thought that he must have," said Coker. "I went out at three, anyhow."

A grim silence greeted this statement. Coker had called his witness, and his witness had failed to corroborate him. The fellows drew their own conclusions from that circumstance.

Coker looked round almost wildly.

"I—I suppose you fellows don't think that I've stolen Hoskins's quids, do you?" he exclaimed huskily.

"I don't see why we shouldn't," said Johnny Bull bluntly. "You're fast enough to accuse other fellows of stealing."

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with gleaming eyes. "You didn't mind accusing us of taking your pocket-book at Courtfield Station. What's just happened shows how much your word is to be relied on. I think the fellows will be able to make up their minds now who put that pocket-book in my study."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"You'd better give Hoskins back his money, Coker," said Wingate coldly.

Coker gave a howl.

"I haven't got it. I don't know anything about it. It was one of these Remove rotters who did it—I know that."

"Hold on," said Hawke, the new boy. "We can prove about that!"

"You shut up, you new chap," said Bolsover major.

"Hold your tongue, Bolsover. Let him speak, if he has anything to say about this," said Wingate.

"I was going to say that Hoskins can tell us how big was the chap who came into the music-room in the Indian clothes," said Hawke quietly. "If he was big enough to be taken for Coker, he was too big to be a junior."

"Jolly keen," said Bob Cherry admiringly. "That ought to settle it. Go ahead, Hosky."

"It was a chap quite as big as Coker," said Hoskins positively. "It couldn't possibly have been a junior. My impression would be that he was a trifle bigger than Coker, but that would be the Indian head-dress."

"Quite as big as Coker," said Hobson promptly. "It couldn't have been one of the kids. If it had been, we couldn't have taken him for Coker."

"That settles it about the Remove," said Wingate. "It seems to me to be pretty clear, Coker. If you still deny it——"

"Of course I deny it!" gasped Coker. "I've been out all the afternoon, and——"

"Then you can come with me to the Head."

"I'm willing. But——"

"Come!" said the Greyfriars captain.

Coker followed Wingate to the Head's study like a fellow walking in a dream. He left the crowd in a buzz behind. There was hardly any difference of opinion among the Greyfriars fellows.

"Coker's the man!" said Temple of the Fourth.

And he voiced the belief of the rest.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
Coker Finds a Friend.

COKER came out of the Head's study looking white and dazed.

He met Potter and Greene in the Fifth-Form passage as he went to his study, and did not for the moment notice that there was a very decided change in their manner towards him.

"I—I say, you chaps!" he gasped. "What am I to do?"

The two Fifth-Formers stared at him, and drew away a little.

"I should think it's pretty clear what you're to do," said Potter drily.

"Quite clear," said Greene.

"I—I don't see it," said Coker huskily. "What do you think the Head's said to me?"

"I don't know."

"He says I'm to give Hoskins back his nine quid and to pack my box and get out," said Coker, in a gasping voice.

"Well, what did you expect?"

"Eh?"

"I suppose you didn't expect the Head to allow you to start in business here as a giddy Raffles, did you?" demanded Potter.

Coker looked at him blankly. A Remove fellow came quietly along the passage, and paused to look at the three Fifth-Formers. It was Dalton Hawke, the new boy.

"I—I—I don't understand you, Potty," said Coker unsteadily. "Do you know what it means? I'm sacked!"

"What did you expect?"

"Expect!" A light seemed to dawn upon Coker. "Potter, old man, you don't mean to say that you believe it?"

Potter sniffed.

"Blessed if I know how you've got the cheek to keep it up like this!" he said. "You rowed with Greene and *me* on purpose this afternoon to get away from us so that you could do this. Everybody knows it; and what beats me is how you expected to do it without being found out."

"That's it," said Greene. "You must have known that Hoskins would make a fearful row over losing his nine quid. He doesn't have much money, and he wasn't likely to let it pass, I should think. Give him his money back."

"I—I——"

"You'll have to do it, or your people will have to," said Potter. "He won't lose the money. Don't be an ass, Coker!"

"Then you believe I took it!" stuttered Coker.

"I know you did, you mean."

"And it's pretty clear now about that affair at Courtfield," said Greene. "You never lost the pocket-book at all. This lets in light on that matter. You got the pocket-book into Wharton's study cupboard somehow."

"I!"

"Yes, you! What's the good of keeping it up now when you're found out? You make me think you're right off your rocker."

"You—you cads!" gasped Coker. "You've always called yourselves my friends, and you go back on me like this!"

"You can't expect us to stick to a thief."

"A—a thief! You call me a thief!"

"Well, I haven't looked the word out in the dictionary lately," said Potter sarcastically; "but I believe a chap who collars another chap's money is a thief."

"You rotter!" roared Coker. "Take that!"

His right came out like a flash, and Potter rolled along the Fifth-Form passage with a yell.

"Do you say the same as Potter, Greene?" demanded Coker, with blazing eyes.

"Yes, I do!" said Greene, backing away with his hands up. "And if you touch me—— Oooooop!"

Coker did touch him—hard! Greene fell across the yelling Potter, and then Coker strode into his study and slammed the door behind him. He went to the open window, and stood there panting, as if he could not breathe. It seemed

to the unhappy Coker that he was suffocating. An invisible net seemed to have closed upon him, and he felt overwhelmed and helpless.

There was a yell from the dusky Close below the window.

"There he is!"

"Yah! Thief!"

"Where's the nine quid?"

"Whose study are you going to hide it in, Coker?"

"Yah!"

Coker glared down upon the upturned faces below the study window. There were a crowd of Removites there, and several Fifth-Formers and Shell fellows, and they were all evidently of the same opinion. Coker would have replied at any other time with a torrent of personal remarks in a very powerful voice, but now he seemed overcome. His bulldog courage had failed him in this strange and unexpected pass that things had come to. He had never dreamed of finding himself the object of general aversion and scorn, and he was not fitted to face it or deal with it.

He drew back and closed the window.

"Good heavens!" the wretched Fifth-Former muttered. "I—I—I don't know what to do. They're all against me—all of them! Oh, what shall I do?"

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Coker swung round in a fury at the sight of the new Remove boy.

"Get out, you young cad!" he shouted. "I'll——"

Hawke closed the door.

"Hold on, Coker!" he said. "I haven't come to bother you. I should like to help you if I could."

Coker unclenched his hands.

"Help me?" he repeated. "You can't! I'm sacked!"

"So bad as that?"

"Yes. The fellows all believe that I pinched that nine quid. They're beginning to think now that I didn't really lose my pocket-book, and that I planted it in Wharton's study. My own chums have turned against me," said Coker wildly. "I feel as if my head were turning round! It's like a dream!"

Hawke looked at him keenly.

"There's one fellow who believes that you didn't do it, Coker," he said.

"Is there? Who's that?"

"Myself."

Coker stared.

"You!" he said. "Then you're about the only fellow here who thinks so."

"Yes, that's true enough."

"What do you mean, anyway? You're only a new kid—you don't know me," said Coker. "Potter and Greene ought to know me by this time, but they believe this against me. The whole school seems to have gone mad. I don't see that you can know anything about it at all—and you're only a fag, too."

Hawke smiled.

"All the same, I feel pretty certain that you're all right," he said. "Do you mean to say that the Head has expelled you?"

"Yes."

"When are you to go?"

"To-night, he says."

"That's bad. But buck up! I don't think it will turn out so bad as that," said Hawke quietly. "I've said that I want to help you, and I can, and will."

"How can you help me?" said Coker dully. "You can't make the Head let me off, I suppose?"

"Perhaps I can."

"What?"

"Anyway, you needn't pack your box—you won't leave Greyfriars to-night," said Hawke. "You can take my word for that."

"You're talking rot!"

"You will see. I tell you I know what I'm talking about," said Hawke. "I may as well tell you that I've got an idea who it was put on your redskin rig-out and played that trick on Hoskins and Hobson."

"You have! It was one of the Remove kids, of course—one of those young villains who stole my pocket-book!" said Coker.

"Never mind that. If you like to let me help you I think, perhaps, we can get the truth out, and you won't have to go," said Hawke.

"I'd do anything I could, of course," said Coker more calmly. "You must be a keen young beggar. You're the only chap in Greyfriars, I believe, who knows that I didn't take Hoskins's money. You've got a lot of sense for a fag."

"You say you went out at three o'clock?" said Hawke.

"Yes, about three."

"And you are sure that the porter saw you go?"

"Well, he must have seen me, unless he was blind," said Coker. "I'm big enough to be seen, I suppose? But he says he didn't, so I suppose he's forgotten. It's rotten unlucky for me, his forgetting."

"Yes, isn't it? You passed quite close to him?"

"Yes, quite close. It's extraordinary his not remembering

that I passed him. But, of course, as he's new here, he wouldn't notice so much, perhaps."

"Only he knew you very well by sight, if he doesn't know all the fellows," said Hawke.

"I don't know about that."

"Yes; you met him at Courtfield Station, the day he came."

"Oh, yes," said Coker; "he was there! I didn't take much notice of him. I don't like the fellow, though I must say he's an improvement on Gosling."

"He helped you there, didn't he?"

"He caught me when those young rotters pitched me out of the carriage," said Coker. "I don't know about helping me. He was a clumsy ass, I thought. He grabbed hold of me, and lugged me over instead of helping me!"

"That was after you missed your pocket-book?"

"Oh, no; before! It was just after he set me on my feet that I felt in my pocket, and found it was gone."

Dalton Hawke nodded.

"Look here!" he said. "Perhaps Cleeke may remember, after all, seeing you go out at three. If that could be made clear, it would prove that you weren't the chap who got himself up as a Red Indian and robbed Hoskins and Hobson. Let's go down and have a jaw with him, and see if we can make him remember."

"All serene!" said Coker.

"Come on, then!"

They left the study together. As they went downstairs, there was a howl from a crowd of juniors in the lower passage.

"Here comes Coker!"

"Look after your pockets!"

Harry Wharton strode towards them.

"What are you doing with that chap, Hawke?" he demanded. "You've no business to be speaking to him! Let him alone!"

"Oh, rot!" said Hawke cheerfully.

"He's sacked from Greyfriars for robbing Hoskins! He's not fit to talk to!" said Frank Nugent. "If you're going to stay in our study, you'd better let him alone!"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"It isn't all right!" shouted Bob Cherry. "If you don't leave him alone at once, you'll be cut by all the Remove, I can tell you that!"

"Never mind; I'll see if I can stand it!" said Hawke calmly.

"Why, you ass——"

"You rotter——"

"You cad——"

And under a fusillade of those complimentary remarks, Hawke walked out into the dusky Close with Coker. Coker was very quiet. All the fierceness seemed to have gone out of him now. He looked at Hawke with haggard eyes.

"You'll get into hot water with your Form for sticking to me like this, Hawke," he said.

"I can stand it!" said Hawke, with a smile.

"Look here!" exclaimed Coker abruptly. "What are you doing it for? I can't make you out! You don't even know me!"

"Oh, I want to see fair play!"

"Well, you're a good sort, though you're only a fag!" said Coker gratefully. "I sha'n't forget this, Hawke, if I get out of this all right!"

"You'll get out of it all right, never fear!" said Hawke cheerily. "Come on!"

And they entered the porter's lodge.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
Dalton Hawke Loses His Purse.

CLEEKE, the porter, was there. He rose to his feet very civilly as the two Greyfriars fellows came in. Coker looked at him grimly. He could not forget that it was the school-porter's strange want of memory that had brought him into his present position.

"Can I do anything for you, young gentlemen?" asked Cleeke respectfully.

"Yes, you can," said Coker; "you can try to remember about seeing me go out at three o'clock this afternoon!"

Cleeke shook his head.

"I'm very sorry, Master Coker," he said. "If you passed me as close as you say, it's very queer I don't remember seeing you. But I don't."

"You must have seen me!" said Coker.

"I'm sorry, sir, but——"

"Have you got a good memory for faces, Cleeke?" asked Hawke.

The new junior was watching the school-porter very carefully. There seemed to be a peculiar interest for him in the face of Gosling's substitute.

Cleeke glanced at the Removite.

"Well, yes, sir," he said; "I generally remember faces all right. But I can't say I saw Master Coker go out."

"You see, it means a lot to Coker," Hawke explained. "If you remembered his going out at three, it would prove that he wasn't the chap who did the robbery in the music-room. In fact, it's simply your evidence that has fixed this thing on Coker."

The school-porter looked distressed.

"I can only say I'm very sorry, sir," he replied. "But Master Coker wouldn't like me to say I saw him when I didn't see him, would he? I shouldn't like to tell an untruth about it. I have to think of my duty."

"I don't want you to tell any lies," said Coker; "but you must have seen me, and you ought to remember. Have you been drinking?"

"I'm a teetotaller, sir!"

"That you jolly well ain't!" said Coker. "You were drinking beer in the buffet at Courtfield when I first saw you!"

Cleeke flushed a little.

"Just a glass of beer, sir!" he said apologetically. "I mean, I'm a teetotaller when I'm on duty. It's very unkind of you to hint that I may have been under the influence of liquor to-day! Master Hoskins saw me, and he can say that I was not!"

"It was you let Hoskins and Hobson out of the music-room, I think?" said Hawke.

"Yes, sir," said Cleeke. "Master Hoskins intended to send me to Courtfield for his new violin, sir, and he told me to go to the music-room for the money and a note, when I had finished my other duties. When I went there I found him locked in."

"And you can't remember about seeing Coker?"

"No, sir. I'm sorry!"

"Well, if you can't, you can't!" said Coker savagely. "But it's jolly rotten for me! Hallo! What's that?"

There was the sound of a sudden clink on the floor. A leather purse had suddenly dropped from Hawke's jacket. The junior stooped with an exclamation. The purse had come open as it thudded on the floor, and several sovereigns rolled out.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hawke, feeling in his pocket. "There's a hole in the lining! Jolly lucky I didn't drop that out of doors!"

He picked up the purse, and gathered up the coins. One of them had rolled under the table, and Cleeke stooped and picked it up, and handed it to Hawke.

"Better be careful where you put that purse, sir," he said respectfully.

"Yes, rather!" said Hawke. "I might have lost the lot, and that would have meant no new bike for me."

And he slipped the purse into another pocket. The school-porter's eyes followed it, with a peculiar gleam in them.

"Well, it's no good staying here," said Coker. "You'd better think it out, Cleeke, and if you remember, you can come up to the House and say so."

"Very good, sir!"

The two juniors turned to the door. Cleeke made a movement after them.

"Pray excuse me, Master Hawke," he said. "There's some dust on your jacket. Pray allow me to brush it for you!"

"Thanks!" said Hawke carelessly.

The school-porter brushed the jacket very carefully, in his respectful, obliging way, and the two Greyfriars fellows quitted the lodge. They walked back to the School House in silence.

Quite a crowd of fellows were gathered in the hall, evidently waiting for them. There was a loud sound of booing as they came in.

"Here comes the redskin raider!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out for your pockets!"

"Hallo, Hawke! Is your money safe?"

Coker strode on with crimson face. Hawke, as if struck by a sudden thought, stopped. He felt in his pockets.

"Lost anything?" exclaimed Potter, with a grin.

"My hat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you really lost anything?"

"My purse!"

"You've lost your purse?" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Yes. I say, Coker, you saw me put it into this pocket, didn't you?" Hawke exclaimed, turning out the lining of the pocket.

"Yes," said Coker, turning back. "Isn't it there now?"

"No."

"Much in it?" grinned Nugent.

"Five quid!"

"Phew! Another haul for Coker!"

"Coker's got it!" said Bolsover. "Search Coker!"

Coker's eyes blazed.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "Do you mean to say——"

"I—I might have dropped it!" said Hawke. "I dropped it once——"

He was interrupted by a roar.

"Coker's got it!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Wharton. "You went out with Coker, and directly you come in you say you've lost your purse. You say Coker saw you put it in that pocket? You must know as well as we do that Coker's taken it."

"Yes, rather!"

"I—I haven't!" gasped Coker, almost overcome by this new accusation. "You can go through my pockets if you like, hang you!"

"That means that you've shoved it somewhere safe," said Bulstrode.

"I—I—I tell you——"

"Yes, you'll tell us anything!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "My hat! Our blessed watches won't be safe till Coker's gone!"

Mr. Quelch came out of his study.

"What is this?" he exclaimed.

A dozen voices replied at once:

"Hawke's lost his purse, sir!"

"He was with Coker—in the dark, too!"

"Coker's pinched it!"

"I—I haven't!" faltered Coker. "Hawke dropped it once, and perhaps he's dropped it again. I—I——"

"I'll go and see, sir," said Hawke.

And he disappeared into the shadowy Close.

There was a tumult in the hall. Coker stood against the banisters, white as chalk. His rugged face was quite haggard. His voice failed him, and he could only glare in dumb anger and misery at the crowd of accusing faces.

Mr. Quelch strove to quiet the boys, but even his authority was hardly equal to it. It looked as if there would be a rush and Coker would be mobbed. The Remove-master forced his way in front of Coker.

"Stand back!" he exclaimed. "Coker, you had better go to your study at once and stay there! Boys, I order you to be quiet! Anyone who touches Coker will be flogged!"

"He's a thief, sir!"

"Silence! I——"

Mr. Quelch was interrupted. From the darkness of the Close came a sudden, sharp, piercing sound.

It was the blast of a police-whistle.

"What is that!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, startled.

Pheep!

Sharp and clear it rang again. There was a rush of excited fellows into the Close.

From the shadows came a clear, cool voice:

"This way! I've got the thief!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trapped!

DALTON HAWKE, when he left the School House, did not pause on the way to look for the missing purse. He made his way at once to the school-porter's lodge and looked in.

"Cleeke!" he called out.

The porter came to the door.

"Yes, Master Hawke!"

"I've lost my purse," said Hawke. "The fellows are saying that Coker took it——"

Cleeke nodded his head sadly.

"I'm afraid that's only too likely, Master Hawke," he said. "I'm afraid that young gentleman is a bad lot, though I'm sorry to say it."

"Oh, rats!" said Hawke cheerfully. "I don't believe Coker took it. Will you come and help me look for it?"

"Certainly, Master Hawke! I shall be very pleased, sir. But I don't think——"

"I'll stand you a bob if you find it, Cleeke."

"I will help you look for it with pleasure, sir."

"Come on, then!"

And the junior and the porter commenced to search for the missing purse. Hawke moved along close to the high iron gate; and Cleeke paused.

"Did you go that way, sir?"

"Better look everywhere," said Hawke. "What's that close by the gate there?"

Cleeke stooped and looked.

"Only a stone, sir—— Ah! Oh! What—— Oh!"

Dalton Hawke was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

The man was taken utterly off his guard.

As he attempted to rise the strong grasp of the junior was upon him, and he was flung back against the gate. He threw out his hands to save himself, and caught at the iron bars.

Snap!
Snap!
It happened like lightning.

The next moment Cleeke was struggling fiercely, with a cold grip on his wrists, and his face was convulsed with fury, as he realised that a couple of handcuffs secured his wrists to the iron bars of the gate.

Hawke stepped back out of reach of his lashing feet and regarded him with a cool and quiet smile.

"Caught!" he said coolly.

Cleeke glared at him furiously, and strove to drag his hands free of the gripping "darbies." But he might as well have striven to drag down the massive gateway. He was a helpless prisoner!

"What—what does this mean, sir!" he gasped. "I—I don't understand! You should not play tricks like this, sir!"

"It means that I've caught you, you scoundrel!"

Hawke drew a police-whistle from his pocket, and the face of the school-porter went strangely white. He realised that a junior who was in possession of handcuffs and a police-whistle was no ordinary junior, and he began dimly to understand.

"Trapped!" he muttered.

Dalton Hawke nodded coolly.

"Yes, trapped!" he said. He blew a loud, clear blast upon the police whistle. "That will bring the fellows here! You're caught, you rascal!"

"Master Hawke, let me go! I—I——"

Pheep!

The junior blew upon the police-whistle again. There was a rush of feet from the direction of the School House and a buzz of voices.

The school-porter struggled again, and the metal of the handcuffs clinked against the bars of the gate.

"Let me go!" he roared. "Hang you, I——"

"This way!" Dalton Hawke called out. "This way! I've got the thief!"

"Hang you! Let me go——"

The Greyfriars fellows came crowding up. There were exclamations of amazement at the sight of the school-porter handcuffed to the gate.

"Cleeke!"

"He's handcuffed!"

"What does it mean, Hawke?"

Mr. Quelch hurried up.

"Hawke, what does this mean?" he exclaimed. "Have you done this?"

"Yes, sir! I've caught the thief," said Hawke quietly. "If you search that scoundrel you will find what is missing. That is the man who picked Coker's pocket at Courtfield——"

"Picked Coker's pocket!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes; and robbed Hoskins in the music-room."

"My hat!"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Cleeke. "I'm a respectable man! I——"

"Where did you get those handcuffs, Hawke?" exclaimed Wingate.

"And the police-whistle?" said Potter.

"How did you do it?"

"What the——"

Mr. Quelch raised his hand.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Now that the thief is discovered there is no need to keep the secret any longer. Dalton Hawke is a detective, and he was sent here in order to clear up the mystery of Coker's pocket-book."

"A detective!"

The Greyfriars fellows gasped out the word.

They were utterly amazed.

"Yes," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "Hawke is the son of Inspector Hawke, of Scotland Yard, and is employed in detective work. I have very great faith in him, and I am sure that he has not made a mistake."

"Search that rascal, sir, and you will find what is missing," said Dalton Hawke coolly. "I trapped him like this, sir, to prevent him from bolting; and I thought, too, that he might use a weapon if he had a chance. Look in his pockets."

"Turn out his pockets, please, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars obeyed.

A leather purse was the first object to come to light, and Coker uttered an exclamation as he recognised it.

"That's Hawke's purse!"

"The bait of the trap!" smiled the Schoolboy Detective.

Cleeke ground his teeth. He understood it all clearly now.

Wingate felt over the man's coat.

"There's something sewn up in the waistcoat, sir," he said. "It feels like money."

"Hoskins's sovereigns," said Dalton Hawke cheerfully. "And you'll find Coker's banknotes about him—or else in his lodge. I think it's pretty clear now, sir."

"Quite clear!" said Mr. Quelch.

Wingate ripped the cloth with his penknife. Thirteen sovereigns rolled out into his hand, and a half-sovereign. The captured scoundrel watched him sullenly. Then there

was a crisp rustle as Wingate drew four banknotes from the lining of the waistcoat.

"Coker's fivers, and his four pounds ten shillings, and Hoskins's nine sovereigns," said Dalton Hawke tranquilly. "I hope you fellows will beg Coker's pardon now. It will be best to send for the police, Mr. Quelch, and you can leave that fellow fastened there till they come to take him."

"Undoubtedly," said the Remove-master. "I will telephone to Friardale for the police at once. Come with me, Hawke."

"Yes, sir."

The Schoolboy Detective and the Remove-master returned to the School House. The crowd of fellows followed more slowly, discussing the amazing occurrence in excited tones, and the still more amazing revelation of the true character of Dalton Hawke.

Potter slid his arm through Coker's, and Coker glared at him.

"I'm awfully sorry, old chap," said Potter penitently; "but—but how were we to know?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Coker.

"And you suspected the Remove chaps, you know, Coker," reminded Greene. "You were taken in as much as we were."

"Well, that's so!" admitted Coker. "I—I'm sorry, Wharton."

"All serene!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "We've both made fools of ourselves, I think. We suspected you, and you suspected us, and——"

"I suspect, thou suspectest, he suspects," grinned Bob Cherry. "I think we'd better make up our minds to say no more about it, now the real thief is found out."

"Well, that's all right!" said Coker.

"But that chap Hawke must be awfully keen," said Nugent. "I'm blessed if I know how he got on to it. Who'd have thought of suspecting Gosling's substitute?"

"Nobody but Hawke," said Wharton. "And a giddy detective, too, and we never guessed. Look here, we'll stand him a feed, and make him explain how he did it."

"Hear, hear!"

Dalton Hawke was explaining already, but it was to the Head. Mr. Quelch had telephoned to the police-station in Friardale, and then he had taken the schoolboy detective to the Head's study. Dr. Locke had heard the uproar in the Close, and he looked quickly and anxiously at the Remove-master as he entered.

"What has happened, Mr. Quelch?" he exclaimed.

"The thief is discovered, sir."

"Coker?"

"No; the school-porter, Cleeke."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, in amazement. "Has Hawke——"

"Yes, sir. Hawke's coming here has been a complete success. I do not yet know myself how he did it, but he will tell us. The proof is complete enough, for all the stolen property has been found upon Cleeke, most of it sewn up in the lining of his waistcoat."

"Extraordinary!" gasped the Head. "I should never have dreamed it. Gosling recommended that man to take his place while he was away for his holiday; but he cannot have known Cleeke's true character."

"No; the man must certainly have deceived Gosling. But probably that was not difficult, sir. But how did you discover the truth, Hawke?"

"Sit down, my lad, and tell us about it," said Dr. Locke kindly.

Dalton Hawke smiled.

He was very cool and very composed, but there was not the slightest sign of "swank" in the junior's manner. He had the look simply of a fellow who had done the work he had set out to do, and done it to his satisfaction.

"Very well, sir," he said; "there is little to explain, after all. When I came here I was put into Wharton's study, in order to acquaint myself with the boys there, and it did not take me long to come to the conclusion that they were quite innocent in the matter of Coker's pocket-book. After observing Coker, too, I could not believe that he was capable of planting such a terrible charge upon those juniors; the motive for such an action was lacking. And besides, by doing so, he would have been, in fact, robbing himself of twenty pounds, for he could not venture to pass the notes if he was keeping them back. I was quite prepared to suspect either party, of course; but it seemed to me much more probable that there was a third party in the case, and I looked for him."

"That is the most amazing part of it," exclaimed the Head. "Naturally, I thought of that, too, and tried to think of a third party, but could not think of one."

"There was one little detail you, perhaps, did not give sufficient attention to, sir. When Coker was pitched out of the train at Courtfield, this man Cleeke was there, and he

caught him. For a skilful pickpocket, that opportunity was quite enough. I fastened upon that circumstance at once. I knew nothing about Cleeke; but the fact that he had had an opportunity, if he chose to take advantage of it, was enough to make me keep him under observation. Then came the circumstance that it was Cleeke who carried out the search in No. 1 Study."

"Blind that I was!" Mr. Quelch exclaimed. "He must have had the pocket-book with him, and dropped it where he pretended to find it."

The schoolboy detective smiled.

"Exactly, sir. He had taken the gold and the notes from it, and he had to rid himself of the pocket-book. He intended, of course, to change the notes later, in some remote place where the numbers, though circulated by the police, would not be known. When they were passed they would then be traced; but I suggest that he calculated upon your being naturally desirous of avoiding a scandal in connection with the school. If he had thrown away the pocket-book outside Greyfriars, some outside thief would have been supposed to have passed the notes, and the investigation would have gone on to the bitter end. But as Greyfriars fellows were suspected, it was more than probable that the search would be stopped, in order to avoid scandal. Wharton might have been expelled, and his people might have made restitution to Coker, and then the matter would have been dropped, and the real thief would have been safe, and in possession of his plunder."

"I—I understand. But what a heartless villian, to be ready to brand an innocent boy for life, in order to secure himself!" the Head faltered. "It is terrible!"

"Certainly he is an utter scoundrel, sir. But after this, and while I was here, there came a fresh development. Cleeke found that Hoskins, of the Shell, had a sum of money in his possession. Hoskins had told him to come to the music-room to take the money to the dealer in Courtfield, so he knew Hoskins was there with the money. The house was empty, and he had seen Coker in the redskin rig-out, which was as perfect a disguise as any criminal could want. He had seen Coker go out, and he simply came into the deserted house, took the things from Coker's study, and robbed Hoskins. It was a cool thing to do, and yet perfectly safe. He locked the two Shell boys in, and had ample time to return the redskin disguise to Coker's study. He risked being seen in the passage; but if anyone had seen him, it would only have been supposed to be Coker rehearsing. As a matter of fact, there was no risk for Cleeke at all."

"The rascal!"

"Then he conveniently forgot having seen Coker go out at three, and so fastened the guilt upon poor old Coker. That was a modification of his original plan, which had been to leave Wharton under suspicion; but it served his purpose equally well, for it caused a general belief that Coker had contrived to get the pocket-book into Wharton's study, and was keeping back the banknotes. When they were passed later, therefore, the belief would be that Coker, the owner, had passed them; and if he denied it, his denial would not be believed, and Cleeke would be equally safe."

"But—but all this was theory," said the Head. "I know that Cleeke was guilty, since he has been searched. But how——"

Dalton Hawke smiled.

"It was theory, but I had worked it out to my satisfaction," he said. "The chain of probabilities was strong. Cleeke had had an opportunity of taking the pocket-book. Cleeke was the one who had the easiest chance of planting it in Wharton's study. Cleeke knew about Hoskins having the money upon him in the music-room. Cleeke fixed suspicion upon Coker by denying that he had seen him go out. These were all facts—not proofs, but grounds for the strongest suspicion, when I had carefully considered them.

"It was necessary, however, to furnish a proof good enough for the police, as well as for myself. For that reason I visited the porter's lodge with Coker, ostensibly to question him about Coker's going out. There I scanned him carefully, and I was satisfied that, in spite of careful washing, a trace of the Red Indian make-up lingered upon his face, about the ears. Even that was not proof, though I was sure. But I was prepared, and in the sight of the porter I dropped a purse, apparently by accident, and he saw the gold it contained, and saw me place it in a certain pocket. If he was the thief, I knew what would flash into his mind. If I lost that purse while in Coker's company, it would be taken as another theft of Coker's; no one would dream of connecting Cleeke with the matter. And that, in fact, is the view the fellows did take. Cleeke offered to brush my jacket in his lodge; and then I was certain. I knew that while he was brushing my jacket he would pick my pocket, though it was done so skilfully that, though I was expecting it, I could not be sure he did it."

The schoolboy detective paused for a moment.

"When we returned to the School House," he went on, "I looked in my pocket; the purse was gone. The fellows jumped to the conclusion that Coker had taken it. Only I knew better. I knew that Coker had not taken it, and therefore that Cleeke must have taken it, and therefore that I now had the proofs I wanted. I engaged Cleeke in a pretended search for the purse, and trapped him, handcuffing him to the gate before he was aware of what I intended. The purse was in his pocket when Wingate searched him, the stolen sovereigns and the banknotes were sewn up in his waistcoat."

"It is amazing!" said the Head. "No one would have dreamed of it. The man seemed most obliging and respectful."

"That was the part he was playing, sir. If he had not been discovered, probably there would have been more thefts before Gosling's return and his departure from the school," said Dalton Hawke; "and he would have left you with a good character, to carry on the same rascality somewhere else."

"That is stopped for good," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "He will go to prison for this, and he will certainly never have such opportunities again."

Hawke nodded.

"It is a very great satisfaction to me to have exposed the rascal, sir," he said. "He is a very dangerous man, and utterly unscrupulous. I don't think any man ever deserved more to be sent to prison."

"You have made it all quite clear, Hawke," said the Head gratefully. "You have saved me from doing poor Coker a great injustice. Although you make it all clear, it still seems marvellous to me that you followed up so slight a clue with such success." He held out his hand. "I am glad—very glad—that I took Mr. Quelch's advice and sent for you, and I should be only too pleased if you could stay at Greyfriars."

Dalton Hawke smiled as he shook the doctor's hand.

"I should like it," he said; "but my work is elsewhere. But I hope that I shall see Greyfriars again some time, though on a more happy occasion."

When Dalton Hawke quitted the Head's study, there was a crowd of fellows waiting for him in the passage.

"Here he is!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush, and Dalton Hawke was seized by the juniors and carried off shoulder-high. The schoolboy detective grinned down upon the enthusiastic Greyfriars fellows from his perch on Coker's and Wharton's shoulders.

"Easy does it," he remarked. "There's nothing to make a fuss about."

"Isn't there?" said Coker emphatically. "My impression is that there is. We've got a big feed ready for you in the Fifth Form-room, and all the Remove are coming. It's a ripping spread, and you've got to tell us all about how you did this."

"Hear, hear!"

And the feed in the Fifth Form-room was indeed a ripping spread, as Coker described it; and the schoolboy detective was the guest of honour, and the hero of the hour. And when Dalton Hawke left Greyfriars the next day, a crowd of fellows saw him off at the station, and cheered the train as it went out; and for many days after that, the chief topic in Form-rooms and studies was the visit to Greyfriars of the schoolboy detective.

THE END.

OUR THRILLING NEW SERIAL STORY. START THIS WEEK!

TWICE·ROUND·THE·GLOBE!

THE·STORY·OF·THE GREAT MAN-HUNT

BY **SIDNEY DREW**

Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.

Prince Ching-Lung, Adventurer, Conjurer and Ventriloquist.

Nathan Gore, Jewel collector, and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction, and now it seemed that this thick fog which had suddenly fallen over the Channel was to spoil everything. For the great sale was to take place at midday, and already the captain had told Nathan Gore that it would be impossible to reach Southampton before that time. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and, as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" presently asked the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?"

The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart; a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and win back my diamond." He sends Prout, Maddock, and Joe down to the cave where the Lord of the Deep is hidden. Just as they arrive there a terrific explosion occurs, leaving the two men fighting for life in the water. Later on, while Ferrers Lord and the remainder of the party are seated at dinner, the millionaire receives a telegram which he reads to the others. "The Lord of the Deep is a total wreck," he reads. Startled, stunned, aghast, they leap to their feet.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Wreck of the Lord of the Deep—The Fragment of a Cartridge—Foul Play—Prout Recovers His Spirits—An Inquiry.

"A total wreck!"

"Blown to bits!" answered Ferrers Lord. "Gentlemen, pray do not let the soup get cold! We have a tedious journey before us. Krantz, my special train!"

The footman bowed, and went out. With white, anxious faces they gazed at the millionaire.

Ferrers Lord was busy with the soup, as if the loss of the most magnificent vessel ever designed by the brain of man were nothing more to him than the loss of a threepenny-bit.

. . . . . .

Everything was put aside for the passage of Ferrers Lord's special. It was a private train, drawn by twin engines of the greatest power, and the two saloons were luxuriously fitted.

Hal Honour drove the leading engine, and Ching-Lung shared the footplate with him. They broke records as the two iron monsters thundered and roared and pounded over the glistening metals.

There was a slight delay at York, but Honour made up for it on the branch line. And then the tumbling sea came in sight, surging restlessly round the base of the great cliffs, and the train drew up in the little station.

Prout, Maddock, and Joe stood on the platform. As the millionaire stepped out of the saloon the three dejected-looking seamen saluted their chief.

He did not speak. Beckoning to Rupert and Ching-Lung, he sprang into a waiting motor-car.

Hal Honour shunted the train into a siding, and followed in another car, with Barry, Joe, Maddock, and Prout. Gan-Waga had gone ahead with the others.

"Tare and onions!" said Barry. "What's the matther wid yez, yez fiddle-faces, at all, at all? Yer dials are as long as yarrds o' pump-wather, and very dirty pump-wather at that! Have yez any pain, dear mother, now, or is it only liver-complaint? Spake, spake, specthers—in fact, spook!"

"Blowed to bits!" groaned Ben Maddock. "Alas—alas!"

"A lass?" said Barry eagerly. "What's her name? Is she purty? Oi love 'em—Oi love 'em!"

"By hokey," sighed Prout, "do choke it off! I'm fair sick! The loveliest boat that ever sailed!"

"Oh, oh, oh!" sobbed Joe, the carpenter, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

Barry sympathetically handed him a large white dust-rag to dry his scalding tears. Barry had never seen the Lord of the Deep, or entered the cavern in which she found harbourage. The other men loved her as only a sailor can.

"By hokey," said Tom Prout, "I wish I'd gone down wi' her!"

"Why did yer pull me out?" moaned Maddock.

"Whoy did he, that's the question? Whoy, whoy, whoy? As the bard sez:

"'Whoy didn't yez lit me doie,
Whoy, whoy, whoy!
Whoy didn't yez shove me down?
Why didn't yez lit me dhrown?
Oi've got to meet me landlord in the mornin'.'"

Three brawny hands closed upon Barry's neck, and six wrathful eyes glared at him.

"Another word," said Prout grimly, "and you choke—I swear it!"

"Me, too!" hissed Joe.

"I also take the dreadful oath!" said Maddock.

Barry had a slight fit of coughing when the hands were removed.

"Bedad, Oi'm moighty sorry. Oi chaffed yez, me dearest bhoys!" said the kindly Irishman. "Oi didn't dhream yez were in arnest. Oi'm sorry—more'n sorry. Yez see, Oi didn't know the ould boat. Put 'em here!"

"Good old Barry!" said Joe. "There's mine!"

They shook hands, and each powerful clasp was one of manliness and true comradeship.

"How did ut happen, thin?" asked Barry.

"We dunno," said Prout gloomily. "We were just afloat and pulling out to her when she blew up. It seemed to lift the starn right out of her. Sartinly there was explosives aboard, but they was forward, not aft."

"Moighty sthrange, Tommy, me jooil! And what thin?"

"Darkness and water. I got a smack on the head, but, by hokey, I've got a skull like a boiler-plate. Every light went out, and there was I floundering about in an inky pit, wi' waves runnin' high as houses and steeples. I got out some'ow."

"And the blackguard doesn't mention that he got me out, too," said Maddock.

"Did I? It was a haccident, then," growled the sturdy steersman.

"Oi calls ut a calamity," said Barry. "And what about ould Joe?"

"Born to be hanged, so he can't drown!" said the polite Tom Prout.

"And it was only your blessed wooden head that kept you afloat!" retorted Joe.

"Gently, gently, little sweethearts!" said Barry soothingly. "Bedad, Oi'll do a poem on the thrilling scene;

"'Up wint the vissil wid a pop,
Down wint the boat wid a flop;
Ut was darrk, what a larrk.
And the woild waves roared and wouldn't sthop;
Though wid fate loike lumps o' lead,
Steersman Tommy's wooden head
Kipt him afloat—he couldn't dhrop.
'Mr. Joe,' he sez, 'what-ho'——"

"Stop!" roared the three victims.

"Sartinly—sartinly," said Barry, "av yez want to get out. Misther Honour," he added, touching the engineer on the shoulder, "the gintlemen begs yez koindly to sthop. Misther Prout having had the sad misfortchune to dhrop his brains in the road."

Honour smiled, but drove on. They buzzed through the gates. A man held up his hand.

"They have gone to the cave, sir," he said, as the engineer brought the car to a standstill.

Honour sprang out and hurried down the winding steps, with the others behind him. Ferrers Lord was waiting for them at the iron door.

"The lighting-plant seems utterly ruined, Hal," said the millionaire.

"I can soon make that right."

"Take your lamps, then."

They were electric lamps, giving a brilliant light, and capable of burning for many hours either in the air or under water. They entered the dark tunnel at the millionaire's heels.

"This is a fearful loss, Ching," said Rupert.

"A momentary and a time loss only," answered Ching-Lung. "We can build another Lord of the Deep—eh, Hal?"

"A dozen," answered the engineer.

"But can you explain the accident?"

"No," said Honour.

"Could it be some fault with the electric wires that ignited the explosives?"

"Bosh!" said Ching-Lung. "Don't talk through your hat! Hal was responsible for the electric arrangements, and if ever he made a mistake in his life he was asleep."

The engineer smiled in the darkness at the compliment. He knew the explosion was due to no carelessness on his part. Their footsteps rang loudly through the hollowness, and the moan of the sea filled the dark galleries.

The tide was out, but even when it was lowest the cavern was never dry in its central channel. The lamps twinkled in a long, vertical line as the men began to descend the ladder. Their rays touched the hanging stalactites of the dome, making them look like vast daggers of silver. They gained the wet sand.

Black and dull, the shattered shape of the Lord of the Deep loomed through the darkness. Every heart felt a pang of sorrow and regret. They had all loved the gallant vessel, that laughed alike at the tossing, white-maned breakers and the eternal stillness and silence of the green, glassy depths beneath the sea. To Prout, who had steered her a million times, and sent her lashing onward, she almost possessed a soul. Now the life had left her—she was a corpse. Tom found the lights dim. His eyes were quite moist.

Ferrers Lord stood motionless, and gazed at her. Then he bent, and held the light close to the wet, gleaming sand. He bent lower still, and lifted some object that the outgoing tide had laid bare.

"Foul play," he cried—"foul play! The fragment of a dynamite cartridge! We never used one like this!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Rupert.

Ferrers Lord turned quickly.

"Honour, examine the vessel, and report."

Without another word he climbed the ladder, and his light twinkled and danced along the other gallery, and disappeared. There was consternation on every face. A boat was shouldered and lowered down to the water's edge. The Lord of the Deep rested on the muddy bottom, about a third submerged.

"I shall need a diving-suit," said the engineer.

"Bring one for me," added Ching-Lung.

The stern deck-plates were torn and shattered, and the deck gaped open, the edges of the plates all jagged and spiked. There was a rent, too, in the hull, and the blades of the broken propeller showed as the lights flashed down through the clear water. Maddock reported eleven feet in the hold.

"The verdict!" asked Ching-Lung anxiously.

Honour walked forward silently.

"Yes!" cried Rupert.

"I cannot promise."

"But what do you think—what do you think?"

"That I can repair her," said the engineer.

A wild, delighted cheer rang through the cavern, and was repeated again and again. Gan-Waga, who always took to the water when delighted, excited, or afraid, dived overboard and began to kick and splash and roll like an exhilarated walrus. Prout was sorrowfully plodding over the sand, moaning over his lost love when that cheer thundered through the vault.

Tom knew what it meant. He danced and roared and ran, forgetting all about the diving suits. Into the salt water he rushed, and swam for his very life.

"Ahoy!" yelled a voice from the depths.

"Ahoy!" shouted Ching-Lung, lowering his lantern.

There was a burst of laughter as the light revealed the red and dripping face of Thomas Prout, Esq., of the hairless head.

"Can she be spliced?" inquired Tom breathlessly. "Say the word, by hokey!"

"She can."

"Hooroar-oo!" bellowed T. P.

"Hoo-how-roo-rah!" shrieked Gan-Waga, bobbing up under the steersman's elbow, and driving the red face and bald head a yard and a half under water.

Prout did not care. His beloved vessel was not lost. He came up with a face like an enormous ripe tomato, and Gan flattened a ball of mud down on his shiny pate amid yells of delight and mirth. Then Eskimo and steersman kissed each other, and swam hand-in-hand to the shore to obtain the diving-suits.

When Hal Honour said "I think," it meant "I know"; when he said "I can," it meant "I will."

Ching-Lung performed a waltz with Barry. Barry made an awkward slip, and fell down the companion into the hold, which he found rather damp. They fished him out. He said Ching-Lung had tripped him, and Ching wept at the accusation. He declared that Barry had fallen over his own feet.

Presently the soaked but happy Eskimo and the saturated but joyous steersman pulled back with the diving-dresses. Hal Honour and Ching-Lung were helped into them, and the grotesque, goggle-eyed helmets were screwed on. They needed no air-pumps or hampering tubes or signal-lines.

Ferrers Lord's diving-suits left the wearer free. They carried air for breathing in steel bottles attached to their backs. It was compressed, and a valve supplied them with the necessary pure air, the waste escaping through a second valve in the helmet.

At his hip each man carried an oilskin bag filled with round leaden bullets. The weight, added to that of the massive lead-shod boots, kept the diver down. But, as the air in the bottles was used up and lost its buoyant powers, the diver became heavier and heavier. The bullets in the bag at the outset were carefully regulated to enable him to walk easily. By throwing out a bullet when necessary, he could keep pace with the escape of waste air. It was a simple enough idea, but it was a brilliant one, and acted perfectly. To ascend, it was only necessary to close the waste valve and inflate the suit with air, and both ascent and descent could be checked and regulated by a skilled man almost to the eighth of an inch.

The goggle-eyed helmets disappeared under water, and the lamps carried by Hal Honour and Ching-Lung flashed up dim and green. They waddled through the rent, blowing up long streams of bubbles, like a couple of weird sea-monsters.

"P-p-plaze," stuttered Barry, whose teeth chattered with cold, "has any g-g-gintleman a b-b-bent p-p-pin and a w-wurrum, 'cos av h-he h-has, Oi s-should l-loike t-to c-c-catch wun o' t-thim m-minnows to k-kape in a p-pickle j-jar at h-home?"

Lifting his lamp up and down, the engineer made his

"Foul play!" cried Ferrers Lord, stooping and picking up an object from the sands. "Foul play! The fragment of a dynamite cartridge!"

examination. The massive forehead behind the hideous helmet grew wrinkled. Dynamite is an explosive that strikes downwards, while ordinary gunpowder strikes upwards. The keel was tremendously torn, and the screw-shaft was twisted like a stick of barley-sugar. It was a miracle that the explosion had not reached the well-stored magazine. Had it done so, not a shred of the vessel larger than a horseshoe would have remained.

They entered the forecastle. Overhead floated lockers, chairs, and benches. A few fish gathered round their lamps like moths about a candle. Honour was making for the engine-room. Honour's light flashed round. All at once he dropped the lamp and swung the great lead-weighted axe above his head.

For a moment Ching-Lung fancied that the great engineer had suddenly lost his senses, and that his last hour had dawned.

Down came the axe with a ferocious, blood-thirsty sweep in the direction of Ching-Lung's helmet. It would have cracked the tough copper like a nut; but Honour's wrist turned, and the leaden edge touched the helmet lightly.

And Ching-Lung understood.

"Tap-tap tap-tap-tap-p ta-ta-ta-tap ta-tap ta-tap-p-p-p ta-ta-p-p tap-tap-tap.

Ching-Lung listened to the jerky quiverings. He knew the code, and could read it as Honour's axe rapped out against his helmet. This was the cheery message:

"Machinery splendid. Can rig her up in a month. She only wants a new nose and another propeller."

His Highness yelled, but no one heard him. Then, in turn, he swung his axe.

"Tap tap-p-p t-t-tap-p ta-ta-ta-tap-p tap-p-p ta-ta-tap."

Honour, in reply, put his fingers as close to his nose as the glass would allow. They floundered back and out of the gap. Eager eyes saw the lights, and eager faces bent over the rails of the vessel. They saw the two grotesque shapes emerge.

"Murther!" roared Barry, in horror.

"Ow—ow!" shrieked Gan-Waga.

Something hideous was happening below. With the flashing lamps strapped to their belts, the two divers were facing each other. Axe met axe in fierce battle. Blows were dealt and parried as the combatants whirled round and round. There was no sound. It was a noiseless duel.

To Gan it was an awful reality; to the others it was a joke. At first, Barry had been startled; but the laughter reassured him. Gan, terrified about the safety of his darling Ching, would have plunged overboard had not Prout seized him and sat on him.

To and fro the fighters swayed, the bubbles pouring upwards. It was parry and feint time after time. And then a fierce downward blow struck the weapon from Ching's hands. The blow was intercepted, but not checked. The axe fell on the prince's helmet, and Honour had him by the throat. Gan wriggled himself free.

Ching-Lung was pinned against the side of the vessel, and Honour's great knife was out, and poised for the death-blow. It glistened through the water.

Then came a splash.

The next thing the screaming spectators saw was Gan-Waga engaged in a deadly struggle with Hal Honour. Gan had his legs round the engineer's neck, and was hammering at his helmet with both fists. Honour closed the valve. The mud rose and concealed everything, until Honour, having

inflated the suit, shot like a rocket to the surface, with Gan perched on his chest. A moment later Ching-Lung followed.

It took a long time and a great deal of mirth to convince Gan-Waga that it was only a joke. Honour had had his leisure, and it was time now to work. The magnificent fittings of the submarine were utterly ruined, and a longer immersion would do the engines little good. They rowed ashore, all merry enough.

"What's to be the first move, Hal?" asked Thurston.

"To float her."

"How will you set about it?"

"There are several ways. I could sink a few lighters, make them fast to her, and then pump the water out of them. They would lift her. Then there is the empty barrel method. Sink the barrels one at a time, and fill her with them. It is a tedious method, and apt to bring the vessel up in a lopsided fashion. I could even patch her under water, and pump her; but the lighter system is the best."

"And how soon can you repair her, miracle-worker?"

"A month."

"Gee-whizz!" said Ching-Lung. "As I've told you before, you're a terror!"

They were out in the bright daylight again, walking through Ferrers Lord's garden. It was a fairyland. All at once a bell began to clang.

"Bedad," said Barry, "ut's school-toime! Run away, Tommy, or the tacher'll cane yez for being late!"

"No; it's muffins!" grinned Prout. "Yer dad allus calls wi' 'em about this time of day."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Maddock and the carpenter.

Barry was unable to find a suitable retort, so he said nothing.

"Beastly muffins Barry's old man sells, ain't they?" sniggered Joe.

"'Orrid!" said Maddock.

"We sharpens the knives on 'em," remarked Prout, "and they ain't bad used as sponges!"

"I heard the blacksmith say," went on Maddock, "that he used 'em on his anvil. He told me he'd forged thousands of horseshoes on one o' them muffins, and there warn't a crack in it!"

"Wonderful!"

"Not a crack!" repeated Maddock.

Still Barry was gloomily silent.

"I also heard——"

"Howld on," said Barry gently—"howld on! Oi'll tell yez somethin'. A man who had become a great chimist wance went back to the college where he'd larned the chimistry. 'Hallo!' sez he to the professor who'd taught him. 'What's become of Bill Bloggins at all, at all?'

"'Cliver chap that Bill,' sez the professor, wid a tear in both fate—Oi mane eyes. 'Best pupil Oi iver had, but moighty careless wid the experiments and the chemicals. D'yo see that dirthy marrk on the ceiling up yondher?'

"'I do,' sez the chap.

"'Well,' sighs the professor, 'that's Bill! He blowed hisself to bits. That's all there was lift of him!'"

Again Barry was silent. Prout, Maddock, and Joe failed to grasp the moral of the story.

"What about it, Irish?" said Joe at last. "What's it all about, anyhow?"

"Just this, bhoys," said Barry. "Oi'm chimical, and moighty sthrong chimical, and Oi can explode. Troth, av yez gives me any more of yer chaff there'll be liss lift of yez than there was of Misther William Bloggs!"

"I am frightened!" grinned Prout.

Foul Play—Prout Recovers His Spirits—An Inquiry.

The bell had ceased to ring. As they neared the house, one of the French windows opened, and Ferrers Lord stepped out. On a lawn as smooth as velvet, chairs and a table had been placed. The millionaire waved his hand, and they sat down. They heard the buzzing of a motor-car, and presently a coastguard and two other men joined the group.

"I have here the written evidence of Prout," said the millionaire, "but that does not concern us. Fellows!"

The sentry who had guarded the iron door stepped forward.

"Manley and Horton!" cried Ferrers Lord.

Two other broad-shouldered, swarthy giants strode into the circle and saluted.

"Horton, you may go," said the millionaire—"and you, too, Fellows. Now, Manley, you were on guard on Horseshoe Cliff?"

"Yes, sir. It was very dark. I kept a good watch, and saw and heard nothing suspicious. At daylight there was a yacht about nine mile out. Arter sun-up I was free."

"That will do," said Ferrers Lord. "It is your turn, coastguard."

The coastguard also had noticed the yacht, and signalled her. He thought she looked a foreigner, but she signalled back that she was the Muriel, of Devonport, and was waiting for letters from Gunderby, the village close by. When the coastguard concluded, a railway-porter was called.

He stated that it was his duty to be at the station just before three in the morning. He was also a telegraph-operator. About four he was rung up from York, and informed that a special had left London. He felt sure that the special had been chartered by Ferrers Lord. When it arrived two men got out.

"Describe them," said Ferrers Lord.

The listeners waited breathlessly.

"One looked like a seafaring man, sir. He was very short and broad and clean-shaven, and black as a nigger. I've seen him afore. The other was tall, but he stooped a lot. He wore a long coat, and his hat was pulled down low. He had long, white 'air, and a funny, wild look in his eyes. They took the road to the mansion."

Ferrers Lord nodded. Ching-Lung and Rupert exchanged glances.

"The inquiry is over," said the millionaire quietly. "Thurston, Honour, Ching, I want you."

They followed him into the drawing-room, and from there to a cool study. The millionaire went to the telephone.

"Are you there?"

There was a silence.

"Get the Night Queen ready for sea in two hours," said Ferrers Lord.

He hung up the receiver and lighted a cigar.

"My friends," he said, "the thief of my diamond and the wrecker of my vessel is one and the same person—Nathan Gore."

"But how did he effect an entrance to the cavern?" asked Rupert, astonished. "The mouth of it is always covered."

"He did not do that himself. He had an accomplice, and that accomplice was a fearless diver and swimmer. Gore must have commenced to carry out his plans the moment he set foot in England. That he has done what he has done in so short a space of time gives us an idea of the man we have to fight. In a few hours he has stolen the finest diamond in the world, wrecked the finest vessel in the world, and made good his escape."

"Marvellous!" said Ching-Lung. "Jupiter! What a tough old ruffian he must be!"

"I expect we shall find that out," said the millionaire, smiling. "All the same, we shall hunt him down. Two hours from now we shall be in chase of the white yacht."

"Where do you think he is making for, Lord?"

"I cannot tell. Cuxhaven or Hamburg, I suppose. He may even have gone north or south, on his way to America. North for choice, and round Scotland. There are too many eyes in the Channel."

"Jove!" said Rupert. "You are pretty cool about it."

The millionaire laughed.

"Who knows?" he answered, and there was a note in his voice that was not good to hear. "We start in an hour, and we may not return for a year."

"A year, Lord! Great Scott! What are you drivelling about?"

"My dear Ching-Lung, I never drivel! Nathan Gore has a long start, but he knows what is behind him. He cannot shake me off. Night and day I will give him no peace. When terror is at a man's heels he makes good speed. If you expect a kind of holiday trip, you are grievously mistaken. I advise you to remain behind, and it is good advice."

Once more the three men looked wonderingly at each other. Ferrers Lord pressed his hand against a tall picture of an armoured knight. The picture slid aside. The millionaire passed through the aperture, and the panel closed behind him.

"Jee-roo-salem!" gasped Ching-Lung. "A giddy year to chase a dirty thief! Will somebody kindly put a pin into my leg and waken me up? I'm getting tired of this dream. Hall, don't stand there with a face like a plaster cast. Tell us your views. Is dear old Ferrers Lord going off it?"

The handsome engineer smiled.

"He knows," he answered, "and we are ignorant."

"A year!" murmured Ching-Lung. "Get me a drink before I faint. Fan me gently, Rupert. Fancy chasing a man with a name like Nathan Gore! I'd sooner chase butterflies!"

"Gintlemen," said Barry, thrusting in his head, "the kerridge waits. Plase come quick, for the horses have been freshly blowed up, and they're moighty frisky. Oi helped to blow 'em up wid what they calls a fut-pump, and, bedad! ut was two yards long. And—and is there a dhrink about?"

"Plenty of water."

"Oi axed for a dhrink," said Barry, in disgust—"not a wash!"

Ching-Lung rang for champagne, and Barry's eyes sparkled. Two bottles were brought. Barry rubbed his horny hands in expectant delight. His jaw dropped as the prince slipped both bottles into his pocket.

"Come on, chaps," said Ching-Lung; "let's go aboard."

"The pigtailed pig!" groaned Barry, as he tramped after them. "Oi expected fizz, and, faith, ut's not fizz, but fizzle. Oi'll stick close to the gint wid the bottles, anyway."

Two motor-cars were ready. Ferrers Lord, masked and goggled, was on the driving-seat of the foremost one. As Ching-Lung took his seat, two golden bottle-necks protruded from his pockets. Barry leaned over, and cautiously removed them. Then, with a grin of joy on his face, and the loot in his possession, he took refuge in the second car, where Prout, Maddock, and Joe, who had witnessed the theft, received him with open arms.

"D'yez luv me, bhoys?" chuckled Barry.

"By honey, we could eat yer—Irish brogue, whiskers, and all!" said Thomas Prout.

The car rushed away along the dusty cliff road, and the pursuit of Nathan Gore had already commenced.

Fairly Afloat on the Black Yacht Night Queen—Gan is Rude Again—A Message from an Ironclad—A Threat of Quarantine.

The Night Queen was a trim, one-funnelled yacht of seven hundred tons. She was painted dead black from bowsprit to propellor-flukes. She was a boat that could go anywhere and weather any gale. As she lay reflected in the blue water, Ching-Lung, Honour, and Thurston admired her delicate lines.

There were many merry greetings. She was manned by old comrades—men who had formed the crew of the Lord of the Deep on perilous voyages. Once aboard, the chain went clanking and clattering through the hawseholes, and the dripping anchor came up.

Ferrers Lord was on the bridge. Hearts grew light as the men felt the salt kiss of the sea on their lips once more. Gan was as frisky as a lamb with two tails. Barry winked and dived below. Watching their opportunity, Prout, Joe, and Maddock crept after him into the forecastle to demolish the stolen wine. Ching-Lung appeared on deck just as Maddock was stealing away. Ching-Lung had been busy in the galley.

"Gan!"

"Hunk, Chingy!" said the Eskimo.

"Go to the forecastle, my sweet and fat one, and tell three rogues named Thomas, Benjamin, and Joseph that his Imperial Highness—myself, twiggy?—requires their presence on deck forthwith. Go on your toes."

"What 'forthwiths,' Chingy?"

"At once, immediately, down on the nail, right away, my blubber-biter, that's what it means."

"Why not say 'a twunce,' den, silly," inquired Gan-Waga cheekily, "and speaks English?"

"If you cheek me——" began Ching-Lung.

Gan had departed, however. Silently as a cat Ching glided after him. Gan made no noise as he neared the forecastle. To the consternation of the four seamen, he burst in. Barry was cutting the wires of the first cork. He dropped both bottles behind a locker.

"What d'yer want, fat mug?" growled Joe.

"'Perial Highness Chingy-Lung want you four ole images on decks forthwith, 'mijitly, down on the nailses, right astray, a twunce," gabbled Gan, with a sweet and oily smile. "And if yo' not goes I punches all yo' greats thick heades! Ho-hoo-hoo-oo!"

Gan fled in time to escape a boot hurled at him by Maddock. Such absolute impudence was unbearable from a fat Eskimo.

"By hokey!" gasped Prout. "Did yer 'ear it?"

"Oi did."

"I shall have that Eskimo's blood on my soul yet!" growled Maddock.

"All the same," added Joe, "we'd better see what the prince wants. The wine'll keep for a bit. What'll you do, Barry, if he jumps on you for stealin' it?"

"Bedad, git jumped on, me bhoy! Images, he calls us, and said he'd punch our heads! By the glory of all the O'Rooneys, Oi'll make that Eskimo a duremat to woipe me fate on! Hear me swear—dash!"

"We'll scalp him!" said Joe.

"Flay him!" put in Maddock.

"Strangle him and bile him!" hissed Prout.

"Tear his ould carcase into leather bootlaces and strangle him wid the longest!" said Barry.

The prospect in front of Gan-Waga looked cheerful. After those dark and awful threats they trooped out, and Ching-Lung slipped in. In a twinkling he had changed the bottles

for another exactly similar in appearance. He heard a footstep, and crouched down out of sight.

Gan-Waga appeared. He glanced round him cautiously. Owing to some unusual neglect of discipline, a hammock still swung in the forecastle. Gan-Waga managed to get his fat figure into it. Then, turning over, he cut a hole in the canvas, and glued his eye to it. Ching could see that twinkling eye, and he wondered what it was all about.

Presently the four returned. They said things about Gan that would have frozen the blood of a salamander. As a salamander is supposed to be able to live in fire, it would be rather difficult to freeze his blood. Both Gan and Ching-Lung lay low—at least, Ching-Lung lay low, and Gan lay as low as he could under the circumstances, for, of course, Gan was in the hammock. And still his black, beady eye twinkled.

"If I wance catch that contwisticated Eskimo," said Barry savagely, "Oi'll screw him into macaroni!"

"And I'll twist him into pipelights!" growled Prout. "Open the stuff, Irish!"

"Oi've dhropped me knife," said Barry.

"Let me do it, then," said Joe.

The cork popped gloriously, and the wine, topped with creamy, hissing foam, was poured into the tin cups.

"Glorious!" said Maddock.

"Bliss utself!" said Barry. "Accordin' to Shakespeare, ut's:

"'Woine, woine, glorious woine!
Nothin' so luvly, nothin' so foine,
Nothin' so swate, and nothin' so noice,
But, bedad, ut's a regular dooce of a price!'"

After this beautiful verse Barry drained his mug, and held it out to be refilled.

"There ain't much in one bottle for four, is there?" said Joe.

"Kill the other, then," remarked Maddock.

The second cork shot out like a bullet. Luckily Gan had moved his eye, for the cork went clean through the hole, and, striking the boards, bounced down on Prout's shiny head.

"Hould on!" said Barry. "We'll have a toast. 'Oireland for ivee!'"

"'Ear, 'ear!" chimed in Joe, whose birthplace was in the isle of shamrock.

"Steady, steady!" said Prout. "What about Hengland and Scotland?"

"Yes, what about 'em? What have they done?" asked the carpenter.

Barry scratched his head.

"Bedad," he remarked, "that's so! Joe and Oi think Oireland the foinest place on earth!"

"So it is," said Joe.

"Gently, gently, me bhoy! Av coorse ut is. But, yez see, Ben's a Glasgie lad boy birth, and Tom is a Lancashire lad. Therefore, we can't put wan counthry afore the other. Now, bein' a man wid brains——"

"Where d'ye keep 'em?" scoffed Prout.

"Whisht, whisht! Bein' a man of brains, Oi suggest that we make wan word of the toast, and wish jolly good luck to the three little counthries that can make the whole wurrld sit up! Dhrink, lads, to Engirscot!"

"To what?"

"Engirscot—England, Oireland, and Bonnie Scotland. Engirscot is short for the three."

"Brave!" roared Maddock. "To Engirscot—drink!"

"All together!" said Prout.

Four pannikins went to four mouths, and the four mouths took four gulps. There was something wrong with that champagne—in fact, it was turpentine, which Ching-Lung had made fizzy by aerating it in a sparklet bottle.

They decided not to drink it.

Spitting out the awful stuff, they got up and danced on their eight legs, and yelled and coughed with their four voices. Their eyes were filled with tears, and their hearts with wrath.

"Pizened—pizened!" moaned Barry. "Ow, ow!"

"Arsenic!" shrieked Joe.

"Strike nine!" screamed Prout—who meant strychnine.

"Struck pink!" sobbed Maddock.

And then, from above, a voice that could control itself no longer trolled out:

"Ho, ho, ho! Hoo-oo-oh! Ha-aa-ah! Ho-ooo-oh!"

The voice was the voice of Gan-Waga, the Eskimo—he of the fat body and twinkling eye—who lay in a hammock and laughed heartily.

(This thrilling adventure serial will be continued in next Tuesday's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Order in advance. One Penny.)

My Readers' Page.

GRAND, NEW, WEEKLY FEATURE.

FOR NEXT TUESDAY:

Next week's grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled

"THE STOLEN SCHOOLBOYS,"

by Frank Richards, and tells the story of an alarming adventure which befalls the chums of the Greyfriars Remove, who experience an aspect of "life on the ocean wave" which has hitherto been unfamiliar to them. The experience, if exciting, is also a very unpleasant and perilous one, and Harry Wharton & Co. do not undergo it without making vigorous protests, which, however, the worthy captain of the ss. Pomerania has a little way of silencing with a rope's end, as Harry Wharton discovers to his cost. The way in which, after many exciting adventures, the chums contrive to turn the tables on their lawless captors, makes

"THE STOLEN SCHOOLBOYS"

a story which no one can help reading with enjoyment, so once again, my chums, let me adjure you to order your "Magnet" Library in advance.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

C. J. Ajalbert (Malmaison).—Thank you for your letter. The point you raise is a very interesting one, but I am able to tell you that the Greyfriars School of Frank Richards' stories is not intended to have any connection with the school of the same name which used to exist in London. Christ's Hospital, the famous "Bluecoat" School, provides an example of the continued use up to the present day of the costumes in vogue at the time of the foundation of the school in the sixteenth century.

E. W. (Dundee).—I must thank you for your letter, and for the help you have given me in trying to increase the popularity of "The Magnet" and "The Gem" Libraries.

H. S. B. (near Richmond).—Thank you for your interesting letter. A number of loyal readers have already formed "Magnet" leagues in different parts of the country, which they are conducting with the greatest success.

V. Cross (Winnipeg, Canada).—I must thank you for your interesting letter and for the way in which you have helped me to increase the popularity of "The Magnet" Library. You may hear more of Alonzo Todd later on.

"New Reader" (a girl) (Nottingham).—Thanks for your letter. The number of the issue of "The Magnet" Library containing the letter you refer to is 219.

S. W. (Leamington Spa).—Thank you for your postcard with the short verses concerning "The Magnet" Library. I am sorry that space does not allow of my publishing it.

"A Widder" (Dublin).—Thank you for your very interesting postcard. I hope "The Magnet" will continue to prove "a boon" to your son as it has done in the past.

Miss U. Wilson (N.S.W.).—I have to thank you for your long and interesting letter, and the good wishes it contained for the welfare of "The Magnet" and "The Gem" Libraries. I am sorry I cannot insert your request now, but you have no doubt seen the notice that was published some weeks back concerning the closing of the Correspondence Exchange.

C. S. C. (Tasmania).—I was pleased to receive a letter from you, and must thank you for it. I will bear your suggestion in mind concerning Vernon-Smith, but cannot promise anything definite.

BACK NUMBERS WANTED.

H. Pike, 20, Higher Henry Street, Hyde, Cheshire, has a number of old "Gem" and "Magnet" Libraries he wishes to sell.

F. Tripp, 31, Silverlock Street, Rotherhithe, S.E., has 64 numbers of "The Gem" and "The Magnet" Libraries for sale at 2s. 8d.

C. Power, of York Crescent Road, Clifton, Bristol, wishes to obtain No. 1 of "The Gem" and of "The Magnet."

A. G. Salter, 50, Struan Villas, E. Finchley, London, N., wishes to obtain Nos. 1 to 130 (penny series) of "The Gem," and the first four numbers of "The Magnet" Libraries.

J. Grimes, 28, Forest Park Road, Dundee, wishes to obtain any six back numbers of "The Gem" Library at half-price.

J. J. Millington, 108, St. Saviour's Road, Leicester, has a large number of back numbers to dispose of, reduced rate, from No. 94 onward.

W. Jones, 4, Bathurst Park, Sydney, Gloucestershire, wishes to obtain No. 1 of "The Gem" and "The Magnet," and also No. 202 of "The Gem."

S. Bodle, 165, Knutsford Road, Warrington, has a small quantity of back numbers to dispose of.

FISHING.

Hints on Catching Perch and Chub.

The amateur angler will find that perch affords him, on the whole, more sport than many other fish. It is found in almost every river in the country, and, what seems very important to the impatient young angler, it, as a general rule, takes the bait very quickly. Where perch are usually found is in a sluggish river, frequenting the water round old piles, and in deep holes, and the like. If you are fishing in rapid water, choose the deepest and stillest parts. The larger fish, as soon as they are hooked, resist violently, so affording excellent sport.

The tackle used for perch is a cork float, a No. 7 hook, having as a bait marsh worms.

On feeling the bite, let the fish run a yard or so, and then strike sharply. Let him have plenty of line, but at the same time take note of the surroundings, and keep it well in hand to prevent it catching in any reeds or roots, etc.

Unless perch are out "on the feed," so to speak, they will probably not notice the worm, or will disregard it altogether, unless it is kept in motion by occasionally moving the rod, first for a few inches up and down, and then from side to side.

Some anglers, when after perch, adopt a method known as "ledger fishing," described as follows:

After baiting the hook, place a "ledger lead"—which can be obtained from any tackle dealer—about ten inches above the hook, with a large shot underneath it to keep it in its place. When fixed, cast the bait into the water, when the lead will sink to the bottom. The rod should be held over the side of the boat so that the top of it nearly touches the water, and then, when the bite is felt, a hard and sudden strike is given.

The Chub

feeds both at the top and the bottom of the river, and usually affords fairly good sport. For the bait, gudgeon, minnows, worms, and paste are very suitable, as also are flies, natural and artificial.

When approaching the water care should be exercised, for should the fish see you he will leave that part of the water. The sport, although fairly good, is not quite up to the perch.

The chub is sometimes found in still, deep holes, but in the summer, if the weather is very hot, he can be found at the sides of the river, under overhanging trees, and such places, feeding on beetles, moths, and other kinds of insects. Of course, if this happens to be the case, fly bait is used.

When fishing at the bottom the best bait to employ is greaves, red worms, or paste. A good pasté is made by soaking the crust of a new loaf in water for a few minutes, kneading well until it becomes a stiff dough. Then mix a piece of very old cheese with it and break into balls about the size of a Spanish nut. On a No. 6 hook this is a killing bait for chub.

This fish is very fond of cherries, and some anglers fasten one on to a hook and allow it to float down-stream. This, of course, attracts the fish's attention.

A few hints on how to fish for barbel, dace, and roach will be given next week.

THE EDITOR.

Printed and published by the Proprietors at 23, Bouverie Street, London, England. Agents for Australia: Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, July 6th, 1912.

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