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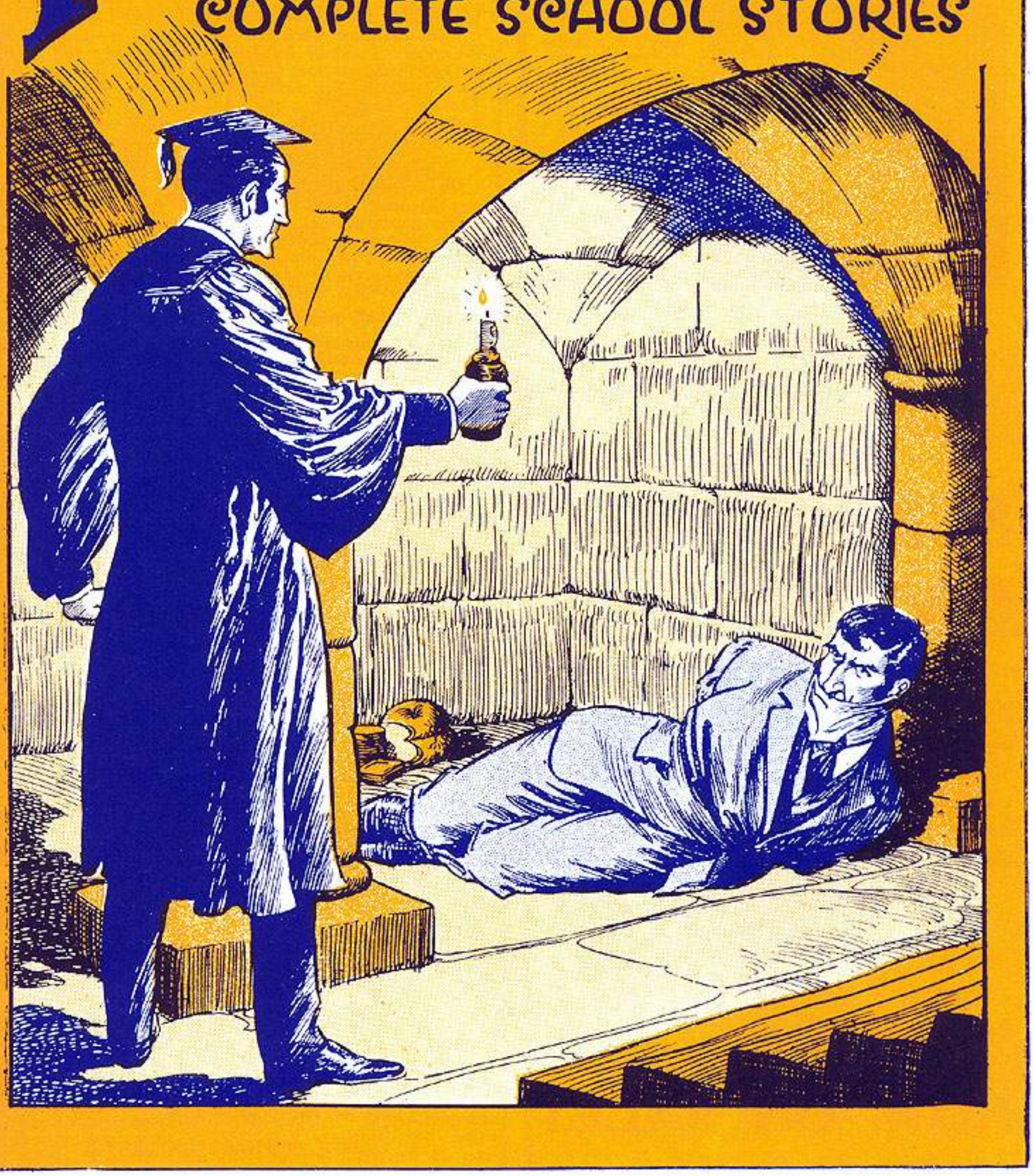

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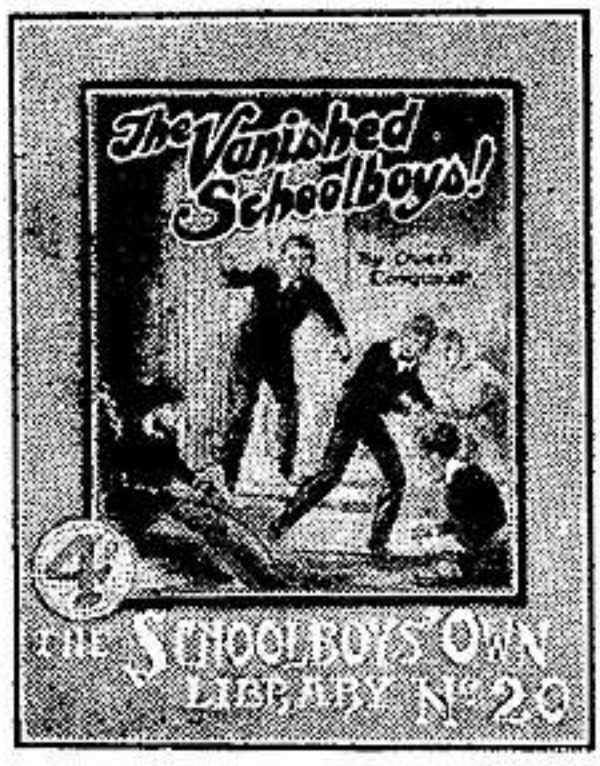

By OWEN CONQUEST

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To and from Your Editor

STILL SOME LEFT!

SEVERAL reader chums have been inquiring if the "Holiday Annual" is now out of print. Not yet. But those of you who haven't bought a copy had better hop round to your nearest newsagent at the double and get him to order one for you. There are only a few copies left, and I'm afraid some of you Magnetites are going to be disappointed if you don't get a move on. It is no more than can be expected, this terrific rush to secure the world's biggest bargain, for the "Holiday Annual's" 360 full pages offer unparalleled value at the modest price of six shillings.

THE NEW SUPPLEMENT!

Next Monday week will see the first issue of Harry Wharton's Football Supplement launched, and I say in advance, and without hesitation, that if this new venture doesn't "go" I'll eat my best—or worst—Sunday hat! There's a surprise in store for you, my chums. Just you make certain of getting a grip of the MAGNET No. 938, and kick off to time with that new footer supplement.

AND A NEW FOOTER SERIAL!

Ha! That's another little surprise for you. With the new Football Supplement there is the start of a powerful footer mystery story introducing your old friends, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. It's a winner from beginning to end, and will undoubtedly rank as one of the finest—if not the finest—mystery stories that have ever appeared in this paper. The title—

"THE CASE OF THE LANGSDALE WANDERERS!"

is worth remembering. And don't forget this new treat, likewise the football supplement, starts the week after next!

THE "SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY!"

Magnetites will find something to their liking in No. 19 of the "Schoolboys' Own Library," now on sale, for it describes how Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars, how Bob Cherry turned up, and how Frank Nugent did his best to cure the present captain of the Remove of his blazing, unreasonable temper. It's a real masterpiece, this story, and as there must be thousands of you who have never read the early yarns of Greyfriars, its success is guaranteed in advance. There's going to be a rush to secure this volume, and my chums would do well to give their order early. As a companion volume, No. 20, entitled, "The Vanished Schoolboys!" wants a lot of beating. It's a remarkable story dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the famous chums of Rookwood. Mr. Owen Conquest is seen at his best. 'Nuff said!

For Next Monday.

"THE PREFECT'S PLOT!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the title of the next grand, extra-long story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Its extra length means that the supplement will have to be held over until the following week. But as this new supplement will start in company with a new footer serial, the week after next will be worth looking forward to. But to next Monday's yarn. Gerald Loder, the unpopular prefect, who figured to such a great extent in that grand series dealing with the fall of George Wingate, again comes into the limelight. Not for long can Gerald Loder keep out of trouble. But Loder has a happy knack of dragging other people into his troubles, and you'll learn how he does this in next week's story. Don't miss it, chums!

"THE MYSTERY OF LONE MANOR!"

Magnetites simply must not miss the final chapters of this popular mystery story. The secret of the Green Spider is now known to you, but a lot is yet to happen before the curtain rings down on one of the most amazing cases Ferrers Locke has ever had to solve.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!

In next Monday's issue of the MAGNET will appear a portrait of Sir Jimmy Vivian, the one-time waif of Carker's Rents, making No. 21 in this popular series. Order your Magnet early, boys!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE BEGINNING! A sudden storm, a lonely passage through the rain-swept woods of Friardale, and somewhere along the path a desperate criminal! Thus starts——

Quelchy's Queer Adventure!

By **FRANK RICHARDS**

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, with Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, filling the principal role.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Caught in the Storm!

"BOTHER!"

Mr. Quelch uttered that ejaculation with considerable warmth.

The master of the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars was picking his way gingerly along the muddy footpath that stretched between Friardale and the school.

"Bother!"

Mr. Quelch found some satisfaction in repeating that remark.

He was returning from the Friardale vicarage where he had whiled away a couple of hours playing chess with Mr. Lambe, the vicar, when it suddenly started to rain.

And the master of the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars had forgotten to take his umbrella with him when he had set out that afternoon.

"This is too bad!"

Mr. Quelch's grim face became grimmer than ever. And his temper, always a doubtful commodity, as it were, when the air was damp, developed a very keen edge. Perhaps the fact that he had lost each game of chess to the Rev. Mr. Lambe did not improve the Form master's temper, and the occasional twinges of neuritis that now assailed him certainly did not help matters.

"Oh, bother!"

A less dignified personage than Mr. Horace Henry Quelch, M.A., doubtless would have found a far stronger term in his denunciation of things in general, and the rain in particular, but Mr. Quelch was a very precise gentleman. He turned up his coat collar and jammed his silk hat down firmly on his head, and strode on towards the school.

The sky was overcast, shedding a premature darkness over the dripping countryside, and the hissing rain against the trees made eerie and peculiar music.

But Mr. Quelch had no thoughts for these things, much as he appreciated the workings of Nature. He was concerned only with getting back to the cosy warmth of his study.

Oooooooh!

"Wow!"

In his haste to reach Greyfriars, Mr. Quelch now paid less attention to the pools of mud that were scattered along the footpath than he had done hitherto. He regretted his carelessness as he found himself floundering almost up to his knees in a fairly large pool of mud and water into which he had walked blindly.

"Ow!"

Mr. Quelch was not given to making ridiculous noises like that. Indeed, he often had occasion to rebuke his pupils in the Remove for disfiguring, as it were, the English language. But really the circumstances that caused Mr. Horace Henry Quelch to forget himself were excusable, for the pool of water was decidedly cold, whilst the same could be said of the formation of mud that began to transfer itself to the Form master's nether garments.

"Groooough!"

Squelch, squelch!

Mr. Quelch shivered and began to drag his heavy footsteps out of that water-logged hole in the path in a manner that undoubtedly would have brought smiles to the faces of the said pupils could they have been present to witness his efforts. Fortunately for Mr. Quelch, and perhaps fortunately for the said pupils, no one was present to witness the Form master's discomfiture.

But that fact did not appease Mr. Quelch's wrath.

Squelch, squelch!

Squelching mud and water at every step, the master of the Greyfriars Remove at last drew clear of that treacherous pool and resumed his journey. Ahead of him were the twinkling lights of the school, to right and left nothing but a stretch of leafless trees swaying and protesting to the fitful breeze that had now sprung up.

Mr. Quelch shivered and drew his coat tighter about him and strode on.

"I shall catch my death of cold," he muttered, a trifle out of breath through the unaccustomed exertion. "I—— Bless my soul!"

The Form master pulled up short as a figure stepped from the shelter of the trees directly in his path.

"Hold on, sir!"

The voice of the stranger was decidedly cultured. Mr. Quelch was quick to observe that, although he wondered what manner of man it was who chose to loiter in the shade of trees on such a wild night as this.

"Who are you?" demanded the Form master ungraciously.

"Never mind who I am," came the reply. "Would you be good enough to tell me if that big building yonder is Greyfriars?"

"It is!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Now let me pass. I'm drenched to the skin."

The stranger laughed, a harsh, unnatural sort of laugh that sent a shiver involuntarily down Mr. Quelch's spine. Looking at the man closer, the Greyfriars Form master saw what he had missed at first. The stranger was a tall, broad-shouldered man, dressed in a well-cut grey suit of clothes, a trifle the worse now for the rain that had drenched them. A black moustache adorned his upper lip, and he was hatless.

"I suppose you wouldn't care to help a fellow who is down and out?" The educated voice broke in upon Mr. Quelch's reflections.

"My good man, what are you talking about?" snapped the master. "If you are—hem—down and out, as you say, surely you can apply to the proper quarters for assistance? A footpath on a wild night like this is hardly the

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place to ask for assistance. Pray, let me pass!"

Mr. Quelch made as if to stride on, but the figure in his way never moved so much as an inch.

"I'll be straight with you, Quelch ——"

The stranger's familiarity with his name caused the master of the Remove to start violently.

"I'll be straight, as I say," went on the stranger, and now the educated voice was submerged in a snarl. "I want some money. In fact, I want all the money you've got about you. See?"

Mr. Quelch drew back. There was something threatening in the very attitude of the man before him.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed with some heat. "Who are you? How do you know my name?"

"Once seen never forgotten, Mr. Quelch, or shall I say Quelchy?" came the stranger's voice. "But the money. You were ever—ahem—a kind-hearted gentleman. You'll not miss a few quids to help a deserving case."

"You scoundrel!" roared Mr. Quelch. "This is highway robbery. I'll make it my business to report you to the police at the first opportunity. All my money, indeed! Do you think you can intimidate me to part with my money?"

A harsh laugh followed the words, and almost before Mr. Quelch quite realised what had happened a pair of strong hands closed round his throat.

"Now then, Quelch, cough up your money, or you'll cough up for good! I'm a desperate man!"

"Gug—gug—you scoundrel—gug!"

Mr. Quelch struggled manfully with his assailant, but he could not shake off that powerful grip on his throat. It seemed that all his breath was being choked out of him.

A savage face with a dark moustache hovered over his own, hot breath fanned his cheeks, and always those fingers round his throat tightened.

"Are you going to hand over?"

"Gug-n-n-never!"

The Form master managed to splutter his refusal as, for a fleeting second, those terrible fingers relaxed.

"You won't—eh? Well, we'll see!"

The man's fingers tightened, and the master of the Remove found himself being borne backwards in the mud.

Thud!

As he fell Mr. Quelch exerted all his strength, and literally tore the clutching fingers from his throat.

"You scoundrel!" he panted. "You shall suffer for this! The police——"

"The police! Ugh!" The man snapped his fingers and laughed. "I don't care that much for them! Ah, would you!"

"Help!"

The Remove master had struggled to his feet; but he saw that he was outmatched; his age was against him. Those gripping fingers again sought his throat and held there.

"Help!" he gasped.

His assailant muttered a savage imprecation as those cries rang through the rainswept wood, and he glanced about him nervously.

"Stop that confounded row, or I'll——"

"Help!"

Mr. Quelch summoned all his remaining strength and yelled. The call echoed eerily through the wood, but there came no answer save the hissing of the rain upon the trees.

Thud!

A fist was plunged full between the Greyfriars' master's eyes. A mist seemed to engulf him, his knees tottered, and then, with a nervous twitching of his muscles, he collapsed into insensibility.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Man with the Moustache!

"RAIN!"

"Go hon!"

"The rainfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars turned up their coat-collars and stepped out briskly in the dusk as the first patter of rain came down.

"Just our luck!"

"The luckfulness is not of the esteemed order," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shudder.

The Famous Five had been on a visit to Cliff House, and were returning by way of the cliff path when the threatened downpour came upon them with startling suddenness.

"Thought it would keep off until we got back to the school," grunted Johnny Bull. "If that fathead Cherry hadn't hung about talking sweet nothings to Marjorie we should have been home by now."

"Oh, I like that!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "I rather thought you kept us waiting, Johnny. You were going great guns with Miss Clara."

Grunt!

Johnny Bull blushed, but it passed unnoticed in the dusk. As a matter of fact, he had delayed the departure for Greyfriars just as much as Bob Cherry, for Johnny was greatly smitten on Miss Clara of Cliff House. But he wouldn't have admitted it for worlds.

"Step it out," said Harry Wharton, with an anxious glance up at the cloudy sky. "It's going to be a regular storm."

"'Oh, it ain't gonna rain no mo', no mo','" sang Frank Nugent.

"The fellow who wrote that song was a bit of an optimist," grunted Johnny Bull. "I'm blessed well soaked!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"How can it, when it's raining?"

"A joke from Johnny Bull!" chuckled Bob. "Who said the age of miracles was past?"

"Look here!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Can't," said Bob Cherry. "It's too dark—thank goodness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter," growled Johnny Bull.

"I quite agree with you, old chap," said Bob Cherry. "I wondered how long it would be before you realised that. But you must make the best of it. After all, it isn't your fault that you've got a face like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the Famous Five, with the exception of Johnny Bull, laughed. But Johnny snorted and tramped on.

"Wow!" he ejaculated suddenly.

"What's the matter now?"

"You clumsy idiot!" roared Johnny, glaring at Bob Cherry. "You put your blessed feet down like tanks. Why, you've just stepped in a puddle, and sent a dashed stream of water up round my ankles!"

"That'll do you good!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Eh——"

"'Cleanliness is next to godliness'—at least, that's what our kind teachers tell us," said Bob. "Water is good for us. What are you grumbling about?"

"Brrrrrr!"

Johnny Bull was almost speechless. It puzzled him how anyone could be cheerful in such a deluge, and he almost hated Bob Cherry at that moment for his cheerfulness.

"'Show me the way to go home,'" sang Bob Cherry. "'I'm tired, and I want to go to——' Yaroooooh!"

Bob Cherry's burst into song ended abruptly as he blundered into a puddle a foot deep.

"Wow!" he gasped as the rain-water drenched his trousers almost up to the knees. "Some silly ass has been digging holes round here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the Co. seemed to find something humorous in Bob's misfortune. Johnny Bull in particular was vastly amused.

"Groooogh!" spluttered Bob Cherry, as he clambered out of that deep puddle and shook the water from his sodden trouser-legs.

"'Cleanliness is next to godliness,'" quoted Johnny Bull, with a grin. "Water is good for us. Hope you like it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow!"

Bob Cherry pulled a wry face, but his cheerfulness soon returned. It took more than a wetting to damp his spirits.

"Step it out," said Nugent, drawing his coat about him. "I'm getting drenched."

"The drenchfulness is terrific," muttered Hurree Singh.

"Let's go by the woods," suggested Harry Wharton. "We shall get a certain amount of cover under the trees."

"Good idea," said Bob. "We're too exposed here. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's someone with a light!"

A light glimmered on the cliff path ahead, swaying to and fro like some will-o'-the-wisp.

"Wonder who it is?" said Frank Nugent, peering through the darkness ahead.

"Oh, a fellow out for a walk, I expect!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's a nice evening for a walk. I'm enjoying it myself."

"Oh, ring off!"

"Expect it's a coastguard," said Harry Wharton. "Those fellows have to go out in all weathers."

"Seems as if the chap is looking for someone," said Johnny Bull. "That light he's carrying is being switched all over the place."

"Perhaps he's looking for us," ventured Bob Cherry. "He might be a rat collector looking for drowned rats. And I think we just about fill the bill. Let's ask him."

"Ass!"

"Halt!"

As the light came nearer the Famous Five discerned the shadowy figure of a man behind it. He stepped full in front of the juniors, and swept his light across their faces. The glare blinded them.

"Greyfriars lads!" said the man with the light, and at sound of that voice the juniors recognised Inspector Grimes of Courtfield.

"Evening, inspector," said Bob Cherry. "Nice night for a sail, isn't it?"

Inspector Grimes came nearer and lowered his light. The Greyfriars juniors saw his face then, and read the anxious expression on it. Evidently something had disturbed Mr. Grimes' tranquility other than the storm, for his eyes were unnaturally bright and piercing.

"Have you passed anyone?" he asked breathlessly. "You boys have come by the cliff path. Have you seen anything of a tall man?"

"No!" said Harry Wharton. "We haven't passed a soul!"

"Oh!" There was a note of disappointment in the inspector's tone. "You are sure?"

"Absolutely!"

"The surefulness is terrific!"

Inspector Grimes frowned.

"We're looking for a man, a tall man!" he muttered half to himself. "The scoundrel has got to be caught before——"

"He'll be caught all right," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"What do you mean?" asked the inspector eagerly.

"In the rain, I mean," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob's attempt at humour did not please the local inspector, for a dark frown settled on his face.

"Hallo, here's another chap with a light!" said Frank Nugent.

At that moment a light glimmered away to the juniors' left, and as he saw it the inspector called out:

"This way, Porters!"

Porters, a plain-clothes man, stepped out of the gloom. The juniors noticed his face was just as anxious as that of Inspector Grimes.

He halted, panting.

"Have you seen him?" grunted Inspector Grimes.

"Not a sign of him!" growled Porters. "He's got clean away in the dark."

"There'll be trouble over this, Porters!" said Inspector Grimes darkly. "That man must be caught! As you were careless enough to let him escape, it is up to you to find him!"

Porters scowled.

"It wasn't my fault," he explained. "I've told you, sir, what happened. The man slipped his handcuffs just as we came out of the station at Friardale. How he did it, I don't know. But he mingled with the crowd and got clean away."

Inspector Grimes bit his lip.

"I suppose these young gentlemen haven't seen any sign of him?" said Porters, turning to the Greyfriars juniors. "A tall, dark man without a hat?"

"Haven't seen anyone since we left Cliff House!" said Harry Wharton, who was now rather curious.

"Well, we'll have to carry on the search," grumbled Inspector Grimes. "If you young gentlemen see anything of the man—a tall, dark fellow with a moustache, give a yell. He's an escaped convict!"

"Escaped convict!" said Harry Wharton. "Is he wearing convict dress?"

"No," said the inspector. "He was to appear on Monday morning in an appeal case, and he was being brought from Wandsworth Prison in his ordinary clothing by Porters here. But the scoundrel escaped at the station, and it looks as if we'll have a deuce of a job to recapture him. Still, if you boys will keep an eye open for him on your way back to the school I'll be much obliged."

"We'll do that," said Wharton.

"Thanks!"

The inspector growled out some orders to his subordinate and began to move on.

"Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night!"

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped on through the darkness, and made for the wood.

"A giddy escaped convict," said Bob Cherry. "Shouldn't like to look for him on a night like this!"

"No fear!"

"Expect he's miles away from Friardale now," said Nugent. "We needn't bother to keep our eyes open for him. Step it out. I want to get into the warmth. I'm jolly near frozen!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors took the path that led through the woods and stepped out briskly. They tramped on for at least five minutes without exchanging a word. Even Bob Cherry's cheerfulness seemed to have evaporated with the continuance of the rain.

"We shall catch our deaths of cold," grumbled Johnny Bull. "What a night to——"

"Help!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry suddenly. "Did you fellows hear that?"

"How can we hear anything with you bellowing?" said Harry Wharton, straining his ears. "I thought I heard a cry!"

"Help!"

Faintly through the rain-soaked woods came a cry, so faint, indeed, that not one of the juniors was absolutely certain that it was a cry. Then, as a gust of wind travelled in their direction, the cry was repeated with greater volume:

"Help!"

"That's someone in trouble," said Wharton, shifting his position to place the spot whence the cry emanated. "Come on!"

Without further words the juniors began to follow Wharton's lead. Running through that darkened wood was no easy matter, for the ground was wet and slippery, but Harry Wharton & Co. scarcely heeded that as they pounded along. Someone was in trouble; someone wanted help. And it was not their nature to leave an appeal of that sort unanswered.

"Help!"

"This way!" panted Harry Wharton, making a short dash through the trees. "It's somewhere near where the footpath joins the lane from the vicarage. Put a spurt on!"

But the rest of the Famous Five needed no injunction on that score. They were as near their leader as it was possible to be.

"This way!" shouted Wharton, gaining a few feet on his chums. "By the coppice! There's a fellow struggling with somebody!"

"Hang on!" called out Bob Cherry, as he raced along. "We're coming!"

There was a stir amongst the rain-swept trees ahead of them as Bob's voice boomed out. For one moment Harry Wharton & Co. caught sight of a face, a startled face, peering at them. Next moment came the sound of someone bursting through the thickets away to the right, and the face disappeared.

But, short as was the opportunity, the juniors saw the dark moustache upon the face of the man whom they had startled, and the same thought came to them all.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE WOOD!

As he fell Mr. Quelch exerted all his strength and literally tore the clutching fingers from his throat. "Help!" panted the Form-master. "Stop that confounded row," hissed his assailant, "or I'll——" "Help!" Mr. Quelch yelled with the full power of his lungs. Thud! A fist was plunged full between his eyes. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"The convict!" breathed Wharton.

"After him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hold on!" said Harry, coming to a halt. "He was struggling with someone. We ought to look for that chap first."

"Of course!"

The juniors moved forward with expectant faces to where they had first seen the man with the moustache. As they did so Harry Wharton almost fell over something lying in his path. He recovered his balance, however, and gazed down at the obstruction.

Then he gasped.

"Here's the fellow!" he said breathlessly. "I nearly fell over him. Poor chap looks to be knocked out."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Strike a match, somebody!"

Bob Cherry fumbled in his dripping pockets and searched for a box of matches. Luckily he had a box with him. In nervous haste he withdrew a match and struck it. Its small flame flickered up under cover of Bob's shaking hands, and the juniors strained their eyes to see the huddled form before them.

Then, as Bob, having got the match fairly well alight, leaned forward and cast its glow over the face of the figure lying still before them, he gasped:

"Why, it's Quelchy!"

"Mr. Quelch!"

The rest of the Co. uttered the same ejaculation a second after, for there was no mistaking the countenance of the man lying in an insensible heap. It was Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

"Poor Old Quelchy!"

"GREAT Scott!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, full of concern. "Poor old Quelchy!"

"The escaped convict must have waylaid him," said Johnny Bull. "He looks jolly groggy."

Mr. Quelch undoubtedly did look groggy. A stream of crimson ran from his nose, his eyes were closed. That much the juniors saw before the match spluttered out. Bob Cherry hastily lit another.

"Give me a hand," said Wharton, kneeling down beside the unconscious Form master. "We must get him back to the school as quickly as possible."

In the feeble light afforded by the match Bob Cherry was holding, the juniors gathered up the inert form of their master, and began to move along the footpath in a slow procession. The path was full of ruts, and Harry Wharton & Co. had to proceed cautiously, but Bob Cherry went ahead with the lighted matches sounding the path, and at occasional intervals his voice came back to his chums, informing them that the path was clear.

It was a very silent and anxious party of Removites who finally emerged on the main road that ran past the school. Up till this time Mr. Quelch had shown no sign of returning consciousness, and Harry Wharton & Co. were feeling uneasy. For one horrible moment they had thought the worst, but Johnny Bull's practical mind was brought to bear. The sturdy junior stopped the party and listened with his ear placed close to the Form master's chest.

And Harry Wharton & Co. breathed a sigh of relief when Johnny looked up.

"He's stunned, I expect," he said quietly. "His breathing is all right, anyway."

"Oh, thank goodness!"

In silence almost the party reached the gates of Greyfriars, Bob Cherry running on ahead to see that the gate was opened, for it was now past locking-up time.

"Ah!"

Harry Wharton & Co. felt their hearts jump as Mr. Quelch stirred in their grasp, and that single ejaculation came from between his clenched teeth.

The juniors stopped.

"What—where am I? Oh!"

Mr. Quelch wriggled slightly in the Removites' grasp, and his eyes opened. He stared in a vacant sort of way at Harry Wharton & Co.

"Oh, thank heavens!" said Harry Wharton. "You're all right now, sir. That ruffian is gone."

"Oh! The scoundrel! My head!"

Mr. Quelch signalled for the juniors to put him on his feet. Gently, very gently the Co. assisted him. The Form master would have fallen but for their supporting arms.

"Wharton! Bull!" he muttered faintly, surprised apparently at finding himself in the company of his pupils. "What happened? Ah!" The master's hand went up to his face as if to pull away the blank that had settled on his memory. "Ah, I remember!"

"You're in good hands now, sir," said Harry Wharton. "Are you very much hurt?"

"I don't know," muttered Mr. Quelch. "My head. I must have hit it on something when I fell."

His hand caressed the back of his head where there was a bump about the size of a pigeon's egg.

"Can you manage to walk, sir?" asked Nugent. "We are almost at the gates now."

"Yes, yes; I think so—I think so," muttered the master of the Remove, in a dazed fashion. "I think so—I think so."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at each other. Evidently the blow on the head Mr. Quelch had received had more than dazed him. He did not seem to get a "grip" on himself as is the custom in such circumstances.

"We'll give you a hand, sir," said Harry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Thank you—thank you, my boys! You are very good—very good."

In a solemn procession the master and the juniors walked in at the gates of Greyfriars. Gosling, the porter, almost collapsed in surprise as he saw Mr. Quelch's blood-stained face.

"My eye!" he ejaculated. "Lawks a mussy! What's 'appened, sir?"

But Mr. Quelch was in no fit state just then to answer Gosling. He blinked in a stupid way at the porter, and then, aided by the young strength of the juniors, tottered in through the gates.

Gosling stood staring after the party in amazement.

"What could 'ave 'appened?"

But there was no one to give Gosling any satisfaction on that point, and, mumbling to himself, the porter ambled to the gates, locked them, and returned to the cosy comfort of his lodge.

Meantime, Harry Wharton & Co. were escorting Mr. Quelch to the sanny. The matron had been prepared in advance by Bob Cherry, and she had already made a bed and lighted a fire in a special ward set aside for the use of the masters.

"Thank you, my boys!" said Mr. Quelch, with a ghost of a smile, as the Removites gave him over to the charge of the matron. "Thank you very much! But you had better dry yourselves and get a change of clothing. You'll be catching terrible colds in those drenched garments. I—— Oh, my head!"

A spasm of pain wracked the Form master's features, and his hand went to the bump at the back of his head. The matron was quick to notice it, and that injury received her first attention when the Form master had been put between the sheets.

"Don't stand there, boys!" she said sharply to Harry Wharton & Co., who had lingered with the idea of making themselves useful. "Go to your dormitories and get a rub down. Why, your clothes are drenched!"

"Are you sure we can do nothing, ma'am?" asked Wharton.

"Quite sure!" smiled the matron. "Now off with you!"

In a silent group the Removites went to their dormitory to change. Already speculative news of what had happened had spread over the Lower School. And as the juniors changed into dry clothes, questions were simply rained on them.

But Harry Wharton & Co., beyond stating how they had come upon Mr. Quelch, refrained from mentioning anything about the escaped convict. As soon as the Famous Five had changed they made a move for the Head's study.

Harry Wharton acted as spokesman.

Dr. Locke's spectacles nearly fell off his nose in his astonishment.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated when the captain of the Remove had told his story. "This is outrageous. Inspector Grimes must be acquainted with this man's unwarrantable attack upon Mr. Quelch without delay."

"We are pretty certain it was the man Inspector Grimes was looking for," said Harry Wharton, as the Head, with hands that shook a trifle, reached for the telephone instrument. "He had a moustache, and he didn't wear a hat."

"Undoubtedly the scoundrel who has escaped from the police!" said Dr. Locke, in righteous indignation. "And poor Mr. Quelch. I must see him at once. Bless my soul!"

In trembling tones Dr. Locke spoke to Inspector Grimes over the phone. That individual let out a roar when he learned that he and Porters had been so near the wanted man. Harry Wharton & Co. heard its dull rumbling even where they were standing.

"You seem to be more concerned with the fact that this scoundrel passed so near, rather than with the fact that he attacked Mr. Quelch in a violent fashion," said Dr. Locke tartly.

And, as a matter of fact, Inspector Grimes was. He liked and respected Mr. Quelch, but his chief anxiety at that moment was the man with the moustache who had escaped and his present whereabouts. But the inspector tactfully expressed his deep concern at what had befallen Mr. Quelch, and then rang off.

"The scoundrel shall suffer for that assault!" said the old Head warmly. "Attacking a Greyfriars master! Bless my soul! It is almost unbelievable."

Harry Wharton & Co. shifted from one foot to the other as Dr. Locke walked up and down his study visualising the scene of the attack upon one of his masters.

"I must see Quelch—must see him at once!" he muttered, forgetting for the moment the presence of the juniors. Then he turned.

"You may go, my boys," he said kindly. "I am proud of you. Greyfriars will be proud of you. Heaven knows what might have happened to your Form master had you not arrived when you did!"

Harry Wharton & Co. blushed and retired.

Dr. Locke passed them in the passage with a rustle of gown as he made steps for the sanny. When he arrived Dr. Pillbury, who had been hastily summoned, was at Mr. Quelch's bedside.

"He is sleeping now," said the medico to Dr. Locke. "I have given him a sleeping draught. His injuries are slight enough. He is suffering from shock more than anything else. A good night's rest and I feel confident that Mr. Quelch will be able to resume his duties to-morrow."

"I am indeed glad to hear you say so," said the Head, his kindly old face a picture of concern.

"He received a blow on the nose, and he must have struck his head on a stone or the root of a tree when he fell," said the doctor. "But both these are minor injuries. It's the shock to the system to a man of his age that is the most vital factor in his case. But, as I say, I think he will pull round within a few hours."

And with another final glance at his sleeping patient, the doctor, accompanied by the Head, softly vacated the sanatorium.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wasted Sympathy!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter put his head into Study No. 1 in the Remove passage just before bedtime.

"Get out!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Run away and bury yourself!" grunted Johnny Bull, who was baking chestnuts on a shovel.

"Really, Bull," said Bunter, advancing cautiously into the study, "you might let a fellow express his sympathy over his Form master's misfortune. Of course, I don't expect a chap like you to have fine feelings. You're not well-bred enough. No, a chap like myself feels for his master in a case like this."

Johnny Bull looked up in amazement. It wasn't the reference to his breeding that caused him to eye Bunter so curiously; it was the Owl's apparent sympathy for Mr. Quelch. That was so unlike Bunter.

"I'm sorry," went on Bunter earnestly. "I hear poor old Quelchy has been run over by a car——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Despite the seriousness of the occasion Harry Wharton & Co. could not help laughing.

Billy Bunter glared at the hilarious juniors with a glare that nearly cracked his spectacles.

"Unfeeling rotters!" he said warmly. "Old Quelch might have been killed. Nothing to laugh at that I can see."

"Who told you that Quelchy had been run over by a motor-car?" said Wharton.

"Why, Skinner did," said Bunter, already helping himself to the chestnuts on the table. "I say, Bull, you needn't have burnt these chestnuts."

"Skinner did?" said the captain of the Remove. "What does Skinner know about it?"

"He says that old Quelchy was walking along the footpath from Friardale, when he was knocked down by a car."

RECOGNISED!

"Hang on, we're coming!" As Bob Cherry's stentorian voice rang through the rain-swept wood there came the sound of someone bursting through the thickets. "The convict!" breathed Harry Wharton. "After him!" growled Johnny Bull. *(See Chapter 2.)*

"Oh, my hat!"

"How could anyone be knocked down by a car if they were walking along the Friardale footpath, old fat barrel?" asked Bob Cherry genially.

"Really, Cherry," blinked Bunter, "that's what Skinner says——"

"The esteemed and ludicrous Skinner is pulling your leg legfully," smiled Inky.

"Really, Inky——"

"Right off the rails this time!" said Nugent.

"I say, these chestnuts are prime," said Bunter, helping himself to a handful from a bag on the table. Apparently Bunter's interest and sympathy in Mr. Quelch's welfare occupied second place now that he had sampled the chestnuts.

"Keep your fat paws off those chestnuts," growled Johnny Bull, "or I'll biff you over the knuckles with this shovel!"

"Why, you mean beast!" exclaimed Bunter. "You might sink your silly petty feelings when old Quelch is lying next door to death with a broken arm and leg and—— What's a few paltry chestnuts at a time like this? Paltry, I call it!"

"A broken arm and leg!" stuttered Wharton.

Billy Bunter paused in his mastication of the chestnuts and blinked over his big spectacles.

"Yes, the silly ass—I mean, the poor chap didn't look where he was going. The car went right over him. Oh, I know all about it. I know that you found him and brought him in. Not much that goes on that I don't get to hear about!" added Bunter fatuously.

"Well, that's true," said Nugent grudgingly. "But you're off the rails completely this trip."

"Really, Nugent! Poor old Quelchy's lying in the sanny——"

"And you're lying here!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Cherry, I consider it frightfully bad form to make fun of old Quelchy's accident. Skinner says he might have to have his arm amputated!"

"Skinner says that, does he?" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat!"

"Yes. It's pretty rough on old Quelchy," continued Bunter. "He'll have to lay up for three months at least!"

"You silly owl," roared the captain of the Remove, "he'll be down in Form to-morrow! He was only stunned. Skinner's been pulling your leg, you fat idiot!"

Billy Bunter started.

"Down in Form to-morrow?" he gasped.

"Yes."

"And he's only stunned? Is that all?"

"Quite bad enough, isn't it?" said Bob Cherry. "I'll stun you with the poker if you think it's such a small matter."

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped.

"Oh lor'!" he muttered. "The beast!"

"Eh? Who's a beast?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Why, Quelchy!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "I thought he was laid up for months with a broken arm and leg. I thought the beast wouldn't be taking us in class for weeks to come. Playing it low down, I call it, just to get stunned!"

"What?" roared Harry Wharton.

"You are sure he'll be down for classes to-morrow?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Of course I am," said Harry Wharton. "The doctor said so himself, anyway."

"The rotter!" roared Bunter. "Why couldn't he get run over——"

"Eh?"

"Fancy wasting sympathy on the rotter when he'll be down for classes to-morrow!" said the fat junior warmly. "I'd have done my blessed prep if I had known."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. roared. It was evident to them that Billy Bunter had swallowed the tale Skinner had given him. More than that, he had, on the strength of it, deliberately neglected his prep, assuming that the Remove would be minus Mr. Horace Henry Quelch in the Form-room. Instead of which Mr. Quelch was fairly certain to resume his duties on the morrow, as if nothing had happened.

Billy Bunter snorted.

Really, it was too bad. Mr. Quelch might have been run over by a car! He might have done the job properly, the fat junior reflected.

"Obtaining sympathy under false pretences, that's what I call it!" he growled.

"Why, you fat worm——"

"Playing it low down!" continued Bunter, with a sniff. "Only stunned! Yarooooh!"

Johnny Bull picked up the bag of chestnuts from the table and hurled them with unerring aim at the fat Owl. The bag caught Billy Bunter fairly on the tip of his snub nose.

"Yowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter, Bull!" roared Bunter.

"Get out, you unfeeling worm," roared Johnny, brandishing the shovel, "or I'll come after you with this!"

"Really, Bull, you rotter, I consider that—— Yoooop!"

Billy Bunter's remark ended in a howl, as Johnny Bull lunged at him with the shovel.

"Wow-yow! Keep off, you beast!"

Whack!

"Yooooooooop! Stoppit, you, rotter! I'm going to tell you—— Yooooooop! Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter fled for the study door with Johnny Bull close behind him, or, what was more to the point, with the shovel close behind him. And Johnny did great execution with the flat side of that shovel.

The Owl of the Remove departed along the passage at a great rate, and he kept on running until long after Johnny Bull had returned to Study No. 1 and slammed the door. But when Bunter stopped and saw that he was safe from pursuit he shook a podgy fist in the direction of Study No. 1.

"Beast!" he roared. "I'll smash him! I'll pulverise him! Yah! Rotters! They're all rotters, and Quelchy's a beast! Yah! Yaroooooh!"

That last ejaculation from Bunter was not intended to be included in his denunciation of the occupants of Study No. 1. But at that moment George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had swung along the passage.

His finger and thumb tightened on Billy Bunter's fat ear.

"Yarooop!" howled Bunter.

"You young scamp to speak of your Form master like that!" said Wingate sternly. "I suppose you know he's lying ill in sanny?"

"Yow! Leggo my ear!" howled Bunter. "I wasn't calling Quelchy a rotter. I feel sorry for him. Really I do, Wingate. Yow! You're hurting my ear! I was telling Wharton & Co. they were beasts for not sympathising with Quelchy. I didn't want the beast—I mean, I didn't want Quelchy to get run over by a car. Yow! I didn't neglect my prep because I thought he wouldn't take classes to-morrow."

"So you haven't done your prep, eh?" said Wingate sternly. "You thought Mr. Quelch wouldn't take Form to-morrow, did you, my fat pippin?"

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "I didn't think anything of the kind. I——"

Wingate released his grip of Bunter's ear and tightened his hold on the ashplant that had slipped down from his arm into his hand.

"Bend over!" he commanded.

Bunter eyed the ashplant apprehensively.

"Really, Wingate——"

"Bend over!"

Reluctantly, very reluctantly, the Owl of the Remove placed himself in a stooping posture.

Swish!

"Yooooooooop!"

"Let that be a lesson to you, Bunter," said the captain of the school sternly. "It's not playing the game to take advantage of an accident that has befallen your Form master. You ought to have done your prep. Now cut off to bed! Sharp!"

And without wishing to come into further contact with the prefect's ashplant, Billy Bunter stifled his wrath and rolled up the Remove staircase dolefully. Really, it was hard lines on a fellow who had so much sympathy to expend on his Form master.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Mr. Quelch!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's Inspector Grimes!"

Bob Cherry's stentorian tones rang out from the steps of the School House as the Famous Five came to a halt after their sprint round the quad before lessons next morning.

"Look at his chivvy," remarked Nugent. "It's pretty certain he hasn't caught the escaped convict."

Inspector Grimes came towards the juniors with a puckered brow. As a matter of fact, the police-inspector had spent most of his night out-of-doors on the trail of the elusive man with the moustache, and his temper had suffered. But his face cleared a little when he saw the juniors whom he had met the previous evening.

"Morning, inspector!" sang out the juniors in one breath.

"Good-morning, my lads!"

"Have you recaptured the giddy convict?" asked Bob Cherry, knowing beforehand that the answer would be in the negative.

Inspector Grimes' face hardened again.

"Haven't seen a sign of him," he said. "Just my luck that you fellows should run into him a few minutes after my meeting with you."

"Well, we're not absolutely certain it was the escaped convict," said Wharton. "Except that he was hatless, and that he had a moustache."

"He was the man right enough!" snapped the police-officer. "Who else would have been out on a wild night like we had yesterday?"

"No one but a desperate man would try the highwayman bizney, anyway," said Bob Cherry.

"How is Mr. Quelch?" asked the inspector.

"Well, he came down from the sanny about half an hour ago," answered the captain of the Remove. "He looks a bit seedy, otherwise there appears to be little wrong with him."

"Good!" exclaimed Inspector Grimes. "I'm just calling to see him. Perhaps he can help me to identify the man from a picture I've got of him."

"I expect so," said Wharton. "He was close enough to him, I should imagine, to remember his chivvy."

"Perhaps you young gentlemen will conduct me to your Form master," said Grimes. "I want you, too, to substantiate or otherwise what evidence Mr. Quelch can give me as to the identity of the man."

"Right-ho!"

The inspector and the juniors moved into the School House, and went down the passage to Mr. Quelch's study.

"Come in!" came the master of the Remove's well-known voice, as Wharton tapped upon the panels of his door.

The juniors and Inspector Grimes entered.

"Ah, good-morning, inspector!" said Mr. Quelch, with a faint smile. "Good-morning, my boys!"

"Good-morning, sir!" said Harry Wharton & Co. dutifully.

"I hope you are better?" added the captain of the Remove.

"I feel more or less all right," said Mr. Quelch, and he passed his hand across his face in that dazed manner which the juniors had remarked upon the evening before. "But Heaven alone knows what would have been my fate had you gallant boys not come to my rescue!"

He proceeded to thank them, much to the growing embarrassment of Harry Wharton & Co., for they thought little of the service they had rendered their Form master. Inspector Grimes, however, came to the rescue.

"Mr. Quelch," he said, with a preliminary cough.

"Inspector——"

"I should indeed be obliged if you would glance at this photograph here and tell me if you recognise your assailant of last evening."

The master of the Remove took the photograph and gazed at it intently.

"That is the scoundrel," he said at length. "I should know his face again anywhere. The moustache, the rather

large eyes—yes, yes, inspector, that undoubtedly is the likeness of the man who attacked me."

"Good!" grunted the inspector. "That helps us a little."

He thereupon began to explain how Porters, the plain-clothes man, who had brought the escaped convict from Wandsworth Prison, had been given the slip at the station.

Mr. Quelch listened with all his attention, although at times a spasm of pain crossed his face.

"A desperate man, inspector," he said at length. "I sincerely trust you will apprehend him. He intended to rob me."

"I rather fancy we shall get him in the long run," said the inspector, showing the photograph to the juniors.

"That's the merchant," said Bob Cherry, screwing his eyes in a contemplative fashion at the likeness that stared out at him from the photograph. "I only caught a faint glimpse of him in the dark, but I would be prepared to swear that that's the blighter—hem!—I mean the rotter—that is to say, the scoundrel!"

Mr. Quelch smiled, and the inspector, despite his worry, allowed a flicker of a grin to cross his severe features.

"Doubtless the man will remain in hiding somewhere near Greyfriars," said the police-officer at length. "You see, sir, he knows the district very well——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, as if recalling something suddenly. "That reminds me, inspector. The scoundrel seemed to know my name. He actually called me 'Quelchy'!"

The juniors started, and looked towards the inspector.

That individual chuckled, and then his face resumed its usual "official" expression.

"There is nothing very surprising in that circumstance, sir," he said, at length; "for the escaped man is an ex-Greyfriars fellow——"

"Oh!"

Mr. Quelch started, and Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. The case was beginning to assume interesting proportions. An ex-Greyfriars man an escaped convict!

"Really, inspector!" exclaimed the master of the Remove. "Are you sure that such is the case?"

"Absolutely certain," returned the inspector.

"But the name on the photograph is 'Flash Jim,' alias 'Monkey Flashman'!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with some heat. "No, boy, to the best of my knowledge, has passed through Greyfriars with that name."

The inspector chuckled grimly at the Form master's ignorance.

"Those are only his professional nicknames," he answered. "The name you would know him by, his correct name, in fact, is Rupert Villemond——"

"Villemond," muttered the master of the Remove. "Villemond! I seem to recollect the name. Ah! I have it. He was a French-Canadian, who came to the school twelve years ago."

"Exactly!"

"And if my memory is not playing me false," continued Mr. Quelch, "he was expelled for smoking and gambling and also——"

"Petty thefts at the school!" added the inspector.

"You know that, too," said the master, in amazement.

"The police know more about a wrong'un than he knows himself," said Inspector Grimes proudly. "We've got his record from the time he came to Greyfriars and thence onwards."

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I'll smash him! Yah! They're all rotters, and Quelchy's a beast. Yaroooooh!" That last ejaculation was not intended to be included in his denunciation of Harry Wharton & Co. But at that moment George Wingate had swung along the passage. His finger and thumb tightened on Billy Bunter's fat ear. "You young scamp, to speak of your Form-master like that," said Wingate sternly. (*See Chapter* 4.)

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "This is a shock to me. An ex-Greyfriars boy a convict! Bless my soul!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had listened to the foregoing with considerable interest. Not one of them knew or remembered the boy Villemond, naturally, for he was before their time. All the same, they were just as amazed as was their Form master. They found it hard to reconcile a Greyfriars boy, whether he had been expelled or not, with an escaped convict—with a man known to the police as "Flash Jim" and "Monkey Flashman." But there was no disputing the facts as Inspector Grimes had related them. He was not likely to make a mistake in such a serious matter. Besides, Mr. Quelch had said that the escaped man had addressed him by name; had called him "Quelchy," in fact. That alone seemed to imply that he knew Mr. Quelch, or, rather, had known him as a boy, for practically everyone in the Greyfriars Remove referred to their learned Form master—in private, of course—as "old Quelchy."

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Quelch dazedly. "This is a shock. Dr. Locke will be astonished when he knows the facts. You are sure you have made no mistake, inspector?" he added earnestly.

Mr. Quelch held the honour of Greyfriars very dear to his heart, and the thought that a boy whom he often had had occasion to instruct in the days gone by had developed into such a notorious scoundrel almost unnerved him. But there could be no mistake. In the years that had passed upon the expulsion of Rupert Villemond Mr. Quelch had quite forgotten the existence of that unruly boy who had passed through his hands.

But in five minutes those years had been thrown aside. Mr. Quelch, without calling unduly upon his imagination, saw the face of the boy sentenced to expulsion the morning he was due to leave the school never to return. He remembered in a flash the sullen look of defiance on the face of Rupert Villemond. He remembered, too, the insulting words the expelled boy had chosen to utter as Mr. Quelch had seen him in the train for London.

At that time the master of the Remove had held an instinctive feeling that Rupert Villemond would turn out a "bad lot." Indeed, he had lectured the errant youth on the pitfalls that lay before an unruly, undisciplined and unprincipled member of this law-abiding community. At the time Villemond had laughed and told Mr. Quelch to "ring off."

And Mr. Quelch recollected how he had pursed his lips, had overcome the temptation to give this insubordinate youth a thrashing on the way to the station, despite the fact that he was no longer, in actual fact, a boy under his jurisdiction.

"I am forced to conclude that you are right, inspector," said the master of the

Remove, at length, albeit reluctantly. "The face of Villemond, too, has changed but little from its original sulky and defiant outline. The eyes are the same, the cruel mouth has not changed except for the worse. Yes, yes, I fear you are right."

"I'm right enough, sir," replied Grimes. "That man has served a sentence of five years for larceny. He was due to come before the magistrates on Monday in an appeal case at Courtfield. That's how it was he was garbed in civilian clothes."

"Which will make it considerably more difficult for you to trace him," said the Form master slowly.

"Yes, and no," answered the police official evasively. "He's pretty certain to hang around this district. Such a course is common with the practised criminal. And the matter of his apprehension is only a matter of hours, or at most days."

"I sincerely trust you are right in your surmise," said Mr. Quelch.

"I take it that these lads will not spread this news around the school," said Inspector Grimes, with a sharp look at Harry Wharton & Co. "News leaks out quickly enough as it is, and we want the escaped man to think that he has a free run."

Mr. Quelch smiled at Harry Wharton & Co.

"You may rest assured, inspector," he said, "that these boys will keep quiet as to what they know of this very regrettable affair."

"We sha'n't say a word," said Harry Wharton. "It isn't exactly to the credit of Greyfriars that a hunted felon should have once been a member of this school. We'll keep mum about it, sir."

"Rather!" chimed in the rest of the Co.

"Thank you, my boys," said the master of the Remove. "The less known about the past of the scoundrel who attacked me the better."

Inspector Grimes reached for his hat.

"Of course, I shall post two or three plain-clothes men in the vicinity of the school," he said, "for it is more than likely that Villemond may seek shelter within its walls. If he does, we shall arrest him without delay, never fear."

"I wish you success," said Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you, sir."

Inspector Grimes smiled on the assembly and strode towards the door. Already the weight of responsibility seemed to have been shifted from his shoulders. In his mind's eye he saw the recapture of Rupert Villemond, alias Flash Jim, alias Monkey Flashman, a matter of hours only.

But if the worthy inspector could have foreseen the startling happenings that were to eventuate, doubtless he would not have felt so confident. And neither would Mr. Quelch and Harry Wharton, for that matter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Flash Jim!

MORNING lessons in the Greyfriars Remove were extraordinarily devoid of sensations, for even Skinner & Co., slackers as they were when opportunity presented itself, forbore from taking advantage of Mr. Quelch's loose grip upon matters appertaining to their instruction.

The Form master seemed to have little interest in lessons that morning. Doubtless he had not yet recovered from the shock of the unwarrantable attack upon him the previous night, or perhaps it was the fact that the person who had attacked him was an ex-Greyfriars boy, an escaped convict.

Certainly Mr. Quelch gave no inkling of his thoughts as he sat at his desk and gazed abstractedly from the window to the ceiling, and then to the sympathetic pupils in the desks before him. But Harry Wharton & Co., in the light of what they knew, fancied they could account for Mr. Quelch's inattention to Form matters.

He was thinking of Rupert Villemond.

And so were Harry Wharton & Co., for that matter, although they did not let that circumstance interfere too much with their studies.

Billy Bunter was jubilant. Perhaps he was the most cheerful youth in all the Form, for the Owl had entered the class-room that morning fully expecting to be called over the coals for having neglected his prep. But for once in a way the master of the Remove did not call upon Billy Bunter to construe, for which Bunter was exceedingly thankful.

He confided to Skinner in a whisper that "old Quelchy" wasn't such a beast after all.

Never had the Remove Form been so studiously quiet. Hardly a whisper ran round the desks, for one glance at the strained expression on Mr. Quelch's face was enough to stifle any attempt at "lawful" insubordination.

The Remove to a man felt sorry for their Form master, and they rather admired his pluck in taking classes that morning after his adventure of the previous evening.

But there was a general murmur of relief when the time for break came round, and Harry Wharton rather fancied that Mr. Quelch joined in.

The juniors streamed out of the Form-room in an orderly line, but the moment they were outside a regular hubbub of conversation ran the round.

"Poor old Quelchy!" said Delarey. "He looks pretty groggy."

"An' worried, begad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "I didn't have the cheek to fall asleep during English history. It would have been playing it rather low down, you know."

"Poor old Quelchy!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked out into the quad for a breath of fresh air.

"Old Quelchy's thinking about that scoundrel Villemond," said Bob Cherry, breaking the silence that had settled over the Famous Five.

"The thinkfulness of the esteemed rotter Villemond is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Co. nodded.

"I say, you chaps," said Wharton suddenly.

"Say on," grinned Bob Cherry. "We like your voice."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" grinned Wharton. "But, I say, did you fellows notice anything peculiar about that photograph of Villemond, Inspector Grimes showed us?"

"Only that it was grubby," said Johnny Bull.

"I don't mean that," said Wharton. "You don't expect a police photograph to be mounted and shoved in a gold frame, anyway. But didn't you spot anything else?"

"Can't say I did," grunted Johnny Bull.

"I mean the likeness," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"What about the likeness?"

"Well, just imagine that face without the moustache," went on the captain of the Remove.

The rest of the Famous Five looked at their leader inquiringly.

"It struck me," continued Wharton, "that there was a thumping good likeness to old Quelchy himself if it hadn't been for that moustache."

"Quelchy would be flattered," said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"The flatterfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous likeness would get the respected Quelchy's rag out ragfully," said Inky.

"Which, being interpreted, means that Quelchy wouldn't feel flattered to hear your remark, Harry," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The captain of the Remove shook his head resolutely.

"I don't care what you chaps say, if there hadn't been a moustache on the chivvy of that rotter Villemond, you would have seen a likeness to Quelchy himself," he said.

"You are not going to say that Villemond is a relative of Quelchy's, are you?" demanded Johnny Bull. "What the thump does it matter whether there is a likeness or not? Likenesses are easy when they're worked like that," added Johnny. "For instance, if it wasn't for Bob's big feet and his face, he'd bear a strong likeness to——"

"Nothing on earth," said Frank Nugent sotto voce.

"Exactly," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Why, you cheeky idiot——" began Bob Cherry.

"As it is," resumed Johnny Bull, "he only bears a jolly good likeness to a fathead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Johnny just jumped clear of Bob Cherry's lunging boot.

The subject of likenesses was dropped by mutual consent after that; but, for all that, Harry Wharton could not rid himself of the impression that the photograph of Villemond had made upon his mind.

Clang!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "There goes the giddy bell!"

The Famous Five set off at the double for the Form-room, there to enjoy or otherwise the company of Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, while he discoursed upon the mysteries of French verbs.

And as they went Harry Wharton & Co. caught a glimpse of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, walking, a trifle wearily, it seemed to them, in the direction of the cloisters.

He was muttering to himself as he walked along, his head drooped forward on his chest.

"My head! I must tell Dr. Pillbury about it. I don't feel quite myself. I can't get a grip on things."

The Form master was speaking the truth, for he mumbled the same words a score of times as he paced restlessly up and down the deserted cloisters. His face was pale and drawn, and his eyes glowed a trifle more brightly than was normal with him.

As he walked up and down, muttering to himself, a face rose from view behind a fall of broken masonry. It was the hard face of a man about twenty-seven years old, although signs of hard living had lined it for all time.

But Mr. Quelch did not see that face.

If he had seen it the master of the Remove would have received the shock

of his life, for there was no mistaking those large, cruel eyes, the thin, curled lips, the black moustache.

It was the face of Rupert Villemond, alias Flash Jim, alias Monkey Flashman.

How the escaped convict came to be in the precincts of Greyfriars was known only to himself.

He had braved the storm of the previous night, had sought the shelter of the school—the school in which he had once been admitted as a scholar, and expelled ingloriously therefrom—when the rest of the countryside was wrapped in slumber and darkness. To scale the wall that encircled Greyfriars was a simple enough task for the criminal; he had scaled higher and more difficult walls than that. And to reach the shelter of the ruined cloisters had been easy of accomplishment, too.

Villemond's memory had not failed him in his emergency. Twelve long years had passed since he last had gazed upon Greyfriars, but he had sought the cloisters in the black darkness with the ease of a cat prowling its way at night.

And there, in the grateful cover of one of the vaults, the escaped felon, drenched to the skin, had waited, fearing recapture with every passing hour. With the dawn, however, his spirits had revived. He was again the desperate man, determined to make a bid for freedom. But he was sorely in need of food.

And, remembering the routine of the school, as if it were but yesterday since he had walked into classes, the wanted man had chosen his opportunity to steal out of the shelter of the vault in search of food. The masters and boys, he reckoned, would be in the Form-rooms. There was bound to be a certain amount of food in the studies of the junior boys.

And just as he had dragged himself clear of the vault Mr. Quelch had rustled by.

"Confound him!"

Without making a sound, the wanted man had concealed himself behind a big block of fallen masonry and waited. His dark eyes gleamed savagely on the face of the man he had attacked so violently the night before.

But Mr. Quelch walked up and down oblivious of the near presence of the man for whom the county police were searching, muttering the same words over and over again.

"My head! I must tell Dr. Pillbury about it. I don't feel quite myself. I can't get a grip on things."

Rupert Villemond heard every word of those oft-repeated mutterings, and laughed silently to himself. At Greyfriars, when he was a pupil, he had hated Mr. Quelch with an unnatural hate, resenting the interference of the kindly Form master, and registering a vow that some day he would "pay the rotter out." Well, the day had come. Mr. Quelch was not "feeling himself."

The wanted man, behind cover of the masonry, laughed sardonically. If those meddling boys had not come upon him in the act of assaulting Mr. Quelch, the Form master would not have been walking the cloisters that sunny morning!

"Is he never going?" muttered the escaped man, watching the Form master's repeated perambulations of the cloisters with lynx-like eyes. "Ah!"

The master of the Remove stopped and fumbled in his gown. He brought to light a small book, and, with a pleased expression on his wan face, sat himself down on one of the stone seats in the cloisters.

Mr. Quelch was a great lover of Thucydides, and nothing pleased him better than to rummage in the pages of

Mr. Quelch's face was pale and drawn as he walked up and down the cloisters. He did not see a figure rise from view behind a fallen heap of masonry. If he had seen it the Form-master would have received the shock of his life, for the face was that of Flash Jim, the escaped convict! (*See Chapter* 6.)

that learned gentleman when he needed some relaxation.

But even Thucydides failed to interest Mr. Quelch just then. He found himself reading the same passage over and over again. At last, with a deep sigh, the Form master rose to his feet and began to walk towards the House, forgetful of the fact that he had left his precious volume behind him.

Flash Jim watched him go with obvious relief.

"The old fool!" he muttered. "I thought he was going to stop here all day. By thunder, I am hungry!"

The eyes of the wanted man watched the receding figure of the Form master until it disappeared from view in the porch of the School House. Very cautiously, Flash Jim rose to his feet. He searched the surrounding vicinity with a watchful eye before he broke from cover.

Then, taking his courage in both hands, the scoundrel made tracks for the window of the nearest study, which happened to be that occupied by Vernon-Smith of the Remove. In two minutes the daring scoundrel had forced the catch of the Bounder's study window and raised the sash. Then, with a final glance about him, to make sure that he had not been observed, Flash Jim pulled himself up over the sill and silently lowered the window again.

He was breathing a trifle heavily after his exertions, but his confidence was stronger than ever. He laughed softly as his keen eyes embraced the lavish appointments of Vernon-Smith's study.

"Chap who digs here must have plenty of brass," he reflected.

He crossed the carpeted floor and turned the key in the lock of the door. Then he turned his attention to the cupboard.

"Locked!" A muttered imprecation escaped his lips as he tried the handle of the door, and then he smiled. "Evidently something good in here," he added. "Kids don't lock their study cupboards unless they've got a load of grub aboard. I'll durned soon open that fourpenny-halfpenny lock, anyway!"

His eyes roved the room for some implement, and a grunt of satisfaction came from him as he saw a small length of wire on the mantelpiece.

"Just the thing!"

In two minutes or under that piece of innocent-looking wire had forced the cupboard lock. And when Flash Jim saw the contents of that cupboard his eyes glistened.

"Geo! Now this is some feed!" he muttered.

The Bounder had laid in an "extra special" supply of tuck, but it was certain now that he would never enjoy it, for Flash Jim, rummaging in the bottom of the cupboard below the shelves, found an old kitbag. And into this kitbag was transferred Vernon-Smith's "feed."

"That bag's a lucky find," grunted Flash Jim, gathering up the loose folds. "I'll fill it before I'm many minutes older, I'll warrant!"

Closing the cupboard door, he crossed to the study door, and stood listening.

But no sound came to him save that of his own heavy breathing, for Greyfriars was to a man in "class."

Noiselessly the scoundrel unlocked the door and passed out, taking his provisions with him. Then he visited several other studies in the Remove passage, and, without exception, each visit proved fruitful of result. By this time the kitbag was well-nigh full.

"Gorging little rascals!" muttered Flash Jim, as he made his way back into Study No. 4. "There'll be a giddy rumpus when they find their precious tuck missing, **I'll be bound!**"

Chuckling to himself, he raised the sash of the Bounder's study window, saw that the coast was clear, and nimbly clambered over the sill, the kitbag tied to his shoulder.

"Easy!" he muttered, standing on tiptoe and dragging down the sash of the window until it was, to all intents and purposes, the same as he had found it. "Now for a feed!"

Taking cover wherever opportunity occurred, the cool scoundrel retraced his steps to the cloisters. He had been gone on his errand scarcely twenty minutes, but he had in that time collected rations in the form of tins of sardines, herrings, ox-tongue, and "bully beef," enough to keep him alive for four days, at least. And quantities of bread, tarts, cakes, and the like, would doubtless give a relish to his meals for the first twenty-four hours of his concealment such as he hadn't tasted for five long years of prison life and prison fare.

Flash Jim smiled contentedly as he betook himself and his provisions to the secret vault. And as his glance rested on the forgotten book Mr. Quelch had left behind him, and he read the title, he shuddered.

The works of Thucydides did not fit in harmoniously with a hungry stomach.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

"BUNTER!"

Bob Cherry roared out that name as he stared in at the cupboard in Study No. 1.

It was teatime, and Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from a vigorous game of football with healthy appetites.

"The fat rogue!"

"I'll skin him!"

Bob Cherry had made tracks for the cupboard at once, whilst Frank Nugent had laid the cloth and Johnny Bull had poked the fire. Early that morning Bob Cherry had received a "whacking" parcel from his aunt. It had contained every sort of tuck, for Bob's aunt knew her nephew's likes and dislikes in the matter of tuck to a nicety.

The Famous Five had looked forward to demolishing that fine array of good things with great gusto. The footer had given an extra edge to their appetites, and one and all declared themselves famished.

But the parcel was gone!

At least, the contents of the parcel had disappeared. Only the brown-paper wrapper remained.

"I'll scalp the rotter!" roared Bob Cherry, as he eyed that empty cupboard. "I'll burst him! I'll——"

Words failed the sturdy Bob. Really, it was too bad to "lay in" an appetite on a grand scale, only to find that the cupboard, like that of the celebrated Mother Hubbard, was bare.

Five faces assumed angry expressions. Five hungry appetites were calling out for vengeance.

"It's Bunter right enough!" roared Johnny Bull. "Nothing is safe from that fat pilferer."

"Lemme get at him!" growled Bob Cherry sulphurously.

It was only natural that Harry Wharton should jump to the conclusion that Bunter had lifted their tuck, for it was a common trick of the Owl's to nose out other people's grub and help himself to it. If anyone ever complained of losing his tuck in the Greyfriars Remove that person had never to look very far for the culprit. Bunter had a weakness for that kind of thing.

"I say, you fellows——"

A fat face, adorned with big spectacles, peered round the corner of the door of Study No 1. It belonged to Billy Bunter.

"The fat scoundrel!"

"Collar him!"

"I say, you fellows—— Yaroooooh! Wharrer you at? Yowp!"

Billy Bunter was collared on all sides. Five hungry juniors were determined to take a severe vengeance on the fat carcass of the fellow who had "boned" their grub.

"Slaughter him!"

"Wow! Let up! Groooooogh! Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter was raised on high and bumped with considerable force on the cold, hard, unsympathetic linoleum.

Bump!

"Yooooooop!"

"We'll teach the fat worm to pinch our grub!"

"Rather!"

"Take it out of his fat hide!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooooh! Leggo, you rotters! I haven't touched your rotten grub! I —— Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter's protestations of innocence passed unheeded. Nobody believed Bunter when it was a question of missing grub. The Removites acted on the ancient maxim of action first and questions afterwards.

Bump!

"Wow-ow!" roared Bunter, wriggling in the grasp of the juniors. "Leggo! I tell you I haven't touched your rotten—— Groooooogh!"

Bang!

The study door was flung open unceremoniously, and Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith and Piet Delarey stood upon the threshold.

"Seen Bunter——" began Delarey.

"There he is!" hooted Vernon-Smith. "After you with Bunter, Wharton!"

"Leave a bit of him for us!" growled Delarey. "He's pinched our grub."

"Eh?"

Harry Wharton & Co. paused. Behind Delarey, Vernon-Smith, and Peter Todd were Skinner & Co., and Ogilvy and Desmond. All of them were looking furious.

"Bejabers, here's the spalpeen!" roared Micky Desmond. "Begorrah, I'll teach him to wolf our grub!"

"Yow!" howled Bunter, collapsing on the study floor. "I haven't touched your beastly grub. Honest injun, I haven't!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at Bunter, and then at the swarm of angry juniors in the doorway. It was pretty evident, on the face of it, that Billy Bunter hadn't been guilty of raiding the grub belonging to all these juniors.

"Our grub's gone, too!" said Wharton. "We thought Bunter had boned it, and we were just lamming him"

"And mine's gone!" exclaimed Skinner. "I had a jolly fine fruit-cake and a couple of tins of sardines——"

"And my chicken and ham paste and jam-tarts have disappeared!" roared Delarey.

"And my tarts——"

"And my corned beef."

It was a regular chorus.

Peter Todd pushed his way to the front, and eyed his fat study-mate sharply.

"Rescue, Peter!" moaned Bunter. "These fellows say I've pinched their rotten grub. I haven't touched it, Toddy. Honest Injun, I haven't! Grrooooooogh!"

"He's telling the truth for once in a way," said Peter Todd.

"Well, you ought to be able to sift the truth from the fibs," said Bob Cherry. "He lives with you."

Peter Todd nodded.

"Bunter's telling the truth," he repeated. "Anyhow, he wouldn't have the nerve to pinch all this grub. Why, it's a regular raid. Expect Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth have been on the warpath."

"My hat!"

"We'll scalp 'em!"

"After them!"

In an excited body the Removites charged down the passage for the Upper Fourth Form quarters, leaving Billy Bunter groaning on the floor of Study No. 1.

They came upon Cecil Reginald Temple in the passage. The elegant captain of the Fourth looked at the mob of Removites with disfavour.

"What are you cheeky kids doing in our passage?" he demanded.

"Collar the silly ass!"

"Smother him!"

"If this is a raid——" began Temple.

"Shut up, you fellows!" said Harry Wharton, realising that he might be making another mistake by assuming that Temple & Co. were responsible for the missing grub. "Look here, Temple ——"

"I'm looking," said Temple loftily. "But I can't stand it for long. Your face worries me, dear boy!"

"Oh, bump the cheeky ass!" roared Trevor.

A certain amount of Temple's loftiness vanished at that remark. A glance round him showed that there was no other Upper Fourth-Former in sight.

"What's the trouble, Wharton?" he asked in a more conciliatory manner.

"Somebody's boned our grub," explained the captain of the Remove. "In fact, half the blessed Form's been raided."

"Temple's gang has been over!" roared Delarey. "They're a hungry-looking lot, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're looking in the wrong quarters for the grub-raiders," said Temple. "'Tisn't likely that we'd raid your silly fag studies. Have you tried Bunter?"

"Yes. We've nearly slaughtered him," grinned Wharton. "But for once in a way I believe he's innocent."

"Well, the Fourth haven't been near your rotten studies to-day, I'll give you my word," said Cecil Reginald.

"Of course, if you say that," said Wharton, "we'll believe you!"

"Well, I do say it."

Whatever his faults, and they were legion in the eyes of the Removites, they knew Cecil Reginald Temple to be a fellow of his word; evidently the grub-raider did not belong to the Upper Fourth.

"Well, no good hanging around here," growled Vernon-Smith. "Let's get back!"

"The best thing you could do," said Temple loftily.

And he swung round on his heel and sauntered away.

The Removites streamed back to their own quarters in an angry crowd. Questions were asked up and down the Remove for the next hour, but no sign of the identity of the grub-raider came to light.

And in a disgruntled mood the hungry Removites crowded into Hall for tea, occasioning no little surprise from the master in charge there, who was unaccustomed to seeing no more than half a dozen or so Removites at most partaking of the rather meagre fare provided by the school authorities.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Daring Scheme!

"DEAR me, I must have mislaid it somewhere!"

Mr. Quelch made that remark after tea that day. The master of the Remove was in his study. The pain at the back of his head still worried him, and he was at a loss for something to do to occupy his time. In his leisure moments Mr. Quelch was given to working laboriously on his typewriter, compiling a History of Greyfriars, but even that attraction wearied him in his present state of mind.

He had seen Dr. Pillbury, who had given him something to appease the pain in his head. The learned medico had made a close examination of the bump at the back of the Form master's head, and had arrived at the conclusion that Mr. Quelch was still suffering from shock. The doctor had urged Mr. Quelch to give up his scholastic duties for a few days, but the master of the Remove wouldn't entertain the notion, much preferring to take his Form in the usual way rather than follow a life of idleness.

He was looking now for a book to read, and his intellectual mind at once craved for the works of Thucydides.

"I wonder where I have mislaid it?" he muttered. "Let me see!"

Mr. Quelch paused in his task of searching the pile of papers on his desk.

"Ah!" he ejaculated suddenly. "I remember. I left it in the cloisters. How forgetful of me!"

He picked up his mortar-board and rustled out of his study in great haste. The idea of Thucydides being left out in the damp air all night greatly concerned him, for Mr. Quelch paid considerable reverence to his books.

He shivered slightly as he encountered the cold air in the quad, and quickened his steps still more. By the time he reached the cloisters Mr. Quelch was a little out of breath.

An ejaculation of delight escaped him when he saw the small volume reposing in the same position where he had left it, but the ejaculation froze on his lips, for in a direct line with the book was a face.

And Mr. Quelch recognised that face in an instant.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Villemond, you scoundrel!"

The face drew clear of the shady cloisters and Villemond moved forward.

"Quiet, you fool!" he hissed. And his features were convulsed with rage.

Mr. Quelch stiffened.

"How dare you speak to me like that, you wretched fellow?" he retorted warmly. "What are you doing here?"

The wanted man laughed.

"You know what I'm doing here," he grated harshly. "But for you last night I should have been miles away."

"You scoundrel!" Mr. Quelch looked about him wildly. But there was no one in sight in that deserted portion of Greyfriars other than this rascal and himself. "The police are looking for you."

"Ugh! The police!" sneered the escaped convict. "What do I care about the police?"

"You will have good cause to care," rapped Mr. Quelch, "for I am going to acquaint them of your presence."

The wanted man took a step nearer, an ugly light shining in his eyes.

"You dare to raise your voice, Quelchy, and it'll be for the last time," he hissed.

The Form master felt a tremor run down his spine. The man looked capable of murder.

"You've surprised me," went on Flash Jim, in a more conciliatory tone. "I should have been safe in the vault until the hue and cry had died down. I only came up for a breath of fresh air and exercise. It's stifling down there, and my clothes are dripping wet. But you surprised me. You always, in the old days, crossed my path, confound you!"

"Enough, you rascal!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "You must go back from where you came. You are a disgrace to your old school. You might, at least, have had the decency to keep clear of Greyfriars."

"You don't understand," hissed Villemond. "You've never sampled life in prison. You've never known what it is to be snarled at by warders. You've never known what it is to sleep on a hard bed."

"Doubtless," answered Mr. Quelch dryly. "I am not a criminal."

Villemond took another step nearer and involuntarily Mr. Quelch shrank back.

"You are going to help me to escape," snapped the wanted man. "Do you hear?"

"I shall do nothing of the kind. It is my duty to inform the police that you are here," replied Mr. Quelch warmly. "Why, even now two plain-clothes' men are almost within call. It is my duty to notify them of your presence."

The wanted man sneered, but there was an ugly purpose behind the sneer.

"You were ever a stickler for duty, Quelch," he hissed. "But your duty is not going to see me caged in behind prison bars again. Help me this once to get away and you'll never regret it."

The master of the Remove laughed, albeit a nervous laugh.

"I shouldn't dream of helping you to escape the consequence of your own criminal misdeeds," he replied, with some heat.

"You refuse, eh?"

"Absolutely!"

Mr. Quelch gave his answer with an air of finality. He was not liking this unexpected interview with Flash Jim, and wanted to get it over as quickly as possible.

"Well, there's no other way for me but to make you a prisoner," snarled Flash Jim. "I can't afford to let you go now, knowing what you do."

"Make me a prisoner!" said Mr. Quelch. "Why, it's ridiculous, my good fellow!"

"Not so ridiculous as you imagine," rapped out Villemond. "I am a desperate man!"

With the words he flung himself upon the Greyfriars master and bore him backwards.

"You scoundrel——"

Mr. Quelch tried to speak, but a rough hand was thrust across his mouth. He tried to free himself of the grip of the wanted man, but the elderly Form-master was like a child before the strength of Flash Jim.

Before he knew what was happening Mr. Quelch was being half lifted and half dragged down into the dank atmosphere of the vaults. A handkerchief had been wedged into his mouth, preventing him from calling out.

Through the labyrinth of passages that underlay the old cloisters the ex-Greyfriars boy picked his way until he reached a vault that had, in his day, been known only to a few. He was not to know that the vault had since been discovered by Harry Wharton & Co., or that it had been placed out of bounds by those in authority. It would offer him a haven of refuge, anyway, until such time as it was safe to throw the dust of Greyfriars from his feet for ever.

A candle stuck into a bottle illumined the vault. Mr. Quelch saw that, and wondered at it. His burning eyes saw, too, a quantity of food piled up in one corner of the stone chamber. Despite

(*Continued on page 17.*)

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THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 256. HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR January 16th, 1926

A WAITING GAME!

The Postal Order that never turns up!

By William George Bunter.

I HEARBY inform William Blogg, as one William to another, that he is a snare and a deloosion. To some fellows he brings good tidings; to others he brings bad tidings; but to me he brings nothing—nothing at all!

I seem to spend half my young life waiting for the postman. It's a nice occupation on a sunny spring morning, when the birds are twittering in the trees, and King Sole is shining; but on a nippy winter morning, when the snow lays deep in the Close, and the temperament of the whether is below zero, it's no joke waiting for the postman, I can assure you!

It takes old Blogg a jolly long time to get from the village post-offis to Greyfriars. If there was a race between the hair, the tortuss, and old Blogg, they would finish in this order:

1. The Tortuss.
2. The Hair.
3. William Blogg.

And when at last the old buffer does turn up, with his back on his sack—or, rather, vicey versa—I find that my long, weary wait has been all in vane.

"Any for me, Blogg?" I inquire eagerly.

He shakes his head slowly.

"Not this mornin', Master Bunter."

"What! Do you mean to say my titled relations have forgotten me again?"

Blogg gives an irritating grin.

"I dessay the prison orthorities won't allow your relations to write to you, Master Bunter," he says.

And he shuffles on, chuckling at his own feeble jest.

There are letters by the score, in old Blogg's sack. Wharton generally gets a heap of corrie's pondence; and old Mauly has letters gallore—though it's too much fag for him to reply to them. I wonder that people keep writing to him, when he never exerts himself to write back.

Old Bloggs sorts out the letters, and puts them in the post-rack, in the hall. The "B" pigeon-hole is nearly always full. There's a letter for Brown, and a cupple for Bulstrode, and a registered packet for Bolsover major. There are letters for Blundell, and Bland, and Bull, and Bolsover minor; but there's never a letter for Bunter, either major or minor!

Well, I won't say "never." Sometimes I get a letter bearing a halfpenny stamp. Either it contains a little bill which I have run up in Courtfield, or a bigger bill which I have run up in London; or a circular from a stockbroker, advising me to invest all my cappital in Consuls or Canadian Passificks. Sometimes, too, I get a circular from a munnylender; but I've got a grate greevance against munnylenders. They never lend munny! When I write and ask them for a loan, they reply that there's nothing doing, bekawse I am a minor. Evidently they mix me up with young Sammy!

I am still waiting, with the combined patience of Jobe and Wilkins Micawber, for my postle-order to turn up. I shall have to go on waiting, I suppose. That postle-order has been on the way ever since I was a new kid. It must have been hung up—a fate which Bob Cherry says I shall suffer one of these days! Bob Cherry's a beest!

But I shall go on living in hope; and one of these fine mornings old Blogg will make the joyful announsement: "Registered packet for Master Bunter!"

LOOK OUT FOR

"HARRY WHARTON'S FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT!"

Starts the Week After Next!

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON

TO certain grown-up people, the postman is simply a man who carries a mailbag. Merely this, and nothing more. But to the expectant, hopeful schoolboy, the postman stands for far more than this. He is a sort of Santa Claus or an agent of Dame Fortune; and who knows what thrilling mysteries, what joyful surprises, lie within that bulky bag he carries?

"Letter for Master Wharton!"

If I have heard that welcome announcement once, I have surely heard it a thousand times.

Scarcely a day passes without my receiving a letter. Sometimes I get half a dozen by the same post, sometimes I get a score. For, apart from my relations, I have friends scattered all over the globe, and it is always a treat to get their cheery tidings.

I suppose that old Blogg is one of the most important persons in this district. In a way he is quite as important as the Head, or the Mayor of Courtfield.

Yet even the most important personages come to be overlooked sometimes. And we have never even thought until now of publishing a special number dealing with Mr. William Blogg and his activities.

The little village of Friardale has not kept pace with the onward march of progress. Fisher T. Fish is justified in calling it a "sleepy I'le hole." Just as it was in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, so Friardale is to-day. Its cottages are lighted by smoky oil-lamps, and its water supply is obtained from the village pump. The inhabitants are content to jog along just as their forefathers jogged along in "the good old days."

Lots of people have to suffer through this old-fashioned way of going on, and Blogg, the postman, is one of the sufferers. He has to carry out his daily duties on foot instead of being provided with a bicycle, or a box-tricycle, or a motor mail-van. Twice a day he trudges from the village post-office up to Greyfriars, and his daily round is a straggling one of seven miles or so. This is rather an ordeal for Blogg, because the poor old chappie isn't getting any younger. He has been our postman as far back as I can remember, and as far back as Wingate of the Sixth can remember, and even as far back as the Head can recollect. He has to brave all weathers—heat-waves and blizzards and gales—and on one occasion he tumbled into a snowdrift in Friardale Lane. But I will leave the worthy Blogg to relate his own adventures.

The human machine cannot keep running indefinitely; and in a few years Blogg will be retiring, with a comfortable pension to ease his declining years. He will also get a handsome cash donation from the Greyfriars masters and boys. And who shall say he does not deserve it?

HARRY WHARTON.

WHEN I caught sight of William Blogg, the postman, battling his way along the shore road to Pegg, buffeted by all the winds that blew, I was reminded of a verse from the comic opera—a verse which I altered slightly to meet the present situation:

"The woes of a postman are many,
His pleasures remarkably few;
Some say that he shouldn't have any—
What is a poor postman to do?
There is never an end of his labours,
Yet he has to look happy and smile,
Lest all his more fortunate neighbours
Should call him a crusty old file!"

William Blogg was not smiling when I approached him. He was puffing and blowing like a grampus as he trudged on his tortuous way. There was a woebegone expression on his weatherbeaten old dial.

"Good-afternoon, Blogg!" I said genially.

The postman gave a snort.

"Which it ain't nothin' of the sort, Master Brown!" he growled. "It's a beastly, blusterin' arternoon as ever was! And 'ere am I, trampin' all the way to Cliff 'Ouse with these letters. I shall be glad when I get 'ome, to rest me pore tired feet. I'm sick to death of this eternal tramp, tramp, tramp!"

I fell into step with the old postman, and nodded sympathetically.

"It must get jolly monotonous, humping a mailbag up and down the country," I said. "And postmen aren't overpaid, I believe."

"Hindeed they're not, Master Brown! If there was any justice in this 'ere land of 'ope and glory a postman would get as big a salary as a Cabinet Minister. Certainly 'e 'as to work 'arder! Which I've bin on me feet since sevving o'clock this mornin'."

"My hat!"

"I've got a round," Blogg went on, "which is five miles long as the crow flies. But, not bein' a blessed crow, I 'as to tramp it, without takin' any short cuts. An' that makes it sevving miles. Wot's more, I goes over the same ground twice a day, makin' a total of fourteen miles trampin'."

"Shame!" I said soothingly. "And how long have you been the postman for this district, Blogg?"

"For thirty-five summers," said Blogg, "with the winters an' springs an' autumns thrown in!"

I made a rapid mental calculation.

"There has never been a Sunday delivery at Friardale," I said. "So, working on the basis of a six-day week, you have put in ten thousand nine hundred and fifty-five days' work. Multiply that by fourteen, and it will give the number of miles you've tramped during your service."

Another calculation—on paper this time—revealed the fact that William Blogg had covered over 153,000 miles in the course of his long career. No wonder he referred to his "pore tired feet!"

"They ought to provide you with a car," I said. "That would make life easier for you. If you were in a car now, you'd be at Cliff House in a flash."

The old postman nodded.

"They might at least provide me with a box-tricycle," he said. "But even then it wouldn't be all 'oney pedallin' along roads like this. Bother the wind!"

A sudden sharp gust from the sea lifted Bloggs' peaked, official hat from his head, and sent it bouncing along the road like a live thing. I rushed forward to retrieve it, and had my own headgear whipped off in the process. Then I spent a lively five minutes pursuing Blogg's hat and my cap. At last I captured both; but their appearance was not improved by the mud-bath they had been given.

We plodded on through the gale, and I asked Blogg to tell me some of his adventures. For I knew that a man can't tramp the roads for thirty-five years, with a mailbag, without having a few startling and out-of-the-way experiences.

Old Blogg was more kindly disposed to me by this time. In fact, he became quite grandfatherly and confidential.

"My fust adventure, Master Brown, was also my wust," he said. "It 'appened nigh on thirty years ago, when I was trampin' down this selfsame road, in the dusk of a winter evenin'. I was joggin' along, whistlin' to meself to keep me sperrits up, when all of a sudden a couple of masked men jumped out on me from the 'edge." "Great Scott!"

I am no craven, but I couldn't help darting a nervous glance to right and left, and over my shoulder. Dusk was already beginning to fall, and if a couple of masked men should happen to be lurking behind the hedge, ready to spring out on us——

I shuddered involuntarily.

"What did you do, Blogg?" I inquired.

"Do? Why, I couldn't do nothin', Master Brown. You see, I was took right off me guard. One of the scoundrels grabbed my arms an' pinned them behind me back, while the other unstrapped my mailbag. Then they took to their 'eels, with me 'ollering 'Stop thiefs!' But, of course, the more I 'ollered the faster they run. So I tramped back to Friardale, an' reported the matter to the postmaster an' the police."

"Were the men caught?"

"No; they got clear away. But they 'ad all their trouble for nothink. There was only a few letters in the bag for young ladies at Cliff 'Ouse School, an' none of the letters contained money. But the affair shook me up a goodish bit, an' for some time afterwards I got the bobby—not Tozer, but the one afore 'im—to walk with me on my rounds."

I took out my notebook and jotted down the details of Blogg's "fust and wust" adventure. Then I coaxed him to tell me more.

"One very severe winter," said Blogg reminiscently, "I 'ad an adventure wot nearly ended in a broken neck. It was gettin' dark, an' I was takin' the arternoon mail up to Greyfriars. Friardale Lane was simply choked up with snow at the time, an' in the darkness I lost me footin' an' pitched 'ead-fust into a snowdrift!"

"My hat!"

"I must 'ave lain there for close on an hour," went on Blogg. "I was sort of dazed, an' well-nigh buried in snow. An' then, luckily for me, a party of young gentlemen from Greyfriars came runnin' down the lane, peltin' each other with snowballs, an' one of them discovered me by bein' knocked flyin' an' landin' right on top of me!"

"And what happened to the letters?"

"Oh, they was recovered all right, an' dooly delivered," said Blogg. "Then I went 'ome, an' took a glass of 'ot toddy, an' went to bed. I woke up next mornin' none the wuss for my experience."

We had reached Cliff House by this time, and I waited by the gateway of the girls' school while Blogg trudged through the quadrangle to deliver the letters. He rejoined me in a few moments, and I shared his homeward journey with him.

"You seem to have had some rather grim times, Blogg," I said. "But surely there have been some bright spots in your career as a postman?"

Blogg's face brightened.

"Why, of course, Master Brown," he said. "I once stopped a runaway 'oss an' trap whilst goin' my rounds. The daughter of the Mayor of Courtfield was in the trap, an' she was scared out of 'er wits—nat'rally so. She was full of gratitood when I succeeded in bringin' the 'oss to a standstill; an' the next day I was sent for by the mayor, an' 'e made a public presentation to me—a cheque for twenty guineas. That was a lot of money in those days."

Blogg then proceeded to tell me of some of the lavish "tips" he had received at Christmas-time. He had an amusing anecdote to relate of Lord Mauleverer, the generous and extravagant schoolboy earl. Mauly greeted the old postman in the Close, who said, handing him a five-pound note:

"Here's a ten-shillin' Christmas-box for you, dear man—an' you can keep the change!"

A typical Mauly yarn, this!

Blogg had other stories to relate, some grave, others gay. He is certainly an interesting old chap, and his reminiscences would fill a volume. But, taking one consideration with another, I came to the conclusion that a postman's lot, like a policeman's, is not a happy one!

One of the scoundrels pinned my arms behind my back, while the other unstrapped my mailbag.

"TEA-ING" WITH ALONZO TODD!

By our Special Representative
TOM BROWN.

WHEN Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of the Remove, invited me to tea in Study No. 7, I fairly jumped with joy, for I was in the state known as "stony." As a rule, when you are on the rocks, nobody ever invites you to tea; but when you are simply swimming in shekels, you get invitations showered upon you.

Alonzo explained that he would be all alone in Study No. 7. His cousin Peter was feeding at the bunshop in the village; and Billy Bunter, for some reason I could not fathom, didn't care to take tea with Alonzo.

Punctually at five o'clock I tapped on the door of Study No. 7, and entered. Alonzo was there, and he greeted me very cordially.

"Ah, here you are, my dear fellow! Sit down and make yourself at home. I trust you have brought a big appetite with you?"

"I could eat a donkey's hind leg off," I said. "But you needn't be apprehensive, Lonzy. I'm not going to start on you!"

I frowned a little as I sat down to the table. When a fellow is invited to tea at five, and he turns up promptly to time, he naturally expects to find the table laid, and groaning beneath the weight of the goodly viands, so to speak.

The table was laid, certainly, with a snow-white cloth. There were also two plates, two spoons, two cups and saucers, a teapot, and two egg-cups. But where were the goodly viands? That, as the immortal Hamlet said, was the question!

"Lonzy," I said, "you are very lax. You promised me an extra-special tea, but I see no sign of the fatted calf."

Alonzo turned a flushed face from the fire.

"We are not having fatted calf for tea, my dear Brown. I do not eat flesh, except when compelled to do so, in the dining-hall. In private life I am an eggetarian."

"A what?" I gasped.

"An eggetarian."

"Surely you mean vegetarian?"

"No; I mean precisely what I say. An eggetarian is a person who subsists almost solely upon eggs."

"This is news to me," I said. "Still, we live and learn. I've no objection to having eggs for tea, so long as there's plenty of them. I'm not greedy, but I like my fair share of anything that's going."

"Do you prefer your eggs lightly boiled, my dear Brown, or otherwise?"

"Lightly," I said. "I can't eat bullets."

Alonzo glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"I have given them ten minutes," he murmured. "That should be sufficient, I think."

"Sufficient?" I shouted. "Why, they'll be overdone, you silly cuckoo!"

Alonzo lifted a small saucepan from the fire, and spooned out an egg, and transferred it to my egg-cup. I sat blinking at that egg as if it was something new and strange—as, indeed, it was. It was the most tiny egg I had even seen—not much bigger than a sugar almond.

"Great Scott!" I ejaculated. "What's the matter with this egg? Has it shrunk through being overboiled? It's not a hen's egg, surely? No hen would plead guilty to laying a miserable little thing like this!"

Alonzo smiled.

"It is a small pigeon's egg," he said. "They are most delicious and nourishing."

"But it would take about a dozen of these to satisfy my appetite!" I said.

"I fear you have gluttonous tendencies, Brown. You are nearly as bad as Bunter."

I gave a grunt, and started to behead my egg. But the egg flatly refused to be beheaded. It was as hard as a brick, and my spoon made no impression on it.

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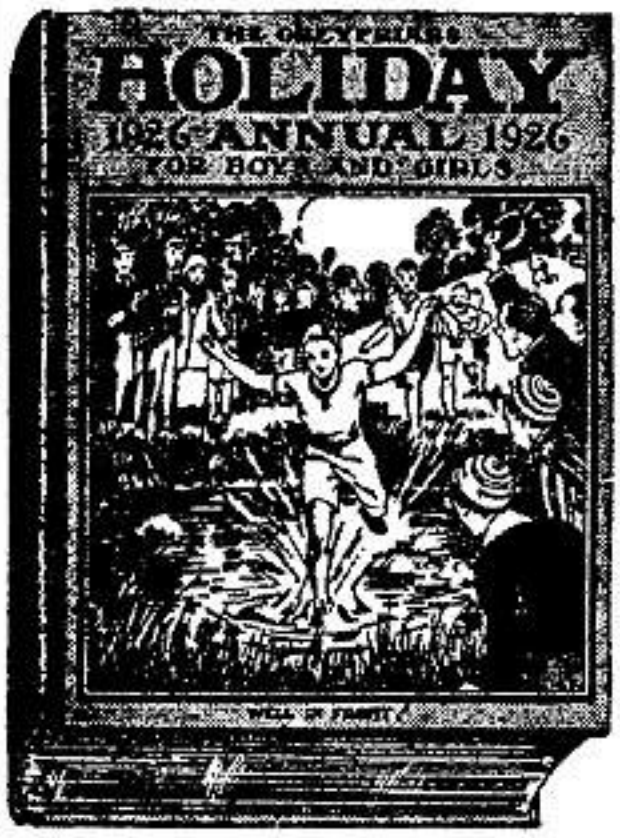

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"Do you have to open these with nut-crackers?" I asked, with crushing sarcasm.

"Not at all, my dear fellow. I always bang mine on the floor. But be very careful not to spill the yolk."

There was no chance of my spilling the yolk, for that part of the egg had become as hard as granite through overboiling. Having cracked the shell by the primitive method suggested by my host, I dug my spoon into the congealed yolk, and tasted pigeon's egg for the first time.

"Gerooogh!" I spluttered. "There's something wrong with this egg. Is it fresh?"

"Certainly, my dear Brown. It was laid only a month ago."

"Only!" I gasped. "And you dare to feed your guest with an egg which is qualifying for its Old Age Pension? Oooch! The taste is awful! Give me some bread-and-butter, for goodness' sake!"

Alonzo passed the bread-and-butter. Instead of being cut into good, honest slices, the bread had been sliced in tiny wafers. The butter was laid on so lavishly that it would have required a microscope to see it.

I popped one of the wafers into my mouth. Alonzo stared at me in horror.

"Pray do not be so extravagant, my dear Brown! Why, you will eat me out of house and home! You should take just the daintiest mouthful and masticate it thirty-six times."

I popped another wafer into my mouth, and then another. I had no chance to chew them—they were so tiny. It was just like eating crumbs.

By this time I was beginning to feel quite rattled.

"Haven't you got anything else?" I demanded hungrily.

"I fear not," said Alonzo. "But I can procure you another pigeon's egg——"

"If you mention pigeon's eggs to me again," I said darkly, "I—I'll burst you!"

Alonzo was eating his own egg with great relish. He seemed to be actually enjoying the odious thing.

"You miss all the joy of life, through not being an eggetarian, my dear Brown," he mumbled. "There is more nourishment in one of these tiny eggs than there is in a whole beefsteak."

"That may be so," I assented, rising to my feet, "but I'd rather have the beefsteak!"

Alonzo clutched at my arm.

"Where are you going?" he said. "I have not poured out your tea yet!"

"Oh, all serene!" I said gruffly. "I might as well stay and have a cup of tea."

Then, to my astonishment, Alonzo took up the teapot, and started to pour out. A colourless liquid splashed into my cup.

"You—you frabjous ass!" I shouted. "That's plain water! You've forgotten to put the tea in!"

"I have forgotten nothing," said Alonzo. "My method—a method I advise you to follow—is to pour out the hot water first, and then add half a spoonful of tea. Stir vigorously for a few seconds, and then imbibe."

"You—you——"

"In that way you derive the full nourishment from the tea," explained Alonzo. "I will mix your tea for you, and you will admit that it tastes delightful."

I gave Alonzo a wilting look. Then I turned on my heel, and swung out of the study, feeling just as hungry as when I had entered it.

(*Continued from page* 13.)

the seriousness of his position the master began to wonder how this desperate criminal had managed to accumulate such a quantity of provisions.

"There you are, my good sir!" said Villemond, setting the master down and tying the gag securely between his teeth. "Welcome to my dug-out!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

Those were the only sounds Mr. Quelch was capable of making, for the gag effectually silenced any attempt at speech.

But he could struggle afresh for his freedom, and once more the Form master and his one-time pupil were at grips with each other. The result was only what Mr. Quelch expected. He was handled like a babe, and at last, out of sheer exhaustion, he lay powerless and limp in the strong grasp of his captor.

Flash Jim propped him up in the corner of the vault and looked at him for several moments.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed at length. "I never knew it before."

He took a pace nearer, and, stooping, stared full into the Form master's burning eyes.

Then he straightened himself and, hand upon his chin, reflected for at least five minutes.

"It's a chance," he muttered, and Mr. Quelch wondered what fresh villainy this cool customer was contemplating. "And a rare chance. Blessed if I don't take it. Better than stopping down here for days and nights, anyway."

What was passing in his mind was unknown to the master of the Remove, but he got a fair inkling of it a moment later, for the wanted man began to strip him of his outer clothes. Off came the gown, and jacket and trousers of Mr. Quelch.

"Gug-gug-grrrr!"

It was useless for Mr. Quelch to protest. The gag stifled all protestation effectually.

"A rare notion!" laughed Flash Jim. "They didn't call me Flash Jim for nothing. I'll surprise you in a moment, my dear Quelchy. Just watch!"

With consummate coolness the scoundrel divested himself of his wet coat and trousers and donned those belonging to Mr. Quelch. Next, he pulled the master's gown over his shoulders.

The effect was startling in the extreme. Mr. Quelch, despite the cold, stared with undoubted interest at the cool rascal before him. For with the clothes of a schoolmaster, completed by the gown, the wanted man now bore an astonishing resemblance to Mr. Horace Henry Quelch, M.A.

"Gug-gug——"

"Ah, surprises you, does it?" asked Villemond. "I never knew before that my features resembled yours. Now, if it weren't for this moustache——"

He picked up the tin lid of a cocoa-tin, and by polishing its surface managed to catch a faint reflection of himself in it.

Instinctively, Mr. Quelch now realised what this rascal's game was. He was going to impersonate him. For a moment Mr. Quelch felt alarmed, for the likeness was extraordinary. Then he smiled grimly. With that moustache, Villemond dared not show himself inside the School House, as Mr. Quelch was clean-shaven.

That one circumstance would put paid to Flash Jim's account. But Mr. Quelch hadn't reckoned with the cunning and resource of the escaped convict.

To the Form master's amazement, Flash Jim took the lighted candle from the neck of the ginger-beer bottle and began to singe the moustache from his face. It was a painful process, and two or three times Flash Jim muttered an imprecation as the burning flame caught his face. But the task was completed in a few moments, and the last trace of the moustache was gone.

"If the prison authorities hadn't allowed me to grow my hair because I was to be presented at court—the police court," he said, with a gay laugh, "I shouldn't have had that painful job. What do you think of the transformation, Quelchy?"

Mr. Quelch was unable to say what he thought, but his eyes spoke volumes. Despite his own precarious position, he could not help but admire the resource of this man.

But Flash Jim did not waste any more time in completing his disguise just then. He proceeded to "dress" the Form master in his own garments, and having done that he bound Mr. Quelch's arms behind him, and ran a length of cord round his ankles.

"I don't think you'll give me much trouble," he muttered, picking up the cocoa lid again. "Just keep still, there's a good chap. I want to get your lines."

Dipping a matchstick in the black smoke that trailed off at the end of the flame from the candle, Flash Jim looked at Mr. Quelch's face intently, and then began faithfully to reproduce the dark lines of age in his own countenance.

"Splendid!" he muttered at length. "Now my topknot. Let me see, Quelchy, you're a trifle thinned out on top. I can't manage that part of the disguise here. That can wait until I get to your room and find a razor. But I want a hat——"

He muttered something under his breath, and stepped out of sight of the bound Form master. He was gone two minutes, and when he returned he was wearing Mr. Quelch's mortar-board.

Mr. Quelch could hardly believe his eyes. The crowning effect that the mortar-board produced was amazing. Mr. Quelch might have been looking in a mirror and seeing his own face and form reflected.

"My dear Villemond," said Flash Jim, in the well-known tones of the Form master, "pray consider the pitfalls that await you in London. Ha, ha, ha!" He burst into a subdued roar of laughter. "I haven't enjoyed myself like this for many a day!"

"Gug-gug-grrrrr!"

Mr. Quelch gave it up. It was useless trying to say anything with that gag in his mouth. But his eyes glared balefully at the wanted man, and if looks could have killed, Flash Jim would have expired on the spot.

"Don't get alarmed," said Flash Jim. "You're doing me a wonderful service, really. To-morrow is Sunday, I think. And Greyfriars masters are allowed to do pretty much what they like on the Sabbath. I'm simply going to borrow your identity for to-night and early to-morrow morning. By this time to-morrow night I shall be miles away. No one will suspect Mr. Quelch of being a wanted man when he walks out of gates early to-morrow morning. I am sorry, and all that, but needs must when the devil drives, you know."

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed.

"Now don't get your rag out, Quelchy!" went on Flash Jim. "You'll simply be inconvenienced here for a few hours, that's what it means. I'll let them know where to find you before I do the vanishing trick. I reckon I can lay hands on enough money in your study, too, to see me through."

"Gug-gug-gug——"

Forgetful of the gag, Mr. Quelch's wrath blazed up, but all to no avail. The scoundrel in front of him simply laughed.

"It'll be easy, Quelchy!" he said tantalisingly. "For I heard you say this morning that you weren't quite yourself. If I make any faux pas with the masters, should I run into them, they'll put it down to the blow on the back of my head. Ha, ha, ha! It was a good thing you did cross my path this time."

Without more ado, the wanted man snuffed the candle and backed out of the vault.

"Good-night, my dear Quelch!" he said calmly. "Happy dreams! I hope your bed at the school is more comfortable than the stone flags here, anyway. Good-night!"

And leaving the shivering Form master to his thoughts, which, naturally, were decidedly unpleasant, the escaped convict ascended the steps of the vault to fresh air and freedom.

Mr. Quelch heard his retreating footsteps growing fainter and fainter, until silence as of the grave reigned around him.

The scoundrel was gone.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Warpath!

CRASH!

The door of Study No. 7 in the Remove passage was flung open, and the fat form of Billy Bunter hurtled through the doorway.

"What the——"

Peter Todd, who was doing his prep, looked up from his books with a frown of annoyance on his face.

"Save me, Toddy!" howled Billy Bunter, panting for breath.

"Eh?"

"Wow! Save me! Groooogh!"

"I'll slaughter you, if you make that awful row!" said Peter Todd grimly. "What do you want to come bursting into a study like that for when a fellow's working?"

Billy Bunter eyed the doorway uneasily, as if expecting a visitor at any moment. Heavy footsteps could be heard coming down the passage.

"Wow!" gasped the fat junior. "He's after me!"

"Who's after you?"

"That rotter Loder!" panted Bunter, looking round the study like a cornered rat.

"Oh!"

Peter Todd's mouth set in a grim line. Loder was a Sixth-Former and a prefect, but if he were "after" Bunter, it was up to Peter Todd to protect the fat youth. There was no love lost between the Remove and Gerald Loder, for the Sixth-Former was a bully of the first water.

"Get under the table quick, Bunter!" snapped Peter Todd. "I'll look after that brute Loder. I expect you deserve whatever he wants to give you. Still, we can go into that afterwards. Get a move on!"

But there was no need to urge Billy Bunter to do that. He fairly dived

under the table, the long folds of the table-cover almost concealing him from view. There he crouched and shivered.

The footsteps in the passage were louder now. They were impatient footsteps—footsteps that Peter Todd knew well.

With a suppressed chuckle, Peter Todd seated himself at the table and simulated for the approaching Sixth-Former's benefit an interest in Virgil.

Crash!

The study door swung open, and an unpleasant face looked in.

"Seen that fat rascal?" demanded Gerald Loder.

Peter Todd looked up from his volume.

"What fat rascal?" he inquired sweetly.

The Sixth-Former came into the study and scowled.

"You know whom I mean!" he snapped, swishing the air with the ashplant he carried.

"Do I?" murmured Peter Todd.

"Bunter!" almost bawled the prefect. "I'll skin the young rotter when I catch him! Is he in here?"

Peter Todd shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask me another," he said. "He might be under the coal-scuttle. No, I think he's a trifle on the large size for a feat like that!"

"That's enough!" rapped the prefect, his eyes glittering. "Don't rot! I'm asking you a plain question. Is Bunter here?"

"Does it look like it?" said Peter Todd, unperturbed.

"I'll flay him alive when I do catch him!" said Loder, his glittering eyes roving round the study. "I saw the fat rotter bolt down the passage in this direction."

And the Sixth-Former turned on his heel and swung out into the passage, slamming the door to behind him with a crash.

"Nice kind of chap," murmured Peter Todd. "So polite!"

"I say, Toddy," came in a whisper from Bunter, "can I come out now?"

"Yes. Roll out, fatty. The coast's clear now," said Peter Todd.

Billy Bunter rolled from underneath the table, and sank panting into the armchair.

"Wow, the beast!" he gasped. "I'm sure he would have laid into me if he had caught me!"

Peter Todd chuckled.

"Just a few," he said. "But what have you been doing to upset his lordship?"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"Loder accuses me of wolfing his rabbit-pie!" he said indignantly. "As if I would, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter Todd faintly.

"I wouldn't touch his measly rabbit-pie with a barge-pole!" sniffed Bunter. "It was rotten rabbit, anyway. I'm sure I shall get ptomaine poisoning."

Peter Todd gazed at his fellow-study-mate admiringly.

"It's really marvellous!" he said. "I don't know how you roll 'em out, Bunter!"

"Eh?"

"You beat Ananias and George Washington rolled into one," went on Peter.

"Why—— Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter nearly jumped out of his skin as the study door reopened and Gerald Loder's unprepossessing features came into view. There was a malignant gleam in the eyes of the unpopular prefect.

"So I've caught you, you little rotter!" he said, with a sneer. "I rather thought you'd be hiding in here!"

He advanced into the study, and swished his ashplant as if to get the measure of it. Bunter's eyes alternately went to the prefect's face and his ashplant.

"Oh, really, you know, Loder!" said Bunter haltingly.

"Come here!" rapped Loder, with an unpleasant grin.

"But——" began Bunter, rising from the armchair, and backing round the table.

"Come here!"

"Oh, really, Loder," said the Owl, "I don't know anything about your blessed rabbit-pie——"

"You fat little toad!" hissed the prefect. "So I was right! You know all about the rabbit-pie. You're the culprit. I haven't said a word to anyone in the Remove as to what I wanted you for. You stand self-confessed!"

"Wow!" In his eagerness to proclaim his innocence Billy Bunter had confessed his guilt. "Keep him off, Peter!"

"Hold on, Loder!"

Peter Todd planted himself in the prefect's way, but Gerald Loder was in no humour to postpone his vengeance any longer. He swept Peter Todd away like a sack of feathers. Then he was upon Bunter.

"I'll teach you to wolf my grub, you fat pilferer!"

Whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter's yell could be heard the length and breadth of the Remove passage.

Whack!

Gerald Loder was going great guns with the ashplant.

"Wow-yow! Groooooough! Oh lor'!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the table, and the Sixth-Former dodged after him, doing great execution with the ashplant.

Whack!

"Yarooop!"

Billy Bunter fairly bolted for the doorway, and passed through it like a streak of lightning. Gerald Loder dashed after him.

Crash!

In his haste to get within smiting distance of the Owl of the Remove, Gerald Loder did not notice Peter Todd's outstretched foot.

"Yowp!" The prefect sprawled over it in an undignified heap, roaring.

"Sorry, Loder," grinned Peter Todd.

"You clumsy ass!" hooted Loder, scrambling to his feet.

Meantime, Billy Bunter was scuttling down the passage at a pace that would have done credit to a professional sprinter. And Peter Todd's thoughtful action gave him a start.

But Gerald Loder was more wrathy than ever. He made a vicious swipe with his ashplant at the grinning Peter Todd, and then raced through the doorway of the study after the Owl of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's stentorian voice boomed forth as he appeared at the door of Study No. 13, with Mark Linley and Hurree Singh. "What's the giddy rumpus about?"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when the fat form of Billy Bunter flew past, to be followed a few moments later by Gerald Loder.

"Loder's on the war-path," chuckled Mark Linley. "Expect Bunter's been after his grub."

"The expectfulness is terrific!" murmured Inky. "And the unluckfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter——"

"Is also terrific!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

At various study doors along the passage juniors had gathered, attracted there by the commotion during the "quiet" hour set aside by the school authorities for prep. They stared in amazement as first Bunter and then Loder of the Sixth flew past.

"Ow!" panted the fat junior, blowing like a grampus. "The beast! Grooough! This is awful!"

He glanced over his shoulder, and saw Loder not very many yards behind him.

"The rotter!" gasped Bunter. "He'll catch me! Wow!"

The Sixth-Former was drawing nearer now, and there was a nasty gleam in his eye. That it wasn't quite the thing for a Sixth Form prefect to be seen chasing a fag in the Remove did not trouble Loder. Dignity had gone by the board. It was vengeance that was uppermost. That rabbit-pie had been specially prepared for the benefit of Carne and Walker, Loder's pals, who had been invited to supper.

And now there was no rabbit-pie, and, consequently, no supper!

"The young thief!" muttered Loder. "I'll flay him alive!"

He quickened his pace, and Billy Bunter, glancing over his shoulder again, almost collapsed with fright as he saw how near the prefect—or, rather, how near his ashplant was!

"Oh crumbs!"

The doorway of the School House loomed up in front of Bunter. He made a frantic dash for it. In his blind haste the Owl of the Remove failed to observe a figure in cap and gown approaching from the opposite direction. There was a crash as Bunter and the figure collided.

"Yaroooooooop!"

"Oh! Ah! Confound you! Grough!"

Those exclamations intermingled. The Owl of the Remove, gasping for breath, sat up. His jaw dropped when he saw Mr. Quelch sitting in a very undignified position on the passage floor alongside him.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. "I'm—I'm s-s-s-sorry, sir! I didn't see you, sir! I——"

"Allow me, sir?"

Gerald Loder, arriving at that moment, was very respectful. He stooped over the prostrate Form master and helped him to his feet.

The master, who was none other than Flash Jim, made a grab for his mortarboard, and jammed it on his head. Then he turned upon Bunter angrily.

"You careless young donkey!" he exclaimed.

"I'm s-sorry, sir!" wailed Bunter. "It wasn't my fault! That beast—ahem!—I mean Loder, was after me. I d-didn't see you coming, sir!"

"That is so, Mr. Quelch," said the prefect. "Bunter has been pilfering, and I considered it my duty to chastise him, sir."

"Indeed!" was the Form master's reply. "And what has this boy, Grunter I mean Bunter— been pilfering—er—er—Loder!"

"A rabbit-pie," said Loder sullenly. "I——"

"A rabbit-pie!" scoffed the bogus Mr. Quelch, who was beginning to enjoy himself now that he saw his imposture

ANSWERS
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wasn't seen through. "Tut-tut! I am surprised—er—er—er—Loder that you should make such a fuss about a paltry rabbit-pie!"

The Sixth Form prefect shifted uncomfortably.

"Let this—ahem!—chase conclude," said the bogus master, with a cough. "It isn't seemly that a prefect should run about after a junior boy. Blunter—ahem!—I mean Bunter—you may go!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter, his fat face breaking into a smile of relief. He wanted to let out a whoop of triumph, but he restrained the impulse. Little did the fat junior know that "Mr. Quelch" was thinking of his own schooldays at Greyfriars, when the prefects had hunted him. Flash Jim never was and never would be on the side of law and order.

When the fat junior had rolled away, Mr. Quelch turned on Gerald Loder and gave him a piece of his mind. Never had Mr. Quelch appeared so vehement. It would seem as if he had "his knife" into Gerald Loder. And the prefect, when he was dismissed, registered a resolution to take it out of Bunter in some other fashion.

That fat youth meantime was telling Peter Todd what had happened.

"And so Quelchy really let you off for having boned Loder's rabbit-pie," said Peter Todd grimly.

"Rather," said Bunter, with a grin. "He said it was paltry to make a fuss about a rabbit-pie. He, he, he!"

"And Quelchy said that, did he?" inquired Peter Todd, reaching for the poker. "Well, poor old Quelchy isn't quite himself these days. I'm sure he wouldn't say that if he were in his right senses, so I'll take it upon me to correct the wrong impression he gave you."

"What do you mean?" said Bunter, in alarm.

"Simply this," said Peter grimly. "That it isn't playing the game to pinch

Bang! The study door was flung open and Peter Todd and a crowd of Removites appeared upon the threshold. "Seen Bunter——" began Delarey. "There he is!" hooted Vernon-Smith. "After you with Bunter, Wharton!" "Leave a bit of him for us!" growled Delarey. "He's pinched our grub!" "Eh?" Harry Wharton & Co. paused in the act of bumping Bunter, and the fat junior rolled on the floor roaring. "Yow-ow! Wow! I haven't touched your beastly grub. Honest Injun; I haven't!" *(See Chapter 7.)*

another fellow's rabbit-pie, not even Loder's. And to cure you of the habit I'm going to prod you with this poker. Like that——"

"Yoooooopp!"

"And that!"

"Wow! Grooough!" roared Bunter. "Keep off!"

"And that!" went on Peter Todd remorselessly.

But Billy Bunter had vanished through the doorway. He had had enough of that poker. And for the remainder of that evening Billy Bunter hung about the Form-room doing, or rather making a pretence at doing, his prep.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
The Bounder is Suspicious!

"HERE'S Inspector Grimes again!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were just emerging from their study about half an hour before bedtime, when the portly figure of the inspector loomed up ahead in the passage.

The captain of the Remove stopped the inspector as he was about to mount the staircase.

"Any news?" he asked. "Have you caught that rotter?"

"We haven't caught him yet," said the inspector, and he placed great stress on the last word; "but he's not far away. As a matter of fact, young gentlemen," he added cautiously, "the man's been traced to this school——"

"Here?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes. It's my firm belief that he's in hiding somewhere within the school," said the inspector slowly. "I'm just going to see your headmaster about it now."

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "If we spot him we'll jolly soon collar him."

"Rather!"

Inspector Grimes smiled.

"You're good lads," he said. "I shall be pleased when all this worry is over. But keep this information to yourselves."

"Oh, we'll keep mum about it!" said Wharton.

"The mumfulness shall be terrific," said Inky.

"What-ho!"

The inspector strode on, and Harry Wharton & Co. returned to their study.

"Do you think the inspector's right?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know," said Johnny Bull. "If he is right I'll ask him to track the rotter who boned our grub."

Hurree Singh started.

"It has just struck me that if the worthy and ludicrous inspector is hitting the wrong nail on the head rightfully that it would account for our tuck grubfully," he said.

The Co. stared hard at Inky.

Weird as was his remarkable English there was no mistaking the common sense that underlined it.

"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Inky, I believe you've got it," said Bob Cherry seriously.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled and bowed his dusky head.

"It seems strange on the face of it that our tuckful grub should do the disappearing caper vanishfully, and that the esteemed and ludicrous Vernon-Smith, and Toddy and Delarey and the rest of the Remove should complain lossfully about their tuck, too," he explained thoughtfully.

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right," said Johnny Bull slowly.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" roared Bob Cherry. "For a blessed convict to bone our grub is the limit!"

Harry Wharton had remained silent for a few moments turning over in his mind the pros and cons of Inky's theory. But the more he weighed them up, the more convinced he became that, if Inspector Grimes was speaking the truth in saying that the convict had been traced to the school, the wanted man indeed was responsible for the missing tuck.

The man would want food. He was conversant with the routine of the school, with the formation of the studies. He would know when to risk appearing from his hiding-place in order to obtain food.

"Inky's right," said Harry Wharton, at length. "Let's go along to Quelchy and put the facts before him."

"Good egg!"

The Famous Five left the study and made for Mr. Quelch's study at the end of the passage.

Tap!

Harry Wharton tapped lightly on the panels.

There was a sound of hurried movement inside the room, and an ejaculation.

"What do you want?"

The captain of the Remove had never known Mr. Quelch to be so ungracious.

"We have come to tell you something, sir," said Wharton, wondering why the Form master did not invite the juniors to enter.

"I'm busy, my boy," came the master's voice, "very busy, and I cannot be disturbed."

"But it's about the convict, sir," said Wharton.

Again he fancied he heard an ejaculation.

"Really, my lad, am I never to be left alone in peace! My head! I must tell Dr. Pillbury about it. I don't feel myself. Please leave this matter over until the morning, my boy!"

"Very well, sir," said Harry Wharton.

And the Famous Five withdrew.

"Thumping odd," grunted Johnny Bull.

"You mean Quelchy talking at us from the other side of the door," said Nugent.

Johnny Bull nodded.

"I expect Quelchy's head is giving him trouble," said Wharton, with a perplexed look on his handsome face.

"No reason why he shouldn't ask us into his study, anyway!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He's never done that kind of trick before!"

"Jolly queer!" said Bob Cherry. "That blow on the head must have done serious damage to poor old Quelchy! Why, he sounded like a different man just now!"

"Just what I was thinking," said Johnny Bull. "Jolly queer, I call it!"

Harry Wharton looked sharply at his chum.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" snapped Johnny Bull. "Let's go and see the inspector."

But the juniors learned from Trotter, the page, that Inspector Grimes had gone.

In silence, the Famous Five strolled towards their study. On the way they ran into Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder wore an unusually thoughtful frown on his countenance.

"What's up, Smithy?"

"Wherefore the furrowed brow?" inquired Bob Cherry, with a grin.

Vernon-Smith halted.

"I've been thinking about that grub raid," he said. "There's more in it than meets the eye!"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

Evidently the astute Bounder had been doing some pretty shrewd thinking on his own account.

"I remember now that I left my study cupboard locked this morning before classes," said the Bounder. "I've been examining that lock since, and I've come to the conclusion that it has been picked by an expert at the job."

The Famous Five were silent.

The Bounder looked at them shrewdly.

"You don't seem surprised," he said. "You know something, perhaps?"

Harry Wharton & Co. fidgeted uncomfortably. They were more or less pledged to keep silent of what they knew.

Vernon-Smith smiled.

"I've been doing a bit of detective work on my own," he said easily.

"Oh!"

"That lock of mine was picked by a cracksman, or my name isn't Vernon-Smith! You see, I've roughed it enough to know a picked lock when I see one. And I'll wager my footer-boots that there isn't a fellow at Greyfriars who could pick a lock like that!"

"Go on, Smithy!" said Wharton, by way of breaking the awkward silence that had settled on the juniors.

"I thought at first that I had left my study cupboard unlocked," continued the Bounder. "And then I remembered locking it. That's what made me pay so much attention to that lock."

"Well?"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I wasn't born yesterday," he went on. "I've seen Grimes popping in and out of this place; what's more, I've read the 'Friardale Gazette.'"

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked relieved.

"Then you know that a chap has escaped his warder while he was on the way to Courtfield?" said Wharton.

"All that, and more," said the Bounder calmly. "But come into the study. We don't want to shout it all over the school!"

The Famous Five followed the Bounder into Study No. 4. Tom Redwing was out, so they had the apartment to themselves.

"Squat down," said the Bounder.

Harry Wharton & Co. seated themselves in the chairs, while Vernon-Smith sat on the edge of the table and swung his legs.

"I've noticed a couple of strangers hanging around the school since this morning," said the Bounder at last. "They're plain-clothes men, I've not the slightest doubt!"

"You're right."

The Famous Five looked admiringly at Vernon-Smith. He seemed to have worked things out for himself.

"You can always tell a plain-clothes man a mile off," said the Bounder, with a grin. "You've only got to look at his big feet."

"Chance for you, Cherry," said Nugent. "You'd make a natural plain-clothes man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" snorted Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with my feet, anyway?"

"But that's not all," went on the Bounder quietly. "When I discovered the picked lock, I began to put two and two together. It struck me as being very peculiar, to say the least, that such a quantity of grub should have been pinched. It was the quantity of it that made me suspicious. Bunter has helped himself to my grub before, but half the

blessed Form were complaining of missing grub."

"Go it, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry. "You're as good as Ferrers Locke! I suppose you'll be able to tell us next where the giddy escaped convict is?"

Vernon-Smith slid down from the table.

"I reckon I know where he is," he replied quietly. "At least, I reckon I know where he came from before he pinched our grub!"

"What?"

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. started to their feet in amazement.

"Look here!" said the Bounder quietly.

He crossed to the window, and brushed aside the curtain.

"Where does this look out on?" he asked.

"The cloisters," said Wharton, puzzled.

"Exactly!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Now, look here!"

He crossed to the fireplace and lifted a saucepan-lid from the carpet that had, apparently, been forgotten when he had cleared up last.

Harry Wharton & Co. eyed that move in some astonishment.

"What's the blessed game, Smithy?" growled Johnny Bull, looking and seeing nothing but the carpet and the fire in the grate.

"Look closely at that corner of the carpet," said the Bounder, with a grin. "I covered it up purposely with this saucepan-lid so that it wouldn't be disturbed."

Harry Wharton peered closely at the edge of the carpet.

"There's a faint smudge of red mould or chalk there!" he exclaimed, at length. "Something like the shape of a man's foot."

"My hat, so there is!"

"You've got it!" chuckled the Bounder grimly. "A man's foot! And that red chalk could only come from one place."

"The vaults in the cloisters!" exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly. "I remember now. The red bricks of the vaults! Bits of them have crumbled and the whole floor of some of the vaults is covered with red chalk!"

"Great Scott!"

Vernon-Smith smiled proudly.

"The vaults," he said. "And that's where I reckon our escaped convict is hiding. How he knew of them beats me!"

"Oh, we can let you out on that score!" said Wharton excitedly. "For the escaped convict is an ex-Greyfriars boy."

"What?"

The Bounder started.

It was his turn to look amazed. Swiftly Harry Wharton outlined the events of the last twenty-four hours, feeling, in view of the discoveries Vernon-Smith had made, that he was not breaking a confidence.

"We'll nab him," said Vernon-Smith, when the captain of the Remove had finished. "I was just coming along to you chaps to ask you to join me in a man-hunt."

"We're on!" exclaimed Wharton. "Get some stumps, you chaps, and a bicycle-lamp."

"Hold on!" chuckled Vernon-Smith, as the Famous Five began to move to the doorway. "I've thought of all that. I've unearthed half a dozen stumps and a couple of lanterns."

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY

No. 20—George Bulstrode (of the Remove).

In these days Bulstrode is not one of the most prominent fellows in the Greyfriars Remove, although at one time he ruled the roost as captain. Rather given to bullying, governing by weight of his fist rather than by tact, Bulstrode gradually saw his old position slipping away from him into the hands of his successor, Harry Wharton. For all that, Bulstrode to-day "toes the line" with the rest of the Remove, and is likeable enough. An average sportsman, Bulstrode sometimes plays "goalie" for the Remove eleven, and sometimes bags a place in the cricket team. But his days as a person of importance are past. Shares Study No. 2 with Peter Hazeldene and Tom Brown.

"Good for you, Smithy!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gazed in silent admiration at the Bounder. He seemed to have thought of everything.

The stumps were fished out from a corner of the study, and, armed with one apiece, the juniors stealthily made their way out of the study and along the passage. Wharton and the Bounder each carried a lantern in his pocket, ready to be lit up when the party was at a safe distance from the school buildings.

That they might be running into danger the juniors gave not the slightest thought. They knew the wanted man to be desperate; his attack upon Mr. Quelch had proved that. But desperate or not, the Famous Five and the Bounder were determined to recapture him off their own bat.

Without exchanging a word, the juniors crept silently towards the old cloisters. The old stonework loomed up weirdly enough in the dusk, and the slightest sound was magnified a thousand times as it echoed through the old arches.

"Quiet as mice," whispered Wharton, who had put a match to his bicycle-lamp by this time. "And don't be afraid to hit out at the scoundrel!"

"What-ho!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise!

THE Famous Five and the Bounder neared the entrance to the vaults with beating hearts. One and all felt convinced that Smithy's theory was correct. The peculiar red chalk, or brick dust, that covered the floor of the vaults was well known to the juniors, who had had occasion to tread those vaults before.

Somewhere down in the darkness of those stone walls dwelt a desperate man. That he would fight savagely for his freedom Harry Wharton & Co. felt not the slightest doubt.

"Ssh!" whispered the captain of the Remove, as he began to descend the dank stone steps, his light sweeping the path ahead.

Step by step the juniors reached the stone-flagged passage below. The lights from the lantern lit up eerily enough the cobwebbed walls. But there was no sign of the wanted man.

Suddenly Harry Wharton stiffened. His right arm came up with the stump ready to strike.

"Listen, you chaps!" he whispered. "I thought I heard something!"

With beating hearts the Removites halted and strained their ears.

"Gug-gug-grrr!"

Faintly, ever so faintly, that weird series of sounds echoed up from the vault away to their right.

"Sounds more like a blessed dog than a convict," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Quiet, Johnny, you ass!"

Grunt! Johnny Bull was the least highly-strung member of the party.

"Gug-gug-grrr!"

The sound came again, much louder now.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Wharton breathlessly. "There's someone here, anyway. Follow me!"

He set off at the run, his lantern sweeping the walls ahead, and his chums followed close on his heels.

"Grrr-gug-gug!"

There was no mistaking whence those weird sounds emanated now. Without a moment's hesitation the captain of the Remove darted into a vault directly on his right, and flashed the lantern round the stone-flagged chamber. Vernon-Smith was not a second behind him.

"Back up, you chaps. I—— Oh, good heavens!" gasped Wharton, coming to an abrupt halt.

"Oh, Great Scott!"

At sight of the gagged and bound figure in the corner Harry Wharton & Co. almost let the cricket-stumps fall in their amazement.

"Quelchy!"

The name echoed and re-echoed in that stone-flagged chamber, and the figure propped up in the corner moved its head.

"Gug-gug-gug——"

It was a queer way of expressing relief, and yet that was what Mr. Quelch was trying to do as he recognised his rescuers.

In a moment Harry Wharton had slipped a penknife from his pocket. Another moment, and the gag had been sliced away from Mr. Quelch's mouth. The length of cord that bound his arms and his ankles was soon trailing harmlessly on the stone-flagged floor.

Then Mr. Quelch found his speech.

"Bless you, my boys!" he gasped fervently. "I thought I was doomed to spend the night in this wretched place. I have been a prisoner here for two hours. But where is Villemond? Where is that scoundrel? He shall answer for this!"

"We thought we would find him here," said Harry Wharton in amazement. "We never dreamed that you were here, sir. You're not hurt?" he added anxiously.

"No, my boy. I am very cold, and my limbs are a bit cramped, but that is all. But Villemond! We must apprehend that scoundrel before he flies from Greyfriars!"

"From Greyfriars?" said Wharton blankly. "You said, sir, that you had been here for two hours. Surely this rotter Villemond has made good his escape?"

The Form master's eyes glinted.

"The rascal had the unparalleled audacity to strip me of my clothes," he snapped. "He is taking my place up at the school, and hopes to make his getaway, I think he termed it, in the morning."

The Removites started, for the first time becoming aware of Mr. Quelch's strange attire.

"T-taken your place?" stuttered Johnny Bull.

Mr. Quelch nodded vigorously.

"The likeness is amazing," he said. "But for his extra breadth of shoulders, and an inch or two in height, this scoundrel Villemond bears almost a speaking likeness to myself. Ugh!"

"Oh, Great Scott!"

"Ye gods!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

These remarks were not usually uttered in the august presence of a Form master, but circumstances alter cases. And certainly the circumstances altered the present case.

Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"But his moustache?" said Bob Cherry. "The rotter!—ahem!—I mean the fellow would give himself away with that moustache of his."

"He burnt it off before he left me here," said Mr. Quelch. "Oh, the rascal is clever enough!"

"What did I tell you?" said Wharton suddenly. "I noticed the likeness to yourself, sir, when Inspector Grimes showed us the photograph."

Mr. Quelch did not seem flattered by the comparison. His thin lips tightened.

"Indeed, Wharton!"

But the captain of the Remove swiftly changed the subject.

"Then if the scoundrel is at the school" he said, "we can capture him. My hat, it must have been Villemond we spoke to when I called at your study about half an hour ago, sir!"

"Quite probable," admitted Mr. Quelch.

"That's why the rotter spoke to us through the closed door," said Johnny Bull. "I said it was jolly fishy."

"We must proceed to my study without delay," said Mr. Quelch. "Follow me!"

But for once in a way Harry Wharton & Co. did not pay heed to the wishes of their Form master. Instead of following Mr. Quelch they raced ahead of him.

The master of the Remove followed some distance behind them, panting.

In a body the Removites charged into the School House, almost bowling over George Wingate and Gwynne, who were talking just inside.

"What the dickens!" howled Gwynne, who went spinning against the wall. "What the——"

"Sorry!" bawled Wharton. "Follow us, Wingate! Back up, Gwynne!"

And without stopping to say more the juniors dashed on.

Wingate and Gwynne, sore at this affront to their dignity, chased after the juniors.

They caught them up outside the door of Mr. Quelch's study. Then, to Wingate's further amazement, the door of that sacred apartment was swung open as if it were a junior study, and Harry Wharton & Co. swarmed in.

"Collar him!"

"How dare——"

A figure rose from the chair by the desk and stared angrily at the invasion of the juniors.

"Ye gods!"

At sight of him Harry Wharton & Co. nearly doubted the evidence of their eyes, for he was as like Mr. Horace Henry Quelch as that gentleman himself almost.

"Boys," said the pseudo master with an awesome frown, and his voice was like unto that of Mr. Quelch, "what does this mean?"

"Collar the rotter!" roared Harry Wharton, springing forward.

"What-ho!"

"We'll give him Mr. Quelch!"

The Famous Five and the Bounder seized the pseudo master on all sides. And Wingate and Gwynne joined in a second or so afterwards, for they heard the scoundrel using certain language as he struggled with the juniors that Mr. Quelch would certainly never have done.

"You young cubs!" he hissed. "You've foiled me a second time!"

"Nail him!"

"Collar the rotter!"

In the grasp of the juniors and the two Sixth-Formers, Rupert Villemond, alias Flash Jim, alias Monkey Flashman, was soon a helpless prisoner. And just as he had been secured Mr. Quelch himself came into the study.

"Ah, you scoundrel!" snapped the master of the Remove.

His hands moved spasmodically. Doubtless at that moment Mr. Horace Henry Quelch was wishing himself a younger man that he might come to grips with the fellow who had treated him so violently.

The noise of the scuffle had brought a number of Removites along the passage. They stared in on the scene in dumbfounded amazement. They saw Mr. Quelch shivering in a suit that didn't fit him; they saw another "Mr. Quelch" wriggling in the grasp of Harry Wharton & Co. and the two prefects of the Sixth.

But to their dismay Mr. Quelch closed the door of the study, thereby shutting off the view of that astonishing scene. But the Removites hung about in the passage for half an hour or more, long after their usual bed-time. They saw Dr. Locke rustle into the study; they witnessed Inspector Grimes and a plain-clothes man also enter that apartment, and they wondered.

They wondered still more when the study door opened again, for between the inspector and his subordinate was a man of about twenty-seven, in other words, Flash Jim.

He was handcuffed to both the police-officers. Inspector Grimes was not taking any more chances with his slippery prisoner.

And as Flash Jim departed, he hurled after him a string of invective for the especial benefit of Mr. Quelch. But Inspector Grimes applied a certain police trick of ju-jitsu on his prisoner, and the imprecations ceased suddenly.

That was the last Harry Wharton & Co. saw of Rupert Villemond, alias Flash Jim.

* * * * * *

The Famous Five and the Bounder walked into the Remove dormitory long after the lights had been put out. They had been specially interviewed by Dr. Locke. The old Head had commended them for the good work they had done, and Mr. Quelch had added his thanks to those of Dr. Locke.

Harry Wharton & Co. and the Bounder had been requested by the Head to keep the news that the escaped convict was an ex-Greyfriars man from the knowledge of their Form-fellows, a promise which the juniors readily gave.

It was close on midnight when Harry Wharton & Co. were allowed to go to sleep—questions simply showered on them. And on the following morning the questions started all over again. Even when their curious Form-fellows had exhausted their interest in the matter, Harry Wharton & Co. could not forget the strange events that had started on that wild night of the storm. It would be a long day, indeed, before they ceased to talk among themselves of Quelchy's queer adventure.

THE END.

(There will be another topping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, *entitled: "The Prefect's Plot!" by Frank Richards. Don't miss this great story in which the unpopular prefect, Gerald Loder, figures prominently.)*

THE MYSTERY MAN! In tense darkness, Drood seems to possess the sight of a cat. In the glare of light that same man is as blind as a bat!

The MYSTERY of LONE MANOR

A Powerful Mystery Story, featuring Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, and Jack Drake, his boy assistant.

A Train Doomed!

AS Jack Drake broke into a run he found three shadowy shapes running to meet him—Locke, Tom Travers, and the fireman from the tank-engine. The fireman's face was badly cut, and his hands were lacerated terribly from his fall. The man—a fair-haired, young fellow in dirty overalls—had in his eyes the beginnings of a terrible fear.

"The express!" he gasped, as Jack halted breathless beside them. "They're madmen—madmen! The coast express is due any minute now—they're heading full tilt to meet it!"

Ferrers Locke gripped his arm.

"What can be done, man? Quick! If anything can be done, you must know to save the express——"

The man reeled, and gripped Locke's arm to support himself. He passed a hand across his bleeding, cut face and groaned.

"My head!" he groaned. "Lord, it aches! The box—there might be time. I doubt it——"

"The signal-box!" put in Travers swiftly.

The railwayman nodded.

"Ay! It's back at the station. But the signalman can't have seen them take the main line, not with this snow! But if it's not too late he could phone through, could stop the express——"

And then the fireman shook his head hopelessly.

"No, no; it'll be too late!"

"I'll try, anyway," said Travers.

He turned and plunged back down the line. In a moment the young footballer had vanished into the snow.

"Hark!" muttered Ferrers Locke.

The throb of an approaching train on the up line had come to his ears. The trio stepped aside out of the track, and Jack stared anxiously down the line. Would Travers realise the approaching danger?

The youngster sent a shrill call echoing through the darkness. To his relief, it was answered by Tom's voice, very faint and muffled.

"Look out! Train coming!"

Locke's eyes were suddenly gleaming.

"We must stop this train!" he cried. "There's a chance we can overtake that locomotive!"

The lighted locomotive on the up line came pounding towards them through the gloom slowly. The glow from the firebox showed the face of the driver hanging over the side peering forward for the signal, obscured as it was by the snow. He had had to slow down; and Jack drew a quick, excited breath.

"Thank goodness for the snow, anyway!" the youngster muttered.

Locke had sprung between the rails, waving his arms and shouting. The oncoming locomotive increased speed suddenly; the driver had glimpsed the green signal-light ahead. Locke sprang out of its path, and it swept past them.

Jack Drake gave a groan of bitter chagrin.

"They've not seen us——"

But even as he spoke there came the grinding of brakes. Locke broke into a run. The big, six-coupled engine was drawing to a standstill, the driver and fireman leaning out, staring back. Locke raced up.

"What in thunder?" cried the driver. "What's the matter?"

In swift, brief sentences the detective explained. The young fireman with them gave a sudden shout of recognition.

"Why, it's old Dick Bateman!"

He scrambled up on to the footplate, pouring out a breathless, excited explanation.

The locomotive was running free—a powerful express goods engine, returning to the depot with no train. In startled bewilderment. Bateman, the driver, listened to their story. His face set with consternation, then went suddenly grim.

"Great powers, man, y'say there's a loco on the down line, in the track o' the coast express? It means disaster! She's due now——"

"The snow will have delayed her a little!" said Locke. "There's a chance! If we can overtake that loco, free the driver, he can race back and on to a siding. The signalman knows by now that——"

"Ay, there's a chance!" muttered the engine-driver. "But it's nigh hopeless! They'll be murderers, those men——"

His great hand went to the throttle, pulling it down. Jack and Locke had already scrambled up on to the footplate. The great locomotive swiftly gathered speed.

The steam churned out as the wheels slipped on the wet track, then the cylinders pounded on more slowly. But the locomotive was moving at a good speed already. Soon the icy, snow-laden air was racing past them.

A green signal-light flashed past. Jack glanced at Ferrers Locke, saw the

INTRODUCTION.

Adam Guelph mysteriously disappears, and Tom Travers enlists the aid of Locke and Drake to find him. This they eventually do, for the old man has been kidnapped by the Wolves. But Guelph's rescuers are unable to discover the motive of the Wolves in capturing him, for the old miser is suffering from brain fever. Locke and his companions therefore set themselves the task of unravelling the mystery. After a series of thrilling hand-to-hand encounters with the Wolves, Locke & Co. learn that the Green Spider—an emerald ring resembling in shape a spider—holds the secret of the whereabouts of a vast hoard of treasure, and that it is this ring and the treasure it will lead to that the Wolves are seeking. This ring is given into Travers' keeping by Armitage, the butler, who knew of its hiding-place.

A series of thrilling adventures follow, during which the ring changes hands several times.

Later, Locke—with the ring now in his possession—is aboard a train, with Drake and Travers, bound for London, when the Wolves bring off a clever coup, capture the ring, and, under cover of darkness, commandeer a light engine to aid them in their escape. Drake boards the footplate, but is, however, thrown off, and it is only then he realises that the arch-villains are travelling on the down line directly in the path of oncoming trains!

(Now read on.)

detective's face set like stone, grim but cool; glanced at the face of the engine-driver, white and stern, with the red shadows playing across it from the open firebox as the fireman fed the flaming opening.

A race for life——

"Look! There she goes!"

On the down line the tail-light of the commandeered locomotive could be seen still travelling up the line. They would be alongside in a moment now. The snow was falling less heavily, and the light from the firebox of the tank-engine could be seen clearly glaring back through the gloom.

And then the youngster's heart seemed to stop beating; for up the line he had glimpsed the glaring lights of the express.

It was racing towards them at sixty miles an hour, dark clouds of steam belching from the squat funnel, billowing against the streaming lights from the long carriages. Racing on through the night to inevitable destruction—a train doomed!

Jack heard Locke's cry and the shout from the engine-driver. He heard the grinding brakes, felt their own locomotive lurch and quiver as the wheels felt the shoes.

"Too late!" groaned the fireman at his side.

"She's done!" muttered Locke hoarsely.

The fireman covered his face with his hands.

They had come to a standstill three or four hundred yards to the rear of the tank-engine on which Drood and Strovolsky had made their escape with the green spider. The little locomotive, as though unaware of its danger, was still running slowly onward, head on to the rushing express.

Jack's eyes were wide with horror, but he could not avert them had his life depended upon it. He knew in that moment what the rabbit feels when it is paralysed by the eyes of a snake. The imminent disaster held him as though in a trance.

Then, with a wrench, he fought free from that terrible paralysis that had enslaved his senses. He put his hands over his eyes, and pressed his thumbs into his ears.

And then came the sound that throughout life he was never to forget.

The sound of the wreck of the coast express!

——

The Trail in the Snow!

WITH a chill dread at his heart, Jack Drake lowered his hands from his eyes.

The snow had almost ceased as suddenly as it had started. A light rain was falling, and through the dreary drizzle he stared ahead, though dreading what he should see.

The great Pacific-type locomotive of the express lay on its side clean across the line, broken and shattered, belching steam from its boiler and torn cylinders. Behind it the dark, tumbled carriages lay piled, some twisted over the edge of the embankment. And yet, as if by some miracle, the last two coaches were still on their wheels, though the wheels were not upon the track. The steel rails, twisted like so much wire, were torn and broken, writhing like snakes, as if in pain.

Of the tank-engine there was no sign. Its mangled remains had vanished—lay, doubtless, beneath the ghastly pile of the wrecked express.

And Drood and Strovolsky? Did they, too, lie beneath that shattered wreckage? And the engine-driver, whom they had forced to his doom—what of him?

A sound like a sob broke from the young fireman at Jack's side.

"Davies!" he muttered brokenly. "Poor old Davies! A good chap—one o' the best!"

Ferrers Locke laid a kindly hand on the fireman's shoulder.

"He may not have been killed," he said. "Possibly he jumped clear—those three on the footplate must have seen their danger and jumped clear!"

"You think he has?" cried the fireman eagerly. "Pray Heaven he did! But the other two"—his fists clenched—"I hope they didn't!"

One by one, as swiftly as their trembling, nerve-shaken limbs would allow, Locke, Jack, and the railwaymen climbed down on to the line and broke into a run towards the wreck.

. . . . . .

It was an hour later that Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and Tom Travers moved off down the line. They had been working desperately with the crowd of rescuers. But now that the initial rescue work was done the detective felt they were free to carry on with their pursuit of the men responsible.

Travers had come up the line on a light engine with some of the rescue-party. The breakdown gang was already at work. The strange, amazing part of the whole affair was that the casualty list was so extraordinarily small.

There had been no sign of Drood, Strovolsky, or the driver of the tank-engine. Locke had looked for them. It was becoming increasingly clear that the detective's theory was correct, and that the three men had jumped from the locomotive upon realisation of the coming disaster.

As they moved away, searching the embankment for signs of the missing men, they were joined by the young fireman of the tank-engine.

"If Davies is still alive," he muttered again and again, "why hasn't he shown up before now?"

They were several yards from the wreck when Tom Travers gave a sudden cry. The other three hurried to him, and found him stooping over a still form that lay among some wet bushes.

It was Davies, the engine-driver, unconscious. Locke knelt beside the man, and his quick hands ran over the still form. He looked up with relief in his eyes.

"No bones broken, anyway," he said quietly. "He made a bad landing, though, and struck his head. But he'll be all right when he comes round."

"And now to find Drood and the Russian," muttered Travers.

The search along the embankment continued, leaving the young fireman with his unconscious mate.

And in the drizzling rain Ferrers Locke's keen, trained eyes came upon the clues he was searching for.

"See this?" he said, pointing. "This is where one of 'em landed when he jumped. Here are his heel-marks plain enough. Then he rolled, and landed in the undergrowth there. It was Drood. Here's a button that was torn off his coat. I remember he had those big grey buttons on his coat, Jack. And over here is where Strovolsky landed. He made a bad landing, did our friend Strovolsky. Hurt himself. See the blood on the grass? And he stood here, reeling and staggering, when he did get up, and he was limping as he ran off to join Drood. You can see that in his footmarks, of course—the left foot is so much more deeply imprinted in the earth than his right."

"Always like that," muttered Jack bitterly. "The wrong 'uns get away with it, when honest men get hurt!"

Locke laughed grimly.

"That's so, Jack. Men like these have nine lives. Well, I'll say Drood and Strovolsky have only got eight left after to-night, for they both deserved to die, even if they didn't!"

They followed the footprints to the foot of the embankment.

"Strovolsky was leaning upon Drood here," went on the detective, reading the marks on the earth like an open book. "He had difficulty in climbing this fence, too—tumbled over it almost. Tore his clothes in doing so. See this patch of cloth? There's blood on this post here, where he put his hand. That would be his right hand, judging from the position of that bit of cloth. His right hand is hurt, which is all to the good. He won't have much fight left in him when we find him!"

"You think we can find him, then?" asked Travers quickly.

Locke nodded.

"Unless our luck is dead out I expect to track them down, Tom. They can't be travelling fast."

The trio climbed the fence. Locke was like a bloodhound on the trail, eyes gleaming, searching every inch of ground, missing nothing in the way of "sign" that was to be read. Across the field beyond the tracks led them, through a hedge, and into a dark lane.

"Easy going here," murmured Ferrers Locke. "In this mud their feet have left tracks inches deep! And, thank goodness, the rain has stopped."

The slight settling of snow had been melted away long ago, before they had got upon the trail. It would have been an assistance to them now, but Locke was not worrying. He could get on without it, as he was proving.

The moon had risen, pale and watery, and by its light the human sleuth led Jack and Tom through the narrow country lanes upon the track of Drood and the Russian. He noted points where they had halted for rest, read every sign of the fugitives in each alteration of direction. They were travelling fast on the trail, faster than Drood and Strovolsky themselves could have travelled, judging by the crippled condition of the Russian as revealed to Locke by the imprints of his feet.

And then, at midnight, they came to the Black Horse Inn.

It was set far back from the road, a sinister-looking place in the moonlight, with its dark windows and creaking sign. But the footprints of the men they were following led to it, and a minute later Ferrers Locke had halted by the inn door.

"Gone to earth," he whispered, with a grim chuckle, "at the Black Horse Inn!"

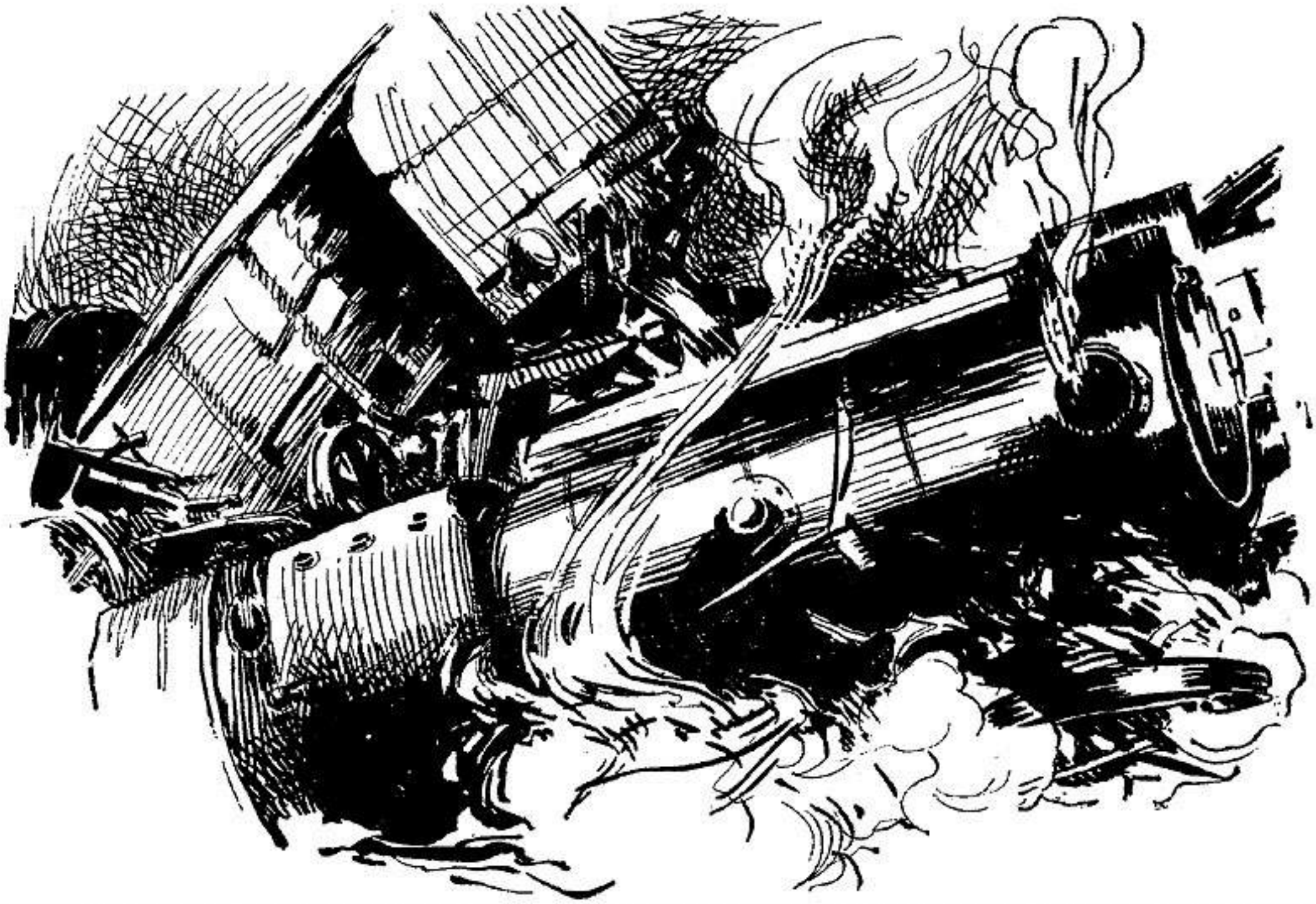
"What's the programme now, guv'nor?" muttered Jack Drake eagerly.

"First we'll get a hang of the lie of the land, young 'un," answered the detective. "Round to the back we go!"

The dark pile seemed lonely and forlorn enough as the three stole noiselessly through a gap in the fence leading them into the field which flanked the inn. They moved silently through the wet grass, and suddenly Jack gripped Locke's arm.

"Look, guv'nor!"

"A light!" muttered Travers.



The great Pacific-type locomotive of the express lay on its side, clean across the line, broken and shattered, belching steam from its boiler and torn cylinders. (*See Page 24.*)

A bright chink of yellow light was cutting the darkness from a small window at the side of the building.

The detective nodded.

"I fancy that's our quarry all right," he murmured softly, "in that room. And—of all the luck—that window is just over the arch leading to the stables! We can have a look at 'em in comfort, just to make sure!"

"I'll go!" exclaimed Travers instantly. And before Locke could speak the young footballer had slipped across the grass and swung himself up on to the fence without a sound. Locke and Jack watched him, outlined like a shadow against the sky.

Silent as a cat Tom Travers climbed higher. Out of condition though he was, the excitement was setting his pulses throbbing, was lending him some of his normal athletic strength.

He was on the broad top of the stone arch now, slithering cautiously nearer to that chink of light streaming out between the almost-drawn curtains of the little window ahead.

And a minute later Tom's eyes were at the crack.

Drood and Strovolsky were in the little inn bed-room, seated at a small table by the foot of the bed. The Russian's right hand was bandaged—Locke had been right in his deductions concerning the man's hurt. Even as Tom Travers watched, Strovolsky rose to his feet and crossed to Drood's side, and he limped as he went.

Then Tom drew a sharp breath.

For in the Russian's fingers was the mysterious ring—the precious green spider!

And the words that came to Tom's ears through the open aperture of the upper window-sash set his nerves thrilling.

"Drood!" came the guttural voice gloatingly. "Drood, I've found it! By Heaven, man, I have! At last! The secret, man! I've found the secret of the hidden jewels! I've discovered the secret of the green spider!"

At the Black Horse Inn!

STROVOLSKY'S gloating words came with a startling thrill to Tom Travers, as he crouched on the stone archway outside the little window of the inn.

The secret of the ring—the riddle solved at last! And the precious knowledge in the hands of the Wolves!

Peering through the partly drawn curtains, Tom saw Strovolsky peering down at the ring in the light of the oil-lamp set on the table at the foot of the bed. Drood's eyes stared sightlessly across the room, and for a moment Tom wondered—what was the mystery of Drood? Sometimes he seemed to be the blind man he professed to be; at other times they believed he had been in possession of his sight. It was a strange puzzle, but there was no time to think about it now. Tom's eyes were riveted on the ring in the Russian's hand.

With a start, Tom Travers saw that Strovolsky had worked the great emerald loose from its gold setting, and it was this stone that his eyes were glittering upon now.

He was talking to Drood, but he had lowered his voice to an indistinct murmur. Tom crawled nearer to the window.

And then came a sudden crash.

The ancient stonework of the arch had betrayed the youngster—a chunk of loose masonry had gone crashing to the cobbles below! In the lighted room, both Drood and Strovolsky turned swiftly to the window. In a moment the Russian's hand shot out to the lamp and snapped out the light by means of the extinguisher.

In his haste, Strovolsky sent the lamp tottering sideways. It reeled off the table, and crashed to the floor in the darkness. Then the curtains of the window were dragged back, and, dim in the gloom, Tom saw the white, grim face of Drood staring out.

The strange eyes seemed to hold a light all their own—a weird, reddish light, strangely horrible. It was uncanny. And then from Drood's lips came a harsh cry.

"It's young Travers! By thunder, Locke must be on the trail!"

A moment ago the man had appeared blind! Yet now——

The lower sash of the window was flung up, and Tom realised Drood's intention in a flash. From where he clung to the top of the arch, Drood meant to fling him down to the stones of the yard below!

There was only one thing to do, and Tom did it. He was quite helpless against attack where he was. With a shout to Ferrers Locke and Jack, Tom flung himself forward, and before Drood had realised his intention, the young footballer had fought his way into the room.

Strovolsky was groping blindly through the darkness. Tom could hear the Russian cursing in his own language—heard Strovolsky cry out as he barked his shins against the bedstead. Then out

of the blackness a pair of great hands came and took Tom by the throat, squeezing cruelly. The hands of Drood!

And Drood's voice came, a malignant, horrible whisper:

"Spying, eh? Well, Locke sha'n't save you this time!"

Tom fought desperately, but the choking hands were robbing him of breath, of life. He was powerless in the grip of this big man, whose eyes seemed sightless by day and in the light, but who could do strange things in the darkness. He felt his senses reeling, and his fingers clung weakly to Drood's wrists.

"The ring!" came the snarling voice of the Russian. "I've lost the ring!"

"Strike a match," said Drood, struggling in the darkness. "I've got this young cub tight—no fight left in him!"

A match spluttered, and the tiny yellow flame leapt out of the blackness. Tom Travers found a pair of sightless eyes staring vaguely past his face.

And then from outside the window came a scrambling sound on the arch. The next moment a dark form had come leaping into the room—Ferrers Locke's young assistant, Jack Drake!

Strovolsky turned with a cry, and the lighted match fell from his fingers.

The little flame all but went out in falling. It glowed upon the floor for a moment, then suddenly seemed to spring to life. It swelled and spread, shaking crimson through the gloom.

The oil from the overturned lamp was alight!

A river of flame ran along the floor, muttering to a roar. By the light of it Ferrers Locke came scrambling in at the open window. Drood heard the flames, and his face went oddly grey. His hands relaxed from Tom's throat, and the youngster reeled away from him.

"My heavens!" screamed Drood. "I can hear the flames—it's fire!"

He twisted round, arms outflung, groping, then plunged away from the window. Straight into the flames he staggered, and the fire scorched his hands, singed his clothes. A scream of dreadful fear rattled from his throat.

"Fire!" he moaned, his lips mouthing with terror. "Strovolsky, help me now! Don't leave me—Strovolsky! I'm blind—don't desert a blind man——"

The Russian did not heed. Panic seemed to have seized him. He sprang for the door of the room, and raced out into the passage beyond.

Ferrers Locke dragged Drood clear of the flames. One corner of the room was a furnace already. The crackling of burning woodwork could be heard in the steady roar of the flames. Writhing smoke swept out of the window on the draught, pouring up the wall of the old inn.

The room might have been made to burn! Woodwork everywhere, dry as tinder, bursting into flame at the first lick of fire.

"The ring!" gasped Travers.

He glimpsed it lying in the shadow of a chair, on the floor, and darted for it. The emerald and the spider-setting lay within a few inches of each other, and a moment later both were in Tom's pocket.

Jack Drake had seized the washing-jug, and, with a strong swing, sent the contents splashing over the flames. But it was a useless effort against the flaming oil, and Locke gripped the youngster's arm.

"No good!" yelled the detective. "Quick—we've got to get out of here!"

Running feet were tearing down the passage outside. Half a dozen men in pyjamas—the landlord and his son, barmen and stable-boys and others—were framed in the doorway in a surging group. But of Strovolsky there was no sign.

"Sand!" rasped Locke. "Fetch sand!"

The group of countrymen gaped at him. The situation seemed to take some grasping on their part. Then some broke for the stairs to get the sand Locke asked for.

"Hold this man!" cried Locke; and a couple of hefty barmen obediently gripped Drood by the arms without question. There was something about Ferrers Locke that made men obey his commands.

But there seemed to be no spirit left in Drood. His sightless face, lit by the ruddy glow from the burning room, was ashen grey. The terror of fire had shaken him to the marrow of his bones. And Jack, watching that trembling mouth, realised the terror that flames must have for a sightless man—if Drood really were blind, as he now seemed to be.

But for the prompt way in which Locke took the situation in hand, the Black Horse Inn would have been burnt to the ground that night. But by the time the local fire brigade arrived—and, considering the loneliness of the inn, those country firemen had worked wonders—the flames were checked.

Locke had made his identity known to the landlord, and even he had heard of the Baker Street detective. By three o'clock that morning, the fire put out and Drood in a locked room awaiting the arrival of the village constable, Locke, Jack, and Tom were snatching a meal in the inn parlour. Locke's name had indeed worked miracles!

"If only we'd got Strovolsky as well as Drood!" muttered Jack Drake.

"Can't be helped," said Locke. "We've got Drood, anyway. He's a more dangerous customer, to my mind, than Strovolsky. I believe now that Drood is joint leader with Silva of the Wolves."

"The man's a giddy mystery," put in Tom Travers. "Is he blind, or isn't he? I can't make him out! In the burning room he seemed to be blind, yet he recognised me when I was outside the window."

"That's puzzling you, eh, Tom?" murmured Locke. "Well, I've cottoned on to the truth about Drood. Ever heard of a nyctalops?"

"A which?" exclaimed Jack Drake.

"A nyctalops, young 'un," repeated Locke. "That is the name given to a man who suffers from a peculiar disease which is pretty rare, but which Drood suffers from. It so affects a man's sight that he is blind by daytime, but can see in the dark like a cat. Drood is a nyctalops."

"My hat!" breathed Jack. "You mean to say the man can see in the dark? So that accounts for it! By the light of the flames he was blind, but when he was staring out at me on the arch, after Strovolsky had put the lamp out, he could see! And when I was chasing that loco earlier to-night he could see me till I was lit up by the glare from the fire-box!"

"And all along, if you look back, he has seemed to have an uncanny power in the dark," added Locke. "In the railway-carriage, when I'd smashed the lights, he hit me where he wanted to, the beggar! And at Lone Manor, of course, he was able to truss us up in the dark. I thought at the time that

"My only aunt!" Jack Drake, bending down at Locke's side, gave an excited shout. The ray of torchlight lighting up the neat, orderly piles of jewels on the shelves of the secret treasure-house was reflected from a thousand points as of coloured fire. (*See Page* 28.)

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Ferrers Locke dragged Drood, the blind man, clear of the flames. One corner of the room was a furnace already. "The ring!" gasped Travers. He glimpsed it lying on the floor, in the shadow of a chair, and darted towards it. (*See Page* 26.)

it was simply the sixth sense of a blind man helping him; but I understand now that he was able to see us, though we could see nothing."

As the detective was speaking, Travers had taken from his pocket the ring, and the emerald that had been prised out of its setting.

By the light of the lamp Travers peered at the great green stone. A quick murmur of excitement escaped him.

"Look!" he cried. "See, there's something scratched on the back of the emerald, that was hidden when it was set in the ring!"

The three examined the stone eagerly, and Ferrers Locke drew a small magnifying-glass from his waistcoat pocket.

"Ah, now it's clear!" he murmured, staring down through the glass. "Listen! This is what has been scratched here. By gad, these letters are minute, if you like! Must have taken some doing!"

He read out the tiny words scratched on the back of the great emerald that had formed the body of the green spider:

"'Beneath the moat. Reached by tower, secret steps, secret stone. Mark a triangle.'"

"Mark a triangle?" echoed Jack. "What the thump have we to mark a triangle for—to get the treasure?"

Ferrers Locke laughed.

"I don't think that's the meaning, young 'un. There should be a comma after the word 'mark.' 'Mark, a triangle,' meaning that the secret stone which gives access to the hidden chamber can be recognised because it is marked with a triangle."

"That's it, of course!" exclaimed Jack. "Crumbs, but Lone Manor seems to be a giddy maze! I suppose that secret chamber old Armitage, the butler, showed us to hide in that day isn't the secret chamber where the treasure is supposed to be hid? If it is, I didn't notice any treasure there."

"It must be another secret room," put in Travers. "I know the old house has plenty of mysteries yet to be unearthed, though my uncle never told me of these secret places below the moat."

Locke rose to his feet.

"No time to waste," he said. "I know we are all dog-tired, but that can't be helped. We've had a good meal, anyway. Remember, Strovolsky has got away from this inn, and we can't waste our time in trying to track him down. He's not big enough game, although he probably knows now the secret of those hidden jewels. We've got to get off to Lone Manor at once. I—— Hallo! Here's the police!"

The local policeman, a cheery giant of a man with a very capable air about him, had arrived, and Drood was given into his charge.

Dawn was breaking by the time the detective, Jack Drake, and Tom Travers arrived at Lone Manor.

As they crossed the drawbridge to the front door of the lonely moated house, grey in the mist from the marshes, it looked strangely dreary and desolate.

Locke smiled grimly for a moment.

Odd to think that beneath that dark stretch of water lay the priceless jewels, massed in the blackness of a secret room, for which Silva and Drood and the rest of the Wolves had risked so much, had gone such lengths to obtain, and even yet were fighting grimly and desperately to obtain possession of!

The Treasure Chamber!

TRAVERS had a key, but the great front door on the farther side of the drawbridge was bolted and fastened on the inside. Not till they had at long last succeeded in arousing old Armitage were they able to gain an entry to the old manor.

The old man, a quaint figure in his nightgown and red nightcap, was delighted to see them.

"I've stuck it out," he said; "but it's bin gettin' on my nerves somethink terrible. Bein' here all alone, I mean. But there's a message come for you, Mr. Locke, Birmingham postmark."

As he spoke he moved to the table in the hall, where a letter lay. Locke opened the envelope and scanned the contents.

"From Dr. Grieve," he said. "He tells me that Mr. Guelph is almost well again, has pulled round remarkably. He will be bringing him home again very shortly, if his good health continues. Splendid!"

"Rather!" chuckled old Armitage. "It'll be good to have the master back. But what o' the Wolves, sir? How——"

"Don't you worry about them," said Locke reassuringly. No need to alarm the old man, he thought.

"You've scared them away for good?" cried the butler, delighted. "Oh, but that's wunnerful news! I can sleep in peace now. I've been scared to death sometimes down here with nothin' to do at nights but listen to the wireless——"

"Oh, so you're a wireless enthusiast, Armitage?" smiled Locke.

"That I am, sir. Just afore he disappeared, sir, Mr. Guelph installed a splendid set, sir."

"I didn't know that," put in Tom Travers.

"No, sir? But he did. Oh, it's a beauty! It listens-in beautiful, and it can send out messages—translate, too."

"You mean transmit," laughed Jack Drake. He looked meaningly at Ferrers Locke. "Looks as though Mr.

Guelph thought a wireless transmitting set might be useful here—eh?"

"But there is no aerial on the roof!" exclaimed Tom.

"This sort don't need no hairy-all," said Armitage proudly. "At least, not an outdoor hairy-all. It's got an indoor hairy-all, so Mr. Guelph said, not that I understand much about such things. But it's a grand set. Up in the top room of the tower, it is."

"In the tower—eh?" said Locke. "Well, the tower is where we are making for now. Come along!"

"Down the secret stairs, the secret stone marked with a triangle," muttered Tom, as they moved off down the hall. "Yo-ho-ho for the glittering doubloons and the pieces of eight!"

They opened a side door and went along the edge of the moat towards the door that gave access to the tower.

The grey early morning light was very dim inside the circular stone tower-room, and the life-size stone figure in its niche in the wall, with the fingers pointing to the movable flagstone, looked ghostly and eerie.

"Where the stone fingers point!" quoted Tom. "I wonder, when my uncle wrote that unfinished message we found in the box in the moat, if he were trying to tell us of the green spider, or of the treasure itself?"

The old iron chest that had once hidden the flagstone had never been replaced. Ferrers Locke stooped, and, exerting all his strength, swung the heavy stone aside by means of the rusted iron ring set in it. The stone stairs below were revealed.

"Now for the giddy treasure of Lone Manor!" chuckled Jack Drake. "Shall I carry on, guv'nor?"

Locke nodded, and Jack stepped down into the opening. Tom followed him, then came old Armitage, an overcoat buttoned over his nightgown, and Ferrers Locke brought up the rear.

Both Jack and Locke were carrying electric flash-lamps, and at the foot of the steps Jack swung the vivid circle of yellow light along the damp stone walls. Almost instantly the dancing beam steadied upon a roughly scratched triangle, quite inconspicuous and meaningless to anyone not searching for it, that marked one of the slabs of stone at the height of the youngster's knee.

"Here we are, guv'nor!"

Locke came forward, and the long fingers of the detective ran over the stone. It seemed to lurch a trifle beneath the pressure of his hands.

"How does it work?" muttered Tom.

"I think I've twigged the stunt," answered Locke. He took a clasp-knife from his pocket, and ran the point of the blade along the top of the stone. Suddenly the strip of steel seemed to sink to the hilt in the solid masonry.

"Good!" said Locke. "I thought that was it."

He levered with the knife-blade, and suddenly the square of stone lurched forward. He caught it deftly.

"A false slab!" he explained. "See, it's only a couple of inches thick, though it looks, of course, like a solid block of stone, like the others."

He put the flat sheet of stone on the floor, and flashed his torch in through the yawning well of darkness it had left in the wall.

Jack, bending down at Locke's side, staring in with eager eyes, gave an excited shout.

"My only aunt!" he exclaimed.

The ray of torchlight was being reflected from a thousand glittering points, as of coloured fire. The reeling beam of light swept through the gloom, lighting up the neat, orderly piles of jewels on the shelves of the secret treasure-chamber.

(The vast hoard of treasure has been located—but the final struggle against the Wolves is yet to come! Look out for another full-of-thrills instalment next week, chums.)

Don't miss this, Boys!

RODNEY STONE

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

AN IMMORTAL DRAMA OF THE BOXING RING

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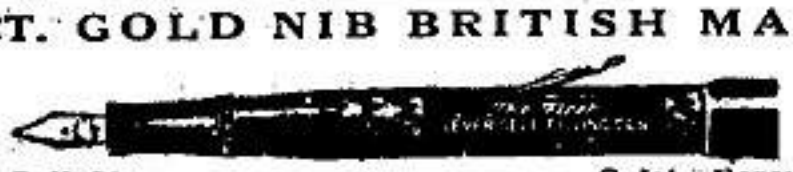

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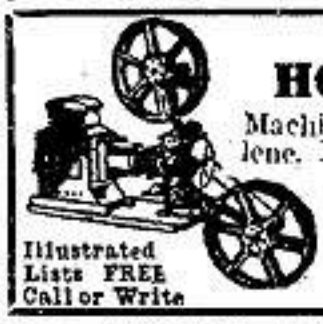

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