"THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!"

Thrilling Holiday Story of the Chums of Greyfriars inside.

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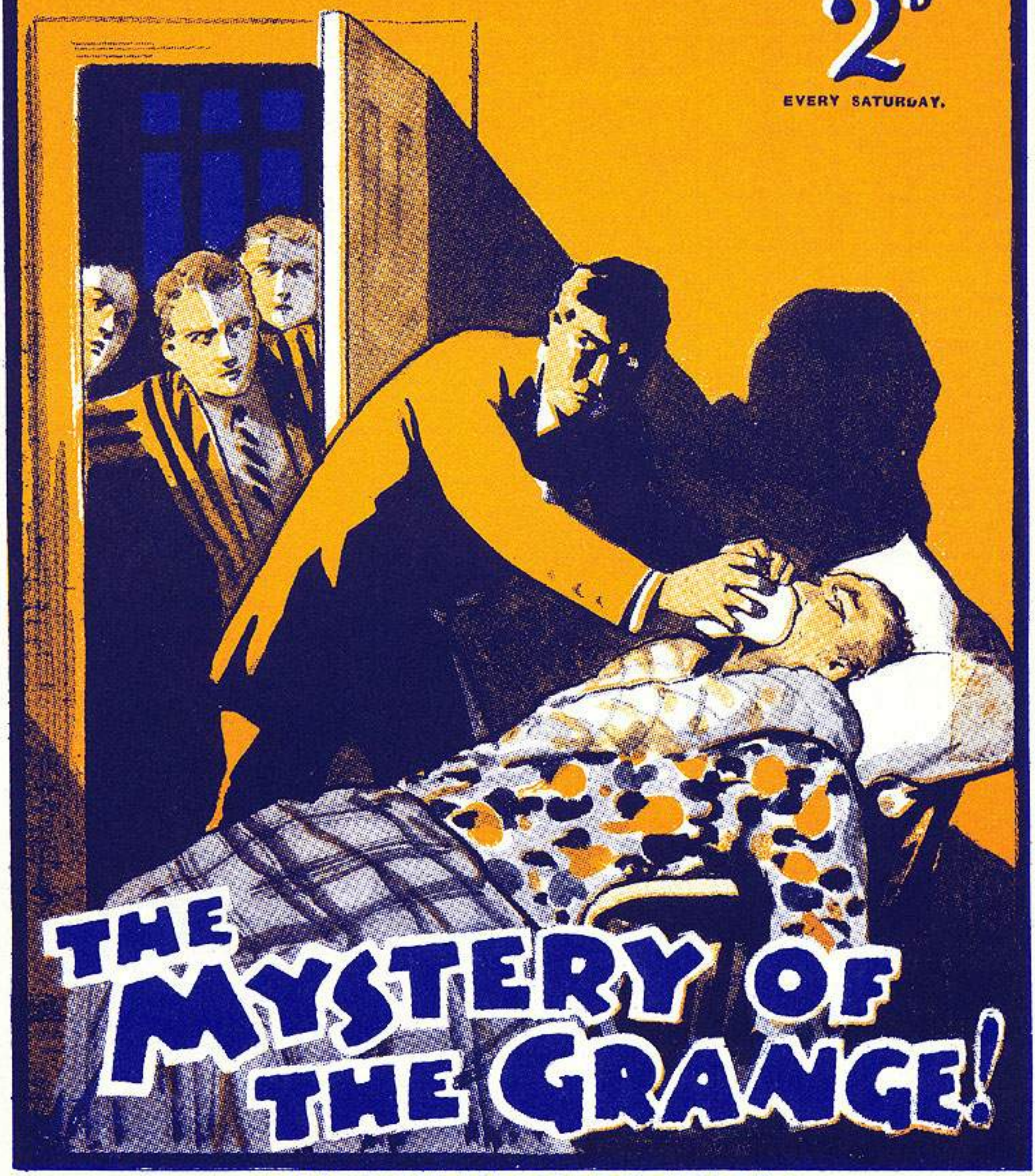
The MAGNET

2d

EVERY SATURDAY.



THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!

IN THE NICK OF TIME!

Another moment and Sir Richard Ravenspur would have breathed his last. But the unknown assassin had not reckoned on the timely intervention of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars! *(See the fine story inside.)*

Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address: The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

YOUR poor old Editor is getting hauled over the coals this week! I've got a couple of letters here taking me to task severely, so let us deal with them before we go on to other topics. The first one deals with

MORE ABOUT THE "MARIE CELESTE."

You will remember I said some time ago that the mystery of the "Marie Celeste" was never cleared up. Well, one of my girl readers, Rose Coleman, of Canonbury, London, writes to say that I have made a mistake, and she sends me a newspaper cutting to show that the mystery was alleged to be cleared up about five years ago.

For the benefit of any of you who did not read my previous remarks, I had better explain that the brigantine "Marie Celeste" set out from America and was found abandoned off the coast of Portugal about five weeks later. She was drifting with all sails set, but there was not a soul on board, no signs of a struggle, and none of her boats was missing. There were meals in the cabin, but every one of her crew, and the Captain's wife and daughter were missing! Where did they vanish?

The newspaper cutting which my reader kindly sent me says that the "Marie Celeste" came across a derelict which contained a large sum of gold. The crew seized this and made off in boats belonging to the derelict, leaving their own vessel drifting. Now, although the cutting states that this is the real explanation of the mystery, I would like to point out that very few sailors accept this explanation, and point out that if the case was as stated, the story would have been bound to leak out shortly afterwards. Furthermore, there is, so far as I know, no record of such a derelict with gold aboard it being in that neighbourhood—and the description of derelicts are all known, especially those which have treasure aboard!

TALL STORIES.

I don't doubt that the story was told by the man mentioned in the newspaper cutting—but remember that "old salts" have been claiming to be able to clear up the "Marie Celeste" mystery for years! And most of them swear that they were on the mystery ship, yet all their yarns are different. So I still stick to my statement that the mystery has never yet been cleared up.

Here are a few of the other stories told about this curious ship! The first has it that a giant octopus pulled everyone overboard and thus left the ship without a crew; another says that the vessel was attacked by pirates who took all the crew on board, then the "Marie Celeste" suddenly luffed in the wind and struck the other boat, sinking her with all hands. Yet another yarn has it that there was a madman on board who poisoned everyone else, threw them overboard, and then jumped in himself.

Another tale, told by a man who claimed to be the sole survivor, was that the captain and the mate went for a swimming match one day when the ship was becalmed, and all the rest of the crew were watching them from a frail structure in the bows. The structure gave way, and all hands fell overboard and could not manage to scramble back aboard. There are

PLENTY OF TALES TO CHOOSE FROM

in the above selection, and you are at liberty to believe whichever one you please! Now we'll get on to the next "grouse".

Ernest Jones, of North Wales, hauls me over the coals because I haven't published any of the humorous stories he had sent in. Of course it is impossible for me to print every story I receive, but I assure Ernest that my staff go through all the stories carefully, and then make their selection. The prizes are given weekly, and it may happen that the stories picked during the particular week that Ernest sent his in were better than his, consequently the senders of those stories got the prizes. Don't be discouraged, chums, if you don't get a prize the first time you send in. Remember we pick them week by week, and this week we have picked the following, for which a penknife has been sent to William J. Billingham, of 2, York Street, Kingsland Road, Bristol.

A little boy was sent by his mother to buy a haddock for tea. The fishmonger asked the youngster if he would like a dozen.

"No," said the boy, "I fink I'd better have a fick 'un, 'cos there's a lot of us!"

I've got plenty more of these useful prizes in stock, chums, so wade in with your jokes.

One of my Irish readers J. G., of Co. Armagh, wants to know

HOW DID IRELAND GET ITS SHAPE?

You've got to go back to when the world was young to understand that, J. G. As the earth cooled, it began to "buckle" and threw up mountains. Water settled in the hollows between the mountains and made the seas, while the mountains became the land. Thus the rough outline of continents and islands were formed. Since then the sea has been constantly eating away parts of the land, and that is why the West of Ireland, which is exposed to the terrific Atlantic storms, is eaten away so much. On the other hand, the sea often recedes from the land, and leaves great patches of land which were formerly covered. So, you see, countries are constantly changing their shape, although it takes thousands of years for the change to be noticed.

Down at Worthing on the South coast, there is an inn called

"THE HALF BRICK."

It's a curious name for an inn, isn't it? But the reason is that the inn was originally built on ground which the sea covers now, and all that was left of the old inn was a half brick. So, when the place was rebuilt farther inland, it was called "The Half Brick." Lowestoft on the East coast is another place where the sea is eating into the land, and it is carrying the ground from there to other places on the coast, thus slightly changing the outline of England.

Here's a question of interest to my Australian readers. Tom Croft, of Wallasey, has been reading a yarn about Australia, and wants to know:

WHAT IS A BUNYIP?

The Bunyip is a mythical creature which is said to have the head and shoulders of a giant and the body and extremities of a fish. It is said to terrorise the minds of the natives of Australia, and is supposed to live in the lake of Warringata, in Queensland.

It is a curious thing that in several parts of the world natives look upon certain lakes as being the homes of evil spirits. There is a lake in Northern Nigeria, whose name no white man has been able to pronounce or write, and which the natives will not venture near, much less bathe in it or set a canoe afloat on it.

Let's have a limerick now. This one comes from E. C. Harris, of 56, Birch Street, Moss Side, Manchester, who, of course, has been awarded a "Magnet" pocket wallet for his winning effort.

A crusty old josser named Popper
One day came a terrible cropper,
A bad egg well aimed
His dignity maimed
For it spattered all over his topper.

Just to wind up, here's next week's bumper programmee:

Full points, of course, go to Frank Richards who winds up his record-breaking series of thrillers with

"THE TERROR TRACKED DOWN!"

one of the most powerful stories of Harry Wharton & Co. ever told. In this superb yarn you'll meet an old favourite in Ferrers Locke, the famous Baker Street detective, who unravels the mystery of Ravenspur Grange in his own professional way. Thrill follows thrill in quick succession in this grand yarn, and if you miss it chums, you'll feel like kicking yourselves.

Turning from the serious to the humorous, we come to another of Dicky Nugent's "shockers," entitled:

"THE HEAD'S FUNNY TURN!"

dealing with the further adventures of Jack Jolly and his jolliboys at Winklesea. You'll laugh louder than you've ever laughed before, believe me, chums, when you read this latest "shocker" by our youthful laughter-merchant, Dicky.

Following this comes another instalment of

"THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE!"

Geo. E. Rochester's latest and greatest serial of the French Revolution, and then the second of our grand new series of flying articles which, together with another cheery "Come into the Office, Boys," completes this bumper programme.

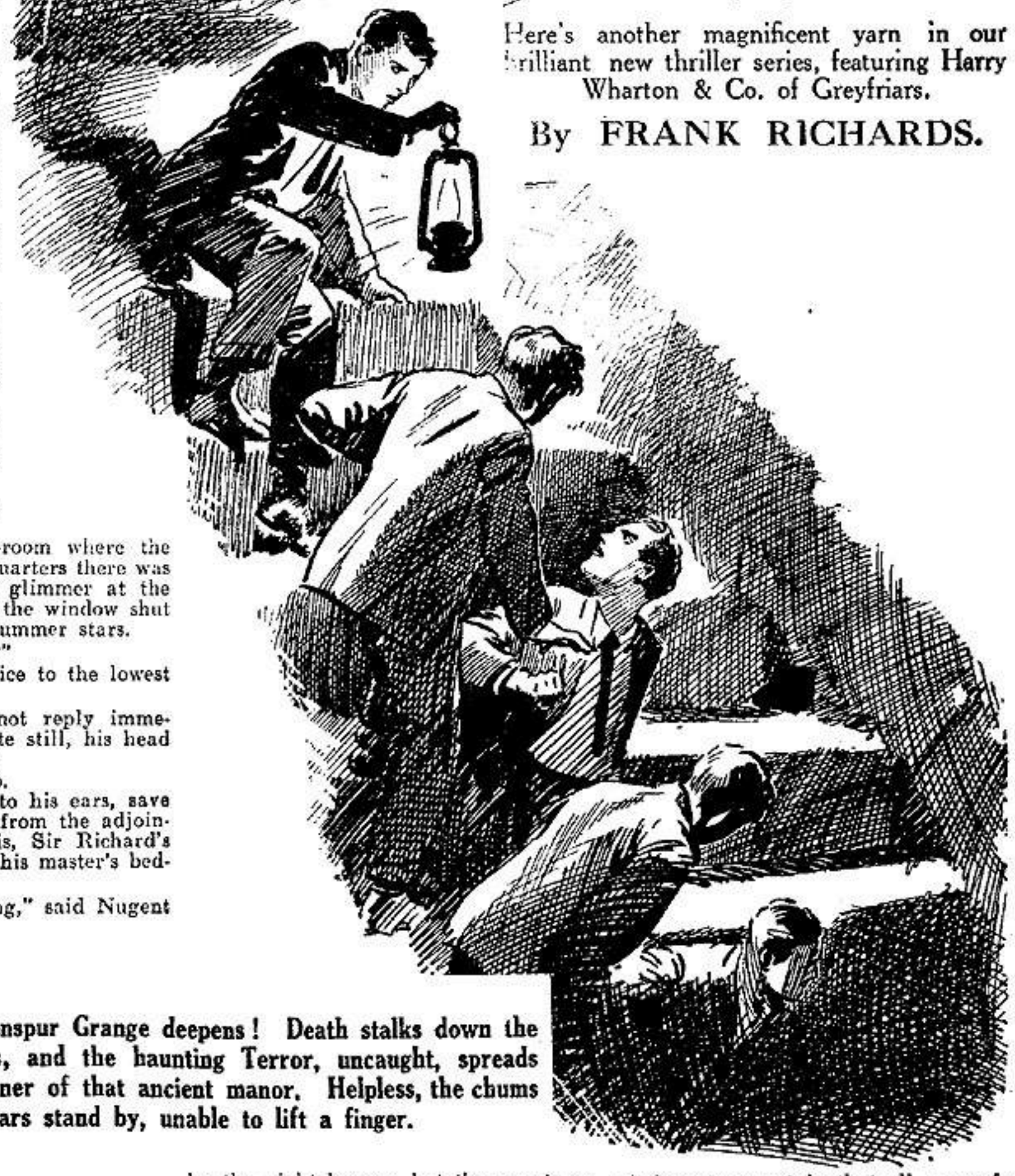
Au revoir till then, chums,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!

Here's another magnificent yarn in our brilliant new thriller series, featuring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The mystery of Ravenspur Grange deepens! Death stalks down the long oaken corridors, and the haunting Terror, uncaught, spreads dread into every corner of that ancient manor. Helpless, the chums of Greyfriars stand by, unable to lift a finger.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Man at the Window!

"HARRY!"

It was a faint whisper in the darkness.

Harry Wharton started and opened his eyes.

"What——"

"Quiet!" whispered Frank Nugent.

Silently Harry Wharton sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and looked at his chum. Nugent was a dim shadow by his bedside. But even in the gloom he could see that Frank's face was pale and tense.

There was a glimmer of light through the half-open door from the adjoining room. That room was Sir Richard Ravenspur's bed-room, where the master of Ravenspur Grange lay asleep.

A shaded light burned there.

But in the dressing-room where the two juniors had their quarters there was no light, save for the glimmer at the door. The curtains at the window shut out the gleam of the summer stars.

"What is it, Frank?"

Wharton sunk his voice to the lowest of whispers.

Frank Nugent did not reply immediately. He stood quite still, his head bent a little, listening.

Wharton listened, too.

But no sound came to his ears, save some slight movement from the adjoining room, where Jervis, Sir Richard's valet, sat watching by his master's bedside.

"I—I heard something," said Nugent at last.

"In the house?"

"Outside, I think."

"But——"

"My uncle's window——"

"Nobody could get to Sir Richard's window, old man," whispered Wharton. "It's thirty feet from the ground, at least."

"I know. But—— There it is again!" breathed Nugent.

The window of the dressing-room, though curtained, was open; the summer night was warm. To Wharton's intently listening ears there came some faint sound of a rustle from without.

"Only the wind, Frank."

"Perhaps. But——"

"You're nervous, old man," said Harry soothingly. "Haven't you been asleep?"

"No. That was not the wind, Harry."

Wharton smiled faintly, and drew himself from the bed. The curtains at the open window were stirring, moved by the night breeze; but they made no sound. The faint rustle the juniors had heard came from outside the house.

Harry Wharton stepped to the communicating door and looked into Sir Richard's room.

The master of the Grange was asleep. In the shaded light Harry could see his pale face on the pillow.

Jervis was wide awake. Wharton made no sound; but the man's glance turned towards him as he looked in.

Harry glanced from the doorway towards the windows of the baronet's room. There were three, all of them closed. Only in the middle window the small square ventilating pane was open.

Wharton shook his head.

The windows, he knew, were securely fastened. Packington, the butler, had examined them before leaving his master for the night, and had gone out on the little iron-railed balcony outside the windows to ascertain that all was safe. Wharton had seen him secure the window-fastenings; and to make assurance doubly sure he had looked at them himself after the butler had gone. Even had the secret assassin who sought the baronet's life succeeded in climbing to the balcony he could not have opened the windows from outside; at all events, not without giving instant alarm.

Wharton turned back to the dressing-room. Nugent, standing there in the gloom, was still listening, with painful intentness.

"It's all right, Frank!" muttered Wharton. "Your uncle's asleep, and Jervis wide awake."

Nugent, without replying, stepped to the dressing-room window. Quietly he pulled aside the curtains and looked out into the starry August night.

Wharton followed him.

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So far as he could see all was well; but he was catching something of his chum's uneasiness now.

The mystery of Ravenspur Grange hung heavy on the hearts and the minds of the Famous Five of Greyfriars.

By whose hand the baronet's life had been attempted, and for what reason, they did not know, and could not begin to guess.

Their suspicions had turned upon his brother, but Captain Ravenspur now lay in a nursing-home at Leyford between life and death, the victim of the poison he had swallowed, that had been intended for the baronet.

Almost at the cost of his life his innocence had been proved.

It was impossible to suspect him now. But whom else to suspect was a mystery.

Inspector Cook had, it appeared probable, at least, formed some theory that might have led to a discovery, but the inspector had been shot dead in the house, and what he had known or suspected could never now be known to others.

The shadow of mystery and crime hung over Ravenspur Grange.

It was no wonder that Frank Nugent could not sleep. It was no wonder he started at a sound.

Some man unknown sought his uncle's life, and that man was still at large, unsuspected. Either he was an inmate of the Grange, or he had some easy and secret access to the old house. The faintest sound in the silence of the night was enough to alarm Frank, to thrill his nerves with the thought that the hidden hand was about to strike again.

"Frank, old man," muttered Wharton, "you're nervous! I tell you nobody could reach your uncle's window without a ladder thirty feet long——"

"I know. But——"

"But what?"

"Listen!" breathed Nugent.

Again that faint rustle from without; a little clearer now that Frank had drawn the curtains aside from the open window.

Wharton started.

That could not be the wind in the trees. It was a rustle from the thick old ivy that clothed the wall of the ancient house. And the night breeze was light; it was strange that it should stir the ivy so much.

"You heard that, Harry?" breathed Frank.

"Yes. But it was the ivy. But the ivy's cropped close to the wall, old man—it would not hold a cat, let alone a man."

Nugent did not answer. He looked from the window and along the ivied wall towards the windows of the baronet's room.

A narrow balcony, not more than three feet in depth, ran along under the three windows. A railing of heavy old wrought iron surrounded it. The balcony jutted out, and below it was a sheer drop of thirty feet to the terrace before the house. Nugent stared towards the balcony, and caught his breath. He grasped Wharton's arm, and pressed it so suddenly and hard that Harry barely suppressed an exclamation.

"Frank! What——"

"Look!"

Harry Wharton put his head from the window and followed with his eyes the gaze of his chum. He started, and his heart throbbed. From the iron railing of the balcony outside Sir Richard Ravenspur's windows something long and sinuous hung, stirring gently in the wind. It was a rope ladder. Secured with a pair of hooks to the balcony rail the long thin rope ladder hung there, swaying, causing the faint occasional rustle that had reached Frank Nugent's restless ears.

"A rope ladder!" panted Nugent. "To my uncle's window! Harry, there is someone on the balcony!"

Dark in the dark shadow of the wall a figure could be seen, flattened against the centre window of the baronet's room. And the horrified eyes of the juniors caught for a second the glint of steel in the gleam of the stars—the glint of the barrel of a revolver.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

HARRY WHARTON stood, for the instant, spellbound.

But only for the instant.

In that instant he knew what was happening—he knew what was intended.

He turned and dashed towards the communicating doorway. In a flash he was in Sir Richard's room.

The windows were shut as before; no attempt had been made to open them. Jervis, wakeful, watchful, started to his feet, staring at the schoolboy. Wharton did not look at him. His eyes were on the centre window, where the small ventilating pane was open.

Through the little opening, not more than six inches in extent, something had been thrust in. It was the barrel of a revolver.

The middle window was exactly in a line with the old canopied bed occupied by Sir Richard Ravenspur.

The muzzle of the revolver that had been inserted at the ventilating pane bore direct on the baronet as he lay asleep, his pale face and closed eyes visible in the shaded light.

Behind the revolver, unseen by Wharton, an eye gleamed along the barrel, as aim was taken.

The assassin, standing on the balcony without, was taking slow and deliberate aim, the barrel of the revolver resting on the brass frame of the ventilating square, his left hand holding up the little hinged pane to clear his line of vision.

How long he would have dwelt on his aim, how long the sleeping man would have hovered on the brink of death, could not be told; for Harry Wharton acted promptly.

He caught up a hassock, and hurled it with all the strength of his arm at the middle window.

Crash!

It was a large and heavy hassock, and it struck the window with terrific force. Whole panes were smashed out by the concussion.

Crack!

Wharton heard a cry of rage and alarm from outside as the revolver rang. Whether the man had been about to fire, or whether the sudden crash had startled him into pulling the trigger, he did not know. At all events, the revolver was fired without aim, and the bullet shot up to the ceiling with a crash of shattered plaster.

Sir Richard Ravenspur, awakened by the crash of the breaking window and the report of the revolver, started up in bed.

"What——"

"Help!" shouted Jervis.

The bed-room door was thrown open, and the Leyford constable, posted in the corridor without, rushed in, truncheon in hand.

Harry Wharton dashed to the smashed window.

Outside, on the balcony, through the jagged gap, he had a glimpse of a dark figure scrambling wildly over the iron rail to the rope ladder. The alarmed assassin was making his escape without the delay of a second.

Wharton wrenched at the window.

The middle one of the three was a french window, but it was fastened with a catch and two bolts, and it was some moments before Harry Wharton could tear it open and rush out on the balcony.

Nugent was at his heels as he ran out.

"Stop him!" panted Frank.

But the dark figure was gone. The swaying of the rope ladder showed that he had not yet reached the ground.

The two juniors stared down over the railing with thumping hearts. Half-way to the ground the dark figure was to be seen, scrambling desperately downward, the rope ladder swinging wildly to and fro in his haste.

"After him!" panted Nugent.

He clambered on the railing.

"Stop!" Harry Wharton caught his arm. "He's armed, Frank—a revolver!"

"I don't care!"

Nugent tore himself loose and scrambled over the railing and grasped the rope ladder.

He swung himself furiously downward. The man below, who had not yet reached the ground, gave an alarmed upward glance as the rope ladder shook above him. Wharton, staring down, saw a face with a sandy moustache and thick sandy hair under a closely-pulled cap, a face he had seen before. But it was only for a second. The man, still at a distance from the earth, dropped the rest of the way and landed like a cat on the terrace.

Wharton swung himself down after his chum.

The dark figure was running along the terrace. But it stopped suddenly, turned, and the right arm was thrown up.

Crack!

Harry Wharton felt the wind of the bullet as it passed.

Crack!

The man fired a second time, and there was a cry from Nugent. He slithered down the rope ladder and fell heavily to the ground.

"Frank!" shrieked Wharton.

In a moment he was on the terrace beside his chum, bending over him. The dark figure was running again, vanishing round a corner of the building But Wharton did not give him a glance. All his thoughts were for his comrade.

"Frank!"

Nugent raised himself on his elbow. He was dizzy and panting heavily.

"You're hurt, Frank——"

"No!" panted Nugent.

"I—thought——"

"Something grazed me—a bullet, I suppose. I slid down!" gasped Nugent. "I've had a tumble—but I'm not hurt." His hand went to his cheek, and his fingers came away red. "Only a scratch——"

Wharton panted with relief.

The fleeing man had fired back at the figures on the swaying rope ladder, ruthlessly reckless of the result, so that he gained time to make his escape.

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The second bullet had grazed Frank's cheek, drawing a streak of crimson. His escape had been narrow.

Wharton helped him to his feet.

"Thank goodness it's no worse, Frank——"

"Come on!"

"But——"

"Come on, I say!" hissed Frank. "This is the first time we've had a chance at him—come on, I tell you!"

He raced away along the terrace.

Harry Wharton followed him fast.

The juniors were unarmed; and the fugitive was armed and desperate and utterly reckless of bloodshed. The man who had shot the scarred man by the park wall of the Grange, the man who had shot Inspector Cook dead in the old gallery, the man who had thrice attempted the life of the baronet, was not likely to hesitate at murder to secure his own escape. It was madness to pursue him, but Frank Nugent thought of nothing but seizing on the villain who had attempted his uncle's life, and Wharton did not think for a moment of deserting his chum. He rushed after Nugent, and they darted round the corner of the building together.

Crack!

They had a glimpse of a panting, crouching figure in the shadows as the shot was fired. But it was fired almost at random, as they came racing round the corner, and it missed by a yard or more. The next instant Harry Wharton crashed into the crouching figure, and another shot missed him as the man went over under the shock.

"Frank—help——"

A heavy blow from the barrel of the revolver missed Wharton's head but struck his shoulder. At the same moment he grasped at the struggling figure, and his fingers closed tenaciously on the sandy hair.

Nugent sprang to his aid, only to be hurled aside by the unknown as he darted away from Wharton.

Wharton staggered to his feet, still holding in his hand the sandy mop of hair he had grasped. It was a wig—evidently a disguise worn by the assassin—and it had come off in his grasp as the man wrenched himself away.

Wharton reeled against the wall. His shoulder was aching terribly from the blow he had received.

Nugent ran on a few paces and stopped. The running figure had vanished now in the shadows of the night. The man whose disguise Wharton held had fled with a desperate burst of speed, and he was gone.

Nugent gritted his teeth and turned back.

"Harry——"

"All right!" panted Wharton. "Only a knock! He's gone."

"We may find him yet."

"He's gone, old chap! Let's get in."

By this time the whole house was in alarm.

Lights gleamed from almost every window, and voices were calling and shouting.

The great door of Ravenspur Grange was flung open, and light streamed out on the terrace and the shadowy gardens. A Leyford constable and several menservants came running out.

But the search for the escaping man was unavailing. He had vanished in the shadows of the night; and only the rope-ladder, still swinging from the balcony outside the baronet's window, remained to tell how he had come and gone.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man from Scotland Yard!

SIR RICHARD RAVENSPUR sat in a deep armchair in a sunny morning-room, looking out on the terrace of Ravenspur Grange.

Outside, the August sun blazed down on the Grange. Across the sunny window a shadow passed at intervals. It was that of a Leyford constable, pasing the terrace.

A bitter smile crossed Sir Richard's face as he noted it.

The baronet's look was pale and weary.

He was under guard now, every hour of the day and the night. Outside the window of the morning-room one constable paced the terrace; outside the door of the room another was on duty.

Harry Wharton scrambled over the railing, grasped the rope-ladder, and swung himself down in the wake of Frank Nugent. The dark figure, running along the terrace, stopped suddenly and turned. Crack! The man fired, and there was a cry from Nugent as he slithered down the rope-ladder and fell heavily to the ground! (*See Chapter* 2.)

In the room with Sir Richard were the chums of Greyfriars. Their faces were very serious.

The latest attempt on the life of their host had only deepened the strange mystery of the Grange.

The rope-ladder, left behind by the unknown in his hurried flight, had been locked in Sir Richard's safe with the wig that Wharton had torn from the head of the escaping man. Both, it was hoped, would prove clues to the identity of the secret assassin. How the rope-ladder had been attached to the balcony rail was a perplexing problem. It seemed impossible that it could have been placed there from below at a distance of thirty feet from the ground. But if it had been placed in readiness from above, by whose hand had it been placed there—and how? Not for one moment had watchfulness relaxed in the baronet's room. And it was only from that room that the balcony could be reached.

That either the assassin or a confederate was in the household seemed certain. Yet there was no member of the household upon whom suspicion could fix.

"Frank!"

Sir Richard broke a long silence at last.

Frank Nugent turned to him at once.

"Yes, uncle?"

"You saved my life last night, my boy—you and Harry. But you ran risks that I should never have allowed——"

Nugent shook his head.

"That's nothing," he said.

"Nothing at all, sir!" said Wharton. "The nothingfulness is terrific, honoured sahib," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We are all ready to run the most preposterous risks, sir."

Sir Richard smiled faintly.

"You boys are on holiday," he said. "I had hoped that you would spend a few pleasant days with me here. As it has turned out, you have come into a house of mystery and crime and danger. I do not wish to ask you to leave me, but for your own sakes I think you had better not remain."

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I mean, we're sticking it out, sir."

"My dear boy——"

"We're jolly well not going!" said Johnny Bull. "Not till that villain has been found and put under lock and key."

"You are in danger here," said Sir Richard gravely. "I cannot allow that, my boys."

"We're staying—unless you turn us out, sir," said Harry.

"I need not say that I should be glad for you to stay—that your presence is a comfort to me and helps to secure my safety," said Sir Richard. "But——"

"The butfulness is superfluous, sir," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The stayfulness is the proper caper; and we shall not departfully bunk unless you bestow upon us the esteemed order of the boot."

Sir Richard Ravenspur smiled again and was silent. There was no doubt that he desired the schoolboys to remain. Their presence in the house had saved his life, and it was an added security to him so long as the secret assassin was unknown and at large.

"Ring the bell for Packington, Frank," said the baronet, after another silence.

Frank Nugent touched the bell.

Packington, the butler, entered with his noiseless, limping tread. His limp seemed more pronounced than usual as he crossed the room to the baronet's chair. The juniors understood that that limp was the result of a wound received in the War, and they had, in consequence, a very sympathetic feeling towards Packington.

"You rang, sir?"

"Yes, Packington." Sir Richard Ravenspur glanced at the clock. "Inspector Garnish, of Scotland Yard, will be here at twelve. You will show him in to me immediately he arrives. See that the car is sent to Leyford Station for him."

"Very good, sir!"

Sir Richard glanced at him kindly.

"You do not seem so well as usual this morning, Packington. I hope your old wound is not troubling you."

The butler coughed apologetically.

"I joined in the search last night, sir, and rather foolishly forgot that I am no longer on the active list. I had a fall, and it hurt my leg a little. But it is nothing, sir."

"You must take care, Packington. It would be better, perhaps, for you to rest. And you may give James my instructions concerning Inspector Garnish."

"You are very kind, sir. With your permission I should like to retire to my room for a time."

"Certainly, certainly, Packington."

"Thank you, sir!"

The butler glided from the room.

Sir Richard Ravenspur turned to the juniors again.

"This case is now being taken up by Scotland Yard," he said. "I have been informed that the detective will be here this morning about twelve. He will probably desire to question you boys, so you had better be at hand."

"Certainly," said Harry.

"In the meantime, you must go out into the air," added the baronet kindly.

"We're not leaving you alone, uncle," said Frank.

"No fear!" added Johnny Bull.

"The no-fearfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh solemnly.

"My dear boys, there are two constables on guard at the door and the window. You need have no uneasiness for me."

"We're on duty, too, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"But really——" said Sir Richard.

"I'm staying here," said Frank. "You fellows get a run in the park."

"Right-ho!"

The four juniors left the morning-room and went into the hall. Packington, the butler, was there speaking to James, no doubt giving him his instructions regarding the expected detective from Scotland Yard.

The juniors strolled out on the terrace.

"Excuse me, young gentlemen."

The juniors started as they found Packington at their elbow.

"You move like a ghost, Packington," said Harry, with a smile, as he turned his head. "What is it?"

"You will excuse me, sir," said Packington deferentially. "I thought perhaps you might be going into the park——"

A SURREY READER STEPS IN

this week and carries off a "Magnet" pocket-knife for the following amusing joke:—

NO WONDER!

Two anglers were fishing in a small stream, and the fish seemed very slow to bite. To while away the time one of them turned to his companion and asked:

"If a herring and a half cost three halfpence how much would one cost?"

The other, after thinking for a while, took a piece of chalk from his coat pocket and started to work it out on a small footbridge that crossed the stream. Having covered the bridge with figures, he returned to his friend, and said:

"Would you mind repeating that question again?"

"Yes. A herring and—"

"Stop!" cried the former. "No wonder I couldn't do it, I'd been reckoning mackerel!"

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You must have heard a good joke some time or other, chum. Send it along to me—it may win you a useful pocket-knife.

"That's it," said Harry, with a nod. "We're going to have another look at the old hunting-lodge."

"The old lodge in the park, sir? Poor Mr. Cook told me that that spot had been thoroughly searched, sir."

"That's so," said Bob Cherry. "But you never know your luck, Packington. It was at the old lodge that we saw that sandy-haired fellow who called himself John Smith—the fellow whose wig Wharton grabbed off last night. He had some reason for being there and we may find out what it was."

Packington coughed.

"I trust, young gentlemen, that you will not think it a liberty if I make a suggestion," he said.

"Of course not," said Harry. "We know that you are devoted to Sir Richard, Packington. Say anything you like."

"I confess, sir, that I am very uneasy about my master," said Packington. "I am aware that two constables are on duty, but"—he hesitated—"I do not wholly trust to that, sir. My leg is so painful after the fall I received while joining in the search last night that I should like very much to take advantage of Sir Richard's kind permission to rest for a time, as I am not needed till lunch. But——"

"Yes," said Harry.

"But I could not rest in ease, sir, unless my master's safety is being watched over," said Packington. "I fear every moment that some fresh attempt may be made."

He paused again, with a distressed expression on his face.

"I understand," said Harry.

"I feel that I am taking a liberty in suggesting a course of action to you, sir," said the butler apologetically. "My uneasiness for a very kind master must be my excuse. But, if you young gentlemen would remain near the house, near Sir Richard's room, until the detective arrives——"

He paused and coughed.

"Please excuse me, sir, for so far forgetting my place!" he said.

"Not at all," said Harry. "The fact is, I think you are right. Nugent is staying with Sir Richard; but we cannot be too careful. If it will relieve your mind, Packington, we'll stay here on the terrace till the detective comes."

"You relieve my mind very much, sir" said Packington.

"That's all right."

"Thank you, sir—thank you very sincerely, sir!"

The butler glided back into the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at one another and smiled.

"After all, the old lodge will keep," said Harry. "We've searched it several times, and found nothing. May as well wait here till Mr. Garnish blows in. I'm rather curious to see a real live Scotland Yard detective."

"Same here," agreed Bob.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

It was pleasant enough on the terrace, strolling in the morning sunshine. The juniors passed the baronet's window several times, and exchanged a few words with the Leyford constable on duty there.

It was about an hour later that a figure was seen coming up the drive to the house.

The juniors turned their attention at once to the newcomer.

As the Scotland Yard detective was to come down by train, they expected him to arrive at the Grange in a car from the station; but this man had evidently arrived on foot. At all events, the juniors had seen and heard nothing of a car.

He was a man of rather bulky frame, dressed in a grey lounge suit, with a bowler hat. His face was ruddy in complexion, with light eyebrows, and a toothbrush moustache, and he wore gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"Is that the man, I wonder?" murmured Bob Cherry. "If so, he's early. It's not twelve yet."

The man in the bowler hat glanced at the juniors as he went directly towards the door of the Grange. They moved in the same direction, and reached the doorway in time to see him hand a card to James. He was immediately shown into the morning-room where Sir Richard Ravenspur awaited him.

As James came away again, after showing him in, Harry Wharton spoke to the footman.

"Is that Inspector Garnish, James?"

"Yes, sir," answered James.

"So he's come!" said Bob. "Better wait here, you men; he will want to see us pretty soon."

And the juniors waited.

(Continued on page 8.)

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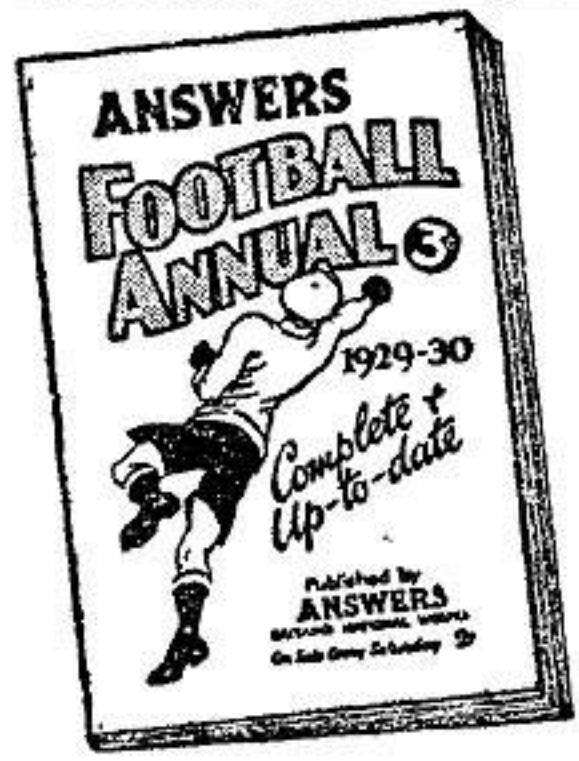

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THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!

(*Continued from page* 6.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Unknown!

"INSPECTOR GARNISH!"

Sir Richard Ravenspur rose from his chair.

The baronet was still suffering from the slight wound he had received almost a week ago, but it was no longer necessary for him to keep to his room. Only a slight paleness in his face, a slowness in his movements, showed that he was not in his usual health.

He greeted the man from Scotland Yard courteously.

Frank Nugent eyed the man with some curiosity. He retired to the end of the room, to leave the detective alone with Sir Richard.

But after a few words with the baronet, the detective glanced round at him.

"This is one of the schoolboys who are staying in the house, I take it, sir?" he asked, speaking in a sharp, incisive voice.

"My nephew, Frank Nugent, Mr. Garnish," answered Sir Richard. "He will have a statement to make to you."

"No doubt," said the detective. "But I should prefer, in the first place, to hear your own statement, Sir Richard, and I will see the schoolboys and the servants later."

"As you please," said the baronet. "Do you mean that you desire my nephew not to remain?"

"I should certainly prefer to discuss the matter with you in private, in the first place, sir," said Mr. Garnish.

"Very good! Leave us for the present, Frank."

"I'll wait in the hall till I am called, then, uncle," said Nugent.

"That will do," said Mr. Garnish.

Frank Nugent left the morning-room and drew the door shut behind him. Sir Richard sat down again.

Across the sunny window fell a momentary shadow. The detective glanced at it.

He blinked in the bright sunlight from the window.

"Have you any objection, sir, to my drawing the curtain a little?" he asked. "My eyes are weak, and the light is strong."

"Please make yourself comfortable," answered Sir Richard.

"Thank you!"

Sir Richard was sitting with his back to the tall window on the terrace. Mr. Garnish rose, passed him, and stepped to the window.

The bright sunlight was shut out as the detective drew the curtain across.

Sir Richard waited for him to return to his chair, which had been placed facing that of the baronet.

He heard the step of the man close behind the high back of his own chair.

What happened next seemed to Sir Richard Ravenspur like a wild and terrible nightmare. He was taken so utterly by surprise that it seemed to him that he must be dreaming.

A sudden grasp was laid upon him from behind, pinning him down against the high back of the chair.

His lips opened, but before a cry could leave them something was jammed over his mouth and nose—something soft and clinging, from which came a strange sickly smell.

Chloroform!

That word flashed through Sir Richard Ravenspur's dazed brain.

For an instant he sat motionless, helpless, too amazed to stir; but only for an instant.

Then he struggled wildly.

His dizzy eyes saw a face before him—the face of the man who had come, as he stated, from Scotland Yard, but strangely altered in expression now.

The gold-rimmed pince-nez were gone, and two deep, fierce eyes gleamed with a savage light at the baronet. A hand that seemed of iron pinned him back in his chair, another hand held the chloroformed pad with ruthless strength over his mouth and nose.

Sir Richard grasped at his assailant. But the sickly fumes of the chloroform, filling mouth and nose, were already overcoming him.

With shut teeth and gleaming eyes the man pinned him down, a prisoner in the deep chair, while the chloroform sucked away his senses.

Through the baronet's dazed and dizzy mind, as he resisted, flashed the knowledge that he was in the grasp of his secret enemy—face to face at last with the desperate man who sought his life.

The assassin, who knew, as it seemed, all that went on in the house, had known that the Scotland Yard detective was expected that morning, and he had come in the place of the man from London. In a deep disguise, with a false card, he had gained admission to the baronet's presence, and had contrived to be left alone with him. Outside the door, hardly a dozen paces away, were Frank Nugent and his comrades—but the shut door was between, and they knew nothing, suspected nothing. It was not a firearm that the dastard thought of using now—a shot would have alarmed the whole house—would have brought two policemen and the five juniors rushing into the room. A sound would have been fatal to him. But he was making no sound. Silent, ruthless, implacable, he pinned the baronet in his chair, with the chloroform pad doing its deadly work.

One wild, fierce effort, Sir Richard made, as he felt his senses leaving him under the penetrating drug. He almost succeeded in throwing off his assailant; for a second his mouth came free of the pad.

But it was only for a second.

With a low, almost inaudible snarl, the man who called himself Inspector Garnish of Scotland Yard threw his whole weight on the baronet, crushing him back limply into the deep chair. The chloroform pad was jammed more tightly over mouth and nose, and this time it did not relax.

The baronet's struggles grew feebler.

His senses were swimming, his eyes losing their vision; the savage face before him seemed to fleet in the air, like the face of a haunting demon. He knew that he was losing his consciousness, and that from insensibility to death was but a step. He still resisted, but his struggling was feebler and feebler, and never for a moment did the iron grasp on him relax.

There was no sound in the morning-room. No sound to reach the ears outside the shut door, no sound to reach the constable pacing the terrace, shut off from view by the curtain that had been drawn across the sunny window. Silence, a terrible silence, reigned in the room where the baronet still struggled feebly, faintly, in murderous hands.

His struggles ceased at last.

Consciousness was leaving him.

The fierce, ruthless face that bent over him was lost now in a cloudy mist. Slowly but surely Sir Richard Ravenspur sank into insensibility.

"At last!"

As in a dream he heard the low muttered words.

"At last!"

But it was no longer the voice the pretended detective had spoken in. The assassin, in the moment of assured success, had uttered the words in his own natural voice. And even as his senses fled Sir Richard knew that that voice was familiar to him, that he had heard it before. It was someone he knew, someone he had known, who was seeking his life, whose ruthless hands were driving him mercilessly into the mists of death.

That was the last conscious thought of Sir Richard Ravenspur. The drug had done its work, and he sank into utter oblivion. Senseless, helpless, he lay under the murderous hands, but still the grasp on him did not relax, still the chloroformed pad was pitilessly pressed

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Wharton's grasp was almost upon the secret assassin, when the man darted round the high-backed chair in which the baronet sat, and eluded the schoolboy. "Collar him!" shrieked Wharton. Crash! Smash! There was a shattering of glass as the fugitive leaped through the window to the terrace. (See Chapter 5.)

over mouth and nostrils, to be held there, shutting off the breath of life, until the dastardly deed was fully accomplished.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Nick of Time!

BIZZZZZZZZZZZZZ!

James went to the telephone-cabinet that opened off the hall.

Harry Wharton & Co. were loitering in the hall. Frank Nugent had joined his chums, coming from the morning-room where the new arrival had been shown into the baronet's presence.

The Famous Five expected to be called into the room before long, as of course, the detective from Scotland Yard would desire to hear their statements.

They were, in fact, a little surprised that Mr. Garnish considered it necessary to interview the baronet in private in the first place. However, that was the detective's business.

James had left the door of the telephone-room open when he went in to take the call. They saw him give a kind of jump, and stand staring at the telephone with a blank look on his face.

His startled tones as he answered reached the juniors.

"What name did you say?"

The reply, of course, was audible only to James. But it made him jump again.

"There's some mistake, sir," said James. "That gentleman is already here, sir, and with Sir Richard now."

Holding the receiver in his hand, James glanced round at the juniors in the hall in helpless bewilderment.

"This here is some trick, young gentlemen," said James. "There was a trick played on Mr. Packington on the telephone the other day, and this here is another."

"What's the trouble?" asked Harry Wharton, approaching the open doorway.

"Man says he's Inspector Garnish."

"What?"

"Stuck up at Leyford station, and can't get a taxi, he says," said James. "Of course he can't; I've never heard of a taxi in Leyford, for one. Might as well ask for an aeroplane."

"Inspector Garnish?" ejaculated Wharton.

"So he says, sir!" James permitted himself a grin. "It's some fellow playing tricks, not knowing that the gentleman from Scotland Yard is here already, sir."

And James was about to jam the receiver back on the hooks and cut off the importunate gentleman at Leyford when Wharton caught his arm and stopped him in time.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry breathlessly.

"It's only gammon, sir," said James. "Didn't I show Inspector Garnish in to Sir Richard only a few minutes ago, sir?"

"Let me take the call."

"Certainly, sir, if you like."

Wharton took the receiver from the footman's hand.

"P'raps I'd better call Mr. Packington, sir," suggested James. "But he's lying down with a bad leg, sir, and has his door locked as usual."

"It's all right," said Harry.

He put the receiver to his ear and motioned the footman to be silent. His chums gathered round him with tense faces. They were utterly amazed to learn that a man calling himself Inspector Garnish of Scotland Yard had rung up the Grange. Inspector Garnish of Scotland Yard was, or should have been, in the morning-room with Sir Richard Ravenspur at that very moment.

But if this was some trickster on the telephone it was possible that something might be learned from him, and if it was not—— Wharton knew that the man from Scotland Yard was expected about twelve, and that the man with Sir Richard had therefore arrived early. With a vague alarm in his mind Wharton spoke into the transmitter.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" came back a rather surly voice.

"Who is speaking?"

"Inspector Garnish, of Scotland Yard."

"From where?"

"I've said already I'm speaking from Leyford railway station," came the answer in testy tones. "I understood that a car was to be sent for me. There is no cab to be had here. Not even a horse cab. How am I to reach the Grange? I am told it is more than a mile distant. What?"

"A car must have been sent," said Harry. "I heard Sir Richard Ravenspur tell his butler that a car was to be sent."

"There is no car here!" snapped the voice.

Wharton's brain almost reeled. There was every sign of genuineness about the man who was speaking on the telephone. If it was a trick it was impossible to imagine any purpose that it could possibly serve.

But if the man from Scotland Yard was at Leyford railway station in the telephone-box there, who was now with Sir Richard in the morning-room?

"Look here," panted Wharton, "if you're Inspector Garnish——"

"If!" snapped the voice irritably. "I am Inspector Garnish! Am I not expected at Ravenspur Grange? What?"

"Yes, yes; but——"

"Well, if I am to walk, I will walk!" snapped the voice. "But I understood most distinctly that a means of conveyance would be provided."

"Inspector Garnish is now with Sir Richard Ravenspur, here in this house!" gasped Wharton.

"What! What!" It was like an angry bark on the telephone. "What! What nonsense are you talking, eh?"

"A man calling himself by that name came here five minutes ago, and is now with Sir Richard!"

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you——"

"Rubbish!" barked the voice. "If any man has come to Ravenspur Grange calling himself by my name he is an impostor, sir—an impostor! He is up to no good, sir! You had better keep an eye on him. What?"

Wharton dropped the receiver.

"Quick, you men!" he panted.

He tore across the hall.

Either the man on the telephone or the man now shut up with Sir Richard Ravenspur was an impostor, that was clear. Which was the cheat, Wharton could not determine; but he was taking no chances in a matter of life or death.

He rushed across to the door of the morning-room, his comrades, their faces full of excitement, at his heels, James standing and staring after them in blank bewilderment.

Wharton reached the door and flung it wide open. He rushed into the room.

"Sir Richard! Oh, good heavens!"

There was a snarl, as the man who was bending over the baronet in the armchair turned his head round towards the door.

One glance was enough for the juniors.

Sir Richard Ravenspur lay back in his chair, senseless, and the man who had called himself Inspector Garnish was holding the pad pressed over his face. The sickly odour of chloroform was in the room; the atmosphere was heavy with it. That was more than enough.

The man at the station was Inspector Garnish. The man who had come to the Grange in his name was the secret assassin.

Wharton rushed right at him, his eyes blazing, his fists clenched.

With a snarl the man sprang away from his victim.

Wharton's grasp was almost upon him when he darted round the high-backed chair in which the baronet sat, and eluded the schoolboy.

"Collar him!" shrieked Wharton.

The man sprang desperately away. Four juniors rushed at him fiercely. Frank Nugent stopped by his uncle and tore away the chloroform pad from the white, deathly face. Sir Richard Ravenspur was completely unconscious. A few more minutes—perhaps one more minute—and he would have been a dead man. But the interruption had come in time to save him.

Crash! Smash!

There was a shattering of glass.

With the schoolboys almost grasping him, the man leaped through the window to the terrace. With his shoulder he drove out glass and sash, and plunged through.

"After him!" roared Bob Cherry.

Broken glass and tangled, torn curtains were in the way. But the juniors plunged out fiercely after the fugitive.

Outside, the Leyford constable stood staring at the window. He was on watch for danger from without; and the crash of the breaking window from within had taken him utterly by surprise.

But he sprang forward and rushed at the fugitive as the man who had leaped from the window raced away down the terrace. The policeman intercepted him and grasped his shoulder.

The next moment he reeled back with a gasping cry as the butt of a revolver crashed on his forehead.

The constable fell heavily; the fugitive raced on. Behind him came the four juniors in full cry; behind them, two or three startled servants.

The man leaped from the terrace and dodged in the gardens. He was running like the wind.

"After him!"

"Run him down!" panted Johnny Bull.

The Greyfriars fellows were good sprinters; but the man who was fleeing for life and liberty seemed to possess the fleetness of a deer.

From the gardens he gained the park; and the juniors sighting Joyce, the keeper, in a grassy side, shouted to him, and Joyce joined in the chase. At intervals the fleeing figure was seen dodging among the trees.

"He's making for the old lodge!" panted Wharton. "We shall get him there."

"Quick!" panted Bob.

The fugitive was lost to sight now in thick trees and bushes. But the pursuers could hear rustling and crashing as he ran.

The sounds died away.

Panting, breathless, they came up to the old hunting-lodge in the park and rushed into it.

That the fleeing man had reached it they were certain; but the old mossy stone ruins, shimmering in the August sun, were silent and deserted when the pursuers arrived there.

The fugitive had vanished.

Eagerly, fiercely, they searched through the ruined lodge. The man could not have been a minute ahead of them. But he had vanished. No sign of him remained.

"He's gone!" said Wharton between his teeth. "Joyce, call your men and search the park for him. There may be a chance yet."

The juniors, breathless, panting, returned to the Grange. The secret enemy of the baronet had escaped once again—though his escape had been narrow. But he had escaped; and his strange and inexplicable enmity still threatened the life of the master of Ravenspur Grange.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Detective!

FRANK NUGENT met his chums as they came back into the house.

His face was pale and harassed.

"Sir Richard——" exclaimed Wharton anxiously.

"He lives—the doctor's with him now," said Frank in a low tone. "It was a close thing; but we were in time. Dr. Wood says that he will recover. But—if that telephone call hadn't come——" He shuddered.

"And the real Inspector Garnish——"

"He is here now—in the library; he's waiting to see you fellows," said Frank. "I can't quite understand it. Packington was told to send the car to the station—you heard uncle tell him——"

"Yes," said Harry.

"He seems to have forgotten. Leyford's a little place, with no cabs to be had. Garnish was hung up there, and that—that villain had a chance of coming here in his place. If he hadn't phoned us, the man who used his name would have got away with it—walked out without a hand raised to stop him, leaving my uncle dead in the room!" muttered Nugent.

"Thank goodness we chipped in in time!" said Bob Cherry. "We were close after the scoundrel, but——"

"He got away?"

"Yes; he dodged us at the old hunting-lodge in the park. But we shall have something to tell Mr. Garnish about that," said Bob.

"I suppose he walked here, after all?" said Harry. "I left him on the phone and forgot about him——"

"Yes, he walked here; he only arrived a few minutes ago, and not in the best of tempers. Better come in and see him now."

"Has he seen your uncle yet?"

"No; Uncle Richard can't see anybody now. Garnish will have to begin with us!" said Frank, with a faint smile.

The juniors proceeded to the library, where they found the detective from Scotland Yard.

Mr. Garnish did not look much like the man who had used his name and taken his place.

He was a man of slight build, with a bald spot on his head, and a face clean-shaven, of hard outline, looking as if it were moulded in iron. His eyes, deep and grey, were very keen, under bushy grey brows. His manner was by no means reposeful; he was moving about the library with quick, jerky steps when the Greyfriars fellows came in.

He stopped, wheeled towards them, and fixed his penetrating eyes on them as they entered.

"Mr. Garnish?" asked Harry.

"Yes." The answer was snapped out so sharply that it seemed as if the word had been bitten off. "And you?"

Wharton introduced himself and his comrades. Inspector Garnish of Scotland Yard favoured each of them in turn with a penetrating stare that was a little disconcerting.

"It appears that you schoolboys have been in the house all through the late extraordinary events?" he snapped.

"Yes," said Harry.

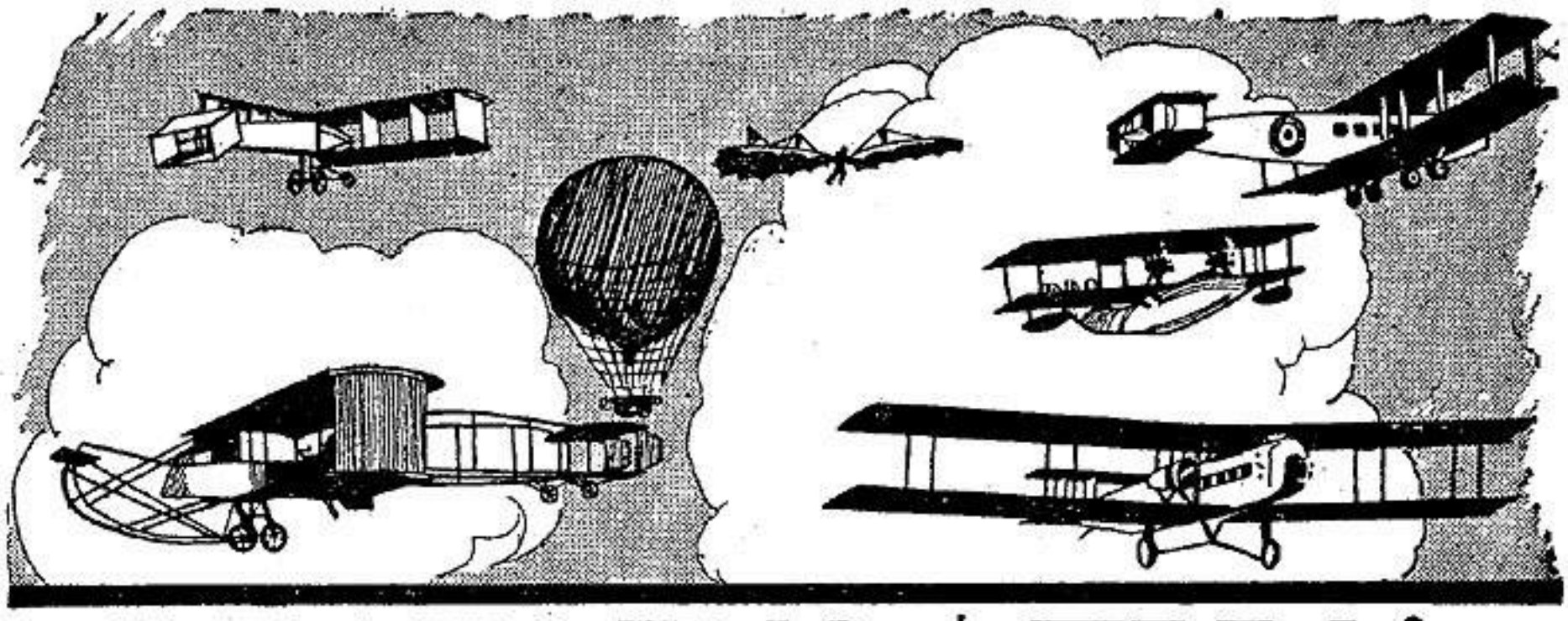
"Then you had better give your account of the matter. It appears that I cannot see Sir Richard Ravenspur yet!" grunted Mr. Garnish.

The juniors had much to tell the man from Scotland Yard. His manner of listening was not flattering.

He moved about unrestingly, sometimes looking at the book-lined walls, once or twice staring out of the windows. But every now and then he would fix his sharp eyes on the schoolboys and shoot out a sudden question; and they noted that every word he took the trouble to utter was to the point.

They told of their first arrival, on a dark and stormy night, at the Grange; of the scarred man from Australia who had been shot by the park wall, and the disappearance of his body; of his having mentioned the name of "Black Edgar," leaving out no detail; then of the attempts on Sir Richard's life and of Captain Ravenspur having taken the poison intended for the baronet; then of the attempt made the previous night, of the rope-ladder that had been left on the balcony, and the sandy wig Wharton had grasped from the man who fled. And they noticed that the grey eyes gleamed when they spoke of these. Last of all, they told of the man who had come to the house in the inspector's name and whom they had pursued in the park.

(*Continued on page* 12.)



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Weird and wonderful were the theories of the world's pioneer airmen and tragic the fate of many who had the courage to put their theories to a practical test. Yet it is to them that we owe in no small measure the present-day conquest of the air.

ONE of the very biggest air displays the world has ever known—that at Hendon, last month, staged by our Royal Air Force—provided so many astounding spectacles of dare-devil stunting in aeroplanes that those who saw the mighty show haven't finished gasping yet!

Not one of the thrilled spectators came away without the firm impression that man can now do no more than has been done to conquer the air. And yet it is only twenty-five years ago last December that the very first man-carrying machine to fly was hauled out of its shed for the trial trip!

The Wright brothers made and owned that rather weird-looking contrivance. True it remained in the air only twelve seconds, but the failures of centuries had been ended by victory. Man had conquered the air at last!

Since then flying has developed in a manner absolutely unbelievable, and it seems incredible that the hardy souls who once tried so hard to emulate the flight of birds should always have been dogged by such terribly hard luck right up to the year 1903.

Aviation in its Early Stages!

SOME of the earliest attempts are so mixed up with legend that we have to take them with a large grain of salt. There is, for instance, poor Icarus, who is said to have fitted himself out with wings constructed of huge quills (from what bird we are not told) and to have launched himself gaily from a height. Unfortunately, he used wax to fix the feathers of his borrowed plumes, and the sun melted it. Of course, he came a cropper. After him comes a whole list of would-be aviators whose one and only attempted flight was in a vertical direction—swiftly downwards.

They all made the mistake of overlooking the question of maintaining balance in the air—easy enough for a bird, but hopeless for a fellow rigged with wings or flapping planes of wood and knowing next to nothing of the vagaries of wind-currents. Why, most of the early experimenters had no notion of the laws of gravity even—until they had hit the ground, and then it was mostly too late for them to profit by their sad experience.

Many were the monks who used their leisure hours in flying experiments and self-styled magicians who knew a lot about flying until put to the test. They couldn't go on boasting for ever, and to each there came the tragic day when they *had* to show how it was done.

The Emperor Nero—the fellow who fiddled while Rome was burning—had at his court one Simon the Magician. They say he really did succeed in hoisting himself skywards in some apparatus of which no description has been handed down. Those who saw the wonder put it down to a trick of the devil. Not that it mattered much to Simon, for he went the way of all his predecessors—straight down to hard and solid earth, and was killed.

The First Winged Machine!

JUMPING a few centuries, all packed with stories of attempted and extremely short-lived flights, we come to the Benedictine monk who, in the eleventh century, built for himself at Malmesbury a winged machine. The great day came when everything was ready for the flight. He and his assistants hauled the machine up to the top of a tall tower. The monk climbed into it, shoved off, glided a foot or two, then—wallop! He kept his life, but broke both legs, and thereafter lost all interest in this dangerous business.

A Saracen had a go at it some years later. He made canvas wings fitted with rods of wood—something like a tailor-made bat's wing on a huge scale. With the upper wooden "ribs" of the two wings fixed to either arm, he trudged up to the summit of a tower in Constantinople, spread his wings, and waited for enough wind to carry him away.

It came—and off he went. Furiously he flapped. But his balance went, and he hit the earth and broke his neck. And still there were not lacking others who firmly believed that the secret of the conquest of the air lay in a pair of wings that would flap like those of a giant bird.

This illustration depicts the weird "outfit" of a would-be birdman of the eleventh century.

A Queer Invention!

A LOCKSMITH in France broke away from the fixed wings idea when, in 1676, he fashioned four planes, one at each end of two long, wooden rods. Each plane was made to fold, rather like the covers of a book, and the long, connecting rods were to be carried over the shoulders.

The two front planes were to be worked by the hands, the two rear ones by the feet, and the great idea was that on the upstroke the planes would close and then open forcibly again on the down stroke. The wearer was to launch himself, in a reclining position, from a height—and flap like billio! The idea is said to have worked more or less successfully so far as short glides were concerned, but nothing seems to have come of the queer invention.

The art of gliding, let alone flying, was still to be learned, and later was to come ballooning, before man's mastery of the air seemed in a fair way to be accomplished. And now, to-day, there is being designed a super aeroplane-rocket that is to carry men to the moon!

(Look out for another of these interesting flying articles next week.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!

(*Continued from page 10.*)

"If I had been here a few minutes earlier!" grunted Mr. Garnish.

He took a turn up and down the library and then stopped before the juniors again, fixing them with his cold, keen grey eyes.

"Can you tell me why the car was not sent to the station?" he demanded.

"No," said Harry, "unless the butler forgot to send it."

"Instructions were given to the butler?"

"Yes."

"To your knowledge?"

"We were present."

"His name?"

"Packington."

"Where is he now? I was shown in by a footman. Is this butler, Packington, at present in the house?"

"He is, or was, in his room," said Harry. "Packington suffers from an old wound received in the War, and has a limp. He took part in the search last night, fell, and hurt his game leg. Sir Richard gave him leave to go to his room and rest this morning. I suppose that's how he came to forget about the car, if his leg was bad."

Mr. Garnish grunted.

"I had to walk from the station," he snapped.

The juniors made no reply to that. Doubtless Mr. Garnish had had a rather warm walk in the hot sun of August. But they could not help feeling that there were much more important matters than that to occupy the attention of the gentleman from Scotland Yard.

"You have nothing more to tell me?"

"We've told you all the facts, so far as we know them, sir," said Harry. "But I should like to tell you that we think——"

Mr. Garnish made an arresting gesture.

"You've told me all you know?"

"Yes, but——"

"What you think is immaterial," said Mr. Garnish.

"Oh!" said Harry, rather nettled.

"I am here to do the thinking," snapped Mr. Garnish.

"Very well," said Harry, setting his lips a little. It was possible that Mr. Garnish was a very efficient detective, but the chums of the Greyfriars Remove did not look on him as a likeable man.

"I must see that rope ladder and the wig," said Mr. Garnish. "They may be important—more important than what you think, Master Wharton, valuable as your reflections may no doubt be. Where are they?"

"Locked in Sir Richard's safe, in the study adjoining this room," said Wharton curtly.

"The key?"

"Sir Richard has it."

The door opened softly and Packington appeared. Under his heavy dark brows his glance went to the slight figure of the gentleman from Scotland Yard. The sharp grey eyes fixed on him at once.

"James tells me that Inspector Garnish is here," said Packington, in his low, smooth voice.

"I am here!" snapped the inspector. "Are you Packington?"

"That is my name, sir."

"Sir Richard Ravenspur's butler, what?"

"Quite so, sir."

"I had to walk from the station this morning, Packington. I understand that Sir Richard directed you to send a car for me. It was distinctly understood that a conveyance was to be provided. Yet there was no car at the station."

"I am truly sorry, sir——"

"That is neither here nor there, Packington. I have walked over a mile in a hot sun. Why was not the car sent?"

"I apologise most humbly, sir——"

"I am not interested in your apologies, Packington, but in your reason," jerked out Mr. Garnish. "Why was not the car sent? That is what I asked you?"

"I fear, sir, that it slipped my memory."

"You are in the habit of forgetting your master's instructions?" asked the detective disagreeably.

"No, sir, I hope not, sir," said Packington. "I have seldom failed to give Sir Richard satisfaction, sir. My excuse in the present case is that I was suffering from the effects of an old wound, and was a little dizzy. I trust you will excuse me, sir, and believe that this forgetfulness was not due in any way to negligence."

Grunt from Mr. Garnish!

"I had to walk from the station," he repeated gruffly.

The juniors exchanged glances. They were feeling extremely sympathetic towards Packington, called over the coals in this gruff way for what was, after all, but a slight fault. They began to feel that they disliked Mr. Garnish. His walk in the August sun seemed to loom more largely in his mind than the attempt on the baronet's life.

Packington gave his deferential cough.

"Sir Richard desired me to give you a message, sir," he said.

"Am I able to see Sir Richard yet?" grunted Mr. Garnish.

"I regret to say no, sir; he is under the doctor's hands at the present moment," said Packington. "But he has sent you the key of his safe, sir, in order that you may take into your charge the articles——"

"Open the safe."

"This way, sir."

Mr. Garnish followed the butler into the study that adjoined the library. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him.

The iron safe, let into the solid stone wall, was concealed from view by a large picture in a heavy gilt frame. The frame was hinged to the wall, and moved aside like an opening door under the butler's hand.

The iron door of the safe was revealed. Packington held out the steel key to the detective.

"Open it!" said Mr. Garnish.

Packington obeyed.

The iron door swung open.

"Hand out the articles—the rope ladder and the wig," said the detective. "Doubtless you know precisely where they were placed?"

"Yes, sir; I was with Sir Richard when he placed them here and locked the safe door, sir," said Packington. "These young gentlemen were also present."

"I am waiting for them," said Mr. Garnish.

The butler looked into the safe.

An expression of surprise, of bewilderment, came over his face.

"I—I do not understand this!" he faltered.

"Indeed! What do you not understand, Packington?" inquired Mr. Garnish.

"They are not here, sir."

"What?"

"Not there!" exclaimed Nugent, springing forward.

The juniors stared into the safe. They had been present when Sir Richard Ravenspur placed the two articles on a shelf within, and locked the iron door on them. The key, they knew, never left Sir Richard's possession. But the rope ladder and the sandy wig were gone.

"Gone!" said Nugent blankly.

"The gonefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in wonder. "Some esteemed and execrable unknown person has opened the safe since the absurd baronet locked it."

"It would seem so, sir," said Packington. "It is inexplicable to me. Sir Richard has the only key to the safe, and this is it. He handed it to me a few minutes ago, requesting me to convey it to Inspector Garnish."

The juniors looked at the man from Scotland Yard. They expected to see him looking disappointed, probably angry. He looked neither. Wharton even thought that he detected, for a moment, a glimmer of a smile on the hard, thin lips of the detective.

"So the clues are gone?" said Mr. Garnish.

"It appears so, sir," murmured Packington. "I cannot understand——"

"You are not expected to understand, Packington," interjected Mr. Garnish. "That is my business."

"Very good, sir."

"You may lock the safe, and take the key back to Sir Richard," said Mr. Garnish; and so far as the wondering juniors had observed, he had not even taken the trouble to look into the safe himself at all.

"Very good, sir!" said Packington again.

Mr. Garnish glanced at his watch.

"Lunch will be served whenever you desire, sir," said Packington.

"I have lunched already," said Mr. Garnish.

He walked away, left the library by the french windows, and disappeared on the terrace. Packington, with his silent, limping tread, glided away, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. looking at one another expressively.

"So that's the detective!" said Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I think much of him!" said Johnny Bull, with a grunt.

"The muchfulness is not terrific," confessed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But perhapsfully there is more in the esteemed and absurd detective than meets the preposterous eye."

"I hope so, at any rate," said Harry.

The juniors went to their own lunch in a thoughtful mood. The disappearance of the two clues to the midnight assassin from the locked safe was one more mystery added to the many strange mysteries of Ravenspur Grange. It was one more proof that the secret assassin had the run of the house; that he was accustomed to the interior of the Grange, if he was not actually a member of the household. The man from Scotland Yard had not seemed surprised; or indeed to attach any great importance to the incident. Certainly he had not impressed the juniors as a man likely to deal successfully with the baffling mystery of Ravenspur. They could only hope that there was, as the nabob suggested, more in Mr. Garnish than met the eye.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret of the Old Lodge!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Somebody's there!"

It was the following morning.

The Famous Five of Greyfriars were

following the shadowy, tangled path, in the heart of the old park of Ravenspur, that led to the ruined hunting-lodge.

The old dismantled stone walls, thick with ivy and creeping plants, glimmered in the bright sun of the August morning.

Many times, already, the juniors had explored the old ruin; but nothing had rewarded their search.

Yet they felt—and they knew that Inspector Cook had suspected—that the clue lay there. If the old ruins hid a secret, the secret was well-hidden. That secret, or any other, they did not think likely to be unearthed by Mr. Garnish, of Scotland Yard.

Their estimation of the detective had sunk to zero.

Mr. Garnish, since he had been at the Grange, seemed to have occupied his time, so far as they could see, chiefly in using his chin.

He had talked to every member of the household, more than once; and perhaps had derived information from the many questions he had asked. If so, he kept it to himself. He had taken up his quarters in the dressing-room attached to Sir Richard's bedroom; hitherto tenanted by two of the Greyfriars juniors. They had turned out to give him the room; not very pleased by the new arrangement. No doubt Mr. Garnish considered himself the proper person to watch over the baronet's safety, but it was certain that the watchfulness of the schoolboys had saved Sir Richard more than once. However, the man from headquarters was in full control, and there was no question of saying him nay.

He had had a brief interview with Sir Richard, as soon as the baronet was sufficiently recovered to see him, and he had made one arrangement of which the Famous Five approved; he had insisted that a constable should be on duty in the baronet's presence, all day; an arrangement irksome enough to Sir Richard, but to which he submitted, as the detective insisted. Mr. Garnish was a most uncommunicative man, as was only to be expected; and what he was thinking he kept strictly to himself, but Johnny Bull had expressed a doubt as to whether he was thinking at all.

As the Famous Five approached the old lodge, under the shadowing branches of beeches and oaks, in the sunny morning, a sound from the interior came to their ears.

"Somebody's there!" whispered Bob.

The juniors, for a moment, felt a thrill of excitement. But the next moment a voice, speaking in the interior of the old lodge, came to their ears.

"This is the place, sir!"

It was Packington's voice.

"Oh, Packington!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Who's there with him, I wonder?"

That question was immediately answered by the snappish voice of Mr. Garnish.

"Oh! This is the place, is it, Packington?"

"Yes, sir!"

"This is where the schoolboys saw, or fancied they saw, a man with sandy hair, the same, as they allege, who climbed the rope-ladder?"

"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

The allusion to themselves was not complimentary.

"Come on!" said Harry quietly.

The chums of Greyfriars entered through the old shattered doorway of the lodge.

Mr. Garnish glanced at them for a second, but took no other notice of their arrival. Packington was standing at respectful attention, his eyes, under his thick dark brows, fixed on the detective.

"May I speak a word, Mr. Garnish?" asked Wharton.

Mr. Garnish glanced at him again.

"You may!" he jerked out.

"I know you are not interested to hear what we think," said Harry, "but I feel bound to tell you that we think there is a secret hiding-place in this old ruin."

"Indeed!"

"The thinkfulness is terrific, sir," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We feel a preposterous certainty on the absurd subject."

Mr. Garnish glanced curiously at the nabob, for a moment, but he made no rejoinder.

"We are certain, too, that Inspector Cook thought so," said Harry. "I am sure that Mr. Cook would have searched for it if he had lived."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Not exactly; but it was quite clear that he believed that a secret passage exists from this old lodge to the house."

Grunt, from Mr. Garnish. He turned to the butler.

Mr. Garnish went to the big oak door, examined the large, old-fashioned lock on it, took out the key, and placed it on the outside of the door. "You intend to lock that door, Mr. Garnish?" asked Sir Richard. "That is my intention, sir," said the detective, "and Packington is to remain locked in here with you!" *(See Chapter 11.)*

"Packington! Have you ever heard of such a thing?"

"I cannot say that I have, sir," answered the butler, with a shake of the head. "It is quite out of my knowledge, sir."

"You're fairly well acquainted with Ravenspur Grange, I take it?"

"Quite, sir."

"Inspector Cook certainly thought that——" said Bob.

Mr. Garnish grunted again.

"Thank you for guiding me here, Packington," he said, and without another word, walked out of the old doorway, and departed.

The juniors gazed after him, colouring with vexation. A faint smile hovered over Packington's face for a moment.

"The ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

Wharton set his lips.

"Well, he doesn't seem to think there's anything in it," he said. "But I'm quite certain there is, and if the secret passage is here we are going to find it, somehow."

"We jolly well are!" said Frank Nugent. "And if we do find it we shall

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THE MYSTERY OF THE GRANGE!

(*Continued from page* 13.)

find out something more when we follow it to the house."

Packington coughed.

"If you young gentlemen will excuse me, I think you are right," he said. "I could not venture to express such an opinion to so very positive a gentleman as Mr. Garnish; but I have some reason to believe that you young gentlemen are on the right track."

The juniors turned to him at once.

"If you know anything, Packington——" said Harry eagerly.

"I cannot say that I know anything, precisely, sir," answered the butler. "but according to the Ravenspur tradition, sir, there is a secret passage, by means of which an ancient Ravenspur escaped from his enemies in the reign of Charles the First. The outlet is supposed to be somewhere in the park. Surely this old lodge is a likely place, sir."

"That's what I think," said Harry, "and we're going to root it over till we find it, and surprise Mr. Garnish with it when we've found it."

"Perhaps you will permit me to assist, sir." Packington looked at his watch. "I need not return to the house for a quarter of an hour yet, and with your permission I should very much like to help."

"Help by all means," said Harry.

"Thank you, sir."

The juniors began the search of the old lodge. They had searched it so many times already that there was little hope of a discovery unless luck befriended them. But they hoped for the best. Packington joined in the search, and suddenly, from the midst of a mass of ivy that clung to a fragment of the old wall, they heard the butler's voice.

"This way, gentlemen."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The juniors ran towards him eagerly.

Close by the old wall, Packington had pulled aside a mass of clinging ivy that had hidden an old flagstone in the floor. The flag looked exactly the same as the rest, and the juniors glanced at it, disappointed.

"What——" began Harry.

"It appears to me, sir, that this flagstone is not secured like the rest," said Packington. "I fancy it moves, sir. Look!"

He pressed on a corner of the flagstone with his foot. There was an exclamation from the juniors. The broad, heavy stone tilted a little under the pressure.

"Eureka!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"We've found it!"

"Packington's found it, anyhow," exclaimed Harry. "Good man!"

The butler glanced at his watch again.

"I must return to my duty now, gentlemen," he said. "You will excuse me. I trust that this may lead to something—it was quite by accident that I placed my foot on this spot, and felt it give. Of course, there may be nothing below—but if you young gentlemen care to investigate——"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, with emphasis.

"I shall be very much obliged, sir, if you will tell me later whether you have made any interesting discovery," said Packington.

"Of course," said Harry.

And the butler left the old hunting-lodge, leaving the Famous Five of Greyfriars gathered round the moving stone with eager faces.

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THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Snare!

HARRY WHARTON breathed hard.

"We're on the track!" he said.

"We jolly well are!" said Bob. "Let's get that stone shifted, and see what's under it. This is the way that sandy-coloured merchant went when he dodged us here—that's a cert."

"No doubt about that!" said Frank Nugent, his eyes shining with excitement. "And if the passage leads to the house, we shall know the way that scoundrel has got in and out of the Grange."

"We shall know more than that!" said Harry. "We know that the villain has a confederate in the house, and this may lead to the room he occupies. It may point out the very man."

"Get going!" said Johnny Bull.

The juniors proceeded to move the flag. A pressure on the side where the butler had trod caused the great stone to tilt up, evidently on some hidden central hinge.

Below a dark cavity was revealed.

The juniors gazed down into it, breathless with excitement now. Dimly they made out the shape of a flight of stone steps leading downward into the depths of the earth.

On the top step stood a lantern. It was clean, filled with oil, and the wick had obviously been recently used, when Wharton picked it up and examined it. This was proof, if proof had been needed, that the secret passage under the old lodge had been in recent use. There could no longer be any doubt that this was the way in and out of the Grange that the secret assassin had used.

Harry Wharton struck a match and lighted the lantern.

He stepped into the opening, feeling the steps with a stick as he did so, and finding them firm and solid.

"My hat! It was a stroke of luck that Packy helped us this morning," said Bob Cherry. "We've rooted over the place a dozen times and found nothing. I know I've trodden on that very stone more than once and it never stirred."

"It fastens from below, of course," said Harry. "This time it was left unfastened. The man we were hunting the night before last dodged down here, and in his hurry left it unfastened, I suppose."

That seemed the only possible explanation. It was obvious that had the moving stone been without a fastening the secret would have been discovered before in the many searches that had taken place in the old lodge. A moment of carelessness on the part of the man who used the secret way, so it seemed, had left the secret to be discovered.

Harry Wharton led the way down the stone steps, showing the light of the lantern before him in his left hand, his right grasping a stout stick. He was wary and on his guard as he descended. That the baronet's secret enemy was at that very moment in the underground recesses was unlikely enough; but the juniors were watchful. The Co. followed him down, and they entered a narrow stone-walled passage that opened from the bottom of the stair.

Wharton held up the lantern and the light gleamed along the stone passage into infinite shadows.

"This is the way," said Harry.

"Yes, rather!"

"And it leads to the Grange," said Frank Nugent. "We've only got to follow it to the end to come out in the house!"

"My hat! We're in luck this morning!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "This will be rather a surprise for the Garnish bird when we tell him."

The juniors moved along the stone passage.

There was scarcely room for two to move abreast, so narrow was the space between the slimy old stone walls. Wharton led the way, his comrades following close behind.

Behind them a shaft of golden sunlight dropped into the orifice in the floor of the old hunting lodge and gilded the dusky stone steps. But the bottom steps were wrapped in deep gloom, and around the juniors was darkness, pierced only by the bright ray of the lantern.

Wharton flashed the light to and fro and up and down as he advanced, wary of pitfalls in the floor, wary of possible lurking foes in the darkness.

A score of yards from the steps he came to a sudden halt, so sudden that his comrades crowded into him behind.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's up?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The game is, from what it looks like," answered Harry, throwing the lantern-light upon a solid wall of stone that blocked the passage ahead of him.

"My hat! That tears it," said Johnny Bull.

"The tearfulness is terrific."

"Rotten!"

Wharton examined the stone that barred the underground passage, flashing the lantern over every fraction of its extent. That the stone formed a door, and that it could be moved the juniors felt certain. But it was motionless under their touch, seemingly as solid and fixed as the earth round it.

"Bunkered!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Looks like it."

"Shove the blessed thing!" growled Johnny Bull. "It must be made to move—you can see that this passage leads somewhere."

"There's some trick in moving it, the same as with the flagstone in the floor of the lodge," said Harry. "That happened to be left unfastened—this one doesn't. Unless we can find the trick of it we're done."

The juniors groped over the flat surface of the stone, pressed it and tapped it, punched it and shoved it. But it remained immovable.

Progress was barred, unless the trick of moving the stone could be found. And it seemed impossible to find it.

"Anyhow, we're on the track," said Wharton at last. "As soon as we report this to Garnish he is bound to take steps—a couple of navvies with crowbars could shift this stone and let us see what's on the other side."

"And if Garnish doesn't take it up, we'll get my uncle's leave to handle the matter ourselves," said Frank.

"Let's get back."

There was nothing for it but to return to the steps and ascend them to the old lodge. Progress was impossible until workmen with powerful implements could be brought to the spot. And the juniors could not doubt that Mr. Garnish, in spite of his apparent disdain for any assistance they could render, would be glad to hear of the discovery of the secret passage, and would push the discovery to the end.

They turned and moved back along the dank, dusty passage towards the stone stair that led upward to the ruined lodge.

The shaft of sunlight, falling from above, was before their eyes, gilding the

upper steps. Suddenly it was blotted out.

Thud!

There was a heavy sound, the sound of a falling stone, and the light of the sun vanished from the opening.

"Great pip!" gasped Bob Cherry. "The stone——"

"It's closed!"

"Quick!" panted Wharton.

He raced back to the steps, holding up the lantern, his comrades dashing after him. Wharton hurried up the stone stair and groped with his hand over the flat, huge stone that shut in the opening above. It did not stir under his push. He set down the lantern and planted his shoulders under the flagstone and heaved at it with all his strength.

But it did not stir a fraction of an inch.

Panting, exhausted with the effort, Harry Wharton desisted. He looked down at his comrades, and in the light of the lantern read in their faces the pale alarm that he knew was in his own.

"It's fastened!" he said in a low voice.

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"Then we—we——"

"We're shut in!"

"Good heavens!"

In the glimmer of the lantern the juniors looked at one another with white faces in silence. The hinged flagstone was closed, and secured above. It could not be an accident. It might have fallen shut, but it could not have been fastened, save by a human hand. And they knew that the secret enemy must have been on the watch, and that he had caught them in a trap, and in each other's white faces they read the thought that was in every mind—that it was a death-trap!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Frank Nugent's Farewell!

PACKINGTON entered the library at Ravenspur Grange with a letter upon a salver. Sir Richard Ravenspur glanced at him.

The baronet sat in a deep old leather chair near the sunny windows. His kind old face was pale and worn.

Strong and sturdy as the old gentleman was, the terrible strain of the past week had told heavily upon him.

He was sitting silent, an unread newspaper on his knees, buried in troubled thought when the butler entered.

At a little distance from him sat a stout Leyford constable stiffly. His eyes also turned on the butler as he came in.

"What is it, Packington?" asked Sir Richard.

"A letter, sir, delivered by hand from Leyford," said Packington. "As it is addressed in Master Frank's hand, sir——"

"Frank! Is he not in the house?"

"The young gentlemen did not come in for lunch, sir," said Packington. "They went into the park this morning, and I saw them at the old lodge. I have not seen them since."

"It is very odd that my nephew should send me a letter from Leyford," said Sir Richard, in astonishment.

He took the letter from the salver.

The address on it was in Frank Nugent's well-known hand, a rather delicate caligraphy, recognisable at a glance.

The baronet slit the envelope, and took out the letter within.

"This came by hand, Packington?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. A few moments ago."

"Is the messenger waiting?"

"He stated that there was no reply, sir," said Packington, "so I did not tell him to wait."

"Very well!"

Packington retired noiselessly.

Sir Richard unfolded the letter and proceeded to read it. Surprise dawned in his face at the first few lines, and deepened as he read on, and the surprise was tinctured with something like contempt. The letter was written in his nephew's hand, on Ravenspur Grange notepaper; but it was not such a letter as Sir Richard would ever have dreamed of receiving from Frank Nugent, of the Greyfriars Remove. It ran:

"Dear Uncle Richard,—My friends and I have consulted about what you said to us yesterday, and we have decided that, in the circumstances, you were right, and that it will be better for us not to remain any longer at the Grange. We feel that our presence causes you some uneasiness, and we do not expect to be of any further use now that a Scotland Yard detective is in charge. Please excuse us for going without taking leave, but we did not wish to disturb you in your present state of health. My friends send you their respects and best wishes, and thank you for your kindness and hospitality.

"Your affectionate nephew,
"FRANK NUGENT.

"P.S.—Perhaps you will be kind enough to let one of the servants direct our baggage to the Red Lion, Woodford, Surrey, to be called for.

"F. N."

Sir Richard Ravenspur read that letter through, and read it through again from end to end, slowly.

Then he laid it on his knees and leaned back in his chair.

The surprised expression had died out of his face, leaving only weariness and contempt.

He could, he thought, read between the lines of that letter.

Undoubtedly it was a relief to him, in a way, to know that his nephew and Frank's schoolboy friends were out of reach of the danger that lurked in every shadow in Ravenspur Grange. It was only because they had wished it, or appeared to wish it so strongly, that he had allowed them to remain.

Now it appeared that their courage had, after all, failed them. For that was, to the baronet's mind, the real meaning of the letter.

His nephew, a Ravenspur on one side, had failed in courage at the test; that was what it amounted to.

For the others, perhaps, Sir Richard had little blame. They were schoolboys on a holiday, and they had wearied of the house where the shadow of mystery and crime and danger dogged their steps. But from his nephew, his own flesh and blood, he had expected better things.

Not for one moment would he have allowed the schoolboys to remain, but in the belief that it was their own strong desire to do so. There was no need of this surreptitious withdrawal. For it was surreptitious; there could be no gainsaying that. They had not cared to say openly that they wanted to go; they had not given a single hint of it in his presence. They had gone quietly, and this letter had been sent to explain. There was something surreptitious about it that caused the baronet's lip to curl.

But Sir Richard Ravenspur had a kind heart and a tolerant temper. After a very short reflection, the bitter expression passed from his kind old face.

After all, they were but schoolboys, and they had been subjected to a terrible strain. It was natural enough that they should desire to go—and natural that they should not care to tell him so. Perhaps this was, after all, the best way.

At all events they were gone, and though Sir Richard, in this time of stress, knew that he would miss the cheery young faces, it was a relief to know that they were no longer in the shadow of the peril that haunted the house of Ravenspur.

They were gone, and all that remained was for Sir Richard to carry out the request made in the postscript to the letter.

He touched the bell, and Packington entered.

"My nephew and his friends will not be returning to the house, Packington," said Sir Richard carelessly.

"Indeed, sir!"

"They have resumed their holiday tour, Packington. As they left rather hurriedly, the baggage is to be sent on."

"Very good, sir."

"You will kindly see to it, Packington."

"Certainly, sir."

Sir Richard referred to the postscript again.

"Let it be addressed to the Red Lion, Woodford, Surrey, to be called for," he said. "You will lose no time about this, Packington."

"Very good, sir."

Packington left the library again.

Sir Richard sank back in his chair. The letter lay unheeded on his knee. His face looked older, paler, and the cloud had deepened on his brow. It was better for the boys to be gone, he told himself, better for them to be out of the reach of danger, out of the shadow of mystery and crime. But he knew that their going was a blow to him. He knew that he could no longer respect them and like them, as he had respected and liked them, for, gloss it over as he might, the actual fact was that they had run away from danger. The baronet's heart was heavier and the cloud deeper on his brow as he sat in the silent library, the unheeded letter on his knee.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

In Darkness and Despair!

"THE light's going!"

Bob Cherry whispered the words.

Strange lights and shades danced and flickered in the stone passage under the hunting-lodge in the park.

Hours had passed.

The lantern was burning out. The oil was exhausted now, and the wick burning dim. Darkness was creeping on the group of imprisoned schoolboys.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull sat on the lowest step of the stone stair. Harry Wharton leaned on the wall. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat on the floor, his back to the wall. Frank Nugent was moving restlessly to and fro.

Every face was hopeless.

Again and again the juniors had striven to raise the heavy flag-stone that closed in the opening in the floor of the old lodge.

They knew it was in vain, but in desperation they had striven again and again; but all their desperate strivings had been of no avail.

The flagstone remained as immovable as the solid stone floor, of which it formed a part. Some secret fastening secured it against all efforts from below. They had desisted at last, exhausted, breathless, despairing.

Again they had groped to the stone that blocked the passage a dozen yards away and striven to move it. But that also was immovable. There was no hope of escape, and they knew that there was no hope.

They had gathered again at the steps, and for some time joined their voices in shouting for help. But that was the most desperate expedient of all, for it was only too certain that no human voice at its loudest could have penetrated through the solid stone into the ruined lodge above, even had there been ears above to hear. With husky throats, they ceased at last to shout.

There was no hope of escape. They knew that. They had been trapped—to their death! For there was no doubting the intention with which the stone flag had been closed on them. Somewhere, unseen, the secret enemy had been lurking, watching, and he had seized his opportunity. He had shut them in those dreary depths—to die! Indeed, since they had been trapped, the juniors had surmised that it was not by chance that they had found the flag in the floor unsecured. They could guess now that the secret enemy had known that they were searching the old lodge, that they were determined to discover its secret, and he had laid his plans accordingly. The upper stone had been left unfastened for them to discover it and enter the underground passage, while the stone door in the passage had been left secured, to prevent their escape in that direction. Then all the dastard had needed to do was to close the flag over the opening, and they were trapped beyond remedy.

It was clear enough to them now; in deeming that they had made a discovery, they had walked into a fatal snare, set by the hidden enemy.

But that knowledge came too late to serve them. They were trapped—shut off from the light of day, from all hope.

The air in the passage was heavy, but it was fairly fresh. There was evidently some means of ventilation—some hidden pipe conveyed through the old stonework. But that gave no hope to the juniors, except that they knew they were not to die of suffocation. Death was to be their lot, all the same, unless rescue came.

And what hope was there of rescue? The Scotland Yard detective had treated with open disdain the suggestion that there was a secret passage under the old hunting-lodge. He was not likely to search for that in which he did not believe. There was no hope from Mr. Garnish.

"There's Packington," Bob Cherry said once, but with little hope in his voice. "He knows we're searching the place——"

"He knows about the moving stone," said Frank. "It was he that showed it to us. If we don't return to the house, surely Packington will guess that we went down, and that something happened to us."

"Surely," said Johnny Bull; but there was a note of doubt in his voice.

"The surefulness is not terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh quietly. "If the esteemed Packington comes back to look for us he will find the stone fixed. He will not be able to open it upfully. He will not be knowfully aware that we are underneath it."

"There's a chance, anyhow," said Harry.

It was the only chance that remained to the imprisoned schoolboys, and they clung to it. But as weary hour followed hour it died away.

They had been missed—they must have been missed. It was long past the luncheon-hour, when they would naturally have returned to the Grange. Sir Richard Ravenspur must have missed them and inquired for them. If the butler guessed or surmised that something had happened to them in the old ruins, they would have been searched for before this. They would have heard the clang of pick-axes on the old flags above.

Packington, after all, had not seen the stone trap-door open. He had merely pointed out that the stone moved under pressure. If he came back to the lodge and found that the stone did not, after all, move from its place, what was he likely to conclude? That he had been deceived in supposing it to be movable and an entrance into an underground passage. Was he likely to guess that the schoolboys had moved it, descended beneath it, and had it closed and fastened after them by a hidden hand? That was expecting the butler to guess a good deal.

As the weary day wore on it became obvious that there was no hope from Packington any more than from Mr. Garnish. And now the light was going.

Faint as the light now was, it was treasured by the imprisoned juniors. They shuddered at the thought of the black, impenetrable darkness that would follow when the lantern finally gave out.

The glimmer grew fainter and fainter, hardly enough to show their white, tense faces to one another.

There was a last faint flicker and the dying wick expired.

Blackness rushed on the prisoners of the subterranean passage. Blackness deep and intense, silence so heavy that they could almost hear their own hearts beating. Wharton felt himself shivering.

"Buck up, you men!" he said, trying to steady his voice. "While there's life there's hope."

"The lifefulness is great, and the hopefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous chums," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That fool Packington——" growled Johnny Bull.

"He may save us yet," said Bob. "Everybody will know that something has happened to us when we don't get back to the house. Packington may be a bit of an ass, but at least he will tell them that we were last seen at the old lodge, and we shall be searched for there."

"That's all we've got left," said Harry.

Silence followed.

In the deep darkness they could not see their watches, but they struck matches occasionally to note the flight of time. Minutes seemed hours, hours centuries. It seemed to the weary, despairing juniors that weeks had elapsed, when a glimpse of a watch by the light of a match told them that it was sunset on the earth above. Over the park of Ravenspur Grange the summer sun was setting in crimson and gold, the birds flying homeward—the juniors could picture the scene of sylvan beauty and peace. And beneath the stone floor of the hunting-lodge they waited in misery and desperation, hope growing fainter and fainter in their hearts.

The minutes crawled by on leaden wings. Surely they would be searched for—surely the hunt was even now going on, on the earth above them. Surely they were not to be left to perish in the darkness in this deep and dismal recess of gloom and horror.

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

A sound came through the heavy silence.

The juniors started and listened.

The sound was heavy, thudding, and it seemed to come from a great distance. But that, they could guess, was caused by the thickness of the massive stone flags overhead. The sound, whatever it was, came from above.

"Is it—help?" breathed Nugent.

They listened, with beating hearts.

Thud! Thud!

"If—if it's that villain——" muttered Johnny Bull, thinking of the unknown who had closed the stone on them.

"He would open the trap. He knows the trick of it," said Harry. "It is not he. But who—what——"

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Was it rescue? Had Packington, after all, guessed what had become of them, and sent help? That could scarcely be, for the sound did not come from the moving stone over the steps. From somewhere in the old hunting-lodge it came, but exactly where, they could not tell, except that it was not over the secret stair.

But hope strengthened in their hearts as they listened. If it did not mean help, what could it mean?

Thud! Thud! Thud!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the Library!

"INSPECTOR GARNISH desires to see you, sir," said Packington.

"Show him in," said Sir Richard wearily.

The little, jerky figure of the detective stepped in. His bright, keen grey eyes roamed over the spacious library for a second, and then fixed on the tired figure in the big chair.

Packington was retiring in his usual noiseless way when the detective's head jerked round at him.

"Stay here," he said.

Packington glanced at his master for confirmation of that order, and Sir Richard nodded.

"Very good, sir!" said Packington.

And he closed the library door and stood waiting inside the room.

"I hope you find yourself better, Sir Richard," said Mr. Garnish, with a touch of sympathy in his sharp voice and hard face.

"Thank you," said the baronet. "Naturally I am feeling the strain. I hope you have some good news for me, Mr Garnish."

"I am afraid that I cannot say so yet, sir. This case is not the easiest I have had to handle."

"I can quite understand that," assented Sir Richard.

"I may as well admit frankly that it is extremely puzzling and perplexing—a case that might baffle Ferrers Locke himself," said the man from Scotland Yard.

"I have no doubt of it."

"However, we must hope for the best," said Mr. Garnish. "You are, at all events, secure at the present time, sir. You have been given no cause for alarm during my absence this afternoon?"

"None!" said Sir Richard.

He eyed the detective curiously, and with something of disappointment in his face. He had hoped a good deal from an expert from the Yard, but Mr. Garnish had not seemed to justify his hopes. That afternoon he had been absent from the Grange for several hours. Possibly he was following up clues in other directions, but it seemed to Sir Richard that the mystery to be

unravelled lay in the house, not elsewhere. And upon whatever business Mr. Garnish had been engaged, it seemed to have led to nothing, so far at least.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Garnish?"

"Thank you—no! I shall remain with you but a few minutes." The jerky little man took a few steps on the rug, stared out of the tall windows at the glowing August sunset over the park, and then jerked back towards the baronet. "I understand, Sir Richard, that I have a free hand here?"

"Certainly!"

"An absolutely free hand?" persisted Mr. Garnish.

"Absolutely."

"I am at liberty, I take it, to take any measures that may seem good to me, on my own responsibility?"

"Quite so."

"What I mean is, that I might find it somewhat embarrassing in pursuing my investigations if I were under the necessity of consulting you before taking certain steps in this direction or that!" jerked out Mr. Garnish.

"You have an absolutely free hand, sir," said Sir Richard. "Take whatever steps may seem to you advisable, and consult neither myself nor anyone else. That is clear, I hope?"

"Perfectly so, sir!" said Mr. Garnish, with a satisfied look.

He moved about restlessly for a few minutes, and then came to a halt again before the baronet.

"During the next few hours, sir, it will be necessary for you to be carefully watched," he said. "May I take it that you will not quit this room until I have seen you again?"

"I am under your orders at present, Mr. Garnish," said Sir Richard, with a faint smile. "Your instructions will be carried out."

"You will not leave this library, sir, on any pretext whatever?"

"I will not."

"Two persons must remain with you," said Mr. Garnish. He glanced at the constable stationed near the windows, and beckoned to him. The officer came across the room. "How long have you been on duty?"

"An hour, sir."

"You will remain with Sir Richard until I return. You will remember that he is under your special care, and that you are responsible."

"Certainly, sir."

"Very good. But there must be two persons," said Mr. Garnish. He jerked his head round to the butler. "Packington!"

"Sir!" said Packington.

"You will remain with Sir Richard and this officer."

"If Sir Richard instructs me to do so, sir, I shall be glad," said Packington. "But I have certain duties in the house, sir——"

"No doubt," said Mr. Garnish. "But those duties may be left, for the present, to your subordinates."

"There are some duties, sir, that a butler can scarcely leave to the other servants," said Packington deferentially. "May I suggest, sir, that James should remain with Sir Richard—a man much younger than myself, sir, and more powerful, physically, in case of need? I have the misfortune, sir, to suffer a little from an old wound."

"I think you had better excuse Packington, Mr. Garnish," said Sir Richard. "My man, Jervis, has rested during the day, as he is to stay with me tonight; but he may now be called——"

Grunt, from Mr. Garnish.

"A few minutes ago, sir, you stated that I was given an absolutely free hand here," he snapped. "Am I to understand that that is now rescinded?"

"Certainly not," said the baronet, colouring with vexation. "I do not desire to impede you in any way, sir. But I fail to see why Jervis, or a footman, would not answer your purpose equally well with Packington."

"I have great faith in Packington," said Mr. Garnish. "I have no doubt that Jervis is a faithful servant; but I prefer Packington to remain." He jerked round at the butler again. "You spoke of your age; you are not an old man, Packington?"

"Forty, sir," said the butler.

"You do not look a weakling," said Mr. Garnish. "I am sure you would be quite useful in a scrap, Packington."

"I should try, sir, if my master were in danger," said Packington. "Unfortunately, my physical disability——"

"In case of any attack being made on your master, Packington, the constable is here," said the detective. "What is required from you is the watchfulness of a faithful and loyal servant. Your disabled leg will not interfere with that."

"Very good, sir," said Packington. Under his heavy dark brows, his eyes were very keenly on the detective.

"Sir Richard is a considerate master," said Mr. Garnish. "He will allow you to sit down while you wait here, Packington."

"You will make yourself comfortable, Packington, my good fellow," said Sir Richard. "As Mr. Garnish insists, I think you had better remain with me."

"Very good, sir."

"Neither you, nor the constable, is to leave the library for a single instant," said Mr. Garnish. "You are to

"Help!" came the shout, as the great stone rolled aside. The man from Scotland Yard motioned the workmen back, and stared down into the cavity, with glittering eyes. Below lay the shape of a stone stair, winding away into the darkness; and from the darkness, a group of white, worn faces stared up. "It's Wharton and his chums!" ejaculated Mr. Garnish. (*See Chapter* 12.)

remain constantly on the alert. I shall search the room before I leave."

"Then you have reason to believe, sir, that some fresh attack is actually intended?" exclaimed the baronet.

"You must allow me to keep my own counsel on that point for the present, sir," said Mr. Garnish.

"The measures you are taking seem to point to it," said Sir Richard.

"Possibly, sir—possibly."

Mr. Garnish roamed round the spacious room, three pairs of eyes watching him as he moved. He went to the adjoining study, looked into it, drew the door shut, locked it, and slipped the key into his pocket.

Then he went to the french windows. They were already closed, and Mr. Garnish looked to the bolts, then locked the window, and placed that key also in his pocket.

His head jerked round at Sir Richard Ravenspur.

"You have no objection, sir, to my taking these keys into my keeping for the time?" he snapped.

"None whatever."

"Thank you!"

After another look round the room, Mr. Garnish went to the big oak door that gave on the hall. He examined the large, old-fashioned lock on it, took out the key, and placed it on the outside of the door.

Packington opened his lips to speak, but closed them again. The Leyford constable watched Mr. Garnish with stolid unconcern. But Sir Richard spoke as he noted the detective's action.

"You intend to lock that door, Mr. Garnish?"

"That is my intention, sir."

"Certainly you seem to be leaving nothing to chance," said Sir Richard.

"It is not my way to leave anything to chance, sir," said Mr. Garnish.

"One moment, sir," said Packington smoothly. "If I am to remain locked in this room, sir——"

"You are to remain locked in with Sir Richard and the constable," said Mr. Garnish.

"In that case, may I ask for a few minutes' grace, in order to give some necessary instructions to the household staff——"

"You may not!" said Mr. Garnish.

"Really, sir——" murmured Packington.

"Sir Richard Ravenspur has dined, I think?" snapped Mr. Garnish.

"Quite so, sir, but——"

"Let Mr. Garnish have his way, Packington, my good fellow," said Sir Richard. "We must risk some disorder in the affairs of the household in the present peculiar circumstances."

"Very good, sir."

"I have no time to waste waiting here," said Mr. Garnish disagreeably. "I am sorry, Packington, but I can give you no time. I will, however, as I leave, convey any message you desire to send to the footmen or other servants."

"It is immaterial, sir," said Packington, compressing his lips. "In the event of anything going amiss in the household, Sir Richard will hold me blameless, I am sure."

"Naturally, Packington," said the baronet.

Mr. Garnish grunted, stepped out of the library, closed the heavy door, and the key was heard to turn in the lock. It was withdrawn, and placed in the detective's pocket, and the three men in the library heard his footsteps die away across the hall.

Sir Richard motioned Packington to a chair. The butler sat down. But, for once, the accustomed impassive calmness of Packington seemed to have deserted him. He sat still, silent, but his eyes, under his heavy brows, roved restlessly, and as the long minutes passed in silence he grew less and less at ease.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Garnish Going Strong!

MR. GARNISH permitted himself a faint, momentary grin as he walked out of Ravenspur Grange. But it was only for a second; then his strongly-marked features seemed moulded in iron again. He went down the drive with his quick, jerky steps, turned from it into a path, and walked into the park. In a grassy ride near the big, bronze gates of Ravenspur Grange, a group of men awaited him. They were in overalls, supplied with axes and picks and spades, and looked somewhat like a "break-down" gang. There were a dozen of them, with a foreman, who touched his hat to the detective as the man from Scotland Yard came jerkily up. Mr. Garnish glanced over the group, and, without wasting time on a word of greeting, rapped out:

"This way!"

He jerked off along the ride, going at a rapid pace into the heart of the park, and the men in overalls followed him.

The detective's steps led him in the direction of the old hunting-lodge.

From a shady ride he turned into a narrow tangled path, and arrived at last at the ruined lodge.

There, for a few minutes, he scanned the stone-flagged floor, the old ivied walls and the scattered blocks of fallen stone. The men, who had followed him in, waited in silence.

"Brown!" jerked out Mr. Garnish suddenly.

The foreman touched his hat.

"This is the place! These flags are to be removed. It will be heavy work, but your men will receive double overtime pay. Lose no time. You are to shift these flags until a certain place underneath is discovered. There is an old passage under the building, the secret of which has been lost for some time. We are here to find it! You understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Brown.

"Then set to work!"

Mr. Garnish sat on a detached mass of masonry, lighted a cigarette, and looked on as Brown and his men set to work.

Thud, thud, thud! Clang, clang, clang!

Crowbars were driven between the old flags, and one after another they were wrenched up.

Had Sir Richard Ravenspur beheld that devastation of an historic relic of the past it would probably have caused him great pain; and might even have led him to withdraw the "absolutely free hand" he had granted to the man from Scotland Yard.

But Sir Richard was quite unaware of Mr. Garnish's proceedings, and the thudding and clanging, noisy as they were, did not reach so far as the distant house.

Mr. Garnish watched the work, as indifferent to the fate of the mossy old ruin, as a Vandal or a Goth might have been.

It was heavy work, and the men toiled hard and perspired at it. But it went on without cessation.

Under the old flags, as they were wrenched out of place and piled, the ancient earth was revealed that had not seen the light of day for long centuries.

An hour passed, and another, and another. The sun was sinking behind the trees in the great park, flaming across the old ruin where the workmen toiled and sweated.

Mr. Garnish showed no sign of impatience.

He smoked his cigarette, threw away the stump, and then sat watching, with an expressionless face.

There was disappointment after disappointment, as only solid earth was revealed under the flags as they were moved one after another. But Mr. Garnish did not seem to feel it.

His patience was rewarded at last. There was a sudden excited call from Brown, the foreman.

"My eye! It's hollow here, sir."

Mr. Garnish sprang up like a jack-in-the-box. Almost before the words had left the foreman's lips, he was at Brown's side.

"Where?" he jerked.

Brown pointed to a crowbar in the hands of one of his men. Driven in by the side of a huge flat stone, it had slipped down, almost disappearing, showing that it had met with a hollow instead of the solid earth.

"Good!" said Mr. Garnish. "Mind how you move that stone! Mind it doesn't fall in."

The workmen gathered round the great heavy flag, with eager faces. They seemed to be feeling more of the excitement of the quest than the man from Scotland Yard.

Under the heave of the crowbars the great stone moved. Then suddenly, as if from the depths of the earth, came a startling sound—the sound of a human voice.

"Help!"

"My eye!" gasped Brown. "There's somebody down there, sir."

For one instant Mr. Garnish's face betrayed surprise. Then he snapped out:

"Get the stone away!"

"It's coming, sir!"

"Help!" came the shout from below again, louder and clearer as the heavy stone moved from its place.

The great stone rolled aside. Mr. Garnish motioned the workmen back and stared down into the cavity, with glittering eyes. Below lay the shape of a stone stair winding away into darkness, and from the darkness a group of white, worn faces stared up.

"The boys!" ejaculated Mr. Garnish.

And he stared blankly at Harry Wharton & Co. Whatever the man from Scotland Yard had expected to discover under the old hunting-lodge, he had assuredly not expected to discover the chums of the Greyfriars Remove there.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rescued!

HARRY WHARTON came up the steps.

He blinked in the red light of the sunset.

Mr. Garnish gave him a helping hand out.

"You!" he said. "Gad!"

The other fellows followed Wharton up.

The juniors were pale, tired, dusty, grubby, worn out by the long and weary imprisonment in the underground passage. But their wan faces brightened in the light of the sun, and they breathed in deeply the fresh cool air of the summer evening.

"You've saved us, sir," said Wharton. "Saved our lives, I think."

Mr. Garnish grunted.

"I suppose Packington told you, after all," said Bob Cherry.

Mr. Garnish stared at him.

"Packington!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Did Packington know you were there?"

"Oh, no; but he knew we were exploring this show," explained Bob, "and I suppose we've been missed long before this."

"Not by me," said Mr. Garnish.

Apparently Mr. Garnish had not considered it worth the trouble to observe whether the schoolboys had been about the house or not. Probably their movements were quite unimportant in his eyes.

"Then Packington did not tell you?" asked Nugent.

"Nothing."

"Then—how did you know we were there?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"I did not know."

"But you've dug us out!" exclaimed Harry, in wonder.

"So it appears."

"But what——"

Mr. Garnish did not wait for him to finish. He took an electric torch from his pocket, and descended the stone steps into the subterranean passage. The juniors sat down to rest, revelling in the sunlight and fresh air after their long imprisonment.

The workmen stood about, resting after their labour, and regarding the schoolboys with curious eyes. There was likely to be an absorbing topic over the ale at the Peal of Bells, in Leyford, that evening. Mr. Garnish's snappish voice came from below.

"Brown!"

"Yes, sir."

"Step down here."

The foreman descended into the cavity.

Bob Cherry looked at his chums, with a grin. They could guess that Mr. Garnish had found the block of stone that barred up the subterranean passage, and had been brought to a dead stop by it. There was a murmur of voices from the depths. The voice of the foreman came at last, rather loudly.

"There ain't any moving that, sir, with these crowbars. There ain't room for more'n one man to get at it at a time. I don't know how it's fixed, but it's fixed pretty solid."

A discontented grunt was heard, and then Mr. Garnish reappeared on the surface of the earth, and the foreman followed him up. The sun was gone down now, deepening twilight stealing over the park. Mr. Garnish glanced round him with puckered brows, evidently discontented. The summer night was closing in, and Brown and his men were anxious to be gone.

"Brown!" jerked out Mr. Garnish.

"Yes, sir."

"You will be here at six in the morning, with your men, and with implements to remove that stone in the passage below."

"Very well, sir."

"Now you had better go," said Mr. Garnish ungraciously.

"'Tain't our fault we can't shift that stone, sir!" said Brown. "It's just wedged in, and——"

"I know that. Good-night!"

Brown and his men departed. As they disappeared through the park, Mr. Garnish's eyes jerked round to the Greyfriars fellows.

"Now tell me how you came to be there!" he snapped.

In his usual way, Mr. Garnish did not appear to listen while he was being told. He moved about, peering into the dark cavity in the floor, staring at the displaced flags, and blinking at the thickening darkness in the surrounding park. But when the juniors had concluded he shot a sudden question.

"Packington showed you the moving stone?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"How did he find it?"

"By sheer chance."

Mr. Garnish looked at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove curiously and rather queerly for a second.

"Chance is a strange thing!" he said ruminatingly.

"He was helping us look round after you left us here, and happened on it," said Harry. "I think we should have found it, anyhow—it was very likely, at least, as we intended to make a thorough search. As it was left unfastened and moved when pressed in the corner, we might have chanced on it just as Packington did."

"Left unfastened?" said Mr. Garnish.

"Yes."

"By the man who used this passage to get to and from the Grange," said Bob. "I rather fancy it was left unfastened for us, and that he was on the watch. He meant to trap us there, the beast!"

Mr. Garnish was staring into the park, and Bob could not have said for certain whether he heard or not. Grateful as the juniors were to the detective for their rescue, they could not help finding Mr. Garnish's manner a little irritating.

"Did you not expect Packington to come, or send, to your help?" the detective asked suddenly.

"Well, we hoped he would," said Harry. "But as he never saw the stone raised he may not have guessed that we were below and shut in. Still, it's curious that he does not seem to have troubled about the matter at all—and I can't understand why Sir Richard Ravenspur has taken no notice of our being missing. We thought at first you had specially come to get us out——"

"Nothing of the sort."

"We know that now. But, if you didn't know we were there, I'm dashed if I know why you were digging in the old lodge at all."

Mr. Garnish jerked a glance at him.

"You don't know?" he asked.

"No!" said Harry.

"Well, after all, that is only one of the many things that you probably don't know," remarked the detective.

Wharton coloured a little.

"I suppose you were searching for the secret passage!" he snapped. "But when we were speaking to you on that subject you ridiculed the whole thing!"

"Did I?" said Mr. Garnish.

"You did!" said Wharton warmly.

"The ridiculefulness was terrific and preposterous!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh with emphasis.

"And now you jolly well know that we were right!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"You were right," agreed Mr. Garnish. "Stranger things than that have happened in the history of the universe."

He turned and walked away by the path into the park.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Well," he said, "it was lucky for us that the man came along and dug up the old place. But——"

"But his esteemed manners are neither grateful nor comforting," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Never mind about his manners," he said. "He's got us out of a fearful hole. I say, I've got an impression that that merchant isn't the ass we thought him. He was only pulling our leg in pretending not to believe in the secret passage under the hunting-lodge. He jolly well knew it was there all the time—he had worked it out in his mind, you know, from what he knew."

"And why should he pull our leg about it, when we are trying to help?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Perhaps he wanted to spring this excavation business suddenly, without anybody knowing in advance," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Some idea of taking the villain by surprise."

(Continued on next page.)

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"Well, he could have trusted us."

"Yes; but Packington was there, too, when he was speaking to us——"

"Packington's to be trusted, I suppose?"

"I suppose so; but he might have talked, and, after all, a detective can't be too careful," said Harry. "After all, I don't think I quite blame Mr. Garnish for keeping his thoughts to himself."

"Perhaps not," said Bob. "He does seem to be a wary bird, after all. I say, any of you fellows hungry?"

"What-ho!" said Johnny Bull, with deep feeling.

"The hungerfulness is terrific!"

"Come on," said Harry. "Let's get back to the house and get some grub—and let Sir Richard know we're safe, if Garnish doesn't happen to think of mentioning it when he gets in."

And the juniors left the hunting-lodge and walked through the shadowed park to the Grange.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Sir Richard!

THE key turned in the lock, the library door opened, and Sir Richard Ravenspur turned his glance upon the jerky figure that appeared in the doorway. Packington rose to his feet at once. His eyes were fixed on the face of the detective as if seeking to read his thoughts there; but the hard, somewhat sour features expressed nothing. Mr. Garnish jerked into the room.

"Nothing happened during my absence?" he inquired.

"Nothing," answered Sir Richard.

"No alarm of any kind, what?"

"None."

"Good!" said Mr. Garnish. "Precautions are never wasted."

"I have no doubt you are right, sir," said the baronet wearily. "But I confess that actual danger may be preferable to remaining locked in a room. I hope it will not be necessary to repeat this experience?"

"I hope not, sir," answered Mr. Garnish indifferently.

He replaced the keys of the window and the study. Packington was receding noiselessly from the room when Mr. Garnish jerked at him:

"Packington!"

"Sir!" said the butler, stopping.

"You were wrong, Packington."

"Indeed, sir? May I ask to what you refer?"

"A secret passage exists under the old hunting-lodge,' jerked Mr. Garnish.

Packington started.

"A—a secret passage, sir?"

"Precisely!"

"I was not aware of it, sir," said Packington.

"No doubt. I asked you whether you knew of such a thing, and you told me that no such thing existed, or something to that effect."

"That no such thing existed, to my knowledge, sir," reminded Packington. "I could not speak with positiveness on a subject of which I knew nothing, sir."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Garnish.

Packington was eyeing him strangely, standing by the half-open door.

"May I ask, sir, whether you found such a secret passage, or whether you merely surmised its existence?" he inquired suavely.

"I have found it."

Packington opened his lips and shut them again, hard. Under his heavy brows his eyes were like a cat's.

"I am sure I congratulate you, sir, with the greatest respect, on your success, sir," he said, but the smooth voice was not so smooth as usual.

"Thank you," said Mr. Garnish. "No doubt it is news to you, Sir Richard, that this underground passage exists?"

"Not exactly news, sir," said the baronet. "There is a family tradition of its existence, though the secret has long been lost. It was certainly known to one of my ancestors. In more recent times it is supposed to have been used by a member of my own family—a nephew of mine—but, if that was the case, he never communicated his knowledge to anyone else. I shall be interested to explore this secret passage when my health is restored. May I ask whether you have followed it from the park as far as this house?"

"I was not able to do so, as the way is blocked—a kind of stone door, fastened apparently from the inner side," said Mr. Garnish. "It blocks up the passage about a dozen yards from its opening in the old lodge. However, workmen are coming in the morning at an early hour to remove that obstruction. Then we shall know all that the passage can tell us."

Sir Richard's eyes glistened.

"That may be much, Mr. Garnish. Now that it is proved that the secret passage exists it may be learned whether it was used by the secret enemy who seeks my life——"

Have you won one of our useful leather pocket wallets yet? Here's this week's winning effort:

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"There is no doubt on that point, Sir Richard. It had been recently used, which is proof enough. A lantern was kept there in readiness for use."

"Then to-morrow, sir, should see the mystery solved!" exclaimed Sir Richard. "If the passage is followed as far as this house, it may lead to the room occupied by the assassin's confederate——"

"No doubt, if the assassin has a confederate."

Sir Richard raised his eyebrows.

"I was taking that for granted," he said.

"It is never safe to take anything for granted!" jerked Mr. Garnish. "I see no reason personally for supposing that the assassin has a confederate."

"It would be a great relief to my mind to be assured that he has not," said Sir Richard. "It has been very painful to me to be compelled to doubt the honesty and good faith of any member of my household."

"Quite!" said Mr. Garnish.

"If you require me no longer, sir, I have duties that demand my attention," said Packington.

Mr. Garnish jerked round at him.

"No doubt, no doubt!" he said. "The schoolboys will require some supper, I imagine, when they reach the house. I imagine they are hungry by this time."

"The schoolboys?" repeated Sir Richard.

"Yes, sir! You may go, Packington," added Mr. Garnish. The butler was lingering at the door.

"Excuse me, sir," faltered Packington, "I understood that the young gentlemen had left——"

"Certainly they came near leaving, and in the most efficacious manner," said Mr. Garnish. "I should like to be informed, Sir Richard Ravenspur, why I was not told that these boys were missing?"

"Missing?" repeated the baronet.

"I presume they have been missed," said the detective.

"You seem to be under some misapprehension," said the baronet in bewilderment. "My nephew and his friends have left the Grange and proceeded on their holiday tour."

"Come, come!" said Mr. Garnish. "May I inquire what gave you that impression?"

"It is not an impression, but a fact, and I was apprised of it by a letter written by my nephew from Leyford."

Mr. Garnish's eyes gleamed.

"Please let me see the letter."

"I have it here."

The detective took the letter and examined it with attention. Then he jerked up his head and stared at the baronet.

"This is your nephew's hand?"

"Yes."

"You are well acquainted with it?"

"Quite."

"A very skilful forgery then," drawled Mr. Garnish, tossing the letter on the table. "Your nephew Frank Nugent never wrote a line of that letter, sir."

"What!" ejaculated Sir Richard.

"Your nephew, sir, and his friends discovered the secret passage under the ruined lodge and were shut up in it, and had I not made the same discovery in my turn, must have perished there."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sir Richard, white as chalk.

"That letter was written, sir, in order to account for their sudden disappearance, without exciting suspicion and causing a search. Since this morning they have been prisoners in an underground passage."

"Good heavens!" the baronet repeated.

"I trust the young gentlemen have come to no harm, sir?" said Packington.

"None at all," said Mr. Garnish. "I fancy they are ravenously hungry by this time; but that, I believe, is the full extent of the damage."

"See that supper is prepared immediately, Packington," said Sir Richard.

"Very good, sir."

Packington glided away. Sir Richard turned to the Scotland Yard man, his face full of emotion.

"Mr. Garnish, from what you tell me, you have saved the life of my nephew Frank, and the lives of his friends."

"No doubt!" snapped Mr. Garnish.

"Believe me, sir, my gratitude——"

"All in the way of duty, sir," interrupted Mr. Garnish. "I will keep this letter, sir, with your permission. I am extremely interested in it, and hope to make the acquaintance of the writer shortly."

And Mr. Garnish jerked out of the library as the footsteps of Harry Wharton & Co. were heard in the hall. Five tired and hungry juniors trailed into the house, and Packington greeted them with respectful attention. Mr. Garnish stood watching them as they paused to speak to the butler.

"Please allow me to express my pleasure, young gentlemen, at seeing you safe and well," said Packington. "The Scotland Yard gentleman has

Suddenly from the direction of the distant park, came a flash that illuminated the shadows of the night, and a deafening roar. Harry Wharton & Co. started to their feet. "What was that?" exclaimed Wharton. "An explosion!" The juniors, together with Mr. Garnish, rushed to the window and looked out across the park. *(See Chapter 15.)*

just informed my master that he found you imprisoned in some cellar or passage——"

"He jolly well did," said Bob Cherry; "and it was lucky for us, Packington! We thought we were booked."

"The bookfulness was terrific!"

"Haven't we been searched for?" demanded Johnny Bull warmly.

"No, sir. You see——"

"My uncle must have missed us," exclaimed Frank Nugent; "and you might have remembered, Packington, that you left us at the old hunting-lodge, and might have looked for us there, I think."

"Undoubtedly, sir; but you will hardly blame me when you know the facts," said Packington. "I was informed by Sir Richard that you had left to resume your holiday tour, sir, so naturally, I thought no more about the matter."

"My uncle told you that?" exclaimed Frank stupefied.

"He received a letter, sir——"

"Here is the letter, if you are curious to see it," interjected Mr. Garnish.

Harry Wharton & Co. glanced at the forged letter. They understood now why no search had been made, and they realised that no search would have been made at all, and understood more clearly than before how utterly they owed their lives to the man from Scotland Yard.

"My hat!" said Bob, with a deep breath. "Who'd have thought it? I—I say, I'd swear that was Franky's hand!"

"I should say so myself, if I didn't know I hadn't written it," said Frank. "The villain must have got a copy of my hand and lagged notepaper belonging to this house."

Mr. Garnish put the letter back into his pocket-book.

"Probably we shall make the acquaintance shortly of the person who has borrowed your name and handwriting Master Nugent," he said. To-morrow morning the secret passage will be cleared and followed to wherever it may lead in this house. Then we shall see."

Mr. Garnish jerked away, the juniors staring after him. For once the uncommunicative detective had been strangely communicative; he had practically told the juniors, and anyone else who might have been within hearing, that on the morrow he hoped to complete his case. They noticed that Packington looked after him very curiously as he went. But they had given up the idea by this time of trying to understand Mr. Garnish and his methods, and they went on to the library to see Sir Richard to receive a warm and affectionate greeting from the master of the Grange.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Explosion!

"GOOD-NIGHT, sir," said Packington.

Mr. Garnish, standing at one of the tall windows in the old oak hall of Ravenspur Grange, was looking out over the starlit terrace. The hour was growing late.

He jerked his head round as the butler spoke. Packington was crossing the hall with his silent, limping tread.

"Going to bed, what!"

"Yes, sir," said Packington. "It is before my usual hour, sir, but my leg is somewhat painful, and now Sir Richard has gone to his room I shall be glad to rest. If you require anything further, sir——"

"Nothing, thanks."

"James will remain up till you retire, sir," said Packington. "If you should need him, sir, a touch of this bell——"

"James may as well go to bed," said Mr. Garnish. "I require nothing."

"Very good, sir," said Packington. "Good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

Mr. Garnish turned to the window again.

Packington noiselessly left the hall, by the passage that led to his own rooms on the ground floor.

The detective remained standing at the window.

He seemed interested in a view of the starlit park, though his hard-featured face expressed nothing of what he thought of it. He was still standing at the window, staring out, when Harry Wharton & Co. came into the hall. Then his head jerked round.

"Time you boys were in bed," he rapped.

"Just thinking of it," said Bob Cherry, with a rather curious look at the detective. "But Franky's rather worried about his uncle."

"Stuff!" said Mr. Garnish.

Frank Nugent frowned.

"It may seem stuff, as you call it, to you, Mr. Garnish," he said tartly.

"It does!" said Mr. Garnish.

Nugent compressed his lips.

"Stuff!" repeated Mr. Garnish. "You are thinking that, having turned you out of the dressing-room adjoining your uncle's room, I ought to be there myself, what?"

Nugent started a little. Certainly the detective had read his thoughts.

"There is a constable in that room, and another in Sir Richard's room, as well as Jervis," said Mr. Garnish. "Depend upon it, your uncle is perfectly safe for the night. And I am here!"

"Well, I'm not going to bed yet," said Nugent.

"Please yourself."

Mr. Garnish turned to the window again.

There was nothing to be seen from the window, save the starlit gardens and the park, yet the juniors could not help having an impression that the detective was watching for something.

For what, was rather a mystery. He could scarcely be expecting to see Sir Richard's enemy arriving at the house openly. But they were more and more impressed by the belief that he was on the watch, for what they could not guess.

The juniors were tired, but they had no desire to go to bed. Now that the secret passage was discovered, now that

it was certain that on the morrow it would be explored throughout its extent, it was obvious that after this night it would no longer serve the purposes of the secret assassin. The thought was in their minds that that very night the unknown dastard might make some desperate attempt, while means of ingress to the house still remained to him.

Mr. Garnish, staring from the window, seemed to have forgotten the presence of the juniors.

Midnight chimed.

Suddenly, from the direction of the distant park, came a flash that illuminated the shadows of the night and a deafening roar.

The juniors started to their feet.

Over the park, and over the house, rolled the thundering echoes of a terrible explosion.

"What was that?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"An explosion——"

"What the thump——"

The juniors rushed to the windows.

Darkness had settled down again, the last echoes of the terrific report died away in rumblings.

"So that was the way!"

The words were muttered aloud by Mr. Garnish. The juniors stared round at him, and to their surprise saw a smile flicker over his hard face.

"You know what it was, Mr. Garnish?" exclaimed Bob.

"An explosion," said the detective.

"But what—where?"

"In the park, obviously."

"But what could have exploded in the park?" exclaimed Harry Wharton in amazement.

"Probably a dynamite cartridge—a very powerful one," drawled Mr. Garnish. "I am afraid Sir Richard Ravenspur will not see the relics of that very interesting old hunting-lodge again. What?"

Wharton caught his breath.

"You think the explosion was at the old lodge?" he asked.

"Why not?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Do you mean to say that the villain has blown up that old lodge with dynamite, to destroy the secret passage before it can be traced to the house?"

"I should consider it probable," assented Mr. Garnish.

"Then the passage will be destroyed—blocked up under tons of earth! It will not be possible to trace it now!" exclaimed Nugent excitedly.

"Probably."

"And you let him do it?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Precisely."

"Well, my hat!"

The juniors gazed at the man from Scotland Yard in utter astonishment. They knew now why Mr. Garnish had stayed up so late, why he had been watching from the hall window. He had been in expectation of some desperate measure being taken by the unknown assassin, to destroy the clue that, on the morrow, would have led to his probable detection. Expecting such a move, the detective had taken no steps to prevent it, and the hoped-for discovery, by means of the exploration of the secret passage, could never now be made. Strangest of all, the detective was obviously pleased and satisfied. His hard face expressed little or nothing, but the gleam in his keen grey eyes was not to be mistaken. He had expected something of the kind—it had happened—and Mr. Garnish was satisfied, and the chums of Greyfriars could only stare at him in bewilderment.

The roar of the explosion had awakened the whole household. The face of Jervis was seen looking down over the oaken rail of the gallery above the hall. Mr. Garnish glanced up at him.

"Go back to Sir Richard's room!" he snapped. "What do you mean by leaving him?"

"Sir Richard has been awakened. He desires to know what has happened," stammered Jervis.

"Nothing of any consequence. Tell Sir Richard he may compose himself to sleep," snapped Mr. Garnish. "Tell the servants to go back to bed, James," he added, as the half-dressed footman ran into the hall. "There is no occasion for alarm."

He turned to the juniors.

"You had better go to bed, my boys! If you have been fancying that Sir Richard's enemy might use the secret passage to-night, you may take my word for it that that passage is now impassable—buried out of human sight for ever. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" gasped Bob.

The juniors went up the staircase.

Mr. Garnish watched them out of sight. His keen, alert eyes roved round him. The alarm had subsided; the house was silent again. Mr. Garnish drew something from an inner pocket that glimmered in the light, and examined it carefully before putting it back again. Then he moved away, and disappeared from the lighted hall. It was as if the explosion in the night had given the detective the signal for action.

Quietly, softly, he trod down the passage that led to the butler's room. His hand groped over the door of Packington's room.

It was locked within.

But Mr. Garnish, of Scotland Yard, was prepared for such emergencies. His hand glided over the lock, and in a few moments the door rolled open, and the man from Scotland Yard, his automatic in his hand now, stepped into the darkness within.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hand of the Unknown!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came downstairs in the sunny morning.

They stopped at Sir Richard's door, to say good-morning to the baronet. Sir Richard, sitting up in bed, gave them a kind smile and a nod. The baronet was looking better that morning, and there was a healthier colour in his cheek. Since the arrival of Mr. Garnish from Scotland Yard, the shadow of danger seemed to have lifted, and there seemed no doubt that Mr. Garnish's presence in the house had checked further attempts by the secret assassin. Sir Richard was feeling the relief from the long strain, and the chums of the Remove were glad to see the improvement in the kind old gentleman's looks.

Jervis was by his master's bedside, and a sleepy constable was yawning by the window, waiting to be relieved of duty. Frank glanced towards the door of the dressing-room, which was half-open.

"Mr. Garnish up yet?" he asked.

"Mr. Garnish has not been in his room, sir," said Jervis. "He does not seem to have gone to bed last night. There is a constable there."

"He hasn't been to bed?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No, sir."

"Mr. Garnish has probably been busy in his own way," said Sir Richard, with a smile. "I have every hope of some discovery being made to-day. Mr. Garnish has said nothing, but I am assured that he knows a great deal."

The Famous Five went down to breakfast.

They saw nothing of Mr. Garnish downstairs, and he was not in the breakfast-room. James came in with the breakfast, and the juniors questioned him.

"You've seen Mr. Garnish this morning, James?" asked Harry.

"No, sir."

"He's in the house, I suppose?" asked Nugent, perplexed.

"I think not, sir," answered James. "A door was found unfastened this morning—the door from the smoke-room to the terrace—and Mr. Packington thinks that Mr. Garnish must have gone out that way some time during the night."

"And left the door unfastened!" exclaimed Harry.

"It was found unfastened, sir," said James. "I was the person who found it so, sir, and it surprised me very much, Mr. Garnish having told us, sir, to be very careful about the fastening of doors and windows. Perhaps he went out intending to return, sir, and was detained."

"It's jolly queer, you fellows," said Bob. "I can't understand Garnish going out and leaving a door unfastened. It was giving that villain a chance to walk in, if he liked."

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Harry. "But if he's not in the house he must have gone out, I suppose."

"The mustfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the surprisefulness is great."

The juniors breakfasted rather hurriedly. They were not merely surprised, but astounded, to learn that the man from Scotland Yard had left the house during the night, and had been so amazingly careless as to leave a door unfastened behind him. It was still more amazing that he had not yet returned to the house.

"Something's up," said Bob Cherry, with conviction. "It's possible that he's got his man. I'm jolly certain that he had the thing worked out in his mind last night."

"I'm sure of that," said Harry. "But—he can't have made an arrest without its being known. I—I wonder——" He broke off.

Bob whistled softly.

"My hat! If that villain's got at him——" he breathed.

The juniors looked at one another, with startled faces. The fate of Inspector Cook, of Leyford, was fresh in their minds. The Leyford inspector had, at least so they believed, made some discovery, or had been on the verge of making one, when the assassin's bullet had reached his heart. The mysterious criminal, whoever he was, was merciless, and they were only too well aware of his cunning and resource.

"Let's get out," said Wharton abruptly. "I'm jolly anxious to see Mr. Garnish again. If anything's happened to him——"

"We may find him all right," said Bob hopefully.

The juniors met Packington in the hall. He greeted them with respectful suavity.

"Seen anything of Mr. Garnish, Packington?" asked Harry Wharton.

The butler shook his head.

"No, sir! He does not appear to be in the house."

"It's jolly queer!" said Nugent.

Packington coughed.

"No doubt Mr. Garnish is engaged upon some important matter, sir," he said. "I am informed by James that the smoke-room door, on the terrace, was found unfastened this morning. I am absolutely certain that it was fastened when I went to bed last night. You young gentlemen were up late, I think?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"You did not by any chance unfasten that door, sir?"

"Of course not."

"I was quite sure of it, sir," said Packington. "But I have questioned the whole household, and no one knows anything of it. I can only conclude, sir, that Mr. Garnish went out that way—why, I cannot undertake to say."

Harry Wharton & Co. went out on the terrace. There was no sign of the Scotland Yard man there.

"He may be gone to see the old hunting lodge," suggested Bob, "to see about the damage done——"

"That wouldn't be likely to keep him all this time," said Harry. "But let's go there. Mr. Garnish thought it was the old lodge that was blown up—but we don't know for certain yet."

That Mr. Garnish had been right on that point, the juniors soon discovered. The spot where the old lodge had stood presented a scene of utter devastation when they reached it. Huge stones and masses of earth had been hurled out of place by the force of the explosion; trees and bushes uprooted, and piled in the wildest confusion. They found Joyce there, staring at the scene of destruction. It was difficult to pick a way among the masses of torn earth and stones and trees. The old hunting lodge had vanished for ever, and the secret it had hidden had vanished also.

Somewhere, buried beneath tons of earth, was doubtless some remnant of the ancient stone passage that had led from the old lodge to the Grange. But it was never likely to meet a human eye again.

"Has Mr. Garnish been here, Joyce?" asked Harry.

The keeper shook his head.

"I ain't seen him, sir," he answered. "Some workmen came from Leyford and said that they was told by Mr. Garnish to be here at six, but he never showed up, sir, and they've gone back."

"You've seen nothing of him this morning?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

The juniors lingered by the spot for some time, and finally left it, and walked back to the house. There they hoped to find the detective. But that hope proved delusive.

"Has Mr. Garnish come in, Packington?" called out Harry.

"No, sir."

"Nothing heard of him?"

"So far as I am aware, sir, nothing," said the butler.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"He can't have gone away—without a word!" he said. "That's impossible. You fellows, something has happened to him."

"Looks like it," said Bob, in a low voice.

"And—and he saved our lives yesterday!" said Frank Nugent, with a catch in his voice. "Is my uncle down, Packington?"

"Sir Richard has breakfasted, sir, and is in the library," said Packington.

The juniors proceeded to the library, where they found the baronet, with a police-constable hovering at hand as usual. Sir Richard Ravenspur's face was pale and troubled. Evidently he was now aware of the mysterious absence of the Scotland Yard detective.

He gave the schoolboys a quick look as they entered.

"Have you seen Mr. Garnish?"

"No, uncle," answered Frank. "We—we're afraid that something must have happened to him. He seems to have left the house in the night, and not come back."

"He was absent some time yesterday," said Sir Richard musingly. "But then, I think, he was making arrangements for the workmen to come to the hunting lodge. He may be engaged upon some matter of importance—but—but—it is inexplicable that he should have left a door unsecured when he left the house. I fear—I fear——"

The baronet broke off. But he did not need to put his fear into words. The juniors knew that he was feeling the same misgivings as themselves.

"If anything has happened to Mr. Garnish, I shall send for Ferrers Locke," said Sir Richard, after a pause. "I have a feeling—a conviction—that Mr. Garnish had his finger on the mystery—that a few hours more would have seen the exposure and arrest of the villain who threatens my life. At the last moment I fear that the dastard may have realised his danger, and have turned on him, like a hunted wild beast. Or—or Mr. Garnish may have heard something, and gone out to investigate, and fallen under a treacherous blow. He must, at all events, be searched for."

During the hours of the morning there was yet hope that the Scotland Yard detective might return from his inexplicable absence. But the summer morning wore away, and there was no sign of him, and the conviction grew in every heart that in life he would never be seen again.

Dead or alive, he was not in the house, and a search of the immediate vicinity failed to reveal him. The keepers had been directed to search in the gardens and the park, and at every moment there was now expectation of some ghastly discovery.

The gloom of tragedy hung over the great house. The servants moved on tiptoe, and spoke in hushed voices. A police-inspector and several constables arrived from Leyford to join in the search. Little, if any, doubt was entertained now, that the detective had fallen at the hands of the secret assassin of Ravenspur Grange. Harry Wharton & Co. joined in the search, with heavy hearts. The man from Scotland Yard had saved them from a ruthless enemy, but he had not been able to save himself.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. He stopped, and pointed to signs of trampling in a thicket on the edge of the park.

"Someone's been here!" muttered Wharton.

The juniors stopped, their hearts beating, fearing what they might discover when they penetrated the thicket. There were signs of trampling in the grass, and some of the tendrils of the thicket were torn and broken. In their hearts they knew upon what their eyes were about to fall.

"Come on!" muttered Wharton. "We've got to find out!"

He pushed into the thicket.

His comrades followed him, their faces pale and tense, their hearts beating fast.

Wharton stopped suddenly. He had almost stumbled over something that lay half-hidden.

"What——" breathed Bob Cherry.

"It—it's——" Wharton's voice faltered.

He pulled the branches aside. The sun gleamed down on a white face that was turned to the juniors with unseeing eyes.

"Good heavens!" breathed Nugent, sick with horror.

Wharton let the branches fall back again, and the schoolboys retreated from the thicket, with blanched faces. They had found what they sought. Inspector Garnish, of Scotland Yard, lay in the green thicket dead, with a terrible wound between his shoulders, where a knife had been driven to his heart by some dastard hand from behind.

For a long moment the chums of Greyfriars looked at one another, with white, horrified faces.

Then, in dead silence, they moved away to the house.

Ten minutes later the body was being carried in by the Leyford constables.

The man from Scotland Yard had been found at last. And that was how he had been found.

* * * * * *

"Dead?"

Sir Richard Ravenspur almost whispered the word His face was white, and his hands trembled.

"Yes!" whispered Nugent.

The baronet was silent.

"There is a curse upon this house!" he said at last. "A shadow of mystery and tragedy and death! But if there lives one man who can solve this fearful mystery, it is Ferrers Locke. He shall come—he must come!"

"He will come!" said Harry.

It was a long telegram that was despatched to the famous detective at Baker Street. It breathed the horror of the mystery and gloom that hung over Ravenspur Grange.

Anxiously the baronet and the Greyfriars juniors awaited the reply from Ferrers Locke.

It was not long in coming. It was brief; its brevity characteristic of the Baker Street detective.

"Arrive this evening.—Locke."

That was all!

But it was enough to bring a new light to the worn face of the master of the Grange, a new hope to his heart.

Ferrers Locke was coming! The secret enemy of Ravenspur, ruthless, cunning, fertile in resources, would be matched against the greatest detective of modern times; and Harry Wharton & Co. did not fear for the result. And every heart was lighter when, in the early evening, Packington's smooth voice announced:

"Mr. Ferrers Locke!"

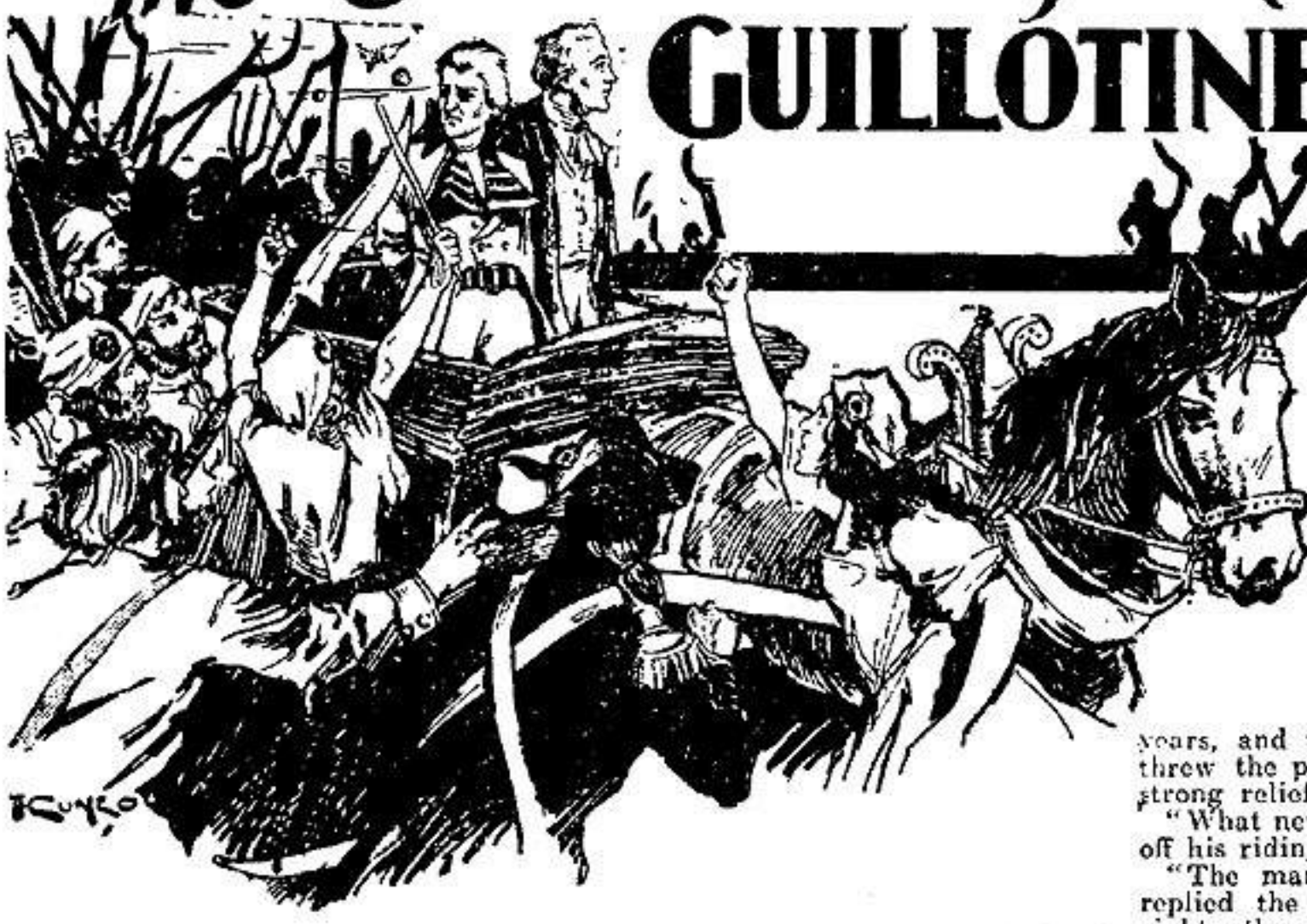
THE END.

Next Week's Extra-Special Story of Harry Wharton & Co., is entitled:

"THE TERROR TRACKED DOWN!"

You'll regret it, chums, if you miss it!

The SHADOW of the GUILLOTINE!



By Popular
GEO. E. ROCHESTER

Introduction on next page.

Paul Dare in a new Role!

"ONE further chance will I give you to withdraw!" announced the captain.

"He dare not fire!" screamed a voice. "He dare not do it, comrades!"

But the captain knew what he was about. He had received explicit instructions from a certain citizen-commissioner, who was one of the most powerful of the people's leaders, a citizen-commissioner who at that very moment was riding up the avenue towards the chateau. And those instructions were that at all costs the mob was to be dispersed, and, if not too late, the life of the most noble the Marquis d'Ermonde de Fontnoy preserved.

So, in a voice suggestive of boredom, the captain motioned with gloved hand and gave the word:

"Fire!"

Again came a crash of musketry, and lurid flame leapt from carbine muzzles. Deliberately the soldiers fired high, but the volley had its desired effect. Shouting and cursing, the panic-stricken peasants rushed for the doors, crowding and jostling as they poured out into the safety of the night. That murderous captain was either mad or drunk! He had fired on them—the people! Pardi! But there would be a reckoning for this!

And now, with six soldiers at his back, the captain was mounting the stairs.

"Citizens," he said, with a clumsy, formal bow, "you are my prisoners! Which of you is the Marquis d'Ermonde de Fontnoy?"

"I am, fellow!" responded the marquis arrogantly.

The captain, a phlegmatic individual, eyed him stonily.

"I am happy in that I find you alive, citizen," he observed. "What lies beyond that door?"

"The banqueting-hall!" Espany said gruffly.

"You will wait there, citizens, under guard!" the captain informed them.

Stepping forward, he threw open the door and stood aside. With a shrug of his shoulders, the marquis walked into the room, followed by his companions and the soldiers. Of what use was resistance now? It would merely be humiliatingly futile. For these blue-coated scum—these soldiers of the people—would shoot them down without compunction.

There's a deadly score to be settled between the Marquis de Fontnoy, the hated aristocrat, and Paul Darc, the once down-trodden peasant, now the Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris. But to leave the settling of it to the revolutionary mob savours to Paul, rightly or wrongly, of being both cowardly and mean.

Closing the door on nobles and guard, the captain descended the stairs. As he did so there came a clatter of hoofs from outside, and a moment later the citizen-commissioner who had sent him and the soldiers to Chateau Fontnoy strode into the hall.

He was sombrely clad was the citizen-commissioner. Below his black cloak he wore a neat black riding-suit, the only splash of colour being the tricolour sash of office which he wore about his waist. He was young, slim, and boyish, but in his eyes was that which made him look older than his years, and the sombreness of his garb threw the paleness of his features into strong relief.

"What news?" he demanded, drawing off his riding-gloves.

"The marquis lives, citizen-deputy," replied the captain, "and with him eight others of aristocratic blood!"

The citizen-commissioner nodded.

"I will see them," he said. "Announce me, citizen-captain!"

The captain led the way up the stairs, followed by the citizen-commissioner, with black cocked hat under his arm.

Reaching the door of the banqueting-hall, the captain threw it open and announced in stentorian tones:

"The Citizen-deputy Paul Darc, Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris!"

The Challenge!

NOT once since that fateful night three years ago when he had journeyed to Paris, had Paul Darc revisited Fontnoy.

And now he returned, still little more then a boy in years, but with a sombreness in his eyes and a weariness in his pale, drawn features which one looks not for in youth.

Immensely popular with the people though he was, and friend of the all-powerful Robespierre, yet the tragic years had bitten deep into the soul of Paul Darc, and his thin, firm lips were those of one who has long forgotten laughter.

Slowly he advanced into the room, halting within a pace of the marquis.

"So, citizen," he said quietly, "we meet again."

The marquis surveyed him with a shrug, then turned to D'Espany.

"It almost seems," he said, with superb insolence, "as though the creature is attempting to claim some previous acquaintance with me."

"Citizen," said Paul evenly, "when I entered this room I did not look for you to know me again, and I see that you do not. But I did look to have found your arrogance somewhat

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tempered by a more seemly humility, and your pitiful stupidity leavened by a belated wisdom!"

The marquis gasped. These words to him!

"Insolent cur!" he blazed, making a menacing movement with his drawn and crimson sword.

"Have a care, citizen!" warned Paul gratingly. "Three years ago you drew that blade on a defenceless man. A right noble deed it was, and one well worthy of the name of Fontnoy—but a deed, citizen, the memory of which has brought me here to-night."

With a quick movement of his hand, Paul picked a laden candelabrum from the table and held it so that the illumination of the lighted candles fell full upon his features.

"Look well on me!" he said harshly. "The one whom once your grooms flogged nigh to death—the one whose father you most vilely slew. I had offended in that I, a son of the people, had presumed to friendship with your kinsman, the Citizen de St. Clair. A heinous crime, was it not, Citizen Fontnoy, but by means of whip and sword, you soon wiped out the insult to your family honour!"

The marquis was staring, with head thrust forward, and now, it seemed, recollection stirred.

"You are the boy, Paul Dare—from the village?" he said coldly.

"Nay, from Paris!" returned Paul, with sudden change of tone, replacing the candelabrum on the table. "From Paris, Citizen Fontnoy. I was announced, but, maybe, the coarse, uncultured tones of the citizen-captain were unintelligible to your noble ears."

The marquis ignored the gibe.

"And what seek you here?" he demanded.

Paul looked at him steadily.

"I seek the fulfilment of the promise which I made to you the day you had me flogged!" he replied.

"What promise, fellow?" demanded the marquis petulantly.

"That I would take payment in full for the killing of my father!" replied Paul harshly. "I hold the papers ordering your arrest."

"On what charge?"

"On the charge of being an aristocrat and, as such, a traitor to the people," replied Paul. "You are to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris."

The marquis laughed contemptuously.

"Before that rabble?" he exclaimed. "Then I am as good as dead. It is droll, is it not," he went on, turning to D'Espany, "to observe how vengeance masquerades as justice. This creature, it appears, owes me payment for a killing and a flogging. So he arrives here with a warrant for my arrest, and with soldiers to aid him in its execution. But the charge, mark you, is merely than I am an aristocrat and, therefore, a traitor to these scum who have overthrown their king and made a shambles of this land of France."

"That is the charge against you," said Paul quietly. "There is no other."

The marquis wheeled on him.

"You expect me to believe that?" he demanded, with withering scorn. "You expect me to believe that at my mockery of a trial no mention will be made of your flogging and of my disposing of your miserable clod of a father?"

Paul's eyes blazed, and his hands clenched, but he held himself in check.

"No mention will be made of them," he replied steadily, "for they are matters which concern no one but you and I."

He turned to the captain.

"Withdraw with your men, citizen-captain," he said curtly, "and await me outside."

The captain growled out an order and followed the slouching soldiers from the room. When the door had closed on them, Paul addressed himself again to the marquis.

"Citizen Fontnoy," he said sternly, "I have not yet appended my signature to the papers ordering your arrest. Were I to die, leaving the papers unsigned, the citizen-captain would have no authority for the conveying of you to Paris and the Luxembourg prison. You understand?"

"Yes."

"The score between us," went on Paul slowly, his sombre eyes on the face of the marquis, "is one which has long called for settlement, and I do not crave the guillotine as an ally. You are a man still in the prime of life, and your skill as a duellist is reputed to be unequalled in France. Therefore, Citizen Fontnoy, I offer you the choice of two courses. Either with the sword you will afford me the satisfaction I seek—or you journey to Paris with the dawn!"

"Are you mad?" gasped the marquis.

Mad? Yes, indeed, Paul Dare was mad, for what chance had ever come his way to learn the sword? In the duel which he was offering he would be hopelessly and fatally outmatched from the first. And he knew it.

But his code of honour was rigid. There was a deadly score to be settled between him and the marquis; a score which, as Paul saw it, must be settled between themselves as man to man. To leave the settling of it to the mob and the guillotine savoured to Paul, rightly or wrongly, as both cowardly and mean. For he knew full well that the marquis was a doomed man once he arrived in Paris.

"Are you suggesting," demanded the marquis, having recovered somewhat from his first almost speechless astonishment, "that I should cross swords with a cur such as you? That I, a Fontnoy, should so dishonour my steel——"

"You have learned the alternative!" cut in Paul coldly.

"It is a chivalrous and unexpected offer, Fontnoy," said D'Espany, eyeing Paul curiously, "and one of which you might, with thankful heart, avail yourself."

"Sangdieu!" cried the marquis passionately. "Has it then come to this, D'Espany, that even you forget your rank and station in that you counsel me to meet this presumptious animal whom I have flogged? I will have none of it!"

INTRODUCTION.

It is the year 1789, when the first rumbles of the coming revolution in France are heard. Paul Dare, a peasant, and the Chevalier de St. Clair, an aristocrat, both young lads, are staunch chums, but they are soon forced to realise the barrier that lies between them. For daring to bathe in the lake at Chateau Fontnoy, Paul is brutally flogged at the order of the Marquis D'Ermonde de Fontnoy, the Chevalier's uncle, who gives further evidence of his fiendish cruelty by killing Paul's father. The lad swears vengeance and is sent to Paris by a revolutionary named Sansarge, there to be placed in the charge of the notorious Robespierre. Three years pass, and the long-threatened revolution has burst into flame. The shadow of the guillotine lies over France, and the Marquis de Fontnoy, realising his danger, prepares for flight. His magnificent farewell banquet, however, is cut short when the infuriated peasants storm the chateau. The marquis and his fellow aristocrats defend the stairway, but the fight is hopeless against such overwhelming odds. Then, just when it seems that all is over, comes a crash of musketry. A score of soldiers of the National Guard have arrived at the castle with orders to secure the Marquis de Fontnoy and convey him to Paris. The captain orders the mob to withdraw, and on their refusal, raps out an order to his men: "Present arms!"

(Now read on.)

Too Late!

SO saying, my noble and angry Lord of Fontnoy flung his sword on to the table.

Slowly Paul turned away and slowly walked towards the door. His fingers on the handle, he turned.

"Citizens," he said, and his face was very white, "I advise you to begone. Citizen Fontnoy alone will remain under guard until the dawn."

Opening the door, Paul passed out, and next moment the soldiers trailed into the room accompanied by their stolid captain.

One by one those dandified gentlemen of France, who that night had come to Chateau Fontnoy to dine and remained to fight, took leave of their sullen host. Few words passed, for what words were there to say?

Some there were who, in their hearts, applauded the attitude which the marquis had adopted to that insolent upstart of a citizen-deputy or citizen-commissioner, or whatever it was he called himself. But there were others who silently deplored what they could only look upon as nought but suicidal madness.

And of these latter was old D'Espany,

The Marquis D'Ermonde de Fontnoy.

who lingered when the rest had gone. By the curtained windows out of earshot of the soldiers he pleaded with the man whom he had known since boyhood—the haughty, arrogant, stubborn Lord of Fontnoy.

It matters little what passed between those two. Suffice it is to say that from cold and aloof indifference the marquis passed at length to impatient expostulation and thence to a grudging and surly acquiescence.

"Then inform the fellow that I will meet him," he growled. And added venomously: "To kill the fool will, I vow, be a pleasure which outweighs the loss of dignity it incurs."

"And will mean, maybe, the saving of your head," remarked D'Espany dryly.

Quitting the room, D'Espany paused to speak to a soldier who, lounging on the landing outside, greeted him with a leer in which familiarity and what was intended to be contempt for this aristocrat were strangely blended.

"Where is the citizen-deputy to be found?" inquired D'Espany courteously.

"He is in that room there," grunted

the soldier, indicating a closed door with a jerk of his dirty thumb. "But he is busy, and is not to be disturbed."

"Be it so, I wish to see him," returned D'Espany. "It is on a matter of urgent importance concerning the Marquis de Fontnoy."

"The Citizen Fontnoy!" corrected the soldier, with a scowl.

The Marquis de Fontnoy, indeed! Would these cursed aristocrats never learn that in this age of the glorious republic all rank had been abolished? But this message for the citizen-deputy now. It might be important. There was something between the citizen-deputy and Citizen Fontnoy. No one seemed to know what. No, not even the captain. But it was whispered that the citizen-deputy had good cause to hate Fontnoy. He might wish to hear this message.

"What is the message?" demanded the soldier. "I, myself, will convey it to the citizen-deputy."

"I thank you," returned D'Espany "but it is one which I alone can deliver."

The soldier's scowl deepened. They were a stubborn lot, these aristocrats.

"Then it will have to wait!" he said roughly. "You cannot see the citizen deputy."

D'Espany wasted no further time in futile argument. He stalked past the soldier, and before that outraged and scandalised individual had realised his intention had opened the door of the room in which Paul Dare was closeted and entered, closing the door behind him.

Paul was seated writing at a small table. But at the entrance of D'Espany he pushed back his chair and sprang to his feet.

"Citizen," he said coldly, "what means this intrusion?"

"It is an intrusion, monsieur," replied D'Espany with a bow, "for which I tender my most sincere apologies, but one which is justified by the urgency of my mission."

He paused a moment, then added:

"I come from the Marquis de Fontnoy!"

Paul stood motionless and silent, his brooding eyes on D'Espany's face. And that silence seemed to render D'Espany's task none the easier, for when he spoke again his tones were curiously stilted.

"The Marquis de Fontnoy," he said, "regrets his hasty and unchivalrous refusal to accept your challenge, monsieur, and is now prepared to afford you the satisfaction which you desire."

Still Paul was silent, and D'Espany went on quickly, with an obvious wish to get this unsavoury business over.

"The marquis presumes that in the event of his being the victor he will be permitted to leave the country without molestation as you, monsieur, inferred would be the case."

There, it was done now, and although he returned Paul's gaze unwaveringly, D'Espany felt the flush of shame mounting to his lined and furrowed cheeks.

But now that it was over, how would this young, pale-faced citizen-deputy answer? Ma foi, if he should refuse—if this belated and humiliating acceptance of his challenge had come too late!

But when the citizen-deputy spoke, his words seemed strangely irrelevant.

"You are a brave man, citizen," he said quietly.

"A brave man, monsieur?" echoed D'Espany in bewilderment.

"Yes," nodded Paul. "In that to save one who is your friend, you have come thus to me with these craven words."

D'Espany squared his shoulders, albeit his flush deepened.

"Monsieur," he answered, "if they be craven words, then it is I who am to blame, for it was I who brought the marquis to this change of mind."

"Nay!" responded Paul harshly. "Do not blame yourself, for it is a change of mind which, without your aid, would have come to the marquis before the dawn."

Abruptly he turned away and, seating himself at his table, picked up a quill pen.

"Monsieur," questioned D'Espany pleadingly, "will you meet him? What is your answer?"

Paul's pen scratched rapidly across the papers in front of him, then rising to his feet with the papers in his hand, he thrust them towards D'Espany.

"That is my answer!" he said sternly.

And D'Espany saw the signature of Paul Dare, Commissioner of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, appended to the papers authorising the arrest of

The Chevalier de St. Clair, nephew of the Marquis.

the most noble the Marquis d'Ermonde de Fontnoy.

"Monsieur," he gasped in dismay, "do you mean this?"

"Your question is unnecessary, citizen," responded Paul coldly. "Assuredly, I mean it. Your friend had his chance, and you witnessed how scornfully he repulsed me. What manner of man would I be to listen now when he comes cringing, prepared to sink his vaunted honour to the end that he might save his noble head? He is for Paris citizen!"

"Then God aid him!" groaned D'Espany.

"Yes," muttered Paul, turning away.

Bowed of shoulder, and looking in that bitter moment very old, D'Espany walked slowly towards the door. But it was thrown violently open before he reached it and a courier, booted and spurred, and splashed with the mud of fast and furious travel, strode into the room.

Pushing past D'Espany, the courier advanced towards Paul, who had wheeled at his entrance.

"Urgent despatches from Paris, citizen-deputy!" he announced, thrusting forward a heavily sealed envelope.

Paul took it and ripped it open. Withdrawing the contents—a single, hastily-scribbled sheet—he scanned it closely.

As he did so, there came a sudden pallor to his cheeks. Like a man stunned, he groped for his chair, and seating himself heavily, sat staring before him with unseeing eyes.

The Despatch!

FOR long moments Paul Dare sat there, immobile, the thin flimsy sheet clenched crumpled in his hand. Then suddenly he stirred and, smoothing it out on the polished table in front of him, he read it through once again.

It was from Sansarge, who was the able and vituperative assistant to the tigerish Public Prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville.

The missive was as follows:

"Rue Couteau.

"To the Citizen-deputy, Paul Dare.

"You have asked me to let you know without delay should there be news of a certain aristocrat. There is news. He has been arrested by soldiers of the National Convention and now lies in the Luxembourg prison awaiting trial. He was, it appears, making for Holland when he fell into our hands on the Douai Road." "SANSARGE."

"Keep out of Paris until this is over"

With slow, almost mechanical movement, Paul screwed the paper up into a spill and held the end to the flame of an adjacent candle.

Waiting until it had flared and burned away, he rose to his feet and, dropping the charred and blackened remnants into the fireless hearth, stood plunged in thought.

This was terrible news which he had received. For the aristocrat to whom Sansarge referred was none other than the young and noble Chevalier de St Clair.

Always, in his heart, Paul had hoped and prayed that his boyhood friend would win through to the safety and sanctuary which lay beyond the frontiers of unhappy France. Daily, throughout the months which had passed, he had anxiously scanned the lists of prisoners, dreading to see there the name of him whom he had never forgotten.

And now the worst had happened. The Chevalier de St. Clair was a prisoner in the Luxembourg, that grim ante-chamber of the guillotine. He was an aristocrat, and as such was already doomed. There would, of course, be a travesty of a trial at the Bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal, but that was just a pleasant and necessary part of the proceedings preparatory to the removal of his head. The people must have the full measure of their sport; and what better sport than to see a cursed aristocrat arraigned before those whom he had so long oppressed?

The chevalier had oppressed none. Always his had been the path of humility and gentleness. But would that help him now? Assuredly it would not. He was an aristocrat—one of the hated breed—and, therefore, a traitor to the people.

Nothing could save him from their vengeance—nothing!

(Although it may mean offending the people of whom he is leader, Paul Dare is determined that by hook or by crook he must save his old and faithful friend, the chevalier, from the guillotine. Whether he succeeds or not you will learn when you read next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums.)

Dr. Birchemall and the Jolliboys!

By Dicky Nugent

Just when things are going all merry and bright with Jack Jolly's Jolliboys at Winklesea, up pops their rascally old headmaster, Dr. Birchemall. And then the fur begins to fly, until—well, you'll read all about it below, chums!

I.

"BLESS my sole! If it's not Jolly and his friends!"

Jack Jolly & Co. wore in the lounge of the Hotel de Swagger, Winklesea, when those words fell on their ears. There was no mistaking the refined, skollerly tones of the speaker. It was Dr. Birchemall, the headmaster of St. Sam's.

"The Head!" eggsclaimed Jack Jolly, swinging round in his seat.

"Right on the wicket!" grinned Dr. Birchemall. "Thanks, I will!"

And in reply to an invitation that nobody else herd, he helped himself to sevveral toffies from the bag on Jack Jolly's knee.

Of corse, the juniors ought to have looked overwhelmed with plezzure at the arrival of the Head. Instead of that, however, they looked overwhelmed with dismay.

"Fansy meeting you here, sir!" said Frank Fearless. "What brings you to Winklesea, if I mite ask?"

"Chiefly the wish to give my dawter Molly a holliday by the briny," answered the Head. "Natcherally a quiet, skollerly jentleman like myself would not choose a vulgar seaside resort for a holliday."

"Natcherally not, sir!" corussed the juniors respectively.

"My own idea of a holliday would be to go to some remote old-world villidge by the sea, where I could spend the peaceful days in study and meditation—somewhere like Southend, for instance," eggsplained Dr. Birchemall. "However, needs must when the dawter drives, as they say in the classix. By the way, here she comes!"

Jack Jolly & Co. all rose to their feet, with cheery smiles, as Molly Birchemall sailed up on the scen. Molly was a firm favourite with our heroes, and it was a never-ending sawce of wonder to them how such a charming spessimen of the femminine tribe could be a Birchemall.

"Good-morning, Miss Molly!" they cried in corus.

"Good-morning, boys! Fansy you all being here!" trilled Molly Birchemall, a modest blush suffusing her pretty face. "Are you all staying at the Hotel de Swagger?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, how lucky, pop!" cooed the Head's dawter. "Now the boys will be able to join us in picnik parties and charrybang outings, et settera; won't they?"

"Tutt-tutt, my child! How you do prattle!" eggsclaimed Dr. Birchemall, with a fond glarnse at his dawter. "Weather they join us or not will depend on how much munny they have with them. And what are you all doing with yourselves down here, Jolly?"

"Hem!"

Jack Jolly cullered slitely. As a matter of fact he and his old pals were having the bizziest time in their carners running a peerot-party on the sands. But he realised that it would never do to reveal that fact to the Head. Dr. Birchemall would not be likely to look on the idea of St. Sam's boys as seaside peerots with favor. What he would say if he ever got to know that Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, was also a member of the peerot-party, Jack Jolly trembled to think.

"Well, you seem to be taking a long time to think over it, Jolly," remarked the Head, with an indulgent smile. "Doubtless you have been up to some fine old larx and pranx, if the trooth were told; but I will not inkwire further—why, bless my heart and sole, if it's not Lickham!"

"Grate pip, sir! Who'd have thought of seeing you?" gasped Mr. Lickham, a sickly paller spreezing over his dile at the shock of the uneggspected meeting. "Are you staying at Winklesea long, sir?"

"For the rest of the hollidays, Lickham—why, what's the matter with you?"

"Nun-nothing, sir!" groaned Mr. Lickham. "I—I just feel a little faint, that's all."

"Been over-eating again, I suppose?" said Dr. Birchemall, with mock soverrity. "Well—well! A holliday wouldn't be a holliday if one didn't over-eat occasionally, I suppose. Come, Molly! We will go for a stroll along the prom. and get a breether of ozone now. See you all anonymously!"

The Head donned his Panamar hat and trotted off, and Miss Molly, after bestowing a sweet smile on the juniors, tripped out after her vennerable father.

"That's done it, boys!" said Mr. Lickham in tragick tones, as he watched them pass through the magnifficent portals of the Hotel de Swagger on to the prom.

"You meen the Head won't allow us to carry on the show?" asked Merry.

"Eggsactly! You know how keen he is on keeping up the tone of the skool. He'll have a bloo fit if he knows we're running a peerot-show here."

"But what can we do?" asked Bright.

"Ask me another. We mite black our fizzogs again and do a nigger-minstrel show."

"But the Head's such a downy old bird. Ten to one in doenutts he'd pennytrate our disguises," mormered Jack Jolly.

"I'm afraid you're right, my boy. We must hope for the best, and trussed to luck that we sha'n't be spotted."

"After all, it would be a bit infra dig for a jentleman of the Head's standing to go to a seaside peerot-concert. Perhaps he'll never find out," said Merry hopefully.

"Let's hope so, anyway," said Mr. Lickham. "I'm afraid it would mean the sack for me if he ever did know the trooth. It's most unforchunit that he has turned up at this juncture—most unforchunit!"

And Mr. Lickham retired, shaking his head very dowbiously.

As Merry had remarked, the probabilities were that a man of Dr. Birchemall's position would not lower his dignity by attending a beech peerot performance.

But for once in a way, luck seemed to be against Jack Jolly's Jolliboys. Weather Miss Molly was leading Dr. Birchemall by the nose was an undecided point. Whatever it was, he strolled down on the sands that afternoon with his fare dawter, and selected a cupple of deck-chairs in the first row, just before the performance began.

It was too late for anything to be done then. Behind the scens, Jack Jolly & Co. and Mr. Lickham felt awfully funky, when they knew the Head was among the audience. But the show simply had to go on. They couldn't disappoint the eggspectant crowd at the last minnit. So they carried on in spite of the Head.

When they cantered on to the stage they herd a simmultaneous gasp from Dr. Birchemall and Miss Molly.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" they nerd the Head eggsclaim.

"It's the boys, pop—the boys and Mr. Lickham!" warbled Molly Birchemall.

"So I beleeve, my dear! I am amazed—shocked—you could nock me down with a fether, in fact!"

"Fansy Jolly and his friends being peerots! How eggsiting!" trilled Molly delitedly.

"It's more than eggsiting; it's disgracing—I meen disgustful!" snorted the Head, getting a trifle mixed up. "I shall have something to say about this later—something that can be said with a birch!"

"Oh, pop!" mermered the Head's dawter with a pout. "But just look at them. Aren't they clever?"

Dr. Birchemall grunted. Nevertheless, he condessended to watch the performance, and had to admit to himself that as peerots, Mr. Lickham and Jack Jolly & Co. took a lot of whacking.

The Jolliboys' show was as popular as ever that afternoon. Mr. Lickham sang like a lark, Jack Jolly & Co. danced and acted with their usual pep, the rank and phint of the party backed up splendidly, while Jimmy Jester, the principal comedian, simply eggselled himself.

Altogether, it was a tip-top show, and the specktators enjoyed it immensely. The only one who seemed dissatisfied was the Head, and his frown grew sterner and sterner as time went on. He was thinking of the good name of St. Sam's, and how it mite be dragged into the mire if the trooth ever leaked out.

The programme finished at last to deffening applawse, and the Jolliboys retired behind the scens to change.

"And now for a jolly old dust-up—or, as the vulgar would eggspress it, a rumpus," mermered the Head. "Please remain here, Molly, while I go and have a few words with these St. Sam's people who have dared to lower the prestoege of the old skool by becoming common peerots!"

So saying, Dr. Birchemall climbed up on the stage, and tramped to the dressing-room, wearing a feerce skowl on his skollerly dile.

II.

"AH! You are all here, I perceeve!" remarked the Head, as he stalked majestickally into the peerots' drossing-room.

"Yes, sir. Won't you take a seat, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham respectively.

"I will not take a seat, Lickham!" thundered Dr. Birchemall. "I have come to inkwire the reason for this—this giddy outrage. Answer me, sir!"

"Well, you see, sir——" began Mr. Lickham apollojettickally.

"Silence! How dare you—you, a St. Sam's master—besmirch the fare name of the skool by becoming a peerot—a strolling player—a meer vagrant, in fact. How dare you, I ask!"

"It's like this here, sir——"

"Silence, I say! Don't bandy words with me, Lickham, or it will go hard with you!" roared Dr. Birchemall feercely. "I want a plain answer to a plain kwestion. Why are you and these juniors playing in a peerot show at Winklesea?"

"You see, sir——"

"One word from you, Lickham, and you will regret it all your life! What is your answer?"

"Well, sir——" groaned the master of the Fourth.

"Didn't I tell you to be silent? Now, Lickham, if you value my regard, speak up!"

Mr. Lickham dried up. Really it was impossibul to do anything with a man who wanted you to be silent and to speak up at the same time.

Dr. Birchemall permitted a sneering smile to cross his face as Mr. Lickham remained tung-tied.

"You are silent—in other words, you are gilty," he said. "I can only conclood that there are no eggsterminating circumstances."

"Don't you mean 'eggstenuating,' sir?" asked Frank Fearless, with a slite grin.

"No, I do not, Fearless. When I say 'eggsterminating,' I meen 'eggsterminating' and nothing else!" barked the Head. "Obviously there are no eggsterminating circumstances. That being the case, I may tell you that I shall deal with this matter in the sevverest possibul manner."

"Oh, crikey!" muttered Mr. Lickham.

"I shall do my best to temper injustiss with mersy," said Dr. Birchemall, with a smirk. "But considering the natcher of your offence, you can hardly eggspect me to let you off litely, can you?"

Mr. Lickham shivered.

"St. Sam's stands disgraced by your reprihnstable behaviour. Our ancient skollastick eddifiss hides her head in shame to-day," cried the Head dramattickally. "For such an offence, Lickham, there can be but one punishment."

"I know! You're going to nock half-a-crown a week off my sallery!" eggsclaimed Mr. Lickham, with a groan.

"Worse than that, Lickham. The good name of St. Sam's is worth more than half-a-crown a week. Three-and-six would be much nearer the mark. But your offence cannot be oblitterated by filthy looker. I shall sack you with ignomininy."

"Who's he, sir?" asked Mr. Lickham.

"Tutt-tutt! What I mean is that I'm going to give you the bullett—with a flea in your ear. Savvy?"

Mr. Lickham turned as red as a pony.

"You can't mean it, sir?" he cried horsely.

"I do mean it, Lickham. Never again shall your shadow darken the portals of St. Sam's!"

"What, never?" gasped Mr. Lickham.

"Well, hardly ever! Now, as to you juniors, you are probably more sinned against than sinning. I will treat you leniently by meerly giving you each a duzzen terrifick floggings and a few hundred thowsand lines when we begin the new torm."

"Oh, crikey!"

"And don't use slang eggspressions in my august prezzence, either!" snapped the Head. "If you must eggspress dismay, use refined elegant phrases like 'Grate pip!' or 'Oh, my giddy aunt!' Hallo! What the merry dickens——"

One of the assistant peerots had just rushed into the room, his face gastly white under his scarlet grease-paint.

"Quick!" he gasped. "Your dawter, sir!"

"What about my dawter?" asked the Head, a sudden, icy fear gripping his hart.

"She went for a stroll on the breakwater, sir, and she's fallen into the sea!"

"Oh, grate pip!" gasped Dr. Birchemall.

The Headmaster of St. Sam's stood there almost parralised with fear.

But while he hesitated, others acted.

Jack Jolly and Frank Fearless farely raced out of the room, and simply floo across the sands to the spot where sevveral people were standing watching the Head's dawter struggling in the water.

Both plunged in together and swam with desprit speed to the reskew of the unforchunit girl.

"Help! Help! I'm going under!" cried Molly Birchemall in her trilling, girlish voice.

The girl's eggsmised cries spurred our heroes on to fresh efforts. They finished the course with a wonderful burst of speed and grabbed the drowning girl by her dellicate shell-like ears, just before she went under for the third time.

"Thank hevvan! My heroes!" cried Miss Molly, as she felt her ears grabbed.

So saying, she swooned away. But it didn't matter now, for she was safe in the arms of Jack Jolly and Frank Fearless, who jently but firmly towed her back to land, to the accompaniment of roars of cheering from the specktators.

Needless to say, the Head was dolited.

"My brave ladds!" he cried, wiping a tier from his eye. "How can I ever reward you? Do you think that tuppence each will meet the case?"

"No, sir, we don't aim at riches," said Jack Jolly. "All we ask is that you drop all this piffle about giving Mr. Lickham the sack, et settera, and allow us to carry on the peerot show."

"Do so, by all means! Blow the good name of St. Sam's! Who trubbles a wrap about that at holliday time, anyway?" cried the Head. "You may carry on the peerot show as long as you like now, Jolly. And I wish you every suxxess!"

"Thank you, sir!" corussed Jolly and Fearless.

And as they retired arm-in-arm to the Hotel de Swagger, leaving a long, long trail of water behind them, they felt that their gallant effort had not been in vain.

THE END.

(Look out for another long laugh in next week's ripping St. Sam's yarn, entitled: "THE HEAD'S FUNNY TURN!" It's a real peach of a story, chums.)