



THE FIRST CHAPTER
THE ROBBER ROBBED!

DOWN the moonlit Great North Road thundered the London mail-coach, with a clatter of horses' hoofs and a rumble of wheels. "Faith, here it comes at last!" "Swift Nick," highwayman, chuckled delightedly, and reined his fine black horse back into the shadow of overhanging trees.

His eyes flashed excitedly through the slits in his black mask as he watched the approaching lights, and he drew two huge pistols from his holsters.

"I warrant there'll be some fat purses to lift!" Nick muttered, with a grin.

The frauds of his guardian, Sir Robert Gregory, a magistrate, now

A thrilling yarn of the romantic days of pounds on Swift the highwaymen, telling how one, Swift Nick's head—dead or alive!

Nick, forced to become an outlaw, fought to save his honour!

living at Ticehurst Manor, actually Nick's inherited property, had driven Nick on the High Toby at the age of nineteen.

The lad knew the risks he ran, for highwaymen were ruthlessly hunted by minions of the Law, and always hanged soon after capture. Already there was a reward of three hundred

However, young Nick, crack pistol-shot and splendid horseman, loved running risks for the sake of adventure. It was his proud boast that he had never shot a man. Being very generous with his plunder, too, he had countless friends on the countryside. In fact, many villagers secretly aided him, and often warned him about Bow Street Runners.

He was called Swift Nick because, on his wonderful horse Lightning, he was an elusive figure, always escaping from tight corners when capture seemed certain.

In his dark three-cornered hat, long dark-blue riding coat, and great black boots that reached almost to his thighs, the postillions of the mail-coach did not spot him under the trees.

They cracked their whips and shouted to the horses, and the coach increased speed as it drew near a long hill, at the bottom of which Swift Nick was in hiding.

That moment Nick rammed home his heels, and Lightning leaped forth from the shadows, to halt on his haunches, barring the way. Nick's challenge rang out loudly :

"Stand and deliver!"

There was instant pandemonium and confusion.

The post-boys yelled and shouted in fury. But they knew better than to defy a gentleman of the High Toby. Seeing the masked rider threatening them with his huge barkers, they reined up, with a clatter of hoofs and a jingle and creak of harness.

"How now!" yelled one. " 'Tis Swift Nick himself! I know yon horse o' his—with that white star on its forehead."

But the two guards, who wore tricorn hats, black cloaks, and were armed with blunderbusses, were tough, resolute fellows. One sat on the box-seat above the horses; the other was stationed on a small platform at the rear.

"Swift Nick, is it!" bawled the guard in front. "Here's earning t' reward for his napper!"

Up came his blunderbuss, and there was a bang and a flash.

But Nick had seen the two guards. Nimble he ducked, to hear a heavy bullet whistle past his ear. He was

leaning down across his horse's shoulder, and from under its neck he loosed a pistol.

Crack! There followed a roar from a guard as the stock of his blunderbuss was shattered. Rapidly Nick fired his other pistol at the rear guard, causing the man to drop his blunderbuss with a shout of anger and clutch his arm. Then, like magic, Swift Nick holstered his smoking pistols, and drew two others from the deep pockets of his riding-coat.

"How now, cullies!" he laughed gaily. "I've no wish to hurt anyone. Stop your nonsense and dismount."

Seeing themselves covered, the guards came down from their perches, growling fiercely; the post-boys swung to the ground, to stand at their horses' heads.

Leaving Lightning to bar the way, Swift Nick sprang from his saddle and strode to the coach-door, keeping an eye on the disarmed guards.

Yells of dismay and anger sounded from inside the coach. The shouts ceased as Nick appeared at the window, flourishing his pistols.

"Your money or your life, gentlemen!" he said pleasantly.

There were shouts of protest and anger from the four passengers.

But Nick was not a fellow to trifle with, and a menacing pistol jammed through the coach window had the desired effect. Speedily bulging purses and gold watches and chains were crammed into Nick's hand.

"I thank you, gentlemen," Nick smiled, flourishing his hat with a low bow. "The coach may now proceed."

He whistled up Lightning and swung to his saddle with a chuckle. A few seconds later, with cries of anger and shouts of vengeance coming from the passengers, the mail-coach thundered on up the hill.

"I wager I've collected fifty guineas as well as three gold turnips!" Swift

Nick muttered as the roar of hoofs and wheels grew faint. "Not a bad haul! Stand still, Lightning, old horse, while I look at the stuff."

Dropping his reins on Lightning's neck, the young highwayman started to examine his spoils. Then—

Bang! There was a sudden report from the dark hedge across the road, and the whistle of a bullet.

Swift Nick threw up his hands and fell forward, to crash down in the road and lie motionless.

"Ha, ha! Got you!" a harsh voice chuckled. "Thank you for holding up yon coach and for saving me a plaguey dangerous job!"

Out from the hedge ran a gaunt, hawk-faced man, wearing a battered cocked hat and a faded riding coat of bottle-green, a pistol in his hand.

Like Swift Nick the man was black-masked. He was a ruffianly, cut-throat Tobymen known as "Iron-face" Jackson, who never ran risks if he could help it. Having, from ambush, watched Swift Nick deal with the coach, he now ran forward to grab the lad's haul.

Nick had only been half-stunned by the ruffian's bullet, which had grazed his forehead, and recovering just in time, the lad saw Ironface

stooping over him, the man's bony hands grabbing at his plunder.

"By thunder! 'Tis Ironface Jackson!" barked Nick. "No you don't, you cur!"

The lad tried to rise, lashing out with his left fist. But he was still



Swift Nick started to examine his spoils when—bang! There was a sudden report from the dark hedge. The young highwayman, stunned by the bullet, threw up his hands and crashed down in the road.

half-dazed, and savagely Ironface knocked the blow aside and clubbed him with a pistol-butt.

"Not dead, after all!" gritted Ironface. "Take that!"

Nick gasped as he received a glancing blow on the head and fell back. Ironface grabbed up the purses and gold watches, and, seeing something

gleaming at Nick's throat, he made a grab at it and tore it free.

Swift Nick uttered a cry of fury and struggled to his knees. Ironface had wrenched away a diamond-studded clasp which Swift Nick always wore in his lace neck-cloth.

Of great value, that clasp was also a heirloom, the last heirloom that remained in Nick's possession when he was cheated out of his property and fortune by his rascally guardian, Sir Robert Gregory.

"Faith, you don't get away with that diamond-clasp, you cur!" Nick cried, and he staggered up and plunged forward.

"Don't I?" jeered Ironface, and he made to shoot Nick point-blank.

That instant, however, from down the moonlit road sounded the beat of hoofs. From the corner of his eye, Swift Nick spotted three horsemen approaching at full gallop, brandishing pistols. Ironface saw them, too.

"Zounds! Here come Bow Street Runners!" guffawed the ruffian. "I warrant you hang at Tyburn! Yon Runners'll get you!"

The ruffian fired hastily at Nick, then dashed away across the road, to go crashing through the hedge into the field where he had hidden his horse.

The bullet Ironface had fired missed Nick by a hair's-breadth. But to make sure that Nick would be caught by the Runners, he cracked off a pistol at Lightning. The great horse reared up on its haunches as its neck was stung by the grazing bullet, while Ironface galloped away across the dim fields.

"Ruffian!" roared Nick, his fists clenched. "I'll——"

The Runners were now bearing down on Nick, spurring their mounts to faster speed. They had recognised the lad, and were determined to catch him at all costs, caring nothing for

the moment about the man who had got away.

Nick hastily grabbed up his pistols from the road and leaped towards Lightning; his clever horse had stayed by him. But even as he caught the reins and made to spring to the saddle, the Runners drummed up within a few yards.

Twisting his head, Nick looked at the muzzles of three great horse-pistols.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

AT THE GREEN DRAGON

"By my life, you've not caught me yet!" Swift Nick shouted defiantly.

With that he swung to Lightning's back and rammed home his heels. The big horse bounded forward, hoofs striking sparks from flints.

The three Runners uttered roars of rage and fired their pistols. There were three deafening reports and heavy bullets whistled past Nick. But the lad was riding flattened on his mount's neck and was not hit.

Hoarse shouts burst from the Runners as they spurred in pursuit, and they pulled out fresh pistols from their holsters.

"Shoot at his hoss, cullies!" bawled the leader, a burly, red-faced man, Wat Simpson by name. "He's worth three hundred pounds—dead or alive! Zounds, he does not escape!"

Again the pistols of the trio roared. That instant, however, Swift Nick swung Lightning round, to charge at a five-barred gate with the ringing cry:

"Up and over!"

The big, black horse took the high gate with ease, landed in a moonlit meadow, and then galloped on. Glancing back, Nick saw the angry Runners smashing at the padlock of the gate with their pistol-butts.

"How now, friends!" Swift Nick shouted defiantly. "Wouldst hunt me? Come on, then! Faith, I'll lead you a merry dance!"

A few seconds later, however, the Runners had the gate broken open, and they spurred on after Nick, brandishing their pistols.

Swift Nick sat down to ride for his life. The lad knew the fate in store for him if he was captured.

His plight was entirely due to the treacherous trickery of Ironface Jackson, and Nick vowed vengeance on the man if he escaped his pursuers.

The lad led the Runners a merry dance. Lightning's long stride covered the ground at a fine speed, and Swift Nick heard the wind whistle in his ears.

Several dim fields were crossed at racing speed. Swift Nick was heading for Harley Woods, in the tangled depths of which he felt sure he could slip his pursuers. He had gained some distance at the five-barred gate, but the lad began to realise he could not shake off the Runners.

Glancing back, Nick saw they were not losing ground. Fortunately they were just out of pistol-shot, but they were obviously well-mounted, and their horses were far fresher than Lightning, who had been on the go all the evening.

"Plague take it!" Swift Nick gritted, glancing anxiously round. "Tis four miles to Harley Woods! Those fellows'll run me down before I can reach the woods. They will shoot to wound Lightning first chance they get!"

The lad racked his brains for a scheme as Lightning raced on. All about him were wide, moonlit fields, with no wood deep or thick enough in which to slip the grim Runners.

Suddenly, however, his eyes flashed through the slits in his velvet mask.

Away ahead of him loomed up a

great shadowy haystack near a gate leading into a hedged lane, and a scheme to slip the Bow Street Runners jumped to his mind. It was a desperate plan, but no alternative offered, with the hard-ridden Lightning already sweat-lathered and slowing in his stride.

"On, Lightning!" gritted the lad. "Just a spurt, old horse! We may diddle 'em yet!"

At the lad's voice Lightning put on a burst of speed, and took a hedge in his stride. The Runners were out of sight for a few moments, and Nick raced Lightning up to the big haystack and drew rein behind it.

Nick swung to the ground, and gave his horse a light slap on its flank with his tricorn hat.

"Away with you, Lightning!" he cried. "Draw 'em off!"

Freed of his rider, Lightning leaped forward with fresh energy, to clear the gate at a bound, and go drumming away down the lane. Swift Nick rapidly clambered up to the top of the haystack, and stretched himself prone as the Runners rapidly approached.

Has they spotted his ruse? The lad wondered anxiously for an instant. Then he grinned his relief, seeing the three angry men race past beneath his hiding-place. For the Runners could hear Lightning's hoof-beats fading down the lane, and they naturally concluded that Swift Nick still rode his horse.

Looking down from his lofty perch, Nick saw the Runners go charging through the gate out of the field, and a few moments later he heard the hoof-beats of his pursuers growing faint in the distance. Nick knew they would never catch the riderless Lightning, and he laughed heartily to himself.

Then he slid to the ground and listened for sounds of Lightning returning to him. Nor was it long

before that clever, well-trained horse popped over the hedge near the haystack and came trotting up to Nick, with reins and stirrups dangling loose. Lightning knew his work as well as any highwayman's horse.

"Well done!" Swift Nick grinned, patting the sweat-grimed neck. "You led them a fine wild-goose chase—not for the first time!"

Then Swift Nick's face grew serious again as he thought of the villainous manner in which Ironface Jackson had served him.

"Faith, I must get even with that rascal," Nick muttered as he remounted Lightning, "and recover my clasp and the coach-spoils!"

And Swift Nick proceeded to try to pick up the trail of Ironface Jackson.

This, however, proved a difficult task, and for two days Nick, who dared not ride the roads in daylight, stealthily inquired everywhere for news of his enemy.

Then, having learnt that the ruffian was lying low at the Green Dragon Inn, he rode to that inn quietly after nightfall.

The Green Dragon was an old roadside tavern with a thatched, gabled roof, diamond-paned windows and timbered walls. It was kept by fat Jimmy Croker, a notorious rascal who, it was rumoured, was not above robbing strange guests at his inn, first slaying them in their sleep by diabolical methods.

Swift Nick rode quietly round to the back of the Green Dragon, amongst the shadowy barns and out-buildings. He looked up at the old inn and saw a light at the window of an upper room. Smiling grimly, he rode Lightning under it, drew rein, and kicked free of his stirrups. One spring and he was standing upright on his saddle and gripping the edge of the window-sill.

Cautiously, Nick peered through the window, which was half-open, and smiled grimly as he saw the occupants of that room. It was just as he had hoped. He could see his enemy at a table with the landlord.

"Ironface and fat Jimmy!" Nick muttered, and his eyes blazed at the sight of his diamond clasp in Ironface's neck-cloth.

The lad strained his ears to listen to the conversation of the gaunt, hawk-faced Tobyman and the podgy, evil-looking innkeeper, and though they talked in lowered voices, their words came faintly through the open window.

Swift Nick nearly fell off his saddle with excitement when he heard that Ironface intended to hold up the private coach of a neighbouring land-owner that very night.

"At yon cross-roads three miles north o' this inn, Jimmy!" Ironface was saying, with his evil smile. "And I warrant I get a tidy haul off Squire Grantham!"

"Half for me," leered the fat innkeeper, "or I'll set t' Runners on your tracks!"

"Plague take you!" snarled Ironface. Then: "All right! I am wearing Swift Nick's clasp, which is well known over the countryside, so 'twill be thought that Nick did the job, if he wasn't captured by the Runners t'other night after I'd relieved him of his haul!"

Swift Nick did not wait to hear any more.

The lad knew it would be worse than useless to try to tackle Ironface and the fat innkeeper together, for the latter had many servants in his tavern.

Swift Nick dropped down into his saddle quietly, and stealthily he rode away from the Green Dragon.

"Ho, ho, Ironface!" he muttered.

"I warrant I get my own back on you to-night, villain! I know a plan to fool you!"

Once clear of the Green Dragon Inn, Swift Nick galloped fast across moonlit fields, and at last he emerged on the Great North Road about a mile above the cross-roads where Ironface intended holding up Squire Grantham's coach.

Swift Nick reined Lightning back in the shadow of towering beech trees beside the road and waited patiently, his eyes flashing through his mask-slits.

"I faith," murmured Nick, "Ironface will be sorry he played me a scurvy trick before this night's out!"

Part of Swift Nick's scheme to get even with Ironface was to hold up Squire Grantham's coach before it got down to the cross-roads where Ironface would be waiting —hence the position he had taken up.

Soon Nick heard the beat of hoofs and rumble of wheels, and saw from his hiding-place the glimmer of coach lamps. He thrilled in every nerve as the coach rolled towards him. He made out the four horses and the two postillions, who wore the livery of Squire Grantham.

The coach rapidly approached, and when it was about five yards away



Cautiously, Nick peered through the half-open window of the inn, to see his enemy, Ironface, in conversation with the landlord. The lad thrilled with excitement as he heard that Ironface intended to hold up a coach that very night.

Nick rammed home his heels. Lightning instantly sprang from the shadows, to halt on his haunches, barring the way.

"Stand and deliver!" Swift Nick shouted, levelling his barkers.

The post-boys reined up with cries of dismay. From out of the coach-window thrust a brick-red, furious face, surmounted by a flowing wig. This was Squire Grantham, who bawled his wrath at being stopped, and vowed that Nick should soon hang on Tyburn Tree.

"What d'you want, villain?" roared the squire. "I'll give you lead

in your gizzard before I let you rob me!"

"Keep your money, squire!" Nick laughed grimly, doffing his hat with a mocking bow. "I only want—your coach!"

"Plague take you!" howled the squire. "Ride him down!" he shouted to his post-boys, and with the injunction he pulled out his blunderbuss and fired.

Nick ducked down in his saddle. Then he yelled to Squire Grantham that he meant neither to rob nor hurt him. The post-boys promptly shouted to their horses, which leaped forward, and the coach rolled onward.

To avoid being run down Nick had to rein aside, but he had no intention of letting his plans be thwarted.

Even as the leading postillion lashed at him with a whip, he struck out with his fist, to tumble the fellow from his saddle into the road. Then, on the instant, Nick sprang clean from Lightning's back on to the back of the post-boy's horse.

He shouted to Lightning to get out of the way, knowing his clever horse would follow the coach at a short distance. Then Nick twisted round in the saddle to the other post-boy, shaking a pistol in his face.

"Ride, you!" he commanded, "or I'll put a bullet into you!" Then, with a laugh: "You have nothing to fear, squire! Sit tight, sir!"

The coach rumbled on down the moonlit road, piloted by Swift Nick, with Squire Grantham roaring lustily inside. The squire could not shoot at Nick on the leading coach-horse without endangering the life of his second post-boy.

Nick chuckled grimly as he took the captured coach along at a hand-gallop. His eyes narrowed with excitement as the cross-roads gradually

loomed up ahead. Was Ironface hiding close by, holding to the scheme which Nick had overheard?

He was! The villain, hiding in the shadow of trees, grinned as he saw the approaching coach. Suddenly he spurred forward, to bar the way with a hoarse shout of triumph:

"Stand and deliver!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

UNMASKED!

INSTANTLY Swift Nick reined up with a gasp of false terror, keeping his head down.

With bulging eyes, the second postillion, horrified at being held up twice within a mile, reined up too. From inside the coach came an ear-splitting yell.

"How now, Squire Grantham! Hand over all you've got an' make no bones about it. Your money or your life!" Ironface laughed grimly as he rode towards the coach-door, barking a threat at the two seeming post-boys, who both appeared to be cowed.

Hardly, however, had Ironface reached the side of the coach than a roar came from the supposed leading post-boy.

"Drop your pistols, Ironface!" was his shout. "You're covered!"

Ironface whirled in his saddle with a gasp. Then his jaw dropped in astonishment as he recognised the square jaw of that leading post-boy and now saw that he wore a black mask, and held two steady pistols in his hands.

"What the deuce!" roared Ironface. "By thunder, 'tis Swift Nick! What's the game?"

"No game at all, knave," Nick replied. "I've got you this time!"

"Who—what—"

"I heard you plotting with fat Jim at the Green Dragon!" cried Nick, his eyes blazing through his

mask at the sight of his diamond clasp at Ironface's throat. "So I hit on a scheme to trap you. Now hand over the mail-coach haul you robbed me of t'other night, and my diamond clasp! Throw 'em down in the road or, by my life, I'll put a bullet through you!"

Ironface was speechless with rage. He could hardly believe his own ears and eyes.

"And, as punishment for your scurvy trickery," continued Nick, thrusting his barkers forward, "I'll have your horse, too! And I hope Runners capture you, as you meant them to do to me!"

There was a moment's silence. Squire Grantham gaped in bewilderment, as did the second post-boy. Ironface could not imagine how Swift Nick had slipped the three Runners, but he knew now that the lad had done so, to turn the tables on him unexpectedly.

Seeing himself covered, Ironface made a motion of dropping his pistols, as ordered. But swiftly he caught them up again and ducked forward in his saddle with the howl:

"That for you, Swift Nick! You'll not have your plunder back!"

Crack! crack! The hawk-faced villain fired instantly with both his pistols. Quick as he was, however, Swift Nick was quicker, and his barkers roared a split second before Ironface's.

Came a yell from Ironface, who found both his weapons shot from his hands, their bullets flying away harmlessly, causing the startled coach-horses to plunge wildly.

Swift Nick sprang from the back of the leading coach-horse and rushed at Ironface, to seize the latter's bridle and strike at him with a clubbed pistol.

Ironface, however, whirled away

with a shout, snatching a spare weapon from a holster. Quick as thought, Nick had another barker from his coat-pocket, and there followed a rapid exchange of shots.

But even as Swift Nick fired, the coach rolled forward, and the hub of one wheel struck Nick, nearly knocking the lad off his balance and ruining his aim.

"By thunder, you don't escape, Ironface!" roared Nick, for the villain wheeled his horse and was off.

Ironface knew he was no match for Swift Nick in a fair duel, and decided to escape while he had the chance. Moreover, he glimpsed Squire Grantham about to shoot into the melee with his blunderbuss!

He wheeled away and set spurs to his nag with a mocking laugh. Just in time, Nick spotted the squire's weapon as the coach whirled past, and knocked it up, so that it only blew a gaping hole in the coach roof. Then he whistled to Lightning.

The well-trained Lightning had followed the coach at a short distance, and now the great horse dashed forward with a neigh.

Swift Nick sprang on to his back just as Ironface put his nag over a hedge and vanished.

Reaching the hedge, the lad set Lightning over it and made off at a fast pace in pursuit of Ironface, whose dim figure could be seen spurring his horse away across a field.

There followed a tough chase by moonlight for several miles, for Ironface's horse was a clever jumper and fast. But Swift Nick kept him in sight, though not yet gaining much.

Nick knew, however, that on Lightning he would run Ironface down sooner or later. He expected the ruffian to ride for the Green Dragon, to his pal, the innkeeper.

But, to his surprise, Nick found that Ironface was heading in the

direction of Ticehurst Manor, where lived Sir Robert Gregory, Swift Nick's guardian, who had, by fraud, ousted the lad from all his possessions and caused him to become an outlaw.

Therefore, Swift Nick was astonished to see Ironface riding pell-mell for the manor; and presently he saw the moonlit park and elm trees of Ticehurst Manor away below him, and then the great mansion itself loomed up in the background.

That moment he saw Ironface's horse leap over the park fence, to go thudding away through the trees, heading for the dark shrubs of the garden around the house.

"What the plague does Ironface want with my rascally guardian?" Swift Nick muttered, in surprise.

The lad followed at a gallop, with Lightning's hoofs muffled on the turf. By now, Ironface thought he had shaken off Nick, who surely would not dream of following him to the home of a wealthy magistrate!

Hidden by trees, Swift Nick was just in time to see Ironface, who had dismounted and hidden his horse, running across a lawn towards the great, silent house.

Nick saw Ironface vanish into the manor by a little side-door. He pulled up Lightning.

"Faith, what's the game?" muttered Nick. "Has Ironface gone to burgle my guardian? It seems like it. I'll look into this!"

Concealing Lightning, Swift Nick dashed across to the moon-bathed mansion, thrilling in every nerve, and soon reached the grey wall of the house. Naturally the lad knew all the secrets of this old manor, and he quickly set his shoulder to a revolving stone he knew of.

Next moment he was in a dark, narrow passage which was built inside the walls of the manor. Along this twisting passage he stole silently, a

pistol in his hand, straining his ears.

It was Swift Nick's intention to emerge from the secret passage into the manor library by way of a sliding panel that was known to him. Then he could hunt stealthily through the house for Ironface.

Even as Nick reached the panel, however, he paused with a gasp of surprise. To his ears came voices, which he recognised, and he put his eye to a crack in the panel. It was to see both Ironface and Sir Robert Gregory in the old library, where candlelight shone on rich furniture and shelves lined with priceless volumes. Ironface and the evil, bald-headed old baronet seemed to be bargaining with each other!

In Ironface's talon-like hand Swift Nick saw his diamond clasp, and he heard the ruffianly highwayman chuckle:

"How much for this clasp, Sir Robert? I meant to keep it, but 'tis too plaguey dangerous! I expect a better price than you paid for 't' spoils from the London mail-coach!"

"Where did you get it?" Sir Robert gasped, his cod eyes popping.

"From Swift Nick, who always wore it," came the reply.

"Then—Why, Swift Nick must be my ward, whom I—er—dispossessed, and I thought him dead!" Sir Robert Gregory blurted out. "Get him caught or killed for me, Ironface, and I will pay you five hundred pounds, as well as the published reward. He must hang at Tyburn!"

Swift Nick had heard enough. At once he realised that his villainous guardian, although a magistrate, actually trafficked with highwaymen, buying their plunder and giving them a safe refuge, when hunted, in the manor!

"How now!" gritted Nick, his eyes blazing; and hurling the sliding

panel aside he leaped out from the secret passage.

"Found you out, guardian!" he cried. "As for you, Ironface, 'tis you who will hang at Tyburn!"

At the startling appearance of Swift Nick, black-masked and dust-grimed, the two villains swung round with gasps of amazement. Then Sir Robert snatched up a heavy chair with a roar of fury, and swung it above his head.

Charging forward with a rush, Nick sent him flying. The man's head struck the corner of a book-case and he went down, stunned. Nick on Ironface.

There followed a fierce fight in the old library, with chairs and tables crashing to the floor. But Ironface had no pistols this time, for Nick had smashed them in the fight near Squire Grantham's coach, and he could not drag his last weapon from his coat-pocket. Swift Nick gave him no chance, and was on him, lashing out with his fists.

For a few minutes Ironface put up a fight, then suddenly he went down



"That for you!" howled Ironface. Crack! Crack! The treacherous villain fired instantly with both his pistols. But quick as he was, Swift Nick was quicker, and Ironface found both his weapons shot from his hands, their bullets flying away harmlessly.

whirled like a tiger

from a crashing blow on the temple. He collapsed senseless amidst the wreckage, and rapidly Nick proceeded to tie him up and gag him with strips of a window curtain. That done, Swift Nick gagged and secured his rascally guardian, too.

"That's settled 'em!" the lad gasped triumphantly as once more he fastened his diamond clasp in his neck-cloth. "And now to prove that my guardian was a ruffian who cheated me——"

Swift Nick broke off. That moment

he heard shouts, and the sound of feet stamping down a passage. Almost instantly the library door was burst open, and in tumbled three Bow Street Runners with roars of triumph!

"Got you this time!" shouted the foremost.

Nick recognised the Runner Wat Simpson, with whom were the very two Runners who had vainly hunted him the night he was ambushed by Ironface.

To the surprise of the Runners, however, Swift Nick neither tried to escape nor shoot at them.

Instead, he stood his ground and drew himself up with a laugh of triumph.

"Here is Ironface, whom I've caught for you, cullies!" Nick laughed. "And there lies Sir Robert Gregory, my guardian, an even greater ruffian!"

And Nick told what he had seen and heard through the crack in the panel, ending:

"I warrant if you break open yonder iron-bound chest you will find the proceeds of the last robbery of the London mail-coach, and of many other robberies. My rascally guardian has too long fooled everyone!"

The bewildered Runners kept Nick covered, while one broke open the iron-bound chest, and in it discovered just what Swift Nick had anticipated would be found.

"Zounds!" Runner Wat Simpson gasped finally. "It seems that you are right, Swift Nick. I'll see you get the King's pardon for nabbing Ironface and unmasking this rogue, Sir Robert Gregory!"

And Swift Nick did receive the pardon, and also his rightful inheritance, while his guardian accompanied Ironface to Tyburn Tree.

THE END

GREYFRIARS RHYMES

FISHER T. FISH

(the Yankee of the Remove)



I guess you've heard of Fisher Fish,
The enterprising Yankee?
The juniors he has tried to "dish"
Denounce his ways so swanky.
He seeks to gain, in manner deft,
The great almighty dollar,
And calls it "biz," but it is theft
To every Greyfriars scholar.

His business instinct made him start
A mode of money-lending,
In which he took the leading part—
Both firm and fellow blending.
But when his clients noticed how
The interest kept jumping,
A fearful vengeance they did vow,
And Fish was bruised with bumping.

Not all the bumps received could crush
His wonderful endurance,
And Fishy started, with a rush,
A system of insurance.
The fellows entered with a will,
But when, in wrath and wonder,
They learned that benefits were nil,
Poor Fish was rent asunder!

Do you imagine, after this,
That Fish desisted? No, sir!
He next began, in perfect bliss,
The business of a grocer.
His tea had neither form nor void,
His coloured cakes were curious;
The cheese was constantly annoyed—
Its bark was fierce and furious!

To sample Fishy's foreign eggs
Was simply suicidal;
'Twere wise to drive them down with pegs,
Or check them with a bridle,
The Greyfriars chaps had bad enough—
Fish took a fearful licking;
To extricate him from his stuff
Was worse than oakum-picking!

An agency for faithful fags
Found Fishy in the centre;
This plan, with many rows and rags,
Returned to plague the inventor.
Then Fish began to realise
That British boys love fairness;
And his behaviour, in their eyes,
Had savoured not of squareness.

The deeds which Fishy doth declare
He did in New York City,
Like all the tales of "over there,"
Are listened to with pity.
Although the Yankees may deride
The British race as dwindleers,
Well might they waste their foolish pride
On Fish, the Prince of Swindlers!

BILLY BUNTER'S BLUNDER!



ADVICE TO NEW BOYS

Poetically offered by some of the celebrities at Greyfriars School

MR. H. S. QUELCH, M.A.



*DO not merely follow
duty's track
When inclination needs
no sacrifice;
However great the burden
on your back
The greater shall you
find your honoured
prize.*

*Remember that all men you cannot please,
Yet do not seek deliberately for strife;
Be true to your own capabilities
In work, in play, in every act of life.*

FISHER TARLETON FISH

The guy who keeps my
motto
I guess will always win;
Take my advice: you've
gotta
Be vurry, vurry careful
of your tin.



Some jays may talk of honour,
But say, I merely grin
And make this vow: "I'm gonna
Be vurry, vurry careful of my tin."

No guy is ever lonely
Whose eyes are free from skin;
Make friends of all chaps—only
Be vurry, vurry careful of your tin.

When knowing blades say, "Trust me!
It's good! I'll let you in!"
Then, take my word, you must be
Exceptionally careful of your tin.

Your life will be most happy,
Your joy will ne'er grow thin,
If you're the sort of chappie
Who's vurry, vurry careful of his tin.

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH

*Advicefulness I cannot give in rhyme,
But what does honoured English proverb
tellfulness?*
*The empty pitcher saves the stitch in time
From taking the long turning to the wellfulness.*

WILLIAM GOSLING

The only advice I can give is this 'ere:
Keep outer my lodge or you'll get a thick ear!

PERCY BOLSOVER



Fight on, though all your
strength has fled,
Fight on, with every sinew,
Fight on until you feel half-dead
And, even then, continue.
Fight at your best in every
scrap,
Fight on, though foemen
trick you;
But never tackle any chap
Who looks as though he'd lick you!

HAROLD SKINNER (with apologies to Kipling)

*If you can smoke, and not
mind others jeering,
If you can bet, and smile
when you go down,
If you can slack while
Quelchy's interfering,
And take no notice of
his awful frown;
If you break bounds
without the prefects' knowledge,
If you get back, and don't wake Mr. Prout,
Then you will soon be famous at this college—
Always provided that you ain't found out.*



ALONZO TODD

Do the very best you can
To point out to your fellow man
That life is but a vale of woe
And tears are all we have to show.
When the sky is grey and drear,
Point out that the rain is near;
When the summer sun shines out,
Say it is a sign of drought.
Be a lively British boy
Spreading happiness and joy,
Crying everywhere you go,
"Life is but a vale of woe!"

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER

*Direckly you arrive at
skool,
Unless you are a silly fool,
You will stand a wacking
grate feed
And be sure to invite me—
take heed!*
*Donuts, jam puffs by the skore,
Appel dumperlings galore,
Tarts and pastrys, all things nice,
Strorbury jam and strorbury ice;
And after that grate feed, you see,
You'll be quite poppular—at leest, with me!*