

ANOTHER GREAT NUMBER!

# The Dreadnought 1<sup>st</sup>

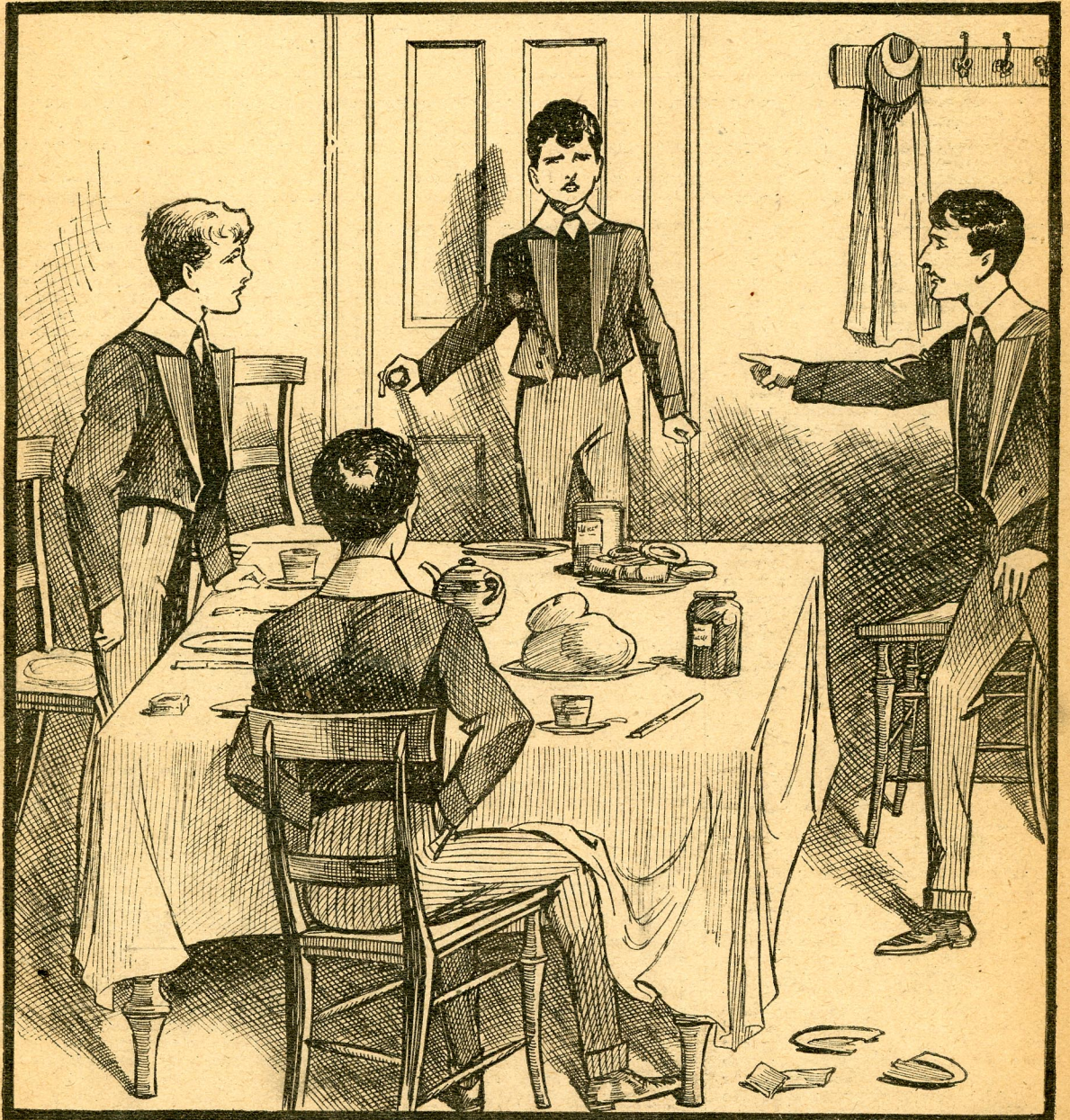
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WITH WHICH IS AMALGAMATED  
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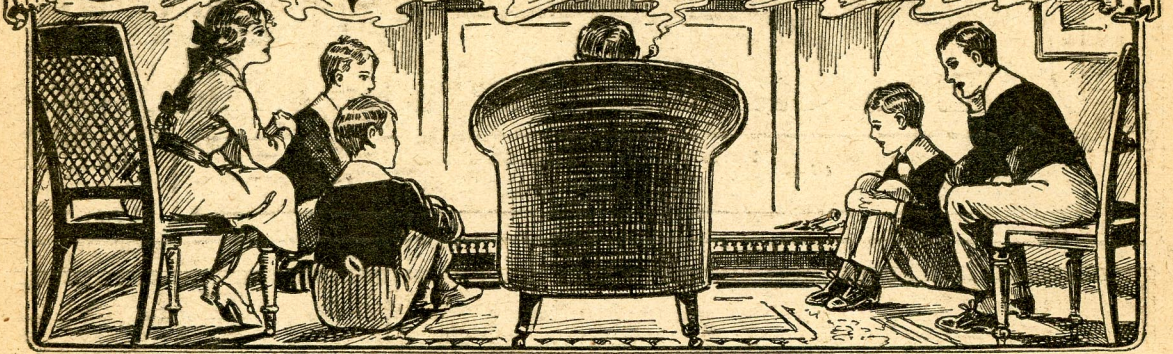
Week Ending  
Feb. 13th, 1915.



## SKINNER'S STARTLING NEWS!

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Contained in this Issue.)

# CHUMS IN COUNCIL.



Whom to write to:  
Editor,  
"The Dreadnought"  
The Fleetway House,  
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## FOR NEXT THURSDAY:

### "HEROES ALL!"

By Frank Richards.

That fine story of the chums of Greyfriars which appeared a few weeks back, under the title of "Captured by Gipsies," is still fresh in the minds of DREADNOUGHT readers, and those same gipsies play a very prominent part in next week's narrative. Melchior, the leader of his ruthless tribe, discovers the secret passage which runs from the ruined chapel to Greyfriars, and the scoundrel intends to use this passage as a means of ingress to the school, where he hopes to carry out a most daring venture. Harry Wharton & Co., meanwhile, have not been asleep, and Melchior, in attempting to make good his nefarious scheme, runs into a warm handful, and is promptly conveyed to the secure shelter of the local lock-up. The Famous Four have indeed distinguished themselves, bringing glory upon their Form, and proving that they are, in every sense of the term,

"HEROES ALL!"

### Whom Shall He Serve?

In the course of a long and by no means uninteresting letter, Charles D., who hails from a little village in Shropshire, writes thus:

"I am the only lad in this parish who reads the DREADNOUGHT, and I lend it to my friends, who don't trouble to buy it so long as they can borrow it from me. If I were to refuse to lend it they would be friends no longer."

Charles D. is in a position which I do not envy. He is held between a sense of duty to this journal and a sense of loyalty to his chums. In other words, if he continues to allow those chums to borrow his favourite journal week by week, he is not doing the sporting thing by his Editor, because people who can borrow books whenever they wish aren't going to take the trouble to buy them. Yet, on the other hand, if Charles D. keeps his journal to himself, rendering it necessary for his friends to buy separate copies, he thinks he will at once forfeit their friendship.

But I cannot think, my dear Charles, that the latter will be the case. I know

that trifles light as air have often been the cause of severed friendships; but I cannot conceive how any boy can give you the cold shoulder just because you exhort him to buy the DREADNOUGHT for himself in the future. Your chums are, I take it, typical British boys, and therefore true sportsmen; and if you hand them this issue of the DREADNOUGHT it will be judged on its merits, and, unless I am very much mistaken, you will no longer be the sole supporter of this journal in your village.

Whatever happens, Charles D., you must certainly not risk a quarrel with your chums. The making and keeping of friends is a far more important thing than most people imagine, for on this foundation is the whole structure of life built.

This has always been a favourite theory of mine, and I maintain that a boy's character is moulded and grafted into its legitimate shape—whether for good or evil—solely by the supreme power of friendship.

And, mark you, the great charm about this youthful affection is that there is no sentimental nonsense about it, but rather a feeling altogether manly and honest. We are considered—and rightly so—to be a very undemonstrative people, and do not usually carry our feelings near the surface. It is quite natural that British boys should act likewise, and therefore, although a fellow does not care to parade the subject, you may be perfectly certain that he is proud to possess a chum to whom he is bound by the strong links of friendship.

You must remember, Charles D.—and so must we all, for that matter—that the world we live in is no longer a Garden of Eden, and that roses do not bloom on every bush; therefore we should take great care to let nothing impair those friendships which we have been fortunate enough to make.

So I would have every fellow make as many chums as he can, but, above all, he should have one special friend, whose standard will float far above the rest, and to whom he will go when in need of help and advice, or when he wishes to disclose some private confidence which he well knows will not be derided or betrayed.

Wretched, indeed, must that fellow be who cannot number among his chums such a one. The fault is most probably all on his side, as he does not possess the great keynote—viz., sympathy, without which he cannot kindle so much as a spark of answering affection.

Look to it, then, you fellows! Make the utmost use of your opportunities, which are many. There is no time like the present, and, above all, beware lest, as the years roll on, and summer fades into autumn, you find that amongst scores of acquaintances you are, in stern reality, friendless.

### To Banish Bad Stuff.

One of my chief aims has always been to unite the readers of the DREADNOUGHT in a common bond to support pure and manly literature, and to boycott the vulgar trash which certain publishers endeavour to foist on to the youth of this country. There are various periodicals of a similar nature to the DREADNOUGHT—some older, some younger; these have my good word and best wishes for their welfare. As for the other "rags" of which I have spoken, I look to the readers of the DREADNOUGHT to join with me in this crusade against them, so that in time they will be crushed out of existence.

I expect every loyal chum to do his utmost, in these days of crowded book-stalls, to support only that type of periodical which exercises a wholesome and invigorating influence on the community.

### Replies in Brief.

"Dulcie."—Glad to hear how highly you appreciated "David Copperfield." Dickens was a very good and great-minded man, and bore throughout his life a very high character. All his personal friends bear testimony to this fact.

J. W. Snowdon (Leeds).—Send your patterns either to Messrs. Catesby's, Tottenham Court Road, London, W., or to the Staines Linoleum Company, Staines, Middlesex.

THE EDITOR.

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When finished with,  
please hand this book to  
a friend, and oblige.  
The Editor.

# The Dreadnought

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in advance.

## THE PHANTOM FUGITIVE!

A Splendid Long, Complete Tale dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS



### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### Bulstrode Makes Reprisals.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, Bulstrode."

"Come here, you young rascal!"

Bulstrode, the bully of the Greyfriars Remove, was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1, his eyes glinting, and his heavy brows dark with anger.

Billy Bunter was alone in the study, getting tea ready, expecting the arrival of Harry Wharton and his chums, Nugent and Cherry, every moment. He had looked up at the sound of the door opening, but instead of seeing his study-mates, he beheld the threatening face of Bulstrode.

"Wh-what is it, Bulstrode?" said Billy Bunter nervously. "I—I can't come just now. I'm getting tea ready, and the chaps will want it when they come in."

"Come here, I tell you!"

Billy Bunter slowly laid down the teacups and saucers he was arranging, and adjusted his big spectacles, which had earned him the nickname of the Owl, in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

He was a timid lad, and he felt a very natural uneasiness when he found the threatening eyes of the Remove bully fixed upon him. Bulstrode had once been a dweller in Study No. 1, and Billy had often experienced his brutality. But, although Billy Bunter would rather have gone anywhere in the world than near Bulstrode at that moment, he did not dare to disobey.

He slowly approached the burly Removeite, a good deal like a helpless animal fascinated by a reptile, blinking uneasily; while Bulstrode watched him, with a grim, sneering smile.

"Wh-what do you want, Bulstrode?" faltered the junior. "I—I can't come now, you know. I'm getting the tea for Wharton and the others."

"Hang Wharton and the others!"

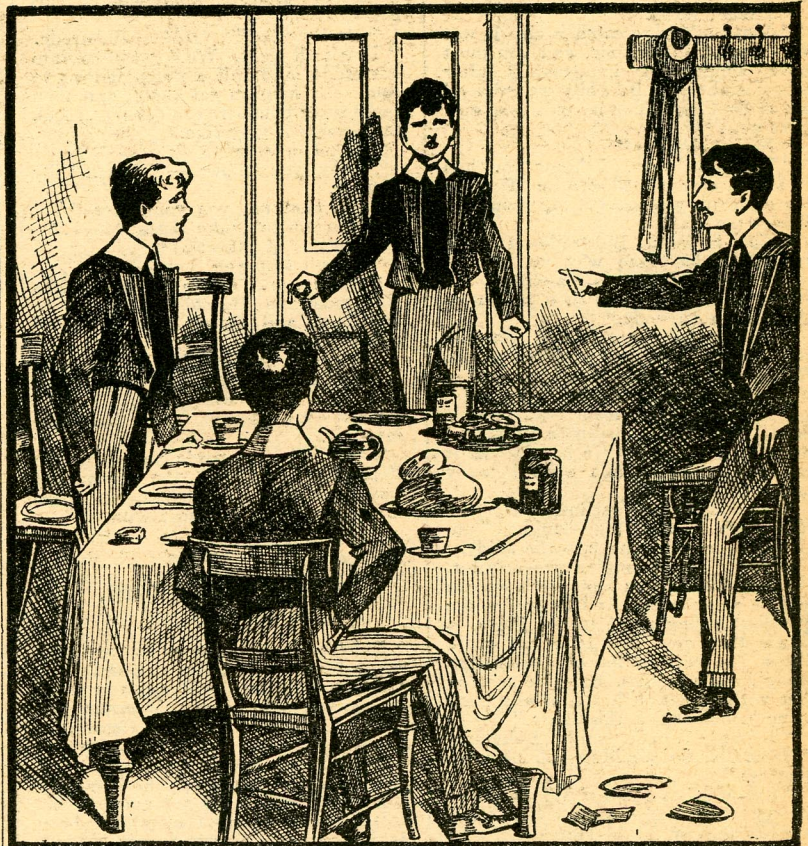
"Certainly, Bulstrode, if you wish," said the Owl pacifically. "But—"

Bulstrode reached out and gripped him by the shoulder with a powerful hand, and the smaller lad gave an anticipatory wriggle.

"Oh, don't, Bulstrode!"

"Don't what?" demanded Bulstrode.

"I—I mean I—"



"Shut the door!" gasped Skinner. "Shut it quickly! Shut it!" Harry Wharton stepped to the door and closed it.

"You know what you deserve. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Oh, no! But— Oh, don't!"

"You do," said Bulstrode, compressing his grip upon the junior's shoulder till he writhed with pain. "You know what you've done, and you know why I've dropped on you, you greedy young rascal!"

"Ow! I—I haven't done anything, Bulstrode—I really haven't! I wouldn't do anything you didn't like, you know, I respect you too much—I do, really!" mumbled Billy Bunter. "Oh, don't shake me like that—please don't, or my spectacles will fall off, and if they get broken you will have to pay for them."

"You greedy young cad! What have you done with the grub out of my study?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"Grub—out of your study, Bulstrode?"

"Yes. What have you done with it?"

"I—I haven't seen it—I haven't,

really! I don't know what you're talking about, Bulstrode. I haven't touched any grub in your cupboard."

"Don't tell lies!" said the bully of the Remove roughly. "If you didn't take it, who did? Answer me that."

"I can't, Bulstrode—I can't really! I don't know who took it, or whether it has been taken at all."

"Don't I tell you it has been taken?" "Ye-es, but you always tell such untruths, you know. No, I don't mean that!" wailed Billy, as Bulstrode shook him till his teeth chattered. "I—I mean, you are so truthful that I admire you immensely. I haven't taken any grub out of your study."

"Who has, then?"

"How should I know?"

"You're the hungriest and greediest little brute in the Remove!" said Bulstrode, again shaking him. "If any grub's missed, it's pretty safe to set it down to you. What I want to know is, where is it?"

"I really don't know, Bulstrode. You see, I haven't taken it. I didn't

know there was any there; and besides, I wouldn't have taken it, anyway. I know my spectacles will fall off if you go on shaking me like that. I really wish you wouldn't do it—I do, really!"

"Where is the grub, then?"

"Oh, don't—don't!"

"I'll shake the life out of you if you don't tell me!" exclaimed Bulstrode savagely. "Several of the fellows have been missing grub from their cupboards the last day or two, and I know very well that you take it. Now, I'm not going to waste my grub on a greedy young pig like you. Tell me where it is!"

"I don't know."

"You can't have eaten it all. It was all there at dinner-time, and you must have slipped in immediately after school and taken it, while we were all out in the Close. You haven't been out, have you?"

"No-o-o, but——"

"That's it, then. I know you had it, so you may as well own up. Perhaps it's my grub you are getting ready for Wharton's tea."

"No, it isn't, Bulstrode—it isn't, really! I don't see why you should pick on me. There is Vaseline. He shares your study, and he'd take anything from anybody."

"Would he?" exclaimed another voice at the door, as Hazeldene of the Remove looked in. "Give him another shake for that, Bulstrode!"

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Hazeldene!" said the unfortunate Billy. "I mean that you wouldn't have taken it on any account, that's what I really meant to say."

Hazeldene—Vaseline, as the Removites called him—laughed unpleasantly as he came into the study.

"You're the champion prevaricator, Bunter. That shows how much we can believe your word. And as you're the greediest young brute in the Form, it stands to reason you took the grub. There has been a lot of grub-lifting lately in the studies, but I've noticed that nothing's been heard of any grub being taken out of this study."

"That's so," said Bulstrode. "Naturally, he wouldn't rob his own quarters."

"I shouldn't wonder if Wharton and Cherry send him out to collar other people's tommy," said Hazeldene. "I dare say it comes cheaper in the long run. As it happens, the grub that's missing is as much mine as Bulstrode's, as we're chumming up in the commissariat line now. Have you taken it?"

"No, I haven't—I haven't, really!"

"Oh, of course, we can't believe a word you say. The best thing we can do, Bulstrode, is to make a clean sweep of the table here. I'm pretty certain that our grub has been brought here, so if we collar all this——"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Bulstrode heartily.

"You mustn't!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "This tommy belongs to Wharton and Cherry, and they are just coming in to tea."

"I'm afraid they'll have to miss their tea, then," said Hazeldene, gathering up the supplies on the table. "H'm! Jam-tarts, cream-puffs, chocolate-biscuits. Good! Ham and tongue, brown bread, and a nice pat of butter. Good! Marmalade! We have some of that, so we'll leave this. We'll have the sugar."

"And the tea-caddy!" said Bulstrode.

"Good! I think that's enough. Lend

me a hand with them, will you? I don't want to stuff all of them into my pockets; it would spoil some of them."

"Right you are!"

Bulstrode released Bunter, and helped Hazeldene to pack up the eatables on the table. Their movements were rather hasty, for they didn't want to be caught in the middle of the raid by the chums of the Remove.

Billy Bunter watched them open-mouthed. This bare-faced brigandage was a little new even for Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove; and since he had been licked in fair fight by Harry Wharton, Bunter wondered at his nerve.

"Buck up!" said Bulstrode. "That's all right. We'll get these into our study, and half a dozen fellows to come and help us eat them, and then those three bounders can come and look for trouble if they like."

"Good wheeze!"

"I say, you fellows——" began Billy Bunter.

"Oh, shut up, you young ass!"

"You mustn't take those things!"

"Get out of the way!"

"I can't stop you, but——"

"But I can!" said a quiet voice, as Bulstrode and Hazeldene stepped to the door; and Harry Wharton stood before them.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth, and Hazeldene stepped back, drawing a little behind his companion.

"Let me pass!" said Bulstrode savagely.

Harry Wharton made no reply. He stepped further into the study, and closed the door behind him, and stood facing the bully of the Remove.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Who?

Bulstrode's face became crimson with rage. Until late, it was new to him for any fellow in the Remove to stand up against him. Harry Wharton had done so, and had been the victor in a hard-fought fight; but Bulstrode's spirit was far from tamed as yet.

"Get out of my path!" he hissed.

Harry Wharton did not move.

"It seems to me that you've been taking rather a liberty in my study," he remarked quietly. "What are you doing with my things under your arms and crammed in your pockets?"

"Mind your own business!"

"It is my business, I imagine, when I find a fellow raiding my study and carrying off my tea!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "I can take a joke with anybody, but this is really a little bit too thick."

"If you want to know, the things belong to us."

"How do you make that out?"

"If you send a rotten little fag round stealing in the studies, you can't expect to be allowed to keep all the things he brings home!" said Bulstrode savagely.

Wharton turned pale for a moment.

"Are you speaking seriously, Bulstrode? If this is a joke, I admit that I don't see the point of it."

"You know grub has been missed from some of the studies lately, Wharton?" said Hazeldene, in the conciliatory, insinuating manner which had gained him the name of Vaseline in the Greyfriars Remove.

"I have heard so."

"Well, it must have been Billy Bunter who roped in the things!"

"It wasn't!" interjected Billy Bunter.

"You shut up, kid!"

"I'm not going to shut up when you say I——"

"Dry up, I tell you! I say it was Bunter who collared the things, and so we came here to get them back, didn't we, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, we did," growled Bulstrode.

"Do you mean to say that some of the articles in this study belong to you?" asked Harry Wharton.

Hazeldene shifted uneasily.

"Well, perhaps not exactly that, but you see——"

"I don't see! Can you identify any article here as belonging to you?"

"Well, no, if you put it like that."

"Can you, either, Bulstrode?"

"You know I can't! But I know jolly well that it was a fellow from this study who has been raiding our rooms!"

"How do you know?"

"Well, nothing has been taken away from this study, for one thing."

"There are some other studies from which nothing has been taken, I believe."

"Very likely. I don't know, and I don't care. But you've got the greediest little rotter in the Remove in this study, and he——"

"You think Bunter has been raiding the studies?"

"I know he has."

"How do you know it?"

"Well, I do know it," said Bulstrode obstinately. "Who is more likely than Bunter to have raided the grub, I'd like to know?"

"It's not a question of what's likely. If you have any proof, or any reasonable suspicion, against Bunter, it's different. But you haven't. You've just jumped to a conclusion, without the slightest reasonable grounds, as far as I can see."

"I'm satisfied about it, anyway."

"But you can't expect me to be satisfied, when it's my grub you are carrying off," said Wharton, smiling slightly.

"I don't care a rap whether you're satisfied or not. Get out of the way, or you will be hurt."

"Probably someone else will be hurt if you try to shift me."

"We're two to one," said Hazeldene.

"Better get out of the way, Wharton; we don't want to hurt you!"

"I'll get out of the way," replied Harry, "when you have replaced those things on the table; not before."

"That's right!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "Cherry and Nugent will be here in a minute, and then we'll kick these rotters out!"

"Come on, Vaseline!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in no wise inclined to leave the tussle until the other two juniors arrived to turn the odds against him.

Bulstrode and Hazeldene rushed at Wharton. Harry did not flinch from the unequal encounter. He hit out with his right, and Hazeldene reeled back against Bunter, who pushed him off, sending him with a bump to the floor.

Bulstrode sprang upon Wharton and jammed him back against the door.

Almost at the same moment the door was pushed from outside, and a cheery voice called out:

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was the usual greeting of Bob Cherry of the Remove. "What are you shutting the door against your uncle for in that way!"

"Come in, Cherry!" shrieked Billy

Bunter. "Bulstrode and Vaseline are here, and they're trying to collar the grub!"

"By Jove, are they?"

And Bob Cherry hurled himself at the door.

It came flying open under his weight, and Harry Wharton and Bulstrode reeled away, still grappling fiercely with one another.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent sprang into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the row?"

Hazeldene staggered to his feet. He was quick to realise that the game was up, with the odds against the raiders.

"It's all right, chaps," he exclaimed; "don't lose your tempers over a little joke, you know! It was all in fun!"

Bulstrode tore himself loose, and made for the door. Harry Wharton set his back against it.

"No, you don't," he said grimly; "not till you've emptied your pockets, my son!"

"Let me pass!"

"Rats!"

"Come off, Bulstrode!" said Hazeldene. "Can't you see it's no good? I'm quite willing to empty my pockets, Wharton! It was all in fun, of course!"

And the cad of the Remove, with assumed cheerfulness, replaced his plunder upon the table. Bulstrode, after a brief hesitation, did the same. Then the precious pair were allowed to depart. Harry Wharton opened the door for them, and shut it again when they had gone.

"I say, you fellows, it was jolly lucky you came, really!" said Billy Bunter. "They would have carried off nearly all the grub, you know. I'd have stood a feed like a shot, only the postal-order I'm expecting hasn't arrived yet."

"What was the cause of the rum-pus?" asked Nugent.

Wharton explained.

"Well, it's true enough that a lot of grub has been missed from the studies this week," said Nugent thoughtfully. "I say, make the tea, Bunter! You must be useful, as you can't be ornamental. But it was like Bulstrode's cheek to jump on the Owl like that without any proof. Of course, Bunter is the most likely person to take the grub; there's no denying that."

"Oh, I say, Nugent!"

"Did you take it, Billy?"

"No, I didn't!"

"The truth now," said Harry Wharton, laying his hand on the youngster's shoulder, and looking straight into his eyes—"the truth now, Billy! Was it you who took the things from Bulstrode's study and the other studies?"

"I'll swear it wasn't, Wharton!" said Billy earnestly.

Harry gave a nod.

"I believe you, Billy. What do you others say?"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Nugent. "I believe him for one. But it's queer, all the same, you know. Somebody has been rummaging round the studies and collaring the grub. Who could it be?"

Wharton looked puzzled.

"It ought to be looked into," said Bob Cherry. "I know some of the fellows have complained to the Form-master about it. I suppose it is a fellow in the Remove playing the giddy goat, and he ought to be dropped on. The fact that this study has not been victimised points suspicion to us to a certain extent, although I know there

are some other studies that haven't been touched."

"Tea's made!" said Bunter.

"Pour it out, then," said Harry. "As Bulstrode has accused this study of being at the bottom of the matter, we might as well look into it, and it wants looking into, anyway. When did the thing start—let me think!"

"Oh, I remember!" said Nugent.

"It was the day after we saw the foreigners off at the station. Russell told me next morning that somebody had been in his study overnight, and simply cleared out the cupboard!"

"Yes, now I come to think of it, none of the thefts happened while the foreigners were here," Bob Cherry remarked.

Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

Lately, a number of foreign lads had been at Greyfriars, most conspicuous among them being Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, who had shared Study No. 1 with the chums of the Remove.

The foreigners were gone, and the Nabob of Bhanipur had gone with them; most unwillingly, for he had become very strongly attached to Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent during the time he had shared their study.

Wharton remembered that the mysterious purloinings from the studies had not commenced till after the departure of the foreigners, now that it was mentioned.

"Well, I don't understand it," he remarked. "It's a trick being played by somebody, of course, but I can't say I like the kind of trick, especially when this study gets accused of it!"

"We'll look into the thing."

"That's the idea! So far as I've heard, most of the purloining has taken place at night," Harry Wharton went on. "The fellow, whoever he is, goes prowling round after lights out, and goes into the studies."

"Looks like it."

"Bulstrode said his cupboard had been cleared out during afternoon school, or just after," Billy Bunter remarked.

"H'm! Then it must have been a chap who was absent from classes!" said Wharton thoughtfully. "It might have been any of a dozen though, as we don't know what time in the afternoon it took place. As something seems to have been taken pretty nearly each night, I think it's quite possible the rotter will be on the prowl again to-night. Suppose we get out of the dormitory after lights out, and look for him?"

"But if the fellow is in the Remove, he'll see us get out, and know we're on the watch," Nugent remarked.

"We can manage it quietly, without alarming anyone."

"Well, yes, it will be dark, and we may be able to get out silently."

"It's settled, then?"

"Yes; if we—What on earth's that?"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Mystery of the Box-room.

The study door flew open with a crash. A junior, with white face and starting eyes, dashed up, and collided with the fellows at the tea-table, and there was a smash of crockery as they all started to their feet at once, and the table lurched to and fro.

"What's the matter?"

"It's Skinner!"

"He's mad!"

"Collar him!"

"Hold on," said Harry Wharton quietly; "there's something wrong. He's frightened out of his wits. What is it Skinner?"

It was Skinner of the Remove who had burst suddenly into the study. He clutched at the edge of the table to support himself, and turned a chalky face upon the chums.

"Sh-sh-sh—"

"What does he mean by 'Sh-sh-sh-sh'?"

"He's off his giddy rocker!"

"Sh-sh-shut the door!" gasped Skinner.

"What for?"

"Shut it! Oh shut it! Oh dear, shut it!"

Harry Wharton stepped to the door and closed it. He could see that Skinner was terribly frightened about something, though he could not imagine what. It was better to humour the scared junior, at all events.

"Lock it!" cried Skinner.

"Oh, what rot!" said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton locked the door.

"Now what's the matter, Skinner?"

The junior looked nervously at the door. The dusk of evening was thick in the Close, but the study was bright and cheerful, and in the lighted room, with four fellows round him, the terror of the junior subsided.

"It—it—it—" he stammered.

"It! What do you mean by 'it'?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Give him time!" said Wharton.

"I—I wasn't really scared, especially when this study gets accused of it!" He was interrupted by a shout of laughter.

"No, of course not," assented Bob Cherry. "You didn't look scared. Did he, chaps?"

"Nothing of the sort," agreed Nugent. "Just a little bit flurried, perhaps; only a trifle; nothing to speak of."

"Oh, come Skinner!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You were in a blue funk! What was the reason of it? You've smashed our crockery!"

"I'm awfully sorry!"

"We shall make you awfully sorrier, if you haven't got a jolly good explanation to give for bolting into our study like that!" said Harry.

"I—I say, you chaps, do you—do you believe—"

"Do we believe you're an ass?" asked Bob Cherry. "Oh, yes, certainly! We haven't the slightest doubt upon that point."

"I didn't mean that. Do you—do you believe in ghosts?"

Harry Wharton looked searchingly at the junior.

"What on earth are you talking about, Skinner? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Ye-e-e-es, I believe so."

"Ass!" said Nugent.

"Well, I saw something," said Skinner. "It was very dark up in the box-room, and I didn't see it very clearly."

"What—the box-room?"

"No, the ghost."

"You've seen a ghost, have you? What have you been drinking?"

"Don't be an ass, Nugent!"

"Well, what was he like?" asked Bob Cherry. "Hoofs and horns and tail, and flaming eyes, or anything in that line?"

"No. He had a face like chalk!"

"Perhaps some fellow has been

chalking his face? That would account for it."

"Look here, if you can't take a serious matter seriously—"

"Oh, go on with the yarn! What was he like?"

"I—I couldn't see very well. It had a fearfully white face, as white as chalk, and two glaring eyes."

"Any nose?"

"I tell you—"

"And you saw it in the box-room?"

asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, I did."

"What were you doing up in the box-room in the dark, in the name of wonder?"

"Well, it's not quite dark there yet, and I was going up to fetch down my old cricket-bat, to oil it this evening," said Skinner. "I knew just where it was, so I didn't trouble to take a light. I had just got the bat out when I heard a noise—"

"A horrible groan, I suppose?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"No, just a slight sound. I thought it was a rat scuttling among the old boxes. I looked up, and there in the shadows was that awful face staring at me."

And Skinner shuddered. Whether he had been mistaken or not, he had certainly been terribly scared.

"And what did you do?"

"I? Oh, I bolted!"

"Why didn't you dot him in one of his glaring eyes?"

"I'd like to see you do it. I was scared—well, startled. I bolted, and came down the stairs four to five at a time. I rushed into the first room that had a light in it—it happened to be this one. I—"

"It was some fellow playing a joke, of course," said Nugent.

"Well, now I come to think of it calmly, perhaps it was," said Skinner. "But it was a jolly startling thing to see, anyway."

"I don't quite catch on," said Harry Wharton. "Had you told anybody you were going up to the box-room to fetch your bat, Skinner?"

"No; I just ran up."

"Then the chap who played the trick didn't know you would be there?"

"Certainly not."

"He can't have intended to play the trick on you, then?"

"N-no; I suppose not."

"It's queer," said Wharton. "He couldn't have known that Skinner was coming there, and he couldn't have expected anybody to go into the room. Nobody goes up to the box-room after dark. And I suppose he didn't go there to play ghost just to amuse himself, all on his lonesome."

"Perhaps it was a real ghost," quavered Billy Bunter.

"Perhaps you're a silly ass," said Bob Cherry. "We can bar the theory that it was a real ghost at the start. The question is whether it's somebody playing a trick, or whether Skinner only imagined that he saw it all."

"Think I should be likely to imagine it?" snapped Skinner. "I suppose I'm not afraid of the dark at fifteen, am I?"

"Well, it was a jape, then."

"Let's go up and search the box-room," said Nugent. "Come on, Skinner!"

"No, thanks," said Skinner promptly. "Of course, it was only a jape as you say. But—but I promised to play a game of chess with Russell in the common-room, and I'm late al-

ready. I must be off." And Skinner unlocked the door and was gone.

Bob Cherry gave a chuckle.

"He doesn't want to go in for any ghost-hunting," he remarked. "We may as well have a little run up to the box-room. The ghost can't hurt three of us. If it's a fellow who has chalked his face, we'll make some of it black for him, for a change."

"Good!" said Nugent. "I can see that Bunter is simply burning to start. Come on, Billy; you shall lead the way. We won't take a light."

Billy Bunter turned almost green.

"I—I—I don't think I'll come, if you don't mind, Nugent," he stammered. "I—I want to run downstairs and see whether my postal-order has arrived yet." And Bunter fairly bolted from the study.

"Ha, ha, ha! Let's go, you chaps!" Harry Wharton took an acetylene bicycle-lamp from the cupboard, and released the tap. A minute later he had it burning.

"Come on," he said; "one of you bring a cricket-stump. If it's a fellow playing a jape, we may as well give him something for his trouble."

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, picking up a stump from the corner. "Lead on, Macduff!"

And Harry Wharton, lamp in hand, led the way upstairs to the box-room.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### The Ghost Hunters!

Dark and gloomy looked the box-room as the three adventurous juniors entered it. It was an extensive apartment, and pretty well filled with lumber, and well coated with dust. Harry Wharton flashed the light of the lamp to and fro as he advanced into the shadowy room.

"There's Skinner's bat!" chuckled Bob Cherry, picking up a cricket-bat from the dusty floor. "He didn't stop to take that with him."

"No; he must have been scared. I hardly think he can have imagined it all," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"Skinner's a chap not much given to imagining things. Perhaps the silly ass who frightened him just came into the box-room to chalk his chivvy, intending to go out in the passages afterwards."

"It's a bit early to start playing ghost; it's only just dark."

"Yes, that's curious, too. Well, let us look for him."

The juniors hunted carefully through the box-room, but not a sign of the mysterious apparition could they discover. They ransacked every corner of the room, and even peered into the empty boxes, but not a trace of anything out of the common could they find.

They stopped at last, disappointed, and somewhat soiled from the dust they had disturbed in their quest.

"Nothing in it," said Nugent. "We've wasted a quarter of an hour, got ourselves filthy, and the tea's spoiled."

"Nice sort of a Job's comforter you are," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Well, let's go and get a wash and a brush down, for goodness' sake!"

"Wait a minute," said Harry Wharton. "Where does that door lead to?"

He pointed to a low door set in the wall of the box-room, almost hidden in

the shadow of a great box. Nugent glanced at it.

"Oh, that opens into a passage leading into the disused wing, behind the cloisters, you know. Nobody ever goes there."

"The ghost may have gone that way."

"Well, if it was a real ghost, it may have gone up the chimney or out of the window. If it was a fellow playing a jape, I can answer for it that he didn't go into the disused wing at this time of day alone. It's dark and full of pitfalls for the unwary. The chaps are not allowed to explore it because it's too dangerous. It's a part of the ancient abbey that was here in King John's time."

"The door is never opened, then?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, it's been opened lately, anyway," said Wharton, looking closely at it. "The dust is brushed off near the handle here."

Nugent grinned.

"That's easily explained. I showed Hurree Singh through the passage the day before the foreign chaps left Greyfriars. He was curious to explore it."

"Oh, I see."

"But we went in the daytime; it's too risky after dark."

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, "the chap who was playing ghost—and I am convinced that there was somebody—couldn't have gone down the stairs in the usual way. He couldn't show himself with the chalk on his face. He's not here, so I think he has cleared out that way."

Nugent gave a grunt.

"You determined bounder! I can see you have made up your mind to explore the ruined wing of Greyfriars!" said he.

"I haven't been over it yet, as a matter of fact; you have been going to show me, and we may as well have a look at it now."

"It's all gaps, and broken mortar, and cobwebs, and dust."

"We can't get much dustier than we are now."

"Well, that one's comfort. Come on, then!"

Nugent pulled open the little oaken door. It creaked rustily on its hinges, and a gust of cold, close air came from the dark passage beyond.

"Ugh!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I can't say I like the look of the place, anyway."

"Take care," exclaimed Nugent, as Harry Wharton advanced into the passage, throwing the light before him, "the floor's shaky!"

"All right, I'll be careful."

Harry Wharton went steadily along the passage. Suddenly there was a sharp clink and a rattle, and Nugent and Cherry jumped.

"Wh-what was that?" exclaimed Nugent nervously.

Wharton laughed. His laugh had a strangely hollow ring in the gloomy passage.

"Only something I have just kicked against."

"Oh, was that all?"

"Yes, there it is." Wharton stopped and flashed the light upon an object lying in the dust. "Why, it's a salmon-tin!"

"My only hat! How did that get here?"

Bob Cherry picked up the tin, and the juniors stared at it in blank amazement.

It was a common tin such as salmon

is preserved in, and had evidently only lately been opened, for there was no unpleasant smell to the fragments remaining attached to the tin.

"A salmon-tin—here!" ejaculated Nugent, breaking the silence. "My only aunt! Does the ghost live on potted salmon, then?"

"Very probably," said Harry Wharton. "I begin to see light, I think. It did not occur to me before that there might be a connection between the ghost of the box-room and the purloining of grub from the junior studies."

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation.

"My hat, you've hit it!"

"I believe you have," said Nugent slowly, as he stared at the tin. "The chap who bones the grub brings it here to eat it. Is that what you mean?"

"Well, it looks a great deal like it, doesn't it?"

"By Jove, it does!"

Bob Cherry dropped the tin to the floor. The light thud was followed by a slight sound further up the passage, and the juniors started.

"Was that an echo?" whispered Bob, taking a firmer grip upon his cricket-stump, while Nugent's fingers closed hard upon the cane handle of Skinner's bat.

"I don't know; come on and see." And Harry Wharton intrepidly led the way.

The discovery of the empty salmon-tin seemed to show pretty plainly that the ghost was of the human variety, but the eerie sound in the gloom of the deserted recesses had set the nerves of the youngsters a-quake. But they followed Wharton without hesitation. Harry, picking his way carefully, led them to the end of the passage. There was no door at the other end, though a pair of rusty hinges still adhered to the stone wall, where they had probably been attached for many centuries. Beyond lay a stone chamber, with a flagged floor and an arched roof. There was a deep window, so overhung with ivy that even in broad daylight hardly a glimpse of the sun could have penetrated to the room.

"Mind the floor!" muttered Nugent.

The warning was needed. In some places the flags were broken, and here and there was a black gap, yawning and dangerous. The juniors trod lightly. A false step might have precipitated them into the chamber below, to death or terrible injury upon the stone.

"The chap must have a nerve if he scuttles about here in the dark," muttered Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't care for the thing myself."

Nugent gave a sudden gasp.

"Look!"

His cry was so sudden that his companions involuntarily jumped. Harry Wharton flashed the light round.

"What is it? Where?"

"There—there! It is gone now!"

Nugent had turned white. His hand was raised and pointing towards a low, dark gap in the further wall. Wharton and Cherry stared in the direction, but could see nothing but the bare stone.

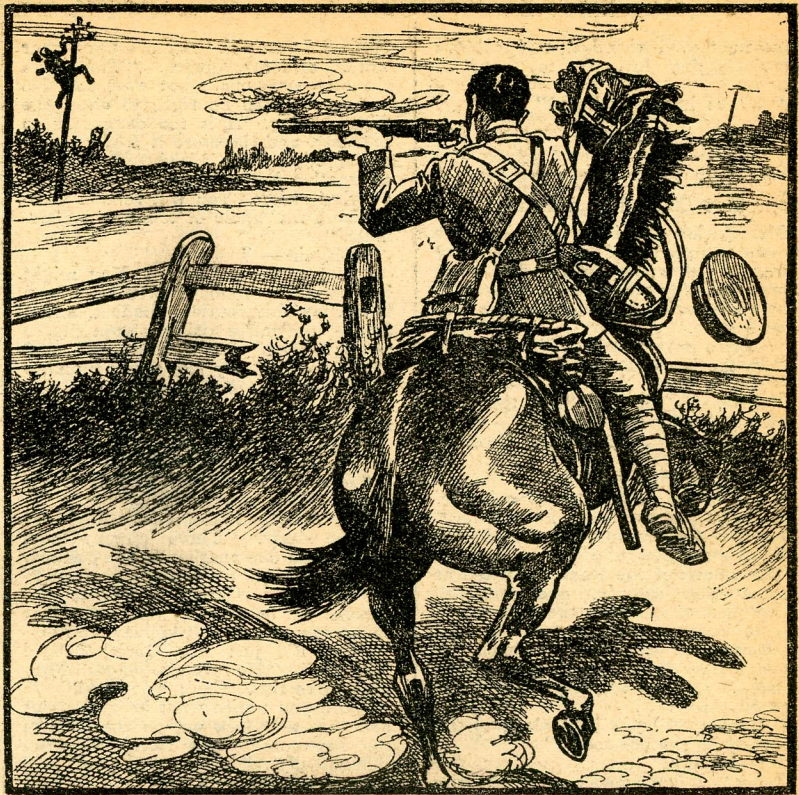
"What was it?" muttered Harry tensely.

"A face." Nugent's teeth were chattering. "A—a face, just as Skinner described it. White—horribly white—with flashing eyes."

"Are you sure?"

"I tell you I saw it."

"You might have Skinner's description on the brain, you know," said Bob Cherry, "and a flash of the lantern might have—"



The above picture depicts an exciting episode in Flanders. Two German soldiers, having successfully evaded the British outposts, were in the act of cutting down telegraph wires when a mounted Hussar appeared on the scene, and the enemy's scheme was quickly nipped in the bud. Thus were the lines of communication unhampered.

"Rats!" growled Nugent. "I saw it!"

"Then we'll see it, too!" exclaimed Harry, hurrying across the room towards the opening of the passage on the further side.

"For Heaven's sake, take care!" shouted Nugent. "You'll be through if you don't!"

"I'm all right."

Several fragments of mortar, displaced by the junior's feet, rolled through the gaps in the flagged floor, and clinked down into the darkness below. But Harry, though swift in his movements, was careful, and he reached the passage without mishap. A cold breath of charnel-like air came from it. He flashed the lantern inside, and saw the top of a flight of stone steps.

"We can't go down there," said Nugent; "the steps lead down to the Greyfriars vaults. They're immense, and extend under the whole school, and there's a passage leading away into the Friar's Wood, too. If the chap's had the nerve to go down there, we've got no chance of catching him."

Harry Wharton hesitated.

"There's another thing," said Bob Cherry; "we don't want to break our necks, and we don't want to make him break his, whoever he is. He might, buzzing about in a hurry to get away from us."

"There's something in that," assented Harry.

"Let's get back."

"Is there any other way out of this place besides through the box-room?" asked Harry, flashing the light round.

"Yes, there's the big door of the

vaults, but that's always kept bolted," said Nugent. "There's another door into the corridor, but that's always bolted on the outside, too, and locked. The Head has all the keys. He takes care of that to keep the juniors from getting in here. The little door in the box-room used to be locked, too, but a chap busted the lock once, months ago, and it hasn't been noticed."

"Then if the fellow comes back, he will have to come out by way of the box-room?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good! We needn't trouble to follow him. We have only to keep a watch on the stairs, and he can't get back into the school without our knowing it."

"Good! That will settle his hash."

The idea was certainly a good one. It was only a question of how long the vigil would last. If a Greyfriars fellow were playing this trick, he would have to get back into the school before bedtime, at latest, or he would be missed. The chums of the Remove had only to keep a watch upon the stairs.

"Come on, then!" said Harry, leading the way back.

The chums passed through the passage, and regained the box-room. Nugent closed the little door. They left the box-room, and on the stairs Harry extinguished his lamp. They went downstairs, and emerged into the lighted passage, and came face to face with Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

The juniors halted in dismay. The Remove-master stared at them as if he could hardly believe his eyes. They

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "HEROES ALL!"

were smothered with dust, and cobwebs were clinging lovingly to them in places.

"Where have you been?"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### How the Owl Kept Watch.

Mr. Quelch asked the question, but it was a superfluous one, for he knew perfectly well where the boys had been. There was only one place in Greyfriars where they could possibly have got into such a state.

"Where have you been?"

"In the box-room, sir."

"Where else?"

"Well, sir, it was like this——" began Bob Cherry.

"You have been in the deserted wing?"

"Well, yes, but——"

"Follow me to my study," said Mr. Quelch. "Not a word! Follow me!" And the Remove-master turned and stalked away majestically.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another glumly, and followed. Their plan of watching the staircase to the box-room was knocked on the head at once. But as they went down the passage Billy Bunter met them. Harry Wharton whispered hastily to the short-sighted junior.

"Bunter, will you buzz along to the stairs up to the box-room?"

"I—I can't!"

"Ass! I don't mean go up to the room. Just stay at the foot of the stairs, and see if anybody comes down."

"Oh, certainly, Wharton; I'll do that with pleasure."

"Mind you stay there till I come."

"Certainly!"

And Billy Bunter hurried off. The chums of the Remove, somewhat relieved in their minds, followed their Form-master to his study. Mr. Quelch's grim face as he ushered them in did not bode a very happy interview.

"You have been in the deserted wing, against the headmaster's direct orders?" he rapped out sharply.

"If you will allow me to explain, sir——" began Harry Wharton.

"I am waiting for you to do so."

"We have been looking for somebody in the deserted wing," he said, in measured accents.

"Yes, sir. You see——"

"H'm! I presume it was the Greyfriars' ghost you were looking for?" the master of the Remove remarked sarcastically.

"Yes, sir."

"Eh? Are you venturing to jest with me, Wharton?"

"Oh, no, sir. We were looking for a ghost, all the same—that is, a fellow who had been playing ghost, and frightening a chap in the box-room."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Quelch, looking a little less stern. "Someone has been playing ghost in the box-room is that it?"

"That is it, sir."

"And have you discovered who it was?"

"No, sir; he got away somewhere."

Harry Wharton did not add that he would not have told who it was even if he had discovered it. Sneaking was not one of his failings. But it was useless to explain all that to a Form-master.

"And what boy was frightened by this supposed ghost?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Skinner of the Remove, sir."

"H'm! I will not question Skinner,

because I can place reliance upon your word," said Mr. Quelch. "This alters the case somewhat; but even for this reason you had no right to enter the disused wing. It is too dangerous to anybody, and therefore it is placed out of bounds by the Head. I have no alternative but to punish you for disobeying orders. You will remain within doors the whole of to-morrow afternoon."

"Oh, sir——"

"Not a word, Cherry! You might have broken a limb, or even have been killed, by this reckless conduct, and I intend to make it an unprofitable escapade, for your own sakes," said Mr. Quelch. "By the way, I understood that the box-room door giving upon that old stone passage was locked."

"The lock was broken long ago, sir," said Nugent.

"H'm! I will see that it is replaced. You may go, boys."

The dismayed Removites filed out of the study. Three gloomy faces looked into one another in the passage.

"Gated for a whole afternoon!" growled Bob Cherry. "What the dickens did he want to remember that to-morrow was a half-holiday for?"

"Oh, it's just like Quelch!" said Nugent. "He always comes down heavy like this. Can't be helped."

"Did you notice what he said about having a new lock put on the door in the box-room?" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I hope that ghost will be safe out before it's put on, or he'll get shut up in the ruined wing."

"Oh, he could get out into the quadrangle, by climbing down the ivy from one of the old casements," Nugent remarked. "That couldn't be done in daylight without his being spotted, though."

"It wouldn't do to speak to Mr. Quelch. We can't give the fellow away."

"No. Let's go and see if anybody has passed Bunter on the stairs."

The chums of the Remove hastened to the spot where Billy Bunter was supposed to have taken up his starfl. But there was no sign of the Owl to be seen.

Harry Wharton looked round wrathfully.

"The young ass! He's not here!"

"Can he have gone up to the box-room?"

"Wild horses wouldn't have dragged him up there," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "He's gone off somewhere. Hallo, here he is!"

There was a patter of feet in the passage, and Billy Bunter came running up. His jaw dropped at the sight of the three chums standing at the foot of the stairs.

"I say, you chaps——" he gasped.

"Why didn't you come here as I told you?" exclaimed Harry.

"I did, Wharton, I assure you."

"Then why didn't you stay here till I came?"

"I was going to, only——"

"Only what, you young ass?"

"Vaseline came by, and he said the postman had just brought a registered letter for me. I have been expecting a postal-order for some time, and I thought it had come at last, so I just buzzed down to see about it. I should have been back in a minute. But it was only a joke of Vaseline's, and there wasn't any registered letter at all," said Billy Bunter ruefully. "But I haven't been away more than four or five minutes at the very most."

"Oh, get out of sight!" said Harry gruffly.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, travel! Don't ask questions!"

"Certainly not, Wharton. I'm not at all curious, but what's the matter?"

"Shall we take him up to the box-room and lock him in?" asked Bob Cherry, looking questioningly at his chums.

There was no need for them to answer; the suggestion was enough. Billy Bunter went along the passage as if he were on the cinder-path. He disappeared in a couple of seconds, and the Removites burst into a laugh.

"Do you think the rotter has escaped while Bunter was away?" asked Nugent, glancing up the staircase.

"It's impossible to say, but it's quite likely he saw the stair was watched, and was waiting for an opportunity."

"Then it's no good our staying here watching?"

"Not much, when we don't know whether the fellow is there or not."

"Well, I want a wash and a brush-up, for one," said Bob Cherry.

"Come along, kids. After all, we shall have another chance to-night, when we lay for the bounder. If he does any more of his raiding on the studies, we shall have him, as dead as nails!"

"We'll keep watch, at all events," Harry Wharton assented.

And the chums of the Remove walked away, in search of a wash and a change of clothes.

Quite unknown to them, a resolution similar to their own had been arrived at by others in the Remove. Bulstrode and Hazeldene were talking the matter over in the junior common-room, in low voices.

"And you still believe that it was Bunter?" Hazeldene said.

The bully of the Remove nodded emphatically.

"I am certain it was."

"I should hardly think he would have nerve enough," Hazeldene remarked dubiously. "He's a greedy young hog, I know, but he's got no nerve."

"He would have if there was somebody behind him."

"You mean Wharton and the rest in Study No. 1?"

"That's it. You noticed how Wharton fired up in defence of him. How could he know anything about it, for that matter?"

"Well, his view was that there was no evidence against Bunter."

"If you're going to take Wharton's side, Vaseline——"

"I'm not," said Hazeldene hastily.

"I thought you wanted to get at the facts. Very likely it was Bunter."

"And he had those cads behind him, to back him up," said Bulstrode savagely. "We know very well that some of the fellows in the Sixth encourage their fags to collar things from the juniors. Carberry, for instance, doesn't pay much for what he has on his table at tea-time. Wharton is working the same idea."

Hazeldene was silent.

He knew perfectly well that Bulstrode's statement was false, and he did not believe that Bulstrode believed it himself. But it was not his policy to quarrel with the bully of the Remove, if he could help it. He had done so before, with direful results to himself. It suited him best to keep on the right side of Bulstrode.

"Well, what do you think?" snapped Bulstrode.



"Why, I think you're about right."  
 "No, you don't," growled the bully of the Remove. "You don't think anything of the kind. But I do, and that settles it. Anyway, whether Wharton has a hand in it or not, I know very well that Bunter does the pinching, and we're going to show him up."

"How?" asked Hazeldene.

"By keeping watch to-night for the rascal. He's bound to go for another raid; it's been done every night for the last two or three nights, at least."

Hazeldene nodded.

"That's not a bad idea. But Wharton may see us getting out of the dormitory."

"No, he won't; not if we're careful. We'll leave it till eleven o'clock, when the fellows are all asleep."

"Good! I'm agreeable!"

"We'll catch the young rotter in the act," grinned Bulstrode; "and even if Wharton didn't put him up to it, we can make him implicate the rotter. He'd say anything to save his own skin. We may be able to fix this on Wharton, so that he won't be able to get rid of it all the time he stays in the Greyfriars Remove."

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### In the Dead of Night.

There was suppressed excitement in more than one breast in the Greyfriars Remove as that Form marched upstairs to bed that night.

Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry had kept their own counsel as to their intended vigil, save for Billy Bunter, who was in the secret, because he had unavoidably heard them talking it over in the study. But it had been impressed upon Billy that if he chattered he would be visited with unheard-of punishments, and for once in his life the chatterbox of the Remove kept a still tongue.

Bulstrode and Hazeldene had kept their secret, too. The latter was very whole-hearted in the enterprise, but Bulstrode was "top dog," and the cad of the Remove had to follow his lead.

To Hazeldene, a warm bed on a cold spring night was more than discovering the culprit, but Bulstrode was obstinately determined to make out some kind of a case against Study No. 1.

The Remove dormitory at Greyfriars was an extensive apartment. The Remove, or Lower Fourth Form, was a numerous one, and the long rows of white beds stretched away with seeming endlessness. There were three doors to the dormitory, all giving upon the same passage, and a huge window at either end. The dormitory contained four fire-grates, at intervals of its length, which were ablaze in winter, but at this time of the year fires had already been stopped in the Remove sleeping quarters. It was a chilly night, and the Removites warmed themselves by the usual horse-play before getting into bed. Carberry, the worst-tempered prefect at Greyfriars, looked in to see lights out, and warned the Remove expressively what would happen if they were not all in bed in five minutes.

There was a howl from the Remove as the prefect turned to go again.

"What's the odds on Bonny Boy, Carberry?"

The prefect turned round with a criminal face.

The question was an evident allusion

to his sporting proclivities, which were quite well known to the Remove, although unsuspected by the Head of Greyfriars—not an unusual state of things in a public school.

"Who said that?" shouted Carberry.

A howl of laughter was the only reply he received. The prefect glared at the juniors, looking greatly inclined to run amok, but there were too many of the Remove. He scowled, and strode from the dormitory, and slammed the door.

The Removites tumbled into bed, and when Carberry looked in again five minutes later, with a dog-whip in his hand, they were all quiet and apparently slumbering. The prefect turned out the lights, and scowlingly withdrew.

There were five of the Remove who did not think of sleep. Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent had three end beds in the dormitory, and as it happened Bulstrode and Hazeldene were at the other end. Each of the juniors had determined to remain awake, but Bob Cherry dropped off first, and then Nugent. Harry Wharton sat up in bed, feeling that he would go to sleep if he remained lying down.

Half-past ten rang out from the clock tower.

Then Harry made a movement. It was time to take up the watch, as the corridors would now be deserted, and the opportunity of the raider had come. There had been no sound in the Remove dormitory; but Harry was already pretty well convinced that the mysterious prowler of the studies did not belong to his Form.

He slipped quietly out of bed, and tapped Bob Cherry on the shoulder. Bob opened his eyes sleepily.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" was his lucid and intelligible remark.

"Wake up, Bob!"

Harry's low whisper scarce broke the silence.

"Wharrer marrer—"

"Bob! Shut up! It's time!"

"Oh!" murmured Cherry, fully awakening.

He slipped out of bed, shivering a little, and hastily put on his clothes. Harry shook Nugent, who, after a preliminary grunt, turned out, and dressed himself. The juniors had taken care to provide themselves with rubber-soled shoes for the occasion, so that their movements made no sound.

Although there were no blinds to the dormitory windows, the darkness of the night made the interior of the room almost pitchy. There was no danger of being observed, even if other of the Removites should happen to be awake.

"Quiet!" whispered Harry Wharton.

"Right-ho! Lead on!"

"Jolly cold, ain't it?"

"Never mind the cold. Come on!"

Harry Wharton led the way to the nearest door. It opened without a sound, and the three juniors passed out into the corridor.

"Where are we going to watch?" asked Bob Cherry, with chattering teeth.

"Down in the second corridor," replied Harry. "No good remaining here. There are two staircases a fellow could come down by, as I'm pretty certain he's not in the Remove. We'll be close to the studies, and we are bound to see or hear something if the rotter is on the warpath to-night."

"Jolly dark to see anything."

"Well, we have our ears, anyway. And if he goes into our study, he's

bound to knock over the chair we've placed ready for him to run into in the dark. If he has a light, we shall spot him at once."

"Let's get on the spot, then."

The chums descended a flight of stairs, and entered the wide, oak-floored passage upon which the Remove studies opened.

It was a curious circumstance that most, if not all, of the raiding had been confined to the Remove studies, a fact which seemed to indicate that the purloiner belonged to that Form, and had an idea of committing all his depredations at home, as it were. At least, that was how it seemed to most of the Remove. Harry Wharton had a suspicion that it might be a fellow in the Upper Fourth, or even in the Shell, or the Fifth, who was thus favouring the juniors with his kind attentions, and who let his own Form alone so as to leave no traces near at hand.

The passage was dark—and cold. It was necessary to be quiet, but the juniors could not keep still in the cold, draughty passage. They exercised to keep themselves warm, and they were going through silent evolutions in the dark when eleven boomed out solemnly from the tower, the strokes ringing with eerie distinctness through the sombre silence of the night.

"Eleven!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We've been out of bed nearly half an hour, and no grub pincher yet!"

"Not even a ghost!" muttered Nugent.

"Ugh! Don't talk of ghosts now!"

"Quiet, kids! I believe I heard something!" Harry Wharton whispered.

The chums were silent, listening tensely.

A faint sound had come to Harry Wharton's ears; a curious sound which would not have been noticed in the daytime, but which was audible enough in the night silence. It was the distant creak of an old stair. It was repeated as the chums of the Remove stood statue-like, still, in the darkness, listening with strained ears.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It was somebody on the—"

"The old stair to the box-room."

"Yes."

"I know that creak," muttered Wharton. "All these stairs are part of the new building, but that old stair has been there for centuries, and—"

"And it always lets you know if anybody is going up or down," chuckled Nugent. "We shouldn't hear it so far away in the daytime, but now everything is so still—"

"That's it. There it is again!"

"It must be the box-room stair, from the direction and the way it sounds," said Harry Wharton, wrinkling his brow thoughtfully.

"No doubt about that, Harry."

"But—but what on earth can it mean? The raider can't have been in the box-room, can he?"

"The chap who played ghost—"

"He must have turned up for bed-time, or he'd have been missed. There was no talk about anybody being missing."

"True. Perhaps he's gone up to the box-room first."

"Before raiding the studies? Why should he go up there, and come down again for nothing?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"It's not that," said Wharton decidedly. "If that's a chap coming down from the box-room now, he hasn't been up from one of the dormitories."

"But he must belong to the school!"

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "HEROES ALL."

"I can't make it out."

"I say, it—it's not possible that—that—" stammered Nugent.

"Are you thinking of the ghost again?"

"Well, not exactly; but—but it's strange, isn't it?"

"Very strange. Did you tell me something about there being a subterranean passage from the Greyfriars vaults to the wood?"

"Yes, so some of the fellows say—from the vaults below here, to the ruined chapel in the Friar's Wood."

"Then it may be a stranger."

"My word! I never thought of that."

"But why should a stranger come here?" said Bob Cherry. "If it was a burglar, I could understand. But for a fellow to take so much trouble for the sake of a bit of grub—that won't hold water, Harry."

"How do you explain it, then?"

"Oh, I can't explain it! It's a mystery."

"There's one way," said Harry, setting his teeth. "We are going to collar that fellow, whoever he is, and make him explain. Man or boy, Greyfriars fellow or stranger, he's going to be shown up."

"Right!" said his comrades tensely.

"Silence now! He's down the stair."

There was no further sound from the darkness. The mysterious prowler of the night had left the ancient stair, and was in the oak-floored corridors, where the solid wood gave no creak at his footsteps.

"Hark!" murmured Harry suddenly.

There was a sound on the stairs. Cautious footsteps, but audible enough to the chums of the Remove.

"He's coming!"

"There's more than one."

"It must be burglars, then!"

Harry Wharton's eyes glinted in the darkness.

"Burglars or not, we're going to tackle them. Are you game?"

"Yes."

"But, I say, they're coming from the direction of the dormitory," whispered Bob, after a moment's silence. "They can't have been on the box-room stairs, then."

That had already occurred to Harry Wharton.

Was it possible that there were two parties of raiders abroad that night in Greyfriars, or had the impunity of the raider tempted others to follow his example? But there was no time to think out the puzzle. The stealthy footsteps were entering the passage where the chums stood. They crouched against the wall. From the high window at the end of the passage came the merest glimmer of light, but it sufficed to dimly reveal two dark forms stealing quietly along.

Harry Wharton nudged his companions.

"Follow me!" he whispered.

And the chums of the Remove sprang upon the dim figures, and bore them to the floor with the suddenness of the attack, and there were two wild, terrified yells in the quiet night.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Mutual Mistake.

"Ow!"

"Ooooooooooh!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"What—how—who—"

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Here's a capture, and no mistake! Why, they're Bulstrode and Vaseline!"

"Bulstrode and Vaseline!"

"The rotters!"

"So it was them all the time!"

"We've caught them!"

"Gerrof me chest!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"Yes, we'll let you get up, you rotters! Light the lantern, Bob!"

There was a scratch and a glimmer of light. Bob Cherry lighted the bicycle lamp. Its rays glimmered upon Hazeldene and Bulstrode, lying sprawled on the floor, with Wharton and Nugent pinning them down.

The sudden attack in the darkness had startled the two Removites, but at the present moment they were more enraged than scared, as they recognised whom their assailants were. Bulstrode was gritting his teeth.

"You cads! Let me get up!"

"We've caught you!"

"We've caught you, you mean!" snarled Bulstrode.

"Eh?"

"I know very well what you three fellows were doing in the passage here. You can't take me in by this trick!" growled the bully of the Remove.

"What trick? What are you talking about?"

"This jumping on us suddenly when you knew we were bound to find you," sneered Bulstrode.

"I'm not a baby to be taken in so easily as all that, I promise you! The whole Remove shall know to-morrow who it is steals grub from the studies!"

"Well, of all the cheek!" gasped Bob Cherry. "To try to turn it round like that, when we've caught them in the very act!"

Bulstrode glared at him.

"What do you mean? In the act of what?"

"Of going to pilfer in the studies."

"Why, you utter idiot, we came down from the dormitory to watch for the pilferer!" snarled Bulstrode.

"We didn't expect to find three—"

"And we didn't expect to find two!"

"Do you accuse me, Hazeldene, and me—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Wait a bit," said Harry Wharton quietly. "It looks to me as if Bulstrode were telling the truth."

"Accidents will happen!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Bulstrode, do you deny that you came down here to go through the studies and raid the grub?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, of course I do! But you—"

"You came down to watch for the raider?"

"Of course we did," said Hazeldene. "You surely don't think, Wharton, that we came to pinch the grub, do you?"

"Yes, I did think so, and I shouldn't be surprised at your doing it, either, Vaseline," said Harry Wharton, in his direct way. "But I shouldn't have expected anything of the sort of Bulstrode. If you say that you came to look for the raider, and not to make a raid yourself, Bulstrode, I believe you."

"Well, that's what we came for."

"Then I'm satisfied."

Bulstrode and Hazeldene were allowed to rise. There was a savage sneer upon the face of the bully of the Remove.

"You may be satisfied," he exclaimed, "but I am not! What were you three fellows doing here? That's what I want to know!"

"I have already told you," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We were here watching for the raider, and when you came along we thought we had got him!"

"Yes, so you say."

"Does that mean that you doubt my word?" asked Harry, with flashing eyes.

"Oh, it's not a question of any fellow's word, but of evidence," said the bully of the Remove. "I'm not going to make it a personal matter, and let you crawl out of it that way, Wharton. It concerns the whole Form. You three fellows have been found here—"

"So have you two, for that matter."

"That's different."

"I don't see how you can make it out."

"Well, for one thing, our study has been robbed twice, and we should naturally look for the rotter who did it. You haven't lost anything. If you have been doing the raiding yourselves, that accounts for your study being left alone. I thought you were putting young Bunter up to it. Instead of that, you're on the job yourselves; or perhaps he's lost his nerve, and you've got no choice in the matter now. It's all pretty clear to me. You sneaked out of the dormitory to raid the studies—"

Harry's eyes blazed, and his clenched fist went up, but Bob Cherry pulled him back by the shoulder. Harry gave him an annoyed glance.

"Hold on, Wharton!"

"Let me alone!"

"Don't start rowing here in the middle of the night. You don't want to bring a master down on us, do you? Quelchy would give it to us pretty stiff if we woke him up—especially after this afternoon."

"Quite right," said Nugent. "You can make Bulstrode take his words back, or else give him a hiding to-morrow, Harry."

Bulstrode sneered.

"Good! We'll see what the Remove says about it to-morrow," he said.

"Come on, Hazeldene, no good waiting here in the cold, now. We've discovered the thieves, and if there's anything taken now we shall know jolly well who took it."

"I don't think it was Wharton really, Bulstrode," muttered Hazeldene, who was afflicted with a desire to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, a policy which frequently brought down upon him the wrath of both parties he tried to propitiate.

"Don't you?" exclaimed Bulstrode, turning upon him. "I suppose you are going to take his side against me, you young cad."

"Oh, no, I don't mean that!"

"Then shut up and come along!"

Bulstrode and Hazeldene made their way upstairs again. The chums of the Remove followed. The noise of the scuffle had fortunately not been heard. Harry Wharton's face was dark as he mounted the stairs. Bulstrode and Hazeldene entered the Remove dormitory, and Nugent and Bob Cherry were about to follow, when Harry Wharton stopped them.

"What is it, Harry?" Nugent asked. "Close the door. I want to speak, and I don't want those rotters to hear."

Bulstrode and Hazeldene were in the dormitory, going towards their beds. Frank Nugent pulled the door shut.

"You've forgotten about the sound

we heard just before Bulstrode came down," said Harry, in a low voice.

"By Jove, so we had!"

"I am convinced that Bulstrode told the truth, in one respect. He really came down to look for the raider, not to collar anything himself."

"Yes, I rather think that much was true."

"And I believe that whoever it was we heard coming down from the box-room ten minutes ago is the rotter we are looking for."

"He must have heard the row in the passage."

"Yes, and it may have scared him off, or he may have taken cover to wait till we're all quiet and in bed again."

"Very likely."

"That's why I came up with Bulstrode. We'll remain here for a bit, and listen on the stairs. If the chap is still in the house, he'll make some sign presently. You're game to see this out to a finish, aren't you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we'll see it through," said Harry Wharton determinedly.

"Good!"

"Don't make a sound. Come down the stairs quietly, and we'll listen for a sound in the passage. The place is so still that we're bound to hear him if he goes into any of the studies."

"Right you are!"

The chums of the Remove crept cautiously down the stairs again in their rubber shoes, making no sound.

On the second of the wide stairs they waited, and, in silence, listened intently for the faintest sound to break the stillness of the night.

It was long in coming!

From the night came at last the chime of the hour—or, rather, the half-hour—the peals indicating half-past eleven from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

The sound died away with many an echo amid the ancient buildings of Greyfriars, and silence, seemingly all the deeper, reigned again.

It was broken by a faint sound.

It might have been a rat scuttling behind the wainscot; but it made the chums of the Remove start and thrill as much as if it had been a sudden clap of thunder.

It was repeated, and then they had no further doubt. Someone was moving in the passage upon which the Remove studies opened!

They could see nothing, hear nothing, but that faint, scarcely audible sound of stealthy footsteps in the dark. But that was enough for them.

Harry Wharton nudged his companions, and, with beating hearts, the chums of the Remove crept forward from the stairs along the passage.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Face to Face.

Harry Wharton suddenly stopped, and caught Bob Cherry by the arm.

"Look!" he muttered.

"My hat!"

In the dense darkness of the passage there was a glimmer of light. It came from under the door of one of the studies; that belonging to Skinner and Russell. The door was closed, but the light from underneath showed that there was somebody in the room. The mysterious depredator had closed the door to keep the light concealed while he raided the cupboard.

Harry Wharton smiled grimly.

"We've got him now!" he whispered.

"Rather!" muttered Nugent.

"He's shut himself up in the room, and we've got him cornered. We've only got to take care that he doesn't get away, that's all!"

"Who on earth can it be?" muttered Bob Cherry. "My hat! I'm anxious to see him in the light!"

"So am I! Not a sound, you know. Come on!"

The three juniors stole down the passage towards Skinner's study, and stopped outside the closed door. There they listened intently for a sound from within.

The light continued to glimmer from under the door, and as it was steady and did not move, the chums guessed that the raider had lighted the gas, and that it was not light from a lantern.

This seemed to knock on the head the theory that the fellow might be a stranger to Greyfriars. He must have known his way about pretty well to explore the rambling interior of Greyfriars without a light.

Sounds came from within the study; faint sounds, but clear enough to indicate the occupation of the unknown individual within. He was evidently removing articles from the cupboard, and the click of crockery and the sound of a falling fork were not to be mistaken.

The chums of the Remove hesitated a second or two. Now that they were on the spot, almost face to face with the mysterious raider, they felt a strange thrill at their hearts.

There was so much that was mysterious, inexplicable, about the whole affair. If the raider were a Greyfriars fellow, what had he been up in the box-room for before the raid? There was absolutely no explanation of that. If he were not a Greyfriars fellow, how did he know his way about the school so well? Yet, if he were an outsider, how came he to content himself with merely taking articles of food, when valuables were to be had easily enough when once the entrance to Greyfriars was effected?

Harry Wharton set his teeth, and laid his hand upon the handle of the door. Even if the boys were called upon to face some hulking ruffian—perhaps an armed man—he was not afraid.

"Come on, chaps!"

The sounds within the study had suddenly ceased. Had the raider heard some faint sound, and taken the alarm?

It looked like it, for, at the very moment that Harry Wharton opened the door, the gas turned off, and the room was plunged in darkness.

The chums were about to rush in, but as a wall of darkness rose as it were before them, they halted and hesitated in the doorway.

For a moment there was a tense and thrilling silence.

They could see nothing, but they knew that the thing was there; whatever and whoever it was, there it was, within a few paces of them, hidden in the gloom—perhaps preparing to spring!

At the thought, they receded a little. Wharton groped in his pocket for matches. There was a sound of quick breathing in the darkness of the study.

"My—my hat," muttered Bob Cherry faintly; "look!"

A glimmer of white had made itself visible in the darkness. The ray of a star, falling through the study window, fell upon a white face—strangely, ter-

ribly white—with strangely sparkling eyes.

The three juniors started back; the sudden and terrible vision was a little too much for their nerves!

They started back into the passage; and the next moment there was a sound of running feet, and something brushed past them in the darkness, and disappeared.

"What was that?"

"Was that you, Cherry?"

"I? No, I—"

"I've got him," gasped Nugent, almost hysterically; "I've got hold of his arm! Lend a hand here!"

"Let go, you ass; it's my arm you've got hold of!"

"Your arm, Cherry—eh?"

"Yes; let me go!"

"Sorry! Have you got him, Wharton?"

"No; he brushed past me. I nearly had him, but Cherry got in the way. But we won't lose him!"

"I say, did you see his face?"

"Yes; it's got up with chalk."

"Oh, you think it's only chalk, then?"

"Of course I do! Did you think it was a ghost?"

"I—I—"

"Never mind talking now! After him! He's bound to make for the box-room, and we'll have him as sure as a gun!"

"Good! Come on!"

Harry Wharton led the way towards the box-room stairs at a sprinting pace. There was a sound of running feet and heavy breathing from the darkness ahead. The raider had abandoned his loot in Skinner's study, thinking only of escape. But the chums of the Remove were close upon the track, running as if they were on the cinder-path in keen competition. They knew every inch of the irregular passages of Greyfriars, and could venture to put on speed, even in dense darkness.

They heard a stumble ahead.

Perhaps the stranger knew the way less than they did—perhaps his haste had made him stumble. The sound of a heavy fall reached their ears.

"We've got him!" gasped Wharton.

"Come on!"

He dashed on in a spurt, and reached the foot of the box-room stairs. Without pausing a moment, he dashed up, and into the box-room. There, fearful of falling over the lumber in the darkness, he halted, and then felt his way towards the little door leading into the hidden passage. There was no sound in the room, save what he made himself, and the door, when he reached it, was closed. Harry Wharton felt a thrill of triumph.

The fugitive could not have got ahead of him so much as that. Undoubtedly he had shot ahead of the raider and cut off his escape.

"Have you got him?"

It was Bob Cherry's voice from the door of the box-room.

"Not yet!"

"Has he got through?"

"I am sure not. I should have heard him open the door. We've got ahead of him. Strike a light, and let's get the lantern started!"

There was a scratch and a flare. Bob Cherry picked his way towards Wharton with a lighted match between his finger and thumb. Harry opened the lantern and the match was applied. The hero of the Remove flashed the light to and fro. Nugent came in, and they hunted through the box-room. There was no trace of the fugitive.

"He's not here," said Nugent.  
"That's plain enough," Bob Cherry remarked. "The question is whether he got ahead and escaped through the passage before we arrived here?"

Harry Wharton shook his head decidedly.

"I'm certain that wasn't the case, Bob. We should have had him if he had kept on after that stumble; we were so close. I thought he had kept on and ran up here; but, as a matter of fact, he must have dodged away in the dark, and I passed him."

"Yes; I fancy that's the case."

"We're ahead of him," said Wharton grimly, "and we've got him shut up somewhere in Greyfriars. It's only a question of time, running him down now."

"He may go straight back to his dormitory," suggested Nugent. "As he seems to have left all his loot behind, he has nothing to come here for. I suppose his usual dodge was to come here and hide it?"

Harry shook his head again.  
"There's more in it than that, Nugent. If he could go back to a dormitory, why should he make for the box-room in the first place when he ran? How was it we heard him coming down from the box-room before the raid?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Well, I know—at least, I can guess."

"What's your idea, then?"

"He's not a Greyfriars fellow," said Wharton, with conviction. "He's somebody who's in hiding in the deserted wing, for some reason or other."

Nugent whistled.  
"I say, that sounds a little steep, Harry!"

"I don't care," said Wharton firmly. "It's my theory, and it's the only one that covers the ground, too. Some fellow is in hiding in the ruined wing, and, of course, he requires grub to live on, and so he comes out at night, or when the fellows are all in the classrooms, and raids the studies."

"But how do you account for his knowing his way about the school so well, then?"

"Perhaps he's an old Grey Friar himself," suggested Bob Cherry. "An old boy would know the ins and outs as well as we do."

"Seems too steep for me," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

"Have you any other theory to offer, then?" asked Harry.

"Oh, no! I don't undertake to explain it. It's a giddy mystery; and it's a size too big for me to tackle," Nugent confessed.

"Well, I believe I've hit the right nail on the head, though I know I can't account for all the circumstances," said Wharton. "If I'm correct, we've only got to take care that he doesn't escape this way, and then we can run him down at our leisure."

"That's so. Quelch was going to have a fastening put on this door—"

"It hasn't been done yet; but there's a lock to the box-room door. We can lock it on the outside, and take away the key, and then the chap will be done when he comes up here."

"Ha, ha! That's good!"

The Removites crossed to the box-room door. Harry Wharton took the key out of the lock. As he did so there was a slight sound on the stairs. Harry sprang through the doorway, and flashed the light of the lantern upon the stairs. He was just in time to see a dim form disappear.

"What was it?"

"He was on the stairs," said Harry Wharton. "That's proof enough. But he won't escape this way in a hurry, I imagine."

The Remove chums stepped outside the box room, and Harry reversed the key, and locked the door on the outside. Then he slipped the key into his pocket. The escape of the mysterious night-prowler was cut off now with a vengeance.

"And now to run him down," said Harry Wharton grimly.

And the chums of the Remove descended the stairs from the box-room to commence the hunt for the mysterious raider.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Run Down!

"Boom!" The first stroke was followed by eleven more. Midnight had rung out from the tower of Greyfriars, and still the three Removites were on the hunt. They had searched far and wide for the unknown raider, and had not seen or heard a sign or sound of him. He had vanished.

There was really nothing surprising in that, for Greyfriars was an ancient, rambling building, and there were a hundred nooks and crannies where a fugitive might hide, and only be discovered by luck.

In any of the studies, in the empty class-rooms downstairs, in the alcoves in the wide passages, in the deep window recesses—the chums of the Remove could not have searched every possible hiding-place in a week.

The fugitive might have slipped into any of the dormitories, and might be hiding under a bed; but it was impossible for the chums to risk disturbing the sleepers in their quest.

Harry Wharton stopped at last as the final stroke of midnight boomed out through the gloomy night.

"It's no go," said Bob Cherry; "and I'm getting jolly cold. What price a warm bed now?"

"Just what I was thinking," Nugent confessed. "But I don't want to give up if you fellows want to keep on. What do you say, Harry?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No good keeping on," he said. "I should have liked to run the fellow down, but there are a hundred places where he might have hidden himself. It's no go. And, anyway, we have discovered something. We know now that it can't be a Greyfriars chap. It's some fellow hiding in the ruined wing, though I'm blessed if I know what he can be doing it for, unless it's some tramp. And then it's curious his not stealing anything besides the grub. I suppose he'll get away by one of the lower windows. But, after to-night, I should hardly think he would have the nerve to visit Greyfriars again."

"That's pretty certain," assented Nugent. "We might capture him by waking the school and having a general hunt."

"We don't want to do that. I suppose he has no right to be here; but he isn't a thief, and we've given him an exciting time," grinned Harry. "Besides, he may have got out by a window on the ground floor already."

"Yes, that's possible."

"We've done about all we can do. Let's get back to bed."

This direction from their leader was gladly obeyed by the Remove chums. They were tired and cold, and now

that the excitement of the chase had died out there was nothing exhilarating in poking about in empty studies looking for a fugitive who, in all probability, wasn't there.

The chums returned to the Remove dormitory, and entered by the door nearest their own end of the room. There was a faint sound in the dormitory as they entered, as of someone moving, but it was followed by complete silence.

"Hallo! Still awake, Bulstrode?" said Harry Wharton cheerily.

There was no reply.

"You awake, Hazeldene?"

No answer came from the cad of the Remove.

"Sulking, I suppose," grinned Bob Cherry. "Somebody is awake, anyway. I heard someone move, I know that."

"It sounded like someone out of bed."

"Exactly."

"I thought it came from this end of the dormitory, though," Nugent remarked.

"Did you? So did I."

Harry Wharton gave a slight start.

"I say, is it possible—"

"What do you mean?"

"He can't be here, surely!" whispered Wharton.

"He! Who?" asked Nugent and Cherry together.

"The rotter we were hunting for."

The chums of the Remove gave a simultaneous jump at the suggestion.

"My only Panama hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "That would be a bit of a surprise! But we thought he might have nipped into one of the dormitories, didn't we?"

"Yes; and why not this as much as any other?"

"True—why not?"

Harry Wharton's eyes were gleaming now. The thought of being successful in the hunt, after all, and unearthing the mysterious raider was inspiring.

"Lock the doors, Cherry!" he whispered. "If the rotter is in here, we'll soon have him out of wherever he's skulking."

"Good!" grinned Bob Cherry.

To lock the doors of the Remove dormitory and extract the keys occupied less than a minute. Meanwhile, Nugent lighted the gas. Several fellows, awakened by the light, looked up, blinking, from their pillows, and demanded to know what the matter was. Bulstrode sat up in bed and growled.

"What on earth are you fellows up to?" he demanded. "Aren't you gone back to bed yet?"

"We look as if we haven't, don't we?" Bob Cherry remarked cheerfully.

"Turn that light out!"

"All in good time."

"How do you think I can go to sleep with that light glaring in my eyes?" howled the bully of the Remove.

"Haven't thought about the matter at all."

"I'll jolly soon make—"

"Oh, shut up, Bulstrode!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "We've been hunting for the raider, and we have an idea that he may be hiding in this dormitory."

"They are," sneered Bulstrode, "all three of them, and I could tell you their names."

"Oh, shut up! If any of you fellows feel inclined to join in the hunt, you can get up and lend a hand."

"By Jove, rather!" exclaimed Skinner, tumbling out of bed at once.

Russell and Morgan and several others followed his example.

"Locked the doors all right, Bob?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! Now let's hunt for the rotter!"

The Removites joined joyfully in the search. There were enough of them to eat the intruder, if he were there, whomsoever he might be. No sound had been heard since the first alarm; but Harry Wharton was almost convinced that the fugitive was indeed in the dormitory, crouching under one of the beds. If he were, capture was only a matter of a few minutes, for there was no escape from the room.

The Removites went along the dormitory, each of them peeping under the beds, which formed the only likely places of concealment in the lofty, barely-furnished apartment.

Harry Wharton went to his own bed, and stooped and lifted the coverlet. He jumped up again with a startled exclamation.

In spite of his feeling that the fugitive was near, he was startled to see the dim outlines of a crouching form under the bed. Bob Cherry looked across at him.

"Seen anything of him, Harry?"

"Yes."

"What?"

There was a general exclamation and a crowding towards Wharton. Harry's face was pale with excitement now.

"Is he under your bed, Harry?"

"Someone is."

"My hat!"

Even Bulstrode was out of bed now, as excited as the rest. He joined the crowd, with Hazeldene. Billy Bunter, as excited as anybody, was feeling wildly about for his spectacles. The whole Remove came crowding round Wharton's bed, and the ring of lads was five or six deep. There was no hope of escape now for the mysterious raider of the Greyfriars studies. Harry Wharton stooped again, and threw back the coverlet.

"Come out!"

There was a gasp under the bed.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### An Amazing Revelation.

"Come out!" howled the Greyfriars Remove as one boy. Another gasp under the bed, a sound of hurried breathing. The sound of a shifting body. But the concealed fugitive did not come out.

"Come out!"

"Reach under and lug him out!" said Bulstrode.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"He may have a knife!"

"Pooh! It's not a burglar."

"It's not a Greyfriars chap!" said Bob Cherry quickly. "We don't know who it may be. Don't reach under till we do know."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton.

"Bring me a poker from the grate, Bunter. I'll jolly soon shift him with that!"

"Certainly, Nugent."

Billy Bunter ran up with the poker. Harry Wharton took it from him, and bent down to lunge under the bed, but he gave the hidden fugitive a last warning first.

"Will you come out? I've got a poker here, and I'll give you a dig that you will remember if you don't show yourself!"

There was a gasp again, and a slim form rolled into view. It was that of a lad, evidently no older than Harry Wharton himself; but he was totally unrecognisable to the Removites. He was dressed in Etons, but so thickly caked with dust and grime that the original colour of the cloth was hardly discernible.

But his face was most startling of all. It was deathly white; but now that it was seen closely in a good light it could easily be seen that the white was caused by a thick coating of chalk.

This mysterious figure rolled out from under the bed, moved at last by the threat of the lunging poker. The Removites stared at him in blank amazement. He picked himself up nimbly, and stood in the midst of a circle of wondering faces, blinking in the light.

"Who are you?"

A dozen voices shouted out the question. The stranger blinked dazedly round at the Remove.

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Look at his hands!"

There was a shout of astonishment from the Greyfriars Remove.

The stranger hastily thrust his hands out of sight, but it was too late. They had been seen. And those hands were seen to be of a dark olive colour, and were evidently not those of an English boy.

"He's a nigger."

"Or a Hindu."

Hindu! The word furnished the clue.

"My only hat," roared Bob Cherry,

"it's Hurree Singh!"

"Hurree Singh!"

The name was exclaimed far and wide. Hurree Singh—the Hindu nabob, who had been in the Greyfriars Remove, and who had come to the school with the foreign pupils, and had left with them, and had not been seen since, although he had been often thought and spoken of by the chums of the Remove.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

The raider of the Greyfriars studies blinked and grinned.

The grin had a strange effect on his curiously whitened face.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent seized hold of him in a twinkling, and gave him a terrific shaking.

"You young ass!"

"You silly young monkey!"

"You rank fraud!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur gasped for breath.

"Have the kindness to be less violent in your greetings!" he gasped.

"You shake the totality of the breathfulness from my respected carcass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If the Remove had any doubts, the hearing of Hurree Singh's beautiful variety of the English tongue would have removed them.

There was only one person in the wide world—at least, as far as their experience went—who could speak that kind of English; and that person was Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry released the nabob at last. They had relieved their feelings a little, and shaken most of the breath out of him.

"Hurree Singh! And what is the meaning of this little jape?" demanded Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by leading us this dance?"

The nabob grinned.

"My heart had the hungerfulness for the respected school where I was happy in the attachfulness of my chums," he said.

"Have you run away from the other place?"

"I never went there, my worthy chum."

"You—you never went there?"

The Removites stared at the nabob in astonishment. Hurree Singh sat down on the edge of Harry Wharton's bed and laughed.

"No. The respected establishment of the admired Herr Rosenblum has not the distinguished honour of sheltering my noble person."

"But you left Greyfriars with all the foreign fellows, and we saw you off at the station, when you gave me that diamond as a farewell gift," said Harry Wharton, looking puzzled.

"That is trueful, but I left the train at the next station."

"My hat! And then—"

"I took the nextful train back."

"Of all the nerve—"

"I lingered about the vicination of the school till after dark, and then I sneaked in quietly," grinned the nabob. "Nugent had shown me over the ruined wing, and I knew just where to hide."

"You young bounder! But what was your little game? 'Do you mean to say that you've been in hiding ever since the foreign chaps left Greyfriars?'"

"That is the exactfulness of the case."

"But—but what was the game?"

"I did not wish to quit the schoolful dwelling where I made the chumfulness with my respected friends."

"And we didn't want you to go, either, old chap; but you can't stay without permission. You couldn't hang out in the ruined wing for ever."

"I did not think much about that. I thought that in time I might find a way of staying. I wrote to my guardian in London to tell him I wanted to stay, and that I would not leave Greyfriars of my own free willfulness."

"Ha, ha! And so it was you who raided the studies?"

The nabob grinned gleefully.

"I had to have the foodful supply for the bodily wants," he explained.

"I took the grubful supplies from the honourable studies, and a spirit-lamp from one place, and a kettle from another, and other useful articles from otherful places, and I have been rather exceedingly comfy in the ruined wing."

"You might have broken your neck in some of the pitfalls there."

"The breakfulness would be due to the carelessness, and my carefulness has been terrific," said the nabob. "I was inclined many frequent times to confide my secret to my chumful friends—"

"Why didn't you, you ass?" asked Nugent. "We'd have stood by you and helped you out, instead of chasing you up and down Greyfriars like a giddy burglar."

The nabob chuckled.

"Was it you who were chasing me this night, my worthy chums? Of course, my knowfulness was limited, and I did not recognise you in the darkful gloom. But I never let on to you, as you express it in English, because I thought you might be questioned as to whether you knew of anyone who was in hiding, and raiding the grubful supplies in the studies. You would then have been placed in the situation of terrific difficulty."

Harry Wharton nodded.

Hurree Singh had acted in a thoughtful and considerate manner in keeping the secret of his presence in Greyfriars from the chums of the Remove.

If they had known they could and would have helped him, but their knowledge would have placed them in a very awkward position had questions been asked.

"You were right, Hurree."

"Yes, I think I was correctful in keeping the secret," said the nabob. "If I had shown any want of confidence in my chums the apologise would be terrific. But that was not the sweet reasonableness of the matter at all. As your poet Shakespeare says in his beautiful poem, 'The Absent-Minded Beggar,' 'I must be cruel only to be kind.'"

"Ha, ha! That's in 'Hamlet'!"

"Excuse me, I think I can say with confidence that it is in the poem I have named," said the nabob, gently but firmly. "I studied the English poets under my master in the Bengal College before coming to this respected country, and I have a terrific acquaintance with the great works of Poet Shakespeare."

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind Poet Shakespeare now. What have you got that chalk daubed all over your beautiful complexion for?"

"That was in case I should be seen, and then the recognisableness would not be so easy," explained Hurree Singh. "Had anyone spotted a dark face like mine at any moment, the whole cat would have been out of the bagfulness, as your English proverb says."

"Good old English proverb!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"So I made my face whiteful with the chalk!" grinned Hurree Singh. "I have once or twice been seen, but I think confidentially that no one has recognised a Nabob of Bhanipur under this disguisefulness."

"You're right there," said Wharton. "I shouldn't have known you from Adam, even now, if I hadn't seen your hands and heard your voice. But, I say, what are you going to do now. You can't go back to the ruined wing."

"Why not?" said Hurree Singh. "If all the persons here will keep the strict mumfulness which reveals the wise head, there will be no harm done by the little adventures and the chasefulness of the night."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm afraid it's asking too much of the Remove," he said. "Somebody would be bound to talk, and this affair would get out—"

"It is out already!" grinned Bulstrode. "Hark!"

There was a sharp rap at the door of the dormitory. The juniors looked at one another in dismay. They knew the rap of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Return of Hurree Singh.

"Open this door immediately!"

"Turn out the light!" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Back to bed; buck up!" exclaimed Nugent.

"No good," said Harry Wharton quietly. "He's seen the light under the door; he knows the door's locked, and he's heard our voices. The game's up!"

Hurree Singh's chalky face wore a worried look.

"Do you think the masterful sahib has heard my talkfulness?" he whispered.

"I expect so."

"Then the gamefulness is up for me."

"Looks like it. But he may not have heard. Pop under the bed again, and we'll see if we can stick out."

"The wheeze is good."

And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh disappeared under Harry Wharton's bed. Then next moment Bob Cherry unlocked the door, and the master of the Remove made his appearance. Mr. Quelch was looking decidedly angry.

"Ha! So I find you all out of your beds!" he exclaimed, glancing round. "I expected as much."

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"Do not answer me in that impertinent manner, Cherry."

"No, sir."

"Cherry, you will take fifty lines."

This time Bob thought it better not to answer at all. Mr. Quelch shook his head warningly at him, and turned to Harry Wharton.

"The punishment of to-day seems to have had no effect upon you, Wharton. I find the whole Form out of bed at past midnight, and I am not surprised to find you dressed. Whose voice was it I heard just before I knocked at the door?"

"Mine, perhaps, sir."

"It was not yours. It was a voice I should have been certain belonged to a boy who was lately at this school, if it were possible that he could still be here. Is it within the bounds of possibility that the Indian youth, Hurree Singh, has been smuggled into the school in any way?"

The Removites were silent.

Mr. Quelch looked round him and then fixed his eyes upon Harry's face again. The strange suspicion in his mind had become a certainty now.

"Is Hurree Singh here, Wharton?"

Harry did not speak.

But it was not necessary, for Hurree Singh saved him from the difficult situation by crawling out from under the bed.

Mr. Quelch gazed at the Indian lad in blank amazement.

"Who—who is that? What does this absurd masquerade mean?"

"If you please, worthy instructor sahib—"

"Hurree Singh!"

"I have the honourable pleasure of presenting my excellent respects to you, sahib," said the nabob, with his politest bow.

"How—how—what—how do you come here?"

"I came in by the door, sir."

"How is it you are in Greyfriars at all?"

"I had too great regretfulness at leaving the school where I happily dwelt in the respected study of my chums, sahib. I returned and hid in the ruined wing, and the whitefulness on my face is of a disguiseful nature."

"I—I really— H'm! Wash your face, Hurree Singh, and get into your bed. It is vacant here. You—you— But I cannot deal with the matter now. I shall take you before the Head in the morning. Boys, go to bed immediately!"

The Remove quietly obeyed. Mr. Quelch put out the light and retired, the most amazed man in Greyfriars. The voice of Hurree Singh was heard after the door closed.

"All is up now, my worthy chums. The upfulness is terrific. I fear that the doctor sahib will send me forthwithfully away."

"We'll all intercede for you," said Bob Cherry.

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We'll go in a body to the Head, and ask him to keep Hurree Singh at Greyfriars."

"That is a ripping idea!" said Nugent. "We'll make a Form matter of it."

"I thank you from the base of my heart, my respectable chums!" exclaimed Hurree Singh gratefully. "As your Poet Shakespeare says, 'how sharper than a serpent-tooth it is to have a thankful child.' Good-night! The chasefulness has fatigued my honourable carcase."

"Good-night, Inky!"

And slumber at last reigned in the Remove dormitory.

None of the Removites woke till rising-bell was clanging on the fresh morning air, and then it seemed like a dream to the chums to see the cheerful olive face of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looking at them from the bedclothes.

"The topfulness of the giddy morning to you, my worthy chums!" exclaimed the nabob cheerily. "Can anybody lend me a suit of clothes? My own are in a condition of extremely terrific dustfulness."

"You're about my size," said Nugent. "I'll manage it. I hope they'll let you stay, Inky. It does me good to see your twopence-coloured chivvy here."

"And I am glad to behold the features of my respectable chum, though as features they are not much to gaze at," said the nabob. "You English have a proverb that 'association makes one satisfied with anything,' have you not?"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's one for Inky!" said Bob Cherry. "It's a pleasure to hear him chipping again. If the Head doesn't let him stay with us, we'll get up a mutiny in the Remove."

The Removites went down to breakfast, and Hurree Singh rather nervously took his place at the Form table with the rest. There were wide-eyed stares from the other tables at the sight of the Nabob of Bhanipur in his old place with the Remove. As the boys left the dining-room after breakfast, Mr. Quelch made a sign to the

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nabob, who approached him meekly enough.

"You will go to the doctor's study immediately after prayers, Hurree Singh."

"Certainly, sir! I hope——"

"You may go!"

Mr. Quelch walked away, and bent his steps in the direction of the principal's quarters. Dr. Locke did not breakfast with the school, and the Remove-master found him in his study. The Head was looking rather worried over a letter he held in his hand.

"Ah, come in, Mr Quelch!" he exclaimed, with a nod to the master of the Remove. "I have had another letter from Herr Rosenblaum. He has not yet found the lad who left his party on the day the foreign boys left Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"You will remember my telling you, Mr. Quelch, that Herr Rosenblaum wrote to me the day after the boys left, to say that the Indian lad, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, had separated himself from the party en route to Beechwood and had disappeared, leaving absolutely no trace behind."

"I remember, sir."

"I was very much concerned, but I hoped that the lad had been found by this time. But I have a letter this morning to say that he is still missing, and the Herr expresses a most curious suspicion."

"Indeed, sir! What is that?"

"He mentions that the Indian lad had grown very much attached to his friends at Greyfriars, and that he seemed very restless at leaving, and thinks he may have had some idea in his mind of returning here. He asks me if I will inquire if anything has been seen or heard of the boy in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch smiled again.

"Of course, such a thing is not likely——"

"On the contrary, sir, it is not only possible, but it has actually happened," said Mr. Quelch.

Dr. Locke stared at the Remove master.

"Eh? Have you heard anything, Mr. Quelch?"

"More than that, sir; I have seen him."

"You have seen the Indian lad—where?"

"Here, sir; at Greyfriars."

"You amaze me. Pray tell me all!"

Mr. Quelch explained. The Head listened in utter amazement. He ran his fingers through his scanty locks.

"Dear me! I am astounded! I never heard anything like this before. And the boy has been in hiding in the ruined wing for two or three days? Amazing!"

"Quite amazing, sir. I have ordered him to report himself to you after prayers, so that you can deal with him."

"H'm—h'm! He deserves a severe punishment. Yet—yet it is hard that the boy should have to leave the school if he has grown so deeply attached to the place and to his friends here, Mr. Quelch."

"I was thinking so myself, sir."

"It is really flattering to us, and to the school, to some extent; although, of course, it would be impossible to justify such an extraordinary proceeding."

"Exactly, sir! If it could be arranged with his guardian and Herr Rosenblaum, it might be possible for him to stay."

"I must think about that."

The Head glanced at the Remove when they went into morning prayers. The nabob was in his place in the Form, with his usually calm expression. After prayers, the Remove filed out, while the rest of the Form went off to the class-room, three of them remained with Hurree Singh. The three, needless to say, were the chums of Study No. 1.

"We're coming with you to see the Head," said Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry slapped the nabob on the back.

"We're going to back you up!" he exclaimed. "Come on!"

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "We'll explain to the Head."

"The gladfulness of my heart will be extreme if the doctor sahib gives the permissiveness for me to remain with my esteemed chums," said the nabob.

Harry Wharton knocked at the Head's door.

"Come in!" said the deep but kindly voice the boys knew so well—knew and respected and liked, in spite of occasional severity from their headmaster.

The chums of the Remove marched in. Dr. Locke raised his eyebrows a little at the sight of four Removites instead of one. He coughed slightly.

"H'm! I believe I sent only for Hurree Singh," he observed.

"That is correctful, sahib," said the nabob. "My chumful friends have come with all due respectfulness to explicate matters to your serene judgment. They——"

"My dear lad——"

"If you would allow Hurree Singh to remain, sir," said Harry Wharton respectfully, "he is sure his guardian would consent, and Herr Rosenblaum would not mind. We all want him with us, sir—all of us in the Remove."

"That's so, sir," said Bob Cherry and Nugent together.

The Head smiled a little.

"Very well," he said. "You have done wrong, Hurree Singh, but I can find excuses for you, and I am very pleased to observe this attachment among my boys. I shall not punish you——"

"The overflowingfulness of the esteemed gratitude——"

"Exactly! I will represent matters to the best of my ability to your guardian in London, and I hope the matter will end satisfactorily to all of us. That is all I can say at present. You may go back to the Form now."

"Thank you, sir!" said four voices in unison.

NEXT THURSDAY :

## HEROES ALL!

Another magnificent, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS

Order your "Dreadnought" in advance.

And the chums of the Remove left the Head's study pretty well satisfied in their minds. The Head's manner had been encouraging, and they had little doubt that the matter would, as Dr. Locke put it, be arranged satisfactorily for all concerned.

"I think that the esteemed Head will arrange the matter nicely," said Hurree Singh, as they walked towards the Remove class-room. "I shall be happy to be placed out of the suspendedness, however. The suspense is killing, as the dacoit remarked when he was suspended by the neck to a tree."

The chums entered the class-room, and Hurree Singh took his old place, next to Harry Wharton. Mr. Quelch treated him exactly as if he had never left the Remove at all, but the fellows kept casting glances towards him, as if to assure themselves that it was really the Nabob of Bhanipur who was sitting there, and not a ghost. They could not soon get used to the return of the nabob.

And after morning school Hurree Singh had something to say to the Remove, which made even Bulstrode glad that he was back again.

"During the hidefulness in the ruined wing, the spur of famine forced me to take the grubful supplies from the Remove studies," the nabob explained to a knot of fellows in the passage. "It was with great regretfulness that I raided the studies, but I had no alternative resourcefulness. I spared the study of my esteemed chums——"

"You didn't spare mine!" growled Bulstrode.

"But you are not my chum," said the nabob. "Nor do I esteem you, I——"

"Are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Certainly not. I am at peacefulness with all the world, and I do not seek to enter into disputefulness with any esteemed rotter present. What I was going to say, when you interrupted me rudely, was, that I raided many studies of the grubful supplies, and that now I should be pleased to make the compensation. I would not insult the esteemed Remove by offering to make the cash payfulness, but I should be gratified if all the sahibs whose grub was taken would come and feed with me in the tuckshop this afternoon, and call for whatever they like."

"Bravo!" was the general shout.

"And to make the thing complete, not only grubfully-raided sahibs, but all the rest of the esteemed Remove might honour me by their presence on the ludicrous occasion," said the nabob.

"Hurrah!"

There was no doubt of the heartiness of Hurree Singh's welcome back to Greyfriars, if he were allowed to stay. And that evening all doubt upon that point was set at rest by a communication from Dr. Locke. He had settled matters with Hurree Singh's guardian, an official at the India Office in London, and with Herr Rosenblaum, and the nabob had full permission to remain at Greyfriars.

The news was received with loud cheers in Study No. 1, which were echoed in the junior common-room when the news was spread there. And so Hurree Jamset Ram Singh became once more a member of the Greyfriars Remove, and an inmate of Study No. 1—to share the future fortunes of the chums.

THE END.

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# The Merchant's Secret!

The Opening Chapters of Our Powerful New Serial Story, Introducing **SEXTON BLAKE**, The World-Famous Detective, **EZRA Q. MAITLAND**, and **BROADWAY KATE**.



The boat containing Merson and Smith, the two detectives of the C.I.D., glided out of the gloom, and strong hands seized Pedro and his unconscious burden.

H.M. Lewis

## THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

SEXTON BLAKE is notified by Fenlock Fawn, of the New York Police, that Count Franz von Stoltz, a German Secret Service agent, is leaving America for England. Knowing the German to be a master-criminal, Blake determines to keep him under strict watch and ward, and sends Tinker to keep the man under observation on his arrival at the docks. Tinker tracks his quarry to a house in Poplar, but is not sufficiently cautious, being caught and made a prisoner in the house. By a clever ruse he succeeds in acquainting his master of his whereabouts, and Blake appears on the scene in the nick

of time. Von Stoltz makes a frantic leap through the window, but beneath him is an open boat manned by two detectives. The count's herculean body hurtles straight for the frail craft.

(Read on from here.)

## Sexton Blake's Clue.

Thud!

Count Franz von Stoltz landed feet foremost in the centre of the boat, and the next second it had capsized, and the spy and the two Scotland Yard men were precipitated into the river.

From the window Sexton Blake saw

what had happened, and, taking a step backwards, he flung his hands in readiness to dive after his quarry.

The detective's lithe figure swooped downwards and cleft the dark waters with scarcely a splash; then, a moment later, his head was above the surface again, and he was shaking the water from his eyes.

The detective trod water and peered around him through the gloom. The two men from the Yard had swum to the overturned boat, and were clinging to it; but there was no sign of the spy upon the surface.

"Have you seen him since he went under, my men?" Sexton Blake asked,



as he swam to the boat and clung to it. "It was Von Stoltz—the master-spy of all! The man whom it is far more important to arrest than all the others who were in the house."

"I've seen nothing of him since he upset us, Mr. Blake," Detective-sergeant Smith answered. "Have you, Merson?"

"No," Merson replied. "There's a chance that he can't swim, and—"

"He can swim right enough," Sexton Blake interrupted grimly. "I happen to know that. Ah—look! There he goes—over there!"

The detective pointed to a spot some dozen yards away to the right, where, in the gloom, could be faintly discerned a bobbing head upon the surface of the river.

"Stay here, my men, and try to get the boat righted," Sexton Blake ordered quickly. "I am going after him!" He set his teeth hard. "He shall not escape if I can possibly avoid it!"

Using a powerful over-arm stroke, the detective struck off swiftly in pursuit of Von Stoltz, who, having swum for as long as possible beneath the surface, had just risen to take a fresh supply of air into his lungs.

The athletic figure of Sexton Blake seemed positively to fly through the water; and inch by inch, foot by foot, he gained upon the German. Three yards, two yards, separated pursuer and pursued; then Von Stoltz glanced furtively over his shoulder and muttered a guttural curse beneath his breath, as he saw the pale, set face of his enemy.

The master-spy's eyes blazed with hatred, and his face looked fiendish in the gloom—more fiendish because of

the blood that was trickling down it from a severe cut upon his forehead. He put on a burst of speed, but already he was growing terribly fatigued, as he was wearing his heavy overcoat, which he had been given no opportunity to fling off.

Von Stoltz slightly increased the distance between the detective and himself; then, treading water, he snatched a large clasp-knife from his pocket and opened the blade with his teeth.

Sexton Blake saw the action, and his jaw set harshly. He never hesitated for a moment, but swam straight for the man he was determined to arrest, who was still treading water and awaiting his approach.

"Perdition seize you, you meddling hound—take that!" Count von Stoltz lunged savagely at Sexton Blake's breast with the ugly-looking weapon, but in the very nick of time the detective gripped his wrist and turned the point of the blade; then the two men disappeared beneath the surface, locked in a life and death struggle.

After a few seconds they reappeared, still fighting tensely for the mastery. They were fairly evenly matched, for despite the slim build and habitual pallor of the famous detective of Baker Street, at all times he was in the pink of condition, and his muscles were as hard as steel.

Again and again the German attempted to force home his weapon to his adversary's heart, but always Sexton Blake kept him at bay and retaliated time after time by dashing his free fist violently into his foe's heavy face.

A hail came from over the waters—a hail that caused Von Stoltz to re-

double his efforts to deal his arch-enemy a fatal blow and make his escape.

The Scotland Yard men had succeeded in righting the boat, and they were now pulling swiftly towards the spot at which the plucky Britisher and the member of the Kaiser's Secret Service were engaged in their desperate conflict.

"Mr. Blake! Hallo—hallo!" came the shout. "Where are you?"

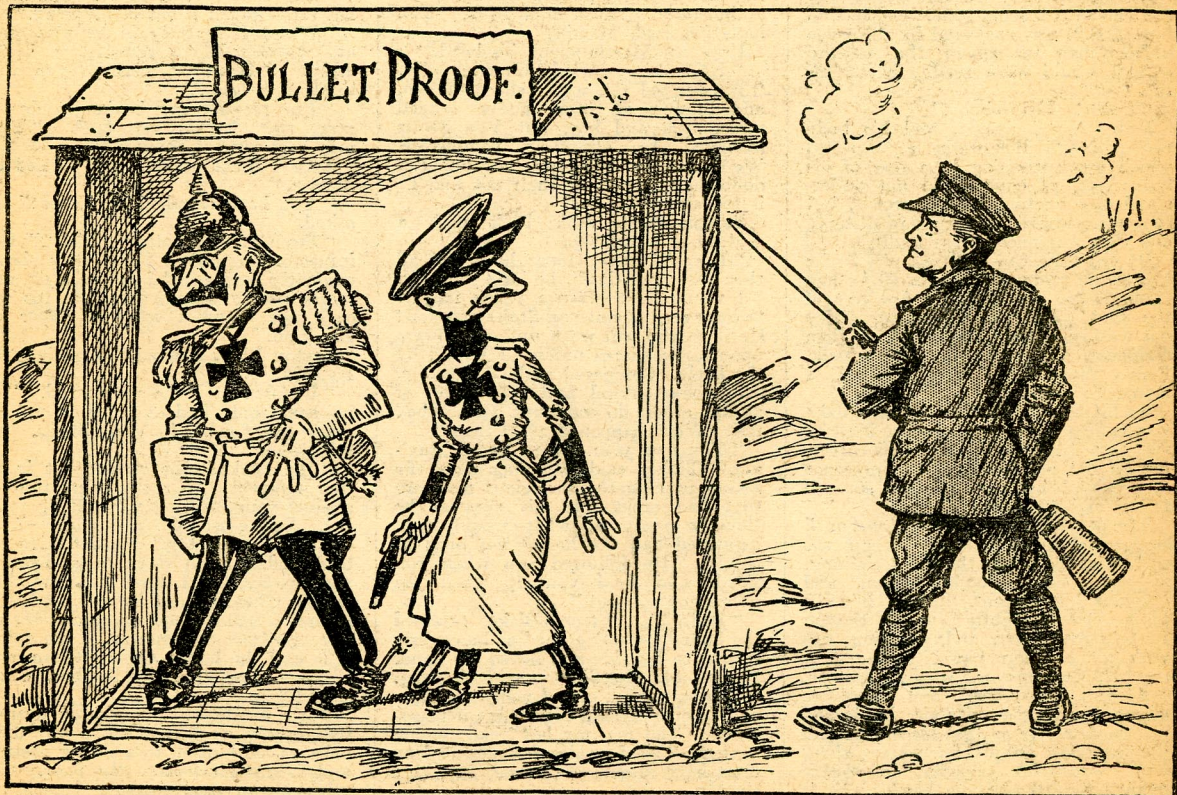
"Hallo!" the detective answered. "Help—help!"

Von Stoltz was seized by a frenzy of rage and fear, and he forced his opponent beneath the waters. As their two bodies went down, down into the black depths, the German showed the foul treachery of which he was capable. He suddenly bent his head and seized Sexton Blake's hand between his powerful teeth, to tear viciously at the flesh.

The detective gave an involuntary gasp of surprise and pain, and the waters rushed into his mouth and nostrils. His fingers momentarily relaxed their hold upon the spy's wrist, and the latter was quick to seize his opportunity.

He struck sharply downwards, and the blade of his knife penetrated Sexton Blake's shoulder; then, releasing his hold upon the weapon, Von Stoltz shot upwards to the surface and struck out towards the shore, at a spot some considerable distance from the house whence he had taken his daring leap.

As the spy disappeared into the gloom the inert form of the detective rose for a moment to the surface. Sexton Blake beat feebly with his hands to keep himself afloat; then a great



SONGS FOR THE KAISER: "I Wouldn't Leave My Little Wooden Hut For You!"

darkness descended upon him, and once more he sank into the depths.

A few minutes later Count Franz von Stoltz drew himself up on to a deserted wharf, and crept furtively away. He fully believed that he had accounted for the one man in the whole of Europe whom he seriously feared, and he did not know that a great yellow body had dived from the window of his rendezvous after himself and Blake.

Pedro, the detective's faithful four-footed ally, had grown alarmed when he had failed to arouse his young master by whining and repeatedly licking his face, and into his doggy brain had entered a desire to call Sexton Blake's attention to the condition of the lad.

Accordingly, Pedro had bounded up the stairs, pausing upon his way to growl at the struggling men, over whom he had to leap.

The hound was just in time to see the form of his beloved master disappear through the wrecked window, and, loping forward, he stood for a few moments whining in perplexity, and peering down into the Thames below.

Pedro saw his master strike away from the boat to which the Scotland Yard detectives were clinging, and, crouching, the hound prepared to follow. He took the great dive with a grace no human being could have excelled, and disappeared beneath the waters.

When he came up, Pedro swam around searching for Blake. The hound had completely lost sight of his master in the gloom, and it was almost five minutes before he seemed to realise by instinct the direction the detective had taken.

He had scarcely decided which way to swim than a shout came from behind him, and it was answered by the voice of the man for whom the faithful animal would have readily given his life.

"Hallo! Help—help!"

Pedro bayed deeply, and his body shot through the water at a speed which was surprising in a dog of his bulk. He, of course, did not understand the meaning of the words, but they were uttered in a tone of distress, and that was enough for Pedro.

By the time Count Franz von Stoltz had swum away and Sexton Blake had risen, Pedro was within a few feet of the spot. He saw his master strike out weakly to keep himself afloat, then disappear, and as Sexton Blake sank, Pedro dived after him without a moment's hesitation.

As his senses left him, Sexton Blake was telling himself in a dim kind of way that this was the end of his career, for he did not know of the presence of his dumb but none the less staunch friend and assistant.

The detective sank like a stone until he reached about half-way beneath the surface of the river; then Pedro's long, sinuous body swooped down and checked his descent. The hound's teeth closed tightly upon Sexton Blake's coat-collar, and, striking out with all his four paws, the gallant creature shot upwards with his master.

As the dog's head and shoulders emerged into the open-air, he jerked up the detective so that his mouth and nostrils were out of the water; then, with wonderful sagacity, he slowly swam in such a position that his master could not drown.

Help, too, was at hand. The boat containing Merson and Smith, the two

detectives of the C.I.D., glided out of the gloom, and strong hands seized Pedro and his unconscious burden, whilst friendly voices coaxingly voiced the great dog's name.

When Sexton Blake once again opened his eyes to life, he found himself lying upon a couch in the meeting-room of the spies whose rendezvous had been raided. Over him was bending Tinker and a kindly-faced man, whom the detective did not know, whilst Inspector Martin and Private O'Leary were seated near at hand, with Pedro squatting at their feet.

"I think you'll do," the stranger said. "You've a nasty wound in your shoulder, but you've a splendid constitution, sir, and with care you soon ought to be well again."

For a moment the detective looked up dazedly into the man's face, then slowly memory returned to him. He glanced at Tinker. The lad had practically shaken off the effects of the drug that had been administered to him, for quite two hours had elapsed since the raid.

"You are a medical man?" Sexton Blake asked of the stranger, and his voice was so weak that it startled himself.

"Yes," the other agreed, rearranging the cushion which had served the detective as a pillow. I am the police-surgeon from the East India Dock Road Station. I was here when you were brought in from the river, as my presence was needed for one of our poor fellows who received a bullet through his lungs."

"Von Stoltz!" Sexton Blake exclaimed, rising upon his elbow, despite the fact that the doctor attempted to authoritatively push him back. "You have got him, Martin?"

Inspector Martin shook his head. "No," he growled discontentedly. "We bagged the whole shoot of 'em, and they've all been safely lodged under lock and key, but Von Stoltz managed to disappear completely. We've got our drag-net out, but I'm doubtful whether we shall not find he is too clever for us."

Sexton Blake sank back with a gesture of weariness.

"I would have sooner have lost all the lesser villains," he said bitterly. "I would have given a year's income to have seen Count von Stoltz arrested! He it is who will work unlimited harm upon these shores unless he is laid by the heels. Compared with Von Stoltz, the arch-soundrel and master-spy of all, the others do not count. He stabbed me! What happened after that?"

"You owe your life to Pedro, gov'nor," Tinker said, stooping over the hound to hide the suspicious moisture that had crept into his eyes as he thought again of what would have happened had the hound not been at hand. "He followed you when you dived, and held you up until the police got you out."

"Pedro!" Sexton Blake caressed the hound's massive head as he eagerly sprang to his side and licked his hand. "Good old dog!" he said huskily. "You've got me out of many a scrape, and I believe you'd die for me if necessary. Tell me, my lad"—addressing Tinker—"what really happened? You must have disobeyed orders," he added sternly.

Tinker hung his head and looked confused.

"You'd better tell me everything."

his master said, his voice softening. "How did Von Stoltz get you into his power?"

"I fairly asked for trouble, sir," Tinker admitted contritely. "I followed him here and broke in."

And then the lad told Sexton Blake of the conversation he had overheard, related how he had been suddenly attacked by the dwarf, how he had subsequently overpowered him and flung the message through the window, and brought his story up to the point when he had been drugged and had remembered no more.

"I will not comment upon your doings further than by saying that a really good assistant never ruthlessly disregards his superior's instructions, Tinker," Sexton Blake said. "Apart from looking a trifle pale, I do not think you have come to much harm from your experience, so we will let the matter drop. You heard the spies mentioning a Scottish firm who were in financial difficulties?"

"Yes, gov'nor. Count von Stoltz proposed to give them the largest portion of the order for the motor-lorries I told you of," the lad stated.

"The name of the firm did not transpire?"

"I did not hear it, sir."

"Humph! There is some deep game going on," Sexton Blake remarked. "But, by Jove, Von Stoltz shall not have it all his own way, if I have to work night and day to foil his plans! What of the agent Von Stoltz mentioned in Newcastle?"

"I did hear his name, sir, but—"

"Well, lad?" his master prompted. "To tell you the truth, sir," the young detective answered slowly, "the exciting time I've lived through since has fairly taken it out of my head."

"Which is scarcely to be wondered at," Sexton Blake retorted a trifle dryly. "However, perhaps you will think of it later."

"I'm racking my brains to do so now, sir," Tinker answered. "You may rely upon it coming to me soon."

Sexton Blake nodded, and turned to Martin.

"You have searched the house?" he asked.

"From top to bottom, Blake," the inspector agreed; "but they have evidently been careful not to keep any incriminating documents here, for we have not found a scrap of paper of any kind."

Sexton Blake stroked thoughtfully at his chin.

"Unfortunate," he murmured. "If we could only find one clue to put us upon the track of Von Stoltz, we might—"

"Mr. Blake," the medico cut in at that moment, "I really must protest against your exciting yourself by talking. You must take rest and—"

"My dear doctor," the detective interrupted, "I am sorry to go against your wishes, but I must point out that even my health must be sacrificed if it means averting some grave disaster or disasters from my country. I am going to search the house again. There may be some small clue that has been overlooked."

"It's madness!" the doctor gasped indignantly, as Sexton Blake with difficulty raised himself to a sitting posture and swung his feet to the floor. "It might mean your death."

The detective shrugged.

"I shall have to risk it," he said coolly. "Give me your arm, Tinker."

The lad obeyed; then, heedless of the protests of both Martin and the police-surgeon, the famous logician of Baker Street commenced a systematic inspection of the premises.

His operations lasted over two hours, but it was not until he arrived at one of the upper rooms which was crudely furnished as a bedroom that Sexton Blake found any success. Almost the moment he entered this apartment, however, his sharp eyes caught sight of a few torn scraps of paper lying in the grate.

So eagerly did the detective dart across the room and snatch up the fragments that his wounded shoulder gave him a nasty twinge, but he heeded it not, and, carrying the pieces of paper to a small table standing beneath the gas-jet, he closely examined them.

"Written in English, but the words were penned by a German," he murmured, half to himself. "Let us see if we can piece them together in their original order."

He seated himself in a chair and began to arrange and rearrange the scraps of paper upon the table before him, whilst Tinker and Inspector Martin looked on interestedly.

At last the detective succeeded in placing the fragments of paper so that the message written upon them—they now formed a whole sheet of common notepaper—was plainly readable.

"Dated from Newcastle—no actual address given," Blake said musingly. "The message reads: 'I have booked up for the rooms for our chief at the hotel you mentioned. They will be ready for him to occupy when he arrives upon the twenty-fourth.' That is all, except that it is signed by simply the surname of 'Speyers.' Why, what is the matter, my lad?"

Sexton Blake had swung round upon Tinker, who had uttered a sharp exclamation.

"It's the name, gov'nor!" the young detective cried excitedly. "It's the name of the count's agent at Newcastle!"

"You are sure of that?" the detective asked sharply.

"Positive, gov'nor!" Tinker averred with conviction. "That was the name he mentioned, I'm sure."

"Then we must start for Newcastle at the earliest possible moment," Sexton Blake stated coolly. "It may prove the missing link we are seeking!"

"But your wound, Blake?" Martin asked. "You will not be able to travel with it, surely, and—"

"As I cannot possibly travel without it, I am really afraid there is no help for it, my friend," the detective answered, with an impatient gesture.

"True, in view of what has happened, Von Stoltz may not have risked journeying to this man, but I think it more than likely that he has urgent business with him, and will do so sooner or later. Therefore, to get upon the track of this Speyers may be a most important move. I am going downstairs now again to tender my thanks to Private O'Leary for the great service he has rendered Tinker and myself, and after that, if there is a train, we shall start this very night—or rather morning, for it must be long past midnight!"

"Then I shall come with you," Martin stated aggressively. "I'm not having you fooling around with desperate alien criminals alone in your condition."

"Alone!" Tinker gasped indig-

nantly. "Here, what about me? Aren't I capable of looking after the gov'nor?"

But Inspector Martin only sniffed superciliously, and regarded the lad in well-feigned amusement.

"You don't appear to be able to take care of yourself yet, my lad," he said pompously; and secretly he patted himself upon the shoulder, for as Tinker reddened with suppressed rage, the official knew that he had got a little of his own back at last.

### Ezra Q. Maitland Makes Himself Known to an Old Acquaintance—Plot and Counter-Plot.

A dull, foggy afternoon in the city of Newcastle-on-Tyne; a day symbolic of the latter end of November; a day that caused the keenest of businessmen to shirk their outdoor duties and endeavour to find occupation within their cosy offices, for without it was gloomy, cold and forbidding, the very atmosphere seeming to cast a feeling of depression over man and beast.

Down Grange Street the traffic crawled along at little more than a walking-pace, and constantly upon the mist-laden air fell the warning hoot of taxis and other motor-conveyances, and the blatant clanging of the bells upon the trams, whilst the pedestrians who were unfortunate enough to be abroad picked their steps warily and jostled each other in passing.

A tall, broad-shouldered man came hurrying through the blanket-like fog, and paused as he drew abreast of a lamp-post, to peer from side to side with the manner of one who was not perfectly sure of his bearings.

"Paper, sir?" A ragged urchin with a bundle of newspapers under his arm detached himself from the lamp-post and thrust a copy of the "Evening Echo" beneath the tall man's nose. "Paper, sir? British cruiser torpedoed by a German submarine! Official!"

"Oh, go to blazes!" the other snarled, in anything but an amiable tone; and, thrusting the urchin aside, he strode off up the street.

"Well, I'm blowed!" the lad gasped indignantly. "He might answer a cove civil! Garn!" he shouted, making a trumpet of his unclean palm. "Yer dirty Germin spy!"

The tall man started slightly; then, with a sinister smile, he tilted his shoulders and passed on; and the angered newspaper-lad little thought how near his chance sally had come to the truth.

Soon after war had been declared between Great Britain and the domineering Power across the North Sea, Ezra Q. Maitland—the man was he—had acted as a paid spy for Germany, endeavouring to divert the gigantic sum of a million pounds sterling into the enemy's hands; but Sexton Blake had crossed his path, and Maitland had been foiled at the eleventh hour. Twice subsequently the master-criminal of America had renewed his acquaintance with the famous criminologist of Baker Street, and upon each occasion Sexton Blake had won, although the crook had, metaphorically speaking, succeeded in escaping justice by the skin of his teeth.

During their last great battle of wits, when Maitland had all but succeeded in getting clear away with a gigantic sum in Australian gold, intended for the relief of the unfortunate people of Belgium, the criminal had twice attempted the detective's life, and the

fact of having a charge of attempted murder hanging over his head, in addition to his other crimes, had caused him to deem it wise to lay low for a while, until a thing had happened that had induced him to once again become active; but more of this anon.

Maitland continued on down Grange Street until he came to a first-class hotel, known as Prince's. There was nothing furtive in his movements, for he was relying upon the excellence of the disguise that concealed his features.

He appeared to be an elderly gentleman of sixty to sixty-five. A grey wig covered his dark hair and neat side-boards, and a moustache of an iron-grey hue adorned his face, whilst his penetrating eyes were concealed by a pair of smoked spectacles, and his assumed complexion was sallow and deeply lined.

He had taken up his abode at Prince's Hotel early that morning, in company with his wife, Broadway Kate, signing the visitor's book as "Professor Carew and daughter." Maitland's trusted ally and confederate Wang had accompanied his master and mistress to Newcastle, but he had not been taken to the hotel. Such a proceeding was likely to arouse unusual attention, a thing that the criminal and his wife were most anxious to avoid, so the Chinaman had found lodgings in a poorer part of the town.

Maitland mounted the steps of the hotel, the hall-porter respectfully touching his cap. The criminal acknowledged the man's salute, and made his way to the first floor, where he and Kate had engaged a suite of rooms.

Broadway Kate looked up from the novel she had been perusing as her husband entered.

She was attired in a costly-loosely-fitting tea-gown, which fell shepherly from her splendidly moulded shoulders, and her dainty feet were encased in a pair of embroidered slippers. Kate looked very different since she had participated in their last attempt at a coup. Whereas her hair had then been of a red-gold hue, it was now of a coppery-brown—a change that was quite easily accomplished by the clever American woman, for always her own dark hair was kept cropped short to her shapely head, in order that she might quickly assume masculine attire, and whenever she appeared as a woman she wore a cleverly-made wig.

When one looked upon her, one could scarcely help deploring the fact of her criminal failings, for to merely say that she was beautiful would be to give a most inadequate description of her charms. She was tall, graceful, and slenderly built. Her pale, creamy face was intensely womanly and tender in expression, and her scarlet mouth was exquisitely shaped, whilst her eyes were large and of a deep-sea blue, holding in their depths something as alluring as it was wistful and innocent. Even Sexton Blake, hardened criminologist though he was, had upon their first meeting found it difficult to believe that Broadway Kate could be capable of the criminal doings of which she was accused. The detective had quickly discovered, however, that Kate was almost as unscrupulous as her husband, merely drawing back at the gravest crime of all—murder.

"Well?" Kate asked laconically, as she carefully marked the place in her book, laid it upon one side, and lit a daintily scented cigarette.

"It is well," Maitland answered,

removing the smoked spectacles, after he had crossed to the door and turned the key in the lock. "It is our man. The supposed Dutchman we followed from London is none other than our old friend Count Franz von Stoltz, the German Secret Service agent, for whom we tried to work the Muratana business. I felt almost certain of it so soon as we fell across him in Soho. He was clever to assume the role of a Dutchman, for his accent is too pronounced to allow him to pass as a Britisher."

"Gee!" Kate murmured, her eyes narrowing. "What do you think you can touch him for?"

Maitland's face set harshly. "A cool thousand, I guess," he said in a hard voice. "Do you remember the fate of the spy Lady?"

"He was executed at the Tower of London."

"Precisely!" Maitland snapped, as he lit one of his strong Indian cigars with the care of an expert in such matters. "And Von Stoltz will be another so-called hero to die for Germany unless he shells out. Guess we're right-down hard-up and our need for money is desperate!"

"How do you propose to approach him?" Broadway Kate suggested. "You forget, I reckon, that we're wanted rather badly, too."

"My dear girl, I forget nothing!" her husband retorted; almost coldly, for at all times he was full of innate conceit. "He will call here in a quarter of an hour from now."

The woman's elegantly pencilled brows went up in amazement.

"Call here?" she gasped. "Why?"

"Because I have commanded him to do so!" Ezra Q. Maitland replied coolly. "Guess I made quite certain that Hans Meppel was another name for Von Stoltz, by examining his writing in the visitor's book at his hotel, then I left for him a carefully worded note to be delivered to him when I had gone. I simply put 'Do you remember a house in Sixty-Seventh Street, New York, and the plans you made there? The writer would advise you to call upon him at Prince's Hotel at 6.30 to renew the acquaintance of himself and wife.' Then I added our names here."

Broadway Kate went suddenly pale. "You fool!" she cried, springing excitedly to her feet. "He will know that 'Professor Carew and his daughter' are, in reality, Ezra Quanton Maitland and wife! He will guess that you are after blackmailing him. What is to stop him giving information to the police and having us arrested?"

"Bah! Quit on it!" Maitland sneered. "Do you think I'm a doddering idiot? His own safety will prevent his doing any such thing! Guess Von Stoltz ain't lost his heart to the police, any more than we. He will come. Ah, hark! That is his footstep upon the stairs now, or I'm right-down mistaken!"

Broadway Kate's hands clenched so tightly that the nails bit into the flesh, and she stood like an animal at bay, her eyes dilated and anxious. There came a tap upon the panels of the door, and, adjusting his smoked glasses, Maitland crossed to it and unlocked it. A servant attached to the hotel stood without, a burly individual at his back.

"A Mr. Hans Meppel to see you, professor," the servant said deferentially.

"Ah, come in, Meppel—come in!" Maitland requested, in the high-pitched, querulous voice he had assumed with

his present disguise. "I have been expecting you."

The servant stepped aside, and after an almost imperceptible hesitation the man addressed entered the room, and Maitland closed and locked the door behind him.

The visitor was stout and florid of face, and certainly his figure was that of Count von Stoltz, although his attire was now quite different from that he had cultivated when Tinker had followed him in London, whilst his face was more deeply lined and his beard and moustache were tinged with grey.

A cynical smile curled the master-criminal's lips as he stood for a moment silently regarding his visitor.

"Say," he drawled at length, "the disguise ain't bad, but I guess it's a bit amateurish, my dear Von Stoltz."

The caller did not start, but his lips momentarily set in a thin, straight line, and his hand wandered to his hip.

"Guess I shouldn't try it, sonny!" Maitland murmured, diving his hand quickly into his jacket pocket. "I'm reckoned to be real smart with an 'iron.'"

"Pardon me, Mynheer," the supposed Dutchman protested, "but it ess a miss-take you make—yah! Mine name ess Meppel, nod—"

"Oh, don't fool!" Maitland exclaimed, suddenly leaping forward and snatching at the new-comer's beard, which came away in his hands. "Guess that's better, Von Stoltz. This tarnation thing made you look like a billy-goat, and didn't suit you now!"

The other staggered back, clutching at his naked chin, his lips drawn back from his teeth in an ugly snarl.

"Curse you, Maitland!" he hissed. "Himmel! What's your game? Why haf you here sent for me?"

Maitland laughed softly as he tossed the false beard on to the table.

"To talk business, I reckon," he drawled. "Sit down!"

"My time is precious."

"So is mine; so, as there's no need to introduce you to Kate, I suggest we come right to the point. Say, you owe me something over that Muratana business."

"Ach, it nonsense is!" Von Stoltz—it will be easier to call him by his correct name—answered angrily. "You vere to betray the whereabouts of the liner to the German cruisers so that my country might secure the million of money she had on board, but, donner und blitzen, like a fool, you failed!"

"Fool!" Maitland's fists clenched and he advanced so savagely upon the German that the latter hastily sprang from the chair in which he had seated himself and recoiled against the table. "Fool!" Maitland snarled. "Curse you, keep a civil tongue in your head! I failed because I was up against a fiend—the one man in Europe or elsewhere who has a brain equal to my own—Sexton Blake, the detective of Baker Street, London!"

The criminal's fingers clenched and unclenched as though he could feel the throat of his arch-enemy in their grasp, and behind the spectacles his eyes blazed like living coals.

"Bah!" he said, calming himself and shrugging his shoulders. "One day Sexton Blake will die at my hands; but we won't talk of him now. You can take it from me that by the time the whole of the Muratana job was over I wasn't a penny better off, and you've got to compensate me!"

"And if I refuse?"

"Then Heaven help you!" Maitland answered in a low voice. "You know the penalty for spying during wartime. Would you like to find yourself seated strapped to a chair in the rifle-range at the Tower of London, with a dozen soldiers drawn up a few paces away? The officer gives the order to 'Present!' and a dozen frowning rifles are pointed at your breast—"

"Ach, himmel! Stop, you fiend!" Von Stoltz whispered hoarsely, his face going a dirty grey with fear, his fingers clawing at his collar as though he needed air. "You would not dare! Your own liberty would be jeopardised!"

Maitland snapped his fingers. "I think not!" he drawled, as he lit a fresh cigar from the stump of the one he had been smoking. "I should find a means of betraying you without danger to myself. But why fall out? A thousand pounds would be little to you, and doubtless you could make your Government stand the racket. Say, have a cigar and think it over. I reckon I ain't in a hurry for your decision!"

Count Franz von Stoltz waved the profured cigar-case away and lapsed into thoughtful silence, his heavy chin resting upon his palm. Presently the spidery lines of thought that had puckered his brow disappeared and he looked up quickly.

"Supposing," he said, "I agree to gif you the thousand pounds you ask, would you be willing to help me in the work I wish to do for my country?"

Maitland flicked the ash from his cigar and studied its glowing end to see that it was burning evenly.

"You can bet on it—if there's money in the circus!" he said, after a pause.

"Ezra!" Broadway Kate crossed to his side and laid her delicate hand upon his sleeve. "Do not enter into this—whatever it may prove to be!" she pleaded wistfully. "Remember, the penalty for treason and—"

"Oh, mind your own business!" her husband snapped irritably. "We're too 'down and out' to shirk a little risk. What is the lay, Von Stoltz?"

The German drew his chair a little closer to the criminal and leant forward almost eagerly, sinking his voice as he commenced speaking.

"It this is," he explained. "Germany is very short of iron and steel—so short that it is impossible for her to build the number of motor-lorries and oder conveyances she requires to replace the wastage caused by the war. Do you follow me?"

Maitland nodded.

"Go on," said he.

"Vell, it amounts to this," the Secret Service Agent continued. "Germany, she is compelled to purchase from elsewhere, and by diplomatically purchasing from Britain she gets her wants, and also a blow strikes at her enemy by lessening England's supply of the commodities I haf mentioned."

"Then you are seeking to buy the lorries and other vehicles from this country?" Maitland asked thoughtfully.

"Exactly!" Von Stoltz agreed. "Listen; this is my plan. I cross to Holland and open an office in Amsterdam or Rotterdam—it does not matter where—and I call myself by some Dutch name. You, as the accredited agent of my firm, stay here in Britain and purchase the lorries and other conveyances ve vant."

Maitland shook his head doubtfully



Maitland leapt forward and snatched at the newcomer's beard, which came away in his hand. "Guess that's better, Von Stoltz. This tarnation thing made you look like a billygoat," he said.

and drummed meditatively with his fingers upon the arm of his chair.

"The plan's too thin," he protested, with conviction. "Any firm would hesitate to supply your requirements without first making the fullest investigations, which would result in their finding out that things were not as they at first appeared. No, my friend, I guess I can't take you! It would be putting my head into a noose!"

The German bent forward and impulsively laid his hand upon that of his companion.

"Not so!" he disagreed. "Let me speak more. You haf not yet heard all I would say. I know a firm who will supply vithout troubling to question the matter. It is John McFarlane and Company, of Moortown, near Berwick-on-Tweed. Der var haf hit them hard—so hard that they are upon the verge of closing down. Bankruptcy stares them in the face, und at the order they will jump. The stuff will not be consigned to Germany, so, pouf, what do they care? They will execute the order and ask no questions!"

"If you're so plaguery sure, why not set about the affair yourself?" Maitland asked suspiciously. "You could surely soon get someone to officiate at the place in Holland and act personally as the agent here?"

"So!" Von Stoltz admitted. "Indeed, I intended so: doing before my

meeting vith you, but my accent would haf stood in my way. As an Englishman"—he shrugged deprecatingly—"I could not pass; as a Dutchman, perhaps, but it would be risky and might the whole transaction spoil. It is thus worth my while to pay you to act for me here."

Maitland nodded slowly, then he lapsed into a long silence. The clock upon the mantel ticked away the minutes, then Maitland roused himself.

"Guess I'll carry the whole thing through for you if we can come to terms," he said quietly. "My price is five thousand pounds—half of it to be paid down, the remainder when it has been successfully carried through."

"Ach, it a big sum is, und—"

"Guess you can accept my conditions or leave 'em!" Maitland snapped.

Just for a moment Von Stoltz hesitated, then he held out his hand.

"I agree!" he said. "A cheque I will write you at once for the first half of the money!"

After the German had departed, Broadway Kate turned angrily upon her husband.

"You must be mad!" she sneered, her scarlet lips curling disdainfully. "The price you asked was not sufficient! I tried to catch your eye, but you ignored me. Considering the risk, the sum is not enough by half!"

Maitland looked up with narrowed

eyes, and removing his cigar from his lips he emitted a long stream of smoke.

"Guess you're right, Kate," he admitted coolly. "In itself, the price is mighty ridiculous. I have yet to devise my plan for diverting something like fifty thousand pounds from Messrs. John McFarlane & Co. to myself."

Broadway Kate's eyes opened wide with astonishment and the match with which she had been about to light a cigarette burnt her fingers before she recollected she was still holding it.

"Do what?" she gasped blankly. "Ezra, you—you are going to steal the purchase money when Von Stoltz pays it over to McFarlane's?"

"Say, what a mighty discerning woman you are, Kate!" Ezra Q. Maitland grinned. "You've hit the korrekct nail right bang on the head. But let's get below. We'll stand ourselves a real top-hole dinner and split the most expensive bottle of wine the shanty contains! Thank goodness there don't seem to be much chance of Sexton Blake poking his nose into this!"

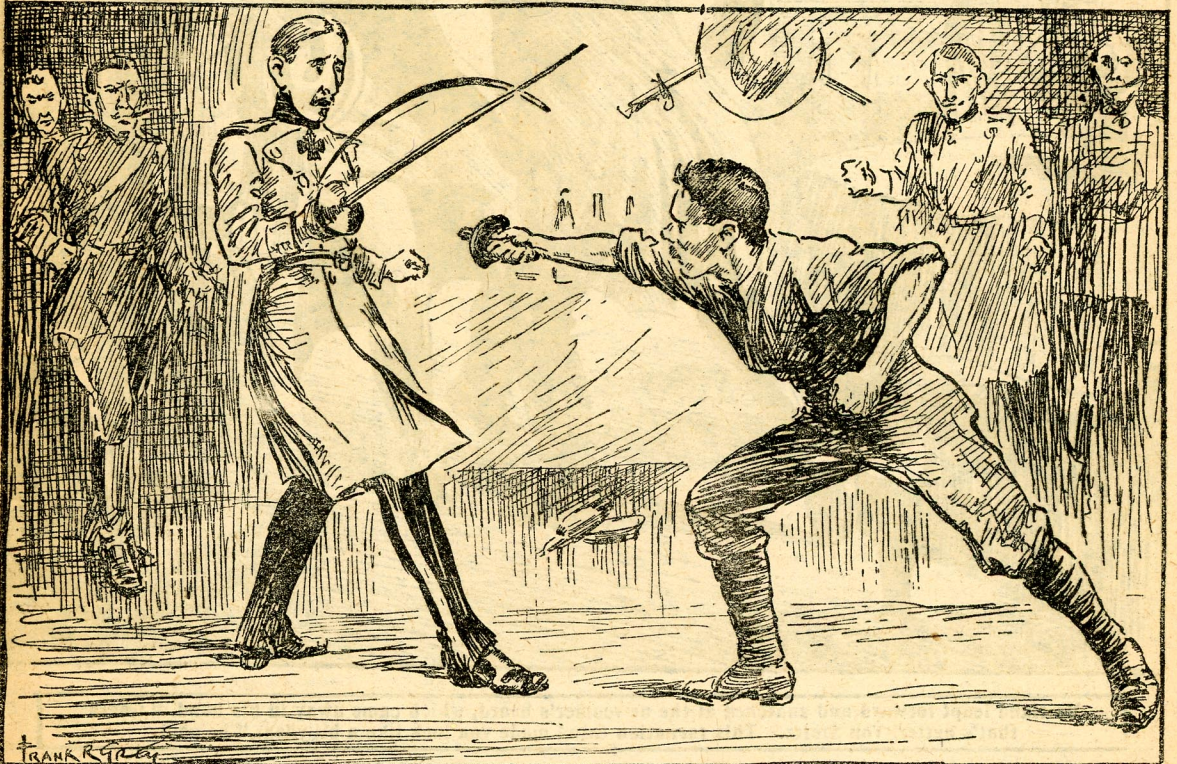
And how could Maitland know that Fate had already brought his arch-enemy to the city; ay, more, was at the moment guiding Sexton Blake's footsteps into his path?

(This great Serial Story will be continued in next Thursday's issue of "The Dreadnought." Don't fail to order your copy in advance.)

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# CAPTURING THE KAISER!

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Bill Stubbs drove at his opponent with a strength sufficient to send the foil through from his chest to his back, but there was a sharp snap of metal as the blade broke off short.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

**The Castle of Heinsberg—The British Transport—Bill Stubbs in the Thick of it.**

The Kaiser Wilhelm, War Lord of Germany, sat crouched up before the fire in one of the rooms of the great castle of Heinsberg, the massive building that practically marked the boundary between Germany and France. There were marks on its walls that spoke of the other invasion of France, the one of 1870, and there were those who said that down in its cellars could be seen the bones of women and children who had starved to death.

That was what was said, and it was more than probable that it was true, for the castle had been in the hands of the Germans for a clear month, when the master of it and every servant had gone into the fighting-line that had vainly striven to keep the invading hordes back from Paris, and there were none who could say—unless the bones spoke the truth—what had happened to the women.

Since then the castle had once more been in the hands of a Frenchman,

though its German name had still clung to it, and after forty-five years it was once more tainted by the Germans—by the War Lord who preached "kultur" and allowed his men, even his own son, to run loose in a mill-stream of atrocities.

Not that the Kaiser looked a happy man as he crouched before the fire that burned in the great room, and listened to the booming of the guns that told of the life-and-death struggle that was being carried on only a few miles away. He was in the full uniform of a general, but his body seemed to have shrunk until the grey green cloth sagged on him and made the uniform look as if it had been intended for a much larger man. Orders and medals glittered on his indrawn chest, but somehow they did not seem to mean anything—all the suggested glory of them had left. They were just baubles that anyone might have pinned on to go to a fancy-dress ball.

But it was the man's face that had changed most completely. The Kaiser's face had always been hard—we, who knew him, can vouch for that—but now the lines were graven as if on stone, and the curious ice-grey eyes seemed to

be colder than ever. There was positively no blood in his face—it might have been the death-mask of the type that was taken in the days of Napoleon, the other War Lord who had failed—and his hair, which had been fair with a touch of red in it, was white as snow.

There was little light in the room; in fact, only that which came from the fire in the great open hearth, for the candles—there was no other way of lighting the room—still remained with their wicks untouched. A short time back a servant had entered with a taper in his hand, but the Kaiser had ordered him to go. So he sat with the light of the fire flickering on his face, but that was enough to show the tragedy that was there. It showed, too, the great pictures that hung upon the walls, breaking the monotony of the old tapestries that had been there for centuries, pictures of men in silk and lace. Some of them had died beneath the knife of "The Widow" in the days of the Revolution; others, whose portraits were not there, had died in the war of 1870, and in 1915—the century of "culture"—there were three members of the house fighting for their country.

The Kaiser moved uneasily, and his

eyes dropped towards his shrivelled left arm, the deformity that had possibly made him more arrogant than he would otherwise have been, for it is always the lame or halt man who has to find compensation for his own deficiencies. His lips twitched a little under the fiercely upturned moustache, and his right hand went across and touched the other arm.

"It can't be true," he muttered; "it was an old fool who spoke years ago of the ruler with a withered arm."

The Kaiser's eyes narrowed, and he crouched further towards the fire, as if the cold was biting into him.

"What did she say?" he went on. "A ruler with a withered arm shall come to the throne of Germany; with him the country shall rise to its highest power, and with him"—he started as the booming of the guns seemed to sound nearer—"and with him it shall fall, and the man with the withered arm shall die by his own hand."

The Kaiser looked over his shoulder to where a sword and its belt, a revolver attached to the latter, lay on a polished table. He rose slowly to his feet and crossed to it, and the fingers of his right hand undid the flap of the holster and drew out the plated weapon that lay within. He opened the cylinder so that he could see the caps of the cartridges, then, with a sudden jerk, he closed the cylinder again and thrust the revolver back into its pouch.

"An old woman's tale," he muttered. "A man would be a fool to believe in such things—a fool. In a year, perhaps less, it will be Germany that will dictate to the world, and I"—the man's grey eyes flashed, and once more his body filled out the uniform that only a short time back had appeared to be far too big for it—"and I shall be the man who won where Napoleon failed."

Once more the Kaiser crouched over the fire, the triumphant light, that was almost one of madness, going slowly out of his eyes, and again he touched the withered arm that all the surgeons in the world had not been able to cure and make long and straight.

There was a knock on the door, and a big man, his uniform stained with mud, strode into the room. His face was broad and harsh, and when he brought his hand to the salute it was with the air of a commander. As a matter of fact, the new-comer was none other than General Feldmann, in command in this part of the area of war. Nominally, it was the Kaiser himself who was the supreme head; but it was General Feldmann who actually commanded.

"Well, general," the Kaiser asked, and it was by an obvious effort that he kept his voice steady—"you have good news to report? Our men have forced those cursed Britishers out of their trenches and got them on the run? So! It was bound to come."

The Kaiser fingered the Iron Cross that stood out conspicuously among his other decorations, and his eyes narrowed as the general shrugged his shoulders.

"No, sire," the latter answered in his deep voice. "I have come to report the fact that our attack on the trenches has failed with the loss of a large number of men. These British hold on to every inch of ground like bulldogs, and, what is more, on this occasion they have not only repelled our attack, but taken the first of our trenches that lies yonder."

The soldier nodded his head towards

one of the windows. It was through there that one in daylight might make out the smoke from the guns—through glasses—and know that that was where the lines of trenches lay, the heavy artillery in the rear of them.

"To-morrow it will be necessary to fall back," the general continued. "The loss of life that is going on cannot be continued, and there is the illness among the men. What else could there be when it is impossible to take the dead from the trenches."

The Kaiser took a quick step forward, and it almost looked as if he would have struck General Feldmann.

"There must be no falling back," he said harshly. "You have not been in Berlin of late, as I have. The people are beginning to doubt; there are even rumours that our victory is not certain."

"It is not," the general said bluntly. "We cannot keep on losing men for ever."

The Kaiser bit his lips savagely, but his fingers were none too steady as they pulled at the ends of his upturned moustache.

"They must be ready to die for their country—every true soldier is," he muttered.

"They are dying," General Feldmann observed drily; "but your Majesty must remember that the best of soldiers can only die once. These fearful losses of ours cannot continue, and that is why I advise a retreat. We should be falling back on to better defences—"

"And I forbid it," the Kaiser broke in with savagery. "You know what my plan has been all along—we were to stretch out troops along the coast so that it would be impossible for the British to bring their food, ammunition, or men into the country; we were to cut their line of communication, and the war would be over."

The Kaiser brought his sound hand down hard on to the table, and in his eyes there was something very like madness.

"Why has that plan not been carried out?"

Once more General Feldmann shrugged his broad shoulders.

"There has only been one small thing in the way, sire," he answered meaningly—"the British themselves. Heavens, what fighters they are."

The Kaiser went livid with passion, and his hand wandered to the sword that lay on the table.

"You do not dare to compare them to the sons of the Fatherland?" he demanded.

It was the turn of General Feldmann to move forward, and his face was grey now, though the eyes were brave enough.

"I dare what I choose, sire," he answered coldly; "and I tell you plainly that had I have known what fighters these Britishers are, that I would have advised your Majesty never to have entered into this war. Every man of them fights as if the whole of England were his own—men we never counted on, mere uneducated louts; and yet"—he paused, and a grim smile came to his lips—"yet one of those same men, who would not come up to my shoulder, very nearly captured the Crown Prince."

The Kaiser flushed with anger, and made a gesture with his hand as if to turn the subject aside.

"I wish to hear no more of that," he ordered. "My orders are that another

attempt must be made to sever the line of communication."

"Perhaps your Majesty will tell me how to do it," the general said, with the suggestion of a sneer in his voice.

Before more could be said there sounded the whir of an aeroplane that was obviously high up in the air, but with every second it grew louder, as if the machine was being brought down to the ground. Pretty well all day long the whir of similar engines could be heard above the castle of Heinberg, yet curiously the general and the Kaiser both stood silent, as if somehow this aeroplane was of more importance than the others that every day went out scouting—some of them never to come back.

The whir of the powerful engine turned to a roar that seemed to shake the windows of the room, then stopped abruptly.

"Whoever the man is, he is bringing news here," the general said below his breath. "It must be something of importance to alight in the grounds of the castle."

The Kaiser and the general both looked eagerly towards the door, for the moment forgetting everything save that news was coming to them very soon. Right through the war the aeroplanes had played a big part, and it was usually the news brought by their pilots and observers that was worth listening to.

An orderly came in quickly, his hand going up to the salute as his heels clicked together.

"Captain von Deck wishes to see General Feldmann," he announced.

"Send him in," the Kaiser ordered, and General Feldmann frowned. Nominally the Kaiser was commander-in-chief, but that did not make it any the pleasanter for the seasoned general to take orders from him.

A figure in a heavy fur-coat came quickly into the room, and lurched forward until he gripped the edge of the table to support himself. His face was white under the safety-helmet that perched on top of it, and from his left arm blood trickled to the floor. By an effort he drew himself upright to salute, then he would have fallen had not the general caught him and helped him into a chair.

"Brandy," the general said curtly, and the War Lord found himself fetching it from a table at the further end of the room. In the ordinary way he would have summoned a servant to do even so small a thing, but at the present time he, too, could think of nothing but what might be the portend of the news that the injured aviator had brought.

A liberal dose of the spirit brought the blood back into the aviator's face, and he rose to his feet and brought his hand again to the salute.

"Your report, captain?" the Kaiser asked eagerly.

"I had orders to go on the look-out for a British transport column, sire," the aviator answered hurriedly. "I failed to find them until half an hour ago. They were then approaching the bridge across the Seltz River."

The Kaiser's pale eyes lit up with excitement, and he took his belt from the table and strapped it on.

"Ah, they have chosen a new route," he said.

"They know that our heavy guns cover the old one," General Feldmann explained, and turned to the captain. "How big is the transport?"

"Close on a hundred motor-lorries," the flying-man answered without hesitation. "There is no escort, only the two men on each lorry. From the look of them they are only carrying food."

The Kaiser strode to where a great map was tacked to the wall, tapping at a part of it with one lean finger.

"We have time to cut them off and destroy the transport," he said eagerly. "There are close on a thousand of the cavalry quartered in these grounds, general. You will see that they are ready to start at once. By keeping to the north we shall be able to swing round to the bridge—if there are British troops there they are very small in number—and destroy the transport."

General Feldmann shook his grey head.

"And how do the troops get back here?" he inquired. "The moment that the transport is attacked troops will be hurried up by the British, and the retreat of our men will be cut off."

"Himmel!" the Kaiser ejaculated angrily. "But I get tired of your objection to all my plans, general. I tell you that these troops of ours can reach the transport, destroy it, and return safely here."

General Feldmann shrugged his shoulders.

"Your Majesty is in command," he answered; "but I refuse to take the responsibility of this—I am not going to lead my men to almost certain death; we need them too much for that."

For the second time that night the Kaiser looked as if he could willingly have struck his general, but all that he did was to pull on his helmet and stride towards the door.

"I will take command myself," he said over his shoulder. "Captain von Deck, you will come with the troops to show the way. You are weak, I know, but the call of your Fatherland will make you strong."

The aviator saluted and staggered after the War Lord, but General Feldmann did not move—then. He stood frowning in the dim light of the room, a fine figure of a man in his uniform, and perhaps he wondered, as many other people in Germany had commenced to do, what the end of it all would be.

War! Yes, he had been trained to it since childhood, but never had he imagined that it could be anything like this. If he had pictured it at all, he had seen nothing but the great legions of the Kaiser marching rough-shod to the Paris that they had taken more than forty years ago. Of course, in parts there would have been opposition—General Feldmann had always admitted that—but they would be brushed aside, at the cost of a certain number of lives, and Paris would become another capital for the Kaiser.

That was what General Feldmann and the other millions in Germany had dreamed, but now his eyes were very wide open to the truth—other men in the world besides Germans could fight. Ditch by ditch they had had to be fought back when they were fighting in an unprepared state, and now that they had got their real power to work it was the Germans who were retreating slowly, but still retreating.

General Feldmann looked at himself in a great glass that ran down one of the walls.

"War ages a man," he muttered; "sometimes it kills a man—as it will

kill me to-night unless I see the Kaiser safely out of his mad folly.

Sharper than the booming of the great guns rose the shrill cries of bugles sounding the "boot and saddle," and General Feldmann knew that the Kaiser had given his orders, and that soon he would be leading his men to capture the British transport that was approaching the bridge over the River Seltz.

General Feldmann gripped the hilt of his sword, swore gruffly under his breath, and stalked out of the room.

Bill Stubbs gave the wheel of his lorry a jerk that showed that he was not losing power in the arm, with the consequence that the heavy vehicle, which had done its little best to get into a particularly muddy ditch, 'chuck-chucked' on with the rest of the transport line. In all, there were just over ninety lorries and motor-buses that were being used for the same purpose—bringing meat from one of the bases to the firing-line. Not very glorious work anyone who had not seen it might say, but if they had they would change their tune, for the men who drove the lorries were as much heroes as the men who lay in the wet trenches, knowing that they would be fed if the grimy figures who drove the lorries could get to them alive.

"Come up, you wall-eyed, boss-tyred brute," Bill Stubbs growled as his lorry made another frantic effort to side-slip into the ditch. Six vehicles had already suffered that fate and been abandoned for the time being, and somehow or other the little cockney was afraid that that was what was going to happen to him. He was the last in the line of drivers, which meant that he had to steer his lorry through all the ruts that the other vehicles had made.

Right ahead they stretched, winding along a road that was dark as pitch and very different from the well-lighted streets that Bill Stubbs had been used to on the Lewisham to London Bridge route. On one side it was just possible to see a hedge, which made it possible to try and avoid the ditch that lay on this side of it, but on the other side it would have been impossible to say what there was—close at hand. Further off there was the gleam of fire as great shells burst and did the work that they had been made for—the work that death did peacefully, save in these times of war.

As luck would have it, Bill Stubbs was alone on his lorry, the officer in command of the transport having moved all his men to the leading lorries when the lines were being approached. Not that he expected an attack, for a totally different road from the usual one was being used, while even if an attacking party did get through it was heavy odds that they would not get back again. If another two or three miles were covered, however, it would be different, for then if the men in charge of the lorries were defeated quickly enough, and new drivers put in their places, it might be possible for the Germans to get the transport into their own lines.

Bill Stubbs chewed at the Woodbine between his lips, and which he dared not light, for even for a second he would not venture to release his grip on the wheel. There was hardly a moment when he did not have to steady the cumbersome lorry, and not a second that he dared take his eyes from the

shadowy shape of the lorry in front. If any accident happened to that he would have to be ready to see that his conveyance did not suffer the same fate.

The lorry swung round, its offside hind-wheel striking the stump of a tree, and the little cockney was as nearly as possible thrown from his seat. That the lorry did not come to grief was almost a miracle, but all that did happen to it was that it lost a few yards, so that the space between it and the next lorry was increased.

"Left at the gate," Bill Stubbs muttered angrily; "also ran, Bill Stubbs, V.C., what couldn't see a tree stump near as big as a bloomin' tram. My aunt, if an inspector 'ad seen me do that bit of drivin' 'e'd 'ave 'ad me taken off the ole 'bus at once an' told me ter push a pram."

Then, with suddenness that would have shaken the nerves of most men—the little cockney did not possess any as far as we can see—harsh cries came out of the night, and the sharp crack of rifles spat through the booming of the heavy guns and made them sound very far away indeed. The next moment Bill Stubbs knew what had happened, for the sound of other reports rang out, and his quick ears told him the difference between those and the first that he had heard.

The first reports had come from German rifles, but the next came from British.

"Charge!" Bill Stubbs yelled, his foot jamming on to the accelerator. The front of the transport had been attacked, and he was going to see that he was not out of it.

With a lurch the lorry rushed forward, the little cockney taking no heed of ditches or anything else now, steering with one hand while the other groped for his rifle.

"We'll get you, you sausage-eatin', murderin' lot of Jack the Rippers!" Bill Stubbs shouted. "Jest wait till I get among yer! Don't run away until then, an' I'll show yer 'ow to play 'op-scotch with a bullet. I've 'ad jest about enough of your little games, me lads, an' you'll see what—"

Bill Stubbs stopped abruptly. For a moment his body grew strangely stiff, then he fell forward across the steering-wheel, an ugly red mark across his left temple.

Then the mud of the road seemed to take charge of the lorry. With a squelching of dirt it swung round, tottered on the edge of the ditch as if not quite sure what to do, then went over in a heap, fortunately flinging Bill Stubbs clear of it, or he must have met his death there and then.

The sound of the rifles, snapping away viciously, still filled the air not so many yards away, but Bill Stubbs, late of the Lewisham to London Bridge route, heard nothing of them.

A scream of agony came out of the darkness, but neither could that penetrate to the brain of the little cockney.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Strange Awakening—Capturing the Kaiser—Once More a Prisoner.

Bill Stubbs opened his eyes, or rather he half opened them, for his senses were not coming back to him all at once.

"I tell you the other cove was on the wrong side of the road, sergeant," he insisted in a husky voice. "Sounded me 'orn? Of course I did. What's a



chapter do when other people drive in the road as if they bloomin' well owned it? You jest take down the names an' addresses of people what saw it; I'm not losin' my licence for someone else's fault. You get 'em all too—"

Bill Stubbs opened his eyes fully, the words stopping short on his lips, and with a shaking hand brushed the blood away from his eyes. He had suddenly realised that rifles were pooping off close to him, that it was not an accident to the old 'bus that had laid him out. He knew, though it was in a very dim kind of way, for the bullet had stunned him badly, that he was lying in one of the muddy roads—somewhere in France—that there was a war going on, and that he was part of it.

"I thought I was in that ole smash by London Bridge, when the other 'bus 'it me," he said weakly, trying to rise to his feet. "The boys seem ter be 'avin' a rough time; I must get along to 'elp 'em."

Three times the little cockney tried to rise to his feet, but it was only on the fourth attempt that he succeeded. He stood swaying and looking with dim eyes at the flashes of the rifles, and in a dim kind of way wondering how far off they were. He thought of his rifle, and staggered to where his lorry lay on its side in the ditch. He found the weapon all right, and his face set grimly as he jerked a cartridge out of the magazine.

"Comin', boys!" he shouted hoarsely, and though the muddy road seemed to be trying to get up and hit him he broke into a shuffling run. At first he stuck to the main road, and it seemed to him that he travelled miles without drawing nearer to the scene of the fight, then he branched off on to a side-track that he dimly imagined was a short cut. He stumbled over the betroots that grew in the field, and once he dropped his rifle and only picked it up again with difficulty, for when he stooped for it he fell, and it took all his remaining strength to get on to his feet again.

"Comin', boys!" he shouted a second time, and it was not until the cry had left his lips that he staggered into the side of a motor-car that had been brought along this side-track. For a moment he saw a tall figure standing up in it, the next moment he knew that a revolver was covering him, and despite the dimness of his brain the little cockney acted with the promptness that was customary with him.

Why it was that Bill Stubbs did not shoot he could never have said, but instead he swung the butt of his rifle up and jabbed it hard between the eyes of the man in the car, though not so hard as to have stunned him. It was the fall from the car that did that and made the man utterly helpless for the time being.

Bill Stubbs swayed as he stood leaning on his rifle, but even then he looked curiously at the other two figures in the car. One was bent forward over the steering-wheel, the other lay with his head back against the cushions. Both of them were dead.

The little cockney noticed the expensive fur coat of the one who lay back in his seat, and perhaps it was that which made him turn to examine the man who lay stunned on the ground. Only a short distance away rifles were popping furiously, yet Bill Stubbs felt that he must look at the man.

In the darkness the little cockney

knel beside the man, then a gasp of amazement broke from him, for the face that he looked into was that of the Kaiser. In a moment Bill Stubbs's brain seemed to clear, the shock that he had received sending all the weariness out of it.

"My great aunt!" he ejaculated—"Kaiser Bill!"

For a short time Bill Stubbs could do nothing but kneel beside the body, staring down at the lined face with the upturned moustache, and listening to the guns. It seemed to him that the firing had grown less, and a terrible fear gripped him that his comrades with the transport were being beaten. The first volley fired had told him that there were a large number of attackers, and he was not such a fool as not to know that the bravest men can be beaten by overwhelming odds.

Bill Stubbs took a step in the direction of the firing, but stopped as a sudden thought came to him.

"They may take the ole transport," he muttered; "but I'll 'uff 'em an' take Bill."

With a promptness born of the hard life that he had led, and which had made him used to dealing with emergencies, Bill Stubbs set about his task, excitement bringing back his full strength for the moment. With his belt he securely bound the Kaiser's arms to his sides, and with the belt of one of the dead men fastened the legs. A silk scarf, also taken from one of the dead men, was quickly formed into a gag, and the ruler who regarded himself as a modern Napoleon, without his liability to fail, lay a prisoner at the hands of a little cockney who no more than a few weeks ago had been piloting a motor-'bus between Lewisham and London Bridge, with nothing more exciting in his life than slippery roads, an occasional row with a cabman, and an evening at the pictures with his girl.

Bill Stubbs's brain grew cloudy again, so that he took no notice of the fast slackening rifle-fire. A bullet whizzed so close to his ear that he felt the wind of it without realising how closely death had brushed by him.

"No good leaving 'is nibs 'ere," he muttered; "some of the sausages are dead sure to come an' look for 'im—'an' we don't want to lose you, though we think you ought ter go."

Bill Stubbs rubbed away at his bristly hair, and the only idea that would come to his brain was that he must hide his prisoner before trying to find the British lines and give the officers there the news. In a vague kind of way he knew that the firing had ceased, but his one great idea was the hiding of the Kaiser.

The little cockney picked up the bound form, for the time being getting back his strength, which was a mighty lot for so short a body. With staggering steps he moved towards the hedge, stumbled through a gap in it, and for no particular reason crossed the muddy road to where his overturned lorry lay, most of the contents of it shot out into the ditch. With a sigh of relief, Bill Stubbs thrust his noble prisoner into a gap between the lorry and a heap of packing-cases, and by moving a few of the latter he made it quite impossible for anyone passing to see the prisoner. Of course, with daylight it would be different, for British or German troops would be certain to examine the wreckage to see what was worth taking, but the little cockney reckoned

that long before then he would have taken his strange news to the lines.

Bill Stubbs stood panting for breath after his exertions. And it must be admitted that he cursed the way in which his head went round and round.

"Talk about the Clacton Belle on a rough day!" he groaned. "Talk about fat 'eads and 'orrid feelings in the mornin', this licks—" He swayed so badly that he nearly fell, and his teeth clenched as everything swayed up before his eyes. "Got to get to the trenches," he muttered. "Tell 'em what's happened."

He became conscious of the fact that the rifle-firing had ceased, though from various directions came the booming of the heavy guns. In a dim kind of way he knew what it meant. The transport had been captured. Heaven alone knew how many of the brave fellows with it lay dead or wounded, yet still there was one bit of news to put against that—the Kaiser was a prisoner.

Bill Stubbs stumbled along over ground that threatened to throw him with every step that he took, and, as a matter of fact, he did fall more than once, until the mud-covered fur coat made him look more and more like a very disreputable type of mongrel dog.

If the little cockney had been in full possession of his senses he would have known that he was not heading towards the British trenches, but making straight for where a force of the enemy lay. Shells whizzed above his head—one burst within forty or fifty yards of him—but he took not the slightest notice of them.

He had got to reach the trenches to tell the officers the news. Once or twice he had to stop and think what the news was, for his head was whirling round worse than ever, and sometimes the blackness of the night swam red before his eyes.

He remembered, he told himself, as he reeled on once more—the attack on the transport, the bullet that had made him lose control of his lorry, and—the Kaiser.

Bill Stubbs fell into a great hole that had been made by the bursting of a shell. It was half full of icy-cold water, and the shock of falling into it did something to rouse the little cockney. Anyway, he was able to scramble out of it, and stagger on in the direction where he believed that the British trenches lay.

Through a field of beet Bill Stubbs went stumbling, falling over a man who lay with his face against the ground. There had been a bayonet charge earlier in the day, and this was one of those who had paid the penalty of war.

"Wonder what they'll do to ole Bill?" the little cockney mused, as he went on. "'Ang him, I should think." He laughed a little foolishly, for the pain in his head would not let him be normal. "Pity they couldn't bring the job off at Lewisham; there's a lot of the boys would like to see it. Any ole lamppost would do."

Then the earth seemed to give way in front of Bill Stubbs, and he plunged down heavily into a trench. In a moment hands were gripping him like vices, though, if the truth were known, in his condition he needed little holding.

"It's all right, boys," the little cockney said weakly; "only me—Bill Stubbs—your ole pal, Bill. Got a joke for you. I've caught—"

There was a heavy exclamation in a guttural voice, and for a moment Bill Stubbs got a grip on his senses.

"Ang, bloomin' Germans!" he said savagely, trying to get to his feet; then the red mist that had been threatening him with unconsciousness was successful, and for a time the little cockney knew no more.

He did not know that an uber-lieutenant bent over him—one of the privates had fetched him—and flashed the light of an electric-torch on to his face.

"Bill Stubbs—so," he said, with a chuckle. "The Crown Prince will be glad to see him, and I shall not be sorry for the reward."

"It was I who captured the man, sir," the private, who happened to be young to the service, ventured. "Surely some part of the reward will be mine?"

The uber-lieutenant swung round with a snarl on his lips. He was a big, fleshy young man with all the arrogant confidence of men of his class—men brought up to regard themselves as gods, once they were in the uniform of an officer.

"Donnerwetter!" he growled. "Yes, you shall have the reward. It is here. You shall not wait."

The officer's gloved hand struck across the face of the private who had dared to regard himself as anything more than the part of a machine, and the man reeled back under the strength of the blow, the back of the trench saving him from falling. As he recovered himself, his hand dropped to the hilt of his bayonet—fortunately for him the officer did not notice the action—but one of his comrades gripped his wrist, and held it fast.

"Don't be a fool, Fritz!" he whispered hoarsely. "Why be shot, except by the enemy?"

"He struck me like a dog," Fritz Kantz answered, between his teeth. "I shall not forget."

"That is as you will, comrade," the other whispered, with a shrug of his shoulders. "For myself, I have no fancy for a bandage over my eyes, and a file of soldiers in front of me."

"Bind the arms of this man!" the lieutenant ordered harshly. "When he recovers consciousness let me know. He will at once be taken under escort to the Crown Prince."

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Crown Prince—A Strange Duel—Bill Stubbs on Trial.

The Crown Prince had dined well, the sight of his rather flushed face was enough to have told anyone that, and he laughed a little foolishly as he leant back in his chair, and threw out the chest of his gorgeous uniform. The Chateau Armand, the present headquarters of the prince, was really a very nice place for a soldier to stop in, and the Comte d'Armand possessed a taste in wine that the prince thoroughly appreciated. That he had not asked permission of the aged count to use both his chateau and his cellar did not worry the Crown Prince, whose ghastly humours had set the worst of examples to officers and men of the great German Army. The count was in Paris—it would have been useless for him to stop and attempt to defend his throne—and the prince and his friends reigned in his stead.

There were a score of officers about the long table that had been placed in

the salon, and it might have been noticed that all of them were young. A short time back the Crown Prince had suffered the presence of the experienced generals, who were nominally under his command in this section of the scene of warfare, but at last he had arranged it that he should see as little of them as possible.

He had given his orders—the troops were to advance whatever the cost in lives—and that was enough. It was absurd for these generals, grown old in the service, to talk about the impossible. What was there impossible to the army of the Kaiser and the Crown Prince? Of a certainty they had been checked here and there, and harvests of the future would be rich with the blood of men who had fallen; but that was to be expected. In war men had got to die—unless they happened to be princes who could keep at a safe distance from the bursting shells—it was part of the game.

So it was that on this particular night only young officers dined with the Crown Prince, and got drunk on the wine filched from the cellars of the Comte d'Armand; for that day the party of the army, commanded by the Crown Prince, had met with a reverse that had meant the forsaking of several trenches, and he had sworn at the generals who had brought the news, and given them orders to go out and retake them.

As a matter of fact, the Crown Prince had a vague idea that he had not been the success that his father had expected, and he had visions and memories of the time when he had been banished to a fortress for making a rather bigger fool of himself than usual. That was not the way that the Crown Prince put it, fool being a description that he only applied to others.

The prince rose to his feet, a trifle uncertainly if the truth were known, and looked round the room, the walls of which were covered with emblems of the chase, for the count had been a great sportsman in his time, and there were few parts of the world in which he had not hunted. There were swords there, too, duelling swords and foils, for also the count had been one of the best of fencers in France.

"To the day when we enter London!" the prince cried, raising his glass above his head. "To the day when culture has finished with those boors of British!"

A loud, half-drunken cheer answered the toast, and if there were men present who doubted that day ever coming, they did not show it. It was the prince who had said that London was to be entered, and surely he was to be believed almost as much as the Kaiser himself.

The prince flopped down into his seat again, and he had scarcely done so before the door opened to admit an orderly. The prince glared at him indignantly, for even with a war of the world in progress, business was not allowed to come before his pleasures.

"The Uber-lieutenant Maritz to see your Highness," the orderly announced.

"Tell the lieutenant to go and interview the British instead!" the prince snapped. "Can't you see that I am busy?"

The orderly could see the way in which his chief was busy; but a protest on his part meant nothing less than disgrace, possibly death itself. He turned towards the doorway, but hesitated when he reached it.

"The lieutenant has a prisoner with

him, your Highness," the orderly ventured.

"One prisoner!" The prince laughed; but his usually sallow face flushed with anger. "Does he think that I am to be disturbed to hear a report about one prisoner? Tell him to bring me a thousand, then I will see him."

"As your Highness wishes," the orderly murmured; then the flicker of a smile came to his lips. "The name of the prisoner is Bill Stubbs. We once had him before, your Highness."

The blood died out of the prince's face as quickly as it had leapt into it, and suddenly he became very sober. He remembered the night when Bill Stubbs had used him as a means of escape, the contempt with which he had been treated, and he could have cried aloud with the joy that the man was in his hands.

"Show the man in," he ordered slowly, and the orderly departed.

Others of the officers present knew of the thing that had happened to the Crown Prince that night—for it is not only rumour that travels quickly at times—and they wondered what was going to happen. They were soon to know.

It was a few seconds later that Bill Stubbs was escorted into the great room in very much the same manner as on the previous occasion, except that Uber-lieutenant Maritz looked even more pleased than the little cockney's former captor had done. As for Bill Stubbs, he looked just a little muddier, and a little paler than usual; but for all that he nodded cheerfully to the young officers round the table before his eyes fell on the Crown Prince, who was looking at him with an expression that almost made his weak face look determined.

"If it ain't the Clown Prince again!" Bill Stubbs said, with a chuckle, though no one knew better than he that his chance of ever leaving the chateau alive was very remote. In the strict sense of the word he was a prisoner of war, but that was not likely to count with the Crown Prince when it came to a question of personal revenge. "I 'ope that you didn't catch cold that night we 'ad the joy-ride together?" Bill Stubbs continued, with a beautiful air of anxiety.

"You dog!" the Crown Prince snarled.

And the little cockney, with the blood caked on one side of his face, shook his head playfully, for he was quite recovered from the damage that he had received.

"That's right," he remarked, "you let your feelin's go if your language ain't worse than that. Lor', I've 'eard a boy scout call me worse when one of my mudguards knocked 'is pole out of 'is 'and. Anyway, there's a sight more satisfaction in bein' a full-grown dog than a puppy."

Someone laughed; there was no mistake about it, for there was not a man present who did not understand English, and more than one of them showed signs of having a difficult job to suppress a grin.

The Crown Prince swung round upon the man who had laughed, and his face was livid.

"What do you mean by that, captain?" he demanded.

"It is so absurd for the man to speak to you like that, your Highness," the officer answered hastily. "Why, you could kill him with your hands!"

The Crown Prince puffed out his

chest until he looked like a thin-blooded pouter-pigeon.

"It is not possible for me to do so," he said. "I have to think of my birth."

"That's it, ole son," Bill Stubbs chipped in with, "you think of your birthmark; for I'd knock it off your hide as sure as I'm not a bloomin' sausage, if I'd got my hands free." The little cockney took a step forward, his chin thrust out pugnaciously, seeming to fairly bristle like a dog in his skin coat. "Lick me!" he said, between his teeth. "My aunt, I'd pick you up in one 'and, an' dust the parlour with you, you filleted, long-necked, weak-kneed thing they calls a prince. I could find a dozen kids in Lewisham that could knock you into the quaggy—that bein' a river, with railings on one side, and a cab-rank on the other."

Uber-lieutenant Maritz, who was obviously anxious to make a big impression, clapped a hand over the little cockney's mouth, only to have one of his fingers bitten in a manner that made him howl with pain.

"I ain't partial to that sort of thing," Bill Stubbs explained. "But I ain't 'aving a dirty German 'and over my mouth, if I can 'elp it!"

The lieutenant stepped back, and dropped a hand to the hilt of his sword.

"Shall I kill him, your Highness?" he asked. "The dog deserves to die! He has insulted you, and if your rank would allow—"

The Crown Prince waved a lordly hand for silence. The fumes of the wine that he had drunk had got up into his head, and he was more of the clown than usual, a clown with vice gripping at his brain.

"Forget who I am," he said harshly, and he moved back the table!"

"Why, your Highness?" one of the officers ventured.

The Crown Prince stalked to the wall, and took down a pair of sharpened foils that hung there.

"I am going to kill him with my own hands," he said.

"But the risk, your Highness?" one of the other officers protested.

The Crown Prince laughed scornfully, and swished one of the slender foils through the air.

"It is my affair if I take risk," he answered. "And you forget that I am one of the finest swordsmen in Europe."

As a matter of fact, the remark about the swordsmanship was incorrect, for probably there was not an officer in the salon who could not have beaten the prince, but he happened to be the prince, and therefore no one contradicted him.

"Release the prisoner's hands," he ordered.

There was a moment of hesitation, then the order was obeyed by Maritz, and with a sigh of relief Bill Stubbs stretched his arms to get the circulation back into them. The position in which he found himself was troubling him very little, for one excellent reason. He remembered that the Kaiser was a prisoner—true, he might be found at any time by German troops, but if that did not happen the little cockney had a plan in his brain for seeing that he came out top-dog after all.

"Your sword," someone said, thrusting the second foil into the hand of Bill Stubbs, and the latter took it and looked at it warily.

"Rum sort of thing," he observed. "Blow me, if I wouldn't rather 'ave

the kind of thing that they 'ave in the cavalry than a meat-skewer like this."

The Crown Prince was making fancy swishes and passes through the air, stamping his right foot in the exaggerated way in which the Germans often fence.

"Don't do it," Bill Stubbs protested, as some of the officers present pushed the long table out of the way. "I'm not nervous, but it's so blessed silly. You wait till I've got my coat on."

Bill Stubbs held the foil between his teeth while he leisurely stripped off his fur coat; his muscles were still stiff from their confinement, and he was taking as long as possible to get them flexible again. His knowledge of the use of the foil was absolutely nil, but he was as ready to handle it as a pair of boxing-gloves, with that self-reliance that comes to a man who has fought in various ways for his existence all his life.

The officers crowded round in a circle as Bill Stubbs, having removed his khaki jacket and displayed a very blatantly red chest-protector that Lil of Lewisham had sent to him, squared up to the Crown Prince very much as if he was starting on a boxing match. The Crown Prince stood in the most scientific of attitudes, a smile of confidence on his face that was to be explained later.

"Ow do we do this business?" Bill Stubbs inquired. "Is it rounds, or do we plug away until I get you in the 'gesich'?"

"There will no need for anything of that kind," the Crown Prince answered. "You will be killed too soon."

Bill Stubbs winked at the officers who stood looking on, and, strangely enough, he did not appear to be in the least worried.

"You've gotter ask me about that first, Clown Prince," he said. "Come on; don't get cold feet."

The Crown Prince advanced his foil in the approved fashion, and that was just where he did not score, for the excellent reason that Bill Stubbs was not worrying about rules and regulations. With a surprising speed the little cockney leapt sideways, and the next moment his foil slashed across the face of the Crown Prince, raising a long red weal on it. The Crown Prince staggered back under the unexpectedness of the attack, and Bill Stubbs, remembering certain things that he had seen both in Belgium and France, did not hesitate. His right arm went back even as the other officers shouted out their protests, and he drove at his opponent with a strength good enough to send the foil through from his chest to his back.

There was the sharp snap of metal as the blade broke off short, and for a moment Bill Stubbs looked down at the hilt of his foil in blank amazement. Then suddenly the truth occurred to him, and his face went red with disgust.

"The dirty tyke!" he cried as the Crown Prince grinned at him, but it was not for long that the latter was triumphant.

Bill Stubbs made a flying leap, his right hand smashed neatly to the side of the prince's jaw, and as the latter went to the boards the little cockney threw himself on top of him and dragged at his uniform.

"There you are!" he shouted as the opened tunic revealed a coat of mail beneath. "The dirty tyke!"

Half a dozen of the officers rushed at the little cockney, but three of them

hit the floor very hard before Bill Stubbs himself was down, and even after that there was quite a pretty struggle before his arms were secured. It was then that the Crown Prince advanced towards him, his face livid, with passion, an automatic pistol in his hand.

"You shall die now!" he snarled.

"Get on with it, Clown Prince," Bill Stubbs answered steadily. "It'll be just another reason why the boys'll 'ang you—shootin' would be too good for anyone but a soldier—'ang you an' get rid of you."

The pistol went up until it covered the little cockney's heart, but the latter was not destined to die yet. The door of the salon was flung open, and an officer, as white as death, came hurrying in. There was mud on his uniform, and his spurs showed red with the want of mercy that he had been able to spare for his horse.

"Your highness," he gasped, "the Kaiser is missing. We believe that he is a prisoner in the hands of the British."

A dense stillness fell over the men in the room, but Bill Stubbs grinned almost audibly. Nothing could have happened more happily for him. Not that he was troubling so much about the safety of his own skin, but he was thinking of the transport that he was certain had been captured by the enemy.

"What do you mean?" the Crown Prince demanded, startled so that he forgot the little cockney he had meant to kill. As a matter of fact, the latter could not follow one word that was being spoken, as the language used was German, but he was cute enough to understand what it was all about.

Hoarsely, sometimes stumbling over his words, the officer told of the raid on the transport column that the Kaiser himself had insisted upon leading, how it had been successful—the British who had not been killed having been taken prisoners after a great struggle—and how after that they had found the car of the Kaiser, the driver and the aide-de-camp dead in their seats, but the Kaiser—gone.

The officers looked from one to another, their faces white and drawn, in some cases their lips loose with the shock that had stunned their brains. And only Bill Stubbs, the little cockney ex-bus-driver who had captured the War Lord, grinned.

The officers knew only too well what the capture of their chief might mean to them. Probably they would be able to keep it quiet but if that was not the case it would mean disaster—swift and certain. Without its strange figure-head—this man with a withered arm who regarded himself as superman—the war might end very easily against Germany.

The Crown Prince passed his tongue across his dry lips, and for once his face wore an almost sensible expression as he turned to Bill Stubbs.

"You were with the transport that was attacked and captured?" he asked huskily.

"You're a winner," Bill Stubbs agreed.

"Then can you tell me what happened to his Imperial Majesty the German Emperor?"

"What, old crackpot?" Bill Stubbs answered. "He's a prisoner all right."

The Crown Prince groaned, and his hand shook as he stroked his little moustache.

"In the enemy's lines?" he muttered.

The little cockney had been thinking hard for quite a long time, and he did not hesitate as to the course of action that he should take.

"Wrong!" he chuckled. "It was me who took him, and it's only me who knows where he is."

For a few seconds the Germans stared at Bill Stubbs in blank amazement, then it was the wounded officer who had brought the news who advanced towards the little cockney with his drawn sword in his hand. The blade of it was stained with blood.

"Tell where he is!" he cried gutturally. "Himmel, but I'll cut your head from your shoulders—so."

The sword swished above the close-cropped hair of Bill Stubbs, but he did not flinch.

"Chuck it, ole son," he said disgustedly; "you ain't dealin' with a German. It's terms we've got to come to, my lad."

Another officer drew his sword and advanced menacingly, but for once the Crown Prince seemed to have had sense forced into his flighty brain.

"You know what we can do to you?" he said slowly, but his eyes wavered before the steady gaze of the little cockney.

"Kill me," the latter answered coolly; but that won't bring ole Bill back to you. I'd like 'im to come back, too, for you an' 'im are bound to make an 'ash of the war."

"What are your terms to tell me where the Kaiser is?" the Crown Prince asked shakily.

"That you let that transport of ours go free," Bill Stubbs answered without hesitation; "and that if there ain't enough of our drivers left, that you supply 'em. You do that an' you can 'ave the bloomin' Kaiser as a gift. Of course, I go with the transport."

The Crown Prince bit his lip, but the officer who had brought the news whispered eagerly in his ear until he nodded in assent.

The prince made an effort to appear dignified as he turned once more to Bill Stubbs, though the latter's grin was enough to take away the effect.

"We are graciously pleased to consent," he said.

Bill Stubbs jerked his head upwards, and the smile went from his lips.

"You cut that part out, ole son," he said; "there ain't nothin' gracious about it. I'm swappin' a madman for the transport—let it go at that. You needn't keep to the bargain if you don't like it."

The Crown Prince's right hand drew his sword a few inches from its scabbard, and his face showed the anger of a spoiled child who has for once been thwarted.

"We shall meet again," he snarled. "Right-ho!" Bill Stubbs answered. "If me 'ands were loose I'd give you me card so that you could call on me in the trenches to get the loveliest licking of your life."

For a few moments the men stood facing one another, then the Crown Prince turned away.

"See that my car is ready," he ordered; "my father must be rescued at once."

Bill Stubbs chuckled, and took a step forward.

"May as well let my 'ands free," he said; "and if you've got an iron cross that you don't want I'd like it as a souvenir."

THE END.

# LION OR EAGLE?

(Conclusion.)

## The Reward of Valour.

Berners and his chief captive entered, the boys following unbidden, for Frank nudged his brother and passed in behind the shelter of his uncle's huge frame. The British and the German generals looked at each other for a moment in silence, and General Forbes bowed slightly.

"I congratulate you on your victory," said Von Schlacht, in a hoarse voice. "It is I who am defeated."

"You fought a gallant fight, and deserve as much honour as the victors," said Forbes, rather grimly.

"You owe my presence here to your Yeomanry captain," said Von Schlacht, chewing his moustache. "But for him I might have met you later on with a different result."

"Possibly!" said General Forbes coldly, and he turned to Berners. "This service will not be forgotten, captain. I will speak with you shortly," he added.

"My nephew showed me the route, sir. He got us there just in time," put in Captain Berners, as he saluted and turned to go. "Why, there he is! Who the deuce told you to come in here?" he said sharply.

"Let them stop. I know them pretty well, and they know me," said General Forbes, with a smile. "Young demons! We grow good material over here, you see, General Von Schlacht. You owe your capture, it seems, mainly to that youngster."

Von Schlacht started as he looked at Victor, whom he had not troubled to notice before.

"Himmel!" he gasped. "It is the cadet who sank the transport ships the night we landed!"

"Yes," said General Forbes. "His speciality is knowing the country, and one or two other little things; indeed, perhaps we all owe him rather more than we think."

Von Schlacht shrugged his shoulders, and looked moodily at Victor.

"It is fate," he said—"the fortune of war. Well, general, I am your prisoner, and I do not care what you do with me. A firing-party would be the best turn you could do me. My Kaiser has little use for surrendered men. But mark you this, Herr General; I shall be avenged, and

avenged ten-fold! Britain will pay the price!"

General Forbes looked him clearly and coldly in the eyes.

"Marshal Von Schlacht," he said slowly and sternly, "brag and bluster will not serve you now, for you know, as well as I who say it to you, that Germany's power in England is broken and at an end. This day has seen the hopes of the invaders wrecked for ever. Their army is broken, their leader in our hands. Your Kaiser has played his last card—and lost!"

Von Schlacht tried to meet General Forbes' gaze. But his own eyes fell, and the colour left his cheeks, for in his heart he knew that the British commander spoke the truth.

"Remove the prisoner!" said the general grimly.

Von Schlacht, his chin upon his breast, was led out by the guard. Victor and Frank turned to General Forbes, with shining eyes.

"Is it so, sir?" cried Victor eagerly. "The enemy have shot their bolt, and victory is ours?"

"It is as true as that the sun shines over us, my boy," said the general quietly. "The defeat of the Germans to-day has been thorough and absolute. They may cause bloodshed and destruction still, but not for long. They are doomed."

"It will never be forgotten how gallant a share you and your brother have borne in this campaign, and that to you and those of your blood is due the capture of the German marshal. Captain Berners will receive his full colonelcy, and I have recommended him for the highest honour that the British Army can bestow."

"The highest honour, sir?" cried Frank joyfully. "The Victoria Cross?"

"And not to him alone. I am sending in both your names, too. And I can promise you that before the week is out, his Majesty himself will fix upon those torn khaki tunics of yours the little bronze cross—the reward of valour. None have earned it better."

The general laid his hand upon the boys' shoulders.

"For the rest, have no doubts. The enemy has wasted our land with blood and fire. His flag flies still, but we have him at last in a ring of steel, and our vengeance will be sure and terrible."

THE END.

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# TWO OF THE BEST!

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By JACK LANCASTER.



Montague Beagle stepped forward. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "I have an idea! An advertising dodge! Pardon me, sir, but would you be willing to sell those kippers?" "Of course," said the artist. "I'll sell them to you for an old song."

## THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

JIM CULVER and VIVVY STEVENS are fellow-clerks in the employ of Crarper & Son, paper merchants. The junior partner in the concern is a despicable cur, with no notions of chivalry, and Jim has occasion to thrash him for insulting Vivvy. The sequel to this scene is that both Jim and Vivvy are sacked, and they set out together to seek new fortunes. In Cambridgeshire, whither they journey, they fall in with Mr. and Mrs. Beagle, a theatrical pair, and confess to a great longing for the stage. Vivvy gives an exhibition of dancing in the roadway to test her abilities, and the performance is rudely interrupted by Lavington Crooks, a theatrical agent, who urges Vivvy to accompany him to London and make a name. Jim Culver interposes, and a quarrel ensues, terminating disastrously for Crooks. A grizzly bear has escaped in the district, and Jim is just in time to prevent a catastrophe, for the creature has attacked a middle-aged man. As it is, the victim is almost

distracted when the young couple arrive on the scene, but before lapsing into unconsciousness he gives Vivvy a curious stare of recognition.

(Read on from here.)

## In Strange Company.

The next thing to be done was to get help for the injured man, or to take him to some place where his hurts could be treated. He was a heavy man, and Jim knew that he could not carry him unaided, and that Vivvy would be of very little use in helping to move him.

"I wish old Beagle'd come along," Jim muttered. "Will you run and see if you can find him, Vivvy? I'll stop here."

"I think I can hear them," Vivvy answered. "Hallo!" she cried. "Mr. Beagle, is that you?"

"Hallo!" came back the answer; and a moment later Montague Beagle and his wife emerged out of the dark-

ness, and picked their way carefully over the stepping-stones in the stream.

"There's been an accident," Jim cried. "That brute of a bear has got at a man. He's badly hurt. Come and help me lift him."

Mrs. Beagle gave vent to a little exclamation of horror, but her husband uttered never a word. Jim had rather expected that he would hold forth in his stagiest style; but in the presence of suffering the old actor became a different man.

Beagle spent a moment looking down on the injured man's face. Then he raised him gently by the shoulders and lifted him up. Jim took him by the legs, and, stopping to rest once or twice, they carried him to the road. Vivvy walked behind with Mrs. Beagle, and told her what had happened in whispers.

"I ought to have come before," Beagle gasped, as they lowered their burden gently on the bank. "But I'm not as fleet-footed as you young people. Poor fellow!"

"He came round once for a minute,"

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Jim murmured, "and then he went back to unconsciousness again. I'm afraid he's pretty bad."

"And Cæsar de Snooke's bear!" Beagle exclaimed. "I am not ungrateful, but I shall bite the hand that fed me. I will give Cæsar de Snooke a piece of my mind. I shall reprimand him until he wilts like—like a withered cabbage!"

Under other circumstances Jim would have laughed at this flower of speech. But Beagle was supremely unconscious of having said anything ludicrous.

"Hallo, here's a light!" the old actor added. "I think it's a cart coming."

It was a cart, and they stopped it. It belonged to a local tradesman returning from his night rounds. He descended from the cart and bent over the injured man.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's Mr. Stelland! He lives over at Friston, where I'm just going to. Shall I take him along?"

"I wish you would," Jim said. "Take him to a doctor. Or, better still, is there a cottage hospital there?"

"Yes, there is one."  
"Better take him there, then. And we can call and see how he is later on in the evening. Thanks awfully!"

As they lifted the unconscious man into the cart, Jim explained how he had come by his injury, and warned the other to keep a sharp look-out for the bear. The man cracked his whip, and answered that he would be all right. The cart drove away, and they stood watching the tail-light until it vanished in the darkness.

Montague Beagle turned and addressed the boy.

"And now," he said, "conduct us to Cæsar de Snooke without more ado. Lead on, Macduff!"

They set off again, Jimmy walking with Vivvy. The chums were silent for a long while.

"Queer thing!" Jim said suddenly, as if to himself.

"What is it?"  
"That poor chap—that Mr. Stelland. Fancy his knowing your pater, and seeing your likeness to him when he was in that state. Didn't you say your pater was dead?"

Vivvy nodded.  
"I never saw him, or my mother," she answered. "I was brought up by that aunt whom we went to see this afternoon. She always told me my parents were dead, but she would never talk much about my father. Do you know, Jim—"

She paused suddenly.  
"Go on," he urged.

"You'll think I'm awfully silly. Well, I've always had an idea that my father is really alive, in spite of what aunt always told me. I don't know why, but I've always felt that. Once I asked her point-blank, and she was quite taken aback. She said 'Of course he's dead, you foolish child!' and got quite angry with me. And she looked as if she wasn't telling the truth."

Jim whistled.  
"It's rather queer," he said. "Do you know what your pater was? I mean what business he was in."

"I don't know. I don't know anything about him. I haven't even seen a photograph of him. I've never met anybody who knew him, except my aunt."

"And Mr. Stelland."  
"Yes, poor Mr. Stelland. When

he's a little better perhaps he'll be able to tell me something. Oh, Jim, suppose he doesn't get any better."

"He will," Jim said consolingly.  
"But suppose he doesn't! Oh, Jim, you don't think it's selfish of me to want him to get better just for that? I'd love him to get better for his own sake, poor man. But you don't know how it felt, to hear him practically say that he knew my father! I've always longed to meet somebody who knew him."

Jim took her arm.  
"It's no use worrying, Vivvy," he said. "I hope to goodness he isn't badly hurt. But if he dies without uttering another word, it sha'n't make any difference. If your father's alive, I'll find him for you. I promise you that."

Vivvy smiled up at him wanly.  
"Jim," she said, "I believe you could do anything."

"I'd try to do most things," he answered simply, "to help a chum."

It did not take them long to reach Friston, which was a small, straggling village astride of a by-road. It was there that Cæsar de Snooke and his show were temporarily quartered. He was not giving a performance there, but halting for the night on his way to Ely. His camp, consisting of eight or nine caravans and tents, was pitched on a piece of waste ground.

The little boy who had been sent out with the bear conducted Montague Beagle to the door of a caravan, knocked, and left him, while the others waited below. Beagle disappeared within, and an explosion of hearty greetings followed.

"My old brother-in-arms!" roared the voice of Beagle.

"My dear old laddie!" boomed another voice.

After that Montague Beagle was heard to do most of the talking. What he said was not audible from outside, but by the tone it was evident that he was giving his old friend a piece of his mind for allowing the bear out alone with a little boy. Presently, however, they came out arm-in-arm, and marched down the steps in perfect amity.

Cæsar de Snooke was a remarkable man to look at. He was tall, stout, red in the face, and had an enormous nose. He had begun the profession as a clown, and had delighted many audiences who knew him by the name of Little Boko. At sight of Mrs. Beagle and Vivvy he swept off his hat, and bowed so low that he might have been preparing for some contortionist act.

"Hallo!" he cried. "Here we are again! Madam, I salute you! Miss, I bid you a warm welcome."

He turned suddenly, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands, and bellowed into the distance.

"Bill!"

A voice answered him from a caravan on the far side of the patch of greensward:

"Yes?"

"Eight more bloaters!" shouted de Snooke, with a fine air of hospitality, adding, to his visitors: "We were just thinking of having a snack of supper, and of course you'll join us?"

Mrs. Beagle said she would be charmed, and Vivvy murmured something, not too distinctly, for she was very shy.

De Snooke went on addressing Jim

and the ladies with an air of apology and regret.

"Dear old Montague," he said, "has been telling me all about the bear. He has given me the sharp edge of his tongue. But I have explained everything to his satisfaction. Nobody could regret the occurrence more than I."

He went on to explain how the bear had always been tame, and had been led by the boy several times without making any attempt to break away. It had been restive of late, however, and, thinking it was due to lack of exercise, he had sent the lad out with it, never guessing that anything would happen.

"When it is found," he promised, "it shall either be shot or sent to the Zoo."

Ten minutes later they all sat down to supper with the company, which was the queerest set of people that Jim and Vivvy had ever seen or dreamed of.

At the beginning of the meal Jim saw a pound of raw steak being sent away on a plate, and Cæsar de Snooke, seeing that he noticed it, told him what it was for.

"That's the wild man's supper," he explained. "The Wild Man of Bingleloo, you know. One of our star attractions."

"Is he very wild?" Jim asked.

"He is, rather. We can't have him here to supper with us, because he's liable to break out at any moment, and his table manners aren't nice. Eats all his food raw. We have to keep him locked up in a caravan by himself. He amuses himself all day by sticking pins in his carcass. It doesn't hurt anybody else, and it amuses him. I've seen that man looking like a porcupine."

"Great Scott!" Jim gasped.

"Doesn't it hurt him?"  
"Shouldn't think so, or he wouldn't do it. We all have our little hobbies, and that's his."

Jim caught Vivvy's eye, and both wanted to laugh. They felt that Fate indeed had thrown them into strange company.

After supper the showman led them on one side.

"Miss Stevens," he said, "I hear you're a genius. Now, don't deny it. Old Montague told me, and what old Montague says goes all right with Cæsar de Snooke. And you, Jim Culver—you can sing more than five per cent. better than a crow, from all accounts. Well, Montague and madam, his wife, have agreed to join our little company, and I'd be pleased and honoured if you'd do the same. I can't offer you much, but if ten bob a week each and your keep is any good, say the word and you're taken on."

Vivvy looked at Jim, plainly asking him to decide for her. Jim promptly closed with the offer. It was better than nothing, and he reflected rightly that they would be gaining experience.

"Good!" said Cæsar de Snooke. "And now listen here. I didn't mean to give another show before we got to Ely, but there's time for one to-morrow night at a village called Arbel-ford, two and a half miles on from here. It'll be a sort of dress-rehearsal for you two. And now I want both of you to do something for me."

"With pleasure, Mr. de Snooke," Vivvy said.

"It's just this. I want you to walk over to Arbel-ford now with old Montague, look out for the most likely

field, and hire it for to-morrow night right away. I'd like you three to go, because you've got party manners and all that, and anybody seeing you would know the show was respectable. See?"

Jim hesitated.

"We shall be pleased to go," he said slowly, "but we rather wanted to call at the cottage hospital and inquire after that poor man who was hurt by the bear."

De Snooke patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't you worry about that," he urged. "I'm just going there myself to see how he is. I'll let you know when you come back. You can call in the morning, if you like."

Jim nodded a little reflectively, knowing how anxious Vivvy was. But they could do the injured man no good, and it would seem churlish to refuse the showman's first request, after his kindness to them.

Accordingly they set out with Montague Beagle five minutes later.

The old actor was in his very cheeriest mood. It had done him a lot of good to meet Cæsar de Snooke again. He was now sure of food and lodging for himself and his wife for an indefinite period, and he had also the pleasure of working with an old crony. He sang the showman's praises until Jim and Vivvy grew tired of hearing them.

Three-quarters of an hour's walking brought them to their destination, another straggling village, somewhat larger than the one they had left. Montague Beagle, ranging with his professional eye, quickly found the very field they wanted. It was in the very centre of the village, and almost surrounded by cottages.

Beagle leaned over the fence and admired it.

"The site's worth an extra ten bob to old Cæsar," he remarked. "We must have this field at any cost, even if we have to pay red gold for it."

A labourer approached, whistling, and Montague Beagle addressed him, doffing his hat.

"Pardon me, young sir," he said, "but if you would grant me the courtesy of a moment's conversation I should consider myself your eternal debtor."

The man stared at him and slowly removed his clay pipe. Then he jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"It's over there?" he said.

"Over there!" said Montague Beagle. "Over there! What is over there, my rustic friend?"

"The bloomin' lunatic-asylum!" the other answered, and laughed coarsely.

Montague Beagle did not turn a hair.

"Ah, no," he said; "you do not understand. I shall not need to call on you. If you will have the goodness you can tell me all I need to know now, without any further conversation."

The other looked bewildered.

"Well, get on with it," he said.

"Then whom does yonder grassy meadow belong to?"

The man grinned.

"Thinkin' of buying it, mate?" he asked.

"That may depend upon circumstances, sir," Beagle answered, with the air of one who bought land here and there with sublime carelessness.

"Well, it belongs to a gentleman named Croogan, and he lives in that cottage over there. He's an artist

gentleman, draws for the comic papers, and more than that I can't tell you about him. There's a light in his front room, so I dare say he's in."

Montague Beagle swept off his hat again.

"Thank you, sir—thank you," he exclaimed. "May I offer you one of my cigarettes?"

He fumbled in one of his pockets, and produced an empty packet, which he gazed at ruefully.

"I am sorry to say," he added, "that I have not one left. But here is the picture. Never mind if you don't collect. Give it to someone who does. No, sir, I insist on your taking it, as a little memento of our pleasant chat together. That cottage, I think you said? Thank you."

They crossed the road to the cottage in question, leaving the man speechless.

It was a very small cottage, but very pretty, and one of the kind built without a hall, so that the front door opened into the front sitting-room. There was a light in the window, and the shadow of a man moved on the blind.

Montague Beagle rapped discreetly on the door, and they waited, listening, but nobody came. They could hear a voice murmuring within, and presently they could hear what the voice was saying.

"Seventy-eight," it mumbled, "seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one—"

Beagle rapped again, and there was a faint stirring from within. Then came the sound of someone approaching the door. The door was flung open, and a man in knickerbockers and a velvet jacket stood framed in the doorway.

"One thousand and eighty-five," he mumbled, staring at them. "One thousand and eighty-five, one thousand and eighty-five! Will you try to remember that, please, and remind me later on? One thousand and eighty-five."

"One thousand and eighty-five," said Jim, choking.

Close behind him he heard Vivvy draw a little breath of suppressed merriment. Once more Montague Beagle removed his hat and bowed.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but if you are referring to the battle of Hastings, I think you have made a mistake. That sanguinary engagement, which gave William the Conqueror his first firm foothold in our land, was fought in the year one thousand and sixty-six. I should have thought, if you will allow me to say so, that any schoolboy—"

The artist interrupted him with a little choking cry.

"Battle of Hastings! Confound you, sir, who's talking about the battle of Hastings? One thousand and eighty-five—remember, please. Well, and what can I do for you?"

Jim struck in. He was not one to push himself forward, but he could see that the artist was worried about something, and that Beagle was likely to worry him very much more.

"We're the advance agents of a show," he said, "and we should like to take your field for to-morrow night, if you are inclined to let it, and if we can come to terms."

The other's face lightened.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" he said. "Come in a moment, will you? You'll have to excuse the extraordinary state my sitting-room is in, but I'll explain how it happened in a minute. One

thousand and eighty-five—please don't let me forget."

He held the door wide for them to enter, and Jim and Vivvy could not repress a gasp of amazement at the sight that met their gaze.

The room was nearly full of kippers! The floor was strewn with them, and kippers were piled high along the walls.

### A Slip of the Pen.

Montague Beagle surveyed the contents of the room with a vast smile.

"Ah, sir," he said, "a collector, I see. And what a hobby! So much more interesting than postage-stamps and cigarette-cards!"

Croogan turned on him, fuming. "My good man," he cried, "you can't think that I collect the beastly things!"

Beagle raised his hands.

"Not a collector? I beg your pardon. A prudent housekeeper, I should have said. At a rough calculation I should say you had enough kippers here to last you—"

"Let me explain how it happened," Croogan said quickly. This came about through my bad handwriting. I am the secretary and treasurer of the local philanthropic society. I was told to order two thousand pairs of slippers for the poor of the parish. I wrote to a friend in town, telling him to order them for me. And look what arrived to-night! He thought I wrote 'kippers' instead of 'slippers'!"

Jim kept a straight face for a moment, but he heard Vivvy sobbing with merriment into her handkerchief, and then he burst out laughing aloud.

"I s-suppose, sir," he said, "you were counting them when we came in? You've got up to one thousand and eighty-five."

"I've counted them over once," said Croogan shortly. "There ought to be four thousand. I made them three thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven—three short. I'm not a mean man, but I don't like being swindled. I'm going over them again, to make sure."

Montague Beagle stepped forward. "Ha!" he exclaimed. "I have an idea! An advertising dodge! Pardon me, sir, but would you be willing to sell those kippers?"

"Sell them! You don't think I'm going to keep them as ornaments, or to stuff mattresses with? I'll sell them to you for an old song."

"I'll tell Cæsar de Snooke. And what about your field, sir?"

"Fifteen shillings for one night," said the artist promptly. "It'll help to make up for what I shall lose on the kippers. Of course, owing to my mistake I shall have to make up the loss of them out of my own pocket."

Montague Beagle nodded.

"Fifteen shillings is a lot of money for one night," he said. "But it is contrary to my instincts to haggle over money. Fifteen shillings it shall be. I am sure Mr. Cæsar de Snooke will make you a generous offer for the kippers. And now, sir, you will want to go on counting them, so perhaps we had better wish you good-night. A complimentary ticket for our performance will reach you early to-morrow."

"Thanks very much," said the artist, and made a movement towards the door.

Jim and Vivvy took the hint. Beagle, however, hung back a little.

"May I ask, sir, if you were count-

ing those kippers for pleasure? If not, I am sure Mr. de Snooke would not mind if there were two or three short, and allow you to make a hearty breakfast into the bargain."

Then he followed the others out, and the artist closed the door with the faintest suspicion of a slam.

Outside, he linked his arm in Jim's. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten to ask that excellent fellow if there were a printer in the village. But here is someone who will be able to tell us."

He stopped a man who was passing, and learned that there was a printer a little further along up the street.

They went thither, and found the shop closed, but knocked the man up. Beagle explained that he wanted bills printed and posted up early the next morning, and handed in an old bill of Cæsar de Snooke's Hippodrome Magnifique and Wonder Show as a pattern.

"But there are more names to come on," he added. "Mademoiselle Viviana Stevana, the premiere danseuse of the century; Mr. James Culver, society baritone; Mr. and Mrs. Montague Beagle, popular entertainers from the principal London theatres. Now, wait a minute. In big red letters at the top of the bill I want you to put something like this:

WE GIVE YOU A FREE  
BREAKFAST!

KIPPERS!

ALL PATRONS PRESENTED  
WITH A PAIR OF KIPPERS  
FREE!

"That ought to fetch them," Mr. Beagle continued. "It'll be the biggest draw of the century. It'll set all the village talking."

He was right. It did. And what came of it will live long in the memory of all concerned.

The printer promised to have the bills printed and posted by an early hour on the following morning, and they bade him good-night, and walked back, tired and sleepy, to Cæsar de Snooke's encampment.

Some news awaited them.

The bear had been shot by a neighbouring farmer, and after what had happened its owner was scarcely sorry.

Cæsar de Snooke informed them that he had been round to the cottage hospital, but could get little news of Mr. Stelland. He could only gather that he was very ill indeed, and that he was unlikely to recover for a very long while—a story that had the effect of saddening Jim and Vivvy considerably.

They sat up chatting for a few minutes and then went to their caravans, dead tired. Vivvy turned in with the Sisters Amazona, comedy jugglers, and Jim with a man who attended to the horses, and the small boy who had had charge of the bear.

The boy, however, had not come in when Jim dropped off to sleep, and when he awoke in the morning he was not there.

As they took breakfast in the morning, gipsy fashion, around a camp-fire lighted on the green, Cæsar de Snooke looked around as if he missed something.

"I can't think what's come of that boy Oswald," he said. "He ought to

ha' been sleepin' in your tent, Jim, along of you and Bill. But Bill says he didn't come in all night."

"Then where can he be?" Vivvy asked.

"I dunno." De Snooke answered, shaking his head. "A good boy he always was, and never gave me much bother. I hope he hasn't taken it to heart over that bear. It wasn't his fault, as I told him last night."

"I wonder if he's run away?" Jim suggested.

"He's the last boy who'd do a thing like that. But perhaps the bear, and what it did to Mr. Stelland, has preyed on his mind. I don't think he'd run run away, though, even for that. I can't understand it."

But Oswald had certainly gone, and his disappearance gave the company something to talk about throughout the morning. He was known not to have any money, and his fate rather concerned them, for they were in the main a kindhearted set of people.

After breakfast Jim and Vivvy set off for the cottage hospital to inquire further about Mr. Stelland. They were both excited, for they had embarked on a new life, and that evening's performance might have some part in deciding their careers for them. It was strange to think that twenty-four hours ago they were setting out for the office.

At the cottage hospital a maid asked them to come in, and presently a nurse came down into the reception-room.

"Dr. Daniels is now with the patient," she said. "I am afraid it is a very serious case, but when he comes down I shall be able to give you more information. Wasn't it you who rescued him from the bear?"

Jim said nothing, except to check Vivvy, who seemed inclined to tell the story of his heroism; and the nurse smiled at them.

"You belong to a travelling show, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes," said Jim.

She gave them a quick look.

"You're rather different from that sort of people," she murmured, "and if I were you I should find something else to do as soon as you can. It's all right while you're young; but you won't always be young, you know, and later on you may find yourselves unfitted to do anything else. Don't think me rude for saying that to you."

Jim nodded. Just now it was a bit of fun; but he did not want to live that life for ever. He thought of the Beagles, footsore, and often hungry, tramping the roads through all weathers, cheerful by instinct rather than by feeling.

Footfalls sounded on the stairs, and the nurse sprang up.

"Ah, here's the doctor!" she said. "I'll tell him you'd like to see him."

She went out, and presently the doctor entered.

"You want to know about Mr. Stelland, I think?" he said gravely.

"Yes," Vivvy murmured, narrowly watching his face.

The doctor sat down and fidgeted with his stick.

"Well," said he, "I'm afraid I haven't any very good news to give you. He is suffering from very bad injuries to the head—very bad indeed."

"Will he live?" Vivvy asked.

The doctor looked up at her.

"His life isn't in danger at the moment," he said; "but he has lost

his memory. There is a piece of bone pressing down on the brain, and that will have to be removed by an operation. It will be a very delicate and difficult operation, and—and I don't like to say what the result will be. If it is successful, he will recover his memory and live."

Jim inclined his head in silence.

"And when will the operation take place?" he asked.

"I don't know. As soon as possible. But he is not in a fit state to be operated on yet awhile. I am going to send to Cambridge for another doctor to come and have a look at him."

Vivvy got up and smoothed down the fingers of her gloves.

"There was a question I wanted to ask him," she murmured. "He knew my father."

"After the operation you will be able to ask him," the doctor said. "It would be no use asking him now. Well, good-morning to you!"

He opened the door for them, and they went out into the sunlight, and made their way back in silence to the camping ground.

They found that great changes had taken place since their absence. Everything had been packed up, and the show, a procession of caravans and waggons, was ready to start.

"That boy Oswald ain't come back," said Cæsar de Snooke, catching sight of them. "But he knows where we're going to—Arbelford, and then on to Ely. I dare say he'll turn up yet."

They started for Arbelford, Jim and Vivvy walking beside the caravans, and reached the meadow they had hired overnight. Then came the business of fitting the show together, and Jim lent a hand with enthusiasm, as all the performers were expected to do.

Cæsar de Snooke's Hippodrome Magnifique was not quite a circus; there being no ring, nor horses that told the time, nor very sensational acrobats. It consisted of a big tent with a wooden stage erected at one end, and benches for the audience to sit on. The orchestra was a single piano, played by some member of the company who did not happen to be performing at the time in any other capacity.

After lunch de Snooke suddenly remembered the absence of Oswald again, and began to grumble.

"You don't seem to notice how much use a boy like that is until after he's gone," he said. "Now the men are all busy, and there ain't anybody I like to ask to go out to get my cigarettes."

"I'll get some for you," Jim said, springing up.

"I don't like to ask you. You see you ain't a servant; you're an artiste."

"That's all right," Jim said. "I'll go. There's a shop just up the road."

The showman handed him three-pence, and mentioned the brand he wanted, and Jim set off.

As he turned out of the field and into the street he saw two figures approaching him that seemed, even in the distance, somehow, familiar. They were linked arm-in-arm, and Jim stared at them with a start of amazement.

Who could they be?

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