

GRAND TALE OF GREYFRIARS!

The Dreadnought 1^d

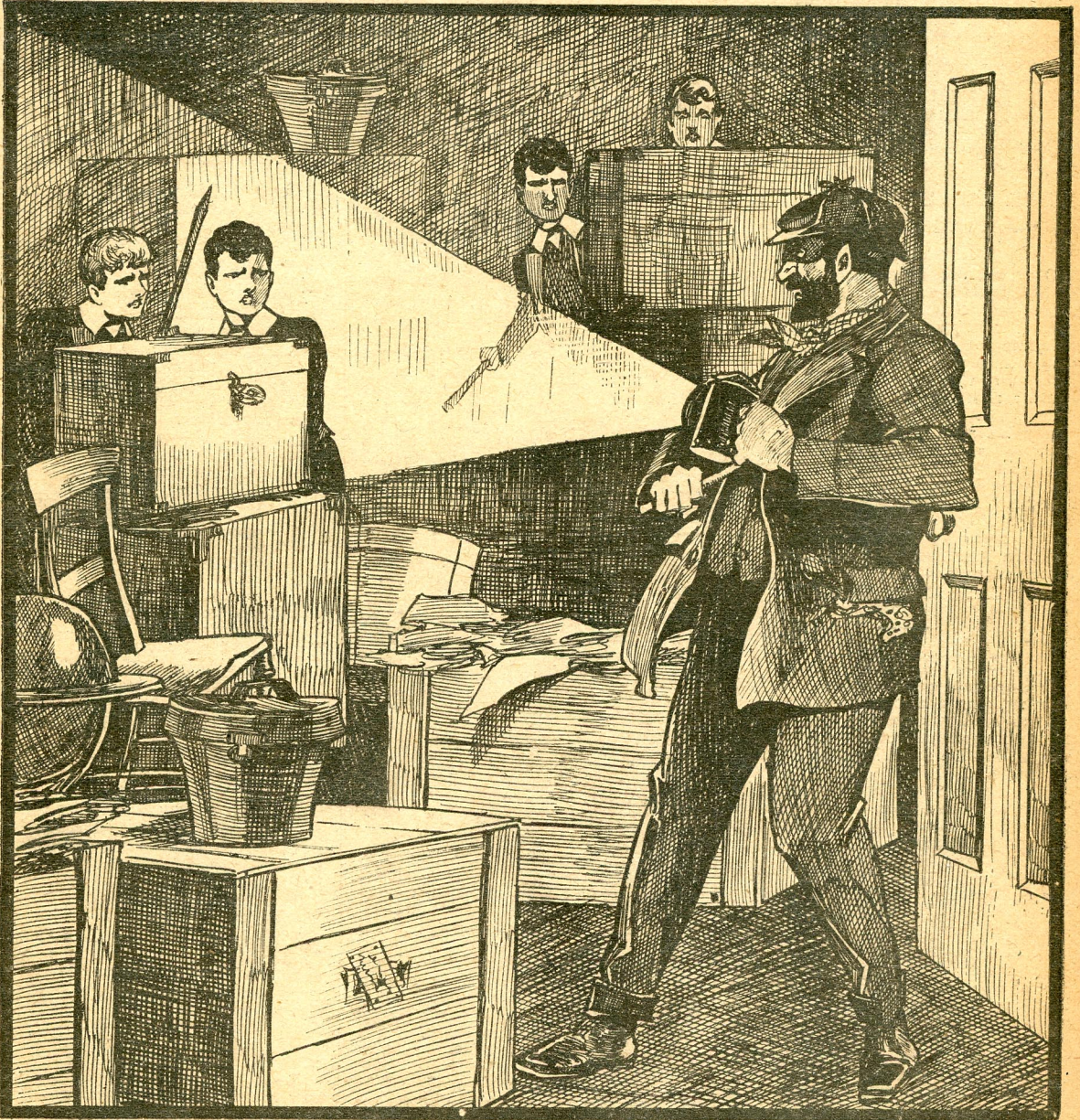
Published
Every Thursday.

No. 143]

WITH WHICH IS AMALGAMATED
"THE BOYS' JOURNAL."

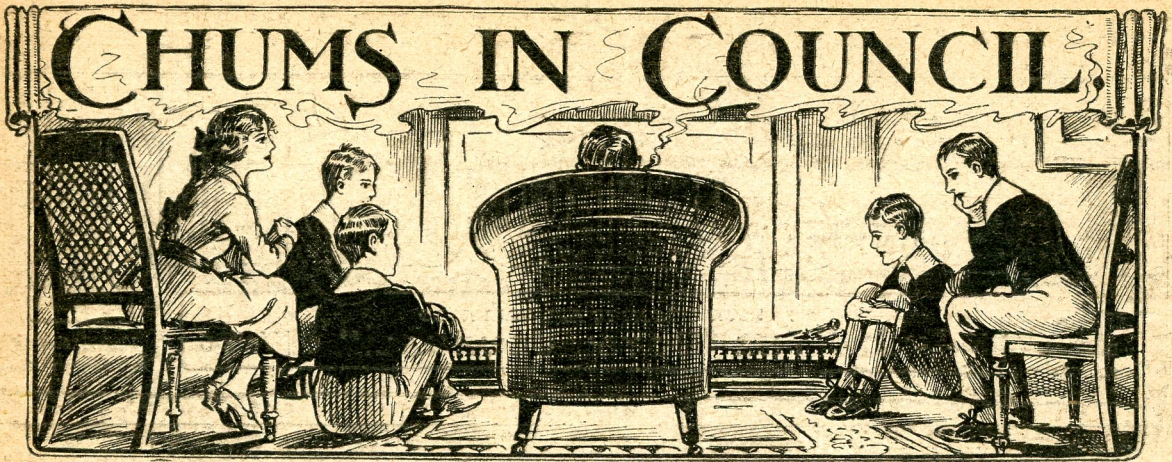
[Vol. 6

Week Ending
Feb. 20th, 1915.



HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S AMBUSCADE!

(A Dramatic Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Contained in this Issue.)



Whom to write to:
Editor,
"The Dreadnought"
The Fleetway House,
Farrington St., London, E.C.

OUR FOUR FAMOUS COMPANION PAPERS:

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Price One Penny. Every Monday.
"THE GEM" LIBRARY. Price One Penny. Every Wednesday.
"The PENNY POPULAR." Published Every Friday.
"CHUCKLES" 1d. Best Coloured Comic. Every Saturday.

FOR NEXT THURSDAY: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"

By Frank Richards.

Our next grand, long, complete story of Greyfriars School goes to show that Hazeldene's troubles are by no means over. Entirely through his own folly he gets into the meshes of a moneylender, who demands an exorbitant rate of interest, so that the junior's life is rendered a misery and he is under a constant cloud. It is at this juncture that Harry Wharton, ever ready to perform a generous act, comes to his school-fellow's rescue, though it is only by a great sacrifice on Harry's part that the moneylender's victim steers clear of all trouble. It has been a bitter lesson for Peter Hazeldene, and he ever afterwards holds in high esteem the fellow who succeeded so splendidly in

"SAVING HIS CHUM!"

A Schoolmaster's Tribute.

It is a rather interesting fact that since replying to a correspondent on the subject of adults reading the DREADNOUGHT a grown-up reader should have written me the following nice letter of appreciation.

My correspondent had not seen the reply in question when he wrote, so his letter is quite a spontaneous and voluntary testimonial.

"Nottingham.

"Dear Sir.—A short time back I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of the DREADNOUGHT, when I realised at once that I had found the magazine which would satisfy a long-felt desire—viz., something that would take me back to my schooldays, and give me the same pleasure I felt then in the reading of school and adventure stories, and, at the same time, satisfy my mature and more fastidious literary appetite, which, of course, demands a strong and solid fare. Until I came across the DREADNOUGHT I had failed to find anything which I could swallow with pleasure and benefit thereby. All I could find were either stories for the

very young, or of the 'penny blood' style, composed of utter impossibilities and machine-made—turned out by the yard. I read of one wonderful giant hero of fifteen who killed a dozen men straight off, and I should not have been surprised to learn that he had quaffed their blood, and then pushed the earth off its axis.

"You will understand that, being a schoolmaster with a long experience of all sorts and conditions of boys, a school tale has to be something of a very high order to win my approbation. The stories of Greyfriars are written in a distinctly refreshing style, and I shall not hesitate to commend and encourage them among my pupils.

"With all good wishes for the continued success of your journal,

"I am, dear sir,

"Sincerely yours,

"BASIL C. WHEATCROFT."

I thank Mr. Wheatcroft most cordially for his warm tribute; and I feel sure that his letter, when read by the parents of many British lads, will be the means of breaking down the barriers of prejudice which still exist—though only in a small measure, I am thankful to say—against journals like the DREADNOUGHT.

When Friends Fall Out.

L. M., a Manchester reader, has a chum to whom he is deeply attached, and although the friendship has gone along merrily for some time past, there is now every indication of a rift in the lute.

I am not sure whether Nature rigged me out to advantage in the role of peacemaker; but I have done all that it is possible to do to effect a reconciliation between L. M. and his chum, and I sincerely hope my efforts have proved a success.

Whilst on this subject, I might mention how necessary it is to possess one special friend, whom one can acquaint with all one's troubles, hopes, fears, and ambitions.

Let us take it that you possess such

a chum; and in your estimation he is, naturally, the best fellow in the world, bar none.

For a time all goes well; then, as in the case of my Manchester reader, you differ. It may be about some trifling thing—I was told of two men who nearly parted on the subject of their favourite tobacco—or, perchance, it is something weightier. Anyhow, there's the rupture. Your first feeling is one of anger; this is quite natural, and for a while you pose—to yourself only—as an outraged martyr. This does not last long, and it is soon eclipsed by a sense of loneliness. You may have been victorious, but there is nobody to witness the victory, and you realise how the Roman Emperors of old would have felt had their triumphal entry been bereft of prisoners and a clamouring, shouting populace. Then you start thinking it over—this, probably, for the first time—and it soon dawns upon you that there was as much against your opinion as for it; and very likely your friend was right altogether.

This may be a bit humiliating, but you are on the right tack.

Now comes the struggle, and your pride fights with your knowledge of what is right. You are proving the metal of your better nature. Will it come out, not only unscathed, but also hardened, from this big ordeal? It will—ay, it must! There are no two ways about it. Whether your friend was right or wrong, the course of action is clear. You seek him out and meet him half-way coming on the same errand.

And then—a few words and a hearty handshake. The breach is healed!

Between you and me, I don't quite believe in your friend who never quarrels. When all is said and done, you want a man who is not afraid of mentioning your faults and little failings. At first, of course, you are a bit wild with him, but if you are worth anything you will soon recognise his generosity, and finding your lofty perch slightly lonely and very ridiculous, will gracefully—or otherwise—climb down, and things will pursue the even tenor of their way.

THE EDITOR.

IF YOU ARE WANTING ADVICE WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR. HE WILL DO HIS BEST TO HELP YOU!

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

THE DREADNOUGHT

To ensure getting
next week's copy
readers are recom-
mended to order in
advance.

HEROES ALL!

A splendid long complete
tale dealing with the early
adventures of Harry Whar-
ton & Co. at Greyfriars
School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Caught in the Act.

Click!

Harry Wharton gave a start.

He was coming along the passage at Greyfriars towards Study No. 1, the famous apartment occupied by the chums of the Remove.

His chums—Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—were waiting for him below, and Billy Bunter was in the school shop. Harry was going to the study for his cap, which he had happened to leave there. The sudden click from the room he had supposed to be empty naturally startled him. It was evidently the sound of a key turning in a lock, and, as the five occupants of the study were out, certainly no one had a right to be unfastening a lock there.

Harry Wharton smiled rather grimly at the thought of catching the unknown prowler in the act. He stepped quietly forward to the study door, which was half open, and looked in.

A fellow was bending over Harry's desk, which he had just unlocked. His back was turned towards Harry, but the latter knew him at a glance.

"Hazeldene!"

The junior in the study gave a guilty start as he heard his name spoken, and he turned swiftly round. His eyes met Harry Wharton's, a wave of crimson swept over his face, and then receded and left him deadly pale.

"Wharton!" he stammered.

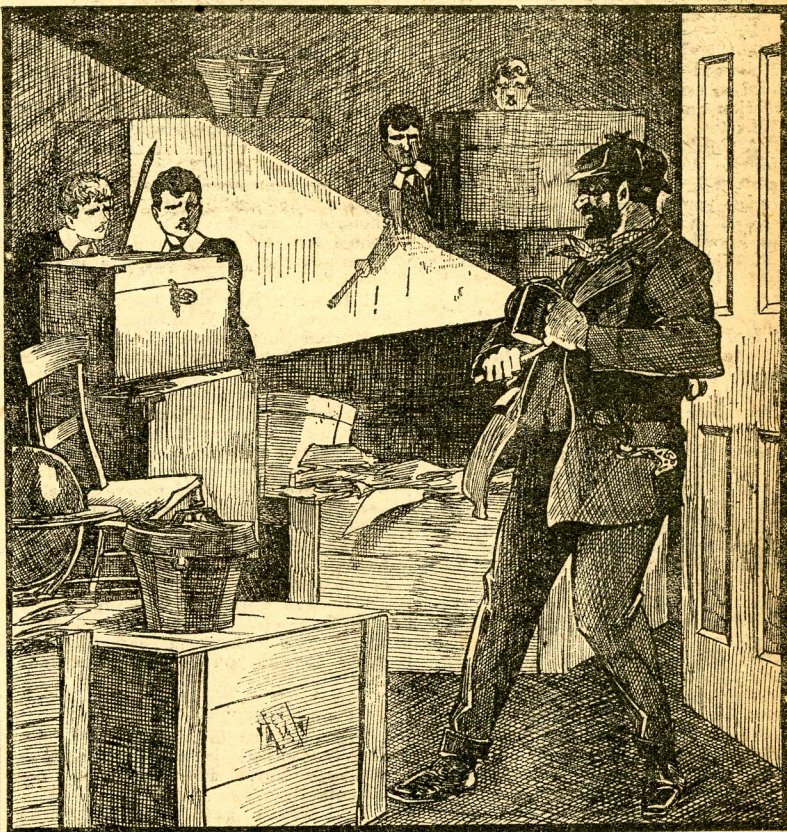
Harry stepped into the study.

"What were you going to my desk for, Hazeldene?"

The other stared at him dumbly. Hazeldene was generally called "Vaseline" by the Remove fellows at Greyfriars, on account of his oily and conciliatory ways, and an explanation—false or true—was generally the last thing he was likely to want.

But he certainly had not one ready now.

He stared dumbly at Harry Wharton, so utterly taken aback that he could not find words.



Melchior the gipsy stepped into the room, and flashing the light from right to left, he gave a convulsive start as he caught sight of the juniors.

Harry glanced at the desk and then at the key in Hazeldene's hand.

"So you have a key that fits my desk?"

Hazeldene turned red again.

"Where did you get it?"

"I—I—"

"You had better explain yourself, Hazeldene," said Wharton quietly, closing the door of the study. "I've found you going through my desk. I keep valuables there—money, and something else, too, worth more money than I've ever had. How did you happen to have a key that fitted my desk?"

"I—I— Skinner has a desk like yours," stammered Hazeldene, "and—and I thought the key might fit it—"

"So you borrowed a key of Skinner?"

"Ye-es."

"Or took it without his knowing, I expect?"

"He— Skinner always leaves his key in his desk."

"Not a very safe practice, with a fellow like you in the Form," said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "I always knew you were a rotter, Hazeldene, but I never expected this of you. You've shown once or twice that you had good points, but—"

"I—I—"

"What were you at my desk for? There's nothing there to interest you in any way. I can only come to one conclusion."

"What—what is that?"

"That you went there to steal."

Hazeldene became deadly pale again.

"Wharton, take care what you say!"

"Give me some better explanation, then. I don't want to think worse of you than I can help," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I keep money in that desk, and the big diamond Hurree Singh gave me the day he left Greyfriars. What else was there in my desk to make you unlock it?"

"I—I was only going to look at the diamond," gasped Hazeldene, with painful hesitation. "The—the nabob's diamond, you know."

Harry looked at him searchingly.

"You only wanted to see the diamond?"

"Ye-es, that's it."

"Why didn't you ask me show it to you, then? I've shown it to lots of fellows, and I would willingly have shown it you."

"Well, we— we haven't been on very good terms—"

"And so you purloined Skinner's key, and opened my desk in my absence, just to have a look at the

diamond out of curiosity?" said Wharton.

"Ye—es."

"That's rather steep, Hazeldene."
"It's—the truth!" muttered the cad of the Remove.

"I hope it is. I can't quite swallow it, but I'll give you the benefit of the doubt, at all events."

"You—you're not going to chatter about this?" asked Hazeldene eagerly.
"No need to tell the fellows; they would be certain to place a wrong construction on the matter!"

Wharton smiled grimly.

"A right one, you mean, Hazeldene, I fancy. But set your mind at rest, I sha'n't talk it over the school. I mean to give you a chance. If I tell anybody, it will only be my own chums, who know how to keep their mouths shut. But mind, no more of these tricks. I shall warn Skinner not to leave his key about in future."

"You—you won't mention—"

"No, I won't mention your name. Put the key back where you found it, and say nothing. And now—get out of my study."

Hazeldene crossed the study to the door, looking like a whipped dog. He paused at the door, and looked back at the stern, grave face of Harry Wharton.

"Wharton, I—I hope you'll believe—"

"I'll believe as much as I can. It's not pleasant to think that there's a thief in the Greyfriars' Remove," said Harry shortly.

"I swear—"

"You'd swear anything, I believe. Do get out!"

And Hazeldene, with a drooping head, left the study. Harry Wharton stood still for some moments, and then gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders, as if dismissing unpleasant reflections from his mind.

He stepped to the desk, and opened a little drawer, and took out of it a small leather case. He touched a spring, and the case flew open, and there was a blaze of light from the velvet lining. A diamond lay there—a large and valuable stone, which had once shone in the diadem of the Nabobs of Bhanipur.

The junior looked at it for a moment or two, and then closed the case and slipped it into his pocket. The diamond was evidently no longer safe in the desk, with a duplicate key in existence and a fellow like Hazeldene in the Remove.

Harry locked his desk, picked up his cap, and left the study. His chums were getting rather impatient, and they hailed him as he came down the stairs.

"Thought you had gone to bed, Harry," said Nugent.

"Or fallen down and broken your neck," Bob Cherry remarked.

"The delayfulness has been great," remarked Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his purring, Oriental voice. "The wastefulness of the time has been a consequence of the delayfulness of our respectable chum."

Nobody ever talked English like Hurree Singh, the Hindoo member of the Greyfriars' Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. His knowledge of our language was fearful and wonderful, and a source of never-failing mirth to his chums and to Greyfriars generally.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"It wasn't my fault, Hurree Singh," he remarked. "As a matter of fact, old chap, it was yours!"

The nabob stared.

"I fail to see how the faultfulness rests upon my honourable self," he replied; "but, if so, the apologise is great."

"How was it Hurree Singh's fault?" asked Bob Cherry, with wide-open eyes. "I don't see how you can make that out, Harry."

"Blessed if I do, either!" said Nugent.

Wharton laughed.

"It was all through that diamond Hurree Singh gave me the day he left Greyfriars," he explained. "Come out into the Close; I don't want everybody to hear. You remember that diamond you gave me, Inky?"

"The rememberfulness is great," replied the nabob, with a nod. "I thought I was leaving the honourable school for everfulness, and I bestowed upon you the parting gift of a grateful heart."

"It was a jolly sight too valuable to give away!" said Wharton.

Hurree Singh waved a dusky hand.

"It was as nothing to a Nabob of Bhanipur."

"It might be nothing to a Nabob of Bhanipur," said Wharton, laughing, "but it's a lot to an English schoolboy. It is worth a hundred pounds at least. I have been rather bothered about it, as a matter of fact. It's too valuable to keep lying about; it might tempt people to steal."

"The wrongfulness would be extreme. Why not exert the lockfulness of the desk?"

"I have kept it locked up in my desk, but—" Wharton paused. "Of course, you understand that what I'm going to tell you is among us four only?"

"Rather."

"Certainly."

"Well, I just found a fellow at my desk. He had it unlocked with a duplicate key. He was after the diamond."

The chums gave a simultaneous whistle.

"He explained that he only wanted to look at it," said Wharton. "But he could have looked at it any time by asking me."

"Rather a lame explanation."

"The lamefulness was extreme."

"So I thought," said Harry, with a nod. "It looks to me very much as if he meant to bone it. As he opened the desk with a key, there wouldn't have been a trace left behind as to how it went. I might even have suspected Skinner, if it had come out that the key of his desk fitted mine."

"That's serious."

"I should say so."

"You needn't tell us who the chap was," said Bob Cherry. "I fancy we can guess, anyway. But, I say, it won't be safe to leave the diamond there any longer."

Harry Wharton tapped his breast-pocket.

"It's safe here," he said.

"You're carrying it about with you?"

"For the present, yes. I'm blessed if I know exactly what to do with it to keep it safe. Hurree Singh used to wear it as a tie-pin, but nobody guessed the value of it. There are fellows knocking around the country who would kill a chap for a diamond like that."

"Nobody will know you are carrying it about with you," Nugent remarked.

"It's all right for the present, anyway. Let's get off!"

The chums walked down to the gates of Greyfriars. It was a half-holiday at the school, and a fine February afternoon. The chums of the Remove were going down to the village, and the affair in the study had delayed them. As they approached the great stone gateway of Greyfriars—grey with the weather-stains of centuries—they saw Wingate, the school captain, standing there in conversation with a man in uniform, whom they recognised as the inspector from the local station. The inspector walked away as they came up, and Wingate glanced at the juniors.

"Anything up, Wingate?" asked Wharton, as he saw the grave expression on the captain's face.

Wingate looked at him. It was considered rather a cheek at Greyfriars for a junior to address the captain of the school without being spoken to first. But Wingate was a good-tempered fellow, albeit a little rugged outside.

"Ah, I wanted to speak to you, Wharton!" he said.

"Here I am, Wingate."

"Do you remember a row you had with some gypsies the other week, when Hazeldene's sister was kidnapped?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I was not at the honourable establishment at that time," said Hurree Singh, "but I have heard of the adventure."

"The two gypsies were taken to the county prison," said Wingate. "What were their names? I forget."

"Melchior and Barengro."

"Ah, that's right! Well, they have escaped from prison, the inspector has just told me."

Wharton started.

"Escaped!"

"Yes. They are two dangerous ruffians, as you know. They are not, of course, likely to venture into this neighbourhood. All the same, as you had a hand in their arrest, you had better look out."

"Thank you, Wingate! I will."

"You are going out now?" asked Wingate, looking doubtfully at the chums of the Remove.

"Yes; down to the village."

"H'm! Well, of course, there's no real danger, I suppose. But you had better keep together; and don't go wandering in the woods."

"We'll look out, Wingate," said Wharton rather indefinitely. And the juniors hurried on before the captain of Greyfriars could extract a more definite promise from them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nadesha the Gipsy—A Joke of the Nabob.

"Kind gentlemen—"

The chums of the Remove stopped. They were passing the cross-roads when the voice suddenly broke upon their ears.

An old gipsy woman, with a coloured shawl wound round her head, was seated upon the milestone, and she had looked up at sight of the boys, and it was her voice that had arrested them.

Harry Wharton glanced at her pityingly. He could see little of her face under the red shawl—a dark, brown face, with two glittering eyes of coaly black, and white teeth glistening. But it was evident to him that the woman was tired, her whole attitude told of fatigue, and perhaps hunger. The

schoolboy's hand went at once to his pocket.

"Young gentlemen——"

"Poor old soul!" murmured Nugent. "Looks as if she's tramped it a lot, doesn't she? Can we help you, mother?"

The black eyes turned upon him, and the hard glitter in them softened.

"You are in want?" said Harry Wharton.

"I am no beggar," said the gipsy, with a ring of pride in her voice. "But I will tell the young gentleman's fortune, if my palm is crossed with silver."

Harry Wharton smiled. He drew a shilling from his pocket, and dropped it into the extended dusky palm of the old gipsy. The black eyes sparkled for a moment, and then they sought the lad's face earnestly.

"You do not believe in the power of the gipsy?" she asked.

Wharton shook his head. "Well, I don't, as a matter of fact," he said. "But I'd like to have my fortune told, all the same."

"The truthfulness will be interesting, though the truthfulness will be in lack," murmured Hurree Singh.

"Old Nadesha tells only the truth, even if her knowledge is not all drawn from the stars," said the gipsy. "The eyes of the old can read the face, and penetrate the heart's secrets there. The hand, too, tells much."

She took Harry Wharton's hand, and fixed her eyes upon it, and then raised them to his face again. "Shall I tell you what your nature is, young gentleman?"

"Yes," said Harry, smiling.

"You are proud and reserved and hot-tempered, not always just, and sometimes take offence for a trifle," said the gipsy.

Wharton turned red. The chuckle with which his chums greeted the gipsy's words showed how true they were—at least, in the opinion of the Removites.

"Oh, rats!" muttered Harry.

"You have been in danger of your life," said the gipsy, "and will be again, and your danger came from a Romany."

Wharton started.

"Hot and wilful and reckless," murmured the gipsy, half to herself; "but sound at heart, high-spirited, a born leader of boys, and then of men. Yet your life may be wrecked, and, if so, the danger will come from yourself—from your own temper and impatience."

Harry laughed rather uneasily.

"You are not flattering," he said.

"Nadesha does not flatter." The gipsy dropped his hand, and her eyes were fixed earnestly upon his face.

"Young lad, you are brave and generous, but beware! The danger I speak of is near, very near. I cannot tell you more, but for safety's sake return to the school you come from, and do not stir beyond its walls again."

Harry Wharton threw up his head proudly.

"Do you think I am a coward?" he exclaimed.

"There are dangers too great for a boy to face."

"I would not run away from them if there were. But what danger is this that you speak of? Is it real? And what is it?"

"I cannot tell you more."

Harry laughed again and stepped back. The chums had their fortunes told in turn, each crossing the dusky

palm with silver. Harry stood with a thoughtful brow, hardly listening. The gipsy's words had made a strange impression upon him. What danger could be threatening him?

"How many wives am I going to have?" Bob Cherry was asking the gipsy. "And will they all be dark or fair?"

Nadesha smiled as she dropped his hand.

Bob was the last, and the chums of the Remove then went on their way, the old gipsy looking after them with a strangely-wistful expression upon the dusky face under the red shawl.

The shade of thought was still upon the brow of Harry Wharton. In spite of himself, the gipsy's words clung to his memory.

"I say, you're not letting that worry you, are you, kid?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking at him.

"Oh, no! But——"

"She seemed curiously in earnest," said Nugent. "Of course, there was nothing in it! Reading the stars is all bosh!"

"She said she did not get her knowledge wholly from the stars," said Wharton slowly.

"You mean she may have some information?"

"Yes."

"But how do you mean?"

"You remember what Wingate told us as we were coming out—about Melchior and Barengo escaping from the county prison?"

"Yes. But she——"

"She is a gipsy, you know."

"My hat, of course! She may know those rotters—may be a connection of theirs—may know that they are in the neighbourhood, perhaps!" exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly.

"That what's I was thinking."

"That puts a different complexion on the case," Nugent remarked. "If Melchior is about here anywhere, there is certainly danger for you, Harry, and for us, too, as we backed you up that time against the kidnappers. If the old lady knows them, and knows they're after you, it was decent of her to put you on your guard. They might knock her on the head if they knew about it."

"But how could she know Harry by sight?" said Bob.

"May have seen him about the village and learned his name."

"The probablefulness is extreme," said Hurree Singh. "I think we have hit upon the correctfulness of the matter. There are many astrologers in my native country, who tell the fortunes of princes from the stars, and they are greatly believed in; but I have heard my father say that their skill is what you English call spooffulness."

"More spoof than anything else, I fancy," said Bob Cherry. "But here we are at the tuckshop, and it's Inky's treat."

"The treatfulness is great. Pray give the orders for the grubful supplies, and I will perform the payfulness with the cheerful countenance."

And the chums of the Remove made a raid upon the supplies of the village tuckshop, which delighted the heart of Uncle George, the deaf old gentleman who kept the shop, and who depended chiefly upon the custom of the boys of Greyfriars for his livelihood.

Hurree Singh, being a prince in his own country, had ample supplies of pocket-money, which he was anxious to expend upon everybody he met. The

chums of the Remove, however, were very strict upon that point. Hurree Singh had been admitted on an equal footing to the honourable fellowship of Study No. 1, but it was on condition that he supplied just as much as anybody else to the common stock, and no more. But every now and then the chums allowed him to stand an extra treat, delighting his generous heart by so doing. This was one of the rare occasions, and Hurree Singh did things in style.

The chums had purposely dealt very lightly with dinner at Greyfriars, so as to have room, as Bob Cherry expressed it, for the feed at the village shop, so they did full justice to the treat. They were getting towards the finish when Bulstrode and Hazeldene came in. The latter turned red at the sight of Harry Wharton.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove. "I see you're standing treat, Inky! Well, it's only right that a confounded nigger should pay his footing, so I'll have some of those jolly tarts."

"Good idea!" said Hazeldene. "So will I!"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh flushed under his dusky skin.

The term "nigger" was freely applied to the nabob by the more ill-natured boys in the Remove, and Hurree Singh objected to it strongly—not because it was anything disparaging in itself, but because it was applied in a disparaging sense.

"These are jolly tarts," said Bulstrode. "It's Hurree Singh's treat, Vaseline. Hand over half a dozen of them, Uncle George! No objection to my making it half a dozen—eh, Inky?"

"Certainly not," said the nabob quietly.

"I'll have some ginger-pop, too—eh?"

"I have no objectfulness."

"And some of those cream puffs?"

"Just as you like, my esteemed father."

"And a few chocolate biscuits?"

"Order as you fancy, my worthy friend."

The chums of the Remove looked at Hurree Singh in surprise. It was not for them to interfere, but they had not expected Hurree Singh to take Bulstrode's bullying manner so quietly. The Nabob of Bhanipur was the quietest and politest and best-natured lad in the Greyfriars Remove, but they knew well that he did not want for courage, or for determination when it was needed.

"Good!" grinned Bulstrode. "This is all right. Get a move on you, Uncle George! How beastly slow you are!"

"It's the rheumatiz, Master Bulstrode——"

"Hang the rheumatiz! Buck up! I'll have some milk-chocolate, too, to shove in my pocket. No objection—eh, Hurree Singh Jampot?"

"Certainly not," said the nabob placidly. "Why should I object to your ordering anything you like, my honourable and respectable Form fellow?"

Bulstrode stared at him.

"Well, you're going to pay, you know. It's your treat."

Hurree Singh shook his head. "You are labouring under a great mistakefulness, I think," he said. "It is my treat for my chumful friends, not for any esteemed rotter who may happen to come into the shop."

Bulstrode glared, and the chums of the Remove chuckled. They saw now

that Hurree Singh had only been pulling the Remove bully's leg, so to speak.

"Do you mean to say that you're not standing treat?" roared Bulstrode.

"I am standing treat to my honourable chums."

"Are you treating me?"

"Oh, no!"

"Do you mean that?"

"The meanfulness is explicit."

"You—you black rotter! You can shove all those things back, Uncle George! I sha'n't want them!" growled Bulstrode.

The old man gave something like a growl.

"But you ordered them, Master Bulstrode," he said, eyeing the Remove bully with no small disfavour.

"I tell you I don't want them. Do you think I've come here to buy up your blessed shop?" snarled Bulstrode.

"Put them over this side, my esteemed old gentleman," said the nabob. "We can perform the consumefulness."

And the esteemed old gentleman grinned as he obeyed. Bulstrode watched the good things with a hungry eye.

"If you care to make the great apologise, Bulstrode, you may perform the consumefulness," said Hurree Singh, relenting.

"I'll see you hanged first!" grunted Bulstrode. "Give me a bottle of ginger-pop, old rheumatiz! That's all I want!"

Uncle George slammed it down on the counter with no very good grace. Bulstrode was not a good customer. He generally wanted to run accounts, and Uncle George knew by experience that any account Bulstrode ran was likely to keep running.

The Remove bully drank his ginger-pop, and signed to Hazeldene, and left the shop. But Hazeldene did not follow.

"I'll join you with pleasure, Inky," he said. "It's awfully jolly to have you at Greyfriars, and I'm glad you came back."

"The gladfulness is of a grubful sort, I think," said the nabob. "But the joyfulness is welcome, and the grubful supplies are great."

And Hazeldene certainly distinguished himself by the way he wired into those grubful supplies. Hurree Singh settled up the bill, over which Uncle George was purring with delight, and the chums of the Remove left the shop, leaving Hazeldene finishing up the remains of the feast.

There was a gentle smile of satisfaction upon the olive countenance of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The smile broadened as he met the glance of Bulstrode, who was dawdling outside the shop waiting for Hazeldene.

"It was great joyfulness to pull the august leg of the esteemed rotter!" murmured the dusky youth. "The bullyfulness of Bulstrode requires to be taken down pegfully, as you English express it."

"Well, where are we going now?" said Bob Cherry, looking round. "We were thinking of the chapel in the Friar's Wood, but under the circumstances—"

"Why not go there?" asked Wharton.

"Well, if it's possible that those gipsy rotters are hanging about the neighbourhood—"

"Oh, who's afraid of the gipsies?"

"Nobody, that I know of," said Bob, rather nettled. "But—"

"I haven't seen the old chapel," said Wharton. "I want to see it, and have a look at that subterranean passage that leads to Greyfriars. We've seen the Greyfriars end of it. Hang the gipsies!"

"You remember what Wingate said—"

"Oh, hang Wingate!"

"That's all very well, but you wouldn't say hang Wingate if Wingate happened to be in hearing," said Bob, rather irritated by Harry's manner.

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Oh, keep your wool on, you two!" exclaimed Nugent, the peacemaker of No. 1 Study. "Are you going to begin ragging again?"

"I'm not beginning ragging," said Wharton shortly.

"Neither am I," said Bob Cherry. "I'm blessed if I can see what Wharton wants to keep on catching a fellow up for! That old gipsy had him down fine, and no mistake!"

"Oh, keep off that!"

"The keep-offfulness would be more tactful—"

"What do you mean, Cherry?" broke in Harry Wharton hotly.

The curiously candid words of the old gipsy were ranking in his mind, and this allusion to the unflattering character old Nadesha had given him made his quick temper flame up.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bob, wishing he had not spoken, as he saw Wharton's flushed and angry face. Then a feeling of impatience came over him. Why should he always be bearing with Harry's hasty temper? And he went on sharply: "Well, as a matter of fact, the old lady had your character to a T, and you can't deny it, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Harry Wharton!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Alone!

There was a painful silence for a moment or two. Harry Wharton's face had gone hard and set. The wilful temper he had been learning of late to keep in check was out of hand now, and rioting within him.

"Oh, shut up, Bob!" said Nugent uncomfortably. "Don't—"

"Oh, it's always I that have to shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "Why shouldn't Wharton do some of the shutting up, for a change?"

"The shutfulness should be bothful—"

Harry's lips curled bitterly.

"Oh, you may as well out with it, all of you!" he exclaimed. "The old gipsy said I was a pigheaded beast, or something to that effect, and you all think so, so you needn't deny it."

The words were a challenge. Nugent, always pacific, and Hurree Singh, painfully polite, would have passed them over. But Bob Cherry's temper could be as hot as Harry Wharton's on occasion, and the present was one of those occasions. Bob's eyes were flashing, too, now.

"I don't deny it, for one," he exclaimed. "I quite agree with the gipsy, if you want to know. If you get into trouble in your life, it will very likely be due to your rotten, uncertain temper, and that's my opinion!"

"Thank you!" said Harry. "And what's yours, Nugent?"

"I'm not going to quarrel with

you," said Nugent. "Hang it, you seem to be in a beastly temper this afternoon, Harry, and I'm blessed if I can see what all the fuss is about."

Harry shrugged his shoulders—a shrug he had which was irritating even to those who liked him best.

"Well, you don't want a fellow with a beastly temper chumming with you for an afternoon!" he exclaimed. "So long!"

And he turned on his heel. Bob Cherry did not make an effort to detain him, and Hurree Singh, new to these outbreaks of temper, did not know what to do. Frank Nugent made a step after Harry.

"Where are you going?"

"Where you needn't follow."

And Harry Wharton strode away, and disappeared among the trees of the lane. His last words had been too much for even the pacific Nugent, and he had turned back to Bob Cherry and the nabob with a set face.

Harry Wharton walked on with burning eyes and a grim face.

It seemed that the savage temper, so long controlled, was rejoicing like some evil spirit in its freedom at last. It had mastered him, and he did not regret a word he had said, or his abrupt leaving of his chums.

He strode on, and took the first footpath he came to leading away from the lane into the thick woods, green and scented in the sunny spring weather.

He did not glance back once, but he knew that his chums were not following. They had taken him at his word, and he was to have the afternoon to himself.

Harry knew whither the footpath led—to the ruined chapel in the heart of the Friar's Wood.

In ancient days the chapel had been connected with the Greyfriars Abbey, and the existence of the secret subterranean passage connecting the two places was much talked of by the boys of Greyfriars.

Many of the juniors, especially the adventurous spirits of the Remove, were anxious to explore it, but such a proceeding was strictly forbidden by the Head.

The subterranean recesses of Greyfriars were too dangerous for them to be placed within bounds.

Wharton was curious to see the old chapel in the woods, and to look for the hidden passage, and it had been with the intention of exploring the ruin that the chums of the Remove had left the school that afternoon.

The quarrel with his friends made no change in Harry's intention. In fact, the obstinacy of his temper made him more than ever determined to carry out his original plan.

He strode on through the woods, following the tangled footpath, till amid the oaks and beeches he came in sight of the ruined chapel.

It was a wild and beautiful, and very lonely spot. The woods had once been cleared from the spot where the chapel was built, but since the building had fallen to ruin, the vegetation had encroached upon its ancient domain.

Young trees grew amid the masses of broken masonry, and ivy and creeping plants grew thickly over shattered casements and broken walls. Moss-encrusted flagstones were buried in the soil. The grass was thick everywhere. A lonelier or more secluded spot could hardly have been found within the county.

The ruined chapel was rarely visited,



"A born leader of boys, and then of men," said the gipsy. "Yet your life may be wrecked, and, if so, the danger will come from yourself."

save by the Greyfriars lads on half-holidays, and the village folk for picnics. There was no one in sight as Harry Wharton advanced towards the ruins, pushing his way through the clinging bushes.

But suddenly, as he came within full view of the ruins, he started.

A head was raised above the broken casement, a dozen yards from him, and a pair of keen, black eyes looked towards the wood.

A man in the ruins had evidently been disturbed by the sound of the junior forcing his way through the brambles.

Harry's heart stood still for a moment.

For he knew the face!

A dusky, brutal face—the face of a gipsy, an outcast of the Romany tribes, as he knew, for he knew the man!

It was Barenegro, the gipsy, the comrade of Melchior, who had kidnapped Hazeldene's sister and robbed her, and had been brought to justice by the efforts of the Greyfriars juniors.

In a moment Harry realised how terribly true had been the warning of Nadesha.

If Barenegro was here, Melchior was

not far off, and Harry Wharton stood at that moment in greater peril than he had ever been in before.

The gipsies, after their escape from the county prison, had made for this secure lurking-place, undoubtedly remembering it from their previous sojourn in the neighbourhood.

Harry Wharton drew back quickly into the bushes. For the moment he hoped that he had not been seen!

But that hope only lasted a moment. The savage look that came over the dusky face as it peered from the broken casement told him that he had been seen, and recognised!

A shrill whistle burst from Barenegro's lips. Harry Wharton turned to run; but the whistle was answered from the wood, and the next moment a burly figure came bursting through the bushes.

A powerful hand gripped Harry Wharton by the shoulder, and he was dragged through the thickets, struggling ineffectually for freedom.

He was as a child in the hands of his powerful assailant, who did not even look at him, but dragged him hastily towards the ruins, and drew him within the shelter of the crumbling walls.

The ruffian's manner was full of un-easiness. He threw the boy to the ground, and set a knee in his back to pin him there, and then turned his glance back towards the wood, bent his head, and listened with painful intensity.

The silence of the wide woods seemed to reassure him. Barenegro came from the broken casement, his black eyes glittering, and joined the ruffian.

"Melchior! So you caught him!"

"I heard somebody in the wood," muttered the gipsy. "I was following to see who it was—whether a keeper, or perhaps a warder! When I heard your whistle, I knew there was danger. But see, it is only a boy!"

"Boy or not, he had seen me, and knew me."

Melchior started.

"He knew you?"

"Yes. And do you not know him?"

"I have not looked at him. What do you mean?"

Barenegro grinned evilly.

"He's an old acquaintance, comrade, that's all."

Melchior dragged Harry to his feet, and looked at him. Then a savage oath broke from the ruffian's lips.

"Harry Wharton!"

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"

Harry pulled himself together. He was dazed from the rough handling he had received, and, with a ruffian on either side of him, he had no chance of making a dash for freedom. But even in that terrible moment his courage did not fail him.

"Yes, it is I," he said, without a falter in his voice.

Melchior gritted his teeth. "You! Ah, I hoped that I might meet you; and now we meet!"

A look of terrible ferocity was in the black, glittering eyes, and distorting the dusky face. The gipsy's hand went to the belt under his ragged coat.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Melchior's Prize.

Harry Wharton's heart was beating hard. He knew that the gipsy's hand was grasping a weapon, and that the ruffian was in a humour to use it. He faced the scoundrel with a calm face, but a feeling of black despair was creeping into his heart. But Barenegro laid a hand upon his companion's wrist. Melchior shook it off, and glared at him angrily. Barenegro spoke in a low voice.

"Don't be a mad fool, Melchior!"

"Let me alone!"

"Fool! Do you want to make it a hanging matter?"

"I will not let this cub escape! Besides, he knows the secret of our hiding-place now. He will bring the police here upon us."

"If you finish him, they will search for him, fool! It is the riskiest thing you can do. Don't be a mad idiot!"

Melchior hesitated. Then he withdrew his hand sullenly. Whether or not murder had been in his mind, he had given up the thought of a savage deed for the present.

"Have your way," he snarled.

"It is better for both of us."

"Bah! I am sick of your cowardly fears. You have trembled at every sound since we left the cell."

"And no wonder! Every sound may be the footstep of a policeman," said Barenegro. "I tell you that if I am caught, I shall go back to prison, but not to the hangman. Don't be a fool! We cannot remain here."

"But for this cub—"

"Others of his fellows might come at any time. Let us see what he has about him. Perhaps enough to see us on our way."

"If we go, what of Nadesha?"

Harry Wharton started. His surmise that there was a connection between the old gipsy and these scoundrels was evidently correct. The ruffians did not notice him.

"She can follow," said Barenegro. "She will know where to find us, with what she can bring. That will be easy."

"I do not wholly trust her," muttered Melchior. "She—"

"She is a true Romany. She would never betray us."

"I do not trust her. But no matter. Let us see what this brat has about him, and then we can leave him tied up to one of these trees, so that he cannot follow us, or give information of our movements to the police."

"Good! And Nadesha can release him when she returns."

"Or he can remain here all night!" said Melchior, with a brutal laugh.

Harry Wharton set his teeth. That should not happen if he could help it.

He could offer no resistance to the ruffians. Barenegro held him in an iron grip, while Melchior went through his pockets.

Harry's heart sank as the gipsy thrust his hand into the breast-pocket of his jacket. He remembered the nabob's diamond reposing there in the leather case.

The ruffian's hand was upon it. He drew out the case, and looked at it in some surprise. He felt for the spring, and the lid shot up. A cry of amazement broke from Melchior, and was echoed by his companion.

"Burn me!" cried Melchior—his usual savage oath. "A diamond!"

"A diamond?"

"And it is a real stone—a prize! By all that's lucky, it must be worth a hundred pounds!"

Barenegro's eyes glistened.

"A hundred pounds! Are you sure?"

"That sum at least, I should say!"

Melchior held the diamond up to the light. Barenegro fixed his eyes upon it greedily. In the excitement of finding the prize, the two ruffians gave little attention to Harry Wharton. The boy's heart beat hard. Here was his chance at last.

It was hard to abandon the diamond in the hands of the thieves; but to escape now was the best way to get a chance of recapturing it.

He drew quickly back, jerking himself from the relaxed hold of Barenegro, and then turned and darted away. The gipsies turned swiftly round. Melchior sprang after him with an oath.

"Seize him!"

But it was too late. Harry Wharton sprang recklessly through a broken casement, plunging into a mass of fern and nettles outside. Barenegro hung back from the reckless leap.

Melchior, with a savage snarl, leaped after the boy, caught his foot in a stone, and rolled over in the nettles, yelling with pain and rage.

Wharton had stumbled, but he was upon his feet again in a flash, and tearing away into the woods. Crashing through the thickets, he dashed on; and then, struck by a sudden thought, he paused to listen to hear if he were pursued.

There was no sound of footsteps behind him. He turned back, and peered through the bushes. The thought was in his mind that the gipsy had been injured by the fall, which had been a heavy one. He half expected to see Melchior groaning amid the ferns.

Instead of that, he saw the ruffian bending down muttering curses, and evidently searching for something that had dropped into the ferns. Harry Wharton laughed slightly. He guessed that it was the diamond that had fallen as the gipsy rolled over, and fear of losing the valuable stone had stopped the pursuit.

But it was no time to linger. Melchior might find the stone any second, and there was Barenegro, too, to deal with.

Harry Wharton turned again and ran into the wood, and found his way to the footpath by which he had approached the old chapel. There he dropped into a slacker pace. What was he to do now?

His brows wrinkled as he thought of the position. His first thought had been of flight, to save himself from the brutal violence of the gipsies; his second, to

save the diamond from the clutches of Melchior.

But how was that to be effected? Long before he could bring the police on the scene the ruffians would have vanished. If only his chums had been there!

Harry's face flushed deeply as he thought of it. He had risked his life at the ruins through going there alone—all through a hasty word or two, in which he had himself been mostly to blame.

The shock of the adventure he had just been through had cleared the air, as it were, and there was nothing like rancour in Harry's breast now.

If only his chums had been with him! They were doubtless not far away; perhaps within sound of his whistle—the signal of the Greyfriars Remove. But he shrank from the thought of calling them to his aid. He had deliberately broken with them. It would be worse than mean to ask them to help him now that he wanted assistance.

"Never!" he muttered aloud.

And he shook his head decidedly. He did not wish the breach to remain unhealed, but the overtures must come from the other side.

He walked along slowly, his brow moody with thought, when all of a sudden there was a rustle in the wood. He started, and sprang to the middle of the path, his fists clenched, his eyes flashing, the thought of the gipsies in his mind at once. But a cheery hail relieved his fears.

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry's cheerful voice. Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh came out of the trees, and all three of them looked curiously at Harry Wharton. Harry unclenched his fists, and turned crimson.

"So, it's you!" he said, forcing a laugh.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Did you think we were going for you?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no."

"Then what did you jump for like a startled hare, and stick up in an attitude like a giddy prize-fighter?"

Harry Wharton laughed rather un-easily.

"You startled me. I—I thought it was the gipsies."

"Got the gipsies on the brain, haven't you?"

"I have just met them," said Harry Wharton, taking no notice of Bob Cherry's tone, which was just a little inclined to be chipping.

This piece of information, however, was quite sufficient to banish every other thought from the minds of the chums of the Remove.

"You have met them!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes, at the old chapel."

"My solitary hat!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "You have been in dangerfulness since you left us, my worthy chum?"

"Yes. They collared me at the old chapel. They're in hiding there."

Bob Cherry's eyes flashed.

"Good! We'll lag them—shall we? There are enough of us to do it. We're four to two, and we can easily cut ourselves cudgels in the thicket."

Harry Wharton hesitated.

"But how did you get away from them, Harry?" asked Nugent, speaking in his usual quiet, friendly way, just as if nothing had happened between the

chums. That was Nugent's usual way, and it was about the best way possible of closing a breach like the present one.

"They have taken the nabob's diamond," said Harry, dropping into the old chummy way at once. "That gave me a chance to give them the slip."

"Have they collared the diamond? My hat!"

"We'll get it back again," said Bob Cherry.

"Certainly. The rofulness ought to be punished, and the rascally rotters ought to be laid by the toes, as you English express it."

"By the heels," laughed Harry.

"By the toes, I think, is the more correctful expression," said the nabob, gently but firmly. "I studied the beautiful language of this country under a Bengalee tutor, and picked up many of your excellent and ludicrous expressions, as well as the classic language of poet Shakespeare."

"Make it toes," said Bob Cherry. "Anything to please the pigs. I say, are you fellows game to go and get the nabob's diamond back?"

"Rather!" said Nugent.

"I say, you chaps," said Harry Wharton hesitatingly. "I—I'm sorry I bolted off like that. I was a bit out of temper—"

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "As a matter of fact, we thought you were probably gone to the ruins, and we were coming after you, when we ran into you here. Let's get some sticks, and then go on the giddy warpath."

"The stickfulness will be the powerful argument with the esteemed ruffians," said Hurree Singh. "It is what you call a good wheezy idea."

The juniors all had pocket-knives, and they were not long in cutting four stout cudgels in the thicket.

Thus armed, they followed the footpath swiftly towards the old chapel. If the gipsies were still there, there would be a fight for the nabob's diamond!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Juniors Against Gipsies.

"Hush!"

Harry Wharton muttered the word as he caught sight of the ruined walls of the chapel through the green trees.

The juniors of Greyfriars came to a halt.

Gripping their cudgels firmly, they peered through the leaves towards the ruins, in search of a sign of the foe.

There was nothing to be seen of the gipsies.

Had they already taken their departure? It was less than ten minutes since Harry had left Melchior searching for the dropped diamond among the ferns.

"Better go and see," said Wharton. "Lead on, Macduff!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"We are ready to follow the leadfulness of our esteemed and ludicrous chief," purred the nabob.

Harry Wharton led the way from the trees towards the ancient doorway of the chapel, now crumbled into mere ruins.

The masses of ancient masonry prevented the boys from seeing into the interior of the building till they were close to the gaps in the wall.

Then Harry came to a sudden halt.

"Look!" he muttered.

His hand rose to point. Through a gap in the old stone wall they caught sight of two ragged and savage figures. They were recognised at a glance! Melchior and Barengro were still in the ruins.

The Greyfriars juniors crept nearer. "Now you have found it, let us go," Barengro was saying.

"I am quite ready."

"There is little to carry," said Barengro, with a snarl, "but the sooner we are gone from here now, the safer we shall be."

"If you had not let him get away—"

"Bah! It was your fault as much as mine!"

"Your infernal clumsiness—"

"If we waste time here bandying words, we may finish our dispute in a prison cell," snarled Barengro. "I am going, whether you come or not."

"Burn me! I am coming!"

Harry Wharton glanced at his comrades.

"They're coming out this way," he muttered. "Down among the stones, quick, and jump out on the rotters as they pass."

"Good!"

"It is a wheezy good idea!"

"Silence now!"

The juniors crouched into cover, waiting with beating hearts for the gipsies to pass. Courageous as they were, they knew it was no light task to tackle two desperate ruffians, who would stick at nothing for their liberty.

The heavy footsteps of the gipsies crunched on the stones, and the two burly forms came slouching by.

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet.

"Sock into 'em!" he shouted.

The ruffians were taken utterly aback. Before they could make a movement, the four juniors of Greyfriars were upon them with whirling cudgels.

Melchior received two of the blows on his arm, and went to the ground, yelling like a wild animal with the pain and rage.

Barengro dodged, and darted off into the wood, with Hurree Singh and Nugent in hot pursuit, brandishing their weapons.

Harry dropped his cudgel, and flung himself upon Melchior.

The gipsy struggled savagely, but Bob Cherry took a grip on his collar, and held him down to the ground, while Harry knelt on his chest.

"You are our prisoner!" said Harry.

The only reply was a savage oath.

"Where is the diamond?"

"Find out!"

"I intend to. Hold him fast, Bob, and crack him over the head with your cudgel if he struggles."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Trust me!" he exclaimed. "Now, you mongrel, keep still, or I'll crack your topknot like a walnut. Do you hear?"

Melchior ground his teeth, but Bob Cherry was flourishing the cudgel in a rather dangerous way, and a blow might easily have cracked the gipsy's head. So Melchior contented himself with oaths, and ceased to struggle.

Harry Wharton was pretty certain that the diamond would be upon Melchior, not his comrade; and he was right.

In a minute or less he fished the leather case out of an inner pocket in the gipsy's rags, and opened it to ascertain that the diamond was there.

"Got it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

And Harry Wharton snapped the case shut, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Good! Now we'll get this scoundrel to the lock-up."

"Where's the other, I wonder?" muttered Wharton, looking round.

Barengro was not to be seen. Hurree Singh and Nugent were returning to the spot, with disappointment written upon their faces. Barengro had evidently given them the slip in the wood.

"Never mind," said Bob Cherry cheerily. "We've got the worst of the two rotters. Here, hold him! He's wriggling like a beastly eel! Hold him, I say!"

Harry grasped the struggling ruffian. Melchior was throwing the whole of his great strength into a terrible effort to free himself.

The sight of the two juniors returning from the unsuccessful pursuit of Barengro warned him that if he was to escape, he had not a moment to spare. With four foes to tackle his chance would be gone.

So great was the strength of the gipsy, so terrible his efforts, that he gained his feet, and in the struggle Bob Cherry was dashed against a fragment of masonry, and he released his hold upon Melchior with a sharp cry of pain.

Harry Wharton, clung desperately to the ruffian, shouting to Nugent, and Nugent and the nabob dashed towards them at full speed.

But with a tremendous effort Melchior tore himself free from Wharton, and hurled the junior to the ground just as Nugent and Hurree Singh came up.

Hurree Singh stumbled over Wharton, and fell into the grass, and Nugent made a clutch at Melchior, and was hurled aside by a savage blow.

The gipsy fled away into the wood like a deer, and in a few seconds disappeared among the trees.

Harry Wharton staggered rather dizzily to his feet. He passed his hand over his eyes in a dazed way. Bob Cherry jumped up with a yell.

"After him!"

He was dashing away in pursuit of the fugitive, when Harry Wharton caught his arm and pulled him back.

"No good!" he exclaimed. "He's gone! No good, Bob!"

Bob Cherry rather reluctantly halted. But a moment's reflection was sufficient to show him that Harry was right, and that it would be useless to pursue the gipsy through the tangled woods.

"You've got the diamond?" asked Nugent.

"Yes," replied Harry, "that's safe enough. After all, that was the chief thing, and we're not called upon to do the work of the police, are we?"

"No, but it would be a jolly good thing to get those two rotters under lock and key; and safer for us, too," said Nugent. "We had better call in at the police-station and tell them about it, and let them know all we can. It will help them to catch the scoundrels."

"Good! We'll do that. Hallo!" Harry Wharton broke off. "Look there!"

There was a glimmer of red among the green bushes, and the gipsy woman who had told the juniors' fortunes came into sight. She started at the sight of the boys, and came quickly towards them.

"So she belongs to those rotters!" muttered Nugent. "Yet she had rather a good face, I thought. But she's one of them."

"Yes, I heard them mention her by name. She seems to be a sort of scout for them, and I expect supplies them with food. Of course, they can't venture to go into the villages themselves."

"She would get into trouble if the policeful sahibs knew that," Hurree Singh remarked. "It is what your lawyers call compounding a felonious intent."

"Ha, ha, ha! I never heard of that crime before," chuckled Bob Cherry. "But I say, the old lady is going to speak to us. Hallo, ma'am! Your friends have hooked it."

Nadesha looked at them anxiously. "Have you seen Melchior?" she cried.

"Yes," said Harry. "He stole a diamond from me, and we have taken it back."

"He is gone?"

"Yes."

"Which way did he go?"

Harry pointed to the wood. Then he stepped a little nearer to the gipsy.

"Nadesha, you are old enough to be my mother, but I can give you a word of advice," he said quietly. "Those two men are utter scoundrels. Let them alone. You look honest and kind—I believe you are so. Have nothing more to do with them, then."

The old gipsy looked at him with a curious expression.

"A true Romany does not desert one of her blood in the hour of distress," she said proudly.

"I have heard that they are outcasts from their tribe," said Harry. "The true Romany does not steal, I have heard, and those scoundrels are thieves and worse."

Nadesha nodded.

"It may be so. But my faith belongs to them, while they are in danger, at least. But you do not understand—and I have no time to lose."

And without another word the old gipsy hurried away into the wood, and the red shawl disappeared from view.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

An Invitation from the Fourth Form.

"Wharton!"

"Hallo, Temple!"

The chums of the Remove were coming in at the gate of Greyfriars. They had called in at the police-station after coming back from the ruined chapel, and they had found Inspector Snoop very glad of the information they gave him. The inspector promised that Melchior and Barendo should be laid by the heels before dark—whereat Bob Cherry coughed, and Nugent winked at Hurree Singh, and the Indian lad was all smiles. Wharton replied solemnly that he was sure of it, and they left the station and strolled back to the school. And as they went in, Wharton was hailed by Temple, of the Fourth.

Now, the Fourth Form at Greyfriars was a high and mighty Form. The Remove, or Lower Fourth, was considered "not in it" with the Upper Fourth. Temple was head of the Fourth, and he was a very great man; at least in his own opinion and that of his immediate friends. Temple was a rather elegant individual, given to dressy tastes, and his neckties were the

envy of the Form. Temple adopted a patronising air towards the Remove—an air which the Removites were always swift to resent. They found it hard to bow down even to the mighty seniors of the Fifth and Sixth, and they were certainly not going to kow-tow, as Bob Cherry expressed it, to any Fourth-Form rotters unhung.

The air of a good-natured patron was very noticeable about Temple as he hailed Harry Wharton at the gate, and Wharton's reply blended familiarly with contempt in a really skilful way.

"I want to speak to you, Wharton."

Harry glanced at his chums.

"Do you mind me speaking to this chap?" he asked.

Bob Cherry, entering at once into the joke, assumed an expression of profound thought.

"Well, you see, Wharton, there's the dignity of the Remove to consider," he remarked.

"Yes, that's what I was thinking of," said Harry gravely.

"Cut it short, anyway," said Nugent.

"Under the circumstances of the case, the shortfulness should be great," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Temple looked annoyed.

"Look here, you kids, if I condescend to speak to you—"

"I can give you three minutes," said Harry Wharton, taking out his watch.

"Make the best of it. I know you're rather long-winded, Temple."

"Yes, rather," said Bob Cherry.

"I've heard that some of the audience go to sleep when Temple's making his speeches in the Fourth Form Debating Society."

"I was told that a member was found dead in his chair once," said Nugent.

"The talkfulness of the honourable rotter is great!"

Temple turned red.

"Oh, don't be so funny!" he exclaimed. "When a chap is going to do you a favour, you might be a little more polite about it."

"Ladle out the favours," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "What's in the wind, anyway?"

"One minute gone," said Harry.

"You know, we chaps in the Fourth—the Upper Fourth I mean, of course—have a debating society meeting in the evenings in the class-room—"

"Haven't we just said so?"

"Well, it has been proposed to admit the Lower Fourth to the meetings," said Temple beamingly.

"To admit the what?"

"The Lower Fourth—the Remove—your Form."

"Call it the Remove, old son—there's nothing low about us; and, as a matter of fact, we do really take the top place at Greyfriars."

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"The topfulness of the Remove is extreme. As your Poet Shakespeare remarks, 'What's in a title? A rose by any other nomenclature would be equally gifted with the honourable and agreeable scent.'"

"Oh, ring off!" said Temple. "When I hear you talk English it sets my teeth on edge—it does, really. We are doing this thing as a favour to you kids. We thought that, as your elders and superiors, we ought to improve your minds. You can't deny that they want a lot of improving."

"Well, I take that as really kind of you," said Harry Wharton gravely.

"But what's the wheeze? Do we take part in the debates?"

"Certainly not," said Temple

promptly. "You are admitted to the room on debate nights, that's all. You sit down quietly and listen."

"What do we listen to?"

"A lot of piffle," said Bob Cherry.

"To the debates, of course," said Temple warmly. "The subject this evening is, whether the present system of the government of public schools is satisfactory. We are going to have a ripping debate on that subject."

"Yes, it sounds promising."

"I am up to speak, and Dabney and Bates. It will be worth listening to, I can tell you, if you want to improve your minds."

"Well, of course, we want to do that."

"Good! Then come."

"But we mustn't join in the debate?" asked Nugent, taking the cue from Harry, who had given him a sign that he had "something on."

"Certainly not. It would be an infraction of the dignity of the Fourth Form to allow Remove kids to join in the debates," said Temple. "But you can ask questions, of course."

"Oh, I see—we come out strong at question-time."

"Yes, you can ask one question each, if you like, and the speakers will reply to you, to clear up any doubts in your minds. I know you'll find it improving."

"That's really kind of you, Temple."

"You'll come, then?"

Harry looked at his companions and winked. The chums of the Remove all bowed simultaneously at the head of the Fourth Form, looking a great deal like a set of Chinese mandarins.

"Rather!" said Harry.

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, we'll come!" exclaimed Nugent.

"We shall be happy to seek the improvement of the brainfulness in the talkful debates of your honourable and esteemed rotten friends," said Hurree Singh.

"Good! The Fourth Form-room at seven sharp, then."

"Right-ho!"

And Temple strolled away. Dabney, his chum in the Fourth Form, joined him as he left the group of Removites.

"Are they coming?" asked Dabney.

Temple nodded.

"Yes, they were glad to come. Of course, they're pleased at our taking any notice of them, Dab."

"They ought to be," said Dab rather doubtfully. "Have you explained that they won't be allowed to bother us with any talking?"

"Yes, they've agreed to that, except at question-time."

"Good. Only those four coming?"

"Well, yes, I thought it would be better to try it with those four first, before letting in the bulk of the Remove."

"Good idea!"

"Yes, I think it's a good idea all round," Temple confessed. "You see, the Remove are always getting their backs up at us, pretending they're as good as the Fourth Form, and all that, and we've had lots of rows. Now, this is a way of putting them in their place, and making them follow our lead quietly and submissively, as they ought to do, without any bother."

"You're right there."

All the same, Dabney looked rather dubiously across at the Removites. Had they been grinning he would have suspected something. But the faces of the famous four were quite grave and

thoughtful as they strolled across the Close to the schoolhouse. It was evident that the condescension of the Fourth Form leader had greatly impressed the usually unruly juniors of the Remove.

The four chums retained the same gravity of demeanour as they entered the house and went upstairs, and not till they were safely within the closed door of Study No 1 did they break out into any expression of the merriment that was consuming them.

Then Harry Wharton broke into a laugh, and Bob Cherry sat down on a chair and shrieked, and Nugent yelled, and Hurree Singh cackled away till Billy Bunter, who was getting tea in the study, asked him if he had an alarm clock going off in his neck.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"How kind of them!" said Harry. "We're going into the Fourth Form-room like a set of good little boys, to have our minds improved."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're not to take part in the debates," grinned Nugent. "Our voices are not to be heard in the assembly of grave and reverend seigneurs. My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Except at question-time!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "At question-time we come out strong, and have any little doubts in our minds removed by intelligent explanation from Fourth-Form piffers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The questionfulness will be terrific," said Hurree Singh. "That is where we come out in a strongful manner. We must be early at the meeting, my worthy chums. As your English proverb says, 'Procrastination is the receiver, and as bad as the thief.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ain't you ready for tea?" demanded Billy Bunter. "I've got it ready. I should have had to have mine alone if you hadn't come in."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry, looking at the well-spread tea-table. "Blessed if I knew we were so well supplied, Billy!"

"You weren't. I ordered these things at the tuckshop."

"My hat! Cheer, boys, cheer! It's Bunter's treat!"

"Not at all," said Billy Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles. "I'm going to stand a treat when my postal-order arrives. I'm really expecting it by every post, but it's delayed."

"Where does this grub come from, then?"

"From the school shop."

"I know that, ass! But who pays for it?"

"It's not paid for yet."

"Oh!"

"It comes to ten shillings the lot," said the Owl. "You see, I thought you'd be hungry after your run in the woods, so I had a ripping feed ready. There's half-a-crown chalked up against each of you at the shop. See?"

"Why, you cheeky young imp—"

"I don't think that's a grateful way of speaking, Cherry, after all the trouble I've taken," said Billy Bunter, in a tone of remonstrance. "You wouldn't find many fellows in the Remove caring whether you were hungry or not after an afternoon out. I think it was very thoughtful of me."

"I suppose it was—and you'd have cleared the board, I expect, if we hadn't



Amid a perfect hurricane of shot and shell, this gallant sergeant of the Hussars, in defiance of all risks, succeeded in carrying a fallen comrade to safety. By great good fortune, both the hero and the horse he rode came out unscathed from the death-trap.

come in," said Bob Cherry. "Never mind; I'm jolly hungry, and as for the bill, that can wait, or we'll sell Bunter's watch and pay it—"

"Oh, I say, Cherry!"

"Dish up the eggs, Billy, and don't talk! We're hungry, and we've to attend an important debate to-night."

And the chums of the Remove were soon heartily discussing the tea so thoughtfully provided for them by Billy Bunter at their own expense.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Interview Between Bars.

"Is Wharton here?"

A Third-Form fag put his head in at the study door just as the chums of the Remove were rising from the tea-table to prepare for their visit to the meeting of the Fourth Form Debating Society. Harry glanced at him.

"Yes, I'm here, kid. What's wanted?"

"Note for you from your sweet-heart," said the cheeky fag, tossing a crumpled envelope on the table. "Ripping girl, too!"

Harry coloured, and his chums grinned.

"What do you mean, Perkins, you cheeky young rascal?" exclaimed Harry.

"She spotted me inside the gate through the bars," said the fag, grinning. "She asked me if I knew Master Wharton, and I said I had heard of a rotter of that name who was not kicked out of the Remove yet."

"Go on, Perkins. Who was it?" said Bob Cherry.

"A gipsy lady," said the fag, "old enough to be my grandmother. But there's no accounting for tastes."

"Get out!" said Harry Wharton.

The chums had looked at one another quickly at the mention of the gipsy. The thought of old Nadesha came into every mind at once. But what could the old gipsy want with Harry Wharton?

The fag looked aggrieved.

"That's a nice way to talk to a chap who has brought you a billet-doux!" he exclaimed. "Isn't that letter worth a jam-tart?"

"Give him some tarts, Billy, and kick him out!"

Billy accordingly bestowed a couple of jam-tarts and a hearty kick upon the fag, who, however, dodged the latter and cut off with the former. Billy lost his balance and sat down, and Bob Cherry slammed the door.

"Now read the letter, Harry. We're all curious."

"The strangefulness of the communication stimulates curiosity."

Harry opened the envelope, and read aloud the single sentence that was written inside.

"I want to speak to you.—NADESHA."

It was from the old gipsy. Harry looked at his chums, and they looked at him. They did not know what to make of the curious communication.

"What can she want to speak to me about?" said Harry.

Nugent shook his head. He gave it up, for one.

"Can't be another warning," said

Bob Cherry. "You're safe enough here."

"Better go and see her," said Nugent.

"True. I suppose this means that she's still at the gate, and I'm to go down there and see her?" said Harry thoughtfully.

"No doubt."

"Well, I'll buzz off. As she says me, you fellows had better not come. I'll tell you about it afterwards."

"There goes a quarter to seven," said Bob Cherry, as the school clock chimed out. "You haven't any time to lose."

"If I'm not back in time, you chaps go to the Fourth Form-room, and I'll follow when I get in," said Harry Wharton, taking up his cap.

"Right you are!"

Harry left the study in a somewhat puzzled mood. What the old gipsy could have to say to him was a mystery. But he had already a liking for Nadesha in his heart. He had seen in her face that she was good and kind, and he wondered at her connection with the two brutal ruffians whom she was aiding to escape from the meshes of the law, but doubtless the strong Romany feeling as to the claims of kindred accounted for that.

The Close was dark now; it was considerably past locking-up time. A few boys were there in the dusk, crossing the Close, but there was no one near the gates. Harry hurried down to the great stone gateway, and there, in the dark shadow of the arch, he caught

sight of a face on the other side of the iron bars of the gate—a dusky face, with bright black eyes, the head covered by a red shawl. It was Nadesha!

The gipsy woman uttered an eager exclamation as the boy came quickly to the gate and stopped.

"It is you?"

"It is I, Nadesha," said Harry. "I thought the note must be from you. I am glad to see you. But what brings you here?"

"I must speak to you."

"Well, I am here."

"You are in danger. Listen! Melchior took a large diamond from you to-day in the ruin in the Friar's Wood."

"Yes; but we got it back."

"Melchior is furious at the way you used him."

"He deserved worse."

"That may be," said Nadesha. "But he is furious, and he is determined to revenge himself upon you, and to obtain possession of the diamond, which he imagines is of great value—sufficient to enrich him for a long time, if he could obtain it."

"It is of great value—a hundred pounds, at least."

Nadesha looked at the boy sharply.

"How came you to possess such a stone, then?"

"It was given me by my friend Hurree Singh, whom you saw with me to-day. He is a prince of India."

"Then Melchior is right, and his project is not so mad as I thought. The

police have been hunting him closely, and he must leave this part of the country; but he needs money—or something he can turn into money—and he is determined not to go till he has obtained possession of the diamond, and revenged himself upon you."

"Thank you, Nadesha! I shall be on my guard."

The gipsy drew a hurried breath.

"You do not understand. It is not an ambush in the woods you have to fear now."

"What is his intention, then?"

"He is coming here!"

"Here!" exclaimed Harry, startled.

"To Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

Harry Wharton stared at the gipsy through the bars of the gate in amazement. The news was certainly startling enough.

"But—but I don't understand," he said. "How is he coming here? How can he come here?"

"I believe he is coming to-night."

"Oh, I see! You mean a burglary?"

"Yes."

Harry's heart beat hard. He understood now, and the thought of what might have happened but for this warning made his heart beat. In the dead of night the savage gipsy might have gained an entrance to Greyfriars—might have found his way to the Remove dormitory, and then—

The junior shuddered.

The gipsy woman's black eyes were fastened upon his face anxiously.

COAL AT 1/- A TON

Astonishing Invention Which Makes One Ton of Coal Equal Two.

Your Opportunity To Save Pounds In Housekeeping.

1 CWT. OF COAL LASTS OUT 2 CWTs. THIS EQUALS 1 CWT. OF COAL FREE.

Housewives and wage-earners, here is an opportunity to positively save pounds! A revolution has been effected in the production of an economical fuel saver, and it is now possible to make ONE cwt. of coal go as far as two cwt. usually goes. Instead of the small household finding it necessary to purchase 2 cwt. of coal in one week, one will now be more than enough. Larger households need only lay in $\frac{1}{2}$ ton where they have in the past bought a ton. Think of the saving this means at a time when money is scarce and coal and foodstuffs are expensive. It is nothing more nor less than a blessing.

SCIENCE versus NATURE.

Science has demonstrated how it can triumph over Nature, for here is a product of mankind which actually improves Nature and makes coal give out just as much heat as usual, but uses only half the energy. Therefore a coal-fire will burn twice as long, with only one making-up. This means that housewives can have fires in kitchen or drawing-room and be as cosy as they like, and yet not worry about enormous coal bills.

GOAL-ORE—THE HEART OF THE COAL.

It is nothing more nor less than the scientific adaptation of the natural elements of heat storing as discovered by the eminent Professor who conducted the experiments. The application of Coal-Ore has demonstrated infallibly that coal can be made to last twice as long and yet still give out the same heat.

REMARKABLE SUCCESS OF COAL-ORE.

So remarkable was the success of Coal-Ore that the Professor decided to give to the public the result of his discoveries. It is now possible for every housewife to

equal success on slack or coke. A mixed fire can therefore be made even more economical. How advantageous must Coal-Ore be for use in factories, schoolrooms, hospitals, kitchens, institutions, and the like, where economy in fuelling is all important, it is easy to see.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

Naturally such a sensational invention is bound to be followed by scores of spurious imitations. We therefore impress upon the public the necessity for insisting upon COAL-ORE, the pioneer coal-saver, which is sold at the specially advantageous rate of 1s. boxes, postage and packing 2d. extra, enough for one ton of coal, or 3 for 2s. 9d., post free. Agents wanted everywhere.

We welcome any inquiries, and will send money back if you are not satisfied that Coal-Ore, properly applied, will effect a saving of 50 per cent. Remember three things:

1. Coal-Ore prolongs the life of coal, slack or coke.
2. Coal-Ore increases the heat of coal, slack or coke.
3. Coal-Ore decreases soot, smoke and ashes, and does not smell or give off fumes.

Write now! Coal is daily advancing in price, and Coal-Ore is always ready to save your money.

COAL-ORE CO., 117, BYRON HOUSE, 85, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

AGENTS WANTED.

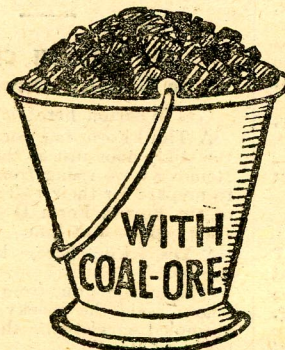
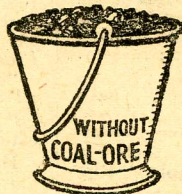


Illustration showing the remarkable saving effected by "Coal-Ore."

treat any quantity of coal, whether in the scuttle or the cellar, with equal facility. A single shilling packet will be ample to treat a TON OF COAL. This means that the benefits of a whole ton of coal are obtained for a shilling! In other words, your coal bill is cut in two!

TREATS COAL SLACK OR COKE EQUALLY WELL.

Not only can Coal-Ore be used in the treatment of coal, but it can be used with

Nadesha saw the colour there waver for a moment. But only for a moment.

"So Melchior is going to enter the school to-night," said Harry quietly. "Good! But you, Nadesha—how comes it that you give us this warning?"

"To save your life."
"You think he would—would—"
Harry shuddered again.

"Yes," she nodded. "Either that, or some terrible injury at least."
"Thank you, Nadesha! But—but now I know, I must tell Dr. Locke. He will be watched for—he will be arrested."

"I know it."
"Then you have made up your mind to let him be taken?"

"What choice had I, when it was a question of that or of this crime?" said the old gipsy bitterly. "I pleaded with him, and he was adamant, and then he struck me."

"Struck you!" exclaimed Harry, with a start.

The gipsy drew the red shawl aside, and showed a mark upon the temple—a mark clotted round with blood.

"He left me senseless in the wood," she said, in a low voice; "whether I woke again to life he knew not, nor cared."

"The brute—the cowardly brute!"
The words broke hotly from Harry Wharton.

Nadesha smiled. She drew the shawl about her head again.

"That blow was the end. I have done with him. But, even then I should not have betrayed him, but for you. I would not leave you to this danger. But now you know."

She made a movement to depart.
"Stop!" exclaimed Harry Wharton hurriedly—"stop, Nadesha! You have not told me enough! When is Melchior coming?"

"Some hour in the dead of night. I can tell you no more than that."

"He is sure to come to-night?"

"Yes, I think so. Now that the police are so close upon his track, every hour he spends in this neighbourhood is full of terror to him."

"Yes, I suppose so. But how does he propose to enter? It is not easy to get into a building like Greyfriars."

"I do not know. But he knows a way, I think, for he spoke with complete confidence of being able to enter the school at pleasure."

Harry Wharton looked puzzled. A skilled burglar, doubtless, would not find it more difficult to break into Greyfriars than into any other place. But this ruffian of the heath and the woods was not likely to be skilled in the burglar's art. Yet there was no doubting the information conveyed by Nadesha.

"I shall have to warn the Head—Dr. Locke—Nadesha."

"I know. Let matters take their course now. Barenegro refuses to join in the enterprise; he knows it might end in hanging," said the gipsy grimly. "Melchior will come alone. Barenegro has already fled. As for the other, let him take his doom."

The gipsy drew her shawl closer about her. The night wind was cold. She again made a movement to go. But Harry Wharton spoke again eagerly: "Wait a little, Nadesha. Where are you going?"

She did not reply.
"Your people—what will they say of this, if they come to know it—and Barenegro will guess, and may tell."

"I shall not go back to my people."

"You must not go like this. Besides, the Head may think I am romancing. You must come to him, to tell him what you have told me."

Nadesha hesitated.
"Promise me, Nadesha, that you will remain while I go to speak to the doctor," said Harry Wharton persuasively. "I cannot open the gate, but I will not be long."
She nodded.

"I will remain."
"Good! I will be quick!"

And Harry Wharton cut off swiftly across the gloomy Close towards the principal's house. Seven chimed out from the tower, but Wharton had forgotten the meeting of the Fourth Form Debating Society by this time. There were more important matters to think of just now than the meeting of Temple, Dabney, and the other debaters. Harry mounted the steps of the principal's house and rang the bell.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Nadesha's Warning.

Dr. Locke was seated in the drawing-room when he received an announcement that a junior named Wharton wished to speak to him very urgently. The Head smiled and frowned, and glanced apologetically at Mrs. Locke. The Head's wife, a kindly lady with a grave, gentle face, smiled, too. She had noticed Wharton more than once.

"Let him come in by all means," she said.

"Very well," said the Head; "you may admit him, Mary."

So Harry Wharton was shown in by a semi-serious maid. The junior's face was very earnest and excited. Mrs. Locke glanced at him curiously.

Harry bowed to the Head and his wife, and stood, cap in hand, the colour coming a little into his cheeks.

"Well, Wharton," said Dr. Locke, "I hear that you desire to see me on very particular business?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is rather unusual for a headmaster to be interviewed by a junior, especially after school hours, but doubtless you have a very powerful motive."

The irony of the remark was not lost upon Harry.

On Harry Wharton's first coming to Greyfriars, he had had what the other fellows regarded as altogether too good an opinion of himself and his importance, and that fact had not been lost upon the doctor. There had been more than one interview in Dr. Locke's study, of a more or less painful nature. Harry flushed as he realised that the Head set his present visit down to a fresh attack of bumpiness.

But Mrs. Locke's kindly glance encouraged him, and he answered quietly:

"Yes, sir."
"Well, please explain yourself, Wharton. It is close upon dinner," said the Head, looking at his watch. "I can give you a few minutes."

"If you please, sir, there is to be a burglary at Greyfriars to-night, and I thought I ought to tell you about it."

A bombshell exploding in the room could hardly have startled the listeners more. Dr. Locke gave quite a jump, and his wife uttered an exclamation.

"Are you serious, Wharton?"
"Quite serious, sir!"

"Do you mean that you have learned that a robbery is intended?"

"That is the case, sir."

"Then you did quite right to come to me," said the Head. "Pray go on, and tell me all about it, Wharton!"

"Certainly, sir!"

And Harry Wharton, in a few concise sentences, explained about the adventure at the ruins in the afternoon, and the visit of Nadesha to the school.

Dr. Locke listened in amazement.

"You should have reported this to me before, about this afternoon's happening," said the Head. "But never mind! Where is this diamond you speak of?"

"I have it here, sir," said Harry, taking the case from his pocket. "I did not wish Hurree Singh to give me so valuable a thing, but I felt that I could not refuse a parting gift—and, indeed, he gave me no chance!"

He handed the leather case to the doctor.

The Head uttered an exclamation as he opened it, and the nabob's diamond flashed and sparkled into view.

"What a splendid stone!" said Mrs. Locke.

"Splendid indeed!" said the Head. "It is not possible for such a stone to remain in the care of a junior, Wharton. With your permission, I will lock it up in safety until the end of the Term."

"I should be glad if you would do so, sir."

"Very good! Now, about this gipsy; you say she is waiting at the gate," said the Head thoughtfully, as he slipped the little case into his pocket.

"Yes, sir. I asked her to wait, as I thought you might like her to corroborate what I have just told you."

"That was quite right, Wharton!"

"I am curious to see her," said Mrs. Locke. "What were you about to say, Wharton? There is something else in your mind, I can see."

Harry gave her a grateful look.

"Yes, ma'am! I was thinking that—"

"You may speak freely, Wharton," said the Head, kindly enough.

"Well, sir, I was thinking—that could be done for old Nadesha, sir," said the boy, colouring. "You see—she has broken with her tribe by giving us this warning, for they are sure to know about it, and—"

"And she is destitute?" said Mrs. Locke softly.

"Yes, ma'am, that is it. It seems a shame that she should go like this—alone and penniless—without friends because she has served others—"

"You are right, Wharton; and it is very thoughtful of you, and shows a kind heart," said Mrs. Locke. "Something must be done for this person, if the facts are as they seem to be." And she glanced at the Head.

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Decidedly! Take this key, Wharton, and admit this Nadesha by the wicket, and bring her here as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir," said Harry delighted. And he hurried away. The Head's face was very grave.

"This is a serious matter," he observed. "Heaven knows what injury might have been done but for this warning. On the occasion when Hazeldene's sister was kidnapped, Wharton behaved splendidly. You remember it?"

"Yes, I remember. It was that which first led me to take an interest in Wharton," said Mrs. Locke. "I

believe he is not very popular in his Form, but he is certainly a splendid lad."

"He had some ways when he came here which caused the Remove to take a dislike to him. But he is making friends now," said the Head; "and certainly I know he is sound at heart. His faults are on the surface, and do not go deep."

"Something must be done for this gipsy woman," Mrs. Locke remarked, a shade of thought upon her brow. "Could she—if a suitable person—remain with us?"

"I leave that entirely in your hands, Alice."

In a few minutes there was a tap at the door, and Harry Wharton re-entered with his companion. Nadesha paused in the doorway, the colour deepening in her dusky face, and she drew the red shawl round her more closely, as if to escape observation. Mrs. Locke stepped towards her kindly. The good lady noticed at once the fatigue of the gipsy, the worn look upon her face, and the cut on the temple. She made Nadesha sit down, and a moment later placed a glass of wine to her lips.

The tears gushed to Nadesha's eyes. From the clock-tower came the echo of a quarter chiming out, and Harry Wharton remembered the debating society in the Fourth Form-room, and gave a slight start.

The Head glanced at him. "You need not wait, Wharton," he said. "Of course, you have your preparation to do. You may rest assured that all proper measures will be taken to secure your safety to-night, and to deal with the burglar. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!"
And Wharton, saying good-night to Mrs. Locke, left the drawing-room. He hurried away from the principal's house, satisfied that he had done all that was required of him. He was free now to join his chums in the Fourth Form-room.

He looked in at Study No. 1 on his way, and found only Billy Bunter there. Billy was sitting at the table, carefully finishing up the remnants of the feed. There was no limit to the Owl's stowing capacities, at least, it seemed so to his chums. Whatever was on the table, Billy could always manage to clear it if required.

"Have they gone to the meeting?" asked Harry.

"Yes, long ago," said Bunter, without looking up from the remains of a steak-pie.

Harry smiled and left the study. It did not take him long to reach the Fourth Form-room. Light was streaming out from under the door, and there was the sound of a voice, which he recognised as Temple's.

He could not distinguish the words, but the head of the Fourth Form was evidently on his legs and making a speech.

Harry opened the door and entered the sacred precincts of the Fourth Form-room, and looked about him with a great deal of curiosity.

teen to sixteen being seated there with grave and attentive faces. The audience was not always so grave, but the presence of a group of Removites made the Fourth-Formers particularly careful to keep serious appearances on this occasion.

The chums of the Remove were seated in a row on a form, listening to the speech with really owl-like gravity.

Bob Cherry and Nugent had their heads resting on their hands, their elbows leaning on the desks, as if to drink in every word of the valuable exposition of the subject now being poured forth by Temple.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was leaning back, nursing his knee with both hands, his face filled with Oriental solemnity, and his dark eyes fastened upon the speaker's face with an unwavering attention, which Temple found rather embarrassing.

Harry Wharton stepped quietly to the form and sat down beside the nabob. Temple glanced at him, but did not cease his speech. But he was near the end, and a few minutes later he sat down.

Dabney, the chairman of the debating society, then glanced at a paper, and called upon Bates to expound his views.

Bates, a rather stout youth with a very red face, got up, and it was evident at a glance that he had forgotten a carefully-prepared speech.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!" said the debating society, with one voice encouragingly.

"The question before us to-night—"

"Cut that; you're not chairman!" said Dabney.

"I suppose I can say what I like, whether I'm chairman or not," said Bates.

"Oh, go on!"

"The question is whether the present system of government in public schools is a satisfactory one," said Bates. "Our friend Temple has replied to that question in the affirmative—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I beg to differ. The system is—is—"

"Go on!"

"Is unsatisfactory. My reasons for this statement are— Has anybody seen a little bit of paper lying about?" asked Bates, looking round him.

"No!"

"I had some notes written on it."

"Speak without 'em, then!"

"But I've forgotten my reasons!"

"Never mind the reasons," said Dabney. "Get on with the speech. We can't stay here all night, you know!"

"How can I get on with the speech when I've forgotten what I was going to say?" demanded Bates, rather excitedly.

"Then let Dabney have his go first, while you look for your precious rotten paper, you ass!" said Temple, frowning a little as he glanced at the Removites. He was very sensitive about what the Lower Fourth-Formers thought of the proceedings of the debating society. The solemnity of the four faces over the desk was almost appalling, but Temple had a suspicion that the Removites were putting that on, with the idea of secretly "rotting" the meeting.

"Is it in order for a speaker to be called an ass?" asked Bates, looking at Dabney in an inquiring sort of way.

Dabney shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he said. "The fact that he may deserve it does not excuse the use of the expression. You must withdraw the word, Temple."

"Oh, very well!" said Temple. "I withdraw it, but I shall punch Bates's head in the dormitory to-night. Get on with the washing, Dab."

"Right-ho! Gentlemen, I rise to remark—"

"Are you sure you haven't seen a little paper lying about anywhere, you fellows?"

"Shut up, Bates!"

"But—"

"Order! Silence!"

"Oh, very well; but if I don't find my notes I sha'n't be able to make a speech, that's all!" said Bates.

"Jolly good thing, too!" said Penny.

"Look here, Penny—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Order! Order!"

"I rise to take the opposite side from that espoused by our friend Temple," said Dabney, when order was restored. He paused a moment and glanced at the Removites. All four of them, as if moved by the same impulse, were taking notes. Dabney felt slightly uncomfortable.

"Go on, Dab!" said Temple.

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting.

"I regard the present system as unsatisfactory," said Dabney, referring to a paper in the palm of his hand. "In the first place, the Fourth Form is not allowed to take a sufficiently prominent place in the school."

"Good!"

"Then, the lower Forms—such as the Remove and the Third—are considered to be really something on an equality with a Form like ours."

"Shame!"

The Removites were seen to be taking notes again.

"Then, the Fifth and the Sixth often think they have a right to bully us, and even cuff us sometimes," said Dabney, warming to his subject.

"Shame!"

"Cads!"

"The prefects are chosen from the Sixth Form solely. The captain of the school is always elected from the Sixth Form. Where is the Fourth Form in all this? I repeat, gentlemen of the debating society and fellow-Formers—I mean, Form-fellows—that is to say, Form-fellows—"

"Leave it at that. Get on with the washing!"

"I repeat, where does the Fourth Form come in?"

"At the door," suggested a would-be joker, who was instantly squelched by a dozen or more freezing glares bestowed upon him by the debating society.

"My view therefore is," resumed Dabney, "that the present public-school system is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare! Unless an equal number of prefects is, are, and shall be, chosen from the Fourth Form, what becomes of the freedom for which our ancestors fought and bled at Waterloo and the Pass of Thermopylæ?"

"Bravo!"

"What becomes of the boasted British Constitution, when the system of fagging the Fourth Form flourishes in these enlightened days of the twentieth century?"

"Hear, hear!"

"I move, therefore, that the public-school system will never be satisfactory till fagging is confined to the Remove and the Third Form, and prefects are

THE NINTH CHAPTER

The Removites Ask Questions

The scene in the Fourth Form-room was an interesting one. The members of the Fourth Form Debating Society were there in force, some fifteen or sixteen youths of various ages from four-

chosen from the Fourth as well as the Sixth."

"Hear, hear!"

And Dabney sat down. He sat down as a speaker, and stood up again as a chairman, to put the amendment to the meeting.

It was carried by a majority, even Temple himself voting for it against his own resolution, so convinced was he by his chum's arguments.

The resolution was accordingly negated, the amendment being adopted that the state of things was not satisfactory in the public-schools of the twentieth century, for the reason set forth by Mr. Dabney in his telling speech.

"And, further," said Dabney, "I propose the resolution that this meeting, representing all that is best in the Fourth Form at Greyfriars—"

"Hear, hear!"

"This meeting, composed of intelligent and enlightened citizens, who have learned to think Imperially upon questions affecting the welfare of the—the welfare of things generally, and so on, comes to the conclusion—"

"Quite time!" said Bates audibly.

"Order!"

"The conclusion," went on Dabney, "and passes the resolution that we don't care a rap for the Sixth, and all the prefects can go hang—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And that if any prefect interferes with us, we shall tell him to go and eat coke!"

"Time that light was out," said Carberry, of the Sixth, looking into the room. "Another five minutes, youngsters. If the light isn't out then, you'll hear from me."

"Yes, Carberry," said Dabney meekly.

And the prefect went out and slammed the door.

The debaters looked at one another rather uncomfortably. After Dabney's resolution, his reply to Carberry seemed rather inadequate. Temple broke the painful pause by looking across at the Removites and addressing them.

"Have you got any questions to ask, youngsters?"

Even the obnoxious word youngsters failed to break down the grave politeness of the Removites.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"Certainly!" he said. "We—"

"I've found my paper!" interjected Bates, drawing a crumpled fragment of soiled exercise-paper from his waistcoat-pocket. "It got in here somehow. Gentlemen—"

"Order!"

"I'm going to make my speech—"

"Too late. It's out of order!"

"You've been jawing all the time."

"You heard what Carberry said?"

"That's all very well, but—"

"Order! The honoured visitors have to be allowed questions, and we've only got a few minutes."

"It's not cricket!" said the aggrieved Bates. "I've found my notes, and—"

"Order! Shut up, Bates. Go on, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton gravely referred to his notes.

"We are allowed one question each?" he asked.

"Yes. And the chairman will do his best to reply."

"Certainly!" said Dabney.

"Very well. I should like to be enlightened on the following point.

Mr. Dabney says he takes the opposite side from that espoused by his friend Temple. Espoused means married. Does the honourable chairman mean to imply that his friend Temple is a married man, and has left his wife, in order to come to Greyfriars and join the Fourth Form Debating Society?"

Temple turned red, and some of the debaters giggled. Dabney looked savagely at the Removites, but they were absolutely solemn. If anything, their gravity had grown more painfully serious, and they seemed to hang upon the chairman's reply as upon words expected from an oracle of wisdom. Dabney could not quite make it out.

"No," he replied shortly. "I didn't mean to imply anything of the sort. If you fellows are rotting—"

Harry Wharton sat down, and Nugent rose to ask his question.

"The chairman stated that the Remove is supposed to be on an equality with the Upper Fourth. Does he mean to insinuate thereby that the Upper Fourth is on an equality with the Remove? If so, I hurl back the insinuation in his teeth!"

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Order! Next question!"

Bob Cherry stood up.

"The honourable chairman made an allusion to our ancestors bleeding and dying at Waterloo and the Pass of Thermopylæ. I should be glad to be informed how our ancestors got so far afield as the Pass of Thermopylæ, as there were no Cook's excursions in those days!"

Dabney turned red.

"That was a—a—a—a figure of speech," he explained.

"Oh! I suppose—"

"You have no right to suppose," interrupted the chairman. "Next question!"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh stood up, an expression of almost wistful earnestness upon his dusky face, but a glimmer in his eyes.

"I have listened to the debatefulness of the society with much instruction and general improvidencefulness to the brain," said the nabob. "The speeches of the ludicrous members—"

"Order!"

"Have greatly enlightened me as to the state of their brains, and I now know exactly how much intelligence there is in the Fourth Form at this honourable school!"

The members of the debating society looked at one another rather dubiously, not knowing exactly how to take this remark.

"Well, go on!" said Dabney.

"After expressing the pleasurefulness with which I have listened to the debateful talkfulness of the present esteemed rotters, I should like to be questionable on the following point."

"Ha, ha, ha! Go on, Inky!"

"The esteemed rotten chairman says that this meeting represents all that is bestful in the honourable Form you belong to."

"Certainly!" said the chairman.

"Hear, hear!"

Hurree Singh looked puzzled.

"I have no doubtfulness of the statement made by the esteemed chairman," he said; "but if this meeting represents what is most bestful and intelligent in the Fourth Form, what is the degree of intelligence in the worstful members of that esteemed and ludicrous Form?"

The debaters looked at one another. "The condition of the brainfulness of this honoured meeting has made itself apparent, but what is the brainfulness

of the more stupid members of the Fourth Form like?" asked Hurree Singh. "Is it inexpressible, and can the force of Nature no further go, as your beautiful poet Dan Leno so well puts it?"

"Look here, you confounded nigger," exclaimed Dabney, starting up—the irrepresible grins of the Removites made it clear enough at last that the Debating Society was being rotted by the hitherto grave and reverent youngsters, "if you are looking for a thick ear—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Answer the question. If this meeting represents the most intelligent portion of the Fourth Form, what degree of idiocy has been reached by the rest?"

"I am awaiting the replyful rejoinder of the honourable rotten chairman!"

"You cheeky kids—"

"Turn 'em out!"

"Kick them out!"

The debating society made a rush. The Removites had already risen from the form, and they backed to the door. The Fourth-Formers dashed at them, and at the same moment the door opened, and Carberry looked in.

"Now, then, put that light out at once!"

The juniors stopped the rush. Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh walked calmly out of the room, and Carberry glared in while the Fourth-Formers prepared to go. From behind the cover of the prefect the Removites placed their fingers to their noses in extended order, as a parting salute to the debating society. Temple and Dabney and their fellow-members gasped with rage.

Then the chums of the Remove walked away, and hugged themselves with merriment in the upper passage, and the corridor rang with their shouts of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was funniful," said Hurree Singh, wiping the tears from his eyes; "but I have a feeling that the esteemed rotters will not ask us to any more of their debateful meetings in the honourable Fourth Form-room."

And Hurree Singh was right. Temple and Dabney, after that experience, quite gave up the project of improving the minds of the Remove.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Well Done!

"And now, what about Nadesha?" said Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove went into No. 1 Study.

Billy Bunter had completely finished the feed, and the room was empty. Harry Wharton at once became grave, and he closed the door before he spoke. His chums looked at him curiously. They could see by his expression that there was something unusual on the tapis.

"It's a serious matter," said Wharton. "I'll give you the story in a few words."

And he explained what had happened during his absence from his chums. Bob Cherry gave an expressive whistle.

"Good old Nadesha," said Nugent. "It was awfully decent of her. I suppose the Head will send for the police?"

"I suppose so," said Harry; "and some of the masters will stay up, I expect, with a policeman or two, to watch for the scoundrel."

"We ought to be on in that scene," said Nugent.

"That's what I was thinking."

"Our noble presence would probably lead to the capturefulness of the giddy burglar," the nabob remarked. "But the instructor sahibs will not allow it."

"Not if they know," said Wharton.

"But if we sit up with them—"

"I wasn't thinking of sitting up with them. Look here, chaps, turn this over in your minds, and tell me what you think. Nadesha says that Melchior spoke confidently about being able to break into Greyfriars. Now, I don't suppose a wandering ruffian like that has much idea of the skilful part of burglary; and where is he to get burglar's tools from, only just out of prison as he is?"

"That's true enough. But—"

"Yet he seemed certain of getting in. My idea is that he doesn't mean to come by door or window in the usual way."

Nugent stared, and Bob Cherry grinned.

"You don't think he means to come down the chimney, surely!" said the latter.

Harry did not smile.

"I think he has another way of coming in," he said quietly.

"Blessed if I can guess what it is," said Nugent.

"You remember that he was hiding with Barenbro in the ruined chapel in the Friar's Wood, Nugent?"

Nugent gave a start.

"My hat! Do you mean that he may have discovered the secret passage leading from the ruined chapel to Greyfriars?" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Why not?"

"It is extremely likely," said Hurree

Singh. "While I was in hiding that time in this esteemful school, I followed the passage to the old chapel to get some fresh airfulness for my health. There is nothing secret about it, if you pull away the ivy that grows very thickly over the opening at the other end."

"It's more likely than not that Melchior found it, looking among the ruins for a safe hiding-place," said Harry Wharton. "If he discovered it, and found that it led to the school, all would be easy."

"My hat! And but for old Nadesha's warning—"

"We might have been killed. But now—"

"Now we shall have the golden opportunity of improving the shining hour," said Hurree Singh. "After the school is sleeping the sleep of the just, we shall proceed creepfully from the dormitory—"

"And get into the box-room, where the passage leads," said Harry quietly.

"If the gipsy comes through the passage, he can only get out into the school by way of the box-room."

"Good! And we shall be there—"

"With a cricket-stump each—"

"And a rope."

"And the esteemed scoundrel will fall into our hands and be captured by our noble and respected selves!" exclaimed the nabob gleefully.

"Ha, ha, ha! My hat, but it's a good wheeze! It will be a feather in the cap of the Remove to capture a burglar single-handed!" said Nugent.

"It all depends upon whether the rotter comes by the secret passage," Bob Cherry remarked.

"To my mind it's certain," said Harry. "But in any case it will do no

harm to watch in the box-room. We don't intend to go to sleep when such an affair is on; and we have a right to take a hand in the game, as it was through us that the alarm was given at all."

"That's quite right."

"We'll wait in the box-room, and if the burglar comes in any other way, why, there will be others looking for him; and if we hear an alarm we can soon get downstairs and chip in."

"Good!"

"While if he comes by the secret passage," added Harry, "we'll capture him single-handed, and then call up the police. We shall want a stump each, and a coil of rope, and a dark lantern. You're all game?"

"Rather!"

"Then it's settled. And mind, mum's the word."

"The mumfulness is important," said Hurree Singh. "I shall be as dumb as the esteemed oysters in the oyster-bed."

And the chums of the Remove were exceedingly careful to keep their secret. Nothing unusual disturbed the routine of Greyfriars up to the bedtime of the Remove, when the Lower Fourth went up to the dormitory, the chums along with the rest. What measures were being taken by the Head Harry did not know, but he guessed that the police had been sent for, though they would not come till after boys' bedtime, to avoid comment.

The famous four did not go to sleep with the rest of the Remove—they were too excited—and their hearts beat fast when they thought of the coming vigil in the box-room, and the possible—or, rather, almost certain—encounter with a desperate and probably armed ruffian.

(Continued on page 32.)



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 FIRST CHAPTERS.

"SEXTON BLAKE, the famous detective, 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. Tinker tracks the German on his arrival to a house in Poplar, which nearly proves the boy's death-trap. Through Blake's timely intervention he is rescued, but Von Stoltz escapes to Newcastle. Here he falls in with Ezra Q. Maitland, the notorious New York crook, and his wife, Broadway Kate. Germany being very short of iron and steel, owing to the wastage caused by the war, Von Stoltz suggests to Maitland a scheme whereby the British consignments can be diplomatically transferred to Germany. Broadway Kate objects, but Maitland falls in with the scheme in face of his wife's opposition, hoping to out-manoeuvre Von Stoltz and effect a big coup for himself.

But Ezra Q. Maitland does not know that at that very moment Fate is guiding Sexton Blake's footsteps into his path.

(Now Read On.)

Sexton Blake Makes a Smart Arrest, and Decides Upon a Great Campaign for Britain.

Upon the day following the events narrated in our last chapter, Sexton Blake, together with Detective-Inspector Martin and Tinker, stood in the private sanctum of Inspector Dane, a very capable official attached to the Newcastle-on-Tyne police.

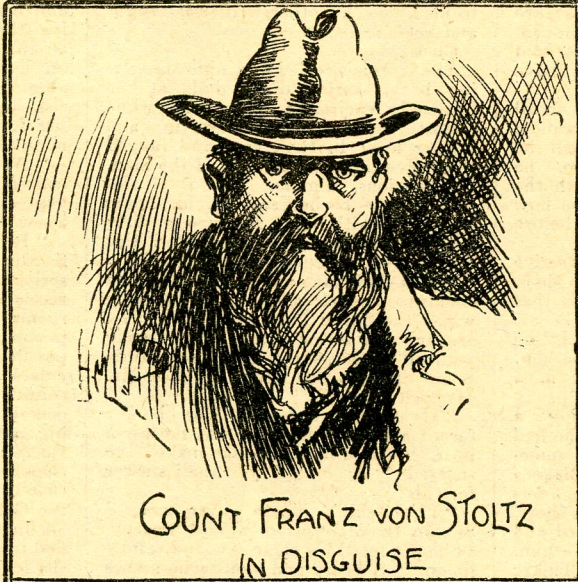
The great detective's face looked a trifle pale and drawn, and there were dark marks about his eyes, but for all that his wound had most favourably progressed.

"Then you imagine that this hairdresser may be our man, inspector?" Blake was saying, as he carefully lit a cigar.

Dane nodded, and tapped thoughtfully at his teeth with the handle of a paper-knife.

"I should think it very likely, Mr. Blake," he answered. "He has certainly registered himself as an alien enemy, but from our records he would appear to be the only German or Austrian of the name of Speyers in my district. I think it would be as well to take a look at him."

"Might be, certainly!" Martin jerked condescendingly, although his air really suggested that he thought the reverse. "Had any suspicious reports concerning him?"



COUNT FRANZ VON STOLTZ
IN DISGUISE

"None whatever!" Dane returned equally as shortly, for he was not the kind of man to knuckle under to anyone. "You may rely I should have mentioned them to you had I received any."

Martin glared at him, then, ignoring him, he turned to his colleague.

"Think it worth while to take a squint at the shop?" he suggested, fingering his short beard.

"I think it would probably be no waste of time to take a look at the proprietor of it," Sexton Blake answered, as he examined his cigar to make quite certain that it was burning to his satisfaction.

"That's what I meant," Martin retorted. "You must have known I did. Give me a cigar, I've run right out of smokes!"

Sexton Blake complied with the request, and Martin savagely bit off the end of the weed and jammed it at an aggressive angle between his teeth.

"Thank you," Tinker murmured sweetly, winking at Inspector Dane.

Martin swung round upon Sexton Blake's assistant, with a very pugacious snort, but it was only to find Tinker gazing abstractedly out of the window. He seemed deeply interested in a bedraggled cat that was stalking across the courtyard without.

"Don't feel myself this morning," Martin said to Blake, a little apologetically. "I always hate wasting time—and that's what we're doing now!"

Sexton Blake shrugged his shoulders.

"You may, or may not, be right," he replied quietly. "But let us get along to Speyers's shop and see if we can find out anything. We can do no further good by remaining longer here. You might jot the address down for me, Mr.

Dane, in case it should slip my memory."

The police official did as the detective requested, and having pocketed the slip of paper and taken leave of the inspector Sexton Blake quitted the station, followed by his companions.

Outside he hailed a taxi and instructed the man to drive to the street mentioned in the address Dane had given him, then the detective followed Martin and Tinker into the cab and it started away down the road.

Almost as soon as Sexton Blake had arrived in Newcastle he had paid the police a visit, in the hopes that they would have some record of the agent Von Stoltz had spoken of in the city. There had proved to be only one alien registered under the name of Speyers, as the reader has doubtless understood from the foregoing conversation in the police-station, and as the Baker Street detective leant back against the cushions of the cab he was asking himself if the hairdresser, whose address reposed in his pocket, could possibly be the dangerous spy for whom he was looking.

At length Sexton Blake roused himself from his reverie and glanced out of the window. He found that they were now traversing a network of streets in the poorer part of the city, and in a few moments the cab pulled up at Sligoe Street, the thoroughfare in which the alien barber resided.

Sexton Blake and his companions alighted, and the former paid off the chauffeur, then they started off down the street, glancing from side to side for the shop they were seeking.

"Look, sir, there it is!" Tinker exclaimed eagerly at length, although it was only with his eyes that he indicated the squalid barber's establishment, with its striped pole, which was in evidence across the way. "There's the name over the door."

Sexton Blake glanced at the shop from beneath lowered lids and slightly inclined his head.

"Keep straight on," he said quietly.

For the matter of a dozen yards the three detectives continued down the street, then Sexton Blake made a sign for his companions to accompany him across the road.

Once there, the detective made a pretence of staring into the window of a newsagent's, whilst he held his handkerchief to his face as a violent fit of coughing seized him.

When he turned again, Inspector Martin fairly started, for a neatly-waxed moustache was adorning his

friend's upper lip, whilst the curve of Sexton Blake's brows had altered to an extent that made him well-nigh unrecognisable.

"What's the game, Blake?" Martin asked in astonishment.

"I want to look into our friend the barber's shop," the private detective answered calmly. "I thought it as well to alter my appearance in case he has met me in the past under some other name. Stay here for a moment and watch events. If you see me enter, you will know that my suspicions are aroused and will both follow me in. You had better come separately and make a pretence of waiting for a shave or hair-cut. Do you follow me?"

Tinker and the Scotland Yard official nodded, and Sexton Blake walked slowly back up the street. When he reached the hairdresser's shop, he paused and opened the door, with the air of one who was looking to see how many patrons might be there before him.

Martin and Tinker saw the detective hesitate, then carelessly enter the shop, and Martin jingled the handcuffs that were in his overcoat pocket.

"Going to be some fun, my lad," he said, and the fact seemed to please him. "You go first; I'll follow you in a moment."

Tinker strutted off, whistling a popular air, and a moment later he had entered the hairdresser's, where, somewhat to his surprise, Sexton Blake—apparently the only customer—was seated in one of the chairs, and a short, stout man, with a thick red beard and moustache, was preparing to shave him.

"I'll come back in a minute," Tinker said, making as if to leave the premises. "Wanted a hair-cut, but I can wait."

"Don't go away, sir," the red-bearded barber urged quickly, as Tinker had reasoned he would do. "I shall not be a moment with this gentleman."

The young detective paused doubtfully and finally sank down upon a bench to wait. The man's accent proclaimed him to be a German, at all events, Tinker decided, and he wondered what was about to transpire.

The barber had arranged a towel about Sexton Blake's neck, and, with the lids drooping curiously over his eyes, the detective was sitting staring straight into the mirror before him. As a matter of fact, the detective had not been quite sure of his man when he had made his entry, and he wanted to be certain before he took any definite action.

No sooner had the detective set eyes upon the barber than it struck him that the man's figure and features were strangely familiar. Somewhere in the past, Sexton Blake felt sure, he had come into contact with this man, but where for the present he could not say. He had a vague impression that the fellow had been clean-shaven upon the last occasion that they had met, and he had determined to get a glimpse at the colour of his eyes—often the last convincing factor when he wished to prove a person's true identity.

Sexton Blake lay listlessly in his chair, staring hard at the barber's reflection in the mirror before him, although that was the last thing that he really appeared to be doing.

The man began to lather the detective's chin, and at that moment Inspector Martin swaggered into the shop and seated himself upon the bench beside Tinker. The burly official took

no notice of the lad, but picked up a newspaper and began idly to peruse it.

The barber, by this time, was almost ready to discard the brush for the razor, but before he could make the change he received the surprise of his life.

As he plied the brush in the few finishing strokes, one of his customer's long, muscular hands shot upwards and gripped his wrist in a vice-like hold. The German let out a gasp of alarm, but he had no chance to demand an explanation. He was positively yanked to his knees, his other wrist was caught and held, and then—

Click!

The German reeled and went staggering back, staring down dully at the handcuffs encircling his wrists, while almost instantly both Martin and Tinker leapt to their feet and ranged themselves upon either side of the man.

"Gracious, himmel, what does this mean?" the barber snarled, his knees trembling with fear, his face a dirty grey. "Why haf you gommited this outrage? I an explanation demand!"

"You shall have it, my man," Sexton Blake responded coolly, as he carefully wiped the lather from his face. "You are arrested for incorrectly registering yourself to the police. Your real name is not Speyers, you know, my dear Mr. Heinrich Brueder!"

"Heinrich Brueder!" The barber forced a laugh, but there was no mirth in it. "You a big miss-dake make!" he sneered. "By blitzen, you shall answer for this!"

"I shouldn't waste your voice," Sexton Blake retorted, almost wearily, as he produced his cigar-case and calmly lit up. "A beard and moustache makes a great difference to you, Brueder, but it does not alter the greenish colour of your eyes, nor does it remove the small mole from your left ear."

The German ground his teeth in a fit of impotent rage.

"Are you man or fiend?" he hissed, his fists clenching until the nails bit into his flesh.

"I am merely Sexton Blake, very much at your service," the detective murmured, as he whipped off his false moustache. "You will perhaps remember me, although I will refresh your memory, as it is five years since we met. Do you remember the hotel in France, where I was responsible for the—er—should we say, misappropriation of a travelling-case belonging to your master, Count Franz von Stoltz? It contained important Government secrets you had stolen from the French Embassy, if you remember, and— Ah, I see that you recollect, so I will say no more. Keep a close watch on him, Martin, he is a slippery customer."

Martin grinned broadly, and his hand descended heavily upon the spy's shoulder.

"I vill haf your life one day for this, Sexton Blake!" the arrested man vowed hoarsely. "You think you are smart—clever—but beware! I vill seek you out, und—"

"If you are not shot as a spy," Sexton Blake interrupted sternly, his manner changing. "There may be other charges in addition to that of false registration. I am about to search for evidence now."

Utterly ignoring the string of guttural and terror-stricken oaths Heinrich Brueder hurled at his head, Sexton Blake commenced a thorough search of the shop. He found nothing suspicious

there, however, and drawing his automatic he disappeared through a door leading into the shop parlour.

Tinker made as if to follow his master, fearing that he might encounter some foe, or foes, within the house, but Sexton Blake waved him back with a gesture there was no mistaking.

"Stay where you are, my lad," he ordered. "I shall not be away longer than I can help. Better lock the door to keep any would-be clients out."

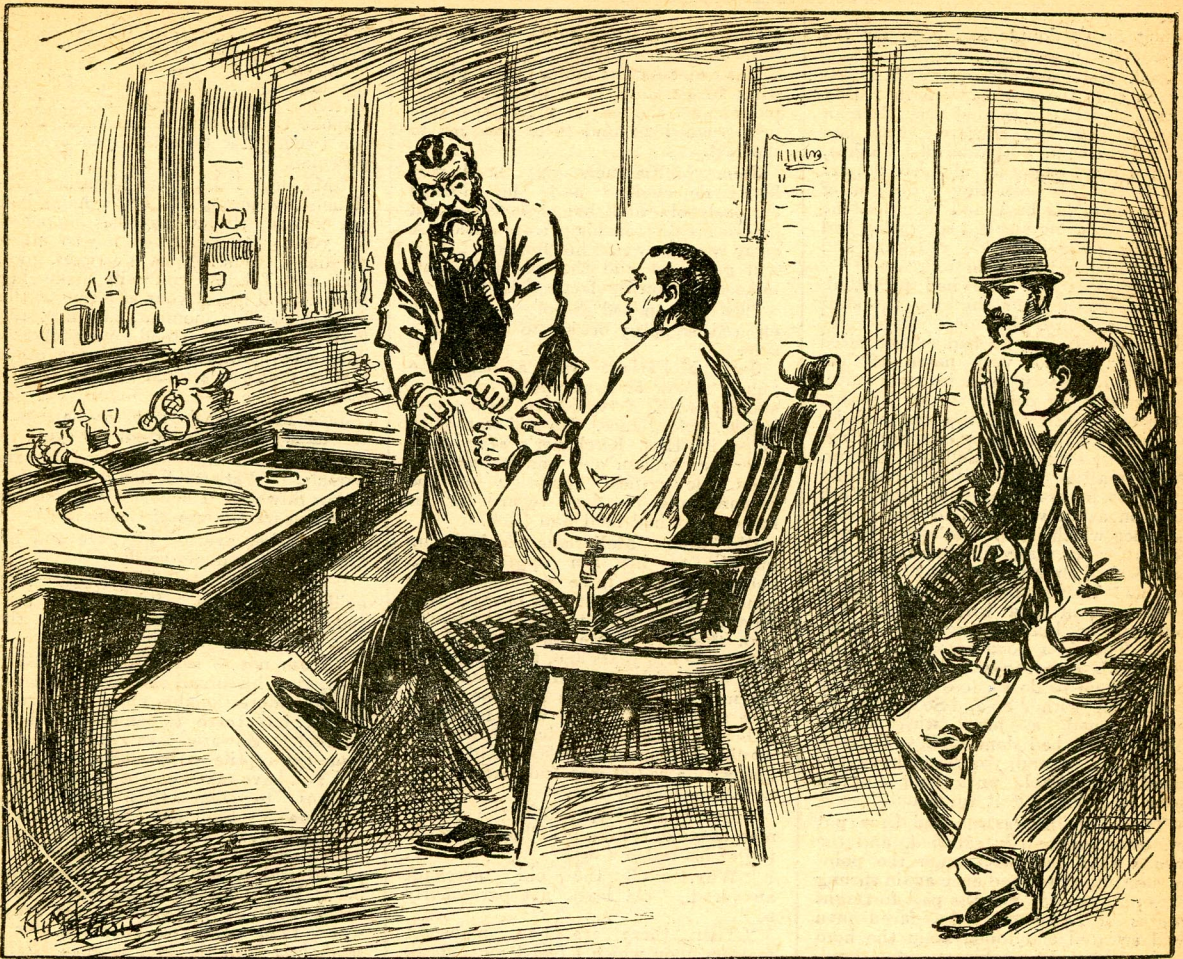
Tinker obeyed, then he and Martin and his prisoner stood anxiously awaiting the detective's return. A quarter of an hour passed away, half an hour, an hour, and still Sexton Blake was absent; then, as Tinker was about to risk his master's displeasure by searching for him, the detective reappeared upon the threshold of the shop-parlour.

"Well?" Martin burst out, unable to conceal his eagerness, for by the grave expression of his colleague's face he knew that his search had borne fruit.

"It is far from well, my friend," Sexton Blake said, his voice harsh and serious. "I have discovered in a secret recess in the wall of one of the upper rooms enough evidence to shoot our prisoner a dozen times, if it were possible. I have found endless particulars of German plans of invasion, countless details as to factories with concrete floors in readiness to receive big guns, but, worst of all"—Sexton Blake's eyes flashed and his hands clenched passionately—"I have learnt that in order to create a reign of terror the Germans have various plans for the shelling of defenceless towns—unfortified towns where the victims would consist chiefly of harmless civilians, the majority of them gentlemen and innocent little children. You cur!" he exclaimed, taking such a threatening step towards Brueder that the latter cowered back as if expecting a blow. "I am almost tempted to release you and give you the horsewhipping you deserve! But, there, you are merely the tool in the cunning hands of the greater barbarian, and are not worth the soiling of one's hands!"

"Martin"—Sexton Blake's face was grimly determined and resolute—"by the complete system of signalling from our coasts these fiends have arranged, it will be quite possible for their warships to make 'cut-and-run' raids upon the unfortified parts of our coasts, for they will know every movement of the ships guarding these shores," the detective stated, and he little dreamed then how true his words would prove. "But I am determined to do my utmost to help the authorities in preventing and crushing out this evil. Until I have left no stone unturned to stamp out the spy-peril with which our seaports are menaced, I will accept no other case. I have found no clue as yet to put me on the track of Count von Stoltz, but to find him will be my greatest aim. Without him, many plans these modern Huns have formed will be disorganised and squashed. Tinker, call the police and have that creature removed. I am usually a most unemotional man, but I shall be letting my feelings get the upper hand of me if he remains much longer here. The very sight of him disgusts me!"

Tinker stared at his master for a long moment in open-eyed wonder; the lad had seldom seen Sexton Blake in such a mood as this. Then Tinker crossed to the door, unlocked it, and blew shrilly upon a police whistle.



Click! The German reeled and went staggering back, staring down dully at the handcuffs encircling his wrists, whilst almost instantly Martin and Tinker leapt to their feet.

And some ten minutes later, the spy Henrich Brueder, alias Speyer, was driven away in custody of a couple of burly constables.

His race had almost been run. The grim horrors of a court-martial, followed by a swift death, awaited him!

Jack McFarlane is Suspicious—What he Overheard—Over the Cliff.

The row upon row of smoke-begrimed buildings which formed the offices and extensive factories of the renowned McFarlane Engineering Works, at Moortown, near Berwick-on-Tweed, had until recently been strangely silent, but now they were once again humming with busy life.

Before the outbreak of the colossal European War, the firm had been one of the most important and soundest of its class. Its principal, "Honest John McFarlane," as he was called, had taken an immense interest and never-failing pride in watching the business grow from one of comparative insignificance to the powerful concern it then represented. His name had become a byword for commercial soundness and integrity, for, although his nature was stern and unbending, at all times he was just and a man of straightforward,

honest principles. He had spent his whole life in the promoting of the interests and building up of his firm, and had grown old and grey in the work he loved.

Until Germany, drunk with her lust for world-power, had thrown the principal countries of Europe into warfare and misery, no employees had been paid so well as those of McFarlanes'—no firm had been so continuously busy, so flourishing and prosperous. Then, with the black shadow of war had come evil times for the great firm. Work had fallen off, fully half of the hands had joined the colours, and their wives and relatives had, according to old John McFarlane's solemn promise, to receive half-pay, whilst four firms with whom the great engineering works had accounts had "gone broke," owing McFarlanes' large sums of money.

Misfortune followed misfortune, and even such a sound, old-established business could not stand the strain. Much as he hated asking for time, the head of the firm had pledged his credit to the utmost until men looked at him in askance and wondered.

Then, when Christmas had been but three weeks distant, and the countryside had been draped by a glistening mantle of snow, the order had come from Holland—the order that John McFarlane hoped would save the

situation and stand him upon his feet again.

The transaction involved no less a sum than fifty thousand odd pounds, and at first both Mr. McFarlane and his son and partner, affectionately christened by the hands "Mr. Jack," had had grave doubts as to whether they should undertake it, for the firm in Holland who required the quantity of motor-lorries, etc. which comprised the gigantic order, appeared to be quite a new concern.

For several days father and son had seriously considered the matter, and young Jack McFarlane had finally decided to demand a quarter of the purchase money in advance to show good faith. By return of post a draft for the amount—just over twelve thousand—five hundred pounds had been forthcoming, together with a courteous letter informing McFarlanes' that Messrs. Swaan—the Dutch firm—were sending their agent, Mr. Samuel P. Silwater, to Moortown to facilitate matters upon that side of the water.

Jack McFarlane had been a little puzzled over the whole matter. He wondered why Messrs. Swaan were so anxious for them to carry out the order, when it could have been kept in Holland with a saving of expense, but when Mr. Samuel P. Silwater had arrived the

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"

young man's doubts had been for the time being dispelled.

Jack had been obsessed with a suspicion that the lorries were in reality intended for the use of the German armies, but Mr. Silwater, who had turned out to be a hard-headed Yankee, with a most engaging manner, despite the fact of his possessing a disfiguring hump upon his back and being in the habit of wearing smoked spectacles, had actually divined Jack's thoughts and promptly laughed them to scorn.

"My dear sir!" he had protested. "Waal, fancy your thinking the stuff was for those blarneyed skunks of Germans! Bah!" he had expectorated viciously. "The very name of 'em gives me a nasty taste in my mouth. Our reason for coming to you, sonny, is because many of the commodities required for the building of these things ain't to be secured in Holland just now. As a matter of fact, the lorries are going to be transhipped to New York as soon as we've added to 'em a contrivance which is my firm's own invention an' a strict secret. You know 'So-and-So,' of Broadway? Why, of course you do! That's where the stuff's going, between you and me, though I'm betraying a business secret in telling you. There's a good reason, too, why my firm's come to you. I personally urged them to do so, 'cos I used to be connected with 'So-and-So'—here he had named a firm with whom McFarlanes' had done endless business in the past—"and, you see, I knew the good and reliable work your concern puts into the stuff it turns out."

Thus Jack McFarlane had been put off and temporarily satisfied, and the works that had been upon the point of shutting down had once again sprung into pulsing life. For the past fortnight scores of half-nude, grimy-faced men had sweated and toiled amid the hum and rattle of the machinery, some standing by the lathes, others carrying cauldrons of molten metal to pour into the moulds. The smiths had wielded their mighty hammers before the many forges and anvils, the sounds of their blows ringing and re-ringing to the time of some rousing chorus, while above the rattling of the hauling-trucks had resounded the thud, thud! of the tremendous steam-hammers upon the masses of metal they were pounding into shape. The furnaces had blazed and roared, and the overhead steam-crane had run upon their ceaseless journeys to and fro.

And the men had worked with a will. To the ringing refrain of loyal and patriotic songs they had toiled and laboured—for Germany!

The plans of the unscrupulous Mr. Silwater—or rather, Ezra Q. Maitland—were working out very satisfactorily, and he had only one regret. This was the fact of McFarlanes' having demanded a portion of the purchase-money in advance, for that meant that when the enormous order was completed there would be just over twelve thousand, five hundred pounds less for him to misappropriate.

Christmas had been passed a full two months and the snow still lay thickly upon field and hedgerow. The weather was bitterly cold and termed "seasonable" by the rich, although the poor and homeless, shivering in their scanty rags, called it many things which all

meant black, heartrending misery and suffering.

The order for the motor-lorries placed with McFarlanes' was nearing completion, yet the elderly principal of the firm seemed to find little pleasure in the fact.

John McFarlane's grey head was bent dejectedly, and he looked curiously old and haggard as he sat before his desk in his private office. A cigar was between his fingers, but it had gone out and the ash had fallen unheeded upon the front of his vest.

The door opened sharply and his son entered, stepping briskly to his father's side.

Jack McFarlane was a handsome young fellow of twenty-four or thereabouts, with a well-knit figure and bright, bold glance. He had wanted to enlist in Earl Kitchener's army soon after war broken out, and it had only been the critical condition of the business and his deep regard for his father that had held him back.

Old John McFarlane looked up quickly as his son appeared and endeavoured to force a smile to his usually stern lips. It was obvious that he was trying hard to greet the young man cheerily. Since the death of his wife some five years ago, the old gentleman had lavished all his affections upon his son, and he always had one of his rare smiles and a kind word for Jack, although until his son had grown into manhood John McFarlane had ruled him with a rod of iron and placed many restrictions upon him.

"Are you busy, dad?" the young man queried, resting his elbow upon the top of his father's desk.

"Why, no," the old merchant answered. "At least, not particularly so."

"Then there are two important matters upon which I feel I must speak with you, dad," Jack said. "Firstly, I want to talk of Edna."

John McFarlane started and regarded his son curiously from beneath his bushy brows.

"Well?" he suggested interrogatively. "Have you realised that your ward is no longer a child," Jack said; "indeed, is now a very beautiful girl upon the borderland of womanhood?"

"Why, bless my soul," the old man exclaimed, his face softening, his eyes growing very tender in expression, "when the matter is brought home to me, my boy, I must admit that you are right. But how the time has flown! It must be quite sixteen years ago that my old friend, Charles Trevour, entrusted his motherless child to my care and shortly afterwards died in my arms. Little Edna was five then, which will make her twenty-one within a few days from now. Yes, my little girl—the lass I have always looked upon as a daughter—has grown up. But can it be possible that—"

He leapt to his feet and clapped his son heartily upon the shoulder.

"Why, you young dog," he cried, "you've lost your heart to Edna! And to think I've never guessed it! Well, well, I must have been blind. And what does she say about it?"

The colour rushed to Jack McFarlane's cheeks, and if ever a man looked embarrassed, it was he.

"She—she hasn't said anything about it yet, dad," he stammered confusedly, "for the simple reason that she—she doesn't know! Dad!"—he pulled him-

self together—"with your permission I am going to ask Edna to become my wife, and if she consents, I shall be the happiest man on earth. Upon a matter of principle I came to you before I spoke to her, as until she has passed her twenty-first birthday, you are her guardian."

"My dear lad," John McFarlane exclaimed, wringing his boy's hand, "I can only say that nothing has happened for years that has given me so much genuine pleasure. Edna is a sweet, good girl, and I know you will make her happy. Tell her of your affection at the earliest possible moment, and may the best of good luck attend your proposal. And now, you mentioned some other matter that you wished to discuss with me."

Jack McFarlane's face set hard and the happy light died from his eyes.

"It is about the—the lorries," he said harshly. "Father, I don't trust that fellow Silwater. I believe the goods are intended for the use of Germany!"

His father averted his gaze and his fingers twitched nervously.

"No, no!" he protested, with evident agitation. "You—you mis-judge him, Jack. The man and the transaction are both above board."

"I am not so sure," Jack persisted, shrugging his broad shoulders. "I am not an impressionable chap, as a rule, father, but there is something about Samuel P. Silwater that reminds me of some evil reptile—a poisonous snake!"

"You have taken one of those strange dislikes to him that cannot be explained," the old man averred, although even now he did not meet Jack's eyes. "The order is almost completed and it will save us from ruin. Jack, before Swaan & Co. placed this order with us we were in far lower water than even you imagined, for I studiously kept the real state of affairs from you."

"You should not have done it, dad," the young man said reproachfully. "You know that I am strong both in body and mind, and I would have worked day and night rather than see the dear old place go wrong."

"I know," his father admitted huskily; "but I could not bring myself to confide the truth to you. Bankruptcy confronted us, and we should have been compelled to close down altogether if the Holland business had not come along."

Jack McFarlane was silent for the space of a second or two, his brows contracted in thought. He looked worried and anxious, and there were hard lines about his finely-chiselled lips.

"Supposing," he suggested at length, "we discovered that without question this stuff was ultimately bound for Germany, what course would you pursue?"

His father hesitated, then he threw up his head, and there was a grim determination in his pose.

"At all costs," he said slowly, and in a dead level tone, "the order would have to be carried through. There would be no backing out!"

"Father," Jack cried, his voice full of horror, "you would betray your country? You—you would help the enemy?"

"It would be for the sake of the business, Jack," the elder man said, as if in excuse for his decision. "I have pledged my credit to the utmost—to the last pound—ay, shilling! To stop the

consignment from shipment now that it is almost completed would spell utter and irretrievable ruin and disgrace. My son, always I have tried to be a loyal and patriotic subject of my King, but to face bankruptcy would kill me!"

"Dad," the young man returned, drawing himself up and looking his father full in the eyes, "I am going to speak plainly. I will say this—much as I love and respect you, dear though the old firm is to me, I would rather face ruin and see you dead than a traitor to your country. I am going out now for a long walk, during which I can think the matter out. I mean to make the fullest inquiries, and if I find my suspicions are correct the shipment of the lorries must be stopped, no matter what the cost."

He turned upon his heel without waiting for his father to reply, and a moment later the door closed behind him. No sooner was he alone than old John McFarlane collapsed limply into the chair before his desk and buried his face in his hands.

"Heaven help me!" he moaned. "He suspects what I have suspected all along. Please Providence he does not find that his impression is correct. I could not let the old firm go to the dogs. It would kill me—it would kill me!"

* Solaced by a favourite meerschaum, and enveloped in a heavy overcoat, Jack McFarlane found that he had traversed some eight miles by the time night had fallen, and he was in the neighbourhood of St. Peter's Head, a little, old-world fishing village of from two to three hundred inhabitants.

The young man was traversing an uneven path running over the rugged cliffs which marked the picturesque hamlet, his brows drawn together in thought.

Again and again he was asking himself if he should remain quiet and allow the shipment of the vast consignment of motor-lorries to take place. He fully realised that to stand in the way of the completion of the transaction would bring about the speedy termination of the old-established firm of which his father was the head, forcing him into the disgrace of bankruptcy and ruin. That the old merchant would never recover from the blow, Jack also knew, and thus it became for him a terrible mental struggle between his love and duty to his parent and his sense of patriotism and loyalty to the country of his birth.

There remained, too, another person to be considered—one for whom Jack McFarlane would have willingly laid down his life. This was old Mr. McFarlane's ward, Edna Trevour, and the girl's pure, sweet face continually rose before the young man's vision. All her life Edna had been accustomed to every luxury and comfort, and for her guardian to be suddenly confronted with poverty would mean that the girl would suffer almost as acutely as he. Jack felt almost tempted to—

The train of the young fellow's thoughts was suddenly snapped as he became aware that he was not alone upon the desolate cliffs. Some twenty yards in front the dark figure of a man was visible. The individual's footsteps were ringing upon the rocky surface of the path, although those of Jack were almost noiseless, for he had been for the last few minutes walking upon the grass.

A curious longing for companionship came to the junior partner of McFarlanes', and with a view to overtaking the man in front, Jack quickened his steps.

Purely by chance he still kept to the snow-covered grass bordering the rocky path, and when he had approached within a dozen feet of the other, the latter still appeared to be oblivious of his presence. Jack was about to hail his quarry when a thing happened that sealed his lips.

The man ahead lit a cigar, and a sniff of its smoke was wafted to Jack's nostrils by the gentle breeze that was blowing in his direction. The young merchant gave a start and an expression of perplexity filled his eyes, for he had recognised the aroma of the cigar. It belonged to the strong Indian brand which Jack had noticed was at all times smoked by the man he knew as Samuel P. Silwater, and he wondered what could have brought the American to this lonely spot.

Of course, it was quite probable that "Mr. Silwater" was, like himself, indulging in a long ramble through the invigorating night air, but somehow Jack could never avoid looking upon the American representative of Messrs. Swaan, of Rotterdam, with suspicion, and he could not bring himself to think that the desire for a walk was the man's sole reason for coming so far from his hotel at Berwick.

By design now, Jack followed the American in silence, and his caution was soon rewarded by reason of what transpired. A second figure loomed up out of the gloom from the opposite direction, and Jack saw the two men stop and greet each other, although they did not shake hands.

"Vell?" the new-comer suggested, and even at the spot at which the young merchant had paused he was distinctly aware of its guttural accent. "Vhat news?"

"The news is of the best," the man Jack knew as Silwater said, replying to the query of his companion. "Within about five days to a week the order will be completed and ready for shipment."

"Good! And the young fool you told me of has shown no further signs of suspicion?"

"No, but I reckon he ain't entirely satisfied with the explanations I've given him. However, I guess you can leave him to me if he should become troublesome. Now, what about the shipment?"

"I am the ship fitting up and sending as arranged," came the reply. "She will be called The Gretchen, and the Dutch flag she will fly. The terms of the order are f.o.b our craft, so McFarlanes' will readily load on to our boat. She ought to get safely to Hamburg, for all the crew and officers are to be trusted, but should've haf any trouble from British warships she will put into Rotterdam as a blind."

"Ach blitzen, vhat is that?"

Maitland uttered an oath and swung round upon his heel. Jack McFarlane had wormed his way amid the gorse until by putting out his hand he could have touched the legs of the conspirators, then by accident he had dislodged a large stone which had toppled over the side of the cliff, noisily thudded upon a protuberance upon its way, and finally fallen with a loud splash into the sea.

Jack realised at once that to attempt to further conceal himself was useless,

and as the American sprang in his direction, the young man rose to his feet and faced the master-criminal with flashing eyes.

Maitland stood for a moment, his lips snarling, his eyes blazing with mingled passion and dismay, then, without a word of warning, he launched himself at Jack's throat.

Thud!

Jack McFarlane's fist crashed into the American's face and he reeled backwards with a gasping curse of rage and pain, but then the young man was suddenly attacked from behind by the burly German who attempted to pinion his arms.

The merchant fought like a demon. Every nerve in his body was tingling with righteous anger, every drop of fighting blood in his veins was roused. By the time Maitland had recovered himself and staggered to his feet, Jack had torn himself from the German Secret Service agent's embrace, had swung round and aimed a swinging blow for the point of his jaw. Von Stoltz saw it coming, and with surprising agility for one of his bulk, he put his head round the blow and countered with his left. His fist landed heavily upon Jack's temple, but it would have taken a dozen such blows to deter him now, and just keeping his feet by an effort, he flung himself at his adversary and grappled with him.

The two men swayed terribly near to the edge of the cliff, then Jack tripped the German up and they both went down in the snow in a huddled heap to fight desperately for the mastery. Twice they rolled over, then Jack secured a grip upon his foe's windpipe and shook him like a terrier shakes a rat, but in his excitement Jack had momentarily left Maitland out of his calculations, and this was to prove his undoing.

The American had whipped a heavy automatic from his hip-pocket, and clubbing it, he stole noiselessly towards the young merchant's back. Nearer and nearer he drew, until he was within striking distance, then Jack McFarlane uttered a choking moan as the butt of the criminal's revolver descended with a sickening thud upon the back of his unprotected head. The young man flung up his arms, fell to one side, and disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

Von Stoltz made a frantic clutch at the young fellow's clothing with a view to pulling him back into safety, but Maitland savagely brushed his hand aside.

"You fool!" he snarled vindictively as a faint splash came to their ears from below. "I guess it was the best thing that could have happened!"

Von Stoltz reeled shakily to his feet and peered with dilated eyes into the darkness, through which he could see the glistening waters as they softly lapped against the face of the cliff.

"Perhaps you right are!" he agreed hoarsely. "But it is murder, and when his body is found we may be suspected. I passed several people in coming here. To have kidnapped him would have been just as effective."

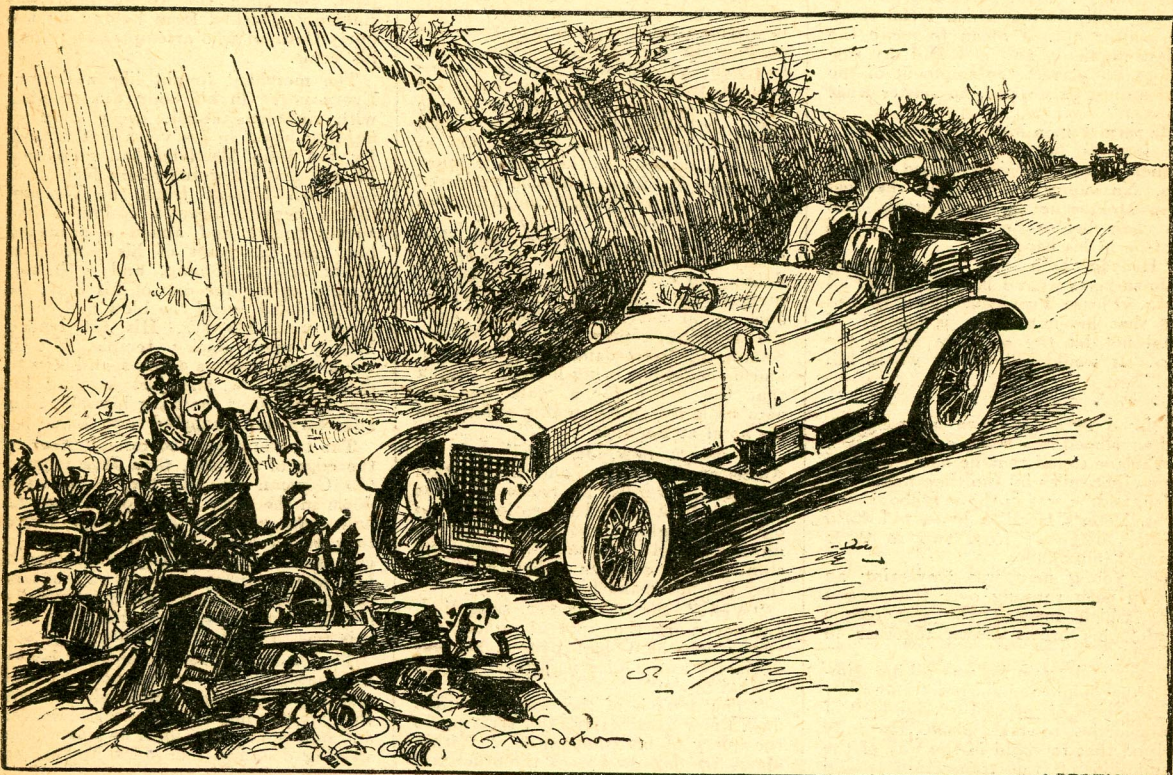
"Dead men tell no tales, my friend!" Maitland returned callously. "It was not my intention to knock him over the cliff, but I guess it's better so. If he had remained alive, all our carefully-laid plans might have come toppling about our ears. Quick, let us get away!"

(Another exciting instalment of this great yarn next Thursday. Order in advance.)

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"

A PERILOUS MISSION!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story dealing with the further Thrilling Adventures of
BILL STUBBS, OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.



The two officers potted away at the approaching motor-car, whilst Bill Stubbs dabbled with the wreckage in the middle of the road. He had thought of a daring plan, and he meant to bring it into action.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bill Meets a Kindred Spirit.

"Y'see, it was like this," explained Bill Stubbs to his circle of listeners, as he lit a fresh Woodbine from the stump of his old one, Bill being an inveterate smoker so long as his cigs lasted, and an abstainer when he couldn't get any. "Y'see, when I woke up, there was the little lieutenant boy standing not 'arf a dozen yards away watching the enemy with his field-glasses as unconcerned as if he were at a picture palace, and blow me if there wasn't some Uhuligans creepin' up behind him just going ter catch him on the 'op. Two of 'em!"

The little cockney held his hands apart about a couple of feet to illustrate.

"As near as that," he went on. "Well, the first Uhuligan chaps gits up before I could say 'snap!' and he jumped on the officer with a yell, and then his mate follows it up, and they get the lieutenant on his back in no time. And me, that mesmerised that I was, stood looking on, and never stirring a finger. 'It's abart time you got a move on, Bill Stubbs,' says I to

myself, and in the next minute you never see two more surprised Huns in all your natural. I was snoozing in the car, you see, and they hadn't spotted me. I caught one of them on the underside of his ear—biff!—and he went down like a pint of four ale tumbles down Ginger Dick's throat. I was going to take my time over the second jossar, when that little lieutenant boy he gets up and puts his oar in. That lieutenant is a bit of a daisy, I can tell you. He just shook hisself, and put his bit of glass in his eye, and looks at me.

"'Aw, thank you, Stubbs,' he draws. 'I was just wondering where you were. I will see to these fellahs, Stubbs, if you will bring the car up, for I must weally get to the general soon.'

"'Right you are, sir,' says I; and then he drops on his knees, and trusses the two Germans like a couple of Turkeys for Christmas. As I went off I heard him talking to them like a father. 'Now then, you fellahs, don't kick, or I shall weally have to hurt you!' he was saying, sarcastic like."

"'Didn't upset himself much, then?' remarked Nobby Jim.

Bill Stubbs chuckled.

"'Upset hisself! I tell yer he's the limit. He talks like a kid at a bloomin' boarding school, and dresses like a tailor's dummy; but you can take my word he's one of the toughest bits of British goods that has been sent across the Straits of Dover.'

Bill, brave as a lion himself, was the first to recognise that quality in others.

In his estimate of Lieutenant Staines he was right. He had only met that young officer three hours before, but that had been long enough for him to weigh the man up. Although the little cockney was really a transport driver, many and various were the duties that came his way in this war that changes hourly. Bill, 'bus-driver in August, had driven all sorts of vehicles since then, aerial as well as land vehicles. He had made his name known as that of a capable little man with a saucy tongue and a nimble wit, and if any tricky job showed its head when Stubbs was in the offing, he was the man picked out for it.

On this wet, misty morning, when he had arrived at General Brownlow's

headquarters with a message from the base, he came at the moment the staff chauffeur had been picked off by a daring sniper. Bill had met the Red Cross men carrying the victim away as he reached the door of the house where the staff were in conference.

After the cockney had saluted and delivered his dispatch, the general eyed him keenly.

"I've seen you before, my man," he said. "What's your name?"

"Private Stubbs, sir. Army Transport Corps—whenever I get a chance at my reg'lar job."

The general was a thick-set, ruddy-faced man, with a fierce moustache, and sharp, beady eyes that—as Bill Stubbs remarked later—would have bored a hole in a petrol-tank. He was not very tall, but what there was of him was a useful-looking bundle. He was known to his officers as "irritable Jimmy," and was accustomed to be obeyed without question. Everybody around him knew that. When he made up his mind to a thing, that thing was as good as done.

At Bill Stubbs' answer, the general turned to an officer, and said something in a low voice.

The officer nodded, and Bill managed to catch the word "Antwerp" in his answer.

"Yes, this is the man," he ended aloud.

"I thought so," said the general, and, without further remark, turned away.

Five minutes later Bill found himself in the seat of the long, grey car that stood outside, taking the place of the staff chauffeur, and a minute later still he was driving Lieutenant Dudley Staines at fifty miles an hour across the front.

It had been but a few hours' work in which he had made the acquaintance of the greatest "k-nut" he had yet seen in the British Army, and this glass-eyed, drawing, dressy young officer had struck him as one of the queerest customers he had ever met. He had been cool as a cucumber whilst being attacked by the Uhlands, and was apparently quite unconscious of danger as they raced through a perfect hail of shell fire. "Deuced rotten!" was the only remark he made when they had to get out and push the car past a big hole in the road made by the bursting of a great projectile, that, if it had burst but a few feet nearer, would have wiped out car and men.

And now the car and Bill were back at headquarters, waiting for further instructions.

He had just finished his little story when the lieutenant came out, accompanied by another aide-de-camp, and the two were talking loud enough for him to hear.

"He has made up his mind, and nothing on earth will stop him; but he has no right to run such risks. He ought to leave it to us. Well, you are going with him, Staines, so you must keep him safe."

"I am afraid the general's a bit too old in the tooth to take much notice of me, colonel, but I'll do my best. He is a little hot-headed, y'know."

"It's rot. It isn't his duty to go scouting. His place is to stop here, because it is more important that he should survive than any of the rest of us. He did his bit in the firing-line years ago, and there's no need for him to go pottering about now. And they are giving us a particularly hot time to-day. A nice thing if he

happened to get caught—we should never hear the last of it."

The colonel walked away, and the lieutenant came over to the car.

"Look hyar, Stubbs," he said. "You and I have got a difficult job in front of us. Hyar's the general coming with us all along the enemy's front, and I tell you fwankly it will be a deucedly awkward thing for us all if we should let him be captured. I want you to keep your eyes open."

"Right-ho, sir!" said Bill.

The lieutenant put up his monocle slowly, and looked at the bus-driver's alert face till that worthy felt like blushing.

"I don't think you are altogether a fool, Stubbs," he said. "And certainly you know how to drive a car."

Bill Stubbs detected a distinct twinkle in the eye behind the "window-pane."

"The general's a bit of hot stuff, sir, I guess," he ventured.

"He's the elementary limit, Stubbs. And we have to look after him to-day like a father—I mean, like a couple of fathers. You understand?"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Troublesome Passenger.

Bill did understand. Also, during the next few hours he had opportunities of understanding better still.

When the general came out of the house and sprang into the car, Bill was ordered to forge ahead immediately, and the dandy lieutenant sat in the front with him to be handy to give instructions. A short run took them into the firing-line, and a journey well after Bill's heart commenced.

The car was one of the best, and, as they went through the cool air, the wind cut like knives, as the bullet that had killed Bill's predecessor had also shattered the wind screen. They followed what looked like a main road to somewhere, or what had once been a road; for now there were holes in it big enough to bury half a dozen cars, and Bill had all his work cut out to steer safely round these souvenirs of the Jack Johnsons. For the most part, the shells that were now coming from the German batteries were directed beyond this road, but now and again a screaming monster would roar over them, and cause a miniature earthquake on the roadside.

The general, smoking a big cigar in the back of the car, directed their movements, often in direct opposition to the wishes of the aide-de-camp, who was nervous with the responsibility. If there was a road that promised to lead them nearer to the German trenches than was safe, along that road Bill Stubbs had to take the car.

"I knew how it would be," groaned Staines, as they were humming down a narrow lane at a point where the Allies had driven the Germans back a little way. "I told him not to come here. Just look back, Stubbs."

Bill twisted his neck round as much as he dared, and gave a grunt.

"A bloomin' German motor-car, and armoured," he said. "Don't worry. We shall leave 'em standing still directly. This engine can make rings round 'em."

"If only the old chap will keep quiet," said the lieutenant. "Drive on, Stubbs, whatever he says. I'll take the blame."

But the old general had caught a word or two.

"Quiet!" he fumed. "Am I to sit still whilst these Huns shoot at us, man? Use your rifle, lieutenant. There the bullets come! Are we to take them lying down?"

"Don't expose yourself, sir," begged the lieutenant. "They will not bother with us, unless they catch sight of your uniform, and then they will want to take you. It is wisest to run."

The bullets from the German car, which had daringly ventured out of the enemy's lines to do what mischief it could, were now pattering on the road, and one or two were rattling on the back of the car. Words were lost on the choleric, self-willed general. Standing up, he handled a rifle in a businesslike way, and gave the approaching Germans a hot welcome.

"Not so fast, driver," he said to Stubbs. "We are leaving them, and my shots are falling short."

Lieutenant Staines tore his hair. To let the Germans come close up would be fatal, for they were sure to have a machine-gun aboard.

"Leave it to me," said Stubbs, in a whisper, and, giving the officer a most undisciplined nudge with his elbow, he threw in the high speed.

The car bounded forward like a living thing. The general stormed and swore. Bill stood up, and began to tug in frantic earnest at the change lever.

"Not a bit of use talking, sir," he said, as solemn as an owl. "She's stuck, and I can't stop her. The old hoss is a-running away wiv us, and I'll have to give her her head a bit. My old 'bus once did me like this on London Bridge, and I ain't ever forgot it."

Perhaps the old warrior had a shrewd suspicion of the truth, but he could not contradict Bill, and so the car bore them safely out of range of the irate Huns.

When a couple of miles further on, Bill somehow regained complete control of his machine, the car was at a cross-roads. One fork led south, the other north.

"North!" cried the general. "You are able to steer, I presume, driver?"

"Not that way, sir," pleaded the lieutenant. "It is too dangerous—especially as the men in the armoured car must have spotted your uniform. Better turn back."

"When I have not seen half what I am determined to see?" queried the general. "Drive on, Stubbs!"

There was no help for it, and down the north road went the racing car, humming along under a rain of furious shells.

"A bit steadier hyar, Stubbs," said the officer, to our hero. "We are close on the enemy, and near twouble. Keep your eyes skinned. Aw, the beggahs!"

Zip! Zip!

The lieutenant did not pursue his observation, because the patter of the bullets that sped swiftly about six inches above their heads was more eloquent than any speech. The car was being sniped at by marksmen hidden on the roadside. Bill rushed her forward, and, with nothing worse than a few holes in the tonneau, she sped round a friendly curve between high banks. Still the road curved, and now the banks shut off the fire of the Germans.

"Thank goodness we are out of that!" breathed the officer. "I was afraid the general was a goner. But—ah!—what have we hyar, Stubbs?"

Stubbs brought the car to a standstill with a jerk that nearly sent them shooting overboard, and even then the huge vehicle slid forward several feet on locked wheels, only just stopping at a heap of wreckage that completely blocked the road. They were in a trap.

Lucky it was for them that the snipers could not see round the corner, and when, after a moment of suspense, no Germans came in sight, they began to hope that perhaps the enemy did not know of the blocked way.

"Looks ter me as if we orter have brought a nacroplane long wiv us," remarked Bill, as he gazed at the sides of the road, the high banks shutting it in, and the piled-up mass of boxes and cans and ironmongery which barred their progress. "Been a transport waggon here, sir, and a shell has landed fair in the middle of 'em. One of ours, by the look of the stuff."

The general and the lieutenant got out of the car and began talking, whilst Bill went up to the promiscuous heap and inspected things. The two officers raised their voices, and the general was evidently angry again. The other protested, but "irritable Jimmy" was determined to have his own way.

"Certain death to go back, sir," cried the aide. "Those snipahs are sure to reappear."

"What do you want us to do, then, Staines?"

Dudley Staines pointed to the top of the right bank.

"There is a way across there that will take you into our lines in three miles walking," he said. "Stubbs and I will remain and draw the attention of the snipahs, and in the meantime you will be safe. Go, sir, for the sake of the corps."

"Do you think I am going to sneak away like that—like a coward?" shouted the general furiously.

What Staines would have replied does not matter, for at that moment there was a distant shout of triumph in German. The snipers had come down into the road, and had discovered their prey. They were at the bend.

Though there were only three of them, the Britishers never thought of surrender. The two officers, shouting to Stubbs, made a strategical retreat to the cover of the car and prepared to beat off their assailants.

But Bill had been busy with his thinking apparatus whilst examining the wrecked transport, and presently he ran back to the car and yanked at the handle.

"What are you doing, Stubbs?" cried Staines.

"Got a bit of an ideer, sir," he said briefly. "You and the general keep the Germs busy at the back, and leave the rest to me. We aren't going to be took by no bloomin' Huns yet, not by a long chalk."

The engine started. Bill was off to the wreck in a jiffy, and did something with some cans he found.

The general shouted angrily after him, but Bill took no notice, and presently the fire of the Germans made matters hot.

"Where's that blessed little cockney gone?" howled the irritated general. "Saving his own neck—what?"

But Bill was not the sort that bolts for cover at the first sign of danger, and there he was, bending down and striking a match coolly. Something

flared up, and as he ran back to the car a flame of flaring petrol reached the mass of boxes and there was a kind of miniature earthquake.

"Duck, you two!" cried the little man, as the mass went skyward and the fragments began to fall.

None of them wholly escaped, and though Bill rubbed the side of his head ruefully where the hard corner of a box lid bounced off him, he could not help grinning at the attitude of the general. The brave old man, who could face any rifle fire without turning a hair, did not appear to relish the falling splinters that showered down upon them.

He got up and shook his fist at Stubbs.

"You confounded ass, what are you up to?" he roared.

Staines, pulling himself up from the car floor, drawled out:

"Was it a shell, sir?"

Bill grinned, but took no more notice. His job was not yet completed. Before the smoke that followed the explosion had drifted away, and before the astonished Germans had recovered their senses, he had clambered into his seat and reversed the car. After one backward move, she went forward again with a jerk that sent the fuming general to the floor, too much out of breath to get out a single more swear word, and the next minute they were rushing over the few remains of the transport at the rate of forty miles an hour—free—safe!

It took quite another ten minutes to explain to the general that Bill Stubbs, having discovered a few boxes of ammunition in the pile, had decided to blow up the lot in order to clear the road, and had succeeded in doing it by the aid of a can of petrol.

"All's well that ends well," growled the old man, "but you might have killed the lot of us."

Bill Stubbs grinned.

"Wot price the Germans wot was coming up behind us, then?" he remarked to the k-nut at his side.

Lieutenant Staines nodded cheerfully.

"Somehow you seem to be a wather sensible sort of a fool, Stubbs—sometimes," he said.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Being Rounded Up.

Bill, thinking their troubles were now over, was for slowing down a bit, as he was not at all sure that the bump over the wreckage had not strained the car somewhere, but Staines urged him on.

"Time is passing," he said, sotto voce, "and I am feeling uneasy. You see, the general would come down hyar, and we are wight in the enemy's zone of action. They must have spotted his uniform, and a general is a big pwize, y'know. And to add to the giddy luxury of things, I lost my route map in that explosion of yours—it must have fallen into the road when you jerked us forward. Ah, what did I say! There the beggahs are!"

A small car was drawn up at the roadside, at a sharp turn, and several rifles protruded from its windows. There was no passing without a fight. There was no going back, either.

Bill threw in the top speed and prepared to rush for it. The two officers opened fire. There was an exchange of shots, but they were going too fast for

either party to take good aim, and the Britishers escaped injury. The Germans had evidently expected their enemies to halt at sight of them, and so fall an easy prey to the company of Uhlans that had now come out of cover in their rear, for as the car swept up, their driver tried to move into the middle of the road. Bill saw the effort, and set his teeth hard as he flew past. The British car got by, as he expressed it, by the skin of its back tyre. One splashboard went, and the jolt sent the German motor spinning halfway round. Lieutenant Staines got a bullet in one of her back wheels as they flashed away, and she was out of the running.

"If they hadn't been so keen on potting at us, they could have lamed us, too, that way," said Bill, thankfully. "The German thinking-boxes aren't orl cup winners!"

They soon outdistanced the galloping Uhlans.

"But what I would like to know, Stubbs," said the k-nutty one, "is exactly where we are now. Judging by the shell-fire, we are nearer to the German lines than I fancy. If we don't clear away soon, I am afraid they will round us up—stalk us, y'know."

"Go on a little further," cried the general, who was now smoking a fresh cigar.

"He's the limit," muttered Staines. "You do just as I tell you, Stubbs—take all the right-hand turns you can, and try to work us away from the Huns."

Bill's only answer was a nod, for he was too intent on the road ahead. It was a strange road to him, there were shell-holes to avoid, nasty curves to negotiate, greasy gradients to speed down at a rate that would do a road-hog credit.

It soon became very clear that they were lost, and also that the Germans knew the identity of the general, and were resolved to capture him. Time and time again had Bill to turn back from promising roads because the enemy were in sight, and twice again they had to run the gauntlet of snipers. They had a feeling that they were being headed off, driven into a trap.

Dashing into the open, once, after tearing through a wood that promised to mask their movements, they were met by a troop of about twenty cavalry, coming to face them at the gallop.

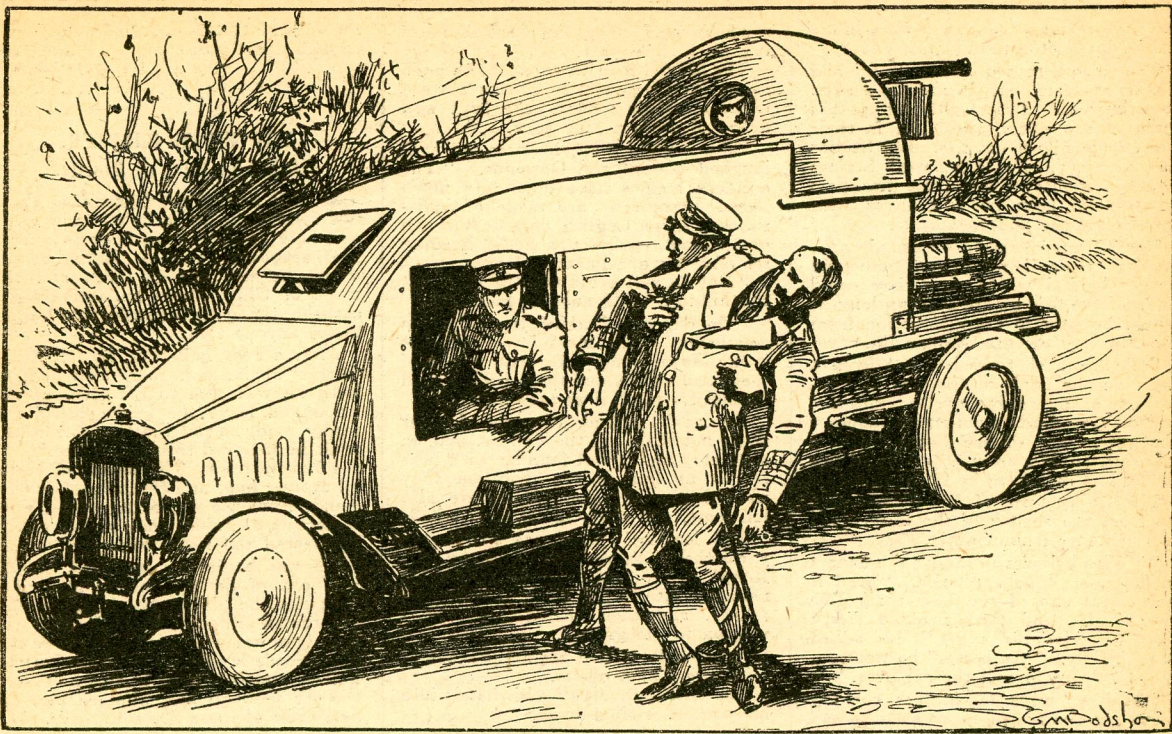
The general shouted something, and the lieutenant spoke, but Stubbey didn't hear either of them. He played the Nelson trick on them, but with his ears. He had his own way of dealing with a situation of this kind.

"I done this sort of thing before," he said, "when I was on my old 'bus. This is a bit of orl right!"

He charged the car straight at the troops of horses.

They did not expect this, and though some scattered, others held their ground to the last moment, firing with their revolvers. The Britishers gave them a hot return, and then the front of the car was upon the riders. Down went horses and men, shouting, struggling, and with one awful lurch, that nearly threw the cockney from his seat, the car was past. Its sides were dented and riddled with bullets, and Staines had a flesh wound on his cheek, whilst Stubbs gripped the steering-wheel with a bleeding finger. "Irritable Jimmy" had escaped without a scratch.

On the road behind them they left



Bill Stubbs lifted the dazed general, and, carrying him to the armoured car, handed him over to the officer in charge. "Here, take him!" he cried. "He's been a regular Jonah to us!"

the writhing forms of several horses and men.

"Aw—you can dwive a little, Stubbs!" said Staines.

"And I think," said the general, "that I have seen enough of the position now. You can go back to our lines as soon as you like, lieutenant."

"Right, sir," said the aide-de-camp. And to Stubbs he added: "If we get him safely home, it's the last time I bring 'Jimmy' out. Is my hair going gway, Stubbs?"

"Pretty dusty, sir," was Bill's response. "But which way?"

They were approaching a forking of the ways.

"To your left—quick!" shouted the general, who now had his field-glasses to his eyes. "There are mounted men the other way."

Staines nodded agreement, and to the left turned Bill. Perhaps two miles they went, perhaps three, and then they came to a stop. The road ran to a dead end, terminated in a grass bank. Staines whistled in dismay, the general threw lurid language around.

"Shall we go back, sir?" asked practical Stubbs. "We shall have to reverse—no room to turn here. There's a narrer path abart half a mile behind, where I could swing her round."

The cockney chauffeur was in the act of turning at the spot he had mentioned when the general gave another shout. He had seen a body of Uhlans—a strong body—on the road they were fastened in. Escape was cut off.

"Down there, along that path—it must bweak out somewhere!" cried the lieutenant. "If you can dwive her in the space."

"Give me room fer her axles, and I'll put her through," granted Stubbs. "Ere goes!"

Bumping, swaying from side to side, now deep in ruts, and now grazing the trunks of the trees, jolting, lurching, the already overstrained car plunged into the wood, careering down the bridle-path like a drunken thing.

"Ort to test some of the mugs that drives 'buses dahn 'ere!" said Bill Stubbs to himself. "This would show 'em up!"

It was a nerve-racking experience, considered merely as a ride, without the added danger of finding that at any moment they might be attacked by the Huns.

Still, fortune seemed to be favouring them, for the wood was silent and deserted—silent, that is, except for the roar of the guns all around them, the crackle of distant rifle-fire and the scream of shells overhead.

And then came disaster. The car was wobbling down a steep slope, and do what he would with the brakes, Stubbs could not stop the car in time.

A gap yawned across the path, a deep, well-dug, and now abandoned trench, and with its wheels fixed and sliding, the big car dropped into the ditch, hesitated a moment, and then turned turtle.

It all happened so suddenly that not one of the three men had time to save himself. As the car went over, they were shot out like stones from a sling, helpless, and very fortunate it was that Bill had managed to check the speed of the car at all.

The old general was pitched farthest, and lay on the ground, still as death. Dudley Staines, badly shaken and bruised, fell into the bottom of the trench, into a foot of water, and the tough little driver—born not to be killed in any accident whatever—had landed in a low bush.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Capturing a General.

Lieutenant Staines sat up, sore and dazed, and looked round him. He saw the general, lying still, and as he climbed out of the wet trench, a voice somewhere near said cheerfully:

"Next gentleman, please!"

Stubbs, seated in his bush, was looking as lively as a cricket, and remarked that it wasn't everybody that could rely on falling right side up every time. And then they went to the general.

"He is not dead," said the lieutenant, after an examination of his fallen chief. "Stunned, that's all, so far as I can see. I'll bring him round whilst you have a look at the car."

Presently, dazed and very much shaken and subdued, the general was lying on the bank side, quite conscious. Staines was relieved at that, but when Stubbs came back and reported that the car was not mortally wounded, he still looked worried.

"She's had a nasty jar, sir," said Bill, "but if we can turn her over, I can make her move. She wasn't going so very fast when the bump came. Will the general be able to help us?"

"I'm afwaid not, Stubbs," said the lieutenant. "He is dazed, but no bones bwoken. What is worrying me is the thought of the Uhlans. If there is any considerable crowd of them, we shall—er—have to surrender. Ah, hyar they are!"

The Uhlans that had found the overturned car were only two men, after all—a couple of scouts who had left the main body and were picking their way through the wood. By the shout of surprise they gave, it was evident that they had given up all hope of catching up their prey.

If they had been cowards they might

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"

have both escaped, but they were brave men and came on confident of victory.

The general roused enough to try and lift his revolver, but he was too shaken to aim well. The lieutenant potted away at the riders, and they, in their turn, gave him a hot fire. Bill Stubbs had vanished. For a moment Staines had his doubts of the little transport driver, and then he was angry with himself for the doubt.

The Germans had dismounted, and, leading their horses, were creeping nearer behind what cover they could find. If the firing were kept up long, it would be sure to draw attention from the not very distant German lines.

Suddenly a shot cracked out from a bush on the flank of the two Uhlans, and one of them threw up his hands and rolled over—dead. Another and another shot came out of the bush, and the remaining German vaulted into the saddle and dashed away furiously.

The stocky form of Bill Stubbs rose up from the shelter of the bush. He was grinning triumphantly.

"I allus believes in taking the enemy in flank, sir," he explained. "And it was abart one of the best shots I've ever had. And t'other bloke didn't stop to take his horse," he added thoughtfully. "An horse," he went on, "will help us to pull the car over."

"Stubbs," remarked Staines, ruefully regarding the shattered eyeglass he had just found, "you do have ideahs. That is not half a bad one. What about the tackle?"

"Genelly somefink that will do in the box," said Bill. "I've had to tow lame ducks before. 'Ere we are."

A rope was found that they made do for the job, and after a bit of trouble—for the cockney was no great lover of horses—they got the car right side up again, on the further side of the trench, and ready for starting.

The irritable general was the next trouble, for he was again unconscious, and it was not until they had lifted him into the car that he opened his eyes again.

Meantime, the galloping Uhlan who had made himself scarce was dashing madly along the bridle-path. He crossed the road, forded a shallow brook, urged his horse over a common, and caught up with a company of his fellows, twenty strong. It did not take him long to explain the situation, how he had found the broken-down car and the two men with a wounded British general. There was great excitement at once, for these were some of the scouts specially told off to capture the British Staff officer who had been seen reconnoitring their positions.

In a few minutes later the whole troop were off in high spirits, reached and passed the ford, and dashed into the bridle-path. They were in a hurry, and made plenty of noise, and seemingly had been heard, for just when their guide was pointing down the way he had tracked the car, another of the men shouted and pointed well away to the right.

"There!" he exclaimed. "The very man! Leave the others!"

They turned, to see an officer galloping away on their dead companion's horse. There was no mistaking him. The sun shone brightly on his uniform, gleaming on the hilt of his sword, brightening vividly the scarlet band of his Service cap.

The troop turned, and went thundering after their prey.

The hunted man was certainly a good rider, for he gave the Uhlans a stern chase for their money. He kept well ahead of them a long time.

"For an old man, he goes strong," laughed one of the Germans. "The accident cannot have done him much harm. Ach, they are made of india-rubber, these English dogs! But this one cannot escape us; he is heading straight for our lines!"

"But he will avoid us if he gets past the hill-top," said another man.

"Go on, men!" cried the officer in command. "We must have him. It is the Major-General Brownlow, one of their staff chiefs, and there will be Iron Crosses for us all if we take him."

Try as he would, the hunted rider could not shake off the Uhlans, and, in a country he was not familiar with, was driven at last in the direction they wanted him to take. His horse also fell lame, and came to an abrupt halt.

The leading Uhlan was within ten yards then. As the troop came on, the British officer fired five chambers of his revolver into their midst, three men falling, and then hurled his empty weapon to the ground.

"Surrender! You are my prisoner!" cried the Uhlan officer.

The Britisher, digging his hands into his pockets, smiled lazily.

"As I am unarmed, I suppose I must be," he drawled. "But why were you so anxious to take me alive, Herren?"

"Donner und blitzen!" roared the Uhlan. "We have been tricked! This is not the general at all—it is only a boy officer!"

"Bill Stubbs said you would be ratty," was Lieutenant Staines's only reply.

For it was Bill Stubbs, and no other, who had conceived the idea of thus saving the general and dishing the Huns.

When he and Staines had lifted the angry but helpless martinet into the car, and were ready to start, they heard the Uhlans coming. They knew there was no escape then, for, shaken as the motor was by its acrobatic feats, no great speed could be got out of it—at least, along that narrow, bumpy, bridle-path.

"We can fight, Stubbs," said the lieutenant glumly. "But they will get the old man."

"I don't fink," said Bill. "Leastways, not if you are so bloomin' keen on saving him. It's a pity, for man for man I'd rather you looked after number one, sir. Well, it's the general they're after. How would it do if you was to put on his togs—his uniform, I'm meaning—and take this 'ere 'orse and give 'em a run for their money? They'll chase you as if you was a bit o' loot, and meanwhile I can tinker up this car and do a get-away with the old fossil. How's that for strategy—what, sir?"

"You have got it, Stubbs!" cried Staines, with unusual animation. "And thank goodness the general is too dazed to object, or he would raise Cain at the ideah! Now for it!"

"Be sure you take the general back to our lines, Stubbs," the lieutenant shouted, as he leapt into the saddle and was off.

"Ay, ay, sir!" sang out Stubbsey, after the fashion of the jolly Jack Tars he had met. "I'd have left you to look after him, only I wasn't tall enough to

mislead the Germs, and you don't know enough abart motor-cars. So-long, old sport!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Useful Sort of Rescue.

So Bill Stubbs set himself to do a few repairs on his own, working away as coolly as if he were back in one of the garages at the base. Buried in the wood, he was out of sight, and the troop of Uhlans were too intent upon catching the general's uniform to bother about anyone else.

After a busy half-hour, he felt ready to start again, and, going slow at first, until he was able to get clear of the wood and leave the bridle-path for a firmer road, he put the bonnet towards what he believed to be the direction of the British lines. The sounds of battle all around him, and the lines of smoke-clouds from the exploding shells, were some sort of guide, and, on the whole, he steered the right way.

He was beginning to fancy himself well out of danger, when, topping a long rise, he almost ran into a couple of German armoured cars. Luckily, the road here was wide, and there were two other roads branching off. The German bullets whistled round him as he turned the car suddenly and plunged into the narrowest of these two side roads.

Down here only one of the armoured cars could follow at once, and that lessened the risk; but it was a tight place. Pushing the jigger for all he was worth, Bill had no chance to reply to the German fire; but fortune favoured him. The leading car punctured a tyre, and had to go back to allow the second to pass and take up the pursuit.

Still, this car gained on Stubbs, and when he came to a cross-road and saw another armoured car rushing up to meet him from the opposite direction—a very big car indeed—Bill nearly gave up hope.

"More bloomin' Germans!" he groaned. "Well, general or no general, I'm going to ram this lot, and chance it!"

And it was only just in the nick of time that he glimpsed the wagging Union Jack on the bonnet of the big motor. Hard on went his brakes, and he let out a yell that almost lifted the German chauffeur off his seat.

The big British car opened fire at once, and the German was quickly crumpled up, a wreck, the target of one well-aimed shell from the quickfrier. Bill at the same moment had lifted the dazed and feebly protesting general from the car to the ground, and handed him over to the officer.

"Here, take him!" cried the little man. "He's been a regular Jonah to us. Ta-ta for a bit!"

He cranked the handle and jumped into his own car and was off, whilst the officer was wondering what it was all about.

"I say, my man——" he cried.

But "my man" had gone—was sitting in a grey, muddy car disappearing in the distance over the hill, in the direction of the enemy's lines!

"If I'd stopped to argue the point, I expect they'd have kept me gassin' no end," Stubbs was thinking. "Had to hook it slippy. Couldn't waste time telling 'em that I'd seen a car and a

troop of Uhligans trotting in front of it, and how I'd made up me mind to have a go at saving me little lieutenant k-nut. Ho, there they are, are they? If I can only cut across and nip in between him and the horses, it could be did. And then— Hello, what's this? Is the whole bloomin' Germin' Army a-comin' this way? It would be wise of you, Driver Stubbs, to get under cover and let the procession go by."

Several columns of German troops were crossing his line of progress towards the spot where he expected to meet Staines's escort, and Stubbs pulled his car into the shelter of a wood at the summit of a hill, and, crawling to the fringe of the wood, he lay on his stomach and surveyed the scene. He had with him the general's field-glasses, which had been left in the car, and something he saw, and kept his gaze upon a considerable time, made him whistle softly to himself.

"The cunning beggars!" he muttered. "It's me ter squash that game—what?" And now for the lieutenant boy."

The bulk of the German advance had now passed the danger-point for Bill, and he dragged the car out and resumed his journey.

He struck the main road in front of the car in which the lieutenant was being conveyed, a prisoner, and gave a sigh of relief when he noticed that the Uhlans had hurried on. The sheer daring of his raid, so openly near to their advance, saved Stubbs from the too keen suspicion of the Germans, and he rushed to meet the car that held the English prisoner and two guards, as unhindered as if he held a German passport.

"Nah for it," he grunted. "I've had one lucky shot ter-day; here goes for another! Got him!"

Bill had potted away at the German chauffeur, and his second shot told. The man fell huddled up over the wheel, if not dead, then helpless. The car swerved, mounted the bank, and pitched out its occupants into the road.

One German lay prone, motionless; the other sprang up and looked ugly. Bill had by now stopped his car, and was afoot. He simply drove his fist into the Hun's face and bowled him over.

"If the car didn't settle you, I jolly

well can, you Hun!" he said. "How do you like that, baby-killer?"

The guards harmless, he turned to Lieutenant Staines. The k-nut was sitting up, rubbing himself, and looking as if he had seen a ghost.

"Hope it ain't hurt you very much, sir," said Bill. "You see, I had to stop you a bit sudden."

"What on earth are you doing hyar, Stubbs?" drawled the lieutenant, getting up on his feet. "I am not more than half killed, but what have you done with the general?"

"I've delivered him safe and sound," said Bill Stubbs. "Then I came back fer you. I didn't even stop to tell 'em what I was coming for. Now it's us fer 'ome."

"Pon my soul, Stubbs," remarked Staines, "you are a jolly decent sort. Dwise off!"

They got off without mishap or being followed, and at a good speed, but when they reached the spot where Stubbs had lain hidden and used the glasses the cockney stopped and got out.

"Something to show you here, sir," he said, handing over the field-glasses. "Wot do you make of it? Wot do you fink of that smoke?"

Lieutenant Staines looked long and steadily in the direction indicated to him. When he shut up the binoculars with a snap he said quietly:

"I think, Stubbs, we will make quick twacks for camp."

So Bill put her along as fast as he could, and they reached their own lines without further adventures. No sooner were they in camp than they left the car, and, without answering the volley of questions that were fired at them, rushed off towards a brewery that still stood, working, amongst the British trenches. This brewery had a tall chimney, and was smoking considerably.

They entered the place, and when they emerged Bill was pushing in front of him a man in yellow overalls.

"Kim up, you bloomin' spy!" he was saying. "I'll teach yer to play gimes of this sort—what?"

And the trio went straight to headquarters.

It was after the fuss was over, and Bill Stubbs had escaped from the con-

gratulations of Staines and the now fully recovered "Irritable Jimmy," and a lot of limelight that he had no fancy for. He was telling a friend as much as he thought fit of the trip he had just experienced.

"A bloomin' joy-ride, that's wot it was, old sport," he said, looking regretfully at the nearly finished cigarette between his fingers. "And I don't want another with the old man on board—not me! Nah, Lieutenant Staines ain't harf a k-nut, he ain't, and a rare plucked 'un, too. We very nearly lost him as a sacrifice to the old general's hog-headedness. I had to bring the old jossar back while Staines put the Huns off the scent by riding away on the horse. He never farked a minit, he didn't."

"And he got copped?"

"Yus," said Bill. "And him worth twenty of the general—though I suppose these old blokes are worth a lot, somehow, or else chaps like the lieutenant wouldn't think so much of 'em. Howsomever, I got my little officer out of trouble again by a slice of luck, as I was a-telling you."

"But what about this spy you said you had captured? Where does he come in?"

The little cockney frowned; then he laughed.

"That was a rummy go," he chuckled. "I was hiding from the Germs, and I see that big chimney smoking. Then I notices that the German guns was a-follerin' the smoke. Whichever way the smoke turned their shells went, and it struck me it was a rummy thing."

"As how?" inquired the curious one.

Bill looked at his friend disgustedly.

"You bloomin' idjit!" he snorted. "What would you think if you was to see smoke sometimes blowing up against the wind, and then chopping and changing abart every two minutes, when the air was as still as nothink? Of course, when we got into the place, we found a steam-pipe running up the inside of that there chimney, so as the spy could make the smoke blow just as he wanted it. Well, he won't blow any more smoke abart, I don't fink. And for being such a thickhead, just hand me another Woodbine over. Talking of smoke gives me an appetite—what?"

THE END.

YOU CAN HELP

To make THE DREADNOUGHT the Finest Paper in the World

BY SUGGESTING IMPROVEMENTS

and by getting all your Friends to subscribe to Your favourite paper every week.

IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS

Send them to your Editor. They will be useful, and he will appreciate your kindness!

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "SAVING HIS CHUM!"



VIVVY STEVENS.

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 find they have to face the world together. Their wanderings bring them into Cambridgeshire, where they make the acquaintance of Montague Beagle, a broken-down actor, and his wife, and with this strange couple they throw in their lot. A grizzly bear has broken loose in the neighbourhood, and Jim is just in time to prevent the creature from killing a middle-aged man. As it is, the victim is badly mauled, and before lapsing into unconsciousness gives Vivvy a peculiar stare of recognition. The two chums, together with Mr. and Mrs. Beagle, are engaged by a showman named Caesar de Snooke, who, on the day of the first performance, requests Jim to buy him some cigarettes. As Jim turns out of the field and into the street he sees two familiar figures approaching, and stares at them with startled eyes.

(Read on from here.)

Not a Success!

Then, with a little start of amazement, Jim realised who they were. One was Lavington Crooks, and the other Jeremy Crarper. As he said afterwards, a feather might have knocked him down.

He was not so amazed at seeing Lavington Crooks, for he did not know where he lived, and altogether knew very little about him. What in the world could Jeremy Crarper be doing there? he asked himself.

He walked on, and, as he drew nearer towards them he could tell by the way they nudged each other that they had seen him. He strode on without taking the slightest notice, but, to his surprise, they stopped him. "The very man we wanted to see," Crooks said genially. "Come somewhere and have a drink with us."

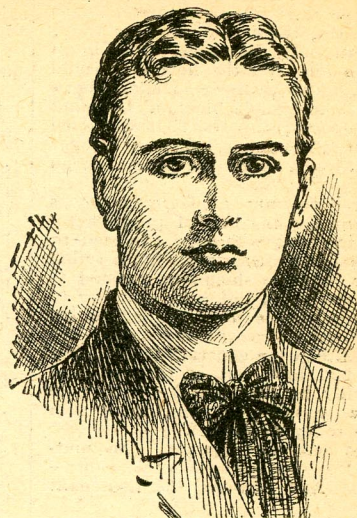
"Thanks," said Jim; "but I'm afraid I can't."

TWO OF THE BEST!

The First Chapters of a grand New Serial Story dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of
JIM CULVER

and
VIVVY STEVENS.

By **JACK LANCASTER.**



JIM CULVER.

"Then walk with us a little way. We want to talk to you."

"I'm afraid I can't," Jim repeated, in a polite but distant voice. "I'm going to get something, and I'm in a hurry."

The two men looked at each other.

"Well, look here, old chap," young Crarper said ingratiatingly, "you can spare us a couple of minutes, can't you? I don't bear you a bit of malice for what happened yesterday, and nor does Crooks. Do we, Crookie?"

"Oh, no, none at all!" Crooks answered; but with an effort.

"And we want to do you a good turn," Crarper added.

Jim stared at them, at first in astonishment, and then in frank disbelief. Jeremy could not meet his gaze, and looked away, blinking.

"It's very good of you," Jim said, still politely. "But I am not in need of a good turn."

"Oh, yes, you are! You'll never do any good on the stage. Look here, I'm sorry my gov'nor sacked you yesterday. I did my best to get him to take you back, but he wouldn't hear of it. So I've got you the offer of another job—a fine job."

"And you came all the way down here, found out where I was, and all that to tell me? Really, it was awfully good of you!"

Jeremy Crarper passed no comment on this remark, which was obviously made in sarcasm.

"It's a job in India. Three hundred a year for you to begin with, and a free passage. What do you say?"

Jim gave vent to a short laugh.

"I say 'no,'" he said simply.

"What!"

"No. And I'll tell you why you made me that offer. For some reason or other you want to get me away from Miss Stevens. I believe you've got some plot which won't work so easily while I'm with her. Well, you just won't get rid of me like that. That's all I have to say to you. Good-afternoon!"

He turned on his heel, but Jeremy Crarper took a step after him.

"You'd better be careful," he said, in a thick, menacing voice. "You'd better take that job. Look here, we're men with money and influence.

D'you think we're going to be beaten by a kid like you? D'you think we're going to let two youngsters stand in our way? If you mind your own business we'll treat you well, but if you get in our way, you'll live to curse yourself for doing it."

Jim laughed then—laughed with real amusement.

"You seem to forget that I licked you yesterday," he said. "If I catch you at anything shoddy, I'll lick you again. Do you think you can frighten me?"

He strode away, still smiling. But he was puzzled, and he knew that he and Vivvy had dangerous enemies.

A Wrecked Performance.

When Jim Culver returned to the field where the show was being fitted up he sought out Vivvy, and tapped her on the arm.

"You weren't thinking of going out anywhere, were you?" he asked.

She stared at him.

"No. Why?"

"Because our two dear friends, Crooks and Jeremy Crarper, are in the village," replied Jim.

Vivvy stared at him wide-eyed for a moment. The smile which she had been wearing left her face.

"What on earth can they want?" she demanded.

"You," said Jim. "They've just been vowing sackfuls of vengeance on me for keeping an eye on you, and standing in their way."

Vivvy leaned her arm on the wheel of a caravan, and was silent for a moment.

"But what on earth can that man Crooks want with me? And Jeremy Crarper, too? Why, it was only yesterday that Jeremy Crarper practically gave me the sack from the office. It can't be only because they think I'm a good dancer, and that Crooks, as my agent, might make a lot of money through it."

"No," said Jim, "it can't be only that. Where would Jeremy Crarper come in if that were the case?"

"Then what can it be?"

"There's some mystery here. I won-

der if it's got anything to do with—
with your father?"

"Oh, Jim, how can it?"

"I'm sure I don't know. The idea just came into my head. There's some mystery about your father, you know, or you'd have met people who knew him, and your aunt would have told you more about him. And all the time you've had an idea that he's alive. I don't know why on earth I should connect Crooks and Crarper with your father in any way, except that you told me about him yesterday, and all these things have happened together."

Vivvy was about to say something, when suddenly she noticed Croogan the artist entering the field. He looked annoyed about something. Jim noticed this, and chuckled.

"Hallo!" he murmured. "I wonder what's the matter? Somebody been sending him some more kippers, or what?"

Croogan approached them at a rapid stride, sweeping off his soft felt hat to Vivvy.

"Good-afternoon!" he said briefly. "Can you tell me where to find Mr. de Snooke, or whatever his beastly name is?"

"I think he's in the big tent," Jim answered. "I saw him there a minute or two ago. Is it anything important?"

The artist blew out his cheeks.

"It depends on what you call important," he answered. "You people have lost a boy, haven't you?"

Jim raised his eyebrows.

"Yes; we have a boy called Oswald. Nobody knows what's become of him."

"I do," said Mr. Croogan. "Does Mr. de Snooke want him back? But of course he doesn't. Nobody could want that boy back when they'd once had the good luck to lose him."

Jim and Vivvy both burst out laughing heartily.

"I rather think Mr. de Snooke does want him back," Vivvy answered.

"Why, where is he?"

"At the present moment he is locked in the wood-shed at the back of my house. He is my prisoner, in fact. I kept him there all the morning for punishment, but now Mr. de Snooke can have him back if he wants him."

"What's he been up to, then?" Jim inquired.

"Been up to? Been— Look here! He turned up outside my house last night at about twelve, and sang 'Sally in our Alley' under my window. If he sang it once he sang it forty times before I went down and nearly throttled him. Then I locked him in the wood-shed, and he's been there ever since. 'Sally in our Alley'—at least forty times—and he's got a voice like a damaged penny whistle."

"Here is Mr. de Snooke," said Jim, still laughing. "I wonder why Oswald did such a thing? He didn't strike me as being dotty."

The artist hurried away, and retold his story to the showman who had come up to within a few yards of Jim and Vivvy. De Snooke apologised in his best manner for the trouble Oswald had given, and sent Jim back with Croogan across the road to fetch him.

Oswald, having been released and cautioned, entered the field in Jim's company with the air of having a grievance. De Snooke addressed him like an old-fashioned schoolmaster.

"Wretched boy!" he exclaimed. "Is this your gratitude to me? To sing under gentlemen's windows, and

get me and my company a bad name? 'Sally in our Alley,' indeed! Well, are you sorry?"

"Yes," said Oswald, in a muffled whisper.

Cæsar de Snooke's expression relented somewhat.

"Well," said he, "if you're sorry, I won't punish you this time. But why did you do it? You must know your voice ain't a pleasure to hear. And this Mr. Croogan ain't done nothing to annoy you, has he? What made you do it?"

"To get the kippers for you," murmured Oswald.

Jim exploded.

"Did you think he was going to throw 'em all at you?" he asked.

"No, sir," Oswald murmured, still addressing Cæsar de Snooke; "but I heard Mr. Beagle telling you about them last night. And he said Mr. Croogan had said that he'd sell them kippers for an old song. Well, 'Sally in our Alley's' an old song, and I thought it'd do. So—"

Cæsar de Snooke exploded suddenly, and Jim and Vivvy rocked with laughter. The showman made a rush at Oswald, aimed a playful kick and missed him purposely, and Oswald bolted, knowing that he was forgiven, and wondering what the joke was.

The rest of that day until the evening, when the performance was given, went slowly for Jim and Vivvy. It was their first appearance as professionals, and, although the audience would be far different from a London one, they were anxious to see how they would be received. For the first time in their lives they had seen their names in print on a bill, and they were tremendously excited.

The doors, or rather the tent, opened at seven o'clock, and it was soon obvious that there was going to be a big house. The audience was composed mostly of men, and they were a rough-looking lot. They came in whistling and singing, each taking the pair of kippers which was presented at the door to all who came through. Oswald handed them out with the air of a great lady distributing gifts among the poor.

Crooks and Jeremy Crarper paid for front seats and came in, and Jim, who was standing by the barrier at the time, saw an expression on their faces which he did not like. They looked far too pleased over something.

In the interval between the filling-up of the house and the commencement of the show, the audience showed signs of being unruly. Cæsar de Snooke went about looking rather worried, although from a money point of view he had done excellent business. He had had to do with unruly audiences before, and he knew what it meant.

At last silence was obtained, and Cæsar de Snooke appeared on the stage, bowed, and began to make his customary little speech. He was drowned at once by loud shouts, laughter, and clapping of hands. A chorus of "You're my Baby," which started amongst the back seats, swept like wildfire through the tent.

"Order! Order!" shrieked the showman, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands. "Order, please!"

Somebody threw a kipper and knocked his hat off, and the chorus gave place to a great shout of laughter, which could have been heard a quarter of a mile away.

Cæsar de Snooke picked up his hat with a kind of dignity, and shrugged

his shoulders. He knew that it was useless to say anything. He waited until the din subsided sufficiently to let his voice be heard, and then he roared out that Mr. and Mrs. Montague Beagle would oblige with their celebrated performance.

Amid a perfect tumult the two elderly Thespians mounted the stage and faced the audience. A piano, that could scarcely be heard in the noise, struck up.

The Beagles' show was fairly simple and straightforward. They were first to sing a duet—two, if they were encouraged—and then to enact the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet."

They waited until the people were comparatively quiet, and then began.

Their voices had once been fairly good; but they were now the worse for wear. They had sung but a few notes when members of the audience began to imitate them. Then came the climax. Mrs. Beagle had to sing by herself. She did, as follows:

"For with her light she guides our
flight
Across the silver sea—"

It was now time for Montague Beagle to join in. His wife continued:

"We are a-lo-one—"

But the voice she expected to join in with hers was silent. She went off into the wrong key, paused, and looked around her. Montague Beagle was behind her on the floor, just rising to a sitting posture. The expression of her face, and that of her husband's, were too much for the audience, and pandemonium reigned for nearly a minute.

It had happened in this way. Montague Beagle had opened his mouth to sing when he observed a shower of kippers, flung unerringly, making straight for him. He flinched, tried to dodge, lost his balance, and went down.

In the midst of a great yell of laughter Montague Beagle rose slowly to his feet, rubbing an elbow and the back of his head. He took a step forward, and held up a hand for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he thundered, "there are some men present who have committed an assault on me with dried fish. Old as I am, I would repay that assault with blows were it not for my rheumatism. But in spite of my age, in spite of my rheumatism, I have a word to say to those men on behalf of my dear wife and myself. They are no gentlemen."

He folded his arms impressively, and another kipper sailed across the tent, and hit him in the mouth.

Montague Beagle turned quickly, to see Cæsar de Snooke standing in the wings frowning, and beckoning him to come off. He nudged his wife, and they beat a retreat amidst a shower of dried fish.

"Next please!" roared half a dozen voices, and a moment later the audience was singing a sort of refrain: "Next please—next please—next please—next please!"

Montague Beagle was furious, as much with himself as with the audience.

"To think," he gasped, "that 'twas I who was responsible for those kippers having been given away. With all my experience of the stage I ought to have known better."

The Wild Man of Bungalow was the next turn to appear. He was led on by the end of a long chain. His turn was to be a war-dance, and eat raw meat.

Roars and a shower of kippers greeted him; but the wild man seemed rather to appreciate these attentions. He hopped about picking up the kippers, and eating them then and there, and the audience withheld their ammunition, seeing that it was taken as a gift, and thoroughly appreciated.

At the end of his turn the wild man danced off, very pleased with his reception. The crowd was roaring "Rotten!" but he mistook this for applause.

"Now, Miss Stevens," whispered the perspiring Cæsar de Snooke.

Jim stepped forward.

"I say, sir," he exclaimed, "I don't think she ought to go on with the crowd in that mood!"

"I don't mind," said Vivvy. "They won't hurt me."

"I'm not so sure," said Jim. "Don't you think she'd better wait, sir?"

"Just as the lady likes," Mr. de Snooke answered.

But Vivvy was not frightened, and she did not care to lose this chance of making her first appearance, in spite of the way the people were behaving. She went out alone and faced them smiling, and the reception she got would have daunted many a hardened professional.

The din before was nothing to the din now. The crowd shouted as if some notorious criminal were on the platform before them. A few decent people cried "Shame!" but their voices were lost, and they only served to increase the noise. And all the while Vivvy faced her audience with a smile, and a plaintive look of appeal in her eyes.

Presently the noise subsided a little, and the piano and violin began. Then Vivvy started to dance.

For a few moments she held the crowd, and seemed to weave a spell over those who watched. Even the rough men who had been hired by Crooks and Jeremy Crapper to spoil the show were still and silent. But they had to earn their bribe-money, and the spell only lasted for a few moments.

Shouts of "Rotten!" burst forth again, hisses, boos, and a shower of kippers. None of them struck her, but Vivvy came to a halt with the music.

"Off you go! Get out! Rotten!" voices shouted.

Jim could stand it no longer. He had seen one man throw a kipper, and that was enough for him. He came round from the back of the stage, mingled with the audience, and threaded his way through to find him.

As he reached the spot the man was standing up, making ready to throw another. Jim wasted no time, but hit him in the mouth. The fellow rolled over the seat and into the arms of the people behind him.

In an instant he was in the middle of a terrific uproar. A score of men closed around him, aiming blows from all points of the compass. One got home on his ribs, and another on his nose, which commenced to bleed.

Two men seated near took Jim's part, and standing up with him shoulder to shoulder, hit out in all directions. Jim wanted to find them afterwards to thank them, but he never saw them again.

Jim gave a good account of himself, but the odds were too absurdly heavy. A blow took him unawares and knocked him down. He found himself under a seat, with a forest of legs all around him. It was useless to try to rise, but a way of escape was ready. He was close to the side of the tent, and before anyone could hold him, he had lifted up a flap of the loose canvas and crawled out.

Outside he waited. A man followed him, and Jim waited until he was on his feet and then hit him hard and straight in the eye. The man wheeled and ran, with his hands pressed to that side of his face. Another made as if to come out, but seeing Jim waiting he drew back his head.

Meanwhile things were happening inside.

The curtain was lowered, and Cæsar de Snooke came out to say that owing to the conduct of the audience the entertainment was now concluded.

The people groaned, hissed, and booed, and then demanded their money back.

Cæsar de Snooke shook his head. His artistes were perfectly willing to perform, he said, but it was quite impossible in view of the way that they were being treated. No money would be returned.

The next that happened was a raid on the stage. As Jim came round the showman met him, white to the lips.

"Get the women into the caravans!" he shouted. "There's going to be trouble."

And trouble there was. A section of the crowd went to look for the man who had taken the money at the barrier, but he had made a bolt for it. The others broke up the benches, tore the tent, made for the stage, and proceeded to smash everything in sight.

The men of the show could do nothing. There were not enough of them. To try to stop the crowd would have been like trying to stem the tide of the sea. The police arrived, however, better late than never.

The crowd melted quickly before the police. It is wonderful how two or three men in blue can inspire hundreds with awe. They made off quickly in all directions, and the police watched them go with a grin. There were too many to make arrests, and the ringleaders were unknown.

The sergeant strolled up to Cæsar de Snooke, who was ruefully trying to find out how much damage had been done.

"How'd it happen?" he asked.

"I don't know. They did nothing but yell and jeer and throw things from the very start. I had to ring the curtain down, and then they wanted their money back. And I didn't give 'em."

"Um!" said the sergeant, who thought on principle that all showmen were vagabonds and undesirables. "It looks very much to me as if there were faults on both sides, and I don't know as I can do anything. I should advise you, my man, to be off as soon as you can, and not come back 'ere again."

"Come back!" gasped de Snooke. "Come back! Look here, if I ever put my head inside this village again I give you leave to arrest me for murder, suicide, arson, theft, or any blessed thing you like. Come back! Not likely!"

The sergeant grinned, turned suddenly, and touched his hat. The village grocer, a little short red man, was approaching.

"Yes, Mr. Rimp," he said. "Anything I can do for you?"

Mr. Rimp nodded. He looked troubled and angry.

"Yes," he answered. "I was at the show, and in the rumpus at the end somebody stole my gold watch and chain."

Cæsar de Snooke glanced at him and met his eyes.

"I'm very sorry," he said, moving off, "but that wasn't my fault. What a happy little village this is. You're all so 'igh-spirited here that you'll go and kill each other one of these fine days, and to tell the truth, I shouldn't be sorry if I heard about it."

So saying, he marched off to the caravans and smaller tents, and encountered Jim, who had been bathing his hurt face.

"How goes it, sir?" Jim asked.

"Pretty bad. They've smashed up the show pretty bad. There's pounds' worth of damage that'll have to be covered."

Jim nodded sympathetically, and looked away. Presently he turned again.

"I say, Mr. de Snooke," he said, "I think I know how this happened. It was all because Miss Stevens and I were in your company. There are two men who hate us, and want to get Miss Stevens into their power. Mr. Beagle's told you about them. I'm certain they wanted to make you get rid of us, so they bribed a lot of men to make a noise and throw things and smash up the show."

Cæsar de Snooke nodded gravely and scratched his chin.

"It isn't unlikely," he said thoughtfully. "It wouldn't take more than a dozen men to start a game like that. The others 'ud soon join in. Well, all I can say is I'd like to catch those two fine fellows who're at the bottom of all the trouble."

"The thing is," said Jim, "that it may happen again at the next place we go to. I thought I ought to warn you. I mean—you might think it better to get rid of us."

Cæsar de Snooke stared hard at the boy.

"You mean," he said, "that they may follow us from place to place, and cause the same thing to happen everywhere?"

"They may," said Jim, "if they can see no other way of getting Miss Stevens away from you."

The showman hesitated. Then suddenly he held out his hand.

"That's straight talk," he said, "and I admire you for saying it. Well, look here, if I could afford it I'd say I'd stand by you, and let 'em go to blazes. But I'm only a poor showman without much money, and what I make I have to make out of the show. I can't afford many nights like to-night. If it happens again we shall have to say 'Au revoir' to one another, but I'll take care you don't starve, and be generous about salary instead of notice. I can't say no fairer than that, can I?"

"No, sir, you can't," said Jim, and they shook hands.

A Lunatic at Large!

After supper that night Jim sat down on the steps of a caravan beside Vivvy and told her what he had said to Cæsar de Snooke, and what the showman had answered.

"I'm glad you told him that," Vivvy said. "It was quite right of you. We couldn't possibly stop here and bring him misfortune."

"I knew you'd say that!" Jim cried glady.

"What else could I say? Oh, Jim, I wonder what it all means? Why should those men want to ruin us?"

"They want to get you into their power for some reason or other. I believe if we could only find the reason you would be quite safe from them."

"And then there's my father. That poor man yesterday has set me thinking of him again. I wonder if he is dead. And if he isn't, I wonder why I have always been told he is. There is some dreadful mystery, I'm sure."

Jim touched her arm. "You haven't got the blues, have you?" he asked anxiously.

She looked up and smiled. "The blues—no! I feel excited and awfully hopeful, somehow. I believe that everything's coming right in the end. I feel sure that it will."

"That's good," said Jim; "I feel just the same."

There was silence for a few moments. Both of them were busy with their own thoughts. Suddenly Vivvy spoke.

"You will stand by me always, won't you, Jim?" she murmured. "I shouldn't feel half so hopeful if I hadn't got you. And you're the only chum I've got in the world."

"Stand by you! Haven't we made a bargain? If I ever fail you, Vivvy, I give you leave never to speak to me again, and to tell everybody you meet that I am the lowest cad in the world.

I say—suppose we have to leave this show?"

"I don't know," Vivvy murmured.

"What should we do?"

"Go to London," Jim said stoutly.

"We'll try our luck there, and defy Crooks and Crapper in their own dens. After all, I don't know that it wouldn't be better. Old Caesar de Snooke is an awfully good sort, and the people here are very jolly and nice, but this show isn't exactly a short cut to a fortune."

Vivvy nodded.

"I'm game," she said. "We'll do whatever you think best."

Jim smothered a yawn. He was beginning to feel very sleepy.

"This has been a strenuous day," he said. "I have helped fit up that show. I have lived on my feet all the time. I have punched and been punched. I think I shall turn in now and sleep for about a week. You must be pretty tired, too."

"I am," Vivvy admitted, holding out her hand. "Good-night, dear old Jim. We'll have better luck to-morrow, I hope."

They parted, and Jim went to his tent, where the other two occupants were already making ready to turn in. Half an hour later he was sound asleep.

How long he slept he did not know. It must have been long after midnight when he was aroused from sleep by some sharp sound that made him sit up wide awake.

"What was that?" he asked. Oswald was also awake, and responded with a grin.

"That was the wild man hollerin'. He often does of a night. It's nothin'." Jim grunted.

"What do you do to keep him quiet?" he asked.

"We generally gives him a bone if there's one handy. That keeps him quiet."

At that moment the noise broke out again. It was weird and sad, and at the same time fierce—a prolonged sort of howl that rose and fell and changed key repeatedly.

The man who looked after the horses sat up.

"Crikey!" he gasped. "The wild man's singin' his war song. I b'lieve he's got out."

Jim jumped up and began to pull on his trousers. Not for the first time it occurred to him that this life in a travelling show was very strenuous.

"Crikey!" cried the man again. "He has got out. It sounds further away."

He began to dress hastily, and Jim did likewise.

"What'll happen?" Jim asked. "Will he fight before he's taken back? And is he likely to do any damage?"

"Damage! Well, he ain't very big, but he's mighty strong, and among other things he's a cannibal! Damage! There's no knowing what he might do!"

Jim was not long in getting into his things, and the other was equally prompt, so that they quitted the tent almost together.

The noise had aroused the occupants of other caravans and tents, and people were shouting across to one another for information.

Jim went straight to the caravan in which the wild man was locked by himself every night, and they found (Continued on next page.)


11 **SINGING TIE-PIN.**



POST FREE.

Sings at your will! Causes Great Fun and Laughter! Friends say, "Where's that Bird?" when, unknown to them, you start "Dicky" singing from your tie by pressing a rubber ball in your pocket. Size of head $\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Length of tubing connecting ball with head, 20 ins. 1/1 post free. Catalogue, post free, of other "Big Bargains" in Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Novelties, War Souvenirs, etc. Satisfaction, or Full Money Back. —Pain Bros., Dept. 33G, "Presents House," Hastings, Eng.

VENTRILOQUIST'S Double Throat; fits roof of mouth; astonishes and mystifies; sing like a canary, whine like a puppy, and imitate birds and beasts. Ventriloquism Treatise free. Sixpence each, four for 1s.—BENSON (Dept. 6), 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.



FREE For Selling 12 Packets of Kew Seeds at 1d. per packet.

To further advertise our Famous Kew Seeds we give every reader of this paper a magnificent present absolutely FREE simply for selling 12 packets at 1d. each. Our up-to-date Prize List contains hundred of different kinds of free gifts including Ladies' and Gents' Cycles, Gold and Silver Watches, Fur Sets, Family Scales, Chains, Rings, Accordeons, Phonographs, Gramophones, Air Guns, Engines, Toys, Cinemas, etc.

All you need do is to send us your Name and Address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of Flower and Vegetable Seeds to sell or use at 1d. per large packet. When sold send the money obtained and we will immediately forward gift chosen according to the grand list we send you. Colonial applications invited. Send a postcard now to—

KEW SEED CO., Ltd. (Dept. 8), Kew Gardens, London.



89 CONJURING TRICKS. 57 Joke Tricks, 60 Puzzles, 60 Games, 12 Love-Money-making Secrets (worth £20) and 1,000 more stupendous attractions. 7d. P.O. the lot.—HUGHES, PUBLISHER, Harborne, B.HAM. Grand Colonial Novelty War Packets, 7d.

BLUSHING. FREE, to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE Specialist, 39, Maddox Street, Hanover Square, London, W.

ANY PERSON

Can earn £1 to £10 spare time with Chocolate Clubs. No Outlay. Particulars—Samuel Driver, Beeston Rd., Leeds.

BLUSHING. Famous Doctor's Recipe for this most distressing complaint. 6d. (P.O.). Never fails. Hundreds Testimonials. Mr. GEORGE, 63, STRODE ROAD, CLEVEDON.

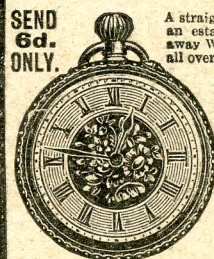
A Real Lever Simulation

GOLD WATCH FREE

SEND 6d. ONLY.

A straightforward generous offer from an established firm. We are giving away Watches to thousands of people all over the world as a huge advertisement. Now is your chance to obtain one. Write now, enclosing P.O. 6d. for posting expenses, for one of our fashionable Ladies' Long Guards, or Gents' Alberts, sent carriage paid to wear with the Watch, which will be given Free (these Watches are guaranteed five years), should you take advantage of our marvellous offer. We expect you to tell your friends about us and show them the beautiful Watch. Don't think this offer too good to be true, but send 6d. only and gain a Free Watch. You will be amazed. Colonial Orders 1s.

WILLIAMS & LLOYD, Wholesale Jewellers,
Dept. 16, 89, Cornwallis Road, London, N., England.



FUN for 6d. Ventriloquist's Double Throat; fits roof of mouth; astonishes and mystifies; sing like a canary, whine like a puppy, and imitate birds and beasts. Sixpence each, four for 1s. Novelty catalogue and art of Ventriloquism included Free. Satisfaction guaranteed.—BRITISH SUPPLY CO., ILKESTON.

Applications with regard to Advertisement space in this paper should be addressed: Advertisement Manager, "Pluck" Series, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

the door open, and nothing inside but the straw in which he had made his bed.

"Jingo! He has gone!" Jim exclaimed. "Who could have let him out? Look, the door hasn't been forced!"

"Well, I locked him in," growled the man, who shared Jim's tent. "That I will swear!"

"Somebody else must have had a key," Jim said quietly. "What shall we do?"

"Find him, before he eats somebody's dog, or bites a few policemen," the other said promptly. "This looks like being more expense for the boss. You take one way, and I'll take another. If you find 'im, don't mind how hard you fetch him one. You'll be sorry afterwards if you don't."

Jim hurried away without a word. Outside the field he turned to the left, and the other to the right. He went a short way, and stopped to listen. There was not a sound. The night was as still as the grave.

He hurried on, and presently saw a dark figure crouching in a hedge. It was not the wild man, but Jim approached it cautiously, not guessing what it was until he was within a few yards. It proved to be a policeman on night duty.

"I say, constable—" Jim began, and then paused.

The constable glared at him, rolled his eyes, and gasped.

"Oh, lor'!" he groaned. "Oh, lor'! Oh, lor'! Oh, lor'!"

"Are you feeling ill?" Jim demanded. "Is there anything I can do?"

The constable groaned again.

"Nothing," he muttered; "but I'd be glad of your company for a bit until I've pulled myself together. My nerves ain't what they were. I've seen summat that 'ud turn your ber-lud to ice-water."

Jim grinned.

"It sounds as if you've seen our wild man," he said cheerfully. "He's broken out. What's the matter?"

The policeman cleared his throat.

"I don't mind burglars, nor yet poachers," he said; "but there's some things flesh and blood can't stand. It was just about three minutes ago. I was standin' up 'ere, not exactly asleep, as you might say, but feeling rather thoughtful-like. All of a sudden I hears a noise. Like a dog howling it was, only worse. And mixed with it was the most awful yells my ears ever beheld. 'Hallo!' says I, taking notice like. Then I hears footprints a-pasting down the road towards me like mad. It was a man runnin' for all he was worth—a gentleman I should say by 'is clothes. And sittin' on his back, laughin' an' howlin' and clawin' at his 'air was a little black demon."

"A what?"

"No more and no less than a little black demon. I don't wonder you're surprised. It's nothing to what I felt when I seed them. They went past like the wind, yellin' and screamin' 'blue murder!'"

(The exciting adventures which follow the escape of the wild man will be splendidly described in next Thursday's instalment of this fine serial. Order your copy of THE DREADNOUGHT Now.)

HEROES ALL

(Continued from page 16.)

They heard the clock strike ten, and then eleven. The house was very still. As the last stroke of eleven died away, Harry Wharton rose quietly from his bed. The other three followed his example without needing to be called.

The chums dressed themselves rapidly, and then took out the cricket-stumps which they had hidden under their mattresses. Harry Wharton picked up the lantern.

"Come on!" he whispered.

The Remove chums stole out of the dormitory, closing the door silently behind them. The passage was pitchy dark, but they knew the way well. They trod lightly upon the stair up to the box-room, remembering that it was given to creaking.

The darkness was intense. Harry Wharton felt for the handle of the door, and opened it. He paused to listen before he entered. There was no sound in the silence of the night. A glimmer of stars fell through the window upon the boxes and lumber in the room. Harry closed the door behind his chums, and then led the way through the lumber towards the little door which gave upon the secret passage.

"Better light the lantern now," whispered Bob Cherry.

The lantern was lighted and the light shut off. Harry placed it in the grate, ready to be picked up and turned on as soon as wanted.

"Cover!" whispered Harry. "I don't suppose he'll come along much before midnight; but he might, and we are best to be in time."

The chums of the Remove took cover among the lumber, close to the little door, and grasped their weapons, and waited.

It was an anxious and weary vigil.

They heard the quarter chime out, then the half-hour, and then three-quarters, and finally midnight tolled forth upon the silent night.

Still not a sound had broken the quiet.

But a few minutes later came a slight sound, which started the Removites into new watchfulness, and sent the blood tingling through their veins.

It was a sound from the other side of the little door.

Was it a rat scuttling there? No. There was a sound of a hand groping over the door, and the chums breathed hard.

There was no mistake now.

Nadesha's warning had been a true one. Melchior was coming, and Harry Wharton had rightly divined the way the ruffian would come.

It was a matter of minutes now!

There was a creak—a grinding sound. The door was being forced by some tool inserted between the lock and the post. A sharp snap—the lock had parted. A glimmer of light came through, and the door swung open.

The juniors crouched, dumb and quiet, in their cover. They heard a movement; a man was standing in the opening, lantern in hand, looking cautiously into the box-room, to ascertain that all was safe before he entered.

Not a sound or a movement. Satis-

fied, Melchior the gipsy stepped into the room, his black eyes glinting. He stepped away from the door, and passed the big box which concealed Harry and Bob. He flashed the light to right and left, and gave a convulsive start as he caught sight of the ambushed juniors.

He was not given time to think or act. Harry and Bob sprang at him fiercely, slashing with the stumps. The lantern crashed to the floor, and the gipsy followed it, half-stunned by the blows he had received.

"The light—quick!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Hurree Singh seized the dark lantern from the grate and turned on the light. Harry, Bob and Nugent piled themselves upon the dazed gipsy.

Melchior struggled madly.

"You whelps, you—"

"The rope!" panted Harry.

"Here it is, my worthy chum!" exclaimed the nabob. "I will execute the tifulness of the esteemed rotter's hands."

And while the chums held the gipsy fast, Hurree Singh bound his wrists tightly together, and then did the same with his ankles. Melchior was a helpless prisoner. He lay glowering at the Removites like a demon. There was a sound of steps on the stairs, and the door of the box-room was thrown open. The noise of the struggle had echoed far through the silent house. Dr. Locke, Wingate, Mr. Quelch, and a policeman dashed into the room—the latter lantern in hand. They stopped and stared in amazement at the bound gipsy, and the triumphant, breathless chums.

"Why, what—what—" gasped the Head.

"We've got him, sir!"

"What—how—"

"We thought he might come in this way, sir," explained Harry Wharton respectfully. "We thought we'd look for him here, sir. We've got him."

The Head smiled slightly.

"I see you have got him, Wharton! You should not have run this terrible risk; but fortunately no harm is done, and I excuse you. Go back to bed!"

"Thank you, sir."

"You'll do, you young rascal!" muttered Wingate, slapping Harry on the shoulder as the juniors passed him; and he laughed.

The chums of the Remove went back to the dormitory feeling extremely well pleased with themselves. The whole Remove was awake now, demanding information as to the row, and the part the four had taken in it.

"Oh, don't bother," said Bob Cherry—"we've been capturing burglars while you've been snoring, that's all! Lucky you have us chaps to look after you!"

The next morning they were the heroes of the school. Melchior the gipsy had been taken to the station, and was in safe hands, and not likely to escape again. Nadesha met Harry Wharton in the morning, and the boy learned, gladly enough, that the gipsy was to remain at Greyfriars, in Mrs. Locke's service. The quartette were heroes in the Remove that day, and fellows even in higher Forms regarded them with envious eyes. They had distinguished themselves, and brought glory upon their Form, and the Remove was in a position to crow over the Fourth—and crow it did, to its heart's content!

THE END.