

“ THE RIVAL PERFORMERS ! ”

A Magnificent Long, Complete Tale of School Life in this Issue.

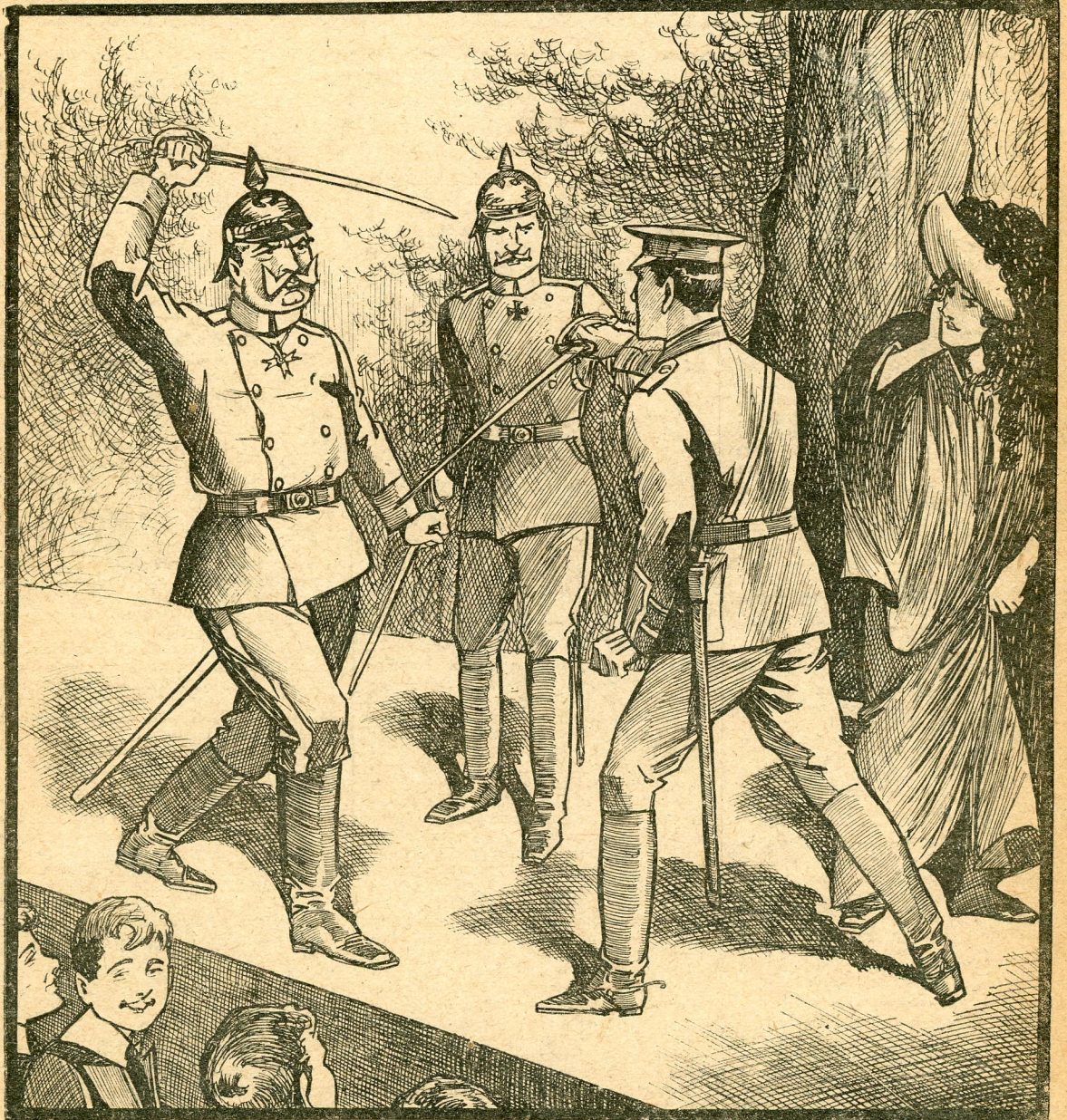
The Dreadnought 1^d

Published
Every Thursday.

No. 147

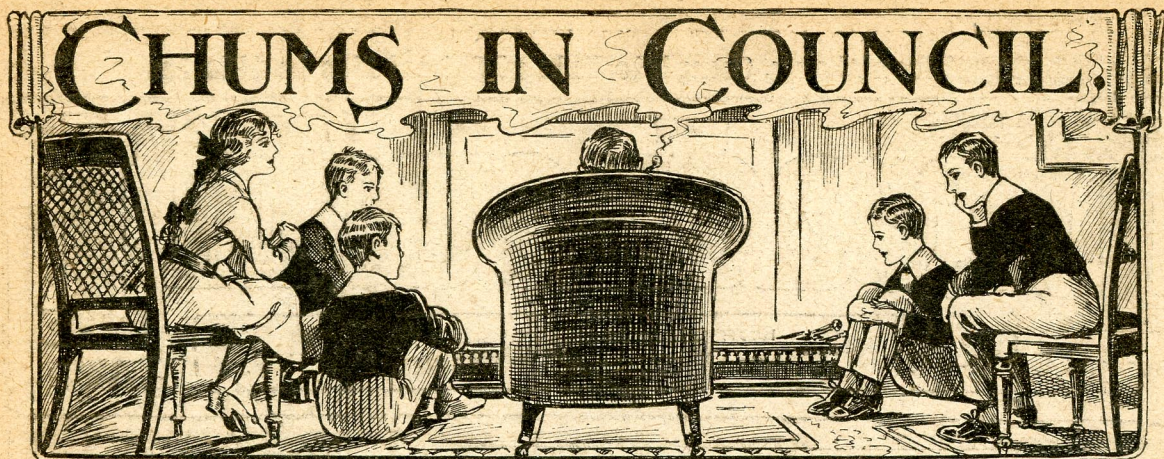
WITH WHICH IS AMALGAMATED
“ THE BOYS’ JOURNAL. ” [Vol. 6

Week Ending
March 20th, 1915.



HARRY WHARTON & CO'S GREAT WAR DRAMA!

(An Amusing Incident in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale Contained in this Issue.)



Whom to write to:

Editor,
The Dreadnought,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon 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—

"THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS."

By Frank Richards.

Our next magnificent, long complete tale of Harry Wharton, the hero of the Remove, describes how he and his chums spend the Easter vacation. Fun and frolic are the order of the day, and the Removites, accompanied by their girl chum, Marjorie Hazeldene, spend a really ripping time at Wharton Lodge. Many wonderful wizzes and ingenious japes occur, but the crowning event is a stunning performance of "Peter Pan" by the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Company. Taken altogether, the holiday is a thoroughly enjoyable one, and

**"THE GREYFRIARS
REVELLERS"**

carry back to the old school many happy recollections.

Complete Satisfaction.

The ranks of DREADNOUGHT readers have been considerably reinforced recently, our old rival and contemporary, "The Boys' Journal," having closed down. Most of the boys who classed that journal as their favourite have now thrown in their lot with my DREADNOUGHT chums, and I wondered at first how they would appreciate their new paper.

I need have had no fears on the subject, for during the last few weeks many letters have reached me from former "Boys' Journal" readers saying that as a weekly periodical for the boys of this country the DREADNOUGHT is all that can be desired. I have pleasure in reproducing below a typical letter of praise from a Berkshire chum:

"95, Wokingham Road, Reading. —Dear Editor,—For the first time in my life I read the DREADNOUGHT today. On Tuesday last I went to the bookseller to purchase "The Boys' Journal," and was told that it was amalgamated with the DREADNOUGHT, which is issued on Thursdays. So I waited till Thursday, and bought the

DREADNOUGHT, with which I was very pleased in every way.

"I had been a regular reader of "The Boys' Journal" for a very long time, and had joined the Boys' Social League connected with it, so the thing I most missed was the League page when I read the DREADNOUGHT to-day, and I should like to see the League revived.

"Wishing you and the paper the best of success,—Yours sincerely,

"C. M. B."

Very many thanks, C. M. B.! I hope I may always rely upon you to back up the DREADNOUGHT through thick and thin.

With regard to the Boys' Social League page, this feature has been transferred to "Pluck," which is on sale every Friday.

I shall be glad to hear from other old readers of "The Boys' Journal" who are now taking in the DREADNOUGHT.

Boy and Girl Friends.

In the course of a rather lengthy letter to me, a Winchester correspondent expounds his views on the subject of boy and girl friendships. He says:

"It seems to be the universal opinion that boys and girls should not meet each other without their parents' consent. In my opinion, people look at the bad side of the case without thinking of the good. I have found that if a boy is in constant companionship with a girl, he gradually grows fond of that company, and the fear of losing it serves to keep him steady, and causes him to abandon other questionable pleasures. If the parents got to know of their meetings they would immediately take steps to prevent them. This would then sadden the boy and girl, and cause them to do many things without the knowledge of their parents which they would not formerly have done. Apart from this, a boy and girl derive much innocent pleasure from each other's company, and the fact that no one knows of their doings adds more enjoyment to them.

"I think it only fair that this side of the question should be brought to light.—H. G. W."

Although there is much to be said for my Winchester chum's point of view, I must say that I consider a properly brought-up girl will not meet a boy "on the sly." It stands to reason that a boy cannot extract much good from his friendship with a girl who hoodwinks her parents.

"Sent to Coventry."

The origin of this term, so freely used in school stories, may not be known to all DREADNOUGHT readers. How it came about is as follows:

In April, 1643, Charles I., during his fight with the Parliamentary troops, ordered Prince Rupert to take a detachment of twelve thousand horse and six or seven hundred foot to open up communication between Oxford and York, passing through Birmingham on his way. The inhabitants of Birmingham, who included many Parliamentarians, strongly objected to Prince Rupert marching through the town, so that when he demanded a night's rest for himself and his officers at a certain hostel, he was received with shots. This made him angry, and a sharp fight ensued. But although the prince was not beaten, he was compelled to turn aside from his original course and take a roundabout route.

It was in this part of the country that the Parliamentary troops frequently met small parties of Rupert's army, whom they attacked and in many cases captured. In course of time they became considerably hampered by these prisoners, and it was suggested that a town should be fixed upon to which they could be sent. Coventry was decided upon. Hence, when any Royalists were captured, the cry arose: "Send them to Coventry!"

It was in this way that the expression which so frequently recurs in the stories of Harry Wharton & Co. originated.

Replies in Brief.

"An Italian."—I was very pleased to receive your interesting letter. You have my best wishes.

J. H. B. (Preston).—Many thanks for your ripping letter.

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.

THE RIVAL PERFORMERS

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

By FRANK RICHARDS



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Rival Heroes.

"Unhand me, villain!"

"Eh?"

"Or by my troth——"

"What?"

"Hallo, is that you, Wharton?" exclaimed Billy Bunter, turning rather red, and blinking at Harry Wharton through his big spectacles. "You—you startled me!"

"You young ass!" said Harry Wharton. "What are you talking that piffle for?"

Billy Bunter had been reading when Harry Wharton entered Study No. 1 in the Remove at Greyfriars, with his eyes glued upon the book, and Harry had tapped him on the shoulder, with the foregoing result

"You see, Wharton——"

"I don't see what you are driving at," said Harry. "What's that you've been reading?"

"I'm studying up my part in the play," said Billy Bunter apologetically. "It rather gets hold of a chap, you know."

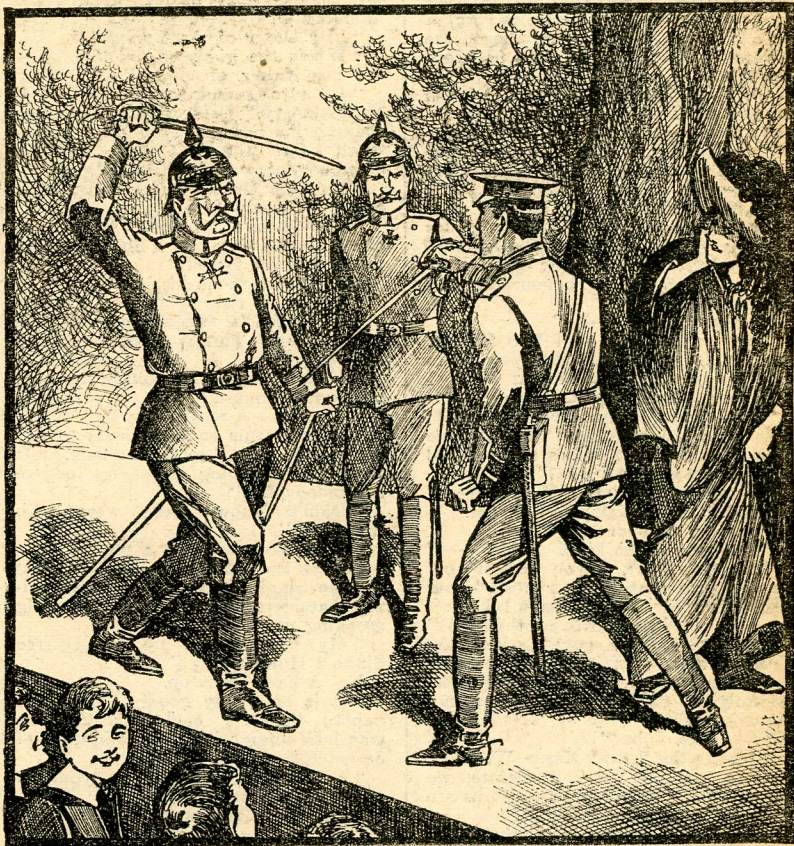
Harry Wharton laughed. He understood now. For the moment he had feared that the Owl of the Remove had taken leave of his senses.

Of late there had been a wave of enthusiasm for amateur theatricals passing over the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

It had really been started by an attempt of Harry Wharton and his friends to give a performance of an opera, music and all. The attempt had not turned out exactly as the Wharton Operatic Company had intended, the result being more comic than tragic; but, in a certain sense, it could be regarded as a success.

The Wharton Operatic Company realised that the task of producing an opera in a foreign tongue was one not lightly to be undertaken, and a second representation of "Carmen" had been indefinitely postponed.

Bob Cherry had suggested taking up a play instead, and had promised to



Valentine drew his sword and gallantly faced the two, and there was a clash and clang of steel. The audience were keenly interested now. "Go it!" they shouted. "Chop him, Kaufmann!" "Slice him, Wharton!" (See Chap. 9)

secure a regular "ripper," to use his own expression, from his cousin in Manchester, who was of a theatrical turn of mind and had a large store of such things.

Wharton was rather inclined to patronise Shakespeare, whom he justly regarded as quite worthy of the attention of the Greyfriars Remove. Nugent was in favour of Peter Pan, while Hazeldene suggested a drama in the Adelphi style. It was agreed, however, to look at the play sent by Bob Cherry's cousin in Manchester before deciding upon anything.

"Has Cherry's play come, then?" asked Harry.

The Owl nodded.

"Yes, here it is. Bob Cherry opened it, and then Hazeldene called for him and they went out. I thought I'd better look at it, you know. There's a part in it that will just suit me."

"What's the part?"

"It's Valentine, the hero. He has a splendid part, and as he's supposed to be a well-built, handsome sort of chap, the part will suit me down to the ground."

"Does he talk that rot you were spouting as I tapped you on the shoulder?"

"Yes, that's part of his speech. The villain grasps him by the throat, and says: 'Aha—aha! I have thee in my clutch!'"

"Ha, ha!"

"No, not 'Ha, ha!' but 'Aha, aha!'" said Billy Bunter. "Then Valentine—that's me—says: 'Unhand me, villain——'"

"Ha, ha!"

"Or by my troth I will cleave thee to the chime!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you want to laugh at," said Bunter. "It's not a comedy, it's a tragedy, and you are supposed to thrill at that part. Just you hear me roll off the hero's speech, and you'll see how good it is!"

"Please don't!"

"Oh, it's no trouble! 'Ah, Colonel Kaufmann, at last we meet——'"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming into the study. "Is that my play you're spouting?"

"Yes, Cherry, I've been learning up my part so as to lose no time."

"Your part? That's the hero's part!"

"Yes, I know it is."

"Well, Bunter for cheek!" said Bob Cherry. "My dear kid, you're going

to be the chap who comes in and says, 'My lord, the carriage waits.'"
Bunter blinked indignantly through his spectacles.

"If you're joking, Cherry—"

"I'm not joking; I'm in deadly earnest. I say, you chaps, what part do you think Bunter has cast himself for?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Nugent and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, followed him into the study.

"Oh, the hero, of course!" grinned Nugent. "That's like Billy's cheek!"

"I don't see where the cheek comes in," said Billy. "My idea is to cast for each character the most appropriate person—"

"The cheekfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, in his purring voice. "The cheekfulness of our Bunterful friend is only equalled by the faithfulness of his honourable and esteemed head."

"Look here, Inky—"

"My dear chap," said Bob Cherry. "Apart from the fact that you are a silly ass, you can't have that part. I had already cast myself as hero."

"Oh, come," exclaimed Nugent; "don't be an ass, Bob! There's one chap here, at least, who's more suited to play the principal role!"

"If you're speaking of Wharton—"

"Rats! I'm speaking of myself."

"Joking, of course?"

"Nothing of the kind. I think—"

"No, you don't, or you wouldn't get an idea like that in your head," said Bob Cherry. "We shall have Inky saying next that he ought to act the hero!"

"And wherefore not?" asked the nabob gently. "If it is a question of the ableness to perform the part, certainly the allotment should be to my esteemed self."

"Oh, rats, Inky!"

"Wait a bit," said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand. "Before we argue about the hero's part, let us see whether the play will suit us?"

"Oh, it will suit us rippingly!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "There's not the slightest doubt on that point!"

"What's it about?"

"Oh, lots of things! The hero, Valentine, thrashes Colonel Kaufmann in the second act. Nugent can play Kaufmann—"

"Can I?" said Nugent, looking rather warlike. "Then you'll have to make a bit of an alteration in the part, and make Colonel Kaufmann thrash Valentine."

"Of course, that's rot."

"I don't see it. I'm not going to be thrashed by anybody if I know it."

"It's only in the play!"

"That's all very well, but—"

"Then there is the part of Gloxiana's brother; that will suit Wharton," said Bob Cherry. "Gloxiana is the sister of Albert and the heroine of the play. We may get Hazeldene's sister to take that part. Albert and Valentine have rows, but they are great friends. In the first act, they thrash Colonel Kaufmann and his lieutenant, Bunkoff. The part of Bunkoff will do for Hurree Singh. He can whiten his face for it."

"The thrashfulness would be a boot on the other foot if I take the part of the esteemed Bunkoff," purred Hurree Singh.

"It's in the play!" howled Bob Cherry. "You have to play what's in the play, ass!"

"There can be an alteration in the playfulness."

"Rats! If I took the part, I should take the licking!"

"Take the partfulness, then."

"Oh, that's rot; it's already settled!"

"That it isn't," said Harry Wharton.

"We've got to have a discussion over this before we can settle whether to produce this play at all. What's the name of it?"

"By Order of the Tyrant!"

"Who's the giddy tyrant?"

"The Kaiser, of course."

"Hum! It sounds to be rather blood-and-thundery," said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "And it's a comedown for the Wharton Operatic Company, after giving Grand Opera."

"But the Grand Opera ended in a muck-up!" said Bob Cherry.

"That wasn't our fault. I don't see any objection to giving a Shakespearian representation myself."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Not up to date enough. I'd rather adopt Nugent's suggestion, and give 'Peter Pan.' This is a regular ripper of a play!"

"I have a suggestive remark to make, my worthy chums."

"You have a what, Inky?"

"I have some suggestfulness to add to the discussion," said the nabob. "It would be a rippingful novelty to give a Hindoo play."

"Didn't know there were such things—"

"I can translate you a play written by a very learned babu in Bengal," said Hurree Singh. "There are fifty leading characters, and each has a very long speaking part, so—"

"My hat! Hands up for Hurree Singh's Hindoo play!"

Not a hand went up.

"It is extremely goodful," said the nabob, "and I could execute the translatefulness with the promptness of despatch."

"Don't bother, Inky; we couldn't give you all that trouble."

"The troublesomeness is nilful."

"Oh, you see, we must support home industries!" said Bob Cherry. "There are lots of English plays which don't want the trouble of translating. This one I've got here is a regular ripper!"

"I'd rather try 'Peter Pan'!"

"Oh, rats, Nugent! 'By Order of the Tyrant!' sounds ripping!"

"Well, we'll see," said Harry Wharton.

"But as for the hero, I really don't see how Bob Cherry is going to take that part."

"Why not?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Well, there's your face," said Billy Bunter, "and—"

Bob Cherry took a gentle grip upon Bunter's ear.

"There's what?" he asked pleasantly.

"Your—ow—ow—leggo!"

"There's what? What's that about my face?"

"I—I didn't mean that your face wasn't very nice, Cherry; and, besides, I know you can't help being like that, and I know you would if you could, and—Ow!"

"Still, Bunter's right!" said Nugent. "The part really belongs to me!"

"Not exactly that, either, Nugent," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"The manager of a theatrical company has first choice. The actor-manager always takes the hero's part."

"He always takes all he can get, I suppose," growled Bob Cherry.

"That's all well enough, Wharton—"

"Of course it is."

"But if you're going to take Valentine's part, I shall have to have Albert's."

I'm not going to be one of the lot that are licked in the first act!"

"Albert's, or Valentine's, I don't care which, for me," said Nugent. "But don't put me down for a licking in the first act, because I won't stand it."

"The sameful sentiments are also mine," said the nabob. "The lickfulness is not flattering to the dignity of a Nabob of Bhanipur, my esteemed chums."

"Now, look here, you're talking rot!"

"If my esteemed chum intimates that I utter rotful remarks, he is in danger of receiving the dotfulness on his honourable nose."

"Hallo, here, what's the row?"

It was Hazeldene's voice at the door. The junior who had once been known as the cad of the Remove looked in.

"What's the argument, kids?"

"Look at that play," said Bob Cherry warmly. "Look at it, Vaseline, and just tell me who ought to have the part of Valentine."

"Certainly!"

Hazeldene took the play, and glanced down the list of the dramatis personae.

"That's according," he said thoughtfully. "Am I going to be in this?"

"Of course you are!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, then, I really think—"

"Oh, don't say you think Wharton ought to have it!" said Bob Cherry.

"Anyway, don't say Nugent, for that's rot, on the face of it!"

"I wasn't going to say either, Bob Cherry."

"There you are!" said Bob, beaming. "I told you Vaseline was a chap with a jolly sound judgment, and could be relied upon to give a sensible opinion."

"I did not hear you say so," Nugent remarked.

"Well, I thought it, then. I always said Hazeldene was a jolly sensible chap, anyway. Who do you think ought to have the part of Valentine, Vaseline?"

"Well, I think it would about suit me," said Hazeldene.

Bob Cherry gave a jump, and the rest chuckled.

"What?"

"I think it would about suit me," repeated Hazeldene. "You asked for my opinion, and there it is."

"And a jolly rotten opinion it is, too," growled Bob Cherry, in great disgust.

"Well, you asked for it."

"Of all the silly asses—"

"Oh, come, Bob!" grinned Nugent.

"Hazeldene was one of the most sensible chaps you knew, a minute ago."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha! He can always be relied upon for a sensible opinion, Bob."

"Oh, rats!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Here's another fathead!" remarked Nugent, as a broad German face looked in. "I say, Hoffmann—"

"I hears to noise, and I looks in mit meinself after," said Fritz Hoffmann.

"Well, look at that list, and pick out the chap in this room that's most suitable to take the part of Valentine," said Nugent.

Hoffmann obeyed.

"Dere is only vun here tat is goot for te part," he remarked, "and tat vun is—"

"Who?"

"Meinself."

"Well, you conceited Dutch bouncer!"

"I punches to head of te chap who calle me Tutch pounder."

"Bosh! But, I say, chaps, we might work Hoffmann in, as a comic character. He's comic enough, goodness knows."

"I haf somethings to tell you."

"Hallo, any news?"

"There have been fresh arrival at te school."

"New kid?"

"Nein! Old kid who come pack mit himself—Adolphe Meunier, te French povy."

"Oh, is Meunier back?"

"Oui, mon garçon." A good-natured Gallic looked in at the door. "I am back viz you vunce more, mes amis. I see zat Hoffmann still ze same fat prize cochon."

"You vas French peeg!"

"You vas Sherman rottair!"

"Ach! I gif you peans!"

"I give you zen back!"

"Peeg!"

"Rottair!"

The next moment the German and the French boy were staggering in the passage in a close embrace, hissing out "Peeg!" and "Rottair!" and pommelling frantically. Nugent laughed as he slammed the door shut.

"Now both those foreign asses are back, I suppose we're going to have a little war of our own," he remarked. "My hat, what a row they're making in the passage! But to get on with the washing."

"We all want to be heroes," said Bob Cherry. "It can't be fixed like that, so some of us have to sacrifice ourselves for the good of the cause. You can withdraw your claims, and—"

"Is that what you mean by sacrificing oneself?"

"Yes, you will be sacrificing—"

"What about yourself?"

"It isn't necessary for us all to make sacrifices, and play the beastly thing without a hero at all," said Bob Cherry.

"Then we'd better put it to the vote," said Harry Wharton.

"Good!" said Hurree Singh. "The settlefulness will be satisfactory if the votefulness of the Dramatic Society be taken on the question. But we must have all the members present for the esteemed votefulness."

"Yes," said Bob Cherry, "and then—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Then we'll put it to the vote, and we'll all abide by the decision," said Cherry. "It's the only way."

"I say, you fellows—"

"The four principal parts once settled, it will be easy to cast the minor characters," Harry Wharton remarked. "There are lots of superts to be had."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dear me, there's Billy Bunter talking! Have you got anything to say, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry, allowing the Owl of the Remove a word at last.

"Yes, I have, Cherry; and I've been trying to speak—"

"Buck up!"

"I've been trying to speak—"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"

"I've been trying—"

"Will you come to the point, or shut up?" howled Bob Cherry, seizing Billy Bunter by the shoulder and shaking him.

"Please don't shake me like that, Cherry. It disturbs my nerves, and you might make my glasses fall off; and if

you broke them you would have to pay for them, and—"

"Have you got anything to say?"

"Yes, if you'll leave off shaking me. I've got a suggestion to make."

"Make it, then, and be quick."

"Certainly, Cherry. There's no need to get excited about it. I was only going to suggest that we should postpone further discussion till after tea, and have some grub now, as I'm awfully hungry."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's a good suggestion!" he exclaimed. "Let's have tea, by all means, and the cast for 'By Order of the Tyrant' can wait."

"It is a wheezy good idea, my worthy chums."

And the good idea was forthwith carried out.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Invitation.

"Letter for you, Wharton!"

Micky Desmond, of the Remove, came into the study, and tossed a letter upon the tea-table. It alighted in the butter.

"I saw it in the rack, and thought I'd bring it up," explained Desmond. "I knew you were having tea, you see. Those cream-puffs look ripping."

"They are ripping," said Harry, laughing. "Take a seat, if you can find one, and wire in."

"Oh, that's all right; I'll sit on Bunter's knees."

"That you won't," said Bunter; "you'll be in the way. I'm awfully hungry, and I'm very busy at the present moment."

"Very well. Sure, and I'll have half your chair, then!"

"There isn't room."

"Oh, we'll find room!" said Desmond cheerfully; and he squeezed Bunter to one side and sat down. "Pass the cream-puffs, Hazeldene. Anything good in that letter, Wharton?"

"I haven't looked at it yet," said Harry, picking the letter out of the butter and wiping it as clean as possible. "Oh, it's in my uncle's hand!"

"You can read it," said Bob Cherry. "We'll excuse you, and I'll have your cup of tea to save you time."

Harry opened the letter. He ran his eye over the contents, and a smile broke out on his face. It was evident that there was good news in the letter from Colonel Wharton.

Harry relations had been very strained with his uncle till of late; but since Colonel Wharton's visit to Greyfriars, uncle and nephew had been on the best of terms. With all his wilfulness and waywardness, Harry could not help liking the kind-hearted old soldier when he came to know him, and neither could he forget that Colonel Wharton had risked death to save him from the rushing river.

"Good news?" asked Nugent, noting Harry's expression.

"Yes, rather."

"Uncle coming down again?"

"No, but—"

"I say, Wharton, you ought to get him down here again," said Billy Bunter. "He stood us a ripping picnic last time, you know. He is the kind of uncle to be encouraged."

"The encouragefulness should be terrific."

Harry laughed.

"He is not coming down, but he wants us to go to Wharton Lodge for the holiday."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"The whole family?" he queried.

"Yes; he says he's obtained the Head's permission for me to go to Wharton Lodge, and to take my friends."

"Sure, we're all your chummy friends," said Micky Desmond. "I've always loved you like a brother, Wharton."

"The lovefulness on my part has been great," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Wharton has been the lightfulness of my existence."

"And I worship the ground he walks on, and the grub he stands in the tuck-shop," said Bob Cherry.

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "You'll find yourself the most popular fellow in the Remove soon, Harry."

"But is the number of your friends specified?" asked Hazeldene.

"No. The colonel says he has obtained permission for me to go, and take my friends with me; and that's how it stands."

"Sure, and the whole Remove will be round your neck as soon as that gets out!" said Micky Desmond. "Are you going to ask me, Wharton? Remember how I tended you with a mother's care from the first moment yez came to Greyfriars."

"I remember that you were one of the lot that ragged me on a dozen occasions or more," Wharton remarked.

"Sure, it was all for your own good, alanna!"

"I've got rather a good idea, kids," said Harry, looking round. "We're getting up a play, and if we rehearse it thoroughly, there's no reason why we shouldn't give a performance at Wharton Lodge, while we're there for the holiday."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That will be rewarding the colonel for hospitality, won't it?"

"The rewardfulness will be great."

"Ahem!" said Nugent. "The colonel may or may not enjoy it. But we can't help his troubles. We ought to give the performance."

"I think it's a rather good idea," said Wharton thoughtfully. "We shall have a better chance of giving a really good show there than here, and it will be one way of killing time, you know. We can get into good form before we go."

"Ripping!"

"In that case, we shall have to take the whole caste along."

"Sure, and I'm to be the heroine!"

"Not this time, Micky."

"But didn't I play 'Carmen' intirely, and—"

"Yes; but this isn't 'Carmen.' This is 'By Order of the Tyrant,' and Hazeldene's sister is going to take the part of Gloriana."

"Faith, and it's a stunning name!"

"But there's a second girl in the play," said Bob Cherry. "We shall want Micky for that part. It's Maria, the comic waiting-maid."

"Sure, and I'd rather do the heroine!"

"I dare say you would, but the lady's-maid is more your mark," said Bob Cherry. "Anyway, that's your part."

"Oh, I don't mind! Pass the jam-tarts, Hazeldene."

"I say, Desmond, you're pushing me off this chair!"

"Never mind, Bunter. What's the odds, so long as you're happy? Thank

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

you, Vaseline. These tarts are really good."

"I think we can settle upon the lot of us going," said Harry Wharton. "We may want one or two other characters, too."

"The Head will be a bit surprised when he sees how long a list of personal friends you can make up," grinned Bob Cherry.

"He will have to pass it, though, as he's promised my uncle." "Let's see—self and Bob, and Nugent and Billy Bunter, Hazeldene, and Desmond and Inky—that's seven."

"We are seven," said Bob Cherry, "and a nice little party. Now, gentlemen of the Operatic and Dramatic Society, I rise to suggest that—"

"You're pushing me off this chair, Desmond!"

"Sure, and you're always complaining about something, Bunt!"

"You've dropped some jam on my trucks."

"Then don't squeeze so close to me."

"Shut up, you two—"

"But I say, Cherry—"

"Dry up; I'm talking. I rise to suggest that as Wharton will be our host on the auspicious occasion of this holiday at Wharton Lodge—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We shall therefore waive—"

"I say, Desmond, will you stop pushing me? I shall be off the chair in a minute!"

"Sure, and it's a nice carpet intirely to fall on, Billy!"

"I tell you—"

"Order! Shut up!" shouted Nugent.

"Go on, Bob. You were talking about waving something. Do you mean that we're to arrive at Wharton Lodge waving flags?"

"No, I don't, ass! We're not going down there like a gang of Bank Holiday bouncers, I suppose."

"Oh, I don't know; that's your usual style, you know," retorted Nugent.

"If you want a thick ear, Nugent—"

"I say, I'm nearly off this chair, Desmond!"

Micky Desmond gave the fat boy of the Remove a push with his elbow, and Billy Bunter rolled on the carpet.

"Now you're quite off," said Desmond cheerfully, "and now I hope you'll be quiet."

"Ow! Ow! I—"

"Faith and he's not satisfied yet!"

"Order! I was going to suggest that we should all waive our claims to represent the hero of 'By Order of the Tyrant' in favour of our esteemed host—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And therefore I beg to propose Harry Wharton for the part of Valentine in the giddy drama," said Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton coloured a little.

"I say, I don't want it settled like that!" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry waved his hand.

"My dear chap, it's settled. As a matter of fact, I have no doubt that you will perform the part almost as well as I could do it myself, and much better than any of the others."

"I was thinking the same," said Nugent. "I have a feeling that I could handle the part better than any of you chaps, but if I don't have it, Wharton is undoubtedly the second best."

"Hear, hear!"

"The questionfulness is passed with unanimous resolution," said Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Wharton can only reply with the graceful acceptance."

The esteemed Wharton grinned.

"Oh, if you fellows really want me to take the part—"

"We insist upon it."

"The insistfulness is only equalled by the hearty approbation of the honourable and esteemed company."

"Then I accept," said Harry Wharton; "I'll take Valentine's part."

"And I'll be satisfied with the part of Gloxiana's brother," said Bob Cherry.

"Will you?" said Nugent. "Of course, if I give up the hero, I take the part of the next chap."

"Now, really, Nugent, don't be an ass!"

"It's you that are playing the giddy ox."

"I'm going to play Albert—"

"Rats!"

"You see, chaps," said Bob Cherry, appealing to the company, "Gloxiana has to faint in Albert's arms in one scene, and so you want to have an Albert who can deal with the situation. Nugent would let her flop on the floor."

"Rot!" said Nugent. "I don't see why Gloxiana couldn't faint in my arms as well as in anybody else's arms."

"Oh, don't you?" said Hazeldene.

"Well, I do. Look here, if Marjorie is going to take the part of Gloxiana, I'd better take that of Albert."

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Hazeldene's right," said Harry Wharton. "Gloxiana has to faint in her brother's arms, and a real brother would make it more realistic."

"That's all very well, but—"

"I vote for Hazeldene," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "Put it to the vote."

"Good!" said Micky Desmond. "I don't want the part, so I vote for Hazeldene."

"So do I," said Billy Bunter. "I really ought to have the part, but there's a lot of selfishness shown in these amateur theatricals. If I'm not to have it, Hazeldene will do as well as anybody."

Bob Cherry grunted. "Well, you've got the majority, Vaseline," he said.

Hazeldene grinned.

"That's all right. I'll go lightly when I start licking you in the second act."

"If you start licking me in the second act there will be ructions," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, you'll have to play the game!" said Wharton.

"That's all very well—"

"Of course it is. Let's go out for a stroll in the Close."

And the discussion was postponed for a time.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Trapping the Owl.

"Wharton, old chap!"

Harry Wharton started. It was Bulstrode who spoke, and as he spoke he tapped Wharton familiarly on the shoulder. Harry had reason to be surprised. Bulstrode had been cock of the Remove before Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars, and it was he who had caused his fall from the high estate. There had been very little love lost between them since.

Wharton stepped quietly back.

"What is it, Bulstrode?"

"I hear you are going home for a holiday."

Wharton understood.

"Yes, I am."

"And taking a party of friends with you."

"Yes."

"Your uncle is going to let you take as many as you like?"

"Yes."

"I was thinking that I should like to take a part in the play you're getting up," said Bulstrode. "I hear you're going to give it at Wharton Lodge."

"That's so."

"Well, would you like me to join the Operatic and Dramatic Society?"

"Not particularly."

"I hope you're not keeping up that old quarrel," said Bulstrode, with great friendliness. "Let bygones be bygones."

"I'm perfectly willing to do that, but I don't think we can chum up together, Bulstrode," said Harry quietly. "It would be a case of the two kings of Brentford in the story, you know. We should never get on."

"If you are going to put on side—"

"Nothing of the sort. But you are a domineering bully, and my temper isn't the gentlest in the world, so the less we see of one another the better."

And Harry Wharton walked on.

He left the bully of the Remove scowling. The glint in Bulstrode's eyes showed how little there was of genuineness in the overture of friendship he had made.

"Hang him!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Hang him! I—"

"I say, Bulstrode!"

The bully of the Remove looked down at Billy Bunter.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"I hear that they've discovered an old vault in the excavations down by the river," said Billy Bunter. "I was thinking of going down and looking at it. Do you know where it is?"

Bulstrode grinned.

"Yes. Would you like to see it?"

"You're very obliging, Bulstrode. I'm sorry Wharton won't ask you to come down to the Lodge with us."

"Who wants him to?" growled Bulstrode.

"Why, you do, don't you?" said Billy Bunter innocently.

"No, I don't."

"I'm sorry; my mistake. I thought you were hinting to him to ask you—"

Ow! Let go my ear, please, Bulstrode; it hurts!"

"You young cad—"

"I'm sincerely sorry if I've said anything to offend you, Bulstrode," said Bunter, rubbing his ear. "Will you show me where that vault is?"

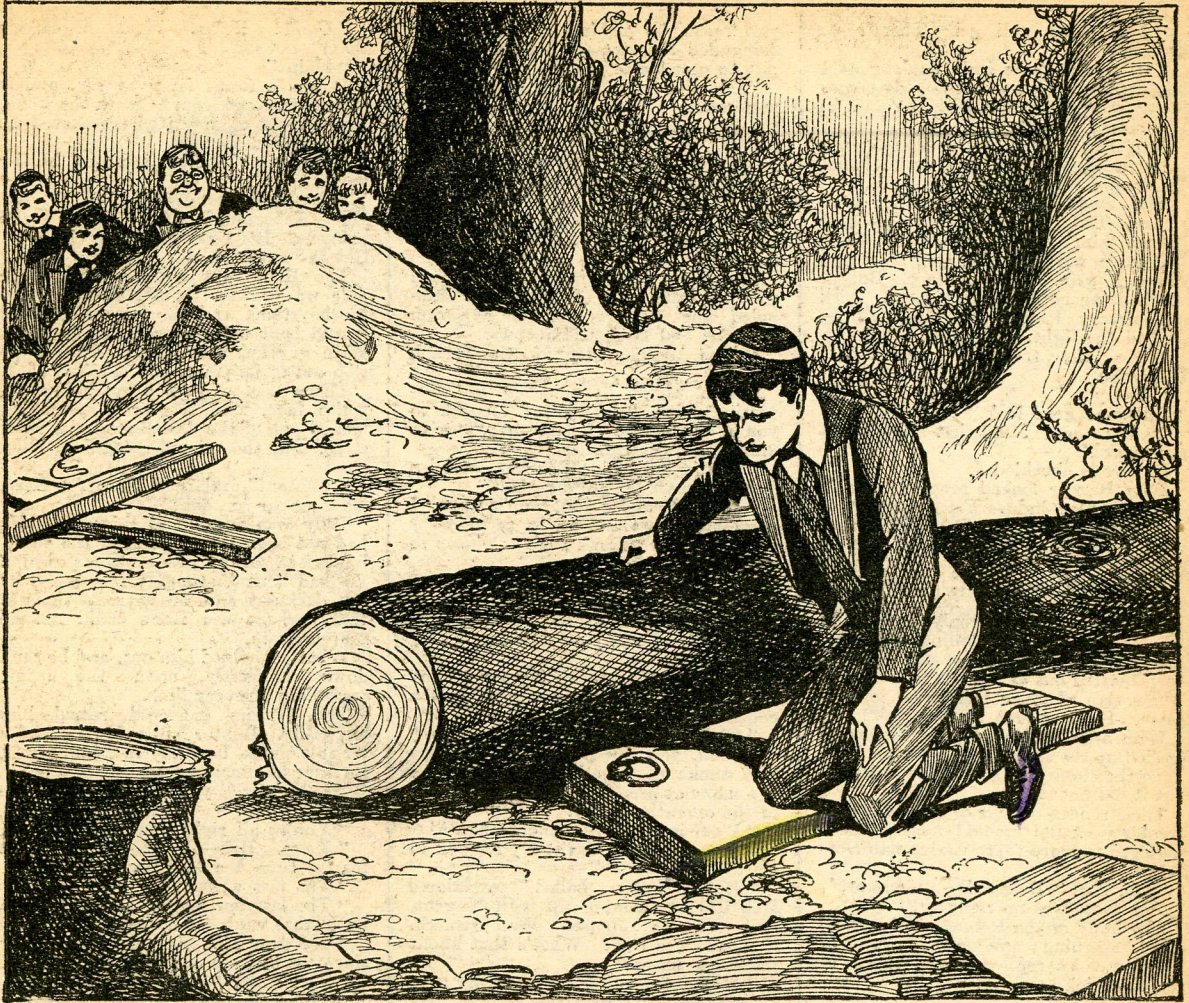
"Oh, certainly!"

Bulstrode had an ill-natured grin on his face. Any boy more wide-awake than Billy Bunter might have suspected that he intended to play some trick, but Bunter was not suspicious.

The two Removites left the school grounds and skirted the wall towards the spot marked out for the erection of the new building, close to Greyfriars.

Many trees had been cut down, and the ground was being cleared for the new building, which was to be run by Herr Rosenblau as a foreign academy when it was completed, in connection with Greyfriars College.

In clearing the ground the workmen had come upon many traces of an



"Bunter! Bly Bunter!" called Bulstrode, but no sound came from below. Behind the cover of the thrown-up earth five juniors were watching and siffling their laughter. The terror and dismay of the bully were evident to them. (See chapter 5.)

ancient building which had once occupied the site.

Old weapons of the Middle Ages had been turned up, and lately a vault had been discovered. It was one of a series extending for some distance under the ground, the full extent as yet unknown.

Bunter blinked round him as they entered the ruins. The workmen had left the place, and wheelbarrows and ladders and implements lay about amid felled timber and heaps of earth.

"Where is the vault, Bulstrode?"

"There it is."

Bulstrode stopped at a spot where a pavement of flagstones had been uncovered, and pointed to a dark opening in the centre.

One of the great stones had been raised by means of an iron ring fastened in it, and laid beside the opening it had covered for probably centuries. It needed only a push, however, to send it clanging back into its place.

Billy Bunter adjusted his spectacles, and blinked down into the dim orifice.

The air had been foul when the opening was first discovered, but the foulness had now cleared off, and only a faint musty odour came up from the vault.

"Looks jolly dark, doesn't it?" said Bunter.

"It would be awful fun to explore it," said Bulstrode. "I shouldn't wonder if there were some treasure hidden down there."

Bunter's eyes glistened. "Do you really think so, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode winked at the beech-trees with the eye that was furthest away from the Owl of the Remove.

"Why not?" he replied. "You know what miserly fellows those old monks were. This old building was a priory, or something, in connection with Greyfriars. I think it's very likely that a vault like this would be used to store treasure in."

"But the workmen haven't seen anything—"

"They haven't been down yet. The air was foul when the vault was opened."

"I see. I say, Bulstrode, there are steps leading down," said Billy Bunter, peering into the opening. "It would be ripping to discover a treasure!"

"Well, it would be rather good, wouldn't it?"

"I should say so. I'm stony-broke just now," said Bunter. "I've been expecting a postal-order for some time past, but there's been some delay, and it hasn't come yet. It would be ripping

to find a treasure, and be in funds for the rest of the term."

"Jolly ripping!"

"Suppose we go down there and look, Bulstrode?"

"Not a bad idea," said the bully of the Remove. "But how are we to get a light?"

"I can fetch Wharton's bicycle lantern."

"Never mind. Here are the lanterns the workmen have left. You can light one of them easily enough."

"Good! So we can. Will you come down with me?"

"Perhaps I'd better stay up and see that nobody comes along and shuts down the slab," said Bulstrode. "It would be no joke to get shut up in that vault."

Billy Bunter shivered.

"You're right there, Bulstrode."

"Look here, you go down and look round, and I'll keep guard," said Bulstrode. "We'll go halves in the treasure."

"Well, if I have the trouble of going down, I think I ought to take more than half."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Well, you shall have two-thirds, then."

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

"I may as well go. There's no danger."

"Of course there isn't, so long as I keep watch and see that nobody comes along and plays tricks with the slab."

"Then I'll go."

Billy Bunter soon had one of the big lanterns alight. Taking it in his hand, he stepped into the opening.

The stone steps were strong and secure. Billy Bunter flashed the light before him as he descended, and Bulstrode watched him from the top, the evil grin upon his face. Bunter reached the bottom of the steps. Dark and dreary looked the vault as he flashed the light round him.

"See any treasure?" called out Bulstrode.

"Not yet."

"Have a good look."

"Oh, rather! Mind that slab doesn't get closed."

Bulstrode chuckled.

Billy Bunter looked round the vault in the lantern-light. From the top of the stone steps came a sudden dull thud. Bunter looked up in sudden alarm.

"Wh-what was that? Bulstrode—Bulstrode!"

But there was no reply; and Billy Bunter did not need telling what had happened. The square of daylight had been blotted out at the top of the steps.

The slab of stone had fallen into its place. He was shut in the vault!

With a gasp of alarm, the Removite dashed up the steps, and thrust his hand upon the stone that closed the opening; but it did not stir.

The strength of four or five fellows of Bunter's build would have been required to move that massive slab from below.

"Oh, dear! Bulstrode—Bulstrode!"

But there was no reply.

The bully of the Remove had walked away, laughing; and only the echo of his own voice replied to the victim of the cruel joke.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue of Billy Bunter.

"Wharton!"

"Hallo, Hoffmann!"

The German boy stopped Harry Wharton in the Close, poking him in the chest with a fat forefinger.

"I wants to speak to you, ain't it?"

"Well, go ahead!"

"I tinks to meinself tat I likes to join te Operatic and Dramatic Society before, ain't it, and dake principal barts in te play after."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Is that all you want, Hoffmann?"

"Ja, mein Knabe. Tat is all before. Tat French ass Meunier dink he can act, and he dink of asking you. I dells him he is ass!"

"Did he tell you you were another?"

"Ja, ja!"

"Quite right, too. You were both right," said Harry Wharton. "We might possibly find you a comic part in the play."

"I dakes der hero."

"You take the cake—for cheek, at any rate!" said Harry. "If we accepted all the heroes who have offered their services, we should have a cast full of heroes, and no minor characters!"

"Ten you picks out te pest—"

"The pest! What do you mean?"

"You picks out te pest—"

"What on earth are you driving at?"

"A pest is a plague, isn't it? What do

you mean by picking out the pest?" demanded the amazed Wharton.

"Te pest for te part."

"Oh, the best!" said Harry, comprehending. "Yes; we've picked out the best already. I'm taking the part myself."

"I tinks I take it petter."

"You can go on thinking so, Hoffy," said Harry; and he put his hands into his pockets and strolled away. He left the German junior shaking his head solemnly.

A dozen paces further on, a youth with a Gallic cast of features button-holed the manager of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society.

It was Adolphe Meunier, the French junior.

"Mon ami," he said, in his persuasive voice, "I zink zat I speak to you a few words. I hear zat you give dramatic representation."

"That's it!" said Wharton, with an inward groan. "Quite right!"

"I zink I act for you, mon garcon. I have had great success in ze amateur theatricals, and I zink I am ze person to take ze part of ze hero?"

"Rats!"

The French junior stared.

"You say 'Rats!' to me, Wharton, when I am offer my services for ze play viz you?"

"Yes. We're not looking out for any heroes. I might find you a part as a comic footman."

"Ciel! Zat is ze insult!"

"Well, you can put it in your pipe and smoke it. That's the best offer I can make at present," said the manager of the operatic society.

"I am insulted. I punches nose!"

"Get on, then. I'm ready for you to start."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up with Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "What's the row? What's that about punching noses?"

"Meunier is going to punch my nose because he can't play the hero in 'By Order of the Tyrant,'" grinned Wharton.

"Non, non! I punches nose because I am insulted."

"Let's insult him some more," said Bob Cherry. "Suppose we take him by the hair and the heels and duck him in the fountain?"

"That is a wheezy good idea. The cheekfulness of the Frenchful kid will be washed out in the cold water!"

"Lend a hand, then. Why, he's gone!"

Adolphe Meunier had not waited for Bob Cherry's good idea to be carried out. He was gone; and Bob, who had not been quite in earnest, grinned.

"We were just going to stroll down to the site of the New House," said Nugent. "Are you coming along, Harry? The workmen have discovered an old vault in the foundations of the building that used to be there hundreds of years ago."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes; I was thinking of going down. Come on!"

The chums of the Remove strolled down to the site of the new building. Nugent stopped at the closed slab of stone.

"Hallo! This was open when I looked this way before. Somebody has shoved the stone in its place."

"There's an iron ring in it," said Bob Cherry. "We'll soon have it up again. We can shove one of these poles through the ring."

"Good! Hallo! What on earth's that?"

"Help!"

It was a faint, far-away cry, and it seemed to come from beneath the stone. The chums of the Remove stared at one another, startled.

"My hat! There's someone in the vault!"

"Somebody got shut up in it!" said Harry Wharton, in a low voice. "Good heavens! It's lucky we came out here. Get the stone up, for goodness' sake!"

The Removites lost no time. The pole was thrust through the iron ring in the stone, and the juniors grasped it and bent their strength to the task. With an effort they wrenched the great slab out of its place, and it rolled back.

There was a gasp from below. A white face, with a pair of spectacles, looked out of the darkness of the vault steps, and the chums recognised Billy Bunter.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry. "Here, let me help you out!"

Billy was white and shivering. He had not been ten minutes in the vault, but it had seemed like centuries to him. He had been thoroughly frightened by the darkness and the terrible thought that perhaps the stone could not be moved again.

Wharton helped him out, and he sank down helplessly upon the stone, trembling in every limb.

The juniors gathered round him anxiously. Bunter had evidently had a terrible shock, but they could only wait for him to recover from it.

"I—I say, you fellows—" he gasped.

"You're all right now, Billy?"

"Ye-es. But—oh dear, I've had a fearful time the last few hours!"

"The last what?"

"The last few hours. I've been shut up in that vault for hours and hours!"

"My dear kid, it's not half an hour since we had tea in the study!"

"You must be mistaken, Wharton. I've been in that horrible place for hours," said Bunter, with a shudder. "I began to think I should never get out alive."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"My dear chap, if you had been there for hours it would be dark now."

"H'm! I suppose it would, when you come to think of it," said Billy Bunter, recovering himself a little. "I suppose it seemed longer than it really was. But I have had a fearful time, all the same."

"How on earth did you get into the vault, Billy, and close the stone over you?"

"I didn't! Bulstrode said there might be a treasure there—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought I might as well look, and Bulstrode stayed at the top to see that nobody came by and closed the stone. Then the rotter closed it himself."

"Bulstrode shut you up in the vault?"

"Yes. It's his idea of a joke, I suppose. I don't see where the joke comes in myself," said Billy Bunter; "I might have starved to death there."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"If Bulstrode shut you up there, Billy, he wouldn't leave you to starve to death. He'd come and let you out after a bit."

"Yes, I suppose so. But it was a dirty trick to play, when I trusted him; and I might have gone off my dot, you know!"

"Well, he was sure to let you out."
 "You wouldn't feel so safe about it, though, if you were inside the vault instead of outside it!" retorted Billy Bunter.

"Well, there's something in that."
 "It was beastly mean and cowardly of Bulstrode," said Harry Wharton, knitting his brows. "It was a silly and dangerous trick to play. Suppose something had happened to Bulstrode himself, for instance—nobody would have known that Billy was shut up in the vault. And a silly ass like Bunter might really have gone off his rocker in the dark!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "The bully ought to be punished," said Bob Cherry. "Suppose we wait till he comes here to let Billy out, and shove him in himself and drop the stone shut?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Nugent. "The wheezefulness is excellent."
 Harry Wharton shook his head.
 "I think I've got a better plan than that, chaps; one that will really make the brute sit up."

"Expound it then, my son."
 "Look at that tree," said Harry Wharton, pointing to one that had been half sawn through by the workmen and left in that state by the call of the day's work. "How much do you think would be wanted to make it fall?"

"Not much," said Bob Cherry. "The saw's still there, and we could give it enough in five minutes to make it come down. But what good would that do?"

"Don't you see? When it falls, it will fall directly across this trap, as it's leaning this way."

"The workmen will have ropes on it to pull it the way they want it."
 "I know; but we want it to fall this way."

The chums of the Remove stared. They could not understand in the least what their leader was driving at.

"What do we want a big tree to fall on the trap for?" asked Nugent. "Can't see anything in it, myself."

"Bulstrode will come along later to let Bunter out, or else send somebody else to do it. If the tree's down, he'll think it fell of its own accord. The opening will be blocked up for good and all; it would take twenty men to move that tree when it is once down. Bulstrode won't be able to open the vault, and he'll think Billy is in it. Bunter will have to keep out of sight, of course."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry. "It will give the brute the fright of his life!"

"By Jove," exclaimed Nugent, "it's a ripping idea! I fancy Bulstrode will be in the bluest funk of all his natural."

"I fancy so," said Wharton. "It will be a punishment for his bullying, and we can let him know the truth when we feel inclined, after he has been put through it a bit. You will have to keep dark a bit, Bunter."

Bunter grinned gleefully.
 "I'll take jolly good care of that, Wharton. I'll go up to the school now and get into the study—"

Harry Wharton gripped him by the arm.

"That you won't, you young ass. Bulstrode will very likely meet you on the way."

"Dear me; I never thought of that! I should be sincerely sorry to give the game away!"

"You'll stay with us. Don't let him out of your sight, kids. Now, then,

some of you lend a hand with this saw."

The huge, two-handed saw was under a tarpaulin. The juniors soon had it out, and they put it into the deep out already made in the tree.

"Now, then, saw away!" said Harry cheerfully.

"I say, this is a jolly lot like work!" grunted Bob Cherry, as he slaved away with the heavy, slow-moving saw.

"Never mind; it will do you good."
 "The goodness of the exercise is great."

"Lend a hand, then, Inky, and get some of the goodness yourself."
 "Not at all, my worthy chum. I would not willingly deprive you of the beneficiality of the esteemed exercise."

"Wouldn't you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, grasping him by the collar and jerking him to the saw. "Now you take hold, or I'll knock your inky head against the tree!"

"Please do not promote the excitedness," said Hurree Singh. "I am willing to take my sharefulness of the honourable labour at the request of my worthy chum."

"Go it, then, you lazy bounder!"
 "All together!" said Nugent.
 "We'll soon be through. Mind you keep out of the way of the tree when it falls. It would crush you as flat as a pancake!"

"By Jove, it would! Keep your peepers open!"

"Where are you going, Bunter?" roared Harry Wharton, suddenly perceiving that the Owl of the Remove was strolling away.

Bunter looked back.
 "I'm rather peckish, Wharton; I'm going to get some grub."

"Stop where you are."
 "But, really, Wharton—"

"Fetch him back, Inky—quick!"
 The nabob darted after Bunter and dragged him back. The Owl protested vigorously, but the nabob was not to be denied.

"Really, Wharton, I should have taken great care not to let Bulstrode see me. If I had seen him coming, I should have dodged very quickly."

"If you had seen him, you Owl! Do you ever see anything?"

"But, really, I'm expecting a postal-order by every post now; and the post is in, and I want to go and see if it has arrived."

"Oh, rats!"

"If my postal-order has come, I should like to stand a feed to all you chaps for getting me out of the vault," said Bunter. "We'll have a feed, anyway, and if my remittance hasn't come you chaps can have a whip-round to settle. Suppose we let Bulstrode off, and leave him to his conscience? It's a good idea to leave a villain to his conscience; and I'm awfully hungry."

"Mind he doesn't go, Inky!"

"He will not be able to take the departfulness without leaving a goodly portion of his ear to me, finger and thumbfully," said the nabob.

"You are hurting my ear, Inky!"
 "I offer the profound and sincere apologies, my worthy chum."

"Yes, but let go!"

"That is impossible, my esteemed Bunter. I have got the right pig by the ear this time, you know, and the let-goffulness is impossible."

"Ow! I—"

"Look out; she's coming over!"
 "Back up!"

The tree was sagging. The juniors scuttled back. They were all on the safe side of the slant of the trunk, but

it was as well to get to a safe distance. The tree was going at last, the slant causing it to fall directly upon the slab which closed the entrance to the vault.

Crash!
 With a terrific concussion the tree-trunk crashed upon the flagstones. The juniors ran forward.

"My hat; the vault is safe enough now!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "The workmen won't be able to remove that trunk without sawing it up into pieces. And, now, shove that saw out of sight; and let's get out of sight ourselves and wait for Bulstrode."

There was plenty of cover close at hand, among the impedimenta of the clearing. The juniors took shelter behind a heap of displaced earth, among ladders and wheelbarrows, whence they could look out without much risk of revealing themselves. And there they waited for the bully of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Shock for Bulstrode.

Bulstrode came through the trees from the direction of the school with a grin on his face. He had little regard for the feelings of the victim of his practical joke, but he felt that it would not do to leave the Owl too long in the vault.

"My—my hat!"
 The bully of the Remove gave a violent start at the sight of the tree stretched across the slab of stone which closed the vault. He broke into a run, and arrived on the spot panting.

"Great—great Scott!"
 He gasped out the words. By thrusting a pole through the iron ring he could have raised the slab of stone to release Bunter, but he could not have shifted that huge trunk if he had had the strength of half the Remove in his own person.

He stood staring down at the tree in dismay. Then he knelt beside it and tapped on the stone slab, in a part where it was not under the trunk, with a fragment of stone. The slab gave a dull ring back to the blow.

"Bunter!"
 Bulstrode called out the word in shaking tones.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter!"
 No sound came from below.

The bully bent his head to listen, and his face grew pale as the silence continued. He tapped again with the fragment of stone.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter!"
 Still no reply. Dead silence hung over the spot. Bulstrode rose with a frightened look. What was the matter with Bunter? Why did he not reply?

Had he fainted? Had he wandered away in an attempt to escape from his prison, and lost himself in an underground labyrinth of vaults?

The bully realised at last that his cruel jest might have its serious side. He stood staring in dismay at the slab and listening with painful intensity.

Not a sound.
 Behind the cover of the thrown-up earth, five juniors were watching and stifling their laughter.

The terror and dismay of the bully were evident to the watching Removites, but not a hint did they give Bulstrode of their proximity.

"Good heavens! Bunter! Bunter!"
 Bulstrode fairly shouted out the name; but only the echoes from the trees around answered his frantic call.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

"What shall I do? I can't move the tree. I shall have to get help; but then they'll know I shut him up here. But he must be let out. Oh, heavens, I wish I hadn't done it. If he hadn't been such a fool, he wouldn't have gone into the vault at all. The young idiot might have guessed I was only fooling him!"

The stammering words were audible to the hidden juniors in the quiet of the summer evening. Billy Bunter knitted his brows with anger. Bulstrode's reference to him was not complimentary.

"I say, you fellows——"

Bob Cherry clapped a hand over his mouth in time.

"Shut up!" whispered Harry Wharton savagely.

Billy gurgled, and was silent. Fortunately, Bulstrode had heard nothing. He was still staring blankly at the slab and the tree that pinned it down.

The chums were curious to see what he would do. If he called for help, the tree might be moved and the slab raised. But then, he would have to own up to having shut Bunter in the vault—a trick that might be regarded very seriously by the Head of Greyfriars. Yet, it was surely impossible for him to leave Bunter in the vault. To do so might end seriously for the junior—that is, of course, if he had really been there, as Bulstrode believed.

True, if, when finally released, Bunter accused him of having shut the stone down upon him, Bulstrode could deny it. There had been no witnesses, and he could say that he had gone away, leaving Billy in the vault, and that the stone had toppled down by itself; or, perhaps, had been knocked into its place by the falling tree.

The fellow who got himself into trouble by bullying was not likely to hesitate at getting out of it by lying. But Bulstrode was not all bad, and he was really anxious for Bunter, apart from his uneasiness as to himself.

Harry Wharton pressed Billy Bunter's arm.

"Keep out of sight," he whispered. "Don't you show yourself when we leave you, or I'll skin you presently!"

"All right, Wharton. I really——"

"Shut up!"

"But——"

"You remain with him, Nugent, and bash his head against the stones if he utters a sound. Will you?"

"Certainly," said Nugent; "with pleasure!"

"You others, come along. We'll come on Bulstrode by surprise, and see what he has to say for himself."

"Good wheeze!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The wheezefulness is ripping!" purred the nabob.

"Mind he doesn't see you. Keep in cover," whispered Wharton, as he led the way from the place of concealment, leaving Nugent mounting guard over Billy Bunter.

"Right-ho! Lead on, Macduff!"

The juniors skirted the heaps of old masonry and earth turned up by the excavations, and entered the trees, and gained the rear of Bulstrode without being seen by the bully of the Remove. Then they walked carelessly on, as if they had just come from the school. Bulstrode was still standing at the slab, staring at it in dismay and indecision. He turned at the sound of footsteps, and gave a guilty start at the sight of the chums of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "Anything wrong, Bulstrode?"

"Wrong? No!" stammered Bulstrode.

"You're looking rather queer about the gills."

"Am I? What rot!"

"Haven't seen a ghost, have you?" asked Bob Cherry. "You look as if you had; or as if you had committed a murder, and couldn't get rid of the body!"

Bulstrode gave a start. "Don't talk rot!" he said savagely.

"The rotfulness of the esteemed Cherry's remarks is only equalled by the politeness of the worthy Bulstrode!" remarked the nabob.

"Look here, what are you badgering me about? I——"

"Have you seen Billy Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

Bulstrode's lip trembled. "No; not lately."

"He walked out of the gates with you a while back, that's all."

"Oh, yes! We separated then."

"I wonder where he is?" said Bob Cherry gravely. "I say, do you fellows see that there's a tree fallen over this slab? We sha'n't be able to explore the vault."

"The explorefulness will have to be postponed," said Hurree Singh. "I am afraid we shall not find our Bunterful chum here, my esteemed friends. Are you quite sureful that you have not beheld the august Bunter, Bulstrode?"

The bully of the Remove scowled savagely.

"Of course I am, confound you!"

"There is no need to get out the ragfulness," said the nabob. "We do not suspect you of having murdered the esteemed Bunter."

Bulstrode started again, and then gritted his teeth and walked away. The next moment he could have sworn that he heard a yell of laughter. He looked quickly back, but the Removites had faces as solemn as Egyptian mummies.

The bully of the Remove strode on towards Greyfriars. He disappeared among the trees, and then Nugent and Billy Bunter came out of the place of concealment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Nugent. "If ever there was a chap in a blue funk, it's Bulstrode at this moment."

"The bluefulness of the funk is terrific!"

"Bet you he won't say a word about it at Greyfriars!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"But when Bunter's missed at calling-over——"

"But I sha'n't be missed at calling-over, Cherry," said Bunter. "I shall have to show up by then; in fact, before then, as I'm fearfully hungry."

"My dear Billy, you can't be allowed to spoil a good joke on account of your unearthly appetite!" said Nugent, shaking his head.

"Look here, I can't starve to death!" said Bunter wrathfully. "It's more than an hour now since a morsel has passed my lips!"

"You wouldn't be missed if you did, except at meal-times," said Bob Cherry comfortingly. "You chaps got any objection to Bunter starving to death?"

"Not at all," said Harry.

"Not the least in the world, as far as I am concerned," said Nugent.

"You see, Billy, the majority's against you, so this is where you shut up."

"Look here, Bob Cherry——"

"We'd better not keep it up after

calling-over," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "If Billy doesn't answer the roll, there will be an inquiry, and we don't want to bring the matter before the masters. We've punished Bulstrode ourselves. But Bunter will have to lie low until roll-call, and then dodge into the hall without Bulstrode seeing him. It will give him a start when he hears Bunter answer to his name, when he thinks the young porker is in the vault all the time."

"Really, Wharton——"

"So you can hide yourself again, Billy."

"I can't possibly do so until calling-over. If I go hungry for any length of time, it has a bad effect on my constitution."

"You can hide yourself in——"

"I can't, Wharton—I can't, really!"

"You can lie low in——"

"I really can't! I'd do anything to oblige you, Wharton, but I can't risk wrecking my constitution even for your sake! I really——"

"You can lie low in the school shop."

"Eh—what?"

"You can lie low in the tuckshop, and treat yourself to a feed there till calling-over," said Harry, laughing.

Bunter's expression changed at once. "Now you're talking!" he exclaimed emphatically.

"Ha, ha! Bunter will lie low in the tuckshop as long as you like!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I always like to be obliging," said Billy Bunter. "I'd do anything in reason for you fellows. As for the feed, I'll let you stand it, but I shall make it up to you when my postal-order comes. I expect it to-morrow morning by the first post, if it isn't already waiting for me in the rack."

The Removites grinned. They knew all about Billy Bunter's postal-order.

"We'll get in over the old wall, and through the doctor's garden," said Harry Wharton; "then we shall be sure to keep out of Bulstrode's way. Once in the tuckshop, Bunter will be safe. Bulstrode won't feel much like feeding in his present state of mind. Come on!"

The chums of the Remove were soon within the school walls, and they reached the shop kept within bounds by Mrs. Mibble, the gardener's wife, without seeing anything of Bulstrode. Billy Bunter was ensconced in the tuckshop with a plateful of provisions, and a pile more at his elbow, and the chums left him with his fat face wreathed in happy smiles.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Arranging the Play.

The boys crowded into the hall at Greyfriars for calling-over as the dusk of the evening grew thicker on the old Close. Bulstrode was almost the last in of the Remove.

He came in with a slow step and a pale face. As yet, he had not said a word of the mishap at the old vault. He dared not face the "music," if he owned up that he had shut Billy Bunter in the vault; and yet he was tormented in his mind as to what might have happened to Bunter in that dark and dreary recess.

Bulstrode took his place with the Remove. Mr. Quelch was taking the roll-call, rapping out the names in his usual quick, staccato manner.

"Bulstrode!"

"Adsum!" said Bulstrode.

"Bunter!"

"Adsum!"

It was Billy Bunter's piping voice.

Bulstrode gave a violent start, and looked along the ranks of the Remove. He could scarcely believe his eyes at what he saw.

There was Billy Bunter, in his usual place, his fat face looking a little more plump and well-fed than when the Remove bully had seen him last.

"Bunter!" gasped Bulstrode.

Hazeldene, who was standing next to the bully of the Remove, looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter with you, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"N-nothing! But did you see Bunter come in?"

"Bunter? Yes. He came in a few minutes before you, with Wharton and Cherry and the Indian."

"Wharton?" Bulstrode gritted his teeth. "Ah, I might have guessed that he was at the bottom of it!"

"At the bottom of what?"

"Nothing."

"But you said—"

"Never mind what I said! It's no business of yours, Vaseline, anyway!" said Bulstrode rudely.

"Silence in the Remove!"

Bulstrode was greatly relieved in his mind. He could not help guessing now that Billy Bunter had left the vault before the great tree had fallen upon the slab. After calling-over, he found the first opportunity he could of speaking to the Owl. He met Billy Bunter in the hall, and grasped him by the shoulder.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Wharton was within call, and Bunter felt safe, though the bully of the Remove had a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"So you have been playing a trick on me, you young imp?" said Bulstrode between his teeth, shaking Billy by the shoulder.

"Please don't shake me like that, Bulstrode. You might make my glasses fall off. And if you break them, you'll have to pay for them, so I warn you."

"You young rotter! You played—"

"I didn't. You played a trick on me, Bulstrode; and Wharton says it was a mean and dirty trick, and I really think it was."

"You rat, why didn't you let me know you had got out of the vault?"

"Wharton thought he'd give you a lesson," chuckled Billy Bunter. "He, he! It was really a good joke, wasn't it, Bulstrode?"

The Remove bully shook him again. "You little fat rotter, I've a great mind to wipe up the floor with you!"

"If you make my glasses fall off, and break them, you'll have to pay—"

"I'll—I'll—"

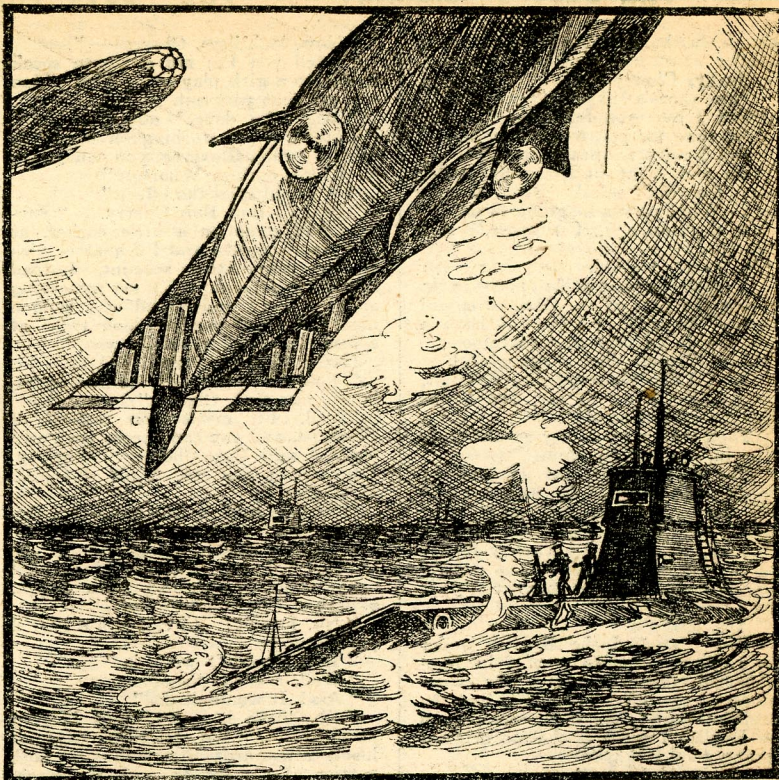
"No, you won't! Wharton won't tell you," grinned Bunter. "I'm to let Wharton if you bully me over this, and he has promised to give you a licking if you do. You remember he gave you a licking once, Bulstrode, and you had an awfully rough time. Ow! Don't shake me like that; you'll make my glasses fall off! Wharton! I say, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton came quietly up.

"Let Bunter alone, Bulstrode."

"Mind your own business."

"That is my business. Billy did as I told him. I thought you ought to



Submarines are now fitted with anti-aircraft guns. This is due to the fact that they are easily discernible from aircraft, not only when they are on the surface, but even when submerged. Our picture shows a submarine making use of its new weapon against a German aerial attack.

have a lesson for being a cad and a brute."

"Wharton!"

"That's plain English," said Harry Wharton disdainfully. "If you don't like it, come over to the gym., and I'll back up my words in a way you can understand. But you are not going to bully this kid. Let him alone!"

Bulstrode, quivering with passion, released Bunter.

"I will settle with you for this another time, Wharton," he said thickly.

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

"Whenever you like."

"The great man is angryful," murmured Hurree Singh, as Wharton rejoined him. "His terrible frownfulness is no longer terrific since he has received the likefulness, but he will get used to it. Shall we go up to the study for a rehearsal, my worthy chums?"

"Just what I was thinking," said Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove were soon in the study. Harry Wharton, who was always methodical in his work, suggested getting prep done first, and done it was. Then, books being cleared away, the play sent so kindly by Bob Cherry's cousin in Manchester was produced, and the juniors read through it.

Bob Cherry pronounced the play absolutely ripping, but each of the other juniors kept to his own opinion that something else would have been better. Harry Wharton still favoured "Hamlet," Nugent "Peter Pan," and the nabob a weird composition which he had a manuscript copy of, and which he averred was frequently performed

in princes' palaces in India. But there was no chance of the juniors agreeing in their opinions, and as it was acknowledged that Bob Cherry's play was easier than the others, they came to a compromise, "By Order of the Tyrant" being adopted as the work that was to receive the attention of the Wharton Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. Further argument on the subject being vetoed by general consent, and the play being read through, the next question was to form the caste.

Wharton had already been selected as Valentine, the hero, and Hazeldene was to take the part of Albert, the heroine's brother. Bob Cherry jibbed a little at the part of Colonel Kaufmann, the villain of the piece, but he preferred it to a minor character, so his name went down on the list as Colonel Kaufmann. Nugent was cast as Lieutenant Bunkoff, the colonel's factotum and secondary villain.

Billy Bunter blinked disapproval the whole time. Billy wanted the hero's part, first of all, and had indeed learned up some of the lines. Then he would have compromised on the part of Gloxiana's brother. After that, he was willing to take either of the villainous parts. When he was cast as a comic page he snuffed.

"If the whole thing falls through, and we get grinned at, don't blame me," he said. "I could save it for you if you liked."

"We'd rather not be saved," said Bob Cherry. "You'll do rippingly as a comic page. You haven't much to say, and you only have to look funny; and goodness knows you look funny

enough, without making up for the part."

"Really, Cherry—"

"Then there's Inky—"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"No time for you to say anything."

"But I want to speak a minute."

"Go and do it in Skinner's study, then. He won't mind. Now, there's Inky. What part is he going to take?"

"A German spy, I suppose," said Wharton.

The nabob nodded.

"I shall have terrific pleasure in playing the part of the German spyful person," he said. "I hope I have a considerable amount of speakfulness."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Well, I don't know, Inky. Schmidt, the spy, has a lot to say, but I was thinking of cutting it."

"Then where would my speakfulness come in, my worthy chum?"

"The fact is, the less you say on the stage the better, Inky, as you would give the thing away with your—your unique way of expressing yourself."

"You mean that my variety of the noble English language is not exactly samefully similar to the manner of your honourable style?"

"Yes, that's it."

"But I studied the English under the rippingest native master in Bengal," said Hurree Singh. "The causefulness of the differentiation is that the English tongue has degenerated, and the English I speak is the old original ripping good English."

"My dear Inky—"

"I am quite certain of this, as my master in Bengal told me so," said the nabob. "But the little difficulty of the differentiation can be easily extirpated. I shall learn the lines heartfully in the memory, and speak them with exact thussness, and so there will not be any signfulness displayed of this slightful differentiation."

"You might make a slip."

"I shall take the extreme care to avoid the pitfall of the slipfulness."

"Very well, we'll see," said Wharton. "Anyhow, you go down as the spy, Schmidt. Young Desmond is to be the waiting-maid, Maria, and Hazeldene's sister, Gloxiana. That's the whole caste, excepting police, servants, soldiers, and so on."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Now, let's see about going through the lines," said Wharton. "We shall have to carefully rehearse the great scene in the second act, where Hazeldene, and I thrash Colonel Kaufmann and Lieutenant Bunkoff."

Bob Cherry and Nugent exchanged glances.

"Shall we?" said Bob. "I really think that scene ought to be cut out, Wharton."

"My dear chap, it's the most telling scene in the play."

"Yes, but—"

"Colonel Kaufmann insults Gloxiana—"

"Look here, I'm not going to insult Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"Ass! It's all in the play."

"It may be in the play. But I tell you I'm not going to be rude to a girl, whatever Colonel Kaufmann may have done."

"It's in the book!"

"It can stop there."

"But if you don't insult Gloxiana, I can't rush on and seize you by the throat, and dash you to the ground."

"You'd better not do that, anyway, unless you particularly want a thick ear."

"Now, look here, Cherry—"

"I tell you I'm not going to speak rudely to a girl, play or no play. You can cut that part out."

"Might be done," said Hazeldene.

"Instead of you rushing on when the colonel insults Gloxiana, you could rush on a little earlier, Wharton."

"It would spoil the effect."

"Stuff!" said Bob Cherry. "Suppose you come on a little earlier, as Vaseline suggests, and I'll quarrel with you on some other account. Instead of insulting Gloxiana, I'll say something about I can't understand why such a nice girl could possibly look twice at a funny-faced bouncer like you."

Harry Wharton turned red.

"You can't turn a drama into opera-bouffe like that, Cherry."

"Well, I'll insult you instead of Gloxiana, and you can choose your own insult," said Bob Cherry. "Anyway, I'm not going to insult Marjorie Hazeldene."

Wharton rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Well, perhaps we can fix it," he said. "You can say something about driving the British flag from Egypt, and then I'll jump on you."

"No, I can't! I'll call you a liar, if you like."

"That wouldn't work in."

"Well, a thief, then?"

"Ass! It wouldn't do!"

"Oh, leave it over!" said Nugent pacifically. "We can think of some insult afterwards that will suit both parties. Let's get on with the washing now."

"The impatience with which I await the proceeding of the washfulness is terrific," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Very well," said Harry; "that can be easily arranged, with a little thought. Now to get on to the scene, Gloxiana is standing under the tree when Colonel Kaufmann comes up with Bunkoff and insults her."

"And doesn't insult her."

"I mean, and doesn't insult her," amended Harry. "Then I rush on— But look here, if Kaufmann doesn't insult Gloxiana, there's no reason why I should rush on. I might as well walk."

"Well, walk, then," said Bob Cherry.

"It's a good scene spoiled! Well, I walk on, then, and the colonel insults me. Then I go for him. Oh, I say, it's rotten! If he insulted Gloxiana, I could go for him all right, but an insult to me wouldn't be a sufficient excuse for using violence before a lady. I should be acting like a ruffian."

"Perhaps you're right there," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Perhaps I'd better dot you on the nose instead."

"That's all right," said Nugent. "You'd have to hit back, and then the dust-up could proceed as per book."

"Well, yes, that might do. I thrash Colonel Kaufmann without mercy—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Do you want to spoil that scene, too, Cherry?"

"No; but I think I ought to have a look in somewhere. We might arrange it that we have a fearful fight, and part on equal terms. The audience will be just as pleased. The fight is what they want, and they don't care who wins."

"Impossible! Lieutenant Bunkoff has to rush to your aid as you're getting the worst of it, and I am attacked by the two scoundrels—"

"The two what?"

"Scoundrels! I'm not referring to you and Nugent, ass, but to Colonel Kaufmann and Lieutenant Bunkoff."

"And then I dash in," exclaimed Hazeldene—"I dash on the scene, exclaiming: 'My friend! My sister! My sister! My friend!'"

"And we give the colonel and his myrmidon a fearful hiding," said Wharton.

Bob Cherry looked grim.

"I know that's in the play—"

"It will have to be in the representation, too. We can't have a good scene mucked up and ruined to save your feelings. We've already cut out your insulting remarks to Gloxiana. You'll want the whole play cut out next!"

"Nugent agrees with me—"

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "I don't see why I should be bumped about the stage by Vaseline, a chap I could lick with one hand."

"Rats!" said Hazeldene.

"If you think I couldn't—"

"That's not the question," said Harry Wharton, interrupting. "This isn't a real fight, but a dramatic representation. I must say that I think you chaps are unreasonable. You will spoil the whole thing."

"How would you like to be licked with Marjorie Hazeldene looking on?"

"There's no alternative."

"Oh, let's get on!" said Bob Cherry. "This play isn't such a really ripping one as I thought at first. Of course, I intended to have been the hero, and then it would have worked out more satisfactorily. But let's get on with the washing!"

"I am waiting for the washfulness, my worthy chum."

"Right you are. Inky has some lines in the beginning of that scene as Schmidt, the spy. He explains to Gloxiana, under the tree, that she is doomed unless she consents to marry Colonel Kaufmann."

"Then I suggest that he should hand her a note instead, supposed to contain all that explanation," said Bob Cherry. "He's bound to come out with some of his beautiful English in a moment of absent-mindedness."

"I should declinefully refuse to hand the honourable note," said the nabob, shaking his head. "I am willing to heartfully learn the lines, and deliver them rotefully by word of mouth, to insure their correctfulness."

"We'll give Inky a trial," said Wharton. "If he has the lines pat by the time we are ready for the final full-dress rehearsal, he shall speak; and if not, he shall deliver a note to Gloxiana, who shall read it aloud, and so let the audience know what is going on."

"That is fairful, and I agree with the great alacrity."

"Then you'd better start learning your lines, Inky," said Bob Cherry.

"I will start at oncefully."

"A good idea is to copy them out, and carry the copy always about with you," said Wharton. "Then you can whisk it out and have a look at any time—in the passages, or the fields, or in the intervals in the classroom."

"It is a wheezy good idea. I think that I shall soon have the lineful words of the esteemed Schmidt quite heartfully, my worthy chums."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hurree Singh Studies His Part.

The Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Company had entered upon the thing in good earnest, and they did not waste

time. During the next few days little was heard in No. 1 Study save lines from "By Order of the Tyrant!" In and out of season the juniors studied and spouted their lines, and gradually got their parts by heart, though it is safe to say that none was letter perfect.

The colonel's kind invitation had been accepted, of course, and Harry had written a very grateful letter to his guardian. Arrangements were made for the dramatic company to accompany Harry on his holiday to Wharton Lodge. There was little difficulty about that, but about the destined heroine of the play there was more. Harry wrote to the colonel, asking his counsel, and the result was a letter from Miss Wharton, the colonel's sister, to Marjorie Hazeldene. Miss Wharton was the aunt who had spoiled Harry in his earlier days, and she was as devoted to her favourite as ever. Her letter to Marjorie was so kind that the girl could have no hesitation in accepting her invitation to spend a week at Wharton Lodge. When the juniors heard that the matter had been arranged, they were jubilant.

"The difficulty is that Marjorie won't be able to come here for rehearsals," Hazeldene remarked. "But she has a gift for this sort of thing, you know, and she will pick up her part in next to no time. We sha'n't be giving the play the first day at the Lodge, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," said Wharton. "Miss Hazeldene will have a couple of days at least to rehearse with us, and then I've sent her a copy of the play already."

"Marjorie will be well up in it—better than most of us, I expect," Hazeldene said confidently.

"I'm sure of it! I wish she could come here for the early rehearsals, though," Bob Cherry remarked.

Hazeldene grinned.

"Well, if you are going to cut up rusty in the second act, when Wharton wallops you, perhaps it's better not!" he said.

"Wharton isn't going to wallop me."

"Yes, I am," said Harry. "Don't be an ass, Bob! You're not going to muck up the whole thing out of sheer obstinacy, are you?"

"Of course not."

"I shall be careful not to really hurt you. You can have some red ink, if you like, on your handkerchief, and I won't really make your nose bleed."

"You'd better not, that's all!" grunted Cherry.

"Of course, it's no good grumbling at trifles. If you got a knock or two—"

"Somebody else would get three or four!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Then don't you be a donkey!"

"My dear friends and chumful comrades," said Hurree Singh, coming up with a manuscript in his hand. "I have learned the greater portion of my part heartfully. Would you care to hear me say a few lines?"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Wharton.

Hurree Singh twisted up his features into a really ferocious expression, and began:

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree—"

Bob Cherry looked alarmed.

"What the dickens are you looking like that for, Inky?" he exclaimed.

"Like what?" asked the nabob, breaking off.

"Like a giddy burglar, or a fearful assassin!"

"I'm putting on the honourable ex-

pression suitable to the esteemed Schmidt. He is a spy, and chocked full with villainousness."

"I see. I thought perhaps you were having a fit, or something."

"Not at all! I will continue the lineful declamation:

"Aha; I see you here beneath the tree!

'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh,

And stern Kaufmann. Trembling English maid,

I tell you that unless you wed Kaufmann,

The dreadedfulness of—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are interrupting my honourable declamation with your esteemed snigger, Bob Cherry," said the nabob reproachfully.

"You're off the line, Inky. I knew you'd drop into your own beautiful idiom sooner or later," grinned Bob. "Better leave out the dreadedfulness!"

"That was only a little slipfulness."

"Well, I told you so."

"An asinine person can say 'I told you so,'" said the nabob. "I will continue with a more terrific carefulness."

"I tell you that unless you wed Kaufmann,

The dreadedful Huns of Prussia Will greet you ere the weekful time has passed—"

"Ha, ha! There he goes again!"

"It was only a little slipfulness."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You'll have to learn them up a bit more carefully, Inky," he remarked.

"But there's plenty of time, and you only want to stick to it."

"The stickfulness will be terrific."

And to do Hurree Jamset Ram Singh justice, he did stick at his task with untiring energy and determination.

Whenever the Indian junior was seen, he had that well-thumbed copy in his hand and was studying his part. At intervals in the classroom, when the keen eye of Mr. Quelch was not upon him, Hurree Singh devoted his attention to the lines of Schmidt, with curious results sometimes to his lessons.

His absent replies had more than once excited the suspicions of Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master was a very keen man in school hours, as Hurree Singh learned in time.

"Hurree Singh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch suddenly, on Saturday morning. "You will go on from where Wharton left off!"

Hurree Singh gave a start.

Wharton had been construing the Ænid, and Hurree Singh had been studying a folded paper hidden in the palm of his dusky hand.

The Indian lad looked up, hastily concealing the paper. The lines from "By Order of the Tyrant!" were fresh enough in his memory, but the lesson might have been going on in Japan for all Hurree Singh had heard of it. He did not even know his place in the book.

"Hurree Singh!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You will go on construing."

"Certainly, sir."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "why do you not go on?"

"I—I have lost the place, honourable sahib."

"Show him the place, Nugent."

Nugent showed Hurree Singh the place. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stood up, in a great state of confusion. Mr. Quelch's eye was on him like a gimlet.

"Go on, Hurree Singh." "Certainly, sir. I shall have great pleasurefulness in going on."

"Then do so at once!" rapped out the Remove-master.

"And Æneas began—" whispered Nugent, giving the nabob the clue.

"Nugent, you are speaking to Hurree Singh; you will take twenty lines!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Silence! Go on, Hurree Singh. If you keep me waiting any longer I shall know that you were not paying attention to the lesson, and shall punish you accordingly."

"Certainly, sir—I mean, certainly."

"And Æneas began—"

"Well, what did Æneas begin?"

"And Æneas began—"

"Go on."

"The honourable and esteemed Æneas began—"

"What did he say?"

"I—I—I—"

"Nothing of the sort," said Mr. Quelch sarcastically. "I don't think you will find that in the Ænid, Hurree Singh."

And the whole class giggled, as in duty bound when a Form-master descended to make a joke. Hurree Singh grew more confused.

"And Æneas began—aha!"

"What!"

"Aha; I see you here beneath the tree!"

'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh,

And stern Kaufmann—"

"What!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

But the bewildered nabob was deaf to him now; he had quite lost his presence of mind, and he went plunging on, while the class shrieked and rocked with laughter.

"And stern Kaufmann. Trembling English maid,

I tell you that unless you wed Kaufmann marryfully,

The dreaded Huns of Prussia Will greet you ere the honourable week has passed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

The class were in convulsions. Mr. Quelch's amazement was as funny as Hurree Singh's blundering. The Form-master stamped his foot.

"Hurree Singh, silence!"

The nabob broke off, because he had forgotten what came next. Mr. Quelch glared at him with an expression that a basilisk might have envied.

"Leave the classroom instantly!" he thundered. "I will deal with you presently, Hurree Singh. Leave the classroom!"

Harry Wharton was on his feet in a moment.

"If you please, Mr. Quelch—"

"What have you to say, Wharton?" rapped out the incensed Form-master.

"Hurree Singh did not mean to be cheek—impertinent, sir. He has been studying a part in a play, and it was absent-mindedness—"

"He's an absent-minded beggar," murmured Nugent.

Mr. Quelch's brow cleared a little.

"Indeed! Is that the case, Hurree Singh?"

"Certainly, sir!" gasped the nabob. "I have terrific sorrowfulness at my great mistakefulness. I beg a thousand pardons of my honourable and esteemed instructor sahib, and I assure him—"

"So that is why you have been so inattentive in class of late?" said Mr. Quelch. "Well, as you are so fond of lines, you shall write out two hundred

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

from the Ænid this afternoon. You will find them much superior to those you have been learning by heart. Now we will continue, please."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Dress Rehearsal.

"What time the dress rehearsal, Wharton?"

"Seven precisely."

"In the Remove-room?"

"Yes."

"Anybody coming?"

"Anybody that likes."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I fancy most of the Form will be there to see how we figure, Harry."

"Well, let them come," said Harry Wharton. "It will get us used to facing an audience, and that's an advantage."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "A Remove audience isn't the easiest in the world to face. We managed them all right with our version of 'Carmen,' because we decided at the last minute to make it mostly comic. But serious business—"

"Well, really, we ought to aim at improving their minds as much as anything, Nugent. The aim of the stage is not wholly to amuse, or to make money. The true actor has a mission in life. His mission, like that of the author, is to educate and elevate through the medium of amusement."

"Yes, but I'd rather try to educate and elevate any other crowd than a Remove one," said Nugent. "Still, I'm game. They can't do worse than throw things at us."

"Oh, that will be all right!" said Harry, laughing. "It won't be as bad as that. Anyway, this is only a rehearsal. Even if it isn't wholly a success, that's no reason why the show at Wharton Lodge shouldn't be a success."

"Well, we shall have a gentler audience there."

"Yes; and it will come as a bit of a rest after facing the Remove."

Bob Cherry was right in thinking that most of the Remove would turn up for the dress rehearsal of "By Order of the Tyrant."

When the notice was put up on the board, it was read with great interest by the Remove, and many fellows of the Upper Fourth, too.

Temple, Dabney, & Co., of the Upper Fourth, made up their minds to come and "see the youngsters make asses of themselves," as Temple kindly expressed it.

During the afternoon, while Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was working off the lines he had earned by inattention in class, Harry Wharton and the rest of the party paid a visit to the village of Friardale, and had a satisfactory interview with the costumier, who had several times supplied their wants.

The clothes for "By Order of the Tyrant" were not at all unique, and they were easily to be obtained, and it was chiefly a question of fitting.

This difficulty was overcome, and the costumier promised that the goods should be delivered at the school without fail by half-past six.

Mindful of the raid of the Upper Fourth fellows on a previous occasion, the chums of the Remove were on the look-out when the carrier was due.

The bulky parcels were duly delivered, and borne up in triumph to No. 1 Study, where the Removites

examined them with great satisfaction.

Harry Wharton looked very handsome as Valentine, the young British officer who was the hero of the play, when he donned the garb; and Hazeldene made a passable Albert.

Bob Cherry, in a German uniform, with immense moustaches, looked terrible as Colonel Kaufmann; and Nugent was unrecognisable as Lieutenant Bunckoff.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh required most making up as Schmidt, the spy, his dusky complexion requiring obliteration; but the grease-paint was not spared, and the make-up was a great success.

Billy Bunter gave a great deal of attention to his get-up as Snipit, the comic page. The page's garb had to be let out considerably to suit his ample proportions; and Bob Cherry, in making him up, left a great dab of red on his nose, by way of a joke, which Bunter did not notice at the time. The question of the spectacles was a difficult one with Bunter.

"I think I ought to have the glasses off," he remarked. "It looks out of place in a serious drama to wear glasses."

"But you're a comic character," said Nugent.

"Yes; but even a comic character can be rendered dignified by the quality of the acting," replied Billy. "I intend to make a jolly good thing of Snipit's part, and I shouldn't be surprised if it attracted more attention than any of the stuff you fellows go in for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can laugh as much as you like, Nugent; but I know jolly well I was born to be an actor! I never go to a theatre without feeling that I could do the thing better than any of the fellows that I see upon the stage."

"But every conceited ass thinks that!"

"Really, Nugent—"

"Look here, if you have your glasses off you'll blunder into people, and make a bother," said Harry Wharton. "Better keep them on, Billy."

"I'll have them in my pocket, Wharton, ready to slip on in case of necessity."

"Oh, very well."

"Sure, and we're ready now!" said Micky Desmond, giving the final touches to his face, which glowed with the ruddy complexion of Maria, the waiting-maid. "It's a great pity ye're sister can't come to the rehearsal, Vaseline."

"Can't be helped."

"No; but how are we going to work the scene without her in the second act? There must be somebody there for Colonel Kaufmann to insult."

"The insults to Gloxiana have been cut out," said Bob Cherry hastily.

"But there must be a heroine for Wharton to defend against the German spalpeen."

"She won't need any defending."

"Anyway, there must be a girl in the scene," said Micky.

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton. "We can't have anybody to speak the lines; but, of course, one of the company is sometimes missing from a rehearsal. Fritz Hoffmann is going on in a cloak to stand under the tree, and have the speeches made at him, and he won't say anything. We must have somebody standing there to be talked at, or the audience will think it's a soliloquy."

"If Hoffmann begins to talk—"

"That's all right; he's agreed not to. Later we can put him into the play as a spy without a speaking part, as I should like him to come down to the lodge. This evening he's Gloxiana, in a cloak."

"Well, I'm about finished," said Bob Cherry. "It's pretty near time, we were in the Remove-room, as we fixed seven o'clock."

"Better have a snack to eat first," said Bunter.

"Well, I'd really forgotten tea," said Harry; "but really we had better have something to eat. Don't bother to make tea. Anything will do."

"I say, Wharton, that's not very sensible, you know. A chap acts so much better after a square meal."

"Well, you can stay here and have a square meal if you like, Billy, while we get on with the rehearsal."

"Oh, no; only I think—"

"Cold ham and brown bread," said Nugent, opening the cupboard. "What could be nicer? There's enough milk for a swig all round, and it's been boiled. Now, then."

Curious enough looked the caste of "By Order of the Tyrant," in their various costumes, eating bread and ham, and drinking milk from teacups.

Billy Bunter started first, and left off last, and then he was far from satisfied. But he did not wish to be left out of the rehearsal, and so he accompanied the others when they left the study.

An interested and admiring crowd followed the amateur dramatists to the Remove-room, passing free and not wholly complimentary remarks upon their personal appearance.

"Did you ever see such guys?" Bulstrode asked Russell.

"Yes, old chap; I can see one now," said Russell, looking at him.

"My hat!" said Skinner. "Inky has changed colour, and no mistake! What have you done with the ink, Hurree Jampot?"

"The inkfulness—"

"And Nugent, too! What giddy moustaches!" said Jameson. "Hallo! Where are you running to, young shaver?"

"I'm sincerely sorry!" said Bunter, who had taken off his glasses. "I didn't mean to run into you, Skinner. I didn't see you."

"It's not Skinner, ass! Where are your barnacles?"

"I have taken my spectacles off for the part, you see. Hallo! What is that?"

"You've trodden on my toe, you young villain!" howled Russell.

"I'm sincerely sorry. I didn't see you."

"Here, come along!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, seizing Bunter by the arm. "You'll do some damage if you run loose."

"Don't jerk me so much, please, Cherry. You might make my glasses fall off; and if you broke them, you would have to pay—"

"Cheese it; you haven't them on, so buck up!"

And Bunter was jerked into the Remove-room. That apartment was pretty well filled. A cheer, somewhat ironical in its tone, greeted the appearance of the amateur dramatists.

"Here they are!"

"My hat! What a sight!"

"More guys!"

Taking no notice of these comments, which came chiefly from fellows belonging to the Upper Fourth Form, the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society marched up the room.

The raised dais at the end was to serve them as a stage, and a curtain had been put up to bar off the green-room. There was no scenery. That had to be understood. But, as Bob Cherry remarked, the acting was the thing. Give an audience good acting, and they don't care for anything else. And the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society resolved to give them good acting.

"Go it!"

The audience shouted encouragement. Harry Wharton had cautioned his company to take no notice of remarks from before the footlights, and consequently the juniors wore expressions of sublime indifference.

"Ach! I am here before you after, ain't it?"

It was Fritz Hoffmann who spoke, as the company passed behind the curtain into the green-room. The German junior had on the long cloak and shady hat he was to wear as Gloxiana.

Bob Cherry looked at him rather disparagingly.

"Don't let the audience see your feet, if you can help it," he said.

"I keeps to cloak over my feet, ain't it?" said Hoffmann.

"And your face, too——"

"Ach! I keeps pack to te audience."

And Harry Wharton appeared on the stage, to be greeted by a mingled uproar of cheers and groans.

**THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Something Like a Row!**

Harry Wharton had plenty of nerve, and any sign of hostility from an audience only made him obstinately determined to brave out their disapproval. He knew that Temple, Dabney & Co. wanted to "muck up" the dress rehearsal if they could, and he was resolved that they should not have a chance. He knew that he could depend upon the Remove to back him up against the rival Form.

Harry delivered his lines with perfect elocution and great spirit. The play was, of course, melodramatic stuff, but the audience were not artistically critical. The Remove applauded the soliloquy, and the Upper Fourth groaned it, which was exactly what was to be expected.

Harry having broken the ice, the rest of the company felt more assured, and they, too, faced the audience, as their cues came, with good composure. Hurree Singh had only a few lines to speak in the first act, and he managed to

Schmidt, the spy, alias Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree," began Hurree Singh.

"Ja, I am here before!" said Hoffmann.

The audience gave a yell. A fierce whisper came from the wings.

"Shut up, Hoffmann, you ass!"

"Ach! I pegs your pardons. I forget mit meinsel!"

"Shut up!"

"I shuts up before."

"Aha, I see you here beneath the tree,

'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh,

And stern Kaufmann. Trembling English maid,

I tell you that unless you wedfully marry Kaufmann——"

"Ass!"

"I mean 'unless you wed Kaufmann, The dreadful Huns of Prussia——'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

"You go on, Bob," muttered Harry. "I might have guessed he'd do it. Fortunately, it's only a rehearsal. But go on and stop him."

And Bob Cherry entered as Colonel Kaufmann, followed by Nugent, his faithful Bunkoff.

"Ah, my good Schmidt, you may leave me now,

Next Thursday :

'THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!'

Another magnificent long complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Order your copy of the DREADNOUGHT in advance!

"Good! You may pass, so long as you don't open your mouth. Are you chaps ready?"

"Quite ready."

"Bunter's got a red patch on his nose," said Wharton.

"You rotter, Cherry!" breathed Bunter.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"By Jove! I meant to rub it off, and I forgot. Here goes!" And Bob commenced to rub away with his handkerchief at Bunter's nose. Billy wriggled.

"Ow! You'll have my nose off in a minute, Cherry!"

"There you are!" said Bob.

"Now we're all right," said Harry, with an anxious glance round. "They're calling to us to come on, and it's turned seven. Ready?"

"Rather!"

"Ratherfully, my esteemed chum!"

"Then ring up the giddy curtain!"

Hurree Singh looked round.

"Where is the curtain that is to be upped ringfully, my worthy friend?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's a figure of speech, Inky. You just walk on—or, rather, I just walk on, as I open the ball with a soliloquy."

"Go it, Harry!"

leave out any of his peculiar English. Gloxiana, when she appeared, kept silent. The first act went off pretty well, and the company retired behind the curtain for a brief and well-earned rest.

"It's jolly good!" said Nugent. "We might as well have called it a performance as a dress rehearsal, as it's going down so well."

"The performfulness is excellent," said Hurree Singh. "If we keep up to the sameful mark for the rest of the play, the successfulness will be terrific."

"Yes, I really think we are doing well," said Harry Wharton. "But, of course, the fighting scene in the second act is the piece de resistance. That is what will fetch the audience every time."

"Rather!" said Hazeldene. "The fellows will cheer when we lick the two German officers. We shall have to give them a knock or two to make the thing realistic."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "You'd better not. I say, they're calling us, so let's get on."

The second act commenced.

The scene was Gloxiana, standing under a tree, waiting for her lover to appear. Fritz Hoffmann stood there in the long cloak, his back to the audience. Enter, instead of Valentine,

And I will talk to this proud English maid."

Hurree Singh stared at him.

"I have not yet concluded my speechfulness, my worthy chum," he remarked.

The audience shrieked.

"Get off, you villain!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh, very well! But I regardfully consider——"

"Get off!"

And the nabob disappeared.

"Let him come back! Let him finish his speechfulness!" roared Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Encore, Inky!"

But Harry Wharton was clutching Hurree Singh behind the curtain, and he could not reappear in answer to his call. Bob Cherry went on with his lines.

"My lovely Gloxiana, you are here, And I am here to talk awhile with you.

Your lover Valentine is far away, And I and Bunkoff only——"

"False German! 'Tis a lie, for I am here!" shouted Harry Wharton, rushing upon the stage.

"Fear not, my Gloxiana, I am here!"

"Ach! I dinks——"

"This German traitor, sweet, shall harm thee not,

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: 'THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!'

While I am here to die in your defence."

"Bunkoff, to me, and we will give this youth a stern chastisement 'fore the lady's eyes!" exclaimed the villainous Kaufmann.

"My noble master, I am at your call!" said Lieutenant Bunkoff.

And the colonel and the lieutenant attacked the English officer. Valentine gallantly faced the two, drawing his sword, and there was a clash and clang of steel. The audience were keenly enough interested now.

"Go it!"

"Chop him, Kaufmann!"

"Slice him, Wharton!"

"Hurrah!"

"My friend! My sister! My sister and my friend!" exclaimed Hazeldene, rushing upon the scene.

"Aid me, brave Albert, 'gainst these coward foes!" cried Harry.

The combat now grew really terrific. Sparks flew from the steel, and the juniors trampled to and fro over the stage, in terrific excitement.

"You ass, Cherry!" muttered Wharton. "It's time for you to be disarmed. Let your sword go, you howling ass!"

"That's all very well!"

"Play the game, idiot!"

Bob Cherry let his sword go, and it clanged to the floor. Then Lieutenant Bunkoff followed his example. The two Germans were disarmed, and at the mercy of the justly-incensed champions of insulted beauty.

Then Harry Wharton delivered the most telling lines of the piece.

"Away with these unnecessary arms!" he cried, throwing down his sword. "Swords are not needed in this combat, friend! An Englishman

needs but an English fist to bring the foreign foeman to his knees!"

"What-ho!" shouted the Remove.

And Valentine and Albert rushed upon Colonel Kaufmann, and his mymidon Bunkoff.

The foreign foe should then have received a severe thrashing, but it did not work out exactly like that, for Bob Cherry and Nugent were both getting excited.

The Remove were shouting to them, too, urging them to put up a good fight, with utter disregard for the fact that the scene was supposed to be a dramatic representation.

"Go it, Nugent!"

"Go it, Cherry!"

"You're not half fighting!"

"Don't let them wipe you up like that!"

"Go it!"

And Colonel Kaufmann and Lieutenant Bunkoff did go it. Nugent closed with Hazeldene, and got his head into chancery; and Hazeldene struggled and roared and hit out. Bob Cherry landed a right-hander on Harry's nose. Harry was getting excited, too, and he replied in kind, and the two juniors were soon at it hammer and tongs.

Hurree Singh rushed on the stage to separate them, and he received a drive in the chest that sent him staggering. He bumped against Hoffmann, and knocked him over, and the German promptly retaliated with a thump on the chest. The blood of all the Nabobs of Bhanipur boiled up in wrath, and in a second more Hurree Singh and Hoffmann were fighting desperately.

The audience were all on their feet now, shrieking with laughter. They roared and shrieked, and urged on the combatants. Wingate and two or three

other prefects rushed into the room with canes in their hands. The uproar was terrific, and it had not been long in bringing the prefects upon the scene.

"Stop that row!" roared Wingate.

And as no notice was taken by the excited combatants, he ran on the stage, and brought the cane into play. They stopped then. Billy Bunter, who blundered into Wingate's way, received most of the punishment. The combatants, looking rather sheepish, separated.

"What the dickens are you up to, you young rascals?" demanded Wingate angrily.

"It's only a rehearsal!" stammered Harry Wharton.

"A what? My hat! If that's how you rehearse, what would the play be like, I wonder? Clear out!"

"But—"

"Clear out!"

And the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society had no choice in the matter. They cleared out. Dusty and dishevelled, they returned to the study, followed by roars of laughter from the Remove and the Upper Fourth.

"Of all the asses—" began Harry Wharton, looking at Bob Cherry.

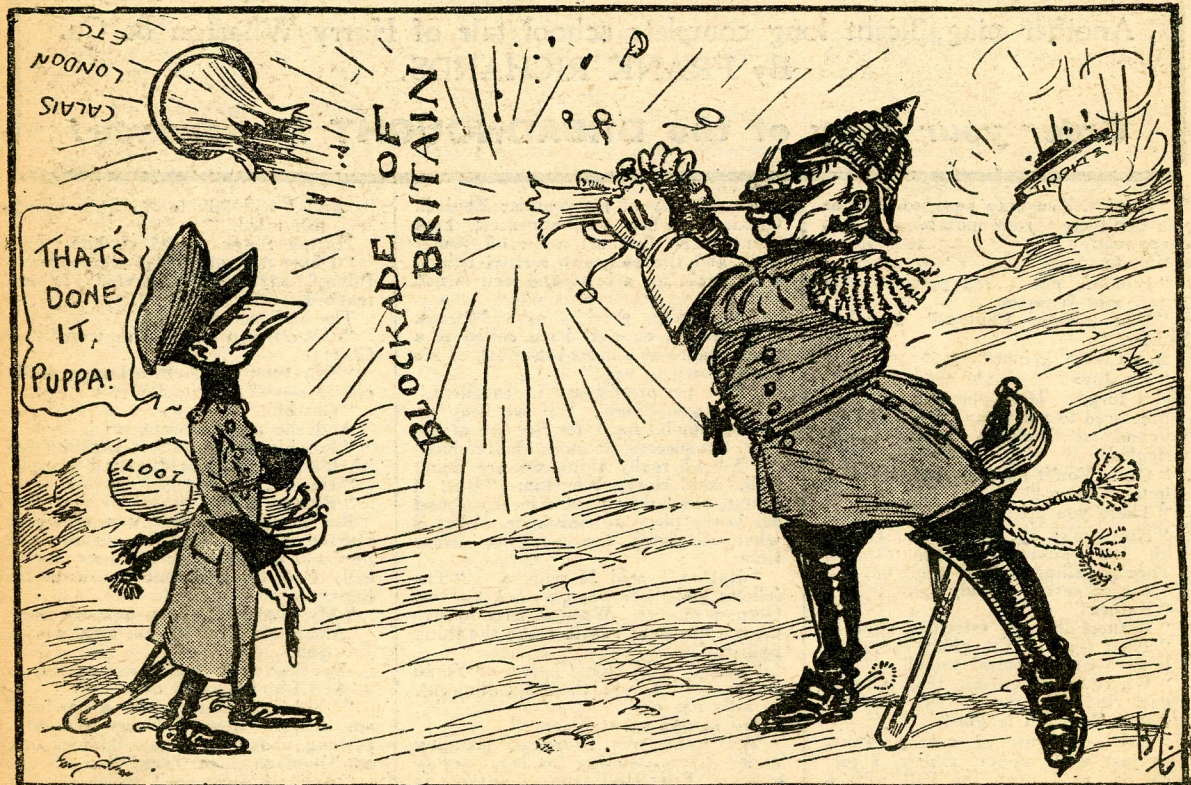
"Of all the asses—" said Bob Cherry, returning his look.

Harry burst into a laugh.

"Well, it's been a muck-up, and no mistake; but it's no good ragging one another. But one thing's settled, we sha'n't play 'By Order of the Tyrant.' It leads a little too much to ructions. When we play at Wharton Lodge, we'll play 'Peter Pan.'"

And the rest of the company, as they rubbed their bruises, agreed that that was a good idea.

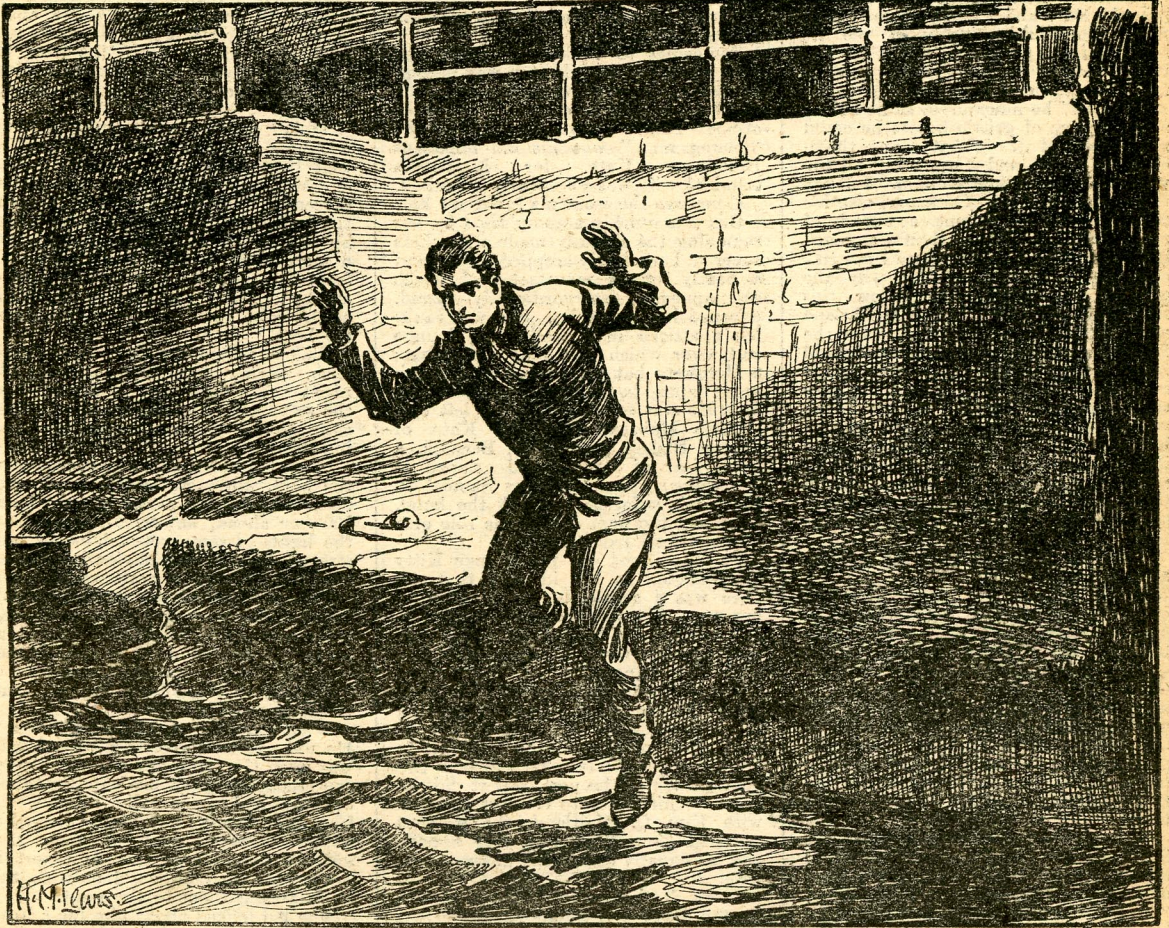
THE END.



SONGS FOR THE KAISER: "Trumpeter! What Are You Sounding Now?"

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**.



A moment later Tinker had descended the damp, slimy steps leading to the water. He shivered as the biting wind buffeted him, and then, setting his teeth, he slipped almost noiselessly into the water. (See page 18.)

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

SEXTON BLAKE, the famous detective, is notified by Fenlock Pawn, of the New York Police, that Count Franz von Stoltz, a German Secret Service agent, is leaving America for England. Von Stoltz goes to Newcastle. Here he falls in with Ezra Q. Maitland, a notorious New York crook, and his wife, Broadway Kate. Owing to the war Germany is very short of iron and steel. Von Stoltz seeks Maitland's assistance with a scheme whereby British consignments of these metals can be transferred to Germany. Maitland falls in with the scheme in the hope of out-manoeuvring Von Stoltz, and effecting a big coup for himself.

Jack McFarlane, a partner in the engineering firm which is to assist the plotters in their shady work, tells his father that he cannot be a traitor and trade with the enemy, and tries to induce him to throw over the traitorous contract, but fails. They quarrel, and the son is disowned. After his

departure, however, the old merchant repents, and decides to cancel the contract. With this object in view, he telephones for his manager, Ian Adair, and for Silwater, who is really Maitland disguised. Silwater interviews the merchant, and his departure at midnight is witnessed by Edna Trevour, the merchant's ward. In the morning the merchant is found dead. Sexton Blake is called in, and both Silwater and Ian Adair protest their innocence to him. Silwater, however, is startled when he recognises the famous detective. An inquest is held, and, in spite of the fact that Sexton Blake gives as his opinion that the merchant met his death by accident, a verdict of wilful murder is given against Jack McFarlane, who has gone over to Holland, and his arrest is ordered. Sexton Blake becomes suspicious of Silwater, and orders his assistant, Tinker, to shadow him.

Tinker at Work—What He Overheard—Sexton Blake's Assistant's Unlucky Fall.

Tinker glided on through the narrow streets in the wake of the master-criminal, halting when he halted, and from time to time dodging into the doorway of some shop or house as Maitland turned his head.

The lad was an expert at his work, and never once did the American catch a glimpse of him. Both shadowed and shadower went on and on, until they reached the criminal's hotel, which was situated at no great distance from the docks.

Tinker dodged into the mouth of a narrow alleyway opposite, leading to some mews, and from this point of vantage he kept his eyes upon the swing-doors through which his quarry had disappeared.

Nearly four hours passed before Maitland again made his appearance, and Tinker was becoming decidedly

(Now Read On.)

hungry. All thought of food, however, was banished from his mind by the reappearance of the man he knew as Samuel P. Silwater, and he dogged Maitland's footsteps to the very heart of the town, where he made a business call at the offices of a firm of cartage contractors.

Back once again to the hotel the lad shadowed the criminal, and took up his post in the mouth of the alleyway opposite. Another couple of hours passed away, and Tinker munched at a rather doubtful-looking meat pie he had hurriedly purchased whilst he had been awaiting Maitland's reappearance from the carmen's premises.

"Phew!" he murmured, as he bolted a large piece of gristle before he could rid himself of it. "That was a three-cornered piece, and it's grating all the way down my spinal column. I fancy this pie was made in Germany, else it's the fruits of a cat-hunt at dead of night. Still, it's better than a stomach full of emptiness, so I suppose I mustn't complain. Now, I wonder why the gov'nor wanted me to follow this American johnny? If old McFarlane was killed at ten to twelve, when he fell and smashed his watch, how could he be jawing to this fellow Silwater at midnight? It strikes me that for once the gov'nor's a little bit off his horse, although I wouldn't let old Martin hear me say so for the Kaiser's boko itself! It seems to me Mr. Blake must think that Silwater had some hand in the crime, or accident—if it was really that—yet how the dickens could that be?"

"Corpses don't chinwag as a rule, and—"

Tinker stopped dead, his mouth full of the last portion of the questionable pie, and stared over the road at the tall, well set-up figure that had paused outside the hotel. To the lad's surprise, the man was Ian Adair, the young manager of John McFarlane & Co. He was standing conversing with one of the hotel porters, and the man was pointing into the building and nodding his head, as though to emphasise the fact that some person was resident there.

"Now, what does that mean?" the lad inwardly asked himself, as Adair slipped some coin into the porter's hand and vanished through the swing-doors. "It looks uncommonly as though he has called to see Silwater."

Tinker thoughtfully rubbed at his chin and frowned, his hand groping abstractedly in his jacket-pocket for a cigarette the while.

"I wonder if Mr. Adair can have some connection with the Yankee?" he murmured. "And what can be their game? The gov'nor suggested that the whole of the trouble—first the attempted murder of Jack McFarlane, and then his father's murder—possibly arose out of the great consignment of motor-lorries that is to be ostensibly shipped to New York, and that it was perhaps part of the quantity of lorries I heard Von Stoltz speaking of in the house at Poplar. Now if that's the case, perhaps Ian Adair knows how the land lies, and is being bribed to hold his tongue, or help in the conspiracy. Yet he doesn't look the sort of fellow to act as a traitor to his country, and, after all, his visit might be purely a business one, and above-board. Anyway, Tinker, my lad, you must keep your pretty blue eyes skinned and your delicate, shell-like ears open jolly wide to—Hallo, here he comes out again. I wonder if I ought to follow him?"

No, I'd better not disobey orders. I'll wait for the American."

Tinker drew back into an alley as Adair swung by upon the opposite side of the road, and he was destined to have a further long wait before the master-criminal again made his appearance.

When Maitland did reappear from the hotel, the shadows of evening were rapidly descending over the picturesque old town, and the coming darkness was in favour of such a mission as that the young detective had in hand.

Somewhat to Tinker's surprise, the man he knew as Silwater was accompanied by a companion—apparently a slenderly built young man of the dude order. Tinker little dreamed that the "young man" was his old opponent Broadway Kate, for Maitland's criminal wife was excellently disguised.

Gone was the woman's luxuriant hair—this was quickly accomplished by her removing the skillfully made wig which covered her closely cropped head—and a neatly waxed moustache, of which she appeared extraordinarily proud, adorned her upper lip. She was faultlessly attired in a well-fitting lounge suit, over which was hung a raincoat; a Homburg hat was cocked at a rakish angle upon her shapely head, and a monocle was screwed into her left eye.

Since Maitland had told Kate of Sexton Blake's presence in Berwick, a great fear of capture had gripped at the woman's heart, and as Samuel P. Silwater's wife she had left the hotel, to return the next day in the role of a young friend from London.

So marvellous was the change Kitty had effected in her identity that not once was a suspicious glance directed her way. She was the somewhat brainless young man from town to the life, and with her new appearance even her voice had changed.

Something in Broadway Kate's figure struck Tinker as being vaguely familiar as he crept after his quarry, but he could not for the life of him call to mind when and where he had seen this young dude in the past, and it did not occur to him then to connect the pair with Ezra Q. Maitland, the greatest criminal New York had ever known, and his equally clever and unscrupulous wife.

Through the quaint, narrow streets Sexton Blake's assistant shadowed the master-criminal and his companion until the harbour was reached, and Ezra Q. Maitland took Kate's arm and led her down a flight of stone steps on to a deserted quay.

Their arrival seemed to be expected, for as Tinker glided to the top of the steps and crouched in the shadows, he saw the American approach the edge of the landing-stage and lean over to address some person who was waiting in a boat.

"Yes, quite allee lightee, mastel. Him come on board nour agoee. Waitee now fol you. The words floated up to Tinker, and he started; there was no mistaking the hisping pidgin-English. The man in the boat was a Chinaman. Of that Tinker was certain, and instantly into his brain leapt what then seemed to him something of a wild theory. Samuel P. Silwater was an American, and the person awaiting him here a Celestial. Ezra Q. Maitland was also from "over the herring-pond," and possessed a Chinese servant. Could it be possible that by some strange trick of Fate he—Tinker—and his master were again pitted against the master-criminal from the States? It

certainly seemed likely. In a flash came to him where and when he had seen a slender young man strikingly like the American's companion. It had been upon the s.s. Muratana, when Maitland's wife, Broadway Kate, had posed as his son, and—

"Let him wait, hang him!" Tinker heard the man he now believed to be Maitland return, in reply to the Oriental's statement. "I guess it will do him good. He'll realise how tarnation important I am to him. Come along, Kate"—Tinker's eyes gleamed with excitement as the name fell from the criminal's lips—"we'll get right along to the steamer. Here, let me lend you a hand."

Tinker watched the criminal and his wife—the lad was now almost positive that they were none other than Ezra Q. Maitland and Broadway Kate—descend a further flight of stone steps, the lower portion of which was lapped by the dark waters of the river, and a moment after they had disappeared from his sight he heard the sound of an oar scraping against the stonework of the quay as it was used to push off the boat.

Tinker waited for fully a minute; then, relying upon the fact that the night was a dark one, he darted down the steps and crouched behind a pile of rusty chains which lay upon the landing-stage.

From his hiding-place he peered after the boat, although he could only just make out its dim shape in the gloom. Further ahead, however, he could see the lights of some vessel lying in mid-stream, and it was obviously towards this that the smaller craft was heading.

Tinker remained still until the swish, swish of the oars died away in the distance, and the shape of the boat was no longer discernible; then he straightened his body, and, approaching the edge of the quay, he stood for a few moments thinking quickly.

What should he do? he asked himself. He was practically certain now that he was upon the track of the great American crook, Maitland, his wife, and their cunning and scoundrelly servant, the Chinaman Wang; but Tinker longed to obtain definite proof of their true identity before returning to report to his master, and he could only do this by following them to the vessel.

The lad looked about him for a boat, but the only one in evidence lacked oars, and was therefore useless. Tinker regarded it ruefully for a while; then he turned and eyed the dark, uninviting waters of the river.

There was only one way to surmount the difficulty with which he was faced. He would have to swim to his goal. It would not be a pleasant task, for the atmosphere was suggestive of snow, and if the waters were half so chilly as they gave one the impression of, the swimmer ran a risk of being chilled to the bone.

Tinker was a lad who never hesitated, however, when the work he loved lay before him. He slipped off his overcoat and boots, and hid them behind a stack of empty packing-cases which were piled up upon the quay, and a moment later he had descended the damp, slimy steps leading to the water.

Tinker shivered as the biting wind that was blowing buffeted him; then, setting his teeth, he slipped almost noiselessly into the river. He went down, down through the icy waters, his whole body seeming to grow numb and cramped with the intense cold; then his descent ceased, and he

shot buoyantly upwards to the surface, where he fought for a second or two for breath, and beat the waters to restore the circulation of his blood.

He was so chilled that he disregarded the possibility of anyone being near at hand, and luck favoured him, for at this particular spot the shore was deserted, nor were there any craft upon the river near enough for those aboard to be alarmed or made curious by the splashing he indulged in.

Tinker's limbs quickly began to glow by reason of the vigorous exercise, and he struck out with a powerful breast-stroke towards the spot in midstream where the lights of the vessel to which he felt sure the boat had been rowed could be seen.

The distance was not a great one, but the swim took Tinker a considerable time to accomplish, for as he neared the vessel he was caught in the grip of a powerful current, and had he not have been an experienced swimmer matters might have fared very badly with him.

He at last struggled to the ship's side. So far as he could judge, she was a large cargo-vessel, and as he swam round beneath the great, frowning hull, his heart leapt with satisfaction, for a boat—a boat that Tinker guessed was that in which Maitland and his wife had embarked—was straining at a stout rope hanging from the rails of the lower deck.

Tinker made a grab at the rope, and gripped it in both hands, drawing himself out of the water; then hand over hand he went up it, until he was able to grasp the rails above. A moment later he had swung himself on to the lower deck, and was lying dripping and shivering in the gloom, panting a little and out of breath by reason of his exertions.

He did not remain inactive for long, however. After straining his ears to ascertain if anyone was near, and hearing no sound above the swish of the waters against the vessel's sides, he crept towards an iron staircase, and, gaining it, he stealthily mounted to the deck above.

Here Tinker had to progress more cautiously, for from the further end of the deck he heard guttural laughter, showing that at least two or more of those aboard were astir. A great attraction for the daring lad was the shaft of light which streamed from one of the hatchways in the centre of the deck, and when he became aware that voices were faintly floating to him from the cabin below, he made up his mind to attempt to overhear what was being said by those below.

Tinker sank at full length upon the grimy, unclean deck, and, wriggling upon his stomach, he slowly moved towards the decklight. The hatchway was half open, and when the lad finally gained it he discovered that he could hear quite plainly the conversation taking place beneath.

Very silently and carefully Tinker raised himself to his knees, taking particular pains to place one of the ventilators between himself and the several dim figures he could see lounging at the far end of the ship, and he looked through the hatchway to the cabin below.

He took in the fact that the man who had called himself Samuel P. Silwater and his slimly built companion were seated in company with two other men around the cabin table, then it was only by biting his lip that Tinker kept back the involuntary cry of surprise that rose

in his throat, for the criminals' two companions were respectively Count Franz von Stoltz, of the German Secret Service, and Ian Adair, manager to the old-established firm of John McFarlane & Co., of Moortown.

For a second or two, Sexton Blake's assistant could scarcely believe that his imagination was not playing him a trick. What was the meaning of it all? Why was Ian Adair meeting this villainous and treacherous German spy? It seemed there was only one answer to these questions. Adair was a traitor to his country; he was in the pay of Germany and plotting to betray Great Britain by deliberately trading with the enemy and supplying her with goods of which she was in dire need if she were to carry on her devastating war against civilisation.

Tinker clenched his fists and his jaw set harshly. He could not forget how near Count von Stoltz had come to dealing his beloved master a death blow when he had escaped from the famous detective's clutches at Poplar. The lad's fingers itched to take a grip upon the German's throat, he was filled with a desire to take the law into his own hands, and wondered why the authorities were lax enough to make the presence of such a man as Von Stoltz in England possible.

The man looked much the same as when he had landed from the New York liner, in the disguise of a Dutchman. True, the colour of his beard and hair had altered, and he was dressed slightly differently, but he was Von Stoltz, right enough—the master-spy of the self-styled War Lord, to whom honour was an unknown word, and no deed too treacherous or underhanded.

"And so, my friend, you are willing to keep your mouth shut?"

It was Von Stoltz who was speaking, and he was addressing Ian Adair. Tinker strained his ears in order that he should not miss a word of the young man's answer, and as he studied Adair's handsome, clear-cut features, the lad asked himself if the young manager could really be the blackguard and scoundrel his presence here would seem to indicate.

"I am willing to keep what I have discovered a secret upon one condition," Ian Adair answered, his head going up sharply, "but I would rather you did not address me as 'your friend,' Herr von Stoltz. 'I'—his voice had grown contemptuous—"want you to ken that I'm no friend of such a man as you."

"When old Mr. John McFarlane sent for me upon the night of his death, he told me everything. He was a broken man, but he was determined. He and I quarrelled violently over this shipment of lorries for Germany. All along old Mr. McFarlane had guessed its destination, but he had kept silent because the old firm—the firm he had seen grow from practically nothing to the mighty concern it represented before this hateful war—was tottering upon the brink of bankruptcy, and he was faced with ruin. He did not care for himself; it was of his ward, Edna Trevour, he was thinking. He must save the business for her sake—save it at any cost, and so he shut his eyes to what was soon an obvious fact to him.

"Then Mr. Jack McFarlane overheard, before he was pitched over the cliff, that without doubt a great German conspiracy was afoot, and that the lorries were really for the use of the Kaiser's armies. He rushed back to his father, and, having told his story,

demanding that the shipment should be cancelled at once, urging his father to sell to the British War Office, even at a loss.

"They quarrelled—father and son—and young Mr. Jack swore that he would leave his father for ever and immediately cross to Holland to obtain definite proof that Messrs. Swaan's were really buying for Germany. Even then his father would not give in. He knew now that he was acting as a traitor to Great Britain by trading with the enemy, but the firm and Edna Trevour, for the time being at least, came before even his honour and patriotism.

"Young Mr. Jack and the old man parted in anger, but very soon afterwards it came home to Mr. McFarlane senior that poverty and ruin were preferable to disloyalty and dishonour. He therefore immediately sent for me and told me everything, instructing me that the goods must not be loaded. He had determined to sell to the British authorities at a much lower figure than that he was to receive from you.

"He realised that by doing this nothing could prevent his being compelled to file his petition in bankruptcy, yet he was resolute and showed no signs of wavering. If I were to carry out what were practically my employer's dying orders, your country, Herr von Stoltz, would not receive the lorries, yet I am willing to keep my own counsel, as I have said, upon one condition."

"And that is?" Ezra Q. Maitland suggested, as he lit one of his strong Indian cigars.

"That the balance of the money due upon the shipment is paid over, in notes, before the lorries are loaded," Ian Adair answered quietly. "Upon no other terms will I consent to allow the goods to fall into the hands of my country's foes. I am acting as a scoundrel and a traitor in not exposing your plot and bringing about your arrest for treason, but there is one person concerned in this affair who is dearer to me than even honour. That person is Miss Trevour, my late employer's ward!"

His voice softened and a tender expression crept into his eyes.

"I love her," he said earnestly—"love her as a man can only love once during his life, and, although I fear that she is not for me, it is for her dear sake that I am allowing my country to be betrayed. I am telling you this because I do not wish even you to think that I am acting callously or for gain!"

"Were you to offer me a thousand pounds—ay, ten thousand, I would not play the traitor were it not for the sake of the woman I love!"

Ezra Q. Maitland took his cigar from his lips and emitted a long stream of smoke, then he laughed softly.

"Say," he chuckled, "you can bet your life we ain't anxious to chuck money away if you don't want it, sonny! We should hate to force it on you. However it's all arranged, I've no doubt. What do you say, Von Stoltz? Can the money be paid over before the stuff's aboard?"

"So," the German responded, nodding his ponderous head. "When will the lorries ready be?"

"Almost at once," Ian Adair answered, "and I want the purchase money paid to me before they are loaded into barges for transport here."

Von Stoltz made a deprecating gesture with one of his podgy hands.

"Ach!" he protested. "You do not appear to trust us greatly, Herr Adair!"

Ian Adair shrugged. "Why should I?" he asked harshly. "By your own showing you are a spy and ready to go to any lengths to further the interests of your country. Who knows? You might be tempted to keep the purchase money in Germany's coffers. My one thought is for Miss Trevour. All her life she has been accustomed to every luxury, and I am sacrificing my honour and self-respect—risking my liberty and good name—that she may never feel the pinch of want. Surely, then, it is not too much to expect you to show good faith and pay!"

Von Stoltz scowled, but he nodded. "All right," he said. "The money shall be paid to you to-morrow and in notes, as you haf stipulated!"

Tinker leant forward as Maitland commenced to speak. The lad understood now why Adair had called upon the criminal at his hotel, and how it was that the manager was here in the company of the German intriguer, Von Stoltz, and his companions.

"Guess we've fixed matters up all O.K.," the master-criminal drawled. "So we'll drink to wet the compact!" "No, thanks," Adair said quickly, drawing himself up, as Maitland produced a bottle of wine. "I would prefer— Good heavens, what does this mean?"

He might well ask. Tinker had rested his weight upon what he had thought in the darkness was the edge of the deck-light. Unfortunately for him, however, a short plank had been lying partly over the actual framework of the hatchway and, when he bore upon it, it suddenly tipped up and went crashing down to strike Von Stoltz a fearful crack upon his close-cropped, bullet head.

The German let out a guttural howl of pain, and, above, Tinker made a desperate effort to save himself as, losing his balance, he pitched half through the aperture. He made a grab at the edge of the hatchway and missed. His fingers clawed wildly at the empty air, then the lad went hurtling downwards, and, like the plank, landed upon Von Stoltz.

Maitland's chair overturned with a crash as the master-criminal leapt excitedly to his feet. He stared at Tinker for the fraction of a second in blank amazement, then he recognised him, and his eyes blazed with mingled fear and passion.

"Tinker!" he gasped hoarsely, and whipped out a revolver.

Crack! The weapon spat viciously and the bullet whistled past the young detective's head, actually singeing his hair, but before Maitland could fire again, Ian Adair struck up the weapon.

"You fool!" he cried sternly. "Not that; it's murder!"

All was chaos and pandemonium. Tinker and the German were struggling in a confused heap upon the floor. Broadway Kate had produced an automatic pistol and had clubbed it. She was stooping over the combatants, waiting to seize her first opportunity of striking the lad senseless.

Thud!

Ezra Q. Maitland's charming, though criminal, wife aimed a heavy blow at the young detective, but, as luck would have it, Tinker happened at that

moment to wrench himself free from Von Stoltz and spring out of harm's way.

The result was ludicrous in the extreme. The unfortunate German spy was in the way of that revolver butt, and he suddenly discovered to his cost that Broadway Kate was no weakling, despite her slim build.

For the second time in as many minutes he received a blow upon the head which would have knocked out a man possessing a skull less thick, and he saw a myriad of hitherto undiscovered stars. He yelled with agony, then indulged in a string of fluent but decidedly bad German, and finished by sitting up and nursing his singing head, groaning dismally the while.

Meanwhile, Broadway Kate had leapt at Tinker with the fury of a tigress. The lad forgot for the moment that his fresh foe was a woman, and raised his clenched fist, but he checked the blow in time and attempted to dodge aside.

Broadway Kate's clubbed weapon descended heavily upon Tinker's shoulder, numbing his right arm for a moment, but he quickly recovered himself and was ready for Ezra Q. Maitland as he tore himself from Ian Adair, who had wound his arms about his body.

Smack! Tinker's fist crashed into the American's face and Maitland went reeling backwards. At that moment he was a very surprised man indeed; the blow had felt to him like the kick from a horse, for Tinker knew how to use his fists. He had been schooled in the noble art of self-defence by his master, who was the winner of more than one light-weight championship.

With an angry curse, Maitland steadied himself, and, mad with rage, he again raised his revolver and fired point-blank at the lad. Tinker ducked in the nick-of-time, and the bullet buried itself in the wall of the cabin, and, fortunately for the lad, Maitland was then prevented from firing again by his wife attempting to strike at Tinker and getting in his line of fire.

"Stop it, you madman!" Ian Adair shouted, clutching at Maitland's wrist. "You will kill him, and—"

"I mean to!" the criminal snarled, his lips drawn back from his teeth, his eyes blazing with fury. "Curse you, let go!"

But Adair hung on until, with a quick twist of Maitland's wrist, he secured the revolver and hurled it out of a porthole. By this time Count von Stoltz had reeled to his feet and taken an active part in the fight. Both he and Maitland made a combined rush at Sexton Blake's assistant, just as the lad stooped quickly and snatched up the plank that had been the cause of his hurtling so unexpectedly into the cabin.

Quick as thought, Tinker raised the heavy missile above his head, then he hurled it lengthwise at the master-criminal and the German with all the strength at his command.

The plank struck both of them a stunning blow in the face and they went down like ninepins, with simultaneous yells of surprise and pain. Tinker risked all then in a desperate bid for liberty. He flung aside Broadway Kate and leapt on to the table, crouched for a second, then made a wild spring for the deck-light.

(Another fine, long instalment of this thrilling story next week. Order your copy now!)

TALES TO TELL

A POOR BARGAIN.

Two Highland soldiers had been left behind after an attack. They lay flat for hours in order to escape the hail of lead. At length dusk came.

"Let's get a move on now, Mac," suggested one of them. "Perhaps we can get back to the trenches."

"I can't replied the other. "Aw'm shot in ma leg."

"Niver mind. Climb on my back, and I'll carry ye."

There was a pause, while the other was contemplating.

"Nae fear," he at last replied. "The Victoria Cross fur you, and another bullet fur me!"

EXACTLY!

A lesson in natural history was being hammered into the heads of the utterly uninterested children who made up the class. The teach mentioned one or two species of birds that had become extinct.

"Do you know the meaning of 'extinct,' Samuel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then tell me the name of an extinct bird."

"Pimple, sir!"

"Pimple! What sort of a bird's that?"

"Pigeon, sir, mine, sir! Our cat caught him this morning!"

MARKING TIME.

"Jimmy," called mother. No answer. "James!"

"Yes, mother!"

"Why are you sitting on that boy's face?"

"I—"

"Didn't I tell you always to count a hundred when you felt your angry passions rising?"

"Yes, ma, and I'm doin' it. I'm just sittin' on his face so as he'll be here when I've finished counting!"

"Health is wealth," quoted the sage. "Not if you happen to be a doctor," corrected the fool.

Howard: "Who was it that said 'Give me the man who sings at his work'?"

Mrs. Howard: "Somebody who never lived next door to one, I should think."

An angry mother had her little son by the hand, and held a menacing cane.

"I'll teach you to tie a kettle to the cat's tail!" said the mother.

"It wasn't our cat," said the boy.

"No; but it was our kettle!" said the mother.

"A burglar got into my house about three o'clock this morning, when I was on my way home from the club," said Jones.

"Did he get anything?" asked Brown.

"I should say he did get something," replied Jones. "The poor chap is in the hospital. My wife thought it was me!"

THE JUSTICE OF FATE!

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



On the ground lay a somewhat rotund German officer, while over him, with a knee in his chest and a huge spanner hovering warningly over his head, knelt a stocky figure in khaki. "Bill Stubbs!" exclaimed Colonel Gazely. (See chapter I.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bill Stubbs's Big Capture.

Brigadier-General Braddington sat in his headquarters' "dug-out," his back to a shoring beam, his knees almost on a level with his chin. Over his knees, like a mud-streaked apron, was spread a large scale-map, upon which his puckered brows had been bent for the past twenty minutes.

Loud in his ears every few seconds boomed the report of big British guns not far away, while all around could be heard the shriek of shrapnel from the German artillery.

Yet the general paid no heed. Use had accustomed him to the fiery rain of death, and he thought not of himself, but only of how to extricate his brigade from a position which had lately become untenable owing to the huge forces which had suddenly been brought up against him.

Huge guns might thunder, and mighty shells play havoc to the right and left of him, without so much as to

quicken his pulse, or cause an extra quiver of his eyelids. It required a much smaller incident to make him suddenly leap to his feet and turn to face someone who had intruded into the dug-out.

"Confound you, what the dickens do you mean by—"

"Beg pardon, sir," came in cockney accents from a well-knit, stocky figure who stood at the salute at the entrance; "but I couldn't see no bell, and as to a servant's entrance, I couldn't—"

"So it's you, Bill Stubbs, is it?" said the general, his stern features relaxing into a smile as he recognised the young motor-lorry driver, whom he knew quite well. "Well, it's not your way to intrude like this unless you've good reason to. What is it this time?"

"Message from Colonel Gazely, sir. One of our airmen have just come in after losin' his machine, with important information about enemy's position, and speshully the shiftin' of their headquarters. But he's too bad to be

brought on here. The doctors are a-pruin' him and a sortin' out his ribs, so the colonel says if yer could kindly step along—"

"Shifting their headquarters!" exclaimed General Braddington quickly, and folding up his map. "I thought something of that sort was taking place from the position of their guns. I'll come along at once."

The injured airman's report was to the effect that the enemy was moving in that direction, with the evident intention of outflanking the British.

"But what's this about shifting their headquarters?" asked General Braddington quickly.

"I don't know whether they intend to do that, sir," replied the airman. "But three or four staff officers, with General von Weidnitz at their head, were engaged a few minutes ago in surveying the river, and seeing if it were fordable. After a little while, they retired to the brickfield which lies just beyond the river, and I distinctly

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

saw them disappear inside the third kiln counting from the bank."

"By jingo!" cried General Braddington. "If we could only lay Von Weidnitz by the heels! What a catch it would be!"

That wish found an echo in every breast. Von Weidnitz—or, "Old Seidlitz Powder," as Tommy Atkins had long ago nicknamed him—was one of the most famous—or infamous—of Prussian generals.

Not content with capturing a town or village of strategic value, he had laid it in ashes, shooting down its non-combatants, pitilessly putting women and innocent little children to the sword, and leaving behind him, wherever he went, a trail of accusing blood.

No wonder, then, that the British troops were filled with an overwhelming desire to make such a fiend captive.

General Braddington had stepped aside to confer with Colonel Gazely and other officers. Presently the news oozed out, as such things do, that a plan had been resolved on to attempt to capture Von Weidnitz and his staff.

"Fifty men wanted!" Colonel Gazely was heard to say. "Fifty men for a perilous mission. I call for volunteers!"

If he had said five thousand, he could have had them—such is the spirit of the British soldier when challenged to a task of danger—in a few minutes.

As it was, every man within hearing stopped eagerly forward, among them Bill Stubbs.

"Infantrymen only," said the colonel, and waved him back.

Bill groaned disgustedly, but brightened a moment after.

"Nemmind," he muttered to himself; "I shall go, all the same. I wouldn't be out o' this picnic for a lorryful o' dimonts."

And go he did. When, under cover of the dusk, the fifty selected men started to move forward, Bill did ditto at a respectful distance to the left. He advanced stealthily, so as not to be seen by Colonel Gazely, or to betray himself or his comrades to the enemy's scouts.

He had heard the instructions given, and he knew that absolute silence and secrecy were the essence of the business. Although the men carried rifles, they had been told that not a single shot was to be fired, save in absolute self-defence. Bill had no rifle, but he had taken care to pocket a large-sized spanner, which had served him as a useful weapon on more than one occasion in the past.

The river lay nearly two miles away to the left, but by taking advantage of every shred of cover, Bill, like the others, reached it in safety.

While they had purposely been led to a point on the bank where the stream was fordable, Bill himself found he would have to swim. Undeterred by this, he slithered into the water noiselessly, and, striking out, reached the other bank as soon as his comrades.

Now all were in the brickfield, within a hundred yards or so of the kiln in which General von Weidnitz was sheltering. And now, the utmost caution being necessary so as not to alarm any sentries that might be about, every man threw himself flat on his stomach, and in that fashion started to wriggle forward.

Bill did his wriggling in a hurry, for he was a good fifty yards further from the kiln which was to be visited than his comrades were, and he had an overwhelming desire to be in at the capture.

But despite his haste this looked to

be impossible. Even while he was still a considerable distance from the kiln, some of the foremost of his companions were actually entering it, led by Colonel Gazely.

Five German staff officers were inside. Only a moment before they had been studying a map by the light of a couple of lanterns. Fierce guttural oaths broke from their throats as Colonel Gazely and his men entered.

"Hands up, you're our prisoners!" cried the colonel.

Almost ere the words were out of his mouth, the lanterns were extinguished, and the air was filled with the sounds of fierce oaths, and a desperate grappling in the darkness.

But with the odds for once in Britain's favour, it was a matter of only a minute or two ere the enemy were secured and quietness reigned.

Colonel Gazely relighted one of the lanterns and surveyed the scene.

"Four prisoners only!" he exclaimed. "I distinctly saw five when I entered. Where is the fifth?"

"Gone!" hissed back one of the captives mockingly. "You have got us, but you have missed the greatest prize. General von Weidnitz has escaped you!"

"Then he was here?" groaned Colonel Gazely disappointedly.

"Yes, he was, but he's escaped you. He's too clever for you British curs."

"I think you had best be civil," said Colonel Gazely quietly; "It will pay you."

The German scowled, but held his tongue.

"Conduct them back to our lines," ordered Colonel Gazely. "It's a good capture, but how much better it would have been if we could have caught Von Weidnitz. Hush, what's that?"

Everybody halted and held his breath. From a distance off, upon their right hand, came the sounds of throaty, gasping sounds, as of somebody engaged in a struggle.

"Come quick!" said the colonel. "There's somebody over there!"

Two "somebodies," as they saw a minute later. On the ground lay a somewhat rotund German officer, while over him, with a knee in his chest and a huge spanner hovering warningly over his head, knelt a stocky figure in khaki.

"Bill Stubbs!" exclaimed Colonel Gazely. "How did you come here? Never mind that now, though. Who's your prisoner?"

"Dunno, sir. But I see him a-hoppin' out o' the kiln next to the one you entered, and a scootin' off as if he wor behind wiv his rent and see his landlord acomin' arter him. All I know is, he nearly done me in wiv the butt-end of his shootin'-iron. Fortinately, I managed to duck and close wiv him. Then I got in me left on his sausage warehouse, and down he flops wiv me atop of him."

Colonel Gazely, bending down, struck a match.

"General von Weidnitz!" he gasped, in amazement.

"Cherrimerufus!" exclaimed Bill Stubbs to one of his comrades a minute later. "I've took many a seidlitz powder before breakfast in me time, but this is the fust time I've took one arter tea in the gloamin'."

When, half an hour or so later, the British lines were reached, the news spread far and wide that the notorious Von Weidnitz had made his escape from one brick kiln to another by means of

an underground tunnel, but had been afterwards captured single-handed by Bill Stubbs.

"You committed a grave offence by accompanying the rallying party when you had not been selected," said General Braddington to Bill a little later on. He spoke sternly, but there was a kindling light in his eye as he added: "Still, in view of the important capture you have made, I shall let you off lightly."

"Thank you, sir," said Bill, saluting.

"General von Weidnitz and the other staff officers are to be sent back to the base on the coast," continued General Braddington. "They will be in charge of an escort under Captain Ringwood. I shall punish you by putting you in charge of the lorry in which they will be conveyed."

"Yes, sir," replied Bill, and saluted again.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Strange Affair.

But if General Braddington thought the great Von Weidnitz would consent to ride in the same conveyance as the other captured officers he had reckoned without that high and mighty personage.

"Quatsch! I will not ride with them," he stormed after he had been fed sumptuously by his British captors. "They are Bavarians—those three. Common swine, promoted from the ranks. Captain Gierstein, here, is a Prussian and a gentleman. He may ride with me; but not the others."

"Very well, sir," General Braddington answered, humouring him, although his lip curled with contempt at such vile snobbery. "It shall be as you wish."

So it happened that presently when the convoy started, Bill Stubbs drove the lorry containing Von Weidnitz and Captain Gierstein, while behind followed another lorry containing the three despised Bavarian officers.

Riding beside the two lorries were a half squadron of dragoons as escort, under Captain Ringwood.

The discovery that he was being driven by the very man who had captured him, incensed General von Weidnitz tremendously. For the first twenty miles of the journey the Prussian officer did nothing else but lean forward and heap curse on curse on Bill Stubbs's head.

Of this Bill took no notice. But when, after consuming a couple of bottles of champagne—with which Von Weidnitz had insisted on being provided, on the plea that he was ill—he hurried one of the empty bottles straight at Bill's head, the latter thought it was time to protest.

He jammed on his brakes and brought his lorry to a halt.

"Look 'ere, sir," he expostulated, screwing himself round in his seat. "Yer've bin cussin' me up hill and down dale ever since we started, and I've put up wiv yer chin-music meek enough. Keep on cussin' if yer like till all's blue, but if yer comes any more Aunt Sally tricks wiv them three bottles, I warn yer to—"

He did not finish his sentence. Before he could do so, Von Weidnitz had risen to his feet in the middle of the lorry, and had hurled himself straight upon Bill. With one huge hand fixed upon his throat, he gripped another

champagne bottle in his other hand, and whirled it menacingly above Bill's head.

Then, indeed, it would have gone hard with the young lorry-driver but for the action of Captain Gierstein. In a second, the latter had sprung forward, to catch Von Weidnitz by the wrist, just as the bottle was descending with murderous intent on Bill's temple.

"What's this?" cried Captain Ringwood, riding up with half a dozen dragoons at that moment, and instantly saw.

In a moment Bill Stubbs was released from the scoundrel's grip.

"Thank you, sir," he said gratefully to Captain Gierstein, at whom Von Weidnitz was now glaring with eyes of bitter hate. "I'm thinkin' yer jest abaht saved my bacon. Yer a Prussian and an enemy, but yer a gentleman, all the same."

"Curses on you for interfering," hissed out Von Weidnitz to Gierstein. "If it had not been for you I should have—"

"General von Weidnitz," said Captain Ringwood sternly, "you have been treated with all the courtesy due to your high rank. You will be so treated as long as you conduct yourself as an honourable foe. But if you should so far forget yourself as to make any further attack on any of your captors, duty will compel me to put you in irons under close guard. As it is, I shall put a trooper to ride alongside the driver for the rest of the journey."

Von Weidnitz said nothing, but, as Bill Stubbs put it, "he looked things as the Censor 'ud never 'ave passed."

"Looks as if he's warblin' that touchin' ditty, 'the hymn o' 'ate, to hisself, don't he, mate?" he whispered to the dragoon who now sat beside him.

Presently along the road came another string of lorries making in the opposite direction.

"It's the post," exclaimed Captain Ringwood. "Pull up. I want to ask them if they have a letter for me."

There was not only a letter but a package for him. The captain's eyes glinted as he scanned the address.

"Bet that's from his financy," murmured Bill to Trooper Perkins. "Twig the set-'em-alight look in his peepers. Reminds me of how I used to look when I was courtin' my Lil, bless 'er 'eart."

The letter was from Captain Ringwood's fiancée. She was a certain Miss Adeline Mannering, the only daughter and heiress to a banker in London of prodigious wealth.

No wonder that the captain's eyes glowed as he read the epistle, for every line of it told of her love for him. Ringwood smiled as he read the post-script:

"I am sending by this same post a box of cigars."

Captain Ringwood opened the package, and looked at the name on the cigar-box.

"Senor Guardazonos," he read. "My favourite brand. What a darling Adeline is to remember."

He prized open the lid with his pen-knife quite easily.

"H'm, rather bigger than the kind I used to buy," he murmured to himself, "but I suppose they make them in various sizes. I won't smoke just now, but—"

In the middle of his sentence he caught sight of Captain Gierstein eyeing the box longingly.

"Ah, captain, will you smoke?" said Ringwood politely, and handed him the box.

Gierstein took a cigar gratefully.

"And General von Weidnitz?" queried Ringwood.

"He is asleep at present."

"Then I won't disturb him," Ringwood said with a smile, and turned away.

But Von Weidnitz didn't need much disturbing. He started awake almost as soon as Ringwood had disappeared. Seeing the cigar in his subordinate's hand, he suddenly leant forward and snatched it away.

"I want that," he said arrogantly.

Gierstein's face flamed up at his superior officer's unblushing insolence, but the iron-bound discipline of Prussia, to which he had submitted for years past, taught him the wisdom of holding his tongue.

Von Weidnitz lit the cigar, and smoked it with sullen satisfaction as the cavalcade once more moved on. For about three minutes he continued to puff at it, cursing Gierstein more than once between the puffs for not having offered him the cigar before.

"It was given me only a few minutes ago by Captain Ringwood, sir," explained Gierstein.

"Curse Captain Ringwood, and curse you. When I get you back to Berlin I'll—"

He said no more. While speaking, he had kept the cigar firmly wedged between his teeth. Suddenly, without any sort of warning at all, there came a violent report, an agonising groan from Von Weidnitz, and a hoarse cry from Gierstein.

Bill Stubbs pulled up on the instant and stared round into the lorry. It was filled full of dense smoke, while an odour of almost overpowering pungency met his nostrils.

The whole cavalcade had stopped. Captain Ringwood and others came riding up.

"What's the matter—what has happened?"

"Don't know yet, sir. The lorry's full o' smoke. Ah, now it's clearin', and— Heaven save us, look, sir!"

Bill had climbed into the back of the lorry, as had Trooper Perkins. In a moment Captain Ringwood had vaulted beside them from the back of his horse.

Awful the sight that met their eyes. All huddled in a heap lay General von Weidnitz, dead, with a fearful wound in his head and shoulders. Near to him lay Gierstein, unconscious, but still alive!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Homeward Bound.

"How could this have happened?" gasped Ringwood. "What caused the explosion? There was no ammunition in the lorry."

"No, sir, I'm certain of that," answered Bill, and others corroborated him.

"This is the most inexplicable thing I have ever known in all my life. There was no ammunition in the lorry, and we had removed their arms from them. How could it have happened? Ah, Captain Gierstein is coming to. Perhaps he can throw some light on the mystery."

Gierstein had opened his eyes. The application of a brandy flask to his lips, and he was able to speak.

"It was the cigar!" he exclaimed, in answer to Ringwood's question.

"The cigar!" cried Ringwood. "In Heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"I saw a sudden flash, then the crack of a detonator, and then—the explosion, and I knew no more."

"Merciful Heaven!" cried Ringwood in an agony. "I don't understand. It can't be as you say. Here are the cigars. They were sent me by—a lady from England. See for yourself."

He took the box from his haversack, opened it again, and handed it to Gierstein for examination.

The Prussian captain took out one of the cigars and eyed it intently.

"They seem all right, and yet—" He stopped doubtfully as he rolled the cigar hard between his finger and thumb.

"Yet what?"

"There is something inside—something harder than pressed tobacco. You have a knife? Open it."

Ringwood took the cigar and cut it carefully open. A gasp escaped him as from the interior of the rolled leaves a thin lead-coloured cylinder lay revealed.

"What is it?" came chokingly from him.

Gierstein, an engineer officer in the Prussian army, examined it closely.

"A most deadly explosive!" he said.

"And concealed in a cigar?"

Gierstein nodded.

"It is a stick of fulminate. And, see, here is a tiny detonator, made out of a percussion cap filled with gunpowder. It had only to be smoked down so far, and then—"

But Captain Ringwood had bowed his head, with his face in his hands.

"My friend," said Gierstein, "be not too distressed. It was an accident, so far as you are concerned. As for Von Weidnitz, he is a loss to the Prussian army, perhaps, but no one who knew him will mourn him. He was one of the cruellest men in all Germany."

"But the cigars," moaned Ringwood. "They were sent to me. She who sent them thought that I should smoke them myself, and—"

"She meant, then, to kill you!" Gierstein exclaimed.

"No—by Heaven, no; I swear that!" cried Ringwood, flushing for a moment through the deadly pallor that had come into his face. "They were sent to me by my fiancée, and by all I hold sacred, I swear she could not do this horrible thing!"

Gierstein shrugged his shoulders.

"I have heard of such a thing being done before—in Germany," he said. "You must investigate the matter."

"Yes," said Ringwood, with a snap of his lips as he carefully placed the box away. "This frightful mystery shall be sifted to the bottom."

When on arrival at the base on the coast some few hours later, the matter of the death of Von Weidnitz was further investigated, no blame of any sort was attached to Captain Ringwood. It was proved on the evidence of Bill Stubbs and one or two others that the box had been handed to the captain on the road by a military postman, and apart from that, there was the evidence of Adeline Mannering's letter.

Still, when an examination of several cigars—the box contained fifty—revealed the fact that all were prepared with fulminate and a detonator to

explode it, it was felt that the matter must be investigated thoroughly.

In this Captain Ringwood quite concurred. While never for one moment allowing himself to entertain the slightest shadow of doubt of the girl he loved, he felt that for her sake as well as his own, the whole mysterious affair must be cleared up.

With the assent of the officer commanding at the base, he determined to proceed to England at once. A boat was sailing from Havre to Southampton that night—a small passenger boat called the Wisteria.

On this boat Captain Ringwood secured a berth, and with him, as one whose evidence regarding the tragic occurrence was likely to be of value, went Bill Stubbs.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Cowardly Act.

Midnight with the steamship Wisteria an hour out from Havre.

Suddenly from the look-out came a cry:

"German submarine on the starboard bow!"

Instantly all was excitement, but not confusion. Other boats, small and large, had been hurled to their doom in the English Channel by torpedoes from the enemy's undersea craft, and not a ship that sailed from coast to coast but what was ready at all times for an attack from such a lawless marauder.

Captain Byng, the skipper of the Wisteria, hurried on deck from below.

"We're in for it, I'm afraid," he muttered gloomily. "See her periscope shining under the moonlight. If there was the smallest chance, I'd try and ram her, but she's cunning enough to keep end on."

"Great Jeremiah, if only we'd a gun!" muttered Bill Stubbs. "A four-pounder would do it."

"Ay, but we haven't, sonny," said the skipper. "The Wisteria's a goner. They'll board us and order us to the boats, and then they'll sink my dear old vessel same as they've sunk many another."

"No," cried Captain Ringwood suddenly. "They're not even going to give us that chance. They're going to send us all to the bottom without mercy. See, there's a torpedo coming straight at us!"

A howl went up from the assembled crew as they saw that what Captain Ringwood said was true. It was a howl not of fear but of heartfelt contempt for the cowardly method of the enemy.

There was no time for action, or even for comment. Even while they stood there, a great explosion came. A torpedo had struck the Wisteria amidships, below the water-line. She gave a great quake like a human thing mortally hurt, and rocked from stem to stern.

The sailors aboard were not navy men but merchant seamen. But they were Britons all, and now, seeing that death had come, they were ready to meet it like men.

They lined up at attention on the deck, and tears of admiration came into Bill Stubbs's eyes as he joined them.

"It's Birkenhead drill, mates," he murmured. "Well, a man might die in a worse way."

"Ay," murmured another man, clutching at his neighbour for support as the vessel gave a great lurch and began to sink. "We're in God's hands, and that should be enough for us!"

"Amen to that, shipmate," said another burly sailor, and struck into song.

And then from every voice aboard there floated across the moonlit sea the opening lines of the hymn:

"Nearer my God to Thee."

But the hymn was never finished, not even the first verse of it. Ere more than three or four lines had been sung, the old vessel had sunk to her decks. Two seconds more, and, with a great gulching sound, she was swallowed in the ocean for ever.

As she sank Bill Stubbs jumped clear, carrying with him a spar. Swimming forward a few yards, he looked around him. Struggling men were everywhere, and the bodies of two already dead floated past him.

Near to him on his left hand, he suddenly heard a little cry. He turned to behold no other than Captain Ringwood, who, after swimming about for a minute or two, had suddenly been seized by cramp.

"All right, sir!" yelled Bill Stubbs. "Hold on for half a mo', and I'll lend yer a hand!"

"No, no, my lad, save yourself. I've got cramp, and I'm done for."

"Not if I know it, sir!" Bill had side-stroked towards him. "Collar hold of the end of this spar. It'll support us both for a bit till a boat picks us up."

They were to be picked up sooner than they expected. The commander of the submarine had spotted their khaki uniforms in the water.

"Soldiers!" he exclaimed. "We'll haul them out, and take them back to Zebrugge as prisoners. They may be carrying dispatches."

The submarine, her deck now showing above the water, glided right alongside Captain Ringwood and Bill Stubbs. In a moment they were hauled aboard.

"Thank you!" Ringwood said gratefully, and then waved his hand across the waters to the rest of the struggling figures. "There are others alive still. You will save them?"

"No. We've no room for them aboard," returned Commander Zoggert brutally. "We've hauled you two out because you are soldiers, and we want to search you. Let the other English dogs die!"

"What! You would let them perish without an attempt to save them? You cowardly villains!"

"What's that?" roared Zoggert; and, doubling his great fist, fetched Captain Ringwood a fierce swipe across the head that felled him to the wet deck.

Hot blood surged up into Bill Stubbs's face at the sight of the cowardly blow. "You bloomin' Hun!" he shrieked. "I'll pay yer for that!"

He made a rush at Commander Zoggert, and administered a right and a left with such speed and force as to knock the fellow clean off his feet.

But that was the end of Bill's resistance. In a second half a dozen German sailors, were on him, punching and kicking him in the ribs until every ounce of breath was knocked out of his body.

Ringwood also was subjected to simi-

lar maltreatment, and the two were carried below in an unconscious condition.

"Search them!" ordered Zoggert; and they were searched.

Nothing in the nature of dispatches were found upon them. The only written document was a letter, all wet now, found in Captain Ringwood's pocket. It was the letter from Adeline.

Zoggert read it without compunction, and grinned as he did so.

"A love letter," he muttered. "The girl mentions that she has sent cigars. I wonder if he has any of them about him? I could do with some cigars."

"Here is the box, sir," answered a sailor, and drew it all dripping wet from the captain's haversack. "But I fear the cigars are all spoilt by the water."

"They will dry all right," said Zoggert. "Place them near the stove."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Sinking of a Submarine.

Side by side in the cramped space below lay Ringwood and Bill Stubbs.

Bill was the first to recover his senses. He opened his eyes and stared round. Three German sailors were standing near by in the dim light of an oil-stove a few feet away.

It was not the sight of them that made Bill suddenly give vent to a shriek of alarm. Nor was it the pain of his bruised and aching limbs.

What filled him with untold horror was the sight of a small box, standing with its lid open, in front of the stove to dry. It was full of cigars, and instantly Bill had recognised it as the box sent to Captain Ringwood.

At the sound of his cry, the sailors whipped round.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded one of them roughly.

"That box," cried Bill. "Take it away from that stove, for 'Eavin's sake!"

"What for?"

"Because it'll be death for the lot of us if you don't. Take it away—take it away."

He rose to his feet, and made as if to snatch the box away himself.

But someone else hurrying into the place intercepted him. It was Zoggert.

"Ach, would you?" he cried, and clutching Bill by the collar swung him fiercely aside. "Trying to get back those cigars, are you? What do you mean by it?"

"He says there's something wrong with them, sir," said a sailor.

"Wrong—wrong? The lying English pig! That's only an excuse to get hold of them again."

"Take them away—take them away!" shrieked Bill. "I tell you, if they get too hot they'll—"

He was cut off in his sentence by the sound of a loud explosion. The cigars had become sufficiently heated to explode the detonators, and all those tiny cubes of fulminate had burst simultaneously.

What happened then Bill had no means of knowing. He and Zoggert and the rest of them were all hurled violently to the other side of the vessel, while water began to pour in through a narrow rent the explosion had torn in the submarine's side.

But somebody rushing down from the conning-tower found ready means to caulk the hole, and in a few minutes



"Not so fast, Mr. Colstone," came in a deep voice from behind; and in a second he was in the grip of two Scotland Yard men, who, with Bill Stubbs, had stepped from behind the screen. "The game is up!"

the submerged vessel, instead of sinking deeper, rose slowly to the surface.

Hardly had it done so, than a heavy shot ploughed up the waters close to her.

Bill Stubbs, recovering from his stunned condition, groped his way to the conning-tower and looked across the sea. There, quite clear in the moonlight, he beheld two torpedo-boat destroyers steaming fast towards them. It was from one of them that the shot had come.

"British destroyers!" cried Bill delightedly. Then, filling his lungs with the salt air, he shouted with all the force of them:

"British ahoy—ahoy! Help—help!"

That shout, carried across the silent sea, reached the ears of the commander of the foremost destroyer, just in time to save a second shot which would have sent the submarine to the bottom never to rise again.

"That's an English voice, I'll swear," he cried, and countermanded the order to fire.

"It's a German submarine, though," said his lieutenant. "And she seems in Queer Street. Result of that explosion we heard, no doubt."

"Yes, if it hadn't been for that we should never have spotted her," said the

commander. "She might even have torpedoed us."

"Help—help!" came in Bill's voice again, and then he shouted no more.

For the rent that had been so hastily caulked suddenly opened again. The water poured into the vessel below, and, ripping her sides open as if they had been of paper, split her clean in half, and Bill Stubbs knew no more as the water engulfed him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

—Taken Aboard a Destroyer.

"Well, sonny, how goes it now?" It was Commander Bethwick, of his Majesty's destroyer Pythan, who asked Bill Stubbs the question an hour or more later. Bill was lying snugly rolled up in blankets aboard the vessel that had rescued him.

"I'm all right, sir," he answered, opening his eyes and staring about him; "but—but where's poor Captain Ringwood?" His voice faltered as he asked the question, for he feared the worst.

Judge, then, of his delight and amazement when a well-known voice answered:

"Here I am, my lad—as sound as a bell!"

"You were saved, then, sir. Oh, thank 'eavins for that!" And he gripped the hand which Captain Ringwood extended to him.

"And thank Heaven you are saved, too," murmured Ringwood fervently.

"Captain Ringwood has told us how you and he came to be aboard the German submarine," said Commander Bethwick. "But he hasn't been able to tell us anything about that explosion we heard. Can you account for it?"

"I can, sir," Bill answered; "it was the cigars."

"Cigars! What do you mean?"

"Ask Captain Ringwood, sir. He can tell you about the box that was sent to him from England."

"Yes, I can tell about that." Ringwood's face clouded over with sudden sadness as he explained to the commander.

"But I don't see what they had to do with the explosion on the submarine," he added.

"Then I can tell you, sir," Bill said. "The Germans found them in your haversack. They was all wet, o' course, and thinkin' they was in for a nice quiet smoke, they shoves 'em in front of the oil-stove to dry. You was unconscious, sir, and so was I for a time, but I come to in time to see the

box steamin' away in front of the stove."

"And didn't you warn Commander Zoggert?"

"That I did, sir, but he said I was a liar. I tried to pull the box away, but I was too late. The detonators went off pop! Then there was a bang that sent everybody flying, and that's all I knew for the time bein'. What became of Commander Zoggert?"

"We picked him and five others up—dead," answered Bethwick. "But in addition to you and Captain Ringwood we saved three of the German sailors alive. But about this box of cigars. That was a queer go. One of the strangest stories I ever heard in my life. How do you account for it?"

"I am on my way to England to sift the thing out," said Ringwood. "At present it's all a dark and horrible mystery."

"Seems little doubt but what the cigars were sent to you in order that you should meet with your death," observed Lieutenant Otway, who had listened to the whole story.

"Yes, I fear so," said Ringwood, in a low tone. "But that was not the doing of the lady who sent them. That I am ready to swear."

"You suspect some plot, then?"

"I do, and it is that plot I have set myself to solve."

"Well, I hope you'll solve it," Commander Bethwick said. "The cigars may have been sent to kill you, but instead of doing that, they undoubtedly saved your life, or, at any rate, your liberty. I'm not sure they didn't save all our lives. But for hearing that explosion, we should never have known the submarine was near us, and she might have torpedoed us before we could have fired a shot."

The Pythan was on Channel sentry duty, and could not leave her cruising ground. But a few hours later a cross-Channel mail-boat was sighted. She was promptly hailed, and Captain Ringwood and Bill Stubbs were transferred aboard her.

A few hours later than that and they were safely landed at Southampton.

No time was wasted at the great port. The mystery of the cigars weighed heavily on Captain Ringwood's mind still, and he was deadly anxious to get at the root of it.

"We'll just get a hasty meal here, my lad," he said to Bill, "and then we'll catch the first train to London."

"Pity all the cigars are gone, sir. It'll be more difficult now to prove—"

Captain Ringwood took a small metal case from his inner pocket.

"I saved two," he murmured grimly. "I'm glad I did. I'm glad, also, that the Germans failed to find them when they searched me. I want one to show to the police at Scotland Yard. The other I want for another reason."

"What's that, sir?" asked Bill.

"Wait and see, my lad," replied Ringwood, and hackneyed as the words were, Bill felt that they had never been spoken with more grim significance than now.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Solving a Mystery.

It was evening when they alighted from the train at Waterloo, and got into a taxi-cab.

"Are you goin' to Scotland Yard, sir?" asked Bill.

"Not yet. I have another call to make. I wish to see Miss Mannerling first. You will come with me, as I may want you."

The house of Mr. Mannerling, the wealthy banker, was in a street off Grosvenor Square. On this particular evening Adeline was at home and alone. Her father had gone out to dine with a Cabinet Minister, and her mother had been dead for many years.

Great was her joy when Captain Ringwood was announced. As he came into the room where she was—Bill Stubbs having been conducted by the footman to another apartment to wait until he might be wanted—she sprang up from her chair and ran towards him with outstretched hands.

"My dear Arthur," she cried, with such love in her beautiful eyes as could not be doubted, "what a happy, happy surprise!"

He folded her to his breast, and held her clasped to his heart for a full minute. He was happy then, happy in meeting once again the girl he loved and who was to be his wife. Yet, as he released her, his face wore such an expression as to make her ask him what was the matter.

"You look so grave, dear Arthur," she said.

"Do I, darling? Well, I feel grave. Something strange has happened. That is why I have returned to England so unexpectedly. I want to ask you something. Where did you buy those cigars you sent me?"

"At Newling's, in Bond Street, where you used always to get them yourself. Why do you ask?"

"Because"—his face had gone graver than ever—"because there was something wrong with them. Did you post them yourself?"

"No; Mr. Colstone posted them for me."

"Mark Colstone, your father's private secretary?" exclaimed Ringwood, with a sudden gathering of his brows.

"Yes; he happened to be here at the time I was sending the cigars off, ten days ago, and he asked if he should leave the package at the post-office for me."

"Ten days ago? But I only got them yesterday!"

"How strange! What could have caused the delay? I wonder if Mr. Colstone forgot to post them?"

"Hardly, I should imagine. A man might forget to post a letter, but hardly a package of that size. I wonder if I could see Mark Colstone to-night?"

"Why, yes. He is to meet my father at ten o'clock at Carlton House Terrace, and return here with him to settle some important business. But why do you wish to see him?"

"That I may tell you later, but not now. In the meantime, darling, it is hard to tear myself apart from you on the evening of my return, but I am compelled to leave you for an hour. I will come back, if I may, long before ten o'clock."

With another tender embrace he left her, and, with Bill Stubbs in company, quitted the house. He had always known that Adeline could have had no hand in the rascally plot to bring about his death, and now he knew it for certain.

More than that, he had a distinct clue to the identity of the fiendish scoundrel who had played him the trick.

"I am going to Scotland Yard, my lad" he said to Bill. "I believe I am

on the track of the villain who sent those murderous cigars, and I want their help."

"You think you've found out who it was, sir? Who was it?"

"The only man I know capable of such a thing. The only enemy I have. It is a man who was my rival. A man who hoped to win Miss Mannerling for his wife, and who, when he found out she preferred me, and had promised to marry me, threatened to have his revenge."

"Wot-ho! Beg parding, sir, for using the expression, but it's about the only one I could think of to meet the case."

"Well, I hope to-night I shall know for certain. At any rate, I am going to put his guilt or innocence to the test in your presence."

"In my presence, sir?"

"Yes, and in the presence of a Scotland Yard officer."

"What are you going to do, sir?" asked Bill, with rapidly growing interest.

"At ten o'clock to-night, or shortly after, you will see."

They alighted at Scotland Yard, and were soon closeted with an important official there. The latter listened to the captain's story intently, and then gave equally eager ear to the plan which Ringwood had evolved.

"Yes, that will do very well," the detective-inspector said. "I will come back to Grosvenor Square with you, and will bring another officer with me."

They went back at once. Miss Mannerling was greatly astonished on learning that two of her visitors were Scotland Yard officers, but Captain Ringwood made the reason clear by telling her the whole story.

"But, Arthur," she exclaimed, in horrified tones, "how could Mark Colstone have done this terrible thing?"

"My theory is that after receiving the package from you he opened it and substituted the explosive cigars for those that had originally been in the box. I noticed on first opening them that they were slightly larger than those I was accustomed to buying."

"But how could he have done it—how could he? When was there time?"

"You forget, darling, that you gave them to him ten days ago, and that they only reached me yesterday."

"Yes, I had forgotten that," she moaned in deep distress; "but could Mark Colstone be capable of so wicked an act? What motive could he possibly have?"

"His love for you," Ringwood whispered in her ear. "He hoped one day that you would be his wife. I never told you, but when he came to hear that you had accepted me, he threatened that one day he would have his revenge."

"How horrible!" Adeline said with a shudder. "And to think what a hypocrite he must be! Why, ever since you have been in France he has been most solicitous about you. That he should have done this frightful thing seems too dreadful to believe."

"It could have been no one else. Only he handled the package, besides yourself. But wait just a few minutes, and I shall put the matter to the test."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Guilty Conscience.

There was not very long to wait. At ten o'clock, almost to the minute, the banker's motor-car drew up outside

the house. From it stepped Mr. Man-
nering and his private secretary, Mark
Colstone.

The banker was surprised and un-
feignedly delighted at seeing Captain
Ringwood. Colstone also expressed his
pleasure, but a close observer might
have noticed a sudden pallor come into
his dark, lank face.

Previous to this, Bill Stubbs and the
two Scotland Yard officers had been
carefully posted behind a big screen in
a corner of the large room.

"My dear Arthur," the old banker
said, as he wrung Ringwood's hand.
"this is indeed a happy surprise! I
have been thinking about you to-night,
and imagining that you were still in
the trenches. Yet here you are, on
my own hearthstone! But I am mon-
opolising your hand, and I am sure Col-
stone there is dying to shake hands
with the returned warrior."

"Yes, indeed I am," cooed the se-
cretary, with a smile that showed all
his long and very white teeth. "How
do you do, Captain Ringwood?"

But the latter ignored the flabby
hand held out to him. Instead, he drew
a cigar-case from his pocket, and in a
voice of wonderfully even courtesy
said:

"Have a smoke, Mr. Colstone. It
is a cigar out of the box which Miss
Manning sent out to me, and which I
believe you were good enough to
post for her."

If guilt ever showed on a man's face,
it showed on Colstone's then.

"I—I would rather not smoke now!"
he stammered.

"Oh, but you must."
"Miss Manning would object," he
urged, the cigar shaking between his
trembling fingers.

"Indeed she will not. I can answer
for her. She wishes you to smoke. So
do I. Come—a light!"

Captain Ringwood struck a match,
and held it towards the cigar which,
almost involuntarily, the miserable man
had raised to his lips. But at sight of
the approaching light he drew back.

"No, no!" he gasped. "I will not
smoke—I will not!"

"You must!" cried Ringwood, in a
voice of thunder, and with his jaw set
like iron. "You must smoke that
cigar, or confess to the infamous plot
by which you hoped to murder me!"

Wonderful and awful the change that
came over the secretary as those words
broke on his ear. He stepped back, his
face all livid, and every fibre of him
trembling.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.
"Your words puzzle me. I do not
understand."

"Then I will try and make it clear
to you. Answer my questions. Did
you post the box of cigars for Miss
Manning?"

"Yes, of course I did," he answered
doggedly.

"Why did you keep them back for
several days before posting them?"

"I forgot them."

"A feeble excuse—an impossible ex-
cuse. Did you change the contents of
the box, or in any way tamper with
them?"

"Why should I?"

"I am not asking you why you
should, but whether you did."

"No."

"You sent precisely the same
cigars as were in the box originally."

"Yes, of course I did."

"Very well, then. Since that is one
of the cigars, why do you refuse to
smoke it?"

Colstone made no answer to that.
For a minute there was silence, during
which Adeline had tearfully whispered
the whole story to her father. The lat-
ter addressed the secretary in a voice
of unwonted sternness.

"Come, sir," he said; "if you are
innocent of this charge, why do you
refuse to smoke the cigar?"

"Surely he will smoke it now?" said
Captain Ringwood, advancing with
another lighted match.

"Curse you, I will not!" shrieked
the secretary, and sprang back, his face
all livid with wild alarm and rage, and
his hand flying to his hip-pocket. "Let
me pass, and allow me to leave this
house!"

"No—not till you have proved
your innocence."

"By Heaven, you shall!" cried Col-
stone, and the next moment was point-
ing a revolver at Ringwood's head.

Adeline gave a shriek; but there was
no need for fear.

"Not so fast, Mr. Colstone," came
in a deep voice from behind; and in a
second he was in the grip of the two
Scotland Yard men, who, with Bill
Stubbs, had stepped from behind the
screen in the nick of time. "The
game is up!"

"You mean that you will arrest
me?"

"I mean that you are arrested. The
charge against you is that of sending
cigars filled with a deadly explosive,
with intent to bring about the death
of Captain Ringwood!"

At the words the handcuffs clicked
upon his wrists. A minute after, he
was led from the room.

Mr. Manning, to say nothing of his
daughter, were painfully distressed. He
had trusted Colstone, and the shock at
finding that he was in reality a des-
perate criminal was considerable.

"Still, as he undoubtedly is a
desperate criminal," he said, "he will
deserve whatever he may get. But, my
dear Arthur, are you quite sure that
the cigars were filled with the deadly
stuff?"

"Ask my young friend here," re-
plied Ringwood, turning to Bill
Stubbs, who, at his special request, had
remained. "He will tell you that they
have killed at least two men already."

"Yes, sir," said Bill, saluting the
banker in his best style. "If it'll be
any consolation to Mr. Mark Colstone
to know it, he done his country at least
one good turn."

: NEXT :
THURSDAY

**'THE HERO OF
TANVILLE !'**

Another grand tale of
Bill Stubbs.

Order your copy of the
DREADNOUGHT
in advance!

"In what way?"
"By blowing Von Weidnitz and Com-
mander Zogger, two of the most 'idjus
bullies in the Prussian army and navy,
to their last long 'ome!"

"Is that really so? Dear me; dear
me! And to think, Arthur, that you
might have been killed by the same
horrible means! But I say, wasn't it
rather a dangerous thing to hand one
of the infernal things to Colstone? He
might have smoked it. Suppose he
had, and had been an innocent man,
after all?"

"I hadn't much doubt about his
guilt," said Ringwood. "As to the
cigar, that wouldn't have hurt him. It
was quite a harmless one, and wouldn't
have hurt him in the least. I've two
of the faked ones here, but the one I
gave him was just an ordinary weed."

"I see what you mean. Any cigar
would have frightened him, under the
circumstances. His guilty conscience
would do the rest."

"Wust of havin' sich a thing as a
guilty conscience, sir," put in Bill
Stubbs. "Want me any more to-night,
sir?"

"No, my lad. But you will call at
my club to-morrow morning. We shall
have business with the police to do."

"Right, sir. Then I'll trot off over
the water. Oh, won't Lil jest be
pleased to see me!"

Colstone was brought before the
magistrate the next morning, and a
three days adjournment was obtained
in order to allow of the police making
further inquiries. In those three days
some startling discoveries were made.
Among these was the fact that Col-
stone numbered among his acquaint-
ances a certain analytical chemist of
Hanoverian descent.

On the latter's rooms being searched,
evidence was found which clearly
proved him to have made the deadly
cigars, and to have handed them to
Colstone for the sum of five hundred
pounds.

With this and other conclusive evi-
dence before him, the magistrate had
no hesitation in committing Mark Col-
stone for trial.

"That means more leave of absence
later on," said Bill Stubbs. "For, of
course, I shall be wanted to give evi-
dence at the Old Bailey?"

"Yes, both you and I will be wanted
undoubtedly, my lad," said Captain
Ringwood. "It's a nuisance, but it
can't be helped. This villain Colstone
must get his deserts."

But Mark Colstone was destined to
get his deserts in another way. Three
days after being committed for trial he
was found hanging in his cell, while by
his side was found a sheet of paper con-
taining a full confession of his crime.

He had loved Adeline Manning,
and the discovery that she had pre-
ferred Ringwood had unbalanced his
mind. As a last desperate venture, he
had endeavoured to get his rival out of
the way by sending him the deadly
box of cigars.

The news of his death was brought
to Bill Stubbs when he was once more
back in the fighting-line.

"Well, he's gone," was his comment,
"and I hope 'Eavin will have mercy
on his soul. But arter this affair I've
more than 'arf a mind to chuck up
smokin'. Yus, I think I will."

He paused a moment in deep
thought, then turned to a comrade
who was approaching.

"Hallo, Joe, 'ow goes it? Got a
fag?"

THE END.

NEXT WEEK'S GRAND HARRY WHARTON STORY IS ENTITLED: "THE GREYFRIARS REVELLERS!"

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.**



The stillness was broken by shouts and the crackle of rifles. A storm of bullets swept past the convict, but he ran on unhurt. (See page 32.)

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

JIM CULVER and VIVVY STEVENS are fellow clerks in the employ of Crarper & Son, paper merchants. The junior partner in the concern is a despicable cur, with no notions of chivalry, and Jim has occasion to thrash him for insulting Vivvy. The sequel to this scene is that both Jim and Vivvy are sacked, and they find they have to face the world together. They make the acquaintance of Montague Beagle, a broken-down actor, and his wife, and with this strange couple they throw in their lot. Meanwhile, Jeremy Crarper conspires with Lavington Crooks, a theatrical agent, to get Jim out of the way, as they have reason to believe that Vivvy is an heiress. Accompanied by the Beagles, they decide to go to London. They are, during the journey, befriended by a Mr. Donnell, proprietor of the Forum Music Hall, who, noting the abilities of Jim and Vivvy, offers them an engagement at that hall, which they accept. Jim's first appearance on the London stage is a great success. Vivvy is "billed" for the same evening, but does not put in an appearance. Jim makes inquiries con-

cerning her, and finds that she has been drugged and kidnapped. He gives up his engagement at the Forum, determined to use all his efforts to find Vivvy. With this object in view, he adopts a disguise, and goes to the offices of Lavington Crooks, whom he suspects of being concerned in the affair.

As Jim enters the place a young man looks up.

"Want to see the boss?" he asks.
(Now Read on.)

Jim Shadows Crarper.

"No, thanks," Jim answered. "I wanted to know if my brother has called here yet. He said that he was going to call on Mr. Crooks about this time, and I promised to meet him outside."

"What's your brother's name?" the young man demanded.

"Chris Jinks. Chris Jinks, comedian, you know."

The other shook his head.

"Don't know him. Not one of our clients. He hasn't been here this morning."

"Oh, I know he's not one of your clients, but he said he was going to call on Mr. Crooks between half-past eleven and twelve. It's an awful nuisance. I wonder if he'll turn up? I wonder what makes men of his profession so unpunctual?"

The young man grinned.

"They all are, aren't they? You ought to hear what the guv'nor says about 'em sometimes! Would you like to take a seat, and wait and see if he turns up?"

"Thanks," Jim answered; "I would."

It was the very invitation that he had been angling for.

He took a chair and settled down in a corner of the office, on the same side as the door of Crooks's private room, so that if Crooks came to the door and looked out he might not see him.

The young man came across and handed him a copy of the "Daily Mail."

"Like to see the paper?" he asked.

"Thanks," said Jim eagerly.

Apart from giving him something to read, it could also be used to screen his face should occasion arise. He felt now

THE RECORD BUMPER NUMBER OF "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1st IS NOW ON SALE!

perfectly safe from observation, but he was impatient at having to sit down and wait.

The minutes dragged by. Two actresses came in and tried to see Crooks, but they were told that he was engaged and would not be able to see anybody before lunch. Then, after about a quarter of an hour had elapsed, no less a person than Jeremy Crarper strolled in.

Jim immediately raised the newspaper a little so that his face could not be seen. Young Crarper, however, took no notice of him.

"Good-morning, sir!" cried the young man at the desk.

"Good-morning, Crooks!" Jeremy Crarper answered amiably. "How are you—eh? Feeling merry and bright—eh, what?"

He rapped his walking-cane against his spats, and struck an elegant attitude.

"Mr. Crooks in there, I s'pose?" he said. "Shall I go in to him?"

"Yes, sir; I know he's expecting you."

"Good!" said Jeremy Crarper, and took a step forward.

At that moment the door of Crooks's room opened, and Crooks himself appeared in the doorway.

"Ah, Jeremy!" he cried. "Come right in! I've been waiting for you. Great news, old son!"

"Aha!" cried Jeremy, and bounded across the room.

The glass door slammed behind him.

Jim went on pretending to read the paper. He could hear voices in the inner office, but not a word that was being said. Still, he gathered from the tone that Crarper and Crooks were in a jubilant mood.

Jim purposely refrained from asking the clerk any questions about Jeremy Crarper. He knew all that the other could tell him, and there was no need to risk incurring suspicion of being a detective. But presently the young man addressed Jim of his own accord.

"Bit of a nut, that bloke who just went in to the boss," he said.

"Is he?"

"I give you my word! He and the boss don't half get up to some games together."

"What's his name?" Jim asked, thinking it better to affect an interest.

"Crarper—Mr Jeremy Crarper. Oh, he is a lad, and so is the boss, on the quiet. They've got some game on now. I can tell by the way they're talking."

Jim saw at once that the clerk did not suspect his employer or Jeremy Crarper of anything criminal. He thought that they were simply two racketty young men who were fond of larks. Accordingly, he changed the conversation.

"Well, my brother doesn't look like coming," he said.

"Time's getting on," the other agreed.

Jim seemed to consider.

"I don't think I shall wait very much longer," he observed. "Very likely he's put off coming until to-morrow. He's one of that sort."

As a matter of fact, he meant to wait until Jeremy Crarper took his departure, and he calculated that that would not be long. He pretended once more to read his paper, and ten minutes elapsed.

At the end of that space of time the door of the inner office opened once more, and Crooks and Crarper came

out. Crooks, however, scarcely crossed the threshold, but stood saying good-bye.

"Yes," he said, evidently continuing some conversation, "one of us is better than two, and you've more time on your hands than I have. You'll let me hear from you soon, old man?"

"Yes, rather; I'll write to-night."

"It oughtn't to take you long," Crooks said. "Well, good-bye, and good luck!"

"Good-bye, old man," Jeremy answered, and, turning, strode across the office.

The door leading to the stairs and Crooks's door closed almost simultaneously.

Jim got up and stretched himself.

"I think I shall follow his example and go, too," he said. "If my brother comes in, tell him that I waited some time for him. Good-morning, and thanks very much."

He walked slowly out of the room, but once he had closed the door he broke into a run, and hastened down the stairs. Outside he saw Jeremy Crarper walking about twelve yards in advance. He kept pace behind him.

Jeremy, unaware that he was being followed, turned into Southampton Street, where a row of taxis were waiting for fares. He approached the first one, and said something in a low tone.

"Paddington Station? Yes, sir," said the driver.

Jim smiled to himself. He went up to the second taxi.

"Paddington Station," he said, "and drive like mad."

The man obeyed, and soon passed the first taxi with Jeremy in it. Jim wanted to reach Paddington before the man he was following, in order that Jeremy should not suspect that he was being followed. He was first there by two or three minutes, and loitering by the booking-office when Jeremy Crarper came along.

Pretending to be intensely interested in a table of fares he heard young Crarper ask for a first-class ticket to Dukestown.

Jim pricked up his ears. This was a long journey. Dukestown was situated in the middle of Saltmoor, near one of the great convict prisons. Jeremy Crarper was going all that distance, and had no luggage with him. Evidently he had sent it along in advance.

Jim walked round to the third-class booking-office and took a ticket for the same destination. He glanced at a mirror to see that his disguise was still effective, and found the train. Jeremy Crarper was already on board, but Jim was not concerned with him for the present. He would find him easily enough at Dukestown.

"I may be jolly well mistaken," he said to himself, "but I've got a pretty good idea that Vivvy isn't a hundred miles from the place where he's going."

He gave vent to a little sigh of relief. He was hot on a trail, and even if it proved to be a false scent, it was better than doing nothing.

Thinking of Jeremy Crarper, he clenched his hands.

"You wait!" he muttered. "You wait!"

A Startling Discovery.

It was a very long and tedious journey, and Jim got tired of his own company long before he had gone halfway. Evening was falling when at last Dukestown was reached.

Only four or five people left the train there, and Jim, walking towards the barrier, had the satisfaction of seeing Jeremy Crarper in front of him.

The station seemed to be some little distance from the small town, for all around there were trees and hedges which presently gave way to the rough moorland. This was rather a nuisance, for Jeremy Crarper might easily notice him if he followed too closely behind, and perhaps penetrate his disguise.

But it so happened that a trap was waiting, and young Crarper got in and was driven away.

Jim watched him drive away without losing his spirits.

"Well, I'll easily find out where he's staying," he thought. "These country people talk a lot, and they know everything about everybody else in the place."

He asked a porter the way into the town, and found it was about a mile and a half distant. Then he set out to tramp.

The road led at first through a narrow strip of wooded land stretching out into the moor, and he noticed, as he walked along, that the ground was littered with broken sticks and twigs.

"There must have been a frightful gale here last night," he thought.

A little further on he came to a spot where a great elm had evidently fallen across the road. Huge logs had been sawn off, and were left on either side of the roadway, and the roots of the fallen tree protruded from the bank, with the great mound of earth which they had wrenched up with them.

A labourer was passing, and Jim pointed to the remains of the tree.

"You've had some wind here," he said.

"Iss, for sure we did," the man answered. "Bowled the owd tree over, proper, it did. Last night she came down with an almighty wallop."

"Last night?"

"Iss! Us was up before light this mornin' clearing she away."

"Must have stopped the traffic?" Jim observed. "But I don't suppose this road's used very much."

"There was a fine big car waitin' while we were clearing t'owd tree away," the man volunteered. "Been ridin' all night, the folk in her had. Come all the way from Lunnon, I shouldn't wonder. Wonderful ways the rich have, motorin' at night when they should ha' been asleep."

Something excited Jim's curiosity.

"Many people in the car?" he asked.

"There was the driver, and Mrs. Epston from The Myrtles, and a young lady. A rare pretty young lady she was, too, and I haven't seen her down in these parts before."

Jim began to feel his heart beating. He dared not question the man too closely, however, lest he should suspect an object behind his questions.

"They must have been tired," he remarked offhandedly.

"Iss, I should think so. The young lady was, anyhow. She wur asleep, and she looked ill."

Jim nodded.

"Mrs. Epston was with her, did you say? I knew a Mrs. Epston once. I wonder if it can be the same."

"She ain't been here long," the man answered. "And she's got a big house called The Myrtles out on the moor just t'other side of Dukestown. Folks say it's haunted, and nobody's lived in it for years before she came."

Jim had heard all he wanted to know for the time being. He prepared to move on, and handed the man sixpence to get some tobacco with. When he was alone he fell to thinking as he trudged.

Suppose the girl who had arrived in the car early that morning were Vivvy! How could she have got there?"

First of all, he thought, she must have been trapped and drugged in the taxicab outside her flat. Then the taxi must have driven off to some quiet spot where a big car was waiting for it. She had been transferred to the big car and taken down to Dukestown.

The old labourer had said that the pretty girl in the car was asleep and looked ill. That might easily mean that she was drugged.

Then, who was Mrs. Epston? Jim did not waste much thought on her. He would find out in due time, he promised himself. Of one thing he was now sure—that Jeremy Crarper had gone to that mysterious house, The Myrtles, where Mrs. Epston lived, and where Vivvy had probably been taken.

He drew a hard breath as he tried to grapple with the problem before him. He had plenty of clues, but not enough to take with him to the police and demand an arrest. For the present he must continue to work on his own.

He reached Dukestown after half an hour's moderate walking, and going to the best hotel he could find, booked a room for the night and had dinner. After dinner he expressed an intention of going for a stroll on the moor.

The head waiter, to whom he was speaking, immediately warned him.

"Mind you don't get lost, sir," he said. "You've heard about the mists we have here, I expect. They come up in a minute and you can't see a yard in front of you. Sometimes they last for days, and you might walk about all that time and never come to anywhere."

"That's cheerful," Jim laughed. "But I sha'n't go far. I thought of strolling out and having a look at the prison."

"That's only about two miles away, sir. You can see it from the west end of the town. By the way, if you ever do get lost in a mist there's one sure way of finding your way out. Walk downhill, and sooner or later you'll come to a stream. Then follow the stream, and sooner or later you'll come to a mill. There are streams all over the moor, and mills on all of them."

Jim thanked the man for his advice, and presently set out. It was quite dark now, so that he could not see the great grim prison in the distance, but the road that led to it was obvious. He took the road that led towards it over the moor, and presently found himself on a wide open plain that rolled away in undulations into the vast distance.

Presently a house grew up out of the darkness, a grey, ugly-looking house enclosed by a high wall. When he reached the high gate-posts he saw The Myrtles inscribed on them in faded gilt lettering, and he halted for a moment, gazing up at the dark, empty-looking windows.

Was Vivvy really in there? he wondered. And he longed to shout out in the hope that she would hear—to let her know that he was close at hand and had come to save her.

"All right, old girl," he said beneath his breath. "I won't be long—I won't be long!"

He walked around the house, and saw

at a glance that it would be no easy place for any prisoner to escape from. The wall enclosed it as if it were a fortress, and there was an array of nails and broken glass on the top.

He tried desperately to think of some way of letting Vivvy know that he was near at hand—that he was not stopping quietly in London to leave her to her fate. But there seemed no way of sending a message. Obviously, he must not get caught himself, or Vivvy's chance of being rescued would vanish altogether.

Suddenly an idea came to him. Crarper had only heard him sing once, and would not be likely to recognise his voice again. But Vivvy would. Suiting the action to the thought, he commenced to sing, and the night air reverberated to the strains of "Off to Philadelphia."

He sang two verses, and then moved away from the wall, gazing up at the house.

The windows were all dim in the darkness, and his eyes grew blurred with watching.

Was it his imagination, or did he really see a white face pressed against the panes of one of the attic windows? If he saw it, it was gone again in an instant, and he was left wondering.

Then, lest he had aroused the house, he walked on, knowing that it would be best to act cautiously at first.

Up and down hill the road ran over the moor towards the prison. The moor was full of mounds and hillocks, deep hollows, high banks. It was just as if a rough sea had been suddenly made solid.

Presently the prison loomed ahead, a great block of stone buildings, uglier and larger than Jim had ever seen before. So this was Saltmoor, where thousands of criminals were undergoing penal servitude. Jim wondered how many innocent men were among them.

Between Jim and the prison-grounds there was an area of peat beds, where the peat was being dug out and piled up in neat rectangles. Jim left the road, and went to look at them, climbing a hillock on the way.

As he approached he heard the unmistakable sound of a man digging, and wondered who could be working so late. At the top of the hillock he paused, and looked down.

Just beyond the bed of peat he saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, digging. Ignorant as he was of the industry, Jim could see that he was not cutting peat. He was waist-deep in the earth, and working vigorously, shooting little nervous glances to right and left all the while.

The loose earth he flung over on to the bed from which the peat had been cut.

Jim watched him, curiously at first, and then with a growing suspicion. The man was up to something queer. He was evidently afraid of being seen, because of the nervous glances he flung around him. For some purpose or other he was digging a deep hole. What did it mean?

Jim crouched and watched him a long time. If it had not been happening so close to the prison he would have gone on and taken no notice, but the closeness of that great, ugly building seemed to make his actions all the more suspicious. From the very start Jim came to the conclusion that he was helping some convict to escape.

All unaware that he was being watched, the man went on with his work for some twenty minutes. Then

he climbed up out of the hole, looked cautiously around, and dusted the soil off his clothes. Then he put the spade under his arm, and walked quickly away still in his shirt-sleeves.

Evidently he had left his coat on the other side of a high mound, for he climbed it, and vanished on the other side.

Jim waited, and listened to the sound of his heart beating violently. He was growing used to adventures, but this one was of an altogether new kind. He began to wonder what he ought to do, if he found out that the man who had been digging proved to be assisting one of the inmates of the prison to get away.

He waited a little while, and then crept down the side of the hillock, keeping his eyes fixed on the spot where the man had been at work with his spade. But as he drew near he found to his intense surprise that no hole in the earth was visible.

He stood still and rubbed his eyes. It was one of the biggest surprises of his life. He had seen the man half buried in the earth, seen him climb up out of a hole, and now, behold, there was no hole!

He began to search around him, but all around the rough peat grasses waved in the wind. He walked backwards and forwards with his head bent, searching, as if he had lost a coin in the street.

Presently, however, he made a discovery, more by luck than desert. He saw in the earth a little crack, which, as he tracked it with his eyes, formed a rough circle. He seized at the grass in the middle of it, and pulled. The earth came away in his hands, and to his surprise he found himself holding a kind of lid. The circular piece of peat was supported underneath by wicker-work, and pierced through and through in parts, like a pepper-pot. It exactly fitted the mouth of the hole, and nobody, not knowing it was there, could ever have found it.

Jim looked down into the hole. It was about four feet deep, and fairly wide, but evidently the digger had not yet finished his task. It had yet to be made deep enough to hold a man and conceal him after the lid had been replaced.

Jim realised what it was for. He had heard that once, some years ago, a convict had escaped in exactly the same way. Some accomplice outside the prison had dug a deep hole and fitted it with a lid, leaving some object on the top to mark the place. The convict had taken advantage of the next fog to make a dash for liberty. He found the hole and hid himself in it, pulling down the lid on top of his head, afterwards living there for a week in the very shadow of the prison, while the warders and police scoured the moor for him for miles around.

Jim knew that the old trick was going to be repeated, and now that he had found out about it came the question of what he should do. Strictly speaking, it was his duty to warn the police or the prison authorities. But then, on the other hand, it was not really his business. And, after all, he thought, suppose Vivvy were in that prison, unjustly convicted of some crime, wouldn't he move heaven and earth to get her out? He could not help feeling some sympathy for the man who dug that hole at great risk to himself. He was, at least, a good pal.

Suddenly a light footstep startled him, and he looked round. A man

was approaching and gazing in his direction—the same man, for, though he was now wearing a coat, he carried the spade under his arm. The lid dropped from Jim's hand.

The man drew near. He was evidently nervous, for his face was white and twitching.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, in a husky undertone. "You spy!"

Jim felt himself flush. "I did not watch you intentionally at first," he said. "I came up over that hillock, and you did not see or hear me."

The other lowered the spade and leaned on it.

"Well," he muttered, "it was only one chance in a hundred, but I took the risk."

"What's that hole for?" Jim demanded.

"You know," the other answered. "Look here, if money—"

Jim interrupted him quickly.

"Thanks," he said drily, "but I'm not that kind of chap."

"You're going to give me away?"

"I don't know; it depends. I suppose I ought to, but—well, I think it's awfully sporting of you to try to get a pal out of a mess."

The other leaned forward.

"You're a good fellow," he whispered, "to look at it like that. I am trying to help a friend. He's been there long enough, and—and he's innocent!"

"They all say they're innocent," Jim said doubtfully.

"But this man was. I swear he was innocent! For Heaven's sake, don't give me away! You'll be hampering justice, not helping it, if you tell anybody what you've seen."

Jim hesitated. The man was convincing enough in his manner, but Jim had met many men who could lie while they gazed at him straight in the face.

"What's the name of the man you're helping?" he asked.

"Stevens—Romford Stevens."

Jim fell back, uttering a little cry. It was Vivvy's father!

A Convict's Escape.

The man stared at Jim, noting his amazement.

"You couldn't have known him," he said. "You must have been a little baby when he was sent to prison."

"I know of him," Jim answered. "I know his daughter."

It was the other's turn to stare.

"You can't!" he exclaimed. "His daughter is dead."

"She was alive yesterday, and if she's not alive now somebody shall pay dearly for it. Her name is Vivien."

The man sat down heavily on a little mound of earth.

"Vivien Stevens!" he muttered. "I knew little Vivvy when she was a mite a few weeks old. Like her father, she was, even then. Poor old Rom, hearing with cut-throats and thieves in there! Are you sure that this is the same Vivvy Stevens?"

"Sure! It'd be too great a coincidence if there were two Romford Stevens, and each had a daughter named Vivvy. Vivvy, by the way, was brought up by an aunt, and she has been told her father was dead. She knew nothing whatever about him. But she always had an idea that he was still alive."

"Where's she now?" the other demanded.

Jim hesitated.

"Look here," he said, "I think you'd better tell me all you know about Romford Stevens, and then perhaps I'll tell you all I know about Vivvy. One thing I'm pretty sure of, and that is that her aunt brought her up to believe that her father was dead so that she shouldn't feel the disgrace of knowing that he was in prison. Her mother's dead."

The stranger nodded.

"Yes, her mother's dead. The shock killed her. Well, I'll tell you the whole story, and then perhaps you won't feel so keen on putting the police on to me for trying to help Romford Stevens to escape."

Jim drew a long breath.

"Innocent or guilty," he said, "there's not a man I'd sooner see free than Vivvy's father, for her own sake. Let's move on, then, shall we? We may be noticed if we hang about here."

The other got up, rested a hand on Jim's arm, and they set off together, walking slowly towards the road.

"Come to my digs," he said, "and

(Continued on next page.)

5 MONTHLY.

I supply the pick of the Coventry Cycles at **Pounds below the Makers Prices,** and arrange easy terms of payment from 5/- monthly.

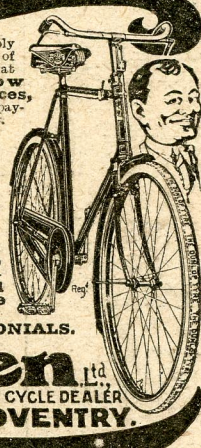
I sell

HIGH-GRADE CYCLES
For £3 10s. Cash.
(Makers' Price £6 Gs.)

I will send you a high-grade cycle, guaranteed for 12 years—on 10 days' free approval, upon payment of small deposit only, and will return money in full if you are not perfectly satisfied. Write to me to day for Free Lists.

THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS.
Edward **O'Brien Ltd.**
THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER
(Dept 2), COVENTRY.


WRITE NOW FOR LISTS



FROM FACTORY TO RIDER.
Save Dealers' Profits. Packed Free. Carriage Paid. Without One Penny deposit. Ten Days' Free Trial.

MEAD Coventry Flyers.
Dunlop Tyres, Brooks' Saddles, Speed-Gears, etc.
£2-15-0 to £6-19-6
Won Cycling's Century Competition Gold Medal. Write for Free Art Catalogue and Special Offer. Motor Cycles & Cycle-cars at Factory Prices.

MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 92C
11 Paradise St., Liverpool.



FREE TO ALL

We give a lovely Watch and Chain (Ladies' or Gent's) or a choice of hundreds of other gifts free to any person selling a few beautiful Postcards for us at 1d. each (including Real Photos of Famous Generals, Admirals, Royalties, Actresses, also Comics, Views, etc., etc.). You can sell them in an hour. Send name and address (postcard will do). Colonial applications invited.—ROYAL CARD CO. (Dept. 14), KEW, LONDON, S.W.



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.

89 CONJURING TRICKS. 57 Joke Tricks, 69 Puzzles, 60 Games, 12 Love-Letters, 429 Jokes, 15 Shadographs, 82 Money-making Secrets (worth £20) and 1,000 more stupendous attractions, 7d. P.O. the lot.—HUGHES, PUBLISHER, HARBOUR, BIRMINGHAM. Famous Sneezing Powder, 6d. Box.

SPORT. Sure Shot Catapult, with Shot, 1/-. Latest Traps, catch birds alive, 1/2, 1/3, 1/6 each. Bird Lime, 4d. tin. Six Latest Wire Puzzles, 6d. All post free.—WICKS BROS., NORWICH.

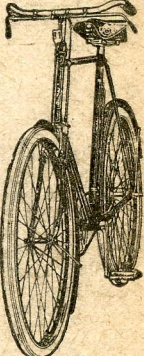
ENTERTAINERS. Amateurs, send 3d. stamp for list of Comic Songs, Duets, Cross-talks, Complete Acts, Ventri-qual Dialogues, etc. Mention paper. JACK M. FINN, 205, Magdalen Street, Colchester.

YOU save pounds by buying direct from our Factory. We supply 1915, Gold Medal, **"QUADRANTS,"** from £3. 9. 6 cash. Easy terms from 5/- monthly. We grant 10 days' free approval, and return money in full if dissatisfied. 10 years' guarantee. Write to-DAY.

WRITE NOW FOR ART LIST



DEPT 8

The QUADRANT CYCLE CO. LD COVENTRY.



ARE YOU NERVOUS?

If you are nervous or sensitive, suffer from involuntary blushing, nervous indigestion, constipation, lack of self-confidence, will power, or mind concentration, I can tell you how to change your whole mental outlook. By my Treatment you can quickly acquire strong nerves and mind concentration which will give you absolute self-confidence. No drugs, appliances, or belts. Send at once 3 penny stamp for particulars of my guaranteed cure in 12 days.—GOREY ELLIOT-SMITH, 472, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London.

BEFORE  **AFTER** 

BLUSHING. Famous Doctor's Recipe for this most distressing complaint. 6d. (P.O.). Never fails. Hundreds Testimonials. Mr. GEORGE, 63, STRODE ROAD, CLEVEDON.

we'll have a chat there. But I'd better begin at once. I've been a pal of Romford Stevens for years, and if I'd known his daughter was living I should have tried to do something for her. Rom married young against the wishes of his father, and his father was one of the most remarkable men that ever lived. He was a miser, and eccentric was not the word for him. He made a lot of money, and then went clean mad. He was afraid to trust in banks, even in the Bank of England, and hid all his money somewhere. Nobody knew where he kept it except Rom, who found out by an accident. Well, Rom married a girl with no money against the wishes of his mean old father. Rom was very poor himself, but they had enough to get along with. After a year Vivvy was born, and then Rom's business failed a few weeks later.

"There was nothing to do but to go to his father and ask help. He went down to his father's country house, but the old man refused to assist them. Mind you, Rom knew all the while where he kept his money, and could have robbed him if he'd been a criminal; but he wasn't that sort. There was a quarrel, and Rom went off very indignant. Stelland, the old man's secretary, overheard the quarrel."

"Stelland!" Jim interrupted. "Good Lord! But I'll tell you about him presently. Go on."

"Well, next morning Rom's father was found dead on the floor of his study. There was a bruise over the heart, where somebody had struck him a heavy blow. The French window was open, so that anybody might easily have come in and killed him. But Stelland gave evidence that he had overheard a quarrel, and that Rom came out of the room looking ghastly white. Well, Rom was arrested."

"He protested his innocence all along, and I believed in him. But he was found guilty. There was, however, some doubt if he had meant actually to strike a fatal blow, and instead of hanging him they sentenced him to penal servitude for life. The shock killed his wife."

"What an awful story!" Jim exclaimed. "Poor Vivvy!"

"Vivvy's aunt believed him guilty, and that explains why she wrote to him in prison to say that Vivvy was dead. When he came out, I suppose she thought it would be terrible for the child if such a father claimed her. I, too, thought the poor little kid was dead. Just think how poor Rom must have felt—imprisoned on a charge of which he was innocent, wife and child, liberty and honour, all gone!"

Jim shuddered.

"I—" he began.

"Wait a moment. You haven't heard all. On the same morning that Rom's father was found dead, there was a tremendous hole found under a tree in the garden. It was generally supposed that the eccentric old man had kept his money there, and that Rom had dug it up. Now, I am quite sure that Rom went home penniless that night. Moreover, he told me, while he was awaiting his trial, that his father had never kept his money in that spot at all. The real murderer must have thought he kept it there, and found out his mistake when he went to look for it. Nobody's found old Stevens's money, from that day to this."

Jim stared.

"Why didn't Romford Stevens say where it was to be found?"

"Well, you see, he was his father's heir and the money really belonged to him. But I think you'll find there's a law that if a man is killed and leaves behind him a will in favour of the man who killed him, that will becomes invalid. I suppose Rom thought that if the law was going to punish him for a thing, he hadn't done, it wasn't up to him to let them know where to find the money that was really his. I expect he wanted Vivvy to have it when she grew up. Afterwards he heard that she was dead, but he still kept quiet about it. I don't blame him. Well, there's thousands of pounds hidden up somewhere that belongs to Miss Vivvy."

Jim whistled shrilly.

"I wonder," he murmured, "if that's why those blighters were so anxious to get hold of her?"

"What blighters?"

"Two men, named Crapper and Crooks. Look here, you've told me your story; now I'll tell you mine."

He then proceeded to tell the whole story of his friendship with Vivvy and their adventures together, just as my readers know it, down to that very evening. The other listened with little ejaculations of amazement.

"Look here, my lad," he exclaimed presently, "my name's Chadd—Arthur Chadd. As Romford Stevens's oldest friend I want to thank you for the way you've looked after his daughter. You're a fine chap. Shake!"

"Oh, that's all right!" Jim growled. But he took the hand held out to him in a cordial grip. "I say," he added nervously, "I hope I haven't been praising myself, or anything. I just told you the whole story as it came into my head."

"You didn't say a word in praise of yourself," Chadd answered, "and that's what I like you for. But I could read between the lines. Look here, young man, you and I have got to be partners in this. Now, listen to me. Those people who've got hold of Vivvy are keeping her because they think she can lay her hands on the treasure. She's safe enough for the present. If they killed her they'd be dished for ever—see? Well, we've got to help her to escape, but first of all we'll help her father. The next fog we shall manage to get him away. Will you help me in this?"

"Rather!"

"Good! Well, then, I'll have that hole finished to-morrow night, and you shall keep cave while I work. That's the right expression—eh? You may wonder why I've let all these years pass without trying to help him out. Well, I'll tell you. It's impossible to help a man to break prison unless you've got a confederate on the inside—a warden or somebody. And if you start offering bribes to warders you get nabbed at once. Well, quite by accident I stumbled across a warden who was willing to whisper in Rom's ear for a hundred pounds. Rom will make a bolt for it during the next fog. The warden has told him where to find the hole. There'll be four or five flints on top of it. All he'll have to do will be to pull the lid down over his head and wait. Nobody'll ever find him. For about a week they'll search all around the moor, and then they'll chuck it up. We'll leave food and clothes for him in the hole. Then, when they've stopped looking for him, we'll get him away."

Jim nodded.

"I've heard of it being done before," he said; "but it's a good idea. The prison people won't know that the

same old trick has been played on them again. Nobody'd ever find that hole with the lid over it, unless they knew exactly where it was."

After dark on the night following, Jim met Chadd, and they went out on the moor together. Jim carried a bundle with him, containing clothes and provisions. While Chadd worked he sat on a hillock and watched.

Presently Chadd whistled up to him, and he went down.

"The hole's finished now," he said. "Look!"

Jim looked down into the black depths.

"Put the clothes and food in there," Chadd whispered.

Jim dropped them down, and Chadd replaced the cunningly contrived lid. He then took a handful of large flints from his pocket, and placed them on the top.

"That's to mark the spot," he explained. "Rom will know it by those flints. He's only got to fling them away before diving in, and nobody'll ever find him. Here's wishing him luck! There may be a mist any day now."

There was one on the very evening following. Mists fall with startling suddenness on Saltmoor. A man may be walking along through a perfectly clear atmosphere one minute, and the next find himself enveloped in mist like a thick, white smoke that goes flying past him. On those occasions convicts are straightway marched back to their cells, guarded by armed warders. Other warders are stationed with rifles at little towers, to shoot at any prisoners who attempt to get away.

The mist came down on Saltmoor with its customary suddenness that evening, and at once the gangs of men in broad arrows were reassembled. One man, however, suddenly ducked his head, and literally dived into the thick mist, zigzagging this way and that, and thus presenting a difficult target to shoot at.

The stillness was broken by shouts and the crackle of rifles. A storm of bullets swept past him, but he ran on unhurt. He ran as he had never run in his life before, outstripping half a dozen of the warders who instantly gave chase.

They kept him in sight until he ran over the peat beds. Then the mist seemed to swallow him.

The warders ran on, shouting, and spreading into a wider line. One of them ran over the very spot where, safe in the hole, Romford Stevens crouched, trembling and gasping.

A great gun roared out, and a bell tolled, telling in its deep and powerful voice to all the adjacent towns and villages that a convict had escaped.

Nervous women trembled—for themselves, lest they should encounter the desperate man; for the poor wretch himself, lest he should be shot in his flight or unduly punished afterwards.

Jim and Chadd heard it as they struggled through the mist together on a far part of the moor.

"He's out!" Chadd exclaimed. "He's out! Jim, lad, I hope all is well."

Jim could only nod. Just for the moment he was bereft of words. There was silence for a minute, filled in by the tolling of the bell.

"Vivvy hears that!" Jim said presently. "She little guesses that it's her father who's escaped!"

(A splendid long instalment of this grand story next week. Order your copy early!)