

THE MOONLIGHT FOOTBALLERS!

A Splendid New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life.



No. 293. Vol. 8. September 20th, 1913.



THE REMOVE-FORM PLAY MIDNIGHT FOOTER!

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.



Show This to Your Sisters, Boys!

FURSETS FOR FOOTBALL FORECASTS



SIMPLE SKILL COMPETITION FOR LADIES.

Help YOUR Sister to win a Ripping Set of Furs for herself!

See To-day's

WEEKLY FRIEND, 1^d.

SPLENDID STORIES FOR SEPTEMBER.

THREE NEW ADDITIONS TO

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

No. 238:

PETE'S PARLIAMENT.

A splendid new, long, complete story, dealing with the further adventures of the three famous comrades, Jack, Sam, and Pete.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

No. 239:

EMPEROR OF THE AIR; OR, WITH THE UNION JACK TO BERLIN.

A grand, long, complete War story.

By JOHN TREGELLIS.

No. 240:

THE BLUE CRUSADERS.

A magnificent, long, complete tale of Football and Adventure.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

Ask your newsagent for "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Complete Library.

6/6 each



The "LORD ROBERTS" TARGET PISTOL.

Beautifully plated and finished. May be carried in the pocket. Trains the eye and cultivates the judgment. Range 100 yards. Targets 9d. per 100. Noiseless Ball Cartridges, 9d. per 100. Shot, 1/6 per 100. Send for list. **CROWN GUN WORKS, 8, Whittall Street, BIRMINGHAM.**



MOUSTACHE!

A Smart Manly Moustache grows very quickly at any age by using "Mousta," the guaranteed Moustache Forcer. Boys become Men Acts like Magic! Box sent in plain cover for 7d. Send now to—

J. A. DIXON & Co., 42, Junction Rd., London, N.

IF YOU WANT Good Cheap Photographic Material or Cameras, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE—Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL.

64 CONJURING TRICKS, 57 Joke Tricks, 60 Puzzles, 60 Games, 12 Love Letters, 430 Jokes, 17 Complete Stories, 50 Money-making Secrets (worth £20), and 1,000 more stupendous attractions. 7d. P.O. lot.—**HUGHES, PUBLISHER, Harborne, BIRMINGHAM.** 25 Screaming Comic Postcards, 7d.

Think of It!!

ONLY **4** MONTHLY WRITE TO-DAY FOR LISTS
for this **GRAND 4** MONTHLY GRAMOPHONE.



I will send a magnificent Gramophone direct to your home on seven days' free approval. Cabinet is solid oak, sumptuously decorated with fluted pilasters and oxydised art metal ornamentation. Handsomely tinted 20-inch Horn yields exquisite tone. Motor extra powerful, silent, and guaranteed for five years. Honestly worth £4 to £6. **MY PRICE** is only 45/- cash or 4/- monthly. All the best makes of Gramophones and Records supplied on Easy Terms. Only a small deposit required. Money returned in full if dissatisfied. Cheaper Gramophones for 12/6 cash or 2/6 monthly. Write at once for Bargain Lists.

CHAS. T. ROBEY, LTD. The World's Provider. (Dept. 3), COVENTRY.



TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

Packed Free. Carriage Paid. No deposit required. **MEAD Coventry Flyers.** Warranted 15 Years. Puncture-Resisting or Dunlop Tyres, Brooks' Saddles, Consters, Speed-Gears, Ac **£2.15s. to £6.19s. 6d.**

Won Cycling's Century Competition Gold Medal. Shop-soiled and Second-hand Cycles, from 15/- Write for Free Art Catalogue, Motor Cycle List, and Special Offer.

MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 44D 11 Paradise St., Liverpool.

FUN for SIXPENCE.

VENTRILOQUIST'S Double Throat; fits roof of mouth; astonishes and mystifies; sing like a canary, whine like a puppy, and imitate birds and beasts. Ventriloquism Treatise free. Sixpence each, four for 1s.—**BENSON (Dept. 6), 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.**

A Real Lever Simulation

GOLD WATCH FREE



A straightforward, generous offer from an established firm. We are giving away watches to thousands of people all over the world as a huge advertisement. Now is your chance to obtain one. **WRITE NOW**, enclosing P.O. 6d. and 2 penny stamps for postage, packing, &c., for one of our fashionable Ladies' Long Guards or Gent's Alberts to wear with the watch, which will be given Free (these watches are guaranteed five years), should you take advantage of our marvellous offer. We expect you to tell your friends about us, and show them the beautiful watch. Don't think this offer too good to be true, but send to-day and gain a Free Watch. You will be amazed. Colonial Orders, 1/-.—**WILLIAMS & LLOYD, Wholesale Jewellers (Desk 16), 89, Cornwallis Road, London, N.**

VENTRILOQUISM made easier. Our new complete enlarged book of easy instructions and ten amusing dialogues enables anyone to learn this Wonderful Laughable Art. Only 7d.; post free. "Thousands Delighted." (Dolls supplied.) 84 Conjuring Tricks, 7d.—**G. Wilkes & Co., Stockton, Rugby, Eng.**

Applications with regard to advertisement space in this paper should be addressed: Advertisement Manager, "PLUCK" SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

A Complete School-
Story Book, attractive
to all readers. . . .

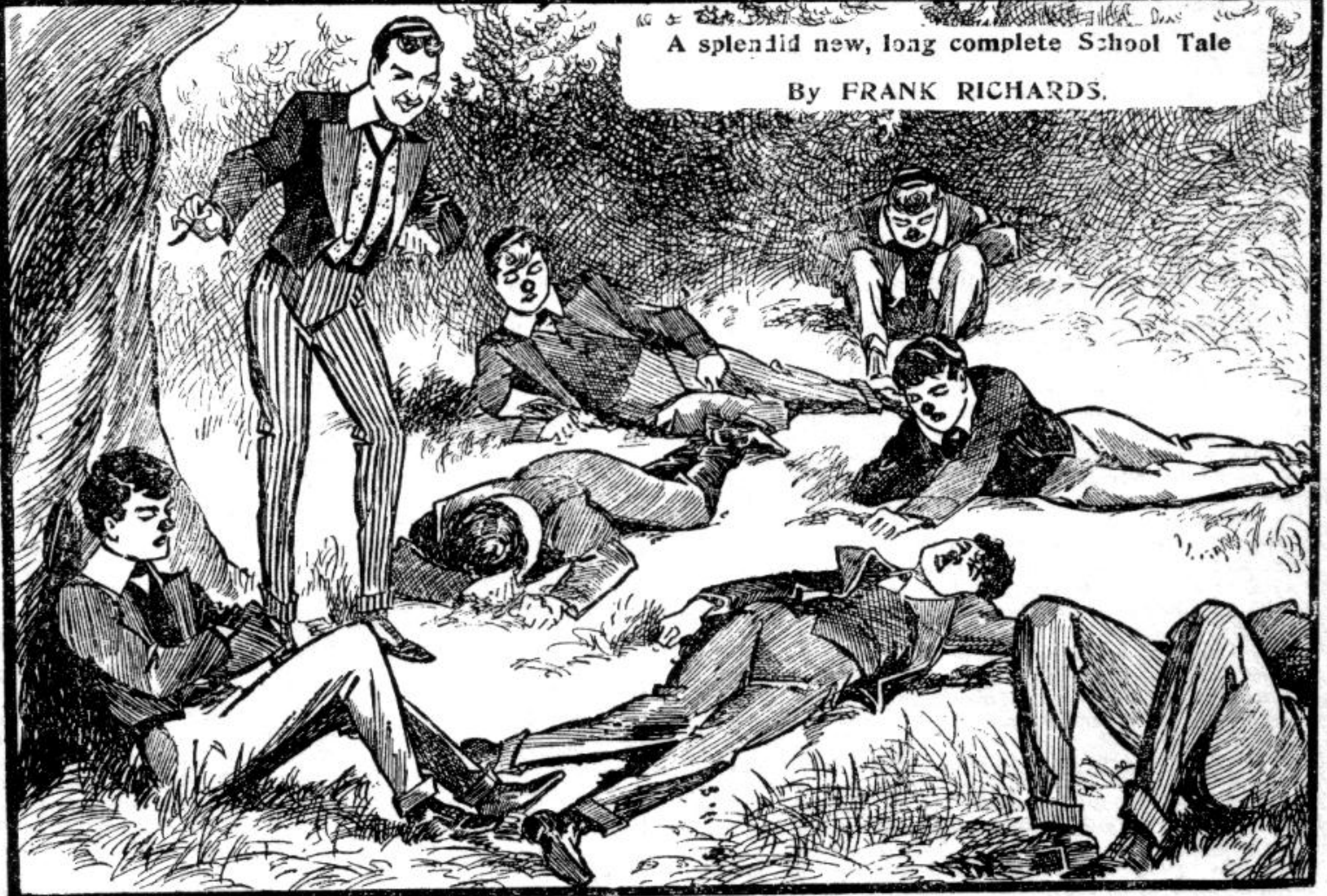
The Magnet¹ Library

The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book, when
finished with, to a
friend.

The Moonlight Footballers

A splendid new, long complete School Tale

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The Bounder bent over each of the sleeping juniors in turn and painted their noses crimson. He chuckled over his handiwork when he had finished, for the aspect of the Removites was extraordinary. (See Chapter 9.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Out Of It!

"PLAY up, Coker!"
"On the ball!"
Bob Cherry, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, snorted. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, growled. Frank Nugent sniffed. Johnny Bull scowled. Even Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the urbane Hindoo junior, looked gloomy and glum.

The Famous Five were standing near the football ground, looking on. The Fifth Form of Greyfriars were at practice. On Big Side the First Eleven were playing their first match of the season with a visiting team from Redclyffe. There were two fags' elevens playing on Little Side. But the Remove were out of it.

The Remove prided themselves upon being the keenest sportsmen in the whole school. Their candid opinion was that what they didn't know about football wasn't worth knowing. They had looked forward to the commencement of the foot-

ball season, hoping and intending to do great things. And now—

On that special afternoon, which was a half-holiday, all Greyfriars seemed to be thinking, talking, playing, and breathing football. All except the Remove. The Remove were out of it!

Wingate and the First Eleven were playing a great game. The Fifth Form were enjoying a practice match. The Shell were playing the Fourth. Even the fags of the Second and Third were playing—what they called football, as Johnny Bull remarked with a sniff. But the Remove were not playing. They were out of it.

They stood and looked on.
Like the Peri at the gate of Paradise, they gazed upon the felicity they might not share.

And they waxed wroth.
"Even that ass Coker is playing!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Blundell of the Fifth wouldn't put him into anything but a practice match. But he thinks he can play footer. Fancy Coker playing, and us—us looking on!"

"Rotten!"
"Beastly!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific," groaned Hurce Jamset Ram Singh, "and the heart of our esteemed form-master is as hard as the netherful millstone."

And Harry Wharton and Co.'s remarks were echoed by the rest of the Remove. Nearly all the Form were looking on. Never had they felt so "done"—so utterly "left," as Fisher T. Fish described it, in the American language.

The fiat had gone forth—the order of the Form-master! The Remove were barred from football—the playing-fields were "out of bounds" for the Lower Fourth.

They had really brought it on themselves. Mr. Quelch, though a somewhat severe master, was not unjust. As Bob Cherry dolorously confessed, he was a beast, but a just beast. The juniors had provoked their Form-master's wrath, and that was the result—the football ground out of bounds for a whole month. It was a severe sentence—more severe, perhaps, than the Remove-master realised. Mr. Quelch had stated that he hoped this would impress upon the Remove the fact that there were other things to be considered beside football—lessons, for example, and keeping order in the house. He trusted that they would not think of playing footer indoors again on rainy days.

During the first two weeks of that black month there had been deluges of rain, and nobody had been able to play. That, of course, was a consolation to the Removites. But the rain had been followed by clear and sunny autumn weather. For some days now the weather had been perfect for footer—clear and cool. And the Removites chafed under the restraint imposed upon them by the Form-master's sentence. There was yet a week to run of their term, and they were reduced to the position of lookers-on, while the rest of the school revelled in the great winter game.

Matches had been scratched perforce. The nearest fixture that the Remove would be able to play was their Form match with the Fifth—on the following Wednesday. And they did not look forward to it cheerfully.

For the Fifth were at constant practice, and the Remove were "out of it." A match with a senior form was a severe test to the Remove, anyway. But if it took place with the Remove right off their form and the Fifth in good fighting trim there could not be the slightest doubt as to the result.

To miss match after match was bad enough. But to begin their play with a crushing defeat at the hands of their old rivals would be worse. As Frank Nugent said sadly, in Shakespearian language: "Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind."

And there seemed no escape from the dilemma.

They had tried an appeal to Mr. Quelch, and it had been of no avail. Their Form-master drily remarked that if they brought punishment upon themselves they must make the best of it.

Harry Wharton, being captain of the Lower Fourth, was expected to find some way out of the difficulty. Peter Todd had already tried and failed disastrously. But Wharton seemed at the end of his tether.

"Play up, Coker!"

The encouraging shouts to Coker seemed to irritate the Removites more than anything else. They regarded Horace Coker as a rank duffer at football and at most other things, and to see him playing while they were barred out was simply awful.

"It's the giddy limit!" said Bob Cherry, in despair.

"Another week of it, too!"

"And then a licking to wind up!" said Nugent.

"Even the Third Form could beat us, if we don't get any practice at all!" groaned Johnny Bull.

"And the Fifth—why, they could beat us, even if they played Coker!" said Bob.

"It's rotten!"

"It's not to be stood!"

"It is terrific, my esteemed chums."

"Look here!" said Wharton. "We've tackled Quelch

once—but one swallow doesn't make a summer. Let's tackle him again."

"He's as hard as nails!"

"No harm in trying!" said Wharton. "Come on—let the whole form march in and interview him—a deputation of all the Remove."

"Might as well try," said Bob, not very hopefully.

And the Remove fellows, with gloomy faces, followed Harry Wharton's lead to the School House. They knew that Mr. Quelch was in his study, engaged upon a literary work which took up most of his spare time. The Lower Fourth marched in in a body, and Wharton tapped at the Form-master's door.

There was no reply. Mr. Quelch, deep in his literary labours, did not hear the tap. Bob Cherry knocked next, with his boot. Mr. Quelch heard that. A sharp voice rapped out, inside the study:

"Come in!"

Wharton opened the door, and the Famous Five led the way in. Behind them the rest of the Remove blocked the doorway and the passage. Mr. Quelch was seated at his writing-table, with a sheaf of manuscript before him, and written sheets scattered over the table, and a pen in his hand. The door being open, the draught from the window made some of the sheets flutter from the table to the floor. Mr. Quelch fixed a surprised and severe eye upon the juniors.

"What does this mean? What do you want?"

Which was not very encouraging, for a start. But Harry Wharton stuck to his guns.

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Quelch interrupted him.

"If you hope to please me by invading my study in this way when I am busy I can only say that you are very peculiar in your ideas of giving pleasure," he snapped.

"What do you want? Come to the point!"

"We want to play footer, sir!" blurted out Bob Cherry. Bob could always be depended upon for coming to the point.

"We're sick of looking on at other fellows playing."

"Is that what you have come for?"

"Yes, sir. You see—"

"Then you may go!"

"But, sir—"

"And shut that door at once."

A gust of wind from the Close had scattered some more sheets from the table. Mr. Quelch looked very cross. Two or three juniors, in the hope of pleasing their Form-master, grabbed at the scattered sheets to rescue them. One of them was still wet, and Bob Cherry's hand smeared across it as he caught it. The Remove-master uttered a loud exclamation.

"Cherry, how clumsy you are! Look at that!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"Leave my study at once! Pick up the rest of those sheets and go!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, frowning.

Perhaps it was unlucky that Mr. Quelch gave that last order. The Removites realised that they had failed in their mission, and they were exasperated. They threw themselves upon the scattered sheets to pick them up a great deal as if their master had ordered them to form a Rugby scrum. In a moment there was a struggle on the floor among those dutiful juniors who were trying to please their Form-master—perhaps. They grabbed at the scattered manuscript, and when two fellows grabbed the same sheet, the inevitable happened—it came in two!

Some were torn and some were crumpled, and some were trodden on. Mr. Quelch started up with gleaming eyes. As he did so Vernon-Smith bumped violently against the table, and it rocked wildly. There was a crash as the inkpot and the rest of the manuscript went to the floor together.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I'm so sorry, sir!"

"Leave my study!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Don't you want us to pick up the rest—"

"Take fifty lines each, all of you, and leave my study at once!" Mr. Quelch roared.

"Oh, sir!"

The Removites streamed out of the study, and did not grin till they were safe in the passage. When the door was closed, they heard muttered exclamations as the Form-master sorted out the manuscript and the ink-bottle. And they smiled.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Last Straw!

COKER of the Fifth came in with Potter and Greene, looking very ruddy and very contented with himself, after the football-practice. Coker had succeeded in kicking a goal. It was true that the goalkeeper had been standing with his back to the field, holding a conversa-

"THE GEM" LIBRARY
FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE
COUPON.

To be enclosed, with coupon taken from page 2, GEM No. 293, with all requests for correspondents. This may only be used by readers in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Canada, India, or other of our Colonies.

See Page 26, "The Gem" Library, Number 293.

M

293

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



Mr. Quelch, looking very annoyed and surprised, came out of his room. Then he gave a sudden hop and a gasp of pain. Oh! Oh, dear!" The Form-master hopped on one leg and leaned against the wall and took the tack out of his boot. Then, treading very carefully, he made his way to the Remove dormitory. (See Chapter 6.)

tion with a fellow outside the ropes. All the same, it was a goal. In a practice-match it did not matter whether Coker kicked goals or not, and nobody minded Coker having that satisfaction. Coker, however, was pluming himself, and he descanted to Potter and Greene eloquently on the subject of footer as they came in.

"Blundell can't leave me out of the team, after this!" he said.

"If he does," said Potter, with great solemnity, "it will be time for the Fifth to look out for a new Form-captain."

"Just what I think," said Greene. "By the way, what are we going to have for tea? I was going to call in at the tuckshop, but I've run out of tin somehow."

"Same here," said Potter. "Quite stony."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Coker. "I've got lots of tin. There won't be any famine in our study so long as my Aunt Judy sends me such ripping remittances. Look here, never mind tea now, though."

"Ahem! I'm feeling a bit peckish," murmured Greene.

"My aunt is coming to see me," said Coker.

"Oh!" said his chums.

"She's a good old girl," said Coker. "Sends me lots of tin. I want to give her some real pleasure while she's here. I want her to see me play for the Form."

"That would be bound to delight her," murmured Potter.

"It wouldn't be quite so delightful for the Fifth, perhaps."

"Eh! I didn't catch what you said."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"I said it would be ripping for you to play in the next Form-match. I don't know what Blundell's thinking of in leaving you out," said Potter blandly.

"That's just it," said Coker. "Now—"

"Shall we drop in at the tuckshop before we go in?" asked Greene.

"Oh, yes, if you like. But I'm thinking about footer. I suppose I can depend on you two fellows to back me up in tackling Blundell about putting me into the next Form-match?"

Potter and Greene exchanged dubious glances. Considering that Coker was about to stand the tea in the study they could hardly refuse. After all, they felt that they could depend on the captain of the Fifth to do the sensible thing.

"I'll talk to him like a Dutch uncle!" said Potter.

"I'll urge him with tears in my eyes," said Greene.

"Here we are at the tuckshop."

The three Fifth Formers entered Mrs. Mible's little shop in the corner of the old Close. There were a good many fellows there—Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove among them. The hapless Removites were drowning their sorrows in ginger-beer. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was absorbing lemonade at the counter.

"Hallo, here's Blundell!" said Coker. "We'll tackle him now."

"Oh!" murmured Potter and Greene, a little dismayed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" sang out Bob Cherry, as he sighted Coker. "Here comes Bloomer the second! You had your shooting-boots on to-day, Coker!"

Coker gave the Removite a gratified nod.

"You saw that goal?" he asked.

"Saw it!" said Bob Cherry enthusiastically. "I never saw a goal like it. It was simply a stunner!"

"The stunfulness was terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Coker."

"Of course, it might have turned out differently if the goalie hadn't had his back turned," Bob Cherry remarked, in a thoughtful way. "You never can tell. But I'd back Coker to kick a goal against anybody, provided he's near enough to the posts and the goalie isn't looking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker frowned. It occurred to him that the cheerful Bob was pulling his leg.

"You cheese it, you cheeky fag," he said darkly. "You're jolly well going to get a tremendous walloping next Wednesday, anyway."

"Just barely possible the Fifth will lick us, as we shall be off our form," said Harry Wharton.

Blundell burst into a laugh.

"Do you kids think you've got a chance?" he said pleasantly.

"Wait and see!" said Bob Cherry oracularly.

"I hear you've been barred from footer till next Wednesday for playing naughty pranks on your Form-master, you bad little boys!" said the captain of the Fifth chidingly.

"Only just heard of it?" asked Harry Wharton. "We'll lick you, all the same."

Blundell chuckled. He had no doubt about the ability of the Fifth to beat the Lower Fourth at any time. In the nature of things a senior Form had an overwhelming advantage over a junior Form. Indeed, Blundell regarded it as rather ridiculous to play the Lower Fourth at all. He had consented because he was afraid of being chipped if he refused the challenge, for all the Remove would have agreed as one man that he was afraid to face them on the footer-field. And some of the Fifth said it would be a good idea to play the cheeky youngsters, and give them such a drubbing that they would not have the cheek to play the Fifth again, or to ask to. Blundell & Co., in fact, had it all mapped out. They were going to take a dozen goals against nil in the first half, and spend the second half chipping their junior opponents. That would be a sufficiently crushing lesson, even for the Remove.

If the Removites had been able to practice they were quite assured that Blundell's schemes, like the best-laid schemes of mice and men, would "gang agley."

It was specially bitter to them to be barred off from football-practice just now, for the result would probably be that Blundell & Co. would carry out their programme. At the best of times the Remove would have had a hard fight for it. But now their chance was so slim that it was not worth counting. Blundell and his men would do exactly as they had planned to do, and for ever afterwards the Fifth would have excellent reason for declining Form-matches with the Lower Fourth. They would be able to say: "Don't be funny, my dear kids! We gave you a chance, and see what silly duffers you made of yourselves. Run away and play marbles!"

"I'm sorry you fags can't get in your practice," Blundell remarked. "Of course, the match would end the same way, anyway."

To which the Removites replied unanimously:

"Rats!"

"Postpone the match a week, and give us a chance to practise, and then see how we'll wipe up the ground with you!" said Harry Wharton.

Blundell shook his head.

"Can't be done! All our dates are full up. As a matter of fact, we only gave you next Wednesday because it happened to be the only vacant date in the term."

"And it was only a joke, playing the Remove, you know," Potter remarked. "Simply to put you in your place, you know, and stop your cheek."

"Exactly!" agreed Blundell.

"I want to speak to you about that match," remarked Coker, while the Removites glared at Blundell. "My aunt is coming to see me next week, Blundy."

"Is she?" said Blundell. "Well, I hope she'll find you well."

"I want her to come on Wednesday—"

"My dear chap, I've no objection to your aunt coming on Wednesday," said Blundell, in a surprised tone. "Well, so-long! Bland's waiting for me!"

"Bland can wait another minute," said Coker. "What

I mean is I want my aunt to see me playing in a Form-match."

"See you playing in a Punch and Judy show!" growled Blundell. "Don't you set up as a giddy humorist, Coker; the part doesn't suit you!"

"Potter and Greene agreed that it's time I was put in the Form eleven."

"Then Potter and Greene are a pair of chumps," said Blundell politely.

"Look here," said Coker, "I'm sick of playing only in practice-matches—jolly keen footballer as I am, too. My opinion is that I could captain the Form team quite as well as it's captained now, if you come to that."

"But we haven't come to that!" said Blundell. "When we come to that, Cokey, old man, the Fifth Form may as well go out of business as footballers."

"Well, unless I play in a Form-match at least once this term, I'm going to resign from the Form footer club," said Coker. "I've been asked to play for a club in Courtfield. There are others who want me, if you don't!"

Blundell sniffed. He could guess what the club in Courtfield wanted. It was not Horace Coker's prowess as a player, but his plentiful flow of cash as Aunt Judy's nephew. And that same plentiful flow of cash was very useful to the Fifth Form Football Club. When it was a matter of a subscription for new nets, or a new match-ball, or new goalposts, it was very useful to be able to drop into Coker's study, with a casual remark: "I know you're standing by the club in this, as you always do, like the brick you are, Coker, old man!"

The Fifth Form F.C. would not miss Coker as a player, but they would miss his subscriptions and his generous donations when required.

"Now, do be reasonable, old chap," said Blundell. "How can I pass over better men to put you in?"

"That's all right," said Coker. "But if there are any better men, trot 'em out and let me see 'em. I've seen nothing of 'em so far."

Blundell gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders. It was quite useless arguing with Coker. Horace Coker knew that he was a splendid footballer, and that was all there was to be said upon the subject.

Potter murmured something in Blundell's ear. The captain of the Fifth started, and then grinned.

"By Jove, you're right!" he murmured.

"What's that?" asked Coker.

"I've been thinking," said Blundell, "Potter thinks you ought to go in next Wednesday. Upon the whole, Coker, I think you're entitled to play in a Form-match the day your grandmother comes."

"My aunt," said Coker.

"I mean your aunt. Coker, old man, you shall play next Wednesday, and we shall expect you to play the game of your life."

"Rely on me," said Coker. "You saw me take that goal to-day, didn't you?"

And Bob Cherry chimed in:

"But our goalie won't be standing with his back to the field, Coker."

A remark which Horace Coker passed over with lofty disdain. Coker threw a sovereign on the counter, and ordered good things for tea, and Blundell walked out grinning. The Removites knew the cause of that grin.

"That villain Potter whispered to him that it would be safe to play Coker on Wednesday, as it's only against us!" growled Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove left the tuckshop.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes; and that's why Blundell had put him in—only against us! My hat!"

"Only!" grinned Nugent. "How are the mighty fallen!"

"The worst of it is that he's right!" groaned Bob Cherry. "If we'd been slogging at practice like the Fifth, he wouldn't dare to play Coker. But, as it is, he's quite safe. They must win."

"Fancy being beaten by Coker," said Johnny Bull.

"Beaten by the Fifth, that's rotten enough—but beaten by Coker! Oh, my only hat! I could go into a corner and cry!"

"The swankfulness of the esteemed Coker will be terrific."

"There won't be any holding him, after this."

"It's insult added to injury!" grunted Bulstrode. "And we've got to take it lying down. Better scratch the match, I should think."

"And have the Fifth chortling for ever and ever that we challenged them, and we're afraid to come up to the scratch!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Better than being licked by Coker."

"That would be the unkindest cut of all," said Nugent dolorously.

The Remove chums looked glum enough. Fortune was

indeed at a low ebb with them. If the Fifth, playing Coker, beat them, they felt that they would never be able to look a soccer ball in the face again, as Bob remarked. And they were so utterly rusty from want of practice that the result seemed inevitable.

"There's only one thing for it," said Harry Wharton desperately at last.

"And what's that?"

"We've got to slog at regular practice all the week!"

There was a howl.

"We know that, fathead! But we can't do it!"

"We've got to!"

"How?" demanded all the Removites together.

"I'm going to think of a dodge."

And when they went in, Harry Wharton shut himself up in No. 1 Study to think it out.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Great Wheeze!

HARRY WHARTON was sitting in the armchair in the study, with his hands in his pockets, his legs stretched out, and a deep and grim wrinkle in his youthful brow, when his chums came in to look for him presently.

Wharton looked up; and there was a gleam in his eyes which was encouraging to his chums.

"I've got it," said Wharton.

"Got what?" asked all the Co. together.

"The idea!"

"How to get in the footer practice?"

"Yes."

"We can't buck up against Quelchy. If we disobeyed him, we should have the Head down on us, and that would dish us," said Johnny Bull.

"Then what are we going to do?" asked Bob.

"Quelchy is a keen old bird, but he closes his eyes sometimes," said Harry Wharton.

"If you're going to wait for Quelchy to close his eyes—"

"Even the Quelch-bird sleeps when it goes to its little nest at night," said Wharton serenely. "It's a downy bird, but it sleeps when it tucks its head under its little wing."

"At night?" said Bob in wonder.

"Yes. We can't expect Quelchy to go to bed in the daytime to please us. But he goes to bed at night."

"So do we!" howled Bob.

"But we can get up again," said Harry Wharton calmly.

The juniors stared at him blankly.

"Get up again?" said Frank.

"Yes."

"And practise footer at night?"

"Why not?"

"Why not?" howled Nugent. "Oh, no reason why not, of course. We can kick goals in the dark quite easily, and—"

"But it won't be dark to-night," said Wharton calmly.

"What?"

"If you noticed the time of year and the state of the weather, my infant, you would know that there is a moon—getting fuller and fuller from now for a week to come. The weather is ripping, and looks like lasting. Last night, when I woke up in the wee small hours, there was moonlight coming into the dormitory window in chunks. The dorm. was almost as light as by day."

"By Jove!"

"The footer field to-night will be specially illuminated for our benefit by the man in the moon," said Harry Wharton. "We can play footer there as easily as we could in the morning or afternoon. And the ground's perfect."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a gasp.

"My only chapeau," said Nugent, "I—I never thought of that! Football by moonlight! Great Sir Walter!"

"The goodness of the esteemed scheme is terrific."

"It will be as easy as falling off a form," said Wharton. "Only we shall have to keep it frightfully dark, that's all. If Quelchy got on to it—"

"Phew-ew!"

"But he won't, if we're careful. The Remove will all have to know, but nobody outside the Form. We'll threaten instant death to anybody who breathes a word."

"It will be a surprise to the Fifth next Wednesday if they find us at the top of our form!" grinned Nugent.

"Yes; and a chance for Coker to show what he can really do in a tough game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of playing football by night was novel and startling. And yet there was nothing to be said against it. In the clear, bright moonlight the footer ground would be light enough—much lighter, as Bob remarked, than it often was on a dull December or January afternoon. The players would have to be careful—very careful—that was all. What Mr. Quelch would say, or the Head, if they were discovered playing football by moonlight, could hardly be guessed. But it was certain to be something very emphatic.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

NEXT
MONDAY;

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Bob Cherry executed a war-dance of triumph round the study-table in his exuberant delight.

"A clear week to practise in!" he chortled. "Why, we shall get into the top of our form by that time—regular Bloomers, the lot of us."

"Yes, rather."

"And Blundell will find that he has made another bloomer in playing Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That'll give us a chance," grinned Wharton. "Blundell is so certain that it will be a walk-over that he feels safe in putting Coker in. It's like giving the other chap a rook in a chess game—it's a weak spot in their line. But we deserve it—as we've been out of practice for so long—and it ought to make things about equal."

"The Fifth are cocksure about it!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Pride goeth before a tumble, and a haughty spirit before a cropper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you seem jolly chippy about something," said Billy Bunter, of the Remove, putting his fat face and spectacles in at the study doorway. "If it's going to be a feed—"

"My fat tulip, rejoice with us!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, catching hold of the Owl of the Remove, and waltzing him into the study.

Billy Bunter gasped. He was fat, and he was lazy, and he was short of breath, and he did not like exercise. He had no energy; but Bob Cherry had enough for two, and it was quite an animated and spirited dance that they executed round the study. They bumped into a chair, and sent it flying; they bumped into Johnny Bull, and he sat down in the fender with a yell.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Yow! Leggo! Grooh! I'm out of breath! Yah! Have you gone off your silly rocker? Gerrooh!"

"Rejoice, rejoice greatly!" sang Bob Cherry, with undiminished glee, as he waltzed Bunter round in the mazy dance. "Trip it lightly. Oh, my fat darling! Hop it! This is where we chortle."

"Yaroooh! Rescue!" panted Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hop it, my blooming pet!" cooed Bob. "Step it out, my beloved barrel! Pile in, oh, fattest of freaks! Hop up!"

"Grooh—hooh! Drag him off!" shrieked Bunter. "Yaroooh! He's dotty! He's dangerous! Oh, crumbs! Lemme go! Yah!"

Crash!

The merry waltzers bumped into the table, and it went flying. Bunter stumbled and fell, and dragged down Bob Cherry. Bob rolled off the fat junior and sat up on the carpet and gasped for breath.

"You ass!" roared Wharton. "Look at the ink on the carpet—look at those books in the ashes—oh, you ass!"

"Ow! I'm killed!" moaned Bunter. "He's knocked all my breath out! He's mad! Yow!"

Bob Cherry grinned and scrambled to his feet.

"Come on, Bunter—another round, my stout beauty—"

But Billy Bunter leaped for the study doorway and fled. And the study having been restored to something like order, and Bob Cherry's exuberance being somewhat expended, the chums of the Remove discussed the details of the great scheme which had been the fortunate outcome of Harry Wharton's big think!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder is Not Pleased!

MUM, as Harry Wharton had said, was the word.

Even the Remove were not enlightened at once.

The members of the eleven were told, one by one, during the evening, and after the first gasp of surprise they rejoiced in the scheme.

Besides the Famous Five, the members of the eleven were Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad; Tom Brown, the New Zealander; Bulstrode, Penfold, Morgan, and Peter Todd. And they were all ready and willing to turn out to midnight practice, with the hope of beating the Fifth Form hollow on the following Wednesday.

"We'll get some practice by ourselves to-night," Harry Wharton said, "for a start. Afterwards, if it works well, we'll take out a scratch team to play against. There are enough fellows in the Remove to make up two elevens."

"We shall be jolly sleepy over lessons to-morrow," Peter Todd remarked.

"We shall have to take an afternoon nap after dinner. We can do that easily enough!"

"Quelchy would smell a rat if we started going up to the dorm. to sleep after dinner," said Bulstrode.

"But we sha'n't do that, fathead. It's ripping fine weather, and we can get a sleep in the meadows, if we want to."

"Good egg! I'm game, anyway!"
 "Besides, we shall only lose half an hour or so's sleep," said Harry. "I shall put my alarm clock on, so we can go to sleep at the usual time. At midnight I call you chaps, and you turn out. At one in the morning we come back to the dorm."

"Easy as winking!" said Tom Brown.
 "We won't be home till morning," trilled Bob Cherry.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "We shall have to get the nets ready, and so on," Bulstrode remarked.

"I've seen to that already—and the goal-posts are a permanency. And I've got a good strong rope to let down from the dorm window, so that we sha'n't have to risk coming out through the house."

"Good egg!"
 "Take your football boots into the dorm during the evening, and leave your footer clobber there ready. That's all you want. I've put the football in the cupboard in the dorm, all ready."

Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of the Remove, came towards the group of juniors, who were talking in a corner of the common-room in subdued voices. The group broke up as the Bouncer approached. A dark look came over Vernon-Smith's face as he noticed it.

"Keeping secrets—ch?" he asked, with a sneer.
 "Well, yes," said Wharton. "It's a secret; but the whole Form will know to-night."
 "Something to do with the footer?"
 "Yes!"

"Have you made up the team for next Wednesday—not that it matters much whom you play, as all the fellows are at the bottom of their form," said the Bouncer, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I've made up the list."
 "My name in it?"
 "No!"
 "You leaving me out?"

"I'm not putting you in, if that's what you mean," said Harry Wharton coolly. "After the rotten way you served us in the cricket, you can't expect to be put into the footer team. You're not reliable!"

"I can play!" said the Bouncer.
 "I know you can when you choose—and when you learn to keep your place. But a fellow who argues with his captain on the playing-field isn't good enough for the team."

"If the captain happens to be a swanking duffer—"
 Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed, but he kept his temper. He had more important matters to think of now than quarrelling with the Bouncer of Greyfriars.

"That's for the Form to decide," he said quietly. "If the Remove are not satisfied with me as skipper, they can sack me at any time. But so long as I am captain, I shall be the only fellow to give orders in the team. You know as well as I do that if you were captain you wouldn't allow it—how can you expect me to? It would be the ruin of the team, and you're aware of it."

"I'm aware that I'm the only chap in the Remove that's had any footer practice to speak of since the footer started. I've been over to Highcliffe pretty frequently, and played on their ground—and hang Quelch!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I'm in good form, and up to playing a good game."
 Harry Wharton nodded.
 "I shouldn't wonder!"

"But you won't put me in?"
 "I can't! You are a good player if you like, but if I put you in, you'd keep the ball to yourself all the time, and risk throwing away the match for the sake of getting glory for yourself. I'm speaking plainly; it's best!"

Do Not Miss Reading

"The Rag-Time Schoolboys!"



Hip Pip Pip! Hip pippip! We Take the Crag, the Latest Rag-Time Band, Oh!

in

"THE GEM" Library.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
 Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
 Every Friday.

"You mean that if I played I should cut you out, and show the fellows that there's a better player in the Form than the high-and-mighty Wharton!" sneered the Bouncer.

"Put it that way if you like. You not going in, and you can think what you like about it."

"The Remove will lose the match, of course!"
 "Better to lose by poor play than by selfishness and want of discipline," said Harry. "When you learn not to want to keep in the limelight all the time, there may be a chance for you—not before!"

And the captain of the Remove walked away, leaving the Bouncer gritting his teeth. But Vernon-Smith hurried after him before he reached the door.

"You've got some plan for getting practice for the Remove?" he asked, stopping Wharton.

"Yes."
 "What is it?"

Wharton hesitated a moment. But he did not want to be disagreeable, and he had already spoken harshly enough. After all, there was no harm in Vernon-Smith knowing the plan a couple of hours sooner. He would know it when the footballers left the dormitory that night. The rest of the Form were not likely to remain asleep while eleven fellows were getting out of the window.

"It's got to be kept dark, of course," said Harry. "You understand that?"

"Oh, of course!"
 "We're going to get out of the dorm, and practise by moonlight!"

Vernon-Smith started.
 "My hat!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming. "What a ripping wheeze!"

Wharton's look became more cordial. He could not help being a little pleased by the Bouncer's evidently sincere admiration for his idea. There was something in it that appealed very strongly to the Bouncer's reckless nature, and he did not hesitate to say so.

"It's ripping!" he said. "Who thought of it?"
 "I did! Glad you like the idea!"
 "Oh, it's first chop. But if you're caught—"

"We shall be very careful. All the fellows will be warned not to say a word outside the Remove."

"Bunter will very likely tattle—"
 "I've thought of that. Bunter won't be told. He's such a sound sleeper that he's not likely to wake up, and we sha'n't tell him anything. If he should get to know, we shall have to keep him quiet, or slaughter him. I say, Smithy, I'm sorry I can't put you in the team—but it wouldn't work. We tried it over the cricket, and it was a ghastly failure. We can't pull together."

"It's not my fault!"
 "Well, I don't say it's all your fault—but it's a fact."

And Wharton nodded and left the common-room.
 The Bouncer was left alone, and his brows wrinkled in deep thought. He was still plunged into a gloom reverie when Skinner came in and tapped him on the shoulder, and he started.

"Penny for 'em!" said Skinner.
 "I was thinking about the footer," said Vernon-Smith, after a glance round to make sure that no one else was within hearing. "It looks as if I'm dished."

"I don't see it," said Skinner. "When the fellows realise that you're the only chap in the Remove fit to play a decent game they will make Wharton put you in. Get some of them to see you play at Highcliffe on Saturday, and they'll scalp Wharton if he thinks of leaving you out. Why, even Wharton the Great and Magnificent wouldn't be a patch on you, considering that he's right off his form."

The Bouncer nodded slowly.
 "That's how I reckoned it out," he said. "Wharton is dead set against putting me into the team, owing to the trouble we had over the cricket. He ordered me off the field once, you know, and nearly threw away a match by wasting my wicket, all because I jawed him a bit."

Skinner grinned.
 "Skippers don't like being jawed on the ground by members of their teams," he remarked.

"But I think he would have had to come round, when the Remove came to know that I was in top-notch form, and the rest nowhere, only—"

"Only what?" asked Skinner.
 "He's got a dodge for getting a full week's practice before the Fifth match—and that knocks me out."

"How on earth—"
 Vernon-Smith explained.
 "Well, that takes the cake!" said Skinner. "If the prefects or the masters got down on them, it would put a jolly quick stop to their giddy practice by moonlight. If a fellow chanced to let a word drop—" He looked significantly at the Bouncer.

"Can't be done; too risky—and—and I don't think I'd care to do it, anyway," said the Bounder; "I should draw the line there."

"Well, it's your bizney," said Skinner. "I'm not playing in the eleven, and don't want to—and I should think twice before I turned out of bed at midnight for practice."

"I wouldn't mind that. Only there's no chance for me—unless they should get bowled out; and stopped!" said the Bounder, very thoughtfully. "But—a chap can't give them away. I'm not a particular fellow, but—but—but I can't do that."

Skinner shrugged his shoulders. He could have done it easily enough, and he did not understand the scruples of the Bounder. It was always a surprise to him that Vernon-Smith was ready to go a certain length in rascality, and then would stop—for no reason that was convincing to Skinner.

"But they may get themselves found out," said Vernon-Smith; "and if that happens—"

He did not finish. But he remained very thoughtful. He wanted very much to play in the Form team in the first match of the season—but, unless Harry Wharton's great scheme was knocked on the head—he knew he had no chance whatever.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Go!

WINGATE of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, saw lights out in the Remove dormitory that night.

There was nothing about the aspect of the Lower Fourth to excite the prefect's suspicions.

They had undressed and gone to bed as usual.

Wingate did not know that eleven pairs of football boots were concealed in the cupboard; but if he had known it, it would hardly have apprised him of what the reckless juniors intended.

He turned out the light, and left the dormitory, without a suspicion in his mind.

Nothing was said of the intended expedition after lights out. As Harry Wharton impressed upon his chums, least said soonest mended. The fellows who woke up when the footballers were going out would have to know. But there was no need to tell it further. It was important to keep it secret from Billy Bunter; and if Snoop could be kept from knowing it, all the better.

One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep.

One by one lights went out in the School House windows as the night grew older.

Midnight chimed out from the clock-tower.

The last chime of the hour was followed by a buzzing sound in the Remove dormitory, close to the head of Wharton's bed. It was the alarm-clock; and it awoke Harry Wharton at once. He sat up in bed, put out his hand to the clock, and stopped the alarm immediately. It had not been sounding for more than a few seconds.

Wharton stepped out of bed. The dormitory was very light. Into the high windows the moonlight was streaming in silver pools on the floor. The night was calm and fine, and there was a gleaming half-moon shining from blue heavens.

Harry Wharton awakened the rest of the eleven quietly. They turned out with hardly a sound. Indeed, the only sound in the dormitory was the deep, unmusical snore of Billy Bunter. There did not seem to be much likelihood of the Owl of the Remove awakening.

"Here we are again!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Tumble into your togs, my pippins. Where's the rope, Harry?"

"Along with the footer boots—wrapped up in a newspaper."

"Good."

Harry Wharton opened the cupboard. The newspaper was still there, but when he groped for the rope, he did not feel it. He groped about the cupboard, with a contracted brow. The rope was not there.

"Any of you fellows moved the rope?" Wharton called out, in a suppressed voice.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

NEXT
MONDAY;

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. Order Early.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"No!"

"Can't you find it?"

"It seems to be gone."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry. "Wait a minute—I'll get a match."

Bob struck a vesta in the cupboard, and by its light they looked for the rope. But it was not to be found. It had vanished. The juniors were sorting out their boots. Wharton wrinkled his brows.

"What on earth has become of the rope?" he muttered. "I put it here right enough before I did my prep. this evening."

"Some rotten prefect has spotted it, and confiscated it," groaned Bob Cherry.

"But I don't see—"

"Loder is always spying after us. If he happened to spot the rope here, he would take it away, of course; he'd know what it was for," said Nugent.



Vernon-Smith ran straight up to the Form-master's room. He was so eager for vengeance on the juniors that he dashed in without even knocking at the door. Mr. Quelch started to his feet, angry and amazed at the sight of the flaming face of the junior. "Who are you? What is it?" he thundered. (See Chapter 11.)

"If he found the rope, he'd find the footer boots too!"

"Might have thought we'd simply stacked them away here. We haven't had much use for footer boots lately."

"That's so! I—I suppose it must have been a prefect. Anyway, the rope's gone," said Harry, biting his lip.

"We can climb down the ivy!" Bob suggested.

Wharton shook his head.

"Too risky. I've done it, I know—but—but I don't like the idea of all you fellows getting down that way. If one of you fell—"

"Well, we've got out of the box-room window before now," Nugent remarked.

"It will have to be the box-room window again. I'll get a new rope to-morrow, and keep it in a safer place. Come on."

Taking the football boots in their hands, the juniors left the dormitory. They moved on tip-toe down the dark passage. As Frank Nugent had said, they had left the schoolhouse by way of the box-room window on other occasions. But it was riskier for eleven fellows to do it than one or two. Mr. Quelch's room was near the end of the Remove passage, and they knew he was a light sleeper. Fortunately, his room was at the end opposite to the box-room.

"Quiet!" murmured Wharton.

"What-ho!"

No sound was heard in the sleeping house as the juniors

stole onward in their socks. They reached the door of the box-room, and Harry Wharton turned the handle. The door did not open.

"Why don't you open the door?" came Bulstrode's whisper from behind.

Wharton set his teeth.

"I can't! It's locked!"

"Locked!"

"Oh, rotten!"

Two or three of the fellows tried the door. It was undoubtedly locked, and the key had been taken away.

"What beastly luck!" growled Nugent. "That shows that it must have been a prefect who spotted the rope. He's locked the box-room and taken the key away as well."

"Well, what's going to be done?"

"We're not going to give in!" said Harry Wharton. "There are other ways of getting out of the blessed house."

"Try the upper box-room!" Tom Brown suggested.

"Too risky to climb down. We can try a window on the ground floor—the hall window."

"We shall have to pass Quelch's room—and a good many others."

"Can't be helped—not a sound! Come on!"

It seemed the only thing to be done. The juniors retraced their steps along the dormitory passage, and passed on to the stairs. They held their breath as they passed the door of Mr. Quelch's bed-room. But suddenly, from one of the party, there was a loud, sharp exclamation.

"Yah! Oh!"

"You silly ass, Morgan!" muttered Wharton, "what are you making a row for now?"

"Ow! Ow! I've trodden on a tack."

"Well, no need to wake the dead if you have—yarrooh!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Bob, you duffer—Ow!"

"Oh! You've got one too, look you," grunted Morgan.

"Now—"

"Cave!" whispered Nugent. "Quelch's awake!"

There was a sound of movement in the Form-master's bed-room. The exclamations of the startled juniors had evidently caught his ears, and had awakened him, if he had been sleeping.

"Cut for it!" muttered Wharton hurriedly.

"Back to the dorm?"

"Yes, yes."

The juniors ran quickly along the passage. Mr. Quelch's door opened, and the Remove master appeared in dressing-gown and slippers, with a light in his hand. But the juniors had vanished. In the Remove dorm. they had hastily thrown the footer boots into the cupboard again, and tumbled into bed.

Mr. Quelch, looking very annoyed and surprised, came out of his room. Then he gave a sudden hop and a gasping cry. One of the tacks had penetrated through the thin sole of his slipper, and it hurt!

"Oh! Oh, dear!"

Mr. Quelch hopped on one leg, and leaned on the wall as he stopped down to examine his slipper. He frowned blackly as he detached the tack from the sole. Then, treading very carefully, he made his way to the Remove dormitory. The suspicion had come into his mind at once that it was a jape, in return for his refusal to the Form to resume their footer.

Mr. Quelch's suspicion was that the juniors had deliberately awakened him, to make him step out of the room upon the tacks placed ready for him. His suspicion was very far from the truth, but it was quite enough to make him visit the Remove dormitory to investigate.

With a frowning brow, he opened the dormitory door.

In the glimmer of moonlight, the white beds could all be seen, each with a quiet and slumbering junior in it. But Mr. Quelch did not trust wholly to appearances. He advanced into the dormitory, and cast the light of his lamp upon those innocent sleepers.

Bob Cherry's closed eyelids twitched in the light of the lamp, and that was enough for Mr. Quelch.

"You may open your eyes, Cherry," he said quietly. "I am perfectly aware that you are not asleep!"

And Bob Cherry's eyes opened wide in dismay, and he blinked at his Form-master.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion!

BOB CHERRY blinked at Mr. Quelch, and Mr. Quelch gazed sternly at the junior. To all appearance, the other Removites were asleep.

"You were pretending to be asleep, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Ahem! Yes, sir," said Bob.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"And why?"

"Chap ought to be asleep at this time of night, sir," said Bob meekly.

"You have been out of the dormitory?"

"Ahem!"

"Have you been out of the dormitory, Cherry? I know that someone here has, and I suspect that it was you, as I find you awake."

"Yes, sir."

"You uttered a sound outside my bed-room door, and caused me to step out, and to step upon a tack!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

Bob Cherry grinned, in spite of himself. He did not know until then that Mr. Quelch had discovered one of the tacks.

"It is not a laughing matter, Cherry!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"No, no! Certainly not, sir," said Bob. "I—I—in fact, sir—"

"You laid that wretched trap for me—your Form-master?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then why did you make a sound outside my door?"

"Because I trod on a tack myself," said Bob ruefully. "I hadn't any boots on, and it hurt, sir."

"Indeed! Then someone else must have placed the tacks there, and they were not intended for me," said Mr. Quelch, his brow clearing a little.

"I suppose they've been dropped there by accident by some clumsy idiot, sir—I—I mean, by some person," stammered Bob.

"Very well! I accept your word, Cherry, and I acquit you of playing a trick upon me," said Mr. Quelch. "But you were out of your dormitory?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were going out of the house?"

"Ahem! Yes."

"And where were you going?"

"I was just going into the Close, sir."

"Indeed! You did not intend to break bounds—to visit the tack-shop in the village, for instance?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"It is very extraordinary that you should want to go into the Close, Cherry. I approve of a love of fresh air, but taking walks outside the School House in the middle of the night is going a little too far. You will take a hundred lines for doing such a ridiculous thing, Cherry; and if you ever do the same again, I shall cane you!"

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly.

He was only too glad that the questioning had not probed deeper, and that his comrades had presence of mind enough to keep silent. If Mr. Quelch had discovered that eleven juniors had been out of the dormitory, he could hardly have failed to suspect something. Eleven was a tell-tale number!

Mr. Quelch left the dormitory, and until his footsteps died away there was no sound in the room. Bob Cherry broke the silence.

"Well out of that, by George!" he said, with a gasp.

"Yes, rather," said Harry Wharton. "You were a brick to take it all on yourself, Bob. I was going to speak up, only it was best to keep Quelch off the grass. If he'd known there were eleven of us—"

"The game would have been up!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I'm jolly glad you had sense enough to keep mum. I was on tenterhooks all the time, lest some silly ass should begin owning up to keep me company!"

"We'll all take a whack at the hundred lines!" grinned Nugent. "So that will be all right. It will only be nine each and one over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly narrow escape!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath.

"What have you fellows been up to?" asked Hazeldene curiously.

All the Remove had been awakened by the visit of the Form-master with the light, of course. Even Billy Bunter was awake.

The Bounder was awake, too; but he lay very quietly, without speaking. For reasons of his own, he was not anxious to draw attention upon himself just then.

"Begad, yaas!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Have you been out of bounds, you out-of-borders?"

"No such luck!" said Harry Wharton. "We didn't get further than Quelch's door. There we trod on tacks, and woke him up."

ANSWERS

"Must have been silly asses to wake him up!" said Skinner.

"Well, we had our boots off, you see, and it's no joke to tread on the business end of a tack in your socks!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I'm feeling lamed, look you!" grunted Morgan. "I wish I could find the silly ass who dropped silly tacks in the passage, and I would slaughter him, look you!"

"We're going to find him," said Harry Wharton, in a tone that struck his chums at once.

"What do you mean?" said Bob. "You don't think anybody put them there on purpose, do you?"

"It looks like it to me."

"Oh, crumbs! But nobody knew we were going out—excepting ourselves. You don't suppose one of the eleven went ahead and dropped down tacks for himself and the rest to tread on?"

"I had told Vernon-Smith early in the evening."

"Oh, Smithy knew?"

"Yes."

"Skinner knew, for that matter," said the Bounder, speaking for the first time. "I had mentioned it to Skinner."

"All the things that have happened didn't happen by chance," said Wharton, in the same ominous tone. "First the rope was gone, and we had to go to the box-room. The box-room door was locked, and we had to pass Quelchy's room. There were tacks spread ready outside Quelchy's room, and some of us trod on them and woke Quelchy up. And now the game is up for to-night!"

"Looks like it," said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't care to venture past Quelchy's door again, tacks or no tacks. He sleeps with one ear open."

"Must have been Loder," said Nugent uneasily. "He took the rope, and locked the box-room, and—and must have put the tacks there to make us give ourselves away. He must have guessed, somehow, that we were going to get out."

"If Loder had guessed that, he would have been waiting for us, to catch us in the act."

"Well, that's so, too. But——"

"It wasn't a prefect. I want to know who did it," said Harry Wharton. "Do you know anything about it, Vernon-Smith?"

"Eh? Did you speak to me?" said the Bounder drowsily.

"Yes, I spoke to you. I asked you if you know anything about what has happened to-night."

"I! No more than you do, of course!" said the Bounder, in surprise. "What should I know about it?"

"Do you know anything about it, Skinner?"

"What the dickens should I know?" said Skinner.

"I believe that one of you knows something," said Harry quietly. "It was a deliberate dodge to keep the eleven from getting out to-night."

"Oh!" said all the eleven together.

"And I want to know who did it," said Harry. "A prefect might have taken the rope, but he would have said something about it if he had. But a prefect wouldn't have scattered tacks in the passage. That's all rot. They were put there by some fellow who wanted us to give ourselves away in passing Quelchy's door."

"But nobody here has been out of the dorm——" began Nugent.

"The tacks could have been dropped there as we came up to bed. We shouldn't notice them while we had our boots on."

"True!"

The Bounder burst into a mocking laugh.

"I suppose that you mean that I did it!" he exclaimed.

"That's what you're driving at, I suppose? If you insinuate that——"

"I don't insinuate it—I say it," said Wharton. "That trick was played by someone who knew the eleven was going out—and it wasn't a member of the eleven. Only you and Skinner knew it, outside the eleven. It was you or Skinner!"

There was a buzz in the dormitory. Harry Wharton's words carried conviction to most who heard them. Skinner gave an indignant yelp.

"Look here, Wharton, draw it mild! What should I want to prevent your rotten eleven going out to practise by moonlight for?"

"Quite so!" said Harry. "But Smithy had a reason, if you hadn't. Smithy has been keeping himself in form by playing at Highcliffe, and if the eleven don't get any practice before next Wednesday, Smithy expects to play against the Fifth, on his form."

"So you suspect me?" yawned the Bounder.

"Yes, I do. What have you to say?"

"Thanks!" said the Bounder calmly.

Wharton set his teeth.

"I suspect you, Smithy," he said. "It seems to me pretty clear. But I admit that there isn't direct proof. But I warn you of one thing. Whatever happens, whether we get practice or not, you don't play in the team in the match with the Fifth. I'd rather play a kid out of the

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Third Form than play you. And we shall keep an eye on you after this. And if there are any more happenings like those of to-night, you will find yourself in trouble. That's all."

"Quite enough, too!" said the Bounder.

Wharton did not speak again. He turned his head on the pillow and settled himself to sleep. The expedition was decidedly "off" for that night. The only result of the attempt had been a hundred lines for Bob Cherry, and the breaking of their night's rest for the eleven. There was a buzz of voices in the dormitory for some time. The secret was out now, and the whole Form knew it and discussed it.

"I suppose nobody else takes any stock in that ridiculous accusation?" the Bounder said, after a pause. "I don't think I need say that there is nothing in it."

"I think there's something in it," said Bob Cherry bluntly.

"You would!" said the Bounder. "Anybody else?"

No one replied. But the silence was enough. The Bounder was under suspicion. The fellows admitted that there was a doubt, and they were willing to give Vernon-Smith the benefit of the doubt; but they suspected him, and if there were any more untoward happenings of the same sort there was likely to be trouble for him. The Bounder realised it, and he gritted his teeth as he relapsed into silence.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Duty!

BILLY BUNTER, the Owl of the Remove, wore a thoughtful expression the next morning. He confided to Bob Cherry that he was feeling the effects of his night's rest being interrupted, and suggested that he could be revived by a liberal dose of ginger-beer and jam-tarts at the tuckshop. To which Bob Cherry cheerily replied that he was welcome to all the ginger-beer and jam-tarts he could pay for, and walked away, leaving the Owl of the Remove frowning.

After morning lessons, the Famous Five strolled out into the Close. Some of the Fifth were punting about a footer on the playing-field before dinner, and Horace Coker was with them. Coker was in great form. He charged Potter over, and fell over Greene, and gave Blundell an accidental hack, so that his fellow-players soon gave him a wide berth and let him do as he liked with the ball. The Removites looked on, grinning. Horace Coker's football was worth watching. As Bob Cherry declared, it was funnier than the funniest thing to be seen in a cinematograph, and cheaper.

Billy Bunter rolled up to the chums of the Remove, that thoughtful expression still upon his fat face. He blinked at them solemnly.

"I want to speak to you, Wharton," he said, in a manner of deep and almost threatening gravity, and the captain of the Remove looked at him curiously.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Tubby?" he asked.

"It's a serious matter," said Bunter, with a shake of the head.

"Expecting a postal-order?" grinned Nugent. "Hasn't it come? Do you want to wire to the Postmaster-General about it?"

"As a matter of fact, I am expecting a postal-order," said Bunter. "There's been some delay in the post, and I'm rather hard-up at the present moment. But I wasn't going to speak about that. However, if you fellows felt inclined to make me a small advance, I would hand the postal-order over to you as soon as it arrives——"

"Go hon!"

"But I came here," said Bunter, with dignity, "to consult Wharton, as captain of the Form. I have a right to consult my Form captain."

"Go ahead!" said Harry. "Has Peter Todd turned you out of the study again?"

"Certainly not! I should refuse to be turned out of my study!"

"Have the fellows been giving you another bath?" asked Johnny Bull sympathetically. "By the way, Bunter, is it true that the time the Remove chaps bathed you, after they'd been scrubbing you for an hour, they found an old waistcoat you thought you had lost?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"Look here, this is a serious matter!" he exclaimed. "If you prefer me to go to Mr. Quelch about it, I'll do it. I wanted to give you fellows a chance, that's all. I'm thinking about my duty."

NEXT
MONDAY,

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

"My hat!"

"I've been reading 'Eric; or, Bit by Bit,'" said Bunter. "I am shocked at the idea of fellows breaking bounds at night. I regard it as wrong. I could excuse fellows getting out of the dorm. for the sake of getting a feed, or anything of that kind; but this getting out of bounds at night to play football, I tell you chaps plainly that I don't approve of it!"

"No?" said Bob. "Well, we shall have to struggle on somehow without your approval, I suppose."

"I cannot approve of such proceedings!" said Bunter loftily. "There's a limit. I regard that as the limit. I do not approve of it. What is troubling me at present is, ought I to allow it to go on?"

The chums of the Remove stared at him.

"Ought you to allow it?" murmured Bob, faintly.

"That's what I said. Ought I to allow these reprehensible proceedings," said Bunter, with a nod, "or ought I to call upon Wharton, as captain of the Form, to put a stop to it?"

"You are looking for a special prize set of thick ears, I suppose?" asked Wharton.

Bunter backed away a little.

"If Wharton does not put a stop to these proceedings, which are against all the rules of the school, it may be my duty to acquaint our Form-master with the matter," he said.

"To sneak, do you mean?" said Wharton, his eyes glittering.

"Duty is above considerations of that sort. If you had read 'Eric; or, Scrap by Scrap'—"

"Never mind 'Eric' now," said Harry Wharton. "You are speaking about sneaking, Bunter. I warn you not to. You will be scalped if you breathe a word."

"My duty—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Of course, I wouldn't be hard, even on bad boys, whose conduct I don't approve of," said Bunter magnanimously. "Treat me well, and I can stretch a point in favour of my friends. I am willing to take your word that you're only going out at night to play footer, though I must say that appearances are against you."

"What!" roared Bob.

"You might be going to play cards at pubs., as Smithy does," said Bunter. "I'm willing to think the best I can of you."

The juniors made a movement towards him. Billy Bunter blinked round, and caught sight of Loder, the prefect, watching the play, and stood his ground.

"Please don't make it necessary for me to appeal to Loder for protection, my dear chaps," said the fat junior. "The whole thing might come out."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the Owl of the Remove speechlessly. If their old enemy, Loder of the Sixth, was put upon the track, certainly the game would be up with a vengeance. And if Bunter "sneaked," any amount of slaughtering afterwards would not undo the mischief. The fat junior held them in the hollow of his fat hand. And he knew it.

"Look here!" said Wharton, between his teeth. "What do you want?"

Bunter smiled.

"Now you're talking!" he said. "What I want is fair play. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, you know. You are leaving me out of the Form eleven, though you know I'm a first-class player—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I'm willing to pass over that," said Bunter. "I don't know that I should care to get up in the middle of the night to practice, but I expect to be treated decently."

"What do you want?"

"Well, I told you I'm expecting a postal-order. One good turn deserves another. If I keep your shady secrets—"

"What!" yelled Bob.

Loder, the prefect, turned his head and glanced towards the juniors. Billy Bunter grinned, and Wharton made Bob a sign.

"One good turn deserves another," said Bunter calmly.

"Do you mean that you want to be paid for not sneaking?" asked Johnny Bull, who had a very direct way of putting things.

Billy Bunter coughed.

"That's a brutal way of putting it," he said. "You were always a rather coarse chap, Bull. I've always noticed that you lacked refinement."

Johnny Bull clenched his hands frantically. He would have given a term's pocket-money just then to be able to hammer the Owl of the Remove right and left. But Loder was looking on, and it was impossible to risk betrayal of the secret.

"If I oblige you fellows, I don't see why you shouldn't

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

oblige me," said Bunter, with dignity. "It's very seldom I ask for a loan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I have a sense of duty—I know it's my duty to tell Mr. Quelch that you are breaking the rules. That's what 'Eric' would have done like a shot. But I don't like doing it. I'm an honourable chap, and as I say, I'm willing to take the best view possible of your conduct. It doesn't come quite up to my standard, but you chaps never were so particular about points of honour as I am."

"Oh!"

"I'm going to think it out very seriously before I take any step in the matter," said Bunter. "I shall try to reconcile my friendship with my duty. Just now I happen to be hard up, owing to a delay in the post. Can one of you fellows lend me a couple of bob until my postal-order comes?"

"Do you know what that is?" said Wharton. "That is what people call blackmail. It's what older rascals than you go to prison for, Bunter."

"Why, you—you—you—" spluttered Bunter indignantly. "All right! I'll jolly soon settle the matter. I say, Loder—"

"Shut up!" muttered Bob Cherry anxiously.

"I decline to shut up! Loder is a prefect, and I've a right to ask his opinion as to whether I ought to speak to Mr. Quelch—"

"Hold your tongue!"

Johnny Bull felt in his pockets, extracted two shillings, and handed them to Billy Bunter.

The fat junior's face cleared at once.

"Well, if you want to be friendly, I'm not the chap to cut up rusty," he said, as the fat fingers closed over the coins. "If you chaps care to come along to the tuckshop, I'll stand you some ginger-beer."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, all serene; all the more for me, then!"

And Billy Bunter rolled off to the tuckshop. The Famous Five exchanged glances of dismay.

"This is a pretty kettle of fish!" growled Bob Cherry. "Might have guessed that something of this sort would happen as soon as Bunter knew. Blessed if I ever heard of such a thundering young scoundrel before."

"The fool!" growled Wharton. "He's too stupid to realise what a rascal he is. But—"

"After next Wednesday," said Johnny Bull meditatively, "I'll take him into a corner, and take a cricket-stump, and—"

"But up to next Wednesday?"

"We shall have to feed the brute!" said Wharton. "He's quite idiot enough to give us away, and risk the slaughtering afterwards. He hasn't sense enough to go in when it rains. We shall have to stand it."

And that was evidently true. Billy Bunter, in the tuckshop, revelled in jam-tarts and ginger-beer, so long as the two shillings lasted. The fat junior was in high feather. Bunter had a very high opinion of himself, and, as Wharton said, he was too obtuse to realise the rascality of his conduct. He was not bothering about the moral aspect of the case now. He was reflecting that he had discovered a horn of plenty—which would have to flow for a week at least. Visions of unlimited feeds at the expense of Harry Wharton & Co. floated before Billy Bunter's mind. And the fat junior enjoyed the prospect.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Football by Moonlight!

MIDNIGHT tolled out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

There was the buzz of an alarm-clock in the Remove dormitory—stopped before it had buzzed half a minute. Wharton jumped out of bed.

It was a fine, clear, moonlight night again.

Outside, in the Close, the ground was bathed in a silver flood of light. There was plenty of light in the dormitory for the eleven to dress. And the rope was not missing this time. Wharton had brought it up to bed with him, wound round his chest under his jacket, and he had hidden it in his bed. It was a new, strong rope, knotted at intervals to make it easier to climb.

Vernon-Smith was awake, and his eyes gleamed as he watched the eleven dressing, and putting on their football boots. If suspicion had not turned upon the Bounder, probably there would have been some new happening to prevent the outgoing of the eleven. But even the Bounder dared not risk the wrath of the Form. They suspected him—and any further untoward happenings would have been taken



The juniors stood as still as mice. Loder did not look once in their direction. He was making for his own study window. The juniors saw him climb in and disappear. "A jolly close shave!" murmured Harry Wharton. (See Chapter 8.)

as proof. And a dormitory ragging would not have been pleasant—especially for a fellow who was trying his hardest to make himself popular in his Form, and to undermine the influence of Harry Wharton. The Bounder knew when he had gone far enough.

Wharton did not glance towards the Bounder. He opened the bottom of the window, and let the rope slide down into the ivy, which hid it from view. The upper end of the rope was attached to the leg of a bed, and the lower end touched the ground in the Close.

Bob Cherry was the first to swing himself out of the window, and descend the rope. The rest of the eleven followed one by one, Harry Wharton remaining till the last. He spoke to Russell before he went.

"The rope's tied to your bed, Russell, old fellow. Could you keep awake till we come in, and see that nothing happens to it?"

"Right-ho!" said Russell cheerily.

"Thanks!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

NEXT
MONDAY:

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

Wharton swung himself from the window, and descended into the Close.

"Safe this time!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Good luck!" said Harry. He glanced along the house—there was not a single light to be seen. All Greyfriars was asleep.

The eleven started for the footer-ground. It was almost as light as day. The moon soared high amid light, fleecy clouds, in a deep blue sky. The night air was keen and fresh, a healthgiving breeze from the sea.

The ground was in perfect condition. In a very short time the juniors had the nets up, and the ball in play.

It was a curious experience, to be playing footer by brilliant moonlight, with the school wrapped in slumber the while.

But the juniors soon warmed to their work, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

They practised energetically, passing and dribbling and shooting, and feeling all their old keenness coming back.

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

But there were no shouts to enliven the play—caution was necessary all the time, and there were only suppressed exclamations.

No one outside the Remove was likely to suspect that the juniors were playing football in the dead of night. But it was necessary to be careful.

The old elms screened the playing-fields from view from the schoolhouse, to some extent; but there were windows that commanded the football-ground. And an injudicious shout might reach the ears that were better left locked in slumber.

"My aunt! This is something like!" exclaimed Bob Cherry joyously. "You ought to have a putty medal for thinking of this, Harry!"

"The something-likefulness is terrific!" grinned the nabob of Bhanipur.

"And the Quelch-bird is fast asleep in its little nest, with its giddy head under its giddy wing!" said Tom Brown, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's safe as houses," said Harry Wharton, when the hour of one tolled out, and the practice ceased. "We'll have two elevens out to-morrow night."

"The whole giddy Form!" said Bob Cherry.

"Very nearly. Why not?" said Harry. "It's safe as houses. We shall be in good form enough by next Wednesday, I think."

"You bet!"

"And the esteemed and ludicrous Coker will meet with the surprisefulness of his august life!"

"What-ho!"

Quite satisfied with themselves, the juniors quitted practice. The nets were put away, and the ball with them, and the eleven returned cautiously towards the schoolhouse.

The house was still wrapped in slumber.

They halted under the window of the Remove dormitory, and the rope was there safe enough, concealed in the thick ivy.

Wharton had taken hold of it, and was about to climb, when Bob Cherry clutched his arm.

"Hold on!"

"What's the matter?"

"Somebody's stirring."

"Quiet, you chaps! Get into cover!"

The Removites flattened themselves in the thick ivy, and in the shadow of the tree that grew close by. A dark form appeared in the moonlit space of the Close, emerging from the trees in the direction of the wall on the road. For a moment the juniors' hearts almost ceased to beat, as they thought it was a master in search of them. Harry Wharton wondered savagely whether Vernon-Smith had betrayed them.

But their fears were relieved in a few moments. The light fell for an instant on the face of the fellow who was crossing the Close, and they recognised Loder of the Sixth.

"Loder!" murmured Bob breathlessly.

"Looking for us!" muttered Tom Brown.

"I don't think so."

The juniors remained as still as mice. Loder, in fact, did not look once in their direction. He was making for his own study window. The juniors watched him, and saw him climb in and disappear.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"A jolly close shave!" he murmured. "If we had been still playing, he must have seen us as he crossed the Close."

"The luckfulness is terrific."

"Where has he been, I wonder?" said Bulstrode.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Not much doubt about that. Pub.-hunting, of course!"

"The rotter!"

"It's an old game with Loder. He will get the sack from the school for it one of these days, if he keeps on, and serve him right! A prefect, too!"

"I—I say," exclaimed Bob in dismay. "Suppose he goes to-morrow night, or the next, and sees us? We sha'n't know exactly what time he may pass—"

"The beast will spot us!" said Peter Todd.

Wharton's brow clouded. It was a risk he had not counted on, certainly. But it was a risk that had to be run; it could not be helped.

"We shall have to chance that!" he said. "Anyway, we're not spotted yet. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Let's get in!"

The footballers climbed the rope one after another. Russell was awake, waiting for them, and he helped them in; but the rest of the Form had gone to sleep, with the exception of the Bounder. The Bounder watched them dropping in from the window, with an unpleasant glitter in his eyes.

"Had a good practice?" he asked.

"Very good, thanks!" said Wharton.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Not spotted—eh?"

"No!"

"How long do you think you will be able to keep it up?" Vernon-Smith asked, with a sneer.

"Till next Wednesday, I hope."

"If nobody gives us away," said Johnny Bull. "And if anybody does, that anybody will get such a slaughtering that he will never be known to smile again."

"Oh, rats!" said the Bounder. And he said no more.

The footballers, tired and sleepy enough now, turned in. And they were sleeping like tops when the rising-bell sounded in the morning, and there were a dozen fellows at least in the Lower Fourth who were extremely unwilling to turn out at the sound of the bell.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Sleeping Beauties!

MR. QUELCH was puzzled.

He had never noticed anything like it before.

Indeed, he was inclined to think at first that it was a "jape," planned in retaliation for the barring of football to his Form.

But he was soon convinced that it was genuine.

It was certainly very curious, from the Form-master's point of view.

It was an attack of drowsiness that a dozen members of the Remove suffered from in the Form-room that morning.

Certainly Billy Bunter had been known to nod off to sleep on a drowsy summer's afternoon in the Form-room. But, curiously enough, it was not Bunter this time. Bunter was all right. And besides, it was not a drowsy summer's afternoon; it was a keen and fresh autumn morning.

Yet that mysterious sleepiness attacked the Remove fellows; and the fellows, too, who were generally keenest about their class work.

Mark Linley and Dick Penfold, the two scholarship boys, were always keen on lessons. But they were as drowsy and inattentive as anybody else this special morning. Bob Cherry, usually even too lively, was not lively at all. He nodded off when he was called upon to construe, and the Remove-master had to touch him up with a pointer. Even Harry Wharton was heavy-eyed and subdued. Peter Todd, who was all life and motion as a rule, and was hardly able to keep still even in class, was too still now. In the midst of morning lessons he was heard to snore.

Snore!

There was no doubt about it. The sound almost petrified Mr. Quelch, and he stood and stared at Peter Todd blankly. The junior's head was resting on his hand, and he was asleep!

"Todd!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

Snore!

"Todd!"

"Yes, sir!" said Alonzo Todd mildly.

"I did not speak to you, but to your cousin!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Todd!"

Snore!

Mr. Quelch approached the sleeping junior and shook him angrily by the shoulder.

Peter Todd started and awoke, and rubbed his eyes.

"Is it rising-bell?" he murmured. "Leggo my shoulder, you silly idiot—oh, I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Todd," said Mr. Quelch in a terrific voice, "you have gone to sleep in the Form-room!"

Peter Todd blinked.

"Did I, sir? I—I'm sorry. It must have been construing, sir. Virgil always sends me to sleep, sir."

"I have never known my class so dull and sleepy," said Mr. Quelch. "Was your sleep disturbed in the night?"

"I didn't wake up after I got to sleep, sir," said Peter Todd demurely. He did not add that it was half-past one when he went to sleep.

"Then there is no excuse for your sleeping now," said the Form-master.

"I suppose it's want of exercise, sir," said Peter meekly.

"When a chap misses his usual exercise, sir, he grows fat and lazy—like Bunter, sir."

Mr. Quelch frowned. He understood the allusion to the taboo he had placed upon footer.

"That is nonsense, Todd!" he said. "You may take as much exercise as you like, excepting in the form I have interdicted for a period. If you go to sleep again I shall cane you."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch bit his lip and continued the lesson. The juniors made heroic efforts to banish their sleepiness. They feared every moment that the truth would dawn upon Mr. Quelch—that they had missed a considerable portion of their sleep

during the night. They were glad enough when classes were dismissed.

"Lucky he didn't guess anything!" said Bob, as the Remove streamed out into the Close. "We shall have to be a bit more careful, you chaps. I'm jolly well going to sleep after dinner!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

The juniors would never have thought that missing their sleep from twelve till one would have had such an effect upon them. But it evidently had. After dinner they strolled out of the school gates down to the river. To sleep in the house would be to invite suspicion, and they laid themselves down in the grass under the trees for a little nap.

"I say, it won't do to oversleep ourselves!" Mark Linley said, a little anxiously. "If we are late for lessons there will be trouble."

"I'll call you, if you like," said Skinner, who had walked down with them.

"Good chap!" said Wharton. "Call us three minutes before the bell goes; that will be all right."

"Right!" said Skinner. "I'm going to read this paper under the tree yonder, and I'll call you right enough."

And the juniors settled themselves comfortably to sleep in the thick grass. Skinner looked at them with a grin, and strolled away. He joined Vernon-Smith on the towing-path. The Bounder was looking gloomy and preoccupied.

"Down-hearted" asked Skinner.

"Oh, it's rotten!" growled Vernon-Smith. "By rights they ought to have been caught the night before last. They weren't. Last night they piled into practice. To-night they're having two elevens out for a regular practice match. They'll get through all right; they'll be in ripping form for next Wednesday. If they weren't, Wharton would have to

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

the river, and mixed the colour thin. Then he strolled along and looked at the sleeping juniors. They were all sound asleep, making up for the rest they had missed in the night. They lay half-hidden in the grass under the trees. The Bounder looked up and down the towing-path. No one was in sight, with the exception of Skinner. He bent over the sleepers, one after another, and with a light and gentle touch painted their noses crimson.

One or two of the juniors stirred in their sleep, and then the Bounder suspended his operations and slipped quickly behind a tree. But they did not awaken.

In ten minutes he had finished.

The aspect of the sleeping juniors was extraordinary now. Their noses gleamed in the sunlight a brilliant crimson, and to one or two of the faces the Bounder had given extra dabs of colour. Vernon-Smith chuckled as he surveyed them. He was still chuckling when he rejoined Skinner.

"Don't call 'em till the bell has gone!" he said.

"No fear!" chortled Skinner.

The tired footballers slept on. Over the Close, the playing-fields, and the river came at last the sound of the bell for lessons. But the sleepers did not hear it; at that distance it was faint to the ear, and it was not sufficient to awaken them.

The bell had ceased when Skinner came dashing along the bank, and he shook Wharton, and shouted to the others.

"Buck up! Sorry I forgot! The bell's stopped, you fellows! Better run for it!"

"Oh, you ass, Skinner!"

"You chump!"

DO NOT MISS READING

"THE RAG-TIME SCHOOLBOYS!"

in

"THE GEM" LIBRARY. Out on Wednesday. 1d.



Hip Pip Pip! Hip pip pip! We Take the Cake, the Latest Rag-Time Band, Oh!

play me. The Form would make him, whatever he says. But he's working it all right now. I sha'n't have a look in."

"Hard cheese!" said Skinner sympathetically.

The Bounder scowled.

"If Quelch had the sense of a white rabbit he'd have spotted what was the matter this morning!" he growled. "What did he think the fellows were falling asleep in class for, excepting that they'd had a night out?"

"Well, he knows they are all good little Erics, and don't go pubbing," grinned Skinner, "and naturally he wouldn't think of footer. It took Wharton a jolly long time to think of the wheeze; and Quelch wouldn't guess it in a year, unless somebody put him on to it."

"I'd almost do that, only—only—"

"They'd know it was you. Now!"

"I suppose they would."

"No doubt about that. I say, what would Quelch say if he saw them all fast asleep now, like the giddy babes in the wood? He'd smell a mouse—what?"

"He won't see them!" snapped the Bounder.

"No. I say—" Skinner paused, and the Bounder looked at him curiously. "You've got a colour-box in your study, haven't you?"

"Yes. What are you driving at?"

"Oh, nothing! Only it occurred to me how funny it would be if anyone happened along with a tube of colour and squeezed some over their chivvies," said Skinner carelessly. "I'm going to call them in time for lessons, but I might forget till the bell had gone, and then they'd have to rush into class in a hurry, and—"

The Bounder burst into a chuckle. He did not answer, but he hurried away towards the school, and in a few minutes returned. He had a soft brush, a tube of crimson lake, and a china dish in his hand. He dipped the brush in

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"Buck up! Run for it!" shouted Skinner; and he darted off himself.

The juniors dashed after him at top speed. Mr. Quelch was very severe upon unpunctuality, and they did not want to draw his attention to themselves after what had happened in the morning. They dashed along the towing-path and up the path to the school without losing a moment.

In a few moments they were dashing across the Close, strung out at different distances, and thinking of anything but of looking at one another's faces. Their own faces, of course, they could not see.

In spite of their haste they were two or three minutes late for class. The rest of the Remove were in their places, and Mr. Quelch was present, when the late comers came panting in. Mr. Quelch turned towards them severely. He was about to point to the clock, and read the late comers a lecture upon the vice of unpunctuality. But the sight of them stopped the words upon his tongue. He gazed at them as if he could hardly believe his eyes. From the Removites seated at the desks there came a yell of irrepressible laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted the Form-master. "Wharton—all of you—what does this mean? How dare you, sir—I say, how dare you!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith Turns Red!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. stared at the angry Form-master. For the moment they could not imagine what Mr. Quelch was so excited about. True, they were a couple of minutes late, but that hardly seemed reason enough for so much excitement on the part of Mr. Quelch.

13

NEXT
MONDAY;

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

"I—I'm sorry we're a minute or two late, sir!" stammered Harry.

"I am not alluding to that, Wharton!"

"Then—then what's the matter, sir?"

"Do you pretend to be unaware of the state in which you have entered the Form-room, Wharton?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

The late-comers looked at one another in dismay. The rest of the Form were laughing, in spite of Mr. Quelch's command to be silent. They could not help it. Fisher T. Fish "guessed" that the crimson beaks were too much for him, and the others felt the same.

"Fireworks!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, "will you kindly explain what you mean by this freak, Wharton? I am waiting."

"If—if you please, sir, if you are alluding to our noses—"

"You know perfectly well that I am alluding to your noses!" snapped the Form-master. "How dare you come into class in such a state!"

"We didn't know, sir. We—we've been sitting in the sun, sir, and—and I suppose our noses have got scorched a bit!"

Mr. Quelch seemed almost petrified by what he regarded as the audacity of this statement.

"Wharton! How can you expect to impose upon me? Do you think I cannot see, you stupid boy, that your noses are painted red?"

Wharton staggered.

"Painted, sir!" he gasped.

"Yes, painted!"

"Painted red!" stuttered Wharton. "Oh, my hat!"

"Were you not aware of it?" the Form-master asked, his tone softening a little as he observed the junior's obviously genuine amazement.

"No, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"I—I can't understand—"

"Do you mean to say that someone could have painted your nose without your knowledge, Wharton?"

"I've been asleep, sir!"

"What! Have all of you been asleep?"

Wharton coloured. It had to be confessed now. It was not much use hoping that Mr. Quelch would imagine that their noses had been painted without their knowledge while they were awake.

"Yes, sir," said Harry reluctantly. "We had a nap on the grass, sir, by the river. It was a warm afternoon, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked perplexed.

"I cannot understand this sudden attack of sleepiness that had overcome so many of the Remove!" he exclaimed. "It is extraordinary! Did you sleep badly last night?"

"Well, I woke up, sir, in the night once, and stayed awake some time," said Harry Wharton, with perfect truth. There was no need to add that during that time he had played football by moonlight. "But—but I'm not sleepy now, sir. I—I'm sorry we came here like this. Some silly ass—I mean some fellow must have come along and seen us, and painted our noses for a lark, sir. We didn't wake up till the bell had gone, and then we ran in as quickly as we could, so we didn't notice it."

Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"It is very ridiculous," he said. "However, as you do not appear to be to blame, I shall excuse you. It was a very foolish joke. Go and wash your noses at once, and return to class as quickly as you can."

"Yes, sir."

And the juniors hurried off.

Wharton started as he surveyed his crimson nose in the looking-glass in the nearest bath-room. It was certainly very striking, and he did not wonder that Mr. Quelch had been startled.

"What silly ass could have done it?" he exclaimed, as he rubbed his nose with hot water and soap. "It's queer Skinner didn't notice it, too, when he called us."

"Skinner did it, of course!" granted Johnny Bull. "That's why the rotter called us late, so that we shouldn't

GOOD TURNS—No. 10.



A girl reader of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY doing a good turn to a blind man by guiding him across a busy thoroughfare.

"M-m-my hat!" said Bob Cherry, looking round at his companions. "How did you get your noses like that?"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bulstrode. "Must have got them burnt in the sun, you chaps. Is mine like it?"

"I should jolly well say it is!" muttered Nugent. "Is mine?"

"Yours! Ha, ha, ha! You should see it!"

Wharton rubbed his nose. The paint was quite dry, and did not come off in his fingers.

"Is mine red, too, you chaps?" he muttered. "I must say you all look awful sights—as if you'd been pouring out the Rhine wine by the gallon."

"Yours is a regular scorcher!" chuckled Peter Todd. "What's mine like?"



Harry Wharton was the last to leave the dormitory, and he stopped and spoke to Russell before he left. "The rope is tied to your bed, Russell," said Harry. "Will you keep awake until we come back, just to see that nothing happens to it?" (See Chapter 8.)

have time to find it out before we bolted into the classroom."

"Oh, the rotter!"

"We'll bump him for it after lessons!" growled Nugent.

"It was a rotten trick, after he had promised to call us."

"Caddish!" growled Bob Cherry. "Jolly good thing that Quelch isn't over-suspicious. If his attention is drawn to our blessed sleepiness much more, he will begin to smell a rat."

"I shouldn't wonder if that was what was intended," said Wharton, with a frown. "We had to let Quelch know that we were all fast asleep in the daytime. He might tumble at any minute to the fact that we were up in the night."

"And if he does—"

"There might be a watch kept on the Remove dorm., to see if we break bounds."

"Oh, crumbs! All the fat would be in the fire then. We'll teach Skinner not to be so funny again, anyway."

And the Removites, with their noses restored to their original colour, returned to the Form-room. Mr. Quelch glanced at them, but allowed them to go to their places without further remarks, and lessons proceeded.

When afternoon lessons were over, and the Lower Fourth came out, the footballers gathered round Harold Skinner. They had something to say to the humourist of the Remove. Skinner looked a little alarmed, but he tried to grin.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"You fellows looked funny when you came in," he remarked.

"You'll look funny when we've done with you," said Johnny Bull grimly.

"I—I say, I didn't do it, you know!" said Skinner.

"Rats! We know you did," said Wharton.

"I—I didn't! Honour bright!" exclaimed Skinner. "Look here, hands off! I give you my word I didn't touch you!"

"Then who did?"

"I—I don't know."

Wharton took out his watch.

"I give you one minute to find out who did," he said.

"If you haven't found out by that time we're going to conclude that you did it. You must have seen that our noses were painted, anyway, when you woke us up—and you broke your promise of calling us before the bell went."

"Look here, I—"

"You ought to blush for your misdeeds!" said Bob Cherry. "I don't believe you've got a blush in you; but we'll make you blush. Gosling has been using a can of red paint in the woodshed, and it's still there!"

"Good egg!" said Wharton heartily. "It won't wash off quite so easily as water-colour, too. Come on, Skinner."

"Look here, I—I—"

"Time's up!" said Wharton, putting back his watch.

"Yank him round to the woodshed. One good turn deserves another."

"It wasn't me!" roared Skinner energetically and ungrammatically.

"Bring him along!"

"Smithy, you rotter, why don't you own up?" howled Skinner.

"Oh, was it Smithy?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, it was!"

The angry juniors went towards the Bounder. His face hardened, and a steely glitter came into his eyes; but he was too proud to run, or to deny it.

"So you played that little jape on us?" said Wharton.

The Bounder nodded coolly.

"You wanted Quelch to know we'd been asleep, eh, so as to put him on the track—next door to sneaking to him?" said Johnny Bull.

"You can think so if you like!" sneered the Bounder.

"Yank him out!" said Harry.

"Hands off!" exclaimed the Bounder fiercely, as the footballers closed round him. "I shall hit out, I warn you."

"Go ahead! I don't think you will lick a dozen of us," said Bob, with a grin. "Collar the cad, and frog-march him if he wriggles."

The Bounder did wriggle, and with energy. He fought like a tiger as the juniors closed upon him. But the odds were too great, and he was whisked off his feet and rushed out of the House in a twinkling. With a rush the juniors brought him round to the woodshed, the Bounder struggling and kicking, and even biting in his rage.

"Let me go!" shrieked Vernon-Smith, "Let me go, you rotters!"

"Yes; when we've done with you—not before."

"Hands off! I'll—I'll—"

"Hold the rotter!" said Bob Cherry, taking up the paint brush and dipping it in the can of paint Gosling had left in the woodshed. "You're going to blush for your sins, Smithy."

"I—I—I—"

"Better close your mouth," said Bob, as he dabbed at Vernon-Smith's face with the thick, smelly paint. "You may get some of the paint in it if you don't!"

"You rotter—groo-oogh—"

"I told you so," said Bob, calmly, as the Bounder spat and spluttered furiously. "You can't say I didn't warn you. Keep your head shut, my son. You're going to have a coat all over your chivvy. One good turn deserves another."

"Grooogh!"

Bob Cherry painted away industriously. The Bounder's face was soon gleaming red. Bob painted with thoroughness, from the roots of the hair down to the neck, and finished with the ears. The Bounder's aspect was very peculiar when he had done. Vernon-Smith looked like a Red Indian with a decidedly pronounced complexion.

"I think that will do," said Harry Wharton, with a chuckle. "You won't do any more painting for some time, Smithy. You can fill up your odd moments getting that paint off your own mug."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder was released. He shook his fists savagely at the avengers, stuttering with rage. But the fury in his face only made it more ludicrous in appearance, and the juniors roared with laughter.

"Laugh, you rotters!" howled the Bounder. "I'm going straight to Quelch! I'll make you sorry for this! I'll tell him what you did last night."

"Sneak!" howled the juniors.

"Sneak or not, I'll make you sorry for this!"

And the Bounder dashed away.

"Stop him!" shouted Bob.

But it was too late to stop the Bounder. He was dashing towards the School House with the fleetness of a deer.

"My hat! If he tells Quelch—" began Bulstrode.

Wharton's jaw set grimly.

"He is not going to scare us with threatening to turn sneak!" he said. "If he does it his life won't be worth living in the Form afterwards. We'll make Greyfriars too hot to hold him."

"That won't get us any footer practice," said Nngent, dismally.

"We'll stop him if we can. Come on!"

And they hurried after the enraged Bounder.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Misunderstood!

VERNON-SMITH rushed furiously into the School House.

He fully meant what he had said.

For the moment he was not thinking of the consequences of his action—he was thinking of nothing but revenging himself upon the raggers. That he had started

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

the ragging, and that he had only received tit-for-tat, did not matter to him. He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. He ran straight to Mr. Quelch's study, and, in his haste, he dashed in without even knocking at the door.

Mr. Quelch, who was seated at his table engaged in his pet literary work, started to his feet angry and amazed at the sight of the flaming face of the junior.

"What—what is it? Who are you?" he thundered.

"I'm Vernon-Smith, sir. I—I've come to you—"

"How dare you come to me in that state? What is your face painted like that for? How dare you enter my study without knocking?"

"I'm sorry—but I—"

"You shall be sorrier, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch, taking up his cane. "I have never heard of such audacity. Don't interrupt me, sir. I will not allow you to interrupt me. Hold your tongue. You reckless, impertinent, outrageous boy!"

"I—I—"

"You do not mean to tell me, I suppose, that you were asleep, and that someone has painted your face while you slept?" exclaimed the Form-master sarcastically.

"No, sir; I—"

"You were wide awake, I presume?"

"Yes, I—"

"You knew that your face was being painted?"

"Of course I did!" howled the Bounder. "They—"

"And then you came to me—"

"I came here at once, to—"

"Exactly. I pardoned Wharton and the others, because they were not to blame. Don't interrupt me, Smith! But you are to blame—you have done this, I suppose, as a reckless prank, to show your Form-fellows that you dare to do it—a thing you are very fond of, Smith, and of which it is my duty to cure you."

"I came here to tell you that—"

"Hold out your hand!"

"What! I—"

"You have said quite enough, Vernon-Smith. Hold out your hand, and do not utter another word, or I shall thrash you instead of caning you!" the incensed Remove-master exclaimed, his eyes gleaming.

"I tell you—"

"Will you obey me?"

"But I've got something to tell you—you ought to listen to me—I—I—"

"Very well, if you prefer a thrashing, you shall receive it," said the Remove-master. "You certainly deserve it."

"Look here," roared the Bounder. "Those fellows are going—"

But Mr. Quelch's grip was on the Bounder's collar, and the cane was lashing over his shoulders, and he was not able to get any further. Mr. Quelch, from his own point of view, was quite justified in being incensed: like the prophet of old, he thought he did well to be angry.

It did not cross his mind for a moment that the Bounder had come to him to "sneak," and had he guessed it he would not have listened willingly—he did not encourage meanness of that sort in his Form. He was greatly annoyed at being interrupted in his literary labours, and he thought that the Bounder was playing a reckless prank upon him in order to "show off" to his comrades. And with that belief in his mind Mr. Quelch laid the cane on well.

The Bounder roared and wriggled under the stinging lashes.

"There!" said Mr. Quelch, when six cuts had descended.

"Now go! Not a word—if you dare to utter a word, Vernon-Smith, I will cane you again! I have had more than enough of your insolence, sir."

Vernon-Smith did not utter any more words. He was not feeling inclined to utter anything but gasps of pain.

He staggered out of the study, and would have slammed the door if he dared. But he did not want that stinging cane over his shoulders again, and so he closed the door quietly. He strode furiously down the passage—and right into the arms of the juniors who were waiting for him.

"Here he is!"

"Collar the cad!"

"Have you sneaked, you rotter?"

"Oh, what a complexion!"

"He bluseth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you told Quelch?" said Harry Wharton, his grasp falling upon the Bounder's shoulder. "About the footer, I mean. You can sneak about the painting if you like."

"I haven't!" he said.

"Oh, good!"

And the Bounder was left to himself. He stamped away savagely to a bath-room, and as he went yells of laughter greeted him from all the fellows who caught sight of him.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Billy Bunter, "What have you

been doing with your chivvy, Smithy? He, he, he—yarrooh! Oh! Beast!"

Vernon-Smith strode on, leaving Bunter sitting on the floor and roaring. Coker and Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, caught sight of him and bore down on him.

"Oh, what a face!" gasped Coker. "Who is it—Sitting Bull, or the Last of the Mohicans?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Red as a rose is he!" chortled Potter. "I love my love with an R because she is red—I love her with a C because she is crimson, I love her with a W because she is waxy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith glared and stamped on. He could not treat Coker & Co. as he had treated Bunter, though he would very gladly have done so. In the bath-room he rubbed and scrubbed his glowing face under a stream of hot water, but the oily paint was a long time coming off. Even when he had finished there was a lingering smell of the paint about him that clung to him lovingly for the rest of the day.

There was no sympathy for Vernon-Smith in the Remove. He was more than suspected of wanting to give away the footballers to the Form-master, and the remarks of his Form-fellows made the Bounder glad that he had not done so. His life would not have been worth living in the Remove if he had succeeded. Even his own friends did not hesitate to tell him their opinion about it—Bolsover major coming straight to the point upon the subject in painfully plain English.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not have much fear now that the Bounder would betray the "wheeze." They were more uneasy with regard to Billy Bunter. The latter dropped into No. 1 Study at tea-time with the manner of a fellow who was quite at home there.

The Famous Five were having tea together, and Tom Brown and Mark Linley were with them. They gave Bunter grim looks, which he was, perhaps, too short-sighted to notice. At all events, he paid no regard to them.

"Ham and eggs, eh?" said Bunter. "And a cake! You fellows are doing yourselves very well, I must say. Glad I looked in."

"The gladfulness is all on your side, my esteemed Bunter," said Inky.

"Quite like old times to be having tea here," said Bunter, apparently deaf to the remark of the nabob. "Pass the ham, Nugent."

"Oh, get out!"

"And the eggs. I see you have got six left; they will be good enough for me, though if you felt inclined to fetch some more I shouldn't mind cooking them for you. I'd do that to oblige fellows I like."

Bunter helped himself liberally. The juniors gazed at him, and at each other in helpless wrath. Bunter began to eat with a keen and determined appetite.

"I dropped in to see Quelchy just now," Bunter remarked casually, as he saw Nugent caressing a cricket-stump. "I happened to mention to him about the footer, you know—"

Bunter paused to engulf another egg.

"You've mentioned to Quelchy," muttered Wharton, "about the footer—"

Bunter nodded affably. He knew that he was keeping the juniors on tenter-hooks.

"Look here, you fat rotter—" began Tom Brown.

"Have you told Quelchy anything?" roared Wharton.

"Can't speak with my mouth full. Wait a minute. You see, I told him I missed the footer practice very much, that's all. Nothing to get waxy about."

"Oh, you silly ass!"

"You might pour out some tea for a chap, Nugent. Blessed if I think you look after your guests well at all!"

"I'd like to pour it down the back of your neck—hot!" growled Nugent.

"Did you say you were going to fetch some more eggs?"

"No!" roared Wharton.

"Then I'll try the cake!"

Bunter tried the cake, and everything else there was on the table. He took a graceful leave when the festive board was quite bare. As he rolled out of the study Bob Cherry sparred wildly in the air.

"Next Wednesday," he murmured. "Next Wednesday his sorrowing relations will have to search round to find the pieces! Oh, my hat!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Luck Is Out!

MOONLIGHT on the football ground again—and a merry crowd of young rascals "urging the flying ball."

The "wheeze" was going like clockwork. Nearly all the Lower Fourth were out, and two elevens had formed up for a regular practice match. Billy Bunter, of course, was in bed, and the Bounder was there, too, in a savage humour, like Achilles of old, sulking in his tent. But the footballers

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet" LIBRARY.** ONE PENNY.

did not care for the Bounder and his temper. They were out in the moonlight, playing the grand old game while Greyfriars slept.

The field was almost as light as by day.

High over the school and the old elms soared the bright moon, amid light, fleecy clouds, sending down a flood of light upon the footballers.

Bolsover major captained the scratch eleven. They were naturally not up to the Form eleven in play, but they were good enough to give Harry Wharton & Co. a tussle, and to make the practice keen and hard.

And they enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

There was no shouting—only suppressed exclamations, subdued calls, and murmured cheers.

The juniors were very careful.

Not a suspicion was awakened so far, and there was no reason any suspicion should be awakened.

The very boldness of the scheme made it unlikely that it would be discovered. Certainly such a "wheeze" had never been thought of and carried out before. And the Remove players were getting into form. If all went well they would be quite fit for a good match by the time they met the Fifth. And when that time came, Blundell & Co. would receive the surprise of their lives.

The play went on with keen enjoyment. The Removites were in their element now.

Half-past twelve chimed out—ONE! But the play did not cease at one. They kept it up for the full allowance of time.

And the second half was more than half through, when a dark figure paused in the Close, and glanced towards the playing-fields.

It was Loder of the Sixth.

The prefect stood rooted to the ground, wondering if he were dreaming. Loder was in funds lately, and he was expending his funds in the way that had grown habitual to the blackguard of the Sixth. This was the second night he had stayed for a late card-party at the Cross Keys, and he had returned unusually late. He could hardly believe his ears as he stood staring towards the football ground.

But it was no dream; he could see the fitting forms, he could hear the subdued but excited voices.

"Pass! Pass!"

"Play up!"

"Oh, well kicked, sir!"

The prefect simply gasped. He knew, of course, about the taboo placed upon Remove football, and as he had had many rubs with the lively spirits of the Lower Fourth, he had been glad of it. It took him some minutes to realise what was going on.

"The cheeky young scoundrels!" he gasped at last. "Football at night—at a quarter past one in the morning! Oh, my hat! I fancy this is where our friend Wharton gets it in the neck—I'm sure he's among them. I'll march the whole crowd in, and wake up Quelch. Ha, ha, ha! It's my duty as a prefect—ahem!"

He walked towards the playing fields.

"H'm! Lemme see—I heard a row, and woke up—came out to see what it was, and found 'em playing footer by moonlight!" he murmured. "That's all right! Wouldn't quite do to let Quelch know exactly how I came to be out of doors."

He chuckled as he walked on. He paused by the edge of the field, and stood for some minutes staring at the players. They were too busy to see him at once. But suddenly Bob Cherry caught sight of him, as he was receiving a pass from Wharton. Bob jumped, and then stood still, staring at the prefect, and the ball whizzed into touch.

"What's the matter with you, Bob?" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "Why on earth didn't you stop that?"

"Loder!" muttered Bob.

"What?"

"Look!"

"Oh!"

Loder strode upon the field. Bolsover major picked up the ball. The juniors stood staring at Loder in dismay. But Wharton was quite cool. He was ready for Loder. He knew Loder's little habits, and after the narrow escape of the previous night, he had looked for something of this sort to happen, and he had thought it out.

Loder regarded the juniors with a grim smile.

"So I've caught you!" he said.

"Looks like it!" said Wharton calmly.

"Playing football in the middle of the night, instead of being in your dorm!" said Loder. "I knew you were the cheekiest young rascals in the school, but I'm blessed if I expected this!"

"Oh, what a surprise!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"The surprisefulness must be terrific, my worthy and

esteemed Loder. But it is a pleasure to behold the esteemed light of your countenance."

"You'll follow me now!" said the prefect.

"Where?" asked Wharton.

"To Mr. Quelch, of course. I suppose you know that it is my duty as a prefect to report this conduct to your Form-master. Indeed, I think perhaps I had better take you to the Head. This is a very serious matter."

"Quite solemn, in fact!" suggested Bob Cherry.

Loder frowned.

"None of your cheek, Cherry. You will catch it pretty warm for this. Follow me."

"Hold on a minute, Loder," said Harry Wharton, very quietly. "Have you considered that you will have to explain why you were out of doors?"

"You woke me up with your noise, and I came out to see what was the matter."

"Rats!"

"What? You cheeky young scoundrel—"

"We haven't made any noise, for one thing; but if we had, it would have woke up others as well as you. Mr. Quelch's room is nearer than yours, and he is a light sleeper. He hasn't been awakened."

"I don't know what you are driving at, Wharton. I happened to be sleeping lightly to-night—"

"You happened to be gone to the Cross Keys to play cards, and you happened to spot us as you came in," said Harry Wharton.

Loder gave a violent start.

"You—you young villain! If you dare to tell any lies like that, do you think you will be believed?"

"Then you weren't out of bounds, Loder?"

"Certainly not!"

"Nor last night, either?"

"Wha-at?"

"This isn't the first night we've played, but we didn't keep it up so late last night," said Wharton coolly. "We saw you come in last night."

"You—you young liar!"

"Oh, don't talk rot. You know you were out, and as I've told you now, you know that we saw you. You're not going to say a word about us to Mr. Quelch, or to the Head either. You are going to keep it dark."

"What?" gasped Loder.

"One good turn deserves another. We know about your disgusting doings, and we haven't given you away. You can do as much for us. This is only a lark, playing footer at night—not quite so serious as playing cards."

Loder's face showed deadly pale in the moonlight. It had not occurred to him that the juniors knew the facts; he had had no suspicion that they had seen him returning the previous night.

"No one would believe you!" he muttered, at last.

"We shall see. We don't want to sneak; but if you betray us—"

"It's my duty as a prefect to report you."

"You didn't discover us as a prefect. As a prefect you would have been fast asleep in bed," said Harry caustically.

"You discovered us, not as a prefect, but as a gambling blackguard coming home at one in the morning."

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Loder. He had never heard such plain talk from a junior before.

"You're welcome to report all you discover as a prefect. That's nothing. We want you to keep dark all you discover as a gambling blackguard."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry; and there was a chuckle from the rest of the footballers. They realised that Loder was as much in their power as they were in his.

"And you think you would be believed if you made such an accusation against me?" said Loder, as contemptuously as he could.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I think so. Eleven of us last night saw you sneaking in, and the Head would know perfectly well that eleven fellows would not make up a lie and stick to it. In fact, we couldn't if we wanted to. He will question us all—perhaps separately, and if we were telling lies we should contradict one another upon some point. Eleven fellows couldn't tell the same lie so exactly on every point that they couldn't be caught out. But with the truth it's different."

Loder knew that.

"And you will have to explain, too, how you came to hear what nobody else heard, though their rooms are nearer to the field than yours," said Harry coolly. "And possibly it might be mentioned that you keep cards and bridge-markers in your study."

"You—you—"

"It's no business of ours what you do, Loder, and we don't want to sneak. But if you betray us, look out for

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

yourself, that's all. We want fair play. We're not doing any harm here—simply playing footer."

Loder choked down his rage. He knew that he dared not face the inquiry that was threatened. If he succeeded in lying himself out of the scrape, the attention of the school authorities would be directed to him, and it would mean the end of his little nocturnal excursions for some time to come at least. Loder was not at all anxious to have the eye of authority turned inquiringly in his direction. He had too many little secrets for that.

"You have come out simply to play footer?" he asked slowly.

The Removites grinned. They recognised the signs of surrender.

"Nothing else," said Harry.

"And you won't do it again?"

"That's not in the bargain. We are going to play again till Mr. Quelch allows us to play as usual—that's next Wednesday."

"You cheeky cub—"

"Draw it mild. If you like to give us away, go ahead! We risk getting a licking, and you risk getting the sack. You've got more to lose than we have. Do as you choose," said Wharton, with cool independence.

"I might close my eyes to what you're doing, perhaps," said Loder. "I don't like to stand in the way of fellows playing football, so far as that goes."

"Good enough! Only let's have it fair and square. You're not to give a hint to any other prefect of what might be discovered here of a night. If we are found out at all we shall put it down to you, and take it as a declaration of war."

Loder bit his lip. The keen junior had read his secret thoughts as easily as the pages of an open book.

"You can trust me," muttered Loder.

"Honour bright?"

"Yes."

"Right-ho! Good-night, Loder!" said Wharton cheerfully.

Loder did not reply to the salutation. He strode away with scowling brows. He had believed that he had the juniors under his thumb, and his fancied power had passed away like a dream. And it was not pleasant to learn that his peccadilloes were known to so many youngsters, who might talk. Loder's frame of mind was not at all a happy one as he climbed into his study.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to their dormitory. They were in a subdued mood. Some of them felt very dubious about Loder.

"You think he'll keep it dark, Harry?" Johnny Bull asked, as they turned in.

"I think so."

"If he doesn't—"

"If he doesn't, we shall get it in the neck; and so will Loder!" said Harry grimly. "But he knows that, and I think he will do the sensible thing."

And Harry Wharton was right. The next morning there was nothing said on the subject, a sufficient proof that Loder had "done the sensible thing," and had not reported his discovery to Mr. Quelch or the Head.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. The Tortures of Tantalus.

THE next day was Saturday, and a half-holiday. Harry Wharton & Co., twenty-two strong, walked out of Greyfriars after morning lessons were over, and took a football with them. That night there was to be no practice by moonlight, for after midnight it would be Sunday morning, and the juniors had no desire to play on Sunday. But at a mile's distance from Greyfriars, on the level sands by the seashore, a space was marked out, and loose rocks piled to mark the goals, and the two elevens slogged into practice. It was practice under difficulties, but it was practice all the same, and they put their beef into it.

They came home to Greyfriars afterwards in cheerful humour.

Wharton's team was working well. All their old keenness had come back, the combination was perfect, and they had the highest hopes of the Form-match on the following Wednesday afternoon. When they came in the Fifth were playing Redclyffe on the Greyfriars ground, and the juniors paused to look on. Horace Coker was also looking on. Blundell had agreed to play him against the Remove, but he would not have played him against any other team for love or money.

The Fifth Formers were putting up a good fight, and Harry Wharton realised as he looked on that next Wednes-

day's match would not be a walk-over, in however good fighting trim the Remove might find themselves.

Coker, however, was disparaging. Potter and Greene, his chums, were in the Fifth Form team, so Coker made remarks to the juniors.

"Pretty slow—what!" said Coker.

"They want you in the team to give them a leg-up, Coker," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

Coker nodded assent.

"But Blundell can't see it," he said. "Looks to me as if Redclyffe will whop them. Two to one so far, and ten minutes to play."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Wharton. "It will get the Fifth used to whoppings, and they won't mind so much next Wednesday."

Coker snorted.

"Next Wednesday it will be different," he said. "I shall be in the team next Wednesday, you know."

Whereat the juniors smiled smiles.

"Sorry you kids haven't been able to get any practice," said Coker kindly. "I should have preferred you to be at the top of your form. Of course, you wouldn't have had any chance, anyway."

"Well, we've got one chance," said Bob thoughtfully.

"What's that?"

"Blundell's playing you, you know."

And Bob walked away before Coker could make any rejoinder to that remark.

As the footballers came in to tea, Billy Bunter met them at the door of the School House. Bunter was looking annoyed.

"Where have you fellows been?" he demanded wrathfully.

"By the sad sea waves," said Nugent. "Have you missed us, Bunter mine?"

"I haven't had my tea yet," grunted Bunter.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"Come on! I'll help you!"

Peter Todd linked arms with Bunter, and walked him upstairs. With his study-leader's grip on him, Billy Bunter did not venture to resist. He was marched into No. 7 Study, where Tom Dutton and Alonzo were already getting tea. Peter slung the fat junior into the armchair.

"So you've added blackmailing to your other gifts, have you, Bunter mine?" said Peter Todd softly.

Bunter blinked at him in wrathful alarm through his big spectacles.

"Look here, Todd, if you bully me, I'll go straight to Mr. Quelch. I'll tell him about the footer at night!"

"My dear Bunter," said Alonzo, "I am shocked at you!"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" snapped Bunter.

"I'm more than shocked at him," said Peter. "He makes me quite ill. You are not allowed to make the chief of the study ill, Bunter. It is against the rules of No. 7!"

"Yah!" said Bunter.

"Lock the door, Alonzo!"

"My dear Peter, what am I to lock the door for?" asked Alonzo, in surprise.

"In case any silly ass should hear Bunter howling, and want to come in," explained Peter. "I'm going to talk to Bunter."

Bunter jumped up, and made a wild rush for the door. Peter put out a foot, and Bunter rolled under the table. Alonzo locked the door, looking very concerned. Peter did not look concerned; he looked quite cheerful. Bunter was groaning under the table, and Peter, having taken up a cricket-stump, bent down.

The Best Story of the Year!!!

"THE RAG-TIME SCHOOLBOYS!" IN NEXT WEDNESDAY'S ISSUE of "THE GEM." 1d. ORDER EARLY.



Hip Pip Pip! Hip pippip! We Take the Cake, the Latest Rag-Time Band, Oh!

"Come up to the study," said Peter Todd. "I've got a tin of sardines."

Bunter snorted.

"You can keep 'em!"

Peter Todd stared at him. As Bunter was always in a stony state as far as money was concerned, Peter was surprised at his turning up his fat little nose at sardines.

"Oh, I'll keep 'em," he said. "There won't be any too much for Dutton and Alonzo and me, anyway. If you come in to tea I'll scrag you."

"Poof! I'm not coming to No. 7 to tea," said Bunter. "You never let me have enough to eat. Keep your old sardines!"

"Why, you fat rotter," exclaimed Peter wrathfully, "who are you sticking for a feed now?"

"The fat beast is coming to tea with us, I suppose," said Wharton.

"Don't you want him?"

"No fear!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! If you don't care for my company, I shall certainly not come. By the way, I have to take in some lines to Mr. Quelch. I hope he won't question me about football. He might; but I hope he won't, for you fellows' sakes."

Peter Todd's eyes gleamed.

"Oh, that's the little game, is it?" he said. "I can't allow you to disgrace the study in this way, Bunter."

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

"Has the rotter been sticking you fellows for feeds?" asked Peter.

"Of course he has!"

"I'll give him something that will stop all that," said Peter Todd. "Come up to the study with me, Bunter."

"I won't!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

NEXT
MONDAY;

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

"Come out, Bunter dear!" he said, in a voice as soft as the coo of a dove.

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"You're not hurt so much as you're going to be," said Peter. "Are you coming out?"

"Ow! I can't move!"

"Why can't you move?"

"Groo! M-m-my leg's broken!"

"Is that kettle boiling, Alonzo?" asked Peter.

"Yes, my dear Peter."

"Slosh some of the water under the table."

There was a wild howl of affright under the table, and Billy Bunter promptly rolled out into view. He sat up on the carpet and yelled.

"Keep him off! I'm not going to be scalded! Yow!"

"Leg all right?" said Peter pleasantly. "I thought you were mistaken about its being broken. You are always making these little mistakes, Bunter. But you never made a bigger mistake than in starting as a blackmailer, and disgracing No. 7 Study!"

"Look here, I—I suppose the fellows can ask me to tea if they like?" gasped Bunter.

"Yes; but they're not going to be made to if they don't like. So you've been threatening to sneak, have you?"

"No; I simply remarked—"

"Yes, I know what you simply remarked. Now, Bunter mine, if you should happen to sneak to Quelch, will you kindly remember that I shall break every bone in your fat carcase? Just bear that in mind, won't you?"

"I—I was only j-j-joking!" stuttered Bunter.

"You mustn't joke on serious subjects, Bunter darling. I want you to know exactly what will happen to you if you should sneak. Are you ready?"

"Ow! Ow!" roared Bunter, in anticipation.

He had good reason to yell the next moment. Peter Todd

seized him by the collar with his left hand. With the right he lashed away with the cricket-stump. The stump lashed and lashed on Bunter's fat person, and he roared and howled wildly. Fellows came along the passage, and shouted through the keyhole, demanding to know what was the matter. Peter Todd did not trouble to reply. He thrashed Bunter till his arm ached. Then he threw down the stump. Billy Bunter sat on the floor, a quivering mass of gasping fat.

"Have I hurt you, dear boy?" asked Peter.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Yow! Yes!"

"Would you like some more?"

"Yah! Oh! No!"

"Well, remember that if you should happen to breathe a single word to Quelch, or to anybody outside the Remove, about the footer, that is merely a little joke compared to what you will get," said Peter. "Will you remember that, dear?"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"You haven't answered me, Bunter," said Peter, making a movement towards the cricket-stump again.

"Yarrah! Yes, I'll remember! Ow!"

"And are you going to sneak now?"

"Groogh! No! Oh!"

"Better not," said Peter agreeably. "I told you once I'd make a man of you, Bunter. This is the way I'm going to do it. Now get up and stop snorting like a walrus; I don't like it!"

Bunter staggered up.

"Sit down, and don't move till I tell you," said Peter, pointing to the armchair.

Bunter collapsed into the chair.

"Now we'll have tea," said Peter calmly. "My hat! That exercise has given me quite a keen appetite!"

And No. 7 Study had tea. Billy Bunter glowered at them wolfishly from the armchair.

He was hurt—Peter Todd had made sure of that—but he was not hurt so much as he was hungry.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

Peter Todd's terrifying eye turned upon him.

"Didn't I tell you not to speak?" he demanded.

"Look here, I'm going to have tea!" roared Bunter.

"You stated distinctly that you didn't want any of the sardines."

"Then I'm going to have tea with somebody else!" yelled Bunter.

Peter shook his head.

"You're not. You're going to sit there and watch us feed, and go without yourself. That is a variation of the tortures of Tantalus, my dear chap. It will be a lesson to you!"

"I—I—I was only joking. I should like some of the sardines!"

"I dare say you would," chuckled Peter; "but you're not going to have any!"

"Look here!" shrieked Bunter. "Do you think you're going to keep me without my tea?"

"I don't think so—I know it."

"I'm hungry!"

"That's no news; you generally are."

"I want my tea!"

"It's a free country; you're at liberty to go on wanting," said his leader. "I don't object in the least to your wanting your tea. I object to your having it!"

"I—I—I—"

"Shut up!"

Bunter relapsed into furious silence, as the three juniors went on with their tea.

Toast and sardines disappeared, and a pot of jam and a cake made their appearance. Billy Bunter eyed them like a wolf.

"I—I say, Toddy, you might let me have some cake!" he groaned.

But Peter Todd was inexorable. He had made up his mind to teach Bunter a lesson, and he was teaching him.

"Tortures of Tantalus," he explained. "I dare say you know who Tantalus was?"

"I don't, and I don't want to!" roared Bunter.

"I'll tell you. He was one of those old Greek johnnies, who was punished by having grub and things placed just out of his reach, while he was famishing. I don't think there is any punishment that will appeal to your feelings so much as that, Bunter."

"I—I—I'll promise not to say a word about the—the footer!"

"You'll be very nearly killed if you do!" chuckled Peter Todd.

"Lemme have some of the jam!" gasped Bunter, as the cake disappeared.

"Not a bit!"

"I—I'll have some bread-and-butter!"

"Not a scrap!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter. "Oh, dear! You're a beast, Toddy! Is this the way to treat an old pal?"

"I'm not treating you," said Peter, with a chuckle; "and nobody's going to treat you any more. You're going to be decent, or you won't have a whole bone left, love!"

"I—I say, I'm frightfully hungry!" groaned Bunter.

"Good!"

"I'm afraid I shall be ill!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, I know my health will suffer——"

"Hurray!"

"If I should die——" groaned Bunter.

"No such luck!" said Peter, with a shake of the head.

And Bunter gave it up.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bouncer's Last Chance!

FOOTBALL practice for the Remove went on cheerfully by moonlight. On Monday night the Form team and the scratch eleven played another practice match, with the full round moon soaring overhead. Billy Bunter had not "happened to mention" anything about it in the hearing of Mr. Quelch—neither had his sense of duty impelled him to acquaint the Remove-master with the circumstances. He stood in wholesome dread of Peter Todd and the cricket-stump—and his dread was still stronger of another application of the tortures of Tantalus. Loder, too, appeared to ignore totally the fact that the Removites were breaking the "taboo." He never made any allusion to the matter, and the juniors were quite willing to let it drop.

The Removites, too, contrived to get little naps undiscovered in the daytime, and did not rouse Mr. Quelch's suspicions with unwonted sleepiness in class.

All was going well.

There was every prospect of the team being in topping form on Wednesday afternoon, when they were to meet the mighty Fifth and the redoubtable Coker.

On Tuesday night they turned out for the last practice by moonlight.

Harry Wharton was an exacting football skipper, but he was satisfied with his team.

The final practice match was a great success. Half-past one chimed out from the clock tower as they finished.

"The last night out!" Bob Cherry chuckled. "I can't say I shall be sorry to stay in bed all night to-morrow night. It's been jolly good fun; but upon the whole I'd rather play footer in the afternoon."

"The ratherfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum!"

In exultant mood the Removites took their way back towards the schoolhouse. A light gleamed up in the Close, and Bob uttered an exclamation.

"Loder again, by gum!"

Wharton looked anxious.

"Loder wouldn't be carrying a lantern!" he muttered.

"It's Gosling!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors halted, flattening themselves against the elm trees. Gosling, the porter, loomed up, with a lantern in his hand. He was peering about as he came on, and muttering to himself.

"Wot I says is this 'ere—I'll report 'em! Breaking bounds, the young raskils! Nice goings-hon, I must say! But I'll report 'em!"

The juniors heard the words distinctly.

Gosling was looking for them. Had he seen them on the footer-field? That was not likely, or he would have come there. Wharton wondered what could have brought the school-porter out at such an hour. Gosling certainly found one of the chief solaces of his life in reporting juniors. But how did he know? It was pretty certain that he could not have got on the track without someone giving him a hint.

"'Arf-past one!" Gosling went on muttering. "'Arf-past one! That was the time—last night. I 'eard 'em distinctly, a-mutterin' outside my winder. Same time to-morrer night, says Master Smith—I 'eard his voice distinct. And wot I says is this 'ere, I'm goin' to catch 'em in the hact. But where are they?"

Gosling was within a few paces of the juniors now. If he came on, and flashed the lantern about him, the shadows of the trees would no longer conceal them.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

The muttered words of the crusty old porter had enlightened him. Vernon-Smith must have left the dormitory after them the previous night. The rope at the window had made it easy for the Bouncer to go and return undiscovered; he had been back in bed before the footballers returned.

Gosling had heard him speaking outside his window—and naturally supposed that he was speaking to others. It was a trick of the Bouncer to put Gosling on the track.

True, the stopping of the moonlight practice would not matter now—it was the last night. But if the juniors were caught outside the house at that hour—and in their football-clothes—all would be known, and the embargo on the game would in all probability be continued as a punishment—they would be detained on the following afternoon, for a certainty—and the long-expected match with the Fifth would not come off at all.

All this flashed through Wharton's mind in a moment, as the grumbling old porter came nearer.

He was making for the schoolhouse wall under the windows of the Remove dormitory, and scanning all the recesses of the Close by lantern-light as he came.

The juniors could not dash out into the moonlight without being instantly seen. And to remain where they were was to be discovered in a couple of minutes at the most.

In that emergency Wharton's brain worked quickly.

He swung himself up a tree he was crouching behind, and swung out upon a low branch. Gosling came on, flashing the lantern round him, still grumbling aloud, and murmuring uncomplimentary remarks concerning boys in general, and Greyfriars juniors in particular. Suddenly it seemed to Gosling that the heavens fell upon him and crushed him to the earth. His hat was flattened on his head, and his lantern was dashed to the ground, and was instantly extinguished.

"Gro-o-o-ogh!" spluttered Gosling, rolling on the ground. "Ow, ow! What's that? Ow!"

Wharton rolled off him, and dashed away, and the rest of the juniors followed at top speed.

They dashed breathlessly across the moonlit space, while Gosling was scrambling into a sitting posture, and grabbing wildly at the hat that was jammed down over his eyes.

"Quick's the word!" panted Wharton, as they reached the rope in the ivy.

"Buck up—he can't see us from where he is," said Bob. "But in a minute—"

The juniors scrambled up the knotted rope with a speed that they would never have deemed themselves capable of. They tumbled into the dormitory one after another, and Harry Wharton, the last to climb in, dragged in the rope and closed the window.

He pressed his face close to the glass and looked down.

A lantern gleamed below a couple of minutes later—Gosling had relighted it, and was continuing his search. Whether he knew what had fallen on him from the tree, Wharton could not tell. He saw the school-porter stand and stare up at the dark window of the dormitory for some moments, and then move slowly away—probably grumbling, though the junior could not hear him.

Wharton drew a deep breath as he turned away from the window.

"All serene!" he gasped.

Bob Cherry gave a breathless chuckle.

"That was a narrow shave, if you like."

"The narrowfulness was terrific!"

"If you hadn't dropped on him, Harry—"

"He would have dropped on us!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anything gone wrong?" yawned the Bounder, from his bed.

"Yes, you cad!" said Harry, gritting his teeth. "But you have failed again."

"I! What have I had to do with it?" asked Vernon-Smith, in a tone of surprise.

"You went out of the dorm. last night—we heard Gosling muttering, and we know exactly what you said. And if he had caught us we'd have ragged you till you couldn't crawl, you-treacherous cad!" said Harry savagely.

"Let's rag the rotter, anyway!" said Tom Brown. "He tried to give us away."

"Oh, let him alone," said Harry. "He's failed—and he's not worth touching. He can't do us any harm after this."

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The outsider!"

And with those remarks, and many more of the same kind, addressed to the Bounder, the footballers turned in. Vernon-Smith lay silent, gnawing his lips. He had failed—and, as Harry Wharton had said, he could not do any harm. It had been his last chance, and it had failed!

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Day of the Match.

MR. QUELCH was very pleased with his class the next morning.

The Remove were exceedingly good.

If their Form-master should have another tantrum, as they called it, and detain any of them in the afternoon, all their noble efforts would be wasted. That consideration was enough to make the conduct of the Removites that morning approach very near to the angelic.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

NEXT
MONDAY

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

When he dismissed the class after morning lessons, Mr. Quelch was pleased to utter a word or two of commendation. "I am very pleased with you this morning, my boys," he said. "This good conduct shows what you are capable of when you—er—try to do your duty. I hope it will not be necessary for me to inflict any further detention upon you. I trust that you will enjoy your game of football this afternoon."

And the Removites chorussed:

"Thank you, sir!"

"You're very kind, sir!"

And they all smiled as they marched out of the Form-room.

After dinner, when they came into the Close, they beheld the great Coker stepping into a trap. Coker was going to the station to meet his Aunt Judy. He assured Blundell that he would be back in good time for the match.

"Oh, don't hurry, old chap," said Blundell affably. "If you should happen to be detained, you know, we'll find somebody."

Coker glared.

"I sha'n't happen to be detained!" he snapped.

"Might like to show your aunt over Friardale, or—or Pegg—or take her for a little walk by the sea," suggested Blundell. "Then you could bring her along here in time to see the second half."

"I shall bring her along in time to see the first half!" said Coker grimly.

"Well, don't break your neck about it," said the captain of the Fifth. "Fitzgerald says he will play if you should happen to stay out."

"I sha'n't happen to stay out; and Fitzgerald can go and eat coke!"

And with that reply, Horace Coker gathered up his reins and drove away in great style. Blundell turned to Potter with a grin.

"Jolly lucky it's only those kids we are playing," he remarked. "Queer how Coker seems set on playing footer. Queer fancies fellows get into their heads sometimes, don't they?"

"They do—they does!" said Potter.

"I suppose his Aunt Judy could play as well as he does. Well, if the old lady sees him playing, it will be a treat for her—good as a Punch and Judy show any day," remarked Brand. "My hat! I wouldn't risk it if I were Coker! If I had a nephew who played footer as he does, I'd cut him out of my will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars fellows were quite interested in Aunt Judy. The good dame had paid more than one visit to Greyfriars. Indeed, the fellows said that Coker would never have got out of the Shell till he was a hundred years old if his Aunt Judy hadn't come to Greyfriars and simply ragged the Head into putting him in the Fifth. Aunt Judy thought all the world of her Horace, and she tipped him magnificently whenever she came to see him. She firmly believed that there was nothing Horace could not do, and do well; and this afternoon she was going to see what he could do!

The Greyfriars fellows looked forward with anticipation to Coker's performances. Many fellows had announced their intention of cutting practice themselves in order to watch the Form-match and see old Coker playing the giddy ox. The only fellow in the school who had faith in Horace Coker's prowess was his younger brother, who was abnormally clever, and was in the Sixth Form, over Horace's head in the school. Reggie Coker firmly believed that Horace was next door to an International in form. Needless to say, Reggie Coker was not a footballer.

The captain of the Fifth was not without hopes that Coker's aunt would keep him late for the match. But Horace had made up his mind about that. A quarter of an hour before the time to kick-off, the trap came whirling in at the school gates, and the fellows gave Coker and his aunt a cheer. Aunt Judy, in a sweet smile and a prehistoric bonnet, looked round her with an expression that seemed to say: "See how Horace drives!"

The pony in the trap was old and tame, but old and tame as he was, Horace nearly succeeded in driving him into the porch of the Head's house, and then had a narrow escape of charging up the steps of the School House. But the trap was stopped safely—by a miracle, Nugent declared—and Coker helped his aunt out.

"Play begins in a quarter of an hour," said Blundell, as he took off his cap to Aunt Judy. "If you'd like to show your aunt round Greyfriars, Coker, and—and cut the first half—"

"My aunt is going to see me play," said Coker. "Reggie, old man, look after auntie while I'm getting into my things, will you?"

"Right-ho!" said Coker minor, of the Sixth. "This way, auntie, and I'll find you a good seat. It's going to be a splendid match. Horace is playing. Lots of fellows are leaving their own game just to watch Horace play this afternoon."

And Aunt Judy purred approval.

Coker came striding down to the ground, with a coat on over his football things. The two teams were ready.

The Remove looked very fit.

Blundell, who knew nothing of the moonlight practice for the past week, wondered to see them so fresh and fit as he looked at them. "Certainly, they looked capable of putting up a great game. But after all, they were only juniors—they were out of practice—it would be quite safe to spring Coker, or two or three Cokers, on them," Blundell said to himself. There was no doubt whatever about the result of the match in the minds of the Fifth. Blundell's instructions to his men, in fact, were explicit.

"We're going to take the Remove down a long peg, for good and all," he said. "They've got to be shown up, and made to look the silly asses they are, challenging a senior form. Pile up the goals in the first half—say nine or ten. In the second half we'll laugh at 'em, and make 'em feel properly small. After a match like that, I don't think they'll have the awful nerve to challenge the Fifth again."

"Hear, hear!" said the Fifth-Formers.

There was quite a crowd round the field as they went on to play. All the Remove who were not in the team were there as spectators. The Bounder had come, with envy and uncharitableness in his breast, and a scowl on his face. Even Billy Bunter was there. Juniors of the Third, the Fourth, and the Shell crowded round in great anticipation. The moonlight practice was still a secret. But it had leaked out among the junior forms that the Remove had a surprise in store for the Fifth—that somehow or other they had contrived to have a rod in pickle for Blundell and his merry men. And all the juniors, of course, wanted to see Blundell & Co. beaten to the wide. Wingate of the Sixth had strolled down to look on, and Loder and several other seniors. Their object was to see Coker playing the "giddy ox." Indeed, Hobson of the Shell, who was an amateur photographer, had brought his camera, with the express intention of snapping Coker in the act, whenever he charged one of his own side, or put the ball through his own goal.

Bigger, heavier, older, and much more swaggering, the Fifth looked a formidable team for the Remove to tackle, as they lined up. But Wharton's team, who, of course, could not equal their adversaries in size or weight, hoped to get level on speed, resource, and combination. Brains are required in football, and the Remove flattered themselves that they had the brains.

Harry Wharton won the toss, and gave the Fifth the wind to kick off against. The whistle rang out—Courtney of the Sixth was kindly refereeing the match—the ball rolled from Blundell's foot, and the match started.

Coker minor and Aunt Judy had good seats to command a good view of the play. Aunt Judy was a little short-sighted, but she was armed with a lorgnette, which she continually turned in the wrong direction. In footer rig, Coker looked very much like the rest, so that in the quick movements of the field, it was not easy for the old lady to distinguish him from his comrades. But she had an infallible way of selecting Horace. Whenever a player was cheered, Aunt Judy concluded that they were cheering Coker, and she clapped her hands too with great enthusiasm.

The Fifth had started with a terrific rush, intending to bear down the juniors, and wipe the field clear of them, so to speak. Then they were going to pelt the goal, and send the ball in time after time, amid roars of laughter from the spectators.

That was the programme. But the match did not go according to the programme. The heavy rush of the Fifth seemed to carry all before it. They came swooping down on the junior goal; but Johnny Bull, at right back, sent the ball past mid-field with a long kick, and the Fifth found that they had overshot the mark. For the Remove forwards were on the ball immediately, and they rushed it on. The backs dashed in. Mark Linley passed to Harry Wharton, Wharton passed out on the other side to Nugent, and Nugent let the wing man have it. He centred to Wharton at the psychological moment, and Wharton slammed it home. Bland of the Fifth, in goal, was prepared to roar with laughter, according to programme, when the leather pelted the Remove custodian. But he was not quite prepared to deal with that tearing shot. He grabbed at the ball too late, and it went into the net—and Bland's face was a study.

From the juniors round the field came a wild roar:

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

And Aunt Judy clapped her hands enthusiastically, in the firm belief that her beloved and admired Horace had taken that goal.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal!

HARRY WHARTON'S eyes were dancing now. The Remove were in great spirits.

They had broken their duck—it was first blood to the Remove. One up for the Lower Fourth in the first ten minutes of the game. The juniors round the field yelled themselves hoarse. Even the Bounder, forgetting his own annoyance, was seen clapping his hands and shouting, in the excitement of the moment.

Bland tossed the leather out with a grim look. Blundell and his men were perceptibly less swanky as they lined up again. That goal was a fluke, of course—ahem!—but it showed that the Fifth Form programme would have to be modified. Piling up goals amid roars of laughter was evidently "off."

Blundell passed the word to his men to be a bit more careful. It would not do to give chances away. And he noted with inward uneasiness that Horace Coker was simply bristling with keenness, determined to do great things that day. Blundell knew the kind of great things Coker was likely to do when he got going.

The Fifth had the pleasure of kicking off again, and the game went on. They were determined to wipe out that misfortune, and they made a terrific attack on the Remove goal. But Bulstrode, in goal, was in great form. Bulstrode had developed great powers as a goal-keeper. He was equal to all the attacks of the Fifth. When they had beaten halves and backs, the Fifth shooters found that the target was still out of their reach. A foot, or a fist, or a head was always ready, and the ball was stopped; and after a fierce struggle at goal, the backs cleared, and gave the forwards another chance. There was a stiff tussle in mid-field, and again a surge towards the Remove goal. But the defence was always sound.

Then came a determined Remove attack, and the Fifth—greatly to their astonishment—were forced to give a corner. And the corner materialised! Harry Wharton's unfailing foot was ready, and it drove the ball home—and Bland was beaten again. He could have sworn that Wharton was sending it into the far corner of the net with his right; but he put it in over Bland's head with his left, as it turned out, and it was another goal up for the Remove. Blundell might have saved it himself, but fortunately—for the Remove—Coker charged his captain just in time.

The juniors yelled.

"Goal!"

"Two up! Hurrah!"

"Wake up, Fifth!" chortled the junior crowd. "Don't go to sleep! Don't make it a walk-over! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fifth, almost desperate as time drew near, made a terrific effort, and succeeded in getting the leather home just before the whistle went. The first half ended with the score two for the Remove against one of their opponents.

Bob Cherry chuckled gleefully as he sucked a lemon.

"The Fifth seem a little bit waxy," he remarked. "Did you hear what Blundell was saying to Coker? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorussed the Removeites.

"The waxfulness of the esteemed duffers is terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And it certainly was. Blundell & Co. were very much annoyed. The programme had not been adhered to at all. Instead of the roars of laughter against the Remove, what had happened? There had been roars of laughter, certainly, but the Fifth Form team had been the object of them. That was not at all what Blundell & Co. had wanted. Instead of spending the second half chipping the Remove, the Fifth had to spend it struggling to get the score level—a proceeding quite outside their original programme.

Blundell & Co. looked quite grim when they lined up for the second half. They had the wind behind them now, and they were glad of that small advantage, so seriously had they already learned to take the Remove. Thus had the mighty fallen!

Harry Wharton kicked off cheerily. The Remove were in high spirits. They had the lead, and they meant to keep it. But the Fifth were in a truculent humour, and the most truculent of all was Horace Coker. Coker felt that something had to be done. Defeat loomed over the mighty Fifth; and to Coker it was quite obvious that it rested with him—Horace Coker—to turn failure into success—to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. And in spite of frowning looks from his captain, Horace Coker sailed in to distinguish himself.

He succeeded.

Loud cheers, of ironical tone, greeted the efforts of Coker. When he passed the ball fairly to Wharton's feet the crowd cheered when he kicked it half the length of the field towards his own goal they roared, when he charged Blundell off the ball—by mistake, and killed an almost certain score—they went into hysterics.

"Go it, Coker!"

"Give Coker a chance!"

"Pile in, Coker!"

And Aunt Judy, hearing those ironical shouts, purred with pride. It was as clear to her as it was to Coker himself that the whole fate of the match depended upon Horace.

Perhaps it did. But for Coker's aid, the score would have been level by now; as it was, the Remove were still ahead. And half of the second act was played. A terrible fear seized Blundell that the Fifth would not even succeed in getting level. His feelings towards Coker were almost homicidal. It had seemed quite safe to play Coker in a mere junior match. Defeat was so utterly out of the question. But—

There was a very large "but" now. And to be beaten by a junior team—beaten by the Remove—beaten after all their lofty "side." It was unthinkable. But it was very probable, unthinkable as it was.

Blundell was a great player himself, and he exerted all his powers now. Fortune smiled upon him once more; there was still ten minutes to go when Blundell put the ball into the Remove net.

Ten minutes to go, and the score level!

Both sides piled in now with the keenest energy. In spite of a gruelling match, the juniors seemed quite fresh. One or two of them, perhaps, had bellows to mend; but the greater part of the team seemed fresh as paint. Right up to the junior goal the attack came surging, and Bulstrode defended manfully.

Again the attack was stalled off, so to speak; as Vernon-Smith remarked in his slangy way, the Fifth did not succeed in potting the red. Vernon-Smith had quite forgotten his personal feeling on the matter now. He was yelling as loudly as any junior there when the Remove swept on for the last attack.

With a beautiful exhibition of short passing the Remove forwards brought the ball up the field. Coker rushed in, and charged Wharton off the ball, but not till he had passed safely to Nugent. Wharton rolled over, and Coker rolled over him; but both were up in a second.

Coker was seeing red—it was touch and go now. Coker felt that it was up to him to pull the game out of the fire. He rushed on, and charged his own backs, and quite settled their chance of stopping the rush of the Remove forwards.

While Coker was rendering yeoman service to the Remove in this way, the ball came rushing down to goal. Inky centred to Wharton. A Fifth Form back was rushing upon the captain of the Remove, having escaped from Coker. Bland was all hands and eyes—the shot could never come off, but Wharton didn't want it to. He heeled out the ball to Nugent, who was ready. He received the charging back

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

with a grin. Nugent sent in the shot before Bland knew that he had the ball, and there was a terrific roar:

"Goal!"

Three goals to two!

The Remove had won!

Then the crowd surged on the field, shouting, cheering, yelling. The Bouncer was the first to clap Wharton on the back. Nugent was seized and carried off the field shoulder-high. The Remove had won—the mighty Fifth were beaten. Blundell & Co. had to hide their diminished heads. The excitement was almost delirious. The field rang with thunderous cheers.

"Has Horace won?" Aunt Judy asked her younger nephew.

And Coker minor grinned ruefully.

"No; the other side's won! Horace couldn't play a whole team by himself, you know. If they'd all been like Horace—"

Coker major, red and breathless, stopped to speak to his aunt as he came off.

"Well, we've lost the match," said Coker. "I did my best. If I had had better backing, I should have dished them!"

"I am sure you would, Horace," said Aunt Judy fondly. "How many runs did you take, dear?"

Aunt Judy's ideas about cricket and football were a little mixed.

Coker grinned.

"I think I took more blessed runs than any other chap on the field!" he said. "I feel as if I'd been running for a hundred years. Well, the Remove has won. But if I'd been captain of the Fifth—"

And Coker made a gesture which implied that he was willing to leave the rest to the imagination.

Blundell said afterwards that it was only the presence of a lady that saved him from homicide after the match. He had come off the field with the full intention of slaughtering Coker.

The great match had been played—and won!

The Remove rejoiced.

It was their first match of the season, and it was one of the toughest, and they had won it! And they triumphed. What puzzled their opponents most was the wonderful form the Remove were in, considering that they had had no practice, and certainly the great match would have ended differently but for Harry Wharton's great wheeze and the football training IN THE MOONLIGHT!

THE END.

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT! DOING IT!! DOING WHAT?

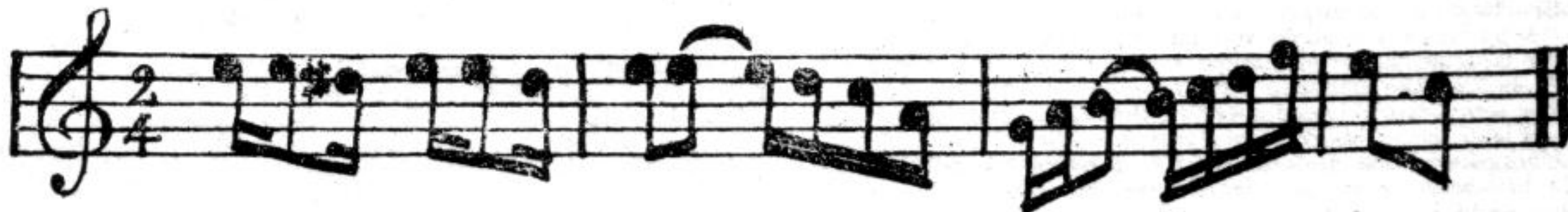
Why, ordering this Wednesday's issue of "THE GEM" LIBRARY TO-DAY,

in order that they may read

"THE RAG-TIME SCHOOLBOYS!"

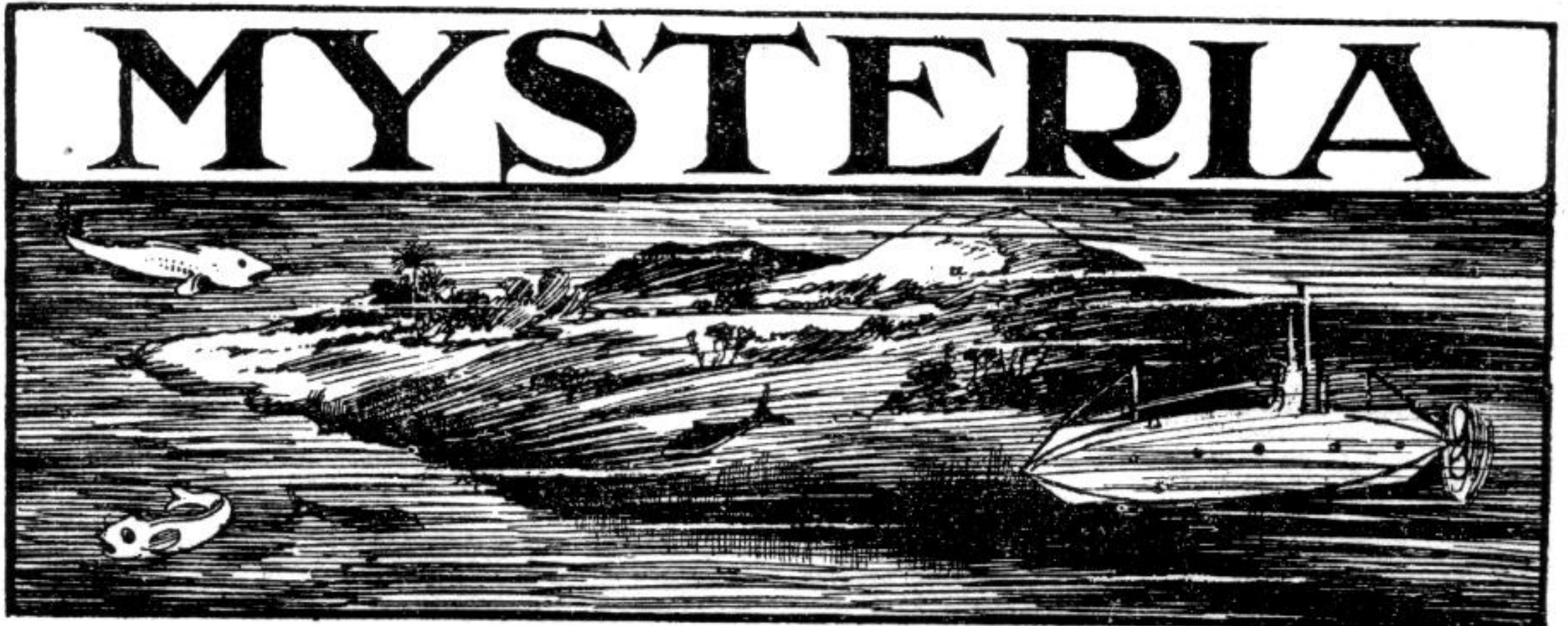
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

DON'T MISS IT! DON'T MISS IT! DON'T MISS IT!



Hip Pip Pip! Hip pippip! We Take the Cake, the Latest Rag-Time Band, Oh!

Our Grand New Serial Story!



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins, and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, which slips out of its secret cave on its mysterious new quest. Ferrers Lord makes for an uncharted island, which he intends to use as his headquarters, and, arrived there, he lands with a party to make the acquaintance of the inhabitants, leaving Prout in charge of the launch. Prout captures a wonderful talking cockatoo, which has evidently escaped from some vessel, but which is now enrolled as one of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, as James Jimson, A.B. Back on the submarine the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fireball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. They ignore the warning, and Redcap—by name Julius Faber—returns with a party of ragged-looking ruffians, and forces them to leave the island by swimming, under cover of the fog. Ching-Lung, remaining behind, is captured and imprisoned in a cave, but, escaping, runs further into the cave, with his enemies in pursuit. Suddenly there is a dull splash, in the darkness as the prince plunges headlong into some black pit of poisonous water. On rising to the surface, he finds the pit surrounded by his enemies, bearing torches, and armed with revolvers. Ching-Lung surrenders, and is again bound and carried to the mouth of the cave. One of his captors, a man named Bullock, less brutal than the rest, refreshes him with some water.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ching-Lung Escapes.

"Give us a 'and, Bullock!" grunted Stumpy. "Ketch 'old 'o this!"

Between them they straightened out the rope. Ching-Lung was not long in discovering that the wooden-legged man was a master in the science of tying knots.

He roped the prince up most dexterously, and rubbed his ebony hands with delight.

"If you can crawl out of them, you brimstone Chow," he grinned gleefully, "then an elephant can get through the key'ole. Are they neat, hey? Are they tight? Do they nip into your flesh? Do you like 'em? Burn you! I'd like to stick one round your neck, and set your yaller carcass swingin' like the pendulum of a grandfather's clock!"

He lifted Ching-Lung like a sack, and dumped him down heavily, with his back against the left wall of the cave. Then the three blackguards squatted down to eat and drink.

"Hallo, Jimson! Poor old Jimson! Jimson's a stiff 'un, ain't he?"

Snarling out an angry oath, Stumpy scrambled up.

"Why don't you shoot the rotten parrot?" asked Bullock.

"By George, if it don't come to me this time I will shoot it!" snarled the cripple. "I'll blow him to bits!"

He seized an old-fashioned muzzle-loader, and leaned forward to listen as he rammed down the charge.

Ching-Lung was almost afraid to attempt the trick again. He had nothing to gain by it now, except a little amusement, and he was not in a condition to enjoy anything of the kind.

"Hallo—hallo! Where's poor Jimson, mate?" croaked the voice.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Stumpy put a cap on the nipple of the gun. A few seconds later there was a loud report, followed by an angry yell.

The cripple, helping himself along by the gun, and swearing as fast as his tongue could move, came limping in. One of his stumps was about nine inches shorter than the other, and the end of it was splintered and jagged.

"What have you been doin'?"

"Slipped down, and let off the brimstone-gun!" he snapped. "Stop grinnin', or I'll brain one of you! Is it anythin' to laugh at?"

"Thank your luck it was only a timber foot," said Bullock, "and quit swearin'. I ain't no saint, but swearin' like that don't do nobody good. Jimson was always at it, and what became of 'im?"

"Jimson's down wi' Davy Jones. Poor old Jimson! He's a stiff 'un, ain't he?"

Ching-Lung felt impelled to answer Bullock's question as to the mysterious fate of James Jimson.

Bullock glanced over his shoulder with a look that was almost one of fear.

"If I didn't know as that was a bird," he said, "I'd think it was the mate's ghost. I don't feel easy 'bout Jimson, and never did. He was drunk, but he was a good seaman, drunk or sober, and could ha' walked a chalk-line in the biggest gale as ever blowed. 'Ow he came to roll overboard in a dead calm set is a licker. He was drunk, but who ever seed him sober?"

"He committed suicide," said the cripple. "Got sick o' run, and thought he'd try water for a change. He, he, he he! I'll bet the first taste on it killed him dead. Water

warn't in his line. He'd sailed on water thirty year, but he never drank enough on it to drown a flea. Don't be so white-livered, Bullock. If ye want to see Jimson's ghost, leave the cork out o' a bottle o' rum, and the smell'll fetch him clean out o' Davy Jones's locker."

His Imperial Highness of Kwai-Hal was much too uncomfortable even to grin or smile. He tingled everywhere—in his eyes especially. Had he been immersed in a bath of hot mustard, the effect could have been little more miserable. He crouched back and tried to sleep. The prince always made the best of a bad bargain, and, as he knew himself, he had seldom made a worse one during all his adventures.

Stumpy unstrapped both wooden legs, pared away the splintered end of the left one, and cut the other down to fit it. The result was that he was more crippled than before, and when he tried the effect of the shortened limbs, he out-did himself in blasphemy.

Bullock put more wood on the fire, and brought out more rum from a hidden hole in the rock. The taste of the liquor soothed Stumpy. After demolishing the contents of the bottle, he tried to sing. Darkness was closing down. The fire shone redder, and the light that fell into the cave had changed from white to blue, and from blue to hazy grey.

"There's wuss things than rum, ain't there?" cried the cripple, fixing a glassy eye on the fire. "Is it good? Is it 'ot? Do it burn? Do it give me gout? No, no! I ain't got no feet. He, he, he, he! I ain't got no toes to prickle, and tingle, and smart. Not me! Fill it up again. Water? I don't touch no brimstone water. Do I take it neat? I does—burnin', blazin', blisterin' neat! I ain't Jimson, neither. I'll tip ye a stave."

He drained the mug dry, and sang, in a cracked falsetto, beating time with the empty bottle:

"Who stuck a knife into Jimson?
I don't know.
He's food for fishes, anyhow, ain't he?
Ho, ho, ho, ho!
He was a brimstone idiot, warn't he?
I didn't do it. No, no, no! Not much!

The other two, slightly more sober than the cripple, laughed, and applauded this magnificent poetry uproariously.

"You ought to sing in a hopera, Stumps," said Bullock, with a hiccup. "You'd make your fortune. Shall we bust another bottle? We ought to 'ave summat to keep the rain out, arter bein' soaked all day."

Their clothes steamed in the heat of the fire with a most unpleasant smell. Bullock began to nod, as the fumes of the fiery liquor took effect. It was plain that he was not such a hardened drunkard as his two companions.

He sprawled down on the sand, and dropped off to sleep. Stumpy seemed spirit proof, though he became noisier. He sang another song about a lady called Merry Meg, the pride of Portsmouth Town, and danced an extraordinary breakdown on his stumps, to the gratification of the other seaman, who was now in a drowsy condition.

Finding himself the only member of the party awake, the cripple drank and smoked steadily for half an hour. He was still comparatively sober. With great deliberation, he spread out three blankets for himself, and scraped up a heap of sand to form a pillow.

Ching-Lung hoped he was going off to sleep, but Stumpy was not ready. Taking a sheet of canvas from a corner, he began to sew something that looked very much like a shroud. Then, when he had finished, he wriggled his body, wooden legs first, into the canvas bag, threw a blanket over it, drained the last drops out of the bottle, and lay down.

Ching-Lung quickly discovered why the man had covered himself so snugly. Drops of water formed themselves on various portions of the roof of the cave and splashed down. The sand, too, though fairly dry on the surface, was quite moist a few inches below. The cripple knew how to guard against rheumatism.

Presently all three were snoring steadily. Night had fallen and a breeze moaned through the ravine. Ching-Lung began to struggle with his bonds. For a long half-hour he tried every trick and twist he knew, in vain. Once Stumpy's red-rimmed eyes opened and glared at him suspiciously, and Ching-Lung remained perfectly still. The cripple dropped into a drunken slumber.

Again the prince strained, and wriggled, and panted. The knots were cunningly tied, but they were yielding perceptibly. He rolled over to where the saucepan stood, and lifted the lid with his teeth. Ching-Lung managed to plunge his wrists into the warm, greasy broth, and he kept them there, to allow the liquor to soak into the strands.

Unless any of the sleepers awoke, or someone else came, he felt that he was as good as free. His right hand slid easily through the greasy loop, and the rest was simply a matter of seconds.

"Whew!" he gasped. "That took some managing."

He bent over each sleeper in turn, and relieved them of their visible weapons. There was little risk of rousing them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

Their heavy, regular breathing told him that. His eye fell on the cripple's needle and a ball of waxed silk. Ching-Lung smiled, and picked both articles up.

He began with Bullock. In and out shot the needle, stitching the legs of the man's trousers together down to the top of his sea-boots and back again. Bullock snored on in blissful ignorance. Then came the other man's turn. Finishing with him, Ching-Lung leaned over Stumpy and sewed the canvas bag up tightly at the shoulders. A rope gently inserted under the other end of the wooden legs settled the matter in that direction.

"Good-bye," grinned Ching-Lung, kissing his hand to the sleepers, "but not for ever. I mean to come back, and you'll be very sorry to see me. Sleep on!"

But Ching-Lung was far from being out of the wood yet. He emptied the powder-flask into the saucepan, took the two rifles, and walked out. In the narrow, overshadowed ravine the darkness was impenetrable. He went carefully, tapping the wall with the butt of one rifle, and throwing the other away as useless.

Except for the moaning of the wind and the occasional trickle of water, the night was utterly silent. Once only he heard the faint bleating of a goat. There was not a single star in the sky to act as a guide. As yet, this mattered little. His one aim was to get clear of the ravine, and he could only follow its windings and evade, as best he could, the numerous rocks and boulders which littered it.

"If I meet anybody," he thought, "and there isn't room to pass, somebody will get seriously damaged. This is a game of blind-man's buff. Bother the thing!"

A stream of water poured down on his head. The ground was soft and specked with puddles. The air, too, seemed fresher, and tasted more salty, and he fancied he could hear the moaning of the surf.

Ching-Lung flattened himself against the side of the ravine. He had heard the splutter of a match.

"Here comes the trouble," he murmured, "and I'm just about ready to meet it."

Swinging the clubbed rifle above his head, he waited for his foe.

On a Fruitless Journey—Nearly Run Down—Where Is the Submarine?

The little dinghy sailed well and breasted the heavy seas in gallant style. But she made too much leeway. With a centre-board to help her, she might have weathered the hidden point. As it was, she drifted steadily out to sea, for the off-shore currents were very powerful.

"It can't be done, Prout," said Ferrers Lord. "It's quite impossible."

"Quite, sir," growled the disappointed steersman. "We're slipin' away a mile in every two. You can 'ardly hear the surf at all."

"Down hard a-lee, then, and put her about."

They obeyed the order promptly, and the boat came up to the wind, and shipped an unpleasant quantity of water. Their failure made the men somewhat sulky, but the task was impossible. It was bitterly cold, and seething waves rolled white under the keel, flinging spray over them.

"We would have been fourteen or fifteen miles out by dawn," said the millionaire.

"Bad luck to any boat wid sails!" growled Barry. "Give me a thing wid a shover behoid ut to push ut along. Fact, ut's heart-breakin' to have to rely on a dirrthy bit o' rag to kape yez movin'."

"Perhaps the wind'll back a bit," said Prout hopefully.

"Ut will—when yez can grow a crop of hair," said Barry; "and that won't be this wake. Ochone, was there iver a man as did any mortal good wid a silly wind-jammer, barrin' Nelson, and he'd only got wan oie? Sails is only fit to cover haystacks wid!"

"It's bad enough, souse me, wi'out your grumblin'," said Maddock, who was pulling steadily to help the sails. "Stow it, Irish. You'll be too tired to talk afore you're home."

Maddock turned out to be a true prophet. The boat travelled very slowly. It seemed more than probable that they would have to wait until morning before they could enter the creek. To beat up and try to round the other point of the island was out of the question in the dark, for they would certainly have drifted ashore. For several hours they were buffeted and tossed about, their sole guide being the thunder of the breakers. Fortunately, the breeze did not increase, but, if anything, the darkness became denser.

"Ut's loike livin' in an ould ink-bottle," said O'Rooney, with intense disgust. "Oi belave Oi shall be saysick primsintly. How are yez, Gan? Bedad, yez don't make a lot of row, sonny."

NEXT MONDAY;

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. Order Early.

Gan-Waga had not spoken a single word from start to finish. He seemed half asleep. Suddenly he lifted the sail and looked ahead. His sharp ears had caught an unusual sound.

"Luffs," he shouted hoarsely—"Luffs!"

Ferrers Lord put up the helm, bringing the dinghy closer to the wind. In an instant, the vast shadowy form of a vessel was towering above them, only to be swallowed by the darkness.

"By hokey," said Prout, "we were nearly under 'er. Where was 'er lights?"

She was showing no lights. Of that they were all positive. Gan-Waga had heard the creaking of her spars and the hiss of water under her bows in the nick of time to save them from being run down. She was a three-master, as far as they could tell. Only a perfect knowledge of the water, or absolute madness itself, could account for such reckless seamanship.

"S-sh!" said Ferrers Lord. "She's bringing up. I thought I heard her cable rattling."

The flapping of their own sails, the rush of the waves, and the boom of the surf drowned all other sounds.

"Oi'll wager that's ould man Faber's tank!" said Barry. "All Oi ax is the pleasure of hangin' that spalpeen to the yarrd-arm, and thin scuttlin' her. 'Good on your ear-sight, Gan, me bhoy! Yez wasn't much too soon. There's some use in an ear the soize of a wagon-wheel afther all!"

Maddox pulled doggedly.

"Fireworks, souse me!" he called.

Momentarily lighting up the spars of the mysterious craft, a rocket hissed into the sky. It had hardly burst before another rocket streamed upwards from the shore.

"Ut must be bonfoire noight, whin sthars shoine broight, and the crackers bang, and the cats all foight," said Barry O'Rooney. "Phwat are they doin', at all, at all?"

"It's a signal o' some sort," answered Prout. "By hokey, whin I signal to the varmint, I'll do it wi' a gun!"

The vessel had anchored, they were almost sure. She showed a light that bobbed dimly up and down. Prout watched it long and fixedly.

"By hokey," he said, more to himself than to anybody else, "it wouldn't be bad fun to creep down yonder and cut 'er adrift."

"And ayther git stove flat agin her bows, or have a chunk of iron pitched through our bottom," grunted Barry. "As my uncle Dinnis said whin the kitchen biler blowed up—"

"Oh, scalp your uncle Dennis!" snapped Maddock. "I'm fair sick of him, souse me! Let him rest, can't yer? Why are you allus diggin' that bloke up? I wish you'd been sittin' in that blessed kitchen biler, I does!"

Barry succeeded in lighting his pipe, as only a sailor can, in spite of spray and wind, and felt comfortable. They had only a rough idea of their bearings, but the entrance to the little harbour could not be far away. Time dragged on miserably, and they, like many other mariners, longed fervently for the dawn. They had achieved nothing at all. Except the knowledge that, with an outgoing tide and a wind from the present quarter, no small craft with a fault for making leeway, could weather the point to the south of the island. And they felt they had paid a heavy price for that almost worthless scrap of information.

The first pale grey streak of the east was welcomed with a cheer. It spread rapidly up the sky. In spite of their efforts to hug the wind, they were a long league from the island, which lay half-veiled in a cloud of mist. There was an ugly sky above them, and the sea looked a treacherous muddy green.

"Can you see where we are, Tom?"

"Well to the nor'-east on her, sir," said Prout, "and the tide's in our favour. It's about a seven-mile run down to the creek. I'm only guessin', by hokey; but I ain't much out."

They rubbed their cramped limbs, and headed for the misty shore as the watery sun climbed up the sky. Prout was not very wide of the mark. When the mist cleared they made out the vessel that had nearly run them down. She lay at anchor about two miles from the cliffs.

"She ain't nigh as big as she looked," said Maddock; "but she's a niceish craft. Yankee, by the style on her. It would take 'em all they knew to claw her off there if the wind was to back and blow a 'alf gale, souse me."

The millionaire inspected her through his powerful binoculars, but made no comment. Very soon the mist hid her. There was very little surf on the bar, and they rode it safely and gained the comparatively calm waters of the creek.

Then in utter amazement they stared at one another, as if a miracle had happened, for the submarine had utterly vanished.

(Another grand, long instalment next week.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 293.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

SPECIAL NEW FEATURE!

Greyfriars Lyrics

BY

"The Magnet" Library's Own Rhymester.

No. 8.—FRANK NUGENT.

May Fate befriend you, worthy Frank—
The finest motives fire you!
Your character is void of "swank,"
For which we all admire you.
You are a white man to the core,
True blue and tender-hearted;
And all your chums would miss you sore
If Fortune found you parted.

When Wharton saved Frank Nugent's life
Frank previously had licked him;
The cruel current's whirling strife
Bade fair to claim a victim.
But Harry, though a fiery youth,
Had pluck exceeding passion,
Or Nugent would, in very truth,
Have died in dreadful fashion.

Right bravely Wharton saved his foe—
He was a splendid swimmer.
When Nugent thanked him, he did show
Of gladness not a glimmer.
But Franky praised him all the same,
Until the wrongs were righted;
And very soon, in friendship's name,
The pair became united.

Frank's deep affection made him glad
To serve his gallant leader;
And now he is the favourite lad
Of many a MAGNET reader.
He figures in the Famous Five—
A hero without question;
And keeps that brilliant band alive,
With every bright suggestion.

In every wheeze he takes a part,
At feeds you'll find him munching;
And Highcliffe cads have learned to smart
By reason of his punching.
When in girl's garb he joined a ball,
To Smith he did his grief takē;
The Bounder was not pleased at all—
His eye required a beefsteak!

In course of time poor Franky found
His name was in bad odour;
And all the fellows on him frowned,
From Vernon-Smith to Loder.
The rumour that he haunted pubs
Was viewed with keen revulsion;
With Smithy, Frank had several rubs,
And then received expulsion.

But Truth soon lifted up her head,
And Smith's deserts weren't pleasant;
But let the dead past hide its dead—
We'll think about the present.
The Bounder always was a worm—
A bugbear to the nation;
But Nugent, till his final term,
Will win our approbation!

The Subject of next Monday's Lyric will be
JOHNNY BULL.



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
 EVERY WEDNESDAY
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

"P.S.—I have thought of calling this club the 'Magnet Club,' with your permission. Correspondents who desire a reply should enclose a stamp."

I shall shortly expect to hear that Master James has succeeded in adding one more to the number of the successful "Magnet" Leagues and clubs that are in operation in many districts both in England and the Colonies.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

By Frank Richards.

Our next long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled as above, reveals Vernon-Smith, of the Remove Form, better known among the juniors as the Bounder, in a new light. Refused a place in the Remove Form football eleven, on account of the ill-natured tricks for which he is noted on the football-field, he sets out to prove his worth as a footballer. This he does in a sufficiently astounding manner, and succeeds in causing public opinion in the Form to veer round once more in his favour, so that cries of

"BRAVO, THE BOUNDER!"

resound through the playing-fields of Greyfriars.

PROPOSED LONDON "MAGNET CLUB."

In pursuit of my policy of encouraging my readers to form social clubs or leagues among themselves, by means of which they may be able to meet together to read and discuss their favourite story-papers, I am able to offer would-be members of "Magnet" Leagues facilities for getting into touch with one another by publishing notices and letters on the subject on this page, from time to time.

I have pleasure this week in thus giving publicity to a letter recently received from a keen reader residing in the neighbourhood of Victoria, London.

This is how the letter reads:

"19, Tachbrook Street,
 Victoria, London, S.W.

"Dear Editor,—Being a great reader of your weekly papers, 'The Magnet,' etc., and wishing to increase the popularity of the above-mentioned books, I have really got a good idea. I have discovered a very nice large room, which is not very expensive, and would make a ripping club-room, and I also know of a lovely ground for cricket and football, and also a place where rowing is allowed at a very cheap rate. It would be an all-round club. I know it is not a very favourable time of the year to start a club, but then we have the footer season, and it would be very nice of an evening to be at the club, where naturally all indoor games would be indulged in. Naturally, this cannot be done on nothing. I have enough money to start the club going, but when the prospective members have seen each other, and arranged everything, a small subscription would be required from the members of the club.

"And, to come to the good part of the idea, if you do not object, perhaps you would reserve a small part of your chat page for notices of the club. This would save stamps, and also encourage others to join. I am not writing this letter to pass the time away.

"Perhaps, if you do not think this letter too long, you would be kind enough to print it, and oblige yours truly,

"D. JAMES."

THIS WEEK'S GREAT PROGRAMME.

In our splendid companion paper this week my chums are offered unusually sumptuous fare in the way of really delightful, interesting, and amusing reading. In "The Gem" Library,

"THE RAG-TIME SCHOOLBOYS!"

(By Martin Clifford)

offers something refreshingly original and amusing in the way of school stories. Tom Merry & Co.'s Rag-time Band creates a great sensation at St. Jim's; also, it goes without saying, a great deal of noise. It is a story no one who appreciates a good school tale could help delighting in.

HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL MAGAZINE.—No. 5.

This gives you eleven pages of literary matter, and provides something material to show to your printer to get a quotation. In addition to these pages, I should start with two pages of advertisements, charging 10s. per page, dividing that up into four quarters—2s. 6d. each; and if your magazine is a monthly affair, make a reduction of twenty-five per cent. per insertion for a yearly advt. Count thirteen months to the year. This gives you, roughly, 98s. per page per annum for advts. Base your calculations for two or more pages, according to orders, upon this.

For size, something like eight by ten inches will meet the case; but, as before, I advise seeing the local printer, and examining

various sizes of papers, and getting quotations. Get to know how many words each page contains, and when the magazine is running instruct each contributor as to the number of words you can allow him.

In securing advertisements, ask yourself, as a boy, "What tradespeople do I get things from?" Right! Make a list of all you can think of—call on them, or write them, with a dummy copy of your magazine, and a list of advertisement rates—where possible, selecting those to whom you have been good customers. Some of the possibles are: Local confectioners, sports' requisites dealers, cycle makers and repairers, booksellers, fishing tackle dealers. Don't forget the local picture show, if you have one. Trot into the theatre, ask for the manager, and put the matter to him. Fellows will be glad to read in the school mag. what films are showing in the town; and promise him, if you get the advert., you will give a nice little par. about the films week by week—for which he will offer you passes to view the programmes.

There are, in addition, the well-known London firms who supply all manner of sports' requisites, etc., for boys. I should send them advt. rates and dummy copy, on the chance of getting their advts. If you follow this course diligently, there is every reasonable promise of success. The last word to you, ere I close this series, boys and girls, is, "Be sincere, be original," and, believe me, if you would write for pleasure or for your daily bread, you can have no better motto.

P.S.

**"THE RAG-TIME SCHOOLBOYS!" IN
 "THE GEM" LIBRARY THIS WEDNESDAY.
 DON'T MISS IT. . . . ORDER EARLY.**

Hip Pip Pip! Hip pip pip! We Take the Case, the Latest Rag-Time Band, Oh!

All Magnetites Should Read This Story.

AT GRIPS WITH THE LAW!

A Magnificent Long, Complete Story Dealing with the Further Amazing Adventures of
SEXTON BLAKE, DETECTIVE.



Despite the wind and the rain the man spread out the paper until he caught sight of the heading, "Convicts escape! Still at large on the moors!" Sexton Blake, coming round the corner, stared curiously at him as a despairing cry broke from his lips. (See this page.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cry in the Street—Robbing the Poor—Tracked to the Train—The Strangler on the Express.

THE small, ragged boy selling evening papers hung back in the shelter of the doorway, so as to escape as much of the bite of the east wind as possible. Also, by doing so, he could stand on a low step, and that kept his practically bootless feet out of the wet. It was raining hard, with a steady persistency that had driven most people indoors; and so it was that the boy called his papers in a hopeless voice, and rather through habit than because he expected to sell any. Yet the bill in front of him, fast getting sodden with rain, was sensational enough:

**"DARTMOOR CONVICTS ESCAPE!
WARDER STABBED!"**

The boy's pitch was situated at the corner of a street off the Brixton main road, down which trams, packed inside to their utmost capacity, whizzed. It was the ones from town that were packed, and it seemed that the number of tired-eyed men and women going home would never come to an end.

Certainly the lot of most of them was probably not a particularly enviable one, yet it was something like a dream of Paradise to the ragged paper-boy. He had no home.

A man came along the road, his head bent low, his coat-collar turned high, battling his way against the rain and wind that tried to beat him back.

"Paper, sir!" the boy cried eagerly. "Convic' escapes! Warden stabbed!"

The boy had not expected the man to take any notice of his appeal, but there he had been mistaken. The man stopped abruptly, raised his head sharply, and stared hard at the poster.

"Paper, sir?" the boy inquired, thrusting one forward.

The man almost snatched it away, thrust a coin into the boy's hand, and hurried to a lamp-post that stood half a dozen yards away. There, despite the rain and the wind, he spread the limp sheet out until he found the column headed, "Convicts escape! Still at large on the moors!"

Another man, coming round the corner, looked curiously at the man who stood in the pouring rain to read a newspaper.

At first he thought that the man might be anxious to learn the result of the race, but remembered that there had been no racing that day, so that could not be the explanation.

A sharp cry, curiously despairing, broke from the man by the lamp-post; then his fingers crumpled the paper convulsively into a wad, and he flung it away. The next second he was hurrying away up the side street.

The other man crossed to the paper-boy, and thrust a coin into his hand.

"Same paper you sold that man!" he said sharply.

The boy handed over a paper, and the man carried it to the lamp. The light fell clean down on his face, revealing its clear-cut lines, which were so familiar to criminals and all the men connected with the detective force of England. So familiar were they, indeed, that a policeman passing recognised him, and touched his helmet.

"Wonder what Sexton Blake's doing down here?" he muttered. "Lor, wouldn't I like to be in the game with him! That would give a chap a chance."

Sexton Blake—for it was the great detective—opened the paper as the other man had done, and his eyes fell upon the heading announcing the escape of the convicts. From that he looked over the entire sheet, but there was nothing, else that could have drawn that cry from

absolutely nothing the man.

Yet, what could he possibly have to do with the escaped convicts?

Still, Sexton Blake was too old a hand in his profession not to know what a large part luck plays in it, and so he stared curiously after the man who had uttered the cry. He had come to Brixton on a little matter concerning a slate club, and had been about to make his way home, when he caught sight of the man with the paper.

Moved by instinct, which had not often failed him, Sexton Blake walked swiftly after the man.

"I am probably a fool to take this trouble," he muttered. "But that cry—what did it mean?"

As the detective hurried after the other man down the long, rather dismal street, he felt more and more inclined to learn the meaning of the cry, and why a most respectable-looking man should be so upset at learning of the escape of two convicts from Dartmoor Prison.

Round a corner went the leading man, and Sexton Blake, who had made up a good part of the distance separating them, was not far behind him. The man was walking quickly, his head bent more than ever, and as he passed by lamps Sexton Blake could see his face was very white.

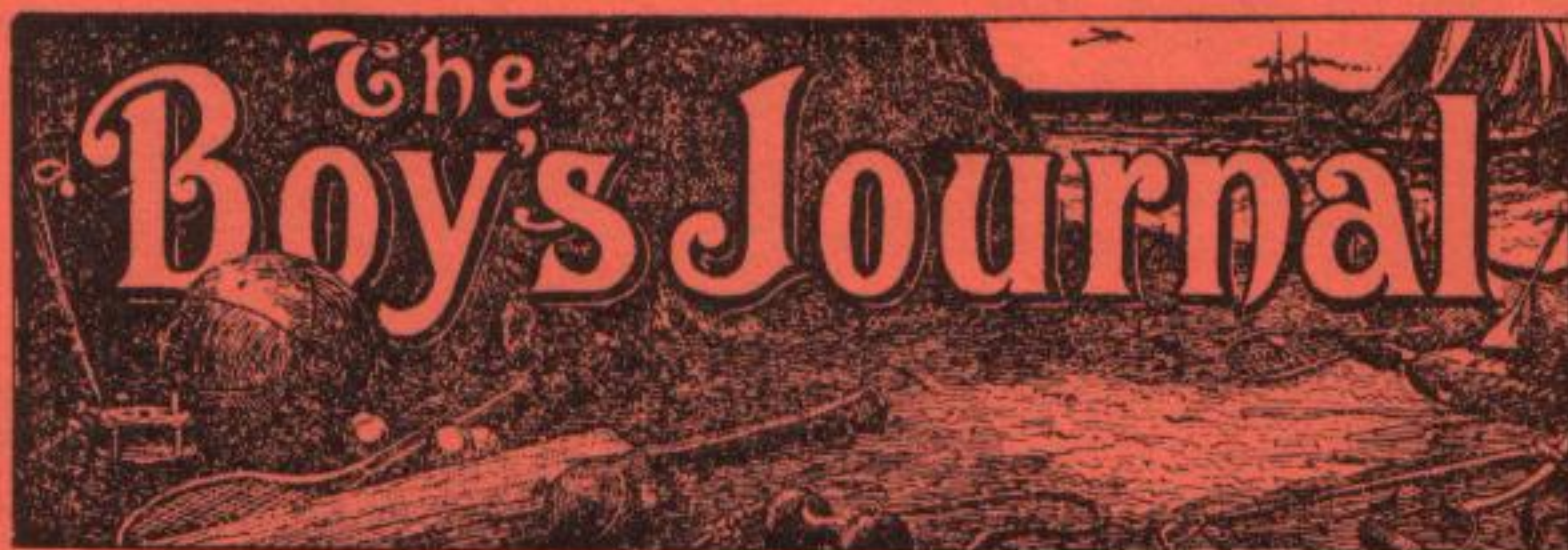
The man turned into a side street full of tall houses, which, as if ashamed of their ungainly height, hid half their lowest storey beneath the ground. Into the garden of one of these houses the man turned, opened the front door with a key, and disappeared.

Sexton Blake strolled by, caught sight of the notice-board planted in the front garden, and came back.

(This story is continued on page iv of cover.)

No. 1 ^{OF} _A SUPERB NEW 1^D. MAGAZINE.

**OUT
TO-DAY!**



**OUT
TO-DAY!**

36 Pages. Every Tuesday. One Penny.

No. 1 of "The Boy's Journal," NOW ON SALE at all Newsagents', Price 1d., contains a magnificent selection of New Stories and Serials, many Valuable Articles, and novel features of great interest to every boy and young man.

👉 8 NEW STORIES AND SERIALS TO-DAY! 👈

INCLUDING

"MIGHTY LONDON!"

Geoffrey Murray's Powerful New Home-Life Serial, full of the mystery, romance, and drama of the Great City.

"CAST OUT BY THE SCHOOL!"

Horace Phillips's Fascinating New School Serial. A feast of fun, excitement, and mystery.

"THE LAND OF THE FIRESTONE!"

Thrilling New Story of Peril and Adventure by Land, Sea, and Air. Written by Alfred Judd, author of many adventure tales.

"CAMERON'S LAST CHANCE!"

Gordon Wallace's Grand New Series of Australian Bush Stories.

"OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE."

Captain Wilton Blake's Splendid New Adventure Series.

"THE ADVENTURES OF A ROLLING STONE."

AND

"TRUE TALES OF BRITAIN'S GLORY!"

£50 IN CASH AND OTHER PRIZES!

👉 If you want to win a Bicycle, a High-class Gramophone, a Fretwork Set, a Photographic Outfit, or any of the other

250 GRAND PRIZES FOR READERS,

buy a copy of "The Boy's Journal" to-day.

SPLENDID ARTICLES EVERY WEEK IN "THE BOY'S JOURNAL," DEALING WITH SPORTS, HOBBIES, STAMP COLLECTING, PHYSICAL CULTURE, PETS, CHOICE OF A CAREER, etc., etc.

No. 1 Now On Sale—36 Pages, One Penny.

"Surrey Street Social Club," he read. "Meetings every Wednesday and Saturday. John Leach, Secretary."

Sexton Blake stopped just long enough to read this notice, then he moved back the way he had come. The line between his eyes was deep-cut and clear, and it was obvious that he was thinking deeply. Yet, what had he really to think about?

He had merely heard a man cry out sharply after reading about the convicts' escape, and had then traced him to a house in which a slate club was being held.

Sexton Blake looked back at the house the man had entered, and saw that a light was shining in the area window. A minute back the place had been pitch-dark. It was also possible to see that the venetian blind of the window had not been drawn properly, for the light came in bars from between the laths.

With a light shrug of his shoulders, as if throwing away all doubt, Sexton Blake turned and went back to the house. He quietly pushed open the garden gate, easing it so that it should not squeak; then went softly down the steps of the area to the window from which the light shone.

The detective had no difficulty whatever in seeing into the room, for the laths of the venetians were wide apart. In one place, too, the cord had broken, leaving quite a gap, and it was through that Sexton Blake looked.

It was not a very fine room into which he peered, but it had its points of interest. For instance, it was not an ordinary sitting-room, but was obviously used for the purposes of a club of a modest kind. Chessboards were piled on one of the tables, a bagatelle-board leant idly against one of the walls, and there were other outward signs of a club. All this Sexton Blake saw in one quick glance, then his eyes turned to the man who sat before a desk at the end of the room. He had already opened it, and was now untying the neck of a canvas bag.

There was a sharp chink of money, which the detective could even hear faintly outside the window, and a little heap of gold lay on the desk before the man. That it was John Leach, secretary of the club, Sexton Blake had already decided, otherwise he would not have been likely to have such easy access to the room and the money in the desk. Later, he proved to be correct.

With a quick turning of his head, which showed a white face and a pair of frightened eyes, Leach turned as if to make sure that he was alone in the room. Then his fingers went over the little pile of gold, counting it as they thrust it back into the bag. But the bag did not go back into its place in the desk, but was dropped into the man's pocket.

Sexton Blake saw this as he looked between the laths of the blind, and he was glad that he had acted on instinct, for it seemed to him that he was to prevent the poor being swindled out of their hard-earned savings. Yet he did not see how he could connect it with the report in the paper.

From another pigeon-hole in his desk, Leach drew a time-table, turning the leaves with fingers that were far from steady. He found the page he wanted, glanced at his watch, and rose to his feet, at the same time putting on his hat, which he had placed on a table while he was at the desk.

Quickly, for he had no wish to rouse the man's suspicions, Sexton Blake went up the area steps, and turned and walked slowly up the street. A minute or so later he heard a door bang, and turned to see that Leach was hurrying off in the other direction. The detective at once followed, keeping a matter of fifty yards in the rear. In this way they reached the main road, and Leach halted beneath an "All Cars Stop Here" notice.

Sexton Blake quietly took up his place beside him. It was the usual thing to wait at such places for the trams, so that it would not make Leach think that he was being followed. True, he did glance nervously at the man beside him, but only to look quickly away again, at the same time drawing his coat-collar higher up.

Two cars came along, one bound for Westminster and the other for Blackfriars, but still Leach waited, the detective beside him. It was the third car, bound for Waterloo, that Leach boarded, Sexton Blake close behind him.

There was a curious little smile on the detective's face, for he was beginning to see light ahead.

One thing was certain, there was some connection between the convicts who had escaped and this secretary of a slate club, improbable though it might seem, for Leach was bound for Waterloo Station, whence Dartmoor could be reached.

At Waterloo both men left the tram and hurried up the hill into the station. Just for a second Leach turned, recognised the man who was behind him as the one who had waited beside him for a tram, and started badly. Yet surely there was nothing remarkable in the two men being bound for the same station.

The two men entered the booking-office almost side by side, but Sexton Blake paused to light a cigar, for Leach had drawn back as if to let him take his ticket first. He could not do so now, however, and he went up to the booking-office and put down two sovereigns, asking for his ticket in so low a voice that the detective could not hear what he said. That did not bother him, for he merely went up to the office and said:

"Same!"

He took the ticket, paid for it, and smiled as he glanced at it. There could be no doubt that his suspicions were well-founded, for the station named on the ticket—Tavistock—was the one to which convicts for Dartmoor were taken. He made inquiries, and found that the train left in ten minutes—in fact, it was already waiting in the station.

Strolling along the platform, Sexton Blake endeavoured to find an unoccupied carriage. Leach was nowhere to be seen, so he guessed that he had already taken his seat. It was no easy matter to see into the compartments, for the windows were blurred heavily with rain, and no one inside could be recognised.

Sexton Blake made his way the full length of the train, but only to find that there was not a solitary empty carriage. He therefore turned to a compartment in which there was only one man, so far as he could see through the rain-blurred window.

The detective opened the door, and, cool man though he was, it was all that he could do to prevent himself stopping and turning back, for the solitary occupant of the compartment was Leach, the man whom Sexton Blake was following. He had recognised the detective, there could be no doubt about it, for there was a startled look in his eyes, and there was nothing for the detective to do but put a bold face on matters and enter the compartment. It was the only way to avoid suspicion, to prevent Leach thinking that he was being followed.

A few minutes later the train started on its long journey, with still only the two men occupying the compartment. Sexton Blake had drawn the paper he had bought from his pocket, but every time he looked up through lowered lids, he saw that Leach was watching him with frightened, desperate eyes.

(This is the opening chapter to the splendid, long, complete story of Sexton Blake contained in this week's issue of "THE PENNY POPULAR," now on sale at all newsagents'. Do not fail to get your copy and finish this grand yarn of the world-famous crime-investigator)

OUR COMPANION PAPER,

**THE
PENNY POPULAR,**

NOW ON SALE

Contains Three Splendid, Long,
Complete Stories—

**SCHOOL,
DETECTIVE, and
ADVENTURE.**

Also a simple weekly Competition.

**45 SHILLINGS IN CASH PRIZES
EVERY FRIDAY.**

"THE PENNY POPULAR" IS THE WEEK-END COMPANION PAPER OF "THE MAGNET."

