

GRAND BUMPER CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

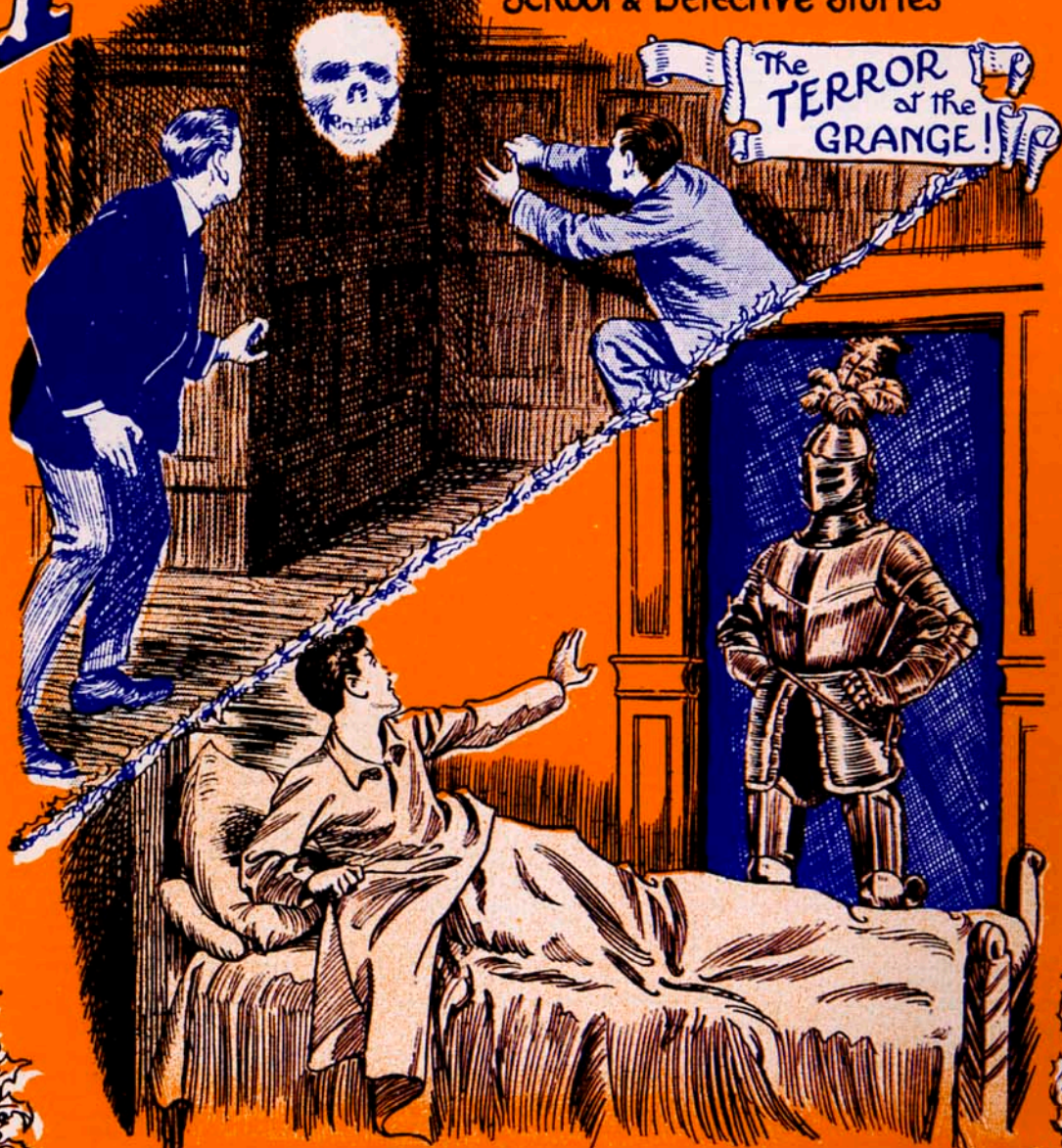
No. 776. Vol. XXII.
Week ending Dec. 23rd.

The Magnet 2

Library
of

School & Detective Stories

The
TERROR
of the
GRANGE!



The Schoolboy Earl sees the Ghost of Mauleverer Towers!

TWO TOPPING LONG CHRISTMAS TALES—
Special Supplement, and many other fine features inside!

More Tales of School and Adventure next Friday — a Bumper Programme for You!



A Christmas Message to All My Readers.

BEFORE I proceed to give an outline of our grand programme for our next issue, I have a message for all my readers.

Another Christmas is here—another round of festivities will shortly commence. And another chance is given me to wish every reader the time-honoured wish—A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

At this time of the year I always feel that I have a deal to do with my readers' Christmas Holidays. It is up to me to give you the best stories and the best articles it is possible to obtain, to help you to enjoy this most festive of all occasions. I think all of you will like this number of the MAGNET Library—in fact, I am sure you will.

If my wishes for your happiness and prosperity went for anything, you would all be the jolliest boys and girls in the world—you would all be multi-millionaires. Unfortunately, wishes do not change into fact; but, nevertheless, one can be very sincere in wishing anybody anything. I feel that way now. I feel that I am addressing a congregation of all readers of this paper—and I do most sincerely tender to you all my very heartiest good wishes for a right royal Christmas, and may the New Year bring you all that you wish for.

That is my Christmas message to my thousands of chums—and although these lines will not reach many hundreds of boys and girls who live in the Colonies until after Christmas has gone by, I want them all to feel that they are not forgotten. In fact, I think I might write on behalf of all the readers in Great Britain, and send our Colonial chums an extra-warm greeting.

So have a good time, and remember Christmas comes but once a year—make the best of it! Be jolly—make others jolly—let the spirit of peace and good will be with you! Then everybody will have a splendid time, and will be ready to tackle the New Year with a light heart.

MAKE A SPECIAL NOTE OF THIS.

Every reader of the MAGNET Library, the "Boys' Friend," and the "Popular" should make a note that

these papers, usually on sale on Monday and Tuesday next week, WILL BE PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY. This is done to give the newsagents a chance to have a rest, and I am sure all boys and girls will be pleased to get their copies of their favourite papers earlier. So our next issue of the MAGNET Library will be obtainable on FRIDAY MORNING NEXT.

I have a very special story for FRIDAY'S ISSUE of the MAGNET Library, entitled:

"PONSONBY'S REVENGE!"

By Frank Richards.

Hazeldene, as most of my readers of long-standing will know, is not always a model youth. He is apt, at times to break out and behave in a manner more reckless than sensible.

Hazeldene, as described in our next story, does break loose again, and this time there is very serious trouble for the weak Removite. Ponsonby & Co., however, find that a desperate junior will do things that he would not do if desperation did not goad him on, and they find that the tables are turned upon them.

But Ponsonby is not like Hazeldene. He is bad to the backbone, and never has any "decent" moments. He is more cunning—a more accomplished young scamp. And he works a scheme—a terrible scheme—which looks as if it will succeed in driving Hazeldene from Greymfriars. But help comes from an entirely unexpected quarter, and that help is sufficient to balance the scales between the Greymfriars junior and his one-time friend at Highcliffe.

Many dramatic and exciting incidents occur in this story—it is a story, in short, which will go straight home to you as being one of the best of the ever-popular Mr. Richards has written.

Make a note, then, again, and see that you obtain this story on Friday morning next!

ANOTHER SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT.

Our next issue of the MAGNET Library will contain, in the centre pages, yet another splendid, special supplement. It is called a SPECIAL HINTS AND IMPROVEMENTS NUMBER, and is undoubtedly one of the best which has so far appeared.

Readers and contributors have

thrown out hints, and some contributors have described the adventures of various juniors in their efforts to provide ideas and improvements in the jolly little Greymfriars papers.

Do not miss this supplement, my chums.

And, remember, it appears in the MAGNET Library, on SALE EVERYWHERE NEXT FRIDAY!

A very special story of FERRERS LOCKE and JACK DRAKE will appear in Friday's issue of the MAGNET Library. It is entitled:

"THE CASE OF THE SMUGGLERS!"

and relates to you how the great detective tackled a case which had baffled the cleverest detectives at Scotland Yard.

The scene is laid at Torkan Bay, and there have been many strange happenings in that quarter. Scotland Yard takes up the case of the smugglers, and fails. Then Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake are invited to "have a shot" at finding how the smugglers get to work. The invitation is accepted, and it is a very small clue which sets "Tiger" Locke on the trail. You must read this splendid story, boys and girls, and see how Ferrers Locke and his youthful assistant accomplished their task.

YOUR LAST CHANCE!

Although I have headed this paragraph thus, I begin to feel that I ought to have written "Your Best Chance!"

For this is the season when presents are being given and received. Sometimes—very many times, I dare say—boys and girls are asked what they would like for a present, or are puzzled what to give their boy and girl chums for a present.

The answer is supplied. The "Holiday Annual" is a present which will warm the heart of every really British boy and girl. Three hundred and sixty odd pages are utilised in providing you with stories and articles, plates and pictures, articles and poems—everything that you like to read. Every taste is catered for, every boyish and girlish want is thought of.

No wonder we have had to reprint in thousands this excellent volume. It takes nearly a year to prepare this volume, but, like all good things, it goes quicker than it takes to prepare.

The volume costs six shillings—a very small price when one considers the number and size of the pages. It is undoubtedly the biggest bargain in "annuals" ever offered, and I want every one of you to get a copy before it is too late.

Your newsagent might have sold out. If he has, ask him to get you a copy—quickly. Do not leave it until Friday or Saturday—go to him today, and make certain of getting what you want in the time you want to have it.

Your Editor.

A Bumper Feast of Christmas Tales!



A Gripping New 20,000-word Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s strange Christmas Adventure at Mauleverer Towers. :: A tale with a thrill in every line.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mauly is Mysterious!

"HEM!" Thus Lord Mauleverer. It was the last day of term at Greyfriars; on the morrow the old school was to break up for the Christmas holidays.

In Study No. 1 in the Remove a merry party had gathered.

Harry Wharton & Co. were winding up the term with a final royal spread. Holly decorated the walls of the study, and highly coloured bunting was looped over the cracked looking-glass, giving the study quite a festive appearance. The Famous Five of the Remove were all there, and Lord Mauleverer was a specially distinguished guest.

It was quite a festive scene, and the chums of the Remove were in the highest of spirits.

Only Lord Mauleverer, the distinguished guest, was rather silent—even more so than usual. Lord Mauleverer was not a great talker—he found talking an unnecessary exertion, and the chief object of Mauly's existence seemed to be to glide through life with the smallest possible amount of exertion.

But on this festive occasion he was still more silent than was his custom, and there was an unusual shade of thought upon his brow.

His remarks for quite a long time were confined to the monosyllables "Yaas" and "No," and he made them at random. It was evident to the Famous Five that something was weighing upon Mauly's noble mind, and they wondered what it was.

So far as they could see, Mauly had nothing to worry about. He was going home for Christmas to the magnificence of Mauleverer Towers. That

was ripping, in itself; and if anything was wanted to make it more ripping, Mauly had it—for the Famous Five were going with him. That was enough to fill any fellow's cup of satisfaction to the brim.

Yet Mauly was silent, thoughtful, distraught, and obviously troubled. He smiled mechanically, and answered "Yaas" or "No" without even hearing what was said to him.

And when he contributed a remark of his own to the conversation, all of his own accord, it consisted of:

"Hem!"

Merely that, and nothing more.

Harry Wharton regarded him rather curiously. Apparently Mauly had something to say, and did not quite know how to say it. The captain of the Remove began to wonder whether something had transpired to interfere with the arrangements for the Christmas vacation.

"Hem!" said Mauly again.

"Go it!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

"Eh, what?"

"Speech!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The speechfulness of the esteemed Mauly is not terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"Hem!"

"You haven't caught a cold, Mauly?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Eh? No!"

"Then what are you coughing for?"

"Hem!"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh. "Get it off your chest, Mauly, old man," he said. "If something's up, tell us, and don't worry. It's not too late to make some other arrangements, if—"

"Oh, is that it?" said Bob. "Dear old Mauly! Pump it up!" Lord Mauleverer reddened.

"You see—" he began.

"Well, we don't quite see, so far," said Harry, with a smile. "If something's gone wrong at Mauleverer Towers, just tell us, and it will be all right. I can telephone to my uncle, and we'll all go to my place instead."

"It isn't exactly that."

"Well, what is it?"

"Hem!"

Lord Mauleverer's face was growing redder and redder. The five juniors looked at him, and looked at one another.

"The fact is—" said Mauly at last.

"Go it!"

"Hem!"

"The hemfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Hem! You fellows are coming home with me to-morrow," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm jolly glad you're comin'. But—"

"But—" said Harry Wharton.

"Hem!"

"You'll be getting hem-stitched if you keep on like this, Mauly," said Bob Cherry.

"Hem! I ought to tell you—"

"Go it, then!"

"But I—I'd rather not."

"Then don't!" suggested Wharton.

"But I must, you see."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, in the circus, I can't very well take you there without tellin' you, can I?" said Mauleverer dismally.

"That depends on what it is," said Harry, in blank wonder. "Is your guardian ill? Sir Reginald—"

"No, no! Right as rain."

"Has the ghost of Mauleverer Towers started walking?" asked Nugent.

"Nubno!"

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"Have you asked Bunter to come?" inquired Bob. "We could stand even that, for the sake of your fascinating society, old chap."

Lord Mauleverer grinned faintly.

"No; Bunter isn't comin'."

"Hurrah!"

"But — but — but —" stammered Mauleverer. "You see, if I'd known earlier—but I didn't—and now it's fixed—and I want you to come. Only—I feel I ought to let you know—only I don't want to mention it. But I can't let you meet the chap without lettin' you know—oh, gad!" Lord Mauleverer's voice trailed off disconsolately.

"Meet the chap!" said Bob. "Some other giddy guest?"

"Yaas."

"You told us you'd asked Drake, who used to be at Greyfriars," said Harry. "We'll be jolly glad to see old Drake again!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The rutherfordness is terrific!"

"Nother chap," said Mauleverer.

"Well?"

"Cousin of mine!" gasped Mauleverer at last.

"Didn't know you had one."

"Never mentioned him," said Lord Mauleverer. "He's a bad hat."

"Oh!"

"Well, even if your jolly old cousin is a bad hat, I suppose we can meet him and no harm done," said Bob Cherry in wonder. "Does he bite?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you see—"

Lord Mauleverer rose from his chair, evidently in a great state of dismay and worry. He stood with his hands driven deep into the pockets of his elegant trousers, and blinked at the fire.

"I'm bound to tell you," he said. "I can't let you meet him without knowin'. It wouldn't be playin' the game. If you feel inclined to chuck it up an' not come, I sha'n't be offended. But what I'm goin' to tell you is in the strictest confidence, of course!"

"Of course!" said Wharton. "But don't tell us if you'd rather not."

"Must!"

"Then cough it up!" said Bob Cherry.

"He—he—my cousin, you know—"

"Yes?"

"He—my cousin, Brian Mauleverer has—"

"Well?"

"He—he—he—well, he's been in—in—"

"In the soup?" asked Bob.

"In—in—in—" stammered Mauleverer.

"In what, for goodness' sake?"

"Chokey!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Prison!" said Mauleverer dismally.

"Now you know!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Bad Hat—and a Hot Tart!

"GREAT SCOTT!" The chums of the Remove fairly blinked at Lord Mauleverer. They had not known what to expect; but most assuredly they had not expected this. That Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy earl, the millionaire, master of Mauleverer Towers and unnumbered acres, had a relation who had been in prison, was about the last thing they would have suspected.

Lord Mauleverer sat down again, crimson.

It was out now! And it was not surprising that Mauly had found it difficult to get out.

"Dear old man," said Bob Cherry, "you're dreaming. The ginger-beer's got into your head."

"It's true. I was bound to tell you, as you're comin' to my place, and you'll meet him," said Mauleverer dismally. "If you'd rather edge off, don't mind me. It'll be a disappointment; but you've a right to. Not that there's any harm in old Brian, you know. Not now, at all events. He's a bad hat, of course. A remarkably bad hat. But I couldn't turn him down. Peace and good will at Christmas-time, you know—forgiveness, and all that. Couldn't turn him down. But I've no right to expect fellows to meet a—a—a gaolbird—not without lettin' them know. Oh, gad!"

"Poor old Mauly!" said Harry. "So that's what you've had on your mind?"

"Yaas."

"If you'd rather we didn't come—"



"Oh, no! I want you to come! But I was bound to give you the warnin'."

"Suppose you tell us a little more?" said Nugent. "Of course, it will be kept in this study. We shouldn't jaw."

"We shall observe the golden silence that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Mauleverer grinned. He seemed a little cheered by the English proverb.

"It's a rotten yarn," he said. "Cousin Brian is years older than I am. He's next to me for the title and the dubs, you know. It really ain't quite fair for me to have such lots and old Brian nothin'. He had somethin' once, but it went—greeges and things. He painted the town too red, an' red's an expensive colour. He was always a miscellaneous sort of johnny. I've only seen him three or four times in my life, an' never liked him. But blood's thicker than water, isn't it?"

His lordship paused. "I've heard that he made things too warm for him in England, and went over the Channel," he resumed. "There he came an awful mucker. What he had

left, and what he got out of Sir Reginald, he dropped at a Continental casino, tryin' to break the bank. The bank broke him. Then he stuck up another kind of bank, and was roped in and sent somewhere quiet for some years. He came out quite recently. It's a dead secret, of course; he had the decency to go to a chokey in France under another name. Now he's turned up, like a bad penny. Like the giddy prodigal, you know. Repented, an' all that. And—and when I heard from my uncle that he's turned up at the Towers, I wired back to nunky to keep him over Christmas. Couldn't do less, could I?"

"Hum!"

"He's quite a new character now, I believe," said Mauleverer. "Learned his lesson, you know—he's had a pretty severe one. If I find there's any harm in him, I shall set him travellin'. But I think not. Uncle says he's in good order, and anxious to get some sort of a job somehow. Can't imagine him doin' any work—but it's a good sign. If you fellows meet him, of course, you won't let him know I've told you? But I was bound to let you know the sort of chap you're goin' to meet. But if you want to cry off, don't mind me."

Lord Mauleverer stopped, with a dismal look. He looked like a fellow who was awaiting sentence as he waited for the chums of the Remove to speak.

There was a brief silence in the study.

"Well," said Wharton at last, "it was decent of you to tell us, Mauly—I suppose you couldn't have done anything else. But I don't see that it makes any difference. If you're satisfied with the chap, I suppose we can be satisfied, too."

Lord Mauleverer brightened up.

"That means that you'll come, all the same?" he asked.

"If you want us," said Harry, with a glance at his chums, who nodded assent.

"Of course I want you!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively. "I shall feel awfully done if you let me down."

"That settles it," said Harry. "We're coming."

"Sticking to you like glue, old top!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll just forget what you've told us, and meet your cousin just as we shall meet old Drake," said Johnny Bull.

"That's it!" assented Nugent.

Lord Mauleverer looked immensely relieved.

"You're awfully good, you chaps!" he said gratefully. "I really believe Brian has turned over a giddy new leaf. Nunky thinks so. If I find that he's at the old game, he goes quick enough. But I want to give him a chance, specially at Christmas-time. He's got an idea of takin' over a farm on the estate—gentleman farmer, you know. Rippin' if it turns out well. He's a rather agreeable chap, too, in his way; no end of a merry merchant. I shouldn't wonder if you like him when you see him."

"We'll make it a point to," said Nugent, laughing.

"I say, you fellows—"

The study door opened, and Billy Bunter blinked in. He gave Lord Mauleverer an affectionate grin.

"I've been looking for you, Mauly," he said.

"Yaas."

"Now go and look for somebody else, Bunter," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bunter rolled into the study. Having found Lord Mauleverer, he did not seem disposed to part with him. He blinked at the table, from which most of the

Another rollicking story of the Greyfriars Chums in the "Popular" to-morrow!

good things had disappeared by this time.

"If you fellows had told me there was a feud on, I'd have come," he grunted.

"That's why we didn't tell you, old fat pippin!"

"If you think I wanted to come to a measly study feed, Bob Cherry, you're making a mistake. I say, Mauly, what time does the train go to-morrow?"

No answer.

"You didn't think I was going to desert you for Christmas this time, did you, old fellow?" asked Bunter affectionately.

"Yaas."

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"I'll be gettin' along, you fellows," said Lord Mauleverer, rising.

"I hope you're not getting out because I've dropped in, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast—I—I mean, I don't mind your little joke, old chap. He, he, he! I'll come along to your study with you if you're going."

"Oh gad, don't!"

"Look here, Mauly—"

"Won't you try a tart, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry temptingly.

Bunter's attention was transferred from Lord Mauleverer at once. His lordship took advantage of it, and escaped from the study; and a moment later a key might have been heard to turn farther along the Remove passage. His lordship, apparently, was not yearning for the charming society of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter held out a fat hand for the tart.

"Hold on a minute!" said Bob gravely. "I'll put a bit of extra jam in it for you, Bunter. You like jam."

"Go it!" said Bunter.

Bob Cherry ladled jam into the tart, thereby concealing the fact that he had already ladled mustard into it.

For days—in fact, ever since break-up for Christmas had drawn nigh—Billy Bunter had haunted Lord Mauleverer as if, he had been the family ghost of Mauleverer Towers.

Now evidently he was only stopping for the tart before he pursued his lordship to his study, and cornered him, as it were. Bob Cherry's idea was to give him something else to think about for a little while.

Bunter fairly grabbed the jammy tart, his eyes glistening behind his spectacles.

"That looks good," he said. "I say, you fellows, I understand that you're coming to Mauleverer Towers with Mauly and me. It'll be rather a crowd. You don't mind my mentioning it, do you? But I think it's rather thick, the whole crowd of you sticking Mauleverer like this."

"What?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Thick!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "If there's a thing I always did despise it's fishing for invitations."

"My hat!"

"Rotten, I call it!" said Bunter. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, of course, but I feel bound to say I'm disgusted."

"You fat rotter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Of course, you don't look at these things as I do," said Bunter loftily. "You're not sensitive. I hardly like letting my old pal Mauly be done like this—"

"Like what?" breathed Nugent.

"Well, sticking him like this for Christmas, you know," said Bunter. "I couldn't do it."



Billy Bunter spluttered and spluttered, and almost exploded. He grabbed the fragments of the tart from his mouth. "Oooooooh! I'm burnt! Oooooooh!" "Don't you like mustard in your tarts?" asked Bob Cherry. "Mustard! Ooooh! Beasts!" yelled Bunter, and he staggered from the study. (See Chapter 2.)

"Why, you—you—"

"Some fellows are not quite so particular as I am," said Bunter calmly. "But it's rather rotten—disgusting, in fact. I must say that I despise you!"

And having thus delivered his valuable opinion, Billy Bunter gobbled up the tart.

Bunter's mouth was capacious, and nearly the whole tart went in at the first gobble.

For a second the expression on Bunter's face was beatific. He liked jam, and the jam was thick.

But the next second there was a sudden awful change.

"Groooogh!"

"Like that tart?" asked Bob Cherry effably.

"Ooooooohch!"

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

"Yurrrrgggggghh!"

Billy Bunter spluttered and spluttered, and almost exploded. He grabbed the fragments of the tart from his capacious mouth with his fat hands, and gurgled and gasped and yelled.

"Ooooh! Groooogh! I'm burnt! Ooooooohch!"

"Don't you like mustard in your tarts?" asked Bob.

"Mustard! Ooooh! Beast! Grooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ggrgrgrgrgrrrrrrrrr!" Billy Bunter staggered out of the study, uttering wild, weird, incoherent sounds, in search of a tap.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now I fancy Bunter will give old Mauly a rest for a little while!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

And Bob was right.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Takers!

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL was in a buzz of excitement the following morning. Brakes rolled off laden with chery fellows, everybody in good spirits and in a good temper. Even Coker of the Fifth shouted a friendly good-bye to the Famous Five, forgetful of unnumbered troubles with those merry youths. Even Loder of the Sixth looked genial, and did not cuff his fag that day. If any fellow in the merry swarn looked anxious, it was William George Bunter. But Bunter had some cause for uneasiness, as he had not completed his arrangements for the vacation. As a last resource, Bunter was going home; but that was only a very last resource. Somehow, he did not seem to look forward to a happy Christmas with his brother Sammy and his sister Bessie. Mauleverer was marked down as his victim; but if Mauly escaped there were others. In fact, Bunter was very much inclined to bestow his valuable company on D'Arcy of St. Jim's, that noble youth being, in Bunter's opinion, soft enough to stand it. Still, Mauly was a bird in hand, and D'Arcy was only a bird in the bush, and Bunter was undecided.

After breakfast he hunted for Mauleverer, but did not find him. With great

What stunts are the Chums of Greyfriars up to next week?

indignation, Bunter realised that Mauly was deliberately keeping out of his way. Mauly found it very difficult to say "No" to anybody, but he was determined not to say "Yaas" to Bunter. So he dodged the Owl of the Remove; and Bunter sought him up and down Greyfriars, but sought him in vain.

Fellows whom he asked after Mauly only grinned, and gave him humorous answers. They seemed to sympathise with Mauly. Vernon-Smith advised Bunter to look on the roof. Peter Todd suggested the coal-cellar as a likely place. Bunter came upon the Famous Five finishing their packing, but he obtained no information from them.

"Where's Mauly?" he demanded.
"Echo answers, where?" answered Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"The wherefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh.

"He's keeping out of sight!" roared Bunter.

"Shouldn't wonder," assented Wharton.

"Beasts! Look here, I can't hang on here all day, hunting for a silly fat head—"

"Better not," assented Bob. "Why not phone home to Bunter Court for the Rolls-Royce, and roll home in state?"

"I've got to fix up something," said Bunter, blinking wrathfully at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "I say, you fellows, this is rather rotten, you know. Mauly's very anxious for me to come with him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"But I must let D'Arcy know for certain—"

"D'Arcy?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes; my old pal at St. Jim's, you know. If I'm going to join him, I shall have to get a trunk call before he leaves St. Jim's. It will take some time."

"Then you'd better buzz off and get a trunk call," said Nugent. "You won't find Mauly."

"Beast! You can give Mauly a message from me," said Bunter. "Tell him he's a silly fatheaded slacker—"

"Good!"
"And that I refuse to come home with him—"

"Hurrah!"

"And that I despise him!"

"Bravo!"

"And you, too!" roared Bunter. "I despise the lot of you!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, leaving the Famous Five quite unmoved by his crushing scorn.

The Owl of the Remove had settled now that it must be D'Arcy. After all, he reflected that Eastwood House would be quite as good as Mauleverer Towers—better, in fact. He waited till he was sure that Mr. Quelch was busily engaged elsewhere, and then rolled into the Remove master's study, to borrow his telephone for a trunk call.

While he was waiting to be put through, he blinked from the study window, and frowned at the sight of the Famous Five in a crowded brake. Lord Mauleverer was with them; he had turned up in time for the brake. His lordship was looking happy and genial, perhaps because Bunter wasn't there. The brake rolled away and disappeared from Billy Bunter's sight, and he gave a snort.

It was a quarter of an hour later that Billy Bunter was "through" to St. Jim's. The telephone-bell buzzed, and he hurried to take the receiver.

"Hallo! Is that St. Jim's?"
"Yes. Who's speaking?"

Bunter recognised Tom Merry's voice on the telephone. As he had rung up a master's number, he was rather surprised to hear his call taken by a junior. However, he went on.

"Bunter, of Greyfriars."

"Oh! What's wanted?"

"I want to speak to D'Arcy. Has he gone yet?"

To Bunter's surprise, there was a chuckle on the telephone.

"Gone? Oh, no!"

"Good! Get him to the phone."

"Certainly!"

Bunter waited. He was a little puzzled by Tom Merry's chuckle. There was nothing to chuckle about, that Bunter could see, in his question.

"Are you there, deah boy?"

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yes, old chap," said the Owl of the Remove. "It's me speaking—Bunter—your old pal Billy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Glad you haven't left yet," said Bunter. "I was afraid you might have started. I've been a lot badgered this morning—fellows worrying me to go home with them for the holidays."

"Oh!"

"I've had to say no to the lot of them," said Bunter. "I had to tell Lord Mauleverer that it couldn't be done, you know. I couldn't let you down for Christmas, could I?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Rely on me," said Bunter. "Now, what time would suit you best for me to arrive?"

"Awkive?"

"Yes. I'm afraid I can't give you the whole of the vacation," said Bunter. "But Christmas week—depend on that."

"Oh cwombs!"

"Are you just leaving, old fellow?"

"Nunno!"

"But you're breaking up to-day, of course?" asked Bunter.

"The fact is, deah boy—"

"What?"

"I'm not goin' home for Chwistmas."

"What?" roared Bunter.

"Not goin' home."

"What rot!" gasped Bunter. "You're not staying at school through the Christmas holidays, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter almost dropped the receiver in his astonishment. This was about the last thing he had expected to hear.

"Staying at the school?" he gasped.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What on earth for?"

There was a chuckle.

"It's a bawwin'-out, deah boy" *

"A what?" howled Bunter.

"A jolly old bawwin'-out, you know."

"A barring-out?" repeated Bunter blankly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, you silly ass—"

"Eh?"

"You frabjous chump!" howled Bunter. "I was relying on you for Christmas. Mauly's gone now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You burbling jabberwock, what are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha! I mean, sowwy, deah boy. You see, we're bawwin'-out heah, and we're sticking it out ovah Chwistmas."

"You silly chump!"

"Weally, Buntah—"

"Do you want another three minutes?" came a sweet feminine voice over the wire. It came from the exchange.

Bunter snorted by way of answer, and jammed the receiver on the hooks. He was utterly disgusted. A barring-out at St. Jim's, at Christmas; it was about the last news he had expected to hear. But there it was. Obviously, he was not going to land himself upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for the Christmas vacation. He rolled out of Mr. Quelch's study in great disgust and indignation.

He spotted Sir Jimmy Vivian in the passage, and bore down on him. Sir Jimmy was Mauly's relation, but apparently he had not departed with his noble relative. Bunter bestowed his most ingratiating grin on the school-boy baronet.

"Overtaking Mauly at the station?" he asked.

"No!" answered Vivian.

"Catching the next train?"

"Yes."

"Good! I'll come!"

"Will you?" said Sir Jimmy, looking at him.

"Yes, old chap! I missed going with Mauly owing to having to speak to an old pal on the phone. I've had to tell D'Arcy that he can't expect me for Christmas. What time do you get to the Towers, Vivian?"

"I don't get there at all."

"Eh?"

Sir Jimmy grinned.

"You see, I'm going home with Newland for Christmas," he said; and he walked away grinning.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

An hour later Billy Bunter was at the station with his minor Sammy. Bessie Bunter, from Cliff House School, joined them there. And the three Bunters travelled home together and perhaps enjoyed one another's society very much. But they did not look as if they did.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Scapegrace!

"MY cousin Brian, you fellows!" Lord Mauleverer coloured slightly as he spoke. But

Harry Wharton & Co. had their best manners on, and not by the slightest sign did they betray the fact that they knew anything about Mr. Brian Mauleverer.

A big car from the Towers was waiting for the Greyfriars party when they came out of the railway station, and a young man was waiting by the car, smoking a cigarette; and that young man was presented to the Famous Five as Lord Mauleverer's cousin.

* The Great Barring-out at St. Jim's is recorded in this week's "Gem" Library.



LORD MAULEVERER.

Next Friday: A real live tale by a real good author—"Ponsonby's Revenge!"

The juniors shook hands with him, and they could not help regarding him with interest. He was apparently about twenty-five years old, though he had an older look at first glance. The life Mr. Brian had led had not helped him to preserve his youth. His face was a good deal like Mauleverer's in feature, but strikingly different in expression. His eyes had what the juniors could not help observing was a shifty look; and there were signs in the face that told of late hours and reckless living.

In the circumstances, the chums of Greyfriars had no choice but to swallow Mr. Brian whole, so to speak, and to dismiss from their minds what Mauly had told them about the unfortunate young gentleman. But they had their own opinion on the subject, and as soon as they saw Mr. Brian that opinion was strengthened. Mr. Brian certainly was a prodigal; but whether he was a repentant prodigal was a very doubtful question.

Harry Wharton's opinion was that the scrapegrace, having run through every penny he possessed, had "landed" himself on his good-natured cousin for want of other resources. But that was Mauly's business, and the Greyfriars fellows were not called upon to sit in judgment upon the prodigal, repentant or not. Mauleverer had given them fair warning, and as they had decided to come to Mauleverer Towers all the same, it was up to them to treat Mr. Brian as they would have treated any other relation of Mauly's.

And the young man was quite agreeable and pleasant. He greeted Mauly with warmth, evidently glad to see him, and pleased by his kind and friendly manner. He chatted cheerily with the juniors as the car ran on to the Towers, smoking cigarettes incessantly the while, till the car was in a blue haze of smoke. The number of cigarettes that the young man consumed was amazing.

Harry Wharton & Co. were glad when they arrived at the Towers; the atmosphere in the car was getting too thick for comfort.

Sir Reginald Brooke, Mauly's uncle and guardian, met them at the door with a cheery smile and a hearty handshake. Lord Mauleverer conducted his guests to their rooms, Mr. Brian drifting away aimlessly into the gardens, still smoking cigarettes. A magnificent suite of rooms had been prepared for the guests, communicating with one another, and all of them opening with French windows upon a long balcony. The change from the old dormitory at Greyfriars was startling, and the juniors smiled as they looked at their magnificent surroundings. Everything at Mauleverer Towers was on the grand scale, and undoubtedly Lord Mauleverer was a fortunate youth much to be envied.

"I hope you chaps will find yourselves comfy," said his lordship.

"We'll try!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "If there should be a crumpled rose-leaf or anything serious like that we'll let you know."

His lordship grinned. "There'll be a late lunch," he said. "Amble down when you feel disposed. Look in for me first."

"Right-ho!" Lord Mauleverer ambled away to his own quarters. Before going down, Harry Wharton stepped out on the balcony, which was on the south side of the house, and gave a wide view over stretching parklands. The December

dusk as setting in, and a slight fall of snow had whitened the park—the leafless trees glimmering spectre-like through the gathering dusk. Frank Nugent came out of his room and joined the captain of the Remove.

"Rather topping, what?" said Frank, with a smile.

"Yes; Mauly's a lucky bargee."

"No end lucky," agreed Nugent; "and the dear old chap never thinks of putting on side. What would Bunter be like if he owned a place like this?"

"I wonder!" said Wharton, laughing.

"What do you think of the jolly old cousin?"

"I think he would be better for smoking a few less cigarettes," said Harry, with a smile.

"Not a bad chap, so far as one can see, though. He seems jolly good-tempered, and rather fond of Mauly."

"He was pleased to see him, anyhow, I think."

There were footsteps below the balcony, and a fragrance of tobacco floated up. The two juniors exchanged a glance. They guessed that Mr. Brian Mauleverer was walking below with his eternal cigarette.

Then a voice was heard; the voice of Sir Reginald Brooke.

"Brian!"

"Well?"

"Dear me, Brian, you are always smoking. Don't you think you would be wise to smoke a little less?"

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a smile.

"Certainly, sir," answered Brian; "but I never was wise, you know. But

if the cigarette offends you, there it goes."

"Now that there are schoolboys in the house, Brian, it would surely be advisable to be a little more—hem—circumspect."

"I am not a schoolboy."

"No, but—"

"By gad! A new character for me, settin' up as a model to youth." The young man laughed. "But you are right, sir. The scrubby little bounders shall not take any harm from me."

"Oh!" murmured Nugent.

Brian's manner to the juniors had been pleasantness itself. It was rather a shock to hear him describing them as scrubby little bounders. And it was not agreeable.

"Really, Brian, I wish you would not speak of Herbert's guests in that way."

"My mistake, sir. I forgot I was on my good behaviour here. I'll promise not to talk horses to them, or to spin them any yarns of wild nights at Monte Carlo."

"Be serious, Brian. I want to warn you once more to say nothing to Mauleverer concerning the incident of the armour—"

"That's all right!"

"Of course, there is nothing in it, but considering the old superstition attached to the armour of Sir Fulke—"

"I understand, uncle!"

"Neither need it be mentioned to the other boys—"

Wharton and Nugent went in quickly at the French windows. It dawned upon them that they were about to hear



"It was a dream," said Mauly, "and I'm not afraid that Sir Fulke's gauntlet will fall, and warn me of my death—" Crash! Mauleverer stopped, the words dying on his lips, his face ashy pale. With a loud crash, a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure on the polished oak. Through the startled room the crash rang like thunder. (See Chapter 6.)

something that was not intended for their ears.

A few minutes later the Famous Five foregathered in Lord Mauleverer's den.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Unrepentant Prodigal!

THE den of Herbert, Lord Mauleverer, was a den that Fortunatus himself would not have despised.

The juniors found his lordship loafing before a leaping log fire, and he turned to them with a smile. On a previous visit to the Towers Harry Wharton and Co. had seen Mauly's magnificent quarters, but they looked about them with much interest.

The room was extensive, and opened upon the same southern balcony where Wharton and Nugent had stood. Floor and walls were of dark solid oak, and the domed ceiling was painted in the Italian style. Tall French windows opened on the balcony, with another

deep window on either side of the French windows. Between the windows stood two figures of ancient armour, complete even to the steel gauntlets.

On the walls hung several trophies of ancient weapons—weapons used probably by old Mauleverers in days that were long gone by.

At the farther end of the room a door opened into Lord Mauleverer's bed-room. There was another door from the bedroom to a corridor.

The electric light was on in Mauly's "den," glimmering on the polished oak, and the armoured figures, and the old weapons on the walls. Half a dozen deep armchairs stood about in the ample space, and three or four almost priceless Persian rugs glowed in colour on the oaken floor.

"And Mauly never grumbles at the study at Greyfriars!" remarked Bob Cherry, with an amused glance round.

"Eh! Why should I grumble at the

study?" asked Mauly. "It's a jolly good old study, isn't it!"

"Bit different from this!" grinned Bob.

"Oh, yaas."

Bob walked up to the armoured figures. He tapped the nearest one on the breast-plate.

"Nobody at home, I suppose?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer did not join in the laugh. For some reason his lazy face became very grave.

"That's old Sir Fulke's armour-plate," he said.

"Who was Sir Fulke?" asked Bob.

Wharton started a little. He remembered that name, uttered a few minutes before by the old baronet.

"One of my giddy ancestors," answered Mauleverer, "that lived before there was an earldom. He used to chop the Saracens in the good old days, in that very set of tin ribs."

GAMES FOR THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

AT Christmas parties, at which guests of all ages are found, it is sometimes a perplexing riddle to the hostess to know how to entertain them all. Musical items may delight the members of the company, but dancing is not always possible in rooms of limited size. Moreover, there are still many young folk who are unable to set their feet nimbly to waltz and waltz-step, and would much prefer a romp to whirling round in time to a measure.

Self-consciousness and shyness are usually very evident when the party enters the drawing-room, and this coating of ice, if not thawed quickly, will rapidly freeze into impenetrable restraint and gloom. At such times a good game, quickly organised, is invaluable. The rules should be explained by the hostess in so simple a manner that the youngest person present can follow them, and everything necessary should be arranged beforehand to avoid awkward delays and pauses.

Here are a few to try at your next party.

THE GAME OF SHADOWS.

A white sheet is stretched against the wall, with a lamp immediately before it. All other lights are extinguished. One of the company sits on a chair or stool with eyes fixed on the sheet. Behind him the company files noiselessly, the while he endeavours to identify them by means of the shadows silhouetted on the screen.

Simple disguises are allowable and increase the fun. For example, a boy may don a girl's hat, a girl a boy's; or a skirt or shawl may be draped over an Eton suit, thus concealing the wearer's identity. The one whose shadow betrays him takes the place of the player who identifies him.

MUSICAL BUFF.

Station a person in each corner of the apartment. Then blindfold one of the party, and lead him to the centre.

The master of the ceremonies points to each of the four in succession, and each says in a clear separate tone the word "Come."

When the word has been said by each in turn, the blind man endeavours to find his way towards the person who spoke first.

PANAMA CANAL.

One of the company is chosen as director, and addresses the company in some such way as this:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—It having been discovered by the director of the Panama Canal Company that the water of the canal is often disturbed to a dangerous degree by means of the passionate sighs and turbulent emotions of the passengers cruising upon it, they have decided that a penitentiary tax shall be levied upon all ships containing lovers, and that, for every kiss given, toll shall be exacted."

The company now pass slowly before the director, who asks each questions as to the name, destination, cargo, number and description of passengers, and any other questions relating to vessels which may occur to him.

No answer must contain the letter K, for this, being the initial letter of "kiss," is forbidden, and the person who uses it is obliged to pay any forfeit demanded by the captain.

A few questions and answers might run like this:—

Captain to passing figure—

"What have you in your ship?"

"Tomatoes."

"Where do you hail from?"

"Liverpool."

"To which port are you sailing?"

"London."

"Have you any girls on board, etc., etc."

Of course, the captain's aim is to force "the ships" to introduce the letter K in their answers.

THE LONGEST LINE.

This is a good competitive game. Men and boys should stand with their feet on a chalked line. Each must stoop down to a half-sitting position, and with the left hand resting on the knee and the right hand inserted beneath the right leg draw a line as long as possible without rising or using the left hand.

GARDENERS.

Two rows, headed by a chosen captain, face each other. In turn they fire at each other the names of vegetables, flowers, or fruit, beginning with the letter A, and using in turn the other letters of the alphabet—asparagus, artichokes, apples, etc.

The players on each side set their wits to work to aid their captain when he shows signs of faltering. They are not allowed to speak aloud, their promptings being given in whispers, and this is where the fun comes in, for, when one is excited and eager to give a word, it is very difficult to remember to whisper, especially when placed at the tail of the line.

When a gardener and his side pause to remember a word the opposite side counts twenty slowly; if at the end of that time their opponents still fail they forfeit a man. The game goes on until one captain has secured all his adversaries' followers. Should any one except the leaders speak aloud, he or she is obliged to cross to the other party.

When a captain surrenders he is obliged to go to the end of the line, and the next man takes his place and responsibilities. Wild flowers or plants are not allowed.

Say, you want a real fine tale? Well, next Friday's Greyfriars story will suit you!

"Good man," said Bob. "And who's the other Johnny?"

"That's the armour of Sir Gilbert, his brother. They weren't a credit to the family, I believe," said Mauleverer. "There's an old yarn about Sir Fulke——" He paused.

"You shall spin us the yarn, Mauly," said Bob. "Is it a ghost story?"

"Yaas."

"Jolly old Sir Fulke revisits the glimpses of the moon, what?" asked Johnny Bull, with a grin.

"Well, of course he doesn't," said Mauleverer, slowly. "But——"

"But——" asked Johnny.

"Well, it's an old yarn, and, of course, there's nothin' in it," said Mauleverer. "We don't believe such things nowadays. But a fellow is bound to give him his own family legends some respect, you know. But, dash it all—never mind ghost stories—you fellows must be famished."

"Hungry as Bunter, or a wolf," confessed Bob.

"Let's get down."

The Greyfriars party went down to a very late lunch. Brian did not join them; but Sir Reginald presided at the table with a beaming, cheery face. But the beaming smile faded from the old gentleman's countenance when Bob Cherry made some allusion to the ghost story. Bob was a little interested in the legend of the ghost of the Towers, though he did not dream of taking it seriously. But the sudden gravity in the old baronet's face made the juniors realise, to their astonishment, that Sir Reginald did not take the matter with the same lightness.

"We want Mauly to spin the yarn," said Bob. "It will make it no end of a merry Christmas if the giddy ghost walks on his beat."

"I am afraid the tale is not a very pleasant one," said the old baronet. "They were lawless days when Sir Fulke Mauleverer lived. Herbert would do well to dismiss the legend entirely from his mind."

"Oh, yaas," said Herbert.

And Bob Cherry let the subject drop at once. But when he strolled out on the terrace later with Wharton, he expressed his amazement to the captain of the Remove.

"Mauly can't be ass enough to believe in the ghost story, surely," he said.

"Well, it's a family ghost," said Wharton, laughing. "Perhaps Mauly feels that it's up to him."

"I'd like to hear the yarn, all the same," said Bob. "I dare say the Brian-bird knows, and he'll spin it for us."

And when Bob went in he asked a manservant where Mr. Brian Mauleverer was. He was directed to the billiards-room, where he found the young man idly knocking about the ivory balls. There was a discontented expression on Brian's face.

He rapped at the ball viciously, but made a good shot. Bob Cherry stopped to watch the shot, and for the moment the scapegrace of the Mauleverer family did not notice that he had entered. The young man placed the balls in a difficult position, and brought off a cannon from the top cushion—with a deftness that showed that a considerable portion of his youth had been misspent.

As he caught sight of the junior, however, the discontented look left the young man's face, and he smiled genially. It was like a mask being put on a face.

Bob Cherry suppressed a grin.

He was not blind to the fact that



Jack Drake reached the side of the schoolboy earl. Mauly was stretched on the floor. There was no stranger in the bed-room. He was conscious, but there was no light of consciousness in his eyes; his glance was wild and strange, and a wild meaningless babble came from his lips. (See Chapter 12.)

Mauly's scapegrace cousin was bored to extinction at the Towers, and saw no prospect of enjoying Christmas in company with a crowd of fellows from school. Much older and wilder company would have been required to make it a happy Christmas for Brian Mauleverer.

But it was evidently Brian's cue to affect a satisfaction with his surroundings that he was far from feeling. In his personal dealings with the Greyfriars juniors, he certainly gave no hint of the fact that he regarded Mauly's friends as "scrubby little bounders."

"Like a game, kid?" he asked, genially. "Let me see, your name's Berry, isn't it?"

"Cherry!" said Bob.

"Sorry—always forgettin' names. I'll give you fifty in a hundred."

"Done!" said Bob.

Bob played billiards in a schoolboy fashion. He was rather proud of leading off with a break of fifteen. Interested in showing his skill, he forgot all about his intention of asking Brian concerning the ghost story. Brian followed him with a break of twenty-five, and then potted his own ball clumsily enough. Bob followed on with ten, and again the scapegrace played badly, and Bob ran out with his hundred, having started with fifty to his score. The schoolboy of Greyfriars felt very pleased with himself.

"Good man!" said Brian, cordially. "You can play."

"Not so bad, was it?" said Bob, innocently.

"Jolly good. I'll give you fifty again, and try you once more," said Brian.

"Let's have a sov. on the game to make it interestin'?"

Bob Cherry started a little. He shook his head.

"Can't be done," he answered, in his direct way. "Never play a game for money."

"Oh, great gad!" groaned Brian Mauleverer. "Where have I landed?"

Bob laughed. "Sorry," he said. "Play you for love, if you like."

"I'll put up a fiver against your quid," said Brian. "Let's have somethin' to put life into it."

"Nothing doing," said Bob, tersely. And as Nugent looked into the billiards-room just then, Bob nodded to the scapegrace, and walked away with Nugent.

Bob was no fool; and a little reflection showed him that Brian had played very badly—after displaying great skill in practice shots. He had, in fact, allowed the schoolboy to win the game, and, obviously, for the purpose of tempting him to play for money. It was pretty clear that whatever kind of a prodigal Brian Mauleverer was, he was not of the repentant kind. His conduct, in fact, was that of a billiards sharper; nothing less or more.

"Poor old Mauly!" Bob said to himself. It was pretty clear that the schoolboy earl was being imposed upon by his rascally relative.

But it was not Bob's business; and he did not mention the incident even to his comrades. But he showed no desire after that to seek Mr. Brian Mauleverer's company.

Now, look here! Next Friday's ripping tale of Greyfriars is going to make a big sensation!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**A Legend of Old Time!**

"YOU fellows look awfully jolly." Brian Mauleverer made that remark. He stood in the doorway of Lord Mauleverer's den. Certainly the fellows looked jolly.

Round the blazing log fire on the wide hearth, half a dozen deep, big chairs were drawn, and the Greyfriars party sat in a merry half-circle, with the firelight playing on their cheery faces.

The evening was growing old, and the party had gathered in Mauly's den for a "jaw" before going to bed. Sir Reginald Brooke was already in bed, and Brian was out of doors when the juniors gathered there. Now he looked in on the party with a smiling face.

Lord Mauleverer turned a smiling look of welcome on his cousin.

"Trot in, old fellow." "Do!" said Wharton. "We're spinning a yarn, Mr. Brian."

The young man sauntered in. He looked very handsome and slim in evening clothes, and no one could have guessed from his face that he was not enjoying his stay at the Towers. He looked very unlike the discontented man Bob had seen in the billiards-room, knocking viciously at the balls; and Wharton and Nugent, glancing at him, tried to forget that he had characterised them as scrubby bounders. Surely that smiling, genial face did not hide a nature of malicious ill-feeling? They tried not to think so, at all events.

Bob jumped up and pulled another big chair into the circle. Brian sat down in it, crossing one elegant leg over the other. As he sat, he was almost facing the gleaming suit of armour that in ancient days had been worn by Sir Fulke Mauleverer. The firelight glimmered on the shining coat of mail and on the closed visor of the helmet; it needed little imagination to suppose that the figure was real and living. Brian's eyes dwelt upon it curiously for a moment or two, and then he lighted one of his endless cigarettes.

His coming did not damp the party in any way. The schoolboys felt, in fact, a little flattered at an experienced man of the world like Brian Mauleverer seeking their company. Johnny Bull had been spinning a yarn and he had just come to a conclusion. Mauleverer glanced at his cousin as he blew out a stream of smoke.

"Your turn, Brian," he said. "Good!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "You've seen a lot of the world, Mr. Mauleverer; you must have a good many yarns to spin."

Brian laughed. "I'm afraid many of my yarns would not do for this company," he said, "but Christmas is the time for ghost stories—what?"

"Good! Let's have a ghost story," said Bob.

"I'll tell your friends the legend of Sir Fulke, Herbert—what?" asked the young man, with a careless glance at Lord Mauleverer.

Wharton, looking at his lordship, had an impression that Mauly would have preferred to avoid that subject. But Mauly nodded cheerily.

"Go ahead—if they'd care to hear," he said.

Brian took his cigarette from his mouth, and the juniors settled themselves down to listen. They glanced a good many times at Sir Fulke's armour,

towering by the shadowy windows. Outside the house the December wind wailed along the terrace and creaked the branches of the old trees. Wharton threw a fresh log on the fire.

Brian told the tale in a low, clear voice, staring at the fire most of the time and allowing his cigarette to expire. It was a strange old tale of battle and murder and feud—a tale of the "good old times" when life was held cheap.

Sir Fulke Mauleverer's career in the reign of Richard the First had been an exciting one, according to the story. He had added field to field and manor

A Famous Volume—

THE

HOLIDAY ANNUAL!

to manor with the strong hand, and a life of violence and bloodshed had ended in violence. In the old stone tower, the ruins of which still stood, he had fallen by the hand of his brother, Sir Gilbert. The fratricide, haunted and conscience-stricken, had found death on a Saracen battlefield, leaving the great Mauleverer estate to his son, the ancestor of the dandy of the Remove, who was sitting silent, staring at the fire, as Brian told the tale.

"The spirit of the wicked old knight, slain by his brother's hand, could find no peace," went on Brian in his low, clear voice. "For ever afterwards the Mauleverers were a haunted race, even to this day. When death is coming to a Mauleverer there is always a sign from Sir Fulke. And the legend tells that more than one Mauleverer has met his death at the hands of the wicked old knight, whose restless spirit has returned to inhabit the armour that he wore when he was a living man."

He paused a moment.

THE IDEAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

"More than once a Mauleverer has been found dead, with the iron grasp of Sir Fulke on his throat—"

There was a sudden movement from Mauly. But he smiled as the juniors glanced at him.

"A steep yarn, begad!" said his lordship.

"There can't be any truth in it, of course," said Wharton, looking oddly at Brian. The young man had spoken with the deepest seriousness.

Brian shrugged shoulders. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy," he remarked. "A great poet has told us that. And it is at least certain that the death of a

Mauleverer, in recent times, has been hinted at by the figure yonder."

The juniors' glances turned involuntarily towards the figure.

"Before the last Earl of Mauleverer died—killed in the hunting-field—a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure," said Brian. "It had held its place from time immemorial. It fell with a crash on the evening before the last lord met his death; and last night—"

Lord Mauleverer started violently. He turned a quick, searching look upon his cousin.

"Last night!" he exclaimed. "What happened last night, Brian?"

The young man hesitated. Wharton and Nugent, remembering the chance words they had heard on the balcony, exchanged a quick glance.

"Nothing," said Brian at last. "I— I—in fact—"

He stammered a little. Lord Mauleverer sat bolt upright in his chair. There was a trace of pallor in his cheeks.

"Tell me!" he said quietly. The juniors looked at Brian. He seemed overwhelmed with confusion.

"I did not mean to allude to it," he said at last. "Sir Reginald asked me not to tell you, Herbert. But after all, it is only a legend. Why should you be afraid?"

Mauleverer flushed. "I am not afraid," he answered. "But if anything happened, I ought to know. What was it?"

"I suppose I had better tell you, as the matter has been mentioned," said Brian at last reluctantly. "I heard a noise in my room—you know I have a room at the end of the corridor. I think I had been dreaming—perhaps the legend was in my mind while I slept. I heard a sound of—of—"

"Of what?" Mauleverer's voice was sharp. "Of armoured feet treading."

"Oh, gad!" "I jumped out of bed and ran here," said Brian. "I looked in and flashed on the light; and I thought—"

He paused. The juniors felt an eerie sensation. All eyes were fixed on the towering armour-clad figure.

"You thought—"

"I thought, for a second, that Sir Fulke moved," said Brian in a low, shuddering voice. "No doubt the sudden light deceived me; no doubt I had dreamed the sound of iron footsteps. Sir Reginald thought so when I told him this morning. He did not wish me to tell you. Forgive me."

Mauleverer laughed lightly. "I'm glad to know," he said. "It was a dream, of course. And I'm not afraid that Sir Fulke's gauntlet will fall and warn me of my death."

Crash! Mauleverer stopped, the words dying on his lips, his face ashy pale. With a loud metallic crash a gauntlet dropped from the armoured figure on to the polished oak. Through the startled room the crash rang like thunder.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**The Spectre Knight!**

LORD MAULEVERER sat fixed, motionless, his eyes staring at the figure of Sir Fulke and the gauntlet that lay on the floor. The juniors started to their feet with suppressed exclamations.

Frank Richards is at his best next week! Don't forget, "Ponsonby's Revenge!"—Friday!

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Brian. He sprang up. Then there was silence; and for some minutes no one spoke. Lord Mauleverer was making painful and visible efforts to pull himself together. The crash of the falling gauntlet had rung like a knell of doom in the ears of the schoolboy earl.

"Good heavens!" breathed Bob Cherry at last. "He hurried across to the armoured form, that seemed to tower threateningly over him.

For some moments he had felt a superstitious thrill; but his sturdy commonsense came to the rescue. He picked up the heavy gauntlet.

"Just come unstuck!" he said, with an attempt at humour.

"It has not happened since—since—" Brian Mauleverer was muttering. He broke off without finishing.

"Quite a dramatic climax to Brian's yarn," said Lord Mauleverer, calmly. He was smiling, but there was a quiver in his lips. "The dashed thing couldn't have given way at a more appropriate moment, by gad, I fancy somebody has been monkeyin' with that armour."

"Who would touch it?" said Brian. Lord Mauleverer shook his head. Wharton looked at him; Mauly was calm, smiling, but there was a dew of perspiration on his forehead. It came as a shock to Harry to realise that Mauleverer was not untouched by superstitious belief in the legend of his family.

"Mauly, old chap—" he said. Mauleverer forced a laugh. "Now, if Bunter were here, I should take that as a warnin'," he said lightly; "as a sign that I was goin' to be bored to death, you know. But as the matter stands, I'm not alarmed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "There's no cause for alarm," said Brian, with a curious look at his cousin. "The thing became detached, and fell. The same thing happened a day before your poor father was killed in the hunting-field, Herbert—when you were a baby. Sheer chance, of course."

"Oh, of course," said Mauleverer, but his lips twitched. "Brian, old man, you tell a ghost story well; and Sir Fulke plays up like a little man to increase the effect. You fellows know it's getting on for twelve? We're riding in the mornin', and Drake's comin' to-morrow. What price bed?"

And the party broke up. Brian Mauleverer said good-night to the juniors, and went away to his own quarters, at the end of the old wide corridor upon which all the juniors' rooms opened. Harry Wharton stayed last to speak to Lord Mauleverer after the other fellows had gone.

Mauly was cool and calm and smiling; but he was not completely hiding the effect of the fall of the gauntlet upon him. And Wharton was feeling a little uneasy about his chum.

"You're rather an ass to have your giddy ancestor in your den, Mauly," he said. "I'd have him shifted."

Mauleverer smiled and shook his head.

"He's stood in this room for a hundred years," he said. "I've heard that he used to stand in the gallery; but people were frightened by a ghostly iron-clad tread in the dead of night. The jolly old dog has never walked in my time. Brian was dreamin' last night—"

"Of course," said Harry. "But—" "All serene, old top! Good-night." "Good-night, Mauly."

Wharton went along to his own room, and Mauleverer's door closed. The schoolboy earl, as soon as he was alone, dropped the mask of smiling nonchalance. His face set gravely, and he walked up to the armoured figure, and stood before it for some minutes, in silence, regarding it. The gauntlet still lay where it had fallen.

For some time Mauleverer stood regarding the figure, in silence, strange thoughts passing in his mind. Then he turned off the electric light, and passed into the adjoining bed-room.

He turned in, and put out the light; but sleep did not come soon.

The old legend of the Towers, which Mauleverer had known from childhood, had a strange effect on his mind. He did not exactly believe in it; but it weighed with him; and the falling of the gauntlet seemed too strange to be a coincidence. Last night Brian had heard the ghostly tread of the wicked old knight; to-night the gauntlet had fallen—as it had the night before the death of Mauleverer's father. It was chance—it must be chance—and yet while Mauleverer's brain told him that there was nothing more in it, something in his heart seemed to tell him a different tale. Something, somewhere in his nature, responded to the call of superstition that his mind rejected.

He slept at last; but it was uneasily. A light sound would have awakened him from a slumber tormented by dreams of a wicked old knight, whose

evil eyes glittered through the holes in his vizor. Suddenly Lord Mauleverer awakened—

He sat up in bed, his very flesh creeping.

What was it that he heard?

Outside, there was a faint wail of the winter wind. But what he heard was closer at hand.

It was the tread of iron feet.

In the darkness he sat, his heart throbbing, the sweat running down his face. Was he dreaming—was he mad?

Tramp! tramp!

It was no dream. Unless he was mad, he heard it. The tramp of a man in armour—approaching the door of his bed-room, from the room where the figure of wicked old Sir Fulke stood—

The door opened.

A thrill of horror and dread ran through the unhappy boy in the bed. He would have stretched out his hand to the electric switch; but horror held him motionless. He could only stare in the gloom—still, dumb, in unspeakable horror.

From the open doorway came a gleam of firelight—the log fire yet burned. It played through the doorway, glimmering. What was it that the firelight glimmered on?

On a figure in armour—on the figure of Sir Fulke Mauleverer—towering in the gloom—

A wild shriek broke from Herbert Mauleverer, and he fell back in a dead faint.



With clanging footsteps the armour-clad figure left its place, rushing towards the door. Jack Drake made a spring at the striding knight and, dodging a savage blow from the steel gauntlet, clung to the figure. "Back up!" he shouted. (See Chapter 12.)

Topping New Year tales soon! Watch the Chat page! Superb surprises!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Horror of the Night!

HARRY WHARTON leaped from his bed.

A shriek was ringing in his ears—a fearful cry that had awakened him, and yet rang and echoed and throbbled in his brain.

That terrible cry came from Mauleverer's room—he knew it!

What had happened?

Wharton did not stop to think. He stopped for nothing. He raced out of his room into the corridor, only pausing a fraction of a second there to switch on the electric light.

Another second, and he was at the door of Mauleverer's den, and had hurred the door wide open.

He switched on the light in the room.

It showed the room exactly as the juniors had left it—the armchairs still ranged round the red embers on the hearth—the two armoured figures standing between the windows.

The door of Mauleverer's bed-room was shut. No sound came from beyond the closed door.

Yet Wharton was certain of the cry he had heard. Something had happened to Mauleverer—something that was terrible.

"Harry!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice behind Wharton.

"You heard it too?" gasped Harry.

"Yes—was it—"

"Mauly!"

Evidently Wharton had not fancied it. Bob had heard it, too—and the doors of three other rooms were opening—Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh hurried out. All had heard that terrible cry.

"Wharton—what—?"

Harry Wharton dashed across the room, and threw open the door of Lord Mauleverer's bed-room. All was in darkness; but in a moment he had found the switch and turned the light on.

"Mauly!"

Lord Mauleverer lay across the bed, motionless. The bedclothes were thrown back. Wharton ran to him.

"Mauly!" he exclaimed, huskily.

No sound, no word, no movement! Mauleverer was insensible.

"He's fainted!" said Harry.

"But what—what can have happened?" asked Bob Cherry, in a low, scared voice.

"Heaven knows."

There was a faint moan from Mauleverer. His eyes opened, and he stared wildly round him. For the moment he did not seem to recognise the chums of the Remove.

He shuddered violently.

"Mauly!" breathed Wharton. He threw his arm round the schoolboy earl and drew him to a sitting posture on the bed. "Mauly, old fellow—"

A long and terrible shudder ran through Mauleverer's limbs again. He muttered something incoherently. "Better call Sir Reginald," said Nugent.

Mauleverer made a movement then. "All right in a minute," he muttered. "Don't—don't call my uncle. Don't! Stay with me a bit, you fellows—"

"Of course we'll stay," said Harry. "Get into the other room, to the fire, old chap; you're shivering. Stir the fire together, Bob."

"Right!"

Mauleverer seemed scarcely able to

move. Wharton caught up a dressing-gown and placed it on the shivering junior, and half led, half carried him into the adjoining room. Bob was stirring the embers into a blaze.

The faces of the juniors were scared and startled. They asked themselves what could have happened, without being able to find an answer. Something had struck the schoolboy earl with horror and fear—what, they could not even guess.

Mauleverer sank into a chair by the fire, still shivering, and the juniors noticed that he kept his face turned away from the armoured figures by the windows.

"Wharton!" whispered Mauleverer at last.

"Yes, old fellow?"

"Is he—is he still there?"

"He? Who?" asked Harry, wondering whether Mauleverer's mind was wandering.

"Sir Fulke."

Mauleverer scarcely breathed the name.

Wharton started. His eyes turned on the armoured figure.

"It's still there, of course, Mauly."

"Has it moved?"

"Moved?" said Harry. "Of course not!"

Mauleverer shuddered.

"Look at it, Harry! Look at it closely, old chap, if you've the nerve. Tell me if it—if it seems to have moved—even an inch—"

Wharton looked at the shuddering junior. Was it some dream—some dream of the wicked old knight who was said to haunt Mauleverer Towers—that had shaken Mauleverer like this, to the very depths of his soul? It seemed incredible.

In silence Harry crossed over to the figure of Sir Fulke.

So far as he could observe, it was standing exactly in its old position. There was no sign of its having moved. How could it have moved?

Each of the armoured figures looked exactly as when the juniors had seen them last.

Mauleverer did not speak, but his eyes seemed to beseech Wharton, as the captain of the Remove came back.

"It's not moved," said Harry.

"Sure?"

"Quite sure, old chap!"

Mauleverer stared into the fire. Bob had fanned it into blaze, and was heaping up half-burnt embers. But the schoolboy earl still shivered, as if the cold were in his very heart.

Wharton closed the doors of the room. The juniors did not think for a moment of leaving their chum. No one else in the house seemed to have heard the cry that had awakened them. The servants' quarters were at a distance; only Brian Mauleverer's room was occupied within range of hearing. But Brian had not turned out.

Wharton thought of him, and asked Mauleverer whether he should call his cousin.

The schoolboy earl shook his head.

"No! What's the good?"

The juniors gathered round the fire. The night was cold, and they were clad only in their pyjamas. For a long time there was silence, but Mauleverer spoke at last.

"A dream," he said. "Was it a dream? You fellows will think me mad, or a funk. But I saw—I saw—" He shuddered.

"What did you see, old fellow?" asked Nugent softly.

There was no vestige of colour in Mauleverer's waxen cheeks. But he was calm now, and his voice was steady as he answered.

"I think I fainted. Did you fellows find my bed-room door open?"

"No; shut."

"Was Sir Fulke in his place?"

"In his place? Of course!"

"Was there—was there anybody in the room, or—or anything?"

"Good heavens!" murmured Wharton, under his breath. Aloud he said: "No, old fellow, nobody—nothing that's not here now. If there'd been anybody, he couldn't have cleared. I heard you cry out, and came at once."

"Then it wasn't a trick?" said Mauleverer.

"A—a trick?"

"Harry, old man"—Mauleverer's voice grew husky—"as I'm living, my bed-room door opened, and Sir Fulke came in—Sir Fulke Mauleverer—"

"Mauly!"

"Unless I'm mad, I saw him!" Mauleverer shivered. "I remember I cried out; then I must have fainted. You fellows know I'm not a funk, to be frightened by a shadow. I saw Sir Fulke—in armour—"

The juniors exchanged alarmed glances.

"You'd been dreaming, old chap!" said Bob uncomfortably.

"I had—I know I had! But it was he—the signal of death to a Mauleverer!" muttered the schoolboy earl. "Well, I'm not afraid! It was only the horror of it—"

"Mauly!" exclaimed Wharton sharply. "Look here, old man, if you saw the armoured figure, there was somebody inside it—"

"I've thought of that. It might have been a cruel trick. But you say yourself that there was nobody here—"

Wharton crossed over to the mail-clad figure. The armour was empty.

"Look about the rooms, you fellows," said Harry. "It's barely possible—"

The juniors searched, though without expectation of making any discovery. Every recess was looked into. There was not the remotest trace of an intruder.

Yet if someone had played a trick with the mail-clad figure it was evident that he could not have escaped unseen.

Wharton had been on the spot at once—his chums close behind him. The corridor had been flooded with electric light. The upper end of it was a blank wall and shuttered window; and in the other direction any fugitive from Mauleverer's room must have passed the doors of all the rooms occupied by the Famous Five. A trickster could not have escaped unseen, that was certain.

The juniors gathered round the fire again. Every face was grave. There was little doubt in their minds that Mauleverer had cried out in the grip of a terrible nightmare.

But they did not say so.

Bob Cherry heaped more wood on the fire. The juniors were sleepy, but they did not think of bed. But Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet at last.

"I'm keepin' you fellows up," he said. "You're tired. I'm goin' back to bed."

"Not alone," said Harry.

"It's all serene, old fellow."

Wharton shook his head.

(Continued on page 17.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2"

Your Editor knows the stuff that goes! He's your pal!



THE 'BREAKING-UP' CONCERT!

By Bob Cherry.

IT was William Wibley of the Remove, who suggested we should have a jolly good concert as a wind-up to the term. Wib is a good actor, and knows it, and as we have had many examples of his skill in this direction, we heartily agreed that a breaking-up concert should be given by the Remove.

Immediately this decision was made known, practically everybody in the Remove suddenly discovered that they could do a turn of some kind, and it was necessary to form a committee to deal with applications from stunt merchants.

They elected me chairman of the Stunt Committee. I must say they elected the right man for the job, as my powers of discrimination are infinitely superior to any other chap's. (Don't talk piffle! We elected you because you can deal with such as Coker and Bulstrode and Bolsover—you're so handy with your mits!—Ed.)

The first chap to get into the study where the committee was sitting was Billy Bunter. I looked at him in a manner which should have frizzled him into a grease-spot.

"I say, you fellows—" he began. "William George Bunter," I said, in my best magisterial tone. "there's nothing doing! Hop it! We want first-class talent—"

"That's why I have come here," broke in Billy loftily. "You must have at least one chap who can do a decent turn. With my wonderful ventriloquism—"

"Ventriloquists are barred; we want something new," put in Harry Wharton. "Look here, Wharton, you know jolly well that I saved your lives when we were in the Congo—"

"We were never in the Congo, my tulip," said Frank Nugent. "On the Congo, you mean!"

"On or in make no difference—" "Only that if you had been in the Congo you would have had two baths instead of one this year!" said Tom Brown humorously.

"Oh, really, Brown— Look here, Bob Cherry, do you want the concert to be a success or a failure?" demanded Billy hotly.

"A success, of course, fathead!" I said. "That's why we don't want any Bunters in the programme. Buzz off!"

"My wonderful ventriloquism—" "Too old, Buntie. We had plenty of that during the term, and the chaps don't want any more of it," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Sammy and I could do a dance," said Billy desperately. "We're very good dancers, you know. It wants chaps with elegant figures like ours to really dance properly. Now, when we performed last vac before—before



The Bunter Brothers give a popular turn in the Greyfriars Breaking-up Concert.

hundreds of titled relatives—I mean, people—the laughter was simply deafening!"

"I dare say it was!" said several of the committee in unison.

"So if we can make a lot of titled people laugh and forget their dignity, Sammy and I can jolly well burst all the Greyfriars chaps!" went on Bunter, warming to his subject. "Now, put us on top of the bill, and we'll give a handsome dance—I mean, a comic dance!"

He broke off, and the Committee looked at one another questioningly. Harry Wharton winked, and Tom Brown nodded. After all, there might be much less funny stunts than seeing Billy and Sammy doing a trot on the boards.

"All right, Billy," I said at last. "You're on the giddy list. Now buzz off, and let some real performers come in!"

There was something like a riot out in the passage. But I could hear Bulstrode and Bolsover bellowing, and I guessed that they were keeping back the crowd of stunt merchants so that they could get in as soon as Billy Bunter had passed out.

Billy smiled—a superior sort of smile that made me long to chuck a table at him.

"As it's Christmas-time, we'll forgo our usual fees," he said loftily. "We generally charge—"

"We'll be charging in a minute," I hinted darkly—"charging you out of the study, you ass!"

"You'd better be careful," said Bunter in what the novelists would call a menacing tone. "We might refuse to perform for you if you don't show us proper respect."

"Scratch his name off the list, Harry," I said at once.

Bunter jumped. "Nummo—I mean—I was only joking!" said Billy hastily. "I'm going now. I really meant to say that it is awfully good of you to allow us to make a success of your rotten concert!"

I slung a book at him then, and Billy disappeared through the doorway like a rabbit down its hole. The next moment Bolsover and Bulstrode came in, together, and glaring at each other like a couple of fighting cocks.

"Put me down for a clog dance—" began Bulstrode quickly.

"My stunt's a clog dance—" commenced Bolsover.

"Look here, Bolsover—" The Committee frowned as one man. "No scrapping here," I said sternly. "Bolsover and Bulstrode—clog-dancing couple! Hop!"

More fun and excitement in next week's special issue of the "Herald"!

"I could do it much better by myself—"
began Bulstrode.

"Next!" I howled.

There was a rush from outside, and in a moment Bolsover and Bulstrode forgot to argue. They had to, for their voices would have been drowned by the row the other chaps kicked up.

However, after much slanging, howling, roaring, shouting, shrieking, threatening, and pleading, we got together a fine group of performers for the breaking-up concert, and notices were put on all the notice-boards to announce that the concert would commence at seven sharp.

It was, perhaps, unfortunate that we didn't keep an eye on the discentented mugs-wumps for whom we couldn't find a place on the programme. We might have saved ourselves quite a lot of trouble, not to mention a few facial decorations to take home with us for Christmas.

The Hall was crowded at seven o'clock with the Remove chaps, who had been allowed in a few minutes earlier than the rest, well in the front row. At least, that is where they should have been, but we noticed that Skinner and his crowd of rotters were at the back. We were more pleased than surprised, as a matter of fact, for their faces would have worried any performer into forgetting what he had to do.

The concert started with a dance by the Bunter brothers, and I must say it was amusing. Two great, fat porpoises could not have danced in a more amusing fashion, and the Bunters really thought their "comic" dance was being laughed at. As a matter of fact, the laughter was caused by their frantic efforts to appear funny!

We had just pushed on Bolsover and Bulstrode when there came a hullabaloo at the back of the hall. Several fellows were singing a rag-time ditty, and Harold Skinner was standing upon a form waving a ruler in the manner of a conductor.

"Hi! What's the giddy game, Skinner, you rotter?" I howled over the footlights.

"It's Ragtime Cowboy Joe—" sang the rotters brigade, unheeding.

"Skinner!" I roared. "Chuck em out, somebody!"

The song, however, was quickly finished, and the rotters sat down. I breathed fire and vengeance, but the spirit of Christmas was in my bones, and I suppose they were feeling a bit lively, too. So we let them stop.

When Hurree Singh started to warble—he's got a nice voice, you know—up jumped the rotters brigade again, and started singing about "his coal-black mammy—" That was too much.

Without any more ado, the committee proceeded to wipe up the giddy lull with the rotters, and the singing gave place to howling.

"What's the trouble?" hooted Skinner, just as I got to him. "This is the breaking-up concert, isn't it? We're only breaking up the—"

"I'm going to break you up into little pieces!" I said, in a gentle roar.

I did—and Skinner went out of the Hall on his neck. All his followers followed, as they should do, and the door was closed upon them.

Then the concert went on uninterruptedly, and a jolly good time we had. Every performer performed in top-hole fashion, and when the masters came in at seven-thirty the audience was in a state of jollity which brought smiles to their faces.

Jolly old Lecke—that's the Head, you know—made a little speech at the end, and Quelch stood beside him, clapping every time he uttered good wishes to all the audience.

The evening was brought to a conclusion with three cheers for the Head, three more for readers of the "Magnet," three more for the Stunt Committee, three more for the performers, three more for the masters, three more for old Wingate, three more for—(Ring off, Bob! If you're going to put down the names of all the people for whom three cheers were called there will be no room for anything else in this special number of ours!—Ed.)

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

EVERYBODY in the country this week is thinking of Christmas and all the good times which Christmas should bring. In the hope that we shall help to make this Christmas an enjoyable one for our many reader-chums, my staff and I have arranged this Special Christmas Number of the HERALD.

I was swamped out with offers of contributions to this number. Every chap in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth, and one or two in the lordly Sixth, wanted to write something or other so that they could take a copy of the HERALD home with them, and show their work to their people.

Loder of the Sixth, with a smile on his face which immediately put me on my guard, brought me an article, entitled, "Why I am Popular." Like his cheek thinking that our paper is a rag which has no respect for the truth. I suppose Loder thought he would get a handsome present from his people if he could show them an article published in the Remove magazine, proving his popularity. I am now threatened with a thick ear a day next term.

Tom Brown has contributed a seasonable story, which is certainly more funny than truthful. Tommy must be a fine chap to have with one in a party at a festive time like Christmas!

My real regret is that Dick Penfold is suffering from a frightful cold in his head, and has been unable to contribute a sparkling poem on Christmas. He tells me he finds rather a difficulty in thinking clearly, and would rather not write anything likely to lower the standard of his work. Let's hope Dicky is all right for the 25th.

We held a special meeting of the staff and contributors on Saturday evening, when a vote of thanks to all readers of the GREYFRIARS HERALD for their support this year: was unanimously passed amidst loud cheering. I was then asked to put the following resolution to you:

"That this meeting, composed mainly of the Remove, wishes to assure all readers of the 'Magnet' Library and the GREYFRIARS HERALD of their heartiest good wishes for a right merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year."

To which Billy Bunter added: "May the puddings be fruity and the turkey tender!"

Cheerio, then, chums all! Have a jolly good time—as I shall if I can dodge Bunter this time!

Ever your sincere pal,

HARRY WHARTON.

A FINE CHRISTMAS
PRESENT:—

THE
"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

THE ORIGINAL SANTA CLAUS!

By Tom Brown.

(I've an idea this has been made up by our cheerful humorist. He tells me that if I don't believe it I should buy a book and look it up.—Ed.)

SANTA CLAUS, the popular gentleman who brings presents along at Christmas-time, was originally a sweep. I don't mean that he was a sweep like Skinner, but a chimney-sweep.

I learn that Santa Claus was once a boy. That is rather difficult to understand, but there is no going against the truth. As a boy, Santa Claus had a great liking for climbing on to roofs and peering down chimneys. In the end his parents thought he would be sooted—I mean, suited—for a sweep, so they put him to the profession.

Santa Claus made great headway in his profession. In less than a century he had become known throughout the world as the biggest chimney-sweep of all time. He had contracts with all the titled people in the country, but my record does not show the name of Bunter in the list of the exalted people who patronised old Santa Claus.

Of course, the sweep made lots of money, and, being a thrifty sort of fellow, he saved and saved and saved until he had accumulated a huge fortune. He loved children, and his first thought, when he retired from business, was to spend his fortune in buying the children presents at Christmas-time.

He did not want to show up in this really topping and generous idea, so he used to slip round to Selfridge's and buy up tremendous supplies of toys, etc. Then came the question of delivering the goods.

This was a great problem. There were no aeroplanes in those days, and the dear old lady who jumped over the moon wouldn't lend him her flying broom. (That sounds a bit mixed, Mr. Editor, but I must follow my records.) So old Santa decided that the best thing to do was to get on the roofs of houses, and drop the merry presents down the chimneys.

His great experience in dealing with chimneys helped him here. He was able to drop the presents down the chimney so that parents could place them in the children's stockings. That is why so many children to-day see their parents placing presents in their stockings, and because they see their parents doing this, declare that there is no Santa Claus.

I hereby put it on record that there was, and still is, a Santa Claus. He is a very old man now, but a couple of doses of thyroid and soda have given him internal life—I mean, eternal life.

Therefore, if there's a row in the old chimney this Christmas I ask all readers not to get the wind up. It's only Santa Claus, having spent some of his War Loan on presents, dropping them down the most sootable place.

Another batch of topping contributions from the Greyfriars Chums next week!



An Eggsciting Christmas advencher speshally ritten for Harry Wharton's Christmas Number. By DICKY NUGENT (Orther).

NOBBY NIX was haggurd. His face was positively pail, and his lips were twitching tremblingly. His eyes were glood to the clock on the mantle piece of his small lodjng bed-room. For 'twas Christmas Day, and he had cleen forgot all about it.

Nobby was pore and without munney, but he new that only one hundred miles away was the castle of his boyhood daze, where his father and mother and sisters and brothers and cousins and uncles and arnts would be spending the whole of Christmas Day in putting away their good things.

"What shall I do?" he muttered in a horse whisper. "The time is late, and there is only one trane to Richville to-nite—I mean, to-day. Ah, the garrage!"

No sooner thort of than acted upon. With a bound like a wounded tiger, he was out of the rume, and down the stairs.

"Farewell, Mrs. Nudgeitt!" he howled merrily. "I'm for home and beauty! A merry Christmas to you and all yours!"

"Thank you kindly, Master Nix!" said Mrs. Nudgeitt, with flashing eyes. "The same to you, and meny of 'em!"

Out into the wild morning went Nobby Nix, his eyes blazing with the fire of battle, and his mind made up to fite his way home, if needs must.

The garrage was only just round the korner, and, looking neither to rite nor to left, nor behind him, Nobby swung round the korner and dashed into the garrage. There were two men there, smoking a cigar which had been given them by a delited and prosperous client, and Nobby jerked to a halt before them, panting.

"A car!" he said tensely. "A car, like one o'clock!"

"It will be one o'clock afore you get a car, sir!" said the man with the biggest cigar. "They are all out, sir, and I ain't got no more in stock!"

A grone escaped our hero's lips. His pants became quicker and quicker, and the wild lile in his blazing eyes threttened to singe his eyebaws.

Suddenly he looked into the korner of the garrage, and hope took the place of the wild lile.

"A horse—a horse!" he ejaculated. "A horse will do! I only want it to take me to the stashun!"

Before anybody could stop him, Nobby had run to the horse, and had sprung upon its back.

"Don't spur him, sir!" worned the young man with the big cigar, in plaintive tones.

Nobby never herd. His heels were digging into the anymal's soft side, and like the gallant feller he was, the horse bounded forward.

Nobby terned him into the road, where the snow was lying thick and hevvy. No thort of slipping entered Nobby's head—his whole mind was occupied in thinking of the castle at Richville. Threw the snow went Nobby and the horse.

A kab got in the way as it was turning in the middel of the rode. Did that stop Nobby? Was he doomed to kollide with the kab, and lose his life and Christmas dinner? Could the kabby tern round in time to let the horse thre? Was it the end—the bitter, orful end?

The moment was drematic. The kabby yelled horsely, and Nobby clenched his teeth.

The next moment horse and rider leapt from the snowey erth!

Clean as a whistle over the top of the kab went the horse and Nobby. The horse's hoofs cort the top of the kab and ripped the material from end to end, but Nobby did not fall.

That was the grate point. The horse landed well, and in anuther instant was boundin forward at grater speed than ever. Nobby glanced at the watch on his rist. He had two minnits more—only two minnits more!

The station hove in site—the trane was signalled. But Nobby hadn't got a tickit. The powerful horse, panting and naying, was pooled to a standstil outside the bookin-office, and Nobby slid down out of the saddle.

Puff, puff! Skreech!

The trane was in.

Should he stop for a tickit and dodge the kollektor at the other end of his jorney?



Nobby and the Kollektor met in the entrance of the station platform, and down they went into the cold snow.

Should he? The temptation was orful, and a grone broak from his lips.

It was Christmas time, and he coulnd do it. No; come what mite, he had to have his tickit.

"Richville—Richville!" he shouted, as he approached the bookin office.

A garsp left his lips. There was no one there! Even as he peered hotly through the bars of the office, he herd the engine shreek again, and saw the trane rolling out of the station.

He maid a frantick dash for the platform. But alas! His luck was out, and so was the kollektor's luck, for they met att the entrance to the stashun platform, and down they went into the cold snow.

"Ow!" gasped Nobby. "My trane!"

"It is gorn!" panted the kollektor. "You are two late!"

They scrambled to there feet again, and the kollektor gazed with simpaty at our hero's pail face.

"Is it so dredful?" he asked ankshusly.

"'Tis Christmas Day, and I karn't get home!" said Nobby, swallowing the lump in his throat. "Ah, me!"

(Continued at foot of column 3.)

HOW I SHALL SPEND CHRISTMAS!

(A number of fellows were asked this question, and the following replies resulted.)

DR. LOCKE:

"I shall spend my Christmas at home, and I should very much like to have all the Greyfriars boys here with me. I shall miss their cheery voices, the noise they make, and the happy laughter which usually makes Greyfriars such a pleasant place to live in. My thoughts will be with you all on the 25th. Have a good time, and come back ready to work harder than ever. I think the greater part of Christmas evening will be occupied in listening to Miss Rose's singing."

GEORGE WINGATE:

"I'm going home for Christmas, and I shall be jolly glad to get away from you young rascals for a time. It will be quite pleasant not to have to cuff a dozen cheeky fags on Christmas morning. No, you cheeky chumps, I don't hang up my stockings ou Christmas Eve!"

GOSLING (the school porter):

"Which I shall spend my Christmas a-hoping as 'ow you young gentlemen's parents lectures you on 'Ow to respect your Holders!' It depends on you young gentlemen whether I have turkey or pork and beans for my Christmas dinner. I love turkey—so does Mrs. Gosling. That ain't a 'int, that's a fact!" (Chaps, ignore the first, but not the second part of Gossy's statement!—Ed.)

BILLY BUNTER:

"Sammy and I will spend Christmas with our titled relatives. We shall have a splendid time, for one of our uncles runs a tremendous store. We shall decorate Bunter Court with holly and coloured papers and Christmas-puddings and turkey. I'd like to take all the Remove with me, but I'm afraid the duke wouldn't like to have a lot of shrieking, ill-mannered fags around him.

"The Army won't get you home, sir!" said the kollektor, who dident understand ritely. "Don't faint, sir—"

"I'm not goin to faint!" declared Nobby, as he squaired his shoulders and the kollektor for knocking him down. "I will never be beat! I will spend my Christmas Day with my relatives! What can I do? What shall I do? How can I do it?"

The kollektor was sylent. His heart was bleedin with pity.

Nobby took to pacing up and down outside the stashun entrance, and the kollektor watched him with eyes that were red with weepin.

A car? There wasent one! A horse? 'Twould be two much for a horse! There wasent eny trane! There wasent eny trams or busses.

Suddenly their was a whir in the air, and a grate big airyplane came down into the snow of the rode. Nobby's eyes lit up with hoap.

"Ah! Oh! The airyplain!" he muttered. "What luck! What bejine luck!"

The avyator got out of the plane and strolled langwidly to the stashun.

"I went up without any matches for my fags!" he said kasually. "Can you oblige?"

Nobby thort quickly.

"I will give you a box of matches if you'll take me to Richville!" he said drematically. "A bargin is a bargin! In there arnt eny shops open—and all the slot masheens are empty! What about it?"

"I'm on, me good lad!" declared the avyator. "Give me a lile and jump in!"

So the boy who lost his trane got home for his Christmas dinner quicker than if he had cort his trane that he lost. It was a matter of great satisfacsun to him and to his parents, and the avyator, who was a genyial feller, stopped with him and brort him back.

THE END.

Look out for next week's special issue!

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AN enthusiastic welcome awaited the Speaker (Mr. Harry Wharton) on his resumption of duty at the House after his adventures on the Congo. Mr. Wharton had been addressing a meeting in Study No. 7, and entered the House late, when Mr. Peter Todd vacated the chair. Accompanying the Speaker were the other members of the party, including Mr. Bunter, whose healthy tan was much admired.

Mr. Harry Wharton: "Well, gentlemen, and others, I am glad to be back, and so are my friends and colleagues. I hope Mr. Todd has been given an easy task in my absence in the way of officiating over this illustrious assembly."

Mr. Peter Todd: "With the exception of a fracas with Coker, and a little row over Loder, we have got on swimmingly."

Mr. Wharton: "That's nothing. Coker is irrepressible. I suppose I had better get straight to business."

Mr. Bunter: "No you don't, you burbling chump! Do you think I am going to disappoint the House? Not me! The chaps want to hear about my adventures. They shall hear them."

Mr. Wharton: "Your exploits, my fat tulip, are not before the House."

Mr. Bunter: "They jolly soon will be. I have made a squeeze to get here tonight. It was precious inconvenient, I can tell you. All my titled relatives are clamouring for me. The duke rang me up on Quelch's phone as I came along. I had to tell his Grace there was nothing doing. He will have to give his dinner-party another night."

Mr. Wharton: "That's all very well, but the House isn't so mighty eager to hear about the lions you ran away from."

Mr. Bunter: "Why, if it hadn't been for me, that Spaniard, with a face like a frying-pan, would have done you all in."

Mr. Wharton: "Order, order! I am ready to admit, with the rest of us, that Bunter's ventriloquial hanky-panky came in jolly useful, but I should advise everybody to take a handful of salt with the statements made by our plump friend. Bunter can write a book if he likes—"

Mr. Bunter: "And I jolly well shall!"

Mr. Wharton: "I am sure it will be an interesting contribution to the literature of the Dark Continent, but I do wish to implore Bunter not to put his idea into execution of dyeing himself black, and appearing on the stage as the Mad Chief of the Jingibbaweese. It would not do. The police would feel hurt, I am sure, and, besides, the part is not in keeping with the dignity of our colleague."

Lord Mauleverer: "Dignity, begad!"

Mr. Wharton: "I used the word advisedly. Bunter is turning over a new leaf. The past is dead. He has learned responsibility in the wilds. He no longer eats as he used to do."

At this stage Bunter was seen to extract a bag of jam-tarts from his pocket and start munching.

Mr. Bob Cherry: "Back at his old games."

Mr. Bunter: "If you mean me, Bob, old fellow, these are tarts, not games."

I am only waiting for silence. Then I will tell the House what happened."

Mr. Wharton: "That you won't! Mr. Todd has handed me a speech from Reader JOHN PALMER, 12, Bloomfield Street, Paddington, W. 2, and I will read it at once." Mr. Wharton read the following:

"Most boys collect stamps, so do I, but I collect omnibus tickets as well. I am not too interested in stamps. A good idea is to get a stamp album and fill it with bus tickets—the 2d. in one square, the 3d. in another, and so on, and also put them in their respective places. Such as putting tickets from York tramcars in one section, instead of stamps from Belgium, etc. Hidden away in the corner of the dining-room I have a portmanteau full of tickets. I have never tried to count them, as I believe there are a few million. In my opinion stamp-collecting is an old pastime. My advice is, start collecting omnibus and tram tickets. I know a fellow who has dozens of expensive omnibus tickets—1s. ones. He very generously gave me a 10d. one, but he had lots higher. So give your stamps away to chaps who still revel in the ancient pastime, and collect bus tickets instead."

Mr. Fish: "Piffle, I call it."

Mr. Wharton: "The hon. member can keep his opinion. I consider Reader Palmer has hit on a good idea. We all ride by omnibus. These days you can travel pretty well all over the country by motor-bus."

Mr. Bunter: "You ought to see the omnibuses on the Congo—all colours. I remember skipping on one and telling the dusky driver to drop me in Nyanza Street, and—"

Mr. Cherry: "The Porpoise is romancing again. Don't you fellows believe a giddy word he says. He has Congo on the brain. There are no omnibuses there."

Mr. Bunter: "I meant to say it was in Peckham. I was going to say my aunt, the Duchess—"

Mr. Wharton: "Has any member any suggestion to make?"

Lord Mauleverer: "Collecting bus tickets may suit some chaps. Of course, you get to know where places are, and that's useful."

Mr. S. Bunter: "I know a man who collects antiques. He never uses new bus tickets, always the old ones; he says it comes cheaper in the end."

Mr. Fish: "You jay! The old tickets won't take you anywhere!"

Mr. Bunter: "I have not the time to take up the business. The last time I got on an omnibus the conductor missed me out entirely. The result was I never had a ticket at all. How can a fellow collect tickets if the officials do not give them to you?"

Mr. Nugent: "Dodging again."

Mr. Bunter: "It is beneath my notice, a remark like that. I never dodge, but I am not the chap to plague a conductor jolly with a fare if he doesn't want it. The poor chap has quite enough to do."

Mr. Wharton: "I think we are all agreed that there is some amusement to be extracted from the hobby. It teaches

topography, anyhow, and shows anybody that Tooting is not in Birmingham, and that Salford has nothing to do with Hammersmith. I now wish to lay before the House the interesting little speech on Railways from Reader E. V. RALPH, 35, Foulsham Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey. Reader Ralph says: "I consider railways to be one of the most interesting subjects in existence. To be able to speak about engines does not necessarily mean that one has to understand mechanism. I always cut out newspaper articles about railways, and the photos of accidents that have occurred. These are added to my collection of engine plates given in the 'Popular.' Which is the 'prettiest' railway? I think the Great Northern. The engines are green, and the coaches light brown. I don't know which station in England is supposed to have the prettiest name, but I think it is Heathfield. Then there are the types of engines—the South Western with their stumpy funnels, etc."

Mr. Alonzo Todd: "I remember Heathfield. My Uncle Benjamin went there once. He says the memorial stone to Jack Cade is worth seeing. He says the old stone was a most fascinating section of English history. It seems that the late Mr. Cade, somewhere about 1150—"

Mr. Johnny Bull: "Rats!"

Mr. A. Todd: "Mr. Cade had a terrible accident. Chap called Alexander Eden caught him one on his topknot."

Mr. Wharton: "Railways are before the House. I agree with Reader Ralph. The subject is interesting."

Mr. Napoleon Dupont: "I think your English railways are what you call topping. But they have one fault—there is no top, like a bus, to ride on. Now in France we can sit on the roofs."

Mr. Mark Linley: "Yes, and get as black as sweeps."

Mr. Bunter: "I am still waiting for my turn, but perhaps next time I shall have my chance. I could tell you something about the railways in Africa. Old Corkran knows about them, but he is a perfect baby compared to me. I can tell you fellows that my word went on the Congo."

Mr. Bulstrode: "Pity you did not follow it."

Mr. Bunter: "I scorn such insinuations. I treat them with despatch. What the British Empire wants is a few chaps like me. We know how to deal with the natives. They all loved me on the Congo. Why, the chiefs could not do enough for me. I tell you flat that I am doing Greyfriars no end of honour by coming back at all."

Mr. Wharton: "I propose a vote of thanks to the two readers who have contributed such telling little speeches."

This was agreed to unanimously.

Mr. Bunter: "If Quelch gives me any of his nonsense it will be a bad day for him. I know what's due to me."

The House adjourned, but Bunter went on talking to empty benches. It was only when Lord Mauleverer returned and dragged him off to supper in his study that the famous ventriloquist desisted.

THE GHOST OF MAULEVEVER TOWERS!
(Continued from page 12.)

"Whatever it was—dream or not—you're not being left alone again to-night, Mauly. There's room for two or three in that big four-poster of yours. One of us is going to stay with you."

Lord Mauleverer smiled faintly. "It's rotten to worry you fellows like this," he said. "A jolly Christmas I'm givin' you, begad!"

"Rot, old chap!"

And when the other fellows went back to bed Harry Wharton went with Lord Mauleverer, quite determined that the schoolboy earl should not be left alone.

Wharton kept the electric light on, and in a short time he was glad to see that Mauleverer was asleep. He did not sleep so soon himself; he lay thinking of the strange occurrence. And suddenly he gave a start. For a moment it seemed to him that he heard a sound in the adjoining room—a sound of movement. He started up in bed, listening intently, with throbbing heart. But the sound was not repeated; he heard nothing but the faint wail of the wind.

He slept at last, fatigued with watching, and he did not open his eyes again till the sun of the winter morning was glimmering in at the windows.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Drake Arrives!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were feeling a little heavy-eyed when they came down in the morning. But a good breakfast and a spell of skating on the frozen lake made them feel quite themselves again—with the exception of Lord Mauleverer. Mauly was quiet and calm, and even cheerful in a way; but the juniors could see plainly enough that the strange events of the night had told on him. At Mauly's request nothing was said to Sir Reginald Brooke on the subject—he did not wish the kind old gentleman to be distressed. And the juniors mentioned none of the circumstances to Brian Mauleverer. The least said, the soonest mended, was Mauleverer's view; and probably he did not care to hear Brian's comments on the subject. It was odd enough, when the juniors came to think of it, that Brian had heard nothing during the night, as his quarters were so close at hand; but if he was in ignorance of what had occurred, it was as well to leave him so.

Mauleverer was keenly sensitive to ridicule on the subject; but in the daylight, at least, it was difficult for the juniors to take the affair with seriousness. It seemed clear to them that Mauleverer had been the victim of an excited fancy; and, indeed, Mauleverer wondered more than once whether they were right. And yet he was convinced—he knew—that he had looked upon the armour-clad figure of old Sir Fulke Mauleverer. He had hoped against hope that some sign of trickery would be found—that it would transpire that someone unknown had encased himself in the old knight's armour to play that trick upon him; but so far as could be seen, that had been proved to be impossible. But if it was no trick, what did it mean? For he had seen the armour-clad figure—he had heard the iron footsteps. Was it, then, a visitation—a

warning of coming death, as the old Mauleverer legend told?

Mauleverer did not join the skaters; and while his comrades were gone out, Wharton looked for the schoolboy earl, and found him in his den. He was seated in a deep armchair, with his eyes fixed on the armoured figure of Sir Fulke, his face strangely pale and worn. He glanced up with a smile as Wharton entered, but the smile evidently was forced. And it came into Wharton's mind that the strange visitation had told upon Mauly more than he had guessed.

"You're coming out on the ice, old fellow?" said Harry.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head. "I think not. Lazy, you know."

"But—" said Harry.

"Besides, Drake's comin' to-day," said Mauleverer. "I think I'll go down in the car to meet him at the station. Like to come?"

"Good!" said Wharton. "When do you go?"

"Twelve."

"Right-ho! I'll be ready. Won't you come out for a run now?"

"Dear boy, you go ahead with the strenuous life. I lost some sleep last night, an' I want a little extra nap."

Mauly closed his eyes. Harry Wharton joined the skaters; but as soon as he was gone from the den, Mauly's eyes opened again. His glance turned almost haggardly on the figure of Sir Fulke.

Brian Mauleverer joined Harry Wharton as he was going down to the lake. The young man was smoking a cigarette, as usual, and he seemed in a cheery mood.

"Nothin' wrong with Herbert, is there?" he asked suddenly.

"Mauly?" said Wharton.

"Yes. He seemed a little off his feed this mornin'." Brian looked curiously at Wharton. "I hope the ghost story didn't give him a jolly old nightmare last night; but from his looks I'm afraid it did."

"Very likely, I think," said Harry.

"Friend of yours comin' down to-day, I believe?" said Brian, changing the subject.

"Yes, Jack Drake. He used to be at Greyfriars with us," said Harry.

"Oh, a schoolboy?"

"Well, it's not long since he was a schoolboy," said Wharton, with a smile. "He's a jolly good sort."

Brian nodded, and strolled away into the park, while Wharton joined the skaters. The captain of the Remove left his comrades in time to join Mauleverer for the run to the station. Mauleverer looked a little more like his old lazy and cheerful self as the car ran down the drive, in the frosty sunshine. But the signs of strain in his face were only too clear.

"Mauly, old man," said Wharton, as the car left the park gates behind, "I've been thinking—"

"About the giddy ghost?" asked Mauleverer, with a faint smile.

"Yes, old chap. I know it's not an agreeable subject to you," said the captain of the Remove, "but I want to ask you a question. Now it's all over—now it's daylight—do you feel sure that you saw—what you thought you saw last night?"

Mauleverer was silent.

"Yaas," he said, at last.

"You feel sure it wasn't a dream?"

"Yaas."

"Then what do you think?"

The schoolboy earl did not speak.

"If you saw it, Mauly, it must surely have been some sort of a trick," said Wharton.

"I don't see how."

"Neither do I," said Harry, with a nod. "Nobody else was there—nobody but ourselves—even if anybody in the house could have thought of playing such a dastardly trick. But—"

"But what?"

"Well, to put it plain, old chap, ghosts are all rot," said Harry. "Now, we're going to meet Drake; and I'm more glad than ever that he's coming. You know that when Drake left Greyfriars, he entered the service of Ferrers Locke, the famous detective. He's a detective himself now."

"Yaas."

"Well, my idea is, tell Drake all about it, and see what he thinks," said Harry. "Sort of professional opinion, you know."

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"This isn't the kind of business a detective could deal with, Harry," he answered. "Either it's a potty fancy—and I want a doctor for that, begad—or—or the old legend's true, and that old villain Sir Fulke Mauleverer has come back to warn me that I'm near the end. And if it's that, a detective can't help—not Ferrers Locke himself."

"But if it was some sort of a deception—"

"How could it have been? You searched my rooms, and there was no one there—and you know nobody could have got away before you arrived."

"That's true. But—"

"Nothin' doin', you know," said Lord Mauleverer.

"All the same, I'd like to tell Drake, and get his opinion. He's no end of a keen chap. If there's anything to be found out, Drake's the fellow to find it out!"

Mauleverer hesitated.

"Drake's a practical sort of chap," he said. "I'm afraid he'll think it's silly nerves. I don't want to be chipped."

"I understand that," said Harry.

"But whichever way you look at it, Mauly, it's a serious matter. Drake will be glad to help, if he can help. If something of the kind happened again this Christmas, you'd feel the shock pretty seriously. Let Drake know, anyway."



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"I'll do as you like," said Mauleverer at last.

"Good man!" said Wharton, relieved. The car stopped at the station, and Mauleverer and Wharton went on the platform. The train came in; and a cheery, good-looking youth with very keen eyes jumped out, and waved his hand to the two juniors. They rushed across the platform to greet him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Jack Drake Takes a Hand!

JACK DRAKE looked very merry and bright.

He shook hands warmly with Wharton and Lord Mauleverer, evidently glad to see his old Greyfriars schoolfellows again.

"It's jolly to see you!" he exclaimed. "Topping, in fact."

"You're looking just the same, Drake," said Wharton, smiling. "I don't think I should guess you were a giddy detective, to look at you."

"Begad, no," said Lord Mauleverer. "I suppose you've been runnin' in a jolly old cracksmen before brekker every mornin'—what?"

Jack Drake chuckled. "I'm a schoolboy again, for the Christmas holidays, at least," he said. "I almost wish I were going back to Greyfriars again with you next term."

"But not quite?"
"No; not quite," said Drake, laughing. "I like my new life, and Ferrers Locke is a man anybody might be happy to work with."

The three schoolboys walked out of the station together. Drake's face was very bright as he sat in the car with the Greyfriars juniors.

He glanced round appreciatively as the car glided along a lane with all leafless trees, white with frost, on either side.

"This is a jolly change after Baker Street," he said.

"But not so excitin', dear boy!"
"No, but rather more jolly," said Drake. "You fellows have already started late hours, I see."

"Oh, you see that?" asked Harry. "I fancy so," Drake grinned. "I'm a detective, you know, and a disciple of Ferrers Locke. Tell me what it is, Mauly."

"Eh? What what is?" ejaculated his lordship, with a start.

"What you've got on your mind."
"Eh? How the thump do you know I've got anythin' on my mind?" demanded Lord Mauleverer.

"I shouldn't be of much use to Ferrers Locke if I couldn't see that, old scout," said Drake. "Has anything happened since you came home for the holidays?"

"By gad!" said Mauleverer. "I hope nobody has burgled the Mauleverer plate?" said Drake. "But if so, hand over the case to me—the man on the spot, you know!"

"Not so bad as that," said Wharton, laughing.

"But something's happened?"
"Yes."

"Something in my line?"
"I don't know yet," said the captain of the Remove, "but we were going to tell you and ask your opinion."

"Good!" said Drake. "I'd be no end pleased if I could help. Get on with the yarn at once."

Drake leaned back on the soft cushions,

drinking in the keen, frosty air, while Wharton told the story, Lord Mauleverer putting in a few words here and there.

Mauly's foreboding that Drake might "chip" him on the subject was not realised.

The schoolboy detective listened with quiet gravity, and it was easy to see that he was taking the incident with great seriousness.

"Well, what do you think?" asked Harry, when the story was finished and the schoolboy detective was in possession of all the circumstances.

"I think it's jolly lucky that Mauly asked me down for Christmas," said Drake quietly. "There's somebody in Mauleverer Towers who will bear watching."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Mauleverer. "I suppose it's known that I'm coming?" said Drake. "Has it been mentioned about my connection with Ferrers Locke?"

"The fellows know, of course," said Harry, "and Mauly's uncle may know. It's not been mentioned otherwise."

"Better not speak of it, then," said Drake. "I'm coming along just as your old schoolfellow from Greyfriars, that's all. No need to put anybody on his guard if we can avoid it."

"That's so," assented Wharton.

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"But you can't think—" began Mauleverer, perplexed.

"It's a bit hard to know what to think so far," said Drake. "But I'm going to look round, and then do some hard thinking."

And that was all Ferrers Locke's assistant had to say. The car glided up the drive at the Towers. Brian Mauleverer was strolling on the terrace with his inevitable cigarette, and he came to meet the juniors. Lord Mauleverer introduced Drake, who was referred to simply as a former Greyfriars fellow. Brian was genial enough to him, but took no special note of the newcomer, evidently not having the faintest idea that Jack Drake was anything but what he looked—a cheery schoolboy.

Drake met the rest of the Greyfriars party at lunch. Wharton had already spoken a word to his chums, and no reference was made to Drake's new profession. After lunch, Lord Mauleverer sought out Harry Wharton, with a rather worried look on his face.

"You remember what I told you fellows before we broke up at Greyfriars," he said.

"About your cousin?"

"Yaas. Drake's come here in the same way, and—and I suppose I ought to let him know. But I couldn't let him know before he came, and—now it doesn't seem specially necessary to

mention it, as he's landed, what? I hate referrin' to the subject, of course."

Wharton smiled. "Drake's landed, as you say," he said. "No need to mention it now, I should say."

Lord Mauleverer looked relieved. "I'm glad you think so. I was bound to let you fellows know—and Drake, too, if I'd seen him—but I didn't! Now it's too late, let it drop—what?"

"I should think so," assented Harry. "Good!"

And nothing was said to Jack Drake on the subject of Brian Mauleverer's peculiar antecedents. But it is probable that Ferrers Locke's pupil needed telling very little on the subject; he had had more than experience enough to read the signs that were indelible in Brian's face, and he needed no prompting to make him decide, at the first meeting, that Brian Mauleverer had been a "bad hat," and had not changed since.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Ghost Walks Again!

HARRY WHARTON had looked forward to the arrival of Jack Drake, as the means of solving the strange mystery of the ghost of Mauleverer Towers. But in the course of the day he was conscious of some disappointment. True, it was Drake's object to appear nothing but a careless schoolboy on a holiday, and to keep the "detective" quite out of sight. If he was playing that as a part, he was playing it remarkably well. For no one, seeing Drake among the Greyfriars juniors at the Towers, would have dreamed that he had any thought in his mind but to enjoy his Christmas holiday. He skated on the frozen lake, he rode one of Mauleverer's ponies, he wandered in the great picture gallery, he chatted to Jerningham, the stately old butler, and he played a game of billiards with Brian Mauleverer. He contrived to put a great deal into the afternoon; but nothing of it, so far as Wharton could see, had any connection with the mystery he had undertaken to solve.

And in one respect Drake seemed to have changed since he had left Greyfriars—as Wharton discovered when he strolled into the billiards-room and found the schoolboy detective at play with Brian Mauleverer. The captain of the Remove learned that there was a fiver on the game. He made no comment; it was no business of his. But he was surprised, and he was not pleased. The "bad hat" was evidently at his old tricks again, in spite of his supposed reform; and Drake had been led into it. After leaving the billiards-room, Drake walked on the terrace in the dusk, and Harry Wharton joined him there.

"We're going to have tea up in Mauly's den," he said. "You've seen Mauly's quarters already."

"Oh, yes; and looked at Sir Fulke!" said Drake. "He looks a bit too solid to take midnight saunters, doesn't he?"

"He does," agreed Wharton. "You seem to get on fairly well with Mr. Brian?"

Drake looked at him. "You don't like the chap," he said. "Hem!"

"I'd never heard of Mauly's cousin before," said Drake. "Good reasons for keeping him dark, I dare say. It would be a bad day for the Mauleverer family if Mauly took a header through the thin

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ice when he's skating, Wharton. Mr. Brian isn't exactly the Johnny to make a reputable head of a noble family."

"You think he's a bad hat?"

"I don't think, I know! It's amazing that Mauly should have a relation like that. Son of a younger son—brought up expensively and left with hardly a brown," said Drake thoughtfully. "It's not uncommon for fellows of that kind to go to the dogs. Unless I'm mistaken, the worthy Brian went to the dogs at top speed, and landed there up to the neck."

"I see you've worked it out," said Harry. A sudden thought struck him. "Of course, you've been drawing him."

"I've been getting posted," said Drake coolly, "and I know what to think of a man who eggs a schoolboy to play for money."

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry's stentorian voice. "You fellows coming to tea?"

"Right-ho!"

Tea in Mauly's den was a good deal like a spread in the study at Greyfriars. Sir Reginald Brooke joined the merry circle for a while, and Brain Mauleverer came in, to smoke cigarettes and chat.

Once or twice Brian made allusion to the ghost story; but the juniors, realising how distasteful the topic was to Mauleverer, headed him off, as it were.

There was, besides, a topic of great interest to the juniors—a dance that they were to attend at a neighbouring mansion in the evening. Lord Mauleverer was to take his whole flock; and he asked Brian whether he was coming.

The young man shook his head.

"I'm readin' up farmin', you know," he said. "I'm goin' to put in an evenin' of steady readin'. You young fellows go off and enjoy yourselves."

And after dinner the party rolled away cheerily in the big car. Harry, who eyed Mauleverer anxiously at times, could see that the fall of darkness brought a sombre shade to the face of the schoolboy earl, and guessed that Mauly was looking forward to the coming night with uneasiness. He was glad that Mauly's mind was to be occupied till bed-time.

It was at a late hour that the party returned to Mauleverer Towers. Sir Reginald Brooke had gone to bed; but Brian was found in the smoking-room, in a haze of cigarette smoke.

"Had a good time?" he asked.

"Top-hole!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"The top-holefulness was terrific!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Brian grinned.

"That's good!" he said. "Good-night."

And the juniors went up to their rooms.

They gathered in Lord Mauleverer's den to say good-night to his lordship. Mauly was smiling cheerily. Whatever he felt inwardly, he was not likely to show any outward sign of disquiet if he could help it. Bob Cherry and Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh went to their rooms sleepy and contented. Wharton and Drake lingered a few minutes.

"Mauly, old man, let one of us camp with you to-night," said Harry in a low voice.

"Rot, old fellow," answered Mauleverer.

"But if there was anything—"

Mauleverer shook his head.

"I'm not draggin' anybody else into it," he said. "If there's anythin', it's for me to stand."



Brian Mauleverer stood at the open door. Outside the wind howled and the snowflakes beat against him. The adventurer looked at the juniors in the doorway. There was no relenting in their faces. Bob Cherry raised his hand. "Get out, you cur!" he said. (See Chapter 13.)

Wharton looked at Drake.

"There won't be anything, if there's somebody with Mauly," said the schoolboy detective. "Mauly, old man, keep your pecker up—and if something happens to-night, all the better. It will help us to clear up the mystery."

Mauleverer smiled faintly.

"Well, good-night, old infants," he said.

Wharton took a last glance at the mail-clad figure of Sir Fulke as he went. The door closed.

Drake went to Wharton's door with him. The face of the schoolboy detective was very grave.

"I sha'n't sleep to-night," he said in a low voice. "You'd better not, either, Harry. But keep in your room unless you hear an alarm."

"You think—"

"I think that the scoundrel will try to repeat his villainy, if he finds the coast clear," said Drake.

"But—I can't understand! Why should anybody try to hurt Mauly? Who could want to?" muttered Wharton. "He hasn't an enemy in the world. Some lunatic, perhaps."

"If it's a lunatic, there's method in his madness," said Drake dryly. "Poor old Mauly keeps it under, but he's fairly shaken up by this. A little more of it, and Mauly's condition will be pretty serious. Fellows have died under shocks like that."

Wharton started.

"But—but you can't suspect—"

"We shall know better what to suspect when the ghost has walked again," said

Drake, and he nodded good-night and left Wharton to himself.

The captain of the Remove was not likely to sleep. He turned out the light and waited. His anxiety for Mauleverer drove away the thought of slumber. And Jack Drake, in his room across the corridor, was not thinking of sleep. After turning out the light, he lifted a chair close to the door, sat down, and listened—and for a very long time Drake did not stir, though his eyes did not close.

The light still glimmered under Lord Mauleverer's door till a late hour. The schoolboy earl was tired, but he was disinclined for sleep. But when the hour of one tolled out, Mauleverer rose at last from his chair by the log fire and turned wearily to his bed-room.

He left the electric light burning in his den.

He switched on the light in the adjoining bed-room, and the hurried glance he gave round him showed how the strange visitation of the previous night had told on his nerves.

He did not undress. He threw himself on the bed, leaving the electric light at full force.

If the ghost of Mauleverer Towers walked that night, it would not walk in darkness.

Mauleverer did not sleep; but at last, after long listening to the December wind wailing without, he dozed.

He came out of the doze with a start. A thrill ran through him, and a groan came to his lips.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!

The tramping of iron feet was not

A story you'll never forget—next Friday's tale of Greyfriars School I

loud—but it was clear, distinct. Lord Mauleverer sat up, pressing his hand to his heart. His face was chalky white, and dewed with sweat.

His eyes were fixed on the open doorway between the rooms.

He knew what was to appear.

His starting eyes fell on the armoured figure advancing from the outer room, the vizor closed; advancing with steady iron tread.

Closer and closer!

It was no dream of the night, no fancy born of darkness and shadow. In the full glare of the electric light Sir Fulke Mauleverer towered over his unhappy descendant—and a gauntleted hand rose over Mauleverer as he cowered on the bed.

The hand descended slowly, inexorably upon the shrinking schoolboy earl, while he watched the black vizor in shuddering dread. It touched him! The icy-cold contact sent a chill to his very heart.

"Help! Help!"

The terrified junior found his voice at last. His cry rang through the room as he tore himself away from that phantom touch and rolled from the bed, on the other side, with a crash. And then, as he lay, wild incoherent mutterings came from his lips; and for the moment, at least, Lord Mauleverer's senses failed him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Amazing Discovery!

JACK DRAKE tore open his door and switched on the electric light in the corridor. At the same moment Wharton's door opened, and his face, white as death, stared out. "Drake, it's Mauly!"

"Come on!"

They raced to Mauleverer's room. The whole corridor, bright in the electric light, was before them. They hauled open Mauleverer's door, and the room before them was bright with light. The room beyond was lighted, too, and from that room cries came faintly, incoherently.

"See that no one gets out, Wharton!"

"But—"

"I'll see to Mauly."

Drake ran across into the bed-room. Wharton remained in the doorway of the outer room.

If some foe was there—some ruthless scoundrel—as Drake evidently suspected, he had no chance of passing Wharton and escaping. Bob Cherry, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh hurried out of their rooms and joined the captain of the Remove.

"Better call Mr. Brian!" said Wharton hurriedly. "Drake thinks someone is here! We may want help!"

"Right!" muttered Bob, and he ran down the passage to hammer at Brian Mauleverer's door.

Meanwhile Jack Drake had reached Mauleverer. The schoolboy earl, stretched on the floor, was alone in the bed-room. He was conscious; but there was no light of consciousness in his eyes; his glance was wild and strange, and the words from his lips came in a wild meaningless babble. It was clear that the unhappy boy had received a terrible shock.

Drake lifted the slim junior in his arms and bore him into the outer room and placed him in the armchair before the fire. Mauleverer ceased to mutter, but his face was still distorted, his eyes strange in their look. The pallor of death was in his face.

Drake set his teeth.

"Another shock like that, and there will be a new Earl of Mauleverer, I think," he said, in a low voice to his comrades.

"But what has happened?"

"We shall soon know."

Bob Cherry came back along the corridor.

"I can't make Brian hear," he said.

"He must be in a jolly deep sleep."

Wharton's lip curled. He had little doubt that the scapegrace had been

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drinking heavily before going to bed, and for that reason could not be awakened.
"Shut the door!" said Drake. "Lock it!"

Wharton obeyed.

The juniors gathered round Lord Mauleverer. For some minutes the schoolboy earl looked at them dazedly, not knowing them. A terrible fear was in their hearts that Mauleverer was losing his grip upon his sanity.

But the wild look faded from his face at last, and he grew calmer. He was shuddering from head to foot.

"It's the warning," he said, in a voice so low that the juniors could barely hear it. "I'm not afraid! I'm ready."

"Mauly, old man—" muttered Wharton.

A faint, tremulous smile glided over Mauleverer's white face.

"Old fellow—"
"Dear old chap," said Johnny Bull, "the armour couldn't move unless there was somebody inside it. And we can see there isn't."

"Search the room," said Drake.
"We did that last night," said Nugent.
"There was nobody."

"Search, all the same."
"We may as well," said Bob. And the juniors proceeded to search.

They examined every corner of the bed-room, and tried the door that led to the farther corridor. But it was bolted on the bed-room side, as it had been the previous night. Then they came back to Lord Mauleverer's den, and searched once more. But they gathered round Lord Mauleverer again, with clouded faces.

The schoolboy earl smiled—a ghastly smile

"Did you go in?"
"His door was locked."
"Call Sir Reginald Brooke," said Drake.

Lord Mauleverer made a gesture.

"No, no! I—"
"You've put the matter in my hands, Mauly, and you must give me my head," said Drake gently. "I've got a reason. I'm going to save you from the scoundrel who has nearly driven you out of your senses and endangered your life."

"Drake!" exclaimed Wharton.
"Call Sir Reginald!"

Without further demur the captain of the Remove quitted the room. It was in less than five minutes that he came back with the old baronet, in dressing-gown and slippers, with pale and startled face. Sir Reginald hurried to his nephew.

"Herbert!" he said huskily.

To Make a Complete Success of Christmas You Must Have

"The Holiday Annual!"



"It's rotten to bother you fellows like this! But there was no doubt this time. I saw him. He touched me—"

"Touched you?" said Bob.

"Touched me! I felt the chill of the gauntlet."

"Impossible, old fellow!" breathed Nugent.

Mauleverer's face worked.

"I never believed in the legend," he said—"never quite, at any rate. Now I've had proof. He touched me—I was broad awake—in the night."

"Who—what touched you?" asked Johnny Bull, in a scared voice.

Mauleverer made a gesture towards the two armoured figures between the windows.

"Sir Fulke?" breathed Nugent.

"Yes."

"You see, Drake," he said, "nobody's here—and nobody could have got away."

"That's certain," said Wharton.

"Old fellow, you dreamed it," said Johnny Bull uneasily.

Lord Mauleverer made no reply to that. He knew that he had not dreamed the terrible sight and the freezing touch of the gauntlet.

All eyes turned upon Jack Drake. His face was grave and grim.

"Drake," said Wharton huskily, "can't you help? Can't you give us some light? This is killing Mauleverer."

"I know that!" said Drake quietly.

"That is the game."

"What?"

"You called Mr. Brian, Bob?"

"Yes. He couldn't hear."

"I didn't want them to tell you, uncle," said Lord Mauleverer. "It's rather a shame. But I've seen it!"

"Tell me all!" said the baronet, his voice quivering.

He listened, his pale face growing paler and more worn. The juniors stood in silence. Drake had quietly locked the door again after the baronet had entered. His face was hard and grim, and there was a glint in his eyes.

"My poor boy!" whispered the old baronet. "I—"

"I have something to tell you, sir," said Drake quietly. "Mauly, old man, you have been tricked. A scoundrel has played on your fears, old fellow. It's a dastardly trick from beginning to end."

"But how—how?" exclaimed the old baronet.

"There is no one here!"

Boys, next Friday's story of Harry Wharton & Co. is a real corker—full of thrills!

"We've searched, Drake," said Bob.
 "You know we've searched!"
 Drake nodded.
 "Mauly did not fancy what he saw!" he said quietly. "He saw the armour of Sir Fulke Mauleverer in motion. That means that somebody was inside it. It was not the phantom of the old knight. It was a cunning trickster who has to gain by Mauleverer's death."
 "Drake!"
 "Look in the armour," said Drake.
 "It's empty now."
 "Look in it!"
 Wharton obeyed. He shook his head.
 "And now," said Drake, with a grim smile, "take off the helmet of Sir Gilbert."
 "What?"
 "The other suit of armour!" said Drake.
 "Drake!"
 All eyes turned upon the figure of Sir Gilbert Mauleverer. It stood motionless in its place.
 "It was Sir Fulke I saw," breathed Mauleverer. "The black armour—"
 "Take off Sir Gilbert's helmet!"
 "But—"
 Wharton was interrupted. There was a sudden amazing movement, and the shining armour of Sir Gilbert Mauleverer was in motion. With clanking footsteps, the armour-clad figure left its place, rushing towards the door. For a moment the juniors stood transfixed, amazed, horror-stricken, unbelieving what they saw. But Jack Drake made a spring at the striding figure of the knight, and grasped at the armour, seemingly tenanted now by a living body.
 "Back up!" shouted Drake.
 He dodged a savage blow from a steel gauntlet, and clung to the figure in armour. Wharton and Bob Cherry, dimly understanding at last, rushed to his aid.
 Crash!
 With a fearful, echoing crash the figure of Sir Gilbert came full length on the polished floor.
 The helmet rolled away.
 A human head showed in its place—a human face, distorted with rage and fury and despair. And from Lord Mauleverer came a faint cry:
 "Brian!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Unmasked at Last!

BRIAN MAULEVERER!"
 It was Brian Mauleverer—the scapegrace, the adventurer, the scheming plotter—exposed and unmasked at last!
 Lord Mauleverer started to his feet, with staring eyes. Sir Reginald Brooke gazed at the sprawling, armour-clad figure dazedly.
 Jack Drake smiled grimly.

"There's your ghost, Mauly!" he said quietly.
 "Brian!" repeated Lord Mauleverer. The young man stared at the startled faces, his features working with fury. A savage curse dropped from his lips.
 "A trick!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, panting with relief. "He was hidden in the armour! Why, last night—"
 "Last night he was hidden in the same place, I should say," said Jack Drake. "He had no time to get clear, according to what you told me, before you got on the scene. After playing his trick, he got out of Sir Fulke's armour, and replaced it; then he heard you coming, and I imagine that at that moment he was fairly scared out of his rascally wits. He dodged into the other suit of armour as a desperate resource—"
 "I—I see—now—"
 "I fancy he was palpitating there, while you searched the room last night," said Drake. "But you did not guess—and he escaped—"
 "I remember hearing a sound—after going to bed in Mauly's room. Of course—"
 "And as he found it safe once, he felt safe enough to-night in hiding in the same way," said Drake. "Don't blame yourself—you didn't guess that there was a cunning villain—not hidden, but standing out in full view under your eyes—inside a suit of armour. But—"
 "You guessed?" exclaimed Bob.
 Drake smiled.
 "That's my business," he said. "My business is to look as deep into a thing as possible, and where there's no explanation, to find one. I expected the ghost trick to be played again to-night. I listened at my door, but the rascal trod by too softly even for me to hear. I never knew that anything was on till Mauly cried out. But after that there was no chance of the rascal getting away, and as we saw nothing of him I knew that he would be found inside the other suit of armour—"
 "A thousand curses!" muttered Brian Mauleverer
 Drake gave him a scornful look.
 "The less you say the better, you scoundrel!" he exclaimed.
 "But why?" exclaimed the old baronet, hoarsely. "Why—why did this man, befriended by my nephew, play so dastardly a trick—"
 "Look at Mauleverer!" said Drake. "You can see the effect it has produced upon him. A little more, and Mauleverer would not have lived. Even now the shock might have—"
 He paused.
 "You need not ask that scoundrel his reason, Sir Reginald. He is heir to the earldom of Mauleverer, and his object was Mauly's death."
 "Good heavens!"
 "The awful villain!" gasped Bob Cherry.
 Lord Mauleverer breathed hard. The

look on his face showed that he had already guessed, before Drake spoke. He knew the reason of Brian's dastardly plot.
 There was no anger in his face as he looked at the baffled rascal. There was pain, and contempt, and grief. Even the hardy adventurer shrank from his cousin's steady look.
 "It's clear enough now," said Wharton slowly. "That is why he told the ghost story—that's why the gauntlet fell—he had fixed that, of course, to work on Mauly's mind. That was his game from the beginning. Mauly, that rascal, must go from here to prison. You can't run a risk like this again."
 Mauleverer did not speak.
 Brian clambered unsteadily to his feet in the clanking armour of the old Crusader. His face was white, his look bitter.
 "What can you prove?" he said contemptuously, savagely. "A trick in an old suit of armour—playing ghost—you can prove nothing that will harm me. Do your worst."
 "You will not be harmed, Brian," said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "You have acted like a villain. I received you here in friendship, trying to forget what you had been—a rascal, a sharper—a gaol-bird! This is how you have repaid me—by seeking my life! You would have succeeded; you knew how to play upon my belief in the Mauleverer legend; you would have caused my death. Jack Drake has saved me, and you will have no chance in the future; you can go unpunished. But go!"
 "But—"
 "Let him go!" said Mauleverer.
 "This very hour, then!" exclaimed the old baronet.
 Five minutes later Brian Mauleverer stood at the open door below, with the Famous Five. Outside, the night wind howled, drifting snowflakes against the old windows of Mauleverer Towers. The adventurer looked into the snowy winter's night—he looked at the juniors. There was no relenting in their faces. As he hesitated on the threshold, Bob Cherry raised his hand.
 "Get out, you cur!" he said.
 And with a black scowl on his face, and a curse upon his lips, Brian Mauleverer went, and quitted Mauleverer Towers—for ever!
 Harry Wharton and Co. enjoyed their Christmas holiday—and Lord Mauleverer, quite his old cheery self again now, was as merry and bright as any fellow in the party. And the chums of Greyfriars did not seem able to make enough of Jack Drake. They were well aware that that Christmas might have been a tragic one had not Drake come to their aid and laid so effectively the Ghost of Mauleverer Towers.



FERRERS LOCKE finds himself up against the strangest and most baffling mystery he has ever encountered. What is the Terror at the Grange? What is the meaning of the appearance of the great white face on the wall?



A Wonderful, Long, Complete Story of a Thrilling Christmas Adventure, introducing FERRERS LOCKE, the Master-Detective, and JACK DRAKE, his young assistant.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cry in the Night!



"A QUIET Christmas in dear old London Town—an entrancing prospect, Drake!" Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, drew his traveling-rug a little closer about him. Opposite him in the railway carriage Jack Drake, his clever young assistant, smiled happily at his chief's remark.

The two were comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage of the Torquay-London express. They had successfully completed a worrying case for a wealthy farmer in Devonshire, upon whose land a series of cattle-maiming outrages had taken place.

"Let's hope, sir," said Drake, "that clients give Baker Street a miss for a few days!"

"I'm!" murmured Locke. "It's now the twenty-third of December. If anyone calls before the twenty-seventh, it will be a case of my being 'not at home' to them."

He watched the blue smoke-wisps of his excellent Havana cigar as they ascended, and then turned his gaze out of the carriage window. Snowflakes were beating down to the whitened ground through the darkness of the night as the express swung along at full sixty miles an hour.

A row of station-lights ran by like a string of yellow beads.

"Andover, in Hampshire," murmured Ferrers Locke, puffing away contentedly. "More than half the journey done."

Silence fell between the two. Locke leaned back, lost in his own thoughts. Jack Drake selected the "Popular" from the little pile of newspapers and periodicals by his side, and was soon chuckling contentedly.

Then, to disturb their harmony, came a violent lurch. It was followed by the grinding roar of the brakes. So swiftly did the express reduce speed that Locke and Drake were almost hurled from their seats.

"M-my aunt! Wh-what's the matter?" Excited and alarmed cries could be heard from adjoining carriages as the train came to a halt.

Ferrers Locke dropped the window, and thrust his head out. The snow, driven by an icy wind, lashed his face, and he shivered. But dimly ahead of the engine he could see a moving red light.

"Someone waving a lantern," he said. "Obviously, there's trouble ahead."

A few minutes later, from the guard, they learned the cause of the stoppage.

"We've had a narrow squeak, sir!" the guard told Locke. "Not twenty yards ahead of us is a splintered rail. It must have been made of defective metal, and the last train over it completed its destruction. Luckily it was that a signalman coming off duty noticed it. It might have meant a bad smash for us."

"A keen fellow that signalman!" commented Locke. "But how long are we likely to remain here, guard?"

"The repair gang are being telephoned for, sir. It may be two hours, it may be five, 'fore we shall get away."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Drake.

"We're a good many miles from Andover now, guard!" murmured Locke.

"Yes, sir. We sha'n't return. We can't get round no other way to London quicker."

Locke jerked his thumb towards the carriage window.

"What lights are those over there?"

"The village of Dundry, I believe, sir."

"Dundry," put in Jack Drake. "That's the little place where that well of healing waters was discovered some weeks ago."

"The very place, young sir. And wonderful they are, too! I tried a couple o' bottles for my rheumatics. The stationmaster at Andover got 'em for me—the bottles, not the rheumatics—and I've felt heaps better."

He left the compartment, and Locke and Drake looked at each other with wry smiles. Neither of them fancied a long wait in the railway-carriage, warm though it was on the train.

They occupied a quarter of an hour by taking up a collection for the signalman who had been the means of saving the train. As they returned to their compartment a sudden recollection came to the detective.

"Dundry!" he murmured. "Of course, that is where young Ronald Masters lives."

"Ronald Masters, sir?"

"You never met him, I believe, Drake," said Locke. "I ran across him at Aldershot once during the war. He was a subaltern in the Second-Third Hampshire then—a very decent chap. Afterwards he got the M.C. at Souchez and a rather bad shell-shock."

Locke paused, and continued:

"I don't think it would be a bad idea

to call on him, my boy; the snow has stopped. He lives at a place called the Grange, with his uncle. It would pass the time to go and look him up."

They put on their heavy overcoats and wraps, and informed the guard of their intention.

Leaving the train, Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake set off over the snow-covered ground towards the yellow lights of the village.

The wind was still keen, but the walk refreshed them wonderfully.

The jovial landlord of the village Inn willingly directed them to the Grange, though he looked at them somewhat curiously.

Taking a narrow lane which led from the village street the two wandered on for another couple of minutes. Again they stopped in the darkness.

"Here's a gateway," said Locke. "The house must be behind that dark clump of poplars."

Drake gave a shiver. "My hat!" he muttered. "I'm so glad we don't live in this part! Baker Street's good enough for me!"

Going up the gravel drive they could see no lights glimmering from the gaunt building behind the leafless branches of the trees. Misgivings possessed them of there being anyone at home.

"It looks like spending the wait on the train, after all, sir," said Drake. "There's no sign of life or of—"

He broke off short. Both he and Locke were frozen to the spot. For, from behind some of the poplars to the right of the house, a wild cry rent the air. It was a long-drawn wail, as of a human being in great agony. It finished in a gurgling sort of whine. Then deadly silence fell over the eerie scene.

The detective and his assistant exchanged swift glances. So unexpected and sinister had been the cry that both revealed the terror which had gripped their heartstrings.

But they recovered themselves almost instantaneously.

The detective dashed away from the gravel path through and among the trees. "Come, Drake," he cried, "we'd better look into this matter!"

Breaking from the cover of the trees they came into a kind of shrubbery.

"Look!" Drake's finger shot out. Ahead of them in the shrubbery was a gaunt figure.

The detective and the boy rushed towards it. The figure dropped downwards. A burst of flame and a roaring

report followed. Locke staggered forward as his hat sailed from his head.

A moment later the detective and Drake had hurled themselves upon a man, who, wrapped up in an overcoat, was crouching in among the bushes. By the fellow was a sporting shot-gun with one barrel empty.

"Let me go, you cowards!" hissed the fellow, struggling violently.

By their combined efforts Locke and Drake dragged him to his feet, and held him firmly.

Their captive was a tall individual, with clean-cut features. His face was working with indignation and anger.

Locke speedily checked the flow of abuse which poured from the man's lips.

"Now, my friend," said the detective, "perhaps you will explain the meaning of that fiendish cry we heard. Also, why you saw fit to blaze off that little pop-gun at us."

An unmusical laugh left the lips of the man.

"Me explain!" he jeered. "Jiminy, I like that! I reckon you can explain that unearthly yell better'n I can, you rotten cowards and trespassers!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Ghostly Visitor!



VERY deliberately Ferrers Locke secured a firm ju-jitsu hold on the captive.

"Now, Drake," he said, turning to his assistant, "I've got this new acquaintance of ours quite safely. Take charge of that shot-gun. Then pick up my hat for me."

Drake did as he was bidden. The hat he placed on his chief's head.

"You had a jolly lucky escape that time, sir," he remarked. "Your hat's as full of holes as a pepper-pot!"

"A miss is as good as a mile!" laughed Locke lightly. "Certainly the hat feels a bit draughty. But let's get along towards the house."

Hardly, however, had they taken half a dozen steps, than the sound of someone approaching through the bushes came to them.

The captive let out a lusty shout. "Rescue! Rescue!"

"Egad!" came the reply. "Is that you, Symonds?"

"Yes, sir! The scoundrels have caught me, and—"

But Locke, who had recognised the former voice, broke in swiftly.

"Hallo!" he called out. "Is that Ronald Masters?"

A young man plunged into view through the shrubbery. His right hand was grasping a very serviceable-looking Colt revolver.

"Hi, lower that gun!" ordered the detective hastily. "I'm Ferrers Locke!"

The moon shining momentarily between the dark, scudding clouds revealed the scene. There was Locke grasping the prisoner. Beside him, with the shot-gun ready for instant action, was Jack Drake.

At the edge of the shrubbery stood a tall, pallid young man with a revolver.

At the sound of the name the newcomer lowered his revolver and walked forward.

"Ferrers Locke!" he echoed. "Great pip! How the blazes did you get here?"

"By train," grinned the detective. "I'm pleased to meet you again, captain! I and my assistant, Jack Drake, were coming to pay a friendly call on you. But we stopped to indulge in a bit of big-game hunting on your preserves. Here's our bag." He indicated the captive with a nod of his head.

The puzzled look remained on Masters' brow.

"I—I still don't understand, Locke," he said. "The man you are holding is Symonds, my footman."

The captive, who had been both surprised and relieved to find that his captor was the world-famous detective, smiled confidently.

Locke released the footman and narrated the story of the delay to the London express and the adventure which had led to the capture of Symonds.

Ronald Masters dropped his revolver in

his pocket and tapped the detective lightly on the arm.

"My dear Locke," he said, "Symonds heard the devilish cry himself and thought you might have had something to do with it. Wasn't that the case?"

"Yes, sir," replied Symonds promptly. "I heard that unearthly yell twice before to-night. Then, without saying a word to anyone, I came out here to try and find out the trouble."

"Very rash of you, Symonds," was the comment of Ronald Masters.

"Yes, sir," agreed the footman. "It was a foolish thing to do to prowl round alone, but I thought I might discover something. Then these two gentlemen appeared on the scene. I thought they were the trespassers and responsible for the cries—and I let fly."

"You did," said Locke, with a laugh; "and it will cost me thirty bob for a new hat. Still, that howl we heard ourselves was enough to put anyone's nerves on edge. Have you heard it before?"

Masters cackled mirthlessly. "Heard it before!" he cried. "Egad, we're always hearing it—or something worse. It's been the giddy limit for the last three or four weeks."

"H'm!" said Ferrers Locke. "I'm to understand, then, that you've heard these weird noises before and you can't account for them?"

"That's so. But come along to the house, Symonds, go ahead and order some hot coffee."

The footman took his shot-gun from Drake with a respectful "Thank you, sir!" and set off to the mansion. Ronald Masters, with Ferrers Locke and Drake, followed.

As they strolled along Locke sought some further information from the ex-officer.

"Is your uncle at the house, Masters?"

"No," was the reply; "he died a few months ago. I was his heir, and came into possession of his property, including the Grange and the acreage surrounding it."

"So you're the squire of Dundrave these days?" said the detective cheerfully.

"I suppose I am," answered the young man modestly. "I wouldn't admit it to another soul, but it's been absolute torture living at the Grange of late. What with mysterious shrieks, mysterious rappings, mysterious lights, and other mysterious happenings, it's a wonder we're not all in a mad-house."

"Who do you mean by all?"

"Myself, Symonds, the footman, and Jenks, the butler. They're the only two servants who have remained. At present I have a cook, a Mrs. Hooper, but she's the fourth, who's been here in the last three weeks."

"A queer sort of place you inherited, old fellow," murmured Locke. "I wonder you stick it."

Masters shrugged his shoulders.

"It's been my home since I was a kid," he said. "The villagers have always said the place was haunted. But it's only lately I've had personal experience of the mysterious visitors. But, by gad, I'm not going to quit the place for all the noises in the world nor all the spooks from any other world!"

Both Locke and Drake admired the fellow for his spirit. But nothing more was said until they were comfortably seated in the library of the Grange.

As he sipped the fragrant coffee served by a stout butler, Ferrers Locke surveyed the library approvingly.

"An excellent selection of books," he murmured. "And I see you have a few sprigs of holly up."

"Yes," said Masters, "though I can't imagine myself having a frightfully merry Christmas here. I think I shall accept an invitation to spend it with some of the county folk. That is, unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Locke.

"Unless you and Drake will stay on here with me."

Ferrers Locke looked at Drake, and Drake looked at Ferrers Locke.

"Thanks, Masters," said the detective, "but I'm afraid we can't accept. We must get back to Baker Street. We promised ourselves that much, and—Great Scott!"

He leaped up as a shrill, feminine shriek echoed through the house. Drake and Masters also left their seats as precipitately. The ex-officer was as pale as death. Apart from the shell-shock he had received during

the war, his nerves had suffered severely by the mysterious happenings of the recent past.

"Heavens! Whatever's up now?"

"That was no ghost!" cried Locke. "It was a woman in distress!"

And so it proved. On the first-floor landing at the top of the staircase a buxom woman was clutching the banisters. Her face was flabby and deadly pale. Her eyes were staring. She seemed about to faint.

"It's Mrs. Hooper!" gasped Masters.

Ferrers Locke dashed up the stairs three at a time and supported the woman. Behind Masters and Drake came the butler and footman. The former, with commendable presence of mind, fetched the brandy carafe.

A few drops of the potent liquor pulled the cook round.

"I—I was going to my room," she panted, "when I—I heard it! It was in there!"

She pointed to a room on the other side of the landing. Leaving Mrs. Hooper to the care of the butler, the others made a dive for the room in question. Locke reached it first, and turned the door handle. The place was locked.

He faced about.

"Who's got a key?" he demanded.

"There one in my room next door," said Masters. "This room hasn't been used for some time."

Quickly he went for the key.

"What did you hear, my good woman?" demanded Locke, turning to the cook.

"S-something moving inside there, sir. Then—then there was a crash like—a body falling." She burst into a hysterical laugh. "I won't stay in this place another day. It's as full of ghosts as—as holly's full of prickles."

With a grunt Ferrers Locke took the key from the hand of Ronald Masters and pushed open the door. Drake had his electric torch ready and flashed it into the room. Nobody was in view, and the room was empty. But on the floor, full-length, lay a heavy cabinet, in which reposed a collection of old English fans and bric-a-brac.

"Well, I'm blessed!" muttered Ronald Masters, in a despairing tone. "Egad, I shall start to believe in the ghost theory myself soon!"

By the aid of the electric torch, Ferrers Locke examined the cabinet and the room.

"It was a pretty hefty ghost which shoved that down," he said.

Then, after the gas was turned on, he even tapped the walls for a secret cavity into which some practical joker could have hidden. But the walls everywhere sounded solid enough.

Returning to the library, he laid his hand on the shoulder of the young squire of Dundrave.

"Masters, my lad," he said, "if you will still have me, I'll stay here for a day or two with you. You're game, Drake?"

"You bet, sir!"

"Good! Then, Masters, we'll try and lay this ghost by the heels for you. But first we must return to the train and get our luggage."

The ex-captain of Infantry appeared delighted. He offered to send his men. But, refusing assistance, Locke and Drake themselves returned to the train. They obtained their suit-cases, tipped the guard, and plodded through the snow back to the eerie Grange.

"A quiet Christmas among the ghosts!" chuckled Ferrers Locke. "An entrancing prospect, Drake!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Mysterious Facts!



THAT night Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake remained up late in the company of their host.

The detective smoked a couple of excellent

Manillas from his host's cigar-cabinet in the library. Masters himself sipped hot lemon

water and consumed cigarettes. Drake amused himself by baking chest-

nuts over the fire and devouring them.

From Masters the detective drew a long account of the many mysterious occurrences which had taken place in and about the house. But beyond the repetition of the

Who is "Yellow Spider"? See next week's gripping tale of Ferrers Locke!

hideous cry from outside the house, there were no more ghostly manifestations.

"I think," said Ferrers Locke, "that we can dismiss the ghost theory right away. There remains other possibilities. The queer noises, and so forth, may be the work of some practical joker. They may be the insane work of a madman. They may be the work of some enemy who has taken this queer means to cause you the utmost annoyance. They may be the work of someone who, for some purpose of his own, wants to drive you out of the Grange."

"Well, Locke," said Masters, "I neither know of any practical jokers nor of any madmen about these parts. As far as enemies are concerned, I suppose I've two or three, like most people."

"Anyone who lives reasonably close to the Grange?"

"Er—yes! There is Sir Boscombe Deller, who occupies Dellers Hall, less than a quarter of a mile away. He's treated me pretty rottenly in many ways since I refused to sell him the Grange."

Locke made a note of the baronet's name and address on the back of an envelope.

"I may like to call on him," he explained. "But tell me, Masters, how long have your servants been in your employ? Were both Jenks and Symonds here before these strange manifestations began?"

"They were. Symonds was here a couple of years before my uncle died. Symonds came to me just after I came into the property. Jenks himself introduced him."

"And they've both stuck out these—er—terrifying incidents?"

"Yes, though both of them have suggested going on more than one occasion."

"You persuaded them to stay."

"Yes. But the cook and two chambermaids left the day after that unearthly shrieking row was heard for the first time. We've no chambermaid in the house now. None of the local girls will take service here. And now Mrs. Hooper's going to pack her things and follow the others."

"One more question, Masters. Are there any others of your known enemies who have shown any keenness to possess this house?"

"No. The term enemies, as far as the other chaps are concerned, is perhaps a misnomer. There is always a certain amount of petty spite in these country places, and it really means nothing. The only other offers for the place I have received are from estate agents. Mr. Ralph Greenways, whose office is in Andover, and who lives near this village, has tried to get me to sell to various clients of his. But, of course, that's his business, and he's never shown any annoyance because of my refusals of his offers."

At this point there was a tap on the door. The butler entered.

"The bed-rooms for the guests are ready, sir," he announced. "Shall the footman and I lock up, sir?"

"Yes, please, Jenks. Then you may retire."

"Thank you, sir."

The butler was about to withdraw when Ferrers Locke rose from his easy-chair.

"Excuse me, Masters," he said, "but would you mind my making a tour of the house first?"

At Masters' request, the butler fetched a lantern. This Ferrers Locke took himself, and, with Masters as a guide, he and Drake made a tour of the premises. One room on the second floor was minus a carpet, and he commented on the fact.

"This was the room I was telling you about to-night, Locke," said the young squire. "This was the place where we had one of those weird experiences. We found a pool of blood on the carpet. How it got there is an absolute mystery. The local policeman whom I told about it came here, but was absolutely baffled."

"Where's the carpet now?" asked Locke. "It was destroyed—a jolly fine thick Turkish rug it was, too."

Locke asked Masters to indicate about the spot where the strange phenomenon had occurred. Then he borrowed Drake's torch, and pulled a small table to the centre of the room. Mounting this, he shone the torch on to the brown oaken rafters which formed the ceiling.

"I—I say, old man," said Ronald Masters, "it was on the floor, you know—not up here."

The detective looked down with a smile.



A gurgling cry rang out from the other side of the library, and the next moment a portion of the heavy panelling swung open, revealing a big aperture. Then a man came hurtling into the room. A second later another figure emerged from the secret panel and stood before Drake and Masters. (See Chapter 4.)

"There you're mistaken, old chap," he said. "Your local policeman evidently had his eyes glued to the carpet when you called him in. There are a few streaks up here which plainly show that the blood, or whatever it was, percolated through a crack in the ceiling."

"Impossible!"
Locke climbed down from the table.
"What is above this room?" he asked.
"A room which is used for storing lumber—a kind of attic."

"Let's see it."

They proceeded to the room above. But here there was no trace of anything untoward at all.

"I think, if you don't mind, Masters," said Locke, "I should like to spend the night in that bedroom underneath. Drake can share it with me. There are two beds, I noticed. Perhaps you will have our things transferred to that room."

Finding that the detective was very much in earnest, Masters issued the necessary orders. Symonds, the footman, attended to the matter. The job done, he and the butler retired. Then Locke, Drake, and their host returned to the library.

"You told us, too, Masters," said the detective, "that strange occurrences took place in this room."

"Only when I stay up till twelve," replied the ex-officer. "I used to stay up late, reading. But I don't now. I'm not exactly looking for scares."

"You say a ghostly sort of face used to appear in the dim light on that wall over there. It was usually in the same position. Kindly point out the spot."

Masters did so.

"Now you go upstairs, old man," said Locke. "Drake and I will stay till midnight in the library. We'll see if the ghostly face with the dark eyes, nose, and mouth will appear for our benefit. But first I should like to borrow a bit of chalk from the billiard-room. By the way, there's one thing you can do. Directly after the library clock has struck twelve, go to the rooms of Jenks and Symonds and call them.

If they are present and correct, merely say you want breakfast half an hour later."

Ronald Masters did not like the idea at all. But Locke was not to be denied. He secured the chalk, and ushered his host upstairs. Then he returned to the library with Drake, and turned the lights low.

"Drake, my boy," he said, "I want you to keep your eyes gined on that place where Masters claims to have seen the mysterious face."

He himself knelt near the oaken panelling on the opposite side of the library. The green piece of billiard-chalk was grasped in his right hand.

Slowly the minutes dragged. A chill crept over Drake as the deep, booming strokes were told off. Then, even as the echo of the twelfth stroke lingered, he started forward in horror. Right before him was a ghostly, inhuman face with dark, hollow-looking eyes and nose, and a dark, grinning mouth. He thrust out his hand, but the face had gone as swiftly as it had appeared.

Wiping a bead of perspiration from his brow, he turned about. Locke signalled to him to turn up the lights. As he did so he saw a green chalk mark on the oaken panelling opposite from where he had seen the face.

"There was no ghostly agency about that face, my boy," said Locke, after Drake had told of what he had seen. "A light shone from this wall. I suspected something of the sort would occur. A portion of this panelling opened a few inches. A light shone forth, and the panelling closed again."

"Couldn't you have pulled the panelling open wide, sir?"

"No, my boy; the secret door was too thick and heavy. Besides, the person—whichever it was—on the other side would have flown. I've marked about the spot from which the light appeared. At our leisure we can investigate the secret of opening the panelling and discovering the miscreant. We'll say nothing to Masters yet."

Although the green chalk mark was right against the edge of one of the oaken panels,

The mysterious Mr. Fang appears again next week!

the two could not discover the secret of opening the wall.

It was nearly ten minutes after twelve ere Masters appeared in pyjamas and dressing-gown.

"I followed out instructions," he said. "Symonds answered at once. Jenks only responded to my call a minute ago. His excuse for not hearing me was that he was sound asleep."

"Jolly suspicious," said Drake.

"Yes," said Locke; "but he was in the house when the shriek occurred outside the building. Symonds was out of doors, then, you may remember."

"Perhaps they're both in it," muttered Ronald Masters. "Though why the dickens—"

"Tut, tut!" interposed Ferrers Locke. "Let's get to bed. We will resume our investigations to-morrow."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Mystery Solved!



AT breakfast next morning Ronald Masters was the recipient of two letters in addition to several Christmas cards. One of these communications was from Sir Boscombe Deller; the other was from Mr. Greenways, the estate agent. Both letters contained offers for the Grange. But to both inquirers the young squire of Dundrave sent the same answer, a courteous but firm refusal.

During part of the morning, while Masters went for a canter across country on his favourite hunter, Locke and Drake set to work in the library. But, try as they might, they could find no means of causing any of the panelling to open.

"Perhaps it won't open from this side," said Locke. "Short of taking an axe to it—which we don't want to do—it doesn't look as though we shall get through. We'll have a look at some of the other rooms."

The whole morning they spent in examining various rooms, but with equal lack of success. At last, baffled and grubby, they went to their own room for a wash and brush-up before lunch.

Drake, standing before the dressing-table mirror, shook his head despondently.

"We know jolly well now," he said, "that some rotter uses secret passages about this house. But how the thump he ever—Hallo!"

He stepped back suddenly, his eyes almost starting from his head. For, right in front of him on the lace dressing-table cover had fallen a large splash of crimson!

Again there was a splash, and the cover became further tinged with red. A little pool began to form. He and Locke stared at it as though unable to believe their eyes.

"M-my aunt!" gulped Drake. "It's blood!"

"It's coming from the ceiling, whatever it is!" muttered Locke. "Come with me, my boy!"

He dashed from the room and up the stairs, followed by Drake. Then he burst into the attic immediately above the bedroom. It was empty!

There seemed no cause whatever for the sinister phenomenon they had witnessed. But Ferrers Locke took out a powerful magnifying-glass and began to examine the flooring.

"Drake," he said, "go and fetch me a claw-hammer and a crowbar, if you can find such things. Don't ask either the butler or the footman."

A few minutes later Drake returned, in company with Ronald Masters. The latter carried the articles the detective required.

Setting quietly but rapidly to work, Locke raised one of the boards of the floor. He put his hand under. When he withdrew it, it held a red, wet, little canvas bundle.

"Here we are, Masters!" he said cheerfully. "Here's the direct cause of one of your troubles! The scheme was simple. A bag of several layers of canvas was placed under this boarding and above a crack in the ceiling of the bedroom. The bag contained a deep crimson dye. After some time—probably three or four hours—the dye soaked completely through the layers of

canvas and so through the ceiling of the bedroom."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Masters. Replacing the floor-board, Locke and Drake went to the bedroom to complete their toilet for lunch.

After the meal, Locke, who wanted to make further investigations, persuaded the ex-officer to go out again.

When Masters had left the house, the detective set Drake to examine the attic in an attempt to find an entrance to a secret passage from there. But with the further idea that perhaps entrance to it could be gained from outside the mansion, he himself put on a pair of strong boots and went off on his own. When he returned at tea-time he was in excellent spirits, but to Drake's questioning he returned merely bantering answers. The boy himself had been no more successful in the attic than he and Locke had been in any other room.

But that Locke himself had discovered something of the utmost importance the boy felt sure when later that evening the detective issued fresh instructions. "Listen to me, you fellows," said the detective to Drake and their host. "I want you to stay in the library until after the clock has struck twelve to-night. I think I can promise that no harm shall come to you. But be prepared for a shock."

Having given voice to that mysterious remark, the famous detective announced his intention of missing dinner. As soon as dusk settled over the land he left the house, and they saw no more of him that evening.

The hands of the library clock pointed to five minutes to midnight. Jack Drake and Ronald Masters sat near each other—waiting. What would twelve o'clock reveal? That was the question which preyed upon the minds of both of them.

At last the hour sounded. As the last stroke died away, Masters gave a terrified gasp as the ghostly white face appeared. Next instant a gurgling cry rang out from the other side of the library. A portion of the heavy panelling swung open, revealing a big aperture. Then a man came hurtling into the room.

"Good heavens!" cried Masters. "Greenways!"

As the words left his lips, Ferrers Locke, in stocking feet, emerged from the secret passage beyond the library. He stood, a stern figure, above the crouching form of the estate-dealer.

"The Terror at the Grange!" he exclaimed. "I've got it here for you, my dear Masters!"

Greenways whimpered like a frightened child, but Locke curtly ordered him into a chair. From the hands of the man the detective took an electric torch. Over the glass face of the torch was drawn a strip of blue muslin which was marked in ink with two eyes, a nose, and a grinning mouth. Locke switched on the torch, and the ghostly face appeared on the wall.

"Well, I'm blest!" muttered Masters, leaning on the library table. "So that's the rotter who was responsible for all the trouble!"

"That's so," said Locke cheerfully. "Near the back of the Grange I found the track of footmarks this afternoon. I traced 'em to some heaps of brushwood. Beneath one of the heaps I found a trap-door, which led to a number of secret passages running through this house. Why, the Grange is honeycombed with 'em, old man!"

"Great Scott!"

"It's true. This evening I waited in hiding near the trap-door. This fellow entered the house by the secret way. I took off my boots and quietly followed him. Then, after he had pushed open this panelling and shone his torch into the room, I pushed him in here. He is who has been making ghastly cries and so forth about your premises."

The estate-dealer broke down completely. "Yes, it was I," he whined. "I'll—I'll confess!"

"And the reason?" demanded Ronald Masters sternly.

"I—I wanted you out of it. I thought I could induce you to leave the place and sell it. Since the healing-well was discovered in this district, I've wanted to acquire this house to turn into a hydro!"

"Oh, you were on a money-making proposition, you old miser! But you won't have any chance for a while to practise any more dishonesty. I'm going to phone for the police."

The estate-dealer grovelled on his knees. "Don't, Mr. Masters—don't!" he pleaded piteously. "I'll do anything you want me to! I'll give up my business and leave the country—anything!"

Ronald Masters looked into the keen face of Ferrers Locke.

"That strikes me as the best thing the rotter can do," he remarked. "He's too dishonest even for an estate-agent. Now, get out of it. And if you're not out of Hampshire in a week, I'll charge you with house-breaking and terrorisation!"

The discomfited Greenways was seen to the front door by Masters himself. As he stepped from the house, the ex-officer raised his boot and speeded the parting guest.

A little later Jack Drake appeared, ready to leave the Grange.

"Sorry I can't stop," he said, "but an old school-friend of mine, Lord Maulverer, is expecting me down at his place for Christmas. Long-standing invitation, and all that."

And the young detective turned his face away towards the station.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's amazing tale of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, entitled, "The Case of the Smugglers!")

Result of "SHEFFIELD UNITED" COMPETITION!

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

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whose solution contained one error.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Mrs. A. Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan.
Eileen Shord, 68, Temple Sheen Road, East Sheen, S.W. 14.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been divided among the following nineteen competitors, whose solutions contained three errors each:

Mrs. L. Kernick, 62, Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; A. Mills, 8, White Cross Road, Hereford; Robert Given, 17, Beith Road, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland; Dorothy Moore, 146, Vine Place, Rochdale; S. White, 28, Albert Road, Aldershot, Hants; Alice Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; Norman Weatherby, 89, Wade Street, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent; Miss M. O. Aitken, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; Stanley Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan; G. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, W. 6; John James, c.o. Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent; Frank Seaton, 311, Cromwell Road, Peterborough; Roland C. Flower, 16, Skelbrook Street, Earlsfield, S.W. 18; Luke Warburton, 331, Hulton Lane, Bolton, Lancs.; William J. Leng, 7, Travis Street, Barry Dock, Glam.; Cecil Crouch, Opposite James Upwell, Wisbech; Ernest Roberts, 1, Grange Villas, Ellesmere, Salop; James Gibb, Bridge Street, Catrine, Ayrshire.

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Christmas Tales to Tell!

A TRICK OF THE TRADE.

Nip, nip, nip! The barber worked away at the man's hair with great eagerness, talking all the while.

At last the man in the chair could stand it no longer.

"Stop!" he cried. "What ever do you want to tell me these horrible bloodcurdling yarns for? I know it is Christmas-time, but I don't want to hear about ghosts and robbers. It fairly makes my flesh creep!"

"I'm very sorry, sir," replied the barber, "but, you see, when I tell stories like that to my clients their hair stands on end, and that makes it much easier to cut."

A MODEST AFFAIR.

Simon Simpkins had received a handsome Christmas present from his employer, and this had tempted Simon to get married a little earlier than he intended. He therefore made tracks for the clergyman at his parish church.

"I've come round to tell you that I'm getting married," he said.

The clergyman smiled, and remarked in a genial tone:

"You mean you've come to give notice for the banns?"

"No, that I haven't!" said the budding benedict. "We're not going to have any bands. Our Jack's going to play the concertina after tea, that's all!"

HE UNDERSTOOD.

Six o'clock, and Christmas Eve, too. Mike O'Mulligan was sitting at his desk, waiting for permission to go. He had finished his work, and was eager

to get home to taste the mince-pies which he knew his mother was cooking.

Suddenly Mike's employer entered the room, but, instead of giving Mike the permission he required, he handed him several letters to post, and told him to come back to the office again.

Mike hurried to the post-office, and in five minutes returned in a breathless state.

"Did you post them all right?" questioned his employer.

"Sure, sir!" replied Mike. "But I noticed that one had no address on it at all!"

"Then why didn't you bring it back?" thundered the boss.

"Be aisy, sir," said Mike. "I thought maybe ye didn't want me to see who ye were writing to."

CROWDED OUT!

"I wish, Henry," said the editor's wife, "that you'd try not to be so absent-minded when you are dining out."

The editor looked up, surprised. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "What have I done now?"

"Done!" cried his wife. "Why, when the hostess asked you if you'd have some more pudding, you replied that owing to the tremendous pressure on your space, you were compelled to decline."

VERY TRUE.

Lodger: "But you advertised that one could see for miles from this room."

Landlady: "Well, so you can. You can see the moon from the skylight, and ain't that miles away?"

A SHOCK FOR THE PROFESSOR.

Professor Bumpkins was explaining to the men employed at a certain factory the operations of a particular machine. The majority of the men listened intently to his explanations, but one man would persist in interrupting, and correcting the professor's statements.

The professor greatly objected to the interruptions, but he said not a word until he had left the men, and was sitting in the manager's office.

"Who was that fellow who pretended to know more than me about that machine?" he inquired.

"Oh, he's the man who invented the machine!" replied the manager.

MIXED FEELINGS.

Schoolmistress: "Well, Tommy, I hope your father gave you the thrashing you so well deserved?"

Tommy: "No, miss, 'e didn't. He said as 'ow it 'urt 'im more'n me."

Schoolmistress: "Pshaw! Sentimentalism!"

Tommy: "Oh, no, miss—rheumatism!"

FOREWARNED.

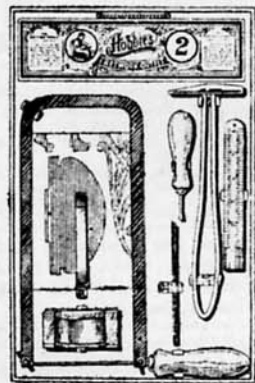
Farmer: "Yes, I want a man. Are you a good jumper?"

Applicant: "Well, yes."

Farmer: "Do you think you could jump a barbed-wire fence without any trouble?"

Applicant: "I suppose so."

Farmer: "That's all right, then. You'll do. You see, some of our bulls are a little wild."



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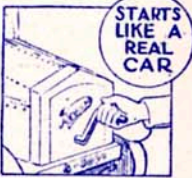
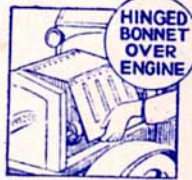
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