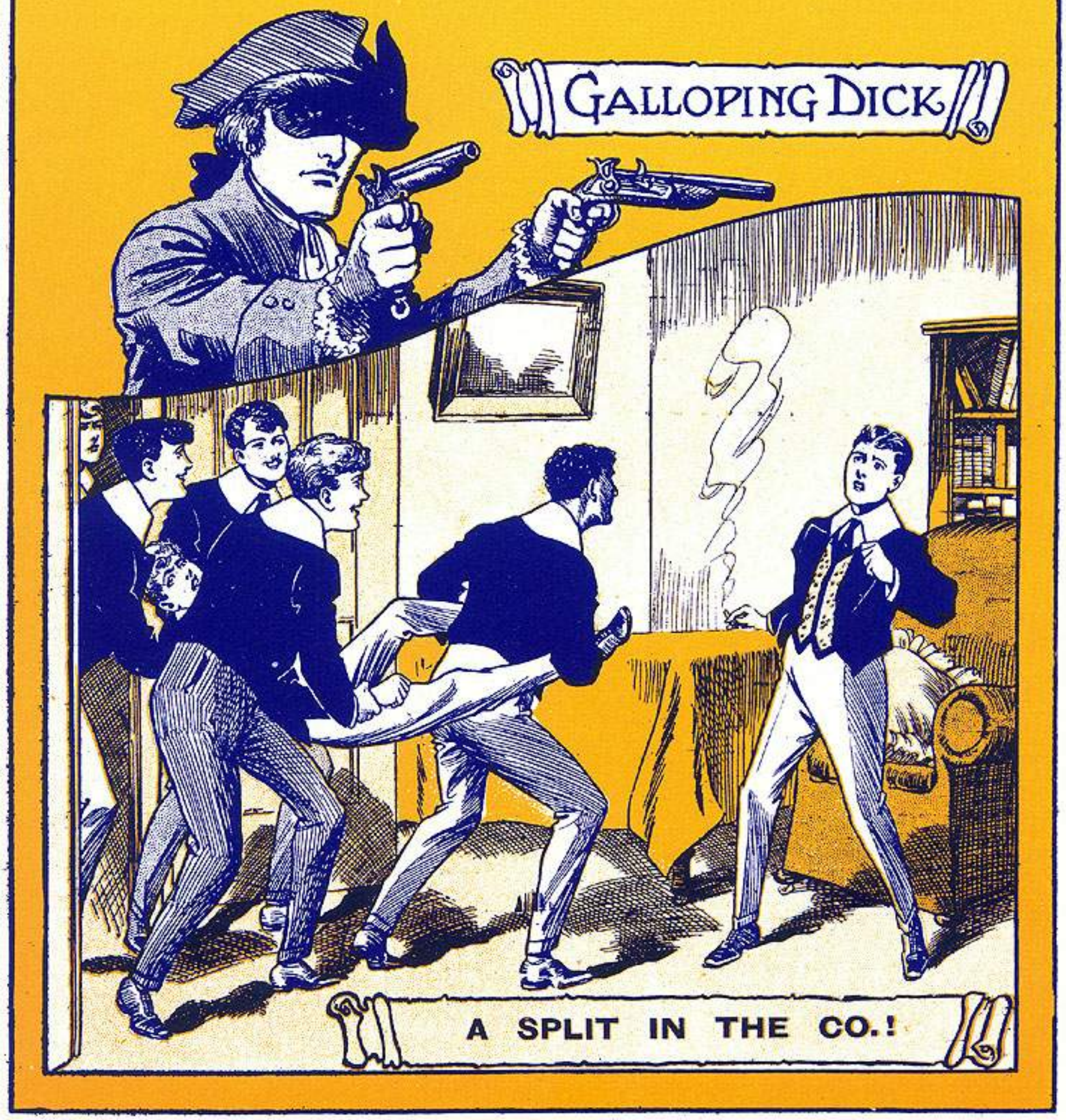
GRAND SERIES OF . . .

HIGHWAYMAN STORIES STARTING THIS WEEK!

No. 808. Vol. XXIV. Week ending August 4th, 1923.

The Magnet Library 2d EVERY MONDAY

of School & Detective Stories.



£300 in Cash Prizes! Try Our Simple Cricket Competition Inside!

"GALLOPING DICK!"

NEXT week's magnificent yarn of the gallant highwayman will leave you with mixed feelings. Don't mistake me; there will be nothing mixed as to the general opinion of the fine story. The general verdict is undoubted. What I mean is, that you will feel, and rightly feel, that there has been some considerable error somewhere in the prevailing idea that a highwayman was an enemy. Galloping Dick puts another complexion on the whole business. We find him on the road in next week's tale, fighting the good fight for the poor and the oppressed. He is up against big odds, but the part he plays throughout is notable, marked by out-and-out heroism, the sort that asks nothing for self. Galloping Dick will soon jump into the position of a tip-top MAGNET favourite.

£300 CRICKET COMPETITION.

The order of the day is coupons. All you astute forecasters of cricket form have a rattling fine chance to bring off something, and win a substantial prize which will come in really handy for the holidays.

"SIR JIMMY'S SUBSTITUTE!"

This is the title of the next Greyfriars yarn, and it is a good one. A bit rough on Bunter, you may say, but the Owl has been showing himself too clever by half. It is this way. Bunter thinks it would be a fine thing to be a baronet, and when the chance comes his way to strut the stage, so to speak, with a handle to his name, he fairly jumps at the golden opportunity. At least, it might have been golden, only it was not. There's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as we all know. Bunter dreamed wonderful dreams of being a "Sir." You cannot blame him, but you may be reasonably surprised at the mistake made by certain nefarious people who really took Bunter for somebody else. I will say no more. You know the story of the man who said he took a goose for a lark! An error like that is absurd. The two birds are not a bit alike. In this case Bunter considered the joke was carried too far, as the judge said to the delinquent who walked off with somebody else's valise for a joke.

"THE THIRD BROTHER!"

Ferrers Locke plunges into the thick of a big conspiracy in next week's MAGNET. There is a lot that is mighty peculiar about this Brother No. 3, who is as elusive as a hare. It is a story to grip the attention from the start.

A SLEEP SUPPLEMENT.

It is always a pleasure to touch on the bright MAGNET supplement, the "Greyfriars Herald," to wit—and you are sure of plenty of wit there. But as regards the main object for next week, though in the kindness of your heart you may be tempted to walk on tiptoe, lest you wake the sleepers, I can assure you there is not the slightest occasion for this benevolent forethought. It is a really look-alive, supremely wideawake supplement, showing that Greyfriars is on the qui vive, and far from being sleepy.

Your Editor.

GREAT COMPETITION FOR CRICKET LOVERS!

FIRST PRIZE £100; SECOND PRIZE £50; THIRD PRIZE £30; and 120 Prizes of £1 each.

Can you forecast how the Counties are going to finish up?

WE offer the above splendid prizes to the reader who is clever enough to send us a list showing exactly in what order the seventeen first-class County Cricket Clubs will stand at the end of the season.

For your guidance we publish the order in which each of the clubs stood last year, which was as follows:

1. Yorkshire.
2. Nottinghamshire.
3. Surrey.
4. Kent.
5. Lancashire.
6. Hampshire.
7. Middlesex.
8. Essex.
9. Sussex.
10. Somerset.
11. Derbyshire.
12. Warwickshire.
13. Gloucestershire.
14. Leicestershire.
15. Northamptonshire.
16. Glamorgan.
17. Worcestershire.

What you have to do is to fill in on the coupon on this page your forecast of the order in which the counties will finish up. To the reader who does this correctly we shall award a prize of £100, and the other prizes in the order of the correctness of the forecasts.

In the case of ties, any or all of the prizes will be added together and divided, but the full amount of £300 will be awarded.

All forecasts must be submitted on coupons taken from this journal or from one of the other publications taking part in this contest.

You may send as many coupon-forecasts as you like.

They must all be addressed to "Cricket Competition," Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, and must reach that address not later than Thursday, August 16th.

You may send in your forecasts at once if you like, but none will be considered after August 16th.

The decision of the Editor in all matters concerning this competition must be accepted as final and binding, and entries will only be admitted on that understanding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Football Favourite," "Sports Budget," "Young Britain," "Champion," "Boys' Realm," "Boys' Friend," "Popular," "Pluck," "Union Jack," "Rocket," "Nelson Lee Library," "Boys' Cinema," and "Gem," and readers of these journals are invited to compete.

I forecast that the Counties will finish the season in this order:

No. 1	
No. 2	
No. 3	
No. 4	
No. 5	
No. 6	
No. 7	
No. 8	
No. 9	
No. 10	
No. 11	
No. 12	
No. 13	
No. 14	
No. 15	
No. 16	
No. 17	

I enter "Cricket" Competition in accordance with the Rules so announced, and agree to abide by the published decision.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

M. Closing date, August 16th, 1923.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.

It generally takes a rare lot to break a friendship. Good comrades do not permit rifts in their lutes without the most excellent reasons. But in this fascinating story Harry Wharton & Co.—known as the Famous Five—are at loggerheads with each other owing to the finding of a letter, alleged to have been written by Bob Cherry, which refers in very slighting terms to Harry Wharton. Who is responsible for that letter?

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Awful for Aubrey!

"I WON'T!"

Dicky Nugent of the Second Form at Greyfriars made that statement at the top of his voice.

"I won't go! I tell you I won't go!"

"I think you will!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And Nugent minor did.

In spite of his emphatic statement on the subject, Dicky Nugent really had no choice about the matter.

There were five members of the Remove gathered round the fag; and they were propelling him in one direction, and Dicky's desire to escape in the opposite direction did not count.

Harry Wharton had taken hold of Dicky's left arm; Bob Cherry had a grip on his right. Johnny Bull had taken his collar. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was walking in advance, with one of Dicky's ankles tucked under either arm. Frank Nugent, Dicky's elder brother, brought up the rear. Frank Nugent was frowning; but his comrades were grinning. As for Dicky Nugent, he was shouting with wrath.

"I won't—I won't go!"

"This way, dear boy!" chuckled Bob.

"I won't!"

"Cut ahead, Franky, and get Angel's door open."

Harry Wharton & Co.—with their unwilling companion of the Second—were progressing along the Fourth Form passage. Several Fourth-Formers were putting their heads out of their studies to stare at them. The door of Study No. 4, which belonged to Aubrey Angel of the Fourth, remained closed—till Nugent reached it. Frank Nugent did not knock at the door; he hurled it wide open with a crash.

There was a sharp exclamation in the study.

Angel of the Fourth was seated there, in his armchair, with his feet resting on the table. The blue smoke of a cigarette floated up before him; that was one of the little ways of Angel of the Fourth. But he jumped up, almost swallowing the cigarette, as his door was hurled open, crashing.

"What the thump——" exclaimed Angel angrily.

"Bring him in!"

"We're bringing him!"

"I won't go!" roared Dicky.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh appeared in the doorway, with Nugent minor's boots showing under his armpits. Wharton and Bob and Johnny Bull followed him in with the rest of Nugent minor.

Aubrey Angel stared at the startling apparition blankly.

"What's this silly game?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by buttin' into my study like this?"

"Here we are again!" sang out Bob Cherry cheerily. "Dump him down!"

Nugent minor was dumped down on Angel's expensive carpet. He howled and jumped up, and made a dive for the door. But Johnny Bull had already shut the door, and had his back to it.

"No, you don't!" he remarked.

"Let me pass!" howled Dicky. "I'll jolly well kick your shins!"

"Better not," said Johnny cheerily. "There'll be a vacancy in the Second Form soon afterwards if you do."

"You rotter!" howled Dicky.

"What does this mean?" shouted Angel. "How dare you butt into my study—a gang of rowdy fags?"

"Pitch into him, Franky!" said Bob.

"I've got something to say to you, Angel, and I've brought my minor to hear it," said Frank Nugent.

"I don't want to hear it, and I don't want to see you, or your minor, either!" snapped Angel.

"That makes no difference—you've got to."

"Get out of my study!" flared Angel.

Taking no heed of that command, Frank Nugent felt in his pocket, and produced a rather crumpled cigarette. He laid it on the table, and Angel stared at it.

"You gave that to my minor?" he said.

"Did I?"

"You did."

"I may have," remarked Angel carelessly. "What about it? I dare say the kid ran on a message for me, and I chucked him a cigarette."

"It's not the first time," said Frank.

"I dare say it won't be the last, either," yawned Angel. "Shut the door after you, will you?"

"It's going to be the last time," said Frank. "You can play what silly and dirty tricks you like yourself, but you're not going to teach my young brother to play the fool. I found Dicky with this cigarette, and took it away from him."

Aubrey Angel shrugged his shoulders.

"You needn't have done that," he said. "I'd have given you one, if you'd asked me."

"I've brought it here," said Nugent, unheeding. "You're going to eat it, Angel."

"Eh?"

"Eat it."

"Is that a joke?"

"You'll find that it isn't. You seem to find something funny and amusing in teaching a kid in the Second Form to make a fool of himself. Perhaps you'll find it funny to swallow that cigarette, as you've got such a sense of humour. Go ahead."

Angel of the Fourth threw himself into the armchair again, with an affectation of indifference that he was far from feeling.

"If you've finished, clear out!" he said.

Nugent glanced round the study. Angel wondered, for a moment, what he was looking for. He soon discovered. Frank Nugent picked up a light walking-cane from the corner of the room.

"Put him over something," he said.

"You bet!" grinned Bob.

Wharton and Bob advanced on the dandy of the Fourth, and Aubrey Angel jumped up again. His affectation of indifference was quite dropped now.

"Keep off!" he panted. "You rotters! Hands off! Ow——"

In the grasp of the two Removites Angel was sprawled across the table, face down.

"Let him alone!" yelled Dicky.

Nobody heeded Dicky. Wharton and Bob Cherry held the wriggling Fourth-Former across the table. Nugent poised the cane.

"Are you going to eat that cigarette, Angel?"

"No."

Whack!

The cane came down across Angel's well-cut and elegant trousers. There was a fiendish yell from Aubrey.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack!

"I'm keeping this up," said Nugent, "till you've eaten the cigarette. I fancy that will be a lesson to you—the lesson you want. It's within your reach when you want it."

"Let me go."

Whack!

"I'll yell for a prefect!" raved Angel.

"Do, if you like—if you want the prefects to know. I don't mind."

Whack!

The yell that followed that whack rang the length of the Fourth Form passage. Outside the shut door there was an excited buzz of voices. Johnny Bull thoughtfully turned the key in the lock. Interference from Aubrey's friends in the Fourth was not wanted, until the young rascal had been dealt with.

There was a thump on the door, and the voice of Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, was heard.

"What's goin' on in there? What are you Remove fags up to?"

"Snuff!" answered Bob Cherry.

"You cheeky ass! Let me in!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Are they raggin' you, Angel?"

"Yes!" howled Aubrey. "Rescue! Yaroooooh!"

Whack!

"It's all right, Temple!" called out Harry Wharton. "Angel's been giving a cigarette to a fag, and we're making him eat it! Nothing for you to get your rag out about!"

"Oh," Temple chuckled, "is that it? Make him eat a dozen if you like, the dashed rotter!"

And Cecil Reginald Temple walked away. Angel had no help to expect from Cecil Reginald.

Whack!

"You—you rotter, stoppit!" yelled Angel, in anguish. "I—I won't do it again! On my honour! Ow!"

"Your honour would be a pretty rotten reed to lean on, I think!" said Nugent. "Are you eating that cigarette?"

"Ow! No! Ow!"

Whack!

"Oh crumbs! Oh jiminy! I—I will if you like!"

Angel could stand no more. This was as bad as a Head's flogging, and Aubrey was not of the stuff that heroes are made. He clutched up the cigarette, crumpled it, and thrust it into his reluctant mouth. His expression as he began to chew was extraordinary.

Even Dicky Nugent grinned at the queer look on Aubrey Angel's face.

"Go it!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "You're awfully fond of baccy, you know—or you make out you are! Pile in! You don't seem to be really enjoying that cigarette!"

"Groooogh!"

"Buck up!"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Angel sat upon the table to masticate his peculiar meal. The Famous Five were ready for him if he stopped. But he did not dare to stop. He could stand no more of the flogging.

Outside there were sounds of chuckling. Aubrey Angel was so very lofty a youth and so liable to look at fellows with a supercilious and superior eye that there were few in the Fourth who had any sympathy to waste on him. Angel even thought that he could hear the chuckle of his pal and study-mate, Kenney of the Fourth.

"You're taking a long time over one cigarette, Angel!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Don't you like it?"

"Groooogh!"

Angel's complexion was turning green. He was feeling by this time as if he were on a Channel steamer upon a particularly rough day. He turned a ghastly face towards the chums of the Remove.

"I—I can't go on!" he gasped. "I—I—I'm goin' to be sick! I—I can't go on! Oh dear! Ow! Groooogh!"

Harry Wharton glanced at Frank.

"Will that do?" he asked.

"Yes, let the cad off with that!" said Nugent. "I dare say he's had enough for a lesson!"

"Looks like it!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Aubrey Angel rolled off the table and hung over the fender, strange sounds proceeding from him. Johnny Bull opened the study door.

"Better give your minor a taste of the cane, Franky!" he suggested.

Nugent shook his head. He preferred to take the view that Angel of the Fourth was to blame. That scene in Angel's study, under the fag's staring eyes, was quite enough to make Dicky unpopular there in the future, Nugent considered.

"Come on!" he said.

The Famous Five left the study, leaving Aubrey Angel still hanging in anguish over the fender, wishing from the bottom of his heart that the tobacco-plant had never been discovered. Dicky Nugent lingered a moment, looking at him. The magnificent Aubrey, who had quite dazzled the foolish fag with his magnificence, had fallen from his high estate now. There was an almost contemptuous grin on Dicky's face as he turned to go.

He went, and Aubrey Angel was left alone. For some time afterwards horrid sounds were heard in the study, and every now and then the door opened, and a fellow would look in at Angel of the Fourth and grin. The whole Fourth Form passage was chortling over the episode, and fellows came from far and near to look at Aubrey. There was no doubt that Aubrey had had a lesson—a lesson that he could not possibly forget in a hurry—and the Famous Five of the Remove charitably hoped that it would do him good.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On the Warpath!

ANGEL of the Fourth did not enjoy life during the next few days.

The ragging in his study was the joke of the House.

It would not have been talked of so much had Angel of the Fourth been a less magnificent and "swanky" individual. But Aubrey Angel had always been very prominent, and he had a supercilious and high-sniffing manner that made many fellows dislike him and sometimes envy him.

He was not good at games, and he had never shown up as a fighting man. But he was wealthy, he was well-connected, he was cool and unscrupulous, and he had made himself of consequence. Now, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof.

Fags of the Second and Third, who had looked up to him with awe, now openly grinned when he passed them in the passages.

In the Fourth he met many glances of scorn.

A fellow who put up with such a humiliation as Angel had received was not likely to receive anything but contempt from his Form-fellows.

He had asked for that ragging and had fully deserved it; but he was not expected to take it quietly, as he seemed decided upon doing. Even his study-mate, Kenney, who was a good deal of a toady to the wealthy Aubrey, sometimes looked at him with a mocking glimmer in his eyes.

Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, looked in on Angel the next day to put it to him plainly. Angel greeted him with a dark scowl.

"Lookin' for a second?" asked Temple.

"A what?" snapped Aubrey.

"Second, dear man!"

"No!"

RESULT OF
MAGNET Limerick Competition (No. 11).

In this competition the first prize of £1 1s. for the best line sent in has been awarded to:

HENRY STEVENSON, 27, Forster Street, Old Radford, Nottingham, whose line was:

And "damned" his resolve right away.

Three consolation prizes of 2s. 6d. each for the next best lines have been awarded to the following:

LESLIE WALLIS, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol.
N. NADIN, "Fernlea," The Lawn, Dawlish, South Devon.
MAUD BROOKS, 16, Nichols Square, Hackney Road, E. 2.

Hallo, hallo, hallo! Dick Dorrington & Co. are making their return—

"You're fightin' without seconds?" asked Temple, raising his eyebrows.

"I'm not fightin' anybody!" growled Angel, his colour deepening.

"Oh!" said Temple.

There was a pause, during which Aubrey Angel's face grew more and more crimson.

"This won't do!" said Temple at last. "We can't have funks in the Fourth Form at Greyfriars!"

"Funks!" muttered Angel.

"You asked for that raggin'!" said Temple. "You've got vicious tastes, Angel! You're a good bit of a blackguard! You don't mind my mentionin' it now we're on the subject? Nobody cares if you play bridge with other shady rotters, or smoke yourself sick, or dodge in at the back door of the Cross Keys on a half-holiday—it's your bizney. But takin' a Second Form fag into such things is the limit! If I had a minor here and you asked him into this study and gave him smokes, I'd smash you!"

Temple, generally elegant and a little lackadaisical, was growing quite emphatic. Angel only scowled by way of answer.

"Nugent major was bound to butt in!" went on Temple. "I'd have done the same! His pals backed him up in givin' you a lesson—quite right! But it puts us in a rotten position—havin' Remove fellows buttin' into our passage and handlin' a Fourth Form chap and goin' safe home afterwards! It's not the thing! You were in the wrong an' you got what you asked for—but you're bound to fight!"

"Rot!"

"Honour of the Form!" said Temple. "That's how it is! In your place, I'd take on the whole five of them, one after another!"

"You couldn't lick one of them!" sneered Angel.

"That's neither here nor there! I'd try!" said Temple. "Fellow can only do his best! I don't ask you to take on the five. But you must fight one of them to show you've got the pluck! Dash it all, we can't show the white feather in the Fourth!"

"I'm goin' to let the whole matter drop!" said Angel. "They were five to one, and I had no chance!"

"You're not goin' to let the matter drop!" said Temple coolly. "If you do, the Fourth Form will show you what they think of cowards!"

Aubrey Angel squirmed uncomfortably in his comfortable chair.

"Scrappin's a bit too low for my taste," he said.

"I dare say. Not so low as teaching a little fool of twelve to smoke," said Temple. "You should have thought of that sooner."

"Well, I'm not goin' any further with it."

"You won't pick a man out of that Remove crowd and fight him?"

"No."

"Good!" Temple pushed back his cuffs. "Come on!"

"Eh! What?"

"Come on!"

"I'm not fightin' you, you ass!" howled Angel.

"You are, unless you stand up to one of the Remove. You can take your choice," said the captain of the Fourth.

Angel sat and stared at him savagely. If he was going to fight he realised that he might as well fight an enemy as the captain of his own Form. And he could see that Temple was in deadly earnest.

"Are you going to eat that cigarette, Angel?" asked Nugent. "No!" Whack! The cane came down on Angel's trousers. There was a fiendish yell from Aubrey. "Yow-wow-ow!" "I'm keeping this up until you change your mind!" said Nugent grimly. (*See Chapter* 1.)

"Look here, Temple——" he began.

"I'm waitin' for you."

"If you really think I ought to carry this matter further——"

"I've said so."

"Well, I'll take your advice," said Angel unwillingly. "I'm not afraid of the cads, of course."

"Good man!" said Temple. "Pick out the merry victim, and I'll be your second."

"Oh, Nugent!" said Angel. "He was the cause of the trouble."

Temple grinned. Angel had obviously picked out Nugent, not because he had started the trouble, but because he was supposed to be the least formidable of the Famous Five.

"Nugent will do!" said Temple. "Come on!"

"No hurry, I suppose?"

"Strike while the iron's hot. You might forget all about it, you know," said Temple sarcastically. "We can't have Remove fags sayin' that the Fourth are afraid of them. Come on, old bean!"

Aubrey Angel reluctantly accompanied Temple from the study. Dabney and Fry of the Fourth joined them in the passage.

"Marchin' on to war?" grinned Fry.

"That's it. Angel's simply burnin' for the fray, and I'm goin' to see him through. You fellows come?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

If Angel was burning for the fray his looks belied him as he went along to the Remove passage with Temple & Co. But he went. Billy Bunter was the first to spot their arrival, and he gave a howl.

"I say, you fellows, here's Angel! He wants another feed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Have you come along to slaughter us, Aubrey?"

"I'm lookin' for Nugent!" exclaimed Angel hastily, not in the least inclined to face Bob Cherry's powerful fists.

"Won't I do?" asked Bob persuasively.

"Hang you! Where's Nugent?"

Bob Cherry hurled open the door of Study No. 1. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were there, preparing tea.

"What the thump——" said Harry.

"Franky here? Good! Make your will, Franky!"

"My will?" repeated Nugent.

"Yes. Here's Angel after your scalp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple & Co. marched into the study. Cecil Reginald proceeded to explain.

"Angel's challenging Nugent to fight. Will you have it here or in the gym?"

"We've got some gloves here," said Wharton. "We can put the table out of the way. You ready, Frank?"

Nugent laughed.

"Quite!"

"Take off your jackets," said Temple. "Who's goin' to keep time? I will, if you like, and Dab can second Angel."

"Any old thing," said Nugent carelessly.

"I say, you fellows, there's a fight in Study No. 1!" bawled Billy Bunter along the Remove passage.

And there was a rush of the Removites to witness it. Vernon-Smith and Peter

Todd squeezed into the study; Tom Brown and Hazeldene and Russell blocked the doorway. Behind them, Bolsover major, Skinner, and Redwing and Squiff, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh, and a dozen more fellows, crowded as near as they could. Most of the juniors were grinning. Aubrey Angel on the warpath was something new, and they did not take him very seriously as a warrior.

Angel stripped off his well-fitting jacket, which came off very slowly, perhaps on account of its excellent fit. The boxing-gloves went on more slowly still. But Aubrey was ready at last.

"Ready, you fellows?" asked Temple, taking out the handsome gold watch that was famous in the Fourth Form.

"Long ago," said Nugent politely.

"You, Angel?"

"Yes!" snapped Aubrey.

"Time!"

"Go it, ye cripples!" said Bob Cherry. And they went it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Humiliated!

THERE was not much room in a junior study for a boxing-match. Angel of the Fourth would certainly have liked more space. He retreated before Frank Nugent's plunging fists, and brought up against the wall. Then he dodged round the study, and bumped on the table, and knocked over a chair, and collided with Bob Cherry, who was making himself as small as possible in a corner. There was a howl of laughter from the crowd in the passage.

"This isn't a fight; this is a game of hide-and-seek," remarked the Bounder. "Or is it blind-man's-buff?"

"The hide-and-seekfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Stand up to him, Angel!" exclaimed Temple.

"Go it, Nugent! He only wants one smack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" said Temple reluctantly.

"Time, too," said the Bounder. "Angel would have butted out of the window in another minute."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Angel leaned on the wall, panting, his face crimson. He had managed to avoid punishment in that round, but he had not been able to keep his breath. Too many cigarettes had sapped away his wind, and Aubrey already had bellows to mend.

Dabney, with a grinning face, fanned his hapless principal with a sheet of impot paper.

"Call this a fight!" said Temple savagely. "If you don't play up in the next round, Angel, you'll get jolly well ragged! Why didn't you go for him, Nugent?"

Nugent laughed.

"If he doesn't want to scrap let him clear," he said. "I don't want to damage him."

"Rot!" roared Temple. "He's come here to lick you."

"Oh, my hat! Well, I'm ready to be licked."

"The lickfulness will not be terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!" snorted Temple.

Aubrey Angel was not insensible to the mockery of the onlookers. In the second round he pulled himself together, and made an effort. Even a hammering was better than this ridicule.

Nugent, unprepared for a fierce attack, was caught napping, and a drive in the face sent him spinning. He crashed down on the floor of the study.

"Phew!"

"Man down!"

"Good!" chortled Fry. "That's the style! Keep that up, Angel."

Angel's eyes gleamed. That expected success spurred him on. His lips set hard in a cruel line. If only he could get the upper hand, Nugent had no mercy to expect. As Frank stumbled up Angel hit out again and hurled him sprawling. After that he had to fight his way to his feet, under a fierce attack, and he was glad enough when Temple called time. It gave him a very much needed rest.

"Good for you, Angel!" said Dabney, fanning his principal. "You might have given the chap a chance. Still, the rules are the rules, and nobody ever expects you to be decent. Keep that up, anyhow."

"I'll smash him!" muttered Angel.

"Do!" grinned Dabney.

"Time!" sang out Cecil Reginald.

Angel came up to time quite promptly. He was hoping now to repeat his success. Nugent looked groggy; and there was a fierce hope in Angel's heart of giving him so terrific a thrashing that he would be long in recovering from it.

But Angel's hope was short-lived.

It was a different Nugent he had to face now. Frank's carelessness and good-humour were gone; he was cool, steady, watchful, and grim. And in the third round Angel had the time of his life. His savage attack was met and stopped, and he was knocked right and left. For a full minute he stood up to the punishment, and then he went down—unnecessarily—and stayed down.

"Pick him up!" grinned the Bounder. "Prop him up! He won't stay up unless he's propped."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Up with you, Angel!" exclaimed Dabney.

Angel groaned. He made an apparent effort to rise, and sank back on the carpet.

"I—I can't!" he gasped.

Temple, with a frowning brow, was counting. He did not hurry over the count.

But he might have counted ten thousand, instead of ten, and Aubrey Angel would have remained on the carpet until he had finished. Angel had had enough—more than enough. His brief hope of victory had expired, and he would not face any more punishment.

"Out!" said Temple at last reluctantly. He snapped his watch away.

"Call that a fight?" said Fry, with deep disgust. "You can get up now, Angel—you're safe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Aubrey Angel staggered to his feet. His nose was streaming red, and his rather handsome features looked damaged. And he gasped and gasped and gasped for breath.

"I've done my best!" he panted.

"What would your worst have been like?" asked Fry.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Nugent tossed aside the gloves and resumed his jacket. He had been hurt in the second round; but he was good for a dozen rounds yet with an adversary like Angel.

"Take it away with you!" said Wharton, as Temple & Co. stamped angrily to the door.

"It" was Aubrey Angel. But Temple & Co. tramped off without heeding, greatly exasperated by the result of the fight. Harry Wharton kindly helped Angel on with his jacket, and received a bitter glare in return. The dandy of the Fourth limped out of the study with his handkerchief to his nose, and a howl of laughter followed him down the Remove passage.

With that sound of mockery ringing in his ears, Angel of the Fourth got back to his own quarters.

Kenney, his study-mate, looked at him with an inquiring grin as he came in.

"Licked him?" he asked.

"No, confound you!"

"Temple's just passed; he seemed waxy."

"Hang Temple!"

Angel threw himself into the armchair. He was out of condition, and feeling quite used-up by the fight in Study No. 1. There was a severe pain in his nose, and he had other aches and pains; and the dandy of the Fourth never could bear pain with patience. His face was black and bitter. He had held his head so high, and had turned up a supercilious nose so successfully, that his fall was all the more marked, and his humiliation the more intolerable. For a whole term he would not be able to live this down, and he knew it.

"I'll make them squirm for it, somehow!" he gasped. "The whole gang of them—I'll make them sorry!"

"Going to lick 'em all round?" asked Kenney blandly.

Angel's reply to that question was a hurtling cushion; and Kenney dodged it and left him to himself, alone with black and bitter thoughts.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Bookmark!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH came out of the School House with his bat under his arm. It was a half-holiday, a few days after the affair of Aubrey Angel—which the chums of the Remove had almost forgotten by that time. Hurree Singh joined Wharton, Nugent, and Johnny Bull, who were waiting for him. Aubrey Angel, loafing idly on the School House steps, glanced at the cheery juniors from under his brows; but they did not even seem to observe him there. Angel of the Fourth was nothing to them, and unless he made himself unpleasant again Harry Wharton & Co. had no intention of taking note of his unimportant existence.

"Where's Bob?" asked three voices, as the dusky junior came out with his bat. A practice game was on that afternoon, and it was seldom that Bob Cherry missed a chance of cricket.

"The esteemed and fatheaded Bob is sitting reposefully in his study, perusefully reading the 'Holiday Annual,'" explained the Nabob of Bhanipur. "He's going to finish a story before he comes out."

"What rot!" said Nugent.

"I have mentioned to the excellent Bob that the rotfulness is terrific, but he says the esteemed story is top-holefully ripping!"

"Slacker!" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Let's rout him out!" he said. "The 'Holiday Annual' is jolly good, but Bob's going to play cricket."

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is great!"

Four merry juniors turned into the School House again, with the cheery intention of routing Bob Cherry out of his study. That "Holiday Annual" belonged to Harry Wharton, and it had made the round of the Remove, being borrowed up and down the passage by nearly all the members of the Lower Fourth. Study No. 13 had had it for two or three days now, and there were other applicants awaiting their turn. But, as it happened, Bob Cherry did not need to be routed out.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Why, here he is!" exclaimed Wharton.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Changed my mind," he explained. "Chap can read in the evening. If you don't mind my keeping the book another day, Harry——"

"Keep it another week if you like, but don't cut cricket," said the captain of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Roll away, Bunter!"

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"You won't be disappointed about a boot if you don't roll off," said Johnny Bull.

"Well, I'm waiting for the 'Annual,' when Bob's done with it!" grunted Bunter.

"It's on my study table," said Bob. "It's Wharton's, though, not mine. If it were mine I'd make you wash the jam off your paws before you touched it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You can have it, Bunter; only don't take it out and lose it," said Harry good-naturedly. "You did that with the last book I lent you. But the 'Annual' costs more than three-ha'pence, you know."

"And don't drop my bookmark out of it," said Bob. "I don't want to lose my place."

"Bother your bookmark!" said Bunter.

The Famous Five walked down to the cricket-ground, Aubrey Angel looking after them curiously. Billy Bunter blinked after them through his big spectacles discontentedly. The loan of the "Annual" was something, but Bunter would have preferred a loan of a pecuniary nature. It would even be difficult to sell the "Annual" cheap in the Remove, as all the fellows knew that it belonged to Wharton. Bunter grunted and turned back into the House.

Angel, still with that curious expression on his face, followed him.

"Busy this afternoon, Bunter?" he asked cordially.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in surprise. He was not accustomed to much cordiality from the superb Aubrey.

"Not at all, old fellow!" he answered cheerily.

Angel winced at the "old fellow," but he contrived to smile. Billy Bunter grinned at him in quite a friendly way. Angel had plenty of money, though none of it had come Bunter's way, so far. Bunter wondered whether a little of it might come, if he buttered Angel sufficiently now that he was in this unusually friendly mood.

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order, old chap," said the Owl of the Remove confidentially. "I was expecting it this afternoon—from one of my titled relations, you know."

"I know!" assented Angel.

"Quite a small matter—only five bob," said Bunter. "If a fellow would lend me five bob, and take the postal-order when it came, that would see me through. See?"

"I see."

"I dare say you've got five bob about you," said Bunter, emboldened. "I—I say, I've always liked you, Angel."

"Have you really?"

"Yes. I don't think you're half such a rotter as the fellows make out," said Bunter flatteringly.

"What?"

"I mean it! And if you're a funk, after all, chap who's a funk can't help being a funk, can he?" said Bunter tolerantly. "I wouldn't be down on you for that. I wouldn't really!"

Bunter's method of "buttering," probably, would not have been successful, had not Aubrey Angel had his own reasons for conciliating the fat junior. The dandy of the Fourth still smiled, though in a rather wry manner.

"I was wonderin' whether you'd care to go down to Friardale for me," said Angel carelessly.

Bunter eyed him warily. He would have gone to Friardale, or to Timbuctoo, on the trail of tuck. Wild horses would not have dragged him so far for anything else.

"Uncle Clegg has some new cakes in at five bob each," Angel hastened to add.

Bunter's fat face was all smiles.

"I'm your man!" he said at once.

"If you care to taste it on your way back, I don't mind," said Angel.

"I—I might take just a snack!" said Bunter, his eyes gleaming behind his spectacles. Anyone who knew Bunter would have known that the "snack" would be precisely the same extent as the cake itself. But Aubrey Angel nodded cheerily.

"Here's the five bob, then. Don't hurry back, you know."

"Right-ho, old top!" gasped Bunter, scarcely able to believe in his good luck.

He rolled away with five shillings tightly clenched in a fat fist. Exertion was not in his line, but he contrived to put on quite a creditable speed as far as the gates, in case the dandy of the Fourth should change his mind.

Angel of the Fourth watched him out of sight, and then went up the staircase. The Remove passage was deserted. Angel strolled on past the studies till he came to Study No. 13. Three of that study's occupants—Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Hurree Singh—were on the cricket-ground, as he knew. The fourth member, little Wun Lung the Chinee, was curled up on the grass in the sun, enjoying the blaze of heat, not far from the cricket-pitch; Angel had observed him there. So he was quite well aware that he would find Study No. 13 untenanted. He entered Study No. 13 and closed the door rather quickly. Billy Bunter, who would otherwise have come there for the "Holiday Annual," was safely disposed of, for an hour, at least.

Angel of the Fourth breathed rather hard as he stood in the silent study. Books belonging to the juniors were on the table—prominent among them the brightly-coloured cover of Wharton's

Lord Mauleverer's shoulder was turned to the doorway, but he had a good view of the looking-glass that faced the door. In that glass there was a momentary reflection of a fellow passing the study. It was that of Aubrey Angel! *(See Chapter 4.)*

"Holiday Annual." Angel took up that volume, and turned the leaves slowly, till he came to a place marked with a bookmark.

Bob Cherry's bookmark consisted simply of a torn strip of paper, a fragment of an old exercise in his own big, scrawling hand.

For several minutes Angel stood looking at it, his face growing slightly pale, and his breath coming hard.

There was a glitter in his eyes—a glitter of deep malice. On that sunny afternoon, when all Greyfriars thought of the playing-fields, or the river, or of cycling in leafy lanes, there were no such thoughts in Angel's mind—his thoughts were black and revengeful and bitter. It was natural, perhaps, that he should remember the trouble longer than the Remove fellows. The punishment and humiliation he had received rankled deeply; and ever since the fight in Study No. 1, he had had to face the contempt of his own Form. Angel was not a fellow to forget or forgive an injury; and the scorn of his schoolfellows added every day fresh fuel to the fire.

He sat down at the table at last, and looked over the school-books. The name of "Robert Cherry" was scrawled in more than one of them, and he easily found an exercise in the same hand. He set that exercise before him, and studied it carefully. Then he dipped a pen in the ink, took a blank sheet of paper, and began to scrawl an imitation of Bob's sprawling hand. It was not a difficult task, especially to a fellow who was clever with the pen like Aubrey Angel.

He covered the foolscap sheet with scrawl, and smiled over it. Then he took a sheet of notepaper from the drawer, and wrote a page of a letter in the same sprawling hand. Having dried the ink, he tore the page into pieces, and all the pieces but one he stowed carefully into his pocket.

But one piece, after looking at it very carefully, he placed in the "Holiday Annual," in the place of the bookmark Bob had left there.

He closed the book and quitted the study.

As he left he gave one furtive look round him, but the passage was empty. The door of Study No. 12 was half open as he passed it, and he heard the sound of a yawn within, which indicated that Lord Mauleverer was at home. Angel trod lightly past.

"That you, Vivian?" asked his lordship from within.

Angel breathed hard and did not answer.

Lord Mauleverer, stretched at ease on the study sofa, could not see the doorway from where he reclined, and nothing would have induced him to take the trouble to get off the sofa.

"Got that ginger-beer, Jimmy, if it's you?" he called out lazily.

His lordship sat up. He was thirsty that hot afternoon, and Jimmy Vivian was to have conveyed ginger-beer to the study. Jimmy had not yet conveyed it.

As he sat up Lord Mauleverer's shoulder was turned to the doorway; but he had a good view of the looking-glass that faced the door.

In that looking-glass there was a momentary reflection of a fellow passing the doorway.

It vanished as Angel trod quickly and softly on.

Lord Mauleverer let his tired head sink back upon a silken cushion.

"What the dooce is Angel of the Fourth tiptoein' about the Remove passage for?" was his lordship's reflection.

But he did not take the trouble to think that matter out. He was thinking chiefly of ginger-beer; and as Jimmy Vivian evidently had forgotten the ginger-beer, and wasn't coming back, Lord Mauleverer closed his weary eyes and dozed.

Aubrey Angel, in his study in the Fourth, lighted a match in the grate, and burned the fragments of paper he had carefully brought away with him from Study No. 13 in the Remove. Then, with a cynical and satisfied smile, he sat down to smoke a cigarette, occasionally glancing out of the window. And he smiled again when he caught sight of the fat figure of Billy Bunter coming towards the School House—without any visible cake. Bunter had the cake—but in the circumstances it was naturally invisible; only the X-rays could have revealed it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Bunter!

"SUCH a beast!" murmured Bunter. "Such a suspicious beast! I know jolly well he wouldn't take a fellow's word, without even asking him."

Bunter was thinking of Aubrey Angel and the cake. Five shillings had been expended at Uncle Clegg's in the village on that cake. Bunter had started back to the school with the cake under his fat arm.

A nibble had been followed by another nibble, a bite by another bite. Bunter really had intended to bring home some remnant of the five-shilling cake.

But his inner Bunter was too much for him.

Long before he was half-way to Greyfriars, the cake had vanished, to the last sultana and the last crumb.

Feeling that it was useless to bring home the wrapping-paper and the string for Aubrey Angel, Bunter had cast them into the ditch, and proceeded on his way thoughtfully. During the earlier part of the walk his jaws had been busy; now his fat brain was busy. He had to give some account of that cake. Angel had told him that he could take a snack; but, naturally—at least, Bunter supposed so—he would expect to see something of the cake.

Bunter's active brain invented yarn after yarn to account for the total disappearance of the cake. Some of the Highcliffe fellows had met him and raided him, taking the whole cake away as a prize of war. But Angel knew Ponsonby of Highcliffe and several other fellows there. Bunter discarded the Highcliffe story. He had stumbled into a ditch, and the cake had dropped out of sight in deep water. Bunter was pleased with this effort, till he fortunately remembered that, owing to the time of year, the ditches were nearly dry. Then, with the gates of Greyfriars in sight, he thought of an escaped lion from a menagerie, which had leaped on him and torn the cake away with gnashing jaws. But somehow even that flight of fancy had an unconvincing air.

"Angel's such a suspicious cad!" the Owl of the Remove reflected. "Not really a gentleman, of course. He wouldn't take a fellow's word. Likely as not to call me a liar point-blank! Me!"

By the time he rolled in at the gates Bunter hadn't satisfied himself as to what explanation would be most likely to satisfy Angel. It was really difficult to deal with a chap who couldn't take a fellow's word.

He decided, upon the whole, not to see Angel.

That was the simplest way.

He could dodge the fellow easily enough, and keep out of his way for a bit; and if Angel hunted him down and asked after the cake then he could decide upon the spur of the moment whether it had been raided by Highcliffians, dropped into a river, or snatched by a hungry lion seeking what he might devour.

Having come to that conclusion, Billy Bunter rolled into the School House, dismissing the matter from his mind.

He made his way to the Remove passage. There was still the "Holiday Annual" to fall back on, as there was nothing more to eat.

He went to Study No. 13, and picked the "Annual" off the table, and rolled away to his own study, No. 7, with it.

Settling himself on his back in the armchair, with his feet on the table, Bunter held the book open with sticky fingers and thumbs, which left beautiful imprints that would have pleased the gentleman of the finger-print department at Scotland Yard. They were really perfect specimens, clearly and deeply marked.

A fragment of a letter dropped out of the volume upon Billy Bunter's well-filled waistcoat.

"Oh, that silly ass' bookmark," grunted Bunter. "Why the deuce couldn't he turn the leaf down? I should! It doesn't matter, as it's not his own book. Some fellows are such asses!"

He picked up the torn fragment of the letter, and blinked at it, and gave a jump.

"My hat!"

As it was evidently part of a written letter, Billy Bunter looked at it as a matter of course—that was one of his little ways. But certainly he had not expected to see what he now saw. Apparently it was part of some letter which Bob Cherry had written but never

---

posted. tearing it up instead; Bunter knew the scrawling hand well enough. But what was written Bunter would never have dreamed of seeing written in Bob's fist. It ran:

"——ton's not really a bad fellow in the main, only his uppish swank does get on the nerves a bit sometimes, and——"

That was all. But it was enough to make Bunter forget all about the "Holiday Annual." That volume rolled down on the floor and remained there unheeded.

Bunter stared at the tell-tale fragment with his round eyes wide open behind his big spectacles.

"Ton!" he murmured. "There's only one chap in the Remove whose name ends in 'ton'—that's Wharton! Fancy Cherry writing about him like that, when he makes out he's such a pal! Mean, I call it."

Billy Bunter had a good impulse. That was to throw the written fragment into the fire. Evidently Bob had not posted the letter, as here was a fragment of it. Possibly he had regretted having written in such a way, and so had destroyed the letter instead of putting it in the post. Then looking for a bookmark in a hurry, he had used this fragment, without noticing what was scribbled on it. It was all clear to Bunter; and he could imagine what Wharton's feelings would be if his eyes fell upon it. A kind-hearted fellow would have burnt the wretched fragment, and said no word about it; and Bunter was not without good impulses. Possibly, if there had been a fire in the study Bunter would have thrown the thing into it. But it was a hot summer's afternoon, and fires were long over at Greyfriars. The impulse came and passed. Bunter thought of striking a match, but the thought went no further.

He sprawled in the armchair, blinking at the piece of paper. He felt loftily disgusted. Bob Cherry was one of Wharton's closest friends—his very best chum excepting Frank Nugent. And this was the way he wrote about his pal!

"Mean!" said Bunter, shaking his head. "Not the sort of thing a fellow does! Of course, Wharton is a swanking ass, and Cherry knows it! But a fellow doesn't say these things about a pal."

The study door opened, and Bunter started up, clutching the scrap of paper in his fat hand. It was Peter Todd that entered.

Peter tossed his bat into a corner.

"Hallo, frowsting indoors, as usual?" he asked. "Why don't you get out a bit, you fat frog?"

"I've walked down to Friardale this afternoon for Angel," said Billy Bunter with dignity. "I'm taking a rest."

"For Angel?" repeated Peter. "Fagging for the Fourth, you fat worm."

"Well, he asked me to fetch a cake, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. A fellow does these good-natured things—at least, I do."

"I was thinking of Angel, if he's expecting to see the cake!" grinned Peter. "Mean to say he trusted you with cash?"

"He trusted me with five shillings!" said Bunter majestically. "Some fellows can trust me, if my own study-mates can't."

"Not fellows that know you," said Toddy. "I always thought Angel was a rogue—it seems he's a fool as well."

"I hope you don't think I'd keep his money, Toddy, and not get the cake."

Bob Cherry was still staring at the paper, watched by a curious group of juniors in the doorway. "It certainly looks like my writing," he said. "But you can't be silly ass enough to believe that I'd write in that style about you, Wharton?" *(See Chapter 7.)*

"Not at all. I'm sure you'd get the cake—as sure as I am that Angel won't get it."

"As a matter of fact, I had an accident with the cake coming back," said Bunter, blinking at Peter Todd. "Some of the Highcliffe chaps rushed me and got it."

"Try again!" said Peter.

"Don't you believe me, you beast?"

"Not a little bit."

"I really meant to say, I—I stumbled and dropped it into a ditch—I mean the river, of course—there's no water in the ditches now——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you don't believe me, Peter——"

"Angel may," said Peter, grinning. "I hardly think he will. But he may. If he was ass enough to trust you with five bob he may be ass enough to swallow that yarn."

"The actual fact is——"

"Good! Let's have the actual fact!"

"A lion escaped from a menagerie and sprang on me. I—I threw him the cake to—to get away, like—like they do to the wolves in the Arctic stories."

"Oh, my hat! Stick to the Highcliffe chaps, Bunter, that's the best yarn of the three!" advised Peter. "But keep out of Angel's reach when you're telling him."

"Well, I haven't seen him yet, and I'm not going to if I can help it," said Bunter. "After all, Angel's a cad. I don't care to talk to such a chap. He might doubt my word."

"Very likely; especially if you spin all three yarns at once. Is that Wharton's 'Annual' on the floor?"

"Yes. I—I say, Peter, Wharton's name ends with 'ton,' doesn't it?"

Peter stared at him.

"Of course it does, ass! What about it? Has Angel's cake got into your head, or is it the sun?"

"If you found a bit of a letter, torn off, you know, in the middle of the name, and what was left was 'ton,' you'd take it to mean Wharton, wouldn't you?"

"Might, or might not," said Peter. "Probably not."

"Why not?"

"Because I shouldn't look at somebody else's letters."

"Oh, really, Peter! You might come on it by accident, used as a bookmark, you know, and—and see it without meaning to. Wharton's the only fellow in the Remove with 'ton' at the end of his name, isn't he?"

"No, ass—there's Dutton!"

"Oh!" Bunter started. "I forgot Dutton."

"Is there anything you don't forget?" inquired Peter sarcastically. "I'll bet you've forgotten to bring in your whack for tea!"

"Couldn't be Dutton," said Bunter, unheeding. "Nobody would call Dutton an 'uppish swanker.'"

"Not unless he wanted his head punched," said Peter.

"He's only a harmless, deaf ass, Dutton is," argued Bunter. "It's Wharton right enough. Besides, Bob Cherry doesn't have much to do with Dutton, and wouldn't be mentioning him in a letter."

"What on earth——" began the astonished Peter.

—commencing in this week's "Boys' Friend"!

Tom Dutton came into the study, with a ruddy face, and a bat under his arm. Peter was interrupted.

"What about tea?" asked Dutton. "You fellows arguing?"

"Only Bunter talking rot."

"Hot? I should jolly well say so!" said Dutton.

"I said 'rot.'"

"Scott? Scott of the Fourth, do you mean?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter. A deaf study-mate was sometimes a little trying.

"No cat here, that I can see," said Dutton cheerily. "What about tea, Peter? Do you mean that Scott is coming to tea?"

"Oh crumbs! No!" roared Peter.

"You needn't yell at a chap as if he were deaf! As for a cat, I certainly can't see any cat."

"I didn't say a cat!" howled Peter.

"Oh, a hat! I thought you said 'cat,' because you mumble so, Toddy. Whose hat do you mean?"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study while Peter Todd was still explaining.

— —

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Bunter Knows Something!

FIVE cheery juniors joined up in Study No. 1 in the Remove for tea after cricket. Harry Wharton brought in with him a bundle from the tuckshop—upon which Billy Bunter, in the passage, turned greedy eyes. Billy Bunter rolled after the Famous Five into the study; and Bob Cherry took him playfully by the ear and rolled him out again, and shut the door and put his foot against it.

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows——"

Skinner and Snoop, who were in the passage, chuckled. Billy Bunter thumped on the door of No. 1; but it did not stir, and Bunter snorted angrily and backed away.

"No room there for a porpoise—what?" grinned Skinner.

"I say, Skinney, I'll come to tea in your study," said Bunter. "Toddy's only got some measly bloater-paste."

"I haven't even that—for you!" said Skinner cheerfully. "Nothing doing, old fat bean!"

"I should decline to come to tea with you, Skinner, if you begged me to," said Bunter, with dignity.

"I don't think!" said Skinner.

"I dare say Angel will be glad to see me," said Bunter thoughtfully. "I've got friends in the Fourth."

"Angel of the Fourth? Has he gone off his rocker?" asked Skinner, with interest.

"Eh? No."

"Then he won't be glad to see you. Sane chap couldn't be!"

"He, he, he!" came from Snoop.

Lord Mauleverer drifted lazily along the passage. Billy Bunter made a step towards him, and his lordship's laziness dropped from him like a cloak. He bolted into his study, and a door was heard to slam.

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

It was never noticeable, in the Remove, that anyone yearned for the society of William George Bunter. Still less did the Removites yearn for it at teatime—which was just the time when Bunter would have liked to be popular.

He rolled back to Study No. 1, and opened the door. There was no foot against it now.

But as it opened a cushion whizzed, and Bunter jumped back just in time. There was a laugh in the study from the cheery quintette of juniors there, and a chuckle from Skinner and Snoop.

"Try again, fatty!" encouraged Skinner.

"Awful rotters!" growled Bunter. "Fancy Wharton having Bob Cherry to tea, you know."

"Why shouldn't he?" said Snoop, in surprise. "Those fellows generally grub together."

"He wouldn't have him if he knew."

"If he knew what, fathead?"

"That's telling!" said Bunter mysteriously.

Skinner and Snoop were interested. Anything "up against" the Famous Five was interesting to the black sheep of the Remove.

"What have you got hold of now?" asked Skinner. "What's Bob Cherry been doing, then?"

"Well, calling a chap names isn't pally, is it?" said Bunter. "Of course, we all know that Wharton is a swanky ass."

"Hear, hear!" said Snoop.

"Still, when a fellow's a pal——" said Bunter.

Skinner eyed him very curiously.

"Do you mean to say that Cherry's been calling Wharton names," he asked—"behind his back?"

"I know what I know!" said Bunter mysteriously.

Skinner was more and more curious. Bunter's talk generally would have led anyone to suppose that he was a direct descendant of Ananias. But although Bunter's statements generally, if not always, departed from the straight line of veracity, there was usually some fraction of fact to found them upon. If there was a minute fraction of fact in this instance, Skinner meant to know all about it.

"Well, you can tell a chap!" he said encouragingly.

"Well, a fellow doesn't want to make mischief," said Bunter. "Sort of thing I never do."

"Oh, of course not! Not your sort!" said Skinner gravely.

"Still, a fellow can't help feeling a bit disgusted," said Bunter. "Going to tea with a chap, you know, and keeping friendly, and then calling him a swanking rotter in a letter—not the thing a fellow does, you know!"

"Gammon!" said Snoop. "Cherry wouldn't! He likes Wharton all right."

"That's all you know!"

"Well, what do you know, then?" demanded Snoop.

"That's telling!"

Billy Bunter, as a matter of fact, was quite incapable of keeping to himself what he had learned. As soon as Bunter knew anything, it was only a matter of time before all the Remove knew it—a fact of which Aubrey Angel was well aware.

Bunter was only waiting to be urged to tell his story, as a tribute to his importance.

"If you've been reading Bob Cherry's letters, there's a kicking waiting for you!" remarked Snoop.

"I haven't! Of course, I wouldn't! But if a chap uses a bit of an old letter for a bookmark, and another chap reads the book, I suppose the other chap can't help seeing it, can he?" asked Bunter warmly.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Skinner. "Cherry's just careless ass enough to do that. What book was it?"

"Wharton's 'Holiday Annual.' It's in my study now," said Bunter.

"And the bookmark in it?"

Bunter grinned.

"No—I've got that in my pocket. Of course, I'm going to keep it dark. I might show it to a pal."

"Let's see it!" said Snoop and Skinner together eagerly.

"Of course, you won't repeat this?" said Bunter.

"Oh, of course not!"

Billy Bunter drew the crumpled scrap of paper from his pocket. Skinner and Snoop fairly stared at it.

They had not a very high opinion of human nature generally, it being their custom to judge others by themselves. But those words, written in Bob Cherry's "fist," startled them.

"Dash it all, that's pretty thick!" said Skinner, with a curl of the lip. "I wouldn't talk about a fellow like that if I were friendly with him."

"Same here!" said Snoop. "I must say I'm surprised. It's not like Bob Cherry. It's his fist right enough."

"He told me there was a bookmark in the book," grinned Bunter. "He didn't know what it was, I'll bet you! Just grabbed the bit up to stick in the book when he was going off to the cricket, you know, without looking at it. He, he, he!"

"So his Magnificence gets on Cherry's nerves a bit, does he?" grinned Skinner. "Well, he gets on mine a bit, too!"

"Mine, too!" chuckled Snoop. "Lots of fellows! But Cherry always seemed to like him."

"Oh, you never know!" said Skinner.

"What's the joke?" asked Stott, coming along the passage.

The scrap of paper was shown to Stott, and he stared and grinned. Two or three other fellows came along. Fisher T. Fish and Russell and Ogilvy, and they were taken into the confabulation.

Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, coming up to their study, stopped to learn what was on, and were told. The Bounder shrugged his shoulders, but Redwing looked troubled.

"You ought to burn that, Bunter," he said.

"It's not Bunter's," said Skinner. "It's Bob Cherry's bookmark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It ought to be burned," said Redwing. "What's the good of making mischief?" And he went on to his study.

A good many fellows who came along the passage were attracted by the chuckling of Skinner & Co., and stopped to inquire. Some of them showed surprise, some repeated Tom Redwing's advice. But Bunter was not disposed to take that advice. His good impulse in that direction had passed long ago.

It was one of Bunter's greatest delights to be the fellow who knew; the chap who had something to tell. Now he knew something—now he had something to tell! And he was not in the least inclined to part with his importance.

"Hallo, here's Angel! Show it to Angel!" said Skinner, who was on rather friendly terms with the black sheep of the Fourth.

Angel of the Fourth sauntered along the passage. His eyes glittered for a moment at the sight of the fragment of paper in Bunter's fat hand.

"Anythin' on?" he drawled.

Bunter gave him an uneasy blink. He supposed that Aubrey Angel had come up to inquire after the cake. But the dandy of the Fourth seemed to have forgotten the cake.

"Look at that!" said Skinner.

Angel glanced at the scrap of paper.

"Well, what's that?" he asked. "What about it?"

"It's Bob Cherry's fist!" explained Snoop.

"Is it?"

"Yes, that 'ton' means Wharton, of course. That's the way he described his pal."

"Pretty mean, in my opinion," said Angel.

"That's what we all think."

Angel nodded, and walked on, and went up the box-room stairs. Not one of the Removites guessed that his visit to their quarters was anything but accidental. Certainly they were not likely to guess that he had strolled along to see whether there were any signs of his scheme working.

Half the Remove had seen the scrap of paper by this time, and made various comments on it. Meanwhile, the merry party in Study No. 1 had finished their tea, in happy ignorance of what was going on in the passage without.

"I say, take Wharton's book back to him, while Cherry's there," suggested Skinner. "Cherry's bound to ask you if you've lost his place, and you can pull his leg about it."

Bunter chuckled.

"Watch me," he said.

He rolled into No. 7 for the "Holiday Annual," and rolled along to Study No. 1 with it, seven or eight fellows watching him. Bunter pushed open Harry Wharton's study door, and blinked in.

"You can come in, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "Tea's over."

"I haven't come for tea, Wharton! I've just looked in to bring your book back."

Bunter tossed the "Holiday Annual" on the table.

"Oh, good!" said Wharton. "First time on record that you've brought a book back after borrowing it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You should have left it Study No. 13, though; Bob's not done with it."

"If you've lost my place, Bunter, I'll scalp you!" said Bob Cherry.

He took up the book and looked at it.

"My bookmark's gone!" he said.

There was a chuckle outside, rather to the surprise of the fellows in the study. Bunter grinned.

"Well, I thought I'd remove that bookmark, Cherry," he said.

"You cheeky fat ass!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "What the thump do you mean by losing my place?"

"Rather better, I think, considering."

"Is the fat duffer potty?" asked Nugent, gazing at Bunter. "What are you grinning and guggling about, fatty?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Oh, get out!" said Bob. "You ought to be kicked, but I dare say I can find the place again all right."

"If that's what you call grateful, Cherry——"

"Grateful!" howled Bob.

"Yes," said Bunter warmly. "Seeing that you used a bit of an old letter for a bookmark. Suppose you'd given the book back to Wharton with that bit of letter in it?"

"What on earth would it have mattered?" asked Harry. "Are you wandering in your mind, Bunter?"

A reproduction in miniature of the incriminating portion of

the letter alleged to have been written by Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I don't believe he is!" said Bob, in amazement. "And it wasn't an old letter—it was a strip off an old exercise I used as a bookmark, I believe."

"It jolly well wasn't!" said Bunter. "It was a strip torn off an old letter you wrote and never posted!"

"Might have been," said Bob. "It doesn't matter, anyhow. I don't think I've ever written anything in a letter that all Greyfriars mightn't see. What are you grinning at, you fat image?"

"You wouldn't like Wharton to see it," grinned Bunter.

"Why not, ass?"

"He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came echoing from the passage.

Bob Cherry jumped up.

"Is this a rag?" he asked. "What's the game? Are you fellows trying to make out that I've written something about Wharton that I shouldn't like him to see? That's not a rag—that's a dirty trick!"

"The dirty trickfulness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"He, he, he!"

"Look here, let's know what all this means!" exclaimed Bob, and he grasped Bunter by the collar. "Now then——"

"Yarooh!"

Shake!

"Leggo!"

Shake!

"If you don't leggo, I'll show Wharton the paper!" roared Bunter.

"Show him, and be hanged, you fat rotter!" exclaimed Bob, and he gave Bunter so hefty a shake that he quivered like a fat jelly.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'll tell Wharton you called him a swanking cad if you don't leggo!"

"What?" roared Bob.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet, his face pale with anger.

"Take a cricket-stump to him, Bob," he said. "Give the rotter the licking of his life!"

"I jolly well will!" gasped Bob. "Hand me a stump, Bull!"

"Here you are!" said Johnny promptly.

"Yaroogh! Help!"

"Let the chap alone!" said Skinner, in the doorway. "He's only telling the truth—— Whoooop!"

Skinner roared, as Bob's left sent him spinning back into the passage.

"You can have some more when I'm done with Bunter, Skinner!" shouted Bob, his good temper quite vanished now. "Now, you fat rascal——"

"It's true!" yelled Bunter. "I've got the paper—I'll show it to Wharton! Leggo, you beast! You daren't let me show Wharton! Yoop!"

Bob Cherry paused, with the cricket-stump in the air. Billy Bunter was evidently in earnest, and Bob's anger changed a little to astonishment. It occurred to him, too, that possibly Bunter's fat leg had been pulled by Skinner & Co. Skinner was as full of tricks as a monkey, and he often found thoughtless victims to act as catspaws.

"I'll give you a chance!" said Bob, breathing hard. "If you've got anything to show Wharton, show it to him!"

"I don't want to see it!" said Harry. "I suppose this is some of Skinner's rotten trickery!"

"Look at the paper and see!" yelled Skinner furiously from the passage, as he dabbed his nose. "You'll like to see how Cherry writes to his people about you! Look at the paper. Show it up, Bunter!"

"If you've got anything, Bunter, show it up before I smash you!" roared Bob.

Thus adjured, Billy Bunter tossed the crumpled scrap of paper on the study table.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Scrap of Paper!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked at the torn strip. They had not the slightest doubt that this was some wretched trickery of Skinner's, who had used the fatuous Owl of the Remove as a catspaw. But they started as they read what was written in Bob Cherry's well-known sprawling "fist."

Bob, who still had Bunter by the collar, looked round at his chums, not at the paper.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

Wharton's face grew crimson.

That the "ton" was the termination of his own name there could be no doubt. Dutton was the only other

fellow in the Remove with a name that terminated with "ton"; and Dutton, the deaf junior, could not have been referred to in such terms; neither was Bob Cherry likely to mention Dutton at all in a letter.

What was written there was written about Wharton.

Wharton was only too well aware that some of the Remove fellows considered him rather too reserved—"stuck-up" was Fisher T. Fish's description—"swanky" was the word Skinner preferred to employ. Even his own friends had sometimes had little disagreements with him on account of certain little faults of temper.

Wharton was by no means a perfect character; and he was conscious of this little weakness on his part, and had honestly striven to keep it in check. He tried not to be annoyed when Skinner alluded to him as "his Magnificence" or "his Serene Mightiness"; and knowing that he lacked patience, he was very careful to be patient—though, of course, he was not invariably successful.

He did not expect his friends to be blind to his faults, but he did expect them to be tolerant; and that allusion in Bob Cherry's handwriting was a sharp blow to his pride.

His face was crimson, and the crimson faded away and left it very pale. Johnny Bull and Nugent exchanged quick looks of dismay.

Bob Cherry, realising the electric atmosphere in the study, released Billy Bunter's collar.

He faced his comrades with a grim brow.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"Look at the paper," said Harry Wharton very dryly.

Bob looked at it—stared at it! The sight of it seemed to deprive him of the power of speech for a moment.

"I'm sorry I get on your nerves, Bob!" said Harry, his lip quivering. "I've tried not to. I—I suppose a chap might have called me a bit uppish when I first came here, but I thought that was all over long ago!"

"What utter rot!" said Nugent. "It's rotten—it's a beastly shame! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Bob!"

"That's my opinion," said Johnny Bull, in his slow, thoughtful way. "Wharton's got his faults, like the rest of us; but that's not the way a friend would speak of any fellow!"

"My esteemed Bob——" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in great distress.

Bob Cherry was still staring at the paper, watched by a curious group at the doorway. He raised his eyes to his chums.

"That looks like my handwriting," he said.

"Isn't it yours?" sneered Skinner.

Bob turned his back on Skinner.

"Wharton! You can't be silly ass enough to believe that I'd write in that style about a fellow I was friendly with. I'd cut my hand off sooner!"

"You didn't write it!" exclaimed Wharton blankly.

Bob's eyes blazed.

"Do you believe I did?" he shouted.

It was an unfortunate moment for Bob to allow his anger to get the better of him. But an accusation of what amounted to treachery and false friendship was too much for him. He had not written that wretched thing, and he expected his friends to know that he had not, without allowing for the evidence under their eyes.

As Wharton did not answer immediately, being too taken aback to know what to say, Bob repeated his words in louder tones:

"Do you believe I wrote that?"

Wharton's own temper was not of the gentlest, and he was wounded and angry.

"What is a fellow to believe?" he snapped. "Are you denying your own handwriting?"

"It's not my hand!"

"Bob!" muttered Nugent.

"Do you think it is, Nugent?" roared Bob.

"I know it is!"

"I tell you I never wrote it—never thought of such a thing—never dreamed of it!" shouted Bob furiously. "But I know what to think of fellows who believe I'd do such a rotten thing. Go and eat coke, the lot of you!"

Bob Cherry swung round, and tramped savagely out of the study, knocking over Skinner as he went, hardly seeing him.

His heavy footsteps rang along the Remove passage to No. 13, and the door slammed.

Skinner reeled against the passage wall.

"Beautiful manners!" he remarked. "The dear man seems to be annoyed at getting found out!"

There was blank dismay in Study No. 1. At the sight of Bob Cherry's handwriting the juniors had had no doubts. But Bob's furious denial shook them.

"What the dickens does the fellow mean?" said Johnny Bull. "There's nobody else's fist like his at Greyfriars—the whole Form knows that scrawl!"

"It was his bookmark, too," said Nugent slowly. "He must have picked it up in his study. Somebody there must have written it."

"The mustfulness is terrific!"

Wharton's lip curled. He was deeply hurt; his pride was deeply wounded, and he was very angry.

"I suppose he had to deny it," he said. "He couldn't own up to such a mean thing, I suppose. I never thought he would come down to telling lies, though."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, get out, Bunter!" snapped Nugent. "Why couldn't you shove the thing into the fire instead of bringing it here, bother you?"

"There wasn't a fire in my study——"

"Oh, get out!"

"I wasn't going to show it to you, either," said Bunter. "I showed it to some of the fellows in confidence. Bob made me show you!"

"Get out!" growled Johnny Bull.

Peter Todd looked in.

"Hold on a minute, you fellows," he said. "I've heard what's going on. Bob says he didn't write that beastly thing!"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I should want a lot of proof to believe Bob a liar," said Peter tartly, "and I'm not so chummy with him as you fellows are! He says he didn't write it. Anybody could imitate Bob's scrawl—a baby could do it. Skinner could, for instance."

"What!" yelled Skinner.

"And I noticed that Skinner put Bunter up to bringing it here," added Toddy.

"Why, you—you awful rotter!" gasped Skinner. "You—you—you accuse me of—of forging Bob's fist—why, I—I——"

Words failed Skinner. There was terror, as well as indignation, in Skinner's excitement, for he was well aware that some of the fellows, at least, would believe him capable of such a trick.

"I'm not accusing you," said Peter coolly. "I'm suggesting a possibility that these fellows will look into, if they've got any sense!"

"I never saw the paper before Bunter showed it to me!" raved Skinner.

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"I don't believe Skinner would," he said quietly. "Why should he? He doesn't like me, but he's got nothing up against Bob; and he's not got the nerve for such a trick, either, if he wanted to. But let's go into it, all the same. Bunter knows, and Bunter can tell."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Where did you get that bit of paper, Bunter?" demanded Peter Todd.

"In the 'Holiday Annual,'" gasped Bunter, who was a little scared by this time at the tempest he had raised. "I—I mentioned it to you when you came in from the cricket, Peter—about 'ton,' you know——"

"I remember. It was a bookmark?"

"Yes, old chap."

"Where did you get the 'Holiday Annual'?"

"Off the table in Bob's study. Wharton told me I might have it."

"And the bookmark was in it then?"

"Of course it was. It dropped out in Study No. 7 when I took the book to my study."

Peter Todd looked perplexed. It was easy enough to see that Bunter was telling the truth, so far as he knew it. Skinner grinned malignantly.

"Well, are you going to make out that I put it there before Bunter got hold of the book?" he demanded.

"Somebody did, unless Bob's telling lies," said Peter. "Cherry says he left a bookmark in the 'Annual,' I think?"

"Yes, he told us so," said Nugent. "That was when we went down to the cricket this afternoon."

"Where have you been this afternoon, Skinner?"

Skinner sneered.

"I've been up the river with Snoop, and Stott, and Bolsover major," he answered. "We dropped in at the Feathers for a game of billiards, if you want to know. And we went out just after dinner, and didn't get back till nearly tea-time. Ask the lot of them."

"That's all true enough," came Bolsover major's bull-voice. "No good trying to put it on Skinner this time!"

Peter flushed a little.

"I'm not trying to put it on Skinner," he snapped. "Skinner's only got himself to blame. He was making as much mischief out of it as he could, anyhow. But I admit Skinner's out of it."

"Thank you for nothing," sneered Skinner, and he walked away with his friends.

"Well?" said Harry Wharton, looking at Peter Todd fixedly.

Peter made a hopeless gesture.

"It beats me," he said. "But I can't believe Bob did it, or that he'd tell lies if he did. It's not like him. But I can't see anything further to be done."

And Peter Todd left the study, and Bunter rolled after him. Harry Wharton picked up the scrap of paper from the table.

Look out for "Sir Jimmy's Substitute!"—next Monday's—

"That's done with, anyhow," he said. "It belongs to Cherry, but I suppose he doesn't want it back."

And the captain of the Remove set a match to the scrap of paper.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Lord Mauleverer Takes a Hand!

SLAM!

Lord Mauleverer sighed.

Bob Cherry had just gone into his study, which was close to Lord Mauleverer's, and he had shut the door with an emphasis that told on the sensitive nerves of Mauly.

Sir Jimmy Vivian, on the other side of the tea-table, grinned.

"There's a row on in the Remove, Mauly," he said.

"There always is," sighed Lord Mauleverer. "But, really, Cherry might close his door a little more quietly. He really might, you know. What's the good of slammin' a door? Only makes more row."

"I suppose he's had a shindy with Wharton."

Lord Mauleverer looked across the table at Sir Jimmy, startled by that remark.

"Cherry—rowin' with Wharton?" he said.

"Well, Bunter would be bound to tell them. You know Bunter."

"Tell them what?"

"About the letter."

"What letter?"

Sir Jimmy grinned. It was utterly unlike Lord Mauleverer to inquire into anything that was going on. Skinner had remarked once that, if somebody had told Mauly that Mr. Quelch had brained the Head with a ruler, Mauly would only have said, "Did he really?" But evidently there were some matters in which Mauly could take interest, and a dispute between two such old friends as Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry was one of them.

"Like to hear?" asked Vivian.

"Yaas."

Sir Jimmy had been a witness of the scene in the passage when Billy Bunter had displayed the scrap of paper to Skinner & Co. and other fellows. He related it to Mauleverer, who listened intently, without even looking bored.

"So when Skinner put Bunter up to goin' into Wharton's study, I guessed the fat would be in the fire," remarked Sir Jimmy "and it is, I fancy. They've had a row."

"Rotten!" said Mauly.

"I daresay there'll be a fight," said Sir Jimmy. "Worth watchin', Mauly. Both good men!"

Lord Mauleverer looked greatly distressed.

"There's some mistake in the matter," he said.

"Well, as a matter of fact, there is a little bit of swank about Wharton, though he's a good chap, and I like him," said Vivian. "Still, it was rather strong Cherry puttin' it like that. Might have told the chap himself; but stickin' it in a letter to somebody else——"

"He didn't," said Mauly.

"Seen it!" said the schoolboy baronet.

"Rot!"

"Look here, Mauly! You can see it yourself, if you like to ask Bunter," exclaimed Sir Jimmy, with some excitement.

Lord Mauleverer yawned.

"Couldn't stand Bunter! Pass the cake, old tulip."

Lord Mauleverer was unusually thoughtful over tea. It was not often that he gave his noble brain much exercise. He found it too fatiguing. But he was thinking now.

After tea he detached himself from his chair, and ambled out into the Remove passage, and along to Study No. 1.

"Come in!" called out Wharton rather gruffly, as Lord Mauleverer's polite tap sounded on the door.

Lord Mauleverer drifted in.

Wharton and Nugent were in the study; Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were gone. Both Wharton and Nugent looked "rotten," as they would have described their feelings; and Wharton was deeply angry, too. It was not only what Bob had said of him that angered him; it was the fact that Bob had said it to a third party, while keeping up an appearance of cheery and cordial friendship. Believing what he did, Wharton was scarcely to be blamed for feeling a deep and bitter resentment.

"Hallo, Mauly!" said Nugent. "We're just getting on to prep."

Mauleverer smiled.

"And don't want any jolly old visitors," he said. "I catch on, dear boy. But I'm not goin' yet."

"You're welcome, old fellow," said Wharton, with an effort. He was not feeling in the mood for any company then, even that of the good-natured and easy-going Mauly.

"Good! I hear you've rowed with Bob Cherry?"

"Yes," said Wharton shortly.

"Somethin' about a scrap of paper. What?"

"Yes. Nothing to talk about."

"Can't a chap see it?"

"I've burned it."

"Floored again!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Dash it all, this is hard cheese! I was goin' to butt in an' set the matter right."

Harry Wharton laughed involuntarily. He could guess what an effort that resolve had cost his lazy lordship.

"Vivian's told me what was on the rag," said Mauleverer. "He saw Bunter showin' it off in the passage. All rot, old chap!"

"Excuse me, Mauly," said Wharton.

Bob Cherry burst into Study No. 1 like a cyclone, and Nugent and Wharton jumped to their feet. Harry put up his fists. His first impression was that Bob had come for war. "I've found it out!" roared Cherry. "It was Angel of the Fourth!" *(See Chapter 9.)*

"Don't want any jolly old visitors," he said. "I catch on, dear boy. But I'm not goin' yet."

"You're welcome, old fellow," said Wharton, with an effort. He was not feeling in the mood for any company then, even that of the good-natured and easy-going Mauly.

"Good! I hear you've rowed with Bob Cherry?"

"Yes," said Wharton shortly.

"Somethin' about a scrap of paper. What?"

"Yes. Nothing to talk about."

"Can't a chap see it?"

"I've burned it."

"Floored again!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Dash it all, this is hard cheese! I was goin' to butt in an' set the matter right."

Harry Wharton laughed involuntarily. He could guess what an effort that resolve had cost his lazy lordship.

"Vivian's told me what was on the rag," said Mauleverer. "He saw Bunter showin' it off in the passage. All rot, old chap!"

"Excuse me, Mauly," said Wharton, colouring. "I'd rather not discuss it, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind," said Lord Mauleverer cheerily. "No business of mine, of course; but I'm buttin' in. Judgin' by the way Bob slammed his door, there's been a shindy. You're not friends now?"

"No."

"Makin' it up again, I hope?"

"Never!" Wharton knitted his brows. "Do you think I'd ever speak again to a fellow who talks about me like that, behind my back? And if I get on his nerves, as he says, the less he sees of me the better."

"But he never said so, old bean."

"He wrote it, anyhow."

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

HARRY WHARTON EDITOR

Supplement No. 136. Week ending August 4th, 1923.

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton

WHEN the Great Fire of London swept across the city, taking its toll of life and property, the arrangements for quenching fires were of the crudest description. I dare say you have seen pictures of this tragic event. If so, you will notice a lot of men rushing about with pails of water, vainly hoping to arrest the progress of the fire. They might with equal success have attempted to stem the flow of a mighty torrent with a straw!

In Study No. 1 at Greyfriars, we have an old print which is entitled "Escape of John Wesley from the Fire." This was not the Great Fire of London, but a fire which broke out at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, in 1709. It is impossible to look at the old print without smiling. There is a huge pillar of flame ascending to the skies, while a man is seen on his knees, filling a wooden pail with water from a small stream. Another man is lifting John Wesley, then six years of age, from the bed-room window of the parsonage. Of course, we have every reason to be thankful that the boy was saved, for he grew up into a wise and good, if not actually a great man. But what makes one smile is the crude and primitive method by which they attempted to extinguish fires in "the good old days."

Times have changed. When an outbreak of fire occurs nowadays, we promptly summon an up-to-date and fully equipped fire brigade. We are not so foolish as to attempt to put out a mighty conflagration with a puny pail of water.

There is a sort of fearful fascination about a fire. The mere mention of a big fire rouses a thrill of excitement. I have long had in mind the idea of giving you a special number dealing with fires, and my idea has been put into practice this week. Of course, our cheery contributors deal chiefly with the comical aspect of fires, so you may be assured of many hearty laughs when you read our stories and articles.

If the gay young "sparks" of Britain are disappointed in this number, it will be a "burning" shame!

HARRY WHARTON.

FIRE ORDERS!

(Unofficial.)

Drawn up by TOM BROWN.

1.—If a boy wakes up in the night and smells something burning, he should promptly rouse the whole school. This can be done in several ways—i.e., by sounding the fire-alarm, ringing the rising-bell, bellowing "Fire!" at the top of his voice, or sending up sky-rockets. If it turns out to be a false alarm, the "something burning" having been the remains of a bonfire in Gosling's garden, the fellow who roused the school will probably find himself in the soup. But he must on no account shirk his duty, in case it should happen to be a genuine fire.

2.—When the fire-alarm is sounded, the Remove Fire Brigade will promptly turn out. Chief-Fireman Cherry will take charge of the hose, and the remainder will arm themselves with buckets of water, and dash to the scene of the conflagration. When the buckets are empty, refills may be obtained from the nearest bath-room, or the school fountain.

3.—Do not be afraid to discharge the contents of your buckets, no matter who happens to be standing in the way. If the Head, or one of the masters is in the line of fire, it will be their funeral. You can't stop to study their personal comfort when you are engaged in putting out a fire!

4.—Do not attempt to extinguish fires with fire-extinguishers. They won't work! The last time there was a fire at Greyfriars I rushed on the scene with a fire-extinguisher. I couldn't get it to go for nearly an hour. By that time the blaze had been successfully put out by the members of the fire-brigade with their buckets.

5.—It is useless to try to extinguish a big fire with your water-pistol. It only holds a thimbleful of water. One might as well attempt to extinguish the Great Fire of London with a fountain-pen squirt!

6.—In the event of a fire, those who are not members of the Remove Fire Brigade will let down the fire chute, and descend into the Close. Billy Bunter will go last. If he went first the chute would be choked up!

"Tumble out, you fellows!
Hurry up and dress!"
Harry Wharton bellows,
Full of eagerness.
Midnight chimes are sounding;
Fellows, with delight,
Out of bed come bounding—
Fire drill starts to-night!

Billy Bunter's lazy,
Will not budge a bit;
'Neath the blankets stays he,
Wharton has a fit.
Grabs him by the collar,
Heaves him out of bed;
Bunter, with a holler,
Lands upon his head!

Down the stairs we clatter,
Having donned our clothes,
In the Close we scatter,
Hunting for the hose.
Buckets full of water
Other fellows get;
Swamp the bricks and mortar,
And make their comrades wet!

Quelchy rushes madly
Through the bustling throng;
Firemen drench him badly,
He yells both loud and long.
"Boys! You are at practice!
Don't you understand?
But the painful fact is
You are out of hand!"

All the jolly japers,
In a noisy swarm,
Then conclude their capers,
And return to dorm.
One o'clock is striking,
We are weary, quite;
Yet we should be liking
Fire drill every night!

Watch out for our special "Sleep" Supplement! It's next!

MY FEETS OF BRAVERY!

By BILLY BUNTER.

IT takes a lot of pluck to march boldly into a blazing bilding, with your hangkercheef tied round your mouth and nose, so that you won't be sufferkated by the fumes.

It takes even mo'e pluck to assend a starecase which is on fire, and looks like kollapsing kompletely at any minnit.

And it takes more pluck still to go to the top room in the bilding, where some poor fellow is imprizzened, and reskew him from a burning fiery furniss.

How many fellows at Greyfriars would have the pluck to do these things? Only one—the fellow whose name appears at the top of this artikle!

Many a hero's hart beats beneeth a bulging waistcoat. And it is serrain that a hero's hart beats beneeth mine. Many a time and oft, during a grate fire, I have taken my life in my hands without dropping it, and I have got a scroodriver and scrood my curridge to the sticking-point. Then I have dashed boldly up a ladder, or up a blazing starecase, and reskewed people from a watery grave.

You won't beleeve this bald statement, of corse. So I shall have to give you chapter and verse.

One night last winter, some silly chump in the Remove dormitery left his candle burning. A strong breeze came in at the windows, and caused the candle to fall over. It set fire to the bedclothes, and the next minnit the bed was a mass of flames. It was Harry Wharton who was sleeping there. He would have been roasted alive, but for my presents of mind. I grabbed hold of a water-jug, and promptly distinguished the conflagration. I swamped old Wharton in the process—and in the neck, as well—but he was awfully greatful to me for saving his life, and he prommist to give me a half-share of his next remittanse. But Wharton's prommises are like paupers—made to be "broke." Anyway, I never reseeved a penny-peace for my galient deed. (As a narrator of fairy-tales, Billy Bunter has Grimm and Hans Andersen licked into a cocked hat!—Ed.)

About a week after this occurrence, Mr. Prout happened to go to bed with his pipe on, as well as his pijjamers. He dozed off to sleep with the lighted pipe in his mouth, and some hot ashes were scattered over the sheets.

Old Prout woke up yelling "Fire!" at the top of his lungs, and I happened to hear his frantick shout in the nick of time. Snatching a fire-distinguisher from its place on the wall, I tore along to Prout's bed-room, and put the fire out in a brace of shakes. Prout has been internally greatful to me ever since.

On another memmerable occasion, the Head was walking across the Close, on a hot day, when a box of wax vesters suddenly eggsploded in his pocket. The next minnit his gown was a mass of flames, and he danced about like a brick on hot cats.

"Yaroooo! I'm on fire!" he yelled. "Put me out, somebody!"

It was a time for instant action. I rushed towards the Head, and gathered him up in my arms as if he was a baby, and carried him boddily to the school fountain.

Splash!

With a mity heave, I tossed the Head into the brimming bowl of the fountain. He sizzled and simmered for a bit, but the flames were suxxessfully put out, thanks to my pluck and presents of mind.

The Head hopped out of the fountain, and came towards me with outstretched hands.

"Billy, old chap," he said, "you've been and gone and saved my worthless life! I had a jolly near squeek of being roasted. After this, I prommis never to flog you again—never to give you an impot—never to take any notiss of any komplaints I may reseeve about you. Let me shake your paw, my heroic fat tulip!"

I don't say that those were the Head's actual words, but I'm giving you the jist of what he said.

Did he keep his prommis? No. I've had a good many floggings—publick and private—since I tossed the Head into the fountain. I find that people have a very short memmery for services rendered. Save their mizzerable lives, and they will swear internal gratitude. But within twenty-four hours they will dismiss the whole subjeckt from their minds.

I could go on quoting instances of my pluck and valler; but the above must suffice. Wharton never gives me enuff space in his paper to do myself justiss. I could tell you how I saved the school from being burnt down on numerus occasions; but these thrilling eppisodes will have to wait. (They'll have to wait a jolly long time, too! Further fairy-tales of this sort will have to be confined to the pages of "Billy Bunter's Weekly."—Ed.)

THE GREAT FIRE OF GREYFRIARS!

By DICK CALTHORPE.

(Member of the Remove Form in the year 1895.)

MY beauty sleep was rudely disturbed on the night of January 14th, 1895.

It must have been about one o'clock in the morning when I was awakened by my pal Ferrars. He stood over me, shaking me violently.

"Tumble out, Dick! The school's on fire!" he panted.

"Great Scott!"

I "tumbled out" with alacrity. So did the rest of the Removites.

I hurried into my clothes, and rushed to one of the windows.

The night was intensely dark, and there was nothing to be seen. No tongues of flame shooting skywards; no outward and visible signs of a fire. But the school bell was being rung violently, and voices came up out of the darkness:

"Fire! Fire!"

I darted to the dormitory door, and threw it open. A distinct smell of burning assailed my nostrils. The landing was thick with smoke. And then I realised that the fire was in the very heart of the building—in one of the lumber-rooms, to be precise. As I stood there, coughing a little, I could hear a distant crackling sound.

I turned back into the dormitory.

"The lumber-room's on fire!" I exclaimed. "If it spreads, all the dormitories will be in danger! We'd better nip down into the Close while the staircase is clear."

The fellows were very excited, but there was nothing in the nature of a panic.

We lost no time in getting down into the Close. The Head was there, and several of the masters.

The scenes of excitement there almost beggared description.

Lanterns were lighted, and the Head called the roll. All were present, save for the prefects who were trying to quell the outbreak in the lumber-room.

After an interval of a quarter of an hour, the fire brigade came on the scene. In less than ten minutes their clothes were scorched, their faces smoke-begrimed.

Slowly, ever so slowly, however, they mastered the flames. Then further reinforcements arrived, and got busy, and the fire, which had raged so fiercely, was forced to surrender.

When at long last the conflagration was extinguished, the Head and the masters went to examine the damage. They had to ascend a staircase at the back of the building, for the main staircase had been practically demolished.

The contents of the lumber-room had been totally destroyed by the fire. The Remove dormitory had suffered badly, also. A great deal of reconstruction would have to take place before we could sleep there again. The Removites spent the rest of that memorable night in the sick-wards in the sanny. It was rather a tight squeeze for us, but we had to put up with it.

The damage inflicted by the fire was estimated at some hundreds of pounds; but most of our private property had been saved.

The origin of the fire was a complete mystery. My own opinion—though I did not express it at the time—was that some bold, bad blade had paid a midnight visit to the lumber-room, in order to enjoy a quiet smoke. He had carelessly thrown a cigarette-end amongst the rubbish, and thus set the place on fire. Possibly he had tried to stamp it out, but without success, and he had fled in fear and trembling to his dormitory.

A SPLIT IN THE CO.!

(Continued from page 13.)

"He didn't."

"Look here, Mauly, you don't know anything about it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton half-angrily. "Drop the subject, there's a good chap."

"Not the least little bit in the jolly old world," said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "I'm settin' this right."

"Fathead!"

"It's plain enough, Mauly," said Nugent. "Bob did act badly; there's no doubt about that. I couldn't forgive him for treating me like it, if he had. I—I'm not sure I shall speak to him again."

"Oh, gad!" said his lordship.

Mauleverer's honest face was quite distressed.

Harry Wharton gave his study-mate a sudden black look. The worst elements in his tempor were on the surface now.

"What do you mean by that, Frank?" he asked. "After the rotten, caddish way Bob has treated me, I was taking it for granted that you'd never speak to him again. If you stand by me, you can't stand by him."

Nugent flushed uncomfortably.

"I've been friends with Bob for a long time," he said.

"So have I—till now. But suit yourself, of course," said Wharton bitterly. "If he's more your friend than I am, stick to him, and welcome. You can't stick to me at the same time, that's all."

"Look here——"

"I mean that." Wharton rose to his feet. "A fellow can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds."

Nugent's eyes gleamed. He was disturbed and irritated himself, and there was a tone in Wharton's voice, as well as his words, that was hard to bear patiently.

"I'm not going to be dictated to," said Nugent sharply.

"I don't want to dictate. What I've said I mean, though. If you say another word to Cherry, don't trouble to speak to me again."

Harry Wharton walked out of the study without waiting for an answer, leaving Nugent breathing very hard. The distress in poor Mauly's face deepened.

"Gad! I've made matters worse instead of better by comin' here," he said.

Nugent gave a rather bitter laugh.

"Not at all. This was bound to happen. I'm down on Bob for what he's done, but I'm not going to be ordered about. I shall speak to him, if I choose—and I jolly well will, too! If it makes trouble in this study, I can't help it."

"Nugent, old man," said Lord Mauleverer gravely, "this won't do! Do you see what's happenin'? A few hours ago there were five fellows in the Remove who'd never have listened to a word against one another. Now they're all at loggerheads—Wharton and Cherry, and now you and Wharton; and Bull and Inky will be dragged into takin' sides soon. The jolly old Co. will be split right up. If you fellows have got an enemy, this is exactly what he would want."

This was an unusually long speech for Lord Mauleverer, and it showed how his lordship's kind heart was stirred.

"You're a good chap, Mauly," said Nugent. "But it can't be helped. The way Wharton's just spoken to me makes me think that perhaps Bob wasn't so much to blame for what he said."

"Bob never wrote that, Nugent. If he did, I should agree with Wharton that any decent chap ought to drop him."

"Look here——"

Lord Mauleverer raised a manicured hand protestingly.

"You're not going to row with me, old bean. Don't! I withdraw all I've said, and anythin' I haven't said, too, if you like."

"Fathead!" said Nugent, bursting into a laugh.

"But to get back to the beginnin'," said Lord Mauleverer. "Bob never wrote that scrap of paper. Some fellows think me an ass——"

"They do!" agreed Frank.

"I may be in some things. I'm as low down as Bunter in the maths set, I can't construe for toffee without a crib, and I don't know whether the United States is in Canada, or Canada in the United States. But I know a decent chap when I see him, Nugent, and I know that Bob never wrote those words at all, and that some awful cad has translated his fist to make mischief."

Lord Mauleverer spoke with such earnestness that Frank could not help being impressed. But he shook his head.

"We've been into that," he said. "Toddy butted in, just as you're doing. Skinner's the only chap in the Remove anybody could suspect of such a rotten trick, and Skinner's cleared."

"There's somebody else."

"Who else?" asked Nugent impatiently.

"I'm goin' to find out."

And with that Lord Mauleverer ambled amiably out of Study No. 1, leaving Nugent shrugging his shoulders. When Harry Wharton came back—as he had to do for his prep—he sat down to the table without speaking a word to Frank. Nugent opened his lips, and closed them again without speaking—hard. Prep proceeded in Study No. 1 in an icy silence.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mauly Does It!

BOB CHERRY gave a growl, not unlike that of a lion disturbed in his lair, as a tap came at his study door and it opened. Lord Mauleverer's serene and amiable face looked in. Little Wun Lung, the Chinee, was in the study—very silent, in view of Bob's unaccustomed mood. Mark Linley worked silently at the table. Hurree Singh was not present. His lordship glanced round the study, and gave Bob a genial nod.

"Lookin' into things," he remarked pleasantly. "You don't mind my buttin' in—what?"

"I'd rather not talk just now," said Bob bluntly.

"That's all right; I'll do the talkin'," said his lordship amiably. "You didn't write that scrap of paper, Cherry."

"No!" roared Bob.

"Gently, old man. I'm not hard of hearin' like poor old Dutton. I know you didn't!" said his lordship soothingly.

"Oh!" said Bob, taken rather aback. "Then you're about the only fellow in the Remove who takes my word."

"Not the only one, Bob," said Mark Linley, looking up. "I take it."

"Thanks, Marky, old chap!" said Bob, more softly. "I shouldn't blame you if you didn't. It looks bad enough, I know. But what I think is that Wharton ought to take my word, when we've been pals for whole terms—not that we shall be pals any longer."

"Yaas, you will, when this is cleared up," said Lord Mauleverer. "We've only got to find the fellow that wrote that bit of paper in your fist, Bob, an' put it in the book to be found."

Bob made a hopeless gesture.

"I can't believe there's a chap at Greyfriars would do such a thing," he said. "Not in the Remove, anyhow. Even Skinner wouldn't, and he's jolly near the limit. I know Bunter wouldn't, and he's a bit of a worm. I simply can't make it out at all. I don't blame the fellows for being down on me, only my own pals might——"

Bob's voice had a catch in it.

"All serene, when we've found the chap," said Lord Mauleverer. "What steps are you takin'?"

"I can't think of anything."

"Lucky you've got me to think for you, then."

"You, old chap?" Bob Cherry grinned. "My hat! Thinking isn't in your line, Mauly, old man. Don't try."

"I don't know," said Mauleverer calmly. "After all, you know, practically all the brains of the country are in the House of Lords."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob. "Are they? Great Scott!"

"Yaas. Nothin' to grin at, Linley; I'm speakin' quite seriously. I'm going into this biznai, if it costs me a headache," said Lord Mauleverer heroically. "Here's five friends of mine, all disputin' and quarrellin', and generally makin' asses of themselves. They'll be fightin' next."

"That's pretty certain," said Bob Cherry grimly. "I'm going to ask each of my friends—I mean, the chaps who were my friends—whether they take my word about that scrap of paper. If they don't there will be four jolly good scraps, at least."

"Oh, gad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Time I butted in, I see. I suppose nothin' would please the fellow more."

"Eh? What fellow?"

"The fellow who shoved that scrap of paper into the 'Annual.' He must have done it to set your crowd by the ears."

"Oh!" said Bob. "You—you think so? Blessed if I can make out why a fellow should have done it at all."

"Let me think it out for you," said Lord Mauleverer. "We'll get at the bloke all right. Bunter found it in the book."

"So he says."

"Oh, he found it all right!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Toddy knows that. You left the book here?"

"Yes, when I went down to the cricket this afternoon. I put a bookmark in my place—an old strip off an exercise, I think it was."

"I remember when you went," nodded Mauly. "No mistakin' your footsteps in the passage. How did Bunter come to have the book, then?"

"Wharton told him he could take it when we were going down to the cricket."

"That's the puzzling point," said Mark Linley. "It seems that Bunter was told he could take the book at once, and he came into the house for it, just when Bob and the rest were going down to the cricket."

"I know it's a puzzle," said Bob. "There doesn't seem to have been time for anybody to get at the book before Bunter got it, and he says he found that

scrap of paper in it. I know it wasn't there when I was reading the 'Annual.'"

"Hold on!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Bunter didn't come up for the book at once. Not for more than an hour."

"What?"

"I heard him pass my door, you see," explained his lordship. "I know his tread—fairly solid, you know. You see, Sir Jimmy Vivian—the young ass—was going to bring me some ginger-beer in the study, and he forgot all about it, and went to cricket with the other asses. So each time a fellow came along I wondered if it was Jimmy with the pop."

"Each time!" said Mark quickly. "Did any other fellow come along?"

"Yaas, Angel of the Fourth."

Bob Cherry leaped from his chair as if he had received an electric shock.

"Angel!" he roared.

"Yaas." Lord Mauleverer gazed at him in mild surprise. "Somethin' bitin' you, old bean? Ow! Leggo!"

Bob, in his excitement, seized Mauleverer by the shoulder and fairly shook him.

"Angel—Aubrey Angel—sure?" he shouted.

"Is his name Aubrey? I forget! It was Angel of the Fourth."

"Are you sure?" shouted Bob.

"Yaas."

"You saw him?"

"How could I see him when I was lyin' on the sofa, and had my back turned to the door?"

"You ass!" roared Bob. "Then how——"

"You see, the door was half open," explained Mauleverer. "I'd sat up, thinkin' it was Jimmy with the ginger-pop. So I saw Angel in the glass opposite the doorway, sneakin' past quietly, I thought."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob breathlessly. "What did you do then?"

"Went to sleep," said Lord Mauleverer innocently.

"Ass!"

"Well, it was jolly warm, you know, an' I was tired, and Jimmy hadn't come with the pop. I had a nice doze, till I was woke up by Bunter stompin' along. I suppose that was when he came for the 'Annual.'"

"Angel!" said Bob dazedly. "If I'd known Angel had been here—if he passed your door, he must have come as far as this study."

"Yaas. He was goin' back, though, when I saw him in the glass."

"Did you hear him in this study?"

"Can't say I did. I was a bit drowsy an' tired. But he was tiptoein' as he went away, and never answered when I called out to ask if it was Jimmy Vivian."

Mark Linley smiled slightly.

"No need to look much further," he said. "I never thought of a Fourth-Form chap; but you had a row with Angel the other day, Bob, and Nugent licked him. You'd better ask him what he was doing in the Remove passage this afternoon."

"I jolly well will!" panted Bob.

He ran out of the study.

"Oh, gad, what a jolly old whirlwind!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, with a gasp. "I want a rest after this."

And Lord Mauleverer ambled peacefully back to his study. Meanwhile, Bob Cherry burst like a cyclone into Study No. 1, and Harry Wharton and Nugent jumped to their feet. Wharton put up his hands instinctively. His first impression was that Bob had come for war.

"I've found it out!" roared Bob.

"What?"

"Or Mauly has, rather! It was Angel of the Fourth."

"What was Angel of the Fourth?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove blankly.

Bob Cherry panted.

"Mauleverer saw him sneaking along the passage this afternoon, while we were at cricket. It was Angel."

"But—but—— What——"

Bob Cherry's powerful voice rang along the Remove passage. Peter Todd looked in at the door.

"What's that about Angel?" he asked.

"Angel sneaked into my study this afternoon, before Bunter got the 'Annual' away," gasped Bob. "Mauly was in his room, and saw him tiptoeing past his door."

"Hold on," said Wharton quietly. "That must have been after Bunter got the book. He went in for it when we left——"

"Not the least little bit," said Peter Todd promptly. "I've already had it from Bunter that he went down to Friardale first. Angel of the Fourth sent him there to get a cake."

"Angel did?" exclaimed Wharton.

Peter chuckled.

"Yes, and I wondered that he trusted Bunter with the money! I know now why he did."

"That settles it," said Nugent. "Angel never got the cake if Bunter fetched it; and he knew he wouldn't. He was simply tipping Bunter to get him out of the way."

"Clear enough," said Peter. "Only it's rather odd that Angel knew anything about the 'Annual' in the study."

"He was there!" roared Bob, remembering. "He was standing loafing there while we were talking to Bunter. You fellows remember he was on the steps. He heard all we said to Bunter—must have!"

Peter Todd gave a whistle.

"What a cheery rotter!" he remarked. "I suppose he'd been turning it over in his mind how he could get his own back, and then he saw a chance and made the most of it! I fancy dear old Aubrey is the man you want."

"But—but——" gasped Wharton. Bad as he knew Angel of the Fourth to be, thoroughly bad, it was hard to believe any fellow guilty of such baseness as this.

Bob Cherry turned towards him.

"Do you take my word now, or not?" he asked. "Before we see Angel—before we get at the proof? Do you take my word?"

For a single second Wharton did not answer. He had had no time to think: and anger and resentment were still strong within him. But at that moment his good genius was with him. It was hard to look at Bob's honest flushed face and not believe, and deep down in his heart, angry as he was, Wharton only

"Stop!" panted Angel. "I—I'm not goin' before the Head!" "Do you own up to having written that caddish letter?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Last time of asking!" "Yes!" panted Angel, "I—I—I wrote it!" (*See Chapter* 10.)

wanted half an excuse to believe in his old chum again. And after that one second's pause, in which he drove down his hurt pride and anger, his answer came clear and frank.

"I do, old chap. I'm sorry."

Bob Cherry's face cleared as if by magic.

"You couldn't help thinking as you did. I was an ass to cut up so rusty," he said ruefully. "Only—only I—I thought you ought to have felt that I couldn't do a beastly backbiting thing like that."

"So I ought," said Wharton. "I'm sorry. And—and Frank, old man, we're not going to row about it, are we? We're not going to let that blackguard Angel have the satisfaction of breaking up the Co.?"

"No jolly fear!" said Frank. "Of course, that was his game, and we've let him pull our legs—with a dashed silly scrap of paper. If we'd all kept our tempers better, we might have got this out sooner."

"Set of asses," agreed Peter Todd. "I've often told you so, and you've never believed me. Come to Study No. 7 for sense."

And the three juniors laughed cheerily as Peter walked away. And then Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, having been called up, the Famous Five proceeded to Angel's study in the Fourth—to interview Aubrey Angel.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Aubrey Takes His Gruel!

AUBREY ANGEL was feeling cheery over tea. His study-mate, Kenney, noticed it, and observed that Angel had not looked so pleased since the painful incident of Dicky Nugent and the cigarette. And, knowing Angel as he did, Kenney wondered whether a winner had got home, or whether Angel had rooked some unsuspecting youth at nap, or whether he had successfully played some dirty trick upon a fellow he disliked. Such were Kenney's ways of accounting for his chum's obvious satisfaction.

There was a thump at the door and it flew open.

Angel had finished tea, and was standing in an elegant attitude on the hearthrug, lighting a cigarette, when the Famous Five arrived. The cheery, satisfied look left his face at once.

The cigarette dropped from his hand. He had been feeling secure, perfectly secure. He had told himself a dozen times that there was no point he had left unguarded. No one had seen him in the Remove passage that afternoon. Only Mauleverer had been indoors, he believed, and he knew that Mauleverer had been stretched on his sofa, and could not have seen out of the doorway as anyone passed. Every scrap of paper he had written in Study No. 13 had been burnt, with the exception of the tell-tale scrap placed in the "Annual" for Bunter to find. Even if the enemy suspected him, there was absolutely no proof, not a shadow of proof. Even that tell-tale scrap of paper itself had since been burnt after doing its mischief. Angel had learned that much.

All was secure. And the Famous Five were at loggerheads. Nearly every fellow in the Remove counted it as a matter of hours before Wharton and Bob Cherry started fighting, and the rest of the Co. were bound to take sides in the matter. Howsoever it turned out, Aubrey Angel had had his revenge. He had hit harder by treachery than he could have hit in fair fighting, even had he been a hefty fighting-man. And all was safe, all was secure. No wonder Kenney had seen smiles of satisfaction wreathing Aubrey's face at tea.

And now—— From that satisfaction and security Angel came with a jump to doubt and fear. That he was suspected he did not need telling as the Famous Five crowded into his study. And that there was more than suspicion was indicated by the fact that they all came together. Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton evidently on their old friendly terms again. Aubrey Angel felt almost sick with apprehension as he stared at the Removites. What had gone wrong? How had his trail been picked up? That terrifying question hammered in his brain.

"What the thump do you fellows want?" demanded Kenney. "If you've come here raggin'——"

"'Nuff's as good as a feast!" said Temple of the Fourth, looking in at the door. "You fags sheer off!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"We've got business here," said Harry Wharton quietly. "You can hear it, Temple. Angel's accused of forging a bit of a letter in Bob Cherry's fist, making out that Bob was writing rotten things about one of his friends, and then putting it in a book for Bunter to find, for Bunter to spread it all over the Remove. We——"

"My dear man, we've heard all about the scrap of paper," said Temple. "I've had it from Skinner and Snoop already. But it's a bit thick to put that down to Aubrey. If a paper was in Cherry's hand I should say that Cherry wrote it."

"Would you?" roared Bob.

"Keep cool, old chap," said Harry. "Angel, what were you doing in the Remove passage this afternoon while we were down at the cricket?"

"I wasn't there," said Angel, recovering his nerve a little. "If anybody says I was there he's lyin'! I came along to the box-room when there was a crowd there about teatime."

"You did not come before that?"

"No."

"That settles it," said Johnny Bull. "He wouldn't deny that he was there if he wasn't guilty."

"The guiltyfulness is terrific!"

"I was not there!" said Angel, between his white lips. "You can take my word for that, Temple. I never went near the Remove passage."

"You gave Bunter five bob to fetch a cake, to get him clear, while you got the 'Annual' ready for him!" roared Bob.

"I let Bunter fetch a cake for me," admitted Angel. "I was rather an ass to trust him. My bizney, though, not yours."

"And when he had cleared off you went up to the Remove passage."

"I did not!" said Angel coolly.

"Dash it all!" said Temple warmly. "Give a chap a chance. Unless somebody saw Angel there you've no right to——"

"He was seen," said Wharton.

Angel's face went whiter.

"It's false!" he said thickly. "You've got some cad to make up this yarn since."

"Let's have it square," said Temple. "If your jolly old witness is Bunter you can cut the whole thing out. Or Skinner for that matter, or Snoop. Angel's in the Fourth, and his word is as good as theirs."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "Just about."

"It was Lord Mauleverer," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Temple. "Mauly's straight as a string, straighter than Angel by millions of miles. If he says he saw him, he saw him."

"Oh, rather!"

"He did not see me!" shouted Angel. "I—I deny it! He couldn't have seen me when——" He broke off.

"When he was on the sofa behind the door, you were going to say," said Wharton grimly.

Angel gritted his teeth.

"Well, if he was on the sofa behind the door, as you say, how could he have seen me, or anybody else?"

"There's a glass just opposite the door, and he saw you in that as you sneaked past on tiptoe."

Angel staggered against the mantelpiece. With all his furtive cunning, all his watchful care, how could he have guarded against that? He could not have, for there never was a crime committed without leaving a clue of some kind.

"Well," said Temple, his lip curling, "what have you got to say now, Angel?"

"It—it's false! Mauleverer never saw me. He—he's lying!"

"Oh, chuck that!" said Dabney.

"I—I deny——"

"Very well," said the captain of the Remove. "You still deny it? Frank, you go and fetch Mauleverer. Bob, you get Bunter. We're going to the Head, and Angel's going with us. He can deny it before the Head."

Angel gave a stifled cry.

"Good egg!" said Temple. "It means the sack for him, and a jolly good riddance for Greyfriars. We're fed up with the cad in the Fourth!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Stop!" panted Angel. "I—I'm not goin' before the Head. I—I know he'll take your word, Mauleverer's word, before mine! I—I've been up before him too often. Stop!"

"Do you own up?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Last time of asking."

Angel panted.

"Yes."

"And that cringing cur nearly set us all at loggerheads!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. "It ought to be a lesson to all of us, you fellows."

"It's going to be a lesson to Angel, too!" said Bob Cherry.

And it was. And the lessonfulness, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh put it, was terrific.

* * * * *

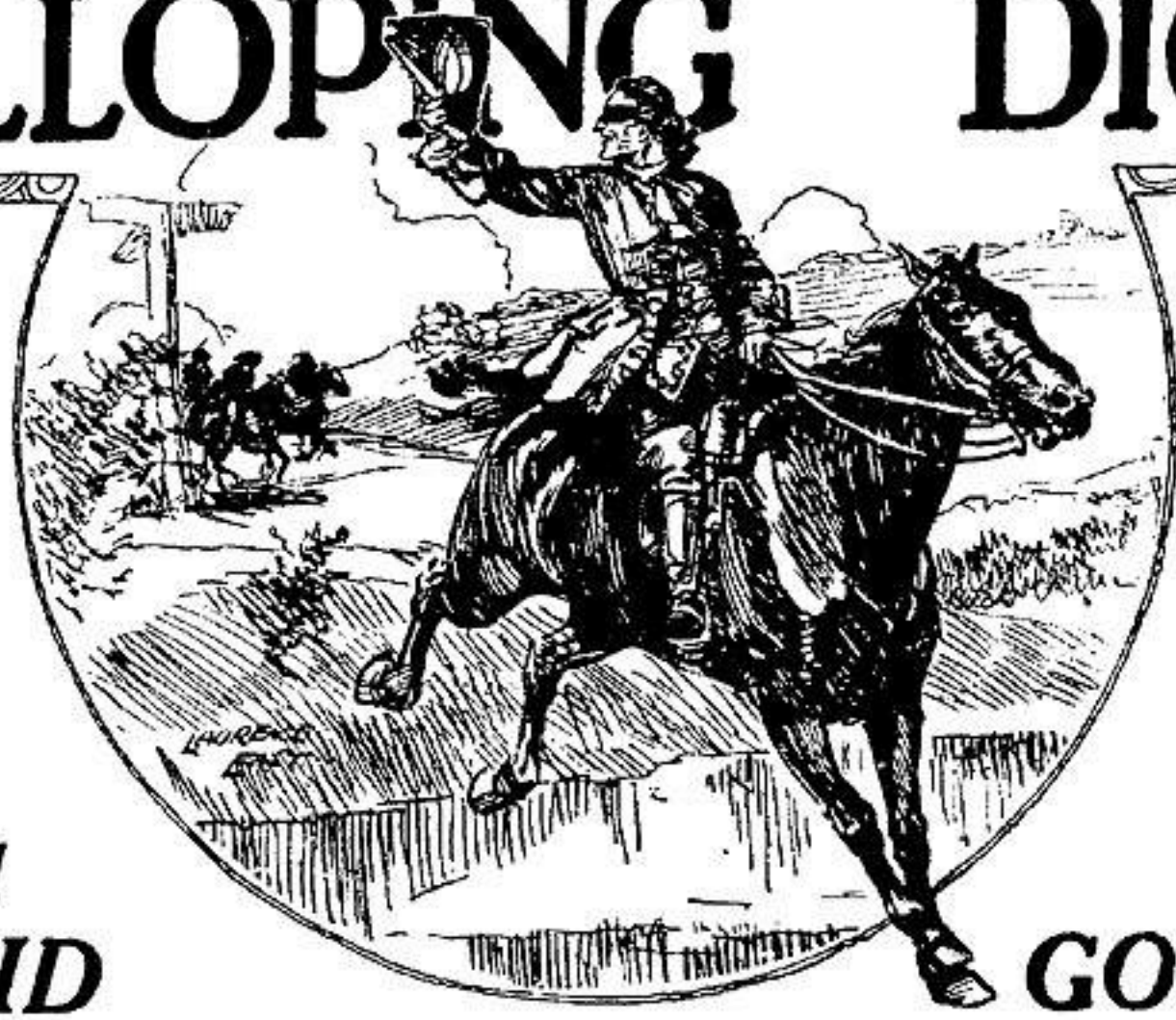
Lord Mauleverer beamed genially on the Famous Five when he saw them again, reunited and merry and bright as of old. All that evening Aubrey Angel groaned dismally in his study, and for a couple of days afterwards he was feeling the effects of severe punishment. And that was not the end, for Temple, Dabney, & Co. sentenced him in solemn conclave, and for the rest of the term Angel of the Fourth was sent to Coventry by his own Form. But he was no longer thinking of revenge. He had had a lesson on that subject that he was not likely to forget. He had failed, and failed dismally, though for a short time he had succeeded in making a split in the Co.

THE END.

On no account must you miss next Monday's Greyfriars story, entitled: "SIR JIMMY'S SUBSTITUTE!"

On your travels, jaunts, and capers—

GALLOPING DICK!



A Sensational Story of the "Good Old Days," introducing RICHARD LANGLEY —a youth whose misfortunes will make a great appeal!

Told by DAVID GOODWIN

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Throw of the Dice!

"HOI-UP, Kitty! Over!"

The black mare's hoofs skimmed over the five-foot laurel-hedge that skirted the lawns of Langleys. The head-gardener glared aghast, and Dick Langley laughed. He never rode through a gap if there was a way over.

He rode up to the main porch of the old Tudor house that held the lordship over six thousand acres, in which Dick and his brother Basil held equal rights since the death of their father in the wars with France. The peace of King George lay on the land, and all was well with Langleys. Yet there was one shadow.

A dishevelled figure came out of the porch—a youth of twenty-one, dressed in claret-coloured satin, and looking pale and haggard.

"Egad, Basil, what ails you?" exclaimed Dick. "Man alive, you look like a dying fish!"

"So would you," said his brother nervously, "if you had sat up since five last evening. Come in quickly. I want to see you. Give the mare to the groom."

"What is it?" said the younger of the two, when they were inside the great porch.

"I want some money, Dick, and quickly. Let me have what you've got about you. You drew a hundred guineas yesterday."

"Look here, Basil," said Dick, tucking his hunting-crop under his arm, "I know what's wrong with you. I don't like it, and that's flat. You've been at the dice all night again with that rascal Frayne."

Basil fired up nervously.

"How dare you insult my guest?" he cried. "Sir Mostyn is a man of honour! I won a thousand guineas from him last week, before this infernal bad luck of mine set in."

"That is no news," said Dick grimly. "Every man who dices with Sir Mostyn begins in that way. What is the use of it?"

"Oh, stop your wretched preaching!" cried Basil hotly, turning on his heel. "If you refuse to give me the money, that's enough. Go your own way, and I'll go mine!"

"No, no! Stop, old boy!" pleaded Dick, catching his brother by the arm. "We've never quarrelled yet, and we're not going to begin over money. A hundred guineas between you and me is nothing! Egod! I've only got eighty! But it makes me miserable to see you shut up night and day with that—— Never mind; here's the money!"

"Yes, yes, let me have it, Dick," said Basil eagerly. "I'm sorry for what I said. That's it. I'll have the whole lot back in an hour. The luck's bound to turn!"

He hurried away up the wide staircase. Dick, standing moodily in the hall, heard a laugh and the muffled rattle of a dice-box.

"It would be a good deed to go up and throw Frayne out of the window," he said to himself, "barring that he's a guest. I hope he'll keep out of my way."

For the next two hours Dick wandered gloomily about the lawns. The presence of Sir Mostyn Frayne in the house was a thorn in his side. Though a man of good family, Frayne had an unsavoury reputation, and those who were careful about their private honour did not consort with him. He owned the neighbouring estate of Fratton, once a goodly domain, but now so impoverished by its owner's evil living that he resorted to very shady devices to fill his coffers. Yet even Dick did not know to what an extent Sir Mostyn had plucked his brother.

"A horsewhip is what he wants," said Dick, at last, as he entered the hall; "save that he never gives one an opening. He—— Ah!"

The murmur of voices upstairs ceased. The report of a pistol echoed through the house, followed by a tinkling of glass and the sound of a heavy fall.

With a strong foreboding of evil at his heart, Dick ran hurriedly up the staircase.

He burst into a large, lofty room. The floor was littered with innumerable playing cards. Across the green table by the window, among the overturned wine-glasses, lay the body of Basil Langley, a pistol in one hand, and a crimson stream trickling from a ragged wound in his temple.

A couple of yards from the table stood a long, lean man, with hawklike features, and a flush on each cheekbone. He was quietly regarding the prone figure.

Dick rushed forward to his brother, crying his name aloud. But the wild eyes glazed, the pistol dropped from the nerveless fingers, and the soul of Basil Langley passed to the great beyond.

As soon as he could speak, Dick drew himself up straight, and stared at Sir Mostyn Frayne with cold, fierce eyes.

"Tell me," he said. "How did this happen?"

"It is a monstrous, unfortunate affair," said Sir Mostyn in a voice of mincing sympathy. "I can't imagine what could have possessed the poor boy. His luck seemed dead out, and he rose in his seat, and, gad, sir, he whipped that pistol from the cabinet and shot himself through the head."

"You have my deepest sympathy," continued Sir Mostyn, with a ring of mockery in his tones. "It is also unfortunate that——"

"Sympathy, you hound!" blazed Dick. "How dare you speak of sympathy? You are no better than a murderer! Leave this house, or I will call the grooms to flog you off the place!"

Sir Mostyn's features turned a sickly green, and a look of fiendish hatred grew in his eyes.

"You are very young," he said suavely, yet without being quite able to disguise his anger. "You have yet to learn the way in which one gentleman should address another. Under the circumstances I forgive you much, but——"

"Go, I tell you!" cried Dick wildly. "Take yourself from my house, or I will run you through!"

"Pardon me," said the other. "If one of us has to go, it is not I. Wait! Take your hand from your sword. I have suffered more than one affront from you, and I propose to repay myself."

He lifted a strip of paper from the

fatal cloth where the dead man lay, and lifted it up for Dick to see.

"You recognise your brother's signature, no doubt. It is a little shaky. As you see, he assigns me, on the fall of the dice, the entire estate and all the contents of the house of Langley!"

Dick stared, unable to believe his eyes.

"You will not gain by such a trick," he said contemptuously. "Even if it were true, half the estate was mine. My brother could not lose what was not his."

"You will find you are mistaken," said Frayne coolly, but with the same smouldering hatred in his eyes. "You and he did not hold the estate in any division, but jointly. One is bound by the act of another, as Lawyer Peek will be able to inform you. Besides, do I understand"—he sneered bitterly—"that you propose to refuse payment of a debt incurred over dice by one gentleman to another?"

Dick sat down on a chair.

"You are right," he said dazedly. "It is a debt of honour. It must be paid. The place does not matter—nothing matters now that my brother has gone. Oh, Basil, Basil, old boy, why didn't you listen to me, and leave this scoundrel alone?"

Sir Mostyn started, his hollow eyes burning with rage.

"Go!" he said. "I will show you who has the upper hand! Leave this house at once, and if you take out of it a single thing save the clothes you stand up in, remember that it is by charity, and not by any right of yours!"

Sir Mostyn had the gift of choosing his words well. He could not have said anything more to the point.

"Charity of yours, you cut-purse!" said Dick bitterly. "I will starve before I touch a thing that you can claim, even under the trick by which you have gained this place. There is only one favour under heaven which I will ask of you, and that is to come down on the lawn and cross your sword with mine!"

Sir Mostyn paused. He was a good fencer. His long rapier had removed from the world many a pigeon of his own plucking, whose tongue might have become dangerous if left to wag. His blade had been hired in more than one shady cause; but he was careful not to cross swords with his equals. Old Mortimer Langley, Dick's father, had been the finest fencer in the South of England, and had taught his sons the art until they had little short of his own skill.

"Enough!" he said mockingly. "You will not entrap me into making myself ridiculous by crossing swords with a mere boy; and there is no credit to be gained by spitting you. Begone!"

Dick, his lips tight shut, stepped forward, grasped the scoundrel by his neckcloth and waistcoat, and, putting forth all his lithe strength, hurled him against the panelling with a sounding crash.

"Now will you fight?" said Dick, as Frayne slowly picked himself up.

Without opening his lips the cowardly Sir Mostyn pointed to the door. Dick curled his lips, shrugged his shoulders, and went to his own room.

"What am I to do now?" he thought dully.

Wild and quixotic as it was, he never thought of questioning the arrangement. A gambling debt in the time of the Georges, and especially in the country, was looked upon almost as sacred, however contracted. And the thought that under that code he would be accepting Sir Mostyn's "charity" if he stayed, or took anything with him, was enough.

"I'll turn out and make my own living," he said. "Nothing matters now Basil's gone. But I must see first that his body is properly cared for."

He went back to the gaming-room. Frayne was not there. He placed his brother's body tenderly on the bed in his own room. Then he put his own affairs straight.

When he went downstairs he found the place in possession of a crowd of Sir Mostyn's men, who had been sent for from Fratton.

Up the drive rode two local justices—Lord Perulam, of Mountchesney, and old Squire Rogers. The former nodded curtly to Dick, and passed a few dry words of condolence; but Squire Rogers, an old friend of the Langleys, dismounted and wrung Dick's hand.

"This is a miserable business, my boy," he said. "But you won't be crazy enough to give the place up? Stick it out, Dick, and I'll stand by you!"

DICK LANGLEY,

Known hereafter as

"GALLOPING DICK."

"No, no, Mr. Rogers," said Dick. "I thank you, but I can't do that. I don't care much now that Basil—— I must go!"

"I suppose you must!" growled the old squire. "Odd life! But that scoundrel will go on working evil till he gets three feet of steel through his vitals. If I get the chance, I'll—— Never mind. Dick, boy, I expect you are anxious to get away by yourself and shake the dust of Sir Mostyn's property—pah!—off your feet. Go, then, and I'll do all that should be done for poor Basil. It's no place for you now; the insult is too bitter."

"Heaven bless you, squire!" Dick exclaimed, his eyes filling. "It's just what I want. Poor Basil! He'd understand. No, I won't let you help me further. I've one guinea in the world, and I'll seek my fortune, and on foot."

An hour later, as night fell, Dick was tramping, hungry, over Blackwold Heath towards Milton Town, the sixteen tall chimneys of Langleys far behind him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
The Open Road!

"STAND!"

Dick stopped with a start. He had been pacing along, gazing moodily at the ground before him. He raised his head, and looked into the muzzle of a heavy, black horse-pistol.

It was held by a short, thick-set man in a scarlet riding-cloak and a velvet mask, and he sat firmly astride a big, raw-boned chestnut horse.

"Keep your hands from your bodkin, you young whelp!" said the highwayman roughly. "Throw me your purse! Quick, or I'll salt your hide with a bullet!"

Dick laughed grimly.

"You've made a poor bag this time, Sir Highwayman," he said. "I have only a guinea in the world, and when I shall see another Heaven knows! Had you stopped me this morning you would have done better."

"Enough chatter!" snapped the man. "Do you take me for a fool? Clothes fit for a prince, and but a guinea in them? Turn out your fobs!"

"You are very unmannerly for a highwayman," said Dick, turning his pockets out and edging a little nearer. His quick eye took in every detail of the man's form and clothing, and made a rough measure of his strength. "One of my family took to the road a century ago, but he was noted for his courtesy. There, my good fellow, you see the only worldly wealth I possess. I presume you will permit me to keep it, rather than soil your dignity by taking so small a sum."

"Give it here!" said the man, with a coarse imprecation. "'Sdeath! The road will soon be no better than an honest trade. A guinea! And from the old apple-woman taking home her week's earnings, I got but sixteen shillings an hour ago!"

"What, you sorry rogue," cried Dick indignantly, "do you loiter the byways to rob poor old women of their gains? You are more fit for a footpad than a highwayman."

"A curse on your long tongue!" cried the rogue in a fury, and he pulled the trigger.

The priming flashed. He flung the useless weapon down, and pulled another from his belt.

Before he could use it Dick's strong wrist countered on his own, and the pistol flew muzzle-up and spent its charge in the air. Then, gripping the man by the throat and belt, Dick tore him from the saddle and flung him on the ground.

"You dog!" cried the highwayman, leaping to his feet and whipping out his sword. "Are you fool enough to tackle Red Jake? Have at you!"

"Very poor play," said Dick coolly, parrying the ruffian's attack. "My good fellow, it is folly to use too long a sword for your reach. Try again."

"Zounds!" panted the highwayman, making a furious and fairly skilful attack, which Dick defended with the greatest ease. "Don't think you are going to escape me!"

"As you please," said Dick. "But you are a long time about it, and if I wished to soil my sword, I could easily compass it thus, and thus, and thus!"

Three times his rapier slipped under Red Jakes' guard, and pricked him lightly. The man broke into a cold sweat. He still fought desperately; but he was badly frightened, and Dick noted an evil, furtive look in his eye.

Suddenly the highwayman, deftly seizing his opportunity, had recourse to the foulest of all foul strokes.

His left hand shot out and seized Dick's

sword. Then, with an imprecation, he lunged forward with all his force.

Dick turned his body sideways in the wink of an eyelid, and the bully's rapier shot past his breast, spitting the ruffles of his shirt. He threw his arms round the man, flung him bodily backwards, and snatched up his sword again, which the highwayman had dropped.

The ruffian did not want for agility. He kept his feet, staggered for a moment, and came on again, shrieking aloud. Then, with a choking cry, he fell back and lay motionless.

He had spitted himself on Dick's sword, as a dog runs upon a trap-spear in the woods, and in two minutes he was dead.

"He earned his death," said Dick, "if ever a man did. I could wish that it were not my sword that the man died on. No matter," he mused, taking off the dead man's mask. "Many a man will be the safer for his death. What a scurvy rogue, to rob the poor! An ill-looking fellow, too.

"I wonder how it feels to hide behind a square of velvet," he continued, fitting the mask on his face. "Comfortable enough, in faith! No man would know me. And the horse-pistols."

He stuck one in his side-pocket, and put the other in the holster.

"I look the complete highwayman!"

He chuckled grimly. Mechanically, hardly knowing what he was about, he loaded the pistols, and put the powder-horn in its place before the saddle. Then he flung the highwayman's red cloak over his shoulders.

"You are no beauty, any more than your late master," he said, looking over the rawboned chestnut.

The brute bared its teeth, and showed the whites of its eyes, as though daring the boy to mount.

"Oho!" exclaimed Dick. "That's it, is it? Well, I've never yet seen the horse I couldn't sit; so, as you're mine by the rules of war, I'll see if I can get on terms with you."

The horse lashed out at him, but Dick got a grasp of the manelock, and in a second was well home in the saddle. The big brute stood stock-still for a moment, all four feet braced, with a wicked look in his eyes.

Then came the tussle. The chestnut backed and reared and snorted, flung himself about like a catapult, squealed and roared, and did his best to dash his young rider against the trees.

Dick sat him like a dragoon, giving easily to the furious bucks, and for the first time since the tragedy at Langleys, began to enjoy himself.

"Go on, you camel-hocked beast!" he cried. "Try again! Don't give in! Away we go!"

If the rawboned chestnut had nothing else he had strength. Finding there was no way of unseating Dick, he jerked the bit forward in his great, gravestone teeth, and bolted like a stampeded bull.

With a thunder of hoofs and a wild rush they cleared the belt of trees, and galloped furiously over the opening of Blackwold Heath. They tore on through the night, and Dick, laughing recklessly, let the tall chestnut ramp along wherever he pleased, taking his chance of stumbling in a rabbit-hole.

Suddenly a solitary horseman, standing in a knoll against the sky, came into view. He looked sharply at the runaway, and, with a shout and a wave of his arm behind him, wheeled his horse and came in pursuit.

Over the crest of the down galloped three others.

"Halt, in the King's name!" roared the foremost.

Dick laughed wildly, and drove in his spurs. On bounded the chestnut, more furiously than ever, and three pistols spoke.

The bullets passed wide, save that one seared the chestnut's flank, and made him snort. Then followed the drumming of hoofs behind, and the three men spurred after the runaway.

"King's riders!" laughed Dick, as he rode. "Now for a pretty chase! They're out after Red Jake, who lies dead in the thicket, and I'm wearing his mask and riding his horse! Ho, ho! Come up, Rawbones!"

The red cloak streamed out behind, and the hoarse cries of the pursuers rang through the gloom. But Dick settled himself in the saddle, and let the chestnut go as furiously as he pleased.

He cast a glimpse behind.

One of the King's men, riding a fine bay mare, outdistanced his fellows, and slowly but surely overhauled the runaway.

flung it in the rider's face. One flap of it wrapped across the bay mare's eyes, and she shied, stumbled, and rolled over on the mossy turf, sending her rider head-first into a fern thicket. Dick galloped on with a laugh.

"By the black rood," cried one of the pursuers, with an oath, "it's young Richard of Langleys!"

The light-grey riding-coat of Dick was known for a dozen miles around. The blood tingled in his cheeks with excitement, but he rode the faster.

The pursuers gained. The chestnut began to labour and strain.

"They'll get me!" thought Dick, glancing backwards. "I cannot draw trigger on them—I am no murderer. If I am taken, Sir Mostyn has influence with the magistrates. He will give me a berth in gaol, if not the gallows. That won't do!"

He glanced ahead. They were flying down the slope of the down, and right in front of them gleamed Beckton Brook, swollen in flood.

"Stand and deliver!" The command rang out across the night air. "Zounds!" exclaimed Sir Mostyn, reining in hurriedly. Right across his path, springing out of the thicket like a great grey ghost, came the chestnut. "Your purse, Sir Mostyn, if it pleases you!" said Dick coolly. *(See Chapter 3.)*

Up he came, closer and closer, till there were but a few yards between them.

"I have you, Red Jake!" shouted the pursuer. "Pull your horse and surrender, in the King's name!"

Dick turned in his saddle, and levelled a pistol at the rider's head.

The man never flinched.

"Fire, and be hanged!" he laughed. "If not I, one of my comrades will pin you!"

And, spurring forward, and reckless of the levelled pistol, he clutched at Dick's rein.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
"Stand and Deliver!"

"WELL done!" cried Dick, switching his horse aside. "You are too brave a man to be shot, so here's your answer!"

He whirled off the scarlet cloak, and

"The bridge is swept away!" thought Dick, a ray of hope springing up within him. "It's a terrific leap!" He glanced behind again. "They'll never do it on those light nags. The chestnut might. Oh, if I had Kitty in this place!"

The chase swept on, amid shouts and yells from the pursuers. Dick drove the chestnut straight at the brook straight as an arrow.

It was a tremendous jump, even for the best leaper in the land. Unless the horse landed fairly, he would never get across, for the farther bank was too high and steep to climb.

Dick set his teeth, and with a mighty bound the great chestnut soared forward. His forehoofs landed, his hind feet barely lit on the brink. The earth began to crumble under them. Then, with a struggle, he pulled himself together, and bounded forward.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick. "You've grit in you, old Rawbones! Pull up!"

He drew rein on a little knoll, and the chestnut stood panting.

The pursuers swept down to the brook with irresistible force. There was no pulling up at the downward slope; the first horse jibbed violently at the water, bracing his forefeet and sliding along, and his rider shot over his neck in the stream. The second made a gallant attempt at the leap, but landed plump in the middle, and Dick roared with laughter as the two men and the horse floundered back to their own bank.

"Ho, ho!" he cried. "Good-night to you, gentlemen, and a pleasant ride! The nearest crossing is six miles, and you'll find them monstrous long ones!"

Then, giving the chestnut time to recover his wind, he cantered easily away into Bassett Woods.

How long Dick rode he hardly knew. The horse soon subsided into a trot, and then into a walk, but the boy did not urge him on. Dick was pondering deeply, his eyes fixed on the ground before him.

He was on a little hillock that overlooked the road to Fratton, and a couple of miles away in the other direction, black against the starlit sky, Dick saw the stately pile of Langleys.

Lost in his own bitter thoughts, he gazed at his old home in silence, while the horse cropped the grass. Long he looked, and presently, like figures in a dream, he saw two horsemen coming slowly along the road, journeying away from the house.

Dick started, and stared hard.

"By Heaven, it's Sir Mostyn Frayne!" he said; and then he laughed bitterly. "And he's riding my mare Kitty! She is his now!"

As Dick dropped his hand to his saddle it fell on the stock of the horse-pistol. A white-hot thought shot through his brain.

"Why not?" he said, between his teeth. "Fate has made me an outlaw. I have cleared the world of a ruffian who has preyed upon the poor, and I have been hunted for my head. I will take Red Jake's place, and prey upon the rich. But the poor shall bless me!"

His face stern and set, he gathered the reins together and pulled the chestnut into a thicket beside the road.

The wayfarers came slowly. One was a servant of the Fratton household, mounted on an iron-grey nag, the other was Sir Mostyn Frayne, riding the black mare Kitty. Dick watched his lean, hawk-like face as he approached.

"Stand and deliver!"

"Zounds!" exclaimed Sir Mostyn, reining in hurriedly.

Right across his path, springing out of the thicket like a great grey ghost, came the chestnut.

Sir Mostyn, turning a shade paler, looked into the muzzle of Dick's right-hand pistol. The servant, stolid and immovable, had the benefit of the other.

"Your purse, Sir Mostyn, if it pleases you," said Dick coolly. "It grieves me to hurry you, but I am pressed for time."

Sir Mostyn turned very pale indeed.

"Red Jake!" he muttered, feeling in his fob with a shaky hand. "No, by Heaven, it's——"

"Quickly, if you please!" said Dick sternly.

The servant, too, drew a light and well-worn purse from his pocket and handed it to Dick. Sir Mostyn's held at least fifty guineas.

Purposely Dick lowered the pistol that covered Sir Mostyn as he leaned over to take the serving-man's purse. The baronet, scared as he was, seized his chance. Clapping his heels home, he bent low in his saddle, and made a dash for liberty.

Dick smiled.

"Our worthy friend has still something of greater value upon him," he said aloud to himself, still keeping one pistol lined upon the serving-man. "We must have him back."

He gave a long, musical whistle.

A shout of anger and fear came from the distance. At the first sound of the call the black mare pricked up her ears and wheeled swiftly.

"Get on! Get on!" shrieked Frayne, plying his whip furiously.

Lucky it was for him that Kitty did not show fight. At any other time she would have thrown him, and killed him with hoofs and teeth.

Dick whistled again, and the mare came straight to him with her beautiful, streaking gallop, while her rider strove vainly to turn her. Right up to her master she raced, and stopped dead beside him.

"Dismount!" said Dick curtly to the trembling rider.

Frayne slid to the ground. Dick leaped lightly down, and vaulted on to Kitty's back. She whinnied softly.

"Get astride the chestnut!" commanded Dick.

And the baronet, not daring to resist, clambered up.

"Exchange is no robbery!" laughed Dick.

"I know you!" muttered Sir Mostyn. "You shall swing in chains for this!"

Dick laughed. He opened the servant's purse, thrust twenty guineas of Sir Mostyn's into it, and threw it to the man.

"I wish you service under a better master," he said.

Then, drawing his riding-whip from his boot, he gave the chestnut a cut across the flank.

"Good-night, Sir Mostyn!" he cried, with a mocking smile.

The chestnut reared under the cut, all but throwing the baronet, and dashed off at full gallop, with Sir Mostyn clinging to its neck and shouting peevishly. The serving-man, smothering a grin, brought up the rear, and Dick, patting the black mare's neck, watched them out of sight.

THE END.

With a price on his head Dick Langley, in next Monday's ripping Highwayman yarn, comes in for some exciting adventures. Despite his nefarious trade Dick is the sworn friend of the poor. Tell your friends about this newcomer to the MAGNET.

Look out for the next "Galloping Dick" story!

The HOUSE of the SEVEN CANDLES

Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake are caught in a storm on the Essex Marshes. They seek shelter at an old mansion. In answer to their summons on the door they distinctly hear approaching footsteps; hear a hand fumbling at the catch of the lock, and then silence—nothing but the silence of the night. What has happened? The explanation is deftly given by

OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Silence at the Gables!

"PHEW! What a go!"

Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's young assistant, made the exclamation in dismal tones.

The sleuth and Jack Drake had left town on the Saturday morning for some duck shooting on the Essex marshes. After an excellent day's sport they were proceeding to the village of Little Gilmow, where they intended spending the night.

Darkness had fallen. They were dog-tired and looking forward to a hot snack of supper and a cosy bed. But the air was close and heavy, making exertion of any kind irksome. The sky, which had been clear all day, was now banked with black, threatening clouds.

"Come, my boy," said Locke cheerily, after they had walked about four miles, "we had better increase our pace. There's a storm brewing."

They quickened their pace. Both were well laden, having their shotguns and their bag of ducks to carry. But they had not proceeded much farther down the narrow, tree-lined lane towards the village on the River Gill when the storm burst.

"Mice and mumps!" muttered Jack Drake, with a wry grin. "We're in for a jolly good drenching, by the look of things!"

"So it seems," said Locke. "A nice end to a perfect day—what? But I think we'd better get away from beneath these trees and into an open field. There will be less danger from this forked lightning."

Together they beat their way through a hedge and into the meadow beyond. As they did so they caught the glimmer of a yellow light through a group of large elms across the other side of the field.

A fierce gust of rain beat so hard at them that they had to turn their faces to breathe.

"Crumbs!" panted Drake. "This is a bit too thick! What do you say to making for that light, sir? There's still a couple of miles to cover for us to reach Little Gilmow."

"I think that's the best plan," agreed the detective.

Staggering across the field, they clambered through another hedge, past the group of elms, and on to a narrow private road. Almost opposite to them was a large wooden gate with a drive beyond.

Locke felt in his pocket and drew forth his electric torch. Flashing a light on the gate, he read the name, "The Gables."

"Ah," he murmured, "we are certain to find shelter here for a brief time until the storm abates."

He pushed open the gate, and, followed by Jack Drake, strode up to the front door of an old Tudor mansion.

A flash of lightning revealed it as a grim, ivy-clad place with gabled roofs. A solitary light glowed in an upper room.

Locke grasped the old-fashioned lion's head knocker, and gave a loud rat-tat-tat. The sound echoed strangely in the ancient building.

There was a short interval of silence, during which Locke and the boy shrank close to the portal of the old house away from the driving rain. Then a scraping sound came to their ears, and the dull shuffling of footsteps approaching the door.

"Good!" said Locke, with a sigh of satisfaction. "We've made someone hear."

The footsteps sounded louder as they came nearer to the door. The two waiting outside could hear a hand fumbling at the latch. And then, just as they expected the door to be opened, there was a slight shuffling sound, followed by dead silence.

For ten seconds Locke and Drake stood motionless. They looked from one to another in astonishment, and Locke rapped with his knuckles on the wooden panels of the door. But there was no response. Silence—a deadly silence—brooded over the old Tudor mansion where they had hoped to find temporary shelter.

The sleuth deposited his gun and bag of ducks on the doorstep. Bending down, he pushed back the brass lid of the letter-box and called through.

"Hallo, there! Open the door, I say!"

But silence reigned supreme. From the time they had heard the mysterious hand on the latch not a sound had come to their ears from within the grim old building.

"Snakes!" muttered Jack Drake. "This is a queer go. Someone certainly came to the door. But I'm blessed if I heard anyone go away!"

"If he went away," responded Locke, "he must have taken off his boots. The floor of the hall inside this building is of polished hardwood, judging from the sound of the footsteps. The man, a fairly heavy individual, was wearing boots. He could not possibly have gone back through the hall without us hearing him go."

"Then why the thump doesn't the chap open to us?" whispered the lad in bewilderment. "What's he doing lying low on the other side of the door. He's not... scared of opening it, do you suppose?"

"Goodness knows," said Locke, with a puzzled frown. "He hasn't gone away from the door, in my opinion. I'll see if this will liven him up."

Once again he gave a sharp rat-tat on the knocker. But as the echoes died away that same sinister silence brooded over the old house. If anything, the silence of the house itself was increased by the roar of the storm without.

"By Jove!" said the sleuth, after a pause. "We seem to have stumbled on a queer little mystery. I'm going to find out the reason for that sudden silence in the house. And if——"

"Listen, sir!" exclaimed Drake suddenly.

Ferrers Locke and the boy remained motionless, hardly breathing. There came to their ears the distinct sound of footsteps. But they were not footsteps inside the house; they appeared to be outside and coming towards them.

Then the dark shadow of a man came from round the side of the building. With head down, the old fellow was beating his way against the rain. He did not notice Locke and Drake crouching in the doorway until he set his foot on the first wide step from the drive. Looking up, his eyes met theirs, as a vivid flash of forked lightning played above the old mansion.

"Ooh!"

The sound which left the stranger's lips was a gasping cry, half of surprise and half of fear.

Ferrers Locke is here again next Monday!

"Good-evening!" said Locke, pleasantly. "We are only wayfarers, and desire shelter here until the storm has passed. May I ask who you are?"

"I'm the housekeeper here. What are you a-wantin' at the Gables at this time o' night?"

"Shelter," said Locke. "I knocked at the door and heard someone come along the hall. But that was some minutes ago. Since then I haven't heard a sound from the place."

"Remarkable queer — remarkable queer!" said the old man, with a shake of his head. "There's someone at home, though."

"Who?" demanded Locke.

"Mr. Gerald Hume, my master. He owns the Gables, you know."

"H'm! He seems to have some rooted objection to opening the door," remarked Locke. "Being housekeeper to him you have a key, of course?"

The old man shook his head.

"No; I've got no key," he answered. "Mr. Hume would never let me have a key."

Ferrers Locke eyed him keenly.

"How did you expect to get in to-night, then?" he rapped out sharply.

"By the back door. That's usually kept unlocked when I go out. I've just been round the back, but it's locked to-night. I s'pose Mr. Hume thought as how he'd better lock up, seein' there was a storm. Sometimes burglars select stormy nights for a-breakin' in places, so I've heerd him say."

Locke did not appear altogether satisfied.

"What is your name, and where have you been?" he asked.

The old man scowled. Obviously he did not care for this examination at the hands of a stranger. But he answered the question, though with reluctance.

"My name's John Lewin," he said. "This was my evenin' off. I was on my way to walk to Little Gilmow to meet some old friends o' mine in the Sail and Anchor. But the storm came on an' I turned back."

The sleuth's keen grey eyes roved swiftly over the old fellow. Lewin was soaking wet, but it was impossible to tell how long he had been out in the storm from his appearance. Even a couple of minutes spent in that driving rain was sufficient to make a man's clothes thoroughly wet.

Putting his hand in his pocket, Ferrers Locke brought out a skeleton key.

"I'm going to open that door if possible," he said to old Lewin. "You've no objection, I suppose?"

The old retainer shook his head.

"It'll be a good thing for me," he said. "I want to get in, and if you can't get my master to open the door, I don't s'pose as how I can. As to whether you and the young gent can stay here to shelter from the storm, that'll depend on what Mr. Hume has to say."

While the old fellow had been speaking, Locke had quietly inserted his skeleton key into the door. But it took nearly five minutes of careful manipulation before he was able to force back the catch.

He gave the door a vigorous push. It flew open, and, as it did so, a dull crash echoed in the dimly-lighted hall.

Locke took a step forward and stopped dead. The mystery of the silence of the Gables was partly explained. At his feet lay the motionless body of an elderly man. It was the owner of the mansion —Gerald Hume!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mystery Upon Mystery!

FOR a brief moment Ferrers Locke stood gazing down at the body at his feet. Jack Drake peered over his shoulder with starting eyes. Old John Lewin, the housekeeper of the Gables, cringed at the sleuth's side, his wrinkled face stamped with horror.

"Come, pull yourself together, Lewin!" said Locke sharply, rising from a swift examination of the body of Gerald Hume. "You identify this unfortunate man as your master, I presume?"

"I—I do."

"I'm afraid there is no doubt that he is dead," said Locke. "I can see no marks on him, and I suppose it is a case of heart failure. But we must summon a doctor. Is there a telephone in this house?"

"Y-yes, sir—in the library."

"Remain here, Drake," commanded the detective. "Come with me, Lewin."

Carefully avoiding the body of his master, the old retainer showed Locke the way to the library and lighted the gas. Here the detective put through a 'phone call to the doctor in Mainbridge—a town on the River Gill, about five miles distant.

That done, the sleuth made Lewin rejoin Jack Drake. Then he himself went upstairs, and entered the room in which he had seen the light from the front of the house.

To his astonishment he found that the gas was not on. Instead, seven lighted candles stood in a row on a small, carved table, affording the only illumination of the room. Their yellow tongues of flame wagged restlessly in the draught from the door, throwing gaunt black shadows of the furniture on the panelled walls.

The candles were not ordinary candles. They were of the large type, such as are used on the altars of certain churches. Locke estimated that they had been burning for several hours, and would probably last for two or three days if burned continually.

The apartment itself was a bed-room with one old-fashioned bed, neatly arrayed with linen near the far wall. On another table close to the bed were two wine-glasses, one full and the other containing but the dregs of some time-mellowed port. A glass decanter containing more of the liquor was close to hand.

Locke placed his face over the full glass, and inhaled the fragrance of the wine. Then he sniffed the other glass. There was a curious, sweet smell to this, an odour such as he had detected as he had bent his head close to the lips of the man lying below in the hall.

Going downstairs, he drew Jack Blake aside from Lewin who was leaning by one of the old suits of armour in the hall, groaning and muttering to himself.

"Drake, my boy," said the detective, "on the face of this it appears as though Gerald Hume had committed suicide."

"Suicide, sir?"

"Yes—by poison. But there are two glasses on a table upstairs. The wine in one of them had been tampered with, that I am positive. It was from this glass that Gerald Hume drank. But it is a most curious thing that if he were bent on taking his own life, he should have responded so readily to a knock at the front door. Anyway, it is now necessary that the police should be informed of the tragedy which has taken place in this house. While I 'phone again, I should like you and Lewin to take up the body and place it on the settee in the library."

Over the telephone, Ferrers Locke briefly put the police of Mainbridge in possession of the facts of the extraordinary affair as he knew them. Meantime, Drake and old John Lewin placed the body on the settee where Locke had suggested, and covered it with a cloth.

Telling Drake to remain in the library, Locke went out and brought in the shot-guns from the porch and the bag of ducks. Having closed the door, he returned to the library, and induced old Lewin to accompany him to the dining-room across the hall. There he lighted the gas, gave the old man a drink from a decanter, and made him seat himself.

"Now, tell me, Lewin," he said, "how long have you been in the employ of Mr. Hume?"

"Five years come next Michaelmas," replied the housekeeper. "Afore that I was employed by Sir Bentham Hume. When he died, he left this house to his two nephews, Guthrie Hume and Gerald Hume. Both of 'em were gettin' on in years, sir."

"I see. You were employed by the two gentlemen. Where is Mr. Guthrie Hume?"

"Dead, sir! The two gen'lemen owned a yacht called the Marnet. One day, a couple o' years back, they went down the river to the sea in her. They met with heavy weather, and Mr. Guthrie Hume was washed overboard. His body was never found, an' his brother was in an awful state. He's never been quite right in the head since. Allus a bit weak in the upper story, so to speak."

"Is that Mr. Gerald's bed-room upstairs where there are the seven candles?"

"No, sir. That's the bed-room that was occupied by Mr. Guthrie. Before Mr. Guthrie was lost from the yacht, the two gen'lemen allus used to take wine together in the library afore retirin'. Since then Mr. Gerald has had the wine every night upstairs in the bed-room o' his brother. Sometimes I've heerd him a-talkin' to hisself up there. He's been very strange for some time, sir—very strange!"

"What's the idea of the seven candles? Do you know?"

"There you've got me. Shortly after his brother's death one candle was kept lighted night an' day. That is, it was changed every two or three days. Then, durin' the past two years, the number grew until now there are seven in all."

"Strange indeed!" commented Locke. "And are you the only person employed about this large house, Lewin?"

"I'm the only one reg'larly employed. Three times a week a woman comes from Little Gilmow to do the charrin' and odd jobs. Neither Mr. Guthrie nor Mr. Gerald liked havin' a staff o' servants. They sacked the two who

were here with me when Sir Bentham Hume had this place."

"How did Mr. Gerald employ his time? Did he do anything?"

"Nothin' to speak of. But I've heerd say that Mr. Guthrie was a scientist o' sorts."

Suddenly there came a loud, whirring sound from outside the house. A motor-cycle had come up the drive. On it was a police-constable, who had been sent from Mainbridge in response to Locke's telephone message. But there was no sign of the doctor who had also been sent for.

Locke himself admitted the policeman, a typical provincial member of the force, of stolid mein, and bristling with eagerness.

When Locke had had a conversation with him, he looked at the body, and gave it as his learned opinion that it was a common case of "suicide whilst of unsound mind." Still, Locke himself was not altogether satisfied. It had stuck in his mind how strange it was that a man who had just partaken of a glass of poisoned wine knowingly should have responded so speedily to a knock at the front door.

The policeman drew out his notebook and proceeded to interrogate the unfortunate Lewin at great length. So irrelevant were most of his questions that Locke became bored to tears with him.

"Come with me, Drake!" whispered the sleuth. "We'll have a ramble over this old place while Robert finishes his cross-examination."

Followed by the boy, he quietly left the room, and made his way up the wide, sweeping stairway to the first landing. Three bed-rooms faced the banisters, which bordered the other side of the landing. The landing itself formed a kind of balcony overlooking the hall.

Switching on his electric torch, Locke looked into the two darkened rooms, one on either side of the apartment in which burned the seven candles. One of these was apparently the bed-room of Gerald Hume himself. The other bore the appearance of a spare room. When they had briefly examined the room wherein burned the mysterious seven candles, Locke suggested they should take a glance at the rooms on the second floor.

The two occupied about five minutes in looking into quaint old attics, dusty from long disuse. Then they descended to the first landing again. As they did so a little cry of surprise left Locke's lips.

The light which shone from through the open doorway of the room in which the candles stood, was growing dim.

Locke and Drake glided swiftly to the door, and looked in. An amazing sight met their eyes. Six of the candles were out, only thin wisps of smoke rising from their wicks. The seventh candle was still alight. But a white arm and hand protruded from the panelling of the wall behind the carved table, and the seventh candle was also snuffed.

Immediately Locke flashed on his electric torch and darted forward. But only the seven candles stood like gaunt white sentinels in its finger of light. The mysterious arm had disappeared, and the wall revealed no aperture!

Jack Drake drew his hand over his forehead.

"Jumping jiminy!" he muttered. "Are we awake or are we dreaming?"

Locke made no reply. He was engaged in looking at the oaken wall.

After a few moments he rose upright, grasped Drake by the arm, and led the boy from the room.

"One of those panels must have been opened," he said. "A bit later we will make a closer examination of this house. There is a mystery about the Gables which I am determined to solve!"

They went down to the hall, and Locke was about to go to the library when Drake, looking beyond the stairway, said:

"There's a queer little door, sir. I suppose that leads to the cellars."

"Yes; I should think the wine cellars are below. We'll just have a look while we're on the job."

The door was locked, but the sleuth speedily opened it with his skeleton-key. Then he and Drake descended a flight of stone steps, picking their way by the light of Locke's torch.

As they had supposed, they found themselves in the wine cellars. Rows of bottles of different shapes lay neatly on shelves, most of them covered thickly with dust. The detective looked over them, and then led the way up the steps again.

Just as they reached the top they came to a sudden halt, and stood momentarily listening, their ears straining to catch the slightest sound. Both had been under the impression that they had heard a curious, choking gasp. This was quickly followed by the bellow of a robust voice from the direction of the library.

"Well, I'm blest! If that doesn't take the biscuit!"

The forceful exclamation came as a relief to their overwrought nerves. Drake gave a laugh, and shut the door leading to the cellars. He strode after Locke along the hall, and saw the burly form of the policeman who had come from Mainbridge emerge from the library. The constable's face was as red as a beetroot, his eyes staring in blank dismay.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" cried Locke. "You look as though you'd seen a ghost, man!"

The policeman pointed a trembling finger into the library.

"It—it's gone!" he stuttered.

"What's gone? Explain yourself, you idiot!"

"The—the body!"

Ferrers Locke roughly pushed the flabbergasted constable aside with his shoulder and rushed into the library. One glance was sufficient to tell him that the settee where the body of Gerald Hume had lain was vacant!

The detective swung round on his heel like lightning to face the policeman again.

"Where's Lewin?" he demanded sternly.

"I—I d-don't know!"

Locke, stepping outside of the library, opened his mouth to ask another

Locke and Drake darted up the staircase, but even as they did so the figure of old John Lewin came hurtling out of the room on the first landing. He struck the banisters, crashed through them, and pitched in a shower of debris to the hall below. *(See Chapter 2.)*

question, when the words froze to his tongue. For at that moment a wild shriek echoed through the old house.

"Great pip!" cried Drake. "That was from upstairs!"

The detective whipped out his revolver and took a flying leap at the stairway. Jack Drake dashed after him. The policeman gasped and sank limply back against a suit of armour for support.

Then the body of a man came hurtling out of the room in which had burned the seven candles. He struck the banisters which bordered the landing. There was a rending crash as the old woodwork gave way. And, in a shower of debris, old John Lewin, the housekeeper, came crashing down to the hall below!

"Go and attend to him, Drake!" cried Ferrers Locke.

The boy turned and ran down the stairs again and flung himself on his knees at Lewin's side. The old man was groaning with pain, his left arm doubled up beneath him.

It took but a second's examination to discover that Lewin had broken his arm. Drake whistled for the policeman, and, with his assistance, lifted the injured man into the library. There they improvised splints and a bandage with some pieces of cloth and some wood which the boy obtained from the kitchen.

Anxious for his chief, whom he had heard moving about upstairs, the youngster called Locke by name. Locke responded by coming downstairs and entering the library.

"The rooms upstairs are empty," he announced.

Then, looking down at Lewin, who had recovered somewhat, he asked:

"How did it happen?"

Old John Lewin raised his right hand and pointed it tremblingly towards the door through which could be seen the stairway.

"It was Mister Gerald's ghost!" he said in a weak, quavering voice. "I saw it—saw it as plain as I see you now! As I went towards the bed-room it suddingly hurled itself at me and sent me topplin' back like a—a skittle!"

"A pretty hefty ghost!" commented Locke dryly. "But what were you doing upstairs?"

"I—I was a-comin' back from the kitchen when I happened to notice there was no lights in the bed-room. Them there candles have been burnin' night and day, and I couldn't understand 'em bein' out. So I went up to see."

"But what were you doing in the kitchen?"

There was a note of suspicion in the detective's tone.

Lewin hesitated, and the policeman interposed.

"He offered to go and boil some water, so's we all could have a hot drink," said the man in blue. "And I went with him. When I came back to the library the body had gone."

"H'm!" muttered Locke. "This is most awkward! Hallo! What's that?"

All looked up sharply.

"It's a knock at the front door, sir," volunteered Lewin weakly.

"The doctor, I suppose," said Ferrers Locke. "Let him in, Drake, my boy."

Drake did as he was bidden, and a few moments later the Mainbridge doctor bustled in, apologising for being late.

"You're too late altogether, I'm afraid, sir," said Locke, advancing and introducing himself.

"The patient is dead?"

"Yes—dead and disappeared!"

The stout little doctor looked at Locke as though regarding a mental case. But the detective speedily explained matters, and the doctor's face cleared.

"Pooh!" he said. "The explanation is perfectly simple! Obviously this Mr. Gerald Hume is suffering from some mental disorder. He attempted suicide and failed. While the constable and the housekeeper were out of the library he recovered from the poison he must have taken, and walked out of the place himself!"

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"You may be right," he said, "though I doubt it. Anyway, our duty is plain. We must find Gerald Hume—and without delay!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Behind the Oaken Panels!

AN ambulance to convey the injured housekeeper to hospital was summoned from Mainbridge. Then Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake detached themselves from the stolid country policeman to conduct investigations along their own lines.

Locke led the way up to the bed-room where the seven candles had burned, armed with a wood-chopper. He lighted the gas and closely examined the oaken panelling of the room. But there was no sign of a secret spring. Nor could he move any of the panels with his fingers.

"My boy," he whispered to Drake, "there is only one way by which we shall achieve any success in this case. We must take the law into our own hands and smash through this wall. Behind that panelling there is a secret which we must possess at the very earliest possible moment. I'm going to smash this wall!"

Raising the chopper in his strong hands, the detective crashed it down time and again on the wall. Splinters of polished oak flew in all directions, but the sleuth cared not for the havoc he was making.

The burly constable, hearing the terrific racket, came upstairs, bearing a stout truncheon in his hand. But, upon seeing the job upon which Locke was engaged, the startled expression on his somewhat bovine face changed to one of indignation.

"Here! What right have you got to knock that there wall about?" he demanded officiously.

"Oh, go and chase snails!" said Jack Drake cheerfully. "We're busy!"

Having made a hole wide enough to admit of a human body, Locke shone his electric torch into the aperture. A narrow passage, thick with dust and cobwebs, was revealed.

"Follow me, Drake," said the sleuth. "You, constable, had better remain in this room or downstairs."

With that he wormed his way through the hole in the panelling of the wall, and Jack Drake nipped in after him.

Moving along the passage, they speedily became aware that the Cables was literally honeycombed with secret corridors. Going down a flight of thickly-padded stairs, they came to a lower passage. A knob on one of the walls took Locke's attention. He pushed on it, and a large panel slid back. Through the aperture that was revealed they found themselves looking into the library.

Ferrers Locke took but a brief glance into the room, now deserted, and slid the panel back into its place.

"The mysterious disappearance of Gerald Hume is explained in part," he remarked. "Whether he was able to get out of that library by himself, or whether he was carried out, is still a problem. Personally, I am convinced he was as dead as a door nail. In that case, someone entered the library and removed his body."

The ray of the detective's torch penetrated down the dusty passage in the opposite direction from which they had come.

"I believe, sir," said Drake, "that there's another flight of stairs a bit farther along."

"We'll explore," said Locke.

Again lighting the way, he set off, with the boy at his heels. Descending the stairs, the two were confronted by a door. This was locked, but the detective, after some difficulty, opened it with a skeleton-key.

The amazement of the searchers was complete when they pushed it open and passed through.

For beyond the door they found a whole series of rooms. There was a living-room, fitted with a table, chairs, and a comfortable bed: and a pantry, in which was a supply of food, some tinned and some fresh. In addition, there was a wonderfully-fitted chemical laboratory, with rows of glass bottles and a surgeon's operating-table. A number of bright, well-kept surgical instruments were in leather cases on a shelf. A short flight of stone steps led down into a cellar, where there were stored several dust-covered bottles of wine and a few tools of various kinds.

Having made a first hasty inspection of this strange secret group of apartments, the two set to work to examine the various rooms a little more carefully. There was ample proof that the rooms were occupied quite recently. The very freshness of some of the food in the pantry testified that.

"There's every sign here, my boy," said Ferrers Locke, "that the someone who occupied these quarters made his get-away in a hurry."

Picking up a measuring-glass in the laboratory, still wet with some kind of coloured fluid, he held it to his nostrils.

"This glass," he said, "contains poison identical with that which Hume drank in his wine."

Leaving Drake to further examine the laboratory, Locke stepped into the living-room and began ferreting about. Presently from under the bed he drew forth a small book. The edges were charred, as though someone had started to burn the thing, and then, changing his mind, had hastily thrown it aside.

Inside the book was some writing in a neat script. Locke glanced over the entries, and gave a gasp of amazement. Then, thrusting the book into the side pocket of his coat, he hurriedly rejoined Jack Drake.

"Come down to the cellar with me at once, my boy!" he cried.

"What is it, sir?" asked the youngster, as he followed his chief.

"This," said Locke: "The house of the seven candles is also the house of some particularly terrible murders, if the entries in a book I have found are true. But we can soon make sure."

Descending underground to the cellar, Locke shone his torch along the stone flags of the floor. Then, requesting

Printed and published every Monday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada).—Saturday, August 4th, 1923.

Drake to hold the light, he took up a pickaxe which rested against the wall, and prised up the centre flag.

Next, the detective obtained a rope, to which was attached a grappling iron that had been lying in a corner. Lowering the hooks through the hole in the floor which had been covered by the stone flag, he manipulated the line, much in the manner of a man fishing from a boat. Then, hand over hand, he hauled up the rope again. To one of the hooks was caught a grinning human skull!

"It is enough!" said Locke, putting the gruesome object on the floor. "Let us get out of this place. We have other work to do. This case has developed into one of the most serious nature."

But, instead of going up the stone stairs again to the other apartments, Locke raised a couple more of the flags of the cellar immediately at the foot of the stone steps. When he had done so another flight of steps was revealed.

Descending these, the sleuth and his young assistant passed along a passage wet with mildew.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken, the mysterious personage we must find passed out of the Gables by this route," said the sleuth. "The book I discovered in the living-room gave me the clue to its existence."

For fully three hundred yards they travelled along the dank passage, and then four more stone steps, dripping with water, met their eyes. Above the steps was a small square of solid granite.

Mounting the steps, Ferrers Locke put his back beneath the slab, and exerted all his strength to push it upwards. It gave more easily than he had expected, for the stone was fastened to a couple of big, well-oiled steel hinges. With a further effort he flung the solid trapdoor right back, and clambered out through the opening.

Raindrops splashed upon his face, and as he looked round he saw he was near the water's edge of a muddy river. Drake climbed out of the aperture after him, and the two stood side by side in the downpour for a few moments, gazing about them.

The night was almost pitch dark, but the torch enabled them to see a small, movable wooden landing-stage a yard or two away. Also, to their left, was a clump of trees, and a light shining from a small building, evidently a cottage.

Then Locke, carefully scrutinising the ground, perceived some freshly made footprints of a man, leading directly to the water's edge.

"The fellow we are after couldn't have intended swimming the river," remarked Ferrers Locke. "Therefore, it's safe to deduce that some boat was moored here, and that he boarded it and pushed off. I think it might well be worth our while to go and make a few inquiries at that cottage over there."

They made their way quickly to the cottage, and knocked at the door. An old rustic, smoking a corn-cob pipe, came in response to their summons.

"Could you tell me, sir," said Locke politely, "what sort of craft was moored near that landing-stage about fifty yards from here?"

The old man gazed at his nocturnal visitors in surprise. But he readily gave the information required.

"That boat be the Marmet, a yacht owned by Mister Hume what lives up at the Gables ower there," said he. "But what be the matter, misters?"

"I'm afraid I have no time to explain," said Ferrers Locke. He took a pound-note from his pocket and thrust it in the gnarled hand of the rustic. "Please describe the yacht to me," he said. "I am very anxious to find it, for it is not at its moorings now. Being a yacht, I suppose it had a fairly high mast?"

"Ay, tolerably so," said the surprised and gratified yokel. "The Marmet ain't been used for a long time, though, so I don't know why she bain't at her moorings to-night. Maybe she got adrift."

"Maybe," said Locke. "But tell me—could the Marmet go up the river, do you think?"

"Not fur, mister," said the old rustic. "There be a low bridge not more'n a quarter o' a mile from here. The yacht was only used in the old days for going downstream."

"How far is the sea from here?" next asked the sleuth.

"'Bout seven miles maybe," answered the old man. "But, as I said, Mister Hume ain't used her for ages, so I don't suppose he'd be taking any sea-trip to-night, if that be what you mean."

"I have reason to suppose that someone has set sail in the Marmet," replied Locke. "And I am very anxious to get on the fellow's track. Is there another craft in this neighbourhood?"

The old man scratched his head with the stem of his corn-cob.

"There be Sir Guy Grayling's motor-boat, the Hawk, which be moored about half a mile lower down the river. I——"

But Locke had learnt all he wished to know, and he closed the conversation abruptly. With a brisk "Good-night!" he strode away, with Drake at his side, leaving the old man gazing after him with a pitying shake of the head.

"We'll march down the river-bank to Sir Guy Grayling's place, my boy," said Ferrers Locke. "If that motor-boat's got petrol aboard, and is fit to move, I intend borrowing it—and without asking."

The two strode along in silence for a few minutes. Then Drake, who had been thinking deeply, remarked:

"It's a fair knock-out to me, sir, that the stone trapdoor near the river-bed didn't rouse the curiosity of folks in this neighbourhood."

"Perhaps it did, my boy," said Locke. "More likely, however, no one outside the actual user, or users, of it knew of its existence. Obviously, that movable landing-stage rested over the top of it. To get out, the person who was before us had to push the staging away. And it shows his desperate hurry that he did not stop to replace it in its original position."

Barely had they gone half a mile than they discerned the slim form of a motor-boat moored to the river-bank. Luck favoured them. There was petrol aboard, and Locke's quick examination of the engine convinced him that the craft was ready to use.

They scrambled aboard, and untied the lines which held the boat to the bank. Then silently they allowed the graceful craft to drift down on the stream. Safely out of sight and earshot of Sir Guy's residence, they lighted the little lamp over the bow, and set the engine going. The motor-boat responded immediately by leaping forward like a live thing.

"I'm gambling entirely on the belief that the man we want is trying to reach Portslea, the port at the mouth of the Gill," said Ferrers Locke. "If he is, we shall overhaul him, I think."

With the rain lashing their faces, and the steady swish of the river rushing past in their ears, they proceeded swiftly downstream. They passed several boats of various kinds moored to the banks or at anchor, but there was no sign of movement in any of the craft.

At last, just as their hopes were beginning to sink, they saw a sight which put fresh heart into them. As they swung round the bend of the river they discerned ahead the white sails of a yacht making its way downstream!

"Have your revolver ready, my boy," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

He took his own automatic from his pocket, and held it ready in his right hand, while he used the left for steering the boat.

Swiftly the Hawk overhauled the white-winged craft ahead. Soon they were able to see the head and shoulders of a man sitting in her sternsheets. Simultaneously they became aware that the yacht had altered her course, and was heading direct for the right bank of the river.

"The beggar's seen us!" muttered Drake, in a tone of suppressed excitement.

Suddenly the man in the yacht dropped his tiller and bobbed down below the bulwark. Next instant there was a flash of flame and a deafening report. A revolver-shot struck the motor-boat on the side, and a jagged splinter of wood hit Drake on the shoulder.

"Keep down! Keep down, my boy!" commanded Locke.

It was useless to reply to the shot, for the head of the man in the yacht was not visible. Two more shots rang out, and the bullets sung by the detective's head. At the second he let out a wild shriek and staggered back.

A maniacal howl of triumph arose from the scoundrel in the Marmet. In his enthusiasm he lifted his head, the better to see the effect of his prowess. As he did so Locke's own revolver spoke. Another shriek rent the air. The head at the stern of the yacht disappeared from view, and all was silence.

Quickly Ferrers Locke, who had only pretended to be hit, took the motor-boat alongside the other craft. The man in her was quite dead, for the bullet from the sleuth's gun had struck him squarely in the forehead.

Taking the lamp from the bow of the Hawk, Drake held it over the fellow and examined him.

"My hat!" muttered the boy. "It's Gerald Hume!"

"No," said Ferrers Locke quietly, "you are wrong. It is Guthrie Hume, his brother."

Jack Drake gazed at his chief in blank astonishment.

"B-but Guthrie Hume was drowned from this very yacht, the Marmet, two years ago," he said. "That old chap Lewis told us so."

"And so Lewis may have thought," said Locke. "But Guthrie Hume was never drowned. It was all part of a diabolical plot. From the book I discovered in the secret living-room at the Gables and my own deductions, I think I can piece together the whole terrible business.

"Guthrie Hume, besides having a scientific bent of mind, was also a hypnotist. There is little doubt, too, that he was partly mad. His brother Gerald was very much in his power. He, poor fellow, had to agree to

(*Continued on next page.*)

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN CANDLES!

(Continued from previous page.)

Guthrie's scheme. This was that it should be given out that Guthrie was drowned from the yacht."

"But the reason?" asked Drake.

"The reason was this. Guthrie Hume had the idea that by certain chemical preparations which he had concocted he could restore life after the heart had ceased beating. But, according to his diary, which is the book I have in my pocket, he was up against the problem of securing human beings for his experiments. He claimed to have successfully restored life in the case of two or three dogs and guinea-pigs. But it was human subjects that he wanted.

"So he disappeared from the outer world. With everyone, excepting his brother Gerald, believing him dead, he could set about obtaining these subjects almost with impunity. No less than seven victims fell to his hands. Remember that several mysterious murders took place in the neighbourhood of Little Gilmow. The bodies of the victims were taken through the secret passage to Guthrie's laboratory. There, after his experiments, the bones were thrown under the cellar floor.

"Finally, madly thirsting for another victim, he killed his own brother, whom he had kept more or less under hypnotic control. The two took wine together, and all would have been well for Guthrie Hume had we not knocked at the portals of the Gables and brought Gerald Hume to the door, where he died."

"It—it seems incredible!" muttered Drake. "But—but the seven candles?"

"They were the outcome of the fantastic brain of Guthrie. For each of the victims he slew he lighted up a candle, which burned day and night, and was changed when necessary. He kept them burning in remembrance of the unfortunate sufferers, who had died in what he called 'the cause of Science.' Now we must tow this yacht to Portslea and report the whole affair to the police."

On the following day the secret cavity in the cellar, from which Locke had brought up the skull, was dragged; and the bones of the seven victims of the mad scientist were brought to light, together with the body of Gerald Hume.

So finished one of the most perplexing cases the "Tiger" had ever tackled.

THE END.