

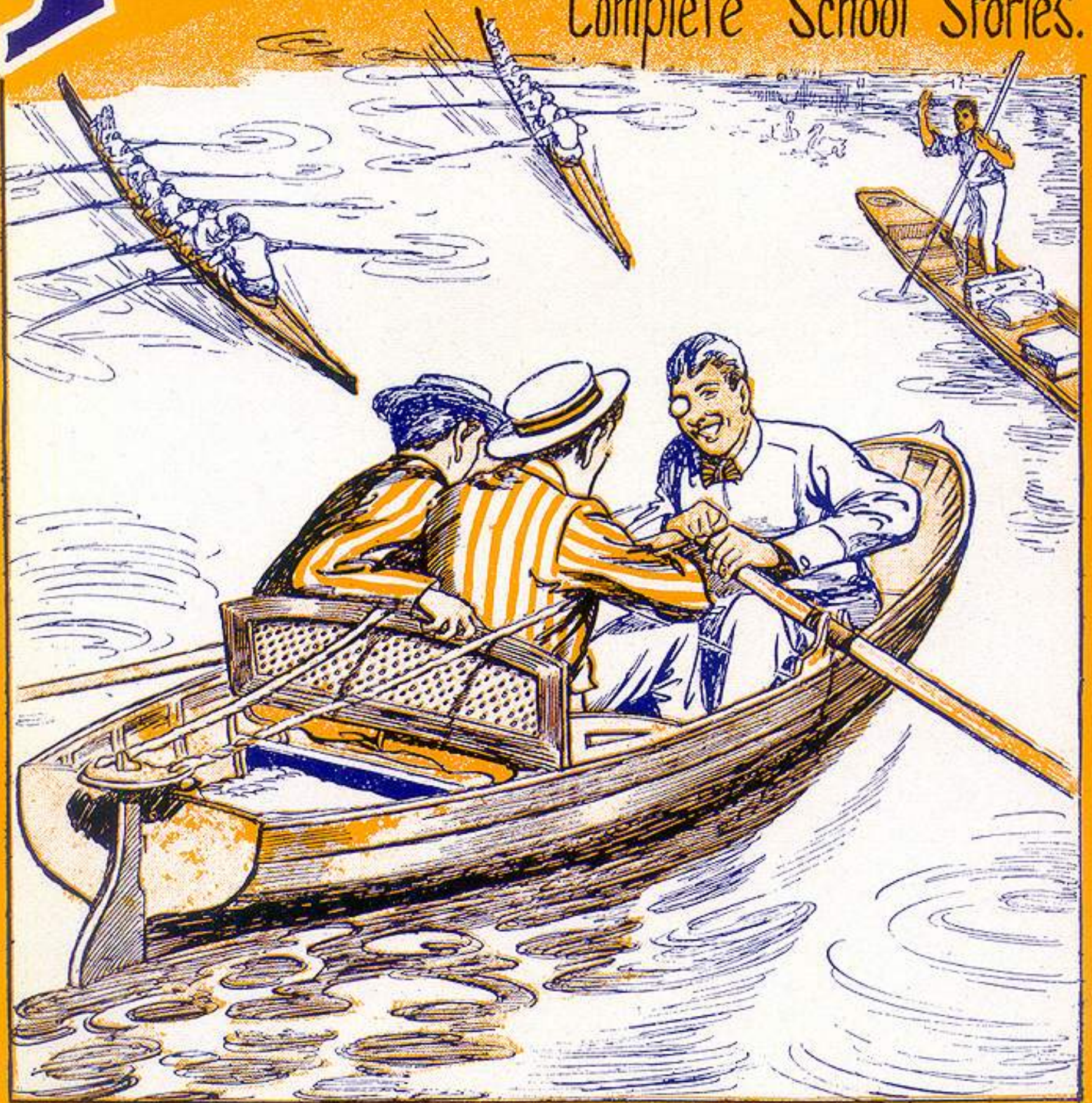
RIVAL OARSMEN! THIS WEEK'S GRAND STORY OF GREYFRIARS

No. 918. Vol. XXVIII.

Week Ending September 12th, 1925.

The Magnet 2^d

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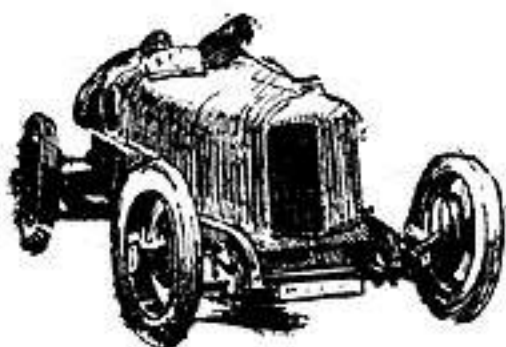
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A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, introducing Frank Courtenay & Co., of Highcliffe.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Challenge!

"PHEW!"
"Great pip! I'm melting!"
"Same here! Groooh! It's hot!"
Rather!"

The Greyfriars racing eight glided to rest, and with a rippling swish of feathered oars on the shining river, eight red-faced and perspiring oarsmen agreed that it was hot.

And it was—there was no doubt about that! It was a drowsy September afternoon—a cloudless blue sky and sweltering heat. On the shimmering Sark, and under the broiling sun, rowing was gruelling work. At all events, the Remove crew at Greyfriars found it so that afternoon. They groused, and even young Gatty, the coxswain of the Remove crew, groused also.

But practice was practice, and Harry Wharton, skipper of the Junior Boats at Greyfriars, was proving a hard taskmaster. Heat or no heat, he kept his perspiring men up to scratch. Harry Wharton took training very seriously.

On the shimmering river there was hardly a craft to be seen save their own. As a pleasure, rowing was decidedly "off" for that afternoon. Fellows who had taken boats or canoes or punts out that afternoon had tethered them beneath overhanging trees, or drawn them up high and dry on grassy banks. At their ease, in the welcome shade, they lazily drowsed away the afternoon with nothing but flies and gnats to worry them.

There was no drowsing or rest, however, for the Remove crew. Like galley slaves, they were kept to the job in hand, and it was with gasps of deep relief that the perspiring oarsmen obeyed young Gatty's shrill command to "Easy, all!" at the end of the training spin.

As the light "ship" glided to rest, Harry Wharton twisted round in his sliding-seat, and turned a grinning, heated face to his crew, most of whom were lying in various stages of collapse over their oars.

"Not bad!" he remarked, with a gasp. "Not bad, at all, you chaps!"

"Not bad!" echoed Bob Cherry, with a groan, and purposely mistaking his skipper's meaning. "I call it jolly bad—wicked, in fact! Groooh! Oh, for a cool, grassy bank beneath a shady tree, and gallons of foaming ginger-pop!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a panting chorus of agreement with Bob's sentiments, and Harry Wharton chuckled.

"I wasn't referring to the heat, Bob," he grinned. "I was referring to the way we're shaping, old chap. We did that last stretch in great style."

"It nearly proved to be my last stretch!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Great pip! There'll be nothing but a wet splash on my seat soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're soft, Bob—out of condition," grinned Harry Wharton. "What you need is more exercise."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And you're going to get it," went on Harry grimly. "We did that last run in spanking style; but I fancy we can do better."

"Some other day, then!"

"No; to-day!" declared Harry Wharton firmly. "We'll do the full course back again, and we'll put our beef into it this time."

"Oh, help!"

"Great pip!"

A chorus of groans and dismal ejaculations ran through the racing craft. They had expected that last "run" to end practice for the day, and Harry's remarks filled them with dismay.

"Have mercy, Wharton!" pleaded Vernon-Smith, from the bow thwart. "It's too thundering hot for rowing. We'll be melting and swamping the boat!"

"Rubbish!"

"Let's mutiny, you chaps," suggested Bob Cherry, in pretended desperation. "Let's mutiny, and chuck the giddy skipper overboard! Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Ha, ha! That's it!"

But even such terrible threats did not move Harry Wharton. He was smilingly deaf to grumbles and expostulations. He spoke to Gatty, of the Second Form, and Gatty chuckled and ran his eye over the crew.

"Are you ready?"

A pathetic groan ran through the boat, and there was a hurried doffing of sweaters, as Gatty's shrill order rang out. Next came the order to "Come forward!" which was obeyed instantly, and the oarsmen settled down for the further order to "Paddle!"

It never came, however, for as the juniors waited, tense and expectant, a sound reached their ears—the measured click of oars in rowlocks. The next instant, another eight swept round a distant bend in the river, their blades flashing and glistening as they rose and fell in the sunshine.

"Half a minute, cox!" said Harry Wharton, staring hard at the approaching boat. "We're not the only chaps out, then. Who the dickens are these fellows?"

"Those Highcliffe bounders," grinned Frank Nugent, whose eyes were exceptionally keen. "They must be as mad as we are to be out now!"

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed as he watched the oncoming racing craft.

"Two's late, and bow's shavelling frightfully," he said critically. "My hat! We'll knock 'em into a cocked hat! Here's a chance to show what we can do, you fellows. Let's give those chaps a run!"

"Good wheeze!"

At the thought of a race with the rival school's crew, the juniors forgot the heat, and their eyes gleamed with eager excitement. The Fourth Form at Highcliffe had only recently formed a crew, and the Remove were eager to test their mettle.

As the Highcliffe boat swept towards them, Harry Wharton sent a cheery hail across the water.

"Ahoy, you cripples!" he called. "Back pedal a minute, Courtenay, old son!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 918.

Frank Courtenay, the genial captain of the Fourth at Highcliffe, had already "back-pedalled." Even as Harry called out, the racing craft slowed down, and eight grinning faces were turned towards the Greyfriars crew.

"Cheerio, Wharton!" shouted Courtenay, a trifle breathlessly. "What's the giddy trouble? Want us to tow you along?"

"That's it, I bet!" grinned Benson. "They're played out, poor little fellows! We'll tow 'em home, Franky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffe crew laughed, and Harry Wharton looked grim.

"It isn't a tow we want, my pippins," he retorted, "but a race. What about a race to the bridge, Courtenay? First boat through the arches wins?"

"I thought that was the wheeze!" grinned Courtenay. "I was going to suggest that myself—at least, I was going to suggest a sort of procession—us leading the way and you cripples trying to catch us up."

"Oh rats! Laugh away, you asses!" grinned Harry Wharton. "We're keeping our laughs until the race is over. Well, what about it? You'll want a rest first, I suppose?"

"Rot! We're ready, if you are!"

"Who's going to start us, though? I suggests one of the coxes."

"That's the wheeze!" said Courtenay. "That kid of yours will do—young Tubb. We can trust him all serene!"

"Right! Get your boat ready, then!" snapped Harry.

He nodded to young George Tubb, and the fag's voice rang out:

"Touch her, bow!"

A single stroke of bow's oar straightened the Greyfriars boat, and in less than a minute both boats had been jockeyed into position by the orders of the cox. Then the fag's keen glance swept across the river, and, when quite satisfied that both boats were level his shrill voice went up again:

"Are you ready? Go!"

A single simultaneous splash of blades, and they were off, both boats getting away well. At the end of the quick start both boats were dead level, and they remained so for fifty yards, and then the Greyfriars craft began to edge to the fore.

"Go it, you cripples!" howled Tubb gleefully. "You're leaving 'em! Well rowed!"

There was little doubt about that, and the yells and exhortations of the Highcliffe cox became frantic. The Highcliffe crew quickened desperately.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Saving the Major!

"GO it, Greyfriars!" yelled George Tubb. "Up, up, up! Bend to it, old sons! Great pip! The beggars are creeping up again! Pull your socks up!"

To the accompaniment of howls and yells from the cox of both boats the race went on, scarcely a foot to choose between the rivals now.

And slowly even that distance was eaten up as the Highcliffe spurt sent their ship inch by inch onward, gradually reducing the Greyfriars lead.

They were level at last, and for the next few lengths the race was ding-dong, neither crew retaining an inch gained. Harry Wharton & Co. were more than a little surprised and startled. They had heard the Highcliffe crew were a fairly hefty crowd, but they had not expected them to put up such a good tussle.

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The old stone bridge was in sight now, and both crews had settled down to the grim struggle in deadly earnest.

"Two hundred yards more!" yelled Tubb excitedly. "Great pip! Get on it, you lot of flopping pillow-slips. Pick it up! Up, up, up!"

Harry Wharton spurted then, and his men picked it up with a will. Young Tubb's yelling became triumphant as once again the Greyfriars ship began to edge slowly to the front.

Courtenay, in his turn, spurted then, and his men responded, every man rowing all out. The muscles on their backs swelled as they stooped and swung and drove desperately. But, try as they would, they could not regain an inch. There was a good length between the boats now, and the Greyfriars heroes looked like keeping it.

"Keep it up, you cripples!" hooted young Tubb gleefully. "My hat! You've got 'em! Only fifty yards now, chaps! Now! Give her ten! One—two—three—"

Young Tubb never finished counting ten, for just at that moment his eyes glimpsed something ahead, and he stopped counting suddenly, to give vent to an angry howl at the top of his shrill voice.

"Boat ahead! Great Scott! Out of the way there, you idiots!"

At the same moment the Highcliffe cox also gave a howl, using practically the same words as Tubb had used. For just emerging leisurely from one of the arches of the bridge was a small skiff full in the course of the racing boats.

There was just time for the pleasure craft to get out of the way, and both coxes naturally expected it to do so after that wild yell of warning.

But the pleasure-craft made no attempt to do so. At the sculls a youth was seated—an elegantly-attired youth sporting an eyeglass—and he seemed oblivious of the approaching racers.

Pulling idly at either scull alternately, the youth sent his boat zig-zagging across the river, making it impossible for either Tubb or the Highcliffe cox to tell what side he intended to take.

There was nothing else for it but to stop the race, and both coxes acted in the nick of time.

"Easy all! Hold her! Back her, bow and two!"

The orders came in frantic yells from both coxes, and their crews obeyed promptly, realising something was wrong ahead.

Amid a swishing and splashing of hurriedly-plied blades, the two boats pulled up, and the oarsmen, panting and exhausted, twisted in their seats, and looked ahead.

As they recognised the three figures in the rowing-boat that had stopped them their faces darkened, and there arose angry exclamations.

"Ponsonby!"

"That cad Ponsonby!"

"He's stopped us on purpose, the rotter!"

"The howling spoil-sport!"

As the angry yells went up, Cecil Ponsonby—for the youth at the sculls was he—turned, and smiled blandly at the two racing-boats a few yards from him.

"Good gad!" he gasped, in pretended surprise. "Are we in the way of you fellows? So sorry!"

There was a soft chuckle from Gadsby and Vavasour who were lounging in the stern, and Harry Wharton's face went dark with fury. To be robbed of victory at the last moment like this was disappointing, to say the least of it. Moreover, knowing Ponsonby's reputation as

a cad and spoilsport, Harry did not doubt for a moment that he had stopped the race purposely. The Highcliffe cad would know full well that the boats would have to stop—their coxes would never dare to risk smashing up their frail craft in a collision.

"You—you howling rotter, Pon!" shouted the Greyfriars skipper. "This is another of your rotten tricks!"

"My dear man," remarked Ponsonby pleasantly. "What are you talking about? Do you happen to have purchased the dashed river, Wharton?"

"You stopped the race on purpose, out of spite, you cad!"

"What an idea!" said Ponsonby, grinning at his chums in the stern. "They think we stopped the race, you fellows! Fancy that, now! Did you chaps see these strenuous merchants coming?"

"Not at all!" said Gadsby.

"Absolutely not!" chimed in Vavasour.

"There you are!" said Ponsonby blandly. "These chaps didn't see you coming, so how could I with my back to you—eh?"

"You rotten fibber!" yelled young Tubb indignantly. "You saw us when you came through the bridge, and then you started dodging about from side to side! Yah! You beastly spoilsport!"

"That's it!" agreed the Highcliffe cox warmly. "The cads must have heard us yelling, anyway! It was done purposely!"

"Of course it was!" shouted Harry Wharton angrily. "Look here, you chaps, we're going to make those cads sit up for this! They might easily have caused a serious accident and a lot of damage! Let's duck the sweeps!"

"Good egg! After them!"

"Touch her, bow side! Come forward!"

Tubb gave his orders quickly, and Ponsonby & Co. realised their danger as the Greyfriars oarsmen stooped to their oars with the obvious intention of pulling towards the skiff.

"Here!" roared Ponsonby, in great alarm. "I tell you we didn't know you chaps were coming, hang you! Look here, Courtenay, back your own school up! Don't let those Greyfriars cads do as they like!"

But if Ponsonby had hoped for rescue from Courtenay & Co., he was soon disillusioned.

"You rotten sweep!" snorted Courtenay. "Back you up—eh? If those Greyfriars chaps don't duck you, we will!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh gad! Get the dashed boat round, you chaps!"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth, and, grabbing his sculls, he fairly wrenched his boat round. He was always on the worst of terms with Courtenay & Co., and he knew there was no help for him from that quarter now.

There was still a chance to reach the shore and escape if they were smart, and Ponsonby meant to be smart. A rowing eight was not an easy boat to handle, and he felt fairly confident of being able to give his enemies the slip.

Ponsonby, however, hadn't counted on accidents.

The rascally Highcliffe junior pulled frantically for the bridge, and the Greyfriars eight pulled in pursuit.

"Look out, cox!" warned Harry Wharton, glancing over his shoulder. "He's making for the bridge, hoping to slide along the stonework, where we can't follow! He'll do us yet if we aren't slippy!"

Wharton's suspicion was soon proved to be right. On reaching the first arch

of the stone bridge the skiff turned abruptly and shot alongside the stonework towards the second arch.

"Easy, all! Hold her, chaps!"

The Greyfriars eight pulled up promptly, as did the Highcliffe eight which was creeping up behind. It was just at that moment the accident Ponsonby hadn't counted upon happened.

So engrossed was Ponsonby in his frantic efforts to escape that he failed to hear or heed the chug-chugging of a rapidly approaching motor-launch. It was a warning yell from Harry Wharton that awakened him to the danger.

"Look out, Ponsonby, you fool!"

Ponsonby saw it then—a small motor-launch just shooting under the shadowy half-circle of the second arch. At the same instant the man at the helm of the tiny launch—an elderly man in white flannels and panama hat—gave a wild yell as he glimpsed the skiff moving across his path.

Quick as lightning the old gentleman swung the tiller round, and the launch swerved violently, missing ramming the skiff by a hairbreadth.

But though it missed ramming the skiff, it did not miss it altogether, catching it a glancing blow that caused the skiff to lurch violently, bringing yelps of fear from its occupants.

That was not all. As the launch struck the skiff the sudden jolt caused the old gentleman to lose his hold on the helm.

The result was disastrous. Uncontrolled, the launch swept round in a half-circle and smashed into the wall of the bridge.

Crash!

"Good heavens!" gasped Harry Wharton.

With a splintering crash the little launch struck the stonework, and its slender bows crumpled up like cardboard. In a flash it had sunk, leaving its occupants—the elderly man and a young girl—struggling in the water.

"It's Major Thresher and his niece!" panted Harry Wharton, jumping up in the racing-shell. "Help me, you chaps!"

Without further ado Harry Wharton dived over the side and went forging towards the spot. In a flash Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Vernon-Smith, and every man of the crew left their craft to take care of itself and went in after Harry.

At the same moment from the Highcliffe boat came a succession of splashes as Frank Courtenay led his men to the rescue, also.

"Oh gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

Like his chums, Gadsby and Vavasour, Ponsonby stood up in their rocking boat, staring helplessly at the struggling figures in the water. It never seemed to occur to them to attempt a rescue—or, if it did, they did not care to risk their skin.

By this time the launch had vanished completely, and only the heads and shoulders of Major Thresher and his niece showed on the shadowy water beneath the arch. The gallant old gentleman was supporting the girl, though it was obviously as much as he could do to support himself.

"Leave her to me, sir!" panted Harry Wharton, forging up like a hungry pike. "All right, sir! I've got her!"

He took the little girl from Major Thresher's reluctant clasp, and just then Bob Cherry and a swarm of eager helpers came forging up.

"The boat, Bob!" gasped Harry Wharton, treading water. "Get the boat—quick!"

Johnny Bull, the Bounder, and Peter Todd had already swum to the help of



"It's Major Thresher and his niece!" panted Harry Wharton. "Help me, you chaps!" Without further ado, Wharton dived over the side and went forging towards the spot. (See Chapter 2.)

the gallant old soldier, and Bob obeyed his chum in a flash.

A few swift strokes took him to the Highcliffe skiff, and after a moment's struggling he managed to clamber over the gunwale. Then he snatched the sculls from Ponsonby's nerveless grasp.

In next to no time he had the light craft round, and a couple of pulls sent it gently towards the struggling figures in the water.

By this time Courtenay and his men were on the spot, and the rest was easily accomplished. Sending the trembling Ponsonby sprawling among the legs of his chums in the stern, Bob leaned over the side, and, with many eager hands to help, lifted the girl into the boat. Then he helped Major Thresher into the boat, also.

Luckily, the boat was a roomy one, and the old warrior and his niece collapsed on the floorboards in two dripping, gasping heaps.

But, though wet through and exhausted, they were obviously little the worse otherwise for their immersion.

"Good gad!" gasped Major Thresher, his moustaches dripping and drooping like the whiskers of a walrus. "This—this is the limit! You all right, Phyllis? My dear girl—"

"Right as rain—only wetter, uncle!"

said the girl, coughing a little. She was already smiling, and Bob Cherry eyed her admiringly. "What a ripping adventure, uncle!"

The major stared at her as if about to have an apoplectic fit.

"Ripping adventure!" he hooted. "My dear girl, it was an exceedingly narrow escape for both of us! And what about my boat—hey?"

"Accidents will happen, uncle—"

"Accidents—bosh!" snorted the irate major, glaring round him. "It was due to nothing less than criminal carelessness and reckless buffoonery. What d'you mean by it, hey?" he hooted, glowering at Ponsonby & Co. in the stern. "What d'you mean by acting the fool in the middle of the river like that, confound you?"

"It wasn't our faults, sir," muttered Ponsonby. "It was these fellows—they were chasing us, or it wouldn't have happened."

"I guessed as much!" snapped Major Thresher. "Gad! You'll hear more of this, my fine fellows! My dashed boat gone, and—"

"Shall I pull you ashore, sir?" interrupted Bob Cherry politely. "You're both rather wet, you know. There's an inn just by the bridge."

"Good gad! Of course we're wet!"

snatched the major. "Put us ashore at once, you young rascal! Drenched through, and my boat gone, begad! You're sure you're all right, Phyllis, my dear?"

"Quite all right, uncle!" laughed the girl, smoothing her wet and bedraggled hair. "It's too bad of you to slang these boys who saved us, though, uncle."

The major grunted, and glowered at the juniors as Bob Cherry pulled the boat swiftly shorewards. The danger was over now, and most of the oarsmen returned to their boats. But Harry Wharton and his chums, with Courtenay and the Caterpillar, escorted the skiff to the bank, and helped the wrathful major and his niece to alight.

After thanking the juniors smilingly, the drenched but cheery Phyllis was rushed up to the inn by her uncle, waving her bedraggled hat behind her at the juniors as she went.

"My hat!" grinned Harry Wharton, staring after her. "Isn't she a brick? Many a girl would have yelled blue murder at getting wet, never mind jolly nearly drowned. But— Oh, my hat! The old major will play Hamlet over this."

"Sure to!" groaned Bob Cherry. "We shall get blamed as much as that cad Pon."

Frank Courtenay nodded.

"He lives just next to Greyfriars, doesn't he?" he grinned.

"Our next-door neighbour!" groaned Harry. "And he's hot stuff—always grousing to the Head about something."

"Doesn't seem to like us smashing his cucumber-frames with cricket-balls and footballs," grinned Bob Cherry. "Anyway, if we are booked for trouble, we can make sure of one consolation."

"What's that?"

"We can do what we intended to do," said Bob, turning to Ponsonby & Co., who were still in the boat. "We can give these cads a thundering good ducking. At 'em, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

A glance showed that the major and his niece had vanished into the inn above the bridge, and Harry Wharton and Courtenay both nodded their agreement to Bob's suggestion.

"Here, what's this game?" yelled Ponsonby, as the juniors jumped into the boat again. "Look here—"

But the oarsmen did not stop to "look here." They grabbed Ponsonby & Co., one by one, and sent them headforemost over the side.

There were three distinct and hearty splashes as the Highcliffe cads soused under to the accompaniment of terrified yells, and then the juniors jumped ashore again and started to pelt the struggling Highcliffe cads as they tried desperately to wade ashore.

Turf after turf rattled about the once elegant heads of the Highcliffe dandies, and their yells of pain and fury brought only yells of laughter from the rival oarsmen. For once Greyfriars and Highcliffe combined forces against the spoil-sports.

They had mercy on the three juniors at last, however, and leaving Ponsonby & Co. to bemoan their plight, the oarsmen, dived into the river again and swam towards their boats.

It was no easy matter to regain their places in the slender ships, but they managed it at last without accident, and then both crews turned and started back down river. For that afternoon the race was decidedly off, and both crews were angry and disappointed in consequence. The ducking of Ponsonby &

Co. had certainly been some little satisfaction, but Harry Wharton & Co., at all events, felt that the matter was not done with. They knew the peppery old major only too well, and they fully expected that trouble would follow from that quarter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Great News!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, Wingate?"

"Head's study at once, kid!"

"Oh, my hat! That's done it!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at each other and groaned.

It was some time since the Remove crew had returned to Greyfriars, and the Famous Five were just clearing tea away in Study No. 1, when the captain of Greyfriars looked in with that ominous message.

To the alarmed juniors the summons to the Head's sanctum could only mean one thing—that Major Thresher proposed to call them to account for the accident on the river.

"What's the matter, Wingate?" asked Harry, anxious to make sure. "Is it trouble?"

"You'll know soon enough, kid," smiled Wingate. "Cut along—sharp now."

"Is Major Thresher with the Head, Wingate?"

"Hallo! You've got a guilty conscience, then, Wharton?" grinned the captain. "No; the major's just gone."

"Oh dear!"

Wingate grinned and departed.

"Better just tell the facts, I suppose," growled Harry Wharton. "We needn't mention the names of Pon or his pals, blow them!"

"Dash it all, it's a bit thick if we get blamed for it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "It was Pon's fault—though the old buffer himself couldn't have been keeping much of a look-out."

"That's so," agreed Harry. "But, after all, we were chasing Ponsonby, and it will look like larking to the Head. You know how strict he is about fellows not acting the goat on the river. Anyway, I'd better buzz off."

With another dismal groan, Harry Wharton hurried to the Head's study. He found Dr. Locke alone, and he was astonished to be greeted with a genial smile by that scholastic gentleman.

"Ah, Wharton," began the Head, fairly beaming at the surprised junior. "I have just had a visit from our neighbour, Major Thresher. He has just told me of the accident on the river this afternoon, my boy."

"Y-yes, sir."

"I was very pleased and gratified indeed," went on the Head, "to learn that boys of this school were partly instrumental in rescuing the major and his niece from a position that might have had very serious consequences. The major has assured me, Wharton, that but for your timely intervention, the accident would almost certainly have ended in a tragedy."

"Oh, sir!"

"Naturally," proceeded the Head, smiling. "Major Thresher is most enthusiastic in regard to your conduct, and insists upon showing his appreciation in a practical manner. To this end, after consultations with Dr. Voysey, of Highcliffe, and myself, he has decided to offer a silver cup to be rowed for by crews chosen from the Fourth Form of both schools."

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

He was thunderstruck.

"Both Dr. Voysey and myself think it an excellent idea," smiled Dr. Locke. "He has agreed with me that all arrangements for the race shall be left in the hands of the juniors themselves to decide upon. I trust that Greyfriars will have the honour of winning the cup, Wharton."

"Oh—oh, yes, sir!" stammered Harry Wharton, his eyes glistening. "It's splendid and awfully decent of the major, sir. Does it mean that both Forms are to compete, sir—the Upper Fourth and Lower Fourth?"

"I presume that is the major's intention," said the Head. "I have already discussed the matter with Mr. Quelch and Mr. Capper, who agree with me that representative crews from the Upper Fourth and the Remove can meet at an earlier date to decide upon the crew to row in the race against Highcliffe. That is all, Wharton. I have posted a notice on the board in Hall relating to the matter already, but as you were apparently the leading spirit in this afternoon's adventure, I felt it would give me great pleasure to congratulate you personally on your gallant behaviour, Wharton."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" stammered Harry Wharton. And as the Head nodded a smiling dismissal the captain of the Remove backed nervously out of the study.

Outside the door, however, Wharton's nervousness vanished, and he executed an impromptu dance of delight. It was amazing news, but undoubtedly true enough. Instead of trouble, nothing but good had resulted from the accident on the river. He could scarcely understand it yet. Instead of playing Hamlet, as they had fully expected, the gallant old major had obviously visited the Head only to praise and express his gratitude. And if he had explained the facts, he had not, apparently, attached the slightest blame to the Remove oarsmen or Courtenay and his men.

Outside in the passage Harry's chums were anxiously awaiting him, and they eyed their leader's extraordinary actions in astonishment.

"What the thump does this mean, Harry?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "I expected the giddy Head would make you dance, but not like that, old chap."

Harry Wharton stopped dancing and explained the position excitedly.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Frank Nugent. "Who would have expected the old buffer to take it like that?"

"I always said his bark was worse than his bite," grinned Bob. "And I rather fancy that brick of a niece of his has talked him round—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I think so, too," agreed Harry gleefully. "This is O.K., chaps. We wanted a race with Highcliffe, and now we've got it—with something worth racing for, too. It's great."

"We haven't licked Temple's lot yet, though," grinned Johnny Bull warningly. "They're a tough handful."

"Rats! We'll lick them all serene," said Harry confidently. "Here, let's go and talk things over with them now."

"Good egg!"

The juniors wended their way in an excited crowd to the Upper Fourth passage, and knocked at the door of the study occupied by Temple, Dabney, and Fry, the cheery leaders of the Upper Fourth.

All three Fourth-Formers were at home, and they jumped up in alarm as the Remove juniors filed into the room. Temple promptly grabbed the poker,

Dabney picked up a handy cricket-stump, while Fry grabbed a cushion and held it at the ready. There was always a state, more or less, of warfare between the rival Forms, and a visit in force by Removites could only have one meaning for Temple & Co.

"All serene, Temple, old dear," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "You can put that giddy poker down. No need to get frightened—"

"Who's frightened?" snorted Temple. "You cheeky little kids—"

"Not so much of the kids, Temple," said Harry, looking suddenly grim. "I said you'd no need to be afraid, old chap. It's pax. We're here on a peaceful mission."

"Then chuck hinting that we're afraid of you kids," sniffed Temple darkly, "or you'll jolly soon find it a far from peaceful mission, my lad. What's the trouble, anyway, youngster?"

Harry Wharton breathed hard, as did his chums. Because Cecil Reginald Temple and his chums belonged to the Upper Fourth—a Form higher than the Remove—they were wont to assume airs of superiority, and to look down on the Removites as mere fags, a fact that was a cause of endless rows between the juniors of other Forms.

But as he was anxious to get the arrangements for the boatrace settled, Harry decided to overlook Temple's overbearing manner for once.

"It's about the boatrace," he said. "I suppose you chaps have heard the news—about Major Thresher's cup, I mean?"

Cecil Reginald grinned and threw down the poker.

"Oh, that!" he remarked carelessly. "My dear man, we've not only seen the notice on the notice-board, but we've already cleared a space on the study mantelpiece to hold the cup."

"Why, you cheeky, cocky ass—"

"Why not?" asked Temple blandly. "We're absolutely certain to knock Courtenay's lot of tub-pullers into a cocked hat, aren't we? I don't call it a boatrace; it's just the kind gift of a silver cup from the major to us."

"But what about us?" hooted Bob Cherry. "You cheeky idiot—"

"My dear man, I wasn't considering you chaps at all," said Cecil Reginald, in pretended astonishment. "You don't mean to suggest that you youngsters are thinking of trying to bag that cup?"

"You—you—"

"If you are," went on Temple kindly, "do cut it out. Drop the silly idea. You Remove kids are amusing enough without posing as oarsmen. You'll make everybody split their sides when you get monkeying about with oars. I'm blest if I know why the boats committee allow you youngsters to go out in anything but a punt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fry and Dabney roared at the expressions on the faces of Harry Wharton & Co. They were simply glowering at the humorous Cecil Reginald.

"You—you silly owl!" hooted Harry Wharton, getting his breath at last. "You—you cheeky cad! Why, we've licked you conceited Upper Fourth fops before, and we'll do it again."

"My dear little fellow, please don't show your 'ickle temper like that," said Temple soothingly. "Now run away and play marbles. Leave sports like rowing to your elders."

"You—you—"

"Do run away, there's good kids," said Temple, waving his hand. "Your fag troubles don't interest us. Yar-rooh! Ow-wow! Grooogh!"

Cecil Reginald's bland remarks ended in a fiendish yell as Harry Wharton's



Temple & Co. jumped up in alarm as the Removites filed into the study. Temple grabbed up the poker; Dabney picked up a handy cricket-stump; while Fry grabbed a cushion and held it at the ready. "All serene, Temple, old dear!" said Harry Wharton, grinning. "No need to get frightened—we're here on a peaceful mission!" (See Chapter 3.)

fist smote his rather upturned nose. The Famous Five had come on a peaceful mission, but there was a limit. And Cecil Reginald had passed that limit.

With his handsome nose running crimson, Temple staggered back, howling, and his chums—Dabney and Fry—also howled the next instant as Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull followed Harry's example and rapped them on their respective noses.

"That's right, you chaps!" snapped Harry Wharton. "Mop the thumping study with the conceited cads! We'll teach the silly swanks to lord it over us! Take that to go with the biff on the boko, Cecil, old man!"

And Temple took it—a hearty thump in the chest that seated him with a thump on the carpet. He jumped up in a flash, however, a warlike gleam in his eyes.

"Back up, you chaps!" he yelled furiously. "Rescue, Fourth—rescue! This way, Fourth! Take that, you cheeky fag!"

His fist clumped home on Harry Wharton's chin, and the next moment the two leaders of the rival Forms were punching each other frequently, and hard. By this time Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were at grips with Dabney and Fry, and the fun grew fast and furious.

Cecil Reginald's yell for aid had been heard, for there sounded the opening of

doors and a rush of feet in the passage without.

"Quick!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he heard the ominous sounds. "Lock that blessed door, someone, or we're done! Oh, my hat!"

But Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh had already realised the danger, and in a flash Frank had jumped to the door and locked it. Then they piled in to aid their chums. The Famous Five were trapped in the enemy's country, but they were resolved to rag Temple & Co., nevertheless.

There came a sudden thumping at the locked door, and Temple yelled again for aid until Harry Wharton rammed a handkerchief into his open, yelling mouth.

It was soon over. With the odds at five to three, the Fourth-Formers stood no chance whatever, and in a very few seconds they were flat on the carpet, with the triumphant Removites seated on their heaving chests.

"Give in, you cheeky cads!" panted Harry Wharton. "Here, let's tie the idiots up, chaps! We've got to go through it before we get out of here, I suppose, so we'll make these beauties go through it first!"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

After a brief, frantic struggle, the hands of Temple & Co. were secured behind them, and then Harry looked

about him for inspiration. His eye caught sight of the fireplace, and, leaving Frank Nugent to attend to the prisoner, he walked across and scraped a handful of soot from up the chimney.

"Gug-grooh!" choked Temple frantically. "Don't shove that beastly stuff—groooh!—on me!"

But Harry was unrelenting. He drew an artistic moustache across Temple's wriggling features, finishing up by giving the Fourth leader a pair of side-whiskers in soot. Then he walked over to Dabney and Fry, and treated them likewise.

"There!" grinned Harry. "You're always calling us kids, and fancying yourselves ancient johnnies! Now you really look the part of giddy ancients with those whiskers and moustaches!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three hapless Fourth-Formers looked sights, and the Removites roared at them. But Harry was not satisfied yet. After fumbling for some moments in the study cupboard, he brought out a jar of jam, a tin of treacle, and a pot of bloater-paste.

In a handy basin Harry carefully mixed a quantity of each, afterwards adding generous amounts of mustard, salt, and pepper—to "taste," as he expressed it.

Armed with the basin and a spoon, Harry walked over to his rival. He scooped out a spoonful of the horrible mixture and held it out above Temple's staring eyes.

"Now, Cecil, old scout," he remarked pleasantly, "you're going to say you're sorry for having libelled us by calling us kids and fags! Are you sorry?"

Harry snatched the handkerchief from his rival's mouth, and Cecil Reginald spluttered.

"No, you howling rotters!" he gasped. "I'll be hanged—Groooh! Mum-mum!"

He spluttered frantically as Harry shoved a spoonful of the mixture into his open mouth.

"That's to be going on with!" remarked Harry cheerfully. "Are you sorry, Cecil?"

"Groooh! Rotters! Will I thump—Ow! Take that beastly stuff—why, I'll—here—yes, I'm sorry! Oh, you cads!"

"You're sorry? Good!" grinned Harry. "He's sorry, you chaps! And the Remove is top form, isn't it, Cecil, dear boy?"

"Groooh! No, you cads! Oh, won't I just—Here—mum-mum!"

Temple's defiant outburst ended once again in a frantic mumbling and gurgling as Harry Wharton gave him another spoonful.

"Are we top dogs?" asked Harry remorselessly.

"Ow-ow! Groooh! No, you howling—Ow! I mean, yes, yes!"

"That's good enough, then!" said Harry, with satisfaction. "He's admitted we're top dogs, you chaps. Remember that, won't you?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"And now about this boatrace business," went on Harry. "We came to discuss arrangements with you, Cecil, and we may as well discuss them now. What about the date, old chap?"

"Ow! You—you rotters!" gasped Cecil Reginald, wiping his mouth desperately with his handkerchief. "Oh, won't we just make you sit up for this! Wait, you cads! You won't laugh when these chaps outside get you. You can't escape!"

Cecil Reginald Temple was wrong there. Even as he spoke, the thumping

by the rescue-party at the door suddenly ceased, and a voice was heard.

"Open this door, Temple! D'you hear me?"

"Wingate!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Oh, my hat!"

"Better open it!" groaned Bob Cherry.

Harry crossed to the door and opened it. Into the study walked Wingate, and he almost fell down at sight of Temple & Co.'s extraordinary appearance.

"Well, you young rascals," he gasped, "up to your games again, eh? What's this game, Wharton? What are you chaps doing here, anyway?"

"We came to discuss the boatrace, Wingate," said Harry meekly. "Just a peaceful visit, you know!"

"Oh," ejaculated Wingate, staring at Temple & Co., "it looks like it, kids! Well, you can take fifty lines each for kicking up a disturbance here, Wharton. Cut those fellows loose at once!"

"Yes, Wingate!"

The Removites released their fuming prisoners, and Temple & Co. staggered to their feet and glowered. Outside the doorway stood a crowd of Fourth-Formers, but Cecil Reginald knew better than to call for "rescue," with Wingate there.

"Now, you kids," said Wingate, apparently deciding to take no further notice of the little "rag," "I've come along to see you about this boatrace. We may as well settle matters here and now. You both know the conditions, I suppose?" he added, looking at Wharton and Temple.

"Yes, Wingate," said Harry; and Temple nodded grumpily.

"Right! I've seen both the Remove and Upper Fourth crews out a lot lately, and I suppose you're both in training," said Wingate. "There's no reason why you shouldn't meet each other very soon, is there?"

"None at all!" grinned Harry Wharton.

"We'll lick these Remove kids without any training!" snorted Temple.

"Don't you worry about us, Wingate."

"I'm not worrying about you," smiled Wingate grimly. "But I fancy you'll be making a mistake if you take things too easily, Temple! Anyway, I want to explain that Major Thresher wishes the final to be rowed off very soon. The old chap is going away shortly, I believe. Have you chaps any objection to rowing yours off next Tuesday, say?"

"That'll suit us nicely, Wingate," said Harry eagerly. "How about you, Temple?"

"Any time will suit us!" growled Cecil Reginald. "It's only a waste of time and energy, in any case. The Upper Fourth's bound to win!"

"That remains to be seen," grinned Wingate. "Shall we say next Tuesday evening, then?"

The rival leaders nodded promptly.

"Right!" said Wingate. "That leaves you less than a week, though, so you'd better make the most of your time, kids. That's settled, then. Now, you Remove chaps, get back to your own quarters, sharp!"

"Certainly, Wingate!" grinned Harry Wharton.

"With pleasure, Wingate!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

And with that the Famous Five grinned cheerfully at the fuming Cecil Reginald & Co., and marched out of the study. With glowering looks the Fourth-Formers found the doorway opened out to let them pass—they could do nothing else with Wingate there.

Once clear of the study, however,

Harry Wharton & Co. took no chances, they took to their heels instead, and fled, yelling with laughter. They had ragged Temple & Co. successfully, and they had, by sheer luck, escaped unscathed from an awkward corner.

Temple & Co. watched them go with feelings too deep for words, but when Wingate had gone they fairly danced with rage.

"Never mind!" vowed Temple, as he led his chums to the nearest bath-room amidst the scarcely-concealed grins of their fellow-Fourth-Formers. "We'll jolly well get our own back for this, you chaps. Oh, blow Wingate! As for the dashed boatrace—well, we're bound to win that."

"Yes, rather!"

Yet that, as Wingate had remarked, remained to be seen.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fon & Co. Again!

SELDOM had any sporting event aroused so much keen interest and excitement among the Lower School at Greyfriars as did the forthcoming boatrace between Highcliffe and Greyfriars for Major Thresher's silver cup. Even the lofty seniors took a mild interest during the next few days in the training "spins" of the respective crews.

These were frequent and hard. Both the Remove and the Upper Fourth had vowed to "bag" the honour of representing Greyfriars, and Wharton and Temple worked their men hard, giving them no respite. Not that they desired any; they were too keen to win, and every moment of spare time was spent on the river.

To meet Major Thresher's wishes, the final event between the rival schools was fixed for the Wednesday afternoon following by mutual consent. It was short notice, certainly, but all the crews concerned had been more or less in strict training for some time, and no objections were raised by any of the juniors.

It was generally agreed that the fight between both schools would be a stiff one. Greyfriars had had more experience, certainly, but, on the other hand, Highcliffe, only having one Fourth Form, were faced only with a single race, whereas the Greyfriars Fourth, being divided into Upper Fourth and Remove, had their own little race to row off first.

Greyfriars did not worry about that, however, far from it. And when the Tuesday came round at last both crews were trained to a hair, and feeling supremely confident.

As the Remove came out from afternoon classes that day, Harry Wharton called his men together, and made a suggestion that surprised them.

"Now, you fellows," he said calmly. "I've thought of a jolly good way of making use of the time before the race."

"If it means work," growled Bob Cherry, "then I vote you bury your thumping suggestion, old chap."

"It needn't mean any work—not hard work, at all events," laughed Harry. "Anyway, what about a little run as far as Popper Island, a light tea there, and a gentle paddle back in time for the race?"

"Great pip!"

"But the race is at six o'clock," objected Peter Todd.

"I know that. But we can take it very easily—just a gentle paddle to stretch our muscles," said Harry. "It will keep you chaps out of mischief, too. I shall have my eyes on you, and I'll

jolly well see you don't eat too much at tea-time."

"Oh!" grinned Bob Cherry. "That's the idea, eh? You're afraid of us guzzling at tea? Well, it's a jolly good wheeze. I'm game."

"Same here."

"It's a good idea, so long as we don't slog and tire ourselves," said Vernon-Smith.

"I'll watch that we don't do that," said Harry grimly. "I think it's better than lazing about, and perhaps getting nervy, at all events. You're all game, then?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then the sooner we get our war-paint on and get going the better. Come on! You chaps can be getting changed while I hunt young Tubb out."

Without further ado Harry Wharton hurried away in search of the Remove coxswain, and his crew made for the changing-room. Harry's idea appealed to them all upon reflection. Waiting before a race was always a trying business, and a little stretch could only do good. Moreover, the thought of a little picnic on the island was a pleasant one.

In next to no time the juniors were changed and ready, and well within ten minutes of reaching the boathouse they were afloat and pulling up stream. Harry had seen to the arrangements for tea, and he had been very cautious and sparing in his arrangements. Sandwiches and dry biscuits and cold water in ginger-beer bottles for each man was practically all Harry allowed them to take.

Harry's main idea in suggesting the picnic was to get his men out of doors after a day in the stuffy class-room, and he set a very easy pace, and kept it up, with several rests, until the island was reached. It was not a hot day, and all the crew were cool and fresh as paint when they landed on the island at last.

As Harry Wharton stepped ashore after his chums he glanced about him a trifle uneasily.

"What the thump's the matter, Harry?" demanded Bob Cherry, noting his uneasiness: "Afraid of savages or wild beasts, or what?"

Harry Wharton grinned.

"I'm thinking of old Popper," he said. "You know he claims to own this island, and that it's out of bounds."

"My dear man," said Bob, "that's true enough, but we don't admit the old hunk's claim. My hat! We've risked it often enough before."

"You're getting nervous in your old age, Wharton," grinned Peter Todd. "Buck up!"

"I'm not nervous, you asses!" laughed Harry. "Only—well, I fancied I spotted someone through the trees over there when I was jumping ashore."

"Oh!"

"It may have been fancy, but we can't risk getting collared by Sir Hilton or his keepers just now," said Harry.

Slightly startled, the juniors followed Harry's glance, and stared hard into the trees and greenery. The island was of some size, covered with trees and thickets, and might easily have hidden a small army.

"We'll soon settle the matter," chuckled Bob Cherry, and he sent a loud hail echoing across the island.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anybody at home?"

"You burbling ass, Bob!" snorted Harry Wharton.

But all was silent on the island following Bob's yell, nor did the juniors see anything at all suspicious. Even Harry was satisfied and reassured then. Had anyone been on the island they



"Now, Cecil, old scout," remarked Harry Wharton pleasantly, "you're going to say you're sorry for having libelled us. Are you sorry?" "No, you howling rotters!" gasped Temple. "I'll be hanged—grooouggh! Mum-m-mum!" He spluttered frantically as Wharton shoved a spoonful of the mixture into his mouth. "That's to be getting on with!" chuckled Harry. (See Chapter 3.)

could scarcely have failed to hear that terrific bawling of Bob's.

"All serene!" said Harry, flushing a trifle as he met his chums' grinning glances. "I must have been mistaken. I felt certain I spotted a movement through those trees, though. Any-old-how, let's get down to the job."

With cheery faces the Remove crew got down to it with a will. They were hungry, and very soon the wherewithal for the picnic was taken from the boat, and the juniors seated themselves on the soft, warm grass to the scanty but welcome meal.

They were still busy discussing the meal and their chances in the race when a sound reached them from the river, and a small pleasure craft flashed into view.

In the boat were three Greyfriars juniors, and Bob Cherry blinked as he recognised them.

"Skinner and his pals," he remarked. "My hat! Fancy those slackers pulling up as far as this! They're getting quite energetic in their old age."

"Got some game on, I suppose," grunted Johnny Bull.

"The cads are awfully thick with Ponsonby and his lot these days," said Peter Todd, shaking his head. "I expect they're off to meet those beauties now."

"Oh, blow them!" said Harry Wharton frowning.

And Harry took his eyes from the pleasure boat, shrugging his shoulders as he did so. The Captain of the

Remove never had much patience with Skinner & Co.

Peter Todd chuckled.

"My dear man, I wouldn't even waste my breath in blowing them," he grinned. "Pass the biscuits, Bob, old man."

Bob Cherry passed the biscuits—or, rather a biscuit. He tossed it across to Peter Todd, and more by design than accident it caught Peter Todd on his rather prominent nasal organ.

"Yooop!" roared Peter Todd.

Trouble started then—trouble usually did start when Bob Cherry was in one of his merry moods. Jumping to his feet, Toddy made a wild rush at the irrepressible Bob. The biscuit was hard, and it had hurt, and Peter was bent upon returning the hurt with interest.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "Here, keep off, you ass!"

Seeing that Peter had no intention of keeping off, Bob leaped to his feet and dodged away, with the irate Peter in hot pursuit. A chorus of chuckles followed them.

Round and round the circle of picnickers dashed Bob, and then finding Peter was in deadly earnest, he made a desperate dash for the shelter of the belt of trees.

Peter Todd went after him in a flash, and for fifty yards or so he chased the humorous Cherry through the trees. Then he gave it up with a grunt, and started to retrace his steps to the picnic party.

But he never reached them. As he tramped back through the trees his ears caught a sudden rustle in the undergrowth, and he stopped and turned—too late!

With startling suddenness something, or someone sprang on to his back, and brought him crashing down on to his face heavily.

What happened after that Peter Todd was too bewildered and dazed to grasp clearly.

He felt a hand clasped tightly round his mouth, while many hands held him fast. Then a coat was whirled round his face and head, temporarily blinding and gagging him.

Peter wakened up then, and began to hit out as best he could.

His first blind blow struck home, and he had the satisfaction of hearing a strangled yelp follow it. But he had left it just a shade too late, and his struggles after that availed him little.

One by one his threshing legs and arms were pinned down, and then cords were passed swiftly round wrists and ankles, rendering them helpless.

This done the coat was wrenched from his head, and as he twisted his head and blinked round he caught a swift glimpse of several figures wearing flannels and blazers, and with handkerchiefs over their faces. It was only a lightning glimpse, however, for the next instant they vanished amid the greenery.

Peter heard the crashing of their retreat, and then he heard a half-stifled cry in Bob Cherry's voice, followed instantly by faint sounds of a struggle. Then these sounds died away, and silence fell.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

What Did It Mean?

"HALLO! It isn't old Pon after all—it's that cad Wharton and his pals," said Stott.

"Couldn't you see that?" sneered Harold Skinner. "They're in rowing togs, aren't they? I spotted them and their boat long ago. What rotten luck!"

Skinner scowled across the water at the picnic party near the river's edge on Popper Island. On sighting the group at some distance away Skinner had recognised the Remove crew, but apparently his chums had not.

"Rotten luck!" echoed Sidney Snoop. "What the thump does it matter, old bean? We've as much right on the dashed island as they have."

"I know that," grunted Skinner. "But we don't want those cads hanging round for all that. Wonder what on earth they're doing here at all? The dashed boarace is at six."

"Looks like a picnic," grinned Stott. "If you ask me Wharton's making Temple and his lot a present of the race, acting the goat like this."

"Trust his dashed magnificence not to do that," grunted Skinner, eyeing the distant figures savagely. "Anyway, the cads can't be staying here for long. We'll steer clear a bit and land higher up."

"What rot! Blow the cads!" "Keep her out!" snapped Skinner. "We'll land higher up, I tell you. Pon must be somewhere on the island now. He'd have shown himself if he'd wanted us to land here, you fool!"

Snoop grunted, and kept the boat on a straight course. Skinner and Stott continued pulling at the sculls. The river was very wide hereabouts, and Skinner & Co. kept their boat well away from the island when approaching it. But they could see the figures by the water's edge clearly, and Skinner

scowled blackly as he saw Bob Cherry chase Peter Todd into the wood inland.

"Oh, hang!" he muttered. "Let's hope those cads don't stumble on Pon and his lot."

"I'm blessed if I can see why they shouldn't," sniffed Stott. "Afraid of Wharton catching 'em smoking and playing nap, or what?"

"Don't talk rot," sneered Skinner. "Can't you see? If Wharton sees Pon here, he'll know we're coming to join 'em. And the less we're seen with Pon the better."

"But why—"

"I'll tell you. You know what happened a week ago? Those cads pitched old Pon into the river. Well, you know what a goer Pon is for getting his own back. He's vowed to get his own back, and he jolly well will, too! You can bank on that. He's vowed to muck up this boarace bizney somehow."

"Silly ass!"

"I know that. But you mark my words—he'll be playing one of his usual dangerous tricks soon," said Skinner quietly. "When he does, we're going to keep out of it. Less Wharton sees us with him the better just now."

"Oh!" said Stott and Snoop almost together.

They understood now. Cecil Ponsonby was noted for his spiteful, revengeful nature, and for the fact that he would go to almost any lengths to "get his own back." On more than one occasion their friendship with the black sheep of Highcliffe had dragged them into trouble with the Famous Five over tricks played by Ponsonby.

Stott and Snoop made no further demur. The boat crept on, and the picnic party passed from their sight behind leafy branches. Skinner gave the word at last, and the boat was edged towards the island.

It touched ground at last, and as the three cads of the Remove sprang ashore a figure came running down to the water's edge to meet them.

It was the dandified figure of Cecil Ponsonby, and Ponsonby had a handkerchief to his mouth.

"Oh, here you are, Skinny!" he said, removing the handkerchief and revealing a cut lip from which a trickle of red ran. "You saw Wharton's lot, I suppose?"

Skinner nodded, eyeing Ponsonby curiously.

"Yes; we didn't let 'em see we were coming here, though," he grinned. "Have the cads seen you?"

"No," said Ponsonby, his eyes glinting. "Look here, Skinner, the dashed picnic's off—here, at all events. We've got something else on. You're just in time to lend a hand. Got any rope in the boat?"

Skinner's face fell, and he also looked a trifle uneasy. The promised picnic at the wealthy Ponsonby's expense, with smokes and nap to follow, had been well worth pulling hard up river for. The thought that it was "off" filled Skinner & Co. with dismay.

They were also alarmed. What was "on" in place of the picnic, Skinner, at all events, could easily guess. It was obviously something "up against" the Remove crew.

"Look here, Pon," muttered Skinner uneasily, "what's the game? What do you want rope for?"

"To tie up Wharton's lot," said Ponsonby calmly, eyeing Skinner sneeringly through his gleaming monocle. "Funk the idea, what?"

Skinner stared aghast at the sneering Highcliffe junior.

"Tie Wharton's lot up!" he repeated faintly. "You must be potty, Pon!"

There's eight of them besides the cox. You're potty, old chap!"

"Your mistake, Skinner," said Ponsonby coolly. "There are only six, with the cox. We've already accounted for two—Cherry and Toddy. That's how I got this."

Ponsonby tapped his split lip, and his eyes glinted again.

Skinner stared at him in alarm. He saw that his fears had been only too well grounded.

"Look—look here, Pon," he said slowly, "we're keeping out of this. It—it's all very well for you chaps. But we've got to face Wharton. The cad will guess we had a hand in it."

"You're going to help, my pippins!" snapped Ponsonby, his face setting resolutely. "If you don't you'll be sorry for it!"

"I'd rather not, Pon!"

"I know that," sneered the Highcliffe junior. "But you're helping for all that. I shall have to turn rusty about that five quid an' more you owe me if you don't. I'll make it hot for you in more ways than one if you don't, too. Got that?"

Skinner & Co. had. All three of them were afraid of the strong-willed but unscrupulous Ponsonby.

"What is the game?" muttered Skinner.

"Quite simple and safe—if all goes well," smiled the dandy blandly. "It's the race between your Form and the Upper Fourth at six o'clock, I believe?"

Skinner nodded.

"Well, this is the game," went on Ponsonby coolly. "That race isn't going to be rowed, you see. If anyone meets our crew to-morrow at all it won't be Wharton's lot. If they don't turn up in time for the race to be rowed off to-night what will happen, Skinner?"

"Temple's lot will row to-morrow, I suppose," growled Skinner.

"Exactly. The race to-morrow is at two o'clock. Your giddy Head isn't likely to let 'em off classes to row it off in the morning, is he?"

"Great Scott! Not likely!"

"That's what I thought," smiled Ponsonby. "I'll fix Wharton's lot nicely. I don't mind if Temple's lot do win."

"But—but how—" began Skinner in alarm.

"I'll tell you!" snapped Ponsonby, looking round him swiftly. "I saw the chance when I spotted your crew land, and I made my mind up to do it somehow. I knew we couldn't manage the eight of them at once. I knew our only chance was to try that giddy Roman Horatius' dodge—tackle the three Ciriaci one at a time, as it were. I was just wonderin' how to do it when Todd and Cherry came running into the wood."

"My hat!" said Skinner. "That's how you did it, then? You collared them?"

"Exactly. We bowled 'em over nicely, and they're now lyin' tied up in little bundles in the wood, old bean. Now, what about that rope of yours?"

Without waiting for Skinner's approval, Ponsonby sprang into the Greyfriars boat, and, taking out his pocket-knife, he hacked through the painter and jumped ashore with it.

"This ought to do with what we've got!" he grinned. "Luckily there was a good length round the dashed picnic-basket. Now, come on—sharp!"

But Harold Skinner still hung back, his face pale.

"Look here," he stammered, "it—it's too thundering risky for us, Pon. We'd stand no chance against the six

of them; and that kid Tubb's a handful."

"Leave it to me," grinned the Highcliff black sheep. "It should work like a charm. Those chaps will get tired of waiting for Cherry and Todd to come back. They'll get windy and go to hunt for them—at least, one or two of them will. It isn't likely they'll all search, though, is it?"

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. "I see."

Ponsonby chuckled and started off at a run for the trees, apparently taking it for granted that Skinner & Co. would follow. Skinner & Co., after looking at each other in a scared way, did follow.

"Come on!" grunted Skinner. "We'll have to help—old Pon will make it hot for us if we don't. You know what he is. In any case, we can keep out of it as much as possible."

Stott and Snoop nodded dismally, and followed their leader as he ran after Ponsonby. That worthy led them into a little clearing where they found Monson, Vavasour, and Gadsby awaiting them. All three of the Highcliffe cads wore masks made of handkerchiefs across their faces.

Through holes in the handkerchiefs their eyes gleamed curiously, and Skinner grinned with sudden relief. Had he not known who they were he could not possibly have recognised them.

Ponsonby tied his own handkerchief across his face in a similar manner, and Skinner & Co. followed suit, after cutting holes in the linen to enable them to see. Their fears were lessening now—with such "masks" on they felt fairly safe.

"Now, you chaps," said Ponsonby, grinning. "We've just got to wait until our chance comes. Then we've got to act swift and sure. I fancy we sha'n't have to wait long."

Ponsonby was a true prophet there. He had scarcely spoken when an echoing hail rang out. All the juniors recognised Wharton's voice, and they chuckled.

"Cooee! Bob, you ass!"

The echoing shout died away, and silence fell once again. But not for long! Several minutes passed, and then a chorus of shouts went up.

"Toddy, you idiot!"

"Buck up, Cherry!"

"Time's up. Where are you?"

Apparently, the rest of the Remove crew were getting impatient. Ponsonby detected an angry note in Wharton's voice, and he chuckled again.

"The little fellows are gettin' impatient," he remarked. "They'll be along soon, my pippins! You chaps ready?"

"What-ho!" grinned Gadsby. "Let's hope they won't come in force, though, or we're done."

The rest of the juniors hoped that, also, and they waited rather anxiously. Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were feeling far from happy in the adventure. Despite Ponsonby's cool assurance, they knew it was a dangerous task; the slightest mistake they know might result in failure, or, at least, the discovery of their identity.

But they had no need to fear, as things turned out. Luck was with the plotters on that afternoon. As Gadsby finished speaking, shouts were heard ahead, and three white-clad forms came flitting through the sparse trees.

"Three of them!" breathed Ponsonby gleefully. "Oh, good! Couldn't be better! Steady, and keep out of sight, for goodness' sake!"

The plotters crouched among the undergrowth as the three oarsmen came nearer, shouting the names of Cherry and Todd as they advanced. It was

clear from their voices that they were not only impatient, but just a bit alarmed in addition.

"Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Bull," whispered Skinner.

"Shut up!" hissed Ponsonby. "Here they come!"

As he spoke, Ponsonby removed his straw hat, and slipped his blazer off. The next moment the three oarsmen came tramping by, scarcely a couple of yards away, little dreaming of danger.

Wharton's face was dark and angry. It was already past time for starting back, and the thought that Cherry and Todd were larking somewhere across the island filled him with wrath.

The attack came sudden and swift, and it took the three oarsmen completely by surprise. There came a sudden rush of feet, and before the three could grasp what had happened, they were down on their faces with hard knees grinding into their backs.

It was over very quickly; against the seven attackers the three juniors stood little chance. Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson knew exactly what to do, and they did it like lightning.

Skinner & Co. also fought hard for once. Failure for them meant serious

Things were working very well indeed for Ponsonby.

"The same again, old beans!" he panted breathlessly. "My hat! It's easier than I expected, begad! Shush!"

Once again three white-clad figures showed through the greenery, and Ponsonby & Co. crouched down and waited. Puzzled and bewildered by their chums' absence, and by Wharton's shout for aid, Bulstrode, Linley, and Nugent, the three remaining members of Harry's crew, came running to the rescue, heedless of the creepers and brambles that tore at their bare legs.

They dashed right into the ambush, and they succumbed quicker even than the other three had done. In falling, Nugent had struck his head against the trunk of a tree, and he was captured without a struggle. And against the seven, Bulstrode and Linley had no chance whatever.

The three juniors found themselves gagged and helpless without even having caught a glimpse of their assailants, who vanished amid the trees the instant their work was done.

When some distance from the spot, Ponsonby halted. He was breathless, but jubilant. He lifted the handkerchief from his face, and tucked it in a bandage on his forehead, showing a grinning face to his fellow spoil-sports.

"Done it, old beans!" he chortled. "At least, we've only one thing to do now, and that's to deal with their giddy coxswain and sink their dashed boat."

"Sink the boat?" echoed Skinner, in alarm.

"I don't mean do it in altogether," grinned Ponsonby. "We'll just sink it near the bank—to place it out of sight. If anyone comes along, it wouldn't do for it to be found here. Oh, dash it all—it's just struck me! Did anyone know the crew were coming here, Skinney?"

Skinner shook his head. "I don't think so," he said. "I didn't know, anyway, and I've heard nobody mention it. Nothing to worry about, though; if anyone comes searching, they'll only look for the boat; they won't dream of the truth."

"That's so," said Ponsonby, his frown clearing away. "Gad! It's working like a charm! Now for that little sweep of a cox."

Ponsonby started off, and the rest of the gang followed him as he tramped through the trees. Ponsonby did not trouble to be cautious. He emerged into the open at last, and grinned as he sighted the boat, and the Greyfriars coxswain.

Young Tubb was taking it easy; he was lying on his back in the warm grass, drowsing as he waited for the crew to return. He heard the sudden rush of feet, and as he lazily twisted his head, he got the shock of his life.

Just a lightning glimpse of masked figures he got, and then he started up with a startled squeal. The next moment he was on his face in the grass, dazed and bewildered, while swift hands gagged and bound him.

It was done at last, and Ponsonby and Gadsby lifted his helpless form and dropped him amidst the ferns and undergrowth some yards inland.

This done, the plotters hauled the long craft farther along the bank, where trees and bushes overhung the low bank, and there they sunk it in the shallow water, hiding the oars in the long grass.

Everything had gone off without a hitch, and even Skinner & Co. were gleeful now.

"That's that!" grinned Ponsonby. "We can now go and enjoy our own picnic, Skinney, old top. Plenty of

A MAGNIFICENT
NEW
MYSTERY YARN

The
Phantom
Bat!

COMING SOON!

trouble, and they were desperate. Harry Wharton was the first down, but he was also the first to realise the danger, and he gave a wild yell for help.

That was the only cry any of the three were allowed to give—Ponsonby & Co. saw to that. In a flash, Ponsonby, Skinner, and Gadsby had wrenched Harry's hands behind him, and in a flash Ponsonby had passed a cord tightly round his wrists.

Then all three juniors left Wharton to his own devices, and jumped to aid their companions.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Strategy!

THERE was good reason for haste now, for that shout by Harry Wharton had brought an answering shout from the distance, and the plotters realised that only prompt victory could save them.

In less than a minute all three juniors were down, gagged with their own handkerchiefs, and rendered helpless. Leaving them lying in the long grass and ferns, Ponsonby and his rascally friends moved cautiously ahead.

From the direction Wharton & Co. had come sounded the crashing of hurried feet, and Ponsonby chuckled.

places on the mainland. The thought of those chaps rolling about in the wood there will keep us merry and bright."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Look here!" said Skinner, with sudden alarm. "You—you don't mean to leave these chaps here—all night, I mean?"

"My dear man," smiled Ponsonby, "what do you take me for? I know I'm wicked, but I'm not quite so bad as all that, old bean! I happen to know of a merchant—a boatman—who'll gladly come along and release 'em for five bob or so. But that won't be until late, my pippin! I'm taking no chances!"

"It's just struck me," muttered Skinner, "Wharton isn't the chap to give in without a fight. Suppose he manages to persuade the Head to let 'em row it off early in the morning, say?"

"I wanted to talk to you about that possibility, Skinner," said Ponsonby, his brow darkening. "Look here. Wharton's lot are not going to row to-morrow—or, if they do, they've got to lose. Got that, Skinner? If anything happens like that—if Wharton meets Temple's lot, after all, and licks them—you've got to let me know at once. See?"

Skinner nodded.

"Why?" he muttered uneasily.

Ponsonby grinned—a nasty grin.

"I'll tell you," he said, showing his teeth. "It isn't only a matter of getting my own back, Skinner. I've got a good bit of cash on this race. Highcliffe's simply got to win. They will win easily enough if they meet Temple's gang of duds. I'm a good judge of rowing form, and I know Temple hasn't an earthly."

"I think that, too," nodded Skinner, looking still more uneasy. "But—out—"

"But Wharton has," went on Ponsonby seriously. "His lot will lick Courtenay's crowd for a cert—if they meet 'em. They've not got to meet 'em, Skinney. I'm done if they do and Greyfriars wins. That's where you come in, Skinner. If this dodge doesn't prove a success—if, by any chance, Wharton gets the chance to row, after all—you've got to let me know at once."

"But why—"

"There are ways and means of seeing a certain crew doesn't win," said Ponsonby, his eyes glinting. "All I want you to do, Skinner, is just to let me know in time. You can telephone easily enough. Well?"

Skinner shrugged his narrow shoulders. He was not such a complete blackguard as Ponsonby.

"I'd rather have nothing more to do with it, Pon," he muttered. "I don't like it."

"You'll do it, for all that!" smiled Ponsonby. "If you let me down you'll be sorry, anyway! And look here—back me up in this and I'll wipe that bit of cash you owe me clean off the slate. I'll see Stott and Snoopy don't lose, either."

"You just want me to let you know at once if Wharton's crew happen to be rowing, after all?"

"Just that. It isn't likely. I fancy this little dodge has worked the oracle!" grinned the black sheep. "But, as you say, there's a chance. I'm taking no chances. You'll do it?"

Skinner looked at his chum, and then he nodded.

"Good man!" said Ponsonby. "Let's be off now, then!"

The Highcliffe dandy led the way to where their own boat was moored

among the willows some distance along the bank, leaving Skinner & Co. to board their own boat and follow. The Highcliffe juniors were grinning and cheerful, but Skinner & Co. were not. Even the prospect of a picnic at Ponsonby's expense, with smokes and cards to follow, did not cheer them much. Enemies of the Famous Five, and cads that they were, they did not like the idea of doing anything to help Highcliffe to win the boatrace—to play the traitor to their own school.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Who Did It?

HARRY WHARTON had never been so startled and amazed in his life as when that sudden and unexpected attack fell upon him like a bolt from the blue. Even after his assailants had vanished amid the thickets it took his dazed brain several moments to grasp what had happened.

But he understood now, and as silence fell on the woods he glanced about him. Yet he could see little, for the grass and ferns grew high about him. He could hear a choking gurgling close by, however, and he rolled himself with difficulty towards the sound.

The painful roll brought him up against a figure bound and gagged like himself, and, twisting his head round, Harry recognised Vernon-Smith.

That junior's eyes were almost starting from his head as he rolled and writhed and struggled with the bonds that held him.

A yard or so from Smithy was Johnny Bull, who, like Smithy, was struggling fiercely and savagely. And, taking his cue from them, Harry wasted no further time in pondering on the unpleasant situation. He set to work with might and main to free himself.

It was a far from easy task, however. Ponsonby & Co. had taken no chances; they had done their work only too well. The cords and ropes cut cruelly into the juniors' bare flesh, but they stuck to it grimly, desperately.

It proved to be a hopeless task, however. Panting, and with beads of perspiration rolling down their heated faces, the juniors gave it up at last as if by mutual consent.

Despite the pain from their bruised and aching wrists and legs, the pain was as nothing to the misery and discomfort of the gags.

Breathing noisily and painfully through their noses, the hapless captives rested, eyeing each other dumbly and despairingly. It was already past the time for the race, and all three of the juniors were seething inwardly with helpless rage and dismay. They had plenty of reason to suppose that no help was at hand. It was only too clear from the silence on the island that their attackers had gone, and that the rest of the Remove crew were somewhere about in the wood, undoubtedly just as helpless as themselves.

One thing was clear enough to Harry Wharton, at all events. Whoever was responsible for the outrage had done it to keep them away from the race. That much seemed clear. There seemed no other way to account for such an extraordinary happening.

Yet who could it be? Who outside Greyfriars would take the trouble or would dare to attempt such a trick? Harry first thought of Temple, Dabney & Co., but he dismissed it from his mind instantly. Temple & Co. were sportsmen to the core, and it seemed impossible to suspect them.

Again and again, with rests in between, the juniors struggled savagely to free themselves, but without avail. Several times they heard the faint splash of oars in the distance, and once they heard distant shouts—shouts the meaning of which was only too clear to them.

The fellows were searching for them—Removites, possibly. The thought that help was so close at hand and yet so far almost drove the captives frantic with rage and dismay. Harry remembered, in deep relief, that Hurree Singh, who was not a member of the crew, knew they proposed to picnic on Popper Island.

But that hope vanished as the shouts died away and the island became silent again.

At last, however, Harry had an inspiration as he sighted a jagged spike protruding from a tree-trunk near the roots, and he rolled over to it. After a struggling time he wormed the spike under the twisted handkerchief round his head, and tugged away with might and main.

He won through at last. The handkerchief slipped off, though it almost tore his hair from his head in doing so. In utter and heartfelt relief, Harry emptied the rolled-up gag from his mouth.

For some seconds he lay gasping and resting his aching jaws, and then he rolled over to Smithy. He was just about to set his teeth in Smithy's knotted handkerchief when he paused and listened, his heart thumping.

Through the wood rang distant shouting and a faint crashing of bracken.

"Oh, good!" breathed Harry thankfully. "That's old Inky's voice, you chaps. It's all serene now."

The shouting approached rapidly, and all three juniors recognised it now. And to it was added another voice—the shrill piping of Tubb, the coxswain.

The next moment Harry Wharton was shouting with all the force of his lungs, and within a minute the figures of Hurree Singh, the Indian junior, and Tubb, the cox, burst through the trees.

They neither seemed much surprised at the plight of the three, and without wasting words they soon cut the captives loose.

"Where are the others, Harry, my chum?" asked Hurree Singh, his dark eyes gleaming. "I will soonfully release the hapless chaps."

"They're near us somewhere," said Harry Wharton, rubbing his stiff and aching limbs vigorously. "My hat! Somebody will suffer for this, you fellows!"

"Yes, rather!" said Smithy, his eyes glinting.

Hurree Singh and Tubb hurried away, searching the place keenly, and very soon a shout told the three that the others had been found. It was some moments before Wharton, Bull, and Smithy felt like walking; but when they limped towards the sounds at last, they found Bulstrode, Nugent, and Linley already free, busily chafing their limbs.

"Never mind gassing about this business now!" snapped Harry Wharton. "Let's find Bob and Toddy. Come on!"

It was no easy task to trail Bob Cherry and Peter Todd, but all the juniors were keen Scouts, and very soon Harry Wharton picked up the trail.

ANSWERS

Every Saturday — PRICE 2:

Eagerly the juniors followed it up through the trampled ferns and grass, and sure enough it led to the missing oarsmen.

As they expected, the excited Bob Cherry was in a state bordering on frenzy, and for some moments after being released he fairly let himself go on the subject of their unknown attackers.

"It's that howling rotter Ponsonby, as sure as fate, I tell you!" vowed Bob, his usually good-humoured face red with wrath and strain. "He and his rotten pals would do it if only to spoil sport, the beastly cads! Oh, just you wait until I get my fists near him!"

"Better make sure it was Pon before you start on him, Bob," said Harry. "I believe you're right now I come to think of it, though."

"It could scarcely have been Temple's lot," muttered Johnny Bull hesitatingly.

"I don't think so for one moment," said Harry emphatically.

"What about Skinner and his pals?" said Smithy suddenly. "We saw them pass in that boat, and they saw us. They daren't tackle us alone, but they might have helped Ponsonby."

"It's possible," said Harry, his brow darkening at the thought. "But—but I hardly like to believe that even Skinner would be such a howling cad. Anyway, it must be after lock-up now. For goodness' sake let's get back! We'll have to explain the facts to Quelchy, of course. What happened when we failed to turn up, Inky?"

"There was the fearful consternation, my chum," said Inky, in his weird and wonderful English. "The esteemed Temple and his esteemed and fatheaded chums crowed. They said that you scarefully funked the contest. But our worthy Form-fellows were angrily waxy. The amazed dismayfulness was terrific."

Harry Wharton nodded and set his teeth.

"And Wingate. What did he do?"

"He was likewise waxy, my chum. He waited a long time, and then, as you failed to turn upfully, he did the gful bunk, saying it was the esteemed Remove's own funeral, and that the disgusting Upper Fourth could claim the race."

"But didn't our chaps do anything?" snorted Harry. "Didn't they protest?"

Hurree Singh nodded.

"They protested vigorously, and a swarm of us came up the river scootfully to search for you, some on bikes and some in boats. I myself came up to this unfortunate island, and rowed round it closefully, and shouted bawfully."

"But didn't you see our boat?"

"There was no boat, my chum. I then rowed on up-river to the locks, and the esteemed lock-keeper told me you had not been there. It was when I was returning speedfully back that I happened to lookfully glance at the island and saw the esteemed and ridiculous Tubb."

"You managed to get loose, then, kid?" said Harry, turning to the cox.

The fag-shook his head ruefully.

"No fear!" he growled, rubbing his swollen wrists. "But I rolled myself out of the thumping wood. Jolly near rolled into the river, too. Anyway, Inky wouldn't have spotted me if I hadn't."

"Jolly good thing you did, kid," said Harry grimly. "My hat! Suppose we'd have been left there all night. Anyway, let's get going now. The dashed boat must be somewhere about."

At a trot Harry led the way through the trees, and very soon the spot was



"Three of them!" breathed Ponsonby to his masked companions. "Wharton, Vernon-Smith, and Bull! Keep out of sight, for goodness' sake!" The three oarsmen came tramping by, little dreaming of the danger that lurked behind the trees. (See Chapter 5.)

reached where they had sat down to the picnic. Harry had his own ideas as to what had happened to their boat, and his suspicion proved correct.

A hurried search along the bank soon resulted in success, and Harry Wharton's face went dark as he saw the submerged boat clearly visible in the crystal clear water.

"In you get, chaps!" snapped he. "Let's have her out!"

The eight oarsmen splashed into the river without hesitation. It was scarcely a couple of feet deep there, and though it was no easy task they very soon had the boat raised, and lifted on the bank. Then, when all the water was run out, they rubbed the sliding seats dry with their sweaters and made things ship-shape.

By this time Inky and Tubb had found the oars, and within ten minutes of finding the boat they were pulling downstream homewards.

Hurree Singh, who had come in a racing skiff, paced them, and it did not take them long to reach the boathouse. They found the boathouse still open, and with the boatman's aid they housed the boats at top speed.

Just as the juniors were hurrying out of the boathouse, Old Joe, the school boatman, called Harry Wharton back.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but I found this in one of the pleasure boats to-night. It belongs to one of you

young gents in the Remove, I reckon, Master Wharton. Young Master Skinner booked that particular boat, so I s'pose it belongs to 'im, or one of the young gents as was with 'im—Master Stott and Master Snoop they were."

"I saw them up-river," said Harry. "Right, Joe! I'll hand it to Skinner."

He took the handkerchief old Joe held out to him with a smile. It was the boatman's job to take any articles left in the school boats up to the school. But Harry was liked by the staff for his good nature, and they often asked him favours they would never have asked of anyone else.

The boatman thanked him for saving him a tramp up to the school, and ambled away. Harry was about to run after his chums when something curious about the handkerchief caught his attention.

Two of the ends were knotted together, and the rest of it was folded as if it had been used as a bandage.

Harry shook it out, and then he gave a violent start.

In the fabric were two round, jagged holes about a couple of inches apart—holes that had obviously not been worn through, but cut out roughly.

His eye gleaming with sudden excitement, Harry dashed after his chums.

(Continued on page 16.)



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

No. 239.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR

Week Ending Sept. 12th.



BILLY BUNTER:

My favorite part is Falstaff, and I play it to perfectshun. I don't have to pad myself out, and give myself an artfishul plumpness. I'm a natcheral Falstaff! I beleeve old Shakespeer must have invented the part speshally for me. Whenever a slim fellow tries to play Falstaff he's a garstly failure. But please, don't run away with the notion that Falstaff is the only part I can play. I am equally at home as Chew Chin Chow, the Merchant of Vennis, Charlie's Aunt, and that famus lover, Mr. Woo. I've been "on the boards" once, but Greyfriars couldn't do without me, and I had to come back. I mean to be a film actor when I grow up—preferably in films where there's a lot of gorging and guzzling to be done. Such a life would suit me down to the ground!

ALONZO TODD:

My schoolfellows have but a poor opinion of me as an actor, and I have never even been given a walking-on part in any of the Remove productions. The only part I have ever played was behind the scenes. It was in "Tempest," and I played the part of a slight breeze! I had to keep on blowing whilst the play was in progress, and I was out of breath long before the finish. I would rather have had Bolsover major's part. He was the Thunder, and his terrific bellows nearly scared me out of my wits!

WILLIAM WIBLEY:

I think I have played pretty nearly every part that's worth while. I've been a double-dyed villain, and a handsome hero, and a blushing beauty, and a shrivelled hag! The parts I like best are those with plenty of "action," and I think I am happiest as D'Artagan, of the Three Musketeers. I simply love acting, whether it's serious acting, or merely acting the goat! I'm only an insignificant shrub as yet in the world of theatricals, but I hope eventually to blossom into a Tree!

BOLSOVER MAJOR:

Give me a part with a "punch" and I'm happy. I once played the hero in THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 918.

a play called "The Pride of the Ring," and the stage was simply strewn with my victims in the great "knock-out" scene. I made a great hit that evening—in fact, I made too many great hits for the liking of my fellow-players!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"You wouldn't never think I'd been on the stage, would you? Well, I 'ave. I once took the part of First Grave-digger in "Amlet," an' I was a rare success. But hactors was considered very small beer in them days, and instead of gettin' a hundred pounds a night like they gets now, I 'ad to be content with an 'umble 'alf-crown. I often wishes I'd stayed on the stage instead of becomin' an 'arassed porter. I reckon I should be rollin' about in a Rolls-Royce now instead of strollin' about with a broom in me 'and! But wot's the use of vain regrets? I'm still on the stage really because Shakespeare says that 'all the world's a stage an' all the males an' fieldmales merely players. They 'as their hexits an' their hen-trances, an' each man in 'is time plays many parts.' So that's that!"

BOB CHERRY:

I am a member of the Remove Dramatic Society, and I have played several minor parts in their productions. What I aim at, however, is a hero's part—I'm fed up with being "noises off." Wibley, who casts the parts, always shuts up sharp when I offer to play the lead. Bunter says I shall never play a decent part because of my big feet. But I proved he was wrong, anyway, for in a recent production Wib cast me as "chucker-out" in a restaurant scene. Those big feet of mine came in useful, as Bunter found out to his cost when I was ordered to throw him out!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

NOW that summer is on its last legs, and the long winter evenings are looming before us, our thoughts naturally turn to Plays, Concerts, and other jolly forms of entertainment.

As President of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, I shall have my hands full arranging programmes and rehearsals. There is plenty of talent to choose from, the Remove being rich in actors. The finest, of course, is William Wibley, who can play any sort of part, from the Prince of Denmark to Poo-Bah. Wib is one of those fellows who live in a world of their own, and his particular world happens to be the theatrical world. He is versed in all the mysteries of "make-up," he is a genius at "getting stuff across"—in other words, impressing and pleasing his audience, and as an impersonator he has no rival within the four walls of Greyfriars. As if these achievements were not enough, Wib is a clever scene-painter, a wonderful organiser, and a businesslike—but rather dogmatic!—stage-manager. Wib is so wrapped up in theatrical matters that the walls of his study are simply swarming with pictures and photos of famous actors and actresses. David Garrick, Edmund Kean, Mrs. Siddons, Henry Irving, Herbert Beerbohm Tree—they are all there, smiling or scowling down at you as you enter the study.

Nearly every fellow gets an attack of "stage-fever" at some period of his boyhood, but usually the attack is short and sharp, and soon sputters out like a damp squib. But Wibley's stage-fever is a permanent part of his temperament.

We shall commence our theatrical season at Greyfriars with one of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas—probably the "Mikado." Then will come a play which Wibley has written himself—you see, he is playwright as well as player!—and after that we shall get on to more serious work, and swot up Shakespeare's "Tempest." In every case, we shall charge for admission, and the profits will go to the Cottage Hospital at Courtfield, which is in a bad way financially.

The Fifth and the Upper Fourth are also getting up plays, but we do not fear their rivalry. And if they should attempt to wreck our rehearsals—as they invariably do—we hereby warn them that they will get it where the chicken got the chopper! Personally, I feel confident that the Remove theatrical season will prove a stunning success—right from the word go, as Fishy would say!

HARRY WHARTON

SPECIAL
"FOOTBALL"
SUPPLEMENT
NEXT WEEK!



DICKY NUGENT.

The Head "Plays" Hamlet!

Another side-splitting story of St. Sam's

"JOLLY," said the Head, insinuating his rather prominent beak into Jack Jolly's study, "I here you are getting up a play."

"Right on the wicket, sir!" said Jack Jolly cheerfully. "We're giving a performance on Saturday evening in the Common-room. Admission free to Fourth-Formers; a tanner for the Sixth; a bob for the Fifth and Sixth; and a ginny for headmasters."

Dr. Birchmell chuckled in his beard. "You'll be lucky to get a ginny out of me, Jolly!" he said. "Why, you are a cold-blinded young propheteer! You remind me of the managers of some of the London theatres! Their charges are generally a ginny per Head!"

"And a tanner per junior, I suppose, sir?" said Merry. "Which is eggsactly as it should be!"

"Ratts!" said the Head, with his usual decorum. "Now, what play do you propose to perform?"

"Well, sir," said Jack Jolly, "we couldn't decide for a long time weather to play 'The Taming of Macbeth,' 'The Merchant of the Shrew,' 'A Midsummer Night's Tempest,' or 'Hamlet.' We fixed on 'Hamlet' at last."

"A wise choice!" said the Head, nodding his approval. "'Hamlet' is undoubtedly one of the best peaces of work Sir James Barrie has given us. I shall fill the title-roll to perfection."

Jack Jolly & Co. blinked at the Head in amazement, not unmixed with dismay.

"You, sir!" gasped Jack Jolly. "But—but I'm playing Hamlet!"

"Tush! Likewise, tosh!" said the Head. "The part of Hamlet should be played by a person of diggnity and refinement. Without wishing to blow my own trumpitt"—the Head paused, and blew his nose violently—"I can onnestly claim to be a born actor. When it comes to playing Hamlet, I've got Tree, and Irving, and Barrymore, and all the rest of them, licked into a cocked hat! What are you larking at, Bright?"

"Ahem! I wasn't larking, sir!" stammered Bright. "I was koffing!"

"Lucky for you!" said the Head grimly. "Now, look here, my boys. I've decided to give you a free hand with your play, and to take the title-roll."

Jack Jolly gave a groan. He had been looking forward to taking the part of Hamlet—in fact, he had swotted up all the lines. Just before the Head had come into the study, Jack had been declaiming that famus passidge:

"Toby or not Toby, that is the question!"

There was an awkward paws.

"I'm sorry, sir!" blurted out Jack Jolly at length. "But we've got everything cut and dried, and I can't allow anybody to queer my pitch!"

The Head's brow grew black as thunder. "Jolly," he roared, "either I take the part of Hamlet, or you reseeve a publick flogging in Big Hall for impertinense! Pay your munny, and take your choice!"

There was nothing for it but to let the Head have his own way, and Jack Jolly reluctantly gave in.

"You can have the part of the First Grave-digger, Jolly," said the Head jenerously.

"Thank you for nothing!" muttered Jack, under his breth. "If I can't be Hamlet, I'll jolly well be Laertes."

Jack Jolly remembered that in the corse of the play there was a duel between Hamlet and Laertes. This would give him a chance to get his own back on the Head!

Dr. Birchmell smiled jenially upon the juniors.

"That's settled, then!" he said. "I'm to play Hamlet; and if I don't take the school by storm on Saterdag night, I'll eat my mortar-board!"

So saying, the Head stalked out of the study, leaving Jack Jolly & Co. in a state of blank consternation.

There was a fool-dress rehearsa' that night in the Common-room, but the Head didn't trubble to attend. Neither did he attend any of the rehearsals. It was not until Saterdag night came that he dared to put in an appearance. Then he strutted majestically into the dressing-room, which was a screened-off corner of the Common-room.

The Head was togged up as Hamlet, in the appropriate Spannish costume of the period. But his long beard, trailing nearly to the ground, made him look the most venerable Hamlet who had ever Hamletted.

"Now, my lads," said the Head briskly, "follow my lead, and play up to me, and everything in the garden will be lovely! I will now take the stage!"

"But—but Hamlet doesn't appear in the opening part, sir!" protested Jack Jolly. "It's Bernardo and Francisco who set the ball rolling."

"Oh, we'll cut out their parts!" said the Head lightly. And there were muttered growns from Merry and Bright, who were playing Bernardo and Francisco respectably.

"What the audience wants is Hamlet—Hamlet at the start, Hamlet in the middle, Hamlet at the finish, Hamlet all the time!"



THE SCHOOLBOY ACTOR.

By DICK PENFOLD.

WHO loves to deal in "props" and "gags," And takes the stage in baggy bags? Whose zeal for acting never flags?

Why, Wibley's!

Who paints his face a crimson hue; Puts charcoal on his eyebrows, too, Plays Hamlet or the Wandering Jew?

Why, Wibley!

Who made a hit as Chu Chin Chow, Receiving, when he made his bow, Cheers, claps, and other sorts of row?

Why, Wibley!

Who taught us to perform our parts With enterprise and eager hearts, And how to flee when "ragging" starts?

Why, Wibley!

Who proved a really clever fellow As Shakespeare's olive-skinned Othello? Who knows the way to boom and bellow?

Why, Wibley!

Who caused a really big sensation, And won the whole school's admiration When making Antony's oration?

Why, Wibley!

Who knows his Shakespeare off by heart, Goes galloping from part to part, Reciting chunks we couldn't start?

Why, Wibley!

Who boasts a really first-class brain, And ought to live in Drury Lane, Where "stars" and "understudies" reign?

Why, Wibley!

Who, when he comes to man's estate, Will be a famous man and great? (Good luck to him, at any rate!)

Why, Wibley!

We will kick off with the ghost scene. Who's the merry Ghost?"

"Me, sir," said Skellington of the Fourth. "Do you know your lines, Skellington?"

"Every word, sir!"

"Then we'll get to bizzness!"

The Head drew back the side-curtain, and stepped on to the platform in full publick view.

"Hallo! False start!" ejaculated Burleigh of the Sixth, whose pater happened to be a racing-steward. "Hamlet duzzent come on yet!"

The Head drew his wooden property sword and waggled it thréttingly at Burleigh.

"Be silent, Burleigh! Your rood interruption has quite driven my lines out of my head! Prompt me, somebody!"

And the Head turned appealingly to the "wings." Jack Jolly & Co. were there, but they had no intenshun of helping the Head out of his fix. They merely grinned.

"Prompt me!" repeated the Head in a desprit wisper. "What do I have to say first? Is it, 'O my profetic sole, my uncle,' or 'Get thee to a nunnery'?"

"Find out!" mermered Jack Jolly, sotto vocey.

The Head found out quickly enuff. He grabbed hold of Skellington, the Ghost, and shook him viggerusly, and growled:

"Prompt me, you young idiot! We can't keep all the school waiting!"

Skellington uttered a very unghostlike yell as he squirmed in Hamlet's grasp. Then he prompted the Head—in tones so loud that everybody in the audience heard them.

Having been given a start, the Head went along like a house on fire. He struck several attitudes, and he also struck several of the players, whenever they tried to butt in with their own parts. He would allow nobody to speak but himself. He paced two and fro as he delivered his lines, and he cuffed and clumped his unforchunitt fellow-players till they fled, howling, from the stage.

"Toby or not Toby (Biff!), that is the queschun!

Weather 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer (Whack!)

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune (Wallop!),

Or to take arms against a sea of trubbles (Clump!),

And, by opposing (Thump!), end them!"

Whatever Jack Jolly & Co. might have thought about their play, the audience enjoyed it no end. They roared and they roared as they watched the Head's amazing antics. It was agreed on all sides that the Head was the funniest comedian who had ever been seen at St. Sam's.

At length the duel scene was reached. The Head swung his property sword above his head, and called upon Laertes to come and he slawtered.

"Hither, thou scurvy varlet," roared the Head, "and I will cleave thee to the chine!"

Perhaps the Head imagined that his challenge would not be axcepted, and that Laertes—alias Jack Jolly—would not dare to come on to the stage. But Jack Jolly had been living for this moment, and he came chagging on to the platform, with his property sword circling through the air.

"Have at thee, Hamlet, thou sorry knave!" he shouted. "Peradventure I will pink thee, thou presumptious Prince!"

And Laertes fairly leapt at Hamlet, doing grate execution with the wooden sword. The Head dodged and ducked, but he was not nimble enuff on his pins to dodge all the thrusts that were levelled at him. He was given a rare grooling, and he yelled with angwish as Jack Jolly's sword prodded and poked him.

"Ow-ow-ow! Jolly, you young rascal, you shall pay dearly for this. You have punctured me in about fifteen places! Ring down the curtain, somebody! I declare this farce at an end!"

Mr. Lickham, who was a member of the audience, hastily rung down the curtain, to save the Head from further hewmiliation, and the performance of "Hamlet" came to a sudden fool-stop, Laertes being declared the winner of the duel on points.

That same evening Jack Jolly was summoned to the Head's study, where he was lectured, lined, flogged, and gated, and forbidden to take part in amachure theatricals for the rest of the term. But Jack Jolly didn't mind. His duel with the Head had given him complete "satisfaction!"

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 918.



(Continued from page 13.)

Bob Cherry looked round and stared at his excited face.

"What's up now, Harry?"
"I'll soon tell you what's up!" snapped Harry. "Look at that, chaps!"

"Well, what about it?" demanded Bob, staring at the handkerchief. "Oh! Great Scott! You don't mean—"

Harry folded the handkerchief a little, and then he pulled the handkerchief over his face, with the knots at the back of his head. Through the holes his eyes gleamed, and his chums fairly jumped.

"A mask, by Jove!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Where did you get that, Harry?"

Harry explained, and the faces of his fellow-oarsmen went grave.

"Skinner!" breathed Frank Nugent. "If that was in the boat he used then it's pretty clear he had a hand in it, Harry. Oh, the howling cad! The— the rotten traitor!"

There was a deep murmur of anger. Harry placed the handkerchief in his pocket. His face was set hard.

"We'll see friend Skinner about this," he said through his teeth. "He'll swear he knows nothing about it, of course. And as there's no name on the thing it'll be difficult to prove it's his, or belonging to one of his pals. We'll tackle the cad, anyway."

With that, Harry led the way to Greyfriars. Harold Skinner was an exceedingly sharp youth, and usually a very careful youth. But he had obviously been very careless for once.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Temple's Wheeze!

PREP had been started some time when the eight juniors, with young Tubb and Hurree Singh, tramped into the School House. They scarcely saw a soul as they made for Mr. Quelch's study to report themselves after changing.

The Remove master looked slightly relieved as he saw them.

"Oh, you have returned, then," he said, eyeing them sharply. "I was just beginning to be very uneasy in regard to your unaccountable absence, boys. Well, what does this escapade mean?"

Wharton very soon explained. He saw there was nothing else for it but a frank statement of the truth, but he did not mention whom he suspected, nor the finding of the handkerchief in the boat Skinner & Co. had used. Mr. Quelch looked amazed and angry when he had finished.

"This is outrageous, Wharton!" he gasped. "Bless my soul! No wonder you failed to turn up for the race! But did you not recognise your assailants?"

"No, sir," said Harry, truthfully enough. "They took us unawares, and we didn't get the chance to see who they were."

The Remove master nodded grimly.

"Very well, Wharton," he said. "I will report the matter to Dr. Locke, and, for the moment, I will say nothing in regard to your having trespassed on Popper Island. In the circumstances, however, I cannot, of course, punish you for being late for calling-over."

"And—and about the race, sir?" stammered Harry breathlessly.

"Personally I am very disappointed about that, as you must be yourselves," said Mr. Quelch. "I had hoped very much that the Remove crew would represent Greyfriars in the struggle for the cup. It cannot be helped, however, and I feel bound to point out that had you not broken the rules by trespassing, this, doubtless, would never have happened."

Harry Wharton felt suddenly sick with disappointment.

"Then—then that means we're out of it, sir? We can't meet the Upper Fourth?"

"Certainly not, Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, arching his eyebrows. "It is most unfortunate. But you failed to appear at the appointed time, and the Upper Fourth crew claim the race. That is their right."

"But Temple is a sport, sir," stammered Harry. "He'll meet us again, I'm certain. What happened was scarcely our fault. Couldn't we meet them, sir?"

"It is quite impossible, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "Major Thresher insists that the race be no later than two o'clock, as he starts for Scotland in the early evening."

"But—but we could row ours off before that—in the early morning, sir. We'd gladly get up early, so would Temple's crew, I'm certain."

"Nonsense! Dr. Locke would never agree to such a proposal, Wharton. It would mean an upheaval in the routine of the school, and is out of the question. Moreover, Dr. Locke will be very angry when he learns you have broken his strict order in regard to that island. He is not likely to grant you such a request. You must abide by the results of your wrong-doing, Wharton, unfortunate and regrettable as they are."

"But, sir—"

"That will do, Wharton."

The Remove master raised his hand, and Harry realised it was hopeless to plead further. He led the way out of the study, his face red and bitter. But it was also set and determined.

"No go!" groaned Bob Cherry as they crowded out into the passage. "Oh, my hat! I never expected this! I felt certain they would let us row it by postponing the race to-morrow afternoon. Oh, if I could only get my hands on the cads who played that dirty trick on us!"

There was a growl of assent, but Harry said nothing for a moment. Then he stopped and eyed his chums steadily.

"Look here, you chaps!" he said hotly. "We're not knuckling under to this! I know Temple's as keen to meet us as we were to meet him. We'll go and see him now."

"What's the good of that?"

"You'll see!" snapped Harry, his eyes gleaming. "I've got an idea, and if I'm not mistaken Cecil Reginald will agree to it. He's a silly ass, but he knows how to play the game. Come on!"

Harry led the way resolutely to the study occupied by Temple, Fry, and Dabney, and the rest of the crew followed wonderingly. Temple & Co. were at prep, and they eyed the eight juniors

curiously as they tramped into the room and closed the door.

For once Cecil Reginald did not look alarmed at the visit in force.

"Oh, you silly idiots have turned up at last, then?" he said, grinning. "Well, we're not really surprised you failed to turn up. We expected you'd funk meeting us—isn't that so, you chaps?"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Fry.

"Absolutely!" grinned Dabney.

"But just where did you put your giddy selves?" went on Temple, eyeing them curiously again. "I must say it was very kind indeed of you to give us the cup like this. I suppose you saw at the last moment that trying to lick us was only a waste of time—what?"

"Look here, Temple!" exclaimed Harry Wharton grimly. "I'll tell you just what happened."

And he did. The three Upper Fourth fellows listened with open mouths.

"Great pip!" gasped Temple, as he finished at last. "So—so that's why you didn't turn up? Phew! I say, that's a bit thick, you chaps. I'm blessed if I like the idea of collaring that race without fighting for it, anyway."

"I knew you'd say something like that, Temple," said Harry. "You're a sport, old chap, I will say that. Well, are you going to collar the glory now you know the facts?"

"Nothing else for it, if the Head won't give in," said Cecil Reginald seriously. "We'd much rather have fought for it, anyway."

"Then you can easily prove that," said Harry, his eyes gleaming. "I've got a suggestion to make. What about breaking bounds to-night and rowing it off by moonlight?"

A dead silence followed that startling suggestion. The rest of the juniors stared at him aghast. It left them speechless.

"I mean it," said Harry steadily. "There's the promise of a clear moon to-night. It's risky—jolly risky—but it could be done easily enough. It'll be a rattling fine adventure, and it will be nice and cool for rowing. I'm willing to risk it if you chaps are."

"Phew!"

"Great pip!"

"What a stunning wheeze!"

Once the juniors grasped the idea, it seemed to take them by storm. Cecil Reginald looked staggered for a moment, and then a broad grin came over his face.

"It is a stunning wheeze right enough!" he gasped. "Oh, my hat! A giddy boatrace by moonlight, eh? But who's going to be the giddy starter and umpire, Wharton?"

"We'll easily arrange that," said Harry, his eyes brightening as he realised Temple was coming round to the striking idea. "What I want to know is, are you game?"

Temple chuckled and nodded.

"It's thundering risky," he grinned. "But it will be no end of an adventure, as you say, Wharton. If you chaps are willing to risk it, I'm game enough. What do you say, Fry and Dab?"

Fry and Dabney grinned and nodded. The suggestion scared them a little, but their leader was game, and that was enough for them.

"I'm game if you are, Temple, old chap," said Fry.

"Same here," muttered Dabney. "To the giddy death, old chap!"

"What about the rest of your crew, Temple?"

"I fancy I can speak for them," grinned Cecil Reginald. "They'll back me up all serene. Wharton. Phew!

What a wheeze! But, look here, Wharton. Suppose your lot should happen to win? I know they won't, of course, if it's just a matter of rowing. But supposing we have an accident—break an oar or a neck, or something like that, and you chaps happen to get home first? How will you square things with the powers that be?"

"I've thought of that," said Harry calmly. "If you win, then the matter ends there. But if we win—and I fancy we shall—then you've just got to back out of the race. You've got to act the generous, unselfish sportsmen who have the good of Greyfriars at heart. You've got to own up that we're the better crew, and that you feel we've the better right to represent Greyfriars. See? If we lick you that will be true enough, anyway. You can't deny that."

Temple pulled rather a wry face.

"Yes, but supposing—I'm only supposing, mind—that you do happen to win by a fluke, and that someone suspects and asks questions?"

"You must just stick to that," said Harry firmly. "Hang it all, you must admit that it's only right and just if we do prove to be the better crew. If you don't want to row to-morrow afternoon they can't force you to, can they?"

"Our chaps will play old Harry, though."

"You can explain afterwards, if you like," said Harry.

"But—but supposing the beaks get wind of it?"

"Well, I don't much care if they do—after the race," said Harry, his eyes glinting. "They can't sack the lot of us, anyway. I, for one, am ready to stand a flogging to win that cup. Well, what about it?"

Temple grinned ruefully. But he was game.

"I'm on! I'll risk it, Wharton!"

"Good man! You'd better get hold of your men at once, and explain, old man. We'll talk details over later, before bed-time."

"Right-ho!"

Harry turned abruptly and led the way out. He knew without asking that his crew would agree to the amazing idea, aghast as they were at thoughts of it. Outside the door he paused, a hard look on his face.

"Now, you chaps," he snapped, "we'll go and talk to friend Skinner about that handkerchief."

"But what about prep?"

"Hang prep!"

And Harry Wharton strode away towards Skinner's study, and his men followed without another word.

Skinner, Stott, and Snoop were at home. They were seated at the table in Study No. 4 doing their prep, and the sight of the Remove crew sent the colour ebbing from their cheeks.

To the guilty trio the visit could only have one meaning—that their share in the afternoon's affair was known. What else could the visit mean?

All three of the shady trio jumped to their feet.

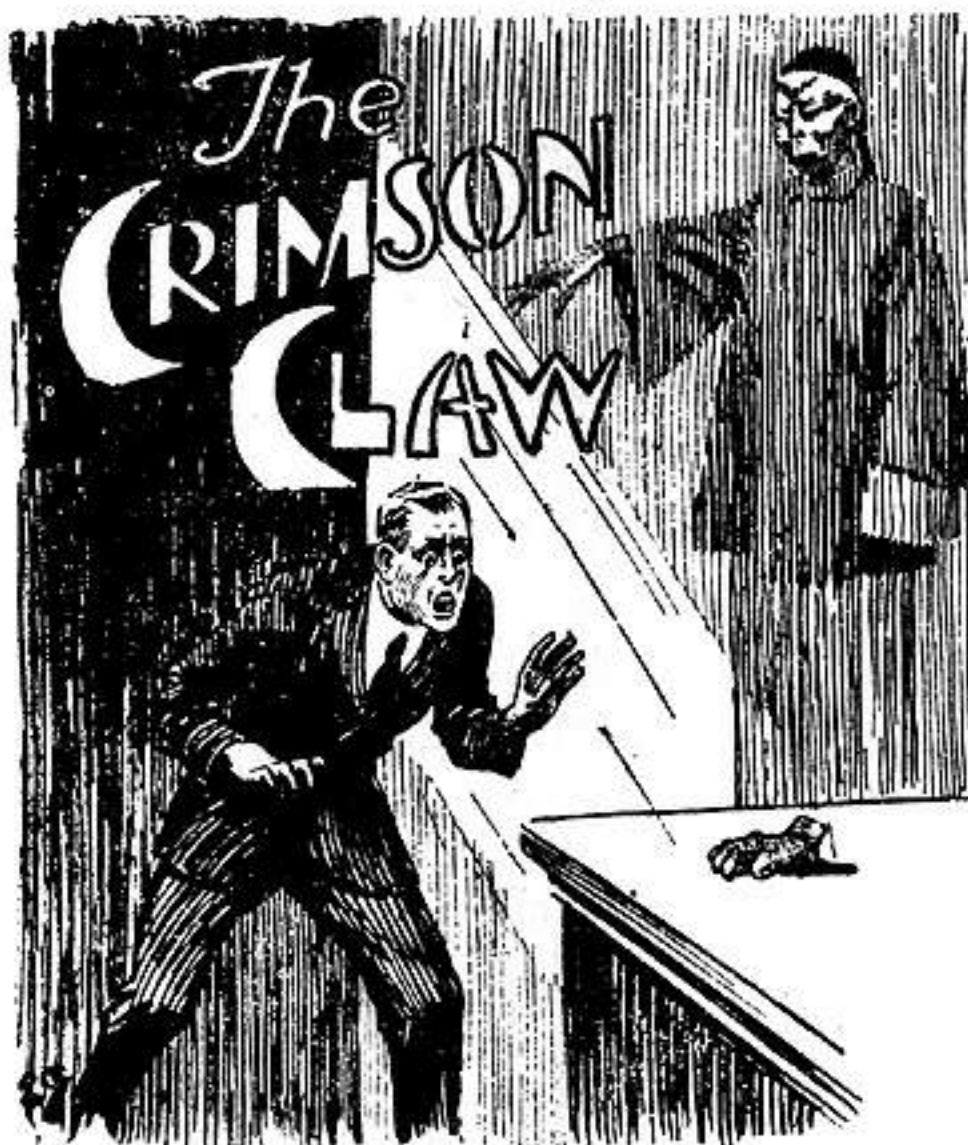
"What—what do you want, Wharton?" stammered Skinner.

The captain of the Remove walked to the table and tossed the handkerchief upon it with a scornful sweep of his hand.

"That's your property, I believe, Skinner?" he snapped.

Skinner stared at the incriminating handkerchief, and as he did so the colour slowly returned to his cheeks. He knew it at once, and he now realised what the visit really meant. Skinner was an exceedingly astute youth, and his "nerve" was unbounded.

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He grinned slightly as he drew another handkerchief from his pocket, and glanced at it carelessly. He had missed his damaged handkerchief on returning to Greyfriars, and he thanked his stars now that he had troubled to get a new one from the dorm.

"No," he murmured, lifting his eyebrows, and eyeing Wharton blandly. "Here's mine. I haven't lost one. But my dear man, why all this rumpus?"

"I'll jolly soon tell you why!" gritted Wharton. "This afternoon, Skinner, some fellows collared us on Popper Island. They gagged and bound us, and left us stranded there. They did it to keep us from the race. They wore masks made of handkerchiefs—like that one. That handkerchief was found by Old Joe in the boat you had out this evening, Skinner."

"Not really?" yawned Skinner, who had quite regained his composure now.

"Yes," said Harry Wharton savagely. "It's no good pretending to be innocent, Skinner. That handkerchief either belonged to you or to Stott or Snoop!"

"What an idea!" smiled Skinner, though his heart was thumping with inward fear. "And you think that just because that dirty-looking rag was found in our boat that we had a hand in your giddy troubles?"

"Yes."

"You've got a thumping cheek, then!" said Skinner. "I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that anyone might have chucked it there? It isn't mine, and I'm jolly sure it isn't either Stott's or Snoop's! We know absolutely nothing about what happened to you. In fact, the yarn's a bit steep, if you ask me. Any chap might have chucked that rag

into the boat as he was passing it to go out of the boathouse."

"You—you deny it, then?"

"Absolutely. I'm willing to go before the Head and deny it, if you like! It's all rot, of course; but if it's any satisfaction to you, I'm ready to do that."

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. He was beaten, and he knew it. Skinner was quite right—any chap might have pitched the handkerchief into the boat. The evidence was not enough.

But Vernon-Smith was not beaten. The Bouncer knew Skinner well, and he was just as astute as Skinner was.

Before anyone realised what was happening he leapt like a panther upon Sidney Snoop, and his hand snatched something that just showed from Snoop's pocket.

It was a handkerchief. Smithy sent Snoop spinning away from him, and shook the handkerchief out. It was rumpled, as if it had been used as a bandage, and two jagged holes showed in it about two inches apart from each other.

There was a sudden silence. Then, with startling suddenness, Stott made a wild leap for the door. But Bob Cherry was too quick for him. His foot shot out, and Stott went sprawling downwards with a crash.

In a flash Bob was upon him, and had taken the handkerchief from his jacket pocket. It was more rumpled than Snoop's, and it had two jagged holes in it.

Skinner's face was livid as all eyes turned upon him.

"Well, Skinner," said Harry grimly, "what have you got to say now?"

Skinner's nerve failed him then.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 910.

"That—that means nothing!" he stammered shakily. "You can prove nothing!"

Harry Wharton's face hardened.

"Run and fetch Wingate here, Bob!" he said.

But Skinner jumped before the door, his face suddenly haggard.

"No, don't do that!" he whined. "Look—look here, Wharton, you can't bring the beaks into this! It means the sack if it comes out! It wasn't our faults—we were forced into it by Ponsonby!"

"My hat!"

"I thought as much!" said Harry Wharton, his lip curling. "So I was right—Ponsonby's at the bottom of this, the hound!"

"But these three cads are worse than Ponsonby," said Johnny Bull, his rugged face red with angry indignation. "Fancy letting his own Form and school down like that! Oh, you rotter, Skinner!"

Skinner fairly trembled. He knew the game was up, and his only thought then was for his own skin.

"It was Ponsonby!" he muttered, in a low voice. "He did it to get his own back for that ducking the other day. He's got bets on the race to-morrow, too. He knows the Remove crew are favourites. He forced us to take a hand in it."

"Forced you?" echoed Frank Nugent scornfully.

"Yes," said Skinner, licking his lips. "We owe him tin, and he's threatening us; he knows things about us, too. You won't give us away, Wharton?" he added, with a whine. "I've owned up now."

"Because you had to!" snapped Harry. "You knew you couldn't face that evidence before the Head—for Wingate would have to report it; you knew that! Well, we won't show you up to the beaks. But we'll jolly well make you sit up for this, you sweep!"

"Yes, rather!"

"It can wait now," said Harry grimly. "But after the race to-morrow the Form will deal with you three sweeps! Old Courtenay will know how to deal with that rotten spoilsport Ponsonby. If the cad thinks he's beaten us he'll jolly well find out his mistake to-morrow, I fancy—and you, too, Skinner. Highcliffe haven't won yet."

It was an incautious speech, and Skinner looked at him sharply. Skinner fancied he could guess what Harry meant. Obviously, the Head had given permission for the Greyfriars race to be rowed, after all—in the early morning, perhaps!

The thought brought another thought to Skinner. He knew he was "for it" from his Form-fellows. But he knew he was in for the time of his life if Greyfriars did happen to lose the cup. Trouble with Ponsonby was infinitely to be preferred to the trouble that would follow with his enraged fellow Removeites if that happened.

"Look here, Wharton!" he stammered. "There's something else. I mean to warn you; if this failed Ponsonby means to try another dodge to-morrow. I don't know what it is, but he's vowed Greyfriars sha'n't win. You—you'd better watch him to-morrow."

"We'll see about that," said Harry, turning abruptly on his heel. "Let's get out of this, you chaps!"

The eight juniors went out, heedless of the black, bitter looks Skinner & Co. gave them.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 918.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

By the Light of the Moon!

"HERE we are!"

As he spoke, Harry Wharton stopped in the deep shadow of the boathouse. Behind Harry was a crowd of silent forms, subdued strangely by the deep stillness of the night. Moonlight glimmered on the bare landing-stage, and on the swiftly-moving Sark, as it murmured its way to the sea. Only in places, near the banks, were dark shadows of trees that overhung the mirror-like surface of the river.

It was long past eleven o'clock, and most of Greyfriars were in bed at that hour. Only a few minutes ago Harry Wharton and those with him had also been in bed.

But they were up and about now, excited and eager, with stern business before them—business that would probably have caused the venerable Dr. Locke to lose his wonted serenity had he only known of it.

For Harry Wharton's great idea was about to be put into practice. As he had expected, his own crew had jumped at the chance, once they had got over their amazement at the suggestion. And the Upper Fourth crew had also "fallen for it"—though with perhaps less enthusiasm.

But they were all "sports," and it was settled at last. Harry had then cautiously approached Hilton and Potter of the Fifth. Though seniors, Harry knew they were fellows who would be willing enough to act as umpire and starter, if only for the sheer fun and adventure of it. Moreover, he knew they were straight as a die, and thorough sportsmen.

The two Fifth-Formers had agreed willingly enough, astounded as they were at the idea. But beyond those two no outsiders were let into the secret—neither in the Remove nor into the Upper Fourth. They were taking no chances of the secret leaking out.

So only the two crews with the coxwains, the two Fifth-Formers, and Hurree Singh formed the party that left Greyfriars by the box-room window that night, and crept down to the shadowy boathouse.

"Stay here, you chaps," whispered Harry, as the rest of the adventurers stopped with him. "I'll soon have the doors open!"

He slipped silently round to the back of the boathouse, climbed up a low, lean-to shed where ropes and broken oars were stored, and reached a small window. It was open, as Harry expected, and a moment later he had squeezed through and was standing inside the dark boathouse.

Harry knew every inch of the place, and a moment later the electric light flashed on as Harry pressed the switch. Save at the front the boathouse was encircled completely by high trees, and Harry did not fear the light being seen—from Greyfriars, at all events.

It was the work of a moment then to draw the bolts, and fling wide the great double doors, and soon the crowd of fellows were inside, and getting to work in earnest.

Working quietly but swiftly, they soon had the two precious racing crafts afloat. Then oars and rudders were carried out, and after slides, stretchers, and rowlocks were tested, all was in readiness for the struggle.

The Remove crew took the water first, but the Upper Fourth were soon after them, and reaching the starting-post they quickly jockeyed themselves

into position. Hilton and Hurree Singh had already rushed on ahead towards the finishing post, and after switching off the light, Potter closed the great doors, and ran up after the crews to the starting point.

All was ready at last, and Potter's voice, sounding strangely eerie in the stillness, rang out over the glimmering expanse of water.

"Are you ready? Go!"

Sixteen shining blades dipped as one, and they were off!

The race that followed was one the juniors were likely to remember for a long time. The ghostly half-light, the silence over the river and the sleeping countryside, the absence of encouraging yells from spectators, and the black, gloomy woods lining the banks, made the scene seem strangely unreal to all who were concerned in it.

But it was real enough for all that, and after the first few strokes of the flying start, the sixteen oarsmen forgot everything but the stern task before them and plugged away with might and main.

Over the silent river a thin mist hung, but it was light enough to see the banks for all that, and both coxes knew every inch of the old river. Their sorest trial was the necessity for curbing their excited inclination to yell, and they were obliged to content themselves with hissing their orders and blood-curdling threats instead of shrieking them.

From the very first, Temple, setting a faster stroke than Harry Wharton, took the lead, and before the race was half a minute old, the Upper Fourth cox was level with the Remove No. 4.

Harry Wharton did not seem to worry about that, however. He still kept up his steady, swinging stroke, and his men clung to it, working together beautifully, their oars moving like clockwork.

But the Upper Fourth crew were rowing well, too, and at the willow plantation Temple had increased his lead by several more feet. His men had to work like Trojans to do it, though.

Temple's face was a trifle white despite his lead, however. He knew the Remove crew were only biding their time, and he knew he had the task of his life before him to keep the advantage.

The race would go to the stroke who showed the best judgment, and Temple had an uneasy feeling that he had blundered by rushing his stroke at the beginning.

He had good reason to feel so, as events proved. Once past the willow plantation Harry called upon his men, and they responded brilliantly.

They picked up the quickened stroke, and the boat seemed to leap ahead.

"Pull, you beggars—pull!" hissed George Tubb, almost bursting with suppressed excitement. "Steady No. 4, Mind your beginning, bow, you ass! Steady all! Great pip! Well, rowed, chaps! You're doing it!"

There was no doubt about that fact. The Remove boat was overhauling the Upper Fourth boat, slowly, but surely. The Fourth cox was back now level with No. 4 in the Remove boat, and inch by inch he fell back still more, though Temple and his men were pulling all they knew.

They were round the bend now, and the long straight to the winning post was in sight, gleaming ahead like a streak of silver in the moonlight.

A smart bit of steering by young Tubb gave the Remove boat a clear quarter of a length round that bend, and now both boats were dead level, sweeping like well-oiled machines towards the finish.

But they did not stay long level. Temple had spurred again, but sheer eagerness made the Upper Fourth crew ragged in their "finish," and their cox yelled furiously, forgetting the need for quietness.

His wild cries to "Steady," and his frantic appeals were of little use, however. His crew were going to pieces—they had lost length and life, and their graceful, easy swing had gone. They rolled in the rougher water in the straight which put the finishing touch to them.

Both coxes were yelling now in their excitement—young Tubb in frantic glee, and Temple's man despairingly. Their cries rang across the stretch of water, and echoed through the silent woods.

Harry had quickened again to thirty now, and there was half a length between the boats. He knew there would be no necessity to raise the stroke higher than that.

Neither was there—the Upper Fourth were done, and Temple knew it. He called frantically, pantingly, to his men in a last wild effort to get them together again; but it was hopeless.

A length now—a length that widened to two lengths with amazing rapidity.

"Only fifty yards," gloated young Tubb. "You needn't burst any blood-vessels, you bounders! We've got 'em cooked! Oh, well rowed, you fellows!"

The white mile-post—the finishing post—was clearly to be seen now, and by it two dim figures were visible. One remained by the post, but the other ran down to the water's edge, fairly dancing with excitement. It was Hurree Singh, and his voice rang across the water.

"Well rowed, my esteemed and ridiculous chums. Well rowed, my esteemed Wharton! Hurrah!"

The Indian junior had need to shout "Hurrah!" for at that moment the Remove boat flashed past the post—unchallenged.

"Remove has it!" yelled Hilton, leaving his place by the mile-post. "Well rowed, kids! Two clear lengths!"

"Hurrah!" howled young Tubb, heedless of noise. "Easy all! You're not going a tour round the world, you idiots!"

The Remove crew ceased rowing, and their boat eased gently and swung with the current. The next moment the Upper Fourth swept up, amid a wild splashing of oars, done to the wide every man-jack of them.

But the Remove men had also felt the strain, and for some moments both crews lay on their oars, with heads between legs whilst the two boats drifted unchecked.

"They're going to sleep here," chuckled Hilton to Hurree Singh. "Here, wake up, you blighters, and let's get back."

Hilton's sarcastic voice brought the oarsmen's heads up with a jerk, and Harry Wharton grinned across at his defeated rival.

"Hard lines, Temple, old man!" he called.

"I give you best, Wharton!" grinned Temple ruefully. "Oh, my hat! I'm whacked! Let's get back!"

Nothing more was said. The victors did not wish to crow, and the losers did not feel like talking or anything else. In silence save for the coxwain's orders, the boats were turned, and they started to paddle gently back, Hilton and Inky running together along the dark, shadowy towing-path.

It was all over—the Remove had earned the right to represent Greyfriars



Before anyone realised what was happening, the Bounder leapt like a panther upon Sidney James Snoop and snatched something that just showed from his pocket. It was a handkerchief. And two jagged holes showed in it about two inches apart from each other. "Well, Skinner," said Wharton grimly. "What have you got to say now?" (See Chapter 8.)

in the fight for Major Thresher's cup, and there was no more to be said—then.

Quietly yet quickly the boats were housed, and everything put shipshape again. Then, after a shower, and a rub down, the oarsmen, victors and vanquished, left the boathouse, Hilton switching the light out and closing the doors from the inside. Then he climbed out through the little window at the back, and rejoined the juniors and Potter, waiting at the front. In silence they started for Greyfriars.

But they did not get far along the towing-path without incident.

Harry Wharton happened to stop to tie his shoelace, which he had forgotten to fasten, and the rest walked slowly on ahead of him. As he straightened himself again, the captain of the Remove heard a slight sound behind him, and he turned abruptly.

Then he started. From a stile they had just passed, and several yards behind him, three figures dropped down on to the towing-path, and turned away along the towing-path. Harry saw from their size that they were boys, and not men. He watched them, struck suddenly by their appearance.

Two of the dark figures walked on past the Greyfriars boathouse, but the third left his companions and vanished inwards towards the dark building.

"Phew!" breathed Harry.

Suspicious now, and without thinking of shouting his friends back, Harry ran back along the towing-path. As he did

so, there came a shout from one of the two figures—a startled shout.

"Look out!"

Harry reached the boathouse just then in time to see a dark figure vanish round the back. Without troubling about the other two, Harry dashed after him. He reached the rear of the dark building just in time to see the third unknown spring down in alarm from the lean-to shed and dart round the building.

He vanished, and Harry set his lips and went after him. Round the boathouse he sped, but when he reached the towing-path again, it was to see all three figures racing away into the shadows along the towing-path.

They vanished from sight, and Harry stopped, realising the uselessness of pursuit. At that moment Bob Cherry dashed up with the rest of the Greyfriars fellows stringing behind him.

"What on earth's up?" he gasped. "Who were those merchants, Harry?"

Harry shook his head. His eyes were gleaming.

"I don't know," he said. "But I fancy I can guess. They came from that stile—it leads from Highcliffe. Can't you guess? I fancy I recognised one of them, too."

"You—you mean Ponsonby?" gasped Peter Todd.

"I suspect it was he with two of his rotten pals," said Harry. "They were obviously up to no good, anyway. Skinner was right, then—we shall have
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 918.

to watch Ponsonby, chaps! He's evidently taking no chances. He was going to tamper with our boat or oars, I fancy."

"Phew! The daring rotter!"

"That settles it," said Harry grimly. "I'll ring up Courtenay in the morning, chaps. I'll tell him all, and I'll ask him to set a watch on that dangerous worm. Let's get home."

"But—but supposing they come back?"

"I don't think they will—they won't dare," said Harry, staring back along the towing-path. "They've had a thundering fright, I bet. Anyway, we daren't stay out any longer, you fellows. Let's get back for some sleep. We've got a stiff task before us to-morrow, and we'll need all the rest and sleep we can get."

With that Harry led the way along the towing-path again. He did not fear that Ponsonby & Co.—if it was those cads—would dare to risk another visit to the boathouse. But he was feeling very uneasy in regard to the Highcliffe black sheep for all that.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Ponsonby's Last Card!

THE rowing enthusiasts of Greyfriars and Highcliffe might have arranged the weather for the following afternoon, for it was almost ideal. Certainly the sun was strong, but a cool breeze whipped the lapping wave-tops on the shimmering Sark, and tempered the heat of the day.

Long before two o'clock the banks of the river swarmed with juniors from both schools—and scores of seniors, too! Those lofty individuals strolled about supremely conscious of the honour they were bestowing upon the junior fraternity by their presence at a fag show.

The Head of Greyfriars was there, likewise the Head of Highcliffe, Dr. Voysey. Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout, and Mr. Capper were there, as also were several Highcliffe masters. The fight for Major Thresher's silver cup was certainly arousing a great deal of interest. On the towing-path the colours of the rival schools mingled freely, and—for once—in friendly array.

The Highcliffe crew appeared first, paddling gently to the starting line opposite the stake boat. And some moments later the Greyfriars Remove crew put in an appearance amid the roars of their supporters.

For Harry Wharton had been right in his views. As he had expected, the powers that were had raised no objections when the Upper Fourth crew had resigned from the coveted honour of representing the school—astonished though they were. Cecil Reginald Temple's ingenious (yet truthful) confession that the Remove were the better crew, and had more right to represent the school, was accepted without question. Indeed, the Head had personally congratulated Temple on his sportsmanship and unselfishness—greatly to that junior's secret amusement.

Whether Mr. Quelch, or Mr. Capper, or Wingate, suspected the true facts of the case, the juniors did not know. If they did they kept their suspicions to themselves, and Mr. Quelch had formally informed Wharton that the Remove were to row in place of the Upper Fourth.

As a matter of fact, both Mr. Quelch and the Head, at all events, were secretly pleased at the change. Despite the Remove crew's wickedness in trespassing that afternoon, they could not forget that it was the Remove crew who had helped to save Major Thresher and his niece, and they agreed that the Remove crew deserved the honour of fighting for the cup.

But there was trouble for Cecil Reginald in the Upper Fourth until somehow the secret of that midnight race leaked out—how, none of the crews concerned in it could tell—and then the trouble ceased quickly enough.

Happily, however, the secret never reached the ears of anyone in authority—or, if it did, nothing came of it. And now, here the Remove crew were, fit as fiddles, and eager for the fray.

There was a hush along the whole course as the two crews took up their positions, and Mr. Lascelles, of Greyfriars, who had been appointed starter, took up his pistol.

"Are you all ready?"

A few moments' breathless waiting, and then:

Crack!

They were off!

The cry ran along the course from mouth to mouth, increasing to a roar as the boats were sighted, fairly in their stride.

"Go it, Greyfriars!"

"Put your beef into it, Highcliffe!"

"Oh, well rowed!"

A biscuit toss from each other the two slim "ships" cut along, side by side, with not an inch between them, for fully fifty yards, amidst a roar of excited shouting.

The bright sun sparkled and glistened on the flashing blades that rose and fell to the measured rasp of the groaning rowlocks. Along the banks a host of excited juniors galloped and surged, yelling and stumbling and colliding, but careless of ought but the race.

All eyes were strained upon the arrowheads of foam that churned and fell away from the racing-boats' noses.

"Greyfriars! Now, the Remove! Pull, you beggars! Pull!"

"Buck up, Highcliffe! Oh, well rowed, the Fourth!"

This last was a delirious howl from the Highcliffe supporters as they saw their boat edge slowly but surely to the front.

"Steady!" roared young Tubb.

"Watch your time! Steady!"

The Greyfriars cox had feared that that triumphant howl would unsettle his men, but he need not have worried. Harry Wharton had dinned his tactics into his crew too often for them to lose their heads just then.

It was gruelling work beneath the hot sun, despite the cool breeze, and from the banks the spectators could almost see the beads of perspiration rolling down the straining faces of the oarsmen.

Half a length ahead was the Highcliffe boat now—and less than a hundred yards gone! From the banks Greyfriars were appealing and yelling angrily. But Harry Wharton merely kept up his steady pace, his leg-thrusts perfect, his swing beautiful to watch, his blade cutting in square and clean. And his men behind him backed him up superbly, the muscles on their backs swelling and rolling as they stooped and swung and drove.

"Broken water ahead!" hissed young Tubb. "Steady!"

The starboard meadows were bare here, and the wind from seawards lashed the tiny wavelets overside. And here Courtenay and his gallant men felt the pinch. They had had less experience than their Greyfriars rivals, and they rushed it a little, working themselves out more than they knew.

They were through the rough at last, with clear water ahead. But during that hard, wearing fight through the rough Greyfriars had got back that half-length lead. More—they were several sturdy inches to the good, and the Greyfriars fellows soon let them know it.

"Oh, well rowed, Greyfriars! You've got 'em! You're holding them now! Oh, great!"

"Come along, Highcliffe—come along! They're leaving you!"

But Highcliffe were not losing ground without a fight. Courtenay, a trifle anxious now, increased from twenty-eight to thirty, and his men were equal to it. Up again crept the Highcliffe boat, amid a perfect tumult from the banks.

Highcliffe were rowing well—better than anyone had expected. There was no doubt about that. Level now, and half the course run. It looked like a stern fight and a close finish.

And it was. Side by side the rivals swept towards the finishing-post, with not a canvas between them at any time. Another fifty yards, and then Harry Wharton signalled with his staring eyes to cox.

Young Tubb gave a wild yell then.

"Now, you cripples! Get on to it! Pull! For the love of Mike—pull!"

His men did pull, though they felt their loins were cracking. They set their teeth and pulled, though the perspiration streamed into their smarting eyes, almost blinding them. Harry had quickened to thirty-two, though he trembled inwardly. And, as he expected, Courtenay also quickened.

Greyfriars went away from them, for all that. Harry Wharton and his men appeared to be made of steel and whipcord that day. They got a lead of half a length almost before anyone realised it, and they kept it despite all frantic efforts by their rivals to regain it.

Both crews were pulling a trifle rockily now; the strain was too much. The bridge was looming ahead now, and scarcely twenty-five yards beyond it was the finishing-post. And Highcliffe were actually wallowing, rolling.

"You've got 'em cooked, Greyfriars! Keep it up!"

It was a frenzied howl from the banks, and it appeared to be true enough.

But the race was not over yet.

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They were near the bridge now; the arch loomed up shadowy before them. And then quite suddenly consternation seized the Greyfriars supporters. Their boat began to act queerly. It seemed unable to keep a straight course.

"Wake up, cox!" yelled the crowd furiously. "What's the matter with you? Oh, you young idiot! Wake up!"

But young Tubb scarcely knew what was the matter with him. He only knew that the sun seemed suddenly to have become hotter, fiercer. He strove to keep the glare out of his eyes, but simply couldn't. It was dazzling.

Harry Wharton, though his brain was swimming, seemed to grasp that something was wrong.

"What is it, kid? What's the matter, you fool?" he panted hoarsely. "Steady!"

"The sun—it's right in my eyes! I can't— Oh, great Scott!"

Quite suddenly young Tubb realised that it was not the sun in his eyes. It was something else. Someone was playing tricks!

At the thought the youngster clenched his teeth hard. He jerked and wobbled his head about, shutting and opening his eyes again and again in a frantic effort to avoid the flashes of light that dazzled and burned and blinded him. Vaguely he saw the arch looming ahead—knew that unless he steered a straight course the boat would be smashed up against the stonework.

He had almost forgotten the race now—the rival boat straining with might and main to recover what they had lost. His one thought was to steer his ship safely through the yawning gap ahead.

In his ears was a roar of voices—voices shouting at him, he knew, though he scarcely heard a word. At all cost he must do it. He must! Wharton was shouting at him almost hysterically, terrified at cox's sudden fidgeting and wild steering.

Only a few yards now. And then quite suddenly a weight seemed to fall from his eyes and the dazzling flashes vanished. He saw clearly—and only just in time he dragged on his rudder-lines.

A dark shadow above the boat, and the next instant they were through—safely. Then young Tubb remembered his job, and gave a gasping yell:

"Now, you lubbers! Get on it! Give her ten! One—two—three—four—five—six—"

He stopped yelling then, for at that moment there sounded loud above the tumult two reports, sharp and clear.

Bang, bang!
"Easy, all!" he howled huskily. "Great pip! We've done it!"

The race was over. Those two reports meant that Greyfriars had won. Young Tubb scarcely troubled to glance at the rival ship that came labouring along the next moment. Greyfriars had won, and that was all that mattered.

It was all over. Greyfriars had yelled themselves hoarse, and Harry Wharton's hands ached with handshaking, as did the hands of his fellow oarsmen. With his honours thick upon him, the captain of the Remove led his men out of the boathouse at last into the bright sunshine. As he did so, a Highcliffe fag came hurrying up and handed him a note. It was from Frank Courtenay, and it was short and to the point:

"Dear Wharton," it read,— "If you'd like to see an interesting bit of 'sport,' will you come along to the bridge at once?—Yours,

"Frank Courtenay."

"MAGNET" PORTRAIT GALLERY.

No. 2.—Robert Cherry (of the Remove).



A sunny, good-natured fellow whose smile is as proverbial as his large feet. A good all-round sportsman, which qualification makes him a formidable member of the Famous Five. Full of energy, Bob has a stimulating effect upon all who come into contact with him. A great pal of Mark Linley, the scholarship junior, who, with Hurree Singh, also a member of the Famous Five, and Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, share Study No. 13 with him. White all through, it is to be doubted whether Bob Cherry has an enemy in all Greyfriars. Lessons don't exactly appeal to him, neither do his efforts in this direction evoke special praise from his Form master, but, scholar or no scholar, Bob Cherry is a plodder, and puts his best into everything he does.

Harry read it blankly. He had only parted from the genial Highcliffe skipper less than ten minutes ago.

"All serene!" he told the fag. "We'll come along."

Harry Wharton and his men went along at a trot, wondering and curious. They reached the bridge at last. High up the steep bank, against the side of the bridge, behind a screen of high thickets, they found Courtenay. With him was a swarm of Highcliffe juniors. On the ground, with several juniors pinning them down, were three other Highcliffe juniors. Harry started as he sighted their white, terrified faces.

They were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour.

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

As he had decided the night before, Harry had phoned to Courtenay that morning, but since then he had completely forgotten Ponsonby and all his works.

He remembered him now.

"Hallo! Here you are!" said Courtenay grimly, as Harry and his chums hurried up, staring. "Here's something that'll interest you, Wharton. I've discovered what happened to your cox during the race, Wharton. The kid swore somebody was playing tricks, didn't he? Well, he was right. These three cads, these crawling worms, were playing tricks. They were lying doggo up behind these thickets, and when you came along they focussed the giddy sun on that poor kid's eyes with magnifying-glasses. No wonder the kid couldn't steer!"

Harry Wharton and his chums stared speechlessly at the shrinking trio in the grass.

"So—so that's it!" gasped Harry, at last.

"That was the game," said Courtenay. "And it jolly nearly came off, Wharton. But it didn't quite come off. The

(Continued on page 28.)

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THE WILL TO WIN! A fight against death in mid-air in an aeroplane that has been tampered with, a forced landing in a barren, almost uninhabited country where water is as scarce and precious as diamonds—even these setbacks are not sufficient to damp Ferrers Locke's ardour. Keen as ever he hits—

The VELDT TRAIL!

A Powerful Mystery Yarn featuring Ferrers Locke, the world-famous scientific investigator, and his boy assistant, Jack Drake.



Bristow Tries It On!

FOR some seconds after the machine had touched ground Ferrers Locke sat rigid, like a statue.

The strain of the last few minutes had been terrific, and the perspiration was streaming down the detective's face as the result of his life-and-death battle in the air.

Then he leapt quickly from the cockpit, followed by Jack and Pycroft; both severely shaken and white-faced.

"Near thing, gov'nor!" muttered Jack, with an unsteady laugh, while the Yard man mopped his face with a shaking hand.

Locke did not answer at once. He was busy searching for the cause of the trouble.

But at last he faced round, a grim expression in his eyes.

"Elevator wire broken," he jerked; "and she's sheared a pin in the magneto timing!"

"Rotten luck, old man," said Pycroft sympathetically. "But you can't always foresee these accidents—"

"This was no accident!" Locke's voice cut in sharply, causing both Jack and the inspector to jump.

The detective signalled to them to come forward, and a moment later he was pointing out certain significant details in the region of the mechanical trouble—details which caused them both to whistle softly under their breath.

"The machine's been tampered with," said Locke in a tense voice, "and whoever did it was an expert in aeronautics. Why, he must almost have timed the breakdown to an hour or so. You see where we've landed, don't you?"

They glanced about them, noting the bleak, arid sand, dotted here and there with sun-scorched, dead tufts of grass and masses of rock and boulders.

It was a veritable wilderness upon which the red disc of the heavens blazed down incessantly, burning the life out of everything it touched.

"The scoundrel who did this," went on Locke, "was out not so much to cause our deaths as to strand us all in the

midst of this desert, and that's a living death in itself. It only wanted a bit less skilful handling, and even if we'd escaped ourselves, the machine would, in any case, have been jiggered up beyond all hope of repair!"

"I'm afraid that's the case now, gov'nor, or as near it as no matter," said Jack Drake suddenly.

And Locke whipped round.

The detective's young assistant had, in the past moment or so, been nosing around the aeroplane on his own account, and now he drew the attention of the detective to something which Locke had not so far noticed—something that caused the blood to drain from his face in horrified dismay.

WHO'S WHO

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous detective, who is engaged in solving the mystery surrounding the tragic end of

SIR MERTON CARR, a South African mining magnate, who has been murdered, uncle of

GERALD BRISTOW—alias Arthur the Dude—an escaped convict, who has made his way over to Johannesburg to seek the treasure of the Golden Pyramid.

GRIGGS, the valet at Sir Merton's house at Parktown, a suburb of Johannesburg.

STEPHEN JARRAD, the late baronet's private secretary, who has mysteriously disappeared, thereby leading the Jo'burg police to assume that he is guilty of the murder.

DAFT DAVE, a local half-wit, who apparently knew the true facts of the murder, but dies before he can make a full confession.

JACK DRAKE, Locke's capable boy assistant.

INSPECTOR PYCROFT, a Scotland Yard detective.

INSPECTOR VANE, a member of the South African Police Force.

The treasure of the Golden Pyramid—which, incidentally, supplies the motive of the murder of Sir Merton—turns out to be a rich asbestos reef in the region of the ruins at Great Zimbabwe, Rhodesia. Locke, Drake, and Pycroft set out for the ruins by aeroplane, fearing that Bristow and Griggs have got ahead of them. Most of the journey is accomplished without incident, and then suddenly the aeroplane gets out of control. More by luck than anything else Locke succeeds in bringing the plane safely to earth. (Now read on.)

"Why, the steering-gear's been doctored!" he gasped. "See here, Pycroft! It's a sheer miracle it didn't snap clean in two while we were trying to land a few moments ago! It's been cut two-thirds through!"

"Good heavens!" cried Pycroft. "That means we—"

"It means that we can't go on, except on foot!" answered Locke in a tense voice. "And as we've dropped down Heaven knows how many miles from anywhere, and—well—"

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

They stared at each other in horrified dismay for some moments. Then Locke, who was far from being of the type that gives way, began to make immediate preparations for their unavoidable trek.

Fortunately, they carried a large scale map in their kit, and, by studying this carefully, with the additional help of the compass in the pilot's seat of the aeroplane, for some minutes they contrived to get a more or less approximate idea of their bearings.

"Our best plan," said Locke at last, "would be to try to strike a native kraal and pick up a guide. There are bound to be some of these kraals dotted about, especially as we're fortunately only on the fringe of the desert land."

They started out at last, each carrying a kitbag containing a fair division of the supplies which had been placed in the aeroplane prior to leaving Bulawayo.

About an hour after they had commenced their journey, when their figures were little more than tiny specks against the horizon, the rays of the setting sun glinted on something that rose in a swoop from the shadow of a distant mountain and soared, like a great bird, into the steely heavens.

"So far so good!" muttered Gerald Arthur Bristow, as he deftly manipulated the controls of the monoplane he was now driving. "And now to pick up that greasy old nigger, Mafuzi!"

Bristow's aeroplane—which he had, incidentally, appropriated from the aerodrome just outside Bulawayo—soared across the sun-swept heavens, and finally came down just outside a straggling collection of wattle-and-daub huts which

marked a large native kraal, or compound, about twenty miles east of the farming district known as Lapanzi.

Mafuzu, true to his word, was waiting in readiness, and, after a brief whispered conversation with Bristow, the wily native set off at a run, taking an oblique line which would cut clean across the path of Locke and his companions, and so intercept them, in accordance with Bristow's plan.

The sun had already set, and night had fallen with the almost startling abruptness peculiar to South Africa, when Locke and his companions halted at the base of a bleak, rocky mountain and prepared to make camp for the night.

They were utterly worn out and aching in every limb, and the fact that they had not struck so much as a suggestion of water during the whole course of their trek had begun to tell heavily upon them.

But they had barely settled down when there came a movement in a large dried-up bush a few yards away, which caused Locke to start to his feet.

Next moment a big, burly native had appeared as if from nowhere, his face expressive of blank surprise as he caught sight of the three white men.

"Inkoos, he lose the way, perhaps?" asked Mafuzu, speaking in the Tebele tongue.

Locke stared hard at him for a moment before answering.

"Supposing we have," he said guardedly, "what do you know about it?"

The native shrugged his shoulders. "Mafuzu see the three white Ingoosi trekking across desert," he replied. "Desert no place for white man, and white man stop plenty time to read big map paper."

Locke gave a short laugh. The average African native, as he knew, was a marvel when it came to stalking, and could follow anything, be it human or animal, for miles, without his presence even being suspected. Evidently this native had done something of the kind in the present instance.

"What did you follow us for?" asked Locke, with a quick glance.

"Mafuzu just want make sure Inkoosi is lost," answered the native, civilly enough. "Then Mafuzu come and say perhaps can help. Mafuzu plenty much first-class guide."

"I say, Locke, old man, that's a piece of jolly good luck if you like!" said Pycroft, who had overheard the conversation, and now joined the detective along with Jack Drake.

Locke did not answer, but turned again to the native.

"Where do you belong?" he asked. The native pointed away to the left across the bleak, moonlit veldt towards a range of low-lying mountains.

"Mafuzu come from Victoria district—from Great Zimbabwe," he said.

"Why, that's just where we're making for!" exclaimed Pycroft delightedly. "This chap can show us—"

He broke off as Locke threw him a quick glance.

"We camp here for the night," said the detective to the native. "We continue our trek at sun-up. You stay here and be our guide—eh?"

The native hesitated, scratching his woolly head doubtfully.

"Better you come now plenty quick, baas," he suggested. "Not too far to go, and—"

But Locke shook his head. "We go at sun-up," he insisted.

"You stay, and then go along with us, savvy?"

The negro still hesitated, but finally nodded.

"Lungeli (all right)," he said shortly. "How much you pay?"

Locke smiled. Even in this remote part of the world the question of money was all important.

"Ten bob," he said.

And even Jack Drake gasped. The amount was absurdly inadequate.

But the native simply nodded again in prompt agreement, and then began at once to prepare his bed for the night.

Much to his companions' surprise, Locke insisted that they should take turns at sentry-go throughout the night—a most unusual proceeding when there was the native guide present, who, in the ordinary way, could always be relied upon to act as patrolman.

Pycroft somewhat indignantly reminded Locke of this fact; but the detective, for reasons he chose not to explain, remained stubborn on the point.

The sun had barely begun to peep over the eastern horizon ere a start was made, with Mafuzu taking the lead.

Within an hour of starting the native, much to their relief, led them to a stream of crystal-clear water, where they quenched their thirst, with many exclamations of genuine delight.

Then the journey was resumed.

It was almost night again ere Mafuzu led them through a narrow, precipitous pass between two rugged mountains, whose peaks were lost in a mist of cloud.

"Where's he jolly well taking us to?" asked Pycroft impatiently. The Yard man was beginning to feel a bit worn out with so much tramping.

But Locke shot him a meaning glance,

and he subsided, without, however, quite realising what the detective was driving at.

They were traversing a narrow, rocky path now, with a sheer drop down one side to a green valley beneath. Mafuzu was some yards ahead, plodding away, chanting some weird dirge to himself as he went.

Suddenly Locke plucked at Jack Drake's arm.

"Don't stop and don't look round!" he whispered. "Just take a look down into the valley—there, beyond that line of boulders standing out just ahead of you."

Jack did as he was bid, wonderingly at first. Then he stifled a sudden gasp of surprise.

Through the foliage at the spot indicated by Locke Jack had just caught the merest fleeting glimpse of something that glinted grey and white in the sun and then seemed to be swallowed up again in the foliage itself.

"Looks like the wing of a stationary aeroplane, gov'nor," he whispered back incredulously.

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly and nodded.

"Hit it first time, my boy!" he muttered.

At the same time he thrust something cold and hard into Jack's hand—something that caused Jack to give a start of surprise.

"Hang on to that," muttered Locke; "but don't use it unless you're forced to do so!"

He turned back to where Pycroft was stumbling along behind him.

"Got your automatic?" he whispered. Pycroft stared at him in amazed inquiry.



"Put up your hands, quick!" hissed Ferrers Locke. Gaping with fright, the native did as he was bid, and next moment Ferrers Locke had snatched a long, ugly-looking knife from the fellow's loincloth and sent it spinning into the valley below. (See page 24.)

"Course I have!" he answered at last. "But why—"

"That's all right!" snapped Locke. "Keep it handy in case of trouble, and be ready when I give you the word!"

"But—but what the thump—" began Pycroft.

His words died on his lips in a gasp of sheer amazement.

Locke had suddenly skipped ahead of them both, moving with the silence and agility of a panther, till he came practically abreast of the all-unsuspecting native who was leading them.

Then, without the slightest warning, Locke jabbed the muzzle of his automatic into Mafuzu's thick neck, causing that worthy to emit a loud squeal of alarm and jump back so that he narrowly missed pitching headlong over the narrow pass into the valley beneath.

"Put up your hands!" hissed the detective, speaking in the native's own language. "Quick and lively, now, and no funny business!"

Gaping with fright, the native did as he was bid; and next instant Locke had snatched a long and ugly-looking knife from the fellow's loincloth and sent it spinning into the air, to fall into the valley below.

"And now," said Ferrers Locke, with a grim smile, "you're going to lead us straight to your scoundrelly master—Mr. Gerald Bristow. I've got a little account to settle up with him!"

Ferrers Locke Springs a Surprise!

LOCKE'S two companions watched the great detective in breathless amazement.

They had been taken as completely by surprise as had the burly native guide whom Ferrers Locke had so peremptorily ordered to put up his hands.

Throughout the best part of the day Jack Drake and Pycroft had followed Mafuzu, the guide, along with the detective, suspecting nothing at all, accepting the native as a pukka guide, as indeed they believed till now that Locke himself had done. And the detective had given them no cause, by word or act, to think otherwise. He had behaved as normally as they had done; yet now, with the swiftness of a lightning streak, he had pounced upon the native without so much as a word of warning or explanation.

Mafuzu was staring at Locke now, the whites of his eyes rolling in stark fright and no little amazement.

"What for you play like this?" he stuttered in broken English. "Mafuzu plenty good mission-boy, no can ferstan (understand)?"

"You ferstan all right!" snapped Locke, looking at the fellow squarely. "You're in Baas Gerald's pay. You come from Bulawayo, not Zimbabwe, and it's no use trying to pretend otherwise! Get a move on now, and lead us to your master, or this thing will go off!"

He jerked his automatic forward threateningly, causing the native to give a sharp squeal of fright.

But whether Mafuzu was even more afraid of Bristow's wrath than he was of Locke's automatic is not certain. The fact only remains that, instead of obeying Locke's command, the guide began again to argue in that injured, apparently innocent tone which the average Rhodesian negro knows so well how to simulate.

"Mafuzu no ferstan," he repeated. "Mafuzu perfect good boy, no work for Baas Gerald—Mafuzu not know Baas Gerald. Mafuzu just plain, or'nary guide boy from Great Zimbabwe—"

"Mafuzu is just a plain, ordinary liar, you mean!" barked Locke. "You say you come from Great Zimbabwe, yet your loincloth is spattered with red clay-mud, which you never see in Zimbabwe, but which is found everywhere in Bulawayo! Also, you agreed to accept ten shillings as guide-pay, without any argument, whereas any ordinary guide-boy would have marched off in disgust at such a mean price. But that's not all. What about this, which I took from your kitbag while you were sleeping last night?"

And Locke suddenly produced a large piece of blue, official-looking paper, at sight of which the native's eyes goggled again in blank dismay.

Even Jack Drake gasped at sight of it. Though he had been in South Africa more than a few months, Locke's assistant knew that this blue paper was what was called a "stupa," or native's employment passport, which the laws of the country demand shall be taken out by any employer of coloured labour under pain of heavy penalties.

This stupa contained all particulars regarding its holder, from his tribal

name and parentage down to his fingerprints and details of any special marks or scars on his body by which he could be identified.

It also contained the name of his employer, details of the period of employment, rate of pay, and so forth. In short, it comprised a sort of miniature "history" of the native on whose behalf it was issued by the government registrar.

The little group of four was now standing on a rocky ledge, or platform, which jutted out over the cliff edge and afforded rather more room than the narrow, tortuous path along which they had up to now been traversing.

Ferrers Locke unfolded the passport and held it up. Jack and the inspector, standing just behind him, took in the particulars at a glance, noting that the passport had been issued in Bulawayo barely a week previously, and that in the column headed "employee" the name "Arthur Gerald" appeared.

"Evidently even Bristow's cool audacity was not equal to his giving his own surname in this case," said Locke, "though he might have done so with comparatively no risk of detection at such a distance from the chief business centres of the Union. But I suspected this johnny from the start. He appeared rather too 'magically' for my liking. One doesn't usually meet stray guides in this part of the world, and—Ye gods, look out!"

He broke off abruptly and sprang forward.

The native guide, taking advantage of Locke's momentarily distracted attention, had slipped noiselessly forward, and, with a quick jerk, had sought to snatch the detective's automatic from his hand.

But Locke was even quicker. His arm shot up, though not quickly enough to prevent the native from knocking the gun from his grasp. It went sailing through the air, to be caught, with amazing dexterity, by Jack Drake, who, in doing so, almost pitched backwards over the edge of the cliff.

But Pycroft's suddenly outflung arm saved him by a hairsbreadth, and now Locke had sprung at the burly native and engaged him in a fierce struggle.

The average Rhodesian native is a marvel of physical strength, and in any ordinary contest with a white man can usually be relied upon to put up a winning show.

But the case was different just now. What this native gained in sheer brute strength he almost entirely lost through his lack of knowledge of the science of boxing—a knowledge which Locke possessed to the point of expertness.

The struggle was sharp and brief in the extreme. At one breathless moment it seemed as if both contestants must pitch headlong over the cliff; but next instant Locke had forced his adversary back and then by a quick turn, coupled with a neat trick, quite unexpected on the part of the negro, the detective had suddenly turned the tables.

Next instant Mafuzu gave a shriek of amazement and terror as he found himself lifted clean off his feet and held easily over Locke's head, his wriggling, squirming body poised over the very edge of the cliff.

"Now," breathed the detective, "you are either going to take me to your boss maningi chetcha (instantly), or you're going to join your fathers in the happy hunting-ground. Which is it to be?"

Mafuzu's eyes nearly fell out of their sockets. He ceased wriggling out of his stark fear of being dropped over the

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cliff. His whole body became almost rigid—frozen with sheer terror.

"Yahoo!" gasped the native in a frenzy of fear. "Me take you all same too quick, my master! Me all same your willing slave, O inkoos! Me no more work for Baas Gerald any more, inyanesi, bayete!"*

Locke set the fear-stricken native guide on his feet, at the same moment recovering his automatic from Jack, who, despite the gravity of the situation, was almost doubled up with stifled laughter at sight of the guide's positively comic fright.

"We'll get along right now, then!" was all that Locke said, his own expression as grim and inscrutable as ever.

And the native, snivelling and whimpering now, started forward. His automatic held at the ready, Ferrers Locke and his companions followed close behind.

The Show-Down!

THE remainder of the journey proved, as Locke had expected, to be a very brief one.

The little party, headed by Mafuzu, now tumbling over himself in his anxiety to obey the detective's slightest word, soon came to a deep descent down the rocky side of the mountain to the valley beneath. When they had traversed a little more than half-way, the native turned aside and came to a halt at a great, yawning hole in the side of the mountain itself.

"A cave, by Jove!" muttered Locke. He signed with his automatic to the native, who fell back, his hands still held high above his head. Then the detective turned towards Pyecroft.

"You might stay here, old chap," he said, "and keep this black trash covered while Jack and I have a look inside. I don't care to trust the native to lead us through that pitch blackness."

Pyecroft nodded, stepping forward and taking Locke's place before the native guide.

The detective and his young assistant moved towards the entrance of the cave now and passed within.

Jack's eyes were gleaming with suppressed excitement. They were nearing the end of the chase now, and at long last were to come face to face with the elusive Bristow.

Locke's assistant crept forward, close behind the detective, and they picked their way through the darkness with the silence of panthers stalking their prey. It was a difficult and perilous task, the darkness growing more and more intense as they got farther in, and Locke dared not risk the use of an electric torch.

But presently they came to a sharp turn in the passage, and as they swerved round a faint glimmer of light came percolating through the blackness, revealing another long, straight passage, at the end of which was apparently a vast cavern hewn by Nature out of the solid rock. As they drew nearer they saw that the light was coming from an oil-lamp suspended by a length of raw cowhide from the roof of the cave.

They moved with even more elaborate caution now. To Jack it seemed an eternity ere the end of this last passage was reached.

Suddenly they halted dead in their tracks as the sound of a movement

ahead reached their ears and a vague shadow flitted across the orbit of the oil-lamp.

"That you, Mafuzu?"

The voice was only too familiar. Locke answered instantly, mimicking the deep, bass voice of the native guide to perfection and replying in faultless Tebele.

"I have returned, O my master," he said; and there came a grunt of satisfaction from Bristow, who was still out of sight.

"And you have brought your three prisoners?" was Bristow's next question.

"Ye bu, Inkoos!" answered Locke gravely.

"Good! Don't hang about out there—come along in at once!"

With these last words, a figure appeared at the end of the passage, and Locke and Jack caught a fleeting glimpse of the inevitable eyeglass which glinted momentarily in the lamp-light.

Next instant Locke had darted forward; his automatic thrust unerringly in front of him.

"Put 'em up, Bristow!" he ordered curtly.

And Gerald Arthur Bristow fell back with a sudden shout of sheer dismay.

The monocled crook was so completely taken by surprise that for the space of a moment or so he could do



Mafuzu gave a shriek of terror as he found himself lifted clean off his feet and held easily over Ferrers Locke's head. "Now," breathed the detective, "you're either going to take me to your master, or you're going to join your fathers in the happy hunting-ground. Which is it to be?" (See page 24.)

nothing but stand and gape at the figures of Locke and Jack Drake, who now stood well within the cavern.

Then suddenly Bristow's eyes became shot with yellow, and blazed in an access of almost uncontrollable passion.

"You!" he breathed, between clenched teeth. "Heavens, I might have guessed the uselessness of trusting to a confounded nigger—"

He gave a sudden roar of concentrated fury, and, ignoring, in his blind rage, the fact that both Locke and Jack were fully armed, made a mad rush at the Baker Street detective.

Locke's eyes flashed, his lips setting in a grim line. This was no time for hesitation.

The detective's finger tightened round the trigger of his automatic. There came a flash of flame and a report that sounded like the crash of thunder in that narrow, confined space.

Locke had fired point blank, and even Jack jumped and gave a cry of surprise and horror.

But, elusive even to the last gasp, Bristow saw it coming, and, with extraordinary presence of mind, stopped

dead, and then dropped flat on to his face at the detective's feet.

It was all done in a split second, and the bullet from Locke's gun went screaming over the crook's prostrate body, to bury itself in a fissure of the rock which formed the wall of the cavern.

Next instant Locke gave a cry as Bristow's long, thin hands closed in a vice-like grip round his ankle. A sudden, vicious tug, and the detective was jerked completely off his balance.

He fell backwards, only Jack's swiftly extended arms saving him from a bad crash on to the solid rock floor.

Locke lunged out fiercely, wrenching one foot free at the same instant. The toe of his boot must have caught Bristow in some vital part, for next instant the crook had given a wild howl of agony, and, releasing his sole remaining grip on Locke's other ankle, rolled over, clutching his jaw in an ecstasy of pain.

Events moved swiftly after that, and in almost less time than it takes to tell, the detective and his assistant had

*A term of the highest respect: "Inyanesi" means "I solemnly swear it!" and "Bayete" is equal to a Royal title, such as "O, King!"

pinioned Bristow's arms to his sides and dragged him to his feet.

He looked a sorry, bedraggled spectacle as he stood before them, his clothes smothered in dust and grime, his eyeglass hanging, a mere shattered fragment, suspended from its tape.

"You win, Locke—as per usual!" he said hoarsely as he surveyed his captors with a baleful glare.

"I think so," murmured Locke gravely, "and I might as well tell you that the story might have had a different ending but for a series of stupid blunders on your part. When I left Bulawayo, I had quite made up my mind that you must have come this way by another route altogether.

"It was only after the accident—to call it by no harder name—to my aeroplane, that I discovered your hand behind everything. When you went to all that elaborate trouble to 'doctor' up my steering-gear, you quite overlooked the fact that your fingerprints must inevitably be left in a regular trail all over the place. I picked out at least a dozen beautifully clear imprints on the machine, and, as I happened to be carrying a photograph of your prints obtained from my friend Inspector Pyecroft, of Scotland Yard, it only needed a quick comparison, plus a little imagination, to put two and two together and make four of them, as usual.

"It was a pity, too, that your native guide was so thundering well rehearsed that he rattled off his speeches like a parrot. Natives are not usually so well primed, so ready with their answers, especially your raw country native, such as this particular beauty pretended

to be, and the fact struck me as suspicious. Also, you failed to take the very ordinary precaution of relieving Mafuzu of his stupa before letting him loose on to our trail. Every picture tells a story, you know."

Bristow's glare changed to a look of frank admiration as Locke briefly outlined these simple yet terribly ominous facts. A slow smile crept over the crook's features, and something of his old urbane coolness came back.

"It's an honour to be beaten by a man like you, Ferrers Locke," he said at last. "Sorry I can't offer to shake hands, but it's your own beastly fault, don't y' know. Those confounded shackles—"

He tugged suggestively at the lengths of rope which bound his arms to his sides and sighed regretfully.

"But even if you have got me at last," he went on, with a sudden show of feeling, "you can't jug me for the murder of Sir Merton. I didn't do it."

Locke, who had been busy looking round the cave, turned abruptly at these words and looked straight into the other's eyes.

"I know you didn't," he answered quietly.

"The dickens you do!" gasped Bristow, falling back a step in surprise, which was shared in scarcely less measure by Jack Drake. "But how on earth—"

"I'm not going to waste time palavering about all that now," cut in Locke somewhat curtly. "But I'll just say this: Even if you hadn't come to me as you did, a few hours after the murder, and told me a story which I knew at the outset to be true, I should have eventually come upon the one piece of evidence which relieves you of the charge of murder. You forget the dagger—the weapon with which the crime was committed."

"I never even saw it," answered Bristow, staring at Locke.

"I am not suggesting that you did," retorted Locke. "The dagger was seen and touched by two people only—first, by the hand that sent it into the heart of one of the finest men who ever lived—a man who might have been your greatest friend, Bristow, had you only

given him a sporting chance and played the game! And, secondly, by another, who removed it from the body and deliberately buried it under the floorboards of Stephen Jarrad's room, so that when it was eventually discovered poor young Jarrad would be accused."

"What was the name you spoke just now?" said Bristow tensely. "Jarrad, did you say?"

Locke nodded.

"I know what you're thinking, Bristow," he said quietly. "The similarity of Sir Merton's secretary's surname to your own Christian name of Gerald had not escaped me.

"Listen! Daft Dave, the inventor of that super-dictaphone affair in which your uncle was interested, was one of the principal causes of all the mystery that has hung like a pall of fog over this case from the outset. Daft Dave it was who appeared on the scene of the crime after it had been committed, after even you had turned up, though you were not to know about that.

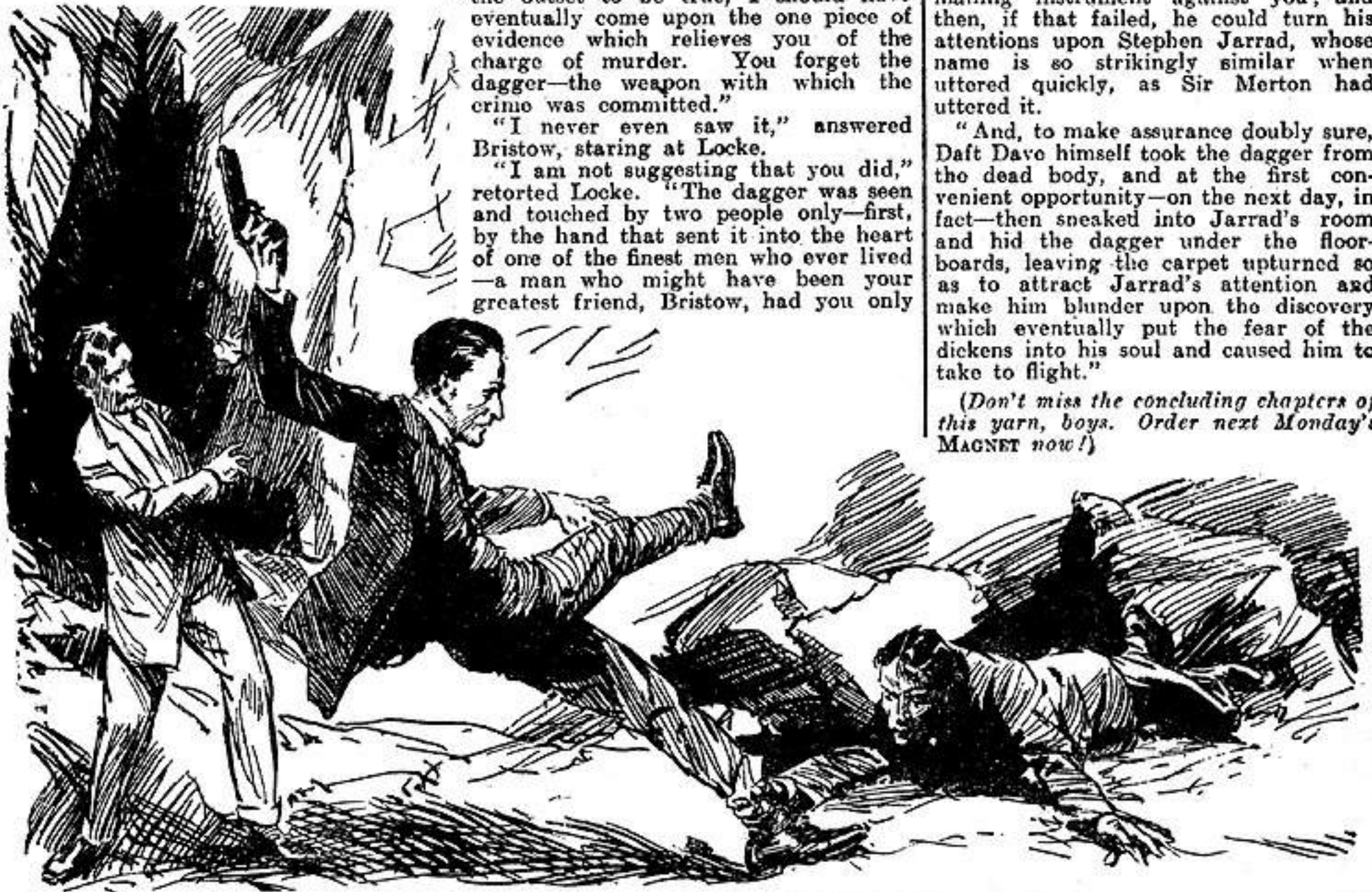
"Daft Dave it was who furtively regained possession of the dictaphone and the small ebony box containing spare 'records.' He had been lying in wait, had actually witnessed the crime from start to finish, had heard those amazing words of Sir Merton's as the poor fellow was struck down—those words which were automatically recorded on the still-running instrument.

"And Daft Dave, like the cunning serpent that he was, saw a double chance for gain.

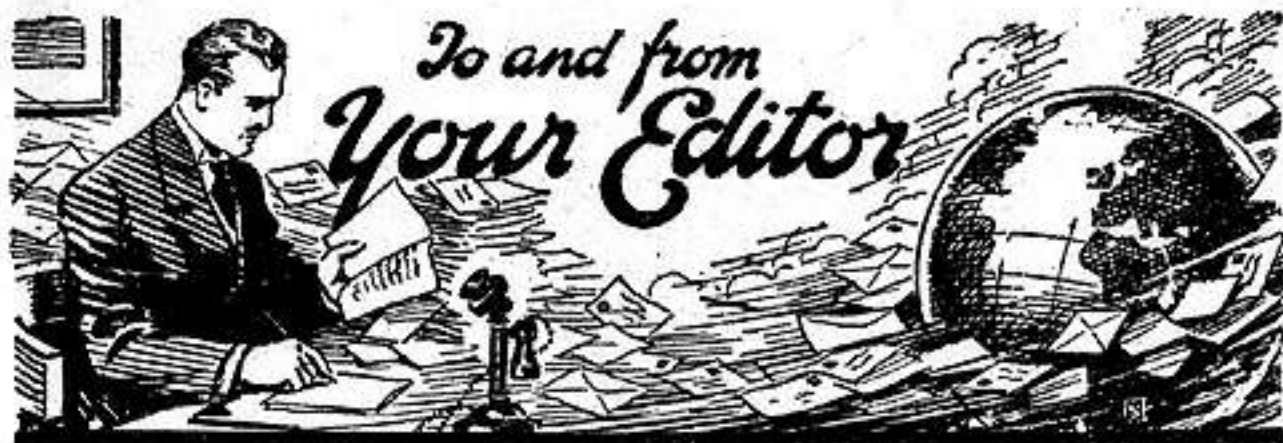
"First, he could keep the dictaphone and records, and use them as a blackmailing instrument against you; and then, if that failed, he could turn his attentions upon Stephen Jarrad, whose name is so strikingly similar when uttered quickly, as Sir Merton had uttered it.

"And, to make assurance doubly sure, Daft Dave himself took the dagger from the dead body, and at the first convenient opportunity—on the next day, in fact—then sneaked into Jarrad's room and hid the dagger under the floorboards, leaving the carpet upturned so as to attract Jarrad's attention and make him blunder upon the discovery which eventually put the fear of the dickens into his soul and caused him to take to flight."

(Don't miss the concluding chapters of this yarn, boys. Order next Monday's MAGNET now!)



Ferrers Locke gave a cry of amazement as Bristow's long, thin hands closed in a vice-like grip round his ankle. A sudden, vicious tug and the detective was jerked completely off his balance, only Jack's swiftly extended arms saving him from a bad crash on the solid rock floor. (See page 25.)



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

TOO MUCH BUNTER!

MY daily mail-bag contains letters of all sorts and sizes, and I tackle it with enthusiasm first thing every day. Most of my correspondents speak highly of the MAGNET, some make useful suggestions, while others air their grouses. You will always find a small percentage of the dissatisfied amongst the satisfied. Here's a complaint from a "loyal" reader, who doesn't either sign his name or give his address. In his town—a large town, wherever that might be—he has heard a lot of complaints about the MAGNET. To boil it all down, he says that there is far too much Bunter. Now, that's surprising, for the majority of my readers who take the trouble to correspond with me say the opposite. Bunter undoubtedly figures a great deal in the Greyfriars yarns. But where would they be without the one and only William George? My dissatisfied correspondent wants to hear more of Dutton, the deaf junior, Brown, and Squiff. He will, if he only possesses his soul in patience. Again, he complains that Wharton, Bob Cherry, and the rest of the Famous Five are too simple. I don't quite understand what he means by that. Neither of these characters can be called simple. They're typical schoolboys, prone to all the mischievous tricks of the average boy. But never simple. Apparently, my disgruntled reader wants Greyfriars stories without the Famous Five, without Billy Bunter, etc. I'm afraid he's asking too much.

TROUBLE AT HOME!

A London chum of mine tells me he is much perplexed as to the best course to adopt. His stepfather is ruining the home, for instead of working he wastes his time in public-houses, drinking with his friends. My correspondent asks whether it would be wrong for him to go away and live by himself, things being pretty miserable at home. He says he is only earning fifteen shillings per week, of which ten go to his mother for his board and lodging. He winds up by saying that his mother would get on much better without him. I take leave to doubt it. I think my chum's place of duty is by his mother. We are often told that the boy's best friend is his mother; contrariwise, the mother's best friend should be her boy. If my chum's mother even supports him in the idea of leaving, he should ignore her advice. It would only be her unselfishness. She will be prouder than she is now if her son stands by her in these sad days, and he will be glad enough he acted so, both now and later. Let him remember that, come what may, he is wanted where he is.

BRAVO, ST. SAM'S!

My friend, A. R. Balfour, 24, St. Mary's Street, Stamford, Lincs., wants to know what about St. Sam's. Could not Wharton get Dicky Nugent to write a St. Sam's story each week for the MAGNET? Those stories, he says, are most amusing, especially when they are about the Head. I am giving this bright notion my best attention, and have ordered in a supply of wet towels. By the way, this keen Lincolnshire reader says good, kind, encouraging words about Bunter and the "Court," which is wise and seemly, for Bunter is a particularly useful bird.

GRAND NEW SERIAL!

I have a special new detective-adventure story, featuring Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, billed to start the week after next. It's a topper! I won't say more at this juncture; I'll just leave you curious. Look out for further particulars in next week's Chat.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

Magnetites should not let the week run out without ordering a copy of this world-famous annual. Without exaggeration, the new "Holiday Annual" beats anything in the way of annuals that has ever seen the light of day. It beats its own high-water mark of quality. Stories by Frank Richards, dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, are there in abundance. Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, too, are also included. For lovers of adventure tales, sporting yarns, articles, hobbies, poems, etc., the "Holiday Annual" fills the bill, while a mention must be made of the superb photogravures and gorgeous, coloured plates. And the index! Magnetites will be pleased to see this new feature to what has always been an otherwise perfect annual. Six shillings is the price of the "Holiday Annual"—a real value-for-money proposition. You'll not suffer a weary moment as you peruse its three hundred and sixty pages.

THE "GEM"!

Just a few words about our topping Companion Paper. Mr. Martin Clifford has been persuaded to write longer St. Jim's yarns—a move that has pleased the vast public of "Gem" readers no end. Magnetites would be doing themselves a good turn to buy a copy of this week's "Gem." It contains a topping yarn of Tom Merry & Co., with Baggy Trimble and a new fellow at the school playing leading parts. In addition,

there is an excellent "St. Jim's News" contributed by Tom Merry & Co., and an amazing serial story of mystery and adventure.

"THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY"

There are two extra-good numbers of this new library now on sale that really should not be missed by lovers of school stories. No. 12 deals with Greyfriars and the early adventures of Alonzo Todd. Readers, lately, have clamoured for a yarn featuring the arrival of the gentle duffer of the Remove. Well, those readers have had their wish granted. This particular tale is a winner from beginning to end. Alonzo is every sort of fool, but there's one thing in his favour, namely, his heart is in the right place. You'll read how eager Alonzo is to help his fellow-creatures. You'll learn, too, how some of those "fellow-creatures" "help" Alonzo! But I'm ringing off at this stage. If you are keen to know more you'll certainly read

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

No. 11 is a topping yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co., the heroes of Rookwood. Silver, the captain of the Fourth, finds himself in a nasty entanglement; but he's a fighter, is young Silver, and he endeavours to put matters right in his own way. His way is slightly unorthodox, but there's merit in it, for Jimmy does the trick. You'll be able to put two and two together when you read

"EXPELLED!"

By Owen Conquest.

Next Monday's Programme!

"SCHOOLBOYS versus 'PRO'S'!"

By Frank Richards.

A magnificent story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars celebrating the opening of the footer season. This yarn has a real kick in it, and will be remembered for many a long day.

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

The closing chapters of this amazing detective story staged in South Africa is a strong item in next week's bumper issue.

FOOTBALL!

What more appropriate than a special "Herald" supplement by Harry Wharton & Co. with the above subject? Stand by for the kick-off!

PORTRAIT GALLERY.

Billy Bunter figures in this new feature next Monday. You won't miss his fat and cheerful chivvy, anyway. Till next week, chums,

Your Editor.

RIVAL OARSMEN!

(Continued from page 21.)

beauties were caught in the act by Tadpole and several other chaps. I promised you this morning I'd set a watch on our dear pal Ponsonby. I set these chaps to shadow 'em at noon, and they've done their work jolly well. They tracked the beauties here, and watched 'em. It wasn't until your cox nearly banged you into the bridge that they spotted the game. Then they went for the giddy spoil-sports like one o'clock. That's why the giddy dazzle left the kid's eyes all at once."

"And a jolly near thing it was, too," grinned Tadpole. "Another second, and you'd have been smashed up against the piles—besides losing the race. Here's the merry old magnifying-glasses the cads used."

And Tadpole took three glasses from his pocket and showed them round.

"Oh!" gasped Harry.

He understood now. He looked at the trembling Cecil Ponsonby, and then he held out his hand frankly to Courtenay.

"You're a brick, Courtenay!" he said quietly. "And a jolly good sport, too. So are these chaps who bowled these

howling cads out. They must have known it would lose Highcliffe the race if they stopped the game. Yet they did it. Some chaps wouldn't have been so generous to do it."

"Hear, hear!" came a hearty chorus from Harry's chums.

Courtenay grinned.

"Don't mention it," he said cheerfully. "It was a bit of a pill, losing the race; but you wait until next year. We'll get that cup yet. And now," went on the Highcliffe skipper, his face and voice suddenly hardening, "what about these sweeps? They've disgraced their school. We're thundering well ashamed to own the blighters. You chaps are just in time to lend a hand. Ponsonby, my lad, you're going to go through it—and you, Gadsby and Vavasour!"

Ponsonby & Co. went through it! Ponsonby had played his last card, and lost. The Highcliffe fellows were angry and more than disgusted, and they let Ponsonby & Co. know it. Those following few minutes were like a horrible nightmare to the three shady schemers. They were rolled in the mud and pelted with sodden turfs, and after that they were ducked one by one into the river—no new experience for Ponsonby & Co.

But it ended at last, and Harry Wharton & Co., at least, were glad when it did so. By that time the once elegant dandies were weeping with rage and despair, and they presented pitiable spectacles.

Later that evening, the Remove crew attended a far more pleasant ceremony, when Major Thresher's charming niece presented them with the challenge cup—which proved, indeed, to be well worth the winning—to the accompaniment of cheers from both Highcliffe and Greyfriars fellows.

It was a happy evening altogether for Harry Wharton & Co., and they even felt disposed to forgive Skinner & Co. their share in the plotting. But the rest of the Remove had other views, and that night, in the Remove dormitory, Skinner went through it as Ponsonby & Co. had done.

By the time their angry Form-fellows had finished with them, Skinner & Co. had plenty of reason bitterly to regret their inglorious share in the affair of the rival oarsmen.

THE END.

(There is another grand story of the Greyfriars chums in next week's bumper issue of the MAGNET, entitled: "School boys versus 'Pro's'!" Don't miss it!)



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