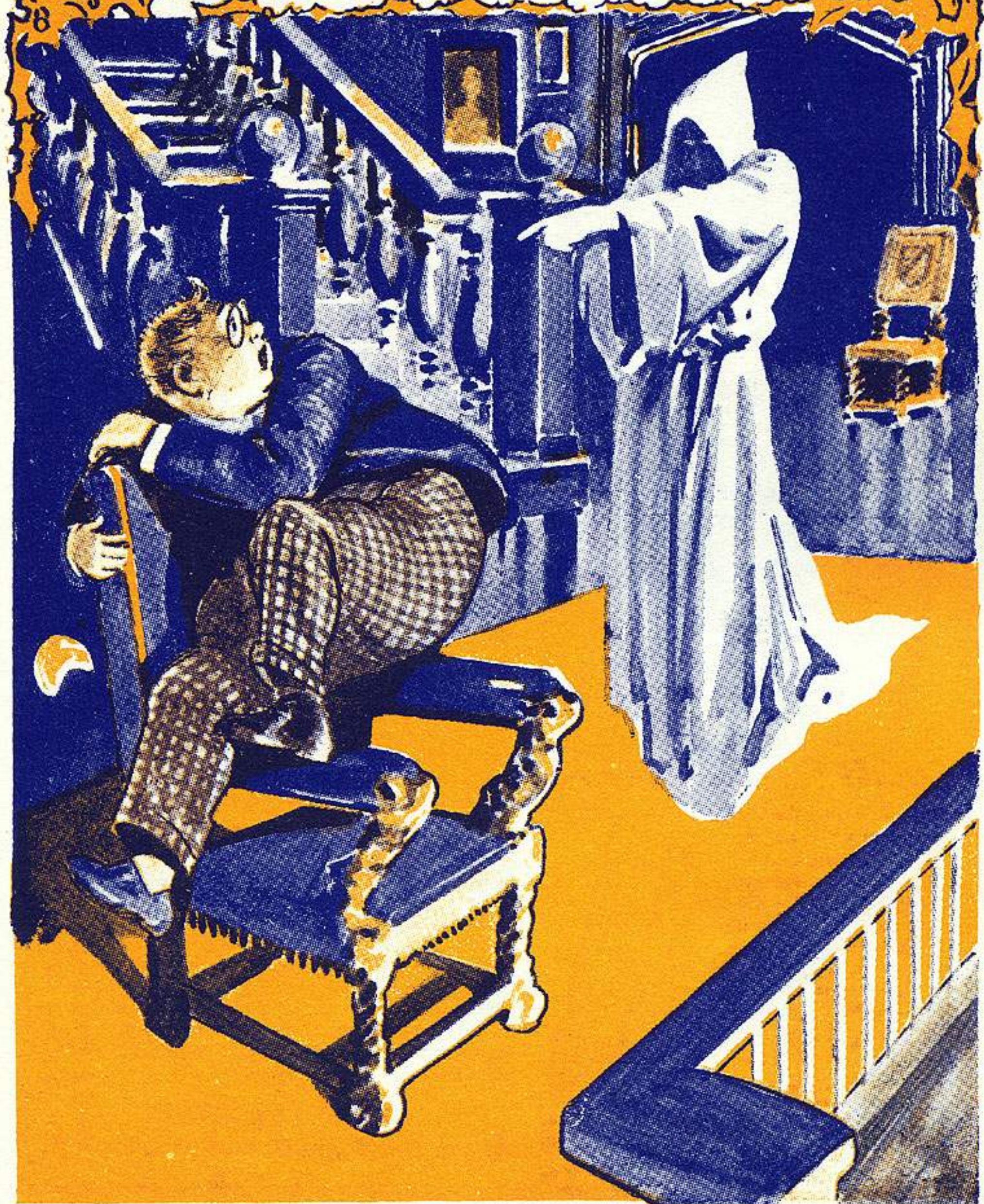


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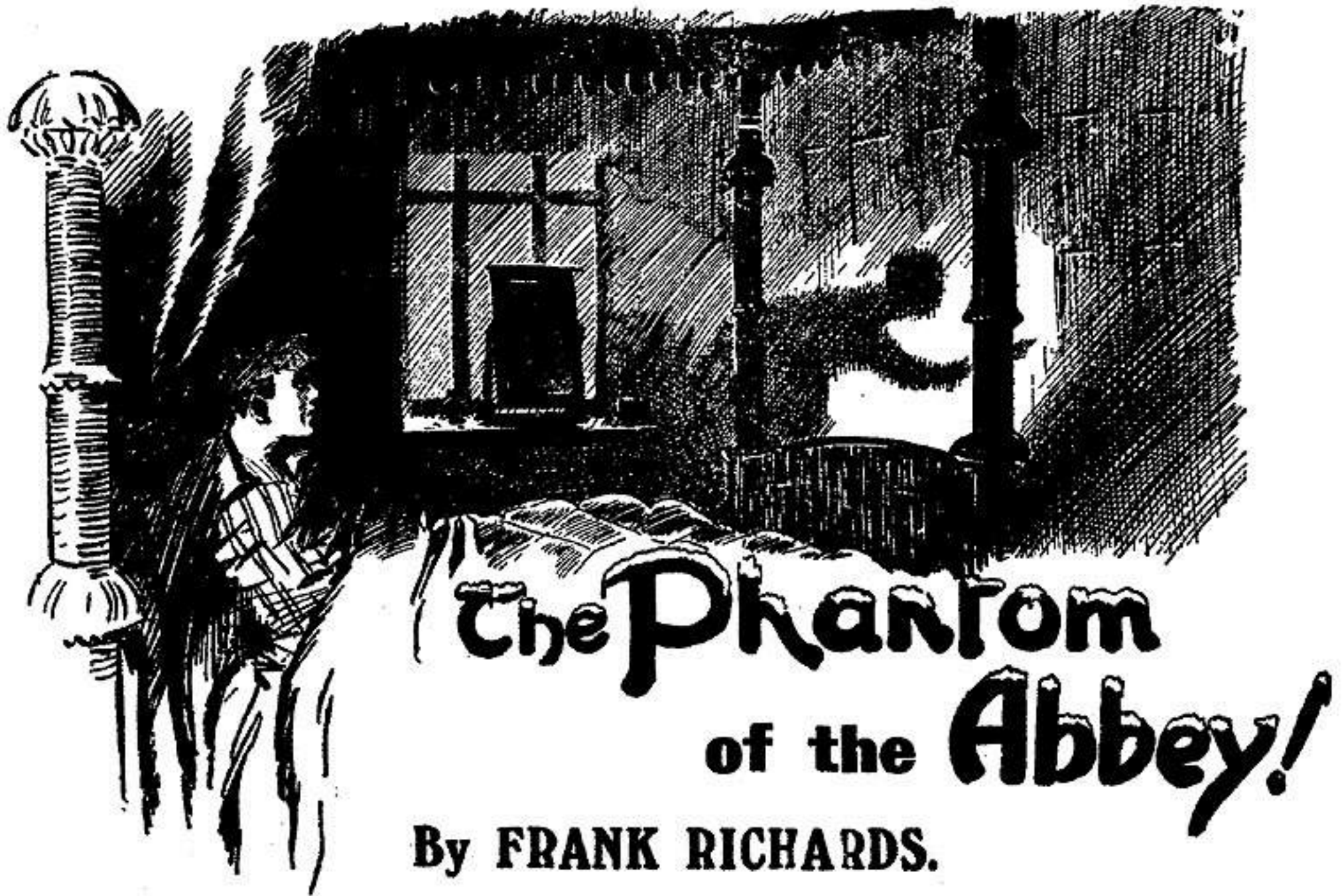
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The Phantom of the Abbey!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Dangerous!

"SHUT up!"
"What?"
"Shut up!" repeated Billy Bunter.

"Look here, Bunter——"

"Shut up!" said Billy Bunter, for the third time.

Harry Wharton breathed hard and deep. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin.

"My esteemed fatheaded Bunter——" he murmured.

"Shut up, Inky!"

The three Greyfriars juniors were standing in the great avenue of Cavandale Abbey, in the bright, keen December afternoon.

They stood beside a car.

A chauffeur was waiting with the car, and Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh had been waiting about ten minutes when Billy Bunter rolled out and joined them.

Albert, Billy Bunter's own special footman, had been helping Bunter into a fur-lined overcoat. It was a brand-new overcoat. Most of Bunter's garments were brand-new. Since he had been a guest of Lord Cavandale Billy Bunter had given extensive tailoring orders. Extensive tailoring bills were coming in after Christmas. Bunter had a very hazy idea of the amount. But that mattered little as Bunter was not going to foot these bills.

Harry Wharton and his dusky chum had been able to get into their coats unaided. Not so Bunter! At Cavandale Abbey Bunter had found that he could scarcely stir without a menial's assistance. Bunter had always been lazy. Now he was cultivating aristocratic indolence in addition.

But he rolled out at last and joined the two juniors on the drive. The circumference of Bunter, always ample,

was ampler than ever in that fur coat. He had always been almost as broad as he was long. Now he looked really broader.

Wharton and the nabob waited patiently. They had now been some days at Cavandale Abbey with Bunter. Bunter was Lord Cavandale's guest, and his lordship had extended a warm welcome to Bunter's friends. So far as his lordship was concerned, the two juniors were quite satisfied. They liked the soldier-peer, and he liked them. Had they been at Cavandale Abbey "on their own" they would have found it very agreeable indeed. But they were there as Bunter's friends, and that made rather a difference.

When the Phantom Abbot stalks the ancient passages of Cavandale Abbey death comes speedily to the reigning head of the Cavandale family. So runs the legend!

Bunter's society had not been enjoyable at Greyfriars School. At Cavandale Abbey it was still less so. At Greyfriars Bunter could be kicked when he asked for it. At the Abbey he could not very well be kicked, even when he begged for it. Again and again Harry Wharton had felt that he would not be able to keep his foot from establishing contact with Bunter's tight trousers. But, so far, Bunter had got through unknicked.

"Now, look here, Bunter——" Harry Wharton began again, in a tone of resigned patience.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"When I say shut up, Wharton, I mean shut up!" he explained.

"You can't drive!" hooted Wharton.

Bunter's fat lip curled in a sneer. "If your people kept as many cars

as we keep at Bunter Court you might know as much about driving as I do," he retorted. "Shut up!"

Billy Bunter did not want any argument. He had stated that he was going to drive that car. It was for the other fellows to get into the car, sit there quietly, and watch Bunter's performances at the steering-wheel with admiration.

Wharton and Hurree Singh did not seem to see it. They seemed to lack faith in Bunter as a driver. Perhaps they felt that they were too young to die.

"You frabjous ass!" said Wharton.

Billy Bunter wagged a fat forefinger at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Now, look here, Wharton, we may as well have this plain. I've asked you here for Christmas, at the magnificent residence of my friend, Lord Cavandale——"

"You benighted ass!"

"Shut up! I don't expect gratitude for introducing you into the highest social circles. I know you too well. But I do expect you to behave yourself, and shut up when you're told. You're having a good time. I'll bet you've never had such grub before. But you've got to remember that we're not at Greyfriars now. I'm somebody here. You're nobody. Got that?"

"You born idiot——"

"The bornfulness of the esteemed idiot is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh.

"That will do!" said Bunter. "I don't want any argument, and I don't want any jaw. Get into the car!"

Wharton and Hurree Singh did not get into the car. Many times, since they had been at the Abbey, they had driven in one or another of Lord Cavandale's cars; but Bunter had not been the

driver. Hitherto, Bunter had been content with the services of a chauffeur. But Lord Cavandale was away in London now, and perhaps in his lordship's absence Bunter was disposed to "spread" himself a little more than usual. Had Bunter been able to drive, of course, it would have been all right. But driving a car was only one of the many things that Bunter supposed he could do, without the slightest foundation for the supposition. Really, Bunter was hardly equal to navigating a push-bike successfully. Motor-cars were far beyond his powers.

But it was one of Bunter's little weaknesses never to realise that he couldn't do a thing until he was actually doing it—or not doing it. And Bunter was deaf to argument. He was clothed in self-satisfaction as thickly as in his new fur coat.

"George!" called out Bunter, blinking round for Albert. Bunter was too aristocratic to remember a servant's name.

"Sir!" said Albert.

"What's the time?"

"Three-thirty, sir."

"We've got no more time to waste. Hop in! Nugent's train gets in at four," said Bunter.

"We'll hop in after the chauffeur!" said Harry.

"The chauffeur's not coming."

"Then we'll walk."

"If that means that you think I can't drive, Wharton—"

"You know you can't drive, you frabjous ass! You're not allowed to drive, either, as you've got no driving licence."

"That's all right. The chauffeur can lend me his."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Hop in! Don't be funky!" urged Bunter. "The fact is, you'll be safer with me. There's snow on the roads. I had a skid the other day, being driven by one of those chauffeurs. With me you're perfectly safe. I'm going to let her out, and before you know where you are we'll arrive at—"

"Kingdom come!"

"At Ashwood!" roared Bunter. "Look here, I'm fed-up with your silly jaw, Wharton. I keep on telling you to shut up. You may be a little tin god in the Remove at school, but you're nobody here—less than nobody! For the last time, shut up!"

Harry Wharton looked at the fat and fatuous Owl of the Remove. Twice a day, at least, since he had been at Cavandale Abbey, he had felt inclined to kick himself for having come. Now he was feeling inclined to kick himself again—though not so strongly as he was feeling inclined to kick Bunter.

But he controlled his wrath. Kicking Bunter in the Remove passage at Greyfriars was a natural proceeding. But kicking him along the avenue at Cavandale Abbey was not quite the thing.

"The walkfulness is the proper caper, my absurd chum!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes; but that fat ass will slaughter himself if he tries driving that car," said Harry. "We don't want to have to pick up the pieces."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Bunter.

"Now, look here, you piffing duffer, you—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter turned contemptuously away and wedged himself into the driving-seat of the car.

The chauffeur looked a little uneasy. But it was not his business to argue with a guest of Lord Cavandale. He stepped back hastily. His example was

followed by Wharton and Hurree Singh and Albert. When Bunter started that car it was only prudent for the spectators to field deep, as it were.

Bunter pressed the starter. There was a buss from the engine.

"Now, are you fellows getting in?" he demanded, blinking round over a fat shoulder with a scornful blink.

"No, you ass! And you'd better get out!"

"Yah!"

"For goodness' sake, Bunter—"

"Yah!"

Wharton was yearning to kick Bunter, but he was also anxious about him. Had Lord Cavandale been at home he might have called on his lordship to intervene. But in the absence of the master of Cavandale Abbey, there was no one to say Bunter nay. Pilkington, the butler, was watching from the doorway; but Pilkington had received instructions from his lordship to give Bunter his head, so to speak. Mr. Parker, his lordship's secretary, was looking from a window of the library; but Bunter was not likely to listen to Mr. Parker. Captain Lankester was strolling in the avenue at a distance; but Bunter was still less likely to heed him. There was really no stopping Bunter, unless the chums of the Remove collared him, and dragged him bodily from the car.

"I'm getting into gear now," said Bunter. "If you're coming—"

"For goodness' sake—"

Wharton had no time to finish, no time to decide whether he would collar the Owl of the Remove and yank him out of the car. The car leaped forward.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

When a motor-car was started, it was not surprising that it should go, but it seemed to surprise Bunter, somehow. He gave a gasp and a jump as the car shot down the avenue.

"Brake!" yelled Wharton.

"Oh crikey!"

Bunter jammed his foot at the brake. It was like Bunter to land that jam on the accelerator instead. With a roar and a whiz the car shot away, Bunter still jamming at the accelerator in the happy belief that it was the brake. Captain Lankester, a hundred yards away down the avenue, was strolling in a leisurely manner, but his motions ceased to be leisurely as Bunter bore down on him. With a sudden gasp the captain jumped for his life. Bunter tore past.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wharton.

"The crumbliness is terrific!" ejaculated Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Come on, Inky!"

And the two juniors raced breathlessly down the avenue, to pick up what was left of Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Short Drive I

BUMP!
Crash!

Whirrrr! Buzzzz!

"Yaroooh! Help! Whoop!"

Billy Bunter did not know what happened. The happenings in that wild drive were much too swift for Bunter's fat brain to follow them. Had Billy Bunter been mounted on a hippogriff, he could have controlled his steed about as much as he could control the car. The car had, as it were, taken the bit between its teeth and bolted with Bunter.

All that Bunter could do was to keep on jamming at the accelerator. And,

really, it would have been better to leave the accelerator alone. The brake would not act. Had Bunter been aware that he was stamping on the accelerator, no doubt he would have realised why the brake did not act. But Bunter was not aware of that circumstance. As for the hand-brake, he did not think of that. A fellow could not think of everything. Indeed, Bunter did not think at all. He rocked along with the bolting car and yelled with affright.

Behind the runaway car Harry Wharton was running his hardest. Close behind Wharton came Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Behind the dusky nabob came the chauffeur, and after the chauffeur came Albert. All of them, strung out one after another, were going strong. But they were, of course, not in it, compared with the car.

Had the car kept on its wild way, without colliding with anything, there was no telling where Bunter would have arrived, or when he would have arrived there. Probably he would have crossed several counties, and only stopped when the juice ran out. But his adventurous journey was destined to be shorter than that—much shorter. Zigzagging across the broad avenue from side to side, Bunter was bound to come to grief sooner or later—probably sooner. And he came to grief soon.

He was not clear as to the sequence of events. Things happened quickly. One moment he was yelling frantically in the driving-seat, another moment he was yelling frantically in a bed of snow. How he got there he never knew. But he did get there—for there he was, rolling in snow, and yelling at the top of his voice. The car, on two wheels, had its bonnet buried in a deep drift of snow beside the avenue, and was buzzing away like a car possessed. It was making quite a noise, but not so much noise as Bunter. William George Bunter was an easy first.

"Whooooop! Help! Yaroooooh! I say, you fellows! Rescue! Help! I'm killed! I'm fearfully injured! Whooooop!"

Cavandale Park was an immenso place. But Bunter awoke almost every echo in it from end to end.

Buzzzzz! Whirrrrrr!

"Yooop! Whooooop! Help! Oh crikey! Ow! Whooooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he came panting up. He was the first to reach the hapless motorist.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Help!"

"Here you are, old man!" gasped Wharton. He bent over the fat junior, and helped him out of the snow in which he was almost buried. "Hurt?"

"You silly ass! Of course, I'm hurt! Yaroooooh! Both my legs are broken! Ow! And my arms! Wow! And my neck! Groooogh!"

"Nothing wrong with your lungs, anyhow."

"Ow! Beast! Wow! Brute! Yow!"

"You've had a jolly lucky escape, you fat chump! If you hadn't been pitched into that snowdrift—"

"Ow! Beast! Ow!"

Bunter had had a bump and a severe shake. Otherwise, he was not hurt. He had shot out of the car like a pip from an orange, and the deep, soft snow had received him like a feather-bed. But there was no doubt that he had been lucky. Obviously, there was such a thing as fool's luck.

"You're all right, old chap," said Wharton soothingly.

"Yow-ow! Beast! I'm not! Ow!"

"You've been jolly lucky—"
 "Ow! Wow! Yow!"
 "The luckfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter," gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as he came up panting.
 "Ow! Ow! Beast! Ow!"
 Billy Bunter sat in the snow and roared. A few yards from him the car was buzzing away frantically, apparently seeking to drive its way through the snowbank. The chauffeur came panting up, and the buzzing ceased as he shut off the engine. Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh helped the fat junior to his feet. To his surprise, Bunter found that he could stand on his little fat legs. They were not, as he had fancied, broken, neither were his arms, and certainly not his neck. In fact, he was not hurt at all, except for a bump and a severe shake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.
 "Oh, shut up!" roared Bunter. "I know I was jamming something with my foot!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shut up!" howled Bunter.
 The chauffeur turned to the car, striving to suppress his emotions. Bunter glared at him, and then glared at the chums of the Remove.
 "You cackling asses!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shut up!" roared Bunter. "Help me back to the house. I'm hurt! I've got a lot of pains! Help me, you beasts, instead of cackling there, you rotters!"
 Wharton and Hurree Singh took a fat arm each and the hapless motorist tottered up the avenue between them. He gasped and gurgled dismally as he went, and blinked wrathfully at the grinning face on either side of him.

"I expect my pals to stick to me when I'm fearfully injured. I say, you fellows!" yelled Bunter. "I say—come back! Come back, you beasts! I say, you fellows! Rotters!"
 But answer there came none. Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh were gone; perhaps having had enough of Bunter's delightful company.
 Bunter glared wrathfully after two active figures that vanished down the drive.
 "Beasts!" he roared.
 The two juniors, going at a rapid trot, vanished.
 "Frederick!" hooted Bunter.
 "Sir!" said Albert.
 "Help me to my room!"
 "Very good, sir!"
 And Billy Bunter was helped to his room where he settled down in an armchair before a blazing log fire. Albert was quietly retiring when Bunter hooted:
 "George!"
 "Sir!" said the patient Albert.
 "You may bring me some coffee."
 "Very good, sir!"
 "And a cake."
 "Yes, sir!"
 "And a box of candied fruits."



One minute Bunter was yelling frantically in the driving-seat of the car; the next he was grovelling in the snow!

"Why didn't you brake, sir?" asked the chauffeur, blinking at Bunter.
 Bunter glared at him.
 "You silly ass, I did brake! I was jamming down the brake all the time! It didn't work! The car wasn't in order! It was all your fault!"
 "The brake was in order, sir!"
 "It wasn't!" roared Bunter. "The beastly thing only went faster when I braked!"
 "It—it—it went faster when you braked!" gasped the chauffeur.
 "Yes!" yelled Bunter. "I had my foot on it all the time, and the beastly thing fairly jumped!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the chauffeur involuntarily.
 "Why, you cheeky sweep!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you mean? What the—"
 "Beg pardon, sir!" gasped the chauffeur. "But you— Ha, ha! You must have— Ha, ha, ha! You must have accelerated instead of braking, sir! Ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove had feared that Bunter's motoring adventure might turn out tragic. As it had turned out merely comic, they felt entitled to grin.
 Bunter could see nothing to grin at.
 "Here you are, old fat man!" said Harry, as Bunter was landed in the house. "Now we'd better cut off or we shall miss Franky and Johnny Bull at the station."
 "Oh, really, Wharton!" Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the captain of the Remove. "Help me to my room, you beast. And stay with me! I'm injured!"
 "But Nugent—"
 "Blow Nugent!"
 "And Johnny Bull—"
 "Blow Johnny Bull!"
 "Look here, Bunter, we told them we'd meet them at the station, and they'll wait. If you're coming—"
 "How can I come when I'm fearfully injured?"
 "Well, take a rest while we go—"

"Yes, sir!"
 "And a few mince pies—say a dozen."
 "Very good, sir!"
 And Billy Bunter settled down in comfort. The cloud of wrath departed from his fat brow as he sprawled and guzzled. After all, this was better than motoring.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Phantom Abbot of Cavandale!

S NORRRRRRRR!
 The December darkness had fallen. The log fire was burning low, casting strange lights and shadows about the room. Light snowflakes pattered on the window-panes, fluttering on the winter wind. From without came a faint wailing of the wind. Within, there was a sound like the rumble of thunder. Billy Bunter, reclining at ease in his chair, with his fat little legs stretched out, his mouth

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open, and his eyes shut, was sleeping the sleep of the just. He had disposed of the foodstuffs almost to the last crumb. Having eaten, Bunter naturally went to sleep. Indeed, he rather needed a rest after his exertions.

He snored in happy comfort. The last dim glimmer of the winter daylight disappeared; the dusk thickened and deepened into night. The early December darkness closed in black on Cavandale Abbey. The room was deep in shadow, save for the leaping, ruddy gleam of the fire.

Bunter was dreaming; doubtless of the tuck he had consumed, for a sweet smile flickered over his slumbering face. But presently that smile faded away, and Bunter interrupted his own snore with uneasy grunting.

Possibly he had packed away a few mince pies too many. Or perhaps the mince pies did not agree with the candied fruits. Or both may have been in disagreement with the cake. Bunter's slumber grew troubled.

A change came o'er the spirit of his dream, as a poet has put it. Instead of happy visions of foodstuffs, a nightmare—or an afternoon-mare—worried the Owl of the Remove as he snored. He was dreaming of the strange happenings that had followed his arrival at Cavandale Abbey; of dark, lurking figures in the night. Billy Bunter had become involved in the mysterious and desperate attempts that had been made on the life of Lord Cavandale; and though nothing would have induced him to quit that palatial establishment before the end of the Christmas holidays, he had suffered very considerably from funk. That was why he had induced Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh to join him, and why the other members of the Famous Five of the Remove were coming. With the other fellows there, Bunter felt safe.

For some days now Lord Cavandale had been absent from the Abbey. He was coming back on Christmas Eve. Bunter had not been sorry when his lordship left. While the peer was absent, the unknown enemy was likely to be absent, too. More than once Lord Cavandale had been fired upon by an unknown hand. Bullets were no respecters of persons, and had a chance shot found a billet in Bunter's ample circumference, matters would have become really serious.

So Bunter bore his lordship's absence with equanimity; and, as the days passed, the fat junior almost forgot

the shadow of mystery and tragedy that hung over Cavandale Abbey.

But now—under the influence of the mince pies—it came back to him in his slumber.

Snorrrrrrrrrrr! Grunt!

Bunter's sleep was troubled.

From a vision of the lurking figure he had seen in the darkness one night, Bunter's slumbering fancy conjured up a vision of the ghostly Abbot of Cavandale.

Mr. Parker, his lordship's secretary, had told the juniors the story of the Phantom Abbot, with many thrilling details; and Bunter had afterwards wished that he hadn't.

Last night he had dreamed of the beastly abbot, creeping about dark passages in robe and cowl, and he had awakened palpitating. Now he was dreaming of him again.

It was a strangely realistic dream. He dreamed that the phantom figure loomed over him in the firelight, and that an icy finger touched his forehead. He wriggled and grunted and groaned and his eyes opened behind his big spectacles.

"Ooooooooh!" gasped Bunter.

He sat up in the chair, blinking uneasily. There was a feeling of chill on his forehead as if the icy finger that had touched him in his dream had been real.

It had grown dark while he slept, and the fire was low, the room full of wavering shadows.

Bunter shuddered involuntarily. He made a movement to leave the chair—to reach the switch and turn on the electric light.

But he did not leave the chair. With his eyes almost starting through his spectacles, he gazed at a figure that stood half-seen in the flickering firelight. For a moment the shuddering Owl fancied that he was still dreaming.

But he was not dreaming—he was wide awake. Every vestige of colour deserted the fat face, as he gazed at a figure in dark, flowing robe and cowl, standing silent, motionless, within a few feet of him. His jaw dropped and his eyes bulged.

It was the figure of the Abbot of Cavandale, as he had seen it in an old print in the library, which Mr. Parker had shown him.

Frozen with terror, Bunter gazed at it.

He was alone in the room but for that ghostly form. The doors were locked, he knew that; locked on the inside. Bunter had never neglected that precaution since he had been at Cavandale Abbey. Whenever he was alone his doors were locked.

He knew that they were locked now. The window was closed and fastened. Yet within a few feet of him stood that strange, unearthly figure, half-revealed by the flickering firelight, looming dim and ghostly against the dark oak panelling of the walls.

Bunter sat without motion, silent, horrified, glued to his chair with sheer terror.

He could not move. He could not speak. He could only gaze in frozen horror at that terrible figure.

The shadowy form moved at last. A faint rustle of the ghostly robe came to Bunter's ears. The right arm was raised towards Bunter. From under the falling sleeve a hand emerged; the extended finger pointing at the terrified face of the Owl of the Remove.

The figure was approaching him with extended hand.

Bunter could not stir.

He longed to leap from the chair, to

rush to the door, to flee, to yell for help. But terror chained him. Like one hypnotised, he gazed at the fearful figure as it advanced.

There was no sound from the approaching figure. From the slits in the cowl that covered the face there was a glint of eyes in the firelight. The outstretched hand drew near—nearer and nearer. Bunter moved at last, backing away from the ghostly finger as far as the deep chair allowed. Crumpled against the back of the chair, he lay gasping with terror as the ghostly finger drew nearer and nearer.

It reached him. A touch, as of ice, sent a chill through his veins. The silence was broken by a shriek of terror from the Owl of the Remove, and he collapsed in the chair in a dead faint.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Locked Room!

"FRANKY, old man! Johnny, old bean! Here you are!"

"The here-you-arefulness is terrific!"

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull jumped from the train, and Wharton and the nabob cut across the platform to meet them. Four cheery faces smiled welcome at one another. The four members of the famous Co. were glad to meet again, though it was not long since they had separated, on breaking-up day at Greyfriars.

"Jolly glad to see you men!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gladfulness of our ridiculous selves is preposterous!" beamed Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Terrifically preposterous!" chuckled Wharton.

"Where's Bunter?" asked Frank Nugent, glancing round.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You won't see Bunter till you get to the abbey. He started driving a car, and had to recuperate—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've got a car outside," said Harry. "I don't know how many cars there are at Cavandale Abbey—I haven't counted 'em—nor how many footmen. I don't know whether Lord Cavandale knows. Terrific show. And Bunter, of course, is in his element. It reminds him of Bunter Court."

Nugent chuckled.

"But how on earth did Bunter land himself there?" he asked. "And—"

"I'll tell you in the car. It's a thrilling tale. This way!"

The early dusk was falling as the baggage was packed on the car and the four Greyfriars fellows packed themselves inside. The headlights gleamed out in the dusk as the chauffeur started, and the car rolled out of Ashwood on the road to Cavandale Abbey. There was a thoughtful expression on Johnny Bull's face.

"This is rather a queer business, you men," he remarked. "Of course, we're glad to be together for Christmas. But I don't quite catch on. We've taken your word for it that it's all right, Wharton, but we don't know Lord Cavandale or anything about him, except that I've seen in the papers that he's the owner of some blessed racehorse or other."

"Maharajah," said Wharton, with a smile. "The horse that is expected to win the Lantham Thousand Guineas some time in January."

Johnny Bull gave a faint grunt. He had no high opinion of racing men or racing.

MECCANO'S

1931 IMPROVEMENTS.

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"Lord Cavandale is one of the best," Wharton hastened to explain. "He was through the War from beginning to end. And his face is terribly scarred, though he's a nice-looking man, all the same. You remember seeing him at Lantham Station the day school broke up?"

"I remember," said Nugent, and Johnny Bull nodded. "Bunter told us he was an old friend of his."

"That was gammon, as usual. Bunter didn't know him then. But that day Bunter saved his life. From what I can make out, Bunter was bilking the railway company by hiding under a seat when Lord Cavandale was attacked in the railway carriage, and Bunter—"

"Stayed under the seat?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Well, no. He seems to have chipped in and saved Lord Cavandale's life. And he hasn't given us details; but I fancy he planted himself on Lord Cavandale as a reward for his services. He makes out that Cavandale begged him to come, and—and so on. But—"

"Oh, we know Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "I know exactly how much Lord Cavandale begged him to come! I suppose he couldn't kick him, if Bunter really saved his life. But if that's how Bunter planted himself in the place, what the thump are you doing there, and what the thump are we doing? I don't make it out. We're not tuft-hunters, like Bunter, I suppose?"

"Fathead! The man who is after Lord Cavandale has tried again and again to get him since what happened in the train. Bunter has got mixed up in it, and I'm bound to say that by queer chances he really has saved Lord Cavandale from getting damaged. And he got the idea that the villain—goodness knows who he is and why he is after Cavandale—would get after him for chipping in. So he fairly dragged Inky and me to the abbot to see him safe. Of course, we couldn't have gone only Lord Cavandale was very decent about it, and he welcomed us, as he will welcome you fellows. I think he really likes to have us there; and, anyhow, we don't feel that we can turn Bunter down."

"Is the fat idiot really in any danger?"

"Well, he may be, and he thinks he is. I think it's possible enough. We're a sort of bodyguard."

"If he's funky, he ought to clear out."

"The grub's too good for that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if the boss of the show likes us there, there's no reason why we shouldn't be there," said Frank. "We might be some use, too; might get a chance of bagging the man who's after Cavandale."

"I've thought of that," said Harry, "and I'd be jolly glad to get a chance. Another thing is, Ferrers Locke is coming, though I don't know exactly when, and you'll be glad to see him again."

"Yes, rather! Is he taking up the case?" asked Johnny Bull.

"That's it! It seems he's away now in Dorsetshire, but he's coming along later. I dare say it was Mr. Locke advised Lord Cavandale to leave home for a time. He went quite suddenly. It's a queer business," went on Wharton. "It's clear that there is some man in the house who let in the villain who was after Cavandale. Bunter saw him one night letting the man in at a window, in the dark. I came on them one evening confabbing in the dark

under the trees, and got a knock on the head. There's been nothing since Lord Cavandale went away. Of course, the man who is after him hasn't any business at the abbey now Cavandale isn't there. He may be looking for a chance at him in London."

"And nobody knows who he is?"

"Not the foggiest."

"It's jolly queer! Some racing man who's lost money and got his back up, perhaps," said Johnny Bull.

"I fancy Ferrers Locke will bag the rotter, whoever he is," said Harry. "I hope he will be here when Lord Cavandale comes back. His lordship asked me to apologise to you fellows for being away when you arrived."

WINTER-TIME
is
JOKE-TIME!

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"Oh, we'll forgive him," said Nugent. "We don't mind. And if he'd taken Bunter with him we'd mind still less."

"Anything happened while you've been there?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yes. Somebody fired at Lord Cavandale when he was showing us his jolly old ancestors in the picture gallery. There's some sort of a secret passage or something there, and the man wasn't seen."

"That sounds interesting," said Nugent. "We'll jolly well find that secret passage. 'Anything else?'"

"There's a ghost," said Harry, smiling. "The Phantom Abbot haunts the abbey. But we haven't seen him yet. He may come later."

"Any other visitors?"
"Only one at present—Captain Lankester. Bunter doesn't like him."

"Any other points in his favour?"
"Well, I don't like him a lot myself," said Harry. "He doesn't like any of us there, I fancy; and that's rather a

cheek. It's nothing to do with him. Then there's Parker, Lord Cavandale's secretary. But he's a fixture. Rather an owl of a chap, with watery eyes and specs, but very civil. He seems to live chiefly for cataloguing books in the library, nosing over old black-letter manuscripts, and so on. By the way, there's one drawback—"

"Go it!"

"We've got jolly nice rooms. But Bunter insists on our beds being all in one room. He's funky of being left at night. It's a big room, plenty of space, nearly half as big as the dorm at Greyfriars. But we have to stand Bunter's snore, the same as at school."

"And the esteemed snorefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"Well, we've stood it at Greyfriars, and we can stand it here," said Frank, laughing. "What about Bob Cherry? He's coming?"

"Bob's coming to-morrow," said Harry.

"Good!"

"Now you fellows know how the matter stands. I can't say it's specially jolly to be there as Bunter's friends. But Lord Cavandale is so jolly decent that I think you'll like it all right. If we get too fed-up with Bunter we can clear. But—the fact is, I really think the fat duffer may be in some danger, and Inky and I have agreed to stick to him so long as we can stand him. And we'd like you men to stick to us. See?"

"The stickfulness is the proper caper," said the nabob. "United we stand Bunter, divided he is too much of a good thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it looks like being a rather exciting Christmas, with a jolly old sniper after our host, and a phantom abbot knocking about at night," said Nugent. "I'm glad we came."

The car ran on swiftly through the December darkness. It turned at last into the great gateway of Cavandale Abbey, and glided up the drive. Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull looked out of the windows with keen interest at the great avenue of oaks and beeches, with the wide parklands stretching beyond, wrapped in winter gloom.

The car stopped at last before the great door. In the deep dusk of the terrace there was a spot of crimson from a cigar. It came towards the Greyfriars fellows as they alighted from the car, and behind the glowing cigar Captain Lankester loomed into view.

"School friends of yours, Wharton?" asked the captain, glancing at the two newcomers.

"Yes," answered Harry.

"Good gad!" said Captain Lankester; and without apparently desiring an introduction, he swung round and walked away along the terrace.

Wharton coloured a little. Johnny Bull cast an expressive glance after the Army man. Nugent smiled.

"It's easy to see that the dear man isn't keen on a schoolboy party here," he remarked. "Is he anybody in particular, Harry?"

"Not at all. A friend of Lord Cavandale's," said Wharton. "He can be quite agreeable when he likes; but he doesn't often like. Anyhow, he can go and eat coke."

"Hear, hear!"

Pilkingham, stately and impressive, received the juniors in the hall. Pilkingham convoyed them as far as the oak gallery above the hall, where the groom of the chambers took them in charge and convoyed them to their

rooms. The rooms were in the same corridor as Bunter's apartments; Bunter had given Pilkington directions to locate his friends as near him as possible. The Owl of the Remove did not appear, and Wharton went to his door and turned the handle. But the door was locked, and he tapped. There was no answer to his tapping, however.

"I suppose the fat ass has fallen asleep," said Harry. "He must be in his room, as the door's locked. He always locks his door, the fathead."

"But he cannot be sleepfully reposing," said Hurree Singh. "In that esteemed case, the snorefulness would be terrific."

"Well, if he isn't asleep, why the thump doesn't he answer? Bunter! Bunter, you fat chump! Are you there, ass?"

Wharton called and thumped. But there was no answer from within the room. Wharton called to Albert, who had followed the juniors up with a suitcase.

"Is Mr. Bunter in his room, Albert?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it's jolly queer he doesn't ans. r."

Thump! Thump Thump!

"Bunter!" roared Wharton.

Dead silence from Bunter's room. Had the fat Owl been asleep there was no doubt that his snore would have been heard. The captain of the Remove began to feel a little uneasy.

"What the thump?" he muttered. "Nothing can have happened to him, I suppose. How long since you saw him, Albert?"

"About an hour, sir."

"We'll try the other door," said Harry.

Bunter's bed-room had a door on the corridor, and Wharton went along to it and tried it. It opened, and he entered and switched on the light. The room was vacant, and he went to the door that communicated with Bunter's sitting-room. This, however, was locked the other side. Wharton thumped on it.

"Bunter!" he shouted.

No reply.

Wharton and Hurree Singh exchanged a startled glance. Bunter was certainly in the room, as both the doors were locked on the inside. Why he did not answer was a mystery.

Wharton set his lips. Bunter had induced the chums of the Remove to stay with him, because he did not believe himself to be safe within the walls of Cavandale Abbey. But that there could be any danger, while Lord Cavandale was away, seemed unlikely; the assassin could scarcely be haunting the place when his intended victim was absent. And in the day-time, in a great house swarming with servants, how could danger have reached Bunter in his room with locked doors? It was impossible. Yet, though the fat junior was evidently in the room, no sound came from him in answer to knocking and calling. Was it possible that something had happened to Bunter while his two friends had been gone to Ashwood?

"Bunter!" shouted Wharton and Hurree Singh together.

Johnny Bull and Nugent joined them. They joined their voices to the other two. But no answer came from the locked room.

"What on earth can it mean?" asked Nugent.

Wharton shook his head.

"I can't make it out! What could happen to him? It's impossible! The doors are locked; he always locks them, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,193.

the ass! Nobody could get in through a locked door—even if there was anybody. Bunter! Bunter!"

"It's very odd, sir," said Albert. "I passed the door some time ago, sir, and the young gentleman was asleep. I heard him snoring, sir. But I don't hear anything now."

"We've got to get in," said Wharton decidedly. "Looks as if he may have had a fit, or something. Bunter!"

"Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull.

Bang, bang, bang!

Captain Lankester looked in from the doorway on the corridor. The captain's rooms were farther along.

"May I ask what this disturbance is about?" drawled the young Army man.

Wharton glanced round.

"We can't make Bunter here," he answered. "Something must be wrong."

"Asleep, perhaps," suggested Lankester.

"We should hear him snoring! Besides, even Bunter couldn't sleep through the row we've been making."

"Yes, you've been makin' rather a row," assented Lankester. "You can be heard all over the house, in fact."

Wharton made no answer to that.

"Albert! Get something to open this door," he said. "A key's no use; the key's in the lock on the other side. It will have to be forced."

"Very good, sir."

Captain Lankester came into the room. He seemed to be faintly interested in the matter. He listened at the door, but there was no sound from the room occupied by the Owl of the Remove.

"This is rather curious," he remarked. "A fit, most likely! I saw Albert bringin' up some refreshments about an hour ago. If Bunter has put himself outside the whole consignment he may have burst."

The juniors did not reply. They were feeling really anxious about Bunter now, and not in a mood for jesting. Wharton and Hurree Singh were feeling it a little on their minds that they had left Bunter alone. Not for a moment had they dreamed that anything could happen to him in their absence, but it looked now as if something had.

Albert came back with tools. It was not easy to force open the strong lock, but it was opened at last and the door flung back. Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into Bunter's room, Captain Lankester at their heels. The room was in darkness, save for a faint glimmer from the hearth. Wharton found the switch and flashed on the light.

"Bunter!"

"Good heavens!"

In the big armchair, before the dying fire, lay Billy Bunter, huddled and insensible.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Ghost Story!

HARRY WHARTON stared blankly at the huddled figure in the chair. Billy Bunter's eyes were closed, his spectacles had slid down his fat little nose. He was breathing in jerks. There was no sign of injury to be seen, but the Owl of the Remove was completely unconscious.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Wharton.

He stared round the room. The window was closed and fastened on the inside, both doors, he knew, had been locked. Yet it was clear that something had happened to Bunter.

"Looks like a faint!" Captain Lankester stared down at the fat junior. "Though what can have caused it—" "Something's happened to him," muttered Wharton.

"What could have happened?"

"I don't know—but this is the first time he's been left alone since we came—and something has happened while we were out."

Wharton hurried into the bed-room, and came back with a carafe of water. Bunter's collar was unfastened, and his face bathed in cold water. A long, quivering mumble came from him, and his eyes opened. He blinked over his spectacles with a terrified blink.

"Ow! Keep it off! Oh! Help!"

"All serene, old man," said Wharton soothingly, "we're here—"

"Ow! Help!"

"We're with you, old bean," said Nugent.

"Oh! I say, you fellows!" Bunter recognised the juniors now. "I say, is—is—is it gone?"

"Is what gone?" asked Harry. "Nobody's here but us."

Bunter sat upright and blinked round him. His scared gaze searched every corner of the room.

"Oh dear!" he gasped. "You—you're sure it's gone? I—I—I saw it—it touched me." He shuddered from head to foot.

"He fancies he has seen something," said Captain Lankester. "Nerves, I suppose."

"What did you see, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"The gig-gig-gig-gig—" stuttered Bunter.

"The what?"

"The gig-gig-ghost!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had wondered what could have affected Bunter to such an extent. But certainly they had not thought of a ghostly visitation. They stared at the fat junior.

"The ghost?" repeated Wharton.

"Ow! Yes! The ghost of the abbot!" groaned Bunter. "Just like he looked in that picture Parker showed us in the library. Oh dear! He—he touched me—Ow!"

"What rot!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Captain Lankester burst into a laugh.

"He has been dreaming about the ghost of Cavandale Abbey," he said. "He has dreamed that he has seen it. Pull yourself together, boy. It was only fancy."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"Wha-at?"

"It wasn't fancy! I was wide awake! It touched me!"

Captain Lankester shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the room. The four juniors remained with Bunter, Albert hovering behind them, listening with all his ears. Albert, at least, was not wholly incredulous, and he was keen for details, to be carried down to the servants' hall. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances and suppressed their smiles. They had little doubt that Bunter had awakened in the dark after a nap in the armchair, and had been scared by some shadow in the flickering firelight.

"I—I say, you fellows, it was real, you know!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I—I woke up and—and saw it! The ghost of the abbot, you know! It—it touched me with a finger—it was like ice! Oh dear!"

"Had you been eating mince pies?" asked Johnny Bull, with a glance at the table near Bunter's chair.

"Ow! Yes! What?"

"That did it!" explained Johnny Bull.

"You silly chump! Mean to say you don't believe I saw it!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly.

"Well, you couldn't have, old chap," said Harry. "You see, there aren't any ghosts, so you couldn't have seen one!"

"I know what I saw!" snorted Bunter. In the bright light, with the other fellows round him, Bunter was recovering his nerve. "Of—of course, I—I don't exactly believe in g-g-ghosts! But I saw him—as large as life! It was—was something—or somebody! It touched me—"

"Tell us exactly what you think happened," said Harry quietly.

The ghost story was staggering, but Wharton was wondering whether something really had happened. It was odd, at least, that this strange occurrence should have taken place on the first occasion when Bunter's friends had been both away from him. And a vague suspicion was in Wharton's mind that some trickster had seized the opportunity to frighten the fat junior.

Bunter proceeded to give a description of his thrilling experience. He blinked uneasily round the room as he did so. Johnny Bull grunted.

"Just imagination!" he said.

"Look here, you silly ass—"

"If it was somebody playing ghost!" said Nugent.

"How could he get into the room?" asked Wharton. "A genuine ghost might get through a locked door, but a silly ass playing ghost couldn't. Blessed if I make it out."

"Well, I saw it!" said Bunter.

"The seefulness could not have been terrific," said Hurree Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"I suppose you fainted?" said Johnny Bull.

"No, I didn't! I don't seem to remember what happened after the—the ghost touched me. Not till I saw you fellows here! I say, I'm all wet! Have you beasts been larking?"

"You were in a faint!" said Harry.

"I wasn't!"

"We had to bathe your silly head to bring you round—"

"I'm all wet! My collar's wet! Beast!"

"Is that how you thank a chap for looking after you?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yah! All your fault, Wharton, for going out and leaving me alone here! I—I don't believe it was a real ghost now—but—but it was something! I—I saw it—and it touched me—"

"You should have hit it in the eye," said Johnny Bull. "That's the way to deal with a ghost."

"I—I never thought of that, at—at



Crack! Bob Cherry was startled at the sudden report of a firearm, and then dimly, through the whirling snowflakes, he saw two figures struggling ahead of him. "What the thump!" he ejaculated.

the time! Of course, I wasn't frightened. But—but—"

"Well, you're all right now," said Wharton. "The jolly old ghost has cleared, if it was ever here—"

"I tell you it was here!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, all right, it was here, then! Anyhow, it's bunked!"

"How did you fellows get in?" demanded Bunter. "I locked the doors, like I always do—"

"We had to force the door from your bed-room—"

"Why didn't you call me?"

"We did call, and banged on the doors—"

"Rot! I should have heard you! Trying to make out that I was in a faint, what?"

"You howling ass, you were in a dead faint—"

"Nothing of the kind! I—I think I fell asleep," said Bunter. "I should have heard you if you'd knocked, of course. Nice state you've got that lock in, you dummies. Frederick! See that that lock's mended immediately. Telephone for a man! It must be done at once."

"Very good, sir," said Albert.

"Smashing a fellow's lock!" said Bunter, blinking indignantly at the Co. "I believe you want that villain to get at me and murder me some night."

"You benighted fathead—"

"Yah! Go and eat coke, the lot of you!"

Bunter rolled into the adjoining bedroom to towel himself dry and change

his collar. The chums of the Remove looked at one another and grinned.

"I suppose we mustn't kick him, in the circumstances," said Frank Nugent thoughtfully.

"The kickfulness would hardly be the proper caper," grinned Hurree Singh.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"I shall jolly well kick him. If I'm staying here I shall kick Bunter just the same as if we were at Greyfriars. If he asks for it he will jolly well get it!"

"But—what can have happened while we were out?" said Harry.

"Nothing!" answered Johnny Bull.

"Just funk!"

"I—I suppose so. But if there were any way of getting into the room, I should think—"

Wharton paused, glancing round at the solid oak walls.

"I wonder—"

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Just funk!"

And Wharton said no more, though a lingering doubt remained in his mind.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Attack on Ferrers Locke I

BOB CHERRY turned up his coat collar, and pulled his cap a little tighter over his mop of hair. A keen winter wind, laden with snowflakes, blew along the road past the gates of Cherry Place, a few miles from the old town of Dorchester.

Facing the wind, his head bent a little to it, Bob tramped away through the thick December dusk.

It was a long and lonely road, and lamps were few and far between. As a rule, it was well frequented by cars, but now not a single headlight came gleaming through the gloom. Snow covered the road thickly, and driving would have been difficult and dangerous work.

Bob, as he tramped through snow and wind, was thinking chiefly of the morrow, when he was to join his chums at Cavandale Abbey, in Surrey, a hundred miles away. But he was thinking, too, of a guest who was expected at Cherry Place that evening—no other than Ferrers Locke, the famous detective.

The chums of the Remove knew the Baker Street detective well. He was a relative of their headmaster, Dr. Locke, at Greyfriars, and they had often seen him at the school. And it was in Ferrers Locke's charge that they had made their adventurous trip to China.

Mr. Locke had been engaged on a case that had taken him down to Dorsetshire, and, his task being done, he was taking the opportunity to call on Major Cherry before returning to London. The heavy fall of snow made it unlikely that he could come by car, and Bob had started out with the idea of meeting him on the road if he walked. It was not an evening that would have tempted many fellows out of doors; but Bob cared little for wind and snow, and he was a whale on fresh air and exercise. He tramped along cheerily, whistling as he went, with a whistle that made up in volume what it lacked in tunefulness.

For a mile or more on the snowy, dusky road Bob had not passed a soul or seen the lights of a car. He wondered whether Mr. Locke would come, after all; it was possible that he might telephone and call it off. Still, a walk was a walk, and out of doors was better than indoors, from Bob's point of view. So he tramped on his way, keeping his eyes open for a pedestrian in the gloom.

The cheery whistle died suddenly on his lips, and he gave a jump.

"Oh, my hat!"

Crack!

It was a sharp, ringing shot from the darkness ahead of him—the sudden report of a firearm.

Bob Cherry jumped and stood still. He stared ahead of him into the deep dusk and whirling snowflakes.

"What the thump—" he ejaculated.

A shot had been fired on the dusky road not fifty yards ahead of him. It was startling enough, and Bob Cherry's heart beat faster. Faint sounds reached him from the dusky distance, the sounds of a struggle.

Only for a moment or two he stood listening. Then he broke into a run and dashed on.

The sound of rustling and panting breath came to him from the gloom. He ran hard, and twice slipped in the snow, picked himself up again, and raced on.

He came quite suddenly on the scene of the struggle. Two figures, bunched together, were rolling in the snow by the road, fighting desperately.

Bob panted to a halt.

Dimly in the gloom he made out that one of the struggling figures was tall and lean, the other short and stocky. The latter was uppermost, and the man underneath was struggling desperately to throw him off.

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Bob's foot clumped against something that lay in the snow. It was a revolver, and he caught it up. Evidently the man who had fired had dropped his weapon in the struggle.

"Help!"

It was a panting cry from the man underneath. A hoarse, husky voice in snarling accents followed.

"I've got you, Ferrers Locke! Nobody to help you here, you bloodhound! I've got you!"

"You scoundrel!"

"I've got you!" snarled the husky voice. "You won't butt in where you're not wanted this time, Ferrers Locke!"

Bob Cherry caught a flash of steel in the gloom.

He leaped forward, grasping the revolver by the barrel. With a crash the butt came down on the head of the stocky man as a knife flashed over the fallen detective.

There was a gasping cry from the ruffian, and he reeled under the blow. Bob struck again, and caught his shoulder with the pistol-butt.

The knife fell into the snow as the man leaped to his feet. He spun round at Bob, and the schoolboy had a glimpse of a hard, furious face, with little piggy eyes close together, under a bowler-hat that was crushed by Bob's first blow. For an instant the ruffian evidently intended to spring on his unexpected assailant; but Ferrers Locke was struggling up, and the man changed his mind and leaped away.

There was a thudding of rapid footsteps for a few seconds, and the man was gone, swallowed up by the December darkness.

Bob panted.

"Mr. Locke! That you, Mr. Locke?"

The Baker Street detective was on his feet again now. He stared round him for a moment in search of his enemy, but the man had vanished. Then his glance turned on the Greyfriars junior.

"Bob Cherry!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Little me," said Bob. "You'd better take this, Mr. Locke."

He handed the detective the revolver. Locke was breathing hard. He grasped the revolver, and peered into the gloom with gleaming eyes. But his assailant was gone; there was no sound of him, and pursuit was impossible in the thick darkness.

The detective turned to Bob again.

"Thank you, my boy!" he said quietly. "I think you have saved my life! The villain had me at a disadvantage."

"You know the man, Mr. Locke?"

"No. I have never seen him before. But I shall know him when we meet again," said Locke. "He knows me, however, that is clear." He smiled. "There's an old proverb that more people know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows!"

Bob Cherry laughed. The Baker Street detective had been within an ace of death; but he was once more cool, calm, only his deep breathing telling of the fierce struggle he had been through. He picked up his hat, and dusted the snow from his coat.

"This was rather unexpected," he said. "The rascal had evidently been watching the road for me—he knew I was here. He was anxious to prevent me from butting in, as he expressed it, where I am not wanted—where he does not want me, no doubt." The detective compressed his lips. "It is very probable that he would have got away with it had not you come along, my boy. But how did you get here, Cherry?"

"I thought you might be walking, and I came along to meet you on the road," explained Bob. "Jolly glad I did now!"

"It was rather fortunate for me," said Locke, with a smile. "Evidently someone was determined that I should not pass my Christmas at Cavandale Abbey. Let us get on, my boy. We shall see nothing more of that scoundrel, unfortunately." The detective gave a rueful glance at his hat before he placed it on his head. There was a bullet-hole in the brim. "The rascal meant business—his shot went very close, dark as it was. Had he had time for a second, you would have been too late to help me. But, luckily, I closed with him in time."

"You're going to Cavandale Abbey for Christmas, Mr. Locke?" asked Bob, as they started towards Cherry Place. "Then you'll see me there."

Ferrers Locke glanced at him.

"You, Cherry?"

"Yes, rather! My friends are there," explained Bob, "and the jolly old one and only Bunter! I'm going to-morrow."

Locke looked at him very curiously.

"I shall certainly be glad to see you there, Cherry; but, in the present circumstances, I should hardly have supposed Cavandale Abbey a suitable place for schoolboys on holiday."

"You see, Bunter's there," said Bob, "and he's asked us to see him through. He fancies he's in some danger there, from what I've heard from Wharton. So we're all sticking to him."

"I see!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob. "Of course, you've heard about some sportsman who's been getting after Lord Cavandale, Mr. Locke. That's why you're going there, of course."

Locke smiled.

"That was not a hard one to guess," he said.

"Then—then," exclaimed Bob, "that brute who was attacking you—he may be the same man—"

"Very probably," said Locke dryly. "My presence at Cavandale Abbey will be unwelcome to him."

"But how the thump could he know you were going there?" asked Bob, mystified. "How could he know you were in Dorsetshire, if you come to that?"

Ferrers Locke smiled grimly.

"He has sources of information, evidently," he answered. "I shall find the answers to those questions, my boy, at Cavandale Abbey—at least, I hope so."

"Looks like being an exciting Christmas for us!" said Bob.

"I hope it may not prove too exciting," said Ferrers Locke rather dryly.

And the Baker Street detective walked on in silence, in deep thought; and Bob, tramping by his side, did not interrupt his reflections—though he would have given a good deal to know what they were.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Ghost Walks!

"LEAVE the light on!"
"My dear ass—"
"Leave it on!" snapped Bunter.

Bunter sat up in bed, blinking wrathfully at the captain of the Remove. After his experience that afternoon Billy Bunter did not intend to be left in the dark again. Sleeping with the light on did not agree with the views of the other four fellows, but that

(Continued on page 12.)

"Half-Time" Gossip!



You'll have to get up early in the morning to catch our "Wise Man of the Whistle" napping. But it's worth while having a shot. Try a tricky soccer question on him to-day.

IS it a fact that the professional footballer can please himself whether he plays for his team at Christmas? This is a reasonable query which has just reached me, and it can be answered, in part at any rate, in the affirmative.

When a footballer signs on as a pro for a football team he has to sign an agreement which contains many clauses. One of these clauses, which is insisted upon by the Football Association, is to the effect that no player shall be "made" to play for his team on Christmas Day or on Good Friday. Interpreted this means that

the player can, if he so chooses, refuse to play on Christmas Day and for such refusal he cannot be penalised by the club to which he is attached.

In practice, of course, very few players avail themselves of this Christmas Day option. Their clubs have important matches on the programme on that day, and the player does his best to help his side through the trying time.

There is no necessity for me to enlarge here either on the strenuous nature of the footballers' Christmas, or on the importance of the games which are played at this period of the season. You need only take a casual glance at the list of matches down for decision to get the proper impression of what Christmas means to the football clubs and to the players.

THIS year, of course, Christmas Day falls just about as badly as it can, from the players' point of view, so far as the day of the week is concerned. There are matches on the Thursday, matches on the Friday, and matches again on the Saturday—three games in three days; involving, in addition to the actual playing, much travelling.

The points which may be lost or won at this period of the season have an important bearing on the positions of the clubs in the League table.

The other day I was talking with the manager of a side which is doing very well at the moment, and I asked him what he thought of the club's prospects of winning the championship. "I never let myself think seriously about championships until the Christmas holiday matches are over. I have seen too many clubs pulled down from the top of the tree owing to a bad spell at Christmas to make any sort of prophecy."

Of this much we can be certain: that the officials of the various football clubs do not want what is known as a "white Christmas." A sudden fall of snow is one of the things which puts a stop to football. Fog is another. You will probably remember that three years ago there was a heavy fall of snow in the south of England which started on Christmas night, with the result that every match down for decision in that part of the country on Boxing Day had to be postponed. The drawbacks of road travel were illustrated that season in more than one instance. The Northampton players, for instance, were travelling across country in a charabanc, but when they got as far as Wendover the snow became so deep that further progress was impossible, and they could not get any nearer to Luton, where they were due to play.

A heavy fall of snow at holiday-time is an expensive luxury which few football clubs can afford. The attendances at this time are usually above the average, and hundreds of pounds are lost—in some cases thousands—if a Christmas Day or Boxing Day match has to be called off. Desperate efforts are often made by club officials to get the pitches fit. After that fall of snow on the night of Christmas Day three years ago the Chelsea officials set nearly two hundred men to work first thing the following morning in an effort to get the snow cleared. But it simply couldn't be done.

BAD weather being so often associated with the Christmas holiday season, it is not inappropriate to remind ourselves just now that the decision as to whether or not a football ground is fit for play, is in the hands of the referee absolutely.

I have known club officials, seeing the prospects of a good attendance "going west" because of the bad weather, try to use their influence with the referee to get him to postpone the match to another day. The conscientious referee, though, doesn't concern himself with the size of the attendance. He has his instructions from headquarters to the effect that he should see the game through, if possible, and there are only two considerations which should have weight with him in deciding whether or not to start a match or see it through.

The first question is whether the game can be carried through according to rule.

If the snow falls so thickly during a game that the lines are obscured, then the referee is justified in calling the match off, because clearly he cannot see the game through according to the rules if there are no lines marking the boundary of the pitch.

There may be so much water and mud about, too, that the lines vanish, and I remember not long ago a game at Highbury being abandoned soon after the interval because the referee could not see the lines which were supposed to mark out the penalty area.

When there is fog about, or it becomes very dark, it is not the concern of the referee as to whether the spectators can see the play. The point with which he is concerned is whether he himself can see with sufficient clearness to be able to interpret the rules.

THE other excuse for not going through with a game on a bad day concerns the question of whether the state of the pitch is such as to render it dangerous for football to be played thereon. The fact that the players may get wet through, or get covered in mud up to the eyebrows shouldn't worry the presiding official. But

If sudden frost has followed rain or snow, making it impossible for the players to keep their feet when a fall would be dangerous, then the referee should call the game off.

There are other points of interest connected with matches which are called off or postponed. If a League match is started, but not finished, then the second meeting between the same clubs is on "cup-tie" terms—that is the clubs go fifty-fifty on the receipts when the game is played for the second time. But if a League match is postponed without a start being made, then the home club takes the "gate" when the match is played just as if it had not been postponed.

THE rush of matches at the holiday period of the year often means a chance for the lads of the club—for those in the background. Three matches in three days usually bring a big list of injuries, and youngsters have often to be introduced around Christmas-time who have not previously been tried out.

Let us hope, however, that this Christmas the casualty list will be small. For some reason or other last Christmas was a particularly black one in respect of serious injuries. I recall that four first-class footballers had legs broken: Barley, of Grimsby Town; Hanson, of Manchester United; Pritchard, of Charlton Athletic; and Walker, of Wolverhampton Wanderers. It is quite bad enough spending the festive season in railway trains and charabancs. To spend Christmas in hospital is even worse.

THE PHANTOM OF THE ABBEY!

(Continued from page 10.)

mattered nothing to William George Bunter.

"Oh, all right!" said Harry Wharton resignedly.

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"Are you afraid of the dark?" he asked sarcastically.

"Beast!"

"There's four of us here to protect you from the ghost!" said Johnny.

"Yah!"

"Oh, anything for a quiet life!" said Frank Nugent. "For goodness' sake, leave the light on if it will stop Bunter talking!"

"As for being afraid of the dark," said Bunter, "if you fellows had a tenth part of my pluck you'd do! But I'm jolly well going to have the light on—and you can go and eat coke!"

"My esteemed, fatheaded Bunter—"

"Shut up, Inky! I'm going to sleep."

Bunter laid his head on the pillow. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him. Had they been at Greyfriars, no doubt they would have hooked Billy Bunter out of bed and bumped him on the floor. Now they refrained from doing so; but the Owl of the Remove had a narrow escape. As a matter of fact, Bunter had had a whole series of narrow escapes lately without being aware of it.

It was a large, lofty room, and there was ample space for the five beds in it, and the sixth bed, which was ready for Bob Cherry when he came. The arrangement had made Pilkington lift his eyebrows; but Billy Bunter cared not a jot or tittle for Pilkington or his eyebrows. He jolly well knew that he was going to sleep safe at Cavandale Abbey, and Pilkington could think what he jolly well liked! That was how Bunter looked at it.

As the chums of the Remove were there to see Bunter through, they did not feel that they could object, though undoubtedly they would have preferred to be at a safer distance from Bunter's snore. They could not help feeling that they had enough of that snore during the term at Greyfriars.

They turned in, leaving the electric light burning. Whatever it was Bunter had seen that afternoon, he did not want to see it again; and a genuine ghost, no doubt, would keep away from a brightly lighted room. At least, Bunter hoped so.

At all events, dread of the Phantom Abbot of Cavandale did not keep Bunter from slumber. His hefty snore was soon going strong.

"Oh, listen to the band!" murmured Nugent.

"The bandfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurrec Jamsat Ram Singh.

Snore!

Bunter was happy in the land of dreams. Nugent and Johnny Bull, tired by their journey that day, soon dropped off, and Hurrec Jamsat Ram Singh followed their example. Wharton did not sleep so soon.

He was thinking of the strange story Bunter had told, and he was thinking, too, of what Lord Cavandale had remarked on one occasion of the secret passages that existed in the ancient building. Some of them were known, some unknown, and a plan of them was supposed to exist among the piles of ancient papers and manuscripts in the library, which were in Mr. Parker's charge.

Since the mysterious shot had been fired at Lord Cavandale from some

secret recess in the old picture gallery, Mr. Parker had been asked to make a special search for that plan, but so far, it appeared, he had had no success.

There were shelves and chests full of ancient documents, deeds, and records, which had not been disturbed or examined for many years. Mr. Parker, who was librarian as well as secretary, was slowly and methodically working his way through the mass.

But it occurred to Wharton that it was quite possible that the old plan was known to someone in the house. It was, at least, evident that some secret recess behind the walls of the picture gallery was known to Lord Cavandale's enemy; the mysterious attempt on his life proved that.

And the captain of the Remove was wondering whether some such secret passage existed behind the oak walls of the suite of rooms occupied by the Greyfriars party. That was the only way of accounting for the mysterious apparition of the phantom abbot, unless Bunter had dreamed it. And Wharton was inclined to believe that Bunter had seen something, though he certainly did not believe that it was a visitant from another world.

Yet who could have played such a trick?

Some servant possibly; for Bunter undoubtedly was not popular below stairs, and probably Pilkington and his staff would have been glad to see the last of him if he could have been frightened away. Wharton thought, too, of Captain Lankester, who made no secret of his dislike of the fat junior, and his dislike of the Greyfriars party's presence in the house. Yet it was difficult to suppose that the supercilious young Army man would condescend to such a trick.

And Wharton, thinking it over, gave a sudden start. If the "phantom" had gained admittance to Bunter's room by a secret passage unknown to the household, surely it was the man who had fired on Lord Cavandale from a hidden recess. It was not likely that two different persons had that familiar knowledge of the secrets of the house, which were unknown to Lord Cavandale himself.

Bunter, on that occasion, had saved Lord Cavandale from the bullet, though by accident. It was likely enough that the villain would be glad to get the fat junior out of the house—and his friends with him. Was it the secret sniper who had played ghost that day?

It was an uncomfortable thought, and as it came into Wharton's mind he was rather glad, after all, that the light had been left on. He turned his head on the pillow to glance towards the door that communicated with the adjoining room. The lock had been repaired, and Bunter had carefully locked that door before going to bed, as well as the door on the corridor. Then Wharton's eyes turned on the dark oak panelling of the walls that glimmered in the gleam of the electric light. It was not a pleasant thought that some unknown, hidden enemy might be lurking behind those ancient, blackened panels, able to enter if he chose at any moment.

The thoughts in the junior's mind grew more and more indistinct, and his eyes closed at last.

But the idea still haunted his sleeping mind, and his slumber was uneasy. From a distance the stroke of one boomed out through the December night, and Wharton awoke suddenly.

He stared from his bed—in darkness.

The log fire on the broad hearth had burned down to a faint red glow. The

electric light was out. The lofty room was wrapped in shadow.

Wharton sat up in bed, his heart beating fast.

The light had been burning when his eyes closed; it should have been burning still. Whose hand had turned off the switch?

He sat very still, striving to penetrate the gloom with his eyes. His straining ears caught a faint sound.

Bunter's snore came steadily through the darkness. But Wharton's ears were used to that.

Suddenly there came a dark, moving shadow between him and the faint, dull glow on the hearth. A figure—silent, spectre-like—had passed before his staring eyes.

Wharton felt a cold trickle down his back.

There was another presence in the room—whether earthly or unearthly. A half-seen shadow that fitted for a second between him and the faint glow of the fire, and vanished again in gloom.

Then suddenly, before the startled junior could decide how to act, there came a piercing shriek in the darkness.

It came from Bunter's bed.

Shriek on shriek of utter terror rang through the silence. There were startled exclamations from the three sleeping juniors as they awoke. Harry Wharton bounded from his bed.

He rushed towards Bunter's bed. It seemed to him that he felt the wind of a flowing garment brush past him in the darkness. He clutched at it, but if it had been there it was gone. Shriek on shriek pealed from Bunter, echoing wildly.

"What the thump!" shouted Nugent.

"That fool Bunter—a nightmare—"

came Johnny Bull's voice. Wharton groped for the switch at the head of Bunter's bed, and turned it on. Light flashed out in the room from the bed-lamp.

Bunter, shaking with fear, sat up in his bed, shrieking. His fat face was white as chalk, his eyes bulging from his head.

Wharton stared round.

Save for the Greyfriars juniors there was no one in the room. He ran to the doors and tried them; both were locked.

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull. "You'll wake the house."

Bunter, past reasoning with, shrieked and shrieked. Harry Wharton dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"All serene now, Bunter—it's all right, old man! Keep cool!"

Bunter clutched at his arm.

"It touched me!" he stammered. "I—I woke up—it touched me! It touched me—like ice! Oh dear! I'm not staying here any longer! I'm going! Oh!"

"You fat dunny, nobody's been here!" granted Johnny Bull.

"Who turned off the light?" asked Nugent. "Did you, Harry?"

"No, I woke up and found it dark."

"Then who—"

"Goodness knows."

"It touched me," moaned Bunter.

"I—I woke up! Stay with me—don't you move away! Oh dear!"

Knock, knock! came at the door on the corridor. The Greyfriars fellows jumped, their nerves tense. But the knock was followed by the voice of Captain Lankester.

"What's the row here? I've been awakened by your howling. What on earth's the trouble?"

"It's all right now," called back Wharton. "Bunter was scared—"

"The young ass!" snapped the captain. "For goodness' sake, keep him



Before the desperate ruffian could carry out his foul deed his arm was grasped from behind by Ferrers Locke!

quiet. He will alarm the whole house at this rate."

And the captain's footsteps were heard to recede towards his own rooms farther up the corridor. The juniors heard the startled voice of Greaves, the captain's valet.

"What is it, sir? Is anything wrong? What—"

"Only that fat fool of a schoolboy howling in a nightmare," snapped the captain. "You can go back to bed, Greaves."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Ho's right!" grunted Johnny Bull. "It was a nightmare, of course. The fat duffer's been dreaming."

"Then—who turned the light off?" said Harry.

"Didn't one of you fellows?"

"No! But it was turned off. And—that's not all!" said Harry quietly. "I saw something—it's not only what Bunter saw, this time. Something—I can't say exactly what—passed before the fire—like a shadow—"

"Perhaps it was a shadow," suggested Johnny Bull. "You're not going to get nery like Bunter, are you?"

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Wharton rather sharply. "What I saw, I saw—I didn't fancy it. And we know that somebody turned off the light. Somebody has been here."

"But who—how—" Johnny Bull stared round. "It was the ceiling light that was left on. It's out now. Sure you didn't switch it off before you went to sleep?"

"Of course I'm sure, fathead."

"Then I'm blessed if I make it out."

"I say, you fellows! Don't you go to sleep again!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you stay awake, you fellows! Put all the lights on!"

"Rot!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Put them all on, you beast!" howled Bunter, and Wharton quietly went from bed to bed, switching on all the bed lights, heedless of Johnny Bull. Billy Bunter was not very far from hysterics, and he had to be given his head. "I say, you fellows, I shan't sleep any more. I'm getting out of this. I'm going away from here first thing in the morning! Oh dear!"

"The stiff-fullness of the esteemed upper lip is the proper caper, my absurd Bunter," remarked Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. "The excellent and ridiculous ghost has departfully bunked."

"Mind you stay awake, you fellows."

"We'll stay awake, old chap," said Harry. "Blessed if I feel inclined to go to sleep—after this—" He stared round at the oaken walls. "Somebody has been here—that's a cert—"

"You d-d-don't think it was a g-g-ghost!" gasped Bunter.

"No, ass!"

"It—it touched me—" mumbled Bunter.

"Then it might have saved itself the trouble!" grunted Johnny Bull. "You were touched already—quite touched enough."

"Beast!"

"Somebody's been here," said Nugent. "If none of you fellows turned the light off—"

"Perhaps Wharton turned it off and forgot it?" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Perhaps you're a silly ass!" retorted Wharton tartly.

"Well, I don't see how anybody could get in. Who would want to play ghost and frighten that fat chump?"

"Somebody who doesn't want him here, I suppose," said Harry.

"Then it might be anybody in the

house—I suppose they all feel like that."

"Why, you beast—" roared Bunter. "Well, I'm going back to bed," yawned Johnny Bull. "You can keep your jolly old ghosts. I fancy you must have turned that light off, Wharton."

"I fancy you're a howling chump!"

"Thanks. Good-night."

Johnny Bull turned in again. Nugent and Hurree Singh looked dubiously at the captain of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, don't go to sleep!" gasped Bunter. "I want you all to stay awake and watch over me, you know. Then I may be able to get a little sleep myself. See?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Don't be selfish," urged Bunter. "I never could stand selfishness."

"You fellows turn in," said Harry. "I'll sit up for a bit. I don't suppose the blighter will come back with all the lights on, whoever he is, and whatever his game is. It's all right."

"Well, I'm sleepy!" yawned Nugent.

"The sleepfulness is terrific," confessed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And they turned in. Wharton threw more logs on the dying fire, and stirred it. He was not disposed for sleep. But a few minutes later there came a drowsy voice from Bunter's bed.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hallo!"

"Not going to sleep?"

"No."

"All right—then I will."

And Bunter did.

Harry Wharton remained in the arm chair, before the leaping fire, with the full intention of staying awake. That was still his intention when he nodded.

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(Continued from page 13.)

off to sleep. The warmth of the fire and the lullaby of Bunter's snore lulled him to slumber, and he started with surprise when Albert's knock came at the door, and he opened his eyes on the dim December morning peeping in at the windows.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Arrives!

H ALLO, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice was a pleasant sound in the ears of his comrades. It was the following day—and Christmas Eve. A taxi from Ashwood had landed Bob Cherry at the doors of Cavandale Abbey, and his friends hurried into the hall to meet him.

Bob looked ruddy and rosy and in exuberant spirits, and glad to see his chums. He gave Billy Bunter a hearty smack on the shoulder, which elicited a loud howl from the fat junior.

"Here we are again, Fatty!" chortled Bob. "Fat as ever! What's the matter, old pippin?"

"Ow! You've dislocated my shoulder, you silly chump!"

"My dear man, that's only a hearty Christmas greeting! Come here and have another."

Bunter backed away.

"Had a good journey, old chap?" asked Harry.

"Oh, ripping! Weather splendid—seasonable, at least. Lots of snow all the way! Jolly glad to see you men again! Dash it all, I'm glad to see you, Bunter," added Bob. Evidently Robert Cherry was strongly under the influence of Yuletide good-fellowship and geniality.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You men having a good time?" asked Bob.

"Oh, tiptop! There was a ghost last night!"

"Good!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "That's what I call real Christmas hospitality, to trot out a ghost. Christmas isn't really complete without one; but they're getting rarer and rarer. To tell you the truth, I've never seen one yet. What sort of a jolly old ghost—grisly skeleton, with clanking chains?"

"No; a jolly old abbot who still feels sore over the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry VIII.'s time," answered Harry, laughing.

"Well, that's keeping up a grudge, and no mistake!" chuckled Bob. "Anybody actually seen him?"

"Only Bunter, so far——"

"After a supper of goose and mince pies——"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"We'll tell you about it," said Harry. "Better trot in and see Lord Cavandale now. He came home this morning. He had to be away some

days, but he's back now. Oh, here he is!"

Bob Cherry turned to the lean, tall gentleman who came to greet him. He recognised the gentleman with the scarred face, whom he had seen at Lantham junction on break-up day—the owner of the celebrated horse Maharajah. Lord Cavandale gave him a pleasant smile and nod as he shook hands with him.

"This is Bob Cherry, sir!" said Harry.

"I think I should have recognised you from your likeness to your father, my boy," said the peer. "Major Cherry was with me in Flanders. I am glad to see you here, though I fear that you will find Christmas somewhat dull at the abbey."

"Oh, we'll make it merry and bright, sir!" said Bob. "Wharton says there's a jolly old ghost. That's simply topping!"

Lord Cavandale laughed.

"I cannot answer for the ghost, though my young friends seem to have had a very singular experience last night, from what they tell me," he answered. "Bunter favours the ghost theory, I think, while Wharton is disposed to believe in a secret passage and a practical joker. And Bull, I think, does not favour either theory. So you may choose for yourself."

"Oh, I plump for the ghost!" said Bob, with a chuckle. "I'll sit up to-night and put salt on his tail."

"Wharton sat up last night, but he jolly well went to sleep!" said Bunter. "I told him specially to keep awake, because I was going to sleep——"

"Dear old Bunter! Always the same bonny boy!" said Bob affectionately. "He never changes, does he?"

"The changefulness is not preposterous."

Captain Lankester lounged into the hall, with the expression on his face that made Bunter describe him as a supercilious beast.

"More of Bunter's friends, Cavandale?" he asked, his lip curling.

"Yes, Lankester," said Lord Cavandale quietly. "This is the son of Major Cherry, whom I am very glad indeed to meet. This is Captain Lankester, Cherry."

The captain, without approaching, gave Bob a careless nod. He lounged away into the billiard-room, and Lord Cavandale, after a few more pleasant words to Bob, followed him there.

Harry Wharton & Co. marched the newcomer off to their own quarters. Bunter rang for Albert.

"George!"

"Sir!" said Albert.

"Let tea be served up here, Frederick."

"Very good, sir!"

"Is that chap's name George, or Frederick?" asked Bob Cherry, glancing after Albert as he disappeared, and then looking at Bunter.

"Oh, neither!" answered Bunter carelessly. "But I can never remember that his name's Albert."

"Eh?"

"I never remember servants' names, you know," explained Bunter. "We keep so many at Bunter Court, that's how it is."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'll have tea up here, old chap," said Bunter. "It will remind you of tea in the study at Greyfriars, you know. It will recall some of the splendid spreads I've stood you at school. You remember them—what?"

"My memory must be failing," answered Bob gravely. "Blessed if I can remember a single one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Jolly quarters!" said Bob. "This your room, Bunter?"

"One of my rooms," said Bunter. "I like having tea up here; it's cosy, and I like having my friends round me in my own quarters while I dispense lavish hospitality. What are you grinning at?"

Bob Cherry gurgled.

"Eh! Was I grinning? My mistake! Well, I had a rather measly lunch on the train, so I'm quite ready for your lavish hospitality, old fat bean; and the lavisher it is the better I shall like it!"

"There's rather a cad staying here—that fellow Lankester," said Bunter. "I don't want you to be too civil to him. He's absolutely cheeky! He doesn't like me."

"Doesn't like you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"No!" said Bunter.

"Well," said Bob, "you fellows told me there were mysteries going on in this place; but I fancy that's the mysteriourest." He looked round at the Co. "What possible reason can this man Lankester have for not liking Bunter? Can you fellows account for it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He can't find fault with his manners, surely?" said Bob. "We know what they're like! Think he's jealous of his good looks?"

"As a matter of fact, I fancy that's got a lot to do with it," said Bunter. "What are you silly owls cackling at? Look here——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the lavish hospitality!" said Bob cheerily. "Bunter, old fat bean, you're a lucky bargee! Talk about pigs in clover!"

"Oh, really, you ass——"

Albert came in, followed by James and Robert. There was no doubt that the hospitality was lavish, whether it was Bunter's or not.

Albert & Co. were dismissed, and the Famous Five sat down to tea, as cheery and bright as if they were teeing in Study No. 1, in the Greyfriars Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been feeling a little troubled over the strange events of the previous night; but all clouds rolled away under the influence of Bob Cherry's ruddy, cheery face and exuberant spirits. Bob had come in like a particularly bright ray of sunshine.

Over tea, his chums told him of the strange happenings at Cavandale Abbey. Bob listened with keen interest.

"Is Mr. Locke here yet?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him," answered Wharton. "We've heard that he's coming to look for that rotter who's been getting after our host. I've no doubt that he will nail him."

"We'll tell him about the ghost, and get him to nail the Phantom Abbot at the same time," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Ring for Albert, one of you!"

"Bother Albert!" said Johnny Bull. "We can have tea without blinking footmen buzzing round the table!"

"You may not be accustomed to footmen, Bull! I am!" said Bunter, with dignity. "At Bunter Court I never lift hand or foot to wait on myself. Ring for Albert! I've left my cigarettes in the other room."

Bob stared at him.

"Cigarettes, you fat duffer! Are you playing the giddy ox now that Quelch's eye isn't on you?"

"A man likes a smoke now and

then," said Bunter negligently. "Who's going to ring for Albert?"

"Echo answers, who?"

"Well, if you're too lazy to step to a bell," said Bunter scornfully, "step into the next room and get the cigarettes? I left them beside my bed."

"Ain't he the same jolly old Bunter that we always knew?" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "Doesn't he give you that same old feeling about the toes, as if you simply must kick him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rose from his chair, and rolled into the adjoining bed-room to fetch the cigarettes himself. The next moment a fearful yell rang through both rooms.

"Ow! Help! Ow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the thump—"

"My only hat! What—"

The Famous Five jumped up from the table. As they started towards the communicating door, Billy Bunter came bolting back out of the bed-room, his fat face white as chalk, and his little round eyes almost protruding through his big round spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—help! Keep him off!" shrieked Bunter.

"What the thump—"

"Ow! The gig-gig-ghost! Yow-ow! Keep him off!" shrieked Bunter.

"Great pip!"

The Famous Five, with one accord, rushed through the doorway into the adjoining room. It was dusky, in the early December evening. Harry Wharton switched on the light.

The room was empty.

"The silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I—I say, you fellows, e-c-c-can you see him?"

"There's nobody there, fathead!"

"I—I saw him!" gasped Bunter. "He—he—he was standing by the wall—the abbot—just like I saw him before! Oh dear—"

"Well, he's gone now," said Nugent. "Look here, old fat man, you mustn't begin seeing ghosts in the day-time. Keep them for night."

"I tell you I saw him!" roared Bunter.

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I tell you—"

Bob Cherry rubbed his hands. "Topping!" he exclaimed. "A jolly old Christmas ghost! My beloved 'earers, we're going to enjoy this Christmas!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Watcher of the Night!

LORD CAVANDALE laughed. "Nonsense, my dear fellow!" he said.

The hour was late.

Harry Wharton & Co. had long gone to bed. The darkness of the December midnight hung over Cavandale Abbey. Pilkington had made his final survey, seen that all was in order, and retired to his own quarters.

Lord Cavandale stopped at the door of his room, which was opened by his valet, Harris. Captain Lankester had come up with the peer, and he seemed to hesitate to leave him.

"The fact is, I'm uneasy, Cavandale," said the captain slowly. "This is your first night home, and—"

"And you think my friend the enemy may be watching for his opportunity?"

"Well, I'm going to glance round your quarters before you turn in," said Lankester. "I'm uneasy."

"Nonsense! Harris is going to sleep in the dressing-room, with the door ajar. I shall have my old Army

revolver by my pillow. I should be glad if the sniper would drop in, as a matter of fact. I should welcome a chance to deal with him, now that I am on my guard."

Lord Cavandale, standing in the open doorway of his bed-room, did not move for the captain to enter. Lankester glanced past him into the lofty, well-lighted room.

"You don't feel uneasy?" he asked.

"Not at all."

"Yet, according to the boy Bunter there is a traitor in your household who admitted the assassin once, and may admit him again."

"I trust that Ferrers Locke will deal with him," said the peer.

"Possibly—when Mr. Locke blows in," said the captain. "I cannot say that I share your faith in him."

"My unknown enemy does, Lankester," said the peer gravely. "For there was an attempt on Mr. Locke's life yesterday, which he is satisfied was made to prevent him from coming here. The traitor in this household knew that I was calling in Ferrers Locke, and took measures to prevent his intervention—which fortunately failed. But the hour is late, my dear fellow. Good-night!"

Captain Lankester lingered.

Spend a few minutes of the
LONG EVENINGS
WRITING GREYFRIARS
LIMERICKS!

Hope Bobby King, of "Lyndhurst," High Street, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, is pleased with the **DANDY POCKET WALLET** awarded him for sending in the following prize-winning effort:

From the dorm came a horrible din;
Billy Bunter had sat on a pin!
Fishy said: "You poor joint,
Now you've sat on the point
It's the sign of an early spring!"

Set to work on a limerick now,
chum, and win one of these handy-for-the-pocket wallets **YOUR-SELF!**

"Well," said Lankester, "really, Cavandale, I hardly take it kindly that you have not told me what measures this Ferrers Locke is taking for your protection."

Cavandale's face became very grave. "I've explained, Lankester, that Mr. Locke has imposed secrecy. I discussed the matter with him in London this morning, and he laid down a certain line for me to follow. He insisted that no one, not even an intimate friend, should be acquainted with the matter; and as I had placed myself unreservedly in his hands, I am bound to carry out his wishes."

"Well, we shall see what we shall see, when the great man comes," said Captain Lankester, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I only hope that your faith in the man may be justified. Well, a last cigarette, Cavandale, and then to bed."

Cavandale accepted a cigarette from the captain's case, and the two men paced the wide corridor while he smoked it. Then they said good-night and parted, and Lord Cavandale entered his room and the door was closed.

Captain Lankester, however, continued to pace the corridor, lighting a cigar to keep him company.

There was no doubt that the captain was, as he had said, uneasy.

Now that he was alone, a dark cloud settled on his brow, and his face had almost a haggard look.

Half an hour passed, and the light no longer glimmered under the door of the peer's room. There was still a light under the door of the adjoining dressing-room, however; and the captain approached it and tapped lightly. It was opened by Harris, who looked at the captain with a slightly surprised expression on his face.

Lankester forced a smile.

"I'm uneasy to-night, Harris," he said. "Lord Cavandale has no fears; but I cannot feel easy in my mind. You are sure that you have examined his lordship's quarters carefully?"

"Quite, sir," said Harris.

"Windows and doors secure, what?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"You are in a hurry for bed?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"Not particularly, sir," answered the valet, suppressing a yawn.

Lankester held out his cigarette-case. "Smoke, my good fellow. Keep me company till I've finished my cigar."

Harris smiled dutifully, and took a cigarette. The captain gave him a light. Captain Lankester leaned on the door, smoke rings rising from his cigar, while the valet smoked the cigarette.

He yawned at last.

"Well, bed, I suppose," he said. "I leave Lord Cavandale in your care, Harris. I don't feel much like sleep; but I'd better turn in. Good-night, Harris!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Captain Lankester walked away, switched off the corridor light at the end, and disappeared. Harris closed his door.

Lankester moved along the oak gallery above the hall, slowly, switching off lights behind him as he went. A short staircase from the oak gallery led to his rooms. He paused in the corridor, to glance at the door of Bunter's room, with a scowl on his face. Then he walked along to his own rooms. A sleepy valet started to his feet as the Army man entered.

"I told you you could go to bed, Greaves," said the captain sharply.

"I thought you might need me, sir," "Nonsense! Go to bed!"

Greaves went to his own room, farther up the corridor. Lankester stood at his open door till the valet's door had closed. Then he closed his door, and, with a hand that shook a little, poured out a whisky-and-soda. A few minutes later his light was extinguished; but Captain Lankester was not sleeping.

He threw himself into a chair, and the red glow of his cigar gleamed through the darkness of the room. But he threw the cigar away half smoked, and it smouldered out on the hearth.

The long, slow minutes passed, and the stroke of one boomed through the silent night.

Still Gerald Lankester remained motionless in the chair, his sleepless eyes staring through the darkness.

Long, slow minutes—each an age to the man who was waiting! Twice he moved to look at the luminous dial of a watch, as if he could not believe that the time was passing so slowly.

But two deep strokes sounded through the night at last. It was two o'clock on Christmas morning, and Captain Lankester rose at last from the chair and with a white, set face moved to his door.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Ferrers Locke on Hand!

THE nightlight burned dimly in Lord Cavandale's room.

It glimmered on the face of the peer, laid on the white pillow, the eyes closed in deep slumber, and on the long scar that seamed the upturned cheek.

The stroke of two had sounded and died away. There was silence, save for the faint moan of the December wind without.

In the adjoining dressing-room a nightlight also burned. From that room, through the half-open doorway, a sound of heavy breathing came. Harris, like his master, was plunged in deep sleep.

Suddenly there was a faint sound in the silence.

Click!

The door from the corridor opened.

The lock had been picked from the outer side. A stocky, thick-set figure stepped quickly into the room and closed the door silently after him.

The light glimmered on a face half-hidden by a dark muffer drawn across it just below the eyes. A bowler hat was jammed down almost to the eyebrows.

It was a strange and sinister figure that stood there, the head bent a little to listen.

For a long minute it stood; then it stirred, crossing swiftly to the half-open door of the dressing-room. In that doorway the figure stopped, staring silently at the valet stretched on his bed deep in slumber. One look seemed enough for the intruder, and he turned back, apparently satisfied that he had nothing to fear from Harris.

Silently the stocky figure approached Lord Cavandale's bedside. The peer slept on.

The right hand of the intruder slid into the coat pocket and emerged again, grasping a length of leaden gaspipe. The hard eyes glittered down at the sleeper.

Yet the wretch, who had come there for deadly work, seemed to pause. One crushing blow with the terrible weapon in his hand meant instant death to the sleeper; but something in the calm face, perhaps the scar left from the terrible days in Flanders, gave the ruffian pause. The man who lay at his mercy had gone through the terrible years of the War, escaping a thousand perils—to perish at last by an assassin's hand under his own roof. It seemed that some faint twinge of remorse touched even the hard heart of the desperate ruffian who stood over him, weapon in hand.

But if so, it was only momentary.

The right arm was flung up, the lead pipe firmly grasped. And as it rose, it was grasped from behind by another hand.

A grasp that seemed of iron dragged the ruffian's arm back over his shoulder, twisted it ruthlessly, and the weapon fell to the floor.

A faint, gasping cry broke from the wretch.

He spun round in the iron grip of the man who had seized him. His starting eyes stared wildly into a cool, calm, clear-cut face, a face that he knew, and a panting cry of terror left his lips.

"Ferrers Locke!"

Like one in a dream, unresisting for a moment, the wretch stood staring at the Baker Street detective, who had appeared as if by magic from nowhere. His jaw drooped, and his eyes seemed starting from his head.

A grim smile curved Ferrers Locke's lips.

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"Ferrers Locke! You—you here!"

"As you see!"

The next instant the man was struggling. Terror changed to desperation, and he fought furiously for his liberty.

Crash!

He was down on his back, and the sinewy grasp of the Baker Street detective dragged his wrists together.

Click!

The handcuffs were on his wrists.

He lay, panting on the floor, his eyes gleaming up at the Baker Street detective like those of a captured wild beast.

Locke stooped over him and drew the disguising muffer from his face.

"As I thought!" he said tranquilly.

It was the face of the ruffian who had attacked him on the Dorchester road that was revealed.

Strange as it seemed, no sound or movement had come from the sleeping peer, or from the valet in the adjoining room, in spite of the noise of the struggle and the crash of the falling man on the floor.

Both of them still slept soundly.

Locke turned from the handcuffed man sprawling at his feet, and bent over Lord Cavandale. He touched the peer lightly.

But the sleeping man's eyes did not open.

He went to the dressing-room door, looked in at Harris, and called:

"Harris!"

But the man slept on.

He came back to the captured ruffian, who had now struggled to his feet. His deep-set eyes gleamed at the detective like a wolf's.

"You've got me, Ferrers Locke!" he muttered. "But for that schoolboy yesterday you would never have been here!"

"Quite!" said Locke.

"And you were here—here all the time, and no one knew—no one—"

"No one!" agreed Ferrers Locke. "Your confederate in the house would hardly have admitted you, my man, had he known that Ferrers Locke was here."

The prisoner ground his teeth.

"Fool!" he breathed. "Fool, to be fooled like this—fooled! He did not know, did not guess, that Ferrers Locke had come—"

The Baker Street detective smiled faintly.

"You need not blame your confederate! I came secretly, in darkness. I entered by a window, and have remained concealed since I came. Even Harris did not know that I had come. No one knew but Lord Cavandale. The secret was well kept, my friend. I was expected to-morrow, and I was not mistaken in judging that Lord Cavandale's enemy would seek to accomplish his work before Ferrers Locke was installed in the house. You scoundrel, I knew that you would be admitted to-night. I knew that you would come, and from the instant you entered this room my eye has been upon you." Locke made a gesture towards a tall Chinese screen. "This night Lord Cavandale has been in no danger, though you and your confederates counted on his death as a certainty. He lay drugged, at your mercy, as you fancied."

"The game's up!" muttered the prisoner sullenly. "Five years for this, Ferrers Locke! I'll remember you when I come out!"

Locke shrugged his shoulders.

He stepped to the door, opened it, and looked out into the blackness of the corridor. There was no sound; the house was buried in silence and slumber.

He looked back at the prisoner.

The man, standing silent, was wrenching at the handcuffs with an effort that made the veins stand out on his forehead. The effort seemed to exhaust him, and he stood unsteadily, catching his breath.

Locke rang a bell. It was two or three minutes before Pilkington, the butler, appeared, switching on the lights as he came. Pilkington was half-dressed, with a coat thrown on, and his face was startled.

He stepped in at the door that Locke had left open, tapping lightly, and staggered at the sight of the Baker Street detective in the room and the handcuffed prisoner.

"What—what—"

Pilkington had been amazed at being rung by his lordship, as he supposed, at such an hour. But what he beheld in his lordship's room fairly unnerved him. For once the professional repose of the butler of Cavandale Abbey completely deserted him, and he goggled at the Baker Street detective.

"Do not be alarmed, Pilkington," said Locke quietly. "I am Ferrers Locke, the detective. I am here on Lord Cavandale's instructions."

"I—I think I know you, sir!" gasped Pilkington. "I—I have seen your picture in the papers, sir! But—but I fail to understand, sir. I was not aware that you were in this house, sir, though I was aware of his lordship's intention to call you in—"

"My presence here was a secret," said Locke. "I have been watching over Lord Cavandale's safety, and have arrested the man who has so often attempted his life."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Pilkington.

He blinked dazedly at the scowling man in handcuffs.

"Kindly go to the quarters of the Greyfriars boys," added Ferrers Locke. "Wake them, and request them to come here as quickly as possible."

"The—the boys, sir!" stammered Pilkington. He expected Mr. Locke to instruct him to telephone to the police; but the request to call the schoolboys to the scene astounded Mr. Pilkington.

"Yes, and at once. Please also call Captain Lankester—as his lordship's friend and guest, he has a right to know immediately what has happened. Ask Captain Lankester to come here."

Locke was looking towards the butler as he spoke, his shoulder turned to the handcuffed man. But in a tall glass, a corner of his eye was on a reflection of the ruffian's face. And he did not fail to note the sudden gleam that leaped into the eyes of the handcuffed man.

He gave no sign, however.

"Lose no time, please, Pilkington."

"Very well, sir!" gasped Pilkington.

And he almost tottered away.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night!

"**H** ALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Who's that?"

"What the dickens—"

Bob Cherry was the first to awake. But the other members of the Co. quickly opened their eyes. Through the silence of the night came a knocking at the door.

The light—or, rather, several lights—burned in the schoolboys' room. Bunter had insisted on all the lights burning all night; and after the mysterious happening of the night before, the other fellows were not unwilling. Wharton jumped out of bed and ran to the door.

"Who's there?" he called out. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was half-past two.

"It is I, Pilkingham!" came the fruity voice of the butler. Pilkingham was recovering his portly calmness now.

"Anything the matter?"

Harry Wharton opened the door as he recognised the butler's voice.

"What on earth do—" exclaimed Nugent, staring at Pilkingham.

Snore! came from Billy Bunter's bed. The knocking on the door, and the sound of voices had not awakened the Owl of the Remove.

"Mr. Ferrers Locke desires your presence in his lordship's room," said Pilkingham.

There was a general exclamation.

"Ferrers Locke!"

"Yes! And will you kindly go at once?"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "But I never knew Mr. Locke was here."

"Neither did I, sir!" said Pilkingham, in a somewhat reserved tone. "I was quite unacquainted with the fact. The whole

proceeding is somewhat singular, I am bound to say, and contrary to the usual customs of his lordship. If you young gentlemen will dress, I will conduct you to his lordship's room, when I have called Captain Lankester."

"What-ho!" said Bob.

He fairly jumped into his clothes.

"But what has happened, Pilkingham?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Something must have happened—"

"His lordship's life has been attempted, sir," said the butler. "But it appears that Mr. Locke was concealed in his room, and he has taken the villain in the attempt."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's got him?" shouted Johnny Bull.

"Yes, sir. The man is now a handcuffed prisoner in his lordship's room, in Mr. Locke's charge."

"Good old Locke!" chuckled Johnny.

"The esteemed Locke was the right man to deal with the absurd and detestable scoundrel!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Pilkingham went along the corridor towards Captain Lankester's rooms. The Famous Five were dressing at a record rate. Billy Bunter was still snoring.

"What about Bunter?" asked Bob, glancing towards the sleeping Owl of the Remove.

"Blow Bunter!" said Johnny Bull. "Locke can't want him!"

"Could anybody want him?" grinned Bob. "But what I mean is, can we leave him here alone? Better not, I think."

"No!" said Harry, and he went to Bunter's bed and shook the fat junior by the shoulder. "Bunter!"

"Groooh!"



Bump! Bunter tripped over the belt of his dressing-gown and went crashing to the floor, bumping his chin. "Yaroooh!" he howled "Ow! Yow-ow!"

"Wake up!"

"Ooooooooh!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Ow! Beast! Lemme alone! Groooh! 'Tain't rising-bell!" mumbled Bunter.

"Wake up, you fat idiot."

Billy Bunter sat up in bed and blinked at the captain of the Remove.

"Wharrer marrer? Wharrer you waking me up for? I'm sleepy! Oh! Is it the gig-gig-ghost?" Bunter started up with a yell.

"Is isn't the gig-gig-ghost!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "But we're going, and if you don't want to be left alone, get into your clobber sharp."

"But I—I say, you fellows—"

"Sharp's the word!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"For goodness' sake, be quick, you ass! We can't wait for you!"

"But what—" gasped Bunter.

"Never mind now—buck up!"

"Look here!" roared Bunter. "Wharrer you mean? What's happened? Think you're giving me orders? Go and eat coke!"

"Suit yourself!" said Harry. "Come on, you men!"

He went to the door, where Pilkingham's portly form had now reappeared.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" yelled Bunter. "I'll come! D-d-don't you leave me here alone to be m-m-murdered, you beasts!"

Bunter leaped into his trousers, and bundled on a dressing-gown. Like most of Bunter's garments, it was a brand-new dressing-gown. It was of a gorgeous design in many colours, rivaling the celebrated coat of Joseph, and Bunter looked a good deal like a

tropical beetle as he enveloped himself in it.

"If you young gentlemen are ready—" said Pilkingham.

"Lead on Macduff!" said Bob cheerily.

Pilkingham gave a slight start, at that unaccustomed mode of address. But he led the way, and the Famous Five followed him towards Lord Cavandale's apartment. Billy Bunter rolled after them. Lights were on in all the corridors and the oaken gallery over the great hall. As the schoolboys went along the gallery there were hurried footsteps behind them, and a sound of panting breath, as of a man in a hurry.

"I say, you fellows, look out!" yelled Bunter. "He's after us!"

"You silly ass!"

"It is Captain Lankester!" said Pilkingham.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

The Army man passed the schoolboys without a word or a look. In the bright light, his face showed pale as death. He ran on ahead of them and turned into the corridor leading to Lord Cavandale's room.

"I—I say, you fellows, don't run!" gasped Bunter. "I say—yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Oh, my hat!" Harry Wharton stared round. "What—"

"Ow! Something's caught me round the ankle!" howled Bunter, sprawling on the oak floor. "Ow! What was it? I say, you fellows—"

"You fat idiot, it was the belt of your blessed dressing-gown! For goodness' sake, shut up and come on!"

"Ow! Beast! Lend a fellow a hand! Ow!"

Bob Cherry lent a hand. He took a grasp on Bunter's hair, and jerked him to his feet. Bunter rose very swiftly.

"Ow! Yow-ow! Leggo! You're pip-pip-pulling my hair out by the roots!" he yelled. "Ow! Leggo, you beast! Wow!"

"Come on, fathead!"

"Wait till I tie up my dressing-gown. I—"

"Go and eat coke!"

The Famous Five hurried on. Bunter, gathering up his voluminous gown in two fat hands, rolled rapidly after them. An ample fold of that gorgeous gown caught in a fat leg, and Bunter rolled over again.

"Ow! Wow! I say, you fellows!"

But the fellows did not heed. They hurried on; and Bunter, picking himself up, spluttering, sprinted after them, and arrived last at the door of Lord Cavandale's room.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

By Whose Hand?

FERRERS LOCKE, standing in the middle of the room, where Lord Cavandale still lay in deep sleep, looked towards the open door, his face expressionless as he listened to hurried approaching footsteps in the corridor. The handcuffed man had thrown himself on a settee, and sat, with his manacled hands before him, scowling sullenly and savagely at the Baker Street detective.

A prisoner, caught in the very act, handcuffed, and under the keen eyes of the celebrated detective, the assassin's game was up, and yet a less keen man than Ferrers Locke would have noted that the bullet-headed man had not given up hope. He was listening to the approaching footsteps even more intently than Ferrers Locke.

Locke glanced at him for a fleeting moment, and through the sullen defiance in the hard face, he read the lurking hope of the rascal that all was not yet up. And on what that hope was founded, Locke was well aware. In the house, unknown among the numerous occupants of Cavandale Abbey, was his accomplice. And it was from this confederate that the scoundrel hoped, and looked, for aid.

And that the unknown and mysterious confederate would, and must, aid him, if he could, was certain. For if he failed, he had betrayal to expect from the man who was captured. That wild night's work was not over yet for Ferrers Locke. It was only beginning. Much remained to be done in the dark, cold hours of that Christmas morning.

The hurried footsteps reached the doorway, and Captain Lankester entered, white as death, panting. His swift glance went to Lord Cavandale's bed, then to the sullen, handcuffed ruffian on the settee, and then came to rest on the calm, clear-cut face of Ferrers Locke.

"Who are you?"

The captain flung out the words.

"Did not Pilkington tell you?"

"He said that Ferrers Locke—"

"I am Ferrers Locke," said the detective, with a slight bow. "You, I take it, are Captain Lankester."

"What are you doing here?"

There was a sort of involuntary hostility in the captain's tone and manner. Locke did not appear to observe it.

His eyes were keenly on the almost haggard face of the Army man.

"I am here on Lord Cavandale's instructions," he answered. He paused

for a moment to nod to the ohms of Greyfriars, who had now arrived at the door, and went on quietly: "I entered the house in secret, and posted myself to watch over Lord Cavandale's safety. I seized upon yonder scoundrel in the very act of lifting his weapon to kill a sleeping man."

"Good gad!" breathed the captain.

His glance went to the bed again.

"Cavandale is—is safe?"

"Quite."

Harry Wharton & Co. entered quietly. It amazed them to see Lord Cavandale sleeping undisturbed, but they said nothing. Captain Lankester did not, for the moment, remark on it.

He gave the juniors a hostile stare.

"What are these boys doing here?" he demanded.

"I sent for them," said Locke.

"Good gad! For a set of schoolboys at an hour like this—"

"I am acquainted with these lads, and can depend on them," said Ferrers Locke. "Someone upon whom I can depend must remain with Lord Cavandale when I leave him."

"Rely on us, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"I do, my boy."

"I am taking your word for it that you are Ferrers Locke, and that you are here on Lord Cavandale's instructions," said the captain. "But in these circumstances, sir, some proof of your bona-fides—"

"These schoolboys are well acquainted with me," said Locke. "They will tell you that they know me as a relative of their headmaster, Dr. Locke, at Greyfriars School."

"That is the case, Captain Lankester," said Harry Wharton.

"The knowfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Locke is terrific!" assured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Moreover, I think my actions speak for themselves," added Locke, with a gesture towards the handcuffed man on the settee. "Here at my feet lies the gas-pipe with which he would have dashed out Lord Cavandale's brains had I not intervened." He fixed his eyes on the prisoner, as Lankester stood silent. "What is your name?"

"You can find that out for yourself," sneered the prisoner.

Wharton started a little at the harsh, husky voice, and Locke smiled.

"Do you recognise the man's voice, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"As that of the man you overheard on the avenue one night, and who struck you down? Lord Cavandale has told me of the incident."

"Yes," said Harry. "I saw the man only in the dark; but he is the same build, and I know his voice again perfectly well."

"Quite so," said Locke, and the handcuffed man gave him a savage scowl. "Where is Bunter?"

"I say, you fellows—"

What looked like a resplendent tropical beetle rolled in at the door. Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

"Leaving me behind, you beasts? I might have been murdered! Lot you care! I say—"

"Bunter!" Ferrers Locke's voice broke in quietly.

"Oh! Yes—what—"

"Look at that man. Have you seen him before?"

Bunter blinked at the sullen-faced ruffian, and jumped.

"Oh crikey! It's that beast—"

"Where have you seen him before?"

"I say, you fellows, is he safe? Is he—"

"He is handcuffed," said Ferrers Locke. "Answer my question."

"He's the man who was in the train from Lantham on break-up day!" gasped Bunter. "The beast who went for Lord Cavandale—and I stopped him—" The fat junior broke off, quite unnerved by the black glare from the man in the handcuffs.

"Quite so!" said Locke. "I had no doubt of it. But it is now established, Captain Lankester, that this is the same man who has repeatedly attempted the life of Lord Cavandale."

"It—it looks like it," said the captain, through his white lips. "It certainly looks like it!"

The man's eyes were fixed on Lankester's white face. It did not occur to the juniors to read a threat in that steady, unwinking stare. Possibly it occurred to Ferrers Locke.

"And I jolly well know the brute, too!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's the man who got at you on the Dorchester road yesterday, Mr. Locke."

"To prevent my butting in here, as he expressed it," smiled Locke. "You are right, Cherry!"

"Mr. Locke—sir"—Pilkington was hovering in the doorway, his eyes on the sleeping peer—"sir, if Lord Cavandale has not been harmed—"

"Not in the least!"

"It is very singular, sir, if you will pardon my speaking, that his lordship does not awaken—"

"I was about to remark on it," interrupted Captain Lankester. "This is—extraordinary!"

"Lord Cavandale has been drugged," answered Ferrers Locke calmly. "I doubt whether he will awaken for some hours yet."

"Drugged, sir!" gasped Pilkington, in horror.

"Yes. And the same drug has evidently been administered to his man, Harris, who is still fast asleep in the next room."

"Oh, sir!" stuttered Pilkington.

"But who—how?" ejaculated Captain Lankester. "By whose hand—"

"That is what we have to discover," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "It is known that the scoundrel yonder has a confederate in the household who has admitted him to do his dastardly work. Undoubtedly that confederate administered the drug to Lord Cavandale and his servant in order to assure the success of the assassin."

"I—I can scarcely credit it!" exclaimed Lankester. "Pilkington, who has done this?"

"It is impossible for me even to make a suggestion, sir," said Pilkington. "There is no member of this household, sir, who has not come under my personal observation. The antecedents of every man and maid are known to me personally. Care is exercised, sir, before any servant is admitted to such an establishment as that of Lord Cavandale. I cannot believe, sir, that any servant employed in this household is faithless to his trust."

Pilkington drew up his portly form.

"I am prepared, sir, to answer for every servant in this household, as for myself," he said with dignity.

"Yet, if Mr. Locke is right—"

"I can only say, sir, that it is beyond me," said Pilkington.

"No doubt Mr. Locke has a suspicion on the subject?"

The captain's eyes turned on the Baker Street detective.

Locke smiled faintly.

"You must not attribute the powers of a magician to me, Captain Lankester. I have, so far, met no member of the household staff with the exception of

Pilkingham, and I am not, therefore, in the position to form the faintest suspicion of any of them. Unless the scoundrel yonder should decide to speak there is a task before us in unmasking his confederate."

Lankester's glance went to the handcuffed man for a second.

"He is not likely to speak, I imagine," he said. "He is a prisoner, and if he has any hope remaining it can only be in his confederate. By betraying the man he can only knock his own chances on the head."

"Quite so," agreed Ferrers Locke. "And I expect no aid from that quarter, for that very reason."

"You'll get nothing from me, Ferrers Locke!" came in a husky growl from the handcuffed man.

Pilkingham had advanced to the bedside, and was scanning the sleeper's face.

He even ventured to shake Lord Cavandale slightly. But there was no sign from the unconscious man. It was evident that the peer was sleeping under the influence of a drug.

"This—this is quite beyond me, Mr. Locke, sir," said Pilkingham. "I—I cannot doubt that a drug has been administered to his lordship. It—it appears certain. But a few days ago, sir, before his lordship went to London, there was an attempt—doubtless his lordship has told you—and his lordship certainly was not drugged at that time."

"The circumstances were different," said Ferrers Locke. "It was not till that attempt was made that Lord Cavandale became aware that there was a traitor in his household. That night he lay defenceless to attack, had not Bunter awakened and alarmed the assassin. But since, Lord Cavandale has been on his guard—his door locked, his servant sleeping in his dressing-room, his revolver at his pillow—and I doubt whether that scoundrel would have succeeded even had I not been here, had not Lord Cavandale been rendered helpless. On this occasion it was essential that Lord Cavandale should be rendered unconscious—and it was done by the unknown rascal who later admitted the assassin to the house."

"But who—who—" exclaimed the captain.

"That is what we have to discover, sir," said Ferrers Locke; "and in the meantime Lord Cavandale must be carefully watched. As for this man—"

"If you desire, sir, I will ring up the police station at Ashwood," said Pilkingham. "Inspector Chapman will be only too glad to come over and take him into custody."

A fierce gleam shot into the eyes of the handcuffed man.

"An excellent idea, Pilkingham," said Captain Lankester. "The sooner the police are here, the better. You will excuse me, Mr. Locke, but you are, after all, merely a private detective—"

"Perfectly so," said Ferrers Locke. "I shall be glad to hand over my prisoner to the official police at the earliest possible moment. Until they can arrive he must be kept in safe custody."

"I will be answerable for him," said Captain Lankester. "He must be removed from here—this is no place for the scoundrel."

"I agree," said Locke. "But perhaps some of the footmen—"

Lankester shook his head.

"You forget, Mr. Locke, that the man's confederate is among the household staff. We can take no risk of his confederate helping him to escape."

"True; but—"

"I will be personally responsible for him," said Captain Lankester. "I have

no intention of returning to bed, and I will keep him under my own observation until the police arrive."

"I should be quite willing to leave that task to some of these boys, sir—"

"I do not share your faith in the capacity of schoolboys to guard a dangerous man," said Captain Lankester acidly.

He stepped towards the prisoner. "Stand up and come with me!"

The man rose from the settee.

"Really, Captain Lankester—" said Ferrers Locke. A trace of irritation was visible in the detective's face. "I am bound to say that you appear to be taking matters somewhat freely into your own hands."

"As Lord Cavandale's friend I have every right to do so," answered the captain coolly. "It is my duty. When

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not an Escape!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. waited. They stood in a group by the bedside of the sleeping peer, speaking in hushed whispers. Pilkingham was using the telephone in the dressing-room, giving startling information to the police station at Ashwood. He came back into the bed-room after putting up the receiver, and looked at the Greyfriars juniors with as much disapproval as he could venture to display. Pilkingham undoubtedly shared Captain Lankester's opinion that schoolboys were out of place in this scene. On that point, however, the Famous Five were quite indifferent to the butler's opinion. Ferrers Locke had told them to watch over the sleeping peer during

GREYFRIARS CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 24.

This week's clever effort by the Greyfriars Rhymester is devoted to Dick Penfold, the poet of the Remove.



I'M sending you, dear Mr. Editor,
This little effusion in rhyme;
And fervently hope, when you've
read it o'er
You won't think me guilty of crime!
I'm hardly a Keats or a Kipling,
A Burns or a Byron, I know;
But still, from the pen of a stripling
You can't expect epics to flow!

I'm seated in happy seclusion,
And toasting my toes at the fire,
Away from the din and confusion
That brainy bards never desire.
I'd rather be writing to you, sir,
Than romping around in the Rag;
And when this epistle is through, sir,
I'll bury myself in a "mag."

I hope you are in a good humour,
And not feeling surly or sore,
Because I have just heard a rumour
That we've a day's outing in store.
And, sir, with your gracious permission,
I'd love to bring Russell and Brown
And Rake, on a grand expedition,
To see you in gay London Town!

Of course, if you're frightfully busy
This project will not be pursued;
I'll spend a dull day with Aunt Lizzie,
For I should just hate to intrude!
But I'm sure, in your charming and
sweet way,
You'll let us your sanctum invade,
And show us the wonders of Fleetway—
The House where the MAGNET is made!

My comrades are wildly excited,
And hope you will grant my request;
Billy Bunter will not be invited,
So set your forebodings at rest!
If Bunter rolled into your portals
I'm certain the list would collapse!
And he'll swallow enough for six mortals
If treated to luncheon—perhaps!

The sounds of high revel diminish,
Old Wingate is bawling "To bed!"
I'm still very far from the finish,
But there! I must give him his head.
And if you approve our excursion
Our joy will be magnified tenfold;
And none will enjoy the diversion
So much as, Yours gaily,
DICK PENFOLD.

Lord Cavandale recovers consciousness he may perhaps tell me that he desires me to submit to your instructions. In that case I shall cheerfully do so. In the meantime I regard it as my duty to take care that Cavandale's enemy does not get loose again."

"If you put it like that—" "I do put it like that!" interrupted the captain crisply. "Lord Cavandale's future safety depends on the safe custody of this man, and I make myself responsible for it."

"Very well," said Ferrers Locke. "I will at least accompany you and see the man placed in safety. Wharton, you and your friends will remain here until I return—I shall not be many minutes. Do not leave Lord Cavandale for a single instant."

"Depend on us, sir," said Harry. And Ferrers Locke followed the captain as Lankester led the handcuffed man away with a grasp on his arm.

his absence from the apartment, and that was enough for them. Billy Bunter settled down in an armchair before the hearth, blinked at the almost extinct fire and blinked round at the juniors.

"I say, you fellows—" "Well?" "The fire's nearly out." "What about it, fathead?" "Well, put some logs on it." "Ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—" "Can't you lift a log yourself?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You know I don't like moving, when I'm sitting down, you beast. Where's that man Pilkingham? Where's that fatheaded butler?"

"Here, sir!" said a voice behind Bunter.

"Oh! Put some logs on the fire, Pilkingham!"

"Very good, sir!" THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,193.

Pilkingham mended the fire. Bunter settled down comfortably, closed his eyes behind his spectacles, and snored.

His snore was rumbling through the room when Ferrers Locke came back. The detective entered the room quietly.

"The man's safe, sir?" asked Harry.

"Quite," said Locke. "Captain Lankester has taken him to his own room, and is to sit up and keep watch on him till the police arrive. He could scarcely be safer. You have telephoned, Pilkingham?"

"Yes, sir," answered the butler. "Inspector Chapman will be here in half an hour, sir."

"Thank you! Now, my boys, I am sorry to have disturbed your night's rest—"

"That's nothing, Mr. Locke."

"I have not, at all events, disturbed Bunter's," remarked Locke, with a glance towards the snoring figure in the armchair. "If you lads have no objection to remaining up—"

"Not the least, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Jolly glad to help!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gladfulness is terrific."

"In that case, I will leave you on the watch," said Ferrers Locke. "You fully understand that Lord Cavandale must not be left alone for a moment."

"I shall be very happy, sir, to remain with my master," said Pilkingham, with dignity.

"An excellent idea!" said Locke. "Remain by all means, Pilkingham. My young friends will remain also. One cannot be too careful, for his lordship has other enemies, as well as the villain whom I have fortunately taken. This man has repeatedly attempted Lord Cavandale's life; but it was not he who fired the shot in the picture-gallery."

"That must have been his confederate, I suppose," said Bob Cherry.

"Perhaps!"

"I don't see that," said Johnny Bull, in his thoughtful way. "If the jolly old confederate was ready to do the job himself, I don't see why he should have called in the other villain at all. Looks to me as if there's some other party after Lord Cavandale, as well as that brute and his confederate in the house."

Ferrers Locke gave Johnny Bull a curious glance, but he made no rejoinder. He bent for a moment over the sleeping peer. Lord Cavandale was still unconscious.

Without a word more Locke quitted the room.

The minutes passed slowly.

Billy Bunter's snore rumbled through the silent room; but the Famous Five were not feeling inclined for sleep. Their nerves were tense. All of them had the impression that the strange affair was not over yet, and they wondered how Ferrers Locke was occupied in these dragging minutes. Obviously, the Baker Street detective had some purpose in absenting himself, and leaving them on guard over the master of Cavandale Abbey.

Pilkingham yawned behind a plump hand.

It was over half an hour before the sound of a car was heard through the silence of the night.

Bob Cherry started and listened.

"That will be the police," he said.

Pilkingham glided from the room. The juniors heard him descending the stairs to open the door to Inspector Chapman.

There was a quiet step in the corridor, and Ferrers Locke came in.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,193.

From a distance below came the sound of voices.

"The police are here," said Locke. "No doubt Pilkingham will take them directly to Captain Lankester's room for the prisoner."

A slight smile hovered over his face for a moment.

Wharton watched him curiously. It was impossible to read the inscrutable face of the Baker Street detective; but Wharton felt that something was yet to come.

There were voices and heavy footsteps in the silent house. The juniors had no doubt that the police were taking into custody the handcuffed man who had been left in Captain Lankester's charge. They rather wondered that Ferrers Locke did not go to the captain's room to see the man handed over.

But Locke remained, and they waited.

There were heavy footsteps in the corridor. A portly figure appeared in the doorway. It was Inspector Chapman, and the expression on his face was one of angry disappointment and disgust.

"Mr. Locke here?" he grunted.

"I am here!" Ferrers Locke shook hands with the Ashwood inspector. "Nothing wrong, I hope, Mr. Chapman?"

The inspector gave a snort.

"Wrong! I should say so, Mr. Locke! The man's gone!"

PLEASE NOTE

that next week's MAGNET will
be on sale **WEDNESDAY,**
DECEMBER 24th.

"Gone?" ejaculated Wharton.

Mr. Chapman stared at him for a moment.

"Gone?" asked Ferrers Locke. "But how— Captain Lankester had him in his personal charge, and he was handcuffed—"

Another snort from Mr. Chapman.

"I wish you had kept him in your personal charge, Mr. Locke. We were taken to Captain Lankester's room, and found him fast asleep in a chair."

"Asleep!"

"Fast asleep!" growled the inspector. "And the man gone! We knew that the rascal had a confederate in the house, of course. Somehow, he got at the man and released him. That is what must have happened—with Captain Lankester asleep in the room!"

Mr. Chapman gave another snort of utter disgust.

"Well, my hat!" muttered Bob Cherry.

The juniors looked at Ferrers Locke. They expected to see the anger and disgust of the Ashwood inspector reflected in his face. But Locke's face expressed nothing.

A hurried footstep was heard, and Captain Lankester entered the room. His look was deeply disturbed.

"Inspector Chapman has told you, Mr. Locke—" he began.

"Yes."

"I can only apologise, only express my deepest regrets. I had no intention of sleeping, of course. The man was handcuffed. I believed him to be perfectly safe. I closed my eyes for a moment, and—and—"

"That is all very well, sir," said Inspector Chapman. "But you had a dangerous criminal in charge—a man who has attempted Lord Cavandale's

life over and over again! Really, sir, it—"

"You need not tell me how much I am to blame, Mr. Chapman," said Captain Lankester. "I am only too conscious of it. I shall never forgive myself. I am utterly ashamed—"

"Well, what's done can't be undone," said Mr. Chapman gruffly. "But I wish you'd kept the man in your own charge, Mr. Locke. I'm bound to say that, in the circumstances, I can't understand you letting him out of your sight."

"Captain Lankester rather insisted upon taking control," said Locke.

Grunt! from the inspector.

"I was to blame," said the captain. "I admit it. I cannot forgive myself. Perhaps—perhaps the man may yet be found."

"Yes," said Locke, "that is very probable."

Captain Lankester started.

"You—you think so?"

"I feel sure of it," said Locke. "In fact, I have little doubt, if any, that the rascal did not get very far when he escaped from your room, sir."

"I—I hardly understand you, Mr. Locke." The captain's look was strange at the Baker Street detective. "Surely the scoundrel will have fled."

"Certainly that was his intention," assented Ferrers Locke. "And that was the intention of the scoundrel who released him. But do not lay your fault too much to heart, sir. Fortunately, I feared that something of the kind might occur, and adequate precautions were taken."

Captain Lankester started violently.

"What—what do you mean?"

Inspector Chapman made an eager step forward.

"Mr. Locke, what—"

"You will find your prisoner, inspector," said Ferrers Locke tranquilly. "His confederate undoubtedly got at him in Captain Lankester's room, and contrived to release him from his handcuffs. He escaped from the captain's room, dropping from the balcony outside the window. Luckily, he dropped into the arms of two of my men, whom I had instructed to keep watch."

Captain Lankester gave a strangled cry.

"Your men? You were not alone here?"

"Here—yes," said Ferrers Locke. "But I have assistance outside. After the prisoner was taken into your charge, sir, I passed them the word to watch for his possible escape. Inspector Chapman, you will find your prisoner on the terrace, in the charge of two of my men, who will gladly hand him over to you."

"By gad!" ejaculated the inspector. He rubbed his plump hands. "By gad, I might have known, Mr. Locke, that no man would get away when once you'd laid hands on him! Good!"

The inspector hurried away. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged a joyful grin. They understood now why Ferrers Locke had left them with Lord Cavandale. It was as if he had foreseen the prisoner's escape, though how he could have foreseen it was a mystery to the juniors. Certainly they had never imagined for a moment that the Army man might sleep at his post.

Captain Lankester stood very still. His face was like chalk, and his eyes gleamed strangely at Ferrers Locke.

"Then—then"—he spoke haltingly—"then—the—the prisoner is—is safe, Mr. Locke? He—he has not escaped?"

"Not in the least," answered the Baker Street detective. "Rest assured that I left nothing to chance, sir, or to

design. The scoundrel is still in safe custody, and will answer for his attempts on Lord Cavandale's life, and you, therefore, need not take it too much to heart that he escaped while in your charge, Captain Lankester."

"And—and—" The captain's voice was husky. "And you have nothing more to tell Inspector Chapman?"

"I have told Inspector Chapman all that I had to tell him."

The captain was breathing hard. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at him in wonder. It was evident that he was the prey of an emotion that he found difficult to control.

He opened his lips to speak, but closed them again, and left the room without another word.

A faint smile flickered on Ferrers Locke's face. He turned to the Greyfriars fellows.

"You boys may return to bed," he said. "I shall remain with Lord Cavandale till morning. Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Billy Bunter was shaken into wakefulness, and the juniors retired. Bunter plunged into bed at once, and was soon snoring. But sleep did not come so easily to the Famous Five. The darkness of the December night was breaking into the grey dawn of Christmas Day before they slept.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Guilty Man I

LORD CAVANDALE stood before the fire in the great library of Cavandale Abbey. His face was a little pale, and there was a wrinkle of troubled thought in his brow. There was a glimmer of wintry sunshine on the tall windows, gleaming with frost. Captain Lankester leaned on one of the marble columns of the mantelpiece, a cigar between his fingers. Twice he had lighted it, and twice let it go out. They were alone in the library, and for some time neither had spoken. It was the Army man who broke the silence at last.

"A Merry Christmas, Cavandale!"

There was a bitter and sardonic note in his voice, and the peer glanced at him quickly.

"You look seedy this morning, Gerald," he said. "I am afraid you had a disturbed night. But, seriously, my dear fellow, Christmas is likely to be more agreeable, if not exactly merry, since the happenings of last night. The wretch who has threatened my life is safe in a cell, and I have little doubt that Locke will soon put his finger on the man's confederate in this house."

"You think so?"

"I feel sure of it," said Lord Cavandale.

"You have no suspicion yourself?"

"None. There is no one in the house whom I do not trust. It will be a painful shock to me when Locke reveals the rascal—as I have no doubt he will do before long."

Captain Lankester threw his cigar into the fire.

"A wonderful man!" he said.

"A clever detective, at least, Lankester. Do not think, for one moment, my dear fellow, that I blame you for the escape of the dastard whom you took into your charge last night. But it was like Locke to take precautions against an event which I, certainly, should never have foreseen. I have every confidence in him—only, I shrink from hearing what he will have to tell me when he reveals the name of the



While making an attempt to escape, the prisoner dropped from the balcony right into the arms of the two men Ferrers Locke had instructed to keep watch!

wretch who has eaten my bread, under my roof, and leagued with my enemy."

The captain bit his lip hard.

"Some man in desperate circumstances, driven to desperate resources," he said, in a low voice. "And you think Locke knows him?"

"I feel that he does."

"Then why has he not handed him over to the police?"

"I cannot say. But doubtless Locke will explain in good time. I am expecting him. He desired to see me, in your presence—"

"That is why you sent Pilkington to ask me to come here?"

"Yes. Locke desires you to hear what he has to say. He knows that I have confidence in you, of course."

Lankester gave the peer a strange look. He snipped off the end of a fresh cigar and lighted it with a hand that visibly trembled.

The door opened, and Ferrers Locke entered the library, closing the door behind him. The tall, lean figure of the detective crossed to the fire, where the two men stood. The expression on Locke's face was grave.

"You have something to tell Lord Cavandale, Locke?"

Captain Lankester spoke abruptly.

"The name, perhaps, of the confederate of the rascal who attempted his life last night?"

"Exactly!"

The cigar dropped from the captain's fingers.

"Are you serious?"

"Quite."

"And—and the name?"

Ferrers Locke did not answer. He turned to Lord Cavandale.

"You must prepare yourself for a shock, Lord Cavandale," he said. "What I have to tell you will not be pleasant hearing."

"I am aware of that, Mr. Locke," said the peer, with a sigh. "Whatever name you give, it will be that of someone I have trusted. You know the man?"

"I know him."

"And the motive of the crime?" asked Lord Cavandale. "But that, perhaps, is asking too much of you."

Ferrers Locke smiled slightly.

"The motive of the crime, Lord Cavandale, was clear to me long before I came here. I knew it when you first communicated with me, a week ago."

"You are a wonderful man, Mr. Locke! I confess that I have never been able to imagine what motive anyone can have for attempting my life," said Lord Cavandale. "So far as I know, I have never made an enemy."

"It was not as Lord Cavandale that your life was sought. It was as the owner of the celebrated horse, Maharajah."

"Are you jesting, Mr. Locke?"

"I was never more serious. Maharajah is expected to win the Lantham Thousand Guineas. The race is, indeed, a foregone conclusion, unless your horse can be got at. He is too well

guarded for that. Great sums have been laid on Black Prince, the favourite, until Maharajah's form became known. There are men who stand to lose thousands of pounds if Maharajah runs in the Lantham 'Thousand.'

"But—but what—"

"Your trainer is fully prepared for attempts on the horse. Maharajah is guarded night and day. But there was another resource for desperate men with ruin facing them. The horse could not be got at. The owner could. You are aware, of course, that on the death of an owner all engagements are cancelled. That is why your life was attacked."

"Good heavens!" breathed Lord Cavandale.

His face was pale.

"If you had died under the assassin's hand, Lord Cavandale, Maharajah would not have run. That was the motive; and from the first I had no doubt of it. I was, as you know, engaged upon a case in Dorset, and could not immediately come to your assistance. But I caused certain investigations to be made by trusted assistants. Before I came here I was aware of a certain group of racing men in London, posts of the Turf, who stand to lose a huge sum unless something should occur to prevent Maharajah running in the Lantham 'Thousand.' One member of this group was a man with whom you were on terms of personal friendship—a man desperately in debt, whose last chance of keeping his head above water was a victory of Black Prince in the Lantham race. This man, I learned, was frequently a guest in your house."

Captain Lankester made a movement.

"And this man—?" said Lord Cavandale.

"This man became the confederate of the desperate ruffian who was hired to destroy you. As a guest in your house, he had the power to admit the assassin, though he was not abandoned enough to strike the blow himself. Even his treachery had its limits."

Lord Cavandale started.

"But during the past week, Mr. Locke, there has been no guest in my house, with the exception of the school-boys and Captain Lankester."

"Quite so."

The peer started again. His glance turned on the white, drawn face of the Army man.

"Mr. Locke! You do not mean—you cannot mean—"

"I warned you to prepare yourself for a shock, sir," said the Baker Street detective quietly. "Last night, while I watched in your room, hidden by the screen, Captain Lankester gave you a drugged cigarette. He gave a drugged cigarette to your man, Harris. Had I not been there you would have fallen a helpless victim to the thug who was admitted into the house. After I had taken the man, Captain Lankester insisted upon taking charge of him. I knew his motive—"

"Mr. Locke!" said Lord Cavandale huskily.

His eyes were on Lankester. The Army man stood motionless, as if turned to stone.

"I knew his motive," repeated Locke.

"I already suspected him when I came to the house—you will remember that I stipulated that my presence should not be known to a single soul. When I saw him offer you the cigarette, I did not for the moment divine his object; but when he gave one also to Harris, I guessed."

"I allowed him to take charge of the prisoner, in his room—knowing his intention. He locked his doors before releasing the man; but a locked door does not give me much trouble."

"While he was working at the prisoner's handcuffs I was in the adjoining room, unknown to him. I saw all, and heard all that was said between them. I did not leave till I had seen him help the prisoner to escape from the window. That was a matter of little consequence—as I had already warned my men to be on the watch, and I knew that the prisoner would not go far. He affected sleep when Inspector Chapman arrived—"

"It is false!" The captain found his voice at last. "Cavandale, you do not believe—you cannot believe—"

Lord Cavandale passed his hand over his brow.

Captain Lankester's eyes burned at the Baker Street detective.

"You lie! You lie!" he hissed between white lips. "If you dare to say that this is true, why did you not tell Inspector Chapman last night—why did you not accuse me openly—"

"That is easily explained," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "I am not an official detective. I am a private detective, here in Lord Cavandale's interests. I leave your fate in his hands. I shall either detain you to be given into custody, or stand aside and allow you to leave, as Lord Cavandale directs. He has called you, and believed you to be, his friend—and he shall decide your fate."

"It is false—false! Cavandale, you do not believe—"

Lord Cavandale averted his glance.

"Save your denials, Captain Lankester," said Ferrers Locke quietly. "Lord Cavandale knows the truth. Neither is it likely that the villain who is now in a prison cell will remain silent when he comes to his trial."

The wretched man gave a groan.

Lord Cavandale turned his eyes upon him. He did not speak; but he made a gesture.

Slowly, with dragging steps, Captain Lankester crossed to the door. Ferrers Locke stood aside for him to pass.

At the door Lankester turned.

"It's useless to say anything," he muttered. "I—I know that! But—but—there are excuses. Don't think that I had a willing hand in this. I was in debt—over ears in debt—you've often helped me; but—but it was ruin this time! And that was not all—I was in their power—they knew things. There was a cheque, with another man's name on it—and they knew—they had me under their thumb! I'd never have—"

He broke off.

"If you wish for my forgiveness it is yours!" said Lord Cavandale quietly. "But never let me see you again!"

"No one is likely to see me again—in this country," muttered Lankester. "The game's up for me—this was my last chance, and it has failed. And—and—believe me if you can, Cavandale,

I'm glad that it has failed! Try to believe that."

"I believe it!" said Lord Cavandale.

"And—and before I go—one word! You are still in danger. That at least I can tell you. Someone else—some other scoundrel with a fortune to lose if Maharajah runs—who I cannot say; I have no idea—but the shot that was fired in the picture-gallery was fired by someone unknown to me. I give you my word for that, Cavandale!"

The door closed behind Gerald Lankester.

"I SAY, you fellows!"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Merry Christmas, old bean!"

"I say, that man Lankester isn't staying over Christmas," said Billy Bunter. "He's just gone! He was looking frightfully sick about something. I say, do you know whether we're having dinner early to-day—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We generally do at Bunter Court, on Christmas Day," said Bunter. "I think it's a jolly good idea. I say, you fellows, I've seen the turkey—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, do you fellows know where that fathead Locke is—"

"Just behind you," grinned Bob Cherry, as Ferrers Locke came out of the library.

"Oh!" Bunter spun round. "I—say, M-Merry Christmas, Mr. Locke!"

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"You're not going, Mr. Locke?"

asked Harry Wharton.

The Baker Street detective shook his head.

"No; I am not finished here," he replied.

"They got that man safe to chokey last night?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Quite safe."

"And now you've got to nail his jolly old confederate?"

"His confederate is gone," said Locke briefly. "He will not be seen at Cavandale Abbey again."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. Locke's expression did not invite questions, and they asked none. But Billy Bunter, naturally, wanted to know.

"I say, who was it?" he demanded.

"Shut up, Bunter!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"The shut-upfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed, jawful Bunter."

"I fancy I know!" grinned Bunter.

"I suspected all along that it was Pilkington—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Well, look here, Mr. Locke," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the Baker Street detective. "Now you're here, you can jolly well find out that beast, whoever he is, who has been playing ghost and frightening these fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Exactly!" said Ferrers Locke.

"Before I leave, I shall certainly hope to see the ghost of Cavandale Abbey."

There was yet a mystery to be solved at Cavandale Abbey. And Harry Wharton & Co. wondered what would be the end of Ferrers Locke's Christmas case.

THE END.

BE SURE YOU READ NEXT WEEK'S TOPPING YARN OF GREYFRIARS.—

"THE SECRET SNIPER!"

IT'S FULL OF SURPRISES AND EXCITING SITUATIONS!

UP, the ROVERS!



By JOHN BREARLEY.

The First Chapters Briefly Retold.

James Brennan, owner of the Railton Rovers F.C., is robbed of his savings by means of a forged cheque, and then fatally injured by some unknown assailant. Further disasters follow, until Jimmy Brennan, the dead owner's son, is forced to sell his house to Charles Thurwood, manager of the Railton Bank, in order to carry on. Determined, without rousing suspicion, to find out who is at the back of the plot to wreck the Rovers, Scotland Yard convinces that Tim Osborne, late of the Canadian Secret Service, should play for the Rovers. Not forgetting his official duties, Tim proves a great asset to the team, for the Rovers' forwards, rightly earning the nickname of the "Gallopers" by the Press, sweep through every defence they meet. The great day comes, however, when Jimmy leads out his all-conquering team, now second in the League table, to do battle against the doughty League leaders themselves.

(Now read on.)

A Battle of Giants!

WINNING the toss Jimmy kicked with the breeze. The visitors set the ball rolling. They were a fine side, not so fast as the Rovers, but well-balanced and clever, and desperately intent on promotion this season. In a whirl of scarlet, they fought their way straight down to Reynolds, who was forced to save in the first minute from a terrific pile-driver which he tipped over the bar. The corner-kick landed beautifully in front of goal, and a hearty scrimmage took place before Harvey, barging through in ponderous style, drove the ball to Jimmy. Scooping it up, Jimmy feinted and tricked his man, and receiving the ball, Tim carried on the attack in a bobbing, hesitating run that sent the crowd delirious.

The Wanderers had heard all about the "Gallopers of Railton," and they settled down to a careful defence and first-time clearances that drove the youthful quintette back time and again. All over the field the game flashed at dizzy speed, now closing in on the Rovers' goal, now storming back to the other end. Each side was trying

its hardest to get a lead; attack gave place to attack, every move in the game was tried, sometimes by the "overhead route," with skilful heads flicking the ball on its way; but chiefly by flat, rapid passing, in and out, backwards and forwards, weaving a breathless pattern over the green turf. Soccer at its best and brightest.

Harford were the first to score—a snappy, sweeping run by their whole forward line ending in a shot that gave Reynolds no chance. Before long, however, Payton had equalised for Railton, running in to meet a through-pass from Jimmy and scoring with his

DARING ABDUCTION BY MASKED MEN!

A devilish plot to ruin Jimmy Brennan, the idol of the Railton Rovers F.C.

favourite cross-drive from three yards outside the post.

Half-time arrived. One-all!

Both teams ran out full of beans for the second session, and clashed in a whirlwind of thrills and rapid-fire footer. Wing-raids down the sidelines, flicking attacks by the inside men, switches and reverse-passes—all were exploited in a wonderful match fought out at fever-heat. Swiftly the minutes slipped by in the ding-dong battle; the darting, racing figures in black-and-white swarmed ever nearer to the visiting goal. Yet the Wanderers beat them off stoutly.

At length deft passing and uncanny ball-juggling by Jimmy and Tim opened a hole in the red-jerseyed wall through which Miller flung himself to score with a cannon-ball drive. The Rovers were leading. But Harford returned to the attack like men possessed.

A clearance-kick from the Wanderers full-back soared into the air and dropped grandly, deep into the Rovers' territory. Jameson, the right-back, ran forward to clear; but in from the touchline came the Harford winger, breasted the leather down and ripped it across to his centre all in one movement. The marksman had just a second in which to shoot, and about a foot of open goal. But it was enough. Taking the ball in his stride he hit it with every ounce of power and flashed it hissing past Reynolds clutching fingers to make the score even.

Two—all! Time getting close!

A din as of a million demons rose when the game restarted.

"Now, Rovers! Come on, Harford! Jimmy—Jimmy—out to Payton! Sling it across! That's it—that's it! Oh, shoot, Tim—shoot—shoo-ohhhh!"

"Well saved, goalie! Now, Reds! Your turn, Wanderers! Go—"

"Tackled, Harvey—good old George! Now, Blake, back to Jimmy! That's the stuff, Jimmy! Over it goes! Get it, Tim! Pass—pass! He's got him! No, dished him, by thunder! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Sparrow!"

"Ro-o-o-vers!"

Came a rolling bellow that would not be denied. Tim, dancing like a will-o'-the-wisp, had suddenly tied Harford's defence into knots. He pushed the ball to Jimmy—Jimmy slung it right out to Atkins—and the supporters of both sides flung up their arms, their hats, anything, in a howl of mingled delight and apprehension. For the "Gallopers" were right on top.

Away down the wing went Atkins in a flash, plugging ahead with hard-set jaw. A frantic back skated across in a sliding tackle, but the winger swerved round him dizzily; his centre whistled squarely across the enemy goalmouth.

Up in the air bobbed Miller and a full-back, cannoned fiercely and missed.

it; the ball dropped at Tim's feet, and the Wanderers' keeper came out in a tigerish rush as the centre-forward let fly.

Thud!

Smack on the shoulder the ball hit him, rebounding high into the air. The bedlam of cheering broke off sharp, red shirts leapt towards the loather. But before anyone could reach it, through the wild-eyed men hurtled Jimmy Brennan, twisted his body in a marvellous swoop, and flashed the pill beneath the crossbar with all the force of his fiery head behind it—

"Goal! Goal!"

Five minutes later the final whistle blew. For the first time that season Railton Rovers were on top of Division II.

The Masked Man Again!

THAT night revelry reigned in Trainer Nye's cottage on the banks of the Railton Canal. George Harvey and the gigantic Reynolds, with Saturday-night pipes well alight, lounged on the sofa, the host occupied the post of honour in a vast armchair. Around the cosy fire, their brown healthy faces glowing in the lamplight, most of the younger Rovers were playing the afternoon's battle over again. Every move, every kick almost, was chewed over; the cheerful babble, as everyone cut in on everyone else, could have been heard beyond the distant garden-gate.

Only Tim Osborne of the Galloping Five was absent. Earlier on he had

been there for part of the evening, lying back in his tilted chair, apparently half-asleep, with his drowsy head resting against the wall close to the window-frame. It was very rarely that he joined in the pow-wow; the Rovers had grown used to his quiet unobtrusive ways by now, and beyond an occasional spot of leg-pulling, took very little heed of him off the field. Which suited Timothy immensely.

At nine o'clock he had suddenly risen to say good-night, pleading weariness, and after a shy grin all round had vanished. The others settled down to talk as before; and only Jimmy of all the merry party gave a moment's thought to his centre-forward's abrupt departure. He could have sworn that, a few seconds before Tim had got up to go, someone had tapped on the window pane; tap, tap, tap! Just like that, softly but sharply. It might have been imagination; there was enough row going on, in all conscience. Anyway, Tim had gone. Jimmy shrugged and plunged into the friendly "dog-fight" once more.

The evening wore on. Bill Nye, secretly pleased at the bubbling enthusiasm around him, rammed an asbestos thumb into the red-hot bowl of his briar and winked across at Harvey and Reynolds.

"When you kids have finished sayin' how clever ye are," he butted in caustically, "I'll be glad. Anyone'd think we'd won promotion already, 'stead of just topping the table for once in a way!"

"Shame!" grinned Jimmy.

"Rats, Bill. We're there to stay!"

"Have a heart!"

A chorus of humorous protests answered him, in the midst of which Mrs. Nye bustled in carrying a tray of cups and an enormous jug of cocoa, which she set down on the table. The chuckling footballers gathered round her cagerly, for "Mother" Nye was a real good sort, although she ruled her little household with a rod of iron.

"Now then!" she announced. "Ten o'clock and home you go, all of you. Talk, talk, talk, the whole evening. Miller, leave the cups alone; Payton, if you spill that— There! Take that, then!"

Smack!

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The outside-left retired with half-a-cup of cocoa only and a tingling ear, while the others roared and gulped the steaming beverage quickly. Ten o'clock was "closing-time" at Bill Nye's and they knew it.

Taking their caps, they said good-night and went down the garden path in a cheery group, Jimmy going with them to bolt the gate. He stood for a little while in the fresh air until his friends' voices died away into the distance. Out here on the outskirts of Railton, with dark country stretching beyond the canal, all was still and quiet—a perfect moonlight night. When he returned to the cottage his candle was lighted on the kitchen table and the old couple had already gone upstairs.

"Ho, hum! I'm ready for bed!" he yawned, and strolled leisurely up to his little room at the back. Setting the candle on his dressing-table, he turned to fling open the casement windows to their widest extent. And, as he did so, a long, black arm slid out from behind

HERE'S TO YOU ALL THIS HAPPY CHRISTMAS-TIDE!

COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of "The Magnet," The Amalgamated Press Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

AS this is our Christmas week issue, chums, I must once again wish all my loyal MAGNETTES a happy Christmas, and may you all have plenty of the good things which this festive season brings in its train. The New Year is close upon us, and I can assure you one and all that, as in the past, so in the future, the good old MAGNET is going to remain true to tradition—"at the top of the tree." Shoals of letters have reached me lately saying that the good old paper is better than ever. And so it is! But, believe me, your Editor is not going to rest on his laurels. Oh dear, no! The year 1931 is going to be the greatest ever! The programme of stories Mr. Frank Richards and I have mapped out for the coming year, not to mention corking serials by popular boys' authors, is going to take the market by storm. You just wait and see!

NOW spare a moment to congratulate Alec Brown, of 102, Kingarth Street, Crosshill, Glasgow, for his Greyfriars limerick. Alec, by the way, has been awarded a handsome Christmas present in the shape of a dandy pocket wallet.

Bob Cherry's as strong as a bull;
Not easily shocked as a rule.
But he fainted this morning,
Without any warning,
When Bunter at breakfast said:
"Full!"

I've got plenty more of these handsome prizes in stock, so it's up to you to set to work and win one.

THE first query this week—a rather interesting one—comes from Fred Davis, of Monmouth. He wants me to tell him something about

A STATUE THAT SINGS!

This is the famous Vocal Memnon statue of the Upper Nile. There are eighty-seven inscriptions upon it testifying to the fact that it has been heard to sing and giving the dates and times upon which these phenomena were heard. But it has not been heard to sing for a long time, and one theory has it that the singing was an imposture practised by the ancient

Egyptian priests. However, the following seems to me to be the most plausible explanation.

It is said that there were two small compartments in the statue, one of which was filled with water. Both chambers were connected by a kind of siphon pipe, and the heat of the sun drove the water out of one compartment into another. The compressed air in the second compartment was driven out through a concealed pipe, which thereupon gave forth musical notes according to the amount of pressure of the air.

The fact that the statue has only been heard to "sing" after the rising of the sun had warmed it, following the coldness of the night, certainly looks as though this was the correct explanation!

NOW let's have a chuckle at this yarn which earns for A. H. Stockley, of 37, Camp Hill Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, one of our useful pocket knives:

The schoolmaster was taking the class in science. "Now then, Smith," he said, "name me a poisonous substance!" Willie Smith, who was not gifted with an over supply of intelligence, thought deeply. "Aviation," he replied after a while. The class tittered with amusement and the master looked sternly at the boy. "Explain yourself, Smith!" he snapped. "One drop will kill, sir!" responded Willie.

Finished laughing? Then we'll see what the black book has in store for next week.

First comes another masterpiece from the gifted pen of Frank Richards, entitled:

"THE SECRET SNIPER!"

This topping yarn abounds in surprises and exciting situations and will keep you interested from the first chapter to the last. Be wise, then, and order your copy in good time. You'll find John Brearley "at home" with another gripping instalment of his great soccer serial, "Up, the Rovers!" The "Greyfriars Herald," too, will be well up to standard, not to mention our other features by the Greyfriars rhymester and "Old Ref."

YOUR EDITOR.

the door, the candle hissed, spluttered, and died. The room was plunged into instant darkness.

Jimmy turned in a flash. Standing before him, rigid as stone, was a tall figure in dark clothes a mere blur in the gloom. Only its head showed in the faint moonlight that streamed through the window—a monstrous head, draped in a shapeless black cowl through which two baleful eyes flared with deadly menace.

Jimmy's heart gave a surging, choking leap. One glance enabled him to recognise the silent apparition. It was the Masked Man again—that mysterious opponent with whom he had fought under the shadow of the trees the night the Rovers' main stand was burnt—the man who had slashed at him with a knife—who had kicked him into helplessness and vanished into the darkness.

The Masked Man!

All this streaked through Jimmy's brain in less than a second. His enemies had come again! His lithe muscles tensed themselves for a spring. Then, from behind the cowl came a low voice, muffled and strange, but paralysing in its stinging venom:

"Don't move!"

Audacity and Guns!

JIMMY slowly relaxed.

Although the sombre form of the Masked Man, faintly outlined against the door, was less than two strides away, the young footballer knew it was useless to resist—yet. For with the low-voiced warning to keep still had come a quick movement of his foe's right hand. It rested now on his hip, steady as a rock. And even in the darkness of the bed-room Jimmy guessed what that hand grasped.

Useless to risk a rush—useless even to raise his voice. He waited, with bated breath, watching the dim figure warily.

"Well?" he said at last.

The Masked Man reached backwards and noiselessly closed the door.

"And don't talk, either!" his biting voice hissed again through the folds of the cowl he wore. "I'll do all that. Sit down!"

Reluctantly Jimmy backed away and sank on to the edge of his bed. Inwardly boiling though he was, he yet had sense enough to keep himself well in hand. If this was going to be another Blackholt Quarry affair, he thought, he would have need of all his coolness. And—in time—perhaps the other would get careless—

For the present, however, there seemed no signs of that. Leaving the door, the Masked Man glided closer; but the gun he held never wavered an inch. He stopped cautiously to the window and tapped on the pane. A soft whistle, audible only to ears that were on the alert for it, drifted up from the garden outside.

At the signal, the Masked Man pulled

"Well, you scum," snapped Jimmy Brennan, "what do you want with me?" The insult went home, and the man at the head of the table hunched his shoulders till he looked like some grotesque bird of prey.



something quickly from under his coat, and, holding one end, allowed it to trickle from his hand over the sill. In the moonlight Jimmy caught a glimpse of what looked like coils of rope, and heard a faint rustle as they pattered down the ivy on the cottage wall.

Once again came the low whistle. The Masked Man grunted, and twined a loop deftly round the post of the bed. His hand shot out smoothly until the cold muzzle of the gun kissed Jimmy's cheek. He spoke again in a voice as chill and hard as a knife.

"Now listen, Brennan—carefully. That's a rope ladder I've just dropped, it leads to the garden. There's another man down there—armed. Get out of that window and climb down. And do it quietly!"

"And if I don't?" said Jimmy quietly. The gun bored harder into his flesh.

"Then Railton Rovers will need another new forward!" was the acid reply. And the words carried conviction.

The lad rose slowly. With the cold ring of steel pressing against his face, he had no option. Only he wished he knew who the gunman was. Somehow the voice sounded sickeningly familiar, but whether due to deliberate disguise or the black hood hiding the Masked Man's head, he could not exactly place it.

His every nerve was on edge for one false move on the part of his opponent; but that false move never came. As he turned to the window the gun left his cheek and dug into the small of his back. Coolly then, he slung one leg over the window-ledge and felt with his foot for the rungs of the ladder. The other leg followed, and as he clambered downwards he saw the head and shoulders of the Masked Man framed in the window above his head, and plainly saw the automatic glinting in the man's hand. It covered him every inch of the way.

In any case there was still no loophole of escape for a while. The moment his feet touched solid earth again, Jimmy felt the pressure of another gun-barrel

in his ribs and became aware of a second hooded figure at his shoulder. His enemies were taking no chances in their daring abduction. In silence he was forced to wait while the Masked Man skimmed lightly down the ladder; then, in the shadow of the cottage wall, he received fresh instructions.

"Go ahead to the gate. No monkey tricks or—"

The sentence was left unfinished. Prodded by the two guns, the helpless youngster threw back his shoulders and went down Bill Nye's flagged path, making no sound. It seemed impossible even now that his captors should succeed like this—yet what could he do? And of other help there was no sign. The loneliness pressed on his heart like a weight.

At the garden gate the party halted, and one of the hooded men went on ahead down the few yards of lane that led to the canal. Jimmy saw his figure for a second in a patch of moonlight and after that it vanished into the still, black shadows. But presently the familiar whistle trilled again through the hush, and the captive was pushed ahead.

They came to the quiet, glimmering canal, jet-black and silver under the moon; a boat was moored in the shelter of the bank. Instinctively Jimmy gave a glance up and down the towpath in the hope that someone might be passing. The sound of strolling footsteps did come to his ears, but they were too far away to be of aid. A mocking voice whispered in his ear:

"Not a hope, dear friend. Get into that boat!"

The crooks had plainly thought out every single detail of their reckless coup; even the rowlocks of the dinghy were greased and the sculls muffled. With barely a sound save the faint dribble of water from the blades, Jimmy was ferried across to the other

side—where only darkness and a lonely countryside awaited him. Up the bank and across a field he was marched, the guns never shifting from his back. Once he stumbled on a grassy hummock and instantly the men were on him like wolves. He recovered and marched on; prisoner and warders came at last to a rutty road that ran parallel with the towpath. Beneath the shadow of a tree he saw the dark bulk of a closed car.

But this—this was ghastly. Yanked out of his own room, with friends within call, herded across the canal and fields like an animal to the slaughter—he writhed passionately in his bonds while the two men on the seat opposite shook in silent mirth. From time to time the Rovers crack forward caught glimpses of their black, sinister heads, nodding to the sway of the car. But nothing was said to him nor was any attempt made to check his struggles. There was something contemptuous in their indifference.

its clay rings broken and in many cases missing altogether. A musty, slatternly atmosphere pervaded the whole place.

For the first time he had a full view of his captors as they grouped themselves round the table, staring down at him through the slits in their cowls. Each had donned a black garment like an overall, and the loose folds disguised their figures perfectly. In the dim light they looked like those ghouls of a by-gone age—devils of the Spanish Inquisition, dreadful in their immobility.

A sibilant whisper hailed them.
 "All right?"
 "O.K.!"
 "Good!"
 Out of the car came a third man, with ropes. Jimmy tried hard to get a look at him, but a cloud had passed across the moon and the darkness was too great. He felt a gag snapped over his mouth from behind; then a coil of rope slid sinuously around his shoulders.

He stopped eventually of his own accord, breathless and exhausted. The struggle, futile though it was, had done some good, however; it had worked off the fever of rage that had blinded him, and he took a fresh grip of himself.

At a sign from one of them the gag was whisked from the prisoner's mouth; the men sat down, the leader facing Jimmy, the others on either side. Jimmy eased himself upright in his chair, his eyes smouldering dangerously. He was weighing up whether it was worth while giving a shout for rescue, but the easy poise of the hooded men told him they did not care if he yelled or not. Apparently they were quite confident no help was nigh.

Immediately, as though an electric current had scorched him, Jimmy sprang into life—desperately—murderously, for it was his last chance. A lashing back-heel cracked on the shin of one of the thugs behind him, the savage plunge of his big sinewy body knocked the man from the car sprawling. Just for one short second wild hope possessed young Jimmy and he opened his mouth in a cry for help. But as he did so the Masked Man struck like an angry snake.

Meanwhile the car tore onwards. To guess the direction in which they were travelling was hopeless; the route turned and twisted bewilderingly. Not only that, but the driver stuck to the dark secondary roads all the time, and never once did a light of any kind flicker through the windows except when an infrequent car fled past in the opposite direction. On and on they went for over an hour, Jimmy judged, eating up the miles. The ropes that bound him tightened on his limbs till he was in an agony of cramp.

Seeing this, Jimmy gave his most insolent sneer. At least he would show them he was not cowed.

A perfect left, smooth and precise, socked into Jimmy's jaw with a sharp, expert crack; an uppercut followed into his ribs. Down into the road he crumpled, arms still hampered by the clinging rope; and long before the numbness of those K.O. blows had worn off, furious hands had trussed him like a chicken and thrown him heavily into the car. Two of the men piled in after him; the door clicked sternly behind them.

Then suddenly the headlong journey ended.

"Well—scum?" he snapped, breaking the tense silence. The insult went home, for the three figures stiffened ominously under their cloaks; and, folding his arms, the man at the head of the table leaned forward, hunching his shoulders till he looked like some grotesque bird of prey. His voice, like that of the first masked man, was distorted beyond recognition by his hood.

Soon the soft peace of the night was broken by the purr of an engine, the crunch of tyres on a gravel surface. The car glided swiftly down the desolate road.

After a last abrupt turn, the car slid gently to a halt. Strong, deft hands bundled Jimmy into the open and he was carried off into the night. He saw his captors were bearing him quietly along the drive of a private house, with trees and bushes crowding blackly on either side. They must be a good fifty miles or more from Ralton, he thought, as the men plunged into the sombreness of the house itself, and quickly up some steps.

"Now suppose we cut all that out, my young friend, and get to business!" he purred. "I can promise you that hard words won't help you at all!"

The Hooded Three!

A FEELING of utter fury, so strong that it almost choked him, gripped Jimmy as the car gathered speed. If only he had had a fight for his money—if he could have gone down swapping punches to the last, it would not have been so bad.

An unseen door was opened by a key, the party passed through an echoing, tiled hall and into a back room. By the light of a single dust-grimed electric bulb that was switched on immediately, Jimmy noticed a table and four chairs, into one of which he was dumped with a force that made him wince. The room was innocent of carpet or hangings, badly-tattered blinds only partially covered the dirty windows. The one other article of furniture besides the table and chairs was a rusty gas-fire,

"That's too bad!" scoffed Jimmy. "And what is your precious 'business,' you rat?"

Smack!
 A set of hard knuckles, belonging to the man on his right, slapped him impatiently across the mouth. But Jimmy saw the blow coming and met it with bared teeth. Growling with fury, the crook leapt to his feet, a trickle of blood staining his hand.

(For what reason has the Masked Man brought Jimmy to this sinister house? Don't miss next week's instalment of this full-of-thrills serial, whatever you do!)

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No. 25.



RECORDS

LAUGH AND GROW FAI

December 27th, 1930.

PLOT TO STEAL "GREYFRIARS HERALD"

Unearthed by Eavesdropper

A CUNNING SCHEME

In another column we are publishing a few extracts from a copy of the GREYFRIARS HERALD written by Horace Coker of the Fifth. This false edition of the Herald was intended to make the Removee very small. It was a little plot of Coker's by way of revenge. Coker was very keen on being allowed to edit the Herald. He pointed out to us that the matter should be left in the hands of a Fifth-Former. Wharton refused—politely, of course—and Coker hit the passage with the back of his hand. He determined to have his revenge, Coker plotted a plot. He decided to wait until we had completed this week's copy of the Herald and, before we posted it to the printer, to open the envelope and take our manuscripts out. In their place he was going to insert a copy written specially by himself. The printer would not know that anything was wrong, and before we could interfere the Herald would have been printed and sent on to the Editor of the Companion Papers for inclusion in the MAGNET.

It was quite a cunning scheme—for Coker. Unfortunately, though, his aunt Judy sent him a hamper while he was still busy on his false copy of the Herald.



A hamper isn't usually regarded as unfortunate, of course; but in this instance it attracted the notice of Billy Bunter, who felt compelled to sneak into Coker's study and wrap himself around as much of Aunt Judy's hamper as he could manage. It was while he was investigating an odd cake that Coker returned to the study. Bunter dived under the table, and while he was under there he overheard Coker tell his fanciful plot to Potter and Greens. Bunter was not discovered. As soon as the three seniors left the study, he scuttled back to the Removee passage, bursting with news and Coker's grab.

When we heard about Coker's little game, we first of all gave Bunter a kick for grub-grubbing, another for eavesdropping, and a third for tale-bearing, and then we held a Council of War. We decided to let Coker think we were ignorant of his scheme until after he had put his spurious copy of the Herald into the envelope. Then we would collect the false copy and expose the Fifth-Former by printing some of his rubbish with an explanation of how we got hold of it. With this view we wrote the genuine edition out twice—one for Coker and one for the printer.

Coker doesn't know yet that we have tumbled to his game. He'll find out when he reads this number. We're all going along to his study to see his face. Poor old Coker! Don't see any green in our eyes, brother? Nay, not much.

We hope that all our chums who read the MAGNET will chuckle at Coker's fatherhoodness. It'll make him feel small if he thinks you are all laughing at him.

SANTA CLAUS! By Dick Penfold.

OUR Santa Claus is old and grey. With long and snow-white beard, they say, and eyes as bright as His face is under the white. He waits on the winds of the winter night, through space with never a pause.

For an active gent is Santa Claus. When I was a youngster of seven or eight, I remember the night when, in the warm, snug bed I'd he had, I'd wait for hours in a worthy cause—I'd wanted to see old Santa Claus!

YOUR GENTS, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Not I say is this "one—there never were a better set of young gents than them at Greyfriars, and that's a fact. Most boys is dratted young tips; but all the young gents at Greyfriars is well-behaved and extremely sensible. I always 'ave said so. Anybody wot says I 'ave some hulkator motive for putting this ere advertisement in the paper is telling lies. Thanking you in anticipation, young gents, WILLIAM GOSLING.

POOR SNAKE

Loder

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM CELEBRITIES

become I am a maulish little broot who duzzent know good hiltenture when he sees it.—HARRY WHARTON.)

Christmas Greetings from Celebrities

Christmas comes. He comes, he comes with a rain of plums, Hobbies in the windows greet him, Sebolla come driving post to meet him.

Girls precede him, bells proclaim him.

Every mouth delights to name him, Wet and cold and wind and dark Make him but the warmer mark.

Lector Huxer.

To all my own scholars, to the readers of the Companion Papers everywhere, I wish a merry Christmas, and all the good things in the verse I have quoted.

HENRY SANDER QUENCH, M.A.

This isn't Christmas weather for me. At my home in Australia, the sun is boiling hot and there isn't a cloud in the sky. But I like the English Christmas all the same. Here's the best of good wishes, Chums.

SAMSON QUINOV IRELEV FIELD.

The Merry-Christmasfulness is terrific, esteemed Sambs. Happy-New-Yearfulness is also great.

HUNNER JAMSER RAY SINGH.

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SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

LECTURE HALL, at 7 o'clock. "My Experiences in the Rockies" Lecture by Paul Prout, M.A. No need to come early. There will be plenty of room.

REMOVÉ DORAL Midnight. Dormitory feast. No visitors from other Forms requested. Masks and profecies requested to keep off the grass.

GYMNASTIC. After call-over. Fight between Bunter and Shoop—unless both boxes funk it at the last moment. This should be the funniest show of the term, and ought not to be missed. Roll up.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS TO-NIGHT. **BIG HALL,** at 6.30 p.m. sharp. **PUBLIC FIGHTING.** Special appearance of Perry Bolsover in the role of victim. **NO CHARGE FOR ADMISSION.** Come early and get front seats. Bolsover's howls will be very entertaining.

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FOOTER ELEVEN IN DISGRACE

SENTENCED TO EAT HIS WORDS

UNCLE SKINNER'S CHILDREN'S CORNER

Let uncle tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a boy named Jack. He was not a good boy. No, if you will believe the word of an uncle who wouldn't deceive you for worlds, Jack was a naughty, naughty, NAUGHTY youth. He ragged, sneaked and booby-tripped. He got ink on his collar and he didn't care a rap for his kind teacher. He had even been known to strike a schoolfellow maliciously, causing him a feeling of intense discomfort and a swelling on the right ear.

When he was a fag Jack was bad, when he was a Removee he was worse, and when he was a senior he was wussier. He out-Lodered Loder. He tied snags on to dogs' tails, handled the ball in the penalty area and mixed gum with his study-mat's hair-oil. Everything bad there was to do Jack did.

He went from worse to worse. He was found out. The headmaster nailed him and put him in the punishment-room. Next day

Hobson: "How could I help it! Not one of the forwards knew anything about shooting goals. They thought the game was a beauty contest." (Laughter.)

The Judge: "Bring me the Record Book." He looked swive through the book and then frowned. "I see," he added severely, "that the Removee had you nine-all. This sort of thing must stop. Who were your forwards?"

Hobson: "That's Temp, outside-right—Lover him right outside this season." (Laughter.)

The Judge: "That chump Temp and a snort from Temp." (Laughter.)

Hobson: "That chump Temp was inside-right, and that frabjous onokoo Hoskins was centre-forward. He knows more about scoring music than scoring goals. Scott and Fry were on the bell wing."

The Judge: "Great Scott! What a Fry! (Groans.)

Hobson: "We won only two matches, and in each case the opposing back put the ball in his own goal. How could we help being at the bottom of the First Division of the League?"

The Judge sentenced the Middle School XI to twelve months in the Second Division.

The next defendant was William Whibley, who was required to explain why he was forty minutes late for a rehearsal of the Remové Dramatic Society.

(Continued at foot of next column.)

Dear readers,—We feel it is app to us to humbly beg the pardon of the seniors—particularly the Vth. They have had a lot to put up with. We have written all sorts of insulting things about them; but we are a jolly site worse ourselves. We are a beedy, low, mizzable, untidy, adshky, rotten, brootal, reboled hot of feggs, and we have there pardon for riting woppers about them.

We admit that the Vth. are the best form in the school, and we will always take off our caps when we see a Vth.-form man out walking with respect and hick his boots and we hoap he kicks us becos it woud serve us rite and also kude us on the side of the head.

(Continued on next column.)

Whibley: "My clock had hopped."

The Judge: "I know what happened. You had been looking at it. Your face would stop a war." (Laughter.)

Whibley: "When your lordship has finished being beastly personal, I should like to explain that I was sorry to have been late. We were rehearsing a splendid play and I—"

The Judge: "What play?"

Whibley: "Footprints in Gore, or the Half-Vengeances."

The Judge: "Help! Who wrote it?"

Whibley: "It is not for me to boast, your lordship, but—"

The Judge: "You wrote it. Very well. I was going to let you off, but I'll be jigged if I will rehearse a splendid play and I—"

The Judge: "You are sentenced to eat your words—and also the paper they are written on."

A Winding-Up Order was applied to the study clock.

Whibley: "I was going to let you off, but I'll be jigged if I will rehearse a splendid play and I—"

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WE ARE A BEASTLY LOW LOT OF FAGGS

What Coker Wanted to Print

CRAZY COPY

Here are a few short extracts from Coker's fake Greyfriars Herald. In the Editorial, which I am supposed to have written, Coker splits an infinitive in the first sentence, and ends the second with a preposition. In the other circumstances, this is hardly a compliment, blow him! (Harry Wharton.)

Who are a ehshky lot of bratis? Who fight with stumps and cricket-bats? Who are always talking out of there silly hats? The Removee.

Who think that Yoolid was a fool? And Ceaser was a silly mule? And who I of these days will be jolly well kicked all round this blessed school? The Removee.

Who roll all day in mud and grime? Who think stale sardons are orally prime? Who try to dole there lessons all the time? The Removee.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor.—Mr. Quetch told me yesterday that I got to jolly well yesterday my face. "Cherry," he said, "you are a disgrace to Greyfriars. I never see an untidier bloke. Go and wash your face immediately." Can you tell me how to do this? I've never washed before in my life, so I don't know how to get about it.

BOBB CHERRY.

(No, Bobb, I can't help you. You had better ask the Vth. They will be able to tell you.—THE EDITOR.)

Dear Editor.—As a reader of the Greyfriars Herald I take up my point to tell you that I think Horace Coker of the Vth. wood make a much better eddier than you. Please ask Coker to take over the editorship at once, and erlige.

YOUNG TRINKS.

(In reply to this reader, and many thousands of other readers, I wood like to state that I am sticking to this job of odditor

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