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Tale Dealing with the
Adventures of HARRY
WHARTON & Co. at
Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Broken Bounds!

CLINK!
Harry Wharton moved drowsily in bed and opened his eyes.

Greyfriars School lay still and silent under the stars. Midnight had chimed out from the old clock-tower, and the last light had been extinguished. All the windows of the old school were dark, and the shadows were thick under the ancient elms in the Close.

Harry Wharton lay half awake, wondering what had wakened him. All was silent in the Remove dormitory; the Lower Fourth were fast asleep. Deep breathing came softly through the darkness from the many white beds, and a deeper sound of snoring from the direction of Billy Bunter. Otherwise all was silent.

Clink!

Wharton started.

It was the sound of a pebble clinking on the dormitory window from outside.

He knew now what had awakened him. In his sleep he had heard that sharp, metallic clink. Now he sat up in bed, gazing towards the window; a dim, glimmering square faintly illumined the starlight.

Clink!

It was a signal from the Close. Wharton, wide awake now,

and listening keenly, heard the pebble strike the glass, and caught a sound in the ivy as it fell there. A frown gathered over Wharton's brow as he listened.

Someone was out in the Close, someone who should have been in bed in the dormitory at that hour of the night. Some member of the Remove had been breaking bounds at midnight. The pebble on the window was the signal to some comrade within to let him in.

As Wharton sat up in the darkness, listening, he heard a sound of movement in the dormitory. One of the fellows was getting out of bed.

Clink!

Another pebble at the window. The fellow out in the Close was growing impatient, evidently. Wharton caught a glimpse of a form in pyjamas moving towards the window.

"Who's that?"

Wharton rapped out the question sharply. His voice was not loud, but it sounded sharp and clear in the silence of the dormitory. There was a gasp.

"Is—is that you, Wharton?"

"Yes; and you're Vernon-Smith!"

The dim figure in the dormitory had stopped, startled by Wharton's sudden speaking. It was Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. But the Bounder recovered his coolness in a moment.

"Yes," he said. "You can go to sleep. This is nothing to do with you."

"Who's throwing stones at the window?" asked Wharton.

"Chap outside," said Vernon-Smith calmly.

"Who is it?"

"Better ask him when he comes in."

Clink!

Again a pebble rattled on the window.

Vernon-Smith hurried towards the window and mounted on a chair. He opened the lower sash, and put his head out.

"All right!" he called out softly.

A hurried whisper came back from the darkness below.

"Buck up! buck up! I've just seen a light in Quelch's window."

"Phew!"

"He must have heard the stones!" came the whisper from the Close. "Be quick with the rope—quick! It's serious!"

Vernon-Smith let a rope slide down from the window. The end was fastened to a bed inside the dormitory. There was a rustling in the ivy as the junior below began to climb.

Vernon-Smith stepped down from the chair. He moved towards the door of the dormitory, and listened. Mr. Quelch was the master of the Remove. If the Form-master had heard the clinking of the pebbles on the pane, he would certainly come to the dormitory to ascertain the cause of it. And the Bounder did not mean to be caught out of bed. There was a sound in the silent house, and Vernon-Smith knew that a door had opened.

The Bounder drew a quick breath.

He ran to the window and put his head out. The ivy was rustling loudly under the weight of the climber.

"Buck up, Skinner!" he whispered shrilly. "I can hear Quelch moving."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I'm going back to bed. Buck up!"

"I—I say, wait for me! Help me in!"

The Bounder did not reply, and he did not wait. He hurried back to his bed and turned in, and drew the bed-clothes over him. Skinner had to take his chance. If he was caught there was no need for the Bounder to be caught, too. That was how Vernon-Smith looked at it.

Wharton was still sitting up in bed. He had heard the whispering, and he knew that it was Skinner who was climbing to the window. It was Skinner who had broken bounds. The head of the climbing junior appeared at the open window, and he clambered breathlessly in, and dragged in the rope after him.

"The rope!" whispered Vernon-Smith. "Put it out of sight, Skinny!"

Skinner detached the rope from the bedpost, and coiled it hastily and threw it under the bed. Then, without stopping to remove his clothes, he turned in, hastily drawing sheet and blankets over him, and laid his head on the pillow.

"Is Quelch coming?" he whispered.

The Bounder listened.

"I can't hear him; but he must be!"

"Safe now!" murmured Skinner. "He won't spot me. Any of the fellows awake?"

"Yes; Wharton."

"Wharton!" There was a strange inflection in Skinner's voice as he uttered the name. "Oh, Wharton's awake, is he?"

"You woke me up," said Harry.

"Keep this dark!" muttered Skinner.

"I sha'n't give you away to Mr. Quelch, if that's what you mean," said Harry, with a curling lip. "Where have you been?"

"That's my business."

"You've left the window open, you ass!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith suddenly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner, in dismay.

"Get out—quick!—and shut it. If Quelch finds it open—"

"I—I can't get out. If Quelch comes in he'll see I'm

dressed," muttered Skinner hurriedly. "You get out, Smithy. It won't be so bad if he sees you."

"Catch me!" said the Bounder.

"But if he sees I'm dressed—"

"I'm not chancing it," said Vernon-Smith. "You ought to have closed the window!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Rats! I'm in Quelch's black books already, and I'm not going to chance his catching me out of bed. Ask somebody else."

"If—if he finds the window open he will ask questions. He may notice that my clothes aren't here. Then he'll find I'm dressed!"

"Shut the window, then!"

Skinner gasped. He was in a state of terror now. Skinner had been expelled from Greyfriars once for bad conduct. If it were discovered that he had been breaking bounds at midnight, there would be no chance for him. He had been allowed to return to the school upon a solemn promise of better conduct in the future. His present action showed how much his promise was worth.

"I—I say, Wharton," he stammered, "will you close the window? Be a good chap. If Quelch finds you out of bed he won't be suspicious."

"I?" said Wharton.

"Yes, yes. You know what it will mean to me if I'm spotted!" said Skinner feverishly. "I was sacked once, and the Head has given me another chance. If I'm spotted I shall be kicked out, and—"

"And serve you right!"

"You don't want to see me sacked!"

"I don't want to get mixed up in your rotten business!" said Wharton angrily. "It's like your cheek to ask me to close the window. Suppose Quelch catches me out of bed, he may think that I'm the chap who got in!"

"But—but I—I dare not be caught! I—I'm dressed, you know, and that would give me away!" stammered Skinner. "For goodness' sake, Wharton, do what I ask you! I—I haven't been doing any harm, really! I—I haven't been down to a pub., if that's what you think. It was—was something else. I—I swear it! I—"

"Oh, shut up your stammering!" said Wharton contemptuously. "You ought to be sacked. But I don't want to see any chap get it in the neck. I'll risk it, if your own precious chum won't do it for you."

"I'm not chancing it!" said the Bounder coolly.

Wharton slipped from his bed. He was very angry at Skinner's conduct in the first place, and at being asked to have a hand in Skinner's disgraceful proceedings in the second place. By helping the black sheep of the Remove he was making himself a party to what Skinner had done, whatever it was. But the instinct to stand by a Form-fellow in trouble was strong, and Wharton was a generous lad. He hurried to the window, and mounted upon the chair and closed down the sash as silently as he could.

There was the sound of a footstep outside the door.

Harry Wharton heard it, and his heart thumped.

He made a spring back to his bed; but he had not reached it when the dormitory door opened, and a light glimmered into the shadowy room. Behind the light appeared the form of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, in dressing-gown and slippers. And Mr. Quelch's sharp, metallic voice rang out sharply:

"Wharton!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

For Another's Fault!

HARRY WHARTON swung round sharply. He had not had time to reach his bed when the Form-master threw open the door. The light of the lamp Mr. Quelch carried fell full upon the figure of the junior in his pyjamas. Wharton's face was white and startled.

"Wharton! So it's you!"

Wharton did not speak. Mr. Quelch advanced into the dormitory. Two or three of the Remove fellows had awakened now, and were blinking in the light in surprise. But the Bounder and Skinner were apparently asleep.

"Well, Wharton?" said Mr. Quelch quietly.

"Yes, sir?"

"You are out of bed!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what the hour is? Half-past twelve!"

"Yes, sir," said Harry mechanically.

"I was awake," resumed Mr. Quelch—"I had, in fact, only just gone to bed—when I heard the sound of a stone clinking on a window. I had the impression that it was the window of this dormitory. I come here, and find you out of bed, Wharton. Can you explain?"

"I—I haven't anything to explain, sir," stammered Harry.

M

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Bunter stooped towards the fender to take up the letter that Wharton had thrown there, but Harry reached out with his foot, and rammed his boot upon the Owl of the Remove, sending him sprawling into the grate. "Oh! Yaroo!" roared Bunter. "Yah! I'm hurt!" (See Chapter 3.)

"Have you been out of the dormitory?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked at the junior's face searchingly.

"Then I must conclude that you are the person who received the signal, and that you opened the window for the boy who was outside. Is that correct?"

"No, sir."

"You did not open the window?"

"No."

"Then why are you out of bed?"

"I—I got up, sir," muttered Harry. The junior's teeth came hard together. He could not give away Skinner. If Skinner had been decent, he would have ceased pretending to be asleep, and would have owned up that he was the culprit as soon as there was danger of Wharton being suspected. But Skinner was not that kind of fellow. And Harry Wharton could not betray him.

"I am aware that you got up, Wharton, since I find you out of bed," said the Remove master sarcastically. "I want to know why."

Wharton was silent.

"If you do not explain, Wharton, I can only conclude that you helped into the dormitory someone who had broken bounds at this late hour," said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"I did not, sir!"

Most of the Remove were awake now, and sitting up in

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bed or lying on their elbows, looking on at the scene in surprise. Wharton's face was pale and troubled. He knew that he was in a very tight place now.

"Were any of you boys awake five minutes ago?" asked Mr. Quelch, looking round at the startled faces of the Removites.

There was a general shaking of heads.

"No, sir."

"Will you explain, Wharton?"

"I—I got up to close the window, sir," said Harry at last.

"Not to open it?"

"No, sir."

"Someone else, then, had opened it?"

"I—I—yes, sir."

"And you closed it so that I should make no discovery—so as to conceal from me the fact that a member of this Form had broken bounds at midnight?" Mr. Quelch exclaimed sharply.

Wharton hung his head.

"I understand now, Wharton. I will not question you further. I accept your word that you were not the guilty party. But you have done very wrong in thus attempting to hoodwink your Form-master."

"I—I'm sorry, sir."

"You will take five hundred lines, and stay in for the

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next half-holiday to write them out!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Wharton's heart sank. The next half-holiday was the date of a specially important cricket-match in the Remove. But it was useless to say so to Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master made a gesture, and Wharton got into bed. Then Mr. Quelch's keen eyes roamed over the awakened juniors.

"This matter cannot rest here," he said. "I must know which boy in my Form has been guilty of this disgraceful conduct. I shall call upon him to give me his name."

There was no reply.

"Not good enough!" murmured Bob Cherry, though he was careful not to let Mr. Quelch hear that remark.

"Very well. I shall question each boy here," said Mr. Quelch. "I hope that no boy will be base enough to tell me a lie!"

And Mr. Quelch proceeded to question the Remove. All but two or three were awake now. Billy Bunter was still snoring. It would have required an earthquake, or a cannonade at least, to awaken him. And Skinner and Vernon-Smith had their eyes closed, and were breathing with beautiful calmness and regularity. Mr. Quelch questioned all the others in vain, and then shook Bunter by the shoulder.

"Groogh!" murmured Bunter. "Gerraway, you beast! Tain't rising-bell!"

"Bunter!"

"Groo! Lemme alone, you rotter! Gerraway!"

The Removites chuckled. Billy Bunter was not aware that he was talking to his Form-master. Mr. Quelch shook him violently.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter's eyes opened, and he blinked at the Form-master.

"Whoozat?" he mumbled. Billy Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and without his spectacles he was quite helpless. "Whoozat? Tain't rising-bell! Look here, you rotter, if you don't lemme go to sleep I'll punch your silly head!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys! Bunter, it is I!" said Mr. Quelch majestically.

"Oh!" Bunter gasped. "I—I didn't know it was you, sir. I thought it was some other silly idiot!"

"What!"

"I—I mean, I thought it was some silly idiot, sir!" gasped Bunter. "What—what are you waking me up for, sir? Is there a fire?"

"No, Bunter. I wish to know if you have been out of the dormitory."

"Yes, sir."

"What! You admit it, then?"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

"And where have you been?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Do you mean the last time I was out of the dorm., sir?" he asked.

"Yes, of course! Where did you go?"

"To my study, sir."

"To your study? You would not require to come in by the window if you had only been to your study!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily.

"I—I—the window, sir? I—I didn't come in by the window."

"Then how did you come in?"

"By the door, sir, along with all the other fellows!" said Bunter in amazement. "We all came up to bed together, sir. We always do."

The Removites chuckled again, in spite of the gathering thunderclouds upon Mr. Quelch's brow. There was evidently a misapprehension in the matter. Mr. Quelch fastened his piercing eyes upon Billy Bunter's face with a terrifying glare.

"Are you joking with me, Bunter?" he demanded.

"J-j-joking, sir? Certainly not, sir! I wouldn't joke with you, sir. I—I'd rather joke with my own grandmother, sir!" stammered Billy Bunter.

"I asked you if you had been out of the dormitory since lights out?"

"Oh, sir, you didn't say since lights out!" said Bunter.

"Of course I haven't been out of the dormitory since lights out. How could I when I've been in bed all the time? Of course, I might have been walking in my sleep. I did once."

"Have you broken bounds to-night, Bunter?"

"Oh, no, sir! Certainly not!"

"That is all I wanted to know. You are a stupid boy, Bunter."

"Th-th-thank you, sir."

Mr. Quelch turned away angrily. The juniors left off grinning as his sharp glance swept along the row of beds. There remained two fellows to be questioned—Vernon-Smith

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and Skinner. The Bounder had opened his eyes now, realising that the pretence could not be kept up any longer; but Skinner, who was less acute, was still apparently asleep.

"Vernon-Smith, have you broken bounds to-night?"

"No, sir!" said the Bounder.

"Skinner!" Skinner opened his eyes. He was afraid that Mr. Quelch might shake him, and feel his collar through the sheet. "Skinner, have you been out of the dormitory?"

"I, sir?" said Skinner, with a look of great surprise. "Oh, no, sir!"

Mr. Quelch made an angry gesture.

"One boy here has lied to me!" he exclaimed. "The matter will not rest here. I shall make further inquiries. For the present you may go to sleep."

And the Remove-master left the dormitory, carrying his lamp. There was a gasp of relief from Skinner as the door closed upon him and his footsteps receded down the passage.

"My hat! I—I was afraid he would spot it that I'm dressed! That was a narrow shave, if you like!"

"So you were out?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Skinner chuckled.

"Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any lies!" he said.

"It was Skinner," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I got up to shut the window after him, so that the silly chump wouldn't be spotted!"

"And got spotted yourself" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yes!"

"More ass you! Why couldn't you leave Skinner to take his chance?"

"It would have been a more sensible thing to do," said Harry.

"I should jolly well say so!"

"You are a rotten cad, Skinner, to tell Quelch such a thumping lie," said Bob Cherry. "I'd rather have owned up, and taken a licking!"

Skinner yawned.

"I've got five hundred lines, and a gating for the next half-holiday," growled Harry Wharton. "You'll have to play Courtfield without me!"

"Oh, rotten!"

And then the Remove went to sleep once more.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Extremely Mysterious Letter!

"LETTER for you, Wharton!"

"Good!"

Nugent had brought it up to Study No. 1, in the Remove. Bob Cherry came in with him. Wharton grinned as he took the letter. He was expecting a remittance from his uncle, and the remittance would be very welcome when it came, as funds were decidedly low just then with the Famous Five.

"Buck up and open it," said Bob Cherry. "If it's a postal order, we can cash it with Mrs. Mible when we go for the grub."

"Sorry," said Wharton, "it isn't!"

"How do you know when you haven't opened it?" demanded Bob.

"It's not in my uncle's fist!"

"Oh, crumbs! Come upstairs for nothing!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"And the postmark's Friardale, too!" said Harry, looking at the envelope. "It was posted in the village to-day."

"Some blessed bill?" said Nugent, with a sniff. "You've forgotten to pay for the new nets, I suppose. Ripping to get a dunning when you're expecting a remittance. What are we going to do for tea?"

Wharton laughed and opened the letter.

He glanced at the contents, and a look of amazement came over his face.

"My only hat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! News?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton looked bewildered.

"It's a hoax, I suppose," he said.

"Some joker in the village pulling your leg?" asked Nugent. "What is it about?"

"Look at it!"

Wharton tossed the letter on the table. The two juniors read it together, and then they gave a whistle. The letter, in a heavy, thick handwriting, ran:

"Master Wharton,—I want to see you to-day. Come to the same coppice after school. I will be waiting there at half-past six. It is important!—J. G."

Bob Cherry stared at the letter, and stared at the captain of the Remove.

"Who's J. G.?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know!" said Harry.

"You don't know him?"

"Not from Adam!"

"Where is the coppice?"

"I don't know any coppice."

Bob looked bewildered.

"The letter can't be intended for you, then," he said.

"I suppose not!" said Harry. "But it was addressed to me right enough. Might be the wrong letter that's got put into the envelope; such things happen sometimes. The address is all right."

The address was certainly all right: Master H. Wharton, Greyfriars School. There was no mistake about that. But the letter was a puzzle.

"Do you know the handwriting?" asked Bob.

"Never seen it before, that I remember," said Harry, scanning the thick, heavy handwriting of the letter.

"And you don't know anybody whose initials are J. G.?"

"I don't remember anybody."

"He says 'the same coppice,'" said Nugent. "Have you met anybody in a coppice lately?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Not that I know of," he said.

"Well, it's a giddy mystery," said Bob, in amazement. "Here's a letter from somebody you don't know, asking you to meet him to-day you don't know where—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's jolly queer," said Harry. "Must be off his rocker, whoever he is, or else it's a joke. But if it's a hoax, you'd expect him to put in the name of the place I'm to go to—I couldn't very well guess which coppice he means—there are a good many coppices up and down round Friardale. I suppose it's some silly ass in the village having a joke, but I'm blessed if I see where the joke comes in!"

And Wharton tore the letter up.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you had a postal-order, Bunter," demanded Bob Cherry, "and rushed off to share it with us at once?"

"Ahem! I'm expecting a postal-order," said Billy Bunter, blinking into the study through his big spectacles. "As soon as it comes, I want to stand you fellows a feed!"

"Thanks! We shall be getting our old age pensions by then, and we shall be able to stand ourselves one!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I just looked in because—because—"

"Because you saw us bring up Wharton's letter, and you guessed that there was a remittance in it," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! Not exactly! I—you see, if there's going to be a feed, I should be quite willing to do some shopping for you, and help you with the cooking. In fact, I'd do anything to oblige fellows I really like!"

"Well, there isn't going to be a feed, so you can luzz off!" said Wharton.

"But I say, now you've got a remittance—"

"I haven't got a remittance!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I saw the letter, you know—"

"It wasn't a remittance!" roared Wharton. "There was nothing in it!"

"Who was it from, then?"

"Mind your own business!"

"I really think you oughtn't to prevaricate, Wharton. I hope you're not keeping your remittance a secret because you think I want to borrow money. I should decline to borrow of you if you lent it!"

"If you say I'm prevaricating, you fat toad, I'll pitch you out of the study on your neck!"

"Ahem! Is that the letter you've just torn up?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"And there was nothing in it?"

"Nothing!"

"Wasn't it from your uncle?"

"No!" roared Wharton. "Never mind whom it was from. Don't ask questions! Get out of this study!"

"Oh, really, Wharton; I don't see what you want to be so jolly mysterious about. If you've been getting letters from Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"You—you fat brute, I haven't!"

"Well, let me see the letter then," said Bunter inquisitively, and he stooped towards the fender, where Wharton had thrown the fragments of the letter.

Wharton reached out with his foot, and rammed his boot upon the Owl of the Remove, sending him sprawling into the grate. Fortunately, there was no fire. Bunter gave a roar as he rolled into the fender.

"Ow! Yaroooh!"

"Get out!"

"Yah! Oh! I'm hurt!"

"You'll be hurt some more, if you don't clear off!" exclaimed the exasperated Wharton, and he bestowed a powerful kick upon the fat person of Billy Bunter.

"Yah! Yaroooh! Oh!"

Bunter scrambled towards the door and fled.

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"The cheeky cad!" Wharton exclaimed angrily, and then he burst into a laugh. "I'll burn the bits of that letter—Bunter will come back for them—he never can mind his own business."

And Wharton gathered up the fragments of the mysterious letter, and applied a match to them. But he did not destroy them all. For the fat hand of Billy Bunter had closed upon the largest of the fragments in the fender, and he had carried it off with him. Billy Bunter's curiosity was excited about that letter—he had always a strong inclination for looking at other fellows' letters and probing into other fellows' affairs. He halted by the window at the end of the Remove passage, gasping for breath, and examined his prize.

It was a torn fragment of paper, and a few words were irregularly scrawled upon it, in a heavy handwriting. There were not enough words to make sense of the letter, but there were enough to excite Billy Bunter's ready curiosity.

"I want to see you—after school—waiting—"

That was all the fragment bore. Billy Bunter blinked over the letter-fragment in great interest. Somebody had written to Harry Wharton to tell him that he wanted to see him after school, evidently, and Wharton was keeping it a secret—so Billy Bunter concluded from the fact that the Remove captain had not been willing to gratify his impertinent curiosity.

"The rotter!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I wonder what it is! He was jolly secret about it. I shouldn't be surprised if it was something shady; something that it's my duty to find out—ahem! I'm jolly well going to keep my eye on Wharton!"

Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove had dismissed the mysterious letter from their minds; they had a more important matter to think of. Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, looked into No. 1 Study as Wharton finished burning the letter.

"You fellows engaged for tea?" he asked.

"No fear!" said Nugent.

"Then come along to my study, my dear fellows; I'm standing a brew. Peter Todd and Tom Brown and Bulstrode are coming, and it will be rather a decent feed, begad!"

The chums of the Remove fell upon Lord Mauleverer and hugged him, much to his astonishment.

"Begad! I say—"

"Corn in Egypt!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Come on, my infants! Mauly, old man, you're the right man in the right place!"

And the juniors proceeded cheerfully to Lord Mauleverer's study to tea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Declines to be Decent!

"SKINNY!"

Vernon-Smith spoke suddenly, and Skinner came out of a deep reverie with a start. Since Skinner's return to Greyfriars he had shared Vernon-Smith's study, and the two had got on very well together. They were, as Bob Cherry had remarked, birds of a feather.

Vernon-Smith was seated in his armchair, smoking a cigarette, and for some time past he had been watching Skinner's thoughtful face. Skinner was so deep in thought that he seemed to have forgotten that he was not alone. He started and coloured as he looked up and met the Bounder's eyes.

"Hallo!" he said confusedly.

"Penny for 'em!" said Vernon-Smith

"Eh! For what?"

"Your thoughts!"

Skinner forced a laugh.

"I—I was thinking about the cricket," he said. "They—they'll be a man short for the Courtfield match, and Wharton's detained for the afternoon to-morrow, and—ah—I was wondering if there was a chance for me to play."

The Bounder laughed.

"Gammon!" he said calmly.

"What?"

"Gammon!"

"Look here, Smithy—"

"Don't try to spoof me," said Vernon-Smith contemptuously. "You weren't thinking about the cricket, and you don't care twopence for being put in the eleven. That's the first yarn that came into your head. You don't want to tell me what you were thinking about."

Skinner flushed.

"Well, you see, I—"

"Where were you last night?" asked Vernon-Smith coolly.

"I agreed to help you out, and to help you in, because you've



done the same good turn for me, more than once. I didn't ask you any questions; I concluded that it was one of the old card-parties at the Cross Keys."

"Don't ask any now," said Skinner.

"Why not?"

"Because I sha'n't answer them!"

"Perhaps I don't need to ask," said the Bounder coolly.

Skinner started.

"You—you mean to say—you know——"

"I know more than you think, anyway," said Vernon-Smith, watching with a peculiar cat-like pleasure the uneasiness growing in Skinner's face. "You may have gone to the Cross Keys, as you let me suppose you were going to do, but that wasn't the only place you went to."

"Where else did I go, then?" said Skinner, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You were in the wood."

"Rot!"

"You deny it?"

"Yes, I do!" snapped Skinner. "What put that idea into your head?"

"Looking at your boots, that's all," said Vernon-Smith.

"From here to the village there is a dry, dusty road, and your boots would have had dry dust on them if you'd kept to it. They had mud and bits of rotten leaves on them, thick. You had been tramping in the wood before you came back to Greyfriars."

"You ought to be a detective," sneered Skinner.

"I think I should make a pretty good one," said the Bounder, with a cool nod. "I should bowl out a fellow like you in no time, anyway."

"Any more evidence as to my whereabouts?" asked Skinner, affecting to yawn, but with his eyes hawkishly on the Bounder's face.

"Yes. You've been thinking about it all day—going off into a snooze—hardly answering when a fellow speaks to you. You've got it on your mind, whatever it is. That's why I've asked you, as a pal, where you went. Have you got into some trouble?"

"If I have you wouldn't help me out of it," said Skinner.

"Oh, I might; it depends. What have you been doing?" asked Vernon-Smith curiously.

"Find out."

"Then you won't tell me?"

"No, I won't."

There was a knock at the study door, interrupting the talk. The Bounder hastily put his cigarette out of sight. If a prefect had found him smoking in his study the results would have been painful for the Bounder. Smoking in junior studies was looked upon with a very severe eye by the authorities of Greyfriars.

But it was not a prefect. Four or five juniors entered the study at once. Bulstrode was at the head of them, and after him came Johnny Bull, Tom Brown, Hazeldene, and Ogilvy.

Vernon-Smith looked at them in surprise. With the exception of Hazeldene, the juniors were not friends of his—quite the reverse.

"Hallo! What do you want?" he demanded.

Johnny Bull sniffed. He had caught the scent of tobacco-smoke in the air.

"We've come to see Skinner," said Bulstrode.

"Here I am," said Skinner.

"It's about Wharton being detained to-morrow afternoon," said Bulstrode, in explanation. "You know we're playing Courtfield."

Skinner nodded.

"We want Wharton! Courtfield are in great form, and we can't spare Wharton from the team. He's got to be got off, somehow."

"I'd be willing to take Wharton's place," said the Bounder.

"The team wouldn't be willing," grinned Johnny Bull.

"If you could take his place in the Form-room for detention, you would be useful."

"Oh, rats!"

"We're not looking for a substitute for Wharton; we want Wharton," said Bulstrode. "He's got to be got off somehow. It's no good asking Quelchy, and explaining about the cricket-match; Quelchy's as hard as nails."

"Well, I can't get him off," said Skinner. "I'm not a Form-master, am I? What's the giddy good of coming to me?"

"Quelchy has got his rag out because he can't find out who was out of the dormitory last night," Bulstrode explained.

"He's been nosing into the affair all day, but he can't find anything out. He's ratty. Now, he's specially ratty with Wharton, because he knows that Wharton must know who it was, as he closed the window after him—after you, of course. Wharton could get off if he gave you away."

"Wharton wouldn't sneak," said Skinner, with a start.

"Exactly; that's why we've come to you," said Tom Brown.

Skinner shifted uneasily in his chair.

"I don't see what you've come to me for," he said.

"We want to put it to you, as a decent chap," said Bulstrode. "You know you promised to play the game, and keep straight, when you were allowed to come back to Greyfriars, after being sacked. I helped you then, more than any other chap; we stood by you because we believed in you. Well, what you did last night doesn't look much like keeping your word. You were out of bounds in the middle of the night—playing some rotten game. Wharton acted like a brick in trying to keep you from getting found out, though he must have been disgusted with you."

"Thanks!" said Skinner sarcastically.

"No need to thank me; you're entitled to my plain opinion," said Bulstrode. "Now, Harry Wharton is detained, and Quelchy won't let him off—unless he finds out who was out of the dorm. last night. If the chap owned up to Quelchy, and explained that Wharton was only doing him a good turn, and wasn't really mixed up in his breaking bounds, then Quelchy would see reason, and let Wharton off."

"He might," said Skinner.

"Oh, he would," said Bulstrode. "He's ratty with Wharton for screening the chap from him. That's the trouble. As captain of the Form, Wharton is supposed to put his foot down on breaking rules, you know. Now, you can see that the only thing for you to do is to go to Quelchy and own up!"

Skinner stared.

"Own up—that I was out of bounds at midnight!" he said.

"Are you dotty?"

"I'm asking you to do the decent thing," said Bulstrode.

"You're asking me to get sacked."

"It wouldn't be so bad as that. If you're found out you may get sacked; but if you own up, it will be up to Quelch not to sack you. You'll only be flogged."

"Only!" said Skinner sardonically. "Only flogged! Merely nothing!"

"Nothing in comparison with risking losing the Courtfield match because Wharton's detained, I suppose," said Bulstrode warmly.

"Oh, nothing at all!" said Skinner, with bitter sarcasm.

"Then you're going to do it?"

"No fear!"

"Now, look here, Skinner, I've explained to you that we must have Wharton for the match——"

"And I've explained to you that I'm not going to play the giddy ox," said Skinner angrily. "You must be off your chump to ask me such a thing, I should think."

"Any decent fellow would do it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, I won't!"

"I told you it would be no good asking him, Bulstrode. He's a worm from the toes up," said Johnny Bull. "He's got to be made."

"How are you going to make me?" sneered Skinner.

"Rag you!"

"Look here——"

"That's the ticket!" said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "You've got to own up, Skinner, and get Wharton off, or we'll rag you bald-headed. See?"

"Don't be an idiot," said Skinner. "I can't, and I won't! Blow your old cricket-match! Do you think I'm going to get flogged for the sake of a rotten cricket-match!"

"It's the Courtfield match!" roared Bulstrode.

"Blow the Courtfield match!"

"I told you so!" said Johnny Bull.

"Then you won't do the decent thing, Skinny?"

"I won't make a fool of myself, if that's what you mean by the decent thing," said Skinner savagely, "and if you rag me I'll complain to Wingate."

"Good! We'll give you something substantial to complain about in that case," said Johnny Bull. "Collar the cad!"

"Hands off! I—— Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Bump! Skinner descended upon the floor of the study with a heavy concussion. He gasped for breath, and glared furiously at the juniors. Vernon-Smith looked on with a grin. It was no business of his—not that the avengers would have allowed him to interfere. They would cheerfully have bumped the Bounder, too.

"Now, then, Skinny, are you going to do the decent thing?"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Give him another!"

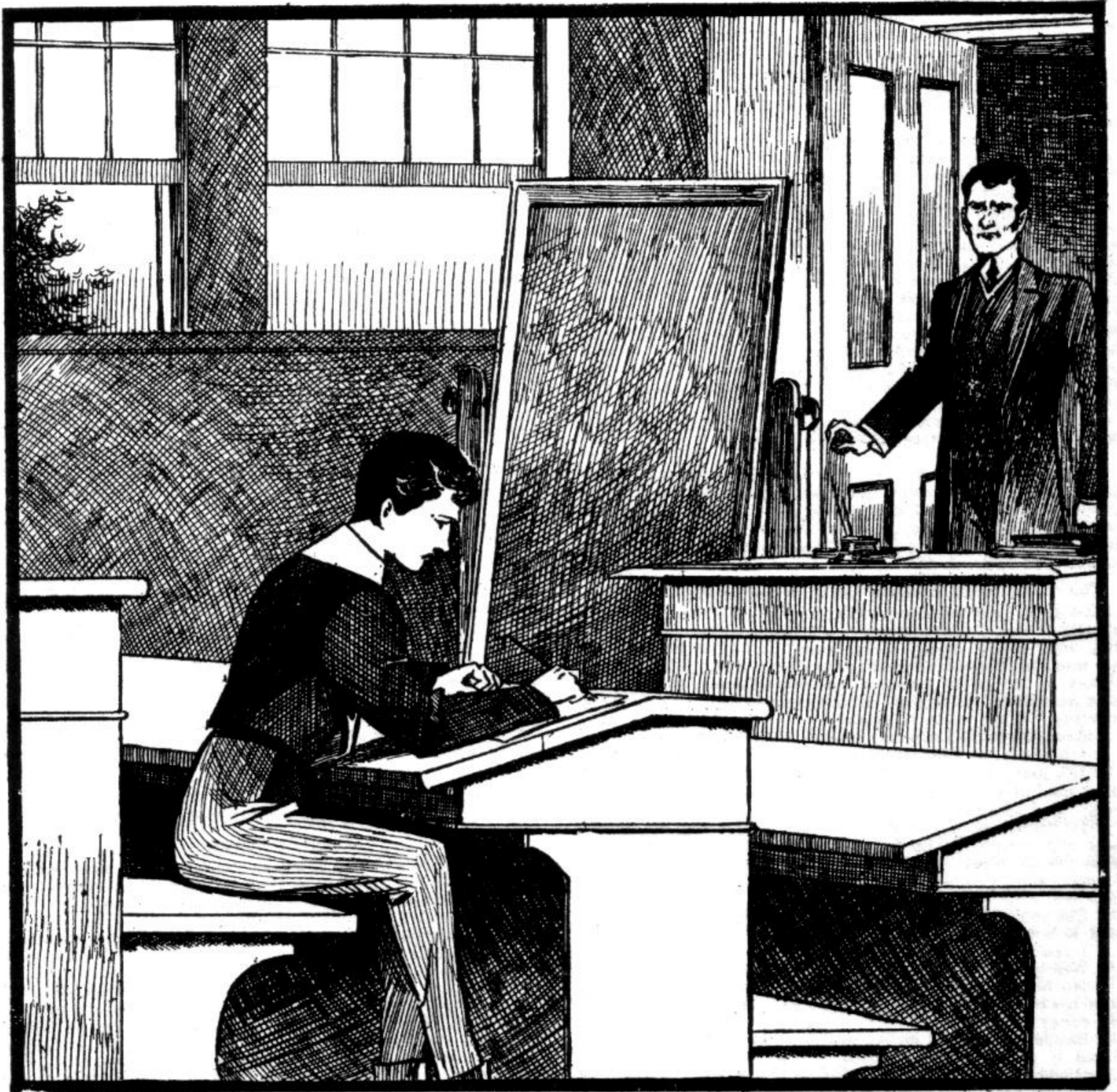
ANSWERS

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 282.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



"I am glad to see that you are still at work, Wharton!" Harry Wharton's deputy fairly jumped, for it was not the voice of Monsieur Charpentier this time, but the deep and severe voice of Mr. Quelch! (See Chapter 7.)

Bump, bump!

"Yarooop! Lemme alone!" roared Skinner.

"We're going to bump you till you agree to do the decent

thing, if we bump you through the floor," said Johnny Bull

"There's only one way!"

"I can't do it!"

"Bump him!"

"Oow—ow—ow! Help!"

Harry Wharton looked in at the open study-door in amazement.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode explained. Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Let him alone," he said. "Something may turn up. You can bump him all you like if I have to miss the match."

"I—I'll think of a way out!" gasped Skinner.

"Better bump him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yow—hands off—I—help!"

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"Chuck it!" said Wharton. "Skinner's a deep beast. He may think of a way out. If I have to cut the match, we'll simply scalp him. But give him a chance."

The bumpers reluctantly agreed. Johnny Bull shook a huge fist in Skinner's face before he left the study.

"If Wharton's detained to-morrow, you'll be scalped, squashed, and slaughtered," he said. "Remember that! Yah!"

And Johnny Bull strode out of the study and banged the door after him. Skinner groaned as he rubbed his injuries, and Vernon-Smith grinned.

"You seem to have got the fellows up against you, Skinny," he remarked.

"Ow! Why didn't you stand by me, you rotter!" growled Skinner.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"No bizney of mine, especially as you haven't even told me where you were last night."

"Well, that's no bizney of yours, either," grunted Skinner. And he did not say another word on that subject, and the Bounder was left with his curiosity ungratified.

NEXT MONDAY: "THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!"

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

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"J. G." Again!

"**M**UST be the remittance this time," said Bob Cherry. A letter addressed to Harry Wharton was in the rack when the Remove fellows came out from the dining-room after breakfast the next morning. Wharton reached it down, and started at the sight of the handwriting.

"It's not from home," he said.

"Not that chap again?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes; it's the same handwriting as the letter yesterday."

"Great Scott! This is getting interesting."

Wharton regarded the letter with a perplexed brow. It was addressed to him in the same thick, heavy handwriting as the mysterious letter of the day before. There was no doubt that it was from the same unknown correspondent. Wharton had dismissed the first letter from his mind, concluding, after thinking it out, that it was some absurd mystification intended as a practical joke. He had never dreamed that he would receive another. But here was another, delivered with the rest of the morning's letters.

"Well, open it," said Nugent. "Let's see whether the chap explains himself this time. It's getting interesting—the plot thickens, as they say in the novels."

Wharton slit open the envelope. He unfolded the letter inside, and the three juniors read it together. It ran:

"Harry Wharton,—I waited for you in the coppice yesterday. You did not come. Does this mean that you will not come? I will give you another chance. I will wait for you in the Old Spinney this afternoon at four o'clock. If you do not come, look out for yourself. I am not to be trifled with, as you will find.—J. G."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another blankly.

The letter was more explicit than the other, as it specified exactly where the junior was expected to meet the writer. But what did it mean? Who was "J. G.," and what did he want to meet Harry Wharton for? And what did the threat in the letter mean? The writer hinted very plainly that he did not think that Wharton would dare to refuse the meeting. What could it mean?

"And you don't know the chap?" said Bob at last.

"I haven't the faintest idea who it is," said Harry.

"It's extraordinary. Must be some idiotic jape. Might be a joke of the Highcliffe fellows to get you there and rag you," said Nugent.

"It might be, but—but they can't expect me to come," said Wharton. "The fellow is threatening me, goodness knows with what. If there were another Wharton at the school, I should think that he'd got the Christian name wrong. But—"

"But you're the one and only; you haven't even a minor," said Bob Cherry.

"I can't understand it."

"Will you go?"

"No fear! If he wants to see me, whoever he is, he can sign his name; and he can come here, too! He can go and eat coke!"

"Besides, you can't go, as you're detained," said Nugent, "and if you weren't detained, you'd be playing in the Courtfield match. I—I say," Nugent broke off, "it couldn't be a trick of a Courtfield chap to get you away from the match, could it?"

Wharton shook his head decidedly.

"Impossible. They're all straight chaps. If we were playing Highcliffe, I should suspect it was a dodge of Ponsonby & Co. But the Courtfield fellows are all too decent."

"Right; it just came into my head, that's all," said Nugent. "You see, whoever wrote that knows that it's a half-holiday here to-day, or he wouldn't make the appointment for four o'clock. We're in the class-rooms at four on other days."

"Well, I suppose everybody knows Wednesday is a half-holiday at Greyfriars," said Harry. "I don't think this was written by a boy at all. It's a man's handwriting, and it's not an educated hand, either. Some heavy-fisted chap, by the way he's jabbed down the pen. But he can go and eat coke. I sha'n't take any notice of it."

"I say, you fellows, is that the remittance?"

"No, it isn't!" said Wharton, tearing up the letter. Don't ask questions."

Billy Bunter blinked at his suspiciously.

"More giddy, mysterious letters—eh?" he said.

"Mind your own business."

The juniors walked away, leaving the Owl of the Remove blinking after them very suspiciously. Wharton had put the fragments of the letter into his pocket, as he could not very well throw them down in the hall. There was no chance for Bunter to spy into that letter. But Bunter had caught a

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glimpse of the handwriting, and he knew that it was the same as the hand upon the fragment reposing in his own pocket.

"Something jolly fishy about all this," murmured Billy Bunter, with a shake of the head. "I wonder what Wharton's getting mixed up in. I'm jolly well going to keep an eye on him. Something jolly fishy, or he wouldn't be so jolly secret about it."

Wharton was thinking about the letter as he went in to lessons that morning. He could not help wondering about it. He had not the faintest idea whom his unknown correspondent could be. Why the man should write to him was a mystery. What object could the unknown have in trying to get him to a meeting in the spinney? The spinney was a lonely place, certainly; but it could hardly be a scheme for robbery. The wording of the letter was certainly not likely to influence Wharton. The threat contained in the lines "get his back up" at once.

After lessons that morning, however, there was something more important than the mysterious letter to think about. "J. G." vanished from Wharton's mind. The Courtfield match was coming off that afternoon, and Wharton was wanted to play. And he was detained. The five hundred lines Mr. Quelch had given him had already been written out—with the assistance of his friends. But he was detained, lines or no lines. Wharton thought it over during dinner with a worried brow. It was not only that he wanted to play in the match. He wanted to do that, of course; but that was not all. Trumper and his team from Courtfield were very "hot stuff," and the Remove wanted their best men in the field. At such a time, it was a great misfortune for their captain to be under detention.

"Suppose you ask Quelch?" said Johnny Bull, as the chums were talking it over after dinner. "Take him in the lines, and put it to him as a man and a brother. Tell him you simply can't miss the match."

Wharton grinned ruefully.

"I'm afraid it's no good," he said. "But I'll try."

"After all, you've done the lines, you know, or, rather, we've all done them. Don't mention that part to Quelch, of course."

"Ha, ha! No!"

And Wharton, laden with quite a sheaf of closely-written impot paper, made his way dubiously to the Form-master's study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Scheme!

MR. QUELCH looked grimly enough at Harry Wharton, as the captain of the Remove entered the study. His expression did not raise Wharton's hopes.

"Well?" he said curtly.

Wharton deposited the sheaf of paper on the table.

"I've done my lines, sir," he said meekly.

"Very well!"

"And—and as I've done the lines, sir, I—I was hoping that you might let me off the detention this afternoon," stammered Wharton. "You see, sir, we've got a rather important cricket-match on—"

Mr. Quelch held up his hand.

"Listen to me, Wharton," he said acidly. "There is no doubt that a member of the Remove was out of bounds on Monday night at a very late hour. You must know perfectly well that that is a very serious matter."

"I know it is, sir."

"I found you out of bed—the only boy out of bed. I accepted your word for it that you had not been out of bounds; that you had not opened the window for the boy, whoever he was, on his return. I know you to be truthful, and I, therefore, accepted your assurance."

"You were very kind, sir."

"My kindness seems to have been wasted, however. Someone in the Form has been guilty of wicked and disgraceful conduct. It is my duty to discover who it is. I cannot do so. You, who could throw light upon the matter, have chosen to keep back anything you could tell me. I do not regard that as being your duty, as captain of your Form, Wharton. I know that you do not wish to be guilty of what your Form-fellows would call sneaking. But this is too serious a matter for considerations of that kind to be allowed to enter. You have your duty to do as head boy of the Form. I expect you to aid me, not to hinder me. I shall not press you for information. I leave it to you to decide for yourself. But unless you decide to do what I tell you is your duty, you need ask no favours at my hands."

Wharton was silent.

The Form-master was quite right, from his point of view. Breaking bounds at midnight was as serious an offence as a schoolboy could commit. Skinner had acted badly, and

Wharton had made himself a party to it, by helping him to escape detection. The junior realised all that clearly enough. But the unwritten code of schoolboy honour held him fast. Skinner might be a rascal; but Wharton could not betray him. And giving information to the Form-master would have amounted to betrayal. Mr. Quelch's point of view would not have been understood in the Lower Fourth at all. The juniors would simply have regarded it as sneaking if Harry had told Mr. Quelch what he wanted to know.

Mr. Quelch waited for the junior to speak. Wharton remained silent.

"You have nothing to say, then?" the Remove-master asked at last.

"No, sir," faltered Harry.

"Then you may leave my study."

"And—and I am detained, sir?"

"Most decidedly. As you have done the imposition I set you, you may write out the four Latin conjugations, active and passive, so that you will not be idle."

"We're playing Courtfield, sir."

"That is no business of mine. You cannot expect to escape the punishment of bad conduct because you are playing a cricket-match."

"I—I don't mean to act badly, sir. I—I—that is, you see—"

"I see that you are wasting my time," said Mr. Quelch.

There was nothing more to be said to that. Harry Wharton left the study with a heavy heart, and a downcast face.

His chums met him at the end of the passage with eager inquiries.

"Got off?" asked Nugent.

"No!"

"But you've done your lines!"

"I've got a new lot to fill up the afternoon in case I should be idle," said Harry bitterly. "I suppose Quelch guessed it was a dodge getting the lines done so soon."

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Johnny Bull.

"Beastly!" groaned Nugent. "Just when we want the eleven to be at top strength, too."

"It can't be helped," said Harry. "You'll have to play without me. Tom Brown can captain the team in my place, and you can put in young Rake; he's a good man."

"But it's rotten."

"Skinner will have to be scragged," said Johnny Bull wrathfully. "It would be all right now, if the cad would go to Quelch and own up!"

"No good expecting him to do that," said Harry quietly. "Skinner's not that sort."

"We could have ragged him into doing it, if you hadn't stopped us!" grunted Bulstrode.

"Skinner said he'd think of a way," said Tom Brown hopefully.

"I'm afraid he can't."

"Let's see him, anyway. It will be some satisfaction to bump him, if he can't think of a way out."

Wharton smiled faintly. He had little hope of Skinner's being about to find a way out of the difficulty. But Skinner had a reputation for being remarkably "deep," and Wharton went with the rest of the juniors to look for Skinner.

"Seen Skinner?" asked Bob Cherry, as they met Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

Fish shook his head. There was a thoughtful expression upon Fisher T. Fish's thin, keen face, as if he were giving great thought to some problem.

"I guess you fellows are landed up against a snag this journey!" he remarked in the beautiful American language, which generally made the Removites smile. But they did not feel like smiling now.

"We're in a difficulty, if that's what you mean," said Wharton.

"Yep! I've been thinking over the matter, and I reckon I can show you a way out!"

Wharton brightened up. If Fisher T. Fish had thought of some "dodge" for escaping detention that afternoon, it was worth hearing, though the juniors, as a rule, hadn't very much faith in Fisher Tarleton Fish and his ideas.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Harry.

"You're detained, I guess. Can't play?"

"That's so."

"Meeting an extra tough team, too—regular galoots," said Fish.

"Yes, yes."

"Then I guess I can fix you. When you're in a difficulty, or up against something hard, all you've got to do is to step round for F. T. Fish. He's the galoot to get you out of it—the kind of pilgrim to deliver the goods, every time."

"Come to the point."

"Yep; I guess I'm coming. You want another captain instead of Wharton—a splendid, all-round cricketer—good at batting, good at bowling, good at fielding, and, above all, good at leading a team. Is that about the size of it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, I guess I'm ready!"

"Wha-at!"

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NEXT
MONDAY:

"THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!"

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"I guess I'll show you how we play cricket over there," said Fisher T. Fish confidently.

"Over where, you ass?"

"In the Yew-nited States."

"You—you ass!" said Wharton in measured tones. "I thought you had something to suggest with some sense in it, though I ought to have known you better."

Fisher T. Fish looked surprised.

"Isn't that hoss-sense?" he demanded. "You lose your skipper, and I offer you a better one? Galoot can't do more than that. I guess—"

"Oh, bump him over, and come on!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I guess— Hallo—I say—hands off—yah!"

The juniors walked on, leaving Fisher T. Fish sitting in the passage, looking very ruffled, and very surprised. It was hard for F. T. Fish to realise that the Remove cricketers really didn't want to know how they played cricket "over there," in the great Yew-nited States!

Harry Wharton more than half-expected to find that Skinner had gone out to avoid trouble. But Skinner was at home. They found him in his study. The Bounder was there, vainly trying to induce Skinner to accompany him on an excursion.

"Why the dickens won't you come?" the Bounder exclaimed angrily. "You never used to want to stick indoors on a half-holiday."

"I can't come."

"I suppose you're not going to watch the match and cheer for the Remove?" said the Bounder sarcastically.

"No!" said Skinner, with a grin.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Oh, hang about!"

"Why won't you come out?"

"I don't want to."

The Bounder turned to the door; and then he turned back, and looked at Skinner with so much keenness that Skinner's eyes dropped before the glance.

"Are you afraid to go out, Skinner?" he demanded.

Skinner coloured and shifted uneasily.

"Why should I be afraid?" he snapped. "What is there to be afraid of?"

"Did you get mixed up in something the other night, and—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Then you won't come?"

"No, I won't!"

The Bounder stalked away angrily. It was just then that Harry Wharton & Co. arrived in search of Skinner.

"Looking for Skinner?" asked Vernon-Smith, as he met them in the passage.

"Yes. Is he at home?"

"You'll find him in there," said the Bounder, and he walked away, with an amiable hope that Skinner was about to get a thorough ragging.

The juniors crowded into the study. Skinner looked at them very uneasily. He had been expecting the visit, and probably only some very powerful reason had kept him within the precincts to meet it. Though why Skinner should not wish to go out with his chum that fine, sunny afternoon was a mystery.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Have you thought of a way?"

"I—I—I—"

"Are you going to get Wharton off his detention, or are you going to be ragged till you feel that life isn't worth living?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I—I think it could be worked," said Skinner.

And all the juniors asked together:

"How?"

"Wharton's got to stay in all the afternoon, same time as regular afternoon lessons," said Skinner. "Well, I happen to know that Quelch's going out."

"What difference does that make?" asked Harry. "He's bound to ask another master, or a prefect, to keep an eye on me, in case I clear."

"I know that; I heard him ask Monsieur Charpentier, the French master. Mossoo is going to look into the Form-room, and see that you are there."

"Well, he'll do it, then."

"You know, Mossoo is short-sighted, and there's a shady corner of the Form-room," said Skinner. "My idea is that another chap might take your place."

"Oh!"

"Of course, it's not any good thinking of taking Quelch in—he's too sharp!" said Skinner. "But he's going out, and that makes all the difference. Mossoo is nearly as blind as a bat, and he won't care twopence about the matter, anyway. He's only taking it on to oblige Quelch. He'll just take a peep into the room once or twice, and if he sees a

fellow sitting there, that will be enough for him. The chap can wear Wharton's clothes, and make up his face a bit—some chap who belongs to the Remove Dramatic Club could do that."

"By George!" said Bob Cherry. "It's not a bad wheeze. But who's going to do it?"

"Well, Wharton can select somebody," said Skinner.

"Young Penfold would do it—"

"He's playing in the eleven."

"Well, Mark Linley, then—"

"He's playing, too!"

"Well, you can find a chap—"

"I've found one!" said Harry.

"Good!" said Skinner. "Who is it?"

"You!"

Skinner jumped.

"Me? No fear! I'm jolly well not going to be stuck in the Form-room all the afternoon! I've got lots of things to do. I—"

"It's your idea, and you can carry it out," said Wharton.

"You got me into this fix, and it's only fair that you should get me out of it. You can choose between that and owning up to Mr. Quelch."

"I'm jolly well not going to own up to Quelch."

"Then you can take the alternative."

"Well, you see, I—I—"

"You'll do it," said Bulstrode. "It's only fair, and it's up to you. If you don't, blessed if I won't go straight to Quelch now, before he goes out, and tell him the facts!"

Skinner looked alarmed.

"Look here, Bulstrode! I—I—"

"Are you going to do it?" demanded Bulstrode.

Skinner gave in.

"I—I—I'll do it if you like, blow you!"

"Good egg!" said Harry Wharton. "I'll stay in the Form-room until Quelch has gone out. As soon as the coast's clear, one of you chaps come and tell me. Then Skinner can come and take my place, and write out Latin conjugations."

Skinner groaned.

"Oh, my hat! Latin conjugations!"

"Yes, your verbs, active and passive!" grinned Wharton.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Well, it will increase your knowledge," grinned Nugent; "and it needs it, you know. You get into the Form-room now, Harry, before Quelch gets his back up, and we'll look after Skinner. We shall have to touch up his complexion with some grease-paint and powder, to make him look a little less putty-coloured, or he'll never pass for you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton went to the Remove-room, while his friends attended to Skinner.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

HARRY WHARTON was seated in the Form-room, steadily at work, when Mr. Quelch looked in about half an hour later. The Remove-master had looked in to see that the detained junior was there, before going out. Mr. Quelch was a severe man, though not a hard one, as a rule; but he considered it his duty to be hard on this occasion, and there was no chance whatever of his letting the captain of the Remove off his detention.

He paused by Wharton's desk, and glanced down at his work. Mr. Quelch was not an encourager of idleness, and he did not intend that the detained junior should waste his time in the Form-room that afternoon.

But Wharton was not wasting his time. He knew that Skinner would not do much work, and it was necessary for some to be done, to keep up appearances, and so Wharton was putting in as much as he could in advance. Warily enough he was grinding out a list of the various tenses of a verb of the first conjugation, active voice.

"Amo, amas, amat

And so forth.

"I am sorry you are detained this afternoon, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you, sir; so am I," said Harry.

Mr. Quelch frowned; the junior's reply seemed to savour of flippancy. If the Remove-master had intended to say anything else, he did not say it, but walked out of the Form-room.

Wharton went on writing.

It was ten minutes later that Frank Nugent came whooping into the Form-room, with a whoop that showed that Mr. Quelch was out of hearing. Wharton jumped up.

"He's gone?" he asked.

"Yes, rather; watched him out of the gates!" said Nugent

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gleefully. "Now you're as free as air, my son! Free as the giddy birdlets!"

"Hurrah!"

"Mes garçons!" It was the voice of Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, at the door, and the juniors became instantly grave as they heard it.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Nugent. "I mean, bong apres-midi! I suppose that's how you do it in French, sir."

Mossoo smiled.

"Ve do not say bong apres-midi in la France," he said. "Zat is English custom, like ze eating of ze biftek. Ve say bonjour."

"Bong jewer, sir!" said Nugent. "Commy vous portez vous?"

"Tres bien, merci," said Monsieur Charpentier. "Nugent, I do not zink zat you are detained."

"No, sir—I mean, nong, mossoo."

"Zen you may go."

Nugent made a grimace and left the Form-room.

"Mistare Quelch 'ave ask me to keep ze open eye on zis room zis apres-midi, Vharton," said Monsieur Charpentier.

"I am sorry zat you are detained. But I keep open ze eye, hein, and I zink you vill not go out, isn't it? I hope zat you stick to ze work like ze—vat you call—blue—"

"Glue, sir?" suggested Wharton.

"Oui, oui; zat is it. You stick to him, and I look in vunce more again, isn't it, and see zat you get on all right," said Monsieur Charpentier.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Wharton demurely.

Mossoo coughed and retired. He had a pretty correct idea of how thankful the junior was for his kind attention.

Wharton waited. Not till the French-master had been seen to wander forth into the Close, with a Parisian newspaper under his arm, to read in the Head's garden, did the Remove fellows come near the Form-room again.

Then they came. They brought Skinner with them. Wharton grinned at the sight of Skinner. The artistic hand of Frank Nugent had touched up his complexion with grease-paint and powder from the supplies of the Junior Dramatic Club. Skinner, who smoked and seldom took any exercise, had a complexion that was far from healthy, and Nugent had touched it up in imitation of Wharton's fresh, healthy face. In a shady corner of the Form-room there was no doubt that it would pass. For the rest, Skinner was very much of Wharton's size, and two juniors in Etons looked much alike.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry. "What do you think of Skinner?"

"I think he'll do," grinned Wharton. "But what about Mossoo? Is he anywhere where he might spot me going out?"

"Gone to read in the Head's garden."

"Oh, good! If he sees me on the cricket-field it won't matter, from a distance—he won't know me from any of the others. Here you are, Skinner, my infant! I've started all the verbs for you, and you've only got to continue them."

Skinner grunted.

"I've got a book with me to read!" he said.

"Well, you must do some verbs, or Quelch will want to know the reason why when he comes back. Now I'll go and get into my flannels."

And the juniors crowded out of the Form-room, closing the door after them.

Skinner was left alone.

He did not settle down to write out Latin conjugations. He had a sporting paper in his pocket, and he took it out to read it, much more interested in the form of horses for certain forthcoming races than in the tongue of Horace and Cicero.

But he jammed the paper hastily into his pocket, and bent industriously over the impot. paper, as the Form-room door opened about half an hour later.

"Ah! Still at work, I see, Vharton, isn't it?" said Monsieur Charpentier cheerily.

"Oui, mossoo!" mumbled Skinner.

And Mossoo went out, satisfied.

Another half-hour passed. Skinner had finished his sporting paper, and put it away in sheer boredom, and was idly writing out verbs. Even that occupation was better than sitting and biting his nails, or doing nothing at all.

The Form-room door opened again.

Skinner affected not to hear it. He kept his face bent over his work. The new-comer entered the Form-room, and came towards the junior.

"I am glad to see that you are still at work, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton's deputy fairly jumped.

For it was not Monsieur Charpentier's squeaky voice this time. It was the deep and severe voice of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master had returned!



Vavasour handed over the card he had picked up in his study. "Do you know what this is, Tom Merry?" he asked. "Yes!" said Tom, with an expression of amazement upon his face. "It's a roulette card!" (For this exciting incident, see the grand long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. entitled "THE RASCAL OF ST. JIM'S!" by Martin Clifford, in this week's number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY. Order your copy now. Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.)

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Wharton at the Wicket!

TRUMPER & CO., the cricketers from Courtfield, had arrived.

Trumper and his team belonged to the County Council School at Courtfield. They did not have so many holidays as the Greyfriars fellows; and on Wednesday afternoons, as a rule, they were hard at their lessons. But there was a holiday on this special Wednesday in Courtfield, on account of some local celebration, and Trumper had taken advantage of it to fix up a match with the Lower Fourth of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co. had been glad enough to meet them. Trumper & Co. were a fine team, and always gave the Greyfriars fellows a hard tussle; which, as good sportsmen, was what they wanted.

The Courtfielders had arrived when Harry Wharton

reached the cricket ground. Harry shook hands very cordially with Trumper.

"Glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "I came jolly near missing the match myself. I want to ask you something before we start."

"Go ahead!" said Trumper.

"I'm detained for the afternoon," Wharton explained. "I've cut it—my Form-master's out, and I've given myself leave."

"French leave?" grinned Trumper.

"That's it! If anything should happen, and I should be roped in, I suppose you wouldn't mind the fellows playing a substitute for me."

"Not at all," said Trumper heartily. "I hope you won't be nobbled. But if you are, put in any fellow you like."

"Yeth, rather!" said Solly Lazarus, the champion bowler of the Courtfield team.

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"Thanks! You are a good chap!"

The two captains tossed for choice of innings. Wharton won the toss, and he elected to bat first. It was a single-innings match. If anything went wrong with Skinner's scheme, and Wharton was recalled to the Form-room, it would be a big advantage to have his batting finished first. It was for batting that Wharton was chiefly wanted. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was the champion bowler of the team, and next to him was Dick Penfold; while Tom Brown and Mark Linley and several more were as good as Harry in the field. If the Remove captain knocked up a good score for his side in his innings, it would not matter so much if some untoward accident recalled him to his detention.

Harry Wharton opened the innings with Nugent.

Trumper tossed the ball to Solly Lazarus for the first over. Solly grinned as he received it. Solly was a bowler of renown in Courtfield, and he knew his powers. He fully intended to give the Greyfriars fellows an exhibition of the hat trick.

And his bowling started well—for Courtfield.

Frank Nugent stopped the first two balls, but the third was a regular scorcher, and it gave him no chance. There was a shout from all the Courtfield team as Nugent's leg stump was whipped out of the ground.

"How's that?"

There was not much need to ask "how" was "that." It was out—right out! Frank Nugent carried away his almost unused bat dolefully.

"Look out for that giddy Hebrew, he's a cough-drop!" Nugent said to Bob Cherry, who was next man in.

Bob nodded, and made his way to the wickets. Solly did not capture Bob's wicket in that over, but no runs were taken; Bob had enough to do to protect his sticks. But in the next over, after a three by Wharton, Bob had the bowling again, and he was caught out by Solly Lazarus at point.

Two down for three!

"Not much of a beginning!" grunted Bob Cherry to Mark Linley, the next man in. "For goodness' sake pile in on the beggars, Markey!"

Mark nodded and smiled.

"I'll do my best," he said.

But Mark Linley's luck was out that day. Grahame, of Courtfield, caught him out in the next over, after he had taken five runs. Wharton had piled up a few as well, but the score was not looking promising. Three of the best bats were out.

The Courtfielders were looking very cheerful now; but the faces of the Greyfriars Removites were very serious indeed.

"My only Uncle Tham!" said Solly Lazarus to Trumper. "I think thith ith going to be a walk-over."

And Trumper grinned assent.

"Buck up, Johnny!" said Bob Cherry, as Johnny Bull went in.

"What-ho!" said Bull.

Bull was an obstinate batsman, not especially brilliant as a run-getter, but to be relied upon to keep his end up. He did keep it up, and Harry Wharton was quite ready and able to contribute the necessary runs. Matters looked brighter for the Remove now. Solly Lazarus did his best against Wharton and against Bull, but the wickets did not go down, and the runs went up. The score was at fifty when Johnny Bull was caught out at last.

The Greyfriars juniors gave him a cheer as he came off. Wharton was well-set at the wicket now, and it looked as if he would be not out for the whole of the innings.

The Remove batsmen came in one after another, and again fortune smiled upon the Courtfield fellows.

Solly Lazarus, now that Johnny Bull was got rid of, seemed to be able to show his powers more effectively than ever, and he took three wickets in quick succession, and a yell from his side greeted the performance of the "hat trick."

Seven down for fifty-two! Even Dick Penfold fell to Solly's bowling, with only six runs to his credit! Eight down for fifty-eight! And Wharton was still batting away well, as if it was going to be the innings of his life.

But there was a shade of anxiety upon Harry's face.

It was useless his batting all through the innings, if his comrades had such bad luck that there was nobody left to keep the other end open.

Two more wickets remained to fall—Bulstrode and Tom Brown, the New Zealander. Wharton was sure of a good partner for the finish, at all events. But—

Bulstrode did his best, but it was sheer ill-luck that brought his wicket down. A stumble on the pitch, and the ball got home in time after two had been run in safety—and the stumps were wrecked. The ball came in from the

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hand of Grahame, true as a die, and it gave the wicket no chance.

"How's that?" roared Grahame.

"Out!"

Bulstrode gave Wharton a grim look along the pitch, and carried out his bat.

"Last man in!"

Tom Brown came down to the wickets. The Remove fellows greeted him with a cheer.

"Good old Brown! Play up, Frozen Mutton!"

"Stick it out!"

Tom Brown grinned. He meant to stick it out if he could. Tom was a splendid bat, and Wharton was in his finest form. There was no reason why their partnership should not pull the game out of the fire after all. Wharton had fully taken the measure of the bowling now, and he did not believe that the Courtfielders could shift him. And he was not at all fatigued—to all appearance, at least, he was as fresh as paint, and keen for his work.

"Stick it out, Browney!" he called along the pitch.

"You bet!" said the New Zealander.

Solly Lazarus went on to bowl once more.

But Tom Brown had better luck, and he was in great form. He did not sit down under the bowling, either; he knocked it right and left. And the batsmen made the running now.

Grahame bowled, but with no better result; and then Trumper took the ball himself for an over; but then the last state of Courtfield was worse than their first.

Both batsmen were hitting out in turn, and there was no more stonewalling; the leather was always on the go, and the fieldsmen were given enough leather-hunting to last them for a considerable time.

The Remove fellows cheered loudly every hit.

"Bravo, Browney!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Good old Maori!"

"Hurrah! Well hit! Hurrah!"

They roared out Wharton's name, quite forgetful of the fact, by this time, that Wharton was supposed to be under detention in the Form-room.

Wharton himself had forgotten it.

He was thinking only of the cricket, and of holding out that final struggle of the innings as long as possible, and giving his side a good score before the innings closed.

The score was mounting up.

Ninety—ninety-four—ninety-six—a hundred! There was a howl of delight from the Removites as the hundred was turned. At least, they had something to go upon now, in spite of the disastrous beginning of the innings. When the Courtfielders came to bat, they were expected to knock up at least a hundred. But the Remove had feared at first that the visitors would have about fifty to beat. Wharton and Tom Brown had changed all that. The visitors would have to make a good score if they were going to win. And the runs were still being captured—a hundred and three—a hundred and five—hundred and ten—

"Bravo! Pile 'em up!"

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a ripple of hand-clapping round the field. Then the cheering died down in eager interest as Solly went on to bowl again. Not that the Greyfriars fellows believed that he would touch Wharton's wicket. They were gleefully anticipating a huge score, and the innings "declared" in order to give the Courtfielders time to bat.

But it was not to be!

In the excitement, no one had noticed a stern figure striding towards the cricket ground; and there was a general start of dismay as a sharp voice rang out:

"Wharton!"

Wharton jumped.

In the keen excitement of the hard-fought match, and his own splendid innings, he had completely forgotten the very existence of Mr. Quelch.

The sudden sharp voice of the Form-master brought him back to realities.

"Wharton!"

The junior swung round from the pitch. Mr. Quelch, with a stern and angry brow, raised his hand commandingly.

"Wharton! How dare you? Return to the Form-room at once!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

An Interrupted Innings!

SKINNER had done his best.

He had stood the test of Monsieur Charpentier's cursory examination, and doubtless if the surveillance of the detained junior had been left to Mossos nothing untoward would have happened.

But Mr. Quelch had returned to Greyfriars, and on his return he looked into the Form-room at once. Perhaps some shout from the cricket-field, heard as he came in, had warned him that the detained junior had broken bounds.

Skinner looked up in dismay at the Form-master, and looked down upon his work again hurriedly. He had little hope of being able to "spoo" Mr. Quelch as he had spooed the French master. Mr. Quelch was a great deal too keen to be taken in so easily. But Skinner did his best. He kept his face over his work, and wrote away at a great rate; and Mr. Quelch paused by his side and looked at him.

"Wharton! Is that you, Wharton?"

Skinner groaned inwardly. Even in that shadowy corner of the Form-room, Mr. Quelch's eyes were not to be deceived. Indeed, Monsieur Charpentier would hardly have been deceived if he had come as close as Mr. Quelch was now. Skinner had only expected a glance from the door—a careless glance. But Mr. Quelch was fairly standing over him now—and he could see that it was not Harry Wharton sitting at the desk.

"What does this mean?" said Mr. Quelch harshly. "Look up, boy! Don't hide your face like that!"

Skinner looked up helplessly.

Mr. Quelch's keen eyes travelled over his made-up face. The Remove fellows sometimes alluded to Mr. Quelch as "Gimlet eyes," on account of the piercing quality of his glance. His eyes seemed like red-hot gimlets to the unfortunate Skinner just now. As Skinner said afterwards, he could fairly feel them going through him.

"Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"What are you doing here, Skinner?"

"W-w-w-working, sir!"

"Where is Wharton?"

"G-g-gone, sir!"

Mr. Quelch frowned heavily. He understood it all now.

"What is your face made up in that ridiculous manner for, Skinner?"

"M-m-my face, sir?" stammered Skinner.

"Yes; I presume you have taken Wharton's place, in the hope of passing for him if anyone should look into the Form-room."

It was not of much use to deny it.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" muttered Skinner.

"Monsieur Charpentier has been here, I think?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"And he supposed you were Wharton?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"You took advantage of his short sight?" thundered the Remove-master.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"And where is Wharton?"

"Playing cricket, sir!" faltered Skinner. "We—we didn't mean any harm, sir! B-b-but it was a very important match, and—"

"Silence! Come here!"

Mr. Quelch stepped to his desk and picked up a cane. Skinner followed him apprehensively. He was going to "catch it" now, and he knew it. Mr. Quelch was angrier than Skinner ever remembered to have seen him before. The Form-master had been severe, but he had reason for his anger. His orders had been directly disobeyed; the boy he had detained had gone out to play cricket in spite of his commands. It was only natural that Mr. Quelch should be very much incensed. There was trouble to come for all concerned; and Skinner was to be the first victim, to take the edge, as it were, off Mr. Quelch's wrath.

"Hold out your hand, Skinner! Now the other—now the other again—and the other!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Skinner simply wriggled. Two on each hand—and deadly cuts! The unfortunate junior had never realised before what an exceedingly hard, bitter man Mr. Quelch could be.

"Ow!" groaned Skinner. "Ow! O-o-o-oh!"

"Now, as you have chosen to detain yourself, Skinner, I will not interfere with your detention," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You may remain here until six o'clock, and write out Latin verbs!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Go to your place!"

Skinner returned to his place. Mr. Quelch left the Form-room, closing the door after him. Skinner sat groaning and rubbing his hands at the desk.

Mr. Quelch strode down to the cricket-ground.

His brows were knitted, and his eyes were gleaming with anger under them. As a rule, Mr. Quelch showed every consideration to the juniors in their sports. But he felt that it was time to put his foot down now. He could not allow his orders to be openly disregarded. And his arrival upon the cricket-ground spread dismay among the juniors.

The Courtfield fellows looked on in surprise.

Solly Lazarus had been about to bowl at Harry Wharton's wicket, and if he had delivered the ball at the moment the wicket would certainly have gone down, as Wharton stood

staring blankly towards his Form-master. But Solly generously held his hand. He would not take advantage of the trouble that had fallen upon the home side.

Mr. Quelch made a commanding gesture to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir," stammered Harry.

"You left the Form-room directly against my orders."

"Yes, sir."

"You will be punished. Now return at once!"

Wharton hesitated.

His Form-master's word, of course, was law; but—but the Remove still wanted some more runs to make their victory secure against the possible score of the visitors. It seemed a sin and a shame to break off his innings before the finish. He cast a helpless glance at his chums. But they could not help him. They were all looking dismayed and angry. But there seemed to be nothing to be done.

Mr. Quelch raised his voice sharply.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Then obey me instantly!"

Still the captain of the Remove did not leave the pitch. The teams and the crowd were looking on with tense faces. For a moment it seemed as though Wharton intended to defy his Form-master.

"Wharton!"

"Won't you let me finish the innings, sir?" said Wharton, appealingly. "It won't take long now! We don't want the side beaten, sir!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's the last wicket——"

"Go to your Form-room at once!"

Mr. Quelch's voice rang out sharply and uncompromisingly.

One brief moment of hesitation, and then Harry Wharton put his bat under his arm, and walked off the pitch, looking neither to the right nor left.

There was a loud murmur on the field.

"Shame!"

Mr. Quelch affected not to hear that murmur. He turned and followed Wharton in the direction of the School House.

"I say, this is rotten!" said Trumper, when the spell of silence was broken by the disappearance of Harry Wharton into the House. "Of course, you chaps can play a substitute to finish the innings."

"Thanks!" said Tom Brown.

And a Remove fellow was put on in Wharton's place. But it was useless. That brilliant innings was ruined; and at the second ball the substitute was out for a duck's egg; and the innings closed for a hundred and ten for all wickets.

And a gloom had fallen upon the Remove team, which dashed their spirits, and made a very perceptible difference to their form.

Harry Wharton's chums were feeling anxious about him, and the other fellows were feeling the gloomy effects of Mr. Quelch's interference in the game; and the bowling and fielding of the Remove team were by no means up to their usual level.

The Courtfielders had a good score to equal; but they looked like equalling it, if not surpassing it.

The game went on; and meanwhile, Harry Wharton had re-entered the Remove Form-room, to which he had hoped to return before Mr. Quelch came home—after the match. He had not known precisely when the Form-master would return; and Mr. Quelch had come back unfortunately early, that was all. Wharton's face was dark and gloomy. He had strong doubts now about the result of the match, and he knew what a depressing effect the incident would have upon his team, just at the time when they needed all their spirit and vigour. Perhaps the trouble in the boy's face touched Mr. Quelch a little, for his voice was less harsh as he spoke to him in the Form-room.

"You have done very wrong, Wharton."

The junior was silent.

"You are the head boy of your Form, and you have set an example of disobedience and defiance of authority to all the other boys," said Mr. Quelch. "Surely you see for yourself that you have done wrong, Wharton."

"I suppose so, sir," said Harry wearily. "I'm willing to take my punishment."

"You are sorry for what you have done, I trust?"

"I had to play up for Greyfriars, sir."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I have caned Skinner," he said. "I shall now cane you, Wharton. I am sorry to have to do so, but you have left me no alternative. Hold out your hand."

Wharton obeyed in silence. He did not even wince under the stinging cuts of the cane.

"You will remain here until six o'clock," said Mr. Quelch.
 "Very well, sir."
 "Can I trust you to remain, Wharton, or must I lock the door?" said the Remove-master sternly.
 Wharton flushed.
 "I will remain, sir."
 "Very well; I take your word."
 And Mr. Quelch went out of the Form-room.
 Harry Wharton sat down gloomily at his desk. Skinner, rubbing his aching hands, grinned at him ruefully.
 "I did my best, Wharton!" he said.

Wharton nodded without speaking. He was exasperated with Mr. Quelch, and exasperated with circumstances generally. But it was all Skinner's fault that the trouble had arisen at all; it was all due to the blackguardly conduct of the cad of the Remove. But for Skinner's excursion out of bounds on Monday night, Wharton would not have been in his Form-master's black books, and the present trouble would not have occurred. If Courtfield defeated Greyfriars Remove, it would be due to Skinner; and Harry Wharton was not inclined to speak to the cause of all the trouble. He settled down glumly and wearily to write out Latin verbs, cheered only by the echoes of distant shouts from the cricket-field.

**THE TENTH CHAPTER.
 Bunter is Shocked!**

SIX o'clock rang out at last from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton rose from his desk in the Form-room.

The Courtfield match was not yet over, as the loud shouts from the cricket-field had told him. Courtfield were still batting, and they were apparently going strong. Wharton hurried out of the Form-room without a word to Skinner, who followed in a more leisurely way.

"Master Wharton!" Trotter, the house-page, met Harry in the passage. "Telegram for you, sir."

Wharton took the telegram.
 Telegrams for juniors were not common at the school, and Wharton opened it immediately, with a fear in his breast that perhaps it meant bad news from home. But the telegram was not from home. The initials "J. G." at the end caught his eye at once, and he knew that it was from his unknown correspondent. "J. G." had fixed an appointment with him for that afternoon at four o'clock, in the Old Spinney. Wharton had utterly forgotten the circumstance in the stress of more important matters that he had to think about.

But the telegram recalled it to his mind. He read through the message with amazement and growing anger.

"Harry Wharton,—I give you one more chance. Come to the Spinney at seven o'clock. Otherwise, I come to Greyfriars to see you.
 J. G."

Wharton crumpled the telegram in his hand.
 "Is it some lunatic?" he muttered. "Blessed if I can understand it! Must be off his rocker, whoever he is!"

He thrust the telegram into the pocket of the blazer he was wearing, and hurried out of the house, and down to the cricket-field.

A shout greeted him—a shout from the members of the Courtfield team. It was not addressed to him, but to Trumper. Trumper and Grahame were at the wickets, and all the Courtfielders had not batted yet. They were not wanted to bat, either. The shout of the Courtfield party showed Wharton what had happened.

"Well run, Trumper!"
 "Bravo, Grahame!"
 "Hurrah!"

It was the hundred-and-eleventh run! Courtfield had run up the score, and won the match; with four wickets still in hand. The Greyfriars Remove score had been at a hundred and ten. Courtfield had won—with four wickets to spare. That was the news that greeted Harry Wharton as he arrived on the cricket-ground.

The Courtfielders were jubilant.
 Greyfriars Remove were far from sharing their feelings. They had had cruel luck. If their captain had not been called away, the last partnership in the Greyfriars innings would have lasted much longer—resulting in a score, probably, that the Courtfielders could not have beaten.

It was hard luck—hard indeed! Courtfield had won, and the Greyfriars juniors, who could take a licking cheerfully enough under ordinary conditions, felt specially "rotten" about this one, because they need not have lost but for untoward circumstances.

"Licked!" grunted Bob Cherry, as Wharton came up.
 "Diddled and done!" said Johnny Bull. "What a bit of rotten luck it was, Quelch turning up like that! Why couldn't he stay out all the afternoon?"

"Why couldn't he fall under a tram or something?" groaned Bulstrode.
 "Well, it can't be helped," said Harry. "Better luck next time."

"All Skinner's fault," growled Johnny Bull. "If he had owned up to Quelch, it would have been all right."

"Too late to think of that now."
 "He ought to be scragged!"
 "No good scragging him now the match is lost," said Wharton quietly. "After all, he did his best, in a way. Don't let Courtfield see you looking down in the mouth."

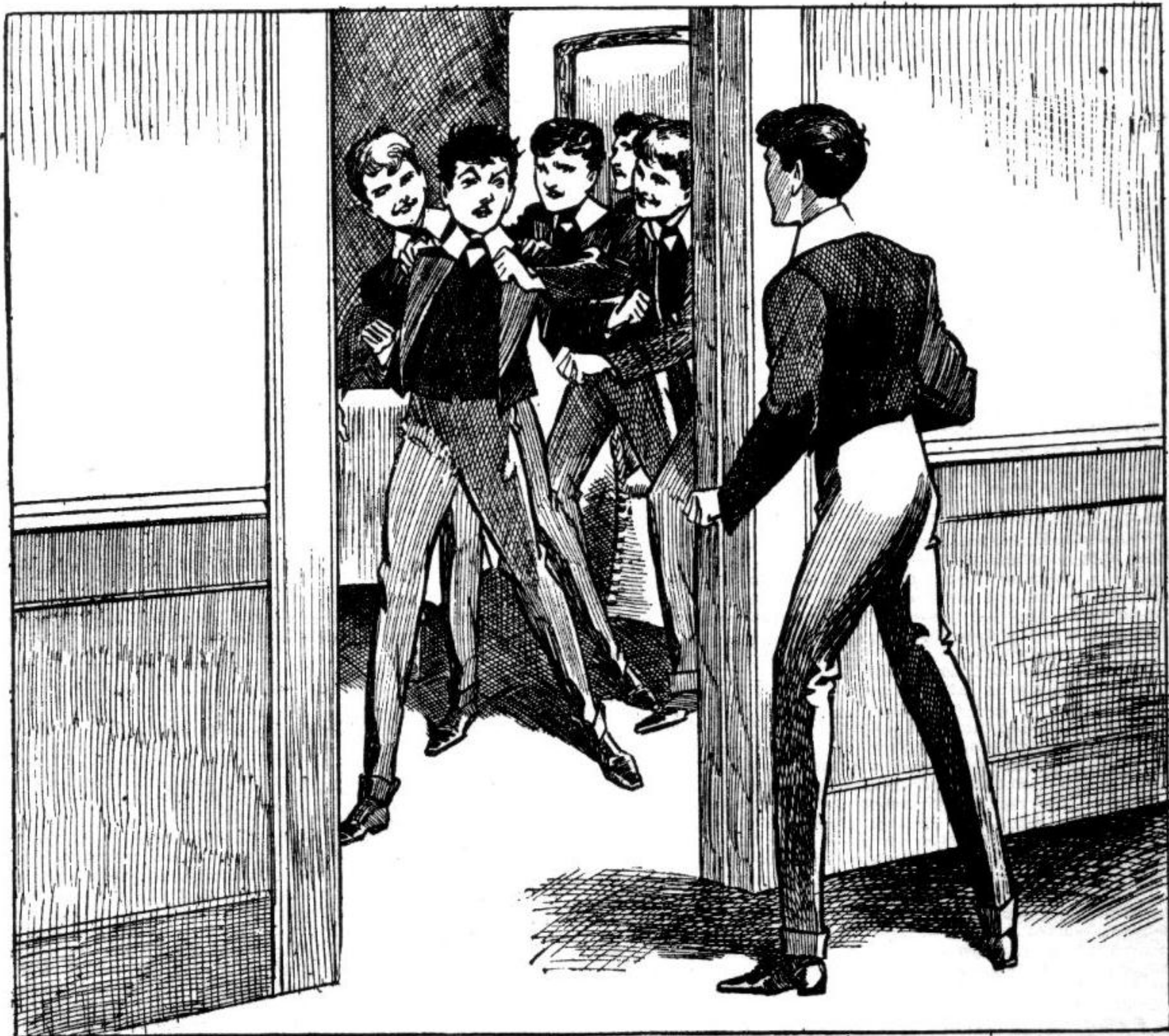
CONTRASTS.—No. 16.

THE OLD-FASHIONED JESTER AND CLOWN, AND—

THE MODERN MIRTH-PROVOKER.



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Harry Wharton looked into the open study with amazement. "What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed. "We're going to bump Skinner until he owns up, and gets you off to play in the match this afternoon!" said Johnny Bull. (See Chapter 4.)

And the juniors contrived to conceal their chagrin from the eyes of Trumper & Co.; but after the Courtfield team had departed, they growled to their heart's content.

Harry Wharton went into the pavilion for his clothes. He had changed in the pavilion before the match, and when he was ordered back to the Form-room he had had to go there at once, in his flannels and blazer. His Etons were, therefore, still in the dressing-room, and he went in for them. He gave a start as he entered.

Billy Bunter was there.

The Remove team had mostly gone down to the gates with Trumper & Co., to see them off, and Bunter had evidently found that his opportunity for sneaking into the dressing-room unobserved.

Wharton looked at him in amazement.

Billy Bunter did not see him at the door. The fat junior was going through the pockets of Wharton's jacket, as it hung on a peg.

The captain of the Remove stood rooted to the ground.

Billy Bunter was a thorough young rascal in some respects; but Wharton would never have suspected him of theft; and yet it certainly looked like it. What had Bunter stolen into the pavilion for, and why was he going through the pockets of Wharton's jacket?

Wharton stood still, wondering. If Bunter, in his need for cash, had taken this method of raising it, there was trouble waiting for him. But Wharton could hardly believe it, and he was willing to give the fat junior the benefit of the doubt.

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So he did not interfere for the moment, but waited to see what Bunter would do.

Bunter had his back to him, and did not look round.

The Owl of the Remove gave a grunt of satisfaction, and drew out his fat hand full of fragments of paper.

"Got it!"

He spread the fragments out on a chair, piecing them together, with the evident desire to read the letter they had formed.

Wharton smiled.

The first unavoidable impression, on seeing Bunter going through his pockets, was that the Owl of the Remove was dishonest. Bunter had laid himself open to that suspicion without a thought, in this obtuseness. And Wharton was glad enough to find that that suspicion, at least, was unjust. Bunter was playing the spy as usual.

Wharton remembered the letter he had received from the mysterious J. G.—the second letter from that unknown individual, which he had torn up. He had placed the fragments in his pocket, because he was indoors at the time, and could not very well throw them on the floor, intending to throw them away later, but he had had plenty of other things to think about, and had entirely forgotten the matter.

Billy Bunter had evidently not forgotten it.

He meant to know what was in that letter; and he was taking a method which recommended itself to his peculiar instincts.

"The Old Spinney—meet—" murmured Bunter, piecing

the letter together on the chair bit by bit, and too absorbed to see Wharton at the door, or to observe that Bob Cherry and Nugent had joined him there. "Good! I'll have the lot soon! They're jolly well not going to keep these rotten secrets from me!"

The chums of the Remove grinned. It seemed so utterly absurd, that Bunter should be piecing the letter together under their eyes, ignorant of their presence, and muttering his comments in their hearing, without being aware that they heard, that the juniors could hardly restrain a roar of laughter. It was impossible to be angry with Billy Bunter. One might as well be angry with Mrs. Mimble's poodle, or Nugent minor's white rabbit.

"Rotters!" Bunter went on murmuring, blissfully unconscious of the fact that the three juniors had entered the room and were advancing upon him on tiptoe from behind. "There's something jolly fishy about this, and I'm going to look into it. It's my duty to look into it. That rotter Wharton— Yaroooh!"

Bunter's mutterings were suddenly interrupted. He was grasped from behind by three pairs of hands, and bumped on the floor with a sudden and terrific bump, which knocked every ounce of breath out of his fat body. His spectacles slid down his fat little nose, and he blinked and gasped helplessly.

"Ow-groo! Groo! Ow! Yow! Yah! Yowp! Oh!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow! You beast! You—you rotters! Yowp!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go it!"
 "Ow! You beast! You—you rotters! Yowp!"
 "Go hon!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton collected up the fragments of the letter, placed them upon a saucer that happened to be on the table, and applied a match to them. Billy Bunter blinked at him, too breathless to rise and make an attempt to rescue the precious fragments. The last pieces of the mysterious letter were consumed in a few seconds.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "You beasts! What did you jump on me like that for! Ow!"

"You were spying into my letter!" said Wharton sternly.

"I—I wasn't! I—I—"

"You took those pieces of paper from my pocket?"

"I—I found them on the floor."

"Why, you awful Ananias, I watched you taking them out of my pocket!" exclaimed Harry Wharton indignantly.

"Ahem! I—I mean—I—I'm rather shocked at you, Wharton!"

"What!" yelled Wharton.

"Shocked at you!" said Bunter firmly. "It's rotten to play the spy like that."

"Play the spy?" said Wharton dazedly. "I!"

"Yes, you! You've admitted it. You sneaked in here and watched me!"

"Why, you—you—you fat rotter!" howled Wharton. "I saw you rummaging in my pockets. If I'd collared you on the spot, you'd have been supposed to have been stealing. I gave you a chance. Any fellow would have thought you were after money, not after some old pieces of paper."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "You'll get into trouble, real trouble, with your rotten spying, one of these days," went on the indignant junior. "Suppose I had lost some money, and then found you rummaging in my pockets. I should think you'd taken it, naturally."

"No good trying to brazen it out," said Bunter, picking himself up gingerly.

"Brazen it out!"

"Yes; that's what you're doing. I've told you I'm shocked, and I am. I should never have thought you'd have descended to it!" said Billy Bunter, with lofty scorn. "I know you fellows don't have the same high ideals that I have!"

"Great Scott!"

"Do your high ideals make you sneak into other fellows' pockets, and read other fellows' letters?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ahem! No good trying to beg the question," said Bunter. "You spied on me. I'm shocked at you. I may say I despise you. I'm sorry to see you fellows turn out like this. I repeat that I'm shocked. That's all!"

And Bunter turned away with an air of great dignity.

The chums of the Remove were speechless for a moment. Bunter's cool "cheek" took their breath away. That a fellow caught in the act of spying should accuse those who had caught him of being spies was a little too "thick." Bob Cherry was the first to recover himself. He rushed at Bunter as the fat junior reached the door, and captured him.

"So you're shocked, Bunter?" he demanded.

"Yes, I am! Leggo!"

"Not yet; you're going to have another shock."

"Ow! Leggo! I—I—yah!"

"Kick him out," said Bob, "all together, and as hard as you can. Imagine you're kicking for goal in a cup-tie! Now, then—one, two, three!"

"Yaroooh!"

Three-feet were planted at the same moment behind Billy Bunter, and he shot through the doorway like a stone from a catapult.

"Yaroooh! Ow! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want another shock, Bunter?"

Bunter didn't! He picked himself up and fled.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
 (On the Track—And Off!)

HARRY WHARTON changed, and came out of the pavilion with his chums. There was a thoughtful expression upon his face. The clock in the old tower indicated half-past six, and the telegram in his pocket had made the appointment—for the third time—for seven o'clock.

Harry Wharton was thinking about that. He was in a state of exasperation that afternoon—everything had gone wrong. The Courtfield match had been lost, he was in disgrace with his Form-master, and now this unknown man—evidently a rascal—was worrying him with threats of he did not know what. It would have been a satisfaction to the worried junior to administer a licking to somebody who was responsible for his worries. The Courtfield cricketers were not proper objects of resentment, and he could not lick Mr. Quelch. So his thoughts turned to the unknown man who was sending him threatening letters. And he communicated his idea to his chums.

"I've had a telegram from 'J. G.,'" he said.

"My hat!" said Bob.

"He orders me to meet him in the Old Spinney at seven, and says it's my last chance, or he's coming to Greyfriars."

"Great Scott!"

"What on earth can it mean?" said Nugent in wonder.

Wharton's brow was dark.

"I don't know what it means," he said. "But it's plain enough that the man is threatening me. Look at the telegram. Either he's mistaken me for somebody else, or he's got an idea into his head that I'm a soft kind of chap who can be threatened."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"He's off the mark there," he observed.

"Yes, rather. I'm getting fed up with his letters and telegrams. I was thinking I might as well keep the appointment."

"Keep it!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes. It's pretty clear that the thing isn't a joke—the man, whoever he is, is trying to frighten me, and I suppose he wants to extort money—that's the only reason he can have, I should say. Well, let's go and meet him. If he's anything like my size, I'll give him a jolly good hiding!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If he's too big for me to tackle, you fellows can lend me

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a hand, and we'll rag the scoundrel, and duck him in a ditch, and teach him not to try to blackmail Greyfriars chaps."

"Jolly good wheeze," said Bob Cherry heartily. "Count me in. He may not be alone, though. Might as well take all the family."

"Yes, that's a good idea. Call Johnny and Inky."

Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were willing enough to join the expedition, as soon as the matter was explained to them.

The Famous Five walked out of the gates of Greyfriars together.

The letters, and the telegram that had followed, mystified the Co. utterly. The only plausible explanation seemed to be that "J. G." was a blackmailer, who was seeking to gain his ends by threats. In that case, the sooner he was stopped and punished the better.

A boy of a weaker or softer nature than Wharton's might have been scared by his letters, especially a boy who had secrets to keep—such as Skinner, for example. It would have been wiser, perhaps, for the juniors to place the matter in their Form-master's hands; but Harry Wharton was not specially anxious to see his Form-master again just then. His relations with Mr. Quelch were very strained. Besides, the famous Co. were accustomed to relying upon themselves. If the man was a blackmailer, they would deal out his punishment, and give him a severe lesson. If he turned out to be a practical joker, they would convince him that practical jokes of that kind were barred.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, looking back as the five juniors swung down the road. "Bunter!"

The Co. glanced back.

Billy Bunter had followed them out of the gates. The fat junior was trudging down the lane after them, his spectacles gleaming in the sun.

Wharton made an angry gesture.

Billy Bunter was evidently on the track! His curiosity was excited, and when Billy Bunter was curious, he was not to be stopped. He had read enough of the torn letter to know that someone had made an appointment with Wharton, and he had guessed that the Famous Five were going out to keep it. And Bunter meant to be on the scene, and know what it was all about.

The Owl of the Remove did not see the juniors looking back. He was too short-sighted for that. He did not know that they had spotted him.

"Inquisitive beast!" growled Johnny Bull.

"He's tracking us down," grinned Bob Cherry. "One good turn deserves another. Let's give him a little run!"

The juniors grinned, and started off again. This time they were careful not to look back, in case Bunter should see that his pursuit was discovered. They entered the wood, and the fat junior, flattering himself that he was quite unobserved, followed upon the track. Bob Cherry led the way, and paused where a woodland stream was crossed by a single plank.

"This is where Bunter gets wet," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors crossed the stream by the plank, and halted, under cover of a mass of leafy bushes.

A few minutes later there was a puffing and panting sound, something like a motor-car climbing a very steep ascent, and Bunter came rolling through the underwoods.

He halted at the edge of the stream, and blinked round him, and blinked at the plank, and blinked across the water.

The juniors were not in sight. Billy Bunter mopped his brow with a large spotted handkerchief. The pursuit had winded him.

"Beasts!" he murmured. "This isn't the way to the Old Spinney. I wonder if they're going round in case they're spotted? This is blacker than I thought. They must have gone across the plank. There's no other way on."

And Billy Bunter started to cross the plank.

He had just reached the middle of it, when Bob Cherry appeared from the bushes on the other side, and stooped over the end of the plank where it rested in the thick ferns.

Billy Bunter halted.

"Hold on!" he roared.

"I'm holding on," said Bob, grasping the end of the plank with both hands. "It's you that had better hold on, Bunty—if you've got anything to hold on to. I'm going to shift the plank. I'm afraid you'll get wet."

"Leggo!" roared Bunter in alarm.

Bob looked surprised.

"Which do you want me to do?" he demanded. "Hold on or let go—you've asked me to do both. You don't make your meaning clear, my dear Bunter!"

"Ow! Let that plank alone!" yelled the Owl of the Remove. He was in the middle of the plank, and he dared not advance, and it was difficult to retreat. Bob Cherry had only to twist the plank to hurl him into the water. The water, it is true, was shallow—not more than twelve or fourteen inches deep. But Bunter disliked water at any time, and a bath with his clothes on did not appeal to him at all.

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"I'll try to please you," said Bob. "I'll hold on first—while I shift the plank—and then I'll let go—when you're in the water. Will that do?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo! Chuckit! I say, Bob, old fellow—Cherry, you beast—ow—yarrooh!"

Splash!

The plank tilted, and Billy Bunter sprawled off wildly. He went into the water with a terrific splash. The juniors on the bank yelled with laughter. Billy Bunter's fat, red face came up out of the water, which streamed down his face and hair and spectacles.

"Ow, ow, ow! Help! I'm drowning!"

"Good! Let's pelt him while he drowns!" said Nugent, heartlessly, dragging up a turf.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz! Whiz! Splash! Splash! Biff!

Bunter roared as the turves splashed in the water round him. He scrambled out of the stream, and sprawled gasping on the bank. Bob Cherry set the plank straight again.

"Safe now, Bunter," he called out; "try again!"

Bunter snorted. Not for wealth untold would he have attempted crossing that plank again while Bob Cherry was anywhere near at hand.

"Better run home," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You'll catch cold, Bunter! The sooner you change your clothes the better!"

"Ow! Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton's advice was too good not to be taken. Billy Bunter set off as fast as his fat little legs could carry him, leaving a wet trail on the grass. And the Famous Five, relieved of the tracker on their trail, went on their way cheerfully to the Old Spinney.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Unknown!

"THERE he is!"

Bob Cherry whispered the words.

The chums of the Remove had approached the Old Spinney cautiously. The woodcraft they had learned in their training as Boy Scouts stood them in good stead now. They did not intend to let the unknown "J. G." become aware of their approach until they had seen him and scanned him. They wanted to know with whom exactly they had to deal, before they tackled him.

The juniors peered through the bushes as Bob pointed the man out. As yet the screen of leaves and twigs hid them from his sight.

They regarded him curiously. The man was standing there evidently waiting—leaning against a tree, and smoking a cigar—a strong cigar, of which the scent reached the juniors where they had stopped. He was the only person in sight, and it was a lonely spot—and it was just seven. There could be no doubt that this was the mysterious "J. G." who had sent two letters and a telegram to Harry Wharton at Greyfriars.

Who was he? None of the juniors knew him by sight. He was a man of about thirty, with a hard face and a square jaw, and little keen, grey eyes that gleamed under bushy brows. He wore a velveteen jacket and gaiters, and looked something like a gamekeeper in appearance. The juniors knew by sight a good many of the keepers in the vicinity, but they did not remember having seen this man before.

"That must be the chap!" murmured Nugent.

"There's nobody else here," said Wharton. "I suppose that's J. G.? Looks something of a rotter, to judge by his chivvy."

"The rotterfulness is terrific, to judge by his esteemed and ludicrous chivvy," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"You chaps wait here," said Harry. "I'll go and see what he wants first. If there's trouble, you'll be ready?"

"What-ho!"

"Lie low till I call you, then."

And, leaving his chums in cover, near enough to hear what should be said between them, Harry Wharton approached the stranger under the tree.

As he pushed his way through the thicket, the man started and glanced up.

A gleam of satisfaction came into his eyes as he caught sight of Wharton.

"Ha! You have come?" he exclaimed.

Wharton nodded calmly.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" he said.

"You are Harry Wharton?" the man asked, eyeing the

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junior searchingly, looking him over from top to toe as if to assure himself of his identity.

"That is my name."

"You got my letters?"

"Yes; if you are the man who signed himself J. G."

"You know I am J. G.!"

"I know it now you tell me," assented Wharton. "I came here after your telegram."

"Why did you not come yesterday, as I told you?" demanded the man gruffly.

"I didn't choose to!"

"What!"

"Didn't you hear what I said?" asked Wharton calmly.

"I didn't choose to. I thought the letter was from some fool playing a practical joke, or from some rascal trying to threaten me. In either case it wasn't worth taking any notice of!"

The man's eyes gleamed savagely.

"You seem to have picked up more nerve than you had the last time I saw you, Master Harry Wharton," he said savagely, biting his lip.

"The last time you saw me?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, you young rascal!"

Wharton turned crimson.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "You—you dare to call me names!"

The man stared at him. The astonishment in his face was so evident that Wharton's anger changed to amazement. What did this man know of him, or fancy that he knew of him? It was borne very clearly in upon Wharton's mind that there was a mistake somewhere—though what it was he could not guess.

"Who are you?" demanded Wharton, as the man did not speak, but continued to stare at him blankly. "What have you written to me for? What does it mean? Why did you want me to come here?"

"One question at a time, young master," said the man, recovering himself. "As to who I am, you know very well."

"I do not even know your name," said Harry.

Again that stare of amazement.

"I begin to think you are out of your senses," said the man slowly. "My name is Jem Gadd, and you know it well enough, as I told you myself."

"You told me?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes."

"When?" asked Harry. "As far as I know, I've never seen you before."

"You young liar!"

Smack!

Harry Wharton's open hand came full across the man's rough face, and Jem Gadd started back with a howl of rage.

"That's for calling me a liar!" said Harry Wharton, his eyes blazing.

The man made a movement as if to spring upon him, but he controlled himself. His eyes scintillated as he fixed them on the junior.

"You—you—" he muttered. "Wait a little—wait a little! I will make you pay for that; but—but we'll have this out first! I think you are mad! You say you have never seen me before?"

"Never that I know of, and I never want to see you again!" said Wharton contemptuously. The junior was standing warily upon his guard. He did not trust Mr. Jem Gadd an inch. "I did not come here because I was scared by your letters, as you have fancied. I came here to tell you what I think of you, and to give you something to remember me by, you villain!"

"It was dark," muttered the man, his eyes scanning Wharton's face. "It was very dark; but—but—you are the same build—and your name is Harry Wharton?"

"My name is Harry Wharton," said the junior.

"You belong to Greyfriars School?"

"Certainly I do!"

"Then there can be no mistake. You are trying to bluff me," said Jem Gadd savagely. "Now, stop this game! I don't know what you mean by it, but stop it! Do you hear?"

"What game?"

"This pretending you don't know me!"

"I don't know you!" said Wharton.

"Chuck it, I tell you!" said Jem Gadd between his teeth.

"Chuck it, you young fool. Listen to me. You've raised your hand to me—"

"I'll raise it again for the same cause!" said Harry.

"You've raised your hand to me," said Jem Gadd unheeding. "Never mind; I can look over it, if you do the sensible thing now. You were trying to bluff me, and I can look over it. But drop it now! I'm fed-up with it! Understand

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me—you are in my power—right under my thumb—and I can put the screw on if I like!"

"Under your thumb!" repeated Harry.

"Yes," said Jem Gadd, "right under my thumb, and you know it. You dare not quarrel with me, and you know that, too!"

"It doesn't look like it, though, does it?" said Harry, contemptuously. "I'm beginning to think you are mad, or you have mistaken me for somebody else."

Jem Gadd sneered.

"So that's the game, is it?" he said. "It was dark, I know; but you can't palm off a yarn like that on me!"

"Dark—when—where?" said Wharton, puzzled. "Are you dotty?"

Jem Gadd burst into a scoffing laugh.

"I tell you it won't work!" he exclaimed. "Don't you understand? It won't work! You are under my thumb."

"In what way?" asked Wharton, in wonder, almost inclined to believe that the man was indeed out of his senses.

"Suppose," said Gadd, with low and angry emphasis—"suppose that I went up to the school—suppose I told your headmaster what I know?"

And he leered at the boy triumphantly, as if expecting him to be crushed under the mere suggestion. But Wharton only stared at him wide-eyed.

"Tell my headmaster what you know?" he said.

"Yes, my pippin. What then?"

"What then? I suppose Dr. Locke would have you thrown out, if you came playing the fool at Greyfriars, or you might be locked up," said Wharton. "What can you tell my headmaster? I don't keep any deadly secrets from him, that I know of. I've done nothing to be ashamed of."

"Nothing?" sneered Gadd. "My eye! What a nerve! You mean to say that you don't care if I came up to the school?"

"I don't care a rap!"

"Not if I see your headmaster?"

"Why should I care?" demanded Wharton.

"Because," said Gadd savagely—"because what I should tell him would be enough to get you turned out of the school, if not sent to prison."

Wharton looked at him fixedly. The man spoke with such intense and triumphant earnestness that it was evident he believed what he was saying. But why he should imagine that he had any power to disgrace Wharton with his headmaster was a mystery. Had he mistaken Harry Wharton for someone else—Vernon-Smith, perhaps? The Bouncer of Greyfriars had certainly done many things to be expelled for, if the Head discovered them, though the Bouncer was always very careful indeed to cover up his tracks. But then, Wharton did not resemble the Bouncer in the least, and again, the man called him by name—his own name! If the man had made a mistake in the person, how could he make a mistake in the name? There was no one else named Wharton at Greyfriars College.

There was a short silence. Wharton broke it.

"So you think you know something about me that would get me into trouble if you betrayed me to my headmaster?" he asked slowly.

"I don't think—I know!"

"You've made some sort of an idiotic mistake," said Harry. "I've done nothing that I should mind Dr. Locke knowing. But even if it were so, what then? What do you want with me? You didn't ask me to come here simply for the pleasure of telling me that, did you?"

Jem Gadd grinned.

"Not exactly," he said. "Now, we're coming to business!"

"Well?" said Harry quietly.

It was his cue now to let the man say what he wanted. Gadd had made an egregious error, in some way Wharton did not understand—he fancied that the junior was in his power—and he intended to use his power—for what? That was what Harry Wharton wanted to know. It was pretty plain—the man had a purpose to serve—and his purpose was blackmail. But the junior wished to hear it from his own lips, so that there could be no possible mistake, before he acted.

"You admit it, then?" demanded Gadd.

"I don't admit anything. I want to know what you want with me, that's all?"

"An old want—money!" grinned Gadd, quite at his ease now. "It's going to be a bargain. You'll make it worth my while, and I'll keep my mouth shut. Understand?"

"I understand!" said Harry. "How much do you want?"

"Now you're talking sense!" said Gadd. "Never mind that slap on the mug—you were trying to bluff me, and I

don't bear malice, now you've come round. Talk business to me, and I'm your man! I want a fiver now."

"Five pounds!"

"That's the figure. I may want more later on," grinned Gadd; "I'll let you know."

"Where do you think a junior schoolboy is going to get five pounds for you?" asked Harry Wharton, still very quietly—a quietness that would have put Jem Gadd on his guard, if Mr. Gadd had been a little less satisfied at his supposed success.

"Oh, you can get it!" said Gadd. "Write home for it; I'm a reasonable man, and I'll wait for a day or two, if it's understood. Say you want it for clothes, or new boots—anything you like—or borrow it—or—" He lowered his voice instinctively, though he did not think there was anyone but Wharton within hearing. "Collar it!"

"Collar it—how?"

"There are plenty of rich boys in your school, and I suppose they don't all lock up their money," said Gadd, with a grin.

Wharton drew back a pace. The man's business made him feel almost sick. Gadd misunderstood his silence.

"Or give me a chance," he said. "I'm an old hand at that game—give me a chance to get into the place—one night—late—you understand?"

"I understand, you scoundrel!" said Wharton, his voice vibrating with anger and scorn. "You think you have some hold over me, and you want to make me a thief to hand you money. If you had a hold over me, you rascal, I should defy you. But you haven't. I came here to find out who you were, and what you wanted, and to punish you if it was anything of this sort. Now you're going to get it in the neck!"

"What! What—you—"

"Come on!" shouted Wharton.

He leaped at the rascal, and seized him; and at the same moment the hidden juniors came tearing out of cover.

Gadd uttered a savage oath.

He made a fierce effort to throw Wharton off; but before he could do so the Greyfriars fellows were upon him.

"Down him!" roared Bob Cherry.

And Gadd went with a crash to the ground, with the juniors sprawling over him.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. A Rascal Well Punished!

"DOWN the cad!"

"Sit on his head!"

Gadd roared and struggled furiously. He was a powerful fellow, and he would have given one or two of the juniors a very severe tussle. But the five of them were much too much for him.

The rascal sprawled in the deep grass, and Bob Cherry sat on his chest, and Nugent stood on his legs, and Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh grasped his arms and held them fast.

The man wriggled and cursed in vain. Harry Wharton, panting a little, stood looking down at the rascal with gleaming eyes.

"I think we've got you now," he remarked, "and we'll teach you a lesson about blackmailing Greyfriars chaps, you scoundrel!"

A torrent of curses replied.

"Shut him up!" said Harry, in disgust.

Bob Cherry grasped up a chunk of grass by the roots, and jammed it into the open and eloquent mouth of Jem Gadd.

Mr. Gadd spluttered furiously, and the torrent of his eloquence was checked.

"Gerrogh—groogh—gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That puts the stopper on," grinned Bob. "Gaddy my man, you mustn't swear. If you swear you won't catch any fish, you know; but you'll catch something else. What are we going to do with the awful rascal, Harry?"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"He ought to be locked up," he said. "He was trying to get money out of me by threats. People are sent to prison for that kind of thing."

Gadd spluttered the grass-roots out of his mouth.

"You take me to the lock-up, and see wot I can tell 'em!" he yelled. "I'll tell 'em all about you—poaching at midnight—"

"Poaching at midnight, hey," said Bob Cherry—"is that the yarn? Harry, old man, I'm shocked at you—I really am! You must have gone poaching in your sleep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He can tell what silly yarns he likes," said Wharton scornfully. "I think the man must be mad. But he's a rotten scoundrel, anyway. You fellows heard what he said."

"Every word!"

"He wanted me to steal and give him money—or let him

into the school to take it," said Harry. "He ought to be locked up. But we don't want to be mixed up in a police-court case if we can help it, and I think we can give him a lesson ourselves."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"There's a ditch on the other side of the spinney," said Wharton. "Bring him along! We will give him a lesson that will make him leave Greyfriars chaps alone in the future."

"Hear, hear!"

"Lemme alone!" roared Gadd. "By George, if you touch me, I'll go straight to the school, and tell your headmaster what I know about you!"

"You're welcome to do that," said Harry Wharton. "I'm not afraid, you scoundrel!"

"You're lying; you'd be turned out of the school—"

"Oh, shut up! Yank him along, you chaps!"

Gadd struggled again; but it was not of much use struggling with five angry and determined fellows. They dragged him along, and his struggles only made it the worse for him. With a fellow holding each arm and leg, and another grasping his collar, he had no chance; but was rushed away through the underwoods. His voice was heard in sulphurous curses as he was bundled along.

The juniors stopped at the side of the ditch with their prisoner. The ditch was deep and wide, and it was half-full of water. Under the water were deep beds of mud and slime, and on the surface floated masses of green ooze.

Gadd shuddered at the sight of the ditch. It was enough to make even a man who was not very particular shudder.

"Don't you dare—" he began.

Wharton cut him short.

"You're going in," he said. "You've threatened me, and tried to get money out of me. You're a rotten, blackmailing hound. You ought to be locked up. You know you'd get sent to prison if I set the police on you, after what you've done. We're letting you off that. But you're going to take your punishment—as a lesson to you."

"I tell yer—"

"And if we find you anywhere near Greyfriars again we'll serve you the same," said Bob.

"The samefulness will be terrific, my worthy and ludicrous, rascally friend."

"I tell yer, you lay a 'and on me, and I go straight to your headmaster!" yelled Gadd.

"You can please yourself about that!" said Harry contemptuously. "If you do, I shall explain to Dr. Locke what we punished you for, and I don't think he will blame us. We'll chance it, anyway."

"I don't mean that! I'll tell him about your poaching at midnight!"

"You can tell him any silly yarns you like, if he'll listen to you," said Harry. "But you're going to take your gruel now."

"Listen to me. I—"

"In with him!"

"Ow!" roared Gadd. "Leggo—oh—ah!"

The juniors grasped him, and swung him into the ditch. There was a terrific splash as Mr. Gadd landed in the very middle of the oozy water, and he went quite underneath it for a moment. It was only for a moment; then he came surging up, and he presented a most horrible appearance as he emerged above the surface.

Green ooze and slime clung all over him, festooning him, and mud was caked on his face and his clothes, and water ran in little streams down his face and hair and clothes.

Mr. Gadd was not recognisable in his new coating.

The juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow! Groogh! Gu-gug-gug!" spluttered Mr. Gadd. "I'll be the death of yer! Ow! I'll go to your 'eadmaster now! Groogh! Ow, ow! Oh! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat, he's stirred up a 'scent in that ditch, hasn't he?" said Bob Cherry, with a sniff. "Gaddy, my man, you'd better walk over to the river and give yourself a bathe. You're like a giddy scent-packet now."

"Don't come out this side," said Johnny Bull, as Gadd tried to scramble out of the ditch. "You smell too sweet!"

"You mustn't get between the wind and our nobility!" grinned Nugent.

"Shove him in!"

Gadd had one knee on the bank, and was crawling out, when Johnny Bull gave him a shove on the chest with his boot.

There was a roar from Gadd as he went plunging backwards into the ditch again.

Splash!

Water and mud rose in a spurt round him as he disappeared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Gadd came up again, freshly festooned with green ooze, smothered with mud, and smelling worse than ever. He panted and gasped and spluttered, and scrambled across the wide ditch to the other side.

The juniors grinned as they watched him crawl out. All the spirit seemed to have been taken out of Jem Gadd. He had no breath left for cursing. He panted and panted as he clambered out of the ditch, and sank in a pool of water and mud and ooze upon the further bank.

"I think that merchant has had his lesson," said Johnny Bull. "I don't fancy he will try to blackmail Greyfriars chaps any more."

"Ha, ha! I should fancy not." Gadd struggled to his feet. He was a horrible-looking object. His face, where it could be seen through mud and slime, was red with fury. He shook his fist across the ditch at the grinning juniors.

"I'll pay you for this!" he muttered hoarsely. "I'll make you smart! I'll get you turned out of your school for this, Master Harry Wharton, you mark my words!"

"We'll mark your chivvy if we see you at Greyfriars!" said Frank Nugent. "You'd better go and get cleaned. You don't smell nice. Poof!"

And the juniors turned and walked away through the wood, leaving Jem Gadd muttering and shaking his fist furiously.

"Blessed if I can quite understand the rotter, though," said Bob Cherry, as they went through the spinney. "We know what he was after, of course. But how could the rascal expect you to give him any money, Wharton? Why should you?"

"I suppose he thought he could frighten me," said Harry, with a curl of the lip. "If it had been little Banthorpe, for instance, he might have scared something out of the kid. But he woke up the wrong passenger."

"Ha, ha—he did!" "You don't think he'll come to Greyfriars?" said Nugent. Wharton shook his head.

"I don't think so. What can he tell the Head about me?"

There's nothing against me—nothing that I should mind the Head knowing."

"That's true. But I suppose he's got a bee in his bonnet. He seemed to think you were in his power, somehow. I wonder—"

"What?" asked Harry, as Nugent paused. "I wonder if he's mistaken you for somebody else. He says he found you poaching at midnight, and it was dark. He may have found some Greyfriars chap. There are some chaps who wouldn't be above doing that."

"But the name?" said Harry. "There's no other chap at Greyfriars named Wharton."

"No; that settles it, unless—unless the chap may have given him a false name," said Nugent suddenly, as the thought came into his head.

"Some Greyfriars chap—poaching at night—using my name, too!" Harry exclaimed.

"Well, that would explain the thing, wouldn't it?" "Yes, it would," said Wharton. "If that's the explanation, I'd like to know what chap has been taking liberties with my name, that's all. I'd take care that he didn't do it a second time."

And the juniors, thinking over the matter as they walked back to Greyfriars, came to the conclusion that Frank Nugent's surmise was probably correct. And if it was—if Mr. Gadd was really convinced that he could get Wharton "sacked" from the school by telling what he knew, then it was extremely probable that he would, after all, come to the school to see the Head. And, in that case, there was trouble in store for some Greyfriars fellow—trouble that might be very serious indeed.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.
Mr. Gadd Calls Upon the Head!

"GOOD heavens!" The Bounder looked round quickly. Skinner was looking out of the hall window in the School House into the Close. The sun was setting, and fellows were coming in from the playing-fields; the dusk was deepening over the old school.

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OUT ON FRIDAY!  **ORDER TO-DAY!**

Skinner had not been out that day. After being released from the Form-room, he had met Vernon-Smith, who had come in from his excursion. The Bounder had proposed a cycle run; for the summer evenings were drawing out now, and it was light quite late in the evening.

Skinner had declined. For some reason best known to himself, he did not want to go outside the school gates. He hung about the house aimlessly, not even going into the Close, as if he clung to the protection of the house for some unknown cause, and the Bounder was very curious. He had asked Skinner questions, and had received the gruffest of replies.

As a rule, Skinner was almost toadying to the Bounder, whose friendship was worth a great deal to him. But just now he did not seem to care a straw whether he offended Vernon-Smith or not. It was easy for Vernon-Smith to see that Skinner had some trouble on his mind, and he wondered what it was.

There were few secrets between the two black sheep of the Remove; but in this case Skinner was proving very secretive indeed.

"Good heavens!" panted Skinner.

Vernon-Smith joined him at the window and looked out, curious to see what it was that had caused the startled exclamation.

A man was crossing the Close towards the School House—a man in rough attire, with a muddy velveteen jacket, and gaiters thick with mud.

He looked as if he had been rolled in a particularly muddy ditch, and had partially cleaned himself afterwards; but only partially.

Skinner's eyes, through the window, were fixed upon the man, and his face had gone white. He did not seem to notice the Bounder at his side. Vernon-Smith scanned the stranger, but did not recognise him. The man was quite a stranger to him. But it was pretty clear that he was not a stranger to Skinner.

"Who is it, Skinny?" the Bounder asked, in amazement.

Skinner started.

"Eh—what did you say? Who's who?"

"Who's that man?" asked the Bounder, with a nod towards the Close.

"I—I don't know."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Don't be an ass," he said. "You know him, and the sight of him has scared you out of your wits."

"It's a lie! I—I—" stammered Skinner huskily.

"It's not a lie, and you know it!" said the Bounder calmly.

"I say, where are you going, Skinner? Where are you off to?"

"I—I'm going to my study. I've got my prep. to do."

"You don't want to see your acquaintance?"

"My—my acquaintance! I tell you I don't know him."

"Rot!"

"Look here, Smithy," muttered Skinner. "Don't talk so loud, you ass; the fellows may hear you! I—I say, you—you might stand by me now. Be a pal. I—I'm going to the study, and—and you might try to see what that man wants, and—and tell me."

"Then you do know him?"

"Yes, I—I've seen him. I'll explain afterwards, if you like," said Skinner wretchedly. "Do as I ask you, like a pal."

"That's why you haven't been out of doors the last day or two. You were afraid of his seeing you," said the Bounder comprehending.

"Don't speak so loud, you idiot!"

The Bounder laughed.

"Cut off to the study," he said. "If you've got to lie low, I'll stand by you, only you should have told me about it before. Cut off!"

Skinner was already on the stairs. The Bounder was left in a state of wonder. He observed the man in the velveteen jacket curiously as he came up the steps of the schoolhouse. A good many more fellows looked at the new-comer with curiosity, too. This disreputable-looking individual was a queer kind of visitor to come to Greyfriars. Trotter, the page, eyed him with great misapprobation as he asked his business.

"I want to see the headmaster!" said the man gruffly.

"Dr. Locke don't see beggars," said Trotter loftily.

"My name's Jem Gadd! Go and tell the headmaster I want to see him."

Trotter hesitated. He did not feel inclined to show the disreputable stranger in, by any means; but Gadd was looking savage, and was evidently not a man to be trifled with. Wingate of the Sixth came down the passage just then, and Trotter turned to him.

"Who on earth's that?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, looking at Gadd.

"He says he wants to see Dr. Locke, sir," said Trotter.

"Nonsense!" said Wingate sharply. "Tramps aren't admitted to see Dr. Locke. Gosling ought to have stopped him at the gates. What do you want, my man?"

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"I want to see the headmaster of this 'ere school!" growled Gadd. "I've got some very important information for him."

"Do you mean you've got a message?" asked Wingate.

"Yes!"

"Take his name in, Trotter. You can wait here, my man!"

Trotter took in the name, and came back in a few minutes to say that Dr. Locke would see the caller. Gadd, with a scowl at the surprised fellows in the hall, followed the page to Dr. Locke's study.

There was a buzz among the fellows when the Head's door closed behind that very curious visitor.

"Jolly queer kind of visitor for the Head!" said Bulstrode.

"Begad! I don't like his looks!" remarked Lord Maul- everer. "He may be goin' to rob the Head! Ought to be somebody near the study in case help's wanted, begad!"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Coker of the Fifth. "Let's keep round here, in case we're wanted. That fellow looks an awfully tough specimen."

The Head's bell rang, and Trotter went. He came back and disappeared into Mr. Quelch's study. Mr. Quelch came out of his study, with a surprised look, and went to the Head's room. The curiosity of the fellows in the hall redoubled. It was evident that there was something uncommon "on." Trotter was surrounded by eager questioners. But he could only say that the Head had sent him to ask Mr. Quelch to come.

A few minutes later, Mr. Quelch came out of the Head's study. His face was very grave, and very severe. He did not appear to notice the curious looks of the crowd of fellows in the hall, but went directly to the stairs, and ascended to the Remove passage. A daring spirit who followed as far as the landing whispered over the banisters that Quelch had gone to Study No. 1.

"Something to do with Wharton and his set, then," said Vernon-Smith. "I wonder what trouble they have been getting into now. Sure it was No. 1, Newland? Not Skin—ahem—I mean, not my study?"

"No; he's gone into No. 1!" said Newland, coming downstairs again.

"What on earth does it all mean?" said Bolsover major.

"Goodness knows!"

And the fellows, in a state of curiosity that was growing quite painful, waited for further revelations. Meanwhile, Mr. Quelch, as Newland reported, had gone into Study No. 1, where he found the Famous Five at tea.

Harry Wharton & Co. had been in some time, since their visit to the spinney to deal out rough justice to Jem Gadd. They were having tea together in Study No. 1 now. On their return to Greyfriars, Wharton had found the long-expected remittance from his uncle waiting for him, and he had promptly cashed it in the tuckshop, and laid in a supply of "tuck" that was, to all appearance, more suitable for fifty juniors than for five. But the Famous Five were hungry after their walk, and they were doing the provisions full justice.

The feed in Study No. 1 was going on very cheerfully when Mr. Quelch came in.

Harry Wharton & Co. rose to their feet at once. They could see by the Remove-master's expression that something was the matter. It could hardly be Wharton's escapade of the afternoon; he had been punished for that, and the matter was over and done with. But they waited rather uneasily for Mr. Quelch to speak.

It was upon Harry Wharton that the Form-master's stern glance fixed.

"You are wanted, Wharton!" said the Form-master.

"Kindly follow me to the Head!"

"Yes, sir. Is anything the matter?"

"Most certainly, yes!"

"Do you mean about my leaving the Form-room to-day, sir? I thought that was done with," said Harry.

"This is nothing to do with your leaving the Form-room while under detention. It is a far more serious matter than that! Follow me!"

"Very well, sir!"

And with his head very erect, the captain of the Remove followed the Form-master out of the study, and down the stairs. A murmur from the crowd below greeted his appearance.

"It's Wharton!"

Wharton followed Mr. Quelch into the Head's study. His chums had come downstairs after him, worried and dismayed.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Nugent. "Has anything happened?"

"The Head's got a jolly queer visitor," said Coker of the Fifth.

The Co. exchanged glances. They thought they understood now.

"Chap named Gadd?" asked Bob Cherry eagerly.

"Yes; that's the name he gave," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, it's all right, then!"

And the chums felt relieved. Gadd had come, as he had threatened—but Harry Wharton had nothing to fear from him—at all events, so they believed.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

DR. LOCKE was looking very troubled, and very stern, when Wharton followed the Form-master into the study.

Jem Gadd was there! He stood with his cap in his grimy hands, and an expression of malicious triumph upon his surly face.

Wharton did not even glance at him. Gadd's presence, of course, warned him of what was to come. But he had nothing to fear—he was innocent. He stood before the Head, and he met the doctor's stern glance without quailing.

"I have sent for you, Wharton," said Dr. Locke, in a deep voice, "because this man has made an accusation against you—a most astounding accusation, which, if true, will make it necessary for you to leave the school. I hope it is not true. I can hardly believe that it can possibly be true. But the matter must be gone into thoroughly. This man's name is Gadd. Do you know the name?"

"I heard it this afternoon for the first time, sir," said Harry.

"You have met this man before?"

"To-day, sir!"

"Not before to-day?"

"No, sir!"

"It's a lie!" blurted out Gadd savagely. "It's a blamed lie!"

Wharton flushed.

"Am I to let that scoundrel insult me, sir?" he said, his voice trembling with anger.

The Head made a soothing gesture.

"Calm yourself, Wharton. I understand your feelings. But it is my duty to investigate this matter. Where were you on Monday night—at midnight?"

"In bed, sir, of course."

"You did not leave the school?"

"Certainly not!"

"I should accept your word, Wharton, without hesitation, against the word of this man. But Mr. Quelch has told me something that puts another light on the matter. It appears that on Monday night, Mr. Quelch, being awake at the time, heard someone throw a stone up to a window, and he thought that it was the window of the Remove dormitory. He came to the dormitory to see whether any boy had been out of bounds, and he found one boy out of bed—and that boy was you."

"That is so, sir!"

"You stated that you had got out of bed to close a window," said the Head. "The inference is that you closed it after someone had entered. You refused to give Mr. Quelch any information, and you were punished in consequence."

"I haven't complained about that, sir. It came very hard on me, as we were playing a special match to-day; but—"

"But it remains to be seen whether you were closing the window after someone else, or after yourself, Wharton," said the Head.

"I can only say that I told Mr. Quelch the truth, sir."

The Head turned to Gadd.

"Repeat what you have told me, my man!" he said.

Gadd gave the junior a vicious look.

"I was in the wood—Sir Hilton Popper's wood—that night," he said. "That was where I found my young gentleman. He had been stealing pheasants—he had his bag crammed with them. I knew he was a schoolboy at once, of course, and I collared him. I made him give up the birds. I made him tell me his name and where he came from. His name was Harry Wharton, and he came from Greyfriars School. I knew he belonged to this school by his cap—I've seen Greyfriars caps about often enough. That's all!"

"You are sure it is the same boy?"

"Quite sure, sir. He give me his name, and I know him, too!"

"It must have been very dark in the wood at midnight," said Mr. Quelch.

"I know him agin, sir."

"What have you to say, Wharton?" asked the Head.

"Under the circumstances, I should not believe a word of

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this man's story. He can have been in the wood for no honest purpose—and if he took the pheasants, he is a thief. He cannot have a good motive for coming here to denounce you, I am aware of that—"

Gadd's grimy face flushed.

"Never mind what I was doin' in the wood," he said. "That's neither 'ere nor there. Never mind what I did with the pheasants. I'm warnin' you that this kid goes out poaching and stealin' birds of a night."

"That will do. Now, Wharton, I am ready to hear you!" Wharton did not falter.

Like a flash understanding had come to him. It was upon Monday night that Skinner had been absent from the dormitory, and he had come back in a hurry, and had hung about the school without going out of gates since. It was all plain enough to Wharton. Skinner had been caught poaching in the wood by this ruffian, and Gadd, with a view to blackmail, had demanded his name. Skinner had had to answer, and he had probably given the first name that came into his head—not his own.

It was clear enough. But Wharton could not betray Skinner. He had to save himself without betraying the black sheep of the Remove—if he could.

"I say that it is not true, sir," he said steadily. "I was not out of bounds on Monday night. I never knew of this man's existence till he wrote to me, signing his letter J. G. He wanted me to meet him. I burnt the letter. He wrote again, and I destroyed the letter again. To-day he sent me a telegram. I was getting fed-up, and I guessed that the man was a rascal, and I determined to go and see him."

"You saw him to-day?"

"Yes, sir. He demanded money, threatening to come and tell you this story if I did not pay him. He even suggested that I might steal money to give him, or help him enter the school to steal it himself."

"Bless my soul!"

"It's a lie!" growled Jem Gadd.

But his expression was quite enough to show that it was true.

"Then I knew what he wanted, sir—he was a rotten black-mailer. I had my friends in the wood, out of sight, and I called them up, and we gave the scoundrel a ducking in a ditch. It was taking the law into our own hands, but we thought he ought to be punished."

"I certainly do not blame you for ducking him, Wharton. He deserved more than that," said the Head, with a glance of scorn at the poacher. "His motive is clear enough—he hoped to obtain money from you as the price of his silence. As you refused to be blackmailed he has come here to betray you."

"That is so, sir. Only he has nothing to betray; his yarn is lies from beginning to end. He has most likely mistaken me for somebody else."

"I ain't mistaken!" said Jem Gadd viciously. "I'd know you anywhere, my fine young gentleman! There ain't any mistake in the matter!"

"You lie!" said Wharton directly. "When I met you to-day you didn't know me by sight. You asked me if I was Wharton. You knew the name, but not me. You said that it was very dark at the time you'd seen me; you admitted you didn't know me by sight."

"I tell yer—"

"You suggest, then, Wharton, that this man has mistaken you for someone else," said the Head slowly.

"I suppose so, sir."

"In that case, the boy he caught in the wood must have given your name."

Wharton was silent.

"There is no other explanation," said the Head quietly.

"Well, I suppose that's so, sir."

"It comes to this, then, that a Greyfriars boy was actually doing as this man states—poaching and stealing pheasants late at night—and when this man seized him he gave your name instead of his own."

"I suppose so."

There was a pause. There was a grin of disbelief on Jem Gadd's face.

"If that is the case, Wharton, you are, of course, exonerated," said the Head slowly. "I hope it is the case. But I cannot be satisfied unless the real culprit is discovered. You were out of bed when Mr. Quelch visited the dormitory—"

"I was in my pyjamas, sir—I couldn't have just come in—"

"You had time to undress before I reached the dormitory," said Mr. Quelch coldly.

"If it was not you who had come in, Wharton, it must have been some other member of the Lower Fourth," said the Head, "and the boy of your Form who was out of bounds that night was undoubtedly the boy whom this man found in the wood."

"I suppose that's the case, sir."
"Very well. As you were aware, at all events, you know who it was that entered the dormitory by the window at that late hour?"

Wharton was silent.

"Answer me!" said the Head, raising his voice a little.

"Well, yes, sir."

"Who was it?"

No answer. The Head waited a few moments, and then went on, gently enough:

"You must tell me the name, Wharton, so that I can question the boy. This is a serious matter. I am aware of your natural prejudice against telling tales, and I approve of it, as a rule. But this case is too serious for considerations of that kind to be allowed to enter. This man—a thoroughly bad man, acting with very bad motives—has given me information that I cannot decline to take notice of. I must know which boy in the Lower Fourth was absent from the dormitory on Monday night. You know who it was. You must tell me."

Silence.

"I am waiting for your answer, Wharton."

"I can't answer, sir," said Harry desperately. "You are going to expel the fellow if he's found out, and I can't tell you."

"You must tell me! Give me his name, and I shall decide between you. But if you cannot answer me, Wharton, I must come to the conclusion that you cannot give me a name—that you were the person who broke bounds on Monday night, and whom this man found in the wood stealing pheasants."

"And I'll swear he is!" said Jem Gadd.

"You cad!" said Wharton, in a blaze of anger. "You'd swear anything since I ducked you for trying to blackmail me!"

"I should not believe a word that this man says," said the Head. "He is actuated by the worst of motives in coming here. But it is quite clear that some boy in the Remove has acted as he has stated—you or another. The boy, whoever he is, gave your name instead of his own—you owe him nothing. You must answer me."

"I can't, sir! You—you don't understand," said Harry miserably. "My life wouldn't be worth living in the school afterwards, if I gave him away. I might as well be sacked myself as be sent to Coventry for sneaking! And, apart from that, I can't! I can't give a chap away to be expelled!"

The words came out in a desperate burst. Then Wharton stood silent, with downcast eyes, waiting for the thunder.

But the thunder did not come. The Head was very quiet and calm.

"I shall give you time to reflect on the matter, Wharton, before I decide," he said quietly. "As for Gadd, if that is your name, you may go!"

Gadd gave Harry Wharton a vicious leer, and shambled out of the study.

"You may go, Wharton! I shall give you a few hours to reflect. This evening I expect you to come to me and tell me the truth—the whole truth! I rely upon you. If you do not, the consequences will be very serious—for you! You may go!"

And Wharton went.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way.

HARRY WHARTON'S face was white as he left the Head's study.

His chums gathered round him anxiously.

"The man's gone!" said Nugent. "What did he tell the Head?"

"What he said he would tell him," said Harry bitterly.

"But the Head doesn't believe him," said Nugent quickly. Wharton nodded.

"He believes him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"He knows that somebody was out of the Remove dorm. that night. You remember Quelchy heard the stones on the window, and came to the dorm. He found me out of bed, and he was ratty because of it. You remember?"

"And now they believe that it was you who were out of bounds?"

"Unless I can prove it was somebody else," said Wharton.

"But you can prove that easily enough!" said Nugent warmly.

"I know I can—if I could give Skinner away! But I can't do that."

"Skinner will have to own up."

Wharton's lips curled.

"Catch him doing that. He was expelled once for being a blackguard, and the Head let him come back. He would be kicked out as safe as houses if this came out. Skinner won't say a word! He's more likely to lie himself out of it, even if I gave him away. And I can't give him away!"

"But—but how's it going to end?" said Johnny Bull.

"I've got this evening to think over it."

"And then?"

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NEXT MONDAY: "THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!"

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

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"I don't know."

"But I know!" said Johnny Bull wrathfully. "You're not going to get it in the neck for Skinner's sake! The cad gave your name—you don't owe him anything! We all know it was Skinner. Smithy let him in; and we all know he was in bed with all his clothes on when Quelchy came to the dorm. He can't have the cheek to keep quiet and let you take the punishment. The Form won't let him!"

"I fancy he will!"

"Well, I fancy he won't; I'll go to the Head myself——"

Wharton laid a hand on his excited chum's arm.

"You can't do that, Johnny. Sneaking's barred, especially among us!"

"Yes; but——"

"But what's going to be done?" demanded Bob wrathfully.

"Goodness knows!"

All the Remove soon knew what had come about. The mystery of Skinner's expedition on Monday night was a mystery no longer. The black sheep of the Remove had been out poaching. He had been caught by Gadd, and given Wharton's name. And Gadd, believing that Wharton was the rascal he had caught in the wood, had tried to blackmail the captain of the Remove, with results that might have been expected. And in his disappointment and rage he had denounced Wharton to the Head, and Wharton could only save himself by, in his turn, denouncing Skinner.

That was how the matter stood.

Skinner would have to own up! That was what all the Removites said. But they knew Skinner too well to suppose that he would do so, if he could help it.

"But he can't help it!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Why, we'd scalp him and slaughter him if he let Wharton get it in the neck over this! He can't be such a funk!"

"It means the sack!" said Vernon-Smith.

"It will mean worse than the sack for him if he lets Wharton get booted out in his place," said Russell. "I've a good mind to tell the Head myself—I jolly well will, if Skinner doesn't own up!"

"We'll see Skinner about it," said Bulstrode. "We'll all go to his study—the whole giddy Form—and put it to him! If he doesn't do the right thing, we'll slaughter him! We'll make an example of him! He shouldn't do these rotten things, if he doesn't want to stand the racket when they come out! Giving Wharton's name, too—did you ever hear of such a dirty trick. He might have given mine—or yours."

"Begad! Call up all the fellows, and we'll all go and see Skinner," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Hear, hear!"

The Bouncer whistled softly, and hurried away to his study. Skinner was there!

The wretched junior was waiting, with sickening anxiety, to know the result of Jem Gadd's visit to the Head.

He started, and uttered a cry, as Vernon-Smith came in. The Bouncer eyed him grimly, and closed the door before he spoke.

"You've got yourself into a ripping pickle this time, and no mistake," he said. "The whole Remove knows the story now—you needn't tell me anything! That man Gadd found you out on the Monday night, and you gave Wharton's name to him."

Skinner groaned.

"I couldn't give my own, could I? And—and Wharton's the kind of chap to deal with that blackguard. I knew he wanted to blackmail me—and I thought Wharton would be able to handle him better than I could. I—I——"

"Wharton has handled him," grinned the Bouncer. "It seems that Gadd has been writing him threatening letters, and trying to screw money out of him—and Wharton and his friends ducked him."

"Serve the beast right!" said Skinner.

"Now he's given Wharton away to the Head——"

"It—it can't hurt Wharton—he wasn't out of the dorm—he can prove——"

"He can't! Quelchy found him out of bed that night—you remember he got up to shut the window after you!"

Skinner gasped.

"You—you mean to say——"

"It's planted on Wharton, that's all!"

"Then he's given me away?" shrieked Skinner.

"No!"

"You—you mean to say he's standing it, and taking it on his own shoulders," said Skinner blankly.

"He won't sneak!"

Skinner drew a deep, deep breath of relief.

"Oh, good! Good! Then it's all right?"

"All right, is it?" queried the Bouncer.

(Concluded on page 26.)

YOU CAN START TO-DAY!

MYSTERIA



—By **SIDNEY DREW.**—

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction, there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk, which he has picked up in an East End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins, and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island, inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, which slips out of its secret cave on its mysterious new quest. After travelling under water for some weeks, Ferrers Lord proclaims his intention of exploring the sea-bottom in the vicinity of the Lord of the Deep. He takes a party of his crew with him, and they discover an old treasure-ship. When they arrive back at their ship, Ching-Lung and Thurston are discussing the find, when there comes a gentle knock at the door.

(Now go on with the story.)

Gan and the Congers.—The Chef Does Not Like His Tobacco.—The Treasure.

"Enter, friend Barry from Ballybunion," said his Highness. "What dost thou need?"

"Plaze you honour," said Barry, one eye fixed on the whisky decanter, "cud yez tell me the toime?"

"What's happened to your watch?"

Barry sighed as he produced an enormous silver chronometer, and shook it. It rattled like a bladder filled with peas.

"Bedad, he's sthruck, sor!" he said. "That howlin' savage of an Iskimo butted into it wid his cast-iron head and nearly burst iviry rib Oi've got, not to mention the ould watch. The cook has swore to put rat-pizen in the spalpeen's gruel."

His eye was still fixed on the whisky.

"Help yourself, Barry," said Thurston. "I'm beginning to think myself Gan is getting a bit out of hand. It's your bad example altogether, Ching. He used to be a nice, in-offensive little chap till he came under your evil influence."

"Wance he was koin'd and gintle,
As any swate gazelle,
But now he'll swat yez wid a brick
And break your ribs as well.
Oh, phwat a change from bliss to woe,
Has come upon the Eskimo!"

murmured Barry.

Ching-Lung wiped away a tear of sorrow with the bow of yellow silk that decorated his pigtail. Gan-Waga himself, unmistakable from his shortness and width, came close to the glass and peered in. He shook a hatchet menacingly at O'Rooney.

"Luk at his savageness," said Barry. "Did yez see ut? Oi belave, bedad, he'd cut me up into lucifer matches av he had the chance."

"It's your own fault," grinned Ching-Lung. "You don't treat the Blubberbiter properly. You should touch your cap to him and call him 'sir.'"

"Phwat!" yelled Barry. "Call that walrus-chain', whale-chewin' candle-guzzler 'sor'? Troth, and me an O'Rooney of Ballybunion Castle, Oireland! Ghost of McClinty, who wint to the bottom of the say, and niver came back! Oi faal ill. Wad yez koin'dly repate it, sor? Ut's the infloorinza

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Oi'm afther catchin'. Will yez wroite ut down? Call that 'sor'? Oi'd sooner go down on my marrerbones to me grandmother's pig and lit the intelligent animal browse off my whiskers. Call ut 'sor'? No, no! Wather is wet, and foire is hot, whin Oi call ut 'sor,' may Oi be shot. Niver, niver, niver! Oi don't moind hittin' ut wid a handspoke first and callin' ut 'sor' aftherwards. Good health, and good-noight!"

Barry strode out with the air of a melodrama hero, whose father the noble earl has sworn to cut him off with three-pence and a box of kippers if he marries the tripe-dresser's beautiful daughter, Margarina Boffins. And Rupert lay back in his chair and laughed.

"You're like a lot of kids at school, Ching. I wonder what a stranger would think if he were suddenly dumped down amongst you? He'd fancy himself in an asylum for incurables. If I didn't know what splendid boys they are, I'd think the same!"

"M'yes!" replied Ching-Lung thoughtfully. "I guess so. Oh, Ru! Look at that! Well! May—I—never—die—of—measles!"

Lucky Gan-Waga could please himself whether he worked or played. His squat figure suddenly rose above the deck. He seemed to be possessed of wings, for two objects were lashing and writhing above his extended arms. He vanished high above the vessel. With a couple of hooks, baited with whiting, Gan had managed to tempt two of the largest congers in the hold of the yacht. They were powerful brutes, and it was risky sport.

"That's a fool's trick, Ching," said Thurston uneasily.

"Oh, trust Gan!" said the prince. "Here he comes!"

The Eskimo bobbed this way and that, and reeled and staggered like a human float. To an ordinary diver, relying on an air-tube for his life, such folly would have been fatal, for one blow from those powerful tails would have severed the pipe. But, in spite of the danger involved, the sight of the dancing diver was so utterly grotesque and ridiculous that Thurston and Ching-Lung roared with merriment. Maddock and Joe paused in their work, and turned their lamps on the dancer, giving a limelight effect. Then Hal Honour's light began to wink and blink as he flashed a message in the Morse code. It was brief, like all the engineer's messages, whether written, spoken, or flashed:

"Take him in."

Tom Prout and Maddock grasped the Eskimo, and their

weight settled the fight. They conducted Gan to the diving-room. Barry O'Rooney answered the signal, and opened the inner door. Gan waddled out as quickly as the weight of the diving-suit permitted, and kicked the door viciously to close it.

"Oh, ut's yez, is ut?" growled Barry. "How d'yez do, yez ould whilk? And Oi suppose Oi have to ondress yez. Bedad, Oi'd as soon be valet to a codfish! Stick your ugly head down afore Oi knock ut off. Oi say, cook, come and give me a hand to peel this miserable baste of a lard-tub! Howld sthills. Ow! Murther and muffins! Ow! Ye spoiteful haythin! My best corn is busted flat!"

A leathen-soled diving-boot, when it comes in contact with a corn, can make itself very disagreeable. Barry gave Herr Schwartz and Gan-Waga a splendid idea of how a cake-walk can be danced on one leg. He stopped suddenly, and began hastily to unscrew the front nozzle of Gan's helmet as Ferrers Lord walked past. Instead of going on, the millionaire, his eyes on the ground and his hands clasped behind him, stood still, wrapped in deep thought. Gan-Waga was undressed in record time.

"Hallo, ole billygoat whiskers!" he grinned. "Yo' want a new faces. Dar's tuppence to buy one. Ho, ho, hoo!"

He pressed a small but lively young crab into Barry's hand and hopped away. Barry smothered a yell, and dropped it as if it had been red hot.

"Oi'll ate him!" he hissed. "Oi'll ate him widout salt!"

Barry would probably have endeavoured to carry out this cannibalistic feat on the spot, except for the presence of the millionaire. The heavy steel door stifled all the noise made by the congers Gan had left in the diving-room. The millionaire glanced at his watch.

"Go to the conning-tower, O'Rooney," he said, "and bring me the chart marked 'B 17.' I shall be in my room."

The Irishman saluted and hurried off, leaving Herr Schwartz alone. A bell rang as Ferrers Lord touched a button. Barry read the order on the indicator, and at once sprang to the wheel. A glance showed him that the divers were clinging to the rail of the deck outside. The vessel rose almost imperceptibly, Barry's eyes glued to the gauge. At eighteen fathoms she backed away gently to the east at a crawl, Prout paying out the insulated wire destined to explode a dynamite cartridge.

Herr Schwartz waited, humming a German ditty. He put a match to a very ragged cigarette of his own manufacture. He always made his own cigarettes, and he made them vilely. The tobacco he kept in a big Dutch jar in the galley. Gan-Waga, being of an inquiring turn of mind, had naturally examined that jar during the owner's absence. It had struck Gan that the jar would be a splendid place for cayenne pepper. Just by way of experiment, he had put an ounce of that condiment in, for Gan was a searcher after knowledge, and he seemed to imagine that pepper would preserve its flavour longer in the jar than in the pepper-box.

Mighty genius, however, often overlooks trifles. Gan forgot to take out the tobacco before putting in the cayenne.

As the chef struck the match the vessel began to move. The heavy door of the diving-room swung open. Schwartz took a long pull at the cigarette. He let out a howl of anguish and jumped a yard from the floor. Then he began to cough and caper and snort. Tears poured from his little eyes, and his face flushed purple.

"Ach! Dunder!" he shrieked. "Phoo! I vas on vire—spa!—under—ouch!—der mouth of me! Pho—pha—sputz! Oooch! Mine Vaterlandt! Vat haf happen, is ud? A-r-r-r! I haf smoke red-hot leaf. Ach, sputz! Ach, dunder! Ja, ja! Vater—vater! Quick! I vas scorched—yes! Ow! Wow! Dunder, I am frizzle! Help! I am ein pig, hod cinder! Wa-ow!"

Herr Schwartz could not see very well, but he could taste. He wondered whether he had drunk a quart of boiling oil, or merely swallowed the galley-stove. A last jump shook the tears out of his limpid eyes, and he started to make a bee-line for the nearest water-tap. His right foot skidded like a cycle-tyre on a greasy road, and he alighted upon his hands, slewed round, waving his legs gracefully in the air, and alighted on his chest.

The shriek he uttered was almost enough to lift the deck of the vessel. Two horrible snakes—they looked like full-sized pythons to the terrified cook—were writhing towards him, with snapping jaws. They were only Gan-Waga's congers, but a gentleman who indulges in cayenne-pepper cigarettes is inclined to suffer from delusions.

Herr Schwartz got nimbly on his rather shaky legs, and, with one last dismal bellow, bolted, reeled into the galley, locked the door, and collapsed in a chair. He got up again, and dipped his head into a bucket of water. He took a pull—a long, glorious, refreshing pull.

But why did he get up again as if stabbed with a pin, and, with hands pressed hard over his waistcoat, dance more wildly than before, roll his eyes in anguish, and squeal abominably? Why—oh, why?

The water was salt.

As Gan-Waga, smiling like a Cheshire cat, talked to the

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congers with a mallet. Ching-Lung watched the operation dreamily.

"Gan," he said, "your papa is puzzled. He cannot understand. Why—why did he laugh so uproariously?"

"Dids he laughs, hunk, Chingy?" asked the Eskimo.

"Of course he laughed. And why did he dance, fat sweet-heart, and laugh so? I am in the dark."

"Sorry yo'm so darkses, Chingy," lisped Gan, striking a match. "Now yo'm lightses, hunk? Tink hims not needed to smokings, Chingy. Huns 'baccy too strongses, Chingy. I puts de crayenne-peppers in him. Ho, ho, hoo!"

"Ah," said Ching-Lung, "you are hot stuff, pet?"

"Not so hots as dat crayenne-peppers, Chingy."

"Think not? I'm not so sure. We'll let that go by, as the soldier said when he got out of the way of a four-point-seven shell. Hallo! Hold up! They're going to let off a cracker!"

The water was roaring as the water gushed from the tanks. Remembering that the swimming-bath would be left high and dry, and that fresh-air treatment would do his dogfish no good, Gan raced to the rescue of his queer pet. Ching-Lung hastened to the conning-tower.

"Go easy, Barry," he said. "You'll strangle your namesake, the kipper."

"And Oi'd loike to do that same to uts owner," growled Barry. "Aisy ut is, sor."

The rounded deck gently broke the surface. The sea was almost as smooth as a mirror, and a low moon threw a pathway of silver across it. At a touch of a lever the glazed door slid down, and the divers cautiously clawed their way aft. Ching-Lung and Ferrers Lord went out.

"Where does she lie, old man?"

"There, to the south-east. You will see little or nothing, for the water is deep, and I am only using a small charge. Go, Hal!"

Hal Honour sent the electric spark flying towards the cartridge. A long, white-topped roller broke over the Lord of the Deep, telling that the charge had been fired successfully. Ching-Lung wound in the wire.

Ten hours later the vessel was again speeding on her journey. Broken specie-chests and heaps of gold and silver coin lay in the store-room. Joe, Barry O'Rooney, and Benjamin Maddock weighed, measured, and counted it like three lusty misers. The silver they ignored altogether. That was flung into buckets to be melted down. At last Maddock knocked, and handed a piece of damp paper to the millionaire.

"Two hundred and forty thousand in gold, and some odd thousands in silver," said Ferrers Lord. "As usual, rumour has lied again."

"M'yes," said Ching-Lung; "but that little lot ought not to make you very tearful, old boy. Hallo, Ben! You look about done up."

"I don't think we ever tackled a 'arder or nastier job, sir," said the bo'sun, who was fagged out. "Mr. Honour worked out the figures. Souse me, if we want to see any more money! Our fingers is as blistered and sore as if we'd been haulin' on a rope for months."

"There will be a holiday to-morrow, Maddock," said Ferrers Lord, "and the galley will not be closed to-night."

The bo'sun smiled, saluted, and went out to spread the welcome news. It was not long before all aboard were informed of the momentous fact, and each of the hard-working crew felt rejoiced at the idea of a day of idleness.

A Holiday — An Interruption at the Festive Board — A Strange Message.

With the prospect of a holiday in store, the crew, in spite of the fascination of an open galley, were sensible enough to turn in early. Ferrers Lord himself took the wheel, and drove the vessel rapidly on her way. Gan-Waga, who had insisted upon singing an Eskimo song, was forcibly carried to the swimming-bath and thrown in. They locked him there, and took away the key. Gan snored the night away gracefully. The one thing that mystified everyone about this extraordinary Eskimo was that he had not grown fins and gills. He was certainly more at home in the water than on land, and the colder it was the more it seemed to agree with him. On land he grew thin, while in the water he waxed as fat as a healthy grampus.

The silvery notes of Maddock's whistle and Prout's hoarse "Tumble up, there—tumble up, you lubbers!" roused the sleepers.

It was a lovely dawn, with a sea as flat as a mirror and as blue as a mountain lake on a June day.

The gallant little vessel had left storm, fog, and cold behind her long ago. Not a ripple broke against her polished sides.

Never had such a delicious scent emanated from the galley.

NEXT
MONDAY:

"THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!"

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

The men sniffed it, and smacked their lips with relish. As a cook the little German was superb.

Science has killed the days of salt junk and spotted dog for ever, and when Joe reported roast legs of mutton, "wi' 'taters browned under 'em," for breakfast, the hungry seamen smiled.

"Faith, ut's loike livin' at a big 'otel," said Barry, as he sat in his hammock, dangling two bare legs over the side. "But, bedad, for livin' in stoile yez ought to live wid my Uncle Dinnis at Ballybunion Castle."

"By hokey, that's the place to taste 'tater-skins cooked in train-oil!" said Prout. "You'd never forget 'em!"

Maddock giggled, and Barry looked hurt.

"Arrah, he knows!" said Barry, who was seldom at a loss. "He's tasted thim often. They're grand, but they make your hair fall out. That's what's shifted this thatch, me bhoys. Joe, collar that pore floy quick! The silly craytur's throyin' to walk on his head. Oh, catch ut! Don't let the dear innocent slip off and break ut's little legs!"

Prout looked round for a mop, and then Barry promised to be ever so good.

Hammocks were stowed, and the tables set up.

In the middle of the proceedings Gan looked in, but he retreated hastily before a volley of breadcrusts.

"Drat that Heskimo!" said the carpenter. "Gimme some o' that gravy, Thomas, and another spud."

Prout, although Maddock still retained the old-fashioned title of boatswain, was really head petty-officer, and as such, he occasionally presided at the festive board.

As Joe passed his plate, a dozen hands shot out to intercept a mysterious object which unexpectedly soared through the air.

Every hand missed, and the object dumped down on the dish, shooting the leg of mutton and potatoes into Prout's lap, and sending a tornado of gravy in every direction.

It was the head of a conger-eel, and on a piece of card pinned to it was written, "A little bit off the top. With Gan-Waga's love to Tommy."

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next week.)

IN ANOTHER'S NAME!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Yes; if Wharton keeps mum, I'm safe. And he's just the kind of obstinate fool to keep mum, on a far-fetched point of honour, too!"

"Pity he can't hear you! He would like to know how grateful you are," said Vernon-Smith. "But it won't do, Skinny. You'll have to own up!"

"Own up!" yelled Skinner. "Are you mad?"

"I'm giving you good advice."

"I should be sacked!"

"I've been thinking about that," said the Bounder. "I'm trying to help you. I don't like Wharton any more than you do. If the matter could be left as it is, I'd be glad. But it can't! I've come to warn you that the whole Form are coming here."

"Wh-what for?"

"They all know the story. They think you ought to own up?"

"I won't—I won't!"

"You must! They'll rag you, and scrag you, and simply slaughter you, if you don't—and it will all come out. Can't you see that? In a few days at most it will be so chattered about that the prefects will get to know all the facts—and then the Head."

Skinner groaned.

"Oh, what a fool I've been! I—I—can't you help me?" he shrieked, glaring at the Bounder. "You're a cunning beast—you always get yourself out of scrapes—you're ten times worse than I am, any day, but you never get into trouble. Tell me what to do!"

"That's what I'm trying to do," said the Bounder coolly. "You've got one chance—soft sawder with the Head! You've heard that Wharton is suspected—you simply break your neck getting to the Head to own up and save your dear schoolmate."

"Wha-a-at!" panted Skinner. "Oh, you're mad!"

"You're mad, if you don't take my tip. The Head will think it's jolly decent of you to own up, to save another chap—and you'll save yourself from the sack. You'll get a flogging—but you can stand that! Take my tip—own up before it's too late, and throw yourself on the Head's mercy."

"But—but—"

"Here they come!" said the Bounder, as there was a roar of voices and footsteps in the passage without. "Make up your mind—quick—and tell 'em you're going to the Head!"

Skinner thought hard. The Bounder's advice was good—it was his only chance. But— The study door opened, and a crowd of juniors poured in, and the passage outside was thick with more of them.

"Here he is!" roared Bulstrode. "Now, Skinner—"

"Skinner, you cad—"

"Skinner, you worm—"

"Keep your wool on," said the Bounder calmly. "Skinner's going straight to the Head now—he's going to do the right thing—ain't you, Skinner?"

Skinner suppressed a groan.

"Yes," he muttered.

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Bulstrode. "No time like the present, though—come on! We'll see you to the Head's study, in case you alter your mind!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 282.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Come on!" roared Johnny Bull.

And the wretched Skinner, in the midst of an excited crowd, was marched away to the Head's study. He went like a criminal going to judgment—as indeed he was.

The juniors left him at the door of the Head's study, and Skinner, with quailing heart, tapped at the door, and the Head's deep voice bade him enter.

Skinner dragged himself in.

"Dear me!" said the Head, surprised and startled by the junior's haggard look. "What ever is the matter, Skinner?"

"If—if—if you please, sir—" stammered Skinner.

"Well?"

"I—I've heard that Wharton is suspected of breaking bounds on Monday night, sir—and—and—and I can't let him suffer for me," said Skinner.

"For you?" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir. I—I wasn't poaching, sir," stammered Skinner, drawing upon his invention to as great an extent as he dared. "That fellow Gadd said he would say I was—so—I—I dared not give him my name. He was there poaching himself, sir. He's an awful villain. I—I was out of bounds, sir."

"You, Skinner!"

"Yes, sir!" Skinner hung his head. "I—I hope you won't expel me, sir!"

"You have come here of your own free will, to admit the truth?" said the Head, his stern glance relaxing a little.

"Yes, sir. I—I couldn't let another fellow suffer for what I've done!" said Skinner.

"That is very right and proper," said the Head. "I am glad to see, Skinner, that you have this much manliness."

"I—I wanted to do the right thing, sir."

"You have done the right thing. You have been guilty of foolish and wicked conduct, for which I should certainly expel you—but for the fact that you have come to me and owned up in a straightforward way!" said the Head. "Under the circumstances, I shall punish you with a flogging, Skinner."

Skinner breathed again. He was not much given to gratitude, as a rule; but at that moment he was deeply grateful to the Bounder for his good advice. The cunning of Vernon-Smith had saved him.

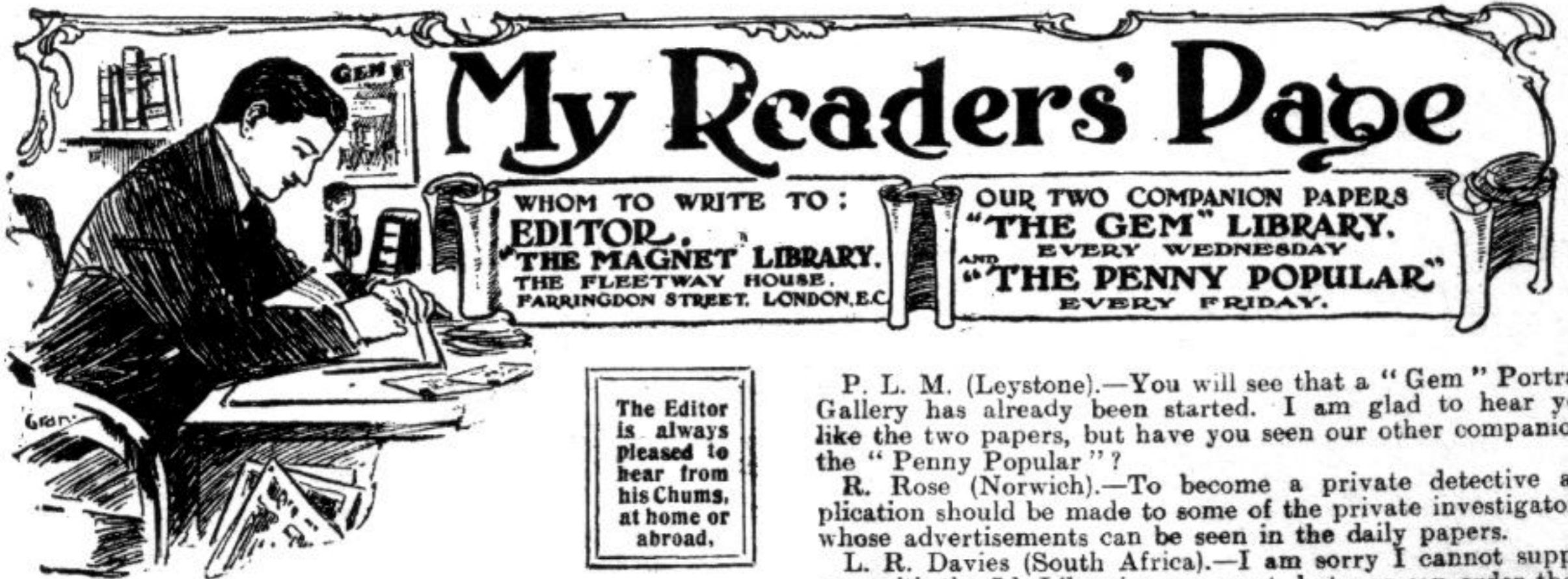
"Thank you, sir!" he faltered.

He did not feel so comfortable after he had had the flogging. It was a severe one, and Skinner left the study feeling that life was not worth living.

Harry Wharton was cleared—and it remained a matter of endless astonishment to the Famous Five that Skinner had owned up. Most of the fellows declared their belief that Skinner had improved—he evidently wasn't such a worm as they had believed. Whatever Skinner's motive, the Famous Five were glad enough that the matter had ended so well. Skinner went up in the estimation of the Remove—a fact that made the Bounder indulge in many a sardonic chuckle.

Skinner's fear of Jem Gadd had gone now—and he was as anxious to see him again as he had before been to avoid him. And he had the great satisfaction of meeting him one afternoon—with a party of Remove fellows with him—and the unfortunate Mr. Gadd was the recipient of such a terrific ragging that he made up his mind to give Greyfriars School a very wide berth in the future. And he did.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled: "THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS," by Frank Richards. Order now to make sure of getting a copy.)



WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 EVERY WEDNESDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor
 is always
 pleased to
 hear from
 his Chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

"THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!" By Frank Richards.

This is the title of our next story, and the yarn is one which will amuse you from beginning to end.

Johnny Bull's fair cousin pays a visit to the old school, and from the very moment she arrives at Friardale things begin to hum. Poor Billy Bunter, who fancies himself as a lady-killer, meets his match in Johnny Bull's cousin, and so do many other members of Greyfriars.

You must not miss

"THE SANDOW GIRL AT GREYFRIARS!"

FORTY-FIVE SHILLINGS OFFERED!

Our companion paper, "The Penny Popular," is offering a number of big money prizes in a simple competition called Poplets. Have you tried your hand yet? Poplets are quite simple to construct, as is proved by the fact that in this week's issue one reader of "The Penny Popular" won twenty shillings for sending up these three words:

Curiosity for "Tenderfoot."

Buy "The Penny Popular" to-day—it is on sale everywhere—and you will soon see how fascinating it is to construct Poplets.

IF YOU FIND A TREASURE.

"Treasure-trove" consists of money or bullion of any description which has been found hidden in all sorts of secret places.

In former times all such property had to be forfeited by right to the Crown; but more recently this law has been considerably modified, with the result that all finders of treasure-trove—on condition that they report their discoveries to the authorities—are to be legally entitled to all such articles as are not actually required for the national institutions, and to the antique value of all articles so required, less twenty per cent.

The rights exercised by the Crown to treasure-trove were the direct cause of many articles of rare antiquity, and of almost priceless value, being lost to the nation. Such articles were formerly consigned to the melting-pot, and sold for their intrinsic value of gold or silver. This was the case with a quantity of jewellery found by a labourer in a ploughed field near Hastings some years ago. The ploughman unearthed with his plough a large number of old rings and chains, which he sold for old brass at 6d. a pound. When taken from the melting-pot the gold realised five hundred and thirty pounds! This by no means represents the value of the articles in an antiquarian sense.

The temptations under the present law, however, for the concealment of treasure-trove may be considered as entirely removed; the finder being reimbursed in full for reporting the find to the proper authorities.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

G. Cousin (Bute).—You should take your dog to a veterinary surgeon.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 282,

P. L. M. (Leystone).—You will see that a "Gem" Portrait Gallery has already been started. I am glad to hear you like the two papers, but have you seen our other companion, the "Penny Popular"?

R. Rose (Norwich).—To become a private detective application should be made to some of the private investigators, whose advertisements can be seen in the daily papers.

L. R. Davies (South Africa).—I am sorry I cannot supply you with the 3d. Libraries you want, but you can order them through any newsagent.

A. Collins (Leicester).—I am afraid I do not know the address you require. If you consulted a local directory, you would probably be able to find it.

G. T. T. (Africa).—You ask me for a place to obtain a book on swimming. Messrs. Gamage & Co., Holborn, London, E.C., stock a good book at about a shilling; but no doubt your own newsagent could get you one from nearer home.

KING CRICKET.

Useful Information on the Great Summer Game.

Care of the Ground.

The fact should be borne in mind that it is not difficult to carefully mow and roll the actual pitch and neglect the surrounding neighbourhood; the whole ground should be treated alike, as if the grass is long the direction of the ball cannot be followed when it is hit by a doughty batsman.

If the ground is composed of clay, it should be watered in the cool of the evening. When watering a pitch, never throw the water on in patches, but always spray it on evenly all over the pitch.

Always clear the pitch of weeds, as a ball bouncing on one of these will jump.

Feats on the Field.

The cricket field at one time and another has been the scene of some very fine feats.

In the year 1895, in a match between the county of Lancashire and Somerset, Mr. A. McLaren made 424 runs in one innings.

In 1901 Mr. C. B. Fry made six successive centuries.

In 1901 in a one-day match, the county of Notts, playing against Yorkshire, only scored 13 runs.

In 1906, Arthur Mold, playing for Lancashire against Surrey, bowled a ball that sent one of the bails 63½ yards.

In 1907, at Lord's cricket ground, Albert Trott (Middlesex), performed the hat trick twice in a match against Somerset.

In 1909, F. Woolley and A. Fielder, playing for Kent against Worcestershire, succeeded in keeping up their wicket—it was the last to fall—until they had added 235 runs to the score.

In 1884, a man named Percival, at Durham, threw a cricket ball 140 yards 2 feet.

The Implements and their Costs.

When buying a bat, see that it is not too heavy for you. You should also see that it is well balanced; a badly-balanced bat is difficult to wield.

Bails and stumps vary in price, but can be obtained from 5s. a set. Guard against knots and flaws in the wood, as should these be present the stump will split and break.

Remember that a little more money spent on good articles at the first is much cheaper, in the long run, than buying implements of inferior quality.

Cricket balls and other necessities for the game vary as to price. A good ball can be purchased for 3s.; a score book for 6d.; a pair of batting gloves for 3s. 6d.; a pair of pads for 5s.

The Editor

THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

FASHION NOTE!



Girls, take a "Merry Widow" hat away with you this summer. You will find the men will always be by your side, if only to get out of the sun.

SHE WOULD SEE IT THEN, PERHAPS!



"Could you spare me a copper, sir? I'm trying to get back to my poor old mother. She ain't seen my face for years."

"I believe you. Why don't you wash it?"



EASIER SAID THAN DONE!



Dr. Flannigan: "Shure you needn't be alarumed about the sweltn' on the back of your neck, Dooley. It's nothing much yet, but just keep an eye on it."

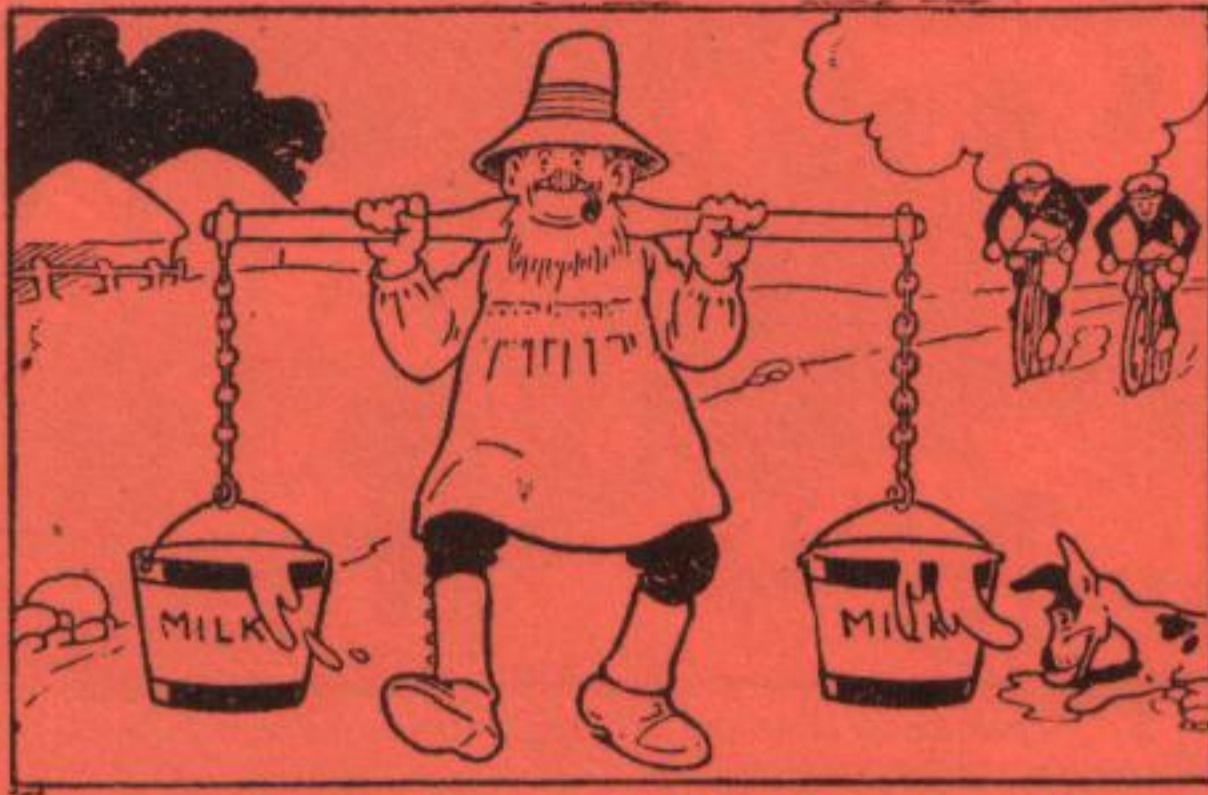
BUSINESS IS BUSINESS!

Indignant Passer-by: "Madam, your batpin has ripped me across the cheek."

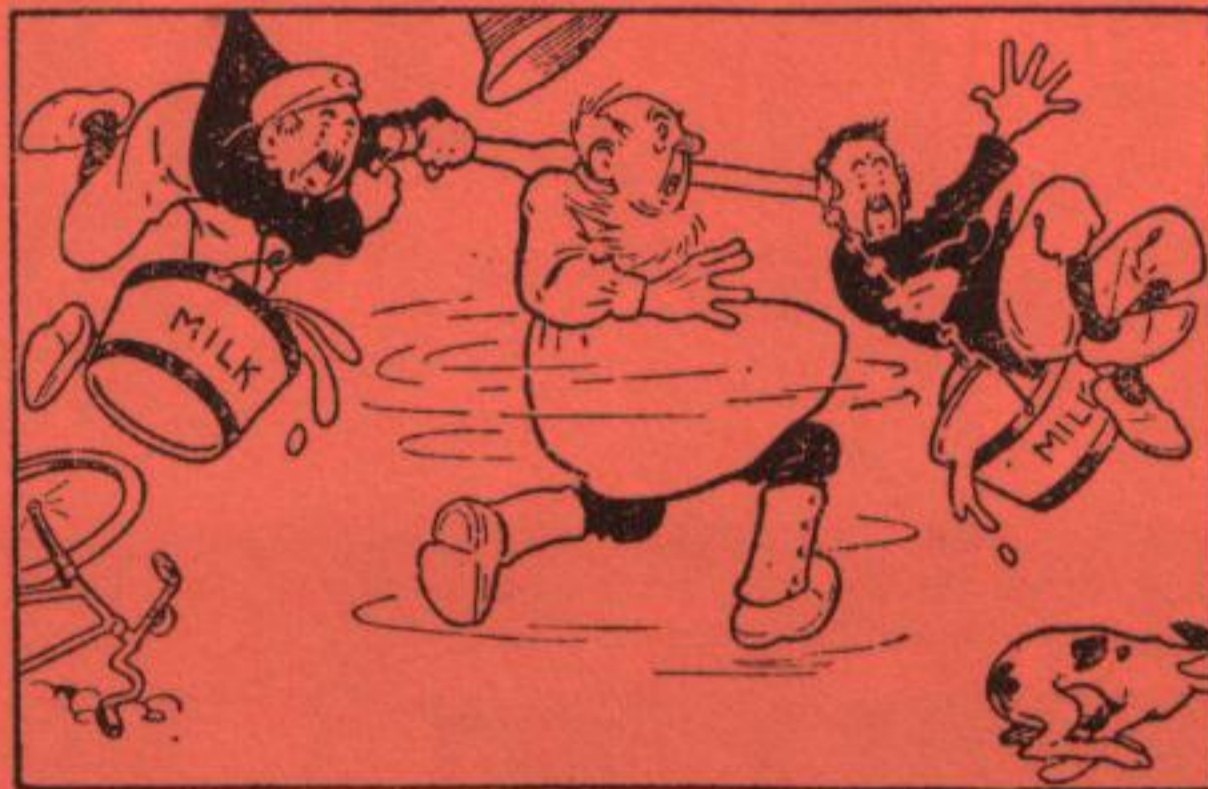
She: "So I see. Permit me to call your attention to Squill Ointment, for which I am the agent. It cures scratches and punctures, prevents blood poisoning, and is sold at the small price of——" But he had fled.



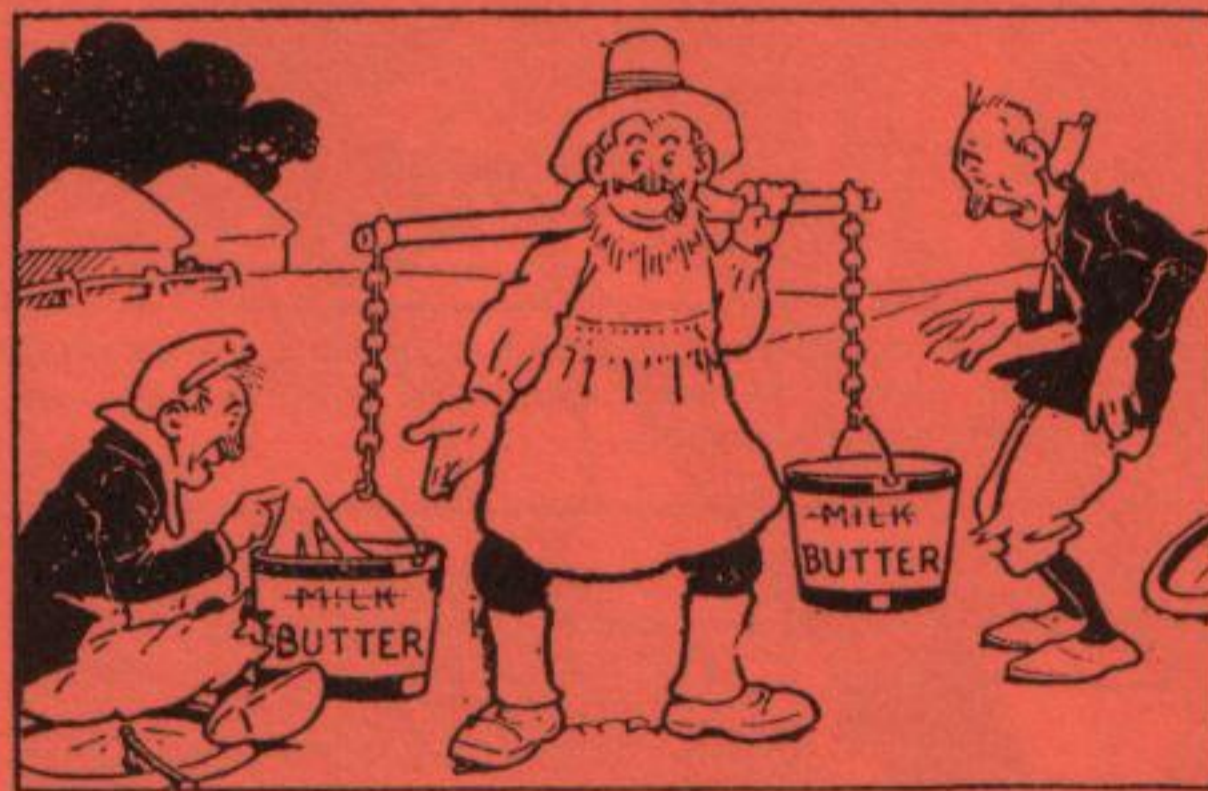
DID HIM A GOOD CHURN.



1. "These 'ere cyclists want all the road," said Farmer Turmut, carrying the pails of milk, as he heard their merry bells ring out in the background.

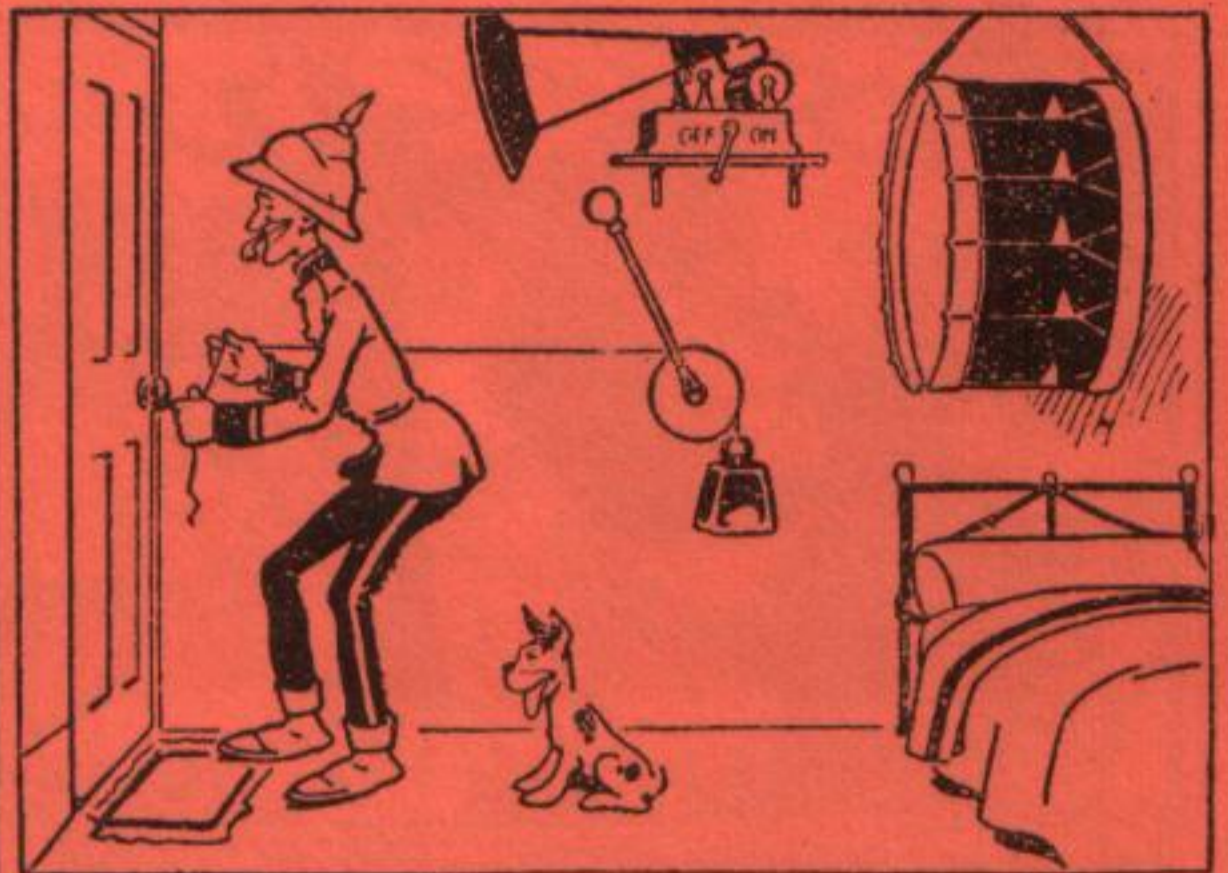


2. And the two speed-merchants, thinking to make the old boy jump, cut by a bit too close, with the above result, while the little poodle warbled, "Waltz me again, Willie."

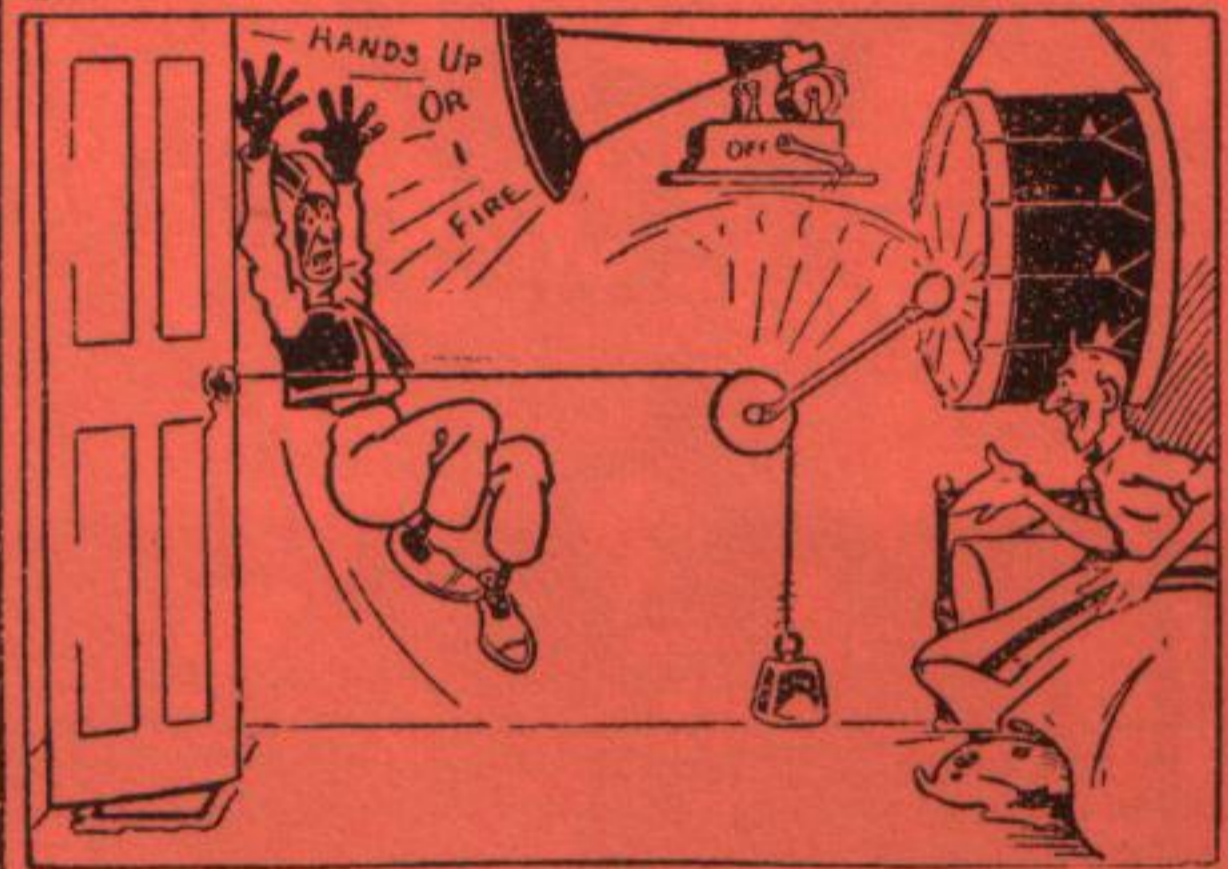


3. But was old Turmut wild? Not much. For, you see, that milk had been churned into butter by the time they had stopped circling the circle. Fact, dear readers.

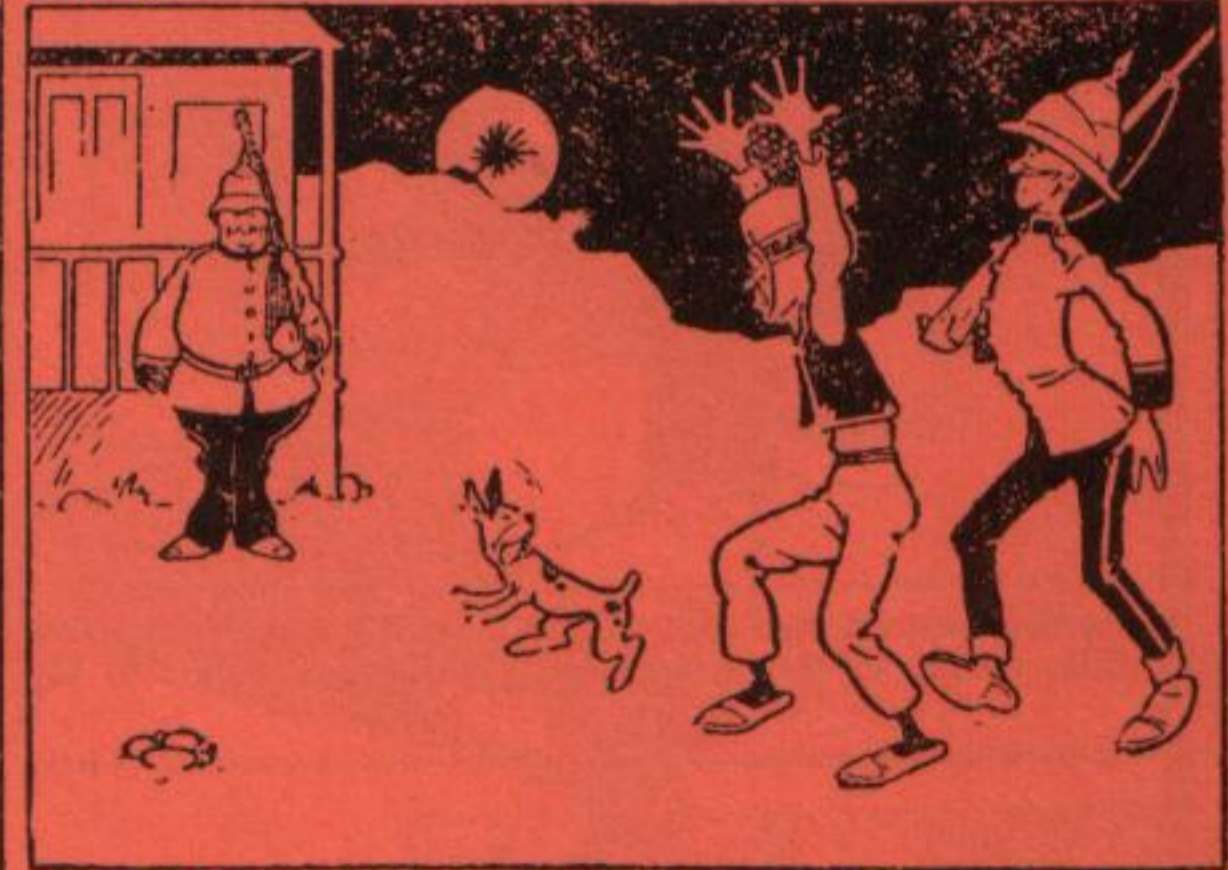
RECEIVED HIM WITH MUSICAL HONOURS.



1. Private Smithy was feeling very aggranoyed at having had his copy of "The Gem" stolen from him in the dead of night, so he prepared a musical reception for the next marauder.



2. And, sure enough, about twelve minutes past thirteen o'clock that afterdark the door was opened, and in crept the pilferer. Then the fun commenced, the phonograph and drum joining in, as per above.



3. "I'll get a medal for this smart capture," chortled Private Smith, as he led his captive off to the thief warehouse, "if the regimental glazier has only got enough putty left to make one."



1. "By Jove! I'm just in time to be too late!"

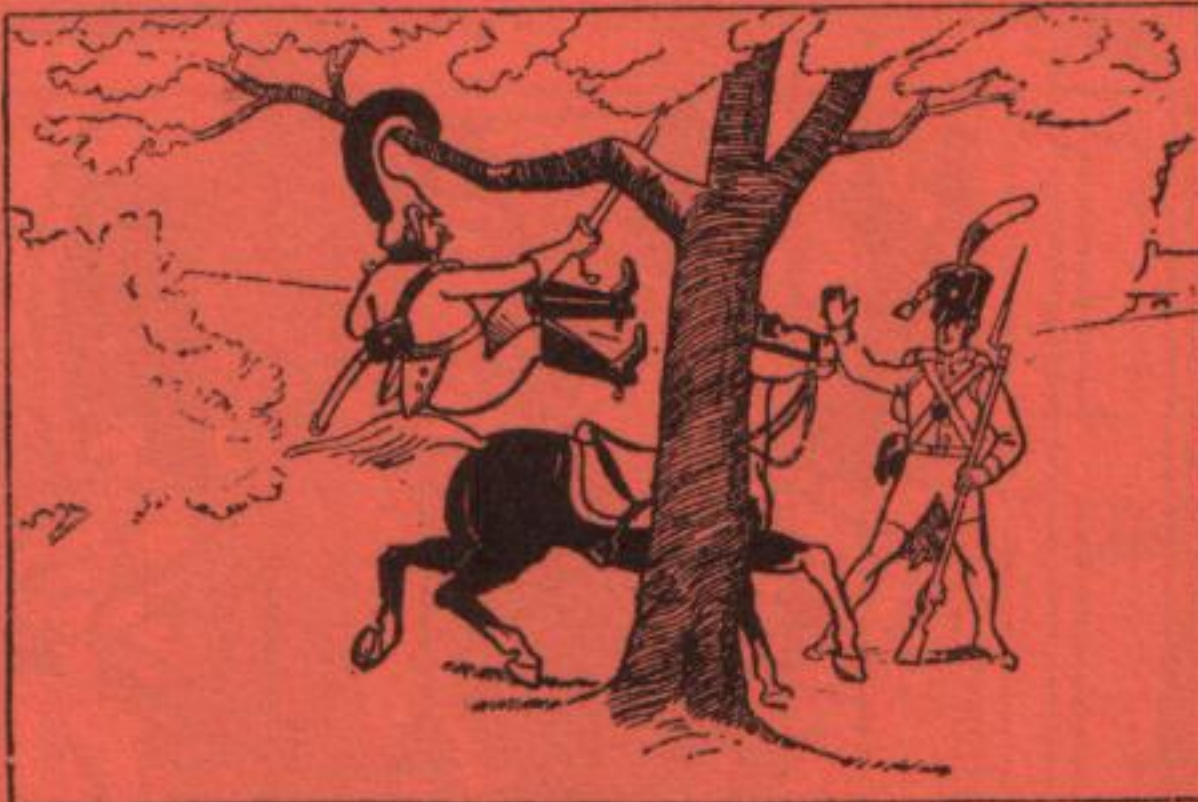
2. "I must take a leap!"

3. But the boat was backing in, and he landed rather abruptly.

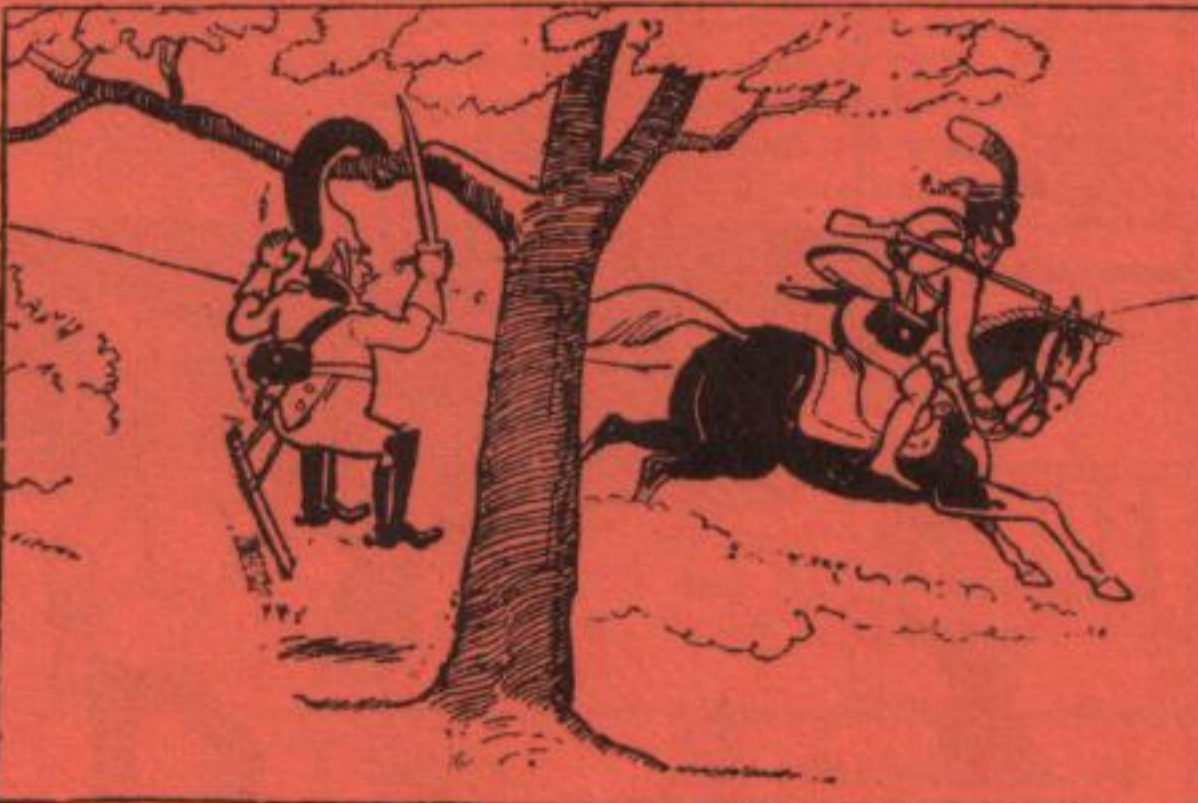
A CASE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION.



1. "Aha! You are my prisoner!" cried the cavalryman to the infantryman. "Halt at once, or it will be the worse for you!"



2 But, unluckily for him, his plume caught in the bough of the tree, and took him clean out of the saddle like this.



3 So the infantryman collared the noble steed and departed, like this, much to the annoyance of the gentleman in the tree.



A TRIFLE MAZY.

Billy Beetle (consulting his map): "Dash it all! They ought to put up signposts when there are so many cross-roads!"

NOT A N-ICE ACTION.



1. "Clear away the snow, sir?" said Ranjee to the Rajah of Tingting. "No!" roared the mean rajah. "Be off! Hop it!"



2. But when the rajah had finished the job himself, Ranjee and Baby, the elephant, dropped a lot of nice fresh spring water outside the front door.



3. Well, of course, when the rajah came forth for his afternoon stroll, which! he went, and came down a nasty one. Then Ranjee and Baby smole.

Teacher: "What is the plural of rhinoceros, Johnnie?"

Johnnie: "Please, teacher, there ain't any!"

Teacher: "How's that?"

Johnny: "'Cos you said just now it was a singular animal."

